

“DANN IST UND BLEIBT EINE KORRESPONDENZ LEBENDIG”: ROMANTIC
DIALOGUE IN THE LETTERS AND WORKS OF RAHEL LEVIN VARNHAGEN,
BETTINA BRENTANO VON ARNIM, AND KAROLINE VON GÜNDERRODE

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I analyze letters and other writing by three women writers during the Romantic period: Rahel Levin Varnhagen, Bettina Brentano von Arnim, and Karoline von Günderrode. I investigate interpersonal communication in the traditional form of the dialogue as it developed between these women authors and their peers. These epistolary projects reflect a different approach of each woman writer to their letters: Levin Varnhagen's letters were destined to be published from the beginning; Bettina Brentano von Arnim's letters were used as a material for her fictional epistolary novel; Günderrode's letters were meant to remain private. Scholarship has often focused on attempts to justify women writers for their choice of the letter genre while I claim that the authors discussed here actively preferred the form of a letter.

I argue that due to the form and content of these letters, a new model of interpersonal communication emerges, which borrows creatively from the Romantic concepts of sociability (including salon conversation) and symphilosophy. The letter exchanges analyzed here are in fact collaborative projects that adhere to the ideals of Early Romantic philosophy. These authors' letters have been described as "life as the process of writing" and represent a high degree of romanticization – the reflection of the reflection – where thoughts, questions, and experiences are poured directly, in a seemingly chaotic way, onto paper. The approach of the "life as the process of writing" removes the split between art and literature and enables the authors to answer the Romantic call according to the maxim that "the world must become romanticized" by being potentialized.

Although Levin Varnhagen, Brentano von Arnim, and Günderrode address multiple topics, it is love (agape, philia, eros) that is at the center of their creative work. Brentano von Arnim connects the process of creative writing to the act of speaking rooted in a divine model of communication where “love is only gods’ conversation” and “question and sweet answer.” One cannot separate oneself from love – as it encompasses all aspects of our lives – just as one cannot separate oneself from dialogue because such separation would create dialogue interruptions and ultimately crises.

The writers I discuss are undeniably all women but all different from one another, and their differences help us see that any essentializing argument about them would be unproductive. I read their letters not relegating them to a private realm as “being too focused on love,” but rather positioning them within Romantic literary movement as they strive to live Romantic philosophy through letters. The relationship of the women authors to salon conversation is reflected and practiced through the genre of the letter on the level of art. The Romantic letter thus should have an established place in Romantic aesthetic theory.

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PREFACE

On May 28, 1811, Rahel Levin Varnhagen, drawing upon her experience as the leading Berlin *salonnière*, writes to Alexander von Marwitz: “Dann ist und bleibt eine Korrespondenz lebendig.”¹ She refers to the manner in which they both need to communicate so as to replicate face-to-face conversation in their letters as closely as possible. Levin Varnhagen reflects here on how letters have the capacity to capture both the immediacy of the spoken word and the moment in which it is uttered. She not only unites salon conversation and letter writing, but also emphasizes the importance of the dialogical quality of a letter exchange that recreates the atmosphere of salon conversations.

In this dissertation, I analyze letters and other writing by three women during the Romantic period: Rahel Levin Varnhagen (1771, Berlin – 1833, Berlin), Bettina Brentano von Arnim (1785, Frankfurt am Main – 1859, Berlin), and Karoline von Günderrode (1780, Karlsruhe – 1806, Winkel am Rhein,). I investigate interpersonal communication in the traditional form of the dialogue as it manifests itself in the modern letter as developed between these women authors and their peers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. I argue that, due to the letters’ content and structure, a new model for interpersonal communication emerges during this period and is found in these women’s correspondences. This new model of correspondence is a phenomenon that borrows creatively from contemporary practices, including

¹ To Alexander von der Marwitz, in Friedersdorf. Tuesday, 9 a.m., May 28, 1811. “Bei der anhaltendsten Hitze, ohne Regen. ‘Ich habe Ihren Brief vor mir und will darauf antworten, als ob Sie mit mir sprächen. So sollten Sie es auch machen! Dann ist und bleibt eine Korrespondenz lebendig, – und ist nicht so viel Tod im Leben, ist es selbst nicht eigentlich das Ringen mit ihm, das man es verbreiten, vermehren soll, wo nur möglich?’” Compare to: “perpetual love that no death will be able to obscure” See Wackenroder, “Herzenergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders,” p. 87. See also Tieck, “Phantasien über die Kunst für Freunde der Kunst,” 89.

salon conversation and the emerging Romantic concepts of sociability² and symphilosophy.³ It is a model for recreating – but also creating – dialogic settings within the supposedly monological form of the letter.⁴

The women authors whose letters and fiction I analyze here use the established letter form in order to represent their experiences, hopes, and concepts in ways that are innovating and astonishingly modern.⁵ For instance, the form of the letter allowed women, who often were prevented from publishing fiction or poetry, to develop a highly artistic style nonetheless, infusing everyday life with the aesthetic concerns of poetry. Karoline von Günderrode emphasizes as much in a letter to Bettina Brentano von Arnim: “Dein Brief macht mir Freude, es ist ein gesundes, munteres Leben darin, ... Du führst eine Sprache, die man Styl nennen könnte,

² I use the term “sociability” (Geselligkeit), following scholars such as Emily D. Bilski, Emily Braun, Anne Janowitz, and Anna K. Kuhn, to describe the atmosphere engendered in social-intellectual gatherings such as those in salons, mainly during the Romantic period, and particularly in the early years of nineteenth century. Markus Schwing states that the theory and practice of sociability complemented Romantic individualism, as intersubjectivity, exchange with others, was one of the anticipated pre-conditions for Romantic identity development. “Romantische Theorie der Gesellschaft,” in *Romantik-Handbuch*, ed. Helmut Schanze, Stuttgart: Kröner, 2003, pp. 510-540, pp. 515. See also *Jewish Women and Their Salons. The Power of Conversation*, eds., Emily D. Bilski and Emily Braun, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005 and *Romantic Sociability. Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain 1770-1840*, eds., Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

³ Symphilosophy, as understood by the Romantics, was the ideal form of work for a group of friends and like-minded artists whose writing and conversation was so interlined that any unequivocal individuation was virtually unfeasible. One can imagine an intense intellectual discussion with a good friend, in which ideas move back and forth, being fashioned, molded and refined, merged and interlocked, corrected and expanded, until one could not honestly say where precisely one’s contribution ended and the other’s contribution began.

⁴ Compare with Friedrich Schlegel *Dialogue on Poetry/Gespräch über die Poesie* where he attempts to emulate Plato’s dialogue form. The main parts of the text were composed in Jena, a setting, which provided the author with a *sui generis* paragon of a vivacious dialogue. Consequently he equipped the characters with the features of his Romantic friends. The work was produced to convey his views on poetry as presented for a circle of friends. The dialogue form enabled him to range over a wide intellectual field in a few pages, and to address the most diverse topics, without obligating him to create a systematic order between them or to dispute his case in detail. Ernst Behler and Roman Struc, “Introduction,” Friedrich Schlegel, *Dialogue on Poetry and Literary Aphorisms* (University Park & London: the Pennsylvania State, 1968), 1-50.

⁵ Private letters have been exchanged since 1300 – the oldest preserved German letter dates to the year 1305 and was written to a cloistered nun named Diemut in Munich (30). Only in 1800’s and 1900’s letters feature the pouring out of personal thoughts and feelings rooted in the Pietist tradition, where also women were encouraged to write letters (44). Women also participated in vigorous secular letter writing motivated by Gottsched and Gellert. Barbara Becker-Cantarino calls this undertaking the “Feminisierung der Literatur” where life, the act of thinking and writing changed the learned and instructing literature into “schöne Literatur,” Reinhard, M.G. Nickisch, *Brief* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1991), 47.

wenn sie nicht gegen allen herkömmlichen Takt wär. Poesie ist immer echter Styl ...”⁶ Brentano von Arnim preferred arrangements of text that were seemingly formless in order to convey experiences of quotidian existence through the prism of imagination, as a result, poeticizing life by blurring the lines between life and literature.⁷ Thus, Brentano von Arnim composed a rendition of life as chaos of outbursts of feelings, happenings, thoughts on art, and literary experiences.⁸

Even though the letter dialogues of Rahel Levin Varnhagen, Bettina Brentano von Arnim and Karoline von Günderrode encompass a myriad of topics – often reflecting the concerns of the Romantic movement of which they were a part – they are about different forms of love: *agape*, *philia*, *eros*, which each author emphasizes to various degrees. All three writers were absorbed in and committed to spoken and written dialogues about love: hence, in the center of their creative work is the symbol of the heart, which Levin Varnhagen calls “das stärkste Organ.”⁹ Levin Varnhagen’s point of departure for analyzing social and psychological phenomena is essentially rooted in the heart, and she (as well as Brentano von Arnim and Günderrode) consistently lauds the concept of love and the Romantic concept of friendship.¹⁰ She does not necessarily privilege the individual person’s feelings over social and psychological phenomena, but rather engages with each individual and deliberates in letters on the essence of love as the core of human interaction and relationships, and conveys assertions based on her

⁶ Letter to Bettine, *Die Günderrode, Werke und Briefe in drei Bänden*, eds., Walter Schmitz and Sibylle von Steinsdorff (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1986) 394.

⁷ Solveig Ockenfuß, *Bettine von Arnims Briefromane. Literarische Erinnerungsarbeit zwischen Anspruch und Wirklichkeit*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992, p. 29. See also Friedrich Schlegel’s *Dialogue on Poetry and Literary Aphorisms* (University Park & London: the Pennsylvania State, 1968,) 1-50, p. 10. Schlegel called his composition “chaotic,” which in fact was a deliberate chaotic presentation, that is, its literary structure was that of an “organized chaos.”

⁸ Ockenfuß, *Bettine von Arnims Briefromane*, 29.

⁹ Rahel to Gentz December 27, 1827, *Rahel Varnhagen. Briefwechsel*, ed., Kemp (Munich: Winkler Verlag, 1979), 157.

¹⁰ Katherine Goodman, *Dis/closures: Women’s Autobiography in Germany between 1790 and 1914*. New York: P. Lang, 1986. p. 93.

observations and communication with others. Brentano von Arnim also links love specifically to the creative process of writing embedded in the act of speaking as “a divine model of communication,”¹¹ where “Liebe ist ... nur Göttergespräch”¹² and primarily “Frage und süße Antwort.”¹³ For Brentano von Arnim, our speech acts are rooted in the divine and in universal love. We cannot separate ourselves from love – as it encompasses and subsumes all aspects of life; and in that same way, we cannot disconnect from the act of dialogue without causing interruptions and ultimately creating crisis. Hence love is tied to dialogue and redeems the act of speaking and conversing: an exchange between a question and an answer are manifestations of divinity, the fullness of being. Therefore, when Günderrode poses the rhetorical question: “ist es nur die Liebe, die in diese dumpfe Leerheit Leben und Empfindung gießt?” the answer is obvious.¹⁴ Günderrode maintains the point of view shared by Levin Varnhagen and Brentano von Arnim: namely, that life is love and love is life; the emptiness is filled and one enjoys being

¹¹ Karin Zimmermann, *Die polyfunktionale Bedeutung dialogischer Sprechformen um 1800*, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 1992, pp. 65-70: Those communicatively marked text forms are based on the Romantic view of personhood which understands the “I” as inner plural and the “you” as a complement to “I.” The most important representatives were: Novalis, Friedrich Schlegel und F.D. Schleiermacher. In the term personality, Novalis interlocks individual existence and importance of community. So in order to develop personality one needs to take on multiple individualities and be able to assimilate himself; through this he will become individuality, a genius: “Eine ächt synthetische Person ist eine Person, die mehrere Personen zugleich ist – ein Genius.” Novalis Schriften Band 3, Fragment nr. 63, p. 250. Paul Kluckhohn und Richard Samuel, Leipzig 1928. Personality is thereby ipso facto not established – not a given but in a permanent formation process. It never commands, rules over itself and if then only in retrospect, referring to the past. Letter, dialogue, diary, fragment are in research emphasized as open forms. If one were to assume that this involves only egocentric texts, one could speak about an “offenen Persönlichkeitsstruktur.” The completion is in the future and implies a continuous development of the I. The product personality is not suggested as the result of an isolated differentiation, but rather as a part of a community. The threatening isolation and rootlessness of an individual is addressed by Novalis in the idea of communicative community: “Je man nichfacher Etwas individualisirt ist - desto mannichfacher ist seine Grenze und Nachbarschaft. Ein unendlich characterisirtes Individuum ist Glied eines Infinitinomiu(m)s. Novalis Bd 3, Nr. 113, p. 262. It realizes itself in the community and learns its subjectivity in the first place in connection with other subjects. Zimmermann, *Die polyfunktionale Bedeutung dialogischer Sprechformen um 1800*, p. 65.

¹² Ibid., 511.

¹³ Bettina von Arnim, *Die Günderrode. Werke und Briefe in drei Bänden*, eds., Walter Schmitz and Sibylle von Steinsdorff (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1986), 511-512. Zimmermann, *Die polyfunktionale Bedeutung dialogischer Sprechformen um 1800*, 67.

¹⁴ An Gunda, Hanau, 24 November, 1801, *Ich Sende Dir ein zärtliches Pfand: Die Briefe der Karoline von Günderrode*, ed., Birgit Weissenborn. Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1992 p. 83-84.

alive. Conversely, for Günderrode, when the joy of living is lost, the only alternative that remains is death.

I choose to look at the writing of Rahel Levin Varnhagen, Bettina Brentano von Arnim, and Karoline von Günderrode not primarily as narratives of marginalization, but rather as those of female literary self-assurance. As a consequence, my argument redefines and sharpens their roles in the history of literary studies. To be sure, feminist literary studies have addressed the predicament of women authors in the context of a history of suppressed women's writing related to patriarchal expectations.¹⁵ Feminist scholars have shown how women writers circumvented the stigma of being dilettantes and proven that their works are indeed worthy of inclusion in the literary canon. Nevertheless, scholarship has often focused on attempts to justify women writers for their choice of the letter form and on ways in which this particular genre can be perceived as creative writing while Levin Varnhagen, Brentano von Arnim, and Günderrode actively preferred the genre of the letter.¹⁶ One of the more significant conclusions of past and recent

¹⁵Barbara Becker-Cantarino, *Der lange Weg zur Mündigkeit: Frau und Literatur (1500-1800)*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1987. *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik. Epoche – Werke – Wirkung*. München: C.H. Beck, 2000. French, Lorely. *German Women as Letter Writers: 1750-1850* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1996). Goodman, Katherine. *Dis/closures: Women's Autobiography in Germany between 1790 and 1914* (New York: P. Lang, 1986).

¹⁶Lorely French, *German Women as Letter Writers: 1750-1850* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1996). Goodman, Runge, Anita, and Lieselotte Steinbrügge. *Die Frau im Dialog: Studien zu Theorie und Geschichte des Briefes* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1991). Groag Bell, Susan, and Marilyn Yalom. "Introduction." *Revealing Lives. Autobiography, Biography, and Gender*. Ed. Susan Groag Bell and Marilyn Yalom (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 1-11.

That women authors discussed in the dissertation made a conscious choice to use the form of a letter can be argued by comparing their writing to that of other women authors of that time period or even before. Sophie von La Roche, for instance, was a well-published writer whose career spanned more than 30 years. Her most successful work was a novel, *Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim* (1771) (275); Sophie Mereau-Brentano, one of the first professional woman writers in Germany, wrote poetry, essays, novellas, and the novels *Blüthenalter der Empfindung* (1794) and *Amanda und Eduard* (1803). Most of her protagonists rebel against any restriction of individual freedom and are like the author herself, women in search of self-determination in the public and private spheres (317); Therese Huber wrote to support herself. Many women authors, yielding to public or private pressures, published their works anonymously (Naubert, Huber, D. Schlegel), under pseudonyms (Günderrode), or even under their husbands' names (Schlegel-Schelling, D. Schlegel, Huber). Nevertheless, their writing in this period is distinguished by accomplishments in all forms, frequently with a purposeful desire to broaden generic boundaries. Even before the Grimms, Naubert was writing and compiling fairy tales that distanced themselves from the rational tales of J.K.A. Musäus. She also developed a new form of the historical novel (a fictional romance with a historically authentic

feminist literary scholarship has been that letters written by women from the early modern period through the twentieth century can be read as autobiographies, and that the boundaries between autobiography and fiction are not always clear.¹⁷

Ultimately, these two – life and work – are not separated, but rather that which is lived is a work of art.¹⁸ I argue that, for the Romantic women writers, the site of aesthetic experience where real life is manifest is in essence the salon and subsequently in dialogical writing – namely in letters. Hence, the salon becomes “a real utopia” that influences and stimulates the production of art, and the *salonnière*, Levin Varnhagen, is transformed into a “Lebens-Künstlerin.”¹⁹ Taking into account the Romantic ideal of the unification of life and art in society and in letters, I aim to promote a revision of scholarly perceptions about the goals and themes in women’s writing in this period. In my view, the theme of love is the bedrock of the kind of interpersonal communication that emerges in these three women’s letters, where love is portrayed as unfolding in dialogue, and is necessarily expressed through dialogue.²⁰ The various types of love serve as a kind of thematic platform on which other subjects are explored. Hence, love is not only a theme,

background) that influenced Sir Walter Scott. Mereau and Huber experimented with diverse prose forms and challenged bourgeois gender conventions, especially those concerning marriage. Caroline Auguste Fischer claimed woman’s rights to personal and artistic self-expression, and in *William der Neger* (1817), she even connected sexual and racial oppression (462). In *The Feminist Encyclopedia of German Literature*, eds., Friederike Eigler and Susanne Kord (Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1997).

¹⁷ See Goodman, *Dis/closures* and Katja Behrens, ed., *Frauenbriefe der Romantik* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1981).

¹⁸ Romantic women’s writing was not separated from life and included indistinctness of writing about life. On the point of the unification of the everyday and the poetic in these women’s work: Rahel Levin Varnhagen claimed and moved within the element of art inasmuch as she approached life as if it were art. See Christa Bürger, *Leben Schreiben. Die Klassik, die Romantik und der Ort der Frauen*. J.B. (Stuttgart: Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1990).

¹⁹ See Peter Seiber, *Der literarische Salon, Literatur und Geselligkeit zwischen Aufklärung und Vormärz* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1993), 339.

²⁰ Niklas Luhmann defines love as a “symbolically generated medium of communication” restricted to the world of the text. I acknowledge Luhmann’s contribution to thinking about communication in the 18th and 19th centuries, but I also maintain that these women’s letters referred to something that the authors felt was outside the text (and the women are not naïve about a text-external reality, but rather did not see the entire world as developing within their letters.) Niklas Luhmann, *Liebe als Passion. Zur Codierung von Intimität* (Frankfurt am Main, 1982), 9

but also provides a structure for how a letter can incorporate intersubjective perspectives.²¹ The letters I analyze here represent a creative process of writing, often with distinctive erotic overtones that communicate a desire to unify passionate and (un)married love. Moreover, although the treatment of the subject of love (whether as eros, agape, or philia) relates to these writers' personal experiences, it does not stop there. Their letters go beyond a consideration of their own lives in order to explore and theorize the notion of love in more abstract philosophical terms.

The dialogues among these women and the other recipients of their letters provide yet another form of Romantic literary output that not only poeticizes the social world by connecting quotidian elements with those of art, but also by giving intellectual insight into how much of human life is dependent on and supported by the presence of love—or constructions of this presence. Dialogical form allows the authors to develop their philosophical and critical positions about love, around love, and other topics.

My work focuses on dialogues in Romantic letters both as the continuation of salon conversations and a realization of the new Romantic practice of sociability and symphilosophy. But it also relates directly to different aspects of discussion on women writers' canonization by literary scholars: on how seriously their works are read and contextualized within German literary and cultural history. The authors I discuss are all women, undeniably, but very different from one another, and their differences help demonstrate just how unproductive any essentializing argument about them as women would be. Rather, I am reading their texts because

²¹ Every literary text fulfills a communicative function, as it implies a fictional or factual addressee. From this point of view literary texts embody messages given this communicative function. Love develops in the course of literary reception. Friedrich Schleiermacher specifies in his Romantic hermeneutics the basic rules of this kind of communication in that he analogizes the reader-text relation to the Romantic intimate system. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik und Kritik*, Ed. Manfred Frank (Frankfurt am Main, 1995), 75. In Christian Metz, *Die Narratologie der Liebe. Achim von Arnims <Gräfin Dolores>* (Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 21.

of what their letters contribute to a new Romantic model for dialogue in this period. I am not intending to privilege women as women, but rather, I wish to acknowledge the letters' personal or private aspects without losing sight of the fact that these are texts, systems of signs, that can be pejoratively interpreted as "too focused on love," for instance – and thus fulfilling the patriarchal notion of feminine sentimentalism. Through emphasizing love as an underlying theme of the authors' writing, I am not reading the letters in an "essentialist" mode and thus relegating women to the "personal" or marginal realm. I am positioning them within the literary movement of Romanticism as adherents attempting to live Romantic philosophy through their letters.

Levin Varnhagen, Brentano von Arnim, and Günderrode had three very different life paths, including their marriages or not getting married (as it was the case of Günderrode). They came from three different religious backgrounds: Catholic, Jewish (though Varnhagen, like her contemporary Dorothea Veit-Schlegel and others, eventually converted to Christianity), Protestant. However they all wrote at the intersection of Enlightenment and Romanticism, and their writings did not intervene in their religious cultures, as those of their male counterparts did. Accordingly, their oeuvres exhibit tolerant and cosmopolitan attitudes and at times suggest a renewed spirituality.

The daughter of merchant-banker Levin Markus and Chaie Levin Markus, Rahel Levin was the most prominent *salonnière* in Berlin, as well as an extraordinarily prolific letter writer. With her salon, she created an alternative society, providing a microcosmic opposite to the patriarchal arrangement of intellectual discourse. Many well-known intellectuals chose her salon as their gathering-place, eg., Friedrich Schlegel, Friedrich Schelling, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt, Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, Ludwig Tieck, Jean Paul.

As emphasized by Barbara Hahn, Levin Varnhagen salon gatherings and her friendships – “the movement of thoughts” – were of great value to her, and both were perceived as political and philosophical undertakings.²² Her life-long dialogical project consisted of several life-long correspondences with prominent and also less celebrated personalities of the day. She, in fact, “created a new practice of writing” by deliberately working to build a network of people who would then engage and produce writing together.²³ Hence, she and her husband, Karl August Varnhagen von Ense, collected diligently and preserved all the letters, including those she received and those she recovered from her addressees. Some of this material was published during her lifetime in various journals. In the course of Levin Varnhagen’s lifetime, her letters to and from David Veit (1771–1814), Alexander von der Marwitz (1746–1819) and Regina Froberg (born Rebecca Saling, married Friedländer, 1782–1850) were prepared for publication and edited by her husband. After his wife’s death, Karl August Varnhagen brought to press a collection of letters: *Rahel. Ein Buch des Andenkens für ihre Freunde* (Rahel: A Commemoration for Her Friends).²⁴

Bettina Brentano was born in Frankfurt am Main to an upper middle-class merchant family. Her mother Maximiliane von La Roche, daughter of the well-known writer, editor, and salon hostess Sophie von La Roche, died when Bettina was eight. She lived with her famous grandmother, and it was there that she met famous literary and political figures of the time and was inspired to read and think independently. Her grandmother’s house was also a place where Bettina Brentano, as a girl, first experienced the atmosphere of salon gatherings that later influenced her own salons. During that time she developed a close connection to her older

²² Barbara Hahn, “Jewish Women. A Comprehensive” Historical Encyclopedia.
<http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/varnhagen-rahel-levin>

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

brother Clemens, who instilled in her a love for literature and introduced her to new literary trends and contemporary writers. Her friendship with the poet Karoline von Günderode was also of great importance. After her husband Achim von Arnim died in 1831, Bettina Brentano-von Arnim immortalized her friend in the epistolary novel *Die Günderode*, integrating actual correspondence into a text of fictionalized letters. Scholars have seen in her dialogical writing a model of feminine aesthetics and of female subjectivity.²⁵

The approach to the works of Karoline von Günderode have suffered from biographism, a tendency to concentrate exclusively on her personal life and to analyze her work almost solely against the background of her love life and suicide.²⁶ The events that weigh heavily on and dominate her texts are indeed biographical. But her literary work has been treated as a construct of her despair and has been denied possible independent meaning, which has resulted in the tendency to label her writing as inferior. Günderode, the oldest of six siblings, came from a cultivated but impoverished aristocratic family. Because of her financial predicament in 1797, she entered a residence for noblewomen in Frankfurt, an institution where indigent unmarried aristocratic ladies could live respectably in hopes of finding a suitable marriage partner. One way to escape the restriction of her state was education, which Günderode acquired by determined “unfeminine” reading. She was interested in literature, philosophy, Far-Eastern and Norse mythology, chemistry, geography, history and history of religion, Latin, and poetry. What distinguished her from contemporary women writers was the fact that besides writing letters and poetry she also wrote dramas – considered “male” genre – and published her works under the

²⁵ Eigler, Friederike and Susanne Kord. *The Feminist Encyclopedia of German Literature* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1997), 25.

²⁶ Biographism – considered a dilettante approach to literature – generally indicates a pseudoscientific method of literary criticism, in which the critic proves an emotional relationship between authors and their works in order to uncover the authentic experience that informed the fictional account. A comparison of the reception of literary works by male and female writers unveils a determined gender bias. See *The Feminist Encyclopedia of German Literature*, eds., Eigler and Kord, 49.

pseudonyms Tian and Ion.²⁷ In August 1804 she met the Heidelberg philologist and archeologist Friedrich Creuzer, who was unhappily married, and great love developed between them. The circumstances surrounding G nderrode’s tabooed death (her claim that she was willing to die with Creuzer, Creuzer’s illness and his choice to end their affair, and ultimately G nderrode’s suicide following the message about Creuzer’s decision) influenced publication attempts and the reception of her works.

Several feminist and gender studies scholars describe the status of women writers in Romanticism as somewhere between muse and artist.²⁸ Levin Varnhagen, Brentano von Arnim, and G nderrode have a special significance as they elude such categorization. Varnhagen, the host of two Berlin literary salons and a prolific epistolary writer, is well known as an astute intellectual and not only a social commentator of her time but also a social activist. Brentano von Arnim – even though perhaps overshadowed at first by her well-known husband and her famous brother – became recognized as a writer, publisher, visual artist, composer, social activist, and a patron of young talent. G nderrode’s reception was indeed determined mainly by a biographical event: her suicide; however, G nderrode herself was self-confident in her creativity. She broke with historical models, which prescribed women to only pursue letter writing and poetry. By engaging in writing drama, she exceeded invisible limits. She also publicized continuously, even though not under her own name in order to maintain distance between herself and her texts and to protect herself from critical attacks. Varnhagen used similar tactics, and Brentano von Arnim only published under her own name after death of her husband.

²⁷ Ibid., 227.

²⁸ Barbara Becker-Cantarino, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik. Epoche – Werke – Wirkung*. M nchen: C.H. Beck, 2000. Lorely French, *German Women as Letter Writers: 1750-1850*. Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1996. Gilmore, Leigh. *Autobiographies: A Feminist Theory of Women’s Self-Representation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994). Hiltrud Gn g and Renate Mohrmann, eds., *Frauen, Literatur, Geschichte: Schreibende Frauen vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1999).

The most significant secondary literature sources that were valuable for my research and pertained to general subjects of my work were those concerning dialogue and letters. In the context of the history of dialogue and conversation, I began with Jürgen Wertheimer's "*Der Güter Gefährlichstes, die Sprache.*" *Zur Krise des Dialogs zwischen Aufklärung und Romantik* and his claim that the "crisis of dialogue" prompted by a structural change within public space and within the consciousness of individuals appeared in fiction around 1800. I argued that this so-called crisis of dialogue is different in the letters written by women writers I analyzed. In my dialogue analysis I found the book by Karin Zimmermann's *Die polyfunktionale Bedeutung dialogischer Sprechformen um 1800* absorbing, as she writes about dialogicity in Romantic texts (basing her analyses on theoretical writings of Bakhtin and Mukarovsky) and connects it to the ideas of Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis, and Friedrich Schleiermacher. Katherine R. Larson's *Early Modern Women in Conversation* helped me find connections between oral conversation and literary enactments of dialogue. Finally, May Mergenthaler's *Zwischen Eros und Mitteilung. Die Frühromantik im Symposium der Athenaeums-Fragmente* shed the light on what the complete, and thus, perfect communication meant for the Romantics and how it became the "poetry of poetry," "transcendent poetry." I found the history of salons and that of conversation exceptionally well delineated in Petra Wilhelmy-Dollinger's *Die Berliner Salons: Mit historisch-literarischen Spaziergängen* and in Peter Seibert's *Der literarische Salon*. I regard Barbara Becker-Cantarino's *Der lange Weg zur Mündigkeit: Frau und Literatur (1500-1800)* to be an indispensable work on women's writing per se, as it situates circumstances in which women wrote within historical setting – giving the reader a new, feminist perspective. Significant for understanding the women writer's letters were works by Barbara Hahn, for instance, *Unter falschem Namen: Von der schwierigen Autorschaft der Frauen* and "*Antworten Sie mir*": *Rahel*

Levin Varnhagens Briefwechse,¹ as well as Becker-Cantarino's book *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik*. All three mentioned books address the difficult issue of the anonymity of women writers as well as that of canonicity of their works and in particular letters –a troublesome genre. When examining Rahel Levin Varnhagen, I first reached for the well-known Hannah Arendt's *Rahel Varnhagen*, where she asserts that Varnhagen is a type in-between the "pariah and parvenu." Ursula Isselstein's *Studien zu Rahel Levin Varnhagen: Der Text aus meinem beleidigten Herzen* is also devoted to Varnhagen, as mostly a Jewish character. For my research on Bettina Brentano von Arnim, I chose Edith Waldstein's *Bettine von Arnim and the Politics of Romantic Conversation*, as well as to Ursula Liebertz-Grün's *Ordnung im Chaos. Studien zur Poetik der Bettine Brentano-von Arnim* and found that both books addressed well the aspect of dialogue in Brentano von Arnim's works as they situated her within the tradition of the Romantic era. I read Karoline von Günderode's letters in the light of Karlheinz Bohrer's *Der romantische Brief: die Entstehung ästhetischer Subjektivität* – despite his assumption that Romantic letters, including those of Günderode, are monological constructs.

This dissertation consists of five chapters: Chapter One, "Letters of Romantic Women Writers as Contributions to a New Conversation;" Chapter Two, "Rahel Levin Varnhagen's Understanding of Love, Realized Through Dialogue;" Chapter Three, "Bettina Brentano von Arnim and the Dialogue About Friendship and Love as Fusion of the Sensual and Spiritual Forces;" Chapter Four, "Love as Passion in the Letters of Karoline von Günderode;" and Chapter Five, "Conclusion."

In Chapter One, I propose a theoretical basis for understanding these women's letters both as products *of* and as contributions *to* Romantic philosophy, sociability, and symphilosophy. I argue that considerations of form as well as content are crucial to a complete understanding of

just how significant these authors' contributions are, both to epistolary production and to the overall discourses of Romanticism. In chapter two, I discuss Rahel Levin Varnhagen's epistolary project based in part on face-to-face conversations in salons (primarily in Berlin around 1800). At times, aspects of these intellectual exchanges transition between the salon and the letters; for instance, when Levin Varnhagen corresponds with the same people with whom she interacted in her salon, or recreates a salon setting and atmosphere within the letters through various narrative techniques. Letters constitute part of Rahel's pioneering social experiment, drawing her correspondents together much as she drew conversants together in her salons, where intellectuals and friends met informally. This chapter is based to some extent on my archival research of the materials from the Varnhagen Collection at the Jagiellonian Library in Kraków, Poland.²⁹

In Chapter Three, I discuss Bettina Brentano von Arnim's epistolary novel *Die Günderrode*. I examine the novel in the context of Romantic salon sociability and letters, as well as various modern manifestations of dialogue, social integration through dialogue, intertextuality, different forms of creativity, and interruptions of dialogue. Brentano von Arnim's work, which was created out of the correspondence with her friend Karoline von Günderrode and appeared thirty-four years after historical Günderrode's death, reconstructs a friendship from her youth and also enables her friend to re-enter the bourgeois public space. Brentano von Arnim's letters constitute a dialogue that reflects her face-to-face conversations with Karoline von Günderrode and address their conscious effort to create and together develop through a dialogue rich with philosophical discourse and poetry. Brentano Von Arnim's *Die*

²⁹ The Varnhagen Collection was previously in the Prussian State Library and was evacuated from Berlin in April of 1941 to be eventually transferred to Krakow after the war. By 1911, the Varnhagen Collection contained the papers of over 9,000 German intellectuals from the early nineteenth century. See Deborah Herz, "The Varnhagen Collection in Krakow" (*The American Archivist* Vol. 44.3 Summer 1981), 223-228, p. 224.

Günderode replicates the sociability and symphilosophy of the Romantic school and suggests a new vision for women interacting in emancipated community.

In Chapter Four, I analyze private epistolary exchanges of Karoline von Günderode that illustrate how interruptions metamorphose into a crisis of dialogue. I argue that her inability to sustain a mutually nourishing dialogue, and at times a lack of response from dialogue partners illustrate her self-designed persona of an author. Günderode's letters, never intended for publication and not published during her lifetime, belonged and arguably still belong to a truly private sphere. Although Karoline von Günderode's letters were meant to remain private, the desire for dialogue and recognition is as visible within these letters as it was in her works published already during her life. The need for intellectual interaction between equal dialogue partners reminds the reader again of the Romantic concept of symphilosophy. To Günderode, love and symphilosophy meant as much as thinking with one's feelings.

The last chapter consists of a summary of my findings and an indication of where work of this nature could go in the future. My project aims to contribute to a better understanding of writing by women in the Romantic era as well as to German and Gender Studies.

The letter collections of Rahel Levin Varnhagen, Bettina Brentano von Arnim, and Karoline von Günderode present, each in their own right, a unique fusion of art and life, book and letter, private and public affairs. Their epistolary dialogues are replete with literary metaphors, topoi, and forms that use structures of the past, but manipulate those structures in order to reflect unique and multiple fascinations and frustrations in their lives and works during the Romantic era. For all three authors, the letters offered aesthetic outlets for creating images of their multifaceted selves in relation to their social environments. Most importantly, they were able to address predicaments and obstacles that affected them directly because of their gender.

In women's literature, the significance of the author's name provokes a conflict. The unnamed are forgotten, and their works are not included in canon. Additionally, a trend has developed where in some secondary literature, women writers are mentioned by their first name only and appear more as distant friends than professional writers; it seems to be the case especially when scholars focus on love themes and create, instead of literary scholarship, biographies geared toward larger audience. In my dissertation, I will use either full names of the writers or their last names, just as would when writing about male writers. As far as spelling of the name "Günderode" instead of "Günderode," is concerned, I will use the former, as the style of writing the name was ascertained and chosen by the whole family.³⁰ The version "Günderode" was used by Bettina Brentano von Arnim in her epistolary novel *Günderode*. Brentano von Arnim also changed the spelling of her own name into "Bettine." Consequently, when writing about "Günderode" and "Bettine," I mean the fictitious characters in Brentano von Arnim's book.

In my dissertation, I demonstrate that the theory and practice of Romantic sociability necessary for carrying out "symphilosophical" work, a theory and practice that involved individual friendships, organized groups, and salon conversation, influenced the form and content of letters and works discussed here.³¹ All three authors were immersed in and committed to spoken and written dialogue about love in the varying manifestations of agape, philia, and eros. Love for them meant also freedom, a kind of mirror revealing the character of the one who loves, involving body and soul and giving of self in order to help another; thus, they never took it

³⁰ See, *Königs Genealogische Adels-Historie*, Frankfurt 1707, specifically "Humbrachts Ahnentafeln der Rheinischen Ritterschaft." Max Preitz, "Erläuterungen," In „Karoline von Günderode in ihrer Umwelt" (*Jahrbuch des Freien Deutschen Hochstifts*, Tübingen, 1962), 215.

³¹ According to Markus Schwering, the influence can be hardly overestimated. Markus Schwering, "Romantische Theorie der Gesellschaft," *Romantik-Handbuch*, ed. Helmut Schantze (Thübingen: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 2003), 517.

for granted. They were dedicated to dialogue and had confidence in its power. For them, love could not be separated from dialogue, just as letters were tied to life, and that which was lived became a work of art. I maintain that the motif of love – although familiar and established – is essential for dialogue; thus, forming a stage on which other subjects are built, underlining the universal significance of love. I see it as essentially the foundation of these women writers’ feminine philosophy where the center of their creative work is occupied by the symbol of heart, called by Levin Varnhagen “the strongest organ.”³²

In the next chapter, I will talk about how the letter dialogues analyzed here (written exchanges of letters between various correspondents and the authors) reflect Romantic ideals and practices of salon conversation and of symphilosophy. I discuss how the cultivation of human communication and friendship is necessarily done through dialogue, and how dialogue is a way of unifying people. However the underlying message of freedom and peace, for all three of the authors represented here, is rooted firmly and ultimately hopefully in conceptualizations of universal love.

³² “Das stärkste Organ.” Rahel to Gentz December 27, 1827, *Briefwechsel*, ed., Kemp, 157.

CHAPTER 1

LETTERS OF ROMANTIC WOMEN WRITERS AS CONTRIBUTIONS TO A NEW CONVERSATION

“Ich muß Dir alles sagen, alles was mit luftiger Eile sich mir durch den Kopf schwingt,” writes Bettine to her friend Karoline in Bettina Brentano von Arnim’s work *Die Günderröde*.³³ Bettine’s need to communicate every detail about the most seemingly mundane interactions with friends and family in a highly aestheticized way leads Karoline to remark: “Dein Brief liebe Bettine ist wie der Eingang zu einem lieblichen Roman.”³⁴ Even though, at times, tendencies toward monologue dominate Bettine’s letters, making them appear as if they were a novel written in the first person, she nevertheless uses them to enter into a dialogue with her friend.³⁵ She always demands an answer. The dialogue between two friends, Bettine and Karoline, is full of references to “love.” This love is, as Günderröde aptly put it, apparently burdensome to comprehend and master even by those considered to be erudite: “Sie sind so gelehrt und haben nicht mehr von der Liebe gelernt!”³⁶ Whether in an epistolary novel or in actual letter exchanges, Brentano von Arnim’s, Günderröde’s, and also Levin Varnhagen’s thematization of love is not *just* a trope or a conventional reference used between women in their letters casually. Instead, a consistent, yet varied philosophy of love persists in these letters, letters written in different places

³³ Bettina von Arnim, *Die Günderröde. Werke und Briefe in drei Bänden*, eds. Walter Schmitz and Sibylle von Steinsdorff (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1986), 663.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 361.

³⁵ When writing about “Günderröde” or “Karoline” and “Bettine,” I mean the fictitious characters in Brentano von Arnim’s book *Die Günderröde*. When referring to the authors, I use their full names or simply last names.

³⁶ “Sie sind so gelehrt und haben nicht mehr von der Liebe gelernt! Sie wissen so viel und sind noch so stolz, und voll Irrthum!” Karoline an Savigny, Hanau 1 August, 1803, „Karoline von Günderröde in ihrer Umwelt. II. Karoline von Günderrödes Briefwechsel mit Friedrich Karl und Gunda von Savigny.” In: *Jahrbuch des Freien Deutschen Hochstifts*, 158-235. Ed. Max Preitz (Kritische Ausgabe mit Kommentar) (Tübingen: *Jahrbuch des Freien Deutschen Hochstifts*, 1964), 188.

and decades in late- and post-Enlightenment Europe. It follows from their writings that love is the foundation upon which everything else is built.

Rahel Levin Varnhagen, Bettina Brentano von Arnim, and Karoline von Günderode are authors whose works, letters in particular, make a significant and, until now, partly unacknowledged contribution to German Romanticism and to German culture in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The letters written by each woman, while very different in content and purpose, contribute to the development of what I argue is a new kind of dialogue around 1800. This is a dialogue that certainly builds on longstanding traditions of epistolary writing and adheres to many conventions of that form. But between 1790 and 1840, as German Romantics instigate a reaction to Enlightenment thought, these women's letters radically transform the epistolary form.³⁷ I argue that in these letters a new model for dialogue emerges which is a phenomenon that borrows creatively from contemporary practices; specifically, their letters enact a living aesthetic form of the "symphilosophy" proposed by the Early Romantics in Jena.³⁸

But Levin Varnhagen, Brentano von Arnim, and Günderode also work with expectations for modern intellectual and personal conversation epitomized by the "sociability" carried out in Romantic salons. And, as the use of letters (to one another and to other correspondents) are typical of the time, so is the content: over a period of years, in letters that cover a huge range of topics, these women also consistently and continuously discuss three ancient forms of "love" that

³⁷ The time span from 1790 to 1840 encompasses the period of Rahel Levin's first salon (1790-1806) in Jaegerstrasse and her second salon when she married Varnhagen and resettled in Berlin (1821-1832) as well as the period of her exile in Prague from which she wrote letters (1813-14). The closing date of 1840 reflects the year Brentano von Arnim's work *Die Günderode* was published.

³⁸ The early Romantics were a group centered around Jena from 1798 till 1804 and included: Friedrich Schlegel, August Wilhelm Schlegel, Novalis, Ludwig Tieck, Friedrich Schelling, Dorothea Veit-Schlegel, Caroline Schlegel-Schelling, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Gottlieb Fichte.

are undergoing modern permutations: *agape*,³⁹ *philia*,⁴⁰ and *eros*.⁴¹ The analyses in this study focus on the ways in which Rahel Levin Varnhagen's letters emphasize *agape*, while Bettina Brentano von Arnim foregrounds *philia* and Karoline von Günderrode concentrates on *eros* (although these categories overlap and find expression in each woman's writing). Love is the departure point and underpinning for the letter dialogues. The lens is aimed not only at showing how relationships can be when a heart of romantic sensual love is in place – a new idea at that time – but also the reader is taken on a journey into the deeper recesses of the human soul, as Levin Varnhagen ponders the meaning of love and life. The love cascades from the clouds, and the trees, and the invisible love flavors the air, as Brentano von Arnim seeks it out in human

³⁹ The word *Agape* refers to the paternal love of God but is extended to encompass a brotherly love for all humanity. The term derives on elements from both *eros* and *philia* in that it strives for a perfect kind of love that is at the same time “a fondness, a transcending of the particular, and a passion without the necessity of reciprocity.” The basic expression of it can be found in the Judaic-Christian tradition in the following verse: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:5) and loving “thy neighbor as thyself” (Leviticus 19:18). The universalist command to “love thy neighbor as thyself” employs the logic of mutual reciprocity, and hints at an Aristotelian basis that the subject should love himself in some appropriate manner. *Agape* is reflected in the ethics of Kant and Kierkegaard – the moral importance of giving impartial respect or love to another person. The universalism of *agape* runs counter to the partialism of Aristotle who admits a partialism in love towards those we are related to while maintaining that we should be charitable to all, whereas others such as Kierkegaard insist on impartiality. Still others would claim that the concept of universal love, of loving all equally, is logically empty because according to Aristotle “one cannot be a friend to many people in the sense of having friendship of the perfect type with them, just as one cannot be in love with many people at once (for love is a sort of excess of feeling, and it is the nature of such only to be felt towards one person)” (*Nicomachaen Ethics*, VIII. 6). Alexander Moseley, “Philosophy of Love” *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. A Peer-Reviewed Academic Resource. Last updated: August 8, 2010 <http://www.iep.utm.edu/love/>

⁴⁰ *Philia* implies a fondness and appreciation of the other and is contrasted with the passionate yearning of *eros*. For the Greeks, the term *philia* included not only friendship, but also allegiance to family and community. The English concept of friendship roughly captures Aristotle's notion of *philia*: “things that cause friendship are: doing kindnesses; doing them unasked; and not proclaiming the fact when they are done” (*Rhetoric*, II. 4, trans. Rhys Roberts). The first stipulation for the highest form of Aristotelian love is that a man loves himself; otherwise he cannot develop sympathy and fondness for others (*Nicomachaen Ethics*, IX.8). The morally virtuous man merits in turn the love of others, but he is not obliged to reciprocate an equal love, which suggests that the Aristotelian idea of love is elitist or perfectionist (*NE*, VIII, 7). Reciprocity is a condition of Aristotelian love and friendship, although parental love can include a one-sided affection. *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. A Peer-Reviewed Academic Resource. Last updated: August 8, 2010 <http://www.iep.utm.edu/love/>

⁴¹ The term *eros* refers to passionate love constituting intense desire for the other. It often indicates a sexual desire, thus the modern notion of “erotic.” In Plato's writings, however, *eros* is described as an ordinary desire that seeks transcendental beauty. The implication of the Platonic theory of *eros* is that ideal beauty, which is reflected in the particular images of beauty we find, becomes interchangeable across people and things, ideas, and art. Reciprocity is not necessary in Plato's model of love because the desire is for the object of beauty, not for the company of another. *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. A Peer-Reviewed Academic Resource. Last updated: August 8, 2010 <http://www.iep.utm.edu/love/>

hearts and in nature. The passionate erotic love in Günderröde's writing propels and reinforces her artistic creativity. However, one person cannot do it alone; more parties are required in any relationship, partnership, or alliance. In fact relationships cannot survive without a dialogue, which is precisely the form chosen by the authors.

The authors consciously re-construct these three forms of love. Hence, their accentuating of agape, philia, and eros is not naïve, but rather constitutes an approach necessarily relying on the form of the dialogue. With their "life as writing," they attempt to obliterate the division between art and life, which was the obvious prerequisite of recognized literature.⁴² They want to write and not have to choose between whether to separate life from writing; thus, the truly lived life can appear as art and that which is written turns into life. Because of the cooperation with others through correspondence, the life gains "double meaning."⁴³ In this manner, Levin Varnhagen's wish "to keep a correspondence alive" and hence also to keep dialogue alive becomes fulfilled since all three writers were able to preserve quotidian life expressed through a highly aestheticized dialogue in letters.⁴⁴ Their letters were published and would ultimately – likewise, in a salon setting – unite those who would not normally meet.

In the following, I will begin with the reflections on the letter transmission and then focus on different formal considerations that are significant for the letter around 1800 and on the importance of the form of dialogue, which was influenced by Romantic sociability. I will then analyze the content of the letters with the emphasis on different types of love, most notably, on its transforming and innovative aspects. Love within the companionate marriage, for example,

⁴² Christa Bürger, *Leben Schreiben. Die Klassik, die Romantik und der Ort der Frauen* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1990), 109.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁴⁴ To Alexander von der Marwitz, Friedersdorf. June 28, 1811.

feminized during the Romantic era (in contrast with the Enlightenment), gained pronounced erotic dimensions.

The 18th century has been described as the century of the letter because no epoch prior or subsequent has attached so much importance to elaborate correspondence. Letters became more personal, longer, and the frequency of their circulation increased. Expressions like, “Ich lasse keinen Posttag ungebraucht” are often to be found, and so Caroline Schlegel Schelling writes about “einem schreibseeligen Rappel, wo sie die Briefe dutzendweis expediert.”⁴⁵ Great literary figures of that time – Lessing, Goethe, Schiller – wrote “posttäglich,” as often as the postal services operated.⁴⁶

The word “Post” comes from Latin “posita station” (“posta” for short in Italian was first mentioned in Marco Polo’s travelogue from China in the 14th century) and originally denoted a permanent dwelling on a route where horsemen – post riders – were held in readiness to take over a dispatch delivered there from the other post. A determinant difference between services of a messenger and postal service is that the latter used a chain of messengers. In Germany, the term “Post” appeared first in 1490 in connection with the Taxis post riders.⁴⁷ The term was transferred to the whole transportation system in the beginning of the 16th century and became the basis for description thereof with such new words as “Postmeister, Postreiter, Postillons or Postknechte.”⁴⁸ Taxis family – originally from Italy – was entrusted with the establishment of the imperial postal service and transformed the messenger system so that since 1752 the system was

⁴⁵ Wolfgang Behringer, *Thurn und Taxis. Die Geschichte ihrer Post und ihrer Unternehmen* (Munich and Zürich: Piper, 1990), 114.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 15

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 14-15

divided into the “fahrende Post” and “reitende Post,” and the use of mail carriages and covered barouches increased.⁴⁹

Goethe, whose parental house stood right next to the Thurn und Taxis palace, was serviced by the Thurn-und-Taxis-Post until the end of his life.⁵⁰ One can only imagine the excitement of those who were expecting letters or wished to send them off when they heard the Thurn und Taxis post horn signaling the arrival of a post rider.⁵¹ In a letter to Rahel Levin in Berlin from September 13, 1792, Dorothea Veit describes the process of the letter transfer, which was not as simple as one might now imagine: “Wenn Sie mir also noch schreiben wollen, so müssen Sie es den Sonntag thun, sonst trifft mich Ihr Brief nicht mehr. Adieu. Wollen Sie wohl so gütig sein und einliegenden Brief zur Post besorgen? Er muss auf jeden Fall durch Berlin. Grüßen Sie unsre übrigen Berliner Freunde.”⁵² Dorothea Veit’s letter discloses that, on the one hand, the mailing process needed to be planned carefully in advance, and that, on the other hand, it might have involved other parties who were willing to help. Moreover, it is also signaled here that the letter in transfer did not need to remain private but might have been destined to be read by more than one interlocutor.

1.1 DIALOGUE IN THE ROMANTIC LETTER

While it is well known that there are compelling connections between oral conversation and written dialogue in literature, letter writing also constitutes an important example of textual

⁴⁹ Ibid., 24 and 123.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 176.

⁵¹ Ibid., 115.

⁵² J.M. Raich, ed., *Dorothea V. Schlegel geb. Mendelssohn und deren Söhne Johannes und Philipp Veit. Briefwechsel im Auftrage der Familie Veit*, vols. I and II (Mainz: Franz Kirchheim, 1881), I.7.

conversation.⁵³ Already in the Early Modern period, women – seizing their didactic role and refraining from the male-dominated spaces represented in many humanist dialogues – experimented with conversational strategies and fashioned conversational spaces in their poetic, dramatic, and paratextual compositions,⁵⁴ These strategies gave female speakers possibilities for civil critique.⁵⁵ The dialogue can be then perceived as the complete model of textual conversation, which encloses the humanist insistence on the close correlation between reading, conversation, and political counsel.⁵⁶

Because letter exchanges have a strong dialogical system already built in, it is almost impossible to ascribe monologizing tendencies to a letter exchange.⁵⁷ Janet Gurkin Altman delineates the characteristics of epistolary discourse as follows: 1) *the particularity* of the I-you exchange, which constitutes a distinguishing mark from both memoir and diary narratives, and *reciprocity*, where the addressee is expected to initiate his/her own utterance; 2) a present tense, which represents past and future, as the writer, anchored in a present time, looks toward both past and future occurrences; 3) temporal polyvalence (the actual time, the moment when the occurrence was written down, the times when the letter was dispatched, received, read).⁵⁸ Gurkin

⁵³ For the discussion about how the dialogue played an important role in illustrating and enacting textual conversation for women in the English pre-Restoration period see Katherine R. Larson, *Early Modern Women in Conversation*, Hampshire (England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 5-8.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ The scholarship in this respect is divided since some critics argue for letters being a dialogue, while some argue against this claim. Nevertheless, according to Rudolf Hirzel (Wertheimer mentions Hirzel's discussion about the history of dialogue in the introduction to his book) traditionally letter was thought of as a "halbierter Dialog." Artemon (Artemon of Cassandreia, a learned grammarian who lived after B.C. 316, was believed to have collected letters of Aristotle. See Sir William Smith, ed. *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*. Vol. 1 (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1867, p. 377) was the first one to use this terminology. See Rudolf Hirzel. *Der Dialog. Ein literarhistorischer Versuch* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1963) 305.

⁵⁸ The basic difference between the real-time conversation/dialogue and a conversation/dialogue in a letter lies in the different time period that separates the letters sent and received. Additionally, dialogue partners conversing through letters are spatially disconnected from each other. Consequently, the sender does not encounter immediate reaction from the recipient, but rather the response is modified in space and time. Janet Gurkin Altman, *Epistolarity. Approaches to a Form* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982), 117-8.

Altman goes on to describe three impossibilities in which the epistolary present is caught up (the impossibility of the narrative's being simultaneous with the event; the impossibility of the written present's remaining valid, especially in reference to the expression of sentiment; the impossibility of a dialogue in the present), and maintains that by imitating the directness and immediacy of spoken conversation, the epistolary format illustrates an effort to close the gaps between present and past, here and there, "I" and "you."⁵⁹ Epistolary discourse is thus a written dialogue "obsessed with its oral model," where the letter writer's awareness of the gap separating him/her from the reader propels him/her to constantly seek to bridge it.⁶⁰ The efforts to fulfill the impossible task of making the reader present require the engagement of the following techniques: the invoking of the mail carrier or messenger; the rapid exchange of notes reflected in the brevity of statement and the curtness of response; quotation and paraphrase of the dialogue partner's remarks.⁶¹ I argue that all of these characteristics of epistolary discourse as mapped out above also apply to the Romantic letters I analyze in the following chapters. These techniques are visible for example in Brentano von Arnim's *Die Gnderode*. Often when Bettine, the character, writes, she recalls her conversation with her friend Karoline: "die groen Gedanken Deines Gesprchs vor mir auftreten"⁶² and even tries to close the time gap of the letter exchange: "Mit der einen Hand hab ich meinen Brief dem Bot gereicht, mit der andern Deinen genommen."⁶³ One can thus say that epistolary discourse is a written dialogue "obsessed with its oral model" because it keeps the correspondence alive, as befittingly expressed by Varnhagen herself: "Dann ist und bleibt eine Korrespondenz lebendig."⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Gurkin Altman, *Epistolarity*, 129-136.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 136-138.

⁶² Bettina von Arnim, *Die Gnderode. Werke und Briefe in drei Bnden*. Eds. Walter Schmitz and Sybille Steinsdorff (Frankfurt am Main: Deutsche Klassiker Verlag, 1986), 308.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 365.

⁶⁴ Rahel Levin Varnhagen to Alexander von der Marwitz, in Friedersdorf. Tuesday 9 a.m., May 28, 1811.

The Place of the Romantic Letter in the “Crisis of Dialogue” Around 1800

The letters of Rahel Levin Varnhagen, Brentano von Arnim, and Günderrode do partly manifest the kind of “crisis of dialogue” that Jürgen Wertheimer has argued appears in fiction at this time.⁶⁵ When writing about his concept of a crisis of dialogue around 1800, Wertheimer is primarily interested in a link between a structural change within public space, defined socio-historically, and a structural change within the consciousness of individuals. Specifically, he focuses on the ways in which these changes impact upon the relatively new bourgeois political public space, and how those changes are anticipated in a crisis of dialogue in literary works.⁶⁶ As the prelude to a dialogue in crisis, Wertheimer sees the following symptoms: insufficient formulation of thoughts, interruptions, contradictions and/or expressions of infuriation, increased need for self-expression and self-manifestation which is disproportionate as compared with the need of the interlocutor.⁶⁷ He defines the crisis of dialogue as the “Phänomen des trotz ‘dialogischer Überkompetenz’ [...] stagnierenden Dialogs.”⁶⁸ This stagnation results from

⁶⁵ Wertheimer, Jürgen. *“Der Güter Gefährlichstes, die Sprache.” Zur Krise des Dialogs zwischen Aufklärung und Romantik* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1990), 8.

⁶⁶ Wertheimer, *“Der Güter Gefährlichstes, die Sprache”* 8.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

⁶⁸ Dialogue stagnation is characterized by “dialogische Überkompetenz,” which occurs when dialogue in the Enlightenment has become specialized and rational. Wertheimer, *“Der Güter Gefährlichstes,”* (Wertheimer 23) and monologization (Wertheimer 30) which in the Romantic period exemplifies an inadequate attempt to save dialogue (Wertheimer 181-182) or to unlimited supplementarity (Wertheimer 46). The perception and stylization of the self as foreign, outsider, marginalized, outcast, or hunted by Rousseau, Hölderlin, Kleist, and Blake show the paradox situation of vehement urge and drive to write in the middle of a communicative vacuum; the isolated self-indulgence, the invention of the “I” (Wertheimer 58). Wertheimer’s interpretation of an ideal dialogue suggests an optimal evolvment of the opposition, a difference between both parties engaged in a dialogue who present their arguments (Wertheimer 46). This kind of dialogue was possible until the first part of 1700’s since the 1760’s and 1770’s communication processes have been made perfect and dominated by rational exchange as well as the willingness and commitment to communicate.⁶⁸ At the same time, however, the marginal development took place, and the state of being capable of dialogue was undermined by “Momente des Glaubens,” that is, not rationally justified decisions in favor of manners (Wertheimer 23). Increasingly dialogue became a medium of self-examination⁶⁸ showing signs of skepticism regarding the ability to communicate (Wertheimer 15). As follows, monological concepts, which served to deliver a message (Wertheimer 30), as well as a principle of unlimited supplementarity, where no consensus put an end to a dialogical speech and became a self-dialogue, developed;

“overcompetence” or polyphony which ultimately means that the function of the dialogue as a tool of mediation between private and public sphere is, by 1800, undermined through an augmenting tendency towards monologue, increasingly supplementing and even substituting for dialogue.⁶⁹

However, Wertheimer’s focus is solely on fiction written by men who were published under their own names, whereas the letters of Levin Varnhagen and Brentano von Arnim in particular need to be read, I argue, in the context of the salons that functioned as spaces for lively public discourse between and among men and women at this time.⁷⁰ It is precisely that space of the salon where polyphonic dialogue took place. In contrast with Wertheimer’s assertion about polyphony’s overcompetence creating dialogue crisis, polyphony in the salon constituted a discourse where the connection of those in dialogue with each other was supplemented through

consequently, the dialogue became endless, with no exit (Wertheimer 46). Because the dialogue does not end, it fails to fulfill its mediating role (Wertheimer 46).

⁶⁹ Attempts to escape from monologizing tendencies are also to be found in novels of Jean Paul and other Romantic authors, such as Ludwig Tieck. In their works and others, a particularly Romantic concept of the mixture of genres “Mischung” is delineated, especially via the insertion of poetry, as it creates a double vocabulary of voice and contra-voice (Wertheimer 183). Dialogue created in this manner is, however, a sign of utopia, as it is not a dialogue in the traditional form of address and response, but rather an aesthetic model that creates pressure and division (Wertheimer 200). This form of dialogue could be seen as an intrusion of the space occupied by “I” and “you,” usurpation of voice, which creates pressure instead of alleviating the stress of the crisis. As a result, in dramas of the era such as Lessing’s *Minna von Barnhelm* (1763-1767), Hölderlin’s *Empedokles* (1797-1800), or Kleist’s *Penthesilea* (1808), utterances increasingly are reduced to a monologue, and in narrative texts the speech of the narrator and the speech of characters overlap. Wertheimer, “*Der Güter Gefährlichstes*,” p. 145. Niekerk sums up Wertheimer’s claim as follows: the dialogue as a mediation device between both spheres was being destroyed on two levels: through the tendency to use monologues in order to communicate some type of message and through unlimited supplementality, where the dialogue continues without end and often becomes a soliloquy; thus, loses its mediating function. Carl Niekerk (in *Bildungskrisen. Die Frage nach dem Subjekt in Goethes Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1995) 115.

⁷⁰ During the 1760s and 1770s, the transition period from Enlightenment to Romanticism, when the bourgeoisie was asserting its space within the public sphere, the crisis of dialogue, manifesting itself in literature of the period, emerged. Examples of works that contain dialogue turning increasingly inward are: Jean Jacques Rousseau’s *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, Friedrich Hölderlin’s *Hyperion oder Der Eremit in Griechenland*, Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi’s *Woldemar*. This is also a period of skepticism about the reliability of communication, and of agreeing to disagree. Instances of this skepticism are found in works as different as Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s *Minna von Barnhelm* and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Leiden des jungen Werthers* and *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*. Wertheimer suggests that this era of ambiguity and uncertainty about the reliability of communication culminates in a break with the communication between private and public spheres. Niekerk argues that the literature of this time (and the letters) didn’t just *reflect* external social and political realities; it helped *create* those realities. See *Bildungskrisen*, 113-114.

many different single voices, commenting on each other, and did not create disharmony, but rather fashioned diversity in unity, which then transferred into letters. A claim could be made that inserting poems into a text might result in polyphony (dialogue or polyphony is then not just between people but between genres). However, on the one hand, this is not the case in letters analyzed here, as the voice of the lyrical “I” can be interpreted as representing the voice of the author. On the other hand, the polyphonic dialogue is connected through the figure of the addresser to her addressees just as that same dialogue was united through the character of the *salonnière*.

To be sure, monologizing proclivities and other dialogue interruptions are also present in the letters discussed here. Just as in a designed literary dialogue, the persons in letter dialogues construct autonomous speech structures and remain in a space of common social thinking by observing the same rules of the game. They must listen to each other and respond to each other in that they provide one another keywords and prompts, which the addressee as the transmitter receives and incorporates in a different sense.⁷¹ One needs to adopt the keywords of the other and transform them into his/her own speech, as well as continually find new aspects of meaning in those keywords and employ them. In that way, one carries on with the dialogue owing to a focused movement of dialogical negotiation.⁷² Being cooperative and open to the dialogue but without concession means building one’s own thoughts and speech forms with those transformed building stones provided by the dialogue partner.⁷³ Truly enough, a focused movement of dialogical negotiation is missing at times in the letters discussed here. Interestingly, as each chapter will also show, certain contemporaries appear in the letters either as dialogue partners, disruptors, or both (e.g., Clemens Brentano). The dissertation will also examine the interventions

⁷¹ Volker Klotz, *Geschlossene und offene Form im Drama* (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1992), 73.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 74.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 76.

of these other historical agents, as they are represented by Levin Varnhagen, Brentano von Arnim, and Günderrode in their letters.⁷⁴

Although the dissertation chooses to foreground these women's voices, and to let them speak, I do lean on Wertheimer's thesis in order to demonstrate how the letters of each woman author discussed in this study indeed contain such dialogue-undermining interruptions, and how the nature and number of the interruptions correspond to their particular place within upper-middle-class public space around 1800.⁷⁵ When analyzing the correspondence of Rahel Levin Varnhagen in the light of dialogue crisis, one has to problematize the aspect of the Jewish-German dialogue. Within this context, Jeffrey S. Librett's hypothesis concerning the historical nondialogue between Jews and Germans provides a persuasive perspective.⁷⁶ According to Librett, the only way to grasp the phenomena of this specific nondialogue is by "placing it within the endless context of the general nondialogicity of which their singular nondialogue is at once a particularization and a particularly massive denegation."⁷⁷ Librett goes on to explain that, "Jews have been associated, since at least St. Paul, with the prefigural, dead letter of the law, while German Christianity has associated German Christians with the literal, living spirit of faith that realizes this law."⁷⁸ Thus, the Jew can never be endorsed as being competent to understand the Christian even though Christians have been constructing Christian discourse on the foundations

⁷⁴ In one of the footnotes to his book's introduction, Wertheimer mentions the letters included in *Rahel im Umgang mit ihren Freunden. Briefe 1793-1833*, ed. F. Kemp (München: Winkler Verlag, 1967) in order to show that the crisis of dialogue appears in letters as well as in other texts of the era.

⁷⁵ I rely on Jürgen Habermas's definition of the bourgeois public sphere, as laid out in *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*. (Neuwied and Berlin: Luchterhand, 1971), 42.: "Bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit läßt sich vorerst als die Sphäre der zum Publikum versammelten Privatleute begreifen; diese beanspruchen die obrigkeitlich reglementierte Öffentlichkeit alsbald gegen die öffentliche Gewalt selbst, um sich mit dieser über die allgemeinen Regeln des Verkehrs in der grundsätzlich privatisierten, aber öffentlich relevanten Sphäre des Warenverkehrs und der gesellschaftlichen Arbeit auseinanderzusetzen."

⁷⁶ Jeffrey S. Librett, *The Rhetoric of Cultural Dialogue. Jews and Germans from Moses Mendelssohn to Richard Wagner and Beyond* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

⁷⁷ Librett, *The Rhetoric of Cultural Dialogue*, xviii.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, xix.

of and as a response to Jewish writing. Christian anti-Semitism is expressed therefore preeminently by the unsettled wish to rid itself of the material figurality of language, the rhetoric of non-self-comprehending speech that is associated with the Jew.⁷⁹ For Gershom Scholem, who came from an assimilated Berlin family and as a Zionist criticized Jewish assimilation, acculturation and assimilation of German Jews meant a required self-abandonment and the end of tradition, already before it was totally destroyed.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, even Scholem had to admit that at the time of Mendelssohn, the beginnings of this very dialogue took place, even though the dialogue fell silent as soon as his successors abandoned the Jewish tradition in order to remain in dialogue with the Germans.⁸¹ The Jews “attempted a dialogue with the Germans,” even to the point of self-abandonment, but the Germans did not attempt a dialogue with the Jews because all of their attempts presupposed that Jews abandon themselves a Jews, in an act of cultural suicide.⁸² According to Librett’s reading of Scholem’s notion of dialogue, the German Jews attempted a dialogue with the Christian Germans to the point of self-abandonment, that is, devoted themselves to the understanding of their interlocutor to make themselves into the figure.”⁸³ However, one can also problematize the issue from the perspective of George Mosse, namely, as assimilation through education. In his book *German Jews beyond Judaism*, Mosse establishes that the educational ideal became the central concept of the Jewish acculturation.⁸⁴ In contrast with Sholem, who saw the break with tradition as a fault, Mosse emphasizes the promise of assimilation through education and the contribution of the Jews to German culture.⁸⁵ He sees

⁷⁹ Ibid., xix.

⁸⁰ Klaus L. Berghahn, *Grenzen der Toleranz. Juden und Christen im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Köln: Böhlau, 2000), 5.

⁸¹ Ibid., 5.

⁸² Librett, *The Rhetoric of Cultural Dialogue*, 9.

⁸³ Librett, *The Rhetoric of Cultural Dialogue*, 9.

⁸⁴ Berghahn, *Grenzen der Toleranz*, 6.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 6.

the renunciation of the Jewish tradition and religion as a necessary – although achieved at a high cost – step leading to the new Jewish identity and equality.⁸⁶ Precisely this equality was aspired to by the Jewish salonnières – cultural and literary figures of the time – Henriette Herz (who never perceived her Jewishness as a stigma and was so impressed by Schleiermacher’s pragmatic Protestantism that she converted without regard for any social ambitions after her husband’s death), Dorothea Veit Schlegel (who upon meeting Friedrich von Schlegel in the salon of her friend Henriette Herz left and divorced her husband and converted first to Protestantism, and finally to Catholicism – most of her later friends were Christians, assimilated or intermarried Jews, or secular Deists), and Rahel Levin Varnhagen (who changed her name first to Rahel Robert and later after the baptism and marriage in 1814 to Antonie Frederike). Within this constellation, Rahel Levin Varnhagen’s actions are explicit and exclusive reactions in an attempt to avoid a marginalization as a Jew, a Paria and Parvenue, as labeled by Hannah Arendt.

Rahel Levin Varnhagen’s, Bettina Brentano von Arnim’s, and Karoline von Günderrode’s letters are partly public documents, intended for public consumption, and partly private. They appear shortly after what Jürgen Habermas has identified as the emergence of the “public sphere” in Europe beginning around 1700.⁸⁷ But they are not strictly categorizable as

⁸⁶ Ibid. The German-Jewish dialogue to which Mosse adheres was based on the ideal of friendship and the classical educational ideal. Even after the Holocaust and Sholem’s statements, he does not see the end of the dialogue, but rather the new beginning to which he contributes.

⁸⁷ Feminist authors censured Habermas for not recognizing that the public sphere of the 19th century was constituted on the exclusion of women – the dimension of the public/ness, which is not in the focus of Habermas’s theory. In his introduction to the second German edition, however, Habermas addresses the question of the exclusion of sub-bourgeois strata and women from the liberal public sphere. The exclusion of women, Habermas presently concludes, had more extreme outcome, as it defined the public and private sphere in gendered terms, marking the former “as based on a ‘fraternal’ social contract, in Carole Pateman’s phrase.” See William Outhwaite. *Habermas: a Critical Introduction* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009), 13.

As Fleming puts it: “from my feminist perspective Habermas’s theory is not universalist enough ... rather ... universalism has to include a vision of gender equality, and what I seek to explain is how and why his theory of communicative action does not allow for the articulation of such a vision.” See Marie Fleming, *Emancipation and Illusion: Rationality and Gender in Habermas’s Theory of Modernity* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997) 1. Her approach can be compared with that of Sayla Benhabib and Nancy Fraser as well as a

“public” or “private” in the Habermasian sense. The letters all arguably reflect their authors’ participation in all three areas of the bourgeois public sphere, implied by Habermas’s notion: the sheerly public (the area of the state and of political activity), the semi-private (for Habermas, the area of the workplace, and I will argue that the Romantic salon belongs in this category), and the sheerly private.⁸⁸ Although the letters I discuss participate in the bourgeois public sphere as a whole, three different women authors reflect emphases on the three different areas of life, as constituted for the upper- and upper-middle class around 1800, that help to form that sphere. Specifically, Rahel Levin Varnhagen’s letters, particularly those written during her exile in Prague, but also others she wrote between 1793 and 1814, emphasize her relationship to the state. Bettina Brentano von Arnim’s fictional re-writing of letters between herself and Karoline von Günderode written between 1804-1806, *Die Günderode* (1840), emphasize and represent interaction in a semi-private sphere, namely her literary work. And Karoline von Günderode’s letters, as well as letters written by her friends that refer to her death, letters written between 1794 - 1810, reflect and problematize her relegation to a strictly private sphere, since she intended for her letters to remain private and since the circumstances surrounding her death were considered a taboo; consequently, her writings were obscured intentionally.⁸⁹

number of other feminists who could be identified as working within a quasi Habermas’s framework, emerging from the same assumptions.

⁸⁸ Habermas describes these spaces as follows: “Der öffentliche Bereich beschränkt sich auf die öffentliche Gewalt. ... Im privaten Bereich ist auch die eigentliche ‘Öffentlichkeit’ einbegriffen; denn sie ist eine Öffentlichkeit von Privatleuten. Innerhalb des den Privatleuten vorbehaltenen Bereichs unterscheiden wir deshalb Privatsphäre und Öffentlichkeit. Die Privatsphäre umfaßt die bürgerliche Gesellschaft im engeren Sinne, also den Bereich des Warenverkehrs und der gesellschaftlichen Arbeit; die Familie mit ihrer Intimsphäre ist darin eingebettet. Die politische Öffentlichkeit geht aus der literarischen hervor; sie vermittelt durch öffentliche Meinung den Staat mit Bedürfnissen der Gesellschaft,” 45-46.

⁸⁹ According to Lorely French, in 1840, when Bettina Brentano von Arnim published *Die Günderode*, Karoline Günderode’s works were probably known and read only by a small circle of friends who had known her during her lifetime. French notes that the editions of Günderode’s poetry that had appeared in 1804 and 1805 had not been reprinted, and the first set of her collected works was not published until 1857. French concludes that by republishing Günderode’s poems, even in an altered form and within their letters, Bettina Brentano von Arnim “was resurrecting a side of the past that had long been lost, if it had even been recognized or appreciated before.” *German Women as Letter Writers: 1750-1850* (London: Associated University Press, 1996), 228.

The proliferation of dialogical structures in women's writing during the Romantic era, which was characterized by the bourgeoisie increasingly asserting its space within the public sphere, is especially intriguing. Namely, when the crisis of dialogue emerged and manifested itself in literature of the period as containing dialogues turning increasingly inward, in these letters there are only traces of such monological tendencies. The letters in question reflect the quotidian reality along with an artistic vision of life and the need for dialogue. All three women writers refrained from the male-dominated spaces put forward in many literary dialogues and fashioned conversational spaces that gave female speakers convincing potential of language use and generated possibilities for civil and cultural critique. Their dialogue can be then regarded as the comprehensive model of textual conversation, with insistence on the direct interrelationship between conversation, reading, as well as political and social counsel.⁹⁰ In an attempt to claim public space for themselves, they used their letters as the vehicle for dialogical expression. In that sense, their letters are not to be perceived strictly as just a mere genre for women in which they felt bold enough to express themselves. It is rather that the form of a letter allowed them to remain in the dialogue with others. That is to say, dialogicity was of paramount value in that it was also a venue for manifesting themselves as writers and public persons.

If one were to compare dialogue spaces created by women writers in their letters to, for instance, the literary dialogues of Friedrich Schlegel, one could not help but see a significant

Dagmar von Gersdorff observes that although Karoline Günderrode's lover, Friedrich Creuzer, praised her talent as a writer, helped her publish some of her works, and even used her work in his book *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker* when describing Egypt (227), he ultimately rejected her with a gesture of burning all her letters written between May 1805 and January 1806 and then stopping the publication of her poetry set entitled *Melete* (254). Gersdorff remarks that his wish was that no one would learn about those poems, since they included autobiographical references; *Melete* turned up years later by coincidence in the Stift Neuburg, the same place where Creuzer had been on the day he became acquainted with Günderrode. "*Die Erde ist mir Heimat nicht geworden.*" *Das Leben der Karoline von Günderrode* (Frankfurt am Main and Leipzig: Insel, 2006), 256. In fact, the death of Karoline Günderrode probably loomed more closely in the public's minds than her talents; even at the present time she is remembered mostly as a poet, not as a dramatist. See Markus Hille, *Karoline von Günderrode* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1999), 137-138.

⁹⁰ Compare with Larson, *Early Modern Women in Conversation*, 5-8.

difference. In Schlegel's formulations, especially in his *Gespräch über die Poesie* in the third *Athenaeum* volume, the Romantic *Sehnsucht* yearning no longer appears as an unascertained desire for the "infinite" and "absolute," but rather as a paradox, ironic, and fragmentary project of "vollendeter Mitteilung." Complete, and thus perfect, communication would mean here the entire world and time encompassing conversation, which goes beyond the usual scope of speech where all those who participate as autonomous individuals criticize and complement each other and thus generate a harmonic but still diverse, infinite but still complete, constantly self-renewable universe.⁹¹ Due to its limited scope of reach, poetry must be reflected, criticized, perfected through conversation or dialogue (Friedrich Schlegel uses both words synonymously), and correlated to other areas of life. In accordance with an undertaking of an affirmative, romantic reading of the Romantic period, all the fragments should be read in participatory, dialogical manner as a model of complete and perfect communication, that is, as a conversation of its authors among themselves and with readers.⁹² To those readings belong besides poetry, especially philosophy, philology, language, history, love, politics, religion and morals.⁹³ Originally, Schlegel planned to involve in this all-encompassing dialogue female members of the Jena circle of the early Romantic period. He intended to include the notes of Dorothea Veit, Caroline Schlegel and her daughter Auguste Böhmer in the conversation in the "Athenaeums-Fragmente." Schlegel also considered incorporating their articles. However, since he failed to do so, there is a lack of women as representatives of nature and readers versus men as authors and representatives of creator.⁹⁴ Hence the conflict arises because without women as authors there is

⁹¹ May Mergenthaler, *Zwischen Eros und Mitteilung. Die Frühromantik im Symposium der Athenaeums-Fragmente* (Paderborn, München, Wien Zürich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2012), 18.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 21.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

no perfect dialogue between genders, God, and nature.⁹⁵ This is precisely the intercept point where Schlegel's idea of ideal communication falls short of perfection, and where salon conversation, carried over to letter dialogue, fulfills the conditions envisioned by Schlegel. In salon conversation not only are both genders represented, but also the place designated to meet like-minded people in an informal atmosphere where various subjects can be addressed without restriction was under the direct influence of a woman, for instance, Rahel Levin (later Varnhagen).⁹⁶ Salons, in particular those led by Jewish women, constituted a contradiction to the "Christlich-Deutsche Tischgesellschaft" and represented controversial culture of the era. In a sense, their setting changed the traditional role division sustained by Schlegel since women no longer embodied nature and readers in contrast with men portrayed as authors as well as symbols of creator. Essentially salon conversation was a complete, and thus perfect, form of communication because those who participated were autonomous individuals belonging to a harmonic yet still diverse universe. In a way, salons were communal spaces resembling the communal sphere of the Jena circle where life was organized according to the rules of symphilosophy, and aesthetic production was not strictly separated from the rest of social life. Life and art converged in letters, as they did in salons as well.⁹⁷

1.2 ROMANTIC LETTERS AS ENACTMENTS OF SYMPHILOSOPHY

The theory and practice of sociability are complementary phenomena to the Romantic emphasis on subjectivity and individual freedom.⁹⁸ Thus, intersubjectivity, the exchange with

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Harro Segeberg "Phasen der Romantik," *Romantik-Handbuch*, ed. Helmut Schantze (Tübingen: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 2003), 49.

⁹⁷ *Encyclopedia of Romantic Era, 1760-1850*, II, ed., Christopher John Murray (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2004), 987.

⁹⁸ Markus Schwering, "Romantische Theorie der Gesellschaft," *Romantik-Handbuch*, ed. Helmut Schantze, Tübingen: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 2003, p. 517. There were two models of sociability in the late eighteenth century.

others, appeared in the early Romanticism almost as a condition for the development and maturation of individuality. A certain legitimately organized exchange between individuality and universality was for Friedrich Schlegel the actual pulse beat of the higher life and the first condition for moral health.⁹⁹ The Romantic sociability understood itself as a virtual societal leading group capable of producing an effect through inherent power or virtue. Thus, new advanced socialization forms were developed in small circles, which should anticipate better organization of the whole society.¹⁰⁰ Informal circles, and perhaps most notably salons, were gathering spaces for sociability, as salon sociability promised the possibility to inform and educate oneself in conversation. Along with the practice of sociability, the theory of sociability was developed. It was on such Berlin Salons that Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher based his ground-breaking work *Versuch einer Theorie des geselligen Betragens/Essay on Theory of Sociable Behavior* (1799), where he delineated precepts of his theory.¹⁰¹ The theory of sociability was implemented in everyday practice in different ways, for instance, friendships, like

The first model was that of “free familiar conversation,” which produced “a well-turned mind” and aimed to incarnate the ideal of social intercourse conceived of as informal, familiar and friendly, teaching the virtues of open manners and an engaged thinking. This model belonged to the pedagogy and manners of the Warrington Academy, as implemented by Warrington tutors. Anne Janowitz, “Amiable and radical sociability: Anna Barbauld’s ‘free familiar conversation,’” in *Romantic Sociability. Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain 1770-1840*, 62-81, p. 62 The second model was shaped from a more urban and militant idea of sociability linked to political activism, in which charity was expressed through political activity and analytical discernment. *Encyclopedia of Romantic Era, 1760-1850*, II, ed., Christopher John Murray (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2004), 987.

⁹⁹ Markus Schwering, “Romantische Theorie der Gesellschaft,” *Romantik-Handbuch*, ed. Helmut Schantze, Tübingen: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 2003, p. 517.

¹⁰⁰ Markus Schwering, “Romantische Theorie der Gesellschaft,” *Romantik-Handbuch*, ed. Helmut Schantze (Tübingen: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 2003), 517. Already the eighteenth century, a time of increasing social mobility and individualism, emergent capitalism, and conflict between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, was called “das gesellige Jahrhundert” when convivial gatherings in public, semi-public, and private spaces played an important role. Ulrich Im Hof, *Das gesellige Jahrhundert. Gesellschaft und Gesellschaften im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (München: C.H. Beck, 1982), 185. As a rule, women were not admitted into literary or political associations, and the exceptions were very few, for instance, the Literary Society in Stockholm or the English Society of Christian Knowledge (Im Hof, 224.) Women were excluded from institutions of bourgeois public sphere, such as coffee houses, educational societies, Masonic lodges and clubs, table groups and artistic and professional associations. See *Bettine von Arnims Briefroman: literarische Erinnerungsarbeit zwischen Anspruch und Wirklichkeit*, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992, 72-23).

¹⁰¹ *Encyclopedia of Romantic Era, 1760-1850*, II, p. 987. See Andreas Arndt, “Geselligkeit und Gesellschaft. Die Geburt der Dialektik aus dem Geist der Konversation in Schleiermachers ‘Versuch einer Theorie des geselligen Betragens,’” *Salons der Romantik. Beiträge eines Wiepersdorfer Kolloquiums zu Theorie und Geschichte des Salons*, ed. Hartwig Schultz (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 45-62.

that of Ludwig Tieck and Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder or of Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano, resulted in literary production; groups, like the Jena Circle comprised of Friedrich and August Wilhelm Schlegel, Dorothea Veit, Caroline Michaelis Böhmer Schlegel and Friedrich Schelling were creative through the support of what Friedrich Schlegel termed “symphilosophizing”; the salon, which served as a space for the emancipation of women and the acculturation of Jewish women and where outsiders were welcome, provided a forum for an open discussion circle.¹⁰² In other words, the theory of sociability was unthinkable apart from its practice. The capacity to exchange information and exercise the mind while producing mutual pleasure clearly gave the newly emerging middle class the potential to engage in even more challenging and socially profitable endeavors. And, cultural forces drew established male public figures and marginalized female writers together within a progressive space of the salon, a dialogical world where communication networks became alive and gained power. As Voltaire remarked, “opinion governs the world,” and it has also been said that “the salons governed opinion.”¹⁰³

Interestingly enough, in Levin Varnhagen, Brentano von Arnim, and Günderröde’s letters, all three forms of sociability – conversing or “symphilosophizing” with friends, groups of people, or in the salon – are represented. In these letters the Early-Romantic principle of “unity in plurality” animated by productive tension and suspense is newly put to the test and even

¹⁰² The Jena Circle can be characterized as being loosely connected which allowed for stronger fluctuation of its members. It was known for equal and often leading membership of women as well as for provocative divergence from traditional code of social behavior. Markus Schwering, “Romantische Theorie der Gesellschaft,” *Romantik-Handbuch*, ed. Helmut Schantze (Tübingen: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 2003), 517. Markus Schwering, “Romantische Theorie der Gesellschaft,” in *Romantik-Handbuch*, 510-540, p. 517. See also Jeannine Blackwell and Susanne Zantop’s *Bitter Healing: German Women Writers from 1700 to 1830. An Anthology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 282.

¹⁰³ Helen Clergue, *The Salon. A Study of French Society and Personalities in the Eighteenth Century* (New York and London: The Knickerbocker Press, 1907), 17.

reinvented.¹⁰⁴ Similarly to the conversation between poets, critics, philosophers about poetry, philosophy and principally about the whole universe labeled by Schlegel as “Sympoesie” and “Symphilosophie” (he used Plato’s Symposium as his model where such gathering is describes as a banquet), salon conversations and letter dialogues can be perceived as practicing “Sympoesie” and “Symphilosophie.”¹⁰⁵ Not only other writers but also the reader is invited to take part in these romantic Symposium; alone in dialogue of the present with the past and future can the communication become complete and perfected.¹⁰⁶ Hence, not only the addressee and the addressed but also readers participate in dialogue encompassing the present and the past as well as look forward to the future. At the same time, these dialogues by connecting life with art and reflecting on themselves become “poetry of poetry,” that is, “transcendent poetry.”¹⁰⁷

Early-Romantic circles were striving to find a perfect combination of being in a community and simultaneously of enjoying the most possible freedom in order to be able to stimulate each other into the productivity of symphilosophy and sympoesie.¹⁰⁸ It seems, however, that it was much more possible to realize that wish through salon conversations and epistolary dialogues than in a circle of people closely connected to each other in a small physical space, like that of Jena. Romantic salons, a democratic space, composed of members of the Aristocracy and middle classes as well as Jewish intellectuals were led by women and were informed by the principle of sociability; the principle that could be realized only through communication with others. The salons afforded intellectuals not merely a physical space, but

¹⁰⁴ See the information on the paradox of decentralized center formation in High-Romanticism. After 1801 there were many centers that were trying to live according to the Early-Romantic principle of the *Einheit in der Vielfalt*.” Harro Segeberg “Phasen der Romantik,” *Romantik-Handbuch*, ed. Helmut Schantze (Thübingen: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 2003), 49.

¹⁰⁵ May Mergenthaler, *Zwischen Eros und Mitteilung. Die Frühromantik im Symposium der Athenaeums-Fragmente* (Paderborn, München, Wien Zürich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2012), 19.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Harro Segeberg “Phasen der Romantik,” *Romantik-Handbuch*, ed. Helmut Schantze (Thübingen: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 2003), 40.

more precisely, a community and a forum for social and intellectual life, where discussions on literature, art and politics took place.¹⁰⁹ Most importantly, however, they gave women freedom of expression, in word and deed, on a scale never seen before. For Romantic writers the audience was like a postulate of the church. Thus, the author entered into a holy relationship with the reader based on intimate and heartfelt symphilosophy and sympoetry. That is why one can say that friendship bonds of Early Romanticism practiced a new form of constructive public-oriented production interrelation.¹¹⁰

The Importance of Salons for Understanding Romantic Dialogue

The period in which salons were dominant has been referred to as the “age of conversation.”¹¹¹ The function of *salonnières* was to maintain order in the Republic of Letters by

¹⁰⁹ Anna K. Kuhn, “Chapter One. The ‘Failure’ of Biography and the Triumph of Women’s Writing: Bettina von Arnim’s *Die Gunderode* and Christa Wolf’s *The Quest for Christa T.*,” *Autobiography, Biography, and Gender*, eds, Susan Groag Bell and Marilyn Yalom (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 13-28, p. 21.

¹¹⁰ Harro Segeberg “Phasen der Romantik,” *Romantik-Handbuch*, ed. Helmut Schantze (Thubingen: Alfred Kroner Verlag, 2003), 41.

¹¹¹ See Benedetta Craveri. *The Age of Conversation*. Transl. Teresa Waugh (New York: New York Review Books, 2005). Marie Therese Geoffrin, who acted as a mentor and model for other *salonnières*, is credited with the invention of the Enlightenment salon. She opened up the whole afternoon for talk by making the sociable meal of the day the one o’clock dinner rather than the traditional late-night supper, and she regularized these dinners by having them on a specific day of the week. The distinction of having founded what came to be known as polite society and of presiding over its first center for more than forty years has been granted to Marquise de Rambouillet (Craveri 2). The marquise had abandoned her position at the court of Louvre, a way of life that profoundly disgusted her, and withdrawn from public life (Craveri 3). Breaking with convention, Mme de Rambouillet had transferred her actual bedroom to a little closet and had turned the big bedroom into an official reception room. The decision, taken for reasons of convenience and health, allowed her to receive the guests in her Blue Room, as she lay stretched on the daybed in the most protected corner of the room; the practice, which began in 1613, set an example and became a social ritual (27-29). Her aspirations were to “control violent instincts, to build defenses against life’s brutality, and to establish a code of behavior that might act as an invisible shield between one person and another so as to protect everyone’s dignity.” These were not only her personal aspirations, but an entire caste demanded these after the bloody fratricidal hostilities of the wars of religion (1562-1598) (Craveri 4). Conversation was one of the main means of education and even dictionaries praised it: “Conversation brings natural talents into play and polishes them. It purifies and sets the mind to rights and constitutes the great book of the world.” Conversation was perceived not only as a device teaching the beauty of language but also as an area for the development of taste and needed help with the acquisition of culture imperative for the Enlightened life. See Goodman, 342.

enforcing the rules of polite conversation.¹¹² The art of conversation obeyed strict laws of clarity, elegance, and respect for others, which guaranteed harmony based on perfect equality. However, equality at that time did not extend to the Jews so that perfect equality in that respect was truly only achieved with the emergence of the emancipatory trend of Jewish *salonnières*.¹¹³ Following in the footsteps of the *Haskalah*, Jewish *salonnières* pursued education and dialogue, as the means to self-betterment.¹¹⁴ Their salons offered a space where modernization to relieve isolation, ignorance, and persecution, in accord with the French Enlightenment ideas disseminated into Germany, could become reality. Many Jewish women, who in the 18th century laid the groundwork for Berlin salons, received French education and at the same time had interest in flourishing German literature. From this symbiosis an atmosphere was formed in

¹¹² Ibid., 91. Goodman reminds readers that in order to minimize the risk of insult that was particularly high in the Republic of Letters (where the citizenry came from all the orders of French society and social distinctions were not recognized), implementation of formal rules of speech and behavior were crucial. p. 97.

¹¹³ Wilhelmy-Dollinger, Greatly impacted by Paris sociability, the salon made its appearance also in Germany in the 18th century, particularly in Berlin, where first salons appeared after 1780. The need for cultural and community events since under the rule of Frederick the Great prompted the formation of first salons. Ibid. 41. Peter Seibert sees Harsdörffer's *Gesprächsspiele* as anticipating the participation of German women in literary sociability to be realized through expanded social base, *Der literarische Salon. Literatur und Geselligkeit zwischen Aufklärung und Vormärz*. (Stuttgart and Weimar: J.B. Metzler, 1993), p. 92. In the time period between 1780 and 1914 there were more than 90 salons in Berlin. See Petra Wilhelmy-Dollinger. *Die Berliner Salons. Mit historisch-literarischen Spaziergängen*. (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 1. Wilhelmy-Dollinger differentiates between two types of German salons in the 18th century: aristocratic Rococo salon modeled on French salon, where guests often conversed in French, and bourgeois salon, influenced by German Enlightenment. Two *salonnières* representing the aristocratic model are Henriette von Crayen (1755-1832) and Elisabeth von Staegemann (1761-1835), who both moved to Berlin in the first decade of the 19th century and established there their salons. The salon of Henriette von Crayen can be regarded as a liaison space between French and German salons between Ancien Régime, revolution and the Restauration (67). She belonged to the circle of Prince Louis Ferdinand and her niece Pauline Wiesel (69). To the second category of *salonnières*, Wilhelmy-Dollinger assigns Luise Gottsched (1713-1762) and Sophie von La Roche (1730-1807), both "gelehrte Frauen" and published authors who practiced sociability in their houses (69).

¹¹⁴ The first Jewish *salonnières*, daughters of court Jews and financiers, were from affluent families and were well educated, hence their houses were ideal meeting places for nobility and intellectuals. Jewish women in Berlin were outside of social structure as far as class is concerned, that is, in contrast with Christian aristocrats and bourgeois, they did not have to abide by some conventions. As outsiders, they had, in the spirit of the Enlightenment, which propagated human and citizens' rights, more freedom than the members of the established Christian class, especially because many of them did not live with their families but rather Jewish community and were not bound by Jewish-Mosaic tradition. p. 16. See Emily D. Bilski and Emily Braun, "Introduction," *Jewish Women and Their Salons. The Power of Conversation*, edited by Emily D. Bilski and Emily Braun (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 16.

which the Berlin salons were formed.¹¹⁵ The phenomenon of the Jewish *salonnière* emerged due to some specific circumstances, such as: unique and superior home education influenced by the Talmudic tradition of hermeneutic interpretation, which prompted the Jewish woman's propensity for dialogue and debate; the established role of Jews as financial intermediary; the ability to survive by wit, negotiation, and improvisation; the fact that the salon provided a secure residence and a sense of belonging, being, at the same time, a gathering place for cosmopolitans; a wish to adhere to a tradition rooted in humanist education, reasoned discourse, open dialogue, and collectively established truth.¹¹⁶ Through the feminine finesse of personal friendship, dialogue, and self-proclamation, the *salonnières* confronted the limitations of the prevailing thought of both majority and minority. The first Jewish *salonnières* of the Enlightenment period can be thus perceived as "civilizing ambassadors" for their people, as they gained new status for women and Jews, along with personal emancipation from their Orthodox households.¹¹⁷ The gendering of the private sphere as feminine under the rubric of Jewish Enlightenment universality strengthened the salon, which allowed women to navigate outside the single category of their "inferior" sex, to function openly within and against patriarchal authority, and thus to question the asymmetrical power relations between men and women.¹¹⁸ "Social networking served the advancement of knowledge and thus the good of society."¹¹⁹ Especially in

¹¹⁵ Wilhelmy-Dollinger. *Die Berliner Salons*, 41.

¹¹⁶ The houses of the Jewish *salonnières* furnished a space of sociability for connection among those associated with different classes; hence, the early salon *mélange* resulted in a high percentage of intermarriage because the women rebelled against their still restrictive faith and the system of arranged marriages. See Wilhelmy-Dollinger, p. 49. See also Julius Carlebach and Hochschule für Jüdische Studien Heidelberg. *Zur Geschichte der jüdischen Frau in Deutschland* (Berlin: Metropol), 1993.

¹¹⁶ See Bilski and Brown, 16.

¹¹⁷ An important facet of holding a salon was the admission to the mainstream by way of personal connection to the upper class and intelligentsia. The salon evidenced the enlightened attitude and desire to assimilate as well as resolved commitment to the values of the increasing in size and importance bourgeoisie, *Bildung* and *Sittlichkeit*. See Bilski and Brown, 16.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* 13-4.

¹¹⁹ Susan Dalton, *Engendering the Republic of Letters. Reconnecting Public and Private Spheres in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Montreal, Kingston, London, and Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 29.

these respects, the Enlightenment culture of sociability foreshadowed the salon of the 19th century.

Salon sociability relied on “the power of conversation – the ability to publicize and arbitrate, to shape consensus, to unite in dialogue those who would not normally meet.”¹²⁰ Conversations in Levin Varnhagen’s salon are a perfect example of the new and unique salon sociability, where the hostess “does not smooth over awkward moments, one assumes, in the interest of authentic social discourse. Sincerity and genuine talent were privileged over social rank, despite the status of several of her guests.”¹²¹ Salon sociability involved multiple dialogues in which numerous people participated.

From the theoretical perspective, dialogue can be among any number of people, not necessarily only two, since the word “dialogue” stems from the Greek word *dialogos*, where *logos* means “the word,” *dia* means “through,” not “two.”¹²² An exchange between Rahel Levin Varnhagen, and her friends, Friedrich von Gentz and Prince Louis Ferdinand, during a series of lectures given by August Wilhelm Schlegel in Berlin in 1802 exemplifies the type of dialogue involving more than two people.¹²³ This very kind of dialogue would have also taken place in the salon and can be visible to some extent in letters where dialogue partners discuss or comment on

¹²⁰ See Emily D. Bilski and Emily Braun, “The Power of Conversation: Jewish Women and Their Salons. Introduction,” in *Jewish Women and Their Salons. The Power of Conversation*, pp. 1-21, p. 2.

¹²¹ The sociability of salon gatherings plays an important role especially in Germany, where a capital and cultural center was lacking. Literary salons were gathering points for intellectual and social communities. Weimar, Jena, Berlin, Wien, Frankfurt am Main, Heidelberg, Dresden were the sites for artistically inclined circles, and also arenas for letter-handling – the points of departure and destination, places where letters were not only inspired, but also sometimes actually exchanged. See *Frauen der Goethezeit in ihren Briefen*, edited by Günter Jäckel (Berlin: Verlag der Nation, 1966), 131. Emily D. Bilski and Emily Braun, “The Romance of Emancipation,” in *Jewish Women and Their Salons. The Power of Conversation*, 22-37, p. 29. See Andreas Arndt, “Geselligkeit und Gesellschaft. Die Geburt der Dialektik aus dem Geist der Konversation in Schleiermachers ‘Versuch einer Theorie des geselligen Betragens,’” *Salons der Romantik. Beiträge eines Wiepersdorfer Kolloquiums zu Theorie und Geschichte des Salons*, ed. Hartwig Schultz (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 45-62.

¹²² David Bohm, *On Dialogue*, ed. Lee Nichol (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 6.

¹²³ Renata Buzzo Märgari “Schriftliche Konversation im Hörsaal: ‘Rahels und Anderer Bemerkungen in A.W. Schlegels Vorlesungen zu Berlin 1802,’” in *Rahel Levin Varnhagen. Die Wiederentdeckung einer Schriftstellerin*, edited by Barbara Hahn and Ursula Isselstein (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 104-128.

situations in different letter or life dialogues, for instance, Rahel Levin Varnhagen in correspondence with Friedrich von Gentz, Caroline von Humboldt, and Karl August Varnhagen during her exile in Prague. In salons, which became the heart and soul of intellectual as well as social exchange, women played not only a visible, but a vital role and became an integral part of them.¹²⁴

1.3 ROMANTIC LETTERS AND THEIR CONNECTIONS TO SALONS

Salon circles often functioned as points of departure and as inspiration for continued epistolary exchanges, as women frequently encountered their correspondents in the salons, and conversations in the salons also determined the subject matter for the letters. Already in the first biography of Rahel Levin Varnhagen (1857), Eduard Schmidt-Weissenfels established the connection between the salon and the letter, as he had named the letter the “Kind des Salons.”¹²⁵ In this context, it becomes strikingly noticeable how this communicative network was interdependent on two forms of dialogue: the physical encounter and the epistolary encounter. Letters became substitutes for conversations with distant dialogue partners; Rahel Levin Varnhagen and Bettina Brentano von Arnim, for instance, spent many hours a day writing several multi-paged letters.¹²⁶ These letters were then often read aloud in the circle of family and friends. In this way, dialogues, which otherwise would have perished, were preserved. The

¹²⁴ There is an abundance of historical debate surrounding the extent to which women played a role in salons. In particular, it was Dena Goodman’s *The Republic of Letters* that ignited a debate surrounding the role of women within the salons and in the Enlightenment. Jolanta T. Pekacz criticized Goodman’s explicit intention of supporting Habermas’ thesis. See Jolanta T. Pekacz, *Conservative Tradition In Pre-Revolutionary France: Parisian Salon Women* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 3. The *salonnières* and the integral role they had within the salons have received attention from a distinctly feminist historiography. The salons, according to Carolyn Lougee, were identified with women. She also emphasizes a positive public role those women played in French society. See Carolyn C. Lougee, *Le Paradis des Femmes: Women, Salons and Social Stratification in Seventeenth Century France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 3-7.

¹²⁵ See Eduard Schmidt-Weissenfels, *Rahel und ihre Zeit*, (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1857), 45.

¹²⁶ Günter Jäckel, “Introduction,” in *Frauen der Goethezeit in ihren Briefen*, ed., Günter Jäckel (Berlin: Verlag der Nation, 1966), 38.

connection between the salon conversation and letters can be illustrated with Levin Varnhagen's own words directed to David Veit: "Ihr Brief ist mir eine wahre Gesellschaft; ich habe mir auch Chokolade dazu machen lassen. (Schreiben Sie mir, ob Sie darüber gelacht haben; ich lache)." ¹²⁷ The idea of sociability, and of a dialogue partner, is connected here to the salon setting, so much so that Rahel Levin Varnhagen is tempted to pretend that her interlocutor is physically present in her space and within her timeframe. To Alexander von der Marwitz she writes: "Ich habe Ihren Brief vor mir und will darauf antworten, als ob Sie mit mir sprächen. So sollten Sie es auch machen! Dann ist und bleibt eine Korrespondenz lebendig, - und ist nicht so viel Tod im Leben, ist es selbst nicht eigentlich das Ringen mit ihm, das man es verbreiten, vermehren soll, wo nur möglich." ¹²⁸ The very representation of the presence of the interlocutor will make their dialogue alive, averting death. The power of both partners' imagination will, so to speak, resurrect the real-time dialogue, and the act of writing it down will preserve it.

Like the salon, a dialogical space, letter writing blurred the lines between the newly emergent private and public spheres, since the letter formally represented the individual to the world outside. The letter was not exclusively a private affair between the sender and the addressee. Even though letters during this period were exchanged between individuals, they would be often read aloud to groups, forwarded to other parties, lent, copied, or even intended for later publication. Thereby letters took on a partially private, partially public character and conformed to the ideal of sociability. The letter has always focused on the public. ¹²⁹

Romantic letters in particular reflect the idea of sociability and dialogical space of the salon, and at the same time they explicitly display the attempts of educated women to bridge the

¹²⁷ To David Veit, October 23, 1794. This instance of conversation illustrates very well Wertheimer's definition of dialogue as referring to "now" and "here." Compare Wertheimer, 9.

¹²⁸ To Alexander von der Marwitz, in Friedersdorf. Tuesday, 9 a.m., May 28, 1811.

¹²⁹ See also Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (Neuwied and Berlin: Luchterhand, 1971), 207.

growing difference between private and public spheres around 1800 as far as women's rights were concerned. Women, who wished to establish themselves in the still emerging bourgeois public sphere, helped in constructing new models for modern conversation — a conversation that would be unthinkable without women.¹³⁰ Letter exchange was regarded by the Jena Romantics as both a prolongation of conversations carried out in the group as a whole, a part of symphilosophizing, and as an unconstrained authentic and therefore exceptionally preferable form of literary expression.¹³¹ In the eighteenth-century tradition of letter writing, as a deliberate artistic form of personal narration, women found their niche of expression. Using letter writing strategies of dialogue and intersubjectivity, women writers disempowered conventional expectations of both biography and autobiography. These writing procedures escape closure, and the texts' dialogic construction replaces the authoritative narrative voice of hegemonic biographical and autobiographical discourse with multivocality.¹³² For instance, the form of the letter allowed women, who often were prevented from publishing fiction or poetry, to develop a highly artistic style nonetheless, absorbing and integrating everyday life into poetry.¹³³ Karoline von Günderrode foregrounds precisely this impression she gets when reading her friend's letter: "Dein Brief macht mir Freude, es ist ein gesundes, munteres Leben darin"; the healthy and vivacious life is described with the language of style because, as Günderrode puts it, "poetry is

¹³⁰ I rely on Jürgen Habermas's definition of the bourgeois public sphere, as laid out in *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, 42. "Bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit läßt sich vorerst als die Sphäre der zum Publikum versammelten Privatleute begreifen."

¹³¹ Janine Blackwell and Susanne Zantop, eds. *Bitter Healing: German Women Writers from 1700 to 1830: an Anthology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 283.

¹³² Compare Anna K. Kuhn, "Chapter One. The 'Failure' of Biography and the Triumph of Women's Writing: Bettina von Arnim's *Die Günderode* and Christa Wolf's *The Quest for Christa T.*," *Autobiography, Biography, and Gender*, eds., Susan Groag Bell and Marilyn Yalom (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 13-28, p. 21.

¹³³ For Schiller and literary critics of the era, writing novels was of secondary importance. Because access to novel was easier as to drama, many women chose the genre of epistolary novel with which they were acquainted. Critics evaluated the works of women as products of their natural talents, which did not live up to the niveau of men writers. Gerhart Hoffmeister, "Der romantische Roman," *Romantik-Handbuch*, ed. Helmut Schantze (Tübingen: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 2003), 237.

always a true style.”¹³⁴ Brentano von Arnim was more partial to the presentation of text that was outwardly formless in order to relay experiences of quotidian reality through the prism of imagination, consequently, poeticizing life by obscuring the line between life and literature.¹³⁵ Life rendered in this way is a seeming chaos of feelings, impressions, opinions about art, and literary experiences.¹³⁶ Arnim implements thereby Romantic ideas as per Novalis’s dictum: “Der wahre Brief ist, seiner Natur nach poetisch” which renders her letters to be art and products with their own inherent aesthetic value; a quality, in the case of letters, only just recently acknowledged by the scholarship.¹³⁷

To be sure letters have been written for a long time. Since approximately 1300, private letters considered “mirrors or portraits of the soul” communicating emotional experiences have been exchanged.¹³⁸ It was the Pietistic correspondence in which women just as men

¹³⁴ Letter to Bettine, *Die Gunderode, Werke und Briefe in drei Banden*, eds., Walter Schmitz and Sibylle von Steinsdorff (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1986), 394.

¹³⁵ Solveig Ockenfu, *Bettine von Arnims Briefromane. Literarische Erinnerungsarbeit zwischen Anspruch und Wirklichkeit* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992), 29. See also Friedrich Schlegel’s *Dialogue on Poetry and Literary Aphorisms* (University Park & London: the Pennsylvania State, 1968), 1-50, p. 10. Schlegel called his composition “chaotic,” which in fact was a deliberate chaotic presentation, that is, its literary structure was that of an “organized chaos.”

¹³⁶ Ockenfu, *Bettine von Arnims Briefromane*, 29.

¹³⁷ Reinhard M.G. Nickisch, *Brief* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1991), 96-8. At the end of the century, letters started to be perceived as a noteworthy genre. As long as they included elements of aesthetic forms, they were considered to be a part of literature even though they primarily served a real occasional purpose. Belke groups letters under literalized forms of usage. Referring to analogous cases of writing made of mixed forms, Hess talks about utility model letter and literary art letter. Fuger describes such letters simply as art letters (97). It has been established that for the authors like Holderlin, Brentano, and Rilke the letter was as much a literary product as a poem or a novel. That is why their letters belong to the very core of their creative work and existence (98).

¹³⁸ Nickisch, *Brief*, 1-39. It was first the personal letter that was considered to be a genuine letter. The new personal letter was different from letters written in Middle Ages or during the Renaissance since they were impersonal and of formulaic content. The only real letters from the earlier periods that can be validly perceived as such are letters written by mystics, those written by Luther to Liselottes v.d. Pfaly, those of the Pietists and those written in the 1800’s (1). Letters belong to the most important category of monuments which individual people can bequeath. The reason they are worth so much is because they preserve the immediate elements of human existence, the shadow of the soul. The letter, as a metaphor of the mirror or reflection of the author’s soul, was, to various degrees, a familiar topos in the epistolary theory since the Greek antiquity. Letters as a pronounced part of subjective self-manifestation have been written not only in the above-mentioned literary periods. Understandably love letters have always circulated and are examples of very personal self-expression (15). Since almost the 1300’s, letters of private subject matter were exchanged; the oldest one was written by a noble nun in 1305 (30). At the beginning of the modern subjective letter, there is an emotional experience of personal resistance (38). For instance,

participated.¹³⁹ However, only after a thorough theoretical-programmatic reform of German language and letter style, were women truly encouraged to write letters.¹⁴⁰ Writing of sentimental letters initiated and taught by Gellert in the Enlightenment era was especially appealing to the educated middle-class women who wrote epistolary novels and thus participated in literary production to a degree not seen before.¹⁴¹ Barbara Becker-Cantarino considers women participating in this astonishing letter production during the new literary development of the 18th to be the “feminization of literature.”¹⁴² The letter was perceived to be not just the expression of the experience but the experience itself; for this reason, the writers of *Sturm und Drang* strove to convey immediacy and directness as well as originality, which led to the expression of feelings.¹⁴³ Probably the most important influence on private letters in general had the precept: “schreibe wie du redest,” which was to become a standard.¹⁴⁴ All in all, the letter became the form of expression of the time.¹⁴⁵

Clearly the Romantics profited from the newly gained style of writing which became unpretentious, more direct, and closer to the spoken word; thematically they reflected subjective state of mind. Regardless of how direct letters became in the pre-Romantic era, the goal of trying to generate experience instead of merely expressing it was never reached. The Romantics kept fostering that same ambition. The program of Romanticism sought to build moral as well as

Hildegard’s mystical exhibition of the soul in 1179 or Margaretha Ebner’s first preserved German correspondence from the period of 1291-1351 (Nickisch 39).

¹³⁹ Ibid., 45.

¹⁴⁰ The letters of Frau Gottsched, a prolific letter writer, were published and became known and popular only decades after her death (Nickisch 46).

¹⁴¹ In case of Goethe, Schiller, Herder, Hölderlin, Jean Paul, and Humboldt, the letter reached a classical rank in that it became a dominated expression and quintessential mirror of intellectual life of the time. The era of Goethe was a classical time period of the German letter where it was extolled to the rank of the bearer of cooperative thinking process and became the unofficial center of social life. Through this communicative endeavor, the intellectual leaders of the middle class were able to influence the political reality in Germany (Nickisch 53).

¹⁴² Ibid., 47.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 51.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

aesthetic flexibility, and ultimately intended to lead to a developed, yet childlike wonder and appreciation of nature and art on the one hand and moral sturdiness on the other hand. It was a philosophy that, in essence, encouraged one to poeticize the world.¹⁴⁶ The Romantics of both genders had a great appreciation for the letter, which, for the contemporary intellectual life, was often more important than an essay or a book; hence, the friendship between many of them found its expression in the correspondence of Romantic circles.¹⁴⁷ It is true that in contrast with the Classical authors, whose thoughts were strictly factual, clearly formulated, dry, and rational, the Romantics appeared to be expandedly subjective full of dazzling ambiguous intellectuality and irony, but always full of life.¹⁴⁸ Even so, it was in fact to a great extent letters of German female Romantics that reached their heyday as far as the depiction of fullness of life is concerned.¹⁴⁹ Bettina Brentano von Arnim's literary production, the letter, not to be substituted by any other form, was where the personal revealing of the self took place; her productivity has been described in the scholarship as art completed but also exhausted in letters.¹⁵⁰ Similarly to Rahel Levin Varnhagen, she is an acclaimed example of "female life in letters."¹⁵¹ Precisely because of the close coupling of life and writing, quotidian and poetic, creating art and aesthetic reflection on beauty which then potentializes life and work, women letter writing can be considered uniquely Romantic. In their letters we find Romantic forms, arabesque and fragment, as well as the reflection on Romantic philosophy with its poeticizing and potentializing predilection so that life becomes art and vice versa. Notwithstanding all these qualities, a significant and powerful

¹⁴⁶ *Internationales Jahrbuch des Deutschen Idealismus. International Yearbook of German Idealism*, "Romantik," 6 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 158.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Here Caroline Schlegel-Schelling needs to be mentioned, as she was an inherent part of the Jena circle (Nickisch 55).

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

aspect of their correspondence is dialogue development, capturing of every-day moments reflecting diverse interests, and pondering a myriad of concerns.

The Romantic qualities of the letters apply to all letters regardless of the editing process. Just as the editors of Karoline von Günderode's letters, Karl Varnhagen exclusively reproduced his wife's letters. Bettina Brentano von Arnim's intention, however, was to create literary monuments through the rendition of partially fictionalized letters and replies. Brentano von Arnim positions herself in the middle of her portrayal and becomes a monument herself. In her lifetime she emerges as an editor of her correspondence and an author of her epistolary novel. The representation of letter and the response to it emphasize dialogue which is conducted but it does not propel the plot or to imitate its dramatic course. Thus, life itself becomes art, and art is defined as life. This is the point where Brentano von Arnim and Levin Varnhagen's philosophy intersect.¹⁵² Despite the fact that all three authors' writings indicate preoccupation with Romantic philosophy and literary forms of expression of that period, each correspondence foregrounds different topics, presents unconventional and independent angle of thinking, or communicates new mood.

Rahel Levin Varnhagen's letters examined here concern themselves with the turbulent political scene, and thus, have socio-historical emphasis. Her writing is in effect of precursory nature, as it introduces two new tendencies which mark the development of the letter in the 19th century since the waning of the Romantic movement and the end of Biedermeier: that is, on the one hand, critical-scientific objectification, and on the other hand, politicization.¹⁵³ In an

¹⁵² See Karin Zimmermann, *Die polyfunktionale Bedeutung dialogischer Sprechformen um 1800* (Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 1992), 23.

¹⁵³ See Nickisch, 55. It was precisely Romanticism that contributed crucially to the formation of the new historical-philological branches of scholarship (56). The correspondence of F.C. von Savigny, the founder of the history of law, must be mentioned as well as that of the Brothers Grimm, K. Lachmann, and K. Goedeke, the publication of the German philology. To the most notable philosophical letter authors of the first phase of the 19th century belong Fichte, Schelling, Baader, and Hegel (57).

intriguing way, Levin Varnhagen's letters combine the ideal of universal thinking and cosmopolitanism with the preoccupation with her own thoughts, feelings, and self-education and manifest this attitude in content, form, and style of her letters. Her letters, which casually fuse politics, social issues, and love, and her surprisingly realistic and at the same time endlessly communicative and quite spontaneous writing style present a true "arabesque" personality employing an ornamental design as *modus operandi* in her work.

Bettina Brentano von Arnim used her actual preserved correspondence and created new letters, thereby constructing fictionalization of epistolary writing in an unconventional way. Her novelization of the letter introduces freshness and imaginativeness into the literary world. The perfect amalgam of reality and fiction created by Brentano von Arnim as a form of arabesque and unparalleled to any other male writing became the source of many a biting criticism. That she was fundamentally and entirely misunderstood can be ascribed to literary critics' unfamiliarity with women writers' endeavors to poeticize and potentialize writing. In point of fact, Brentano von Arnim's writing embodies the "Romantic poetry" – as delineated in Romantic theoretical writings – because it is infinite and free, thus always becoming; it is also universal and fuses "poetry and prose, inventiveness and criticism, the poetry of art and the poetry of nature," and it "treats all subject from high to low" and "reflects the world being at the same time also self-reflexive."¹⁵⁴ Since "poetry begins where reason and logic are suspended," and we plummet into the "confusion of imagination and the primeval chaos of human nature," we, as readers, find ourselves in the middle of arabesque.¹⁵⁵ This thought is well represented in von Arnim's text where "künstlich geordnete Verwirrung, diese reizende Symmetrie von

¹⁵⁴ Compare Frederick Garber, ed., *Romantic Irony* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988), 17.

¹⁵⁵ Frederick Garber, ed, *Romantic Irony*, Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988, p. 19 and p. 36.

Widersprüchen, dieser wunderbare ewige Wechsel von Enthusiasmus und Ironie” is prevalent.¹⁵⁶

That being so, the world created by Brentano von Arnim is an adept semblance of chaos, a derision of order which is, in reality, “a prodigious instance of the mind’s ordering capacities.”¹⁵⁷

From this follows that chaos is a manifestation of the mind’s necessary freedom. In the case of Brentano von Arnim, the chaos or the form of arabesque would apply not only general freedom but also her personal freedom as a woman and a woman writer. It is, however, important to keep in mind that this form of chaos is a designed chaos; a design that would be carefully built according to the thought: “Es ist gleich tödlich für den Geist, ein System zu haben, und keins zu haben. Er wird sich also wohl entschliessen müssen, beides zu verbinden.”¹⁵⁸

Karoline von Günderrode’s letters were meant to remain fully private but are also perhaps most “Romantic” in that her letters represent fragmentary contributions to unfinished dialogues with others who never read them.¹⁵⁹ Additionally, the letters illustrate the fragmentary self-representation of the author and show her exceptional ability for self-reflection as well as remarkable understanding of others. For instance, Günderrode’s reaction to Clemens Brentano’s letter reveals the grasp of his character of multiple personalities or souls that she describes as

¹⁵⁶ Charakteristen Kritiken, I, p. 318-9, in Frederick Garber, ed, *Romantic Irony*, Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988, p. 36.

¹⁵⁷ Garber, *Romantic Irony*, 36.

¹⁵⁸ Athenaeum Fragmente 53, Schlegel, in Frederick Garber, ed., *Romantic Irony* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988), 37.

¹⁵⁹ “Fragment,” *Encyclopedia of Romantic Era*, I, 373. There are many examples of well-known fragments belonging to a long-standing tradition of the genre: the Analects of Confucius, Aesop’s Fables, the fragments of Demophilus and Heraclitus (sixth century B.C.E.), the Old Testament Book of Proverbs, and the Aphorisms of Hippocrates (fourth century B.C.E.) (*Encyclopedia of Romantic Era*, I, 372). The theorization of a fragmentary epistemology and metaphysics emerged in Germany, at first in texts such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s epistolary novel *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (1774) and the fragmentary *Italienische Reise* (1786-88.) Goethe’s perception of the aphoristic fragment as a pertinent form in which to personify intuitions of nonsystematic knowledge was taken up by the German Romantics located at Jena, namely, by Friedrich von Schlegel, who with his brother August Wilhelm von Schlegel, Novalis and Friedrich Schleiermacher coauthored the collection “Fragmente” 1798 in the journal *Athenaeum*. Regardless of Goethe’s precedent, for Schlegel, the author of his own fragmentary novel *Lucinde* (1799) as well as for Novalis and for others of the Jena circle, the fragment did not merely provided an ethical maxim in the Knatian sense, but – in view of its brevity, its capability to be both subjective and objective, and its simultaneous manifestation and abdication of the whole of which it conceived a synecdochic part – becomes the perfect form in which “the genius of language could point to its own limits of signification and transcend them” (373).

“moments.”¹⁶⁰ Moreover, Günderrode’s self-discovery is also fragmentary and only tangible in the mode of a particular fictional representation. Her aesthetically constructed letters where the self finds and formulates its ipseity semantically are to be understood only as symbolic forms of artistic representation. The theologic-historical circumstances of the Romantic fragment, in the exact sense of the word, is dependent on the essential and yet unrealizable relation between its two systems of actuality, that is, as “an autonomous and self-contained entity, a whole in itself; and as a part of a greater unity or totality to which it always points – a relation that is the foundation of what has come to be called romantic irony.”¹⁶¹ Consequently, it may be concluded that Günderrode’s letters, although arguably not intended to be published, uncover a fragmented persona of an artist profoundly agitated by the opposition of heart and intellect, of spontaneity and contemplation, of passion and calculation, and enthusiasm with skepticism.¹⁶²

The letters of Rahel Levin Varnhagen, Bettina Brentano von Arnim, and Karoline von Günderrode relate consciousness and self-consciousness in art and artist, convey internalization of expansive contradictions, and suggest freedom in the artists’ own inventions, a process which in essence is propelled by Romantic irony.¹⁶³ Hence, they may be characterized according to

¹⁶⁰ See my analysis in the chapter on Karoline von Günderrode.

¹⁶¹ “Fragment,” *Encyclopedia of Romantic Era*, I, p. 373. The concept of Romantic irony is linked to the Jena circle. Its theorization merges the mystical-theoretical, rhetorical-philosophical, and rational traditions, and it was published in short texts by Friedrich Schlegel in “Kritische Fragmente 42” (1797) in *Lyceum*. Schlegel reconfigures irony in three ways: 1. On a textual level, where it displays the connection between the spirit and the letter, that is, the stylistic and rhetorical display of language. 2. On the level of the individual, since the individual spirit is a metonymic, microcosmic part, that is, in theory the person who successfully transcended the limits of language and realized the whole within himself would become the model of the prophet hierophan artist, one whose words are by definition only intelligible to kindred spirits. Hence, many texts created by Schlegel and his colleagues are in the form of collections of fragments each of which is a whole in itself, but at the same time also stands as a part. The spaces or gaps between the fragments illustrate the ironic disjunction between the totality of meaning and the fragmentation of its expression in language. 3. Irony is more than the spatial relations of a system, as it also figures temporally on the hermeneutic or interpretive plane of history, thus, the end of history would be the attainment of an absolute and obvious real language which would transcend the restrictions of human language. This is unattainable because the end of irony is itself ironized; this is what is labeled “the irony of irony” (*Encyclopedia of Romantic Era*, I, 565).

¹⁶² More than in any other period of Western literature the ironic attitude appears as the distinctive hallmark of the Romantic generation, Frederick Garber, ed, *Romantic Irony*, Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988, p. 43.

¹⁶³ Garber, ed, *Romantic Irony*, 17.

Schlegel's terms, as "artfully ordered confusion or intricacy, a charming symmetry of contradictions or opposites, a marvelous eternal alternation of enthusiasm and irony."¹⁶⁴ Through the descriptions of the real and imaginative based on the underlying theme of love, the authors enter into the expansive vision of art and nature. It represents a mode of poetic reflection multiplied as if in an endless array of mirrors, to discover that "genuine irony is the irony of love," as "it arises from the feeling of finiteness and of one's own limitations and the apparent contradiction of these feelings with the concept of infinity inherent in all genuine love."¹⁶⁵

1.4 "LOVE" IN THE LETTERS AS BOTH TOPIC AND NARRATOLOGICAL SYSTEM

Finding herself back in the stark reality of being single again after an unhappy end to a love affair, Rahel Levin Varnhagen nevertheless was able to approach the subject with a good dose of irony: "Die Komödie geht von Neuem los; lieben muß ich."¹⁶⁶ Even though she felt her condition was "eine Art von Tod," Varnhagen did not turn away from falling in love again. Perhaps her optimism and determination stemmed from the impression that life was some kind of theater. She voiced this noteworthy presentiment on many occasions: "Mir kömmt die Welt jetzt accurat vor wie ein Spektakel."¹⁶⁷ Varnhagen perceives her life as a spectacle or, in other words, as a form of art which renders her quasi-immortal.¹⁶⁸ That, in art, conscious activity is enhanced with subconscious activity was a well-known thought in the Romantic period, and here Levin Varnhagen blurs the distinction between what is real and unreal, what is conscious and

¹⁶⁴ (Schlegel's *Rede über die Mythologie*) Garber, *Romantic Irony*, 19.

¹⁶⁵ Friedrich Schlegel, 45. Schlegel lectures of 1929 "Frederick Garber, ed, *Romantic Irony* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988), 46 in Garber, ed, *Romantic Irony*, 46.

¹⁶⁶ To Frau von Boye Juli 1800. RB, I207f, here Zimmerman, 110-111.

¹⁶⁷ RahelsBibliothek, I, 242, in Karin Zimmermann, "Das Rahelsche 'Lebenstheater,'" 109.

¹⁶⁸ Compare: "Lasset uns darum unser Leben in ein Kunstwerk verwandeln, und wir dürfen kühnlich behaupten, daß wir dann schon irdisch unsterblich sind." Ludwig Tieck, "Phantasien über die Kunst für Freunde der Kunst," *Die deutsche Literatur in Text und Darstellung. Romantik I* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1978), 91.

subconscious.¹⁶⁹ As an artist, she lives and constructs her life imbued with love on multilayered levels.¹⁷⁰ Just like Günderrode, who designed her life in writing as a woman and an artist and in a way predicted her own death – for her a form of life in perpetuity – Levin Varnhagen described her life in terms of teatrology.¹⁷¹ With this gesture, she poeticizes her life so that: “Dichtung ist vom Leben nicht zu trennen, der Akt des Dichtens ist keine höhere Weihe am Schreibtisch, sondern die unmittelbare Realität.”¹⁷² These circumstances imply being in both real and fictional states of fragmentary self and chronicle the difficult transitory state in which women of the era found themselves. The overcoming of a traditional concept of a woman as divided into either an erotic soul mate or an intellectual companion presented a vital challenge to the educational conventions of the Enlightenment. The Romantics pioneered their way in these new symbiotic feelings and tried to erase the divide of love and fellowship between lovers and spouses.¹⁷³ Levin Varnhagen, Brentano von Arnim, and Günderrode emphasized libidinal desire and carnal love, and in doing so inscribed sexual pleasure into companionate relationship and marriage. Both in

¹⁶⁹ Compare: “Schon längst ist eingesehen worden, daß in der Kunst nicht alles mit dem Bewußtsein ausgerichtet wird, daß mit der bewußten Tätigkeit eine bewußtlose Kraft sich verbinden muß und daß die vollkommene Einigkeit und gegenseitige Durchdringung dieser beiden Das Höchste der Kunst erzeugt.” Ludwig Tieck, “Phantasien über die Kunst für Freunde der Kunst,” *Die deutsche Literatur in Text und Darstellung. Romantik I* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1978), 92.

¹⁷⁰ In the philosophy of consciousness, *sentience* (the ability to feel, perceive, or experience subjectivity rather than to think/reason) can refer to the ability of any entity to have subjective perceptual experiences, or as some philosophers refer to them, “qualia.” This is distinct from other aspects of the mind and consciousness, such as creativity, intelligence, sapience, self-awareness, and intentionality (the ability to have thoughts that mean something or are “about” something). David Cole, “Sense and Sentience,” *SENSE* 5 8/18/90, 1-19-98. <http://www.d.umn.edu/~dcole/sense5.html>

¹⁷¹ See also the letter from Rahel Levin Varnhagen to Gutzkow, October 26, 1830: “O! welch amüsanten Busen führ’ ich in mir. Das Lebenstheater darin wird immer reicher” (RahelBibliothek, III, 456). The idea of “life as theater” connects the space of life with that of art, as life appears as a scene where actors play: “Mir kömmt die Welt jetzt accurat vor wie ein Spektakel” (RahelBibliothek, I, 242). Zimmermann sees here a conflict situation where under social repression of a domineering patriarchal society a female cannot properly function and thus is forced to give in into a total self-denial (Zimmermann 109). With the reference to “sterben, ohne tot zu sein,” not only Finckenstein but also society surrounding him appears as a company of actors.

¹⁷² Compare how E.T.A. Hoffmann describes his own position in “Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier,” *Die deutsche Literatur in Text und Darstellung. Romantik I* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1978), 275.

¹⁷³ Caroline Böhmer is a good example of an author who not only created epistolary culture bordering on the private conversation and public sphere while in dialogue with free equal women and men, but also who combined the roles of an erotic and intellectual partner. See Harro Segeberg “Phasen der Romantik,” *Romantik-Handbuch*, ed. Helmut Schantze (Thübingen: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 2003), 41.

their writings and in their lives, these women authors moved outside of the patriarchal order as they demonstrated that only there where the harmony of views and attitudes were to be found, will love grow. They also encouraged the belief that mutual love and passion belonged to a union between a man and a woman who were not necessarily united in a bond of formal marriage. They desired to establish the noble cult of love rooted in the sensual Romanticism where the dignity of women would be restored. That is to say, the natural and intended state of being was meant to be that of emotional and physical equality between a woman and a man and expressed by keeping balance between giving of self and protecting individuality. This unspoken criticism of marriage for maintenance meant also the demand for the economic independence of women. They refused to subscribe to the restrictive and oppressive gender ideology which was vehemently discussed at the time and based on definitions of women's destiny by emphasizing biological, rather than social factors. Ultimately Levin Varnhagen, Brentano von Arnim, and Günderrode rewrote the definition of marriage and romantic relationships at large.

For Levin Varnhagen letters had a purpose similar to that of the salon, that is, the cultivation of human communication and friendship. Hence, brotherly love takes in her writing prominent place. If the love is of the self-sacrificing variety, then necessarily, proving that sort of love means to sacrifice oneself. Such is the love depicted in Levin Varnhagen's letters written in her Prague exile in the spring of 1813. This was a time of her public service for Germany when she organized a rescue operation for the injured, displaced, and all those distressed by the *Befreiungskriege* (Wars of Liberation). Her experiences from that time period show her reliance on a brotherly form of love; a love for all humanity: agape. This is the love that draws on both elements from eros and philia in seeking perfection that encompasses fondness and passion for the other without the necessity for reciprocation of feelings. Levin Varnhagen found an effective

way of unifying people through dialogue expressing the message of harmony, freedom, and peace rooted in the concept of universal love and illustrated by Biblical maxim: “love thy neighbor as thyself.” Hers was a more urban and active idea of sociability linked to political activism, in which charity is expressed through political action.¹⁷⁴ Her political ideas are much more cosmopolitan than those of male writers and do not communicate superiority of any particular nation.¹⁷⁵

In contrast with the desiring and passionate yearning of sensual eros, philia entails a fondness and appreciation of the other with no sexual connotation. The term philia incorporates not just friendship, but also loyalties to the other, that is, having a deep sense of feeling for someone as a friend and acting out one’s love. This is the kind of love on which Brentano von Arnim concentrates although it is not her exclusive focus. The theme of love is a programmatic statement for Brentano von Arnim’s reconstruction project of a friendship from her youth, as she proposes a dialogue to develop not only deeper friendship, but also strategies of resistance against the rules of patriarchal society. She introduces symbiosis of the intellect and sensuousness to bring about the atmosphere of intellectual conversation, akin to what took place in salons led by women. Brentano von Arnim’s characters, Bettine and Karoline subscribe to female philosophy rooted in the notion of Schwebereligion (a term coined by Brentano von Arnim) free of traditional dogmas and regulations, but connected to erotic desire. The author also connects love expressly with the innovative method of writing rooted in the performance of speaking as “a divine model of communication,” where “love is ... only a dialogue with God”

¹⁷⁴ Compare: Baudelaire – “Essay le Salon de 1846” and relations of the art and politics, *Encyclopedia of Romantic Era*, II, p. 985.

¹⁷⁵ Compare: “Von der Liebe zum Vaterlande. Frage: Du liebst dein Vaterland, nicht wahr, mein Sohn? ... Vom Erzfeind. Frage: Wer sind deine Feinde, mein Sohn? Antwort: Napoleon, und solange er ihr Kaiser ist, die Franzosen.” Heinrich von Kleist, “Aus dem Katechismus der Deutschen,” Ludwig Tieck, “Phantasien über die Kunst für Freunde der Kunst,” *Die deutsche Literatur in Text und Darstellung. Romantik I* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1978), 199 -201.

composed of “a question and a sweet answer.”¹⁷⁶ For that reason, love points to dialogue. The power of words and ultimately dialogue is not to be disregarded: “Durch Worte herrschen wir über den ganzen Erdkreis; durch Worte erhandeln wir uns mit leichter Mühe alle Schätze der Erde.”¹⁷⁷ The thought that our knowledge of any language system has its origins essentially in the human heart, where our feelings are being formed and our attitudes are being molded, finds a prominent articulation in Arnim’s *Die Günderröde*.¹⁷⁸

In contrast, Karoline von Günderröde connects her passion for writing with her actual condition of being in love. The term *eros* points to that part of love constituting a passionate, vehement desire for something and often pertains to a sexual desire, ergo the modern notion of “erotic.” In essence, Levin Varnhagen, Brentano von Arnim, Günderröde all aestheticize the forms of love they thematize, making them not necessarily the exclusive focus of their writing but rather positioning their themes of love as a nourishing platform on which other topics draw.

¹⁷⁶ Bettina von Arnim, 511-512. Karin Zimmermann, *Die polyfunktionale Bedeutung dialogischer Sprechformen um 1800*, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 1992, p. 511. Those communicatively marked text forms are based on the view of personhood that understands the “I” as inner plural and the “you” as a complement to “I.” The most important representatives were: Novalis, Friedrich Schlegel und F.D. Schleiermacher. In the term personality, Novalis interlocks individual existence and importance of community. So in order to develop personality one needs to take on multiple individualities and be able to assimilate himself; through this he will become individuality, a genius: “Eine ächt synthetische Person ist eine Person, die mehrere Personen zugleich ist – ein Genius.” Novalis Schriften Band 3, Fragment nr. 63, p. 250. Paul Kluckhohn und Richard Samuel, Leipzig 1928. Personality is thereby ipso facto not established – not a given but in a permanent formation process. It never commands, rules over itself and if then only in retrospect, referring to the past. Letter, dialogue, diary, fragment are in research emphasized as open forms. If one were to assume that this involves only egocentric texts, one could speak about an “offenen Persönlichkeitsstruktur.” The completion is in the future and implies a continuous development of the I. The product personality is not suggested as the result of an isolated differentiation, but rather as a part of a community. The threatening isolation and rootlessness of an individual is addressed by Novalis in the idea of communicative community: “Je man nichfacher Etwas individualisirt ist - desto mannichfacher ist seine Grenze und Nachbarschaft. Ein unendlich characterisirtes Individuum ist Glied eines Infinitinomi(m)s. Novalis Bd 3, Nr. 113, p. 262. It realizes itself in the community and learns its subjectivity in the first place in connection with other subjects. Karin Zimmermann, *Die polyfunktionale Bedeutung dialogischer Sprechformen um 1800* (Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 1992), 65-70.

¹⁷⁷ Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, “Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders,” *Die deutsche Literatur in Text und Darstellung. Romantik I* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1978), 84.

¹⁷⁸ Compare to “Wir wissen nicht, was ein Baum ist; nicht, was eine Wiese ist, nicht, was ein Felsen ist; wir können nicht in unserer Sprache mit ihnen reden. ... Und dennoch hat der Schöpfer in das Menschenherz eine solche wunderbare Sympathie zu diesen Dingen gelegt, daß sie demselben auf unbekanntem Wegen Gefühle oder Gesinnungen, oder wie man es nennen mag, zuführen, welche wir nie durch die abgemessensten Worte erlangen.” Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, “Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders,” *Die deutsche Literatur in Text und Darstellung. Romantik I* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1978), 85.

As argued by some scholars, Karoline von Günderrode's state of being in love could be regarded as an amalgamation of reality and Romantic fantasy, namely, an aesthetic subjectivity.¹⁷⁹ In order to describe this circumstance, I employ the metaphor of the phoenix – an idealistic self-consumption in the context of enduring and consuming passion, as she becomes regenerated in the publication of her works during her lifetime and later reborn through Bettina Brentano von Arnim's *Die Günderode*.¹⁸⁰

1.5 CONCLUSION

The letters of Levin Varnhagen, Brentano von Arnim, and Günderrode live up to the Romantic call that “die Welt muß romantisiert werden” in being potentialized.¹⁸¹ The belief that through art, which presents “the highest human perfection,” we will be able to achieve the state of “perpetual love that no death will be able to obscure” is made plain in their works.¹⁸² By expressing themselves through Romantic letters, Levin Varnhagen, Brentano von Arnim, and Günderrode employed dialogue. The form of the letters combines, and works creatively with the Early Romantic notion of symphilosophy and the ideal of sociability as practiced in Romantic

¹⁷⁹ Karl Heinz Bohrer, *Der romantische Brief. Die Entstehung ästhetischer Subjektivität* (München and Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1987), 82 -83.

¹⁸⁰ I refer here to a long-lived bird that is cyclically reborn. According to the historical record, the phoenix "could symbolize renewal in general as well as the sun, time, the Empire, metempsychosis, consecration, resurrection, life in the heavenly Paradise, Christ, Mary, virginity, the exceptional man." R. van der Broek, *The Myth of the Phoenix, According to Classical and Early Christian Traditions*, transl. I. Seeger (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), 9.

¹⁸¹ “Die Welt muß romantisiert werden. So findet man den ur(sprünglichen) Sinn wieder. Romantisieren ist nichts als eine qualit(ativ)e Potenzierung. Indem ich dem Gemeinen einen hohen Sinn, dem Gewöhnlichen ein geheimnisvolles Ansehn, dem Bekannten die Würde des Unbekannten, dem Endlichen einen unendlichen Schein gebe, so romantisiere ich es.” Novalis, “Die Welt muß romantisiert werden,” *Die deutsche Literatur in Text und Darstellung. Romantik I* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1978), 57.

¹⁸² “Die Kunst stellt uns die höchste menschliche Vollendung dar.” Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, “Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders,” *Die deutsche Literatur in Text und Darstellung. Romantik I* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1978), 87. “Wenn wir in reicher, frischer Lebensgegenwart unbefangene Blicke auf die Welt und in unser Inneres werfen, ..., wir empfinden es lebendigst, wie unsre Liebe ewig sei, wie kein Tod sie beschatten könne, kein Bild der Ewigkeit sie unbedeutend machen dürfe.” Ludwig Tieck, “Phantasien über die Kunst für Freunde der Kunst,” *Die deutsche Literatur in Text und Darstellung. Romantik I* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1978), 89.

salons. The content of the letters adopts and uses creatively ancient notions of love including agape, philia, and eros. Ultimately it is love that encompasses and unites all in the women's writing discussed here manifested in both the form and the content. Letters, as other forms of the literary discourse, generate at first a specific "love code"; love is regarded as a concept that is not a reference point but rather a method of a text. Primarily, a literary text establishes a dictionary of love in order to unfold love, that is, each text develops its own literary procedure – a love procedure. The premise should then be: first the text than love.¹⁸³ The design of love can be described as a symbolically generated merger of communication medium with the poetic communication model. By this means, one comes to conclusion that love codes in a literary text could only be set up where characters communicate with each other. This rule applies first of all to individual figures of a novel. Figures as lovers must communicate and act; in a literary text this is obligatory.¹⁸⁴

The dual focus on form and content allows us to gain an illuminated understanding of the authors' endeavor to consciously re-construct the three forms of love and at the same time to constitute an approach necessarily relying on the form of the dialogue. With their approach of "life as writing," they erased the divide between art and life. Through the cooperation with many correspondents all three writers were able to preserve quotidian life expressed through a highly aestheticized dialogue in letters. The Romantic letter thus participates in a modern conversation that is still marked by convention and by expectations around gender roles—but at the same time, it uses ancient ideas (the ancient form of the dialogue; ancient notions of love) together with modern Romantic innovations (symphilosophy, sociability) to produce a new discourse—

¹⁸³ See Christian Metz, *Die Narratologie der Liebe, Achim von Arnims "Gräfin Dolores"* (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 20-21.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

one marked by convention and tradition, but one that nevertheless pushes women into a much more public form of cultural production than they had been involved with in the past.

CHAPTER 2

RAHEL LEVIN VARNHAGEN'S UNDERSTANDING OF LOVE, REALIZED THROUGH DIALOGUE

“Die Menschen verstehen einander nicht. Sie lieben sich zu ungleichen Stunden,” Rahel Levin Varnhagen (1771-1833) wrote in the weekly *Berlinische Blätter* (November 28, 1813).¹⁸⁵ When talking about love as agape expressed towards fellow humans, Levin Varnhagen emphasizes love’s potential asymmetry. To be sure agape’s spiritual and selfless dimensions provide a model for humanity that Levin Varnhagen acknowledges and authenticates by locating it within the Judeo-Christian tradition as specified with the commandment, “love your neighbor as thyself.” Every human being must be treated as a unique person never as a thing or a means to another’s end. Levin Varnhagen points out to the reader that the problem lies in love not being reciprocal at the right moment. She connects love to dialogue when suggesting that the lack of love at any given moment results in a break-down of communication.¹⁸⁶ When writing these lines in the year 1813, Levin Varnhagen was in exile in Prague where she experienced many such dialogue crises and at the same time lived and theorized agape in the private and public sphere.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Sunday, November 28, 1813, *Berlinische Blätter für deutsche Frauen. Eine Wochenschrift*, edited by Friedrich Baron de la Motte Fouguè, (“Varnhagen” written in pen), III vol., book 4, Berlin, 1829, Maurersche Buchhandlung, pp. 137-184, p. 150, crate no. 204 entitled “Gedrucktes von und über Rahel. Denkblätter Rahels in mehreren Zeitschriften.” Varnhagen Archive, Jagiellonian Library, Krakow, Poland.

¹⁸⁶ See Nilolaus Wegmann, “Diskurse der Empfindsamkeit. Zur Geschichte eines Gefühls im 18. Jahrhunderts Stuttgart 1990,” in Christian Metz, *Die Narratologie der Liebe, Achim von Arnims “Gräfin Dolores”* (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 20. From the semiotic and narratological point of view, love is an internal phenomenon and can be described as a symbolically generated merger of communication medium with the poetic communication model.

¹⁸⁷ Jürgen Habermas’s definition of the bourgeois public sphere, as laid out in *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Neuwied and Berlin: Luchterhand, 1971), 42.

Levin Varnhagen's aspirations for integration, even among people who had difficulty understanding one another and "sich...zu ungleichen Stunden lieb(t)en," set a model for the role that Jewish women would play in shaping intellectual and cultural life in the modern world.¹⁸⁸ In literature women's letters have traditionally been stereotyped as mirrors of their lives; emotional, fragmentary, interrupted, modest, whimsical, private, restricted, self-centered.¹⁸⁹ Yet, Rahel Levin Varnhagen's letters challenge such facile categorization, poignantly documenting the innovative ways in which women of this period were able to escape the isolated, confined place long assigned to them. As a Jewish woman, Levin Varnhagen fostered aspirations for integration that provided a model by which marginalized persons could and would play a role in shaping intellectual and cultural life in the modern world while challenging the rigidity of class, gender, and ethnic confinement.¹⁹⁰ Through her salon and in approximately six thousand surviving letters written in Germany, in France, and in exile in Prague, Levin Varnhagen was not only able to explore and reorder her innermost self, but was also in position to portray and shape the story of assimilation and emancipation among Jewish women.

¹⁸⁸ The salon afforded a space for women where they were able to emancipate and educate themselves through the enlightened conversation. Letters were in part continuations of salon conversations. Heidi Thomann-Tewarson credits Rahel Levin Varnhagen with being a model for others, in this case, Jewish women in the process of their acculturation and emancipation. She observes that "Emanzipation, Aufklärung, Bildung und Freiheitsstreben" are the characteristics that women had in common. "Lebensprojekte Deutscher Jüdinnen Während der Emanzipationszeit. Rahel Levin Varnhagen und Fanny Lewald," in *Lektüren und Brüche. Jüdische Frauen in Kultur, Politik und Wissenschaft*, eds., Mechtild M. Jansen and Ingeborg Nordmann (Königstein, Taunus: Ulrike Helmer Verlag, 2000), 22-47, p. 23.

¹⁸⁹ On discussion about women's letter writing and emancipation, see the following: Goodman 1986, Hahn 1991, Hahn 1988 (13-27), Kord 1996.

¹⁹⁰ Dagmar C. G. Lorenz emphasizes the role of Rahel Levin Varnhagen in German literature in the following words: "Rahel was able to create a Jewish woman's voice with which to speak to her friends and to the public. By doing so, she laid the foundation for a Jewish discourse in German. Her vocabulary and diction by far exceeded the capacities of her native Yiddish to express a position of biculturalism, and they expanded the parameters of the German language to include Jewish concerns. Without her pioneering effort, German-Jewish literature such as Heine's *Rabbi von Bacharach* and Lewald's *Jenny* are inconceivable. Rahel's salon was the motherland of the following generation of Jewish authors (Lorenz 1997, 36).

The rediscovery of the Varnhagen Archive after World War II sparked a new interest in Rahel Levin Varnhagen's writing, which resulted in prolific scholarship.¹⁹¹ Researchers studying Levin Varnhagen's letters wrote biographies that focused chiefly on issues of ethnicity, gender, and the author's love life, as manifested in her correspondence, or concentrated on her contacts with the famous people of the era. Some literary critics focused on her engagement with literature, especially Goethe's oeuvre.

This chapter – after sections that explicate Levin Varnhagen's understanding of how an ideal dialogue was to function in both the salon setting and in letter-writing – emphasizes and explores Levin Varnhagen's view from exile in Prague through her epistolary dialogues with Friedrich von Gentz, Carloine von Humboldt, Karl August Varnhagen, and Clemens Brentano. This particular selection of letters highlights Levin Varnhagen's hopes for a dialogue that is embedded in love and originates in the salon and in the Romantic idea of symphilosophy. It includes women – embracing those of Jewish lineage – allowing them to enter public space, and finally constitutes art intertwined with every-day life, so that life expressed through dialogue becomes art.

Although she was a private citizen, Rahel Levin Varnhagen's letters, especially those written in Prague, where she found refuge when, in 1813, Prussia declared war on Napoleon, reveal much about public realities of the era. Through the close reading of Levin Varnhagen's epistolary exchange from that time depicting patriotic activism and war relief efforts, I will show ways in which Rahel Levin Varnhagen from that very space consistently emphasized

¹⁹¹ The Varnhagen Collection was previously in the *Preussische Staatsbibliothek* (Prussian State Library) and was evacuated from Berlin in April of 1941 to be eventually transferred to Kraków after the war. As Deborah Herz observed, it holds “treasures for *Germanisten* and intellectual historians.” By 1911, the Varnhagen Collection contained the papers of over 9,000 German intellectuals from the early nineteenth century. In addition to letters by Rahel Levin Varnhagen, the Collection includes works by Goethe, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Friedrich and A. W. Schlegel, Heine, Hegel, Fichte, and Marx. The 1911 guide to the collection by Ludwig Stern has 963 pages and is still incomplete, since additional manuscripts were added to the collection after that date. See Deborah Herz, “The Varnhagen Collection in Krakow” (*The American Archivist*, vol. 44.3 (1981) 223- 228), 224.

Enlightened ideals of freedom and peace, but rooted in highly Romantic notions of universal love and reciprocal dialogue. With her principle of “life as writing” – initiated in the salon and emerging from the Romantic philosophy of sociability and symphilosophy – she strove to remove the separation between art and life.¹⁹² Levin Varnhagen’s insistence on dialogue and the ways she theorized and connected it with the content of her letters, the ideal of love that could be in part realized through art, are best illustrated in these particular letter exchange collections, that is, in the dialogue with those correspondents with whom she was in close contact during her exile in Prague.

2.1 RAHEL LEVIN VARNHAGEN’S LIFE AND LETTERS IN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SPACES

Rahel Levin Varnhagen’s functions as a private and public persona intertwined. Her semi-public role as a well-known hostess of a successful salon, a forum for all to speak equally where not only one voice is heard, extends to her letters. The letters, on the one hand, appear to be private; on the other hand, however, not only do they communicate matters of historical and public interest, but also by being circulated among close and distant friends and finally by being published, they become public.

An example of the connection between the oral and written as well as private and public space is a written exchange between Rahel Levin Varnhagen and her friends, Friedrich von Gentz and Prince Louis Ferdinand, during a series of lectures given by August Wilhelm Schlegel in Berlin in 1802. The notes that they circulated during the lectures illustrate a mixture of serious

¹⁹² See Christa Bürger, *Leben Schreiben. Die Klassik, die Romantik und der Ort der Frauen* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1990), 109.

engagement in the public event and private elements of gossip and flirtations.¹⁹³ Renata Buzzo Mångari observes that the records in Levin Varnhagen's notebook, reflect the playful, entertaining character of conversation and the laxly connected transition from one subject, private, to the other, public, and vice versa.¹⁹⁴ It is precisely this kind of dialogue that can be understood as a continuation of salon conversation within the letters. Levin Varnhagen's entire epistolary project is based on a form of dialogue that from the beginning united the private and public spheres through, for instance, the use of "dialogue within dialogue" and "collective dialogue." Jutta Juliane Laschke insists that the dialogue about Goethe in Levin Varnhagen's letters constitutes a dialogue within the dialogue, in that Levin Varnhagen discusses various aspects of his writing with different correspondents.¹⁹⁵ She wants to carry on a dialogue in letters with more than one partner and thus sees herself as a part of a *Gesamtdialog*, collective dialogue, which is unified through particular reference points, such as quotations.¹⁹⁶ Levin Varnhagen's correspondence provides a sense of her original use of language and how intrinsic the principle of dialogue was to her entire project.¹⁹⁷ Her spoken language included many foreign words and phrases, especially French ones, and reflected the language of the salon.¹⁹⁸ Thus, Levin

¹⁹³ Renata Buzzo Mångari, "Schriftliche Konversation im Hörsaal: 'Rahels und Anderer Bemerkungen in A.W. Schlegels Vorlesungen zu Berlin 1802,'" in *Rahel Levin Varnhagen. Die Wiederentdeckung einer Schriftstellerin*, edited by Barbara Hahn and Ursula Isselstein (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 104-128.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

¹⁹⁵ Jutta Juliane Laschke, *Wir sind eigentlich, wie wir sein möchten und nicht so wie wir sind* (Frankfurt am Main, Bern, NY, Paris: Peter Lang, 1988), 69.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 116-120.

¹⁹⁷ Emily D. Bilski and Emily Braun, "Introduction," *Jewish Women and Their Salons. The Power of Conversation*, eds., Emily D. Bilski and Emily Braun (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000).

¹⁹⁸ Barbara Hahn demonstrates how French for Jewish women became a transition language, as they began to abandon writing in German in Hebrew characters. Before they would use occasional remarks in Yiddish in Latin characters; however, this identified them as foreign words, with no direct path into the German Language. They began shifting into French particularly when reflecting on the difficulties of the acculturation process. French enabled them to maintain a distance from the Yiddish one could hear in the German of their mothers. A letter in two languages or even alphabets permitted them to safeguard their double identity. Rahel Levin Varnhagen's letter to her sister Rose Asser in the Hauge, at the time when she was already living in Karlsruhe as the Prussian diplomat's wife, or Freiderike Varnhagen illustrates this phenomenon: "I was a Jewess, not pretty, ignorant, without grace, sans

Varnhagen's letters document the authentic salon conversation featuring the distinguishing mark of the usage of the French language with its peculiar accent, implying a question and an answer pattern, a dialogue.¹⁹⁹ Her dialogue with the world continues when her works become published, as can be seen in the reception of her works and their legacy.

Rahel Levin Varnhagen as a Woman, a Jew, and a Salonnière

Rahel Levin Varnhagen grew up with the ideals of the Enlightenment and French Revolution.²⁰⁰ As an adult, she was to witness a reaction to the overpowering inheritance of the revolution: Napoleon – the reaction that aimed to restore the old order. Hers was a time of momentous social and political changes, especially for social groups lacking autonomy under feudal and absolutist social orders: women, Jews, and the bourgeoisie. Her identity was intertwined with all three.

Levin Varnhagen's frustration with the suffocating space assigned to women under traditional patriarchy is best illustrated in a letter she wrote to the close childhood friend David Veit:

[Was] kann ein Frauenzimmer dafür, wenn es *auch* ein Mensch ist? Ein *ohnmächtiges* Wesen, dem es *für nichts* gerechnet wird, nun *so* zu Haus zu sitzen, und das Himmel und Erde, Menschen und Vieh wider sich hätte, wenn es weg wollte (und das Gedanken hat wie ein anderer Mensch), und richtig zu Haus bleiben muß²⁰¹

talent et sans instruction: ah ma soeur, c'est fini, c'est fini avant la fin réelle. I could have done nothing differently." Hahn calls this code switching "a kind of carnival of languages," which "offers possibilities for evading unambiguous attribution." Barbara Hahn, *Jewess Pallas Athena: This too a Theory of Modernity* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2005) 28.

See also the chapter entitled "The Jewish Voice. Chicken Soup or the Penalties of Sounding too Jewish," in Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), 10-37.

¹⁹⁹ Renata Buzzo Margari, "Schriftliche Konversation im Hörsaal," 106.

²⁰⁰ Ursula Isselstein, "Emanzipation wovon und wofür? Das Beispiel der Familie Levin aus Berlin," in *Jüdinnen zwischen Tradition und Emanzipation*, eds., Norbert Altenhofer and Renate Heuer (Frankfurt am Main: Bibliographia Judaica, 1990), 80-113, p. 81. "Er wird seinen Kindern – wenn überhaupt eine – diese Religion der Aufklärung vermittelt haben," commented Ursula Isselstein about the father of Rahel Levin Varnhagen. See chapter "Juden: Das 'Verrückthistorische,'" in Ursula Isselstein's *Der Text aus meinem beliedigten Herzen. Studien zu Rahel Levin Varnhagen* (Turin: Tirrenia Stampatore, 1993), 30.

²⁰¹ Rahel to David Veit in Göttingen, Berlin April 2, 1793, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 19.

In that same letter, she reveals the exasperation regarding her Jewish origin when she calls herself “ein Schlemihl und eine Jüdin.”²⁰² Even her early letters show signs of limitations she would have to come to terms with, as both a woman and a Jew.²⁰³ The feeling of frustration, of literally being unable to find a “breathing space” is still present sixteen years later when she writes to Fougué, describing herself as a “*nichts*,” thus, “keine Tochter, keine Schwester, keine Geliebte, keine Frau, keine Bürgerin einmal.”²⁰⁴

For Levin Varnhagen, being free meant also being true to yourself, and being able to articulate your thoughts without compromise:

Rahel sagte in Betreff ihrer selbst rücksichtslos die ganze Wahrheit, und würde, auch die beschämendste und nachteiligste, wäre eine solche vorhanden gewesen, demjenigen nicht verhehlt haben, der im Schein edlen Vertrauens und einsichtiger Teilnahme sie darum befragt hätte. Sie glaubte, indem sie wahr sei, niemals sich etwas zu vergeben, noch durch Verschweigen etwas zu gewinnen, und dieses höchste, ausgleichende, versöhnende Interesse für die Mitteilung der Wahrheit, welches sie empfand, setzte sie für deren Würdigung auch bei andern stets, wiewohl leider meist fälschlich, immer aufs neue voraus.²⁰⁵

This unchangeable desire for communication of *Wahrheit*, which Astolphe de Custine referred as “une confession volontaire,” was of a magnetic quality, as it produced many followers and admirers, and was also reciprocal.²⁰⁶

²⁰² Ibid., 20.

²⁰³ Her remarks refer to a literary and philosophical debate, largely among men, about the intellectual and erotic capabilities of women and the new gender order; they also refer to the Jewish assimilation and acculturation debate which was taking place in the 1790s in Germany most notably through the contributions of Wilhelm Dohm’s *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden* (1781), David Friedländer’s *Sendschreiben* (1799) or Wilhelm von Humboldt’s articles published in *Die Hören*, such as “Über den Geschlechtsunterschied und dessen Einfluß auf die organische Natur” and “Über die männliche und weibliche Form.” See Claudia Honegger, *Die Ordnung der Geschlechter. Die Wissenschaften vom Menschen und das Weib, 1750-1850* (Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus Verlag, 1991), 182.

²⁰⁴ Rahel to Friedrich de la Motte Fougué, Berlin July 26, 1809, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 296.

²⁰⁵ Karl August Varnhagen, “Rahels erster Salon: ‘Ordentliche Dachstubenwahrheiten,’” in Strube, *“Sie saßen und tranken am Teetisch” Anfänge und Blütezeit der Berliner Salons 1789-1871* (Munich: Piper, 1992), 106-128, p. 120.

²⁰⁶ Quote from Custine’s Nekrolog (Astolphe de Custine, “Madame de Varnhagen,”) in Varnhagen’s *Denkwürdigkeiten*, vol. 8, p. 685-712, p. 703 in Peter Seibert, *Der literarische Salon, Literatur und Geselligkeit zwischen Aufklärung und Vormärz* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1993), 327.

Sie empfand und nahm auch die Erscheinungen des Lebens immer in ihrer vollen Wahrheit auf. Überhaupt war Wahrheit ein auszeichnender Zug in ihrem intellektuellen und sittlichen Wesen. Sie kannte darin keine weichliche Selbstschonung, weder um sich etwaige Schuld zu verbergen oder sie zu verkleinern noch um in Wunden, die ihr das Schicksal schlug, mit tiefer Selbstprüfung einzugehen.²⁰⁷

Humboldt, Brentano, and Gentz were some of the intellectuals who were attracted to Levin Varnhagen precisely because of this quality: “Man ging zu ihr wie zu einem Orakel, um die unverfälschte Wahrheit nicht nur in persönlichen, sondern auch in politischen Angelegenheiten aus der reinen Quelle der Selbstdenkerin zu schöpfen.”²⁰⁸ The aspect of *Wahrheit* encompassed not only the personal area, as the expression “une confession volontaire” might suggest, but also other domains, including politics. Rahel Levin Varnhagen’s opinion was valued, and what is probably more significant, it inspired independent original thinking. That is why “man fast mit Gewißheit darauf rechnen konnte, nie von ihr zu gehen, ohne nicht etwas von ihr gehört zu haben und mit hinwegzunehmen, das Stoff zu weiterem ernstem, oft tiefem Nachdenken gab oder das Gefühl lebendig anregte.”²⁰⁹ The echo of Kantian thought is clearly visible in Levin Varnhagen’s logistics of dialogue, which was permeated with the desire for freedom, to be able to think rationally and independently. Freedom should bring mankind to reason, which in turn should lead everyone to the truth. Having grown up with the ideals of the Enlightenment, Levin Varnhagen recognized that all human beings possessed the ability to be emancipated. In other words, humans are equal by nature and are part of a universal community; consequently, differences among people are less important than their fundamental sameness. This was the conviction that drove the spirit of her salon:

Wissen Sie, wer jetzt noch meine Bekanntschaft gemacht hat? Prinz Louis. Den find’ ich gründlich liebenswürdig. Er hat mich gefragt, ob er mich öfter besuchen dürfe, und ich

²⁰⁷ Wilheml von Humboldt: ‘Man ging nie von ihr, ohne nicht etwas mit hinwegzunehmen’ in Strube, “*Sie saßen und tranken am Teetisch*”, 218-220, p. 219.

²⁰⁸ Isselstein, *Der Text aus meinem beleidigten Herzen*, 73.

²⁰⁹ Humboldt: ‘Man ging nie von ihr,’ 220.

nahm ihm das Versprechen ab. Solche Bekanntschaft soll er noch nicht genossen haben. Ordentliche Dachstuben-Wahrheit wird er hören. Bis jetzt kannt' er nur Mariane, aber die ist getauft, und Prinzeß, und Frau von Eybenberg; was will *das* sagen?!²¹⁰

Levin Varnhagen's impulsive temperament gave her originality a character of unflinching quest for truth whereby she spared neither herself nor her guests.²¹¹ Upon entering Levin Varnhagen's salon, Prinz Louis was expected to widen his circle of friends (including bourgeoisie) and accept them as equals, and thus to demonstrate his newly acquired openness for liberal ideas. Levin Varnhagen divulged to everyone, even to Prince Louis Ferdinand, "Dachstubenwahrheiten" without reserve.²¹² She acted towards all her guests in an open and uncomplicated manner, regardless of their class, rank, or profession. In exchange, she tolerated their mannerisms, peculiarities, and weaknesses. With all this axiomatic bluntness, however, the expression of helpfulness as a sign of respect for the other was never lacking. According to Wilhelmy-Dollinger, this was what distinguished Levin Varnhagen's salon from the unconventional, radical "Bohèmegesellschaft."²¹³ Levin Varnhagen declared she would allow for all possible permissiveness "nur die [Rücksicht] der geselligen Sitte fordere ich, denn das *darf* ich nicht erlassen."²¹⁴ After Levin Varnhagen's death, Gustav von Brinckmann, according to his extensive participation in her first salon, not only acknowledged this art of salon guidance, but also gave emphasis to it.²¹⁵ Rahel Levin Varnhagen sought to honor and redeem the ideal of harmony and at the same time tried to give space to each participating individual, as she "mit seltenem

²¹⁰ Rahel to Brinckmann Berlin, Ende Mai 1800, *Rahel Varnhagen Briefwechsel*, edited by Kemp, vol. III, 103.

²¹¹ Strube, *Der literarische Salon*, 19 - 20.

²¹² Liliane Weissberg explains that Rahel Levin Varnhagen's brother Moriz wrote "Dachstuben=Wahrheit" on the wall which was near the entry to her private area in the hallway on the upper floor. This meant that there she could tell her own special truth. "Selbstbeschreibung als pädagogischer Diskurs: Rahel Varnhagens Briefe," in *Rahel Levin Varnhagen. Die Wiederentdeckung einer Schriftstellerin*, ed., Barbara Hanhn and Ursula Isselstein (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 76-85, p. 84.

²¹³ Petra Wilhelmy-Dollinger. *Die Berliner Salons. Mit historisch-literarischen Spaziergängen* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 85.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 85.

²¹⁵ Karl Gustav von Brinckmann (1764-1847) was a Swedish classicist poet, writer and diplomat. He served as ambassador in Berlin (1807).

Zartgefühl das Gespräch von jenem Streitpunkte ablenkte, der auch nur eine augenblickliche Verstimmung hätte verursachen können.”²¹⁶

When Clemens Brentano accused Rahel Levin Varnhagen of having inferior motives – such as desire for attention and vanity – for leading the salon, she felt urged to give an account of her sociability in practice by declaring her love for all people and her desire for dialogue: “Ich bin bescheiden und gebe mich doch preis durch Sprechen und kann sehr lange schweigen und liebe alles Menschliche, *dulde* beinah *alle* Menschen.”²¹⁷ Here she declares the practical goal of her salon, namely, the construction of the heterogeneous constellation of guests, which Schleiermacher substantiated theoretically.²¹⁸ The space where love is manifested first is her salon and following her letters. For Rahel Levin Varnhagen, letters had a purpose similar to that of the salon, that is, the cultivation of human intercourse and friendship. She was quite aware that she possessed a special social talent and defined it in a letter to Clemens Brentano:

Ich liebe unendlich Gesellschaft und von je, und bin ganz überzeugt, daß ich dazu geboren, von der Natur bestimmt und ausgerüstet bin. Ich habe unendliche Gegenwart und Schnelligkeit des Geistes, um aufzufassen, zu antworten, zu behandeln. Großen Sinn für Naturen und alle Verhältnisse, verstehe Scherz und Ernst, und kein Gegenstand ist mir bis zur Ungeschicklichkeit fremd, der dort vorkomen kann.²¹⁹

The ostracism of specific “Scherze,” however, indicates a moving beyond of the Enlightenment sociability, since it does not derive from moral, but rather from aesthetic (Romantic) concerns.²²⁰ For example, she was against personal satires as they contained the element of maliciousness.²²¹

²¹⁶ Gustav von Brinckmann, Rahel’s letter to Varnhagen von Ense, in Varnhagen, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, Vol. 8, 639-684, p. 648-9 in Seibert, *Der literarische Salon*, 334.

²¹⁷ Rahel to Clemens Brentano in Wien, Prag, August 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, III, 358.

²¹⁸ See Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, “Versuch einer Theorie des geselligen Betragens.” *Schriften aus der Berliner Zeit 1796-1799*, ed., Günter Meckenstock (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1984), 165.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ See Seibert, *Der literarische Salon*, 334.

²²¹ Heidi Thomann Tewarson, Rahel Levin Varnhagen, *The Life and Work of a German Jewish Intellectual* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 36.

Rahel Levin Varnhagen's animated configurations of sociability are the product of her burning desire for the encounter in a dialogue with humanity. This passion coincided with Schleiermacher's theory of sociability, that is, the presentation of individuals in their singularity, where the knowledge of a human being is entwined with the idea of art.²²² Levin Varnhagen conceived of her salon as a social occasion of unfolding and an expansion of life, which did not have to be off-limits for her, a woman and a Jew, as it was elsewhere.

Dialogue in the Space of the Salon

Via the salon and her letters, Rahel Levin Varnhagen became visible in the modern public sphere, which Jürgen Habermas has identified as emerging in the early eighteenth century, and in which letters and salons were among the means available to educated women. Between 1790 and 1806, Rahel Levin's salon on Jägerstraße in Berlin welcomed many well-known personalities of the day. Among the guests were Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt, Friedrich Schlegel, Friedrich von Gentz, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia and his mistress, Pauline Wiesel, Jean Paul, Clemens Brentano, Ludwig and Christian Tieck. Her first salon ceased to exist with the entry of Napoleon into Berlin on October 27, when a wave of nationalism and anti-Semitism began to sweep the intellectual and aristocratic circles. The second salon came into existence when, after marrying Karl August Varnhagen, the Varnhagens resettled in Berlin. From 1821 to 1832, Rahel Levin Varnhagen's salon was a meeting place for Bettina von Arnim, Heinrich Heine, Prince Hermann von Pückler-Muskau, G.W.F Hegel, Leopold von Ranke, and Eduard Gans. Her personal encounters with her guests were compensated with and continued in letter exchanges.

²²² See Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, "Versuch einer Theorie des geselligen Betragens." *Schriften aus der Berliner Zeit 1796-1799*, ed., Günter Meckenstock (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1984), 165.

Levin Varnhagen's first Berlin salon unfolded as a social institution that helped shape the inchoate positions of citizens experimenting with newly fluid boundaries between social and discursive practices, polite conversation and letter writing.²²³ The Berlin salon was a space of dialogical interaction that brought together women and men, Jews and Christians, aristocrats and middle class in a setting where normal social constraints and segregations could be suspended. It was a space where public and private spheres were being merged.²²⁴

The heterogenization of social constellations required dialogues rooted in acceptance and tolerance, and these indeed were largely practiced in the salons. They were simultaneously spaces of aesthetic importance. Levin Varnhagen attributed the aesthetic qualities of her salon to its dialogical structure. At the same time, she referred to her letters as conversations since they were inhabited, as if they were alive. Yet, through art and not only through will, they become written words on paper: "Nämlich, ich mag nie eine Rede schreiben, sondern will Gespräche schreiben, wie sie lebendig in Menschen vorgehn, und erst durch Willen und *Kunst* – wenn Sie wollen – wie ein Herbarium, nach einer immer toten Ordnung hingelegt werden."²²⁵ "Eine Rede" is not a dialogue, but a monologue. Levin Varnhagen prefers a dialogue, which she then arranges into an art piece.²²⁶

Dialogues in Levin Varnhagen's salon were ordered, aesthetically pleasing creations, not just spontaneous expressions: "Aber auch meine Gespräche sind nicht ohne Kunst; das heißt ohne Beurteilung meiner selbst, ohne Anordnung."²²⁷ She stresses that good conversation must

²²³ In contemporary sociology, the term "social institution" refers to such elaborate social forms as the family, governments, legal systems, universities, hospitals, business corporations, and may even denote human languages. "Social Institutions," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/social-institutions/>

²²⁴ Wilhelmy-Dollinger. *Die Berliner Salons. Mit historisch-literarischen Spaziergängen* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000).

²²⁵ Rahel to Gentz in Pressburg, October 26, 1830, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 183-184.

²²⁶ See Peter Seibert, *Der literarische Salon*, 266-7.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 184.

include elements of culture and nature. She does not distinguish between or see a contradiction between “lebendigen Gesprächen” and “kunstvollen Gesprächen,” because for her “living” conversations are, in fact, aesthetic. As her husband and editor, Karl August Varnhagen reported after Levin Varnhagen’s death, she did not separate culture and nature:

Das Gespräch wurde sehr lebhaft, und wogte zwischen den Personen wechselnd, über die mannigfachsten Gegenstände hin. ... Man sprach vom Theater, von Fleck, dessen Krankheit und wahrscheinlich nahen Tod ... von Gesellschaftssachen, von den Vorlesungen August Wilhelm Schlegels, denen auch Damen beiwohnten. Die kühnsten Ideen, die schärfsten Gedanken, der sinnreichste Witz, die launigsten Spiele der Einbildungskraft wurden hier an dem einfachen Faden zufälliger und gewöhnlicher Anlässe aufgereiht. Denn die äußere Gestalt der Unterhaltung war, wie in jeder anderen Gesellschaft, ohne Zwang und Abischt, alles knüpfte sich natürlich an das Interesse des Augenblicks, der Person, des Namens, deren gerade gedacht wurde.²²⁸

Varnhagen’s ideal of salon dialogue, which she overtly attempts to recreate in the form of a letter, resembles Friedrich Schleiermacher’s vision of an unrestrained, free sociability where topics were chosen unreservedly and encompassed everyday occurrences as well as bold ideas and discussions of music and theater.²²⁹ Nevertheless, this dialogue was embedded within a

²²⁸ Karl August Varnhagen, “Rahels erster Salon: ‘Ordentliche Dachstubenwahrheiten,’” 107.

²²⁹ See Schleiermacher, “Versuch einer Theorie des geselligen Betragens,” in *Schriften aus der Berliner Zeit 1796-1799*, 165. In his theoretical writings, Schleiermacher deepened and formulated philosophically an ideal of sociability, which he personally experienced in the close circle of friends – admittedly the circle did not only encompass those living in Jena, but also Henriette Herz and her sisters, as well as Rahel Levin’s salon. He notes that true sociability occurs under the supervision of women, as a certain necessity drives educated women to organize these ideal gatherings: a necessity, which infiltrates sociability in the form of a backlash against the experience of domesticity, the only potential experience of middle-class women. Consequently, in order to escape their everyday world, where they are excluded from formal education at the university and from professional occupations, and yet still include men in their circle, women organize a type of social interaction, a dialogical space. In this manner, the salon social gatherings bring together men and women, Jews and Christians, aristocrats and commoners in a setting where normal social constraints and segregations could be suspended, however, this heterogeneous formation of participants rendered salon communication interference-prone. Another vital aspect of Schleiermacher’s free sociability is reciprocity. The free and purposeless sociability is a situation in which several people should have an effect on one another, and this effect should in no way be one-sided, but dialogical. The emphasis is on the simultaneity of a plurality of perspectives, a *Vielseitigkeit*, on interdiscursive communication, which is more emphasized than the subject thereof. In contrast with the Enlightenment, the content, facts and clarification, are not most important. One characterizes a person not according to the substance of what one thinks or does but rather according to the way one handles that substance, how he establishes connections and develops and communicates his subject. The manner in which an action is carried out replaces the essence. The reciprocity and cooperation certainly bear the mark of the Jena model of Romantic sociability as well as call to mind Novalis’s “Das Schreiben in Gesellschaft” and the theme of literary co-production, where the gender roles are overridden, as all members of the circle are productive authors as well as literary critics. The early Romantic literary symbiotic community in the

larger concept of the human person, the genuine and fundamental interest of the *salonnière* Varnhagen. In the salon of young Rahel Levin, personal encounter was emphasized even though discussions about literature were a dominant part of the salon culture. Her specific quality of bringing people together has been duly noted by all who knew her, most notably by Goethe whom she admired all her life, and who once said: “Sie hat den Gegenstand.”²³⁰ Her appreciation of Goethe lay in his philosophy of humanity and his approach toward the human person so similar to her own: “Der Mensch als Mensch ist selbst ein Werk der Kunst, und sein ganzes Wesen besteht darin, daß Bewußtsein und Nicht-Bewußtsein gehörig in ihm wechseln. Darum liebe ich Goethe so!”²³¹ Levin Varnhagen accepted all aspects of humanity, the good and bad sides, the normality of life with its problems and with its poetry and beauty. To her art was a domain where a person’s freedom became materialized and fulfilled; a person was simultaneously a work of art, a perfection-in-imperfection as his/her internal struggle.

As Seibert points out that in this respect, Levin Varnhagen always spoke of her salon as a source of pleasure and enjoyment and claimed that this experience was not different from an enjoyment of art: “Verhält es sich aber mit dem Leben anders, als mit der Kunst?” Rahel asks her friend Brinckmann.²³² The salon is in essence the site of aesthetic experience where real life is manifest. According to Seibert, in this way the salon becomes, paradoxically, a very real utopia, which then influences, inspires and “fertilizes” the production of art.²³³ Within this

spirit of salon sociability and productivity is manifest in the letters of Caroline Schlegel or those of Dorothea Veit to Schleiermacher.

²³⁰ Ingeborg Drewitz. *Berliner Salons. Gesellschaft und Literatur zwischen Aufklärung und Industriezeitalter* (Berlin: Haude & Spenersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1965), 8.

²³¹ Rahel to Rose in Berlin, Paris 1801, Rahel-Bibliothek, ed. Feilchenfeldt, vol. I. 226.

²³² Ibid., 339. See Peter Seibert, *Der literarische Salon*.

²³³ Ibid.

context Levin Varnhagen becomes a “Lebens-Künstlerin.”²³⁴ Her persona thus transfers from the private space to the public:

Ich verstehe einen Menschen, *Sie* ganz. Vermag es, wie doppelt organisiert, ihm meine Seele zu leihen, und habe die gewaltige Kraft, mich zu verdoppeln, ohne mich zu verwirren. Ich bin *so* einzig, als die größte Erscheinung dieser Erde. Der größte Künstler Philosoph oder Dichter ist nicht über mir. Wir sind vom selben Element. Mir aber war das *Leben* angewiesen...²³⁵

With this proclamation the private life entered the literary sphere. Life became art, and salon discussion carried over into the correspondence, which featured a familiar conversational tone as well as gave prominence to a discussion that transcended both the mundane and literary subjects like religion and philosophy. Letters became public outlets for the private discussions and proliferation of ideas even before they were published, as they were widely circulated among friends and acquaintances.²³⁶

Rahel Levin Varnhagen’s Correspondence Project

The desire to bring the public and private spheres together, and thereby to create a new hybrid sphere (a sphere very similar, again, to Habermas’s notion of the bourgeois public sphere), is reflected in Rahel Levin Varnhagen’s letters.²³⁷ On several occasions, Rahel Levin Varnhagen voiced a wish to have her letters collected and published. In doing so, she consciously attempted to enter the public sphere through means of dialogue. Her letters can be regarded as a continuation and *locum tenens* of her salon conversations as well as an endeavor to

²³⁴ Ibid., 339.

²³⁵ Rahel to David Veit, February 16, 1805, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 83.

²³⁶ Compare with the *Briefe die neueste Literatur betreffend*, edited by Lessing, Nicolai and Mendelssohn between 1759 and 1765, who express their reviews as a stylized collection of letters to a “meritorious officer” who had been wounded in the Seven Years War. This form of literary criticism which used a fictitious situation, provided the reviews with a conversational tone and with an opportunity to discuss matters that transcended literature, see Klaus L. Berghahn, “On Friendship, The Beginnings of a Christian- Jewish Dialogue in the 18th Century,” *The German-Jewish Dialogue Reconsidered: A Symposium in Honor of George L. Mosse*, ed., Klaus L. Berghahn, *German Life and Civilization* (NY: Peter Lang, 1996), 5-24, pp. 17-18.

²³⁷ Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, 42.

preserve them for posterity. Her conception regarding letter preservation varied drastically from the opinion of respected contemporary voices, such as that of Wilhelm von Humboldt, who categorically and programmatically rejected the idea of saving and safeguarding women's correspondence: "Ich bin ein großer Feind von alten Briefen ... Ein Brief ist ein Gespräch unter Abwesenden und Entfernten. Es ist seine Bestimmung, daß er nicht bleiben, sondern vergehen soll, wie die Stimme verhallt. Bleiben soll der Eindruck, den er in der Seele hervorbringt."²³⁸ Interestingly enough, as Barbara Hahn observes, he saved the letters of his wife and evidently those of various authors.²³⁹ Letter collections retained their value only if one, or better yet, if both of the corresponding parties were noted authors. Letters from female readers were forgotten, as soon as they fulfilled their role, that is, when the response to them has been generated. In the process of eliminating female dialogue partners, letters became monologues.²⁴⁰ Levin Varnhagen's project was based on a dialogue – a private dialogue that was destined from the very beginning to become public.²⁴¹

The story of Rahel Levin Varnhagen's involvement in the publication of her own letters has occupied scholars for over a century. She did publish some of her letters, but never under her full name.²⁴² According to Ursula Isselstein, the acclaimed *salonnière* did not want public

²³⁸ Letter from July 10, 1922, Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Briefe an eine Freundin*, vol. I, 1909, p. 48f. in Barbara Hahn, "'Weiber verstehen alles à la lettre.' Briefkultur im beginnenden 19. Jahrhundert," *Deutsche Literatur von Frauen*, vol. II, 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, ed. Gisela Brinker-Gabler (München: C.H.Beck, 1988), 17.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Compare Gottfried Keller's response to Ludmilla Assing's publication of Pückler-Muskau's letters in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* which conveys this very frustration: "Ärgerlicher Weise fehlen auch hier, wie in allen solchen Briefwechseln, die Briefe der Dame, ich weiß nicht, woher das kommt, aber es ist fast immer so und ist ein Mißbrauch, daß die eine Hälfte solcher Korrespondenz immer auf die Seite gebracht wird. Man fährt immer im Nebel herum, da man nicht weiß, was die andere Partei wert ist." In Lorely French, *German Women as Letter Writers: 1750-1850* (Madison and London: Associated University Presses, 1996), 29.

²⁴¹ Rahel Levin Varnhagen's epistemological dialogue with her husband Karl August Varnhagen allows readers a glance into Rahel's salon as a platform for literary criticism. Heidi Thomann Tewarson, *Rahel Levin Varnhagen. The Life and Work of a German Jewish Intellectual* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 45.

²⁴² Heidi Thoman Tewarson points out that Levin Varnhagen's letters delineate her interest in literature, especially in Goethe's writings, and her beginnings as a publicist (129). Goethe's works fascinated Levin Varnhagen

recognition preferring to remain in the background.²⁴³ Levin Varnhagen was not ready to relinquish her anonymity and asked her editors not to disclose her name; hence, all her texts that were published during her life either came out anonymously under the initial G., appeared under the name Friederike, or were hidden in Ludwig Robert's texts.²⁴⁴ It was in this manner that her personal letters started making the transition into the public sphere and became literature. Even so, Levin Varnhagen's authorship was an open secret since her editors, Troxler, Börne, Fouqué, and Cotta, knew her well, and she herself informed her friends and acquaintances about her publications.²⁴⁵ Tewardson notes that most literary men preferred the anonymity since they felt that only in exceptional cases women should invade the public realm with their writings.²⁴⁶

With her epistolary writing, Rahel Levin Varnhagen built one of the most valuable collections of letters in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Germany. Reevaluations of letters of the period alluded to their unique quality, describing them as "sensations of an aesthetically mixed form"²⁴⁷ in which literary reviews, philosophical conversations, and descriptions of

even before he became famous, and social gatherings in the Jägerstrasse helped promoting an appreciation for his more mature works, considered demanding in both form and content, and which therefore often met with a lack of understanding (45). Through her intermediary Karl August Varnhagen, Levin Varnhagen established connections to publishers or recommended new authors, among them Goethe (45 and 129). The exchanges about Goethe's works contained in Levin Varnhagen's correspondence appeared anonymously in 1812 in the journal *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände* under the title "Über Goethe: Bruchstücke aus Briefen" and continued in four installments in consecutive issues. *Rahel Levin Varnhagen. The Life and Work of a German Jewish Intellectual* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 45.

See also Kemp on Rahel Levin Varnhagen's early recognition of the universal relevance of Goethe's work. Already as a young girl, Levin Varnhagen studied Goethe and eagerly spread the knowledge about his genius in her circle of friends and acquaintances. "Nachtrag. Rahel als Briefschreiberin in der Kritik der Zeitgenossen" (*Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol II), 478-9.

²⁴³ Ursula Isselstein. "Rahel's Schriften I. Karl August Varnhagens editorische Tätigkeit nach Dokumenten seines Archivs," *Wiederentdeckung einer Schriftstellerin*, 16-29, p. 25.

²⁴⁴ Thomann Tewardson, *Rahel Levin Varnhagen*, 203.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Silvia Bovenschen, *Die imaginierte Weiblichkeit: Exemplarische Untersuchungen zu kulturgeschichtlichen und literarischen Präsentationsformen des Weiblichen* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1980), 216.

psychological sensibilities interchange with reports of daily routine, gossip and chatter.²⁴⁸ In contrast, recent scholarship on Levin Varnhagen's letters suitably emphasizes their value as illuminators of a momentous, long-silenced outlook on the role of women in the early nineteenth century.²⁴⁹ Substantiation of this kind of social and political awareness attests to Levin Varnhagen's status as a forerunner of the modern feminist movement, at the same time placing her within the public sphere; a place she earns through unrelenting dialogue. Such an assessment has also become a source of ongoing deliberation as to why Rahel Levin Varnhagen never published her letters openly – under her own name.

By 1809, Levin Varnhagen's talent was recognized in wider circles of literati, as an example from K.A. Varnhagen's letter demonstrates:

Jean Paul ist Dir von Herzen zugethan, er rühmt Dich als eine einzige Erscheinung, ... Ich war so eitel, liebe Rahel, ihm zu sagen, daß ich an die dreitausend Briefe von Dir hätte, ... Es sei ein ungeheurer Schatz, ein einziger. Du schriebest vortrefflich, es sei aber nothwendig, daß Du an jemand schriebest. ... Er hält Dich für eine Künstlerin, für das Anheben einer neuen Sphäre, Du müssest aber unverheirathet bleiben.²⁵⁰

Levin Varnhagen was not unaware of the special gift she possessed. Already four years prior to Jean Paul's remarks, she commented on her persona: "Ich bin so einzig, als die größte Erscheinung dieser Erde. Der größte Künstler, Philosoph oder Dichter ist nicht über mir. Wir sind vom selben Element. Im selben Rang, und gehören zusammen."²⁵¹ She was a "unique phenomenon on this earth" who understood her significance and the precarious position in society precisely because of it. Jean Paul also realized that this extraordinary gift would best come to fruition in dialogical interaction. This is the site where Rahel as *Künstlerin* comes to

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 216. Compare to Elke Frederiksen, "Die Frau als Autorin zur Zeit der Romantik: Anfänge einer weiblichen literarischen Tradition," *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur Neueren Germanistik* 10 (1980): 83-108, p. 99.

²⁴⁹ See Doris Starr Guilloton's "Rahel Varnhagen und die Frauenfrage in der deutschen Romantik: Eine Untersuchung ihrer Briefe und Tagebuchnotizen," *Monatshefte für deutschen Unterricht* 69 (1977): 391-403. See also Thomann Tewarson, *Rahel Levin Varnhagen*, 50.

²⁵⁰ Varnhagen to Rahel, Bayreuth, October 24, 1809, *Rahel-Bibliothek*, ed. Feilchenfeldt, vol. IV. 1, 79.

²⁵¹ Rahel L. V. to David Veit, February 16, 1805, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 83.

light and becomes an inspiration for generations of women to follow. Jean Paul felt, however, that the new *Kunst* could be only propagated by a woman who would remain single. Yet, she chose not to follow the great writer's advice. Rahel Levin Varnhagen's wish to spend her life with K.A. Varnhagen can be illustrated with many a letter. In fact one of the most widely known lines written by her comes from such a correspondence: "Varnhägchen, ich vergehe, verdorre hier ganz! ohne Dich; ohne irgend eine Freude für meine Augen. Ohne Liebe. Ich martere mich nur ab: und mein Leben soll zu Briefen werden! [my emphasis]... Manchmal ist's, als sollt' ich gar nicht allein bleiben können. ... man vergeht allein!"²⁵² Indeed her whole life became not only a text, but also literature, as most strikingly explained by Barbara Becker-Cantarino, who notes that Rahel Levin Varnhagen collaborated with her husband on the aesthetic construction of her letter project, and he simply continued the project after her death. In that sense, Levin Varnhagen's posthumously published letters are not only a natural continuation of the flourishing letter culture of the eighteenth century but also have contributed to her myth construction and the stylization of her epistolary collection into a literary work.²⁵³ It has been noted that letters served as an ersatz for the lack of life experience: women wrote letters in lieu of traveling, doing business, engaging in politics or writing high literature. In them, they articulated their feelings, hopes, and wishes, which were normally banned from the professional and public world shaped by males.²⁵⁴ Her frustration regarding this situation permeates Levin Varnhagen correspondence. Nevertheless, from the very beginning of her writing project, she relentlessly fostered a vision of being a published author. Long before she met her future husband Karl August Varnhagen von

²⁵² Rahel L. V. to Varnhagen, December 8, 1808, GW, ed. Feilchenfeldt, IV.1, 183.

²⁵³ Barbara Becker-Cantarino, "Leben als Text – Briefe als Ausdrucks- und Verständigungsmittel in "Die Briefkultur und Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts," in *Frauen Literatur Geschichte. Schreibende Frauen vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, eds., Hiltrud Gnüg and Renatae Möhrmann (Stuttgart and Weimar: J.B. Metzler, 1999), 129 -146.

²⁵⁴ Anita Runge and Lieselotte Steinbrügge, "Einleitung," in *Die Frau im Dialog. Studien zu Theorie und Geschichte des Briefes*, eds., Anita Runge and Lieselotte Steinbrügge (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1991), 9.

Ense, she had thought about having her letters published. To Frau von Boye in July 1800 she wrote:

Ich muß alles, was ich kenne, was ich liebe, was mich ärgert und kränkt, reizt und freut, verlassen! ... Sterben muß ich: aber tot werd' ich nicht sein. ... – Und sterb' ich – such' alle meine Briefe – durch List etwa – von allen meinen Freunden und Bekannten zu bekommen und Finck'n sag', ich befehl' es ihm als eine Tote und Getötete – nicht just von ihm – daß er sie gebe – und ordne sie mit Brinckmann. Es wird eine Originalgeschichte, und poetisch.²⁵⁵

In this passage, Levin Varnhagen refers to Count von Finckenstein, to whom she was engaged, and her wish to have her letters collected and published. With this gesture, Levin Varnhagen prepares to bring her private life into the public forum. Her love life, which normally would belong to the private sphere, will be thus exposed. The word “Geschichte” also implies that she regards this private narrative from her life to be material for a story, an epistolary novel in a poetic, romantic style. In this way, even her death itself will not render her dead, but she will remain always relevant (“alive”).

Rahel Levin Varnhagen's Ideal of Dialogue in Letters

The “high-ranking, surprisingly realistic and also endlessly communicative epistler” remains, without doubt, among the most used descriptors in Rahel Levin Varnhagen scholarship, as does her “hastiger, nervös-geistreicher Stil,” which renders the spontaneous products of her pen not exactly easily readable.²⁵⁶ Communication and, by implication, dialogue – that is, striving for mutual understanding – are surely the most distinguishing features of Rahel Levin Varnhagen's epistolary writing, which relies uniquely and without doubt on the imitation of the spoken word. She especially pays attention to *the particularity* and *reciprocity* of the I-you

²⁵⁵ Rahel to Frau von Boye, Berlin, Anfang Juli 1800, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. I, 304.

²⁵⁶ Reinhard M.G. Nickisch, *Brief* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1991), 55.

exchange and uses a present tense representing past and future.²⁵⁷ To address the impossibility of the narrative's being simultaneous with the event and the impossibility of the written present's remaining valid, she emulates the directness and immediacy of spoken conversation and tries to close the gaps between present and past, here and there, "I" and "you."²⁵⁸

Being faithfully dedicated to her ideal of dialogicity, Levin Varnhagen demanded that same standard from her addressees:

Nun aber ein Zank, lieber Fouqué! was ist das, daß Sie gar nicht antworten, wenn Sie schreiben: Sie schreiben mir auf den Brief, den Ihnen Hanne brachte, als schrieben Sie aus dem Stegreif; auch nicht eine Silbe Antwort. Ich liebe Antwort. Wenn Sie das immer tun, kann ich auch am Ende *nur* antworten. Sie müssen approbieren oder tadeln, oder recht geben oder widerstreiten.²⁵⁹

That she continually reaches out to individual recipients, remaining in a constant dialogue with her many correspondents and later with an anonymous readership, was already duly noted by Barbara Hahn, in entitling her book about Rahel Levin Varnhagen "*Antworten Sie mir*": *Rahel Levin Varnhagens Briefwechsel*.²⁶⁰ In dialogue, Rahel Levin Varnhagen united nature and culture. She filled the gap between the two which Schlegel described as "Stil, wenn es den Rechten von beiden, der Kunst und der Natur, nicht zu nahe tritt, welches nicht anders möglich ist als durch die dem Werke selbst gleichsam eingeprägte Erklärung, es sei nicht Natur und wolle

²⁵⁷ Janet Gurkin Altman, *Epistolarity. Approaches to a Form* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982), 117-8.

²⁵⁸ Gurkin Altman, *Epistolarity*, 129-136.

²⁵⁹ Rahel to Fouqué in Nennhausen, November 29, 1811, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 300.

²⁶⁰ Barbara Hahn. "*Antworten Sie mir*": *Rahel Levin Varnhagens Briefwechsel*. Basel: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 1990, p.77. See also the section about dialogicity in Rahel Levin Varnhagen's letters in Sabina Becker's article "Gelebte Universalpoesie. Rahel Varnhagens Lebensprojekt im Kontext der frühromantischen Kunsttheorie," in *Rahel Levin Varnhagen. Studien zu ihrem Werk im zeitgenössischen Kontext*, ed., Sabina Becker (St. Ingbert: Rähring Universitätsverlag, 2001), 17-51, pp. 27-30. On the principle of dialogue in Rahel Levin Varnhagen's letters see Emily D. Bilski and Emily Brown, "The Romance of Emancipation," in *Jewish Women and Their Salons*, 22- 37, p. 30.

sich nicht dafür ausgeben.”²⁶¹ Levin Varnhagen refused to accept the idea of “dem Werke die Nachricht angehängt, daß es nicht Natur seyn soll.”²⁶²

Levin Varnhagen possessed rare empathy and intuition for people and their problems, along with an intuition regarding literature and music that fascinated her contemporaries.²⁶³ Her regular guest, the Swedish diplomat and poet Karl Gustav von Brinckmann (1785-1847) voiced the following opinion: “alles versteht sie, alles empfindet sie, und was sie sagt, ist in amüsanter Paradoxie oft so treffend wahr und tief, daß man es sich noch nach Jahren wiederholt, und darüber nachdenken und erstaunen muß.”²⁶⁴ K. A. Varnhagen described the Romantic nature of his wife as “nature formation” where not only the idea of humanitarianism played a role, but also the idea of a “real” human, derived from Rousseau’s ideal of unspoiled being or natural genius, (who received no formal education). Wilhelmy-Dollinger sees as a key to Levin Varnhagen’s personality her Romantic constitution, unifying pursuit of harmony in her expression and truth, in the sense of authenticity or remaining true to oneself.²⁶⁵ Her firm conviction that only human person, life, nature is her subject matter influenced her choice of medium for artistic expression, namely, the dialogical epistolary form.²⁶⁶

Dialogue, that is, communication implying mutual understanding, consideration, sensitivity, and tolerance, and, perhaps first and foremost openness, is surely the most distinguishing trait of Rahel Levin Varnhagen’s writing. She expected to find dialogue’s attributes in conversations with others. In her letters she tells a great deal about herself, shares her thoughts and feelings, and describes her emotional and physical states. The letters, however,

²⁶¹ Schlegel, “Die Kunstlehre,” 95 in Renata Buzzo Mångari “Schriftliche Konversation im Hörsaal,” 117.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Wilhelmy-Dollinger, *Die Berliner Salons*, 83.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Wilhelmy-Dollinger, *Die Berliner Salons*, 83-4.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

also disclose the deep empathy she readily extended toward others, her impromptu willingness to counsel, console, guide, or simply entertain. Dialogue with others supplied incentive for her writing; consequently, it was not meant to be self-contained but always addressed to someone. Rahel Levin Varnhagen's work reached out to individual recipients whose perceptiveness, intellectual capacities, or openness she realized fully throughout the act of writing. The recipients subsequently responded, and therefore became a part of her work, thus necessitating their introduction. The explicitly dialogic quality was the most outstanding feature of Levin Varnhagen's writing. I will examine it, beginning with the correspondence with her friend Friedrich von Gentz, followed by the epistolary exchanges with Caroline von Humboldt, Karl August Varnhagen and Clemens Brentano.

2.2 EXCHANGES WITH FRIEDRICH VON GENZ

Friedrich von Gentz (1764-1832 – the statesman and publicist and a visitor in Rahel Levin's first salon) was initially an admirer and follower of Kant and Rousseau, as well as a supporter of the French Revolution.²⁶⁷ He became, however, increasingly conservative, and after 1815 he was closely associated with Prince Metternich, the restorer of the "Old Regime" and the designer of the reconstruction of Europe after the Napoleonic wars. The biographical differences between the two correspondents, Rahel Levin Varnhagen and Friedrich von Gentz, suggest that their epistolary exchange must have been permeated by conflict. What possibly could have been the subject of conversations between one of the most prominent conservatives of that time and a Jewish woman who had to depend on the process of emancipation. And what bonded them in their youth? – Barbara Hahn asks, remarking that these questions are not easily clarified since

²⁶⁷ See the chapter entitled "Friedrich von Gentz" in *Henriette Herz in Erinnerungen, Briefen und Zeugnissen*, ed., Rainer Schmitz (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1984), 74-78.

their letter exchange is asymmetrical.²⁶⁸ The letter exchange meant more for Rahel, Hahn claims, than for her “difficult” friend as evidenced by the fact that she was the one who usually restored the broken off correspondence.²⁶⁹ The asymmetry, Hahn continues, manifested itself when Gentz posed serious existential questions while failing to react to Levin Varnhagen’s attempts at answers, or by interrupting their correspondence. She, in contrast, did not ask any such questions, but wrote back providing answers to Gentz’s inquiries, thus, initiating a chain made up of answers.²⁷⁰ It is true that many of Levin Varnhagen’s letters to Gentz have not been preserved. It is also true that their correspondence has been marked by difficulties and misunderstandings. Nevertheless the letters that remain and those that Levin Varnhagen wrote to Karoline von Humboldt about taxing experiences with Gentz offer a glimpse into a truly dialogical relationship. Neither of the correspondents shuts the dialogue down. Despite the interruptions, their dialogue has an exit, that is, it is not just simply talking interminably in an attempt to find consensus and without reaching any productive conclusions. When engaging in dialogue, it is useful to have a facilitator to get the group motivated who monitors developments and explains what is happening from time to time.²⁷¹

Levin Varnhagen was a natural facilitator in the salon setting, and this very role she transferred from the salon to her letter writing. In a dialogue, people coming from different backgrounds typically have different basic assumptions and opinions.²⁷² It is therefore important to keep a stream of meaning flowing between the participants in hopes that some new

²⁶⁸ Barbara Hahn explains that more letters from Gentz to Levin Varnhagen have been preserved than those from Levin Varnhagen to Gentz because she saved his letters with care. It remains unclear whether Gentz burned her letters when organizing his papers in winter of 1831. “*Antworten Sie mir!*” *Rahel Levin Varnhagens Briefwechsel*, 77.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁷¹ David Bohm, *On Dialogue*, ed., Lee Nichol (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 15.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 7.

understanding might emerge.²⁷³ Remaining in dialogue means thinking together. In order for genuine dialogue to take place, a new structure needs to be implemented which is not based on obligation; a place where there is no authority, no hierarchy and no special purpose, where one can let anything be talked about.²⁷⁴ In the light of the above stated conditions for a true dialogue, it is clear that Rahel Levin Varnhagen had capability and determination to fulfill them all. Gentz possessed the very same competence, which is most probably what bonded them together. However, the most important element that committed them to dialogue was their deep friendship and ultimately *philia*.

When writing about Friedrich von Gentz, Friedhelm Kemp emphasized his intrinsic aptitude for conversation in all its flexibility of diverse form, be it to debate, to examine, or to justify – with the change of tone and dialectic, with happy mood and strong reluctance.²⁷⁵ Much like Rahel Levin Varnhagen, Gentz spoke with genuine openness about his views and convictions; in Kemp's words: "Sich zu verstellen, war ihm nicht gegeben."²⁷⁶ When writing to Rahel Levin Varnhagen in Prague, Caroline von Humboldt elaborates on this quality of Gentz and her opinion appears even more genuine since she herself does not take kindly to the man in question: "Für Gentz habe ich keinen Sinn. Nein, ich habe ihn nie geliebt, was wir lieben nennen; aber ich habe ihn in vielem bewundert, seine Eleganz zum Beispiel, weil sie mir aus der ewigen Quelle nie getrübt Wahrheit zu rinnen schien."²⁷⁷ In turn the openness and simplicity of Levin Varnhagen's manner fascinated Gentz:

Wo ist denn noch eins, das so lieben, so denken, so rasen, so schreiben kann! Und solche Liebe! und besonders – solche Wahrheit! Solche bodenlose Wahrheit – Sie nennen mich ein *Kind*; es ist das Höchste, das Süßeste, was Sie mir sagen können. Aber Sie

²⁷³ Ibid., 6.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 42.

²⁷⁵ Friedhelm Kemp, "Zur Biographie," in *Rahel Varnhagen. Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 408.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 408.

²⁷⁷ Caroline von Humboldt to Rahel in Prag, 15. Dezember 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 142.

allein, Sie *machten* mich zum Kinde. ... Ja! Wenn ich schreiben könnte wie Sie! oder vielmehr, wenn ich *das* verstünde, wodurch Sie das Schreiben ersetzen! Ihre Briefe sind gar nicht *geschrieben*: es sind lebendige Menschen, die mit schönen, lieben, weichen Händen, vollen Busen, kleinen Füßen, göttlichen Augen, besonders göttlichen roten Lippen einhergehen, vor mir auf und ab spazieren, mich küssen, mich an ihre Brust drücken - . solche Briefe soll ich beantworten.²⁷⁸

It is important to observe that the dialogical relationship between Levin Varnhagen and Gentz perpetuated in their letters but was deeply rooted in the salon culture of personal encounter where her letters seem to be “living persons.” They appear not to have been written, but rather to have been spoken with the immediacy and openness of a face-to-face conversation.²⁷⁹ The distinct liveliness and immediacy of Levin Varnhagen’s expression was a result of her consciously cultivated dialogic style approximating the spoken language. In order to enhance this experience, Gentz copied all of Rahel Levin Varnhagen’s letters and thus was able to read them over and over again, as if he were reading a book.²⁸⁰ When the letters were read out loud, the difficulties created by broken off or otherwise incomplete or disconnected sentences, faulty or idiosyncratic punctuation or word order, or inconsistent orthography mostly disappeared. Necessary in making the addressee present as if in a face-to-face conversation include the following: the invoking of the mail carrier or messenger, the rapid exchange of notes reflected in the brevity of statement, and the quoting and paraphrasing of the dialogue partner’s remarks. For example:

Meine geliebte, teure Rahel! Gestern abend bekam ich Deinen großen, lieben Brief, und war vergnügt den ganzen Abend bis zum späten zu Bette gehen, da las ich Deinen Brief zum Zweitenmale – es dauerte beinah eine Stunde, o Dank Dir, geliebte Rahel! – und schlief in der Freude, ihn heute zu beantworten, vergnügt ein. Ein rechtes Fest dacht’ ich

²⁷⁸ Gentz to Rahel 1803, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 121-122.

²⁷⁹ “Engel des Himmel! Giebt es denn eine Sprache auf Erden, in welcher man Ihnen schreiben kann? - Giebt es denn Antworten auf *solche* Briefe? Haben Sie sich denn vorgesetzt, mich wahnsinnig zu machen? – O! meine tiefe, meine durchdringende Klugheit, meine Gelehrsamkeit, meine gelehrte, feste, unerschütterliche Festigkeit, wenn es auf das Innerste vom Innern des Menschen ankommt. Wie oft habe ich es gesagt, daß Sie das erste Wesen auf dieser Welt sind!” Gentz to Rahel 1803, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 121.

²⁸⁰ Gentz to Rahel, October 19, 1803, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 126.

mir zubereiten zu können – hätte ich doch die Nacht geschrieben! da war es so festlich in meiner Seele.”²⁸¹

We find likewise in Levin Varnhagen’s letter to her husband: “Ich habe diesen Brief liegen lassen, um erst wieder einen von Dir zu haben; denn mit Briefen an Dich, die Dir nachlaufen mußten, ist es mir schon zu schlimm ergangen.”²⁸² Already Friedhelm Kemp recognized that Rahel Levin Varnhagen’s letters are not only worth to be read, but more importantly, need to be “spoken.”²⁸³ Actually in order to understand them properly, one needs to read them out loud; and in order to make them present, one has to repeat them. This was a great discovery of Levin Varnhagen scholarship, which Kemp hopes, is assumed as a premise.²⁸⁴ “Rahel Levin Varnhagen speaks to her dialogue partners, speaks to us, and who speaks about her may only do so as the one who can hear her speak.”²⁸⁵

Another important aspect of their amity to which Gentz refers is Levin Varnhagen’s capacity to render him a child: humble, teachable, and free from selfish ambition. Here the biblical command is shifted to mean that unless he became like a little child, he could not enter a real dialogue based simply on love. At the end of her life Rahel Levin Varnhagen returns to this very remark by her friend. She inserts a poem into her letter:

Wo nimmst du den Mut zu so viel Feigheit,
Solch verbrecherischer Schlawheit her?
... Dein zerronnen Herze liebte niemand als dich selbst;
Und so hast du *niemand* denn geliebt. ...
Böses altes Kind!²⁸⁶

²⁸¹ Varnhagen to Rahel, December 12, 1808, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. II, 85.

²⁸² Rahel to Varnhagen, February 27, 1812, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. II, 189.

²⁸³ Isselstein mentions that the theory of spoken quality of Levin Varnhagen’s letters was established by Klaus Haase (*Rahel Varnhagens Brieftheorie*). *Der Text aus meinem beleidigten Herzen*, 92. Friedhelm Kemp, “Ohne philologischen Brauntöner. Zur Edition von Rahels Briefen. Eröffnungsvortrag,” in Isselstein, *Wiederentdeckung einer Schriftstellerin*, 9-15, p.11.

²⁸⁴ Kemp, “Ohne philologischen Brauntöner. Zur Edition von Rahels Briefen. Eröffnungsvortrag,” in Isselstein, *Wiederentdeckung einer Schriftstellerin*, 9-15, p.11.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ To Gentz March 10, 1831, in *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 193.

In her poem, Levin Varnhagen summarizes the crises of dialogue they both had to endure throughout the years in order to sustain their relationship. According to her poem, it all ultimately comes down to the ability to love the other. Levin Varnhagen rebukes her friend for loving in a defective way, that is, for egocentric motives. To love in such a narrow way implies that Gentz is not substantially giving himself to her, but rather is withholding part of himself at times. In a letter to Leopold Ranke written after her Gentz's death, she reveals the workings of their complicated bond marked by difficulties:

So können Sie nicht wissen, daß ich meinen verschwundenen Freund nur dann, nur deshalb *liebte*, wenn er recht etwas Kindisches sagte, oder tat. .. *Seine* Perfidien – er übte sie reichlich, *gegen* mich – sind anders, als der andern ihre: er gleitete wie in einem Glücksschlitten *fliegend* auf einer Bahn, auf der er allein war; und niemand darf sich ihm vergleichen; ... Nun aber, beim Fazit, bleibt mir nur reine, lebendige Liebe. Dies sei sein Epitaph! Er reizte mich immer zur Liebe ... andre, *wenige*, kann man viel tadlen, aber sie öffnen immer unser Herz, bewegen es zur Liebe. Das tat Gentz für mich: und nie wird er bei mir sterben. Übrigens glaube ich jetzt, wir werden nach dem Sterben voneinander wissen: oder vielmehr, uns zusammenfinden.²⁸⁷

The dialogical relationship of Levin Varnhagen and Gentz survived till the very end because it rested on the idea of openness and love. The dialogue terminated with Gentz's death.

Theoretically, however, this dialogue did not end as long as Levin Varnhagen continued discussing Gentz with other correspondents and felt the need to disclose the particulars of her unparalleled friendship which, as she predicted herself already at its beginning would never end: "Nie werden Sie mich los! Solange uns eine Erde Trägt."²⁸⁸ Levin Varnhagen realized that the purpose of dialogue entails much more the seeking mutual understanding rather than seeking harmony. As a consequence of dialogue one may come to understand why one disagrees so vehemently with someone else; thus, there will be better understanding but not necessarily more harmony.

²⁸⁷ Rahel to Leopold Ranke, June 15, 1832, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 201-202.

²⁸⁸ Rahel to Gentz in Teplitz, September 18, 1808, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 127.

Perhaps more than any other male friends, Gentz understood Rahel Levin Varnhagen as a woman, as one of the most quoted passages from her correspondence suggests:

Wissen Sie, Liebe, warum unser Verhältnis so groß und so vollkommen geworden ist! Indes will ich es Ihnen sagen. Sie sind ein *unendlich produzierendes*, ich bin ein *unendlich empfangendes* Wesen; Sie sind ein großer *Mann*; ich bin das erste aller Weiber, die je gelebt haben.²⁸⁹

These are not attributes describing a woman preordained to become a wife and mother. On the contrary, through this role reversal Gentz appears to criticize the unfeminine or masculine behavior of Rahel Levin Varnhagen, who not only is a prolific writer, but is also aware of her talent and does not hide it under the pretext of false humility – a demeanor more culturally appropriate for the era of polarized gender theories.²⁹⁰ In the light of the whole correspondence between Levin Varnhagen and Gentz, however, this passage does not constitute a criticism, but rather it depicts a new model of a woman who leads in the relationship. This extends even to the point of decision making regarding erotic love, as in the same letter Gentz refers to what their sexual union would have meant for both of them.²⁹¹ Seventeen years later, Levin Varnhagen is prepared to declare in response: “Ich bin doch ein Mann geworden, wozu das empfindlichste, das stärkste Organ, mein Herz, immer die Anlage war; bei einem der freiesten Geister, wie ich ihn habe, oder bin.”²⁹² Her ability to write and to analyze social and psychological phenomena, which is manifest throughout her correspondence, and which would have been only too readily

²⁸⁹ Gentz to Rahel 1803, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 122.

²⁹⁰ Compare the chapter by Silvia Bovenschen entitled “2. Die Ergänzungstheorien,” in *Die imaginierte Weiblichkeit*, 24-43.

²⁹¹ See the letter from Gentz to Rahel in Teplitz from September 21, 1810, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, 129: “...daß wir nicht zur Liebe gegeneinander – ich meine, zur ordentlichen, vollständigen – gelangt sind! ... Es war doch hauptsächlich *Ihre* Schuld; Sie standen höher, sahen freier und weiter als ich; Sie mußten mich von Christel losmachen und Urquijo zum Henker schicken.” Such extravagant flattery may explain why the bond between Rahel Levin Varnhagen and the admiring men who frequented her salon, despite its considerable intimacy, remained chiefly in the realm of intellectual friendship.

²⁹² Rahel to Gentz December 27, 1827, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 157.

ascribed by status-designators exclusively to males, is ultimately rooted in the heart, the organ associated with love.

The specific type of love, which connected Rahel Levin Varnhagen and Friedrich von Gentz and counterbalanced misunderstandings and resulting hurt, was shaped by their dialogical approach, which required a sustained chain of responses. The lack of it was either frowned upon or lamented.²⁹³ When Rahel Levin Varnhagen could not write because she was too sick, she complained to Gentz: “Gentz schreibt mir; und *ich* antworte nicht.”²⁹⁴ After some time of not hearing from her friend she reminded him: “Ich bedarf Antwort.”²⁹⁵

A trying period for their friendship occurred when Levin Varnhagen was in exile in Prague, a time of a new narrow kind of patriotic fervor when the nobility desperately tried to conserve its power and privileges. Levin Varnhagen’s Prague correspondence reflects her cynicism with regard to both Gentz and Humboldt, a cynicism that stemmed from being treated disrespectfully by both of them.²⁹⁶ Barbara Hahn comments that the incident, which took place in Humboldt’s house, has a special meaning when considered within the time-frame of the Congress of Vienna from the perspective of Rahel Levin Varnhagen who was a fresh Christian convert married to a politically unimportant man. She was simply ignored.

²⁹³ Barbara Hahn, *Antworten Sie mir*, 79.

²⁹⁴ Rahel to Gentz, December 27, 1827, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, 156.

²⁹⁵ Rahel to Gentz in Vienna, November 23, 1831, Kemp, vol. III, 200. According to Gentz’s letter from July 8, 1831, postal service was not to be trusted so that he asked Levin Varnhagen to forward her letters to him through a third party as this was the reason for slower exchange.: “Nur durch eine so sichere Gelegenheit konnte ich mich *so frei* aussprechen.” *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 197.

²⁹⁶ Barbara Hahn recalls an incident which Rahel Levin Varnhagen described in a letter to Auguste Brede from February 28, 1815: “... als wir die Treppe hinab gingen ganz enge, ging Gentz an uns vorbey, ohne uns anzusehen, noch natürlich zu erkennen, und sang ta dita, ta ta ta! Ich lies ihn vorbey; als er aber so weit war, daß er oben, und wir unten waren, und an keine Umkehr mehr zu denken schrie ich ihm nach! Nun! Wenn Sie nur noch munter sind!! Er schrie mir wieder etwas hinab Welches ich nicht verstand. Das war komisch.” Barbara Hahn, “*Antworten Sie mir!*” 79.

The letters from the Prague period reflect a crisis in that the reader has a feeling as if both the sender and the recipient missed each other constantly.²⁹⁷ Interestingly enough both correspondents conclude that the perpetual breaking of communication and lack of personal contact could be blocking their closer relationship, as Gentz assumes:

Ich würde Sie bis zur Verliebtheit lieben, wenn Sie mich nicht durch Ihre ewige Verlegenheiten gewaltsam zurückstießen. Dies erkläre ich Ihnen ein für allemal. Ob ich Sie morgen sehe, weiß ich nicht. Morgen – ist ein großer Tag! Aber übermorgen sehe ich Sie gewiß, es sei nun im Garten oder bei Ihnen.²⁹⁸

And Rahel Levin Varnhagen concludes:

Gott müsse eine große Ursache zu unserer Trennung haben. Sie, Gentz, fühlen dies alles nicht so, sind davon nicht so überzeugt: und ich weiß auch ganz, wie ich Ihnen erscheine: Sie lieben mich nur, diesen Brief, und alle meine Briefe, wie Sie den entzückten Tasso liebten, begegneten Sie ihm in jenen Gärten gekrönt. ... Aber unsere Trennung war doch eben solch Unglück für Sie als für mich: ewig wird mir diese Überzeugung bleiben; und nur mit diesem Bewußtsein enden; Sie können sie nur bekommen mit jedem Tage, den ich bei Ihnen lebte! zusammen mit Ihnen erlebte. ... *Lebten* wir zusammen, so liebten Sie mich nur, und könnten nicht ohne mich leben.²⁹⁹

Rahel Levin Varnhagen accuses Gentz of treating her like a character in a book and of being incapable of loving her in a deeper way. She continues that same thought in a letter to her friend Caroline, as she writes: “Er hat eine schöne Bibliothek von mir: wenn er je zum Lesen kommt, kann er darin lesen; als ein Buch mag’s der Mensch eh’r verstehen.”³⁰⁰ It is unclear what was exactly the nature of the conflict. As Barbara Hahn indicated, we do not have all Levin

²⁹⁷ “Ich bin seit vorgestern hier, habe aber Geschäfte und Verhältnisse vorgefunden, die es mir bisher unmöglich gemacht, Sie zu besuchen. Ich fürchte, es wird mir auch heute noch so gehen. Morgen spätestens will und muß ich Sie auf jeden Fall sehen. Melden Sie mir unterdessen, welche Stunden Ihnen die bequemsten sind.” Gentz to Rahel in Prague Juli 16, 1813, vol. III, 133.

“Ich verließ Wien schon am 8. vorigen Monats. Ihr Brief ist dorthin gewandert, und von dort zurück, erst heute in meine Hände gekommen. Ich war Ihnen also weit näher, als Sie glaubten...” Gentz to Rahel in Prag 23. Juni 1813, 131.

... Wir werden uns sehen, und in kurzem. Denn, es mag Krieg oder Frieden das Resultat sein, nach Prag komme ich in jedem Fall, und wahrscheinlich bald (132).

²⁹⁸ Gentz to Rahel in Prag, Prag, August 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, 137

²⁹⁹ Rahel to Gentz in Prague July 18, 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, 134-135.

³⁰⁰ Rahel to Caroline von Humboldt in Wien, Prag, February 10, 1814, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp.

Varnhagen's letters from the Prague period. It seems, however, that the contention had its roots in political matters, as it could be deduced from at least one of Gentz's letters:

Jetzt habe ich Ihren Brief gelesen. Und Welch einen Brief! Eine Person wie Sie ist nur einmal geboren; und ein schwerer Kummer, daß Sie, wie ich nun ganz klar erkenne, eigentlich für *mich* in die Welt kamen. ... Ich bin ja in den Kettten der Welt so schmäählich befangen, daß nicht bloß Freiheit, sondern Mut, nach ihr zu streben, mir abgeht. Und *doch* ist *ein* gutes Haar immer noch an mir.³⁰¹

Clearly, on a personal level, Gentz still admires Levin Varnhagen. At the same time, he criticizes his own actions for allying himself with the opportunistic way of life while betraying a dear friend. Having empathy, the bedrock of a successful dialogue, but not acting from empathy leads to guilt, as each human being deserves respect simply because of their humanity. The feelings of guilt are reflected in Gentz's letters from the Prague period. At the same time, he tries to justify himself in a way and complains of being "unendlich alt und schlecht geworden," in contrast to Rahel Levin Varnhagen, who appears to him to be "noch sehr redlich, sehr Frisch, sehr liebevoll."³⁰² In an act of self-reproach, he admits his iniquity: "Sie sehen es nun ein, daß ich völlig recht hatte. 'Ich verstehe keins Ihrer Worte.' Wie sollte ich denn? Der innre Sinn, die Empfänglichkeit ist abgestumpft. Sie *leben*; ich bin *tot*."³⁰³ Gentz's conduct is the source of conflict that hurts their dialogical relationship and creates crisis, which is first visible in his inability to understand his dialogue partner. His receptivity has become dull to the point of death.

Rahel Levin Varnhagen narrates the awkward situation to Caroline von Humboldt:

Vorgestern früh ist Gentz abgereist; zwei Tage vor seiner Abreise nahm er Abschied bei mir, und sagte im Weggehn: 'Verzeihen Sie mir alles, was ich Ihnen hier getan habe!' Ohne *alle* Veranlassung, wir sprachen *von nichts* Persönlichem. Mein Lächeln war beinah ein Lachen: ich sagte Ja.³⁰⁴

³⁰¹ Gentz to Rahel in Prague, Prag, August 13, 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, 137-138.

³⁰² Gentz to Rahel in Prague, June 23, 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, 132.

³⁰³ Gentz to Rahel in Prague. Prague July, 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, 136.

³⁰⁴ Rahel to Caroline von Humboldt in Vienna, Prag, December 7, 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, 140.

Caroline von Humboldt urges Rahel Levin Varnhagen to break off the correspondence. In her advice, however, she does not take into account their personal relationship, but rather concentrates on the public persona of Gentz and his political affiliations:

Tue es nicht, schreibe ihm nicht mehr. Schreibe mir, schreibe Varnhagen, nicht ihm. ... Er liebt die Unsern nicht, unsere Preußen, verstehst Du. Der eigentliche Geist, der die Nation begeistert hat, der sich klar in Tat und Wort wie Tausenden ausgesprochen hat, den hat er nicht erkannt. Das kommt eben auch daher, weil er die Liebe nicht erkennt.³⁰⁵

At first Rahel Levin Varnhagen agreed to what her friend had suggested, motivated by the same political reasons.³⁰⁶ The crisis continued in the following year of 1815. During that time Gentz talked openly about his friend's "reluctance" toward him and was ready to make peace with her because he could not bear the "hatred" any longer.³⁰⁷

When the crisis ended, Gentz observed: "Ihr Brief hat einen angenehmen Eindruck auf mich gemacht, ob ich gleich mit den meisten Sätzen, die Sie aufstellen, *nicht* einig bin. ... Aber – ist es nicht, als ob ich gestern Tee bei Ihnen getrunken hätte?"³⁰⁸ Like Levin Varnhagen, Gentz understood that the purpose of dialogue implies seeking mutual understanding rather than harmony. The result of dialogue is not always harmony: it is more important to realize why one disagrees with the other in order to better understand each other. Gentz realized that for his

³⁰⁵ Caroline von Humboldt to Rahel in Prag, 22. Januar 1814, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, 146.

³⁰⁶ Sei versichert, Freundin, daß ich Gentz nicht mehr schreiben werde: Was wäre Vorsatz, was wäre Wille? ... Nein, er stieß mir mit Gewichten ans *Herz*, wenn er sagte 'Preußen', 'der König von Preußen' und 'wir', wenn er von den Östreichern sprach. Der Blasebalg! Alle Bildung, jede Freiheit des Denkens, jede Nahrung, für den alten *body*, und den Geist, hat er von dort. Lehrer, Kameraden, Freunde, Geschwister; den ganzen Geisteschwung, das ganze *Hochfliegen*, die Dreistigkeit dazu, die Ahndung, es zu können; Metternichs *Bekanntschaft!* ... Glaube nicht, daß mich die *jetzige* Patrioten-Wut bewegt; *die* hasse ich: Ich liebe unser Land und unsern König – und uns, seit Jena: wie die angehäuften Krankheit als namen-, grenzenloses Unglück ausbrach. Rahel to Caroline von Humboldt in Vienna, Prague, February 10, 1814, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, 146-147.

³⁰⁷ "Das Verhältnis, worin ich mich, höchst unerwartet, gegen Sie versetzt finde, ist eines der schmerzhaftesten, in welchen ich mich je befand; die Äußerungen, die ich darüber in Ihrem Briefe lesen mußte, und die harte schneidende Art, mit welcher Varnhagen mir (bei einer ohnehin unangenehmen Veranlassung) Ihren Unwillen gegen mich zu erkennen gegeben, haben mir meinen durch überhäufte, p. Geschäfte und körperliche Leiden schon überflüssig verbitterten Aufenthalt in Paris vollends ganz vergiftet. 152. Mit Ihnen Frieden zu schließen, wäre einer meiner größten Wünsche. Ob dies möglich ist, haben Sie allein zu entscheiden. In mir liegt kein Hindernis. Ihr Haß gegen mich kommt mir jetzt schon wie ein böser Traum vor." Gentz to Rahel in Frankfurt am Main, Paris, October 26, 1815, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, 153.

³⁰⁸ Gentz to Rahel, Weinhaus September 28, 1824, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, 153-155.

friend Rahel Levin Varnhagen, friendship is not founded on identity of positions, beliefs, ideologies, but rather in human solidarity, and thus beyond any political or social differences. It is interesting that this awareness is juxtaposed in his letter with the memory of the salon setting, a space of free sociability and dialogue. In the end things have come full circle for both friends, and Rahel Levin Varnhagen's letter from September 22, 1830 echoes one of her first letters to Gentz, as she exclaims: "Wir beide dürfen uns nicht trennen, solange wir atmen."³⁰⁹ She reassures Gentz of her everlasting friendship, calling him her "köstlicher *reiner Freund*."³¹⁰ Gentz eagerly confirms their bond of friendship with a long letter in which he then requests a quick answer:

Der gegenwärtige Brief ist der längste, der seit Jahren aus meiner Feder geflossen ist. Ihnen wird er Freude machen, das weiß ich. Belohnen Sie mich bald mit einer Antwort. Ich schmachte danach. Verstanden und geliebt zu werden, ist der höchste Genuß der Welt, nach dem, welchen die eigentliche Liebe gewährt. In unserer jetzigen Korrespondenz ist beides verschmolzen. Also – vorwärts! Gott sei mit Ihnen.³¹¹

He supports the idea that has long been the foundation for the framework of dialogue and friendship, as understood by Rahel Levin Varnhagen. She also elaborates on the subject stating that "Erdenglück ist nur in Menschenliebe" and goes on to explain why she loves Gentz: "Weil Sie ein Kind sind; und der Mensch, gegen den ich wahrhaft in allen Stücken sein kann."³¹² She is able to be herself in front of him, he is open for a genuine dialogue, living the dialogue, writing the dialogue, this is her life. She loves life, the full meaning of it.³¹³

In one of the later letters to Gentz, Rahel Levin Varnhagen sums up her theory of writing and dialogue, stating that she does not like "to write a speech," but much rather prefers "to write

³⁰⁹ *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, 170.

³¹⁰ Rahel to Gentz in Wien, 3. Oktober 1830, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, 170-171.

³¹¹ Gentz to Rahel, Preßburg, 18. Oktober 1830, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, 183.

³¹² Rahel to Gentz 27. Dezember 1827, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, 157.

³¹³ *Pauvre humanité* ist das Beste, was Madame de Staël sagte. Ich liebe die Kreaturen: das heißt die leidenfähigen Wesen. Rahel an Gentz in Wien 22. Dezember 1828, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, 165.

conversations, as they proceed in living people.”³¹⁴ Subsequently she arranges them according to her own artistic vision. At the end of the passage, Levin Varnhagen reiterates her position regarding spoken and written conversations:

Aber auch meine Gespräche sind nicht ohne Kunst; das heißt ohne Beurteilung meiner selbst, ohne Anordnung. Ist ein Schreiben, es sei Buch, *mémoire* oder Brief eines andern nur vollständig gehaltene Rede, so hat es für mich immer einen Beischmack von Mißfallen.³¹⁵

She insists on her writing being both nature and art, highly organized, and designed with a very specific goal. The dialogue that she engages in with the recipients of her letters mirrors the salon conversation. Rahel Levin Varnhagen’s striving to keep the dialogue alive reflects the basic definition of the word “dia logus,” which means “through words,” where the creative thinking things through together emerges in the atmosphere of genuine empathy, a deep appreciation for another’s situation and point of view. Again, not acting from empathy lead ultimately to guilt, which is visible in Gentz’s letters from the Prague period. At the same time, however, he was capable of showing his remorse and sadness to which Rahel Levin Varnhagen promptly responded. Levin Varnhagen’s gesture reflects the love that was not of the Platonian acquisitive kind, directed to an object regarded as valuable and perfect, but rather her love was fashioned along the lines of the superior style of love, *agape*, because she was capable to love the whole person.³¹⁶ Only by accepting the other person unconditionally, and thus loving for who the other person really is, was she able to avoid egocentric motivation. Aristotle’s *philia* reflects partially this ideal since, according to Aristotle, to love means to wish another person well for his or her

³¹⁴ “Nämlich, ich mag nie eine Rede schreiben, sondern will Gespräche schreiben, wie sie lebendig im Menschen vorgehn.” Rahel to Gentz in Pressburg, October 26, 1830, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, 183.

³¹⁵ Rahel to Gentz in Pressburg, October 26, 1830, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, 184.

³¹⁶ Alan Soble, “Exploring the Classics,” *Eros, Agape and Philia. Readings in the Philosophy of Love*, ed., Alan Soble (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 77-83, p. 79.

own sake without self-interest.³¹⁷ This benevolence, however, should be directed only at good people and is thus conditional on their merit.³¹⁸

Rahel Levin Varnhagen and Friedrich von Gentz's dialogue was marked by courageous speech and candor: seeking an inclusive viewpoint, valuing and accommodating diversity, revealing assumptions and discrepancies. Ultimately both correspondents were able to survive the crisis of disparities and to start a recovery of their dialogical relationship because they did not limit their dialogue but "let anything be talked about."³¹⁹ They never attempted to shut down their dialogue, but rather thought together and were able to share their opinions without hostility. Their "dialogue within the dialogue" was about love and everlasting friendship and had an objective, that is, it was not about just simply talking interminably.

2.3 EXCHANGES WITH CAROLINE VON HUMBOLDT AND KARL AUGUST VARNHAGEN

As already noted, although Rahel Levin Varnhagen's letters participate in the bourgeois public sphere as a whole, they emphasize three different areas of life, as constituted for the upper- and upper-middle class around 1800, that help to form that sphere. In particular, Rahel Levin Varnhagen's letters written during her exile in Prague, highlight her relationship to the state. This is a time of her public service for Germany, as she takes on an active role in organizing help for the wounded, the displaced, and all else affected by war, especially the impoverished. This section will primarily examine Levin Varnhagen's patriotic role in exile as means by which she was able to assert her place within the newly established public sphere.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 80.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 80.

³¹⁹ David Bohm, *On Dialogue*, ed., Lee Nichol (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 42.

Perhaps it is the dialogical quality of the genre Levin Varnhagen employs, namely letters, which gives her view from the exile a singular twist. Levin Varnhagen is a woman in a dialogue with the world, not only reporting on the atrocities of the war, but also taking action. Levin Varnhagen's dialogue from Prague with Caroline von Humboldt (1766 - 1829)³²⁰ and Karl August Varnhagen (1785 - 1858) focuses on the subject of war and thus constitutes a "dialogue within the dialogue," a *Gesamtdialog*, which is unified through particular reference points.³²¹ In this case, the dialogue is flowing and complete, characterized by collective participation as a part of collective thought – people thinking together. Participants are able to share their opinions without hostility.³²² The problem in the dialogue between Rahel Levin Varnhagen and Caroline von Humboldt involves not so much the issue of "what is being said," but rather "what is not being said." This dilemma prompts an inquiry regarding Caroline von Humboldt whether "we can let anything be talked about."³²³

When in the spring of 1813, Prussia declared war on Napoleon, Rahel fled Berlin via Breslau to Prague, and as she put it herself: "Es war eine komplette Flucht: von *Stunde* zu Stunde mußte man schneller weg. Wegen Pferden, Befehlen, Pässen."³²⁴ She also described difficulties with establishing herself in the city: "Madam Brede hat mich aufgenommen; bei der wohne ich. ... Quartier, nichts ist hier zu bezahlen. Die Stadt voll Landsleute. Ich schrieb dem Obristen und der Brede von der letzten Post hierher. Ihnen verdank' ich Asyl und Leben hier."³²⁵ Thanks to her friend who worked in Prague as an actress, Rahel Levin Varnhagen was able to set up a humble household for herself and her servant. Since Prague had become the

³²⁰ Kemp's edition uses the spelling "Caroline" in contrast with the edition Feilchenfeld, which uses the spelling "Karoline." She herself signed her letters "Caroline," and the Feilchenfeld's edition keeps the "C" when the name appears as a signature.

³²¹ Renata Buzzo Märgari, "Schriftliche Konversation im Hörsaal," 104-128.

³²² David Bohm, *On Dialogue*, 26.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 42.

³²⁴ Rahel to Varnhagen, May 23, 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. II, 216.

³²⁵ Rahel to Varnhagen, June 19, 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. II, 222.

center of the anti-Napoleonic forces, it attracted a number of diplomats, intellectuals, and artists. As a result, Rahel met many of her friends and former acquaintances there, and also made new contacts. Surrounded in Prague by a circle of interesting people, Levin Varnhagen could surely have resumed her role as a salon hostess. However, she decided to take on a new role. After the battle of Kulm, on August 13, 1813, the sick, the injured, and the displaced began pouring into the city. The military hospitals were completely incapable of meeting the needs of the soldiers. Lacking nourishment, shelter, and care, the wounded lay unattended in the streets. Motivated by these circumstances, Rahel Levin Varnhagen began to organize a rescue operation. She remained in Prague until the end of the war helping those who suffered in battle and those who suddenly became refugees.

Although herself in Vienna, Levin Varnhagen's friend, Caroline von Humboldt, assisted her in this daunting task with advice and charitable donations:

Geliebte Rahel, durch Bartholdy sende ich dir 764 Gulden, 45 Stück Dukaten und 9 Gulden ConventionsGeld für deine armen Verwundeten. Bei Pilats Vater in Prag ... liegen auch 130. verwundete Offiziere. Ich überlasse es ganz dir ob sie auch an dieser kleinen Unterstützung Theil nehmen können. ... Die Ärmsten und Verlassensten möge deine liebe Hand erquickken. Außerdem bringt Bartholdy einen Pak Charpiee Bandagen. Wir werden damit fortfahren. Geld hätte ich wohl mehr gesammelt, allein die Großfürstinnen ließen eben auch eine Collette für die Verwundeten in Prag machen, und du weist wohl wie es geht³²⁶

Levin Varnhagen's action of seeking donations constituted an act of public involvement.

Through the procuring and allocation of funds, women were able to play an important role in historical events without transgressing existing boundaries of political engagement.³²⁷ Already

³²⁶ Karoline von Humboldt to Rahel, September 14, 1813, *Rahel-Bibliothek*, ed. Feilchenfeldt, vol. IX., 348-9.

³²⁷ Ulrike Landfester, "Vom auserwählten Volk zur erlesenen Nation: Rachel Varnhagens 'Uremigrantenthum,'" *Nation, Politik und Geschlecht. Frauenbewegungen und Nationalismus in der Moderne* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2000), 36.

during the late Enlightenment era women were encouraged by female publicists to solicit donations. However, during the French Revolutionary Wars, this particular political activity became a legitimate form of female involvement in public events. Thus, female Caritas coded political participation, as monetary donations were lifted out of the traditional context of local Christian charity and transferred to a secular plane.³²⁸ Because this form of action was open to all social spheres and had no special requirements, it developed into one of the most important mediums of female politics.³²⁹ Through the management of monetary donations, patriotic and national-democratic women's organizations won a significant decision-making power. In this way, they were able to rehearse a distinct form of autonomy from which the later generations of women were able to profit.³³⁰ The fact that women solicited, provided, and managed funds themselves and consequently were involved in public-political matters, became a cultural paragon, which legitimacy was no longer questioned.³³¹ According to Levin Varnhagen's correspondence with Karoline von Humboldt, women were also involved in procuring legal documents for their fellow citizens:

Vom kleinen Kronstein wollt' ich sprechen der mir endlich ... schrieb. ... So schreibt er von dir: 'Wie kann ich Ihnen genug danken, daß Sie mir eine Adresse an die Gesandtin gaben? An diesen Engel! Wie gut, wie liebenswürdig nahm sie mich auf! ... Durch ihre Verwendung wurde mir der Aufenthalt hier gestattet: ihr verdank ich einen ordentlichen Paß.'³³²

For the first time, women engaged actively in patriotic actions on a large scale and Rahel Levin Varnhagen took an active part in those actions. These women were mainly from the upper middle class and aristocracy.³³³ Already in the spring of 1813, the first women's associations

³²⁸ Ibid., 36.

³²⁹ Ibid., 37.

³³⁰ Ibid., 37.

³³¹ Ibid., p. 38.

³³² Rahel to Karoline von Humboldt, September 15, 1813, *Rahel-Bibliothek*, ed. Feilchenfeldt, vol IX, 352.

³³³ During the Wars of Liberation (Befreiungskriege 1813-14) Berlin salon hostesses replaced salon activities with charitable engagement. They took part in relief efforts, and so for instance, in the palace of Princess

were founded, and as the Russian troops marched in on March 11, 1813, the *Verein zu Unterstützung der Landwehr* was ready to provide clothing.³³⁴ They were encouraged officially through “Aufruf an die Frauen im Preußischen Staate” issued by the twelve princesses of the House of Hohenzollern under Princess Marianne v. Preußen, the sister-in-law of the King Frederick Wilhelm III.³³⁵ With this appeal, largely circulated in the press of the day, the female members of the royal family took initiative and called for a patriotic organization, which would support action against Napoleonic France.³³⁶ Rahel Levin Varnhagen’s letters communicate the very spirit of responsibility that women felt:

Die Frauen im einzelnen fangen an, sich die Verwundeten auszubitten, ihnen einstweilen Essen und Hülfe auf die Gassen zu senden ... Auch war ich unbekannter Weise bei Gräfin Moritz Brühl, und bat diese, mit ihrem Namen die vornehmen Damen zu bewegen: sie versprach es.³³⁷

The spontaneous action of raising money for the weapons, equipment, clothing, provisions, and support for soldiers’ families, for widows and orphans, as well as organizing medical help for ill and wounded soldiers is well documented throughout Levin Varnhagen’s correspondence. However, her letters attest to the fact that women and women organizations not only engaged in various fundraising activities, but also participated in the historical events.³³⁸ Medical care and relief belonged also to legitimate political involvement. For the first time in history, during the French Revolutionary Wars women’s organizations began to produce bandage and wound

Luise Radziwill, a military hospital was set up where *salonnières* were accepting supplies and donations. They also took care of war orphans, for example Henriette Herz provided free school instruction. Wilhemy-Dollinger, *Die Berliner Salons*, 119.

³³⁴ Ute Planert, “Vater Staat und Mutter Germania: Zur Politisierung des weiblichen geschlechts im 19. Und 20. Jahrhundert.” *Nation, Politik und Geschlecht. Frauenbewegungen und Nationalismus in der Moderne* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2000), 91.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 92.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

³³⁷ Rahel to Varnhagen, September 2, 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, 231.

³³⁸ Ulrike Landfester, “Vom auserwählten Volk zur erlesenen Nation,” 38.

dressing material, to nurse wounded and sick, and to set up military hospitals.³³⁹ Because of an inadequate infrastructure, Prussian authorities of 1813 depended heavily on this type of cooperation with women's organizations and allowed them to work independently.³⁴⁰ The amount of work was so immense that Rahel Levin Varnhagen's efforts needed formal infrastructure in order to be carried out successfully:

Vorgestern schickte mir Karoline (die Brillenfrau) hundertdreißig Gulden; nun kauf' ich Hemden, Socken, lasse kochen ... ; kurz: bei mir ist ein kleines Bureau: meine intimen Frauen helfen mir wie Engel: ich habe eine Menge Leute an der Hand: von jeder Klasse. ... Also Gott hat mir gelächelt: ich *helfe* etwas.³⁴¹

From 1806 till 1815 a trend of religious, royalist, tradition-conscious patriotism in Prussia, fueled by the popular daily literature, produced by a vision of a German nation with a common cultural heritage.³⁴² Typically, various pamphlets featured figures of *deutsche Heldinnen* engaged in matters connected to the state and nation.³⁴³ Such was the time of Levin Varnhagen's public service for Germany, as she organized a rescue operation for all those affected by war; a time in which she, as Hannah Arendt put it, "reminded herself about her patriotic feelings."³⁴⁴ Evidence that Levin Varnhagen cared for her country is easy to find, as she writes: "Aber ewig muß man sein Land lieben, wie seine Geschwister, wenn man sie auch haßt und tadelt."³⁴⁵ As she comes to a clear realization that this represents a real love, she needs to put it in writing: "O, ich habe es nie gewußt, daß ich mein Land so liebe! Wie einer, der durch

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Rahel to Varnhagen September 16, 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. II, 235.

³⁴² Karen Hagemann, "'Deutsche Heldinnen': Patriotisch-nationales Frauenhandeln in der Zeit der antinapoleonischen Kriege." *Nation, Politik und Geschlecht. Frauenbewegungen und Nationalismus in der Moderne* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2000), 87.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen. Lebensgeschichte einer deutschen Jüdin aus der Romantik* (München: R. Piper, 1959), 183.

Wilhelmy-Dollinger observes that around 1808, Berlin salons have become increasingly more patriotic. Wilhelmy-Dollinger, *Die Berliner Salons*, 107.

³⁴⁵ Rahel to Karoline von Humboldt, February 10, 1814, *Rahel-Bibliothek*, ed. Feilchenfeldt, vol. IX, 392.

Physik den Wert des Bluts etwa nicht kennt; wenn man's ihm abzieht, wird er doch hinstürzen!"³⁴⁶ Levin Varnhagen concerns do not solely display the imperative of duty or custom, but rather reveal her love in the form of agape, the love of mankind that desires only the best for others, even to the point of self-denial. Her position is not merely that of a philanthropist (literally a lover of mankind) who, by acts of generosity, demonstrates that he values the well-being of others and uses her money to alleviate suffering. If such a philanthropist did not have affection toward those whom she assisted, she would still be a benefactor, but not a lover of mankind even in the most abstract sense.³⁴⁷

Levin Varnhagen's love for country becomes especially visible when she encounters Prussian soldiers: "Und immer unsere Preußen. Karoline wenn ich einen sehe, und einer sagt ik bin en Pruße,; *vergehe* ich. Ach! Das Gefühl kennst du nicht. Gott giebt mir eine *besondere* Gesundheit hier, zu den Erschütterungen, und zur Thätigkeit."³⁴⁸ The feeling of gladness derives from her ability to help is present throughout the correspondence: "Meine Landsleute suchen Rat, Hülfe, Trost: ja, und Gott erlaubt mir, klein, und nichts, und gering geboren, und verarmt, wie ich bin, es ihnen zu geben. An Konnexionen fehlt es mir nicht."³⁴⁹ Her patriotism, however, did not obscure her healthy and universal outlook on life in general. When conscious renunciation of all French influences in culture, language, and dress was being called for, and women's fulfillment of their traditional vocation encouraged by husbands, sons, fiancés, and brothers to fight was demanded, Levin Varnhagen had the courage to resist.³⁵⁰ Although Berlin and vast areas of Europe were under French occupation, Rahel refused to adopt the anti-French

³⁴⁶ Friedhelm Kemp, "Nachtrag. Rahel als Briefschreiberin in der Kritik der Zeitgenossen," in *Rahel Vanhagen Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol II, 469-509, pp. 479-480.

³⁴⁷ John A. Brentlinger, "The Nature of Love," *Eros, Agape and Philia. Readings in the Philosophy of Love*, ed., Alan Soble (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 136-148, p. 139.

³⁴⁸ Rahel to Karoline, September 17, 1813, *Rahel-Bibliothek*, ed. Feilchenfeldt, vol. IX, 356.

³⁴⁹ Rahel to Varnhagen, October 12, 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, 239.

³⁵⁰ Karen Hagemann, "'Deutsche Heldinnen,'" 87.

attitude that had become prevalent among her former salon guests. France remained for her a country to be admired and emulated for its established liberal institutions. She continued to improve her knowledge of the French language, which she called “European,” in the hopes of joining her brother Ludwig Robert in Paris. For Levin Varnhagen, the allegiance of the French Enlightenment tradition of sociability and the French way of life, especially during the era of Restoration in Germany, when liberal social perspectives were in retreat, remained a paragon, as stated in one of her letters:

Ich bin der größte Franzosenleben-Schätzer. Wir gehen, wir Deutschen in lauter *Mitteln*, in *Zukunft*, unter. ... Der gesellige, nur auf Geselligkeit angewiesene, und nach ihr und ihrerr Ausbildung strebende Franzose will im Augenblick scheinen und sein: scheinen was er ist, und sein möchte. Dringendste Anforderung des nun auf Erden einmal gehemnten Menschenthums!³⁵¹

Cosmopolitanism and tolerance remained guiding principles for her.³⁵² This attitude is evident when she talks about soldiers: “Denke nicht, daß ich mich untestehe für die Preußen mehr zu thun: Gott bewahre! ich überwinde mich. Ich gebe den dreien gleich ... sie rühren mich alle.”³⁵³ She even goes one step further adding to the feeling of compassion that of the universal brotherhood: “Ich bin hier sehr wirksam, und menschenumgebener als je, das heißt nicht gesellschaftlich, sondern geschäftlich und wohltätig. ... Bartholdys Gulden sind für die *Preußen*: das andere teile ich ehrlich: und verwundete Feinde sind des nicht mehr!”³⁵⁴ But perhaps more telling is her disconcertment as she writes to Karl August Varnhagen:

daß wir Deutsche heißen und sind, ist eine Zufälligkeit; und die Aufblaserei, dies so groß hervortreten lassen zu wollen, wird mit einem Zerplatzen dieser Thorheit endigen. *Jedes* zu Verstand gekommene Volk soll brav sein; und die Freiheit haben, es zu sein. ... Dies muß jedes Europäische, Christliche, Gott in sich selbst erkennende Volk; und jedes

³⁵¹ Rahel to Ernestine G., March 31, 1831, in: *Buch des Andenkens* II, p. 491-494, p.492. in Seibert, *Der literarische Salon*, 339.

³⁵² Thomann Tewardson, *Rahel Levin Varnhagen*, 93.

³⁵³ Rahel to Karoline, September 17, 1813, Prague, *Rahel-Bibliothek*, ed. Feilchenfeldt, vol. IX, 356.

³⁵⁴ Rahel to Varnhagen, October 4, 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, 236.

solches muß dies allen anderen Völkern gönnen und wünschen: und nicht sich prahlerisch *allein* dazu ernennen, ausschreien und brüsten.³⁵⁵

Levin Varnhagen's condemnation of nationalistic presumptuousness and arrogance is noteworthy since it was formulated during the chauvinism of 1813, the pinnacle of the so-called Wars of Liberation.³⁵⁶ She experienced these wars as a cursed destiny. Not even this pressure, however, was able to change Levin Varnhagen's opinion about political party's conflicts, as she found the supposed national values and national philosophical sophistry to be of little interest.

During this war, she continued to be cosmopolitan with a patriotic sentiment, regardless of circumstances under which her future husband found himself. Karl August Varnhagen served for a regiment of Russian military forces, which he joined as captain under General Tettenborn, and committed to fight for German freedom. Levin Varnhagen condemned the war and underlined the right of various peoples, tribes, nations to be accepted and respected equally. What is more important, however, with the gesture of stating her position, Rahel Levin Varnhagen proclaimed the right of women to formulate their own political opinion. In this manner, her individual, independent political views, dreams, and hopes for the better future of humanity became visible, as delineated in one of the letters to her future husband:

³⁵⁵ April 5, 1813, Berlin, *Rahel-Bibliothek*, ed. Feilchenfeldt, vol. V, 32.

³⁵⁶ Gertrud M. Rösch explains that Rahel Levin Varnhagen rejected the model suggested by Caroline de la Motte Fougué in her text "Ruf an die deutschen Frauen," (110) which reintroduced the cultural norm of passivity and immobility for women. That same model was propagated in educational texts and fiction between 1770- and 1830 and negated all possibilities of women's active engagement in public life (112). Motte Fougué claimed that the duty of women lies in sending men to the impending battle and taking their place at home (110-111). In contrast, Levin Varnhagen introduced another model of national identity: ("Dass wir Deutsch heissen und sind... zufälligkeit") which represented a rejection of the patriotically motivated separation from the French and the polemics directed against their cultural influence; unlike Motte Fougué, Levin Varnhagen did not attack the French language, thus defending her own reality of the past, her salon (influenced by the French salon culture), and her baptism would become an elemental component of her social future (114). The Germanophilia inherent in Caroline de la Motte Fougué's text "Ruf an die deutschen Frauen" was never a part of Levin Varnhagen's philosophy, as she never subscribed to the idea of the choice of Christian Europe as standard. Gertrud M. Rösch, "The Liberation from Napoleon as Self-Liberation: The Year 1813 in the Letters of Rahel Varnhagen," in *Women Against Napoleon. Historical and Fictional Responses to his Rise and Legacy* (Frankfurt and New York: Campus Verlag, 2007) 109-135, 110. See also Rahel Levin Varnhagen's letter to Varnhagen, April 5, 1813, Berlin, where she criticizes Fougué's appeal: "Gott im Himmel! Wie durchaus erbärmlich sie wußte absolut nichts, als daß sie einen schreiben wollte." *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. II, 205.

Ich habe so einen Plan im Herzen, all europäische Frauen aufzufordern, daß sie den Krieg *niemals* mitmachen wollen; und gemeinsam allen Leidenden helfen wollen: dann könnten wir doch ruhig sein, von *einer* Seite; wir Frauen mein' ich. Sollte so etwas nicht *gehen*?³⁵⁷

Levin Varnhagen's question sounds perhaps naïve. Nevertheless, this passage illustrates her pacifist ideas that cannot be simply ignored. They echo in a way Immanuel Kant's proposed perpetual peace program articulated in his 1795 essay, "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch" ("Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf"). In this essay, arguably seen as the starting point of contemporary liberal thought, German philosopher presented his program as a moral imperative to be accomplished through legal means of an established world republic based on reason and individual autonomy. Kant reworked Augustine's moral-religious and eschatological (theological) *pax aeterna* into a social and political (secular) phenomenon, *pax sempiterna*; thus, rendering his program to remain a project of perpetual pacification.³⁵⁸ Levin Varnhagen's proposition, in contrast, was based on love and focused on heart-centered female leadership. Her idea might be perceived as a forerunner of peace movements that appeared shortly thereafter in the United States in 1815-1816,³⁵⁹ especially those established by feminists, for instance, "Olive Leaf Circles" formed by British women in the 1840s where groups of 15 to 20 women gathered to discuss and promote pacifist ideas.³⁶⁰ These concepts were grounded in human love modeled on God's love as groundless and altogether spontaneous. *Agape* here is "indifferent to value" since it imparts value by loving; thus, effecting a transvaluation of all values. What gives the man value is precisely the fact that his human soul has infinite value and

³⁵⁷ Rahel to Varnhagen, October 4, 1813, Prague, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. II, 237.

³⁵⁸ William Rasch, "Kant's Project of Perpetual Pacification," *Law Critique*, 19.1 (2008), 19-34, pp. 22-4.

³⁵⁹ See Peter Brock, *Pacifism to 1914: An overview* (Toronto: Thistle Printing, 1994), 38-9. The first such movement was the New York Peace Society founded in 1815 by the theologian David Low Dodge and the Massachusetts Peace Society. It became an active organization, holding regular weekly meetings, producing literature and advocating pacifism on Christian grounds.

³⁶⁰ Jill Liddington, *The Long Road to Greenham: Feminism and Anti-Militarism in Britain since 1820* (London, Virago, 1989), 14-5.

God loves him, as reflected in the words of Matthew: “He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.”³⁶¹

Throughout her correspondence, Rahel Levin Varnhagen described her relationships with her addressees as love relationships. Her letters abound in philosophical discourse about love. The space where love is first manifested is her salon, and subsequently her letters. For Levin Varnhagen, letters had a purpose similar to that of the salon: the cultivation of human intercourse and friendship. From this perspective, Levin Varnhagen’s letter exchange with her future husband Karl August Varnhagen and her friend Caroline von Humboldt exemplifies a perfect dialogue where the flow of information is never interrupted and the attempts to close the time and place gap are made on several occasions (for instance when Caroline von Humboldt “writes” to her friend without cessation even in her thoughts).³⁶² Their dialogues can be characterized as filled with genuine respect and driven by cooperation, where they treat each other as peers who can trust and be trusted.³⁶³ In all letters of Caroline von Humboldt and K.A. Varnhagen, the ability to listen in order to understand as well as inventing new ideas and ultimately thinking together with the dialogue partner, are visible. Without doubt, one could say that all correspondents here are willing collaborators who are prepared to learn from each other and give each other enduring support; thus, their dialogue is coherent and constructive.

³⁶¹ Anders Nygren, “Agape and Eros,” *Eros, Agape and Philia. Readings in the Philosophy of Love*, ed., Alan Soble (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 85-95, p. 87.

³⁶² “Ich schreibe Dir schon seit vielen Tagen, aber Du bekommst es immer nicht, mein liebes Kind, den ich schreibe nur immer in Gedanken.” Caroline von Humboldt to Rahel in Prague, January 22, 1814, in *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 145.

³⁶³ The first letters that Rahel Levin Varnhagen and Caroline von Humboldt exchanged between Vienna and Prague set the tone for their correspondence: “Welch ein Unternehmen, Dir nach so vielen Jahren wieder zu schreiben! – erlaube mir im tête-à-tête das Du; ich wüßte in meiner Seele nicht anders zu Dir zu sprechen.” Rahel to Caroline von Humboldt in Vienna, Prague, July 26, 1813, in *Briefwechsel*, Kemp, vol. IV, 37. “Ein so liebes Brief wie der Deine hätte nicht vierzehn Tage unbeantwortet liegen bleiben sollen, geliebte Freundin.” Caroline von Humboldt to Rahel in Prague, Vienna, August 19, 1813, in *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. IV, 42.

The fact that the correspondence between Rahel Levin Varnhagen and Caroline von Humboldt does not reflect even the slightest conflict might be puzzling since the epistolary exchange between Caroline von Humboldt and her husband reveals remarks about Jews, and even about Levin Varnhagen herself. Thomann Tewardson claims that it would be difficult to determine the extent to which Rahel Levin Varnhagen and K. A. Varnhagen were aware of the Humboldt's true feelings.³⁶⁴ Yet, from Levin Varnhagen's letters to Caroline von Humboldt, it is clearly discernible that she was aware of Wilhelm von Humboldt's feelings and was able to even discuss this disturbing situation with her friend Caroline.³⁶⁵ At approximately at the same time that Levin Varnhagen began her mission in Prague and rekindled her friendship with Caroline, Wilhelm von Humboldt bluntly expressed his lack of tolerance in a letter to his wife: "Die kleine Levi ... hat mich sehr agaciert, ... allein was soll man mit der Judenmamsell? Gentz versichert zwar noch immer, sie sei die geistreichste Frau auf Erden. Man muß auch des Geistes entbehren können. Ich bleibe also unerbittlich."³⁶⁶ Although Humboldt distanced himself from the Romantics like Brentano who turned anti-Semitism and the exclusion of women, French, and Philistines into their programmatic agenda, he nevertheless kept his prejudices within his private social sphere.³⁶⁷ As a liberal he was not averse to social contacts with Jews. Still he believed that there were limits to Jewish integration into German society. The letters of the couple leave no

³⁶⁴ Thomann Tewardson, *Rahel Levin Varnhagen*, 152.

³⁶⁵ For extensive discussion of Wilhelm von Humboldt's anti-Semitic remarks see Ursula Isselstein, "Emanzipation wovon und wofür? Das Beispiel der Familie Levin aus Berlin," in *Jüdinnen zwischen Tradition und Emanzipation*, edited by Norbert Altenhofer and Renate Heuer, Frankfurt am Main: Bibliographia Judaica, 1990, pp. 80-113. "... so spricht er auch, ich bin ein *monstre*" Rahel to Caroline von Humboldt in Vienna, Prague, July 26, 1813, in *Briefwechsel*, edited by Kemp, vol. IV, 39. She also discusses this issue with Gentz: "Sie haben mir meine Intimität mit Humboldt nie verzeihen können." Gentz to Rahel, September 21, 1810, *Briefwechsel*, Kemp, vol. III, 130.

³⁶⁶ Wilhelm von Humboldt to Caroline von Humboldt, July 25, 1813, in Ursula Isselstein, "Emanzipation wovon und wofür? Das Beispiel der Familie Levin aus Berlin," 107. Barbara Breysach observes that already in 1813 it was known that Rahel Levin Varnhagen would marry K. A. Varnhagen. That is why the remark "Judenmamsell" was an attempt of social degradation hinting at the unwanted presence of a woman and a Jew in circles reserved exclusively for men and Gentiles. *Die Persönlichkeit ist uns nur geliehen. Zu Briefwechseln Rahel Levin Varnhagens* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1989), 135.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 106.

doubt that they categorically disapproved of K. A. Varnhagen's marriage to a Jew: "Man sagt mir, daß ... [Varnhagen] die kleine Levy nunmehr geheiratet hat. So kann sie doch einmal Gesandtenfrau und Exzellenz werden. Es ist nichts, was der Jude nicht erreicht."³⁶⁸ While earlier Humboldt had an aversion to Rahel Levin Varnhagen because of her supposed monstrous intelligence and ignoring of social rank, later he despised her for marrying a Gentile and climbing the social ladder. His wife was of the same opinion. In a letter of November 13, 1815, she commented on the nomination of Varnhagen (already married to Rahel Levin) as Prussian Minister to Karlsruhe as a surprise, and she could not approve of Hardenberg's liberalism toward the Jews, since this makes Germans look ridiculous.³⁶⁹ Caroline von Humboldt's one remark in particular sheds light on her increasingly anti-Jewish attitudes when she referred to her husband's endorsement of the Edict of Emancipation of 1812: "Du rühmst Dich, die Juden nie zu verlassen. Es ist der einzige Fehler, den ich an Dir kenne."³⁷⁰

From Karl August Varnhagen's critical remarks about Caroline von Humboldt, one could assume that at first the couple Varnhagen was oblivious to her ideology regarding the Jews and only later learned about her increasingly anti-Semitic stance:

Ich finde Frau von Humboldt sehr verändert in ihrem Wesen, sie muß schlechte Liebhaber vor Augen gehabt haben, wenigstens teilt sie die undeutsche Deutschheit und das unchristliche Christentum, die jetzt im Schwange sind, mitsamt ihren Töchtern. Sie haßt die Franzosen mit Schleiermacher'scher Furie, die Juden etc., und liebt nur immer Einzelne. Ich habe mit Betrübniß gesehen, wie furchtbar und abscheulich die Vorurteile sind, die man mit Aristokratismus bezeichnen mag, da sie selbst die Besseren untergraben, anstecken und zu Grunde richten, und wie schonungslos daher, selbst mit wütender Grausamkeit, wenn die Gelegenheit kommt, dagegen zu streiten ist.³⁷¹

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 108. October 12, 1814.

³⁶⁹ Ursula Isselstein, "Emanzipation wovon und wofür? Das Beispiel der Familie Levin aus Berlin," p. 108.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

Deborah Hertz delineates the process of Caroline von Humboldt's becoming increasingly more nationalistic and anti-Semitic. For instance, she believed that the main task for patriotic German women was procreation in service of the German nation, rather than education; consequently, she did not agree with the intellectual ambitions of several Jewish salon women in that they preferred to remain without offspring. *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 257.

³⁷¹ Varnhagen to Rahel, Berlin, June 24, 1815, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. II, 308.

Although Rahel Levin Varnhagen never gave up resisting the forces trying to oppress and marginalize her, she predicted her fate years before when writing to her sister Rose:

Du heißt Rose, hast *blaue* Augen, und ein ganz anders Leben als ich mit *meinen* Sternen, Namen und Augen. Aus ist's in der Welt mit mir, ich weiß es, und vermag es nicht zu fühlen, ich trag' ein rotes Herz, wie andere, und hab' ein dunkles, trosloses, häßliches Schicksal.³⁷²

She perceives her eyes and name to be distinguishing marks preventing her from acculturation.

Barbara Hahn points out that the name "Rahel" signalizes limitation since, according to *Duden* dictionary, it has never become popular or assimilated in Germany.³⁷³

When Rahel Levin Varnhagen writes to her publisher in May 1816, who was issuing excerpts from her correspondence, she addresses the subject of her name: "Von mir, Lieber, können Sie sagen was Sie wollen, nur meinen armen Namen nicht! Er ist mir so bequem wie ein dunkles Kleid, von dem man sich einbildet, es hielte auch warm."³⁷⁴ Levin Varnhagen's problematization takes place on two levels: when she directly talks about her "poor name," and at the end of her letter, which she signs with just her initial "R." It is a strategy, Barbara Hahn remarks, which prohibits a chain of association and cannot be ridiculed.³⁷⁵ Rahel Levin Varnhagen's given name "Rahel," similarly to the term "Jewess," worked as a file for society's resentment to and disapproval of her aspirations as a Jewish woman of unique intelligence and aptitude. Tewarson points out that Rahel Levin Varnhagen conceived of assimilation as real acculturation, encompassing emancipation, education, and an unflinching commitment to the ideas of the Enlightenment. Consequently, she never intended to assimilate solely through her

³⁷² Rahel to her sister Rose in Amsterdam, Paris, March 14, 1801, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp Vol. IV, 16.

³⁷³ Barbara Hahn, *Unter falschem Namen. Von der schwierigen Autorschaft der Frauen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 21.

³⁷⁴ *Rahel-Bibliothek. Rahel Varnhagen. Gesammelte Werke*, eds., Konrad Feilchenfeldt, Rahel E. Steiner and Uwe Schweikert, München 1983, vol. II, 406, in Barbara Hahn, *Unter falschem Namen*, 13.

³⁷⁵ Barbara Hahn, *Unter falschem Namen*, 13.

marriage to K.A. Varnhagen.³⁷⁶ In fact, Levin Varnhagen begins to use the name “Robert” (a name, which her brother Ludwig took on after his baptism around 1800) before she herself changes her name to Antonie Friederike at the time of her baptism shortly before marrying Varnhagen on September 27, 1814.³⁷⁷ In a letter to Ernestine Goldstücker from May 16, 1818, Rahel Levin Varnhagen formulates programmatically her point of view regarding the name change process:

Ich halte diese Namensveränderung für entscheidend wichtig. Sie werden dadurch gewissermaßen äußerlich eine andere Person; und dies ist besonders nöthig. ... Sie müssen sich auch äußerlich and die Klasse halten, sich zu der großen Klasse bekennen, mit der Sitten, Meinung, Bildung, Überzeugung Sie Eins sind. Sie werden dadurch in das einzige Schlechte, welches dieses Bekenntniß nach sich führen könnte, in den neuern Judenhaß, nicht miteinstimmen.³⁷⁸

Thus Jewish acculturation and emancipation is “a biographical event, and vice versa, a biographical events like marriage and divorce relate to acculturation and emancipation.”³⁷⁹ At the end of her life Levin Varnhagen reflects again on her being Jewish and her acculturation, as she writes down a passage – from which the line about her “Uremigrantentum” was to become one of the most quoted in Rahel scholarship:

Dienstag wurde Goethens Ankunfts-Jubiläum in Weimar von Hof, Land und Stadt – wahrhaft gefeiert. ... - und alle Schleusen meines gelebten Lebens öffneten sich, sprangen auf; alle Ehrfurcht in mir stand unterm Gewehr, alles, was Dank in mir sein kann: gegen Gott, Fürsten, Erkener, Menschenfortschritt, Gutes auf Erden, Freude seines Gedeihens, Freude über Einsicht in mir alles dessen, ... über mein *Uremigrantentum*, welches nur so irdische Verständlichkeit in mir erlangt. Aber auch

³⁷⁶ Thomann Tewarson, *Rahel Levin Varnhagen*, 102-103.

³⁷⁷ Hannah Arendt, “Zeittafel,” in *Rahel Varnhagen. Lebensgeschichte einer deutschen Jüdin aus der Romantik* (München: Piper, 1959), 285-286.

See also Friedhelm Kemp, “Rahels Eltern und Geschwister,” Briefwechsel, edited by Kemp, vol. IV, p. 402.

³⁷⁸ Birgit Anna Bosold, “Nachwort,” *Friederike Liman. Briefwechsel mit Rahel Levin Varnhagen und Karl Gustav von Brinckmann sowie Aufzeichnungen von Rahel Levin Varnhagen und Karl August Varnhagen. Eine historisch-kritische Edition mit Nachwort*, Dissertation (Hamburg: University of Hamburg, 1996), 213.

In relation to Ernestine Goldstücker, Arendt interprets the text as a document of “contradiction” and “ambiguity,” where all attempts to get rid of Jewish roots are disgraceful. Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen*, 207.

³⁷⁹ Bosold, “Nachwort,” *Friederike Liman. Briefwechsel*, 214.

brüllende – ich weinte mit Tönen, wie Wasser bei Schleusen lärmt – Tränen des Neides weint’ ich, und der Zerknirschung; und bat Gott, dies große Opfer mir ja anzurechnen.³⁸⁰

From the beginning, prejudice stood in the way of communication between Rahel Levin Varnhagen and Karoline von Humboldt – it was a superficially open dialogue that only appeared to be unproblematic. Nevertheless Levin Varnhagen remained unbiased and forthcoming, as she still met with her old friend in 1819:

Sie wissen doch, daß Frau von Humboldt hier ist? Vor ein paar Tagen war ich bei ihr: noch sah ich sie wenig, da sie und ich den Husten hatten; ihn sah ich noch gar nicht. Apropos! Unter andern sind manche von unsern Freunden Staatsminister geworden, vergaß ich Ihnen zu sagen: und das ist auch eine Art von Tod.”³⁸¹

The exchange between Rahel Levin Varnhagen, Karoline von Humboldt, and Karl August Varnhagen in 1813 is genuinely unique. It reflects a “dialogue within the dialogue,” “collective dialogue,” and its contents are deliberated upon in the letters between the Humboldts, in Rahel’s correspondence with Varnhagen, but from different perspective. Still, all the letters exchanged share the common context of the war and its impact on social and political life.

2.4 EXCHANGES WITH CLEMENS BRENTANO

Through the attempts to continually reach out to individual recipients, thus remaining in a constant dialogue with her many correspondents and later with an anonymous readership, Rahel Levin Varnhagen positioned herself decisively within the public sphere. Using the same medium of expression that Levin Varnhagen utilized as her strategy of becoming visible, Clemens Brentano (1778 - 1842) attacks her, a celebrated figure in Berlin. His letters attempt to relegate Levin Varnhagen to the status of the other, the one that does not belong and therefore needs to keep silent. It can be argued that Brentano here reflects the patriarchal power of the time as well

³⁸⁰ Rahel to Wilhelm von Willisen in Paris 11 Nov 1825, Berlin, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. IV, 284-285.

³⁸¹ Rahel to Karl Gustav von Brinckmann, November 30, 1819, Berlin, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 116.

as the growing anti-Semitic sentiment of the era. Brentano's attempts to exile Levin Varnhagen intellectually take place while she finds herself physically exiled in Prague. During that time a delicate situation resulted from the meeting of Rahel Levin Varnhagen with Clemens Brentano. Brentano was involved in a row with Karl August Varnhagen, who had given Brentano two slaps in the face and retained the manuscript of the tragedy "Aloys und Imelde" as a collateral for his betterment.³⁸² Although the disagreement ultimately ended in a confrontation, the situation between Varnhagen and Brentano seemed to get resolved.³⁸³ In her letters, which represent a substantial, if indeed fragmentary source of this dispute,³⁸⁴ Levin Varnhagen describes her reactions to the conflict.

This is the period of Levin Varnhagen's life about which Arendt made an assumption that it had been much more happy than the one in Berlin.³⁸⁵ However, if one looks closely at the Rahel Levin Varnhagen's correspondence with Clemens Brentano (and even at those with Friedrich von Gentz from the Prague period), the idyllic appearance of the exile becomes problematic, since Brentano's letters were of a highly offensive nature. In this sense, Levin Varnhagen's exile in Prague was bittersweet. Before this emotionally stressful period ensued, Levin Varnhagen and Brentano had attempted to kindle a "Romantic friendship."³⁸⁶ Ursula Isselstein notes that their attempt to become friends embodied "unvereinbare Lösungsversuche der großen geistigen Krise ... in welche die französische Revolution und ihre Folgen die deutsche

³⁸² "Ich habe ihm vor vier Wochen zwei gewaltige Ohrfeigen beigebracht. ... Er betrug sich elendiglich, die Ohrfeigen hätte er aber nicht geachtet, wenn ich ihm nicht zugleich sein handschriftliches Trauerspiel "Aloys und Imelde" konfisziert, und als Pfand seiner guten Aufführung zurückbehalten hätte." Varnhagen to Rahel, Prague May 22, 1812, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. II, 196.

³⁸³ "Du wirst Dich wundern zu hören, wer mich alle Tage besucht, und mich ziemlich lieb hat: Clemens Brentano. In meinen kranken Tagen war er fast immer bei mir, und las mir vor; ... Von Dir spricht er jetzt anders, und sagte mir gestern aus freien Stücken, er würde Dich besuchen, sobald er wieder nach Berlin käme." Varnhagen to Rahel, Prague October 24, 1811, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vo. II, 174.

³⁸⁴ See Rahel an Varnhagen in Prag, February 20, 1812, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. II, 188.

³⁸⁵ Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen*, 183.

³⁸⁶ See the section of the chapter "Freunde. Ein Exkurs" entitled "Ein romantischer Freundschaftsversuch: Das Beispiel Clemens Brentano" in Isselstein, *Studien zu Rahel Levin Varnhagen: Der Text aus meinem beleidigten Herzen*, 76.

Intelligenz gestürzt hat.”³⁸⁷ Their letter dialogue, Isselstein declares, substantiates the general contemporary crisis at that time, combined with personal problems.³⁸⁸

Nevertheless, the dialogue between Levin Varnhagen and Brentano, notwithstanding its interruptions, was initially not suspended, thanks to Levin Varnhagen’s disposition, described by Brentano as “zum Verstehn berufen.”³⁸⁹ This particular dialogue gives a testimony to Levin Varnhagen’s way of life in accordance with her philosophy and sketched out in many a letter, which can be described with the phrase “Erdenglück ist nur in Menschenliebe” – happiness on earth can only be found in human love.³⁹⁰ Regardless of Karl August Varnhagen’s warnings about Brentano, she decides to open herself up to yet another experience of “Menschenliebe.” In that same spirit, she tries to justify her decision to Karl August Varnhagen: “Du weißt, daß ich sie kenne, beide, Clemens und Bettinen: aber die Natur hat einen Reiz für meine in diese Geschwister gelegt.”³⁹¹ She also openly discusses her feelings with Clemens Brentano:

Diese Langmut, wie ich es hier nenne, war mir von der Natur in meinem ganzen Wesen und fühlbar im Herzen beigegeben durch eine ganz bestimmte Neigung zu Ihnen und zu Ihrer Schwester, sobald ich Sie nur zu Gesicht bekam. Jede Liebe ist eine Überzeugung der innersten Art; eine absolute.³⁹²

Without doubt it was that special kind of love that Levin Varnhagen mentions that made it easier for Brentano to seek contact with her again.

Brentano begins the letter exchange in *year* by saying he wants to turn animosity into friendship. He appeals to Rahel Levin Varnhagen’s ability to understand others:

Ich kann nicht begreifen, warum wir nicht miteinander sprechen, und uns ganz treuherzig einander eingestehen, was wir selbst und was Menschen uns voneinander vorgelogen; ich

³⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 82. Isselstein notes that in 1815 the fascination of the “Dachstube,” that is actually the salon of a Jewish family, has passed. Ibid., 76.

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 77.

³⁸⁹ See the letter of Clemens Brentano to Rahel Levin Varnhagen in Prague from August 14, 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 370.

³⁹⁰ Rahel to Gentz, December 27, 1827, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 157.

³⁹¹ Rahel to Varnhagen in Mecklenburg, Prague July 10, 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 349.

³⁹² Rahel to Brentano in Vienna, Prague August 1, 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 355.

glaube, es wird uns vieles zur Windmühle werden, was wir für Riesen gehalten haben. Ich reise in drei oder vier Tagen nach Wien, und indem ich meine Stube, meine Papiere und mein ganzes Prager Leben ordne, sichte und vernichte, und meine Rechnungen tilge, möchte ich hier kein Herz zurücklassen, dem ich nicht klar gegenüberstehen könnte.³⁹³

The offer of friendship, however, is tainted from the very beginning, as it is overshadowed not only by the row with Varnhagen, to which Brentano refers here, but also by other incidents.

Rahel Levin Varnhagen and Clemens Brentano first became acquainted in 1804, at the time of his first stay in Berlin. However, the rapport between the two became complicated in 1811, as during that time blatantly anti-Jewish activities of *Christlich-Deutsche Tischgesellschaft*³⁹⁴ and the incident between Arnim and Moritz Itzig took place.³⁹⁵ The friction between Brentano and K.A. Varnhagen escalated into a conflict in August 1811, as Brentano approached him repeating anti-Jewish remarks of his sister Bettina who had referred to Rahel Levin as “garstige, zudringliche Jüdin.”³⁹⁶ The conflict then erupted again after Brentano’s letter of an offensive nature to Rahel Levin.³⁹⁷ Under the circumstances, when it was virtually impossible to ignore his compatriots and also in hopes to retrieve his manuscript, Brentano decided to renew his

³⁹³ Brentano to Rahel in Prague, Prague June 25, 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 337- 338.

³⁹⁴ Dagmar Barouw mentions that back then the mystical and fickle Catholic Brentano was inclined towards religious-political anti-Semitism whereas the sceptic Humboldt expressed himself occasionally about deportment of some individual Jews, for instance, Rahel Levin Varnhagen’s social ambitions upset him, but still he was able to successfully lobby for for the Jewish minority on the political level. The cultural society with strong patriotic features founded by Achim von Arnim and called *Christlich-Deutsche Tischgesellschaft* to which writers Brentano and Fouque, philosophers Fichte and Schleiermacher, as well as the historian Savigny belonged, was an exclusive club. Radically anti-bourgeois and ant-French, the society rejected members and specific forms of European Enlightenment, most notably the early Romantic ideas of sociability with its poetic-philosophical androgynous traits transcending social conventions. The exclusion of women, French, Philistines, and Jews – even those baptized – culminated in the exclusion of specific bourgeois intellectual facility like the salon, where women and Jews played an important role. Dagmar Barnouw, “Einzigartig. Rahel und die deutsch-jüdische Identität um 1800,” in *Rahel Levin Varnhagen. Studien zu ihrem Werk im zeitgenössischen Kontext*, ed., Sabina Becker (St. Ingbert: Röhrig Universitätsverlag, 2001), 81-117, pp. 105-6.

³⁹⁵ Martina Vordermayer notes that the incident was later documented in Varnhagen’s article “Ludwig Achim von Arnim und Moritz Itzig.” *Antisemitismus und Judentum bei Clemens Brentano*, Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern, New York, Paris, Vienna: Lang, 1999, *Antisemitismus und Judentum bei Clemens Brentano*, 179-181.

³⁹⁶ Rahel to Alexander von der Marwitz, December 8, 1812, *Gesamtwerke*, vol. IX, p. 285 in Martina Vordermayer, *Antisemitismus und Judentum bei Clemens Brentano*, 181.

³⁹⁷ The letter itself does not exist any longer. There is only Varnhagen’s letter relating the situation and Rahel Levin Varnhagen’s answer to Brentano’s letter. Martina Vordermayer, *Antisemitismus und Judentum bei Clemens Brentano*, 186.

acquaintanceship and to engage in a dialogue. Considering that the dialogue process is a form of conversation that can be meaningful to people from a variety of backgrounds, and that people come to dialogue for various reasons, including a wish to resolve conflicts or to get along better with a particular person, this dialogue was especially important for Brentano and Levin Varnhagen. However, Brentano ignored the fact that dialogue is about a shared inquiry and reflecting together: it is something you do with people, not to people. The dialogue between Rahel Levin Varnhagen and Clemens Brentano exhibits tendencies toward monologue, which as Wertheimer indicates, are characteristic of the dialogue around 1800. It is important not to compromise the dialogue and redeem it through monological concepts, and so this particular exchange begins with the monologue of Clemens Brentano's letters. The non-comprehension constitutes the initial point of the dialogue and develops from the tension of holding on to the idea of achieving some form of consensus and the basic misgiving about such a consensus. This process reflects those paradoxical conditions under which the dialogue develops around 1800, as described by Wertheimer. The seemingly contradictory conditions demonstrate dialogue being threatened by the reduction of represented points of view to the extent of minimal consensus reached dialogically.

In the exchange between Rahel Levin Varnhagen and Clemens Brentano this consensus is no longer valid; in fact, it is obliterated. Brentano writes:

Es ist etwas in meiner Seele, was ich ewig aussprechen möchte, aber man muß es fühlen, man muß es ahnden; es ist, was mich erhält, und wofür ich alle Morgen, alle Abend Gott von Herzen danke: es ist das *Fiat* des Schöpfers. ...
Ich fühle mein Beruf zur Einsamkeit oder meinen Umgang mit ganz gewöhnlichen Menschen notwendig zur Erhaltung meiner Lebenslust, und notwendig, meinen Geist zu der Art von Arbeiten zu stärken und zu sammeln, zu denen ich mich hinneige. Wie ich zwischen Menschen trete, die zu den Gebildeten oder Geistreichen gehören, wird mir angst und bang, und es erzeugt sich unwillkürlich zwischen mir und ihnen, ich möchte sagen, eine Art von Seifenwasser, und ich lasse tausend Blasen aufsteigen.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁸ Brentano to Rahel in Prauge, Prague July 1, 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 339-341.

Already here Brentano violates the symmetrical nature of dialogue by rejecting the premise of being peers and being able to cooperate. This passage points to his tendencies to monologism. He is a poet belongs neither in heaven nor on earth, who becomes assigned to each space based on his surroundings. This condition, Isselstein remarks, points to the basic Romantic problem of a subject's relationship to others, especially within the context of social living together.³⁹⁹ In her answer, Rahel Levin Varnhagen addresses this problem. Through his act of creating, Brentano can avoid the social role pressure. However, the creative power is only granted to him by the means of his faith. It is a Romantic premise, that the man is a creative center of the world, similar to the creative power of God.⁴⁰⁰ His inclination for this kind of solitude, however, transgresses precepts of symphilosophy and sociability.

Topp! Schreiben kann ich nicht, wie Prinz Hamlet. Aber lassen Sie es sich nicht leid sein, geschrieben zu haben. ... Ohnerachtet der mich gewiß überaus ergötzenden Farben der Seifenblasen, wußt ich wohl, nicht daß es Tränen würden, sondern daß sie schon welche waren. Gebe Ihnen ein guter Gott sanfte, verstehende Menschen! Die aber Sie nicht zurückschrecken und, wenn auch nicht geflissentlich, doch beleidigen.; wenden Sie, wenn es möglich ist, ein wenig Fleiß an, dies zu vermeiden. Tun wir Menschen einander nicht alle weh?⁴⁰¹

In her answer, Levin Varnhagen expresses, in equal measure, understanding and distance – as well as a joking attitude. In that spirit, she acknowledges her remoteness from the world of *Dichter* and *Denker*, and at the same time, she signals the willingness to reconcile. In contrast with Rahel, for whom the answer is important, Brentano feels the necessity of exclusive self-expression and considers it the prerogative of being an artist. As Barbara Breysach observed, Brentano expresses his frustration in a witty manner, to which Rahel Levin Varnhagen reacts immediately, and complains that the learned society sets boundaries for the individual freedom,

³⁹⁹ Isselstein, *Der Text aus meinem beleidigten Herzen*, 89.

⁴⁰⁰ Breysach, *Die Persönlichkeit ist uns nur geliehen*, 149.

⁴⁰¹ Rahel to Brentano in Prague, Prague July 2, 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 343.

self-isolation and intellectual open-mindedness.⁴⁰² He writes a letter with the emphasis on the complementary character of their natures, which sets both correspondents apart, instead of bringing them closer. In so doing he infringes on the dialogical character of their exchange that Levin Varhagen tries to preserve as she asks: “Lieben Sie’s wenn man auf jeden Punkt in Briefen antwortet? Wenn Sie’s nicht lieben, sagen Sie’s ... Aber um Gottes willen schreiben Sie mir ja viel.”⁴⁰³ Nevertheless, Brentano warmly solicits Levin Varnhagens friendship:

Es freut mich, daß Sie meinen Brief verstanden haben; ich habe es, wie immer, gut gemeint, wie überhaupt meine Rechnung mit dem Herzen besser steht als mit dem Kopf, und ich herzlicher klug als dumm bin. Unsere Freundschaft soll also unter uns sein, und unter vier Augen. ... Ich weiß nicht, ob es Ihnen bekannt ist, daß es Menschen giebt, die eine Ähnlichkeit zwischen uns wollen entdeckt haben; es mag etwas daran sein, nur sind wir umgekehrte Figuren. Sie haben eine Bemühung, aus dem äußern Leben in eine eigene innere Natur zurückzutreten; ich möchte aus meiner innern Natur in ein äußeres Leben. Sie haben auf der Peripherie sich müde bewegt; ich bin im Mittelpunkte versessen, verbittert und verblendet.⁴⁰⁴

Verehrte Freundin! ... Sie sind eine treffliche Kapelle, und Silber und Gold habe ich genug, es darauf zu bringen, ich wollte bei Ihnen scheiden und münzen und gelten. Aber allein müßte ich Sie haben und ohne Freunde, mit mehreren sind Sie mir nicht lieb.” ... Liebe Rahle, anders nenne ich Sie nicht mehr. also liebe Rahle! warum habe ich Sie nicht eher gekannt? ... denn es ist eine Offenbarung, daß ich der Mensch bin, dem Sie hätten helfen können.⁴⁰⁵

For Rahel Levin Varhagen, the most decisive element in Brentano’s persuasion is the fact that he recognizes this one feature in her character that she herself thought to be the unique but that has not been appreciated: her ability to understand people.⁴⁰⁶ She seems to ignore the remarks about the exclusive nature of the proposed friendship, which would not allow everyone in,⁴⁰⁷ and to disregard some already religiously marked solemn pronouncements. Consequently, she opens herself totally to the dialogue in a very lengthy letter composed over three days:

⁴⁰² Breysach, *Die Persönlichkeit ist uns nur geliehen*, 153.

⁴⁰³ Rahel to Brentano in Vienna, Prague August 2, 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 362.

⁴⁰⁴ Brentano to Rahel in Prague, Prague July 2, 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 345.

⁴⁰⁵ Brentano to Rahel in Prague, Vienna July 28, 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, pp. 350-351.

⁴⁰⁶ Isselstein, *Der Text aus meinem beleidigten Herzen*, 90.

⁴⁰⁷ “Sie seien die Braut eines Mannes, an den ich nicht denken kann, ohne daß sich mein Inneres empört.” Brentano to Rahel in Prague, July 28, 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 351.

Ein ganzes inneres Dasein in seiner völligen Zeitausdehnung haben Sie in mir zum Leben geweckt. Ich freute mich über Ihren Brief, ganz eigentlich, er ging mir bis ins stillste, lebendigste Innre: Satisfaktion hatte ich davon. ... Sie werden mich noch nicht verstehen, Clemens; ich meine nicht die Kränkung, die Sie mir zufügten. – (Von der weiß ich *nichts*, als daß ich Ihnen Ihre abnehmen möchte, um großen Preis; aus dem Bewußtsein anderer; denn auch Sie werden Sie nicht zu teuer finden für den Erwerb meiner Bekanntschaft. Auch ich fühlte mich unendlich beleidigt ... *Lieber Clemens!* Ich habe auch harte Momente gehabt von der Geschichte, und *wirklich*, wie selten ist das, mich dadurch gebessert; beschließen Sie das auch in sich: niemals mehr als mit *Ihrem* Urteil über Menschen zu urteilen, zu entscheiden, zu schwatzen. Ich weiß, Sie können plötzlich sich darin ändern und auf ewig.) ... Und Sie, Clemens, finden das Urteil der Welt über Sie und mich nicht ungerecht? Ich finde es *absolut*, durchaus, evident albern. Ganz stupid. Und sollte es nicht ungerecht finden? ... und ich mache mich nur wieder rein und los durch Zeit. Wo man nichts von mir wußte, womöglich meine Geburt nicht, ist mir es immer gelungen.⁴⁰⁸

At first it seems paradoxical that Levin Varnhagen, who was in contact with so many people, speaks of her isolation and makes it into a focal point of her long letter. She consciously leaves it for posterity, as a synopsis of her suffering life, describing herself as a "missglückte Kreatur" und "Virtuosin des Unglücks" who possesses special qualities.⁴⁰⁹ Jutta Juliane Laschke comments on the "Appellcharakter der Briefe," and how this distinct and pleading character of Levin Varnhagen's letters typifies a struggle for understanding borne out of an urgent need to escape the isolation in which she finds herself.⁴¹⁰ The drive to plead and entreat others is only realizable through self-portrayal and dialogue.

Klaus Haase points out that one of the important characteristics of Levin Varnhagen's letters is her self-portrayal, which was duly noted by Wilhelm von Humboldt, Gustav von Brinckmann, and Theodor Mundt, who remarked: "Diese Aufrichtigkeit in Selbstbekenntnissen

⁴⁰⁸ Rahel to Brentano in Vienna, Prague August 1, 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 355-359.

⁴⁰⁹ Jutta Juliane Laschke, *Wir sind eigentlich, wie wir sein möchten und nicht so wie wir sind. Zum dialogischen Charakter von Frauenbriefen Anfang des 19. Jahrhunderts, gezeigt an den Briefen von Rahel Varnhagen und Fanny Mendelssohn* (Frankfurt am Main, Bern, New York, Paris: Peter Lang, 1988), 69.

⁴¹⁰ Jutta Juliane Laschke, *Wir sind eigentlich, wie wir sein möchten und nicht so wie wir sind*, p. 69.

wie in Selbstkenntnis war neu und einzig.⁴¹¹ Levin Varnhagen's Jewishness, Haase claims, had to appear to her as a personal deformity which she was unable to alleviate through reflection and of which she became aware anew every time she interacted with her surroundings; this is why her ideal of an immediate, direct, and socially unobstructed self-portrayal emerged.⁴¹² It was a gesture of naïve, secularized-pietistic justification.⁴¹³ This particular gesture in the letter to Brentano, however, suggests not only a personal opening to a friend and to a potential audience within a public sphere, but it also constitutes a deep willingness to reconcile, to allow for the healing of the past wounds. She then continues her letter and refers to Brentano's contemptuous comments about K.A. Varnhagen by explaining her position and acknowledging the one she chooses to be her true life companion, friend, and husband:

Nur Einer in der ganzen Welt erkennt mich an; daß ich eine Person sein soll; will nicht nur Einzelnes von mir gebrauchen, verschlucken, liebt mich, wie die Natur mich geschaffen hat, und das Schicksal behindert.⁴¹⁴

Levin Varnhagen's rationalization pertains to her unremitting quest for understanding and acceptance just the way she is, a woman and a Jew. The lack of willingness to recognize her for what she is was the point of contention, which began erupting in the following letter of Brentano:

Ihr Brief war eine Freudenfeuer, und vielleicht ein *Leichenfeuer*, ich bin abergläubig und übergläubig; in sechs Wochen wird sich zeigen, ob wir beiden uns meiden oder suchen müssen, dann sollen Sie mehr wissen. ... Für uns tun wir nichts; wir handeln für alle, und wissen es nicht, und es geht uns auch nichts an, wir sind aber ungebärdig, wenn wir es nicht glauben wollen, fromm und demütig, wenn wir es ahnden, selig, wenn wir es glauben, heilig, wenn wir selig darin untergehn, und mit Gott vereint, wenn wir es heilig getan haben... In meinem und Ihrem Briefe, in meinem und Ihrem Leben ist ein Unterschied, der oft auf die ähnlichsten Resultate führt. ...Gott hat, diesem Schicksal sich durch den Erlöser zu unterwerfen, selbst nicht verschmäht; und was dem Gekreuzigten für mich geschehn, was er für mich getan, warum will das nicht über mich ergehen

⁴¹¹ Klaus Haase, "'Laß dies mein Epitaph sein.' Zur Selbstdarstellung in Rahels Briefen," in *Rahel Levin Varnhagen. Die Wiederentdeckung einer Schriftstellerin*, edited by Barbara Hahn and Ursula Isselstein (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 67-75, p. 67.

⁴¹² Ibid., p. 68.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Rahel to Brentano in Vienna, Prague August 2, 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 360

lassen? ... Es stehe dahin; mir ist immer recht geschehn, wenn mir auch unrecht getan wurde. Warum bin ich nicht untadelhaft, ruhig, bescheiden, mild, fleißig, keusch, rein, edel, klar und besonnen!⁴¹⁵

The difference between Levin Varnhagen's and Brentano's ideas of fate becomes obvious in this passage. To be sure they share the same feeling of powerlessness of an individual so characteristic for that time. However, for Rahel Levin Varnhagen destiny means secular combination of character and prevailing circumstances; while for Clemens Brentano it signifies divine providence, when people are nonsentient instruments of the higher power.

Isselstein explains that this difference between the two correspondents signifies much more; namely, that Brentano always transforms people into his poetical material, whereas Levin Varnhagen is always ready to communicate.⁴¹⁶ Brentano stylizes himself as a poet. The religiously motivated topos of passivity, Isselstein expounds, is tied here to the poet's unconscious; hence, his work belongs to the higher power rather than himself, and this state renders him immune to any criticism.⁴¹⁷ In this manner, Isselstein claims, the persona of the poet is divided into a regular person who is able to submit himself to moral laws, and in that of an artist who is under a spell of a foreign power and in passive irresponsibility follows totally different laws.⁴¹⁸ According to Isselstein, this model of creativity suggests an explanation for Brentano's subjective lack of guilt and ruthlessness, as well as for his struggle, since these two spaces were irreconcilable.⁴¹⁹ If we take Isselstein justification into consideration, it is then obvious that Rahel Levin Varnhagen expects to hear an answer from the persona of an artist with aesthetic sensibilities and to that persona she addresses her concerns, but is suddenly confronted

⁴¹⁵ Brentano to Rahel in Prague, Vienna August 9, 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 363-365.

⁴¹⁶ Isselstein, *Der Text aus meinen beleidigten Herzen*, 105.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 102-103.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.* Isselstein states that this split is particularly manifest when Brentano becomes the scribe for Katharina Emmerich's visions.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.* Isselstein claims that even in Brentano's late letters to Bettina and his anecdotes one finds the aesthetical side of his nature, which he was never able to successfully suppress.

with the other persona of Clemens, full of prejudices, preconceptions, and ready to discriminate and marginalize. The dialogue serves here as a test to anticipate the unknown reality, and the meaning of the dialogical contention becomes visible. It consists in the danger of a dispute. What becomes manifest here is the real crisis of dialogue. With one short letter, Rahel Levin Varnhagen breaks the newly established friendship:

Wenn mir jemand so vorkäme als ich Ihnen, wie Sie mich in dem Brief an mich malen, so könnte dies nie meine Freundin, noch meine Vertraute sein. Wie das in Ihnen zugehen kann, weiß ich nicht und kann es auch mit meinem Grad Verstand nicht begreifen. Daher habe ich Ihnen gar nichts zu antworten. Adieu! Leben Sie wohl! Wenn Sie in sechs Wochen noch Lust haben, mir zu schreiben, so weiß ich nicht, ob es mich von Ihnen wundern kann oder nicht.⁴²⁰

What follows Levin Varnhagen's decisive letter is Brentano's great monologue, which, so to speak, continues forever. Brentano is the only party speaking, as he sends Levin Varnhagen four letters; the first one of the four is the longest and consists of eight pages:

Sie, Unglückliche, können wirklich nicht schreiben, vielleicht auch nicht sprechen. Wie kommen Sie zu den entsetzlichen Ausdrücken *urgent, stupid, acharniert, satisfaction?* Der erste und dritte ist so gräßlich, daß sie, gegen eine Amme gesprochen, ihr die Milch in den Brüsten könnten gerinnen machen. ... Betrachte ich Sie, im Judentum geboren, mit ungemeinen Talenten dem Umgange der mannichfaltigsten, ungläubigsten, witzigsten, interessantesten Lebenshelden preisgegeben; hier hingerissen, dort liebend, dort vermittelnd, dort verstehend, dort mißbraucht, dort sich wieder erhebend in eigener Kraft, dort resignierend, dort begehrend, in unendlicher Entwicklung der geselligen Schutz-, Trutz- und Ehren-Waffe, des Verstandes, aber mit einem Herzen, das nur von sich selbst lebt und nur von der Natur, so müssen Sie, beständig aus dieser Quelle den tausend Armen und Beinen und Fühlhörnern Nahrung gebend, endlich zu einer Gestalt geworden sein mit unzähligen Armen und Beinen: dieses sind in der Pflanzenwelt die Bäume, in der Tierwelt die Insekten, in der Menschenwelt aber die Ängstlichen, die Übergestalteten – sie können in der Phantasie indische Götter sein – Götzen. ... Sie sind gewiß versichert, daß ich Ihnen nicht zumute, eine Christin zu werden, weil es Mode ist; aber noch weniger wünschte ich Ihnen, keine zu werden, weil es Mode ist, eine zu werden. Ich wünschte Ihnen einen innigen, großen und heiligenden Beruf, ein Verschmähen der Sünde ohne Sophisterei, und der Welt ohne Hypochondrie, und eine Entzückung zu Visionen ohne Hysterie. ... *Ite missa est*. Behalten Sie mich lieb.⁴²¹

⁴²⁰ Rahel to Brentano in Vienna, Prague August 13, 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 368-369.

⁴²¹ Brentano to Rahel in Prague, Vienna August 14, 1813, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 369-377.

When analyzing the grim letter of Brentano, Friedhelm Kemp emphasizes the idea of Brentano's torn nature, which his "brilliant but also deeply offending" letter best exemplifies. Brentano uses Levin Varnhagen, Kemp claims, in order to project his unholy self on her and thus to exorcise his devils, but in the end he performs an exorcism on her; Rahel Levin Varnhagen took seriously this mistake since she abhorred nothing more than phantoms of the new Romantic converts.⁴²² Brentano transforms the Christian missionary tone into institutional language, as he ends the letter with the words from the liturgy of the church, "Ite missa est," go, the mass has ended. He takes an appearance of authority and voices commands, which, especially to Levin Varnhagen, had to appear forbidding and repulsive.

Levin Varnhagen certainly was aware of the fact that she needed to convert in order to marry Varnhagen. Taking into consideration Levin Varnhagen's character, it is impossible to imagine that she found the precepts of Christianity repulsive. She was baptized and took on the new names of Friederike Antonie. Even though she felt inspiration when reading works of Christian mystics, she never was tied to any doctrine and sustained independence of thought. Hannah Arendt suggested that Rahel Levin Varnhagen reconciled with her Jewishness at the end of her life, as she said:

Welche Geschichte! – rief sie mit tiefer Bewegung aus, – eine aus Ägypten und Palästina Geflüchtete bin ich hier, und finde Hülfe, Liebe und Pflege von euch! Dir, lieber August, war ich zugesandt, durch diese Führung Gottes, und du mir! Mit erhabenem Entzücken denk ich an diesen meinen Ursprung und diesen ganzen Zusammenhang des Geschickes, durch welches die ältesten Erinnerungen des Menschengeschlechts mit der neuesten Lage der Dinge, die weitesten Zeit- und Raumfernen verbunden sind. Was so lange Zeit meines Lebens mir die größte Schmach, das herbste Leid und Unglück war, eine Jüdin geboren zu sein, um keinen Preis möcht' ich das jetzt missen. Wird es mir nicht eben so,

⁴²² Friedhelm Kemp, "Ohne philologischen Brauntöner. Zur Edition von Rahels Briefen. Eröffnungsvortrag," in *Wiederentdeckung einer Schriftstellerin*, 9-15, p.11-12.

mit diesen Krankheitsleiden gehen, werd' ich einst nicht eben so mich freudig an ihnen erheben, sie um keinen Preis missen wollen.⁴²³

However Arendt did not quote the entire passage containing Rahel Levin Varnhagen's pronouncement:

O lieber August, welche tröstliche Einsicht, welch bedeutendes Gleichnis! Auf diesem Wege wollen wir fortgehen! ... Lieber August, mein Herz ist im Innersten erquickt; ich habe an Jesus gedacht, und über sein Leiden geweint; ich habe gefühlt, zum erstenmal es so gefühlt, daß er mein Bruder ist. Und Maria, was hat die gelitten! Sie sah den geliebten Sohn leiden, und erlag nicht, sie stand am Kreuze! Das hätte ich nicht gekonnt, so stark wäre ich nicht gewesen. Verzeihe mir es Gott, ich bekenne es, wie schwach ich bin.⁴²⁴

Rahel Levin Varnhagen was certainly able to joke about her Jewishness, as Ulrike Landfester demonstrates in the example of a circumstance involving Gustav von Brinckmann who wished to introduce her to his friend.⁴²⁵ Levin Varnhagen asked Brinckmann to convey to his friend, that she was a savage and that it was thus possible to speak with her about virtually everything so that they could "skip this nasty process of becoming acquainted," and immediately feel at ease with each other.⁴²⁶ The adjective "savage" suggests that Rahel Levin Varnhagen reflected on her foreignness as a Jewish person, a wild one in the civilized space of Christian society, and on this idea as an intervention of an alien creature from the darkness of a mythical past in history.⁴²⁷

Levin Varnhagen's ancestry certainly was an obstacle on many levels and especially in the context of communication between her and Brentano. As Peter Seibert points out Brentano voiced objections to Levin Varnhagen's practice of sociability even though he considered sociability to be an aesthetic project – as it follows from his epistolary dialogue with Savigny when he speaks about „Verein vortrefflicher Menschen in Freiheit,“ who „bewußlos zum

⁴²³ Rahel-Bibliothek, GW I Buch des Andenkens für ihre Freunde. "Aus Varnhagen's Denkwürdigkeiten. 1803," 4-50, p. 43.

⁴²⁴ Ibid., 43-44.

⁴²⁵ Ulrike Landfester, "Durchstreichungen. Die Ordnung des Werks in Rahel Levin Varnhagens Schriften," in *Rahel Levin Varnhagen. Studien zu ihrem Werk im zeitgenössischen Kontext*, ed., Sabina Becker, 53 – 79, p. 61.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

Kunstwerke der Geselligkeit werden.⁴²⁸ He questions the authenticity of her relationships with salon guests, reproaches her pronounced individualism and inner conflict, as conditioned by the practice of sociability, and ultimately perceives her as a monster without human traits.⁴²⁹ Rahel Levin Varnhagen, of course, conceives of her salon as a social opportunity, which remains denied to her as a woman and a Jew elsewhere.

Perhaps the most telling line from the Brentano's longest letter to Levin Varnhagen is the one appearing in the first paragraph ironically lamenting her inability to write: "Sie, Unglückliche, können wirklich nicht schreiben." At the same time, however, Brentano admits that he has not yet encountered a letter like this, where the content, construction, and style are so "wunderlich."⁴³⁰ This new fantastical style, as Brentano described it, reflected the spoken language, and it was in fact a true innovation of the time, which Levin Varnhagen consciously developed as a form of art.⁴³¹ Her spoken language included also some foreign words and phrases, especially French ones, and thus mirrored the language of the salon.⁴³² Renata Buzzo Margari explains that Rahel Levin's notebook from the lectures of A. W. Schlegel in Berlin 1802 documents the authentic salon conversation featuring the distinguishing mark of the usage of the French language – the obvious language in the salon – which meaning Levin Varnhagen confirms theoretically in a comment to a statement by Schlegel. Schlegel noticed that the French had "den einzigen Akzent auf der letzten Silbe" so that one could say speaking in French is like

⁴²⁸ Clemens Brentano, "Das unsterbliche Leben," *Unbekannte Briefe*, edited by Wilhelm Schellberg and Friedrich Fuchs. Jena 1939, 306. In Seibert, *Der literarische Salon*, 338.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Letter of Brentano to Rahel, Vienna 1813, in Textanhang in Ursula Isselstein, *Der Text aus meinem beleidigten Herzen*, 91.

⁴³¹ See Isselstein, *Der Text aus meinem beleidigten Herzen*, 92.

⁴³² Barbara Hahn demonstrates how French for Jewish women became a transition language, as they began to abandon writing in German in Hebrew characters. *Jewess Pallas Athena: This too a Theory of Modernity* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2005), 28. See also the chapter entitled "The Jewish Voice. Chicken Soup or the Penalties of Sounding too Jewish," in Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), 10-37.

continuous, impatient asking. To that Rahel Levin noted: “daß franz. Eine Art Fragen ist, macht sie zur wahren conversation.”⁴³³

From the remarks of Clemens Brentano, it is obvious that even though he criticized Levin Varnhagen, he was nevertheless intrigued by her innovative and creative nature. In respect to Brentano’s ill-disposed deportment toward Levin Varnhagen, Martina Vordermayer demonstrates that the Prague incident shows Brentano’s dependency on his sister’s opinions and judgments. At first both of them demonstrated great interest in Rahel. This however ended, as soon as Bettina Brentano found out about Rahel Levin Varnhagen’s ancestry.⁴³⁴ Brentano’s reaction however is different since at first he polemicized against Levin Varnhagen, and then changed his mind after they both met in Prague.⁴³⁵ Due to Levin Varnhagen’s intercession Brentano received his manuscript back and wrote to her expressing his gratitude: “Ihr herzlicher Anteil an der Geschichte meines Manuskripts zeugt mir von neuem für eine Herzensgüte in Ihnen, die ich nie verkannt habe.”⁴³⁶ Rahel Levin Varnhagen, in turn, upon hearing about Varnhagen’s amusing account of the reunion with Brentano, comments warmly:

“Ich küsse Dich wegen Clemens. Pauvre humanité. ... Alles, was wir tun können, besteht in einem richtigen Erschauen. ... Der Faule muß alles nachholen, ... Wir versuchen Alle, und oft, faul zu sein; aber wir müssen es nicht bleiben: Clemens ruht sich wieder zu sehr beim Katholizismus aus; vorwärts, armer Clemens! Je eher je lieber.”⁴³⁷

⁴³³ Renata Buzzo Märgari, “Schriftliche Konversation im Hörsaal,” 106.

⁴³⁴ Martina Vordermayer, 191-192.

⁴³⁵ Ibid., p. 192. See also Brentano’s letter to Arnim: “Du wirst vielleicht wissen, daß die Rahle hier ist, und zwar bei der Schauspielerin Brede. Ich habe sie besucht, um über Varnhagen [s...] Aufschluss zu haben, und habe an ihr ein kluges und eigentlich recht gutmüthiges Wesen gefunden, so daß ihre Vertrautheit mit jenem Verrückten das Schlechteste ist, war mir an ihr zu denken erlabut bleibt. Vordermayer, p. 192. Vordermayer explains that Brentano disliked Varnhagen more, as reflected in the second version of his *Aloys und Imelde*, where he portrays the infamous incident. The figure of Varnhagen appears also in his *Gründung Prags*, where he takes on the features of Zeitsgespenst and Geist. Vordermayer, 199.

⁴³⁶ Brentano to Rahel, Wiepersdorf, October 1, 1814, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 380-381.

⁴³⁷ Rahel to Varnhagen, March 24, 1829, Rahel-Bibliothek, GW, VI/2, p. 391, in Isselstein, *Der Text aus meinen beleidigten Herzen*, 101.

Although Levin Varnhagen holds responsible the Catholic *renouveau* for the assaults against the Jews, she acknowledges that the wrongdoers are hardly religious people. Neither are they uncultivated and unlettered. Levin Varnhagen's dilemma of coming to terms with the fact that the very people who advocate anti-Semitism were formerly her salon guests, including the poets Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano, is reflected in her dialogue with the latter. One might say that the dialogue crisis in their relationship indicates the historical events to come that she herself foretold many a time, especially in her correspondence with Varnhagen.⁴³⁸

So sieht mein Geist ein reelles Unheil voraus, wenn die Narren noch länger fortarbeiten: ... O! armer Novalis, armer Friedrich Schlegel, der gar noch leben bleiben musste; das dachtet ihr nicht von euren seichten Jüngern. Großer, lieber, ganz blind gelesener Goethe, feuriger ehrlicher Lessing, und all ihr Großen, Heiteren, dass dachtet ihr nicht: konntet ihr nicht denken. Eine schöne Sauerei!⁴³⁹

Rahel Levin Varnhagen's letter about the pogroms in 1819 is one of those occasions on which she resorts to religious rhetoric, revealing a sense of helplessness "too profound to bear without miracles or an escape from reality."⁴⁴⁰

In the dialogues of Rahel Levin Varnhagen there are many paradoxical conditions, which Wertheimer denotes as characteristic for the dialogue around 1800. They could be understood as justification of the dialogue. The actual epistolary exchange develops within the tension of the constant threat of dialogue disintegration. Dagmar Barnouw observes that:

Dialogue preserves the distinctness of the participants on equal terms. This was not true in the case of German-Jewish interaction because it concerned a large majority and small minority, and no kind or degree of toleration would change the reality of power as long as the socio-political role (value) of majority and minority could not be redefined.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁸ Isselstein. "Rahel's Schriften I. Karl August Varnhagens editorische Tätigkeit nach Dokumenten seines Archivs," *Wiederentdeckung einer Schriftstellerin*, 16-29, p.17.

⁴³⁹ Rahel to Varnhagen in Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, October 28, 1817. *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. II, 364.

⁴⁴⁰ Dagmar C. G. Lorenz, *Keepers of the Motherland*, 36.

⁴⁴¹ Dagmar Barnouw, "Enlightenment, Identity, Transformation: Salomon Maimon and Rahel Varnhagen," *The German-Jewish Dialogue Reconsidered: A Symposium in Honor of George L. Mosse*, ed., Klaus L. Berghahn, *German Life and Civilization* (NY: Peter Lang, 1996), 39- 58, p. 41.

In the dialogue between Levin Varnhagen and Brentano, the consensus would mean forcing Brentano's point of view on Levin Varnhagen. The consensus is not mutually reached; it is not an agreement, but it would mean negative consensus where one party dictates the result of the dialogue, and such an outcome Rahel Levin Varnhagen would reject. This kind of arrangement would also make the continuation of the dialogue impossible. This state corresponds to the paradoxical terms, already established by Wertheimer, to which dialogical speech around 1800s is subjected. They point to the seemingly achieved consensus, which in reality cannot be achieved because of the threat to the dialogue by a reduction of represented viewpoints.⁴⁴² Thus, the dialogue between Rahel Levin Varnhagen and Clemens Brentano begins and also ends with the monologue of Brentano's letters.

2.5 CONCLUSION

The life that Rahel Levin Varnhagen desired for herself at the end of the eighteenth century was that of an intellectually active woman absorbed in and committed to spoken and written dialogue. Communication was indispensable to her as a woman and a Jew who intently sought emancipation and acculturation. In her salon and in epistolary writing she identified prospects for the kind of communication that would pave the way for more genuine human interaction, a precondition for her integration. She profited from these by employing them to the greatest possible advantage in a way that no one had done before her. She relocated and rearranged the salon dialogue into letters, thus, "recording" that which could no longer be

⁴⁴² Compare the statement about heated discussions on matters of religion and philosophy, and "that even after long discussions they often could not find a common ground. Yet they continued their discussions until a consensus had been reached. 'Oh, who has had this experience in his lifetime,' he wrote, 'and can still be intolerant or can still hate his fellow man, because he does not express or think in religious matters like himself, I don't want to have him as a friend; for he has lost his humanity.'" Klaus L. Berghahn, "On Friendship, The Beginnings of a Christian- Jewish Dialogue in the 18th Century," *The German-Jewish Dialogue Reconsidered*: 5-24 and 17-18.

reconstructed due to the variable and elusive features of oral communication in the salon. The form of the letter – the correspondence – made possible what other forms of writing were not able to provide, that is, the exchange of ideas with individual people. This created what Barbara Hahn called a “Netz von Gedanken” which in turn propelled her work so that ultimately she wrote “ein riesiges Buch ... an viele und mit vielen.”⁴⁴³ In that sense her project was truly rooted in the Romantic idea of symphilosophy. Rahel Levin Varnhagen’s work authenticates a complete and intact communicative network through which the most dissimilar persons were connected. By emerging as the author, the subject, and the main character of her texts to the reading public, Levin Varnhagen’s writings shed the light on the gentrification process of women on the margins in unparalleled detail.⁴⁴⁴

A member of the Romantic generation with strong roots in Enlightenment confidence in humanity, tolerance, and cosmopolitanism, she praised the middle-class as the underpinnings and potency of the nation, including women’s role in it. She added a female voice and perspective to the cultural memory and history of the nineteenth century and beyond by providing sufficient grounds for opposition to Napoleon’s politics and offering selfless service to her fellow-citizens, as well as being concerned with the nation; thus, intertwined with the major themes of nation’s history. She discovered the one and only method for transforming people, and subduing conflicts, which brings about a sense of community and an attitude of kindness or friendliness, benevolence, and causes people to react sympathetically to one another, rather than to perpetuate negative stereotypes. Levin Varnhagen found an effective way of unifying people through dialogue based on the principle of love because she recognized that “Erdenglück ist nur in

⁴⁴³ “Rahel Varnhagen: An Interview with Barbara Hahn,” Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg, 12. Mai 2011 http://panorama-publikumspreis.de/stilbruch/archiv/stilbruch_vom_12_05/rahel_varnhagen.html

⁴⁴⁴ Dagmar C. G. Lorenz, *Keepers of the Motherland. German Texts by Jewish Women Writers* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 27.

Menschenliebe.”⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴⁵ Rahel to Gentz, 27. Dezember 1827, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, 157.

CHAPTER 3

BETTINA BRENTANO VON ARNIM AND THE DIALOGUE ABOUT FRIENDSHIP AND LOVE AS FUSION OF THE SENSUAL AND SPIRITUAL FORCES

“Ich trinke Liebe um stark zu werden”⁴⁴⁶ can be read as a programmatic statement for Bettina Brentano von Arnim’s (1785-1859) project of reconstructing a friendship from her youth.⁴⁴⁷ Brentano von Arnim’s fictional rewriting of letters she exchanged with Karoline von Günderode between 1804-1806, in the form of the epistolary novel *Die Günderode* (1840), poeticizes the interaction between two close female friends in a semi-private sphere of their seemingly private letters. Brentano von Arnim began working on her book in 1838, and *Die Günderode* appeared in 1840, thirty-four years after Günderode’s death. This particular literary reconstruction of friendship is important for understanding Romantic constructions of subjectivity, as well as for Brentano von Arnim’s understanding of the relationship between life and art, feminism and the “feminine.”⁴⁴⁸ In the radical refashioning of her friendship in letters, Brentano von Arnim created two main characters, Bettine and Karoline, who are propelled by love. It was the strength of *philia* that allowed her as an author to rescue her writer friend from

⁴⁴⁶ Bettine to Karoline, Arnim, Bettina von, *Die Günderode. Werke und Briefe in drei Bänden*, eds. Walter Schmitz and Sibylle von Steinsdorff (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag), 1986, 718. (Abbreviated as Schmitz and Steinsdorff.) When writing about “Günderode” or “Karoline” and “Bettine,” I mean the fictitious characters in Brentano von Arnim’s book *Die Günderode*. When referring to the authors, I use their full names or simply last names.

⁴⁴⁷ Because of Clemens Brentano’s consternation with his sister Bettina’s lack of social grace, he recommended she live with her oldest stepbrother in Frankfurt. This is where she met Karoline von Günderode, who lived at the Damenstift, and through her – apart from her brother – she became acquainted with early Romantic concepts. Günderode’s knowledge of literature and history was the important influential factor in Bettine’s cultural development. See Edith Waldstein, *Bettine von Arnim and the Politics of Romantic Conversation* (Columbia, South Carolina: Camden House, 1988), 38.

⁴⁴⁸ Friendship between many of women writers developed most prominently in the Romantic letter circles. See “Ein Frauenleben in Briefen” (G. Mattenklott 1985, p. 127) Bettina Brentano von Arnim’s literary production was fully based on the letter form so that her art was fulfilled in that very form. See (Heuschele 1938, 32) in (Reinhard M.G. Nickisch, *Brief*, (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1991), 55.)

oblivion. That same power enabled her fictitious figures to protect their unique female friendship and actualize their creativity not only through *philia* but also through *eros*.

Self-reflection and self-definition through the establishment of harmony with others are at the center of this novel. Both characters are attempting to come to terms with themselves and the world in which they live. Bettine's inclination to laud the friend she loves is unmistakable, but cannot be thought of as some type of glorification. The two friends share views, experiences, and feelings as equal partners. However, the essential function of the work, simply put, is the revival of the friend's memory. Friedrich Creuzer, Karoline von Günderrode's great love, to whose work *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen* (1810-12) she contributed, never mentioned his lover's name in his autobiography; it is only owing to Brentano von Arnim's work, that Günderrode's name, despite the controversy surrounding it, was kept alive.⁴⁴⁹ Brentano von Arnim upholds Günderrode's state of rebirth till the very end of the work since she does not mention her friend's death explicitly. Instead, she chooses to hint at it symbolically throughout the text. Through the act of creating an extended fictionalized version of their real-life conversation and actual letter dialogue, Brentano von Arnim not only resurrected her friend metaphorically, but also enabled Günderrode to re-enter the bourgeois public space (this time under her own name) when she introduced and re-introduced her poems. One of Günderrode's poems mentioned by Brentano von Arnim for the first time was "Ist alles stumm und leer." Shortly after Brentano von Arnim's publication, the poem was disseminated – at first

⁴⁴⁹ Barbara Becker-Cantarino, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik. Epoche-Werke-Wirkung* (München: C.H. Beck, 2000). 205. Friedrich Creuzer was a philologist and archeologist and for nearly forty-five years a professor of philology and ancient history at the University in Heidelberg, where he co-founded the philological seminary in 1807.

in letters – by Helmina von Chezy who eventually had it published in 1847 in Düsseldorf with the editor Abraham Voß in his anthology *Deutschlands Dichterinnen*.⁴⁵⁰

I chose to discuss the epistolary novel *Die Günderrode* rather than the historical correspondence on which the novel was based for two reasons: the novel demonstrates an experimental approach of the author to the genre of the letter, and the historical correspondence is not fully available. The few original letters exchanged between Arnim and Günderrode that remain – ten in all to be precise – demonstrate only occasional resemblance of the text to the novel.⁴⁵¹ Brentano von Arnim’s novel material goes beyond the use of only her and her friend’s correspondence and includes letter exchanges with other addressees.⁴⁵² According to scholarship, it is unsure how many authentic letters served as the basis of the novel, and it appears that most letters are fictionalized versions of Brentano von Arnim’s correspondence.⁴⁵³ Sometimes Brentano von Arnim invented her letters as a response to a conversation with a friend. For instance, when she asked her friend Moriz Carriere – who at that time was working on his “Religionsphilosophie” – whether they should found a new religion, and on the following morning she produced a newly discovered letter (she had supposedly written in her youth to Günderrode) about the invention of *Schwebereligion*. A few days later, she found more “old” letters on the subject, which she then read to Carriere.⁴⁵⁴ Wolfgang Müller reported that while Brentano von Arnim was reading to him from her old letter exchange with Günderrode she had

⁴⁵⁰ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 1110.

⁴⁵¹ Waldemar Oehlke, who had written his dissertation on Bettina Brentano von Arnim, was first to undertake an academic study of her epistolary books. In 1920 he began publishing a seven-volume collection, which was completed in 1922. Oehlke was committed to comparing her published works with the original materials and published her original correspondence with Goethe and his mother as well as other letters in the collection entitled, *Bettina von Arnim. Sämtliche Werke*. Oehlke sought to differentiate, letter by letter, accurately what Bettina Brentano von Arnim had altered from her original correspondence; however, his work on the *Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde* was most effective since it could be compared directly with the actual letters. In Marjanne Goozé, “Bettina Brentano-von Arnim as Author and Historical Figure,” *Bettina Brentano-Von Arnim: Gender and Politics*, eds. Elke Frederiksen and Katherine Goodman (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1995), 349-409, pp. 354 and 371.

⁴⁵² Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 1102.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., 1093-4.

just found, he noticed that those letters had been written on a brand new stationary covered with fresh shiny ink.⁴⁵⁵

This fictionalized version of a letter exchange by one of the correspondents means that the main issues that I discuss in my dissertation (symphilosophy, love, crisis of dialogue, public-private sphere) are communicated mainly from one perspective, namely, that of the author. The author has the power, and Brentano von Arnim is ultimately in charge of her friend's image and shapes it in a certain way. However, oftentimes the correspondence of a historical person has been made available to readers through an edition, which often also to some degree selects and fictionalizes the text. Inevitably there is the porous boundary between fiction and life writing.

The combination of truth and fiction as well as the making private life public informed the reception of this work, which was inclined to split into two categories: the one differentiating between the fact and the fiction and the second favoring no such distinction.⁴⁵⁶ Consequently, many critics were concerned with the authenticity of the letters in the book.⁴⁵⁷ Christa Wolf's

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., 1094.

⁴⁵⁶ See Patricia Anne Simpson, "Letters in Sufferance and Deliverance: The Correspondence of Bettina Brentano-von Arnim and Karoline von Günderode." *Bettina Brentano-von Arnim. Gender and Politics*, eds., Elke P. Frederiksen and Katherine R. Goodman (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1995), 250.

⁴⁵⁷ Lorely French notes that in comparison with *Goethes Briefwechsel* reviewers were less accusatory and much more willing to acknowledge *Die Günderode* as a literary work. See Lorely French, *German Women as Letter Writers: 1750-1850* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1996), 222. Waldemar Oehlke, who had written his dissertation on Bettina Brentano von Arnim, was first to undertake an academic study of her epistolary books. In 1920 he began publishing a seven-volume collection, which was completed in 1922. Oehlke was committed to comparing her published works with the original materials and published her original correspondence with Goethe and his mother as well as other letters in the collection entitled, *Bettina von Arnim. Sämtliche Werke*. Oehlke sought to differentiate, letter by letter, accurately what Bettina Brentano von Arnim had altered from her original correspondence; however, his work on the *Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde* was most effective since it could be compared directly with the actual letters. Although *Die Günderode* was published under two different editors by Insel Verlag in 1904, 1914, and 1925, only very recently has it received much attention. Christa Wolf's interest in Romantic women writers, and especially in Karoline von Günderode, inspired her to amend the Heinz Amelung edition. Although not precisely a new edition, the appearance of *Die Günderode* in 1982 under the auspices of Wolf, one of the prominent contemporary German writers incited both scholars and the general public into reading Bettina Brentano von Arnim's writings and increased interest in nineteenth-century women writes in both East and West Germany. In Marjanne Gooz , "Bettina Brentano-von Arnim as Author and Historical Figure," *Bettina Brentano-*

editions of Günderrode's works, including *Die Günderrode*, her essays on Bettina Brentano von Arnim and Karoline von Günderrrode as well as her book *Kein Ort, Nirgends* (1979) have placed Brentano von Arnim's relationship with Günderrode in the forefront of scholarly interest, displacing Goethe, and thus furthered the interest in Günderrode's own life and works.⁴⁵⁸ Christa Wolf's "Nun ja! Das nächste Leben geht aber heute an, Ein Brief über die Bettine," interpreted *Die Günderrode* as a testimonial of a paradise-like female friendship, doomed to fail in reality; at the same time, the essay emphasized the significance of dialogue for this particular relationship.⁴⁵⁹ In point of fact, time and again Bettine spotlights the importance of dialogue in her relationship with Karoline:

Mein Brief ist zerstreut geschrieben, das ist, weil ich Dich suche – sonst stehst Du vor mir, wenn ich Dir schreibe, da spreche ich mit Dir; die Hälfte sind da meine Gedanken und die Hälfte Deine Antwort, denn ich weiß allemal, was Du antwortest, wenn ich Dir was sage; so lerne ich immer das Tiefere, das Weisere, das Bestätigende aus Dir.⁴⁶⁰

The two friends are mutually dependent on each other, and the contribution to the conversation rests equally on both of them. Their joining of individuality with interdependence enriches them on emotional, creative, heuristic, and educative levels. The conversation between two women replaces the single authoritarian narrative voice and, thus, the work transcends traditional norms of canonicity. In their dialogue, both friends find strength as they develop the strategies of resistance against the rules of patriarchal society, even though each woman approaches the dilemma with a different method. By employing intersubjective themes, both authors bypass the objectification ingrained in Western hegemonic discourse, as they conscientiously forgo

Von Arnim: Gender and Politics, eds. Elke Frederiksen and Katherine Goodman (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1995), 349-409, pp. 354 and 371.

⁴⁵⁸ Marjanne Goozé, "Bettina Brentano-von Arnim as Author and Historical Figure," 385.

⁴⁵⁹ According to Ursula Liebertz-Grün both women enjoyed idyllic friendship that can be perceived as an escape into the aestheticism and into a dangerous "Ghetto" of esoteric space and can be diagnosed as socially caused illness and an attempt at self-healing. Ursula Liebertz-Grün, *Ordnung im Chaos. Studien zur Poetik der Bettine Brentano-von Arnim* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1989), 37 and 75.

⁴⁶⁰ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 709.

postulating authorial supremacy over their subject matter and thus escape the scenario of making objects out of their human material.⁴⁶¹ Hence, new literary forms that substitute a dialogic structure for a masculine form of discourse are created.⁴⁶²

Die Gunderode is designed to reflect the dialogue between the two friends: “Lebe wohl Liebe und ermude doch nicht mir zu schreiben.”⁴⁶³ The work’s dialogicity, rooted in both friends’ real-life verbal and epistolary exchanges offers a unique possibility to understand the development of their friendship through dialogue and forging their relationship through philia. Because Brentano von Arnim and Gunderode find themselves in conflict with the society which marginalizes them based on their gender, they fight against this exclusion with deliberate strategies of dialogue that are never too far removed from expressions of love. These in turn were instigated by the salon sociability, as salon conversations were advanced through letters.⁴⁶⁴ In her letter dialogues where sociability becomes recorded, Brentano von Arnim brings together the salon interaction and her creative work, united with sensual and spiritual elements. The factor of love is never peripheral: “I trinke die Liebe um stark zu werden, wenn ich denke so bewegt mich heimliche Begeistrung fur meine eigne Erhohung; – wenn ich liebe auch. – Nur: In der Liebe fuhl ich mich flehend wie im Tempel; wenn ich denke, kuhn wie ein Feldherr.”⁴⁶⁵ It is the

⁴⁶¹ Dialogical aspect of Brentano von Arnim’s project insists on the difference of voices instead of making it disappear. This way of writing postulates fully different author situation, different from that of the male author, for instance, Friedrich Schlegel, who writes letters geared towards topics instead of writing them to someone (236). See Helga G. Braunbeck, “Das weiblich Schreibmuster der Doppelbiographie. Bettine von Arnims und Christa Wolfs Gunderode-Biographik,” *Frauen-Literatur-Revolution*, eds. Irmgard Roebing and Sigrid Schmidt-Bortenschlager (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus-Verlag, 1992), 231-244.

⁴⁶² Anna K. Kuhn, “The ‘Failure’ of Biography and the Triumph of Women’s Writing: Bettina von Arnim’s *Die Gunderode* and Christa Wolf’s *The Quest for Christa T.*,” *Revealing Lives. Autobiography, Biography, and Gender*, eds., Susan Groag Bell and Marilyn Yalom (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 15.

⁴⁶³ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 668.

⁴⁶⁴ Ingrid Leitner, “Liebe und Erkenntnis. Kommunikationsstrukturen bei Bettine von Arnim. Ein Vergleich fiktiven Sprechens mit Gesprachen im Salon,” *Salons der Romantik. Beitrage eines Wiepersorfer Kolloquiums zu Theorie und Geschichte des Salons*, ed. Hartwig Schultz (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 235-250, p. 235.

⁴⁶⁵ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 718.

feeling of love, including erotic love, which motivates and strengthens Bettine to the point of her identification with spiritual and military figures. Similarly G nderode emphasizes spiritual dimensions of dialogue and connects praying with thinking: “das Denken mit dem Beten, und das Beten mit dem Denken.”⁴⁶⁶ She refashions the Benedictine rule *ora et labora* into their feminine symphilosophy according to the new motto: “thinking with praying” and vice versa.

Both friends make the conscious effort to create and develop together through dialogue, and thus symphilosophically. The early Romantic purpose of free and equal dialogue that poeticizes the world – a synthesis of the rational and the emotional and an appreciation of nature without tyrannizing it – were all fulfilled in their unique friendship. The two friends initiated and cultivated their own love relationship and their own *Schwebereligion*, through which they hoped to combat injustices, to share life, and to encourage bringing forth *Poesie* within oneself.⁴⁶⁷

The importance of dialogue is perhaps most apparent as soon as the dialogue grows stagnant or disconnected, and this threatens the stability of the women’s friendship. Monologues become more pronounced at the end of the book, where G nderode’s answers become scarce and shorter. G nderode ruminates on the nature of existence, the passing time and death. She seems to simulate a “going away” process, that is, a gradual fading away pointing to her premature death:

Auch die wahrsten Briefe sind meiner Ansicht nach nur Leichen, sie bezeichnen ein ihnen einwohnend gewesenes Leben, und ob sie gleich dem Lebendigen  hnlich sehen, so ist doch der Moment ihres Lebens schon dahin; deswegen kommt es mir vor, wenn ich lese was ich vor einiger Zeit geschrieben habe, als s he ich mich im Sarg liegen, und meine beiden Ichs starren sich ganz verwundert an.⁴⁶⁸

G nderode is confronted with both of her identities, as a private person and a writer. The act of writing appears to her at the moment to be tied to temporality. Their old letters, for the lack of

⁴⁶⁶ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 449.

⁴⁶⁷ Waldstein, *Bettine von Arnim and the Politics of Romantic Conversation*, 38.

⁴⁶⁸ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 682.

dialogical activity, give the impression of being no longer alive. While Günderrode gets carried away with the thoughts of premature death, Brentano von Arnim braves the realities of a difficult social integration through the means of self-reinvention as a child, self-education, creativity, new feminist religion, and, most importantly, through the project of love.

It is the love- and friendship-based conversational exchange about “thinking” and “praying” together that appear attractive to Bettina Brentano von Arnim, the author. The terms of thinking and praying, expressed first in a phrase “*Denken ist Beten*” are initiated by attempting to resist, what she calls, “Philistine” tendencies and promoting student attitudes, and are realized through her understanding of learning.⁴⁶⁹ Brentano von Arnim focuses on recreating the spirit prevalent among the students as expressed with the pronouncement, “to lead a free life, dedicated to learning, art, and friendship together.”⁴⁷⁰ The student attitude filled with multiple plans and aspirations for life, poetry, and philosophy is in direct contrast to the Philistine inclinations towards materialism and is disdain for intellectual or artistic values. The Philistine approach to life was criticized by Clemens Brentano in his satirical essay “*Naturgeschichte des Philisters*” that he recited at the end of 1799 in Schlegel’s house in Jena when Fichte, Tieck, and Novalis were present.⁴⁷¹ Brentano’s satire, an attack on the Philistine, is in itself a topic characteristic of the university.⁴⁷² However, his essay “*Naturgeschichte des Philisters*” became later a source for yet another paper entitled, *Der Philister vor, in und nach der Geschichte* that was published in March 1811 following its reading to the members of the *Christlich-Deutsche Tischgesellschaft* in Berlin.⁴⁷³ To the new version of his essay, Brentano added particulars that were influenced by

⁴⁶⁹ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 449.

⁴⁷⁰ Theodore Ziolkowski, *German Romanticism and Its Institutions* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), 218.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 219.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, 219.

⁴⁷³ Martina Vordermayer, *Antisemitismus und Judentum bei Clemens Brentano* (Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 1999), 110.

the current political subjects attacking specifically the emancipated Jews and the politics of Hardenberg. The anti-semitic assaults at the beginning of the essay aimed to justify the exclusion of potential Jewish members, as the *Christlich-Deutsche Tischgesellschaft* with its exclusion of “Frauen, Franzosen, Philistern und Juden” was an alternative project to the Jewish salons in Berlin.⁴⁷⁴ In juxtaposing the figure of a student with that of a *Philister*, Brentano von Arnim reaches back to the tradition of university as she introduces a new *Bildung* path for herself and her female friend. Perhaps in this context, it is worth mentioning that Brentano von Arnim chose for the publisher of *Die Günderröde* a young friend of hers, Wilhelm Levysohn, because he was Jewish and married his wife for love.⁴⁷⁵

In the following, I will look at Bettina Brentano von Arnim’s biography, going back to the time of her growing up in the atmosphere of sociability and her friendship with Karoline von Günderröde. I will then return to a discussion of the epistolary novel *Die Günderröde* that reveals

⁴⁷⁴ Vordermayer, *Antisemitismus und Judentum bei Clemens Brentano*, 110. In the correspondence between Karl August Varnhagen and his future wife Rahel Levin during the years previous to the founding of the *Christlich-Deutsche Tischgesellschaft*, there were only literary remarks about Clemens Brentano. The relationship became complicated in 1811 because of the apparently anti-semitic activities of the *Tischgesellschaft*. The controversy between Brentano und Varnhagen began with Brentano’s account about the anti-Semitic statements of his sister Bettina about Rahel Levin, who in turn felt offended. On December 8, 1812 Levin Varnhagen reported to Alexander von der Marwitz that “das erste Wort, das Clemens in Töplitz zu Varnhagen sage, ... daß seine Schwester sich über die garstige, zudringliche Jüdin beklagt habe” (Vordermayer 181). When describing a walk together with Bettina Brentano von Arnim in October 1810, Rahel Levin Varnhagen mentioned Bettina Brentano von Arnim’s “Frankfurter Judenhaß.” Thus, apart from mutual affection and intellectual appreciation for each other, both women felt at the same time some form of estrangement. When Brentano von Arnim’s remark about Levin Varnhagen being “an intrusive Jew” was revealed in winter 1811, one could assume that Brentano von Arnim’s voice was echoing the anti-Semitic political restoration movement in Prussia of which the *Christlich-Deutsche Tischgesellschaft* with the prominent members from Brentano von Arnim’s milieu (her brother Clemens Brentano, brother-in-law Friedrich Karl von Savigny and in particular her future husband and then partner Ludwig Achim von Arnim) was a part. She was however an outsider as far as the new nationalist movement was concerned. Brentano von Arnim met Varnhagen personally in 1812 in Berlin in the house of Geheimen Staatsrats Stägemann. They remained friends regardless of some fluctuations in their relationship. Brentano von Arnim took care of his wife and her friend Rahel Levin Varnhagen in the days before her death and found a homeopathic physician for her. During that time, Brentano von Arnim belonged to the most intimate circle of the Varnhagen family, and Varnhagen acknowledged and discretely documented her sacrificial assistance in his documentation *Rahel. Ein Buch des Andenkens für ihre Freunde*. See Konrad Feilchenfeld, “Bettine, Rahel und Varnhagen,” *Herzhaft in die Dornen der Zeit Greifen. Bettine von Arnim 1785-1859* (Stuttgart: Freies Deutsches Hochstift Frankfurter Goethe-Museum, 1985), 233-242, p. 238-9.

⁴⁷⁵ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 1101.

how the arguments I made about dialogue in and among Romantic women's letters in the early chapters still function in Brentano von Arnim's radical epistolary fiction.

3.1 THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIABILITY ON BETTINA BRENTANO VON ARNIM'S LIFE AND WORK

Just as Rahel Levin Varnhagen and Caroline Schlegel-Schelling, Bettina Brentano von Arnim was a *salonnière*. She conducted her salon in Berlin from the late 1820s for more than a decade.⁴⁷⁶ Her salon also played a part in a growing upper-middle and middle-class public sphere in which individual and group experiences were vocalized and exchanged not only for personal reasons but also advancing political causes.⁴⁷⁷ Ultimately, Brentano von Arnim's salon was transformed into an arena for handling concerns and subjects that were increasingly occupying her attention, that is, politics and social reform.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁶ Ingrid Leitner, "Liebe und Erkenntnis. Kommunikationsstrukturen bei Bettine von Arnim. Ein Vergleich fiktiven Sprechens mit Gesprächen im Salon," *Salons der Romantik. Beiträge eines Wiepersorfer Kolloquiums zu Theorie und Geschichte des Salons*, ed. Hartwig Schultz (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 235-250, p. 235. According to Klaus Günzel, already as a child when living at her grandmother's house, Bettina Brentano von Arnim was influenced by the cosmopolitan spirit of the salon. The salon of her grandmother – Sophie von La Roche who was a published and acknowledged writer making a living with her profession – was a meeting point for young artists and scholars, German Jacobins, and French emigrants. See Klaus Günzel, *Die Brentanos. Eine deutsche Familiengeschichte* (Zürich: Artemis and Winkler, 1993), 45. Dischner discusses guests that frequented her house who were: writing businessman Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, young Goethe, a council of war Johann Heinrich Merck, her close friend Wieland. Intellectual socialization of young Bettina was shaped by environment of sociability where the focal themes were the events surrounding the French Revolution, thus, her epistolary novels emanate the spirit of precisely that sociability of republican commitment. Gisela Dischner, *Bettina von Arnim. Eine Biographie aus dem 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Philo, 1998), 7.

⁴⁷⁷ Edith Waldstein, *Bettine von Arnim and the Politics of Romantic Conversation*, 19. Brentano von Arnim could name among her friends many paramount cultural figures, involving the musicians, Ludwig van Beethoven, Felix and Fanny Mendelssohn, Robert Schumann, and Johannes Brahms. Frequently, evenings in her salon involved instrumental and vocal concerts. At times, Arnim attended Varnhagen's aesthetic teas. Yet, she preferred no social conventions at her salon where her custom was that of running an open house with her children, her friends, and her visitors. After her Goethe book publication, her apartment developed into an unofficial forum to appreciate Goethe's eminence, to confer about Romantic concepts of nature, and to listen to Arnim telling probably embellished anecdotes about her life and experiences. Margaretmary Daley, *Women of Letters. A Study of Self and Genre in the Personal Writing of Caroline Schlegel-Schelling, Rahel Levin Varnhagen, and Bettina von Arnim* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1998), 79.

⁴⁷⁸ Daley, *Women of Letters*, 80.

In addition to the influence of her grandmother's salon, Brentano von Arnim's personal development, which broadened her worldview and social deportment, took place in other salons she had visited. Clemens Brentano's note from the end of 1810 saying, "Ich bin mit Bettine zu Herz," attests to the fact that both brother and sister frequented Henriette Herz's salon.⁴⁷⁹ From 1819, both von Arnims, just as the Schleiermacher family, were regular guests at the Rahel Levin Varnhagen's so-called second salon in Berlin, which was called *Berliner Salon*.⁴⁸⁰ Additionally, the brother and sister joined by Friedrich von Savigny and his wife – Bettina Brentano's sister Gunda – and, again, Friedrich Schleiermacher were among guests in the salon of Amelie von Helvig from approximately 1816 to 1830.⁴⁸¹

The habitual frequenting of salons belonged not only to the *bon ton* and to improving one's social status, but it was important for intellectual exchange and friendship. As we see, along with Brentano von Arnim, to the regulars at various salons belonged also Schleiermacher, whose friend Eleonore Grunow described him as a "Virtuose der Freundschaft."⁴⁸² A leading Romantic thinker and writer, Schleiermacher believed in the necessity of practicing moral sociability, whereby people met not so much for the purpose of plain amusement, but rather with an intention to converse according to ethical standards and engage in meaningful discussion on specific topics. This ideal sociability was precisely the one he had experienced in Berlin salons,

⁴⁷⁹ Frankfurter Brentano Ausgabe 17, 452, in Sabine Schormann, *Bettine von Arnim. Die Bedeutung Schleiermachers für ihr Leben und Werk* (Niemeyer, Tübingen, 1993), 41.

⁴⁸⁰ Petra Wilhelmy-Dollinger, *Die Berliner Salons. Mit historisch-literarischen Spaziergängen* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 680-687 and 865.

⁴⁸¹ The salon gatherings were regularly organized first on Saturdays then on Mondays. See Wilhelmy-Dollinger, *Berliner Salon im 19. Jhd.*, 669.

⁴⁸² Sabine Schormann *Bettine von Arnim. Die Bedeutung Schleiermachers für ihr Leben und Werk* (Niemeyer, Tübingen, 1993), 62. The free sociability according to Schleiermacher's conviction was a form of moral socialization, which was based on intersubjectivity, in other words, it was constructed in a communicative way and excluded monologues. The acts of reading alone, praying alone, writing letters alone do not fit the category of good lifestyle which requires reciprocity. Only a mutual or cooperative interchange expressed at least in the form of a simple answer fulfills this condition. Schleiermacher processed his personal participation and observations in Berlin salons and transformed his experiences into the work entitled *Versuch einer Theorie des geselligen Betragens*, which first appeared in 1799 as a fragment in the magazine *Berlinisches Archiv der Zeit und ihres Geschmacks*. *Berlinisches Archiv der Zeit und ihres Geschmacks* (5) 1799, 48-66, 113-123.

as he expressed: “ich habe einen Dialog im Plato gelesen, ich habe ein kleines Stück Religion gemacht, ich habe Briefe geschrieben kurz ich habe alles versucht außer die gute Lebensart, und was soll ich mit der ohne Gesellschaft?”⁴⁸³

Brentano von Arnim’s relationship with Schleiermacher was determinative for her life and work, a circumstance long acknowledged at the time in literary research.⁴⁸⁴ Schleiermacher helped Brentano von Arnim to work through her grief after her husband Achim von Arnim died without the couple having a chance to reconcile following an argument.⁴⁸⁵ Their intensive friendship, while they saw each other almost every day, was also an inspiration for her charitable social engagement during the period of a cholera epidemic.⁴⁸⁶ In addition, Schleiermacher had an impact on Brentano von Arnim’s creative production: under his influence, she shaped her ideas as a unity of the sensual and spiritual and skillfully elucidated abstract thoughts.⁴⁸⁷ At the same time the cerebral connection between them, which was reflected in Brentano von Arnim’s sociability and documented in her works, was firmly rooted in the idea of the salon, that is, in interaction and reciprocity (Wechselwirkung). As illustrated by Karl Gutzkow’s description of Brentano von Arnim’s conversations with Schleiermacher, there was a constant interchange of abstract concepts between them.⁴⁸⁸ Most importantly, however, Schleiermacher not only

⁴⁸³ 23. March.1799 to his sister Charlotte in Andreas Arndt, “Geselligkeit und Gesellschaft. Die Geburt der Dialektik aus dem Geist der Konversation in Schleiermachers’ Versuch einer Theorie des geselligen Betragens,” *Salons der Romantik. Beiträge eines Wiepersorfer Kolloquiums zu Theorie und Geschichte des Salons*, ed. Hartwig Schultz (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 45-61, pp. 47-48.

⁴⁸⁴ Schormann mentions articles of Moritz Carrière in 1887 and Philip Engehard Nathusius; Selma Steinmetz 1931 called him “leitender Genius” for Brentano von Arnim, in Schormann, *Bettine von Arnim. Die Bedeutung Schleiermachers für ihr Leben und Werk*, 1.

⁴⁸⁵ Schormann, *Bettine von Arnim. Die Bedeutung Schleiermachers für ihr Leben und Werk*, 56-57.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 2-4.

⁴⁸⁸ “Die zwei Stunden einer mir unvergeßlichen Unterhaltung rauschten wie Sekunden vorüber. Wir sprachen über alles und hätten doch, als wir schieden, erst anfangen mögen! Diese Vielseitigkeit, diese Gedankensprünge, diese geistreiche Formgebung im Momente, deises neckische Spiel mit der Wahrheit oder mit dem Schein derselben – es bezauberte. ... Ich begriff nun wohl, was sie mir selbst mit jener kleinen Koketterie, die eben zu den Reizen ihrer Erscheinung gehört, erzählte, daß Schleiermacher, wenn dieser in der Akademie hätte über einen philosophischen Gegenstand lesen müssen, ihr sagte: “Bettina, schreib mir über Musik, über Liebe, kurz über

explored various concepts with Brentano von Arnim, but also relied on her as an inspiration for his influential writings and speeches.⁴⁸⁹

Ingrid Leitner suggests that the comparison of Brentano von Arnim's written works and salon activities unearths similarities and common aspects present in both forms of communication and allows for illuminating conclusions. An allusion to parallel structures can be found, for instance, in a letter of Leopold Ranke from February 18, 1835 to the geographer Heinrich Ritter. It includes a reference to the Goethe book and to Brentano von Arnim's salon, which he had often visited between 1826-1827: "Wenn Du es ansiehst und im dritten Band auf allgemeine Erörterungen stößest über Genius, Liebe, Schönheit und Kunst, so kannst Du dabei denken, daß dies eben die Träume und Phantasien sind, welche ich im Jahre 26-7 so oft dort gehört habe."⁴⁹⁰ Evidently the themes addressed in the salon are continued and elaborated upon in Brentano von Arnim's work – they are present in both the oral and written forms.

The communication in Brentano von Arnim's salon can be perceived as the teacher/student constellation. The first example is the young Bettina Brentano's Landshut salon, where she led a social circle with conversations about current subjects in literature and art – and established herself as the erotic-spiritual focal point of that circle.⁴⁹¹ She was the teacher and animator of the group and ultimately the guiding force propelling the communication.⁴⁹² The central position Brentano von Arnim occupied was retained even after the discontinuation of the

das, was ich abzuhandeln habe, einen Bogen voll von deinem Zeuge auf!" – "Er brauchte es zwar nicht", sagte sie; "aber er regte ihn an. "Karl Gutzkow bei Bettina: 'Leuchtkugel im Mondeschein'" in Strube, ed., 237-249.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁰ *Das Briefwerk*, ed. Walther Peter Fuchs, Hamburg 1949, p. 233-266. Ingrid Leitner, "Liebe und Erkenntnis. Kommunikationsstrukturen bei Bettine von Arnim. Ein Vergleich fiktiven Sprechens mit Gesprächen im Salon," *Salons der Romantik. Beiträge eines Wiepersorfer Kolloquiums zu Theorie und Geschichte des Salons*, ed. Hartwig Schultz (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 235-250, p. 235.

⁴⁹¹ In September 1808 she went with the Savigny family to Landshut, where Savigny accepted a position as a university professor for Roman law and was married on March 11, 1811 in Berlin. http://mugi.hfmt-hamburg.de/A_lexartikel/lexartikel.php?id=arni1785

⁴⁹² Leitner, "Liebe und Erkenntnis," 235.

Landshut salon. Conversations were continued through letters, not in the form of a correspondence among the students themselves, but, rather, in one on one dialogues where Brentano von Arnim corresponded with each of them separately.⁴⁹³ Leitner describes this arrangement as a “lopsided dialogue” where Brentano presents herself as the source of an uninterrupted, awe-inspiring speech streaming forth only from her and thus turning her students into the silent listeners, into pure audience. It was a role that they less or more accepted, as attested to by Philipp Nathusius in 1836:

Lieber und lehrreicher als zwanzig Collegia ist mir eine Viertelstunde bei der Arnim. Ich zehre von einem Malz um andern von dem Nachhall ihrer Reden, die wie eine volltönende Brandung über mich kommen, und versuche allemal, aber fast vergeblich, die Klänge, die mir im Sinn liegen, in Worten auf dem Papier wiederzugeben.⁴⁹⁴

Of that same opinion was Rudolf Baier who on February 9, 1844 wrote: “Was ist diese Frau doch so ungeheuer groß, wenn sie nur aus sich will und nur, wie eine Stimme in ihr spricht und taub bleibt und blind für die Außenwelt; es liegt eine ungeheurer Egoismus in solcher vermeintlichen Unfehlbarkeit, aber auch ein Großes, das große des Genies ...”⁴⁹⁵ Brentano’s first salon conversation is less dialogical or socially intended since it is constructed cognitively; therefore, its hierarchical structure dependent on authority leads into a certain kind of carefree violence, with which Bettina Brentano von Arnim attracts her students and motivates them to cooperation.⁴⁹⁶ Her salon conversations differed from the very beginning in that they were less socially and more cognitively oriented.⁴⁹⁷ What Leitner describes as a “lopsided dialogue” in the early salon of Brentano von Arnim and in the letters to the students, can be seen as monologizing

⁴⁹³ Leitner, “Liebe und Erkenntnis,” 235.

⁴⁹⁴ Eleonore Fürstin Reuß, *Philipp Nathusius’ Jugendjahre. Nach Briefen und Tagebüchern*, Berlin 1896, 67 in Leitner, “Liebe und Erkenntnis,” 237.

⁴⁹⁵ Kurt Gassen, ed., *Bettina von Arnim und Rudolf Baier. Unveröffentlichte Briefe und Tagebuchaufzeichnungen*, Greifswald 1937 (Aus den Schätzen der Universitäts-Bibliothek zu Greifswald 11), 22 in Leitner, “Liebe und Erkenntnis,” 237.

⁴⁹⁶ Leitner, “Liebe und Erkenntnis,” 240.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 238.

tendency in the later portions of *Die G nderode*. However, even there there are instances where the character Bettine involves more than one partner in the correspondence when she addresses both her friend and her brother, thus rendering the work dialogical.⁴⁹⁸

The role Brentano von Arnim played in her salon of the late twenties changed even more in the forties, as she was not the only an instigator of salon communication, suggesting the subjects and directing the conversation. She more fully enabled others to get involved so that the conversation continued in smaller circles.⁴⁹⁹ Consequently, in the later salons the discussion encompassed more topics and was more dynamic with more participants, for whose knowledge and insight the salon provided a forum, playing leading roles.⁵⁰⁰

After 1831, Bettina Brentano von Arnim's salon was not linked to a permanent address. She often changed her place of residence; was frequently absent from Berlin; and, there was inconsistent availability. Thus, Brentano von Arnim's salon becomes a kind of migratory, almost nomadic space.⁵⁰¹ This space is, however, marked by and reinforces Brentano von Arnim's propensity for interiors. Just as she detested living in the countryside, her attitude towards nature remained influenced by town culture.⁵⁰² The whole work of Brentano von Arnim abounds in descriptions of nature: Fritzlar, Offenbach, Frankfurt and its vicinities, the Rhein area, and the Alps. Yet if one reads these descriptions more closely, one discovers that all of them are connected to a specific circumstantiality or infix themselves in the perspective as seen from the

⁴⁹⁸ "Lieber *Clemens*. Liebe *G nderode*! Denn lieber *Clemens*, ich mu  doch gewi  einen haben, bei dem ich Dich verklage, Dir ins Gesicht kann ichs nicht alles sagen was ich schlimmes von Dir wei  und aus Deinem Brief heraus sogleich entdeckt habe. ... Also schreib ichs hier ans *G nder dchen*, da kannst Du gleich erfahren wie zwei M dchen sich  ber einen listigen J ngling lustig machen. Also denk nur *G nder dchen*, der *Clemens* ist eifers chtig  ber den G rtner. In Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 152.

⁴⁹⁹ In the last Berlin apartment of Brentano von Arnim, there were two salons since the March Revolution of 1848 – one led by her, more of political profile, and one led by her daughter. See "Kommentar" in Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 749-977.

⁵⁰⁰ Leitner, "Liebe und Erkenntnis," 237.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 244.

⁵⁰² Marie-Claire Hoock-Demarle, "Frau und Stadt: Erlebnis und Erfahrungen der Bettina Brentano-von Arnim," *Bettine von Arnim. Romantik und Sozialismus (1831-1859)* (Trier: Karl-Marx-Haus, 1987), 41-57, p. 48.

interior.⁵⁰³ In this creative way Brentano von Arnim connects the open space to the interior space of the salon, emphasizing its public sphere. Leitner insists that throughout her time as a salonnière Brentano von Arnim's salon was a public space. Everywhere she finds herself, the salon – in the sense of public speaking space – is not bound to time, place, or people.⁵⁰⁴

Brentano von Arnim was committed to communicating her ideas to the world and used all possible media available to her in order to publish her work – be it papers, letters, or through people. Her strongest social achievement was the enormous ability to communicate through various print media and via her salon, voicing her opinions about themes and problems that normally would not have had a chance to gain public exposure.⁵⁰⁵ At the same time, she does not differentiate between life and art. Gisela Dischner considers Brentano von Arnim's creative production to be the "Leben als Schreibprozess," in the sense that all what she thought and felt was poured seemingly directly onto the paper and reflected upon. Consequently, it represents a key Romantic notion, romanticization, the reflection of the reflection.⁵⁰⁶ The thinking of thinking is the further potentization of life, during which the act of production becomes transparent.⁵⁰⁷ The world must be romanticized in the sense of an intensification (Potenzierung) of life, in that the common gains appreciation, the ordinary becomes mysterious, the known acquires the

⁵⁰³ Hoock-Demarle, "Frau und Stadt: Erlebnis und Erfahrungen der Bettina Brentano-von Arnim," 48.

⁵⁰⁴ Leitner, "Liebe und Erkenntnis," 249.

⁵⁰⁵ Leitner, "Liebe und Erkenntnis," 250, Leitner relies here on the correspondence between Brentano von Arnim and her brother Clemens Brentano from which she concludes that he was not supportive as far as her official publications were concerned: "weils Unsinn ist was mir in der Seele wogt, weils Unsinn ist was meine Gedanken mir vorbeten, weils Unsinn ist der mich ahnen als höchstes Gesetz der Weisheit ergreift," 632.

⁵⁰⁶ Gisela Dischner, *Bettina von Arnim. Eine Biographie aus dem 19. Jahrhundert*, Berlin: Philo, 1998, p.

⁵⁰⁶ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 18.

⁵⁰⁷ As understood by Novalis, the early Romantic program of romanticization was in fact a poetic critique of qualification of life where the usual everyday objects, words, ect., are perceived in a different context and thus redefined, romanticized. Dischner describes romantization as a means of expressing resistance against the process of capitalist production and avoiding materialistic tendencies. Dischner, *Bettina von Arnim. Eine Biographie aus dem 19. Jahrhundert*, 18-20.

dignity of the unknown, the finite receives the aura of the infinite.⁵⁰⁸ The creative process of Brentano von Arnim was as follows: she used the open letter form and was in dialogue with her correspondents for a second time as she literarized the original correspondence and added new letters or fragments to them. As an editor, she interpreted and paraphrased her own letters. This process conforms to potentialization in the context of early Romantic philosophy.⁵⁰⁹ In this very sense Brentano von Arnim romanticizes her life in her manner of writing. A potential form of alienation emerges (*Verfremdung*) as the reader might find Brentano von Arnim's texts strange, difficult to understand, or surprising in their juxtaposition of the trivial with the essential. This achieves a form of Romantic mystification of everyday life, at the same time criticizing the social values and practices of the epoch.⁵¹⁰ In their effort to romanticize the world, the Romantics sought to erase the boundaries considered to be artificial – for instance, those between objective and subjective reality, and between art and life.⁵¹¹ The fact that for the Jena Romantics everything, even the most mundane topic, was a latent wellspring for art, can elucidate the heterogeneity of her text.⁵¹² In Brentano von Arnim's work, the relationship between art and nature, art and life, fantasy and reality goes beyond the confines of previously widely-held distinctions in order to find their similarities and dissimilarities and uncover their interplay in a romanticizing manner. She converts all her experiences and thoughts into the matter of written poetic communication with her counterparts.⁵¹³

⁵⁰⁸ As postulated by Novalis.: Novalis 424 Werke und Briefe, München 1968, in Dischner, *Bettina von Arnim. Eine Biographie aus dem 19. Jahrhundert*, 22.

⁵⁰⁹ Karin Zimmermann, *Die polyfunktionale Bedeutung dialogischer Sprechformen um 1800*, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 1992, 157.

⁵¹⁰ Dischner, *Bettina von Arnim. Eine Biographie aus dem 19. Jahrhundert*, 22.

⁵¹¹ Karin Zimmermann, *Die polyfunktionale Bedeutung dialogischer Sprechformen um 1800*, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 1992, 157.

⁵¹² Anna K. Kuhn, "The 'Failure' of Biography and the Triumph of Women's Writing," 26.

⁵¹³ Dischner, *Bettina von Arnim. Eine Biographie aus dem 19. Jahrhundert*, 22.

In order to communicate successfully, both interlocutors will read, interpret, and understand the messages transmitted. In real-time conversation, the act of communicating involves three components: verbal, the content of our message; nonverbal, the message expressed through our body language; paraverbal, the tone, pacing and volume of our voices. The nonverbal and paraverbal components can be to certain extent replaced with punctuation marks or additional descriptions. The most critical element in an open conversation is, however, the risky act of opening up and being fully known by another human being. Bettina Brentano von Arnim attempts to address this challenge by bridging the gap between art and nature, art and life, fantasy and reality through “unconscious conscience.”⁵¹⁴ She thus provides a space for the stream of thoughts, reflections, and introspection: “Und wie ich mit Dir red heute, da fühl ich, daß es eine bewußtlose Bewußtheit gebe.”⁵¹⁵ Brentano von Arnim formulates here her own theory which to a degree coincides with Schelling’s transcendental philosophy that illuminates the opposition between nature and culture, more precisely, the work of art, in that “in der Natur von dem Bewußtlosen angefangen werde um es zum Bewußten zu erheben, in der Kunst hingegen man vom Bewußtsein ausgehe zum Bewußtlosen.”⁵¹⁶ Unlike Schelling, Brentano von Arnim combines in a new creative way both the unconscious and conscious elements. Even though Schelling’s innovative theory posits itself in contrast to Schiller’s notions (with which she disagrees), Brentano von Arnim takes Schellings’ conception one step further.⁵¹⁷ She emphasizes the significance of subjectivity rejected by Schiller, who claimed that the more

⁵¹⁴ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 309.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

⁵¹⁶ Friedrich Schiller, *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe. In drei Bänden*, vol. 2, no. 805, March 27, 1801 (Leipzig: Insel, 1912), 367-369.

⁵¹⁷ According to Schiller, the artist starts in the unconscious and finds through the clear conscious of his undertaking the first total idea of his work in the finished work. Without this dark and powerful total idea, which comes before all other technicalities, no poetic work can be created. The poetry consists in expressing this unconscious, in communicating it. The non-poet as well as the poet can be moved by a poetic idea, but he cannot depict it with the necessity. Such work does not begin in the unconscious and it does not end there. The unconscious united with the sober-minded makes the artist. Schiller, *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe*, 367-369.

subjective the perception, the more accidental the work, as objectivity brings forth the ideal.⁵¹⁸

Essentially Brentano von Arnim directly denies Schiller's philosophy:

Heute Nachmittag brachte der Büri der Großmama ein Buch für mich – Schillers Ästhetik – ich sollts lesen meinen Geist zu bilden; ich war ganz erschrocken, wie er mirs in die Hand gab, als könnt's mir schaden, ich schleuderts von mir. – meinen Geist bilden!⁵¹⁹

As Zimmerman observed, the process of remembering, and of becoming conscious, is sensually and communicatively expressed. Instead of the “cogito ergo sum,” the “cogitor ego sum” is privileged: the person produces thoughts, not the other way around. “Der Mensch erzeugt die Gedanken nicht, sie erzeugen den Menschen.”⁵²⁰ The isolation from the society and within the structural context, to which Bettine as a thinking subject is exposed becomes suspended in a “dialogical view of the world,” as she persists in entitlement to dialogicity.⁵²¹

For Brentano von Arnim, as for Levin Varnhagen (who was able to perfect her consciously subjective dialogue style expression forms like letter, diary, aphorisms), the subject matter of writing was life. Early Romantic philosophy here is indeed influential, as we see the same type of thinking about poeticizing and aestheticizing life, turning life into a work of art, already in early Romantic thought.⁵²² Like Friedrich Schlegel, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Dorothea Veit-Schlegel and others, Brentano von Arnim regards life, nature, and people as equal material for art and writing, and through this particular perspective gains self-assertion. This is central to the concept of individuality that she, in the spirit of the early Romantic philosophy, developed and which her literary creativity reflects.⁵²³

⁵¹⁸ Schiller, *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe*, 367-369.

⁵¹⁹ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 468.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, 445.

⁵²¹ Zimmerman, *Die polyfunktionale Bedeutung dialogischer Sprechformen um 1800*, 190.

⁵²² Hannelore Scholz, “Geselligkeit als Utopie. Weiblicher Dialog in den Privatvorlesungen von A.W. Schlegel,” *Salons der Romantik. Beiträge eines Wiepersdorfer Kolloquiums zu Theorie und Geschichte des Salons*, ed. Hartwig Schultz (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 135-146, p. 146.

⁵²³ Scholz, “Geselligkeit als Utopie,” 146.

Romantic sociability found expression in the salon; it also advanced in principles and practice in collaborative magazines and collaborative novels, for example, in the whimsical novel parody entitled “*Die Versuche und Hindernisse Karls*“ written by Karl August Varnhagen, Friedrich Heinrich Karl de la Motte Fouqué, August Bernhardt and Wilhelm Neumann.⁵²⁴ In the context of this tendency, the letter form was declared an art form because art was a uniting part of the Romantic sociability which in turn connected to life and to the attempt of a way of life in groups.⁵²⁵ The letter was directed to a particular addressee, but simultaneously it was also directed to a literary public sphere, of which that addressee was a part.⁵²⁶ The particular “you” of the dialogue was at the same time directed to the world, and those letters of which the work consisted were poeticized into epistolary novels for the world, that is, they were romanticized for the second time for the German literary public sphere.⁵²⁷

The division between private and public sphere, of bourgeois and citizen, between the feeling and political understanding, between family and business, was twice overridden through the Romantic letter, once through the mixture of private and public content and again through the publication of the seemingly private correspondence directed only to one addressee.⁵²⁸ Bettina Brentano von Arnim’s declaration of the singularity and distinctiveness of the individual, as well as the insistence on the right to nonconformity, questions the collective way of life. Yet, simultaneously the individual can only develop with and through others. The Romantic sociability, the constant contact with the others, the mutual-productive criticism opened into concrete attempts to live together, to think together, to write together and to realize yourself in

⁵²⁴ Dischner, *Bettina von Arnim. Eine Biographie aus dem 19. Jahrhundert*, p. 25.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.* 25.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

the subjectivity is only achieved in the connection with the other subject. The Romantic subjectivity is the expression of this sociability.⁵²⁹

3.2 ROMANTIC PHILOSOPHY AS REFLECTED IN DIALOGICITY IN *DIE GÜNDERODE*

Rooted in Romantic sociability, the concept of thinking together through dialogue in conversation and in letters as well as in epistolary novels is undeniably manifest in *Die Gündertode*.⁵³⁰ Several times Bettina Brentano von Arnim calls reader's attention to the handed-down form of the epistolary novel that she employs. She invents a poetic letter exchange, marked by an uncompromising commitment to fantasy and hints at this process throughout the book:

Auf meiner Heimfahrt von Hanau hab ich das Gespräch gedichtet, es ist ein bißchen vom Zaun gebrochen. – Ich wollt die Prosa wär edler, daß heißt: ich wollt, sie wär musikalischer; es enthält viel, was wir im Gespräch berührt haben. Du schreibst mit mehr Musik Deine Briefe, ich wollt ich könnt das lernen.⁵³¹

Here Karoline composes a poetic conversation and complains that it does not possess the musical quality Bettine's letters do. The conversation becomes extended through letters, which in turn become a book. Bettine's grandmother wants to give her letters that the grandfather in his youth wrote in order to cultivate qualities of statesmanship while in service for the count Stadion. For his twenty-first birthday, the count gave the grandfather letters from the emperor and the king.⁵³² He made the gift of the entire correspondence, including all invented letters from the addressee. Bettine wishes to publish the collection of half-invented (yet seemingly genuine) letters that the grandfather and the elector wrote to each other. This particular description alludes to the same

⁵²⁹ Dischner, *Bettina von Arnim. Eine Biographie aus dem 19. Jahrhundert*, 27.

⁵³⁰ According to Gisela Dischner, Brentano von Arnim's writing was a "reproduction" of the Romantic sociability of salon culture initiated and conducted by women. Dischner, *Bettina von Arnim. Eine Biographie aus dem 19. Jahrhundert*, 25.

⁵³¹ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 301.

⁵³² *Ibid.*, 459.

process by which Brentano von Arnim's created her own book based on the correspondence with her friend Karoline. Another reference to the development of *Die G nderode* is found in the scene when Bettine consults with G nderode about whether she should correspond with her grandmother and later develop those letters into a book.⁵³³

In the letter about the impossibility of writing a novel, Bettine succumbs to the sentiment that everything has already been thought about, and ventures to engage in dialogue with nature in order to think that which has not yet been thought (das Ungedachte): "Geistesgedanken ber hren nichts was schon da ist, sie erzeugen neu."⁵³⁴ The author describes her approach as the need of being stimulated by oral and written sources.⁵³⁵ This kind of reinforcement produces two effects, dialogization or (at times) monologicity of the text, which then resembles a novel. Interestingly enough some letters in *Die G nderode* include no closing and no name and are not dated; instead, brief time and place descriptors are added: "Am Mittag," "Montag," "Sonntag," "Frankfurt," "Marburg." Through this gesture, the author distances herself from traditional letter form for the sake of a novel-like structure, where no closing lines simulate seamless transition to the next chapter. Because in *Die G nderode* the author added to all greeting lines additional headings, such as "An die Bettine" or "An die G nderode," the structure even more resembles chapters in a book:⁵³⁶ "Dein Brief liebe Bettine ist wie der Eingang zu einem lieblichen Roman, ich habe ihn genippt wie den Becher des Ly us, der ein Sorgenbrecher ist, es tat mir auch sehr

⁵³³ Ibid., 603-605.

⁵³⁴ Ibid., 530.

⁵³⁵ Ibid., 598, "ich glaub zu so etwas h tt ich Verstand."

⁵³⁶ The veracity of both forms, novel and correspondence, was questioned by Sophie Mereau (1770-1806), a novelist and Bettina von Arnim's sister-in-law. She wrote her husband, Clemens Brentano, "Es ist ein sonderbares Gef hl, sich auf dem Papier jemand n hern zu wollen, ... Ein Brief ist mir immer wie ein Roman... Das Papier ist ein so ungetreuer Bote, da  es den Blick, den Ton vergi t, und oft sogar einen falschen Sinn  berbringt." To Clemens Brentano, Jena, Ende November 1799, *Briefwechsel zwischen Clemens Brentano und Sophie Mereau*, ed. Heinz Amelung (Potsdam: R tten & Loening, 1939), 50. Katherine Goodman remarks that in Germany at that time, the terms novel and correspondence were sometimes confused. Friedrich Schlegel advised his sister-in-law, Caroline Schlegel, that she should have someone else draw up the plan, and in case it would not entirely be composed of letters, also write that part which is not. See Goodman, *Dis/closures: Women's Autobiography in Germany between 1790 and 1914* (New York: P. Lang, 1986), 90-91.

wohl.”⁵³⁷ The letter to which Günderode refers begins like an opening of a novel with the description of the day of her arrival.⁵³⁸ It is also quite long – it consists of seven parts written on different days – and features scarce direct address using the pronoun “Du.” Karoline refers to particular letter paragraphs either as “stories” (“Deine Erzählung vom Bostel ist ganz artig”)⁵³⁹ or “ideas” (“Deine Erzählungen und Ahnungen beschäftigen mich, ich träum mich in den Schlaf, in dem ich Dir alles nachfühle und nachdenke”).⁵⁴⁰ Similarly, Bettine labels some parts of Karoline’s letters as “narratives”: “— Was ist Dein Brief voll schöner Geschichten.”⁵⁴¹ In addition, she underlines the fact that letters can be read and reread, which gives them the aura of books: “Ich hab Deinen letzten Brief noch oft gelesen, er kommt mir ganz besonders vor.”⁵⁴² The possibility of rereading, however, implies not only similarities with novel, but also emphasizes the attempt to close the gap of time between both correspondents, whose goal is sustained dialogue:

Ich warte alle Tage auf Deine Briefe, mir bangt immer du mögest einen Tag überschlagen, bis jetzt warst Du sehr gütig gegen mich – ich geh mit Zuversicht wenn ich Abends nach Hause komme und fasse den Brief auf meinem Kopfkissen, wo er hingelegt wird von der Magd, im Dunkeln und halt ihn bis Licht kommt – im Bett lese ich ihn noch einmal, das macht mir gute Gedanken.⁵⁴³

The appearance of ceaseless writing is yet another way of closing the time gap. After the process of continuous writing, there comes the act of reading several letters at a time, which resembles novel reading.

Last but not least, Karoline comments on her friend’s ability to produce much more than just a simple letter: “Dein Brief macht mir Freude, es ist ein gesundes, munteres Leben darin, das

⁵³⁷ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, p. 361.

⁵³⁸ Ibid., 329.

⁵³⁹ Ibid., 310.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., 422.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., 428.

⁵⁴² Ibid., 382.

⁵⁴³ Ibid., 422.

ich immer lieb in Dir gehabt habe. Du führst eine Sprache, die man Styl nennen könnte, ... Poesie ist immer echter Styl.”⁵⁴⁴ Karoline considers Bettine’s style to be poetic, and her poetry connects to every day life. If, however, one were to compare the authentic letter written by GÜnderode with its fictionalized rendition by the author, one would notice that the vital issues of poetry and style are not addressed in the authentic letter:

Dein Brief hatt mir Freude gemacht und ist eine gesundes, munteres Leben darin, das ich immer lieb in Dir gehabt habe. Wenn Du einige Stunden in der Geschichte genommen hast, so schreibe mir doch darüber, besonders in welcher Art Dein Lehrmeister unterrichtet, und ob Du auch rechte Freude daran hast.⁵⁴⁵

By putting the words of praise into her friend’s mouth, Brentano von Arnim alerted the reader to the fact that the novel is much more than simply an accumulation of old letters. Brentano von Arnim developed her epistolary novel according to the literary forms of the early Romantic school.⁵⁴⁶ She preferred formlessness in order to convey experiences without a need to distort and wanted to reflect two different dimensions of life and imagination, with no division between the life and literature.⁵⁴⁷ Brentano von Arnim’s planned chaos encompassed the pouring out of feeling, descriptions of society, events, thoughts on art, and literary experience.⁵⁴⁸ The original letters were segmented, strewn and inserted in appropriate places, and seldom did she leave letter excerpts unchanged. Yet, she still tried to preserve the original character of the letters by filling in event motifs, shaping and conjoining them, and avoiding bigger unnecessary gaps.⁵⁴⁹ Consequently, the letters were arbitrarily dated without any reconstructed exact chronology. Bettina Brentano von Arnim adhered to the early Romanticism and gave the mundane

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid., 394.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid., 1102.

⁵⁴⁶ Solveig Ockenfuß, *Bettine von Arnims Briefromane. Literarische Erinnerungsarbeit zwischen Anspruch und Wirklichkeit* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992), 27.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., 28-29.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., 29.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid. 29.

prominence, the usual a mysterious appearance, the known the dignity of the unknown, and the finite the indefinite shine – just as Novalis had phrased it.⁵⁵⁰

Basing her concept on Romantic sociability through thinking together in dialogue, this letter exchange takes place when the author, with unflagging resolve, writes in a partner-oriented manner and maintains the reference to her imaginary counterpart. The basic expression of such partner-orientation in a letter is the salutation and the closing line. Brentano von Arnim peppered *Die Gunderode* with greeting lines like “Liebe Bettine!”⁵⁵¹ “Gunderodchen,”⁵⁵² “Lieber Widerhall,”⁵⁵³ “Dein Brief, liebe Betine,”⁵⁵⁴ and “Dein Brief macht mir Freude.”⁵⁵⁵ Throughout *Die Gunderode*, the connection between the dialogue and the letter is also readily visible in the process of letter transfer. Just as Levin Varnhagen’s letters describe letter delivery – her awaiting the arrival of the postman, and rushing in order to be able to catch the almost-leaving post – so does Brentano von Arnim’s work include many similar descriptions: “Morgen fruh kommt die Botenfrau, ich schicke diesen Brief mit, obschon er noch nicht so gefahrlieh lang ist wie mein erster,”⁵⁵⁶ “Mit der einen Hand hab ich meinen Brief dem Bot gereicht, mit der andern Deinen genommen,”⁵⁵⁷ “ich mu morgen fruh um sieben Uhr den Brief dem Boten mitgeben, uberdies brennt mein Licht so duster, es wird bald ausgehen, gute Nacht, Brief!”⁵⁵⁸ Bettine writes “dangerously long” letters, which can be perceived as a wish to remain in continual dialogue with the correspondent and personifies her own letter by speaking directly to it. These seemingly unimportant features elucidate and emphasize the process of communication, in the sense of

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., 41.

⁵⁵¹ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 434,

⁵⁵² Ibid., 568,

⁵⁵³ Ibid., 624,

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., 361,

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., 394.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., 353.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., 365.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid., 344.

thought exchange and a constant attempt to close the gap of passing time between the arriving and sent off letters. They also enhance the contrast between the frequent immobility of the letter writer and her desire to embark on a journey with her letter and beyond. This yearning suggests a gradual widening of the new feminine space and women's attempts to enter the newly emerging bourgeois sphere with the promise of public involvement. This process is illustrated in Brentano von Arnim's highly dialogical epistolary novel.

The presence of the counterpart, who remains in epistolary dialogue, is especially visible when quotations are used. When the letter writer quotes from a received letter, the chronological sequence is suspended. The long pauses between the letters, which are unavoidable because of the addressee's absence, textualization, and the act of sending the letter through the post is held in abeyance. In this case address and answer appear to be simultaneous, and the quotation marks distinguish themselves from the rest of the text optically. Strong pronominalization, an anticipation of dialogue partner's articulation and the infiltration of the partner's own words into the letter are the visible signs of the imaginary interlocutor and indicate the dialogical orientation of the letter. Yet, another factors creating an illusion of the counterpart's presence and supporting dialogue form is the usage of pronouns "Du," "Dich," "Dir," which are disseminated throughout the text. Additionally, the switch from the pronouns "ich" and "Du" to the possessive "mein" and "Dein," and especially the communal "unser," increases the intensity of dialogue. Similarly questions including rhetorical ones like: "Weißt Du denn, wer meine erste Bekanntschaft ist, die ich hier gemacht hab?"⁵⁵⁹ "... ist es nicht dumm, daß ich so frage?"⁵⁶⁰ "Was hast Du denn da für Bekanntschaft?"⁵⁶¹ imitate the presence of the dialogue partner. All kinds of appeals, demands,

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., 606.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid., 667.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid., 312.

petitions, requests, such as, "... sage mir auch, wie Ihr lebt"⁵⁶² "Grüße den Savigny recht freundlich von mir, erinnere ihn doch zuweilen an mich"⁵⁶³ and especially entreaties for response, for instance, "so schreib mir bald wieder,"⁵⁶⁴ "Schreib mir viel, auch über meine Sachen, ich schicke dann mehr,"⁵⁶⁵ connect question and answer into a streaming dialogue. This process is enhanced in such scenes when, for example, Bettine meditates on her dialogues with Günderröde: "Der Plaudergeist in meiner Brust hat immer fort geschwätzt mit Dir, durch den ganzen holperigen Wald bis auf den Trages."⁵⁶⁶ The continuity of dialogue is emphasized with the description of ever resounding conversation: "Jetzt bin ich schon acht Tag hier, unser Gespräch klingt noch immer nach in mir."⁵⁶⁷

The thought about the addressee motivates the author to take on different roles and move between different forms of consciousness. The depiction of roles is indispensably linked to the letter, since letter writers fashion their own portrayal and also construct the image of their partners. Zimmerman sees this negotiation of the mutual exchange and the correction of the self-design as a tendency to evolve into a philosophical dialogue, resulting in the construction of the "I" and the development of the partner blueprint.⁵⁶⁸ However, she continues, frequently the picture of the partner, which the writer portrays, may not be identical with the picture that the addressee has about himself/herself. By the same token, the picture of the author himself, which he designs, will be to a high degree influenced by the gaze at the addressee.⁵⁶⁹ The author of the letter appears to be broken in three parts, as a subject, as the writer of the letter, and in the role

⁵⁶² Ibid., 301.

⁵⁶³ Ibid., 301.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., 302.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid., 323.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., 299.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid., 300.

⁵⁶⁸ Zimmermann, *Die polyfunktionale Bedeutung dialogischer Sprechformen um 1800*, p. 27.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.

s/he takes on in front of her/his counterpart.⁵⁷⁰ The relationship teacher/student, brother/sister can be described as one of the basic models of the dialogical configuration used by Brentano von Arnim in *Die G nderode* as her figure Bettine assumes the role of a teacher. Hence, she instructs both G nderode, and the students of the late 1830s and 1840s to whom the book was dedicated, as well as readers – who also take on the role of the “Du.” G nderode also appears in the role of the educator (Bettine identifies G nderode as Plato), and in turn Bettine takes on the role of a student; whereas, Clemens, as the older brother, acts towards Bettine as an educator, and his role serves Bettine as provocation to critical debates and disputes with him.⁵⁷¹ In the life of the author, (not in her fictional life as a figure Bettine) the reversal of roles in the student/teacher relationship surfaces not only in the Landshut salon but also partially in the 1840s at a time when Bettina Brentano von Arnim’s Berlin salon flourished. During that period she offered artists advice and supported their talents.⁵⁷² The dialogue was then an ego booster and focused on the affirmation of the “I” through the voice of the other.

Temporal perspective plays a decisive role in letters. In the case of Bettina Brentano von Arnim’s *Die G nderode*, the situation is much more complex, as the authentic letter exchange with her late friend serves to make the past present with the letters brought before the reader in revised versions. While Levin Varnhagen develops her self-portrayal from the dialogue with the correspondent, Brentano von Arnim works with the completed correspondence. The point of departure for making the past present, Zimmerman suggests, constitutes the dialogue because retrospection serves to revive the communicative process as the form of personal self-realization. It is based on written dialogue, which becomes the topic of dialogical self-examination to the

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid., 28.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., 29.

⁵⁷² Ibid., 29.

point of dialogical autobiography.⁵⁷³ Here, however, the autobiography escapes its usual canonical mode as it emphasizes the importance of sociability more than the idea of constructing the self in isolated mediation.⁵⁷⁴ In the ideal harmony of a new society, it is the manner of sociality suggested which shapes both the content and the form of the epistolary efforts of Levin Varnhagen and Brentano von Arnim. Their letters illustrate the constructing the self through the medium of dialogue and are not projects carried out in isolation.

Text passages of *Die Günderröde* contain dialogical as well as monological characteristics. Apart from the reciprocity that the dialogical letter shows through the presence of the dialogue partner, the letter dialogue proves to be always receptive, as it remains inconsequential whether the addressee agrees or disagrees with the role and the picture the letter writer creates of him. There are times when the gaze is directed towards the self, and the discussion with the self is the focus, as the purpose of the letter gets lost; on occasion, the friend to whom one writes becomes no more the partner, but the object of the letter.⁵⁷⁵ I will discuss this development as a case of dialogue interruptions.

3.3 SOCIAL INTEGRATION MANIFESTED AS STRATEGIES OF RESISTANCE AND DIALOGUE INTERRUPTIONS IN *DIE GÜNDERÖDE*

Neither Bettina Brentano von Arnim and Karoline von Günderröde felt understood or recognized in the system of patriarchal society; they used different strategies to overcome their marginalization. As manifested in *Die Günderröde*, these measures lead at times to dialogue interruptions. As a highly gifted woman from the upper class of a patriarchal authoritarian state, Brentano von Arnim was simultaneously privileged and oppressed. This in-between position

⁵⁷³ Zimmermann, *Die polyfunktionale Bedeutung dialogischer Sprechformen um 1800*, p. 43

⁵⁷⁴ Goodman, *Dis/Closures*, p. 77.

⁵⁷⁵ Zimmermann, *Die polyfunktionale Bedeutung dialogischer Sprechformen um 1800*, p. 32.

made her particularly sensible to social injustice and taught her how to resist the oppressing and reductive tendencies of Prussian society. As a woman, she was perfectly aware of the obstacles tradition placed before members of her sex that needed to be challenged:

Erstens: ich soll mir häusliche Tugenden angewöhnen. Zweitens: wo ich einen Mann hernehmen will wenn ich hebräisch lern? – So was ekelt einem Mann, schreibt der lieb gut Engels-Franz, als wie die spartanische Suppe; an einen solchen Herd wird sich keiner niederlassen wollen und eine Schüssel Mathematik von einem alten schwarzen Juden assaisont sei auch nicht appetitlich, darauf soll ich mir keine Gäste einladen, und der Generalbaß als Dessert, das sei so gut wie eingemachter Teufels-Dr.⁵⁷⁶

Along with her personal realization came admonitions of Clemens:

... stelle Dich nicht so heilig, nehme das Leben leicht, und Deine Pflichten ernst, lerne mit vernünftigen Leuten lustig und fröhlich umgehen, und habe mich in vernünftigem Andenken. Dein ehrlicher Bruder *Clemens*.

Noch etwas! – verphantasiere Dich nicht mit dem Gärtner! – er ist ein guter vernünftiger Bursche an seinem Platz, nämlich unter Kraut und Rüben.⁵⁷⁷

Brentano von Arnim however did not want to give up her fantasy and continued to fight for her freedom: “Ich fang an zu glauben daß ich gar nicht fürs Gesellschaftliche geboren bin, konnt ich je meiner Phantasie nachgeben ohne mich zu erhitzen über den sinnlosen Widerspruch der Andern?”⁵⁷⁸ She continued to live her freedom in a fantasy world:

“ – Ich möcht auch fort in die Welt, ja, ich möcht fort! – Ich bin doch in meinem Leben noch auf keinen Berg gestiegen, von wo aus man die ganze Welt übersieht, und in meiner Seel überseh ich doch die Welt.”⁵⁷⁹ In reality she lived out the longing for wide-open spaces in her night walks.

Her little liberties shocked others, while she herself felt guilty: “Drei Uhr Morgens! – Hier bin ich – auf der Terrasse am Main; ... am Tag bin ich zerstreut, was mir immer wie Sünde deucht, daß ich Anteil nehm an was mich nichts angeht.”⁵⁸⁰ Brentano von Arnim reacts to constricting

⁵⁷⁶ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 684.

⁵⁷⁷ *Frühlingskranz*, Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 152.

⁵⁷⁸ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 613.

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 511.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 415.

and distorting structures of society in two ways: with omnipotent fantasies of artistic creativity through her vision of nature salvation and with a pragmatic integration into the society, in an astute adaptation and self-assertion.⁵⁸¹ I will discuss the protagonist Bettine's strategies to resist the societal pressure in terms of her philosophy of remaining a child, pioneering creativity incorporating new erotic elements, in self-education, and inventing her own *Schwebereligion* – as well as with regard to dialogue disruption.

Brentano von Arnim's Self-Reinvention as a Child in *Die Günderröde*

In *Die Günderröde*, Bettina Brentano von Arnim portrays herself as a consistently naïve character, but she and many of her readers and acquaintances knew this was a fictitious performance.⁵⁸² When Alexander von Humboldt reports in his letters in 1840 about “das Kind,” he does not have a child in mind.⁵⁸³ “Das Kind” (the labeling “Kind” was her nickname in the intellectual circles of Berlin) was by that time a woman in her middle fifties, a respected Romantic writer and a mother of seven children.⁵⁸⁴ Humboldt's use of the term was by no means meant to be depreciative, since he himself had a great regard for the agile Bettina Brentano von Arnim and was considered to be an advocate of her viewpoints and her patron. According to Karl Gutzkow, a writer notable in the Young Germany movement, Brentano von Arnim had courage

⁵⁸¹ Ursula Liebertz-Grün, *Ordnung im Chaos*, 41.

⁵⁸² Hedwig Pompe, *Der Wille zum Glück. Bettine von Arnims Poetik der Naivität im Briefroman Die Günderröde* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 1999), 69.

⁵⁸³ Caroline Schelling felt that Bettina Brentano von Arnim looked like a “kleine Berlinerjüdin,” and would stand on her head in order to be funny. She could not understand how a person so witty could be at the same time “so verkehrt und verreckt und gespannt,”³⁴ Caroline Schelling to Luise Wiedemann, February, 1809, *Caroline und Dorothea Schlegel in Briefen*, ed. Von Ernst Wieneke (Weimar 1914) 259; Jochen Kirchhoff, *Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling* (Reinbek 1982), 45.

⁵⁸⁴ Hartwig Schultz, “Bettine von Arnims Weg zur politischen Schriftstellerin: ihr Kampf für die Brüder Grimm,” *Bettine von Arnim. Romantik und Sozialismus (1831-1859)* (Trier: Karl-Marx-Haus, 1987), 11-26, p. 11.

and audacity to remain a child and to voice her feelings.⁵⁸⁵ Little Bettina's grandmother, Sophie von La Roche, and a well-known writer, who primarily took care of her after her mother's death, admired rather than restricted her granddaughter's vivid fantasy and her wild manners.⁵⁸⁶ As a result the grandchild was able to speak her mind freely – and in suitable or unsuitable moments; consequently, she seemed to remain a child for an extended period, and even when later she was no longer a child, she would play one.⁵⁸⁷ She always had a determined and sincere need for freedom and did not accept authority unexamined. Through her free-spirited behavior, Brentano von Arnim tried to secure the fondness of those around her, for instance, the acquainted nobles:⁵⁸⁸

Die Gesellschaft wunderte sich über meine *naïve Art*, damit meinen sie *Unart*, ich merkte es; sie halten mich für einen halben Wilden, weil ich wenig oder nie mit ihnen spreche, weil ich mich durchdränge wohin ich will, weil ich mich ohne Erlaubnis an der Prinzeß Seite setze, ... weil ich so leise geschlichen komm daß mich keiner merkt, weil ich davon laufe und nur das Windspiel vom Herzog von Gotha sich mit mir zu schaffen macht ... der L.H. sagte mir daß man sich über meine Unart aufgehalten, den Hund so laut bellen zu machen; er erzählte mir aber nicht was ich von der Tonie hernach hörte, daß die Kurprinzeß sagte: sie ist ein liebes Kind, und daß der Herzog von Gotha sagte: ein allerliebstes Kind. – Nun, ich gefall mir selbst gut. –⁵⁸⁹

Brentano von Arnim considered the situation to be a form of a play in which she had taken part. On a different occasion she also felt as if engaging in a staged event since she commented: “ich komme mir vor wie ein Schuspieler der sich unter einem Charakter beliebt gemacht hat, und der diesen nun immer beibehält.”⁵⁹⁰ Some of Brentano von Arnim's contemporaries and biographers did not take her seriously when referring to her as the “Immerkind.”⁵⁹¹ To be sure, she was an

⁵⁸⁵ Hartwig Schultz, *Katalog: Herzhaft in die Dornen der Zeit greifen*, ed. Christoph Perels, Frankfurt: Freies Deutsches Hochstift, Frankfurter Goethe-Museum, 1985, p. 106.

⁵⁸⁶ Hedwig Pompe, *Der Wille zum Glück. Bettine von Arnims Poetik der Naivität im Briefroman Die Gunderode*, Bielefeld, Aisthesis, 1999, p. 68.

⁵⁸⁷ Pompe, *Der Wille zum Glück*, p. 68.

⁵⁸⁸ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, p. 607.

⁵⁸⁹ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, p. 340-341.

⁵⁹⁰ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, p. 685-686.

⁵⁹¹ Pompe, *Der Wille zum Glück*, p. 69.

eccentric, defined by dreams and phantasies; when older she was described as a “kranke Hexe.”⁵⁹² Despite that, she was lucid in her arguments and remained in connection to society, optimistically sensitive to its contemporary problems.⁵⁹³

Her grandmother’s “Grillenhütte” in Offenbach remained till her death her homeland on which she projected the creative myth.⁵⁹⁴ Brentano von Arnim chose for herself the role of a fool and a lovable *enfant terrible* in order to avoid two evils. On the one hand, she did not want to inherit the folly of others:

So der ganze Religionsunterricht, der machte mich völlig dumm. – Z. B. die Lehre, mit welchen Waffen die Ketzer zu bekämpfen, mit welchen Grundsätzen sie bekämpfen? – da kam mir Ketzer und Waffe und Glaube alles wie ein Unsinn vor, und hätt ich nicht meine Zuflucht dazu genommen gar nicht zu denken so wär ich ein Narr geworden. – Wie denn wirklich alle Menschen Narren sind, mein großer Courage dies zu glauben und ohne viel Speranzien sie auch danach zu respektieren das hat mich frei gemacht von der Narrheit.⁵⁹⁵

Secondly, she did not want average people to perceive her genius as madness.⁵⁹⁶ She warns Gündertode emphatically not to understand this insight falsely:

Es ahnt mir schon, Du wirst wieder bange werden um mich wie vorm Jahr! ... Sei nicht dumm, lasse Dir nicht von den Philistern bange machen um meine Gesundheit, wo sie mir schon den Verstand absprechen... Noch einmal, ich bin nicht krank, störe mich nicht damit daß Du mir das Geringste sagst, denn ich will Dir noch mehr sagen wenns möglich

⁵⁹² Kurt Lüthi, *Feminismus und Romantik. Sprache, Gesellschaft, Symbole, Religion* (Wien, Köln, Graz: Hermann Göhlaus Nachf, 1985), 69.

⁵⁹³ Lüthi, *Feminismus und Romantik*, 69.

⁵⁹⁴ Besides the parental home “Zum Goldenen Kopf” in Frankfurt, the one in Marburg, the country estate Trages, and the residence of her brother-in-law Savigny were also considered Brentano von Arnim’s homes. Sybille von Steinsdorff and Walter Schmitz, “Kindheit und Jugend 1785-1810,” *Herzhaft in die Dornen der Zeit greifen... Bettine von Arnim 1785-1859*, ed. Christoph Perels (Frankfurt: Freies Deutsches Hochstift, 1985), 9.

⁵⁹⁵ Steinsdorff and Schmitz, 513.

⁵⁹⁶ See Lieberzt-Grün, *Ordnung im Chaos*, 46. Bettine became closer to her brother Clemens only in the year 1801 after the death of his favorite sister Sophie (9). He stylized Bettina into an incarnation of the childlike and at the same time feminine, and the almost twenty-year-old, also since long marriageable adopted this role willingly and consciously. For the “prodigal son” Clemens she inhabited the paradise from which he was banished by the severe father: the land of childhood and nature-true poetry. In this way the letter exchange between brother and sister developed which served to correct his autobiographical novel *Godwi*, where Bettina improves and enhances in her poetic memorization the myth of the lost paradise filled with inner turmoil and brokenness und alienation, as conceptualized by *Godwi* that is why Clemens dedicated the second part of the novel to Bettina. Sybille von Steinsdorff and Walter Schmitz, “Kindheit und Jugend 1785-1810,” *Herzhaft in die Dornen der Zeit greifen*, 10.

ist, was hättest Du an mir, wenn ich nicht lernte Dir meine Seele geben, nackt und bloß. Freundschaft! das ist Umgang der Geister, nackt und bloß. –⁵⁹⁷

The pathos of the emphatic candor is a masquerade since Bettine never appears without a mask, which seems natural and genuine vis-à-vis each partner in every different situation.⁵⁹⁸ Only to her friend Günderode, she suggests becoming “uncovered” and showing the true spirit in all its nakedness. This measure will be necessarily undertaken through dialogue – and must be reciprocal.

Die Günderode, fundamentally an early Romantic work written during the conservative backlash of the Metternich Restoration, replicates the sociability of the Romantic salon through its use of conversational tone; hence, it repudiates hierarchical social structures and undermines societal expectations. Instead of the Revolution’s “fraternity,” Brentano von Arnim proposes the liberating “sorority,” where women support each other.⁵⁹⁹ When Bettine reveals the desire to rule the world, “O ich wollt gleich die Welt regieren, und die Leute sollten sich verwundern, das hab ich in jenem ersten Moment gelernt von der Natur, wie ich das machen soll, und glaub nur, ich würde nie fehlgehen,⁶⁰⁰ Karoline, in turn, has a vision of her friend as a hero, “wenn Du ein Knabe wärst, Du werdest ein Held werden; da Du aber ein Mädchen bist, so lege ich Dir all diese Anlagen für eine künftige Lebensstufe aus, ich nehme es als Vorbereitung zu einem künftigen energischen Charakter an, der vielleicht in eine lebendige regsame Zeit geboren wird.”⁶⁰¹

Both proclamations offer thoughts on the various directions feminism may take in the future. These directions include departing from the most traditionally conspicuous form of feminism of the time and extending female participation into yet more male-dominated activities

⁵⁹⁷ Steinsdorff and Schmitz, 434.

⁵⁹⁸ Ursula Lieberzt-Grün, *Ordnung im Chaos*, 47.

⁵⁹⁹ Anna K. Kuhn, “The ‘Failure’ of Biography and the Triumph of Women’s Writing,” 23.

⁶⁰⁰ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 533.

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 727.

and professions. It included, too, imagining ways in which feminism could be applied to inequalities other than those strictly between men and women, as well as exploring the role of the feminist as activist.

Female Independence through Self-Education in *Die Gunderode*

Even though *Die Gunderode* was not as popular as *Goethes Briefwechsel*, it was widely read by students of the younger generation to whom it was dedicated: “Den Studenten” Euch *Irrenden Suchenden!* ... Die Ihr *Hermanns Geschlecht* Euch nennt, *Deutschlands Jungerschaft! Musensohne!*⁶⁰² It was an alternative to traditional works of literature, a venture in genuinely dialogic method of perception and expression.⁶⁰³ The figure of the student stood for an idea of openness and readiness to learn in a wider sense of the word. In contrast with students, Philistines were narrow-minded bourgeoisie.⁶⁰⁴ Brentano von Arnim insisted on exhibiting her disdain of the middle-class lifestyle and the “philistines” who enjoyed it, as she voiced her opinion in the dedication part of her book: “Wenn der Philister Torengeschlecht den Stab Euch bricht, so gedenket Musensohne! da ihre Larmtrommel, des leuchtenden Pythiers Geist nicht betaubt.”⁶⁰⁵ This novel of Brentano von Arnim was radical first and foremost in its analysis of the social lassitude and illness of its time, in its assessment and judgment of the bourgeois ideology of developing capitalism, that is, in its dismissal of an ideology that held that human

⁶⁰² Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 297.

Bettina Brentano was in close contact with several students in Landshut where Friedrich von Savigny accepted a position as professor at the University of Landshut (54). On May 2, 1810 Savigny and Bettine Brentano in company of students, Johann Nepomuk Ringseis, von Schenk, Salvotti, Gumpenberg, Freyberg, Ludwig Grimm, decided to go on an educational trip. Salzburg and Wien were their immediate points of exploration (76). Her correspondent Philipp Nathusius later became the main character in her book *Ilius Pamphilius und die Ambrosia* (1848) – “Das Buch ... besteht in Briefen, die ich mit Studenten gewechselt habe,” Drewitz, *Bettine von Arnim*, 76.

⁶⁰³ Waldstein, *Bettine von Arnim and the Politics of Romantic Conversation*, 56-7.

⁶⁰⁴ “Der Philister tut alles um des irdischen Lebens willen. ... Nie sind sie berauscht gewesen, ohne zu trinken, und dann immer sehr besoffen.” Clemens Brentano, “Ein Typus der Zeit: Der Philister,” *Die Deutschen Romantiker: Grundlagen der Romantik* (Munchen: Langen Muller, 1994), 261-268, p. 261.

⁶⁰⁵ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 297.

life can be quantified. Brentano von Arnim, specifically and utterly antiauthoritarian by nature, declined the confines of convention and conformity, and refused to recognize the instrumental rationality transmitted by the “philistines,” as she called those who had adopted the materialistic values of the day: “... , daß ich das Geschrei der Philister, die des Geistes Stimme mit Grundsätzen bedrängen, durch das bloße Regiment meiner Empfindung ersticken wolle.”⁶⁰⁶

The term “Philistine” was appropriated by students to denote a class of people who were nothing but a mere imitation of the powerful and fearsome Philistines of history. Philistine, therefore, was the name for all who were not students, and if we take the word student in the broader sense of one who studies – someone eager for cognition – in contrast with those who “reach the poetics of their lives only when traveling, attending a wedding or a baptism and in the church.”⁶⁰⁷ The distinction between the student and the Philistine was converted by the Romantic theoreticians of the university from the social to the intellectual and redefined so as to differentiate between “the true scholar-critic-intellectual” and “the specialized *Brotgelehrte*.”⁶⁰⁸ The view of university as the concretization of a unified knowledge within a historical context was idealized by Schiller, Fichte, and Schelling and embodied the principal themes of Romanticism, as evident in the Romantic metaphor, where heterogeneous elements were brought together in a new arrangement.⁶⁰⁹ Friedrich Schlegel’s *Athenaeum* fragment no. 116 about Romantic progressive universal poetry, which intended to unify all the unconnected genres of

⁶⁰⁶ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 350.

⁶⁰⁷ “Den höchsten Grad seines poetischen Daseins erreicht der Philister bei einer Reise, Hochzeit, Kindtaufe und in der Kirche. ... Philister also wurden alle genannt, die keine Studenten waren, und nehmen wir das Wort Student im weiteren Sinne eines Erkenntnisbegierigen, eines Menschen, der das Haus seines Lebens noch nicht wie eine Schnecke, welche die wahren Hausphilister sind, zugeklebt, eines Menschen, der in der Erforschung des Ewigen, der Wissenschaft oder Gottes, begriffen, der alle Strahlen des Lichtes in seiner Seele freudig spiegeln läßt, eines Anbetenden der Idee, so stehen die Philister ihm gegenüber, und alle sind Philister, welche keine Studenten im weiteren Sinne des Wortes sind.” Clemens Brentano, “Ein Typus der Zeit: Der Philister,” *Die Deutschen Romantiker: Grundlagen der Romantik* (München: Langen Müller, 1994), 261-268, pp. 262-3.

⁶⁰⁸ Ziolkowski, *German Romanticism*, 253.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 252.

poetry as well as to reunite poetry with philosophy and rhetoric, goes back to the message of unified knowledge in a historical context as presented by Schiller, Fichte, and Schelling in their lectures on the nature of the university.⁶¹⁰ Schlegel wrote about the university as an institution, describing it in 1798 as "something quite arabesque" and concluding with a Romantic metaphor: "a symphony of professors."⁶¹¹ Brentano von Arnim's aversion to, as she put it, all "philisträsen" systems was, in part, inherited from the early Romantics Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis and their ideas of a productive chaos.⁶¹²

Brentano von Arnim's independence of thought formed also the basis of her learning philosophy. Neither achievement nor satisfaction belonged to her objectives:

Ich bin so froh, daß ich unbedeutend bin, da brauch ich keine gescheute Gedanken mehr aufzugabeln, wenn ich Dir schreib, ich brauch nur zu erzählen; sonst meint ich, ich dürfte nicht schreiben ohne ein bißchen Moral oder sonst was Kluges, womit man den Briefinhalt ein bißchen beschwert.⁶¹³

She does not rely on renowned philosophers but holds on to her own ideas: "Dein Schelling und Dein Fichte und Dein Kant sind mir ganz unmögliche Kerle."⁶¹⁴ She is suspect of the philosophers of German Idealism who put the individual "I" on the pedestal as the all encompassing and absolute in order to imagine the "I" as an autonomous thinking entity. In matters of spontaneity and unconventionality, the older friend, Günderode, seems to have learned from her younger friend, Bettine. In the traditional sense, however, Bettine knew she was Günderode's student and admired Günderode's clarity and grace, as well as her encouragement to educate herself in new areas – for instance, in Latin and Mathematics, but specifically in History and Philosophy. However, while Günderode monumentalizes the historical figures of

⁶¹⁰ Ibid., 253.

⁶¹¹ Ibid., 261.

⁶¹² Schultz, "Bettine von Arnims Weg zur politischen Schriftstellerin," 24.

⁶¹³ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 380.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid., 307.

old time (“Regsam und zu jeder Aufgabe kräftig”),⁶¹⁵ Bettine caricatures the arid listings of numbers, names, and supposed facts that are piled upon her as history lessons.⁶¹⁶ She does not want the past to obscure her present:

Der Geschichtslehrer kommt dreimal die Woch, ... Er unterrichtet mich so, daß ich wahrscheinlich der Zukunft ewig den Rücken drehen werde, und so auch um die liebe Gegenwart geprellt wär, wenn die unreifen Aprikosen in der Großmutter Garten nicht meinen Diebssinn weckten.”⁶¹⁷

Bettine is afraid that she will be forced to give up her fictions for the facts. Indeed, both Gündert and Clemens shared a concern that Bettine’s spirit was too chaotic, flighty, and lacking direction and thus hoped reading would help her find a coherence and a secured, more organized philosophy. Yet, Bettine preferred freedom: “... und oft bin ich unruhig und kann nicht auf einem Platz beiben, ich muß fort ins Feld, in den Wald; – in freier Luft kann ich alles denken, was im Zimmer unmöglich war, da schwärmen die Gedanken über die Berg, und ich seh ihnen nach.”⁶¹⁸

Bettine neither focuses upon the accumulation of knowledge, nor wishes to take pride in education. She refuses to internalize all those mentality structures, behavior patterns, reasoning models, sentiment paradigms, speech techniques, and sense of taste criteria which are considered specifically characteristics of female in the society: “jeder soll neugierig sein auf sich selber, und soll sich zu Tage fördern wie aus der Tiefe ein Stück Erz oder ein Quell, die ganze Bildung soll darauf ausgehen daß wir den Geist ans Licht hervorlassen. ... Echte Bildung geht hervor aus Übung der Kräfte die in uns liegen.”⁶¹⁹ Bettine’s learning philosophy encompasses a vision of educated women that enables them to reach their fullest potential: “Du hörst gern von Deinem

⁶¹⁵ Ibid., 401.

⁶¹⁶ Ibid., 397, “Babylonier, Assyrer, Meder führen Krieg – bis Cyrus der Perser alle Reiche wieder erobert. – Babilonische Geschichte umfaßt 1600 Jahr, hat um elf Uhr angefangen und Glockenschlag zwölf Uhr aus, ich spring in Garten.”

⁶¹⁷ Ibid., 396.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid., 299.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid., 468.

kleinen Paradiesgarten, in dem alles so schön ist und kein Baum von dem man die Äpfel nicht essen darf.”⁶²⁰ The little garden described in the passage is in fact better than the acclaimed paradise, as women have access to knowledge. The idea of obedience is obliterated in Bettine’s world view: “Ich glaube, daß ich nicht lebe, um zu gehorchen oder um mich zu zerstreuen, sondern um zu sein und zu werden ... an die Macht des Willens und der Bildung.”⁶²¹ The notion of becoming through gaining independent knowledge takes on new quality in Bettine’s ideology because it is connected to sensual love:

Wissend sein ist Gedeihendsein im gesunden Boden des Geistes, wo der Geist zum Blühen kommt. Da brauchts kein Behalten, da brauchts keine Absonderung der Phantasie von der Wirklichkeit, die Begierde des Wissens selbst scheint mir da nur wie der Kuß der Seele mit dem Geist; zärtliches Berühren mit der Wahrheit, energisch belebt werden davon, wie Liebende von der Geliebten, von der Natur.⁶²²

There is no true knowledge without love. One must be moved by love – depicted here as a synthesis of sensual and spiritual elements – in order to find truth. Knowing comes from an untainted spirit; nonetheless, there is no need to separate fantasy from reality. The longing for knowledge is likened to the kiss of a soul, a torch of truth.

Groundbreaking Creativity Based on Dialogical Sensuousness

Schelling, Schlegel, and Novalis made the sensual appearance of nature and the entire world communicable.⁶²³ In theory the Romantic philosophers and writers drew attention to the symbiotic relationship between the intellect (Geist) and sensuousness (Sinnlichkeit); in practice, natural and spontaneous communication took place in the salons.⁶²⁴ The inclusion of a sensuous

⁶²⁰ Ibid., 365.

⁶²¹ Schleiermacher, “Idee zu einem Katechismus der Vernunft für edle Frauen” 1798-1800 in *Athenaeum*, in Sabine Schormann *Bettine von Arnim. Die Bedeutung Schleiermachers für ihr Leben und Werk*, 72.

⁶²² Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 626.

⁶²³ Zimmerman, *Die polyfunktionale Bedeutung dialogischer Sprechformen um 1800*, 177.

⁶²⁴ Waldstein, *Bettine von Arnim and the Politics of Romantic Conversation*, 25.

element in intellectual conversation accommodated the individuals and enhanced the entire atmosphere with both a sense of freedom and feeling of community. Nevertheless, it was in the salon space under the guidance of women that a synthesis of intellect and sensuousness of reason as well as spontaneity of spirit and body was most successfully realized.⁶²⁵ Brentano von Arnim was primarily interested in the subject's development and the finding of "I" under the conditions of eroticism, in that the various encounters, devotions, and love promoted her creativity and helped her to disentangle from biological and societal role stereotypes prescribed for women.⁶²⁶

In contrast with Bettine of the *Clemens Brentanos Frühlingskranz* (1844), who successfully resists the attempts of her brother to turn her into a resonance and confirmation tool for his patriarchal expectations of femininity, Bettine in *Die Gänderode* realizes herself through gestures of erotic affection and attachment.⁶²⁷

Du, und ich die mit Deinen Fingern spielte beim Sprechen, das war als so, daß ich dacht der Geist wär nah bei uns und trenne uns von allem Unsinn; ... und wo sollt ich noch einmal fühlen so vertraulich? – kann man so bei Prinzessinnen simulieren, so im Mondschein im Zimmer an der Erde liegen und ihm nachrücken und Geschichten erfinden wie wir den Winter, und wenn ich Dein Haar flechten wollt, da hast Du michs lassen aufflechten und wieder flechten.⁶²⁸

In the process of Bettine's self-discovery within the context of her erotic encounters one could point out polarities. On the one hand, her intense sensuality had something diffuse about it and was not target-oriented. An erotic influence on men in the sense that Caroline Schlegel Schelling exercised was in the case of Brentano von Arnim, who was not compelled to define herself

⁶²⁵ Waldstein, *Bettine von Arnim and the Politics of Romantic Conversation*, 25. Waldstein explains that the reason women were able to provide exactly this kind of atmosphere might be elucidated by their traditional nurturing and caring roles, which demanded a pronounced expression of emotions and a strong sense of the relationship between body, mind, and social environment.

⁶²⁶ Lüthi, *Feminismus und Romantik*, 71.

⁶²⁷ Liebertz-Grün, *Ordnung im Chaos*, 74.

⁶²⁸ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 342 and 369.

through a man, unthinkable.⁶²⁹ On the other hand, she stylized and idolized her partners like Goethe, partially through an erotic impulse.

In comparison with other women writers of her time, Brentano von Arnim was in no shape or form a passive muse of a man; especially in her writing she was independent and self-contained.⁶³⁰ Her encounters helped her achieve freedom from the confinement of the “I.” Brentano von Arnim’s creativity was based on a spontaneous interplay of fantasy, sensuousness and intellect, as she realized that she could destroy her creativity if she were to rigorously suppress her sexuality. When in her tower contemplating the poplars, which are sexual symbols, she realized that the cut (or castrated) poplars suffer from the loss of speech:⁶³¹

– die hohe schwankende Pappelwand, die himmelansteigenden Treppen die ich alle wie oft hinangestiegen bin um die Sonne nachzusehen, um die Gewitter zu begrüßen; durchgeschnitten! – zwei Drittel davon in grader Linie abgesägt! ...
– Ach Ihr Baumseelen wer konnte Euch das tun? ... – ach es schneidet mir ins Herz – es war als könnten sie nicht mehr sprechen als sei ihnen die Zunge genommen denn sie können ja nicht mehr rauschen. So war ihr Stummsein eine bittere Klage zu mir die ich ewig mit mir herumtragen werde ... ich wußte auch gleich daß nur aus grausenhaftem Philistersinn solche Untat geschehen konnt.⁶³²

Her reaction to the castration of the poplars is prompt, as she warns the gardener not to neglect the roses, while casually playing with her own erotic wishes. In an autoerotic scene “wo ich an der Erde lag mit verborgnem Gesicht, da war ich einmal zärtlich, ach!”⁶³³ Her wish for genital sexuality is connected to the sadness of nature:⁶³⁴ “da hörte ich diese traurige Stille der Natur, da lag eine Scheidewand zwischen mir und ihr, das fühlt ich deutlich daß ich nicht bis zu ihr drang.”⁶³⁵ To fall in love and become passionate for someone in order to stimulate her artistic creativity does not appear to her blameworthy, as she contemplates beautiful young men while

⁶²⁹ Lüthi, *Feminismus und Romantik*, 71.

⁶³⁰ Ibid., 71.

⁶³¹ Liebertz-Grün, *Ordnung im Chaos*, 49.

⁶³² Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 580-582.

⁶³³ Ibid., 532.

⁶³⁴ Liebertz-Grün, *Ordnung im Chaos*, 49.

⁶³⁵ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 531.

taking an imaginary trip to the region of the Ganges and Indus,⁶³⁶ observes lovers in college, and offers roses to a passing group of students: “Ihr guten Studenten! heut haben sie wieder nach den Rosen gesehen, – ich möcht sie Euch alle abrechen eh ich weggeh und sie Euch auf den Kopf werfen.”⁶³⁷ She tosses the rose petals, which symbolize the transition of the bride into a loving and passionate wife – yet another erotic element of Romanticism.

Bettine’s Romantic nature is probably best described in comparison with that of her friend when she poses a question to Karoline:

Gibts nicht einen Moment in der Poesie wo der Geist sich vergißt und dahin wallt wie der Quell dem der Fels sich auftut? daß der nun hinströmt im Bett der Empfindung voll Jugendbrausen, voll Lichtdurchdrungenheit, voll Lustatmen und heißer Lieb und beglückter Lieb; alles aus innerer Lebendigkeit, womit die Natur ihn durchdringt?⁶³⁸

In contrast with her own texts depicting the Romantic landscape of the soul, she perceives her friend Karoline’s poetry to be more classical in nature. The Romantic artist integrates all everyday elements into her work and allows more room for erotic concerns than for those of rationality. The classical artist in contrast tries to isolate herself from the unclean and unspiritual and “forces the erotic to put on the mask of the spiritual.”⁶³⁹ Bettine shows no attraction toward martyrdom, as far as chastity laws for young single women of the upper class are concerned; she does not perceive her body to be a cage for a “schöne Seele.”⁶⁴⁰ She blocks herself from expectations propagating self-tormenting love; that is why she mocks songs in the Minnesingers style.⁶⁴¹ She also ridicules Mme de Stael’s novel *Delphine* in which the main character commits suicide out of love: “Abends wird im Teezimmer vom Moritz die Delphine von der Stael vorgelesen, für mich das Absurdeste was ich hören kann, ich mach einen Plumsack von meinem

⁶³⁶ Ibid., 505.

⁶³⁷ Ibid., 739.

⁶³⁸ Ibid., 619-620.

⁶³⁹ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 620.

⁶⁴⁰ Liebertz-Grün, *Ordnung im Chaos*, 49.

⁶⁴¹ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 629.

Schnupftuch und amüsiere die Kinder derweil, das hat den Lector nicht wenig verdrossen, ja ich muß fort.”⁶⁴² She is not afraid of commandments and bans, and the taboos do not fascinate her because she does not become fixated on that which is forbidden. Her erotic energies are not concentrated on sexuality exclusively; she loves life itself and all that is living and appears in nature. Even the very air she breathes means, ultimately, love.⁶⁴³ Brentano von Arnim connects sensuousness to nature, which in turn is linked to religious experience:

Wer ewig zum Leben begeistert ist, der ist immerdar Lebensfrühling, das Leben ist aber bloß Begeisterung, denn sonst ists *Tod*; ... Das ganze Leben ist bloß Zukunftsbegeisterung, nicht ein Moment kann aus dem andern hervorgehn, wär's nicht Begeisterung der Natur fürs Leben. Die Zeit würde aufhören, wär die Natur nicht mehr frühlingsbegeistert, ... , daß sie ewig nach der Zukunft strebt macht, daß sie lebt; und daß sie ewig den Frühling erneuert, das ist ihre Seele, ihr Wort das Fleisch geworden ist.⁶⁴⁴

Brentano von Arnim's creativity, based on the spontaneous interplay of fantasy and sensuousness, encompasses the entirety of life, including its religious aspects. Her philosophy is based on the life-giving optimism of springtime. Because she is able to sublimate and transform to a high degree, her creativity can develop regardless of social repressions and restrictions.

Brentano von Arnim's Invention of *Schwebereligion*

At the heart of Brentano von Arnim's characters' Bettine and Karoline's feminine philosophy is the notion of *Schwebereligion*, a term perhaps best translated as religion held in suspense or abeyance. It was Bettine who initiated the idea of female religion absent of traditional dogmas and regulations: “– Lasse uns doch eine Religion stiften, ich und Du, und lasse uns einstweilen Priester und Laie darin sein, ganz im Stillen, und streng danach leben, und ihre Gesetze entwickeln, wie sich ein junger Königshohn entwickelt der einst der größte

⁶⁴² Ibid., 604.

⁶⁴³ Ibid., 697.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid., 648.

Herrscher sollt werden der ganzen Welt.”⁶⁴⁵ However, very shortly thereafter both women find themselves in a dialogue regarding the very premises of their religion, as Bettine says to Karoline: “Wer nit bet, kann nit denken.”⁶⁴⁶ And in turn Karoline answers: “*Denken* ist Beten, ... das Denken mit dem Beten, und das Beten mit dem Denken.”⁶⁴⁷ With these statements, the direct link between thinking and praying has been established. Consequently, one of the chief components of the new religion is the renunciation of the traditional concept of education, which in Bettine’s view should not be accretive, and should not superimpose knowledge and values upon the individual.

Both friends shared a vision of a more dignified and righteous world and tried to foster their dream through a religion in which they would turn the social order upside down by being outspoken against injustice – and share life, develop personal wisdom, and create poetry. The cosmically ecstatic Bettine’s poetry connects to that same matriarchal culture through the commitment and involvement with the poor and oppressed.⁶⁴⁸ The principle of their religion is to elevate simple everyday deeds to greatness: “unsre Religion muß die *Schwebe-Religion* heißen, ... Der Mensch soll immer die größte Handlung tun und nie eine andre, und da will ich Dir

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid., 448.

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid., 449.

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid., 449.

⁶⁴⁸ Both writers subscribe to the early Romantic demand that all people should become royal – that same necessity which was rooted in the criticism of Protestantism (Protestant tendency to democratize everything that comes with a privilege) and anticipated the thought of Max Weber, was later voiced in surrealism, and not by chance became the word of Novalis (62). The privilege to which Bettine subscribes is to have an obligation to democratize the development of human senses through positively gained intellect and fantasy (63). Believing that the class difference becomes prominent not only in economy, but also in consciousness, Brentano von Arnim fights with others representing Young Germany for the establishment of bourgeoisie against nobility; however, the class difference, being characterized as ruler and ruled, can also make visible that the bourgeoisie is already a dominating class, which Brentano von Arnim criticizes when speaking about Jews, Poles, and the poor. For that very reason, the Protestant virtues like industriousness, thriftiness, and discipline are censured. The anti-patriarchal utopias tie also to the French Revolution, which did not bring forth a new kingdom of freedom, but helped the new class, bourgeoisie, to gain power against the newly established proletariat. Dischner, *Bettina von Arnim. Eine weibliche Sozialbiografie des 19. Jahrhunderts*, 63.

gleich zuvorkommen und sagen, daß jede Handlung eine größte sein kann und soll.“⁶⁴⁹ The learning process and philosophy become natural and organic practices: “Echte Bildung geht hervor aus Übung der Kräfte, die in uns liegen.”⁶⁵⁰ Bettine understands herself as a part of nature and identifies herself with nature, as she finds the universe in herself or herself in the universe or in each phenomenon of nature.⁶⁵¹ The universe and the stars are on her side, on the side of a rebel, and they support her, as she receives cosmic energies within her own self:

... zwischen den Sternen und mir ist nur der Geist, ich fühls, alle sind Spiegel des Geistes der aus meiner Brust steigt, sie fangen ihn auf und strahlen ihn zurück; was Du denkst das einzig ist die Wahrheit, ... das Umherschweifen nach einer neuen Welt, die Deine Ahnung Dir weissagt, ist nicht Sünde, denn der Geist ist geschaffen, der Welten unzählige zu entdecken.⁶⁵²

The Rebellion is not selfish and unsocial since the destructive energies are not filled with self-hatred or misanthropy, but are dependent on the constructive erotic energies. The rebellion breaks “die Ketten die den Hafen sperren.”⁶⁵³ Her freedom remains tied to the freedom of others.⁶⁵⁴ Bettine, who feels at home in the paradise of fantasy is still capable of finding her way in the everyday reality and guards against self-destruction.⁶⁵⁵ Her understanding of religion and religious experience are always tied to erotic elements, such as sensuous dancing: “Schau auf, GÜnderod, gleich wird ein himmlischer Tänzer aus den Coulissen hervor schweben. Tanz ist der Schlüssel meiner Ahnungen von der anderen Welt. Er weckt die Seel, sie redt irr wie ein Kind, was in Blumen-Labyrinthen sich verliert.”⁶⁵⁶ Through the energy created by means of fantasy Bettine is able to stand the tension between the ideal and reality and get excited about that which is out of the ordinary and still be able to solve everyday problems.

⁶⁴⁹ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 449.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid., 308.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid., 316. See also Liebertzt –Grün, *Ordnung im Chaos*, p. 51.

⁶⁵² Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 660-1.

⁶⁵³ Ibid., 663. See also Liebertzt –Grün, *Ordnung im Chaos*, p. 52.

⁶⁵⁴ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 663.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid., 680. See also Liebertzt –Grün, *Ordnung im Chaos*, p. 53.

⁶⁵⁶ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 410.

Schwebereligion and the vision of redemption through nature are an attempt to overcome ruling ideology and dogma of the established religion in order to transform the established secular and religious world into poetic language.⁶⁵⁷ She movingly and uncompromisingly distinguished between the kingdom of fantasy and that of the every-day life and used creativity rooted in a spontaneous interplay of fantasy, sensuousness, and intellect, thus connecting the erotic and sacred.⁶⁵⁸ This can be seen in the authors resorting to the matriarchal structures of society as an early historical possibility which can be linked to Romanticism, a strongly effeminized movement, which looked for new forms of sociability.⁶⁵⁹ Salon culture organized by women was incompatible with norms established by men, and salonnières did not wish to adapt female culture to the norms established by men.⁶⁶⁰ Schwebereligion, as a utopian moment emphasizing female self-consciousness and their mystical relationship, was a link to Romantic self-reflection.⁶⁶¹

Dialogue Interruptions in *Die Günderrode*

Bettina Brentano von Arnim and Karoline von Günderrode did not feel understood by a society based on patriarchal model and Philistine attitudes. In the novel, Günderrode escapes into her dream world when she could not cope with the reality, as Bettine observes:

Dein ganz Sein mit Andern ist träumerisch, ich weiß auch warum; wach könntest Du nicht unter ihnen sein und dabei so nachgebend, nein sie hätten Dich gewiß verschüchtert, wenn Du ganz wach wärest, dann würden Dich die gräßlichen Gesichter,

⁶⁵⁷ Liebertzt –Grün, *Ordnung im Chaos*, 61.

⁶⁵⁸ Similar combination of religious and erotic elements can be found in Clemens Brentano's works. The images of his early-deceased mother, those of the women he courted, and finally those of the Mother of God blurred into his phantasmagorias, a concoction of erotic-sacred images. From the beginning, the creative erotic and religious elements amalgamated with the reality what moved the old Frau Rath Goethe to prophecy: "Dein Reich ist in den Wolken und nicht von dieser Erde, und so oft es sich mit derselben berührt, wird's Tränen regnen." Günzel, *Die Brentanos*, 104.

⁶⁵⁹ Dischner, *Bettina von Arnim. Eine weibliche Sozialbiografie des 19. Jahrhunderts*, 66.

⁶⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁶⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

die sie schneiden, in die Flucht jagen. ... Du willst keinen Abscheu in Dir aufkommen lassen gegen sie, die nicht Deine Brüder sind, denn Absurdes ist nicht Schwester und nicht Bruder; aber Du willst doch ihr Geschwister sein und so stehst Du unter ihnen mit träumendem Haupt, und lächelst im Schlaf, denn Du träumst Dir alles bloß als dahin schweifenden grotesken Maskentanz.⁶⁶²

Bettine's attempts to free GÜNDERODE from her self-oppression are without success.⁶⁶³ GÜNDERODE masks herself protected from those who cannot understand her.

In the subsequent sections, I will investigate the crisis of dialogue in the novel, as reflected in the epistolary exchange between Bettine and Clemens, followed by a discussion on love manifested in nature and depicted in the concluding letters of Bettine and Karoline. In the fictionalized dialogues with Clemens Brentano, in the use of nature imagery, and in the evocations of love, Brentano von Arnim wields the form of the letter as a powerful imaginative tool for creating new intersubjective configurations.

3.4 DIALOGUES WITH CLEMENS BRENTANO IN *DIE GÜNDERODE*

Brentano von Arnim ends her novel *Frühlingskranz* with the following words of her brother Clemens directed to her: "So eben kommt die Frankfurter Post. Ich habe keine Zeile von Dir ... Du hast ja auf der Welt nichts zu tun, schreibe mir doch oder ich glaube daß Du mich nicht mehr liebst. Clemens. Ende."⁶⁶⁴ The longing for dialogue in *Frühlingskranz* connects ultimately to love, that is, the lack of dialogue translates into the lack of love. Brentano von Arnim thematizes remaining in the dialogue with her brother Clemens not only in the novel dedicated to him, but also in *Die GÜNDERODE*. Yet, the conflict or dialogue interruptions are already signaled at the closing of *Frühlingskranz*, as Clemens assumes that Bettine has nothing

⁶⁶² Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 382-383.

⁶⁶³ Ibid., 619-620.

⁶⁶⁴ *Frühlingskranz*. Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 293-294.

to do and practically orders her to write to him. Time and again he reveals his controlling character; Bettine, in turn, resorts to conveying a different image of herself to him.

Because Brentano von Arnim made her reputation by refusing to compromise, she encountered the expression of strong disapproval or even harsh criticism for her unwillingness to live by the structures of polite society. In such situations, Clemens' warning and reproach always comes first: "Der Clemens mit seinen Warnungen? – Ich hab ihm heut geschrieben. Die Linden blühen wohl noch und hauchen einen süß an, aber keine Menschen, und die Natur ist schöner und gütiger und größer als alle Weisheit der Welt."⁶⁶⁵ Bettine dismisses her brother's unnecessary censure, and feels that he unrightfully perceives himself to be a wiser – or better – person. She successively ascribes his criticism to his anger and displeasure of life culminating in his sulkiness, at the same time realizing that it is always difficult to discuss dilemmas with Clemens:

Vom Clemens weiß ich nicht, ob ich wohltun würde ihm so nachzugehen wie Du es meinst, es läßt sich da nicht einbiegen und ihm in den Weg treten um ihm zu begegnen, wo ich ihn aber begegnen werde, da sei überzeugt daß es nur friedliche und herzliche Gesinnung sein wird, ich bin weit entfernt ihn aufzugeben, er steht mir vielmehr zu hoch für meine Kräfte, die nicht an ihn reichen.⁶⁶⁶

Yet, she is never ready to give up her dreams and even prefers provoking her brother.⁶⁶⁷ Most of the time, Bettine's feelings of resentment towards her brother are mixed with playful irony.⁶⁶⁸ In such cases, she dismisses his warnings as superfluous and does not hide from him that both she

⁶⁶⁵ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 347-8.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid., 682.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid., 513, "Wenn Du an den Clemens schreibst, so sag ihm's, das schein mir mein entschiedenstes Talent, die Welt regieren; weiß er Gelegenheit, mich darin zu üben, so will ich fleißig sein Tag und Nacht. Schon jetzt nehmen mir die Regierungsgedanken den Schlaf, von allen Seiten, wo ich die Welt anseh, möcht ich sie umdrehen."

⁶⁶⁸ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 346: "Der Clemens hat mir aus Weimar geschrieben und mich gewarnt vor dem Verlieben – überflüssig!"

and Günderode like to poke fun at him.⁶⁶⁹ Oftentimes she chooses to employ the defensive strategy and to avoid revealing too much information about herself, thus presenting herself in a different light to Clemens: “Dem Clemens sag nichts als daß ich brav studier wies vom Himmel regnet, und daß nichts dabei herauskommt, das sage auch, aber von mir – von Uns sag nichts. Er brauchts nicht zu wissen, daß wir so himmlische Kerle sind, heimlich mit einander, wo er nicht dabei ist und keiner.”⁶⁷⁰ Günderode harbors the same feelings regarding the relationship between the sister and brother Brentano:

Dem Clemens will ich gern von Deinen Briefen an mich nichts sagen, weil Du es nicht willst, und ich fühl auch, daß es nicht so sein kann, es wäre Störung ohne Gewinn, er sieht Dich so ganz anders, ohne daß er Dich falsch beurteilt, nur sieht er in jedem Farbenstrahl Deines Wesens, wie Diamanten, die er meint fassen zu müssen und doch nicht erfassen kann, weil es eben nur Strahlenbrechen Deiner Phantsie ist, die ihn und jeden verwirrt.⁶⁷¹

She cooperates with Bettine’s wish and tries to justify her actions by underlining the fact that at heart Clemens means well for his sister.

Brentano von Arnim grounds her idea of female community in the very concrete bond of love, which constitutes an alternative to male bonding. A specific form of solidarity emphasizing the female, even within a patriarchal space, can be illustrated in relation to Bettine’s brother Clemens as Bettine asks Karoline:

Schreib dem Clemens nichts von mir, sag ihm nur nichts von meiner Ausgelassenheit, er meint gleich, ich wär besessen, er tut mir tausend Fragen, er ist ganz verwundert, daß ich so bin, er forscht, er sucht eine Ursach und frägt andre Leut, ob ich verliebt sei, wo ich doch nur im heiligen Orden meiner eignen Natur lebe.⁶⁷²

Once more, Günderode, in solidarity with Bettine, agrees to cooperate with her friend’s request.

Later Bettine tries to justify her decision not to reveal the truth: “Vom Clemens glaub doch nicht,

⁶⁶⁹ *Frühlingskranz*, Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 152: “Lieber Clemens. ... , da kannst Du gleich erfahren wie zwei Mädchen sich über einen listigen Jüngling lustig machen.”

⁶⁷⁰ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 410.

⁶⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 413.

⁶⁷² *Ibid.*, 408.

daß ich ihn belüg, ich bin anders mit ihm in meinen Briefen, weil ich so sein muß.”⁶⁷³ To her mind, this is not an act of deception, but rather of self-protection. It is the protection of friendship and feminine space within the new bourgeois sphere-in-the-making.

The controlling presence of Clemens, who represents a repressive patriarchal force in public as well as in private life, emanates throughout the text. Although his appeal to Bettine to write creatively is genuine, Clemens is first and foremost concerned about the social repercussions of her work. He instructs his sister to suppress the idea of publishing on the grounds of propriety.⁶⁷⁴ He was embarrassed and disturbed by the high spirits and unconventional behavior of his younger sister. Nevertheless, he encouraged Bettina to put her thoughts into writing to cultivate self-awareness and literary prowess.

The correspondence with Clemens introduced Brentano von Arnim to the concept of using the letter form in order to communicate not only personal, but also philosophical and political ideas in a variety of styles, including a literary one. In her letters to Clemens, she was able to practice self-reflection, which required the integration of the partner’s response into the thought processes. Additionally, objectivity and subjectivity could be merged to convey perceptions more precisely, as personal and political topics could be discussed, and at the same time, emotions did not need to be separated from opinions.⁶⁷⁵ Günderode herself finds yet another impetus for Clemens’ encouragement:

Clemens schreibt, Du müßtest fortwährend dichten und nichts dürfe Dich berühren als nur was Deine Kräfte weckt, es ist mir ordentlich rührend, daß während er selber sorglos leichtsinnig, ja vernichtend über sich und alles hinausgeht was ihm in den Weg kommt, er mit solcher Andacht vor Dir verweilt, es ist als ob Du die einzige Seele wärst, die ihm unantastbar ist, Du bist ihm ein Heiligtum.⁶⁷⁶

⁶⁷³ Ibid., 419.

⁶⁷⁴ Daley, *Women of Letters*, 74.

⁶⁷⁵ Waldstein, *Bettine von Arnim and the Politics of Romantic Conversation*, 36.

⁶⁷⁶ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 414.

Clemens's "devotion" to his sister, in his mind stylized as "sacred," allows for only very specific form of character formation and talent development.⁶⁷⁷ In her poem "An Clemens," G nderode continues to exculpate and legitimize Clemens as an authority figure in Bettina's life:

Wie Moses auf des Berges H hen,
Als ihm der Herr zu schaun gebot;
Er sah das Ziel der Erdenwallen
Und mochte f rder nichts mehr sehn.
Wohin, wohin soll ich noch wallen,
Da ich das Heilige gesehn? – ⁶⁷⁸

G nderode's justification does not provide a new model for gender interaction, but rather remains within the patriarchal structure preferred by contemporary society. Just like the Biblical Moses who delivers the message to the people – to be exact, the Law – so does Brentano von Arnim's brother communicate what is appropriate for a young woman in her position. The essence of Moses' leadership is that of a prophet, a traditional title in Israel, a title first given to Abraham. The prophet is the one who guides the people. In that same manner G nderode establishes Clemens as a unique and towering figure.⁶⁷⁹ "Mit dem Clemens versteh ich Dich oder ahne doch wie es zusammenh ngt, ich hab auch gar nicht die Idee, da  es anders sein sollte, nur  ber das, was er von Dir sagt, wie er Dich ausspricht, und das geschieht oft, ist mir manchmal so wunderlich zumut, weil er ganz prophetisch Dich durchsieht."⁶⁸⁰ In the vein of that same patriarchal tradition, G nderode continues to justify Clemens:

– Der Clemens – er wird Dich einst nach hundert Jahren auf dem Berge Arafat finden
– wie Adam, als er nach seiner Verbannung aus dem Paradiese die Eva aus den Augen verlor, die in der N he von Mekka auf jenem Berge weilte, ... er kannte sie wohl, ihre Seele war in seine Seele eingep rgt, und suchte sie flei ig; ... bis der Engel Gabriel den Adam auf den Gipfel jenes Berges bei Mekka f hrte, wovon der Berg seinen Namen Arafat, hei t auf arabisch: Erkennen, erhielt. ... Mag denn Clemens wie Adam den

⁶⁷⁷ G nzel, *Die Brentanos*, 104.

⁶⁷⁸ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 441.

⁶⁷⁹ The towering character of Moses is at the core the appointed one who brings Israel to "serve God on this mountain [Sinai]" (Exodus 3:12), and so to receive the Law for their lives.

⁶⁸⁰ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 420.

Untieren und Berglüften von Dir vorpredigen, ich bin zufrieden unterdes, daß du mich zum Hüter Deiner verborgnen Wohnung bestellt hast und mich zum Kerbholz Deiner heimlichen Seligkeiten machst.⁶⁸¹

This time using the figure of Adam, the father of all mankind, she stylizes the relationship between the brother and sister to be also a spiritual bond. However, Bettine refuses to accept this particular justification: “nur der Clemens ist doch mein Adam nicht, das prophezeihst du schlecht, daß er mich erst nach hundert Jahren auf dem Berg der Erkenntnis treffen werde.”⁶⁸² She does not wish to change and to conform to the rules of society, but rather expects her brother to accept her the way she is. Yet, she receives no affirmation from her brother. Instead, the policing of her letters occurs, as Bettine reports to Karoline: “Wie der Clemens nach Haus gekommen war, hat er gleich nach meinem Brief gefragt, er wollt auch dran schreiben, ich hab ihn aber zerstreut durch allerlei was ich von Dir erzählte, denn ich wollt ihn nicht gern lesen lassen, daß ich als Einsiedler mit Dir leben wollt.”⁶⁸³ Bettine refuses to be monitored in this way, and Karoline cooperates with her by letting her know about Clemens’s questions.⁶⁸⁴ Nevertheless, Karoline is troubled by the style of Bettine’s letters and the ideas included within; she is sure Clemens would not have approved – even though he was to a great degree a catalyst for Bettine’s artistic development.

It was in fact Clemens Brentano who – while studying at the University of Jena and attending lectures by professors such as Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling

⁶⁸¹ Ibid., 421.

⁶⁸² Ibid., 428.

⁶⁸³ Ibid., 569-570.

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid., 470, “Der rasche Wechsel von Anregungen in Deinen Briefen würden dem Clemens die Haare zu Berge stehen machen, und Dein zärtlicher Umgang mit dem Heiligen Geist, wie du das nennst, den Du gleich einem Jagdhund witterst, das würde ihm unsägliche Sorgen machen. Er fragt mich, was Du mir schreibst, denn er wisse, daß ich enorm lange Briefe von Dir bekomme. Wo er das her weiß, das ist mir ein Rätsel; ich hab mit niemand davon gesprochen.”

– provided his sister Bettina with the direct link to the early Romantic movement.⁶⁸⁵ Brentano von Arnim’s utopian vision (which would unite the past and present for a better future, synthesize objective and subjective experience, the public and private spheres, science and nature, the male and the female) reflects those ideas.⁶⁸⁶ Bettine envisions her utopia just in the way she described her relationship with her brother, namely, in a gesture of wrapping her arms around his neck and kissing him in order to let him know that everything is subjected to unconditional love.⁶⁸⁷

3.5 “LOVE” AS A UNIFYING CONCEPT IN *DIE GÜNDERODE*

An amalgamation of the factual and the imaginative, with the determination to find herself, is the purpose of the love that Brentano von Arnim proposes. The magnitude of this love stems from its direct link to her self-exploration and search for herself as a creative individual. Influenced by the Romantic movement, Brentano von Arnim attempts to transcend individuation and be productive through exchange and reflection while at the same time remaining true to herself as a distinct entity. Consequently, the novel *Die Gündertode* is filled with literary devices of mirror motifs, which display Bettine’s self-reflection. As Edith Waldstein points out, the immediacy of this creative process and self-definition is visible throughout the novel and is the result of von Arnim’s synthesis of self and other through love.⁶⁸⁸

Brentano von Arnim also links love to the creative process of writing rooted in the act of speaking. Initially, she relies on the biblical account of creation: “Und da fiel mir ein, daß Gott

⁶⁸⁵ Thanks to her brother, Bettina Brentano became familiar with the Jena school of early Romanticism, more specifically with the writings and thought of Friedrich and August Wilhelm Schlegel, Ludwig Tieck, and Novalis’ ideas about politics and history, and the dialectical relationship between the past, present and future. Of much more importance, however, was her exposure to the “feminine culture” envisioned by these early Romantics, for instance in Friedrich Schlegel’s novel *Lucinde* (1799) or Dorothea Veit Schlegel’s *Florentin* (1801).

⁶⁸⁶ Waldstein, *Bettine von Arnim and the Politics of Romantic Conversation*, 35.

⁶⁸⁷ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 428.

⁶⁸⁸ Waldstein, *Bettine von Arnim and the Politics of Romantic Conversation*, 46.

sprach: Es *werde*, und daß die Sprach Gottes ein Erschaffen sei; - und das wollt ich nachahmen.”⁶⁸⁹ Through the use of the expression “Es *werde*” the author makes an analogy between the the creation story of the Hebrew Bible which introduces the first Book of Moses (Genesis) with the words: “Und Gott sprach: Es werde Licht! Und es ward Licht.” Zimmerman observes that by placing language as the instrument of creation at the center of attention, Brentano von Arnim connects it to the “inspiring nature,” as illustrated in Schlegel’s progressive *Universalpoesie*.⁶⁹⁰ The verbalization of nature is not only connected to thinking, as delineated by Novalis, but rather it begins in human experience and feeling within the human heart.⁶⁹¹

– Alles was ich anseh – ja das empfind ich plötzlich ganz – ... das dringt mir alles mit etwas ins Herz, soll ichs Sprach nennen? – mit was berührt man denn die Seel, ist die Sprach nicht die Lieb die die Seel berührt, wie der Kuß den Menschen berührt? – Vielleicht doch, nun so ist das, was ich in der Natur erfahr gewiß Sprache denn sie küßt meinen Geist, – jetzt weiß ich auch was küssen ist, denn sonst wärs nichts wenns das nicht wär, jetzt geb acht:
Küssen ist, die Form und den Geist der Form in uns aufnehmen die wir berühren, das ist der Kuß; ja, die Form wird in uns geboren, und darum ist die Sprach auch küssen, es küßt uns jedes Wort im Gedicht.⁶⁹²

In the end, the author concludes that the act of speaking is not only achieved through “the act of thinking,” but also through love appearing inside one’s heart. She compares the spiritual act of love able to touch the soul to the erotic act of individual words kissing the reader. Brentano von Arnim conceptualizes “a divine model of communication”⁶⁹³ per se: “Liebe ist glaub ich nur

⁶⁸⁹ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 467.

⁶⁹⁰ Zimmermann, *Die polyfunktionale Bedeutung dialogischer Sprechformen um 1800*, 190.

⁶⁹¹ Novalis derives from this bible word the equivalency of speaking and doing: “Denken ist Sprechen. Sprechen und Tun oder Machen sind eine, nur modifizeirte Operation. Gott sprach es werde Licht, und es ward.” Schiften vol. 3, 106.

⁶⁹² Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 527-528, here Zimmerman, 192.

⁶⁹³ Zimmermann, *Die polyfunktionale Bedeutung dialogischer Sprechformen um 1800*, 63-65.

Zimmermann talks about constituting personality: Those communicatively marked text forms are based on the view of personhood which understands the “I” as inner plural and the “you” as a complement to “I.” The most important representatives were: Novalis, Freidrich Schlegel and Schleiermacher. In the term personality, Novalis interlocks individual existence and importance of community. So in order to develop personality one needs to take on multiple individualities and be able to assimilate himself/herself; through this gesture, he/she will become an individuality, a genius: “Eine ächt synthetische Person ist eine Person, die mehrere Personen zugleich ist – ein Genius.” Novalis Schriften Band 3, Fragment nr. 63, p. 250, eds., Paul Kluckhohn und Richard Samuel (Leipzig,

Göttergespräch. – Weil ich weiß daß ich alles weiß, nur kann ichs nicht finden, so such ich alles in mir, das ist ein Gespräch mit Gott. Das ist also Liebesgespräch. ... Aber Liebe ist doch wohl doch bloß Gottheitsgespräch? – Ja, was soll sie anders ein? – Frage und süße Antwort.”⁶⁹⁴ In the end love becomes linked to dialogue since the act of speaking is an exchange between a question and an answer, and these then in turn are connected to divinity.

The author associates the somatosensory system with linguistic abilities. She equates language with an act of love (“ist die Sprach nicht Lieb”),⁶⁹⁵ which moves the spirit, the place of sensation reception. Because of this limitation of language perception, a redundancy appears as a comparison with bodily contact; consequently, Brentano von Arnim transposes the function of the eye and mouth in regard to nature: “denn die Augen sind der Mund den die Natur küßt.”⁶⁹⁶ The point of departure for the definition: “darum ist die Sprache auch küssen” builds the common function of both actions. When Brentano von Arnim speaks about the language touching the spirit and the kiss touching a human being, she uses touch as an umbrella term, which employs the verbs “sprechen” and “küssen” as synonyms.⁶⁹⁷ The premise for this is limited definition of speaking as the act of love. The synonymous usage, spirit and sensation,

1928). Personality is thereby ipso facto not established – not a given but in a permanent formation process. It never commands, rules over itself and if then only in retrospect, referring to the past. Letter, dialogue, diary, fragment are in research emphasized as open forms. If one were to assume that this involves only egocentric texts, one could speak about an “offenen Persönlichkeitsstruktur.” The completion is in the future and implies a continuous development of the I. The product personality is not suggested as the result of an isolated differentiation, but rather as a part of a community. The threatening isolation and rootlessness of an individual is addressed by Novalis in the idea of communicative community: “Je man nichfacher Etwas individualisirt ist - desto mannichfacher ist seine Grenze und Nachbarschaft. Ein unendlich characterisirtes Individuum ist Glied eines Infinitinomi(m)s. Novalis Bd 3, Nr. 113, p. 262. One realizes oneself in the community and learns its subjectivity in the first place in connection with other subjects. Zimmermann, *Die polyfunktionale Bedeutung dialogischer Sprechformen um 1800*, 65.

⁶⁹⁴ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 511-512.

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid., 527.

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid., 528.

⁶⁹⁷ Zimmermann, *Die polyfunktionale Bedeutung dialogischer Sprechformen um 1800*, 193.

rationality and reflection, which are interchangeable, hints to the fact that nature shares itself with people by triggering sensations.⁶⁹⁸

Bettine constantly looks for words that would reflect the synthesis of life, and her friend Karoline von Günderode recognizes the need for discovering new sources of innovative language: “Du meinst es müßten neue Sprachquellen sich öffnen um Deine Begriffe zu erhellen. ... Von der Sprache glaub ich daß wohl ein Menschenleben dazu gehört, um sie ganz fassen zu lernen, und daß ihre noch unentdeckten Quellen, nach denen Du forschest, wohl nur aus ihrer Vereinfachung entspringen.”⁶⁹⁹ To Brentano von Arnim, words seem to function as “einzelne architektonische Teile” which organize thoughts symmetrically. However, “es gibt aber eine gewisse Romantische Unordnung, oder vielmehr Zufallsordnung, die so was lockendes, ja ganz hinreißendes hat in der Natur.”⁷⁰⁰ The connection to nature allows for Romantic chaos, ensuring that the following thoughts are possible: “Alle Form ist Buchstabe wisse die Formen zusammen zu setzen so hast Du das Wort (Kuß), und durch dieses den Sinn (Gedanken) Liebesnahrung des Geistes.”⁷⁰¹ Successively, nature links all the ideas not only to art but also to language and essentially to love.

The core concepts, upon which Brentano von Arnim develops her notion of creation, correspond to three self-designed gospels: communication, nature, and youth – brought to unison through love and the synthesis of spirit and feeling. Her thought here corresponds to that of Aristotle: “while young men become friends quickly, old men do not.” It is indeed in spending their days together in endless conversations that their friendship develops.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁹ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 578.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid., 619.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid., 533.

Brenatano von Arnim's Use of Nature Imagery in the Letters

“Seit die Rosen in meinem Zimmer blühen sprechen sie als mit mir von Liebe,” Bettine says.⁷⁰² Roses in particular play an important role in illustrating how nature itself speaks of love. A rose bush standing in Bettine's room where it was placed secretly not only speaks of love but also continues to do so when it blooms with brand new blossoms.⁷⁰³ “— Seh ich den großen Rosenstrauch an da auf dem Inselberg, er hatte beinah schon abgeblüht, jetzt ist ein Nachschuß da, das betracht ich alles, das dringt mir alles mit etwas ins Herz, soll ichs Sprach nennen?⁷⁰⁴ Bettine takes to bed the rose which speaks and represents “ein Heiligtum der Natur” prompting one to think only noble thoughts.⁷⁰⁵ The rose leitmotif embodying the sanctum of nature is the key element that connects the themes of nature, religion, and love:

Heut Morgen kam ich dazu wie der Bernhards Gärtner mit einem Nelkenheber die dunkelroten Nelken in einen Kreis um einen Berg von weißen Lilien versetzte, in der Mitte stand ein Rosenbusch. Diese Früharbeit gefiel mir wohl und hab mit Andacht dabei geholfen, der Dienst der Natur, der ist wie Tempeldienst.⁷⁰⁶

Here Bettine perceives herself to be a servant of nature and communicates in theological language. The register changes when she describes students' reaction to the rose bush in her window, a rare sight during the winter time in Marburg.⁷⁰⁷ She begins a playful game with the rose bush by putting it on the window sill so that students can see it. In turn they count the rose buds, and Bettine toys with the idea of throwing them to the students, so that each of them could put the flowers in their hats:

⁷⁰² Ibid., 738.

⁷⁰³ Ibid., 736.

⁷⁰⁴ “mit was berührt man denn die Seel, ist die Sprach nicht die Lieb, die die Seel berührt, wie der Kuß den Menschen berührt? – Vielleicht doch; nun, es ist das, was ich in der Natur erfahr, gewiß Sprache, denn sie küßt meien Geist, - jetzt weiß ich auch was küssen ist, denn sonst wär's nichts, wenn's das nicht wär,” Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 527.

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid., 458.

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid., 416.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid., 736.

Heut Morgen hab ich den Rosenstock wieder ans Fenster gestellt eh die Studenten kamen und hab hinter dem Vorhang gelauscht ob sie wieder heraufgucken, sie haben sich bemüht die Rosen zu zählen einer zählte siebzehn der anere funfzehn, so viel sind grade zu sehen, die andern sind noch zu klein, – könnt ich jedem eine hinunterwerfen sie an seine Mütze zu stecken.⁷⁰⁸

The students engage in the game, as they actively look for the rose bush, and this time Bettine wishes to throw roses directly on their heads before she leaves the town: “Ihr guten Studenten! heut haben sie wieder nach den Rosen gesehen, – ich möcht sie Euch alle abbrechen eh ich weggeh und sie Euch auf den Kopf werfen.”⁷⁰⁹

Here Bettine uses the symbol of roses, epitomizing romantic expression of love and passion, as if in a wedding ceremony. She wishes to scatter roses over the students’ heads. The significance of roses slowly takes on an erotic meaning when Bettine calls them “brides of Ephraim,” the one who initially gave her the rose bush and who will take care of it while Bettine is gone.⁷¹⁰ Ephraim, however, suggests giving the roses to the students who look at them “lustfully” and, in effect, feel insatiable desire for them. When – upon discovering that the rose bush had vanished from the window – students become surprised and sad, Bettine makes her last promise:

Und eben sah ich noch die Studenten ins Kolleg gehen und sie waren recht verwundert daß der Rosenstock nicht mehr da war. Ich sahs ihnen an, es war ihnen Leid, sie hatten nun schon acht Tage hinter einander die Rosen gezählt. – Wartet nur Ihr werdet ihn bald ausfündig machen und dann werden die Artigsten unter Euch meine Rosen in der Weste tragen dürfen.⁷¹¹

Bettine tries to console the disappointed students, who will get to carry roses in their vests, that is, close to their hearts. This description points to that idea of eternal love. Considering that this

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid., 738.

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid., 739.

⁷¹⁰ Ibid., 740-741, “O Ephraim . . . , denn Ihr seid vermählt zusammen mit den Rosen, sie sind Eure Braut. Ich war ein paar Mal versucht sie abbrechen und sie den Studenten hinunter zu werfen, weil sie so lüstern danach hinaufsaßen. Er sagte, ‘O wenn Sie es erlauben, so will ich sie schon unter den Studenten austeilen, es besuchen mich alle Tage welche und dann werden schon mehrere kommen, wenn sie wissen daß es Rosen bei mir gibt.’ Das war ich zufrieden und ich freu mich recht drüber daß meine Studenten noch meine Rosen kriegen.”

⁷¹¹ Ibid., 742.

is the closing of the last letter in *Die G nderode*, it can also be perceived as a fulfillment, as the fundamental idea of the author, and her witness to love.

Dialogues About Love in the Last Letters

Love occupies a paramount place in Bettine's world: "Wissen ist Handwerker sein, aber Wissend sein, ist Wachstum der Seele Leben des Geistes mit ihr in der Natur; Leben ist aber Liebe."⁷¹² She equates life with love, and all actions also need to be rooted in love: "Alles aus Liebe, sonst geht die Welt unter."⁷¹³ In Bettine's last letters, there is restlessness caused by the absence of G nderode's letters, which drives the project of their friendship into crisis:

Was wars also mit Deinem fr h sterben wollen? – wem zu gefallen willst Du das? – Dir selbst zu Lieb? – also rechnest Du die scharlachen Kaiserbahn f r Deine Jugendbl te, blo  weil sie so glanzvoll schimmert, aber sieh doch, die Welt achtet sie ja nicht, sie zerrei t sie in Fetzen, und Du stehst an ihrem End, und ist nicht mehr eine Spur davon, und da willst Du Dich mit zerrei en?⁷¹⁴

Bettine seems to have overcome the crisis after receiving another letter from her friend. At the same time, however, Bettine transforms the structure of dialogue into a dialogue with her interior self, which takes place in the second part of the novel, where she increasingly converses with spirits, stars, and nature.

Hedwig Pompe explains that this could be a strategy Brentano von Arnim used to work through the tragedy of the end to the "real" relationship with G nderode, and thanks to the

⁷¹² Ibid., 628.

⁷¹³ Ibid., 592, "ein Wappen in Glas gemalt in griechischer Sprache geschrieben es ist dem Gro papa von der Stat Trier geschenkt worde, weil er als Kanzler in trierischen Diesnten sich gegen den Kurf rsten weigerte, eine Abgabe, die er zu dr cken fand, dem Bauerstand aufzulegen; als er kein Geh r fand, nahm er liebe seien Abschied, als seinen Name unter eine unbillige frodergun zu schreiben; so kamen ihm die Bauern mit B rgerkronne entgegen in allen Orgen und in Speier hatte sie sein Haus von innen und ausse geschm ck und illuminiert zu seienm Empfang."

⁷¹⁴ Ibid., 700-701.

power of poetic continuation, she overcomes the crisis.⁷¹⁵ “Wenn Du nicht wärst, was wär mir die ganze Welt?”⁷¹⁶ Bettine asks her friend giving her the credit for her whole existence:

– auch bin ich gestorben schon jetzt, wenn Du mich nicht auferstehen heißest und willst mit mir leben immerfort; ich fühls recht, mein Leben ist bloß aufgewacht, weil Du mir riefst, und wird sterben müssen, wenn es nicht in Dir kann fortgedeihen. – Frei sein willst Du, hast Du gesagt? – ich will nicht frei sein, ich will Wurzel fassen in Dir – eine Waldrose, die im eignen Duft sich erquicke, will die der Sonne sich schon öffnen, und der Boden löst sich von ihrer Wurzel, dann ists aus. – Ja, mein Leben ist unsicher; ohne Deine Liebe, in die es eingepflanzt ist, wirds gewiß nicht aufblühen und mir ists eben so durch den Kopf gefahren, als ob Du mich vergessen könntest – bleib mir doch. –⁷¹⁷

Aristotle’s model of ideal friendship emerges – according to which moral virtue endures, so that love based on goodness will be correspondingly constant – as Bettine does expect their ideal friendship to be constant.⁷¹⁸ The desperate cry for the presence of her friend through dialogue remains unanswered. The author then connects the feeling of love with that of jealousy:

Eifersucht fährt heraus aus dem Geist der Liebe als wärs der Dämon selber, sie ist eine starke bewegende Kraft, ich weiß was ich ihr zu danken hab; – ja vielleicht ist sie eine Gestalt, in die sich der Dämon kleidet; wenn ich eifersüchtig bin ist mirs immer göttlich zu Mut, alles muß ich verachten, alles seh ich unter mir, weil es so hell in mir leuchtet, und nichts scheint mir unerreichbar, ich fliege wo andre mühselig kriechen.⁷¹⁹

Die Günderode reflects yet another Aristotelian view about friendships, namely, that “one cannot be a friend to many people in the sense of having friendship of the perfect type with them, just as one cannot be in love with many people at once (for love is a sort of excess of feeling, and it is the nature of such only to be felt towards one person).⁷²⁰ Even though the jealousy and possessiveness are depicted as constructive forces at first, which are supposed to advance their friendship, love demands exclusivity. The monologue becomes more prevalent towards the end

⁷¹⁵ Pompe, *Der Wille zum Glück*, 70.

⁷¹⁶ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 300.

⁷¹⁷ Ibid.

⁷¹⁸ Alan Soble, ed., *Eros, Agape and Philia. Readings in the Philosophy of Love* (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 43.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid., 343.

⁷²⁰ Aristotle, “Perfect Friendship,” (reprinted from the *Oxford Translation of Aristotle*, ed., W.D. Ross), in *Eros, Agape and Philia. Readings in the Philosophy of Love*, ed., Alan Soble (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 57-70, p. 63.

of the work, as the feeling of love becomes gradually obliterated. Brentano von Arnim connects dialogue directly to love: “Frage ist Liebe, und Antwort Gegenliebe. Wo die Frage bloß Liebe zum Dämon ist, da antwortet er, der Lieb kann Geist nicht widerstehen, wie ich nicht und Du nicht.”⁷²¹ The last pages of the novel are in the form of an addendum reserved for a poem by Karoline Günderode entitled, “Der Franke in Egypten” that describes a pilgrim finding his way home through love. In this way, the author emphasizes, once more, the theme of love present through the novel. The closing words invoke the consolation stemming from love: “Wohl mir! dich und mich hab’ ich gefunden. /Liebe hat dem Chaos sich entwunden.”⁷²²

3.6 CONCLUSION

Die Günderode is revolutionary in its presentation of an alternative vision of Romantic writing, proposing a fresh feminine perspective. In contrast to a paradigm of the adoring child in the Goethe book, which depicted the conventional male-female role division, or the unruly youth of *Frühlingskranz*, *Die Günderode* focuses on the experiences of women and presents a topic that was anathema to the literature of its time: the passionate friendship between two women.⁷²³ The hyperbolic and excessively emotional language of Romanticism that informs *Die Günderode* might initially inhibit the modern reader’s access to the text, making it difficult to assess the significance of the women’s relationship. The intensity of their interaction soon makes it apparent that their relationship even transcends Romantic norms. While its doubtful that that women were physically intimate, there are distinctly erotic overtones in many of Bettina Brentano von Arnim’s letters. It is precisely the female identification and the characters’

⁷²¹ Ibid., 341.

⁷²² Ibid., 746.

⁷²³ Anna K. Kuhn, “The ‘Failure’ of Biography and the Triumph of Women’s Writing,” 24.

rejection of male values, as presented in *Die G nderode*, that enable the two women to develop an alternative social vision.

In *Die G nderode*, the self-discovery of female identity is attained through female bonding and mirroring – through the dynamics of friendship between members of the same sex. In this text the quest for the other also becomes a quest for the self. The characterizations of both Bettine and G nderode are not simply epistolary self-revelations. Both figures exist in the text in relation to each other, that is, each constantly defines the other, for instance, as the *Wiederhall*.⁷²⁴ The text celebrates the reciprocity of friendship between two temperamentally very different, yet complementary individuals who respected each other’s uniqueness and who shared experiences, thoughts and emotions with each other. *Die G nderode* depicts the process of self-definition undertaken by the two women as a process of self-understanding achieved in large part through an understanding of the other. The friendship between the two young women relied heavily on correspondence for its sustenance. The writing of letters, which the brother Clemens Brentano encouraged, became the foundation of the relationship between Bettina Brentano and Karoline G nderode. Only through this open dialogue and symphilosophy did they come to understand themselves and one another. Furthermore, Brenatano von Arnim helped her friend G nderode out of the neutralizing oblivion by taking the focus off her suicide and instead zooming in on Romantic female creativity.

The singularity of *Die G nderode* lies in the reciprocity it creates between writer and subject and between reader and text. Both texts constitute a dialogue between the writing subject, the ’’I’’ narrator of the *Die G nderode* who at times appears to be identical with the author and

⁷²⁴ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, for instance (624 or 381), ’’Lieber Wiederhall, ich hab Dir was zu sagen von meiner schmerzlichen Langenweil, ... Du bist der Wiederhall und ich darf nun nicht eher hoffen als bis mein Rufen bei Dir angeschlagen hat,’’ and ’’und wenns noch so sch n ist, es ist doch traurig ohne Wiederhall in der lebendigen Brust, der Mensch ist doch nichts als Begehren sich zu f hlen im Andern.’’

the subject of narration, Karoline von Günderode. This dialogue is then extended to include the reader as well, either through direct address or through the active involvement of the reader in the reading process. Brentano von Arnim provokes traditional norms and suggests alternative forms. In the endeavor to articulate her experiences, she designed writing techniques that enabled her to subvert some of the impediments of conventional, that is to say, male literary forms. Instead of the supremacy of an authorial voice, Bettina Brentano von Arnim established a dialogue situation that did not objectify Karoline von Günderode. She celebrates reciprocity of close friendship between women by emphasizing the role of love in their interactions and relationship in general. In her dialogic epistolary novel *Die Günderode*, Brentano von Arnim focused on the importance of sociability and symphilosophy in every day life with the emphasis on the idea that “life is love.”⁷²⁵

⁷²⁵ Schmitz and Steinsdorff, 628.

CHAPTER 4

LOVE AS PASSION IN THE LETTERS AND SELECTED WORKS OF KAROLINE VON GÜNDERRODE

When Karoline von Günderrode asked Gunda Brentano: “Gunda, ist es nur die Liebe, die in diese dumpfe Leerheit Leben und Empfindung gießt?,” she knew full well that for her, love was not only the starting point for her creativity, but most importantly the very foundation of her life and that of others.⁷²⁶ In this chapter, I will read Karoline von Günderrode’s letters and analyze them in the light of the concept of dialogue, more specifically a dialogue about love. I am particularly interested in how she constructed her life based on a simultaneously intellectual and passionate ideal of love that fueled her artistic imagination and propelled her inspiration. I will also elucidate the importance of her dialogical project as a woman writer attempting to enter the public sphere in a male-dominated society.

Just as Rahel Levin Varnhagen and Bettina Brentano von Arnim, Karoline von Günderrode (1780-1806) was absorbed in and committed to spoken and written dialogue about love, but not in a classically romantic sense. Rather, I argue that Günderrode constructs herself in the letters very idealistically as the figure of a phoenix who is reborn.⁷²⁷ Enduring and consuming passion is genuinely something Günderrode experienced, but at the same time it is a

⁷²⁶ Günderrode to Gunda (Kunigunde) Brentano, Hanau, 24 November, 1801, *Ich Sende Dir ein zärtliches Pfand: Die Briefe der Karoline von Günderrode*, ed. Birgit Weissenborn (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1992). 83-84.

⁷²⁷ It may be helpful here to consider the mythological figure Phoenix whom Günderrode mentions in her poem “Ist alles stumm und leer,” which is analogical to her portrayal of herself in many letters as being born and reborn anew. In Greek mythology, a phoenix is a long-lived bird that is reborn cyclically by acquiring new life and arising from the ashes of its predecessor. According to R. van der Broek’s study, the phoenix in the historical record could symbolize renewal in general as well as the sun, resurrection, life in the heavenly paradise, Christ, Mary, virginity, the exceptional man, and certain aspects of Christian life.” Door Roelof Van Den Broek, *The Myth of the Phoenix. According to Classical and Early Christian Tradition*, transl. I. Seeger (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1972).

powerful trope within her highly complex letters.⁷²⁸ However, not only letters, but also works such as her most popular drama, *Mahomed* (1805), focus on the form of dialogue and a notion of fervent love.⁷²⁹ Her utopian view that love cannot exist without a harmony of views and attitudes, and that mutual love and passion belong to a union between a man and a woman who are not necessarily united in a bond of formal marriage, presented a revolutionary statement in itself.⁷³⁰

Günderrode's extensive correspondence with the two most prominent literary members of the Brentano family – Clemens and Bettina – has captivated literary critics for years.⁷³¹ Günderrode's letters were frequently “harvested” for their revelation of the Brentanos' social and literary world, as well as for an insight into her own affairs of the heart. She met the Brentano family at the age of seventeen after she moved to Frankfurt to live in the *Damenstift*, a Protestant institution for unmarried noblewomen.⁷³² It was also in Frankfurt that she became acquainted with Friedrich Karl von Savigny, with whom she fell in love.⁷³³ However, she was disappointed when he married her friend, Kunigunde Brentano (called Gunda for short), another member of

⁷²⁸ According to Karlheinz Bohrer, Günderrode's love for Savigny was only an aesthetic expression of subjectivity (82), and her love to Creuzer was trapped in the realm of Romantic fantasy (83). See Karl Heinz Bohrer, *Der romantische Brief. Die Entstehung ästhetischer Subjektivität* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1989). Margarete Susman explains Günderrode's relationship with Creuzer as insatiable Romantic love (145). According to Susman, it was a sort of a dream, which led her to seek death, and thus, immortality (150). See Margarete Susman, *Frauen der Romantik* (Köln: Metzler, 1960), 151.

⁷²⁹ Günderrode's editor, Christian Nees von Esenbeck (1776-1858), referred to her *Mahomed* as a “dialogiserte Geschichte.” See Walter Morgenthaler, ed, *Sämtliche Werke und Ausgewählte Studien*, vol. III (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfelder/Roter Stern, 1990), 129.

⁷³⁰ “Ich kann mir keine Liebe ohne Harmonie der Gesinnungen denken, diese ist hier unmöglich.” To Karoline von Barkhaus, February 14, 1800, Weissenborn, 62-63.

⁷³¹ For the information about Günderrode's letters and their passing on and publication history see Max Preitz, ed. “Einleitung,” „Karoline von Günderrode in ihrer Umwelt. II. Karoline von Günderrodes Briefwechsel mit Friedrich Karl und Gunda von Savigny.” In: *Jahrbuch des Freien Deutschen Hochstifts*, 158-235. Ed. Max Preitz (Kritische Ausgabe mit Kommentar) (Tübingen: *Jahrbuch des Freien Deutschen Hochstifts*, 1964), 158-161. Ludwig Geiger was the first editor to publish Günderrode's letter collection, entitled, *Caroline von Günderrode und ihre Freunde* (1895) followed by Karl Preisendanz's edition *Die Liebe der Günderrode* (1912) and Paul Pattloch's *Unbekannte Briefe der Karoline von Günderrode an Friedrich Creuzer* (1937-38).

⁷³² See Max Preitz, “Karoline von Günderrode in ihrer Umwelt I. Briefe von Lisette und Christian Gottfried Nees von Esenbeck. Karoline von G. Friedrich Creuzer, Clemens Brentano und Susanne von Heyden” (*Jahrbuch des Freien Deutschen Hochstifts*, 1962), 208-306, p 212.

⁷³³ Friedrich Carl von Savigny (1779 – 1861) a jurist and a historian. See Preitz, I, 212.

the Brentano family. About the same time in 1804, she published her first collection of poems, *Gedichte und Phantasien*, and, shortly thereafter, her *Poetische Fragmente* (1805) appeared.⁷³⁴ Because these events took place almost simultaneously, Günderrode's works have since been associated with her love life. Inevitably, a few years later, after her love affair with the married Friedrich Creuzer, which ended with Günderrode's taking her own life with a dagger in Winkel on the banks of the Rhine River, Günderrode was received as the epitome of a Romantic woman and an expression of Romantic pessimism.⁷³⁵ Her shocking death and contact with the Brentanos precipitated an abundance of biographies which concentrated on her correspondence with her famous friends, on her death as an act of despair, and on her poetry as an articulation of her feelings.⁷³⁶

The most prominent of the biographical writings on Günderrode were those written by Bettina Brentano von Arnim in the nineteenth and Christa Wolf in the twentieth century.⁷³⁷ Regardless of the significant number of biographical accounts issued since Brentano von Arnim's *Die Günderrode*, none has been as influential as Christa Wolf's writings in ensuring that Günderrode's name as an important woman author lived on in the twentieth century.⁷³⁸ In the introduction to *Der Schatten eines Traumes*, an edition of Günderrode's poetry, prose, and excerpts from her letters, "Wolf enters into dialogue not only with Günderrode but also with

⁷³⁴ Tian. *Gedichte und Phantasien*, Hamburg und Frankfurt: J.C. Hermannsche Buchhandlung, 1804. Tian. *Poetische Fragmente*, Frankfurt a.M. Friedrich Wilmans 1805. See Walter Morgenthaler, ed, *Sämtliche Werke und Ausgewählte Studien*, vol. III (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfelder/Roter Stern, 1990), 11-17.

⁷³⁵ Since August, 1804 she was in love with Friedrich Creuzer (1771 –1858), a philologist and archaeologist. See Max Preitz, ed. "Karoline von Günderrode in ihrer Umwelt. I. Briefe von Lisette und Christian Nees von Esenbeck, Karoline von Günderrode, Friedrich Creuzer, Clemens Brentano und Susanne von Heyden." In *Jahrbuch des Freien Deutschen Hochstifts*, 208-306. (Erste kritische Briefausgabe mit Kommentar, bringt ca. 40 authentische Briefe) (Tübingen: *Jahrbuch des Freien Deutschen Hochstifts*, 1962), 212. Birgit Weißenborn remarks that Günderrode's death – and initially her dedication to philosophy which alienated her from the middle-class life – brings her closer to other tragic writers of the era: Kleist, Hölderlin or Novalis. *Ich Sende Dir ein zärtliches Pfand: Die Briefe der Karoline von Günderrode* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1992), 38.

⁷³⁶ Stephanie, M. Hilger, *Women Write Back. Strategies of Response and the Dynamics of European Literary Culture 1790-1805* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), 91-93.

⁷³⁷ *Ibid.*, 91-93.

⁷³⁸ Hilger, *Women Write Back*, 91-93.

Arnim when she comments on the reception of Arnim's *Die Günderröde*," lauding Brentano von Arnim's reworking of her and Günderröde's correspondence into an epistolary novel and defending her poetic style.⁷³⁹

In a way, Wolf's encouragement of dialogue might be perceived as the continuation of the dialogue Günderröde began and wanted to sustain. Günderröde's letters and works not only illustrate countless attempts to remain in dialogue with others, but also demonstrate how dialogue interruptions metamorphose into a crisis of dialogue. The process of dialogical disintegration can be observed in Günderröde's later letters. It begins innocuously and gradually gains strength as her letters document her conflict with society and the feeling of being totally isolated. At times, her dialogue with the recipient of her letter assumes the form of an echo conversation with herself.⁷⁴⁰ Since some of her friends' letters were composed only after Günderröde's untimely death and describe the circumstances thereof as well as ruminate on her actions, they exclude her from the dialogue.⁷⁴¹ The collection of letters as it was published after Günderröde's death illustrates figuratively the act of silencing the woman author, muting her progressive ideas and preventing her from entering the public sphere.

In the following, I first explain that I read Karoline von Günderröde's private letters (not intended for publication) in order to examine the differences between her letters and those of Rahel Levin Varnhagen and Bettina Brentano von Arnim. Subsequently, I explore friendship as manifestation of sociability and symphilosophie in Günderröde's letters as well as the importance of intellectual love in her life. Finally, I focus on her letter exchanges with two

⁷³⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁰ Letter to Gunda Brentano, September 4, 1801. Preitz II, 171-2. "Du versetzest mich dadurch daß Du mir nicht schreiben willst in die Lage eines Menschen der sich in das Echo verliebt hat; oder wenn ich es recht genau nehmen wollte in eine noch viel schlimmere, das Echo ist freilich allen Fragen, allen Bitten taub, aber man kann sich doch einbilden eine Antwort von ihm zu hören; und das kann ich nicht mal bei Dir."

⁷⁴¹ See Birgit Weißenborn's edition *Ich Sende Dir ein zärtliches Pfand: Die Briefe der Karoline von Günderröde*, (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1992).

correspondents in particular: Friedrich Creuzer and Carl von Savigny. Along the way, I show that a genuine felt sense of love – but also a self-conscious construction of love of the Phoenix – in G nderrode’s letters is a central element in her self-understanding. Her consuming Phoenix-like passion is also central to her death – which, provocatively, she did not see as a finality. The fact that G nderrode’s letters sometimes do reflect the “overcompetence” that J rgen Wertheimer argues characterizes the “crisis of dialogue” around 1800, does not mean that she fails to communicate.

4.1 STRATEGIES OF DIALOGUE IN G NDERRODE’S PRIVATE LETTERS

G nderrode’s letters, never intended for publication and never printed during her lifetime, belonged and arguably still belong to a truly private sphere. Despite this, she was always a member of the bourgeois public sphere since she was a published author already during her lifetime. Hence this particular part of her dialogical undertaking was destined to remain concealed. Her need of meaningful intellectual interaction between equal dialogue partners points to *Symphilosophie*, which to G nderrode meant, as much as thinking with feelings, an emphasis on an intense intellectual discussion in which ideas move back and forth until it would be impossible to delineate where precisely one’s contribution ended and other’s contribution began.

G nderrode attempted to enter the public sphere not through her letters, but rather through her work that was issued under the masculine pseudonyms of Tian and Ion. In contrast with Rahel Levin Varnhagen and Bettine Brentano von Arnim, she showed no interest in collecting her letters and did not solicit them from her correspondents. In the end few of her

letters survived.⁷⁴² Not only was Günderrode not interested in disseminating or even preserving her letters for a public, but she expressed directly a desire for them to remain private. In some existing letters, there are instructions to destroy the letter either by burning it: “Ich bitte verbrennen Sie diesen Brief,”⁷⁴³ or by shredding it to pieces: “Zerreiße dies Blatt.”⁷⁴⁴ She also specifically asks her correspondents to keep her messages undisclosed:

Jetzt will ich Ihnen alles was mein Verhältniß zu Creuzer betrifft recht aufrichtig sagen. ... Sie kennen Creuzers Frau, und haben Einfluß auf ihre Entschließungen, ... Ich habe noch eine Bitte an Sie und Kunigunde, sie besteht darin daß Ihr beide mir die heiligste Verschwiegenheit über diese Sache versichert, es könnte mir unendlichen Verdrus machen wenn man zu früh etwas davon erführe; nicht wahr Ihr thut mir den Gefallen und sagt *Niemand* davon?⁷⁴⁵

The desire to protect her correspondences so that they remain private, however, did not prevent Günderrode from using some passages from Creuzer’s letters in her own work.⁷⁴⁶ Through this act she clearly connected the private with the public sphere. In contrast with Günderrode, several years later Bettina Brentano von Arnim incorporated all of her correspondence into her various books, thus, greatly enhancing the importance of the letter genre. Although Günderrode seemingly sought privacy in her letters, she also quite often conveyed the hope of not becoming

⁷⁴² Margarete Susman, *Frauen der Romantik* (Köln: Metzler, 1960), 151. Creuzer transferred Günderrode’s letters to her friend, Susanne von Heyden (1775-1845) who acted as an adviser and a liaison between Günderrode and Creuzer. According to the agreement regarding the exchange of the letters, Heyden burned all the letters from Günderrode to Creuzer, and only some transcriptions were found later. See Barbara Becker-Cantarino, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik. Epoche – Werke – Wirkung* (München: C.H. Beck, 2000), 205.

⁷⁴³ Günderrode to Karoline von Barkhaus, 19. Juni 1799, Preitz, 163.

⁷⁴⁴ Günderrode to Gunda, Hanau, Juni 1802, Preitz, 176.

⁷⁴⁵ Günderrode to Savigny, Frankfurt, ein letzter Septembertag, 1805, Preitz, 208.

⁷⁴⁶ “Der Tod ist nur ein Übergang. Der Tod ist mir willkommen, und zu dieser Ruhe der Betrachtung zu gelangen, sey das Ziel unseres Strebens,” is the essence of the two friends’s letters according to Becker-Cantarino (359). In “Eusebios Antwort” Günderrode quoted excerpts from her letter exchange with Creuzer; perhaps it was the reason why Creuzer prevented publication and destroyed the manuscript of “Melete” that he had previously arranged for publication in 1806 at Mohr and Zimmer. (224). Hundred years later in 1906, four printed pages and five correction sheets, which were incidentally preserved and found, were published. The title, “Melete” – “die Muse des sinnigen Daseins, die auf hohe Lieder singet” – came from Creuzer. See Becker-Cantarino, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik*, 210

forgotten (“Vergessen Sie mich nicht”⁷⁴⁷), but rather being remembered (“Erinnere Dich an Deine Freundin”⁷⁴⁸). After G nderrode’s passing, her name was at first consigned to oblivion because death by suicide was considered a taboo. Furthermore, G nderrode’s memory was actively and deliberately silenced by the man she loved.⁷⁴⁹

As already mentioned, the first author to undertake the restoration of Karoline von G nderrode’s memory was her friend Bettina Brentano von Arnim, who through the act of creating an extended fictionalized version of their real-life conversation enabled G nderrode to re-enter the bourgeois public space, this time under her own name.⁷⁵⁰ Her almost completely forgotten works – due to German literary historians’ predominant concern with G nderrode’s suicide than with her literary production – were published anew by Christa Wolf in 1970 in Bern.⁷⁵¹ Wolf’s edition allowed a contemporary access to the ignored woman author, however, at the same time, Wolf’s prose created a mystical G nderrode, an image difficult to expunge from literary history.⁷⁵² In contrast this chapter concentrates on G nderrode’s dialogue about love,

⁷⁴⁷ G nderrode to Karoline von Barkhaus, 19. Juni 1799, Preitz, 163.

⁷⁴⁸ G nderrode an eine unbekannte Freundin. Hanau, 13. April 1794, Wei enborn, 43

⁷⁴⁹ In his autobiography *Aus dem Leben eines alten Profesors* (1848), Creuzer did not mention Karoline von G nderrode at all. Her file and works were kept quiet till in 1840 Bettina von Arnim’s Letter-Biography was released. See Becker-Cantarino, 205.

⁷⁵⁰ For the information about handing down and publication of G nderrode’s works see Walter Morgenthaler, ed, *S mtliche Werke und Ausgew hlte Studien*, vol. III (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfelder/Roter Stern, 1990), pp. 11-17. After G nderrode’s death, the first edition of her works, entitled, *Gesammelte Dichtungen von Karoline von G nderode* – consisting of those already published during her life (*Gedichte und Phantasien* and *Poetische Fragmente*) – came out in Mannheim (1857) under Friedrich G tz. In his edition of 1920-22, entitled, *Gesammelte Werke der Karoline von G nderode*, Leopold Hirschberg included her previously published works as well as, *Melete*, correspondence with Karoline v. Barkhaus, and those (published according to Geiger 1899) and unpublished estate writings. In 1923, the editor Elisabeth Salomon published (1923) *Karoline von G nderode. Gesammelte Dichtungen*, which, according to Morgenthaler, is the most complete edition alongside that of Hirschberg. Morgenthaler described Christa Wolf’s edition (1979) as a partial edition. Wolf’s important contribution, in the form of an essay, updated the status of the Romantic writer for the contemporary readership. Yet, Wolf’s edition is problematic because it does not differentiate between published and unpublished estate writings and bibliographical information is often inaccurate: missing secondary literature works or listing wrong authors and titles.

⁷⁵¹ Janine Blackwell and Susanne Zantop, eds. *Bitter Healing: German Women Writers from 1700 to 1830: an Anthology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), p. 421.

⁷⁵² Gisela Dischner, *Bettina von Arnim. Eine weibliche Sozialbiografie des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin: Wagenbach, 1977, 77.

distinctly, about how the passionate love she fashioned played a role in her life as an artist and demonstrates how the crises of dialogue reflect the state of oblivion to which the author was sentenced.

Among the most difficult tasks in letter writing are the reenactments of prior conversations or the creation of a new conversational situation. The writer and the reader strive to make their partner in dialogue become present, so to speak. Such an aspiration is reflected in one of Günderrode's letters to Creuzer: "Nachmittags. Ihr Brief, den ich kürzlich erhielt, hat mich so fremd angesehen, und ich konnte weder seine Sprache noch seine Blicke recht verstehen, er ist so vernünftig, so voll nützlicher Tatlust und gefällt sich im Leben."⁷⁵³ Günderrode brings Creuzer's letter to life and humanizes it by describing how it is able to gaze and to speak. To speak or to write – to remain invisible or to become visible – are questions Günderrode and other women writers at that time had to ask themselves. As she writes, "Ich vergesse schon wieder daß ich nur mündlich mit Ihnen von diesen Dingen sprechen wollte,"⁷⁵⁴ and then ruminates on occasional loneliness in her monastic-like cell⁷⁵⁵ in contrast to those times spent in amusing company,⁷⁵⁶ she considers the difference between the spoken and the written word and the setting in which each act is carried out. She divides communicative acts into categories of those spoken, those written in private, or those destined to be published, and then obliterates the divide between these categories. To that end, she uses Creuzer's "private" letters

⁷⁵³ Günderrode to Friedrich Creuzer, Frankfurt, March 22, 1805, Weißenborn, 205-6.

⁷⁵⁴ Günderrode to Karoline von Barkhaus, Hanau 16 August, 1799, Preitz, 167.

⁷⁵⁵ "Da sitze ich wieder in meiner einsamen Zelle, und die verdumpfes schmerzliches Gefühl des verflossenen Angenehmen und des augenblicklich schmerzlichen Entbehrens zurückläßt." To Karoline von Barkhaus, Frankfurt 18 Juli, 1799, Preitz, 162.

⁷⁵⁶ "Ganz ohne ernsthafte Gedanken bin ich in das neue Jahrhundert eingetreten; ich war gerade auf einem lustigen Ball und in leichtsinniger Stimmung." Karoline von Günderrode to Karoline von Barkhaus, Frankfurt, 11 Januar, 1801, Weißenborn, 74.

he wrote to her as dialogues for her “public” works.⁷⁵⁷ While letter writing constituted an important example of textual conversation, Günderrode was experimenting with conversational strategies in her poetic, dramatic, and paratextual compositions as well.⁷⁵⁸ She thus created alternative interactive modes for herself and her protagonists. As a woman writer, she explored conversation’s didactic potential for women through the compelling connections between oral conversation and literary enactments of dialogue as speech exchange systems.⁷⁵⁹

One could argue that writers consider the objectives of expressing themselves and sharing ideas to be the most compelling objectives of writing. Likewise, for Günderrode the possibility of expression was compelling; “Menschen, die mir Sinn und Liebe für interessante Gegenstände und ein gewisses Streben danach zeigten, wurden oft meine Freunde, weil mir Mitteilung Bedürfnis ist.”⁷⁶⁰ She even goes as far as saying that precisely the need to express herself was initially the sole motivation for making friends. Nevertheless, at the same time she complains about not being able to communicate with others:

Du versetzest mich dadurch daß Du mir nicht schreiben willst in die Lage eines Menschen der sich in das Echo verliebt hat; oder wenn ich es recht genau nehmen wollte in eine noch viel schlimmere, das Echo ist freilich allen Fragen, allen Bitten taub,

⁷⁵⁷ “Eusebios Antwort” in *Melete*. See Barbara Becker-Cantarino, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik. Epoche – Werke – Wirkung* (München: C.H. Beck, 2000), 224.

⁷⁵⁸ Compare Katherine R. Larson, *Early Modern Women in Conversation*, Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011: The dialogue as the complete model of textual conversation encloses the humanist insistence on the close correlation between reading, conversation, and political counsel (4). Women employed the dialogue’s conversation and conventions in their writings, for instance the genres like the psalm, the verse epistle, and the paratex. They created alternative interactive modes for their female main characters. There are convincing connections between oral conversation and literary enactments of dialogue as speech exchange systems because letter writing constitutes an important example of textual conversation (5). Women were experimenting with conversational structures in their poetic, dramatic, and paratextual compositions. Thus, they were able to escape the male-dominated spaces constituting many humanist dialogues but seized their didactic function (8).

⁷⁵⁹ Katherine R. Larson, *Early Modern Women in Conversation*, 5. There were more than two people participating in the dialogue: Karoline and Gunda to Friedrich Carl von Savigny, Frankfurt, Ende 1802, Weißenborn, p. 91. Most Günderrode’s literary works are dialogical, for example, in *Gedichte und Phantasien: Die Manen, Wandel und Treue, Immortalia, Mora, Des Wandrers Niederfahrt*; in *Poetische Fragmente: Hildgund, Mahomed*; in *Sonstige Veröffentlichungen: Udohla, Magie und Schicksal, Nikator*, in *Melete: Scandinavische Weissagungen*.

⁷⁶⁰ To Gunda, Hanau, 24 November, 1801, Weißenborn, 83-84.

aber man kann sich doch einbilden eine Antwort von ihm zu hören; und das kann ich nicht einmal bei Dir.⁷⁶¹

The act of expressing oneself, making one's message manifest, is here compared to an echo effect: the one who generates the message is also the one who receives it. Thus, the message is not disseminated properly, and this is not an ideal setting for Günderrode – as she much rather prefers interaction in the form of receiving feedback or some form of an answer:

Die Einseitigkeit unseres Briefwechsels erregt mir auch unangenehme Empfindungen. Ich schlage Töne mit den schon verhallten abwechseln. – Beinahe wirst Du mir zu fremd, um Dich in die eigentlichsten Teile meiner inner Welt einzuführen; dennoch bist Du ein Gast, den man nicht draußen vor der Tür möchte stehenlassen.⁷⁶²

The lopsidedness of her correspondence with Gunda Brentano is so much of a burden that she decides to elaborate on the problem, noting that the lack of dialogue causes her to feel as if they were strangers. The idea of dialogue requiring a response on a regular basis is confirmed by one of her correspondents, Charlotte: “Gar so lange, meine Liebe, hast Du uns auf eine Antwort von Dir warten lassen, und außer dem, daß es uns sehr unangenehm war, von Dir so lange nichts zu hören, hast Du auch die Mahlchen Wegen den Ohrringen in eine große Verlegenheit gesetzt.”⁷⁶³ However, Günderrode's yearning for dialogue cannot be fully satisfied, and the most blatant example of dialogue interruption is her correspondence with Clemens Brentano,⁷⁶⁴ who subordinates his life to poetry according to his formula: “die Kunst ist lang, das Leben klein.”⁷⁶⁵ He sacrifices the truth for the expression of feelings and living adventurous thoughts of poetic

⁷⁶¹ Günderrode to Gunda, Hanau 4 September, 1801, Preitz, 171.

⁷⁶² Günderrode to Gunda, Hanau, 20 Oktober, 1801, Weißenborn, 81.

⁷⁶³ Charlotte von Günderrode and Karoline von Günderrode, Hanau, 31 Juli, 1800, Weißenborn, 70.

⁷⁶⁴ According to Bohrer the dialogical character of the 18th century letter which was anthropologically curious was lost due to the monological constructs of the I; thus, not permitting for an answer but rather introducing more self-portrayal and self-image cultivation and not its dialogical partnership but its function as a demand to solitude. Bohrer, *Der romantische Brief*, 214.

⁷⁶⁵ Bohrer, *Der romantische Brief*, 257.

existence.⁷⁶⁶ It is a monological self-encounter, and many of his letters were recognized by scholarship as literature.⁷⁶⁷ This never-ending monologue of aesthetic existence poeticizing life is manifest in his love letters to Günderrode.⁷⁶⁸ In contrast to Brentano von Arnim's *Die Günderrode*, which is designed to reflect the dialogue between the two friends, Günderrode's genuine letters reflect a gradual dialogical disintegration. Brentano von Arnim upholds the character Günderrode's state of rebirth till the very end of the work, since she does not mention her friend's death explicitly. Instead, she chooses to hint at it metaphorically throughout the text. In Günderrode's letters the absence of the answer and later the lack of her own voice creates a vacuum.

4.2 FRIENDSHIP AS SOCIABILITY AND SYMPHILOSOPHY IN GÜNDERRODE'S LETTERS

To remain in a meaningful dialogue is a crucial ingredient of any friendship. The letters of Karoline von Günderrode give us an understanding into how she conceptualized friendship. As with as Rahel Levin Varnhagen and Bettina Brentano von Arnim, she hoped for immediate reciprocity, that is, a dialogue based on progressive companionship of ideas:

Auch die Freundschaft versagt mir ihre glückliche Täuschungen. Menschen die mir Sinn und Liebe für interessante Gegenstände, und ein gewisses Streben darnach zeigten, wurden oft meine Freunde, weil mir Mittheilung Bedürfniß ist. Bald aber hatte ich das Interesse daß ich mit ihnen theilte erschöpft, und fand daß ich sie selbst erschöpft hatte; sie hatten nur die Kraft das schon Gedachte, schon Empfundene, mit zu denken mit zu empfinden; aber das Eigene, und Besondere diesem Allgemeinen anzuschließen, die neue Ansicht der Dinge in sich zu erschaffen diesen immer quellenden Reichtum des Geistes versagte ihnen die Natur. In solchem Falle muß man ermüden, oder dem Andern

⁷⁶⁶ Bohrer, *Der romantische Brief*, 258.

⁷⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 237.

⁷⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 260.

immer so viel geben, daß man nich gewahr wird wie wenig man empfängt. Das letztere konnte ich nicht.⁷⁶⁹

As Günderrode seeks contact with those who are ready to listen and to develop their own original ideas, she becomes disillusioned and disappointed with those who cannot contribute to dialogue in productive creative ways and are only able to think that which had already been thought about and experienced. For Günderrode, the focal point of friendship is not as much about persons themselves but about remaining in dialogue about concepts, notions, and perceptions that form interesting subject matter. When an issue under consideration is unsatisfactorily considered, she feels a void, lamenting the inconsistent, unequal and aberrant treatment of the topic. Because of such unfruitful discussions and reflections, she becomes distressed and in turn exasperates her counterparts. She identifies the ideas of discussions with her own life while her friends refuse to do so. What Günderrode envisions and expects is *Symphilosophie*, a collaborative philosophy which – as developed by the Romantics – envisages a group of friends in close fellowship, whose work became fused or aggregated into one work through dialogue, descriptions, explanations, and elucidations so that specific individuation is not discernible.

Such a (sym)philosophical cooperation requires an intense intellectual discussion in which ideas are being transferred back and forth, being shaped and refined, corrected and extended, blended and united until it is impossible to distinguish where one contribution ended and counterpart's contribution began. She, in contrast, despises heartless conversations of everyday company:

... denn nichts ist mir mehr zuwider als der Geist – und herzlose Unterhaltung alltäglicher Gesellschaften denen man doch so manche Stunde aufopfern muß, nie werde

⁷⁶⁹ Günderrode to Gunda, Hanau, 24 November, 1801, Preiz II, 174. “Karoline von Günderrode in ihrer Umwelt” I (Briefe von Lisette Nees und Christian Gottfreid Nees von Esenbeck, Karoline von Günderrode, Friedrich Creuzer, Clemens Brentano und Susanne von Heyden), 208-306; II (Briefwechsel mit Friedrich Karl und Gunda von Savigny), 158-235, III (Karoline von Günderrodes Studienbuch), 223-324, ed. Max Preitz (*Jahrbuch des Freien Deutschen Hochstifts*, Tübingen 1962).

ich mich hineinfinden können, sooft ich auch schon darüber berufen worden bin, und doch sehe ich nicht ein, wie man sich ganz darüber hinaussetzen kann, die meisten sehen das Drückende und Unnatürliche lästiger Konvenienzen und schleppen doch an der Kette.⁷⁷⁰

The conservative, rigid, and irate companions she barely endures proceed with caution when choosing the subjects of their deliberation:

Nun wurden mancherlei Gespräche angesponnen, doch mit vieler Vorsicht, denn es waren Menschen unter uns, welche sehr altgläubig und wütende Aristokraten sind. Jetzt war's 12, wir gingen in die Kirche; hier kam es mir vor wie die Kirche, welche Kosegarten beschreibt, so ländlich war alles, auch die Leute so andächtig. Dann gingen wir ins Haus zurück, aßen, waren sehr fröhlich und traten um 4 unsern Rückweg wieder an.⁷⁷¹

In comparison with Rahel Levin Varnhagen's salon gathering, Karoline von Günderrode's company appears to be mind-numbing and wearisome. It is not only because of the subject matter to which they restrict their conversations, but also – or perhaps most importantly – because of the fact that they come only from one prominent social class, namely, the aristocracy. It is almost as if they belonged to the past, as their thoughts are not progressive, thus, in conflict with Günderrode's notion of symphilosophy. One could say that Günderrode wished for the same salon climate which was to be found in Rahel Levin's salon: a place which attracted intellectuals, men as well as women, where one met like-minded people, in an atmosphere that was informal and where people felt appreciated and understood. An ideal life of the mind would be conducted with friends. Levin Varnhagen cultivated this idea not only within the space of her salon, but also in letters, as she believed that friends by corresponding with each other developed their minds through living in a close network of conviviality. For her, letters were also a means of introduction to those she admired or was fond of.⁷⁷²

⁷⁷⁰ Günderrode to Karoline von Barkhaus, Hanau 29, Juni 1799, Weißenborn, 48.

⁷⁷¹ Günderrode to Karoline von Barkhaus, 14 February, 1800, Weißenborn, 62.g.

⁷⁷² Rahel Levin Varnhagen wrote to her friend Wilhelmine von Boye, prompting her to show her letters to Jean Paul so that he would get to know her better: "show Richter... my previous letter as well as this one... show him some funny ones, too. He shall know me better, I wish it." Maren Meinhardt, "Rahel Levin: Her salon and her

In contrast with the letters of Levin Varnhagen, Günderrode's letters more often refer to the fact that through them she seeks a certain kind of closeness to women as well as a life independent of patriarchal structures. Both wishes are salient in one of Günderrode's early letters to Savigny, as she vehemently protests being ousted from her status as a best friend of his future wife, Gunda:

Es gefällt mir recht gut daß Sie mich Gunderrödchen nennen, aber daß gefällt mir schlecht daß Sie mich ganz austreichen, und sich an meine Stelle setzen wollen, denken Sie ich werde mir das gefallen lassen? Oder sind Sie so erschrecklich stolz zu glauben man werde mich Ihnen zu lieb gleich für null, nichtig und subnummerär erklären, und Sie so lieb haben als mich? o weit gefehlt! Sie sind so gelehrt und haben nicht mehr von der Liebe gelernt! Sie wissen so viel und sind noch so stolz, und voll Irrthum!⁷⁷³

The kind of love Günderrode mentions at this point is love of friendship – *philia* – here, specifically between women. A distinct quality of women's bond and solidarity can be best illustrated with the letter to Günderrode of Lisette Nees von Esenbeck, who was valued as one of the most intelligent and learned women within the friendship circle of Günderrode.⁷⁷⁴

Nein, niemals Karoline werde ich ein Verhältnis, wie das unsrige war, vergessen können; es war die Jugend meines Lebens, frei, ungetrübt und ewig heiter wie der Himmel; nun habe ich mich hinausgewagt aus diesen Spielen der Kindheit, und schon ergreift mich das Leben mit seinen ungewissen Schicksalen, seinen Sorgen und Schmerzen. Ich lebe jetzt anders wie Du mich Dir denkst, und ich werde Dir einmal viel davon sagen. Es könnte kommen, daß ich der Anhänglichkeit an Dich mehr wie jemals bedürfte, um zu leben, darum laß uns immer innig verschlungen bleiben, was uns jemals verbunden, muß ewig⁷⁷⁵ sein, laß mich immer mit Dir fortleben, und lebe Du auch ein doppeltes Leben in mir.

soul," TLS, *The Times Literary Supplement*. The leading international forum for literary culture, <http://www.the-tls.co.uk/tls/public/article1018449>

⁷⁷³ Günderrode to Savigny, Hanau, August 1, 1803, Preitz II, 187.

⁷⁷⁴ The couple Nees von Esenbeck got married in 1804. As a young married woman, Lisette Nees not only managed family property, but also helped her husband with his academic research as they shared the same interests in literature, philosophy, and aesthetics. She was also Karoline von Günderrode's trusted artistic adviser and a close friend. See Preitz, "Zur Einführung," p. 210. Christian Gottfried Daniel Nees von Esenbeck, born on February 14, 1776, studied in Jena Lutheran theology and philosophy, natural sciences, and medicine. In 1800 he was promoted to Dr. med. Later he was the president of the Kaiserlich-Königlich-Leopoldinisch-Karolinischen Akademie der Naturforscher. Preitz, "Zur Einführung," 211.

⁷⁷⁵ Günderrode to Karoline von Barkhaus, Hanau 29, Juni 1799, Weißenborn, p. 48. Wolf classifies such dialogues between women "Weibliche Elemente" and emphasizes the role of the salon in developing similar ideas further. See Christa Wolf, "Nun ja! Das nächste Leben geht aber heute an. Ein Brief über die Bettine," Bettina von Arnim, *Die Günderrode. Mit einem Essay von Christa Wolf* (Leipzig: Insel, 1993) 545-548.

To “lead a double life” was for Lisette Esenbeck a way of escaping her new societal role. As a married woman, she feels trapped within a domestic space and finds leading a meaningful life to be challenging and distressing:

Ich kan mich täglich weniger in die Welt und die Bürgerliche Ordnung fügen
Caroline, mein ganzes Wesen strebt nach einer Freyheit des Lebens wie ich sie
nimmer finden werde; Die Liebe sollte doch dünkt mir frei seyn, ganz frey von den engen
Banden der Bürgerlichkeit; ihr ganzes Wesen, ihre Natur und Tendenz will so etwas ganz
verschiednes als die Welt will daß sie nur 243 gelähmt und recht gedrückt in ihr erscheinen
kann: sie ist wie die Pflanzen und Menschen entfernter südlicher Climate die wir in
unsern rauhen und unfreundlichen Himmelsstrich versetzen; sie stirbt ganz oder wo sie
sich erhält ist ihr Wuchs ärmer und das freie üppige Leben ist erstorben. ... Die
Verhältnisse der Bürgerlichkeit sind überall beengend und jede Berührung mit Menschen
heißt dem freien Schwunge der Liebe die Flügel kürzen. Nützlichkeit ist ein Bleygewicht
an dem Aderfluge der Phantasie.⁷⁷⁶

According to Günderrode’s contemporary Lisette Esenbeck, love should be totally free from the tight ropes of middle class values because its very nature wants something quite different from what the world expects. Thus, love appears to be paralyzed and suppressed, as if suffocated, because it is not truly free. Karoline von Günderrode finds in Lisette Esenbeck the right conversation partner – for what they seek is similar. They do not want to be reduced to their basic womanhood and femininity even though they still value romantic love, understand as the sentimental domain assigned to women, in contrast with that of the intellect and reason assigned to men.⁷⁷⁷ Creuzer’s and Savigny’s reprimands and corrections under the sign of dominating patriarchal structures attest to their perturbation regarding the role transgression committed by

⁷⁷⁶ Lisette Nees to Karoline, Sikershausen 11 Juni, 04, Preitz, 243-244.

⁷⁷⁷ Helen Fronius discusses how the social constructions of patriarchy essentially traumatized women born around 1750, contributing to high level of psychological disorders. Functioning in accord with ideological ideas, the system denied women freedom of expression and creative imagination. Restrictive and oppressive gender ideology defined the role women were allowed to play in society according to definitions of the “Bestimmung des Weibes.” Women’s futures were often defined in restrained ways both in pragmatic texts and literary publications. Based in part on the writings of Rousseau, the debate became more deterministic by focusing on biological, rather than social factors. Helen Fronius, *Women and Literature in the Goethe Era. 1770-1820. Determined Dilettantes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 17-18.

Romantic women.⁷⁷⁸ According to Savigny, Karoline von Günderrode possesses “a strong manly spirit.”⁷⁷⁹ She is, after all, a productive and creative being. She describes herself in these same terms, and wishes to have been born a courageous man, since she is not endowed with feminine virtues:

Gestern las ich Ossians Darthula, und es wirkte so angenehm auf mich; der alte Wunsch einen Heldentod zu sterben ergrif mich mit groser Heftigkeit; unleidlich war es mir noch zu leben, unleidlicher ruhig und gemein zu sterben. Schon oft hatte ich den unweiblichen Wunsch mich in ein wildes Schlachtgetümmel zu werfen, zu sterben, Warum ward ich kein Mann! Ich habe keinen Sinn für weibliche Tugenden, für Weiberglückseeligkeit. Nur das Wilde Grosse, Glänzende gefällt mir. Es ist ein unseliges aber unverbesserliches Misverhältniß in meiner Seele; und es wird und muß so bleiben, denn ich bin ein Weib, und habe Begierden wie ein Mann, ohne Männerkraft. Darum bin ich so wechselnd, und so uneins mit mir.⁷⁸⁰

Günderrode subscribes to the patriarchal gender role division model by admitting that being female is an imbalance and “an incurable discrepancy” – in other words, a kind of disease. Nevertheless she chooses to succumb to this feeling of inner division to the point of self-alienation:

... ich kann es Ihnen nur mit großer Blödigkeit sagen, ich schreibe ein Drama, meine ganze Seele ist damit beschäftigt ja ich denke mich so lebhaft hinein, werde so einheimisch darin, daß mir mein eignes Leben fremd wird; ich habe sehr viel Anlage zu einer solchen Abstraktion, zu einem solchen Eintauchen in einen Strom innerer Betrachtungen und Ereugungen. Gunda sagt es sei dumm sich von einer so kleinen Kunst als meine sei, sich auf diesen Grad beherrschen zu lassen; aber ich liebe diesen Fehler, wenn es einer ist, er hält mich oft schadlos für die ganze Welt.⁷⁸¹

Losing herself in writing about themes considered masculine, to the point when her own life becomes “foreign,” is deemed to be a positive “mistake” which indeed maintains her composure. However, her real life becomes entwined with that of her creative fiction. Margarete

⁷⁷⁸ Caroline Schlegel and Dorothea Veit belonged to the Romantic group of women writers who emerged as independent authors and thus not only as companions of famous male writers. Harro Segeberg “Phasen der Romantik,” *Romantik-Handbuch*, ed. Helmut Schantze (Tübingen: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 2003), 46.

⁷⁷⁹ “Ich weiß nicht, ob ich über dieses Mädchen dem Gerücht glauben soll, nach welchem sie kokett oder prüd oder ein starker männlicher Geist sein müßte, oder ihren blauen Augen, in denen viel sanfte Weiblichkeit wohnt.” Friedrich Carl von Savigny to Leonhard Creuzer, Jena, 7 Juli, 1800, Weißenborn, 70.

⁷⁸⁰ Günderrode to Gunda, Hanau 29 August, 1801, Preitz, 170-171.

⁷⁸¹ Günderrode to Savigny, Frankfurt, 26 Februar, 1804, Preitz, 198.

Susman remarks that those who saw Günderrode's "timid and reserved girlish silhouette with blue eyes" were surprised about the grand manly themes of her oeuvre.⁷⁸² Günderrode's first book publication, written under the pseudonym Tian, was entitled *Gedichte und Phantasien von Tian* (1805) and was printed by Brede in Offenbach, and published by the Hermann bookstore in Hamburg und Frankfurt.⁷⁸³ Günderrode dismissed publishing under her own name in order to avoid public criticism of her work appearing in journals, because the profession of a writer and public appearance was considered unfeminine and was frowned upon especially in better circles. Her pseudonyms functioned as a form of protective cover for her reputation and at the same time they served, for the insiders, as a poetic guise.⁷⁸⁴ Soon, however, her pseudonym Tian was decoded in the friends circle of Bettina Brentano von Arnim, and both Brentano von Arnim and her brother wrote enthusiastic letters to Günderrode, who kept her poems secret.⁷⁸⁵

Ich habe gehört die Lieder und Erzählungen, welche unter dem Namen Tian erschienen sind, seyen von Ihnen, Bettine wollte es als gewiß wissen, und zwar durch das Gedicht "Der Franke in Egypten" das Sie ihr schon einmal als ein Kind Ihrer ersten kindschen Seele eingestanden hätten, und durch die vortreffliche Romanze "Don Juan", die Sie ihr auch eingestanden, ich habe in dieser Idee mir diese Lieder verschrieben, ich habe sie mit Entzücken gelesen, es scheint mir möglich, daß sie von Ihnen seyen, aber ich kann es dann wieder nicht begreifen, daß ich eine solche Vollendung in Ihrem Gemüth nicht sollte verstanden haben ... ich habe weinen müssen über das wunderbare Geschick meiner Empfindungen, und nun weiß ich doch nicht mehr, als vorher, ob die Lieder von Ihnen sind, weiß ich nicht, aber daß was ich in diesem Augenblick fühle, Ihnen gehört, das weiß ich.⁷⁸⁶

Basing his intuition on that of his sister, Clemens Brentano attempted to first convince himself that Tian was the same author as Günderrode. He was only able to assess the works as written by

⁷⁸² Susman, *Frauen der Romantik*, 140.

⁷⁸³ Becker-Cantarino, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik*, 208

⁷⁸⁴ Susane Kord, *Sich einen Namen machen: Anonymität und weibliche Autorschaft 1700-1900*. Stuttgart : Metzler, 1996, 16.

⁷⁸⁵ Karoline von Günderrode, *Sämtliche Werke und Ausgewählte Studien*, ed. Walter Morgenthaler, vol. III (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfelder/Roter Stern, 1990), 60f.

⁷⁸⁶ Clemens Brentano an Karoline, Marburg, 1 Mai, 1804, Preitz, 227.

a woman on the premises of the “feeling” which the reading of her works produced.⁷⁸⁷ Because Brentano was influenced by gender models popular at the time, it was difficult for him to accept that a woman could be capable of composing poetry of that caliber. Günderrode reacts to Brentano’s letter with a good dose of modesty and appreciation:

Die Gedichte von Tian sind von Mir, ich wollte es allen Menschen verbergen, ein Zufall hat es vereitelt, aber noch hat mich kein Beifall so erfreut wie der Ihrige, und mehr wird es keiner. ... Leben sie *recht* wohl, ich schreibe dies heute wahrlich nicht der Form wegen.⁷⁸⁸

In that same frame of mind she writes to Savigny and Gunda:

Man ist hier ganz fest überzeugt ich sei Tian, und alles läugnen will nichts helfen. Im Freimüthigen steht eine Rezension die ich Euch hier, der Schlechtigkeit wegen, mitschicke, ein gewisser herr Engelmann Hofmeister allhier ist deren Verfasser... Adieu Gundelchen, adieu lieber Savingny, wer bin ich?⁷⁸⁹

Apparently the criticism her work received was not something to be proud of, and yet she decided to attach it to the letter, although it is clearly visible that in this case her pseudonym Tian serves as a shield from any possible ridicule.⁷⁹⁰ At the same time an identity conflict emerges

⁷⁸⁷ In his gender model, Wilhelm von Humboldt envisioned the sexes as binary opposites, each with its own attributes. His essay “Überber den Geschlechtsunterschied und dessen Einfluß auf die organische Natur,” published in Schiller’s *Die Horen* in 1795, is programmatic in claiming that sexual difference is the essence of nature itself; thus, not just limited to the purposes of reproduction, but all-pervasive (20). Humboldt’s essay defined sexual difference, and assigned to both genders rigid characteristics: activity, energy, strength, willpower, independence, and courage were classified as those of men; weakness, passivity, dependence, subjection, modesty, kindness were associated with women (23). Literary texts popularized these gender models, for example, Schiller’s “Das Lied von der Glocke.” Consequently men were allowed to occupy the public whereas women were relegated to the private sphere. In the 1790’s Goethe and Schiller started developing aesthetic counterarguments to female authorship, relying on contemporary concepts of gender (62). The genuine artist was someone who exercised art according to principles of science, and his stance was objective. Genuine art was timeless, but dilettantism was ephemeral. According to gender theories, women could not even aspire to the title of the real artist because they were supposedly closer to their feelings and less capable of reason; women were trapped in their own emotionality and subjectivity. Additionally women did not have formal education and training. Helen Fronius. *Women and Literature in the Goethe Era 1770-1820*, 63.

⁷⁸⁸ Günderrode to Clemens Brentano, Hof Trages, Mai, 1804, Preitz, 230.

⁷⁸⁹ Günderrode to Savigny, Frankfurt, last day of May, 1804, Preitz, 200.

⁷⁹⁰ According to Becker-Cantarino, male friends negotiated with publishers in Günderrode’s name because it was not proper for a woman to do it herself. More than likely, Christian Nees von Esenbeck, himself a scientist and a writer, arranged for the publication of the second collection of “Fragmente von Tian” (1805) that appeared at the publishing house of Friedrich Wilmans in Frankfurt. Creuzer made an effort to have Günderrode’s poetry published at Goethe’s publisher Cotta. In the meantime, however he received a message from her that those poems are already “sold.” See Becker-Cantarino, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik*, 208-9.

when she asks a question, “wer bin ich?” She presents herself to the world as a man, and the act of so doing only exacerbates her. However, the thought of a well-received work and the desire to create permanent writings and give her life expression through the creative oeuvre on par with great poetry never abandoned her:

Den Mahomed habe ich Ihnen nicht schicken wollen, weil ich zugleich eine vorteilhafte Rezension mitanbinden lassen möchte, wie sonst *große*, berühmte Gelehrte pflegen, allein auf eine solche Rezension warte ich immer vergebens. Sie müssen also noch warten, lieber Savigny, Adieu!⁷⁹¹

Günderrode’s aspiration to be remembered not only as a woman writer, but also as a great and famous learned writer is undisguised in her letters and discernible in her ambitious prose pieces, poems, and dramas – genres which at that time were considered taboo for women writers. That her writing was not yet officially valued follows from Creuzer’s letter:

Wie sehr ich schon gewohnt bin, Deine Herrlichkeit mir zuzueignen, schließe aus der Art, wie ich heute beflissen war, das Goethesche Urteil über Dich, zu verbreiten. Ich hatte nicht eher Ruhe, bis es Savigny und Clemens wußten, wie wenn ich Anteil an Deiner Glorie hätte. – Beide nahmen es auf ihre Weise auf. Savigny klar und freundlich: “Das werde Dich ja recht freuen” – Clemens: “Das habe Goethe nur ironisch meinen können.”⁷⁹²

Creuzer’s and Savigny’s confidence in her talent clashes with the opposite view of Brentano.

And then for Christian Gottfried Nees von Esenbeck, a reader, adviser, and critic of

Günderrode’s works, her *Mahomed* was not tragic enough:

“Werden Sie mir aber wohl die Wahl des Zeitpunkts für die Herausgabe, die Bestimmung des Honorars ganz überlassen oder haben Sie noch Etwas darüber zu erinnern?” Christian Gottfried Nees to Karoline, Sickershausen 9 Juni, 04, Preitz, 243. “Ich habe nun Ihren Mahomed mit den verabredeten Abänderungen zum Abschreiben gegeben, und hoffe, ihn in 4-6 Wochen wieder zu erhalten. Dann werde ich das Weitere besorgen. Nun habe ich aber noch eine Bedenklichkeit. Die Abtheilung in 5 Akte widerspricht offenbar dem Titel eines Fragments; denn ein Fragment in 5 Akten, d.h. mit der Form der Vollendung ist nur ein mißlungenes Drama. Diese Eintheilung darf also nicht bleiben.” Christian Gottfried Nees to Karoline, Sickershausen, 2 Juli, 04, Preitz, 246.

⁷⁹¹ Karoline to Savigny, Frankfurt, Mitte Juli, 1805, Preitz, 207.

⁷⁹² Freidrich Creuzer to Karoline von Günderrode, Heidelberg, October 17, 1804, Weißenborn, 169. Goethe voiced his support of Günderrode to Christian Nees von Esenbeck: “die Gedichte seien wirklich eine seltsame Erscheinung und für eine Rezension brauchbar.” This remark was the cause of controversial discussions among Clemens Brentano, his wife Sophie, and Savigny. “Anmerkungen,” in Weißenborn, 379.

Die Handlung eines jeden Drama aber ist nothwendig eine endliche, und wenn in der Tragödie das ewige Schicksal erscheint, so erscheint es zugleich in der Beschränktheit einer, wenigstens supponierten Beziehung auf einen endlichen Zweck. Kann nun ein Prophet Subject eines wahren Drama seyn? Ich glaube nicht. Sie sehen also – Ihr Mahomed ist mir nicht tragisch genug. Aber für die komische Seite ist er doch zu ernsthaft, ... Sollten wir nicht, um unsres Urtheils gewiß zu seyn, Clemens zum Schiedsrichter aufrufen?⁷⁹³

Having followed Esenbeck's suggestions as well as refined the text according to her own wishes, Günderrode achieved perfect dramaturgical form for her purposes:

Durch die vorgeschlagenen Umtaufung und Namensänderung Ihres Mahomeds haben Sie alle meine Zweifel in Bezug auf dessen Herausgabe völlig beseitigt. Sie bezeichnen durch den title "Dramatisches fragment" eine freywillige Beschränkung Ihrer Aufgabe. Mahomed soll nicht unter der rein organischen form des Dramas die Innerlichkeit seines Wesens objektivisiren, ... So wäre Mahomed, als dramatisches Fragment, nichts anders, als das äußere, endlich Leben Mahomeds auf endliche Weise dargestellt. Das Dramatische ist die Form, die aber hier, aus den angegebenen Gründen, sich zu dem Inhalt nur wie Äußeres zu Äußerem verhält.⁷⁹⁴

She creates a humanized figure of Mahomed who not only has deep feelings in his soul, which appears to be like a temple of God, but also offers a gift of prophesy.

While Lisette Nees's husband helped Günderrode with editing matters and encouraged her creativity, Lisette Nees herself always offered supportive advice:⁷⁹⁵

Wage es liebste Lina und biete den Frankfurter Litterarischen Zirkeln Trotz und erkläre Dich frey gegen alles was nicht frey ist, und der Leibeigenschaft zugesellt werden muß. Von allen deutschen Dichtern dürftest Du in diesem Geist, keinen lesen als Tieck, die beyden Schlegel, Goethe und Novalis. ... So vortrefflich nun auch ohne Zweifel die Schriften dieser Männer sind um romantischen Sinn zu erweken und auszubilden, so sind sie doch weder das Einzige, noch das Beste was Dir zu diesem Zweke nützlich wäre, und Du müßtest höher hinauf in das wahre Land romantischer Poesie, in das Mittelalter, und insbesondre der südlichen Sprachen.⁷⁹⁶

⁷⁹³ Christian Gottfried Nees von Esenbeck to Karoline, Sickerhausen, 25 May, 04, Preitz, 234-238.

⁷⁹⁴ Christian Gottfried Nees von Esenbeck to Karoline, Sickerhausen, 25 May, 04, Preitz, 241.

⁷⁹⁵ "Ich sende Dir hier eine meiner italienischen Übersetzungen liebe Karoline der ich aber billig einige Erläuterungen beyfügen muß. Ich fand diese Novelle, die Bürger in seiner Ballade bearbeitet (Lenardo und Blandine) und schon Hans Sachs in ein Drama gebracht an dessen naiver Behandlung wir uns in Hanau oft ergötzen, in einer Auswahl aus Bokkazens Novellen." Lisette Nees to Günderrode, Sickershausen, 28 Februar, 1805, Preitz, 258.

⁷⁹⁶ Lisette Nees to Karoline, Sickershausen, 17 April, 1805, Preitz, 264-270.

The prompting from her friend galvanizes the creative spirit of G nderrode and inspires her to go beyond what would have been considered the usual education for women. She is not to dismiss reading works produced by men, and while writing, she should not feel a compulsion to invent something radically new. Yet, she must go on her own – beyond what is widely accepted – rooted in Romanticism: explore, think for herself, stimulate her own creativity, form new ideas, conjure up visions. The element of sharing is an important part of this friendship: “Alles, was ich wei  und gelernt habe, m chte ich gern Dir mitteilen. Trost, Liebe und Harmonie in Deiner Seele suchen.”⁷⁹⁷ Here the idea of sharing is extended even further: “Es ist wunderbar, da  alle geistigen Gen  e fast durch Mitteilung vermehrt werden; da bei Materiellen doch das Gegenteil stattfindet. Geben und reicher werden durch Geben! Es ist h chst wunderbar, ja, ich meine, es enth lt eine Widerlegung gegen den Materialismus.”⁷⁹⁸ G nderrode posits an idea, which pertains directly to dialogue. It is only through communication that spiritual pleasure is disseminated, thus, presenting refutation of materialism and pointing to the love of giving as a relief. She exceeds the scope of reaching out to her friend and puts forward a conviction encompassing all humanity. The rhetoric in G nderrode’s letters, however, both reinforces a concept of love – different from the image of love in other Romantic letters discussed here – and at the same time interrupts a seemingly stable and idealistic notion of love. I will talk more about this development later in the chapter.

4.3 INTELLECTUAL LOVE AS A FOUNDATION OF LIFE, ART, AND DEATH IN G NDERRODE’S LETTERS

Karoline von G nderrode could neither find her place nor security in the forms of life prescribed for women; thus, her poetic talent, intellectual development and emotional sensitivity

⁷⁹⁷ Ibid., 72.

⁷⁹⁸ Ibid., 77.

failed because she could not lead an independent life.⁷⁹⁹ Her escape into the world of thought was an answer to her difficulties: “Bisher las ich auch sehr viel in Herders Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit, bei allen meinen Schmerzen ist mir dies Buch ein wahrer Trost.”⁸⁰⁰ She would not compromise her ideal just to accommodate the demands of society and agree to a marriage without love. She succumbed to romantic wishes of life filled with love, which so inspired Romantics.⁸⁰¹

Wie ich lebe? Oft unzufrieden mit mir selbst, von denen, die mich hier näher umgeben (zürnen Sie mir nicht deswegen) kann ich keinen eigentlich lieben, ich kann mir keine Liebe ohne Harmonie der Gesinnungen denken, diese ist hier unmöglich.⁸⁰²

Romantic love envisioned by Günderrode encompasses a strong intellectual aspect, including shared attitudes and viewpoints, a like-mindedness implying oneness. Her letters reveal an uncompromising contradiction between her desire to study, write, and publish, and the pressure to conform to a traditional role assigned to women under patriarchy. It would not, however, be a mistake to maintain that Günderrode’s life as reflected in her writing was defined by struggles involving love, since her desire to be loved and accepted collided with her passion for writing.⁸⁰³ Karoline von Günderrode’s love has been described as an insatiable romantic poetic love with no link to reality; consequently, an artistic fantasy.⁸⁰⁴ The question of love certainly belonged to the central issues in Günderrode’s life:

⁷⁹⁹ Becker-Cantarino, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik*, 204.

⁸⁰⁰ Günderrode to Karoline von Barkhaus, Hanau, 16 Juli, 1799, Preitz, 165.

⁸⁰¹ Becker-Cantarino, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik*, 204.

⁸⁰² Günderrode to Karoline von Barkhaus, 14 February, 1800, Weißenborn, 62-63.

⁸⁰³ Christa Wolf claimed that Günderrode’s experience of being unable to actualize herself in love and art led to her death. “A Letter about Bettine,” *Bettina Brentano von Arnim: Gender and Politics*, eds. Elke Frederiksen and Katherine Goodman, Detroit: Wayne State University, 1995, 66.

See also Birgit Weißenborn, “Introduction” in *“Ich sende Dir ein zärtliches Pfand” Die Briefe der Karoline von Günderrode* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1992), 39.

⁸⁰⁴ According to Karlheinz Bohrer, Günderrode’s love to Savigny was only an aesthetic subjectivity (82), and her love to Creuzer was trapped in the realm of Romantic fantasy (83). Margarete Sussman explained Günderrode’s relationship with Creuzer as insatiable Romantic love (145). According to Sussman it was a sort of a dream, which led her to seek death, thus, immortality (150).

Mein Leben ist so leer, ich habe so viele langweilige und unasgefüllte Stunden. Gunda, ist es nur die Liebe, die in diese dumpfe Leerheit Leben und Empfindung gießt? Oder gibt es noch andere Empfindungen, die dies tun? Es ist hier eine Lücke in meiner Seele; umsonst suche ich sie zu erfüllen, umsonst sie wegzurasonnieren, die Kunst kann nur durch die Natur, mit der Natur wuchern, ohne sie kann sie nichts.⁸⁰⁵

Only love, Günderrode senses, enables life and empathy. Art in itself is limited, and it will not “fill in the gap” in one’s soul. Only through nature, will art thrive. The state of consciousness is interpreted in the texts of letters and in her work “Ein apokaliptisches Fragment” as alienation from the unity of nature. She defines the “I” in the context of the whole; one is precisely not the other but one’s self because all is determined by the whole. In life, only love reconciles personality and allness, and only after death, personality returns as refined basic life to allness. The state of perfection is achieved only when all dualisms become synthetized, and love is the medium through which the reconciliation of personality with the allness can be achieved.”⁸⁰⁶

Karoline von Günderrode posits consciousness as being in contrast to a dream or becoming. The dream or sleep guarantees, similarly to love, the suspension of consciousness. Both motifs, love and dream, appear in the poem dedicated to Friedrich von Savigny “Der Kuss im Traum.”

Der Kuß im Traum

Es hat ein Kuß mir Leben eingehaucht,
Gestillet meines Busens teifstes Schmachten.
Komm Dunkelheit! mich traulich zu umnachten
Daß neue Wonne meine Lippe saugt.

In Träumen war solch Leben eingetaucht.
Drum leb ich ewig Träume zu betrachten,
Kann aller andern Freuden Glanz verachten
Weil nur die Nacht so süsen Balsam haucht.

Der Tag ist karg an Liebe süßen Wonnen

⁸⁰⁵ Günderrode to Gunda, Hanau, 24 November, 1801, Weißenborn, 83-84.

⁸⁰⁶ Compare with Karin Zimmermann, *Die polyfunktionale Bedeutung dialogischer Sprechformen um 1800* (Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 1992) 196.

Es schmerzt mich seiner Sonne eitles Prangen
Und mich verzehren seines Lichtes Gluthen.

Drum birg' Dich Aug' dem Glanze irrscher Sonnen
Taug Dich in Nacht, sie stillet Dein Verlangen
Und heilt den Schmerz, wie Lethes kühle Fluthen.⁸⁰⁷

The author focuses on the suspension of consciousness. Love, dream, and sleep have the function of inducing this condition, that is, the rescission of consciousness. She gathers empirical evidence from her self-observation to support her reasoning and to gain understanding:

Oder vielmehr ich habe zuweilen gar keine Meinung von mir, so schwankend sind meine Selbstbeobachtungen. Überhaupt ist mirs ganz unbegreiflich daß wir kein anders Bewusstsein haben, als Wahrnehmung von Wirkungen, nirgends von Ursachen. Alles andere Wissen scheint mir (sobald ich dies bedenke) nicht wissenswürdig, solange ich des Wissens Ursache, mein Wissensvermögen nicht kenne. Diese Unwissenheit ist mir der unerträglichste Mangel, der größte Widerspruch. Und ich meine wenn wir die Gränze eines zweiten Lebens wirklich betreten, so müßte es eine unserer ersten inner Erscheinungen sein, daß sich unser Bewusstsein vergrößere und verdeutlichere; denn es wäre unerträglich, diese Schranke in ein zweites Leben zu schleppen.⁸⁰⁸

The thought of having consciousness only as a perception and cognition of effects – and not that of causes and grounds – proves to be incomprehensible for the writer who is interested in the source of knowledge. The inability to comprehend this phenomenon appears to be the biggest contradiction and unbearable lack, which, she concludes, will no longer apply after death. The realm one enters after life promises enhanced consciousness. Thus, to her mind, death is not the end or a tragedy, but rather a way to heightened consciousness and knowledge. Her heuristic observations and reflections about death often find their way to her letters:

Nie habe ich jemand gesehen der dem Tode so reif ist als sie; ihre Laufbahn ist auch ihren intellektuellen Kräften nach geendet; denn ihre Seele ist so geartet daß sie nie nach außen glücklich entwiklen wird ... Jetzt kann in ihr nichts mehr wachsen, als der Tod, und die Vernichtung; glücklich daß der physische Tod ihr zu Hülfe komt.⁸⁰⁹

⁸⁰⁷ Günderrode to Savigny, April, 1804, Preitz II, 200.

⁸⁰⁸ Günderrode to Gunda, Hanau, August 11, 1801, Preitz II, 168.

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid., 168-9.

Since her friend lost all intellectual potency, only physical death remains as an answer: death brings happiness. Deliberations on a fortunate transition from life to another life after death belong to motifs of Günderrode's writing in all genres she practiced. Literally, the crux of her poetry was the passionate and enduring sorrowful connection of her life to beauty and death.⁸¹⁰ Yet it was immersed in Romantic poetic love and sempiternal dream, which was fueled by her desire to invent and reinvent new concepts of intellectual love.

This strange external love dream, which propelled Günderrode's soul and artistic fantasy, was always engaged in a dialogue.⁸¹¹ I would like to call this phenomenon "a dialogue of the phoenix absorbed in enduring and consuming passion." The phoenix's mythological pattern of consumption by flame and resurrection out of ashes – a symbol of the rise and rebirth – conveys Günderrode's approach to life and the philosophy of love as reflected in her writing. She works through the emotions of being angry, anxious or terribly hurt; then she focuses on her heart, and embraces her situation to the fullest ... burning through the pain, daring to burn like a Phoenix and transfiguring the pain into a powerful and beautiful creativity. Günderrode thematizes her experiences in the poem called "Ist alles stumm und leer":

Ist alles stumm und leer
Nichts macht mir Freude mehr,
Düfte sie düften nicht,
Lüfte sie lüften nicht,
Mein Herz so schwer!
...
Frühlings Blumen treu,
Kommen zurück aufs Neu,
Nicht so der Liebe Glück
Ach es kommt nicht zurück
Schön doch nicht treu.

Kann Lieb so unlieb sein,

⁸¹⁰ Susman, *Frauen der Romantik*, 140.

⁸¹¹ Bohrer, *Der romantische Brief*, 82.

Von mir so fern was mein? –
Kann Lust so schmerzlich sein
Untreu so herzlich sein? –
O Wonn' o Pein

Phönix der Lieblichkeit
Phönix der Lieblichkeit
Dich trägt dein Fittig weit
Hin zu der Sonne Strahl
Ach was ist dir zumal
Mein einsam Leid?⁸¹²

Günderrode's overcoming death by embracing poeticized love and poeticized life means, precisely, seeking death as the means to a new perfect life. Her own words, "Denn ich bin ewig meine Liebe selbst," reflect the concept of how she would flame up in her own love and be creatively productive.⁸¹³ Susman emphasizes the fact that only in the world of Romanticism was it possible to enact the idea of Platonic eros in the Romantic rhythm of life, the mystery of insatiability dedicated to death and immortal love.⁸¹⁴ The introspection that the author introduces is reminiscent of Plato's school of thought where God socializes with man only by means of love: "for God mingles not with man; but through Love all the intercourse and converse of gods with men, whether they are awake or asleep is carried on."⁸¹⁵ Here eros has also religious significance since it is the mediator between Divine and human life. The entire structure of Platonic eros is egocentric as its character is acquisitive because the aim of love is to gain possession of an object, which is regarded as valuable. To love Divine is the to desire to possess God permanently; thus, love is ultimately a desire for immortality.⁸¹⁶ Diotima emphasizes this theme saying that all men desire the immortal that is why they beget children; their offspring will

⁸¹² *Zweifelhaftes*, Nr. 83, in Morgenthaler II, 261-2.

⁸¹³ Susman, *Frauen der Romantik*, 134.

⁸¹⁴ Susman, *Frauen der Romantik*, 145.

⁸¹⁵ Plato, "Plato. Socrates Speaks at a Banquet," (reprinted from the *Symposium*, transl., Benjamin Jowett), in *Eros, Agape and Philia. Readings in the Philosophy of Love*, ed., Alan Soble (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 46- 56, p. 49.

⁸¹⁶ Alan Soble, ed., *Eros, Agape and Philia. Readings in the Philosophy of Love* (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 91-2.

preserve their memory and give them immortality which they desire for all future time.⁸¹⁷

Karoline von Günderode's offspring is her work through which she hopes to achieve immortality. Her love dreams, apart from the actual relationships with the unattainable men, Savigny and Creuzer, were filled with death premonitions, often in mythological pictures, with a wish to be free like a man and be able to think without restrictions and ultimately with a wish to become immortal.⁸¹⁸

4.4 LETTERS WITH FRIEDRICH CARL VON SAVIGNY

Karoline von Günderode describes the very moment she fell in love with Savigny in a letter to her friend Karoline von Barkhaus:

Schon beim ersten Anblik machte Savingne einen tiefen Eindruck auf mich, ich suchte es mir zu verbergen und überredete mich es sei blos Theilnahme an dem sanften Schmerz den sein ganzes Wesen ausdrückt, aber bald, sehr bald belehrte mich die zunehmende Stärke meines Gefühls daß es Leidenschaft sei was ich fühlte.⁸¹⁹

Three years later in a letter to Savigny, she debunked the claim that in truth her feelings were passion.⁸²⁰ Doubtlessly she realized in the very beginning that her emotions and desires were limited to the realm of dreams: "Sie sagen ich sollte meinem Herzen nicht zu sehr nachgeben, und doch ists mein größtes Vergnügen diesen Träumen nachzuhängen."⁸²¹ The act of abandoning herself to and immersing herself in the pleasure of dreams was a part of her performance, and Savigny from the very beginning was even less than a dream: "Wenn Sie etwas von S. hören darf ich Sie dann bitten es mir zu schreiben, verärgeren Sie mir deise Bitte nicht, es ist ia das

⁸¹⁷ Plato, "Plato. Socrates Speaks at a Banquet," in *Eros, Agape and Philia*, p. 54.

⁸¹⁸ Becker-Cantarino, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik*, 204.

⁸¹⁹ Günderode to Karoline von Barkhaus, Frankfurt, June 19, 1799. Preitz II, 162.

⁸²⁰ "Gunda behauptet ich habe eine kleine Leidenschaft für Sie, sie schreibt es Ihnen auch, aber es ist nicht, gewis nicht; wenn Sie mich kennten würden Sie wissen daß es nicht sein kann, aber Sie kennen mich nicht."
Karoline to Savigny, Frankfurt, July 20, 1803, Preitz II, 183-4.

⁸²¹ Günderode to Karoline von Barkhaus, Hanau, July 16, 1799, Preitz II, 165.

Einziges was ich von ihm haben kann, der Schatten eines Traumes.“⁸²² By describing Savigny as “the shadow of a dream,” Günderröde assigned him a role of a phantom and transformed him into a figment of the imagination. In point of fact, Günderröde, who sought a relationship of intellectual kinship, was not satisfied with her association with Savigny:

Schreiben Sie mir nicht, Ihre Briefe haben mir nicht viel Freude gemacht, es war, immer etwas Erzwungnes darin so als hätten Sie ein paarmal vorher gesagt, ‘ich will heute dem Günderrödchen schreiben’, und so war es auch mit ein paar Briefen, ich mußte mich immer darüber besinnen.⁸²³

In her letter, Günderröde seeks to end the dialogue with Savigny and sheds light on the nature of their “forced” communication, which later remains present in her thoughts all the more. Savigny, however, does not want to terminate their dialogue and complains about Günderröde’s distancing herself from him: “Sie haben mich verkannt, Sie haben mir Unrecht gethan.”⁸²⁴ It is at that time that Günderröde puts forward an offer of friendship, to which Savigny responds enthusiastically – as attested in several of his letters.⁸²⁵ He, however, complicates their friendship by misemploying the newly acquired status of a friend:

Ich wollte Ihnen sagen, daß es entsetzlich unnatürlich zugehen müste, wenn wir beide nicht sehr genaue Freunde werden sollten. ... Nur etwas ist schlimm: ich stehe Ihnen gar nicht dafür, daß ich mich nicht zu Zeiten etwas in Sie verliebe, und das soll der Freundschaft Abbruch thun. Zum Beispiel es wäre nicht ohne Gefahr, wenn Sie eine kleine goldne Uhr an einer goldnen Kette um den Hals trügen: vor einem weißen Schürzchen, das Sie ehemals gehabt haben, fürchte ich mich gar nicht, denn das ist wohl schon längst zerrissen; aber ich werde mich wohl hüthen, Ihnen den Clavigo oder Hermann und Dorothea vorzulesen. ... man spricht viel von den Leiden des jungen Werther, aber andere Leute haben auch ihre Leiden gehabt sie sind nur nicht gedruckt worden.⁸²⁶

By implying the possibility of “falling in love” and making a reference to “Hermann und Dorothea” and to the *Leiden des jungen Werther*, Savigny unequivocally crosses the boundaries

⁸²² Günderröde to Karoline von Barkhaus, Hanau, July 26, 1799, Preitz II, 166.

⁸²³ Günderröde to Savigny, Frankfurt, etwa July 20, 1803, Preitz II, 183-184.

⁸²⁴ Savigny to Karoline, Marburg, the end of July, 1803, Preitz II, 186.

⁸²⁵ Günderröde to Savigny, Frankfurt, July 20, 1803, Preitz II, 183-4.

⁸²⁶ Savigny to Günderröde, Marburg, December 14, 1803, Preitz II, 189-190.

of appropriate behavior. In turn, Günderrode reminds him about their relationship status as friends: “Ich werde Ihnen angehören wie ein Freund. Sie sagen es auch? Werde ich nicht sehr stolz werden? ... Vergessen Sie nur nicht, lieber Savigny! Daß ich nun Ihr Freund bin, denn es macht mich gar zu froh.”⁸²⁷ Furthermore, she insists on calling herself “ein Freund.” This gesture conveys her wish for equality in their dialogue, as, once again, she plays a role; this time it is a role of a “male friend.” She further confirms her distance as a potential lover by ties to Savigny on the level of kinship:

Ich finde unser neues Verhältniß sehr schön und frei, aber ich wollte daß irgend ein sichtbares band mich an Euch bände, wenn ich doch Ihr bruder wäre, oder Gundelchens Schwester; ich würde es nicht schöner fine, aber sichrer. Die Verhältnisse der Verwandtschaft sind so unzerstörbar, und kein Schicksal kann sie auflößen, das gefällt mir so...⁸²⁸

Karin Zimmermann maintains that with the title “friend,” Savigny deleted Günderrode as a woman and most importantly as a beloved. By doing so, he created a verbal distance which culminated with a change in the way they addressed each other; namely, he supposedly forbade her to use the familiar form “Du.”⁸²⁹ However, from their letter exchange, it follows clearly that it was rather a playful use of the formal “Sie.” Savigny consistently continued to call Günderrode “Du” and admittedly she on most occasions answered using “Sie,” but at times she switched back to “Du.”⁸³⁰ They did remain informal and were able to continue intellectual letter exchange with each other. Eventually, Savigny crossed the line again, as he initiated a dialogue about a kiss.

⁸²⁷ Günderrode to Savigny, Frankfurt, December 15, 1803, Preitz II, 192.

⁸²⁸ Günderrode and Gunda to Savigny, Frankfurt, 1 January, 1804, Preitz II, 194.

⁸²⁹ Zimmermann, *Die polyfunktionale Bedeutung dialogischer Sprechformen um 1800*, 96.

⁸³⁰ “Noch zwei Tage nachdem Du weg warst lieber Savigny war mir so traurig und fürchterlich zu Muth ...” Frankfurt, November 18, 1805, Preitz II, 209. “Lieber Savigny, um Dir ganz wahr zu sein muß ich sagen, ...” Frankfurt, December 1805, Preitz II, 12. “Du hast mir gar nicht geantwortet, lieber Savigny, ich habe die Bettine nach Dir gefragt, und auch diese sagt nie ein Wort von Dir, Du bist mir doch nicht böse?” Frankfurt, March 1806, Preitz II, 212. “Creuzer habe so klat Abschied von Dir genommen, und ihr habe seschienen, Du seist betrübt darüber. Ich kann Dich heilig versichren, daß Creuzer mit herzlicher Freude zu Dir nach Marburg ging.” Frankfurt, April 1806, Preitz II, 214.

Ey, Günderrödchen, wo bleibt denn die berühmte Seelenverwandschaft zwischen uns beiden? Und wer soll denn um Gottes willen in Ihr Stübchen in Trages ziehen, wenn Sie vor wehmüthiger Einsamkeit vergehen wollen (den Mund ausgenommen, ohne den man freylich nicht küssen kann)?⁸³¹

Here Savigny mentions playfully a concern for their “soul relationship,” yet, at the same time goes beyond what such friendship would allow. In reply, Günderrode reassures him that she cares for, but her soul is busy with her creative work that apparently takes over all her being:

Mein Herz hat sich nicht von Ihnen abgewendet, viel weniger einem andern Sterblichen zugewendet, nein, ich denke immer mit grosser Freude daran daß ich Ihnen und Gunda in Zukunft angehören werde, aber es ist mir doch seit einigen Wochen anders als vor ein paar Monaten. . . . ich schreibe ein Drama, meine ganze Seele ist damit beschäftigt, ja ich denke mich so lebhaft hinein, werde so einheimisch darin, daß mir mein eignes Leben fremd wird; ich habe sehr viel Anlage zu einer solchen Abstraktion, zu einem solchen Eintauchen in einen Strom innerer Betrachtungen und Erzeugungen.⁸³²

The blurred border between reality and fantasy is Günderrode’s creative space where the author finds inspiration but finds no room for real love – to which she says farewell in the poem, “Der Kuß im Traum.” She includes the poem in her letter to Savigny and, one could argue, she thus continues the love kiss theme initiated by Savigny. The kiss happens in a dream so it is not a conscious act. The subject actually lives in order to observe dreams perpetually – that is to say, does not participate in any dreams but only observes them. The night setting provides consolation in contrast with the day, which consumes all with its light glow.⁸³³ One could argue that, on the one hand, Günderrode composed the poem just as a form of valediction. On the other hand, one might claim that she expressed her general inability as an artist to be able to love with the kind of love as expected by society at large. Savigny sustained the said theme even a few months later: “und sey mir nicht mehr betrübt wenn Du mich siehst, vielmehr muß Du mir,

⁸³¹ Savigny to Günderrode, Marburg, February 8, 1804. Preitz, II, 198.

⁸³² Günderrode to Savigny, Frankfurt, 26 Februar, 1804, Preitz II, 198.

⁸³³ “Der Kuß im Traum,” April 1804, Preitz II, 200.

Savigny, an den Hals springen und mich küssen. Hast's gehört.... adieu bis wir Dich küssen."⁸³⁴

In contrast to Savigny's description of the worldly and literal act of kissing to welcome her or to say goodbye, Günderrode's gesture of kissing functions neither as an adieu nor as a sign of welcome and greeting, which are necessarily linked to a particular timeframe. It is an endeavor to communicate the feeling of being suspended in time – in abstract space.

Günderrode's *cri de Coeur* is not to expose herself to the "worldly shine of sun," where love dwells, but rather immerse herself in the night where desire becomes neutralized and pain heals.⁸³⁵ Susman draws attention to the fact that both Savigny and Günderrode made a conscious decision to continue their relationship in "renunciatory Love," which only shows that their relationship was an artificial one, and quite unreal.⁸³⁶ One need recognize, that it was Günderrode's purpose from the very beginning to adhere to her love as a regulatory ideal that fueled her creativity, while Savigny was the one interested in keeping up the semblance of real relationship. Günderrode was a self-professed "dreamer" who lived a renunciatory, almost ascetic abstraction, the ideal of her own artistic vision:

Ich kehre in mich selbst zurück und erschaffe mir eine andre Welt; leichte Träume umschweben mich, mein Bewußtsein verliert sich in der Betrachtung. So mag es einem Sterbenden sein, das Bewußtsein wird immer schwächer und unterbrochener; Träume umhüllen es immer dichter und vermählen sich mit den Gestalten der Wirklichkeit, bis diese ganz schwinden und der Träumer zum Traum wird. Das helle Bewußtsein ist drückend, es ist immer mit tausend Schmerzen verbunden, es kann die Zeit nicht vergessen und knüpft mit unseligen Banden an die Erde und die Zeitlichkeit, darum weiß das Bewußtsein von keiner Ewigkeit. Aber in Träumen ist die Ewigkeit, da gelten nicht die Berechnungen der Zeit, im Traum ist Seligkeit, und alle Seligkeit ist nur erträumt – die Ewigkeit ist das Land der Träume.⁸³⁷

Günderrode created for herself another world where light dreams floated around her. As she herself described in a letter to Claudine Piautaz, her consciousness was able to lose itself in

⁸³⁴ Trages, Mittwoch June 6, 1804. Preitz II, 201.

⁸³⁵ "Der Kuß im Traum," April 1804, Preitz II, 200.

⁸³⁶ Margarete Susman, *Frauen der Romantik*, 154.

⁸³⁷ Günderrode to Claudine Piautaz, Trages, April 1804, Weißenborn, 126.

observation of the whole process, just as if she were dying. Reality mixed itself with dreams so that she, the dreamer, would become the dream herself. She stipulated that eternity must be preserved in dreams. Eternity and the realm beyond death is the land of dreams. Similarly, in a poem “Der Trauernde” included in that same letter, Günderrode touches upon the theme of death and connects it to those of love and the kiss. Inspired by the world of the unreal, inhabited by elves, the mourner who lost his beloved forgets about the real world and begins to dream about erotic love. He dances and forgets about his beloved so that everything becomes jovial. The conclusion is that all is doomed to first bloom and then to pass away.

Der Trauernde
Zum Grab der Trauten schleicht der Knabe,
Ihm ist das Herz so bang und schwer,
...
Und sieh! Ihm winkt der Elfen Schönste
Und spricht: was trauerst Du so sehr?
Komm! Ist dein Mädchen Dir gestorben?
Vergiß sie! Komm zum Tanze her.
Frei sind wir Elfen, ohne Sorgen,
...
Und froh, und leicht sind Lieb und Kuß.
...
Er tanzt, vergißet die Geliebte,
Kann alles froh und lustig sehn,
Die Dinge blühen und vergehn.⁸³⁸

Susman asserts that even though Günderrode’s love was flamingly existent, still, it was not reliable and sustainable.⁸³⁹ It was not peaceful, not able to be maintained, and clearly not fitting for every day life. It was rather a solitary and secluded love. Susman observes that dialogue conflict begins with the letter to Savigny where Günderrode rejects Gunda’s assertions, and pleads for his understanding of her social alienation: “Gunda tadelt mich, sagt ich sei hochmüthig, liebe

⁸³⁸ Günderrode to Claudine Piautaz, Trages, April 1804, Weißenborn, 127.

⁸³⁹ Margarete Susman, *Frauen der Romantik*, 144.

niemand, und nähme keinen Antheil, aber sie irrt, wehnigstens übertreibt sie sehr.”⁸⁴⁰ As specified by Bohrer, Günderrode already anticipates that she will not be understood, as her aesthetic subjectivity as an artist overlaps with her feelings as a private person – for Savigny, it is an artistic fantasy.⁸⁴¹

A decisive moment in Günderrode’s dialogue with Savigny, which lasted many years, was when he did not know any longer how to answer her concerns in a proper way. Savigny approached her from a false psychological standpoint and pathologized her behavior instead of affirming her Romantic fantasy and aesthetic achievement.⁸⁴² Even though Savigny recognized the element of fantasy, as follows from his letter, he did not see it as a part of her artistic constitution: “Etwas recht von Herzen lieben, ist göttlich, und jede Gestalt, in der sich uns diese Göttliche offenbart, ist heilig. Aber daran künsteln. Diese Empfindung durch Phantasie höher spannen, als ihre natürliche Kraft reicht, ist sehr unheilig.”⁸⁴³ Criticizing Günderrode’s love for Creuzer, Savigny formed his opinion solely based on the moral standards of the time. In finding fault with Günderrode’s behavior, Savigny speaks out against her convictions and essentially against the erotic nature of woman’s love.

4.5 LETTERS WITH GEORG FRIEDRICH CREUZER

In her letter exchange with Creuzer – whose research interests amplified her own fascination with mythology and old cultures – the word “Morgenland,” Orient in Luther’s translation, stood for the Greek Anatolia, meaning “East” or “Sun(rise)” and implying the ideal

⁸⁴⁰ Margarete Susman, *Frauen der Romantik*, 146. Bohrer, *Der romantische Brief*, 79.

⁸⁴¹ Bohrer, *Der romantische Brief*, 82.

⁸⁴² November 29, 1805, Preitz, 210-211.

⁸⁴³ Savigny to Günderrode, November 29, 1805, Preitz II, 210-211.

spiritual place of love.⁸⁴⁴ Thus, Günderrode set up the mood for all of her writing, that is, her letters as well as the poetic texts where the reader is transported to Egypt, to the Nile River, to Caucasus.⁸⁴⁵ The Oriental characters, such as Malabaric Widows or Mahomed the prophet from Mecca serve as the vehicles for the dissemination of her ideas.⁸⁴⁶ For instance, Günderrode stylizes her Mahomed as a figure of German Idealism vacillating between his mortal and devotional sides.⁸⁴⁷ His figure stands for the Romantic author's feeling of alienation from her surroundings and a conflict between her feminine and masculine sides.⁸⁴⁸ Most notably, however, the author "foregrounds love as the point of departure."⁸⁴⁹

Günderrode's belief that mutual love and passion belong to a union between a man and a woman who unite (though, not necessarily in a bond of formal marriage) is articulated in her letters:

... aber Creuzer zu heurathen dazu fand ich in meinem Gemüth keine Möglichkeit, ich war verwirrt und uneins mit mir selber; als er mir aber schrieb, seine Frau sei von selbst auf den Gedanken gekommen sich von ihm zu trennen, faßte ich den Entschlus wenn er Heidelberg verlassen wollte mit ihm zu gehen, aber heurathen wollte ich ihn nicht. Creuzer vereinigte sich aber sehr bald wieder mit seiner Frau, und noch ehe er etwas von meinem Entschlus erfuhr.⁸⁵⁰

Barbara Becker-Cantarino observes that in order to create artistically and to gratify her needs, Günderrode searched for a man's love: a claim that rings true in the context of the events.⁸⁵¹ However, it is highly doubtful that Günderrode sought marriage itself. Astonishingly, she was even ready to run away and live with Creuzer – disguised as a man:

⁸⁴⁴ Becker-Cantarino, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik*, 217-18.

⁸⁴⁵ See Walter Morgenthaler, ed., *Sämtliche Werke und Ausgewählte Studien*. Ed. Walter Morgenthaler, vol. I, (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfelder/Roter Stern, 1990).

⁸⁴⁶ Becker-Cantarino, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik*, 217-18.

⁸⁴⁷ Stephanie M. Hilger, *Women Write Back. Strategies of Response and the Dynamics of European Literary Culture 1790-1805* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009) 107.

⁸⁴⁸ Hilger, *Women Write Back*, 116.

⁸⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁸⁵⁰ Günderrode to Savigny, Frankfurt 6 November, 1804, Preitz II, 206.

⁸⁵¹ Becker-Cantarino, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik*, 204.

... denken Sie doch an Rußland und Ihren alten Plan, vergessen Sie nicht, den Tag zu bestimmen, wenn Sie hierherkommen, ist es abends spät, so kommen Sie den Vormittag um 10 Uhr zu mir, ist es aber den Vormittag, so kommen Sie um halb 3, daß ist eigentlich die ruhigste Zeit. ... Der Freund hat mir gesagt, wenn dieser Krieg ihm und seinen Wünschen gefährlich werden sollte, so wollte er Dir bewußt Kleidung anziehen, entlaufen und bei Ihnen Bedienter werden, wegzagen können Sie ihn doch nicht, und er wollte sich so fein verstellen, daß man ihn nicht erkennen sollte, das wollte er ihnen gelegentlich alles begreiflich machen.⁸⁵²

In that same letter, Günderrode speculates what will happen if she were not to be united with Creuzer: “wollen Sie ihn aber alsdann der öffentlichen Meinung wegen nicht aufnehmen, so wolle er den Tod suchen.”⁸⁵³

Her love-dreams were filled with wishes to be a man in order to be independent and to think freely and with premonitions of death that were manifested in her oeuvre, quite often in mythological settings.⁸⁵⁴ She painfully experienced the discrepancy between pursued autonomy and true commitment and was able to productively transfer that awareness into artistic work, enhancing her creative sensibility. Birgit Weissenborn remarks that when one undertakes a parallel reading of Günderrode's letters and works, one has an impression as if the difference between the two sides of her personality became more and more blurred as she consecrated herself more to her Eusebio – Creuzer. It is likewise difficult for the reader to distinguish whether Creuzer addresses his beloved, the poetess, or a fictitious novel character.⁸⁵⁵

The writer Günderrode recognized that her enthusiasm for a “triumph of reason” would be destructive to her creativity. In her work “Melete” she has Almor say the following:

meine stolze Vernunft maßte sich bald die Alleinherrschaft in mir an; sie wollte, Alles sollte vernünftig seyn. ... endlich sprach eine innere Stimme zu mir: ... Ist nur der

⁸⁵² Günderrode to Friedrich Creuzer, Frankfurt, September 15, 1805, Weissenborn, 239.

⁸⁵³ Ibid., 239.

⁸⁵⁴ For instance, while reading Ossian's Darthula, she wishes she could die hero's death. See edition Weissenborn, 78f.

⁸⁵⁵ Birgit Weissenborn, “Einleitung,” *“Ich sende Dir ein zärtliches Pfand” Die Briefe der Karoline von Günderrode*, 34.

tugendhaft, der auf den Ruinen seines eignen Geistes steht und sagen kann: Seht, diese hatten sich empört, aber sie sind gefallen, ich bin Sieger worden über sie Alle! – Barbar! Freue dich nicht deines Siegs, du hast einen Bürgerkrieg geführt, die Überwundenen waren Kinder deiner eignen Natur, du hast dich selbst getötet in deinen Siegen, du bist gefallen in deinen Schlachten. Ich konnte dieser Stimme nichts entgegensetzen, als die Unordnung, in welche die moralische Welt gerathen würde, wenn keiner gegen seine Neigungen kämpfen wollte. Aber diese Antwort genügte mir nicht; der Friede, mit solchen Opfern erkaufte, war mir zu theuer, und ich konnte den Gedanken nicht mehr ertragen, mich Theilweise zu vernichten, um mich Theilweise desto besser erhalten zu können.⁸⁵⁶

In that sense, Günderrode's work can be read parallel to her letters. Günderrode, the artist, reproached her beloved indignantly: that he would prefer to live, rather than to commit double suicide:⁸⁵⁷

Ihr Brief ... ist so vernünftig, so voll nützlicher Tatlust und gefällt sich im Leben. Ich aber habe schon viele Tage im Orkus gelebt und nur darauf gedacht, bald und ohne Schmerz nicht allein in Gedanken, nein ganz und gar hinunterzuwallen. Auch Sie wollte ich dort finden, aber Sie denken andere Dinge. ... Die Freundschaft, wie ich sie mit Ihnen meinte, war ein Bund auf Leben und Tod. Ist Ihnen das zu ernsthaft? Oder zu unvernünftig? Einst schien Ihnen der Gedanke sehr wert, mit mir zu sterben und mich, wenn Sie früher stürben, zu sich hinunterzureißen. Jetzt aber haben Sie viel wichtigere Dinge zu bedenken ... Ich verstehe diese Vernünftigkeit nicht."⁸⁵⁸

Günderrode juxtaposes Creuzer's "reasonable" or "common-sense" letter with her exalted and irrational ideas about their bond in life and death; she refuses to understand his rational perspective. In "Die Malabarischen Witwen," included in her work *Melete* she praised Indian widow burning practice as exemplary: "Die Sitte hat der Liebe Sinn verstanden." The essence of love lies in the total commitment as a martyr for love, and can be interpreted as a form of worship, while the object of love is not only admired but also venerated. The yearning for the

⁸⁵⁶ *Der Schatten eines Traumes, Gedichte, Prosa, Briefe, Zeugnisse von Zeitgenossen*, ed., Christa Wolf (Darmstadt, Neuwied 1979), 120-121.

⁸⁵⁷ Compare to Novalis's work. Death as spiritually productive liberation was prefigured in Novalis's poetry, and the letter exchange about life and work has certainly contributed to his image as a sort of a Messiah of Early Romanticism. Harro Segeberg "Phasen der Romantik," *Romantik-Handbuch*, ed. Helmut Schantze (Thübingen: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 2003), 48.

⁸⁵⁸ Günderrode to Creuzer, 22 März, 1805, Weißenborn, 205-6.

world of perfect love, for which Günderrode is ready to give her own life, can only be lived fully in her artistic fantasy:

Es ist sonderbar, daß die Phantasie am meisten hervorbringt, wenn sie keine äußern Gegenstände findet, sie erschafft sich dann selbst Gegenstände und bildet sie um so sorgfältiger, da es keine fremden Stoffe, sondern ihre eignen Kinder sind. Im Genuß ist keine Dichtung (die Wirklichkeit tötet den Traum), nur in der Sehnsucht, diese ruft ein anders Leben hervor in mir als das Wirkliche. Wer ganz genießt, der lebt wirklich und wer so lebt, wie sollte der noch träumen wollen oder können. Das Leben läßt sich nicht teilen; man kann nicht in der Unterwelt mit den Schatten wandeln und zugleich auf der Oberwelt unter der Sonne und mit den Menschen. - Ich habe oft darüber nachgedacht, aber ich glaube nicht, daß man zwei Zustände zugleich haben kann; ich glaube, sie folgen (mögen auch die Zeitabschnitte noch so klein sein) aufeinander.⁸⁵⁹

Günderrode's letter to her friend Claudine Piautaz illustrates her thoughts on poetry, life and fantasy. She equates poetry to a dream, and declares that poetry can only exist when fueled by the Romantic longing (die Sehnsucht) that awakens a different life in her, different from the real one. Having said that, she acknowledges that it is impossible to divide your life into the underworld of fantasy and our real world in which we live in reality. For her as an artist, the optimal possibility – after living two lives in both worlds – would be to choose the poetic life itself. In that same letter, she includes her poem about the Rhine River:

In stolzen Bogen dann in sanften Krümmen
Ergießet sich der königliche Rhein.
... Mit Wohlgefallen schaute in den Fluten
Narzissus einst sein schönes Angesicht
Und trennte sich vom eignen Bilde nicht.⁸⁶⁰

The narcissistic motive prevalent in Günderrode's writing is the way to an open dialogue with both Savigny and Creuzer. Karin Zimmermann observes that Günderrode's transgression of gender roles – and ignoring the state of affairs where man claims the category of intellect and reason and relegates the category of feeling to the woman – brought her Savigny's and Creuzer's reprimand. Caught in the dilemma of the chaos that Günderrode had generated, and trying to

⁸⁵⁹ Günderrode to Claudine Piautaz, Trages, April 1804, Weißenborn, p. 125.

⁸⁶⁰ Ibid., 126.

alleviate the problem, they identified as rooted in her narcissistic nature, Savigny demanded the emotional and Creuzer the spiritual self-denial.⁸⁶¹

Savigny sees in Günderrode a passive nature, an introverted individual who is solely concentrated on her own feelings and unable to distinguish between that which is deep and important from that uncommon and bizarre. He claims that all feelings can be categorized and organized; thus, the confusion between the true feeling and the estranged leads to the situation of ambiguity, which cannot be explained rationally. At the same time, he insinuates Günderrode's impiousness, which supposedly reflects her sensual weakness. Savigny sees the allowing for spontaneous feelings as a shortcoming and self-indulgence.⁸⁶² His reasoning addresses mainly temperance, which is exactly the point of disagreement – since Günderrode is not ready to compromise her viewpoint. In her poem “Wandel und Treue” the reader finds that same problem confronted in statements pronounced by the character Narziß. The poem is a dialogue between Violetta and Narziß, and the criticism of Günderrode is suggested in in the presentation of Narziß, whereas Savigny's attitude is criticized in the portrayal of Violetta:

Violetta.
Hast du die heil'ge Treue nie gekennet?
Narziß.
Mir ist nicht Treue was ihr also nennet,
Mir ist nicht treulos was euch treulos ist! –
Wer den Moment des höchsten Lebens theilet;
Vergessend nicht, in Liebe selig weilet;
Beurtheilt noch, und noch berechnet, mißt;
Den nenn' ich truelos, ihm ist nicht zu trauen
Sein kalt Bewußtseyn wird dich klar durchschauen
Und deines Selbstvergessens Richter seyn.
Doch ich bin true! Erfüllt vom Gegenstande
Dem ich mich gebe in der Liebe Bande
Wird Alles, wird mein ganzes Wesen seyn⁸⁶³

⁸⁶¹ Zimmermann, *Die polyfunktionale Bedeutung dialogischer Sprechformen um 1800*, 93.

⁸⁶² Preiz II, 210.

⁸⁶³ Morgenthaler I, 38.

The concept of faithfulness as presented from the viewpoint of Violetta is categorized under the rubrics of intellect, that is, not losing yourself in love, but rather in calculated emotions. This kind of commitment appears to Narziß as unfaithfulness, and the category of pure reason seems to turn the beloved into an object. Narziß perceives faithfulness as the reversal of this objectification, that is, in the willingness to abandon oneself and sacrifice oneself for the sake of others.⁸⁶⁴

The theme of sacrifice and death are, again, not restricted to the fantastic and poetic realm of Günderrode's creative pursuit. In one of her letters to Creuzer, she ruminates on death once again:

Den vorigen Sonntag war ich den ganzen Tag allein zu Hause, abends hatte ich etwas Brustschmerzen, ... Zugleich dankte ich dem Schicksal, daß es mich so lange hatte leben lassen, um etwas von Schellings göttlicher Philosophie zu begreifen, und was ich noch nicht begriffen, zu ahnen; und daß mir wenigstens vor dem Tode der Sinn für alle himmlischen Wahrheiten dieser Lehre aufgegangen sei; denn ich gedachte jener Stelle aus Sophokles: "O, der Sterblichen Glückselige, welche die Weihung erst schauten, dann wandeln zum Hades, denn ihr Anteil allein ist es, dort noch zu leben."⁸⁶⁵

Before contemplating the topic of death and dying from a poetic point of view, Günderrode expresses her thankfulness for being able to live and learn from a philosophy, which helps her to understand deeper meaning of life more precisely. She decides that life does not end with death – but instead begins after death. This almost exuberant note evolves when Günderrode changes her observations from a general to a personal level: "Die Freundschaft, wie ich Sie mit Ihnen meinte,

⁸⁶⁴ Karin Zimmermann explains that one can interpret the concept of faithfulness using feminist theory and use it as a proof for non-acceptance of women and their degradation as objects. Especially Creuzer demands in his love to Günderrode self-abnegation. However, those feminist interpretations (which Gooze takes up), must take into consideration the fact that the texts early Romantics featured antithesis, and synthesis and the dualisms and oppositions belonged to their repertoire. Furthermore, the author adapts the motive of Narcissist and changes the emphasis of the Ovid's model in that she does not focus on self-love but on the love to beauty. In this manner, she frees love from being dependent on a person and ties it to beauty as a virtue. She interprets the old model in a new way by presenting it as a new category of beauty where it is not perceived as an object but is restored as a subjective experience. Karin Zimmermann, *Die polyfunktionale Bedeutung dialogischer Sprechformen um 1800* (Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 1992), 94.

⁸⁶⁵ Günderrode to Friedrich Creuzer, Frankfurt, March 22, 1805, Weißenborn, 205-6.

war ein Bund auf Leben und Tod. Ist Ihnen das zu ernsthaft? Oder zu unvernünftig? ..., da wäre es doch schade, wenn Sie die Ursache meines frühern Todes sein sollten.”⁸⁶⁶ Here is the most distinct instance where the line between real life and that of poetry becomes blurred. Creuzer adapts to the tone of Günderrode’s letters not only by composing and including his own poetry in his letters, but also by creating an imaginative setting:

Freudvoll und leidvoll
Gedankenvoll sein –
Hangen und Bangen
In schwebender Pein
Himmelhoch jauchzend
Zu Tode betrübt
Glücklich allein
Ist die Seele, die liebt.

Weißt Du aber auch, Du Poesie, daß mir dieses Goethische nicht lieber ist als dieses:

O reiche Armut! Gebend, seliges Empfangen!
In Zagheit Mut! In Freiheit doch gefangen.
In Stummheit Sprache,
Schüchtern bei Tage,
Siegend mit zaghaftem Bangen.
Lebendiger Tod, im Einen sel’ges Leben
Schwelgend in Not, im Widerstand ergeben,
Genießend schmachten,
Nie satt betrachten
Leben im Traum und doppelt Leben.⁸⁶⁷

Creuzer considers Günderrode to be his “poetry,” only one of many appellations he confers on her, and continues the theme of death throughout the poem. In contrast to Günderrode’s absorption with the continuation of life after death, he concentrates on death becoming entwined with life while still living, that is, “living death in a blissful life.” Hence, it is a “life in a dream and double life.”

⁸⁶⁶ Karoline von Günderrode to Friedrich Creuzer, Frankfurt, March 22, 1805, Weißenborn, 205-6.

⁸⁶⁷ In Weißenborn, 242.

Susman suggests that this love came into Creuzer's life in the form of a deity: Günderrode practically appeared to him as a divine figure.⁸⁶⁸ That is why he showered his beloved with outpouring of transfigured love and poetry. Günderrode's reading of metaphysical pieces by Schelling and Spinoza, among others, awakened her living passion and seized her, so that all philosophy merged with her worldview.⁸⁶⁹ All her Romantic plans were based on a fully unrealistic fantasy. For the man, whom she loved, her life and her love were fully alien.⁸⁷⁰ Nevertheless, it needs to be noted that Creuzer responded to Günderrode's poetic moods and fanciful notions. Throughout his correspondence, he esteems her with various honorifics, a gesture which creates an aura of a fictitious realm. Addressing his sweetheart as "göttliches Mädchen," and at the same time inquiring: "wer hat Dir solche Zauberei gelehrt?"⁸⁷¹ Creuzer incorporates two supernatural elements into one sentence, namely, that of religious piety and of magic. He ascribes to Günderrode supermundane powers with regard to the role models of the sexes he himself conceptualizes. To his worshiped beloved, he assigns the role of a saint and appoints himself as the pious (der Fromme).⁸⁷² In that vein, he asks for her prayer: "Heiliger Engel, bete für mich, daß ich mich wieder fügen lerne in mein Schicksal. Nein, bete nicht, ist es doch süßer Trost für mich, daß Du in gleicher Trauer versunken. .. O Du Heilige."⁸⁷³ The poetic condition of suffering grief triumphs over the solicitation of prayer. In the end, Creuzer does not need Günderrode's intercession. As Zimmermann remarks, to a certain extent Creuzer's letter dialogue with Günderrode is a dialogue with himself precisely because of the role division

⁸⁶⁸ Susman, Margarete, *Frauen der Romantik*, 147.

⁸⁶⁹ Susman, Margarete, *Frauen der Romantik*, 149.

⁸⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁸⁷¹ Friedrich Creuzer to Karoline von Günderrode, Heidelberg, September 1805, Weissenborn, 242.

⁸⁷² Friedrich Creuzer to Karoline von Günderrode, Heidelberg, Oktober 3, 1805, Weissenborn, 249-250.

⁸⁷³ Creuzer to Karoline von Günderrode, Darmstadt, April 12, 1806, Weissenborn, 305.

conceptualization.⁸⁷⁴ In yet another letter, Creuzer intensifies the votive appellation directed to his beloved:

O sanctissima Virgo, tecum moriar libens. Eusebio will das nächste Mal vom Freunde hören, was dies Worte heißen, und fragt dabei an, ob er nach und nach mehrere solche Sprachübungen diktieren darf. (O allerheiligste Jungfrau, mit Dir zu sterben wäre ich bereit)⁸⁷⁵

He, the poetic Eusebio, is now immersed in a fantastic vision of dying with his “Virgin.” In this setting of pious adoration, it is virtually impossible to enter into a dialogue about even a contemplation of different self-projections; rather, Günderrode’s imagination and passion are being fed and provoked by illusory dreams. Rarely does Creuzer address Günderrode by her first name. In this manner, he stylizes and reduces Günderrode to her artistic work because, in his symbolization, the person of Günderrode vanishes; the view of her personhood becomes accessible first and foremost through the idea as a form of reflection. Creuzer’s objectification and essentialization of Günderrode is also visible in a letter where he describes the moment he first saw her:

Und aus Deinen lieben Augen und Mienen dasjenige zu malen, was Du selbst nicht weißt, weil es aus Gott ist, dasjenige, was mich im ersten Augenblick, da ich Dich sah, mit Andacht erfüllte, Du Engel, um dies darzustellen, hätte es auch einer wunderbaren Hilfe von oben bedurft. Aber alles, was menschlich an Dir ist, das heißt, was zum Umhalsen einladet und zum Küssen, das hat er Frisch und aufs lieblichste wiedergegeben.⁸⁷⁶

Creuzer stereotypes Günderrode as an angel filled with devotion. Her body is the epitomization of her humanity; it is a feminized body inviting hugs and kisses. Creuzer’s description excludes her intellect; moreover, the remark about Günderrode not being able to know her appearance and external qualities fully marginalizes her as a feminine entity with no access to knowledge. When writing about mental activity, he calls Günderrode his “good sister,” which reductively puts her

⁸⁷⁴ Zimmerman, *Die polyfunktionale Bedeutung dialogischer Sprechformen um 1800*, 96.

⁸⁷⁵ Creuzer to Karoline von Günderrode, Heidelberg, April 17-18, 1806, Weißenborn, 306.

⁸⁷⁶ Creuzer to Karoline von Günderrode, Heidelberg, December 19, 1805, Weißenborn, 289.

into a more equal category of a peer, and suggests their co-operation on his work, instead of simply asking her for assistance:

Liebe, gute Schwester, ... Der Fromme schämte sich nicht wenig, als ich ihm sagte, Du beschäftigtest Dich jetzt zuweilen mit seinem Geistesprodukt. ... Aber sobald das beendet sei, werde er sich damit abgeben, einige alte griechische Philosophen herauszugeben und ins Deutsche zu übersetzen, und da wäre es ihm dann die größte Freude zu denken, daß der Freund an dieser letztern arbeit teilnehmen werde. Da wollten sie beide recht zusammensitzen über einem griechischen Philosophen, den er oft nannte – und nun ist mir wahrhaftig der name doch vergessen – genug er sagte, der Freund kenne und liebe ihn besonders.⁸⁷⁷

The fact that the “friend” or “sister” knows and loves the Greek philosopher in question should then suffice to reward her labor. The whole letter exchange between Friedrich Creuzer and Karoline von Günderrode is dominated by terminology that emphasizes her ideal character and denies her access to reality. The non-sanity of their relationship may not be disturbed – in the sense Creuzer understands it – by the process of thinking. By way of his projection, he eludes a genuine discussion with Günderrode and, at the same time, excuses himself for his own mediocrity.⁸⁷⁸ With his idealization of Günderrode, not only does he deliver a distorted picture of her but also of their friendship. From his projection, however, it follows that the shared ideal dimension of their relationship has no connection to reality, and thus will have no influence on their life circumstances. The personal commitment that Günderrode conveys is alien to Creuzer.⁸⁷⁹

A few letters of Günderrode’s friend, Lisette Nees, offer the outsider’s point of view about the situation:

... Du fürchtest den Tod nicht, aber für wen würdest Du denn eigentlich sterben? Die Phantasie würde sich an Dir rächen daß Du sie aus ihrem eigenthümlichen Gebiete der

⁸⁷⁷ Creuzer to Karoline von Günderrode, Heidelberg, Oktober 3, 1805, Weißenborn, 249-250.

⁸⁷⁸ Zimmerman, *Die polyfunktionale Bedeutung dialogischer Sprechformen um 1800*, 96.

⁸⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 96.

Poesie und Kunst in die bürgerliche Verhältnisse hast übertragen wollen wo sie stirbt und Dich verzehrt.⁸⁸⁰

It is a clear warning and a fairly accurate depiction of the reality Günderrode creates for herself. Lisette Nees seems to be the only one who recognizes the emotional condition of her friend – who indeed is not afraid of death because of the philosophical stance she adopted. Günderrode deliberately extends the realm of fantasy well beyond the domain of poetry and art so that it imposes on her real life, creating a sharp contrast with everyday life. Nees is even more unequivocal when explaining the phenomenon of Günderrode's love for Creuzer and vice versa:

Creuzer liebte Dich erst, weil er in Deinen Blicken Liebe zu lesen glaubte; seine Liebe war nicht heftig und gewaltsam denn ohne den Vorschlag seines Freundes hätte er sich mit einem Verhältnisse begnügt das ihm Dich öfters zu sehen erlaubt hätte.⁸⁸¹

Lisette Nees suggests that Günderrode's irrational and ultimately breathtaking love, taken from her world of fantasy, ignited Creuzer's own love, which was never intense or fierce, unless propelled by more reveries:

Sage mir wo ist hier Creuzers Glück? Sein böses Schicksal muß er verfluchen. – Noch unglücklicher kann er aber durch Dich werden; Du lebst in Männertracht bey ihm unter Männern. Glaubst Du as es möglich sey ihnen lange Dein Geschlecht zu verbergen? Wenn man es erfährt so ist seine Ehre auf der ganzen Universität sehr angegriffen und Du stehst dem Urtheil der Welt so blos gegeben da wie Du es nie als Weib seyn würdest. – Du mußt ihn verlassen nicht wahr? Oder unter den vielen Männern gewinnt einer Deine Liebe; Schönheit und Jugend reizt gewaltsam Deinen Sinn, oder auch nur Deine Phantasie;⁸⁸²

Once again, the lack of differentialization between literature and life – Günderrode's purposeful and determined intertwining of fantasy and reality – is the focus of Lisette Nees's criticism.

Karoline von Günderrode was confronted in this frank and brusque way not only by her friend Lisette but also by her former love, Savigny:

⁸⁸⁰ Lisette Nees to Karoline von Günderrode, Sikershausen, November, 1805, Preitz, 276.

⁸⁸¹ Lisette Nees to Günderrode, Sikershausen, November, 1805, Preitz, 276.

⁸⁸² Ibid., 275.

So bist Du, und daß Du so bist und bleibst, kommt von einer Gottlosigkeit her, die Deine gute, wahrhafte Natur gewiß schon ausgestoßen hätte, wenn es die sinnliche Schwäche Deines Gemüts zuließe. Alles nämlich, was Deine Seele augenblicklich reizt, unterhält und erregt, hat einen solchen absoluten Wert für Dich, daß Du ihm auch die schlechteste Herkunft leicht verzeihts. ... Dein Geschmack an Schriftstellern, zum Beispiel an Schiller, hängt damit zusammen. Denn was ist das charakteristische an diesem, als der Effekt durch eine deklamatorische Sprache, welcher keine korrespondierende Tiefe der Empfindung zum Grund liegt?⁸⁸³

Savigny's letter to Günderrode from November 29, 1805 marks the interruption of their long-standing dialogue, as he completely ignores the artistic nature of her character and accuses her of lack of morality and of prioritizing her physical sensuality. His censure extends even to the area of her education and interests. As a woman, she needs to be careful when selecting her reading. In contrast to Lisette Nees, Savigny does not mention her confusing fantasy with the real life. Ursula Liebertzt-Grün concludes that Günderrode embraced her own death because she could not bear the pressure between the two worlds.⁸⁸⁴ According to Bohrer, Günderrode did not inadvertently confuse her dreams with life, but instead sought the implementation of her own programmatic life design that Bohrer labels as "Tod als teleologisches Projekt."⁸⁸⁵ Günderrode never ceased to speak the language of death, the love beyond death. However, her language became more and more the language of one without hope. The death offers no guarantee for

⁸⁸³ Savigny to Günderrode, Marburg, November 29, 1805. Preitz II, p. 210.

⁸⁸⁴ Ursula Liebertzt-Grün, *Ordnung im Chaos. Studien zur Poetik der Bettine Brentano-von Arnim* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1989), 61.

⁸⁸⁵ Bohrer, *Der romantische Brief*, 135-164. The question to what degree Günderrode's death motif was structured by teleological ideas or catastrophic consciousness allows only for ambivalent and complex answers. The reference to Hegel's philosophy of the divine and Schelling's nature philosophy influenced Günderrode's thinking since 1804. The idea of transcendence of the I into nature is reflected in her work, as the death is in the Romantic nature philosophy a medium of transition into the great nature: "Der Tod ist ein chemischer Prozess, eine Scheidung der Kräfte, aber kein Vernichter, er zerreit das Band zwischen mir und ähnlichen Seelen nicht." – so speaks the teacher in "Die Manen." Hölderlin's Hyperion proclaims: "Eines zu sein mit allem, was lebt, in seliger Selbstvergessenheit wiederzukehren ins All der Natur, das ist der Gipfel der Gedanken und Freunden, das ist die heilige Bergeshöhe, der Ort der ewigen Ruhe." (193). Such sentences coming from Hyperion could have possibly influenced Günderrode's eroticism of death and enthusiasm for death. The letter of dying Diotima: "Wir sterben, um zu leben" also communicates that same message (194). Further examples that could have impacted her decision to take her own life might include Hölderlin's Empedokles (194). Here the longing for death in a pure form becomes tangible. Just like for Hölderlin's Empedokles the death is a passage to "immortal gods" so is the final union with her beloved for Diotima (195). Bohrer, *Der romantische Brief*, 198.

being together in contrast to what the ideas of natural philosophy had promised. Günderrode's last letter to Lisette von Nees written in July 1806, written shortly before her suicide, communicates a state of definitive resignation: "Nach mir fragst Du? Ich bin eigentlich lebensmüde, ich fühle, daß meine Zeit aus ist, und daß ich nur fortlebe durch einen Irrthum der Natur; dies Gefühl ist zuweilen lebhafter in mir, zuweilen blasser. Das ist mein Lebenslauf, adieu Lisette."⁸⁸⁶

4.6 LETTERS WITH CLEMENS BRENTANO

According to Bohrer, there is a similarity between Karoline von Günderrode and Clemens Brentano's letters since both authors sought a partner with whom they could enter into a poetic covenant of artistic passion; their characters demanded "all or nothing."⁸⁸⁷ Brentano's restlessness and his alienation from society both emerge in his letters to Günderrode. His deeply sensual pronouncements and loftiness transform the mundane into the extraordinary:

So öffne alle Adern Deines weißen Leibes, daß das heiße schäumende Blut aus tausend wonnigen Springbrunnen spritze, so will ich Dich sehen und trinken aus den tausend Quellen, trinken, bis ich berauscht bin und Deinen Tod mit jauchzender Raserei beweinen kann, weinen wieder in Dich all mein Blut und das meine in Tränen, bis sich Dein Herz wieder hebt und vertraut, weil das meine in Deinem Puls lebt. ... und Du, Günderrödchen, im Fräuleinstift, was habe ich euch so lieb, ihr Teufel und ihr Engel, mein Herz ist keine arme Seele. ... haben sie das Seufzen ihrer Liebe an dem Echo meines Busens gebrochen, und wie sie sich umarmten, verwandelten sie sich in eine goldenene, süße, bittere, wollüstige Schlange, die mich mit den lebenigen, drückenden, zuckenden Fesseln ihres Leibes umwand. Und da riß ich die Kleider von mir, daß die Umarmung keuscher sei, wie der Blitz schnell und elektrisch, biß mir die goldene Schlange ins Herz und ringelte wie in gewundener Luft an mir herauf, sie vergiftete mich

⁸⁸⁶ Preitz I, 281.

⁸⁸⁷ Bohrer, *Der romantische Brief*, 73. Bohrer classifies Clemens Brentano's letters to Savigny and to his beloved Sophie Mereau not as a dialogue, a true correspondence, but Brentano's "narcissistic" tendencies. In other words, his letters do not display his curiosity in that which is anthropologically unknown. Brentano sought the Early Romantic project of dialogue, that is, of philosophizing together, not as a revolutionary culture mission but as mystical-erotic manifestation. Brentano's obsessive letter writing, and the claim that his letters were composed only reluctantly prove his failure, and at the same time reveal his letter writing philosophy where the letter appears to have only its basic communicative function, hence, it has ultimately nothing to express. Bohrer, *Der romantische Brief*, 251-252.

mit göttlichem Leben und in mir war ein anderes Leben, es zieht mir mit ergebenem Widerstand durch Adern und Mark... Drum beiße ich mir die Adern auf und will Dir es geben, aber Du hättest es tun sollen und saugen müssen. Öffnen Deine Adern nicht, Günderrödchen, ich will Dir aufbeißen ... Lebe wohl, und habe den Mut, nur darum zu weinen, daß Du nicht bei mir bist im Fleische, sondern nur in Gedanken, denn beide sind eins und nur im Abendmahl genießen wir den Gott, den alles Wort muß Fleisch werden, auch dies Wort der Liebe ... sei doch kein Kind, mein Kind, und verstehe zu leben, das heißt, bekümmere Dich nur um Gott.⁸⁸⁸

With sexually arousing language, Brentano addresses Günderrode's putative love. Corporal representations of his fantasy commingle with rendition of spiritual visions, so that ultimately all is love. Ecclesiastical phraseology prevails in the rather bizarre conclusion of the letter; after multiple sensual comments directed to Günderrode, he requires her to trouble herself only with God. Dumbfounded, Günderrode finds herself not addressed:

Es war mir ganz wunderlich zumute, als ich Ihren Brief gelesen hatte; doch war ich mehr denkend als empfindend dabei; denn es war mir und ist mir noch so, als ob dieser Brief gar nicht für mich geschrieben sei. Ja, ich verstehe den Augenblick, in dem Sie mir geschrieben haben; ich bin überhaupt nie weitergekommen als Ihre Augenblicke ein wenig zu verstehen. ... Es kömmt mir oft vor, als hätten Sie viele Seelen, wenn ich nun anfangen, einer dieser Seelen gut zu sein, so geht sie fort und eine andere tritt an ihre Stelle, die ich nicht kenne und die ich nur überrascht anstarre. Aber ich mag nicht einmal an alle Ihre Seelen denken, denn eine davon hat mein Zutrauen, das nur ein furchtsames Kind ist, auf die Straße gestoßen; das Kind ist nun noch viel blöder geworden und wird nicht wieder umkehren. Darum kann ich Ihnen auch nicht eigentlich von mir schreiben. ... Ich bin fleißig und zeichne auch wieder, kurz, ich folge allen Ihren vernünftigen Ratschlägen.⁸⁸⁹

Along with reciprocity, which dialogical letters suggest through the presence of the corresponding counterpart, they are also receptive. Here both functions fail because Brentano, with his fantasy, puts himself in the focus of an absurd monologue, and Günderrode in turn is anything but receptive and approachable in her response. The solitude and isolation of Brentano who thinks himself to be in a dialogue is entirely illusory, as he conjures only himself with his own reflection – as if he were looking into a mirror. This is precisely the thought that

⁸⁸⁸ Clemens Brentano to Günderrode, April 1802, Weissenborn, 86-88.

⁸⁸⁹ Karoline to Clemens, Frankfurt, 19 Mai, 1802, Weissenborn, 88-89.

Günderrode communicates to him in her response. She cannot truly engage in any form of dialogue with someone who is essentially fictitious; that is why she is unable to write frankly about herself. Having abandoned his seductive strategy, Brentano changes his tone into that of a male speaking with authority:

Mein liebes Gundelchen! Alles, was ihr tut, muß Liebreiz werden oder Pflege und hängt einzig mit eurer einzigen Bestimmung zusammen, uns zu locken und aus dem Staat in jedem Augenblick zum bloßen Leben zurückzuführen und dann Mutter zu werden. Wie sollte ich mir anders das Geheimnisvolle, Lust und Andacht erregende, das mir über jeder blühenden züchtigen Jungfrau verbreitet ist, erklären, wenn es nicht bloß Durchsichtigkeit wäre, durch die mir ewig die Eigkeit der Menschheit, die Produktion entgegenblickt? Und alles ist heilig, was uns fern ist und doch das Unsrige. Und alles Heilige wird, wenn wir es berühren und mit dem Leibe ergreifen, Schöpfung, die nur mit Lust vor sich geht. Große Handlungen eines Weibes sind mir immer durchaus fatal gewesen, wenn sie nicht von dem Geschlechtstribe oder der Mütterlichkeit ausgehen, das Weib kann nie menschlich groß sein, ohne mir das ekelhafte Geheimnis der Unfruchtbarkeit zu verraten.⁸⁹⁰

Brentano attempts to communicate what, to his mind, is the most essential ingredient of women's lives and tantamount to their destiny: becoming mothers. As he proceeds with the message, his language reveals a thinly disguised misogyny, and states that, "the woman as a person can never reach greatness." However, when failing to obtain a reply from Günderrode, he once again changes the tone of his letter:

Wie Sie über mich denken, ist mir nicht mehr bekannt geworden, seit Sie meine Nähe vermieden ... mein Betragen zu Ihnen hat mich nie gereut, mein Leben, mein unglückliches zerrissenes Herz, und sein trauriges Verhältniß zum Leben hat mich gereut, wenn Sie mich hassen, so thuen Sie mir unrecht, Ihren Haß verdiene ich nicht ... ich konnte damals Ihre Herz nicht errathen, Ihr großes schönes Herz, ich erkannte es nur als krank, die Qual des unausgesprochenen Gedichts empfand ich selbst zu oft in mir bloß als Krankheit, als daß ich Ihnen verstehen sollte, was in mir selbst ein unauflöblicher Schmerz ist, weit tiefer, fester, ernster, reiner, frommer, begeisterter als ich ... Ich bitte Sie um Gerechtigkeit, um Ruhe, um Freundschaft für mich, ich bitte Sie um Verschwiegenheit gegen Savigny und sein Weib übr diesen Brief. Ich stehe auf einem ruhigen denkenden Punkt ohne Freund, ohne Glück, meine größten Hoffnungen sind so in ihrer Möglichkeit getödet, daß selbst die Begeisterung, der Reiz des Sehns vorüber ist, die Welt steht kalt, klar und lieblos vor mir, ich wache ewig, kein Traum mehr, keine Fremde, keine Heimath, ich glaubte Wein zu trinken, und trank mein Blut. ...

⁸⁹⁰ Clemens Brentano to Gunda Brentano, Marburg, Mitte Januar 1803, Weissenborn, 91-92.

verzeihen Sie mir, sein sie meine Freundin. Jezt meine Freundin zu sein, da Sie neben Menschen stehen, die mich nicht lieben, ist groß, ist ihrer würdig.... Wenn Sie mir vertrauen wollen, daß Sie Tian sind, will ich Ihnen vertrauen, wer ich bin.⁸⁹¹

Brentano's apology and contrite request for Günderrode's friendship form the background for his actual inquiry. He declares himself ready to judge Günderrode's lyrical work once she admits to being Tian. On the level of comradeship of poets, Brentano seeks understanding. His evaluation of Günderrode's state of mind follows from his own experience, as he calls the state of an artist during his or her artistic production "a painful disease." Being unable to speak out and produce the work that inevitably grows inside the artist's head or soul causes indissoluble pain. His artistic disposition and poetic world were discussed by Günderrode's friend Lisete Nees:

Deine Erzählungen von Clemenz sind mir wunderbar, ich möchte einen warnenden Zeigfinger aufheben ... Lina nehme Clemenz nicht anders wie er ist, vertraue diesem ungetreuen Schiff nicht! Sein Brief an Dich ist nichts anderst wie ein verdiente Würdigung Diener Gedichte, seiner Natur gemäß ausgedrückt; Clemenz ist ein Künstler aber ein reiner Enthusiasmus lebt doch nicht in seiner Seele, denn er liebt es daß man seine Originalität in ihm anstaune wobey es ihm gleichviel ist ob die Sache wofür er spricht Eingang gewinnt. Lina, sey das nicht, traue den süßen Tönen des Sirenenliedes nicht. Sieh ich eifre nicht und werde Dich auch achten wenn Du ihm täglich schreibst, aber Feine Ruhe ist mir werth und Deine poetische Muse.⁸⁹²

Nees warns Günderrode about Brentano's real nature, that is, that of an impetuous artist. This letter is similar to Günderrode's response to Brentano's letter. It is as if Brentano had two souls independent of each other. Although Nees expresses her observation slightly differently, the idea is the same: Brentano's world does not intersect with the real world of bourgeois persons. He belongs to his own world created not only for himself, but rather also for others to admire. When Nees compares Brentano's words to a mermaid's voice, she draws attention to the power of poeticized love in a space of fantasy – a poeticized life.

⁸⁹¹ Clemens Brentano to Günderrode, Marburg, 1 Mai, 1804, Preitz, 229.

⁸⁹² Lisette Nees to Günderrode, Sikershausen, 23 Mai, 1804, Preitz, 232-233.

4.7 DIALOGUE CRISIS THROUGH THE EXCLUSION OF GÜNDERRODE

Something very much like a “crisis of dialogue” escalated around Günderrode in the year of 1800, as her friends and paramour corresponded among themselves, excluding her from their exchanges. Inherently, Creuzer felt that Günderrode, when talking about love, did not really refer to him, but pointed to a dream, a self-created ideal; they talked at cross purposes, and they never reached accord.⁸⁹³ In a letter to Lisette Nees, Creuzer reveals that he was aware of Günderrode’s actual feelings for him, and expresses regrets: “dieses Unbestimmte hätte niemals ein Bestimmtes werden sollen, dann wäre mir der zerreissende Widerstreit zwischen Wirklichkeit und Dichtung nie zum Bewusstseyn gekommen.” He recognizes that Günderrode’s world is undefined in the sense that it is a shifting always between the two areas of reality and poetry. According to Creuzer’s opinion, Günderrode became prudent as a result of a warning from a higher power.⁸⁹⁴ When writing about Creuzer’s letter to Günderrode, Lisette Nees admits that his “quiet sorrow moved her.”⁸⁹⁵

On July 26, 1806, Karoline von Günderrode took her own life with a dagger. With that act, she terminated her participation in the letter dialogue with others. The events which took place on that day became known through the letter exchange between Karl Daub and Susanne von Heyden, the letter of Susanne Heyden to Hektor von Günderrode, Karoline’s brother; and through the report of Bettina Brentano von Arnim to Goethe’s mother as well as to Achim von Arnim. Günderrode’s untimely death should not be straightforwardly connected to her love affair with Georg Friedrich Creuzer. Although assumptions common among biographers, that, in order to die with Creuzer, Günderrode killed herself with a dagger lend themselves to interpretations of her suicide exclusively in reference to her unrequited love, such advances the danger of

⁸⁹³ Susman, *Frauen der Romantik*, 150.

⁸⁹⁴ Friedrich Creuzer to Lisette Nees, Heidelberg, 9 November, 1804, Preitz, 252-253.

⁸⁹⁵ Lisette Nees to Günderrode, Sikershausen, 4 Dezember, 1804, Preitz, 254.

diminishing her as an artist.⁸⁹⁶ The one who is prepared to devoutly adore possesses ability to suspend the border between life and death, and between reality and dream just like Günderrode's "Immortalita," the immortal. Günderrode insisted adamantly on her individuality even though the patriarchal structures of society were in opposition to her self-driven individualization process.

Unlike in the alternative pietistic interpretation, the suicide here appears as an emphatic act of an isolated subject, reflecting on herself and, in herself, deflagrating. The suicide is constructed as the consequential maneuver of the Romantic desolate.⁸⁹⁷ The aforementioned letter of Susanne von Heyden may illustrate this claim: "... sie konnte nicht leben ohne Liebe, ihr ganzes Wesen war aufgelöset in Lebensmüdigkeit.... ihr Herz war größer denn diese Welt, nur die innigste Liebe konnte es lebend erhalten, als diese starb, brach auch ihr Herz."⁸⁹⁸ Heyden seeks to define Günderrode's Romantic mentality. However, both the sentimental formula of "Lebensmüdigkeit," fatigue, as well as the conventional Romantic notion of *Liebestod* obscure the spiritual aspect of the act. Lisette von Nees ascribes Günderrode's death to the seduction of the devil and deliberates over an abandonment of nature, which is a sin just as much as an apostasy from morality. Ultimately Nees accuses Günderrode of sinning against both.⁸⁹⁹ Moreover, she classifies Günderrode's behavior as "a play":

In diesem Spiel, daß Lina oft sich und ihre Zustände als die eines dritten schildert, liegt mir ein tiefer Sinn: es giebt uns die Spaltung in ihrer Seele, das immer thätige Vermögen der Reflexion, sich von sich selbst zu trennen im Bilde wieder. Ihre Darstellung ihrer drey Seelen ist sehr wahr. Die Einheit dieser drey Gewalten ware die Liebe gewesen. – In der Herrschaft der ersten Seele war sie Weib, und in so fern modernes Wesen, in der zweiten Mann und lebte im Antiken. In der dritten lag die Tendenz zur Ausgleichung beyder in das ... Caroline vermochte dies nicht. Sie fiel, ein Opfer der Zeit, mächtiger in ihr wirkender Ideen, frühzeitig schlaff gewordener sittlicher Grundsätze:

⁸⁹⁶ See Alice Kuzniar, "Labor Pains: Romantic Theories of Creativity and Gender." *Essays on Jewish and German Literature and Thought in Honor of Geza von Molnar*. "The Spirit of Poesy," eds., Richard Block and Peter Fenves (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2000), 120.

⁸⁹⁷ Bohrer, *Der romantische Brief*, 182.

⁸⁹⁸ Susanne von Heyden to Hektor von Günderrode, 28. Juli 1806, Weißenborn. 346.

⁸⁹⁹ Lisette Nees to Susanne von Heyden, shortly after Günderrode's death, Weißenborn, 282.

eine unglückliche Liebe war nur die Form unter der dies alles zur Erscheinung kam, die Feuerprobe die sie verherrlichen oder verzehren musste. Friede mit ihrer Asche!⁹⁰⁰

Nees posits a theory about Günderrode's different egos and calls it a "split in her soul." The element holding the three parts of her soul together is love. While Susanne von Heyden talks in a sense of a readily identifiable pietistic motive of "Lebensmüdigkeit," which is also characteristic for Kleist's self-description in the suicide letters and Novalis's diary, Bettina Brentano von Arnim's portrayal presents a literary stylization through which the incident of Karoline's suicide has already poetical features of a Romantic folk tale in terms of her brother Clemens Brentano.⁹⁰¹

After Günderrode's death a series of letters on the shocking event followed. Exchanges included: Lisette Nees von Esenbeck to Susanne von Heyden; Bettina Brentano to Savigny; Meline Brentano to Savigny; Savigny to Friedrich Heinrich Schwarz; Sophie von LaRoche to Elise von Laubach Solms; Susanne von Heyden to Hektor von Günderrode; Susanne von Heyden to Carl Daub. Thus, a dialogue about Günderrode ensued, though, without her participation since she was no longer able to speak. As Achim von Arnim put it:

Der sanfte, blaue Blick der armen Günderrode begegnet mir sicherer, nun sie nicht mehr sprechen kann, sie sieht freier und ohne Zurückhaltung in die Welt, wir fühlen uns enger befangen, schlagen die Augen nieder und an unsre Brust, wir konnten ihr nicht genug geben, um sie hier zu fesseln, nicht hell genug singen, um die Furienfackel unseliger, ihr fremder Leidenschaft auszublasen.⁹⁰²

The manner in which von Arnim approaches Günderrode's death is decidedly different from others. He actually looks back with wariness at his and other's failure to help her and to attempt to understand her better. He retains a wariness of Günderrode's volatile artistic spirit, which he describes as a "torch fury of her disastrous strange passion." In the end, Günderrode cannot

⁹⁰⁰ Ibid., 282.

⁹⁰¹ Bohrer, *Der romantische Brief*, 182.

⁹⁰² Achim von Arnim to Bettina Brentano, Göttingen, August 27, 1806, Weissenborn, 357.

express herself through her letters any longer, and the memory of her begins to be systematically obliterated shortly after her death:

Glaube mir, lieber Vetter, ich werde keinen unvorsichtigen Schritt tun, und dem sehr erklärbaren Widerwillen gegen öffentliches Auftreten gebe ich so wenig Raum ... Es ist Brentanos Frau und Kind, mit dem sie diese Nacht im Wochenbette gestorben ist, ... Wenn ich meine Sophie noch recht lange behalte! ... Mit den unglücklichen Briefen, lieber Vetter, hast Du viel Mühe. Indessen kann ich Dich doch nicht dispensieren von der Lektüre des Teils derselben, der die Periode vom Mai 1805 bis zum Jenner 1806 umfaßt. In diesem Kreise nämlich müssen die Briefe liegen, worin die bewußten Äußerungen enthalten sind. ... Wenn Du die Briefe aus der oben bemerkten Periode gefunden und vernichtet hast, so melde mir es doch. Sonst laß mich nichts weiter davon hören.⁹⁰³

Günderrode's death becomes taboo, and Creuzer, afraid of public opinion, proceeds to destroy the evidence of their relationship. He cannot, however, control the dialogue about Günderrode that continues till today, even though the last letter about Günderrode (in the Weißenborn's edition) is that from Bettina Brentano to Max Prokop von Freyberg, written in Bukowan on July 11, 1810.⁹⁰⁴

4.8 CONCLUSION

Karoline von Günderrode and Bettina Brentano von Arnim ascribed to the heart – and mind and soul – the architectural structure of a room. In a letter written together with Gunda Brentano, Günderrode writes: “Ich trage meistens ein stilles Kämmerlein in meinen Gemüthe herum in diesem lebe ich ein eignes, abgesondertes, glückliches Leben in dem Interesse und der Liebe zu irgend einem Menschen, einer Idee, einer Wissenschaft oder einer Kunst.”⁹⁰⁵ In that imaginary space, Günderrode cultivates passion for life – expressed through love for people, ideas, learning, or art – that allows her to be an inventive and fecund artist.

⁹⁰³ Creuzer to Leonhard Creuzer, Heidelberg, October 31, 1806, Weißenborn, 362-4.

⁹⁰⁴ Weißenborn, 365.

⁹⁰⁵ January 3, 1804, Preitz II, 195.

Similarly to her close friend Lisette Esenbeck, who had decided to “lead a double life” as a means of escaping her new societal role of a married woman and a mother trapped within a domestic space, Günderrode adopted more roles for herself. As a woman author and a lover of a married man, she moved outside of the patriarchal order. However, to her mind, poetry could only exist when fueled by the Romantic longing that was able to awaken a different life in her – that of fantasy. For Günderrode as an artist, the optimal possibility – after living two lives in both worlds – would be to choose the poetic life itself. Her self-invention as a person of passionate erotic nature and a Romantic artist allowed her to unite life and art – at least in her writing.

Günderrode’s love and suicide fantasies could be compared in some respects to Clemens Brentano’s concept of aesthetic autonomy. She enforced the longing for the eternal as death wishes and love pathos, and, in doing so, fused religious and erotic elements together.⁹⁰⁶ Her oeuvre, including her private letters, manifests a determined commitment to dialogue of and about a phoenix – of her own amalgamation of herself as a private person and an artist consumed by a self-designed creative passion. With her life and in her writing, Günderrode devised her own life formula, the deceptively simple phrase: “Überall Liebe.”⁹⁰⁷

⁹⁰⁶ Bohrer, *Der romantische Brief*, 179.

⁹⁰⁷ Günderrode’s poem in *Melete*, in Morgenthaler I, 335.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

During the Romantic era, the letter was no longer esteemed mainly for its educational attributes, but became appreciated for its subjective features, its similarity to spoken conversation, and its dialogical form.⁹⁰⁸ The literary and epistolary production of Rahel Levin Varnhagen, Bettina Brentano von Arnim, and Karoline von Günderrode highlights these specific aspects of the culture of Romantic letters, since all these authors relied on dialogical form for their creative production. Dialogue and connectivity in letters have an impact on at least two dimensions, temporal and spatial. The temporal dimension of the published letter includes the past and the present as well as the future and focuses not only on the author of the letter but undeniably also on those others participating in the exchange, even in the role of recipients. Geographically the widespread impact of the letter is especially prominent in Levin Varnhagen's correspondence because the places where her letters or those of her addressees are created or received include, among others: Breslau, Göttingen, Berlin, Jena, Halle, Paris, Prague, Hamburg, Stralsund, Amsterdam, Königsberg, Tübingen, Dreseden, Stockholm, Vienna, Bremen, Frankfurt am Main, Stuttgart, Koblenz, Manheim, Rome, Leipzig, Weimar, Trier, Karlsruhe, London, München, Nürnberg, Venice, Kassel, Bonn. Letters connect then not only people and dates, but also places.

⁹⁰⁸ Romantic letters – with their qualities of matching the communicative needs of the developing bourgeois society – can be seen in contrast to, for example, travel letters (Georg Christoph Lichtenberg's *Briefe aus England*, 1776-78, and Karl Philipp Moritz *Reisen eines jungen Deutschen in England im Jahre 1782/1783*) and literary critical letters (Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Briefe die neueste Litteratur betreffend*, 1759-65) perceived as a widely suitable didactic medium. The privacy and subjectivity of the Romantic letter – within the cult of friendship – ends when the letter becomes semi-public since letters were read, copied, and circulated among sizable groups of friends. See Ursula Hudson-Wiedenmann, "Letters: Germany," in *Encyclopedia of the Romantic Era 1760-1850*, vol 2, 673-674, ed., Christopher John Murray (New York and London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2004), 673.

Letter exchanges between Levin Varnhagen, Brentano von Arnim, and Günderrode and their interlocutors functioned as alternatives to traditional authoritative narrative voices. In their dialogues, these women writers developed strategies of resistance against the rules of patriarchal society even though each woman approached the dilemma with a different method. The process of dialogical disintegration or crises illustrates their resistance and can be found to a certain degree and different extent in each letter collection. Thus, the letter exchanges between letter-writers and readers sometime assume the form of an echo in conversation with itself, or read as solitary monologues.

The form of the letter exchange, the epistolary dialogue,⁹⁰⁹ enabled those corresponding with each other to exchange ideas, which created what Barbara Hahn describes as a “Netz von Gedanken,” a complete and intact communicative network.⁹¹⁰ In that sense women writers’ letter writing pursuits are related to the Romantic idea of sociability and symphilosophy. Consequently, with regard to the letter exchange as a whole, one must speak about co-authorship and thus each epistolary dialogue can be regarded as a joint project.⁹¹¹

Friendships relied heavily on correspondence. The writing of letters, certainly in the case of Brentano von Arnim and Günderrode, formed part of the foundation of their relationship. Through reciprocity and receptivity in an open dialogue it was possible for friends to come to

⁹⁰⁹ Barbara Hahn in her extensive research on Rahel Varnhagen’s correspondence discusses the important aspect of dialogic exchange in letters. The word “Briefwechsel” itself implies that one needs to include both sides of the letter exchange as much as possible. See Barbara Hahn, *Antworten Sie mir!* For references to “dialogic quality” in Brentano von Arnim writing (25) and establishing of “a dialogic situation” in Günderrode’s work (47) see Friederike Eigler and Susanne Kord. *The Feminist Encyclopedia of German Literature* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1997).

⁹¹⁰ “Rahel Varnhagen: An Interview with Barbara Hahn,” Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg, 12. Mai 2011 http://panorama-publikumspreis.de/stilbruch/archiv/stilbruch_vom_12_05/rahel_varnhagen.html

⁹¹¹ See also Lorely French, *German Women as Letter Writers: 1750-1850* (Madison: Teaneck Fairleigh: Dickinson University Press, 1996). “the epistolary dialogue” in letters 30

understand one another and themselves.⁹¹² The letter itself documents the dedication to dialogue with a partner or partners. Dialogue partners exercise self-reflection and self-expression and integrate in letters each other's portrayals. In a certain sense it seems reasonable to reverse Bohrer's arguments about aesthetic subjectivity: while he asserts that Romantic letters are monological constructs, the letters analyzed in this study show rather that monologicity appears at times only as interruptions of dialogue. The interdependence of the intellectual salon society's communication and its continuation in written correspondence manifests itself distinctly in Levin Varnhagen, Brentano von Arnim, and Günderrode's oeuvre.⁹¹³

Thus, the letter exchange as an expression of co-authorship can be seen as a collaborative work project: a project rooted in sociability and symphilosophy. And, the authors whose work I have analyzed here indeed conceived of their letters as part of such a project since they adhered to the ideals of Early Romantic philosophy. Friedrich Schlegel perceived collective work to be a consequence of successful "sympoetry" (Sympoesie).⁹¹⁴ The space where, in fellowship, ideas and aesthetic postulates are formed and from which they are disseminated was the space of the salon or family. Schlegel's reflections on poetry reveal dialogue as the fundamental concept of Romantic theory comprising life as well as literary production, according to which dialogue is considered a paramount contributor to the process of fashioning totality by means of multiple perspectives. Accordingly, dialogically structured forms of the spoken and written word occupy dominant place in Romantic theory and practice, which are indivisibly interconnected.⁹¹⁵ The

⁹¹² Edith Waldstein, *Bettine von Arnim and the Politics of Romantic Conversation*, 38.

⁹¹³ Ursula Hudson-Wiedenmann, "Letters: Germany." In *Encyclopedia of the Romantic Era 1760-1850*, vol 2, 673-674, ed., Christopher John Murray. New York and London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2004, 674.

⁹¹⁴ May Mergenthaler, *Zwischen Eros und Mitteilung. Die Frühromantik im Symposium der Athenaeums-Fragmente*. Paderborn, München, Wien Zürich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2012, 19.

⁹¹⁵ Schlegel and other Romantic writers' deliberations on the letter establish it as a singularly respected genre. Schlegel's Athenaeum fragment 77 considers the closeness between letter and fragment, and notes that both genres are compatible with dialogue. Ursula Hudson-Wiedenmann, "Letters: Germany," in *Encyclopedia of the*

Romantic women writers are echoing certain aspects of that thinking, but at the same time stepping into a new direction.

According to Friedrich Schleiermacher, the sociability in salons is part of an entire aesthetic program.⁹¹⁶ The group proves its identity through aesthetics and equalizes, at least temporarily, all rank or class distinction.⁹¹⁷ In reality, women assumed the leadership of salons and suggested the subjects or themes to be attended to as well as organized readings, talks, and discussions. The relationship of the women authors I have discussed here to salon conversation is reflected and practiced through the genre of the letter on the level of art. The Romantic letter thus should have an established place in Romantic aesthetic theory, which reunites all literary genres and asserts “the interchangeability of art and life.”⁹¹⁸

Levin Varnhagen, Brentano von Arnim, and Günderröde’s writing has been described as part of a “Leben als Schreibprozess,” where all experiences reflected upon and questions posed were deliberately and consciously poured onto the paper, actually represents a high degree of romanticization, the reflection of the reflection.⁹¹⁹ Levin Varnhagen’s and Brentano von Arnim’s refashioning of letters and creating new forms of fiction epitomizes romanticization. As Levin Varnhagen, together with her husband, prepared the collection of letter fragments to be published after her death (the 1834 edition which proved to be an uncommon success) and thus aimed at an comprising portrait of herself (a prolific letter writer who corresponded with three hundred

Romantic Era 1760-1850, vol 2, 673-674, ed., Christopher John Murray (New York and London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2004), 673.

⁹¹⁶ See Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, “Versuch einer Theorie des geselligen Betragens.” *Schriften aus der Berliner Zeit 1796-1799*, ed., Günter Meckenstock (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1984), p. 165.

⁹¹⁷ See Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, “Versuch einer Theorie des geselligen Betragens.” *Schriften aus der Berliner Zeit 1796-1799*, ed. Günter Meckenstock (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1984), p. 165.

⁹¹⁸ Ursula Hudson-Wiedenmann, “Letters: Germany.” In *Encyclopedia of the Romantic Era 1760-1850*, vol 2, 673-674, ed., Christopher John Murray (New York and London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2004), 673.

⁹¹⁹ Gisela Dischner, *Bettina von Arnim. Eine Biographie aus dem 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Philo, 1998),

partners and whose posthumous letters count more than six thousand documents) she already reflected upon her own reflection.⁹²⁰ As Brentano von Arnim drew on letters and memories in her fictionalized autobiographical epistolary novels, she was creating the reflection of the reflection. Similarly, Günderrode's act of taking sections of her private letters and using them in her poetry or including poetry in her letters denotes romanticization. In adopting the epistolary form for the bulk of their written work, these women writers elevated it to an aesthetic vehicle that declares the importance of personal experience for the outside world. Their affirmation of letter writing as an act of narration questions the splits between literature and history, fiction and reality, private and public spheres, which narrowly define mutually exclusive types of discourse.

The Romantic idea of "life as text,"⁹²¹ as clearly manifested in these women's letters, means that each life constitutes a text interlacing diverse components of time, memory, knowledge, and intuition into a poetic reality, even though the interest is still historical.⁹²²

Women, previously objects in and of history and at most facilitators of conversations during the Enlightenment, are now transformed into subjects thanks to the Romantic salon, the real-time space of conversation where those who would not normally meet are able to unite in dialogue.

With their approach of "life as writing," Levin Varnhagen, Brentano von Arnim, and Günderrode removed the split between art and life. Because of the synergy connecting them with many correspondents, all three writers were able to depict quotidian life expressed through highly

⁹²⁰ Ursula Hudson-Wiedenmann, "Letters: Germany." In *Encyclopedia of the Romantic Era 1760-1850*, vol 2, 673-674, ed., Christopher John Murray (New York and London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2004) 673.

⁹²¹ Compare Barbara Becker-Cantarino's term "Leben als Text" as she reflects on Rahel's words: *Mein Leben soll zu Briefen werden.* In *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik*, 169.

⁹²² The famous 116 Äthenäum-Fragment argued for the convergence of genres and declared that "die Reisebeschreibung, die Briefsammlung, die Selbstgeschichte sind für den, der in einem romantischen Sinne zu lesen versteht, ein besserer Roman als die bewährten des zu Ende gegangenen Jahrhunderts." Thus, the life is poetic and the poesy is the life: "Die romantische Poesie ist eine progressive Universal poesie ... Sie will, und soll auch Poesie und Prosa, Genialität und Kritik, Kunstpoesie und Naturpoesie bald mischen, bald verschmelzen, die Poesie lebendig und gesellig, und das Leben und die Gesellschaft poetisch machen." In Pfothenhauer, *Literarische Anthropologie: Selbstbiographien und ihre Geschichte, am Leitfaden des Leibes*, 185.

aestheticized dialogues in letters. Based on the concept of Romantic sociability through thinking together in dialogue, dialogical letter exchanges take place when the author with unflagging resolve writes in a partner-oriented manner and maintains the reference to the imaginary counterpart.⁹²³ The dual focus on form (letter) and content (love) elucidates understanding of the author's effort to consciously re-construct the three configurations of love (agape, filia, eros) and at the same time to develop a *modus operandi* depending on the form of the dialogue. Hence, the letters of Levin Varnhagen, Brentano von Arnim, and G nderrode lend force to the Romantic entreaty that "die Welt mu  romantisiert werden" by being potentialized.⁹²⁴ The understanding that through art, which demonstrates "the highest human perfection," individuals will be able to reach the state of "perpetual love that no death will be able to obscure" is explicit in their works.⁹²⁵

Essentially it is the underlying theme of love, in various manifestations, that guides and unites both the form and the content in the women's writing examined here. Just as Brentano von Arnim related speech acts to the divine and the universal love so did Levin Varnhagen and G nderrode, each in their own way, affirmed love to be the encompassing element that subsumes all aspects of life. Hence love is ultimately tied to dialogue and cannot be separated from it. To G nderrode, love and symphilosophy meant as much as thinking with our feelings. The need for intellectual interaction between equal dialogue partners reminds the reader again of the Romantic concept of symphilosophy.

⁹²³ It is important to not that the dialogue is not only with one partner: "Diese Bemerkungen sind alle aus Gespr chen mit dem Voigt, der mir gern seine Weisheit bringt aus dem Grund, weil ihn kein Mensch sonst anh rt; er sagte, ich bin jeder mann langweilig, aber ich kann Ihnen versichern, die Leute sagen, Sie w ren auch langweilig; letter to Karoline, 340

⁹²⁴ See Novalis, "Die Welt mu  romantisiert werden," *Die deutsche Literatur in Text und Darstellung*, 57.

⁹²⁵ See Wackenroder, "Herzensergie ungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders," 87. See also Tieck, "Phantasien  ber die Kunst f r Freunde der Kunst," 89.

For Levin Vanhagen love is a method for transforming people, and triumphing over conflicts, and precipitates the realization of community and fellowship, without adhering to harmful stereotypes. She discovers a compelling way of bringing people together through dialogues that continually return to the topic of love, in accord with her dictum: “Erdenglück ist nur in Menschenliebe.”⁹²⁶

Love is essentially the foundation of these women writers’ philosophy. It is the nucleus of their creative work, which for Levin Varnhagen was symbolized by the image of the heart, “the strongest organ.”⁹²⁷ Brentano von Arnim and Günderrode envision the heart or mind and soul hidden within the structure of a room.⁹²⁸ In that imaginary space, love is developed, kept safe, and idolized – a process that allows them to be creative and productive as artists. Brentano von Arnim’s creativity was based on a spontaneous interplay of fantasy, sensuousness, and intellect because she recognizes that she could destroy her creativity if she were to rigorously suppress her sexuality.⁹²⁹ Günderrode’s love and suicide fantasy formed her aesthetic autonomy and aesthetic teleology.⁹³⁰ As a woman author and a lover of a married man, Günderrode moved beyond the patriarchal order and declared love imbued with passion as an essential ingredient of life.

The Romantic letter thus engages in a modern dialogue that is still marked by norms and by anticipations around gender roles. It uses, however, ancient ideas (the long-instituted form of the dialogue; prevailing notions of love) in combination with modern Romantic development (symphilosophy, sociability) to forge a new discourse—one characterized by formal praxis and

⁹²⁶ Rahel to Gentz 27. Dezember 1827, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, 157.

⁹²⁷ “Das stärkste Organ.” Rahel to Gentz December 27, 1827, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Kemp, vol. III, 157.

⁹²⁸ “Ich trage meistens ein stilles Kämmerlein in meinen Gemüthe herum in diesem lebe ich ein eignes, abgesondertes, glückliches Leben in dem Interesse und der Liebe zu irgend einem Menschen, einer Idee, einer Wissenschaft oder einer Kunst.” January 3, 1804, Preiz II, 195.

⁹²⁹ Ursula Liebertz-Grün, *Ordnung im Chaos. Studien zur Poetik der Bettine Brentano von Arnim*, Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1989, 49.

⁹³⁰ Bohrer, *Der romantische Brief*, 179.

tradition, but one that yet prompts women into a much more public positioning of cultural production than they had been involved with in the past.

In her essay “Rahel und Goethe,” Käte Hamburger observes that “Rahels Gespräche, damals weit über Berlin hinaus berichtet, sind verklungen. Aber sie klingen nach und wieder auf in einem Briefwechsel.”⁹³¹ Here Hamburger connects the act of conversing directly to the act of letter writing. Her response to Romantic women writing is not only a reaction to their work, but in fact the continuation of the Romantic dialogue that those women began. The dialogue continues through time and space, as more authors and literary critics engage with this topic—thus keeping it alive.⁹³²

⁹³¹ See Käte Hamburger, „Rahel und Goethe“ in *Kleine Schriften* (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag H. -D. Heinz, 1976), 113.

⁹³² “An Alexander von der Marwitz, in Friedersdorf. Dienstag Morgen 9 Uhr, den 28. Juni 1811. Bei der anhaltendsten Hitze, ohne Regen. ‘Ich habe Ihren Brief vor mir und will darauf antworten, als ob Sie mit mir sprächen. So sollten Sie es auch machen! Dann ist und bleibt eine Korrespondenz lebendig, – und ist nicht so viel Tod im Leben, ist es selbst nicht eigentlich das Ringen mit ihm, das man es verbreiten, vermehren soll, wo nur möglich?’” Compare to: “perpetual love that no death will be able to obscure” See Wackenroder, “Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders,” 87. See also Tieck, “Phantasien über die Kunst für Freunde der Kunst,” 89.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The various available editions of the texts analyzed in this dissertation serve several purposes, and different editors describe the authors in varying ways as well. Additionally, editions produced for a broader market are often less rigorous than historical critical editions in matters such as spelling and punctuation. I follow the spelling used in the editions from which I quote. In my choice of specific editions of works, I chiefly paid attention to editions with the letters I needed for my analysis, since not all letters were to be found in each edition.

In my research, I used two editions of Rahel Levin Varnhagen's letters: Friedhelm Kemp's, and Konrad Feilchenfeldt's (in cooperation with Uwe Schweickert and Rahel E. Steiner). Barbara Hahn's newest (six-volume) edition of Levin Varnhagen's letters, *Rahel. Ein Buch des Andenkens für ihre Freunde. Nach dem Manuskript der Sammlung Varnhagen* was published in 2011 however, I did not have access to it in time to integrate it into the relevant chapter here. Kemp's edition is dialogical, but some letters are incomplete.

Furthermore, there is a gap in the letter exchange between Karl August Varnhagen and Rahel Levin Varnhagen from 1817 till 1827. In this case, I had to turn to the Feilchenfeldt edition, especially when writing about the period of exile in Prague. There are only a few letters of Caroline von Humboldt in Kemp's edition. The remaining letters are in the Feilchenfeldt collection (again, most notably the Prague letters). Kemp's edition begins with the letter exchange of Karl August Varnhagen and Rahel Levin Varnhagen, and continues with the Clemens Brentano letters to Rahel Levin Varnhagen and vice versa. The exchange of Friedrich von Gentz and Caroline von Humboldt follows. Kemp presents thematic sections rather than foregrounding chronological arrangements of letters; that is, the exchanges between specific people, or letters written in particular places, such as Prague or Paris.

All citations from Bettina Brentano von Arnim's *Die Günderröde* are in the critical edition of Walter Schmitz and Sibylle von Steinsdorff. Schmitz also comments on the text and provides information about their biographical contexts, historical origins, and the history of their reception.

When working on Karoline von Günderröde's letters, I used the edition by Max Preitz and Birgit Weißenborn. Preitz, however, only includes two letters written by Günderröde herself in his first volume, which primarily contains letters written about her by others. The second volume of Preitz's edition contains forty original letters of Karoline von Günderröde from the estate of Friedrich Karl and Gunda von Savigny. Weißenborn's edition is also dialogical (featuring letter exchanges). However, Weißenborn's edition does not include many letters by Friedrich Creuzer. It rather focuses on dialogue between women, with the exception of Clemens Brentano's letters, whereas Preitz's edition does not include letters from Bettina Brentano or Karoline von Barkhaus. Diary entries and letters from Creuzer mixed with those from Lisette von Nees and Bettina Brentano are arranged according to chronological model. Weißenborn also chooses letters that foreground the aspect of love more than does Preitz's second volume, which emphasizes Karoline von Günderröde's development as a writer, as she corresponds with the couple Christian and *Lisette* Nees von Esenbeck who serve as her critics. Christian Nees von Esenbeck also acted as Günderröde's liaison with the publishers Brede in Offenbach, Hermannsche Buchhandlung in Hamburg und Frankfurt, and Friedrich Wilmans in Frankfurt.

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