

“So wollen wir leben und reisen!” New Lights on the Wandering Poem ca. 1800 and beyond¹

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Abstract. “So wollen wir leben und reisen!” (So, let us live and travel!) is the last line of the poem “Werstpfähle, Von Dörpt nach Riga und weiter” (“Milestones, from Tartu to Riga and beyond”), written in 1812 by Casimir Ulrich Boehlendorff (1755–1825) from Courland, now part of Latvia. I begin my article with Boehlendorff’s poem for several reasons. First, last year (2025) marked the 250th anniversary of his birth and the 200th anniversary of his death. Second, I want to draw attention to a poet who, though writing in German, lived and worked outside Europe’s literary centres and therefore did not receive the recognition his work merited, a fate shared by many talented poets from the so-called ‘periphery’ of European literature, especially those from ‘small’ literatures, whose poems often remain accessible only through translation. Third, because of an interesting historical parallel in Estonian literature: seven years after Boehlendorff’s journey from Tartu to Riga, which is the subject of the aforementioned poem, in June 1819, Estonian poet Kristian Jaak Peterson (1801–1822) walked the same route on foot. And fourth, Boehlendorff’s poem offers an excellent starting point for a discussion of the phenomenon of ‘wandering poetry’ (*Wanderlyrik, Reiselyrik, ambulante Poesie*).

In Boehlendorff’s time, around 1800, wandering poetry – poems that invite the reader to wander, thematise wandering and are written while wandering – was in vogue. Poets, sons of the Muses, went on journeys into the great outdoors and recorded their wanderings in verse. Wandering had become a new way of discovering both the external world and the inner self. Boehlendorff was such a romantic wanderer, “a vagabond, who wanders the world and describes his wanderings in verse. In fifteen years, he has walked some twenty thousand miles”, as the Russian poet Vassily Zhukovsky wrote to Alexander Turgenev in 1817.

This paper will address the following questions: What are the possibilities of depicting such a linear and narrative (epic) activity as wandering in poetry? What exactly does ‘wandering poetry’ mean? What did it mean in Romanticism, and what are the lyrical representations of wandering in the 20th century, when the ‘wandering’ was often a forced journey, a journey into exile,

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displacement or banishment? Drawing on Boehlendorff's poetry, I will point to three modes of expressing wandering in Romantic poems. I will give examples from both large and small literatures.

Keywords: wandering poetry; travelling poetry; Baltic German poetry; Estonian poetry; romantic poetry; Casimir Ulrich Boehlendorff

I

"So wollen wir leben und reisen!" (So, let us live and travel!) is the last line of the poem "Werstpfähle, Von Dörpt nach Riga und weiter"³ ("Milestones, from Tartu to Riga and beyond"), written in 1812 by Casimir Ulrich Boehlendorff (1755–1825) from Courland, now part of Latvia. I begin my article with Boehlendorff's poem for several reasons. First, last year (2025) marked the 250th anniversary of his birth and the 200th anniversary of his death. Second, I want to draw attention to a poet who, though writing in German, lived and worked outside Europe's literary centres and therefore did not receive the recognition his work merited, a fate shared by many talented poets from the so-called 'periphery' of European literature, especially those from 'small' literatures, whose poems often remain accessible only through translation. Third, because of an interesting historical parallel with Estonian literature: seven years after Boehlendorff's journey from Tartu to Riga, which is the subject of the aforementioned poem, in June 1819, Estonian poet Kristian Jaak Peterson (1801–1822) wandered the same route on foot, recording fleeting moments of this journey in his Estonian-language diary and his "Song, when I went from Tartu to Riga, to see my parents" ("Laul, kui ma Tartust läksin Riia poole, oma vanemaid vaatama", Peterson 2001: 55–56). And fourth, Boehlendorff's poem serves as an excellent starting point for discussing the 'wandering poetry' (*Wanderlyrik*, *Reiselyrik*, *ambulante Poesie*⁴) of the

³ The manuscript of the poem is kept at the University of Tartu Library. For a printed version, see Boehlendorff 2000 I: 31–38.

⁴ Although travel has been a theme in poetry throughout the ages, travel poetry has received relatively little attention in literary studies, which is surprising given the general boom in travel literature research over the last 30 years. An interesting take on Romantic travel poetry can be found by Heinrich Bosse and Harald Neumeyer (1995); and a chapter on "Traveling Poetry" in Ramazani 2009. In 2020, Johannes Görbert and Nikolas Immer edited the most comprehensive study of *Ambulante Poesie* to date, which examines German-language travel poetry since the 18th century (Görbert, Immer 2020).

Romantic era. Drawing on Boehlendorff's poetry, I will point to three modes of expressing wandering in Romantic poems.

Casimir Ulrich Boehlendorff is regarded as one of the most gifted Baltic German poets, alongside Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz (1751–1792). Although he belongs to the Baltic German literary canon, both in literary histories and anthologies (about his reception see Stüben 1997), his work has gained some attention in Germany only in recent decades when the first monographs on his dramatic works (Zimmermann 1997) and poetry (Habeck 1997) appeared and in 2000, Boehlendorff's collected works were published in three volumes by Frieder Schellhase, including many previously unpublished texts (Boehlendorff 2000). In May 2025, the first conference dedicated to his work, "Der vagierende Dichter Casimir Ulrich Boehlendorff zwischen Kurland und Deutschland" ("The Wandering Poet: Casimir Ulrich Boehlendorff between Courland and Germany"), took place in Riga (the conference proceedings are forthcoming).

Born in Jelgava (Mitau), Boehlendorff was raised in a multi-ethnic region as a member of a small but influential German-speaking minority that made up 3–5% of the population amid a predominantly Latvian-speaking peasantry. The rulers of the semi-independent Duchy of Courland, which until 1795 was a vassal state of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and thereafter became part of the Russian Empire, were Baltic Germans. As in Estonia and Livonia, German was the language of administration and education in Courland. The Baltic Germans spoke Latvian or Estonian with the peasantry, but communicated with the Russian central authorities in German.

Boehlendorff studied at Academia Petrina, the highest education institution in the Baltics until the reestablishment of the University of Tartu (Kaiserliche Universität zu Dorpat) in 1802, before moving to Jena to study law. Studying in German universities was part of the education journey for Baltic Germans in the *Ostseeprovinzen* and it was often their first trip abroad.

Jena was the favourite university of Baltic students in the final decade of the 18th century, attracting them with its vibrant, free-spirited student life and renowned professors. From 1789 to 1793, Friedrich Schiller served as a professor of history in Jena, but Boehlendorff's romantic vein of poetry was alien to him and he rejected Boehlendorff's poems for publication in his magazine *Thalia*. Boehlendorff became close to Johann Gottlieb Fichte and other early Romantics, including Friedrich and August Schlegel, Ludwig Tieck, and Novalis, sharing their philosophical and aesthetic views. His poetry was appreciated by Friedrich Hölderlin, who helped publish two of his poems. Hölderlin felt a kindred spirit in Boehlendorff: "We have the same fate" and "I need your pure tones", Hölderlin wrote in his letters to Boehlendorff. (Boehlendorff 2000 I: 281, 295)

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However, Boehendorff failed to break through as a poet in Germany and returned to his homeland, moving from one place to another while battling a worsening mental illness, until he shot himself in the chest on 29 March 1825.⁵

II Romantic Wanderer

Boehendorff was a wanderer both in life and verse. While he was studying in Jena, Boehendorff and some friends undertook a walking trip across the Alps to Italy. In his travel diary from 1797, *Adventurous Letters* (*Abentheuerliche Briefe*), which Robert Habeck in his monograph calls "the most impressive proof of early Romanticism" (Habeck 1997: 61), Boehendorff writes, foreseeing his fate: "Condemned to a vagabond's life, I shall not rest until I am buried under the last ruins of my hopes." (Boehendorff 2000 I: 11)

He later roamed through Germany and Russia, reaching present-day Belarus and Ukraine. In 1817, Russian romantic poet Vassily Zhukovsky (1783–1852), who was living in Tartu at the time, described him in a letter to Alexander Turgenev (1784–1845) as "an eccentric, a poet, a vagabond, a child, a greis" "who wanders the world and describes his wanderings in verse. [...] In fifteen years, he has walked some twenty thousand miles." (Boehendorff 2000 I: 456.)

Wandering is central to Boehendorff's poetry, as evident in titles such as "Die Reise nach den Alpen", "Sänger. Ein Wanderer", "Reiseacte", "Früh vor der Reise", "Gegenwart (auf der Reise)", and "Der Wanderer bei Nacht".

This makes me wonder: what are the possibilities of depicting such a linear, narrative (epic) activity as wandering in lyrical poetry? A glance at the history of poetry shows that travel has been a theme in poetry throughout the ages because people (especially poets) have always travelled. Around 1800, wandering poetry – poems that invite the reader to wander, that thematise wandering and are written while wandering – was in vogue, as Heinrich Bosse and Harald Neumeyer have convincingly demonstrated in the case of German poetry (Bosse, Neumeyer 1995). Poets, sons of the Muses, went on journeys into the great outdoors and conveyed their wanderings in poetry. Travelling had become a new way of discovering the world, triggered by the influence of Jean Jacques Rousseau, who advised his Emil to walk on foot to experience the world; by the advent of alpine walking; and by Wilhelm von Humboldt's education reforms, which emphasised self-development and the need to experience the world with one's own eyes. *Sesshaftigkeit* (sedentarism) has been considered a characteristic only of the bourgeoisie; academics, sons

⁵ For a detailed account of his life and travels, see Freye 1913.

of the Muses, are expected to be mobile because mobility promotes innovation. This applies most directly to poets, who see the bourgeois, the philister, the stagnant and the routine as their enemy.

III Goethe and Boehendorff

In this fashion, perhaps ironically, Goethe wrote in 1800 his role poem “Der Musensohn” (“The Son of the Muses”), the first stanza of which is as follows:

Durch Feld und Wald zu schweifen,	Roaming through field and wood,
Mein Liedchen weg zu pfeifen,	whistling my song,
So geht's von Ort zu Ort!	thus I go from place to place!
Und nach dem Takte reget,	And all keep time with me,
Und nach dem Mass beweget	and all move
Sich alles an mir fort.	in measure with me.
	(Translation by Richard Wigmore)

Goethe's poem and Boehendorff's early written poem “Sänger, Ein Wanderer” are quite similar:

Bin ein Wanderer auf der Flur,
 Wanderer unter Blüten.
 Lächelnd führte mich Natur,
 Wo die holden glühen.
 Glühte dann in warmer Lust
 Meine Wange, meine Brust.⁶

Without naming exact places and routes, both poems thematise movement, wandering; even the rhythm of the verse expresses motion. The lyrical I sees himself as a wanderer and wandering as his only way of living. However, the wanderer in Goethe's and Boehendorff's poems differs in terms of his state of mind. Goethe's wanderer is sanguine, joyful, vivacious, while Boehendorff's wanderer is resigned and melancholic. In Goethe's poem, the wanderer also encounters others and thinks of a loved one on whose breast he hopes to find peace, whereas in Boehendorff's poem, there are no other people or settlements. While Goethe's wanderer is aided by love, Boehendorff's wanderer is accompanied only by unfulfilled longing. Boehendorff's voyage is never a happy journey (*Glückliche Fahrt*), referring to the famous poem by Goethe; his wanderer never arrives and never finds a home. “Mich führt kein

⁶ All poem quotations are according to Boehendorff 2000.

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Weg zum heimatlichen Herde" ("No way leads me to my home herd"), as the poem "Einsamkeit" ("Solitude") says. In the poem *Zur Heimath* (*To Home*), the identity of home and self is denied: "Doch heim ist nicht mein eignes Ich" ("But home is not my own self").

The Romantic poet has no home; he lives on the road, somewhere in between and avoids all attempts to remain stationary. Boehlendorff's return to his homeland in 1803 was an enforced one, and here too he roamed around, although he was not a stranger: "Nicht gar ein fremdling irr'ich an den stellen", as stated in a poem dedicated to his brother and sister, "Am Ostseestrände" ("On the Baltic Sea Shore"). He makes an attempt to love his homeland ("Noch einmal zu lieben mein vaterland") but, however, becoming sedentary will not succeed. For Boehlendorff, travelling is a way of life and arriving, coming back, or coming home is only possible in the grave, as he says in the poem "Zur Heimath" ("To Home").

Boehlendorff's best-known poem, "Der Wechsel" ("The Change"), thematises the opposition between home and farness: while abroad, the lyrical I thinks of home 'on a far shore', recalling his childhood view of ships sailing out to sea, which he thought was only imagination. In the sonnet's final stanza, the poet is carried by the crashing waves of the sea, and, in contrast, the memory of a quiet beach at home seems to be only an image, a fantasy.

Let us compare the two poems of the same title, "Auf dem See" ("On the Lake"), by Goethe and Boehlendorff:

Goethe, “Auf dem See”, 1789

Und frische Nahrung, neues Blut
 Saug ich aus freier Welt;
 Wie ist Natur so hold und gut,
 Die mich am Busen hält!
 Die Welle wieget unsern Kahn
 Im Rudertakt hinauf,
 Und Berge, wolkig himmelan,
 Begegnen unserm Lauf.

•

Aug, mein Aug, was sinkst du nieder?
 Goldne Träume, kommt ihr wieder?
 Weg, du Traum! so gold du bist:
 Hier auch Lieb und Leben ist.

•

Auf der Welle blinken
 Tausend schwebende Sterne,
 Weiche Nebel trinken
 Rings die türmende Ferne;
 Morgenwind umflügelt
 Die beschattete Bucht,
 Und im See bespiegelt
 Sich die reife Frucht.

Boehlendorff, “Auf dem See”, 1800

Bey der heil’gen Sternenhelle,
 Gleitet auf der dunklen Welle,
 Mit der Hoffnung munterm Sinn,
 In dem leichten Nachen hin.

/—/

Und das Ruder schlägt die Welle,
 Silberfunken blinken helle,
 Und das Schifflein strebt und sinkt,
 Wie sich Well an Welle schlingt.

Horch, der Töne neues Leben!
 Nachtigallenstöhn’ entschweben,
 Und des Mondes Blick erhellt
 Eine neue Zauberwelt.

Welche Nacht nach dumpfer Schwühle!
 Welch ein Steigen der Gefühle!
 Wie das Herz in Wehmuth schwebt,
 Und nach einem Herzen strebt!

Aber seht! die Bilder schwinden;
 Stille steigt aus dunklen Gründen,
 Und in heil’gem Schweigen ruht
 Schon das Ufer und die Fluth.

•

Liebe waltet hier; sie schwebet
 Auf der Wellenfläch’ und webet
 Um die sternenhelle Flur
 Diesen Schleyer der Natur.

•

Liebe winkt auch mir von ferne,
 Duftend in dem letzten Sterne;
 Und auf spiegelheller Bahn
 Schlägt mein Schiff an’s Ufer an.

The similarity in the poems’ content is obvious. Both are about a boat trip, welcoming the morning and new hopes. Goethe is on the lake in a boat in the early morning, and when the morning comes, he overcomes his golden dreams, realising that life and love are also here and now. Boehlendorff’s boat glides on dark waves in starlight, with the traveller’s mind also at first lively and hopeful. He sees shadows wandering on the shore, from which he paddles away, listening to the sounds of new life and dreaming of a new, magical world. Love reigns on

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this side of the shore, too, the lyrical I believes, but already these images are fading and the shore is silent. Love waves only in the distance and the boat rows ashore on mirror-like water.

In comparison with Goethe, Boehlendorff's Early Romantic sensibility becomes clearly apparent. Both poems depict experiences of nature on a lake, yet they are grounded in fundamentally different conceptions of nature. In vivid and rhythmic language, Goethe celebrates the vital force of nature and the harmonious connection between human being and the world. For him, nature is sensually tangible and has an invigorating, structuring and optimistic effect on the lyrical I. In contrast, Boehlendorff transforms nature into a poetic dreamscape in which reality and emotion dissolve. Nature is romanticised, mysterious and enchanted, and the lyrical self is passively carried along by this, withdrawing into itself and its own longing. The significance of night and darkness is a recurring theme in Boehlendorff's poetry. Night dissolves the contours of the objective world and enables a journey inward, the rise of feelings, and the awakening of inner powers and creativity, which is close to Novalis' imagery⁷.

IV The Modern Ossian as Romantic Wanderer

The oppression of a sedentary existence is well conveyed in the poem "Der Moderne Ossian am kurischen See" ("The Modern Ossian by the Curonian Sea"), which Boehlendorff wrote in the winter of 1824/1825 in Engure (Angern), on the shores of Lake Engure in Courland, where he served as a Hofmeister (tutor) for food and lodging. This is a role poem in which the lyrical I calls himself Ossian of Courland, identifying himself with the Celtic bard whom sentimental and romantic literature saw as a figure of identification. (Kaur 2021) The poem is a *Wechselgesang*, a dialogue between the Ossian of Courland and Malvine, the voice of the daughter of the real Ossian. Ossian feels lonely in the misery of the Eastern night, wandering like a sleepwalker on the shore of a lake. Malvina sees in him the shadow of his father, the son of lost times ("Sohn der verlorenen zeit"), while Courland's Ossian sees himself not as Ossian's great shadow but a grey singer. He admits that Ossian's songs gave him his own, but his name does not ring out or echo. He has nothing to hope for from his homeland; its waters are still, its shadows echo neither of deeds of valour nor of fighting, the island in this lake is empty and desolate, only the bull and the sheep feast there peacefully when the poor fisherman casts his nets and

⁷ The affinity between Boehlendorff's poetry and Novalis' magical idealism, as well as Schelling's metaphysics of Nature, is also emphasised by Stüber (1997: 249, 252, 257).

the children come to the prey. The natives know only the lake, the stars, and the forest, which provides them with trunks and bushes so that they may not fear the winter cold. They have an intercessor in heaven, whom they know and to whom their silent prayer goes up. But the poet asks Malvina to take him with her and the birds up to the treetops and throw him down into the depths of the waves. Only in this way can his journey end.

So, the poet also feels abandoned and lonely in his homeland and envies the locals who live in harmony with the place and have a strong faith in the one to whom they pray. In the poem "Die gränzen der heimath" ("The borders of home") he laments how "The poor beauty of my homeland is loved only by the pious landmann" ("Meiner heimath arme schöne / Liebt der fromme landmann nur").

We observe that Boehldorff's wandering poetry presents a lyrical I as a romantic wanderer who is constantly on the road and never arrives, this being the first, very Romantic, mode of the wandering poem. The lyrical I, as a Romantic poet, wanders outdoors on foot, in the mountains and valleys, by boat on the lake. In the poem "Ungestilltes Sehnen" ("Unfulfilled Longing"), the poet asks: „Muß ich immer weiter wandern, / Selten rasten, nimmer ruhn?“ ("Must I always wander, / seldom rest, never find peace?")

The poem "Sänger, ein Wanderer" answers this question, defining the poet as a wanderer guided by nature, "die duftumhüllte Welt" ("the scent-shrouded world"), which he perceives with all his senses. There is only nature, with which the wanderer feels in complete harmony.

Empfang mich Thal - du meiner Sehnsucht stilles
Und letztes Ziel! In deiner Felsen Schooß,
In deines dichten Hains Umschattung ruht
Die Seele von des Tages Wirbeln aus. /---/
Verwebt, bin ich an deinem Mutterherzen
Natur! und was nicht dein ist, ist nicht mein!

"Receive me, valley – silent final goal Of all my longing!"

The lyrical I of Boehldorff's poems wants to become one with nature, believing that "what is not yours is not mine", as he says in the poem "Fantasies" ("Phantasien"). But ultimate merging with nature leads to death, as in his ballade "Die Reise nach den Alpen" ("Journey to the Alps"), which begins as a merry wandering song, describing the ascent of the Alps by two friends while a mysterious voice warns them that they may never return. The closer they get to the top of the mountains, "Götterwohnung" ("abode of the gods"), the more menacing the landscape and the warning become before the earth engulfs

them. The ascent to divine heights, as well as the decent into the bosom of nature, leads to death. Ossian of Courland begs Malvina to take him up to the treetops with the birds and cast him down into the depths of the waves, for his heart still beats and his mind is full of sorrow, although it is also full of hope for the Creator.

V Travelling in the paratexts

In many famous wandering poems of the time, such as Goethe's "Wandrer's Nachtlid II" (1780/1815) or "Harzreise im Winter" (1789), William Wordsworth's "Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" (1798), Samuel Coleridge's "Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" (1797) or Percy Shelly's "Mont Blanc: Lines Written in the Vale of Chamouni" (1816), as well as in very many of Boehlendorff's poems, wandering is only a pretext for an inward journey. Real places are rarely mentioned; the journey's topology is not a significant factor. Romantic poems do not often thematise movement but rather a state of mind, an emotional or psychological condition of the lyrical I. The wanderer feels a sense of piety for nature, which prompts philosophical reflection, meditation or memory. Thus, it is more about wandering through time than space. This is in line with Romantic poetry's aim to convey the inner world, as most prominently expressed by Novalis in his fragment 16 from "Blüthenstaub": "We dream of traveling through the universe – but is not the universe within ourselves? The depths of our spirit are unknown to us – the mysterious way leads inwards. Eternity with its worlds – the past and future – is in ourselves or nowhere." (Novalis 1997: 25.)

In these cases, the journey, the wandering of the lyrical I, is only mentioned in the paratexts in titles or epigraphs. In Boehlendorff's poems, the places of his homeland are frequently mentioned: "Herbstlied an Stabburags", "Am Ostseestrände", "Marggrafenstein", and "Der Wälschhühnerberg". The first poem depicts one of Latvia's natural gems, the nearly 18.5-metre-high Staburags spring-fed cave on the banks of the Daugava River, which Boehlendorff often visited. "Marggrafenstein" (Lat. Mērsrags) is dedicated to Boehlendorff's home on the shores of the Gulf of Riga, where he worked as a teacher towards the end of his life. The poem "Der Wälschhühnerberg" (Lat. Tihterkallns) focuses on Engure lake near the Gulf of Riga.

In "Der See bey M- -n in Kurland und der See bey Neuenburg im Schweizerland", he contrasts the small scale of home with the grandeur and ambition of foreign lands.

Berge sind hügel Dort, hier sind die hügel gebirg'
 Neue reisen entwerfen sie dort, um reichthum zu lokken,
 Aber der landmann ermißt hier, mit prüfendem gang,
 Seines wohnorts entfernung vom saatfeld oder vom hofraum,
 Oder folget der lust, angelnd im eignen gebiet.
 Plane machen sie dort, um see und gestad' zu verlassen,
 Hier, nach zerstörendem sturm, neu zur bauen ein hauß!

Although in real life, Boehlendorff had to leap national and cultural boundaries when travelling, and in his homeland he traversed a multilingual region, in his wandering poems we are unsure whether the people we meet, the landmen, are Latvian or German. In the poem “Werstpfähle, Von Dörpt nach Riga und weiter”, the poet encounters people from all walks of life on his seven-day journey, although there is not a single reference to their national origin.

VI The poem as a travelogue

“Werstpfähle” (“Milestones”), with which I began my article, leads me to the third mode of travelling in Boehlendorff’s poetry. In May 1812, Boehlendorff travelled from Tartu to Riga, promising his friends in Tartu that he would write as many verses as it took to pass milestones. The total number of miles, as well as the number of verses in hexameters, is 231.

This poem is like a travelogue. Unlike Boehlendorff’s other wandering poems, in which the journey is depicted metaphorically, with the poet’s inward journey in the foreground, this poem focuses on the external. He gives a detailed description of the route and places passed, what was seen on the way, who was met, and where the stops were made which allows us to reconstruct the exact route of his journey.

Boehlendorff was closely connected with Tartu. His brother Hermann Leopold (von) Boehlendorff (1773–1828) was professor of practical theology at the reopened university in Tartu, and he had many other friends in the city (among them Karl Morgenstern (1770–1852), Gottlieb Eduard Lenz (1788–1829) and Karl Petersen (1775–1822), who are mentioned in the poem⁸). Boehlendorff, too, wished to become a professor, and was still cherishing the hope of becoming a lecturer at the University, signing his poem on 1 June 1812 as “künftiger Lektor zu Dorpat”.

The verses were written on open pages in different places, reflecting the moments of his journey. Due to their fragmentary character, the Werstpfähle

⁸ About the historical background of this poem, see Lukas 2027.

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are a romantic project in the sense of the early Romantic understanding of poetry, which viewed the fragment as the most appropriate form of a continual being-on-the-way of existence and of the human being toward a wholeness. (Schlegel 1967) Later, when rewriting the text and numbering the lines, he no longer followed the route and chronology of the journey, trying to organise the fragments to give the poem an "epic meaning", as he says in his poem, although this is not very successful, or only partially so.

The theme of this poem is travel. This journey takes the poet away from his friends, away from his hoped-for job in Tartu. The journey becomes increasingly uncomfortable for him, sometimes making him remember that this is no ordinary journey, and "the hangman rings the bells" ("Glocken läutet der Henker"). At the end of the poem, the existential worry that is nagging at the poet's heart is also alluded to: "Hunger is sorrow: be it still far away!" ("Hunger Kummer ist: sey der noch fern!").

The journey from Tartu to Riga leads to loneliness, away from the world. It is a story of liberation from social ties. But the poem ends with an optimistic and hopeful note:

"Nicht nur der Zeit zu gedenken, erreicht' ich das mühsam eriegte
Ziel; Vergessen ist süßer! so wollen wir leben und reisen."

VII And Beyond. Comments on Estonian wandering poetry in the 20th century

Finally, allow me to make a few observations on Estonian wandering poetry. Seven years after Boehendorff's journey from Tartu to Riga, in June 1819, the Estonian poet Kristian Jaak Peterson walked the same route on foot, recording fleeting moments of the journey in his Estonian-language diary and his "Song, when I went from Tartu to Riga, to see my parents". Unlike Boehendorff, Peterson's poetry did not appear in print during his lifetime; it was forgotten and only discovered 100 years later. Thus, the beginning of Estonian wandering poetry (and, in fact, of Estonian poetry) was delayed by 100 years.

It should be emphasised that the condition for Romantic travel was freedom of travel – the freedom to go, find one's own way, and return – and an understanding of travel as a means of self-development and self-discovery. These conditions rarely existed in the Baltic countries in the second half of the 20th century. At a time when the whole free world was travelling, and James Clifford was talking about "traveling cultures", defining travel in the late twentieth century as "the ways people leave home and return, enacting differently centered worlds, interconnected cosmopolitanismus" (Clifford

1997: 27–28), for the world behind the Iron Curtain freely crossing borders and free interaction were not possible. For many, travelling meant displacement. Most 20th-century Estonian travelling poetry can only be mentioned in quotation marks.

Hitler's treaty with Stalin in 1939 resulted in the displacement of entire nations. First, all Baltic Germans were displaced, never to return home. In the following years, 80,000 people fled Estonia to escape the Soviet regime in small boats across the sea, braving not only the windy seas but also Soviet bombing raids.

Among them was the poet Karl Ristikivi (1912–1977), whose wandering song from 1950 goes like this:

Sing me a song of a lad that is gone,
Say, could that lad be I?

Sing me a song of a lad that is gone,
Say, could that lad be I?

Minagi olin Arkaadia teel,
kuigi ma sündisin saunas.
Mõnikord mõtlen: ma läheksin veel,
muretu nooruk Arkaadia teel,
marssalikepike paunas.

Once I was young and Arcadia-bound,
Thought I was born in a hovel.
Sometimes I muse with my feet on the ground:
Oh, to be young and Arcadia-bound,
Safe from the pick and the shovel!

Aga ma tean, et kaotasin käest
Tee juba enam kui ammu,
Ja et ma üksinda enese väest
Leiaksin tee, mille kaotasin käest,
Selleks ei ole mul rammu.

But like so many another I've lost
Track of the signs to those bowers,
And to discover them now it would cost
More than the dreams of the youth that I've lost,
More than my physical powers.

Kuhu ka lähen, seal vesi on ees,
Vesi ja kõledad kaljud.
Lahkunud viimne kui lootsikumees,
Lahkunud lauldes, et vesi on ees,
Nii nagu laulavad paljud.

Where shall I go then? The water is there,
Lined with cold rocks and dead beaches,
And the last boatman has left with his fare,
Singing to warn me the water is there,
Singing of channels and reaches.

Nõnda ma istun ja tõesti ei tea,
Vanduda ennast või saatust.
Ärge vaid öelge, et nõnda on hea,
Nõnda on elu... Sest teie ei tea,
Ei tunne mu isamaatust.

So here I am, and I really don't know
Where I shall waken to-morrow,
Don't try to tell me it's good to be so;
Life, after all, is like that. You don't know
The depth of an exile's sorrow.

(Translated by W. K. Matthews)

"So wollen wir leben und reisen!" New Lights on the Wandering Poem ca. 1800 and beyond

For Ristikivi in 1972, there was no turning back to the homeland. After nearly 30 years in exile, Ristikivi knows: "No, we shall never return to this shore" ("Ei, meie ei tule kunagi tagasi siia randa").

Those who stayed behind the Iron Curtain could not travel, or, if they did, it was a forced travel, for example between 1941 and 1949, when 100,000 people were, on Stalin's orders, forcibly displaced from the Baltic states to remote Siberia, deprived of their homes and forced to live in prison camps in inhumane conditions, enduring hunger, cold, hard labour and violence. Many of them died, just like the Estonian poet Heiti Talvik, who died in 1947 in Siberia's Tyumen Oblast. The location of his grave remains unknown. His 'wandering poem' entitled "The Refugee" ("Pagulane") goes like this:

Nõrkenult jäin maha metsa serva, Käies teed, mil nimeks Ei-tea-kuhu.	Weak, I halted by the forest's mearing, Walking ways whose name was Who-knows- whither;
Rohukõrsi ronib mulle kõrva, Lilleseemneid kannab tuul mu suhu.	Creeping grass-haulms now disturb my hearing, And my mouth tastes wild seed blowing hither.
Kellele mu laule veel on vaja? Kaugelt veereb kahurite kõu. Jahe metsatukk on nüüd mu maja Ja ta haljust ahnelt soob mu põu.	Who cares here for all my recent singing? Cannon-thunder limns the distant scene. These cool depths are now my home, and springing Shrubs and grasses proffer me their green.
Joob ja joob ning uinudes veel tajub, Kuis mu süda linnulauluks hajub.	As I drink that green and press the heather's, I can feel my bird's heart growing feathers.
(Translated by W. K. Matthews)	

Talvik may have been physically destroyed by the Soviet authorities, but, as another Estonian poet Hannes Varblane (2008), has said, his poems "functioned like a time bomb for me and other poets of my generation and not only for us, not only for my generation. He is one of the reasons we are, at least at the moment, living in a free Estonia."

Today, in our free world, we can be romantic wanderers, enjoying freedom of movement and freedom of thought, as we search for ourselves in the world and return again. Thus, we can now cheer with Boehlendorff: "So, let us live and travel!" But we must not forget that there is also travel poetry in the world today about flight, exile, and violent displacement, as is currently the case not far away in Ukraine.

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