

METAMORPHOSES OF THE MUSE: RETHINKING GENDER AND CREATIVITY IN
GERMAN POETRY FROM 1800-1850

Amy Louise Jones

A dissertation submitted to the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Carolina-
Duke Graduate Program in German Studies

Chapel Hill
2022

Approved by:

Gabriel Trop

Eric Downing

Stefani Engelstein

Sarah Pourciau

Aleksandra Prica

© 2022
Amy Louise Jones
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

ABSTRACT

Amy Louise Jones: *Metamorphoses of the Muse: Rethinking Gender and Creativity in German Poetry from 1800-1850*
(Under the direction of Gabriel Trop)

For a significant part of Western European literary history, the muse has been imagined as a female human figure who inspires and entices a male artist with her beauty. This female muse is passive, while the male artist is active. My project unearths a more varied literary history of muse figures in German Romantic and post-Romantic literature, especially poetry, as a genre often associated with the invocation of the muse. The muse figure, while often hidden in the shadows of the more common genius figure, appears in the discourse about creativity and procreation from the mid-eighteenth century onward. Both muse and genius represent the unknown energy and vitality behind the creative act. In nineteenth-century Romantic and post-Romantic texts, such as those by the poets Karoline von Günderode, Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, and Heinrich Heine examined here, the classical muse figure is reimagined and reinterpreted as an embodied figure – not always human – with which the poet figure in a text must interact. The muse figure takes unexpected forms such as the corpse, the vampire, or the flower.

In contrast to the discourse about the solitary male genius, sole authority over his work, the discourse about the muse is one of collaboration. The unconventional muse figures I notice in these texts challenge the normative expectations for the poet/muse roles and for their relationship. In some cases, the poet-muse relationship unsettles philosophical binaries such as gender (male/female), species (human/non-human), organic state (life/death), and agency

(active/passive). The variety of new poet/muse relationships that arise in Romantic and post-Romantic texts respond to contemporary aesthetic, philosophical, and scientific trends and flourish into a broad array of possible creative paradigms. Many of these paradigms explicitly challenge pre-existing patriarchal paradigms of creativity, while others do so implicitly. This project therefore attempts to look at the German Romantic and post-Romantic muse through a queer lens, remaining attentive to the unconventional, non-normative, and novel facets of the poet/muse relationship.

Dedicated to my father, David F. Jones

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you first of all to Gabe, my advisor, for understanding my chaos. Writing and brainstorming together during our meetings was one of my favorite parts of the dissertating process. Long live *Symphilosophie!* It's no exaggeration to say I would never have gotten to the end without your continual positive energy and support of me – as an academic, but more importantly, as a human.

Thank you as well to the other members of my committee: Eric Downing, Stefani Engelstein, Sarah Pourciau, and Aleksandra Prica. I learned so much from each of you and am grateful for your feedback throughout the course of this project.

No graduate student could survive without the support of our fellow students, and I'm especially grateful to Natasha Chernysheva and Maggie Reif for hangouts, humor, chats, and sharing so much important knowledge; to Heidi Hart for sharing cat photos, a love of classical music, and your poetry; and last but not least, to Undraa Lhamsuren, Tatjana Zimbelius, Natasza Gawlick, and Luca Pixner – have fun and good luck!

Dorothy, Margy, Valerie, and Pam – thank you for helping keep me on track with deadlines and for helping make both UNC and Duke such good places to teach and work over the years.

Having completed the Certificate for Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies at Duke, I am grateful to the department staff who kept everything running and communicated about making a class work from UNC. Special thanks to Pete Sigal, who graciously allowed me to

draft part of the Heine chapter in his History of Sexualities class in Spring 2021. I learned a lot in that class, and your feedback was remarkably kind and helpful.

I would be remiss to leave out Paul Roberge, always a supportive figure in both my academic and my linguistic endeavors!

Much appreciation goes to all of my students, but especially to those that I have been teaching during this semester of finishing my dissertation, as well as to two students from past semesters who have stayed in touch and been great fun to talk to: Corbin, from UNC, and Connor, from Duke. Thank you all for your patience, and for your enthusiasm and hard work – it's truly amazing to get to teach and learn alongside you.

During my year in Tübingen, I met so many lovely kindred spirits. I really enjoyed being a part of Jörg Robert and Astrid Dröse's *Kolloquium* and special seminar on Cotta. Our weekly post-*Kolloquium* dinners were a lot of fun, as well as the visits to the DLA Marbach and Heidelberg. Just to name a few of my fellow students: Juliana, Lia, Gudrun, Mirek, and Elif, thanks for the chats and the support! On the other side of the road, taking classes with Dagmar Leupold in the Studio Literatur und Theater was an unforgettable experience – meeting other creative writers of all ages and getting to use the German language in a wholly different way.

Of course, while in Tübingen, I met many non-academic friends as well: thanks to Felix for being the best roommate; Tamás, for the Hungarian conversation and different perspectives; and Karla, for traveling with me to see Droste-Hülshoff's little seaside house and for the epistolary exchanges.

I'm also very glad I met Gábrriel, my second Hungarian language partner and a friend during the long lonely days of the early pandemic. The terrible, fundamental secrets of the

(German literature) universe would surely have sucked me into their depths had it not been for friends such as you. And to Viki, *köszönöm a szavak! És szia Zoé!*

Thank you to my friends from high school and college for continuing to reach out and support me during this whole process: special mentions to Colleen, Kailen, Christine, Elise, and Michael B.! On the grad school side of things, I'm so happy to have had Chandler as a fabulous roommate and great friend, and Yen as my current roommate, pandemic survival buddy, and fellow cat-mama.

Lots of love to my family back in Ohio: Mom, Dad, Andrew, Uncle Dave, and Zoë, and – in memoriam – Janie and Pepe. Despite my apparently endless supply, words can't properly express how grateful I am for all the support over the years. Thank you to my dad especially for listening to endless calls about dissertation turmoil – and sometimes even successes! And to all of you, thank you for being so proud of and excited about what I'm doing, even when it's in a language you don't (always) understand.

I'm very thankful to Lyra and Cloud, the kittens, for making sure I take breaks and focus on something that's not a computer screen. While they haven't always been patient during the writing process, they've been excellent furry companions. Now we can play!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: MUSE RHETORIC IN GERMAN ROMANTIC POETRY	1
CHAPTER 1: INVERTED MUSES AND VAMPIRIC VITALISM IN KAROLINE VON GÜNDERRODE.....	40
CHAPTER 2: REANIMATING THE ROMANTIC: THE NECRO-BOTANIC POETRY OF ANNETTE VON DROSTE-HÜLSHOFF.....	69
CHAPTER 3: SEXY STATUES: SCULPTING QUEER DESIRE IN HEINRICH HEINE'S <i>FLORENTINISCHE NÄCHTE</i> AND <i>BUCH DER LIEDER</i>	116
CONCLUSION.....	157
WORKS CITED.....	162

INTRODUCTION: MUSE RHETORIC IN GERMAN ROMANTIC POETRY

Wollust ist meines Daseins Zeugungskraft.

– Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, 2. Teil, “Die Erfüllung”¹

Er ist die vollkommenste animalische Pflanze, ein eingeborner Genius in einer menschlichen Bildung.

– Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*²

Nowadays, the muse suffers from a bad reputation. She – for the muse is still often gendered female – is considered old-fashioned, sexist, even uninspiring. If the muse is mentioned at all in popular writing, it is most often to push back against these very tropes, and even in recent academic writing about gender and authorship, “muse” is most often a term applied to a woman who helped a man write (although not necessarily with her beauty – more often via mutual intellectual companionship). Nobody questions the muse; they simply neglect her. But the muse – like the author, her constant companion – should not be prematurely consigned to the graveyard of bygone literary figures. This project aims to excavate a Romantic muse figure that has been forgotten, but that lies at the nexus of questions about poetic and gender norms that still

¹ Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2016), 155.

² Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen Zur Philosophie Der Geschichte Der Menschheit*, ed. Martin Bollacher, vol. 6, Werke in Zehn Bänden (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1989), 273.

influence how we read (and produce) literature. This muse figure can help conceptualize the text's relationship to non-standard bodies, genders, and sexualities.

Like everything unfashionable, the muse comes back into style from time to time: most recently in 2018-19, as the #MeToo movement began calling into question the “great men” of the art world. In 2018, *The Guardian* published reviews of two books that reframed two female muses as poets in their own right: an academic biography of the nineteenth-century Elizabeth Siddall, a poet as well as a pre-Raphaelite artist's model; and the first English translation of work by Norah Lange, known as “Borges's muse,” but likewise a poet and novelist.³ Notably, both of these articles include the word “finally” in the title, suggesting a shared mood in the contemporary Zeitgeist: *finally, women are getting a voice!* Similarly, an article in *The New Yorker* from 2019 frames Françoise Gilet as a powerful artist with the title “How Picasso's Muse Became a Master.”⁴ Ironically, as the muse regains some popularity, it seems to be only in order to emphasize that the figure is becoming ever more passé.

The 2018 art exhibition *Everyday Muse* at Itd los angeles confronted similar questions of gender, power, tradition, and autonomy. In the magazine *i-D*, the co-curator of the show John Edmonds said that one goal was “to push the idea of how active a muse can be for an artist.”⁵ The artists in the show, many of whom are working-class and/or queer, make “[c]elebrating our

³ Alison Flood, “Elizabeth Siddall: Pre-Raphaelites' Muse Finally Gets Her Own Voice, 150 Years after Death,” *The Guardian*, September 4, 2018, sec. Books, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/sep/05/real-face-of-pre-raphaelites-ophelia-to-be-revealed-elizabeth-siddall> and James Reith, “Norah Lange: Finally, ‘Borges's Muse’ Gets Her Time in the Spotlight,” *The Guardian*, August 2, 2018, sec. Books, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2018/aug/02/norah-lange-finally-borgess-muse-gets-her-time-in-the-spotlight>.

⁴ Alexandra Schwartz, “How Picasso's Muse Became a Master,” *The New Yorker*, July 15, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/07/22/how-picassos-muse-became-a-master>.

⁵ Benoit Loiseau, “These Artists Are Deconstructing the Myth of the Muse,” *I-D*, August 14, 2018, https://i-d.vice.com/en_uk/article/wjkbaw/these-artists-are-deconstructing-the-myth-of-the-muse.

everyday muses” into “a political task,” says journalist Benoit Loiseau.⁶ In some cases, this means representing the self as muse, as Black artists Mickalene Thomas and Lyle Ashton Harris do in their photographs. In other cases, the artist subverts the expectation of who is muse – inspiration for a painting, a subject in the sense of passive material – and who is an active agent in the painting, a subject in a different sense. This is the case in the work of Chelsea Culprit, herself a former strip-club dancer, whose paintings of former co-workers represent them not from the perspective of the male gaze, but “from the subjectivity of the artist’s experience.”⁷ Other artists in the show, such as Chanel Von Habsburg-Lothringen, find the muse distasteful due to its suggestion that art is divinely inspired, not requiring work – she calls the idea of a muse “unintellectual.”⁸ Connecting all these diverse insights into the role of the muse is a deep awareness that the muse’s role counts as labor, just as much as that of the artist.⁹

The idea of the muse as a political figure representing the gendered power struggle in art history is not new. Loiseau introduces the muse in the article on the 2019 art exhibit by citing Germaine Greer, whose argument is that it is the muse who penetrates the poet, rather than vice versa.¹⁰ Greer published an article in *The Guardian* in 2008 titled “The role of the artist’s muse,” whose subtitle explains her view: “A muse’s job is to penetrate the male artist and bring forth a work from the womb of his mind.”¹¹ This is essentially the childbirth metaphor for creativity,

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Loiseau asks: “How many muses does it take to build the success of an artist, and who gets to dictate the worth of their labor?” (Ibid.)

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Germaine Greer, “The Role of the Artist’s Muse,” *The Guardian*, June 1, 2008, sec. Art and design, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/artblog/2008/jun/02/theroleoftheartistsmuse>.

very popular around 1800, albeit here expressed more directly than most nineteenth-century artists would have dared. In this article, she argues that “[p]hysical congress with one's muse is hardly possible, because her role is to penetrate the mind rather than to have her body penetrated.”¹² Thus she challenges the popular fascination with the sexual, seedy side of muse histories. Even so, her article reads mostly as a list of the most famous historical muses – although not all of them are women – and does not yet reveal the transformation of passive muse into active artist that bursts onto the scene in 2018.

Greer's article seems to represent a turning point in popular consciousness of the muse, which has been changing rapidly as social media introduces feminist thought to broader populations. As recently as 1996, the *New Yorker* published an article with the dramatic title “Is the Muse Dead?”, which agreed with Greer that the artist/muse relationship involved sublimation of female sexuality, but which – despite its acknowledgement of the same virgin/whore duality against which the artists from the 2019 exhibition “Everyday Muse” push back – unquestioningly accepted the muse's passive role: “It is not the man speaking through the woman; it is the woman speaking through the man. The Olympian male imagination will always do more for the woman than she would do for herself.”¹³ Regardless of whether the muse is alive or dead, it is clear that the public image of the muse as beautiful, mysterious, passive woman has been taking a long time to die.

The following introduction will place the literary muse figure into conversation with other generative figures from the natural sciences, in particular botany. Following Ludmilla

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Arlene Croce, “IS THE MUSE DEAD?,” *The New Yorker*, February 18, 1996, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1996/02/26/is-the-muse-dead>.

Jordanova, who sees imagination as being at the center of scientific endeavor – an endeavor that includes the “desire for dominance over nature” – I examine how the Romantic and post-Romantic muse grows out of concerns about literary power, especially as filtered through gender.¹⁴ I take the botanical muse as a paradigmatic example, but the imaginative force that this figure represents could also be mediated via other images. This dissertation focuses on the vampire and the statue, but in my readings, a muse figure is a node in the text that concentrates its speaker’s (in the case of poetry) or narrator’s (in the case of prose) “generative anxieties” – which often, but do not always, coalesce around the creative act. Thus an encounter with a muse figure does not always lead to an artwork being created, but rather, the muse figure acts as a prism through which to refract the text’s own relationship with art. One might think of this kind of muse as a meta-muse: a word that immediately activates a network of related literary tropes, histories, and theories.

Gender and sexuality play a significant role in my readings of muse figures, in particular given the muse’s feminized history. In this introduction, I will consider how the gendering of the muse figure differs from the gendering of the genius figure, as well as how the botanical muse collects within a literary representation the Romantic era’s fascination with androgynous and perverse generative powers in nature. The authors whose work I read – Karoline von Günderrode, Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, and Heinrich Heine – write within a culture that is at once consolidating new and in many ways more rigid gender roles, and at the same time making scientific discoveries that reveal the breadth of sexuality in nature. The Romantic and post-Romantic muse, as depicted or implied in their texts, can often be read *both* as a confirmation of contemporary gender roles and as a counterargument to them. There is a constitutive tension

¹⁴ Ludmilla Jordanova, *Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 24.

between norms and the search for an undefinable new way of writing – and the concepts of genius and originality increasingly push back against the belief in creative norms at all.

The connection between the muse figures I identify may seem tenuous, given the difficulty of defining what precisely a muse is when it is not a human goddess or a human woman. If an apple tree, a dead body, and a statue can all be considered muses, then what *is* a muse? The introduction will consider this question in light of a focus on generativity that does *not* reproduce – a queer kind of generativity that relies on relationality. The Romantic and post-Romantic muse draws our attention to textual moments that unsettle and rethink old metaphors of literary creation.

Part I. The Muse is Dead! Long Live the Genius: The Gendered History of the Creative Act

Nineteenth-century poets also struggled to adapt the figure of the muse to their own era, recognizing the figure's problem of antiquity, if not of sexism. There are remarkably few scholarly commentaries on the muse in nineteenth-century German writing, since the muse rarely appears in texts, at most as a brief nod to an outdated tradition. Or so it seems. A significant amount of the muse commentary that informs my project comes from the field of Classical Studies or Feminist Studies. So, is the muse un-German? Or just unimportant? The questions are fair. It is easy to draw a connection between German literature and the muse's counterpart, the genius, a figure that equally started life as a god, only to become incorporated into the poet's self. The discourse on genius in the late eighteenth-century German literary world was detailed and rich; the discourse on the muse, less so.

Other countries and centuries found the muse more worthy of note.¹⁵ “The Muse was a favourite theme in art” in eighteenth-century London, and the Swiss painter Angelica Kauffmann “even presents herself as her own Muse” in a self-portrait.¹⁶ Similarly, the painter Richard Samuel depicts nine well-known female artists of the era as Classically-garbed muses in his 1779 painting *The Nine Living Muses of Great Britain*. Penny Murray argues that this painting depicts “the Muses as emblems of female power rather than as passive enablers of male artists,” and that this is indicative of a broader conversation about what women are capable of that was going on in British society at the time.¹⁷ If the muse’s depiction represents an examination of female power in the art world, then does her absence mean that this discussion is not happening at all?

Rather, it seems that in Germany the muse discourse was undergirded by unexpected literary interpretations of gender that make it difficult to recognize a simple, traditional muse figure. Martha Helfer makes the argument that, even though “woman and the feminine are troped as the originary condition of possibility of Romantic self-definition and Romantic artistic production,” it is actually the male muse that underlies Romantic artistic production.¹⁸ The female dead beloved, who would be easier recognized as a muse figure, is treated mainly as an ironic figure that the Romantic text calls into question, according to Helfer. On a textual level, she is wholly dependent on the male artist. But Helfer, rather than reading this situation as a

¹⁵ See for a French Renaissance example: Anne-Pascale Pouey-Mounou, ed., *La Muse s’amuse: figures insolites de la Muse à la Renaissance* (Geneva: DROZ, 2016). Also focusing on the French muse, this time in the nineteenth century, is Gayle A. Levy’s *Refiguring the Muse* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999).

¹⁶ Penny Murray, “Reclaiming the Muse,” in *Laughing with Medusa: Classical Myth and Feminist Thought*, ed. Vanda Zajko and Miriam Leonard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 331.

¹⁷ Murray 334.

¹⁸ Martha B. Helfer, “The Male Muses of Romanticism: The Poetics of Gender in Novalis, E.T.A. Hoffmann, and Eichendorff,” *The German Quarterly* 78, no. 3 (2005): 299.

crystallization of a patriarchal creative paradigm, interprets the irony as a first step towards self-reflection. In her interpretation, the male author “defines himself in terms of woman, but then questions the traditional female gendering of its [the narrative’s] own poetic ground ironically and self-critically,” therefore “question[ing] how poetic production is gendered” and “destabliz[ing] conventional models of gender and subjectivity.”¹⁹ Finally, she argues that the way the texts of early German Romantics showcase the conventional female muse and unexpected male muse “suggest that gender itself is produced poetically” in an “*autopoietic* process.”²⁰

In the following chapters, I identify muses of varying genders, and even genderless muses, but I consider Helfer’s provocative analysis an excellent foundation to explain why I see muses as important to German literature. The idea of inspiration and of poetic self-reflection appears frequently in Romantic literature, even when it is not explicitly stated as such. Romantic poets’ quest for an original poetic source – such as the famed *blaue Blume* of Novalis – resembles a musal act. When there is no visible, tactile muse, then where *does* one find poetry? This is a question that engages German Romantics, especially as the era gives birth to a new kind of inner medium: the genius, or the self-as-muse.²¹

The nineteenth-century muse figure was a transformation – a metamorphosis – of the Muses as goddesses, and as such has a numinous heritage just like the genius. Perhaps unexpectedly, the genius can be compared not only to the ancient concept of the personal guardian spirit – a type of god – but to the mortal Narcissus, famous for his self-adoration.

¹⁹ Helfer, 302.

²⁰ Emphasis in original; Helfer 314.

²¹ For more on the figure of the genius in German literature, see: Jochen Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens 1750-1945* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1985).

Alexander Mathäs analyzes the phenomenon of narcissism as a driving force of literary creation at the end of the eighteenth century, a time when old religious and social structures were quickly changing. Not merely a self-aggrandizing attitude, “narcissism can be viewed as testing the limits of the self by erecting borders where boundaries collapse and by transgressing limits where borders threaten the individual’s sense of autonomy and flexibility.”²² This testing of limits indicates a certain flexibility in thinking about literary creativity, even as new systems that codified poetic production according to class, gender, and other social factors were being developed. David Wellbery concurs, describing Kant’s *Geniebegriff* as something that oscillates between the norm and its opposite(s), in its striving “auf eine Dimension der Produktion von Sinnhaftem aufmerksam zu machen, die sich nicht durch kulturelle Regeln normieren lässt und trotzdem Normatives zeitigt.”²³

The way that late eighteenth and early nineteenth century authors treat the figures of the genius and the muse – how they appear in their texts, how often, with what kind of language and tone – can offer information about how these authors understand and value the creative act. Likewise, understanding the discourse on genius, which is closely linked to that of procreation – human *and* non-human – can illuminate the role of the figure of the muse, who has been shadowed by the light of masculine genius in both the primary and the secondary literature. Finally, examining the boundary-pushing (and boundary-creating) aspects of the muse and genius figures in literary texts can animate queer readings that might otherwise remain concealed behind the more easily visible traditional meanings of a text.

²² Alexander Mathäs, ed., *The Self as Muse: Narcissism and Creativity in the German Imagination 1750-1830* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2011), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/duke/detail.action?docID=1365258>, n.p.

²³ David E. Wellbery, “Kunst – Zeugung – Geburt: Überlegungen Zu Einer Anthropologischen Grundfigur,” in *Kunst – Zeugung – Geburt: Theorien Und Metaphern Ästhetischer Produktion in Der Neuzeit*, ed. Christian Begemann and David E. Wellbery (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach Verlag, 2002), 14-15.

The Romantics were not the first to queer the muse by invoking something non-normative as a poetic source. One early example of such a queering is the Roman poet Propertius's declaration that it is not the muses, but rather his girlfriend, who has inspired him to write his *Elegies*.²⁴ In so doing, he imbues a mortal being with a godlike power of creation. Nor is his girlfriend as muse particularly passive or gentle; rather, she appears to the lyric I (a version of Propertius) in a dream and announces that he shall soon join her among the shades so that she can "wear away the bone joined with bone," in a phrase that mingles eros and decay.²⁵ Thus even the tropes that are, by the Romantic era, in a sense traditional – such as that of the dead beloved as muse, revived by Dante with his Beatrice figure and by Petrarch with his Laura figure – can be read as queer, pushing back against political and social forces that aim to control poetry's generative force. Invocations of the muse figure allow the poet to allude to the history of the genre and to its ability to impact social beliefs and political actions.

In terms of procreative language popular around 1800, one of the most well-known tropes is the childbirth metaphor – at least for men. During this period, intellectual and artistic creativity become linked with genius via metaphors of procreation, with the resulting belief that artistic geniuses themselves are born, just as they birth great works of art. Thinkers such as Wilhelm von

²⁴ In an explanation to his patron Maecenas, the lyric I explains: "You ask where the passion comes from I write so much about, and this book, so gentle on the tongue. Neither [Apollo](#) nor [Calliope](#) sang them to me. The girl herself fires my wit" (Propertius. *Elegies*. Translated by A.S. Kline. *Poetry in Translation*. <https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Prophome.php>, n.p., Elegy 2.1).

²⁵ "Now, let others have you: soon I alone will hold you: you'll be with me, I'll wear away the bone joined with bone" (Ibid.). The Latin text reads "[nunc te possideant aliae](#): [mox sola tenebo](#): [mecum eris, et mixtis ossibus ossa teram](#)," with a more visually striking poetic joining after death – telling a fictional, erotic story about Cynthia's wish to possess the poet (in the opposite way to how nineteenth-century geniuses purported to possess the muse, but revealing perhaps a longstanding anxiety about poetic obsession) (Propertius. *Elegies*. Edited by Lucian Mueller. Leipzig: Teubner, 1898. *Perseus Digital Library*. <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:latinLit:phi0620.phi001.perseus-lat2:2.1>, n.p., Elegy 4.7).

Humboldt “equated genius with “the intellectual force of procreation,””²⁶ and Johann Wilhelm Ritter argues that “[d]as Weib gebirt Menschen, der Mann das Kunstwerk.”²⁷ Accompanying this metaphor of art as male gestation and birth is the idea, expressed for example by Immanuel Kant, that a genius cannot truly understand how he produces great works of art. It is a subconscious process, as the word’s etymology suggests: the word *genius* comes from “dem eigentümlichen einem Menschen bei der Geburt mitgegebenen schützenden und leitenden Geist” – and thus is a natural, inborn trait.²⁸ Furthermore, Kant declares that “schöne Künste notwendig als Künste des *Genies* betrachtet werden müssen,” systematizing the theory of the genius across all forms of respectable art.²⁹

The gendered discrimination of this system, which relegates women to the role of physical mother and cuts them off from producing ideas, has been commented on extensively, but it is not necessarily a *goal* of the concept of genius. Rather, the idea of genius arises in connection with new theories of nature, self, and mind that themselves grapple with the role of the genders. Jocelyn Holland, in her work on science and theories of procreation in German Romanticism, explicitly states that she does *not* argue that procreation is “instrumentalized in an attempt to reconfigure questions of gender” in texts of the era, in large part because the gendered metaphors that contemporary authors used were based on their varying subject matter and did not

²⁶ Jocelyn Holland, *German Romanticism and Science: The Procreative Poetics of Goethe, Novalis, and Ritter* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 3. Holland cites Humboldt in this quotation.

²⁷ Johann Wilhelm Ritter, *Key Texts of Johann Wilhelm Ritter (1776-1810) on the Science and Art of Nature*, trans. Jocelyn Holland (Leiden: Brill, 2010), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unc/detail.action?docID=634924>, 384-85.

²⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Werke in Zwölf Bänden*, Vol. 10 (Frankfurt am Main, 1977), 242.

²⁹ Kant, 241.

follow any rigid patterns.³⁰ However, she acknowledges scholarship stating that woman (as a counterpart to man) “has been confined as the plant to man’s animal, the nature to his art, the object to his subject, the *you* to his *I*.”³¹ Quite apart from any cause-and-effect arguments, the discourse about genius shows that there is a baseline of gendered inequality in terms of access to the author role around 1800.

Contemporary science and contemporary gender roles around 1800 agree that women cannot be geniuses, and that consequently women cannot truly be authors. As Christine Battersby puts it, “Romanticism turned the artist into a demi-god: the genius. Women, by contrast, became simply ‘Other.’ The occasional female creator could be countenanced; but being a creator and a truly feminine female were deemed to be in conflict,” or, more succinctly, “[g]enius, apparently, required a penis.”³² In fact, the question of whether or not women should or could create poetry (or engage in any intellectual activity, including scientific pursuits) is intimately connected with scientific beliefs about gender.³³

The muse can be read as a figure that demonstrates the artificiality of the binary system representing men as active artists and women as passive raw material. To discover the active muse, we must look back to the world of Greek legend, where one discovers “dass die Musen einst selber Sangerinnen waren, dass sie also im kunstlerischen Prozess eine durchaus aktive

³⁰ Holland, 11.

³¹ Holland, 13.

³² Christine Battersby, *Gender and Genius: Towards a Feminist Aesthetics* (London: The Women's Press, 1989), 6.

³³ For example, an early twentieth-century writer named H.J. Mozans, attempting to argue *for* women’s participation in science, “urged women to join the scientific enterprise,” choosing a muse metaphor to describe their role “a Beatrice inspiring her very own Dante to achieve his full potential; in this way, man and woman would complement each other and together form a perfect *androgyn*e” (Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 5).

Rolle hatten und nie nur eine rein passive Inspirationsquelle verkörperten.”³⁴ If the muses themselves were singers, then they were not really so different from the poet-as-genius as the Romantic era imagines him: the differences between the role of medium (muse, woman, beloved) and artist (author, man, lover) are also culturally drawn. In fact, the original concept of the muse positions the author – regardless of gender – in a manner that cannot be called neither wholly active nor wholly passive. The ideal situation represented by the ancient muse and poet requires *both* participants to be receptive. The creative act is based on a relationship, or to use a more contemporary scholarly term, a collaboration. Furthermore, the Greek muse communicates with the poet via breath, meaning that later applications of the muse figure to written work already changes the original, literal concept of inspiration (the Latin verb *inspirare* means to breathe in).

Of course such a situation is an idealization – we have no way of knowing how ancient Greek poets interacted with muse figures in their minds or in the tactile world, nor how genuine their belief in inspiration was – but this situation can serve as a jumping-off point for re-evaluating muse figures, as well as poet figures, in German literature of the early nineteenth century. This is important in part because, as Laura DeJulio and John Lyon remark, the belief in the genius has remained strong from the Romantic era until the present day: “The idea that genius is a necessary precondition for authorship emerged in the eighteenth century and has characterized judgments of literary value well into the twentieth. Genius determines which writers are considered important, and which works are worthy of continued reading and

³⁴ Irena Samide, “Die singenden Musen,” *Estudios filológicos alemanes* 16 (2008), 114.

interpretation.”³⁵ While the authoritative male genius is perhaps the *strongest* paradigm for creative work, other paradigms exist, and the muse figure can be a cipher for recognizing these paradigms.

Recognizing alternative paradigms of inspiration also requires recognizing the logical gaps in the author-as-genius paradigm. Penny Murray, for example, remarks that “the image of the Muse personifies inspiration and the source of creativity as female,” even though neither of these things are actually gendered.³⁶ Indeed, while the source of creativity may need to be female according to a very specific Romantic paradigm – as Wellbery argues in the case of Goethe’s early poetry³⁷ – Romanticism’s “unusual muses,” such as the botanical, vampiric, and sculptural muses examined in this dissertation, demonstrate that this is not *always* the case. Muses can be genderless, androgynous, or male as well as female. In the literary world, they can be tactile and take human form, or be oneiric and formless. Essentially, the muse as it appears in this volume is queer – in the sense of resisting categorization and of representing sexualities different than the norm. The muse is a figure that seems to be stable, conventional, and standard, and yet authors like Karoline von Günderrode, Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, and Heinrich Heine take this figure and put it in a textual world where hierarchies are questioned, where the norm sometimes disappears, and where poet-muse relationships are anything but standard.

³⁵ Laura Christine Deiulio and John B. Lyon, eds., *Gender, Collaboration, and Authorship in German Culture: Literary Joint Ventures, 1750-1850*, New Directions in German Studies, vol. 27 (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 1.

³⁶ Murray, 331.

³⁷ This female source of creativity also must be silent, according to Wellbery’s argument: “if the female were to become one speaker among others, then she could not fulfill the function lyric accords her. She could not, in other words, guarantee access to the Source beyond all speech.” David E. Wellbery, *The Specular Moment: Goethe’s Early Lyric and the Beginnings of Romanticism* (Stanford University Press, 1996), 26.

In the nineteenth century, we often find the muse haunting places of death. In an ironic way, the nineteenth century is grappling with the same “death of the muse” that we find in the newspapers of thirty years ago. But for the Romantics and post-Romantics, places of death were not necessarily endings: beginnings could also happen here. Theories of life after death, or even of life starting with death, fascinated the same people who put their minds to understanding procreation and genius. Ritter, for example, writes in his fragments: “Das liebende *Paar* wird im *Tode* wieder *Individuum*, aber *Kind*. Die Liebe ist der Embryo, der im Tode als Kind geboren wird; der Tod ist die Geburt desselben.”³⁸ Karoline von Günderrode also theorizes that death is not a permanent separation between souls, but that it is merely “ein chemischer Prozeß, eine Scheidung der Kräfte.”³⁹ The understanding that *something* can supersede death – whether love, the soul, or some other non-corporeal entity – is a common belief held by German writers of this era. Consequently, these writers also have a fascination with rebirth as a concept in mythology and religion (especially East Asian or Buddhist beliefs), as well as folktale figures that straddle life and death (vampires, golems), and with Gothic tropes such as the graveyard and the ghost.

Indeed, there is no better place to start than the graveyard in order to unearth an example of an unusual –neither passive nor stereotypical – Romantic muse. In her fictional prose fragment *Ledwina*, written in her early twenties at the start of the 1820s,⁴⁰ Annette von Droste-Hülshoff explores the psyche of the eponymous main character through a necromantic dream sequence. In this dream, as she seeks “ihr Liebstes auf der Welt” in a graveyard set up to

³⁸ Ritter, 384. Emphasis in original.

³⁹ Karoline von Günderrode, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 1, ed. Walter Morgenthaler (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld Verlag, 2006), 33.

⁴⁰ Cornelia Blasberg and Jochen Gryswatch, eds., *Annette von Droste-Hülshoff Handbuch*, De Gruyter reference (Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 480.

resemble a game of chess, the expected binary of life and death becomes confused in an unexpectedly erotic way.⁴¹ Unexpected, that is to say, if the reader expects a calm Biedermeier demeanor from the poet. It is my argument that the sapphic desire (if we read Ledwina's corpse as female as well) and the auto-eroticism that arises within the dream is *not* unexpected if we read via the lens of the muse, who occupies hidden, unspeakable, but extremely productive spaces.

In her dream, Ledwina's search for "ihr Liebstes" is complicated by the realization that "sie wußte keinen Namen, und hatte keine genauere Form dafür, als überhaupt die menschliche."⁴² Here it should be noted that "Liebstes" is in the neuter gender, which belies the biographical reading, based on scholars' fantasies about Droste-Hülshoff's life, that Ledwina seeks a man – a reading that I find extremely unconvincing. More importantly, however, is the pair "Norm" and "Form," which represent twin forces that both attract and repel. In the dream, the search for "Norm" and "Form" affects Ledwina, but this search is also relevant to her waking self as a creative woman in the early nineteenth century. Ledwina is characterized as a nature-loving, daydreaming free spirit oppressed by her consumptive illness and her bourgeois family – in short, the ultimate Romantic poet. "Norm" refers not only to the expectations that Ledwina has for her beloved – the search in the dream follows an intense waking conversation with her sister, Therese, in which Ledwina admits that she has stopped seeking a human lover and accepted she will remain alone – but also the social norms that have caused this situation of solitude. Gendered expectations for creativity, and the exclusion of women from the creative

⁴¹ Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, *Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe: Prosa*, ed. Walter Hüge (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1978), 96. Hereafter cited as HKA followed by page number.

⁴² *Ibid.*

field, are one of those norms. Form, on the other hand, refers to the shape of the beloved, but also to both poetic form and philosophical form.

Form and Norm can reinforce one another, supporting social norms, as they do for poets like Goethe. As David Wellbery writes, Goethe's theory of aesthetics is based on a "Formkonzept," a formal concept, namely that of "immanente[] Stimmigkeit."⁴³ Forms generate out of themselves, but the poet helps along the process via the feeling of love, via his poetic, generative gaze.⁴⁴ Ledwina, as a woman, resembles these poets in their ability to grasp this natural "Stimmigkeit" or harmony, and to feel love, but she knows she cannot become a poet in the same socially-accepted way. Elisabeth Krimmer, in her analysis of this scene, notes that Ledwina cannot "read the inscriptions on the gravestones," and is therefore "exiled from the realm of language."⁴⁵ Ledwina's poetry, according to Krimmer, is a utopian ideal: a poetry "that arises from nature itself, untouched by the duality of language."⁴⁶ This new Form for poetry, the new Norm that Ledwina tries to create, is one that is able to "conceive of death as inspiration and of art as female."⁴⁷

Ledwina's search for her "Liebstes" transforms the Goethean trope of silent woman (*qua* muse) as inspiration and of art as male. However, this transformation is by no means simple or immediate – indeed, as Krimmer's analysis makes clear, it is a *utopian* ideal, a scene that takes place within a dream. That said, the dream is, like the graveyard, a key location in Romantic

⁴³ Wellbery, *Kunst – Zeugung – Geburt*, 23.

⁴⁴ Wellbery calls this process "de[r] für Goethes Lyrik zentralen Komplex von Liebesblick und künstlerischer Zeugung" (*Kunst – Zeugung – Geburt*, 24).

⁴⁵ 130

⁴⁶ 131.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

texts for imaginative experimentation. Simply because something happens in a dream does not mean it is to be ignored or discounted. In the case of the graveyard dream, Ledwina discovers an erotic energy driving poetic creation that is queer, autopoietic, and beyond human – hence my argument that this scene can be considered a belated *Urszene* – a *Nachsene*, so to say – for the Romantic muse.

While Ledwina’s search is complicated by not being able to recognize a Norm or Form or to read the inscriptions on the tombstones, she eventually finds her “Liebstes” via a process of magnetic attraction – she is drawn to a grave and falls in. As one might expect in a graveyard, the beloved ends up being a corpse, but Ledwina is delighted: “sie umfaßte es fester wie wir Gedanken fassen können, dann richtete sie sich auf, und suchte in dem grinsenden Tottenkopfe nach Zügen, für die sie selbst keine Norm hatte, es war aber nichts.”⁴⁸ The lack of Norm does not disturb Ledwina, who spends a day and a night embracing the corpse, gently reattaching its hand after she covers it with glowing kisses: “[S]ie faßte eine der noch frischen Todtenhände, die vom Gerippe los lies, das schreckte sie gar nicht, sie preßte die Hand glühend an ihre Lippen, legte sie dann an die vorige Stelle, und drückte das Gesicht fest ein in den modrichten Staub.”⁴⁹ Her embrace seems to be an effort to become one with the corpse, which represents not the norm, but the search for the norm – as well as, both Krimmer and I argue, her self.⁵⁰ In this dream scene, Droste-Hülshoff spectacularly overturns the expectations that a woman must be a muse, that the female muse must be passive, and that the love object of the (male) poet must be a woman. Ledwina’s dream scene is a sapphic, autoerotic version of Romantic autopoiesis.

⁴⁸ Droste-Hülshoff, HKA, 96.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Krimmer: “And, one might speculate, she is also the dead body in the grave” (131).

Furthermore, Ledwina's dream concludes with a botanical fantasy of procreation, linking her to one of the central creative theories of Romanticism. In the late eighteenth century, following the popularity of Linnaean botany, poets writing about human creation were inspired by the concept of plant procreation. Ledwina, in her dream, conjures up what I term a Persephone fantasy in which she brings life back to her dead beloved via a profusion of flowers. Buying a basket of flowers from a child wandering by the grave, her dream self has an idea: "da sie den Korb umschüttete, wurden der Blumen so viele, daß sie das ganze Grab füllten, daß freute sie sich sehr, und wie ihr Blut milder floß, formte sich die Idee, als könne sie den verweseten Leib wieder aus Blumen zusammen setzen, daß er lebe und mit ihr gehe."⁵¹ As happens so often in dreams, she awakens upon having this idea, so it remains simply a concept – but it sets the tone for a kind of poetic creation that queers accepted norms and makes space for an as-yet-unimagined kind of creativity. Her creation fantasy parallels the era's new anxieties about boundaries between life and death arising from scientific discoveries around pregnancy and birth.⁵²

In the next section of this introduction, I will introduce the scholarship on the mutualistic relationship between botany and poetry in the pre-Romantic era and explain how the botanic muse is part of an important new paradigm for understanding literary creation, as well as how it – and other "unusual muses" – develop over the course of the first half of the nineteenth century.

⁵¹ Droste-Hülshoff, HKA, 97.

⁵² Stefani Engelstein describes how the expanded ability of surgeons to modify the human body led to such anxiety; in the context of the dream, Ledwina can be seen as a kind of floral surgeon: "As both dissectors of corpses and vivisectors of the living, surgeons threatened the integrity of the human body by literally opening, altering, and supplementing it, as well as by postulating that organs, and even entire limbs, were removable or replaceable parts" (*Anxious Anatomy: The Conception of the Human Form in Literary and Naturalist Discourse* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2008), 61).

Part II. The Botanic Muse: Plants, Procreation, and the Poetic Act

The plant is a muse in its role as mediator between the organic, inorganic, and fantastical (imaginative) realm. The quest for such a mediator – a single force that could be found in and could generate everything – occupied literary authors and scholars alike during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Scientists such as Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, Carl Friedrich Kielmeyer, and Johann Wilhelm Ritter looked for “a single supreme force in living organisms” that “was responsible for procreation and growth.”⁵³ This scientific search, which drew upon but also contributed to the semantics of the Absolute, struck a chord with philosophers and literary authors as well. Johann Gottfried Herder’s philosophical essay *Übers Erkennen und Empfinden in der Menschlichen Seele*, which seeks to understand how humans understand the universe (*das Weltall*) and God, abounds with “botanical metaphors for human creativity” such as the seed, the root, the harvest, and the fruit.⁵⁴ Herder takes seriously the interconnectivity of the human with other organic creatures (animals, even as small as the “Zoophyt,” and plants) and even with the inorganic (for example, stone), to a lesser extent. All of these beings resemble one another in their structure, their striving to enjoy and understand the world, and their origin.⁵⁵ (This does not mean that Herder considers plants and humans

⁵³ Holland, 4.

⁵⁴ Linda Dietrick, “Vegetable Genius and the Loves of the Plants: Botany in German Poetry around 1800,” in *Translation and Translating in German Studies: A Festschrift for Raleigh Whiting* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2016), 45. Just a few examples of Herder’s botanical language are: “In solcher Blüte von Notdurft und Liebe keimt das Erkennen, die Frucht!” (1099), “Alles wuchs aus Einer Wurzel zur Glückseligkeit und Wahrheit” (1125), both from Johann Gottfried Herder, *Übers Erkennen Und Empfinden in Der Menschlichen Seele*, ed. Martin Bollacher and Jürgen Brummack, vol. 4, *Werke in Zehn Bänden* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1989).

⁵⁵ Herder writes about the shared ability of all living organisms to perceive (*empfinden*) God and nature: “So gehts tief hinab bis zum Zoophyt und zur Pflanze: ihre Organisation ist schon ein künstlichgebildeter Zustand, das Universum unter einem gewissen Sinne zu einem lebendigen Eins zu sammeln, andre Dinge in sich zu assimilieren, das Fremde fortzustoßen, und damit fortdaurend und fortstrebend sein Wesen zu erhalten” (4:1106).

equivalent in value or intelligence – but his thinking on the subject, among others’, contributes to the possibility for plant/human communication and assimilation that will bloom in later Romanticism and post-Romanticism.) The focus on the similarities between all beings and the quest for a single source of life energy became a literary quest as well, and in literature, very often the source which the author seeks is the source of the text: hence the importance of the muse as mediator between source and poet.

By the Romantic era (ca. 1800), the interest in the source of this single language that could describe the origin of all things, with a focus on the plant as *chiffre*, had become common in German literature and poetry in particular. The idea that human and plant engaged with the world similarly, if on different levels, had developed further. As Linda Dietrick writes, “In German poetry around 1800, botanical images serve not merely as allegories of human scenarios, but as symbols, or more accurately metonyms, of the poet and his or her creations.”⁵⁶ Plants are important because they are a part of the changing paradigm of (pro)creation, which includes artistic productivity. Both poem and plant are considered “products of procreation or natural creations generally,” with the poem the natural creation of the poet just as the flower is the natural creation of the plant.⁵⁷ Dietrick refers to this discourse as “vegetable genius,” a term she borrows from Meyer Howard Abrams, and which eloquently encapsulates the connection between botanical and human creation.⁵⁸

Understanding poems and plants as connected, similar beings was just one part of a larger transformation of the way people – from scholars to laypeople – understood the natural world

⁵⁶ Dietrick, 57.

⁵⁷ Dietrick, 50.

⁵⁸ Dietrick, 45.

and the arts. Just as Linnaeus' and Herder's work transformed how people thought about nature, "theories of artistic creation elaborated by such figures as Johann Gottfried Herder, Karl Philipp Moritz, and Immanuel Kant fundamentally transformed how Europeans thought about literature by replacing traditional religious or mechanist metaphors with those drawn from the language of organic growth and generation."⁵⁹ Dietrick's argument goes further, however. Calling a poem and a flower metonyms, rather than simply metaphors, means that they each belong to the same category. Understanding this distinction requires understanding what was meant by "procreation." Around 1800, procreation was an interdisciplinary discursive phenomenon around 1800, "extend[ing] beyond a narrow set of physiological questions to include all processes of generation."⁶⁰ Due to this interconnection between scientific and literary ideas, Romantic ideas about procreation inform their concepts of genius, metamorphosis, and poetic form, which will all come into play in the following chapters.

The idea that plants are a metonym for poems, and the connected idea of botanical muses that I develop here, connects the human to the non-human organic world, as well as to a more abstract world of ideas and dreams. The plant as a representative of Romanticism's "unusual muses" demonstrates the Romantic openness to a fluid understanding of sexuality and gender. This fluidity, however, was itself indebted to Linnaeus's sexual system for the organization of plants, which remained popular for decades after its publication in 1735. While Linnaeus' work, *Systema Naturae*, was clearly intended to bring together all plants (and indeed all beings) into an organized structure, "Romantic era frictions between the ambition to name and classify all plants

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Jocelyn Holland, *German Romanticism and Science: The Procreative Poetics of Goethe, Novalis, and Ritter* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 3.

and a strong suspicion that plants might “confound” any system devised to accomplish this goal, together with its middle position among the kingdoms of nature, made botany an epistemic minefield in an era when collecting and identifying plants (or not identifying them) was a popular field of inquiry among amateur naturalists.”⁶¹ The implications of such slippages for the categorization of human sexuality are clear – namely, that human sexuality might also escape all scientific and literary systems intended to contain it.

The most dramatic such contemporary example of sexual slippage between plant and human occurs in Erasmus Darwin’s 1791 poem *The Botanic Garden*, especially in its second part, “Loves of the Plants.” In this poem, he anthropomorphizes the “marriages” of various plant species, which range from chaste and bourgeois to promiscuous and libertine. Theresa Kelley summarizes the impact of this poetic depiction of sexual diversity in nature as follows:

More flamboyantly than any other romantic writer, Erasmus Darwin suggests the risk of botanic figure. That he does so by dramatizing kinds of sexual difference and conjunction in whose presence monogamous heterosexuality looks like a disappearing species is critical to my argument. For much as queer theory and reading tend to unhinge the stabilities of modern critical practice, so does his exuberant portrait of different ways of sexing plants disturb the scientific, material discourse that is the avowed focus of botany’s visible popularity from the late eighteenth century forward. This is so despite the fact that Darwin’s suggested couplings remain determinedly heterosexual.⁶²

This same fluidity – in a historical context, one could say a willingness to shock and be shocked – is not present to such a degree in other metaphors for artistic creation based on procreation, such as the childbirth metaphor, although “[s]uch tropes are particularly striking when used by male writers.”⁶³ As Dietrick remarks, “[w]hat has received less critical attention is

⁶¹ Theresa M. Kelley, *Clandestine Marriage: Botany and Romantic Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 6.

⁶² Kelley 57.

⁶³ Dietrick 46.

the imagery of plant reproduction, except perhaps in treatments of Goethe's elegy "Die Metamorphose der Pflanzen."⁶⁴ And yet this imagery was equally present in the texts of the day: far more authors than just Goethe used botanical imagery as a way of writing about human creativity. Seeing plants "as cross-kingdom beings" was one such poetic trope, "the most common of them bird-to-plant/plant-to-bird crosses like bird's foot trefoil or John Clare's "pouch lipd cuckoo bud."⁶⁵ While there are many examples from England, as well as from other European countries, Dietrick argues that "there is a distinctly German tradition of translating Linnaean botany into poetic form."⁶⁶

Linnaeus' 1751 text *Philosophica botanica* was the catalyst for these late eighteenth-century conversations about plants and procreation. His work explicitly makes an "equation of plant sexuality with human sexuality," albeit in the opposite direction that I will argue here: namely, in that he uses human sexuality as a guide to classifying plant reproduction.⁶⁷ Already in the eighteenth century, however, the directionality of influence is mutual: human sexuality inspires the way plant sexuality is understood, and vice versa. Herder broadens the human/plant comparison to say that there is "a generative power that animates all of living nature, from plants to animals to human beings."⁶⁸ He calls this vitalist force "*Lebenskraft*," and it allows him to draw a line from reproduction in the organic world to the capacity for thought and intellectual production.⁶⁹ This idea evolved so that "the language of reproduction in poetry signified

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Kelley 8.

⁶⁶ Dietrick 46.

⁶⁷ Dietrick 45.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Dietrick 46.

metonymically poetic production itself,” and eventually – I argue – the plant or flower became a shorthand for this relationship.⁷⁰ Plants and flowers are not the *only* being or object that can play this role mediating different-but-similar kinds of (pro)creation,⁷¹ but during the era around 1800, at the peak of Romanticism, they were the most visible such beings.⁷²

Other concepts, even that of love, were swept along in the tide of new scientific thought. Since ancient times, people have espoused the idea that love is an energy that leads to writing poetry, and that the beloved is a muse. That relationship appears in one of the few German poems about the plant/human procreation connection that has been studied: Goethe’s “Die Metamorphose der Pflanzen.” In this poem, Goethe relates the process of plant growth to human *Bildung*, as well as to the traditionally female rites of marriage, pregnancy, and motherhood. Thus the plant and the beloved – who plays the role of the muse – are connected. But so too are plant and poet: Dietrick argues that the elegy “also represents how, in the relationship of the lover to the beloved, the poet’s creativity and development are stimulated in ways that parallel

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Indeed, Jocelyn Holland points out that writers such as Goethe, Novalis, Johann Wilhelm Ritter, and Mary Shelley all use procreative language to describe processes that are *not* human nor animal, but mechanical and scientific, such as electricity and magnetism (see Holland 3-4). The genuine belief that mechanical reproduction and human reproduction might be not only similar, but even the same, colored thinking about these processes during the Romantic era. The organic and inorganic realms were not fully separate.

⁷² There is significant interest in the role plants play in Romantic poetry. In addition to Theresa Kelley’s *Clandestine Marriage*, some recent works include: Gillian Beer, “Plants, Analogy, and Perfection: Loose and Strict Analogies,” in *Marking Time, Romanticism and Evolution* (University of Toronto Press, 2017), 29–44, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3138/j.ctt1x76gzb.6>; Tristanne Connolly, “Flowery Porn: Form and Desire in Erasmus Darwin’s The Loves of the Plants,” *Literature Compass* 13, no. 10 (2016): 604–16, <https://doi.org/10.1111/lic3.12347>; Amanda Jo Goldstein, *Sweet Science: Romantic Materialism and the New Logics of Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), <https://find.library.duke.edu/catalog/DUKE009731786>; Robert Mitchell, “Cryptogamia,” *European Romantic Review* 21, no. 5 (October 1, 2010): 631–51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509585.2010.499030>; Kate Rigby, “Art, Nature, and the Poesy of Plants in the Goethezeit: A Biosemiotic Perspective,” *Goethe Yearbook* 22 (2015): 23–44; and Heather Sullivan and James Shinkle, “The Dark Green in the Early Anthropocene: Goethe’s Plants in *Versuch die Metamorphose der Pflanzen zu Erklären* and *Triumph der Empfindsamkeit*,” *Goethe Yearbook* 26, no. 1 (2019): 141–62, <https://doi.org/10.1353/gyr.2019.0024>.

the plant's procreativity and growth.”⁷³ Once again, when examined more closely, the poet/muse distinction – and in this case, the poet/muse/plant distinction – proves to be an illusion. While different roles can be delineated, the essence of each role is similar, and there prove to be more interconnections than separations. The poet cannot write alone.

My argument brings up the thorny problem of poetic autonomy once again. Goethe’s “Die Metamorphose der Pflanzen” centers on the “image of a self-fertilizing flower,” which “becomes a symbol [here] for vegetable genius and the autonomous work of art,” suggesting that the woman/muse is merely a foil for the poet’s development.⁷⁴ However, believing this interpretation means believing that women really did not write, grow, or collaborate – and, as the comparison between plant growth and women’s life rituals makes clear, women certainly *could* partake in vegetable genius. As Dietrick summarizes:

In contrast to this new, Romantic identification of the (male) poet and his creation with the flowering plant, the identification of women with flowers was, of course, a long tradition. As a rule, the *tertium comparationis* was the quality of beauty. But given the cultural context outlined here, it can be argued that around 1800, any female poet who identifies herself with flowers is probably alluding to her own creative power. For obvious reasons, women writers were more circumspect about allusions to (plant) sexuality or artistic genius as it might apply to them. Nevertheless, a number of works by Sophie Mereau and Karoline von Günderode, for example, evoke a dialogic relationship between the speaker and either personified flowering plants or a powerful feminized Nature, whereby this relationship animates and inspires her creative activity.⁷⁵

While Goethe’s poem may not seize upon this potential, founded as it is on an androcentric creative system, it contains the seeds of an alternative paradigm. Indeed, Goethe’s work did not exist in a vacuum and was just as reliant on collaboration and on inspiration via other texts as any work by a woman.

⁷³ Dietrick 54.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Dietrick, 54-5.

In the introduction to the poem, Darwin writes that his goal is “to inlist Imagination under the banner of Science,” and to inspire readers via poetry into a deeper understanding of “philosophy” or natural science.⁷⁶ In this way, Darwin makes poetry itself play the role of muse, adding expansive prose footnotes to the poetic text and creating “art” by turning readers into scientists. There is, however, a more obvious figure playing the role of muse in his text: namely, the Botanic Goddess, who “is nature animated for botanical culture...the bridge in the poem between empirical botanical features of the material world and the expansive and vitalist analogies that Darwin promulgates in his verses,” as well as the representative of both women interested in the sciences and of “a dynamic vision of nature” itself.⁷⁷ While Goethe’s poem, however, does not recreate this Botanic Goddess for the German tradition, but rather depicts a rather docile female student, Darwin’s figure is interesting for its invocation of a female figure who represents a system of generativity that is at once poetic and scientific.

Part III. Orgasmic Paradigms: Novalis’ and G nderrode’s Creative Urszenen

It would be not only hasty, but un-Romantic, to claim that there is *one* alternative paradigm for creative activity. The Romantics were fascinated by the diversity of the natural world, which, as we have seen above, was a source of poetic inspiration. Likewise, in their own works, there are hints of a broader set of creative paradigms than the one – passive muse, active male artist – so often assigned to them (by themselves or by later scholars). Creativity is fed by a

⁷⁶ Erasmus Darwin, *The Botanic Garden, A Poem In Two Parts* (Project Gutenberg eBook, 2011), n.p.

⁷⁷ Ann Shteir, “‘She Comes! – The GODDESS!’: Narrating Nature in Erasmus Darwin’s *The Botanic Garden*,” in *Fact and Fiction: Literary and Scientific Cultures in Germany and Britain*, ed. Christine Lehleiter (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 73-4.

borderless desire, which cannot be contained in a single theory. As Friedrich Schlegel writes in the “Gespräch über die Poesie,”

Nie wird der Geist, welcher der Orgien der wahren Muse kennt, auf dieser Bahn bis ans Ende dringen, oder wähen, daß er es erreicht: denn nie kann er eine Sehnsucht stillen, *die aus der Fülle der Befriedigungen selbst sich ewig von neuem erzeugt*. Unermeßlich und unerschöpflich ist die Welt der Poesie wie der Reichthum der belebenden Natur an Gewächsen, Thieren und Bildungen jeglicher Art, Gestalt und Farbe.⁷⁸

Schlegel’s entire “Gespräch” is filled with an enthusiasm for poetry and individuality, but this excerpt in particular defines poetry as an erotic act, linking the muse to orgies and speaking of a never-ending longing, one that, once satisfied, “sich selbst ewig von neuem erzeugt.” Eros, in this case, is explicitly *not* heteronormative – rather, it is the joy of the mind (“Geist”) taking pleasure in the entire world around it. Human poetic longing is an outgrowth of nature, according to Schlegel, and thus poem and flower are metonyms – products of the same procreative urge.

That desire can flow both from human to nature *and* from nature to human becomes clear when we examine botanical muses. In a poem by Annette von Droste-Hülshoff (untitled, but often called “Blumentod” or referred to by its first line “Wie sind meine Finger so grün”), the death of the flower is the impetus for the poem. Watching the green blood of the flower’s stem flow down her fingers in shock, the poet figure exclaims, “Sie wollten für mich blühen / Und haben sterben müssen.”⁷⁹ The flowers desire to bloom for the poet, but they must die – in an imitation of the passive female muse, but with the difference that their martyrdom and death for art spur the poet to a Baroque self-reflection on the meaning of life. The two species are connected by the inevitability of death, but also by the desire to grow, to bloom. Further, the

⁷⁸ Friedrich Schlegel, “Gespräch Über die Poesie,” *Athenaeum*, 3, no. 1 (1800), facsimile of the first edition, with an afterword by Ernst Behler (Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta’sche Buchhandlung, 1960): 59 (my emphasis).

⁷⁹ Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, *Gedichte*, ed. Bodo Plachta and Winfried Woesler (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1994), 590, l. 3-4.

suggestively dripping sap of the plant – “Da floß ihr grünes Blut / Um meine Finger nieder” – suggests not only an erotic act (the plant’s juices resemble semen or vaginal fluid) or a regretful battle victory (the blood of a vanquished foe), but also the sacrifice of a religious martyr. “O schuldlos Blutvergießen!”⁸⁰ – the poet’s regret demonstrates that death is not an *obligatory* sacrifice for the muse, but one of many possibilities.

The green blood of the flower in Droste-Hülshoff’s poem is not as famous as that flower of another color that represents Romanticism even beyond Germany: Novalis’s *blaue Blume* from his novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. On the surface, the “blaue Blume” is easy to dismiss as another patriarchal wish-fulfillment figure, a woman transformed into a flower in order to celebrate her beauty and transform it into poetry. These elements are indeed present in the story, which centers around the desires of the young male protagonist. But just as Droste-Hülshoff’s dying flower connects human and plant in an erotic, communicative, even religious act, there are queer elements to the *blaue Blume* as well. Heinrich, a human, desires a flower with a human face – a being that does not exist, but whose theoretical existence combines the yonic and phallic elements of its environment into a perfect being. Scholarship has focused on the *blaue Blume*’s apparently female face, but I argue that the flower resists binary gendering. Instead, it is representative of the androgynous, ambiguous, strange, and queerly gendered muses and mediators of Romanticism.

Just like Ledwina’s experience with the corpse, Heinrich’s encounter with the flower takes place in a dream. As Heinrich wryly (and not entirely accurately) comments, “[E]s ist, als hätt ich vorhin geträumt, oder ich wäre in eine andere Welt hinübergeschlummert; denn in der

⁸⁰ Ibid., l. 22.

Welt, in der ich sonst lebte, wer hätte da sich um Blumen bekümmert.”⁸¹ As we have seen, German scientists and literary authors *did* concern themselves with flowers; Heinrich’s parents, however, consider dreams to be mere fluff. Despite their lack of concern with dreams and flowers, it turns out that Heinrich’s dream of the *blaue Blume* uncannily resembles a dream his own father had right before marrying his mother. In that dream, his father was led by an old man into a fantastical landscape, where he saw “[ü]berall Quellen und Blumen und unter allen Blumen gefiel mir Eine ganz besonders, und es kam mir vor, als neigten sich die andern gegen sie.”⁸² Heinrich eagerly demands to know the color of the flower, and to his disappointment, his father claims that he cannot remember. Nonetheless, both dreams center around this botanical guide. The father plucks the flower in his dream, setting off a sequence of transcendent knowledge and symbolism alternating between heavenly (angels, music) and earthly, even womblike (a dark, narrow, “ordinary” space, like a womb). Out of this dark space appears Heinrich’s mother, holding “ein glänzendes Kind,” which may or may not represent Heinrich. Regardless, the dream corroborates the father’s claim earlier in the story that his son’s penchant for daydreaming was influenced by the “südliche Luft” of Rome, where his father had been right before his conception.⁸³ Here the folk belief that “the maternal imagination” has “the power to shape progeny” is given a paternal twist.⁸⁴

Heinrich’s dream, therefore, intimately – and in some ways even erotically – connects him to his parents. His mother is the one who wakes him from his own dream, embracing him in greeting while he is still “entzückt” over the imagined encounter with the blue flower. In the

⁸¹ Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2016), 9.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 17.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁸⁴ Marie-Hélène Huet, *Monstrous Imagination* (Harvard University Press, 1993), 7.

context of the discourse on procreation, the insistence on linking parent and child through botanical imagery reminds the reader of the Linnaean reproductive system, itself full of possibilities that – like Heinrich’s erotic family tradition – directly contradict bourgeois sociality. While the father and son’s connection via the *blaue Blume* may seem to indicate a patriarchal handover of generative power, the son’s botanical dream, like the father’s, blends female- and male-connoted spaces to result in the perfect being. This being is not necessarily androgynous, but rather exists in a state that oscillates between the male and the female extremes of gender.

In Heinrich’s version of the dream, he lives through an entire sequence of marvelous, unusual lives before he discovers the flower. Like his father, he then wanders through a beautiful, deserted natural landscape, eventually entering a narrow opening in a cliff and finding a fountain that shoots golden sparks into the air. The cave’s narrow entrance and erupting fountain mix yonic and phallic imagery together. Heinrich drinks from the fountain and bathes in it, covering himself in the golden liquid and feeling himself embraced by it, as though by dozens of young maidens. We might read this as an orgasmic experience. This experience lasts only briefly before he is swept away to a meadow where the *blaue Blume* blooms right at the side of a *Quelle* – both a water source and, surely, a source of inspiration. His expulsion from the cave resembles a birth, as he is pushed out of its dark space via a rush of liquid into a sudden bright light. And, in a final explosion of erotic and procreative language, the *blaue Blume* undergoes a metamorphosis before his eyes: “[D]ie Blätter wurden glänzender und schmiegt sich an den wachsenden Stengel, die Blume neigte sich nach ihm zu, und die Blumenblätter zeigten einen blauen ausgebreiteten Kragen, in welchem ein zartes Gesicht schwebte.”⁸⁵ The face of the *blaue Blume* emerges from its floral collar like a clitoris – that misunderstood female organ that

⁸⁵ Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, 12.

generates not children, but pleasure. What better symbol for the Romantic pleasure in writing expressed by Friedrich Schlegel?

The dream of the *blaue Blume*, with its joyous confusion of erotic and parental love, human and plant existence, and yonic and phallic parts, represents the surfeit of physical and mental pleasure at the root of the Romantic creative act. This pleasure emerges from patriarchal norms and desires, but – like Heinrich – strives to distinguish itself from those same norms. Heinrich’s father considers his dream a “seltsamen Traum,” one he had entirely forgotten before Heinrich’s mother reminds him of it.⁸⁶ Heinrich, however, declares that even the “verworrenste Traum” is “ein bedeutsamer Riß in den geheimnisvollen Vorhang...der mit tausend Falten in unser Inneres hereinfällt.”⁸⁷ The veil with its many folds represents the hidden truth of nature, as represented for example by the goddess Isis in Novalis’s own *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*, but the “tausend Falten in unser Inneres,” read from a female perspective, also calls forth the folds of the vagina. Neither Heinrich nor his father, nor Novalis himself, likely considered this perspective, but read alongside the womblike cave’s yonic imagery, it is telling: there is a generative force beyond the phallic at play in Novalis’s works, and in Romantic poetry at large.

The dream of the *blaue Blume* is not the only example in a Romantic text where poetry originates from a combination of personal erotic experience with a return to the womb. Novalis himself returns to this concept in part two of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, in the opening poem of which, titled “Astralis,” Heinrich “identifies himself completely with the self-pollinating flower.”⁸⁸ We can consider this an autoerotic version of this paradigm. In the final stanza of the

⁸⁶ Ibid., 14.

⁸⁷ Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, 13.

⁸⁸ Linda Dietrick brought my attention to this moment. See footnote 7 on page 58 of “Vegetable Genius.”

sixth and final part of *Hymnen an die Nacht*, Novalis's lyric I returns to the *Schoß* – the lap or womb – of the father. And finally, in Karoline von Günderrode's poem "Einstens lebt ich süßes Leben," the lyric I returns to the *Schoß* of the mother. In all of these cases, it is an enclosed, dark, quiet space that is the source of creative work – a womblike enclosure.

Novalis's conclusion to *Hymnen an die Nacht* is, of the three, the most closely imbued with a patriarchal creative paradigm: the lyric I states, "Zum Vater wollen wir nach Haus."⁸⁹ Throughout this part of the poem, the lyric I longs for the "Vorzeit," a time when the father (representing God) and the people (humanity) – his offspring – still recognized one another.⁹⁰ In much of its wording, the sixth part of the poem resembles a Catholic-Romantic fantasy of returning to the purity of a medieval, unitary existence. However, everything changes in the final stanza – which is not surprising taken the position of the poem as a whole, which rejects day and embracing the night as a time of true knowledge. In this conclusion, everything seems to be leading up to an embrace of the father, a return to old times – but this return is accomplished via death. And death ends up being a dream.

As is typical in a Romantic dream, suddenly all expectations are overturned. Furthermore, Novalis' choice of line breaks assimilates Jesus with the "sweet bride," the dead beloved whose loss inspired the poem and the descent into darkness. Once again, after an entire section seeming to celebrate the clarity of the patriarchal "Vorzeit," it is maternal-paternal darkness – the "Schoß," or womb – that welcomes the abandoned poet:

Hinunter zu der süßen Braut,
Zu Jesus, dem Geliebten –
Getrost, die Abenddämmerung graut

⁸⁹ Novalis, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Hildburg and Werner Kohlschmidt (Sigbert Mohn Verlag, 1967), 119. I cite the Athenäum version here.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

Den Liebenden, Betrübten.
Ein Traum bricht unsre Banden los
Und senkt uns in des Vaters Schoß.⁹¹

While the word “Schoß” can be construed as meaning simply the lap of the father – an entirely innocent reading does exist – it is my argument that, in the context of the procreative discourse around 1800, as well as the bridal imagery earlier in the stanza, the conclusion of the poem is almost certainly to be read erotically. Death delivers the lyric I from suffering; the result is consolation and freedom. While not as pleasurable as the conclusion of the *blaue Blume* dream, the conclusion of *Hymnen an die Nacht* also centers generative power – in this case regenerative, death as a return to life – as an erotic, intergenerational experience. It is a poetic variation on Ritter’s idea that the loving pair is reborn in death as a child.

Günderrode’s poem “Einstens lebt ich süßes Leben,” written around the same time as Novalis’s *Hymnen an die Nacht*⁹², can be seen as a maternal alternative to this generative paradigm. Linda Dietrick mentions the poem as an example of a female poet communicating with “a powerful feminized nature.”⁹³ In the poem, the lyric I imagines being “nur ein duftiges Gewölke,” free to float anywhere, in imagery remarkably similar to Novalis’s “Astralis,” where the poetic voice imagines being a pleasantly-scented flower:

Versunken lag ich ganz in Honigkelchen,
Ich duftete, die Blume schwankte still
In goldner Morgenluft. Ein innres Quellen
War ich.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Novalis, *Gesammelte Werke*, 123.

⁹² It belongs to her poetic *Nachlass*, so was written no later than 1806; the Athenäum version of Novalis’s *Hymnen* was published in 1800.

⁹³ Dietrick, 55.

⁹⁴ Novalis, *Gesammelte Werke*, 155, l. 18-21.

Being a cloud or a flower frees the poetic voice – presumably originally a human voice – from the restrictions (including gender) of a human existence. In Günderrode’s poem, it also allows the lyric I to float far above the human world and to experience a psychedelic dreamscape much like Heinrich’s dream of the *blaue Blume*. In this dreamscape, rather than encountering the father, the cloud-self encounters a “Jungfrau,” “blühend vor Anmuth.” The lyric I pauses here to contemplate a sudden feeling of loss, of having been “von einem süßen Leibe / los gerissen.”⁹⁵ The imagery here is of birth, but from a virgin – a clear allusion to the Christian figure of Mary, mother of god.

Like Novalis’s *Hymnen an die Nacht*, Günderrode’s poem also concludes with a return to the parent: but in her case, the parent from whom the poet comes and to whom the poet must return is the mother. Further, the language of flowers and the language of the “Schooß” combine to make a much more colorful, lively, and hopeful conclusion:

Da ward mir, als sey ich entsprungen
dem innersten Leben der Mutter,
und habe getaumelt
in den Räumen des Aethers,
ein irrendes Kind.
Ich mußte weinen,
rinnend in Thränen
sank ich hinab zu dem
Schooße der Mutter.
Farbige Kelche
duftender Blumen
faßten die Thränen,
und ich durchdrang sie,
alle die Kelche,
rieselte Abwärts
hin durch die Blumen,
tiefer und tiefer,
bis zu dem Schooße
hin, der verhüllten

⁹⁵ Karoline von Günderrode, *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 1, ed. Walter Morgenthaler (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld Verlag, 2006), 385, l. 70, 68.

Quelle des Lebens.⁹⁶

Calling the “Schooß” of the mother the “Quelle des Lebens” is a much more directly sexual image, one intensified by the image of the lyric I falling through “alle die Kelche” – in this context, they seem to be the wombs of the flowers. The return to the mother is therefore also a return to nature, to something deeper than human understanding can penetrate. Nor is this penetration (“und ich durchdrang sie”) written as a violent incursion from without, as a patriarchal paradigm might think. Rather, the lyric I sinks into the depths and “trickles” (“rieselte”) down, gaining understanding via openness – and metamorphosis. The cloud has become tears, and the emotional transformation is what allows entrance to the maternal (and the poetic) source. This poem gives us an alternative paradigm to the patriarchal, phallic idea of a solitary genius.

If, as Foucault claims, discourses around sexuality multiplied from the seventeenth century onward and contributed to new techniques of regulation and administration, then the texts I examine seek out opportunities to subject such tendencies to a poetic deregulation, or at least to create imaginative zones in which dominant sexual norms can be rendered more fluid. The similarities between the ways in which Günderröde’s and Novalis’s poems use natural imagery, in particular flowers, to explore generative experiences is striking not only for the lyrical beauty produced, but also for the simultaneous acknowledgement of current sexual discourse – in this case botanically-inspired – and for the fantasy of escaping regulation even while experiencing pleasure. This is especially true given the general tendency of the era to ignore and recategorize female orgasm as inessential for reproduction:

Near the end of the Enlightenment...medical science and those who relied on it ceased to regard the female orgasm as relevant to generation.... Previously a sign of the generative

⁹⁶ Ibid., 385-86, l. 93-112.

process, deeply embedded in the bodies of men and women...orgasm was relegated to the realm of mere sensation, to the periphery of human physiology—accidental, expendable, a contingent bonus of the reproductive act.⁹⁷

In this cultural context, Novalis's Heinrich – with his androgynous orgasmic experience – but especially Günderrode's poetic I, with its experience of orgasmic birth, can be read as reclaiming an earlier paradigm of generativity focused on pleasure and on sensation and individual experience as opposed to systematization. Günderrode's mention of "alle die Kelche" blends the Linnaean distinctions between plants, not entirely obfuscating the question of difference, but choosing to focus on similarities between species instead. The human requirement of explaining sexuality and desire fades away as the lyric I dissipates into the different elements of nature, resulting in a generative fantasy that escapes social control.

Chapter Summaries

Each of the following chapters focuses on one author in particular, going from the early Romantic era to the end, as a sort of "case study" of how muse figures appear in their work. Each poet uses the muse figure in an unexpected way that nonetheless ties into an overall discourse on the creative act and gender roles. My readings examine in what ways the muse figure's interactions with the poet figure in that poet's works can (re)inform our interpretations of how those works confront contemporary, gendered creative roles and open up spaces for literary exploration of gender and creativity. A quick note before delving into the chapter contents: I have chosen to use the umbrella term "creativity," although the current meaning did not exist at

⁹⁷ Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1992), 3.

the start of the nineteenth century,⁹⁸ in order to tie my work in with other recent texts on gender and literary writing in the German Romantic era.⁹⁹ This term encompasses terms that *were* used in this era, such as “*Kreation, Originalität, Genie, Talent, Schöpfungskraft, Schöpfertum oder Autorschaft.*”¹⁰⁰

Chapter One, “Inverted Muses and Vampiric Vitalism in Karoline von Günderrode,” recognizes in Günderrode’s poetry a model of mutual inspiration in which the poet and the muse both keep each other alive – or, as the case may be, undead. The most melancholic of the three authors examined here, Günderrode creates poet figures who struggle with obsession and who nonetheless find hope and rebirth, even in a world where death is inevitable. Long before Anne Rice, her vampiric muses engage in a dialogue with the poet that challenges the active/passive binary. Günderrode’s poems bring back the Ancient Greek concept of the muse possessing the poet and yet recognize that the muses are, in this case, only kept alive by the poet’s love. The chapter centers her poem “Die Bande der Liebe,” in which the “inverted vampirism,” as I term it, is most evident; however, the same mutual obsession appears in a less vampiric guise in many of her other poems.

Chapter Two, “Reanimating the Romantic, or the Necro-Botanic Poetry of Annette von Droste-Hülshoff,” explores the afterlives of the Romantic muses. As a poet growing up in the

⁹⁸ The first usage of “creativity” in the modern sense of original artistic production was in 1875. Rob Pope and Joan Swann, “Introduction: Creativity, Language, Literature,” in *Creativity in Language and Literature: The State of the Art* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 2.

⁹⁹ In German Studies, these works include the relatively recent collection *Weibliche Kreativität um 1800*, edited by Dietrick and Giesler, cited above, and the collected volume to which I contributed an earlier version of the chapter on Günderrode (Elisabeth Krimmer and Lauren Nossett, eds., *Writing the Self, Creating Community: German Women Authors and the Literary Sphere, 1750-1850* (Rochester: Camden House, 2020)). The collected volume edited by Alexander Mathäs, *The Self as Muse: Narcissism and Creativity in the German Imagination, 1750-1830*, looks at this topic from another angle, focusing much more on narcissism than on the muse.

¹⁰⁰ Emphasis in original. Linda Dietrick and Birte Giesler, “Einleitung,” in *Weibliche Kreativität um 1800 = Women’s creativity around 1800*, 1. Auflage (Hannover: Wehrhahn Verlag, 2015), 8.

1810s and deeply influenced by both Romanticism and her own doubtful, yet deeply held Catholic faith, Droste-Hülshoff's work is imbued with both the botanical and natural imagery of Romanticism and the Catholic tropes common to gothic novels: ghosts, graveyards, redemption, and so on. Her work addresses this connection to Romanticism, embracing many of its ideals, while also expanding on the Romantic botanical paradigm for creativity in an original way. Droste-Hülshoff explicitly rejects the laurel as the symbol of the poetic genius, choosing other plants – notably the myrtle and the rose – that are, via her poems, tinged with sapphic affection. In my interpretation of her poem “Die Schmiede,” Persephone takes pride of place as the goddess of poets, rather than Apollo. Like the Romantics, Droste-Hülshoff also thematizes death and the grave as source of poetry, reaffirming the Romantic sense of possibility and experimentation in an era where the social and poetic norms have become more firmly gendered.

Finally, Chapter Three, “Sexy Statues, or Sculpting Queer Desire in Heinrich Heine's *Florentinische Nächte* and *Buch der Lieder*,” examines the concept of a non-patriarchal creative paradigm from a male perspective: both that of the male author and that of the gay or queer poet figure. Heine's own outsider position as a Jew and his virulent homophobic polemics against the known-to-be-gay poet (and Catholic) August von Platen complicate these readings, but do not nullify the queer elements to be found in both the poems and the prose pieces. While Heine, unlike Droste-Hülshoff, mocks rather than embraces Romantic ideals, he nonetheless works through the Romantic influence in his works, especially in the early *Buch der Lieder*. In the somewhat later prose work *Florentinische Nächte*, published in the mid-1830s after his exile to Paris (following the explosion of the feud with von Platen as well as his failure to obtain a university job in Munich), the main character Maximilian attempts to turn a Medusean gaze onto his convalescent female friend Maria, making her into a stone-dead muse, yet fails. He is

offended – yet secretly titillated – when she recognizes homophilic elements in his retellings of childhood love affairs, including his first love, a statue in a deserted garden. Maximilian’s love of art pieces – statues, paintings, dying composers – situate him within a *non*-procreative paradigm that is nonetheless productive, and that links organic and inorganic beings in a way that is reminiscent of the Romantic discourses on procreativity.

Taken as a whole, these “case studies” demonstrate that the richness and variety of the natural world as interpreted by the Romantics can indeed result in a rich variety of creative paradigms, none of which are reliant on a passive female muse. Even the stories that, like Heine’s *Florentinische Nächte*, thematize the death of female characters, are shot through with queer elements and moments that belie a one-sided reading. I hope with these readings to show that the Romantic muse, dead or alive, is worth taking seriously.

CHAPTER ONE: INVERTED MUSES AND VAMPIRIC VITALISM IN KAROLINE VON GÜNDERRODE

*O! sauge Geliebter
Gewaltig mich an,
Daß ich bald ewig
Entschlummern kann.*

– Novalis, *Hymnen an die Nacht*, 1. Fassung¹⁰¹

*...Qui tutto spira
Un tranquillo contento
Ma non per me. Se l'idol mio non trovo,
Sperar nol posso.*

– Orfeo, *Orfeo ed Euridice* by Christoph Willibald Gluck¹⁰²

*Introduction*¹⁰³

One might think the muse's job is easy: as a purveyor of ideas, she need merely plant them in the poet's consciousness, where they grow into poems and stories. Karoline von Günderrode, invoking the muse Melete at the start of her last collection of poetry published during her lifetime – a collection named after this same muse – is aware that this is not always

¹⁰¹ Novalis, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Hildburg and Werner Kohlschmidt (Sigbert Mohn Verlag, 1967), 92. I cite the manuscript version above. The Athenäum edition makes a few changes, removing the reference to eternity: "O! sauge, Geliebter, / Gewaltig mich an, / Daß ich entschlummern / Und lieben kann" (ibid., 93).

¹⁰² The entire libretto can be read here: <https://www.opera-arias.com/gluck/orfeo-ed-euridice/libretto/>, and the English translation here: <https://www.opera-arias.com/gluck/orfeo-ed-euridice/libretto/english/>. This section reads in English: "Here everything breathes peace and contentment, / but not for me. / If I cannot find my idol, / there is no hope for me!"

¹⁰³ An earlier version of this chapter was published as "Vampirism Inverted: Pathology, Gender, and Authorship in Karoline von Günderrode's "Die Bande der Liebe" in *Writing the Self, Creating Community: German Women Authors and the Literary Sphere, 1750-1850*, edited by Elisabeth Krimmer and Lauren Nossett (Rochester: Camden House, 2020), 141-162.

the case. The invocation explains the climate in which the poet is writing is inhospitable to poetry, asking for aid in protecting the leaves and blooms that manage to sprout:

Schütze, o sinnende Muse! mir gnädig die ärmlichen Blätter!
Fülle des Lorbeers bringt reichlich der lauere Süd,
Aber den Norden umziehn die Stürme und eisichte Regen;
Sparsamer sprießen empor Blüten aus dürftiger Aue.¹⁰⁴ (p. 317, l. 1-4).

Melete belonged not to the later cadre of nine muses, but to a triad of earlier muses, which the second-century travel writer Pausanias speaks about, consisting of Melete (Practice), Mneme (Memory), and Aoede (Song).¹⁰⁵ While calling upon Melete, the muse of Practice (*Übung*), seems a less poetic choice than one of the other muses, Memory or Song,¹⁰⁶ the choice was a compromise between Günderrode and Friedrich Creuzer – her friend, lover, and advocate in the patriarchal world of publishing. In a letter written on 23 January 1806, Creuzer suggested calling the collection *Mneme* or *Melete*, and apparently Günderrode’s earlier idea had been *Mnemosyne*.¹⁰⁷ Regardless of the specific muse chosen, this selection of title situates the work as a whole in the contemporary discourse on poetic creativity, as well as the discourse on ancient Greek poetry as a model for contemporary German writing.

Writing in 1806, Günderrode depicts German poetry as a sparsely-blooming field. The “eisichte Regen” that lashes down on the “Blüthen” of the northern regions is in stark contrast

¹⁰⁴ Karoline von Günderrode, *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 1, ed. Walter Morgenthaler (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld Verlag, 2006), 317, l. 1-4.

¹⁰⁵ Pausanias, *Pausanias’ Description of Greece with an English Translation*, transl. W.H.S. Jones and H.A. Ormerod (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918), n.p.
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Paus.%209.29.2&lang=original>.

¹⁰⁶ This is perhaps not so unexpected, however, if we consider the muses’ mythical parentage: “Dass dem Mythos zufolge alle neun Musen Töchter der Erinnerungsgöttin Mnemosyne sind, markiert den schöpferischen Akt explizit als an Kontext, Tradition und Geschichte gebunden.” (Linda Dietrick and Birte Giesler, eds., *Weibliche Kreativität um 1800 = Women’s creativity around 1800*, 1. Auflage (Hannover: Wehrhahn Verlag, 2015), 12, footnote 20.)

¹⁰⁷ Erwin Rohde, ed., *Friedrich Creuzer und Karoline von Günderrode. Briefe Und Dichtungen*. (Heidelberg: Carl Winter’s Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1896), 83.

with the later view of German Romanticism as a blooming of German literature. The idea that the “lauere Süd” was a land of more fecundity – and more promiscuity, both literary and otherwise – was quite common at this time, although Germans tended to favor Italy over the more exotic “Orient” mentioned in *Melete*, due to its proximity. On the one hand, the muse function in Günderrode’s poetry is to make the barren northern lands hospitable for some sort of creation – even if not as rich and varied as that in the south. Very often, the muse and poet figures in her work find themselves separated by a divide similar to the north/south divide in the invocation to *Melete* – sometimes this divide is as strict as that of life and death, and sometimes it is simply a physical boundary. Yet in a way, the barrenness of the soil is exactly the source from which Günderrode’s poetry is generated – a paradoxical creation from an infertile ground, which can be understood as queer reproduction. Günderrode’s muse figures are not only sources of poetry, but also mediums for a negative energy, which could be termed death: they slowly chip away at the poet figure’s sense of identity, and it is in fact this dissolution of identity that allows for poetry to bloom.

This negative force of growth resembles, in some ways, Lee Edelman’s argument that “the queer comes to figure the bar to every realization of futurity, the resistance, internal to the social, to every social structure or form.”¹⁰⁸ Such a queer figure resists determination, as Edelman writes, pushing back against “the imperative to immure it in some stable and positive *form*.”¹⁰⁹ This is in contrast, writes Edelman, to the norm, which is to praise the child and the future – whereas the very existence of the queer works against that socially-accepted utopia. I read Günderrode’s vampiric muses as a similarly “negative” force, although not in an evaluative

¹⁰⁸ Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 4.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

sense (as “bad”), but rather, in the sense that they, too, represent a source of something outside the norm. The muse figure’s role is then to connect to the poet to this source – and very often, they do so by creating an erotic (not necessarily sexual) connection to the poet figure.¹¹⁰

Günderrode’s treatment of the muse also defines poetry, as the Introduction showed was typical for the era, as an organic form. Poetry cannot, therefore, be forced to grow nor can it be mechanically constructed. It can be fed with emotion and with intellectual connection – whether understood in a positive or a negative sense. Sometimes the muse and poet connect in a loving way, other times in an aggressive way, but this energy always flows between the two, or at least from the poet out into the landscape. The poet is always connected to nature, and nature often reveals something deeper. Flowers, for Günderrode, are never merely flowers, but symbols.

The “Zueignung” following the invocation “An Melete” makes this inner depth clear in its elucidation of the colorful flower crowns woven by maidens in the East: “Doch Einer ihren tiefen Sinn erkennt, / Ihm sind Symbole sie nur, äußre Zeichen.”¹¹¹ Reading poems correctly (or at least not superficially) therefore requires a certain type of reader, someone who understands the “Sinn... / Der in des Blüthenkelchs Verschwiegenheit / Nur sichtbar wird dem Auge, das geweiht / Im Farbenspiel den stillen Geist gefunden.”¹¹² In *Melete*, therefore, Günderrode explicitly introduces her poetry with a theory of botanical inspiration. Furthermore, the placement of the source of inspiration in the East – Greece or simply the “Orient”¹¹³ – suggests

¹¹⁰ Edelman identifies Lacanian truth as that which is that outside the norm (see 5 ff.). While I do not base my reading of Günderrode on Lacanian Symbolism, there are certainly parallels between the Romantic discourse of inspiration, especially of abject female inspiration – like the vampiric muses examined in this chapter – and later twentieth-century philosophers’ theories of language and the mind.

¹¹¹ Günderrode, 318, l. 12-13.

¹¹² Ibid., l. 5-8.

¹¹³ Ibid., l. 9.

that the key to creativity for German writers lies in accepting the wisdom of other countries, and not in proclaiming one's own superiority. The collection contains many other poems inspired by the East, including "Aegypten," "Der Nil," and "Eine persische Erzählung," as well as some contrasting pieces set in the north, such as "Scandinavische Weissagungen." While an analysis of G nderrode's use of Oriental tropes is outside the scope of this chapter, the importance of dialogues between different regions and literatures is a constitutive tension of *Melete*.

While flowers are an important symbol for G nderrode, the muses this chapter will focus on are not botanical, but rather, are variations on the trope of the dead beloved. One such variation is the vampiric muse; another is the imprisoned beloved. All end up playing the role for G nderrode of an "Erweiterung ihres eigenen kreativen Selbst."¹¹⁴ G nderrode's creativity relies on a form of individuality that is supported by and in dialogue with voices outside of itself. This dialogic relationship stands in stark contrast to what Irena Samide depicts as the male poet's vampiric consumption of the female muse's creative energy: "Obwohl der poet in der Regel so dargestellt wird, als w re er von der Muse besessen, sei in Wirklichkeit er derjenige, der besitzt, weil der Akt der Benennung seiner Natur nach hierarchisch seu [sic]. Seine Anrufung und Berufung auf die Muse seien somit ein Akt der Aneignung und Kontrolle, er konsumiere sozusagen die Muse und sauge ihre kreative Energie in sich auf."¹¹⁵ The muse is prey, a trophy, a symbol of the poet's superiority. But not for G nderrode – even when she depicts the poet-muse relationship as vampiric and obsessional.

In the following chapter, I start by discussing the obsessional nature of the poet-muse relationship across G nderrode's work. While her poems borrow from Petrarchan tropes and

¹¹⁴ Irena Samide, "Die singenden Musen," *Estudios filol gicos alemanes* 16 (2008): 131.

¹¹⁵ Samide, 116.

from the myth of Orpheus centering around the unattainable (dead) beloved, she constructs a different paradigm for the obsessional poet-muse relationship, one that often challenges literary gender roles. The muse's role is not simply to radiate beauty, but to hold open a dialogue between her- or himself and the poet, as well as to draw the poet deeper into thoughts and spaces that could be considered dangerous to the "daylight" world. G nderrode also frequently avoids specifying the poet figure's gender, and the gender of the muse varies from poem to poem – from a modern perspective, her poems with a male beloved offer the potential for a homosexual or homosocial reading. Despite some of her own contemporaries seeing it as a flaw, I argue this gender indifferentiation is in fact a core aspect of G nderrode's poetology. By allowing categories such as male and female to blend or to remain indistinguishable, G nderrode opens up space for other categories – notably that of muse and poet – to dissolve and recombine. In her poems, this blending can have tragic consequences when it leads to incurable obsession, but it also provides her poet figures with the opportunity to live freely, for once, within a literary space unencumbered by social norms.

Part I. Eternal Obsession: The Deadly Attraction of the Unattainable Muse

From the outside, the poet's obsession with the muse appears as an addiction. For the lyric I, however, the beloved is a savior. An example can be found in the poem "Der Gefangene und der S nger," in which a male singer is drawn to visit a male prisoner in a tower. Returning again and again, until the singer is quasi-imprisoned by the power of his fascination with the prisoner, this poem restages the medieval story of rescuing the princess in a tower in a queer way. The poet, although outwardly the free one, is emotionally bound by his desire for the prisoner. The impossibility of their relationship is highlighted by the wishes they cannot fulfill: as the prisoner laments, "Gern g b ich dir Lieber! so rief er: die Hand, / Doch sie ist von Banden

umwunden.”¹¹⁶ His bonds may be literal, but the figurative bonds that chain the poet to the tower are no less powerful. This same word, “Bande,” appears in the elegy “Die Bande der Liebe,” which likewise discusses the fatal attraction of the poet figure to a dangerous muse. What the poem about the poet and the prisoner shows is that this danger is not necessarily an inborn trait of the muse – the vampirism that arises in the elegy is not because the muse *is* a vampire, per se, but because the relationship becomes vampiric. The poet and the prisoner find themselves both tethered to one another in a similar relationship that is entirely realistic, yet no less fatal to the poet’s art: such an obsession kills any further artistic growth, even as it results in eternal loyalty. As the poet proclaims, “Und harren dort werd’ ich die Jahren hindurch, / Und sollt’ ich drob selber erblassen.”¹¹⁷

The tension between these two energies – active, obsessional passion and passive, eternal love – make up an essential force in G nderrode’s lyric poetry. In the muse’s role of fanning the flames of this passion, G nderrode borrows from a long tradition of the dead or unreachable beloved as muse – for example, Petrarch’s Laura. But G nderrode’s muses are not simply beautiful. Often, they are devouring, ominous, murdering. Sometimes, the energy or concept that inspires this utter devotion does not exist until it is created by the poet in a kind of monstrous birth.

An excellent example of the poet giving birth to a personal monstrous muse is found in the poem “Die Einzige.” Written like an incantation in trochaic pentameter, the poet circles again and again around the “Eine” – never specified as a human. The “Eine” is the muse figure, which lacks any identifiable traits other than its magnetic pull on the poet. This lack of traits resembles

¹¹⁶ G nderrode, 337, l. 29-30.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., l. 28-9.

the lack of a norm in the dead beloved in Droste-Hülshoff's *Ledwina*. Here, however, rather than discovering the beloved/obsession in death, the poet gives birth to it:

Freude kann mir nur gewähren,
Heimlich diesen Wunsch zu nähren,
Mich in Träumen zu bethören,
Mich in Sehnen zu verzehren,
Was mich tödtet zu gebären.¹¹⁸

The muse figure is the “Wunsch,” which, in a vampiric move, kills what gives birth to it. This inverted model of procreation – death brings life – is reinforced by the poem’s recycling of rhymes in slight variations (“verzehren” in line 8 becomes “verzehret” in line 38, for example) to suggest a cyclical logic. Death brings life, which, via obsession and the eternal drive to feed that wish, brings death once again. This trope appears again and again in Günderrode’s writing.

The poet who gives birth to his or her own death resembles the monstrous mother, a figure who has haunted the public and literary consciousness for centuries. Marie-Hélène Huet, writing about the monstrous imagination, remarks that “the female is a necessary departure from the norm,” if, like Aristotle, we consider the male to be that norm.¹¹⁹ However, in Romanticism, the “power once attributed to the other to create singular progeny” is reassigned to “the artist as monstrous father,” with the result of skewing the discourse on procreation towards the strange, the monstrous, and the illicit.¹²⁰ Nor has this strange gendered tension between monstrosity and violence disappeared over the past two hundred years: as Claire Scott writes, in late twentieth century German literature, “[v]iolence is figured as a process of masculine birthing, a male

¹¹⁸ Günderrode, 326, l. 5-9.

¹¹⁹ Marie-Hélène Huet, *Monstrous Imagination* (Harvard University Press, 1993), 3.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

reproduction that generates new versions of itself over and over again.”¹²¹ Women can, in her reading, attempt to invert this system “by using the tools of violence” – notably literature and language – “to generate collective forces of power.”¹²² While Scott’s argument focuses on much later texts, her analysis can shed light on Günderrode’s use of the inverted vampire as muse figure.

The death-birthing poet resembles another figure as well: that of the vampire. Due to its ontological nature, the vampire cannot play the role of mother biologically, although vampires have often been given gender – and laden with sexuality – in literature. As Susanne Kord observes, “The female vampire is the antithesis of motherhood: she does not feed her offspring but feeds from it; she does not give life but un-death.”¹²³ A similar exchange occurs between many of Günderrode’s poet and muse figures, who keep one another alive, in a sense, even while constantly consuming one another’s life energies. It is a delicate balance that poetically stages Günderrode’s philosophical thinking about the cyclical nature of life and death.

In alluding to the figure of the vampire in some of her poems, Günderrode contributes to a contemporary discourse on this folkloric monster, whose popularity spiked after a supposed Serbian vampire outbreak in the 1730’s. Military reports sent back to Austria eventually inspired the first German-language vampire poem in the late 1740’s, and rather than fading away, the vampire’s popularity grew throughout the following decades.¹²⁴ Susanne Kord points out that “it

¹²¹ Claire Scott, “Murderous Mothers: Feminist Violence in German Literature and Film (1970-2000),” PhD Dissertation (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2017), 1.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 4.

¹²³ Susanne Kord, *Murderesses in German Writing, 1720-1860: Heroines of Horror* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 52.

¹²⁴ For more on the German literary vampire’s origin story, see Chapter 3 of Susanne Kord’s *Murderesses in German Writing*, entitled “The Plague: Vampires.”

is no coincidence that vampires entered the German imagination in the Age of Enlightenment, at the precise time, in other words, when the immortality of the soul was no longer accepted as a given and the processes of physical death became the subject of medical research.”¹²⁵ The vampire’s liminal ability to hover between life and death fascinated philosophers, poets, scientists, and the common folk equally.

The poets Gottfried August Bürger, in “Lenore,” and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, in “Die Braut von Corinth,” engaged with the vampire legend in ballad form. Both poems do so more explicitly than Günderrode’s “Die Bande der Liebe,” analyzed below, but there are lexical similarities that suggest Günderrode intended for her readers to catch the allusions. For example, Goethe’s vampire drinks wine that resembles blood, an act he describes with the words “gierig” (greedily) and “schlürfte” (slurped), which is echoed in Günderrode’s description of spirits of the dead sucking greedily (“schlürfen sie gierig mir aus”).¹²⁶ The verb “saugen” also appears with regularity in vampire-related texts, appearing in Goethe’s “Die Braut von Corinth” (“Und zu saugen seines Herzens Blut”¹²⁷) and in the so-called “Vampire Letter” sent by Clemens Brentano to Günderrode. While Günderrode’s “Die Bande der Liebe” chooses a gentler term for the vampiric exchange, her poem nonetheless demonstrates a familiarity with the vampire as a medium between the living and the dead.

Indeed, the vampire’s inability to be pinned down to a category makes it an excellent representative for the unattainable muse. Nicole Sütterlin defines the vampire as “*die*

¹²⁵ Kord, 49.

¹²⁶ “Gierig schlürfte sie mit blassem Munde / Nun den dunkel blutgefärbten Wein,” Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Gedichte, 1756-1799*, ed. Karl Eibl, vol. 1, 40 vols., *Sämtliche Werke. Briefe, Tagebücher Und Gespräche* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1987), 689, l. 94-5.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 691, l. 179.

paradigmatische Figur des unvereinbaren Dritten, des *weder/noch* und *sowohl/als auch*.”¹²⁸ The vampire in many Romantic poems is a precursor of the norm that can be eternally sought, but never grasped, in Annette von Droste-Hülshoff’s *Ledwina*.¹²⁹ While all vampires call the life/death binary into question, this undead state also complicates gender and sexuality. Like flowers, vampires provide Romantic poets with a fertile ground for exploring the limits of sexuality gender.

Part II. Vampiric Liminality as a Genderless Space

The root of the problem of gender and sexuality when it comes to vampires is their undead. As a being that is considered neither dead nor alive, the vampire represents something beyond human comprehension. Even death escapes the understanding of the living, but undead, as a constant oscillation between the two states, is even more difficult to grasp. Furthermore, given that vampires generally exist only in the imagination – although, as Susanne Kord wryly notes, “belief in vampires alone might be enough to kill people”¹³⁰ – they do not obey the rules of physics. This means that, unlike plants, which even in reality display a dazzling spectrum of sexual possibilities, vampires are only as limited as the human imagination.

Nonetheless, like most literary trends, vampires tend to echo the concerns of the era in which they were conceived. While Franco Moretti warns against the “Zeitgeist fallacy” of assuming a vampire can represent an entire era, there are issues that arise across the vampire

¹²⁸ Nicole Sütterlin, “Überschreitungen. Zur (De)figuration des Vampirs in E.T.A. Hoffmanns Vampirismus-Erzählung,” in *Figur, Figura, Figuration: E.T.A. Hoffmann*, ed. Daniel Müller Nielaba, Yves Schumacher, and Christoph Steier (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2011), 190.

¹²⁹ See the Introduction for more on this.

¹³⁰ Kord, 47.

literature of most eras that show remarkable similarities to the issues in the German discourse on literary procreation.¹³¹ The desire to scientifically identify and categorize gender according to a human schema, as Linnaeus did for plants, is also common with vampires. Milly Williamson, building upon the work of Barbara Creed, analyzes how the female vampire could be understood as the norm:

the vampire is always symbolically female even if it is nominally depicted as male because it raises the ‘abject’ nature of the female body. The vampire, like the female (particularly maternal) body, is not clean and pure and closed. Instead, it transgresses boundaries and disrupts ideas about where the body starts and ends.¹³²

This lack of boundaries helps explain the frequently with which the vampire “infects” the human figure in literary texts. Vampirism was thought to be highly contagious, although this belief, given that germ theory was not yet accepted – disease could just as easily be spread via some immaterial force – did not necessarily confirm the vampire’s materiality. Regardless, the concept of the vampire as a leaky object has ramifications for our understanding of literary procreation, especially when the infected human is a poet figure.

Its association with materiality and maternity does not make the vampire entirely abject, however. While impurity and infection accompany the vampire in its travels between life and death, Susanne Kord argues that there are also positive dimensions to its particular kind of body. As she sees it, “vampirism represents the triumph of sexuality over death, of body over spirit, of the material over the invisible.” (52) Thus the traits that, during the Enlightenment and German Romanticism, are gendered as female or feminine, become something productive. Christine Battersby notes this as a general tendency of the era, not restricted to vampires, when she notices

¹³¹ Milly Williamson, *The Lure of the Vampire: Gender, Fiction and Fandom from Bram Stoker to Buffy* (London: Wallflower Press, 2005), 5.

¹³² Williamson, 12.

that “many of the qualities praised by the advocates of genius included stereotypically ‘feminine’ characteristics (intuition, emotion, imagination, etc.).”¹³³ Only men, however, should use these qualities to create art, and the genius’ similarity to “an animal, a primitive, a child or a woman...was deceptive.”¹³⁴ Vampires, as imaginary beings, trouble this easy distinction between man and woman (or child), between the genius and his adoring audience, between fact and fiction. Their role as fictional figures, as I read it, is to call facts into question. In some cases, the result is a comforting reinforcement of the norm – one might read Bürger’s “Lenore” as a warning about condoning the expression of female sexual pleasure – but in other cases, it can open up space for thinking through gender and sexuality differently. Indeed, Erik Butler, writing about the metamorphoses of the vampire throughout history, recognizes its enduring ability “to move between and undo borders otherwise holding identities in place.”¹³⁵

One reason that the vampire works so well as an unsettler of norms, especially around creativity, is that vampires’ “bodies and gender are dissociated from procreation.”¹³⁶ While it is easy to impose gender on a vampire – if the lover is male, then the vampire must be female – this is not supported by biology. As with plants, one can try to fit the vampire into a human gender and sexual category, but there is always an underlying unease to this process. Kord argues further that “gender makes no sense” for a species in which “[b]oth male and female vampires have only one ‘sex organ,’ the mouth.”¹³⁷ The fact that her argument about gender is based on

¹³³ Battersby, 3.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Erik Butler, *Metamorphoses of the Vampire in Literature and Film: Cultural Transformations in Europe, 1732-1933* (New York: Camden House, 2010), 1.

¹³⁶ Kord, 52.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

the presence or absence of a sex organ reveals the difficulty of keeping gender and sex separate. However, the idea that a vampire's mouth is the site of this gender/sex confusion is taken up by other scholars as well, such as Milly Williamson, who writes that "the vampire's mouth...is the site of [its] sexual mobility because it is both an 'inviting orifice' and a 'piercing bone.'"¹³⁸ In essence, the vampire's mouth combines the yonic (vagina) and the phallic (penis) in a single organ. Williamson cites Barbara Creed's comparison of the vampire's mouth to the mythical *vagina dentata*, a symbol of the monstrous feminine, as proof that the vampire understood as a female monster "may be abject," but "it certainly does not code the feminine as 'passive.'"¹³⁹

Even if the comparison to the *vagina dentata* reinforces the idea that vampires are essentially female, in reality, many of the most well-known vampire texts deal with an oscillation between accepted gender categories and a curiosity about what lies beyond the norm. The concept of "gender inversion," in terms of the roles that people of a specific gender are expected to perform, comes up in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, in a scene where a passive Jonathan is subjected to the active sexuality of three female vampires.¹⁴⁰ Similarly, in Goethe's "Die Braut von Korinth," a young woman is turned vampire after her own recently-converted family kills her to prevent her from marrying a pagan, rather than a Christian. The climax of the poem is a "wedding night" between the vampiric maiden and the young man intended to be her husband, and the young man's own climax is death – as the young woman proclaims, "Du versiechest nun an diesem Ort."¹⁴¹ In contrast to a proper bourgeois maiden, the vampiric or otherwise

¹³⁸ Williamson, 10. She cites Christopher Craft, " 'Kiss Me with those Red Lips': Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," in E. Showalter, ed., *Speaking of Gender* (London: Routledge, 1990), 169.

¹³⁹ Williamson, 12.

¹⁴⁰ Williamson, 9.

¹⁴¹ Goethe, *Gedichte*, 692, l. 184.

supernatural woman uses her sexuality for her own ends – for revenge, like the bride of Corinth or for wealth, like the mother in E.T.A. Hoffmann’s “Vampirismus” tale from *Die Serapionsbrüder*. The idea that the vampire’s sexuality is in contrast to “normal” sexuality, to the extent that it is monstrous, runs throughout its entire history.

Returning to Günderrode, it is important to note that, in most cases, she explicitly does *not* gender her poet figures. Her poems have a natural affinity toward the sexual and gender fluidity concentrated in the figure of the vampire. Many of her poems avoid using gendered language that can be assigned to the lyric I. As in “Die Einzige,” sometimes the muse figure is gendered – and the poem that will be examined in depth later in the chapter, “Die Bande der Liebe,” also genders its dead beloved as male (“Ach! Mein Geliebter ist tod!”¹⁴²). But Günderrode rarely resorts to stereotypical gendered poet-muse relationships, instead challenging the equation of the poet role to the active male, and the muse role to the passive female. In her writing – and this will become more clear in my close readings – male muses can be actively passive; genderless poets can passively take an active role.

Both her own contemporaries and later scholars have remarked on Günderrode’s unusual depiction of gender roles and atypical use of gendered language. Regarding gender roles, Irena Samide notes, “[a]uffällig ist, dass Karoline von Günderrode in ihrem Werk Freundschaft nur zwischen Männern gestaltet,” and that this choice could be seen as a desire to universalize her theories and to allow them to be applied to women as well – with “man” standing in for “human.”¹⁴³ This was a reading that Günderrode’s friend and later fictional biographer Bettina

¹⁴² Karoline von Günderrode, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 1, ed. Walter Morgenthaler (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld Verlag, 2006), 68, l. 1. In future notes, this work will be abbreviated as *SW*.

¹⁴³ Samide, 130.

von Arnim happily accepted, seeing her own friendship with Günderrode reflected in the teacher-student dialogue of *Die Manen*, which discusses, among other things, the unbreakable relationship between the living and the dead.¹⁴⁴

Meanwhile, Günderrode's contemporary and Bettina's brother, Clemens Brentano, infamously praised her work for all but one characteristic: its apparent gender. Writing in a letter of June 1804 about her recently published *Gedichte und Phantasien*, Brentano critiques: “[d]as Einzige, was man der ganzen Sammlung Böses vorwerfen könnte, wäre, daß sie zwischen dem Männlichen und Weiblichem schwebt.”¹⁴⁵ He does not specify *what* precisely is “männlich” or “weiblich” about the collection, but rather, uses the substantivized adjective to gender the entire being of Günderrode's poetry. Perhaps Brentano did not see this trait as entirely negative, since he writes in the conditional, but his judgment references a norm for gendered language that Günderrode's writing does not meet.

Ironically, Brentano's letters to Günderrode – notably the one sometimes infamously referred to as the “Vampire Letter” – play with gender boundaries as well, although in a way that is more cautious and less confident than Günderrode's. The “Vampire Letter,” sent in April 1802, opens with an imagined exchange of body fluids – blood for tears – between himself and Günderrode:

Ach, bist du es, bist du es nicht? so öfne alle Adern deines weissen Leibes, daß das heiße schäumende Blut aus tausend wonnigen Springbrunnen sprizze, will ich dich sehen, und trinken aus den Tausend Quellen, trinken, biß ich berauscht bin und deinen Tod mit jauchzender Raserei beweinen kann, weinen wieder in Dich all dein Blut, und das meine in Tränen, bis sich dein Herz wieder hebt, und du mir vertraust, weil das Meinige in deinem Puls lebt.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Weißenborn, 144.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 86.

The most striking aspect of this letter – beyond the fantastical gore, that is – is the uncertainty the speaker has as to who, exactly, is the victim. The speaker appears, in this first section of the fantasy, to play the role of the vampire: yet he commands the “du” to open up her veins for him, and erases her bodily autonomy by replacing her blood with his tears. The entire scene blends not only their identities but the “good” with the “evil,” a mood enhanced by Brentano’s remark later in the letter that Günderrode is someone who “magst allerhand, was man nicht soll,” like the “armen, lieben, zweibeinigen Engel in der Hölle.”¹⁴⁷

At the end of the letter, Brentano returns to the question of who is really the active figure in his fantasy. He turns around the situation imagined at the start and demands, one after another, a number of scenarios that confuse the active and passive roles of the “ich” and the “du.” First, he portrays the “ich” as a self-sacrificing vampire: “Drum beiße ich mir die Adern auf und will Dir es geben” – but promptly accuses the “du” of not being the vampire herself – “aber Du hättest es tun sollen und saugen müssen.”¹⁴⁸ Directly thereafter, contradicting the very first command from the beginning of the letter, he takes back the active role: “Öffne deine Adern nicht, Günderrödchen, ich will sie Dir aufbeißen.”¹⁴⁹ While Brentano admits that he wrote this letter “in einem süßen, drehenden Rausch,”¹⁵⁰ complicating any attempts to make logical deductions about his poetological or philosophical paradigms from it, it is evidence of the fascination that gender indifferentiation, mediated via the vampiric muse, held for Romantic poets of all genders.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 87.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 87-8.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 87.

Despite the anxiety pervading his letter – he adds a postscript asking what her reaction to his fantasies are, and stating that he always is afraid that Günderrode presents herself as “klüger oder dümmer an, als Du bist”¹⁵¹ – Brentano’s imaginary vampiric encounter with Günderrode contains moments of pleasure centered around the loss of the male-connoted active role. He conceals this masochistic wish within the confusing, contradictory commands about who ought to do the biting – but in my reading, the sexual (and literary) pleasure that he obtains from the scenario is a direct result of this uncertainty. In this respect, he echoes an aspect of the classical muse, who, according to Elisabeth Bronfen, “radically disrupts notions of ego-stability” and “gives figure to a lack or gap, a real void grounding artistic representation.”¹⁵² Brentano stops short of any genuine self-reflection about this void, holding firmly to his ego as he cannot resist belittling Günderrode as “mein Kind” in the postscript and giving her advice about living a godly life – thereby closing up the vulnerable space that the vampire figure had opened.¹⁵³ Nonetheless, his letter demonstrates the importance of gender differentiation as an essential aspect of the Romantic creative paradigm.

Günderrode’s work more openly explores the potential of pushing gendered boundaries, despite the real-life challenges that being seen as a female poet presented for her. While Brentano could write and send such a letter as that analyzed above with no consequences except for the dry, distant reply from Günderrode a month later, such openly sexual literary fantasy could tarnish a female poet’s career and reputation. A few years later, in 1804, this is what Günderrode’s childhood friend Lisette Nees von Esenbeck has in mind when she warns

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 88.

¹⁵² Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity, and the Aesthetic* (New York : Routledge, 1992), 364.

¹⁵³ Weißenborn, 88.

Günderrode to be wary of Brentano, who will treat Günderrode like “[e]in neues Spielwerk, womit er den langweiligen Genius seiner Ehe beschwört.”¹⁵⁴ Her warning comes in the aftermath of Clemens’s discovery that Günderrode is the author of *Gedichte und Phantasien*, with the pen name Tian. Nees von Esenbeck fears that Brentano is merely jealous or bored, and worries that Günderrode will respond positively to his renewed pleas for friendship – and attention. The use of the word “Genius” in this letter is particularly interesting, as it is applied not to a human, but to a bond between humans, and one that is explicitly *not* inspirational. Brentano, according to Nees von Esenbeck, is interested not in Günderrode explicitly, but in being admired: “er liebt es, daß man ihm seine Originalität in ihm anstaune, wobei es ihm gleichviel ist, ob die Sache, wofür er spricht, Eingang gewinnt.”¹⁵⁵ He had married Sophie Mereau in 1803, but this relationship – a wife and a child, with a veneer of bourgeois acceptability – seemed to only inflame his desire to find a forbidden muse. While his Vampire Letter contains some interesting concepts regarding the blending of souls and bodies, and while he continues to season his letters with poetic claims of love and trust, Nees von Esenbeck correctly – as I see it – analyzes his creative paradigm as one based not on a mutualistic muse, but on an egoistic genius.

While Clemens Brentano’s concept of the vampire ends up reinforcing patriarchal stereotypes about power and creativity, this is not the case for Günderrode’s use of a vampiric muse figure. While his vampiric genius is possessive, prone to extreme mood swings, and jealous of female autonomy, Günderrode emphasizes vampiric traits in the relationship between her poet and muse figures to call into question the need for poetic autonomy. Indeed, her work “rejects the necessity for personhood of firm borders between the self and the world, and the

¹⁵⁴ Weißenborn, 138.

¹⁵⁵ Weißenborn, 137.

necessity for freedom of autonomy, that is, of avoiding external influence on one's actions."¹⁵⁶

The idea that true creativity can only be achieved when the poet works in concert with other beings and ideas – including the muse – results in what I will call an *inverted* vampiric relationship. In this kind of relationship, which is poetically staged in the elegy “Die Bande der Liebe,” the boundary between poet and muse crumbles as the poet shares the life force with the muse. This relationship gives both life and death, but the directionality of that gift is not always clear. In the next section, I explore how such a relationship underlies Günderrode's beliefs about poetic creativity.

Part III. “Die Bande der Liebe”: Vampiric Vitalism as Creative Paradigm

“Die Bande der Liebe” is an elegy that can be described as a darker retelling of an Orphic descent to the underworld in search of a dead beloved. While Orpheus seeks out his fiancée, Eurydice, in Günderrode's poem, the dead beloved is gendered as male. The poet figure, meanwhile, is left ungendered, and the entire poem is from the poet's perspective. It is set in a world halfway between that of the dead and the living – a world that is dreamed into being – where the poet breathes life back into the dead beloved. While certain scholars have read “The Bonds of Love” biographically as a lament for Günderrode's unsuccessful love affairs,¹⁵⁷ recent interpretations of Günderrode's work recognize her interest in contemporary philosophy, and I

¹⁵⁶ Anna Ezekiel, “Metamorphosis, Personhood and Power in Karoline von Günderrode.” *European Romantic Review* 25, no. 6 (2014): 777.

¹⁵⁷ Margarete Lazarowicz, for example, interprets “The Bonds of Love” autobiographically as Günderrode's response to the end of her relationship with Savigny. She notes the obsessive nature of the lyric I's attempt to retrieve the lost lover, commenting that the lyric I's “eigene Persönlichkeit...[sich] verzehren muss” (own personality...must devour itself), Margarete Lazarowicz, *Karoline von Günderrode, Portrait einer Fremden* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1986), 121.

follow this style of reading.¹⁵⁸ In this and in other poems, Günderrode depicts love as an intellectual and spiritual bond that can help to navigate deep philosophical questions, whose answers can be discovered only by living. And living fully, in her understanding, can include dying.

The key act of the poem – the re-animation of the dead beloved by the Orphic poet figure – takes place in what the lyric I describes as the “[s]eliges Land der Träume,” which is “ein Land, wo Todte zu Lebenden reden, / Wo sie, dem Orkus entflohn, wieder sich freuen des Lichts.”¹⁵⁹ Günderrode uses the word “Orkus” as a nod to Greek mythology, and her dreamland – which is *not* Orcus, but rather, a liminal space where the dead and the living can communicate – alludes to Elysium, the realm where the blessed dead are permitted to stay in Greek myth. Intriguingly, Günderrode’s phrasing suggests that the dead, too, can dream – and that they happily come to this conversation spot in order to commune with the living who visit them there. The poet figure illustrates the fluidity between the states of being alive and being dead by describing the dead as glowing with earthly light: “ein irdisches Licht glühet im Leichengewand.”¹⁶⁰

Returning to this dreamspace again and again, as the poet figure in “Die Bande der Liebe” does, is not without real-life (that is, living-life) effects. The poet figure’s companions

¹⁵⁸ See for example Anna Ezekiel, “Metamorphosis, Personhood and Power in Karoline von Günderrode,” *European Romantic Review* 25, no. 6 (2014): 773-791; Kathrine von Holst, “Subjektivität im Werk der Karoline von Günderrode,” *Text & Kontext* 39 (2017): 28-52; Steven D. Martinson, “‘...aus dem Schiffbruch des irdischen Lebens’: The Literature of Karoline von Günderrode and Early German Romantic and Idealist Philosophy,” *German Studies Review* 28, no. 2 (May 2005): 303-326; and Annette Simonis, “‘Das verschleierte Bild’: Mythopoetik und Geschlechterrollen bei Karoline von Günderrode,” *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 74, no. 2 (2000): 254-278.

¹⁵⁹Günderrode, *SW* 68, l. 13, l. 9-10.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, l. 12.

notice an unsettling pallor spreading across their friend's cheeks, and the poet's response suggests that this trip to the liminal world is not a one-time affair:

Darum fraget nicht, Gespielen! was ich so bebe?
Warum das rosige Roth löscht ein ertödtendes Blaß?
Theil ich mein Leben doch mit unterirdischen Schatten,
Meiner Jugend Kraft schlürfen sie gierig mir aus.¹⁶¹

An exchange of youth (“Jugend”) and life for what? – Surely the poet is not simply a masochist, like Brentano's vampire. The poet feels a compulsion to seek out the dead beloved again and again, a compulsion created by the “ewiges Band” of love,¹⁶² but I argue that there is also a benefit to the poet from this encounter. The poet receives the pleasure of giving life – which is in itself a poetic act – and the embrace with the dead beloved is a particularly intense and intimate form of communication and “the sharing of life's experiences,” which, as Steven D. Martinson contends, “were essential components of her [Günderrode's] activities as a writer.”¹⁶³ It would be *more* fatal to the poet figure to take away this connection than to attempt to protect the poet by forbidding the object of their obsession – who, from this perspective, plays the role of muse.

The scene of reanimation is where the roles of poet and muse invert. Typically, as it happens in the ballads by Bürger and Goethe, the vampire is identified with the dead lover who sucks the lifeblood of his surviving partner. In Günderrode's inverted vampiric reanimation scene, the vampire is the poet, who submissively and willingly offers the breath of life to the dead beloved. This is an act of both healing and harming, depending on perspective. One of the lines cited above – “Warum das rosige Roth löscht ein ertödtendes Blaß?” – makes this particularly clear in that it can be read just as easily in two different directions, thanks to its

¹⁶¹ Günderrode, *SW* 68, l. 21-24.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, l. 6.

¹⁶³ Martinson, 304.

neuter nouns. The act of reanimation by the poet causes the poet's face to pale, as the rosy color of life returns to the beloved's cheeks.

While blood is the vampiric medium with which post-*Dracula* readers are most familiar, and blood shows the success of the reanimation in G nderrode's poem, the vital substance that actually revives the dead is breath.¹⁶⁴ The lyric I imagines the revivifying act as follows:

Und ich hauche die Kraft der Jugend dann in den Schatten,
Da  ein lebendig Roth wieder die Wange ihm f rbt,
Da  die erstarreten Pulse vom warmen Hauche sich regen,
Und der Liebe Gef hl wieder den Busen ihm hebt.¹⁶⁵

Choosing breath as the force that causes blood to return to the body, as G nderrode does, carries biblical connotations of awaking beings to life as well as musical overtones of speaking, song, and poetry. The reverse vampire's gift of breath echoes the classical muse's gift of *anima*. Furthermore, the verb "hauchen" is a particular favorite of G nderrode's, according to Martinson, who writes that "the breath of life (*Hauch des Lebens*) reinvigorates her work, creating moments of original insight and poetic inspiration."¹⁶⁶ Breathing life into someone is also much gentler and less violent way to exchange vitality than the biting and weeping imagined by Brentano, for example.

Breath alone could not reanimate the dead, even in works of the imagination.

G nderrode's figures believe in the power of this reanimating act not because of a biological

¹⁶⁴ It is not unusual for pre-*Dracula* vampires to lure and transform their prey via an alternative medium to blood. Nina Auerbach, focusing on the Anglo-American tradition, lists a number of vampiric media from the early to late nineteenth century: friendship (for example, the Byronic sympathetic vampire); moonlight (used by mid-century vampires such as the campy 1840's Varney the Vampire); and abstract concepts such as intimacy or love (particularly demonic female love, as represented by Geraldine in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem "Christabel," or sapphic love, as represented by the titular Carmilla in Sheridan Le Fanu's novella. (See Nina Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 48.)

¹⁶⁵ G nderrode, *SW* 68, l. 17-20.

¹⁶⁶ Martinson, 306.

exchange of substances – although this exchange does create fascinating connections with the theories of botanical and cross-species procreation discussed in the Introduction – but because of another, more abstract force: that of love. There are as many definitions of love as there are poets, but fortunately, the lyric I in “Die Bande der Liebe” offers a definition specific to this exact scenario: “Liebe heißt dies Band, das an den Tag mir geknüpft / Hat die ererbische Nacht, Tod mit dem Leben vereint.”¹⁶⁷

This definition is grammatically complex, evoking the interweaving of ribbons (“das Band” can mean either a bond, in the sense of a chemical, physical, or metaphorical connection, or simply a ribbon). The alliterative chiasmus of “Liebe” and “Leben” frames the couplet, while “Nacht” and “Tod,” like seeds, are nestled in the center. The subject of the sentence is ambiguous: it could be “dies Band” or “die ererbische Nacht.” The first option, however, seems logical: “Love is the name of the bond that connects deathly night to day for me,” but grammatically speaking, the reverse is also possible: “Love is the name of the bond that deathly night has connected to day for me.” In the latter case, the directionality we might expect (life to death) is reversed (death to life), and night – along with its companion, death – emerges as the origin of the connection.

The idea that death is a space or a time where love does not perish, but instead is reborn, is common in German Romantic texts, such as Novalis’ *Hymnen an die Nacht*, with its celebration of the reunion with the beloved in the afterlife. Günderrode treats the subject of eternal love in other poems as well, such as the sonnet “Überall Liebe,” in which the “überall” explicitly refers to the land of the dead. This poem depicts the fire of love as eternal in a tragic sense, as the lyric I cannot escape the torments of finding love anywhere: “Ich stieg hinab, doch

¹⁶⁷ Günderrode, *SW* 68, l. 7-8.

auch in Plutons Reichen, / Im Schoos der Nächte, brennt der Liebe Glut, / Daß sehrend Schatten sich zu Schatten neigen.”¹⁶⁸ If love is truly eternal, those who are unhappy in love – including those who cannot find love and seek “andere Freuden” in the underworld – cannot drown their sorrows even in the Styx.¹⁶⁹ As is typical for Günderrode, she does not shy away from depicting the dark side of desire.

On the other hand, if love can exist anywhere, then death cannot vanquish love. This has interesting repercussions in Günderrode’s philosophy that go beyond romantic love stories. As stated above, in Günderrode’s creative and philosophical understanding, life and death are not strictly separated realms. The flow of life into death is not a single, distinct and one-directional occurrence. Rather, the exchange of these two energies is ongoing, flowing from living to dead and from dead to living, resulting in a state we might call undeath – a highly creative, dreamlike existence. Wolfgang Westphal remarks on Günderrode’s philosophical engagement with a similar idea in her fragment “Die Manen,” in which she theorizes that the connection between the living and the dead is an ongoing and intellectually fulfilling process.¹⁷⁰

In this fragment, a student and a teacher discuss the possibility of communicating with the dead, which the teacher believes is possible through the “inneren Sinn” (inner sense). Everyone possesses this sense, but most remain unaware of how to use it. Only those who “harmonize” with the spirits of the dead will be able to become aware of this sense and learn to communicate. The teacher explains:

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 335, l. 9-11.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., l. 7.

¹⁷⁰ See Wolfgang Westphal, *Karoline von Günderrode und “Naturdenken um 1800”* (Essen: Die Blaue Eule, 1993), 56-7. See also Martinson, who argues that, in “Die Manen,” death can create new life and, in doing so, overcome death (317-8).

so gewiß stehen auch wir in Verbindung mit d e m T h e i l der Geisterwelt der mit uns harmonieret; ein ähnlicher oder gleicher Gedanke in verschiedenen Köpfen, auch wenn sie nie von einander wußten, ist im geistigem Sinne schon eine Verbindung. Der Tod eines Menschen der in einer solchen Verbindung mit mir stehet, hebt diese Verbindung nicht auf. Der Tod ist ein chemischer Prozeß, eine Scheidung der Kräfte, aber kein Vernichter, er zerreißt das Band zwischen mir und ähnlichen Seelen nicht.¹⁷¹

This passage describes precisely the understanding of death that is evident in “The Bonds of Love,” which treats the topic from a more lyric and romantic perspective. The beloved may be dead, but this does not mean that the connection between the lovers has been severed. The scene of reanimation is a dramatic staging of the kind of connection that is possible in another sense simply by *thinking*, by learning to use one’s inner sense and to harmonize with those who have come – and thought – before us. In this context, Günderrode’s argument is strikingly similar to the contemporary academic understanding of learning from old texts, except that her characters communicate via speech rather than writing – via the all-important *Hauch*.

Importantly, Günderrode theorizes such a connection not as the ability to move *beyond* life and death, but rather to move *between* and *among* the two. Neither time nor space are linear and logical in “Die Bande der Liebe,” “Die Manen,” and her other works. As boundaries become crossed and intertwined, Günderrode’s concept of life looks more like a web or map of experiences than a neatly ordered chronicle. This allows for a more flexible understanding of categories, in particular binary categories, which has implications for how we can read gender politics in Günderrode’s work. Binaries simply are not at the core of her worldview. Anna Ezekiel comments, “Günderrode does not imagine pairs of polarities that must be unified, but a single universe within which movement and connection is already possible.”¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ Günderrode, *SW* 33.

¹⁷² Ezekiel, 776.

Günderrode's non-binary understanding of the universe – to use an anachronistic term loosely – returns us to the concept of gender indifferentiation. Many of her poems, including “Die Bande der Liebe,” permit a variety of interpretations of the poet figure's gender, even while not centering gender as an important part of the poem. Rather, identity as a whole – of which gender and sexuality are only a part – is important to her work. The way that her poet figures give (re)birth to their own muses binds the two figures in a way that challenges separate, autonomous identities. As Ezekiel writes, “[f]or Günderrode, the self is not an independent, transcendent, autonomous subject, but is permeable, vulnerable, and changeable.”¹⁷³ Günderrode's work “envision[s] a form of identity that survives fracture and dissolution,” including the physical separation wrought by death.¹⁷⁴ In such a universe, gender becomes a truly infinitesimal point in comparison to the infinity of connections that there are to be made: intellectual, romantic, aesthetic, and so on. This universe may exist only in literature, but its multi-faceted options show that despite facing the difficult parts of life (and death) face-to-face, it is possible to remain open to change, to positive and mutual support, and to the life-giving power of poetry.

Conclusion

Günderrode's poetry delights in the possibilities of the borderless self. She employs an inverted vampiric poet-muse relationship focused on the breath of life, or “Hauch,” as a gentler creative paradigm that centers continued communication, rather than possession. This paradigm can be construed as one possible solution to the patriarchal paradigm, as represented by

¹⁷³ Ezekiel, 787.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 781.

Brentano, which identifies women as passive muses. In response, Günderrode's work offers the figure of the author-muse, a pair whose bond goes beyond death. However, more important to Günderrode is to imagine a world in which there is a *lack* of gendered roles, one that dispenses of the need to replace a patriarchal with a matriarchal (or otherwise female-oriented) paradigm.

Undeath is, in this sense, a keeping open of the space of possibility. To conclude, let us return to the end of "Die Bande der Liebe," which seems to represent the death of the poet at the hand of the muses. Upon returning to the liminal dreamspace, the poet eventually encounters not only the (revived) dead beloved, but an entire horde of shades who greedily suck at the poet's life force. For the poet does not share life with merely *one* dead beloved, but with "unterirdischen Schatten," in the plural.¹⁷⁵ Each shade wants the connection with life, and for whatever reason, even if simply the obsession with returning to the place where the beloved was reanimated, the poet is willing to give it. The poem's conclusion with this image of the poet being drained by multiple shades suggests that the reanimation, like death and life, is not a one-time, simple, unidirectional act. Rather, the cycle begins again and again, and perhaps the poet figure, if death occurs, becomes a muse for a later poet. Additionally, the devouring mouths of the vampires challenge the primacy of the written word, cutting off and ending the poem just as the poet seems to have used written language to have successfully revived the dead.

I do not read this conclusion as a negative one, although it is easy to do so from a normative perspective that considers death to be an end one must avoid. Rather, "Die Bande der Liebe" is a utopic reflection on what *could* be, if the imagination could be brought to life. Like the graveyard dream scene in Annette von Droste-Hülshoff's *Ledwina*, examined in the Introduction and in the following chapter, Günderrode's poetry is based around the role of

¹⁷⁵ Günderrode, *SW* 68, l. 23.

imagination in overcoming physical limitations – and mental preconceptions. In order to read Gūnderode mindfully, the reader must be willing to abandon preconceived notions about the role of those involved in the creative act – in which the reader plays just as essential a role as the poet or muse – and to abandon the belief that the self or the author is superior.

CHAPTER TWO: REANIMATING THE ROMANTIC, OR THE NECRO-BOTANIC POETRY OF ANNETTE VON DROSTE-HÜLSHOFF

*Saamen [sic] der Zukunft verbirgt mein festverschlossenes Gehäuse;
Also umschließet auch dich einst die bergende Gruft*

– Friederike Brun, “Die Urne unter den Blumen,” 1785¹⁷⁶

The poetic “race” enjoys a special relationship with eternity.

– Paul Westover¹⁷⁷

Introduction

The poetry of Annette von Droste-Hülshoff has suffered, in some scholarly circles, from an accusation that made by Clemens Brentano to Karoline von Günderrode: not, in this case, that her poetry hovers between the male and the female, but that it hovers between recognizable literary eras. Condemned to the problematic category of the Biedermeier, Droste-Hülshoff’s extraordinary poetry has been neglected in favor of her more easily-categorized short story *Die Judenbuche*, which can be slotted into Realism, or at least proto-Realism – although whether the division of time into literary eras is necessary is a discussion that goes beyond the scope of the current project. I bring up this hovering in order to call attention to an important element of Droste-Hülshoff’s poetics. Many of Droste-Hülshoff’s poems are self-reflexive, in that they seek

¹⁷⁶ Cited in Linda Dietrick, “Vegetable Genius and the Loves of the Plants: Botany in German Poetry around 1800,” in *Translation and Translating in German Studies: A Festschrift for Raleigh Whiting* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2016), 56.

¹⁷⁷ Paul Westover, “Interlude: Necromanticism and Romantic Authorship,” in *Necromanticism: Traveling to Meet the Dead, 1750-1860* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 94.

their own meaning and origin, especially in their connections to German Romanticism.

Returning to the ideals of Romanticism gives direction to the poet's search for inspiration in a world that many feared was increasingly unable to appreciate anything but material wealth. In my focus on this orientation toward the past as an inspirational nexus of time and place – and a source for muses – I follow a similar path as Martin Dawson, hoping to “draw[] out the imaginative potential of the past” in Droste-Hülshoff's work.¹⁷⁸

Droste-Hülshoff solves the dilemma of the gendered muse in a similar way to female poets, such as Karoline von Günderode, who came before her: namely, by creating her own muses with which she could communicate. Rather than seeing the muse as a pre-existing medium connecting the poet to the realm of ideas, Droste-Hülshoff, via the poet figures in her texts, depicts muses as powerful counterparts existing on the threshold of the real and the ideal. The following chapter explores how Droste-Hülshoff revives literary muses of the past – such as Petrarch's Laura, herself based on Ovid's Daphne – and imbues her own retelling in the two-poem set *Stammbuchblätter* with a more fluid understanding of who is allowed to have generative power. Female friendship features in many of her poems, including the “Nachrufen an Henriette von Hohenhausen,” a friend who is also addressed in the second poem of *Stammbuchblätter*. Poetic power is not patriarchal in Droste-Hülshoff's poetry, and the muse is not chased and obtained in an Ovidian-Petrarchan sense, but rather the muse is admired, worshipped even, and sometimes even so intimately known that she (or he, or it) is folded into one's sense of self. In the prose fragment *Ledwina*, written in Droste-Hülshoff's youth, the muse *is* the self: and a dead self, at that, overturning the reader's expectations for the dead beloved in multiple ways.

¹⁷⁸ Martin Dawson, “Transports of Imagination: Poetry and the Rehabilitation of Experience, 1830-1860,” PhD Dissertation (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2021), 11.

Botanic muses also appear in Droste-Hülshoff's poetry. The third section of the chapter focuses on a poem fragment, "Die Schmiede," that at first glance takes place in a typical German countryside – but in which a two-sided tree with connections to the underworld shakes up this pretty world's "Liederklänge." Flowers are uprooted as a dark force erupts into this idyllic nature scene. Death and flowers are also allied, albeit as a way to revive the dead, in a dream sequence in *Ledwina*. In my readings, I am inspired by Katrin Pahl's theory of "read[ing] "plantwise," that is to say, to read for plants while acknowledging and drawing on the wisdom of plants and thus learning to think and feel in the manner of plants without completely abandoning the traditional tools of human thought. Or, to put it somewhat differently, I attempt to think, feel, and read from the queer angle of the human vegetal."¹⁷⁹ This kind of reading is queer in the sense that it attempts to see beyond the norm. As I claimed in the Introduction, the search for an unattainable norm is a key element of Droste-Hülshoff's *Ledwina* and, as I argue, of her poetry as a whole, especially in her reworking of the poet-muse relationship.

The following chapter proceeds in four sections organized by topic, starting with an exploration of what it means for Droste-Hülshoff to revive Romantic ideals as inspiration for her creative paradigm. The next section goes back even further in time to analyze the violent, gendered power at the root of the normative Western European creative paradigm, which Droste-Hülshoff reinterprets in her own Laura-inspired sonnet. The third section focuses on an uncanny apple tree in the fragmentary poem "Die Schmiede" as a symbol for the destructive side of poetic inspiration. Droste-Hülshoff deems this destructive aspect of creativity necessary, and although the published version of the poem almost always omits it, she explores a possible ending in her letters to her friend Levin Schücking that compares the earlier creative and destructive elements

¹⁷⁹ Katrin Pahl, "Queer Procreation: Reading Kleist Plantwise," *Qui Parle* 28, no. 1 (2019): 138.

of the poem to the story of the mythological goddess Proserpina, queen of springtime and the underworld, and her rape by Pluto. Finally, the fourth section of the chapter returns to Droste-Hülshoff's own roots with a closer inspection of the auto-erotic creative paradigm found in *Ledwina* as Ledwina embraces a corpse – and her self. The conclusion reflects on how Droste-Hülshoff's literary communication with the dead parallels the trend of necromantic tourism as described by Paul Westover, showing that Droste-Hülshoff's desire to find connection via death was not an isolated or uncommon occurrence, but rather – like the similar desire of Günderrode before her – an outgrowth of her time. Nonetheless, as I hope to show in the following readings, Droste-Hülshoff treats these topics with an intensity that is all her own – showing a core of poetic individuality within her network of friends, both dead and alive.

Part I. "Vor vierzig Jahren": Reviving Romantic Ideals as the Heart of Poetry

The return to Romanticism gives the post-Romantic poet a sense of spiritual groundedness, but at the same time, the ideals that Droste-Hülshoff espouses celebrate the unbounded nature of Romantic imagination. Not cultural conservatism, but a desire to break free from societal norms, is what leads Droste-Hülshoff back to 1800. This date is, more or less, what Droste-Hülshoff is thinking of when she discusses Romanticism, as made clear in the title of one of her poems written during the particularly fruitful Meersburger Winter of 1841/42: "Vor vierzig Jahren."¹⁸⁰ In this poem, Droste-Hülshoff identifies the Romantic appeal to an unknown source of poetry as the reason for their poetic success: rather than being constrained by a specific vision of what poetry ought to be, the Romantics sought experiences beyond their norm and their

¹⁸⁰ Cornelia Blasberg and Jochen Gryswatch, eds., *Annette von Droste-Hülshoff Handbuch* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 197.

own expectations. Droste-Hülshoff's ideal poet invokes the unknown as muse in an act that gives the poet the ability to go beyond the known.

Droste-Hülshoff turns to that moment forty years ago as the inauguration of a new logic of mediation that allows something beyond human experience into lived poetic practices. This unknown can take the form of something divine, something natural, or something entirely imagined. However, this unknown force or object always acts on the poet, very often through a dream or a vision. The encounter with the muse via a dream or a vision creates a connection between the poet's body, nature, and the spiritual realm, resulting in an inspiratory matrix that allows for "muses" to emerge at various points of friction between poetic and inner reality. This matrix of inspiration also frees the muse from existing as one single entity, body, or gender.

Droste-Hülshoff's representation of inspiration blends enthusiasm and spirit (breath) with the body in an image reminiscent of an ancient ritual. This ritual is carried out at the altar to the unknown god:

Und drüber man den Brodem
Des liebsten Weihrauchs trug,
Lebend'gen Herzens Odem,
Das frisch und kräftig schlug,

Das schamhaft, wie im Tode,
In Traumes Wundersarg
Noch der Begeistrung Ode,
Der Lieb' Ekloge barg.¹⁸¹

An invocation of gods that are not one's own – historical gods – is an attempt to resuscitate belief. The ritual carried out in these stanzas is aimed at awakening a symbolic function, some aspect of Romanticism that is missing forty years later. The lack of a specific definition for what is missing – beyond feelings such as "Begeistrung" or "Lieb" – is itself a return to a Romantic

¹⁸¹ Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, *Gedichte*, ed. Bodo Plachta and Winfried Woesler (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1994), 27, l. 15-24.

ideal of embracing the unknown, which, as we will see, appears frequently in Droste-Hülshoff's poetry.

The core of this ritual takes place in the "Traumes Wundersarg," a location that also embraces the indeterminate, lying at the intersection of reality (a coffin, a graveyard) and the imagination (the dream, a miracle). Within this dream-coffin beats a living, breathing heart, an image that recollects Droste-Hülshoff's contemporary Edgar Allen Poe. But Droste-Hülshoff is not using this image to evoke horror, or if she is, it is horror at the *opposite* of such a fate. The living heart of poetry is to be worshipped; it may be somewhat unsettling – like many Catholic relics of saints' body parts with which Droste-Hülshoff was surely familiar – but it represents continued existence even in the face of apparent death. Droste-Hülshoff is borrowing both Christian and pagan imagery to build her own religion to poetry, which she also experiments with in her spiritual cycle *Das geistliche Jahr*. The twin forces of death and reanimation that underlie so many of Droste-Hülshoff's poet-muse relationships are deeply rooted in Catholic belief, as is the case for many European writers in the gothic tradition (whether themselves Catholic or not). The reference to the poetic forms of "Ode" and "Ekloge," however, which were popular at the time of Romanticism as well as in the Enlightenment era, broadens Droste-Hülshoff's religion of poetry beyond any one time period or genre and confirms her dedication to the unknown.

The uncanny gothic imagery of a heart beating in a coffin – as if the coffin itself were the body and the heart floating within – also emphasizes the vulnerability needed for writing poetry. If the heart represents the vitality of the poet, then the heart without the protective shell of the body represents unmediated emotion, connection, and life. Naturally, this kind of pure sharing of emotion and life force cannot occur in reality, which is why the *Wundersarg* is a marvel. But this

dream of perfect transparency is a stark contrast to the lifestyle that Droste-Hülshoff criticizes when she describes how her contemporary countryfolk and poets turn every plant and landscape they touch to dust, like a botanical version of King Midas. She decries the “übersatte Spott” with which her contemporaries react to the exaggerated emotions of Romanticism.¹⁸²

The emotion of “Spott,” or mocking, is the polar opposite of the emotions of “Begeistrung” (enthusiasm) and “Liebe” (love) celebrated in the Romantic ritual. Mockery literally becomes a weapon and brings death *without* the possibility of reanimation, murdering the most valuable thing of all: the ideal.

Mit unsres Spottes Gerten
Zerhaun wir was nicht Stahl
Und wie Morgana’s Gärten
Zerrinnt das Ideal,

Was wir daheim gelassen
Das wird uns arm und klein
Was Fremdes wir erfassen
Wird in der Hand zu Stein.¹⁸³

This stanza depicts a series of violent metamorphoses that result in the destruction of everything that brings life: the garden, the enjoyment of everyday life, even the exploration of what is new. The contemporary poet is gifted with the power of transformation, but their hands turn everything to stone. The image of a stone in the hand echoes the image of a heart in a coffin, each one a small, roundish object contained in a protective shell – but the coffin, despite being a symbol of death, keeps the heart alive, whereas the hand of the mocking poet kills.

It is not just mockery, but the desire to possess, that leads to the dissolution of the ideal – which is not defined in the poem because it represents that unknown towards which the poet

¹⁸² Droste-Hülshoff, *Gedichte*, 27, l. 14.

¹⁸³ Droste-Hülshoff, *Gedichte*, 28, l. 49-56.

strives. It is not just the muse that the nineteenth-century poet wishes to possess, but knowledge and pleasure:

Ist Wissen denn Besitzen?
Ist denn Genießen Glück?
Auch Eises Gletscher blitzen
Und Basiliskenblick.¹⁸⁴

The problem, as “Vor vierzig Jahren” makes clear, is that knowledge and pleasure are not *things* that one can possess, but rather the fruit of experience and vulnerability. When people treat inner experience as riches and try to stockpile it like gold, they are misunderstanding its true value.

The mythical basilisk, with its gaze that turns people to stone, completes the cycle started by the good bourgeois citizen. Not only everything they touch, but they themselves end up lifeless:

“Und bettelhafte Kön’ge / Stehn wir im Steppenreich.”¹⁸⁵ This same effect occurs when the poet tries to possess the muse and thereby renders her powers void.

In contrast, the ideal Romantic poet is compared to a flourishing garden. Despite old age and even death, the poets of forty years ago are remembered as full of childlike wonder, purity, and love:

Ihr Greise, die gesunken
Wie Kinder in die Gruft,
Im letzten Hauche trunken
Von Lieb’ und Ätherduft,

Ihr habt am Lebensbaume
Die reinste Frucht gepflegt,
In karger Spannen Raume
Ein Eden euch gehegt.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Droste-Hülshoff, *Gedichte*, 27, l. 29-32.

¹⁸⁵ Droste-Hülshoff, *Gedichte*, 28, l. 63-4.

¹⁸⁶ Droste-Hülshoff, *Gedichte*, 27, l. 33-40.

Droste-Hülshoff once again makes a religious comparison, this time to the Garden of Eden. But in her version, the quasi-Edenic fruit is not one of temptation, but one of purity. The Romantic poets – “Ihr Greise” – die as innocently as children, an image that on the one hand represents the Christian ideal (lack of sin) and on the other hand is deeply unsettling. Within the context of the poem, this stanza depicts the genuine curiosity and hard work required to create good poetry. But at the same time, the images of the “Gruft,” of “karger Spannende Raume,” and of children sinking into the grave suggest a sacrifice or sorrow underlying the positive emotions of enthusiasm and love that make up the poetic religion. Given that so many Romantic poets died young, the blurring of lines between youth and old age is even more potent, and the “Traumes Wundersarg” takes on greater meaning as the cradle of poetry. This fascination with the interweaving of life and death as the basis of poetry snakes through all of Droste-Hülshoff’s work, from the early fragments to the mature poetry.

A kind of violent metamorphosis – the possession and transformation of something that the poet desires to own and to show off – is at the root of modern Western poetry. Metamorphosis, in this sense, cannot be defined as simply as “the related activities of growth and reproduction,” or “a prolonged process of procreation,” as it was by Goethe in a botanical context, although growth, plants, and procreation are all involved.¹⁸⁷ The history of violent literary metamorphosis stretches all the way back to the Greek myth of Apollo and Daphne, better known in Western Europe from Ovid’s retelling in the *Metamorphoses*. From Apollo’s perspective, this myth is about how the laurel came to crown the head of the successful poet. From Daphne’s perspective, it is a story of rape, as she flees Apollo’s advances. The way that (one-sided) love and inspiration justify gendered violence, as symbolized in the laurel – that

¹⁸⁷ Jocelyn Holland, *German Romanticism and Science: The Procreative Poetics of Goethe, Novalis, and Ritter* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 14.

crown of poets – comes to define not just Ovid’s understanding of the poet-muse relationship, but also that of poets for centuries to come. In the following section, we will focus on one specific poetic lineage, reading Droste-Hülshoff’s poem “Mit Lauras Bilde: Im Namen eines Freundes” in the context of two previous poets: Ovid in ancient Rome and Petrarch in medieval Italy.

Despite the very different cultural milieus in which they are living and writing, each of these authors is interested in how cultural understandings and misunderstandings of love and inspiration affect poetry and the muse. As the most recent of the three, Droste-Hülshoff is able to look back at Petrarch and Ovid and to analyze and adapt the roles played by each figure in the myth of the laurel crown. Droste-Hülshoff’s own retelling of the myth calls into question the centering of the laurel as the plant of the successful poet. Her poem “Mit Lauras Bilde: Im Namen eines Freundes,” which is the first of a pair entitled *Stammbuchblätter*, paints a fictional vignette of Petrarch, who is unhappy in spite of his laurels, and reflects on the various meanings of laurel and myrtle. In the end, the poem’s speaker suggests that myrtle is not merely a replacement for the laurel, but a more desirable prize. My reading places “Mit Lauras Bilde” alongside its companion poem in the *Stammbuchblätter* set as well as her other poems on friendship and flowers in order to examine the differences in relationship dynamic between the masculinized Petrarch – a bold, adventuring, unhappy hero – and the quieter but no less determined poetic subjects in Droste-Hülshoff’s work.

This discussion paves the way for the section thereafter, which examines some other plants in Droste-Hülshoff and the ways they symbolize and inform her explorations of different kinds of poet-muse relationships. A world in which laurel is no longer the sole crown of the poet, and in which nature is seen as a place worthy of respect, opens up the poet to accepting multiple

other plants as symbols or mediums of inspiration and emotion. This opening-up of the natural world in turn allows the poet to experience the self more fully, and Droste-Hülshoff's poetic subjects fantasize about life without the restrictions of gender and mortality.

Part II. "Der schnöde Preis": Rejecting the Laurel as Poetic Paradigm

By Droste-Hülshoff's time, both laurel and Laura were common symbols for the poet's success in writing and in love, respectively. Droste-Hülshoff's "Mit Lauras Bilde," in eight brief lines, challenges the assumption that all is well when the poet transforms the laurel into a crown and Laura into a poem. In order to understand the significance of Droste-Hülshoff's retelling of Petrarch, we will spend some time tracing the genealogy of Laura – the woman to whom Petrarch dedicates his poems in the *Canzoniere* – back to the story of Daphne's transformation into a laurel tree in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Both Petrarch and Ovid focus on what Laura/laurel can do for the male poet; Droste-Hülshoff, on the other hand, paints the laurel as a tragic prize, one "[v]on Dornen und Zypressen rings umragt," acknowledging the suffering inherent in winning the laurel without explicitly mentioning the violence of the original tale (p. 106, l. 11). Ovid's telling, on the other hand, viscerally expresses the trauma experienced by Daphne as she changes into a tree. Even if the few lines she speaks in the poem disappear under the weight of Apollo's speech, the ambiguity of the experience – poetic victory or rape – is made clear by Ovid's focus on Daphne's physical change and Apollo's continued violence to her arboreal form. Despite this ambiguity, though, retellings from Ovid onward have rarely given much space (or speech) to Daphne's perspective (at least until the twenty-first century).¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ For example, Nina MacLaughlin's *Wake, Siren: Ovid Resung* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2019) includes a brief retelling of the myth in first-person from Daphne's perspective. There are also numerous academic

While Droste-Hülshoff does not mention Daphne explicitly in “Mit Lauras Bilde,” she does mention Laura, the muse of Petrarch, and one of her symbols, the laurel. In Droste-Hülshoff’s poem, Petrarch fills his chamber with boughs of laurel (“Mit Lorbeerreisern füllt er das Gemach”). In Italian, “Laura” is only one letter off from one of two words Petrarch uses for laurel: “lauro,” but the close connection of the two beings – woman and plant – goes far beyond wordplay. According to Sara Sturm-Maddox, “in Petrarch’s portrayal of Laura, elements of the feminine figure are interchangeable with those of her arboreal equivalent,” and Laura also dissolves into nature in the other plays on her name, “l’aurora” (the dawn) and “l’aura” (the breeze).¹⁸⁹ This deliberate dissolution of boundaries between woman, poem, and nature sets up the paradigm via which Petrarch “will associate his pursuit of the poet’s laurels with his pursuit of Laura.”¹⁹⁰ In both the Ovidian source material and Petrarch’s adaptation, Daphne is able to inspire the poet because she can be taken apart; it is the “fragmentation of her physical image” into elements of poetry that make her valuable as an inspiratory figure.¹⁹¹ Ovid’s and Petrarch’s poems slowly transform a human woman into her elemental parts, which the male poet then uses to construct his image as a poet.

Yet the metamorphoses of Daphne and Laura are not linear, and in both Ovid and Petrarch there are moments where the woman pushes back against the forces that have compelled her to change her form. Daphne does not immediately become fully a tree: instead, she is trapped

articles as well as newspaper articles – particularly in the wake of the Me Too movement – that dissect the misogyny in Daphne’s myth and in other tales from the *Metamorphoses*.

¹⁸⁹ Sturm-Maddox, Sara. *Petrarch’s Laurels* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 18-19.

¹⁹⁰ Sturm-Maddox, 3.

¹⁹¹ Sturm-Maddox, 25.

within a shell of bark and can still react to Apollo’s violent touch. As she transforms, Apollo still tries to penetrate the human-tree boundary, feeling a heart beating, even beneath the wood – “positaque in stipite dextra / sentit adhuc trepidare nouo sub cortice pectus” – and kisses the wood, even as it shrinks away – “oscula dat ligno; refugit tamen oscula lignum.”¹⁹² When he tears a branch from the laurel to make himself a crown, Ovid’s poem is silent on the matter of Daphne’s pain, but the poem ends with her apparent acquiescence: “factis modo laurea ramis / adnuit utque caput uisa est agitasse cacumen.”¹⁹³ But acquiescence does not follow from Daphne’s actions in the poem, and furthermore, these lines emphasize what the reader (and Apollo) do *not* know, rather than what they do. The laurel’s head *seems* to have shaken (“uisa est agitasse”), and in the original Latin, there is no way to distinguish feminine pronouns (“her branches, her head” in the English translation), so that in the end the only thing we *know* is that the tree’s branches moved. The only reason to assume Daphne nodded in approval is because the reader is taking Apollo’s point of view; she may just as well have shaken her head in disgust or distress. In Petrarch’s poems as well, Laura’s speech is most often reported filtered through the emotions of the male poet and is often described metaphorically or allegorically.¹⁹⁴ Daphne and Laura can speak only through their physical appearance and movements, and the male poet forms their gestures to suit his own desires.

¹⁹² P. Ovidi Nasonis, *Metamorphoses*, ed. R.J. Tarrant, Scriptorum classicorum bibliotheca Oxoniensis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 22, l. 554 and 556. Note that this edition, following tradition, prints what is often modernized to a “v” as a “u” (for example, “uisa” (visa)). English translations of the lines are as follows: “on the trunk / He placed his hand and felt beneath the bark / Her heart still beating,” and “[He] pressed his kisses on the wood; / Yet from his kisses still the wood recoiled.” (Ovid [Publius Ovidius Naso], *Metamorphoses: Book 1*, *Oxford World’s Classics: Ovid: Metamorphoses*, ed. A.D. Melville and Edward J. Kenney (1986, published online July 2015), <https://www-oxfordscholarlyeditions-com.proxy.lib.duke.edu/view/10.1093/actrade/9780199537372.book.1/actrade-9780199537372-div1-01>, n.p.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, l. 566-7. In English: “the laurel in assent / Inclined her new-made branches and bent down, / Or seemed to bend, her head, her leafy crown.”

¹⁹⁴ See Sturm-Maddox 47-53.

The sonnet “Mit Lauras Bilde” succinctly defines the core struggle between the patriarchal values of the laurel and the feminized, even sapphic values of the myrtle. “Mit Lauras Bilde” reveals the flaws of a system where the poet violently possesses the muse, calling the laurel a “schweren Kranz” that is difficult even for the successful poet – Petrarch – to bear.¹⁹⁵ The unnamed poet figure writing the sonnet instead imagines a system with different values, which are encapsulated in the “teure Haus” and the “Blick” of the beloved Laura.¹⁹⁶ The key difference in the perspective of Petrarch and the unnamed speaker of the poem is that Petrarch desires to possess the myrtle, whereas the contemporary poet knows that he or she is unable to obtain the myrtle at all. This recognition makes the rejection of the laurel easier, and the poet neither explains why the myrtle remains out of reach nor complains. On the surface, it would seem that Petrarch takes action and the unnamed poet remains passive, but this is not the whole story. Rather, Petrarch’s action is reported to be more futile than the unnamed poet’s patient waiting.

The fictional Petrarch’s story is told in the first eight lines, or the octet, of the sonnet, followed up by a short self-reflection by the contemporary poet in the sestet. Thus by the choice of form, Droste-Hülshoff immediately pays homage to Petrarch, master and creator of this kind of sonnet. It is all the more ironic, then, that her fictional version of Petrarch is so unhappy: he is celebrated as a poet to the extent that he has an entire room full of laurel branches, and yet he longs for the myrtle, which he cannot obtain. The way this conflict is sketched out immediately reminds us of the gendered violence – attempts at unwanted penetration – in the story of Apollo and Daphne: “Mit Lorbeerreisern füllt er das Gemach, / Doch kann er in den Myrtenhain nicht

¹⁹⁵ Droste-Hülshoff, *Gedichte*, 106, l. 13.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, l. 6 and 12.

dringen.”¹⁹⁷ When this fails, since the myrtle grove protects itself – a nod to the medieval topos of the walled garden of pleasure, yet one that in this case refuses to open¹⁹⁸ – Petrarch moves on to his next weapon: poetry.

Petrarch’s heroic efforts to obtain the myrtle are doomed to fail from the start, for he acts in line with the patriarchal system of the laurel. To request, or rather demand, the myrtle, he sends a swan: a symbol of Apollo, poets, and song, but also an animal traditionally associated with death.¹⁹⁹ This phrasing suggests the power of poetry to create objects out of nothing. But this power is denied, for the objects that Petrarch seeks exist already, and they resist being made into possessions like the laurel. The second quatrain repeats the frustration of the first: the attempt to penetrate a closed space; the space’s refusal; the realization that myrtle is unobtainable. This time, the swan goes on a hero’s journey – “Da zieht er durch die Welt mit hellem Klingen, / Schlägt mit den Flügeln an das teure Haus,” but is denied access and receives, instead of myrtle, “den Zypressenkranz.”²⁰⁰ His laurel crown of success morphs into a cypress crown of denial and frustration: patriarchal power is a one-way street, one that refuses alternative symbols or systems. This narrowness of spirit is why Droste-Hülshoff calls the laurel a

¹⁹⁷ Droste-Hülshoff, *Gedichte*, 106, l. 3-4.

¹⁹⁸ Particularly notable is the popular thirteenth-century French tale *Le roman de la rose*, written by Jean de Meun, which sparked a fierce quarrel led by Christine de Pisan against its misogyny. Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* was written between the 1320s and 1360s, and according to Lori J. Walters, “the Italian poets Dante and Petrarch were astute readers of the work.” While the beginning of the poem, written by Guillaume de Lorris, celebrates an “idealized conception of the love quest” (ibid.), Petrarch’s Laura poems nevertheless also depict her as a prize, and this relegation of Woman to the status of object is what Droste-Hülshoff’s poem speaks against, continuing the struggle to redefine poetry and literature without gendered violence. (Lori J. Walters, “Rose Summary,” John Hopkins Sheridan Libraries, *Digital Library of Medieval Manuscripts* (blog), accessed January 13, 2021, <https://dlmm.library.jhu.edu/en/romandelarose/rose-summary/>.)

¹⁹⁹ Swans are associated with Apollo because they draw his chariot, and they are also “proverbially beautiful singers, and able to predict their own deaths” (Frederick M. Ahl, “Amber, Avallon, and Apollo’s Singing Swan,” *The American Journal of Philology* 103, no. 4 (1982): 373; see pp. 373-76 for more on Apollo’s association with swans).

²⁰⁰ Droste-Hülshoff, *Gedichte*, 106, l. 5-6 and l. 7.

“schnöden Preis...[v]on Dornen und Zypressen rings umragt.”²⁰¹ Unlike Ovid’s and Petrarch’s metamorphoses, this is one that denies the patriarchal expectations of a spurned lover, refusing to allow him to gaze at the desired object (the myrtle), much less touch or possess it.

In contrast, the myrtle is presented as a smaller, lighter, in some ways less powerful plant, but one that does not entrap the poet in a moral quandary. The qualities associated with myrtle can be considered “feminine” in the context of the poetic symbolic history we have just examined; there is no striving for fame, no public recognition, for the poets of the myrtle. In fact, the unnamed poet who narrates Petrarch’s story, reflecting on their own experience, admits to being closed out of the society of poet laureates entirely: “Mein Freund, wohl ist der Lorbeer uns versagt.”²⁰² This dramatic volta invites the reader to reflect on what the story about Petrarch has to say to us. The “Freund” appears not only here, but also in the title; the lack of identifying information – gender, age, personality – leaves any characterization up to the reader. Even the masculine form “[m]ein Freund” does not necessarily mean the poet and addressee are both male; women such as Karoline von Günderrode and George Sand used masculine pronouns in their work as poets, yet they too were all too often refused laurel once their gender was discovered. Thus it would be possible to read the conclusion to “Mit Lauras Bilde” as a reflection on the state of writing as a woman in the nineteenth century: one devoid of praise and fame, but rich in other qualities.

The poem itself implies what those qualities might be without explicitly stating what the myrtle stands for. The meaning of myrtle cannot be expressed with a single word; it is not the opposite of laurel nor a symbol for any so-called feminine kind of poetry, but rather an invitation

²⁰¹ Ibid., l. 10-11.

²⁰² Ibid., l. 9.

to perceive the purpose of poetry differently. It is true that in nineteenth-century *Blumensprache* guides, myrtle was often interpreted as a sign of romantic love or marriage, a link that went back to the plant's association with the goddess Venus.²⁰³ But this simplistic connection is not adequate to capture the way myrtle works in Droste-Hülshoff's poem. Rather, I argue that Droste-Hülshoff's invocation of myrtle draws on what Ariadne Staples calls Venus's "broader function" of "draw[ing] together into a single system the various categories — whether defined sexually, politically or socially — that other cults and rituals separated."²⁰⁴ In some cases, myrtle crowns were even given the same way as laurel crowns, albeit for a different kind of victory: "an easy victory owing to a quick surrender," one that avoided bloodshed and suffering.²⁰⁵ The myrtle chaplet represented, in this case, the idea that such a victory was owed to Venus in her role of bringing together diverse factions – in this case, two warring parties.²⁰⁶

²⁰³ For example, in an 1822 guide to flower symbolism, the myrtle blossom is listed as "Sey standhaft, der Liebe Lohn ist süß," and the myrtle branch is even more explicitly associated with marriage, viz.: "Willst Du mein Gatte (meine Gattin) werden?" (H. August, *Die Blumensprache nach vaterländischen Dichtungen: eine Frühlings-Gabe* (Schulz u. Wundermann, 1822), 37). Louise Cortambert's *Die Blumensprache, oder Symbolik des Pflanzenreichs* lists "Myrrthe" as symbolic of "Liebe" and relates various legends and myths associated with it. Most interesting in our context is the remark that the reason for myrtle's association with love is that "die Myrrthe, auf der Stelle, wo sie gepflanzt wird, alle andere Pflanzen um sich her vertilgt. So findet auch in einem Herzen, das von Liebe erfüllt ist, kein anderes Gefühl Raum" (Louise Cortambert, *Die Blumensprache, oder Symbolik des Pflanzenreichs*, translated by Karl Mühler (K.A. Stuhr, 1820), 49). Given that Cortambert also mentions the Roman habit of crowning victors with myrtle rather than laurel as stemming from the rape of the Sabines, this power of the myrtle to kill off its botanical competitors seems somewhat more ominous ("Die Römer bekränzten sich, nach dem Raub der Sabinerinnen, zur Ehre der kriegerischen und siegreichen Venus, mit Myrrthen. Diese Myrrthen-Kränze theilten in der Folge den Vorzug der Lorbeerkrone, sie schmückten das Haupt des Triumphators," 49-50). The nineteenth-century moral drawn from this story does not confront the very clear violence that undergirds the concept of romantic love ("Liebe").

²⁰⁴ Ariadne Staples, *From Good Goddess to Vestal Virgins: Sex and Category in Roman Religion* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 1998): 100-101.

²⁰⁵ Staples, 101.

²⁰⁶ There were multiple cults of Venus, and each focused in some way on her role of "integration," but this is not to say that Romans had any interest in getting rid of distinct social categories. Staples adds: "[i]t is important to note that in integrating disparate categories the cult of Venus does not deny the existence of the categories. Ritual categorization was a defining feature of Roman cult. Venus simply provided an alternative way of treating those categories. But the integrity of the separate categories was never compromised; their boundaries never blurred" (107).

Whether Droste-Hülshoff knew this specific fact or not, her poem “Mit Lauras Bilde” acknowledges the similarities and differences of myrtle and laurel in a way that highlights the “broader function” of myrtle as a symbol of connection. Despite the unflattering representation of Petrarch in the octet, the poem does not mean to reject wholesale the history of poetry – its echoing of Petrarch’s Laura and its use of the Petrarchan sonnet form deliberately build on the work of past poets. Furthermore, Droste-Hülshoff also explores the concept of an easy or difficult victory, in this case a poetic victory experienced as fame or recognition. Petrarch’s laurels represent public acclaim; the myrtle crown represents a quieter, even domestic mode of creating poetry that is however built on a different kind of recognition, the kind that Petrarch desires but cannot obtain. And this kind of recognition is one that is premised on the *female* gaze, rather than the male gaze:

Will es in einer Laura Blick mir tagen,
Dann hab’ ich gern dem schweren Kranz entsagt,
Die kleine Myrte lässt sich leichter tragen.²⁰⁷

Notably, the poem does not specify *which* Laura’s gaze is at stake here; instead, Laura takes on the same symbolic power as myrtle or laurel. But she is not objectified: rather, her gaze (“Blick”) is given the power to begin a new day. Petrarch and his laurels have been left behind, banned from the shared gaze that links the friend, the poet, and Laura in a mutual network of desire and creation. Laura can be anyone, and in following up this first poem in the *Stammbuchblätter* set with one dedicated to a real-life friend, Henriette von Hohenhausen, Droste-Hülshoff suggests that friendship between women is one fertile source that inspires poetry.

²⁰⁷ Droste-Hülshoff, *Gedichte*, 106, l. 12-14.

The myrtle is merely one of a multitude of flowers and plants that Droste-Hülshoff associates with this friendship-oriented poetic paradigm. In other poems, she dedicates plants such as the evergreen, the ivy, and the rose to her friends, very often in memorial poems written after their death. Thus these plants not only invoke the friendship that connected two women – and often two poets – in life, but suggest in a much less violent way than the laurel that such connections persist when one member of a bond metamorphoses. Rather than the connection that Apollo forces on Daphne by seizing and breaking her branches, Droste-Hülshoff chooses a plant that represents the bond she had with her friend. The plant then becomes a cipher, a metaphor, linking the living memories of the poet to the remembered being that the friend has become. The botanical metaphor connects two kinds of time (that of the living and that of the dead) via poetic time, which shimmers on the edges of both.

In one such poem, “Nachruf an Henriette von Hohenhausen” (a different poem than the one in the *Stammbuchblätter* set), Droste-Hülshoff chooses three very different plants with which to decorate her friend’s grave:

Nicht möcht' ich einen kalten Stein
Ob deinem warmen Herzen sehen,
Auch keiner glühen Rosen Schein,
Die üppig unter Dornen wehen;
Des Sinnlaubs immergrünen Stern
Möcht' ich um deinen Hügel ranken,
Und überm Grüne säh' ich gern
Die segensreiche Ähre schwanken.²⁰⁸

The first four lines set up two pairs of contrasting images: the cold stone versus the warm heart, and the glow of the rose versus the thorns. The poet rejects both of these images for different reasons: the cold stone (a gravestone) conceals the “warm heart” of the dead friend, effectively

²⁰⁸ Droste-Hülshoff, *Gedichte*, 108, l. 41-8.

shutting down the memory she wishes to keep alive²⁰⁹; meanwhile, the rose seems to be *too* warm, even erotic, with the poetic adjective “glühen” setting the rose on fire (like the warm heart). Despite the poet’s rejection of the rose, the poem takes pleasure in describing these contrasts, emphasizing that rose suffers (“wehen”) luxuriantly (“üppig”). But the poet moves away from this necromantic melancholy and chooses instead two far less bright and showy plants with which to adorn the friend’s grave: the “Sinnlaub” and the “Ähre.” The “Sinnlaub” is an evergreen plant, one that represents lasting friendship,²¹⁰ and an “Ähre” is the a long stalk or shaft that contains grains, like an ear of corn (the grains develop out of small flowers, but the ear does not have the same visual impact as a rose’s luxurious petals).

In this memorial poem, Droste-Hülshoff rejects heterosexual eros for another kind of desire: instead of the classic erotic image of a rose, she chooses a plant that represents friendship. She also wishes to see the “segensreiche Ähre” swaying above her friend’s grave. Normally one does not plant wheat or corn or similar ear-bearing plants on a grave. The typical graveyard flower is instead a fast-fading petaled bloom that must be brought back regularly by living people in order to remain fresh. But Droste-Hülshoff wants her friend to be memorialized by a plant that contains in itself the seeds of its renewal: the “Ähre” is “segensreich” in part because it contains within itself many futures. While the poet imagines wrapping the evergreen around the grave (“ranken”), the poem lets the “Ähre” float or hover on its own power (“schwanken”), suggesting that it is still alive – that the poet indeed wants to plant it on the grave and let the

²⁰⁹ As written, the “warmen Herzen” of the friend is not dead – but rather, continues to be warm even within the grave. One possible reading would be to take this as a metaphor (the warmth is a character trait, a memory of the friend’s personality while alive), but the indistinctness of the writing also permits a more literal and therefore fantastical reading, in which the friend will remain alive in some sense if the poet chooses the right memorial flower.

²¹⁰ In H. August’s *Die Blumensprache*, the introductory poem links Immergrün (another name for Sinnlaub) to friendship due to how long it stays green: “Aber im dauernden Immergrün / Wollte die F r e u n d s c h a f t ihr Sinnbild erziehn,” 25).

roots grow down into her friend's body. Admittedly this conclusion is somewhat imaginative, but nonetheless, I perceive "Nachruf an Henriette von Hohenhausen" as calling upon not just a new plant, but a new goddess: Persephone.

The goddess of springtime and death, Persephone is an ideal mythological role model to take the place of Apollo in Droste-Hülshoff's poetic world. She is adaptable, even metamorphic, transforming each half year from goddess of springtime to underworld queen – a transformation that, as we will see, Droste-Hülshoff's *Ledwina* also embodies (at least in her dream). Droste-Hülshoff's poetry as printed does not directly reference Persephone, but Kirsten Reinking sees this myth as a useful counterpoint to Droste-Hülshoff's "Perspektive zwischen Leben und Tod" and to her friend Levin Schücking's characterization of Droste-Hülshoff herself as a "Seherfrau."²¹¹ Reinking also identifies the one poem in which Persephone *does* appear, albeit only in draft form: in a letter written by Droste-Hülshoff to Schücking as a suggested ending for the poem "Die Schmiede." In Reinking's reading, the Persephone myth is relevant throughout Droste-Hülshoff's work as an underlying three-part journey from life to death and back, representing the possibility for rebirth via the poet's creative act. Having rejected the laurel, this poem creates "eine Pforte in die Unterwelt" by means of a different plant entirely: an apple tree.²¹² I now turn to this poem and its linkage of creative and destructive energy as equally potent sources for the poet.

²¹¹ Kirsten Reinking, "Das Schweigen mit einem Zauberwort zu brechen: Eine Nachprüfung ausgewählter Gedichte von Annette von Droste-Hülshoff dem Persephonemythos," M.A. Thesis (California State University, 2011), v. <https://pqdtopen.proquest.com/doc/866338159.html?FMT=ABS>.

²¹² *Ibid.*, xvii.

Part III. “Die Schmiede”: Nature and the Mythological Muse

As published in the 1844 edition of Droste-Hülshoff’s poems, “Die Schmiede” is a short, unassuming poem about a smithy who works near an unusual tree. This is also the version we see in most later published editions, including the collected works that I cite. However, Droste-Hülshoff also conceived of a potential ending to what she sees as a fragment, which she drafts out in a letter to Levin Schücking, who is at this point serving as the contact between herself and the publisher Cotta. In the first of two letters dated 6 February, 1844,²¹³ she responds to many of Levin’s questions about her manuscript, defending certain parts of poems, changing others, and in this case, adding an entirely new section. It is only in this unpublished conclusion that Droste-Hülshoff mentions Persephone at all.²¹⁴ In the last two lines, she references the myth of Persephone and Hades, suggesting their tale as a potential interpretatory guide to the preceding stanzas about apple tree and smithy.

²¹³ The second letter makes corrections to her corrections; it seems to have been written partly on the urging of Droste-Hülshoff’s brother-in-law, Joseph Laßberg (married to her sister Jenny), who thought she should ask for more money from Cotta, and partly to make clear Droste-Hülshoff’s own mixed feelings about the monetary issue and the poetic corrections (see Levin Schücking, ed., *Briefe von Annette von Droste-Hülshoff und Levin Schücking* (Grunow, 1880), 262ff.).

²¹⁴ Reinking writes as though this conclusion were the definitive edition of the poem, although most nineteenth-century and contemporary editions print the fragmentary version (xviii). She follows the edition of Clemens Heselhaus (Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Clemens Heselhaus, 2. Aufl. (München: C. Hanser, 1955). Heselhaus, in another text on Droste-Hülshoff, offers more information on the *Entstehungsprozess* of the poem: “Die Rauchwolken der Schmied-Esse und das singende und Blumen pflückende Mädchen darunter sollen im Bilde den Raub der Proserpina durch Pluto darstellen. Aber zu diesem mythologischen Bild paßte das eingefügte Volkslied schlecht. [Based on this text and the letters cited below, the “Volkslied” seems to be those four lines that talk about flowers flying out of the forge.] Darum bot es Droste mit und ohne Volkslied an. In der ersten Fassung endete das Gedicht nicht mit dem Proserpina-Vergleich, sondern mit einem ironischen Vergleich von der Schmiedin als Dame und von dem langen blonden Knaben als Ritter: “Ist dies Idyll auch kühn genug / Für diese kühnen Zeiten?” Die erste Fassung sollte auch den Untertitel “Ein gefühlfvolles Idyll” haben und das Motto “O Natur! Natur! Natur! (locus communis).” Aber das alles ist für die zweite Fassung, die sie Schücking am 6. Februar 1844 mitteilte, geopfert werden [sic]. Jedoch ist das Gedicht um seiner anfänglichen Ironie willen in die Gruppe “Scherz und Ernst” gekommen” (Clemens Heselhaus, *Annette von Droste-Hülshoff. Werk und Leben* (Düsseldorf: August Bagel Verlag, 1971), 252-3).

Before analyzing the role of Persephone's myth in the poem, it makes sense to introduce the preceding stanzas, in particular the figure of the apple tree. This tree is described in a fantastical way as "[h]alb tot, halb lebend, wie ein Prinz / In einem Ammenmärchen," somehow still bearing "lockre Früchte."²¹⁵ The tree is also compared to "ein zweiter Scävola,"²¹⁶ Gaius Mucius Scaevola being a legendary Roman general who once "demonstrated his courage to his captors by thrusting his right hand into a blazing altar fire and holding it there until it was consumed."²¹⁷ Although these descriptions are fantastical, putting the tree into a context of legend and myth, the mundane setting of the German smithy keeps the tree grounded in reality. Furthermore, both the fantastical and the real layers of description interweave tree with human: the tree is a prince, a hero; it has a face and eyes.

As the poem gradually shifts from describing the tree to describing the blacksmith, the tree makes an imperceptible metamorphosis from botanical to human (by way of the mythical). By referring back to "der alte Apfelbaum"²¹⁸ as "er" and metaphorically calling the tree "[e]in zweiter Scävola," Droste-Hülshoff prepares the reader to see "er" as "der Apfelbaum," and it is therefore a surprise when the eyes and face of the smithy superimpose themselves on an image we think will describe the tree:

Langt mit der andern, üppig rot,
Er in die Funkenreigen,

[...]

Ein zweiter Scävola hält Jahr
Auf Jahr er seine Rechte

²¹⁵ Droste-Hülshoff, *Gedichte*, 169, l. 2.

²¹⁶ Droste-Hülshoff, *Gedichte*, 170, l. 13.

²¹⁷ "Gaius Mucius Scaevola," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed February 9, 2021. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Gaius-Mucius-Scaevola>.

²¹⁸ Droste-Hülshoff, *Gedichte*, 169, l. 1.

Der Glut entgegen, die kein Haar
zu sengen sich erfrechte.

[...]

Die Kohle knallt und drüber dicht,
Mit Augen wie Pyropen,
Beugt sich das grimmige Gesicht
Des rußigen Zyklopen.

Er hält das Eisen in die Glut
Wie eine arme Seele...²¹⁹

The reader expects that “drüber” will lead us back to the tree, but instead, a new figure makes an appearance: a face “[m]it Augen wie Pyropen,” eyes like blood-red granite. That face is also a cyclops, so we can suppose it has just one eye. When we read that this imposing figure holds the iron into the forge like a poor soul, suddenly it no longer seems to be quite so human; in addition, we can map each trait of this face back onto the tree: the red eye is like a ruddy apple, the bark of the tree is surely just as sooty as that of the cyclops. It is also possible that a tree could hold iron over the forge, if this iron were somehow attached to its branches. Thus Droste-Hülshoff slowly transforms the image before the reader’s eyes from a two-sided apple tree to a truly fantastical being, part human, part cyclops, and increasingly chthonic.

Having introduced this exceptional tree and the forge, the poem begins to transition from description to action. As we have seen above, the smithy – or the tree – holds the iron in the forge “[w]ie eine arme Seele”; next, this productive force creates horseshoes out of “Weh,” “Zorn,” and “Schmach”:

Dann auf dem Amboß, Schlag an Schlag,
Läßt es sein Weh erklingen,
Bis nun gekrümmt in Zorn und Schmach
Es kreucht zu Hufes Ringen.²²⁰

²¹⁹ Droste-Hülshoff, *Gedichte*, 170, l. 9-10, 13-16, and 21-26.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, l. 29-32.

This is the end of the poem as published, and even with this fragment (in Droste-Hülshoff's own estimation), we can interpret the poem as a meditation on the creative power that can be drawn from dark sources. Reading realistically, the last few stanzas depict the simple act of a wizened old one-eyed smithy pounding a horseshoe into shape. But reading fantastically, we see a tree-turned-human singing out its suffering ("Läßt es sein Weh erklingen")²²¹ and the negative emotions of anger and humiliation ("Zorn und Schmach") turning into the ringing sounds emanating from a horseshoe. The powerful interweaving of emotion, sound, and object describes not only the act of creating a horseshoe within the poem, but also the poem itself as both tangible and intangible material.

Droste-Hülshoff was unsatisfied with the poem in this form, and on February 6th, 1844, she mentions possible improvements to "Die Schmiede," among other poems, in a long letter written in response to a packet Levin Schücking had sent, which included an eagerly-awaited offer from the publisher Cotta. Droste-Hülshoff's enthusiasm and anxiety about earning an adequate payment, selecting the right publisher, and explaining her choices to her family are all palpable in this letter, and she urges Levin: "Übersehn Sie doch nichts beim Lesen, es ist so durcheinander geschrieben."²²² It seems that either Levin did overlook Droste-Hülshoff's proposed conclusion for "Die Schmiede," or that her uncertainty about the adequacy of the conclusion won out. Regardless, given our interest in Persephone, it is intriguing to see her

²²¹ The "er" from earlier stanzas turns into "es" via a description of landscape ("Es knackt und sprizet Funkenblut / Und dunstet blaue Schwele," p. 170, l. 27-8), which further blends the human ("Blut," "Schwele") and the material (the metal of the forge) using a language reminiscent of mythology, which might describe a hero as having "Funkenblut" or as a strong and wizened tree.

²²² Theo Schücking, ed., *Briefe von Annette von Droste-Hülshoff und Levin Schücking*, 2nd Edition (Leipzig: Fr. Wilh. Brunow, 1880), 261.

thoughts on completing “Die Schmiede,” which link the fantastical apple tree of the introductory stanzas directly to the powers of both song and underworld:

Soeben fallen mir ein paar Schlußstrophen für die Schmiede ein; sie sind nicht besonders, aber ich glaube nicht, daß sie mir ein anderes Mal besser gelingen. Also (das Ende war: „Gekrümmt zu Hufes Ringen”): „Am Pförtchen scharrt der Rappe, schnaubt Dem Schlackenstaub entgegen, Wo hinterm Hagen dichtbelaubt Sich Liederklänge regen. (Nun kann das Lied folgen oder auch wegbleiben.) ,S ist eine Stimme fest und klar, Wie Morgenfrische heiter (oder „Morgenluft so heiter”); Nun durch die Spalten (Zweige) fliegen gar Maßlieben, Dold’ und Kräuter. Da wilder scharrt der Rappe, schwallt Am Dach der Funkenreigen, Und eine dunkle Nachtgestalt Scheint aus dem Schlot zu steigen. Und lockend (zitternd) schwankt (sucht) der Äpfel Schein Den Hagen zu berühren: Will Pluto hier am Blütenrain Proserpina (oder „der Ceres Kind”) entführen?” oder: „Will etwa Dis vom Blütenrain Persephone entführen?” Besser weiß ichs nicht zu machen; gefällts Ihnen nicht, so mag die Schmiede springen; denn die ersten Strophen allein werden Ihnen doch auch wohl zu fragmentarisch vorkommen?²²³

Invoking Pluto and Proserpina at the very end of the poem causes the mythological past to erupt into the prosaic everyday scene of a blacksmith’s forge, while the mention of “Liederklänge” – harkening back to the Volkslieder collected by the Brothers Grimm and their many assistants – lends these foreign gods a German identity. Each ordinary object in the poem, from the black horse (“Rappe”) to the flowers to the forge itself, takes on a fantastical double existence, located at the crux of two worlds and two energies. The underworld and the earthly realm, the powers of destruction and creation, the dark and the light: all these dissonant forces come together in “Die Schmiede” to create a crucible of poetic birth. Yet the creatures formed out of this forge are ominous, even monstrous: the apple tree with its incongruous “lockre Früchte” next to “Gespinnns, / Wurmfraß und Flockenhärchen” blends youth and age; the black horse scrapes at the ground (“scharrt”) as though opening up a path to the underworld; and finally, a dark night figure rises out of the chimney. Each of these images could be entirely rational – the dark figure mere smoke, the horse impatient for food, the tree singed by fire – but Droste-Hülshoff

²²³ Theo Schücking, 259-60.

deliberately calls into question both her own fantastical interpretation and the rational explanation by invoking Pluto and Proserpina not as fact, but as a question. Furthermore, Droste-Hülshoff does not say that Pluto *is* carrying off Proserpina, as ancient myth would have it, but rather, asks whether he *wants* to (“Will Pluto...?”). This is the same mode of openness to inspiration that we see in “Mit Lauras Bilde,” where the poet does not demand, but rather imagines the inspiratory gaze of the beloved (“Will es in einer Laura Blick mir tagen...”).

If “Mit Lauras Bilde,” in rewriting the myth of Apollo and Daphne, called into question the idea of possessing a muse, then “Die Schmiede” argues that destruction makes up a key element in creativity. This is not meant in a nihilistic way, but rather in a way that recognizes the side effects of making something as simple as a horseshoe: this act leaves the apple tree badly burnt and decaying on one side, and the striking at the forge casts aside the “Maßlieben, Dold’ und Kräuter,” small plants that fly through the air. Their flight transforms them from their botanical origins to a quasi-avian state; this metamorphosis, caused by the forge, seems to cause – even if loosely – the horse’s impatience and scraping at the ground. The black horse itself is a figure that evokes nearing death, echoing earlier Romantic images: Goethe’s Faust and Mephistopheles hurrying to Gretchen’s prison on black horses, or the lover hurrying off with his dead beloved to her grave in Gottfried August Bürger’s vampiric ballad “Lenore.”²²⁴ The latter poem is written in cheerful iambic tetrameter (just like Droste-Hülshoff’s “Die Schmiede”), combined in the case of Bürger’s ballad with regular iambic trimeter and with onomatopoeia for the horse’s movements:

Und hurre, hurre, hop hop hop!

²²⁴ This detail is found in a stage direction: “FAUST, MEPHISTOPHELES. *auf schwarzen Pferden daher brausend.*” Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust. Texte*, ed. Albrecht Schöne (Berlin: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2017), 191.

Ging's fort in sausendem Galop,
Daß Ros und Reiter schnoben,
Und Kies und Funken stoben.²²⁵

Droste-Hülshoff's poem, despite treating similarly serious subjects (the cycle of life and death, the appearance of omens), takes equal pleasure in reproducing the sounds of the forge, and these small poetological choices also tie her fragment in to various earlier Romantic texts.

The flowers, ripped from their roots, recall the cycling of Prosperina/Persephone between goddess of spring – creative, (re)productive – and her banishment to the underworld, where she maintains an equally powerful position, but one that brings winter and death on the earth. Droste-Hülshoff's alternative name for the goddess, "Ceres' Kind," links Proserpina's power back to that of her mother, goddess of grain and therefore of life: in Greek mythology, Ceres succeeds at seeing her daughter again "by causing the earth to remain barren and so depriving the gods of their sacrifices."²²⁶

There is a parallel between the leafy fate of Daphne and Proserpina's springtime form being carried off by Pluto: in both cases beautiful, flourishing beings are subjected to and transformed by desire. In Daphne's case, however, the metamorphosis is one-directional and contains her voice within the tree forever. In Proserpina's case, as depicted in "Die Schmiede," the goddess is contained within flowers that return every year. She may be ripped up by the roots, but her roots are shorter and therefore more quick to grow. Proserpina masters her metamorphosis, taking charge of the underworld powers she is offered, even though her fate at first seems equally as tied to aggressive male desire as that of Daphne. The apples of the forge,

²²⁵ Gottfried August Bürger, *Lenore. Ein Gedicht* (London: S. Gosnell, 1796), <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CW0114059785/ECCO?sid=bookmark-ECCO&xid=f05bde77&pg=10>, 7.

²²⁶ Robin Hard and H.J. Rose, *The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology: Based on H. J. Rose's Handbook of Greek Mythology* (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis Group, 2003), 12.

growing on the wizened yet radiant tree, illustrate the life-death cycle of which Proserpina is both symbol and ruler.

The apple tree in “Die Schmiede” is not the only powerful, unusual tree in Droste-Hülshoff’s work. The far more famous “Judenbuche” from Droste-Hülshoff’s eponymous novel has been identified as a source of potentially supernatural power by a number of scholars, including Dania Hückmann, who writes that in this novella, as well as in many other tales stretching back – as we have seen – to Daphne, “trees serve as containers for the dead.”²²⁷ On the one hand, the tree in *Die Judenbuche* is a place “where the dead retain a material form” – whether literally and momentarily (multiple corpses are found near the tree throughout the course of the novel) or figuratively and more permanently (because the tree comes to represent those who died there); on the other hand, the tree is a place “where their [the dead individuals’] voices are preserved and address us.”²²⁸ Daphne, however, falls silent; meanwhile, Proserpina appears in Droste-Hülshoff’s work only in a single line in an unpublished letter. If the importance of the tree, according to Hückmann, is its ability to speak or communicate, then Droste-Hülshoff’s poetic plants have much less of a voice than the *Judenbuche* – in particular when we consider how often students of German literature read *Die Judenbuche* compared to any of her poems. But this does not mean that trees, plants, and other botanical beings are *not* essential to the human-landscape connection in the poetry, nor that prose is somehow more successful at conveying voices. Rather, we see an alternative tactic in the poetry, in which plants do not contain the human, but rather, the human becomes plant.

²²⁷ Dania Hückmann, “The Dead Speak: On the Legibility of Trees in The Aeneid, Gerusalemme Liberata, and Die Judenbuche,” *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* 90, no. 3 (July 3, 2015): 175.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

In parallel with their role as potential beings into which humans can metamorphose, both the apple tree of “Die Schmiede” and the flying flowers are also the fertile ground for a metamorphosis of the landscape, a change that is activated by a disembodied voice. As Kirsten Reinking remarks, these “Liederklänge,” emanating from behind a thick hedge (“hinterm Hagen dichtbelaubt”), create a portal to the underworld.²²⁹ The thick foliage of the hedge (“dichtbelaubt”) echoes the German term “Dichtung,” transferring the musico-poetic imagery from its human source to the reader via a botanical medium. It is not containment, but transferral which is at stake here.

Droste-Hülshoff makes an interesting parenthetical comment in the poem at this point in her letter to Schücking: “Nun kann das Lied folgen oder auch wegbleiben.”²³⁰ It seems that she envisioned inserting a folk song into the poem: an interesting variation on the Romantic trend of inserting poems into prose novels. But as her comment makes clear, the song itself is not necessary for the reader to grasp the power that its sound has. The theme of the power sound begins as soon as the smithy appears in the poem. The first mention of the blacksmith’s shop is the word “Funkenreigen,” a circle of sparks into which the enchanted apple tree reaches. This word combines light or fire (“Funken,” sparks) and dance (“Reigen,” round), suggesting music; from that point on, the onomatopoeiac or musical adjectives pile up. The circles of sparks rise “knatternd” (crackling) from the forge; the flame makes a sound like a pipe (“Man hört die Flamme pfeifen”); and as mentioned above, the shaping of the horseshoe rings out (“Es kreucht zu Hufes Ringen”).

²²⁹ Reinking, as mentioned above, calls the opening that results “eine Pforte in die Unterwelt” (xvii).

²³⁰ Theo Schücking, 259.

Given how much of the poem in its incomplete form deals with the power of sound and music, it is no surprise that Droste-Hülshoff's suggested conclusion builds on this theme. I argue that she also, in this conclusion, depicts a quasi-causal connection between music and nature: a productive energy that goes in both directions and draws the human into this existing network of creation. Because the source of the music is never named – only the location from which it emanates, the hedge – the plants are not a muse in the sense of a medium through which the poet receives some sort of creative product by dictation; rather, Droste-Hülshoff leaves it open whether poetry and song originate in nature or in human activity. “Die Schmiede” suggests that it is some (un)holy alchemy that mixes natural and human activity into poetry.

Showing once again that creation is not always a pure act of innocent genius, the “Liederklänge” are also the catalyst that awakens the destructive energy of Dis. Droste-Hülshoff describes the magical appearance of a shadowy form in the forge as the “Liederklänge” ring out. Following Droste-Hülshoff's first choices from the parenthetical options given above in her letter, the poem represents its appearance as a kind of vision induced by music, tempered by words such as “scheint” (“seems”), “gar” (“even”), “schwankt” (“quivers” or “floats” or “wavers”), and the aforementioned question rather than strict conclusion:

,S ist eine Stimme fest und klar,
Wie Morgenfrische heiter
Nun durch die Spalten fliegen gar
Maßlieben, Dold' und Kräuter.

Da wilder scharrt der Rappe, schwallt
Am Dach der Funkenreigen,
Und eine dunkle Nachtgestalt
Scheint aus dem Schlot zu steigen.

Und lockend schwankt der Äpfel Schein
Den Hagen zu berühren:
Will Pluto hier am Blütenrain

Proserpina entführen?²³¹

In this suggested conclusion, the themes seen in the published fragment come together in a powerful blend of the botanical, the historical, and the mythical. The flying flowers, the “Funkenreigen” of the forge, the shining apples, the hedge, and the song blend together to create a setting that blends mythical beings – “eine dunkle Nachtgestalt,” Pluto and Proserpina – into the everyday German world of a smithy. The location of a blacksmith is not inconsequential, as it combines the act of creation with the potential for violence (think of the “Amboß, Schlag an Schlag” – the smithy is a place where fire, heavy tools, and powerful animals converge). Nor is this just any smithy, but a German one in particular – for what activates the portal to the underworld and its violent creation are “Liederklänge...eine Stimme fest und klar.” For the German Romantics, the German *Volkslied* became a symbol of national unity, so by the time Droste-Hülshoff wrote “Die Schmiede,” we can read “Liederklänge” as a shorthand for this particular *Klangwelt*. The poem confronts the question of poetic creativity as not just a personal act, but one that connects people, times, and places that cannot otherwise be brought together.

The form of “Die Schmiede” echoes the *Volkslieder* as well; its four-line stanzas with alternating tetrameter and trimeter and abab rhyme can be considered *Vagantenstrophe*, a metric pattern common in German folk song since the Renaissance.²³² Dieter Lamping identifies certain

²³¹ Theo Schücking, 259. I have taken the liberty of arranging the lines, written in prose form in Droste-Hülshoff’s letter, into lines and stanzas matching those of the published fragment. I have chosen the first option given in each case where the letter offers alternatives (the alternatives are as follows: “Zweigen” to replace “Spalten”; “zitternd” for “lockend”; “sucht” for “schwankt”; “der Ceres Kind” for “Proserpina”; and as an alternative final two lines, “Will etwa Dis vom Blütenrain / Persephone entführen.”

²³² Christian Wagenknecht defines *Vagantenstrophe* as a stanza following the pattern 4m, 3w, 4m, 3w (“m” identifying a “masculine” line with an accented syllable at the end, and “w” a “feminine” (“weiblich”) line with an unaccented syllable at the end). The rhyme pattern is typically abab. While the *Vagantenstrophe* contained longer lines when written in Latin, German poets tended to split each original line into two, and thus ended up with four-line stanzas (each shorter line corresponding to half of a Latin line). This kind of stanza appeared in both Renaissance folksongs and in Romantic and post-Romantic “volksliedhafte Lyrik,” which is what we see in “Die Schmiede” (*Deutsche Metrik : Eine Historische Einführung*, 5th edition (München : Beck, 2007), 70-73).

characteristics of poems that aspire to be musical or to imitate folk songs, particularly those written by Romantic poets:

Ein Eindruck textueller Musikalität wird meist schon durch die Paar- oder Kreuzreimbindung der Strophen bewirkt. Ein speziellerer Eindruck von Liedhaftigkeit kann resultieren, wenn überdies das Metrum bewusst gegen den normalen Sprechakzent ausgespielt wird... Die so erzwungenen schwebenden Betonungen oder gar Tonbeugungen können an einen tatsächlichen Gesang erinnern. Besonders die von Goethe und den deutschen Romantikern gepflegte sogenannte Volksliedstrophe (die die Herkunft aus dem Volk eher suggeriert als wirklich beanspruchen kann) vermag mit ihrem charakteristischen Sing-Sang-Rhythmus und scheinbar naiven Ton starke Effekte von Liedhaftigkeit zu erzeugen.²³³

Some of these characteristics of “Liedhaftigkeit” can be seen in “Die Schmiede,” including the rhyme scheme (Kreuzreim, or abab) and the sing-song rhythm. While Droste-Hülshoff more or less remains within the rhythm she sets, sometimes elements of the “schwebenden Betonungen” Lamping mentions appear: for example, in the line “Maßlieben, Dold’, und Kräuter,” the first syllable of the first word, normally the stressed syllable, is placed into an unstressed position.²³⁴ Thus, although we do not have any further evidence of the “Lied” that Droste-Hülshoff mentions to Schücking in her letter, we can consider “Die Schmiede” itself to be a literary folksong. As Lamping remarks, however, the Romantic *Volksliedstrophe* which Droste-Hülshoff uses is only an approximation of a folk form, and Droste-Hülshoff’s mythological and literary references – as well as her broad-ranging vocabulary (“Schlackenstaub” is a technical term from blacksmithing) – place the poem firmly in the realm of the written (and not the spoken) word.

²³³ Dieter Lamping, *Handbuch Lyrik : Theorie, Analyse, Geschichte*, Vol. 2, erweiterte Auflage (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2016), 207).

²³⁴ There is a certain flexibility to folk song meter, however, as Wagenknecht remarks: what matters most are the three or four regular stressed syllables (Hebungen; musically speaking, the upbeat) that characterize the pattern; a “Füllingsfreiheit” exists in which there can be more or less syllables between the stresses. However, by the nineteenth century, this sort of freedom was less common, although variations were not impossible. See Wagenknecht 71-72.

In “Die Schmiede,” then, just as in “Mit Lauras Bilde,” Droste-Hülshoff identifies an animated, female-coded nature as the source of lyric. In both poems, she also thematizes the violence and uncertainty that attend any poetic endeavor. But in neither poem are the female figures that underlie the power of poetry – Daphne and Persephone – wholly destroyed; instead, they change shape. The female figure is not, however, the main figure of inspiration in “Die Schmiede”; that role goes to the apple tree, with its half-living, half-dead, humanoid appearance. This tree and its apples’ “Schein” transform the surrounding landscape – including the smaller flowers that literally uproot themselves and fly like birds – into a realm of fantasy. “Die Schmiede” is more of a tone poem than a story; the mention of Hades and Persephone at the end serves merely to heighten the overarching mood of expectant anxiety. But despite its fragmentary nature, the world of “Die Schmiede,” in particular the strength of the connections it forges between human (poet) and environment (muse), is central to Droste-Hülshoff’s poetic project. Rather than choosing any *one* muse figure, the poet reaches out to the entirety of nature,²³⁵ seeking inspiration and enlightenment not in human language, but in the movements of plants and animals.

Droste-Hülshoff’s turn away from the single female muse on the model of Apollo and Daphne resists gendered violence and seeks meaning instead via imagined connections to botanical and mythological beings. But the imagery of “Die Schmiede” is not unambiguously

²³⁵ Hartwig Schultz shows that nature is *not* an opposite to culture/society in Droste-Hülshoff’s work, but rather that the problems of nature and culture are inextricably entangled. Nature, culture, and self cannot be separated, and Droste-Hülshoff often uses similar metaphors – the desert (“Wüste”) and grave worm (“Grabeswurm”) are examples – to represent the fallen nature of both culture (that is, the loss of the Romantic belief in utopia, as we have seen in “Vor vierzig Jahren”) and of self. This analysis is helpful in that it emphasizes how Droste-Hülshoff’s engagement with nature – in my sense, our non-human surroundings and fellow beings – is not some panacea or separate act from her poetry, but rather, simply another way she seeks to understand her social (and therefore poetic) quandaries. For more on Schultz’s position, see Hartwig Schultz, *Form Als Inhalt: Vers- Und Sinnstrukturen Bei Joseph von Eichendorff Und Annette von Droste-Hülshoff* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1981), 277ff.

positive. The seductive yet ominous apple tree, with its alluring apples (“Und lockend schwankt der Äpfel Schein”), is reminiscent of the Garden of Eden with its tempting knowledge, and the worms gnawing at its bark seem to echo the poet’s anxiety about the poem’s quality and worth, as seen in her comments to Schücking. While her poem need not be read as an allegory for Droste-Hülshoff’s own creative challenges, the poem nonetheless reflects a sense of longing for an unattainable experience, much like that of Petrarch in “Mit Lauras Bilde.” The curiosity and persistent questioning that runs throughout “Die Schmiede,” as well as Droste-Hülshoff’s attempt to conclude the German *Volkslied* beginnings of her poem with a Greek mythological ending, suggests that being torn between worlds is an inescapable experience for the poet. Metamorphosis does not offer a simple escape, but instead, offers the poet the chance to try out different experiences one after another and to resist being contained within a gendered role.

Part IV. Ledwina: The Grave as Womb, or, an Autoerotic Poetics

The tension between metamorphosis and containment that is so constitutive of Droste-Hülshoff’s poetry appears already in her early prose fragment, *Ledwina* (begun in 1819 and worked on periodically until the mid-1820s). I would like to discuss this work at the end of this chapter because *Ledwina* is a breeding ground for the uncanny and unusual erotic energies to be found in later work by the author. Reading *Ledwina* seriously, as a work in which Droste-Hülshoff begins to address the issues that will interest her throughout her career, can enrich our understanding of the later poems. Furthermore, unlike the poems “Mit Lauras Bilde” and “Die Schmiede” discussed above, this early work deliberately (and literally) embraces the decay and death inherent in acts of metamorphosis. The focal point of the fragment is undoubtedly the dream scene, in which Ledwina has a close encounter with a corpse, and which confuses the boundaries between self and beloved, poet and muse, and human and plant. The result is a

creative paradigm focused on a very specific type of monstrous generation: an autoerotic poetics in which the (female/ungendered) author gives birth to a flower-human by embracing her/its own corpse.

Ledwina is a text that centers around its eponymous heroine, a biographical prose fragment that often reads like an extended poem in prose. With romantically daydreaming sentences, the fragment meanders between Ledwina's hikes out on the moor and her fraught encounters with her proper bourgeois family, led by her widowed mother. Ledwina herself is more concerned with questions of being and the meaning of life. Despite the richness of the family scenes, the true center of gravity of the text – following, as it does, Ledwina in both her outer *and* her inner life – are the sequences that take place fully within her imagination. Most scholarship on *Ledwina* has focused on the role of the woman within society and specifically on Ledwina's failure to find a role that suits her.²³⁶ My reading builds on the arguments put forth in Elisabeth Krimmer's reading of the graveyard dream, which acknowledges the constraints of gender roles but does not consider either *Ledwina* or Droste-Hülshoff to have been failures.²³⁷

Ledwina's dream is introduced in the context of another dream: her sister Therese's daydream. The sisters appear to be opposites – Ledwina dreamy and poetic; Therese practical and hard-working – but rather than distinguishing between the “emotional” and the “rational” characters, the introduction to Ledwina's dream shows just how intertwined these two figures (and thus their primary modes of relating to the world) are. On a narrative level, the dream takes

²³⁶ See for example Patricia H. Stanley, “Annette von Droste-Hülshoff's Poetic Vision Unmasked: The Importance of the Novel Fragment ‘Ledwina,’” *South Atlantic Review* 61, no. 1 (1996): 1–25; Kristina R. Sazaki, “The Crippled Text/Woman: Annette von Droste-Hülshoff's ‘Ledwina,’” *Monatshefte* 89, no. 2 (1997): 168–81; and Carol Tully, “Placing Droste-Hülshoff's Ledwina: ‘Jugendwerk’ or ‘Gescheiterte Frauenliteratur’?,” *German Life and Letters* 52, no. 3 (1999): 314–324.

²³⁷ Elisabeth Krimmer, “A Perfect Intimacy with Death: Death, Imagination, and Femininity in the Works of Annette von Droste-Hülshoff,” *Women in German Yearbook* 17 (2001): 121–40.

place after Ledwina has been ordered to bed by her mother due to worry about her health after her long walk; in Ledwina's room, the sisters have a long conversation about marriage and love that distresses Therese, who goes on a walk much like Ledwina's. Therese is presented as a quasi-religious figure in this section, who ventures into the wilderness to weep for her "doppeltes Leben, eins für sich, eins für andre" – the latter always winning out.²³⁸ She goes to battle for others but not for herself, carrying "statt des Schwertes die Leidenspalme."²³⁹ Thus far the scene perfectly encapsulates existing scholarship on *Ledwina*, which emphasizes the lack of creative and autonomous life paths for women in the early nineteenth century.

However, the restrictive nature of women's lives is balanced out to some extent by the potential of nature. The sunset outside Ledwina's window is so beautiful that, when Therese returns from her walk, she falls into a dreamlike contemplation of the golden light. The narrator notes that "[f]ür Ledwinens krankes überreiztes Gemüth, hätte dies flimmernde Naturspiel leicht zu einem finstern Bilde des gefesselt seyns in der sengenden Flamme, der man immer vergeblich zu entrinnen strebt, da der Fuß in den qualvollen Boden wurzelt, ausarten können, aber Therese war es unbeschreiblich wohl geworden."²⁴⁰ Therese, on the other hand, experiences a peaceful "Glaube an eine verborgene geistige Abspiegelung aller Dinge in einander," a spiritual rebirth that seems to owe just as much to pantheism as to Christianity.²⁴¹ She comes back to reality "wie aus einem schweren Traum," but unlike Ledwina, her dream does not create a sense of "gefesselt

²³⁸ Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, *Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe: Prosa*, ed. Walter Hüge (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1978), 94.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 94-5.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 95.

seyns.”²⁴² For Ledwina, nature in the form of plants reveals its dark side. In her version of the sunset (as imagined by the narrator), her foot turns into a root that fastens her to the ground, like a modern-day Daphne. The same possibilities of freedom that Ledwina finds in her wanderings transform via her fantasies into a trap.

It is in this context of sisterly concern, spiritual awakening, and imaginary struggle that Ledwina’s dream unfolds. Narratively, the dream is introduced with a sudden backwards move: “Es war tief in der Nacht, als Ledwina aus ihrem langen Schlummer erwachte,” we are told, but we are immediately thrust back into her dream when we discover that, although “sie hatte äußerlich tief geruht” when Therese looked in on her, “in Ledwinens Innren hatte sich eine grauenvolle Traumwelt aufgeschlossen.”²⁴³ This sudden reversal throws off any expectation of Ledwina’s dream resembling Therese’s peaceful daydream, and Droste-Hülshoff keeps the momentum going – not allowing the reader or Ledwina to rest – with a run-on sentence that ends only at the most dramatic moment of the dream. The second sentence, starting at this point, carries us through the rest of the dream.²⁴⁴ This breaking of grammatical norms with run-on sentences is fully intentional, not only stylistically but also thematically, as we will soon see.

Coming so soon after Ledwina’s discussion with her sister about women’s roles and rules in life, it should be no surprise that the dream is also based around images that have to do with rules and games. The dream is set in a graveyard, which Ledwina’s dream self perceives as a chessboard due to the configuration of “weißer Leichensteine und schwarzer Grabhügel.”²⁴⁵

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid., 96.

²⁴⁴ The sentence that begins “Es war tief in der Nacht” goes on for almost an entire page in the edition I cite, which does not add any periods as some editions do. This first sentence contains 365 words.

²⁴⁵ Droste-Hülshoff, *Prosa*, 96

However, this is an endless chessboard, with a “zahllosen Menge” of the alternating colors.²⁴⁶

Torches flicker and cause the chessboard to come in and out of view as Ledwina and her acquaintances make their way towards the theater.

Both of these places – the theater and the graveyard – are in-between, in the sense that they may follow society’s rules, but they are also outside of them. Michel Foucault calls these spaces “heterotopias,” meaning “a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.”²⁴⁷ Ledwina’s dream self never makes it all the way to the theater, but her path towards it passes through a graveyard, thereby juxtaposing these two sites; the graveyard superimposes itself on the expectation of the theater, taking over its role as a presenter of stories. Ledwina experiences this theatricality quite literally, seeing herself within the dream’s shifting like a figure on stage: “nun war sie plötzlich die Zuschauende, und sah ihre eigne Gestalt todtенbleich mit wild im Winde flatternden Haaren, an den Gräbern wählen, mit einem Ausdrücke in den verstörten Zügen, der sie mit Entsetzen füllte.”²⁴⁸

This theatricality is not merely a cunning effect borrowed from Gothic literature, but rather, its effect of distortion and setting-apart (*ent-setzen*) gets at the core issue in Ledwina’s dream: Norm versus Form. Ledwina’s dream self is distressed because she sees herself with distorted features, a self that breaks away from the norm. The form of her face is recognizable, but distorted through its deathly pallor and its expression, one that the narrator leaves blank so that the reader can imagine it. Does Ledwina’s set-apart face horrify her because of its

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 24.

²⁴⁸ Droste-Hülshoff, *Prosa*, 96.

expression of distress? Or is it pleasure? With what emotion does her Doppelgängerin break the rules of society – and grammar – to dig into a grave?

In my reading, Ledwina sees pleasure and determination in the face of her dream self. While the precise emotions each reader sees remain subjective, I argue that the continuation of the dream sets up a zone of imagination in which Ledwina breaks the romantic rules of heterosexual nineteenth-century bourgeois society by exploring Necromanticism and auto-eroticism. She both wants these new experiences and, as her “Entsetzen” shows, is horrified by them. However, as the dream goes on, pleasure takes the place of horror.

We discover what dream-Ledwina is seeking when she suddenly falls beyond the stage into one of the graves, which attracts her, specifically, according to the power of the dream (“im Zwang des Traumes”²⁴⁹). She falls beyond the superficial norms of society, which oppress her, into a space that should seem tiny and oppressive, but which her dream self declares to be the space that contains “ihr Liebstes auf der Welt”²⁵⁰: a coffin containing a corpse! In this dreamspace, which follows its own logic, Ledwina knows – and this knowledge is heralded by the start of the second sentence – that the body beside whom she lies “war ja ihr Liebstes.”²⁵¹ This sudden, precise knowledge, which Ledwina accepts and (literally) embraces, is very different from her earlier uncertainty in the aboveground world. When she enters the chessboard, she already knows what she is seeking, but the parameters are undefined: “[es fiel] ihr plötzlich [ein], daß hier ja ihr Liebstes auf der Welt begraben liege, sie wußte keinen Namen, und hatte keine genauere Form dafür, als überhaupt die menschliche, aber es war gewiß ihr Liebstes.”²⁵²

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

Locating her “Liebstes” cannot be done via mental (in the sense of *geistig*) or institutionalized knowledge – something that can be expressed in words and concepts, with “Namen und Form” – but rather must be experienced bodily, even sensually.

Poetry is generally made up of words and concepts, but in my reading, Droste-Hülshoff is making the argument that there is an essential part, even the core part, of poetry that is inexpressible in words – a muse, a spark of genius, a corporeal experience that is not patriarchal but matriarchal, of the womb and of darkness. I say “muse,” but like Ledwina’s certainty that the corpse is her beloved despite its state of decay, the muse as I mean it here need not match up with existing understandings. Rather, with Elisabeth Krimmer, I agree that Ledwina’s fall into the grave and embrace of the corpse is an act of “creat[ing] for herself a dead muse who is both “source and address of her poetic inspiration.”²⁵³ Going a step further, I argue that Ledwina, in embracing the corpse, engages in a process of self-discovery that gives birth to her *self* as muse.

Ledwina’s encounter with the corpse starts with a plummet into a dark, tight, womblike space: “kaum betrat sie ihn [den Erdhügeln] so stürzte er zusammen, sie fühlte ordentlich den Schwung im Fallen und hörte die Bretter des Sarges krachend brechen, in dem sie jetzt neben einem Gerippe lag.”²⁵⁴ Ledwina’s corporeal knowledge of feeling the fall and hearing the cracking takes over from the intellectual knowledge involved in trying to read the gravestones. Krimmer borrows Elisabeth Bronfen’s interpretation of the nineteenth century inspirational paradigm that links woman to matter rather than mind, which means that Ledwina must “accept her exclusion from the realm of language even as this requires a fading of the self.”²⁵⁵ Ledwina’s

²⁵³ Elisabeth Krimmer, “A Perfect Intimacy with Death: Death, Imagination, and Femininity in the Works of Annette von Droste-Hülshoff,” *Women in German Yearbook* 17 (2001): 131.

²⁵⁴ Droste-Hülshoff, *Prosa*, 96.

²⁵⁵ Krimmer, 130.

inability to read aligns with her femininity in this reading, and her corporeal knowledge is a feminine compensation for masculine symbolic knowledge, which is defined (according to Elisabeth Bronfen) as imagination replacing matter with mind, that is, with words.²⁵⁶ While I agree with most of Krimmer's reading – in particular with her assertion that the dead body in the grave *is* Ledwina – I think that this “split” between mind and matter is not as clear-cut as Bronfen's theory would make it seem.

Rather than a split (between mind and matter, masculine and feminine, or language and body), I see Ledwina falling into a totally different space, not an impossible utopia as Krimmer sees it, but, as I have stated above, a heterotopia. Ledwina (and Droste-Hülshoff) know that a dream is an in-between space that does not need to stand in for reality. Literature is also such a space. Instead of reading *Ledwina* as a mirror of Droste-Hülshoff's own struggles as a female author in her own time, I am interested in reading the graveyard dream as an erotic and creative space that breaks apart all the stereotypes *we* (let alone nineteenth-century readers) might have about what constitutes eroticism and creativity.

Just as in nature, decay is necessary for literature to create itself anew. Krimmer calls the need for death before resurrection in *Ledwina* a paradox,²⁵⁷ and on the one hand it is. How can life spring from death? But on the other hand, this particular flow of energy (death → life rather than life → death) is common in many mythologies (including Christian), as well as in the work of Droste-Hülshoff's Romantic predecessors. One of these predecessors, whom I have discussed in an earlier chapter, is the poet and philosopher Karoline von Günderrode. Like Günderrode, Droste-Hülshoff creates a poetic universe that counteracts expectations of linearity. However,

²⁵⁶ See Krimmer, 128.

²⁵⁷ See Krimmer, 131.

even as this cycle of death into life contradicts expectations for realistic literature, it also calls back to other mythologies and artistic tropes, such as the myth of Persephone and the sixteenth-century fondness for the *memento mori*. Persephone brings life, despite her struggle with death that parallels in many ways Daphne's struggle. Both women die due to the desire of a man (patriarchal eros), and both women resist death botanically – following the logic of the earth, in which decay also brings life. Grubs chew tree stumps into new dirt, and fallen leaves enrich the soil: this is a logic that, like Ledwina's dream logic, obeys not language but planetary cycles.

I read Ledwina's dream as a Persephone fantasy, a longing to break free from the "Norm" that entraps the human in a single, limited way of being. Like the Daphne figure in "Mit Lauras Bilde," Ledwina's dream self resists the paradigm of the passive female muse, but in this case, by literally rejecting male lovers in favor of one's own corpse. In her conversation with Therese before falling asleep, Ledwina declares that she will not find an earthly lover, because her "loses thörichtes Gemüth hat so viel escharfe Spitzen und dunkle Winkel, das müßte eine wunderlich gestaltete Seele seyn, die da so ganz hinein passte."²⁵⁸ That her embrace of the corpse in the dream is so erotic reveals that she has indeed discovered an alternative paradigm, not a "Norm" but something outside the norm: an auto-erotic passion out of which life (and poetry) can arise.

The eros of the dream consists in embraces, but also in a literal taking apart and consumption of the self that echoes the "Ent-setzen" felt by Ledwina prior to falling into the grave. The corpse embrace is a scene that combines the eroticism of a Gothic novel with the conviction of a religious experience: "...sie faßte eine der noch frischen Todtenhände, die vom Gerippe los lies, das schreckte sie gar nicht, sie preßte die Hand glühend an ihre Lippen, legte sie

²⁵⁸ Droste-Hülshoff, *Prosa*, 93.

dann an die vorige Stelle, und drückte das Gesicht fest ein in den modrichten Staub.”²⁵⁹

Ledwina’s actions evoke an almost religious awe; furthermore, the dream logic has her lying beside the corpse from day to night, as if she is engaging in a ritual similar to that of a wedding night (“übrigens war es jetzt am Tage [...] nach einer Weile sah sie auf, es war wieder Nacht”).²⁶⁰ When Ledwina’s acquaintance, who was accompanying her to the theater earlier in the dream, reappears, she tells him to leave a lantern and go, because “sie werde immer hier liegen bleiben, bis sie todt sey.”²⁶¹ Her union with the corpse will become eternal.

This “Liebestod” is not, however, the final word (or rather image): after a while of lying alongside the corpse, Ledwina notices a child at the top of the grave selling fruits and flowers. This inspires her to buy the flowers – and only the flowers – and the dream takes a turn into a kind of Jesus fantasy (evoking the story of the loaves and fishes): “da sie den Korb umschüttete, wurden der Blumen so viele, daß sie das ganze Grab füllten, deß freute sie sich sehr, und wie ihr Blut milder floß, formte sich die Idee, als könne sie den verweseten Leib wieder aus Blumen zusammen setzen, daß er lebe und mit ihr gehe.”²⁶² Within the womblike grave, Ledwina/Persephone acts as an earth mother, giving birth to endless flowers that she fantasizes can make up a human body and gain the power to move. The fantasy is a pastiche of reality (buying flowers at a theater/flowers springing up on a grave), mythology (Christian and Greek), and science fiction (a flower-human). Awakening after her dream-self has this revelation that she could revive the corpse with flowers, Ledwina feels “ziemlich frei,” taking with her into the

²⁵⁹ Droste-Hülshoff, *Prosa*, 96-7.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Droste-Hülshoff, *Prosa*, 97.

²⁶² Ibid.

waking world the impression of possibility: for an expanded sense of identity, for a kinder and more mutual poetry, and for female and (to speak anachronistically) non-binary pleasure.²⁶³

Conclusion

While the ability to reanimate a human with flowers is available only in the dreamworld, *Ledwina* shows how a fantastical interpretation of Romantic botano-poetic thought can itself be a textual revival, bringing new life into old ideas. This desire to understand and admire – even, as in the case of “Vor vierzig Jahren,” to worship the literary past – is combined, in Droste-Hülshoff’s work, with a desire to go beyond its limitations as well. As I show in the discussion of Romantic poetry in the Introduction, this pushing back against literary predecessors was already a feature of Romanticism. In this concluding section of the chapter, I will illustrate how Droste-Hülshoff’s botanical muses interact with the past, especially in conversation with earlier texts, creating an intergenerational inspirational network – and how this connection is not hindered, but rather romanticized and encouraged, by death.

Paul Westover, focusing on British Romanticism, identifies a trend of literary tourism that is centered around the twin concepts of death and immortality. He terms this “Necromantic tourism” or simply “Necromanticism,” noting that “when people in the early and middle nineteenth century traveled to visit living authors, they often described those authors as if they *were* dead.”²⁶⁴ As he explains, the trip to visit a living author became conflated with the trip to an author’s grave in part because of the idea that poets themselves were outside of place and time: “As peer to immortals, the soon-to-be laureate belongs in another place and time, or perhaps

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Westover, 92.

outside of time altogether.”²⁶⁵ The early death of so many Romantic poets may have contributed as well to this sense of otherworldliness.²⁶⁶

Intriguingly, visiting a dead poet was an activity not focused on imagination and memory, as one might expect – but, as in Ledwina’s dream, on the body. Tourists hoped, in visiting a poet – either living or dead – to corporealize the phantom of the author. Westover emphasizes that the tourists were, in so doing, “seeking a particular kind of intimacy” – the kind that comes from reading and believing that one knows the characters or, in this case, the author.²⁶⁷ Visiting the living author therefore had the benefit over visiting the author’s grave of having satisfied the “desire to get at writers’ bodies,” and to “prove[] his or her ghostly friends corporeal.”²⁶⁸

While Westover’s analysis is based on the poets of British Romanticism, I mention it as a way of showing how my reading of Droste-Hülshoff’s creative paradigm as one that intertwines forces typically considered opposite – especially life and death – harmonizes with the tendencies of her era. The character Ledwina’s fantastical dream makes her a Romantic poet *par excellence*, even if she has never written a word. However, Droste-Hülshoff’s work also engages with – and rejects – the binary pairs of male/female and genius/muse. This tendency is encouraged by Necromanticism. Westover offers as an example Lord Byron’s analysis of Corinne, a character written by Germaine de Stael. Byron, summarizes Westover, writes that the individual slowly decays into the author: “all individuality, even gender, vanishes.”²⁶⁹ This dissipation of

²⁶⁵ Westover, 94.

²⁶⁶ See Westover, 95.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Westover, 96.

²⁶⁹ Westover, 103.

individuality recalls Ledwina's inability to find a norm for her beloved. As she seeks a human form, which morphs into corpse, skeleton, and finally flower, her search never lands on a single object. But what it does find is, as I argued above, a creative paradigm that embraces broadened possibilities, including new understandings of the ways in which gender and sexual identity can be expressed poetically – and, in a necromantic sense, collectively. For Droste-Hülshoff, this collective life extends beyond the communion with the immortal poet to include a communion with the non-human, even the abject: corpses, skeletons, plants, and animals. Any of these figures might become muses – figures with whom to converse, erotic partners, places of pilgrimage – if the poet is brave enough to lift the lid of the “Traumes Wundersarg.”

**CHAPTER THREE: SEXY STATUES, OR SCULPTING QUEER DESIRE IN
HEINRICH HEINE'S *FLORENTINISCHE NÄCHTE* AND *BUCH DER LIEDER***

– *Musen sind sensible Tiere* –

– Heinrich Heine, “Kalte Herzen”²⁷⁰

*Wie der Schnee so weiß,
Aber kalt wie Eis,
Ist das Liebchen, das du dir erwählt.*

– Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, “Die Braut von Corinth”²⁷¹

Introduction

Heine's most infamous encounter with homosexuality came in the form of a literary quarrel that ended in both him and his nemesis – the Count August von Platen-Hallermünde – leaving Germany for good. The two were rivals on many levels, but most important to Heine seemed to be that Platen, as an aristocrat, represented the hated conservative government in Bavaria that refused to grant Heine tenure as a professor. However, both men chose to launch attacks at one another based not on their deeper political beliefs (in part due to the harsh censorship of the time), but rather, based on what they viewed as personal traits: Heine's Jewishness and Platen's sexual preferences. This literary quarrel took place over the second half of the 1820s, as each man wrote plays and novellas in which they wove in personal attacks

²⁷⁰ Heinrich Heine, *Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. Klaus Briegleb, vol. 4 (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1971), 476, l. 42.

²⁷¹ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Gedichte, 1756-1799*, ed. Karl Eibl, vol. 1, 40 vols., *Sämtliche Werke. Briefe, Tagebücher Und Gespräche* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1987), 689, l. 110-12.

against the other. As can be gleaned from this encounter, Heinrich Heine was not particularly open to homosexuality; it might thus seem strange to be analyzing one of his texts under a queer light. However, keeping this context in mind, I nevertheless aim to analyze the ways in which Heine's aesthetic projects – from the early poems of the *Buch der Lieder* to later prose works are deeply bound up with queer sexuality, including forms of homosexual desire.²⁷² In particular, Heine's work often makes use of the figure of the statue and the material of marble in ways that evoke queer desire.

This chapter examines the prose work *Florentinische Nächte* as an exemplary text in which Heine interweaves both illicit and queer desires with the poet's or author's quest for identity, belonging, and self-understanding. While these desires are not explicated as queer per se, in our own modern sense, they are nonetheless perceived as unusual, eccentric, even alarming, by the narrator and the other characters in the text. At the same time, *Florentinische Nächte* builds its narrative around these same desires, making them into a core part of the work's aesthetic project. Nor is this text an isolated example; Heine's early poetry in the *Buch der Lieder* plays with similar concepts of necrophilia and making love to artwork as the later prose work. Furthermore, each of these texts flirts with homophobic and anti-Catholic themes (frequently interlacing the two), a trait shared in the explicitly anti-gay chapter of Heine's *Die*

²⁷² Scholars such as Susan Bernstein, Bettina Rabelhofer, and Catriona MacLeod have recently offered readings of the text that attempt (in my view, successfully) to see past its older reputation as “a flighty, insubstantial, unoriginal, and basically uninteresting” text (!) (Susan Bernstein, “Q or, Heine's Romanticism,” *Studies in Romanticism* 42, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 379. Bettina Rabelhofer notes that “[d]ie “Florentinischen Nächte” gelten mitunter als Heinrich Heines “untypischste” literarische Textproduktion” (The “Florentine Nights” have meanwhile gained a reputation as Heinrich Heine's “least typical” literary work), in large part due to their supposedly unquestioned Romantic veneer (as a fantastical story focused on dreams and death) (“... ich habe auch todtte Frauen geliebt”: Zur erotischen Produktivkraft des Todes in Heinrich Heines “Florentinischen Nächten”,” in *Heine-Jahrbuch 2007: 46. Jahrgang*, ed. Joseph A. Kruse (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2007), 26). Bernstein also notes that “*Florentinische Nächte* is often read as an effort to block out the political circumstances that led to the banning of Heine's works, and to avoid the invasions of censorship by pre-censoring content,” but that focusing purely on how Heine worked around censorship by writing what could be considered a harmless text leads readers to miss the text's other possible meanings (380).

Bäder von Lucca, the text that turned the literary quarrel between Heine and Platen into a nationwide scandal. Taken together, I argue that queer desire is not only evident in Heine's work, but is a key topic that arises when his narrators and lyric subjects try to make sense of their place in a rapidly changing aesthetic world.

Part I. "Entzückende Marter und wonniges Weh!": Androgyny, Masochism, and Inspiration in Heine's Early Lyric

Heine's early collection of poetry, *Das Buch der Lieder*, is also arguably his most popular work, a fact that he confronted himself in the prefaces to the second and third editions of the work, published in 1837 and 1839 respectively (the first edition appeared in 1827, but the poems had been written earlier and published separately, between 1817 and 1821). These two prefaces address the place of poetry in politics by discussing the two themes of truth and youth. Heine remarks that the reading public tends to perceive prose and poetry differently, and to devalue poetry as less "truthful" or politically engaged than prose. He sees an overall trend away from poetry, especially Romantic love poetry such as that in the *Buch der Lieder*. Indeed, in the preface to the second edition (1837), Heine refers to his experience writing those poems with over-saturated Romantic images: "hie und da, müssen welke Blumen liegen, oder eine blonde Locke, oder ein verfärbtes Stückchen Band, und an mancher Stelle muß noch die Spur einer Träne sichtbar sein..."²⁷³ However, this Romantic state of affairs persists only as long as the poems remain unpublished; Heine quickly shifts into a new metaphor in which the published poems resemble unlovable women: "grell schwarz gedruckt auf entsetzlich glattem Papier, diese haben ihren süßesten, jungfräulichsten Reiz verloren."²⁷⁴ This gendered metaphor suggests to the

²⁷³ Heinrich Heine, *Werke und Briefe in Zehn Bänden*, ed. Hans Kaufmann, Vol. 1 (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1972), 7.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

reader of the *Vorrede* that Heine might have done better to leave the poems unpublished, a relic of his youthful loves – and yet, given that he is republishing them, he must explain why.

Heine's explanation lies in his belief, clearly stated in the 1837 preface, that it is counterproductive to separate an author's poetry from his prose (as Theodor Adorno did when he critiqued Heine's poetry – but not his prose – on the occasion of Heine's 100th deathday).²⁷⁵

Heine writes: "Bemerken muß ich jedoch, daß meine poetischen, ebensogut wie meine politischen, theologischen und philosophischen Schriften, einem und demselben Gedanken entsprossen sind und daß man die einen nicht verdammen darf, ohne den andern allen Beifall zu entziehen."²⁷⁶ However, Heine also understood the political and aesthetic situation that led, even in his own time, to his early lyric being seen as outdated, apolitical, and himself "als bloßer Virtuose verdächtigt und als Dichter infrage gestellt."²⁷⁷ Both Heine's own exile to Paris and the July Revolution occurred between the first and second publication of the *Buch der Lieder*, and he acknowledges a shared "Abneigung" "gegen alle gebundene Rede" between himself and his German compatriots; he explains, "[e]s will mich bedünken, als sei in schönen Versen allzuviel gelogen worden."²⁷⁸

However, during the 1830s, it was the "studentische Jugend" along with the "liberale Beamte und Unternehmer" that made Heine's poetry increasingly famous, although perhaps for unexpected reasons: the *Buch der Lieder* was popular "nicht als politisches Buch, sondern als Ausdruck romantisch-freiheitlicher Gesinnung."²⁷⁹ It would seem that the revolutionarily-

²⁷⁵ Gerhard Höhn, ed., *Heine-Handbuch: Zeit, Person, Werk* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2004), 54.

²⁷⁶ Heine, *Werke*, 10.

²⁷⁷ Höhn, 54.

²⁷⁸ Heine, *Werke*, 7.

²⁷⁹ Höhn, 54.

inclined readership of the poems appreciated their Romantic atmosphere not just aesthetically, but also politically, believing that their mindset was conducive to freedom. Consequently, the debate about Heine's work cannot be divided quite so neatly between Romantic fluff and serious political engagement. One cannot be had without the other, as Heine argues.

Following his Romanticized reflections on the writing of his first poems, Heine again turns to a feminized metaphor to explain his republication of old poetry: the muse. He does not call on the muse so much as he ironically addresses her like an old lover, but despite how irreverently he treats their relationship, he takes very seriously the reasons for their connection:

Ja, es sind nun zehn Jahre, seitdem diese Gedichte zuerst erschienen ... als die ersten Küsse der deutschen Muse in meiner Seele brannten. Ach! die Küsse dieser guten Dirne verloren seitdem sehr viel von ihrer Glut und Frische! Bei so langjährigem Verhältnis mußte die Inbrunst der Flitterwochen allmählich verrauchen; aber die Zärtlichkeit wurde manchmal um so herzlicher, besonders in schlechten Tagen, und da bewährte sie mir ihre ganze Liebe und Treue, die deutsche Muse! Sie tröstete mich in heimischen Drangsalen, folgte mir ins Exil, erheiterte mich in bösen Stunden des Verzagens, ließ mich nie im Stich, sogar in Geldnot wußte sie mir zu helfen, die deutsche Muse, die gute Dirne!²⁸⁰

The muse is, in this preface, not a goddess but a "Dirne," a word that here seems to be chosen for its Teutonic resonances, but perhaps also for its associations with prostitutes. After all, Heine does not claim that the "deutsche Muse" serves only himself. On the surface, "die gute Dirne" means simply "the good girl," "the good maiden," but read in the context of the dissipated "Glut und Frische," the muse is presented as a hardworking, though not entirely "salonfähige" companion. Notably, unlike the uninterested women that the lyric I loves in the *Buch der Lieder* (readers may be most familiar with the beloved from the *Lyrisches Intermezzo*), the "deutsche Muse" responds to the "Zärtlichkeit" of the poet.

²⁸⁰ Heine, *Werke*, 8.

In this preface, Heine fictionalizes not only the “deutsche Muse,” but his own authorial self. He does this as a way of explaining his choice to republish a work that now seems outdated. Somewhat melodramatically, he implores the “Götter” to leave him not youth itself, but “die Tugenden der Jugend, den uneigennütigen Groll, die uneigennütige Träne!”²⁸¹ These Romantic phrases echo Heine’s own poem from the *Lyrisches Intermezzo*, set to music by Robert Schumann a few years later in 1840: “ich grolle nicht, und wenn das Herz auch bricht.”²⁸² Rather than rejecting his early poetry, then, this prose introduction weaves the poetry into its defense of the lyric. While his tone is tongue-in-cheek, the argument that the poetry is worth republishing and rereading is serious. Heine’s repetition of the adjective “uneigennützig” emphasizes that his early poetry, with its Romantic origins, is *not* selfish, apolitical, or outdated, even as the word and the accusation “unnützig” or “nichtsnutzig” lurks in the wings.

This defense of poetry – a defense of the “deutsche Muse” – may be part of what inspired Heine, a mere two years later, to write a poetic preface to the third edition of the *Buch der Lieder*. This preface is also published in the fifth edition, the “Ausgabe letzter Hand,” meaning that many readers post-1839 will never see the prose preface, unless they go searching for it. Poetry effaces prose, but despite concerns to the contrary, lies do not efface truth. Instead, Heine breaks apart this binary system in the form of a *tertio comparationis*: the riddle. In the poetic preface of 1839, Heine introduces the reader to a poetic subject who wanders through an “alte[n] Märchenwald,” in which “[v]ergessene Träume” reawaken.²⁸³ In this Romantic landscape, the lyric I comes upon a silent castle that seems to be the domicile of “der stille Tod,” and in front of

²⁸¹ Heine, *Werke*, 11.

²⁸² Heine, HKA, 1.1:152, l. 1.

²⁸³ Heine, HKA 1.1:11, l. 1 and 12.

this castle, a sphinx.²⁸⁴ As we will see, the sphinx confuses not just the binary of truth versus lie in the form of its task, the riddle, but Heine's sphinx also confuses gender expectations – an action that will resonate throughout the superficially heteronormative poems of the *Buch der Lieder*.

The sphinx of the poetic preface is a “Zwitter von Schrecken und Lüsten,” both attracting and repulsing the poet in an erotic movement that we will see repeated by Maximilian in *Florentinische Nächte*.²⁸⁵ This blend of attraction and repulsion represents the basic type of relationship that Heine's lyric I describes and seeks throughout the *Buch der Lieder*. In the well-known second poem of the cycle, the maiden who washes the poet's shroud is described as “so schön und doch ein Grau'n.”²⁸⁶ Death and pain are allied with love and passion, and these ambivalent relationships are presented under the sign of the hermaphroditic sphinx.

The word “Zwitter,” as I read it, represents a being suspended in between static definitions of gender. In the Romantic era and directly thereafter, the term “Zwitter” referred to a hermaphrodite, a concept that had been around for centuries, but which gained currency during this time of rapid social and scientific development. Richard C. Sha explains how the contemporary understanding of sexual differentiation allowed for various understandings of sex and gender, as well as for the development of perversions (including homosexuality):

In brief, in Romanticism scientists considered that there was only one feminized sex until the moment of puberty, whereas after puberty full sexual differentiation was achieved. One sex became two in puberty as males gained strength and departed from their original feminized bodies: sexual difference unfolds diachronically, and thus both sexes are grounded upon one. Genitals did not stand in for difference in the way they do now, and this meant that biological sex was more elastic and thus could become a ground for liberation. If one sex became two, difference itself became even more vexed. Hence the

²⁸⁴ Ibid., I. 19.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., I. 22.

²⁸⁶ Heine, HKA 1.1:23, I. 72.

period's fascination with a common nervous system, hermaphrodites, and men and women who failed to develop properly.²⁸⁷

In this chapter, I will be using “queer” as a way to refer to ways in which Heine aesthetically and narratively delves into this existing discourse of fluid, androgynous, “perverse” sexuality. Instead of reading Heine through the lens of the contemporary queer identity, I reveal how Heine engages with contemporary debates surrounding aesthetics, sexuality, and poetic identity.

Returning to the sphinx, we find the poet unable to resist the temptation of a kiss: but when he gives in to desire, the stone comes alive.

Die Nachtigall, sie sang so süß –
Ich konnt nicht widerstehen –
Und als ich küßte das holde Gesicht,
Da war's um mich geschehen.

Lebendig ward das Marmorbild,
Der Stein begann zu ächzen –
Sie trank meiner Küsse lodernde Glut,
Mit Dürsten und mit Lechzen.

Sie trank mir fast den Odem aus –
Und endlich, wollustheischend,
Umschlang sie mich, meinen armen Leib
Mit den Löwentatzen zerfleischend.²⁸⁸

As the sphinx transforms from a Romantic trope (“das holde Gesicht”) to a living statue (“das Marmorbild”) to a dangerous beast (“Löwentatzen”), so too the poet’s language changes, becoming increasingly violent and specific. While the early stanzas of the poem repeat a limited Romantic vocabulary of short words, here the words focus in on powerful feelings and actions: “lodernde Glut,” “Lechzen,” “wollustheischend,” “zerfleischend.” There is a preponderance of

²⁸⁷ Richard C. Sha, *Perverse Romanticism: Aesthetics and Sexuality in Britain, 1750-1832* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 80.

²⁸⁸ Heine, HKA 1.1:13, l. 29-40.

fricatives (Z's, H's) and laterals (L's), that is, consonants that hiss or rub. These sounds slow down the poem as the poet experiences being devoured.

The sphinx, as a physically ambiguous body (half woman, half lion) and a gender-ambiguous being ("Zwitter"), is the nexus of inspiration for the poet. She/it is his artwork, but ironically, the artwork devours the poet. Thus for the early Heine, the muse (and poetry) are presented as all-consuming entities that warp the boundaries of what is possible. The sphinx is "both/neither" male and female, alive and dead, muse and mistress.

While the sphinx is explicitly described as an androgyne, her/its characteristics – voracity, aggression, indifference – extend to the majority of the female-coded lover figures in the *Buch der Lieder*. What all these figures also have in common is their proximity to statues. For example, in Poem IX (earlier titled "Die Blasse"), the lyric I is awakened by the dream image of a maiden "wie Marmelstein so bleich," who claims to know love despite the fact that her breast is "wie Eis so kalt."²⁸⁹ It is the marble woman, rather than the poet, who expresses sexual desire by lying herself atop the poet ("Und an mein Herz sich niederlegt / Die marmorblasse Maid") and wildly embracing him.²⁹⁰ Her embrace is ambiguous – it "that mir fast ein Leid" – almost hurting the poet, or else making him feel sorry for her.²⁹¹ With the sphinx preface influencing our reading, we might be more inclined to believe that the marble maiden is more dangerous than pitiful. Feminine desire is aggressive in this case, while masculine desire is reactive.

²⁸⁹ Heine, HKA 1.1:51, l. 5 and 53, l. 17.

²⁹⁰ HKA 1.1: 51, l. 11-12.

²⁹¹ HKA 1.1: 53, l. 25.

Elsewhere in the *Buch der Lieder*, Heine's male personae also long to be devoured and ripped apart by a more powerful counterpart, so to say a poetic superior. In the very brief prose note that follows the sphinx poem in the third edition's preface, Heine addresses Apollo as the "allwissender Gott" who understands why he, Heine, has had to lay aside poetry for so many years.²⁹² At the very end of this note, Heine adds a strange request: "Erinnerst du dich auch noch des Marsyas, den du lebendig geschunden? Es ist schon lange her, und ein ähnliches Beispiel thät wieder Noth..."²⁹³ Marsyas, a satyr, was flayed alive by Apollo in Greek mythology as punishment for challenging the god to a musical contest. Heine's attitude in the preface appears to be extremely humble, as he apologizes for the verses in the *Buch der Lieder*. But is he in fact challenging the god via some trick of false humility? Is it Heine himself whom he wants the god to flay? The final line of the preface is entirely ambiguous, echoing Romantic poets such as Novalis: "Du lächelst, o mein ewiger Vater!"²⁹⁴ Here, Apollo takes on a strange role that blends father and god with elements of the lover, the figure who alone understands why "in schweigender Glut mein Herz verzehrt."²⁹⁵

Apollo and the sphinx, as the twin powers addressed at the start of the *Buch der Lieder*, cast their gender- and reality-warping energy over the entirety of the collection. In other words: Heine clearly intended to draw out the strange qualities of the figures and the relationships in his early lyric when he wrote these prefaces in 1839. Furthermore, Heine's own fictional self as depicted in the preface imitates the subordinate position of the male personae in his early lyric. As Diana Lynn Justis remarks, "the male persona in Heine's early love poems...is negated

²⁹² Heine, HKA 1.1:15.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

(feminized, castrated, murdered) by his fatal love affair.”²⁹⁶ Intriguingly, the traits which Justis identifies as common in the male persona of the *Buch der Lieder* resemble those of an actual (not an animated) statue: “his pallid complexion, dumbness, and immobility.”²⁹⁷ Heine’s male lyric personae, ironically, are more like statues than the statue-women whom they love!

In contrast to this self-pleasuring masochism, Heine addresses a differently perverse type of sexuality in his later poem “Die Götter Griechenlands” (still part of the *Buch der Lieder*, but from the second “Nordsee” cycle, written in 1825). Here, the lyric I addresses the sexual activity of Zeus in an apparently nostalgic way: “Das waren bessere Zeiten, o Zeus, / Als du dich himmlisch ergötzt / An Knaben und Nymphen und Hekatomben.”²⁹⁸ Zeus’s perversity extends beyond young boys (pederasty) and nymphs to bestiality: “Hekatomben” or hecatombs refer to a large sacrifice of approximately one hundred oxen or cattle. This apparent nostalgia, which would suggest approval of such perversions, is somewhat dampened by the poetic persona’s later declaration, “Ich hab’ Euch niemals geliebt, Ihr Götter!”²⁹⁹ and his statement that he supports the old (Greek) gods merely out of pity and out of distaste for the false modesty of the new (Christian) gods who replaced them. At any rate, we should note that the poet first sees the gods as clouds that look like “kolossale Götterbilder / Von leuchtendem Marmor,” which then “come alive” as gods, much like the equally perverse sphinx.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁶ Diana Lynn Justis, *The Feminine in Heine’s Life and Oeuvre: Self and Other* (New York: P. Lang, 1997), 49.

²⁹⁷ Justis, 48.

²⁹⁸ Heine, HKA 1.1:413, l. 25-7.

²⁹⁹ Heine, HKA 1.1:415, l. 64.

³⁰⁰ Heine, HKA 1.1:413, l. 7-8.

As a final example of a perverse inspiratory figure, Heine invokes the false “Aftermuse” in his sonnet to A.W. von Schlegel (the first of the “Sonnetten” collection of the *Buch der Lieder*). Heine’s relationship to Schlegel, his former university teacher, became less admiring as his student years receded, and he even wrote a polemic against Schlegel in *Die romantische Schule* (1835/6), similar to (but less harsh) than his polemic against Platen. Schlegel, as Robert C. Holub summarizes Heine’s argument, “can only lend a veneer of propriety to the subjects which he treats; he is unable to create anything vital and living, hence, unable to procreate.”³⁰¹ This is not only a marital problem, but, as Heine will also argue in regards to Platen, a poetic problem. We must not take these accusations literally, however, as Holub argues. That is, Heine’s “purpose is not to upbraid wayward or abnormal sexual conduct” (even if there is a metaphorical element to the poet as father/creator), “but rather to expose all deficiencies in his opponent’s views and behavior – and to define his own position as well.”³⁰² In this early sonnet, however, Heine has only praise for Schlegel (although he briefly acknowledges their differing political views in a footnote).

The “Aftermuse” represents everything that Schlegel is not. Occupying the octet of the sonnet, the Aftermuse sweeps onto the page dressed in foppish eighteenth-century finery:

Im Reifrockputz, mit Blumen reich verzieret,
 Schönplästerchen auf den geschminkten Wangen,
 Mit Schnabelschuhn, mit Stickerein behangen,
 Mit Thurmfrisur, und wespengleich geschnüret:

So war die Aftermuse ausstaffieret.³⁰³

³⁰¹ Robert C Holub, “Heine’s Sexual Assaults: Towards a Theory of the Total Polemic,” *Monatshefte* 73, no. 4 (1981): 419.

³⁰² Holub, “Heine’s Sexual Assaults,” 427.

³⁰³ Heine, HKA I.I., 115, l. 1-5.

The fact that this description, beginning *medias in res* so to say (with the subject, “die Aftermuse,” appearing only in the second stanza), at first appears to be describing Schlegel – the addressee of the sonnet, and until line five, the only figure the reader is aware of – is belied by the continuation, which explains that Schlegel in fact avoids the Aftermuse’s embrace. Instead, Schlegel comes upon a Romantic ruined castle, where a Sleeping-Beauty-like maiden, “wie’n holdes Marmorbildniß,” lies waiting “in Zauberschlaf.”³⁰⁴ This maiden awakens at Schlegel’s greeting and falls into his arms “liebestrunknen,” representing “Deutschlands ächte Muse.”³⁰⁵ The contrast between the Romantic images of Germany’s true muse – the castle ruins, the wilderness, the “Trieb” that draws Schlegel in³⁰⁶ – and between the French style of the Aftermuse are fully intentional. The Aftermuse is dressed like a courtier of the ancien régime, in an embroidered jacket with heeled shoes, a high wig, makeup, and a corseted waist. Even the word “ausstaffieret” and its rhyme “verzieret” have a French sound in their endings.³⁰⁷

Thus the early Heine praises Schlegel for being aesthetically German, casting him in the role of the masculine savior of an unconscious muse and decrying the feminized French style of the previous century. (Later, Heine will give these same feminized attributes of dainty clothing and poise to Bellini in the *Florentinische Nächte*.) The poem therefore suggests that the only true poet is male, and that indeed it is a male prerogative to give life to art. As Christian Höpfner

³⁰⁴ Heine, HKA I.I., 115, l. 10-11.

³⁰⁵ Heine, HKA I.I., 115, l. 14, 13.

³⁰⁶ Heine, HKA I.I., 115, l. 8.

³⁰⁷ The *Digitale Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache* states that “ausstaffieren” entered standard High German from the Middle Low German word “ūtstoffēren” in the second half of the sixteenth century. However, the similar verb “staffieren,” today uncommon, was borrowed from the Old French “estofer” in the first part of the sixteenth century. Digital Dictionary of the German Language; s.v. “staffieren,” accessed Aug. 26, 2021, <https://www.dwds.de/wb/staffieren>.

writes, “Schlegels Verdienst als Repräsentent der Romantik ist es, diese Poesie lebendig gemacht zu haben. Die “Aftermuse” wird demgegenüber als unnatürliches Wesen geschildert, das sich künstlich “ausstaffiret,” und zwar in einer Mode, die der Vergangenheit angehört.”³⁰⁸ These ideas have nationalistic elements, but are also progressive in some ways, questioning the value of tradition and authority. And just as the young Heine juxtaposes the “genuine” Romantic poets with the false French poets, the older Heine will question whether poetry can be genuine at all.

The young Heine was not alone in participating in the “Aftermuse” discourse; both Friedrich Schiller and Ludwig Uhland used this term in polemical poems against Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Romanticism as a whole (c/o Ludwig Tieck), respectively. Schiller castigates Goethe for staging a French play – Voltaire’s *Mahomet* – and Uhland mocks Tieck’s famous *Glosse* by reinterpreting it as a warning against Romanticism’s needless “Reimchen” and “Assonänzeln,” concluding: “Bleib der Aftermuse fern / Der romantisch süßen Herrn!”³⁰⁹ The Aftermuse’s crime is not merely being foreign, but also being outdated. While the Schlegel sonnet does not explicitly accuse him of sexual perversion (despite the ambiguous beginning that seems to be describing *him* as the Aftermuse), later on, Heine will combine similar accusations of being foreign and outdated in his polemic against Platen and in Maximilian’s musings about art and gender in *Florentinische Nächte*.

As a final note, while the etymology of “Aftermuse” is generally linked to “After” as having a similar meaning to English (after, therefore less original/less high-quality), the word “After” also means “anus.” The young Heine seems to have had no intention of poking fun at

³⁰⁸ Christian Höpfner, *Romantik und Religion: Heinrich Heines Suche nach Identität* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1997), 11.

³⁰⁹ Ludwig Uhland, *Gedichte* (Stuttgart und Tübingen: Cotta, 1815), 124.

Schlegel with a homophobic play on words, but he must have been aware of this double meaning. Even if the potential perverse meanings do not appear in the sonnet, Heine later indulges in significant anal wordplay in his homophobic attack on Platen in *Die Bäder von Lucca*. As modern readers, we can consider the sonnet “An A.W. v. Schlegel” as an early point in this development of literary perspectives and weapons, and we already observe the basic gender beliefs and relationships that Heine will later exploit in his political attacks and aesthetic meditations.

Part II. “Eine griechische Offenbarung”: Eros and Art in Florentinische Nächte

The story in *Florentinische Nächte* begins with a frame narrative about the two friends Maximilian and Maria. Maria is ill, probably with tuberculosis, and Maximilian visits her to tell her stories. These stories form the bulk of the narrative, and all of them relate in some way to Maximilian’s sexual history. Maria appears to be interested in his stories, although she rejects all of her friend’s erotic advances towards her. She is also a curious and keen listener who frequently questions Maximilian’s narrative in ways that reveal its underlying energies. Maria is the one who notices that all of Maximilian’s stories revolve around a specific cohort of uncanny women: she asks if one of his lovers was “eine Marmorstatue oder ein Gemälde? eine Tote oder ein Traum?” (a marble statue or a painting? A dead woman or a dream?).³¹⁰ Max answers: “Vielleicht alles dieses zusammen.”³¹¹ Maria is correct in her analysis; Maximilian is only interested in women who are works of art, figments of his imagination, or – preferably – dead.

³¹⁰ HKA V.207.

³¹¹ Ibid.

He has a queer hierarchy of erotic desire that presupposes filtering everyone he meets through an artistic lens and categorizing them into these three types.

The tale has been analyzed extensively for its perverse content, including Maximilian's necrophiliac desires, and there are a few gender-based analyses of Heine's prose, which focus on either the male/female power relationship or on Heine's relationship to the feminist movement of his day.³¹² Only recently has Heine's work been approached from the perspective of queer theory, and much work has analyzed the caricature of Niccolò Paganini in a famous episode of *Florentinische Nächte* without attending to the importance of his narrative counterpart, Vincenzo Bellini, in which the problem of male-male desire comes explicitly to the foreground.³¹³ Building off my close readings of Maximilian's love for female statues and male virtuosi, I argue that – notwithstanding its tropes of undead Romantic women – *Florentinische Nächte* revolves around

³¹² In an essay written in 2005, Robert C. Holub expresses his astonishment that “if I plug the words Heinrich Heine and feminism into a Google search, the talk that is the foundation for this essay is cited as the fourth entry. In the three entries above my talk the association between Heine and feminism was a coincidence of verbal proximity, not a serious consideration of the topic” (“Heine's ‘Mädchen Und Frauen’: Women and Emancipation in the Writings of Heinrich Heine,” in *From Goethe to Gide: Feminism, Aesthetics and the French and German Literary Canon, 1770-1936*, ed. Mary Orr and Lesley Sharpe (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 2005), 82).

82). Holub suggests that perhaps Heine's own outsider position as a German Jew offered him some measure of protection from being accused of misogyny, noting that even “the various emancipated women Heine knew during his lifetime, for example, the German Jewess Rahel von Varnhagen, the noted French writer George Sand, or Christina, Principessa di Belgiojoso-Trivulzio,” refrained from critical comments on his stance towards feminist thought (82). Holub adds that this is all the more surprising considering that “women play a central role in many of his [Heine's] texts, particularly those of the 1820s and 1830s, and despite prima facie evidence that he resorts, as Peters contends, to the typical male stereotypes of women drawn from a long tradition of patriarchal thought” (ibid.).

³¹³ For a queer theory reading, see: Jutta Cornelia Kling, “On Knowingness. Irony and Queerness in the Works of Byron, Heine, Fontane, and Wilde,” Dissertation, Universität Tübingen, 2015. For readings of the Paganini episode, see: Susan Bernstein, “Q or, Heine's Romanticism,” *Studies in Romanticism* 42, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 369-391, esp. 380-386; Gabriele Brandstetter, “The Virtuoso's Stage: A Theatrical Topos,” *Theatre Research International* 32, no. 2, vol.7 (2007): 178-195; Maiko Kawabata, “Virtuosity, the Violin, the Devil ... What Really Made Paganini ‘Demonic’?,” *Current Musicology*, no. 83 (2007): 85-108; Céline Frigau Manning, “The ‘Musical People’ of Italy: A Nineteenth-Century Medical Question,” *Laboratoire Italien*, no. 20 (2017): n.p. (digitally published); and Lucia Ruprecht, “The Imaginary Life of Nineteenth-Century Virtuosity,” *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift Für Literaturwissenschaft Und Geistesgeschichte* 87, no. 3 (September 1, 2013): 323–55.

homosexual desire. In so doing, I will place a greater emphasis on the virtuoso who has been neglected by most of the scholarship – the delicate, blond Bellini.

I will begin with a close reading of the first statue story Maximilian tells, which sets the stage for the rest of his erotic adventures. As inorganic objects carved to resemble living forms, the statue's uncanny humanity has been expressed in legends such as that of Pygmalion, the Greek sculptor who loved his statue so much that Venus took pity on him and brought it to life. This same topos was revived by Romantic authors, most notably by Joseph von Eichendorff in his novella "Das Marmorbild," first published in 1819, in which a statue of Venus comes to life once a year to lure unsuspecting young men into her garden. In Eichendorff's story, even the tapestries, flowers, candleholders, and other statues come to life to threaten and contain the hero in the fantastical realm – thus the Pygmalion legend takes on a more somber, Gothic overtone, at least from the male hero's perspective. Heine also engages with the Pygmalion legend in a way that emphasizes not the love and bliss of the sculptor, but rather the dangers that lie in wait. In Bettina Rabelhofer's reading, "Heines Text [*Florentinische Nächte*] scheint den Pygmalion-Mythos, der der Kunst belebende Kraft verleiht, geradezu in sein Gegenteil zu verkehren: Nicht steinerne Materie schlägt in Lebendigkeit um, sondern toter Marmor ersetzt lebendiges Fleisch."³¹⁴ The artist has the power to bring death, rather than life, into being.

Maximilian's first encounter with a statue occurs in a space marked by decay. As a twelve-year-old boy, he accompanies his mother to her old estate, which has a garden that he explores while she is dealing with economic affairs. This garden, like the rest of the estate, "bot den trostlosesten Blick der Zerstörniss."³¹⁵ The estate and garden are relics of the eighteenth

³¹⁴ Rabelhofer, 36.

³¹⁵ Heine, HKA 5:201.

century, as is made clear by the humorous interlude in which mother and son must wait half an hour for a servant to put on his old livery in order to welcome them in properly. This scene is also imbued with some sexual humor, since the servant is in such a hurry (despite making them wait so long) that he doesn't put on stockings; the young Maximilian cannot tell if he's wearing breeches: "[D]ie langen, nackten, rothen Beine stachen aber nicht sehr ab von dem grellen Scharlachrock. Ob er darunter [unter dem Scharlachrock] eine Hose trug, weiß ich nicht mehr."³¹⁶ It is clear that Maximilian sees the glory of the aristocratic past as something worthy of mockery, and yet barely a few paragraphs later, he will relate with extreme pathos his encounter with even older statues in the garden. This combination of mockery, pathos, and eros runs like a common thread throughout his stories.

The garden is no less disheveled than the servant, but when Maximilian tells the story to Maria, he cloaks it in a vocabulary that humanizes the plants and statues, as if they were about to come alive. Since this is the first story he tells to Maria, it sets the mood for the rest of the narrative. The section is worth quoting in full:

Die großen Bäume waren zum Theil verstümmelt, zum Theil niedergebrochen, und höhnische Wucherpflanzen erhoben sich über die gefallenen Stämme. Hie und da, an den aufgeschossenen Taxusbüschen, konnte man die ehemaligen Wege erkennen. Hie und da standen auch Statuen, denen meistens die Köpfe, wenigstens die Nasen, fehlten. Ich erinnere mich einer Diana, deren untere Hälfte von dunklem Epheu aufs lächerlichste umwachsen war, so wie ich mich auch einer Göttinn des Ueberflusses erinnere, aus deren Füllhorn lauter mißduftendes Unkraut hervorblühte.³¹⁷

Not only the statues, but even the trees in the garden are mutilated (“verstümmelt”), a word that uncannily anthropomorphizes the pain of inorganic and non-human beings. The word contains the idea of a stump (Stumpf) within it, but also refers to the statues' limbs and features, which

³¹⁶ Heine, HKA 5:200.

³¹⁷ Heine, HKA 5:201.

the young Max remembers as though they were alive. He reserves this memory of animation, however, for one statue in particular. The other statues, like the half-dressed servant, are laughable – Diana, confident goddess of the hunt, is tied up with ivy, and the goddess of abundance grows weeds in her cornucopia. Their original attributes and meanings are to some extent still readable, but they no longer function properly in modern-day society.

But Maximilian perceives one statue as perfect. It is un mutilated, and when he encounters it, he feels a simultaneous sense of attraction and repulsion:

Nur eine Statue war, Gott weiß wie, von der Boßheit der Menschen und der Zeit verschont geblieben; von ihrem Postamente freylich hatte man sie abgestürzt ins hohe Gras, aber da lag sie unverstümmelt, die marmorne Göttinn, mit den rein-schönen Gesichtszügen und mit dem straffgetheilten, edlen Busen, der, wie eine griechische Offenbarung, aus dem hohen Grase hervorglänzte. Ich erschrack fast als ich sie sah; dieses Bild flößte mir eine sonderbar schwüle Scheu ein, und eine geheime Blödigkeit ließ mich nicht lange bey seinem holden Anblick verweilen.³¹⁸

This statue appears as “eine griechische Offenbarung” (a Greek revelation) – but what does that mean? Are the comically separated breasts of the statue the revelation, which might admittedly fit in with the mindset of a twelve-year old boy? In this description – not just the “straffgetheilten, edlen Busen” (firmly separated noble breasts), but also in them – I see a nod to a Winckelmannian description of art.

One word in this description is particularly noteworthy in the context of a queer reading, although translations and commentaries have thus far avoided or elided it: “schwüle.” Modern German speakers will know that the word “schwul,” without the umlaut, means “gay.” While it would be anachronistic to translate “schwül(e)” this way, following the word’s etymology takes us along some intriguing paths. The Grimm brothers’ *Deutsches Wörterbuch* from the early nineteenth century refers the reader to “schwül” in the entry for “schwul,” suggesting that the

³¹⁸ Ibid.

two words were at that point merely alternate spellings.³¹⁹ The word “schwül” means muggy or humid, which at first glance might seem far removed from the meaning of “gay.” Furthermore, the *Digitale Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* tells us that the use of “schwul” to mean “gay” only started to become common around 1900.³²⁰ However, the meaning of humid/muggy/oppressively hot reminds us of that common eighteenth- and nineteenth-century term for men with a sexual preference for other men: “warme Brüder,” or “warm brothers.” Writing about three expressions still common in Central and Eastern European languages (such as Czech, Slovak, Polish, and Hungarian) to denote gay men, Andrea Trovesi identifies “warmer Bruder” as the most widespread, adding that “[i]t is no coincidence that this phrase has spread precisely among those peoples who historically have been in contact with the German language, particularly within the Hapsburg Empire...as, for almost a thousand years, the region was an area of intense German-Slavic and German-Hungarian contacts.”³²¹ While in Germany, “the term *warm* was gradually replaced by *schwul*, a specialized and monosemantic term meaning ‘male homosexual,’ which almost completely lost its derogatory connotation,” this does not mean that the subliminal meaning of hot – even oppressively hot – has been lost: quite the opposite, since Trovesi tells us that “[t]he word *schwul* is a 17th-century loan from Low German (see the Dutch *zwoel* “oppressive, sultry heat”), which in new High German has given rise to two words: *schwül* “sultry, suffocating” and *schwul* “homosexual, gay.”³²²

³¹⁹ Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, s.v. “schwul” and “schwül,” accessed May 31, 2021, <https://woerterbuchnetz.de/?sigle=DWB&lemid=S22816#0>

³²⁰ Digital Dictionary of the German Language; s.v. “schwul,” accessed May 31, 2021, <https://www.dwds.de/wb/schwul>

³²¹ Andrea Trovesi, “Warm, Blue, and Bulgarian: The Development and Diffusion of Three Expressions to Denote a ‘Male Homosexual’ in Central and Eastern European Languages,” in *Go East! LGBTQ+ Literature in Eastern Europe* (Ljubljana: Ljubljana University Press, 2020), 123.

³²² Trovesi, 124.

Of course, there is no proof that Heine himself intended for the phrase “sonderbar schwüle Scheu” to have any homosexual meaning, but there is an opportunity here to read this as a *queer* encounter. For this reason, I would translate the phrase as “a strangely queer shyness.” Surprisingly, among the many late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century translators of the *Florentinische Nächte*, most translators have avoided or elided the word. Even the sexologist Havelock Ellis, who made his own translation in 1887, skips the word, writing: “this form inspired me with a *singular feeling*” (my emphasis).³²³ Ellis essentially translates “sonderbar” without “schwül.” The translation that seems to have been the most commonly reprinted, by Charles Godfrey Leland (1906), is also the one that in my opinion sticks most closely to the German original: “this statue inspired in me a strange, close, feverish terror.”³²⁴ Simon Adler Stern (1873) translates the phrase as “a strange feeling of oppression and fear,” and Frederick Carter as “the sweet and awful sensation”; the latter adds in “sweet,” which is not in the original, but which does express the ambiguity of the emotions well.³²⁵ The only translation that I could locate from after the 1930s was a 1960s reprint of the Leland version. This all may seem to be a preponderance of evidence *against* reading “schwüle Scheu” as any sort of gay fear. In my reading, however, Maximilian’s (and Heine’s) explicit refusal to consider men as beautiful or sexually appealing is here couched with an undercurrent of queer emotion. (How much more queer when we remember that the feeling of oppressive heat stems from an encounter with the cool marble lips of a statue!)

³²³ Heinrich Heine, *The Prose Writings of Heinrich Heine*, trans. Havelock Ellis (London: W. Scott, 1887), 182.

³²⁴ Heinrich Heine, *The Works of Heinrich Heine*, trans. Charles Godfrey Leland (London: William Heinemann, 1906), 5.

³²⁵ Heinrich Heine, *Scintillations from the Prose Works of Heinrich Heine*, trans. Simon Adler Stern (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1873), 5, and Heinrich Heine, *Florentine Nights*, trans. Frederick Carter (London: Gerald Howe, 1933), 17.

Like Winckelmann, Maximilian is not interested in the *realistic* state of the statues, but rather in the impression they make upon his imagination. It was not uncommon for antique statues to be in a mutilated state when they were rediscovered during the European Renaissance, and this is how German authors saw them in collections during the Enlightenment and Romantic era. However, Winckelmann does not consider this mutilation to be an impediment to their beauty. In his description of the torso of Hercules at the Belvedere in Rome, he uses the same comparison to a tree: “Wie werde ich dir denselben beschreiben, da er der zierlichsten und der bedeutendsten Theile der Natur beraubt ist! So wie von einer mächtigen Eiche, welche umgehauen und von Zweigen und Aesten entblößt worden, nur der Stamm allein übrig geblieben ist, so gemäßhandelt und verstümmelt sitzt das Bild des Helden; Kopf, Brust, Arme und Beine fehlen.”³²⁶ But even if the first glance only shows “einen ungeformten Stein,” upon viewing the statue “mit einem ruhigen Auge,” the observer will notice “der Held und der Gott” within the mutilated image.³²⁷ In other words, the statue awakens when it is viewed properly, and Winckelmann goes on to tell how each part of the statue brings to mind a different part of the god’s legend.³²⁸

³²⁶ Helmut Pfotenbauer et al., eds., *Frühklassizismus: Position Und Opposition. Winckelmann, Mengs, Heine* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1995), 179.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ German intellectuals remained very familiar with Winckelmann’s work, as well as his homosexuality, between his own time and that of Heine. As Whitney Davis reports, there was a “widely read 1784 publication of Winckelmann’s painfully romantic letters to his young friend Friedrich von Berg” – and it was in fact to this friend/lover that Winckelmann addressed the work “On the Ability to Perceive the Beautiful in Art,” in which he states that men must see beauty in other men to properly appreciate art (*Queer Beauty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 36).

The relevant passage in Winckelmann reads as follows: “Furthermore, since human beauty has to be expressed in a general concept, I have observed that those who are only aware of beauty in the female sex and are hardly or not at all affected by beauty in *our* sex, have little innate feeling for beauty in art in a general and vital sense. The same people have an inadequate response to the art of the Greeks, since their greatest beauties are more of our sex than the other. But more feeling is required for beauty in art than in nature, since the former is without any life, as tears in the theatre are without pain, and must be aroused and restored by the imagination” (Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Writings on Art*, trans. by David Irwin (London: Phaidon, 1972), 92).

Maximilian sees the beautiful statue of the goddess as a “griechische Offenbarung” (Greek revelation) that seems to tell him the secrets of desire. His imagination takes over for reality and makes the statue into his own Galatea; however, despite the longing apparent in his telling of the tale, the story as he tells it to Maria also echoes Eichendorff’s “Das Marmorbild,” which sets a dangerous, almost Gothic pagan universe against a pure, Christian fantasy of medieval Europe. Similarly, Maximilian’s longing for the fallen goddess threatens to mix up historical timelines within the space of his own imagination:

Im grünen Grase lag die schöne Göttinn ebenfalls regungslos, aber kein steinerner Tod, sondern nur ein stiller Schlaf schien ihre lieblichen Glieder gefesselt zu halten, und als ich ihr nahete, fürchtete ich schier, daß ich sie durch das geringste [sic] Geräusch aus ihrem Schlummer erwecken könnte. Ich hielt den Athem zurück als ich mich über sie hinbeugte, um die schönen Gesichtszüge zu betrachten; eine schauerliche Beängstigung stieß mich von ihr ab, eine knabenhafte Lüsternheit zog mich wieder zu ihr hin, mein Herz pochte, als wollte ich eine Mordthat begehen, und endlich küßte ich die schöne Göttinn mit einer Inbrunst, mit einer Zärtlichkeit, mit einer Verzweiflung, wie ich nie mehr geküßt habe in diesem Leben.³²⁹

In his imagination, not only is the goddess asleep rather than trapped in a “stony death” (steinerner Tod), but Maximilian even imagines that he can kill *and* make love to a statue!

While this scene might seem to be a harmless enough, if somewhat quirky, experience, Maximilian’s crush on the statue resonates with a longstanding European discourse surrounding materiality, art, and ethics. Questions about which types of art were more sensual – that is, material as opposed to imaginative or spiritual – interested both eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophers dealing with changing societal views on the purpose of art and their Romantic followers. The philosopher of language and history, Johann Gottfried Herder, for example, argued that painting was much more sensual than sculpture, because it led the viewer into the imagination’s “gefärbte duftende Wollustgärten,” while even hermaphroditic statues –

³²⁹ Heine, HKA 5:202.

queer ones, so to say – contained “eigentlich keine *Unzucht*.”³³⁰ This word – “Unzucht” – is a very old one, according to the Grimms’ *Deutsches Wörterbuch*; in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, it referred simply to any kind of very bad behavior, but by the time Herder and, later, Heine, were writing, the word often referred more specifically to sexual misdeeds.³³¹ In fact, one of the example sentences the Grimms offer under this definition includes the word “florenzinische” [sic] in a list of adjectives set before “Unzucht.”³³² The same list includes the words “sodomitische” and “bestialische,” confirming that the “Unzucht” Herder was referring to when he discussed statues was indeed part of a larger discourse about sexual crime.

The same concerns about the power of art, and especially statues, to lead humans into sexual misbehavior persisted into the Romantic era. This was in large part due to the perception of statues as overly material; the Romantic novelist Achim von Arnim (1781-1831), for example, argued that “Winckelmann’s view of beauty was problematically wedded to materiality and stasis.”³³³ The Romantics generally preferred art that they perceived as fluid and immaterial: painting was preferable to sculpture, but music was “idealized as the ineffable art that exceeds the normative constraints and commonplaces of language.”³³⁴ Accordingly, von Arnim’s 1824 novella *Raphael und seine Nachbarinnen* describes Raphael as “an artist who constantly—and

³³⁰ Quoted in Catriona MacLeod, *Fugitive Objects: Sculpture and Literature in the German Nineteenth Century* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2014), 85.

³³¹ Grimm, Jacob and Grimm, Wilhelm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, s.v. “Unzucht,” accessed May 31, 2021, <https://woerterbuchnetz.de/?sigle=DWB#3>.

³³² Ibid. The verb “florenzen” is also listed in Paul Derks’ “compilation of references to male homosexuality in German literature between 1750 and 1850,” as noted by Alice A. Kuzniar in the introduction to *Outing Goethe and His Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 7.

³³³ MacLeod, “Fugitive Objects,” 83.

³³⁴ Susan Bernstein, *Virtuosity of the Nineteenth Century: Performing Music and Language in Heine, Liszt, and Baudelaire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 10.

ultimately fatally—struggles between, on the one hand, the temptations of sensuality, which are associated with antiquity, corporeality, femininity, and sculpture, and on the other hand, the expression of Christian spirituality, which occurs in painting.”³³⁵ The Classical past, and especially its sculptures, are problematized as pagan and sensual. Heine, however, is less critical of Classical sensuality and more critical of the so-called *Kunstperiode*, or the time between the French Revolution and the July Revolution of 1830 during which Johann Wolfgang von Goethe reigned supreme as “Dichterstürst.”³³⁶

What Heine found problematic about this period was its sterility. This term immediately takes on a heavier weight when viewed through a queer lens; if sterility is the inability to reproduce, then how much more might it affect queer poets if fertility is held up as the keystone of poetic achievement? Catriona MacLeod summarizes Heine’s view in the following words:

In his *Romantische Schule* (Romantic School), Heine had memorably characterized the works of Goethe, the colossus of the *Kunstperiode*, as marble statues, sensual but frigid, seductive but sterile. The artist who positions himself in the role of Pygmalion is exposed as leading an ultimately fruitless existence, since the union between him and his beloved statue can produce no children---such offspring representing for Heine “Taten,” or actions in the political sphere.³³⁷

The word “Tat,” in this context, carries with it all the baggage of the second act of Goethe’s *Faust*, in which the hero, struggling to translate the gospel of John – “in the beginning was...” – moves through a series of solutions, from “Wort” to “Sinn,” to “Kraft,” and finally settles on “Tat.” For our purposes, we can understand Heine’s point of view as one that resists the past as

³³⁵ MacLeod, “Fugitive Objects,” 84.

³³⁶ I borrow this definition from the entry “Kunstperiode” in Wolfgang Beutin et al., *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2013), 185.

³³⁷ Catriona MacLeod, *Embodying Ambiguity: Androgyny and Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Keller* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 175.

well as the concept of the solitary genius. Where Faust sits alone in his study, using words to reason his way through his problems, Heine's characters struggle to free themselves from stasis – even as they, like Maximilian, are enamored by it. Paradoxically, Heine's statues are alive, or rather, they are portals to the past. This kind of life, as we will see, does not rule out the potential of queer reproduction. Rather, by breaking open the typical understanding of artistic time as linear, it creates space for the queer.

Statues take on this essential role as mediators between the past and the present in part due to their material – marble – and in part due to their androgyny. Jürgen Fohrmann sees marble as the necessary *tertium comparationis* between “Norm und Kritik,” between past and present.³³⁸ He focuses not on statues as genre, but rather on marble as the signifier of the in-between, saying:

Immer (so weit ich sehe), wenn das Alte *als Kunst* im Neuen zitiert wird, taucht der Marmor auf... Der Marmor steht zwar für das Überkommene, Tote; er erfährt aber in der Zitation, durch die Vermittlung des Autors, eine Belebung. Ja, man kann sagen: Der Marmor hat seinen Platz in der Mitte, im Übergang zwischen Leben und Tod, zwischen dem Leben der Kunst und dem Tod der Kunst, zwischen dem Tod des Lebens und dem Leben des Lebens.³³⁹

While it is the author who actually carries out the deed (Tat) and brings the past to life, marble is the obligatory medium, just as Maximilian kissing the statue in his mother's garden links him to the chthonic world. Intriguingly, Fohrmann declares the “Eros” necessary for such reanimation to be “der des *Liebhabers*,” adding: “Pygmalion: Das ist Goethe. Venus: Das ist Heine.”³⁴⁰ This somewhat enigmatic declaration seems to me to differentiate between two kinds of eros, one that

³³⁸ Jürgen Fohrmann, “Heines Marmor,” in *Heinrich Heine: Neue Wege der Forschung*, pp. 274-291, ed. Christian Liedtke (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000), 278.

³³⁹ Heine, HKA 5:279.

³⁴⁰ Fohrmann, 288.

is “dead” and old, one that is “modern” and new. However, as Fohrmann himself states, Heine’s work is constantly oscillating between these two states of being, trapped in its own longing for a past that it rejects. This oscillation is apparent not only in such theoretical arabesques as I have outlined here, but also in the text’s insistence on memory and dream, which Fohrmann also finds relevant. The resistance to a linear, teleological narrative complicates the way Maximilian navigates and judges his own desires. If Heine is Venus, then he is not simply giving life to old texts and beliefs, but filtering them through the erotic norms of his own time as well as that of their time of origin.

Part III. A Bloom of Flesh: Bellini’s Queer Death

If marble is the medium between past and present, then Maximilian’s predilection for describing *living* people with the adjective “marble/marmoreal” (marmorn) is worthy of note. In so doing, he creates a statue-human who encapsulates not only the past, but also the future, within the present moment. In the following section, I examine the Bellini episode within this context, aiming to show the homosexual erotics at play in this triangulation of masculinity, death, and aesthetics – adapting Bettina Rabelhofer’s analysis of *Florentinische Nächte* as a “höchst ambivalente Amalgam aus Weiblichkeit, Tod, und Ästhetik.”³⁴¹ I do not wish to subtract from the feminist critiques of this text, nor to suggest that the male characters are more important (quite the opposite: Maria is essential for my reading), but rather to approach it from a queer perspective.

As noted above, many readings of *Florentinische Nächte* mention the devilish virtuosity of Paganini; however, if Bellini is mentioned, it is often simply as a side note. Despite the

³⁴¹ Rabelhofer, 27.

treatment of Bellini as a marginal figure in a marginal text, I see his character as essential to understanding Maximilian's homophobic beliefs *and* his homosocial desires. More so than Paganini, whose relation to the demonic is obvious and superficial (if well-represented in contemporary literary and cultural production), Bellini is a projection of Maximilian's necrophiliac vision: he must be turned into marble, whereas Paganini is already allied with the realm of the dead. I read the Bellini/Paganini pair as a mutually dependent dyad, both reliant on Maximilian's erotic readings of their bodies. Nonetheless, these two figures share similarities as well, especially in the way that Max's stories about them make use of queer and non-human language.

Analyses of Bellini's role in *Florentinische Nächte* are just as rare as queer readings of Heine, which (as we will see) might not be a coincidence. Caryl Lyn Einberger argues that Bellini merges "the imaginary world of Maximilian's memories and dreams, which are full of sexual and sensual impressions, with a reality that is missing these qualities."³⁴² While Einberger correctly notes how Bellini's character incorporates a certain kind of sensuality, and mentions how Bellini serves as a plaything for the women at the salon (an intriguing concept), it is worth following this impulse further.

My goal in this section will be to analyze both of these characters in terms of gender. In other words: What gender *are* Bellini and Paganini? This question is not superficial, since the discussion between Maria and Max about the composers focuses on questions of aesthetic attraction, as well as the social norms surrounding how men discuss other men versus how women discuss men. Furthermore, as we have seen above, artistic representations of people such as statues or caricatures do not have a gender. The statue or drawing may strongly *suggest* a

³⁴² Einberger, 120.

gender, but the perception of the audience (or the artist) is the source of this trait, rather than any innate characteristic of the marble or paper that the figure is made of.

Following this line of thinking, I argue that both Bellini and Paganini are genderless, and that their inclusion in the line-up of Maximilian's past lovers *makes* them part of the group oscillating between different sources of non-normative desire: "eine Marmorstatue oder ein Gemälde? eine Tote oder ein Traum?"³⁴³ This inclusion sparks a homophobic anxiety in Maximilian, who avoids acknowledging how the two male composers resemble the female statues and beloved artworks of the rest of the story. Maria, as usual, is the one who picks up on this. She asks: "Sie haben ihn [Bellini] persönlich gekannt? War er hübsch?"³⁴⁴ Maximilian answers the question in a way that insists upon his identity as a man: "Er war nicht häßlich. Sie sehen, auch wir Männer können nicht bejahend antworten, wenn man uns über jemand von unserem Geschlechte eine solche Frage vorlegt."³⁴⁵ He does not explain *why* men cannot answer affirmatively,³⁴⁶ but in the lengthy description of Bellini that follows, he deliberately feminizes the composer. This speaks to Maximilian's – and, as scholars have argued, Heine's – insistence on a "feste Vorstellung von *dem* Männlichen und *dem* Weiblichen."³⁴⁷ And yet, Maria's question opens up the possibility of an alternative answer, one in which Maximilian is allowed to say: "Yes! He was good-looking."

³⁴³ Heine, HKA 5:207.

³⁴⁴ Heine, HKA 5:210.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ The difference between "können" (can, be able to) and "dürfen" (to be allowed to) are interesting here, although most likely Heine would not have thought of Maximilian's answer as one of being not *allowed* to admit attraction to men, but merely as a fact. Perhaps "können" is also a more casual way to imply that such a thing simply isn't done.

³⁴⁷ Höhn, 247.

Maria's question about Paganini, whose story follows that of Bellini, is perhaps even more illuminating: she asks, "Lieben Sie Paganini?" Her choice of words – "lieben" is a very strong word in German, indicating a feeling far beyond simply liking or enjoying someone's art – is all the more suggestive coming, as it does, after she hears what her friend has to say about Bellini. Max replies evasively: "Dieser Mann...ist eine Zierde seines Vaterlands."³⁴⁸ Remarkably, given that Maximilian claims to barely notice the men in his memories, he has exactly the same hierarchy of desire for them that he does for women: "Die Männer interessiren [sic] mich nie viel, wenn sie nicht entweder gemalt oder gemeißelt sind."³⁴⁹ This admission, masked as an offhand comment about only liking men as art, takes on significantly more weight given what we know about the erotic potential of male statues in German and Italian art, and more generally of statues to Max personally. In essence, Maximilian has the *exact same erotic pull* towards male and female statues – calling into question whether we can convincingly read the female-coded statues as entirely female, or even as gendered at all.

Thus my conclusion that, as works of (narrative) art, and in their assimilation to the de-sexuating pull of marble, neither Paganini nor Bellini have a gender. Maximilian seems to intuit that the way he tells his stories opens up this possibility; a certain fluidity of gender is apparent in Maximilian's description of Bellini, despite his desire to maintain a strict distinction between male and female traits. Max's perception of Bellini borrows from eighteenth-century pastoral vocabulary and feminizes the character, resulting in an androgynous pastiche of gender and era:

So schwärmerisch wehmüthig waren seine Haare frisiert, die Kleider saßen ihm so schmachtend an dem zarten Leibe, er trug sein spanisches Röhrchen so idyllisch, daß er mich immer an die jungen Schäfer erinnerte, die wir in unseren Schäferspielen mit

³⁴⁸ Heine, HKA 5:213.

³⁴⁹ Heine, HKA 5:208.

bebänderten Stäben und hellfarbigen Jäckchen und Höschen minaudieren sehen. Und sein Gang war so jungfräulich, so elegisch, so ätherisch.³⁵⁰

Heine uses Bellini's physical features and clothing as signifiers of the eighteenth-century vogue for pastoral performances, choosing words ("minaudieren," "idyllisch") that call up images of the French court. He also, however, uses a number of terms that refer back not to eighteenth century France, but to the German *Sturm und Drang*: "schwärmerisch," "wehmüthig," "schmachtend," "ätherisch." These words could just as easily describe Goethe's suicidal hero Werther, whose popularity aligned with the era of male sentimental friendship in the 1770s and 80s. In short, Bellini as a character is – like Platen in *Die Bäder von Lucca* – not only out of place, but out of time.

Maximilian dislikes the queer appearance of Bellini, but his dislike also comes from the excessive vivacity of the man: "Bellinis Gesicht, wie seine ganze Erscheinung, hatte jene physische Frische, jene Fleischblüthe, jene Rosenfarbe, die auf mich einen unangenehmen Eindruck macht, auf mich, der ich vielmehr das Todtenhafte und das Marmorne liebe."³⁵¹ The word "Fleischblüthe" (flowering of flesh, flesh-bloom) appears to be Heine's own creation, a word that subtly aligns Bellini with the non-human in the form of the plant. This reminds us of the scene in the mother's garden, where a young Maximilian notes the statues grown around with weeds. But the description also veers towards a different kind of non-humanity, that of the mechanical or demonic.

The narration of how Bellini turns from an awkward young man full of life into a corpse as cold as a marble statue prefigures the later description of Paganini as automaton, animated by

³⁵⁰ Heine, HKA 5:211.

³⁵¹ Heine, HKA 5:212.

the devil, showing how the two men are two sides of the same coin: an angel and a devil. Both figures inspire “Lachlust” in their audience, yet at the same time, the audience is too afraid to laugh. In Bellini’s case, the salon members always feel in his presence “eine gewisse Angst ... die, durch einen grauenhaften Reitz, zugleich abstoßend und anziehend war.”³⁵² In Paganini’s case, it is likewise a “grauenhaftes Mitleid” that silences the laughter.³⁵³ If Bellini is depicted as an outdated theater figure, an eighteenth-century shepherd boy, then Paganini is more modern, yet no less upsetting: he is an automaton, a wooden animal. Maximilian writes that “[i]n den eckigen Krümmungen seines Leibes lag eine schauerliche Hölzernheit und zugleich etwas närrisch Thierisches.”³⁵⁴ This strange alliance of animal and automaton aligns on the one hand with the perception of the queer (in historical parlance, the perverse or pederastic) as non-human. But on the other hand, Paganini and Bellini are oddly in control of the social situation despite their status as outsiders. The others dare not laugh, and despite their sense of revulsion at certain aspects of the two figures, the audience of the salon and the concert are drawn to the men, feeling a kind of attraction.

Like with everyone to whom he feels any kind of attraction (aesthetic or erotic), Maximilian wants to play (reverse) Pygmalion, and Bellini and Paganini thus serve as intermediaries between the truly dead marble statues (and women) of the first story and Mademoiselle Laurence, the living woman of the Second Night’s tale. As Susan Bernstein puts it, in Paganini’s case, “an animated figure is created and set alive in the center of the stage.”³⁵⁵

³⁵² Heine, HKA 5:211.

³⁵³ Heine, HKA 5:216.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Bernstein, “Q,” 383.

Rather than a statue being made human or a human being made a statue, in this case, two humans are made into the not-quite-human: Bellini becomes at turns a “Fleischblüte,” a theatrical trope, a marble face; Paganini becomes a demon, an automaton, an animal. But Max’s goal in transforming the two is not to make love to them, as it is with the women in the text. Instead, he intends to pin the men down, using narrative to bind and disempower the uncanny genderlessness of their performances. Maria’s cheeky question “Lieben Sie Paganini?” implies that she has seen through this veneer.

The relationship to the demonic also carries with it a certain fluidity of gender; Einberger addresses the devil’s powers of both shapeshifting *and* gender-shifting, citing Heine’s own Mephistophela – the devil having taken on the guise of a woman – as an example. The idea that the devil can shift between genders also suggests that there *is* no original gender for that figure, an idea worth keeping in mind as we read Heine’s other works. For Heine, as Einberger explains, both the Christian devil and the Greek gods represent a sensuality that “challenge[s] the authoritarian position of Christianity.”³⁵⁶ Venus is described in Heine’s *Elementargeister* as the “Erzteufelin Venus,” and Einberger sees this depiction as polemical (anti-Christian).³⁵⁷ The fluctuations between human, statue, and painting or between male and female in *Florentinische Nächte* are thus embedded in a larger discourse about gender, religion, art, and politics. We can read Maximilian’s, and even Heine’s, disgust as genuine, but we can also read the queer allure of marble and the “ghastly charm” of Bellini’s feminine appearance as signs of the persistent power of poetic-erotic attraction that eludes literary and societal norms.

³⁵⁶ Einberger, 139.

³⁵⁷ Heine’s words are quoted in Einberger, 139.

Part IV. Virility as Poetic “Zeugungsvermögen” and Heine’s Anxious Male Narrators

One of Heine’s main poetic concerns in *Florentinische Nächte*, as well as in his polemic against Platen in *Die Bäder von Lucca*, is the productivity, or fecundity, of the artist. The metaphor of the author or poet as a parent – specifically a gestating mother – is an old one, but in this case, virility is the core concern. Heine’s narrators, Maximilian and Doktor Heine,³⁵⁸ mock the queer-coded characters Bellini and Platen because they do not, in their opinion, fit into the masculine norms of the era. As we have seen above, Bellini is described as a sentimental shepherd boy from the eighteenth-century, while Platen, as we will see below, is depicted as a pallid imitator of ancient Greek forms. In contrast to Maximilian and the Doktor, who believe themselves to be suitable adjudicators of gender presentation and of poetic talent (perhaps this is why the Doktor claims to be a jurist³⁵⁹), Bellini and Platen are accused of being dilettantes, of having a certain talent (in Bellini’s case, even genius), but also some key flaw that prevents them from achieving virility and poetic fecundity.

As stated in the Introduction, Heine’s polemic against Platen was inspired by his anger against the Catholic state, which he viewed as retrograde, and he used homophobic arguments in large part because they contributed to the overall argument that Platen (and Catholicism) were out of date. The view of (the real) Platen as metrically proficient but uninspired was in fact not uncommon, and a reviewer writing in 1851 praises Platen’s hard work, but comments on what

³⁵⁸ Except for a short exchange at the start of Chapter V, the narrator is referred to only as “Doktor,” but perhaps one of Heine’s reasons for putting a version of himself into the story was to better set up the Platen polemic. Gerhard Höhn notes that Karl August Varnhagen von Ense, when reviewing the *Bäder von Lucca* in 1830, summarizes the first ten chapters as “eine launige und humorvolle Durchgangsstation zum Ort der Platen-Exekution” (a witty and humorous waystation along the road to the Platen execution; 236).

³⁵⁹ The narrator’s friend, the Markese, remarks that “ich [the narrator] sey derselbe Johann Heinrich Heine, Doktor Juris, der jetzt in der deutschen juristischen Literatur berühmt sey,” but problematically, this seems to be a falsehood (7:96). Another of the guests in Lucca is a jurist, as well, and has never heard the name Heine; the narrator claims “daß ich nicht unter meinem eigenen Namen schriebe” as an excuse (ibid.).

we might term a stunted poetic fertility: “[d]ie Einseitigkeit der Richtung mag durch das magere Zeugungsvermögen bedingt worden sein.”³⁶⁰ The concept of a poet as having a “magere Zeugungsvermögen” links creativity and inspiration – the ability to create good art – with the ability to procreate sexually. Doktor Heine, the narrator, makes a similar remark when he writes of the fictional Platen: “Wenn ihm auch die Musen nicht hold sind, so hat er doch den Genius der Sprache in seiner Gewalt.”³⁶¹ And it is not only Platen, but Bellini, who is depicted as incapable of poetic “Zeugungsvermögen”; Bellini not only dies young, but even before his death, Maximilian considers him child-like, declaring that he has “die harmlose Gütmütigkeit, das Kindliche, das wir bey genialen Menschen nie vermissen.”³⁶² Combined with the characterization of Bellini as awkward with women, treated by them as more of a plaything than a companion, Maximilian makes clear his opinion that the composer is lacking in artistic virility.

Ironically, Maximilian in particular expresses insecurity about his own poetic skills and virility throughout *Florentinische Nächte*. He announces to Maria’s doctor, who asks him to distract her with fantastical tales, that he is “schon ganz zum Schwätzer ausgebildet.”³⁶³ However, his use of the word “Schwätzer” (chatterbox) is ironic, by no means referring to especial artistic talent or genius, and this reading is furthered by the remark that he says this sentence “melancholisch.”³⁶⁴ Additionally, Maximilian fails to gain Maria’s sexual interest. She rejects him in blunt terms, suggesting that he has some essential flaw: “Entsetzlich! Sie wissen,

³⁶⁰ Cited in Esterhammer, 6.

³⁶¹ Heine, HKA 7:138.

³⁶² Heine, HKA 5:212.

³⁶³ Heine, HKA 5:199.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

dass ein Kuss von ihrem Munde...³⁶⁵ Whatever this flaw is, it would appear that Maria tolerates Max's stories in large part because they distract him from trying to kiss *her*. She deftly guides the conversation back to his lost loves, where it remains for the rest of the story.

Poetic fecundity, for Heine, is something other than genius: genius is sterile if it fails to go beyond imitative ability, and it is inspiration – being desired and heard by the muses – that makes the artist fertile. The artist who can commune with the muse is capable of more than simply reproducing the forms of the past. The lack of inspiration is one of the accusations levied against Platen by the Doktor, who declares: “in seiner erlauchten Liebhaberey sehe ich nur etwas Unzeitgemäßes, nur die zaghaft verschämte Parodie eines antiken Uebermuths. Das ist es ja eben, jene Liebhaberey war im Alterthum nicht in Widerspruch mit den Sitten, und gab sich kund mit heroischer Offenheit.”³⁶⁶ In other words, Platen lacks “Zeugungsvermögen” or poetic fertility not because he is homosexual, but because this homosexuality is, in Heine's eyes, a sign of Platen's failure to create his own artistic paradigm. Instead he is a mere imitator, or as Lorella Bosco puts it, “[er] wird hier zum “letzten Zerrbild des Winckelmannisierens.”³⁶⁷ More recent scholars have been sympathetic to Platen's plight, in that he was societally unable to express his homosexuality, even poetically. But what is particularly interesting, as I read the texts, is that Heine's narrators are *also* incapable of fully expressing themselves, suggesting that the freedom to experience queer desires is essential for full poetic “fertility.”

Furthermore, knowing that the narrator of *Die Bäder von Lucca* sees Platen as a worshipper of a shameful, perverse past sheds a different light on the statue-loving Maximilian.

³⁶⁵ Heine, HKA 5:203.

³⁶⁶ Heine, HKA 7:140.

³⁶⁷ Lorella Bosco, “Das Furchtbar-Schöne Gorgonenhaupt Des Klassischen”: *Deutsche Antikebilder (1755-1875)* (Würzburg : Königshausen & Neumann, 2004), 259.

While he may consider the statues he loves to be female, they are, at best, androgynous. In this reading, I follow Catriona MacLeod, who writes that “Heine's *Florentinische Nächte*, finally, is a work that comments explicitly on the late romantic [sic] desire to reimpose order both on the female body, terrifying in its polymorphousness, and on an aesthetic that has itself, through the influence of Friedrich Schlegel, become predicated on androgynous chaos.”³⁶⁸ The statue of Diana in the garden with its genitals concealed by ridiculous ivy; Michelangelo's “Night,” the statue that enralls Maximilian in Florence, “dessen gewaltiger Leibesbau von der kühnen Kraft des Michel Angelo zeugt;”³⁶⁹ even the reclining Maria, whose refusal to kiss Maximilian prevents her from being transformed into marble – none of these statues can fit into the early nineteenth-century stereotype of passive, delicate femininity. And their very material, marble, resists any strict categorization; it is non-organic, non-human, and simply cannot have a gender. Thus Maximilian's efforts to attain virility by loving statues are failures from the start; like Platen, he is attempting to express his erotic feelings in ways that are no longer modern. Perhaps this trait of being stuck in the past is why the Doktor taunts Platen by saying that even the youth thinks he is no poet: “Er ist kein Dichter, sagt sogar die undankbare männliche Jugend, die er so zärtlich besingt.”³⁷⁰

In the end, neither Maximilian nor “Doktor Heine” is able to fully extricate themselves from the gender confusion caused by their fascination with statues. The most carefully-laid efforts to distinguish between male and female are exploded by the narrators' desires to mock feminine men, thus inadvertently creating new gender categories in the reader's imagination

³⁶⁸ MacLeod, *Embodying Ambiguity*, 184.

³⁶⁹ Heine, HKA 5:203.

³⁷⁰ Heine, HKA 7:139.

even as they mock those same categories. For example, the Doktor claims that Platen is “ein Weib, und zwar ein Weib, das sich an gleich Weibischem ergötzt, er ist gleichsam eine männliche Tribade.”³⁷¹ The insult “eine männliche Tribade” is not only startling as an acknowledgement of female-female desire in an era in which it was generally ignored, but is also a paradox, one that reveals more than it conceals about queer desire. Superficially, we can read this as a typical insult feminizing men who have sex with men; however, reading *Die Bäder von Lucca* from our contemporary context, we can also see this insult an example of the nineteenth century’s struggle to contain queerness.

In closing, I would briefly like to return to the first garden scene in *Florentinische Nächte* and to reflect on its setting: a garden. This garden is overgrown, paradoxically both luxuriant and in a state of decay, with plants attacking the statues carved to look human and at times covering them in vines. This battle of the organic and the inorganic recalls vividly the climax of Eichendorff’s “Das Marmorbild,” in which statues come to life and attack the narrator, and the “hohen Blumen in den Gefäßen fingen an, sich wie buntgefleckte bäumende Schlangen gräßlich durch einander zu winden” (tall flowers in their containers began, like brightly-spotted snakes rising up, to wind horridly through one another).³⁷² In Eichendorff’s text (which, incidentally, also takes place in Lucca), the inorganic comes alive while plants gain the mobility of the animal world; in Heine’s story, the non-human organic (plants) slowly overtakes the order imposed by humans onto both their own kind and onto marble. The garden is a source of life, like the Garden

³⁷¹ Heine, HKA 7: 141.

³⁷² Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff, *Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts; und Das Marmorbild : zwei Novellen nebst einem Anhang von Liedern und Romanzen* (München: Winkler Verlag, 1981), 188. Note that here, we have a yonic and a phallic symbol that become one; the flower and the snakes wind around one another, and this is surely one reason that Eichendorff calls the moment “horrid.”

of Eden, but it too has been abandoned and cannot, therefore, serve as a source of heteronormative “productive” poetry. Maximilian’s first encounter with *eros* is already sterile.

If we read Maximilian’s love of marble statues as homosexual or queer desires, and we read these desires as sterile, then that creates, however, a problematic logic. Must homosexuality be considered infertile simply because, biologically, children are born via heterosexual intercourse? While Heine does not address this question explicitly in either of these texts, I would argue that there are elements of *Florentinische Nächte*, at least, that hint at a kind of queer artistic fertility. Among these elements are the plants and the marble itself, which show that there are non-human ways of animating and renewing the world. Maria’s insightful questions also illuminate the queer mechanisms of Maximilian’s desires that he would rather leave unsaid: like the insult “eine männliche Tribade,” her questions about whether he loves Paganini or sees Bellini as beautiful shed light on the forbidden. Therefore we can see *Florentinische Nächte* as an exercise in creating art that is *not* procreative, but that is still original. By narrating his marble loves, Maximilian animates his desires, and by telling them to an audience (Maria and the reader), he keeps those desires alive and therefore resists being fossilized into his own concept of ideal virility.

Conclusion

While Heine’s work is anything but queer when read with a focus on authorial intent or on the social norms of his era, both his early poetry – the famous *Buch der Lieder* – and his later work, including the short story *Florentinische Nächte*, offer plentiful occasions for a queer reading. The characters and figures in Heine’s work ostensibly embrace a thoroughly traditional set of gender norms, yet their hidden desires – and the creative force underlying the text – are

always in some way forbidden, unusual, or non-normative. From the powerful, flesh-shredding, androgynous sphinx who presides over the third edition and beyond of Heine's *Buch der Lieder*, to the statue-loving Maximilian in *Florentinische Nächte*, Heine's work is full of ambiguity regarding gender and sexuality.

Much of this sexual ambiguity is focused explicitly on homoerotic desire, in particular the statue love in *Florentinische Nächte*, which draws on a discourse about gender and creativity that began in the Enlightenment with Winckelmann, proliferating in Romantic tales of uncanny love. While Heine's narrators in *Florentinische Nächte* and in *Die Bäder von Lucca* mock the possibility of homosexual desires, they experience their own queer desires for the inorganic and the inhuman, and they struggle to pin down a definition of virility without breaking open the Pandora's box of the gender binary. Mocking "feminine" men such as Bellini and Platen is intended, by Maximilian, to reinforce the gender norms he is comfortable with. However, as Maria points out, there is a striking similarity between the love Maximilian professes as normative for beautiful female art objects and artists, and that which he conceals and denies for male artists.

Many of Heine's scenes about homoerotic encounters also focus on masochistic desires, taking the Romantic concept of the feminized male genius to an extreme. Rather than simply showing emotional and artistic sensibility, the male artist in Heine – while depicted as a genius, like Paganini, or seeming to consider himself one, like Maximilian – is also endowed with more negative traits, which tend towards self-destruction. I have shown above in the chapters on Günderrode and Droste-Hülshoff how apparently destructive energies can in fact be poetically productive, and the same is true in Heine's writing, even when neither he nor his poet figures and narrators intend this. In fact, an anecdote that Heine himself wrote about his ill body's

prostration before a beautiful statue serves as the introduction to a volume on male masochism in the *fin-de-siècle*, which posits Heine as a kind of predecessor to “a discourse by and about men that took hold in the German-speaking world between 1870 and 1930 and that articulated masculinity as and through its own marginalization.”³⁷³ It is in this vein that I read Heine’s androgynous, flesh-rending sphinx as a kind of muse – a figure through whom the artist filters his own hidden desires that give birth to his poetry. While this muse image of “pitying but nevertheless cold” female (or androgynous) beauty has its roots in Romantic writing, its influence goes on to contribute to discourses that are recognizably gay or queer.³⁷⁴

Heine’s centering of homoerotic male love for artworks and statues has implications for what creativity means, as well. He argues that a one-sided love of the past – the true flaw he sees in Platen’s work – makes a poet infertile. Heine’s own characters and texts, however, cannot entirely escape a love of art that is coded as homosexual and past-oriented à la Winckelmann. While Heine prefers to avoid confronting this quandary head-on, instead using irony to trace its contours, the reader must follow the questions that the text – and its figures, such as Maria – pose, asking the questions that nineteenth-century narrators refuse to, or cannot, answer. In doing so, we bring the text to life again, making it modern even as we resist the urge to project our own concepts of gender and sexuality back onto Heine’s time. The delightful irony of Heine as Venus, giving life to androgynous statues, offers us an alternative way of reading that replaces sterility with a creative drive that makes the most of humans’ inability to pin gender to one place – or time.

³⁷³ Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, *Sublime Surrender: Male Masochism at the Fin-de-Siècle* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), 1-2.

³⁷⁴ Stewart-Steinberg, 2.

CONCLUSION

The past three chapters have offered “case studies” of unconventional muse figures in German Romantic and post-Romantic texts. As we have seen, the procreative discourse that sprouted from Linnaeus’ botany quickly took root in German literary ground. Touching on such aesthetic concepts as genius, autopoiesis, the childbirth metaphor, and Herder’s concept of *Lebenskraft*, the procreative discourse challenged earlier creative paradigms based on the Christian patriarchal god or on mechanistic theories and explored a more collaborative, pleasure (*Wollust*)-centered paradigm that reanimated earlier theories of orgasmic generativity. This botanical, procreative discourse merged with Romantic discourses surrounding life, death, and rebirth – as well as a socially-driven necromantic drive aimed at the author figure – to create a negative, queer form of poetic procreation. These changes in literary philosophy opened up new ways of thinking about the creative act that were not heteronormative in nature.

While the muse was less central conceptually than the genius during the early nineteenth century, German authors nonetheless engaged with the muse or created muse-like figures. These figures took a variety of forms. Muse relationships could involve plants (such as G nderrode’s two-sided apple tree in her poem “Die Schmiede,” Novalis’s *blaue Blume*, or the Persephone-like Ledwina); supernatural creatures (such as G nderrode’s inverted vampiric poet-muse and dead beloved); artworks (such as the marble statue in Heinrich Heine’s work); and of course, men (particularly as seen by Heine’s narrator Maximilian in the story “Florentinische N chte”). Each of these figures – flower, vampire, statue, man – engages with the poet figure in some way, often in an imaginary encounter (a dream, a memory). Some of these muse figures are more

easily understandable as a muse than others – for example, the statue Maximilian falls in love with – because they follow the typical Western story of an erotic relationship that sparks a poetic (or in this case narrative) outpouring of words on the part of a single poet figure. Other figures, modify this story, like the corpse in *Ledwina*, by changing the gender expectations for the roles and by mirroring the poet in the muse figure. Still other figures are difficult to categorize as muses per se, in particular the botanical muses, but they nonetheless are figures that the poet figure or narrator (or in the case of “Die Schmiede,” the reader) encounters, which serve as sources of poetic energy. Often, on an intradiegetic level, it is this figure that fundamentally shifts the poem or narrative from a standard, normative social register to a queer, otherworldly register from which the dark energies that fascinate and animate the lyric I arise.

The poet/muse relationship is often conducted over what seem like impossible boundaries, such as that between life and death. This is perhaps unsurprising, given that the muse as a literary figure was considered by many people, even in 1800, to be “dead” in the sense of outdated and unexciting. However, death is also an important philosophical issue for G nderrode and Annette von Droste-H ulshoff in particular, whose muse figures often *are* dead precisely so that the poet figure may explore the concept of rebirth. Death, for the Romantics, is not an end but a new beginning. Many Romantics, G nderrode included, believe in a cyclical time/space continuum rather than a linear, teleological timeline. The dead muse is not so much meant to shock the reader as to draw the poet into a discourse about what could be. Death is a space of possibility.

Heine, who is well known for his ironic view on Romanticism (and perhaps even for naming the era) in his treatise *Die romantische Schule*, does not see death quite so idealistically as G nderrode or the young Droste-H ulshoff. Rather, he always treats death and the dead

beloved with an ironic distance. And yet, reading his works queerly can reveal that even the most staunchly self-identified heterosexuals, such as Maximilian in “Florentinische Nächte,” are susceptible to the Romantic allure of the illicit. The necrophilic attraction to a marble statue is irresistible to many of Heine’s narrators, and statue-love is not an uncommon topic in late- and post-Romantic literature. Joseph von Eichendorff’s *Das Marmorbild* is the most famous example. Therefore, even in texts where death does not hold the same idealistic, cyclical appeal as it did for the early Romantics, it still stands in for the desire to cross existing boundaries.

While the muse figures I examine in this dissertation are not stereotypically erotic in the sense of a beautiful human body to be fossilized into an artwork, there is still an erotic element in most of the poet/muse relationships of this era. This eros, however, can take on diverse non-heteronormative forms. Maximilian’s statue-love, for example, causes his friend Maria to notice his suppressed homoerotic desire. Droste-Hülshoff’s *Ledwina* embraces her own corpse autoerotically, giving a sapphic twist to the Romantic concept of autopoiesis. Early Romantic poet/muse relationships are often the most erotically diverse of all, with Novalis’ yonic-phallic *blaue Blume* as the least normative and yet the most representative of all. While most of Novalis’ readers in the long reception history of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* have likely not even considered that the *blaue Blume* could stand for female pleasure, I hope to have shown that this is not only a possibility, but indeed a likely reading and one that finds echoes in later writing.

Female poets such as Günderrode and Droste-Hülshoff put their own yonic twist on the Romantic concept of the self-birthing poet. Even while tying their own work into older creative paradigms such as the laurel, with its roots in the stories of Petrarch’s Laura and the Greek/Roman Apollo and Daphne, female poets resist the patriarchal violence inherent in these origin stories. One way that they do so is to create female-female relationships that give birth to

poetry in a collaborative fashion. This kind of birth is animated not by a purely intellectual genius to the detriment of the material, maternal body, but rather by friendship and self-love. Droste-Hülshoff's poet/mentor poems that center women in both roles, especially "Katharine Schücking," are an example of this non-violent, often sapphic energy.

Finally, it is important to note that many of the muse figures encountered in these pages are fantastical. This does not, in my view, make them any less capable of changing the way we read and interpret the texts they inhabit. Indeed, a belief in the fantastic or the phantasmagoric is a common thread running through all three authors analyzed here. Once again, the binary fantastic/real is too narrow to truly capture what is at play. While outside the scope of the current work, the figure of the golem is another fantastical figure from literary history that has musal energies. Droste-Hülshoff's poem "Die Golems" explicitly discusses this figure from Jewish legend, exploring the idea that life can be created out of dirt and out of text. Here again, binaries – life/death, Jewish/Christian, text/material – come productively together. While Droste-Hülshoff's poem views the golem negatively due to its lack of a true life force, the golem is an intriguing counterexample of the undead muse.

I would like to conclude by returning to my reading of the *blaue Blume* as a clitoris. While the intent of this reading is to show how Romantic texts center female, androgynous, and queer pleasure, this reading also owes much to very recent developments in scientific study. Until recently, the clitoris was usually depicted in scientific textbooks and in the public consciousness as a tiny organ – a mere fraction of the size of the penis – a "button" or "nub." This is not the whole truth by any means. Rather, the clitoris has – poetically, in light of the botanically-based procreative discourse discussed here – *crura*, which can be translated as legs (or botanically, roots or bulbs), that connect it to the entire body's nervous system and result in a

larger internal organ. Despite this new knowledge and efforts by French scientist Odile Fillod to make a 3D-print model of the clitoris publicly available, there is still a greater challenge than what we know factually: namely, what we know culturally.³⁷⁵ In a literary world that has for so long based the value of texts and authors on phallic paradigms, it is my hope that this dissertation, in its intentionally queer, provocative readings of Romantic texts, can be one example of how to expand our horizons about creativity. How we understand the clitoris is just one example of a much broader contemporary discourse about gender, biological sex, and sexuality. Reading older texts through the lens of the unconventional muse can inspire us to look again and to reflect on not only what we perceive in a text, but how – and why.

³⁷⁵ Naomi Russo, “The Still-Misunderstood Shape of the Clitoris,” *The Atlantic*, March 9, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2017/03/3d-clitoris/518991/>.

WORKS CITED

- Auerbach, Nina. *Our Vampires, Ourselves*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- August, H. *Die Blumensprache nach vaterländischen Dichtungen: eine Frühlings-Gabe*. Schulz u. Wundermann, 1822.
- Ahl, Frederick M. "Amber, Avallon, and Apollo's Singing Swan," *The American Journal of Philology* 103, no. 4 (1982), 373-411.
- Battersby, Christine. *Gender and Genius: Towards a Feminist Aesthetics*. London: The Women's Press, 1989.
- Bernstein, Susan. "Q or, Heine's Romanticism." *Studies in Romanticism* 42, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 369-91.
- Bernstein, Susan. *Virtuosity of the Nineteenth Century: Performing Music and Language in Heine, Liszt, and Baudelaire*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Beutlin, Wolfgang, et al., eds. "Kunstperiode." In *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte*, 185. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2013.
- Blasberg, Cornelia, and Jochen Gryswatch, eds. *Annette von Droste-Hülshoff Handbuch*. De Gruyter reference. Boston: De Gruyter, 2018.
- Bosco, Lorella. "*Das Furchtbar-Schöne Gorgonenhaupt Des Klassischen*": *Deutsche Antikebilder (1755-1875)*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004.
- Bronfen, Elisabeth. *Over Her Dead Body : Death, Femininity, and the Aesthetic*. New York : Routledge, 1992.
- Bürger, Gottfried August. *Lenore. Ein Gedicht*. London: S. Gosnell, 1796.
<http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CW0114059785/ECCO?sid=bookmark-ECCO&xid=f05bde77&pg=10>.
- Butler, Erik. *Metamorphoses of the Vampire in Literature and Film: Cultural Transformations in Europe, 1732-1933*. New York: Camden House, 2010.
- Cortambert, Louise. *Die Blumensprache, oder Symbolik des Pflanzenreichs*, translated by Karl Mühler. K.A. Stuhr, 1820.
- Crawford, Heide. *The Origins of the Literary Vampire*. London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016.
- Croce, Arlene. "Is the Muse Dead?" *The New Yorker*, February 18, 1996.
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1996/02/26/is-the-muse-dead>.

- Darwin, Erasmus. *The Botanic Garden, A Poem In Two Parts*. Project Gutenberg eBook, 2011.
- Dawson, Martin. "Transports of Imagination: Poetry and the Rehabilitation of Experience, 1830-1860." PhD Dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2021.
- Davis, Whitney. *Queer Beauty: Sexuality and Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Freud and Beyond*. New York, N.Y: Columbia University Press, 2010.
- Deiulio, Laura Christine, and John B. Lyon, eds. *Gender, Collaboration, and Authorship in German Culture: Literary Joint Ventures, 1750-1850*. New Directions in German Studies, vol. 27. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019.
- Dietrick, Linda. "Vegetable Genius and the Loves of the Plants: Botany in German Poetry around 1800." In *Translation and Translating in German Studies: A Festschrift for Raleigh Whiting*, 61–78. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2016.
- Dietrick, Linda, and Birte Giesler, eds. *Weibliche Kreativität um 1800 = Women's creativity around 1800*. 1. Auflage. Hannover: Wehrhahn Verlag, 2015.
- Droste-Hülshoff, Annette von. *Gedichte*. Edited by Bodo Plachta and Winfried Woesler. Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1994.
- Droste-Hülshoff, Annette von. *Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe: Prosa*, edited by Walter Hüge. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1978.
- Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.
- Eichendorff, Joseph Freiherr von. *Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts; und Das Marmorbild: zwei Novellen nebst einem Anhang von Liedern und Romanzen*. München: Winkler Verlag, 1981.
- Engelstein, Stefani. *Anxious Anatomy: The Conception of the Human Form in Literary and Naturalist Discourse*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2008.
- Ezekiel, Anna. "Metamorphosis, Personhood and Power in Karoline von Günderrode." *European Romantic Review* 25, no. 6 (2014): 773-791.
- Flood, Alison. "Elizabeth Siddall: Pre-Raphaelites' Muse Finally Gets Her Own Voice, 150 Years after Death." *The Guardian*, September 4, 2018, sec. Books.
<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/sep/05/real-face-of-pre-raphaelites-ophelia-to-be-revealed-elizabeth-siddall>.
- Fohrmann, Jürgen. "Heines Marmor." In *Heinrich Heine: neue Wege der Forschung*, edited by Christian Liedtke, 274–92. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000.

- Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias." Translated by Jay Miskowiec. *Architecture / Mouvement / Continuité* 5 (October 1984): 1–9.
- "Gaius Mucius Scaevola | Roman Hero." In *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Accessed February 9, 2021. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Gaius-Mucius-Scaevola>.
- Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. *The Madwoman in the Attic*. Yale University Press, 2020.
- Glăveanu, Vlad Petre, Lene Tanggaard, and Charlotte Wegener, eds. *Creativity: A New Vocabulary*. Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016.
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *Faust. Texte*. Edited by Albrecht Schöne. Berlin: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2017.
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *Gedichte, 1756-1799*. Edited by Karl Eibl. Vol. 1. 40 vols. *Sämtliche Werke. Briefe, Tagebücher Und Gespräche*. Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1987.
- Greer, Germaine. "The Role of the Artist's Muse." *The Guardian*, June 1, 2008, sec. Art and design. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/artblog/2008/jun/02/theroleoftheartistsmuse>.
- Günderrode, Karoline von. *Sämtliche Werke*. Vol. 1. Edited by Walter Morgenthaler. Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld Verlag, 2006.
- Hard, Robin, and H.J. Rose. *The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology: Based on H. J. Rose's Handbook of Greek Mythology*. Abingdon: Taylor & Francis Group, 2003.
- Heine, Heinrich. *Florentine Nights*. Translated by Frederick Carter. London: Gerald Howe, 1933.
- Heine, Heinrich, Manfred Windfuhr, and Pierre Grappin. *Heinrich Heine: historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke*. Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1975.
- Heine, Heinrich. *Sämtliche Schriften*. Edited by Klaus Briegleb. Vol. 4. München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1971.
- Heine, Heinrich. *Scintillations from the Prose Works of Heinrich Heine*. Translated by Simon Adler Stern. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1873.
- Heine, Heinrich. *The Prose Writings of Heinrich Heine*. Translated by Havelock Ellis. London: W. Scott, 1887.

- Heine, Heinrich. *The Works of Heinrich Heine*. Translated by Charles Godfrey Leland. London: William Heinemann, 1906.
- Heinrich Heine. *Werke und Briefe in Zehn Bänden*. Edited by Hans Kaufmann. Vol. 1. Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1972.
- Helfer, Martha B. "The Male Muses of Romanticism: The Poetics of Gender in Novalis, E.T.A. Hoffmann, and Eichendorff." *The German Quarterly* 78, no. 3 (2005): 299–319.
- Herder, Johann Gottfried. *Ideen Zur Philosophie Der Geschichte Der Menschheit*. Edited by Martin Bollacher. Vol. 6. Werke in Zehn Bänden. Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1989.
- Herder, Johann Gottfried. *Übers Erkennen Und Empfinden in Der Menschlichen Seele*. Edited by Martin Bollacher and Jürgen Brummack. Vol. 4. Werke in Zehn Bänden. Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1989.
- Heselhaus, Clemens. *Annette von Droste-Hülshoff. Werk Und Leben*. Düsseldorf: August Bagel Verlag, 1971.
- Hille, Markus. *Karoline von Günderrode*. Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999.
- Höhn, Gerhard. *Heine-Handbuch: Zeit, Person, Werk*. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2004.
- Holland, Jocelyn. *German Romanticism and Science: The Procreative Poetics of Goethe, Novalis, and Ritter*. New York: Routledge, 2009.
- Holst, Kathrine von. "Subjektivität im Werk der Karoline von Günderrode," *Text & Kontext* 39 (2017): 28-52.
- Holub, Richard C. "Heine's 'Mädchen Und Frauen': Women and Emancipation in the Writings of Heinrich Heine." In *From Goethe to Gide: Feminism, Aesthetics and the French and German Literary Canon, 1770-1936*, edited by Mary Orr and Lesley Sharpe, 80–96. Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 2005.
- Holub, Robert C. "Heine's Sexual Assaults: Towards a Theory of the Total Polemic." *Monatshefte* 73, no. 4 (1981): 415–28.
- Höpfner, Christian. *Romantik Und Religion: Heinrich Heines Suche Nach Identität*. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1997.
- Hückmann, Dania. "The Dead Speak: On the Legibility of Trees in The Aeneid, Gerusalemme Liberata, and Die Judenbuche." *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* 90, no. 3 (July 3, 2015): 171–86.
- Huet, Marie-Hélène. *Monstrous Imagination*. Harvard University Press, 1993.

- Jordanova, Ludmilla. *Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989.
- Justis, Diana Lynn. *The Feminine in Heine's Life and Oeuvre: Self and Other*. New York: P. Lang, 1997.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Werke in Zwölf Bänden*. Vol. 10. Edited by Wilhelm Weischedel. Frankfurt am Main, 1977.
- Kelley, Theresa M. *Clandestine Marriage: Botany and Romantic Culture*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012.
- Kord, Susanne. *Murderesses in German Writing, 1720-1860: Heroines of Horror*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Krimmer, Elisabeth. "A Perfect Intimacy with Death: Death, Imagination, and Femininity in the Works of Annette von Droste-Hülshoff," *Women in German Yearbook* 17 (2001), 121-140.
- Krimmer, Elisabeth, and Lauren Nossett, eds. *Writing the Self, Creating Community: German Women Authors and the Literary Sphere, 1750-1850*. Rochester: Camden House, 2020.
- Kuzniar, Alice A., ed. *Outing Goethe & His Age*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.
- Lamping, Dieter. *Handbuch Lyrik : Theorie, Analyse, Geschichte*. Vol. 2. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2016.
- Lazarowicz, Margarete. *Karoline von Günderrode, Portrait einer Fremden*. Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1986.
- Loiseau, Benoit. "These Artists Are Deconstructing the Myth of the Muse." *i-D*, August 14, 2018. https://i-d.vice.com/en_uk/article/wjkbaw/these-artists-are-deconstructing-the-myth-of-the-muse.
- MacLeod, Catriona. *Embodying Ambiguity: Androgyny and Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Keller*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998.
- MacLeod, Catriona. *Fugitive Objects: Sculpture and Literature in the German Nineteenth Century*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2014.
- Martinson, Steven D. "'...aus dem Schiffbruch des irdischen Lebens': The Literature of Karoline von Günderrode and Early German Romantic and Idealist Philosophy." *German Studies Review* 28, no. 2 (May 2005): 303-326.

- Mathäs, Alexander, ed. *The Self as Muse: Narcissism and Creativity in the German Imagination 1750-1830*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2011.
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/duke/detail.action?docID=1365258>.
- Murray, Penny. "Reclaiming the Muse." In *Laughing with Medusa: Classical Myth and Feminist Thought*, edited by Vanda Zajko and Miriam Leonard, 327–54. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Novalis [Hardenberg, Friedrich von]. *Gesammelte Werke*. Edited by Hildburg and Werner Kohlschmidt. Sigbert Mohn Verlag, 1967.
- Novalis [Hardenberg, Friedrich von]. *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2016.
- Pahl, Katrin. "Queer Procreation: Reading Kleist Plantwise." *Qui Parle* 28, no. 1 (2019): 137–66.
- P. Ovidi Nasonis. *Metamorphoses*. Edited by R.J. Tarrant. Scriptorum classicorum bibliotheca Oxoniensis. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Ovid [Publius Ovidius Naso], *Metamorphoses: Book 1, Oxford World's Classics: Ovid: Metamorphoses*, ed. A.D. Melville and Edward J. Kenney (1986, published online July 2015), <https://www-oxfordscholarlyeditions-com.proxy.lib.duke.edu/view/10.1093/actrade/9780199537372.book.1/actrade-9780199537372-div1-01>
- Pausanias. *Pausanias' Description of Greece with an English Translation*. Translated by W.H.S. Jones and H.A. Ormerod. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918.
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Paus.%209.29.2&lang=original>.
- Pfotenhauer, Helmut, Markus Bernauer, Norbert Miller, and Thomas Franke, eds. *Frühklassizismus: Position Und Opposition*. Winckelmann, Mengers, Heinse. Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1995.
- Pope, Rob, and Joan Swann. "Introduction: Creativity, Language, Literature." In *Creativity in Language and Literature: The State of the Art*, 1–22. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011.
- Praz, Mario. *The Romantic Agony*. Translated by Angus Davidson. 2nd edition. London: Oxford University Press, 1951.
- Propertius. *Elegies*. Translated by A.S. Kline. *Poetry in Translation*.
<https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Prophome.php>
- Propertius. *Elegies*. Edited by Lucian Mueller. Leipzig: Teubner, 1898. *Perseus Digital Library*.
<http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:latinLit:phi0620.phi001.perseus-lat2:2.1>

- Rabelhofer, Bettina. “»... ich habe auch todte Frauen geliebt« Zur erotischen Produktivkraft des Todes in Heinrich Heines »Florentinischen Nächten«.” In *Heine-Jahrbuch 2007: 46. Jahrgang*, edited by Joseph A. Kruse, 26–45. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2007.
- Reinking, Kirsten. “Das Schweigen mit einem Zauberwort zu brechen: Eine Nachprüfung ausgewählter Gedichte von Annette von Droste-Hülshoff mit dem Persephonemythos.” M.A. Thesis, California State University, 2011.
- Reith, James. “Norah Lange: Finally, ‘Borges’s Muse’ Gets Her Time in the Spotlight.” *The Guardian*, August 2, 2018, sec. Books.
<https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2018/aug/02/norah-lange-finally-borges-muse-gets-her-time-in-the-spotlight>.
- Ritter, Johann Wilhelm. *Key Texts of Johann Wilhelm Ritter (1776-1810) on the Science and Art of Nature*. Translated by Jocelyn Holland. Leiden: Brill, 2010.
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unc/detail.action?docID=634924>.
- Rohde, Erwin, ed. *Friedrich Creuzer und Karoline von Günderode. Briefe Und Dichtungen*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter’s Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1896.
- Russo, Naomi. “The Still-Misunderstood Shape of the Clitoris.” *The Atlantic*, March 9, 2017.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2017/03/3d-clitoris/518991/>.
- Samide, Irena. “Die singenden Musen.” *Estudios filológicos alemanes* 16 (2008): 109–33.
- Sazaki, Kristina R. “The Crippled Text/Woman: Annette von Droste-Hülshoff’s ‘Ledwina.’” *Monatshefte* 89, no. 2 (1997): 168–81.
- Schiebinger, Londa. *The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.
- Schlegel, Friedrich. “Gespräch Über Die Poesie.” *Athenaeum* 3, no. 1 (1800): 58-128. Facsimile of the first edition, with an afterword by Ernst Behler. Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta’sche Buchhandlung, 1960.
- Schücking, Theo, ed. *Briefe von Annette von Droste-Hülshoff und Levin Schücking*. 2nd Edition. Leipzig: Fr. Wilh. Brunow, 1880.
- Schultz, Hartwig. *Form Als Inhalt: Vers- Und Sinnstrukturen Bei Joseph von Eichendorff und Annette von Droste-Hülshoff*. Bonn: Bouvier, 1981.
- Schwartz, Alexandra. “How Picasso’s Muse Became a Master.” *The New Yorker*, July 15, 2019.
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/07/22/how-picassos-muse-became-a-master>.
- Sha, Richard C. *Perverse Romanticism: Aesthetics and Sexuality in Britain, 1750-1832*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009.

- Scott, Claire. "Murderous Mothers: Feminist Violence in German Literature and Film (1970-2000)." PhD Dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2017.
- Shteir, Ann. "'She Comes! – The GODDESS!': Narrating Nature in Erasmus Darwin's *The Botanic Garden*." In *Fact and Fiction: Literary and Scientific Cultures in Germany and Britain*. Edited by Christine Lehleiter. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016.
- Simonis, Annette. "'Das verschleierte Bild': Mythopoetik und Geschlechterrollen bei Karoline von Günderrode," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 74, no. 2 (2000): 254-278.
- Stanley, Patricia H. "Annette von Droste-Hülshoff's Poetic Vision Unmasked: The Importance of the Novel Fragment 'Ledwina,'" *South Atlantic Review* 61, no. 1 (1996): 1–25.
- Staples, Ariadne. *From Good Goddess to Vestal Virgins: Sex and Category in Roman Religion*. London: Taylor & Francis Group, 1998.
- Stewart-Steinberg, Suzanne. *Sublime Surrender: Male Masochism at the Fin-de-Siècle*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018.
- Sturm-Maddox, Sara. *Petrarch's Laurels*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992.
- Sütterlin, Nicole. "Überschreitungen. Zur (De)figuration des Vampirs in E.T.A. Hoffmanns Vampirismus-Erzählung." In *Figur, Figura, Figuration: E.T.A. Hoffmann*, edited by Daniel Müller Nielaba, Yves Schumacher, and Christoph Steier, 187-201. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2011.
- Tobin, Robin. *Warm Brothers: Queer Theory and the Age of Goethe*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.
- Trovesi, Andrea. "Warm, Blue, and Bulgarian: The Development and Diffusion of Three Expressions to Denote a 'Male Homosexual' in Central and Eastern European Languages." In *Go East! LGBTQ+ Literature in Eastern Europe*, 121–28. Ljubljana: Ljubljana University Press, 2020.
- Tully, Carol. "Placing Droste-Hülshoff's Ledwina: 'Jugendwerk' or 'Gescheiterte Frauenliteratur'?" *German Life and Letters* 52, no. 3 (1999): 314-324.
- Uhland, Ludwig. *Gedichte*. Stuttgart und Tübingen: Cotta, 1815.
- Wagenknecht, Christian. *Deutsche Metrik: Eine Historische Einführung*. 5th Edition. C.H. Beck Studium. München: Beck, 2007.
- Walters, Lori J. "Rose Summary." John Hopkins Sheridan Libraries. *Digital Library of Medieval Manuscripts* (blog). Accessed January 13, 2021. <https://dlmm.library.jhu.edu/en/romandelarose/rose-summary/>.

- Weißborn, Birgit, ed. *“Ich sende Dir ein zärtliches Pfand.” Die Briefe der Karoline von Günderrode.* Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1992.
- Wellbery, David. “Kunst – Zeugung – Geburt: Überlegungen Zu Einer Anthropologischen Grundfigur.” In *Kunst – Zeugung – Geburt: Theorien Und Metaphern Ästhetischer Produktion in Der Neuzeit*, 9–36. Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach Verlag, 2002.
- Wellbery, David E. *The Specular Moment: Goethe’s Early Lyric and the Beginnings of Romanticism.* Stanford University Press, 1996.
- Westover, Paul. “Interlude: Necromanticism and Romantic Authorship.” In *Necromanticism: Traveling to Meet the Dead, 1750-1860*, 92-105. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- Westphal, Wolfgang. *Karoline von Günderrode und “Naturdenken um 1800.”* Essen: Die Blaue Eule, 1993.
- Williamson, Milly. *The Lure of the Vampire: Gender, Fiction and Fandom from Bram Stoker to Buffy.* London: Wallflower Press, 2005.
- Winckelmann, Johann Joachim. *Writings on Art.* Translated by David Irwin. London: Phaidon, 1972.