



CANNIBAL RETURN: Defying Narratives of Homeland through Contemporary German-Language Literature

**THURSDAY
FEBRUARY 6, 2020**

LOCATION:

*Student Union Memorial Center
Agave Room*

TIME:

4:00 pm



The concept of returning home has seen an upsurge in recent public discourse. A binary of temporary residence and permanent home animates constructs of national belonging: from marketing so-called heritage travel through ancestral destinations to incendiary evocations of alleged “homelands” bandied by the Right against (im)migrants and people of color. This paper asks what methodological recourse we can take in this polarized environment to reimagine belonging in a renationalized, postnational context—and how literature may complicate fixed notions of being in place. In doing so, I draw on interventions from decolonial cultural anthropology to provoke ontological discourse. Self-identification arises not through a confrontation with the other, but through a continual practice of interactive becoming which dissolves fixed notions of selfhood and otherness. I bring “cannibalistic” practices investigated by Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro—consuming both selfhood and otherness in indigenous constructs of being—into conversation with recent publications by contemporary Berlin-based authors such as Deniz Utlu, Fatma Aydemir, and Max Czollek. Through close-readings of these authors’ literary works and performances, I critically examine defiant interjections in the fable of return to explore the role which movement between places and ascribed traditions contributes to practices of radical diversity.



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Jon Cho-Polizzi is a doctoral candidate at UC Berkeley’s Department of German, the concurrent Ph.D. Program in Medieval Studies, and the Designated Emphasis in Folklore. He received his B.A. in Literature and European History at UC Santa Cruz and an M.A. in Übersetzungswissenschaft [Translation Studies] from Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg. He has also served as managing editor for four issues of Berkeley’s electronic journal, TRANSIT. Jon’s literary translations have been published by Spiegel Online, Versopolis Poetry, and in various anthologies; a new cycle of his poetry translations is forthcoming in the Spring 2020 volume of Jewish Currents.