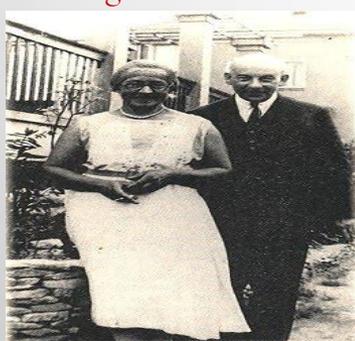


# Neil H. Donahue, German Studies

Professor of German and Comparative Literature

Senior Associate Dean, Honors College



My research in 20<sup>th</sup>-century German literature and culture has been mainly devoted to prose fiction and poetry, but also film and other arts. In all of my work I try to link formal analysis of the work, based on 'close reading' or close textual analysis, with the social, cultural, intellectual, artistic and literary history of the work(s) and the author: I try to relate the two dimensions of aesthetic form and historical context(s), of analytical *formalism* and *New Historicism*, through an understanding of *Critical Theory*.

Orte der Geometrie:  
Einzelne Pappel, Platane.  
Und dahinter die Luft,  
Schiffbar mit heiterem Kahne  
In einer Stille, die braust.  
Einsames Sich-Genügen  
In einem Himmel aus Schaum,  
Hell und mit kindlichen Zügen.  
Alles wird faßlich und Form:  
Kurve des Flusses, Konturen  
Flüchtender Vögel im Laub,  
Diesige Hitze-Spuren,  
Mundvoll Wind und Gefühl  
Für blaue Blitze, die trafen  
Körperschatten, die sanft  
Schwanken wie Segel vorm Hafen

I've had research grants from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the Fulbright Program and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation that led to numerous articles and reviews, and the books that appear below. At Hofstra I've received the Lawrence Stessin Prize for Best Scholarly Publication in 1993 and the Peter Herman prize in 2000. In 2011, I chaired the international German Studies Association Book Prize committee in the humanities.

### Exemplary excerpt: Explication (in English) of a Poem (in German)

The third section of *Wind und Zeit* carries the same title as its first poem "Aufschwung" and, taken as a whole, constitutes the axis of this volume and of Krolow's development in these years. "Orte der Geometrie" (I, 110) is a companion piece to "Drei Orangen, Zwei Zitronen" and compresses further, under the influence of Jorge Guillén, the aesthetic enunciated by that poem in order to gain an additional degree of logical clarity and visual simplicity:

Image and poetics go side by side, each determining the other: the image renders the concept concrete, the concept renders the image intellectual, as a metaphor of itself, perceived and apperceived, registered by the senses and reflected upon by consciousness. The poem becomes an intellectual landscape in which idea and image come together, without merging, the real and the cognitive, contraries conjoined by juxtaposition, which requires an act of visual intellection, as would an oxymoron ("Stille, die braust"), whereby neither element points beyond to a larger order of coherence to become allegory. Both terms simply reflect forth and back upon each other as an "Einsames Sich-Genügen" of metaphoricity. As such, as "Orte der Geometrie," the landscape becomes both sensuous and abstract, an object and its universal: "Alles wird faßlich und Form: Kurve des Flusses, Konturen." The poem achieves flashes of cognition and recognition ("blaue Blitze") in the metaphorical dimension of language between description and proposition, between the language of nature and denatured concept, or, for example, in the abstract interstices of the tautological compound "Körperschatten," where each part adumbrates the other just as a body throws a shadow, and vice versa, a far less common thought. For Krolow, that interstice of intellection is not a gloomy abyss, but the bright light around the shadow, its nimbus, the negative space around the object. In this manner of refined expression, the leit-motif of wind in this volume does not even here require direct utterance, since it is present, though unseen, in the image and fills the "Segel vorm Hafen" like thought within language. (Krolow, p. 123)

