

Nixe On The River

Felix Paul Greve In Bonn (1898-1901)

Accounts of the life and work of the Canadian writer Frederick Philip Grove (FPG) *alias* the German writer and translator Felix Paul Greve remain tantalizingly incomplete. These accounts include Grove's own published autobiographies, *A Search for America* (SFA) and *In Search of Myself* (ISM), as well as those of his critics. Following the findings and disclosures of D.O. Spettigue and Desmond Pacey (with J.C. Mahanti) regarding Grove's German family background and career, much remained to be clarified. Since then, a number of researchers have succeeded in filling in various blanks in Greve's biography. Significant portions, however, remain unclear or entirely obscured, such as Greve's childhood and school-years in Hamburg, aspects of the Johanneum period (1897-8), time spent in Rome and Munich, and his work for J.C.C. Bruns and other publishers.

Here, I shall concentrate on Greve's years as a student in Bonn (1898-1901), about which little is known.¹ Knowledge about this period in Grove's life may help untangle the knot of autobiographical narrative strands of the first half of ISM and parts of SFA and thus contribute to an increased understanding of Grove's method of interweaving fact and fiction.

While discussing Greve's translation of Wilde's *Intentions*, Spettigue, who has also recorded the available data of FPG's attendance at Bonn's Friedrich-Wilhelms-University, points out that Greve may have been inspired by "the hedonistic milieu he had encountered in some group of avant-garde students in Bonn, stimulated no doubt by the George reading, which apparently made a significant, if not profound, impression on him" (1973: 87).

Here as elsewhere the critic makes shrewd guesses, often, however, unwittingly conflating disparate events and unproven assumptions. For instance, I found that there was indeed a group of students to which Greve belonged. An influential poetry reading also occurred but not, as the critic has it, by George (Spettigue 1973: 58). Grove, in *ISM*, and Spettigue agree that FPG must have owned a boat (Spettigue 1973: 86). In fact, he owned more than one, but not in Hamburg. In addition, we now know about matters such as Greve's first Bonn lodgings "on Dreieck Street," about the duration of the summer and winter semesters (May to August, October to March), and we have also obtained, by way of illustration, a glimpse of the university's main building and the "chestnut trees" in front of it. But where else did Felix live in Bonn and what did he do when he was not attending classes? Spettigue also usefully lists some of the courses he took and mentions Greve's mysterious "defection since the fall of 1900" which the university's authorities had retrospectively "acknowledged to be a permissible leave of absence" (1973: 49-50).

Then, understandably preoccupied with Greve's 1903 trial for fraud, Spettigue speculates on Greve's behaviour to help explain his absence from the university: "But had his conduct been blameless? A matter of taste, perhaps, but there were rumours that Felix had gone a little wild even by college standards" (1973: 50). What were these standards, these rumours? The biographer does not say, but speculates about them using statements about Greve's spending made at his trial and paraphrased in the newspapers, quoting two statements which the critic himself considers not very reliable (1973: 95-96). Again, in the light of later developments—Greve's work on Wilde and Gide and his suspected homosexual relationship with his friend Herman Kilian—the critic assumes that "Felix's defection from Bonn in the late fall of 1900 had a specific cause, namely, the news of the final collapse and, on the night of November 30, the death of Wilde in Paris" (1973: 58). Inevitably, considering the paucity of sources available, Spettigue felt he had no choice but to be "led into speculation" and to be guided by "the thin narrative of events discernible from the von Poellnitz correspondence" (1973: 91). Today, in addition to Greve's correspondence with the Insel Verlag's manager, von Pöllnitz, we know a little more about the young author's relations with other publishers, notably with J.C.C. Bruns (Martens 1996). Spettigue thought that the Bruns papers might be "invaluable" but believed them lost (Spettigue 1973: 107). Although it is not true, as Knönagel somewhat rashly asserts, that "Spettigue's discovery raised more questions

than it answered” (1989: 63)—and Knönagel himself fails to provide significant additional answers—Spettigue’s accounts from 1969 and 1973, much like Grove’s own, are themselves in need of discussion and explanation.

Suffice it to say that, although much else has been uncovered since the groundbreaking initial discoveries regarding the identity of Grove and Greve—particularly the publication of the “Baroness Elsa” papers (Hjartarson / Spettigue 1992) and the discovery of Greve’s correspondence with Gide and a number of German authors (Spettigue 1992), many other points remain to be cleared up or are in need of reformulation. My essay, based on new and unpublished evidence, is intended as a contribution to help answer some of these questions. It does, moreover, provide the first and only account of Greve’s personal life and much of his social life during the crucial period in Bonn.

In Transit

Felix Paul Greve arrived in Bonn during the first days of April, 1898. He was entered as a student in the Philosophische Fakultät on April 20, 1898, after paying to the bursar the registration fee of 25.40 marks. Provided with sizeable sums of stipend money, he presented himself to the Bonn students not only in a new suit and tie but also as a new man: proficient in the modern and ancient languages, young, successful, well-heeled. No one would have suspected his lowly origins. *Incipit vita nova*. He would be welcomed as a desirable addition to the higher strata of town and gown. Indeed, at that very time of year, certain groups of academics were out looking for suitable additions to their circles. Greve, too, was on the lookout, and thus he was found.

Rhenus

The cover of a booklet, privately printed in Cologne (1898), bears the Greek motto ARISTON MEN ΥΔΩΠ in capital letters above the intertwined initials T and R, followed by an exclamation mark. It is the coat of arms of an arms-bearing fraternity,² a so-called “*Waffentragende Verbindung*,” with (water-)sports as the focus of its activities. The booklet, entitled *Semester Bericht des A.R.C. Rhenus*, contains the semi-annual report of a Bonn academic fraternity, the rowing-club ARC Rhenus on the banks of the River Rhine, for the summer semester (April to July) of 1898. Entries were made at irregular intervals by club members elected to various offices, taking turns each semester. Among these offices were those of the treasurer, the

head of the committee on boats, and the four positions filled by members elected to take charge of the club for the semester, which I shall discuss later. The entries in the log consist of summary accounts of social and sporting events, the minutes of various meetings, reports on rowing events, festive occasions, outings, accounts of the club's income, records of gifts and trophies given and received, reports on admissions and expulsions, and so on.

In the spring of 1898, ARC Rhenus proudly announced to its “inactive” members (senior members in good standing of usually more than four or five semesters in Bonn and close to their exams) and alumni (or *Alte Herren*)—mostly men with their exams well behind them—that the club had entered the new semester with the record number of eleven new *Füchse* (foxes, or new members on probation). Among the newcomers, entered into the club's membership rolls as No. 119, was “Felix Greve, stud. phil, 1. Semester, aus Hamburg.” Other freshmen listed include students named Arnold Cappenberg and Hans Lomberg. There was a straggler, already entering his third semester, who was registered as No. 124 on May 13, 1898. This was “Hermann Kilian, stud. rer. nat., aus Dresden.” Herman (he used the English spelling of his first name) F.C. Kilian's grandfather, Dr. Herman Friedrich Kilian (1800-1863), a professor at Bonn University, had been a renowned gynaecologist, proficient in several languages. In addition to a large body of original work published in his field, he had translated medical works from the English and Russian. There was literary talent in the family. Thus it may be surmised that one of the things that may have attracted Greve and Kilian to each other was their easy mastery of English and their interest in literary matters, an interest considered ungentlemanly at the time. In addition, photographs showing both Kilian and Greve make it plain that Kilian, a tall and somewhat sombre-looking man, sporting a drooping moustache, a tweed-cap and a suit in the English style, made much of his English family relatives, whom Greve was later to graft onto his own family tree. If Kilian surrounded himself with the third-hand aura of literature and foreign descent, Greve used literature to win friends and influence people. Translation would do for Greve what it had done for Kilian's grandfather.

When Frederick Philip Grove, many years later, created his fictional autobiographies, he “translated” himself into a semblance of the enviable German-Scots ancestry of his former friend Kilian by making his mother, a “lowly” Bertha Reichentrog, into what he considered the more reputable

“Rutherford.” Some parts of *In Search of Myself*, where we read of Grove’s purported travel with “Uncle Rutherford” to St. Petersburg and other regions of Russia (ISM 147; 151), may have been derived from Kilian’s stories about his well-travelled grandfather. There were other sources to be tapped among Rhenus members, as we shall see. In a further effort at belated biographical *translatio* Grove also appropriated some of the reputation of Kilian’s maternal grandfather; as Lord Rutherford Clark was an eminent jurist, this act must have seemed to Grove, a convicted felon, a form of poetic justice.

Felix Greve, just arrived from Hamburg, had now almost instantly found a haven among a new and exclusively male “family” of mostly dedicated sportsmen eager to test their intellectual and physical prowess and to distinguish themselves among young men of equal ambitions. What could have been more useful to a nineteen-year-old from the lower classes but of no modest means just graduated from the renowned Johanneum? Of course, there were other fraternities. But it would have been impossible for someone like Greve to join Bonn’s most prominent fraternity, the Borussia, which counted the Emperor among its illustrious alumni, and was soon to accept the Crown Prince into its membership. The Borussia fraternity was exclusively for the sons of royalty, of noblemen and the lesser gentry, of diplomats and other rich and influential people. One of these was the turn-of-the-century collector and connoisseur of art, Harry Graf Kessler, famous even at that time. Count Kessler—like Felix Greve and also like the patron of the arts, Aby Warburg of the Hamburg dynasty of bankers—was a Johanneum alumnus. Kessler was involved in the publication of *Pan*, a major journal of literature and the arts, but also in the founding of *Insel* magazine. Is it possible that Felix Greve did not know about the Count whose family was on intimate terms with Bismarck and members of the Imperial family?³ In fact, it appears to me that Grove’s account of his fictional “mother’s” travels all over Europe, the distinguished international social circles that he claimed she moved in, and the attractions her drawing-room allegedly held for such composers as Mahler and Brahms may have been derived from Count Kessler’s autobiographical writings (ISM 80-81). As to a Borussia membership, Kessler confirms that “financial independence” was essential.

A Rhenus membership was less expensive. Like any other new member, Felix Greve had to deposit 400 goldmarks as security.⁴ This, a very sizeable sum, was about a fourth of his considerable income, but he apparently felt

that he could (and should) afford it. In addition, Rhenus' dedication to sports apparently made it possible for a former social outsider like Greve to join, making up in performance what he lacked in real wealth and social standing. Indeed, the very fact that Felix Greve had been a student at the *Realschule* and the *Realgymnasium* in Hamburg, before entering the *Gelehrtenschule des Johanneums*, prepared him for Rhenus. Almost all Rhenus members were either active in practical pursuits or preparing for them. They were doctors, engineers, teachers, pharmacists, and lawyers. Three tobacco planters and overseas traders were also among them. Thus Felix Greve's intended path in life was, at this point, already expressed in his choice of fraternity, a choice which in the ordinary course of things would have determined his career. He later wrote: "Since university 'standing' has become the prerequisite for position in the hierarchy of the state, the institute has become too large and unwieldy; within the student body social distinctions define themselves as rigidly as they do elsewhere" (ISM 160).

We cannot help but realise the evident dichotomy—never to be resolved—between Greve's scholarly preparation and his academic and social ambitions. Indeed, one reason for Felix Greve's reckless spending even then is evident in his good fortune in coming into sums of money larger than any he (or anybody else in his family) had been used to handle, and also in his aspiration to an elevated status in society (the imaginary boyhood among the minor landed gentry in Grove's *In Search of Myself* would have prepared him for exactly such a position). His exemplary performance at school encouraged him to reach for the stars. As yet, he did not use his academic preparation for the prodigious work he was to accomplish later as an author and translator. Instead, his years at school helped him project the image of an independently wealthy man-of-letters. Young Felix Greve, it appears, had fallen victim to the widespread "romantic" image of the writer rising by sheer effort from lowly beginnings to a glamorous place in society. If this was the case, then Greve did not realise that among his contemporaries almost all great careers in letters and sciences were securely built on comfortable family incomes, especially among the members of the Berlin and Munich circles whom he was to join, including Stefan George himself. Felix Greve's essential innocence in the ways of the world of literature combined with the triple windfall of his scholarship money to ruin this clean-cut youth, just out of school.

Felix Greve, as he then called himself, also looked the model of the inno-

cent, clean-cut and promising freshman. The once poor Hamburg student now sported an elegant silk-tie and a suit of dark cloth, proudly displaying the Rhenus flag on the left lapel—blue and white with a red eight-pointed star—the outward sign of newly achieved status in society: he was a young man of quality (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Felix Paul Greve in May, 1898. Professional photo, a so-called *Kabinettsbild* to be given to friends and for display among other such pictures in a kind of frieze decorating the main assembly-room of the ARC Rhenus *Bootshaus* on the River Rhine.

Athlete

Still, even Rhenus members had to be prepared to spend not inconsiderable sums of money in addition to the sizeable security deposit. The monthly membership fee itself was comparatively negligible, a mere five marks. But rowing and sailing were and still are expensive sports and, as one had to hold one's own among the other members, it simply did not do to skimp. Contributions toward the acquisition of new boats were expected. Sporting outfits—first blue, then white tricots and sweaters—had to be tailor-made. The same was true for acceptable everyday wear, evening clothes, and other formal attire, because a certain amount of ritual and tradition were an inescapable part of fraternity life.

Active and inactive members dined in each other's company, meeting for their daily lunches at the elegant Hotel Kronprinz, while they often dined at the Restaurant Hähnchen. In all seasons there were outings and picnics on

weekends, occasionally in the company of young ladies. Dances had to be attended at nearby resort hotels. One of the club's favourites for such occasions was the Hotel Mundorf in nearby Plittersdorf, upriver from Bonn in the vicinity of Bad Godesberg. One could row or walk there along the towpath, weather permitting, or one might take the train along the Rhine as far as Koblenz or other towns and villages on the way, and return by motorboat. There were many opportunities to entertain and to be entertained in style. Gifts were given, portraits exchanged in token of friendship, rounds of champagne, wine and beer bought at dances and other festivities. The most formal of these festivities was the *Stiftungsfest* usually held in early July when the club's founding was celebrated. These annual club reunions took place either at the *Bootshaus* or at the Hotel Kley in nearby Koblenzerstraße (today's Adenauerallee, studded with government offices), where also many of the club's dances, including the *Faschingparty*, were held.

As to the rowing activities proper, here, too, things were done in style. Trophies and other prizes were presented to successful members of one's own or of competing clubs. Prizes were custom-made by local craftsmen and had to be paid for by the donor. Members had to keep up appearances and sustain their real or assumed social standing inside and outside of the club circles. Delegations of other clubs stopped by in their boats and had to be accommodated, fed and entertained. During the fall break of 1898, for instance, the club established contact with a foreign rowing team: "During the fall vacations we were visited by a crew from London on an excursion down the Neckar and Rhein in their *kanadischen Kanoe*" (*Festschrift* 1906: 51). The names of the visitors were not recorded. Perhaps Greve used the occasion to practice his English and establish contacts that would have been useful from 1901-02 onwards.

Felix Greve must have been quick to grasp the social advantages provided by his new circle. If a member wanted to become popular, distinguishing oneself as a sportsman went far in compensating for other deficiencies. In this, the fraternity in Bonn, the "German Oxford," as it was called, was not unlike its contemporaries in the English-speaking world. In addition, presenting oneself on occasions of high social visibility usually payed off. One such occasion was the wake for the former *Reichskanzler*, Graf Otto von Bismarck, in Bonn's Beethoven Hall, on November 28, 1898, attended by all Rhenus members in their club finery, the three students in charge standing at attention with lowered silver-plated ceremonial rapiers, the basket hilts

padded with cloth in the Rhenus colours red, blue, and white. Felix Greve, “third-in-charge” although only in his second semester, was among the three who were certainly admired by the crowd attending the spectacle.

Rowing was the club’s *raison d’être* and taken very seriously. It was done singly or in crews of two, three, four, or even five men. Boats were taken off their racks in the large lower hall of the boathouse and carried through the open wooden portals to the slip and down an incline into the river with its strong current. There certainly was a danger of the inexperienced being carried away by the swift waters or turned over and drowned if they were not good swimmers. In order to compensate for the lack of safe and easy waters for training purposes, beginners were expected to take part in regular exercises and initial “dry” training in a stationary trainer on the first floor of the boathouse in preparation for the actual rowing on the river. Although Rhenus crews took part in numerous races in Bonn, Frankfurt, Berlin, and elsewhere they had yet to score a major success comparable to the one in 1904, when a Rhenus boat with a crew of four won the Emperor’s trophy at the Grünau race in Berlin.

Aside from regular rowing activities during the semester, members were expected, particularly during the winter, to engage in two hours of gymnastics on the Rhenus premises. Greve may have done those “exercices on horizontal bars”—which he claims his “father” performed at “Castle” Thurow (ISM 28)—in the boathouse yard, a kind of “open-air gymnasium,” and in the training facilities on the first floor of the boathouse. If the young and agile Felix himself was not able to do the “giant’s turn,” others would have been able to show him. One very likely tutor, besides Fritz Schröder, the university’s professional gymnastics trainer, was the muscular and heavily whiskered Theo Thiel, a widely travelled and adventurous medical doctor and an older mentor much beloved by Rhenus members. I have found a number of photos taken on these outings, either about twenty-five miles upriver from Bonn to the abandoned island and the ruined castle of Hammerstein, both of which were overgrown with weeds and therefore called a “wilderness,” or, especially in the summer of 1898, to the small town of Hönningen (Figure 2).

Even more than the routine of gymnastics, the noble art of fencing, then requisite for a student in any of the *Schlagende Verbindungen*, was part of the mandatory Rhenus activities and of Greve’s self-imposed training at the university. Scholars have overlooked the fact that Bonn university records



Figure 2. The club on an outing to Hönningen on the Rhine in the summer of 1898. Felix Paul Greve is the second from the left, top row, behind the Rhenus flag. His mustachioed friend and later nemesis, Herman F.C. Kilian, English-looking in tweeds and smoking a pipe, is sitting in the second row from the bottom.

show Greve to have taken a twelve-hour-course in fencing—a *Schlägerkurs*—from the university’s professional fencing-master, Mr. Wilhelm Ehrich. Greve’s first course lasted until July, 1898 and was followed by another during the summer vacation. During the winter term of 1898-99 he took two more courses, the last one devoted to the techniques of handling the rapier.⁵ Felix Greve clearly saw to it that regular professional training in fencing enabled him to hold his own when it came to passing the often rather bloody fencing requisite for being accepted as a regular member in good standing. University fencing courses were supplemented by regular practice at the clubhouse, also under the supervision of coach Ehrich (Anon., *65 Jahre 1955*: 12). These first rites of passage performed, Greve and his *confrère* Arnold Cappenberg were admitted together on October 22, 1898.

Castle Thurow On The Rhine

Although Felix Greve had a rented room in the city, the centre of his life for two years was the Rhenus boathouse, the hub of the club’s activities. This impressive building had been erected in 1897 to replace a previous, much more modest structure. The first floor housed the racks that held the club’s

several boats of different sizes. The house was destroyed by fire in 1945, but a number of surviving photographs of its interior, exterior, and surroundings help to provide us with a good idea of what it looked like.

The building was situated on a spacious lot about a hundred feet up the left bank of the Rhine surrounded by shrubs and bushes. The front of the large white two-storey house faced the river. On its right, somewhat set back from the front yard, was an attached three-storey square tower with a peaked turret, topped by an iron weather-vane. A footpath and boatslip led from the riverbank to the house. The second floor resembled a verandah, featuring decorative woodwork and glass. Behind the verandah, a large assembly and dining hall were located as well as the study and the library. Pennants, medals, trophies, and other memorabilia were displayed on the mantelpiece and along the walls.

There are, indeed, strong indications that Grove's purported childhood home "Castle Thurow," described at great length in his autobiography, was derived from the imposing building that was the future novelist's "home," although not his actual residence, between 1898 and 1901. Although no extensive "lawns swept down to the edge of the beach", there was a grassy slope leading down to a rocky strip of land that touched the water. The beach fronted by this turreted and gabled structure was not that of the Kattégatt or any other rocky strip of coast on the Skagerrak, but that of the Rhine. Whatever Grove meant by the "cliff-like structure" of "Castle Thurow," the large tower "flanking" the building was there, and so were the terrace and driveway. "The hall" that "was the scene of the everyday life of the household which never consisted of less than twenty people, exclusive of servants" corresponds to the large assembly hall on the second floor of the boathouse (Figure 3). The building most certainly was not "within about twenty miles from the ancient city of Lund" or "within about a hundred yards of the sea" (ISM 18) but within a few miles of the ancient city of Bonn and about a hundred yards from the Rhine, although in my view it may well be considered the basis of young "Phil's" lost home as Grove presented it to his Canadian readers. By the time Felix Greve got to the *Bootshaus*, he was—though of delicate build—already "an expert oarsman, a bold swimmer, and very self-reliant" (ISM 35), and determined to improve his talents.

On the up-river side, the house and its grounds bordered on the vast building of a commercial brick-kiln with its towering chimney. Both the chimney and the tower of the house served the rowers as useful landmarks

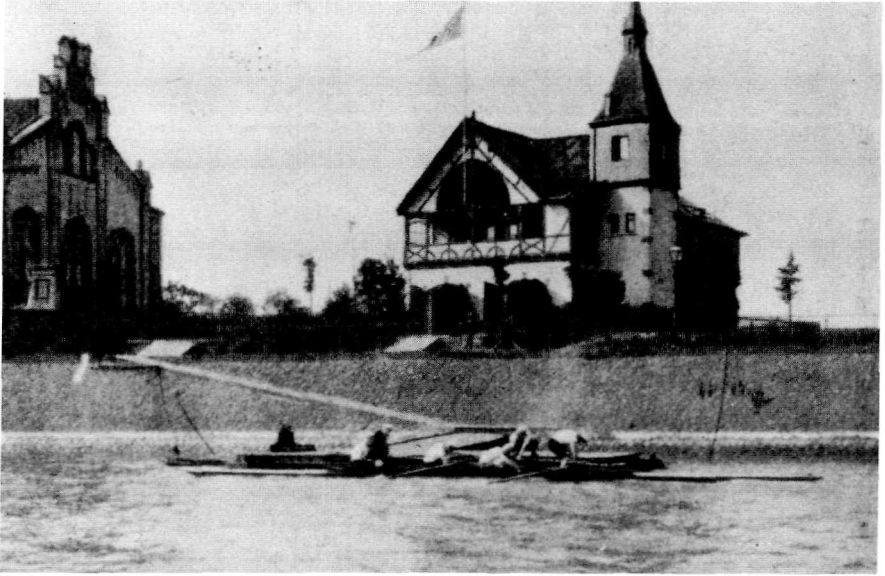


Figure 3. The ARC Rhenus *Bootshaus* on the Rhine, a more than likely model for Frederick Philip Grove's fanciful rendering of his fictitious childhood home, "Castle Thurow." The photo dates from 1899 when Felix Greve was one of the club's leading members.

for their navigation. Perhaps the chimney and tower anticipated the "lighthouse" and "tower near the beach" close to the "Thurow" estate from where young "Phil" set out on a trip in a small rowboat, risking the danger of "being swept out, through the Sound, into the Kattegatt" (ISM 36 ff.)? Anyway, the impressive new Rhenus boathouse and the many trips taken from there to various places borne on the treacherous currents of the river may indeed have given him dreams of drifting from here "into the North Sea, or the Atlantic, whence the Gulf Stream might take me into the Arctic Ocean" (ISM 39).

The *Bootshaus* must have struck young Felix Greve as a singular and imposing structure. In terms of social ambition, it was indeed the proving ground for the young man. If the university exposed him to the world of learning, then the elite society at the boat-house, with its competitiveness, its manly fencing rituals and festive celebrations, provided a sheltered entry to high society. Greve also gained access to a network of wealthy and influential men all over the world who considered the *Bootshaus* a shared home long after they had left university. To those expelled from the club or the few occasionally removed for other reasons, leaving the club not only meant

social disgrace, but jeopardising a promising future within the bounds of established society.

My Memory Is A Palimpsest

A chronological account of Greve's verifiable movements between April, 1898 and January, 1901, as far as they can be traced or inferred from the Rhenus papers, may help decipher the palimpsest that is his account of life as a young man in Germany. As far as Greve's actual presence in his Bonn apartments and at the clubhouse is concerned, the hand-written records confirm that he sought election as third in charge of the club. Thus he was present in Bonn during the spring, summer, fall, and winter of 1898. Several notes in Greve's handwriting concerning matters of business, including plans for a Christmas party, attest to his presence in Bonn for the period from October 19 to November 30, 1898. Photographs document his presence at the club's 1898 Christmas party (Figure 4).

In the fall of 1898 he took part in walking tours again to Linz and, via Remagen, to the monastery of Maria Laach and its famous lake, the Laacher See. On other occasions he and his comrades rowed past Linz and went as far as Bendorf, near Koblenz.

During his first year at Rhenus, then, Felix Greve had risen to positions of trust and responsibility and was inching ever more closely towards the top of the club's hierarchy. In keeping with his improving position, he moved to new quarters close to Rhenus and the banks of the Rhine, at Koblenzerstrasse 24. Here Greve lived close to the more wealthy among the students and to two of the rising stars among the cultural avant-garde and the young academic elite.

Drama And The Stage

In the early summer of 1899, the regular training schedule for June had to be occasionally interrupted for rehearsals for a major event in which "numerous" Rhenus members, as well as members of other fraternities, took an active part. A committee of Bonn professors and citizens had decided to honour the famous literary historian, poet-professor, and translator Karl Simrock by erecting a monument to his memory.⁶ To help defray the expenses, Bonn students decided to stage two performances, on July 7 and 9, 1899 at the Bonn Stadttheater, then under the direction of Julius Hoffman, and supported by Berthold Litzmann, a conservative but influen-



Figure 4. The club's Christmas gathering in 1898. Felix Paul Greve, holding a stein, is in the second row from the top, directly under the lamp. Kilian's name may be seen on the blackboard in back at the top of a list of four names. He is the third from the left in the second row. Lomborg is immediately to the right of Greve, Cappenberg on the left, looking down into his stein.

tial professor of German (Höroldt: 400-403). No fewer than three plays were chosen to be staged on each of the two evenings, beginning at 7 p.m. and ending at 9:45 p.m.: *Philotas*, a tragedy by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Johann Wolfgang Goethe's one-act play *Die Laune des Verliebten*, and the first of the three parts of Friedrich Schiller's drama *Wallenstein*. We know that, according to the newspapers, both performances were considered great successes. The net income was 1,121.50 marks. We also know that the monument was dedicated in 1904.⁷ But we have no visible proof that Greve participated in the performances or even played a part. No cast of characters has been found. However, the Rhenus log contains the following entry: "Of the Rhenus officials, three were cast in major roles, three others played minor speaking parts." At the time, Greve was "a Rhenus official." It would have been strange, given Greve's ambition, if he had not been one of the participants. One would have liked to know whether Greve had possibly played the part of "Lamon" to a young lady playing the "Egle" in Goethe's short play, with its classical presentation of two couples in love (Goethe 1968). His own *Helena und Damon* (1902), although reduced in format to a pair of actors, may have very well profited from the Bonn dramatic experience. Or did he,

like Max Piccolomini in *Wallensteins Lager*, wield the weapon he had so assiduously learned to handle? On the other hand, the classical background of *Philotas* would have suited his scholarly preparation.

I Trained For A Boat-race In Single Sculls

Felix Greve is on record as having owned two boats. Neither, however, was built in Hamburg or brought from there, but—like most of Rhenus' boats—had been custom-built in Rotterdam. The log for October–November, 1898 reports: “Our dear active member Greve got himself a nifty single scull for training purposes, which was built by Deichmann & Ritchie and has turned out pretty well.” The new boat was immediately tested on a “trip in a single scull by Greve to Leubsdorf (upriver from Linz) [,] ca. 50 km.” He donated this boat, called *Nixe*, to the club during a ceremony at the club's Christmas Party on December 16, 1899, at which he presided.⁸ For a student, the gift was an extraordinary demonstration of affluence. Felix owned a second single scull, called *Faultier* (sloth), which he sold to the fraternity the following year, probably before going to Rome and in an effort to collect travel-money and to rid himself of the encumbrance. From the name of his first boat Felix took his secret nickname: *Nixe*. Most club members had such “secret names” conferred upon them to be used in their closed circle only.

Nixe was a fitting name, for, as an excellent rower and swimmer, the slender Greve was a veritable water creature. In *A Search of America* he describes himself as such a creature when he saves a man from drowning by unhesitatingly jumping into the deep and cold waters of a dead arm of the Ohio River, explaining to the reader: “I am—or was—by nature nearly amphibious, swimming and diving being my favourite pastimes” (SFA 298). A “*Nixe*” is, of course, a mermaid. On the other hand, a *Nix* or *Nöck* is the wild merman or *Wassermann* of Germanic mythology. Boats more often than not carry women's names, but some may consider it proof of Greve's somewhat androgynous appeal that the name should also have been transferred to the owner of the boat.

That Felix should not object to *Nixe* as his clubname and also give the name to his single-scull (or vice versa) may, however, be explained not only by the possibly erotic implications of the nickname or its homophonic relation to his first name; as it happens, Felix followed a Rhenus tradition by choosing *Nixe* as a name for his boat. Indeed, the 1906 anniversary publica-

tion tells us, “*Nixe* was the only sailboat ever owned by the club” (*Geschichte*: 84). In addition, in the club’s lists of boats owned, the first *Nixe* is specifically identified as a “Norwegian sailboat.” If, by analogy, Felix’s own *Nixe* and the club’s sailboat of the same name are perceived in relation to his nickname, then Grove’s recurrent tales in his autobiographical narratives about sail-boats that he claims to have owned, cease to appear wholly fictitious but have their factual basis here—including the Norwegian origin of the sailboat which may indeed have once been in the Skandinavian waters so often mentioned by Grove. As it happens, Grove turned his “Uncle Jacobsen” into the instrument for the “purchase of the yacht” in which they sailed from “Luebeck to Haparanda and Helsingfors; and even down the Baltic, past Thurow into the Skagerrak, along Jutland, and down the North Sea to Hamburg” (ISM 91). The old Rhenus sailboat *Nixe*, however, was not known for easily traversing the Baltic and taking the famously rough course from the Baltic into the North Sea, but for capsizing easily and providing its crew with unwanted baths. Grove may have enjoyed an inside joke here.

Indeed, in Grove’s recollections, most of the episodes concerning “Jacobsen,” boating and sports seem to have their verifiable roots in Greve’s time in Bonn. Consider, for instance, Grove’s other account of “Jacobsen’s” days of sailing with him:

Whenever we were near water, he had one of his fleet of boats shipped out from Hamburg: a double skiff, or a half-outrigger boat; and finally two single seaters with full outrigger row-locks and sliding seats. In these boats, some of them no more than sixteen inches wide, we travelled thousands of miles, on the Rhine, the Elbe, the Oder penetrating thence into the Moselle, the Main, the Neckar, the Havel. We went to England to attend the great regattas and thus saw much of the countryside. And finally he taught me to sail. (ISM 90)

Did the real Jacobsen own a small fleet of boats? We cannot doubt that back in Hamburg Felix Greve must have acquired some experience in rowing, for in Bonn he almost immediately started out in the *Vega*, a double skiff, and did only seven kilometers less than the 270 km that a crew of six consisting of the club’s most experienced rowers had done in the *Fiducit* the preceding week. It appears unlikely that the real Jacobsen, who both in Hamburg and *In Search of Myself* significantly failed to contribute to the upkeep of FPG’s dying mother, ever owned several different sculls; on the contrary, it is more than likely that Grove, in 1946, was thinking of the Rhenus boathouse’s ground floor which in 1899 accommodated about twelve boats of various

sizes; among these Greve indeed preferred the club's double-skiff, the *Vega*, and his own "two single-seaters with full outrigger row-locks and sliding seats," the *Nixe* and the *Faultier*.

Custom-built single sculls suitable for racing ran to at least 150 gold-marks a piece. Felix Greve did not (yet) have to skimp, and he probably also did not have to approach anybody in order to borrow significant sums of money, be it from Kilian or anybody else. Indeed, Felix never even once shared a boat with Kilian on any outing or race while they were both club members. Greve could still afford to be liberal. He is on record as having donated a gas-heater for the change-room of the boat- and clubhouse. He also bought and gave away custom-made prizes for boat-races. In fact, one of his first acts after entering the club and going on his first boat-trip was to promise an expensive prize for the "crew of four to manage the longest trip upriver in one day in the course of the summer semester of 1898." A Rhenus crew that went from Bonn to Niederlahnstein and back on June 9-10, 1898 accordingly received from him "a gorgeous crystal goblet with the club's coat of arms engraved in Gothic style." The 1906 *Festschrift* states that the goblet, with the names of the winners engraved upon it, remained as a show piece in the major assembly room of the *Bootshaus*. It is believed to have disappeared in 1945. In view of Felix's sporting feats and his spectacular largesse—he also donated a stopwatch in August, 1898—there can be no doubt that he wanted to be regarded as an achiever who also graciously recognised achievement in others.

Greve's friend Kilian is not on record as having participated in any strenuous athletic activities or as having given expensive gifts to the club. He, too, rose in the club's hierarchy, although the young Greve outdistanced him on every occasion. When they were admitted as full active members to the club, Greve (not the wealthy Kilian) again made a donation: "Our dear active member Greve made us a present of two rubbings by [the painter] Mack depicting [the castles] Rheinsteinstein and Lichtenstein," (*Semesterbericht* I, October 19-November 30, 1898). The framed pictures were hung in a prominent place to the left and the right of the huge fireplace, above the mantelpiece on which Grove's goblet was on display. These objects were destroyed in 1945, but they may still be seen in a number of photographs that survive of the assembly-room. With such gifts in mind, Grove's later statement that as a young man he soon found he "had a talent for forming the centre of certain groups" (ISM 161) is not surprising. On the same occa-

sion at the start of the winter semester, just six months after entering the club, Felix was elected “third in charge,” quickly rising to “second” in April, 1899, and finally running the club as its elected “first-in-charge” or *Erstchargierter* from October, 1899 until the end of March, 1900.

When Greve became “third in charge” (of the club’s finances), Kilian rose to *Fuchsmajor*, responsible for the new members. In this capacity Kilian had to instruct “foxes” in the club’s dress codes and codes of behaviour and to coach them on important occasions. In the light of Kilian’s suspected homosexual inclination the office may have been both a temptation and a trial for him.

Nixe On The River

During his six semesters with Rhenus, Felix Greve took an active part in five major excursions and in numerous lesser races and trips in various kinds of boats, from single scull to five-seat outrigger. The most spectacular trip occurred when Greve was one of five men—Georg Thiel, Felix *Nixe* Greve, Hans “Hanne” Lomberg, Carl Hartmann, Matthias Schmitz—who rowed their boat *Prosit* (Cheers) on August 3 to 15, 1899 from Bonn up the Rhine and Main Rivers past Wiesbaden and Mainz to Würzburg and Heilbronn and down the Neckar and Rhine Rivers until the crew reached Bonn again. This was a trip of 758 km, accomplished in thirteen days, including three days of rest. No mean feat. In fact, this achievement is still regularly cited in anniversary publications of the club.⁹

The two-week outing was not only a strenuous but also a memorable and most pleasant undertaking. The several stages and incidents of the trip are well documented. I take the following short summary from a lengthy account in which Felix *alias Nixe* figures prominently. In fact, he is one of only two participants explicitly mentioned at all. The anonymous author allows us rare glimpses of life among friends and equals in the only account we have of FPG at twenty:

After leaving Bonn in the early morning, at noon Greve and his friends made their first stop at an island near Neuwied. Their cooking turned out to be less than successful. They were, however, saved by a friend from the club and his two daughters who brought them a decent meal, rowed from across the river. Afterwards they napped, and their visitors mysteriously disappeared while they slept. Having passed Koblenz by nightfall, they entered the mouth of the River Lahn and landed at Douqué’s Inn at Niederlahnstein, in sight of nearby Stolzenfels Castle. There, they enjoyed a good bottle of wine in the cool of the

evening. They had made it their rule to drink no alcoholic beverages during the "intolerable heat" of the day. The next morning, they came near to being swamped by a steamer, but they took it all in good humour, enjoying the "refreshment." Past the bend in the Rhine at Boppard, the river-bed became so narrow between the mountains that they exchanged greetings with the people walking the towpaths and walkways. Often they landed at some pleasing spot and walked barefoot to see the sights. However, they viewed St. Goar and the Loreley only from their boats. "The heat was so intense," wrote Thiel, that "I tucked a white handkerchief under my cap to protect my neck and wrapped my legs in pieces of white cloth." Only "Hanne and Nixe"—Lombert and Greve—"who had rowed the most in the course of this summer and had brought some 'colour' to this trip" needed no protection. They made it their rule to slow down at riverside garden restaurants about an hour before sunset, to have waiters hand them glasses of beer while they remained in their boat. There were small adventures. Beyond Oberwesel they got caught in a cable tied to a boat anchored well out in the river, losing their flag-pole in the process. One morning, having walked through the city gate of Bacharach to their boat, they "wiped the dew off the boat and the oars, stowed away their gear" and continued upstream. However, hardly had they "warmed up when they had to get back into the water; and while 'Nixe', a short way past the town, steered around a mole that extended into the Rhine and along which the water raced mightily downstream, we were suddenly stuck on a submerged rock in front of the mole. In an instant, the stream gripped the bow-end and threw it into the current. The boat took a courteous bow to larboard, and there was an audible crack. Immediately we hurried overboard, and the boat was saved; we had drifted quite a distance when we finally found ourselves, dripping, back in the boat." That evening they landed at Kostheim, near the confluence of the Rhein and Main rivers. "We sent our quartermaster 'Nixe' out as a scout, whom Mother Nature has equipped with such irregular bodily height that he cannot easily get lost. He did not come back until after we had brought the boat to safety and were busy teaching the grown youths of the village, who had helped carry the boat, the basic rules of beer consumption. Only after having walked about for a long time had he been able to find quarters, for the next day there was to be a *Kirmes* (fair). So we spent the evening with pork sausages and wine in large 5/10 glasses directly from the barrel—a new era had begun." The next day, a Sunday, they reached Frankfurt [which Greve knew well from two former races] and were spectators at a boat-race, resting for a while in the shade of huge old trees, at the invitation of a friendly local club. In the evening they landed at Rumpenheim without having to worry about a place for the night. "'Nixe" had again proven "his astonishingly fine nose, for the stout landlady with whom we stayed made an extremely reliable impression."

They then leisurely proceeded up the River Main, past the wooded hills of the legendary Spessart forest to Aschaffenburg. This was old Roman border country. One evening, probably again thanks to "Nixe's fine nose" they spent the night in a picturesque small one-room inn merely "lit by a small oil lamp." The landlady fixed beds of straw for them on the dance floor. On a rainy afternoon, they reached the ancient city of Miltenberg. They were so wet that they decided to stay and have their things "dried in the village baker's oven." For a student of

archeology like Greve, who had almost certainly been enlisted to help Professor Loeschke trace the Roman *limes* near Bonn, the stop at Miltenberg was a must. They climbed the steps to the castle and in the yard they admired the inscription on an “inconspicuous column of weathered sandstone found in the nearby woods. In almost illegible Latin characters it announces to the epigones: ‘This is the border between the Teutons and the Romans.’” Thus the days passed with sightseeing and much strenuous rowing. They came to look more and more like “a real gang of robbers” but felt themselves in fine shape, going hungry sometimes, at other times “feasting on roast and baked fish and fruity red wine.”

From Würzburg they shipped their boat in advance to Heilbronn while they went by train. Locating their boat at their destination and putting it into the Neckar River already in the dark, they found themselves near the ominously named *Gasthaus zur Kettenschiffahrt* (Chain Shipping Inn). Shuddering, the author says, at first they passed by the lonely and suspicious-looking place. However, only when they—tired, derelict, and dirty as they were—noticed the coat-tailed waiters at the brightly lit hotels did they timidly creep back to the inn where they received food and lodging and spent the night lulled by the rushing sounds of the stream. Leaving Heilbronn in the morning, they arrived back at the Bonn boathouse after three days of fast downriver rowing past Worms, Mainz, and Geisenheim. (*Festschrift* 1906: 176-195)

Although Greve was later to complain to Karl Wolfskehl about (fashionable, real, and occasionally timely) health impairments and Grove was to suffer from acute back problems in Canada, there always was a tendency to seek—and enjoy—physical (over-)exertion. “I am naturally an outdoor creature,” Grove wrote on the first page of *Over Prairie Trails* (1922), his first book published in Canada. His rowing feats with Rhenus as well as his later nine-hour swim across Lake Garda and back, reported in a letter of August 13, 1902 to Wolfskehl,¹⁰ are proof. His no less strenuous exertions as the driver of a buggy and horse on the wintry country roads of Manitoba could be sustained because of his early training in Germany. However, quite in contrast to the self-projected image of the loner, haughtily pursuing his ways far from the crowd, we learn from his travels with his Rhenus friends that Felix Greve did indeed have a talent for conviviality. For, clearly, he is the one who figures most prominently in the account of their two-week trip by boat. He is the one on whom the others relied for finding places to eat when they were famished, and places to spend the night when they were dog-tired. Greve was already the *primus inter pares*, and was duly elected, two months later, to the highest office the club had to offer. When we contemplate Greve’s strenuous boat-trips into the heart of pre-First World War Europe, we should not wonder at the similarly boundless energy and endurance expended on another trip that Grove—then lonely, destitute,

and often disheartened—reports having taken down the Ohio River, in *A Search for America* (1927: 283-335). Here, there was a river to match the one he had rowed upon in his youth. Now, he claimed, he was a “nomad who lived off the land” (253) in tattered clothes, while then he had been an elegant lad, laughingly exposing himself to the weather as member of a genteel “band of robbers.” While, formerly, he had rested among friends with girls serving lunch, he was now wakened, shivering, by a kick in the ribs, and told to “Move on, there! Or I’ll have you run in. No vagrants wanted” (286). In contrast to some of the trips to the quite civilized “wilderness” on the island of Hammerstein, he had now to remind himself that “this was no pleasure outing” (289) and that drinks of water were taken not by choice but were the only ones there were to be had.

In *A Search for America*, Greve reveals an intimate knowledge of rivers rising and falling, of strange objects carried by the tide, of riverbanks shaped by the changing currents of islands in the river and the people living off it, the fishermen, the boatmen, and the rafters. All of these descriptions are anticipated in Greve’s adventures on the Rhine, Main and Neckar Rivers. Possibly the very clarity of the author’s memory of his youthful adventures on the river may have helped to suppress details in the Canadian narrative. The conflict between clearly remembered details in the past and their fictive use in a new setting may have been responsible for another one of Greve’s curious statements that somehow promise information and manage to withhold it at the same time, as in the following passage:

The story of my trip on the raft stands out with great clarity in my memory. There was fun and disaster, comedy and quasi-tragedy enough in those two weeks to fill a book by themselves. But all that has little bearing upon the present story; I must skip. I shall, after a few preliminary remarks, explain only how my raft came to harm. (292)

Not surprisingly, the trip in the boat *Prosit* and the one on the Ohio river-raft both took two weeks. But only the European trip consisted of “fun and disaster, comedy and quasi-tragedy.” The reader, appetite whetted, once again has to be satisfied with “hints.” The erasures in Greve’s Canadian texts hint at the “real” story hidden beneath the “autobiographical” writings.

Java, Not Far From Batavia

In late 1899, Greve, now sporting a blond moustache with upturned ends not unlike Kaiser Wilhelm’s,¹¹ was at the midpoint of his one-semester

tenure as the elected leader of the club, officiating at its functions, for instance at the great ball on November 27, 1899 at the Hotel Kley. It was also one of his duties as the club's chief official to correspond with the "inactive" members in Germany and abroad. At the Christmas party on December 16, 1899 he must have eagerly awaited the guests. For among the several older visitors was one, Robert von Kraft, who was on vacation from his business as Chief Administrator of a tobacco plantation on the Deli railroad, near Medan on the island of Sumatra. Kraft (meaning "force"), was an imposing figure. Even more than his friend and classmate Thiel, he may have been one of the models for Grove's imaginary refashioning of his "father" who, as he claimed in ISM, was a proficient athlete in spite of being "a man weighing 225 pounds." When a younger man and "in training," Kraft was 196 cm tall and weighed 180 pounds. He may easily have gained another 45 pounds in the meantime. His colourful life as a tobacco planter undoubtedly impressed Greve and his friends and they may have listened rapturously to his tales of the huge plantation, his Chinese servant, and his prospects for the future. Kraft and Thiel had once met and celebrated a reunion in Singapore. That Christmas the club members looked at a picture of Kraft and Thiel standing near palm tree trunks, the Chinese servant crouching in front of them holding up a sign with the Rhenus coat of arms.¹²

Greve, recording the event for the club, wrote that Kraft donated "unusually valuable decorations, his collection of ancient Malay weapons," to the club. These weapons, mostly *kris*, were on display on the walls of the club's great hall until 1945. They (and part of the frieze of *Kabinettsbilder*) can clearly be seen in a number of early photographs taken during one or another of the club's festivities (Figure 5). This incident may have generated Grove's account of the "hobby" he ascribes to his almost certainly fictive "Uncle Jacobsen," that is, collecting *Kris* and other native weapons from the East Indies where he had relatives in the Dutch settlements. "This was to be of some slight importance to me a year or so later when I spent three months with a cousin of his on the island of Java" (ISM 130). Kraft's importance for Greve clearly had less to do with monetary matters than with the example he provided by his colourful personality, physical prowess, and international career. He died in Sumatra on August 5, 1900, a few months after his last visit to Bonn. There is little doubt that Kraft forms an important part of the palimpsest that Greve carefully fashioned into "Uncle Jacobsen" and "Jacobsen's" equally spurious "cousin Van der Elst, a settler



Figure 5. View of the interior of the boathouse's second floor with the main assembly hall and the library at the back. On the left-hand wall two of Greve's gifts to the club are on display, the tall crystal goblet and, framed, one of the two "rubbings by Mack" showing Castle Liechtenstein. Robert von Kraft's gift of his collection of Malayan *kris* is on display on the wall to the right of the door. The frieze of members' photos may be seen along the top of the panelling covering the lower portions of both walls.

on the island of Java, not far from Batavia" (ISM 154). Grove later ascribed to the fictive "Van der Elst" (elsewhere he mentions a certain "von Els" as one of "the parasitic young men in Europe" he claimed to have met; see SFA 40), the real Indonesian setting described by Kraft, while he depicted "Jacobsen" as owning Kraft's collection of *kris*. Much as the *Bootshaus* may have supplied Grove with the architecture of his "Castle Thurow," and at least three of the Rhenus members—Kraft, Thiel, and Kilian—supplied Grove with "family connections" and tales of travels in southeast Asia. These stories possibly also involved accounts of Kraft's travels to southeast Asia by way of Siberia, passing through Omsk, Semipalatinsk, arriving at "Nikolayevsk, which, at the time, was almost an Arctic port," followed by the "long voyage home," from southeast Asia, "via Java, the Malay Peninsula, two or three Indian cities, the Red Sea, and the familiar Mediterranean" (ISM 149-155), then, we might add, past Gibraltar and into the English Channel to land safely in Rotterdam, 400 km downriver from Bonn, after which Kraft's "Rotterdam Estate" was named. It was Rotterdam where Greve's and several of Rhenus' boats had been built to order. It was well known to him. Did Greve, in 1909, leave Europe from there? We should note here that another poet, the then much admired Maximilian Dauthendey, actually went to

China, Java, and Sumatra in 1906 and 1914, respectively. He lived (and died) in 1918 not far from where Robert von Kraft had died, in Medan, near the Deli railroad. He, too, had for a while attempted to make a living planting tobacco in the same faraway country whose possibilities had once so entranced Felix Greve that he still wrote about them in 1946, searching for yet another of those selves that he had considered adopting for himself.¹³

Nothing But Evil From The Reign Of William II

Although Rhenus, unlike Borussia, had no members of the royal Hohenzollerns among its ranks, it, too, attempted to win its own “place in the sun.” It was Greve who, in October 1899, as “first” in charge moved Rhenus to join the super-patriotic and very influential *Flottenverein*, a powerful lobby group in support of the new Imperial German Navy which was meant to rival England’s (in possession of its own “Naval League”). As a result, during the first three months of Greve’s ambitious leadership, the rowing club attempted to win favour in high places and, in this, to catch up with its blue-blooded rivals. Greve could not have had much time to travel with Kraft or even to go to Rome then for he was busy arranging for his next coup. It was not the Pope he wanted to impress, but the Kaiser.

The occasion was the annual celebration of Kaiser Wilhelm’s birthday. The preceding day, January 26, 1900, the majority of the Bonn students were to take part in a festive public event. Felix Greve’s outstanding role on this occasion earned him a high degree of visibility and good marks not only among the members of his fraternity. The handwritten log proudly and tersely reports:

On January 26 [1900] we participated in the annual *Kaisercommers* organised by the Bonn students. Although in preceding years we had been elected to the executive council we had only now been chosen to preside. Our first-in-charge, Greve’s performance was in all respects commensurate with his time-consuming and honourable task as the president of the entire gathering. For this, he received recognition from several sides.¹⁴

What a sight Felix Greve must have been, a tall young man in the colourful red, blue, and white regalia of his office, on his head a cap with a gold border, a ceremonial sabre at his side or on the table in front of him at the centre of the raised dais. To have acquitted himself well under the scrutiny of the *crème de la crème* of city and university must have meant not only a splendid entrance into high society, but almost certainly the promise of a good career, aided by his club and his well-heeled influential new acquaintances.

After the university president's speech there were three cheers for the assembled academic youth, including the Crown Prince, who attended the ceremony in the midst of his fraternity, the Borussia.¹⁵ For Greve to chair a ceremonial meeting in honour of the Emperor in the presence of such a distinguished crowd meant that he had, in fact, come a long way from the poor boardinghouse in a drab street of Hamburg's Old Town.

With Rhenus, Greve had attained the apex of his German career with truly astonishing rapidity. Well known and respected in Bonn, he could now move with confidence. Indeed, three years later, at Greve's Bonn trial, the correspondent of the *Bonner Zeitung* wrote to J.C.C. Bruns publishers in a matter-of-fact tone: "For a time, Greve played a major role in this town."¹⁶

The Dramatic Society

Greve's readings in classical and contemporary authors at the Johanneum School and, in 1899, Rhenus' involvement in the staging of benefit performances for the Simrock monument, were very probably not Greve's only contacts with contemporary literature in these early years. In fact, shortly after his arrival in Bonn he may have had a splendid occasion for being introduced to avant-garde poetry. I think it unlikely—given his later preoccupations—that he would have missed making such literary contacts.

Rudolf Borchardt (1877-1945) who had recently moved from Berlin (where Greve also had initially wanted to pursue his studies) to Bonn's Koblenzerstraße, may have paved the way for Greve's entry into Bonn's literary circles. The young poet, dramatist, and essayist had spent an unhappy year studying at Berlin University where he had made the acquaintance of a number of influential professors and promising students. Among these were the painters Reinhard and Sabine Lepsius, Botho Graef, an influential professor of archeology, and Graef's *protégé*, the gifted poet and dramatist Ernst Hardt (i.e. Ernst Stöckhardt, 1876-1947). In Berlin, Borchardt also made the acquaintance of the literary historian Richard M. Meyer who had just published a seminal article on Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Stefan George, entitled "Ein neuer Dichterkreis" (Meyer 1897). In Bonn, Borchardt joined the board of the *Dramatische Verein*, an association of citizens, students, and professors interested in literature, which Borchardt planned to turn into a purely literary society. Such associations were not rare. They made it their business to promote the latest trends in the arts and the most

fashionable writers and composers. It was a circuit that was closely monitored by publishers. Greve's publisher-to-be, J.C.C. Bruns, for instance, regularly advertised in handouts and playbills of the Bonn *Dramatische Verein*.

In April, 1898—the month Greve registered at the university and became a member of Rhenus—Borchardt wrote a letter to R.M. Meyer in Berlin asking him to support “a reading [...] in which young Viennese poets will be heard” (Zeller 41). He also asked Meyer for the privately printed *Blätter für die Kunst*, from which he wanted to have copies made of the texts he desired. Finally, Borchardt succeeded in having Ernst Hardt invited to read poems by Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Stefan George. George himself, of course, during this period never read his poems in public in Bonn, as Spettigue (1973: 58) has it, or elsewhere, but confined his appearances to selected circles of friends like those occasionally gathered in the Berlin apartment of Reinhard and Sabine Lepsius or the house of Georg Bondi, his publisher-to-be.¹⁷ Hardt's reading was advertised in the *Bonner Zeitung* (No. 121: May 24, 1898) as “Wiener Dichter in Bonn.”

The Hotel Kley, with its large assembly hall where both Rhenus gatherings and the regular meetings of the *Dramatische Gesellschaft* were held, was selected for Hardt's appearance. To judge from Borchardt's notes, the reading caused something of a scandal and was interrupted by loud complaints and the noise of angry people leaving. Hardt's own account to Karl Wolfskehl reads slightly differently:

The evening in Bonn devoted to George's work was impressive. There were about a hundred invited guests, who came away from the evening delighted beyond all expectations. —While I was reading, I had the lights turned off, so that the candles on either side of my head were the sole source of light in the relatively large hall. The holiness of the verse resounded in the darkness so that the people may very well have imagined themselves in front of an altar—this breathless stillness is among the most beautiful experiences I have had in my life.¹⁸

The next day, Borchard “willingly” endured the almost universal disgrace (Zeller 43). How could Felix Greve, already well acquainted with the premises, possibly have missed the newspaper announcement in the *Bonner Zeitung* (May 24, 1898) and the lively discussions? This was his second chance at getting in touch with the new movement in poetry, a movement that, outside of the immediate George circle, consisted of a number of young academics in contact with each other through Graef, Usener, and, possibly, Hermann Diels (a former Johanneum teacher, then a professor in Berlin). Had Greve used the occasion of Hardt's reading to get acquainted with

the young poet and dramatist, one of Else Ploetz's lovers, who was himself acquainted with Richard Schmitz and August Endell of Munich, also lovers of Else? Did he know that Usener, his professor, not only knew Hardt but that both had met Karl Gustav Vollmoeller, while Vollmoeller knew Richard Delbrueck, both students in Bonn, and young archeologists, who were to be of great importance for Greve in Rome?¹⁹ This new world of art that Greve did his best to join was, like that of the academies, a small one. Like Borchardt, Endell had recently published a volume of poems before he went on to become known as a designer of furniture and an architect in Munich (Endell 1896). Greve found in Bonn an atmosphere conducive not only to sports and studies but to the production of verse. It helped to generate the poems of his small volume *Wanderungen* and his somewhat precious dialogue *Helena und Damon*, as well as his own wanderings among this loosely connected group of artists and academics in Bonn, Rome, Munich, and Berlin.

A Death By Water

The finale of Felix Paul's career with Rhenus came almost exactly a year after his glorious appearance at the *Kaisercommers*. What happened? Spettigue, unaware of Rhenus and Greve's Bonn circle of friends, suggests that "Felix's defection from Bonn in the late fall of 1900 had a specific cause, namely the news of the final collapse and, on the night of November 30, the death of Wilde in Paris" (1973: 58). I doubt that news of Wilde's death prompted Greve's departure. The immediate cause was different, no less tragic, and much closer to home.

The Rhenus journal for December 1, 1900, contains the following laconic entry: "As has become known through our circular of October 31, we lost our dear inactive member Lomberg through a sad accident." What was this sad accident and why did it take the whole month of November until it was recorded? Lomberg had disappeared after a dance in the company of his Rhenus friends at the Hotel Mundorf in nearby Plittersdorf. The party must have included Greve and Kilian, for the winter semester was well on its way, and neither the university records nor Rhenus annals note a leave of absence in effect for either of them at that time. The Bonn newspapers carried the story of "Lomberg's mysterious disappearance" and provided almost daily updates on the search. A reward of 3000 marks was offered. The body was found only three weeks later, at Hersel, downriver from Bonn. It was a sensational affair. The handwritten Rhenus log states that

after the dance at the Hotel Mundorf some of the students took the train back to Bonn, while others (no names were mentioned) waited for the regular motor boat. Unfortunately, these had to stay over when fog prevented the boat from leaving. Lomberg, however, had “apparently” decided to walk back to Bonn. During the Memorial Service, the Protestant university pastor used his sermon to ask, somewhat melodramatically, the questions that must have occurred to all:

How did he get into the water? [. . .] Did he lose his way in the dense fog? Did he unwittingly step too close to the steep bank and fall in? Was he stunned by the fall? Did a heart attack in the cold water put an end to his life? Or did he, an able-bodied swimmer, struggle with the flood until his strength gave out? Did he call for help when nobody heard his voice in the still night? . . . [W]e are faced with a riddle. (*General-Anzeiger*, vol XII, November 23, 1900: 6)

It has remained a riddle.

Lomberg, Greve, and Kilian joined the club almost all at the same time. When Greve became first-in-charge, Lomberg became “second.” When Greve became “inactive,” Lomberg became his successor as the club’s “first.” Kilian’s only record as a rower was in a crew with Lomberg, in the summer of 1898. “Hanne” Lomberg was one of the team that travelled with *Nixe* Greve up the Rhine, Main, and Neckar Rivers the previous year. Lomberg was clearly an acquaintance of both Greve and Kilian. As a result, the following entry in the Rhenus log for the week after the ceremony for Lomberg is more than strange: “We had to expel our inactive member Kilian because of his total lack of interest and unworthy behaviour. He was neither present at the ceremony for Lomberg’s body nor at his funeral. He did not write a word of excuse and in general did not take a great deal of notice of the whole unfortunate accident.” Greve must have been present at the funeral. No one had been excused. Had Kilian simply been rude or had there been tensions among the threesome (if they were that close) that led to Lomberg’s mysterious disappearance and death? If Kilian was the (first?) “young man, very slightly my senior in years [who] incredibly subordinated himself to me” (ISM 161), had he become jealous of Lomberg who must have had a close working relationship with Greve in their capacities as officials of the club? In any case, Kilian’s behaviour on the occasion of Lomberg’s funeral was exceedingly inappropriate. The club’s reaction was no less extreme. It was the first time that a member was ever expelled. The evidence that led to this grave decision must have been damning indeed.

Exit

There must have been additional cause besides Kilian's absence from the funeral and the failure to write an apology for him to be summarily expelled. Either his behaviour was simply the last straw in the accumulation of previous misbehaviour (nowhere mentioned), or he was under a far darker cloud in connection with the Lomberg case. The Rhenus log remains curiously silent. I have little doubt that there was a secret to be kept.

However, one of the next entries in the Rhenus journal, the one for January 19, 1901, when read in connection with the occurrences of a few weeks before, is both laconic and eloquent in what it does *not* say: "Our erstwhile member Greve has been granted his request to leave." There is not a word of regret, no mention of his spectacular achievements for himself and the unprecedented recognition he had won for the club almost exactly a year before. The Lomberg affair had ended in sentimental funeral oratory. The mystery of his death was allowed to remain unsolved. It was as if all those in the know had formed a conspiracy of silence. Had there been an unwritten agreement—the less said, the sooner mended—to part ways with no damage to the reputation of either Rhenus or its three former members, easily the flower of the "foxes" of April, 1898? Of these, one was dead, and two departed. The sentence granting Felix Greve his request to leave, however, is not the last we hear of him in the annals of the ARC Rhenus. Mention of him in his various capacities as sportsman and Rhenus official are made repeatedly throughout the following decades. That his actual name tends to be omitted in later Rhenus records may be due not only to his trial for fraud, on May 29, 1903, but also to the occurrences of November, 1900. There is not a word in the Rhenus records concerning Greve's public disgrace. Indeed, his name is so extensively erased, he might as well have died in February, 1901.

Coda

In closing, I think it not enough to view young FPG merely as part of a small avant-garde coterie of possibly homosexual young artists and poets determined to imitate the "master," Stefan George. It also will not do to limit our reading of Greve's years in Bonn as an anticipation of his later fraudulence. The young man who allowed himself and his single scull to be called *Nixe* was also an exceptional athlete, a tremendously gifted and efficient scholar with singular powers of concentration and an unusual capac-

ity for sustained work. As the admired leader of a club of pragmatically oriented young men he seemed to have the makings of future greatness. The occasional grandiloquence of the first half of *In Search of Myself* is an echo of the powers he not only felt in himself but realized time and again by making himself new, sloughing off old skin that seemed to constrict his growth. It seems that the nobility Grove claimed by reinventing himself as the offspring of impoverished landed gentry was his way of expressing an achievement based on nobility of mind and spirit, quite independent of the material wealth he had once sought. To reinvent, as I believe he did, the Rhenus *Bootshaus* as “Castle Thurow,” the River Rhine as the Baltic and its dangerous currents and shores, and his chosen friends (Cappenberg, Kilian, Kraft, Lomberg, Thiel) as “family” was to lay claim to a share of the world which would otherwise have been withheld from someone of his circumstances. Next to archeology, classical philology, writing and translation, rowing may at first sight appear a mere pastime, easily ignored. However, competitive rowing in America and elsewhere was an élite sport. This activity not only helped provide access to desirable strata of society, but was, in effect, already a visible gesture of belonging. In addition, as Thomas Eakins’ painting of his friend “Max Schmidt in a Single Scull” makes clear, art and sport were not necessarily separate. Rowing and sailing had become a subject of High Art, indeed, an activity of which a budding poet and novelist had no reason to be ashamed (Stebbins et al. 1988: 266-7). A student from anglophile Hamburg, pursuing his studies at the “German Oxford,” would have been aware of the connection

To conclude. The *Bootshaus*, and not an outsize “castle” somewhere on the shores of the Baltic (German or Swedish), was Frederick Philip Grove’s proving ground. Bonn and the *Bootshaus* provided terrain for bodily and mental exercise as well as sympathetic audiences for his first feats of strength and endurance. There, he learned self-reliance and to survive crises both indoors and out. Readings and play-acting introduced him to the literary scene of his day. He acquired basic skills in handling people and managing an audience. In short, Bonn and his Rhenus circle of friends helped him gain and store the expertise and the energy that would serve him well during the years to come as a settler and teacher in the Manitoba marshes. Outings from Bonn prepared him for the survival skills displayed in *Over Prairie Trails*. These skills later enabled him to style himself a “Nature-Study-Crank,” a kind of Thoreauvian “self-appointed inspector of snow-storms.”

Imagery derived from his Bonn experiences on the Rhine served him well in his early Canadian writings: Manitoba snow-drifts are made out to look like “the wing-wave thrown to either side by the bow of a power-boat that cuts swiftly through quiet water” (1922: 160-62). In his buggy—a “cutter”—the narrator feels as if he were in a “wind-tossed nutshell of a one-man sailing craft” (129). In a storm, the vehicle’s curtains “emit that crackling sound which indicates to the sailor that he has turned his craft as far into the wind as he can safely do without losing speed” (156-57). Grove’s first Canadian writings in particular feature these easy shifts in imagery. It is as if the author, living landlocked in Canada, loves to play with images derived from his earlier experiences on German waters. Such shifts subtly carry both author and reader into different realms of nature and geography and new incarnations of a person who felt equally competent on land and water.

“Oh, for the juggling of words!” Grove exclaims (166). To a lesser extent than Joyce, Greve plays with his own name: we have seen how Felix became *Nixe*, how, elsewhere, Greve became the pseudonymous Reelen and Gerden and—partaking less of Thurow and more of Thoreau—Konrad Thorer. These became Frederick Philip Grove who invented Phil Branden. Finally, we may recall how somebody called Kraft served him as one model for those powerful “family members” he searched out for himself, “fathers” and “uncles” of his own choice and making who served to carry both Young Felix and “Young Phil”—a *philologos*, indeed—away on tours of the world, real and imaginary.

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NOTES

- 1 For information on the aforementioned sketchy or blank periods of Grove’s biography, see my forthcoming book *Felix Paul Greves Karriere: Frederick Philip Grove in Deutschland* (St. Ingbert: Röhrig Universitätsverlag, 1997).
- 2 Interestingly enough, when reversed, the monogram Grove had composed and sent, with a commentary, to Lorne Pierce on February 4, 11, and 15, 1939 bears some resemblance to the Latin letters in the Rhenus coat of arms which all members, Felix Greve included, had learned to use in signing their names, and with a flourish. A similarity between the Rhenus signet and Grove’s later monogram may also be discerned in the “F” of his hand-

written signature in one of Grove's early letters to Warkentin. Many early instances of the Rhenus coat-of-arms in Greve's handwriting survive in the handwritten Rhenus log and also on the back of the photograph Felix dedicated to his friend Cappenberg. For Grove's monograms see Desmond Pacey 1976: 350 and "Appendix B" for the facsimile letter to Warkentin. On the other hand, Divay makes a case for Grove's monogram as having originated with August Endell. See Divay 1994: 184.

- 3 See Kessler 1988: 198-201 for an informed account of life in the elite fraternity Borussia.
- 4 Information contributed by Mr. Reipert.
- 5 Information taken from Greve's "Anmeldebuch." Courtesy of the Universitätsarchiv of Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, Bonn.
- 6 Karl Simrock (1802-1876) had been a professor of philology in Bonn.
- 7 The public announcements were placed in *Bonner General-Anzeiger*, July 6, 7, 8, 1899, and a review can be found in *Bonner General-Anzeiger*, July 23, 1899: 7.
- 8 "Semesterbericht II: 12" (Nov. 1899-1. Jan. 1900). *Clubnachrichten* II:2 (Januar 1900).
- 9 Both the *Clubgeschichte* of 1955 (p. 16) and that of 1990 (p. 12) record this memorable tour. Other Rhenus members, throughout the years, achieved uncommon distinction as German and European rowing champions in various disciplines. A detailed and lively report of the tour may be found in *Geschichte* 1906: 176-195.
- 10 In the context of his discussion of the Greve-Wolfskehl correspondence at Marbach, Spettigue (1992: 18) was the first to mention Greve's swimming feat on Lake Garda. He also mentions the 1902 photographs of Greve alone and with a fisherman friend sent to Wolfskehl.
- 11 See the cover photo of Martens, *Literaturvermittler*.
- 12 I have taken details regarding Robert von Kraft and Dr. Georg Thiel from a memoir contained in *Geschichte* 1906: 274-75.
- 13 Maximilian Dauthendey (1867-1918), a contributor to *Blätter für die Kunst*, was well-known for his volume *Ultra-Violett* (1893). His poetry in *Des großen Krieges Not* (1915) was first published in Medan. For George's problematic relation to Dauthendey, see Kluncker 1974. Kluncker also mentions Greve. For further information on Dauthendey, see Geibig 1992. Dauthendey died August 29, 1918 in Malang, Java.
- 14 "Semesterbericht III," *Clubnachrichten* II.4 (März 1900).
- 15 *General-Anzeiger für Bonn und Umgegend*, vol. 12, No. 3580 (January 27, 1900): 7.
- 16 Letter *Bonner Zeitung* (Th. Grah) to J.C.C. Bruns (June 20, 1903). Bruns Archive, Minden.
- 17 Spettigue 1973 overlooks the vital connections between the circles in Bonn, Munich, and Berlin.
- 18 Letter Ernst Hardt to Karl Wolfskehl. Berlin, n.d., "nach 8tägiger Abwesenheit" (Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach).
- 19 Karl Gustav Vollmoeller (1878-1948), poet, pilot, film-pioneer. Grove mentions him in a letter to Kirkconnell (December 13, 1927). See Pacey, *Letters*, 73, 74 n.8.

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