From Goethe to Gundolf

Essays on German Literature and Culture

Roger Paulin
There is however one particular aspect of Gundolf’s reception of the Romantics which shows him to be not so much — or not only — the recorder of their subordinate status compared with the ‘great figures’, but in a deeper way the continuer of their work and their attitudes. One is perhaps not surprised that Gundolf fails to honour August Wilhelm Schlegel’s other side, his critical achievement in the Berlin and Vienna lectures, leaving only the translator of Shakespeare. His view of Tieck, too, although he scrupulously discusses nearly all the many facets of that writer’s long and many-sided career, is more concerned with showing Tieck’s importance than his intrinsic quality;\(^{40}\) that is, his significance as the great initiator of so much in subsequent fiction, drama and poetry, the butterfly drinking from every flower, bewitched by every tradition. It is true that so much of Tieck did, as it were, slip into the mainstream of German literary and intellectual culture without its originator being recognizable in the end product: the European and American tale of terror, the ‘Gesamtkunstwerk’ of Wagnerian provenance, the vision of the Renaissance later seen by Burckhardt or Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, the discursive, conversational mode of fiction perfected by Theodor Fontane, the celebration of the ‘great’ figures of national poetry, Dante, Shakespeare, Miguel de Cervantes, Luís de Camões, Goethe. Some of these Gundolf found congenial, many distinctly not. Thus it may be that Gundolf, himself in thrall to that ‘Verdichtung des Weltgeschichtlichen in den Heroen’,\(^{41}\) while recognizing Hegel’s or Carlyle’s, Burckhardt’s or Nietzsche’s role in isolating and celebrating greatness, chose to overlook that the Romantics themselves began this process — in other terms and for other purposes — with their establishment of a canon of Romantic poetry enshrined in names like Dante, Shakespeare or Cervantes (the trinity of the Schlegels’ Athenaeum), with Goethe only, never Schiller, as the modern embodiment of the rebirth of the universal poetic spirit. Indeed this opening up of the national literature to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance — the Romantic — may rightly be seen as the real lasting achievement of the Schlegel brothers. It explains why so much of their endeavour is directed towards the figures of Goethe and


\(^{41}\) ‘Concentration of world history in heroes’.
Shakespeare, why, in Tieck’s case, these two became a preoccupation and an obsession.

Bardolatry one can certainly hold against Tieck;\(^{42}\) Goetheolatry, certainly in later life, rather less so. Gundolf places both on the altar of his idolatry. What is more, he adduces one in defence of the other. For it is the Goethe of *Shakespeare und kein Ende!* that Gundolf invokes in both of his works on Shakespeare, in order to justify the somewhat shaky thesis that first Herder and then Goethe had established Shakespeare as something indivisible from ‘deutscher Geist’. Shakespeare is thus not essentially of the stage, is ‘wahrer Sinn’ as opposed to mere ‘Handlung’.\(^{43}\) This enables Gundolf to play down the theatrical, rhetorical tradition represented by Schiller\(^ {44}\) and later by Grillparzer whom he condemns on account of his very theatricality.\(^ {45}\) It affords a convenient side-swipe against the ‘Synthetiker’ Hugo von Hofmannsthal.\(^ {46}\) This view of Shakespeare would not necessarily separate him from Schlegel, whose notion of the stage has less to do with theatre than with national character expressed in dramatic form. It would however go against everything that Tieck stood for. In several other significant ways, Gundolf stood in agreement or coincidence with much of what is representative of both Schlegel and Tieck as Shakespeare scholars and critics.\(^ {47}\) First: his purely literary knowledge of English (plus a dislike of the nation itself)\(^ {48}\) which made him choose the Romantic-Classical, ‘Goethean’ Schlegel translation as the model for his own version of the Shakespeare text\(^ {49}\) and to disregard or disdain any subsequent attempts to render Shakespeare into German. Second: the open disregard for source material and philological apparatus (although statements in letters make it quite clear that he


\(^{44}\) Gundolf, *Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist*, 187f.

\(^{45}\) *Beiträge*, 349.

\(^{46}\) Ibid., 134.

\(^{47}\) The main points set out by Mason, ‘Gundolf und Shakespeare’, without parallels being drawn.

\(^{48}\) George-Gundolf, *Briefwechsel*, 259.

did use them), notably those of English provenance. Like Schlegel’s Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur/Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature of 1809–11, Gundolf’s two-volume Shakespeare. Sein Wesen und Werk/Shakespeare. His Life and Work of 1928 rises up seemingly from the pure source of the Bard himself, innocent of the footnote or the merely learned aside. Indeed, one might say that this discreet covering of tracks is one of the sources of fascination for the reader of any of Gundolf’s works and a compelling source of authority. (It is, in fairness, worth remembering that nineteenth century commentators also do this, the much-despised Georg Gottfried Gervinus and the more respected Otto Ludwig.)

Third: Gundolf’s interest in character rather than in dramatic action is central to Schlegel’s approach to Shakespeare, but also indicates how closely he, like Samuel Taylor Coleridge at the same time, sees the plays in terms of dominating, often eponymous, figures.

There are indications that Gundolf occasionally repeats or continues the particular emphases of his Romantic predecessors. Take Lady Macbeth, one of Tieck’s more daring, even outrageous, attempts to break with traditional characterization in Shakespeare, and in this case, with Schiller’s, which was to postulate a more female, femininely tender, Lady Macbeth. For Gundolf, too, she is ‘kein selbstisches Mannweib’, but ‘die schmiegsmas kluge und starke Gefährtin’ with ‘geselliges Weibstum’, ‘Hausfrau und Schaffnerin’, ‘höfliche, umsichtige, ja bezaubernde Wirtin’, ‘die Berechnende’ as opposed to ‘der Besessene’ who is her husband. Take Falstaff. Like Schlegel, Gundolf, while fascinated by the breath-taking effrontery of this character and the sheer impudence of his wit, does not overlook that he is underneath it all ‘alt und dabey lüstern und liederlich’ (Schlegel), ‘ein saftiger Lump’ (Gundolf). Or, turning this time away from character to action, take A Midsummer Night’s Dream.

---

50 Cf. George-Gundolf, Briefwechsel, 184, 191, 275.
51 Gundolf, Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist, 353.
52 Wolskehl-Gundolf, Briefwechsel, I, 86.
Both Schlegel and Gundolf draw especial attention to the different levels of action — the wedding of Theseus, the quarrel between Oberon and Titania, the two pairs of lovers, and the ‘rude mechanicals’ and how they form part of one indivisible whole: ‘so leicht und glücklich verflochten, daß sie durchaus zu einander zu gehören scheinen, um ein Ganzes zu bilden’ (Schlegel),\(^{56}\) ‘ein rhythmisch ausgewogenes Zusammen, Gegeneinander und Durcheinander’ (Gundolf).\(^{57}\) I draw particular attention to these three examples, which are not randomly chosen: they are those on which Eudo Mason dwells in his article ‘Gundolf und Shakespeare’ as instances of Gundolf’s perception and sensitivity as a Shakespeare critic.\(^{58}\) For me, they show in addition a remarkable case of the persistence of Romantic approaches to Shakespeare — so very different from the technical and analytical approach of, say, Otto Ludwig, to whom Gundolf was nearer in time if not in spirit.

Even then our analogies are not exhausted. This time, Gundolf seems nearer to Tieck than to Schlegel. Take his tripartite division of Shakespeare’s life,\(^{59}\) a central part of Tieck’s fragmentary Buch über Shakespeare/Book about Shakespeare\(^{60}\) and incidentally also integral to Coleridge’s chronology of Shakespeare. Like both Tieck and Coleridge, Gundolf is once or twice only (to his credit) tempted to postulate a chronology of Shakespeare’s works different from the usual standard, in order to accommodate a seeming inconsistency or contradiction. Thus, for instance, he dates Henry V before Henry IV.\(^{61}\) But Gundolf comes closest to Tieck in his assertion of Shakespeare’s uniqueness, as the one figure bestriding all like a colossus.\(^{62}\) Tieck, who knew his Elizabethans and Jacobeans much better than Gundolf did, was of course concerned to relate every aspect of English drama between 1580 and 1615 to Shakespeare, to prove that no development came about without the Bard. It led him, on the one hand, to ludicrous extensions of

---

\(^{56}\) ‘Lightly and felicitously woven together that they seem to belong together and form a whole’. Schlegel, Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Litteratur, 325.

\(^{57}\) ‘A rhythmical balance of coherence, antagonism and confusion’. Gundolf, Shakespeare. Sein Wesen und Werk, I, 210. The same point is made by Gundolf in the discussion of most of the Comedies.


\(^{59}\) Cf. ibid., 125.

\(^{60}\) Cf. Paulin, Ludwig Tieck, 246f.

\(^{61}\) Gundolf, Shakespeare. Sein Wesen und Werk, I, 373.

\(^{62}\) As, for instance, in his assertion that Titus Andronicus contains all of Marlowe’s achievement. Ibid., I, 27.
the Shakespeare canon, a craziness of which we cannot accuse Gundolf.\textsuperscript{63} It led him also, and here we see Gundolf coming nearer to Tieck, to diminish and disparage the achievements of other Elizabethans, notably Marlowe. Both Tieck and Gundolf, in different contexts, are concerned to prove that the nobility, the magnanimity, the spiritual greatness, the heroic wilfulness, manifested in the plays are all part of Shakespeare’s own character. Tieck does this in fictive guise, in a contrast between Shakespeare’s assumed character and that of his contemporaries;\textsuperscript{64} for Gundolf, such a contrast is a postulate worthy of the ‘Allgeist’\textsuperscript{65} that is Shakespeare. Shakespeare, too, while absorbing elements of the Middle Ages or of ‘Renaissance-individualismus’\textsuperscript{66} displays these, significantly enough, only in the early stages of his career, as the author of \textit{Henry VI} or \textit{Love’s Labour’s Lost}, but not in the mature works where he is beholden to no ‘influence’ or ‘school’. Christopher Marlowe, by contrast, is ‘der eigentliche elisabethanische Renaissance-dramatiker’.\textsuperscript{67} In this, Tieck would heartily concur.

One final coincidence of ideas binds Tieck and Gundolf. Both are connoisseurs of the German drama of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Tieck its first real editor).\textsuperscript{68} Both, although separated by a span of a hundred years, are unable to appreciate the peculiar style of drama that the Jesuits, the Dutch, the German Silesians and, to some extent, Pierre Corneille brought about. Here the contrast with Shakespeare serves to do little more than cloud the issue, as in Gundolf’s short monograph on Andreas Gryphius.\textsuperscript{69} For Tieck, this might be pardonable, for Gundolf, less so. It was to be Walter Benjamin who first demonstrated convincingly that there is little to be gained by confronting the ‘great names’ of Aeschylus or Calderón or Shakespeare with Martin Opitz, Andreas Gryphius or Daniel Casper von Lohenstein. Similarly, we are bound to say that it was a pupil of Gundolf’s Heidelberg colleague Max von Waldberg, the young Richard Alewyn,\textsuperscript{70} who was to establish

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{63} Cf. Paulin, \textit{Ludwig Tieck}, 245f.
\item \textsuperscript{64} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{66} Gundolf, \textit{Shakespeare. Sein Wesen und Werk}, I, 79.
\item \textsuperscript{67} ‘The quintessential Elizabethan Renaissance dramatist’. Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{68} Cf. Tieck’s \textit{Deutsches Theater} (1817).
\item \textsuperscript{69} Gundolf, \textit{Andreas Gryphius} (Heidelberg: Winter, 1927), 20.
\end{itemize}
that tradition and study of formal devices were of greater assistance in the understanding of seventeenth-century literary texts than some amorphous notion of ‘Geist’.

I have said much of Gundolf’s limitations as a writer on German Romanticism. His writings nevertheless remain to this day eminently readable and stimulating and are part of the ‘Geistesgeschichte’ of the first decades of the twentieth century. Perhaps the time has come, nearly fifty-five years after Gundolf’s death, to view them less in terms of strict philology or academic literary criticism, but as creative insights, the product very of their own age, written not in an anxious awe of the letter or the page but with imagination and sometimes uncanny intuitive vision, conjuring up, not through factual accumulation or adherence to doctrine, some of the essential spirit of a movement: in short, as literature.
NINETEENTH CENTURY
Fig. 13 Wilhelm Müller, engraving by Johann Friedrich Schröter (c. 1830), Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wilhelm_M%C3%BCller_by_Schr%C3%B6ter.jpg, public domain.

To coincide with the two-hundredth anniversary of Wilhelm Müller’s birth in 1794, the first collected edition of his works since 1830 has been produced. This must be regarded as a literary event that will give pleasure alike to friends and lovers of ‘Die schöne Müllerin’ (‘The Fair Maid of the Mill’) or ‘Die Winterreise’ (‘The Winter Journey’) and to scholars of Romanticism and Biedermeier. Not everyone may be aware that there is an ‘Internationale Wilhelm Müller-Gesellschaft’; its support was an important factor in the production of this much-needed edition. The catalogue of an exhibition mounted in his birthplace, Dessau, marks the same event with useful documentation and fascinating pictorial material. The word ‘minor’ punctuates the whole literature on Müller,

1 This chapter was originally published in Modern Language Review, 92 (1997), 363–78.
but surely it is on this occasion not inappropriate to speak of a ‘minor’
literary sensation.

Wilhelm Müller is one of those figures in the history of German
literature who stand in the shadow of others mightier than themselves.
First there is Franz Schubert. It is now surely impossible to unravel the
composer of ‘Die schöne Müllerin’ and ‘Die Winterreise’ from their
author, so much have they assumed an existence of their own. Then there
is Heinrich Heine. To many, perhaps to most, Müller appears as Heine’s
forerunner. The famous and much-quoted letter of July 1826, a little
over a year before Müller’s tragically early death, for all its deferentiality
(and its pleasure at being well reviewed by the other),⁴ places Müller in
most readers’ minds in a relationship where personal genius lies finally
with the essentially greater figure, with Müller the spur for the superior
achievement:

Ich bin groß genug, Ihnen offen zu bekennen, daß mein kleines Intermezzo-
Metrum nicht bloß zufällige Ähnlichkeit mit Ihrem gewöhnlichen
Metrum hat, sondern daß es wahrscheinlich seinen geheimsten Tonfall
Ihren Liedern verdankt, indem es die lieben Müllerschen Lieder waren,
die ich zu eben der Zeit kennen lernte, als ich das Intermezzo schrieb. Ich
habe sehr früh schon das deutsche Volkslied auf mich einwirken lassen,
späterhin, als ich in Bonn studierte, hat mir August Schlegel viel metrische
Geheimnisse aufgeschlossen, aber ich glaube erst in Ihren Liedern den
reinen Klang und die wahre Einfachheit, wonach ich immer strebte,
gefunden zu haben. Wie rein, wie klar sind Ihre Lieder und säßlich
sind es Volkslieder. In meinen Gedichten hingegen ist nur die Form
einigermaßen volkstümlich, der Inhalt gehört der konventionellen
Gesellschaft. Ja, ich bin groß genug, es sogar bestimmt zu wiederholen,
und Sie werden es mal öffentlich ausgesprochen finden, daß mir durch
die Lektüre Ihrer 77 Gedichte zuerst klar geworden, wie man aus den
alten, vorhandenen Volksliedformen neue Formen bilden kann, die
ebenfalls volkstümlich sind, ohne daß man nöthig hat, die alten
Sprachholperigkeiten und Unbeholfenheiten nachzuahmen. Im zweiten
Theile Ihrer Gedichte fand ich die Form noch reiner, noch durchsichtig
klarer — doch, was spreche ich viel von Formwesen, es drängt mich
mehr, Ihnen zu sagen, daß ich keinen Liederdichter außer Goethe so sehr
liebe wie Sie.⁵

---

⁴ ‘Über H. Heine’ (1823), in Wilhelm Müller, Vermischte Schriften. Herausgegeben mit
einer Biographie Müller’s begleitet von Gustav Schwab, 5 vols (Leipzig: Brockhaus,
1830), V, 440. Cited henceforth as VSchr. [BL, L, OT, Edin].

⁵ ‘I can freely admit to you that my little Intermezzo does not have a mere chance
similarity to your accustomed metre, but that it most likely owes the inner secret of
There is a double irony here (a word purposely chosen). The *Sieben und siebzig Gedichte aus den hinterlassenen Papieren eines reisenden Waldhornisten* / *Seventy-Seven Poems from the Literary Remains of a Travelling Horn Player* (the seventy-seven poems referred to), with their dedication to Ludwig Tieck, are, like all of Müller’s collections, a miscellany: naturally and pre-eminently, ‘Die schöne Müllerin’, but also ‘Wanderlieder’, ‘Reiselieder’, ‘Ländliche Lieder’, sonnets, poems to nature, to wine, to love, to friendship. The second part of the collection, which Heine in his letter claims so much to have enjoyed, contains ‘Johannes und Esther’, poems with another conventional theme, unfulfilled love, but in a context that gives the Petrarchan patterns a particular twist: boy (Christian) loves girl (Jew). It is the subject (or rather, one of them) of Müller’s later Novelle *Debora* and none the better for appearing in that collection of modish narrative clichés. Heine is prepared to be accommodating. For Müller, with consummate grace and ease, has assembled the most accessible lyrical forms and themes of the almanacs and florilegia both of the late eighteenth century and of Romanticism. With the exception of some sonnets, which Müller, like Heine, can turn as well as the next poet, these are by and large in ‘Volksliedstrophen’, but there are sections that will recall the anacreontic poetry so popular in Germany since Hagedorn and rarely exceeded in quality since his day. The esoteric, ‘difficult’, un-folk-like Romance stanzaic forms are absent from Müller’s collection, but not, as his reviews make clear, from the efforts of so many early Biedermeier poetasters. Another irony lies in the reflection that

---

its modulation to your songs, in that it was the sweet Müller songs that I became acquainted with when I wrote the Intermezzo. I have from very early on absorbed the German folksong; later, when I was a student in Bonn August Schlegel opened up a number of metrical secrets to me, but I believe it was in your songs first that I believed I had found the pure sound and the true simplicity that I had always sought after. How pure, how clear your songs are, every one of them a folksong. In my songs, by contrast, only the form is approximately folk-like, while the content belongs to conventional society. Yes, I freely repeat it again, and you will duly find it stated in public, that reading your 77 poems brought home to me how one can create new forms from the old folksongs that we have, that are just as folk-like, but without the need to imitate the old jingles and bad rhymes. In the second part of your poems I found the form even purer, of even brighter clarity — but what is all this talk of formal matters, I feel the urge to tell you that I love no song-writer, Goethe excepted, more than you’. Heinrich Heine, *Säkularausgabe. Werke. Briefwechsel. Lebenszeugnisse*, ed. by the Nationale Forschungs- und Gedenkstätten der klassischen deutschen Literatur in Weimar and the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris, 27 vols (Berlin: Akademie; Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1970–84), XX, 250.

---

6 ‘Songs of the Wayfarer’; ‘Songs of Travel’; ‘Country Songs’.
Müller himself said words similar to Heine’s about both Ludwig Uhland and Justinus Kerner, not privately but in print, in the important article in Brockhaus’s periodical *Hermes*, ‘Über die neueste lyrische Poesie der Deutschen’ (‘On the Latest Lyrical Poetry of the Germans’, 1827). Heine is thus enunciating not so much a statement of personal discipleship as a set of criteria to which nearly all the great lyrical poets of the nineteenth century subscribed. Theodor Storm, whose two anthologies of 1859 and 1870 draw generously on both these poets, articulates in his credally formulated introductions the principles that Müller and Heine had expressed before him. Yet all of them know and admit that it was Gottfried August Bürger and Goethe who first showed them the simplicity of poetic language producing the ‘Natursprache’, the ‘Urmutter aller Poesie’, that can appeal directly to the heart. It will be rhymed, readily set to music, not rhetorical (Klopstock’s and Schiller’s failing), not archaicizing, arch, or faux-naïf (the lesser Romantics’ weakness).

Goethe, whom Heine placed on a rather higher altar of his idolatry, seems to have had an off day when Müller visited him in Weimar in 1827, committing unflattering comments to Kanzler von Müller (‘eine unangenehme Personnage, sagte er, süffisant, überdies Brillen tragend, was mir das Unleidlichste ist’). Heine linked Goethe and Müller as lyric poets, but both the *Italienische Reise*/*Italian Journey* and Müller’s highly readable *Röm, Römer und Römerinnen*/Rome, Roman Men and Roman Women of 1820, largely forgotten today, are formative texts for his own Italian memoirs and point forward to Heine’s own inimitable style. The sentence from Heine’s *Reise von München nach Genua*/Journey from Munich to Genua, ‘ach, er [Müller] war ein deutscher Dichter!’ thus places him in a double relationship, as a lyrical poet in the folk mode, but also as a master of the witty and interesting travelogue.

Müller, born in 1794, was six years younger than Byron, for whose fame and reputation in Germany he did so much, and three years older than Heine, whose eloquent admissions of debt I have just quoted. These are years of brief spans of talent (like Wilhelm Hauff, 1802–27)

---

7 Wilhelm Müller, IV, 297–342.
8 ‘The language of nature’; ‘the earth-mother of all poetry’. Ibid., 299.
10 ‘Oh, he was a German poet!’. Heine, *Säkularausgabe*, VI, 55.
or genius (like Franz Schubert, 1797–1828). Whatever else Müller may have in common with Byron and Heine, arguably the two greatest masters of poetic form of their century, he shares the problem of their true place in literary history and of their subsequent reputations. But am I not setting my sights just a little too high in linking Müller with these manifestly superior names? It is a matter of degree. To deal with the last aspect first: it is understandable that Müller’s reputation, while freeing itself in the course of the century from the mild hagiography of Gustav Schwab’s introductory ‘Wilhelm Müller’s Leben’ of 1830,11 had nothing to fear from the kind of personal revelation that was to prove injurious to Byron and to some extent Heine. But in associating the three poets I am making a slightly different point. All three belong, for differing reasons, fairly and squarely in the century that gave them birth, and yet (allowing for Müller’s lesser stature) they are associated with revolutionary movements that are part of the political tissue of the nineteenth: Greek, and to some extent Italian, national determination, or the future constitution of the German nation. Müller had taken part in the Wars of Liberation in 1813–15, and there is no doubt that this experience and his subsequent association with figures like (and as unlikely as) ‘Turnvater’ Jahn or Kalckreuth senior and junior, or Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, were at least factors in his admiration for the hero of Missolonghi. The young Müller shared briefly some of the inanities of patriotic professors and firebrand students, but he did also cherish liberal ideals, especially after the clampdown of Karlsbad. His short career as a writer had to contend with censorship, known, it is true, for its severity but also its capriciousness. Generally, Müller politically played safe and sailed less close to the wind than Heine was (later) to do. The example of Béranger across the border was not encouraging, but it did not prevent Müller from writing a generous and warm-hearted defence of the man and poet, at that time in prison for his views.12 His several reviews and articles on Byron, quoting copious extracts from the man himself, sentimental, witty, but also outrageous and subversive (‘Lord Byron is perhaps the greatest and most fertile, but also the most dangerous genius of our age’),13 send

11 VSchr, I, xvii-lxiii.
12 Wilhelm Müller, IV, 151–55.
13 ‘Lord Byron is perhaps the greatest and most fertile, but also the most dangerous genius of our age’. VSchr, V, 156.
out an encoded message to his liberal-minded and educated readers arguably more effective than all the young poets who were emulating *Cain* or *Manfred*. It is a message different from Goethe’s: what the older man found fascinating was daemonic poetic genius, not a heroic death in the Morea. If Müller never created an Euphorion (or Heine’s William Ratcliff), he does deserve some credit as the man who for a short period of years kept the name of Byron fairly and squarely before the literary reading public.

There is, in a literary age so given to eclecticism, no contradiction between the folk mode and that of the ‘conventionelle Gesellschaft’. And, as both Byron and Heine demonstrate, the mastery of form is no barrier to the expression of deep feeling. At his level of achievement, Müller’s poetry reflects both these willingly borne constraints. It also, I feel, shares in the fortunes of both Byron’s and Heine’s receptions. The *oeuvre* of both these great poets survives during the latter part of the nineteenth century essentially on a reduced and narrowed base. Byron cannot easily provide a ready model for generations that produce Alfred Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, Dante Gabriel Rossetti or Algernon Charles Swinburne; Heine, so formative for Storm, has less to say to Gottfried Keller and nothing at all to Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, let alone Hugo von Hofmannsthal or Stefan George. But both have passed on enough into the life-stream of their respective national poetic traditions to ensure that they are known and read, and can be revived when times are more receptive to their particular styles. Müller at his level, is altogether more vulnerable. He survives as part of the ‘Hauschatz der deutschen Lyrik’, and as the sung text of two of Schubert’s song cycles. His complete poetry is never out of print during the nineteenth century: Gustav Schwab’s edition of 1837 is succeeded by, among others, Max Müller’s reissue of his father’s poems in 1868 and a nearly 400-page Reclam volume in 1898. But the five-volume *Vermischte Schriften* edited by the same Gustav Schwab in 1830, which are the essential monument

---

14 ‘Conventional society’.
15 ‘Treasury of German Poetry for the Home’.
to the full range of Müller’s achievement, have had to wait until 1994 for the nearest approach to a reprint. The reception of Heine’s works, by contrast, with the exception of the shameful interlude of 1933–45, is clearly and deservedly different.

My association of Byron and Heine with Müller is not intended to crank his reputation up to a level with theirs. Nor do the nearly twenty-five pages of entries in the standard bibliography, the 1905 edition of Karl Goedeke’s Gründriß, necessarily justify a major rehabilitation of all aspects of his oeuvre, although they make for interesting and salutary reading. Friedrich Sengle, for whom Müller was a significant (but not central) figure in his Biedermeier constellation, dealt with him in a few deft and masterly strokes and stressed the centrality of ‘Lieder-Müller’. The editors of the new edition also place the major (but not sole) emphasis on the song-writer and the range of his lyrical activity. My own view is that much of Müller, not just the lyrical poetry but even the less-read and less-readable output, can serve to place a period and its major figures in focus. For that reason, I now dwell a little on his short life and his circumstances.

Schwab, the dutiful chronicler of Schiller’s and Hauff’s lives, produced a short biography of Wilhelm Müller for the Vermischte Schriften, which appeared in 1830. Schwab made Müller’s personal acquaintance in the last year of his life, and this note tinges his assessment of the other poet’s work and character:

Wenn mich schon seine Lieder dem liebenswerthen Dichtergeiste recht nahe gebracht hatten, so versprach die Woche, die ich ihm ausschließend widmen durfte, mir ein langes, inniges Verhältniß mit Müller dem Menschen. Seine Gedichte ließen harmloses Wohlwollen gegen jedermann, schnelle Begeisterung für Schönes und Gutes, Talent für Geselligkeit und geistreiche Unterhaltung zum voraus ahnen. Im näheren Umgang aber entwickelte sich bei ihm auch ein Ernst der Gesinnung, ein biederer Sinn, eine sittliche Zuverlässigkeit, die, wenn man sie einmal

---

His famous son, Max Müller, in the preface to his edition for the ‘Bibliothek der Deutschen Nationalliteratur’ in 1868, could also write from the heart, and his words ‘ich habe ihn ja kaum gekannt’\(^{21}\) have a certain poignancy. But he was, or was to be, in possession of family papers that showed his father in a more human light, notably his early diaries. Max Müller, as befits the times, and, it is fair to say, his own convictions, writes more of his father’s political views and his contention with the censor than does Schwab. He is by the same token now aware that not all of his father’s oeuvre is secure. Both of these biographical sketches stress the harmony between Müller’s poetic persona and his actual character, and that is in keeping with nineteenth-century literary biography in general. Schwab’s comments are, however, telling. For there was no immediate reason why Müller, a North German, should appeal to the Swabian school of poets, to Schwab himself in particular, but also to Ludwig Uhland and Justinus Kerner. But Schwab, later mercilessly harried by Heine along with his fellow-countrymen, is making the point that the happy coexistence of simple lyricism, ‘Talent for Geselligkeit’,\(^ {22}\) and what Heine called ‘conventionnelle Gesellschaft’, was not regionally limited and that it appealed to a broad national reading public. Indeed, Heine’s style was not very much different from that favoured in Stuttgart except for its being more witty, less conventional, and, crucially, more talented. One could, after all, read Heine without approving of him. Prince Metternich read Heine’s love poetry attentively while also allowing his minions to wield the blue pencil on the political writings; he may have also enjoyed Müller’s ‘biederer Sinn’ (‘honest sense’) while

\(^{20}\) ‘If his Lieder brought this agreeable poetic personality very close to me, the week that I was to devote exclusively to him promised me a long and intimate relationship with Müller the man. His poems gave intimation of innocence, benevolence towards everyone, a quick enthusiasm for the beautiful and good, a talent for conviviality and witty conversation. But on closer acquaintance one was also made aware of a serious-mindedness, an inner worth, a sureness in moral matters, which, once one was made aware of them, gave even his lightest products a particularly charming aspect, like summer-houses built on rocks’. VSchr, I, lvi-lvii.

\(^{21}\) ‘I hardly knew him’. Gedichte (1868), xi.

\(^{22}\) ‘Talent for conviviality’.
noting his more carefully phrased subversiveness. In terms of the history of style and taste, Müller represents what he himself, talking of the ultimate model Goethe, called ‘Vieltönigkeit’.\textsuperscript{23} It is the principle of versatility and even eclecticism that can be found in nearly all the poets, great and small, in the Biedermeier period, that dominates their major publication outlet, the literary almanac, and that provides the most important factor of continuity with the century that first allowed \textit{poésies fugitives}, ‘Volkslied’ (‘folksong’), and sentimentality to coexist: the eighteenth. Thus Müller, who so admires in Schmidt von Lübeck the ‘echt deutscher Liedersänger von reiner, voller und herzlich bewegter Stimme’\textsuperscript{24} and in Kerner ‘jenes rückhaltslose Erschließen des innersten Herzens’,\textsuperscript{25} is equally at home in the poetry of wine and mild eroticism, of friendship and ‘deutscher Sang’, but he can also display an intolerance of revealed religion’s embrace of political reaction. None of these positions is incompatible with the other. They were not all handed down to the poet; some, indeed, would need the impulse of his own times for their acquisition and mastering.

Müller lived and died in Dessau, the capital and residence of Anhalt-Dessau, one of the more liberal, if patriarchal, states of the post-1815 ‘Bund’. If Dessau later gave him a professional base and enabled him to carry out a wide range of literary activities for publishers in several different centres, it was Berlin that proved in the first instance formative. Müller’s father was a master tailor, who, after a period of financial uncertainty, and a second marriage, could be called fairly well-off. It seemed reasonable and proper that his son should proceed to the liberal and enlightened ‘Hauptschule’ in the town, and Müller’s excellent knowledge of both classical and modern languages was certainly acquired there. When later giving an account of Byron’s miserable schooldays and love-hate relationship with the ancient classics, Müller might well reflect that however much Germany lacked in Byronic panache and effrontery, it certainly produced well-educated writers. Anhalt not having a university of its own, the choice for higher study fell on Berlin. Again, the contrast between Humboldt’s University of Berlin and Byron’s Trinity College,
as yet innocent of William Whewell, Julius Hare or Connop Thirlwall, cannot be stressed too much, except, of course, for the poets it brought forth. Yet for a young man of a scholarly turn of mind, it might be bliss to be alive in Berlin in 1813, in the university of Friedrich August Wolf, of Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand Solger, of August Böckh, Johann Wilhelm Süvern, Friedrich Rühs (the list could be extended). Müller’s father could finance Wilhelm’s studies, but was immediately confronted (his reaction is not recorded) with a less studious side of his son’s character. Müller, at the age of eighteen, responded to the King of Prussia’s call to arms after Napoleon’s defeat in Russia. This was easily enough done, until one considered that Anhalt-Dessau, despite the ‘Alter Dessauer’ and his role in Frederick II’s greatness, was not a Prussian fief. Clearly, local dynastic differences were not holding back the patriotic fervour of the young. From 1813 to 1815, Müller was a soldier, rising to the rank of lieutenant. This puts him in the company of those other soldier poets and painters (Joseph von Eichendorff, Max von Schenkendorf, Theodor Körner, Friedrich Rückert, Fouqué, Ferdinand Olivier, Philipp Veit, and others) whose formative experience was the Wars of Liberation. Yet Müller never wrote anything approaching ‘Der gute Kamerad’ or even ‘Lützows wilde Jagd’; we have no images of him in uniform, as in Georg Friedrich Kersting’s well-known painting of Körner and comrades. It may therefore come as a surprise to find the singer of ‘Die Winterreise’ as a young man expressing animadversions like these:

Aus Franzenschädeln trinken wir
Dort unsern deutschen Trank
Und feiern Wilhelms Siegeszier
Mit altem Bardensang.²⁹

²⁶ Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Dessau (‘the Dessauer’) was a general in Prussian service under Frederick William I and Frederick the Great.
²⁹ ‘From Frenchmen’s skulls we quaff
There our German wine
And mark Wilhelm’s victory bays
With bard-song as of yore!’. Wilhelm Müller, I, 4.
These calamitous verses are from Müller’s first collection of poetry, *Bundesblüthen* (1816). It is significant that neither Schwab nor any subsequent nineteenth-century editor, even in an age fairly flowing with patriotic gore, chose to include this early stuff. The later *Lieder der Griechen/Songs of the Greeks*, where the skulls might be Turkish and the wine Chian, would be sufficient reminder of Müller the political bard. This side of his oeuvre cannot be overlooked, and, as already stated, it is part, but part only, of his admiration for Byron and political freedom. For all that, it did mean that he had actually wielded the ‘Schwert’ while also stringing the ‘Leyer’, and that his warrior pose was marginally more convincing than had been Johann Wilhelm Ludwig Gleim’s enfeebled calls to arms under Frederick (or even the minor Romantics’ under Frederick William III).

Müller saw action at Grossgörschen and Kulm in 1813, then postings at headquarters in Prague and Brussels. In Brussels there was a shadowy love-affair with ‘Therese’, and there have been those who have wished to identify her as the Jew of ‘Johannes und Maria’ and later of *Debora*. Returning to Berlin in the autumn of 1815, he was to experience another variant of the Petrarchan cycle; meeting the young artist and bemedalled war veteran Wilhelm Hensel and entering his house circle, Müller fell in love with his sister Luise. That might be too gross an expression for this relationship; the two lovers met in a common religious inwardness: their virginal devotion was to be sustained by the suppression of the flesh and its earthly lust (‘böse Erdenlust’). Luise’s spirituality and ethereality were later to try the sexual patience of Clemens Brentano, ever ready to sublimate his baser desires in otherworldly devotion. If Müller’s diary fragments from the period reveal less self-maceration, they are documents of a young man urgently eager to be pure, patriotic and poetic. The relationship with Luise came to nothing. Yet Müller, like Heine, both knew the Petrarchan literary mode and experienced its real-life counterpart. Brooding melancholy, but also the forceful overcoming of introspection, are as much part of the tissue of his poetic cycles as they are of Heine’s *Buch der Lieder/Book of Songs*. But whereas

---

31 A reference to Körner’s collection *Leyer und Schwert/Lyre and Sword* (1814).
32 ‘Wicked earthly lust’. Wilhelm Müller, V, 55.
Heine compensates by challenging accepted norms, Müller more often than not has recourse to conviviality and friendship as the cure for Weltschmerz.\footnote{Wilhelm Müller 1794–1861. Porträtist und Maler. Werke und Dokumente. Ausstellung zum 200. Geburtstag, veranstaltet vom Mendelssohn-Archiv der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin-Preußischer Kulturbesitz 15. Dezember 1994 bis 29. Januar 1995 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1994), 23.} It was with friends, including Hensel and the young count Friedrich Kalckreuth, that the collection Bundesblüthen of 1816 came about. It displeased the Prussian censor, not for its exquisite badness, but for its possible seditiousness.\footnote{‘And thus it was yesterday evening, too, when he felt the friendly hand-clasp of the man to whom next to God and his parents, he owed the most and best, I do not mean the fleeting benefits of life, but the evergreen seed of the good and beautiful in him, however young it may be, in a word, a German heart and German taste’. Wilhelm Müller, V, 109–10.} With these particular friends it could be said that Müller had fallen socially and professionally on his feet. His rather bland portrait drawing joins the gallery of Biedermeier notables (Heine, the Mendelssohns, Brentano, Rahel Varnhagen) in Hensel’s portfolio.\footnote{Wilhelm Hensel 1794–1861. Portraitist und Maler. Werke und Dokumente. Ausstellung zum 200. Geburtstag, veranstaltet vom Mendelssohn-Archiv der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin-Preußischer Kulturbesitz 15. Dezember 1994 bis 29. Januar 1995 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1994), 23.} Kalckreuth is the son of the Prussian field marshal.

Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, a mere baron and a major, receives a letter containing this sentence: ‘Und so war es auch gestern abend, als er den freundlichen Händedruck des Mannes fühlte, dem er nächst Gott und seinen Eltern das Meiste und Beste verdankt, ich meine nicht die vergänglichen Wohltaten des Lebens, sondern die immergrüne Saat des Guten und Schönen in ihm, so jung sie auch noch sein mag, mit einem Worte, ein deutsches Herz und einen deutschen Geschmack’.\footnote{Wilhelm Müller, V, 109–10.} Müller later had cause to be ashamed of such sentiments, and of his association with the ‘Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache’, the Germanophile society that harboured the xenophobia, illiberalism and anti-Semitism of Berlin notables like Jahn, Böckh, or Rühls. Yet his first non-poetic publication, if one will, his first scholarly effort, was a product of these circles: Blumenlese aus den Minnesingern/Florilegium from the Minnesingers (1816).\footnote{Blumenlese aus den Minnesingern, ed. by Wilhelm Müller (Berlin: Maurer, 1816). [BL, OT, StA].} Was this just an interest in Petrarchism, this time German-style, or a harbinger of something deeper? Müller reprints Johann Jacob Bodmer’s Middle High German based on the Manesse text, adding his own modern version en face (it is not encouraging to find the Kürenberger’s famous poem...}
masquerading as ‘Fräuleins Klage’). Other eighteenth-century revivals of Minnesang, Gleim’s or Bürger’s, had been more interested in the psychological stance of speaker and addressee than in textual niceties. The Romantics, Ludwig Tieck and Friedrich Heinrich von der Hagen, modernizing and making accessible texts they saw as appealing to the spirit of their times, were at the same time continuing the previous century’s antiquarianism. Tieck, following Friedrich Schlegel, had postulated a continuity of ‘Eine Poesie’ throughout the undulations and anfractuosities of the historical process. Müller’s preface reflects his deference to the great Friedrich August Wolf and his ‘Liedertheorie’ of Homer, already turning the heads of sober classical scholars like Niebuhr. The mode of transmission from the heroic age or even the ‘schwäbisches Zeitalter’, of epic or lyrical texts in older Germanic dialects might, in Müller’s eyes, best be compared with that of the songs of Homer as they passed through many hands and became remoter from the texts that the rhapsodists had once sung. As a philologist (and Müller can lay claim to this title) he sides less with academic scholars like Georg Friedrich Benecke or the Grimms or Karl Lachmann. There is a wider reading public in mind; the style is clear and elegant; his models are Johann Heinrich Voss, August Wilhelm Schlegel and Goethe. ‘Wissenschaftliche Prosa’ of this kind was still highly regarded by teachers of aesthetics and ‘Beredsamkeit’ (‘eloquence’), and it has the advantage of accessibility and readability: it is the tradition that became great in the hands of Ranke and Mommsen, Alexander von Humboldt and (later) the Grimm brothers. 

Of further significance during Müller’s period in Berlin was the circle around August von Stägemann and his wife Elisabeth. Stägemann was a man of affairs, close to the chancellor Karl August von Hardenberg, but, on less secure ground, also a poet of sorts. His wife’s salon brought together Berlin notabilities: here Müller met Friedrich Förster, whose Die Sängergfahrt/The Minstrel’s Journey is one of the key texts of Berlin late Romanticism, and most likely Achim von Arnim, with whom he was to collaborate in translating Christopher Marlowe. The Stägemann

---

38 ‘Young Lady’s Complaint’.
39 ‘One sole poetry’.
40 ‘Era of the Swabian emperors’.
41 *Wilhelm Müller*, IV, 75.
42 ‘Scholarly prose’. 
house was musical, convivial and literary: it contained the elements that were to launch Müller on a career in letters. We may assume that his contributions to almanacs and literary magazines (such as Friedrich Wilhelm Gubitz’s much-read periodical Der Gesellschafter, in which both Arnim and Brentano published) were in some measure due to the contacts the concourse in the Stägemanns’ house afforded. Some of these early efforts contain the first versions of the works that were to bring Müller fame: Der Gesellschafter for 1818, for instance, contained twelve ‘Müller-Lieder’, some written for a lyrical dramolet in the Stägemann house and now taking on lineaments of their own.

Before Müller emerged as a literary persona, he had to undergo yet another formative influence: Italy. It was to have been Greece, but unromantic circumstances deemed otherwise. Had it been Greece, it is conceivable that he might have followed an academic career, for Friedrich August Wolf was involved in the matter. He had been approached by Baron Albert von Sack, a gentleman of means and leisure who wished to spend two years travelling in Greece and the Near East and sought a suitably qualified young travelling companion. Wolf and Böckh recommended Müller, who in his turn had good reason to turn away from the cloying religious and patriotic atmosphere of the last two years. This was in August, 1817; the journey was to lead from Vienna to Constantinople. In Vienna, Müller met for the first time Greeks exiled through the political circumstances of their native country; it was the germ of the later Lieder der Griechen. In Vienna, too, the news reached the travellers that an outbreak of plague had made the Ottoman lands unsafe. Baron Sack, not lacking resource, decided to do the Italian leg of the journey, originally planned for the return stage. Thus it was that Müller made the journey to Rome; his other travelling companion was the Nazarene artist Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, for whose society he later had cause to be grateful. Once arrived in Rome, Müller parted company with Sack amid recriminations, and he was glad of contacts among the Nazarenes: Schnorr and Philipp Fohr did portrait drawings of him (Schnorr’s the kind of superbly severe head-and-shoulders likeness in which the brotherhood excelled), and the art historian and patron Carl Friedrich von Rumohr, ever interested in young men, lent him money. It may be hard to imagine Müller among the company in

[43 Cat., 120.]
the Caffè Greco depicted by Fohr before his tragic death in the Tiber: there was already too much ‘altdeutsche Tracht’, too much intense seriousness, too much religiosity. But like the Nazarenes, Müller sought relief from the Roman heat in the Albano mountains, not idealizing the local inhabitants as backdrop studies for religious paintings, as their scenes of Olevano tend to do, but trying to understand their mentality. Although Müller befriended August Sigismund Ruhl, one of the few Nazarenes who actually broke his bond with the brotherhood, he seems to have found the company of Per Daniel Amadeus Atterbom, the Swedish Romantic, more congenial. Each is commemorated: Ruhl is the dedicatee of the sonnet collection ‘Die Monate/The Months’ in the *Sieben und siebzig Gedichte*, while Atterbom is more aptly remembered in the preface to Book II of *Rom, Römer und Römerinnen/Rome, Roman Men and Roman Women*. That text, which appeared in 1820, revealed that the Italian experience was a search for both his personal and his national identity, while claiming to offer some insights into the mentality of a people much written about by the Germans but equally often misjudged by them. Müller did not echo Tieck’s testy words of 1816 to his friend Solger: ‘Ich liebe die Italiener und ihr leichtes Wesen, bin aber in Italien erst recht zum Deutschen geworden’. That was an ungenerous reaction to Goethe’s *Italienische Reise*, a text that had not scrupled to treat Romantic sensibilities with some little severity. Müller, for his part, did not omit some unflattering asides on the subject of the Nazarenes, but that was all part of the business of casting off native prejudices and inborn preconceptions. The servants of revealed religion do not emerge well from Müller’s account, except where they display scholarship and learning, but by the same token Northern Protestant ‘Verinnerlichung’ emerges as the main barrier to understanding the Italian character and

45 ‘Old German costume’.
46 *Deutsche Romantik. Handzeichnungen*, I, 1476.
49 ‘Inwardness’.
its notions of right and wrong. Müller does see religion in Italy, but it is
enshrined in observances that are already present in the mythology and
customs of Roman antiquity. This mythological interest could be called
Romantic, but it also casts a wry and dispassionate eye over things
considered sacred and ‘naive’ by the Nazarenes. Above all, Müller seeks
to discard received moral and cultural ideas, to understand a national
character while gaining comprehension of himself. In practical terms
that means learning the language and its dialects, not blenching at its
sexual mores or its robust folk-song, playing the flâneur, listening and
keeping one’s eyes open. These are also features that the best Roman
sections of Goethe’s *Italienische Reise* contain. *Rom, Römer und Römerinnen*
keeps the figure of the exploring author firmly before the reader; he may
not be the famous ‘pittore’ hiding his identity, but he is a young man
bent on finding his psychological feet in a foreign land.

One senses that Müller returned from Italy late in 1818 having cast
off his priggishness and many of his inhibitions. He did, however, face
a crucial decision. What could one do after Berlin and Rome? A matter-
of-fact solution was reached: to return home to Dessau. Had Müller
abandoned the *monde* that had seemed to beckon, or the hopes of
academic preferment? Perhaps not without some sense of resignation,
he seems, like so many of his contemporaries, to have concluded
that home is best. If Dessau was not Berlin or Leipzig or Dresden,
in a pre-railway age it was not far from these cultural centres either.
Literary magazines and almanacs could be published even in Altona
or Karlsruhe or Bunzlau and still reach the reading public on which
they depended. Yet Müller as a teaching assistant at the Latin school
that had replaced his own old institution does seem a depressing climb-
down, a Carl Spitzweg painting without the humour or the whimsy. He
found an outlet in the duties of a librarian, for Dessau was to receive a
public library, and, after struggles with his superiors, he was eventually
to be entrusted with its charge. But that was not until 1823. He had first
to establish himself socially and economically. The irony is that he had
only a few more years to live, and the tragedy is that he seems almost to
have worked himself to death.

The return from Italy coincided with publications reflecting the first
flush of his lyrical energy, but also *Die Sängerkahrt* and *Doktor Faustus*.50

50 *Die Sängerkahrt. Eine Neujahrsgabe für Freunde der Dichtkunst und Mahlerey [*…*]
Gesammelt von Friedrich Förster [*…*] (Berlin: Maurer, 1818), ed. by Siegfried Sudhof
The former, so significant for its stories by Brentano and Arnim, hardly does Müller credit. For the latter, Müller was certainly better versed in English than Arnim and certainly more knowledgeable. Not even Arnim’s preface would touch off any great wave of interest in Marlowe’s work in Germany, an uphill task against the ‘Shakespearomanie’ in which neither poet, to their credit, chose to join. But Arnim was generous and entrusted one of his longer and better poems to Müller’s short-lived periodical *Askania.*

For the remainder of his short life, Müller pitched himself into a frenetic series of activities. This, at least, is how they seem to the observer at today’s distance. It does, however, emerge that Müller was tidy, well organized, wrote easily, and could readily draw on the vast fund of literary knowledge in several languages that he had acquired in Berlin and Italy. In 1821 he married Adelheid Basedow, the granddaughter of the famous educationalist of the Philanthropin: Wilhelm Hensel obliged this time with a double portrait, anodyne like the first and lacking the forceful character of Schnorr’s. Like most of Hensel’s portrait drawings, it bore an autograph: ‘Werde glücklich wie der durch ein Weib wie die!’

Müller was professionally a librarian. In the terms of his day that also meant being an antiquarian, a side that emerges in his editions of seventeenth-century German poetry. He remained a classical scholar, but of the more popularizing kind: *Homerische Vorschule/Homer’s Forebears* is the result. He was well and truly harnessed into what might seem the ephemeral world of reviewing and contributions to reference works. He kept several almanacs stocked with his occasional verse, including Amadeus Wendt’s *Taschenbuch zum geselligen Vergnügen/Almanac for Social Enjoyment,* even his own *Askania,* the mayfly that did not outlive the year 1820, and out of these emerged the collections for some of which he is remembered today. He joined in gregariousness and conviviality of all kinds: so much of his verse seems to have been written for occasions where time stood still and the song and the wine flowed. But there

---


52 ‘Be happy like him with a wife like her!’ *Cat.,* 119.
was also a shrewdness underlying this flurry of activity. He chose his publishers with care: Friedrich Arnold, and later Heinrich, Brockhaus in Leipzig, had every cause to be satisfied with their young author in Dessau, and they paid well for work always punctually delivered. Friedrich Arnold Brockhaus, as an astute publisher, kept a variety of different enterprises going: *Literarisches Conversations-Blatt*/*Literary Conversations, Hermes oder kritisches Jahrbuch der Literatur*/Hermes, or *Critical Yearbook of Literature*, the almanac *Urania*, the famous *Conversations-Lexicon*. Müller contributed to them all, but he also kept his options open, playing off the cautious Brockhaus against the mighty Johann Friedrich Cotta and his *Morgenblatt für die gebildeten Stände*/Morning Paper for Educated Classes, yet not entrusting his *Waldhornist* collections to either and having them printed locally in Dessau. As his literary reputation increased, he could bargain for better royalties, not quite yet in the league of popular writers like Heinrich Clauren or Carl Franz van der Velde or Tieck, but the mild tussle with Brockhaus over *Debora* shows Müller standing his ground in monetary matters.53

Müller was well received in literary circles, notably those in Dresden, and especially those around Ludwig Tieck. The dedications of the *Waldhornist* volumes to Tieck and Carl Maria von Weber respectively are not mere conventional deferentiality. Weber (also working himself to death) was a reminder of the important links between poetry and music; that the naked text of so much seemingly trivial verse of the period is calling out for the decent covering of a musical setting. For a younger writer, Tieck was a model in both a positive and negative sense. His poetry, by then at last available in collected form,54 would provide the base line for so many of the young generation, the vocabulary, the attitudes, the clichés. His Novellen, the product of a pen that Müller rightly calls ‘flüchtig’,55 might convince the younger and less experienced that they too could extract a fairly good story from a set of stock situations. Perhaps Wilhelm Hauff could; Müller certainly could not. Tieck was a warning example of how not to dissipate one’s time and talents in conflicting and multifarious projects. Yet Müller did not share Tieck’s consuming passion for the theatre and for Shakespeare.

53 Wilhelm Müller, V, 413–14.
54 Gedichte von L. Tieck, 3 parts (Dresden: Hilscher, 1821–23).
55 ‘Fugitive’. Wilhelm Müller, IV, 411.
His corpus of reviews at their best recall more of the later Goethe’s range of interests, in their catholicity, their sense of ‘Weltliteratur/World literature’, their admiration of the folk traditions of southern Europe, their (differently accentuated) fascination with Byron. If the actual meeting with Goethe went badly, at least Müller’s reception in Dresden compensated, where he stayed in the grandeur of the Kalckreuths’ Villa Grassi. There he joined the lesser lights of that city, Malsburg, Förster, Loeben, as they revolved around the star attraction of Tieck, or paid brief homage to Weber.

How many of the writings of this almost manic spurt of activity actually deserve to survive? With this question I also approach the problems of the selection principles faced by past and present editors. Leaving aside the poetry proper for the moment, it emerges that nearly all of his writings actually impact on questions of poetic tradition, taste, or convention, on the relationship of the written to the spoken word. *Rom, Römer und Römerinnen*, already alluded to for its function in Müller’s development, has important sections on Italian folksong, which it quotes liberally, noting the ability of unlettered Italian street singers to improvise, but also their extraordinary feats of memory (a point also observed by Goethe). Hearing an Italian recite from memory canto after canto of Tasso is a living reminder of the ‘Geist der alten natürlichen Poesie’, the oral tradition that exists outside written documentation or inscription, and adapts to the times in which the stories are being recounted, which is inevitably accompanied by dance and music. The quotation comes from Müller’s *Homerische Vorschule. Eine Einleitung in das Studium der Ilias und Odyssee/Homer’s Forebears. An Introduction into the Study of the Iliad and the Odyssey*, easily written off as Friedrich August Wolf made accessible for the aesthetic tea-table (it is his only scholarly work to go into a second edition), yet for Müller proof that natural sung language is a reflection of the essence of those who sing, the ‘Stimme der Völker’. His praise of the Volkslied and of those who practise it well (Goethe, Uhland, Kerner) links him with Herder’s

---

57 ‘Spirit of ancient natural poetry’.
59 ‘Voice of the nations’.
concerns half a century or so earlier, but, as already noted, it postulates a national poetry for the Germans that will be from the heart, natural, and free of artifice. It speaks the language of Goethe’s famous review of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, and it is fair to say that Müller, by precept and example, is a major factor in the process that eventually denies legitimacy to mere formalism and rhetoric in lyrical poetry. These concerns inform his best literary criticism, in a negative sense his unease at what formal poets like Platen or Rückert were producing, his ill-concealed contempt for so much of the poetic almanacs (and his ironic self-deprecation at being so dependent on them); more positively, his praise of the best Swabian poetry, but a word of commendation for the ‘durch heite Ironie gemilderte Schwermut’ of lesser lights such as Schmidt von Lübeck. When Müller produced his major anthology *Bibliothek deutscher Dichter des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts/Library of German Poets of the Seventeenth Century* he was not pursuing mere antiquarianism (although collating the texts also involves that) but seeking to reacquaint the Germans with a tradition of their own poetry on which they had all but turned their backs. Modern Baroque scholars should pay some deference to Müller as one who tried, but ultimately failed, to secure some of the best older lyrical poetry for the nation. If he preferred Paul Fleming and Simon Dach to Martin Opitz and Andreas Gryphius, this is consistent with his general criteria, where ‘bürgerliche Biederkeit und Unumwundenheit’ (referring to Dach) rank higher than formal correctness or vanitas. In rehabilitating Johann Christian Günther as the only genuine poet in a half-century of aridity, he had Goethe’s judgement on his side.

These criteria extend without qualification to foreign literatures. The translator must know how to employ them in his task of ‘Eindringen und Untergehen’ in an alien tongue. I draw attention to the word Müller uses for particularly successful translations in these terms, namely ‘Ueberdichtungen’, a word not known to the *Deutsches* 


Wörterbuch/German Dictionary and not readily translatable, yet one that expresses concerns peculiarly close to nineteenth-century German poetic endeavour. Müller himself is no great translator:

War das der Blick, der tausend Schiffe trieb  
In’s Meer, der Trojas hohe Zinnen stürzte?

This is hardly the Marlowe we know and love. His major corpus of translated work, Neugriechische Volkslieder/Modern Greek Folksongs, is itself a reworking of Claude Charles Fauriel’s French version. When discussing Pierre-Jean de Béranger or Byron or Thomas Moore or modern Greek poetry, Müller blends his remarks with factors that are more or less overtly political. The texts of Neugriechische Volkslieder pre-date the main struggle for independence and are in some ways closer to older ballad traditions or even the Serbian folksongs that so appealed to Goethe. They gain through their formulaic quality a tone that is alien to Müller’s own Lieder der Griechen, where moral outrage (and even rant) are never too far from the surface. In reviewing Moore’s poetry for Hermes in 1823 Müller made a crucial distinction between verse that was merely ‘demagogisch’ and patriotic poetry that could produce ‘unmittelbare Begeisterung durch die Zeit’. While admitting that Moore did not always observe this rule, Müller might well have reflected that his Lieder der Griechen were closer to the former than to the latter. It is hard to be fair to political poetry at the best of times. To cite an analogy: Heine at his best would satisfy the nobler of Müller’s two categories; Ferdinand Freiligrath or Georg Herwegh would fall into the lesser. It is easy to write off German ‘Griechenlieder/Songs of the Greeks’ (Müller’s are but one example among many) or ‘Polenlieder/Songs of the Poles’ as being vicarious or surrogate, as not addressing directly the need for freedom at home and, with questionable honesty, embracing the needs of those conveniently remote in space and culture. His interest in Byron

64 ‘Transpoeticization’, perhaps. Ibid., 281.
65 ‘Was this the face that launched a thousand ships  
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?’ Doktor Faustus, 131.
and Moore and Walter Scott and so much other foreign literature might by the same token be a mere attempt to counteract the political stuffiness and limitation which he was powerless to change. Neither of these views is really fair. I therefore quote in full his poem ‘Die verpestete Freiheit/ Freedom under the Plague’, not for its poetic qualities, although its contained rage is not without effect, but for what it actually says:

Was schreit das Pharisäervolk so ängstlich durch die Länder,  
Die Häupter dick mit Staub bestreut, zerrissen die Gewänder?  
Sie schreien: Sperrt die Häfen zu, umzieht mit Quarantänen  
Die Grenzen und die Ufer schnell vor Schiffen und vor Kähnen!  
Die Pest ist unter ihrer Schar. Da seht die Strafgerichte,  
Damit des Herrn gerechte Hand Empörer macht zunichte!  
Die Freiheit selber, wie es heißt, ist von der Pest befallen,  
Und flüchtet sich nach Westen nun mit ihren Jüngern allen.  
O seht euch vor, daß in das Land die Freiheit euch nicht schleiche,  
Und der gesunden Völker Herz mit ihrem Hauch erreiche!  
Sie kleidet sich zu dieser Zeit in vielerlei Gestalten:  
Bald Weib, bald Mann, bald nur ein Kind, bald hat sie greise Falten.  
Drum lassest keinen Flüchtling ein, der kommt vom Griechenlande,  
Daß nicht die Freiheit ihre Pest bring in die guten Lande!

This is Müller accepting the limits imposed by censorship and political constraint, but also registering a point that still (alas) has relevance in the Europe of 1995 (or 2021).

Inevitably, the two collections, Sieben und siebzig Gedichte aus den hinterlassenen Papieren eines reisenden Waldhornisten of 1821 (dedicated to Tieck and containing ‘Die schöne Müllerin’) and Gedichte aus den hinterlassenen Papieren eines reisenden Waldhornisten of 1824 (dedicated to

---

68 ‘Why do the Pharisees rage so excitedly through the lands,  
Their heads strewn with dust, garments torn to bands?  
They cry: Close down the ports and put a quarantine  
On all our borders, ship and barquentine!  
The plague has broken out. See the court that sits,  
For the Lord’s just hand to smite his enemies in bits!  
For freedom, so we hear, the plague has got,  
And is fleeing westwards bringing all her lot.  
Beware that freedom does not slip into the land  
And taint the people’s hearts with pestilential hand!  
She puts on many guises in our day:  
Man, woman, child, even heads grey.  
Keep out all refugees arriving from Greek isles,  
Or freedom brings its plague and with it all its wiles!’. Wilhelm Müller, II, 285.
Carl Maria von Weber and containing the full text of ‘Die Winterreise’) must command more attention than any other aspect of his oeuvre, for these encapsulate quintessentially the ‘Lieder-Müller’ whose survival is assured. It will, however, not do simply to isolate the Schubert texts and forget the rest, for that would overlook the complexity of the relationship between melodic and poetic line. It is also not merely a question of noting where the major differences lie between Müller’s and Schubert’s respective order and phrasing (especially with reference to ‘Die Winterreise’). Müller set both these lyrical cycles of ‘Rollenlieder’ in collections (sometimes containing further, different sets of ‘Rollenlieder’) and he seems to be inviting the reader of the Walhornisten poems, as it were, to forget Schubert and look at the overall context. The phrase ‘durch heitre Ironie gemilderte Schwermut’, quoted above in respect of Schmidt von Lübeck, can serve as a cautionary superscription to both of these collections. In giving them the titles he does, Müller is making a statement about the mixed nature of his poetry, or rather, the unforced coexistence of various components in forming a harmonious whole. Thus, while ‘Die schöne Müllerin’ and ‘Die Winterreise’ are undoubtedly texts of Weltschmerz (‘melancholy’), there is enough in the collections that frame them to counteract any sense of utter existential loss. ‘Die schöne Müllerin’ even contains those two poems, ‘Der Dichter, als Prolog/The Poet as Prologue’ and ‘Der Dichter, als Epilog/The Poet as Epilogue’, ironizing through a deliberate ‘Stimmungsbrechung’ the lapse from fulfilment into despair that the encapsulated poems express. But the titles of these poetic collections’ titles keep a similar set of contradictory components in balance: the ‘Walhornist’ immediately has associations with Tieck’s Romantic novel Franz Sternbald and its constant horn serenades amid forest glades, ‘reisend’ as befits a novel that never reaches its destination, with ‘hinterlassene Papiere’ suggesting perhaps that he, too, has gone the way of the young miller. We must, however, accept the fiction that the ‘Walhornist’ in his turn is also the author of all the poems, ‘Reiselieder/Songs of Travel’ or ‘Ländliche Lieder/Songs of the Country’ or ‘Tafellieder/Drinking Songs’, that contain the therapy against the despair of the ‘Winterreise’. Schubert, never otherwise noted for the sureness of his literary taste, found ‘Die schöne Müllerin’ in

69 Wilhelm Müller, IV, 424.
70 ‘Break in tone’. 
the 1821 collection and promptly excluded the prologue and epilogue poems. This changes Müller’s text and leads the way for the domination of words by music. ‘Die Winterreise’ is more complex, in that Schubert first composed the twelve poems that had come out in *Urania* (1823), with an order slightly different from the 1824 edition, then added the remaining poems, but in a sequence that was not Müller’s but his own. Thus, while the Weltschmerz of ‘Die schöne Müllerin’ comes out fully only in the musical setting, the text of ‘Die Winterreise’ is altogether more pointed in its message. Winter already has bleak connotations. We are clearly not in the late eighteenth-century rococo winter landscape of, say, Günther von Goeckingk’s ‘Als der erste Schnee fiel/When the First Snow Fell’,71 with Nantchen wrapped up in her muff, but in a world of doors that close, houses that remain shut, nature that is inimical, trackless, without destination, where wandering is a symbol of the human state. Schubert, even without altering the text, intensifies the Weltschmerz (‘melancholy’) and makes it the dominant tone; the poet, in his turn, invites us to read back or read on and find a more cheerful collection to raise our spirits, perhaps those ‘Tafellieder’ that appealed to two other composers, not alas of Schubert’s stature.

Müller’s remaining lyrical collection, *Lyrische Reisen und epigrammatische Spaziergänge/Lyrical Journeys and Epigrammatic Strolls* (1827), is presumably to be read in a similar fashion: ‘Lieder aus dem Meerbusen von Salerno/Songs from the Gulf of Salerno’, ‘Lieder aus Franzensbad bei Eger/Songs from Franzensbad Near Eger’, ‘Frühlingskranz aus dem Plauenschen Grunde bei Dresden/Spring Nosegay from the Plauenscher Grund near Dresden’, ‘Muscheln von der Insel Rügen/Shells from the Island of Rügen’ (echoes of Heine here), ‘Berenice. Ein erotischer Spaziergang/Berenice. An Erotic Promenade’. He did not live to unite other remaining disparate items. Fatigued, with eye and heart trouble, seeking convalescence on Rügen or in Franzensbad, even granted a temporary Tusculum in Dessau by his reigning prince, he worked on to the end. The visit to Stuttgart and Tübingen, to Schwab, Uhland and Kerner, was his last personal triumph. A heart attack brought his life to an end on September 30, 1827, just short of his thirty-third birthday. It was left to Gustav Schwab to commemorate his newly found friend in the five-volume *Vermischte*
Schriften of 1830, and the two-volume Gedichte of 1837 that reprinted the first two parts of the earlier edition.

An editor of Müller’s works will be both constrained and encouraged by the printing history of his disparate oeuvre, whereas a commemorative volume will seek to do justice to all significant aspects of the man and writer. The Vermischte Schriften contain the poetry, the Novellen and the major critical essays (including those on the Tasso and Dante translations, on Uhland and Kerner, on almanac literature, on Rückert and on Willibald Alexis’s Walladamor), the crucial account of Byron’s life and works, and a miscellany of almanac and magazine contributions. They exclude much that was still in print in 1830, such as the collections and editions. The first two volumes provided a basis for the various editions of the poems, enabling these to remain within reach of the reading public. The poetry in both the 1830 and 1837 editions, even in Max Müller’s 1868 edition, was grouped round thematic clusters, not in strict chronological progression. The diaries and letters were edited by Philip Allen and James Hatfield in 1903, publishing the early Berlin diary and such correspondence as was available at the time. Hatfield in his turn did a critical edition of the poems in 1906, and Heinrich Lohre’s ‘Lebensbild’ of 1927 added important letters to Brockhaus. Much of the material in the later volumes of the Vermischte Schriften has never been reprinted, but Deobra, for reasons best known to the compilers, made its way into Paul Heyse’s and Hermann Kurz’s Deutscher Novellenschatz. Rom, Römer und Römerinnen has until now never been republished in its entirety. Doktor Faustus was reprinted in 1911, and the recent reprint of Die Sängefahrt/The Minstrels’ Journey picked up the few, hardly significant, contributions Müller made to that collection. Neither of these works is, however, truly central to Müller. Much else is in the rare book category and difficult of access: the Müller scholar still needs a

72 Diary and Letters of Wilhelm Müller, ed. by Philip Schuyler Allen and James Taft Hatfield (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1903).


75 Ed. by Bertha Badt, Pandora 11 (Munich: Georg Müller, 1911).
‘hands-on’ approach to texts; reprinted prefaces alone do not give the feel, texture or scope of many of the large-scale works.

Müller is not an author for whom a historical-critical approach is appropriate. Thus this multi-volume and splendidly produced edition by Maria-Verena Leistner is inevitably a selection, a generous and judicious one for all that. The poetry and the diaries and travel accounts are virtually complete; the letters are well chosen. I could have done without the Novellen, but that is a personal judgement and not a scholarly criterion. My own selection of the critical writing might well have been different from the editor’s, but only in detail (I should have preferred the Tasso and Moore pieces to one or two published here). I should single out for special mention the prefaces to the Minnesinger and Opitz selections (republished for the first time), the large and important article on Byron, and the review of Uhland and Kerner. I regret that the decision was made, however understandable, to exclude the contributions to encyclopaedias: the printing history of these publications is a bibliographer’s nightmare, and not even Goedeke ventured into this veritable minefield. Encyclopaedias are, however, the single most important mode of dissemination of useful knowledge in the period, Müller almost coinciding with the inception of Brockhaus’s or Ersch-Gruber’s enterprises. They also represent a factor of continuity amid the changes of critical theory and literary canon. The scholarly apparatus of this edition consists of a fifty-eight-page introduction to Volume I, by Bernd Leistner, short introductions to each work or set of works, and notes. Volume V contains a select bibliography of primary and secondary literature, an important orientation for non-specialist and specialist alike. The editorial principles set out in the same volume are matter-of-fact and without fuss. While accepting that most of Müller’s work does not exist in manuscript, and that he made alterations to his own works during his lifetime, the principle of manuscript or first printing is adhered to, with variants available in the notes. The spelling has been modernized in accordance with good sense and practice. The notes themselves, especially those of a bibliographical nature, are useful, and clearly much research into sources has gone into

them. Unlike those of the ‘Bibliothek deutscher Klassiker’, for instance, they are more cryptic than expansive. Thus in some cases just a few more chosen sentences of introduction would have been useful, as on Byron, or the Greek wars of independence, or even on, say, the Bibliothek deutscher Dichter des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts/Library of German Poets of the Seventeenth Century. True, Leistner’s highly useful introductory essay to Volume I does this in a few, sometimes very few, well-weighed words. The decision not to document except in passing Müller’s contributions to encyclopaedias means that references to these are not as clear as they might be. These are very small criticisms to raise of an edition of this scope and significance.

The commemorative volume, Wilhelm Müller. Eine Lebensreise/Wilhelm Müller’s Life’s Journey contains contributions by both Bernd and Maria-Verena Leistner, but also by a dozen other experts.77 These range from essays of more local interest to articles dealing with major aspects of Müller’s oeuvre and thinking. These roughly 100 pages form a corpus of knowledge (I have drawn on it extensively for this article) that will, I hope, help to bring Müller back into a wider general consciousness, and, who knows, attract visitors to his birthplace. There are superb illustrations based on the exhibition that gave rise to the volume.

---

William Shakespeare is a major figure of bearing, reference and identification in Heinrich Heine’s oeuvre and also the subject of a whole work, *Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen/Shakespeare’s Girls and Women* (1838). The experts cannot agree whether it is a minor piece with major overtones, or perhaps a larger complex that remains fragmentary (a Shakespeare project) or even a kind of extension of his ‘Deutschland-Schriften’ which start around 1832. Certainly it has elements of all these, but above all it is an occasional piece, eclectic, pluralistic, open-ended.

---

1 An earlier version of this chapter was published as: ‘Heine and Shakespeare’, in *Heine und die Weltliteratur*, ed. by T. J. Reed and Alexander Stillmark (Oxford, London: Legenda, 2000), 51–63.
3 ‘Writings on Germany’.
like so much of Heine’s own creation and his view of creation itself. It is also, as opposed to allusions, his last major statement on Shakespeare.

Under the disarming subtitle of Erläuterungen/Explanatory Notes and with Heine adopting the role of the guide to a kind of stately home, throwing open the various rooms, he manages to address subjects well known from the major works of the 1830s: the role of the poet as diviner or seer, standing above ‘mere’ history; the question of national literature and national appropriation; the monarchy of states and letters as against the république, and much besides. I do not wish to discuss all, or for that matter any, of these in any systematic way. Rather, I hope to enter into the spirit of improvisation that breathes through these pages.

It is a pity that Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen does not have a section on The Winter’s Tale. We know of course that Heine was aware of the connotations of ‘Wintermärchen’ when he chose that subtitle for his imaginary journey through Germany. As a nineteenth-century German Shakespeare edition defines it, a ‘Wintermärchen’ is ‘[e]ine schauerliche oder rührende Geschichte’. It is also a world encompassing antiquity and Renaissance, improbabilities and coincidences, oracles and bears, disguises and revelations. Above all, it is mythical and ends happily. It is not unlike his general view of Shakespeare, and, with the notable exception of that happy ending, it is not dissimilar to his view of Germany.

Our symposium has the overall theme ‘Heine and World Literature’. That notion of ‘world literature’ is by common agreement, if not necessarily a Goethean creation, certainly a coining of Johann Wolfgang Goethe’s, and is a reflection of the opening up, from the 1790s on, of perspectives across national, cultural, and linguistic borders, the ‘Kosmopolitismus des Blicks’ of which Jean Paul had spoken, the throwing open of windows in which the Romantics had had such a part. On a more modest scale it was fostered by Heine’s much-revered Wilhelm Müller. To all this, Heine is heir, but also to its controversies and polemics. One notes with what care Goethe chooses a paradigm

---

5 See footnote 1.
for the process by which a foreign literary culture may transfer back to its country of origin an insight and a penetration not yet available at home. It is, of course, Thomas Carlyle’s *Life of Schiller*. The example is right and proper and well chosen. One does note, however, that Shakespeare (except in the very broadest sense) is less prominent in this Goethean construct of ‘Weltliteratur’. The English Romantics almost to a man — and one of them, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, coming mightily close to plagiarism — were saying that it was now the Germans who were leading the field in Shakespeare studies. Would that not also constitute a prime example of those cosmopolitan border-crossings and fructifications? But Goethe had chosen the model of Carlyle and Friedrich Schiller because in addition it demonstrated that, while Schiller’s reputation in Germany was slumping in the 1820s, it had entered into the blood-stream of world literature, and that was what mattered. Who was responsible for that collapse in German esteem? The Romantics, of course. It is thus no coincidence that Goethe in 1828–29 published his correspondence with Schiller, in the lifetime (just) of both Schlegel brothers, whose critical machinations (as Goethe might perceive it) had seen to it that Goethe’s reputation increased while Schiller’s decreased.

By giving such prominence to literary politics and controversy I am perhaps distorting the many coincidences and areas of agreement between these literary generations. Is this one of the bad habits one picks up as a literary biographer? It is however observable that Shakespeare — our subject, not Goethe or Schiller — is a divisive and unruly force in the German republic of letters. One notes that three of the most devastating annihilations of reputation and character in German literary criticism occur in the context of Shakespeare or to figures once involved in his reception: Gothold Ephraim Lessing’s of Johann Christoph Gottsched, Schiller’s of Gottfried August Bürger, and Heine’s of August Wilhelm Schlegel. The task was done with such thoroughness that these names are all but expunged from the annals of literature, the victims referred to in hushed embarrassment, like a mad aunt or uncle in an otherwise respectable family. Take August Wilhelm Schlegel: there has been no proper critical edition of his works since 1846, no satisfactory critical edition to date of the world-famous *Vorlesungen uber dramatische Kunst und Literatur/Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* (even the Düsseldorf Heine edition has recourse to
an unsatisfactory edition), no biographer, no scholarly reprint of the original Shakespeare translation of 1796–1810. His reputation has been subject to the continuing ‘destruction’ in the nineteenth century of the older Romantics (note the speaking title of Rudolf Haym’s *Die romantische Schule/The Romantic School* [1870]) in favour of the more accessible talents of Clemens Brentano, Arnim or Eichendorff. He is not even mentioned in Friedrich Gundolf’s *Romantiker* of 1929. Did Heine’s infamous attack on Schlegel in *Die romantische Schule* bring this about? Of course not: teleological reductionism makes for bad criticism and bad literary history. Schlegel’s reputation lived on in France and England. He was, besides, in later life singularly unattractive, and himself no mean controversialist. There is another answer. Siegbert Prawer, in his inaugural lecture of 1970, draws attention to the visceral image that Heine employs in *Die romantische Schule*, of Indigenous peoples of North America killing their elders when they become old and decrepit. Like James Frazer’s potent image of the priests of Nemi, it reminds us, too, that the stiletto knife in the back is Heine’s ultimate sanction.

Leaving such severities, it is much more profitable to see Heine and Schlegel and Heine and Shakespeare in another and better perspective. As with so many internecine inter-generational relationships, there is more in common between Heine and Schlegel than what separates them. Surely Schlegel is an important model for the elegant style Heine so cultivates and which is one of the few qualities in the older man singled out for praise in *Die romantische Schule*. More importantly, Schlegel’s critical method and historical perspective is close to Heine’s. Schlegel followed only to a limited extent Johann Gottfried Herder’s notion of organic development, change and decay, or revolution, in German culture. He is far happier setting up constructs, pairs of opposites (Classical and Romantic being the best-known) only loosely based on some kind of historical continuity and owing more to inner artistic or aesthetic qualities. The Heinean notions of ‘Romantische Schule’, set up

---

8 Prawer (note 1), 7.
9 Note of 2021: this was the case when I wrote this in 1997. Fortunately the situation has now much changed for the better, although it has taken 150 years to do so. See below, footnote 38.
10 *SS*, V, 417.
against its cosmopolitan or Protestant or classical counter-equivalents, or even the notion of a ‘Kunstperiode’, are not alien to general Romantic thinking, Schlegel’s or others. The Romantics’ term ‘universal’ could have embracing connotations similar to Heine’s ‘cosmopolitan’. Heine in *Die romantische Schule* notes that Schlegel’s Shakespeare translation is hardly in keeping with his usual (perceived) Christian, Catholic, anti-cosmopolitan, mystical and Calderonian orientation. Of course, August Wilhelm’s embrace of Catholicism (as opposed to Friedrich’s) had been short-lived. More importantly, his Shakespeare translation is the work of a philologist, not an apologist, and the polarization of Schlegel and Voss in *Die romantische Schule* is a critical device to tear apart two figures who basically converge on the same object from different corners, making ‘classical’ literature (in the fullest sense, antiquity and Renaissance) available to the educated German reader. Schlegel is also the only classical philologist of his day to face Johann Heinrich Voss on equal terms.

On the other hand, Heine may not have known how much Schlegel hated the English — as opposed to Shakespeare, of course. By and large, the German Romantics are not great anglophiles. Schlegel the Hanoverian cannot comprehend that ‘die frostigen, stupiden Seelen auf dieser brutalen Insel’ could have produced such genius. Hence his lack of interest in the ‘Life and Times’ of Shakespeare. The greatest disappointment in Ludwig Tieck’s life was his trip to England in 1817. Heine could find in William Hazlitt the insight that the older English Shakespeare critics, Samuel Johnson especially, had failed to appreciate Shakespeare’s genius: but it was already there in Schlegel, and English readers duly noted and deferred to it. Heine, despite his fine poetic ear, is not a philologist or translator. We cannot take too seriously his plan for an illustrated prose translation in 1839. He is unfair to Schlegel the translator, but his unfairness is that of a younger generation that regarded rendering of Shakespeare into German as a process in being and not one already concluded. Not only do the various different sources

---

11 The epoch of art’. Heine’s ‘Ende der Kunstperiode’ can be applied historically to the long and daunting shadow of the Goethean achievement, to Shakespeare’s similarly.
12 Ibid., 4n and 375.
for his quotations in *Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen* bear witness to that fact\(^\text{14}\) (as well as to his hasty improvisation). His generation by and large did not regard the positions reached by Schlegel or Tieck as fixed or final. Georg Herwegh and Ferdinand Freiligrath are examples, as is also the young Theodor Fontane, and it was only the adoption by the Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft (founded in 1864) of the so-called ‘Schlegel-Tieck’ that conferred on this translation the classic status it still, rightly or wrongly, enjoys. In the final analysis, Schlegel and Heine are not so much divided over Shakespeare as over more concrete, personal factors: Schlegel had revived his noble title and had accepted preferment in the Prussian state. That was where Romanticism got you. Heine, despite being disrespectful and malicious to the old ‘Hofrat’ Tieck, is much more appreciative of his Shakespearean studies and his general contribution to ‘Capriccio’ and ‘Scherz’,\(^\text{15}\) certainly more than he deserved. He may not have known that it was Schlegel who put Tieck on to the idea of translating Cervantes while he got on with Calderón. Now, while Heine rightly sensed that he had knifed Schlegel the old priest in the sacred grove, he was aware that Schlegel’s colleague, Tieck, was still at large. One reason for his urgency in throwing together *Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen* is the fear that Julius Campe might turn to Tieck!\(^\text{16}\) In the event, Heine need not have feared. It is nonetheless right to see *Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen* in the wider context of German Shakespeare reception: of all those translations, of course, but also illustrated editions, biographies, life and works, analyses of plays, a huge activity predicated on the awareness that Shakespeare is German property and inheritance, a classic. In the words of Franz Horn, a figure much maligned by Heine, ‘wir wollen streben, daß Shakspeare ganz der unsrige werde’.\(^\text{17}\)

*Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen* is, of course, different from Schlegel’s *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur* of 1808 in that its concern, by and large (and when it does not allow itself to be side-tracked) is with character, not with plot structure, especially with character as it is realized both in its textual and dramatic development.

\(^{14}\) *DA*, X, 356.

\(^{15}\) *SS*, V, 421–31.

\(^{16}\) Heine, *Shakespeares Mädchen*, ed. Hansen, 221.

\(^{17}\) ‘We wish to do our utmost to make Shakespeare our own’. Franz Horn, *Shakespeare’s Schauspiele*, 3 vols (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1823–31), I, 444.
In this respect, Goethe was of little assistance as an alternative to Schlegel. For *Shakespeare und kein Ende!/Shakespeare and No End* (last part 1826) had postulated a Shakespeare above concerns of character and stage, a kind of ‘Urphänomen’ of creativity, a measure of the creative process itself. Schlegel’s lectures had held out the hope that a historical drama could now be within the Germans’ grasp, were poets but to use the historical past in respectful imitation of Shakespeare. Goethe (but this time more in private) had warned that Shakespeare was a great inhibitor of talent (a warning too little heeded in the nineteenth century). Christian Dietrich Grabbe’s *Über die Shakespearomanie/On Shakespeare Mania* of 1828 had set up danger signs for the would-be Shakespeareanizing dramatist and the pitfalls he might face. The stridency of Grabbe’s tone, his presumption in drawing attention to Shakespeare’s ‘faults’ (about which little had been heard since Herder banished them from the critical agenda), his pointing to other, safer models, are indications that, for him, Shakespeare might well cause a loss of national literary identity. Heine, too, has his word in season for Shakespearean imitators, but they again are not his major concern. Above all, the consistency, not to say stridency, of Grabbe’s essay is not his approach. He found much more common ground in Tieck’s *Dramaturgische Blätter/Essays on Drama* (1826), a loose concatenation of drama reviews that, as it were incidentally, also turned to deeper issues of character and interpretation (often controversially), allowing digressions and anabases and asides. The seeming outrageousness of Tieck’s reading of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* was an indication that he perceived a need to break with what were by then ‘standard’ interpretations. So as not to show too much deference to the old Romantic for whom he had a soft spot, Heine pushes one of Tieck’s less favoured authors, Hazlitt, into the foreground. It is Hazlitt in translation, of course, which made him sound more German. Thus Heine found Hazlitt’s attack on Johnson to his liking. It reminded him, perhaps, of his own dealings with August Wilhelm Schlegel, without of course the personal, scandalous and wounding aspects. The English

---


Romantics’ sense of literary continuity means that, while they may not like the Augustan age or Johnson the critic, they are nevertheless aware of the ‘debt of the past’ and sense acutely the ‘anxiety of influence’. Hazlitt (and to some extent Anna Jameson) escape the anathema Heine visited on the English. His account of French Shakespearean reception is however rather sketchier and more skewed. With few exceptions, he says, the French have read Shakespeare through a trivialized Romantic vision, have failed to distinguish atmosphere and stage-property from substance, have elevated plurality of style to an absolute without an understanding of Shakespeare’s subtleties, especially in his comedies. They are, as imitators, more like Christopher Marlowe or Thomas Heywood.\textsuperscript{20} Had Heine been reading Tieck’s Novelle \textit{Dichterleben} / \textit{The Life of the Poet}, where the so-called minor Elizabethans have an uncanny resemblance to the younger generation of poets of his own day. Only François Guizot, the historian and critic, receives Heine’s favour, as one who is able to see Shakespeare in a wider span of English history, something his contemporaries, Victor Hugo, Alfred de Vigny and Alfred de Musset, with their uncreative frenzies,\textsuperscript{21} fail to do. Heine’s point is interesting. Doubtless it was the Shakespeareanizing Hugo, not so much Shakespeare himself, who influenced the young Georg Büchner (the translator of \textit{Lucrèce Borgia} and \textit{Marie Tudor}).

Guizot’s remarks on the several approaches to comedy by Aristotle, Molière and Shakespeare raise the discussion on to the level of the nature of the comic muse herself, in place and historical time. We are close here to Heine’s passing insight on Molière’s greatness from the first book of \textit{Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland} / \textit{On the History of Philosophy and Religion in Germany}: ‘Darum ist eben Molière so groß, weil er, gleich Aristophanes und Cervantes, nicht bloß temporelle Zufälligkeiten, sondern das Ewig Lächerliche, die Urschwächen der Menschheit, persifliert’.\textsuperscript{22} It is the cosmic trope of a world theatre, the comedy of human history, in which these poets share. It is also the other distinction that Heine draws, between ‘Weltgeschichte’, with its disharmonies and clangour, and ‘Geschichte

\textsuperscript{20} SS, VII, 283.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 281–90.
\textsuperscript{22} ‘Molière is so great for that reason, because, like Aristophanes and Cervantes, he pokes fun not just at the casual matters of everyday life but at the ever-ridiculous, the inborn foibles of humanity’. Ibid., V, 535.
der Menschheit’, where in Heine’s image one can hear above the din of human affairs the sweet eternal melodies of mankind. Heine’s canonically ‘great poets’ inhabit these regions — and Shakespeare is almost always to the fore because of the primacy of drama (here we see Schlegel’s influence as well as Hegel’s). Does it matter that Heine’s ‘core canon’ is essentially the Romantics’, itself formulated embryonically by the *Sturm und Drang* (‘Storm and Stress’) generation? Certainly, the Schlegel brothers in their *Athenaeum* incarnation would not have dissented from the triumvirate (the ‘Dichtertriumvirat’) later set up by Heine, of Goethe, Miguel de Cervantes and Shakespeare. It remained essentially Tieck’s trinitarian position in his poetic doctrine. Where Tieck spoke of ‘Erzpoeten’, Heine refers to ‘Urpoeten’ (his list is Aristophanes, Goethe and Shakespeare). These transcending figures are of course wreathed in myth (the ‘Kunstperiode’ is one such), are heroic, supernal, ‘Napoleonic’, if you will. They represent universals, just as their names were associated in Romantic discourse with the notion of ‘Universalpoesie’. They stand, not for thought, not for political engagement, not even for ‘esprit’, but for ‘poetry’ or ‘art’. That, in the final analysis, is the criterion of their canonicity. I used before the term ‘inhibitor of talent’, and indeed all of Heine’s ‘Urpoeten’ are that. The image of the poet-genius standing above quotidian human concerns is of course not new (think of the opening of Herder’s Shakespeare essay). As there, it is also a metaphor of creativity. ‘Shakespeare gesellt sich zum Weltgeist’, says Goethe in *Shakespeare und kein Ende!*, through him we gain insight into the living processes of which we are part. Heine, too, speaks of Shakespeare and the ‘Weltgeist’. In the Jessica section of *Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen*, we read that Shakespeare, in writing *The Merchant of Venice*, may have wished to write comedy, he may have even wished to present us with ‘einen gedrillten Werwolf’ in Shylock:

---

Aber der Genius des Dichters, der Weltgeist, der in ihm waltet, steht immer höher als sein Privatwille, und so geschah es, daß er in Shylock, trotz der grellen Fratzenhaftigkeit, die Justifikation einer unglücklichen Sekte aussprach, welche von der Vorsehung, aus geheimnisvollen Gründen, mit dem Haß des niedern und vornehmen Pöbels belastet worden, und diesen Haß nicht immer mit Liebe vergelten wollte.

Aber was sag’ ich? Der Genius des Shakespeare erhebt sich noch über den Kleinhader zweier Glaubensparteien, und sein Drama zeigt uns eigentlich weder Juden noch Christen, sondern Unterdrücker und Unterdrückte [...].

Of course a little care is needed here, for this is not a subject about which Heine could be objective. It may be an astute rhetorical ploy to introduce that ‘Weltgeist’ and then smuggle under its accommodating wings a private reading of *The Merchant of Venice*. But so often, for so many different purposes, Heine is inviting us to see a problem from a universal, cosmic, mythical angle. It is essentially the device used to exculpate Jessica, the convert. Is she not, like Desdemona or Imogen, a ‘Tochter Evas’, willful, disobedient, unheeding — like the mother of us all? And so *Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen* ends with the grand cosmic conceit, indeed a plurality of worlds, with the sun (Miranda), the moon (Juliet), and the comet (Cleopatra), the three stages of civilization, from ‘unbefleckte[r] Boden’, ‘schauerliche Reinheit’, to the ‘Sinnenglut’ of the Renaissance, and ‘erkrankte Zivilisation’ and ‘Zerstörungslust’.

It follows that Heine is not really interested in the Shakespearean ideologies current in his time, such as the ‘Life’ and the ‘Man’, nor in what can be called ‘Shakespeare-Philologie’. Thus his learned reference to William Prynne’s *Histriomastix* is simply part of his anti-English agenda, the Puritan, Cromwellian, stolid, pragmatic streak of Albion that he so detests. A poet in touch with the ‘Weltgeist’ will be above

---

29 ‘But the poet’s genius, the world spirit that operates in him, always ranks higher than his private will, and so it came about that he enunciated in Shylock, despite having made a crude caricature of him, the justification of an unfortunate sect, that providence, for reasons best known to itself, has saddled with the hate of the rabble, high and low, and that did not always wish to pay back this hate with love. But what am I saying? Shakespeare’s genius rises above the petty squabbles of the two sectarian factions, and his drama shows us in real fact neither Jew nor Christian, but oppressors and oppressed.’ SS, VII, 251.

30 ‘Daughter of Eve’. Ibid., 257.

31 ‘Unsullied ground’; ‘fearsome purity’; ‘sensual fire’; ‘civilization in decay’; ‘destructive passion’. Ibid., 292–93.

32 Ibid., 175.
anecdotes, even above rigid genre distinctions (Heine subdivides the plays more than most critics). Above all, the critic may look behind any historical context of the plays or any possible intention on the part of the poet (as with *The Merchant of Venice*), and see things that are new, startling, perhaps even seditious.

Which brings me finally to *Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen* itself. Certainly it must rank as one of the most ‘occasional’ of Heine’s major works, in the sense that it came about in an improvised and hand-to-mouth fashion. As the only major work devoted to a single non-German author, it makes no pretensions to ‘mere’ objectivity; its strength is in details, not in encompassing arguments. It quite openly accommodates current ideologies inside its framework; indeed it welcomes them. Thus in a sense the whole work is responding to Karl Gutzkow’s promptings that there should be a Young German position in the wider debate on Shakespeare (the same Gutzkow, incidentally, who in 1864 will give the official tercentenary address in Weimar!). I have indicated unexpected fraternalities between *Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen* and other Shakespeare studies. It likes to confront, outrageously if necessary. Who, for instance, had ever begun a study of Shakespeare’s characters with *Troilus and Cressida*? (Anna Jameson does not even refer to this play.) Its loves and hates are plain for all to see, although it is a pity that Heine is so uncomplimentary about the French in their second great wave of Shakespeare reception, but that of course had been initiated by Schlegel’s companion, Madame de Staël. Perhaps there is more than a hint of rivalry. At least there is no sign yet of those later proprietary claims by German nineteenth-century Shakespearean scholarship which deny the French houseroom altogether. Naturally, it owes much to Anna Jameson (in translation), and it defers not a little to the unfortunate Franz Horn, whose gentle soul had expired the year before. In 1831, Horn wrote this:

> In Shakespeare’s Werken finden wir die vollständigste Galerie der Frauen, die, wenn wir sie Jahre lang und mit Genauigkeit und Liebe betrachtet haben, uns endlich überzeugen muß, daß nie ein Dichter gelebt, der dem weiblichen Geschlechte so reine Huldigung dargebracht hat wie er. Es

gibt in seinen Werken keinen männlichen Charakter, in welchem der Verein des Guten und Schönen, des Freien und Nothwendigen, der Tiefe und Klarheit, der Anmut und Würde zu einer ganz vollendeten Einheit gebracht worden wäre [...] .

This ‘Galerie der Frauen’ Heine supplies in 1838, in the form of the series of English lithographs which accompany his text. And the less said about them the better, except that they are very much of their time.

Many of the most memorable passages in Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen are only tenuously about Shakespeare himself: the assassination of the English character, the mouse dialogue, the lament for the Jewish people which goes far beyond Jessica (or even Shylock) and extends in a great parabola before ending on that ‘Jessika, mein Kind’. Let me take that wonderful mouse vision as an example. Note that these mice are the device employed to introduce the Histories, the plays that Schlegel calls a ‘historisches Heldengedicht’, and to which he gives an attention never hitherto granted them. Heine does not even subdivide the plays into Histories as such, grouping instead their heroines chronologically. That is of course not the same as writing about history itself. Historical drama is however another matter. ‘Ein alter Mauserich’ with long experience of human affairs, is Heine’s witness. It is essentially a catalogue of ‘eine nur maskierte Wiederkehr derselben Naturen und Ereignisse’; ‘man amüsiert sich mit weiser Gelassenheit’. The historical drama as such (not least Ernst von Raupach’s ‘Hohenstaufenbandwürmer’, in Friedrich Hebbel’s dismissive phrase) tells us about theories of history.

35 In Shakespeare’s works we find the most complete gallery of women, which, when we have closely and lovingly studied them for years, must in the end convince us that never has a poet lived who has paid such pure homage to the female sex as he did. There is no male character in his works in whom the good and the beautiful, freedom and necessity, depth and clarity, grace and dignity combine in perfect unity’. Horn, Shakespeare’s Schauspiele, V, 98.
36 ‘Jessica, my child’. SS, VII, 266.
39 ‘An old father mouse’.
40 ‘A recurrence of the same natures and events, only masked’. SS, VII, 215.
41 ‘One takes a wise, amused view of it’. Ibid., 211.
(hence the account of the ‘Souffleur’ with Hegelian overtones), but not about man’s ‘progress’ as such. And Heine is using his mice to tell us that it is not the business of historical drama to do so. By following Anna Jameson’s device of selecting *Shakespeare’s Mädchen und Frauen* — female characters — he is automatically downgrading the Histories; for the heroines are only there ‘weil die darzustellende Historie ihre Einmischung erforderte’,\(^{43}\) not because they are part of the integral portrayal of historical events. But the opportunity afforded by historical examples or incidents is quite another matter. Shakespeare knows more than we do. With due respect to Friedrich Schlegel, he becomes ‘ein in die Vergangenheit schauender Prophet’;\(^ {44}\) he does not depict history itself but fills ‘die Lakunen der Historie’.\(^ {45}\) Our attention is seized by his historical figures because they bear out our own experience with kings and rulers in our own times. Knowing Heine as we do, we must expect some unflattering parallels. We have one in the sustained comparison of Bolingbroke in *Richard II* and Louis Philippe: ‘ein schlauer Held, ein kriechender Riese, ein Titan der Verstellung, entsetzlich, ja empörend ruhig, die Tatze in einem samtnen Handschuh, und damit die öffentliche Meinung streichelnd [...]’\(^ {46}\) Although this is supposed to relate to the section on Lady Gray from *Henry VI*, we leap from *Richard II* to *2 Henry IV*, to the usurper king’s last words to his son, ‘die Shakspeare schon längst für ihn [i.e. Louis Philippe] aufgeschrieben’.\(^ {47}\) Thus, too, the Joan of Arc section (*I Henry VI*) insists on the multiform injustices of the English towards the French, from the Maid of Orleans — to Napoleon.

Heine had of course been reading some history, the ‘geniales Buch’ of Jules Michelet.\(^ {48}\) Heine is not interested in Michelet’s basic thesis that English literary culture is anti-Christian. He does not utilize Michelet’s rather cheap point that the Shakespearean legends depict the Bard beginning as a butcher. But he cannot resist Michelet’s sustained account of English commercialism, mercantilism and hard-headedness, the

\(^{43}\) ‘Because history, as it was to be presented, required them to be involved’. *SS*, VII, 218.

\(^ {44}\) ‘A prophet able to look back into the past’. Ibid., 230.

\(^ {45}\) ‘The gaps in history’. Ibid., 229.

\(^ {46}\) ‘A cunning hero, a creeping giant, a Titan at deception, calm to a terrible, even outrageous degree, his claws in a velvet glove, stroking public opinion with it.’ Ibid., 231.

\(^ {47}\) ‘That Shakespeare had long since written down for him’. Ibid.

technical superiority by which their foot-soldiery at Crécy destroyed the ‘fine fleur’ of French chivalry. Immediately Heine sees the opportunity for another image: the battle between prose and poetry. We almost believe that he is going to fall for the French ‘Ritterromantik’\(^49\) that Hugo and Alexandre Dumas père so eloquently represent. But his return to ‘objectivity’ is half-hearted: ‘Die Triumphe der Engländer sind immer eine Schande der Menschheit, seit den Tagen von Crécy und Poitiers, bis auf Waterloo. Klio ist immer ein Weib, trotz ihrer parteilosen Kälte, ist sie empfindlich für Ritterlichkeit und Heldensinn; und ich bin überzeugt, nur mit knirschendem Herzen verzeichnet sie in ihre Denktafeln die Siege der Engländer’.\(^50\)

I believe it is also essentially from Michelet that Heine introduces into Shakespeare discussion the notion of ‘Renaissance’.\(^51\) At least I am not sure of its use before him. By introducing it into his account of Portia (also at the end, in his description of Juliet)\(^52\) he places the Christian-Jewish contrast into even sharper relief, between ‘Glück’ and ‘Mißgeschick’,\(^53\) between the ‘Nachblüte des griechischen Geistes’\(^54\) and the claustrophobic restrictions of Judaism. I need not tell this company that this is a conflict unresolved in Heine himself. For nineteenth-century Shakespeare studies at large, the notion of Renaissance is a means towards situating his work historically and culturally inside a framework that involves France, Italy and England. And that in itself shows how *Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen* succeeds — if that is the right expression — in remaining outside institutionalized German Shakespeare reception.

\(^{49}\) ‘Chivalric Romanticism’.
\(^{50}\) ‘The triumphs of the English are always a scandal to humanity, from the days of Crécy and Poitiers to those of Waterloo. Clio is always female, and despite her cold even-handedness, she has a soft spot for chivalry and heroics, and I am convinced that she only lists the victories of the English in her annals through gritted teeth’. *SS*, VII, 229.
\(^{51}\) Ibid., VI, 262.
\(^{52}\) Ibid., VII, 292.
\(^{53}\) ‘Fortune’ and ‘calamity’. Ibid., 262.
\(^{54}\) ‘Late flowering of the Greek spirit’.
Occasional poetry has a double focus. It may involve the immediate (or seemingly immediate) reaction to events (victories, celebrations). It may stand back from those events, in reflection or reconsideration of the implications of adventitious happening, and try to wrap mere contingency in some explanatory religious or ethical or philosophical envelope. The event may, on the other hand, bring to the surface untried forms and formulations, now ‘occasioned’. The centenary of Friedrich Schiller’s birth in 1859 was, like our millennium, an event plotted and prepared for, and it reflected that directional quality. It was also an occasion that touched off spontaneous reactions. The story of Schiller as a subject in German poetry does not of course start in 1859, nor does it end there. Conrad Ferdinand Meyer’s later poem and anthology piece ‘Schillers Bestattung/Schiller’s Burial’ (1882) can afford to be sparse and economical in detail because it comes towards the end of a biographical (hagiographical) and historicizing century that had both documented Schiller and rhetoricized his achievement. It sets aside the merely

1 An earlier version of this chapter was published with the same title in History and Literature. Essays in Honor of Karl S. Guthke, ed. by William Collins Donahue and Scott Denham (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 2000), 351–65.
circumstantial and gives us the punchline, ‘Der Menschheit Genius war’s’.4 Like Karl Gutzkow’s earlier remark on the same subject — ‘Es war der Genius des deutschen Volks’5 — it ends the anecdotal speculation begun, say, by Gustav Schwab’s biography of 1840, and now states a myth. At the other end of the scale, Johann Wolfgang Goethe’s poem ‘Epilog zu Schillers “Glocke”/Epilogue to Schiller’s “Bell”’ of 1805 is also an occasional poem (his attempt at a more elaborate apotheosis of Schiller in 1805 collapsed).6 Unlike the Romantics, who saw the vacant throne left by Schiller rather than his actual achievement, Goethe used his authority to foreclose such counterclaims and to reinstate Schiller in the national canon where he felt him to belong:

Denn er war unser! Mag das stolze Wort
Den lauten Schmerz gewaltig übertönen!
Er mochte sich bei uns im sichern Port,
Nach wildem Sturm, zum Daurenden gewöhnen.
Indessen schritt sein Geist gewaltig fort
Ins Ewige des Wahren, Guten, Schönen,
Und hinter ihm, in wesenlosem Scheine,
Lag, was uns alle bändigt, das Gemeine.7

Those words, ‘Denn er war unser!’ might be a stumbling-block to some in 1805, but in 1859 few would dare to contradict their self-evident validity. The irony was that, at face value, they were equally applicable

---

5 ‘It was the genius of the German people’. Karl Gutzkow, Vom Baum der Erkenntnis, Werke, ed. by Reinhold Gensel, 12 vols (Berlin, Leipzig, Vienna, Stuttgart: Bong, n.d. [1910]), XII, 119, also 282f.
7 ‘For he was ours! And may the mighty word Sound louder than our cries of pain!
He felt at ease with us in our safe port,
The storm now past, to settle was his gain.
His spirit now in giant strides set forth
Towards eternal truth and goodness, beauty’s fame,
Behind him lay, reduced to dimmest light,
What binds us all, the base and common plight’. Schiller, I, 484.
to Shakespeare in 1864, indeed after Franz Dingelstedt’s proprietary statement of 1858, ‘Unser Shakspeare’, the present tense would seem more appropriate.

* * *

This is, rightly speaking, a large subject, and one whose wider implications I do not wish to explore. The commemoration of Schiller’s hundredth birthday in 1859, however strong it might have been on ideology, hardly produced much poetry of the quality of Goethe’s in 1805. The event proper commands more attention. It has national, nation-wide and international significance — celebrated in 440 German and fifty foreign towns — ‘zu Melbourne in Australien wie zu Valparaiso am Stillen Ozean’ in Jacob Burckhardt’s embracing phrase — and as such it has been documented in almost exhaustive detail. Quite the same cannot be said of the Shakespeare festivities in Germany in 1864. On a much more modest scale and with another emphasis, it too is an important event for German ‘Bildungsbürgertum’ (educated middle class). Whereas the national occasion could command names to conjure with — Jacob Grimm, Paul Heyse, Ferdinand Freiligrath, Friedrich Theodor Vischer, the young and still unknown Wilhelm Raabe, and just across the border Jacob Burckhardt and Gottfried Keller, to mention but a few — the international happening was by its very nature more restricted. There were a few who lent their voices to both events, notable Shakespearean scholars or translators featuring prominently in 1859: Hermann Marggraff, Friedrich von Bodenstedt, Franz Dingelstedt, Rudolph Genée (and in exile, Freiligrath and Georg Herwegh). Karl Gutzkow, forgetting his earlier animus against Schiller, is represented at

---

9 An indication of the extent of the celebrations may be gained from two contemporary publications: Adolph Büchting, *Verzeichniss der zur hundertjährigen Geburtsfeier Friedrich von Schiller’s erschienenen Bücher, Kunstblätter, Kunstwerke, Musikalien, Denkmünzen etc. [...]* (Nordhausen: Büchting, 1860) and Karl Tropus, *Schiller-Denkmal*, 2 vols (Berlin: Riegel, 1860) (henceforth cited as *Schiller-Denkmal*). In addition, the names are listed in Karl Goedeke, *Grundriß zur Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung*, continued by Edmund Goetze et al., 10 vols (Dresden: Ehlermann, 1893), V, i, 128–32.
both events. Friedrich Hebbel, ambivalent as ever on the subject of the relative merits of the two great poets, restricted his views on Schiller to a smaller circle, having refused Dingelstedt’s suggestion that he might complete Schiller’s unfinished *Demetrius*. In 1864, he was already dead. Otto Ludwig, his trenchant distinction between Shakespeare and Schiller not yet available to the reading public, took no part. Franz Grillparzer’s scepticism towards the event kept him from delivering the speech he had written. Both occasions produced institutions, the ‘Schillerstiftung’, and the ‘Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft’, respectively, and it is fair to say that the ‘official’ and ‘institutional’ set the tone for both 1859 and 1864. Then there was Theodor Fontane, addressing the ‘Tunnel’ society in 1859 with the poem ‘Zum Schillerfest des “Tunnel”’ and in 1864 delivering the extended speech known as ‘Zum Shakespeare-Fest’. In the scheme of things in both years, and among the many names of the great and the good, Fontane’s could as yet mean little to most of his contemporaries. 1859 was not another stepping-stone to higher preferment and enhanced reputation, as it was, say, for his old associate Heyse.

Inside Fontane studies, it is not a subject that has commanded much interest. This need not matter unduly, for surely his later theatrical criticism is the major area in his oeuvre where Schiller and Shakespeare meet. That critical corpus serves a double function. The following remark from 1873 is not untypical: ‘Meine Empfindung verwirft Uriel Acosta und ist umgekehrt nicht nur durch alles Shakespearsche hingerissen, sondern sogar auch durch die Räuber’.

13 Schiller, I, 428f., 583f.
14 Heyse’s contributions can be found in Paul Heyse, *Lyrische Dichtungen*, 4 vols (Stuttgart and Berlin: Cotta, 1911), II, 319–25.
15 ‘My feeling rejects Uriel Acosta [a play by Gutzkow], but by the same token is not just enraptured by all of Shakespeare, but also by the Robbers’. Theodor Fontane, *Werke, Schriften und Briefe*, ed. by Walter Keitel and Helmuth Nürberger, 20 vols (Munich: Hanser, 1964–84). Henceforth cited as *SW*, followed by section, volume and page number; here IV (Briefe), i, 431f.
making important distinctions and registering preferences, inside both Schiller’s and Shakespeare’s oeuvre as they appear in Berlin productions. My concern here is not to open up a far-ranging discussion of Fontane’s attitudes to Schiller and Shakespeare — ‘ein zu weites Feld’ — but to set him in a more general context where he also has his place.

Before turning specifically to Fontane, it may do to sketch in a little of the background to the two events in which he shared. Neither occasion — if we except the unforeseen and unforeseeable political development of the Schleswig-Holstein crisis in 1864 — seemed to do little more than confirm tendencies and developments already culminant. Who needed the fortuitous cycle of birthdates to remind one of reputations already securely and firmly established? Certainly the animadversions expressed about Shakespeare in 1864 had been common currency for the best part of half a century and hardly needed the rhetorical reiterations and insistences of German professors and ‘Oberlehrer’. No one was in doubt as to Shakespeare’s supernal and universal genius: history’s arsenal of commensurate names would include Homer, or Michelangelo, Columbus or Raphael. There was general agreement, too, on the Germanic brotherhood that embraced Shakespeare, with the added piquancy that the German part of that confraternity had turned the tables on the English and was now, by general admission, taking the lead in Shakespearean appreciation and scholarship. Direct comparisons between Shakespeare and Schiller (or Goethe) on the other hand, were a problem (only really solved by Friedrich Gundolf’s ideologically charged Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist/Shakespeare and the German Spirit of 1911). They were best avoided. One could distinguish the national (Schiller) from the universal (Shakespeare), and accord to each its validity. Or one could invoke the powerful ideological mythologies and self-assured teleological reductionisms that associated the renewal of German literature proper with the ‘Geistesheld’ Lessing, the true forerunner of Weimar greatness, and his crucial sponsoring of Shakespeare against the French. This did

17 Friedrich Gundolf, Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist (Berlin: Bondi, 1911).
not involve reading the small print of Lessing’s seventeenth *Literaturbrief* of 1759, an approach not seemly to the broad-brush technique of nineteenth-century German literary historiography.18

These positions were not without their differentiations, paradoxes, and inconsistencies. There was what appeared like a tacit agreement between the older Romantics, August Wilhelm Schlegel and Ludwig Tieck, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, to raise Shakespeare above any indigenous dramatic production, notably Schiller’s. Instead, the aim was to make Shakespeare the exemplar of principles, features and ideas that knew no national or temporal constraints. In reality however, useful though it may be to compare the older Romantics and Hegel in their respective attitudes to Shakespeare and Schiller, there are major divergences. Schlegel saw Aeschylus, Sophocles and Shakespeare as supernal representatives of the tragic, equally valid, yet separated through time, culture, and religion, the ‘Classical’ as against the ‘Romantic’. Hegel by contrast, perceived in Shakespeare’s major figures affinities with the ultimate creations of classical Greek tragedy; only Shakespeare’s modern, ‘innerlich’ position was for him the last strand of Romantic art before its dissolution into subjectivity.19

Where they converged was in the Romantic disapproval of Schiller and their cult of Shakespeare, and in Hegel’s interest in Shakespeare as the representative of the post-classical, Romantic drama, and his growing disenchantment with Schiller the dramatist and thinker.20 Be that as it may, sets of prejudices — the Romantics’ animus against Schiller, or their Bardolatry — were hardly good either for dramatic production or for a proper understanding of one’s own indigenous traditions. The first major reaction against this comes, not by chance, from Christian Dietrich Grabbe, a dramatist beholden to both Shakespearean and Schillerian practice, but concerned also to find a ‘national’ style: in his


Über die Shakespearo-Manie/On Shakespeare-Mania of 1827. The attempts by the first major nineteenth-century literary historians — August Koberstein, Georg Gottfried Gervinus, Julian Schmidt, Hermann Hettner, August Friedrich Vilmar — to accord Schiller his rightful place in ‘Nationalliteratur’ and to counteract both Romantic and Young German strictures, were also not without their problems. For often these same historians, like Koberstein, Gervinus and Schmidt, were also votaries of Shakespeare, who if pressed would make unflattering contrasts between the merits of Shakespeare’s Elizabethan age, and current literary and cultural conditions in Germany. The Shakespeare cult could conveniently join forces with neo-Hegelian aesthetics, more often than not lacking Hegel’s differentiated analysis — Hermann Ulrici, Heinrich Theodor Rötscher, Friedrich Theodor Vischer — and inclined to see in Shakespeare’s world the workings of a ‘Grundidee’ or a ‘Weltgesetz’.

That is, in Gustav Freytag’s later phrase, the ‘ideal nexus’ of the discussion of Schiller and Shakespeare, the debate reserved for the aestheticians, the theoreticians, and the professoriate. But what of its ‘pragmatic’ coefficient, the popular reception, the reactions of the general educated reader? In the 1840s, it is Shakespeare’s Hamlet who appears, in Ferdinand Freiligrath’s terms at least (‘Deutschland ist Hamlet’), to be a symbol more appropriate to Germany’s political condition than, say, Schiller’s Marquis Posa. But even Freiligrath’s famous reference should not be exaggerated beyond its immediate significance. Above all, one should not overlook the place of Schiller in the articulation of national political aspirations. Whatever doubts literary historians or aestheticians might express, Schiller was assuming a commanding status, backed by a popular movement of considerable momentum. Some of this energy was directed towards the fostering of local patriotic pride: the celebrations of the Stuttgart ‘Liederkranz’ in 1825 and 1826, for


22 ‘Basic idea’, ‘world law’.
instance, or the unveiling in Stuttgart of Thorwaldsen’s statue of Schiller in 1839 (before the monuments to Goethe in Frankfurt and to Lessing in Braunschweig), or Andreas Streicher’s, Gustav Schwab’s and Hermann Kurz’s biographies. The ‘Schiller-Vereine’ of the 1840s, in Leipzig, in Breslau (Hoffmann von Fallersleben), and in Stuttgart, were actual centres of ‘Vormärz’ opposition and liberal aspiration. In some sense, therefore, the particular national, political and cultural significance of the Schiller year of 1859, without which the occasion could not have burgeoned into what it did, lay very much in galvanizing forces already present, active, and vociferous.\(^23\)

Could the same be said about Shakespeare? At such a popular level, clearly not. The claim that Shakespeare was ‘ours’ did not need Dingelstedt’s much quoted declaration of 1858, for it had been current at least since Tieck and Schlegel. Everything seemed to speak for the validity of the statement made in 1864 by a Marburg professor: ‘Jetzt steht der britische Shakespeare im deutschen Gewande in der Bibliothek eines jeden gebildeten deutschen Hausvaters’,\(^24\) and there would be not just the ‘Schlegel-Tieck’ translation, but many different versions to choose from. Bibliographical evidence alone indicates a wide range of reception, from ‘Familien-Shakespeare’ or popular biography, translations of Shakespeareana from the English or the French, or illustrated works, to studies of characters or scholarly enquiries into matters of text or dating. Again, the year 1864 merely crystallizes momentarily a whole process; yet it, too, has its unmistakable time reference.

The ‘Schillerfeier’ of 1859, and its correlatives, the ‘Schillerstiftung’ and the ‘Schillerpreis’ — on this all modern scholars are agreed — was an eminently political occasion.\(^25\) It united all liberal and national

---


\(^24\) ‘Now the British Shakespeare in German guise is to be found in the library of every educated German husband and father’. L. O. Lemecke, *Shakespeare in seinem Verhältnisse zu Deutschland. Ein Vortrag gehalten im Rathhaussaal zu Marburg am 16. Febr. 1864* (Leipzig: Vogel, 1864), 26.

forces across a wide spectrum of the population and across the divides of educational attainment. It was perhaps short on landowners and peasants, on Catholic clergy, officers or the nobility, as those least affected by the atmosphere of liberalism that characterizes the late 1850s and the early 1860s. That such a popular demonstration did not attend the truly muted celebrations of Goethe’s anniversary in 1849 is a tribute to the change in course since that year of reaction. Yet we should not forget Gottfried Kinkel, Freiligrath and Georg Herwegh, who added their voices to the general jubilation, while still exiles from the year of revolutions. It was a reflection of Schiller’s status as ‘Nationaldichter’, despite the monumental symbol of Ernst Rietschel’s statue in Weimar, on which both poets, Goethe and Schiller, clasp the same laurels. On the intellectual level, Rudolf Haym’s article in the recently-founded Preussische Jahrbücher sums up the best national, liberal and cultural expectations of the event:

erschienen, die uns noch vorenthalten sind, und zu denen wir daher in einer Stimmung emporblicken, welche die Grundstimmung sämtlicher Schillerschen Dichtungen ist.26

Yet one senses that this nobility of tone — Jacob Grimm reaches similar heights, like Burckhardt, who understandably omits any reference to the German nation — was reserved for the discriminating audience or reader. When Dr. Oskar Jäger (later head of the Königl. Friedrich Wilhelm Gymnasium in Cologne and a pillar of Wilhelminian rectitude) addresses the festive gathering in Prussian Wetzlar, he also stresses to his young charges the ‘Einmütigkeit’ occasioned by the event, but casts an eye back to Schiller’s place (as he saw it) in the political developments around 1813, his ‘nationale Gesinnung’, his role as ‘Seher’. Stepping outside of the assembly hall and into the open, he declares his hand: ‘Ja, meine Herren, jetzt, wo unter den Auspizien eines hochherzigen Regenten Preußen die Fahne dieser maßvollen und männlichen Freiheit den deutschen Stämmen voranträgt’27 (the rest is predictable). Again, one senses that the authorities, elsewhere nervous about the occasion getting out of hand and provoking civil disorder, would warm to the appropriateness of these sentiments. Perhaps it is worth recalling that the ‘Schillerfeier’, for all its laudable and almost universally expressed notions of ‘bürgerliche Freiheit’,28 did not infect all its participants

26 ‘Like no other poet he lives immortal in the hearts of his people. The world has seen the unforgettable spectacle of the divided tribes, our people torn apart in great numbers, scattered throughout the globe, meeting together in the veneration of this poet, just as once the Greeks did in their praise and appreciation of Homer. This November celebration, as one of the festive speeches we have read called it, was a ‘true victory festival of the mind’, a testimony to the lasting power and imperishable liveliness of the workings of the spirit. It was above all a national festival. The German people admitted that, however outwardly torn, it is inwardly indestructible, and that the symbols of its unity are more dear to it than anything else. But more than that. One can say that immortality and fame like this has never before been bestowed. For with the poet’s greatness we have celebrated what he was still lacking in ultimate perfection. By celebrating the man with the poet, he has appeared as a symbol of all the moral qualities that we are still lacking and towards which we cast our eyes, filled with the same sensation that the whole of Schiller’s poetry engenders in us’. Rudolf Haym, ‘Schiller an seinem hundertjährigen Jubiläum’, Gesammelte Aufsätze (Berlin: Weidmann, 1903), 49–120 (118f).

27 ‘Accord’; ‘national feeling’; ‘seer’; ‘Yes, gentlemen, now that, under the auspices of a magnanimous regent, Prussia bears the banner of this measured and manly freedom to the German lands’. Oskar Jäger, Zu Schillers Gedächtnis (Wetzlar: n.p., 1859); Jäger, Pro Dom. Reden und Aufsätze (Berlin: Seehagen, 1894), 3–10 (3, 7, 9).

28 ‘Civic freedom’.
with high solemnity: Gottfried Keller’s, Paul Heyse’s and Friedrich Hebbel’s private reactions are revealing.\[29\] It also had elements that were less spontaneous. On November 9, 1859, by royal decree of the regent of Prussia, was issued the declaration of the ‘Schillerpreis’ and the ‘Schillerstiftung’.\[30\] If the popular demonstrations reflected political liberalization (however short-lived) and liberal notions of ‘Volk’ and culture, the ‘Schillerpreis’ was a more overt attempt at annexing for cultural politics the name of the greatest German dramatist, to harness the theatre, the temple of art, the ‘sittliche Idee des Staates’ (Rudolf Gottschall’s words).\[31\] The great and good on the jury — Leopold von Ranke, Theodor Mommsen, Johann Gustav Droysen, Georg Gottfried Gervinus, Gustav Freytag, later Hermann Hettner, Julian Schmidt, Heinrich von Treitschke and Wilhelm Scherer — and their association with this attempt to raise literary standards in the drama, had little effect on the generally mediocre level of those honoured (only Hebbel and Otto Ludwig stand out, both now spent forces).

As the ‘Schillerfeier’ merged into the ‘Shakespearefest’, the irony was that these years, while reflecting the high status of dramatic art, its classical authority and the canonicity of its major representatives (with Shakespeare in first place of esteem), were generally ones of epigonal formalism and imitation, accompanied by a dearth of real talent.\[32\] Grillparzer was silent; Hebbel and Ludwig, as mentioned, were cut off through the supervision of circumstances. As Helmut Schanze has shown, 1859 is symbolic in seeing the publication of two major works which dispense with conventional dramatic theory: the third edition of Arthur Schopenhauer’s *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*/The World as Will and Representation, and the posthumous *Philosophie der Kunst*/Philosophy of Art of F. W. J. Schelling.\[33\] These exceptions apart, the problems

---

31 ‘The moral idea of the state’. Ibid., 42.
attendant on celebrations of this kind were that they elevated poets to paradigms or absolutes, and placed them on pedestals beyond the reach of the young and not-so-young alike. They imposed patterns — the historical drama springs most readily to mind — that had once been appropriate in their own time, in both Shakespeare’s and Schiller’s, indeed eminently worthy of emulation, but that were not endlessly transferrable to Hohenstaufens, or Habsburgs — or Hohenzollerns. These awarenesses form part of the current general discussion of dramatic technique, which, while not coinciding exactly with these celebrations, certainly provided its broad theoretical background. What is more, they bring together the names of Shakespeare and Schiller as role models for a German tragedy of the future.34

For all that its rhetorical gesturings and orotundity seemed to indicate a rehearsal of 1859, the ‘Shakespearefest’ of 1864 nevertheless had accentuations of its own. Even those who saw the links between the occasions were aware of this. Dr. Paul Möbius, who addressed the festive assembly in Leipzig, makes this point:

Selbst das wichtigste und großartigste von allen, die Schillerfeier von 1859, durch welche erst der Grund für die nachfolgenden geebnet wurde, so verschiedenartig noch während der Festtage selbst ihre eigentliche Bedeutung aufgefaßt wurde, galt zuletzt doch nichts Anderem, als was nachher ein Schützenfest zu Frankfurt, ein Turnfest zu Leipzig und endlich in ebendemselben Jahre die erhabene Gedenkfeier unseres Vaterlandes von französischer Knechtschaft noch zu klarerem Ausdrucke bringen sollte.

Es war die herzerhebende Freude, in dem Dichter einen Mittelpunkt für alle Stämme und Parteien der Nation gefunden zu haben, einen Mittelpunkt, der Bürgschaft zu geben schien, daß der Geist, der schon vorhanden, sich zuletzt doch noch eine Form verschaffen werde, die auch den rauhesten Stürmen der Wirklichkeit Widerstand zu leisten vermöge.

Und heute feiern wir abermals das Geburtsfest eines Dichters und abermals ist es nicht unsere Stadt, nicht unser Land allein, das an dieser Feier Theil nimmt. Schon längst drang die Kunde zu uns, daß auch diesmal, ähnlich wie 1859, an den Orten der verschiedensten Länder, ja

---

34 For an indication of the extent of these discussions, see the bibliography in Realismus und Gründerzeit. Manifeste und Dokumente zur deutschen Literatur 1848–1880, vol. I, ed. by Max Bücher, Werner Hahl, Georg Jäger and Reinhard Wittmann (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1976), 452–56.
Welttheile, wo Deutsche zu Deutschen sich gefunden, sie zu festlichem
Beginnen zusammentreten und das Andenken des großen Shakespeare
feiern wollen.35

Of note is that insight that a poet has become the ‘Mittelpunkt für alle
Stämme und Parteien der Nation’.36 Certainly in 1859 Schiller the poet
was the focus for whatever was associated with the idea of a nation.
But could Shakespeare fulfil such a function in 1864? Clearly not in
the same way. For Möbius, in common with most speakers, goes on to
stress the special nature of the Shakespeare celebrations. Here, also, two
different strands are apparent. Clearly this cannot be a national occasion
except in a very general sense; rather, other phrases from Möbius like
‘Blick auf das Ewige’ or ‘Weltbürgertum’37 indicate the overarching,
universal appeal of the Shakespearean achievement, one that, if pressed,
speakers might declare to be superior to Goethe’s or Schiller’s, indeed
the greatest of all time. But, whether in verse pageants, declamations,
speeches or whatever — all along the lines of 1859 — particular
German concerns obtrude. The main note is ‘er ist unser’;38 we have
annexed him and Germany is his ‘zweite Heimath,’39 the scene of a new

35 ‘Even the greatest and most signal of all, the Schiller celebrations of 1859, which
laid the ground for the ones that followed, despite the differences in their actual
significance, that became manifest as they unfolded, was in reality aimed at nothing
which would not be expressed at rifle-club festivals in Frankfurt or a gymnastics
display in Leipzig, and in the same year as the mighty commemoration of our
fatherland’s liberation from French vassalage.
It warmed the heart to find the poet providing a focal point, an earnest, for all the
regions and parties of the nation, for our hopes, that the spirit, already present, will
find a form that will be able to withstand even the roughest storms of reality.
And today we celebrate again the birthday of a poet, and again it is not our city,
not our country alone, that joins in this festival. We have long since received the
news that this time, like as in 1859, in places in the most disparate countries, or
continents, where German meets German, they come together to celebrate and to
mark the memory of the great Shakespeare’. Paul Möbius, Shakespeare als Dichter
der Naturwahrheit. Festrede bei der Shakespearefeier zu Leipzig am 23. April 1864 gehalten
(Leipzig: Voigt & Günther, 1864), 5f.

36 ‘Focal point for all regions and parties of the nation’.

37 ‘A view into the eternal’; ‘citizenship of the world’. Möbius, Die deutsche
Shakespearefeier. Eine Rechtfertigung derselben nach einem im kaufmännischen Vereine zu
Leipzig gehaltenen Vortrage (Leipzig: Julius Werner, 1864), 5; Möbius, Shakespeare als
Dichter, 15.

38 ‘He is ours’. J. J. Rietmann, Shakspeare und seine Bedeutung. Festrede gesprochen an der

39 ‘Second homeland’. August Schwartzkopff, Shakespeare, in seiner Bedeutung für die
Kirche unserer Tage dargestellt […], 2nd ed. (Halle: Richard Mühlmann, 1864), 3.
'Bellalliance'\textsuperscript{40} (note the terminology). This, in its turn, has a double emphasis. Following Julian Schmidt’s insight of a few years earlier, it is Shakespeare the ‘Protestant’,\textsuperscript{41} the representative of a literary culture for so long denied in Germany who is ultimately responsible for the ‘Wiedergeburt des zweiten goldenen Zeitalters’\textsuperscript{42} across the water, who is the ‘Vater und Meister’\textsuperscript{43} of modern German poetry. But this annexation has meant that the Germans — Coleridge, after all, had said it — are now the true guardians of the sacred flame of the Shakespearean heritage (‘am Hausaltare deutscher Nation’).\textsuperscript{44} In this Germanic brotherhood, ‘Fleisch vom eignen Fleisch’, ‘Blut vom eignen Blut’,\textsuperscript{45} it is Shakespeare who represents the deepest and most lasting bond. For it was ‘deutsches Talent, deutscher Geschmack, deutscher Scharfsinn und deutscher Fleiß’\textsuperscript{46} that had been largely responsible for the current revival of things Shakespearean, the restoration of the Shakespearean text, or philosophical and historical insights into the plays themselves. And it is true that the translations into English of major German Shakespeare scholars like Hermann Ulrici, Georg Gotfried Gervinus, later Karl Elze, or the seeming over-representation of Germans in the notes to the great Variorum edition started in 1874, might well bear this out. The main product of the German Shakespeare celebrations of 1864 is of course the foundation of the ‘Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft’.\textsuperscript{47} This is not the place to discuss the significance of that society. Suffice it to say, however, that the statement of intent prepared in 1863 by Wilhelm Oechelhäuser, later its president, stresses the wider, national, propaedeutic function of the society and its forthcoming celebration:

\begin{quote}
Es wird vielmehr in dieser Beziehung die wesentliche Aufgabe des beginnenden vierten Jahrhunderts nach Shakespeare’s Geburt bleiben,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{40} A reference to the battle of Waterloo. Kuenzel, \textit{William Shakespeare}, 44.
\textsuperscript{41} Lua, \textit{William Shakespeare}, 11.
\textsuperscript{44} ‘At the tutelary altar of the German nation’. Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} ‘Flesh of our flesh’; ‘blood of our blood’. Möbius, \textit{Die deutsche Shakespearefeier}, 12.
\textsuperscript{46} ‘German talent, German taste, German intelligence, and German industry’. Kreyssig, \textit{Ueber die sittliche}, 8.
There is an irony that this takes place against a background where the first cloud to overshadow Anglo-German political relations had appeared on the horizon: the Schleswig-Holstein affair. Several anniversary speakers are at pains to remind their audiences that the England with whom they are culturally bonded is not that of Palmerston, Russell and the free press. The ‘Shakespeare-Gesellschaft’ is, of course, too fastidious to bring politics of this nature into its founding statements (a scruple which it abandons but briefly in 1870–71). It is also worth reflecting that the great period of early Victorian reception of things German — Fontane still experiences its high point while in London — was now moving into a less uncritical phase. And there is in German historiography and historical thinking the awareness that, whereas Shakespeare might represent the highest modern human achievement in poetry, he does not possess the ‘innere geistige Reife’ of the classical German tradition or its association with philosophy and scholarship and its rooting in antiquity. Nor does the open-handed acceptance of the Shakespearean Weltanschauung and its political and intellectual implications involve an identity with his present-day countrymen or their institutions.

Which brings me back to Theodor Fontane. Any reader of his works and letters will need no reminder of the respect and love that both Schiller...
and Shakespeare enjoy in his esteem. It is not unqualified or uncritical, especially in Schiller’s case. The words in a letter to Maximilian Ludwig of 1878 — ‘Daß ich im Uebrigen meinen Schiller aufrichtiger liebe und bewundere, als es das nachplappernde Phrasenvolk, das Salon und Schule unsicher macht, beim besten Willen imstande ist, brauche ich Ihnen nicht erst zu versichern’ — come after fairly uncharitable remarks on *Die Räuber/The Robbers*. Even at the very beginning of his poetic career, brought up as he was on a forced diet of Schillerian ballads, he had made fun of the Schiller cult. His occasional poem ‘Zum Schillerfest des “Tunnel”’ is a toast or ‘Trinkspruch’, an occasional poem, which gains its dignity from the ‘occasion’:

> Es sprach Apoll: “Ich bin der Lieder müde
  Zu Ehren all der Damons und Damöte,
  Ich mag nicht mehr, was unwahr und was prüde”.

> Und siehe da, anbrach die Morgenröte
  Der deutschen Kunst, vom Berge stieg zu Tale
  Die hehre Doppelsonne Klopstock-Goethe.

> Geboren war die Welt der Ideale;
  Hell schien das Licht; nur für die nächt’gen Zeiten
  Gebrach uns noch das Feuer der Fanale;

> Gebrach uns noch das Feuer, das von Weiten
  Zu Waffen ruft, von hohem Bergeskamme,
  Wenn’s gilt für Sitte, Land und Thron zu streiten;

> Gebrach uns noch die hohe, heil’ge Flamme,
  Die unsren Sinn von Kleinheit, Selbstsucht reinigt
  Und uns zusammenschweißt zu einem Stamme;

> Und Schiller kam und Deutschland war geeinigt.  

---

51 ‘That I incidentally am a far greater lover and admirer of Schiller than all the cliché-mongers who are at large in salons and schools are capable of, however hard they try, I hardly need to assure you’. *SW*, IV, ii, 567.

52 ‘Apollo spoke: “I’m tired of songs
  That honour all the swains and their swainesses
  And all that to untruth and prudes belongs”.
  Lo and behold, the dawn undid her tresses
  On German art, from mount to dale
  The double sun of Klopstock–Goethe presses.
  And born was now the world of true ideals;
  Bright shone the light; but for the hours of night
The occasion is all-important. This is not Zurich, where Gottfried Keller produces stanza after stanza of high-sounding verse to impress elevated seriousness on his fellow-citizens. This is the more intimate atmosphere of the ‘Tunnel’ society, among fellow-poets, as it were; without the whole declamatory apparatus that lesser and greater talents were inflicting on captive audiences. Indeed one states in less hushed and reverential terms what speaker after speaker was saying (or was going to say, for the ‘Schillerfeier’ of the ‘Tunnel’ took place on the 8th, not on the 9th of November, the actual birthday).\textsuperscript{33} Clearly this is not a poem which sustains too great a degree of formal analysis. It is clearly tongue-in-cheek: the disjunction between the rhetorical flights it perpetrates and the rhyme framework (\textit{terza rima}) it employs, gives it away. ‘Damöte’/‘Morgenröte’ might seem bad enough, but ’Und siehe da, anbrach die Morgenröte’ is certainly no better. One notes with interest, however, a coincidence between Fontane’s two opening stanzas and a section of Jacob Grimm’s speech, with its progression from ‘poesielose Orgons- und Damonstücke’\textsuperscript{54} to the heights and achievements of Klopstock and Goethe. But Grimm in his turn was rehearsing the perceptions — the clichés — attendant on nineteenth-century awareness of ‘Nationalliteratur’. The insight that the ‘Schillerfeier’ restores ‘was uns gebrach’\textsuperscript{55} and is a force for the spiritual unanimity that must precede actual political union, is the real point of Fontane’s poem, one in 1859 reiterated endlessly at various levels of sophistication. It is not even the only poem produced by the ‘Tunnel’ for the occasion. Fontane’s friend and fellow-poet Scherenberg delivered himself of several execrable stanzas,\textsuperscript{56} overladen with rhetoric and inventive conceits, against which Fontane’s seems restrained and apposite. For all that has been noted about its tone, it is enshrined in Adolph Büchting’s \textit{Verzeichniß}/Directory of 1860, an important source of

\begin{flushleft}
We needed fire to follow on its heels. \\
We needed fire to call out from the night \\
To arms, from highest mountain top, \\
For home and hearth and throne to fight; \\
We needed sacred lofty flame — no sop — \\
To clear our minds in pettiness benighted \\
And weld us in one undivided knot. \\
And Schiller came: and Germany was united’. \textit{SW}, VI, 470f.
\end{flushleft}

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., I, 470. \\
\textsuperscript{54} ‘Orgons and Damons and their unpoetic stuff’. \textit{Schiller}, I, 444. \\
\textsuperscript{55} ‘What we were lacking’. \\
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Schiller-Denkmal}, I, 199–221.
information about the 1859 celebrations, and its text graces Tropus’s *Schiller-Denkmal* of the same year.

Fontane’s Shakespeare piece was, however, not published in his lifetime and has not been the subject of any significant critical interest. We need not take too seriously his diary entry that it was ‘aufs Papier hingeschmissen wohl oder übel’. He had made notes, which suggests a degree of reflexion. In essence, however, he needed no preparation. Shakespeare was already long since enshrined in his scheme of things, through a knowledge of the text, and experience of live performance at home and in London. Fontane is part of the generation that includes Freiligrath, Herwegh and Bodenstedt; like the first two, he is aware of the political charge of the Shakespearean text (as in that early poem, ‘Shakespeare an einen deutschen Fürsten/Shakespeare to a German Prince’); like all three of them, he does not regard the so-called ‘Schlegel-Tieck’ version as definitive. There had been the rash experiment of a Hamlet translation (a version of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is lost), the theatre criticism from London, with its emphasis on authenticity and closeness to human experience. He had noted the way in which Shakespeare was still a ‘Dichter des Volks’ in England, part of an almost unbroken tradition of theatrical performance and role creation — in contrast with Germany, where Schiller had that function, whereas Shakespeare is ‘etwas Apartes’. It is worth mentioning that his two other English-language role models, Walter Scott and Charles Dickens, are in a sense part of a wider texture of Shakespeare reception, through the intertextual allusions which form part of the tissue of their

---


58 *Schiller-Denkmal*, I, 121.

59 The full text is published, as ‘Rede zum Shakespeare-Fest’, in *SW*, *Aufsätze*, I, 195–204.

60 ‘Dashed off as it comes’. *SW*, *Aufsätze*, I, 798.


62 *SW*, I, 758f.


64 ‘Something very special’. Ibid., 107.
work. Both Shakespeare and Scott come together to influence those early historical fragments, Wolsey, and especially the drama Carl Stuart. Fontane is aware of the discussion of Shakespeare in his formative years as a writer (Wagner’s Das Drama der Zukunft [sic], for instance) without necessarily subscribing to its proprietary claims. Above all — and this is crucial for his Shakespeare speech and marks it out from all others in 1864 known to me at least — he had been to the sacred place of pilgrimage, Stratford, the ‘Pilgerstätte’, the ‘Wallfahrtsort’. Again, that gave his remarks the stamp of authenticity that a more literary approach could not.

That is not to say that Fontane’s speech does not have a specifically German emphasis or an accentuation that is peculiarly his own. With others as well, he distinguishes Schiller the ‘Lieblingsdichter’ of 1859 from the superior genius of Shakespeare. The Germanophile proprietary claim ‘Shakespeare ist unser’ is qualified by the later reference to ‘[die] ganz[e] gebildet[e] Welt’ (another important difference from Schiller), the universal commonalty of Shakespearean connoisseurship and appreciation that knows no national boundaries. Fontane is steering a middle course between crude German partisanship (there is no mention of Schleswig-Holstein, for instance, a subject about which he has decided views) and an uncritical Anglophile stance. For all his fascination with English historical fact and fiction, he is not willing, as Gervinus or Julian Schmidt had been, to berate his fellow-countrymen for their failure to achieve a symbiosis of political and literary culture like that from which Shakespeare once emerged. At most the Histories could serve that function. The great tragedies — Hamlet, King Lear, Othello, Romeo and Juliet — are however free of these associations: their presentation of the human heart is the key to their appeal in all ages and nations. This point, it need hardly be said, had been common currency in German Shakespeare appreciation since Herder and was one of the first indications of an independence from English-language criticism. Quoting the words ‘Wunderkind’ or ‘Naturkind’, Fontane evokes

---

65 Ibid., 99.
66 Ibid., 202.
67 ‘Favourite poet’. Ibid., 195.
68 ‘Shakespeare is ours’. Ibid.
69 ‘The whole of the educated world’. Ibid., 196.
70 ‘Wondrous child’; ‘nature’s child’. Ibid., 197.
the oldest strands of Shakespearean reception and not the nineteenth century’s sophistication, and frees notions like ‘nature’s child’ or ‘negative capability’ from any anchorage in space and time and sites such genius anywhere — if need be, in Germany.

Fontane’s seemingly magisterial dismissal of the old biographical, anecdotal approach to Shakespeare — another of the nineteenth century’s obsessions — is however subject to gradations. Instead, he turns to topography: London and Stratford. Here, too, there are clear affinities with his own preoccupations, which find their expression not only in Ein Sommer in London/A Summer in London, Aus England/From England and Jenseit des Tweed/Beyond the Tweed, but also in his first major literary achievement, Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg/Walks through the March of Brandenburg. London (and to some extent Manchester) emerges in Fontane’s account not so much as the living site of past history, but as the repository of evidence and documentation of that past. London, the huge seething city, then as we now know at the apogee of its world-wide influence, lacks in Fontane’s eyes the quality of a past time-frame, of history caught in arrest, of living historical associations. This he finds in Waltham Abbey, in Oxford, in Chester, almost everywhere in Scotland (he turns aside from a visit to Glasgow) — and not least in Stratford. England, a country so obsessed with the changes conditional on world trade and naval and military might, has swept away so much of the old — in London more radically than elsewhere — and has thrown up edifices of the new. Thus Shakespeare’s London (Fontane accepts the effects of the Great Fire) exists only in images and documents or inscriptions. Its icon is not some haunt on the South Bank, but the bust in Poets’ Corner (and Fontane cannot resist the reference to Shakespeare’s near-neighbour in that place, Handel, a near-topos of German Shakespearean studies). Warwickshire, and more especially Stratford itself, is an enclave amid change and progress (witness its proximity to the cradle of the Industrial Revolution). Its cultural roots go even deeper than Shakespeare, back to the old folk ballads of a pre-industrial, pre-enclosure era. Thus Stratford — and Fontane knows all the other literary associations of Warwickshire — is all the more precious for having living traces of ‘das alte heitäre Land’. 71 But we are, as it were, with the writer all the time; he accompanies us

71 ‘The old happy land’. Ibid., 201.
to this place of pilgrimage (‘Pilgerstätte’, ‘Wallfahrtsort’); we stoop to enter the humble birthplace, we add our fingers to the thousands who have touched its walls. We are made aware — Washington Irving, who becomes a kind of spiritual ancestor of the *Wanderungen*, made the same point much earlier — that this may be against all reason and factual foundation, but we enter willingly and consciously into these pious delusions. And our human sense and our experience of life is invoked when Fontane examines the inscription on Shakespeare’s tomb and declares: ‘Es sind Worte, die nichts andres ausdrücken wollen, als die tiefe Sehnsucht nach Ruhe’. The vignettes, the linking of history and personal musing, the blending of the concretely factual with wider spheres of human experience, that ‘wir’ that involves us vicariously in the experience — all these point forward to the Fontane of *Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg*, on which he was then working. And — to revert to our overall theme — among the many speeches delivered on the occasion of Shakespeare’s tercentenary, it is unique for these very qualities. But let us not forget that the technique being unfolded in the Shakespeare piece and in the *Wanderungen* is also the basis of his later mature novel style: the importance of ‘place’, but above all its symbolism and human associations, the awareness that the particular and the local also involve, if not the universal, but certainly insights conditional on the widest range of human experience and (if we could but see it) human wisdom.

---

72 Ibid., 202.
73 ‘They are words that express nothing more than the deep longing for peace’. Ibid., 204.
Fig. 16 Theaterplatz in Dresden. Photo by author, CC BY-SA 4.0.
My real subject in this chapter is ‘lieux de mémoire’, ‘Erinnerungsorte’, ‘loci memoriae’ or ‘places of memory’. I shall be looking at three examples in a German context and will be examining them as they affect the national memory and its myths, but also the way the nation viewed its national poets and the emergent canon that served to galvanize national cultural aspirations. If we look at the ‘Urtext’ of this cult of memory, Pierre Nora’s *Les Lieux de mémoire* (1984–92) and especially its German equivalent, Étienne François’ and Hagen Schulze’s *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte* (2000), we notice that the concept of these national monuments, places or spaces, common to both works, is very commodious. It can be a place, like the Minster in Strasbourg or the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin or the city of Dresden. It can also be a person, like Arminius or Frederick the Great or Otto von Bismarck. Or it can be an event like the year 1968. These figures all mark out a space in the national memory and consciousness. Seen in these terms, therefore, figures in the literary canon like Johann Wolfgang Goethe and Friedrich Schiller, the one with *Faust*, the other with *Wilhelm Tell*, also constitute such places.

And yet we must be aware of the separateness of places of memory in France and Germany as presented by Nora and François and Schulze respectively. There can be no Rheims or Panthéon for Germany (no
Westminster Abbey); Victor Hugo, Jules Michelet, François Guizot and Augustin Thierry may have created the nineteenth-century view of France that in many ways is still current, but Germany has no Hugo, and the greatest of its nineteenth-century historians, such as Leopold von Ranke or Theodor Mommsen, are focused elsewhere. The Teutoburger Wald, Potsdam, the Wartburg, the Walhalla are all expressions of a nineteenth-century desire for nationhood, but none of them is in a capital city like Paris. The monuments in royal capitals like Munich or Berlin, though attempts at creating a historical panorama or progression, are nevertheless above all tokens of Bavarian or Prussian achievements and are unthinkable in any other context. This is not to diminish the significance of such representations of the national history, but a comparison with France is not in the first instance workable or desirable.4

François’ and Schulze’s volumes do recapture much of what the nineteenth century would have regarded as the central symbolism and iconography of its aspirations before and after 1848 or 1871, whereas places of memory in the twentieth century cannot be disassociated from the memorialization of a less positive past, ‘Mahnmale’, warning monuments, not just ‘Erinnerungsorte’.5 Thus the city of Dresden, which these volumes mark,6 is at once the ‘Elbflorenz’, the pearl of German cities, the cultural jewel with its matchless art collections, but also the city ravaged and laid waste on February 13, 1945, the city, too, described in Victor Klemperer’s diaries that was still overseeing the deportation of its Jews almost up to the eve of that terrible night. I will stay with Dresden because it is a convenient example with which to lead into my subject. Today, one may be grateful for every corner of Dresden that has survived the fire from heaven in 1945 and has been subsequently restored. We should not however forget that the city and its famous skyline, already immortalized in the eighteenth century by Canaletto and Bernardo Bellotto, is a cultural artefact made up of various styles,

4 A point which emerges in François and Schulze’s introduction, ‘Einleitung’, in Deutsche Erinnerungsorte, I, 9–24.
eclectically framed together over nearly two centuries (and let us not forget that the same Bellotto records its bombardment in 1759–60 during the Seven Years’ War, an act of vandalism at the hands of Frederick the Great, about whom more later).

Whereas it is appropriate and legitimate in identifying ‘Erinnerungsorte’ to refer to historical cultural manifestations in the widest of terms, as in the article ‘Dresden’ in François and Schulze, the cultural or literary or art historian may wish to examine aspects of these places with an emphasis different from mine. (I qualify only as a literary historian.) Thus when my wife and I stood in 2002 on what was once called the Schlossplatz and has become the Theaterplatz, armed with a camera and some memories of our first visit to Dresden in 1974, we remarked that we were standing on a many-layered ‘lieu de mémoire’, not least because two of the constituent buildings, the royal palace and the opera house, still ruins in 1974, had been rebuilt since the 1980s, so that the symbolism of the royal capital of Saxony that the city once was, had been restored for a purpose very different from that intended in the nineteenth century. For if we take in all sides of this square — as we are intended to do — we move from the royal palace, mainly Renaissance and much restored in 1890–1902,7 to the baroque Hofkirche (now Dom), to Gottfried Semper’s picture gallery (behind which one can see that baroque extravaganza the Zwinger), to the opera house (after Semper’s design: the original building was destroyed by fire) to the centre, the equestrian statue of King John of Saxony (König Johann), by Johannes Schilling and erected in 1889 (see Fig. 16).8

Clearly this is a congeries of buildings demonstrating royal power and its cultural attachments in the widest sense. The king, who reigned from 1854 to 1873, dominates the scene from his vantage point above a

---

high and elaborate plinth, the whole competing with the great squares of Europe (see Fig. 17). Looking at the king, with his accoutrements, the traditional royal mantle and sceptre over a modern uniform, with stirrups, we might be tempted to see here the symbol of military power. But this is not, say, King Ludwig I of Bavaria on the Odeonsplatz in Munich with raised sword and defiant gesture. It is an essentially unmartial king, who tried to preserve Saxony’s independence, but backed the wrong side in 1866 and was only spared the fate of Hanover through Bismarck’s generosity. He is a king who went without great enthusiasm into the ‘Reich’ of 1871 (he was not present at Versailles and does not figure on the definitive version of Anton von Werner’s famous monumental painting of the proclamation of the German Empire). Yet a monument to a king will hardly commemorate what he did not do. What sort of monument is this?

Fig. 17 Equestrian statue of King John of Saxony, Dresden Theaterplatz, by Johannes Schilling (1889). Photo by author, CC BY 4.0.
In his seminal article in the *Historische Zeitschrift* in 1968, Thomas Nipperdey identifies five different kinds of monuments which express and symbolize German ideas and aspirations in the nineteenth century. 1) The national and monarchic or dynastic (such as Frederick the Great’s statue in Berlin, about which more later, or Kaiser William’s (now lost); 2) the memorial church; 3) the monument to the national culture (such as the Walhalla near Regensburg); 4) the national monument of a democratically constituted nation (the Befreiungshalle at Kelheim or Hermann dominating the Teutoburg Forest); or 5) the monument of a nation now politically coalesced (the many commemorating Bismarck).

The monument to King John has manifestly elements of several of these. Erected by his son, the martial and highly popular King Albert, it is the dynastic homage to the royal house of Wettin (as indicated by the crown on the rear of the plinth), but also to the constitutional monarch (although instinctively conservative), the ‘father of his people’, who presides over the arts of war and peace, the ‘Landesvater’. For if we read the frieze on the plinth from right to left, we see in order of sequence soldiers in the uniforms of the Franco-Prussian War, the industrial arts and crafts and agriculture, then the fine arts. There are links here with nineteenth-century kings of the stamp of King Frederick William IV of Prussia or King Ludwig I of Bavaria, both of whom were indeed King John’s brothers-in-law, one with artistic leanings and the other a poet in his own right, but both very different all the same. Albert, Prince Consort, in this country, has perhaps more affinities. For the figures on the plinth are not merely borrowed from traditional iconography; they reflect the king’s lively interest in all of his kingdom’s activities, technical, administrative and cultural (see Fig. 18).

But what of the back of the plinth, directly under the horse’s tail? It is clearly not a place of dishonour, but rather of distinction, for there one will remark the royal crown of Saxony and, below it, a relief portrait of Dante (see Fig. 19). It is a reminder that the king is also Philalethes, who as Prince John of Saxony produced a metrical (iambic) translation of the *Divine Comedy* between 1830 and 1849 and who as king issued a revised edition in 1866. Dante on the plinth does not come as a surprise when we know that the great Italian poet had already formed part of

---

Fig. 18 Equestrian statue of King John of Saxony, detail of plinth. Photo by author, CC BY 4.0.

Fig. 19 Equestrian statue of King John of Saxony, rear of plinth. Photo by author, CC BY 4.0.
the king’s official iconography during his lifetime, a Dante bust already featuring on several of his official portraits or representations.\textsuperscript{10}

He is also noted for assembling around him an ‘Accademia Dantesca’ that included the poet and translator Ludwig Tieck, the translator Wolf von Baudissin, and the physician and painter Carl Gustav Carus, who between them had the oversight of the royal translation and offered their several poetic or scientific skills and insights. This is not the place to discuss the merits of this translation, as compared, say, with his contemporaries August Kopisch or Karl Ludwig Friedrich Kannegiesser or Carl Streckfuss, nor the role of the ‘Accademia’.\textsuperscript{11} What is important in this context is that Philalethes’ Dante is one those projects in the nineteenth century which linked foreign and native cultures, thereby representing a symbiosis between German ‘Bildung’ and alien poetry. It descends lineally from the German reception of the Greeks, then of Shakespeare, Cervantes and others, including Dante. Its origins lie in the idea that a cultivated nation, while not yet politically united and without a capital city, may nevertheless make its mark in cultural terms. As Georg Forster formulated it in 1791:

Geographical position, political constitution and various other factors have given the Germans the eclectic character by which they can explore without prejudice and for its own sake the beautiful, the good and the perfect which is scattered in fragments and adaptations all over the earth’s surface, collecting and collating it until such time as the edifice of human knowledge stands complete before us.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{10} See König Johann von Sachsen. Zwischen zwei Welten, frontis., plates 29, 299.


\textsuperscript{12} Georg Forster, Sämtliche Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe, ed. by Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, 18 vols (Berlin: Akademie, 1963–), IV, 285. The original reads: ‘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, uneingemützig um sein selbst willen erforschen, sammeln und so lange ordnen sollen, bis etwa der Bau des menschlichen Wissens volendet da steht, —oder unsre Rolle gespielt ist und künftige Menschenalter die Steine, die wir zusammentrugern, zu einem neuen Gebäude brauchen’. 

The translator and critic August Wilhelm Schlegel, lecturing on European literature in Berlin in 1801, stated that the Germans, while yet essentially without a nationality of their own, do possess depth and universality, a different way of expressing the German cultural embrace of the Other. Or in 1818–19, in a very different cultural and political climate, the literary historian Ludwig Wachler, though fixated on the idea of the renewal of the national fibre through Teutonic virtues, nevertheless praises openness to other nations’ attainments (Dante, Calderón, Shakespeare) as an essentially German quality. Something similar is still being echoed by Georg Gottfried Gervinus in his Neue Geschichte der poetischen Literatur der Deutschen/New History of the Poetic Literature of the Germans (1842) and his call there to incorporate into the national literary culture those aspects that are common to Europe as a whole (such as the reception of Shakespeare). Like the so-called ‘Schlegel-Tieck’ translation of Shakespeare, like A. W. Schlegel’s Sanskrit editions — but exceeding both in the extent of it annotations — Philalethes’ Göttliche Comödie sees itself as both scholarly and poetic.

In that sense, the Theaterplatz in Dresden is a ‘lieu de mémoire’, not just a memorial to national or dynastic values. It is, more discreetly (the small plaque of Dante) a monument to those aspects of the national character which expressed themselves in the belief that the Germans had an innate empathy with certain figures of foreign national culture and might be seen to understand them as well if not better than their own compatriots. The example of Shakespeare springs to mind. This place of memory might be Saxony’s response to another monument.

13 August Wilhelm Schlegel, Kritische Ausgabe der Vorlesungen, ed. by Ernst Behler, Frank Jolles et al., 6 vols (Paderborn etc.: Schöningh, 1989-), I, 195 (‘sie [die Deutschen] allein verbinden Tiefe und Universalität, und ihre Nationalität besteht darin, sich derselben willig entäußern zu können’).
(about which more later) that makes quite a different cultural statement, Berlin’s statue of Frederick the Great. For that statue, like the one to Frederick William III in Cologne, is, as we shall see, flanked by significant ancillary figures, whereas King John stands above, but also represents symbolically, the ‘general people’ who populate his plinth. It might also be a restrained message to William II, the newly ascended young Kaiser, ridden by the same cultural meddlesomeness as his great-uncle Frederick William IV but who, unlike him, was about to embark on two decades of royally and imperially sponsored vulgarity.

But to make the Theaterplatz a ‘place of memory’ in the full sense, we must of course not overlook that it has on one side one of the great world-class collections of Italian, Spanish and French art, forming one flank of the square, a reminder that the appellation ‘Florence on the Elbe’ was open to the widest and most positive of interpretations. Moving however to Semper’s opera house, also in its turn a monument to European, not exclusively national, culture, and coming round to its right entrance, we see two over-life-size seated statues. They are Goethe and Schiller, looking across to the king and poet-translator on his pedestal, both classically attired and surmounting symbolic reliefs with the connotations of genius and inspiration. They are here for what they are, but also because as young men both underwent crucial experiences in this city. Given their supernal status in the nineteenth century, one might almost say that they were necessary to round off the iconography and symbolism of this public square as a cultural and political space and entity.

Leaving Dresden, we move to Prussia, the royal house of Hohenzollern and the residence of Sanssouci in Potsdam. There is no need even to begin to justify ranking this among the potential ‘lieux de mémoire’ of Germany, any more than one would need to produce arguments for Versailles in France, so commanding is the case for inclusion (François and Schulze however think differently). Of course, on the surface, we may have to look hard and possibly in vain for any connection here with a specifically German culture, so much do Frederick the Great’s palaces and park bear the stamp of French taste and artistic execution. Yet let us not forget that two Prussian kings, not just Frederick, were active in setting the mark of their very different personalities on this cultural landscape: Frederick the Great of course, but also his
great-great-nephew, Frederick William IV, the so-called ‘Romantic on the Throne’. In fact Frederick William was, out of piety for his famous ancestor, responsible for restoring the palace of Sanssouci to its original French rococo state. On the other hand, as crown prince and then as king, he interspersed throughout the park of Sanssouci buildings that stand in marked contrast to Frederick’s. They are either Italianate (like the Neue Orangerie) or Romanesque, like the Friedenskirche, where he and his wife are buried, with its very un-Hohenzollern sentiments on the ‘Prince of Peace’, or they are classical Roman, like the Charlottenhof, to which I now turn.  

Built for his wife Elisabeth, the Charlottenhof emerged between 1826 and 1851 under the guidance of the architects Karl Friedrich Schinkel, Ludwig Persius and Peter Joseph Lenné (quite a trio in their own right). It seems to have been transplanted from the Roman countryside, with its Doric-columned front, its vestibule, and its park with copies of Greek statues, and its herms. The herms, designed in 1851 by Gustav Bläser, certainly look very classical in form until we look closer and remark that their sculpted heads are in fact modern. For as we enter one of the alleys of the grove to the rear of the house, we encounter Goethe and Schiller, and on the other side Cristoph Martin Wieland and Johann Gottfried Herder. At the other end, complementing them, are Dante, Boccaccio, Ariosto and Tasso.

Clearly the king did not wish the park of Sanssouci to echo only to the now departed sounds of French. To that end he had used his famous ancestor’s Neues Palais and its rococo theatre, where in Frederick’s day nothing in German would have been performed, for the first German production of A Midsummer Night’s Dream. It was that epoch-making event in 1843, with Ludwig Tieck directing and Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy providing the incidental music. Eclectic to a fault, he had also had Sophocles’ Antigone and Jean Racine’s Athalie performed, with the same producer and composer. But nothing concrete remains to commemorate that event in German musical and theatrical history except the music itself.

But what of the herms, but a short walk distant from the Neues Palais? Was the king thinking of the garden at Belriguardo in Goethe’s

---

Torquato Tasso, with the herms there of Virgil and Ariosto? Whatever, these figures ensure that the park of Sanssouci has its own corner that makes a statement about the national literary canon.

At a time (1851) when public monuments to Germany’s heroes of culture were springing up, to Albrecht Dürer in Nuremberg (1829), to Johannes Gutenberg in Mainz (1834), to Schiller in Stuttgart (1839), to Ludwig van Beethoven in Bonn (1846), the king sets up his own idea of who is significant in German — and Italian — letters. The Italians need not surprise us: Frederick William’s additions to the park of Sanssouci are themselves a blend of the German and the Italianate. But the Romantic on the Throne, who shared his love of Dante with his royal cousin and brother-in-law in Dresden and who followed closely the progress of Philalethes’ translation, would know that it was the German Romantics who had done so much for the mythology of the great ‘archpoets’, Dante especially. But Wieland and Goethe, too, form part of the statuary of the Charlottenhof, the one (Wieland) also associated with the Ariostian epic in German guise, the other (Goethe) with the

---

troubled life of Tasso. (And both had revived the Boccaccian novella in their respective collections.) The Italians were there too in Schiller’s Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung/On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry (where Schiller even tried his hand at translating a passage of Ariosto) and in Herder’s grand schemes of western poetry and its canon. In a sense, by inviting the frail and elderly Ludwig Tieck to be a kind of court poet in Potsdam, Frederick William was honouring not only the Shakespearean scholar but also the former member of his royal cousin Philalethes’ ‘Accademia Dantesca’.

The king’s taste in German literature still accorded with the general classical ranking granted to Goethe and Schiller, whose status was beyond doubt, but also to Wieland and Herder. True, a liberal historian (and liberal politician) like Georg Gottfried Gervinus, might withhold some recognition from Weimar Classicism and its court culture, for him a triumph in poetic terms only, but not the galvanizing force of a cultural nation. Seen thus, all four German poets in the Charlottenhof garden — Goethe, Schiller, Herder, Wieland — could be seen to represent a Weimar under princely patronage. It is a conservative canon: there is no Gothold Ephraim Lessing, but Berlin would make up that deficiency (as the statue of Lessing in Brunswick already had). But German poets had received no recognition from Frederick the Great, and so here, in this very Frederician ‘lieu de mémoire’, they are receiving some belated remembrance.

Lessing, as said, had not been forgotten, but his initial commemoration in Prussia was to be almost incidental, in a much more public space than Sanssouci: on Unter den Linden, the most important thoroughfare in Berlin, but as a supporting figure on one of its most prominent features, the statue of Frederick the Great by Christian Daniel Rauch, unveiled on March 31, 1851, the same year as the herms of Sanssouci (see Fig. 21). (Lessing did not receive his own memorial in Berlin until 1890, the one still standing in the Tiergarten.)

Frederick, it hardly need be said, is an ‘Erinnerungsort’ in his own right. The statue has a storied past. Suffice it to say that plans for such a commemoration went back as far as the last years of the great king’s

---

13. Under the Horse’s Tail

Some, if executed, would have involved huge mausolea or Trajan-style columns. Looking at Rauch’s statue today, we find it hard to visualize it as a part of the huge ‘lieu de mémoire’ that its precinct once was and was to become, extending from the royal palace as far as the Tiergarten park. Thus, in 1918, at the end of the Hohenzollerns’ reign, it would have presented the beholder with a whole forest of statuary, from Andreas Schlüter’s equestrian Great Elector in front of the palace, Alexander Calandrelli’s equestrian statue of Frederick William IV in front of the National Gallery, Reinhold Begas’s enormous monument to Kaiser William I on the other side, various allegorical nudities on the Schlossbrücke, Prussian generals flanking Karl Friedrich Schinkel’s Neue Wache, then Christian Daniel Rauch’s Frederick himself, with Begas’s Bismarck in front of the Reichstag building, then Kaiser William II’s supreme folly and triumphal avenue, the Siegesallee in the Tiergarten, with its three dozen Hohenzollern rulers in marble, a riot of dynastic self-display and ostentation. What is left? In the mean time, the palace

---

has been blown up (the Humboldt Forum is now emerging in its place), the Great Elector is in Charlottenburg, William I has gone (only the lions from his monument survive, but elsewhere). Frederick William IV is still there, but the generals languish in the Prinzessinnengarten, Bismarck is on the Grosser Stern, and the Siegesallee, or what is left of it, is in a private museum in Spandau. Unlike Paris, where in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries statues came and went, Berlin ultimately had World War Two and its aftermath to thank for the radical reordering of its monuments. (Frederick was even banished to a corner of Sanssouci between 1950 and 1980.) That leaves Frederick isolated in a way that he never was for a good part of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. His nearest neighbours now are the brothers Humboldt, whose statues sit in front of the former palace of the king’s brother Prince Heinrich, today the Humboldt University. These are all good reasons for not passing him by and for looking very hard at the rider, the horse and what is under the tail.

The statue is the one chosen by Thomas Nipperdey to exemplify his category of ‘national monarchical or dynastic monuments’. In that sense it is very different from Frederick William IV’s private neoclassical villa in Sanssouci. But if one looks at all aspects of the statue it emerges as a hybrid. The king, though over-life-size, does not completely dominate the area, for he is flanked on the plinth by numerous other figures, also larger than life, who have been brought into the king’s ambit. Some words of explanation are needed.

For the foundation stone to be laid on June 1, 1840, the centenary of Frederick the Great’s accession to the throne, numerous elements had to be in place. There had to be agreement on the form and costume of the statue — and royal assent to it. It was not be antique; it was to reflect not just Frederick’s military achievements but all aspects — administrative and cultural — of his reign. These were to be represented by supplementary figures on the plinth. It was also to be the apotheosis

---


of an enlightened reign: Alexander von Humboldt’s speech to the Prussian Academy of Sciences (founded by the king in 1740) stressed the ‘wise man on the throne’ who had reconciled the conflicting needs of rule and freedom.\textsuperscript{25} The works of Frederick the Great (all in French) were also issued between 1846 and 1857 by a distinguished committee of the Prussian Academy,\textsuperscript{26} a further token of the king’s contribution to eighteenth-century European culture. A happy coincidence saw C. F. Köppen’s \textit{Friedrich der Große und seine Widersacher. Eine Jubelschrift/ Frederick the Great and his Adversaries. A Festive Volume} appear in 1840, with its emphasis on the king’s enlightened values. Eduard Duller’s \textit{Die Geschichte des deutschen Volkes/The History of the German People} in the same year, with illustrations by Ludwig Richter\textsuperscript{27} and above all Franz Kugler’s \textit{Geschichte Friedrichs des Großen/History of Frederick the Great}, illustrated by the young Adolph Menzel (also 1840 and successively reprinted) were able to present Frederick as a figure of national identification.\textsuperscript{28} That these values were to be subject to severe constraints during the years 1848–49 and challenged by the sentiments uttered at the unveiling in 1851, does not affect the figures on the plinth, which are our main concern here.

If the period roughly 1840 to 1870 sees, as one author has put it, ‘literary history in bronze and stone’\textsuperscript{29} through the erection of monuments to the emerging nation’s greatest poets, do those incorporated on royal statues in Dresden, Berlin or, as we shall see, Cologne, differ in status from more general forms of poetic memorialization? Would they not seem to be a continuation of earlier patterns, like the poetic ‘Grabmal’ (Gellert’s in Leipzig is the best-known example), the bust in a discreet corner of a royal park, the plaque, the shrine-like grave (such as Klopstock’s in Ottensen)? Whereas the free-standing civic statue is an unmistakable and

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Oeuvres de Frédéric le Grand}, 30 vols (Berlin: Decker, 1846–47).
\textsuperscript{27} Nürnberger, ‘Rauch’s Friedrich-Denkmal’, 117.
visual tribute to national and local pride (Schiller in Stuttgart, Goethe in Frankfurt, Jean Paul in Bayreuth), the poetic memorialization on a royal statue is always secondary and ancillary. Only informed beholders will be aware of the significance of Dante on King John of Saxony’s plinth, whereas Goethe and Schiller stand free in their own right. Even King Ludwig’s Walhalla (inaugurated in 1842) is first and foremost a public architectural monument with a symbolic setting between East and West. The interior contains a (later) full-size seated figure of the king himself, whereas the ‘worthies’, who include a number of poets, are reduced in size under the huge vault and its allegorical representations.\(^{30}\)

It was only in the first years of the post-1815 Restoration that monuments to non-royal personages were permitted in the German lands. Significantly, the first was to a military hero, Blücher (1818) and then not in Prussia.\(^{31}\) The first in Prussia was the Luther statue in Wittenberg (1821), but then again both person and place transcended any mere local significance and took on the lineaments of a national monument.\(^{32}\) Frederick William III’s opposition to a Beethoven statue in Bonn, completed under his son Frederick William IV, is well documented.\(^{33}\) It is noticeable that the first statues to figures in German national culture are in Free Imperial Cities or their equivalent (Dürer in Nuremberg, Gutenberg in Mainz, Goethe in Frankfurt) or in minor residences (Lessing in Brunswick, Schiller in Stuttgart, Johann Peter Hebel in Karlsruhe).\(^{34}\) In Prussia, by contrast, statues to Immanuel Kant in Königsberg, to Lessing, Goethe and Schiller in Berlin, came relatively later, and in the case of Berlin never in competition with the main royal and dynastic ‘lieu de mémoire’. The inclusion of such figures (Lessing,

\(^{30}\) The selection of poets’ busts, done mainly some time before the completion of the Walhalla, is eclectic but reflects literary taste around 1815: Goethe and Schiller, Wieland and Klopstock, Herder and Johannes von Müller, Bürger and Heinse (there is no Lessing). It is almost Madame de Staël’s pantheon. Cf. Nipperdey, ‘Nationalidee’, 556–8 (‘betont monarchiches Denkmal’).

\(^{31}\) Ibid., 557.

\(^{32}\) Ibid.


\(^{34}\) Hess, ‘Panorama und Denkmal’, 152.
Kant) as ancillaries or incidentals on Rauch’s statue of Frederick the Great is therefore of some significance. From the point of view of art history, it is somewhat of a hybrid, while from a purely cultural viewpoint it is an attempt to summarize in bronze a whole epoch, not its supreme hero alone.

We need to bear in mind that eleven years passed between the laying of the foundation stone of Frederick’s statue in 1840 and its unveiling in 1851. The liberal hopes that had been expressed in 1840 had been subjected to the ultimate test of 1848, and the aspirations once placed in Frederick William IV as a liberal and cultured monarch had been severely tried. The speeches at the unveiling were thus not free of references to the recent ‘fateful year’ and what it had boded and to the need to reflect on the Prussian virtues for which Frederick had stood: order, discipline, hard work, the military qualities that had accompanied his victories. Although the emphasis in 1851 was not entirely or exclusively on his military prowess, it nevertheless set the tone and helped to initiate more strident identifications with Frederick the Great later in the century.

But we have not examined the statue itself. It shows the king in old age in the historical costume of the eighteenth century, with tricorn and marshal’s baton, his achievements behind him, not as he may have placed himself at the head of his army as it marched eastwards along the Frankfurter Strasse towards Küstrin, Kunersdorf or Prague. Below, flanking the plinth, are his generals, one architect of his victories on each corner, accompanied by allegorical representations of fame, peace and the like. At the rear (see Fig. 22), which interests us, are the equestrian statues of the generals Seydlitz and Zieten. Immediately below the tail of Frederick’s horse are two allegorical figures representing the arts and sciences, between them an image of fame, below them peace and plenty (the branch and the cornucopia). Grouped around the base of the rear plinth, between the generals, are Ernst Wilhelm von Schlabrendorff, the defender of Silesia, Carl Wilhelm Finck von Finckenstein, Frederick’s

35 Nürnberger, ‘Rauch’s Friedrich-Denkmal’, 121f.
cabinet minister, Johann Heinrich von Carmer, the jurist and one of the framers of the ‘Landrecht’, Carl Heinrich Graun, Frederick’s court composer, then Lessing and Kant. Beneath these, there is a plaque listing names that include Samuel von Cocceji, Georg Wenzeslas von Knobelsdorff, Christian Wolff, Karl Wilhelm Ramler, Johann Wilhelm Ludwig Gleim, Christian Garve, Ewald von Kleist, Christian Fürchtegott Gellert, Pierre Louis Maupertuis, Antoine Pesne, Charles-Étienne Jordan and Johann Joachim Winckelmann.

Fig. 22 Equestrian statue of Frederick the Great, detail of plinth. Photo by author. CC BY 4.0.

A strategy similar to that on the later statue of King John of Saxony is being observed; the rear of the plinth is clearly reserved for non-military deeds or achievements. We are expected to read along the pedestal from front to rear in a symbolic order. As we saw on the Dresden statue, we read (German terminology) from ‘Wehrstand’ to ‘Nährstand’ to ‘Lehrstand’, defence, agriculture, learning, and we end our survey at the rear. Frederick rarely had anything good to say about poets or ‘Scribenten’ in general, especially those writing in German. But the sculptor, acting according to later royal wishes, has placed administration (Jordan), law (Cocceji), music (Graun), poetry and thought in equality of position, with Lessing and Kant as embodied representatives. I find
it therefore surprising to read in an otherwise very informed study of nineteenth-century monuments to poets and thinkers (1988) the view expressed that Kant’s position ‘under the horse’s tail’ represented the reaction of 1851, a historical panorama in which the liberal aspirations of the educated middle classes were trampled underfoot.\(^{37}\) I think the observable facts speak for themselves, remarkable enough as they are. For the decision to include Kant and Lessing was part of a general design approved in the 1830s by the king and the crown prince.\(^ {38}\)

If these figures or names are intended to represent the Enlightenment for which Frederick the Great also stood, they are well chosen. Graun illustrates the king’s love of music and deserves his prominence for that reason, a kind of ‘Flötenkonzert’ in bronze. Kant’s admiration of Frederick is well known and documented (and regretted by some), although the king never received him or even set eyes upon him, which is another matter. But Lessing is quite a different proposition: a non-Prussian, but associated with Berlin nevertheless, no friend of Frederick’s however. Indeed, liberal commentators on Lessing in the 1840s and 1850s make the point that Frederick was actually ill-disposed towards Lessing.

Yet the royal committee in the 1830s had caught the spirit of things. For Lessing emerges in the literary historiography of the nineteenth century, from the 1820s onwards, as the great pioneer and liberator, a second Luther, indeed a figure more positively evaluated than Goethe and Schiller.\(^ {39}\) And in 1851 we are chronologically not far from the re-writing of German national literary history from roughly 1860 on, with say Hermann Hettner, that equates Lessing’s role in the realm of the mind with that of Frederick in the sphere of war and politics. It prepares the way for the reinterpretation of history in the biography by Erich Schmidt (1884–92) in which Lessing becomes a loyal Prussian and Wilhelmian and where Bismarckian ideologies can be satisfied. And so the ‘sacra conversazione’ on the rear of the statue, between

---

\(^{37}\) Selbmann, *Dichterdenkmäler*, 60.


Lessing and Kant (which cannot be real) is symbolic of a coalescence of intellectual forces as the nineteenth century perceived them. Kant seems to be making a point to Lessing, who listens intently. But the statue is not dealing in philosophical nuances: Kant is addressing Lessing, one assumes, as the author of *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts*/The Education of the Human Race, less as the author of *Emilia Galotti* or *Nathan der Weise*.

What of the ‘supplementary list’ appended below the ‘big six’? Here we encounter some of the names mentioned and illustrated in Kugler’s and Menzel’s popularizing account of 1840, men who surrounded Frederick with taste and wit and learning: Knobelsdorff, the architect of Sanssouci, Pesne, the court painter, Maupertuis, mathematician and first president of the Prussian Academy of Sciences, Jordan, Frederick’s secretary and confidant (this would have pleased Berlin’s Huguenot community, whose church on the Gendarmenmarkt Frederick built). Indeed two of Menzel’s best-known images, of the circle at Sanssouci, and of Pesne decorating the interior at Rheinsberg, are associated with this list. Ewald von Kleist’s is another name in that work, as far as I can see the only German writer whom Kugler and Menzel mention or illustrate, not for his poetry, but for his ultimate death at the battle of Kunersdorf. Christian Wolff, the rationalist philosopher banned by Frederick’s father but called back by the son, needs no introduction, except that Kant, the author of the First Critique might find his presence dubious, and Lessing also might have his doubts. Christian Garve, the practical moralist, is a Silesian, which commends him to Frederick the annexer of that province, but he is also the translator of Cicero’s *De officiis* for the king. The poets Gleim and Ramler both sang of Frederick’s deeds, indeed Ramler is a kind of unofficial German court poet, while of course never actually being received at Frederick’s court. Both Ramler and Gleim still hold their own in histories of literature around 1850, so that their inclusion here is not anachronistic or a retrospective canonization merely for their association with Frederick. Gellert is still remembered in 1850 for his fables, but also for his legendary meeting with Frederick that had entered into the royal folklore. Like Lessing, he is also a Saxon, here

---

enrolled among the honorary Prussians. Winckelmann was from Stendal and thus Frederick’s subject, but he turned his face against anything Prussian and never came back to his homeland. He is doubtless here for the sake of completeness, not of historical accuracy, for it was the court in Dresden, not in Berlin, that enabled him on his way to Rome. His is the only ‘big name’ among these poetae minores on the plaque, and one might question the commodiousness and legitimacy of this account of Frederician culture which does not stop at cultural annexation.

The omissions are also patent. Where is Anna Louisa Karsch, who so praised Frederick? But women, it seems, must not feature in this account of a misogynist king. (She had also slipped in general esteem.) Where is Moses Mendelssohn, the Berliner by choice and famed well beyond its confines? But Jews, especially ones whom Frederick refused to receive, must not form part of this narrative either. Where is Voltaire, so memorably portrayed by Menzel in conversation with the king at Sanssouci? But Voltaire, unlike Frederick’s loyal Frenchmen, had become slippery and perfidious. Not least, his enlightened scepticism could be associated with the French Revolution and thus with recent events in Berlin, of unhappy memory. Generally, it could be said that Frederick William IV, through his capricious and unpredictable behaviour in 1848, had forfeited the legacy of enlightened liberalism that people were still willing to associate with Frederick in 1840. Nevertheless, the canon of German writers, conceived largely in the 1830s and visible only to diligent beholders willing to devote a thorough scrutiny to the plinth, was one which had not lost its validity in the debates concerning the king’s physical representation. It could be said that the martial monument and the notion of a national or patriotic literature maintained a balance that would be sustained for a good part of the nineteenth century.42

The less well-known equestrian figure of Frederick William III on the Heumarkt in Cologne, sends a slightly different message. The work of Gustav Bläser and others, with its foundation stone laid in 1865 and unveiled in 1878, a generation after Rauch, it has elements of the Berlin statue, the monarch represented by horse and rider but with mantle and sceptre, and supplemented by supporting figures on the plinth. It might

---

41 His inclusion was at the insistence of Baron Bunsen in 1845. Eggers, Christian Daniel Rauch, IV, 118f.
appear at first glance to symbolize the superimposition of Prussian (and Protestant) rule on a less than willing Rhineland in 1815 under the aegis of Frederick William III, and some features seem to bear this out. Yet it was erected as a result of a local initiative, not through a directive from Berlin.\(^43\) The emphasis was to be on the Wars of Liberation and

the Restoration of 1815,\textsuperscript{44} years which had also seen the foundation of the University of Bonn (under Frederick William’s son, Bonn also received its Beethoven monument). The flanking figures are mainly generals or administrators (Blücher, Gerhard von Scharnhorst, Freiherr vom Stein, Prince Hardenberg, for example), with the brothers Wilhelm and Alexander von Humboldt, Ernst Moritz Arndt and Barthold Georg Niebuhr representing science and culture. Some (Alexander von Humboldt, Niebuhr, Arndt) have Rhineland connections, but all are Protestants. It is on the relief panels placed behind the main supporting figures that we remark the useful arts, industries and trades of the Rhineland provinces. Individual figures are picked out in friezes representing these areas. Here at least there are some Catholics, such as the brothers Sulpiz and Melchior Boisserée or Ferdinand Franz Wallraf (under ‘Baukunst’) or even Beethoven himself. But there are also poets and writers. What narrative do they provide about the poetic canon in 1865 or 1878? One, August Wilhelm Schlegel, might once have been part of such a canon, but no more;\textsuperscript{45} in fact, after Heinrich Heine’s attack of 1835 and Rudolf Haym’s disparagement of 1871 he was at the nadir of his esteem. And so he is here as a founding professor at the University of Bonn, under ‘Wissenschaften’ and next to the Berlin luminaries Schleiermacher or Hegel, which might have irked him. There was some amnesia at work in the choice of the main supporting figures, but this was not the place for nuances: Wilhelm von Humboldt had been dismissed by the king; Alexander, his brother, was more oriented to France than to Berlin; at least Arndt, whom the king had suspended from office, maintained his reputation as a poet and patriot throughout the century and was part of its canon. Seven minute figures representing ‘Freiheitskriege’ might seem to be out of touch with the times in 1878.\textsuperscript{46} But one, Fichte, was never absent from the general consciousness, if only for his \textit{Reden an die deutsche Nation/Addresses to the German Nation} of 1808. Three other figures, all poets, had outlived any exclusive association with the Wars of Liberation: Max von Schenkendorf’s works were reprinted in 1871, Theodor Körner’s frequently during the nineteenth century (twice during the 1870s), while Friedrich Rückert, who had died as recently

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 89f.  
\textsuperscript{45} Becker, ‘Klassiker’, 24.  
\textsuperscript{46} Puls, ‘Zur Genese’, 150.
as 1866, was now known better for his oriental poetry. As in Berlin, it is only the enterprising beholder, climbing on to the plinth, who can garner this information on the history of literature.

The Rauch statue in Berlin had an unfortunate sequel in the ‘Siegesallee’ that Kaiser William II created as a triumphal account of the house of Hohenzollern.\footnote{See Uta Lehnert, *Der Kaiser und die Siegesallee. Réclame Royale* (Berlin: Reimer, 1998).} If Rauch’s figures still contained some reverence for the notion of a Prussian enlightenment tinged with French ideas, the Siegesallee was an unadorned display of monarchical principles and the divine right of kings. The statues of rulers, which are unmemorable, need not concern us here, but the supporting figures may do. For each ruler is flanked by the bust (at suitable distance) of two prominent representatives of his respective reign. There is no place for poets in this scheme of things, but there are some notable redistributions. Schwerin, Frederick’s field marshal, stays with his king but is joined — astonishingly — by the Thuringian Johann Sebastian Bach, doubtless on account of his one visit to Sanssouci and his Musical Offering. But Bach, near the end of his life when he came to Sanssouci, is a rather anachronistic choice. Frederick William II is joined, as is appropriate, by Johann Heinrich von Carmer, who saw the Allgemeines Landrecht to its completion. But he is made to share the company of Kant. The inclusion of Kant is truly bizarre, for the edicts of Frederick William’s minister Johann Christoph von Wölner had almost put an end to Kant’s publishing and teaching career and represented a reaction against everything that Kant had stood for. It did not worry William II, and this late Wilhelmian statuary has in the fullest and most literal sense stood under the horse’s tail of history, in a place of dishonour and now of oblivion.
POETRY
Fig. 24 Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, c. 1760. Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Friedrich_Gottlieb_Klopstock-01.jpg, public domain.
14. Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock

‘Der Zürchersee’¹

Schön ist, Mutter Natur, deiner Erfindung Pracht
Auf die Fluren verstreut, schöner ein froh Gesicht,
Das den großen Gedanken
Deiner Schöpfung noch Einmal denkt.

Von des schimmernden Sees Traubengestaden her,
Oder, flohest du schon wieder zum Himmel auf,
Kom in röthendem Strale
Auf dem Flügel der Abendluft,

Kom, und lehre mein Lied jugendlich heiter seyn,
Süße Freude, wie du! gleich dem beseelteren
Schnellen Jauchzen des Jünglings,
Sanft, der führenden Fanny gleich.

Schon lag hinter uns weit Uto, an dessen Fuß
Zürch in ruhigem Tal freye Bewohner nährt;
Schon war manches Gebirge
Voll von Reben vorbeigeflohn.

Jetzt entwölkte sich fern silberner Alpen Höh,
Und der Jünglinge Herz schlug schon empfindender,
Schon verrieth es beredter
Sich der schönen Begleiterin.

“Hallers Doris”, die sang, selber des Liedes werth,
Hirzels Daphne, den Kleist innig wie Gleimen liebt;

¹ For a translation of this poem see Appendix One at the end of this chapter. An earlier version of this chapter appeared in Landmarks in German Poetry, ed. by Peter Hutchinson, British and Irish Studies in German Language and Literature 20 (Berne, etc.: Peter Lang, 2000), 41–56.
Und wir Jünglinge sangen,
Und empfanden, wie Hagedorn.

Jetzo nahm uns die Au in die beschattenden
Kühlen Arme des Walds, welcher die Insel krönt;
Da, da kamest du, Freude!
Volles Maßes auf uns herab!

Göttin Freude, du selbst! dich, wir empfanden dich!
Ja, du warst es selbst, Schwester der Menschlichkeit,
Deiner Unschuld Gespielin,
Die sich über uns ganz ergoß!

Süß ist, fröhlicher Lenz, deiner Begeistrung Hauch,
Wenn die Flur dich gebiert, wenn sich dein Odem sanft
In der Jünglinge Herzen,
Und die Herzen der Mädchen gießt.

Ach du machst das Gefühl siegend, es steigt durch dich
Jede blühende Brust schöner und bebender,
Lauter redet der Liebe
Nun entzauberter Mund durch dich!

Lieblich winket der Wein, wenn er Empfindungen,
Beßre sanftere Lust, wenn er Gedanken winkt,
Im sokratischen Becher
Von der thauenden Ros’ umkränzt;

Wenn er dringt bis ins Herz, und zu Entschließungen,
Die der Säufer verkennt, jeden Gedanken weckt,
Wenn er lehret verachten,
Was nicht würdig des Weisen ist.

Reizvoll klinget des Ruhms lockender Silberton
In das schlagende Herz, und die Unsterblichkeit
Ist ein großer Gedanke,
Ist des Schweisses der Edeln werth!

Durch der Lieder Gewalt, bey der Urenkelin
Sohn und Tochter noch seyn; mit der Entzückung Ton
Oft beym Namen genennet,
Oft gerufen vom Grabe her,

Dann ihr sanfteres Herz bilden, und, Liebe, dich,
Fromme Tugend, dich auch gießen, ins sanfte Herz,
Ist, beym Himmel! nicht wenig!
Ist des Schweisses der Edlen werth!

Aber süßer ist noch, schöner und reizender,
In dem Arme des Freunds wissen ein Freund zu seyn!
So das Leben genießen,
Nicht unwürdig der Ewigkeit!

Treuer Zärtlichkeit voll, in den Umschattungen,
In den Lüften des Walds, und mit gesenkttem Blick
Auf die silberne Welle,
That ich schweigend den frommen Wunsch:

Wäret ihr auch bey uns, die ihr mich ferne liebt,
In des Vaterlands Schooß einsam von mir verstreut,
Die in seligen Stunden
Meine suchende Seele fand;

O so bauten wir hier Hütten der Freundschaft uns!
Ewig wohnten wir hier, ewig! Der Schattenwald
Wandelt’ uns sich in Tempe,
Jenes Thal in Elysium!

The eighteenth century which produced Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock is two things. It is an age of contentment with its existing poetic achievements, with its mastery of rules and *bienséances*, its crafting of a language consonant with these aims. But it is also an age unruly in itself, filled with an inner unease and with the hope that the masters of German poetry might find better ways of exploring the deeper urges of the human soul and might be more adequate to the task of saying what the heart wishes to utter. One remedy might be to look at great outside models and their forms, Greek and Roman, for instance, and this poem bears some of that influence. Or one might look at one’s own native tradition of German poetry, the great formers and moulders of the German language. It comes as no surprise that Klopstock counts as one of the revivers of what we might call the Germanic inheritance, not in any strictly historical sense, but in his general awareness of standing in a line of descent which first peaks with Martin Luther and continues with Martin Opitz and Albrecht von Haller. When in 1750 he went to Zurich and this poem came about, it was at the invitation of Johann Jacob Bodmer. Bodmer counts as the first major renewer and editor of Middle High German poetry in the eighteenth century. We associate him, not always happily, with the movement towards a new expressiveness in
the German language. In this, his true, if rather wayward, disciple is Klopstock. Klopstock dedicates an ode to him (‘An Bodmer’), written in the same year as ‘Der Zürchersee/Lake Zurich’. It has to do with moral and poetic models — and with friendship. Of all these factors, it is the sense of a new mastery of poetic language that is carried over into the poem with which we are concerned here.

Nowhere else in Europe was poetry like this being written around 1750. But it is not enough to say that Klopstock is better than William Collins or Thomas Gray or Jean-Baptiste Rousseau or Albrecht von Haller. As a landmark the poem remains difficult and slightly intractable. It is ‘difficult’ in the sense that today so much of it requires explanation and explication. Its subject is friendship. This is not necessarily something alien to modern experience, at least it shouldn’t be. But modern poems tend to deal more with friends than with the notion or concept of friendship itself. Thus in 1977 the East German poet Volker Braun, actually quoting Klopstock’s poem, wrote

\begin{quote}
Aber am schönsten ist \\
\textit{Von des schimmernden Sees Traubengestaden her} \\
in der Zeit Wirre \\
Die die Freunde verstreut roh \\
Vom Herzen mir, eins zu sein \\
Mit seinem Land, und \\
Gedacht \\
Mit Freunden voll das Schiff [...] \\
\end{quote}

These are lines very different in tone from Klopstock’s, despite ranging poetry and friendship with national language and nation (‘eins zu sein / Mit seinem Land’). For Braun’s is a political poem about friends, ‘all in the same boat’, but some are now tipped out of it by the course which others steer. Klopstock’s poem provides for Braun the intertext and the contexture for reflexions on nation and state that Klopstock,

\footnote{‘But sweeter by far \\
\textit{From the vineyard shores of the shimmering lake} \\
In the tumult of times \\
That rudely scattered the friends \\
From my heart, to be one with one’s land and \\
Thought \\
Full with friends the ship’ \\
at least in 1750, kept out of his poetic considerations: It might seem different when Friedrich Hölderlin, in 1789 and again in 1790, copied out stanzas thirteen and fourteen of Klopstock’s poem for his friends Johann Christoph Benjamin Rümelin and Clemens Christian Camerer:

Reizvoll klinget des Ruhms lockender Silberton
In das schlagende Herz, und die Unsterblichkeit
Ist ein großer Gedanke,
Ist des Schweisses des Edlen werth!

Durch der Lieder Gewalt, bey der Urenkelin
Sohn und Tochter noch seyn; mit der Entzückung Ton
Oft beym Namen genennet,
Oft gerufen vom Grabe her [...]

Yet the young Hölderlin, despite the importance for him of the addressees of poems as a friendly and reassuring presence, extracts from Klopstock not the notion of friendship, but the sound of poetic fame. This is what he wants to share with his friends. And when in another early poem, ‘Mein Vorsaz/My Purpose’, he talks of striving after ‘Klopstoksgröße’, he is already aligning himself with the grand tradition of Pindar and Horace that he sees represented in German by the older man’s poetry. And yet, as I hope to demonstrate, Hölderlin, like Goethe before him, engraved ‘Der Zürchersee’ in his memory and retrieved from it something that Klopstock would have regarded as incidental: the extraordinary landscape description.

For us today that landscape description has landmark quality. A line like ‘Von des schimmernden Sees Traubengestaden her’ has rhythm and musicality, but also inner dynamism (‘Von [...] her’) and inventiveness (‘Traubengestaden’): not just the lake shore covered with vineyards, but the much more concrete lake shore seemingly hanging with bunches of grapes. When Hölderlin later writes his most famous first stanza, for ‘Hälfte des Lebens’, we note how much he has learned from Klopstock with that merging of fruit and shore in one process (‘Mit gelben Birnen hänget [...] Das Land in den See’). And it is fair to say that no poet in

---

7 ‘Half-Way Through Life
With yellow pears hangs,
And full of wild roses,
The land into the lake’.
German before 1750 and few since, have managed such a good line as Klopstock’s here, certainly Goethe and Hölderlin, but there our short list ends. But as I said, for Klopstock the landscape is incidental, the background, at most the scene of other things much closer to his heart. How do we know? The opening of the poem will tell us:

Schön ist, Mutter Natur, deiner Erfindung Pracht
Auf die Fluren verstreut, schöner ein froh Gesicht,
Das den großen Gedanken
Deiner Schöpfung noch Einmal denkt. 8

We can see from this prelude to ‘Der Zürchersee’ how alien a landmark it is, certainly to post-Goethean or post-Wordsworthian sensitivities. But a poem written 250 years ago, especially one as complex as this, is unlikely to reveal its qualities without some understanding of the period in which it was written and of the poet who wrote it. 9 We must be very careful not to misread this opening. Mother Nature, far from being the commonplace it is now (although the idea of all-provident maternal nature existed long since as a trope in religious and semi-religious discourse), 10 was regarded by Klopstock’s conservative contemporaries as too bold and thus inappropriate. Far from suggesting with that verb ‘denkt’ (‘ponder’) that we should turn away from nature to rational activity, Klopstock is actually using it more or less in the same sense as ‘empfinden’ (‘feeling’). 11 Thus the first stanza recognizes nature in its fullness, but also claims for the human mind the faculty of recreating through the processes of inward contemplation and feeling what is ‘out there’. That still leaves us, however, with that irksome word ‘Gedanken’

8 ‘Mother Nature, how sweet when your works you unfold
On the meadows about, sweeter, a gladsome face
Pondering o’er the great thought
Of your handiwork yet again.’


(‘thought’). Time and again, Klopstock makes it clear that for him, the religious poet that he sees himself to be, it is the creator, not creation, that has prominence in the scheme of the universe. The opening of the ode ‘Dem Unendlichen/To the Eternal One’ (1764) is even more uncompromising that our poem’s:

Wie erhebt sich das Herz, wenn es dich,
Unendlicher, denkt! wie sinkt es,
Wenn auf sich herunterschaut![...

Klopstock is here formulating an idea which we associate with the word sublime (in German ‘das Erhabene’), the contemplation of the grand and elevated to produce an effect, as he says, ‘Wie erhebt sich das Herz’ (‘How the heart leaps’). With ‘Der Zürchersee’ we are just seven years before Edmund Burke separated the categories of the sublime and beautiful. We find them both prefigured in a letter of Klopstock’s closely connected in time and place with ‘Der Zürchersee’. On his way to Zurich in 1750 he is visiting that ‘must’ for all eighteenth-century travellers, the falls on the Rhine at Schaffhausen:

Dem Rheinfälle gegenüber
auf einem schattigen Hügel.

Welch ein großer Gedanke der Schöpfung ist dieser Wasserfall! — Ich kann itzt davon weiter nichts sagen, ich muß diesen großen Gedanken sehen und hören. — Sei gegrüßt, Strom! der du zwischen Hügeln herunter stäubst und donnerst und du, der den Strom hoch dahin führt, sei dreimal, o Schöpfer! in deiner Herrlichkeit angebetet!


12 ‘To the Eternal One
How the heart leaps when you,
Eternal One, are its thought, and how
It sinks when it contemplates you!’. HKA, I, 1, 224.
Gedanken und keinen Wunsch hegen, als seine Freunde um sich zu haben und beständig hier zu bleiben.

Und ich sage im Namen aller dieser Freunde: Amen! Hallelujah! ——

Klopstock.13

This remarkable passage makes it clear that ‘Der Zürchersee’ is expressing notions of nature, creation and friendship that are close to Klopstock’s heart. We notice words like ‘schön’ and ‘holdselig’ (‘beautiful’, ‘beauteous’) but also ‘Getöse seines mächtigen Brausens’ (‘resounding noise of its uproar’, the sublime). We note how a nature depiction similar in its boldness to ‘Der Zürchersee’ (‘der du zwischen Hügeln herunter stäubst und donnerst’/‘that beween the hills sprays and thunders’) is placed in the wider context of the One who created it; how nature becomes the expression of the soul of God himself. Equally significant is the human relationship most appropriate for the enjoyment of the spectacle and its implications: friendship. In this religious context, where poetry seeks — however inadequately — to tell the wonders of creation, it is friends who form the only appropriate companionship. The theme of friendship as such comes as no surprise, perhaps only its intensity and exclusiveness. For Aristotle, Cicero, Montaigne, even Voltaire and so many others, friendship is the ideal human relation; it crosses the dividing lines of classical humanitas to embrace the virtues common to both ancient and Christian moral thinking. In the eighteenth century, where feeling, the practice of virtue, and social intercourse are perceived as one human activity, giving rise to the direct expression of emotions, the classical greatness of soul traditionally associated with

13 ‘Opposite the Rhine falls, on a shady hill. What a great thought of creation is this waterfall — I can say no more about it here, I have to see and hear this great thought — Greetings, stream! that between the hills sprays and thunders, and thou, who draws the stream through, be threefold adored, Creator, in thy glory. Here, in front of the great Rhine falls, in the resounding noise of its uproar, lying on the grass on a beauteous height, here I greet you, friends, near and far, and above all you, worthy country, whose soil I am about to tread! A thousand greetings! O that I could gather here all those whom I love, to enjoy with them such a work of nature! Here I would gladly spend my life and die in this place of such beauty — Words cannot express further. Here one can have no other thought and can express no other wish: than to have one’s friends about one and remain here forever! And I say in the name of all of these friends Amen! Halleluia

friendship is ratified by the Christian experience of ‘where two or three are gathered together’. Klopstock need not have looked farther than the literary practice of his own time to remark the pervasiveness of friendship as a theme. Yet, when a slightly older contemporary, Samuel Gotthold Lange, begins a poem ‘Die Freunde’ (1745) with ‘Ich will, ich will die Freunde besingen’, we feel that he is cranking up a piece of cumbersome mechanism. Klopstock, on the other hand, is prepared to invest friendship with the supreme attributes of the high style of poetry: his long ode in classical alcaic stanzas, ‘Auf meine Freunde/To My Friends’ (1747), invokes in its opening stanzas Apollo, Dionysus and Pindar before apostrophizing his friends collectively and singly. His friends become part of the poetic act that is unfolding in verses like:

Wie Hebe, kühn und jugendlich ungestüm,  
Wie mit dem goldnen Köcher Latonens Sohn,  
Unsterblich, sing ich meine Freunde  
Feyrend in mächtigen Dithyramben.

Wilst du zu Strophen werden, o Lied oder  
Ununterwürfig, Pindars Gesängen gleich,  
Gleich Zeus erhabnem truncknem Sohne,  
Frey aus der schaffenden Sel enttaumeln?  

I have mentioned all of this extra-textual material to assist us on our way into the first stanza of the poem. Before looking more closely at the text stanza by stanza, we ought to consider the circumstances that led to its being written in the first place. In 1750, on a journey to Switzerland (as quoted above), Klopstock sojourned in Zurich. Zurich, the home of Johann Jacob Bodmer and Johann Jacob Breitinger, is the centre of the new poetry and the new aesthetics that are causing rifts and dissensions

---

14 Matthew, 18:20.
16 ‘To My Friends
Like Hebe, bold, youthful, impetuous,  
As with his golden quiver Latona’s son,  
Immortal, I sing of my friends,  
In paeans of mighty dithyrambs.  
Would you become verse, o song, or  
Unyielding, like to Pindar’s strain,  
Like Zeus’ great drunken son,  
Come tumbling straight from the soul, creating?’ *HKA*, I, i, 6.
in the world of German letters. Zurich is on the side of imagination and feeling (‘hertzrührende Schreibart’). Breitinger’s *Critische Dichtkunst/Critical Poetics* (1740) sums up ‘die bewegliche und hertzrührende Schreibart’ as follows:

> Die Eigenschaft dieser Sprache bestehet demnach darinnen, daß sie in der Anordnung ihres Vortrags, in der Verbindung und Zusammensetzung der Wörter und Redensarten, und in der Einrichtung der Rede-Sätze sich an kein grammatisches Gesetze, oder logicalische Ordnung, die ein gesezteres Gemüthe erfordern, bindet; sondern der Rede eine solche Art der Verbindung, der Zusammenordnung giebt, wie es die raschen Vorstellungen einer durch die Wuth der Leidenschaften auf einem gewissen Grad erhizten Phantasie erheischen [...].

Breitinger is not advocating chaos and disorder in poetic discourse, but a form of order and combination not subject to mechanisms, able to free itself from the bonds of logical order at the behest of non-rational intimations. Klopstock, almost on cue, arrives in Zurich as the author of the opening cantos of a religious epic, *Der Messias/The Messiah*, which is a declaration in favour of the poetry of emotion, of expression, of imagination, of bold formal experiment. Klopstock is taken by friends on a boating excursion on the Lake of Zurich, done in his honour. He leaves a long factual account in a letter to his cousin; Johann Kaspar Hirzel, mentioned in the poem, wrote similarly to Ewald von Kleist, also immortalized. We learn who the company was and where they went. Klopstock flirted with the sister of one of the society. But the bare bones of Klopstock’s account do not prepare us in any way for the poem that arises from the occasion. I use that phrase in preference to ‘occasional poem’. For the poem that proceeds from a certain time and

---

17 ‘Style that moves the heart’.
18 ‘Thus the quality of this language may be so defined: in the order of its diction, in the combination and ordering of words and styles, of the way the phrases are so arranged so as not to be bound by any grammatical law or logical order such as a more moderate soul requires, but gives speech such a way of combining and ordering as are demanded by the rage of passion and a certain degree of heated imagination’. Johann Jacob Breitinger, *Critische Dichtkunst*, ed. by Wolfgang Bender, Deutsche Neudrucke. Reihe Texte des 18. Jh., 2 vols (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1966), II, 354.
place transcends the occasion and arcs over into central concerns of the poet, not subject to the bonds and constraints of time or place.

The incidentals of experience are transformed by the shaping hand of metrical form. The dignity of classical verse removes these events from the purely adventitious sphere and translates them into that of rhetoric, the high style. It is classical rhetoric in the service of ‘den großen Gedanken’, the great thought. It involves an ultimately religious contemplation of nature, but also the active will to extract from it a precept and an example for Christian ethics, what older religious language called ‘conversation’. That is why the poem will not permit ‘Mutter Natur’ more than a secondary place in its scheme of things. Klopstock chooses as his verse the fourth asclepiad ode stanza, known to generations of schoolchildren through Horace’s ‘O fons Bandusiae, splendidior vitro’. He takes the metrical pattern of the classical original and makes its quantities correspond to the strong and weak beats of German poetry. That is, his language follows the normal accentuation of German, so that ‘Schön ist, Mutter Natur, deiner Erfindung Pracht’ can be read as a line of verse, but also as quite naturally cadenced German. These ode stanzas (alcaic, asclepiad, sapphic) appeal because they can express both the order and the imaginative enthusiasm that Breitinger spoke of. Their introduction into German by Klopstock is the major breakthrough in eighteenth-century German poetry before Goethe. The asclepiad stanza is largely dactylic (−xx), so that there is movement implicit in the verse form. This isn’t stately verse like the alcaic (‘Wie Hebe kühn und jugendlich ungestüm’, the opening of ‘Auf meine Freunde’); it is characterized by movement inside each line, with a marked masculine ending to verses one, two and four.\(^{20}\) Those strong beats are important, for they start and end each line. Klopstock puts his connecting words at the beginning of the stanza: ‘Komm’, ‘Schön’, ‘Jetzt’, ‘Jetzo’. He often ends his stanza with a dynamically stressed word: ‘Abendluft’, ‘vorbeigeflohn’, ‘auf uns herab’, ‘ganz ergoß’ etc. And so we hear those unusual words — new — his compounds (‘Traubengestaden’, ‘entwölkte’, ‘vorbeigeflohn’) or his intensifying comparatives (‘beseelteren’, ‘empfindender’, ‘beredter’, ‘bebender’, ‘sanfter’), which English cannot render, inside the structure of the verse.

\(^{20}\) It goes without saying that my English version cannot reproduce these features of the original.
That is why the line ‘Von des schimmernden Sees Traubengestaden her’ is so remarkable, in terms of vocabulary, verbal experiment and poetic musicality. Klopstock isn’t all tortuous syntax or interruption, as some of the older standard wisdom on the subject would have it.\(^{21}\) It is true that his poetry exemplifies what he calls ‘Darstellung’: ‘Unvermutetes, scheinbare Unordnung, schnelles Abbrechen des Gedankens, erregte Erwartung, alles dieses setzt die Seele in eine Bewegung, die sie für die Eindrücke empfänglicher macht.’\(^{22}\) Stanza two, with its difficult inversions (‘Oder, flohest du schon wieder vom Himmel auf’) might illustrate the point, as might stanza six with its double objective ‘Hallers Doris, die sang […] Hirzels Daphne, den Kleist innig wie Gleimen liebt’. But anyone with a musical ear will, I hope, hear the harmony and grace of ‘Jetzt entwölkte sich fern silbener Alpen Höh’ or ‘Jetzo nahm uns die Au in die beschattenden/Kühlen Arme des Walds’. Through this kind of verse — this needs to be said — German poetry is liberated from the grip of those ‘vers communs’, rhymed iambic pentameter, that dominate the high style or the didactic mode before the 1740s, or from shapeless madrigal verses, such as Barthold Heinrich Brockes’s, with their varying line length. The releasing of poetic energy with Klopstock is unstoppable. He does not directly influence all subsequent developments in eighteenth-century German poetry. But he produces a willingness to respond to a whole variety of forms and influences that produce the extraordinary ‘mix’ of the next fifty years or so of German poetic expression. That is the essential link forward from ‘Der Zürchersee’ to Goethe, Schiller and Hölderlin.

To return to our poem. Perhaps it is not by chance that Klopstock often ends his rhetorical sections by introducing more cadenced nature passages. Thus, stanza one with its double apostrophe to Mother Nature and to a human apperception of nature, breaks off and leads over to ‘Von des schimmernden Sees Traubengestaden her’. This in turn produces the unruly and inverted stanzas two and three that apostrophize joy. For the lake shore is only important as the place where joy, here

---

\(^{21}\) Such as the highly influential Eric Blackall, *The Emergence of German as a Literary Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 347.

\(^{22}\) ‘Representation’. ‘Unexpected seeming disorder, thought abruptly breaking off, feverish expectancy, all this sets the soul in movement and this makes it more receptive to impressions’. Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, *Ausgewählte Werke*, ed. by Karl August Schleiden (Munich: Hanser, 1962), 1034.
personified, descends in the evening zephyr, to produce ‘Jauchzen’, her more ecstatic manifestation, but also gentler feelings (‘sanft’). It is as if joy were coming down in that very moment to assist the writing of the poem, suggesting that its artistry is really improvised on the spur of the moment. Klopstock does not want his poem to be impersonal, so he names the young woman who is susceptible to such tender feeling. In the first printing of the poem he wrote ‘Sch ... inn’, meaning his cousin Fanny Schmidt. As in that other poem ‘An Gott’ (‘To God’), so excoriated by Lessing, Klopstock is not above introducing the object of his personal hopes and devotion in the context of his poetic metier. It shows our poet to be very human after all. (Fanny Schmidt rejected him.)

Klopstock then changes tense to the imperfect, to introduce five stanzas dealing with the boat excursion, his companions, and their feelings. The abruptness of this transition is at first bewildering: ‘Schon lag’. We are taken into the real event, in medias res, to be told, not what they saw, but what was already ‘hinter uns’, ‘vorbeigeflohn’. It leads over to that remarkable line ‘Jetzt entwölkte sich fern silberner Alpen Höh’, running slap against a sublime manifestation of nature, in a dramatic confrontation. Stanza after stanza of Albrecht von Haller’s ‘Die Alpen’, one of the century’s great didactic poems, never came up with a line like this. But it is not nature, it is human company that quickens the pulse (‘empfindender’) and gives more eloquent utterance (‘beredter’). Note that a technical and syntactical device, much favoured by Klopstock, the anastrophic genitive, enables him to stress — and link — ‘Höh’ and ‘Herz’. Feeling and words now combine in that strangely tortuous next stanza six. Once we have teased out its syntax, we might be tempted to dismiss it as one of the poem’s weak spots. But look at its positioning in the very centre of those five stanzas that describe the journey on the lake. It is this invocation of names that leads over to the renewed apostrophizing of joy, ‘Freude’ or ‘Göttin Freude’ in stanzas seven and eight. Eighteenth-century poetry is not inhibited about naming names, and so many of Klopstock’s poems address real persons. Hölderlin, too, takes comfort in the presence of the friends to whom he dedicates his poems: ‘sagst du’, ‘Aber Freund’, to Heinse in ‘Brod und Wein’, ‘mein Sinklair’ to Isaak von Sinclair in ‘Der Rhein’. Klopstock’s stanza links

---

friends (Hirzel and his wife) and friends who also are poets. Hirzel’s wife, here given the stylized Arcadian name of Daphne, sang Haller’s ode to Doris; Hirzel, of whom Kleist is as fond as he is of Gleim. Ewald von Kleist, Gleim and Hagedorn are poet-friends; the respected older Swiss poet Haller is a congenial spirit. For Klopstock, poetry and friendship belong together; the creative act is also a corporate act. Poetry gives the legitimation to the expression of such feeling.

That stanza six, with its two-fold stressed ‘Und’ now urges over to stanzas seven and eight, ‘Jetzo’, ‘da’, ‘auf uns herab’, ‘Dich’. The communal experience in nature (‘in die beschattenden / Kühlen Arme des Walds’) brings the renewed presence of joy, descending in personified guise, the sister of its guileless companion, humanity. Eighteenth-century German poets, from Hagedorn to Schiller, have a weakness for addresses to joy, ‘An die Freude’, or to other allegorical virtues. But this poem, as we see, is not a mere ode to joy like Hagedorn’s. Its descent to Schiller’s poem is also not direct. Were it not for those verbs of action ‘kamest […] herab’ and ‘ergoß’ (stanza 8), we might nevertheless say that the poem has moved rapidly away from real persons in real places to abstractions. The next seven stanzas (9–15) in fact make no direct reference to the excursion, subsumed as they are under that general experience of joy. Instead, they mark a process of intensification, from the visual (‘fröhlicher Lenz’), to taste (‘winket der Wein’), to sound (‘klinget des Ruhms lockender Silberton’). That process is plotted by nature, but a very non-specific nature (‘Lenz’, ‘Flur’, ‘Odem’) couched in conventional language. And nature makes feeling triumphant; it removes the inhibitions between ‘der Jünglinge Herzen’ and ‘die Herzen der Mädchen’. Wine gladdens the heart of men, but the gladness it imparts is enhanced by moderation (the ‘sokratischer Becher’). It is the teacher who tells us what is worthy of ‘der Weise’. This is not an easy word to translate: it has associations with wisdom, but also with moderation and abstinence and the stoical satisfaction with one’s lot. It is also the subject of a poem by Friedrich von Hagedorn, whom Klopstock has already addressed. The scale has even higher stages. For fame, immortality that outlives its own generation, transferred through the act of poetry, nurturing the virtues of love and

---

goodness (‘fromm’), is worthy of the highest effort of the noble soul. The young Hölderlin clearly found this sentiment appropriate for his friends’ commonplace books. These seven stanzas, with their invocation of nature, wine, and fame, are also related to the earlier address to the poet-friends. Kleist, Gleim and Hagedorn represent the strand of eighteenth-century poetry that celebrates the gentle virtues, the happy life without excess; Albrecht von Haller sings the high moral qualities of the human soul. All of them value friendship. Thus, the sections are thematically linked.

Our poem could end here. It has catalogued joy, feeling, wise moderation, and fame, in an ascending scale. Part of that process of impulsion upwards has been sustained by the use of absolute comparatives: ‘schöner’, ‘bebender’, ‘Lauter’, ‘sanfter’. It cannot seemingly mount higher. It can. ‘Gedanken’, ‘Entschließungen’, ‘Ruhm and ‘Tugend’ cede the place of honour to ‘life’ and ‘eternity’ ‘in the arm of a friend’ (stanza 15). Klopstock has described a huge arc from the ‘froh Gesicht’ of stanza one, has taken in the virtues of human company and conviviality, in order to state in this fifteenth stanza what humankind’s highest aspiration is. But the stanza remains unspecific. Klopstock therefore appends three further stanzas to spell out the implications of friendship. He remembers the occasion that gave rise to the poem, and conflates the various earlier elements of nature description, ‘schimmernder See’, ‘silberner Alpen Höh’ and ‘beschattenden / Kühlen Arme des Walds’ to produce ‘Umschattungen’ and ‘silberne Welle’, a poetic shorthand for those earlier lines. Note that now the gaze is not directed upwards towards the snowclad peaks, but downwards (‘mit gesenktem Blick’), inwards, in silence. Like the letter I quoted earlier, the ending of the poem can imagine nothing better than the epiphany of friends. Perhaps theophany is the right word. For the final stanza does nothing less than equate the tabernacles of the Mount of Transfiguration in Matthew xvii (‘Lord, it is good to be here’, ‘one for Moses and one for Elias’), with the gathering of friends. But Klopstock, by another fine poetic reminiscence from earlier in the poem, takes us from the unspecific Mount of Tabor (the place of the biblical transfiguration) to the here and now. He remembers again the ‘beschattenden / Kühlen Arme des Walds’, and the ‘Umschattungen’ two stanzas up, and produces ‘Schattenwald’. The wooded place in which we are standing, with its nature evocation,
would become the classical Vale of Tempe, the valley over there might be the Elysian fields. Klopstock has no qualms about merging Christian and classical mythology: it is an old Renaissance tradition. It goes hand in hand with the adapting of classical forms to the expressive needs of modern poetry. In this final stanza, Klopstock has fulfilled the promise of stanza one. The delights of Mother Nature are not forgotten, only they are translated on to a higher sphere, hypostasized into mythological association. The great embracing of friends would take place here, amid the ‘Schattenwald’ and ‘jenes Tal’. But thinking ‘den großen Gedanken deiner Schöpfung’ makes them into Tabor and Tempe, the highest places of inspiration in the classical and Christian traditions.

Klopstock’s poem has dynamics that my stanza-by-stanza analysis has not brought out. It plots abstract and unqualified notions in ascending order: ‘Mutter Natur’, ‘froh Gesicht’, ‘süße Freude’, ‘Empfindungen’, ‘Entschließungen’, ‘Unsterblichkeit’, ‘Elysium’. But these would be unpoetic, at most didactic, were they not accompanied by a progression in verbal action: ‘denkt’, ‘lehre’, ‘sang’, ‘empfanden’, ‘ergoß’, ‘steigt’, ‘winkt’, ‘dringt’, ‘klinget’, ‘bilden’, ‘gießen’, ‘genießen’. They represent a movement away from learning or apprehending to feeling and fulfilling. Several of those verbs are compounds: ‘flohest […] auf’, ‘kamest herab’. We saw how, in the first part especially, the poem was impelled along by strongly stressed words like ‘Schon’, ‘Jetzto’, ‘Dann’, ‘Aber’. But the essential dynamics of the poem for the modern reader are surely ‘Von des schimmernden Sees Traubengestaden her’, ‘Jetzt entwölkte sich fern silberner Alpen Höh’, ‘Jetzo nahm uns die Au in die beschatteten / Kühlen Arme des Walds’ and ‘in den Umschattungen, / In den Lüften des Walds’. When the young Goethe in 1775 retraced Klopstock’s footsteps and embarked with friends on a boat on the same lake, there was not a shadow of doubt that all involved knew they were re-enacting ‘Der Zürchersee’. It was perhaps inevitable that Goethe, taking out his notebook and jotting down three stanzas now known as ‘aufm Zürchersee’, was reminded of what I call the essential dynamics of the earlier poem. Klopstock, as Werther testifies, is one of the important influences on Goethe for a brief time. In an extraordinary homage to Klopstock later in 1775, Goethe quotes the phrase ‘Gedanken

Goethe’s is a poem very different from Klopstock’s. Goethe, ever feline and wayward in friendship, is not interested in ‘Hütten der Freundschaft’, even if his companions may be. He is not concerned with the catalogue of virtues in Klopstock’s poem, even though he will come to ponder some of them in his reflective poetry of the early 1780s. In his little poem on the lake, Mother Nature is a nourisher so exuberant that the poet gets his images mixed up (‘Ich saug’ an meiner Nabelschnur / Nun Nahrung aus der Welt’). But he takes, not in Klopstock’s order, the things in nature that had helped to bear ‘Der Zürchersee’ along: ‘Und Berge Wolkenangetan / Entgegnen unserm Lauf’, ‘Auf der Welle blinken / Tausend schwebende Sterne’ and ‘Im See bespiegelt / Sich die reifende Frucht’. All of these images are bolder and more concrete than Klopstock’s, especially their evocation of the light dancing on the waves. They are part of a process in the poem where the young Goethe establishes the adequacy of his poetic powers to overcome a crisis in his creative and emotional life. But generations of commentators on this poem, agonizing over the meaning of ‘reifende Frucht’, might have started (where they finish is another matter) with Klopstock’s ‘Traubengestade’ or ‘Gebirge, / Voll von Reben’. It is surely a tribute to Goethe’s powers of observation and his sense of artistic perspective that he first looks up (to the mountain peaks), looks down (to the light on the waves) and then around him (at the shores covered with vineyards, the ripening stage of the cycle of nature). Klopstock’s poem, perhaps against its stated intention, had helped him to see these processes. Hölderlin, over twenty-five years later, remembers just two of the landscape features of ‘Der Zürchersee’. Its message has long since been overtaken by mythological visions alien to Klopstock. But in ‘Der Rhein’ (1801), we read ‘Unter den silbernen Gipfeln’ and ‘Im Schatten des Walds’, in ‘Patmos’ (1803) ‘der schattige Wald’ and ‘der silberne

der Schöpfung’. Goethe’s is a poem very different from Klopstock’s. Goethe, ever feline and wayward in friendship, is not interested in ‘Hütten der Freundschaft’, even if his companions may be. He is not concerned with the catalogue of virtues in Klopstock’s poem, even though he will come to ponder some of them in his reflective poetry of the early 1780s. In his little poem on the lake, Mother Nature is a nourisher so exuberant that the poet gets his images mixed up (‘Ich saug’ an meiner Nabelschnur / Nun Nahrung aus der Welt’). But he takes, not in Klopstock’s order, the things in nature that had helped to bear ‘Der Zürchersee’ along: ‘Und Berge Wolkenangetan / Entgegnen unserm Lauf’, ‘Auf der Welle blinken / Tausend schwebende Sterne’ and ‘Im See bespiegelt / Sich die reifende Frucht’. All of these images are bolder and more concrete than Klopstock’s, especially their evocation of the light dancing on the waves. They are part of a process in the poem where the young Goethe establishes the adequacy of his poetic powers to overcome a crisis in his creative and emotional life. But generations of commentators on this poem, agonizing over the meaning of ‘reifende Frucht’, might have started (where they finish is another matter) with Klopstock’s ‘Traubengestade’ or ‘Gebirge, / Voll von Reben’. It is surely a tribute to Goethe’s powers of observation and his sense of artistic perspective that he first looks up (to the mountain peaks), looks down (to the light on the waves) and then around him (at the shores covered with vineyards, the ripening stage of the cycle of nature). Klopstock’s poem, perhaps against its stated intention, had helped him to see these processes. Hölderlin, over twenty-five years later, remembers just two of the landscape features of ‘Der Zürchersee’. Its message has long since been overtaken by mythological visions alien to Klopstock. But in ‘Der Rhein’ (1801), we read ‘Unter den silbernen Gipfeln’ and ‘Im Schatten des Walds’, in ‘Patmos’ (1803) ‘der schattige Wald’ and ‘der silberne

26 ‘Thought of creation’. Ibid., 37.
27 ‘I suck on my navel cord
Nurture from the world’.
28 ‘And mountains decked with clouds
Rise up to meet our path.’
‘On the wave-tops sparkle
A thousand dancing stars’
‘In the lake is mirrored
The ripening fruit’.
Schnee’, proof of the dynamic power of Klopstock’s ode to penetrate poems about myth and history and the fulfilment of all things.

Appendix One

Translation of Klopstock, ‘Der Zürchersee/The Lake of Zurich’

Mother nature, how sweet when your gifts you unfold
On the meadows about, sweeter, a gladsome face
Pondering o’er the great thought
Of your handiwork yet again.

From the vineyard shores of the shimmering lake,
Or, if once again you to the heavens flew,
Come in the reddening ray
On the wings of the evening air,

Come and teach my song to be youthfully glad,
Sweet joy, like you, like the youth’s jubilation,
Quick, and filling the soul,
Gentle, as Fanny is, the tender.

Far beyond us lay mount Uto, at whose feet
Zurich lies in her vale, nurturing freemen in peace;
Now many a vine-clad slope
Had flashed past as we rowed our way.

The clouds now broke to reveal the heights of silvery alps.
The young men’s hearts beat in their feelings’ rush,
Words came easier
To their fair companion’s mouth.

‘Haller’s Doris”, sang she, worthy herself of the song,
Hirzel’s Daphne: Kleist loves him as he does Gleim,
And we young men sang
Full of feeling like Hagedorn.

Now the Au took us into the leafy shading
Arms of the wood, that the island surmounts;
Then, then, you descended,

---

29 ‘Beneath the silvery peaks’, ‘in the forest shade’, ‘the shading forest’, ‘the silver snow’. Hölderlin, Große Stuttgarter Ausgabe, II, i, 142, 147, 165f.
Joy, and our cups ran over.

Joy divine, your very self, you, yes we felt you.
Yes, it was verily you, humanity’s sister,
Companion, pure in heart,
Who outpoured yourself on us.

Sweet is, springtide joy, your breath and inspiring
When the lea bears you forth, and your gentle breath
Pours into the hearts of youth
And into the maidens’ hearts as well.

O feeling triumphs through you, the breath rises,
Flourishes sweeter and beats,
Louder is the voice of love
When you loosen the magic spell.

Gently beckons wine when through it feelings,
Better desires and gentle beckon us in our thoughts,
In the Socratic beaker
Wreathed about with the dewy rose;

When it pierces the heart and resolutions are made,
To the drunkard unknown, awakens every thought,
So that we learn to abhor
What to the wise unworthy is.

Fame sounds silvery-voiced, charming, enticing
In the beating heart, and life without end is
Worthy to ponder,
Worth the sweat of the noble brow.

Passed down through song’s power to generations to come,
Its charms from daughter to son, son and daughter to be,
Often named by your name,
Often called from without the grave,

Then to shape their gentle heart and pour love
And good virtue, to pour into their gentle heart,
Is, by heaven, no trifle,
Worth the sweat of the noble brow!

But sweeter by far is yet, fairer and comelier,
In the arms of a friend, knowing that friend is yours,
Sharing life in this way,
Never-ending, and worthy too.
Tender affections full, in the shadowy glades,
In the breeze of the woods, with downward look of the eye
On the silvery wave,
Silent, I made the loving wish:

Were you but all here, you who love me abroad,
Scattered here and there in the land of our birth,
Whom in hours of bliss
My soul sought out and duly found:

O then here we would build tabernacles of friendship:
Ever live here, ever. The forest’s shade
To Tempe changed,
And that vale to Elysium!