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The Unbounded German Nation: Dr. Otto Hahn and German Emigration to Canada in the 1870s and 1880s

Abstract

Otto Hahn, a lawyer and emigration promoter from the German state of Württemberg, was an integral part of the German debate about emigration, colonial empire and German identity. This paper suggests that any discussion of nineteenth-century European emigration must consider its location in the context of colonial expansion. Hahn was, in many ways, typical of the emigrationist colonialist. Yet, he had ideas which deviated from what has been recognized as emigrationist colonialism. His growing fascination with Canada sheds light on how this popular ideology could be altered. Any discussion of a transnationally conceived German identity in the late nineteenth century, then, must include intellectual and spiritual communities as sources of such an identity, and must locate them in the general context of the diffusion of modernity. The last part of Otto Hahn's story, finally, allows us to get a rare glimpse of an emigrationist colonialist turned actual emigrant, thereby permitting us to conceive of emigration as a way to contest and negotiate nationalism rather than an exit from the national community.

Résumé

Otto Hahn, un avocat et un organisateur de l'émigration de l'État de Württemberg en Allemagne, fit partie intégrante du débat allemand sur l'empire colonial, l'identité germanique et l'émigration. Dans cet article, nous suggérons que toute discussion portant sur cette dernière au niveau européen au dix-neuvième siècle doit prendre en considération là où elle a eu lieu dans le contexte de l'expansion coloniale. Hahn était, à bien des égards, un représentant typique du colonialisme émigrioniste. Pourtant, il avait des idées qui déviaient de ce qu'on comprend normalement sous ce terme. Sa fascination toujours plus grande pour le Canada jette une lumière sur la manière dont cette idéologie populaire pouvait s'altérer. Par ailleurs, tout débat sur une identité germanique conçue à un niveau transnational vers la fin du dix-neuvième siècle doit inclure des communautés intellectuelles et spirituelles en tant que sources d'une telle identité, et doit les placer dans le contexte général de la diffusion de la modernité. Enfin, la dernière partie de l'histoire d'Otto Hahn nous permet d'avoir un rare aperçu d'un colonialiste émigrioniste devenu lui-même un émigrant, ce qui nous permet ainsi de concevoir l'émigration comme un moyen de contester et de négocier le nationalisme plutôt que d'y voir une porte de sortie de la communauté nationale.

The annual report of the Canadian Minister of Agriculture for the year 1881 contained a brief commentary on the state of German emigration to Canada prepared by a Dr. Otto Hahn of Reutlingen in the southwestern German state of

Wurttemberg.¹ In it, Dr. Hahn voiced his “conviction that Canada is the land best fitted for German colonization.” He admitted that Canada, “through the relation which I have now had for some years with that country, has become a second home to me, so that I feel as much home there as here.” He concluded with the promise to “make all exertion for emigration, in which I see the only radical solution of the social problem, and for emigration to Canada in particular.” The social problem Hahn was referring to was the lack of economic opportunities for many people in the newly unified German Reich. This must not have been an easy confession for a proud German to commit to paper and send to a foreign land. Indeed, unlike the more than 200,000 Germans who, in 1881 alone, fled the tumultuous socio-economic conditions in Germany to make their homes elsewhere in the world, Hahn was not yet ready to abandon Germany for his imagined second home in Canada. Instead, he remained on the Canadian government payroll as an immigration agent in Germany, promoting the northern part of North America to his compatriots who had given up on the German dream. Eventually though, in July, 1888, Otto Hahn, his wife, and ten children would join the torrent of emigrants and settle, far away from Swabian lands, in Toronto, Ontario.

How does a nation, recently united into a state and rapidly ascending to world power status, make sense of the enormous loss of its citizens through mass emigration? How does a group of people imagine themselves as a nation when the supposed members of that nation leave in large numbers and end up scattered around the globe? How can a homeland be a home when it does not provide, materially and spiritually, what its inhabitants need? The answers to these questions are contained in Otto Hahn’s story. His story confirms the validity of scholarship which “challenges the nation-state as the basis of German nationalism” and “seeks to reconceptualize German identity in global terms.” The editors of a recent collection define Germanness culturally and not territorially or as a bounded state; they deterritorialize nationalism and create the concept of “homeland nationalism.”² In North American immigration historiography, the concept of a diasporic imagination with its concomitant persistent attachment to a national homeland has been used to explain how European immigrants in the United States became assimilated but still “unmeltable” ethnics.³ This paper uses the ideas of a diasporic imagination for the Canadian context, cautiously calling into question the assumption that nineteenth-century migrants in Canada connected the local and the global, but did not concern themselves with the national.⁴ Some nineteenth-century migrants, such as Otto Hahn, did conceive themselves as nationally and transnationally German, in a Canadian environment. The paper, then, uses microhistorical analysis to tease out larger themes of German and German-Canadian identity formation in the last third of the nineteenth century.

Hahn’s story encompasses elements identified more than thirty years ago by an

American historian, Woodruff Smith, as emigrationist colonialism.⁵ After the creation of the German Reich in 1870-71, the proponents of this ideology endorsed emigration based on the scenario of the Malthusian nightmare of a growing population that could no longer make a sufficient living off the land. Emigrants, who in the German popular imagination of the pre-national period were either useless paupers or reckless adventurers,⁶ were transformed in the writings of emigrationist colonialists into both victims of larger demographic and economic forces and rational actors whose mobility resulted in economic benefits not just to themselves and their families, but also to the community they left behind — a community that was healthier and more balanced. Overpopulation having been accepted as the fundamental rationale for emigration, emigrationist colonialists rejected the contention by both traditional imperialism and left liberalism that German industries, bolstered by either trade colonies or free trade, would absorb any surplus labor. In fact, they expressed a distinct fear of industrialization and its social and political consequences, such as proletarianization of farmers and tradesmen, displacement, class formation, and class conflict expressed in the rise of socialism. Emigrationist colonialism, according to Smith, “represented an attempt to lessen the bad effects of economic change by removing many of its victims, while establishing overseas a society which would maintain desirable preindustrial values within a wider, culturally defined Germany.”⁷ Based on anti-industrial agrarianism, it was in essence a socially conservative philosophy which sought to reconcile emigration, nationhood, and global status. The ideas of emigrationist colonialism have been largely ignored by historians of German colonialism or European expansion since Smith’s writing, but I would suggest that they have to be reintegrated into the colonial debate as well as introduced into migration history and German transnational history.

Otto Hahn, of course, is not a familiar figure in German political or cultural history. In fact, the name Hahn is better known in Canadian art history, Gustav Hahn being a reputable *Art Nouveau* painter and Emanuel Hahn, one of the most accomplished Canadian sculptors of the first half of the twentieth century, who created the design of today’s Canadian nickel and quarter coins. Gustav and Emanuel were Otto’s oldest and youngest son, respectively. Two other sons were professional musicians in Toronto.⁸ Otto himself appears in Canadian historiography only briefly in a recent study of German migration to Canada, being introduced as one of several Canadian immigration agents operating in German territory.⁹ Sources in which Hahn describes his activities on behalf of the Canadian government can be found in the Library and Archives of Canada (LAC) records of the Department of Agriculture (RG17), as well as in the reports by the Minister of Agriculture to Parliament, contained in the *Sessional Papers*. In addition, much of what Hahn was thinking about German emigration is contained in his many German-language publications that

appeared between 1866 and 1890 and are available today in the library of the state of Baden-Württemberg in Stuttgart. Hahn was a self-confident and prolific writer of everything, ranging from plays to scientific articles and from travel reports to promotional literature. These texts shed light on his ideas, concerns, and his sense of self.

Otto Hahn was born on July 13, 1828 in Ellwangen, Württemberg. On his mother's side, his relatives were well-known freethinkers with leanings towards the Swedenborgian New Church, which had established itself in England, Germany, Switzerland, and the United States, and maintained multiple connections across borders. His father was a civil servant in the kingdom of Württemberg. The Hahn family existed comfortably at the intersection of two types of identities, one based in a spiritual transnational community rebelling against the strictures of the established church, or *Landeskirche*, and one defined by service to the state. Young Otto grew up in the city of Reutlingen with four siblings and plenty of intellectual stimulation.¹⁰ At age sixteen he entered the University of Tübingen (only a few miles from his home) where he studied both law and natural sciences for the next six years, witnessing from afar the failed 1848 attempt to establish a German national state.¹¹ His youth and years as a student were the years of massive emigration from Württemberg, with 180,000 people leaving the kingdom between 1840 and 1855. This was also the time when German political economists, foremost among them Reutlingen-born University of Tübingen Professor Friedrich List, developed an economic rationale for colonial expansion by virtue of a German frontier in eastern Europe.¹² Young Otto Hahn absorbed these formative events and thoughts, but seemed most moved by the plight of Württemberg's poor. In his first publication, in 1866, he would describe villages with lowly, often dirty and impoverished-looking dwellings with miniscule plots, inhabited by joyless and downtrodden day laborers and factory workers.¹³

After successful completion of his law degree, Hahn entered the civil service and spent several years in the Department of Justice and the Department of the Interior, trying to utilize his abiding interest in economics and following the path set out by his father.¹⁴ However, a straightforward career was not to be a part of Otto's life story either then or later. Instead, in 1860 Otto joined a religious commune, Gustav Werner's *Bruderhaus* in Reutlingen. The *Bruderhaus* consisted of a network of co-operatives, both in farming and trades, and provided industrial training for destitute young men and orphans. Through its founder, it was strongly infused with Swedenborgian ideas, although apparently its foundation in unorthodox, even heretic, religious principles was not advertised in early histories of the institution.¹⁵ Hahn was attracted to Gustav Werner's work both by its Swedenborgian underpinnings, but also by its attempt to address the social issue of poverty and unemployment through means other than charitable handouts or socialism. From the beginning, Hahn was most interested in the creation of more farming opportunities for displaced and proletarianized farm-

ers. During his four years in the commune, he pushed strongly for the establishment of an agricultural settlement in Costa Rica as a colony of the *Bruderhaus*. A combination of resistance by Werner, financial difficulties, and waning public interest in emigration in the 1860s eventually doomed these plans to failure. After a study tour to Venezuela in 1864, Hahn left the commune and settled down in his private law firm in Reutlingen. At age 37 he married the much younger Rosine (Rosa) Friederike Schloz who, over the next 20 years would bear him seventeen children, ten of whom survived into adulthood. By the time the global recession hit in 1873, the Hahn family was on a stable financial basis, unlike so many of their fellow Wurttembergers. While many lived near starvation levels, the Hahn children had private art and music instruction and, according to one account, an English governess.¹⁶

From the mid-1860s onward, Otto Hahn's interest in emigration began to place him in the mainstream of Woodruff Smith's emigrationist colonialism. In it he saw an alternative to both British-style liberalism, which linked economic progress to industrialization and global free trade, and conservative economic colonialism, which demanded the formal acquisition of overseas territories as a source of raw materials and markets for German industrial products. In contrast, emigrationist colonialism was an ideology "which combined an overt distrust of industrialization with a proposed solution: to maintain an idealized society overseas... . It also combined appeals to German patriotism and pride in German culture... with an acceptance of emigration."¹⁷ Advocates of this kind of thinking established an institutional framework through a network of organizations and publications. Starting with the *Verein für Socialpolitik* (Association for Social Policy), founded in 1872/3 and the *Centralverein für Handelsgeographie* (Central Association for Commercial Geography), founded in 1878, leading advocates such as Eugen von Philippovich and Robert Jannasch gathered like-minded men for discussions and exchange of research.¹⁸ By the 1880s new organizations such as the *Deutsche Kolonialverein* (German Colonial Association) were more actively involved in political lobbying; their members increasingly were representatives of commerce and financial interests, in contrast to the more academic orientation of the earlier organizations. Even regional branches of the *Verein für Handelsgeographie* (Association for Commercial Geography), such as the one founded in Wurttemberg in 1882, now combined ethnological and geographic research with the practical purposes of providing information to commercial interests and potential emigrants. For example, exhibitions of ethnological material collected for the Linden Museum in Stuttgart were meant to entertain, but also to educate German commercial interests about the tastes and values of foreign peoples for the purpose of improving export trade. It was in this way that academics and intellectuals helped to conceptualize the German relationship with the world in utilitarian but also exotic patterns of otherness.

Otto Hahn, in his thinking, his institutional associations, and in his practical work in the field of migrant recruitment, was a part of the emigrationist colonialism movement. His many publications from the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s reflect all the elements of this line of thinking that scholars like Smith have identified.¹⁹ Hahn consistently started with references to overpopulation and the Malthusian dilemma of competition for scarce resources and equally consistently proposed emigration, a “natural law” that was rooted in reason, morality, and human history, as the only dignified solution of the social problem of overpopulation. As an economist he identified agriculture as the only sound basis of a national economy: “Kein Land ist gesund, als das in welchem Landbau die Hauptbeschäftigung ist und bleibt.” [A country is healthy only if agriculture is, and remains, the main mode of production.]²⁰ As a social and political commentator he observed displaced peasants who, being forced into soul-and body-destroying long hours of factory work and still not making a living, were driven into socialism. In the perhaps most detailed elaboration of his emigrationist philosophy, Hahn constructed an analogy to describe the nation using the Swedenborgian principle of three concentric circles: the spiritual, the moral, and the material. The German state, he argued, had defined the national territory through a political process, this territory being only the body to the German spirit which was based in German work.²¹ He then created idealized images of homesteads, farming and the liberating effects of private property for both the individual and the nation. Throughout the 1880s, Otto Hahn was an active member of the Wurttemberg branch of the *Verein für Handelsgeographie*. The *Centralverein für Socialpolitik* (Central Association for Social Policy) took notice of his work,²² and the President of the *Deutsche Kolonialverein*, Prince Hohenlohe-Langenburg, in December, 1885, invited him to his family castle to discuss settlement projects on the Canadian prairies.²³ Hahn also published an article in the main organ of the Colonial Society, the *Kolonialzeitung* (Colonial Newspaper),²⁴ organized a delegation of four academics to tour Canada in 1881, and spoke in Berlin before Jannasch and the *Centralverein* in early 1888. Institutionally and intellectually, then, Hahn was a small but recognizable part of the movement.

Since its emergence in mid-century, emigrationist colonialism ran into one major problem: the issue of vanishing potential colonial space in the world. If Germans were to go abroad, where should they go? Where, beyond the territory of the German state, was there room for German work to apply itself and for German *Kultur* (civilization) to unfold? Where could German agricultural group settlements be established and sustain themselves? Rejecting the individualistic, republican-assimilationist model of the United States as detrimental to the maintenance of German values, emigrationist colonialists developed a lasting fascination with South America, rivaling in their intense “German Occidentalism” the parallel British and French Orientalist para-

digm described by Edward Said.²⁵ Otto Hahn, as we have seen, initially shared the popular enthrallment with Latin America. However, unlike many other intellectuals, he also put his hopes into the American West as a “free” land. He was attracted to the climate of religious freedom praised by returning Germans who belonged to the Swedenborgian New Church which had established itself in Pennsylvania, but also by the practical value of existing German settlements.²⁶ According to his own testimony, he directed many Württemberg settlers towards the United States before eventually relegating the cause of emigration to the backburner and immersing himself in his family and his hobby of scientific studies by the end of the 1860s.²⁷ When Germany became a country, Otto Hahn was bent over a microscope. This is how he discovered Canada.

Hahn’s first contact with Canada came in the form of the fossil “*eoazon canadense*,” which Canadian geologist William Dawson of McGill University in Montreal claimed to be an organic, single-celled protistan. Hahn’s fascination with the *eoazon*’s meaning for evolution drew him into a lively international debate that involved German zoologist Karl Möbius, British geologist Sir Charles Lyell, and none other than Charles Darwin himself. Hahn’s research on the “Canadian dawn animal” would earn him an honorary doctorate in science in late 1878.²⁸ It also attracted his attention to the Dominion of Canada, the northern part of North America, which had not caught the interest of either emigrationist colonialist or potential emigrants. Between 1850 and 1870, only about 2.5% of the roughly two million German emigrants had chosen British North America as their destination, condemning post-Confederation Canada to remain an unknown quantity in the plans of those who followed previous emigrants’ paths.²⁹ In the climate of global recession in the 1870s, the new country, Canada, struggled to attract settlers from beyond the British Isles, and sent recruiting agents to various parts of Continental Europe. In the fall of 1875, Otto Hahn was visited in his home by one of them, Elise von Koerber, a woman originally from the neighboring state of Baden, who had made her home in Canada in the 1850s and had begun Canadian recruitment work in Switzerland in 1873.³⁰ Koerber and Hahn immediately got along and talked about migration matters for hours. Koerber suggested to Hahn that the Canadian province of Ontario might provide just the kind of conditions that Hahn had in mind for agricultural settlements. Hahn then proposed to visit Canada and gather settlement information for publication in Württemberg if the Canadian government were willing to pay for his trip. It took a while for Koerber to convince her superiors in Ottawa, but they eventually issued an invitation in the spring of 1878.³¹

Hahn’s trip to Canada in the summer of 1878 allowed him to collect fossils and information for settlers.³² It also revived his idea of an agricultural settlement, built on the spiritual foundations of the New Church: a Reutlingen *Bruderhaus* colony,

not unlike the one he had once imagined for Costa Rica. Traveling from Quebec City to Montreal and Toronto, Hahn stopped in Berlin, Ontario, a largely German-speaking town which was home to a thriving Swedenborgian congregation, the Church of New Jerusalem, where he visited a friend, probably the Reverend L.H. Tafel from Pennsylvania.³³ He then made the trip northward into what he called the primeval forest (*Urwald*). His enchantment obvious in his report, Hahn quickly made the unfamiliar familiar to himself and his readers by a simple process of appropriation, describing Lake Nipissing and its surroundings on the edge of the Canadian shield in terms of a Lake Constance landscape, with rolling hills, mixed forests, rich harvests, encounters with fellow Swabians and Swiss settlers, and Magnetawan, a bustling village with stores, mills, a hotel, and a post office. “Dieses Land halte ich für württembergische Einwanderung für sehr gut” [This place is ideal for migrants from Württemberg], he concluded. Within days he had bought a piece of land just outside Magnetawan Village from Annie Blaser of Switzerland, who, together with a brother from the St. Chrischona mission in Basel, had attempted to run a home for Swiss orphans. Hahn intended to transform the home into an agricultural training station for youths from Wurttemberg.³⁴

Far from having given up on the *Bruderhaus* ideal or his association with Gustav Werner, Hahn, in fact, approached his old friend after he returned to Germany and, with the help of the energetic Elise von Koerber, convinced the philanthropist to support the venture and help organize the first group of youths, who left for Canada in the spring of 1879.³⁵ Hahn then appointed as a director of the new Canadian venture Jacob Haerlen, who had previously been in charge of one of the Wurttemberg farms that were part of Gustav Werner’s network. Haerlen, the new “manager of the German settlement at Magnetawan,” was to provide advice and settlement assistance to new arrivals from Wurttemberg in the spirit of providing training to young lads with the intention of allowing them to acquire their own land later. He would work solely for the proceeds of the farm but without salary “in the interest of the cause” (an ambiguous reference which could either mean German emigration to Canada or the establishment of Swedenborgian communities overseas).³⁶ It is not clear whether the Canadian government was aware of this particular project, but in the spring of 1879 Hahn was appointed as immigration agent for Canada in Wurttemberg with a substantial expense account. In the fall of 1880, \$100 from this account went for improvements to the house and \$250 to Annie Blaser.³⁷

The religious motivation for emigrationist colonialism that Hahn displayed in his first venture into Canada is not an oddity per se. After all, much of the colonial impulse that existed in Germany was linked to the protestant missionary movement.³⁸ Hahn’s project in northern Ontario serves as a useful reminder that emigrationist colonialism, though overtly concerned with emigration, was also a part of the colonial

movement. By the 1880s, voices demanding a formal colonial empire for Germany had become louder, patriotism more stridently militaristic, and the defenders of emigration had to redouble their efforts to prove the usefulness of diasporic Germans in the face of an increasingly hostile government. In 1884, the year that Germany claimed its first formal colony in Africa, Chancellor Bismarck declared that “a German who jettisons his fatherland like an old coat, to me is no longer a German; I do not feel any ethnic loyalty to him.”³⁹ In this charged atmosphere, how could emigrationist colonialists still make a credible case? The answer lies in the ideal of an unbounded German nation: overseas Germans played a central role not only in the colonization debate, but in the emergence of a German national identity in the 1880s.

The basic debate which would continue in Germany for decades was about what defined Germanness: was it the state and its power to circumscribe territory and bestow privileges and duties on its inhabitants; or was it a person's cultural belonging to an imagined community regardless of location. In Germany's pre-national period, citizenship in the states was established primarily through residence, but the country's 1871 citizenship law, already reflecting an awareness of the loss of a valuable resource if the residence-based criteria were to be maintained, allowed emigrants to register with a German consulate when taking up residence abroad, thereby maintaining their claim to German citizenship. In the 1880s emigrationist colonialist lobbies further pushed the expansive view of German identity beyond German territory by linking Germany's prosperity and power to the success in maintaining ties to the German diaspora. Despite Bismarck's misgivings, German popular support rallied behind definitions of a national community that embraced expatriate Germans. Ethnicity and culture, rather than the state, were seen by many as central to German nationalism.⁴⁰ The state-based nationalists pushed back, however, rallying around military service as the symbol that showed commitment to the state and, hence, the nation. A defense law in the 1880s stipulated that a male German had to leave Germany before his seventeenth birthday to avoid his citizen's obligation to the German state, i.e., having to register for compulsory military service.⁴¹ Adult males who evaded this obligation were considered outside the German national community.

Otto Hahn was actively involved in defining diasporic Germanness both through his words and actions. He, too, emphasized the importance of retaining emigrants as part of the national community. His economist's training had him stress the practical value of cultural and commercial links to various parts of the world first. He stressed that emigration was a loss of energy at first, but would ultimately generate returns.⁴² Very quickly, however, he began to focus on the emigrants' sense of self and their motivation, focusing, one might argue, on a crucial part of the equation that was neglected by both the government and the intellectuals in their debate. Hahn argued that every man had three loyalties: his fatherland, his family, and satisfying

work.⁴³ The decision to leave was a wrenching one: “Wer auswandert, verlässt sein Vaterland, seine Familie, seine Heimath, seinen Boden, seine gewohnte Umgebung, man kann sagen, seine Luft.” [A man who emigrates leaves his fatherland, his family of origin, his home, his soil, his familiar environment, you might even say, the air that he is used to breathing.] What he never left behind was his *Arbeitskraft*, his ability to work. Given by Mother Earth a new bit of soil where he could apply this ability to work, he would create a new *Heimat*, a new beloved home and fatherland, a land given by the father to his children. Migration, then, was simply a change in workplace with new loyalties being generated by the opportunities for the children.⁴⁴ Hahn’s intensive involvement with emigrants had led him to understand the basic psychology of emigration and to create a definition of the German nation that existed wherever German work and energy (male) interacted with the land (female). A German *Heimat* could be built wherever the productive and reproductive functions of German men and women could unfold to their fullest. The German “loves his soil and is a born husbandman. The fecundity of his families guarantees attachment to the new home. ...Above all he knows that work is the only source of prosperity....”⁴⁵ A state that could not guarantee useful work within the confines of its national territory could not blame its citizens for going elsewhere. Nowhere in Hahn’s German transnational community was there room for the military demands of the state; in fact, when three of his artistically inclined sons were in their mid-teens, Hahn decided to move his entire family to Canada. This act did not make him less patriotically German in his own mind; on the contrary, it showed his commitment to his culture-based German nation.⁴⁶

The definition of the German nation that emerged in the 1880s naturally has to be questioned through a postcolonial analysis. For one, as Klaus Bade and recently Oliver Trevisiol have demonstrated, dogged efforts to keep Germans abroad under the mantle of German citizenship had their counterpart in the increasing exclusionary practices towards Polish agricultural workers and Jewish residents, especially in Prussia.⁴⁷ Secondly, Hahn’s romantic notions of interaction with the soil and large families points to familiar tropes of what recent scholarship has identified as a colonialist mindset. According to Susanne Zantop, there was a connection between the “over there” of the other and the “over here” of the self; the colonial fantasy and the historical reality at home were intertwined. It is, therefore, important to point out that emigrationist colonialism accepted without question the displacement of indigenous people in the establishment of German agricultural settlements, speaking of the urge to “spill over” into foreign territory as a natural force that was not to be resisted; the wishes of the colonized were irrelevant. According to Zantop, the significance of these sexualized and gendered colonial fantasies in the formation of German national identity has been largely ignored by historians.⁴⁸

Hahn's writings do show some of the elements of race and gender, but they also reveal the possibility of alternative thinking in 1870s and 1880s Germany. His depiction of North America's native peoples is orthodox, steeped in the popular culture of James Fenimore Cooper and Karl May frontier novels.⁴⁹ In his early writings, he set out the condition that agricultural colonies could only be established in those countries where the indigenous races were at a lower level of cultural development than the immigrants.⁵⁰ In many ways, despite mocking the general image that Germans had of Canada as a ice-covered land frozen in time, he himself fell into the trap of considering "Indians" as prehistoric creatures who had either been absorbed into the mainstream (one Cherokee chief he met in Quebec was even a lawyer!) or who survived only in the form of exotic exhibits in archeological museums.⁵¹ Having symbolically removed the real native populations from their ancestral homelands, Hahn could claim to explore "primeval forest where no human had ever set foot" around Lake Nipissing (the hunting grounds of the Ojibwa and Algonkin tribes) and to speak of virgin soil awaiting human cultivation.⁵² As he proudly proclaimed: "Thus Culture marches on under the sign of the cross, across prairies and across mountains, thus Culture conquers the world with work and with the plough."⁵³ To be German was to be in motion.

Hahn also connected the transformation of virgin lands into gardens with brighter prospects for German "surplus women," or as he phrased it rather indelicately, the tens of thousands of "man-able virgins" (*mannbare Jungfrauen*) who had absolutely no prospect of marriage due to a deficit of men in Württemberg. Here Hahn showed that he could deviate from conservative orthodoxy, however. While he suggested that surplus virgins could emigrate to places where industrious German women were in great demand⁵⁴ both as helpmates and wives,⁵⁵ he also strongly advocated training and education for women to make them generally less economically dependent on marriage.⁵⁶ This oddly feminist component of his worldview is easily traceable to the work of the Reutlinger Training Institute for Women (*Frauenarbeitsschule*) with which Otto Hahn was familiar. Hahn also supported his old friend Elise von Koerber in an emigration project for single women for domestic service in Canada, which was coordinated by the Württemberg branch of the main German bourgeois feminist organization (led by Mathilde Weber, the wife of University of Tübingen agricultural economist Heinrich Weber) and a women's association in Montreal. Finally, Hahn's oldest daughter, Otilie, born in 1870, acquired a certificate to teach at such a women's school.⁵⁷ Hahn, therefore, did display a sense of Germanness that was built on German cultural superiority, but allowed for German women a productive function when their reproductive destiny could not be fulfilled.

Otto Hahn, as this paper has attempted to demonstrate, was an integral part of the German debate about emigration, colonial empire, and German identity. I would suggest that any discussion of nineteenth-century European emigration must consider its

location in the context of colonial expansion. Hahn was, in many ways, typical of the emigrationist colonialist: he was an academic enabler of German expansion and its “othering” and exclusionary tendencies, and he displayed a profound uneasiness with the effects of modernization on the economy, German society, and culture. Yet, he had ideas which deviated from what has been recognized as emigrationist colonialism. His growing fascination with Canada sheds light on how this popular ideology could be altered to encompass Germans in British North America, rather than in South America. Hahn’s admiration for British culture seems to have been a by-product of his interest in the sciences. His scientific internationalism — the thrill of being part of an international community of scholars (who, of course, were also involved in building the scientific underpinnings of European dominance) — coexisted uneasily with the prevailing academic agenda of providing intellectual rationales for national domination and competition. Hahn was perhaps more comfortable than most in a context that took him beyond the national framework because his religious affiliation with the Swedenborgian church had always placed him into a transnational community. In fact, if it is true, as Zwink claims, that Hahn was motivated in his migration work by his desire to create abroad the truly free ecumenical German church that could not exist in Germany, then his repeated attempts to duplicate the *Bruderhaus* experiences abroad could be seen as a quest for an alternative to a national identity: a Swedenborgian diaspora that would escape the bonds of the established “national” church (*Landeskirche*) and create a different kind of productive community united by a spiritual bond. Any discussion of a transnationally conceived German identity, then, must include intellectual and spiritual communities as sources of such an identity, and must locate them in the general context of the diffusion of modernity.

In the end, one often wonders how ideals and intellectual musings measured up to the reality of an emigration experience. The last part of Otto Hahn’s story allows us to get a rare glimpse of an emigrationist colonialist turned actual emigrant, thereby permitting us to conceive of emigration as a way to contest and negotiate nationalism rather than an exit from the national community. Hahn’s plan for his Canadian life was to establish an agricultural training school for young German boys near Toronto, yet another *Bruderhaus*. Apparently, one of his close friends, who was a multi-millionaire, had indicated his willingness to sponsor this venture. Hahn also hoped that the Canadian government would continue to pay him a salary for doing settlement work in Canada. This was not to be, and he received his last paycheck in September, 1888.⁵⁸ After that, twenty-two-year-old Gustav had to step up and support his entire family as a commercial designer and art teacher, while Otto increasingly immersed himself in scientific studies, frustrated that he could not find paid employment in his field.⁵⁹ The family spoke German at home, played music, and

read books. As the other boys grew older, they worked as sales clerks and in odd jobs (none of them, one might add, in agriculture, as was predictable for this urban middle-class family). The oldest daughter, Ottilie, became a nurse. All the children remained in the family home in Rosedale for a long time, except for Gustav who married one of his students and moved out. Otto identified himself to the census taker in 1901 as a Doctor of Physics, but the continuing lack of public recognition and paid employment frustrated him and caused tensions in the family. He finally decided to spend some time back in Stuttgart with his sisters, and to take his youngest son, Emanuel, along for training at the same art institute where Gustav had received his education. Both Otto and Emanuel were naturalized before they embarked on their voyage in November, 1903. On February 23, 1904, seventy-five-year-old Otto Hahn, a British subject, died in Stuttgart of a heart ailment, if not a broken heart.⁶⁰

While Otto Hahn's life after emigration did not resemble his vision of a transnational German homeland, and his plan to transplant German institutions did not work out, we can ultimately place his children in this new "Heimat abroad" or fatherland that their father's actions had created for them. Ottilie had a career, unlike many women of her age and standing, due to the training she had received in Reutlingen. Walter and Paul, even while working as clerks, played professional violin and cello, and Paul eventually started a family business that exists in Toronto to this day, selling and repairing pianos. Gustav left his mark as a public artist, as did his daughter, Sylvia. Emanuel, the most successful of them all, used his schooling in Stuttgart after his father's death to become a better sculptor; his work also reflects in many aspects his father's thinking. Both Gustav and Emanuel applied the techniques and aesthetics they had acquired in Stuttgart to an intense engagement with the Canadian landscape, Canadian history, and Canadian identity. Celebrating their love for the north country, they met for gregarious family gatherings on Hahn Island, a property that Emanuel bought in 1923, south of Lake Nipissing on the Pickerel River. All the children lived to an old age, the last two sisters dying in 1979. Reutlingen's Otto Hahn and his family and their lives in Canada thus become a different German story, unbound.

NOTES

1. Canada, House of Commons, *Sessional Papers*, 1882, n.11, 250-53.
2. O'Donnell et al., eds. *The Heimat Abroad*, introduction.
3. Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*.
4. Hoerder, *Creating Societies*.
5. Smith, "Ideology of German Colonialism, 1840-1906."
6. Retterath, "Deutschamerikanertum und Volkstumsgedanke," 132-3.
7. Smith, 643.
8. On Gustav and Emanuel, see Weissenborn's brief entries in the *German Canadian Yearbook* 6 (1981), 238-244.
9. Wagner, *History of Migration from Germany to Canada 1850-1939*.
10. Zwink, "Otto Hahn (1828-1904)," 328-353.

11. Kollé, "Glanzvolle Künstlerkarriere in Kanada," 218.
12. Philippovich, ed., *Auswanderung und Auswanderungspolitik in Deutschland*, 236-237; Smith, 644-645; Walker, *Germany and the Emigration*, 1816-1885, 114-117.
13. Hahn, *Amerika: Der Bauer und Arbeiter in Schwaben und in Amerika*, 7.
14. Hahn, "Otto Hahn, autobiographical summary," 106-109.
15. See Zwink. During the late 1860s, the director of the Bruderhaus tool factory, Gottlieb Daimler, taught young orphan apprentice Wilhelm Maybach. The rest is car history.
16. Baker, *Emanuel Hahn and Elizabeth Wyn Wood*, 15.
17. Smith, 649.
18. Both men published on the questions of emigration and colonies. Philippovich, ed. *Auswanderung und Auswanderungspolitik in Deutschland*; Robert Jannasch, first president of the Centralverein für Handelsgeographie, added a third section to the third edition of Roscher's classic on emigration. Roscher and Jannasch, *Kolonien, Kolonialpolitik und Auswanderung*.
19. *Amerika: Der Bauer und Arbeiter; Canada: Meine Reise and den Nipissing (Ontario) und die Schweizerkolonie; Canada: Ein Auswanderungs-Ziel für Deutsche; Canada : die Berichte der vier deutschen Delegierten über ihre Reise nach Canada*; "Canada: Vortrag gehalten in Reutlingen June 1, 1882," 10-14; "Wanderung, Auswanderung, Kolonien," 1-21.
20. Hahn, *Amerika*, 19. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.
21. "So bildet das Staatsgebiet den Körper unseres geistigen Lebens, dieses aber besteht zum grossten Teil in der deutschen Arbeit." In "Wanderung, Auswanderung, Kolonien," 2-4.
22. Philippovitch, 282.
23. Hahn memorandum on audience with Prince Hohenlohe, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Records of the Department of Agriculture, enclosed in Hahn to Tupper, January 1886, RG17 vol. 471 file 51579. Hohenlohe, after touring Western Canada in the summer of 1883, helped establish two German settlements in Saskatchewan.
24. Hahn, "Die Entwicklung von Kanada."
25. Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies*, 14-16.
26. Zwink. On the importance of prior German migration to the U.S. during the 1880s, see, for example Hahn to High Commissioner, 16 March 1881, LAC, RG 17 vol. 307 file 31668.
27. Koerber to Jenkins, 4 December 1875, *Sessional Papers*, 1876, 153.
28. On his correspondence, see <http://www.wlb-stuttgart.de/referate/theologie/skothahn.html>. On the honorary doctorate, Kollé, 219 n.5.
29. Wagner, 25, 80-1.
30. Sauer, "Gender and Transnationalism in the Work of Immigration Agent Elise von Koerber, 1872-1884."
31. Koerber to Minister of Agriculture, 24 February 1876, LAC, RG17 vol. 151 file 15900. Koerber to Minister, 11 December 1876, LAC, RG17 vol. 174 file 18096. See also Koerber's testimony, 19 April 1880, *Sessional Papers*, 1880, appendix 3, 19.
32. The following is based on Hahn's publication *Canada: Meine Reise and den Nipissing (Ontario) und die Schweizerkolonie*.
33. Bird, "The Swedenborgian Community in Waterloo County."
34. Koerber to Lowe, 23 November 1878, LAC, RG17 vol. 236 file 24267. The census identifies Elisabeth Annie Blaser as a member of the Free Church.
35. Koerber to London, 17 October 1878, LAC, RG17 vol. 234 file 24032. Koerber, 19 April 1880, testimony before the House of Commons Committee, *Sessional Papers*, 1880, appendix 3, 14-26.
36. Hahn to Lowe, 26 August 1880, LAC, RG17 vol. 290 file 29967. The 1901 census of Magnetawan Village lists Jacob und Maria "Hoerlan" as 1880 immigrants from Germany. Nine children were born in Canada. The family inter-married with other German Canadian settlers in the area.
37. Letter by Hahn, 18 June 1879, LAC, RG17 vol. 252 file 26000. Hahn to High Commissioner London, 16 March 1881, LAC, RG17 vol. 307 file 31668.
38. Bade, *Friedrich Fabri und der Imperialismus in der Bismarckzeit*.
39. Original quoted in Retterath, 133.
40. Sargent, "Diasporic Citizens."
41. Colmer to Tupper, 23 February 1888, LAC, RG17 vol. 569 file 64091.
42. Hahn, *Amerika*, 23.
43. *Ibid.*, 6.
44. "...und nun die Mutter Erde zu einem neuen, geliebten Vaterland geschaffen zu haben." Hahn, "Wanderung, Auswanderung, Kolonien," 21. "Wanderung ist Wechsel im Orte der Arbeit," *ibid.*, 9.
45. Hahn, Report on German Emigration, September 1881, *Sessional Papers*, 1882, no.11, p.252.
46. His son Emanuel reflected his father's anti-militaristic attitude in the sculptures he created during World War I, especially "War the Despoiler" in which a serpent-like creature rips life out of the womb of a mother, symbolic of Mother Earth and the trenches. Ironically Emanuel's design for a war memorial in Winnipeg was rejected by the public in 1926.

because he was “a German.” See Baker, *Emanuel Hahn*.

47. Bade, “From Emigration to Immigration”; Trevisiol, *Die Einbürgerungspraxis im Deutschen Reich 1871-1945*.

48. Zantop, introduction.

49. Wagner, 28-30, 95-96.

50. Hahn, “Wanderung, Auswanderung, Kolonien”: “wo das Land frei, d.h. noch nicht bestetzt, wild ist” (where the land is free, i.e., not occupied, wild).

51. Canada, a presentation by Otto Hahn, 1 June 1882, LAC, RG17 vol. 409, file 44286. His son Emanuel’s sculpture “Indian Scout” reflects the construction of indigenous people as primitive in their cultural development.

52. Hahn, *Meine Reise and den Nipissing*, 11 (“Urwald”), 21 (“jungfräuliche Länder, die der Kultivierung harren”).

53. Canada, a presentation by Otto Hahn, 1 June 1882, LAC, RG17 vol. 409, file 44286: “So schreitet die Cultur unter dem Zeichen des Kreuzes über Steppen und Gebirge, so erobert sie mit der Arbeit, dem Pfluge die Welt....”

54. Hahn, *Amerika*, 12. Best for them to go somewhere “wo man sich um eine fleissige Frau rei?t.”

55. Canada, a presentation by Otto Hahn, 1 June 1882, LAC, RG17 vol. 409, file 44286, p.4

56. Hahn, *Die Frau auf dem Gebiet der Arbeit*.

57. “As for my person and specially my children, I have educated them for Canada.My eldest daughter intends to establish there a school for ladies after the model of these schools here.” Hahn to Minister, 30 April 1888, LAC, RG17 vol. 579 file 65380.

58. Hahn to Minister, 12 February 1888, LAC, RG17 vol. 569 file 64091. “Details of Expenditure,” *Sessional Papers*, 1889, vol. 3.

59. If we are to accept Zantop’s dictum that the colonial imagination made the unfamiliar familiar, and the familiar familiar, then Hahn explained both his own and the German state’s expectations when he said that colonies were like children in a family: the father must not assume that his children will reimburse what he spent on their education, but if the parents didn’t mistreat their children, they would repay them in indirect ways.

60. Baker, *Emanuel Hahn*, 14-19. Census of Canada 1901, Ontario, district 129, sub-district g-3.

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