

## Where Romanticism was Female

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**Abstract:** Universal texts have the potential to provide findings for the reader from any perspective at any period of time. So does the written heritage of Early Romanticism. Nevertheless, to understand the spiritual awakening in the 18th century in Germany, an outline of a social and political environment as prerequisites is here given. Several “departures” led to the movement of the Early Romantics at the end of the century. In its center were women. Early Romanticism has always been a challenge for each existing social order, a social disruption, demanding the whole human being in all his and her possibilities. For in the history of reception of Romanticism, those of the late phase have been more easily comprehended. They are happy by nature, Catholic, and they can be categorized, while the Early Romantics usually are dismissed as “crazy” and “confused”.

**Key words:** Early Romanticism, Conviviality, Salons, Natural Completion, History in Process

Within the period which from today’s perspective is called Romanticism, there was a brief period in Germany in which the promise of the Enlightenment had been kept, came to bloom, and bore fruit.

The promise was reason as the new power. This was the “end of immutable truths”. Thinking had been liberated from the corset. The postulate of equality, which materialized in the French Revolution, could lead to new opportunities for people of both sexes if the Kantian call “Sapere Aude”<sup>2</sup> were followed.

According to Kant, Enlightenment is man’s emergence from his self-

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<sup>1</sup> Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu.

<sup>2</sup> “Have the courage to think”.

imposed immaturity, the inability to use one understands without guidance from another. Kant surmounted the Enlightenment, and prepared the ground for Idealism.

At the beginning, there were meetings of friends who were related to each other on an emotional and intellectual level. In their center were women. For a short time, a small group of friends succeeded in living together in their own utopia, according to their ideas of art and life in a provincial town in Germany. They questioned the theories they built and developed together, changing as individuals and as a group, as did their worldviews. Their thoughts are still today sources for new ways of thinking. The major themes of the 20th century had been quietly introduced in the literature of the late 18th century. What conditions made the 18th century ready for departure – to be on the move? To understand this phenomenon, we turn first to the historical and intellectual conditions which provided the breeding ground for a “wealth of ideas”. This leads us to the phenomenon of “Zeitgeist”. How this spirit was taken up and processed, and what knowledge came out of it should be shown with glimpses into lives of some participants. In other words: The following section will examine how the demands of philosophy were reflected in people’s lives and found their limitations in social conditions.

## **Mosaics**

In the 18th century, Germany was according to the unanimous verdict of visitors from neighboring countries a backward, provincial agrarian country. It was fragmented into principalities and state let residences<sup>3</sup>. Every man was a subject and depended on a ruler, while the educated but relatively powerless bourgeoisie took refuge in introspection or in the public privacy of salons. Additionally, since the Reformation, the country had been torn in two denominations, “Cuius regio, eius religio”<sup>4</sup>. This was not always possible with individualistic Protestants as subjects. In the Duchy of Württemberg, the absolutist ruling sovereign was Catholic, the subjects

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<sup>3</sup> By 1800 there were about 355 courts.

<sup>4</sup> Whose realm, his religion.

Protestant<sup>5</sup>. The northern part of Germany was predominantly Protestant. Most of the “poets and thinkers” in the 18th century came from Protestant pastor houses<sup>6</sup>. Children from pastor families knew by nature ancient languages, at least Greek and Latin, and of the new languages, mostly English and French. Sixteen-year-old Schelling in addition had mastered Hebrew and Arabic, when he arrived at “Tübinger Stift” with a special permit to study theology. There it happened that he shared his room with Hegel and Hölderlin, which is not without significance for the history of the German mind. The three of them secretly read Kant, who in 1789 was still banned in the “Stift”. Together they designed their first “System Program”, in which they tried to dissolve the contrast between the “people full of ideas and poor in action” (gedankenreiche Tatenarmut). On the basis of liberty, they intended to change society by a new mythology of reason.

With the period of Enlightenment, the interest of a formerly religion-oriented reading public had been transformed. Belletristic literature was required. There were lending libraries. Girls’ education was an issue, as it differed from that of boys<sup>7</sup>. The virtue of a daughter was rarely called into question. She was a pawn in the hands of an otherwise powerless father<sup>8</sup>. Writings about the “education of women” were in circulation. That of Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel should be mentioned. Hippel, a friend of Kant, a chief of police (and other local positions) in Königsberg and confirmed bachelor, was considered willful and witty. He wrote in 1774 a small, unsophisticated treatise, “On Marriage”, which in 1794 was in its fourth edition. His essay, “On the Civic Improvement of Women” (1792), is not just about the education of women<sup>9</sup>, but also about the emancipation of men,

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<sup>5</sup> Schiller spent his youth there. He wanted to study theology, but was ordered by his sovereign to attend military school.

<sup>6</sup> Kant is an exception, as he came from a family of artisans. His father was a saddler.

<sup>7</sup> Rousseau was known by his confessions and was highly revered, but his concept of girls’ education was largely rejected by enlightened readers.

<sup>8</sup> Lessing’s civil tragedy “Emilia Galotti”.

<sup>9</sup> “Would the state be seriously concerned to employ the great and noble half of its citizen usefully, he felt the great responsibility, those which made nature the same, to treat them according to equality and law, give them back their rights and personal freedom and independence with these ... and civic honor ... “ (quoted from Lange, 1983: 263)

who must realize that their freedom is not without that of women (Wuthenow, 1984: 134-51).

### **In the Beginning There Was Departure**

On May 23rd 1769, Johann Gottfried Herder departed Riga, unhappy with who he was and what he had been doing, and lacking the courage and strength to change things. On May 17th, he gave his farewell sermon, and went off, not knowing where to. He took a ship whose cargo was destined for Nantes. At sea, released from yesterday, today and tomorrow, thrown back upon himself and the infinity of the horizon in a universe between sky and sea, “without books and muses and thoughts”, he gave himself to his “dreams”, as he said later, bringing clarity to views and insights and knowledge of the world. What he found in himself, and where his thinking led him, he wrote down in Nantes and later in Paris. In his “Journal Of My Voyage in 1769”, there is a universe of thoughts. It provides us with insights into philosophical thinking in northern Europe in the second half of the 18th century. Although Herder’s Journal was published posthumously in 1846, his influence on the appearing intellectual currents of the time can not be underestimated. His insights about people and nation, the individual and the community, about religions and languages, and of history as a dynamic process were adopted and developed further. At that time travel was trying. But people traveled and read and wrote. Who was known, was visited. Otherwise, people met each other at dinner parties, in hostels or elsewhere<sup>10</sup>.

### **Forms of Expression**

In the 18th century, diaries and epistolary novels were used as literary forms. Lessing used the letter form for his theory on the novel. The letter it-

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<sup>10</sup> In 1770 Herder and Goethe, five years younger, met in in Strasbourg. Goethe then was still the one who took and was confronted with completely new ideas. Herder’s idea of “organic growth” was immediately taken over by Goethe and carried into his essay on the Strasbourg Cathedral. Herder’s ideas processed by Goethe can be traced throughout his collected works – which in turn is revealed in Friedrich Schlegel’s review “About Goethe’s Meister”, which appeared in the “Athenäum”. According to some interpreters, in this novel Goethe let die the principle of romantic - which is symbolized in the the character of Mignon, while the commercial principle gains ground. The “guidelines” of Romanticism as well are obliged to Herder.

self was stylistically sophisticated. It was a “schreibwütiges” (furiously writing) century, which gives us an accurate insight into the contemporary structure of thinking and feeling.

Letters were written by men and women. In the 18th century men also wrote treatises and novels; however, women only wrote letters. By recognizing the letter as a literary genre, a new research area developed. This may explain in part why the female influence within philosophy and the proportion of women in literature of the Romantic period is no longer ignored. The absence of women as authoresses can only be surmised. Existing prejudices about women writing are often cited as the reason<sup>11</sup>. Only women who wrote for a living published under their own names. Obviously this is not true for translation. Even if it were the woman who secured the livelihood of a family with her translations, they were published under her husband’s name.

Among the few popular female writers of the 18th century, Sophie La Roche (1730 - 1807) was successful from the beginning of her writing career. In 1771 she published her first novel. After her husband was dismissed from service as a councilor, her large family could live comfortably on the income from her popular novels.

## Friends

On close examination, the brief period of Early Romanticism even today is as brilliant as a jewel. The experiment of the “Jena Circle” to overcome the separation of mind and nature, bringing the dream of freedom and totality to bloom, was for a short time a reality before it became a promise for the future again.

The house in Jena where the Schlegel family lived is regarded as the birthplace of Romanticism. Here in the early phase of the movement, peo-

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<sup>11</sup> Caroline von Humboldt not only came forward as a patron, but also as an art critic. From Spain she sent Goethe a description of a painting by Raphael, which he published in “Jenaer Allgemeine Literaturzeitung”, under the byline “by a person”. Another example of men’s contemporary identity: In 1814 Goethe met the very young Marianne von Willemer, who became one of his latest great loves. At that time he dealt with the collection of poems by Hafez translated by Hammer-Purgstall and published in 1812. The lovers read Hafez together and corresponded about it. Several of the poems in “West-Östlicher Divan” are creations by Marianne von Willemer - by Goethe nowhere mentioned.

ple were living together, shaping their lives according to their ideas. After the experiment was over the ground was prepared for new beginnings elsewhere. The release of the first edition of “Athenäum” in 1798 is considered the birthdate of Early Romanticism. The center of the house community in Jena and of the early movement was Caroline, born Michaelis, widowed Böhmer, divorced Schlegel, and married Schelling.

Caroline Michaelis was born in 1763 in Göttingen. Her father, a renowned professor of Oriental studies and theology, had campaigned for women’s education already in 1740.

Caroline grows up in a big open house where conviviality (*Geselligkeit*) is maintained and where students, scholars and travelers go in and out. She is supported by her father and has free access to knowledge, which she uses in her own way. She reads Hume, Pope and Shakespeare in the original version and translates Goldoni, but she refuses any compulsion and hates useless systematic knowledge. From childhood she is on familiar terms with the great minds and personalities of public life visiting her home. Her mother, it seems, rarely takes part in social events, perhaps exhausted from her numerous pregnancies<sup>12</sup>. Caroline’s father sends her to a private girls’ home to when she is twelve years old. Here she meets her lifelong friend Luise. To Luise most of her early letters and the most intimate are addressed. Fairly early on, Caroline’s ideas about herself and her capabilities as a woman in society are clear. To Luise, she writes about her “strangeness”: if she were allowed to be her own master and able to live in a pleasant situation, she would prefer not to marry, and try to be useful otherwise<sup>13</sup>. Caroline and her friends Therese Heyne and Dorothea Schlözer<sup>14</sup>, as the three daughters of professors, are in Göttingen a provocation for many for their unconstrained behavior. They are observed and gossiped about. Caroline is willing to satisfy social conventions and asks her stepbrother,

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<sup>12</sup> At this time it was quite normal for a woman to give birth in succession of up to ten or more children. In addition to the physical hardships, women had to handle the emotional toll of the infant mortality rate. Caroline’s mother also was in this cycle of birth and death. Of the eleven children she gave birth to, only five survived.

<sup>13</sup> Letter to Luise 1.11. 1781 / Damm, Sigrid, p.97

<sup>14</sup> Dorothea Schlözer received her doctorate at the age of 17 at Michealis’, which Caroline considered an act of performing dead knowledge.

Fritz, to determine her future husband. He chooses his childhood friend, Johann Wilhelm Franz Böhmer, a physician and trusted neighbor. Married in 1784, Caroline moved with Böhmer to Clausthal, a mining town in the nearby Harz<sup>15</sup> She is determined to accept her role in society, but she does not succeed completely. It is rather an inner emigration<sup>16</sup>. One year later, she is happy with the birth of her first daughter Auguste. When Böhmer dies of an infection in 1788, Caroline is pregnant with her third child. She returns to her parents' house. The newborn dies shortly after birth. Caroline's gradual return to active life can be traced in her letters. On her father's 72nd birthday, a young student writes a poem in Caroline and Auguste's name. It is August Wilhelm Schlegel, who idolizes Caroline. Caroline has certain ideas about education in freedom and the upbringing of her two daughters. Göttingen does not seem the appropriate place. In 1789, she moves to Marburg where her stepbrother lives. He has since become conservative in his views. Her youngest daughter dies. Her friend Therese Heyne is married to George Forster<sup>17</sup> and they live in Mainz. Mainz is not far from France, which is currently changing itself and the world. Forster works there as a librarian and is known for his republican views. Caroline moves to Mainz - which will be the first Republic on German soil - and mixes in, gets in touch with farmers and feels like a Republican. When Therese leaves Forster, Caroline takes care of his household until he is sent to Paris. She succeeds with her daughter in leaving the city before it is occupied by the Prussian troops. On the way she is captured and taken to Königstein. She is considered a Republican and Forster's mistress, who is accused of "high treason". Her situation and circumstances in prison are degrading - she is also pregnant<sup>18</sup>. She knows that if her pregnancy were discovered, she would be excluded from any further middleclass life, and her daughter would be taken from her. Her suicide seems the only way out.

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<sup>15</sup> German low mountain range.

<sup>16</sup> This can be seen in the books she asked her friends for. She wants books to read at the table, and books to read on the sofa, but in no case any novel by Sophie La Roche, which she detests.

<sup>17</sup> Scientist, explorer, and writer.

<sup>18</sup> By Crancé, a young French lieutenant who was among the friends of Forster.

In fact, August Wilhelm Schlegel brings poison as a precaution. But at the same time he moves heaven and earth and writes letters, including to Humboldt - who declines - and Caroline's brother Philip. The brother immediately rushes up from Italy and addresses himself directly to the king. Caroline is freed.

August Wilhelm Schlegel works as a private tutor in Amsterdam. He comes running and brings Caroline to a doctor and in a remote place. Then he sends his brother Friedrich to her assistance. Twenty-one-year-old Friedrich falls deeply in love with Caroline, and is charmed by Auguste. Caroline is thirty years old and pregnant. She influences Friedrich with her republican views<sup>19</sup>. His understanding of art is shaped by her, as is his perspective on life. He sees Caroline as his brother's bride. The child she gives birth to dies before she finds a place for her children and herself.

Where can they go? The stay in Göttingen is forbidden after a decree of the "Königlichen-Großbritannischen and Kurfürstlichen Braunschweigischen-Lüneburgischen Universitätskuratorium". Friends turn away, although no one knows of her illegitimate child. Finally she finds refuge in Gotha with her friend Luise – who, with her husband, will be marginalized as long as she stays there.

In August 1795 she settles with her mother and her daughter in Braunschweig. In July 1796 Caroline and Wilhelm get married and move with Auguste to Jena.

Jena belongs to the Duchy of Weimar, where Karl August is sovereign. In his youth he sought Goethe's acquaintance and with him acted as foolish young men. Goethe since then has been his confidant, adviser and minister. The University of Jena was founded in 1585. Its glorious days began with the appointment of Fichte in 1794. Schelling came in 1797 and Hegel in 1801. Wilhelm Schlegel came to Jena at the invitation of Schiller. Schiller had high hopes for collaboration with Wilhelm as a critic and translator in the "Horen"<sup>20</sup>. In 1794 Friedrich had Jena commended to Wilhelm as the right place for his literary projects. There were Humboldt, and Weimar with

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<sup>19</sup> The Schlegel brothers from here are referred to by first name - as they signed their articles in the "Athenäum".

<sup>20</sup> One of Schiller's magazines.



Goethe and Herder were near, and instead of an art collection there were pure nature.

A.W. Schlegel was an accomplished translator. The plan was to translate Dante and the whole Shakespeare for the “Horen”. Parts of two of Caroline’s letters to Wilhelm are preserved, probably from 1797, which are a continuation of talks about Romeo and Juliet. In these letters, Caroline not only philologically tracks down every nuance of Shakespeare’s language, but explores psychologically each character in its deepest depths<sup>21</sup>.

Teaching activities were generally poorly paid, in Jena even worse. Offers for translations and articles to be published in one of the many magazines were most welcomed. Wilhelm did not have a teaching position yet when he was relieved of his translation tasks for the “Horen” by Schiller. His brother Friedrich had sharply attacked the “Horen” in another journal, criticizing what he considered too many questionable translations printed there (- certainly he was not referring to his brother’s). From the beginning, Friedrich was critical of Schiller. As a young girl, Caroline had been thrilled while declaiming “Die Räuber”<sup>22</sup>, but found him in Jena pathetic and not sensual. The brothers’ negative attitude toward Schiller does not go back to Caroline, but she certainly sensitized their perception of all his weak points<sup>23</sup>. Goethe tried to mediate in the conflict with Schiller, but the breakup was final. However, he did not lift a finger in the atheism dispute with Fichte although the students approached with signatures and asked for his help. Fichte’s article “On the Basis of Our Belief in a Divine World Government” in 1798 was an opportunity to get rid of him under the pretext of atheism. Caroline suspected that Fichte for his “unflinching honesty” had become uncomfortable for many people at the University of Jena and at the court in Weimar. Schiller in a letter to Goethe, referred probably to the same characteristics of Fichte, although he called it “incorrigible imprudence.” The circle of friends felt threatened. This dispute on atheism

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<sup>21</sup> Until Erich Fried’s new Shakespeare translations into German those of Schlegel were unsurpassed for generations.

<sup>22</sup> Freedom drama by Schiller.

<sup>23</sup> Schiller was “a god”. And suddenly there were these young people who disrespectful told, that upon reading Schiller’s “Glocke” (Bell) they had fallen of their seats with laughter. This irritated.

was an attack on everybody's freedom of thought<sup>24</sup>. Fichte left Jena for Berlin. The debate on atheism had become a new departure for him.

The "Athenäum", issued by the two Schlegel brothers, the "divine boys", as Wieland had once called them, was the mouthpiece of Romanticism for two years. Here they spread their philosophy. Friedrich defines the Romantic poetry as poetry in a universal process. In here the separated genera are reunited with philosophy and rhetoric, so to speak, enriched, and in here poetry and prose are included, ingenuity and criticism, art poetry and nature poetry, and everything is mixed and melted into one another. The poetry itself is sociable and serves to enhance society, to poeticize wit, to enrich forms with images, and to enliven with humor.

The process of becoming is the very essence of Romanticism. The being in this process of development involves not only a rejection of the categorization of science, but also a challenge in itself. Friedrich takes this challenge and demonstrates his skills elegantly in his review of Goethe's "Wilhelm Meister". Goethe is very pleased, because for "Werther," he is hardly noticed; Friedrich's criticism makes the "Wilhelm Meister" known - and helps Goethe to new popularity.

Caroline is for Friedrich the personification of his philosophy. With her he shares the rejection of closed systems of thought; in their community life, he sees in her person his social theory confirmed. A joint visit - Caroline, the two Schlegels, Schelling and Novalis - to the Dresden Gallery can be seen as the successful prelude to their new life. Their conversation on art appeared in Athenäum<sup>25</sup>. This conversation is not a didactic one. Unlike Plato's 'Dialogs', there is no hierarchy in knowledge among the participants. This celebration of a new aesthetic is demonstrated through the medium of language in "social interrelation" in art. Everyone has equal rights to self-representation and in unfolding his and her ideas. Caroline appears

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<sup>24</sup> Fichte did not always follow the ideas of the young Romanticists, but he often was their guest and joined heartily. His writings in turn were praised by them because of their clarity. Caroline's satirical poem on Fichte's "Wissenschaftslehre" is certainly gracious. It was only found in 1956 in a bound edition Athenäum.

<sup>25</sup> "Athenäum Zweiten Bandes Erstes Stück" Berlin 1799, bei Heinrich Frölich, "Die Gemählde", ein Gespräch von W (P. 31 – 151)

as “Louise”. Her excursions take up most space; there in is reflected Caroline’s idea of a life not cut into pieces but in natural completion - instead of moral completion.

When Caroline came to Jena, she mentioned in a letter the Salon of Sophie Mereau as the only inspiring one. Sophie Mereau published her first poems in 1791. She translated from various languages for Schiller’s “Horen”. After she had divorced with the help of Goethe, who acted as an intermediary, she published short stories and novels, a calendar, a women’s magazine and worked as an editor at “Göttinger Musenalmanach”. She could live off her work as one of the first professional female writers. She advocated for women’s rights to freedom of mate choice and free love. In the house of the Schlegels she met the twenty one-year-old Clemens Brentano, who courted her immediately. She was twenty nine then, marrying him a few years later. She died in 1807, giving birth to her third child with him. Brentano writes in a letter to Karoline von Günderrode, he had an excellent wife, who climbed with him mountains only one week after she had given birth. In her marriage there was no space left for her writing<sup>26</sup>.

### **Interjection: A Different Form of Romanticism**

Clemens Brentano, the sensitive poet and collector of folk songs reflects in his letters - free from doubts - the patriarchal roles of his time. He did not know how to meet the demands of the self-conscious Auguste Bussman, who was not willing to sacrifice her dreams to her life. They were addicted to each other and warred with each other to the finish. Both came from influential Frankfurter banker families. So one could seek permission for a divorce. The divorce proceedings lasted two years. Auguste then married a banker - which enraged Clemens - had several children and lived to everyone’s satisfaction a largely adjusted life. In 1832 she drowned herself.

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<sup>26</sup> Not long after Sophie Mereau’s death, a seventeen-year-old girl in Frankfurt publicly threw herself on Clemens Brentano’s chest to force him to marry her. Auguste Bussman and Clemens Brentano experienced hell and heavenly passion with each other and the world looked on. The couple’s letters and documents were accumulated by Hans Magnus Enzensberger and published as “Requiem für eine romantische Frau” Berlin 1988 Friedenauer Presse.

Clemens Brentano, whose self-image did not suffer from any irritation, continued writing poems and stories and eventually turned to the bosom of the Catholic Church. When he met the young writer Luise Hensel (1816), he proposed to her. His proposal was refused, but under his influence Luise Hensel converted to Catholicism. Together they wrote poems and songs. It seems Hensel did not insist on her authorship.

### **Berlin Networks**

Even for Jews, the Enlightenment was initially just a promise. Their life in Germany was marked by discrimination, prohibitions and persecution. With the Edict of March 1812, they were for the first time formally on an equal footing. At this time, Prussia was under the occupation of Napoleon.

When Moses Mendelssohn, still a boy appeared in 1742 at a city gate in Berlin, he was hungry for knowledge. Mendelssohn fell in love with Fromet Gugenheim, and she with him. It was not intended in Jewish tradition that young people declare themselves bride and groom. Generally Mendelssohn stuck to the tradition of his faith, but decided in the case of a conflict in favour of reason. So in this case. Even with the letters they wrote each other during the engagement period in the years 1761/1762, they had to ignore the conventions (Mendelssohn, 1985). Mendelssohn's daughters grew up freely, with access to languages and knowledge. Brendel, the eldest, who later called herself Dorothea, was married at a young age, according to tradition.

What caused the spirit of that era? Was it the conversation that formed peoples' consciousness in their society and from that, passed on, theories derived, which generate philosophical tenets? Or were the theories first, discussed and finding their way into conversations in everyday life? And however alienated influenced the public domain which then became 'Zeitgeist'?

Conversations can take place anywhere. At Mendelssohn's reading from scripts and philosophizing takes place between books of accounts when Moses is still working as an accountant. At the publisher Nicolai's people meet first in the printing workshop. Markus Herz, a doctor and Kant-student lectures in his house every Wednesday afternoon on physical and philosophical subjects while his very young and very beautiful wife Henriette hosts next door the literary conversation.

Henriette Herz was not equipped with education, but she learned quickly and easily, yet she felt in her knowledge not at home. Only with Schleiermacher at her side, she learned to get familiar with what she had learned. Schleiermacher caused a sensation with his “Speech about Religion,” in which he ultimately argues for a separation of state and society. He seeks the unity of body and mind and in the universe he sees the divine. Friedrich meets Schleiermacher in the “Montagsrunde” (Monday circle) and moves in with him<sup>27</sup>.

Schleiermacher takes Friedrich to the Salons - which are the intellectual focal points of Berlin.

Salons were different from the then usual dinner parties, where the sexes met while on the same premises, but remained in their spheres. In Salons the class barriers were lifted. There were no men’s or women’s conversations. Each and every one was able to contribute on any subject. Spirit was more in demand than reason, imagination was valued higher than virtue. In Rahel Levin-Varnhagen’s salon, not only the ‘entire city’ meets, but over the years ‘half of Europe.’ There are writers and businessmen, aristocrats and artists, soldiers and revolutionaries, priests and freethinkers, married and single, a prince and his lover, and travelers. They all come for talking, for discussion and discourse, to find new ideas and question the old ones. And often their conversation is carried on in letters. Rahel is neither beautiful nor rich. But she is passionately interested in people, is fascinated by them and she fascinates them. On top of this she has a special sensitivity for the mystery of each person and she opens up to everybody. Those characteristics make her salons so unique<sup>28</sup>. Rahel, the oldest daughter of a banker, was born 1771 in Berlin. She suffered under the authoritarian father, her Jewishness and her womanhood. Her longing to be a whole person was stigmatized by Orthodox Jews as “apostasy”. As a Jew among Chris-

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<sup>27</sup> Both enjoy their ‘men-living-community’ where after waking up they just needed to open the bedroom doors to go on with last night’s conversation - from bed to bed.

<sup>28</sup> Wilhelm von Humboldt recalls in a letter on March 3rd 1834: “People just loved to go to her not only because of her really very amiable character, but because they could be sure never to go by it, if they have not heard anything from her and take away the substance for further, more serious, often deep thoughts or feelings. Her liveliness was inspiring ..” (quoted from Schmid, 1985: 195)

tians, she was considered a second class citizen, and as a woman she had not yet fully arrived in society<sup>29</sup>. Of these traps, Rahel tries to free herself by immersing in literature and philosophy. Here she finds what she seeks. Acting people in Goethe's novels, with Fichte, the liberation of the "I". For her as a girl and Jewish, education was not on the schedule. Her parents spoke "Jiddish" – an old Jewish language, related to Middle-High-German - and she also wrote in Hebrew letters. Rahel had first to learn German.

With her style of writing she enriched the German language and brought it to a special tone. Grillparzer in his autobiography recalls an encounter with Rahel, in 1826 in Berlin. He describes her as an inconspicuous creature bent of old age, that the moment she started to speak, he was enchanted. He walked by her and was convinced that only this woman could have made him happy<sup>30</sup>. In Jägerstraße in the center of Berlin, Rahel opened her first salon after her father had died. In the "Dachstube" as she called her attic room, supposedly tea was served. Yet there were always guests and discussions, and there met the centuries: The previous era with the heirs of the Enlightenment met the future with its self-conscious representatives of new ideas and ways of life, the Romantic movement. Here Dorothea Veit, Mendelsohn's daughter Brendel, and Friedrich Schlegel were introduced<sup>31</sup>.

Dorothea had spent nearly twenty years at the side of a brave man to whom her wisdom and her wit had no value. With Friedrich she finally

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<sup>29</sup> In Rahel's letters and diaries, often she has recurring dreams. In one of those dreams she died and arrived in heaven with her two friends Bettina von Arnim and Karoline von Humboldt. In order to free themselves, they each were to query the most painful experiences of life. So Rachel asked her girlfriends: Do you know disappointed love? They cried out loud and for all three their sorrow and pain from the heart were washed away. And she went on. Do you know infidelity, abuse, insults, grief, sorrows ... and every time the other two nodded and the three of them were crying and were relieved of their burden. Then Rahel finally asked: do you know shame? This time, the two friends kept silent, looked surprised and moved away from her. Rahel knew that she was alone with this burden. (Stephan Zweig: *The World of Yesterday: Memories of an European*, Stockholm, 1944, in Hannah Arendt: *Die verborgene Tradition*, Frankfurt / M 1976, p.74.)

<sup>30</sup> Günzel: *Silhouettenbilder*.

<sup>31</sup> Friedrich wrote to his friend Novalis about Dorothea. "In terms of external training and delicacy she is far behind the sister-in-law (Caroline). She is just a sketch, but quite large in style. Her whole being is religion, although she does not know of it. If she loses me, she would follow me as in Indian custom." (Drewitz, 1979: 39)

feels recognized, appreciated and loved. In the difficult time of divorce - the process took two years - Schleiermacher is her confidant. Her husband stays generous. He sets up a small annuity and allows her to keep the youngest son, on condition that she not marries again and not convert. Dorothy is divorced, when in 1799 "Lucinde" Friedrichs scandalous roman à clef appears. It is a memorial to Caroline. She is the woman who saves the protagonist from his crisis. Her humanity and natural generosity gives him back his belief in truth and beauty. His fulfillment he finds in Lucinde (Dorothea), who has 'remained natural amid human society, accepting with childlike sense the grace and gifts of the gods'<sup>32</sup>. Dorothea is thirty-four, highly delighted and grateful for the change in her life and nothing can frighten her - neither the sensation the novel provokes nor pending money problems. She is willing to do anything to gain her idolized Friedrich the freedom for his writing. She translates, edits popular poetry, begins a novel, and later even sews shirts - because there are already enough books in the world, but no one had complained that there were too many shirts<sup>33</sup>.

Although Dorothea's pension was often their only income she converted to Protestantism and married Friedrich. Their later conversion to Catholicism often is interpreted as an expression of a particular variant of religious Romanticism - or even as a return to the fold after life was a failure. Circumstances suggest a pragmatic decision. Friedrich was looking for a position as an official. These only were available for Catholics in Catholic countries. In 1809 he was appointed Secretary of the Imperial Court and State Chancellory in Vienna.

### **The Jena Circle Breaks up**

In autumn of 1799, Friedrich returns to Jena. A little later Dorothea follows with her youngest son. In Schlegel's house life is intense and in full swing. Romantic companionship means to be active together. Caroline writes to Luise about everyday's life (October 5th 1799). She has to entertain 15 to 18 people with the help of a good cook. They eat, drink, make music and

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<sup>32</sup> Romantik. Erläuterungen zur Literatur

<sup>33</sup> narrated by Grillparzer in Drewitz, 1979: 41.

verses, read, recite, debate and go hiking together. The three children including Tieck's daughter, have equal rights. Schleiermacher's theory of sociableness is exercised and it works with irony and their sense of humor. Schelling and Caroline had met in Dresden on the occasion of the gallery visit. In the same year, Schelling - much to Goethe's efforts - was appointed to the University of Jena. Very quickly, he belonged to Schlegel's house. Without this group of early Romantics, his "positive philosophy" that he wanted to develop on the basis of reason, would never have led to the "German idealism" (Frank, 2004).

When Caroline, twelve years older, and Schelling finally admitted their love for each other, tensions among the group started. In spring of 1800, Caroline fell seriously ill. Letters from this time are written by Auguste<sup>34</sup>. The usual methods of treatment aggravate her condition. Schelling then forces the doctor to apply the Brownian method. These are tonics, bouillion and Hungarian wines, which lead to a slow recovery. For full recovery Caroline goes with Auguste for a cure to southern Germany. There on July 12th, Auguste dies of dysentery. William is at Caroline's side immediately, at the end of September bringing her to Braunschweig. She still is not allowed to go to Göttingen.

The death of Auguste has changed everything. Dorothea and Friedrich indirectly blame Schelling because he intervened in the treatment. Dysentery is an infectious disease which cannot be fought with mustard plasters and bloodletting, the usual contemporary methods. But Schelling falls into depression. Caroline tries to cheer him up in her letters and asks Goethe for help. At that time the hostilities on the part of Dorothea and Friedrich are fully erupted. They do not refrain from slander and intrigue. Caroline returns to Jena in the spring of 1801. From a letter of May 7th or 8th to Wilhelm, who is then teaching in Berlin: "The only word, (that) you do not want to take part against me in the personal relationship between Friedrich and me, has made me very calm? I desire nothing else, although my heart has been fairly full of resentment. I still cannot see clearly, and do not un-

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<sup>34</sup> Dorothea writes to Rahel: "Our beautiful life has destroyed an evil demon, for six weeks 'die Schlegel' (Caroline) is confined sick to bed ...."



derstand, how Veit has really ventured without taking so little consideration for both you and me, so that I am still inclined to think that my eyes and ears deceive me” (Damm, 2005: 337). Caroline and Wilhelm’s request for divorce is granted with the support of Goethe in 1803. Both remain linked together in friendship. Schelling and Caroline marry in the same year and leave Jena. Hegel had come to Jena in 1801. In 1802 Schelling and Hegel publish the “Kritisches Journal für Philosophie”. Wilhelm Schlegel lives and travels with Madame de Stael.

### **A Whole Life As A Departure**

Through her brother Clement Brentano, Bettine is introduced to the early Romanticists. Her social education is similar to Caroline’s. From childhood on, she is intellectually stimulated and exposed to social intercourse. In the salon of her grandmother, Sophie La Roche, artists and scholars meet side-by-side with German Jacobins and French emigrants, which certainly influence Bettine’s political views. Like the other Early Romanticists, she feels in the tradition of Herder’s philosophy of history and influenced by Jewish thinking. Bettine was born in 1785 and grew up in Frankfurt’am Main’. Marriage was not planned. Despite this she married Achim von Arnim in 1811. She then was already twenty six years old. Von Arnim was a close friend of her brother Clement. Both had published the folk-song collection “Des Knaben Wunderhorn”. Bettina wanted to keep her wedding secret, “...so that the talk of an ordinary day does not interfere with the magic world”. She lived with her husband and without him, alternately in Berlin and at the nearby estate Wiepersdorf<sup>35</sup>. After the death of Achim von Arnim, with whom she had seven children, she returned to literature and social activity until old age.

As for Rahel, the letter is the art form of sociability, to Bettine, the letter is the literary form of art per se. Her novels are based on mails which she has reworked and intertwined twenty or even forty years later. She opposes any kind of oppression - except that of women. She feels superior to man imprisoned in his reason. Rahel writes about her as the wittiest of women, whose

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<sup>35</sup> Today, a state institution for artists.

spirit has the most twists and it has her, not she it. Bettine accepts no patronizing, by neither her brother nor the state<sup>36</sup>. She is aware of her special position. The freedom she is permitted, not only as an ‘infant prodigy’ but later as a peculiar unrelenting old woman, she uses for herself and others up to the limits of social boundaries<sup>37</sup>. Three women were important to Bettine’s development. Her grandmother, the professional writer Sophie La Roche, Goethe’s mother<sup>38</sup>; and Karoline von Günderrode, five years her senior. She forms Bettine intentionally, their different natures complementing each other.

Karoline von Günderrode (1780 - 1806) was descended from impoverished nobility. At the age of 19 she was sent to a “Damenstift”<sup>39</sup>. She wrote poems and prose, and stabbed herself to death at the age of twenty-six on the banks of the Rhine<sup>40</sup>.

It was about the turn of the century when three of the Brentano siblings, Bettine, Clemens and Gunda, first met Günderrode. They were introduced by Friedrich Carl von Savigny, who was fascinated by Günderrode, but later married the rather unambitious Gunda. At that time two volumes of Günderrode’s poetry had been published under the male pseudonym “Tian”.

Bettine and Clemens are both violently in love with this philosophically trained, reticent poet. Towards Clemens, “this politically irresponsible son of the bourgeoisie”<sup>41</sup>, who is torn, arrogant and insistent, Günderrode remains aloof but appreciates his poems. With Bettine’s emphatic way of currying favor, she opens up eventually, and a stormy yet fruitful friendship begins. Clemens also is courting her through letters written in his didactic

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<sup>36</sup> She wrote two books of indictment of the social conditions in Prussia, the so-called “Book of the King”. In order to avoid censorship, she wrote under the title of the first volume (1843) the dedication: “This book belongs to the king.”

<sup>37</sup> She educated her seven children according to her self-understanding, what today would be called ‘anti-authoritarian’. In spite of the potential influence of backward Germany, she succeeded in the synthesis of art and politics and stayed always the radical.

<sup>38</sup> Bettine as a child loves to visit Goethe’s mother. In her King’s book she let her as “Frau Rat” (Mrs. Council) ask questions which reveal the state in its inadequacy. Also her view that the State itself is the greatest criminal, she made “Frau Rat” express. This is how she made the taboo topics of the salons get into public.

<sup>39</sup> A facility, similar to a nunnery, for unmarried nobles.

<sup>40</sup> River, which was mystified not only by the later Romantics.

<sup>41</sup> This is how refers H. M. Enzensberger to him.

manner, including unsolicited advice. He says he is delighted by “Tian”’s poems and wants to know - after G nderrode confessed her authorship - why she has decided to print her songs. He then gets carried away with rather absurd criticism of some of her poems. She responds with humor. G nderrode’s influence on Bettine can be discerned everywhere. Bettine’s epistolary novel, “Die G nderrode”, published in 1840, gives insight into how the two friends shared and complemented each other.

Young Bettine was among the very few who recognized H lderlin’s genius. Her dealing with his illness anticipates the anti-psychiatry thinking of the second half of the 20th century. She thinks that H lderlin, with all he says about language, was close to illuminating the divine mystery of language<sup>42</sup>.

G nderrode’s philosophy of history is strongly influenced by the early Romantics. Despite her convent residence, she was among a circle of like-minded women. They all reflected on their situation but not as uncompromisingly as G nderrode<sup>43</sup>. G nderrode acquires her knowledge persistently and systematically, on her own. She deals with geometry and mathematics and Schelling’s “Naturphilosophie” and notes: “I also thanked the fate that I lived so long to grasp something of Schelling’s divine philosophy and what I do not yet understand to imagine and that at least before death the meaning of all heavenly truths of this teaching have risen.” Her conception of the world is similar to Schilling’s. In her historical understanding, G nderrode is committed to the scholar of antiquity, Creuzer. He brought her close to the ancient world and his view of religion as a myth common to all nations and continents. G nderrode and Creuzer meet in August 1804. Creuzer is married, a fact which does not protect either of them against an outbreak of violent love for each other. His wife first agrees to a divorce, but then withdraws her consent. Creuzer falls seriously ill; he is

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<sup>42</sup> “But we are not aware of our own disease, not of the rigid senses; we do not feel that this is disease, - and we are so mad and even more so than he, whose spiritual flame should light his own country - but goes out in the muddy creek of rain overflowed of everyday routine...” (Dischner, 1978: 125-126)

<sup>43</sup> In her “Apocalyptic fragment” (ein Apokalyptisches Fragment) she says: “It is not two, not three, not thousands, there is one and all; it is not divorced, body and spirit, so that one belongs to time, the others to eternity, it is one, belongs to itself and is also time and eternity, visible and invisible, and remains in transition, an infinite life.” (G nderrode, 1922: 94 /15)

diagnosed with brain fever. He realizes that he cannot cope and announces the final separation. That is the occasion for G nderrode to kill herself, an act she had long prepared for. Her longing for death appears in her poems over and over again. She had revealed to Bettine her secret slogan: “ To know quite a lot, to learn quite a lot, and not survive youth. Die early.”

Bettine describes how she had struggled against G nderrode’s flirtation with death. In her book “Die G nderrode,” this struggle has turned into a veritable psychotherapeutic session: Bettine who feels betrayed and threatened tries desperately to break the death spell. She takes G nderrode’s dagger with a silver handle, and stabs into the upholstered furniture in her home. The horsehair stuffing swells and swirls in the air. Then she runs the knife into the window frames to blunt the blade.

On the day when the expected letter arrived with the news of Creuzer’s separation, G nderrode wrote the poem for her grave stone; a reminiscence of Herder’s translation from the Sanskrit, “Parting of the Hermit.”

There is another possible reading of this short life: Creuzer, highly gifted, but from a humble back ground, had patrons who enabled him to study. One of them was Savigny. After his professor had died, Creuzer marries his widow in gratitude. With G nderrode he not only finds love, but also the kind of spiritual ecstasy, which can arise when common interests and passion fall together. Creuzer’s later published book, “Mythologie und Symbolik der Alten” - which influenced Bachofen and his investigations on Matriachats - would be unthinkable without G nderrode. His critique of her poetry is insightful and thorough. He refers to the basics of ancient poetry, seeing that not her prose, but her poetry, is extraordinary. But what Creuzer finds in G nderrode, he had not looked for. He has been appointed to the Universit t of Heidelberg and he wants the kind of security offered him. His wings had been clipped a long time ago. G nderrode writes: “Vorzeit und neue Zeit Ein schmaler rauher Pfad schien sonst die Erde. Und auf den Bergen gl nzt der Himmel  ber ihr, ein Abgrund ihr zur Seite war die H lle, und Pfade f hrten in den Himmel und zur H lle. Doch alles ist ganz anders nun geworden, der Himmel ist gest rzt, der Abgrund ausgef llt und mit Vernunft bedeckt und sehr bequem zum gehen. Des Glaubens H hen sind nun demolieret. Und auf der flachen Erde schreitet der Verstand, und

misset alles aus, nach Klaftern und nach Schuen.”<sup>44</sup> Creuzer belongs to the ‘new era’. He has established himself in what his condition allows. He can not escape. He is in need of a woman who keeps his domestic routine going. This is not Günderrode’s world. She is uncompromising, claiming the whole of life with all the trimmings and at every moment. In the end, she felt earth held nothing more for her.

## Epilogue

Günderrode considered her first publications as constituting an opening to the world. Her last manuscript she sent to Creuzer in January 1806; he was to take care of the printing. He disagreed with the title. They ultimately agreed on “Melete”. The series of poems is a declaration of love for Eusebio, and Eusebio is Creuzer. He was enthusiastic and joked about Günderrode’s intellectual superiority. After her death, he cancelled the manuscript printing, and the work was considered lost until 1896, when a first proof of ‘Melete’ appeared near Heidelberg.

## Conclusion

The women from the early period of German Romanticism presented here shared the gift of an extraordinary self-knowledge. Caroline Michaelis at a very young age has an accurate picture of her character and her possibilities as a woman in her society. She is willing to compromise. She reflects on two possible ways of life - the peaceful, socially accepted one or the free life with troubles. “Only the one who is sure she can bear the consequences is allowed to live in her own way”. About herself she said, “...I know what I have to do - because I know what I can ...”. Early in life she started cultivating her idea of friendship and lived up to it.

Rahel Varnhagen’s keen sensitivity toward outsiders, which made her

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<sup>44</sup> “Ancient and New Times”: “The Earth seems to be a rough path. And on the mountains glimmers the sky above her, an abyss next to her was hell, and paths leading to heaven and to hell. But everything has now turned out differently, the sky has fallen, filled the abyss, and covered with reason to walk comfortably. Of heights of beliefs are now demolished. And on the flat ground below reason walks, and measures everything, in the manner fathoms and shoes.” Karoline von Günderrode.

salons famous, was her special gift derived from the collective memory of centuries of persecution. She left behind a literary work in letters, in which she analyzes not only her personal experiences as a woman with class barriers but the psychology of a society.

Bettine Brentano was exposed to a mentally stimulating, socially and intellectually formative environment. She had an exuberant temperament and the freedom to ignore social boundaries. She filled every phase of her life and remained faithful to herself without compromising.

Philosophically trained Karoline von Günderode was fascinated by Bettine's vivacious temper. She suffered from the limitation of being a woman. Uncompromising, she demanded all of her life.

These women of Early Romanticism were romanticized in every aspect. Novalis defined Romanticization as a qualitative increase of potency to a better self, to a higher meaning and to mystery. In this serie of intensify the quality potential Caroline Schelling sticked to the mystery. Rahel Varnhagen captured and preserved the dignity of the unknown in herself and in others. Bettina von Arnim enhanced sympathy and compassion to its highest. "Early accomplished" Karoline von Günderode found herself in the "infinite light", which is considered the romanticizing of the finite. Each of these women reflected her "naturalness".

**Özet:** Evrensel kültür metinleri, farklı dönemlerin farklı bakış açılarına sahip okurlarına yeni şeyler sunma kapasitesine sahiptir. Erken Romantik dönem yazarlarının metinleri de böyledir. Bununla birlikte, bu makalede, Almanya'da 18. yüzyıldaki tinsel uyanışın önkoşulu olan toplumsal ve siyasal çevrenin bir taslağı çıkarılmaya çalışılacaktır. Erken Romantik hareket 18. yüzyılın sonuna doğru birtakım "uyanışlar" sonucu ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu hareketin odak noktasında kadınlar vardır. Erken Romantik hareket, bütün olanaklarıyla birlikte "tüm-insan" talebini ortaya atarak her türden mevcut toplum düzenine karşı rahatsız edici bir patlayıcı madde etkisi gösterir. Bu nedenle Romantisizmin alımlanma tarihinde erken dönem Romantik yazarlar "hayalperestler" ve "şaşkınlık" diye nitelenip küçümsenmişlerdir. Yeğlenen ise talihli, Katolik ve bir kategoriye sokulabilir olan geç dönem Romantikleri olmuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Erken Romantisizm, Birlikte Olma, Salon, Doğal Gelişim, Dinamik Süreç

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