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MADISON CAWEIN AS AN EXPONENT OF GERMAN CULTURE

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Madison Julius Cawein, called "the Kentucky Keats" and "the Omar Khyyam of the Ohio Valley," enjoyed the consort and correspondence of several notables during his lifetime, but today he is known only to those who take a scholarly interest in American poetry. A quiet man, his relatively short life of forty-nine years was unmarked by events of external significance; he travelled little, leaving his Kentucky home only a few times. He married at the age of thirty-eight, having lived with his parents in and around Louisville until that time. Cawein died in December, 1914, almost simultaneously with the epoch which ended with the Great War.

Cawein is remembered primarily as a "nature poet," a champion of faery, whose dreamy, wordy, and often classicizing poems seem to be the ultimate in poetic foolishness and frivolity to the more practically minded. His taste for archaic words and alliteration and his fecund poetic fantasy seem to mirror the age of the gilded lily and the florid ornament of late Victorian taste. But in his own day, the two decades surrounding the turn of the century, he bade fair to become one of America's greatest poets. Many literary commentators of Cawein's time were favorably disposed towards him. Writing in 1906, Mildred Lewis Rutherford offered this summary and prophecy: "For the last few years Madison Cawein has not lacked admirers or just appreciation; many say that he is destined to be one of America's greatest poets."¹ Montrose J. Moses stated: "In a larger sense, Madison Cawein, the laureate of Kentucky, may be regarded as the most distinctive poet of the South today."² Fred Lewis Pattee named Cawein among the twenty-five most

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¹ Mildred Lewis Rutherford, *The South in History and Literature* (Atlanta, 1906), p. 677.

² Montrose Jones Moses, *The Literature of the South* (New York, 1910), p. 472.

significant American poets of the period 1870 to 1890, a list which included Bret Harte, Sidney Lanier, and James Whitcomb Riley.³

Always conscious of his desire to be a poet, young Cawein published his first collection of verse, *Blooms of the Berry*, in Louisville in 1887. Fortunately for Cawein, the book was favorably reviewed by the eminent literary critic William Dean Howells, in whom Cawein found an admirer. Writing in *Harper's Magazine* (May, 1888) Howells says of Cawein:

He is a real poet of the West. He has a sweetness and a freshness which stamps him as a poet in a class by himself. His rich, fresh strain of the new land is something different when mixed with Italian fervor, and the result is a richly sensuous, boldly achieved piece of color. He has a true lyrical ability and the power to tell a story. He has passion and dramatic strength which is not excelled in any poet of his day.⁴

Cawein's further poetry appeared not only collectively in small editions published in major cities in the United States and in London, but also singly in various contemporary literary journals and magazines, including *Harper's Monthly*, *The Poetry Review*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Century*, *The Chap-Book*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Lippincott's*. Naturally enough, some poems were also published in the Louisville newspapers. His fame was spread by anthologies of literature as well. Just after the turn of the century some of Cawein's verses had made their way into several anthologies, most of them dealing with Southern literature.⁵

If Cawein drew support from Howells and Thomas Bailey Aldrich, the review editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, he also found his detractors. A reviewer in *The Dial* (September 1, 1898) faulted Cawein for writing too much and for lack of sincerity when on the theme of love.⁶ In 1915 F. L. Pattee succinctly voiced one of the most frequent criticisms of Cawein: "One turns page after page of the thick volumes of the collected lyrics to find some simple human bit that came hot from the heart of a poet, some stanza that compels quotation, but one gets lost at length in the maze of sweetness."⁷ Such objections reflected too much perhaps a certain Romantic conception of the Poet, but the critic did

³ Fred Lewis Pattee, *A History of American Literature Since 1870* (New York: The Century Co., 1915), pp. 321-322.

⁴ Albert Lee Swank, "Madison Julius Cawein: A Poet of Kentucky," M.A. Thesis (University of Pittsburgh, 1933), p. 46.

⁵ The *Library of Southern Literature* (Atlanta: The Martin & Hoyt Co., 1907), a massive collection, presented nineteen poems by Cawein. W. P. Trent's *Southern Writers* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1905) allowed Cawein seven entries.

⁶ Swank, "Madison Julius Cawein," p. 48.

⁷ Pattee, *History of American Literature*, p. 349.

express a sentiment which others have felt as well. A later scholar, Albert Lee Swank, concluded his study of Cawein, echoing some of the observations made earlier by others, with these words:

Certainly there are some merits in his works. These include a certain freshness of the West which was not noticeable before his day, an intimate knowledge of nature, a keen observation, a search for the ideal and the effort to enshrine it in poetry, a striking picturesqueness resulting from his ability to use words, some evidence of literary taste and culture and, occasionally, a deep emotional feeling when nature seemed cruel to one of her children. Set over against these merits are definite weaknesses which partially explain why he is not more widely recognized. He lacked the type of inspiration which compelled one to write; his work shows too little careful revision and self criticism; he seemed incapable of stern suppression of certain works and deep concentration, which resulted in the writing of too much that was not poetry. His fancy ran away with his vocabulary, consequently there was the profuse use of color adjectives, the strain for epithet, and the hunt for picture words, which gave clumsiness to his lines. But above all, Cawein lacked the human touch in his poetry.⁸

Swank's statement, necessarily quoted here at length, remained the standard critical assessment of Cawein the poet until the very recent past, when a much needed re-evaluation of Cawein was undertaken by Carlin T. Kindilien. In his study of the poets of the eighteen-nineties, Kindilien placed Madison Cawein in somewhat better perspective. While Kindilien granted that much of Cawein's work is *not* for the ages, he still found things worthy of admiration. In critical summary he said of Cawein's poetry: "For its genuine depiction of his mountain environment [sic] and its reproduction of the color and atmosphere of one of America's most beautiful regions, [Cawein's] nature poetry can stand with the best work of the poets of American nature."⁹ Cawein's collected verse amounts to some thirty-six volumes, a voluminousness which renders him somewhat inaccessible. Kindilien felt, however, that a highly selected, one-volume edition of Cawein's poems "would guarantee to him a high place among southern poets and a secure position in the second rank of all American poets."¹⁰

Even in his own day Cawein was never overly accessible; the reviewer for *The Literary World* (London) noted that "Cawein was too vague to be understood by the masses."¹¹ He did not achieve the popularity of James Whitcomb Riley, with whom he corresponded, although there is

⁸ Swank, "Madison Julius Cawein," p. 52.

⁹ Carlin T. Kindilien, *American Poetry in the Eighteen Nineties: A Study of American Verse, 1890-1899* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1956), p. 52.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹¹ Swank, "Madison Julius Cawein," p. 47.

an occasional touch of Riley's folksiness in Cawein's verses. Howells, his early supporter, commented that Cawein's early nature poetry and idealism were out of step with current taste. The historian of Southern literature, William Henry Hulme, spelled out Cawein's basic anachorism: "In spirit [Cawein's] poetry is for the most part as little Southern as it is American; and it is as little American as it is English."¹² Cawein was, then, something of a paradox, a "regional" poet with no clearly discernible locality, an enigma to the majority of his countrymen, from whose perception of reality his own—as evidenced in the credal poem "There are Fairies"¹³—so radically differed. Yet to make the paradox more complete, Cawein was able to support himself nicely by his literary endeavors.

It is unlikely that the psychology of a poet can ever be fully plumbed. However, there is one aspect of Cawein's poetic personality which can be better explained. Cawein's understanding of the German poets and German culture in general has been alluded to by literary historians, but has never been investigated. Perhaps it was because William Dean Howells was himself so steeped in the German language and so well-versed in Heine and Uhland¹⁴ that he was able better to understand and appreciate the work of Madison Cawein.

The likelihood of German influence in Louisville may seem remote to the visitor to that city today, yet in the mid-nineteenth century and during Cawein's own lifetime German culture enjoyed a certain vigor there. Louisville was then the third largest city west of Cincinnati and had supported a German-language newspaper since 1841. Between 1845 and 1855 (the year Cawein's parents were married) some ten different German papers were founded.¹⁵ The year 1848 saw the founding of a German singing-society (*Liederkrantz*) in Louisville only two years after the establishment of a similar institution in New York (the earliest of these had begun in Philadelphia in 1835 and in Baltimore in 1836).¹⁶ A second singing-society came into being some 15 months later and a

¹² William Henry Hulme, "Madison Cawein," in *Southern Writers: Biographical and Critical Studies*, ed. William Malone Baskerville (Nashville and Dallas: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1911), II, 353-354.

¹³ Madison J. Cawein, *The Vale of Tempe* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1905), pp. 146-149.

¹⁴ Henry A. Pochmann, *German Culture in America: Philosophical and Literary Influences 1600-1900* (Madison [Wis.]: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), p. 475.

¹⁵ Leonard Koester, "German Newspapers Published in Louisville," *German-American Review*, 20 (No. 5, 1967), 24-27.

¹⁶ Albert Bernhardt Faust, *The German Element in the United States* (2 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1909), II, 273. See also Erna Ottil Gwinn, "The Liederkrantz in Louisville," *The Filson Club History Quarterly*, 49 (July, 1975), 276-290.

third in 1856. A *Turnverein* (athletic club) existed as early as 1849 and was strengthened by the arrival of new immigrants after the political troubles of 1848.¹⁷ During the years 1851-1856 "a rich, concentrated German life . . . was found in Louisville,"¹⁸ and it was to continue for a number of years. Cawein lent his support to a *Sangerfest* in Louisville in 1914 by contributing a poem "To Music" for the official program.

It was in this Louisville that Madison Julius Cawein was born in 1865, a descendant of Paul de Herancour, a French Huguenot who emigrated to Germany in 1685. Cawein's father, born in 1827, came from Muhlhofen in the Rhenish Palatinate; his mother, Christiana, was the daughter of John G. and Rosina Stelsly of Wurtemberg, Germany.¹⁹ Cawein was christened in Louisville at St. Paul's Evangelical Church which Cawein referred to as the "German Lutheran Church." At that time the church records were kept in German, Cawein himself reports.²⁰ He was not confirmed.

Whether German was spoken in Cawein's parents' home is not certain. The question acquires added significance in Cawein's case because the poet lived with his parents until he was thirty-eight years old. Had German been spoken in the home, Cawein would thus have been surrounded by the language throughout his formative years as a poet. Since his parents attended a church whose records were kept in German, it seems likely that they exchanged at least a few words of German on occasion. It is certain that Cawein heard German from his grandmother, since according to Cawein himself, she was "fond of improvising poems in German."²¹

That Cawein read and understood German easily is indisputable. Rutherford stated that Cawein could quote the German poets he read with "remarkable fluency."²² The German language was taught at Cawein's parents' church; Cawein may have been exposed to his first formal instruction in German there. Possibly he improved his knowledge of German during his years at the Louisville Male High School since German was taught there at that time. While the level of Cawein's prac-

¹⁷ Ludwig Stierlin, *Der Staat Kentucky und die Stadt Louisville, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des deutschen Elements* (Louisville, 1873), Pt. iv, 21-24.

¹⁸ Koester, "German Newspapers," p. 24.

¹⁹ Otto A. Rothert, *The Story of a Poet: Madison Cawein* (Louisville, 1921), p. 165. This work by a friend of the poet is a rich compendium of various materials about Cawein's life and works (including some autobiographical items) and is indispensable to the scholar.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

²² Rutherford, *The South in History*, p. 676.

tical speaking ability may remain unknown, the fact remains that his family and cultural backgrounds were emphatically, though not exclusively, German. Cawein was perfectly willing to acknowledge his German ancestry (and did so in a letter at Theodore Roosevelt's request),²³ but he does not seem to have thought of himself as a "German-American," nor does he seem to have associated much with the more recently immigrated.

Evidences of this German heritage are present in Cawein's works almost from the outset. In 1888 Cawein began work on his dramatic recasting of the *Freischütz* theme in which a hunter relies on diabolic aid to achieve success. Cawein published his version of the tale in the collection *Accolon of Gaul* (1889). His *Moods and Memories* (1892), likewise an early work, also contains references to things German, including a poem prefaced by a stanza from Heine and another poem called "Hackelnberg," based on the legend of Hanno von Hackelberg.²⁴ *Weeds by the Wall* (1901) presents Cawein's translation of Goethe's famous poem "Kennst du das Land," sometimes known as Mignon's song. In *The Poet, the Fool and the Faeries* (1912) Cawein shows that his interest in trolls, nixen, kobold, and the panoply of Germanic mythology has not waned. Cawein actually uses a line of German in the poem "A Belgian Christmas: The 'happy year' of 1914" from *The Cup of Comus* (1915).²⁵

In *The Cup of Comus* is also found a little poem of two stanzas entitled "On Re-reading Certain German Poets." Here Cawein gives us a good indication of what it was in German culture that so appealed to him. He mentions specifically the Harz Mountains, the Hackelnberg motif, Wallenstein (probably from the play by Schiller), *die Lorelei*, Mephisto, Faust, Margarete, and the Brocken (the magic mountain from Goethe's *Faust*). Cawein highly esteems the atmospheric intensity (the

²³ Rothert, *The Story of a Poet*, p. 267.

²⁴ According to the legend, Hackelberg was a hunter who in his nocturnal rides took little regard for the peasants' fields. At last, Hackelberg was wounded fatally by a wild boar. When the priest came to Hackelberg's death bed, Hackelberg swore that he would renounce all the pleasures of heaven if only he were allowed to hunt once again. As punishment for his irreverence he was damned to ride the countryside nightly.

The motif of the eerie night rider attracted Cawein. It had previously been treated by Gottfried August Burger, among others. There is a faint similarity between Cawein's "Hackelberg" and Burger's poem, but it is not known whether Cawein read Burger; thus it would be difficult to show influence from Burger.

²⁵ Madison J. Cawein, *The Cup of Comus* (New York, 1915), p. 67. The line reads "A cry of 'Halt!'— / 'Ach! Ich bin kalt!" A grammatical mistake of this type might indicate that Cawein's active command of written German was fading. Spelling errors also occur in the few surviving examples of Cawein's written German; he was never overly meticulous about either spelling or punctuation!

"gloom and glow,"²⁶ as he, characteristically alliterating, phrased it), the aura of enchantment and mysticism and the immediacy of danger and evil. Certainly one could argue with Cawein's almost exclusively Romantic interpretation of German literature, especially with his somewhat one-sided reading of Goethe. Nevertheless, the choice was his to make, and he communicated his reading of German poetry to others by publishing this poem in *Lippincott's Magazine* (1911) before it appeared in *The Cup of Comus*.

In his private letters as well Cawein makes mention of the German poets he read. Writing to Hubert Gilson Shearin, Cawein states that "German poetry from the 'Niebelungen Lied' down, as well as folklore traditions of Germany and the Old World in general have always captivated me."²⁷ Naturally this interest is reflected in Cawein's poetry. Other acquaintances of the Louisville laureate testify to his interest in the German poets. Anna Blance McGill, friend and critic of the poet, notes that Cawein "was constantly returning to Spenser, Keats, Wordsworth, Horace and the German poets."²⁸ Another personal friend, Henry A. Cottell, confirms that Cawein "studied in the original, Goethe, Schiller, Geibel, Uhland and Lenau . . ."²⁹ That Cawein also kept abreast of contemporary German literature is seen in his discussion of the Naturalist dramatist Gerhart Hauptmann in an article for *The Writer's Bulletin* in 1914.³⁰

Two of Cawein's own poems indicate that he did some creative borrowing from one German poet in particular. Cawein's "Hildegard" (from *Red Leaves and Roses*, 1893) ends with a striking image: "She is gone; and in her stead/Flies a milk-white snake that hisses."³¹ The ominous white snake is a familiar bit of Germanic folklore which Cawein may have known from the Grimm brothers' fairy tale, but certainly from Emmanuel Geibel's poem "Die weiß Schlange," which Cawein translated and published in 1895.

An examination of another poem by Cawein should attest his further indebtedness to Geibel, one of the most popular poets of the mid-nineteenth century. In *Intimations of the Beautiful* (1894) Cawein included a poem entitled "Legendary."³² This poem bears a striking similarity to Geibel's "Romanze." One is immediately struck by certain

²⁶ Madison J. Cawein, *The Cup of Comus* (New York, 1915), p. 76.

²⁷ Rother, *The Story of a Poet*, p. 273.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 425.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 437.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 351.

³¹ Madison J. Cawein, *Red Leaves and Roses* (New York, 1893), pp. 137-138.

³² Madison J. Cawein, *Intimations of the Beautiful* (New York, 1894), pp. 105-107.

parallelisms: Cawein's Flamencine, the female figure, "shook a tambourine"; Geibel's *Flamenca* "schwingt das Tamburin"; "shoes of satin sheen," for "Fuß im Seidenschuh"; "violets," "Nachtviole." The imagery, mood, and thematic elements in the two poems are much the same; the nature of the girl—exotic, passionate, enchanting, and malevolent—is identical. In Cawein's poem the narrator admits to his servitude to Flamencine; Geibel's *Flamenca* can sing the hearts of those who look upon her. To the basic material of Geibel's poem Cawein added a rustic flavor with "dreaming vistas," "darkling dells," and "beechn shadows." Cawein later translated Geibel's "Romanze" and included it in the volume *The White Snake, and other Poems* (1895). The existence of two "versions" of it testify to Cawein's esteem for it; surely his inclusion of it in the translations atones for his earlier unconfessed borrowing.

Cawein did not express himself at length on the theory and technique of translation. He did, however, make a few brief statements which illumine somewhat the principles he followed in rendering foreign verse into English. Translation was, for Cawein, "the best possible exercise for a poet"; its aim was to be able "to interpret the mood of a poem in another language, to catch the very breath and color of words." Cawein, who often worked at translating early in the morning on days when he was not able to write poetry of his own, regarded a translation "quite as much a work of art as an original poem."³³ Fidelity to "form, metre and rhyme" was of great importance to Cawein; nevertheless, he felt free to translate the "general impression" which the thought made upon him, as he stated in the prefatory remarks to *The White Snake*. He disdained translations which were mere "rhymed prose."³⁴

In discussing his translations of the poet Nicolaus Lenau in 1914, Cawein voiced his opposition to "literal" translations; such can never do justice to the poet's original. He further related that he "was often in despair over passages of poetic beauty which were impossible, almost, to render in any way without spoiling the entire poem by changing the meaning completely, but rather than do the poet [i.e., Lenau, in this case] this injustice on such occasions I have translated as closely as the requirements of rhyme and of rhythm permitted me, retaining as much of the beauty of the original as was possible."³⁵ Thus in his statements

³³ Rothert, *The Story of a Poet*, pp. 107-108. An interview with Cawein on the subject of translation and other topics as well as a sample of one of his Lenau translations was published in the *Louisville Herald* (October 2, 1910).

³⁴ Madison J. Cawein, *The White Snake, and Other Poems* (Louisville, 1895), p. [1].

³⁵ Preface to the translations of Lenau, in the Madison Cawein Papers, The Filson Club manuscript department, folder 71. I should like to thank the authorities of The Filson Club for permission to use the Cawein papers and for their help in using the same.

on the subject of translating Cawein showed that he approached the work of the translator with all his poetic sensitivity, retaining the freedom to "interpret," if necessary. Rhyme and meter require great strictness and Cawein felt duty-bound to reproduce the "forms" of the original in the English version.

Cawein's most tangible contribution to American understanding of German literature is his collection of thirty-two poems entitled *The White Snake* which he translated and published in 1895. The volume includes ten poems of the ballad-master Ludwig Uhland, nine by Emmanuel Geibel, seven from "Mirza-Schaffy" (pseudonym used by the orientaling Friedrich Bodenstedt), four by Heinrich Heine, and a section from the second part of Goethe's *Faust*, which Cawein called "one of the greatest poems ever written."³⁶ Most of the poems are ballads; a few are more personally lyrical. The book is suffused with the air of mystery, irony, and Romantic exoticism which Cawein so admired in the German poets and occasionally captured in his own verse.

Cawein's reputation as a "nature poet" tends to obscure his attempts at Arthurian and Oriental romance, his ballads about supernatural events, and his interest in the world of faery and myth, although such elements are strongly represented in his volumes of verse. Thus it is understandable that Cawein chose to translate Geibel, Bodenstedt, Heine, and Uhland, poets with subjects and themes similar to his own.

At this point it seems necessary to make some assessment of Cawein's translations.³⁷ To this end several translations by Cawein in *The White Snake* have been examined and compared with the originals and with other translations of the same poems. As might be expected, the quality of his translations varies somewhat, depending on the difficulties posed by the German original and the particular author he was translating. The eminent bibliographer of German literature in translation, Bayard Q. Morgan, states that Cawein's translations are "mostly excellent versions."³⁸

³⁶ Hulme, "Madison Cawein," p. 361.

³⁷ *The White Snake* was reviewed by *The Independent*, *The Critic*, and *The Bookman*. *The Bookman's* anonymous reviewer (No. 3 [April 1896], pp. 173-177) notes the faithful reproduction of Heine and Uhland (whose poem "Die Mahderin" he found "pretty" and "touching"), but makes, in general, little comment on the quality of the translations. The reviewer for *The Critic* (October 31, 1896, p. 261) dislikes translations on principle, and thinks that Cawein should have been less conscientious in regard to "the exacting details of structure." The writer is not unmindful of Cawein's other talents, calling him "one of the best of our younger singers."

³⁸ Bayard Q. Morgan, *A Bibliography of German Literature in English Translation* (Madison [Wis.], 1922), p. 623.

Cawein's translations of Geibel rank among his most successful, perhaps because Cawein felt most at home with Geibel's meter and imagery. His high degree of technical ability with rhyme and meter served him well in rendering the ballads of Uhland and Heine into English. In fact, Cawein's skill with rhyme was so acute, that he was often able to reproduce the original rhyme perfectly, or very nearly so. In a difficult poem by Goethe, Cawein succeeded in re-creating bi-syllabic rhyme. Similar success with meter can be observed: Cawein often achieved the same number of beats per line that the original had. Furthermore Cawein's prodigious English vocabulary of archaic and esoteric words aided him in his translations as well as in his own poetry. Such a vocabulary is especially useful for lending a poem an Oriental or Medieval atmosphere.

As no translation is perfect, there are, naturally enough, some problems with Cawein's versions. Cawein occasionally intensified the original metaphor, making it more emotional and subjective than the original had been. Yet one would not wish to accuse Cawein of falsification or infidelity: it may be that German, a language the poet had heard in early childhood at his grandmother's knee, was imbued with emotional connotations for him, possibly even returning him to a childhood state. Cawein's translation of Goethe's "Kennst du das Land" provides a good example of this subjectivity. Goethe's original "Dahin! dahin!" (literally: "to that place") is translated by Cawein as "Thither, ah, me! ah, me!" Cawein's own poetry sometimes indulged in exactly this kind of nostalgic sighing. Such "intrusions" upon the original meaning are the chief problem with Cawein's translations. A secondary problem is his overuse of alliteration, a fault for which his own verse was criticized.

While there is variation in quality of translation in *The White Snake*, Cawein displayed a high degree of technical ability both with meter and with rhyme. In many poems Cawein succeeded in conveying the sense and the mood of the original poem, yet in others he let his own personality, and to some extent, the age in which he lived, intrude upon the original. Cawein's translations are of sufficient quality that they could certainly serve as a basis which with editorial revision might achieve the "perfect" translation, a practice frequently seen. Such "hybrid" versions could very well provide us with truly excellent versions of the more popular, mid-nineteenth-century German poems which Cawein delivered in his anthology, *The White Snake*.

Although *The White Snake* represents Cawein's most tangible single achievement in the area of German-American literary relations, some mention must also be made of his translations of the German poet Nikolaus Lenau (1802-1850), whom Cawein considered second only to Heine.

The exact number of Lenau poems that Cawein translated can no longer be determined; they were not published, except for one which appeared in a Louisville newspaper. A Louisville physician and friend of Cawein, Dr. Henry Koehler, claims that he introduced Lenau's poetry to Cawein who then turned more than a hundred of his poems into English.³⁹ No such number survive; his surviving papers at The Filson Club contain only six, some of them in multiple versions differing only slightly.⁴⁰ The quality of these translations compares well with those by Charles Wharton Stork in *The German Classics* edited by Kuno Francke. No matter how many he did, his selection was consciously subjective. Cawein avoided Lenau's most pessimistic mood and chose instead "the unusual of metaphor, the weirdly suggestive, and such as deal with or describe nature."⁴¹

In addition to his translations of Lenau, Cawein also made a public address (in November, 1911) on Lenau's life and works to the Louisville Literary Club assembled at the Louisville Free Public Library. To judge by Cawein's preface to his Lenau translations, he was well versed in the intellectual backgrounds of the nineteenth century poets and was able to compare Lenau to Wordsworth and the younger Tennyson with whom his audience was, no doubt, more familiar. Cawein read some twenty of his translations of Lenau on this occasion and praised the poet for his use of meter. There was a general discussion of Lenau's works after the formal address.⁴²

In 1910 Cawein, by then a celebrated personality, was sought by George Sylvester Viereck, the energetic young associate editor of *Current Literature* to do a "little article" on Germans in American letters; the article would be published first in Viereck's magazine *Der deutsche Vorkämpfer* (The German Pioneer) and subsequently in *Current Literature*, which had previously reprinted some of Cawein's poems.⁴³ No such article by Cawein appeared in *Current Literature*, and it may be assumed that Cawein, who, after all, had to support himself and his family by his pen, was unable to accept the task because the financial reward was so small.

It is unfortunate that death cut short the work of Madison Cawein. In more mature years he might have produced truly flawless translations

³⁹ Rothert, *The Story of a Poet*, p. 453.

⁴⁰ Madison Cawein Papers, The Filson Club Manuscript Department, folder 95.

⁴¹ Preface to Lenau translations, p. [3], in *Ibid.*, folder 71.

⁴² Unpaginated clipping from the *Louisville Herald* (November 28, 1911) in the Cawein Papers. See folders 114-121 for clippings about Cawein.

⁴³ Letter from George Sylvester Viereck to Madison Cawein, June 22, 1910, Cawein Papers, folder 40.

without personal and idiosyncratic intrusions, using all his technical skills to fullest advantage. There is every indication that his role as transmitter of German literature and culture would have gone beyond the modest part which he was allowed to play, for his interest in the subject seems to have grown constantly, as did the acuity of his historical and critical approach to literature. It would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to trace the effect of Cawein's particular reading of German literature and culture on the American public. Yet the question is a tantalizing one, especially since Cawein's "gloom and gleam" interpretation stands in some contradiction to other more negative images of Germany which were enormously exaggerated during the flood of anti-German sentiment which accompanied the First World War.