The monolingual paradigm—the idea that each individual ‘owns’ the one language in which he or she has been socialized, and that this language therefore offers the best possible opportunities for expression—is becoming increasingly fragile. Scholars have pointed out, and rightfully so, that this idea is a modern Western construction that is meant to produce cultural homogeneity in the service of ‘nation building,’ to create a uniform space of communication. For Germanophone areas, this linkage between language and nation is associated in particular with Jacob Grimm, who invoked this connection repeatedly and emphatically in his many writings. He writes in his Über den Ursprung der Sprache (On the Origin of Language): “the power of language forms nations and holds them together; without such a bond, they would scatter” (“die kraft der sprache bildet völker und hält sie zusammen, ohne ein solches band würden sie sich versprengen,” 30). Yet, if the monolingual paradigm no longer applies, then what will take its place?

Critics of the monolingual paradigm seem to agree that it is not possible to simply return to some ‘primordial’ multilingual world. Yildiz has written about the “post-monolingual condition,” signalling uncertainty about what would and should take
the place of monolingualism. The sociolinguists Makoni and Pennycook argue that if multilingualism means to supplant the monolingual paradigm, then multilingualism cannot just be the simple pluralisation of monolingualisms. Instead, we must begin “disinventing” linguistic homogeneity. Or, to use a category proposed by Stockhammer and others, one must destabilize the simple ‘linguism’ (“Sprachigkeit”) of linguistic elements and structures, meaning their assignability to one language (in the sense of langue; see Stockhammer et al.).

The following remarks are dedicated to assessing alternatives to the monolingual paradigm. We use an example that affects us philologists in the emphatic sense of the word: we focus on ‘our’ own language and inquire into the possibility of a post-monolingual philological writing. We begin our discussion by first dealing with the reasons for the efficacy of the monolingual paradigm, particularly in the sciences and in philology (section I). Second, we turn to evaluate the relationship of philology and foreign languages, a problem that is particularly well illustrated in the field of translation and the use of foreign words (section II). Third, we return to address our initial question, which explores the limits of and alternatives to the monolingual paradigm in the discipline of philology (section III).

**Scholarly Politics of Monolingualism**

Derrida’s famous sentence—“I only have one language; it is not mine” (*Monolinguisme* 1, “Je n’ai qu’une langue, ce n’est pas la mienne,” 13)—suggests that our very own idiolect still remains unavailable to every one of us. Everything that we say is (pre-)formed in its units and structure by other people, and this is not changed by the fact that we appropriate language for ourselves in a unique way and piece it together into ‘our’ language. The monolingual paradigm conceives of monolingualism as a phenomenon located beyond each individual speaker’s unique linguistic competence as well as the idioms of communication in which multiple idiolects enter into play with one another. It ignores how in these situations different linguistic standards grate on each other, and the narrowness of every isolated language, as well as the unambiguous linguism of the structures used, is potentially called into question. The monolingual paradigm would define language as a precisely delimited communal property, free of the effects of idiolects and everyday creolization.

Nevertheless, this line of argument can only scratch the surface of the monolingual paradigm’s social efficacy. This limitation is also due to the fact that this paradigm ‘only’ forms the ideological superstructure for politico-linguistic strategies that have changed the sociolinguistic setting tremendously. In the service of monolingualism, innumerable pedagogical and political institutions have worked, and continue to work, to invent linguistic standards and to sanction deviations. The enforcement of the monolingual paradigm has been and is accompanied by the establishment of linguistic borders and the removal of linguistic variance and transitional