

Genre and National Identity in German Romanticism

By

Stephanie L. Galasso

B.A., University of California, Davis, 2012

M.A., Brown University, 2015

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Date _____

Susan Bernstein, Advisor

Recommended to the Graduate Council

Date _____

Kristina Mendicino, Reader

Date _____

Zachary Sng, Reader

Approved by the Graduate Council

Date _____

Andrew G. Campbell, Dean of the Graduate School

CURRICULUM VITAE

Stephanie Galasso is a feminist German Studies scholar. She attended the University of California, Davis where she graduated *summa cum laude* with degrees in English and German. She joined the Department of German Studies at Brown University in the fall of 2012. At Brown, she has taught a range of courses, including introductory and intermediate German language. She has also worked as a teaching assistant in close collaboration with Professors Arnold Weinstein (“Literature and Medicine”) and Kristina Mendicino (“Writers in Exile: Addressing Fascism in America”). She earned her transitional degree of Master of Arts at Brown in 2015, following fields lists on the history of German lyric theory and discourses of memory, trauma, and remembrance. She spent the academic year of 2015-2016 at Universität Konstanz (Germany) through the support of a Fulbright Research Fellowship. She is the author of multiple translations, as well as of “Form and Contention: *Sati* as Custom in Günderrode’s ‘Die Malabarischen Witwen,’” which was published in Volume 24 of the *Goethe Yearbook* in 2017.

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INTRODUCTION

Genre and National Identity in German Romanticism

In order to account for this dissertation, and for the relationship between my writing and your reading, the following introduction must begin with a glimpse into the project I initially thought I would write, but ultimately did not: namely, a study of the German romantic elegy and women's contributions to it. This dissertation is a product of its times, roughly the years 2015 to 2018, a time during which my own understandings of loss, suffering, and national traditions have undergone dramatic revision and which have prevented me from writing a project focusing strictly on the elegy in German romanticism. Rather, I have focused on several texts that are crucially interlinked through their representations of difference (national, cultural, religious): Bettine von Arnim's *Die Günderröde*; Karoline von Günderröde's "Die Malabarischen Witwen" and "Adonis Todtenfeyer"; Goethe's *West-Östlicher Divan*; and several of Hölderlin's odes, including "An die Deutschen," "Dichtermut," and "Gesang des Deutschen."

There were many reasons for this change in topic. In beginning this introduction with what my project is *not*, I am further indebted to a poem that is largely responsible for this shift in my work: "not an elegy" by Danez Smith. Smith published the poem online after the police murder of Michael Brown of Ferguson, Missouri, which took place 9 August 2014. The following are several strophes from the version ultimately published in Smith's collection, *Don't Call Us Dead*:

I am sick of writing this poem
but bring the boy. his new name

his same old body. ordinary, black
dead thing. bring him & we will mourn
until we forget what we are mourning

is that what being black is about?
not the joy of it, but the feeling

you get when you are looking
at your child, turn your head
then, poof, no more child.

that feeling. that's black.

\\
think: once, a white girl
was kidnapped & that's the Trojan War.

later, up the block, Troy got shot
& that was Tuesday. are we not worthy

of a city of ash? of 1,000 ships
launched because we are missed?

i demand a war to bring the dead child back.

i at least demand a song. a head.
\\

It would be impossible to write a word about this poem without acknowledging that I come to it from the subject position expressly invoked later in the poem: “reader, what does it / feel like to be safe? white?” (ll. 49-50).¹ Precisely this gulf—which the poem makes explicit—has profound consequences for how I will relate to the imbrication of genre and difference throughout this dissertation. One way that I will attempt to pay

¹ I would be remiss if I did not attempt to make it emphatically clear here that the very fact that I am using this poem in a dissertation, a genre of academic writing and expertise in its own way, will impact how my citation is read. I hesitate to cite this poem, to put it up for scrutiny and analysis, including my own, when I argue against genre theories of the romantic period being read without significant contextualization of the instrumentalization of various forms of difference in categorizing literatures. I do not want to level out the extreme differences between my lived experiences and those of the poet in question. Rather, I wish to pay some form of homage and respect to what kinds of questions this poem has raised for my dissertation.

tribute to this poem is to acknowledge the impact that it had on my work on many interconnected levels.

First, the poem raises the question of what events have been viewed as “worthy / of a city of ash” as well as worthy of storytelling, of elegy, and of song. The poem suggests that it is not an elegy because the loss described, the loss of the “black / dead thing” is, in the framework of White supremacist state-sanctioned violence, not recognized as loss at all. Such a structure of institutionalized violence allows for a new name at the same time it rapidly forgets “his same old body.”

Secondly, the poem seems to refuse the label of “elegy” because, as the title of the poetry collection insists, *Don’t call us dead* (and again, the “I writing the word “us” is not included in that “us” because the “I” writing occupies a body that has not been marked in a way that assigns police violence to it). As Smith writes in the first poem of the collection, “summer, somewhere”: “please, don’t call / us dead, call us alive someplace better.”

Finally, I focus on these strophes, and this moment, because it hovers in the space that opens up when genre is revealed to be an assumption of a certain aesthetic relationship. To be more precise, the following project will argue that a major component of German romantic genre theory arises out of a strand of the *overall* corpus of genre theory that construes genre as a relationship between speaker and listener, or writer and reader. Aristotle famously grounds the origins of poetry in representation:

As to the origin of the poetic art as a whole, it stands to reason that two operative causes brought it into being, both of them rooted in human nature. Namely 1) the habit of imitating is congenital to human beings from childhood (actually man differs from the other animals in that he is the most imitative and learns his first lessons through imitation), and so is 2) the pleasure that all men take in works of imitation. 20

Hence, humans both learn through mimetic behaviors and also enjoy witnessing, viewing, and taking part in mimetic works. It is through this general thesis that Aristotle is able to categorize poetic forms based upon their intended imitation. Genres, then, possess the ability to have a certain prescribed effect on the one receiving, witnessing, or reading the work. This conceptualization affects each of the texts in my dissertation, as I will enumerate later in this introduction.

“not an elegy” reveals the instabilities and precarities of this perceived relationship of genre in numerous ways. Many critics have demonstrated that genres are almost impossible to establish as following one set pattern, and that even texts hailed as classics or forerunners of a certain genre often disturb the precedent they ostensibly mark.² As a result, the relationship between writer and reader has been subject to immense critique. But “not an elegy” suggests there are further reasons for the fundamental instabilities in the relationships that genres assume and establish, not only because the category of the elegy has itself seen so many modulations.³ The poem therefore raises critical questions for the investigations of genre and difference that will follow.

Smith’s poem overturns understandings of genre that presume the speaker’s words can influence the listener or reader’s affect in a calculable manner. Smith explicitly invokes the classical tradition that spawned the elegy in the poem’s renunciation of its

² For a nuanced and illuminating account of the *Bildungsroman*, for example, see Marc Redfield’s *Phantom Formations: Aesthetic Ideology and the Bildungsroman*. Ithaca, Cornell UP, 1996. Print.

³ See, for example: Ziolkowski, Theodore. *The Classical German Elegy, 1795-1950*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980.

codified, impossible specificity: “think: once, a white girl / was kidnapped & that’s the Trojan war. / Later, up the block, Troy got shot and that was Tuesday.” There is a fundamental and persistent asymmetry in what is construed as tragic, what is construed as a representation, and who gets to perform that representation. This poem forced me, on multiple levels, to confront the residues of race, privilege, and national identity as they stick to the markers we call “genre.” Smith refuses to write an elegy, not only because an elegy is not enough to express the grief of another state-sanctioned murder, not only because the poem would be entering into a canon produced by a society that has not recognized this murder as loss, and not only because the entire collection is named after a refusal to be counted as dead (*Don’t Call Us Dead*): Smith also seems to refuse to write an elegy because the elegy itself is a category derived from a tradition and a way of thinking that has assumed “the feeling / you get when you are looking / at your child, turn your head / then, poof, no more child” could ever be made accessible and known to an audience who has never, and will never, share that experience. This dissertation will examine the assumptions, textual qualities, and formal devices that ornament this difference at the same time they seem to leave it unacknowledged. But in each chapter, I hope also to show how the rubrics of genre, and the language used to describe literary form, might still leave room for more honest and self-reflexive engagements with difference. “not an elegy” taught me to think about the circumstances, conditions, categories, and hierarchies that affect intersubjectivity and its representations throughout literary history.

Again, this dissertation is the product of its times. It has been profoundly influenced by US-American events, race theory, and their intersections with literary

criticism. Anne Cheng, whose work influenced the broadest conceptualizations of my project and specifically my work on Hölderlin, suggests that race and racialization are in fact central to the corpus and canon known as “American literature.” In her study, *The Melancholy of Race*, she describes the formation of a “melancholic corpus” that is melancholic “because of what it excludes but cannot forget” (12). This exclusion yet retention of texts by marked bodies from the American canon has lasting influences, including the very structuring of what is considered marginal or mainstream in literary discourses. (Cheng ties these trends to the overall, political imaginary and narrative that serves as the foundation of what is often touted as US-American identity). But the question I find most pressing for my own work at hand is: how has the representation of bodies marked as “different” been essential to the formation of both nation and national literatures?

Two further texts have been instrumental in my theoretical re-formulation of the dissertation: Toni Morrison’s *Playing in the Dark* and Fredric Jameson’s *The Political Unconscious*. In the latter text, Jameson argues with great relevance for my research interests, that though genres may be wholly inconsistent formal structures, their historical contingencies contribute to every encounter one makes with a text:

Texts come before us as the always-already read; we apprehend them through sedimented layers of previous interpretations, or—if the text is brand-new—through sedimented reading habits and categories developed by those inherited interpretive traditions. This presupposition dictates the use of a method (which I have elsewhere termed the ‘metacommentary’) according to which our object of study is less the text itself than the interpretations through which we attempt to confront and to appropriate it.
ix-x

Genre here is still a preconception of a relationship between the writing subject and the recipient of that writing, but Jameson crucially notes that that relationship comes charged

with the accrued experiences of prior readings, and, I would add, *lived experiences*. My intervention in the following work on von Arnim, Günderrode, Goethe, and Hölderlin is to argue that their articulations and modifications of genre are consistently being worked out in contemporaneous frameworks that sought to codify and accumulate knowledge of difference. And precisely this subject position, of being the subject, of aspiring to knowledge that is not wholly self-reflexive, is taken up in their writings. In order to hold myself to comparable principles, I have chosen to inscribe this introduction with an explicit account of how my topic has developed, and also to acknowledge how I may approach a text from a position of relative “safety,” to borrow Smith’s word, that would inflect my understanding of loss and, ultimately, also of elegy.

Toni Morrison adds crucial specifications to the broad historicist approach of Jameson: she transforms the focus from how the subject has envisaged such concepts as freedom, to how the subject construes and requires (racialized) objects *within* the construction of the concept of freedom, and related concepts, in American literature. Drawing on a phrase from Marx’s *Das Kapital*, Jameson claims that a wholly Marxist approach to literature must view texts through the lens of their being instantiations of the long overarching plot of “the collective struggle to wrest a realm of Freedom from a realm of Necessity” (4). What Morrison points out is that that articulation of Freedom, from at least the Enlightenment on, was always coded through a relationship to a racialized slave class.⁴ That is why I think it would be impossible to carry Jameson’s

⁴ Note that she is not arguing that there is some transhistorical conception of freedom that was constructed through race. She explicitly ties developments in these discourses to specific historical time periods, including the colonization of the American continent: “The need to establish difference stemmed not only from the Old World but from a difference in the New. What was distinctive in the New was, first of all, its claim to freedom, and, second, the presence of the unfree within the heart of the democratic experiment”

imperatives to their fulfillment without a thorough articulation of what race and difference more broadly (and particularly gendered racializations) have to do with the historical moments that literary critics examine.

Jameson acknowledges the issue of attempting to refute a teleological conception of history without forcing an interpretive “master narrative” of one’s own (15). What he proposes, then, is recognition of the political unconscious that shapes both the texts themselves and critics’ attempts to interpret them. But what Toni Morrison so critically argues in her work is that any collective “unconscious” is by no means universal. She intervenes by looking at the White literary unconscious, centering the purposes black characters are made to serve in texts by white authors. She turns the position of the author in to its own kind of object in a defiant critical move against the whiteness that presumes itself a universal, representing, and unmarked subject:

[There is a] pattern of thinking about racialism in terms of its consequences on the victim—of always defining it assymmetrically from the perspectives of its impact on the object of racist policy and attitudes. A good deal of time and intelligence has been invested in the exposure of racism and the horrific results on its objects. [. . .] But that well-established study should be joined with another, equally important one: the impact of racism on those who perpetuate it. It seems both poignant and striking how avoided and unanalyzed is the effect of racist inflection on the subject. What I propose here is to examine the impact of notions of racial hierarchy, racial exclusion, and racial vulnerability and availability on nonblacks who held, resisted, explored, or altered those notions. “Playing” 11

In the following dissertation, it is critical to note that I am writing about a time period when race was in a crucial period of configuration.⁵ Though I have relied heavily on

(48). I should also note here that the methods, devices, technologies, and articulations of the racialization that I have noted were not consistent over time and were subject to their own shifts.

⁵ See, for example, *The German Invention of Race*. Ed. Sara Eigen and Mark Larrimore. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006. Print.

contemporary race theory in the framing of my overarching research questions and objectives, it would be a misnomer to refer to the processes I describe in this dissertation as racialization, and to tie it too rigidly to the notions of “racial hierarchy, racial exclusion, and racial vulnerability” Morrison describes. As I will show, the notions of difference that are invoked in the nineteenth century are diffuse and difficult to isolate. Difference is shaped by religion, culture, gender, national origin and the nation’s political structures, and each of these categories seem in turn to shape one another; difference is both a residue of confrontations between “East” and “West” as well as between the emergent German “nation” and other European countries; and difference is the gap that exists between divergent lived experiences, predicated in each of the texts on an experience of oneself as an authoritative self capable of representing that difference. However, Morrison’s general contention that, for too long, criticism has ignored the “subjects” that purport themselves to be in a position to represent difference (and subjects who construct these representations often in ways that degrade that difference), influences my attempts to rethink the retention of difference in German romantic theories of genre and form.

An additional, mediating text that has begun to help me think through these tensions and gaps has been an essay by Caren Kaplan and Inderpal Grewal, “Transnational Feminist Cultural Studies: Beyond the Marxism/Poststructuralism/Feminism divides” in which the authors saliently point out a frequent oversight of canonical Marxist cultural theory: namely its purport to a universal critique of class and history without a rigorous analysis of how gender, race, and unequal distributions of wealth are written into the textual and institutional legacies

of the authors themselves and of the history of what constitutes canonical Marxisms. Pointing to the erasure of Gayatri Spivak in broader, ostensibly groundbreaking theorizations of globalization, most notably a text I have used for my second chapter, Aijaz Ahmad's *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*, Kaplan and Grewal note that the postcolonial subject cannot be taken as a unified entity, as colonialism and the construction of gender were mutually imbricated.

While Spivak has also been crucially engaged in the work of theorizing class and globalization, her incitement to take the formations of gendered and nationalized subjectivities has been consistently ignored. All too frequently, as Kaplan and Grewal point out, intersectional feminist work such as Spivak's is ignored by Marxists *as well as* by Anglo-American and Eurocentric feminisms that end up instrumentalizing her rigorous insights for a consolidation of disparate yet entangled subjectivities into the notion of one unified feminist subject.

One of the things that I admire so much about Morrison's *Playing in the Dark* and Kaplan and Grewal's intervention is their earnestness in examining their own subject positions. The feminist authors I have cited in this dissertation are the first to implicate themselves in "this configuration of power" (Kaplan and Grewal 437). In contrast, I take issue with self-fashioned Marxist critics like Fredric Jameson who frame their work as potentially "polemic" theories of literature but, in the end, run the risk of re-entrenching a non-rigorous order of literary interpretation, dissemination, and appreciation (Jameson xii).

Through engagement with feminist literatures from a variety of contexts, my critique of genre and its formulations in nineteenth-century Germany are inseparable

from my ongoing negotiation of my own subjectivity that I bring to bear upon my work. My dissertation explores several dimensions of literary analysis and categorization that I take to be inextricably interlinked. This dissertation is as much about the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as it is about problems and oversights I see recurring in certain areas of literary scholarship, particularly the positing of certain constructions of feminist agency or political self-representation as definitive and paradigmatic. These tendencies can be especially pronounced in feminist German Studies scholarship on Orientalist texts such as Karoline von Günderrode's "Die Malabarischen Witwen." Each of the chapters that will follow is at once an attempt at a rigorous formal analysis at the same time that it critiques the histories of the very formal conventions that characterize the work at hand. Likewise, I have intended for any socio-historical context I invoke to be matched with a critique of the status of those contexts in the existing secondary scholarship, to which I contribute and in which I am implicated.

My insistence on examining the factors that contribute to difference and, hence, the understanding and theorization of genre, is a guiding principle of this project. Genre theory is constantly being worked out in relationship to difference broadly conceived (sometimes in terms of national identity, gender, etc) but in its use as a kind of device in facilitating representation, that difference is then often erased or not acknowledged as affecting the ability to represent. The impossibility of the authorial subject's experiencing a certain event is not taken as a hindrance to the ability to represent it. In my work on Bettine von Arnim, the complex interconnections between racialization and gender, and their mutual imbrication in what is framed as a kind of mournful reflection on the death of Günderrode, I argue that von Arnim's theorizations of reconciliation, wholeness, and

stability, explicitly rely on difference (*Widerspenstigkeit*) which is then carried out in her treatment of Ephraim. Günderrode's poetry has been an essential component of this dissertation both in terms of its content as well as in the transnational feminist scholarship that surround the topic of *sati*. It was through this chapter, as well as my work on Goethe's *West-Östlicher Divan*, that I confronted certain "sedimented" (to borrow Jameson's phrase) representations of events and political structures of the "Orient" that are construed as habitual, deeply engrained, and essentially despotic. These two chapters also develop readings of moments when non-human entities (flowers, talismans) take up speech, and how this fantasy of the assumption of speech models the valuation being placed on speech and "self-representation." The accompanying suspicion that these objects might be misleading or esoteric (India as deceptive, abraxas token) suggests implicit recognition that the subject's representation may not be accurate. I look into these moments, too, because they suggest moments when representation and literature might have taken different, less transgressive routes. My chapter on Hölderlin takes up how contrasting notions of freedom and nation are imaged as processual rather than fixed, and suggest his poetry may contain productive insights into alternative readings of national identity formation.

GERMAN ROMANTIC GENRE THEORY

German romantic genre theory emerges out of broader trends in the eighteenth century, when aesthetics as such began to become a codified study. Johann Christoph Gottsched, for example, outlined a theory of poetics in *Versuch einer kritischen Dichtkunst* (1730) that rests upon several related points. Namely: good poetry imitates, or at least should imitate, Nature, and it should abide by the precedents of Greek poetics,

who achieved perfection in all sciences. The duty of the poet is to constantly refine his taste according to the reputed standards of the Greeks, and to develop his life experiences in such a way that they can be transmitted and conveyed to the audience through the medium of poetry. In describing the earliest poets, he quite literally terms poetry a kind of “Mittel” for the communication of experiences, in a way that again assumes emotional states to be transmissible to the recipients of aesthetic language in a way that I trouble in my work:

Man hat ja die alten Dichter allerzeit für weise Männer gehalten, und läßt ihnen noch heute zu Tage diesen Ruhm unangetastet. Foglich wird mans ihnen wohl nicht streitig machen, daß sie auch Absichten bey ihren Arbeiten gehabt haben. So mannigfaltig nun dieselben gewesen seyn mögen, so leicht sind sie doch zu errathen. Ihre Gedichte sind ja die Mittel, wodurch sie dieselben zu erlangen gesucht, und wirklich erlanget haben. 137

This is not the first time that he refers to something like an essential *Absicht* or purpose that motivates the relationship between poet and listener, given that in describing music (which he takes to be the foundation for poetry), he describes the musician’s affect thus: “Es war also sehr natürlich, daß die ersten Sänger den Anfang machten [. . .] verständliche Sylben und deutliche Wörter zu singen. Dadurch konnten sie dasjenige, was sie bey sich empfunden hatten, desto lebhafter ausdrücken [. . .] und bey ihren Zuhörern den gewünschten Ausdruck erreichen” (117). Genre becomes a way of ensuring this transmission of affective states from the speaker to the listener, but the situational differences that would impede or enhance that transmission, conditions that might reveal the failure of an artist’s *Absicht*, are leveled out.

Of course, there is a long tradition of poetics that supports his general trajectory; as Aristotelian poetics had insisted that all art essentially derives from the desire to

represent and to mimic. One of Gottsched's revisions or additions to this thesis is that genres are themselves constituted by the type of imitation achieved, he calls these "die drei Gattungen der poetischen Nachahmung."

Supposing, along with Gottsched and his contemporaries, that poetry is essentially mimetic, and genres are one means of augmenting or enhancing that mimesis, then "my" poetic experience of nature, and my relation to the listener or reader of my poetry are extremely significant, if not definitive aspects of poetic experience. A particular ethics of representation would need to emerge, and an ethics of the kind of transmission or presentation that genres enable.

To that end, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Laokoon: oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* (1766) posed critical interventions regarding the suitability of certain media forms for particular types of representation. Lessing distinguished between particularized affective states and their modulations through particular media, namely, as the subtitle suggests, between painting and poetry. One of his contentions opposes Adam Smith's claim in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* that emotions, when depicted too heavily-handedly, become unappealing and deterring. Lessing writes:

Nichts ist betrüglicher, als allgemeine Gesetze für unsere Empfindungen. Ihr Gewebe ist so fein und verwickelt, daß es auch der behutsamsten Spekulation kaum möglich ist, einen einzelnen Faden rein aufzufassen und durch alle Kreuzfäden zu verfolgen. 35

He opposes a general theory of sentiment, noting that sentiments in general are closely and inextricably interwoven, to the point that the possibility of arousing or stirring only one of them seems foreclosed. Yet, his distinction between poetry and painting also assumes that there can be a fundamentally shared affect between the artist creating the

representation and the reader or observer who receives the representation, and that the medium of an art form plays a central role in suggesting that affective state.

Friedrich Schiller's *Über Naïve und Sentimentalische Dichtung* of 1795

performed its own eponymous division, focusing on two movements of poetry. Schiller viewed the progression out of the age of the Greeks as a significant moment in the nature of poetry. While poets of the classical age could write from their perspective as inhabitants of Nature, Schiller's contemporaries stood on the other side of the advent of "Kultur," and thus occupy a new relation to their world. Hence, classical poets write a "naïve" poetry that reflects their status as "Naturkinder" (653). Meanwhile, a sentimental poetics has arisen that reflects a desire to return to this idyllic time. Out of this sentimental poetics, according to Schiller, emerge sub-categories such as the satirical and elegiac. The treatise is significant in its recognition of poetic forms as contingent upon the poet's relationship to his or her context, transforming Gottsched's insistence upon imitation of the Greeks into a heralding of a new poetic age.

German romanticism formed a central moment in the reconfiguration of genre. Friedrich Schlegel is one of the central theorists of these reconfigurations. As Peter Szondi notes, Schlegel changed the very nature of genre theory from a system of classification of the existing and/or possible genres, to the search for "a principle" that unites and complicates them all: his work "completes the transition of poetics from the Enlightenment to German idealism, from a pragmatic to a philosophical theory of the poetical genres" (Szondi 78). Moreover, as Szondi notes, his remark that poetry is tied to a place, seems a further and more critical elaboration of the division Schiller had made in

Über Naïve und Sentimentalische Dichtung. Schlegel writes in fragment 1880 of
Fragmente zur Literatur und Poesie:

Alle D i c h t a r t e n sind ursprünglich – Naturpoesie—eine bestimmte, lokale, individuelle. (Es kann unendlich viele Dichtarten geben.) Das individuelle bleibt darin, auch nach der Umbildung d[urch] Künstler. Die Formen sind einer unendlichen Umbildung fähig. Alle Griechischen und alle romantischen Formen verliehren sich ins Dunkel und sind nicht von Künstlern gemacht. – 186

Crucially, Schlegel argues that forms of poetry are tied to their contexts of composition, and for this reason there could be infinitely many. A century and a half before Michel Foucault could write in *The Order of Things* of the necessity of an “archaeology” of the grounds through which “knowledge and theory became possible,” Schlegel recognized that any theory of a particular genre, any attempt to demarcate one individual genre, was also an affirmation of a system of classifying that merits further investigation (xxi).

I argue in the following dissertation that what has heretofore gone unremarked is a negotiation of genre with *difference*. Schlegel fundamentally put into question the underlying grounding beneath individual theories of genres; and how one assumes that one genre can be differentiated from another. As Szondi also notes, this turn opened up a fundamentally new way of thinking about genre, one that, while in search of an underlying principle, also took into account the fact that a genre’s “historicity entails a transformation within the boundaries of the genre” (79). This is a realization that goes on to impact Lukacs, and hence a Marxist theory of a historically-contingent genre theory as I have shown in Jameson. But Schlegel, I would argue, was also demonstrating that genre theory was not only about differentiating individual genres from one another, and critiquing them with an eye to their historical contexts, but also beginning to show that *difference* is essential to the very notion of genre altogether. His father, Szondi points out,

went so far as to compare, “with the enthusiasm of a second Columbus, the discovery of further poetical genres with the discovery of unknown continents” in his version of Batteux’s *Les beaux arts réduits à un même principe* (77). In citing this comparison, I do not mean to affirm the implication that the colonization and genocide that followed the “discovery” of the Americas is something ethically or logically applicable to a metaphor of literary innovation. Rather, one must take the statement on its own terms: something about coining a new genre should be comparable to the sighting of new land. Szondi’s chapter on “Schlegel’s Theory of Poetical Genres” even uses language that acknowledges this tension, using the word “indigenous” to describe genres that necessarily arise out of their historical contexts (79). And while Szondi and Duff both acknowledge Goethe’s most concise definition of the three forms of poetry in his notes to the *West-Östlicher Divan* (the subject of my third chapter), they do not critically engage the fact that Goethe’s engagement with Arabic and Persian language poetics, the main substance of the volume in question, were a central site of Goethe’s attempt to relate and differentiate “Western” and “Eastern” literatures to and from one another.⁶

In the first three chapters of my dissertation, the perceived national, cultural, or religious difference of the marked Other plays a crucial role in the meaning of the genre of the text. Bettine von Arnim’s theory of a totalizing reconciliation that would also involve artistic forms relies upon difference in a way that is then applied to her relationship with Ephraim. The sonnet’s history glorifies *sati* in addition to the thematic content of Günderrode’s explicit statements. Goethe’s whole conception of uniqueness,

⁶ See Szondi’s insightful remark on Schlegel’s *Athenaeum* fragment 434: “This was written around 1798. Twenty years later, in the notes to the [sic] *East-West Divan*, Goethe wrote a passage on the ‘Natural Forms of Poetry’ in which the history of poetry is represented as forming a circular pattern reminiscent of Schlegel’s astral orbits (84).

circulation, and language hinges upon his articulation of a politicized difference between governance in the “West” and the supposed despotism of the East. Schlegel’s insights still resound in any analysis of genre and difference in the romantic period, because he recognized that any particular genre was an affirmation of an underlying classificatory system that would rebound upon all genres. I am delving deeper into that principle; the literature it would inform if it were in fact taken as a representative whole. What are the cultural, religious, gendered, nationalized values and norms that are taken to condition this underlying “Universalpoesie”? Perhaps in its negotiations of “freedom,” “suffering,” “victimhood,” “mourning,” etc., something of the instrumentalization of difference in literary and broader discourses emerges.

Bettine von Arnim’s Impossible *Vermählung*

My first chapter sets significant groundwork for the entire project not only through themes and motifs that it explores, but also through critical questions regarding the articulation and incorporation of difference in Bettine von Arnim’s novel, *Die Günderode*. This chapter explores how the theorization of a grand conceptual reconciliation, *Vermählung*, ends up essentializing difference as a sustainable category for the retention of the self. The ways in which von Arnim imagines this kind of reconciliation, and the ways she poeticizes and enacts difference in the novel, also rebound upon the theoretical frameworks I have begun describing, especially Marxist literary theories of genre that have not sufficiently addressed the roles of race, gender, and marginalization in literary production.

Die Günderode adumbrates a kind of *Vermählung* that would encompass all entities in their search for the Ideal, of coming together in *Geist*. This *Vermählung* is

sought at various levels; whether it's in terms of an art form (often described in terms of aspiring towards *Verklärtheit*); or in terms of interpersonal relationships (*Selbstverleugnung*); and communication (striving towards *Liebesgespräch* instead of *Selbstsprache*). But the novel is constantly bearing witness to forms of difference that cannot be integrated into these attempted reconfigurations. In fact, in a crucial passage, von Arnim explicitly invokes the idea of the *Widerspenstig* as part of the articulation of *Geist*. Alternatively, difference is at times leveled out in an erasing gesture of enforced sameness, when, for example, Bettine acknowledges and disavows her impulse to treat Ephraim as “Gegenstand der Neugierde” (606).

One index of how difference is never fully integrated into a complete *Vermählung* is the modulation of images and motifs (particularly sun and light-related images, as well as flowers) that are taken up repeatedly throughout the novel. For example, one could be forgiven for attempting to trace the major relationships of the novel through interwoven images of the sun, sunlight, candles, and flames. Günderrode is likened to the sun in the novel's beginning, and precisely as she begins to distance herself from Bettine, Bettine glimpses Ephraim in a room dappled with “Abendrot” (606). This reworking and interrelationship of images again fosters the sense that all images can be taken into a conclusive system, but their multiplicity and complexity defies a systematic kind of ordering.

By attempting to fit everything into a *Vermählung* while insisting on difference as a step in this reconciliation, a system risks ignoring and neglecting (and hence eventually perpetuating) the differentiated subjectivities that contribute to any kind of larger system. In this sense the novel is significant not only for how I think about genre, but for how I

approach theories of genre like Fredric Jameson's, which may claim to look at literary history as the broader history of the struggle for freedom, but he does not interrogate how freedom has been molded in contradistinction to enslavement.

While my critical and theoretical methods take this adumbration of a transnational feminist set of practices as crucial, I want to stress that I do not simply take that theory and use it to read the novel. Unlike previous scholars, I do not seek to label the novel as offering a philo- or anti-Semitic treatment of Ephraim, nor am I interested in redeeming von Arnim's politics.⁷ The objectification of Ephraim is important to my work because it is embedded in a larger system of insisting upon, while also disavowing, difference.

"Geschmücket festlich": Genre and Mourning in Two Poems by Karoline von Günderrode

In my second chapter, I examine a sonnet by Karoline von Günderrode, "Die Malabarischen Witwen," as well as a non-fixed-form poem, "Adonis Todtenfeyer," written as part of a sequence on Adonis, with Friedrich Creuzer. The two poems explore two events that have been construed as women-centered *mourning* practices: *sati*, or widow immolation in India, and the cult of Adonis. I argue, however, that viewing "Die Malabarischen Witwen" through the lens of mourning re-inscribes an Orientalist

⁷ In this sense, I am again inspired by Toni Morrison, who writes in *Playing in the Dark* and in her analysis of Hemingway's *The Garden of Eden*:

these deliberations are not about a particular author's attitudes toward race. That is another matter. Studies in African Americanism, in my view, should be investigations of the ways in which a nonwhite, Africanist presence and personae have been constructed—invented—in the United States, and of the literary uses this fabricated presence has served. [. . .] My project is an effort to avert the critical gaze from the racial object to the racial subject; from the described and imagined to the describers and imaginers; from the serving to the served. 90

understanding of women's agency in *sati*. It seems that within the sonnet, "Die Malabarischen Witwen" itself, the sonnet's history is invoked for numerous purposes.

First, she draws on its history as a form for courting the elusive beloved (usually gendered female). She portrays the women as young and beautifully robed, which is in keeping more with the sonnet's gendered conventions of courtly love, as well as with colonial descriptions, than with documented accounts of *sati*. This effect seems to be in contrast to the more nuanced account of the cult of Adonis, where trochaic tetrameter and repetition convey a musicality that mimics the musical nature of the mourning practices. "Adonis Todtenfeyer" appears to be a poem informed by replication of an experience, whereas, at first glance, "Die Malabarischen Witwen" seems motivated by ornament and ornamentation.

More specifically, in "Die Malabarischen Witwen," Günderrode draws on, and inserts herself into, the sonnet's contemporaneous status as a form that highlights the metrical prowess of the poet, particularly for German authors. This aestheticizing aspect of the form is significant, given the context of the overall subject positioning of German Indologists, who viewed themselves, in contradistinction to European rivals, as uniquely philosophical, critical, and scientific about their work with Indian literatures. However, perhaps it is precisely in this aestheticizing gesture that Günderrode's sonnet is most accurately representative of German, and in some sense broader European, scholarship and attitudes towards colonized India.⁸ Numerous contemporaneous studies surrounding Günderrode's poem stress the mystery and allure of India in terms suggesting a need for "deciphering." Viewed in this context, it seems that both poems, and not just "Adonis

⁸ I say broader European here because Orientalism operated through shared translations of texts into European languages, and my chapter involves several moments from French-language sources.

Todtenfeyer” replicate an experience—one, the musicality and dance of the cult of Adonis, and the other, the exoticizing approach of German Indologists.

In more technical terms, too, she draws on certain formal expectations associated with the Petrarchan sonnet in particular, in order to stress the sense of unification that should emerge out of *sati*. Namely: the volta, which typically signals a *turn* away from, or contradiction, or comment upon the subject matter of the initial octave, becomes a site of merging, unity, and harmony by stressing, “Nicht Trennung ferner solchem Bunde droht” (l. 9).⁹ This is a decisive example of a trend carried out throughout her sonnet, where meter and pauses also replicate the procession of women’s marching to the pyre.

The chapter ends with the suggestion that self-reflexivity and greater attention to the idea of reception might pose an alternative approach to literatures from disparate traditions. This suggestion is not my own twenty-first century anachronism, but rather an approach that emerges from some of the vocabulary of texts such as Georg Forster’s translation of *Sakontala*. At the same time that many of these texts assert a certain cultural superiority of the German Indologist accessing these texts, there coincides a vocabulary of alternative, receptive rather than classificatory approach to literatures.

Money Talks, Despots Don’t: *West-Östlicher Divan* and Goethe’s Appreciation of Persian Poetry

My third chapter has significant consequences for conceptualizations of language and the transmissibility of affective states through genre. Between the poetry of *West-*

⁹ This poem and all subsequent poetry from Karoline von Günderrode is taken from Walter Morgenthaler’s three-volume edition of her work. Subsequent citations will refer to volume number and page number; here 1: 325.

Östlicher Divan as well as Goethe's commentary on it in the *Noten und Abhandlungen zu besserem Verständnis*, two attempted delineations of language emerge: something like a poetic language that would be non-symbolic and immediate, capable of serving as a "heilige Zeugnisse," not subject to repetition because each time it is the essence itself; vs. a repetitive, citational, monologic, degraded language that circulates like paper money and coins (231).¹⁰ Concomitant to this distinction, Goethe describes Persian literature and Persian society as despotic: any form of protest takes place "nur in Zitaten des Korans und bekannter Dichterstellen" a statement that devalues citation and casts an entire society itself as authoritarian (234). However, in his own attempts to describe an immediate, non-symbolic kind of language in the poem *Segenspfaender*, Goethe reveals the untenability of his own distinction between these two types of language.

But looking at language is only one way in which I critique this conception of difference which attempts such a profound characterization of Persia. I also examine Goethe's self-insertions of himself as a "German" within the poetry of both *West-Östlicher Divan* and *Römische Elegien*. Rather than evaluating Goethe's approach to the texts he adapts, I look critically at how he formulates Germanness, and how these formulations could potentially be self-reflexive, revealing national identity to be a socially constructed phenomenon. The claim to nationalized subjecthood often passes as self-explanatory, but Goethe draws attention to his own position in a way that has *potential* to complicate the encounter between Western and Eastern poetics. The self-insertions make visible the attempt at representation that informs the volume, and the one that complicates Aristotelian genre theory up to the present. The attention drawn to

¹⁰ I have relied on the *Berliner Ausgabe* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1965), for the following analysis of both *West-Östlicher Divan* (Band III) as well as *Römische Elegien* (Band I).

Goethe's own construction of himself as German provides a trajectory for mapping what that identity formation looks like, in poems such as "Nachbildung."

The apparent linkage between Persian political structure and national literary traditions (including the genres either used or disavowed) is perhaps the logical conclusion of a thinking of genre that expects the subject to represent itself to the receiver in a certain pre-conceived fashion. Goethe could not create such a rubric for despotism if he were not drawing on a classical theory of genre that assumes a certain receptivity between subject and object. Given the proliferation of socially conditioned, ineffable view points (how the state affects experiences of powerlessness), genre theory needs to be profoundly reconceptualized. In that sense, Goethe's reflection on himself as a German poet throughout his poetry at least acknowledges his implication in the broader spectrum of national identities that are subject to racism, xenophobia, and cultural relativism.

"Alldulndend, gleich der schweigenden Mutter Erd": Victimhood as Legacy in Hölderlin's Odes

Moving from a call to greater self-reflection that is derived largely from Goethe's own poetic vocabulary, my analysis of Hölderlin focuses on a crux of his odes to Germany: namely, the fact that they seem to question the possibility of something like an ode, as well as something like a nation, entirely. I examine several of his odes ("An die Deutschen," "Dichterberuf," and "Gesang des Deutschen"), as well as an ode from one of his influences, Klopstock ("Mein Irrthum"). Both penned odes ostensibly informed by emerging concepts of nationhood, Germany in Hölderlin's case, and, in the poems I examine from Klopstock, France.

In the case of Hölderlin's odes, it seems his poetry resides in the moments of tension and emergence, rather than fixed categories. In "An die Deutschen," he draws upon the ode's history as a form of public address in a way that questions a poet's ability to speak on behalf of or represent any collective. He achieves this complication through a critical vocabulary of *ansprechen*, *büssen*, *irren*, and *erkennen*. These words end up destabilizing notions of activity and passivity that have been taken for granted in writers such as Goethe. In particular, Hölderlin also reveals the slippage in *Leiden* between a kind of endurance and suffering, in a way that rebounds upon the poet's project.

Although the ode, like the sonnet, was embedded in larger critical conversations regarding the possibility of classical poetic forms' being made to fit the German language, Klopstock and Hölderlin both focus on notions of perception, misrecognition, and error when discussing certain nationalizing concepts such as freedom and law. Both seem to suggest the potential for violence and suffering as consequences of forms of speech that claim to represent collectives, particularly in forms of law. In this sense, they also complicate the "secular" poetics that they have been taken to represent, as they reveal law to be implicated in power dynamics that can assume violence.

In "Gesang des Deutschen," the concluding poem of my analysis, Hölderlin uses several forms of song, including the nightingale's call, to suggest that aesthetic representations must also embrace hesitance, tarrying, and openness in order to avoid these power movements and potentials for abuse.

CHAPTER 1

Between Mourning and Melancholia: Attachment, Form, and Difference in *Die Günderode*

“Der Plaudergeist in meiner Brust hat immer fort geschwätzt mit Dir,” Bettine von Arnim begins her tribute to the eponymous Karoline von Günderode in *Die Günderode*¹¹ (299). The spirit of chatter is at once an exchange with another being, and yet so intimate that it resides in her own breast. The memory of cheerful conversation with her beloved friend keeps her awake through “den ganzen holperigen Wald” on her route home (299). The affinity between the two women, it would seem, is both a shared experience and yet something intensely personal to von Arnim—a conversation continuing with Günderode in absentia.

Von Arnim continues, describing her hosts’ reactions to her late arrival: “sie wachten auf und sagten, es wäre schon 1 Uhr vorbei, auf dem Land blasen sie Abends die Zeit aus, wie eine Kerz, die man sparen will” (299). This initial image of scarcity might also lend itself to von Arnim’s treatment of Günderode, who died at the end of the novel’s purported time frame, in 1806, although it is important to note that her death is not an explicit feature of the novel’s plot. One could imagine Bettine, though decades removed from the initial shock of Günderode’s death, treasuring these memories of her

¹¹ Although the correct spelling of the title is *Die Günderode*, Walter Schmitz rightfully points out in his commentary to the text that the original spelling of Karoline's last name is Günderode (825). I retain the distinction throughout the following chapter.

friend as one regards a candle certain to burn out. The heat of the candle flame is taken up again as von Arnim goes on:

Durch Dich feuert der Geist wie die Sonn durchs frische Laub feuert, und
mir gehts wie dem Keim, der in der Sonn brütet, wenn ich an Dich denken
will, es wärmt mich und ich werde freudig und stolz und strecke meine
Blätter aus, und oft bin ich unruhig und kann nicht auf einem Platz
bleiben, ich muß fort ins Feld, in den Wald... 299

It is a comparison that will be drawn many times in the course of the novel, both the comparison between human and plant life, as well as von Arnim's likening of herself to something in need of Günderrode's nurturing and guidance.¹² Note also the subtle wordplay in the repetition of *feuer* which is then slightly displaced in the word *freudig*. The idea of stretching out her leaves [*strecke meine Blätter aus*] in the warmth of Günderrode's influence reaches outside the plot; in thinking of Günderrode in this way she also, quite literally, proliferates the pages [*Blätter*] that go on to make up *Die Günderrode*. Again, she uses the word "fort," reiterating her love of movement and wandering. This dense compression of multivalent words is a frequent component of von Arnim's writing, and clearly the introductory letter to the book is no exception. Moreover, the word "fort" captures some of the delight von Arnim seems to experience each time she receives a letter from Günderrode, as if momentarily transported.

The desire to move and progress, and the competing impulse to conserve time as if it were a melting candle, the warmth of something called *Geist*, and the convergence of vegetal and human all foster an interconnected network of von Arnim's main concerns—

¹² Barbara Becker-Cantarino points toward this dimension of botanic imagery in the text in her thorough study, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik*, and makes the noteworthy point that natural images also speak to Bettine's transformations within the development of the text. She writes that her use of "Leitmetaphern aus der Natur" allow von Arnim to portray "die Selbstentfaltung der Kunstfigur 'Bettine' die zugleich Muse – Schmetterling – für 'die Günderrode' ist und sich als creative Autorin entpuppt" (257).

yet the greater hermeneutic for bringing these elements together never fully arises. Or at least, motifs and variations on images give the provocative sense of impending closure or resolution, yet a remainder always disturbs this apparent tranquility. Indeed, her next letter centers around a seductively related, yet mysterious botanic image:

Frei sein willst Du, hast Du gesagt? – ich will nicht frei sein, ich will Wurzel fassen in Dir—eine Waldrose, die im eigenen Duft sich erquicke, will die der Sonne sich schon öffnen und der Boden löst sich von ihrer Wurzel, dann ists aus. – Ja mein Leben ist unsicher, ohne Deine Liebe, in die es eingepflanzt ist, wirds gewiß nicht aufblühen. 300

No longer content to be the seed reveling in the warmth of Günderrode's spirit, Bettine now wishes to fasten roots in Günderrode's being. The *Plaudergeist* with which she began the novel has now morphed into a dream of shared development. A forest rose could have embodied a type of freedom, as it grows under shade of trees, far from human touch; and yet, it is here changed to embody the very opposite condition: deeply rooted in the body of the transient, loved object, dependent upon her body for her own nourishment. This passage also introduces another of von Arnim's counter-actions, *fassen*. Although she writes expansively of her desire to run "fort" as I have just shown, and to live freely and seemingly detached from the restrictions of her family, selected significant moments center around grasping and clinging. And here the grasping is a rootedness in Günderrode. Interestingly, though, she envisions the rose's being revived [*erquicken*] *not* in the warmth of Günderrode's body, but in its *own* fragrance [*im eignen Duft*]. Perhaps because it has been given a nurturing environment, the plant comes to life with its own scent and delights in the sun until a radical breakage occurs, and the roots are loosed from the soil [*und der Boden löst sich von ihrer Wurzel*]. This plant, captivated

by its own scent, might also model a tension that develops in von Arnim's description of the relationship between self and other—how the self can produce itself [*sich erzeugen*] without relying on or essentializing the other. By essentializing I mean treating the other strictly in terms of that which is perceived to be a defining characteristic; usually one imbued with a certain value judgment or meaning by the social and historical context in which it is produced. Then, for reasons unknown, the plant is loosed from its roots and is prepared to die – *dann ist's aus*. Von Arnim leaves unclear the grounds for this uprooting, but it seems a natural precondition of completing the plant's life cycle. Or perhaps it can be seen as somehow foreshadowing the traumatic, sudden loss of Günderrode.

In a slightly later letter, startled perhaps by the first rumblings of Günderrode's ominous designs, von Arnim uses a telling metaphor that once again particularizes her connection with the fellow writer. After receiving an ominous letter from Günderrode containing that which is later published as her "apokaliptisches Fragment,"¹³ von Arnim rejects what she perceives to be the macabre undertone of the text, saying, "In diesem Fragment lese ich, daß du nur im Vorübergehen mit mir bist, ich aber wollte immer mit Dir sein, jetzt und immer, und ungemischt mit andern" (317). This emphasis on the singularity of their bond evokes the botanic image of being planted in Günderrode. She specifies that her desire for Günderrode precludes any similar connectedness to another person—like roots in the soil of Günderrode's being, von Arnim dreams of existing "ungemischt mit andern" (317). While this quotation may not stress the conception of the self, it does betray her investment in a singular relationship with Günderrode.

¹³ It is important to note, along with Bäumer and Schultz, that the novel also sought to popularize Günderrode's largely forgotten written works: "'Bettina [wollte] ihr neugewonnenes Ansehen [nach der Veröffentlichung des *Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde*] um die Aufmerksamkeit eines größeren Lesepublikums auf die Autorin Karoline von Günderrode zu lenken" (31).

As I have stated, the full “key” to decoding each element of these interrelated images always seems just out of reach. In the following chapter I will attempt, accepting the often winding path occasioned by von Arnim’s writing, to pay attention to these images of growth, movement, and the competing (or at least, seemingly counter) impulse to seize and hold on to something—the desire to abide, willfully, by a certain image or person. These terms also feature frequently in von Arnim’s adumbrations of suitable writing forms, and bring together thoughts on loss and writing. Although the novel’s plot never explicitly stages G nderrode’s death, it is an event that hovers over the text, especially towards its ending. In the absence of the event of G nderrode’s death, I will examine how the novel nevertheless structurally and thematically enacts a type of mournful reflection on G nderrode’s influence. The structural mourning occurs in the attempt to dissolve the exclusive bond to G nderrode and the centrality of conceptions such as self and other, while the novel also introduces a character whose influence seems to challenge the easy emergence of a new cathexis.

In order to speak to this point, I will focus in particular on a selection of letters that expressly tackle von Arnim’s conception of the relationship between self and other (in this case, again, she does not herself cast G nderrode as the mourned object) and the role of writing. In keeping with this line of thought, it is also important to note that my decision to singularize these letters contradicts the very non-particularizing stance von Arnim attempts to describe in the novel, in which every word and every thought should strive towards totality. Moreover, such an approach to the highly complex plot of *Die G nderode* inevitably poses some obstacles to readability: with the fine web of interrelated images and motifs von Arnim uses, it is often impossible to single out one

particular instance without hearkening back to a constellation of moments throughout the novel. I hope the reader will forgive some incidences of moving backwards or forwards as the explication of such images requires. For example, when von Arnim writes of *Geist* and blooming flowers, she also seems to grapple with human attachment and the seemingly impossible task of fully divorcing oneself—like the roots suddenly severed from their soil—from a lost loved object. In the first letter I analyze, von Arnim adumbrates a connection to oneself and to others that de-centralizes the significance of the self and the particularized object (a central concept she calls *Selbstverleugnung*). She stresses instead movement towards a collective action in *Geist*, and cultivating a form of communication that puts what was heretofore known as the self (a situation she refers to as *Selbstsprache*) into an unbounded conversation infused with spirituality (*Liebesgespräch*, as she will call it). She draws upon musical images, too, in order to convey the type of seemingly paradoxical, wholly adaptive conversation she envisages as the ideal type of expression. But it is also in this particular letter that von Arnim emphasizes the significance of otherness—the “Widerspenstigen”—whose very waywardness actually strengthens the convictions of *Geist*. Although every aspect of her world should strive towards *Geist*, she leaves some space for contrary figures—thoughts, forms, persons—to challenge and even seduce.

The second letter of my analysis begins to illustrate one way in which this otherness is envisioned, and connects these thoughts on otherness with further reflection on formal aspects of writing. She begins the letter with resentment towards Clemens’ insistence that she focus her energy on poetry. Specifically, he encourages her to poeticize a treasured memory of a boat ride on the Rhine she had taken with Günderrode.

The particular hazards of forced rhyme and meter occupy central concern in the letter, and once again raise questions of *Geist* and the transformation of a lived relationship into written form. Writing should reinforce and strengthen *Geist*, according to von Arnim. And in the face of losing that *Geist* and the affective state of a memory, she decides that the possibility of forgetting is less deleterious than inflicting a memory with acoustic effect.

She ends the excursus with an apparent digression: a brief memory from the day before, in which she and Clemens strolled through the *Judengasse*. Von Arnim depicts the inhabitants she sees there as spirit-like (*Gestalten* and *Geister* appear in the account), apparently only slightly more materially substantial to her than the memory of her night with G nderrode on the Rhein. Although the explicit connection between her thoughts on poetics and her experience in the *Judengasse* is left vague, the final digression of the letter lends a crucial vocabulary to how von Arnim will relate to perceived Jewish otherness in several significant moments in the novel. It sets up a network in which Jewish otherness becomes a way of seducing her away from the need for G nderrode's companionship. The episode brings together her approach to aesthetics and her thoughts on Jewishness by describing the neighborhood in terms of spirits, uncanniness, and temptation.

The third letter I will devote considerable attention to is actually the final letter in the novel. Written after a long and foreboding silence from G nderrode, the letter opens with an apparent reversal of this *Waldrose* aspiration I have just introduced. As if a perfect image of the mastery of loss, von Arnim describes tending a magnificent rosebush with exactly twenty-seven blossoms, the precise age of the apparently suicidal

Günderrode in this scenario “mit siebenundzwanzig Knospen, das sind Deine Jahre, ich habe sie freudig gezählt,” she extols to Günderrode (736). Once the dependent rose proliferating roots in Günderrode’s spirit, von Arnim now appears as the gardener and protector of her friend’s memory—the confidante charged with the loving task of *erzeugen* in the face of Günderrode’s certain loss.

If she appears to have accomplished her goal—to have successfully abandoned the significance of her own self and her desire for Günderrode’s intimacy by tending the rosebush, and by writing this extensive novel in her remembrance, something still haunts at the edges of this apparent success. First, the rosebush so well suited to her affection for Günderrode is in fact a gift from a character introduced in the final third of the novel, Ephraim. Ephraim, repeatedly dubbed the “Handelsjud,” appears at first surrounded by tatters of fabric for a wedding dress he should sell to Bettine’s friend, but eventually starts to fill the role Günderrode once had. He encourages von Arnim’s education, even teaching her Hebrew and mathematics, and shares with her a passion for a deeper meaning to her otherwise fairly restricted life. Yet, he is immediately introduced to readers through the terms of his supposedly fixed cultural and religious identity, and his Jewishness is stressed in nearly every interaction depicted between the two of them throughout the novel.¹⁴ While

¹⁴ To be sure, the existent scholarship on *Die Günderode* has focused on nearly every conceivable aspect of the text aside from the convergence of its interests in both mourning and cultural otherness. One promising sentence, however, from Ingeborg Drewitz’s biography gestures toward this connection: „Die Überlagerung von Gegenwärtigem und Vergangenen fällt auch in der ausführlichen Würdigung des Marburger Kleiderjuden Ephraim auf“ (190). My chapter, however, hopes to critique the notion that a „thorough appreciation“ for Ephraim lies behind his deployment as a symbol of past and present.

Of the scholars who even acknowledge Ephraim’s presence in the text, most tend to focus either solely on the question of whether he fits either a philo- or antisemitic motive, and one even simply classifies Arnim as “solidarisiert [. . .] mit den Juden” without any reading of Ephraim at all (see Ursula Liebertz-Grün’s *Ordnung im Chaos: Studien zur Poetik der Bettine Brentano-von Arnim*. Carl Winter: Heidelberg, 1989. 40). Bäumer and Schultz’s *Bettina von Arnim* of 1995, focuses on the novel’s attempt to reclaim Günderrode and commemorate her contributions both to Arnim’s personal development, as well as to the literary canon. Although Bäumer and Schultz do not frame the text as a work of mourning, they do claim that the text presents “[ein] Akt psychischer Katharsis” that allows Arnim to transform “quälend[e]

he appears to satisfy von Arnim's repeated desire for a strong spirit to inspire her to greater thoughts and actions, he also seems made to embody the kind of *Widerspenstigkeit* von Arnim outlines in her pursuit of *Selbstverleugnung*. Indeed, in his introduction into the novel, traces of her first recorded encounter with Jewish life in the *Judengasse*, where everything had seemed so startling and uncanny, inhere in her interaction with him. Moreover, he marks crucially von Arnim's ongoing desire to *fassen* onto something solid and reliable, despite her apparent relinquishing of her all-consuming need for Günderrode.

Their relationship dissolves the sense of *Vermählung*—to borrow another of von Arnim's favorite words—that might otherwise have arisen in the course of the novel. Instead, Ephraim's gift of the rosebush raises significant questions surrounding the role of the "other" not only in von Arnim's quest for *Geist* and self-denial, but also in relationality altogether, and in the role of mourning. If the successful mourner, in Freud's view, can successfully re-cathect the anxious libido onto another object, what mechanisms should guarantee that the "other" is not then retained persistently as an other, and treated as such? Indeed, Freud defines the emergence or distillation of melancholy as the result of a failed re-attachment, one that falls short of the mourner's ability to find another loved object. He writes, "Der Erfolg war nicht der normale einer Abziehung der

Gedanken" into a "Literaturdenkmal" for Günderrode (33). Yet Bäumer and Schultz ignore the fact that this project is inextricably linked with an attempt to find a suitable writing form for the task. Fortunately, they do devote a small section of the chapter to Arnim's overall attempt to develop a "zukunftsorientierte 'Dichtersprache'" (41). Alongside the "Kernthematik" of self-development that they identify, Arnim constantly questions the possibility and mode of a writing style that could be said to develop in a similar manner. To ignore the text's considerable investment in its own genesis and to focus merely on its status as a revised, semi-autobiographical epistolary novel precludes insight into how this struggle for an appropriate form relies upon a degree of exploitation of presumed Jewish Otherness.

For studies of the novel's genre, see, for example, Schmitz's description in the commentary to *Die Günderrode* (883-4) and, briefly, Margaret Ives' "Karoline von Günderrode" in her co-edited volume with Anthony J. Harper, *Sappho in the Shadows: Essays on the work of German women poets of the age of Goethe*, in which she claims the novel is "is best described as Bettine's version of the story of a spiritual friendship" (89).

Libidio von diesem Objekt und Verschiebung derselben auf ein neues, sondern ein anderer” (202-3). But the “normal” itself is hard to define, and somewhere *between* the desperate merging of loss with self and the utter breakage from the initial loved object, the possibility of fully displacing such energy onto “ein neues” comes into play. These questions also inflect von Arnim’s critical reflections on communication and expression. All communication, she had argued, should strive towards enacting a loving conversation with *Geist*—but how could that conversation succeed if someone must always be figured as a seducer and the other as a lover? One as a tempter on the far side of the water, and the other doomed to wait on the shoreline?

In place of the solid conception of the self, which is so significant to Freud's distinction between the mourner and the melancholic, von Arnim hones in on that which, borrowing from Freud's vocabulary, might be called the libido itself-- an energy at once anxious and overwhelming, but envisioned in these letters as also central to *Geist*. In an earlier version of this chapter, I had argued that a type of displacement of grief occurs from the lost G nderode onto Ephraim. Now, however, I believe the notion of displacement contradicts von Arnim's attempts to relate to individuals in a nondifferentiated way; what begins as the wish to be planted within G nderode turns into a gentle questioning of how one relates to all others if the ultimate pursuit is one of *Geist*. She attempts to incorporate *all* relationships, all forms, into a larger pursuit of *Geist*. And yet, as I have already remarked, it is still *Die G nderode*. There is still the desire to *fassen* onto one particular object who can disband the urgency of unattached libido.

What does it mean to deny the significance of the self in a context of mourning?

The novel, written in 1840, is a tribute to a poet and thinker who died at the age of twenty-six, in circumstances that left von Arnim understandably isolated. Perhaps with the aid of time and hindsight, von Arnim is able to chart a course of gradual divestment, dislocating the particular significance of G nderode into a more diffuse sense of longing and nostalgia, which permeates the novel. But how does the act of writing, and the finished written product, convey something of this struggle to divest herself of such an attachment to G nderode? It is difficult to reduce such a process to a discussion of genre, especially since *Die G nderode* famously defies generic classification. Rather, von Arnim's moments of reflection on written form employ many of the same terms of grasping and letting go that also describe her relationship to G nderode. The resulting novel is a fascinating testament to a work of mourning that at once attempts to destabilize the individualized, privileged meaning of the lost object (to run *fort*, to associate with as many others as possible), while also insisting on (*fassen*) that object's significance: the novel is, after all, so identified with the memory of Karoline von G nderode that it features her name as its title.

SELBSTVERLEUGNUNG / GEIST: "an die G nderode nach W rzburg"

Das wahrhafte Ideal des Menschen ist die lautere Selbstverleugnung, aus ihr auch allein kann alle Weisheit hervorgehen in allen Handlungen die das Schicksal erreicht; zu derselben Selbstverleugnung, sind wir berechtigt alle Menschen aufzufordern, denn sei das Resultat eines solchen Tun was es wolle – sie handeln in Gott und das ist Religion, und da machs Kreuz, oder sei Ketzer oder Jud. 518

To begin this examination of von Arnim's ideas surrounding the self and its role in development and relationships, I will focus largely on a letter at the structural center of the novel. Von Arnim sends it off as G nderode leaves for W rzburg, a city so far away

in Bettine's eyes, that it may as well be "ausser der Welt" (510). The letter combines aesthetic, political, and philosophical reflections in dizzying detail. One of the letter's core passages is the above commentary on self-denial. *Selbstverleugung*: a denial of the self that is also a sacrifice; an abandonment of one's wishes and attachments. It is a self-motivated depreciation of all ego attachments in favor of a larger *Schicksal*, as it is envisaged in this quotation. Moreover, the modifying adjective "lauter" suggests that this self-denial is once again in the realm of the early flame imagery of the first letter, with its associations of "das durchsichtig reine, klare, in Bezug auf Luft und Feuer" (Grimm and Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* 6: 378). Flames once again betoken scarcity and loss, even as the promise of a greater achievement beckons with the act of self-denial. Such an achievement, the above formula holds, obtains a universal result despite the supposedly original religious affiliation--or lack of affiliation--of the practitioner. To a certain extent, this letter signals the attempt at such self-denial in the face of impending loss. What is, at the novel's beginning, an intense, almost symbiotic relationship between the two writers, becomes a gradual process of Bettine's relinquishing this libidinal attachment—a process not so much explicitly "staged" within the plot, as it is one enacted in the growing relationship she has with Ephraim. Von Arnim also envisions such self-denial as serving as a type of co-operative project in which one should require a similar effort from others. But the overall relationship to otherness outlined in this letter raises perhaps more questions than it answers. I choose this letter because it moves mercilessly from complicated reflections on friendship, to forms, to self-denial, and then to the *Widerspenstig*. The letter introduces the initial terms through which the significance of the individual (in this case, Günderrode) can successfully be abandoned by striving

towards overall *Geist* but does not fully elucidate how otherness can be integrated without still being retained *as* otherness.

The comparatively extensive, philosophical letter in which this description of *Selbstverleugnung* appears marks a significant departure from von Arnim's repeated appeals to G nderrode's attention. In fact, the very intensity of her connection to her confidante prompts the question of whether she seeks a *Selbstverleugnung* for the sake of *Geist*, or if she envisions this movement as a kind of *Hingebung* occurring within the parameters of a relationship to another individual: one wonders if she gives up her conception of the self in order to be aligned with *Geist*, or rather in order to be subsumed into the life of an other-- to plant the forest rose of her life in G nderrode's spirit, for example. And this relationship, to be clear, seems at least initially to exist willfully and emphatically *only* with G nderrode.

Hence, the shift to the type of language of *Selbstverleugnung* seems even more striking. This adumbration of a new way of relating (to both the self and to others) is less a result of specific events in the novel, as it seems to reflect von Arnim's ongoing negotiation of G nderrode's death even while composing the novel. This passage, and the letter in which it appears, are both central to understanding the complexities of von Arnim's ideal relationships to self and to others. Again, von Arnim begins the letter with resentment towards G nderrode's traveling, describing its impact thus: "es war schon als h tt ich Wurzel gefasst in diesem sch nen Briefleben" (504). Here we see the verging of the text, the body, and the vegetal, with the density of their correspondence taking on a life of its own, and one so nourishing that von Arnim feels rooted to them. The image is also reminiscent of the earlier claim that G nderrode's influence makes her want to

extend her leaves (*strecke meine Blätter aus*), in that both moments connect personal development to writing in the form of a botanic image. Indeed the entire letter draws upon motifs already introduced in the first letter of the novel. In her very thoughts about giving up the illusion of the self, she admits that in her moments of greatest connection and inspiration, the boundary between her own thoughts and those of her loved one begins to blur: “Ich brauche nur auf eine Natur zu treffen die mir liebreizend scheint so bin ich gleich voller Gedanken die mich belehren, als seien sie geweckt von jenem” (518). The “Plaudergeist” with which the novel opens also emanates in this moment, as even von Arnim’s “own” thoughts feel spurred on by the presence of a loved one. She also returns to the flame motif with which she had introduced her nighttime conversations with Günderrode (“wie eine Kerz die man sparen will”), in order to describe the intoxicating effects of this inspiring type of person. This time, she compares such a relationship to an encounter with godliness itself: “gewiss ist es was grosses was ganz göttliches dass der Mensch wo er das göttliche ahnt, [. . .] gleich harmonisch mit einstimmt und alle Feuer in ihm aufflammen” (518). Connections with others temper the need for a firmly delineable self, and instead bring her into contact with something larger and closer to God. The stunning acoustics of the first half of this thought also seem to sway between openness and enclosure, with the almost iambic rhythm and the hard, voiced stops (*gewiss, grosses, ganz, göttliches*) giving way to soft sibilance.

In response to the ongoing tension between the desire for freedom or *Fortsein*, and the inclination to grasp onto someone, this passage once again shows von Arnim striving for the dissolution of boundaries between self and other, to such an extent that convictions and thoughts seem not telekinetically communicable, but somehow shared in

the atmosphere of such a significant encounter. At the same time, and seemingly incompatible with this blurring of boundaries, the presence of the other is so pronounced that one feels almost godly in its heat. Could there be something like a successful repudiation of the self while still insisting upon the solidity of the category of the other? Von Arnim seems to believe in the viability of such a project, yet the very discrepancy in boundaries poses difficulties in integrating certain images and characters—particularly Ephraim—into the plot.

As a result, even this articulation of the need for *Selbstverleugnung* hovers indeterminably between two apparent poles: the absolute attachment to figures such as G nderrode, and the ideal dissolution of the conception of the self entirely. Though the formulation poses a significant departure from her dependence on G nderrode, it still stresses certain magnetic individuals at the same time it seems to champion the abandonment of such categories of understanding in favor of *Geist*.

It is again important to stress that, while von Arnim repeatedly invokes certain motifs and images, their precise interrelationship constantly eludes the reader's grasp, perhaps like the presence of G nderrode, always enticingly near, yet just out of reach. I repeat this point now because her evocation of godliness as a feeling of the other ties also into her thoughts on a multivalent entity she terms *Geist*, yet without their being identical or clearly interrelated. As I will soon analyze in closer detail, von Arnim develops a project that strives ever towards *Geist*, while carrying with it notions of aesthetic forms and human relationships. Though the novel can be viewed as an intoxicating series of digressions, never fully revealing the linkages between her main concepts, von Arnim defends her way of thinking and writing by asserting that, while others may recuse her

sporadic impulses and seemingly disconnected thoughts, “es gibt etwas was andre gar nicht fassen von dem spring ich eben nicht ab”-- this something appears to be her conception of *Geist*, towards which her writing and her relationships ostensibly aim (517). Though all aspects of her life should aim toward *Geist*, there are moments and figures wherein she describes a kind of counter-image or antithesis, through which the *Geist* is challenged and strengthened. *Geist*, then, seems subject to the same overall indeterminability between self-denial and the desire for something ascertainable as an other. *Geist*, too, in von Arnim’s world, is penetrated by something apparently different or foreign. She uses, at times, a language of ghostliness and seduction in order to describe this characteristic of *Geist*, its attraction to the other. As I will show in this chapter, these moments chart a complicated path of relating to otherness and to Ephraim in particular. In this sense, the project of *Selbstverleugnung* and divorcing affective states from particular individuals becomes more complicated, as certain individuals are required for particular states and realizations.

So intense is *Geist*’s relationship to the other that von Arnim even goes on to call it a form of obsession or possession. She writes, in this same letter:

Ich wundre mich über meine Gedanken! – Dinge über die ich nie etwas erfahren, die ich nie gelernt, oder vielleicht grade das Gegenteil davon, stehen hell und deutlich in meinem Geist. – Kann ich denn wissen ob ich nicht vielleicht von einem Geist besessen bin? – und ist Besessensein nicht vielleicht ein Aufgeben der Individualität, und sind die Widerspenstigen die sich dem Geist widersetzen nicht vielleicht individuell stärker, als die vom Geist durchdrungen? – Ach liegt wohl die Stärke im Hingeben? – Ist nicht manches im Geist und in der Seele Wirkung anderer Welten? – Die Liebe, die Leidenschaft, ist die nicht Anziehungskraft von der Sonne? 520

First, von Arnim presents her thoughts as discrete enough for her to be able to wonder about them—again, the continuity between self and thought seems challenged, just as in

the earlier quotation about thoughts appearing to stem from others. Then, the first of many excited clarifications appears, punctuated by a dash. It is unclear to what exactly the phrase “oder vielleicht grade das Gegenteil davon” refers: oppositions are shady and murky in this realm of reflections, as *Geist* in general seems removed from traditional knowledge. She does not require firsthand experience in order to possess certain things in her *Geist*, she claims. Perhaps the “Gegenteil” stands for contradictory thoughts which, in *Geist*, can still reside in harmony with that which she has in fact learned or experienced. In *Geist* even the unknown appears clear and discernible, according to von Arnim.

Again, the subsequent sentence adds only further confusion to the postulation. If *Geist* had seemed something all-encompassing, something not quite soul and not quite knowledge, it now appears that there can be more than one, as she writes, “ob ich nicht vielleicht von *einem* Geist besessen bin?” (emphasis mine). She wonders if the presence of certain persons might be so influential that she fails to distinguish her own thoughts, and here a similar phenomenon seems to occur with *Geist*. Again, von Arnim characterizes the dissolution of such boundaries in a positive light. Obsession is the act of *Selbstverleugnung* par excellence, “ist Besessensein nicht vielleicht ein Aufgeben der Individualität?” She wonders, too, if surrender is not a form of strength. “Ach liegt wohl die Stärke im Hingeben?” The use of the almost desperate “ach,” in the form of a question makes it sound as if she were responding to a preexistent assumption that, yes, strength does lie in surrender. But what, or who, exactly offers the temptation to surrender? By attributing such an effect to something like gravitational pull-- “Die Liebe, die Leidenschaft, ist die nicht Anziehungskraft von der Sonne?”—these connections again seem to be controlled by something other than solely the individuals involved. The

emphasis relents from the significance of the individual and disperses into a generalized relationship.

Widerspenstig, I should note, contains at its center the word *spenst*, connoting also seduction and temptation (Grimm and Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* 10: 2157). Who or what are the “Widerspenstigen die sich dem Geist widersetzen,” who thereby strengthen *Geist*? Günderrode, whose very existence is so central to von Arnim’s conception of herself, seems too intimate to fulfill this role of contrast and challenge. And yet, the concluding sentence of the passage, in which von Arnim wonders if love is not “Anziehungskraft von der Sonne,” should evoke the earlier sentiment that Bettine feels like a seed basking in the sun of Günderrode’s *Geist*: “mir gehts wie dem Keim, der in der Sonne brütet” (299). Moreover, the use of words like “hell” and “deutlich” reinforce the sunlight imagery that often qualifies descriptions of Günderrode. Although the source of this confrontation with otherness is unclear, von Arnim champions the capacity to submit to a wayward thought or force, without fear of its other-worldliness. Again, the paratactic, frequently punctuated syntax with which von Arnim writes gives the impression of breathless, spontaneous reflection. Yet they draw on a variety of images and analogies that recur throughout the novel, once again precipitating the expectation of a larger conceptual *Vermählung*.

From a broader perspective of emplotment, the moment and the entire letter mark a significant turn towards attempting to let go of particular objects and to pursue instead *Geist* in all its complexities and contradictions—to incorporate that which appears other into this larger striving. This passage and its emphasis on the willingness to surrender to the “Widerspenstigen,” should also stand out amid the repeated references in this same

letter to “sich selbst erzeugen” (517). Von Arnim’s novel is also an act of assisting G nderrode in the process of *Selbsterzeugung* that was cut short by her suicide, an *Erzeugung* that is also a form of *Zeugen*, bearing witness, a transformation of loss made possible by von Arnim’s attempt to de-centralize the self as well as the loved object. Within the context of the plot itself, the letter demonstrates von Arnim’s developing thoughts on G nderrode’s significance, as well as her hopes for her own development. Taken at the macrological level of von Arnim’s writing, the letter also serves as an essential midway point in the conception of mourning and relating to otherness.

WRITING

The aim of letting the self dissolve in a pursuit of something greater, or *Geist*, carries over into her formulations of writing, self-expression, and communication. How can communication take place if stress is taken off of individual personalities? And how does or should one find words or means of contact that do justice to the process of pursuing *Geist*? These questions all surround von Arnim’s discussion of development and self-denial, in this same dizzying letter.

Perhaps these questions arise out of thoughts on proximity and distance. With her major source of gravitational pull, G nderrode, being on the road to W rzburg, Bettine considers her even farther “ausser der Welt,” and, as such, longs to join her in her wanderings and to be able to see a glimpse of the whole world: “Ich m chte auch fort in die Welt, ja ich m chte fort! – Ich bin doch in meinem Leben noch auf keinen Berg gestiegen, von wo aus man die ganze Welt  bersieht, und in meiner Seel  berseh ich doch die Welt” (511). The moment draws on a popular motif in romantic literature—that of the solitary wanderer enjoying a panoramic view of nature from atop a hill or

mountain, captured most famously in Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer Above A Sea of Fog*, as well as in the poetry of Wordsworth and Charlotte Smith. Although she may believe that she carries a vision of the universe inside her, she also wonders what forms might evade her understanding:

Nur bei kleinen Dingen steht mir manchmal der Verstand still, zum
Beispiel gestern bei einer wilden Kastanie die ich aus ihrer grünen Hülse
losmachte, da lagen drei Kastanien in einander gefügt, noch unreif,
blendend weiss, da mein ich immer, ich müsst mit Gewalt alles wissen
lernen was alle diese Formen sprechen, denn gewiss ists, allese
geschaffene ist durch den heiligen Geist erzeugt. 511

The rhythm of movement, again, so central to von Arnim's desire for experience and indicative of her thoughts on her relationships (moving, as she does, from images of wandering to seizing) again shifts here to the stationary. "Nur bei kleinen Dingen steht mir manchmal der Verstand still"—she writes, implying, by contrast, that her comprehension and thought *normally* feel like a type of movement. In contrast to other romantic writers like Wordsworth, who reserve this type of defamiliarization for more grave encounters—or "spots of time"—von Arnim specifically cites the "kleinen Dingen," the supposedly everyday, as capable of slowing her thoughts to a halt. And yet, these supposedly little things effectively lure her into thoughts of "den heiligen Geist" towards which all life should strive. This moment of arresting compels her to examine the object and to consider its particular form. In this case, the object is a wild chestnut which she shells and considers in all its blinding whiteness.

It is unclear what exactly she means by "kleine Dinge," but the unripe chestnuts once again link the vegetal with larger thoughts on form and, eventually, writing. She emphasizes that these forms seem to speak on their own: "ich müsst mit Gewalt alles wissen lernen was alle diese Formen sprechen"—not what they signify, not how they

work, but what they speak on their own. Indeed, she launches into a larger postulation surrounding speech as a connection to *Geist* that can occur even in nonverbal forms. Again, what begins as the significance of a subject's being able to name and speak itself seems to give in to the larger conversation: "Nun, was durch den ewigen Erzeugungswillen hervorgeht das muss doch eine Selbstsprache haben, das muss sich nämlich aussprechen und sich auch beantworten. Dein Leben muss doch eine Sprache führen, sonst ist es ja nichts. Also wen Gott liebt mit dem führt er Gespräche" (511). *Selbstsprache*, a self-language or self-speech, something she defines as being able to ask and answer itself. Her use of the qualifier "nämlich" puns on the idea of naming. Any form, it would seem, whether a natural form existing in the physical realm, or the form of thought, must be allowed to speak. Hence, von Arnim begins to frame forms as necessarily aiming towards togetherness and conversation—towards something greater than the individual herself. And yet, just as there are moments where she is briefly arrested by contemplation, there are impediments, blockages, and necessary impossibilities of communication in speech. "Ich sag Dir wenn ich geschwiegen hab so ist das weil mir die Worte nicht wohltönend genug vorkamen, ich seh mich im Geist um nach Klang, wenn ich etwas sagen will da find ich keinen Ton der stimmt" (512). In her writing about these occasional failures of speech, her words take on musicality, with the alliterative "w" sounds and in the cyclical way in which the thought is marked by two conditionals "wenn." Silence can be a form of speech, or it can be a marker of the moment words cannot capture a feeling or thought. Where words fail, von Arnim continues, there is the literal glory of music.

She writes, "durch Musik hab ichs herausgeföhlt dass aller Geist im Menschen

liegt, dass er aber nicht die Melodie dazu findet ihn auszusprechen” (512). Through music, she insists, she has discovered that which can express spirit. This discovery, it is worth noting, is described by honing in on the visceral, emotional effect she associates with melody and *Geist*, using the word “herausfühlen” rather than “herausfinden.” She speaks of a register beyond communicating solely ideas, and instead demonstrates the significance of emotional perception. She continues: “[d]enn jeder Gedanke hat eine Verklärung, das ist Musik, die muß Sprache sein, alle Sprache muß Musik sein” (512). She never specifies what about music in particular acts as a transformation [*Verklärung*] of thought, beyond the equation of music with speech. Again, she courts the synesthetic realm with this word choice, as *Verklärung* literally denotes making something clearer. But what she seems to cherish in music are its manifold possibilities, even contradictory possibilities—she remarks in the earlier quotation that she knows things which she has not yet experienced, and music seems to be the dimension in which she achieves this paradox. Her philosophy of writing and thought allows for transformations, equations, paradoxes, and sudden shifts. There seems something motile about such a style, never content to rest too long at one pole or one term and always threatening to shape-shift just as one believes one has a firm grasp.

The precise word *Verklärung* has important resonances also for her conceptions of writing and how words take shape, as well as transformations and embodiments of various kinds in this letter and elsewhere in the novel. Language strives towards clarification in music in order to become more easily comprehensible as and to *Geist*. But many significant moments in the novel trouble the distinction supposedly rendered here between the starting term and its clarification or transformation. The significance of light

and taking on light, radiating light and extinguishing light—all initiated in the novel's opening image of nighttime running out like a precious candle—lure us into questions of duration, loss, and the less easily definable transitory states hovering in between. Günderrode may be the sun, but there are competing sources of light in the text, and as I will discuss later, Freud also draws on images of illumination to characterize the murky work of analyzing melancholia (the melancholic's very preoccupation is famously invisible, "nur das uns die melancholische Hemmung einen rätselhaften Eindruck macht, weil wir nicht sehen können, was die Kranken so vollständig absorbiert," Freud writes) (200).

In any case, the shape-shifting effect I describe in this letter is as much a product of the ideas von Arnim records as it is a necessary impact of her writing style. In this section of the letter alone, the individual terms all seem to depend on one another, to sprout from the preceding one and yield to the following one as if they were branches of the plant von Arnim so often uses to describe Günderrode and writing. Sentences and thoughts are interpunctuated with dashes—marks of connection mimicking the coalescing of her major terms, but at the same time visually manifesting their difference and separation. These moments bring together thoughts on language and conversation (*Sprache* and *Gespräche*), on wordlessness as conversation, on God's love as conversation, and of forms in nature as all infused with this godly love. At times the passage seems to center around love, others around conversation, and at one crucial moment, around *Geist*. "Man braucht mich auch nicht zu beschuldigen daß ich alles durch einander werfe, und von einem zum andern spring, es gibt etwas was andre gar nicht fassen von dem spring ich eben nicht ab, mein Geist bildet sich selbst seine

Übergänge” (517). But this point also brings up another crucial question: if all thoughts should aim to be transformed and *verklärt* into a relationship with *Geist*, does there not emerge the potential for a contradictory logic of singularity with regard to form? What is marked here is a difference between thought and the ways in which thought can be communicated. Thoughts seem adaptable to a variety of scenarios or contradictions not otherwise possible, for example, she says she can hold thoughts of experiences she has never had. And in that sense, they are generalized and not subjected to categorizations or singularizations. Communication of those thoughts, on the other hand, does seem to require the appropriate form— a thought cannot appear in „unwürdiger Gestalt“ and still be apprehensible to and as *Geist* (512). This interconnection is a significant relationship and dynamic to observe, as it draws together von Arnim’s thoughts on human life and relationality (de-privileging the individual and the self, striving towards *Geist*) with how individual thoughts are implicated in the struggle of individual *persons* relating to each other in such a way. Writing and the aesthetic are the ways in which we lure others into the pursuit of *Geist*, so it is worth investigating what type of form these thoughts take on in the act of communicating.

How does an emphasis on music and *Geist* in communication account for writing about loss, and the loss of Karoline von Günderrode in particular? She describes and enacts a writing that takes account of its own necessary failures, and its attempt to transgress the formal boundaries that otherwise separate writing from music. But if communication and writing should be directed at *Geist*, the process of commemorating one person through writing seems difficult.

Letter Two: WIDERSPENSTIGKEIT

Several unresolved concerns have been raised in this first letter, leading to questions of how forms can be brought into conversation, how to give up strong notions of selfhood while also respecting the influences of friends and confidantes, and how one relates to otherness entirely. I turn now to the second letter, as von Arnim expatiates here on the appropriateness of certain forms, and hones in on music as the paradigmatic form for encouraging a cohesive, unifying movement towards *Geist*. The letter ends, however, with a striking passage that might seem an utter digression from the rest of its subject matter. And yet, the disturbing remarks on a Jewish neighborhood crucially relate to how von Arnim will perceive Ephraim and otherness.

This letter, I should note, marks the beginning of the novel's second part, its division into an ostensibly separate or different stage, which features a preface with its own bifurcation:

Wenn dich eine höhere Vorstellung durchdringt von einer
Menschennatur, so zweifle nicht dass dies die wahre sei, denn alle sind
geboren zum Ideal, und wo Du es ahnst, da kannst Du es auch in ihm zur
Erscheinung bringen, denn er hat gewiss die Anlage dazu.

Wer das Ideal leugnet in sich, der könnte es auch nicht verstehen in
Andern, selbst wenn es vollkommen ausgesprochen wär. – Wer das Ideal
erkannte in Andern, dem blüht es auf, selbst wenn jener es nicht in sich
ahnt. 563

The first half of the epigraph encourages the acceptance and belief in a person's ideal "Menschennatur" if they seem especially elevated, while the second half warns against rejecting one's own ideal: "Wer das Ideal leugnet in sich, der könnte es auch nicht verstehen in Andern, selbst wenn es vollkommen ausgesprochen wär" (564). Here, again she relies on images of the speakable [*ausgesprochen*] to describe qualities relating to

development, character, and *Geist*. Then, a dash intercedes and she ends the preface with the thought: “Wer das Ideal erkannte in Andern, dem blüht es auf, selbst wenn jener es nicht in sich ahnt.” It is unclear whether this aphorism is directed at Günderrode, Ephraim, or von Arnim itself. It seems equally applicable to all three, and linked to the novel’s emerging emphasis on co-development and *erzeugen* others as well as the self.

I noted just above, in the concluding thoughts on the first letter of my analysis, that the word *Verklärung* raises significant questions of clarity, embodiment, and form in the course of von Arnim’s discussion of *Geist*. This possibility or trope of transformation is carried into the present letter, which begins with an intriguing image. Von Arnim at first describes her brother Clemens’ demand that she send his greetings to Günderrode, a moment that is interesting also in that it expressly thematizes the process of her writing the letter. As if animated by Clemens, von Arnim begins by obeying his command to start her letter with his words: “Günderödchen, der Clemens lässt Dich tausendmal grüssen. Ich muss es zuerst schreiben, denn er steht hinter mir und zwingt mich dazu” (568). She then mentions that Clemens is involved in a puppet show for a friend. This bit of information retroactively casts the instructions from Clemens in the light of this puppetry—she seems to suggest subtly a relationship between enforced forms of writing and the type of animation Clemens lends the dolls. Although his type of puppetry obviously differs in nature and gradation from the type of transformation von Arnim describes from thought to music, this constellation of images demonstrates how subtly interconnected the nodes of her writing are. Much of the delight and work in reading *Die Günderrode* lies uncovering these understated interconnections. Von Arnim feels burdened by Clemens’ instructions, a feeling that will carry over into dismantling of

poetics into formal attributes.

What is accomplished by Bettine's momentary seeming transformation into one of Clemens' puppets? For one, it draws up the categories of *Geist* (content) and the form that it must take on or through which it must be communicated. The "real" puppets take on animacy, and eventually perfectly fulfill their supposed task: she describes Clemens' performance as so successful that it quite literally deprives him of his *own* animacy: "jeden Augenblick flog eine Rakete auf, bis endlich das Puppenspiel ihn *übermannte* wo er vor Lachen nicht mehr witzig sein konnte" (572, emphasis mine). So consumed by the hilarity of his antics, he is overrun by the situation and has to relent. In contrast, the human Bettine will resent the type of control implied by Clemens' interference with the letter, and seems to speak to similar concerns she has regarding the suitability of form to *Geist*, the guiding impulse of her relationships.

Clemens' dictation informs much of the content of this letter. Indeed, his attempted control over her writing prompts extensive reflection on the different forms of communication von Arnim had begun to analyze in the previous letter. In Bettine's account, she tells her brother about a treasured memory of riding along the Rhine¹⁵ with Günderrode in the moonlight, to which Clemens repeatedly asks pedantic questions for as many details as possible. At the end of her recounting, he orders her to sit in a locked room until she emerges with a new poem based on this memory-- the gravest of all possible punishments. "Da stand ich – ganz widersinnig im Kopf," she begins, at the thought of having to condense such a vibrant memory into something so confined (570). She continues:

¹⁵ A memory made perhaps all the more significant considering Günderrode's suicide took place on the banks of this river.

Mir kommen Reime kleinlich vor so wie ich sie bilden soll, ich denke immer: ach der Gedanke will wohl gar nicht gereimt sein, oder er will wo anders hinaus und ich stör ihn nur, - was soll ich seine Äste verbiegen die frei in die Luft hinausschwanken und allerlei feinfühlig Leben einsaugen, was liegt mir doch daran, dass es symmetrisch verputzt sei. 572

The dissimulating, obtrusive act of forcing symmetry upon a thought; the violence of twisting and bending that which was meant to hover and sway in the air without consequence—all of these offenses underlie von Arnim's aversion to the act of writing and, as she calls it earlier in this same grievance, *Versmass*.¹⁶ Again, she emphasizes the beauty of movement. When held in the strictures of rhyme, instead of absorbing [*einsaugen*] the contents of life, a thought can stand only artificially calcified [*verputzt*] and, it would appear, isolated. The word *verputzt* also seems to hone in on its difference from the *Verklärtheit* she associates with the type of communication she pursues: whereas *verputzt* stresses rigidity and possible opacity, the ideal form is clarified. False symmetries of rhyme and rhythm destroy the type of organic coming-together she envisions.

These comments make more sense in light of her adumbration of striving towards *Liebesgespräch* and music. Rhyming seems to interfere with the type of *Selbstsprache* her particular memory of Günderrode evokes. As I have shown in the first letter of this chapter, in her sense of humans and interaction, the goal should be the dissolution of the concept of the self. Hence, in communicating, thoughts should be refined and joined onto *Geist*. Von Arnim expands upon this idea in the letter, saying that melodies are the specific means by which this process can occur:

was Dich bewegt gibt Klang, der weckt seine Mittöne, die rühren das Echo

¹⁶ For a brief look at how this aversion to classical form inflects Arnim's appreciation for Günderrode and Hölderlin and how subsequent scholars have misrepresented this aversion as a critique of the two poets, see Bäumer and Schultz, 40-41.

doppelt und allseitig, und die ganze Harmonie erwacht, - und zwischen dieser durch, wandelt der Gedanke und wählt sich seine Melodie, und offenbart sich durch die dem Geist. – Das deucht mich die Art wie der Gedanke sich dem Geist vermählt. 570

She imagines everything coming together in a *Vermählung*. And again, such reflections contextualize her interest in letter-writing, which ostensibly fosters a sense of harmony and echo, despite the fact that it is not music. Not only is the individual thought opened up [offenbart] to a larger melody, but the tone that stirs one individual [was Dich bewegt gibt Klang] goes on to awaken an entire harmony [die ganze Harmonie erwacht]. Her adumbration of music as the ideal form of contact fits her ideal, harmonizing conception of *Geist*. Verse that has been manipulated to fit patterns of meter and rhyme, however, creates an artificial sense of melody and unison; a secondary “symmetry”—to use her word—based merely on acoustic effect rather than emotional accuracy. She writes, “Gott ist Poesie, gar nicht anders, und die Menschen tragen es über in eine tote Sprache die kein Ungelehrter versteht” (571). As the musical imagery demonstrates, what she longs for is an emotional attachment to others, one that attempts to pay homage, perhaps even in silence, to the beauty and singularity of the memory in mind. What she disdains so much in rhyme and meter is their perhaps exclusionary effect—their detraction from the movement towards *Geist* and the abandonment of selfhood. Meter and rhyme add unnecessary obstacles to emotional perception and communication, as von Arnim views it.

By applying the image of a tree’s swaying branches to this apparently contrived writing process, von Arnim also draws the dynamic into her constellation of images relating to Günderrode and their relationship. As she attempts to write the life of their friendship, to literally and figuratively write *Die Günderrode*, to carry on the *Plaudergeist*

in Günderrode's absence, it perhaps makes sense that she applies the same type of botanic image to the writing process as well as to her friend. She carries the tree imagery into a further tribute to their shared memory, and into her resistance toward confining something that still feels alive to her:

wie hätte ich unsre orangenblühende Nacht, unsre selige Alleinigkeit
verpfuschen sollen, sie, die in jeder verlebten Minute jenes Gefühl
aussprach was ich da oben Gottpoesie, Weisheitsgefühl nenne. – Nein ich
wollte nicht ein so süß Dämmern zu einzelnen Gedankenschatten
zusammenballen. Laß es fortdämmern oder sich verflüchtigen; aber nicht
in engherzige Verse einklammern was so weiche Zweige in die Luft
ausstreckt, laß es fortblühen bis es welkt. 572

The von Arnim narrating this passage seems to be actively in the process of letting go of Günderrode in her dedication to the beauty of the memory. The risk of sabotaging and botching [verpfuschen] such a luminous evening is too threatening for her to overcome in order to render it into verse. The beautiful phrase, “laß es fortblühen bis es welkt” treats the memory like a delicate flower which, though certain to perish and fade away [verflüchtigen], is too precious to be forced into confined verse. Once again, images of light and dark are used to convey transitory impressions and loss. The repetition of “dämmern,” speaking of that fleeting time of night when nothing seems permanent and hence all the more precious, reiterates this sense of precarity and fragility—it is even, synesthetically, a sweet falling of night—“ein so süß Dämmern.” Conversely, to describe the most hollow narrative she could offer of this night, she uses the metaleptic “Gedankenschatten,”: the shadow of a thought. *Gedanken*, as we will recall, are something of the first step in von Arnim's schema to achieving *Geist*; they constitute the necessary material for creating a *Liebesgespräch*. All of this emotion, taken together, cannot be balled up and coagulated [zusammenballen] into a poem, although that might

even mean losing the memory. Rather, von Arnim seems content to expose their vulnerable *Alleinigkeit* to time, to let it inevitably wilt away.

But barely does twilight settle on this memory before von Arnim recounts a separate, more recent nocturnal wandering with Clemens. At the very end of her letter, without any introduction or explanation, von Arnim writes to Günderrode:

Gestern wanderten wir durch die Judengasse, es liefen so viele sonderbare Gestalten herum und verschwanden wieder dass man an Geister glauben muss, es ward schon dämmerig, und ich bat dass wir nach Haus gehen wollten, der Clemens rief immer seh den, seh da, seh dort wie der aussieht, und es war als liefen sie mir alle nach, ich war sehr froh als wir zu Haus waren. 572-3

Here, twilight as a time of day heightens the uncanny register of von Arnim's account. The haziness punctuates von Arnim's perception of this neighborhood as frighteningly other, a place where people seem more like spirits or ghosts, here *Geister* but also *Gesperster*. The fact that it is an event from the day before, which can then be treated as a supposedly interesting narrative for Günderrode stands as a certain level of objectification on its own, to say nothing else of what follows. The use of the passive construction "es liefen so viele sonderbare Gestalten herum" further mystifies the people imaged, instead of representing at least a certain degree of their agency through a more active grammatical construction. Deprived of agency in this account, Jewishness as a supposedly self-contained category appears seductive, as Clemens hurriedly points out one person after another. Von Arnim runs away and feels glad to be back at home, but the effect of the encounter is far from over.

Designations such as "Gestalten" and "Geister" both fit into the language of animacy and *Widerspenstigkeit* I have been describing. Jews are treated as mysterious,

threatening, and even other-worldly.¹⁷ If von Arnim had been looking for something apparently wayward and seductive to strengthen the convictions and feelings within her *Geist*, she seems to have set up the framework in her treatment of her Jewish neighbors. Not to mention, the related word *Gespenster* draws on the same root—*spenst*—I have emphasized in her earlier account of the *Widerspenstigkeit*. *Grimms Wörterbuch* ties the word to “locken” and “verlocken”—enticement and temptation (10: 2157). Through these terms of ghostliness, Jewishness might be implied in von Arnim’s pursuit of a strengthening contrariness that bolsters *Geist*. This language will go on to inflect her portrayals of Ephraim in the final letter of the novel. It will also be important to note that Jews are treated as inhabiting more spiritual bodies than others—they are figures and ghosts, as if imbued with supernatural *Geist* from the outset. Moreover, in a letter that began with visions of puppets and the human turning automated, it seems significant that Jews are described in this type of language. It lends their depiction a quality of uncanniness; Freud, quoting Jentsch, famously defines the paradigmatically uncanny encounter as one in which the dead has been given life again: “Zweifel an der Beseelung eines anscheinend lebendigen Wesens und umgekehrt darüber, ob ein lebloser Gegenstand nicht etwa beseelt sei” (“Das Unheimliche” 250). The letter mystifies

¹⁷ Although limited to the Anglo-American literary canon, Bryan Cheyette’s volume *Between ‘Race’ and Culture* does an admirable job of tracing the incredibly varied depictions of and attitudes toward Jewish, stressing the inconsistency of what marks “Jewishness.” As he notes,

What is clear from these examples is that the racial identity of ‘the Jew’ was not simply determined biologically but varied radically both between and within the literature under discussion. Even within the same ‘character,’ the otherness of ‘the Jew’ was such that s/he could be simultaneously ‘male’ and ‘female’ and ‘black’ and ‘white’ and ultimately, as many essays illustrate, both ‘philosemitic’ and ‘antisemitic.’ The protean instability of ‘the Jew’ as a sign is, therefore, continually refigured by a wide range of differentiating discourses that complement the intertwining trinity of ‘race,’ class, and gender. 11

Jewishness in bodily and spiritual terms.

Although the letter's reflections on poetics stress harmony and even suggest a degree of working through the attachment to G nderrode, the ending leaves a type of irrecoverable otherness at the forefront. Though apparently a mere digression from the main subject matter, this moment actually signals a turn that will occupy the second portion of the novel, in which G nderrode spends an increasing amount of time with Ephraim and seemingly detaches from G nderrode. Their interactions simultaneously enable von Arnim to move closer towards *Selbstverleugnung*, while revealing a disjuncture in the transition from one loved object to another. In a sense, this initial register of otherness attached to the "Judengasse" is maintained even in von Arnim's apparent cathexis of her libido from G nderrode to Ephraim.¹⁸

EPHRAIM: A CHARACTER PORTRAIT

To be fair, a certain degree of Otherness attaches to G nderrode, too. Certainly, the contact with G nderrode is a first intoxicating brush with someone von Arnim can consider *widerspenstig*, in the sense of wayward or rebellious. She is a separate voice, an accomplished writer, a confidante, a muse, and an inspiration to von Arnim. Although G nderrode often echoes Clemens' concerns that Bettine devote more attention to her studies, G nderrode and the private channel of communication she enables give Bettine a

¹⁸ Lisabeth Hock points out that this scene in the *Judengasse* also marks a split in Arnim's supposedly natural understanding of Jewish Otherness. Hock draws an important distinction between the fear Arnim seems to feel in an area dominated by the Jewish minority as opposed to the intimacy she perceives in her one-on-one relation with Ephraim. Perhaps in the latter case, the ability to project onto his character her desire for mystery and wisdom makes her feel more comfortable. Drawing on Sander Gilman's conception of the stereotype, Hock points out: "Daher ist die Offenheit dem Anderen gegen ber eine beschr nkte Offenheit, die nur das zul sst, was man schon irgendwie kennt" [So the openness towards the other is a limited openness which only permits that which one already knows somewhat] (335).

much-needed creative refuge. Von Arnim often refers to their relationship as something like that of Echo and Narcissus, a loving moniker that also sheds light on the element of identification that characterizes their relationship. But for all the comfort and excitement their companionship may offer, it also seems that von Arnim longs for other figures with whom to transgress the narrow confines of her immediate social circle. She wants also to delve further into an emotional realm which G nderrode seems reluctant to share. At one point von Arnim even pleads, “O verzweifle an mir nicht, denn ich war in meinen Briefen auf einsamen Wegen gegangen, ja, zu sehr als such ich nur mich selbst, das wollt ich doch nicht, ich wollte *Dich* suchen, ich wollt vertraut mit Dir werden” (489). Moreover, the bond between G nderrode and von Arnim registers as precarious, with G nderrode often writing of her desire to die a young death, and von Arnim chastising her for the feeling of abandonment.

What opens up, then, over the course of the novel, is von Arnim’s desire for another Other, one who will midwife her philosophical project within the novel’s plot itself—her striving for an equality of relationships through *Geist*—as well as a figure who, from the perspective of narration, holds up the novel as the body of its assumedly central protagonist inevitably passes on. Von Arnim seeks someone who stems the tide of a melancholia that, in her own words, “aus dieser Quelle des Lebensdrangs flie t, der sich nirgend ergiessen kann” (507). Though this passage speaks of the inability to divert her attachment onto someone or something else, her philosophy of development and *erzeugen* opens her up to the possibility of meeting other like-minded persons.

It is worth hesitating for a moment at the initial description of Ephraim. As the passage is rather significant, I will quote it here at length:

Weißt Du denn wer meine erste Bekanntschaft ist die ich hier gemacht hab? – Ein Jud! – aber was für einer? – der schönste Mann! – ein weißer Bart von einer halben Elle, große braune Augen so schöne einfache Gestalt, die ruhigste Stirn prächtige majestätische Nase, Rednerlippen, aber von denen die Weisheit süß hervortönen muß. Unser Hauswirt der Professor rief mich und sagte, ‘wollen Sie einen schönen Juden sehen so kommen sie in meiner Frau ihr Zimmer, sie verhandelt ihm eben ihr Hochzeitkleid’...*es war ein Bild zum malen*, er saß in einem sehr reinen Rabbiner- oder Gelehrten-Gewand am Tisch, seine Hand guckte aus dem schwarzen weiten Ärmel, und das Abendrot leuchtete durch die Scheiben...es war ein orangenfarbner Stoff mit silbernen Sträußen und granatfarbnen Blumen durchwirkt, was sehr schön mit dem starken Abendrot kontrastierte, es war das schönste Bild und gern hätt ich die Meline gerufen es mit anzusehen, wenn nicht eine Scheu, um nicht zu sagen Ehrfurcht, mich auf dem Platz gehalten hätt, ich hätte diesen Mann nicht als Gegenstand der Neugierde behandeln. 606, emphasis mine

Again, within her first few words of introduction, she emphasizes his form—“schöne einfache *Gestalt*,” the same word she had used to characterize the inhabitants of the *Judengasse*. She immediately considers him distinguished from her other contacts, and imagines his possessing an unconventional wisdom. Her very meeting with him is conditioned by her peers’ objectification of him as Jewish, and her romanticization of him immediately proceeds along these terms. He is also envisaged in language that has previously been used in descriptions of Günderrode, with his orange fabric (cf. Günderrode and the “orangenblühende” ride on the Rhine) and his association with sunlight. This time, though, the sun begins to set—“stark[es] Abendrot”—as if mimicking a transition taking place in von Arnim’s relationships (the sun of Günderrode’s influence beginning to set).

I have emphasized the words “es war ein Bild zum malen” in this lengthy passage. Von Arnim had associated music and melodies with her striving toward *Liebesgespräch* and *Geist*. This instance is perhaps the only one in which the pictorial,

visual art is singled out as the ideal aesthetic to capture a particular moment, although there is one major exception. Von Arnim uses the exact same phrase in a parenthetical remark deriding her mail-carrier, whom the two women often mention when recounting their excited reception of new letters. At one point, von Arnim mocks Hirsch, the mail-carrier, in his observation of the Feast of the Tabernacles.¹⁹ She writes, “der Kerl sah so närrisch aus, aus seinem Sack guckten lange Palmzweige über seinen Kopf, mit der einen Hand hielt er seinen langen Bart fest, mit der andern stellt er seinen langen Stab weit von sich [. . .] ich ließ ihn eine Weile stehen, so gut gefiels mir ihn anzusehen, ein Bild, wers verstünd zu malen” (459). These two moments, focused on the supposed alterity of Jewish characters Bettine encounters, deviate from the language of movement, musicality, and harmony through which von Arnim has heretofore adumbrated ideal forms. Here, she wishes to arrest the appearances of these two men; one for outright mockery and the other to grant the extensive glance that she abandons out of *Scheu* and *Ehrfurcht*. Both of these passages, too, estrange the movements of the characters: both passages use the noteworthy verb “gucken” to describe either the effects or the gestures of Ephraim and Hirsch, lending further to the uncanny qualities von Arnim attributes to Jewishness. Hence, even in the role he will play in helping von Arnim adjust to the diminishing role of Günderröde in her life, she does not allow him to escape this dimension of radical otherness.

Moreover, there is a sexual element to the objectification already at work in this introduction to Ephraim. I have already noted that the word *widerspenstig*, through which

¹⁹ Hock points out that Hirsch's comparatively rough treatment, as opposed to Ephraim's idealized one, indexes a classed dynamic absent in Arnim's relationship to Ephraim: "Bettines herablassendes Benehmen ist wohl nicht nur der Religion von Hirsch, sondern auch dem Klassenunterschied zwischen den beiden zuzuschreiben" (332).

von Arnim imagines one might achieve actual self-denial and become strengthened in the power of *Geist*, has at its core a word hinting at seduction, temptation, and ghostliness—words that also describe von Arnim’s attraction to Ephraim. This doubled signification—both something seductive and sexualized as well as other-worldly, only further points to the fact that “Jewishness” as a supposedly steady referent is indeed one constructed to suit the purpose of the one invoking the label as a marker of difference. Throughout the novel, Ephraim is repeatedly envisaged in terms of marriage. In fact, the first time von Arnim introduces him, as discussed above, he is in the business of selling a friend her *Hochzeitkleid* (606). Fabric from the dress sits in tiny piles all around him, and, although von Arnim assures G nderrode, “ich h tte diesen Mann nicht m gen als Gegenstand der Neugierde behandeln,” she remains transfixed and, as noted earlier, imagines him as a portrait (606). Moreover, Ephraim is often imaged as surrounded by his seventeen grandchildren and his name, according to the Old Testament, shares etymological roots with the Hebrew word for “fertility.”

There is a further sexual energy between the two of them when their host offers Ephraim a glass of wine and Arnim initially refrains, only to take a slight sip before she turns “ganz rot [. . .] vor Vergn gen” (607). For a literary figure so often treated as „sexless“ and childlike, even in scholarly literary histories of German writers, this type of subtle eroticism is perhaps underplayed in criticism of the novel.²⁰ Their sexual energy might serve a role in her gradual divestment from G nderrode as the sole inspirant of her philosophy and ideas. Again, it seems she conceptualizes his beauty in terms related to her attraction to G nderrode, which, as I have shown earlier, she envisages as a

²⁰ See Ruth Whittle’s *Gender, Canon and Literary History: The Changing Place of Nineteenth Century German Women Writers (1835-1918)*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2013.

gravitational attraction to the sun. She compares the effect of Ephraim's face to „die Dämmerung am Abend“ (609). The repetition of *Dämmerung* in temporalizing her encounters with perceived Otherness, and particularly with Ephraim, casts him in the shade of her attachment to Günderrode, and retains him in a kind of hazy liminality that can never fully integrate him. She may have removed herself from the shadow of her loved object's influence, but the twilight hour left in its wake seems steeped in longing and unresolved loss. These traces of the vocabulary once reserved for Günderrode suggest the replacement logic that informs her new relationship to Ephraim, and the impossibility of a full resolution of her need for the intimacy of their letter exchange.

THE FINAL LETTER

Indeed, Ephraim cannot catalyze such a realization without being implicated in von Arnim's adumbration of *Geist*. From his initial appearance in the novel, von Arnim stresses the qualities she perceives to contribute to his status as an other, and often repeats the desire to capture him in a static visual image or *Bild*. Despite her assertion that sacrificing the self for greater action in godliness erases the divisions of heathen, pagan, or Jew, something of his perceived total difference clings to each depiction of him in the novel. At certain moments in her portrayals of him, his words melt into hers, and his sentiments fit almost effortlessly into her conceptions of relationships and *Geist*. Yet, both the language of his appearance as well as his late arrival in the plot reinforce the sense that he is, in von Arnim's conception, a counter-figure through which the pained attachment to Günderrode is transformed into a diffuse type of longing and nostalgia. He partially seems to give rise to the *Vermählung* she longs for, one of both aesthetic forms and one of the differences that she attributes to human life and association, and yet also

leaves an unanswered sense of loss at the end of the novel.

By looking at a few of these passages in greater detail, I do not aim to contribute necessarily to debate regarding von Arnim's depiction as either philo- or anti-Semitic.²¹ However, Ephraim's character is essential to the structure and thematics of the novel, and his Jewishness, in turn, appears by all accounts essential to von Arnim's relationship to him.²² Perhaps in a vein similar to the rebellion she seeks from her brother in *Clemens Brentano's Frühlingkranz*, her configuration of Ephraim as an other is compounded by the fact that their relationship disturbs her society.²³

The last letter of the novel strikes a powerful affective chord, appearing as it does in the wake of a prolonged silence from Günderrode. It is not, however, von Arnim's immediate response to Günderrode's return; there is in fact a penultimate letter from von Arnim in which she more directly thematizes the effect of Günderrode's delayed return to communication. Several noteworthy moments mark this penultimate letter and help contextualize the central figures of the novel's ending.

To turn briefly to this penultimate letter, first, von Arnim recounts at length the excitement and dread she feels at finally receiving a response. Fearing the worst and sensing Günderrode's immanent departure, von Arnim writes, "Dein Brief kam mir wie Nebel vor – ja wie Nebel – und dann wars als wenn dadurch ein Altar schimmert mit Lichtern, dann ist es wie ein Flüstern, wie Gebet in diesem Brief. – Ein Zusammenfassen

²¹ Lisabeth Hock and Irving Massey (see his *Philo-Semitism in Nineteenth-Century German Literature*) have contributed to this discussion.

²² In considering this dynamic, I hope also to expand feminist criticism of Bettine von Arnim and other German women authors from the time period. As Jacqueline Rose writes in her essay on antisemitism and Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*, "[t]his may be another version of a problem that has recently become familiar to feminism-- the limits to its earlier celebration of women writers, the point where feminism has had to acknowledge the other blind spots or oppression which that celebration apparently had to ignore" (115).

²³ See Krimmer 194.

all Deiner Geisteskräfte als wolltest Du den Geist der Trauer in mir beschwören” (730). Gone is the radiance of the sun that could warm Bettine’s spirit to its core, like a seed in the soil of her friend’s spirit. Risen, instead, is the fog of mourning. *Der Plaudergeist* has descended into a singular whispering or prayer, and the movement and spontaneity von Arnim had so long associated with her idol has calcified into an ominous, desperate *Zusammenfassen*.

But despite the nervousness and dread, von Arnim seems also deeply involved in her theorized process of privileging the collective *Geist* over her individual attachment to Günderrode. She writes also of revelations she has while holding onto the letter from Günderrode, occasionally repeating phrases from Ephraim’s lessons and thoughts in the novel, which I will attempt to mark here. She writes, for example, “Der wahre Geist ist nicht allein, er ist mit den Geistern, - so wie er ausstrahlt so strahlt es ihn wieder, seine Erzeugnisse sind Geister die ihn wieder erzeugen” (733). I have already suggested that von Arnim goes on to *erzeugen* Günderrode through the composition of the novel and in preserving their conversation. The spirit of Günderrode will continue to radiate through this act of witnessing, von Arnim seems to argue in this aphorism, drawing also on the significance of *Selbstverleugnung* which was so central to the first letter of my analysis. What was once a sacrifice of the concept of the self in relating to otherness and *Geist* becomes a sacrifice also of the corporeal and lively. She seems more at peace with the certain loss of Günderrode, writing, “Die Schönheit die sinnlich vergeht, die hat einen Geist der sich weiter entwickeln will, der Rose steigt höher wenn ihre Schönheit vergeht” (734). The language used here should remind us, first of all, of von Arnim’s earlier opposition to confining her memory of Günderrode on the Rhein to poetic reflection.

“[L]ass es fortblühen bis es welkt,” she had written of the beautiful blossom of memory (572). Here, the image of Günderrode’s material existence, imaged as a flower, stands on the verge of passing away or wilting. Von Arnim’s resignation with regard to this inevitable loss might stem also from a remark by Ephraim. Although she doesn’t directly replicate the sentence, the thought is reminiscent of his observation that, “[i]n der Liebe ist das erste was wir weihen der Leib, - und dies ist die Wurzel und der Keim der Liebe – und ohne diese Weihe wird keine Liebe bestehen, sie welkt wie eine Blume die man bricht, aber *durch* diese Weihe, *mit* Ihr, muss die Liebe bestehen” (693).

The language of transformation and *Verklärung* from von Arnim’s earlier thoughts on form and music also resonate with this sentiment. In a novel that begins with the image of nighttime passing by as a candle melting under its flame, this language of consecration, *Weihe*, which von Arnim carries into her remarks on passing beauty, speaks also to the transformation of physical beauty to eternal *Geist*.

By all accounts, Ephraim and his language are closely tied to these transformations in von Arnim’s approach to Günderrode within the framework of the plot. The last letter makes clear to what extent her attachment to Ephraim replicates certain bonds she had previously shared with Günderrode, while also troubling the idea of such a simple replication. As I have attempted to argue throughout the preceding analysis of other letters in the novel, the apparent success of von Arnim’s relinquishment of the supreme significance of the self and the individual, as well as her coming to terms with loss, nevertheless latches onto Ephraim as an irrecoverable other. Claims to an ultimate *Vermählung* falter in the face of the ways Ephraim is envisaged in this final letter. The

notions of consecration and the sacrifice of the material body for *Geist* raise questions as to Ephraim's future.

The final letter begins with a moment I have already foreshadowed in the preceding analysis:

mit siebenundzwanzig Knospen, das sind Deine Jahre, ich habe sie freudig gezählt und daß es grad Deine Jahre trifft das freut mich so; ich seh sie alle an, das kleinste Knöspchen noch in den grünen Windeln das ist wo Du eben geboren bist. Dann kommt das zweite da lernst Du schon lächeln und dahlen mit dem kleinen grünen verschlossenen Visier Deines Geistes, und dann das dritte da bist Du nicht mehr festgehalten, bewegt Dich schon allein, - und dann winkst Du schon mit den Rosenlippen und dann sprechen die Knospen und dann bieten sie sich dem Sonnenlicht und dann sind fünf bis sechs Rosen die duften und strömen ihre Geheimnisse in die Luft, und dieser Duft umwallt mich und ich bin glücklich. 736

On a broad level, the moment does seem to reverse the *Waldrose* image with which I began this chapter. Her cathexis onto Günderrode has peacefully given way to this mournful remembrance of her beloved friend. It is as if she were tending the cathexis in front of our very eyes--as if the impending loss of Günderrode, traced in her written project, were now under her control. Each bud models one year of Günderrode's development: her smile, her countenance, her speech, her mobility, and her mysteries. She has paired the botanic and natural—registers further tied in her vocabulary to *Geist*—in a way that draws her closer to Günderrode's spirit (“und dieser Duft umwallt mich und ich bin glücklich”).

She repeats her sense of happiness at the suitability of the image: “ich habe sie *freudig* gezählt,” and “ich bin glücklich,” a happiness that centers around Günderrode's imaged development and independence. Imagining her full mobility at the age of three, von Arnim treasures the image that “da bist Du nicht mehr festgehalten, bewegt Dich

schon allein.” As if a static montage of Günderrode’s transition to independent life, the rosebush prompts a more altruistic vision of von Arnim’s love. But for all its faithfulness to Günderrode’s body and development, it also contains a notable error: Günderrode lived to be twenty-six, not twenty-seven. Despite the relative sense of security with which she seems to imagine Günderrode’s mortality in this passage, this additional (fictional year) hints at irresolution and an abiding desire for more time with her friend.

In his essay *Trauer und Melancholie*, Freud will go on, some fifty years later, to differentiate mourning from the more enduring melancholia through the ability to achieve exactly what von Arnim seems to accomplish in this rose-related image. Whereas melancholia almost creates a separate being from grief—he calls it in the opening sentence “das Wesen der Melancholie”—“das Normalaffekt der Trauer” remains just *that*, more of a kind of affect-- a painful, passing state that can then be abandoned at re-attachment to a new loved object. After successfully, and with great effort, divesting all energy from the lost loved object, Freud argues, the mourner’s subjectivity emerges “nach der Vollendung der Trauerarbeit wieder frei und ungehemmt” (199). Instead of submitting to a “Hingabe an die Trauer” and shutting out the outside world, von Arnim instead seems to submit, as she had articulated earlier in the novel, to the allure and seduction of the *Widerspenstigen*. Her interest in the outside world is safeguarded by her new connection to Ephraim (198).

Perhaps because von Arnim has already striven towards giving up the self, the entity that seems to be depleted in the course of melancholic detachment, she is able to work through the loss of Günderrode in a mournful capacity. “Bei der Trauer ist die Welt arm und leer geworden, bei der Melancholie ist es das Ich selbst,” Freud writes in a

famously quotable formulation (200). In finding meaning in her formulation of *Geist* and de-privileging her feeling of her *Selbst*, the allure of abyssal melancholia seems to remain safely afield.

And yet, if melancholia is a crisis of tempting, invisible surrender, mourning's visibility may be deceptive. Freud repeatedly draws on ocular images to describe his confusion at the workings of melancholia, as well as the murkiness of the process itself. In the same initial sentence I have quoted above, regarding the "Wesen der Melancholie," Freud states his intention to attempt to "erhellen" the problematic of melancholia (197). Later, he claims the painfulness of melancholia will be made brighter—"wird uns wahrscheinlich einleuchten"—in an economic analysis of its phenomenon (198). And of course, as I have already stated, Freud pinpoints the crisis of melancholia in its invisibility, "Nur daß uns die melancholische Hemmung einen rätselhaften Eindruck macht, weil wir nicht sehen können, was die Kranken so vollständig absorbiert" (199-200). With the striking visibility of Bettine's mourning in the form of the rosebush, it seems easy to gauge her witnessing of Günderrode's life as an unmitigated success. But the process of investing her energy into Ephraim eludes one's grasp in this peaceful image of the rosebush. I have already noted the emergence of a new vocabulary of darkness and fog that replaces the light-related imagery that had once characterized Günderrode. It might have seemed easy for von Arnim to continue in that darkness and confusion at the loss of her friend. And yet, new sources of light emerge in the form of Ephraim.

To that end, I turn now back to the letter itself, and the ways in which Ephraim is lured into the discussion of the rosebush. Von Arnim reveals that the rosebush was a gift

from Ephraim himself, a plant that he has impressively brought “schon zum zweitenmal zur Blüte” (737). This sense of repetition and re-blossoming fits into the de-singularizing logic of what has become von Arnim’s approach to relationality and mourning. The loss of one friend may threaten instability, but the blossom of a new attachment is as much a promise as the changing of seasons. At this point, von Arnim indeed seems aligned with mournful behavior. Several key terms which have already featured heavily in my analysis reappear in the final paragraphs of the letter. Describing her return to Ephraim and her bringing the flowers back to him, von Arnim writes

Ich hatte ihm seinen Rosenstock zurückgebracht, er sollt ihn aufbewahren, die Rosen sind viel mehr aufgeblüht, wie schön standen sie bei der hellen Lampe zu seinem schneeweißen Bart. Ich sagte die Rose und Euer Bart gehören zusammen und es ist mir lieb daß ich keine abgebrochen habe, denn Ihr seid *vermählt* zusammen mit den Rosen, sie sind Eure Braut. 740

Und die Schönheit dieses Mannes leuchtete mir da in der letzten Stunde auf dem Turm so recht hell auf, denn das *Bild* mit den Rosen, es war als hätt es mein Genius bestellt daß ichs recht *fassen* solle, wie Du die Tempelhalle geweiht achtest von der Du weißt daß inner ihren Mauern die Opferflamme lodert, der Tempel ist nur dann heilig wenn er den Menschen, den eignen Leib darstellt, - und des Gottes Lehre den eignen Geist. 742

Ephraim’s own fragility is on display here, at the same time von Arnim returns to much of the language that had seemed the underside of her descriptions of Günderrode. Just as she had once striven to establish roots that would *fassen* inside Günderrode’s spirit or in their correspondence (Wurzel in diesem Briefleben), she now fantasizes about capturing Ephraim in a static image: “dass ichs recht fassen sole.” Like the melting candle of the opening letter, she dreams of an *Opferflamme* of consecration, through which physical existence can give way to the permanence of *Geist*. While this last part may also seem to relent in the face of Ephraim’s mortality, it is attached to this desperate longing to capture

him permanently in pictorial form. The visual arts and their confinement to one particular moment seem diametrically opposed to the language of development, melody, and harmony that had motivated von Arnim's love of music. In this case, a *Bild* seems much more aligned with the strictness of rhyme and meter she had once disdained in poetry: it could capture only the specificity of Ephraim's beard and roses, so significant to her alone—to her memory of him. The shift from describing Ephraim in terms of haziness and liminality, to bathing him in light and striving to preserve him in a *Bild* seems a testament to the persistent anxiety of loss, even in the apparently successful mourning.

She claims his beard and the rosebush, that remainder of Günderrode's physical existence, form a perfect *Vermählung*. His beard, the apparently certain signifier of his masculinity, pairs perfectly with the relentless redness of these fertile flowers. She repeatedly makes the case for reconciliation, for a coalescence of these terms in the name of *Geist*, and yet, I think, the end of the novel presents nothing but the hollowness of utter loss. This sense consists in the near-duplication, yet non-identity of so many terms used throughout the novel. The candle imagery of the first letter returns in the *Opferflamme*, but it can never be the same flame, and it can never reinvigorate the spirit of Günderrode that had been so central to the novel. *Geist* in the sense of spirit is revealed to be most vividly the *Geist* of ghostliness, of impossibility, of an incomplete reconciliation of forces in art as well as in life. The repeated desire to hold on to the image and capture Ephraim visually disturbs the notion of an effortlessly *ungehemmt* re-attachment onto another figure, or at least one that can view him as an individual not defined by his sexual and cultural otherness. Von Arnim leaves us with the sense that the spiritual *erzeugen* she has adumbrated throughout the novel has yielded to *zeugen* itself.

In the face of an incomprehensible loss, of a talented friend and spiritual comrade dead at such a young age, she is left with the task of witnessing and paying homage to a person who died too early to complete the task herself.

I should note here that it is precisely through the image of the rose that Luce Irigaray envisions a new mode of perception, relating, and understanding that runs counter to established religio-patriarchal order. In “Belief Itself,” Irigaray argues that there would be no need for belief, no need for the games of make-believe through which Freudian children and the adults they become erase and manipulate the woman’s body, if we did not avoid the truth of material, socially-inflected life. “Belief is safe only if that in which or in whom the assembly communes or communicates is subject to concealment. Once this is exposed, there is no need to believe, at least as adherence is usually understood” (27). If women are taken out of positions of concealment, new modes of subjectivity and communication are set up, not unlike that which *Die Günderröde* adumbrates. In a stunningly relevant moment in the text, Irigaray argues for the beauty of the rose, a bold, secretive blossom that persists in spite of the concealment and denigration of the feminine. The passage is extensive, but begins with the haunting counterpoint: “But there are still flowers [. . .] There are roses, if I may evoke the flower that, despite its thorns, has so often been celebrated” (47). The weighty turn to this unapologetically blooming and visible form, after such an emphasis on the erasure of the female body, is moving. She continues: “[the rose] is neither object nor thing. It cannot speak itself in words, even though a certain set of syllables designate the rose in our language. It has no double. It always gives itself for the first unique time” (48). But von Arnim would perhaps respond that that is precisely the rose’s means of speaking itself,

albeit in a register different from our typical attunement, that it models a new way of relating. Von Arnim has written earlier in the novel that each form must have a *Selbstsprache*, through which it partakes of and is informed by *Geist*. Although I have argued that much of the novel shows von Arnim's attempt to move from the singularity of the rose—"it has no double"—Irigaray's description still evokes much of the same hope discernible in von Arnim's writing. "You will never see what she is or has in her heart of hearts. Perhaps it—or he? Or she?—can be sensed by someone living close to the rose, breathing the space around her" (48). Irigaray could just as easily be describing Günderrode here: her untimely death, her mysterious thoughts, left ever obscured by her dwindling responses (made no less mysterious by the fact that her actual correspondence with Friedrich Creuzer, for example, was destroyed at his wish). Again, the only option seems to be von Arnim's means of *erzeugen*, of trying to bear witness to her beloved spirit. "But can a mortal still sing?" Irigaray asks. Von Arnim seems to answer angelically from before—as Irigaray would have it, surely—and insist that such a singing is all one can seek as a mortal and for fellow mortals (50).

Von Arnim dreams of a way of relating that combines the flexibility of movement and music, while also testifying to the necessary difficulties attendant to re-negotiating the strength of the individual and the persistence of particularized attachments. Irigaray's formulation of the rose's blossom speaks encouragingly to this desire: "What is offered in this way is the very movement of blossoming, a growth that is not entrusted merely to the veiling-unveiling activity of the gaze but allows itself to be seen as it blooms" (49). The split between subject and object, encapsulated in Bettine's initial desperate plea to be the *Waldrose* planted in Günderrode, fails in the face of the actual rose. The rose peacefully

defies the notion of veiling and unveiling, and blossoms regardless of human attention. What Irigaray describes in this botanic image is precisely the type of *Selbstverleugnung* von Arnim so ardently seeks.

But even in the case of an apparently successful self-repudiation, in her tending the rosebush of Günderrode's memory, there remains the unanswered question of her subsequent attachment to Ephraim. His name, meaning fertility—replicated in his green thumb and bringing the rosebush to blossom twice—suggests also the endless repetition of loss and rebuilding. His Jewishness had from the outset betokened temptation and waywardness and otherness, and in these final moments, he seems doomed to a portrait that retains him as such.

CHAPTER 2

“Geschmücket festlich”: Genre and Mourning in Two Poems by Karoline von Günderrode

Günderrode’s dedicatory opening sonnet of the collection *Melete*, too, begins with flowers assuming speech. Although Günderrode penned “Zueignung” in 1806, it still reads almost as kind of response to Bettine von Arnim’s *Die Günderode*:

Ich habe Dir in ernsten stillen Stunden,
Betrachtungsvoll in heil’ger Einsamkeit,
Die Blumen dieser und vergangner Zeit,
Die mir erblüht, zu einem Kranz gewunden.

Von Dir, ich weiß es, wird der Sinn empfunden,
Der in des Blütenkelchs Verschwiegenheit
Nur sichtbar wird dem Auge, das geweiht
Im Farbenspiel den stillen Geist gefunden.

Es flechten Mädchen so im Orient
Den bunten Kranz; daß Vielen er gefalle,
Wetteifern unter sich die Blumen alle.

Doch Einer ihren tiefern Sinn erkennt,
Ihm sind Symbole sie nur, äußere Zeichen;
Sie reden ihm, obgleich sie alle schweigen.²⁴

The flowers here transcend their vegetal “Verschwiegenheit,” speaking, as Irigaray has argued, not “in syllables,” but with the “tiefern Sinn” that only the initiated recognizes (Irigaray 48). The speaker of the poem describes her process of sitting and weaving the flowers of the present and past times together into a wreath for one who is initiated into

²⁴ This poem and all subsequent poetry from Karoline von Günderrode is taken from Walter Morgenthaler’s three-volume edition of her work. Subsequent citations will refer to volume number and page number; here 1: 318.

their unique symbolism.²⁵ The dedication of these flowers to a recipient is something of a model for how the recipient will receive the sonnet and the collection as a whole.

The poem draws attention to the very formations and processes of “knowledge” that would allow a poetic subject to assume such authorial subjectivity, to create something like a poetic reflection that can be dedicated to someone else. In the sonnet, G nderrode uses several words all related to perception and the acquisition of knowledge. At first, the poetic subject appears in the position of solitude and “Betrachtung,” weaving the wreath as one might write a sonnet (l. 2). The scene of consideration and reflection here is also a kind of remembering, “Die Blumen dieser und vergangner Zeit,” in a way that is more explicit than it had been in Bettine von Arnim (l. 3). Then, she claims that she *knows* that the one receiving the dedication will *sense* the meaning of the silence of the flowers (“Von Dir, ich *wei * es, wird der Sinn *empfunden*” (l. 5). She then moves into a conception of initiation describing the recipient’s eye as “geweiht / Im Farbenspiel den stillen Geist gefunden” (ll. 7-8). Finally, she singularizes the object of the dedication as the one who will *recognize* the flowers’ deeper sense, “Doch Einer ihren tiefern Sinn erkennt” (l. 12). What is being given up and dedicated is a flower with a meaning not immediately apparent to an un-initiated eye. The dedication stresses the mysterious sensing and perceiving of the one who will receive the flowers.

Although I will go on to argue that strictly biographical readings of G nderrode’s work have not paid sufficient tribute to her formal eloquence, creativity, and her

²⁵ Of course, in using this language, which I obtain from the poem itself, I must acknowledge the work of Karoline von G nderrode’s lover, confidante, and friend Friedrich Creuzer, who wrote the *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten V lker, besonders der Griechen, dritte verbesserte Aufgabe* in six volumes (Leipzig: Georg Olms Verlag, 1973).

philosophical contributions, one might be justified in reading this intense preoccupation with silence assuming a kind of speech in line with many of the key terms that recur in Friedrich Creuzer's letters regarding the publication of *Melete*. Given that Creuzer was, as any G nderrode scholar knows, already married, his assistance in helping G nderrode publish the volume was something he always sought to undertake with the greatest "Verschwiegenheit" (Morgenthaler 3: 167). He also worked on the revisions and proofs of her work nightly in scenes of *Betrachtung* and stillness (two key words from the poem as well), accompanied by a locked portfolio that his wife, Sofie Creuzer, knew only abstractly to contain some letters from G nderrode (Morgenthaler 3: 167). G nderrode's assumption of this vocabulary in "Zueignung" suggests also a role reversal in which she is permitted the space for contemplation and solitude, and in which her story is permitted to come out of the secrecy that caused her and Creuzer so much worry.

"Zueignung," in its reflection on the modulations of perception, and its reflections on reflection itself, lives up to the older senses of the word: the transfer of property.

Grimms W rterbuch associates "Zueignung" with "Besitz bergabe" (*Grimms W rterbuch*, online ed, "Zueignung"). The poem seems a giving-over of ownership and possession in the form of the objectification of knowledge. The recipient of the dedication is almost exclusively imagined in the dative case, marking him as a recipient [indirect object] first and foremost, until he is envisioned as the "Einer" (l. 12). The grammatical shift suggests that the act of being the *one* who can recognize is what makes him into an individualized subject. This reflexivity upon the constructions of how a subject performs operations of perception, and is construed in those processes, is crucial for the analysis at hand.

In addition to its more self-reflexive vocabulary of perception, “Zueignung” also renders literal many of the movements that will be taken up more implicitly in the contexts in which G nderrode writes, in ways that rebound not only upon additional poems in *Melete*, but also upon the structures of signification that will recur throughout Goethe and H lderlin. Namely, she makes explicit her comparison of herself to women of the Orient, a gesture that will be implied in “Die Malabarischen Witwen” as well as in criticism of it, precisely at the turning point of the volta: “Es flechten M dchen so im Orient / Den bunten Kranz; da  vielen er gefalle, Wetteifern unter sich die Blumen alle” (ll. 9-11). The “so” here both ties the lyrical subject’s weaving to those of the women in the “Orient,” at the same time it suggests that the subject possesses firsthand knowledge of these women. This gesture stands in contrast to the more nuanced vocabulary of perception that characterizes the rest of the poem. Yet, in that contrast, it also suggests that gendered, cultural, and national differences become a site for the assumption of a certain kind of knowledge that otherwise had seemed almost to disavow ownership in the transfer of *Zueignung*. Hence, while it is promising that G nderrode acknowledges the implicit comparison between her poetic subject and differentiated women in this poem, it appears that the self-reflexivity does not extend to moments when Orientalizing difference is made legible; crucially, the fact that knowledge has moved from the solitary sphere of reflection and memory into a realm beyond (“the Orient”) does not hinder the ability of this dedication to take place. But the dedication, the transfer of property in the form of a floral wreath, cannot function without acknowledging the forms of perceiving that had made the object of knowledge into precisely that, objects that can be transferred and dedicated to another.

I emphasize these verbs and their suggestions of knowledge acquisition, or forms of perceiving, because they foster a sense of reflexivity that ultimately falls short when constructing difference, and which will be absent in “Die Malabarischen Witwen.” But even in that absence, the fact that the collection begins with a dedication that acknowledges and lists different forms of perception is itself an index of alternative forms of positioning oneself as a “knowing” subject.

She also makes clear that the flowers’ speech has a kind of symbolism and metaphoricity that will be helpful in understanding how these anthropomorphisms “speak” to constructions of self-representation and sovereignty. The poem thus reveals one of the fundamental significances of the flowers of *Die G nderode*, in which flowers had seemed a remnant of a promise toward a totalizing *Selbstverleugnung* in which difference would no longer be sustained, and yet, where flowers are *implicated* in the novel’s crucial image of objectification. Here, the flowers symbolize the significances of symbolism²⁶ itself: namely the interest in a language that would retain symbols but in which the symbols would serve as “ u re Zeichen” for something more enclosed—“des Bl tenkelchs Verschwiegenheit” (l. 6). This focus on the flower as an anthropomorphized ornament might be one way of looking at how speech and self-representation are taken as mutually assuring in these texts from German romanticism. In focusing on the ornament and the detail, specifically the flower, and their apparently silenced state requiring and ultimately *acquiring* communicability, von Arnim, G nderode, and Goethe convey something about the construction and valuation of autonomy and self-representation. A recurring fantastic element of the literature in German romanticism is the assumption of

²⁶ A further project is owed G nderode’s use of the word “symbol” here, and its complex relationship to Creuzer’s writings on the symbol.

speech on the part of inanimate entities. Does this fantasy not also say something about how German romantics viewed their own speech and ability to signify, their ability to represent themselves? Perhaps the fantasy of silence becoming pure speech is also the fantasy of the self being able to represent a knowledge one does not and cannot possess, which is the moment genre becomes most important, because it can encourage or support a certain type of reading.

The authors at the core of this chapter weave their own garland. Soon, I will examine a central sonnet from *Melete*, Günderrode's "Die Malabarischen Witwen," a representation of widow burning in India. Although Georg Forster is not explicitly mentioned in Günderrode's *Melete*, his translation of the classical Indian text *Sakontala* (1791), itself based on William Jones' English translation, lingers in the background of Günderrode's text, as it was a formative text in German romantic depictions of India. Forster inscribes his translation of this classical text with an epigraph that calls to mind both Günderrode's *Kranz* of flowers and Creuzer's nightly readings of *Melete*:

Wenn ich des Abends nach vollbrachter Arbeit noch mit diesen *Blumen Indiens spielte*, war es mir oft gegenwärtig, wie angenehm es einen mit der Phantasie der Griechen, der Römer, und anderer berühmten Völker vertrauten Geist beschäftigen müßte, dieses Werk mit den Dichtungen ihrer Kindheit zu vergleichen und wahrzunehmen, wiefern die schöpferische Energie des Menschen sich in ihren Äusserungen überall gleich bleibt, und wie sie durch Lokalverhältnisse sich verändern läßt. Wem wird es nun nicht einleuchten, warum ich diese litterarische Seltenheit vor Ihren Richterstuhl bringe? Bei Ihnen selbst wird der kindliche Geist, der in *diesen Blumen weht*, mein Fürsprecher seyn, wenn ich sie zum *Kranz* für die ehrwüridgen Schläfe des besten Vaters weihe.
278, emphasis mine

Günderrode's "Zueignung" had acknowledged that knowledge is a kind of formation that would need to be conceptualized as its own kind of object in order for it to be transferred to someone else. It was a self-reflexive kind of dedication. It is not to demean the intensive philological labor that Forster showed *Sakontola* that I point out his characterization of the work as leisurely and diversionary—a nightly pastime akin to *playing* with flowers and construing them as a "Kranz für die ehrwürdigen Schläfe." The comment also suggests that, although he will go on to present a scholarly preface for the translation, he has interwoven the text within the realm of poetics through the image of the wreath. Altogether, this epigraph seems less of a self-reflexive dedication on the processes of knowledge formations and more like an affirmation of a certain kind of reception.

This tension between dedication and reception is writ large upon the approach Forster takes to the affective expressions he finds in *Sakontola*—"die schöpferische Energie des Menschen" which, though varying in its modifications and appearances, essentially reaffirms a broader human principle that he will describe further in the *Vorrede*. Perhaps in a manner similar to Schlegel's attempt to articulate a systematic theory of an underlying principle of genre, Forster seems to conceptualize aesthetic expression as belonging to an overall "menschlichen Charakter" (287). One might have thought that in the process of fashioning oneself as the recipient, one might be less objectifying than the bestowing or dedicating subject. However, it is precisely in Forster's conceptualization of German-speaking audiences as more *empfänglich* that he essentializes national difference and also erases the structures of nationalizing

differentiation in order to affirm something like a universally applicable approach to aesthetics.

To give a brief outline of his *Vorrede* to Sakontala, he begins by asserting that Germans have a uniquely multifaceted approach to texts from India. Whereas England especially conforms its taste to the metropole, “In Deutschland verhält es sich anders” (285). Germany, at this point still a loose assemblage of territories, does not have one major capital that dictates its tastes. Rather, unlike competing European powers, Germany, due to a distinctive mixture of factors, can devote itself to a broader theorization of aesthetics and taste. He writes,

Gleichwohl hat uns geographische Lage, politische Verfassung und so manches mitwirkende Verhältniß den eklektischen Charakter verliehen, womit wir das Schöne, Gute, und Vollkommene, was hie und dort in Bruchstücken und Modifikationen auf der ganzen Erdoberfläche zerstreut ist, *uneigennützig* um sein selbst willen erforschen, samm[el]n, und so lange ordnen sollen, bis etwa der Bau des menschlichen Wissens vollendet da steht,--oder unsere Rolle gespielt ist und künftige Menschenalter die Steine, die wir zusammentrugen, zu einem neuen Gebäude brauchen. 285, emphasis mine

The project of Germans, whose sense of nationality and taste is not as codified as those of other European countries, is to gather all the information unselfishly for the production of an entire human knowledge.²⁷ The use of the word *uneigennützig* is

²⁷ In writing about Forster’s claim that a special affinity exists between Sanskrit and German, and one that allows a better mediation and understanding of “*Werke der Kunst*,” I should also refer to Aijaz Ahmad’s critique of the term “Indian literature,” a phrase which forms a facile placeholder for the works Forster and others investigated. First, there is the very precariousness of attempting to call a vastly differentiated (linguistically, culturally, formally) body of texts “Indian literature” (246). Moreover, assuming a scholar could even hope to acquire all necessary languages to consider oneself a true scholar of this linguistically heterogeneous corpus, that same scholar would find, in the end, the very absence of a literal “corpus” at all, as the inevitable result of arresting in print a trove of work deeply embedded in bodily and oral performances.

Writing specifically about the current perils of allowing English to become the primary *lingua franca* for these translations, his comments are also relevant to claims such as Forster’s: “this disability [of English to impart the sense of the original text] is proportionately greater the closer the original text is to the oral, the performative, the domestic, the customary, the assumed, the unsaid” (250). Aside from the issue of the fidelity of translation, of course, arises the issue of which works were in fact selected for

significant here because it draws us back into the realm of dedication and reception, of Günderrode's *Besitzübergabe* that also reflects on the formation of that very *Besitz*.

While Forster may narrate this project of knowledge accumulation as *uneigennützig*, his particularization of Germany's ability to spearhead and complete (*vollenden*) this project certainly articulates a favorable self-image:

Diese allgemeine Empfänglichkeit ist es, die uns in Stand setzt, den Werken des Geschmacks, gleichviel von welcher Nation, wenn sie nur wahre Vorzüge besitzen, wirklich zu huldigen; dahingegen es Franzosen, Engländern, und Italienern so schwer, ja fast unmöglich wird, sich in eine andere Denkungs- und Empfindungsart, in andere Sitten und Gewohnheiten als die ihrigen zu versetzen. Ihr Genuß ist einseitig und konventionell, der unsrige kann allgemein und philosophisch seyn; sie suchen nur unmittelbare Befriedigung ihres Gestandes, wir genießen auch in Werken der Kunst den Zuwachs unseres *Wissens*. 286

His singularization of German readers as more receptive and open to the effects of literature from India is structurally intensified by the anaphoric "sie...wir" with which he juxtaposes German and other European understandings of such material. He further proposes that the German interest in India is somehow more neutral and objective—*philosophisch*—motivated by the desire for a greater accumulation of knowledge rather than the bolstering of a one-sided (*einseitig*) view of things as they already appear to be. This conceptualization also has significance for the way something like genre theory will

translation at all; a result of a variety of influences, prejudices, and privileges. Later German Indologists, Ahmad notes, worked exclusively with "Sanskrit classics," a factor in and product of the overall ways in which "European Romanticism often overlapped with Indian Brahminism," as access to original texts was facilitated through collaboration with elite castes (258-9). Hence, there is a distinct imbalance in this reception of literatures, in which German researchers could claim to be transmitting something like one unified "Indian literature" on the basis of several texts that inevitably fail to reconstruct the entire linguistic and social diversity of an entire region. Although German Indologists and writers were only beginning to research the variety of languages and traditions to be found in India, I consider it worthwhile as a scholar in the twenty-first century to acknowledge these imbalances.

be articulated, in that he seems to be echoing Aristotle's *Poetics*.²⁸ Perhaps also, as he suggests at the very beginning of the *Vorrede*, Germany can take this supposedly more philosophical approach because it had no active stakes in the colonial mission being imposed upon India.

But perhaps most importantly for the passage and for the analysis to follow: the context of colonialism is taken to be something one can remove from view (literally, he refers to the colonial aggressions of the British as a “näheres Interesse” that “den Geisteswerken der Indier eine äußere Wichtigkeit des Augenblicks verleihen kann”) (285). Difference in affect and expressivity is taken to be the result strictly of geographical positionality and factors such as religious custom and national mythologies. What is not taken into account are how factors such as internal power dynamics, the colonial regime, and gendered norms influence the expression and understanding, the dedication and reception, of emotion and feeling. In place of such an account, Forster offers the following concluding remarks:

Man könnte, um diesem Entwurf noch einiges Interesse zu geben, theils diesen Menschenstamm und seine lokalen Verhältnisse charakterisi[er]en, theils die Berührungspunkte aufsuchen, wo die Phantasie sowohl als die Vernunft und der Sinn alter und neuer Völker mit den indischen zusammentreffen. Vielleicht wäre es sogar nöthig, vor einer zu raschen Vergleichung der Kunstprodukte eines so entfernten, so von europäischen Sitten abgeschiedenen Volks mit den unsrigen, und vor der Anwendung unserer Regeln auf etwas, das ohne einen Begriff von diesen Regeln entstand, recht ernstlich zu warnen. Die Billigkeit forderte wohl, daß man es deutlich auseinandersetzte, wie die Verschiedenheit der indischen Mythologie, Geschichte und Sitten, von der griechischen zum Beispiel, den Kunstwerken jenes Landes eine uns ungewohnte Gestalt und Maschinerie verleihen müsse, wie aber das Interessante eines solchen Werks gar nicht darin bestehe, ob es fünf oder sieben Aufzüge habe, sondern daß die zartesten Empfindungen, deren das menschliche Herz fähig ist, sich so gut am Ganges und bei dunkelbraunen Menschen, wie am

²⁸ I am indebted to Kristina Mendicino for pointing out this resonance.

Rhein, am Tyber, am Ilissus bei unserem weissen Geschlechte äussern
konnten. 287

Certainly, with new access to classical texts, the resonances in human feeling and the consistency among traditions taken to be very different would be striking. However, by emphasizing the layers of difference (mythology, history, customs, and skin color), in a progression towards similarity sets a troubling precedent. Humanity becomes something to be assessed by the comprehensibility of a representation for the one ostensibly receiving it. The reception of this aesthetic representation ends up affirming the recipient's sense of subjectivity. The movement seems to set difference along a track that ultimately reaffirms a falsely symmetrical relationship of representation and reception that, across sedimentations of socio-historical power dynamics, will be untenable. And in the end, this broader humanity is taken as further *Wissen* for German aesthetic fantasy. It opens up the possibility of new kinds of representations: "hier öffnet sich unserm Gefühl und unserer Phantasie ein ganz neues Feld" (287).

But what if Forster really *had* located a kind of *allgemeine Empfänglichkeit*? Could there be something like a receptivity that doesn't stand in service of erasing socio-historical contexts of power and colonialism, that doesn't essentialize national difference, but instead performs something more self-reflexive? An *Empfänglichkeit* more in keeping with the reflections on perception that had occurred in Günderrode's *Zueignung*?

"DIE MALABARISCHEN WITWEN" AND THE SONNET

The answer to these questions, in light of Günderrode's use of the sonnet form in "Die Malabarischen Witwen," appears for now to be: no. I turn now to this crucial poem and explore how the contextual history of the sonnet form carries with it a history of

objectification that further aestheticizes the event of widow immolation. Moreover, the “sedimentations” (to borrow Jameson’s phrase) of powerful feeling that are associated with the sonnet are also deeply engrained in the false symmetry that German romantic Orientalism fosters, to the extent that the sonnet enforces a kind of reading of *sati* as something representable and know-able by readers and writers thousands of miles away from India. To explore these points and relationships, I will also delve into some of the contextual sources for German representations of *sati*, including Gerhard Anton von Halem’s *Blüthen aus Trümmern* and Pierre Sonnerat’s *A Voyage to the East Indies and China* (1782, English translation 1788-89).

Zum Flammentode gehn an Indusstranden
Mit dem Gemahl, in Jugendherrlichkeit,
Die Frauen, ohne Zagen, ohne Leid,
Geschmücket festlich, wie in Brautgewanden.

Die Sitte hat der Liebe Sinn verstanden, [5]
Sie von der Trennung harter Schmach befreit,
Zu ihrem Priester selbst den Tod geweiht,
Unsterblichkeit gegeben ihren Banden.

Nicht Trennung ferner solchem Bunde droht,
Denn die vorhin entzweiten Liebesflammen [10]
In Einer schlagen brünstig sie zusammen.

Zur süßen Liebesfeyer wird der Tod,
Vereinnet die getrennten Elemente,
Zum Lebensgipfel wird das Daseins Ende. 1: 325

“Die Malabarischen Witwen” is of the sonnet variation known as Petrarchan, based on the precedent set by its namesake, Petrarca. Petrarca perhaps initiated the ongoing association between the sonnet and the aesthetic itself. His famous sonnet sequence, *Canzoniere*, addressed to Laura, plays upon the resonance between the name

and the laurel wreath which recurs throughout the texts at hand²⁹. During the romantic period, the sonnet continued to symbolize one of the peaks of poetic stylization; with its complicated formal conventions regarding meter (iambic pentameter) and rhyme (variable according to Shakespearean or Petrarchan form). As such, the sonnet came to stand in for the aesthetic itself, and many sonnet sequences from the time have been read through the lens of metapoetical commentary (Goethe's sonnet sequence, for example). Ian Balfour describes this quality of the sonnet, writing, "few forms have tended to such extreme self-consciousness as has the sonnet, which thrives on a textual vertigo or *mise-en-abîme*" (185). In the particular context of the German romantic sonnet, Thomas Borgstedt notes that while the form has seen a range of subject matters, Petrarca's legacy of the aestheticization of the beloved woman endured, and even became a kind of prestige for German poets: "Das Sonett als Form wird als ein Medium des Werttransfers genutzt: Durch die Anhebung von Thematik und Stil und die philosophische Aufwertung des Reims wird das Sonett selbst als Form angehoben" (451). This economic dimension of Borgstedt's language plays into the asymmetrical foundations of the relationship between German writing subject as both recipient and dedicator of knowledge: mastery of the sonnet's rhyme and meter only compounds the subject's formulation of him- or herself as possessing knowledge to be represented.

"Die Malabarischen Witwen" certainly engages in this pattern, but it does so not through Günderröde's representation of her own love; rather, through the representation and aestheticization of *sati*. Various structural elements and innovations of the sonnet combine to create an impression of everlasting union between husband and wife—certain

²⁹ I am grateful to Felix Green for making me aware of this wordplay.

words are picked up and repeated, particular sounds blend together, among other effects—in a way that deploys the eponymous women as elements in this overall schema. The octave opens by stressing the impervious progression of the women, describing their appearance as “[g]eschmücket festlich, wie in Brautgewanden.” (l. 4). It goes on to contextualize their marching as one step in the sanctified process of immortalizing their marital bonds. The concluding sestet, which in the Petrarchan tradition usually constitutes a “division of thought” here rather stresses the supposed unification of the lovers (*Princeton Encyclopedia* 1319). The poem ends by subverting the conception of death as an ending into death as a pinnacle: “Zum Lebensgipfel wird das Daseins Ende” (l. 14). Günderrode aestheticizes this conception of death itself as a kind of reunification.

One locus of this emphasis on convergence is the rhyme scheme. The sestet itself has a somewhat unusual rhyme pattern for a Petrarchan sonnet, which typically eschews a concluding couplet *cdd cee*. The rhyme that interconnects these two halves of the sestet is the one between *droht* and *Tod*—a significant pairing, as the second half goes on to name and clarify that which was only suggested in the first half of the rhyme, acoustically carrying on a trend in delaying naming that will also receive much attention in the investigation at hand. It is death (*Tod*) as separation that threatens (*droht*) in the first line of the sestet, and in assuming the assonance of *droht*, *Tod* indeed serves as a type of *Vereinigung*; or, at the very least, in rhyming, sonically affirms the speaker's claim that it will unite, rather than divide, the lovers. The overall rhyme scheme thus gradually shifts— in the movement from octave to sestet— from *umarmender Reim* to mediated couplets, ending with the rhyme between *Elemente* and *Ende* (ll. 12 and 14). Moreover, whereas the first half of the octet features several caesuras interceding, for example,

between the image of the women and their described equanimity ("Die Frauen, ohne Zagen, ohne Leid"), as if emphasizing the measured rhythm of their steps, the remaining stanzas possess no such caesuras.³⁰ Instead, the reflections seem to coalesce effortlessly. At the very moment the poem splits itself between this octave and sestet, a dactyl intercedes and acoustically stresses the envisaged binding force of death: "**Nicht Trennung ferner solchem Bunde droht**" (ll. 9-10). The poem structurally replicates the very union it attempts to represent by placing metrical emphasis on death's inability to separate the lovers—in the precise moment the poem experiences its own major bifurcation.

It is also worth noting that the word *Trennung* itself receives considerable emphasis in "Die Malabarischen Witwen," as it occurs no fewer than three times within the sonnet-- the third and final time as a past participle rhyming with the concluding couplet mentioned above, "Elemente / / Ende" (l. 13). These final lines also hinge on a type of coming-together: the pattern "zu etwas werden" unites the first and final lines of the tercet, expatiating on the new dimensions death supposedly assumes in the spectacle of immolation. In fact, the poem is very finely constructed in terms of its replication of unification in several significant structural and acoustic gestures.

A further dimension of this emphasis on unification is Günderröde's series of compound nouns to designate *sati*. they read as slightly more literal versions of a technique overwhelmingly associated with Old Germanic verse, the kenning, and hence, as perhaps more open than such colonial nomenclature. But these kenning-like

³⁰ As part of her careful study of classical meters, Günderröde paid special attention to the acoustic effects of well-placed and varied caesuras. In her notebooks on poetics, she writes, "gut ist es wenn diese Ces[s]ur abwechselnd bald nach einem männlichen und bald nach einem weiblichen Wort erfolgt" (Morgenthaler 2: 421).

designations further publicize and glorify immolation. To be sure, G nderrode's compound nouns arise in a very different context and with more literality than the type of kenning typically associated with skaldic verse.³¹ But Rudolf Meissner's general definition of a kenning as "ein zweigliedriger Ersatz f r ein Substantiv der gew hnlichen Rede" still applies to these particularized combinations (2). Her names for *sati* incorporate synecdoche-- the flames of the pyre standing in for the entire event in *Flammentode*, or *Liebe* abstractly replacing the married couple involved in the event. Several consequences arise from these kenning-like designations. First, they once again enact the kind of unifying or uniting the entire poem seems to stage--indeed their metaphoricity lies in their bringing together two disparate entities or concepts into a meaningful encounter. Hence, their exegesis requires a kind of deciphering. As a result, Gary Holland notes, kennings serve both "ornamental" and practical considerations, in that they both embellish and innovate, while also economically presenting an image or idea (130). Conveniently, then, as Edith Marold argues, kennings can be used to characterize and singularize individual persons by placing "die Einmaligkeit und Unverwechselbarkeit des Individuums in den Vordergrund" (58).

This ability to crystallize significant details and combine striking images is precisely what I believe draws G nderrode to use such nominalizations in "Die Malabarischen Witwen." Indeed, as Holland points out, this combination typically involves a "blend of real-world and mythological knowledge," which, I would argue in relation to the sonnet at hand, serves once again to sensationalize and embellish the

³¹ For the following remarks on kennings, I am greatly indebted to Gary Holland's concise and lucid discussion of major theoretical work on kennings from linguistic, poetic, and historical perspectives in "Kennings, metaphors, and semantic formulae in Norse *dr ttkv tt*." *Arkiv f r Norisk Filologi*, 120 (2005). 123-147

image of *sati* (141). Her images combine routine concepts with eye-catching images. Death, a part of life's trajectory, becomes an ostentatious *Flammentode*— a designation that also neglects the complicated contexts of *sati* at the heart of this discussion, and instead stresses the elemental spectacle and the ultimate result of the practice. Similarly, *Liebesfeyer* condenses the marital relation and the events surrounding *sati* into a highly problematic conflation. The aestheticizing heart of the sonnet form extends into these moments of naming, which bolsters the illusion of knowledge of *sati* on the part of the poetic subject.

It bears noting, too, that this element of the German language—its propensity for creating *Komposita*—is a central factor in Forster's linguistic linking of German and Sanskrit.³² As I have shown with Forster's preface to *Sakontala*, this kind of singularization of German linguistics is also deeply invested in distinguishing a nascent German literary and philosophical tradition from other European canons. He writes in his *Erläuterungen* appended to the volume, noting the loss of poetic effect from working with a translation already twice removed from the source text:

Man begreift, wie viel auf diesem Wege von der Energie der Sprache und von der Eigenthümlichkeit ihres Ausdrucks verloren gehen mußte, zumal da die englische Sprache beinah keine Zusammensetzungen leidet, wozu sich *die unsrige* schon ungleich mehr bequemt, die sanskritanische hingegen vor allen anderen geschickt ist, da es in derselben gestattet wird,

³² According to Gerhard Steiner, Forster was in fact at work on a verse translation of the play, as was Wilhelm Gerhard roughly three decades later, the title of whose translation (*Sakontala: metrisch für die Bühne bearbeitet*) further suggests dissatisfaction with the prose form (495). Gerhard's preface to his translation, while perhaps too complicated to address adequately within this initial discussion, presents a variety of fascinating statements regarding the need for a verse translation. In it, he discusses a friend's suggestion that he compose the translation as an opera, to which he responds in an interesting summary of generic difference and suitability: "einem Freunde, welcher meinte, das Sujet eigne sich besser zu einer Oper, wußte er durch den Grund zu begegnen, dass es Schade sey, die zarte Blumensprache zu einer Freskoarbeit, wie es einer Oper ist, zu verbrauchen, in welcher der Tonsetzer selten Selbstverläugnung genug besitze, den Worten des Dichters Gerechtigkeit widerfahren zu lassen" (VIII). Note also the use of "zart" to describe the language of *Sakontala*, a term that will recur in Herder's reception of another German text on India, Gerhard Anton von Halem's *Blüthen aus Trümmern*.

eine ungeheure Menge Worte miteinander zu einem zusammenhängenden Ganzen zu verbinden, und man in einigen indischen Urkunden Beispiele von einem hundert und zwei und fünfzig-sylbigen Worte nachweisen kann. 387 (emphasis mine)

Once again, the language of "they" (in this case the English-speaking translators, in the *Vorrede* he referred also to France and Italy) versus "us" (the German speakers) features prominently in his analysis. This formulation fits his overall claim that languages have their own *Eigenthümlichkeit*, again drawing on the root of *eigen*-, property. These qualities of language contribute to the sense that they can be known and analyzed and disseminated as objects. But in this insistence of Germany as being able to render that quality and property most accurately, Forster reveals also something of the suspicion that other qualities may go lost in translation.

CONTEXTS

In thinking of kennings as a riddle, and of these nominalizations also as such, it is important to foreground some of the contextual, contemporaneous materials that continued to frame India as a source of mystery and even deception. This figurative approach to naming and designating *sati* not only reinforces the attempt to represent something Günderrode of which had no personal knowledge, but also distills something like a uniform India into a puzzle for European *Entzifferung* (literally, un-writing, decoding) that is also its own *Bezifferung* (calculating, estimating, but also writing). These movements of naming sensationalize and stage the event of *sati* as if it were never to be completed, with the emphasis on the burning flames featured in two of the four instances. They are also crucially linked to the works of such Orientalists as Pierre Sonnerat and Gerhard Anton von Halem. Sonnerat's *A Voyage to the East Indies and China* (1782,

English translation 1788-89), a travel account thought to have inspired Goethe's poem "Der Gott und die Bajadere" and a plethora of other Orientalist texts begins: "All nations have an origin, true or fabulous, to which they recur; but the origin of the Indians is lost to the obscurity of time," through which line of thinking Sonnerat also argues that India's history can only ever be reconstructed from the sacred writings in which this history is "allegorically contained" (i-viii).³³ India is imaged, then, as an esoteric puzzle requiring decipherment. This kind of language becomes the site of where dedication becomes reception, and vice versa; where the desire to know and represent difference is interwoven into the textures of the aesthetic itself.

This interweaving is where also the recurrent romantic fantasy of the nonhuman, usually botanic, image taking on speech encounters its more suspicious counterpart. The emphasis upon deciphering unearths a suspicion that "the Orient" might not represent all it possesses: that the essentially shared emotional experiences that could be delivered and received symmetrically in Forster's vision might actually retain an element of the unknown. This becomes especially clear in the work of von Halem. *Blüthen aus Trümmern* of 1798 is an interesting volume for several reasons. First, of course, is von Halem's relative obscurity within German literature. Not a single text of his has so far been translated. But von Halem was an author in dialogue with such prominent figures as Herder, Voss, and Wieland. *Blüthen aus Trümmern* consists of short narratives he dubs "Paramythen," which also incorporate dialogues and lyrics (Preface 4). His rendering of *sati* occurs in a chapter called "Die Blume Oschaddi," an image he seems to have

³³ For the question of the text's influence on Goethe, see Karl Richter, Herbert G. Göpfert, et al., *Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens (MA)*, 4.1. München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1988, 1222.

adapted, like many others in the volume, from Forster's *Sakontala*, for which he had particular affection. Indeed, he writes in his commentary to the chapter:

Auch auf mich hat dieses fast zweitausendjähriges Indisches Gedicht eine große Wirkung getan. Von der süßen Schwärmerei, der zarten Empfindsamkeit, der unbeschreiblichen Naivetät, die darin herrschen, innig gerührt, wagte ich's, nicht nur manches aus den Indischen Mythen, sondern auch mehrere Züge aus dem Schauspiele selbst in diese Erzählung einzuflechten. 247

Again, the image of weaving makes literal the adaptation of partial accounts of India into attempts at representation. Despite his obvious engagement with significant texts in the early Indological movement, I have not come across any scholarship on von Halem's depiction of *sati* in this volume, aside from Herder's review of it, which I address later; indeed, hardly any scholarship on von Halem's literary publications appears available. It remains unclear how Günderrode came into possession of the text, yet her familiarity with such an obscure depiction of immolation warrants further attention. Since Morgenthaler isolates it as the likely immediate influence on "Die Malabarischen Witwen," I will devote some time to it here.

First, a basic sense of the complicated nested narrative is necessary. Von Halem renders a young woman, Zilia, who recounts a song to her beloved, Fleurau, at a family gathering. The lovers are evoked, at the chapter's beginning, as enjoying an evening on a terrace. Nostalgia and winsomeness permeate the story, as Herder will later go on to remark and praise in his review of the text. When Zilia thinks of the possibility of someday losing her beloved, she decides to lead him on a walk through the gardens. Together, they stumble upon a tree bearing a sign with a depiction of Rama,³⁴ whom von

³⁴ Another detail lifted from Forster's *Sakontala*, in which the tree is singled out as one of Sakontala's favorites (she is imaged as a careful tend-er of nature throughout the drama. Her companion Priyamwada even says, in a moment eerily similar to Bettine von Arnim's image of Ephraim and the rosebush in *Die*

Halem calls in his notes to the text “der indische Amor” (248). Zilia reveals that it was a gift from her French friend Latour, who sent her the tree and the sign as a remembrance of his narratives from his time in India, which Fleurau terms “das Land der Täuschung,” a phrase also picked up by Zilia when she refers to Rama as “Die Mutter Täuschung” (168). A type of *occupatio* ensues, in which Zilia expresses a desire to run away from the tree and the memories of Latour’s stories it recalls, while also stressing the overwhelming effect it apparently has on its listeners. At Fleurau’s repeated enreating—“es ist auch Wonne, der Trauer nachzuhängen,” he romantically offers—Zilia recounts the song she has learned from Latour (169).

Lest one think the complicated frame narrative had finally reached its core, Zilia’s recounting of Latour’s story progresses into yet another nested dimension. It turns out that Latour has heard the song—to repeat, it is a song taking on the perspective of a woman about to mount the funeral pyre of her husband—not from the woman herself, as so many colonial accounts attempt to proclaim, but from the *sister* of the woman who has committed *sati*. This detail appears to be solely a creation of von Halem; I have not come across any other literary or journalistic accounts that claim to have learned the song from a *sati*’s sister or other relative. This unusual rendering and perspective (in terms of its deviation from many other accounts of *sati*) gives voice to the suffering of a *sati*’s sister, at the very least a slightly more sympathetic perspective than so many colonial accounts focusing on the eyewitness’s own suffering at the ghastliness of the event. Once Zilia performs the song, the narrative returns to her walk with Fleurau, which the pair concludes with admiration for the “hinduisch[e] Wittwe” and thoughts of the immortality

Günderode, “Weil der Amrabaum mit dir (Sakontala) vermählt zu seyn scheint, die du in voller Anmuth der blühenden Winde gleichst, welche sich um ihn schlängelt” (298).

of their own bond (176). Zilia describes the song as embodying the “indischen Hymne” as the “Sohn des Liebesgottes und der Verzweiflung” (177).

But at the core of this Indian hymn, according to Zilia, is the transformation of “Poliwantas anfänglicher stummer Schmerz” into “Poesie” (170). This moment acknowledges the desire to find an aesthetic form that could represent the event of *sati*. In this way, the statement also reveals the aestheticizing impulses behind Günderrode’s representation of *sati* as well. The entire chain of poeticizations and narrations rests on the assumption that *sati* is something that could be represented and hence known by European Orientalists. The images of mystery and deception give way to a fundamental belief in the symmetry of a relationship of representation.

As I have already shown through the case of Forster’s introduction to his *Sakontola* translation, von Halem is far from alone in this assumption. Indeed, his *own* source text follows the precedent of evaluating materials from India in terms of their aesthetic impact and their ability to be made comprehensible. The article from which von Halem draws inspiration for the lament in *Blüthen aus Trümmern*, “Reflections on Oriental Poetry,” also claims to reproduce a song from a “lovely Hindu girl, for such it seems she was” (336)³⁵. The author uses her song as an example of the release of passionate feeling typical of poetry from the Orient—a motive of course significant to romantic literature overall, most famously captured in Wordsworth’s *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads*, published just seven years after “The Oriental Hermit.” These passions,

³⁵ In the *Anhang to Blüthen aus Trümmern*, Von Halem directly attributes his supposed familiarity with *sati* to an English-language colonial newspaper, *The Friday Morning Advertiser*, which published a lament supposedly stemming from a young woman intending to mount the funeral pyre in article called “The Oriental Hermit; or, The Lucubrations of Sinbad, with the Long Beard” (von Halem 248). I have been able to access a reprint entitled “Reflections on Oriental Poetry” (see bibliography).

the author claims, speak to the overall need for the British to invest more time and care in the poetry of India, as well as the comparative benefits of “language issue[d] warm from the heart” over “cold sophistry of scholastic refinement” (335). Here he views this sophistry as a kind of ornamentation of the more pure and organic language of the heart; a poignant reversal of the formulation Forster had seemed to propose in his singularization of the German approach to knowledge, in which a general receptivity and philosophical approach is something to be lauded. The author of this text lauds the “affecting manner in which this sonnet is composed,” drawing on an older use of the term to denote a shorter piece of writing, “esp. a lyrical love poem” (336 and *The Oxford English Dictionary*). Although Forster and the author of “Reflections on Oriental Poetry” differ in their evaluation of the status of affective outpouring vs. supposedly more refined philosophical inquiry, both suggest that these two approaches are separable, and that European and British analyses of Indian literatures should focus on the universal affective components of the works.

Although this author writes from a context very different from that of von Halem and G nderrode (he is, of course, British), it is worth noting that von Halem drew his inspiration from a source that labels *sati* a lyrical subject more stirring than even “Sappho’s sonnet on the Power of Love” (336). Immolation is envisaged as occasioning the most romantic of all poeticization, and even as bridging gaps between “oriental” (as it is called in the title) and Western literature. Hence, despite the different contexts and geographic locations of the authors, this approach to *sati* cannot be separated from von Halem’s adaptation of it, nor, by extension, from G nderrode’s. These authors stress the emotional impact that *listening* and receiving the representations have had upon them.

This point should be stressed, as it becomes the fodder for their own representations, suggesting that the supposed outpouring of emotion is treated in a manner that reaffirms the subject as knowledgeable.

Finally, as a further link in this chain of texts, I would like to address Herder's review of von Halem's *Blüthen aus Trümmern*, which will again blur the lines between reception and dedication, and posit von Halem as an aesthete of previously foreclosed knowledges. He begins his review by praising the collection's ability to weave virtues "in einem Kranz von Blüthen über Trümmern alter Zeiten, mit Grazienhänden gewebet" (311-312). In addition to von Halem's ability to weave these materials together in one collection, Herder praises the affective quality of these materials: focusing on the story "Die Blume Oshaddi," Herder calls the song itself "schauerlich groß," again using the language of powerful feeling that characterizes von Halem's source text, "Reflections on Oriental Poetry" (Herder 313). His comments on the entire volume in his concluding remarks are also noteworthy. He calls the collection "zart" and, due to its brevity, possessing something "was lange Romane selten geben, nämlich den Geist eigner Erzählung und geselliger Unterhaltung" (313). Hence, Herder evaluates the text according to its ability to convey something of a personalized approach to the Orient. He classifies the text as within the realm of *Unterhaltung* or entertainment, an effect achieved by its brief narrative quality. In addition, Herder speaks explicitly about the virtue of von Halem's having transformed the song into something of "eigner Erzählung"—giving witness to the overall subject positioning of European authors attempting to represent *sati*, to make it into an object of knowledge that can then be transferred, *zugeeignet* [*Besitzübergabe*] on an affective plane.

This garland of representations, these remarks on the aesthetic of representation, are crucial to my exploration of G nderrode’s work. Forster, Von Halem, Herder,³⁶ and the author of “Reflections on Oriental Poetry” share a conviction that their sources deserve attention from European and British scholars, and a desire to make understandable the affective qualities of different texts from India. In this sense, when G nderrode describes the women as “geschm cket festlich” and heightens their aestheticization, she does so within a framework that already positioned itself as giving voice to the deceptive, mysterious other; as discovering the deep affective qualities of women of India; she could not render them aesthetic objects in need of representation if there were not already a vast discourse of attempting to bring the voice of the Orientalized other into a representable aesthetic form.

TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON *SATI* AS AN AESTHETIC OBJECT

With all this emphasis on mystery and deciphering, the German writing subject so rarely acknowledges his or her own work as indulging its own mythologies. To this end, I turn to several foundational interventions from transnational feminist scholars. I foreground the following interventions in an effort to make my own dedications and

³⁶ Herder writes his own account of *sati* in his work, *Ideen zur Philosophie*, a study G nderrode apparently read just a few years before writing “Die Malabarischen Witwen.” These reflections also occasion remarks about Herder’s own understanding of German national identity vis- -vis its treatment of women. Citing *sati* as “barbarisch,” he writes that, owing to “sein Klima, sein genetischer Charakter, seine ganze Lebensweise,” German men recognize the virtues of their fellow countrywomen. Consequently, he exhorts German women: “f hle den Ruhm deiner Urm tter und eifre ihm nach: unter wenigen V lkern r hmt die Geschichte, was sie von ihnen r hmet; unter wenigen V lkern hat auch der Mann die Tugend des Weibes im  ltesten Germanien geehret” (320). These remarks demonstrate, once again, that constructions of gender and national identity are co-constituting, and that to attempt to analyze gender without a transnational perspective is insufficient.

debts explicit: to frame my own work at hand as a result of the influences of transnational feminist writers who worked before me.

As one of the preeminent women writers of German romanticism, it is important to note that Günderrode's depictions of India are also one of her modes of contributing to a male-centered discourse.³⁷ Her interest in distant countries (Egypt and Persia, as well as India, number among her favorites), is increasingly well documented.³⁸ A variety of Germanists and scholars of European Orientalism have cited the poem in broader studies of Günderrode's corpus or of the significance of India to German romantic fantasies.³⁹ These references serve larger arguments as varied as Günderrode's preoccupying "pantheis[ti]c" interest in world religions and mythologies,⁴⁰ her biographical "longing

³⁷ Liesl Allingham has written illuminatingly of Günderrode's insertion of herself into male-centered discourses through the example of the Ossian myth (Allingham 41). I should note here, of course, that Günderrode's attitudes towards India exceed the perspective encapsulated in "Die Malabarischen Witwen." Dorothy Figueira has written and critically of Günderrode's depiction of *sati* as well as her citation of a Sanskrit poem in her self-fashioned epitaph (see her article, "Karoline von Günderrode's Sanskrit Epitaph," *Comparative Literature Studies* vol. 26, no. 4, 1989, pp. 291-303). More recently, Steven Martinson has also paid much-deserved attention to Günderrode's more sympathetic reading of Hinduism and other world religions in "Geschichte eines Brahminen" than that manifested in certain writings from Goethe and Herder. While it may be true that, in that text, "Günderrode engages critically the European prejudice against the East" I hope also to bring attention to the specifics of Indian women's representation in "Die Malabarischen Witwen," a poem in which Günderrode's attitude toward India becomes a problematic adulation of a complicated act (Martinson 312).

³⁸ Recent texts that feature substantial discussions of German romanticism or romantic authors and research on India include: Todd Kontje, *German Orientalisms* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004); Douglas T. McGetchin, *Indology, Indomania, and Orientalism: Ancient India's Rebirth in Modern Germany* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2009); Andreas Polaschegg, *Der andere Orientalismus: Regeln deutsch-morgenländischer Imagination im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004); Kamakshi P. Murti, *India: The Seductive and Seduced 'Other' of German Orientalism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001).

³⁹ I borrow this phrase from Suzanne Zantop's *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family, and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770-1870*. Durham: Duke UP, 1997.

⁴⁰ Leslie A. Willson, *A Mythical Image: The Ideal of India in German Romanticism*. Durham: Duke UP, 1964, p. 188.

for a union in death,"⁴¹ or her interest in "'exotic' fatalism,"⁴² as well as her relationship to the overall "European" narrative of *sati*.⁴³

Günderrode was writing against the backdrop of the proliferation of a field known as "Indology," which needs to be disentangled from the more generalized, and also more diffuse concept of "Orientalism," outlined most famously in the eponymous volume from Edward Said. The former encompasses a variety of scholarly pursuits in the interrelated fields of linguistics, philology, and emergent anthropology, primarily conducted in England, France, and Germany at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. As Douglas McGetchin notes, "there were several centers of Sanskrit studies, and each developed its own unique character," with names as varied as "Indische Literatur, Indische Philologie, Indische Altertumskunde, Orientalische Philologie, Vergleichende Sprachwissenschaft, Sanskrit Philologie" in addition to "Indologie" (18). Forster's *Sakontala* was a central text in the formation of this "discipline."

Preceding the academic enterprise of Indology and its various permutations is the overall staging of an imagined "West" and East" encapsulated in Orientalism. Although I will look in more detail at one critique of Orientalism that notes its varying and even self-contradictory definitions by Said himself, for the sake of convenience I offer one of Said's formulations of this polyvalent concept:

Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and 'the Occident.' Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists,

⁴¹ Becker-Cantarino, "Mythology," 65.

⁴² Dorothy M. Figueira, "Karoline von Günderrode's Sanskrit Epitaph," *Comparative Literature Studies* 26.4 (1989), pp. 291-303; here 299.

⁴³ Dorothy M. Figueira, "Die Flambierte Frau: Sati in European Culture," in *Sati, the Blessing and the Curse: The Burning of Wives in India*, ed. J. S. Hawley. New York: Oxford UP, 1994, pp. 55-78.

philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, 'mind,' destiny, and so on. 2-3

Hence, while Indology as a field can and has been labeled as Orientalist, Orientalism, in Said's formulation, precedes and permeates Indology in its attempt to understand languages and literatures of Asia. Aijaz Ahmad critiques the apparently transhistorical dimension of Said's definition of Orientalism his *In Theory: Classes, Nations, and Literatures*. Taking issue with Said's positioning of the colonial mindset (another loaded term that Said, as Ahmad points out, sometimes equates *with* and sometimes differentiates *from* Orientalism itself) as already present within depictions and imaginations of Asia as early as classical Greek theater, Ahmad hones in on a question that will also feature centrally in my analysis of "Die Malabarischen Witwen"-- that of representation:

One of [*Orientalism*]'s major complaints is that from Aeschylus onwards the West has never permitted the Orient to represent itself; *it* has represented the Orient... [W]hat is remarkable is that with the exception of Said's own voice, the only voices we encounter in the book are precisely those of the Western canonicity which, Said complains, has always silenced the Orient. Who is silencing whom, who is refusing to permit a historicized encounter between the voice of the so-called 'Orientalist' and the many voices that 'Orientalism' is said so utterly to suppress, is a question that is very hard to determine as we read this book. 172-3

Aside from the instabilities of categories such as East and West across time, Ahmad points out, the claim that representations of the "Orient" have only ever been produced by Europeans ends up blurring the distinction between silencer and silenced, and ending with the same muteness of the "Orient" that Said otherwise ascribes to Western interference. Hence, when I use the term "Orientalist" in my analysis, I refer specifically

to a discourse of images, exoticizations, tropes, and metaphors that characterize much of German romantic writing on India--which Said's volume gathered and dissected from a literary (and more Anglo- and Francophone) standpoint in an unprecedented and abidingly relevant way. But I do not subscribe to the diachronic, linear narrative also involved in Said's alternative definitions of the term. In focusing on the time frame and artistic movement of the late eighteenth century and first decade of the nineteenth century, I hope to specify the ways in which the formal aspects of literary representation (most crucially, the sonnet) can impart new insights into the formation of German national identity vis-à-vis other countries and languages in early-nineteenth century depictions of India.

The significances of genre, then, form one aspect of my intervention in this scholarship on Orientalism. But I also want to draw upon feminist responses to the canonical texts of Orientalism. Ahmad and Said set aside the complex interweavings of gender and Orientalism, through which *sati* becomes such a "contentious tradition," to borrow Lata Mani's phrase. Mani and Gayatri Spivak make clear that conceptions of what constitutes self-representation in political, public senses is multivalently related to what constitutes a representation, whether representations by Indian authors themselves, or the representations that Orientalists construct out of their own mythologizations of life in India.

Because G nderrode has been marginalized within the German literary tradition itself, due to her gender, feminist scholarship on her work has focused primarily on resuscitating her work for new audiences.⁴⁴ Of course, Bettine von Arnim was one of the

⁴⁴ As Douglas T. McGetchin notes in his study of German academic Indology, "[a] close investigation of women's reactions to Indian literature [. . .] remains worthy of further research" and, I would add, an

first champions of Günderrode's writing, publishing her work within *Die Günderode*. A century later, Christa Wolf's *Der Schatten eines Traumes* would re-invigorate interest in her work.⁴⁵ But in general, another consequence of this limited scholarship on "Die Malabarischen Witwen" as a singularized text is the virtually non-existent account of the contemporaneous status of *sati* as a practice in colonized India and the ways in which it was debated, regulated, and recounted by both Indians and the English-speaking colonial presence (including its presses). The poem makes clear the urgent need for more transnational feminist interventions in German Studies.

One major exigency for such an approach to "Die Malabarischen Witwen" is the correction of several factual errors. First, Malabar has never permitted the carrying out of *sati*. Indeed, Binita Mehta points out that Malabar itself, also the setting of French dramatist Antoine-Marie Le Mierre's *La Veuve du Malabar* of 1780 and British dramatist Mariana Starke's *The Widow of Malabar* of 1791, is, on the part of Anglo- and European writers, "an unfortunate oversight, since, in reality, *sati* was strictly forbidden in the Malabar region of South India because of the matriarchal system that prevailed there"(67).⁴⁶ Andrea Major points out that it was a practice mostly confined to Bengal and Rajasthan (xvi). This inaccuracy has so far been ignored in scholarship on the poem, but, in light of its perpetuation of the mythologization of *sati*, it deserves acknowledgement. Second, the emphasis on youth—"Jugendherrlichkeit" (l. 2)—though

investigation that takes into account the work of feminist criticism outside the purview of European literature (64).

⁴⁵ Christa Wolf, *Der Schatten eines Traumes: Gedichte, Prosa, Briefe, Zeugnisse von Zeitgenossen*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1981.

⁴⁶ For a detailed account of Starke's revisions of Le Mierre's drama and a reading of British women's writings on *sati*, see Marie A. Dakessian's "Envisioning the Indian Sati: Mariana Starke's 'The Widow of Malabar' and Antoine Le Mierre's 'La Veuve du Malabar.'" *Comparative Literature Studies*, 36.2 (1999), pp. 110-130.

consistent with much of the colonial administration's fixation on the frequency of supposedly young, barely adolescent women committing *sati*, diverges from the statistic that most immolations occurred among women over the age of forty-one.⁴⁷ Debates on the justification for *sati*, according to Lata Mani, labored on between 1780 and 1833, "the period of British expansion from its foothold in Bengal, to its de facto control over much of the Indian subcontinent" (14). Over the years, to appeal to various causes, *sati* was painted by colonial authorities in alternating strokes as either informed by supposedly unanimous "religious" or scriptural precedent or, alternatively, as deeply and irrevocably embedded in an ostensibly homogenous "Indian" culture. Mani notes that both of these trends served political motivations and were rooted in colonizers' misunderstandings of the peoples of India: this first interpretation of *sati* as religious imperative should be read in light of the impossible task of reaching consensus, especially as colonizers leveled out the complex diversity of Hindu scriptures and uselessly sought one unifying exegesis that could possibly justify *sati* (36-7). Second, the attempt to interpret *sati* as a deep-seated tenet of Indian culture was deployed, alternately, to cast the indigenous Indians as barbaric, or in order to allow the practice, however begrudgingly, as a means of avoiding the threat of retaliation by indigenous Indians (20). Nowhere in any of these efforts by colonial policymakers, Mani argues, did space emerge that allowed women themselves to express their opinion or understanding of this practice. Moreover, as Rajeswari Sunder Rajan points out, this attempt at legislation continues to inflect modern debates on *sati*,

⁴⁷ From Mani: "Official representations further reinforced such a view of widow by 'infantilizing' the typical *sati* . . . Here again, statistics on *sati* compiled by officials between 1815 and 1829 challenge such a conclusion. For instance, Benoy Bhusan Roy's analysis of the age distribution of widows who died in *sati* reveals that young women, between eleven and twenty, accounted for less than 5 percent of all burnings. The majority of widows who burned, 60 percent, were over forty-one" (32).

with the result that those who argue against the practice can be accused of merely "replicat[ing] the move of the colonial ruler" (17). This critical aspect of the history of *sati* must be accounted for in any engagement with literary representations of the event.

It is also imperative to pay close attention to word choice that stress certain normative notions of agency. Mani often refers to the acting widows as having "committed" *sati*, similar to the English use of this verb in describing suicide. She also removes the prefix "self-" so often attached to the word "immolation." These interventions in the ruling terminology speak to her overarching point that notions such as "voluntary" and "consent," when used to talk about *sati*, are "exceedingly dubious concepts" (161). Indeed, the attempt to ascribe categories such as "voluntary" to *sati* are doubly problematic, as Mani demonstrates, because it ignores both any doubts, efforts, or overall agency on the part of the widows—including many accounts of women actively fleeing the fire—as well as the fact that many widows were coerced onto the pyre either physically or through the influence of opium and pressured from family members concerned about providing for the newly-widowed women (170-2). The question of "voluntary" *sati* also serves as the crux of Rajan's intervention to change the traditional understanding of *self* in these debates, in which the *sati* is viewed through either the lens of "subject-constitution ('she wanted to die') and object-formation (i.e. 'she must be saved from dying')" as it places feminist critique in a kind of double bind (19). Indeed, to treat the practice as entirely involuntary in each individual case risks "emptying her subjectivity of any function or agency" (19). Finally, as Andrea Major notes, the word *sati* originally described the wife herself—"the virtuous woman"—and not the practice. British misuse prompted the expansion in meaning to the immolation as an isolated event,

a broadening of the term that Major says ignores *sati*'s original meaning as "something one becomes" by "accumulate[ing] enough *sat* (goodness)" (xix).

"Die Malabarischen Witwen" remains among the few German literary representations of *sati* by a German woman writer. As Spivak notes in her critique of the British outlawing of *sati*, several British texts that describe *sati* reinforce the "white men seeking to save brown women from brown men" narrative, especially in their repeated equations of *sati* with "faithfulness" based on mistranslation (305). In contrast to these "eyewitness accounts" and testimonies, Günderrode's poem and Goethe's earlier "Der Gott und die Bajadere" both emphasize a glorified conception of everlasting union in *sati*. Goethe's "indische Legende," [Indian legend] however, *does* reproduce this same narrative of masculine Indian violence that Spivak identifies:

Nur dem Körper folgt der Schatten
In das stille Totenreich;
Nur die Gattin folgt dem Gatten:
Das ist Pflicht und Ruhm zugleich. (ll. 82-85)

This last line in particular perfectly exemplifies Spivak's point about the Western representation of patriarchal violence in India in Western texts; the priests are imaged as recognizing this act as both a *Pflicht* and something warranting approbation and *Ruhm*, much like the British mis-translation of *sati* as "faithful wife" transplants "Victorian" patriarchal values upon the act and simultaneously prepares a scenario ostensibly and conveniently requiring Western male intervention (305).

Günderrode's apparent admiration of this "süß[e] Liebesfeyer" (l. 12) and the pageantry she associates with it could, in a quick reading, signal an attempt to valorize these widows without showcasing a patriarchal culture as Goethe's poem does. Viewed

in light of the recurring themes of G nderrode's corpus, one could perhaps even attempt to treat "Die Malabarischen Witwen" as an expansion of that which Liesl Allingham, building upon the research of Helene Watanabe-O'Kelly, Marjanne Gooz , Patricia Simpson, and Elisabeth Krimmer, identifies as G nderrode's use of the battlefield as "an imaginary space to transcend gender difference," and, most importantly, one "where notions like heroism can be detached from gender" (40). Indeed, G nderrode stresses that the women progress "ohne Zagen, ohne Leid," and it is ultimately through their immolation that death becomes a "s   [e] Liebesfeyer" (ll. 3 and 12). But if the poem *does* celebrate the heroism of these women as if they were warriors on a battlefield, it merely performs the same dangerous reversal Spivak describes in attempting to read the story of Durga/Sati and her death and dismemberment as "goddess-centered and therefore feminist" (306-7). Both of these approaches, whether Goethe's account of duty and fame, or G nderrode's romanticization of the widows' heroism, continue to obscure the women in question. They both represent the destruction of the subaltern woman's body in service of (albeit varied) ideals. "There is no space from which the sexed subaltern subject can speak," Spivak writes (307). For this reason, broad statements such as Wendy Nielsen's recent claim, "The main critical question facing scholars of G nderrode is: How do we interpret her heroines' deaths?"—although they may certainly be justified with regard to individual texts in G nderrode's *oeuvre*—cannot be taken as a prescriptive statement for all research on G nderrode, specifically in texts where merely assigning the label "heroine" to its subjects places them in a complicated narrative of sacrifice and intent that erases their subjectivity (83).

Although such an exploration is perhaps beyond the scope of this chapter, G nderrode scholarship, if it is to keep pace with theoretical interventions from postcolonial and feminist circles, requires also a lengthier critique of her relationship to the notion of "mythology" as it pertains to German romanticism as well as to the Indologists quick to label unfamiliar figures and concepts from Hindu scriptures as "mythology." It is out of a desire to recognize the complex configuration of writing subject as the recipient and representative of knowledge that I have focused on this work from G nderrode. The sonnet form's history and contexts bring to bear a level of mythologization that accentuates the broader objectification of difference in German romanticism.

ADONIS TODTENFEYER AND ALTERNATIVE REPRESENTATIONS

I turn now to a contrasting set of moments from G nderrode's *oeuvre*, namely, a poem she wrote as part of a tripartite sequence with Friedrich Creuzer, on the death of Adonis.⁴⁸ Most significantly, "Adonis Todtenfeyer" represents a turn *away* from the sonnet form in a poetic evocation of many themes shared with "Die Malabarischen Witwen." "Adonis Todtenfeyer" may also adumbrate alternative modes of representation, particularly in the domain of women's practices of mourning.

I locate this "turn away" namely in the fact that Creuzer's preceding two contributions to the sequence are in fact sonnets, a genre choice G nderrode abandons for her closing poem of the sequence. Following are Creuzer's two sonnets:

ADONIS TOD

1.

Die G ttin sinkt in namenlosem Leide,

⁴⁸ Morgenthaler attributes the poem to Creuzer in his notes to the sequence (3: 175).

Den Jäger traf des Thieres wilde Wuth;
Die Rose trinkend von des Jünglings Blut,
Glänzt ferner nicht im weissen Liljenkleide.

Das Abendroth der kurzen Liebesfreude
Blickt traurig aus der Blume dunklen Gluth;
Adonis todt im Arm der Göttin ruht;
Das Schönste wird es kargen Hades Beute.

Verhaßt ist ihr des langen Lebens Dauer,
Das Götterloos wird ihrer Seele Trauer,
Die sehnsuchtskrank den süßen Gatten sucht.

Und still erblühet heißer Thränen Frucht;
Den stummen Schmerz verkünden Anemonen,
Den ew'gen Wunsch im Schattenreich zu wohnen.

2.

Den Liljenleib des Purpurs dunkler Schleier
Dem irren Blick der Göttin halb entzieht;
Der Trauer Bild, die Anemone, blüht
So weiß als roth zur stillen Todenfeyer.

Erlöschen ist in Ihm des Lebens Feuer,
Sein todt's Aug' die Blume nimmer sieht. –
Doch plötzlich schmilzt der Göttin Leid im Lied,
Die Klage tönt, die Seele fühlt sich freier.

Ein Kranker, der des Liedes Sinn empfunden,
Durch Ihrer Töne Zauber soll gesunden. –
Der Andacht gerne Liebe sich vertraut.

Und glaubig einen Tempel er sich baut,
Auf daß er pflege in dem Heiligthume
Der Sehnsucht Kind die süße Wunderblume. 1: 321-2

These two sonnets merit their own concentrated analysis, but for now I will provide just a brief outline of their content and the significant turns of phrase within them. Sonnet I imagines the moment Aphrodite loses her beloved Adonis to the charging boar. The rose collects Adonis' blood, and, in the second part of the octave, reflects the

dimming light of their young love. In the center of the poem, line 7, Adonis' body lies in Aphrodite's arms, destined to descend to Hades. In the concluding sestet, Aphrodite's loss is translated into a hatred of going on without Adonis, and the poem ends with the anemone flower bearing witness to Aphrodite's desire to join her beloved "im Schattenreich zu wohnen" (l. 14).

Sonnet II begins by taking up the image of the anemone, which blooms with Aphrodite's grief. Aphrodite's mournful song resounds in the second half of the octave, shifting from "Leid im Lied" (a resonance that will also be picked up implicitly in "Die Malabarischen Witwen"). The sense of the song is enough to heal a sick man, who builds a temple for the wondrous flower that has resulted from Aphrodite's grief.

The two sonnets reproduce several key phrases and images from the source texts of von Halem and Forster, including, of course, a preoccupation with a woman's mournful, musical lament affecting her recipient profoundly. In particular, the notion of "stumme[r] Schmerz" assuming the ability to speak [*verkünden*, a word that will also occur in Goethe's "Segenspänder"] should recall to mind von Halem's depiction of Poliwanta's song, as well as the song of the young woman in "Reflections on Oriental Poetry," von Halem's source. This consistency in language shows that the treatment of *sati* by Günderrode and her contemporaries and predecessors is less about *sati* and more about an overall insistence upon attempting to represent the suffering of the other. In the context of German Orientalisms, the subsumption of accounts of *sati* under this rubric of attempting to know and represent the other reveals asymmetrical valences of literary accounts of the "East" by authors from the "West."

Sonnet II repeats the language of initiation that had featured in “Zueignung”—namely, “Ein Kranker, der des Liedes Sinn empfunden” is then able to establish a temple in the memory of Adonis’ beauty (l. 9). However, unlike the “Einer” at the end of “Zueignung,” who then goes on to decipher the “äußre Zeichen” of the flowers in pursuit of their “tiefern Sinn,” the sick one’s temple is structured around *pflügen* (“Zueignung” ll. 12-14). One wonders if the sick one of the sonnet is at all inflected by Georg Forster and his description of himself in the epigraph to *Sakontala*, constructing from the flowers of Indian literatures wreathes for the temple of best fathers of literature: a “Kranz für die ehrwürdigen Schläfe des besten Vaters” (278). Even if not a direct reference to this father of German fascination with India, again, the continuity of these images speaks to an overarching subject positioning that is continued in Günderrode’s “Die Malabarischen Witwen”: the ability to perceive, understand, and know immense grief that is in fact unknowable, and the subsequent fashioning of oneself as the representing subject of that experience.

As I will explore, Günderrode's representation of the cult of Adonis seems at times to offer alternative approaches to genre as an element of representation, as well as to representation in general. The following is her concluding text for the three-part sequence:

3.

Wehe! daß der Gott auf Erden
 Sterblich muß geboren werden!
 Alles Dasein, alles Leben
 Ist mit ihm dem Tod gegeben.
 Alles wandelt und vergehet, [5]
 Morgen sinkt was heute stehet;
 Was jetzt schön und herrlich steigt,
 Bald sich hin zum Staube neiget;

Dauer ist nicht zu erwerben,
Wandeln ist unsterblich Sterben. [10]
Wehe! daß der Gott auf Erden
Sterblich muß gebohren werden!
Alle sind dem Tod verfallen,
Sterben ist das Loos von allen.
Viele doch sind die nicht wissen, [15]
Wie der Gott hat sterben müssen;
Blinde sind es, die nicht sehen,
Nicht den tiefen Schmerz verstehen,
Nicht der Göttin Klag und Sehnen,
Ihre ungezählten Thränen, [20]
Daß der süße Leib des Schönen
Muß dem kargen Tode fröhnen.

Laßt die Klage uns erneuern!
Rufet zu geheimen Feyern,
Die Adonis heilig nennen, [25]
Seine Gottheit anerkennen,
Die die Weihen sich erworben,
Denen auch der Gott gestorben.
Brecht die dunkle Anemone,
Sie, die ihre Blätterkrone [30]
Sinnend still herunter beuget,
Leise sich zur Tiefe neiget,
Forschend ob der Gott auf Erden
Wieder soll gebohren werden!

Brechet Rosen; jede Blume [35]
Sei verehrt im Heiligthume,
Forscht in ihren Kindermienen,
Denn es schläft der Gott in ihnen;
Uns ist er durch sie erstanden
Aus des dumpfen Grabes Banden. [40]
Wie sie leis hervor sich drängen,
Und des Hügels Decke sprengen,
ringet aus des Grabes Engen
Sich empor verschloßnes Leben;
Tod den Raub muß wiedergeben [45]
Leben wiederkehrt zum Leben.
Also ist der Gott erstanden
Aus des dumpfen Grabes Banden.

The poem is constructed through three stanzas of varied length—themselves composed of rhymed couplets in trochaic tetrameter—and adheres to many elements of Bion's elegy, which Morgenthaler cites as an influence for the whole sequence (Morgenthaler 3: 175). The poem reads as funereal dirge, as critics such as Barbara Becker-Cantarino have already suggested, and even its metrics seem to follow classical Greek precedent (Becker-Cantarino, "Mythology" 51). Of course, this type of versification is, like the rendering of "Die Malabarischen Witwen" in sonnet form, also an act of aestheticization, but one seemingly rooted in a type of generic and historical fidelity to the actual practice among Adonis' cult of women.⁴⁹ In contrast, the sonnet as a strict form tied to love poetry and aesthetic contemplation heightens the idealization of death as eternal bond in "Die Malabarischen Witwen."

Although they vary in length, the stanzas of this poem interconnect through G nderrode's careful repetitions and evocations of certain lines and images. The first stanza, for example, begins with an apostrophic outcry that recurs precisely in its middle, "Wehe! da  der Gott auf Erden / Sterblich mu t gebohren werden!" (ll. 1-2). The middle stanza picks up this refrain in slightly altered form in the concluding couplet: "Forschend ob der Gott auf Erden / Wieder soll gebohren werden!" (ll. 33-34, emphasis mine). Finally, the third stanza gestures toward the beginning of the previous stanza by repeating its imperative to break the flowers, and, like the first stanza, features a repetition internal to itself, but this time between its middle lines and the concluding couplet: compare "Uns ist er durch sie erstanden / Aus des dumpfen Grabes Banden" to "*Also ist der Gott*

⁴⁹ For a helpful contextualization and history of the cult of Adonis, including the use of song and dance, see J. D. Reed's introduction and commentary to his translation of Bion: *Bion of Smyrna: The Fragments and the 'Adonis'*, ed. J. D. Reed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997.

erstanden / Aus des dumpfen Grabes Banden" (ll. 39-40 and 47-48, emphasis mine).⁵⁰

The gradual slide of these repetitions from the beginning of the first stanza to the ending of the final one lends a degree of musicality in its cyclical structure. In other words, because these repetitions speak between stanzas and shift from beginning to middle and then from middle to end, one senses that the poem might resume after the final stanza. In the case of this poem, these gestures take multiple forms, but the progression of echoes gives the sense that something is always about to be taken up again. Of course, this progression could also suggest a degree of finality or closure, yet the resonance between the arising god of the final lines and the lamented one of the opening lines also suggests a certain cyclicity echoed in these (near) repetitions.

On the note of the poem's musical affinities, its meter also adheres to classical expectations of a rhythm more suited to ritual and dancing. Trochaic tetrameter, metrists have noted, is the beloved meter of "rapid movement and dancing" as it "simplifies the fitting of words to music" (*Princeton Encyclopedia* 1462). Morgenthaler's edition of her corpus provides ample evidence of Günderrode's lessons in poetic meter, and her choice of trochaic tetrameter seems consciously to evoke the musical lamentation that were, according to Jay Reed, associated with Adonis's yearly mourning rites (15). It could also be argued that trochaic stress demonstrates an attempt at fidelity to the "high dactylity" of Bion's style as the trochee, like the dactyl, also begins with a stress (37). Hence, Günderrode's abnegation of Creuzer's precedent in the preceding two sonnets suggests a degree of historical immersion: as noted above, she pays particular attention to the cult of

⁵⁰ Of course, her decision to re-state these images in slightly revised form should also be noted. These revisions draw attention to the particularity of their iterations, as if acoustically staging this emphasis upon birth and regeneration depicted throughout the poem.

Adonis as a specifically feminine space. In its eschewing simple generic classification, "Adonis' Todtenfeyer" would seem to present a historically- and mythologically-informed lament, emotively reconstructing Aphrodite's loss in a way that Creuzer's sonnet sequence rejects.

But perhaps fidelity is only one way of looking at these formal decisions. It also seems that the very notion of fidelity to some deeper, expressible emotion is thrown into question here, in a way that hearkens back to my analysis of perception in "Zueignung." Indeed, the first strophe posits a view of loss that contrasts with the emphasis on representation that recurs throughout the source materials from Forster, von Halem, and, to some extent, Herder. The persona repeatedly laments not only loss, but the blindness of others to that loss: "Viele doch sind die nicht wissen, / Wie der Gott hat sterben müssen" (ll. 15-16). Both spatially and conceptually, these lines are a central point in the poem. Whereas "Die Malabarischen Witwen" aestheticizes women who have been transformed into ornaments, "Adonis Todtenfeyer" laments the incapacities of lamenting itself.

The flowers, too, take on very different roles from the roses of "Zueignung," *Sakontola*, and *Blüthen aus Trümmern*. Rather than figuring the fantasy of the subject's assumption of speech, they are a site for anger and grief: "Brechet Rosen; jede Blume / Sei verehrt im Heiligthume" (ll. 35-36). The persona seems to suggest breaking the buds in order to disclose the "verschloßnes Leben" within them (l. 44). This moment marks a rupture with the contemplative, leisurely weaving of myth and perception into the ongoing *Kranz* of German Orientalist literatures. In transitory, fleeting ways, the poem

articulates relationships to aesthetics and loss that seem to extend beyond merely transforming death into artistic representation.

NAMING AS SUPPRESSING AND REPRESENTING

If part of my investigation relies upon the ability to name the genre of "Die Malabarischen Witwen" in accordance with a major literary form, and to allow that classifiability to influence my reading of Günderrode's understanding of cultural difference, then the overall orbit of naming and unnameability *within* the two texts must also come to the fore. I have already stressed the significance of designating and describing *sati* in Mani's detailed history and its surrounding discourse. In Spivak's critique of French poststructuralism in "Can the Subaltern Speak?", naming serves as part of her reintroduction, drawing on Marx's *Achtzehnte Brumaire* [Eighteenth Brumaire], of the bifurcated meaning of *representation* as it used, for example, in Deleuze. She points out the distinction between representation as *vertreten*, which she defines as "'speaking for,' as in politics," and representation as *darstellen*, which she terms "'re-presentation,' as in art or philosophy" (275). Spivak looks to this scene of naming in Marx in order to disentangle the elided concepts of these interrelated gestures of representation (274). She focuses on Marx's claim that the small peasant proprietors cannot act "in their own name" and seek representation in the Napoleonic Code (278). When the two valences are considered independently, it becomes clear that acts of aesthetic re-presentation merely attempt to represent these "object beings" without condemning or even noting the ideological forces that have silenced and valorized, the subaltern: "[theories] must note how the staging of the world in representation—its scene of writing, its *Darstellung*—

dissimulates the choice of and need for 'heroes,' paternal proxies, agents of power—*Vertretung*" (279).

One way in which to attend to this process is to think through the trajectory of naming, being able to name, and being rendered nameless as they occur within and, as discussed above, in the context of the poem. Even in the process of adhering to the generic name of the sonnet, or to call upon the figure of Adonis,⁵¹ has various consequences for an author's positioning of herself and making an act intelligible to an audience. Of course, Günderrode's attempt to name the women she assumes to practice *sati* is an act of calling out informed by a variegated ideological impulse. As Spivak recalls in her specific analysis of *sati*, part of the British colonizers' erroneous and partial understandings of *sati* can be charted in their attempts at recording names of women listed as having died in the process (305).

Both titles, "Adonis Todtenfeyer" and "Die Malabarischen Witwen" provide significant details that the trajectories of their respective texts keep less conspicuous. The only explicit reference to Adonis, aside from the title, occurs in a line that draws attention to its own act of naming: "Laßt die Klage uns erneuern! / Rufet zu geheimen Feyern, / Die Adonis heilig nennen, / Seine Gottheit anerkennen" (ll. 23-26). In these lines, naming is associated with the act of recognizing and appreciating, and of helping to give immortality to the gods who must die.⁵² But the attentiveness to its own performance of a calling merits further attention. Indeed, the speaker exhorts the audience to join in

⁵¹ Reed notes that the name and figure of Adonis stems from "a seventh-century B.C. Greek adaptation of the yearly lamentation for the Mesopotamian god Tammuz (the Sumerian Dumuzi), adopted by Greek women from the women of Syro-Palestine" (18).

⁵² As Reed helpfully notes in his commentary to Bion's *Epitaph on Adonis*, a strong motif in Greek tragedy, and also in the rites of the cult of Adonis, is the repeated formulation, "so-and-so is dead!" (195 n.1).

geheime celebrations where this naming can take place privately. Here, then, the concept of naming coincides with the question of ritual and custom which also features so centrally in "Die Malabarischen Witwen." Not only does the celebration incorporate the only explicit act of naming, but naming verily characterizes the entire celebration: they are, after all, the rites "[d]ie Adonis heilig nennen" (l.25). Naming, in both poems, is both a means of explaining and obscuring—of drawing attention to central aspects of the envisioned mourning practices while also reinforcing a sense of mystery and allure.

Suppressing the name of Adonis in the rest of the poem forms just one dimension of the overall dearth of proper names and details in the poem. Aphrodite, who figures so centrally in both Bion's original elegy and Creuzer's sonnets—as well as in Ovid's account, which even ends with the image of the winds named after

Aphrodite/Cytherea⁵³—receives no mention at all, aside from the following lines:

Blinde sind es, die nicht sehen,
Nicht den tiefen Schmerz verstehen,
Nicht der Göttin Klag und Sehnen,
Ihre ungezählten Thränen,
Daß der süße Leib des Schönen
Muß dem kargen Tode fröhnen. 17-22

The entire passage stresses lack and incapability. The anaphoric 'nicht' foreshadows perhaps the aforementioned 'nicht Trennung' of the volta in "Die Malabarischen Witwen" and negates the possibility of comprehending the unnamed Aphrodite's suffering. Her tears, *ungezählt*, are nevertheless not described as *unzählbar* or *zahllos*. At the very least, this moment emphasizes a resistance to or impossibility of counting as well as naming. A tension between the desire to lure in the spectator and this lack of specificity arises. The emphasis instead seems to lie in the liberating effect of the

⁵³ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 10.737-9

ceremony, and on the stunning transformation of death into new life. Indeed, by keeping Aphrodite relatively anonymous, by repeatedly referring to Adonis as "der Gott," and by integrating stylistic elements (trochaic tetrameter, rhymed couplets) that seem historically accurate, G nderrode creates a more easily universalizable lament that also adheres to classical representations of Adonis, and celebrates the hope for regeneration after death. Crucially, the poem also *laments* Adonis' death rather than idealizes or romanticizes it for the sake of the festivity.

G nderrode's depiction of *sati* is also remarkably reticent in terms of specific details, and even in its evocation of India. Aside from the title and the opening line, the poem, like "Adonis Todtenfeyer" focuses far less centrally on any specific events and instead seems preoccupied with the assumed meaning of the entire spectacle. I use the word spectacle here also to draw a connection to the expressly *geheime* celebrations of Adonis as they contrast with the poet's representation of a very public death in the practice of *sati*. It is as if, to borrow Spivak's formulation, the subaltern woman is "even further in the shadow" of the Western Self, as the assumed function of the event overpowers the women's identities (280). "Zum Flammentode gehn an Indusstranden" the poem begins, but no further specificity is lent these women or their culture or history throughout the remainder of the poem, aside from, of course, the eponymous misattribution of *sati* to Malabar. Whereas the poem obscures and even misreads geographic and personally identifying information, its metaphoricity in fact relies upon constructions related to naming. Indeed, aside from the simile, "geschm cket festlich, wie in Brautgewanden," the poem's figurative language largely relies upon G nderrode's varied designations for *sati*. One would be remiss to ignore yet another instance of

Günderrode's movements of unification and blending in this list of compound nouns, as they each build upon an element of the preceding one. *Flammen* is taken up from *Flammentode* to *Liebesflammen*, *Liebe* moves from *Liebesflammen* to *Liebesfeyer* (not to mention the translingual play upon *feyer* and fire), and *Liebe* is gently modified to *Leben* in *Lebensgipfel*. Like the "vorhin entzweiten Liebesflammen," the key words of the poem also collide with each other into one (l. 10). These gestures all enhance the aestheticization at work in the sonnet form as well as in the overall treatment of the Orient within this network of texts; a rubric of all-consuming love is placed upon an experience unknown to Günderrode and her contemporaries, and used to attempt to make it comprehensible.

BREAKING AND BINDING: FROM NAMING TO 'CUSTOM'

Naming is inextricably linked with the process of commemoration and the idea of custom in both poems. As I have just stressed, the celebration of Adonis takes shape in its recognition and repetition of his name, and in its almost violent command to break the flowers symbolizing gods' imprisonment in their bodies. The emphasis on naming in "Die Malabarischen Witwen" seems limited to the event of *sati* itself. In a sense, naming would seem a primary means of making something or someone known and representable, and granting immortality in its or the person's ability to be hailed even after death. Indeed, in direct contrast to the ending of "Die Malabarischen Witwen," which makes of death a "süß[e] Liebesfeyer," the opening stanza of "Adonis Todtenfeyer" laments that "Alles Dasein, alles Leben / Ist mit ihm [der Gott] dem Tod gegeben," and posits death as the dissolution of all godliness ("Adonis Todtenfeyer" ll. 3-4). It is not until the imperative of the second stanza that naming Adonis is suggested as a means of becoming

"erneu[t]" through this practice and freeing Adonis from mortality (l. 23). Hence, the question of custom, in whatever form, and its ability to liberate the deceased from the confines of the grave should also revolve around this difference between the two poems' approach to death. In "Adonis Todtenfeyer," custom and mourning seek to emancipate godliness and beauty from bonds of mortality; in "Die Malabarischen Witwen" and in Günderrode's interpretation of *sati*, the preservation of marital bonds motivates the entire representation of the custom.

I have already shown that "Die Malabarischen Witwen" finesses the act of naming as its main figurative lure. These names, of course, attempt to designate *sati* and do so by romanticizing and poeticizing the act of immolation. But a brief moment at the beginning of the second quatrain approaches *sati* in a seemingly more straightforward nomenclature. "Die Sitte hat der Liebe Sinn verstanden," she writes after chronicling the women's impressive garments (l. 5). Before taking a closer look at the use of "Sitte" here, it is worth mentioning that *Sinn* also stands out in its multitude of meanings. In its stronger resonances, *Sinn* of course refers to "sense" as in "meaning" or "significance." Related also to the five human senses, *Sinn* in this line—acting as it does as a genitive attributed to "love"—draws further attention to the sensual overload that otherwise seems only vaguely imaged in the rest of the poem, though the individual flames "schlagen brünstig [. . .] zusammen" (l. 11). Recall that Mani points out a significant lack of specificity or sense of the physical pain suffered by widows in the English language "eyewitness reports" (174). But the *Grimms Wörterbuch* also tells of an element of directionality or "Ortsbewegung" in *Sinn*, retained in such phrases as "in diesem Sinne," (Grimm and Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* 10: 1103). The practice of *sati*, in the logic

of this stanza, has understood and reckoned with love's significance, its sensuality, and its apparently errant strivings. In fact, it might seem that the *Sitte* itself has tamed the wild impulses of love. This movement would feature in addition to the more literal process of understanding that is also described in the strophe. "Verstanden" is significant given the overall emphasis upon understanding that is initiated in "Zueignung" and recurs in the framing of *sati* in the texts from von Halem and his source.

The alliteration between *Sitte* and *Sinn* might also suggest some form of affinity between the two terms, in accordance with this etymological reading. Additionally, in the following line, the vowel sounds of "Liebe" coalesce with this sibilance between *Sitte* and *Sinn* into the *Sie* of "Sie von der Trennung harter Schmach befreit," as if the sounds of the preceding line "schlagen brünstig . . . zusammen," mimicking the supposed reunion of the lovers' bodies. The lines also suggest a collective power greater than the individuals involved, as the *Sitte* itself, and not its supposed practitioners, apparently understands the sense of love and liberates it from the disgrace of separation.

Moreover, the sentence in question is the only one of the whole poem to employ the perfect past tense. The rest of the poem occurs in the present, as if the event were unfolding before the reader's eyes. By assuming the voice of the past, *Sitte* appears already established, and not in the process of its coming to be. This tendency differs, of course, from the effect I have attributed to her use of kenning-like *Komposita* in naming *sati* and thereby offering it as perhaps an ongoing visual phenomenon coeval with the poetic present.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ In her close reading of "eyewitness accounts" of *sati*, Mani observes that the "ethnographic present" can have an effect similar to the one resulting from the perfect tense in this description of custom: both gestures render immolation "merely a disinterested religious performance whose repetition is to be understood as unreflective obedience to scripture" (183).

The poem becomes a moving image with each element, like the "getrennten Elemente" of the final tercet, progressing towards a form of idealized unification (l. 13). But that is perhaps precisely the problem: alongside these elements—the poetic synecdoches, the acoustic effects, the careful caesuras—the widows seem merely one factor in the poem among many, with no names, identities, or agency. And as discussed above, the focalization of this narrative through a genre associated with aestheticization—the sonnet—and through the persona's perspective as outside observer only reiterates this sense of the widows' minimization. If the stylization of naming through *Komposita* rhetorically emphasizes the supposed grandeur of immortal love sanctioned by immolation, then the integration of these names into a schema depicting this event as *Sitte* programmatizes these widows' deaths as long-standing tradition. Note, then, the logical tension between G nderrode's emphasis on eternal bonds as an inducement to commit *sati* and her treatment of it as pure tradition and custom.

To bring this investigation to its ending, it might help to return to "Adonis Todtenfeyer" for a closer examination of G nderrode's very different treatment of women's mourning rituals. As noted above, the ritual is enacted in a private—*geheim*—location, where the practice is defined not by custom but by lamentation—*Klage*—and loss, "Die die Weihen sich erworben, / Denen auch der Gott gestorben" (ll. 23-28). Adonis' death is said to affect all of the initiates through this use of the dative case. Clearly, there is space within the privacy of this *Todtenfeyer* to give powerful voice to one's suffering and loss, if primarily through aggressive behaviors: "Brecht die dunkle Anemone," the persona exhorts (l. 29). And whereas G nderrode chooses the poetic perspective of another ostensible eyewitness observer in "Die Malabarischen Witwen,"

she seems, in this second stanza of "Adonis Todtenfeyer," to invoke the voice of bereaved woman—perhaps even the voice of Aphrodite herself, through whose perspective Bion also recounts the loss of Adonis in his elegy. For the widows of "Die Malabarischen Witwen," there seems no space alongside their impressive garments and their *Jugendherrlichkeit* for any comparable type of expression, due not only to their treatment in the poem itself, but also within the accumulated significances of the sonnet as an aestheticizing kind of tribute to the beloved.

A further particular locus of this difference in perspective lies in the images of bonds and bands throughout the two poems. As I have noted above, the bands of love and marriage in "Die Malabarischen Witwen" require preservation and can only be secured through the breaking of earthly bonds; the very *Sitte* receiving so much attention in the current analysis lends them these safeguards. In "Adonis Todtenfeyer," however, the women's rites serve to unearth and shatter the oppressive ties that assign the god to the grave:

Brechet Rosen, jede Blume
Sei verehrt im Heiligthume,
Forscht in ihren Kindermienen,
Denn es schläft der Gott in ihnen. 35-40

Under the pressure of the women exploring [*forschen*] and smashing the flowers of the landscape, the musty enclosure yields "verschlossenes Leben," radiating the newly immortal God. "Leben wiederkehrt zum Leben" in the process of this ritual (l. 46).

Remember that *sati*, according to Günderröde, grants the bonds of love between husband and wife immortality only at the same time it ends their physical existence: "Zum Lebensgipfel wird das Daseins Ende" (l. 14). This image perhaps exemplifies Günderröde's conception of *sati* as, to borrow a formulation from Dorothy Figueira, "the

pinnacle of eroticism" ("Die Flambierte Frau" 56). The physical bonds between the lovers assume the transcendent dimensions of an immortal pact. Hence, although both poems celebrate the attainment of immortality, the means by which it is conferred and the recipient of its bounty differ starkly between both representations. The bands that tie Adonis to earthly life are precisely what need to be destroyed by collective mourning in order to ensure his legacy, whereas the solidification of marital bonds appears, in the sphere of Günderrode's poem, as the central reason for widows committing immolation. Hence, even if one were to suggest that the poem attempts to represent the women's acts as heroic—setting aside the complicated notions of "voluntary" that would imply—the poem's emphasis on an ultimate devotion to the marital connection and love once again interferes with such an attempt to ascribe subjectivity to the women depicted.

I began this chapter with an analysis of the first poem of Günderrode's *Melete*, "Zueignung." The volume was not published during Günderrode's lifetime, despite intensive collaboration between Günderrode and Creuzer. Before "Zueignung," however, there is an epigraph that asks for protection, which resounds eerily given the fact that Günderrode did not live to see the book in print:

AN MELETE.

Schütze, o sinnende Muse! mir gnädig die ärmlichen Blätter!
 Fülle des Lorbeers bringt reichlich der laure Süd,
 Aber den Norden umziehn die Stürme und eisichte Regen;
 Sparsamer sprießen empor Blüthen aus dürftiger Aue. 1: 317

In a sense, asking for protection reads in line with classical invocations of the muses, and especially so given that, in Creuzer's words, Melete "war auch ein Muse und zwar

diejenige die das Aufbewahrens Werthe dem Gedächtnis aufbewahrte” (Morgenthaler 3: 166-67). But the epigraph and invocation also suggests a further complication in the dynamics between reception and dedication that have been central to this analysis. To be protected by the muse of contemplation would mean an openness to new thoughts, to the “Stürme und eisichte Regen.” In seeking protection, one does not avoid the complications of difficult encounters. Instead of expecting experiences to be comprehensible through language or aesthetic expression, the one seeking protection from Melete acknowledges the polyvalences of words, the fragility of language in the face of experiences one cannot know—“die ärmlichen Blätter.” To safeguard something without treating it as an object, to *bewahren* memory and impressions without enforcing a rubric of knowledge and representation onto it, would be far more difficult than the kinds of subject formations staged in “Die Malabarischen Witwen.”

CHAPTER 3

Money Talks, Despots Don't: *West-Östlicher Divan* and Goethe's Appreciation of Persian Poetry

In the rush to dissect Turkey's constitutional referendum of April 2017 regarding the balance between parliamentary and presidential powers, several analysts in the German-speaking world offered one evocative interpretation: in granting increased executive power to President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey had ostensibly paved the way to a twenty-first century "orientalische Despotie."⁵⁵ Meanwhile, in the months preceding this referendum, two of the predominant States of the "West" affirmed nationalistic and xenophobic political agendas (the referendum for Great Britain to withdraw from the European Union in June 2016, also known as "Brexit," and the election of Donald Trump in the United States in November 2016). With the appointment of Donald Trump, the US sanctioned the increasingly blurred boundary between corporate interests and federal power, ushering in a slew of authoritarian and racist "executive orders" aimed at vulnerable populations. Were he alive today, political theorist Sheldon Wolin would certainly view Trump's presidency as the logical result of right-wing political elites' decades-long suppression of voters as well as of necessary concepts such as civic activism from public school curricula, and the continued

⁵⁵ See, for example, Cem Özdemir's comments in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*'s video analysis: Kohler, Berthold. "Abschied von den Lebenslügen." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* [Online], 18 Apr. 2017.

governmental prioritization of private corporate hegemony over public and environmental prosperity: a condition he called “inverted totalitarianism.”⁵⁶

Given these contexts, the celerity with which the Western press deployed the phrase “orientalische Despotie” is significant but, it should be noted, not without precedent. The term has seen a variety of usages, including in the sociologist Karl Wittfogel’s volume of the same name.⁵⁷ But the word despotism, seemingly so easy to describe as “orientalisch,” itself emerges out of an Orientalizing and Islamophobic discourse. The word gained currency during the French Revolution, but had been applied to various forms of leadership throughout Roman history, the Byzantine era, and through confrontations with the Ottoman Empire during the “Turkish conquest” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Its usage in Western contexts assigns the word and condition to a lifestyle and form of governance ostensibly other and inherently authoritarian in a way that would supposedly never be permitted in the “enlightened” and “secular” West.

Goethe, too, was no stranger to the word and the phrase. In the *Noten und Abhandlungen zu besserem Verständnis des West-Östlicher Divans*, Goethe writes that Persian literature has had no need of drama or other dialogic forms of literature because “das orientalische Leben an sich selbst [ist] nicht gesprächig; der Despotismus befördert kein Wechselreden” (234).⁵⁸ The assumptions made here are varied.⁵⁹ First, he

⁵⁶ See his *Democracy Incorporated: Managed Democracy and the Specter of Inverted Totalitarianism*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2010.

⁵⁷ Wittfogel, Karl A. *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1957.

⁵⁸ I have relied on the *Berliner Ausgabe* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1965), for the following analysis of both *West-Östlicher Divan* (Band III) as well as *Römische Elegien* (Band I).

⁵⁹ I say assumptions here to draw attention to the degree of presumption required for Goethe to write something like *Noten und Abhandlungen*. The implication of such a text is that Goethe can mediate something like the entirety of several canons for a German-speaking audience. This attitude is partially what Edward Said points to in his famous reference to *West-Östlicher Divan* in his classic *Orientalism*. Taking issue with German and “Anglo-French” scholarly forms of control over the East, Said writes,

characterizes an entire region as idle. Then, he assesses the literary output of this area based upon one characteristic assumed to be accurate for all of its peoples. He conceives of despotism in the East as a form of monologue, and one that, even in any attempt to enter something like an exchange, falls back upon citation, “wir finden, daß eine jede Einwendung gegen Willen und Befehl des Herrschers allenfalls nur in Zitaten des Korans und bekannter Dichterstellen hervortritt” (234). In this logic, citation must be viewed as an ineffectual, one-sided repetition. But is citation merely repetition or can it be used in different ways? There is a continual accusation of the East as being not only despotic, but in that despotism, prone to repetition rather than, apparently, innovation. What could be seen as a gesture of appreciation for “Eastern” literatures actually insists on a difference between repetition as “Eastern” and innovation as “Western.”⁶⁰

But this characterization, I will show, is deeply rooted in Goethe’s attempted bifurcation of language into two different types, which will also rebound upon his conception of aesthetic representation. The poetry of the volume *West-Östlicher Divan* constantly interrogates and complicates language as a potential site for exploitation, wondering at times if there is ever a way to tell “Schlangengift und Theriak zu sondern” (“Fetwa” l. 6). This uncertainty and precarity, which often seems to be resolved in the

“There is nothing mysterious or natural about authority. It is formed, irradiated, disseminated; it is instrumental, it is persuasive; it has status, it establishes canons of taste and value” (19).

⁶⁰ In focusing on the specifically literary dimensions of Goethe’s adaptation of Persian- and Arabic-language poetries, a more nuanced vision of the cultural consequences of German Orientalism might be possible. The movement of evaluating and appreciating Eastern literatures and analyzing them through the lens of tokenizing views of their societal structuring puts them into a kind of circulation. I sympathize with Dorothy Figueira’s argument against “transhistorical” views of the West as always already engaging in a form of imperialism, especially in light of her convincing claim that such an action then constructs “Western critical theory alone [as providing] the language and ideological parameters within which this critique is developed” (Figueira, *The Exotic* 6). Hence, my focus on Goethe’s literary understanding and representation of the East focuses in particular on how poetic forms are embedded in a discourse that took on particular meanings at particular times. Hence, also, my efforts to contextualize *West-Östlicher Divan* with the source texts Goethe used, while also relying upon theoretical interventions from non-Western contexts.

notion of treating language as something to be protected and stored (*verwahren*), is opposed to the distinctions he seems to make regarding language in the *Noten und Abhandlungen*. In his own poetry, he plays with poetic language as he himself formulates it: namely, as a space outside the law and outside power, where “Schlangengift und Theriak muß / Ihm das eine wie das andre scheinen” (ll. 7-8). Or, in another poem, “Wink,” he concedes, “Denn, daß ein Wort nicht einfach gelte, / Das müßte sich von selbst verstehen” (ll. 2-3). These moments would acknowledge that with any attempt at aesthetic representation, there is the potential for mis-representation. In the poem, “Wie kommt’s,” which I will analyze, Goethe even suggests that contextual, social, and historical aspects inform the relationship between the one making the representation and the one receiving it.

In contrast, in the *Noten und Abhandlungen*, an uneasy distinction will be made between language that circulates like worn money (“wie Scheidemünze und Papiergeld”), and language that is, every time, a “heilige Zeugnis” (“Verwahrung” 231). In the prose commentary of *Noten und Abhandlungen*, Goethe regards language as easily divisible into sacred witnesses and counterfeits, in a way that he himself had seemed to complicate within the poetry of *West-Östlicher Divan*. I argue that this division is the basis upon which one must read the Orientalist claim that Persian literature is informed by a despotic society. This attempted bifurcation crucially inflects Goethe’s association of Persian literary forms with despotism. If there is something like a repetitive language that circulates like worn money, it would seem to be embodied in Goethe’s understanding of political intervention that can only ever be a citation. The implication of Goethe’s accusation that “der Despotismus befördert kein Wechselreden” is that language could

function more purely in political contexts, but that Persians simply haven't attained such a language. If language itself is so precarious, would a "Wechselreden" suffice to overturn supposedly despotic conditions?⁶¹

The instability of Goethe's attempt at dividing language in this way also shapes his conception of the "self": that there could be a poetic self and a nationalized self, one who partakes in political structures and interventions. Indeed, there are two intertwined "selves" that recur in different forms throughout *West-östlicher Divan* and the *Noten und Abhandlungen*. There is the "nationalizing" self, by which I mean a subject who construes himself as standing in for the nation that is coming to be imagined in the nineteenth century—this persona comes to the fore in such poems as "Der Deutsche Dankt" and "Nachbildung." There is also the poetic self, the one who thinks of himself as representing an internal experience to a receptive audience. This self is perhaps less clearly demarcated than the nationalizing self, at least in *West-östlicher Divan*, in poems such as "Geständnis" (wherein the poetic self is the one making the eponymous confession, but without explicit admission as such). In fact, it's interesting that the poet *making* the "confession" is kept out of the title, when the poem itself claims:

Am schwersten zu bergen ist ein Gedicht;
Man stellt es untern Scheffel nicht.
Hat es der Dichter frisch gesungen,
So ist er ganz davon durchdrungen,
Hat er es zierlich nett geschrieben,
Will er, die ganze Welt soll's lieben.
Er liest es jedem froh und laut,
Ob es uns quält, ob es erbaut. ll. 7-14

⁶¹ Again, Goethe's poetry within *West-östlicher Divan* seems more sympathetic. In the poem "Der Deutsche Dankt," he writes that the poet is able to work precisely "[a]ußerhalb der Grenze des Gesetzes" (l. 4).

Throughout the collection, and in a way that rebounds upon all the works in this dissertation, the nationalizing self and the poetic self are shown to mutually constitute each other. Implicit also in these processes is the role that difference plays in shoring up both of these selves. Goethe's conception of his own nationalizing self is constantly worked out in tension with what he is constructing as the Orientalized other. Not to mention, the poetic self requires an *other*, someone who receives the poem and the attendant emotions without attention to its potential for "torturing."

In drawing attention to this operative logic, I am indebted to the work of Saba Mahmood, whose *Politics of Piety* urges feminists to rethink the rubrics of freedom and authoritarianism that might be brought to bear upon cultures, religions, and practices of which one is not a participant or subject.⁶² In particular, she takes issue with reductive Western responses to a contemporary pietist, Islamist movement in Egypt run largely by women. The movement prioritizes ordering one's life upon the principles of Islam—potentially raising the ire of Western feminists and secularists not only because of its religiosity, but also because of its challenge to a "Protestant conception of religiosity [that] presupposed a distinction between a privatized interiority that is proper the locus of belief and a public exteriority that is an expression of this belief" (xv). In contrast, Mahmood notes that, for *da'wa* pietists, interiority and exteriority "are [. . .] inseparable in their conception" and, "more importantly, belief is the *product* of outward practices, rituals, and acts of worship rather than simply an expression of them" (xv, emphasis mine). I refer to this intervention because it invokes a trend that marks encounters between "secular" Western liberals and "despotic" Easterners, in a way that is legible

⁶² Mahmood, Saba. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton UP, 2005.

even in Goethe's work from two centuries ago, particularly in his framing of Persian literary forms and political action across the "Orient." Obviously there are salient differences in the contexts I describe here, and to apply Mahmood's ethnography of the *da'wa* movement to a literary text from nineteenth-century Germany runs the risk of broadening, rather than critiquing, existing generalizations. But in the wake of Mahmood's critique, my approach to *West-Östlicher Divan* and the *Noten und Abhandlungen* requires the abrogation of certain preconceptions surrounding representation and agency that inform Goethe's charge of despotism.

Indeed, Goethe's allegation implies that there is a certain form of self-representation and "Wechselreden" that should characterize a non-despotic society. Because hypothetical political resistance takes place in Persia "nur in Zitaten des Korans und bekannter Dichterstellen" and not through some "original" text by the author leveling the claim, all of Persian society must be "zur Ruhe geneigt" (234). He elaborates that this idleness creates favorable conditions for wanting to be *read to* rather than to speak for oneself: "sie läßt sich gern etwas vorerzählen, daher die Unzahl Märchen und die grenzenlosen Gedichte." Such an understanding of literary forms could only arise from a certain formulation of both what aesthetic self-representation should achieve, as well as what language itself can achieve. The following analysis will underscore the Eurocentric premises that inform many of the key conceptions of nation, identity, language, repetition, citation, and literary form in *West-Östlicher Divan*, beginning with the central misunderstanding that is itself a reflection on misunderstanding⁶³: the claim that

⁶³ As Goethe writes in the sequential sections "Zweifel" and "Despotie" of the *Noten und Abhandlungen*, "[d]ie persische Dichtkunst aber, und was ihr ähnlich ist [a fascinating remark in and of itself] wird von dem Westländer nie ganz rein, mit vollem Behagen aufgenommen werden" (212). And this impossibility, as he continues in the section "Despotie," is a Persian obsequiousness intolerable to a Western sensibility:

despotism is the ultimate marker of Persian self-identity and literature and the main obstacle to readers from Western contexts.

Expectations of representation in the cultural-religious sense described by Mahmood carry over into preconceptions of how representation might look in lyrical, aesthetic media. It is in Goethe's poetry that a more nuanced analysis of language as capable of mis-representation than his strict categorizations of self-representation in both poetic and political senses emerges. I trace these moments in poems such as "Segenspfänder." I also transition into looking at moments in which he expressly conceptualizes both his poetic and nationalizing selves in poems such as "Nachbildung," as well as selected moments from *Römische Elegien*. In fact, my initial hope was to compare Goethe's conceptions of his relationships to literary precedents and authors in both the earlier poetry cycle *Römische Elegien* (1795) as well as in the later *West-Östlicher Divan* (1819). From the silent stones of the First Elegy, to the supposed scarcity of Arabic- and Persian-language poets worth reading (a claim he makes throughout his *Noten und Abhandlungen*), both collections thematize the fragility of empires.⁶⁴ These moments reveal how aesthetic representation is, for Goethe, crucially involved in national identity and vice versa. Given recent work on *West-Östlicher Divan*⁶⁵ and its

"Was aber dem Sinne der Westländer niemals eingehen kann, ist die geistige und körperliche Unterwürfigkeit unter seinen Herren und Oberen, die sich von uralten Zeiten herschreibt" (213).

⁶⁴ In the *German Studies Review* from February 2017, Volker Berghahn has argued that an analysis of the economic incentives of German colonialism and the "entrepreneurial perceptions of national and international problems" may form an important link in sorting out the particular trajectories of German imperialisms (158). Though he writes mostly on the period between the First and Second World Wars, it might also be worthwhile to look at these "business cultures" in the nineteenth century. See his "German Colonialism and Imperialism from Bismarck to Hitler." *German Studies Review* 40. (February 2017), pp. 147-162

⁶⁵ To name just a small selection, Navid Kermani devotes a chapter to Goethe and the significance of *West-Östlicher Divan* to his views on Islam in *Between Quran and Kafka: West-Eastern Affinities*. Trans. Tony Crawford. Malden: Polity Press, 2016. As I have already mentioned, Yomb May has also written about the legacy of Goethe's volume in a chapter from *Encounters with Islam in German Literature and Culture*. See also Inge Stephan's "'War Goethe ein Mohammedaner?': Goethe's *West-Östlicher Divan* (1819) als

significance to literature on relationships between West and East, I have focused largely on this volume, with *Römische Elegien* rounding out my analysis of sexuality and empire. In both, however, I take Goethe's metatextual comments on genre and the self to indicate something of his entanglement in larger discourses regarding the individual self, the nationalized self, and the nation as its own "imagined community" to borrow Benedict Anderson's phrase. I begin with textual analysis and then broaden my approach by also considering movements and networks that might inform these formal elements.

Crucially, Persian poets and writers active during and in the years after Goethe's initial work on *West-Östlicher Divan* might have agreed that *contemporaneous* Persian literature was at risk of becoming repetitive. As Iraj Parsinejad notes, after a long period of influence from Indian texts, Persian writers of the nineteenth century began to look back at classical Persian poetry and insist on re-enlivening the tradition by engaging "the lives of ordinary people" rather than repeating the themes and images of poets like Hafiz before them (37). (By drawing on classical Persian poetry, then, Goethe can be seen as himself indulging in the kind of repetition that Persian poets were increasingly abandoning). Moreover, recognizing and challenging repetitive rhetorical movements—and the development of a strong Persian literary critical tradition—were essential components of Persian self-realization in the nineteenth century. "Iran was on the threshold of the Constitutional Revolution," Parsinejad argues, "and burning questions [. . .] were being discussed. In this social and political ferment, criticism helped reorient writers and poets" (37). Persian literary innovation was in fact a well-established and essential component of social and political reform.

Spiegelungsfläche in Thomas Lehrs *September. Fata Morgana* (2010)." *Goethe Yearbook* (Vol. 24, 2017), pp. 265-279

One could perhaps make the argument, too, that Goethe employs the imaginary of a unified Oriental canon as a surface upon which he considers questions circulating in the Western tradition as well. Indeed, this conflict between innovation and repetition, specifically vis-à-vis Greek classics, had been played out in German poetics in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries between Winckelmann and Lessing, and were later taken up by Schelling and Schlegel.⁶⁶ Still, the privileging of Greek literatures was itself a tradition that suppressed the relevance of Afro-Asiatic cultures and literatures, and the emergence of literary networks engaged in translation and scholarship from the “Orient” is but a further turn in this often problematic, increasingly raced discourse of literary influence.

West-Östlicher Divan had long been understood as a gesture of welcome toward the literatures of the East. Goethe’s admiration of the poet Khwaja Shams-ud-Din Muhammad Hafez-e Shirazi (heretofore Hafiz) catalyzed the collection of poems, and Goethe even inscribes the *Noten und Abhandlungen* with an epigraph ostensibly promoting understanding: “Wer den Dichter will verstehen, / Muß in Dichters Lande gehen” (161). But then again, this image speaks to Goethe’s linkage of Persian-speaking cultures and poetry, a side effect of their supposedly monologic structuring of authority and society. To understand Hafiz, Goethe has researched a land he considers predisposed to poetry, a “Dichters Lande,” not solely due to a creative spirit, but because of a supposedly despotic form of government.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ See, for instance, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s *Laokoon* and his debate with Johann Winckelmann.

⁶⁷ I hope that the irony of this remark is apparent in a second context as well. Goethe accuses the “oriental lifestyle” of being inimical to dialogue or interchange (“der Despotismus befördert keine Wechselreden”) while at the same time himself constructing what Yomb May has called “a Western monologue delivered at a passive Orient” (102). For all his talk of the lack of intellectual exchange in the national character of Persian peoples, Goethe presents this critique in the form of a one-sided “monologue” to readers in a

In the process of making the materials adapted accessible, of putting them into an equitable exchange, a “West-Östlicher Divan” that can be transacted on the pages of a poetry volume, is Goethe not, actually, making the materials reiterable in a way that not only appropriates them, but makes them subject to their own repetition outside of the contexts in which they were written and produced? He puts them into a system of exchange that is founded in assigning values and making those values equitable and representable as wealth, and my argument is that certain experiences or attitudes cannot be represented in a readily communicable fashion to those from differing contexts:

Am liebsten aber wünschte der Verfasser vorstehender Gedichte als ein Reisender angesehen zu werden [. . .] Damit aber alles, was der Reisende zurückbringt, den Seinigen schneller behabe, übernimmt er die Rolle eines Handelsmanns, der seine Waren gefällig auslegt und sie auf mancherlei Weise angenehm zu machen sucht; ankündigende, beschreibende, ja lobpreisende Redensarten wird man ihm nicht verargen. 164

Appropriation might traditionally be seen as a kind of spatial relationship, the act of taking a piece of property and making it one’s own—*proprius*—but here Goethe engages in a kind of temporal or rhythmic appropriation: a gesture of taking literatures and attempting to integrate them into a market of exchange predicated on hierarchies. This appropriation, in any case, contradicts any claims of repetition as a purely “Eastern” method, as Goethe himself makes the texts reiterable. Perhaps the collection is yet a

German-speaking context. May makes this comment in the context of a larger discussion of the disparity between the content of *West-Östlicher Divan* itself and the material in the *Noten und Abhandlungen*. Certain moments, May argues, cast far more severe judgments upon Islam as a religion and upon citizens of “the Orient.” Indeed, as I have just shown above, Goethe extols his western peers for their refusal to accept the sort of despotism he attributes to Persia (May 102). In the process of describing a lack of exchange within Persian communities, Goethe effectively performs his own silencing. Conversation is not purely a theoretical concept evoked in the text, it is also a structure of the encounter that, in this volume, reads more as a soliloquy.

result of Goethe's appreciation: an appreciation in the economic sense of the term, "the action of setting a monetary value on something" (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

These economic valences end up revealing the same insistence upon self and representation that I have located in Goethe's claim regarding despotism and Persia. An important component of my analysis revolves around Goethe's presentation of exchange as a system founded in belief or credit in "Segenspfänder," the second poem of the volume. The poem may seem to be a homage to talismans and amulets, but the (erroneous) title reveals multiple modes of circulation that nevertheless all rely on certain expectations of identity and representability. Moreover, the poem is a thinly-poeticized adaptation of information gleaned from an Orientalist volume, Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall's *Fundgruben des Orients*, which included an essay that inspired "Segenspfänder," directly, entitled "Über die Talismane der Moslimen" (Maier 81). The very sourcing of that material—the relationship between Goethe, Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, and the source texts—is irrevocably embedded in a discourse that was anything but a neutral evaluation of value.⁶⁸ As Ingeborg H. Solbrig has noted, Hammer-Purgstall's travels through Egypt provided much of the material for his translations and bibliographic writings, through which he achieved "Unschätzbare für die Orientalistik" (51).

Left out of these discourses of "despotism" and monologic societal relationships is the fact that Persia was treated as a pawn in diplomatic and territorial aggressions between several European countries and Russia. Because of its geographical relevance to

⁶⁸ For an account of Hammer-Purgstall's involvement in the British military's exploits in Egypt and Syria, see Solbrig, Ingeborg H. *Hammer-Purgstall und Goethe: "Dem Zaubermeister das Werkzeug."* Frankfurt/M: Verlag Hubert Lang, 1973, 45-55.

routes reaching India, Great Britain had a vested interest in maintaining friendly (read: managerial) ties to Persia. Persian peoples were subjected to wars with, and territorial incursions from, Russia in order to safeguard British colonial landholdings. Not to mention, this apparently “despotic” country actually suffered the whims of British and Russian interference in ruling successions (see Bitis 198). The charge of despotism belies an intricate interweaving of imperial and colonizing interests on behalf of both European countries as well as Russia.

As I have noted, he even portrays his role in this interaction as that of a merchant: “die Rolle eines Handelsmanns, der seine Waren gefällig auslegt und sie auf mancherlei Weise angenehm zu machen sucht” (164). He fulfills his role as merchant by putting two concepts, East and West into a supposedly stable equation that can then be circulated. He then fashions this appreciation as a kind of *Nachbildung*; distancing himself again from any accusation of bland repetition. While, according to Goethe’s reading of his materials, other poets may merely repeat, and while Eastern societies and literatures may require repetition, he inserts himself in ways that position him as an innovator.

In closing, despotism in the case of Persia is framed as a kind of literary relationship that molds the structures in which literature is either composed or suppressed. Hence, Goethe claims in his section “Naturformen der Dichtung,” “[a]uf diesen Wege gelangt man zu schönen Ansichten sowohl der Dichtarten als des Charakters der Nationen und ihres Geschmacks in einer Zeitfolge” (233). But is that same logic applied self-reflexively (as much as one can take the West to have a relationship to itself?). Rather, it seems in self-insertions and comments on poetics throughout both *West-Östlicher Divan* and *Römische Elegien*, that Goethe aspires to a national poetic

tradition founded in innovation, without ever recognizing his own indebtedness. If the languages and literatures of the Orient are something he can carry back as if he were a salesman, one crucially absent feature of this mercantile structure is the inspiration Goethe takes from his source materials.

“SEGENSPFÄNDER” AND THE VALUE OF REPRESENTATION

I. THE MINTING OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

“For Classical thought in its formative phase, money is that which permits wealth to be represented. Without such signs, wealth would remain immobile, useless, and as it were *silent*; in this sense, gold and silver are the creators of all that man can covet.” Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, emphasis mine, 177

Somewhere between a series of encyclopedic entries and a poem, “Segenspfänder” reads almost like a sly admission. It was never meant to be titled “Segenspfänder” at all, according to Konrad Burdach. Apparently, as early as the so-called “Wiesbader Register”—a version of the collection that dates from Goethe’s arrival in Wiesbaden in 1815—Goethe mixed up the titles of two sequential poems, “Segenspfänder and “Talismane, Amulete, Abraxas, Inschriften, und Siegel” (57). “Segenspfänder” as it continues to be known, in fact offers a strophe-by-strophe catalogue of the five eponymous objects named in the subsequent poem’s title, suggesting that Goethe had in fact intended for the titles to be reversed (with “Segenspfänder” serving as a title for what, in subsequent publications has been entitled “Talismane.”) Burdach goes so far as to call this mix-up on Goethe’s part “sinnlos” (57). But this mix-up is precisely why the poem ends up feeling like a kind of admission: the poem stages the structure in which words themselves assume the role of a *Pfand*, or anything that “als [S]icherheitsleistung genommen oder gegeben wird” (Grimm and

Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* 7: 1603). In this case, the word acts as a guarantee in order for the depicted languages of the different objects (whether carved into stone or grafted onto paper) to be able to “speak”. Using Goethe’s own logic of the mutually constituting nature of literatures and national identity, I will analyze the repercussions of this structure of *Pfand* for Goethe’s portrayal of the supposedly silent, obedient Persian.

By all accounts, “Segenspfänder” is a striking poem. It is the second poem of the entire collection, somewhat overshadowed by the often-quoted “Hegire” that precedes it, forecasting the bursting of empires and the flight into “Patriarchenluft” (l. 4). The “book” that houses it is the “Buch des Sängers”—although the list-like catalogue structure of the poem seems more prosaic than musical. It describes a variety of accessories and protective items that acquire their meaning through their ability to represent purely.

The opening strophe, comprised of eleven lines, already begins to pose questions where one might have expected answers or preliminary definitions:

Talisman in Carneol,
Gläub’gen bringt er Glück und Wohl;
Steht er gar auf Onyx’ Grunde,
Küß ihn mit geweihtem Munde!
Alles Übel treibt er fort,
Schützt dich und schützt den Ort:
Wenn das eingegrabne Wort
Allahs Namen rein verkündet,
Dich zu Lieb und Tat entzündet.
Und besonders werden Frauen
Sich am Talisman erbauen. ll. 1-11

To begin with, the talisman of the first sentence is grammatically positioned as if it were in fact intended to be the heading of a definition: “Talisman in Carneol / Gläubigen bringt er Glück und Wohl” (ll. 1-2). The verb is postponed until after the indirect object (*den Gläubigen*) and followed by a pronoun. So how is the talisman defined? The talisman is a

sleek black stone, made of onyx, delivering luck to believers, and capable of making its own announcements. And that quality—the ability to proclaim the name—is precisely what guarantees protection.

The second half of the strophe contributes to possible uncertainties with its prominent “wenn” clause. The talisman drives off all evil and protects its wearer (dich) and the location (den Ort), “Wenn das eingegrabne Wort / Allahs Namen rein verkündet / Dich zu Lieb’ und That entzündet” (ll. 7-8). The “wenn” could somehow seem to apply retroactively to the benefits I have listed (the protection of wearer and area); as if one enjoys this protection only if the engraved name is capable of proclaiming purely. But it could also apply to the phrase that comes after it; if the embedded word proclaims Allah’s name purely, it will drive you to love and action. Both of these moments (the initial imperative to kiss the onyx if the talisman stands consummately in the grain of the onyx, as well as the conditional regarding the purity of its proclamation) suggest that there could be an impure talisman, or multiple meanings to its language. If one must ascertain these qualities in order to either kiss the stone or benefit from its protective qualities, then there must be some risk of encountering a false talisman. This possibility is also enhanced by the gender-specific nature of the talisman’s effects, given that *Frauen* need to be addressed specifically, suggesting the typical believer is gendered male. Also, the acoustic similarity between “Alles” and “Allahs” also warns of the potential for miscommunication. These moments blur the supposedly pure language Goethe professes to describe, and will become increasingly significant as I move into a broader analysis of Goethe’s treatment of language in *West-östlicher Divan*.

And then there is the nature of the talisman's being written: it is not engraved so much as buried and embedded, "eingegrab[e]n" into the onyx, as if the name had taken up its very existence there. But this proclamation ironically interrupts the continuity it is meant to celebrate. In other words, the engraved word *itself* is given first mention, "das eingegrabne Wort,"—an empty placeholder-- and only in the subsequent line is it revealed to be Allah's name. This dislocation of word from meaning or referent disturbs the purity it seeks to describe. If it is truly the name, then why would Goethe have to go on to explain it? How can it be both word and name, in a way that would encompass both the specific name as well as a generic "eingegrabne[s]" word that could be anything? In insisting on its being a word that can purely proclaim the name of Allah, Goethe actually pushes a split between word and name. The rupture also contradicts the proclamation at the beginning of the fourth strophe: "Die Inschrift aber hat nichts hinter sich, / Sie ist sie selbst, und muss dir alles sagen" (ll. 20-21). But more on that moment later. For now, it bears noting that language itself seems to struggle against the conception of immediacy that Goethe describes as an essential aspect of the talisman.

One must believe in these talismans in order for them to offer protection. Is this not also the faith one must show in order to make a transaction in coinage? The "rein" relationship between the protection and the belief are exchanged directly and equitably. This protection, in turn, is a type of speech that appears to move beyond the symbolic. In this way, the structure of the talisman resembles the series of movements that, in Foucault's analysis of exchange in *The Order of Things*, makes wealth representable as currency. Though golden coins might seem to be rooted in an intrinsic value more immediately apparent than paper money, Foucault points out that these precious stones

have value *only* because “the process of minting them into gold and silver coinage has given them a utility that those metals do not possess of themselves” (176). That process of minting is itself desirable because it enables the “utility” of representation: “all these factors make gold and silver into a privileged instrument for the representation of all other kinds of wealth, and for strict comparisons between them by means of analysis” (176). Goethe has done something related in *West-Östlicher Divan*. He has transformed the name of Allah into a minted object, through which it, too, functions as a kind of *Pfand*. Through tracing the efficacy of faith in Allah to the appearance of a name on a coin, religious faith is replaced by faith in the *Pfand* of the word.

Not to mention, in the commentary of *West-Östlicher Divan*, Goethe has produced another type of minting through reducing the nationalized subject to a token which can be put into print, and then compared and circulated. The individual piece of metal that forms a coin is valuable within a network of comparisons, and as Foucault reminds us “the metal merely enables this value to be represented” (176). Goethe expects difference to be as legible and comprehensible as the surface of a coin. The tokenized national identity that results from Goethe’s descriptions of Persians and their literature discounts how gender, religion, and cultural difference might inflect the ability for each discrete identity to “represent” itself in a way that would be immediately comprehensible to an audience outside of the specific context. But, with Saba Mahmood’s interventions in mind, what if the very insistence on representation is already predicated upon certain systems of understanding that privilege the Western subject and deride difference as inherently despotic? In this way, though the title of “Segenspfänder” may be the result of an

editorial oversight, the notion of *Pfand* can serve as an important correlate for thinking through Goethe's minting of national identities for the literary market.

II. IMMEDIATE LANGUAGE

In "Segenspfänder," languages of the Orient are posited as having more opportunity for self-representation than Persians themselves, as Persians have been imagined in the volume. Coinage can speak, talismans can speak, but under the conditions of despotism, Persians have no apparent need for dialogue, in Goethe's view. Coins acquire value through their ability to represent "the image or the mark of the Prince," to guarantee an exchange (Foucault 176). This structure would imply that contextual elements, such as the reign of one Prince in a given region, inflects understanding. Goethe does not seem to acknowledge this dynamic. In the case of the talisman, while the value may seem to lie in the ability to represent Allah, Goethe stresses the *means* of the representation most of all. Languages of the Orient are taken up as commodities that can circulate while the people speaking these languages are imaged as *silent*. Not to mention, the very imperative to *represent* assumes a degree of symmetry and immediacy that cannot be guaranteed on a linguistic or nationalized level.

The second strophe, which moves from the talisman to the amulet, has as its focus the spatial constraints of these forms of protection.

Amulete sind dergleichen
Auf Papier geschriebne Zeichen;
Doch man ist nicht im Gedränge
Wie auf edlen Steines Enge,
Und vergönnt ist frommen Seelen
Längre Verse hier zu wählen.
Männer hängen die Papiere
Gläubig um, als Skapuliere (ll. 13-20)

In describing the amulets, he insists that they are “dergleichen” aside from the surfaces upon which they are written (l. 12). The push towards similarity is again a gesture of putting concepts into an evaluative framework, but this time the speaker does not refer to names but to “auf Papier geschriebene *Zeichen*” (l. 13, emphasis mine). The shift from the name to the abstract “*Zeichen*” again suggests this slippage in referent. Meanwhile, the (gendered) significance of media, which had already been an element of the first strophe, assumes greater significance here.⁶⁹

Goethe’s focus moves from stone to paper, as does the development of currency. Kevin McLaughlin has noted that this transition from metal coin to paper money was accompanied by skepticism, and by the degrading of the written word on paper.⁷⁰ He summarizes the resulting paradox: “How can a substance represent a condition excluding substantiality?” (2). But in Goethe’s adumbration, the use of paper allows for more space, “Und vergönnt ist frommen Seelen, / Längre Verse hier zu wählen,” which is posited as an advantage (ll. 17-18). In order for this shift in substance to be conceived of as an advantage, the language itself that is inscribed on the surfaces must be considered the

⁶⁹ Goethe’s source material illuminates one possible reason for this commentary on spatialized and gendered understandings of the objects. Indeed, the gendered difference in the use of these *Segenspfänder* is also played out here: women especially enjoy the talisman; men, however, hang the papers of amulets around their necks. Hammer-Purgstall apparently also made a strong point about this distinction in his *Fundgruben des Orients*: “Heute besteht der Unterschied zwischen *Talismanen* und *Amuleten* darinn, daß bei jenen die Inschrift auf Stein, bei diesen auf Papier geschrieben ist, daß jene größtentheils nur von Frauen am Gürtel oder Busen, diese von Männern und zwar meistentheils von Soldaten als Scapuliere [. . .] getragen werden” (Maier II 81-82). The male-gendered object is granted more space and hangs suggestively from the neck, whereas the talisman is tied to protection of the woman’s body. Moreover, the amulet is envisioned as an item for soldiers in battle. Perhaps the militarized implications of the amulet are related to the emphasis on spatiality. The soldier crosses spaces and defends what is demarcated as the space of his people. He also might be perceived to require lengthier verses to protect him in the face of battle.

⁷⁰ See his *Paperwork: Fiction and Mass Mediacy in the Paper Age*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005.

source of value. Hence, again, in the circulation that is Goethe's *Segenspfänder*, the value of the material is the ability to facilitate exchange through language.⁷¹

The third strophe moves from a description of the materials to the inscriptions themselves in a way that reiterates the impossibility of self-identical, immediate language:

Die I n s c h r i f t aber hat nichts hinter sich,
Sie ist sie selbst, und muss dir alles sagen,
Was hinterdrein, mit redlichem Behagen,
Du gerne sagst: Ich sag' es! Ich. ll. 20-23

Here, the supposed identity of the *Inschrift* is compared to the “you” who must say whatever “I” say. First, the split between the ontological existence of the “sie selbst” and the predicate it must take in the second half of the clause (“muss dir alles sagen”) implies a more complicated entity than the “selbst” might have attempted to suggest. Also, this additional use of the word “alles,” which would be different from the “alles” of the first strophe, reiterates the instability of the word itself. This strophe demonstrates the mercuriality of the deictic. One cannot speak of the *you* who looks to proclaim itself without also drawing attention to the linguistic split between *you* and *I*. As Žižek writes in *For They Know Not What They Do*, “The self-reflexivity of language, the fact that a

⁷¹ I would also like to point out how this rupture in the apparent straightforwardness of the *Pfänder*: “Männer hängen die Papiere / Gläubig um, als Scapulire” rebounds upon a certain assumption of a unified nationalized, religious Western self (ll. 18-19). The explication of amulets requires an identification with a Christian monastic garment. This may be one of Goethe's moments of explication for a “Western” audience;⁷¹ yet it is interesting that the persona constructs this identification in order to cite a similarity in approaches to faith. It is indeed not a comparison; Goethe does not say that the men wear these *in the manner in which* one would a scapular. Rather, he says that amulets are worn *as* scapulars: “Gläubig um, als Scapuliere” (l. 19). I should note that this is a phrase he derives, again, from Hammer's *Fundgruben*. Goethe adapts the phrase with no alteration. Choices in preposition such as these render explicit the frame of thinking that brings together the “West” and “East” of the title. East, here, is thought in terms of its intelligibility to the West. There would be no “als” if Christianity were not considered a foundation on top of which, or against which, Islam is formed. The perception, then, is that Islam “owes” something to the practices of Christianity.

speech act is always a reflexive comment on itself, its own *qualification* (in both main meanings of the term), bears witness to the impossibility inscribed into the very heart of language: its failure to grasp the Real” (xiv). Precisely in repeating the claim that “ich” can say it, the impossibility of locating that *I* is made audible. This slippage is only intensified by the fact that it is preceded by “Du gerne sagst.” The act of recounting the logic of these objects splits their supposed purpose and plunges us into the rift in the pure language Goethe so admires.

This claim of the language of the talismans and amulets to speak self-identically must also be situated within the larger Orientalist narrative of “Eastern” languages’ being intrinsically more apt at representation than “Western” languages. Goethe writes about this in a striking passage from *Noten und Abhandlungen*: “In der arabischen Sprache wird man wenig Stamm- und Wurzelworte finden, die, wo nicht unmittelbar, doch mittelst geringer An- und Umbildung sich nicht auf Kamel, Pferd, und Schaf bezögen” (223). He assumes that the Arabic language is predicated upon an immediately indexical relationship between words used and the objects of everyday life (to say nothing of the stereotyping involved in his choice of these words as representations of everyday life). There is no need of separating the signifier from the signified, as the Arabic language has merged the two through the construction of a language based on what are supposedly the foundational elements of “Arab” experience.

III. THE THREAT OF THE COUNTERFEIT

So far Goethe has described talismans and amulets as valuable in a way I have considered comparable to the way money acquires value: through the terms of their use of a language that enables concepts to be represented and circulated. The objects have a duty to fulfill, just as “money becomes real wealth only to exactly the same degree to

which it fulfills its representative function, when it replaces commodities, when it enables them to be moved or to wait” (Foucault 178). But in this very insistence on function, the objects come into conflict with Goethe’s own idealistic formulations of what language should achieve, for it is precisely in the realm of language that Goethe claims he seeks to shun quick and easy transactions.

Not to mention, with the possibility for these representations of value, there must also come an anxiety of counterfeiting. In the fourth strophe, Goethe invokes the *abraxas*, amulets of Gnosticism in this light:

Doch *Abraxas* bring ich selten!
Hier soll meist das Fratzenhafte,
Das ein düsterer Wahnsinn schaffte,
Für das Allerhöchste gelten.
Sag ich euch absurde Dinge,
Denkt, daß ich Abraxas bringe. ll. 24-29

He claims that the *abraxas* turns the “Fratzenhafte” into “das allerhöchste”—or at the very least, that the hideous can pass for (“gelten”) the all-highest. This suspicion of counterfeit language once again complicates Goethe’s insistence on an immediate literality. It is also worth noting that the moment recalls Goethe’s preoccupation with *Wechselreden* as an index of a non-despotic society. The relationship between speaker and recipient is not represented as a communicative one, if in fact the speaker can disavow his absurdity through the “Abraxas”—the word “bringe” conveys a sense that the words themselves are merely vehicles that alleviate the speaker’s responsibility.

Almost as if to console this emergent suspicion, the poem ends with the reassuring, circular image of the genuine language of the *Siegelring*. I should note here

that the circle may in fact be one of the controlling images of the volume.⁷² Within the context of “Segenspfänder” as a poem, circularity takes on a variety of roles. In the first strophe, the rhyme scheme and assonance combine to place extra emphasis upon circularity.⁷³ After describing the “geweihtem Munde” in its readiness to kiss, the acoustics force a rounded mouth by stressing “fort // Ort // Wort”—indeed, it is the only vowel sound that receives an extra rhyme in a strophe otherwise comprised of couplets (Carneol // Wohl, Grunde // Munde). It is perhaps fitting, then, that the poem closes with this ring:

Ein S i e g e l r i n g ist schwer zu zeichnen
Den höchsten Sinn im engsten Raum;
Doch weißt du hier ein Echtes anzueignen,
Gegraben steht das Wort, du denkst es kaum. ll. 30-33

Despite the difficulty of fitting the words onto the surface of the ring—and here the use of “doch” is particularly noteworthy—one can know that “ein Echtes” has been inscribed, without even having to think about it. “Segenspfänder” is a poem that ripples forth from an anxiety that strikes at the core of the *Pfand*.

But despite this conciliatory image, the central doubt evinced by the *Abraxas*, the *gelten* that complicates *Geld*, reveals the fundamental disconnection in the structure of Goethe’s poem, and broadens to reveal tensions in his entire conceptualization of a de-

⁷² For his service to Sir Sidney Smith during English military occupation of Egypt, Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall received “den Siegelring Sir Sidneys, den ihm der Kommandant als Zeichen der Beglaubigung gegeben hatte” (Solbrig 52). As Solbrig continues, “[d]er Siegelring des Machthabenden auf der Hand seines Abgesandten war von jeher im Morgenland das Symbol höchsten Vertrauens und unumstösslicher Vollmacht” (52).

⁷³ Moreover, on a structural and contextual level, if circulation between West and East could be considered perfectly equitable, the *West-Östlicher Divan* would in fact circle back upon itself. Goethe even writes in the section “Naturformen der Dichtung” that if the three modes of literature (epic, lyric, and drama) would ever finally come together, it would take the form of a circle: “bis endlich die Vereinigung von allen dreien erscheint und somit der ganze Kreis in sich geschlossen ist” (233).

politicized *West-Östlicher Divan*. In the essentializing, Orientalizing admiration of, say, the Arabic language as closer to the signified, or Persian poetic traditions as a linear narrative emerging from despotic conditions, Goethe draws attention to precisely the faultlines and anxieties that make these talismans and amulets circulate like legal tender. By privileging representation and exchange, Goethe imposes a rubric upon the East predicated upon accessibility for the West.

He focuses on these amulets and talismans because they enact what he describes in the section “Verwahrung” of *Noten und Abhandlungen* as the counter-point to increasingly degraded elements of poetry and language altogether. This section of the *Noten und Abhandlungen* is significant because it adumbrates Goethe’s distinction between poetry and everyday language. It is also a section that ushers in several remarks regarding the supposedly nationalized characteristics of certain classifications of literature. He writes in “Verwahrung” that the easy circulation of words, like “Scheidemünze oder Papiergeld” is oriented solely towards “schnellem, Augenblicklichem Verkehr” rather than attentiveness:

Wenn jemand Wort und Ausdruck als heilige Zeugnisse betrachtet und sie nicht etwa, wie Scheidemünze oder Papiergeld, nur zu schnellem, augenblicklichem Verkehr bringen, sondern im geistigen Handel und Wandel als wahres Äquivalent ausgetauscht wissen will, so kann man ihm nicht verübeln, daß er aufmerksam macht, wie herkömmliche Ausdrücke, woran niemand mehr Arges hat, doch einen schädlichen Einfluß verüben, Ansichten verdüstern, den Begriff entstellen und ganzen Fächern eine falsche Richtung geben. 231

The concept of words as “heilige Zeugnisse” speaks to the key moments of “Segenspänder” in which the inscriptions were envisaged as proclaiming the name of Allah. Goethe considers himself involved in the process of salvaging words from their

degradation through common use. The very name “Verwahrung” or safe-keeping, reiterates the sense that Goethe appoints himself the sole merchant of the materials he presents in *West-Östlicher Divan*. Immediacy and witnessing are the goals Goethe envisions for language, and he seems to believe that talismans and amulets attain to those goals.⁷⁴ But why, how, and with what consequences?

Apparently the words witness something beyond a moment’s glance, beyond the “Augenblicklichem.” On the one hand, Goethe could be referring to the Gospel of John: “In the beginning was the Word” and to a certain notion of the primacy of the word. Words appear separate from the logic of transactions: the beauty of language is precisely the fact that words might attest to something beyond use value, and attain to a new realm of clarity and precision.

Indeed, in a volume concerned with modes of circulation and understanding, this passage lends critical insight into how words and literatures are implicated in modes of production and transfer. The fact that Goethe compares language to forms of currency shows an awareness of the economic means of exchange that otherwise seems to be taken for granted in this collection.

And yet, the tone of the entire passage is off. If Goethe is indeed drawing a distinction between language used for exchange and language used as a witness, his identification of what language can witness reads a bit bathetically. It would seem he insists on essences that one could then witness. He describes the speaker of the holy

⁷⁴ As I have suggested already, this characterization, on the one hand, perpetuates Orientalist notions of Eastern languages as inherently more closely representative than Western languages. Moreover, the passage repeats the same gesture of “Segenspfänder.” In attempting to highlight the identity possible between signifier and signified, he ends up rendering apparent the necessity of belief in order for words to circulate and be exchanged meaningfully. While the aspiration may be to find a means of communicating that goes beyond the “Scheidemünze or Papiergeld,” Goethe continues to envisage language as circulating in precisely such a manner.

witnesses as desiring a “wahres Äquivalent” of “geistigen Handel und Wandel.” Does not the use of these trade-related terms only further circumscribe the supposedly “holy” domain of language? What is to be made of the slide in register from the holy to the almost pejorative tone of “Handel und Wandel”? The rhyming suggests something like derision. And while Goethe may have been searching for language that spoke of a higher value than mere exchange, he also draws attention to language as something that can be used as an equivalent. Recall that the “fratzenhafte” element of the abraxas was that it could pass for (*gelten*) the all-highest. The phrase seems paradoxical: how can something be a genuine equivalent? It is especially significant in that the equivalent is described as a stand-in for matters of the spirit. This phrase reiterates the complexities of the “self” that should be represented either by language or literature. By using an idiom that reflects the frenetic nature of trade, Goethe inadvertently draws the Idealist realm of selfhood back into the network of practices and significations that inform all constructions of the self both within and beyond language.

One of these practices lies in a certain conception of the self and representation as put forth by Protestant religiosity—a concern that I have touched upon when discussing Goethe’s explanation of amulets through the monastic scapular. As Mahmood argues, “the Protestant conception of religiosity presupposes a distinction between privatized interiority that is the private locus of belief and a public exteriority that is an expression of this belief” (xv). In the same way, Goethe repeatedly frames language along similar lines of expression and essence even when describing spiritual and religious effects that may not be defined by the same presupposition.

To contextualize the consequences of Goethe's claims for language, it helps to look specifically at the notions of legitimacy and counterfeiting that formed a significant element of the Orientalist literature Goethe was reading. It would be impossible to sever *West-Östlicher Divan* from broader literary trends and from the contexts of the scholarship which informed Goethe's research. Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, for example, evaluates disparate literary traditions in his *Geschichte der schönen Redekünste Persiens*, claiming at one point, that it is an "allen Orientalisten bekannte Wahrheit, daß die türkische Litteratur (nur eine Nachahmung arabsicher und persischer Meisterwerke), sich aus den Schätzen beider bereichert habe" (Vorrede). He also repeats the claim that Persian poetics derives its meters solely from Arabic-language poetry.⁷⁵ Both of these interpretations work to concretize boundaries between traditions while also claiming that the distinctions of tradition are in fact muddled by imitation. Hammer-Purgstall casts Turkish literature as merely derivative without taking into account the conditions which brought these poetic traditions into contact with one another.

While Goethe himself, of course, did not write these evaluations, they are the scholarly basis for his poetic interpretations. My argument is less that Goethe replicates this language of hierarchization and legitimacy, and more that they form an important context for the claims made in "Segenspfänder" and in the section "Verwahrung" of his *Noten und Abhandlungen*. Can a language still be thought of in terms of its legitimacy in a context that casts certain literatures as derivative of others, or as traces of forms of national character? On the one hand, language is taken to be something beyond distinctions of trade and exchange ("nicht [. . .] wie Scheidemünze oder Papiergeld"),

⁷⁵ For a refutation of the notion that Persian meters are strictly derivative of Arabic meters, see L. P. Elwell-Sutton's *The Persian Metres*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1976.

something that can finally bridge the gap between the “I” represented and the “I” who speaks, as in “Segenspfänder.” But on the other hand, the use of language in literature is apparently, according to Hammer-Purgstall and, as I will argue, Goethe, subject to codifications of national identity, hierarchies, and debts left unexpressed.⁷⁶

REPETITION

At stake in the previous section was Goethe’s concept of *Verwahrung* in his relationship to language as a valuable, immediate witness of some essential spirit. In the following sections, I will read several poems that refer either directly or indirectly to Goethe’s positioning of himself as carrying on and carrying over the poetics of Persian and Arabic literatures. He takes issue with the notion of mis-appropriation in the following poem “Wie kommt’s?” and clearly sees his efforts as part of a literary *Verwahrung*. In Goethe’s view, he is not repeating the materials of his predecessors, but building upon them (quite literally) and expanding them for a new audience. The images that result cast the literatures in question, again, as subject to appreciation and evaluation. They are also deployed in Goethe’s envisioning of an empire centered around poetry (which, lest we forget, is cast in contradistinction to Goethe’s essentializing image of Persian governance as despotic).

The fact that Goethe could not read Persian or Arabic did not stop him from making comments on similarities and differences in poetic conventions of these traditions

⁷⁶ It is important to note that, although scholars such as Hammer-Purgstall were eager to point out apparent debts between languages and literatures of the “East,” the possible indebtedness of German literatures to these same traditions is never made apparent. As Martin Bernal writes in *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, “cultural pride needs to be maintained in the face of foreign borrowing that is so massive that it cannot be denied, or where borrowings run counter to a hierarchy of cultural or ‘racial’ superiority.” (198). Hammer-Purgstall, as it were, had no qualms about equating Persian and German linguistically, “Durch gründliches Sprachstudium ist die nächste Verwandtschaft der persischen und deutschen Sprache schon längst außer Zweifel gesetzt” (vii). Here the relationship is one of equality and comparability, rather than subordination.

when compared to German poetry. He compares, for example the Persian proclivity to “Doppelvers” to the effect of an alexandrine line (212). “Doppelvers” is itself an interesting term—a German rendering of what is typically called stichomythia, in which characters trade lines. He also rightfully draws attention to the significance of rhyme and acoustics in Persian poetry, honing in on the importance of the “Steigen und Fallen des Tons” in which the poetry is meant to be delivered (211).

Moreover, one central component of Goethe’s understanding of these traditions is his insistence that literary scholars themselves have limited the number of poetic masters over time. Not only that, but Goethe then insists that nothing significant has occurred in Persian-language poetry since these masters were writing. These notions of scarcity and limited supply also fit into the economic or commodified language with which Goethe describes the traditions. He frames such remarks as an appreciation for the rigor of “Oriental” literary classification: “Wie nun hierüber die Nation streng geurteilt hat, sieht man daran, daß sie in fünfhundert Jahren nur sieben Dichter als ihre obersten anerkennt” (226). But the implication of such a claim is that, to continue writing poetry after these seven poets, one risks merely repeating the grand achievements of one’s predecessors. This mandate against repetition forms a salient background to Goethe’s conception of his own approach in *West-Östlicher Divan*.

He in fact singles out repetition as the marker of “Dummheit” in an untitled poem from “Buch der Sprüche.” The poem is decidedly epigrammatic, witty, and appropriate for a section entitled “Hikmet Nameh” or “Buch der Sprüche.” But this section title itself is not appropriate, as it turns out. As editors have pointed out, “Hikmet” does not mean “sayings” (*Sprüche*) but rather “wisdom.” The section of the book that houses this poem

performs the type of re-appropriation that the poem itself had seemed to warn against: by translating “wisdom” as “sayings,” he presumes that pearls of wisdom can be condensed into memorable wordplay; easily quoted and reiterated from the “Älteste” to the “Jüngste.” The monorhyme contributes to this packaging of the poem, as it is an acoustic device known in some traditions for “facilitate[ing] wordplay” (*Princeton Encyclopedia* 898).⁷⁷ How could a poem about the subtle shift from goodness to stupidity end up placing itself in a grey area on its own spectrum? The formulation of turning wisdom into sayings also posits a means of acknowledging Hafiz that actually focuses on repetition and repeatability:

Wie kommt's, daß man an jedem Orte
 So viel Gutes, so viel Dummes hört?
 Die Jüngsten wiederholen der Ältesten Worte
 Und glauben, daß es ihnen angehört.

That which seems to distinguish the inane is its misappropriation of the knowledge of elders: “Die Jüngsten wiederholen der Ältesten Worte / Und glauben, daß es ihnen angehört.” But what I would like to explore is this question: is the issue that one unfeeling repeats the words of the elders, or that one repeats the words and assumes ownership over them (“glauben, daß es ihnen angehört”)? To put it more simply: is it an issue of affect or one of ownership? This distinction would lend insight into Goethe’s own approach(es) to his materials, as well as the apparent irony in Goethe’s insertion of this poem into a collection that has itself turned wisdom into something iterable and quotable (literally, a saying: *Spruch*).

⁷⁷ I would be remiss if I did not also point out that monorhymed poetry is also considered characteristic of Arabic-language poetry (*Princeton Encyclopedia* 898).

In recognizing that the young may repeat the words of the old in a way that does a disservice to the “Ältesten Worte,” Goethe discredits the notion that materials and texts could be circulated without attention to their contexts. But this discrediting is not self-aware. Credit is still the basis of the presumed transaction between Eastern and Western literatures: the attempt to put them into a system of equitability that makes Eastern literatures available for use. What might have been a more appropriate movement is a recognition of indebtedness; of acknowledging the authorial relationship between the words of the *Jüngste* to those of the *Älteste* by Goethe himself.

This indebtedness, too, might rebound upon the entire notion of “national” literatures, taking into account the relationships between Persian- and Arabic-language literatures. Most of all, such a movement would begin to shed light on the hypocrisy of treating Eastern literatures as prone to repetition or merely the substance at the basis of Western innovation.

REPRODUCTION AND EMPIRE

Up to now, I have focused on Goethe’s interest in a language that can represent the essence of the East, arguing that the insistence upon self-identity cannot be severed from a certain culturally-determined conception of selfhood and nationality. I turn now to a selection of moments and poems in *West-Östlicher Divan* and the commentary that directly speak to a certain formulation of Goethe’s literary self. These moments are, in some sense, more straightforward regarding Goethe’s appropriation of Persian literatures in order to compound his sense of a national identity. He envisions a type of empire invigorated by poetic creativity through fixing a conception of “Germanness” tied to notions of innovation and discovery.

Goethe claims early on in the *Noten und Abhandlungen*, following the precedent set up in Schiller's *Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung*, that "[n]aïve Dichtkunst ist bei jeder Nation die erste, sie liegt allen folgenden zum Grunde: je frischer, je naturgemässer sie hervortritt, desto glücklicher entwickeln sich die nachherigen Epochen" (165). Poetry is bound up with the conception of the nation itself, and sets the foundation for all future poetic endeavors. In this sense, he again broadens a category that he seems to derive from Greek classical criticism and genre theory to all literature. Little wonder, then, that he would be so admiring of Arabic- and Persian language literature: as Mommsen points out, the classical age of Arabic-language, pre-Islamic poetry is lauded by critics of various traditions.⁷⁸

These perspectives also speak to Goethe's repeated claim in the *Noten und Abhandlungen* that poets are involved in the dissemination of politics and religion. We see this claim also in the quotation with which I began this chapter: that any form of action against the mysterious despotic figure takes the form of citations from the Koran and poetic passages. He writes in the section "Dichterkönige" that earlier societies had relied upon the counsel of poetic "ministers," saying, "Diese Stelle hat man als eine der vorzüglichsten am Hofe zu betrachten: er war Minister aller wissenschaftlichen, historisch-poetischen Geschäften" (192). One could have even have been forgiven, Goethe claims, for considering him a type of "vesir." A similar point is made in the poem "Der Winter und Timur." He apostrophizes Timur: "Bist du der verdammten Geister / Einer, wohl! Ich bin der andre. / Du bist Greis, ich auch, erstarren / Machen wir so Land als Menschen" (ll. 14-17). Goethe speaks as the poet who has a hand in this nation-

⁷⁸ See her *Goethe and the Poets of Arabia*, Chapter 1: Pre-Islamic Bedouin Poetry (17-69).

building—“der andre”—the ones who supposedly create the very land they inhabit as citizens.

To preface this discussion, I should note that, as several critics have made clear, Goethe’s perspective on Hafiz and on Islam and related matters can vary significantly between the poetic performance of the *West-Östlicher Divan* and the commentary he provides in his *Noten und Abhandlungen*.⁷⁹ Questions of nationalism and imitation and indebtedness are also taken up in his poetry on Hafiz within the text, and I will explore these moments in some detail.

There are several poems in the *Buch Hafiz* that situate this admiration in terms of nation-building, poetic traditions, and circulation. First, it helps to look at a poem unique in its metatextual explication of Goethe’s approach to working from Persian poetic models “Nachbildung”:

In deine Reimart hoff ich mich zu finden,
Das Wiederholen soll mir auch gefallen,
Erst werd ich Sinn, sodann auch Worte finden;
Zum zweitenmal soll mir kein Klang erschallen,
Er müßte den besondern Sinn begründen, [5]
Wie du’s vermagst, Begünstigter vor allen!

Denn wie ein Funke fähig, zu entzünden
Die Kaiserstadt, wenn Flammen grimmig wallen,
Sich Wind erzeugend glühn von eignen Winden,
Er, schon erloschen, schwand zu Sternenhallen; [10]
So schlang’s von dir sich fort, mit ew’gen Gluten
Ein deutsches Herz von frischem zu ermuten.

The title means imitation: a building *after*. Goethe acknowledges his procession out of the work of Hafiz, at least temporally. But it is not so much an expression of indebtedness

⁷⁹ See, for example Anil Bhatti, who argues that the poems are performative and that the difference leaves an “Ambivalenz” that contributes to “polyphonen Diskursen” (121). This polyphonic dimension is also something Eleanor ter Horst notes with relation to *Römische Elegien* (see bibliography).

as it is rather a performance of imitation. While in Goethe's adumbration, Persia itself is limited in expressivity because of despotic repetition, Goethe has the ability to exceed repetition and to *build after*. Although in the previous poem, "Wie kommt's," Goethe indicts mindless repetition, here he envisions repetition as its own form of creative adaptation. "In deine Reimart hoff ich mich zu finden, / Das Wiederholen soll mir auch gefallen, Erst werd ich Sinn, sodann auch Worte finden" (ll. 1-3). Instead of repetition, Goethe suggests that there is a value in finding something adaptable in the wake of one's predecessors and models. But he also implies, again, that his process of poetic discovery takes place in the reading of Persian poetry—again enacting what Yomb May had called the rejuvenation of his own poetry by adapting from literatures to which he does not contribute.

The first strophe is delicately constructed around the acoustic dimensions of imitation. Assonance and proximal vowel sounds create a sense of near-repetition: "**d**eine Reimart," "Wiederholen soll," as well as "**S**inn [. . .] **f**inden" and "zweiten**m**al [. . .] ersch**a**llen" to cite several of the many instances at play in this strophe. He also repeats the word "finden" to fit his rhyme scheme. But this finding is not identical to itself; first he finds himself in the rhyme of his predecessor, and then he must find his own sense and words. What does it mean to "find" in the context of working through poetry of a different language? Goethe has not actually "found" anything; the poetry of Hafiz had existed for centuries before *West-Östlicher Divan*. It is in this, sense, too that repetition must be rethought as a category of Eastern literatures, or of Persian society. "Finding" as a "Western" action is likewise untenable, as is the "erfinden" of *Nachbildung*; I wish to dispel the notion of invention and innovation as Goethe's privileged responses to Persian

literature. At the very least, he positions his own poetic interpretation of Hafiz as material through which he can find *himself*, and ultimately re-assure his German identity vis-à-vis Hafiz's example.

Although he claims that "Wiederholen soll mir auch gefallen," he seems again to discredit repetition in the second half of the strophe. "Zum zweitenmal soll mir kein Klang erschallen, / Er müßte denn besonderen Sinn begründen": I understand these lines to caution against the very repetition of a rhyme that Goethe in fact uses when repeating the word "finden" (l. 4). The repetition would have to have at its core a contribution to the meaning of the lines. The split here between "Sinn" and "Worte" should be noted after the described desire in "Segenspfänder" to find a language that has already married these two concepts.

Goethe imagines himself as re-circulating Hafiz's literature through his *Nachbildung*, and he apostrophizes the relationship between Hafiz and himself: "Wie du's vermagst, Begünstigter vor allen!" (l. 6). He considers himself a part of a lineage descending from Hafiz. Moreover, he describes Hafiz's talents as the result of *Begünstigung*, which gives him a kind of poetic power, "wie du's vermagst" (l. 6). *Vermögen* as a verb denotes the ability to bring something "zu Stande" or "Kraft haben zu etwas," senses retained in the noun *Vermögen*, meaning fortune, capital, or assets. Poetic inspiration, in this formulation, is a form of grace that is bestowed upon someone or some place. But more importantly, this bestowal of grace seems to signal a register of wealth separate from the economic transactions that I have already underscored in "Segenspfänder."

The second strophe attempts justification for the aspirations of the first strophe. But the logic through which this justification proceeds is difficult. Goethe shifts from one type of power to another: the power or ability of poetic craft, to the power to change the course of empire. He begins with a causative conjunction: “Denn wie ein Funke fähig, zu entzünden” (l. 7). Again, if poetic inspiration is something bestowed upon others, this image of a single spark makes sense. But the comparison that comes next seems directly opposed to the framework of building after that lend the poem its name. “Die Kaiserstadt, wenn Flammen grimmig wallen, / Sich Wind erzeugend glühn von eignen Winden” (ll. 8-9). “Die Kaiserstadt,” is presumably Moscow, victim in 1812 of the infamous fire that destroyed most of the city. Why would Goethe liken poetic inspiration and strength to an image of all-consuming conflagration? The procession of lighter *f*-alliteration to the more sonorous *w*-alliteration also mimics the spark’s accumulation of force through the city. The poem is invested in the construction, destruction, and restructuring of empire. Moscow’s fire occurred during the time of Napoleon’s invasion, a time of imperial hubris writ large upon the Eastern continent.⁸⁰

But while Hafiz’s poetic force is indeed likened to this single spark that then destroys the city, the moment Goethe chooses to examine is not the spark in its

⁸⁰ Concurrent to this act of aggression, however, was Russia’s antagonism towards Persia—a “shadowy” affiliate of Great Britain (an on-again, off-again rival in the face of scaling back the tide of French imperialism), and a “potentially hostile” impediment to Russia’s nearby protectorate, Georgia (Bitis 194). In actuality, Persia ended up becoming a proxy between Russia and Great Britain. Napoleon’s invasion of Moscow in 1812 was in fact, in some ways, a welcome development for Persia, where war and negotiations with Russia were “delayed [. . .] in the hope of Napoleon’s victory” (195). In the end, Persia was forced to recognize Russia’s “possession of Georgia, Dagestan, and indeed all its Caucasian territories up to the Terek” (195). Tensions continued after these settlements, as Russian leadership aimed at “creating a Persian succession crisis and a civil war leading up to the break-up of the Persian empire and further Russian expansion” (198).

accumulation of destructive capability. Rather, he points out the spark after its having been extinguished:

Er [der Funke] schon erloschen, schwand zu Sternenhallen;
So schlang's von dir sich fort, mit ew'gen Gluten
Ein deutsches Herz von frischem zu ermuten. ll. 10-12, emphasis mine.

Hafiz's inspiration is likened to the afterglow of the spark, after it has disappeared in the starry skies. This facet of the comparison may be because Hafiz has long since been dead at the time of Goethe's writing, or perhaps it signals also the relationship of Hafiz to his own moment in history. Perhaps he was a spark that, though capable of enacting destruction, instead soared to the horizon. But this comparison still leaves unanswered questions about the role of the overall fire.

The fire is reminiscent of several images scattered throughout *West-Östlicher Divan*, where fire and destruction signal transformation.⁸¹ But in "Nachbildung," this relationship is even more fraught. While poetry somehow intersects with the foundations of power, signaled in the use of the word *Kaiserstadt* for Moscow, its strength apparently exceeds that of empire. Indeed, Hafiz's spark is termed "ew[i]g." What results is an elaborate conceit: Hafiz's poetic legacy is imaged as a spark, glimmering after having multiplied to destroy Moscow, and which then goes on (rather bathetically, I would argue) to inspire Goethe's German heart—"Ein deutsches Herz von frischem zu ermuten" (l. 12). He rewrites the historical events of France's incursion into Russia as Hafiz's action. But it also implies that the destruction of Moscow is a kind of rejuvenation, if the spark that caused it can be said to have a comparable effect on Goethe. The image may be

⁸¹ See, for example, the poem "Selige Sehnsucht," which imagines a moth's approach toward a flame. In the moment of immolation, the moth is transformed, semantically, into a butterfly: "Und zuletzt, des Lichts begierig, / Bist du, Schmetterling, verbrannt" (21, ll. 15-16).

one of poetic power—one that can transcend the violent destruction of a city—but this poetic power is still implicated in a frame of imperialism. In reality, Napoleon’s invasion of Russia did nothing to stop Russian interference in Persian governance and landholdings. In fact, ongoing tensions between the two powers erupted again in the Russo-Persian War of 1826 to 1828. And yet, Goethe imagines that Hafiz’s poetry can break down the imperial center of a country that, during Goethe’s composition of *West-Östlicher Divan*, was antagonistic to Persia.

In the face of historical inaccuracies or re-envisionings, the concept of poetry is the outlet through which Goethe conceives of a relationship between two phenomena. In this sense, Goethe continues with the assumptions regarding language and self-representation that he had already described in “Segenspfänder.” What is perhaps frightening or foreboding is the thought that transformative fires will inspire Goethe’s “German heart.” On the one hand, as May has pointed out, this gesture is indicative of the overall trend in *West-Östlicher Divan*, of using material from the “Orient” to enliven his own poetry. But it also raises the question of how that Germanness is framed and understood. Instead of taking Hafiz’s legacy as inspiration and then deductively suggesting consequences thereof for Goethe’s German heart, I suggest reading the poem *backwards*. I would begin with Goethe’s claim of having a “deutsches Herz”: what about this fixed identity of “Germanness” and the contemplation of a national poetic tradition causes Goethe to look to the poetry of Hafiz? In reading the poem with gentle skepticism towards this assumption of Germanness in mind, a narrative of nationalized poetics becomes clearer. Rather than gliding between fixed poles of innovation, repetition, origins, and legacy, we find ourselves as readers, too, looking for stable footing (“In

deine Reimart hoff ich mich zu finden”). The true heart of the poem is the construction of identity, the nationalized *Bildung* as construction or fixation that coincides with a poetic *Bildung*.

THE ROMAN CASE

In *West-Östlicher Divan*, language, and the surfaces upon which languages are inscribed, have been deployed in a schema of circulation (dupliciously) predicated upon equitability and value. The underlying tenets of an Orientalist discourse that, in this specific historical moment, evaluated literatures of the East for their “worthiness” shaped these perceptions of languages. In as much as language, for Goethe and his contemporaries, and the literary modes that languages enable or imply reflect the national identity of the country in which they arise, literature is also implicated in the formations and destructions of empire.

But how might these concerns appear in a volume rooted in what had, up until the emergence(s) of scholarly work on the East concomitant to European imperialisms, been considered the classical foundations for German literature—classical Roman (and Greek) literatures?⁸² Goethe insists in *West-Östlicher Divan* that Persian literature has a compulsion to poeticize out of despotic limitations on dialogue. Instead of “repeating” Hafiz’s work by offering a translation, Goethe claims that he is constructing something new in the wake of his influence. In *Römische Elegien*, Goethe was able to replicate the poetic meter of classical elegies. How do *Nachbildung* and repetition (of forms) look in this collection and context?

⁸² For an analysis of how this trend of thought suppressed the influence of specifically Egyptian and “Afroasiatic” philosophies and literatures, see Martin Bernal’s *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (I: The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985). New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1987.

Römische Elegien, like *West-Östlicher Divan*, features several references to the literary tradition Goethe engages. The collection begins with a sense of abandonment, as if the persona alone were denied access to the wisdom of ancient Rome. The eternal city seems rather very finite and already destroyed. Love—and, famously, sexual passion—are the elements that keep the legacy of Roman history in tact. Indeed, despite the transitory nature of this former empire, the love that is associated with it will persist: “Doch bald ist es vorbei; dann wird ein einziger Tempel, / Amors Tempel, nur sein, der den Geweihten empfängt” (ll. 11-12). This is the mantra of the First Elegy, which then gets put into action in the Second Elegy.

“Nun bin ich endlich geborgen!” the persona declares at the beginning of the Second Elegy, alluding to his relationship to the beloved (l. 1). He has found protection and he can now connect to the historical tradition:

Das mir Amor, der Fürst, königlich schützend, verlieh.
Hier bedeckt er mich mit seinem Fittich; die Liebste
Fürchtet, römisch gesinnt, wütende Gallier nicht.

Again, as has been the case with Günderrode and Goethe, protection is a gift of the poetic muse. Perhaps this connotation to protection is why Goethe names the section on bifurcated language “Verwahrung.” As Eleanor Ter Horst suggests, Goethe seeks protection from the literary following he has gained in Germany (404). The Roman god of love is the only one who can protect him from the pressures of his life at home. Sexuality is what propels his sense of protection and freedom, and what allows him to partake in the otherwise stilled voices of the ancient Romans. While the physical remains of Rome attest to the fragility of empire, his apparent sexual prowess and his ability to portray these events in verse signal the durability of poetic legacy. Sexual freedom seems

to be the operative power of this collection, as it here ushers in the shift in perspective between the precariousness of the persona in the First Elegy to a more secured position in the Second Elegy and onwards. The persona no longer cries out for defense and protection, rather, he is safe in his lover's arms, reflecting on his own poetic talents.

The private sexual relationship (and it will be clearly demarcated as a *private* relationship in the Twelfth Elegy) is the privileged site of poetic inspiration and empire-making. As Ter Horst notes, the breakage at the beginning of the Twelfth Elegy is not only from historical time (similar to Goethe's admonition against repetition in "Wie kommt's?") but from public, political happenings (or so it seems at first) (409). These poetic talents allow him to imagine his own break from tradition, from ruined empires to an empire rooted in the liberation of pleasure. But even *this* empire is infiltrated with the same kind of logic of exchange and circulation that marks Goethe's "appreciation" for Persian poetry. Hence, it is not solely in *West-Östlicher Divan* that Goethe imagines his poetry as transcending the limits of meaningless repetition. Nor is it only in *West-Östlicher Divan* that images of trade and circulation complicate perceptions of purity.

To introduce the poem briefly: it begins with the persona informing the beloved that, outside their room, harvesters are beginning their homeward trek. The sounds of their joy remind him of the cult of Ceres; more specifically, he focuses on the process of initiation into the orders. What the initiate ends up learning, according to the speaker, is "daß Demeter, die große, / [. . .] / Ihres unsterblichen Leibs holdes Verborgne gegönnt" in an affair with the mortal Jasion (ll. 23-26). As the editors point out, Goethe here adapts material from Ovid's *Amores* and Homer's *Odyssey* (825). Ceres' love affair was tarnished by the subsequent ruination of earthly crops. But not to worry, the persona

assures his beloved in the final line: “Unsre Zufriedenheit bringt keine Gefährde der Welt” (l. 34).

The opening image, aside from setting up the breakage between Goethe and the outside world, bears important traces of Roman history. Goethe had spent his time in Rome living along “den Flaminischen Weg” as he writes in the opening line. Regine Otto notes in the commentary to the Berliner Ausgabe of the *Römische Elegien* that this road extended from the Porta del Popolo (825). This arch was known primarily for its purpose in controlling traffic rather than securing defense. It was intended also to contribute symmetry and a sense of order to the Piazza del Popolo.⁸³ It is a marker, then, of urban life—of the need to mediate in human activity and mobility. Goethe’s physical separation from that structuring does not, however, exclude him from the economic dimensions of Roman life and commerce.

Though Goethe cannot see the *Schnitter*, their described jubilation contrasts with the fate of farm labor during the late Roman empire. The decline of agriculture as a trade was one of the defining marks of the time period. According to Peter Sarris, the threat of invasion into Rome’s northern and western provinces meant “the large-scale raising of cereal crops and suchlike to feed settled populations [. . .] effectively disappeared” (75). Individuals were forced to farm on a much smaller scale. All of this change followed what had appeared to be a well-developed commercial network; foremost of which, Sarris notes, was their system of “minting and circulat[ing . . .] Constantinian gold *solidus*” (75). But this was problematic for a variety of reasons: one, this abundance of

⁸³ According to the architectural plans produced at the Accademia di S. Luca in 1773, “Ornare di fabbriche decorose, e disposte in buona simmetria, la piazza davanti la porta Flaminia, detta oggi del Popolo” (quoted in Giorgio Ciucci, *La Piazza del Popolo: Storia architettura urbanistica*. Roma: Officina Edizioni, 1974. 87).

coinage was then used partially to justify an exploitative level of taxation on farmers and landholders that de-incentivized their remaining in the countryside. Moreover, the small denominations of that same coinage, and “on which the most basic of day-to-day transactions depended, began to disappear in the West from the start of the fifth century” (78). Rulers shied away from minting new coinage, and the desire on the part of “Western elites” for luxury goods from the East means “there is likely to have been a marked tendency for the remaining stock of gold coinage in circulation in the West to drain eastwards” (78). This, in turn, led to the push for wealthy city-dwellers to leave urban areas as they lacked the coins to take part in exchanges (77).

Despite the obvious strain exerted historically on Roman farmers, Goethe begins the poem with the sounds of the “muntre Geschrei” from harvesters on their way home. Their mirth is another product of the harvest, like the wheat they carry with them “nach Hause zurück, / Weit hinweg” (ll. 2-3). Note the enjambment that visually emphasizes the distance of their journey. Although the Romans outside Goethe’s window no longer devote their festivities to Ceres, their jubilation is a further instantiation of “jen[e] mystischen Feier” (l. 9). Some might say the entire economy rests on the cyclical pattern of Demeter’s grief: “the cycles of circulation are determined by the yearly occurrence of the harvests” (Foucault 185). Her grief, and the return of her daughter, may repeat the same themes, but each loss is new in its sting, and each return novel in its joy. But in Goethe’s version, there is only this cyclicity; the poem begins *in media res*. These opening lines cut us from history quite literally, and also from the labor portion of the cycle.

The poetic empire Goethe cultivates here is one of private sexual experimentation: “Laß uns beide das Fest im stillen freudig begehen! / Sind zwei liebende doch sich ein versammeltes Volk” (ll. 7-8).⁸⁴ The persona and his lover are allowed to cut themselves off from the celebrations as well as trials of the farming classes. In this private space, Goethe explains the connection between their private acts and the rituals associated with the harvest. (What is also intriguing in the framing of the poem is its quasi-dialogic unfolding. He poses four rhetorical questions ostensibly directed at the beloved, but which in fact perpetuate his own status as the font of Roman wisdom—not so dissimilar from his positioning of himself as a merchant in the commentary to *West-Östlicher Divan*. So much for his dismissal of dialogic poetics from the Persian canon!). The connection, though not made explicit, seems to hinge on the fact that Ceres, that arbiter of harvest and circulation, breaks the faith that farmers have invested in her. The myth of Ceres that Goethe draws on is not the popular story of her bereavement; rather, it is Ovid’s account of Ceres’ affair in the tenth elegy of *Amores III*. “Keine Feste sind mehr der großen Göttin gewidmet,” the persona claims, but he goes on to explain the origins of the “mystischen Feier” that had once been directed at her.

In the classical account, Ceres had dared to indulge in an affair with a mortal and was so consumed by passion that “die übrige Welt verschmachtete” (l.29). As a result, she broke the faith that farmers invest in her abundance. Their *Pfand*, the work devoted to tilling the land, is met with barrenness rather than harvest. Goethe and the beloved, however, are removed from that cyclicity by repeating Ceres’ sexual acts in *private*. It is a repetition based in the beloved’s being taken out of circulation, literally. Unlike

⁸⁴ See Ter Horst’s remark that this moment alludes to the gospel of Matthew (409).

Ceres, the beloved has the good sense to remove herself from public sexual display. But what role does that put the beloved in, if she is in fact repeating—or *Nachbilden*—the choices of Ceres? What kind of faith has been placed in her as opposed to the faith placed in Ceres?

It is hard to say, as this very comparison is rooted in a poem that excludes any input from the beloved. Interestingly, Goethe gestures toward dialogue while simultaneously drawing attention to the fact that there is no dialogue. Overall, the poem gestures towards but also occludes the economic contexts that inform the sexual judgment being made. I say “occlude” because the persona ends by declaring that their relationship will not have the same effect that Ceres’ had—a movement that, of course, also draws attention back to that scene of agricultural devastation. Roman history is set aside in order to place the emphasis on myth-making and ritualizing; on poetic prowess and sexual freedom.

West-Östlicher Divan suppresses the indebtedness of German-language poetics to Persian-language poetry, with Goethe exempting himself from the charge of bland repetition. The Twelfth Elegy transforms what was historically a growing material indebtedness to the East into a blend of myths surrounding Demeter’s sexuality and fertility. *West-Östlicher Divan* minted its own coinage while discussing faith-based stones; *Römische Elegien* neglects coinage and hones in on faith, myth, and ritual. Roman history is something kept just outside of Goethe’s room; one can hear the cries of the *Schnitter*, but their festivities are nothing more than remnants of a lost, yet lingering, time. But in both volumes, a strong connection is made between history, poetics, and nation.

One elegy in particular speaks to the significance of sexuality to the operation of Goethe's empire. The Fifth Elegy stages a fascinating economic interplay between time spent in poetic labor and time spent in sexual experimentation. The poem features several moments of exchange, balancing, and compensation. Proceeding somewhat chronologically from the material already discussed in the first two elegies, the Fifth Elegy expands on the conditions in which the persona finds himself in Rome. Days are spent researching the literatures of his predecessors, and nights spent in the loving embrace of his *inamorata*. This latter pursuit, too, he describes as a type of business or occupation ("hält Amor mich anders beschäftigt"). This euphemism not only thinly disguises the sexual activity he describes, but prompts the question of why this pursuit is rendered in terms of occupation or even work. And then he proceeds with a series of equations. "Werd ich auch halb nur belehrt, bin ich doch doppelt beglückt" (l. 6). As a result, he continues, he also learns about the aesthetic, specifically how to appreciate Roman statues. Setting aside for a moment the troubling nature of his comparison between the female subject and an inert statue, it is worth noting that Goethe describes this learning process through synesthetic images that again create the sensation of being compensated or balanced out. "Ich denk und vergleiche," he writes, drawing direct attention to the comparative nature of his study, "Sehe mit fühlendem Aug, fühle mit sehender Hand" (ll. 9-10). Again, too, these synesthetic images are strung together in the nearly palindromic order that is used in the First Elegy, "Wäre die Welt nicht die Welt, wäre denn Rom auch nicht Rom" (l. 14). Perhaps this chiasmic structure is again a gesture of equatability, similar to moments from *Segenspfänder*.

These images reveal the permeation of economic language into even that most (supposedly) private domain, the sexual behavior of the poetic subject. Engagements and activities are thought of in terms of balancing and credit. If time for poetic research is lost, it is made up for in the doubled pleasure of energizing sexual behavior. This dynamic becomes even clearer when he describes his allocation of time in the following equation: “Raubt die Liebste denn gleich mir einige Stunden des Tages, / Gibt sie Stunden der Nacht mir zur Entschädigung hin” (ll. 11-12). *Entschädigung* is a striking word in its undeniably economic-influenced register. Hence, the economic exchange is viewed not in terms of reciprocity between partners, but in terms of equitable division of the poetic subject’s time: namely, between literary research and sexual intercourse. In the remains of the Roman Empire, what sustains the poetic subject in his sense of protection and well-being is this equal treatment of literature and sexuality.

The repeated use of passive constructions such as “Wird doch nicht immer geküßt, es wird vernünftig gesprochen” detract from the interpersonal engagement of the behavior described and instead create a vague scene of disaffection (l. 14). The themes decried by contemporaries as wanton and lewd in fact construe an oddly puritanical, or at least, not exactly pleasure-based, interaction.⁸⁵ The hedonism one might have expected on the basis of contemporaneous reviews is replaced by an understated and apparently frugal sensibility. And yet, the relationship between literary tradition and sexual engagement is made clear in the end of the elegy. Drawing attention again to his use of classical elegiac meter, he describes counting the hexametrical feet on his beloved’s

⁸⁵ According to Regine Otto, Johann Baptist von Alxinger, for example, faulted the collection for its overtly biographical sexual honesty: “darin liegt es, daß hier nicht der Dichter, sondern der Geheime Rat, die bestimmte Person, redet und uns keine Dichtung, sondern eine wahre Geschichte scheint aufzischen zu wollen” (820).

back: “Oftmals hab ich auch schon in ihren Armen gedichtet / Und des Hexameters Maß
leise mit fingernder Hand / Ihr auf den Rücken gezählt” (ll. 15-16). Poetic energy is
innervated by these sexual experiences, and the persona is inspired to compose hexameter
while with his beloved.

As much as the collection is about sexual energy, then, it is also about the
relationships between sexuality and empire throughout history, and about the mediation
of these relationships through poetry. But poetry is also not taken as a self-explanatory
entity. Rather, Goethe draws the connection between his own work and that of his
classical predecessors. Through the image of the light—the light that had perhaps been
missing in the First Elegy, the persona fits into this lineage: “Amor schüret die Lamp’
indes und gedenkt der Zeiten, / Da er den nämlichen Dienst seines Triumvirn getan” (ll.
19-20). The triumvirate here refers to the three classical elegists, Propertius, Tibullus, and
Catullus. This is an empire in which legitimacy is attained through mastery of tradition.
Because Goethe can re-work the dactylic hexameter of classical elegies, Goethe feels
included in the lineage facilitated in the act of Amor’s lamp-lighting.

Recall, too, that it is a spark that signals Hafiz’s poetic legacy and endurance in
“Nachbildung.” An image of transience that has gone on to persist; perhaps that is why
the spark is significant to these two collections. The spark signals the possibility of
destruction or extinguishing. For Goethe, it also marks the creative potential of poetry,
which stands in contrast to the fragility of imperialist foundations.

And yet, it has been the work of subsequent scholars to parse out the contextual
relationships between empires that render such volumes possible. These relationships are
also not wholly consistent when compared against the traditions of classical Roman

literature and Islamic poet(ies). Goethe does not position himself in *Römische Elegien* as a traveling tradesperson looking to show off his wares. He directly stages his own insecurities and triumphs (in his eyes) throughout the volume in a way not apparent in *West-östlicher Divan*. But in both volumes, and this is the point I would like to stress in closing, the assumption of equitable interactions and immediate self-representation are complicated by the insistence on a poetic and nationalized self. Just as we saw in “Nachbildung” there are moments in *Römische Elegien* in which Goethe refers to his German-ness vis-à-vis his Roman lover. Dialogue as a rubric for understanding structures of authoritarianism and despotism is revealed to be tenuous even in Goethe’s claims to embody an intercultural (in *West-östlicher Divan*) or sexual (*Römische Elegien*) encounter. The emphasis is upon his own capacity for self-representation, which is enacted along established poetic lines and reliant upon certain “Western” conceptions of the self and the spirit.

MYSTERY

To return to the questions that gave rise to this analysis: questions of despotism, of poetry and nationalism, and of value and circulation, I turn to the poem “Geheimes” of *Buch der Liebe*. *West-östlicher Divan* and *Römische Elegien* also offer compelling points of comparison in their treatment of love, sexuality, and heterosexual desire. Goethe’s “appreciation” of his Persian- and Arabic-language sources has been a process of deeming himself capable of bestowing value upon these canons. “Geheimes” applies a similar logic to the monogamous desire for the female beloved:

Über meines Liebchens Äugeln
Stehn verwundert alle Leute;
Ich, der Wissende, dagegen
Weiß recht gut was das bedeute.

Denn es heißt: ich liebe diesen,
Und nicht etwa den und jenen.
Lasset nur, ihr guten Leute,
Euer Wundern, euer Sehnen!

Ja, mit ungeheuren Mächten
Blicket sie wohl in die Runde;
Doch sie sucht nur zu verkünden
Ihm die nächste süße Stunde.

The poem's persona in the first two quatrains is easy to disdain. The persona positions himself directly in the middle of the first strophe, with his knowledge not one ontic characteristic of himself, but instead his very ontological Being: "Ich, der Wissende, dagegen" (l. 3). The eponymous "geheimes" concept; the meaning behind his lovers' eyes, is his singular knowledge. The Orientalist, too, sees in the Orient a trove of information for his own use, something valuable precisely in its status as a kind of cultural wealth that can then be circulated.

In the second quatrain, the persona is gracious enough to share the meaning of his beloved's eyes for us, the ignorant: "ich liebe diesen, / Und nicht etwa den und jenen" (ll. 5-6). The woman is envisioned as singling out the persona as her true love; no longer of use to "ihr guten Leute" given her attachments, the persona advises, "Lasset nur [. . .] / Euer Wundern, euer Sehnen!" (ll. 7-8). Appropriation, it would seem, is not merely restricted to poetics, as the persona here imagines the woman's entire ability to convey meaning as somehow his own property.

But in closing, this final strophe offers a definitive shift away from the kind of essentializing, evaluative logic that has enabled the circulation of literatures in *West-Östlicher Divan*, and contributed to the economic registers of sexuality in *Römische*

Elegien. Precisely in the moment of rendering the beloved's thoughts, the persona deviates from the first-person perspective and reports from the third-person: "Doch sie sucht nur zu verkünden / Ihm die nächste süße Stunde" (ll. 11-12). Moreover, the speaker is put into a position in which he has to make clear *his* reading of this announcement, in a way that renders the similar movement of reading the "verkünd[ende]" talismans in *Segenspfänder* more explicit and self-reflexive.

Precisely this shift from a first-person perspective to a third-person one would form one step in thinking outside the Orientalist discourse that characterizes Goethe's treatment of West and East in the collection. In turning from "Ich, der Wissende" to "ihm" (note also the dative case, transforming the subject into a recipient of an action or knowledge), the subject is forced to evaluate his own positionality. I began this analysis by pointing out that "despotism" has been a charged leveled against the East by thinkers of the West; although Goethe claims elsewhere in the *Divan* "so müssen wir uns orientalisieren," there is so rarely the imperative for writers of the West to be held accountable to their own moral judgments (226). Who is the "we" who can meet the call to Orientalize themselves? Instead of treating the Orient as a mysterious, sensual landscape, perhaps writers of the West would do better to engage the sources of their own "[V]erwunder[ung]" (l. 2).⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall's translation of the Hafiz poem that Goethe adapts in "Geheimes" offers the possibility that knowledges could take on several forms. Moreover, his diction focuses not on whether or not one is "der Wissende," but rather on ways of experiencing input: "Über meines Liebchens Aeugeln / Staunen alle Unerfahne / Ich bin so wie ich erscheine, / Während sie es anders wissen" (Maier 156).

CHAPTER 4

“Alldulndend, gleich der schweigenden Mutter Erd”: Victimhood as Legacy and Prophecy in Hölderlin’s Odes

Goethe’s image of knowledge rooted in the woman’s body in “Geheimes” required a kind of self-reflexivity that had seemed absent in his treatment of difference in other portions of *West-Östlicher Divan*. In sections such as “Despotie,” Persians are taken as passive, and given over to despotism in a mutually-informing *Teufelskreis* (they are passive because they live in conditions of despotism, and they live in despotism because they are submissive).

One of the foremost contributors to the genre of the German ode, Georg Rudolf Weckherlin, writes in his “Lied” about women who waste time observing *themselves* in the mirror:

Warumb, ihr frawen und jungfrawen,
Spieget ihr euch so williglich,
Wan die sonn, ihren glantz zuschawen,
Pfleget in euch zu speigeln sich ?
 Und wan der glantz ewerer augen
 Wol kan für einen spiegel taugen?

Ihr, wahre spiegel aller ehren,
Pfleget mit durchtringendem schein
Die göter und menschen zulehren,
Wie sie sollen tugenthaft sein:
 Dan die klarheit ewerer augen
 Kan besser dan kein Spiegel taugen. ll. 1-12

Here, women looking at their own reflections are imaged as superfluous, given that their faces carry light that inspires the sun itself. Women themselves become mirrors

for “aller Ehren” that then inspire gods and humans “wie sie sollen tugenthaft sein.”

Setting aside the unsavory implications of vanity so often ascribed to women who dare to enjoy looking at themselves, the poem is compelling in that it transforms the site of self-reflection into a surface for the radiation of larger virtues. Self-reflexivity provides an occasion for a form of enlightenment.

I begin with this poem not only because it is a text by one of the first poets to compose odes in German, but also because this idealistic transformation also provides a sense of the multiple transvaluations that will occur in Hölderlin’s odes to Germany. Odes to Germany might seem like a space focused on vain self-reflection, like looking at oneself in a mirror. Yet, these odes from Hölderlin question the very conditions for this kind of self-reflection: they question the sources of light, they question the faces and their reflections in the mirror.

I begin by looking carefully at Hölderlin’s “An die Deutschen.” The poem transforms the contextual legacy of the ode as a statement of a poet on behalf of a collective, as a poem occasioned by a special event. Hölderlin situates the lyrical subject precisely “vor dem Feste,” wondering what conditions would allow one to speak on behalf of a nation. He questions the very mode of address that provides the title of the poem. I also argue that this complication rebounds upon Hölderlin’s conceptions of the lyrical subject itself, as well as its experiences. I do this by focusing on floral images and his use of the word *leiden* to describe perception. Hölderlin draws attention to the multivalent status of *leiden*: both to endure and to suffer.

This ambiguous nature of *leiden* is one way in which Hölderlin destabilizes what are taken to be active and passive states, in ways that also rebound upon discussions of

agency in Goethe and Günderröde. In the ode “Dichterberuf,” Hölderlin describes something like a poetic law that stresses receptivity and openness, and the refusal to inflict suffering. I contextualize this framing of *Gesetz* through a brief look at how secularism as a political discourse has also run the risk of ascribing passivity to political regimes that do not brand themselves as “secular.” Klopstock’s ode to freedom, “Mein Irrthum” also provides critical context for political events in the French Revolution that reveal the danger for the perpetuation of violence to arrive under the guise of something like “freedom” and revolutionary action.

Finally, I end the chapter with an analysis of “Gesang des Deutschen,” where women’s suffering plays a crucial role. Hölderlin removes the mirror from women’s faces and turns it to the supposed citizens of the nation itself: asking how the assumption of something like a representative political stance or nationalizing rhetoric runs the risk of misusing the voices of marginalized bodies. “Gesang des Deutschen” brings together the critical vocabulary from the preceding odes of the chapter, and suggests that precisely the poet who acknowledges and embraces hesitancy, errancy, and nonviolence might usher in alternative forms of community.

In the century preceding Hölderlin’s poetry, the ode had become both the foremost genre for re-awakening questions of patriotism and the *Vaterland* (indeed, that was one of the most alluring legacies of its framing through Pindar’s work, see Vietör 98). It was a critical site for the discovery of how to re-make a classical poetic mode for the “deutsch[e] Zunge,” in formal and affective terms, but also how to push the limits of that nationalized creativity (Vietör 99). Beyond questions of metrics, strophic divisions,

and linguistic patterns, there were significant religious, social, and political considerations behind choices of genre as well. The ode was a playground for newfound interest in the negotiation of ostensibly rational subjectivity: “[d]a der Mensch als Quelle göttlicher Offenbarung erscheint, gibt man sich einer eindringlichen Selbstbeobachtung hin” (110). Klopstock’s enthusiastic ode heralded this new poetic age. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that for Klopstock, these apparently bifurcated aspects of human experience and perception were in fact mutually implicated in poetic expression.

Wading into the contested territory of the ode, Hölderlin gives a singular view into the interrelationship of genre and national identity at the onset of the nineteenth century. Karl Vietör has pointed out that the ode has in some sense been marked by its usefulness to Christian dogma from its earliest appearances. The ode was at first viewed as a genre in contradistinction from Hebraic psalms of the Judaic tradition (6). Later, too, the kind of classical education that became associated with the resuscitation of forms like the odes were a way of pushing back against what Christian humanists viewed as the “arabisch gefärbten Aristotelismus” (9). The ode of German romanticism can be traced into a long history involving suspicion of Arabic or Hebraic influence.

The ode itself is a central site of this struggle between the lyrical, affective utterance of an individual and privileged soul, vs. the changing nature of religiosity, the relationship between self and faith, as well as the relationship to the classical tradition (specifically Horace).

“An die Deutschen”: Opening Remarks

Spottet nimmer des Kinds, wenn noch das alberne
Auf dem Rosse von Holz herrlich und groß sich dünkt,

O ihr Guten! auch wir sind
Thatenarm und gedankenvoll!

Aber komt, wie der Stral aus dem Gewölke komt,
Aus Gedanken vielleicht, geistig und reif die That?
Folgt die Frucht, wie des Haines
Dunklem Blatte, der stillen Schrift?

Und das Schweigen im Volk, ist es die Feier schon
Vor dem Feste? die Furcht, welche den Gott ansagt?
O dann nimmt mich, ihr Lieben!
Daß ich büße die Lästerung.

Schon zu lange, zu lang irr ich, dem Laien gleich,
In des bildenden Geists werdender Werkstatt hier,
Nur was blühet, erkenn ich,
Was er sinnet, erkenn ich nicht.

Und zu Ahnen ist süß, aber ein Leiden auch,
Und schon Jahre genug leb' ich in sterblicher
Unverständiger Liebe
Zweifelnd, immer bewegt vor ihm

Der das stetige Werk immer aus liebender
Seele näher mir bringt, lächelnd dem Sterblichen
Wo ich zage, des Lebens
Reine Tiefe zu Reife bringt.

Schöpferischer, o wann, Genius unsers Volks,
Wann erscheinst du ganz, Seele des Vaterlands
Daß ich tiefer mich beuge
Daß die leiseste Saite selbst

Mir verstumme vor dir, daß ich beschämt
Eine Blume der Nacht, himmlischer Tag, vor dir
Enden möge mit Freuden
Wenn sie alle, mit denen ich

Vormals trauerte, wenn unsere Städte nun
Hell und offen und wach, reineren Feuers voll,
Und die Berge des deutschen
Landes Berge der Musen sind,

Wie die herrlichen einst, Pindos und Helikon,
Und Parnassos, und rings unter des Vaterlands
Goldnem Himmel die freie

Klare geistige Freude glänzt.

Helle Morgen und ihr Stunden der Nacht! wie oft,
O wie heilige Richterin!
Nachwelt! Hab ich
den Wagen deines Triumphs
und die Beute gesehn,
Und die Wilden in goldenen Ketten,
Und es sangen die Priester des Friedens
dem liebenden Volk und seinem
Genius Wonnegesang! in den Hainen
des Frühlings! 5: 535-536⁸⁷

“An die Deutschen” submerges the speaker into a garden where all things are in suspense, and the possibilities of their movement captivate the senses. It is important to note that, in a broader sense, too, the poem is quite literally in a state of suspense, as it is a draft Hölderlin never fully completed. Ripening, blossoming, and blooming, things within the context of the poem are perhaps not seen so much as felt, sensed, or anticipated: “Nur was blühet, erkenn’ ich” intones the subject (ln. 14). As if in a dream, objects and materials seem less significant in their literality than in the deeply-held associations they arouse. For this reason, too, the poem seems a record of a submersion. Just as the petals of a bud tempt one to find the innermost center, the landscape of the poem refers often to complex processes and unfoldings. As Vietör has noted, at their best, Hölderlin’s odes are far less explicitly descriptive than they are testimony to the experiencing of, or longing for, myth.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ This poem and all subsequent poetry from Hölderlin are quoted from the *Frankfurter Ausgabe*, hereafter abbreviated with volume number and page number.

⁸⁸ He writes of Hölderlin’s “Dem Sonnengott”: “Hölderlin nicht seine Stimmung angesichts des Sonnenunterganges geben will als eine unendlich verschwimmende, unbestimmte Empfindung; sondern ihn als einen Mythos erlebt” (158).

This characteristic of his writing is precisely why I have chosen his odes as I open up these questions between secularism, national identity, race, and genre in German romanticism. In this particular ode, Hölderlin is far less invested in the concrete status of beings and concepts, and far more focused upon the very process of coming into being. For all of the difficulty of Hölderlin's poetry, and particularly his odes, there is a certain clarity in their adumbration of processes and relationships among things. And it is in the interstices of concepts such as law, freedom, and victory that I believe fruitful insight into the relationships between aesthetics and politics emerge.

FORMS OF ADDRESS

One of the major aspects of the poem, and of each of the odes to come, is the various adumbrations of address that shape the poem. The ode itself, as a lyrical genre, has become associated with a kind of address. It also implies an occasion which would require the poet to speak on behalf of a larger collective, being the form most paradigmatically associated with "public utterance on state occasions" (*Princeton Encyclopedia* 971). This framing is often reflected in an ode's title. Hölderlin follows this pattern, directing his ode "An die Deutschen." What were brief self-insertions in *West-Östlicher Divan* become scenes of unfolding the various ways in which a nation imagines itself.

But what exactly is being directed towards the Germans, who is bestowing it, and who, indeed, are the Germans at all? This formulation differs from the texts I have previously examined, in that Hölderlin enmeshes his lyrical subject within a larger collective which supposedly shares the subject's identity. It is no longer a question of the

subject representing difference, but rather the subject representing the subject's larger network.

These are the central questions I will explore in analyzing this poem. Moreover, they are questions that involve key terms such as shame and atonement. As the poem itself rejects linearity, these senses will sometimes fade back into themselves and into each other. For the sake of some degree of clarity, I treat them separately to the best of my ability. As I have just noted of Vietör's assessments, Hölderlin's odes revel in subverting stasis—he is not so much defining *who* Germans might be, but taking into question the processes that go on to constitute the identity mentioned in the title. The poem submerges us into some form of imagined German collective subjectivity.

In focusing on his odes that specifically apostrophize Germans, I still seek to acknowledge that Hölderlin's work and central terms and themes resist facile one-to-one correspondences. As Kristina Mendicino cautions, Hölderlin's work is populated by moments in which "language is indicated in an irreducible plurality that exceeds whatever it may convey in any one tongue, including the apparent limits of a single national language" (5). Even when calling upon something like a collective German identity, Hölderlin draws upon fundamental questions of relationships between poet and society, laws and freedom, and thought and action that, inevitably, end up clouding any attempt at a singular understanding of a German poetic tradition or a Christian poetic tradition (through which framework he is often analyzed).

I. IMPERATIVE

In the first line, Germans are admonished for mocking the child on his wooden horse, who thinks his deeds impressive and his stature imposing. This initial imperative

creates some distance between the lyrical subject and the eponymous Germans, but the subject also includes himself in the admonishing through the use of the first-person plural: “auch *wir* sind / Thatenarm und gedankenvoll” (ll. 3-4, emphasis mine). In beginning the poem with a call to meaningful action, Hölderlin seems to tie the ode to Pindar’s precedents, whose *Victory Odes* often thematize questions of justifiable pride and envy. The opening of “An die Deutschen,” however, does not make clear what sort of test is at hand. Instead, the strophe revolves around an analogy between childish pride and collective responsibility. It suggests a temperance of pride rather than a blossoming manifestation of it. The image makes clear that there is something significant to the disparity between being empty in deeds yet full of thoughts, but does not necessarily ascribe a value judgment to emptiness and fullness.

Moreover, in beginning a poem, specifically an ode, with an imperative, Hölderlin draws attention to the potential for a power dynamic in situations that call upon one to speak on behalf of a collective. The very word *imperative* is related to *imperium*, Latin for a command (*Oxford English Dictionary*). But rather than acting on this stance of power, which is buttressed also by the form of the ode, Hölderlin goes on to call into question the very ability of his poetic voice to be differentiated from the collective he represents.

Although the speaker suggests that action is necessary, the very nature of that action is called into question. How to overcome such inactivity? The next strophe offers an attempt at explanation: perhaps actions proceed from words like a beam out of a cloud; or perhaps [vielleicht] fruit follows from the silent scripts like the dark leaf of a branch?

Aber komt, wie der Stral aus dem Gewölke komt,
Aus Gedanken vielleicht, geistig und reif die That?
Folgt die Frucht, wie des Haines
Dunklem Blatte, der stillen Schrift? ll. 4-7

The two images offered initially seem quite different from another. Gone is the child on the wooden horse, and in his stead Hölderlin offers a ray of light and a piece of fruit. Hölderlin seems to play with the poet's role in this transition from inaction to action, with the ray of light ushering in the word "vielleicht," a word acoustically proximal to *licht*, light. This gesture is perhaps a sign of the questions to come, regarding how a poet might speak on behalf of a nation.

Fruit is invoked as something reassuring in its tactile affirmation of a blooming towards *something*.⁸⁹ It is also worth noting that the image at hand carries on the preoccupation with the laurel wreath that has recurred in the work of Karoline von Günderrode and her sources. In general the strophe suggests that the poet, the one who writes the silent words, bears some responsibility in the propagation of a meaningful act. In keeping with the movement from haziness to ripeness, the major acoustic effects of the strophe round out fricatives into closed plosive sounds (*Folgt die Frucht; stillen Schrift*), which gives some sense of completion. But the poet as a figure is not introduced in the form of a poet as such (which is not the case in other major odes), rather, through the traces he or she leaves "der stillen Schrift" – a phrase rendered not in the nominative but the genitive, drawing attention again away from agents and towards relationships.

⁸⁹ The word "fruchtbar" is also significant for contemporaneous discussions of the proper use of mythology in Christian poetics. Herder, in fact, differentiates between excessive, superfluous mythologies and judicious reference from "einer neuen schöpfersichen, *fruchtbaren* und kunstvollen Hand" (emphasis mine, qtd. in Vietör 125).

II: SILENCE AND ATONEMENT

Having suggested that thoughts might give rise to action, what is one to make of the inactivity of the mouths of the German people? The next strophe begins: “Und das Schweigen im Volk, ist es die Feier schon / Vor dem Feste?” (ll. 8-9). As I have shown in the cases of Günderrode and Goethe, silence in several romantic texts is positioned to be something that should be rectified through self-representation; in both authors, inanimate tokens’ taking on speech had functioned as a model for the expectations of representation that occur in both authors—a model that also reiterates the asymmetries that can arise in theories of genre that construe experience as something readily communicable.

This strophe makes clear that Hölderlin is diverging from the expectations that are associated with the ode. He is not speaking on the occasion of a public event; rather, the strophe questions the possibility of an occasion itself as a cite of proclamation. The speaker draws a comparison between the inactivity of the prior strophe and silence, suggesting that this silence is preparation for an impending festivity of actions. This relationship between festivity and speaking introduces significant vocabulary for the rest of the ode.

The use of “Und” to connect the two strophes buttresses this apparent connection between inactivity and silence. But, the speaker also wonders, could this silence be “die Furcht, welche den Gott ansagt?” (l. 9). What is the relationship between *Frucht* und *Furcht*? Is the speaker attempting to induce Germans to some kind of action? Does the poet necessarily conquer a certain fear when speaking the ode? The issue remains unclear at least partially as a result of the grammatical construction of the questions. The subject wonders if the silence is actually the fearful reverence that, in itself, announces the arrival

of the god. This relationship is slightly different from the images of silence that have recurred in G nderode and Goethe, because there is an additional segment to the chain or garland, *Furcht*. *Furcht*, not silence, is the one imaged as eventually announcing. The *Grimms W rterbuch* defines *Furcht* as almost incapacitating, as a kind of “*Seelenregung*” (Grimm and Grimm, *Deutsches W rterbuch* 4.1A: 684, emphasis mine). It seems, then, that the poet’s return to the imperative mode signals an attempt to transform the *innerliche Furcht* into this announcement: “O dann nimm mich, ihr Lieben! / Da  ich b  e die L sterung” (ll. 10-11). On the other hand, the grammar leaves open the possibility that his sacrilege is precisely something that he alone will suffer from having rendered that interior experience outward. The difficulty in discerning the relationship between *b  en* and *Schweigen* reiterates the sense that H lderlin is calling into question the entire premise of an act of speaking on behalf.

Atoning for the sacrilege of Germans, apparently, requires facility with language and the sensitivity of spirit that are so tied to the conception of the poet. He has to be willing to face the *Furcht* for the sake of his country. In his poetry, he will atone for the sacrilege of the German people. But does the strophe actually equate this *b  en* with speaking? Does atonement have to take the form of speaking on behalf of?

This complication of the poet taking an action on behalf of Germans coincides with a literary-historical generic development involving similar questions regarding the singularity of the poet, the singularity of the German tradition, and the relationships between philosophical developments and the possibility for self-expression. All of these questions were also encapsulated in the particular significance of the ode around the mid-eighteenth century. Poetry was increasingly seen as a vehicle for subjective expression:

“[j]etzt handelte es sich um die Schöpfung neuer Kunstformen für neue Erlebnisse und Gefühle, kurz: um die persönliche Kunstlyrik” (Vietör 98). These new forms took place against a backdrop of trying to make poetic forms “German”: “Das bedeutet für die Ode: man wollte die echte Gattung der horazischen Ode in deutscher Zunge erwecken” (98). Both in conceptions of language that will later be applied to Hölderlin, as well as in the development of the ode at this specific historical moment, expression is a kind of challenge, and a test of personal ability).⁹⁰

III. RECEPTIVITY AND SUFFERING

In Georg Forster’s work on India, as I have shown in Chapter 2, receptivity is taken to be a crucial and defining characteristic of German audiences in contradistinction to other European audiences. Receptivity shapes the philosophical approach Germans supposedly bring to texts from India. In “An die Deutschen,” this receptivity is intensified into suffering. It is a crucial strophe because it draws into the open the semantic instability of *Leiden*, of *patior*, both to endure and to suffer. Hölderlin calls into question the ability to separate these two states or experiences, in keeping with his destabilization of notions of agency and passivity.

After the initial imperative and questioning of “An die Deutschen,” the next four strophes wend more in the direction of description. One implication is that the poetic subject, too, has dwelt too long in the realm of thought and conscience rather than of action. He characterizes this inactivity as a kind of “irren”: “Schon zu lange, zu lang irr

⁹⁰ Later in this analysis I will look briefly at an ode from Klopstock that seem to take the ode in other, though related, directions. Klopstock’s approach, however, seems to stress an affective reaction to language, rather than an emphasis on the beautiful burden of its inaccuracy. It should seem no surprise, though, that so much of Hölderlin’s odes will go on to conceptualize the relationship of poet, and nationalized German subject, to tradition, since the ode itself was a privileged genre for the working-through of precisely those questions. I should note also that one of the philosophers in the background of this chapter, Wolff, was credited with being the first to make philosophy “German” by writing in German.

Yet, in a way that perhaps recalls the distinction drawn between being “thatenarm” und “gedankenvoll,” the subject does not utterly castigate “irren” as the issue. *Irren* may be an inconclusive type of wandering, but it alone does not seem problematic in the texture of the poem. As Zachary Sng has pointed out, the very roots of error itself is polyvalent: “the Latin *errare* means both ‘to wander freely’ and ‘to wander from the right path’” (Sng 3). Not to mention, the speaker explicitly aligns himself with the layperson of the workshop; poetry here is not about the mastery or power of the one proclaiming, as one might have expected in an ode. Nor does it laud its dedicatee for his or her power or prestige. Rather, the ode presents the poetic space as a kind of process and construction.

In an earlier draft of the poem, this section had stressed visuality:

5: 528

This previous incarnation of the strophe emphasizes the preoccupation with perception that is more problematized in the draft at hand. Perception is given to mis-perception, and the eye can be faulty. But the later version stresses something more than vision; he stresses forms of recognition beyond the eye. Instead of the objectification that would be implied in seeing something, Hölderlin describes a process of spiritual ripening that allows things to blossom.

If this construction changes the attitude toward alterity, it also has significant repercussions for the “subject.” Indeed, the fifth strophe contains a critical re-articulation of receptivity and suffering. It is significant that this moment occurs near, yet not exactly, in the middle of the ode. The center of the ode, the supposed center of subjectivity, the articulation of self, is pushed just slightly towards the margins:

Und zu Ahnen ist süß, aber ein Leiden auch,
Und schon Jahre genug leb’ ich in sterblicher
Unverständiger Liebe
Zweifelnd, immer bewegt vor ihm

Hölderlin here draws crucial attention to the doubled meanings of “Leiden.” It is grammatically a deponent verb, at least in its Latin usage *patior*—a verb combining both active and passive resonances, either to endure or permit something, or to suffer “intransitively.” But by tying *Leiden* to *Ahnen*, Hölderlin also suggests that suffering can be active. Yet most importantly (though I hesitate to speak in terms of a hierarchizing logic), this connection between sweetness and suffering seems to blur the distinctions between the active and passive usages. In order to intuit, one must be both open in general but also open to suffering. The nature of atonement, I have already argued, is however not a process of assuring and guaranteeing speech. This *Leiden* would seem a

non-teleological kind of endurance. And indeed, the speaker goes on to describe this perceiving as ever still “zweifelnd” predicated not upon representation but upon movement: “immer bewegt vor ihm.” The line also seems to call upon the history of the ode as a specifically musical form. If there were a central message this supposedly representative nationalized subject seems to communicate “An die Deutschen,” it would appear to be the very refutation of a teleological message; what emerges instead is a reclamation of doubting, of blossoming, of processes and questions, and a distinct aversion to speaking on behalf of the German people.

The creative spirit he seems to speak of at the end of this strophe serves as a further disavowal of his ability to represent Germany. While this creative spirit is engaged in “das stetige Werk,” the subject self-professedly “zag[t],” a verb that had featured centrally in Günderröde’s “Die Malabarischen Witwen.” And yet, this very hesitance becomes its own kind of creativity, as in this moment his poetry seems to enact the very creation he describes, with the vowel and consonant sounds of “Reine Tiefe” merging into the word “Reife.”

From the spiritual depth of this silence, Hölderlin moves into the depths of night and into the hollows of valleys and crags in the German landscape.⁹¹ Suffering and atonement attain the status of glorious spectacle. Temporality itself becomes difficult to chart. German-ness is here definitively associated with a landscape that can resemble the

⁹¹ Sari Nusseibeh has recently written of the importance of landscape to poetry for Arabic language literature in a beautiful remark:

But for the desert wanderer, the poet, the solitary traveler in times past, pondering the surrounding vastness, a totally different spectacle must have appeared. How much, if at all, does what one sees by day or night, scattered in time and space, possess a single essence? How much, if at all, is one human being part of the boundless expanse? Indeed, how may an individual contemplating the stars or trudging through the scorching sands, relate her fragile existence to the sovereign majesty that governs or envelops all that surrounds her? 2

markers of antiquity. The mountains of the Germans, “die Berge des Deutschen,” should inspire the muses as once did Pindos and Helikon in Greece: “Landes Berge der Musen sind, / Wie die herrlichen einst, Pindos und Helikon” (ll. 35-37).⁹² Here Hölderlin deploys much of the vocabulary to be found in Pindar’s *Victory Odes*. The mountains have actually already been marked somehow as German in this scenario, and what the speaker desires is the transformation of these mountains into a space for the muses.⁹³ This moment is related to the trajectory of the poem. Though one of the central moments is a kind of prostration before the “Seele des Vaterlands,” we are not so much witnessing the emergence of a German identity but a submersion into its lack of definition. The lack of a linear progression between the main threads of each strophe also suggests that the attempt to understand processes relating to national identity formation will always elude easy grasp. The speaker wonders what sorts of actions and what kinds of reckoning will turn these mountains into the “Landes Berge der Musen.”

The editors to the Frankfurter Ausgabe note that earlier versions of the poem had shifted from the use of the first-person to a third-person account: “Richterin, / Wenn er ihn sah” (Text V, ll. 58-59). The later version and its emphasis upon the first-person visions of the wagon of triumph seems to suggest a greater role of the poet in the formation of these actions. The poet serves as a kind of prophet and see-er, setting the

⁹² It’s perhaps reaching too far to note the syllabic resonances between Pindos/Pindar and Helikon/Hölderlin.

⁹³ In a particularly elegant formation, Vietör describes the difference between, for example, Brentano’s and Hölderlin’s odes in a way that, I think, is also reflected in this channeling of German literary identity. He writes of their treatment of subjectivities in their odes to the sunset, “wie Hölderlin nicht seine Stimmung angesichts des Sonnenunterganges geben will als eine unendlich verschwimmende, unbestimmte Empfindung; sondern ihn als einen Mythos *erlebt*, während Brentano nur mythische Beseelungen benutzt, um eine in ihren Umrissen unbestimmbare Stimmung auszudrücken” (152, emphasis mine). In this evocation of German national identity, it does seem like we are already submerged in an experience of it and its limitations.

metric by which this German identity will be recognized through his own perception of “die Priester des Friedens” and their songs of genius (l. 47).

And yet, of course, the first half of the ode has already called into question the very notion of a representative poet. The poem draws attention to modes of address that are associated with the ode, and ultimately presents their lack of clarity. The entire ode is staged anterior to the event that would typically occasion an ode. “An die Deutschen” is an ode that refutes the major poles of the poetic form: who is the one who speaks, what is the nature of that speech, and for whom and on behalf of whom should the poet speak?

SUFFERING, LAW, AND FREEDOM

As I move into the second major section of this chapter, I turn to several of the questions that Anne Anlin Cheng initiates in *The Melancholy of Race*. I draw upon this text because it raises critical points for the articulation of subjecthood and exclusion both in the national imaginary as well as in the formation of a literary canon. Now that I have introduced “An die Deutschen,” and Hölderlin’s complication of the idea of a kind of representative oratorical mode such as the ode, I will show the consequences such a destabilization has for constructions of law and freedom.

In *The Melancholy of Race*, Cheng studies racial oppression in the United States and argues on behalf of a deeper, more attentive reading (literally) of the psychological effects of these structures. She cites the case of *Brown vs. Board of Education* as significant not only for its result, but also in the way that result was achieved: namely, the Supreme Court acknowledged the gravity of “intangible” psychological effects through studies of black children and their identification with white dolls (x).

Cheng cites this case as a means of thinking about the ongoing, constitutively melancholic process of racialization in the US, and how something like a national imaginary can integrate contradiction and error into its very texture. Cheng also shows how literary canons can speak on behalf of certain bodies while diminishing marginalized bodies because certain forms of suffering are construed as more legitimate than others. As Cheng argues, melancholia is useful as a psychoanalytic category because 1) it re-evaluates *grief* itself as a category worth investigating in the construction of race and 2) it recognizes racialization as a complex, interdigitating socio-psychological series of processes (and series meaning perhaps even contradictory and concomitant, not linear).⁹⁴ The US is a unique case because it is a country that has founded its dominant (White) imaginary on the ideals of equality, while simultaneously and consistently relying upon exploitation, subjugation, and violence in order to sustain for its material basis (10). America's democratic ideals are thus "busily" buried and cannibalized in a melancholic introjection that then works to deny the existence of its partially digested object (10). She makes the point that Freud never talks about how that object is 1) never recognized in its potential for its own subjecthood and 2) not thoroughly envisaged in terms of the resentment that it arouses in the swallowing subject. Hence, the White supremacist imaginary both disavows and relies upon the racialized object in order to sustain itself. Throughout this analysis, Cheng is careful to caution against a facile arbitration of the subject and object; rather she focuses on melancholia precisely because it can blur the boundaries between subject and interred object. The black subject in the US, she notes, is

⁹⁴ She argues against a linear notion of history specifically in racialization by looking to Joan Copjec: "history conceived linearly is truly ahistorical, while the psychoanalytic perspective teaches us to be attentive to the disjunctive and retroactive hauntedness of history—and, I might add, of the haunt[ing] of that history within the subject" (28).

both “a melancholic object and a melancholic subject, both the one lost and the one losing” (17). She thus avoids the kind of evaluation of agency and subjecthood that, as I have argued in Chapter 2, plagues certain analyses of Günderrode’s “Die Malabarischen Witwen.” One important consequence, too, Cheng argues, is that the United States has become a country “at ease with grievance but not with grief” (12).

I have just stressed that Cheng situates her analysis solely in the context of US-American racism, racialization, and racial (a)histories. But I believe her potent analysis of affect and racialization has much to offer the conceptions of suffering and endurance that resound in these works in the nineteenth century. A nationalized ideal can simultaneously proclaim and enact two mutually opposed positions and values. When one positions oneself capable of speaking on behalf of others, certain forms of suffering can be taken as truth at the expense of other, more marginalized forms of suffering. The uneasy space between receptivity and suffering can assume much danger.

The ode was one of the preliminary lyrical genres associated with the expression of the self’s subjecthood, but it was also a form that was associated with speaking on behalf of a presumed collective, whether national or more local. Cheng locates the emergence of the subject in psychoanalysis, but the history of formal categories and poetic expressivity suggest perhaps an even earlier history. I think the conceptions of the relationship between self and freedom, as well as suffering and endurance (perhaps envisaged as necessary paths to differentiated kinds of freedom, poetic or legislative or both), at work in both Klopstock and Hölderlin have complicated roots in both religious/secular as well as broader philosophical movements.

Because I am suggesting an understanding of the relationships between language, literature, and national identity and race that is embedded in tensions rather than poles, investigating the complex mechanics of subject-making and object-making in the context of Hölderlin's odes is necessary. Hölderlin's work is both invested in these interstitial spaces as well as subsumed into them by subsequent literary history. "An die Deutschen" produces significant terms for thinking through the relationship between a subject and a collective, as well as how any subject might represent the collective either through poetry or through political action.

HOW SUFFERING BECOMES LAW

"Dichterberuf"

Des Ganges Ufer hörten des Freudengotts
Triumph, als allerobernd vom Indus her
Der junge Bacchus kam mit heilgem
Weine vom Schläfe die Völker wekend.

Und du, des Tages Engel! erwekst sie nicht,
Die jetzt noch schlafen? gieb die Geseze, gieb
Uns Leben, siege, Meister, du nur
Hast der Eroberung Recht, wie Bacchus.

Nicht, was wohl sonst des Menschen Geschik und Sorg'
Im Haus und unter offenem Himmel ist,
Wenn edler, denn das Wild, der Mann sich
Wehret und nährt! denn es gilt ein anders,

Zu Sorg' und Dienst den Dichtenden anvertraut!
Der Höchste, der ists, dem wir geeignet sind
Daß näher, immerneu besungen
Ihn die befreundete Brust vernehme.

Und dennoch, o ihr Himmlischen all und all
Ihr Quellen und ihr Ufer und Hain und Höhn
Wo wunderbar zuerst, als du die
Loken ergriffen, und unvergeßlich

Der unverhoffte Genius über uns

Der schöpferische, göttliche kam, daß stumm
Der Sinn uns ward und, wie vom
Strale gerührt das Gebein erbebte,

Ihr ruhelosen Thaten in weiter Welt!
Ihr Schicksallstag', ihr reißenden, wenn der Gott
Stillsinnend lenkt, wohin zorntrunken
Ihn die gigantischen Rossen bringen,

Euch sollten wir verschweigen, und wenn in uns
Vom stetigstillen Jahre der Wollaut tönt
So sollt' es klingen, gleich als hätte
Muthig und müßig ein Kind des Meisters

Geweihte, reine Saiten im Scherz gerührt?
Und darum hast du, Dichter! des Orients
Propheten und den Griechensang und
Neulich die Döner gehört, damit du

Den Geist zu Diensten brauchst, und die Gegenwart
Des Guten übereilst, in Spott, und den Albernern
Verläugnest, herzlos, und zum Spiele
Feil, wie gefangenes Wild, ihn treibest.

Bis aufgereizt vom Stachel im Grimme der
Des Ursprungs sich erinnert und ruft, daß selbst
Der Meister kommt, dann unter heißen
Todesgeschossen entseelt dich lasset.

Zu lang ist alles Göttliche dienstbar schon
Und alle Himmelskräfte verscherzt, verbraucht
Die Gütigen, zur Lust, danklos, ein
Schlaues Geschlecht und zu kennen wähnt es

Wenn ihnen der Erhabne den Aker baut
Das Tagslicht und den Donnerer, und es späht
Das Sehrohr wohl sie all und zählt und
Nennet mit Nahmen des Himmels Sterne

Der Vater aber deket mit heilger Nacht,
Damit wir bleiben mögen, die Augen zu.
Nicht liebt er Wildes! doch es zwinget
Nimmer die weite Gewalt den Himmel.

Noch ists auch gut, zu weise zu seyn. Ihn kennt
Der Dank. Doch nicht behält er es leicht allein,

Und gern gesellt, damit verstehn sie
Helfen, zu anderen sich ein Dichter.

Furchtlos bleibt aber, so er muß, der Mann
Einsam vor Gott, es schüzet die Einfalt ihn,
Und keiner Waffen brauchts und keiner
Listen, so lange, bis Gottes Fehl hilft. 5: 559-561

Similar to the beginnings of “An die Deutschen,” Hölderlin cultivates a scene in “Dichterberuf” in which the people invoked are inactive, this time to the point of sleep. The description revolves around a typically Hölderlinian participial, “Der junge Bacchus kam mit heilgem / Weine vom Schlafe die Völker wekend” (ll. 3-4). Such a construction places an emphasis, again, on *how*, or in what manner, Bacchus proceeds from the landscape (in this case “Des Ganges Ufer”). As I noted in the case of “An die Deutschen,” much rhetorical and structural flourish is devoted to the emergence, growth, and blossoming of objects and attitudes in the poem. The pattern fits the poem’s overall investment in the question of how actions come into being. It is almost as if “Dichterberuf” emerges from slumber just in time to describe the waking-up of the “Völker.” Perhaps that is the occupation of the poet itself, to awaken out of the murkiness of everyday life.⁹⁵ It is also worth noting that the central sensory mode associated with this triumphal procession is the auditory. Before any explicit claims are made on the topic, Hölderlin links the realm of song and vocality with victory and progress.

The last poem suggested a fundamental uncertainty regarding the poet’s ability to speak on behalf of the collective mentioned in its title. It also suggested that the type of

⁹⁵ Such a phenomenon might be particularly relevant for Hölderlin’s “tragic ode,” as he envisions the form as a kind of contact with the infinite that is ultimately a denial, which renders any kind of certainty of direction precarious at best (See Mendicino’s discussion of “The General Basis” in *Prophecies of Language* 163ff.).

perception the poet must engage is not objectifying, but rather permissive. It allows for entities to bloom, and it also quite literally involves a slippage between *ahnen* and *leiden*. Perceiving must flirt with the possibility of suffering in its attempt to permit and undergo.

But what if perceiving and acting end up perpetuating suffering? “Dichterberuf” seems at times to stage a kind of ethics of poetics. Crucial concepts of victory and freedom recur throughout the ode, but are perhaps not as explicit as one might have expected. “Dichterberuf” suggests that, just as the poet has a singular risk of submitting himself to language, he also, alone (*nur*), enjoys “der Eroberung Recht, wie Bacchus” (l. 8). The joyous invocation of Bacchus at the poem’s onset stands in contrast to the warning tone that is struck at the beginning of “An die Deutschen.” It is also important to note that Hölderlin describes a “right” to victory, already drawing the poem into a kind of legislative realm:

Und du, des Tages Engel! erwekst sie nicht,
Die jetzt noch schlafen? gieb die Geseze, gieb
Uns Leben, siege, Meister, du nur
Hast der Eroberung Recht, wie Bacchus. ll. 5-8

The laws he brings coincide with life itself, as the speaker asks for both, one after another. What is the relationship between forms of godliness and law-giving? It seems defined by poetry. If *only* you—“du nur”, the angel of the day, the one like Bacchus—has that right, law is itself somehow a celebration, a form of awakening, and a form of life.

It is as if humanity cannot exist without the divine influence that comes trickling down with the Ganges. What stage is humanity in if it longs for activity, action, victory, and new laws? In “Der Frieden,” the speaker incants Freedom to come “[m]it deinen ungeschriebnen Gesezen auch” (l. 30). I will show soon that Klopstock also envisions

freedom as a particular kind of lawfulness. But for now I want to hesitate at the question of how errancy, freedom, and law are related.

As I noted with regard to the prescription of action at the beginning of “An die Deutschen,” here, too, it is not a kind of victory predicated upon weaponry and violence: “Nicht, was wohl sonst des Menschen Geschik und Sorg’ / Im Haus und unter offenem Himmel ist” (ll. 9-10). Returning to his insistence upon music and sound, it’s a victory through singing every-newly in the highest embodiment of human life: “Daß näher, immerneu besungen / Ihn die befreundete Brust vernehme” (ll. 15-16). Things come more sharply into focus and comfort one with their proximity, all through the law of poetry. How do these things appear and arrive? It might feel like being submerged or pleasantly washed over, “Der unverhoffte Genius über uns / Der schöpferische, göttliche, kam, daß stumm / Der Sinn uns ward und, wie vom / Strale gerührt das Gebein erbebte, / Ihr ruhelosen Taten in weiter Welt” (ll. 21-25). Touched as if by lightning, the mode of this section is reminiscent of the question posed in “An die Deutschen,” of how thought is transformed into action. It is significant that all of these movements are also staged with regard to collectives.

Of course, Hölderlin is not the first to draw significant connections between poetry and law. One of his predecessors, Johann Christoph Gottsched, notes in his attempted history of poetic forms, *Versuch einer critischen Dichtkunst*, that Greek historians often recounted events in verse (202). Although he stresses that such verse does not count as poetry (because for him poetry is or should be a kind of imitation, rather than a mere narration of events), he includes it in his critical history of poetry: “Sachen nämlich, die wirklich geschehen sind, d.i. wahre Begebenheiten, darf man nicht

erst dichten: folglich entsteht auch aus der Beschreibung und Erzählung derselben kein Gedichte, sondern eine Historie oder Geschichte” (202). Hence, Hölderlin’s suggestion of a relationship between poetry and law is supported by a certain strand of genre theory that preceded his time.

Although I hesitate to contextualize one of Hölderlin’s odes in the terms of another one, it does seem that this and related moments in “Dichterberuf” speak to some of the ambiguities of the first-person persona’s relationship to poetic prophecy in “An die Deutschen.” In that poem, as I have already emphasized, the persona claims, “Zu ahnen ist süß, aber ein Leiden auch” (l. 17). Suffering is revealed to be one aspect of the kind of patience that necessary action (as opposed to violent action) seems to require. There is an apparent prohibition of violent action in the end of “Dichterberuf”: “Furchtlos bleibt aber, so er es muß, der Mann / Einsam vor Gott, es schüzet die Einfalt ihn, / Und keiner Waffen brauchts und keiner / Listen, so lange, bis Gottes Fehl hilft” (ll. 61-64). In return for the suspension of violence, and in recognition of the patience and suffering of slow, meaningful action, perhaps, the angel of the day grants mortals law. This is evident in the aversion to a use-value logic, in the last third of the ode: “Zu lang ist alles Göttliche dienstbar schon” (l. 45). But Hölderlin’s ode does not seem to proscribe one clear type of action explicitly, rather, he draws attention to the questions of how humans relate to their fate, and how they negotiate the relationship to God and to violence on earth.

These two odes, addressed to Germans and addressed to poets, seem interrelated in their concerns, as well as in their investment in geographies and landscapes. “An die Deutschen” ends with the question of when Germany’s valleys and mountains will attain the literary status of Greek mountain ranges where the rhapsodists once incanted.

“Dichterberuf” begins by invoking India’s Ganges, and creating a connection between it and Greek classicism (Bacchus). From purifying fires and the desire for freedom from chains at the ending of “An die Deutschen” one has come to the ecstatic new order where laws can be written anew.

Despite the fact that Hölderlin is taken to usher in a new relationship to the ode in general⁹⁶ and to Christian thematics in general,⁹⁷ I would argue that the questions opened up in these odes are distinctly related to broader questions in strands of Christian theology. As I have begun to note, Leibniz, one of Klopstock’s main inspirations, had been deeply concerned with questions of suffering and faith in divine providence. Hence, even if Hölderlin is assumed to represent a secular poetics, I believe his staging of tensions and relationships between concepts that defined theological debates needs to be acknowledged and scrutinized. This transformation of the expressly theological content of the ode tradition into something more attenuated is related to aspects of the overall phenomenon of secularism.

How does Hölderlin’s attention to the multiple layers of *patior* inflect his understanding of law? Whose suffering, whose endurance is either encouraged or prohibited by law? Moreover, it is important to consider how a movement considered secular can end up perpetrating suffering. *Patior* is distinctly implicated in theoretical discussions of secularism as a distinct political doctrine separate from religiosity. As I have shown in the preceding chapter on Goethe, the charge of oriental despotism that Goethe levels relies upon the assumption that Persia is idle and *passive*. This assumption

⁹⁶ See, again, Karl Vietör’s *Geschichte der deutschen Ode*.

⁹⁷ See Priscilla A. Hayden-Roy, whose work I will discuss a bit later in this chapter, as well as David Jasper’s chapter on Hölderlin in *The Sacred and Secular Canon in Romanticism: Preserving the Sacred Truths*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999.

is even taken up in Charles Taylor's analysis of the emergence of the modern secular democratic nation-state, in contrast to which, he claims "Traditional despotisms could only ask of people that they remain passive and obey the laws" (43).

Hölderlin's interventions are critical because they draw attention to the possibilities of that which has been construed as passive to be seen as more active, but also that which has been construed as more active to be hinged upon certain notions of suffering. As Talal Asad notes in his groundbreaking study *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* the guise of secularism has largely adapted what had previously been construed as religious violence into "the violence of national and colonial wars" (Asad 7). The law, as a manifestation of the violence of the state, becomes of crucial "mediating" significance, to borrow one of Asad's key terms. In one particularly concise formulation, Asad argues: "A secular state does not guarantee toleration: it puts into play different structures of ambition and fear. The law never seeks to eliminate violence since its object is always to *regulate* violence" (8). Although a study of violence in Hölderlin's odes would also be illuminating, and although I will look at certain moments in "Dichterberuf" that touch on violence, I focus here not on the inflicting of violence but primarily upon representations of suffering.

Laws in "Dichterberuf" are a gift that connect poets, gods, and people. *Gesetz* as a concept does seem related to location, to place-ing something. Poets are, for Hölderlin, as well as for Goethe, as I have shown in the previous chapter, related to the construction and disseminations of the laws of the gods. Hölderlin describes this in the related ode, "Gesang des Deutschen": "Wo sind jetzt Dichter, denen der Gott es gab, / Wie unsern Alten, freudig und fromm zu seyn, / Wo Weise, wie die unsre sind?" (ll. 45-47). This

relationship, staged in Hölderlin's odes, may appear poetically unique, but is deeply embedded in aesthetic, theological, philosophical, and political debates of the time period.⁹⁸

In the previous chapter, I argued that Goethe's elision of poetic forms with structural despotism relies upon an Othering of Persia, the Orient, and Islam through conceptions of texts, repetition, innovation, and originality. Hölderlin's odes crucially plumb the meanings and meaning-making of action, law, justice, poetry, godliness, and fate at their core. But it is also important to look at the network in which these odes themselves emerge, which has held central ideological weight in the determinations of institutions of knowledge as well as the imbrications of these knowledges within Orientalism, nationalism, and racism. The ode as a genre was distinctly involved in the development of certain ways of thinking that characterized the merging of poetry with Christian elements. Later in its development, the ode became the site of important conflicts between classical mythologies and biblical content, with Vietör going so far as to call the mixing thereof a "schwerer Gewissenskonflikt" for Christian clerics (10).

In this sense, again, Hölderlin's poetics touch upon significant debates of the period in which he writes as well as those before and after him. Leibniz's philosophy and his theological excursions often involve images of sleep, darkness, awakening; of motion

⁹⁸ Although such an exploration exceeds the limits of the present investigation, future scholars might do well to explore the relationships between German ideations of Islam and how these encounters (or imagined encounters) inflected conceptions of reason. Sari Nusseibeh claims that Islam stopped systematically analyzing the role of reason in religion somewhere around the 16th century. What then, did the articulations of a supposed "conformity of faith with religion" in European and German Christian discourses (thinking here particularly of Leibniz) bring to bear on the world? Leibniz goes so far as to isolate Christianity as singularly endowed with a heritage predicated upon reason: "For reason, far from being contrary to Christianity, serves as a foundation for this religion, and will bring about its acceptance by those who can achieve the examination of it" (*Theodicy* 102). Has not the illusion of the *unique* compatibility of faith with reason in Christianity merely deepened existing rifts and hierarchies that continue to inflect all regions of socio-political life across the globe?

and movement invoked in order to defend the concept of a benevolent monotheistic god worthy of both fear *and* love.⁹⁹ In fact, progression and movement, so much of the focus of Hölderlin's writings and grammatical constructions, is one of Leibniz's key modes of justifying human fallibility. Leibniz argues that humans will sin, but what matters is their constant striving and receptivity to realization:

I see a tower which from a distance appears round although it is square.
The thought that the tower is what it appears to be flows naturally from
that which I see; and when I dwell on this thought it is an affirmation, it is
a false judgment; but if I pursue the examination, if some reflexion causes
me to perceive that appearances deceive me, lo and behold, I abandon my
error. To abide in a certain place, or not to go further, not to espy some
landmark, these are privations. 142

What matters in this case is not the facticity of the object of perception, but rather the continual striving towards reflection. Hölderlin's "Dichterberuf" asserts, "Noch ists auch gut, zu weise zu seyn. Ihn kennt / Der Dank" (ll. 56-7). For Hölderlin, all his emphasis on action and inaction seems not to proscribe one or the other, but rather to show how the very grasping towards action can be compatible with patience (a patience that could be taken in a religious direction, as in Leibniz's work). Hölderlin focuses in on this moment of confusion, the moment roundness and square merge, when "Der schöpferische, göttliche kam, daß stumm / Der Sinn uns ward" (ll. 22-23). His poetry is contentedly in movement, suspended not between goals or realizations, but at the mercy of tension in and of itself. Recall, also, that a critical moment in "An die Deutschen" asserts the speaker's propensity for doubt: "[z]weifelnd, immer bewegt vor ihm" (l. 20). And at

⁹⁹ In a moment perhaps Goethe would enjoy, in light of his comments on Persia, Leibniz defends piety by insisting on God's essential benevolence: "Our end is to banish from men the false ideas that represent God to them as an absolute prince employing a despotic power, unfitted to be loved and unworthy of being loved" (127). Defending Christian monotheism takes the recognizable form of defending against perceived despotism. In Leibniz, too, this defense will be embroiled in fear of Islam.

times, as I have shown, this suspension is imaged as implicated in suffering and sacrifice. It is also invested in that moment when error is still possible, and what might emerge out of that errancy.

Finally, too, the ode ends with a notion of temperance and precisely the avoidance of violence through the kind of law that Bacchus would bring:

Furchtlos bleibt aber, so er muß, der Mann
Einsam vor Gott, es schüzet die Einfalt ihn,
Und keiner Waffen brauchts und keiner
Listen, so lange, bis Gottes Fehl hilft.

It is not a law that seeks to regulate violence; rather, protection is guaranteed through the avoidance of weaponry and violence. It is a law that seeks not to inflict suffering.

What I wish to stress in terms of Hölderlin's odes so far is that, despite the fact that so many of his questions are bound up in questions that were being asked of Christianity and German national identity, I do not believe he posed definitive answers to the relationships between law and nation. In the odes "An die Deutschen" and "Dichterberuf," Hölderlin seems far more invested in the intervening spaces and ambiguities, in ways that might prove productive for interlinking disparate traditions, beliefs, and ways of living. While Leibniz insists that Christianity has a purchase on reason, Hölderlin's poetics, and particularly his German odes, revel in the ambiguity before precedence and hierarchy take over.

ERROR, LOVE, AND LAWLESSNESS

Building off of scholarship that shows Hölderlin's relationship to Klopstock before him, I want to examine how Klopstock's configurations of law and poetics are also taken up in Hölderlin's odes. Perhaps the poeticization of "Freiheit," "Eroberung,"

and “Gesetz” in both poets do in fact provide a bridge between the philosophical questions circulating in Leibniz (and which I predominantly associate with Hölderlin and his subsequent reception), as well as the sociopolitical laws and freedoms at the institutional and governmental levels. Most importantly, Klopstock’s “Mein Irrthum” stages the danger of the violent deeds that can result from those who claim to speak on behalf of all; how these violent deeds can be presented as something like a secular turn when in fact they perpetuate the violence of before. If the alternative to violent passion is something like passivity (which had been negatively evaluated in Goethe’s Orientalist characterizations of Persian poetics), it seems that for Klopstock and Hölderlin that passivity might be the answer.

In drawing attention to Hölderlin’s relationship to Klopstock in exploring these dynamics, I am indebted to Priscilla A. Hayden-Roy’s *‘A Foretaste of Heaven’: Friedrich Hölderlin in the Context of Württemberg Pietism*. Hayden-Roy argues against simplistic attributions of “pietist diction” as well as attributions of a teleological historical trend towards secularism to Hölderlin’s corpus by complicating the very definitions of pietism and secularism that have been allowed to inform this kind of research, most notably, she claims, in the case of Wilhelm Dilthey’s *Leben Schleiermachers*, where “he projects an inside/outside, or essence/non-essence opposition onto pietism: positive articles of faith, dogmas and confessions constitute ‘exoteric’ religiosity which ‘devalues life,’ while he valorizes an inward religious experience that apprehends the ‘fullness of human existence’” (7). I admire her detailed historicization of pietism in the Württemberg context and Hölderlin’s familiarity with the main texts and proponents thereof, and follow a further investigation of the secularization that is taken to be at odds

with pietist discourse. Moreover, as I have suggested, I take this interest in secularization and its complications further in the direction of its significance for national identity in terms of governance, law, and relationships between nationalized subject and other. Hayden-Roy's analysis is pertinent in its cautious and judicious reading of Hölderlin's Christian influences.

First, I will look at Klopstock's "Mein Irrthum:"¹⁰⁰

Lange hatt' ich auf sie, forschend geschaut,
Auf die redenden nicht; die Thäter! War,
Bey den Maalen der Geschichte
Wandelnd, den Franken gefolgt.

Die an Völkern du rächst, Königin rächst,
Priestern, die Menschheit, wie war's, Geschichte, voll
Von Gemälden, die der Gute,
Bleich vor Entsetzen erblickt.

Dennoch glaubt' ich, und ach Wonne war mir,
Morgenrötlicher Glanz der goldne Traum!
War ein Zauber, wie gehofter
Liebe, dem trunkenen Geist!

Freyheit, Mutter des Heils, daucht' es mich, du
Würdest Schöpferin seyn, die Glücklichen,
Die so ganz du dir erkohrest,
Umzuschaffen gesandt!

Bist du nicht Schöpferin mehr? oder sind sie
Nicht umschafbar, die du entfesseltest?
Ist ihr Herz Fels, und ihr Auge
Nacht, zu sehn, wer du bist?

Deine Seel' ist Gesetz! Aber ihr Blick
Wird des Falken, ihr Herz wird Feuerstrom;
Ha er funkelt, und es glühet;
Wenn das Ungesetz winkt.

Dieses kennen sie, dich kennen sie nicht!
Das das lieben sie! Doch dein Name tönt.
Wenn die Guten das verruchte

¹⁰⁰ This citation is from the *Hamburger Klopstock-Ausgabe*.

Schwert trifft: schallt es von dir!

Freyheit, Mutter des Heils, nanten sie dich
Nicht selbst da noch, als nun Erobrungskrieg,
Mit dem Bruche des gegebenen
Edlen Wortes, begann?

Ach, des goldenen Traums Wonn' ist dahin,
Mich umschwebt nicht mehr sein Morgenglanz,
Und ein Kummer, wie verschmähter
Liebe, kümmert mein Herz.

Müde labet wohl auch Schatten am Weg'
In der Öde, der weit umher sich krümt;
So hat jüngst mich die erhabne
Männin, Kordä gelabt.

Richter schändeten sich, sprachen es los
's Ungeheuer: sie sprach nicht los, und that,
Was mit Glut einst auf der Wange,
Thränen, der Enkel erzählt. II: 486-487

Klopstock's "Mein Irrthum," like Hölderlin's "An die Deutschen," begins with a distinction between the active and the inert. "Lange hatt' ich auf sie, forschend geschaut, / Auf die redenden nicht; die Thäter!" (ll. 1-2). He goes on to set somewhat of a gruesome scene of revenge, lightened only by the apostrophic invocation in the third and fourth strophes of "Freyheit, Mutter des Heils" (l. 13). Already, the issue of how action should unfold, and the relationship between activity and nation-building come into focus.

Freedom is imaged as a creator in her own right—a compelling descriptor, as one could perhaps also imagine freedom being envisioned not as *creative* in and of itself but as merely releasing.¹⁰¹ According to the speaker, freedom is something that can transform

¹⁰¹ In certain strains of Islamic thought, Nusseibeh points out, including *kalam*, philosophizing based on abstract concepts alone was considered useless. They rather prioritized the lived significances of a certain concept based on its related actions in the concerned society:

practitioners of *kalam* shied away from granting existential status to the referents of abstract nouns (for example, 'justice,' 'knowledge,' and 'will')—unlike the 'philosophizers' who did so gladly. Instead of constructing their theories by hypothesizing metaphysical levels of existence thought to 'house' such meanings, they

a people; it has been sent “die Glücklichen / [. . .] / umzuschaffen” (ll. 14-16).¹⁰² But in this entire set-up across the first four strophes, the individual and his reflections are foregrounded. Can the individual conceive of freedom? Is it not rather a collective endeavor? And would not that individual then be claiming to act and represent the wishes of the broader collective?

This is perhaps the essence of the eponymous error, as the speaker introduces the notion of error thus: “Bist du nicht Schöpferin mehr? Oder sind sie / Nicht umschaffbar, die du entfesseltest?” (ll. 17-18). The error is that the subject’s countrymen, *die Franken*, think freedom is violence and lawlessness, but the persona insists that the soul of freedom is actually a certain ethical law and lawfulness, but not the kinds of laws that, in Asad’s formulation, merely “regulate” rather than abjure from violence. This reading would suggest that the *Thäter* of the first line were contributing to an atmosphere of “trunkenen Geist” to which the persona had hoped freedom might have acted as a palliative (l. 12). The poem shows that error and lawlessness can become the core of a national imaginary.

As in Hölderlin and in Leibniz, one of the ode’s central tensions is that between freedom and law. In the cases of all three thinkers, freedom is not the absence of any form of constraint, rather it is a certain kind of *relationship* to constraint. In Leibniz, freedom is meaningful in the continual pursuit of goodness and divinity. God neither prevents nor induces sin, rather he *permits* evil, as Leibniz writes in Paragraph 25 of *Theodicy*:

examined usage and context; the task was to determine, say, what *being just* means in common speech. 57

¹⁰² In a sense, this description of freedom as itself creative is reminiscent of Heidegger’s description of a loss that is in itself productive: “In releasing what was previously possessed, [the calculative intellect] receives, and not as some kind of subsequent reward; rather, a mournful enduring of the necessity of renunciation and of letting go is in itself a receiving” (85).

God wills all good *in himself antecedently*, [. . .] he wills the best *consequently* as an *end*, [. . .] he wills what is indifferent, and physical evil, sometimes as a *means*, but [. . .] he will only permit moral evil as the *sine quo non* or as a hypothetical necessity which connects it with the best. Therefore the *consequent will* of God, which has sin for its object, is only *permissive*. 138

Freedom means the opportunity (and responsibility) to participate in the continual striving to extend God's goodness ("I have therefore been well pleased to point out that every purely positive or absolute reality is a perfection, and that every imperfection comes from limitation, that is, from the privative: for to limit is to withhold extension, or the more beyond" 384). In a moment Leibniz would undoubtedly appreciate, Klopstock even compares this misunderstanding of freedom to blindness: "Ist ihr Herz Fels, und ihr Auge / Nacht, zu sehn, wer du bist?" (ll. 19-20).¹⁰³ Freedom is not the absence of evil or regulation, rather it is a relationship to fate predicated on trust and cooperation, as well as a foundational moment of recognition.

I must note here that in the work of Leibniz, this prescription of a relationship to fate is envisioned in Islamophobic terms. The assumption was that reason was something alien to Islam, and so its practitioners resign themselves to their fate in a way that, according to Leibniz, masks laziness with virtue:

many will be inclined to evade the difficulty of consideration and abandon themselves to fate or to inclination, as if reason should not be employed except in easy cases. One will then all too often reason in the Turkish fashion (although this way is wrongly termed trusting in providence, a thing that in reality occurs only when one has done one's duty) and one will employ the lazy reason, derived from the idea of inevitable fate, to relieve oneself of the need to reason properly. 55

¹⁰³ As I have quoted above, Leibniz writes in the *Theodicy* that "Evil is therefore like darkness, and not only ignorance but also error and malice consist formally in a certain kind of privation" (141).

Leibniz seems wary, too, of the likelihood that such a way of thinking could overpower “most men, and even Christians” (55). I read this admission not in the sense that this tendency exceeds and defies religious (dis-)affiliations, which could be one way of reading it, but rather as a trace of Leibniz’s suspicion of Islam and its influence over otherwise “Christian” men. Although Hölderlin’s and Klopstock’s texts do not set concrete referential poles, there does seem to be an overriding suspicion of the other as an influence and as a legislator in both poets’ depictions of freedom.

Just as one must endure occasional evil in the pursuit of the good, freedom may also require sacrifices: “Wenn die Guten das verruchte / Schwert trifft: schallt es von dir!” (ll. 27-28). Forbearance and patience are posed as key to life’s struggles. There is also the expectation of errancy, framed as the poem is in terms of “Mein Irrthum.” It resonates very strongly with Leibniz’s aforementioned prognosis of mis-perceptions as one part of striving towards perfection. Hölderlin, too, had accepted the tendency towards error in “An die Deutschen,” where the persona admits, “Schon zu lange, zu lang irr ich, dem Laein gleich, / In des bildenden Geists werdender Werkstatt hier” (ll. 13-14).

Klopstock intervenes by terming this errancy a kind of unrequited love. Later, after the countrymen neglect the necessity of laws, the persona is enveloped by “ein Kummer, wie verschmähter / Liebe” (ll. 40-41). Perhaps, instead of the figurative heartbreak, the speaker laments the “Bruche des gegebenen / Edlen Wortes” (l. 37). The noble word has been broken, and it is not strictly the word of God that is supposedly brushed aside in the turn of the secular. Rather, it is the promise of the French Revolution, which ushered in a violence that purported to speak for all. The poem expresses the loss in the face of a “secular” revolution that perpetuates violence.

For the relationship between freedom and the individual to be imaged as a (failed) monogamous one, it would seem to be an isolating rather than productive approach to constructing freedom. Klopstock takes these images even further in the related poem, “Der Eroberungskrieg,” where war’s end is compared to the lover who returns from the brink of death, as well as the feeling when a mother in a plague-ridden city receives personal confirmation from her only son that he has survived.¹⁰⁴ The poetic subject centers his disappointment and errancy in having imagined that the others understand freedom as a kind of law-following. Instead, the others respond with violence and destruction: “Aber ihr Blick / Wird des Falken, ihr Herz wird Feuerstrom; / Ha er funkelt, und es glühet; / Wenn das Ungesetz winkt” (ll. 21-24). The discovery of the incapability of the others to relate to freedom in its law-providing structure feels like a romantic betrayal. In this sense, aspiring towards freedom is still a collective effort, and one with such grave consequences that it stains the relationship between the poetic self and his progeny for generations into the future.

Overall, the poem stresses the deep misgivings of assuming a necessary relationship between law and freedom. When one or a collective assumes the ability and power to speak and act on behalf of all, there is the danger that suffering will be posited as justified.

THE TRAGIC ODE

Why does the ode become the privileged genre for negotiating these questions of law, freedom, and endurance, and how does Hölderlin’s request that the poet instate new laws relate to this context of Klopstock’s odes? Rather than viewing Hölderlin as the poet

¹⁰⁴ *Hamburger Klopstock-Ausgabe* II: 488-489.

heralding a new age, I locate him within a network of authors grappling with related issues of suffering, errancy, and national identity. One might say that the poem is about the relationship between the individual, the poet, the landscape, and laws/freedom, rather than explicitly defining any of these categories as such. I am in sympathy with Mendicino's point that Hölderlin's odes require a significant re-conceptualization of how genre itself might work as a series of iterations. Although she writes specifically about the context of the *Empedocles* texts, her remarks upon the significant movements in genre theory is relevant also to Hölderlin's negotiation of the ode. She writes:

Around this time, a fixed, prescriptive "Gattungspoetik" begins to give way among major writers to a historical-philosophical investigation of aesthetics. Unprecedented even in light of his contemporaries' reconsiderations of genre, however, Hölderlin's 'tragic ode' may well designate an ode that flares up only in this singular text, with no other poetic existence. (251-2n)

This singular aspect of his odes seems related to the fundamental plurality of languages that Mendicino locates in Hölderlin's work and across works of the nineteenth century. It is an ode that defies reduction to one particular characteristic or trend. But the questions Hölderlin's odes take up are deeply embroiled within these very debates about the aesthetic histories of odes. While it is imperative to recognize each text as a particular, discrete entity, it is also important to link its particular refutation of the particular to the overall difficulty of genre (and of the ode). By looking into these interlinkings, differences between national traditions lose their essential strictness and become far more legible in their economic, gendered, and raced constructions.

What is it about "Enlightenment narratives of the origins of language" that Hölderlin would be resisting (Mendicino 2)? How are those notions of singularity related

to an assumption of Christian hegemony? And has the overall Enlightenment discourse of singularity—whether it’s regarding the origins of language or the uniqueness of Christianity—continued to influence how literature is disseminated in the German tradition?

In the sense that Hölderlin innovated within a form that was already involved in questioning the origins and uses of mythologies, he was certainly working through the same questions as his predecessors, including the odes of Klopstock. However, his tragic odes are singular in the sense that they explode the philosophical concepts in their delineations, as Klopstock had intended to circulate and question them. As I have said, it is as if we are submerged in worlds beyond delineated concepts.

AN ALL-SUFFERING NATION

“Gesang des Deutschen” heralds a very different relationship between subject and nation than that in the odes I have previously examined. The gendered dynamics that had perhaps been partially obscured in previous odes, as well as in Klopstock’s contribution, come fully to the fore.

*Vis consili expers mole ruit sua;
Vim temperatam Di quoque provehant
In majus.*

Horat.

O heilig Herz der Völker, o Vaterland!
Alldulndend, gleich der schweigenden Mutter Erd’,
Und allverkannt, wenn schon aus deiner
Tiefe die Fremden ihr Bestes haben!

Sie erndten den Gedanken, den Geist von dir,
Sie pflücken gern die Traube, doch höhnen sie,
Dich, ungestalte Rebe! daß du
Schwankend den Boden und wild umirrest.

Du Land des hohen ernsteren Genius!

Du Land der Liebe! bin ich der deine schon,
Oft zürnt' ich weinend, daß du immer
Blöde die eigene Seele läugnest.

Doch magst du manches Schöne nicht Bergen mir;
Oft stand ich überschauend das holde Grün,
Den weiten Garten hoch in deinen
Lüften auf hellem Gebirg' und sah dich.

An deinen Strömen gieng ich und dachte dich,
Indeß die Töne schüchtern die Nachtigall
Auf schwanker Weide sang, und still auf
Dämmerndem Grunde die Welle weilte.

Und an den Ufern sah ich die Städte blühn,
Die Edlen, wo der Fleiß in der Werkstatt schweigt,
Die Wissenschaft, wo deine Sonne
Milde dem Künstler zum Ernste leuchtet.

Kennst du Minervas Kinder? sie wählten sich
Den Oelbaum früh zum Lieblinge; kennst du sie?
Noch lebt, noch waltet der Athener
Seele, die sinnende, still bei Menschen,

Wenn Platons frommer Garten auch schon nicht mehr
Am alten Strome grunt und der dürftge Mann
Die Heldenasche pflügt, und scheu der
Vogel der Nacht auf der Säule trauert.

O heilger Wald! o Attika! traf Er doch
Mit seinem furchtbarn Strale dich auch, so bald,
Und eilten sie, die dich belebt, die
Flammen entbunden zum Aether über?

Doch, wie der Frühling, wandelt der Genius
Vom Land zu Land. Und wir? ist denn Einer auch
Von unsern Jünglingen, der nicht ein
Ahnden, ein Räthsel der Brust, verschwiege?

Den deutschen Frauen danket! sie haben uns
Der Götterbilder freundlichen Geist bewahrt,
Und täglich sühnt der holde klare
Friede das böse Gewirre wieder.

Wo sind jetzt Dichter, denen der Gott es gab,
Wie unsern Alten, freudig und fromm zu seyn,

Wo Weise, wie die unsre sind? die
Kalten und Kühnen, die Unbestechbarn!

Nun! sei begrüßt in deinem Adel, mein Vaterland,
Mit neuem Nahmen, reifste Frucht der Zeit!
Du letzte und du erste aller
Musen, Urania, sei begrüßt mir!

Noch säumst und schweigst du, sinnest ein freudig Werk,
Das von dir zeuge, sinnest ein neu Gebild,
Das einzig, wie du selber, das aus
Liebe geboren und gut, wie du, sei—

Wo ist dein Delos, wo dein Olympia,
Daß wir uns alle finden am höchsten Fest?—
Doch wie erräth der Sohn, was du den
Deinen, Unsterbliche, längst bereitest? 5: 632-634

First: a few remarks on the structure of the poem, which is presented as a song. Of course, as I have noted earlier, the history of the ode renders this styling hardly surprising, as it is deeply associated with hymns. I will focus in this poem on images of musicality. The *Grimms Wörterbuch* clarifies that *Gesang* signifies musicality predicated upon togetherness: “wobei *ge* ursprünglich die bedeutung ‘zusammen’ hatte, ‘stimmendes zusammensingen” (Grimm and Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* 4.1B: 3796). Hence the poem portends not only a myth of German identity, but one in which all Germans partake and for which they come together in the act of singing. This dimension will become more significant as the dominant motifs and images of the poem come into focus. The first three strophes seem to pose the question of how a poet might respond to or represent a country that actively denies itself. In this sense, it carries on the discussion of the role of the poet from “Dichterberuf.” The speaker suggests that he still accesses some of the beauty of his country, “Doch magst du manches Schöne nicht bergen mir” (l. 13). The speaker then recalls the singing of the nightingale, which calls to his mind his

home country. The poem then shifts to encompass views of the nation; including fields and shores with urban development. From that point, the ode incorporates more mythological content in its exploration of the ability of a poet to carry on piety and wisdom of the old masters: “Wo sind jetzt Dichter, denen der Gott es gab, / Wie unsern Alten, freudig und fromm zu seyn, / Wo Weise, wie die unsre sind?” (ll. 45-47). The ode ends with the suggestion that Germany is lingering and growing silent with the creation of “ein neu Gebild,” the nature of which the Son will only be able to guess (l. 54).

It is crucial to note before advancing further that the poem adapts and reworks several levels of mythologies and references; working as it does with Horace’s odes as well as Greek and Roman figures (Philomela and Minerva). Hence, any attempt at tracing core motifs or messages of the ode would need to acknowledge the multi-layered levels of reference occurring in the poem.

These three strophes also take up several shared concerns from the preceding odes of Hölderlin as well as Klopstock. The mode of address for this song does not begin with a command, but rather an invocation of the *heart* of the country. This initial image and central organ of the poem will also return in a modulated form in the third strophe, where the speaker refers to Germany as the “Land der Liebe” (l. 10). Love seems to be tied to the notions of freedom and tempering suffering that I have traced in these texts. The lyrical subject seems to care for continuing this aspect of his national belonging, but he acknowledges that there are obstacles.

One of the major obstacles seems to be the perception that the country has been plundered. Even in the second line of the ode, Germany is envisaged as “Alldulndend, gleich der schweigenden Mutter Erd.” The nature of this all-endurance is partially

clarified in the second strophe, where the subject reveals this plunder through a continuation of the fruit-related imagery that had come up in “An die Deutschen:”

Sie erndten den Gedanken, den Geist von dir,
Sie pflücken gern die Traube, doch höhnen sie,
Dich, ungestalte Rebe! daß du
Schwankend den Boden und wild umirrest.

In “An die Deutschen,” the fruit had signaled a unique image in comparison to the images of garlands and flowers in my chapters on Günderrode and Goethe. The fruit had been an image that disavowed the type of objectification and assumption of representation and giving-voice that troubles the floral language of other romantic texts. I had argued that “An die Deutschen” shows the potential for receptivity, which features so strongly in German romantic accounts of authors’ relationships to difference, to be construed as suffering. Here it seems that Hölderlin takes up this danger, with “alldulndend” becoming a key term. The fruit here is an index of the potential for exploitation, plunder, and suffering. “Irren,” too, which had previously been a kind of undefined form of opposition to immediate action in “An die Deutschen,” is here construed as a negative consequence of plunder.

But Hölderlin constructs these images perhaps precisely to carry on the questions Klopstock had posed regarding freedom, lawfulness, and suffering in “Mein Irrthum.” When a collective assumes the ability to represent and speak for all, there lies the potential for the perversion of supposedly straightforward values. Hölderlin images Germany as the site of plunder not to foster that sense of victimhood, but rather to point to the potential for a nation to conceive of injury as a justifying narrative for violence and revenge.

The nightingale's song offers one vision of what "Gesang" can achieve, and is crucially related to these questions of violence and revenge. The speaker recalls:

An deinen Strömen gieng ich und dachte dich,
Indeß die Töne schüchtern die Nachtigall
Auf schwanker Weide sang, und still auf
Dämmerndem Grunde die Welle weilte.

The replication of the w-sounds and the overall slight modulation of acoustics between *Weide*, *Welle*, and *weilte* mimics the echoes of the nightingale's call. Twilight suggests a hazy time of day, in which the piercing call resounds, though shyly [*schüchtern*]. But hovering in the background of this seemingly peaceful image are the resonances of mythology and of aesthetics in general.

Before I turn to the myth of Philomela, I should note the significance of the nightingale for German poetic history. In his *Versuch einer critischen Dichtkunst*, Gottsched identifies the bird's song as a common reason for the origin of music. Drawing on Aristotle's argument in *Poetics* that humans learn through imitation, Gottsched writes:

Einige wollen behaupten, daß die allerersten Menschen das Singen von den Vögeln gelernt haben. Es kann solches freylich wohl nicht ganz und gar geleugnet werden; vielmehr hat e seine ziemliche Wahrscheinlichkeit für sich. Leute, die im Anfange der Welt mehr in Gärten oder angenehmen Lustwäldern, als in Häusern wohnten, mußten ja täglich das Gezwitscher so vieler Vögel hören, und den vielfältigen Unterschied ihres Geschreyes wahrnehmen. Von Natur waren sie, sowohl als unsre kleinste Kinder, uns Erwachsene selbst nicht ausgenommen, zum Nachahmen geneigt: daher konnten sie leicht Lust bekommen, den Gesang desjenigen Vogels, der ihnen am besten gefallen hatte, durch ihre eigene Stimme nachzumachen.
115-116

He continues in the next section by saying that humans would have learned to sing even without the presence of birds, but he does not totally deny the influence of animals upon

human expression. Hence, Gottsched's claim suggests that humans represent through imitation; that song today can be traced to our time in nature throughout history.

But what if humans' imitation of the bird's song is based on misunderstanding? Hölderlin plays with this possibility by suppressing the name of Philomela from the poem. Although Hölderlin does not name her as he does Minerva and her owl, the nightingale and her plaintive tune on the banks cannot be dissociated from the legend of Philomela. Nor can one ignore the implication that her metamorphosis adumbrates a particular kind of revenge fantasy. Philomela is not only raped and tortured by her sister's husband, but she also loses her tongue to him. She is transformed into a nightingale, whose song constantly reminds of the violent rape that preceded her metamorphosis.

The call to revenge, to murder the son, is one of the dangers that the speaker of the poem seems to allude to, when he remarks upon Germany's quandary. If one positions oneself capable of representing a collective, and does so by drawing on narratives whose meaning one misunderstands and distorts, there is a potential for gruesome violence.

To counter this foreboding sense of violence, Hölderlin offers the epigraph from Horace's Ode III. This particular ode deals largely with questions of patriotism, and it seems fitting in multiple senses that Hölderlin refers to this classical ode in order to frame his conceptualization of the danger he sees with regard to his contemporary Germany. Ode III. 4, which is the source of his epigraph, deals with "Wisdom and Order," and particularly the hope for temperance rather than retribution. The ode also features a representation of Diana as the victim of Orion (ll. 69-72). Both odes negotiate the ethical means of addressing injustice and injury.

Another way in which Hölderlin rounds out the violence of the Philomela myth is through the presentation of Minerva, and the attendant symbol of the owl, “der / Vogel der Nacht” who mourns on the columns (l. 32). Minerva, that goddess of war, and her associated predatory bird. But Minerva is also called upon in her capacity as the goddess of wisdom, rebounding upon the Horatian epigraph advocating “vim temparatam” (l. 6). In fact another source of the variegated levels of myth in the ode is Hölderlin’s adaptation of Horace, since much of the danger of “Gesang des Deutschen” seems to lie in the potential for a nationalized song or ethos to take inspiration in a misunderstood message, particularly one that stresses the nation as an all-suffering victim.¹⁰⁵ Perhaps the intertextuality underscores the sense that poets, in their ability to coexist with uncertainty and multiplicity, construct a different relationship to adaptation than other spheres of communication and expression.

Altogether, the poem poses multiple versions of song and justice. In one of its concluding moments, silence and hesitation are again re-evaluated as perhaps the answer to an increasingly “enlightened” nation: “Noch säumst und schweigst du, sinnest ein freudig werk” (l. 53). Finally, silence is envisioned as something other than passivity, and passivity itself is taken not as a definitive statement but rather a mode of being and coexisting, a moment of ethical care. From this silence, “ein freudig Werk / . . . / das aus / Liebe geboren und gut, wie du, sei” can take shape (ll. 53-56).

¹⁰⁵ I could cite in this reading innumerable instances of women’s experiences of wartime rape being co-opted by nationalist narratives, including in Bangladesh’s “Liberation War”, where women rape survivors were given the honorific title of “birangonas” or “brave women” to adapt this trend to a redeeming account of the formation of the nation state. See, for example Nayanika Mookherjee’s *The Spectral Wound: Sexual Violence, Public Memories, and the Bangladesh War of 1971*. Durham: Duke UP, 2015.

Hölderlin's odes seem to pose the questions: if the poet cannot speak on behalf of the nation, what recourse does he have? Or, if speaking on behalf of runs the risk of misappropriating narratives, how can something like a "Gesang des Deutschen" be said to exist? Again, though I hesitate to pose one definitive answer to such a complexly multilayered poem, one approach seems to be to return to the "Hain"—to the fruits and leaves of "An die Deutschen," where precisely tarrying, erring, and doubt were permissible, and where "[n]ur was blühet, erkenn ich" (l. 14).

Conclusion

I have focused in this chapter on the questions of how suffering gets taken up in the production of a national self-image. But the discourses of suffering and subjecthood that are taken up in the history of the ode in German romanticism are also implicated in the growing centrality of race as a nexus for the articulation of subjecthood and grievance at this particular historical moment (early nineteenth century).

So much of this chapter, and so much of the philosophical and literary background of the odes I have explored pursue the question of freedom, and how error is involved in the articulation and recognition of freedom; how freedom itself implies a certain kind of lawfulness. I have also drawn upon the work of Anne Cheng, who notes that today, modern juridical concepts of grievance and law continually fail to address psychological impacts, and grief specifically, of racialized subjects in the US. The ghost that was not a ghost, or what Toni Morrison calls, in the US-American literary context, "the ghost in the machine" is a prescient metaphor also for the types of occlusions I have attempted to hint at in this chapter ("Unspeakable" 136).

What remains to be analyzed is the use of Hölderlin's vocabulary for utterly contrasting narratives: narratives that pose as certainty, as moral righteousness, and as rigid fact. Hölderlin's odes to Germany show how even suffering is not a neutral concept—those who claim to be able to represent and speak for collectives can also foreground their experiences leaving the already marginalized even further in the margins. Through revealing the valences of language, Hölderlin's odes reveal the urgency of more critical approaches to representation, narrative, and law.

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