

Words Full of Deed
Prophets and Prophecy in German Literature around 1800

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Abstract

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In this dissertation, I consider the role of prophets and prophecy in German drama and dramatic discourse of the Romantic period. Against the backdrop of the upheaval wrought by the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, such discourse exhibits a conspicuous fascination with political and social crisis in general as well as a preoccupation with imagining how the crises of the present could provide an opportunity for national or civilizational renewal. One prominent manifestation of this focus is a pronounced interest in charismatic leaders of the legendary or historical past—among them prophets like Moses, Muhammad and Joan of Arc—who succeeded in uniting their respective societies around a novel vision of collective destiny. In order to better understand the appeal of such figures during this period, I examine works of drama and prose fiction that feature prophets as their protagonists and that center on scenarios of political or religious founding. Reading texts by major authors like Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Friedrich Schiller and Achim von Arnim alongside those by the lesser-known writers such as Karoline von Günderrode, August Klingemann and Joseph von Hammer, I analyze the various ways these scenarios are staged and situate them within their specific political, intellectual and literary contexts. In so doing, I show that the figure of the prophet—a figure whose authority is based not on their own wisdom, talent, or cunning, but rather on their claim to speak for a higher, superhuman power—offers authors a paradigm of political and cultural innovation that radically displaces the agency of the rational subject in favor of non-rational factors like language, performance, history, myth and the emotions. Moreover, I argue that this figure reveals

an important connection between the history of drama in this period and an emergent, post-Enlightenment political discourse concerned with the origin and nature of sovereignty.

Table of Contents

Preface: Between Word and Deed.....	vii
Chapter One: The Prophetic Founder as Political and Cultural Origin.....	1
1. Two Models of Prophetic Self-Fashioning: Goethe’s <i>Mahomet</i> and Günderrode’s <i>Mahomed, der Prophet von Mekka</i>	3
2. The Prophet in History and Culture: Joseph von Hammer’s <i>Die Eroberung von Mekka</i>	16
3. Propheying against Empire: Klingemann’s <i>Moses</i>	27
Chapter Two: Prophecy, Heroism and Nationalism in Friedrich Schiller’s <i>Die Jungfrau von Orleans</i>.....	39
1. The Power of Symbols.....	46
2. Speech, Action and Sovereignty.....	58
3. The Leadership of the Good Shepherd.....	68
4. A Crisis of Prophetic Calling.....	78
5. Johanna’s Task and Schiller’s Task.....	93
Chapter Three: Prophecy, Sociability and Authenticity in Achim von Arnim’s “Melück Maria Blainville”.....	105
1. Resolution and Catastrophe.....	109
2. Enlightenment Sociability between Decorum and Sensibility.....	114
3. The False Prophecy of Revolution.....	124

4. A Prophetic Anecdote.....132

Coda: The Future of Romantic Prophecy.....144

Bibliography.....152

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To my parents

Preface:
Between Word and Deed

In a stand-alone chapter of the monumental *Von Geist der Ebräischen Poesie* (1783) titled “Beruf und Amt der Propheten,” Johann Gottfried Herder reflects on the distinctive characteristics of prophecy as it is depicted in the Old Testament of the Bible. For Herder, prophecy is a “Word full of deed” (*tatvolle[s] Wort*), a kind utterance unique for the way it cannot be conceived apart from the intention that animates it and the singular figure who utters it.¹ This figure, the prophet of ancient Israel, emerges from Herder’s imagining as a visionary who is haunted by the catastrophe unfolding before his eyes and who consequently feel compelled to speak out in the most insistent way possible:

[Die Propheten] sahen die Sachen, die sie verkündigten, schon werdend; und so werden sie als Seher, ja als Schöpfer des Guten und des Unglücks betrachtet. Sie schlagen das Land mit dem Stabe ihres Mundes und ihr mächtiges Wort befreit wieder. Gott legt auf ihre Lippen die Botschaft und haucht sie mit göttlichem Feuer an. Voll unwiderstehlichen Triebes reden sie also, oft wider ihren Willen und mit schlechtem Lohn, durch eine höhere Kraft gezwungen und getrieben. Diese Gattung Aussprüche hat in der Poesie anderer Völker wenig oder nichts Gleiches. Hier ward nichts zur Zeitkürzung gedichtet: der Poet entwarf keine Zerstörung Jerusalems oder Babels als Schauspiel. Hätte sich in Griechenland die Poesie der Weisen und Dichter reiner erhalten: hätten wir von ihren alten Theologen und Propheten mehr unverdächtige Reste; so würden wir mehrere Ähnlichkeit sehen,

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

die jetzt im Munde Calchas, der Cassandra bei Aeschylus und derer, die etwas in Erscheinungen oder sterbend weissagten, unverkennbar bleibet.²

In this portrayal, the prophet is a figure defined by contradiction and ambiguity: Imbued with extraordinary power in the form of speech that exerts a tangible force, he is at the same time a creature of absolute compulsion, one who is utterly helpless to resist the drive to speak. Though he believes himself to be motivated by a future he has foreseen, his compatriots suspect that he is complicit in—or even ultimately responsible for—the transformation of good fortune into bad or bad into good. The prophet strives to communicate a vision—a spectacular image of future destruction or redemption—yet what he does could not be further from theatrical spectacle. Finally, the language of the prophets is unmatched among the literary traditions passed on by the cultures of antiquity, yet it seems to bear a fundamental similarity to the speech employed by some of the most striking figures in Greek epic and drama.

I cite this passage as a kind of epigraph for the following dissertation, which examines representations of prophets and prophecy in German literature and drama around 1800 as a way of understanding broader transformations of public discourse during the period. Herder articulates here in cogent and exemplary fashion many of the themes that play an important role in this study: The performative attributes of prophecy, its claim to a supposedly exceptional kind of sincerity or authenticity, its shifting relationship to other modes of public expression, and the ambiguity regarding whether it constitutes a cultural or sociological category. This passage also provides me with the title for this project—*Words Full of Deed*—a phrase I understand as referring to prophecy's undermining of the conventional distinction between speech and action as well as,

² Johann Gottfried Herder, *Werke*, Bd. 5, ed. Rudolf Smend (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker, 1985): p. 1004-1005.

more generally, the ability of such discourse to carry an array of different rhetorical, emotional, spiritual, cultural, and political charges.

Words Full of Deed posits a conception of prophecy that is specific to European Romanticism and the Romantic discourse on drama. To be sure, the figure of the prophet has long been a familiar one to scholarship on European Romanticism.³ In now classic treatises, critics such as Harold Bloom and M. H. Abrams examined the function of the prophetic as a mode of self-fashioning employed by English and German poets like William Blake, Percy Bysshe Shelley and Friedrich Hölderlin to express a novel authorial confidence and to promote the role of poetry generally in the public sphere.⁴ More recently, Steven Goldsmith and Ian Balfour have argued that the prophetic tradition of literary Romanticism anticipates poststructuralist insights about the ways in which poetic language can offer resistance to totalizing historical narratives.⁵ Balfour and John Mee, moreover, have shown how Romantic prophecy engages an array of contemporaneous intellectual and cultural discourses on topics such as enthusiasm and Biblical exegesis.⁶

For the most part, these critics focus exclusively on the tradition of Romantic lyric. As I hope to demonstrate, however, this focus overlooks a critical facet of Romantic prophecy, a facet that can only be appreciated by considering the dramatic discourse of the period. Such an examination reveals that the Romantic preoccupation with prophecy is profoundly informed by

³ For an overview of this scholarship, see: Christopher Bundock, “‘And Thence from Jerusalem’s Ruins’: Romantic Prophecy and the End(s) of History” in: *Literature Compass* 10/11 (2013): pp. 836-45.

⁴ Harold Bloom, *The visionary company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961). M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revelation in Romantic Literature* (New York: Norton, 1971). For an analogous tradition in French Romanticism, see: Paul Bénichou, *The Consecration of the Writer, 1750-1830*, trans. Mark K. Jensen (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1999).

⁵ Steven Goldsmith, *Unbuilding Jerusalem: Apocalypse and Romantic Representation* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993). Ian Balfour, *The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2002).

⁶ Jon Mee, *Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation: Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003).

efforts on the part of writers and thinkers to distinguish between modern culture and the traditionally normative culture of ancient Greece.⁷ Indeed, the distinctive features of the Romantic prophet can be illustrated through a comparison to the formal and thematic function of the prophet in ancient Greek tragedy: In the latter tradition, seers like Tiresias and Cassandra are juxtaposed with morally compromised protagonists, whose occasional defiance of tragic warnings amounts to a heroic assertion of individual agency in the face of the God's tyranny.⁸ The seer confronts such heroic ambition by articulating the will of the god, yet such insight comes at the implicit cost of the prophet's own agency; according to the religious and moral economy of Greek tragedy, insight into the future is only granted to those who, like Tiresias, withdraw from public life, or, like Cassandra, are afflicted with the curse of never being believed. Though the seer may see the tragic plot unfolding, they are ultimately helpless to prevent it from taking its course.

The Romantic prophet, in contrast, exerts a seemingly superhuman degree of agency, an agency paradigmatically manifested in the founding of entire states or religions. Agency of this kind, however, paradoxically demands a partial surrender of the individual will: In this conception, the mind of the prophet serves as a medium for powerful extrapersonal forces—nature, culture, history, reason, the sublime, though rarely God—that interact with the prophet's exceptionally rich personality to give rise to the inspired utterance. Such a conception, I argue, appeals to Romantic thinkers and authors because it presents a model of discursive and historical innovation that

⁷ These efforts have become known to literary historical scholarship as an eighteenth century German revival of the seventeenth century French *querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*. On these debates, see: Hans Robert Jauss, "Schlegels und Schillers Replik auf die Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes" in: *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1970): pp. 67-106. Peter Szondi, *Poetik und Geschichtsphilosophie I*, eds. Senta Metz and Hans-Hagen Hildebrandt. (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1974). For a more recent account, see: Maike Oergel, *Culture and Identity: Historicity in German Literature and Thought 1770-1815* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006).

⁸ For a sustained analysis of this structure as it appears in the tragedies of Sophocles and Homer's *Iliad*, see: Rebecca W. Bushnell, *Prophesying Tragedy: Sign and Voice in Sophocles' Theban Plays* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988): especially 5-7.

decenters the thinking subject, yet at the same time seemingly affirms the historical and political significance of the creative individual.

Romantic prophecy undermines conventional distinctions between word and deed. The Romantic prophet not only foresees the future; they also help to create the world they envision. This is especially the case with figures like Moses, Jesus and Muhammad who established entire states or religions and thus made objective reality conform to their subjective vision.⁹ In this way, the figure of the prophet demonstrates that to speak about the future is to change it.

Finally, prophecy offers Romantic authors a unique paradigm for relating to the past and future in a particularly dynamic fashion. The very notion of prophecy assumes a kind of reception for the prophetic utterance that varies over time. Even in circumstances in which such an utterance is initially neglected or ignored outright, the prophetic pronouncement can suddenly become authoritative if the prediction it contains is fulfilled. Such a model implies that the meaning of individual human events and individuals is always fluid and can be transformed and rendered usable through creative reinterpretation.

The chronological scope of this project spans the period from the 1770's and the advent of the *Sturm und Drang* to the immediate aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars. This period was one of political and social upheaval caused by revolutions in America and France as well as various projects of reform pursued throughout Europe. These included not only projects of political reform, but also efforts aimed at a renewal of culture such as the literary provocations of the young Herder, Goethe and Schiller along with the anthologies of folk literature collected by authors like Herder, Arnim, Brentano and the Grimms. Against this backdrop, the figure of the prophet served to affirm

⁹ The Romantic prophet can thus be understood as a subspecies of the Romantic hero, whose agency stems in part from their ability to realize their subjective ideas. For a recent discussion of this figure, see: Simon Williams, *Wagner and the Romantic Hero* (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2004).

the transformative potential of individual creativity. Several factors during this period contributed to the emergent conception of the prophet as a unique personality rendered fertile by powerful external forces. As Reinhart Koselleck has famously shown, the period around 1800 gave rise a new way of thinking about and relating to history, one that understood history as a singular, dynamic force producing incessant, unprecedented change.¹⁰ It was at this time, moreover, that the topic of myth received new interest as both a focus of scholarly interest and a model of literary production and reception.¹¹ Finally, the period witnessed new theories of language that sought to call attention to its self-referential and performative qualities.¹²

In three chapters, I isolate and analyze representations of prophetic figures and prophetic speech in the work of Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, Karoline von Günderrode, Achim von Arnim, August Klingemann and Joseph von Hammer. Through a series of close readings, I seek to shed light on how these figures relate to the larger plot of their respective works and determine what kind of agency they acquire. In order to situate these representations vis-à-vis the literary projects of their respective authors, moreover, I also draw connections to other, non-literary discourses.

In my first chapter, I consider the ways in which the prophets Moses and Muhammad function as divergent models of political and cultural innovation. Focusing first on the Muhammad plays of Goethe (1772-1774) and Günderrode (1804), I show how these authors employ personal

¹⁰ Reinhart Koselleck, "Historia Magistra Vitae. Über die Auflösung des Topos im Horizont neuzeitlich bewegter Geschichte" In: *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1984): 38-66.

¹¹ George S. Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago P, 2004). Christoph Jamme, *Einführung in die Philosophie des Mythos*, Bd. 2: *Mythos und Gegenwart* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991).

¹² Angela Esterhammer, *The Romantic Performative: Language and Action in British and German Romanticism* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000).

research on Islam and the life of its Prophet to revise traditional conceptions of prophetic inspiration. I then turn to a drama about Muhammad's life by the Austrian translator and amateur scholar Joseph von Hammer, which provides me with an example of an attempt to establish a reputation for the Prophet as a great man of history. Finally, I examine August Klingemann's *Moses* (1812), which I read as an attempt to construe the prophetic founder of ancient Israel as an exemplary protagonist of modern, Romantic drama.

Chapter Two attends to prophecy's role as a model for a creative engagement with the past. To this end, I focus on Friedrich Schiller's "romantic tragedy" *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*, a play notable for the considerable liberties it takes in depicting the life of its eponymous protagonist. My investigation first seeks to clarify what makes the Maid worthy to prophesy in Schiller's portrayal as well as what qualities define her as a leader. I then read the play's ending—which notably replaces the death by burning suffered by the drama's historical subject with a heroic act of self-sacrifice on the battlefield—as a programmatic statement on the role of historical drama in relating the past to the present.

My final chapter explores prophecy's role as a means of expressing moral and political dissent. My investigation of this theme centers on a reading Achim von Arnim's short story "Melück Maria Blainville. Die Hausprophetin aus Arabien" (1812), which portrays the fate of an Arab immigrant in France on the eve of the French Revolution. I begin my analysis by focusing on the story's first, "comic" half in which a tragic conflict is contained by the prevailing social norms of pre-Revolutionary French society. Turning then to the story's second, "tragic" half, I show how the undoing of this tentative resolution is anticipated in a prophetic speech delivered by the title character, and how her speech ultimately functions to mobilize decisive action in the face of catastrophe. I conclude by considering why the story is labelled an "anecdote," a designation

that I suggest highlights the narrative's staging of its own dissemination as a unique model of prophetic reception.

Chapter One:

The Prophetic Founder as Political and Cultural Origin

This chapter examines depictions of the prophets Moses and Muhammad in a series of mostly dramatic texts written by several different German authors around 1800. I have chosen to focus on these two figures because they illustrate what is at stake in staging prophecy during this period. As prophetic founders of religions and states, Moses and Muhammad exemplify a distinctly radical kind of historical origin, one defined by the unique characteristics of the individual prophet's personality as expressed through the medium of inspired discourse. By dramatizing such figures, the writers treated in this chapter pose, in an especially pointed way, questions about the relationship between the vicissitudes of personal subjectivity and larger processes of historical change as well as about the role of speech in initiating and shaping historical transformations.

In the following, I isolate several themes running through literary and cultural representations of prophecy at the turn of the nineteenth century, and consider how they are used to imagine the relationship between inspiration, speech and historical change. I begin by comparing two dramatic fragments about the founder of Islam, Johann Wolfgang Goethe's *Mahomet* (1772-1774) and Karoline von Günderrode's *Karoline von Günderrode's Mahomed, der Prophet von Mekka* (1804). My interest in these texts pertains to the ways they depict

Muhammad's experience of inspiration and calling. Notably, neither Goethe nor Günderröde attempt to adapt the official narrative of this episode. As I show, however, both incorporate personal research on the history and culture of Islam into their respective dramatizations of the prophet in a way that enables them conventional notions of religious inspiration. What emerges from these renditions is a distinctly secular conception of prophetic inspiration, i.e. one that decenters the role of the divine in engendering transcendent insight. Both Goethe and Günderröde portray the mind of the prophet not as a medium of divine communication, but rather as a point of intersection for various natural, cultural and unconscious forces that combine with the prophet's singular personality to produce profound religious and political innovations.

From there, I turn to Joseph von Hammer's *Mohammed, oder die Eroberung von Mekka* (1823) or, more specifically, its programmatic preface. My main concern in this section is the historical prophet. Specifically, I want to show how the prophet figures in the literature and thought of the early nineteenth century as a distinctive kind of historical and cultural agent. I have selected von Hammer's play as a focus for this investigation because it is explicitly conceived as a defense of Muhammad's status as a great man of history, one that specifically seeks to counteract earlier literary renditions of the founder of Islam. For von Hammer, such an apology demands not only a thoroughgoing familiarity with the words and historical deeds of Muhammad, but also with his cultural context. This context, notably, cannot be reproduced through historical reconstruction; instead, von Hammer relies on his own first-hand experience of Arab culture in the present. In so doing, I argue, he situates the prophet within an Oriental cultural space imagined to be timeless. It thus becomes the prophetic legacy of Muhammad to have exerted a transformative influence within his own present while articulating this culture in an exemplary fashion.

In the final section of the chapter, I attend to the figure of Moses. To this end, I examine the “dramatic poem” *Moses* (1812) by August Klingemann. I am specifically interested in how the prophet functions for Klingemann as a unique—and distinctly modern—kind of dramatic protagonist. My analysis centers on the juxtaposition of Moses and Pharaoh, who, I contend, emerge from Klingemann’s depiction as exemplars of fate as conceived, respectively, in ancient and modern drama. While Pharaoh embodies the doomed hero of Greek tragedy, Moses represents a modern protagonist aware of being implicated in larger historical and cultural forces. Armed with this insight, the Hebrew prophet is able to channel these forces into a profoundly transformative type of historical agency.

1. Two Models of Prophetic Self-Fashioning: Goethe’s *Mahomet* and Günderröde’s *Mahomed, der Prophet von Mekka*

Goethe’s abortive *Mahomet* drama from the early 1770’s is perhaps best known—to the extent that it is known at all—for having produced the much more famous “Mahomets Gesang,” which the author published separately as a free-standing lyric in 1789. The latter has long featured prominently in critical discussions of Goethe’s early career, where it often figures as an exemplary manifestation of the writer’s youthful *Sturm und Drang*-inspired poetics.¹³ Indeed, with its central image of a powerful, churning river absorbing smaller, inferior tributaries on its path to providing nourishment to large human communities, the hymn vividly renders the notion—promoted by

¹³ For an overview of this reception, see: Inka Mülder-Bach, “Mahomets Gesang” in *Goethe-Handbuch*, Bd. 1, eds. Regine Otto and Bernd Witte (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1996): pp. 99-107.

Goethe and his fellow *Stürmer und Dränger*—as a creative force essential for the growth and prosperity of civilization.¹⁴

“Mahomets Gesang” notably lacks any specific allusion to the life and teaching of the eponymous prophet other than the reference contained in its title, yet the original version of this poem—in which the hymn takes the form of a panegyric sung, in antiphonal fashion, by two of the prophets’ disciples—was initially designed to feature in a play that would have portrayed Muhammad as a (possibly problematic) embodiment of the ideal celebrated in the published lyric.¹⁵ The text of “Mahomets Gesang” constitutes one of merely two surviving fragments from this project. The other, larger fragment consists of a lyric sung or spoken by Mahomet¹⁶ himself followed by a brief scene of dialogue between the title character and his foster mother Halima. In the presumptive chronology of the play, this latter fragment would have appeared several acts before the disciples’ hymn. Indeed, the fragment in question shows Mahomet arriving for the first time at an intuition of divine presence and thus portrays the very beginning of his life as a prophet.

¹⁴For a sustained reading of the poem along these lines, see David E. Wellbery, *The Specular Moment: Goethe’s Early Lyric and the Beginnings of Romanticism* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996): pp. 121-183, especially pp. 130-147.

¹⁵ This is according to Goethe himself, who describes his plan for the drama in the fourteenth chapter of his memoir *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. The author writes that he was inspired to write the play after observing the well-intentioned, yet ultimately exploitative relationship of the physiognomist Johann Kaspar Lavater and the educational reformer Johann Bernhard Basedow to their respective patrons during the famous journey down the Rhein Goethe, Lavater and Basedow undertook in the summer of 1774. Goethe insists he could never regard Muhammad as an “imposter” (*Betrüger*), yet he saw in the example of the Muslim prophet as way “to depict on stage the ways I had seen so vividly in real life that one can be led to damnation while seeking salvation” (*jene Wege, die anstatt zum Heil, vielmehr zum Verderbern führen, dramatisch darzustellen*). In this portrayal, Mahomet would be increasingly drawn to commit acts of violence in the pursuit of his mission before finally recognizing his faults and achieving a manner of redemption on his deathbed. Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Aus meinem Leben. Dichtung und Wahrheit*, ed. Klaus-Detlef Müller (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1986): here pp. 684-7. For an overview of Goethe’s career-long fascination with Muhammad and Islam in the context of eighteenth century Orientalism, see: Stefan Leder, “Die Botschaft Mahomets und sein Wirken in der Vorstellung Goethes” in *Oriens* 36 (2001): 215-41.

¹⁶ In the following, ‘Mahomet,’ ‘Mahomed,’ and ‘Mohammed’ refer to the respective protagonists of Goethe’s, Günderröde’s and von Hammer’s plays while ‘Muhammad’ designates the historical founder of Islam.

In the following, I focus on this scene of origination, which I read as undermining and revising conventional notions of prophetic election. As I hope to show, the scene in question represents an attempt by Goethe to conceive of such an election in a way that eliminates what would seem to be its defining feature—namely, an explicit statement of divine intent regarding the vocation of the prophet. In so doing, the author fundamentally reimagines this basic scenario of prophetic biography as a model for a particularly radical kind of self-fashioning.¹⁷

To facilitate my analysis of this scene, it would be useful at this point to quote in full the hymn uttered by Mahomet along with its accompanying stage directions:

Feld. Gestirnter Himmel

MAHOMET *allein*:

Teilen kann ich euch nicht dieser Seele Gefühl.
Fühlen kann ich euch nicht allen ganzes Gefühl.
Wer, wer wendet dem Flehen sein Ohr?
Dem bittenden Auge den Blick.

Sieh er blinket herauf Gad der freundliche Stern.
Sei mein Herr du! Mein Gott. Gnädig winkt er mir zu!
Bleib! Bleib! Wendst du dein Auge weg.
Wie? liebt ich ihn, der sich verbirgt?

Sei gesegnet o Mond! Führer du des Gestirns.
Sei mein Herr du mein Gott! Du beleuchtest den Weg.
Laß! Laß! Nicht in der Finsternis
Mich! Irren mit irrendem Volk.

Sonn dir glühenden weihet sich das glühende Herz.
Sei mein Herr du mein Gott! Leit allsehende mich.
Steigst auch du hinab herrliche!
Tief hüllet mich Finsternis ein.

Hebe liebendes Herz dem Erschaffenden dich!
Sei mein Herr du! mein Gott! Du alliebender du!
Der die Sonne den Mond und die Stern

¹⁷ The classic treatment of creative self-fashion can be found in: Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1980).

Schuf Erde und Himmel und mich.¹⁸

I want to begin with a few quick glosses of the complicated scenario that emerges from this scene. This is ostensibly one of conversion: Peering into the night sky, the future prophet embarks on a process of spiritual and intellectual conversion that leads him to apprehend and accept the basic worldview of monotheism. This process unfolds as a series of appeals directed at the celestial objects in the heavens above him—first the planet Jupiter (here given the supposedly Arabic name of Gad¹⁹) followed by the moon and the sun. Employing the primitive logic of nature worship, Mahomet initially addresses these heavenly objects as gods, and demands from each in turn an explicit gesture sign of divine sovereignty (“Sei mein Herr du! Mein Gott”). In each instance, the failure of this entreaty to elicit a response—other than the continuation of the body’s pre-established orbital trajectory—inspires first disappointment, and then a new appeal to an even larger, more sublime object. Finally, in the fifth stanza, after having just petitioned in vain to the sun—the largest, most sublime body in the sky—Mahomet abruptly to changes course, appealing no longer to a particular object, but rather to the mysterious, transcendent entity he refers to only as “the creating one” (*der Erschaffende*). Having made this cognitive leap, the prophet subsequently regards the stars, moon and sun as mere manifestations of this creative power instead of as deities in their own right. The scene then ends with a final, intense expression of devotion (“Hebe liebendes Herz dem Erschaffenden dich!”) that seals the character’s conversion.

Other than the two extant fragments of the play, the only contemporaneous evidence of Goethe’s work on the project—which otherwise goes completely unmentioned in his notes and

¹⁸ Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Dramen 1765-1775*, ed. Dieter Borchmeyer (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985): here p. 249. All future references to this text will be provided in parentheses and indicated with the abbreviation *G*.

¹⁹ Goethe himself explains the name of this “star” in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, p. 686.

letters from the period—is a series of excerpts the author wrote down (and, in some cases, lightly adapted) from Latin and German translations of the Qur'an. One of these, which Goethe translated from Ludovico Maracci's Latin version of the text, reveals that he drew the stargazing episode dramatized in the fragment from a passage contained in the sixth Sura. In Goethe's rendition, this passage reads as follows (note that the plural first person 'wir' in the passage refers to God Himself, who speaks here through the prophet Muhammad):

Abraham sprach zu seinem Vater Azar. Ehrst du Götzen für Götter? Wahrhaftig ich erkenne deinen, und deines Volkes Offenbaren Irrtum. Da zeigten wir Abraham des Himmels und der Erde Reich dass er im wahren Glauben bestätigt würde. Und als die Nacht über ihm finster ward, sah er das Gestirn und sprach: Das ist mein Herrscher, da es aber niederging rief er: untergehende lieb ich nicht. Dann sah er den Mond aufgehen, sprach: Das ist mein Herrscher! Da er aber nieder ging sagt er: Wenn mich mein Herr nicht leitet geh ich in der Irre mit diesem Volk; Wie aber die Sonne heraufkam sprach er: Das ist mein Herrscher. Er ist größer. Aber da sie auch unterging, sprach er: O mein Volk nun bin ich frei von deinen Irrtümer! Ich habe mein Angesicht gewendet zu dem der Himmel und Erde erschaffen hat. (*G* 733-4)

In a scenario that seems designed to resonate with the agonistic poetics of the *Sturm und Drang* generation, Abraham abjures the authority of father, country and religion in favor of seeking a more powerful father figure and sovereign among the heavens. Like Goethe's Mahomet, the patriarch is guided by the gradual realization that the stars, moon and sun are each unworthy of his reverence to conclude that he can only worship a deity who transcends the sphere of perceptible nature. The implicit transgression inherent in this determination is contained only by the point of view from which it is presented, i.e. the perspective of the deity Himself, who frames the episode as an instance of divine accommodation to the limited human faculty of perception through the visible wonders of nature.

Though it is notable that Goethe ascribes an insight originally associated with the Quranic version of Abraham to Muhammad himself, what is even more remarkable about the author's

rewriting of the episode is the disappearance of this frame along with the corresponding assurance of God's involvement in the process of revelation. More broadly, there is no indication that the entreaties Mahomet issues to the heavens are heard by the 'du' invoked in the poem's final stanza, or that this mysterious addressee even exists. As Klaus Weimar observes in his definitive reading of the hymn, at no point in the hymn do the title character's pleas provoke a clear response.²⁰ Mahomet, in his ensuing dialogue with Halima, refers rather ambiguously to having experienced God's proximity ("Der Herr, mein Gott hat sich freundlichst zu mir genaht") as well as to the "blissful sensations" (*glückseligen Empfindungen*) it produces, yet not to a specific act of divine manifestation or communication.

Mahomet's spiritual transformation is animated by an impulse that is more emotional than speculative in nature, an impulse that originates as the attempt on the part of the future prophet to contend with a powerful, yet unidentifiable "feeling" (*Gefühl*). That this feeling eventually drives him to seek a sign of divine concern suggests that it is a religiously or spiritually motivated desire. At the same time, however, his appeals to the various celestial bodies appear designed to provoke a decidedly human response. This is particularly evident at the end of the first stanza, when he conceives of the reaction he desires as a distinctly anthropomorphic exchange linking the mouth and eye of the speaker to the ear and eye of the deity ("Wer, wer wendet dem Flehen sein Ohr? / Dem bittenden Auge den Blick"). The implication here is that, in order to come to terms with this unsettling emotional excess, Mahomet needs to share it with someone who, like him, is disposed to having such feelings.²¹

²⁰ Klaus Weimar, *Goethes Gedichte 1769-1775* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1982): here p. 43.

²¹ On the eighteenth century psychological discourse that understood solitude as providing a crucial impetus for individual creativity, see: Kathrin Wittler, "Einsamkeit. Ein literarisches Gefühl im 18. Jahrhundert" in: *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 87:2 (2013): pp.186-216.

The driving impulse of this hymn is thus based on an inherent contradiction: On the one hand, Mahomet seeks an interlocutor who is perfect in the manner of a deity, and, as such, can devote himself unreservedly as well as serve as the object of unreserved devotion. On the other hand, the protagonist requires an essentially human mirror for his emotions. It is the attempt to reconcile this contradiction that sets Mahomet on the path to his climactic monotheistic insight.

Yet it is not through the force of emotion alone that the future prophet arrives at this insight: Indeed, the logic of the hymn implies that an important role is played by this act of stargazing, which gradually leads through ever greater magnitudes of imaginative contemplation until he is mentally prepared to grasp the idea of a single, omnipotent deity. This intuition is enabled not only by the appearance of stars, moon and sun, but also by their consistency, which, though initially a source of disappointment, ultimately allows Mahomet to extrapolate the principles of an all-encompassing, transcendent order in the universe. Though this scenario is clearly indebted to the contemporaneous discourse of the sublime, it is not the terrifying sublime of Burke that is invoked here, but rather the edifying sublime that Goethe himself describes in his essay of a few years earlier, *Von deutscher Baukunst* (1772).²² The perception of the sublime, the hymn suggests, empowers the viewer to realize incipient thoughts and exceed his cognitive limits.

At the same time that Mahomet progresses through increasingly more expansive notions of the divine, he continues to look for a deity capable of reflecting his emotional state. Interestingly, however, the former tendency brings about a change in the way the protagonist thinks about this relationship: Specifically, his conception of himself begins to take on certain

²² Johann Wolfgang Goethe, "Von deutscher Baukunst" in: *Ästhetische Schriften 1771-1805*, ed. Friedmar Apel (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1998): pp. 110-8. For Goethe's edifying conception of the sublime in this essay, see: Dorothea E. von Mücke, "Beyond the Paradigm of Representation: Goethe on Architecture" in: *Grey Room* 35 (Spring 2009): pp. 6-27, especially p. 14.

characteristics of the objects he addresses. Accordingly, in the penultimate stanza, he promises to dedicate his “glowing” (*glühend*) heart to the glowing sun, and, in the first line of the final verse, he bids his “loving” heart to “raise itself up” (“Hebe [dich] liebendes Herz”) to the entity he describes in the following line as “all-loving” (*allliebend*). Indeed, these lines can be seen as forming an incomplete chiasmus, which would suggest that the next attribute to be taken from the creating one is the power of creativity itself. Mahomet is thus not only converted in this scene, but also undergoes a process of *Bildung*, one that transforms him in the image of the creator god and endows him with the agency to instigate profound change. This transformation is so complete that it later causes Halima to remark—in a possible play on the verb *bekehren*—that “his nature is reversed” (“seine Natur ist umgekehrt”) (G 251).

With this scene, Goethe uses his prophetic title character to imagine how transformative religious ideas could come into being without the overt intervention of the supernatural. The scenario presented by Mahomet’s contemplative act of stargazing is one in which such spiritual innovation is guided by the spectacle of nature, the formal requirements of song and the intense emotional disposition of an extraordinary individual. Rather than replicating the conventional understanding of the prophet as a medium of divine revelation, Goethe portrays the mind of the prophet as a nexus of natural and cultural forces that, in conjunction with the prophet’s exceptionally rich personality, gives rise to transformative ideas in the form of radical speech. As a model of historical change that decenters the role of the conscious subject, the fragment anticipates later conceptions such as the one articulated by Heinrich von Kleist in his famous essay

“Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden” (1805), which, however, surpasses the earlier work by emphasizing the unique role of speech in producing such change.²³

* * *

Both Goethe’s *Mahomet* and Karoline von Günderrode’s *Mahomed, der Prophet von Mekka* can be understood as using the medium of drama to reimagine prophetic election as kind of self-fashioning. Unlike the former, however, Günderrode’s play begins *in medias res*, at a point in time after the title character’s initial experience of prophetic calling. Rather than play out on stage, then, the process of calling is recounted by the prophet himself at the beginning of the first *Zeitraum* (as the divisions of the play are referred to in the text). This narrative, furthermore, is preceded by an account of his pre-prophetic life intended by Mahomed to convey his conviction that he bears a unique and heroic destiny. With this performance, the prophet literally fashions himself as a character in the drama and establishes his singular fate as an implicit telos of the ensuing action.

That some degree of personal or political calculation is involved in this act of self-fashioning is indicated by the contrast between the scene in which Mahomed recounts his call and the two scenes that immediately follow. If it were the prophet’s intent to deceive, he could find no more credulous audience for his account than Nahlid, the young servant to whom he first chooses to confide about his calling. As Mahomed himself notes during the scene in question, Nahlid’s defining traits are his “inexperience” (*Unerfahrenheit*) and lack of cunning.²⁴ True to this

²³ Heinrich von Kleist, “Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden“ in *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, Bd. 2, ed. Helmut Sembdner (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2001): pp. 319-24.

²⁴ Karoline von Günderrode, *Mahomed, der Prophet von Mekka* in: *Sämtliche Werke und ausgewählte Studien. Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, Bd. 1, ed. Walter Morgenthaler (Frankfurt a.M.: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 2006): pp. 110-200, here p. 114. All future references to this text will be provided in parentheses and indicated with the abbreviation *KvG*.

description, the young man is mostly passive during Mahomed's narration, never questioning the story he hears from the prophet and interrupting only to confirm what the older man tells him. Whatever misgivings are raised by Nahlid's conspicuous artlessness are then compounded by the subsequent exchange between Mahomed and Tarrick, an enemy of the prophet's tribe with whom Mahomed is shown to have been conspiring. Indeed, it soon becomes clear that Mahomed has been scheming for some time to betray his native Mecca by leaving its gates open at night so that Tarrick and his soldiers can attack and plunder the city; though the Prophet eventually rejects this scheme, he does so only to adopt instead a more ambitious plan with which he aims to subjugate all of Arabia. This revelation causes the group of Egyptian slaves who have been accompanying Mahomed—and who serve throughout the play as an antiphonal choir—to argue among themselves whether the Prophet is trustworthy or not. This debate gives rise to further disclosures pertaining, above all, to Mahomed's preoccupation with the occult: He is said to have ventured into the pyramids during a journey to Egypt as well as on a separate occasion entered into a trance in which he communicated with spirits.²⁵ Such insights suggest that, contrary to his own assertions, Mahomed has not simply been granted forbidden knowledge and power, but rather has long sought them out.

As the plot continues to unfold, though, it becomes evident that Mahomed is hardly a self-serving charlatan in the mold of the villainous protagonist from Voltaire's notorious tragedy *Le*

²⁵ Indeed, Mahomed is even said to have conversed with a Faustian "spirit of the earth":

Ich sah ihn durch die Wüste irren,
Gedankenvoll und ganz allein
Mit seinem Geist Gespräche führen;
Und bei des Mondes Dämmerchein
Hinab in Pyramiden steigen,
Beschwören dort der Erde Geist:
Ihm das Verborgene zu zeigen
Und wie der Strom der Zeiten fließt (*KvG* 121).

fanatisme, ou Mahomet le Prophète (1741).²⁶ Indeed, the Prophet is repeatedly depicted refusing to take a devious, yet strategically sound course of action in order to secure what he on several occasions describes as “the advantage of the moment” (*Vortheil des Augenblicks*).²⁷ Thus, though he does initially conspire with Mecca’s enemies, his refusal to go through with this plan is revealed, by the end of the play, to enable the largely bloodless conquest of the city. Moreover, he is shown on several occasions throughout the drama to retain his sincere concern for his mission even when he is left alone on stage. In a particularly telling scene at the beginning of the third *Zeitraum*, Mahomed, after suddenly and inexplicably suffering a lapse of inspiration, resorts to inquiring about the future of his new religion from “hundred-year-old magician”; in so doing, however, the prophet disavows any interest in his own well-being, instead seeking assurances about the fate of his followers and the Qur’an itself.²⁸ In the logic of Günderrode’s play, it is this—potentially self-sacrificing—commitment to a future that will unfold long after the Prophet has ceased to exist that, more than anything he says or does, establishes him as a heroic figure.

This ideal of commitment can be regarded as a traditional feature of prophets and prophecy going back to the Old Testament, yet such an ideal is rendered subversive in this context due to the particularly inscrutable nature of the inspiration on which Mahomed bases his faith. Inspiration for him takes the form of “strange revelations” (*seltsamen Offenbarungen*) that enter his mind

²⁶ On the ways that Günderrode’s treatment of the Muslim prophet diverges from Voltaire’s tragedy, see: Stephanie M. Hilger, “Staging Islam: Karoline von Günderrode’s *Mahomed, der Prophet von Mekka*” in: *Women Write Back: Strategies of Response and the Dynamics of European Literary Culture, 1790-1805* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009): pp. 91-117.

²⁷ See, for example, Mahomed’s praise of Nahlid’s youthful naiveté and idealism: “Was würde es mir nützen, wenn du den nächsten Augenblick klug zu berechnen wüßtest, für jede nächste Verlegenheit ein kleines Mittel hättest; ich muss eine Höhe erklimmen, von der ich Jahrhunderte und Völker überschauen kann, jene zu erforschen, diese zu leiten, diese Weisheit geziemt mir und keine andere” (*KvG* 114).

²⁸ Mahomed sends the choir to make this inquiry, telling them: “Befragt [den Magier] um des Korans Schicksal, und wie ihr euch retten möget vor meinen Verfolgern, meiner aber gedenket nicht” (*KvG* 153). Günderrode here anachronistically depicts the Qur’an as having been written down during the Prophet’s lifetime.

through stellar “rays” (*Strahlen*), which convey “all sorts of wondrous lights into [his] soul” (*allerlei wunderliche Lichter in meine Seele*) (KvG 111). According to his own account of his previous life, Mahomed only becomes aware of his prophetic calling gradually, through a series of mysterious, hallucinatory premonitions. These include “images of many kinds” (*vielerlei Bilder*) that haunt him at night and occasionally seem to have “an obscure connection” (*einen dunklen Zusammenhang*) to events of the day (KvG 116). These apparitions are all the more unsettling because Mahomed initially cannot grasp their relationship to his conscious mind.²⁹

Even when these premonitions eventually crystallize into a distinct experience of calling, the experience proves to be profoundly vexing for the future prophet. The onset of inspiration is announced by incomprehensible, “frightful voices” (*fürchterlichen Stimmen*) that cause Mahomed “terror down to the marrow” (*mein innerstes Mark gerann vor Entsetzen*). Though his terror is immediately assuaged by the appearance of an angel, this figure soon proves to be just as cryptic: The angel utters the motto “see! believe! do!” (*siehe! glaube! thue!*), and shows Mahomed a vision of a tree growing to gigantic heights until it overlooks “lands of immeasurable expanse” (*unermeßliche Reiche*), an imperialist image at which the future prophet initially balks. Adapting an authentic Islamic legend, Günderrode has the angel respond to Mahomed’s reluctance by taking the heart out of the protagonist’s body and squeezing it until it is purified of all “earthly fear and doubt.”³⁰ It is only with this implicitly violent, ritualistic gesture of initiation that the prophet overcomes his reservations and can be led by the angel on a visionary journey through “realms

²⁹ “Ich dachte viel darüber und oft, aber ich wußte sie damals noch nicht zu ordnen und mir zu eigen zu machen, sie beherrschten mich vielmehr und quälten mich.“ (KvG 116-7).

³⁰ For the origin of this episode in early Islamic biographies of Muhammad, see Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muhammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims* (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1995): pp. 59-75. On Günderrode’s use of European biographies to inform her depiction of the Prophet, see Erich Regen, *Die Dramen Karolinens von Günderrode* (Berlin: Emil Ebering, 1910): pp. 28-75.

never glimpsed by human eyes” (*Räume, die noch kein Auge gesehen [hat]*) and told “things never heard by human ears” (*Dinge, die noch kein Ohr gehört hat*) (*KvG* 118).

The flashes of light, the subjective perception of images and sounds, the enigmatic imperatives: All suggest that the experience of revelation originates in the unconscious, non-rational parts of the prophet’s soul. Such a conclusion is supported by the fact that this experience manifests outwardly as a kind of seizure. Recounting one such episode, the choir testifies that:

Die Augen sah ich wie Kometen
Ihn wild in ihren Kreisen drehn;
Er raßte, wie des Meeres Welle
Gepeitscht von des Nordwinds Macht,
Doch Göttersprüch’ wie Blitzehele
Durchzuckten seines Wahnsinns Nacht (*KvG* 122)

Inverting a familiar motif from the Christian apologetic discourse on Muhammad—according to which the Prophet feigned inspiration to hide his epilepsy³¹—Günderrode here allows for the possibility that epilepsy or a similar mental irregularity functions for Mahomed as a unique source of creativity.

Mahomed does not immediately provide an interpretation for these phenomena, ending his account to Nahlid abruptly before revealing what it is he has supposedly learned from the angel. Only at the end of the first *Zeitraum* does the prophet introduce his new monotheistic theology to his fellow Meccans. This chronological gap between the experience of inspiration and its explanation as divine revelation suggests that this interpretation is the product of deliberate spiritual and intellectual labor performed by Mahomed. The future prophet’s initial struggle with the experience of inspiration, moreover, suggests that this is a labor of heroic dimensions.

³¹ For the origin of this motif in the Christian anti-Islamic polemic of the Middle Ages, see John V. Tolan, “European Accounts of Muḥammad’s Life” in: *The Cambridge Companion to Muḥammad*, ed. Jonathan E. Brockopp (New York: Cambridge UP, 2010): pp. 226-50, especially 228-9.

In this depiction, what makes Mahomed worthy to assume the mantle of prophecy is this heroic willingness to create meaning by contending with the creative, yet chaotic forces manifesting themselves in his psyche. In contrast to the scene of calling from Goethe's *Mahomet*, G nderrode's play leaves unresolved the question of whether these forces truly stem from an external influence of some kind—divine or otherwise—or whether they originate from within the soul of the prophet. What the portrayal does make clear, however, is that Mahomed's embrace of inspiration as an experience of calling requires a profound transformation of the self, an idea symbolized by the ritual of purification performed by the angel. By presenting the episode as the culmination of a life narrative told by the prophet about himself, the play suggests that this transformation can only be completed through a deliberate act of self-construction.

2. The Prophet in History and Culture: Joseph von Hammer's *Die Eroberung von Mekka*

Both Goethe and G nderrode notably allow their respective Muhammad dramas to be informed not only by their own historical research into the life of the prophet and the emergence of Islam, but also by the religion's own mythological and literary representations. Though Goethe's endeavor to reimagine Muhammad's initial experience of revelation in line with a secular understanding of religious psychology suggests a fundamentally skeptical attitude about the transcendent claims made by Islam, the use of an episode from the Qur'an as a model for the scene in question indicates a willingness on the author's part to cede a kind of cultural authority to the religion. Even though the original, Qur'anic version of the stargazing episode pertains to Abraham rather than Muhammad himself, the association of the story with Islam makes it attractive for Goethe as a way of guaranteeing the authenticity of his portrayal. The same can be said about

Günderrode's reason for depicting the opening of Muhammad's breast. Both writers take liberties with historical and biographical events, but try to do so within a credible Islamic and Arabian cultural space.

What is the historical status of prophets like Moses and Muhammad, and what does it matter for attempts to represent them in the medium of literature? To address these questions, it is worth considering the programmatic preface written by the Austrian diplomat, translator and amateur scholar Joseph von Hammer for his "historisches Schauspiel" *Mohammed, oder die Eroberung von Mekka* from 1823.³² Von Hammer's play—which the preface explicitly frames as an attempt to popularize an image of the Prophet as a great man of history—endeavors to humanize Muhammad for European audiences by utilizing the dramatist's unique reserves of ethnographic and philological knowledge about Islam and the Orient. The problematic that emerges from the playwright's formulation of this program in the drama's preface is one that resonates strikingly with the paradoxical relationship between the divine or transcendent origin of revelation and the mortal prophet who serves as its medium—namely, the tension between the Prophet's existence as a historically situated individual and his claim to the kind of timeless and universal relevance that would make him a figure of interest for von Hammer's European audience. Ultimately, the dramatist addresses this tension by linking his title character to a cultural and sociological context that ostensibly transcends history.

“Das tragische Ungeheuer, den französischen Mahomet, kennt das gebildete Publikum aller europäischen Nationen zur Genüge; den historischen großen Mann aber kennen die

³² On von Hammer (alternately known as Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall) and his career, see Paula Sutter Fichtner, *Terror and Toleration: The Habsburg Empire Confronts Islam, 1526-1850* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008): pp. 130-161 and Ingeborg H. Solbrig, "Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall" in: *Major Figures of Nineteenth-Century Austrian Literature*, ed. Donald G. Daviau (Riverside, CA: Ariadne, 1998): pp. 278-308

gebildetsten, mit Gibbon und Johannes von Müller vertrauten Liebhaber der Geschichte nicht hinlänglich.”³³ Thus complains von Hammer at the beginning of his preface *Die Eroberung von Mekka*. The “French Mahomet” that so frustrates him here is none other than the caricature of the Muslim prophet Muhammad popularized by Voltaire’s *Le Fanatisme*, which by this point had been appearing on European stages for more than eighty years and, much to von Hammer’s dismay, had been translated into German by none other than Goethe.³⁴ Taking as its subject the Muslim conquest of Mecca in 629, the French play portrays its protagonist as a tyrant and religious fraud who plots to hasten the downfall of the city by bullying one of his young followers into murdering its defiant leader. As the title suggests, this portrayal is intended not as a historically accurate representation of Muhammad, but rather as a dramatic demonstration of the perils inherent in excessive religious passion. Indeed, the polemical focus of *Le Fanatisme* is directed less at Islam and its founder than at the political machinations of the French Catholic Church—specifically, the assassinations of the French kings Henry III and Henry IV by the Catholic zealots Jacques Clement and François Ravailiac.³⁵ “With this work,” Voltaire wrote to his friend César de Missy, “I wanted to show the dangerous excesses to which fanaticism can lead weak souls under the guidance of a

³³ Joseph von Hammer, *Mohammed, oder die Eroberung von Mekka. Ein historisches Schauspiel von dem Verfasser der Schirin und des Rosenöls* (Berlin: Schlegel, 1823): p. v. Future references to this text will be provided in parentheses and indicated with the abbreviation *H*.

³⁴ For the background and reception of this translation, see: Marcel Krings, “‘Ein sonderbares Unternehmen.’ Zu Goethes Übersetzung des *Mahomet* von Voltaire” in: *Jahrbuch für internationale Germanistik* 43 (2011): 81-100. On the history of *Le Fanatisme* on European states—where it was regularly performed until the mid-nineteenth century—see: Voltaire, *Le Fanatisme, ou Mahomet le prophète / De l’Alcoran et de Mahomet*, eds. Christopher Todd and Ahmad Gunny (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2002): here pp. 20-32.

³⁵ Nicholas Cronk, “Preface” in: Voltaire, *Le Fanatisme, ou Mahomet le prophète / De l’Alcoran et de Mahomet*, eds. Christopher Todd and Ahmad Gunny (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2002): pp. xix-xxv, here p. xx.

scoundrel; under the name of Mahomet, my play shows the Prior of the Jacobins giving the dagger to Jacques Clement so that he [...] can commit parricide [i.e. regicide].”³⁶

In the remark quoted above, however, von Hammer takes issue not with this anti-clerical appropriation of Muhammad’s biography, but rather specifically with the way the tragedy denies the Prophet his legacy as a great man of history. Such a distortion is especially problematic, in the Austrian’s view, because the enduring popularity of Voltaire’s play has supposedly allowed it to overshadow historical scholarship in which an earnest endeavor is made to acknowledge and assess this legacy. Indeed, in the work of Edward Gibbon and Johannes von Müller—the two historians mentioned by von Hammer—the “educated public” of the period would have encountered a very different conception of the Muslim prophet: For Gibbon—whose *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-1788) is even today cited as an important milestone in the European reception of Muhammad³⁷—the founder of Islam is a man of “genius” who brought about “one of the most memorable revolutions which have impressed a new and lasting character on the nations of the globe.”³⁸ In the now-lesser known *Vierundzwanzig Bücher allgemeiner Geschichte* (1810), the Swiss von Müller describes the Prophet as being driven to his mission by the intense “pain” of witnessing the decline of his “fatherland” due to the abandonment of traditional customs in favor

³⁶ “J’ay voulu faire voir par cet ouvrage à quels horribles excez le fanatisme peut entraîner des âmes faibles conduites par un fourbe; ma pièce représente sous le nom de Mahomet le prier des jacobins mettant le poignard à la main des Jacques Clement [...] au parricide.” Voltaire, “Letter to de Missy on 1. September 1742 [D2648]” in: *Correspondence and Related Documents*, vol. VIII, ed. Theodore Besterman (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1970): pp. 243-4, here p. 244. See also the “Avis de l’éditeur” that was included in the print edition of the play and that was mostly likely written by Voltaire himself. Voltaire, *Le Fanatisme / De l’Alcoran*, pp. 143-7, especially pp. 145-6.

³⁷ Tolan, “European Accounts,” pp. 242-3.

³⁸ Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. III (New York: The Modern Library, 1983): here p. 56.

of new, foreign ones.³⁹ Both historians eschew the overt didacticism of *Le Fanatisme*, aiming instead to provide a deliberately ambivalent account of Muhammad's life and character primarily capable of explaining his influence on the history of the Arab people and the broader region.

Despite professing admiration for these authors, von Hammer argues that historical scholarship alone—notwithstanding its usefulness for illuminating the “pragmatic connection” and “historical meaning” of events—is not enough to serve as the basis for a “living representation” of the Muslim prophet; such a representation must also draw on a “living cognizance” of the customs and “regional circumstances” in which he grew to maturity.⁴⁰ Though recognizing the value of contemporaneous travelogues in providing this sort of knowledge, the Austrian asserts that the most important insights about exotic cultures can only be had by experiencing them first-hand—something that, as von Hammer is quick to remind his readers, he can claim to have done in his capacity as a diplomat. Indeed, he insists, it was only once he had been to Arab Egypt—which he visited while serving as a liaison to the British army in the wake of Napoleon's famous invasion of the country—that he began to truly understand Muhammad. During this time, the Austrian boasts, he “lived with Arabs under palms and tents” and conversed with “emirs in the cities and Bedouins from the desert,” providing him plenty of opportunity to form a vivid impression of the local culture.⁴¹

³⁹ “Mohammed sah mit Schmerz den Verfall des Vaterlandes, wie es von den alten Sitten hinuntersank, fremde sich angewöhnte.” Johannes von Müller, *Vier und zwanzig Bücher allgemeiner Geschichten besonders der europäischen Menschheit*, ed. Johann Georg Müller (Tübingen: J.G. Cotta, 1810): here p. 34.

⁴⁰ “Durch die kritische Würdigung belaubigter Thatsachen mag wohl ihr pragmatischer Zusammenhang und ihre Wechselwirkung vom historischen Sinn rein aufgefaßt und verstanden werden; aber zur lebendigen Darstellung der großen handelnden unter andern Zonen und fremden Nationen ist die lebendige Kenntniß ihrer Sitten und Lebensverhältnisse ein unerläßliches Erforderniß.” (*H* xi-xii).

⁴¹ Writing in the third person, von Hammer recalls the times “als er [...] mit Arabern unter Palmen und Zelten gelebt, als er mit Emirn in Städten und mit Beduinen aus der Wüste Gespräch und Umgang geflogen [...]” (*H* xii).

Yet the true catalyst for his insight into the prophet's character was his acquaintance with a single individual, a Bedouin sheik and anti-Napoleonic partisan notable for his exceptional courage in the face of the enemy. Almost a century before the publication of Max Weber's famous essay "Die drei reinen Typen der legitimen Herrschaft" (1922)⁴², von Hammer's description of this sheik evokes the quality that Weber would identify as charisma: In the Austrian's excited recollection, the sheikh is miraculously able to command his followers' loyalty without the benefit of a conventional basis for his authority, relying instead on his own, especially potent personal appeal. He is endowed with "the ripest bloom of masculine beauty and power" as well as a "reputation for holiness" that he owes "neither to an excessive number of cousins and relatives nor to a wealth of horses and camels, but rather solely to the natural magic of captivating eloquence." He exhibits, moreover, a certain "inexplicable something" that allows him to inflame the "spirits and passions" of the other Bedouins. Possessed of such qualities and animated by "the fullest conviction of his invincibility and his higher calling," he is able to lead his "disciples" into the "fiery maws" of the enemy.⁴³ So envisioned, the Sheikh offers an alluring example of personal and political autonomy; though the Bedouin himself believes that he is following the directives of the divine will, von Hammer's description implies that the guiding impetus behind his actions ultimately originates in his own, uniquely forceful personality.

⁴² Max Weber, "Die drei reinen Typen der legitimen Herrschaft" in: *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Teilband 4, ed. Edith Hanke (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005): pp. 717-742, especially 734-42.

⁴³ In German, von Hammer describes his acquaintance as a man, "der in der reifsten Blüthe männlicher Schönheit und Kraft, und im Rufe der Heiligkeit, letztern weder dem Uebergewicht von Vettern und Stammverwandten, noch dem Reichthum an Pferden und Kameelen, sondern bloß dem natürlichen Zauber hinreißender Beredsamkeit dankte, der, wenn er sprach und schwieg, seine Umgebungen unwiderstehlich an sich zog, und in der vollsten Ueberzeugung seiner Unverletzbarkeit und seiner höhern Sendung seiner Jünger den feindlichen Feuerschlünden entgegen führte, und mit einem unnennbaren Etwas alle Geister und Gemüther durch die Emanationen des seinigen in Flammen setzte [...]." (*H* xiii).

Awed by the sight of this individual, von Hammer finds that he understands Muhammad in a way that previously eluded him when he studied the most importantly biographical sources on the Prophet's life. Suddenly, as if struck by a "magic wand," the Austrian forms a mental "image" of Muhammad "the divinely inspired Arab poet, the divinely sent seer of the desert"—an image all the more powerful for its "full clarity and definition."⁴⁴ Within the ostensibly timeless geographic and cultural space of the desert, and in the company of nomadic warriors, the seemingly incongruous facts about the Prophet provided by scholarship crystallize for von Hammer into a coherent conception of the man.

On this basis, von Hammer promises to show his readers a thoroughly remarkable individual, one who both embodies and transcends the dynamic culture and historical period of his birth; a man of seemingly superhuman talents who, in bringing Islam into the world, inaugurates a transformation of global dimensions, yet nevertheless struggles with recognizably human shortcomings like envy and lust:

Die glänzendsten Strahlen seines Dichtergenies, die hellsten Blitze seiner Sehergabe, der große und erhabene Plan der Vernichtung des Götzendienstes und die Einführung des Kultus eines einzigen Gottes, die wichtigsten Momente seines Lebens, die Absendung von Gesandten an die Fürsten der Erde, der Bund von Hodaiba, die Eroberung von Mekka, sind hier auf einen einzigen Punkt zusammengebracht, und die menschlichen Schatten seiner Dichtereifersucht und besonders seine Schwäche für die Frauen sind nicht versteckt worden. (*H* vii).

This ostensible contradiction between, on the one hand, the spiritual, political and military genius shown by Muhammad and, on the other, his supposed susceptibility to human weaknesses like envy and lust form a conspicuous leitmotif in von Hammer's preface. In both the preface and the play itself, the dramatist juxtaposes episodes indicative of the former with others exemplifying the

⁴⁴ "Da stand auf einmal, wie durch den Schlag einer Zauberruthe, das Bild des gottbegeisterten arabischen Dichters, des gottesandten Sehers der Wüste in voller Klarheit und Bestimmtheit da." (*H* xiii). For von Hammer's relationship to the Egyptian Bedouins, see: Solbrig, "Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall," p. 283.

latter. Thus, for example, the preface recounts how Muhammad's prophetic speech won the admiration of the great Arab poets Ka'b ibn Zuhayr and Labīd before describing the Prophet's persecution of two other poets, Abdallah and Hassan, for their rhetorical and poetic skill in expressing skepticism about Islam as well as for the latter's connection to an embarrassing incident involving Muhammad's wife Aisha (*H* viii-ix).

The apparent human shortcomings of the Prophet serve an important function in allowing von Hammer to illustrate his specific historical and dramatic approach to his subject matter. Like Goethe, the Austrian writer undertakes to portray Muhammad in a way that eliminates all supernatural elements from his story. This entails reimagining prophetic speech as identical to poetry in terms of its psychological origin and formal characteristics; indeed, for von Hammer, Muhammad was a poet, though one whose literary faculty fit within an arsenal of other talents not normally associated with writers. As such, the Prophet needed to distinguish himself from other poets: "Je höher Mohammed als Dichter über die Poeten seines Volks hervorragte, und je weniger er in dieser Hinsicht fürchten durfte, dieselben zu sich herauf gehoben zu sehen, desto mehr scheute er dennoch jede Vergleichung mit ihnen, wodurch die flammende Glorie seines Prophetenscheines in einen bloßen Poetennimbus verwandelt werden konnte" (*H* vii-viii). The persecution of poets by Muhammad is thus not only attributable to personal envy, but also figures into his self-fashioning as a prophet as well as into his strategy for establishing a position of spiritual and moral authority for himself within Arabian society.⁴⁵ In this way, the depiction of a personal failing becomes the basis for a broader psychological and sociological insight.

⁴⁵ For the Islamic understanding of the difference between Muhammad's prophetic utterances and other forms of inspired speech, including poetry, see: Michael Zwettler, "A Mantic Manifesto: The Sūra of 'The Poets' and the Qur'ānic Foundations of Prophetic Authority" in: *Poetry and Prophecy: The Beginnings of a Literary Tradition*, ed. James L. Kugel (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1990): 75-119.

The depiction of Muhammad's sexual proclivities, in contrast, enables von Hammer to define his dramatic approach to his material by distinguishing this approach from Voltaire's rendition of the Prophet. Accordingly, the Austrian focuses an almost lurid degree of attention on the episode in Muhammad's life that forms the basis of *Le Fanatisme*, namely, the Prophet's ostensibly incestuous marriage to the wife of his foster son. As von Hammer notes in his preface, the relationship of the historical Muhammad to this adopted son, Zayd ibn Harithah, and his wife, Zaynab bint Jahsh—whom the Prophet compelled to divorce so that he could marry Zaynab himself—is reflected, in Voltaire's tragedy, in the love triangle between Mahomet, Séide and Palmyre. Von Hammer, for his part, endeavors to present the episode in a more historically accurate fashion by portraying it as less a source of conflict between the three individuals involved than a cause for scandal within the larger Muslim community (*H* x-xi).

More broadly, though, the Austrian invokes the Zaynab affair in support of his argument that the story of the Prophet cannot be staged as a tragedy at all. For von Hammer, the libertine behavior supposedly demonstrated by Muhammad in this episode—as well as more generally in his polyamorous lifestyle—amounts to a consistent failure to achieve the standard of personal greatness required of a tragic protagonist. Nor, in the Austrian's view, would it be possible to depict Muhammad accurately without portraying such qualities (*H* xviii). It is for this reason that von Hammer prefers the generic designation “historisches Schauspiel” (or, alternately, “geschichtliches Charakterschauspiel”) for his play.⁴⁶ With respect to the origin of the play's representation in a mental image informed by scholarship and direct ethnographic observation, this designation can be understood literally, as evoking a kind of dramatic poetics aimed at producing

⁴⁶ “Historisches Schauspiel” appears on the title page while “geschichtliches Charakterschauspiel” is used in the preface (*H* xviii).

an historical and cultural tableau against which the story of the Prophet can play out. It is only within such a tableau—and not within the conventional frame of tragedy—that Muhammad can be understood as an individual and the true grandeur of his legacy appreciated.

Yet von Hammer does not limit himself to merely reproducing this context; true to his primary occupation as an amateur scholar and translator, the dramatist has his title character speak lines drawn directly from the Qur'an as well as from the *Sunnah*, the originally oral record of sayings and deeds attributed to the Prophet. Von Hammer himself provides the translations into German. He assures the reader, moreover, that any liberties taken with the text have been minimal, and he challenges skeptics to compare the passages quoted in the play with those printed in the *Fundgruben des Orients*, a journal of popular scholarship about the Orient the author edited from 1809 to 1818.⁴⁷ He further asserts that these quotations are true not only to the content of the original texts, but also to their lyrical form, an approach that includes the attempt to reproduce the complex rhyme scheme of the Qur'an.

This endeavor to recreate the actual speech of the Prophet is all the more important because it figures prominently in von Hammer's understanding of why Muhammad makes for a suitable historical and dramatic—though not tragic—protagonist. Such an understanding emerges from the account that concludes the play's preface, a conspicuous show of name-dropping in which von Hammer recalls the conversation with the famous French writer Germaine de Staël that supposedly first inspired him to dramatize the life of the Prophet. According to von Hammer, this idea was provoked by a remark from de Staël regarding

die in der dramatischen Litteratur aller Völker dringend gefühlte Nothwendigkeit, die Leidenschaften der Liebe und des Ehrgeizes fortan nicht als ausschließlichen Stoff für das Trauerspiel zu betrachten, sondern denselben in andern Motiven

⁴⁷ On the history and influence of this periodical, see Solbrig, "Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall," p. 287 and Fichtner, *Terror and Toleration*, p. 147.

großer historischer Begebenheiten zu suchen, hinführo nicht bloß Könige und Helden, sondern auch Gesetzgeber und Religionslehrer auf der tragischen Bühne vorzuführen. (*H xvii*)

This remark prompts von Hammer to reply by pointing to Voltaire's *Le Fanatisme* as an attempt to stage precisely such a figure, one that is marred, however, by the liberties taken in molding the life of its subject into a suitably tragic plot. De Staël responds by challenging the Austrian to write his own tragedy about Muhammad. Von Hammer accepts, but only on the condition that the play not be a tragedy (*H xvii-xviii*).

De Staël's proposal that the tragic protagonist of the future must be a lawgiver or a teacher of religion—categories that can both be understood as encompassing the figure of the prophetic founder—is a telling one. It suggests that such a protagonist should be, like Moses and Muhammad, a spiritual or political innovator. Such a conception is implicitly motivated by a distinctly Romantic standard of heroism that associates individual greatness with the ability to make sense of the world from a subjective point of view.⁴⁸ The prophetic founder, however, takes this standard a step further by reshaping the world in line with this subjective perspective. The key factor enabling this feat is speech, which allows the unique subjectivity of the lawgiver or prophet to be externalized and take concrete form. In presenting *Die Eroberung von Mekka* as a response to De Staël's challenge, von Hammer aligns his play with this ideal.

In this conception, Muhammad's legacy consists in the Islamic culture that his teaching inspired. Indeed, this culture is not only a legacy, but also a manifestation of his rich personality. It is for this reason the von Hammer believes this his encounters with modern Muslims legitimize his portrayal of the prophet. For the Austrian, these Muslims exemplify a historically transcendent cultural unity that both shaped Muhammad the individual and was profoundly shaped by him. As

⁴⁸ Simon Williams, *Wagner and the Romantic Hero* (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2004): p. 8.

a prophet and thus as a mediator of such a higher authority, Muhammad throws this dynamic between the historical individual and the overarching culture into stark relief.

3. Prophecy against Empire: Klingemann's *Moses*

In turning now to the second of the two prophetic figures treated in this chapter, it is worth briefly observing an important distinction between the respective legacies of Moses and Muhammad. Upon his death in 632, the prophet Muhammad bequeathed his successors a theocratic state that would, within a period of less than three decades, form the basis of a sizable empire reaching from modern-day Tunisia in the west to Afghanistan and Pakistan in the east and including the entirety of the Arabian Peninsula. It is for this reason, among others, that he could inspire admiration from—and be cited as model by—the figure often regarded as the archetypal great man of history, Napoleon Bonaparte⁴⁹ (indeed, this may have also been a source of the Prophet's appeal for a writer like Karoline von Günderode, whose writings often celebrate the French Emperor as a redeemer of European culture⁵⁰).

This is not the case with Moses. Once established, ancient Israel struggled to preserve its independence in the face of larger, imperial neighbors, yet never exerted imperial ambitions of its own. This made Moses difficult to invoke as a model for such aspirations. To be sure, this did not prevent Napoleon and his supporters from likening the French Emperor to Moses, but such a

⁴⁹ The French army used Muhammad as a propaganda tool during Napoleon's famous Egyptian campaign, yet Bonaparte also invokes the Prophet as a role model in his memoir. See Tolan, "European Accounts," pp. 243-5.

⁵⁰ On Günderode's complex relationship to Napoleon, see Kelly Barry, "The Subject and Object of Mythology" in: *A New History of German Literature*, ed. David E. Wellbery (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2004): pp. 494-500.

comparison could only be made on the basis of the prophet's reputation as a lawgiver, a role that Bonaparte sought to claim for himself when introducing the Code Napoléon.⁵¹

Yet as *Moses. Ein dramatisches Gedicht in fünf Akten* by the dramatist and theater director August Klingemann demonstrates, the lack of imperial connection in Moses' biography also made it possible to conceive of the prophet as an anti-imperialist icon. Published in 1812—during the Napoleonic wars and at a time when the author was living under *de facto*, if not official, foreign occupation in the newly created Kingdom of Westphalia, a vassal state ruled by the emperor's brother Jérôme—the drama pits a notably self-assured and patriotic Moses against a Pharaoh portrayed as a ruthless and self-aggrandizing conqueror. It would be a mistake to identify the latter too closely with Bonaparte; indeed, it is worth noting in this regard that the play is dedicated to an ardent Napoleon supporter, the Jewish reformer Israel Jacobson.⁵² Nevertheless, a compelling case can be made that *Moses* is implicitly designed to encourage readers and audiences to relate the Exodus narrative—or at least the version of it is presented in the play—to the European present in which the work first appeared.

To this end, the following remarks focus on the contrast between the prophet Moses with his Pharaonic antagonist, a juxtaposition I read as demarcating two different models of spiritual and political leadership. Against the model of imperial leadership exemplified by the Pharaoh—a model in which authority is tied to the fate of the individual leader—Moses embodies a form of

⁵¹ David Wisner, *The Cult of the Legislator in France 1750-1830* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1997): p. 139. Jonathan P. Ribner, *Broken Tablets: The Cult of Law in French Art from David to Delacroix* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993): pp. 29-49.

⁵² Jacobson, who is today often celebrated as a founding figure of the Reform movement in Judaism, was, at the time of the play's writing, president of the Royal Westphalian Consistory of the Israelites, a body charged by the government with overseeing and rationalizing Jewish worship in the Kingdom. It is due to his singular energy in promoting religious reform that Klingemann's dedication anoints Moses' successor. On Jacobson and the Consistory, see: Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York: Oxford UP, 1988), especially pp. 28-43.

leadership based on the ideal of patriotism and the ability of the leader to represent symbolically the larger collective. What is particularly striking about this opposition, however, is that it is articulated most cogently not on a thematic level, but rather on the level of genre poetics. More specifically, I argue that Klingemann aims with his respective depictions of Moses and Pharaoh to illustrate and compare two different kinds of drama.

Before addressing this last point, though, it is worth taking a step back to consider just how the dramatist portrays his two main characters, starting with Pharaoh: It says much about the approach Klingemann takes to depicting the Egyptian ruler—as well as to rendering ancient Egyptian society in general—that he gives the character the name of Sesostris. It should be noted, first, that this choice is indicative of the way the author endeavors to fill in details omitted in the Biblical account of Exodus—especially those concerning the religion and politics of ancient Egypt—with information drawn from non-Biblical sources. In this case, a possible and likely source of the Pharaoh’s name is Herodotus’ *Histories*. There, an Egyptian pharaoh named Sesostris is described as having established a heroic reputation for himself with a series of impressive feats on both land and sea, including sailing a navy as far as the Indian Ocean and marching an army north through Asia and up to Europe. The most telling connection between the Sesostris described by Herodotus and the one appearing in Klingemann’s drama is the Pharaoh’s supposed practice of erecting stone columns on the lands of defeated enemies to either honor or mock them, depending on their perceived performance in battle.⁵³ Klingemann adapts this detail to significant dramatic

⁵³ Here is how Herodotus describes the practice: “Whenever [Sesostris] encountered a brave people who put up a fierce fight in defense of their autonomy, he erected pillars in their territory with an inscription recording his own name and country, and how he and his army had overcome them. However, whenever he took a place easily, without a fight, he had a message inscribed on the pillar in the same way as for the brave tribes, but he also added a picture of a woman’s genitalia, to indicate that they were cowards.” Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008): p. 133.

effect, most notably by having his Sesostris perish at the end of the play within sight of one such column in a way that underscores the extent of his fall.

As the choice of this figure as a model would suggest, the play's depiction of Sesostris focuses on his overweening ambition, a trait that causes him to trumpet his extravagant military success through fulsome gestures like the aforementioned columns or the spectacular parade with which he makes his initial entrance into the drama. Describing him to the long-exiled Moses, the young Joshua introduces the recently crowned ruler as:

Sesostris Pharao, genannt der Große,
Weil er die Erde selbst erobern will,
Und unter seines Scepters Allgewalt
Die Pharaonen aller Länder beugen!⁵⁴

This characterization turns out to be accurate in an expectedly literal fashion when Sesostris first appears on stage near the end of the second act, preceded by an exorbitant process of musicians, soldiers and dancing women and riding a "victory chariot" (*Triumphwagen*) pulled by four captured kings. Indeed, such literalness is a defining feature of the Pharaoh's relationship to his reputation; in a particularly telling exchange, Sesostris rebukes the high priest Jambres for his praise of the ruler's battlefield feats, declaring that fame should remain silent when deeds can speak for themselves.⁵⁵ Shortly thereafter, the Pharaoh, in a way that strikingly conflates dramatic and non-dramatic action, boasts that "only the entire world is a worthy stage for my victories" (*die ganze Erde / Ist meiner Siege würd'ger Schauplatz nur!*) (K 101).

⁵⁴ August Klingemann, *Moses Errettung* and *Moses. Ein Dramatisches Gedicht in fünf Akten* in: *August Klingemann's Dramatische Werke*, Bd. 7 (Vienna: Leopold Grund, 1821): pp. 3-206, here p. 65. Future references to this text will be provided in parentheses and indicated with the abbreviation *K*.

⁵⁵ "Ich führe meine Thaten vor mir her, / Drum laß den Ruhm, so lange selbst sie reden" (K 99-100). Note that the word "Thaten" can be understood here as referring to the captive monarchs pulling Sesostris' chariot, who are literally standing in front of the Pharaoh at this moment.

Another notable trait of this figure is his pronounced hostility to prophecy. Such hostility concerns, significantly, not only the threatening pronouncements of the title character, but also any assertions made, on the basis of a transcendent authority, about the limitations of his, Sesostris', seemingly boundless success. Thus, for example, the Pharaoh soon becomes embroiled in a tense exchange with one of the captive kings when the monarch in question, the Ethiopian ruler Sabraccon, begins to taunt the Egyptian by repeating the phrase "The wheel turns!" (*Das Rad läuft um!*), an allusion to the Baroque topos of the wheel of fortune; though Sesostris ostensibly prevails in the exchange by unexpectedly freeing Sabraccon—a gesture aimed at showing the Pharaoh has no fear of the Ethiopian—his inability to compel an expression of gratitude from the fallen king leaves him visibly rattled.⁵⁶

More important, however, is Sesostris' disregard for another prophetic pronouncement; this oracle stems not from an enemy of the Pharaoh, but rather from his own father, the Pharaoh Amenophis. Though Amenophis never appears on stage, he nevertheless plays an important role in the drama as the Egyptian ruler who gives the order for the newborn male children of the Hebrews to be put to death. In both the Bible and Klingemann's play, this decree is significant because it motivates the famous episode in which the mother of the infant Moses tries to save the future prophet by placing him in a basket and allowing him to float down the Nile; this basket, according to the legend, is subsequently discovered by the kindly daughter of the Pharaoh, who rescues the child within and raises him as her own son. Amenophis' decree thus gives the initial impetus for Moses' extraordinary life story. In Klingemann's portrayal, this episode takes on

⁵⁶ SABRACCON Ein Stolz'rer Mensch nur, als wir übrigen!
 SESOSTRIS Hast du kein bess'res Wort, mich zu benennen?
 Der Menschen Unzahl ist wie Sand am Meere;
 Ich hasse sie!
 SABRACCON Fürwahr, du hast's bewiesen!
 SESOSTRIS (wild aufrufend) Hinweg mit dir! (*K* 102-3)

additional meaning because it leads to the future prophet being raised among the Egyptian ruling class, a turn of events that—as I discuss later—enables him to acquire the intellectual and spiritual insights needed to guide the Hebrews in their uprising against their oppressors.

Klingemann depicts the rescue and adoption of the baby Moses in a stand-alone prologue to *Moses* titled *Moses Errettung*. This prologue also reveals the reason for Amenophis' command to kill the Hebrew children. In the Bible, it should be recalled, this command is attributed solely to the desire of the Egyptian monarch to limit the Israelites' growing numbers, which he perceives as a potential threat to his country's internal security.⁵⁷ Klingemann's drama, in contrast, provides an additional, and more personal motivation, for the Pharaoh's cruelty—namely, the desperate desire to avert the dire fate predicted to the King in a vision he receives soon after learning of his wife's pregnancy:

[...] als die Königin sich fruchtbar fühlte,
Trat [das Gesicht] um Mitternacht zum Amenophis,
Und sprach: "Der Knabe der Hebräerin,
Der in derselben Stunde mit dem deinen
Dem Schooße sich entwindet, wird sein Volk
Befreyen, deine Erstgeburt verderben!"
Und aufgeschreckt, befahl da Amenophis,
Die neugebornen Söhne der Hebräer
An ihrer Mütter Brüsten zu erwürgen! (K 25)

It is worth observing that this episode is recounted by Moses' father, Amram, who correctly deduces that the prophecy concerns his own son and is thus further encouraged to take action to protect the child.

⁵⁷ "[Pharaoh] said to his people, "Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase, and, in the event of war, join our enemies, and fight against us and escape from the land." (Exod. 1:9-10). The Bible is cited according to: *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha*, 4th ed., ed. Michael D. Coogan (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010).

More broadly, what this means is that Amenophis—and by extension his heir Sesostris—are implicated from the very beginning of the play in a tragic subplot running parallel to the main plot adapted from the Biblical narrative. In keeping with the model of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, the stage is inadvertently set for this tragedy by the Pharaoh's attempt to avert the dire fate contained in the oracle. As with the Laius-Oedipus relationship in Sophocles' play, however, the unfolding of this catastrophe also requires decisive impetus from Amenophis' son. If the elder Pharaoh creates the conditions for disaster by acting in a too precipitous manner in reacting to his vision and thus rendering himself and his family morally complicit in the murder of the Hebrew children, then it is the error of the younger ruler to allow his excessive pride to cause him to neglect completely the warning contained in his father's vision. Indeed, Sesostris is even provided the opportunity, when Moses is brought before him in chains after having been arrested for murder, to eliminate this existential threat to the Egyptian ruling dynasty once and for all. In case there could be any doubt that the younger Pharaoh is familiar with his father's vision, the high priest Jambres clarifies the situation by reiterating the vision's content and identifying Moses as the subject of the oracular warning.⁵⁸ As earlier with Sabraccon, though, Sesostris chooses instead to free his captured enemy rather than respond in a way that could be taken for fear: "Wo Amenophis fürchtete, verachtet / Sesostris Pharaos, der Herr der Herren!" he taunts Moses (*K* 111-2).

For Klingemann—as he makes clear in the preface—this tragic plot is not only a dramatic device, but also corresponds to a broader historical condition of religious and political decline in

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Großer Pharaos!

Ist es derselbe doch, vor dem ein Traum
 Einst deinen Vater Amenophis warnte,
 Dass der Hebräer neugeborne Knaben
 Durch ganz Aegypten-Land er tödten ließ!
 Nur dieser [i.e. Moses] wurde wunderbar errettet,
 Und grade er ist in derselben Stunde
 Mit dir, o großer König, einst geboren! (*K* 105)

the state of Egypt at the time of the Exodus. Such a conception is articulated in exemplary fashion by Friedrich Schiller in his lecture-essay “Die Sendung Moses” (1789), a text to which the preface of *Moses* discreetly alludes.⁵⁹ Like Klingemann’s play, “Die Sendung Moses” participates in the esoteric tradition that sees Moses’ prophetic mission as guided by arcane insights the future prophet acquired while living among the family of the Pharaoh and after supposedly being initiated as a novice into the secrets of the Egyptian priesthood.⁶⁰ Chief among these insights was the idea of universal monotheism, a notion the priests of Egypt perceived as an existential threat to the polytheistic state religion and thus made known to only a select few. To this end, the monotheistic idea was encoded in the elaborate and opaque rituals of the official religion—above all, in the practice of hieroglyphic writing and cult of veneration centered on the veiled statue of the goddess Isis. In Schiller’s portrayal, however, what began as a pragmatic measure intended to ensure the stability of the Egyptian state eventually became a means for the priesthood to secure its control over the population by restricting access to the truth and even deliberately fostering superstition. Ultimately, the desire to restrict access to the priesthood’s secrets to a tiny elite resulted in the loss of these insights among the Egyptian clergy.⁶¹

I can now turn to Moses himself. In a notable contrast to the initially reluctant figure featured in the Biblical account of the Exodus, Klingemann’s Moses is marked from the very

⁵⁹ Near the beginning of the preface, Klingemann references the work of “a great German master” (*eines großen deutschen Meisters*) on the topic of Moses (K 9). On the connection between Schiller’s lecture and Klingemann’s play, see: Andreas B. Kilcher, “The Moses of Sinai and the Moses of Egypt: Moses as Magician in Jewish Literature and Western Esotericism,” trans. Tanya Ury in: *Aries* 4:2 (2004): pp. 148-70, here p. 166.

⁶⁰ For the history and significance of this tradition, see Jan Assmann’s now classic study: Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1997):

⁶¹ Friedrich Schiller, “Die Sendung Moses” in: *Historische Schriften und Erzählungen I*, ed. Otto Dann (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2000): pp. 451-74, here p. 463.

beginning of the play—indeed, even as an infant⁶²—by a forceful quality of self-assurance. In the case of the adult Moses, this quality manifests itself in a tendency toward conspicuous acts of self-presentation analogous to those performed by Sesostris (if nowhere near as extravagant). Take, for example, the following scene from the first act, when the prophet first identifies himself to Joshua (as well as to his wife, Zipporah, and her father, Jethro, who up to this point are unaware of his true background). Joshua—who has fled to the land of Midian in order to escape oppression in Egypt—is prompted by Moses to recount the history of the Hebrews from Genesis to the events of the play’s prologue. When the young man finishes, the prophet asks him what has become of the providential child rescued by Pharaoh’s daughter from the Nile. Joshua responds:

JOSUA	Er ist entflohen, längst gewist gestorben!	
MOSES	(rasch und mit Nachdruck) Nenn‘ seinen Nahmen!	
JOSUA		Moses!
JETHRO UND ZIPORA	(stürzen zu beyden Seiten des Moses auf ihn zu, und rufen erstaunt und überrascht.)	Moses?!
MOSES	(kühn vortretend.)	Hier!!
JOSUA	Was bedeutet das?	
JETHRO	So heißt er!	
ZIPORA	Moses heißt er!	
MOSES	Ich bin’s—bin Moses, der verheiß’ne Retter! (K 68)	

It is worth observing that this scene plays out directly before Moses’ encounter with the burning bush. This means that—even if the ostensible encounter with the divine later in the scene plays an important role in crystallizing the prophet’s resolve to confront the Pharaoh—Moses does not require the direct intercession of a deity to see himself as a redeemer figure.

If Moses can be so certain of his calling to rescue his people, it is not only because he—like seemingly every other character in the play—is aware of the oracle received by Amenophis regarding the Hebrew child born at the same time as his heir. It is also because, during his time

⁶² Thus, Amram remarks of the baby Moses: “Schau’ ihn an! / Er schlägt die Augen auf, und blickt in’s Leben, / So kühn, als wär’ er nicht zum Knecht geboren“ (K 26).

among the Egyptians, he has learned to read the hieroglyphic writing that the priests themselves have forgotten to decipher and has thus acquired arcane knowledge about the workings of the universe that even the Egyptians do not possess. This is no small advantage since, as Klingemann makes clear in the play's preface, this knowledge includes insight into how to perform miracles⁶³; indeed, drawing on a different esoteric tradition, the play depicts the prophet as endowed with supernatural powers that allow him to summon at will various afflictions to trouble the Egyptians.⁶⁴

More important, however, is the fact that Moses sees himself not as a hero like Sesostris, but rather as a prophet who acts on behalf of transcendent forces. Indeed, unlike the Pharaoh, the title character does not indulge in the illusion that he is an autonomous or self-made individual, but rather—conscious of the unlikely sequence of events that enabled his initial escape from Amenophis' fatal decree—regards his life story as revealing the futility of human efforts in the face of God's plan: "Ein Wunder war mein Retter, / Und durch ein Wunder hat mich Gott erhalten" (K 70). The catalyst for this insight is his experience of prophetic calling. Tellingly, Klingemann changes this episode by having the deity appear to Moses not only in the form of a burning bush, but rather as a violent storm that results in a bush near where the prophet is standing being struck by lightning. Employing the language of the Burkean sublime, Moses responds to the storm in a manner suggesting a fantasy of personal annihilation:

O zürne nicht! Ich bin ein sterblich Wesen,
Ein schwacher Hirte—kann ich es bestehen?
Zum Völkerführer ward ich nicht erlesen,
Ohnmächtig werd' ich vor dir untergehen;

⁶³ Thus, Klingemann concedes that his portrayal of Moses has caused some critics to see the character as assuming "here and there the appearance of a sorcerer" (*hin und wieder das Ansehen eines Zauberers*), yet asserts that depicting the prophet "without the miracles commemorated in the ancient document [of Scripture]" (*ohne die Wunder, deren die alte Urkunde gedenkt*) would amount to "a sin against the holy spirit of poetry" (*gegen den heiligen Geist der Poesie*) (K 9)

⁶⁴ On the tradition portraying Moses as a sorcerer imbued with magical abilities due to his encounter with the deity, see Kilcher.

Mein Mund kann nimmer deine Worte künden,
Wo werd' ich Kraft vor deiner Allmacht finden?
Und tret' ich auf in deinen wilden Wettern,
So werden sie mich selbst vor dir zerschmettern! (K 73-4)

Whereas the Biblical Moses shrinks in fear before the appearance of God, this experience provides Klingemann's character with an intuition of divine omnipotence.

In the preface to *Moses*, Klingemann defends his unconventional choice of dramatic protagonist. The essentially dramatic quality of Moses' life, the author asserts, cannot be doubted by anyone familiar with the "innermost spirit of the dramatic" (*innersten Geist des Dramatischen*) as it has come to be manifested in modern, Romantic literature (K 11). In Klingemann's view, this "spirit" is best articulated by August Wilhelm Schlegel as the defining attributes of the "Romantic drama," a genre Schlegel conceptualizes and illustrates in his influential *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur* (1809).⁶⁵ As far as *Moses* is concerned, the most important of these attributes is the genre's characteristic mixing of formal and thematic elements conventionally regarded as incompatible⁶⁶: What makes Moses an appropriate subject for the stage, Klingemann argues, is, firstly, the way the Prophet embodies several different "dramatic motifs," chief among them a "great enthusiasm [*Begeisterung*] for a divine idea, together with the endeavor to realize this idea in the world despite all external resistance and even despite the inner anguish caused by

⁶⁵ For an overview of Klingemann's thinking on the theory and practice of drama as well as the author's position on the aesthetic debates of the early nineteenth century, see: Claude D. Conter, "August Klingemanns Theaterreform. Zur Bedeutung Schillers und der Frühromantik für die Neubegründung des Unterhaltungsdramas um 1800" in: *Das Unterhaltungsstück um 1800. Literaturhistorische Konfigurationen—Signaturen der Moderne. Zur Geschichte des Theaters als Reflexionsmedium von Gesellschaft, Politik und Ästhetik*, eds. Johannes Birgfeld and Claude D. Conter (Hannover: Wehrhahn, 2007): pp. 230-67.

⁶⁶ According to Schlegel, "[das romantische Drama] sondert nicht strenge, wie die alte Tragödie, den Ernst und die Handlung unter den Bestandteilen des Lebens aus; es fasst die ganze bunte Schauspiel desselben mit allen Umgebungen zusammen, und indem es nur das zufällig nebeneinander Befindliche auszubilden scheint, befriedigt es die unbewußten Forderungen der Phantasie, vertieft uns in Betrachtungen über die unaussprechliche Bedeutung des durch Anordnung, Nähe und Ferne, Kolorit und Beleuchtung harmonisch gewordenen Scheines und leiht gleichsam der Aussicht eine Seele." August Wilhelm Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur*, Tl. 2, ed. Edgar Lohner (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1967): p. 113.

the violence of the means [employed in such an undertaking].”⁶⁷ Yet such enthusiasm or inspiration is also a distinctly lyrical topos, one indicative of the ways in which the experience of reality can be decisively shaped by human subjectivity. As conceived by Schlegel, Romantic drama functions to actualize such subjective perception in the public space of the theater, and it is in so doing that the genre ultimately distinguishes itself from Classical drama, which Schlegel understands to be aimed at representing reality in a thoroughly mimetic fashion. Accordingly, it was as an example of a historical individual who was able to cultivate a unique worldview and then establish it as law that Moses appeals to Klingemann as an innovative subject for drama.

If Moses is an ideal subject for modern, Romantic drama, then his antagonist, Sesostris, represents the paradigm of the tragic protagonist, one whose heroic ambitions are inevitably crushed by the objective reality of the Gods’ will. By opposing the prophet to such a figure, Klingemann establishes a competition of different dramatic models. Moses’ victory at the end of the play signals the superiority of Romantic drama over classical drama. What is at stake here, however, is not only a stylistic preference. The two rival dramatic models also pose divergent conceptions of fate. What ultimately separates Moses from the pharaohs is the fact that he regards fate not as an external force that either supports or thwarts him, but rather as an inner potential that has to be realized and unleashed.

⁶⁷ “Was die dramatischen Motive in dem Charakter des Moses betrifft, so sind die hohe Begeisterung für eine göttliche Idee, verbunden mit dem Bestreben, dieselbe in der Wirklichkeit, ungeachtet alles äußer Widerstandes und selbst des innern Leidens über das Gewaltsame der Mittel, zu realisieren.” (K 12)

Chapter Two:

Prophecy, Heroism and Nationalism in Friedrich Schiller's *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*

In this chapter, I turn my attention to Friedrich Schiller's 1801 tragedy *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*, a play that dramatizes the story of the French visionary and heroine Joan of Arc. I am interested in how Schiller's rendition of this story can be related to a larger recuperation of Joan in the nineteenth century as an icon of French national identity. As I hope to show, *Jungfrau* exemplifies an approach to historical empathy that would become crucial to nationalist discourse, an approach fundamentally concerned with situating historical figures like the Maid of Orléans within a specific historical reality while simultaneously portraying them as being profoundly relevant to the present. Such an approach makes it possible to conceive of historical persons as being both distinctive individuals and symbols of the collective ideals that are regarded as defining a nation over the course of centuries.

Largely neglected in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Joan of Arc experienced an astonishing resurgence of popularity in the nineteenth century both in France and around the world. Though this revival of interest can be attributed to a number of causes, arguably one of the most important was the emergence of several new discourses aimed at providing novel perspectives on history generally as well as the native—i.e. French or European—past of the

Middle Ages. In France, the status of the Maid in the popular imagination was both elevated and transformed by the broad fascination with the medieval period in the art and literature of Romanticism. At the same time, though, the pioneering work of professional historians like Jules Michelet and Jules Quicherat—the latter of whom edited and annotated the record of her trial and rehabilitation for publication in 1841-1849—provided new insights into her life and times authorized by scholarly expertise. Finally, her legend was further amplified by a cult of French nationalism that viewed Joan as an exemplary patriot and authentic representative of the people. This last factor, especially, enabled her legacy to be reconceived as a national myth that could be invoked—and instrumentalized—by intellectuals and politicians from across the ideological spectrum, a phenomenon resulting in a prismatic multiplication of her image in the culture. The historian Michel Winock—following a long tradition of scholars using similar approaches—has identified three distinct “models” for interpreting this legacy that prominently feature in French public discourse from over the course of the century: (1) a “Catholic” model that celebrates Joan as an impassioned defender of belief in the supernatural, (2) a “Republican” model that remembers her as an advocate of the common people threatened by the wars conducted between rival factions of the nobility, and (3) an extreme “nationalist” model that conceived of her as exemplifying Gallic or French spiritual and racial purity in the face of a hostile incursion in the national body politic by a foreign—i.e. English or Jewish—other.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Michael Winock, “Joan of Arc” in *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*, Vol. III, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia UP, 1998): 433-80, here pp. 449-67. My brief summary of this broad and internally heterogeneous discourse also draws on: Gerd Krumeich, *Jeanne d’Arc in der Geschichte: Historiographie—Politik—Kultur* (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1989); Dietmar Rieger, „Jeanne d’Arc und der Patriotismus: Zur Geschichte einer 'belle image du livre de prix' von der Revolution zur Resistance,” *Romantisches Jahrbuch* 36 (1985): pp. 122-139; Marina Warner, *Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), especially pp. 237-75; and Charles Wayland Lightbody, *The Judgements of Joan: A Study in Cultural History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1961): pp. 154-71. Lightbody observes that Joan was claimed by several different nationalisms, including by Germans. The identification of Joan as a German was based on the fact that her native province of Lorraine was then part of the Holy Roman Empire. See p. 161. Finally, for the classic account of the different forms taken by French and German nationalism in the course of their emergence in

As a drama about Joan written by a German playwright in the very first years of the nineteenth century, *Jungfrau* offers a unique case study for understanding the complex appeal of the Maid during this period. The play—which originally bore the subtitle “A Romantic Tragedy” (*eine romantische Tragödie*)⁶⁹—is often identified as the first depiction of the figure to emerge within the paradigm of European Romanticism.⁷⁰ The reception that greeted the work among German audiences was one of the most enthusiastic received by any of Schiller’s plays⁷¹, and the drama itself inspired further portrayals of Joan across Europe—including, most notably, operatic renditions from Verdi (1845) and Tchaikovsky (1878).⁷² Indeed, Schiller’s work anticipates many of the themes that would animate the contesting images of Joan in the coming century: Like the Catholic image, *Jungfrau* offers a programmatic response to the paradigmatic eighteenth century

the French Revolution and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, see: Hans Kohn, *Prelude to Nation-States: The French and German Experience, 1789-1815* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1967).

⁶⁹ Rüdiger Zymner notes that scholarship on the play has long pondered the question of why Schiller chose this subtitle, yet without producing any firm answers. There is, however, a tentative consensus around the notion that—at least at one level—the term ‘romantic’ refers to the inclusion of fantastic elements like the Black Knight in the play’s dramatization of history as well as, more generally, to the work’s multiple deviations from the official narrative of Joan’s life. Rüdiger Zymner, *Friedrich Schiller. Dramen* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2002), pp. 119-121. Claudia Stockinger argues that the term ‘Romantic drama’ describes Schiller’s aesthetic agenda of drawing on medieval and Christian motifs to establish a poetic version of history capable of surpassing historical reality: “der Text [inszeniert] über in die Figurenrede integrierte Ritterromantik, nationale Mythenbildung und deren christlich-naïve Deutung eine geschlossene zweite Wirklichkeit, die das Interesse und die Aufmerksamkeit des Publikums von der historischen Realität der Ereignisse auf die poetische Wahrheit der Darstellung lenkt.” I agree that the play implicitly challenges the limitations of authorized history, though I would add that Schiller also seeks to recuperate the historical Joan by displacing a previous poetic rendition of the figure, i.e. Voltaire’s *Pucelle*. Claudia Stockinger, “Dramaturgie der Zerstreung. Schiller und das romantische Drama,” in: *Das romantische Drama. Produktive Synthese zwischen Tradition und Innovation*, eds. Uwe Japp, Stefan Scherer and Claudia Stockinger (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000): pp. 199-225, here p. 207.

⁷⁰ Warner, *The Image of Female Heroism*, p. 241.

⁷¹ This reception is described in: Zymner, *Friedrich Schiller*, pp. 117-119.

⁷² The play was decidedly less popular among theatergoing audiences in France, though it was translated into French within a year of its initial publication and furnished with enthusiastic preface from the revolutionary author and politician Louis Sébastien Mercier (himself an author of a drama about the Maid). For an account of this translation and the French reception of the play, see: Winfried Woesler, “Erste Französisch-Deutsche Reaktionen auf Schillers *Jungfrau von Orleans*. Carl Friedrich Cramers Brief vom 8.6.1802 an Louis Sébastien Mercier”, *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 57 (2013): pp. 11-22.

depiction of the heroine, Voltaire's 1762 mock epic *La Pucelle d'Orléans* (though Schiller, as I hope to show, was less concerned with affirming the existence of the supernatural than with validating the dynamic potential of belief as a force for psychological, cultural and political transformation). Like the Republican Joan of Arc, the play's protagonist considers herself a representative of the common people and explicitly advocates on their behalf before the monarch. Finally, like the nationalist Joan, the character is portrayed as exemplifying a certain kind of purity as well as mercilessly—and violently—opposing the presence of foreigners on French soil.

This direct relevance to the history and culture of a modern, Christian, European nation distinguishes the protagonist of *Jungfrau*—who is named “Johanna” in the text of the play⁷³—from the other prophetic figures treated in this dissertation. Her presence in this study offers an example of a prophet invoked as a model for a new kind of political authority, one associated with the transcendent ideal of the nation.⁷⁴ In contrast to the Classical heroes celebrated by the Enlightenment, Johanna is defined by her political and psychological radicalism. Her claim to speak for the divine—as well as for the common people—is portrayed as placing her outside of mainstream political activity practiced by the ruler, the aristocrats and the parliament as well as

⁷³ In the following, I will use the name “Joan” to refer to the historical Joan of Arc and “Johanna” when referring to Schiller's character.

⁷⁴ In a departure from older critical traditions that understood *Jungfrau* as an allegory of religious transcendence or individual autonomy, scholarship of the last three decades has witnessed an increasing number of attempts to historicize the play by drawing connections to new French and German nationalisms emerging at the turn of the nineteenth century. Peter-André Alt, for example, maintains that Johanna's first prophetic speech echoes nationalist themes that were first disseminated in German political periodicals from the time of the French Revolution and that would later feature in Freiherr von Stein's Napoleonic-era reform of the Prussian state. Peter-André Alt, *Schiller. Leben—Werk—Zeit*, Bd. 2, (München: C.H. Beck, 2000): p. 520. Albrecht Koschorke compares the protagonist's transformation into an emblem of collective identification to the invention of Marianne as a personification of the French Republic. Albrecht Koschorke, “Schillers *Jungfrau von Orleans* und die Geschlechterpolitik der Französischen Revolution” in: *Friedrich Schiller und der Weg in die Moderne*, ed. Walter Hinderer (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006): pp. 243-59, here pp. 258-9. Hans-Georg Pott argues that the play dramatizes the emergence of a premodern “protonationalism” centered on the figure of the heroic martyr Johanna. Hans-Georg Pott, “Heiliger Krieg, Charisma und Märtyrertum in Schillers romantischer Tragödie *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*” in: *Athenäum* 20 (2010): pp. 111-42. None of these critics focuses specifically on the relationship between the status of the protagonist as a nationalist icon and her role as a prophet.

the competing nations of France and England. This activity is shown to be sterile and sterilizing because it is dominated by the rival interests of different factions, and the play centers on the attempt by Johanna to shape this activity while remaining apart from it. This potential for contamination of her mission anticipates the later problematic presented by the attempted appropriation of her legacy in the nineteenth century.

What makes *Jungfrau* especially fascinating as an attempt to relate to a particular historical figure is the evident tension between, on the one hand, the play's conspicuous references to specific details pertaining to the life and times of its protagonist, and, on the other hand, the blatant license taken in deviating from the official narrative of this life—a license that, as Schiller's biographer Peter André Alt notes, is extreme even when compared to the standard of the dramatist's previous works.⁷⁵ This freedom is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the play's notorious ending, which fundamentally alters the circumstances of the historical Joan's death by allowing the protagonist to perish heroically on the battlefield rather than be burned at the stake. This ending has perplexed audiences and readers since the play's initial publication.⁷⁶ Why take the drastic step of inventing a novel scenario for the character's demise when the original story—as viewers of Theodor Dreyer's famous cinematic rendition, *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (1928), can attest—is not lacking for dramatic potential?

The answer to this question, I suggest, has to do not only with the specific poetics of historical fiction at work in the play, but also—relatedly—with how the dramatist reimagines what it means to be a prophet. As he does with the eponymous founder of Judaism in “Die Sendung

⁷⁵ Alt, *Schiller*, p. 514.

⁷⁶ One such puzzled reader was Jean Paul's friend, Christian Otto, who, despite liking the play, complained that “der Geschichte treuer, wäre er [i.e. Schiller] tragischer geworden.” Friedrich Schiller, *Werke und Briefe in zwölf Bänden*, Bd. 5, *Klassische Dramen*, ed. Matthias Luserke-Jaqui (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1996): p.651.

Moses,” Schiller endeavors to portray Joan in way aimed at revealing certain distinctly “human” qualities obscured by traditional conceptions of her as a recipient of divine inspiration.⁷⁷ Instead of depicting Moses and Joan as sources of divine insight, the author foregrounds the legacy of these individuals as agents of historical change within specific political, social and cultural contexts. This approach opens up a parallax perspective on these figures by means of which the conventional understanding of their role is contrasted with the “enlightened” conception articulated by Schiller. Moses and Joan present especially appealing subjects for this kind of approach because, as prophets, they are already associated with an analogous bifurcated model of reception; indeed, the prophet is defined by such a dual temporality, one aimed both at an audience in the present and one in the future. Schiller implicitly invokes the model to reflect on the ways in which empathy with the past can have a transformative effect on the present.

There has long been a consensus in the scholarship on *Jungfrau* that the play should be read—in Karl Guthke’s oft-cited formulation—not as the tragedy of a prophetic “mission” (*Sendung*), but rather as one of “missionary consciousness” (*Sendungsbewußtsein*).⁷⁸ This distinction is intended to highlight the way the drama foregrounds the psychological tension implicit in Johanna’s sense of herself as being called at the expense of the calling itself—the true origin of which remains unclear in the play. The protagonist is made powerful by her ardent belief in the authenticity of her “mission” (*Sendung*); this conviction—which the protagonist herself

⁷⁷ For a more detailed comparison of *Jungfrau* with “Die Sendung Moses,” see Christopher J. Wild, *Theater der Keuschheit—Keuschheit des Theaters. Zu einer Geschichte der (Anti)Theatralität von Gryphius bis Kleist* (Freiburg: Rombach, 2003): pp. 424-6.

⁷⁸ Karl S. Guthke, “Die Jungfrau von Orleans,” *Schiller-Handbuch*, ed. Helmut Koopmann (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner, 1998): 442-65, here p. 464. For an overview of postwar scholarship on the play, see, in addition to the account provided by Guthke: Gerhard Sauder, “Die Jungfrau von Orleans” in: *Friedrich Schiller. Dramen. Neue Wege der Forschung*, ed. Matthias Luserke-Jaqui (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2009): pp. 157-89. More recent scholarship is covered by: Ariane Martin, “Die Jungfrau von Orleans. Eine romantische Tragödie (2009)” in: *Schiller-Handbuch. Leben—Werk—Wirkung*, ed. Matthias Luserke-Jaqui (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2005): pp. 168-95, especially pp. 192-3.

attributes to an inner “spirit” (*Geist*) or “voice” (*Stimme*) instructing her and urging her on—is so intense that it can be perceived by others, and thus constitutes a significant part of her extraordinary appeal to her compatriots. As Guthke and others have argued, however, this calling—which demands the use of absolute violence against the enemy—follows the exclusive logic of nationalism rather than any religious or Christian idea. Christopher J. Wild has demonstrated how this mission is constructed through a series of speech acts and thus functions as an almost theatrical role Johanna unconsciously adopts in response to the crisis of national leadership caused by the English invasion.⁷⁹ The play thus attributes to the radical subject a kind of foundational power formerly ascribed to the Deity.

In the following, I hope to show the connection between this understanding of the prophet as a kind of spiritual and political actor and the stylization of Joan of Arc as a mythic figure of French nationalism in the nineteenth century. I begin my investigation by analyzing the depiction of Johanna’s inspiration and calling in the play’s prologue, an act that introduces the Maid and situates her in an imaginary pre-modern landscape shaped by powerful semiotic forces; as I hope to demonstrate, what initially defines the Maid as a prophet is her ability to channel these forces in a way that makes them relevant to a time of crisis. My analysis continues with an examination of the first act and the sequence of events leading up to the initial meeting between Johanna and the Dauphin Karl, the beleaguered rightful sovereign of France. Here my goal is to identify the specific factors that authorize the young woman to speak as a prophet, as well as, eventually, to lead her compatriots into battle. This will bring me to the third section of the chapter, which focuses on the portrayal of spiritual and military leadership in the play. By studying Johanna and the Dauphin as contrasting models of leadership, I endeavor to show how Schiller’s characterization

⁷⁹Wild, *Theater der Keuschheit*, pp. 437-50.

of the Maid reflects a new, distinctly modern understanding of political and spiritual power. Turning then to address the catastrophe that befalls Johanna in the third and fourth acts of the play, I argue that this disaster raises the stakes of her story by posing the question of what legacy she will have after her prophetic mission is complete. Finally, I consider the play's idiosyncratic rendition of Johanna's death as a reflection on the relationship between drama and transformative historical figures like Joan of Arc.

1. The Power of Symbols

Jungfrau begins with a prologue that introduces the title character and her ambition of rescuing her French homeland from the invading English.⁸⁰ If that were all, this prologue could well be deemed extraneous; indeed, much of the information imparted here is recounted again in the play's first act. Yet this prologue also has a more significant function—namely, to stage the circumstances that culminate in the final decision by Johanna to leave her native village and take up arms against the invaders. This is important because the scenario that unfolds in these scenes differs in several important respects from the account she gives later in the first act, when she is brought before France's nominal ruler, the Dauphin Karl (i.e. the historical Charles VII), and asked to explain herself; there, she attributes her resolve to fight for her country to a relatively conventional experience of prophetic inspiration and commissioning, claiming to have been instructed to do so in a series of visionary encounters with the Virgin Mary. The prologue, in contrast, portrays her mission as being motivated by a variety of factors, not all of which conform to such a familiar model of visionary revelation.

⁸⁰ Quotations of *Jungfrau* are drawn from the following edition: Friedrich Schiller, *Werke und Briefe in zwölf Bänden*, Bd. 5, *Klassische Dramen*, ed. Matthias Luserke-Jaqui (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1996), pp. 149-277.

Johanna is first introduced as one of three sisters whose father, the “reicher Landmann” Thibaut d’Arc, has decided to marry off all at once to suitors from their native village. By doing so, Thibaut hopes to ensure his daughters’ safety and well-being should the war raging across France reach their home, which up to this point has been spared from the conflict.⁸¹ Johanna, however, withholds her assent to this plan, steadfastly refusing to answer her father as he first entreats and then harangues her to acquiesce to the proposal of marriage offered to her by the “valiant youth” (*wackre Jüngling*) Raimond. This behavior causes Thibaut to accuse her of indulging in a severe emotional and sexual repression, an attitude he diagnoses as a “grave error in nature” in a young woman who has just arrived in her years of sexual maturity.⁸² Johanna, he tells Raimond, has allowed herself to indulge a “sinful arrogance” out of intense dissatisfaction with her modest social station.⁸³ This characterization, though, notably diverges from the description of the protagonist’s demeanor provided in Schiller’s stage directions, according to which she stands “silently and inattentively” (*still und ohne Anteil auf der Seite*) of the stage while

⁸¹ Though Thibaut does not say so explicitly, it can be inferred that one reason for his eagerness to marry off his daughters is his desire to protect them from the sexual predations of the English soldiers, who are said to target unmarried women; as Bertrand reports, “In frechem Mute haben [die Engländer] geschworen, / Der Schmach zu weißen alle Jungfrauen [...]” (Prologue.3.252-3). Claudien Benthien notes that this strategy amounts to a “Symbolpolitik der aktiven Beschämung” aimed at inscribing shame and impotency on the very bodies of the conquered foe. Claudia Benthien, *Tribunal der Blicke. Kulturtheorien vom Scham und Schuld und die Tragödie um 1800*, (Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2011), p. 114.

⁸² Observing that this apparent frigidity is manifesting itself at a time in the life of the protagonist when she otherwise might be prone to an excess of erotic feeling, the elder d’Arc is quick to pathologize her condition:

O das gefällt mir nimmermehr und deutet
 Auf eine schwere Irrung der Natur!
 Das Herz gefällt mir nicht, das streng und kalt
 Sich zuschließt in den Jahren des Gefühls. (Prologue.2.61-4)

⁸³ Thibaut ascribes this dissatisfaction to her evident superiority in appearance and ability to her female neighbors and the corresponding conviction that she belongs in a higher sphere of life:

Sie schämt sich ihrer Niedrigkeit—weil Gott
 Mit reicher Schönheit ihren Leib geschmückt,
 Mit hohen Wundergaben sie gesegnet,
 Vor allen Hirtenmädchen dieses Tals,
 So nährt sie sünd’gen Hochmut in dem Herzen [...] (Prologue.2.126-32).

Thibaut and Raimond are speaking; rather than projecting insolence, her posture is marked by a pronounced passivity suggesting either indifference or even obviousness to what is happening around her.

When Johanna does break her silence, however, the change in her demeanor is both swift and profound. The catalyst for this transformation is the arrival on stage of her neighbor Bertrand carrying a metal war helmet. The sight of the helmet has a visible effect on the young woman, causing her to suddenly become alert and approach the area where Bertrand is conversing with her father and Raimond; after listening intently to his account of how he received the helmet from a mysterious “brown Bohemian woman” (*braun Bohemerweib*) during a visit to the nearby town of Vaucouleurs, she abruptly interjects to demand the helmet—“The helmet is mine and it belongs to me” (*Mein ist der Helm und mir gehört er zu*) (Prologue.3.193)—and even rips it from Bertrand’s grasp when he does not immediately hand it over to her. As Bertrand—after deciding not to argue with her—proceeds to relate the news of the war he has heard during his journey, the protagonist slowly and silently dons the headpiece. Once it is on her head, though, she suddenly launches into her first prophetic speech.

Some commentators have suggested that this helmet is endowed with magical properties that enable Johanna to prophesy and make it possible for her to perform heroic feats in battle later in the play.⁸⁴ The play itself, though, never explicitly ascribes such attributes to the headpiece. What is certain is that the helmet prompts a powerful reaction from the young woman, one so

⁸⁴ Marina Warner, for instance, writes that the helmet is “enchanted” and protects Johanna “against all enemies, unless she falls in love.” Warner, *The Image of Female Heroism*, p. 241.

striking that it is immediately remarked upon by the characters who witness it.⁸⁵ Raimond, for instance, exclaims to Thibaut:

Es ist
Der Helm, der sie so kriegerisch beseelt.
Seht eure Tochter an. Ihr Auge blitzt,
Und glühend Feuer sprühen ihre Wangen! (Prologue.3.328-31)

The reference to the flash of lightning (*blitzen*) in her eyes continues a meteorological motif from earlier in the scene. Immediately before Johanna puts on the helmet, Bertrand—while describing the English use of burrowing tactics during siege of Orléans—alludes to the “crack of thunder” (*Donners Krachen*) the inhabitants of the city expect to hear at any moment from explosives buried under their fortifications. On a metaphorical level, this coincidence serves to equate the act of donning the helmet to the effect of being struck by lightning. In this imaging, the helmet functions as a kind of conductor that energizes the protagonist and empowers her to speak.

The source of this power, though, is not electricity, but rather a sort of semiotic energy that the helmet acquires due to the circumstances in which it is introduced. The potent significance of the helmet is highlighted from the very first moment it appears in the scene, when Thibaut chastises Bertrand for introducing such an “ill omen” (*böse[s] Zeichen*) into the “peaceful region” (*Friedensgegend*) of their village (Prologue.3.162). The helmet functions in this sense as a reminder of the war that the elder d’Arc seeks to banish from the village and the lives of his family. This connotation of disruption is underscored by the story Bertrand relates of receiving the helmet from the Bohemian woman, whose gypsy-like attributes together with her mysterious appearance and disappearance make her a figure of mobility and homelessness that contrasts with the

⁸⁵ Guthke also highlights the role of the helmet in catalyzing Johanna’s inspiration, noting that it implicitly supplants the traditional scenario of revelation “from above.” I would contend, however, that he overemphasizes its significance of factors such as the Druids’ tree and the Image of Mary that also play an important part in motivating the protagonist’s first prophetic speech. It is my argument that these objects together constitute a symbolically charged context in which Johanna’s prophetic mission can emerge. Guthke, “Jungfrau,” p. 453.

traditional domesticity of the village life idealized by Thibaut. As Bertrand recounts, moreover, the woman approaches him in the midst of confusion created by the sudden arrival in Vaucouleurs of refugees from the frontlines, an occurrence that links the helmet to the general displacement and disorder engendered by the war with England. The woman herself alludes to the troubled times when she presents him with the helmet, which she tries to convince him to purchase by advising him that “a steel roof for the head is more valuable these days than a stone house” (*ein stählern Dach fürs Haupt / Ist jetzo mehr wert als ein steinern Haus*) (180-1). The helmet, in this reasoning, represents that guarantee of safety that can no longer be provided by the compromised state; accordingly, it is not only a symbol of the anarchy resulting from the invasion, but also of the commitment to military force demanded by this chaos.

More than any specific meaning the helmet may hold, though, it is its status as a sign that gives it its power. In the play’s medieval setting, signs are perceived as being imbued with supernatural qualities, a fact underscored by the warning Thibaut imparts to his daughter—whom he suspects of harboring an obsession with the occult—not to produce signs of her own (“schreibe keine Zeichen in den Sand”) (Prologue.2.151). The power of signs in this context is also evident in the semantically charged landscape against which the prologue unfolds: This backdrop is framed, on one side, by an ancient “druids’ tree” (*Druidenbaum*)—a symbol of the region’s pre-Christian past—and, on the other side, a chapel containing an image of the Virgin Mary. The significance of this location becomes clear over the course of the prologue and the first act, during which it is revealed that Johanna habitually seeks out this place in order to escape the narrow confines of family and village life; more importantly, it is here where she first receives her visions of the Virgin Mary. This backdrop serves as the focus for a telling hermeneutic contest between Thibaut and Raimond, who argue over whether it is, as Thibaut asserts, the “frightful tales”

(*schauerhafte Mären*) told about tree and the “uncanny sound of strange voices” (*seltsamer Stimmen wundersamen Klang*) that attract her to this place (100-1), or whether, as Raimond claims, she is drawn to the chapel and “the holy presence of the sacred image” (*des Gnadenbildes segenreiche Näh*) (109). This is the first expression of a question that troubles the play’s characters repeatedly throughout the play—namely, the question of where the protagonist’s inspiration comes from and, specifically, whether it is divine or demonic in origin.⁸⁶

The speech that results from Johanna’s contact with the helmet is marked in several key respects—in terms of its content, form, style, delivery and context—as being characteristically prophetic. Prompted by Bertrand’s disclosure that the people of Vaucouleurs have decided to surrender their city to the enemy, Johanna pleads with her father and neighbors to abandon such thoughts of capitulation and remain steadfast in their loyalty to the Dauphin, their rightful sovereign. To the men’s surprise, she proclaims that France’s deliverance is at hand, and that this deliverance will take the form of a meek “maid” (*Jungfrau*) who will be empowered by God to defeat the previously invincible English. Johanna seeks to assure them of God’s grace by alluding to key episodes from the history of Christianity in the country—its evangelization, its role in halting the Moorish conquest of Europe, its participation in the Crusades, the reign of the saint-king Louis⁸⁷—as proof that the French are uniquely favored by the Deity. Finally, she asks the

⁸⁶ Stockinger also sees in this exchange a “leitende Frage” for the entire play—namely, the question whether “Johannas Verhalten auf eine ‘schwere Irrung der Natur’ [...] zurückzuführen sei, wie Thibaut befürchtet, oder ob sich darin, mit Raimond, ‘was Höhres’ offenbare.“ Stockinger, “Dramaturgie der Zerstreung,” p. 214.

⁸⁷ Hier scheiterte der Heiden Macht. Hier war
Das erste Kreuz, das Gnadenbild erhöht,
Hier ruht der Staub des heil’gen Ludewig,
Von hier aus ward Jerusalem erobert. (Prologue.3.337-40)

men whether their land could ever be loved by a foreign monarch with no ancestral or personal ties to the country and who does not even speak the language.⁸⁸

The speech centers on an oracle of collective salvation, one premised on the notion that the French are uniquely favored by God. Johanna evokes the history of Christian France to portray its people as a latter-day, European analogue of the Biblical Israelites, a nation that can be assured of its survival as long as it places its trust in the Deity and not—as the citizens of Vaucouleurs have elected to do—in pragmatically motivated overtures to foreign leaders or peoples. Contained within this promise, moreover, is a proclamation of divine vengeance against the English, who, having morally compromised themselves through their excessive pride and desire for fame, are to be punished with the immediate reversal of their previous military triumphs. Stylistically, these oracles recall the discourse of Biblical prophecy through the concentrated use of natural and agricultural metaphors (“Mit ihrer Sichel wird die Jungfrau kommen” (Prologue.3.306); “eh der Rocken / Gelb wird, eh sich die Mondesscheibe füllt...” (310-1); “Eine weiße Taube / Wird fliegen und mit Adlerskühnheit diese Geier / anfallen” (315-7)) as well as figures of speech such as interjected imperatives (“Nichts von Verträgen! Nichts von Übergabe!” (302); “Verzagt nicht! Fliehet nicht!” (310)), parallelism (“Der Retter naht, er rüstet sich zum Kampf” (303); “[Des Feindes] Maß ist voll, er ist zur Ernte reif“ (305)), paradox (“Durch eine zarte Jungfrau wird er sich / Verherrlichen, denn er ist der Allmächt’ge!“ (326-7)), rhetorical questions (“Dieser alte Thron soll fallen?” (332); “Wir sollen keine eignen Könige / Mehr haben, keinen eingebornen Herrn[?]” (344-5)) and hyperbole (“Dieses Land / Des Ruhms, das schönste, das die ew’ge Sonne

⁸⁸ Der fremde König, der von außen kommt,
Dem keines Ahnherrn heilige Gebeine
In diesem Lande ruhn, kann er es lieben?
Der nicht jung war mit unsern Jünglingen,
Dem unsre Worte nicht zum Herzen tönen,
Kann er ein Vater sein zu seinen Söhnen? (Prologue.3.360-5)

sieht / In ihrem Lauf, das Paradies der Länder” (332-4)).⁸⁹ Johanna’s outward demeanor during the speech is one that visibly manifests the influence of inspiration; the stage directions for the scene indicate that she speaks “in a state of enthusiasm” (*in Begeisterung*), and remarks by the other characters present call attention to how she appears unusually animated by her pronouncements (“Was für ein Geist ergreift die Dirn?” (328)). Finally, she utters these pronouncements in the distinctly prophetic speech situation of moral and patriotic exhortation. Johanna’s prophecy of divine intercession on the side of France is ultimately aimed at promoting a spirit of resistance among her listeners.

In keeping with the model of Biblical prophecy, however, Johanna’s appeal does not succeed in mobilizing her audience—a result that, in the context of the play, points to the limitations inherent in this kind of prophecy. Instead of heeding her call, Thibaut rebukes the young woman, reminding her that the people of their village lack the training in the basic skills needed to fight a war. He then encourages her to wait and see whom “der Sieg” will make king, arguing that the outcome of wars is decided by God and that the ruler of France will be whoever can hold Reims long enough to be crowned there.⁹⁰ This response suggests that the powerful rhetorical appeal of Johanna’s speech is not enough to overcome the official symbolism of state power or the impression of military superiority enjoyed by the English and their allies. In order to inspire opposition to the invaders, the protagonist requires a more potent symbol of their vulnerability.

⁸⁹ For an overview of the stylistic features that define prophetic speech, see: Jan Dietrich, “Prophetenrede” in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, Bd. 7, ed. Gert Ueding (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2005): 290-307.

⁹⁰ Laßt uns still gehorchend harren,
 Wen uns der Sieg zum König geben wird.
 Das Glück der Schlachten ist das Urteil Gottes,
 Und unser Heer ist, wer die heil’ge Ölung
 Empfängt zu Rheims in unsrer lieben Frauen
 Und sich die Kron’ aufsetzt zu Saint Denis. (Prologue.3.369-73)

This illocutionary failure sets the stage for a second, very different kind of prophetic speech. Unmoved by the protagonist's exhortation to take up arms against the enemy, Thibaut, Raimond and Bertrand exit. Left alone, Johanna launches into a soliloquy in which she announces her decision to leave the village for the battlefield. From the start, this soliloquy is marked as a departure from the preceding speech. She begins by apostrophizing the landscape surrounding her village, bidding farewell to the mountains, the "beloved meadows," the fields that she watered, the trees that she planted, the echo that responded to her songs and, finally the lambs that she tended (Prologue.4.383-92). This personal statement makes clear that she now speaks for herself rather than in the voice of prophetic inspiration. There is also a notable shift in temporality, from a frame of reference set in the distant past and immediate future to one situated in the present. This shift marks a transition from a role of commenting on the situation in France to taking an active part in it. As she puts it, she must abandon her role as the shepherd of her father's sheep because she must tend "a different herd" on "the bloody fields of danger." Johanna now states explicitly that she has received the call of the "Spirit" commanding her to join the conflict.⁹¹ She is to become the virgin savior of France evoked in the previous speech.

Whereas the earlier speech merely foretells the arrival of the Maid, the soliloquy specifies the expectations to be placed on her. Johanna asserts that she is directed by the spirit who commissioned Moses to stand "before Pharaoh" and who chose David, "the pious son of Jesse" (*den frommen Knaben Isai's*), to serve as God's champion against the Philistine Giant Goliath (403-4). The two are linked to each other and to Johanna by their original occupation as shepherds;

⁹¹ Denn eine andre Herde muss ich weiden,
Dort auf dem blut'gen Felde der Gefahr,
So ist des Geistes Ruf an mich ergangen,
Mich treibt nicht eitles, irdisches Verlangen. (397-400)

for both, moreover, this occupation presages their later function as leaders and founding figures of ancient Israel. By associating herself with these Biblical figures, the protagonist makes clear the scope of her calling: She is to play a similarly foundational role for France, a country that, as her previous speech suggests, needs to be reminded of its history and providential destiny. At the same time, however, it is telling that she points to two such different figures, i.e. a prophet and a warrior. She thus signals that her role will extend beyond the conventional prophetic function of mediating divine revelation. As both messenger and warrior, she is charged not only with envisioning France's salvation, but also with making this vision of liberation a reality—even if that means engaging in violence against those who would stand in her way.

The ensuing passage of the soliloquy is made up of one lengthy quotation in which Johanna reports verbatim the instructions she has received from the voice of inspiration. Though, at a superficial level, this passage resembles a conventional narrative of calling—a standard form in the prophetic books of the Bible—the use of quotation marks is noteworthy; this act of citing highlights to the temporal disconnect between the original moment of inspiration and her later articulation of it in speech. Such a discrepancy is telling because it suggests a displacement of divine authority at the key moment of commissioning. This displacement, along with the doubt posed earlier in the prologue about the origin of her inspiration—doubts that resurface during the scene in question when Johanna discloses that she hears the voice of inspiration through the branches of the Druids' tree⁹²—point to a constitutive absence in her experience of calling, an absence that draws attention to her ostensible role as a medium capable of making the divine present. This kind of inspired speech—which takes place despite the apparent absence of the deity—resembles the “radically empty” (*radikal leer*) kind of enthusiasm that Hans-Thies

⁹² “Er sprach zu mir aus dieses Baumes Zweigen” (Prologue.4.7).

Lehmann has diagnosed as a feature shared by many of Schiller's protagonists, including such characters as Karl Moor, Fiesco, Wallenstein and Demetrius.⁹³ Lehmann contends that, for these characters, enthusiasm is motivated and sustained solely by a continuous expansion and accentuation of their own selfhood.⁹⁴ Such *ex nihilo* creativity is problematic for Johanna, however, since the ethics of her prophetic self-understanding mandates that she be moved to act purely by the Spirit rather than "vain, worldly desire" (*eitles, irdisches Verlangen*) (400). For this reason, her mission must adopt—to use the terminology introduced by Wild—the "structure and logic of quotation" (*Struktur und Logik des Zitats*).⁹⁵ In other words, Johanna can only define her mission by performatively invoking the words of another, absent entity. Her calling is inherently theatrical⁹⁶; she must play the role of the divine herself in order to enact the exchange between deity and human mediator that defines prophecy.

This theatrical element also manifests itself in the terms of the calling Johanna quotes. Over the course of the play, what allows Johanna to remain convinced of her essential worthiness to prophesy is her ability to abide by the terms set forth in this scene. The most significant of these terms is the requirement that she preserve her virginal purity. In this, Schiller follows the example of Voltaire's *La Pucelle*, which also makes the empowerment of the Maid contingent on her maintaining a vow of chastity.⁹⁷ Yet whereas Voltaire's protagonist is merely obligated to refrain

⁹³ Hans-Thies Lehmann, "Politik des Enthusiasmus—Enthusiasmus der Macht. Versuch über Schiller," *Spieltrieb. Was bringt die Klassik auf die Bühne? Schillers Ästhetik heute*, ed. Felix Ensslin (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2006): 82-100, here p. 91.

⁹⁴ "[Der Affekt des Enthusiasmus] ist nichts als in sich bewegte Selbsterweiterung, Selbst-Steigerung." Lehmann, p. 92.

⁹⁵ Wild, *Theater der Keuschheit*, p. 440.

⁹⁶ Lehmann notes this kind of dramatic self-staging is another common feature among Schiller's protagonists. "Politik des Enthusiasmus," p. 91.

⁹⁷ For a detailed overview of the ways in which *Jungfrau* is influenced by and diverges from Voltaire's mock epic, see: Anni Gutmann, "Der bisher unterschätzte Einfluß von Voltaires *Pucelle* auf Schillers *Jungfrau von Orleans*" in:

from sexual intercourse, Johanna commits herself to a much more expansive—and restrictive—ideal of virginity. As she herself explains it (again, by quoting directly the instructions she receives from the voice of inspiration):

In rauhes Erz sollst du die Glieder schnüren,
Mit Stahl bedecken deine zarte Brust,
Nicht Männerliebe darf dein Herz berühren
Mit sünd'gen Flammen eitler Erdenlust,
Nie wird der Brautkranz deine Locke zieren,
Dir blüht kein lieblich Kind an deiner Brust,
Doch werd' ich dich mit kriegerischen Ehren,
Vor allen Erdenfrauen dich verklären. (Prologue.4.409-16)

In order to win the glory promised her as the future savior of France, Johanna must renounce the rewards of a conventional female life—erotic love, marriage and childbirth. This sacrificial exchange is affirmed by the act of donning armor, which—in addition to its function as protection on the battlefield—serves to symbolize the containment of unruly bodily desires. Prophetic calling thus paradoxically offers the Maid the (illusory) experience of both perfect submission and—insofar as she willingly accepts this burden—absolute control over the self.

Johanna ends this speech by referring again to the helmet that she now wears on her head:

Ein Zeichen hat der Himmel mir verheißen,
Er sendet mir den Helm, er kommt von ihm,
Mit Götterkraft berühret mich sein Eisen,
Und mich durchflammt der Mut der Cherubim (Prologue.4.425-8)

She confirms the break with her father's pragmatic worldview by offering a different interpretation of the helmet; it is no longer an "evil" sign, but rather a sign from Heaven, one that provides seemingly objective confirmation of what the voice has told her. Viewed in this way, the helmet achieves its full potential as a source of emotional energy. Johanna thus integrates the helmet into

Voltaire und Deutschland. Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Rezeption der französischen Aufklärung, ed. Peter Brockmeier, Roland Desné and Jürgen Voss (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1979): pp. 411-23.

the symbolic world of her home, and, in so doing, imbues it with a unique power. This ability demonstrates the quality that Alt has described as a kind of exceptional receptivity (*Empfänglichkeit*) for the play of signs.⁹⁸ It is this ability that singles her out among her family, neighbors and compatriots and makes her uniquely worthy of being a prophet.

2. Speech, Action and Sovereignty

If the prologue of *Jungfrau* is about the commissioning of the protagonist—and thus about what makes her worthy to prophesy—the first act shows how she finally convinces others of this calling and establishes herself as a leader of the French. This act culminates in the initial encounter between Johanna and the Dauphin Karl, in the course of which she succeeds in winning the trust of the monarch and restoring his depleted hopes of victory. Tellingly, she does this not by repeating the oracle of impending military salvation she delivers earlier to her father and neighbors, but rather by recounting her own story—the story of how she learned about the English conquest of France, how she prayed for her country to be liberated, and how her prayers were answered by the visionary appearance of the Virgin Mary. In so doing, Johanna takes the first, decisive step in her transformation into a collective symbol of resistance. What is notable about this transformation—at least as it is portrayed in the scene in question—is the distinctly dramatic fashion in which it is enacted. In order to claim the mantle of prophet, it is not enough for her to prophesy; she must also embody the role of divinely inspired messenger.

In depicting the first interview between Johanna and the Dauphin, Schiller makes use of an apocryphal episode from the life of the historical Joan of Arc. According to a popular rendition of this story, the future Charles VII—after having agreed to meet with the self-proclaimed

⁹⁸ Alt, *Schiller*, p. 516.

visionary—devised a plan to test the prophetic talents of the young woman: Without wearing any kind of official regalia or insignia, he would mingle among a crowd of his courtiers and see if she could recognize him upon entering.⁹⁹ Schiller takes this scheme a step further by having Karl decide to swap places with his lieutenant, the Count Dünois, so that the Count is seated on the throne when the protagonist appears. As in the traditional account, the Maid immediately detects the deception: After chiding Dünois for trying to tempt God, she “resolutely” (*mit entschiedenem Schritt*) walks up to the real monarch and kneels at his feet.

The story of this encounter is one of several pertaining to Joan’s travel to and arrival at the royal court that serve to explain why the Dauphin would ultimately take the exceptional risk of supporting the young stranger; indeed, even after this meeting, the historical Charles would require a lengthy examination by the Parlement of Paris before allowing her to participate in the attempt to lift the enemy siege of Orléans.¹⁰⁰ It is telling that Schiller’s rendition essentially inverts this sequence: Rather than come before the Dauphin as a relatively obscure commoner making the fundamentally implausible claim to be the Heaven-sent savior of France, Johanna appears at Karl’s court having already proven herself in battle. Immediately prior to her entrance, news is brought to the court of the surprising victory she has won by successfully leading a small band of French soldiers in a bold charge against a much larger English force. It is this news that prompts Karl to meet with the protagonist.

Marina Warner has argued that the aim of the “traditional [...] recognition scene [between Joan and Charles] is twofold: it underlines both Joan’s divinatory faculties and Charles’s ineffaceable aura of kingship. Obviously to a prophet gifted by God with higher powers, his holy

⁹⁹ Warner, *The Image of Female Heroism*, p. 60

¹⁰⁰ Warner, *The Image of Female Heroism*, p. 63.

calling could not be camouflaged.”¹⁰¹ Though Schiller’s version of the scene retains this basic dynamic of reciprocal authentication, the play’s rearrangement of the chronology for the scene has the effect of tilting the balance of power in the interaction to Johanna’s advantage. Johanna appears before Karl having already proven herself as the heroine capable of delivering victory to the Dauphin when none of his generals could. Karl, in contrast, spends the entire act up until this point casting doubt on his own ability to lead his country in a time of war. As a result, Johanna’s recognition of him not only serves to legitimize his claim to the throne, but also has the effect of restoring his confidence in himself and reaffirming his basic fitness to rule.

It is worth taking a step back at this point to examine the preceding scene—i.e. the scene in which Karl first learns of Johanna’s victory—and consider what, precisely, this feat reveals about the protagonist. For the protagonist’s triumph on the battlefield attests not only to her competence as a military leader, but also—and more importantly—to her ability to convert words into transformative actions. This ability figures prominently in the account provided by the French knight Raoul, a participant in the battle and eyewitness to Johanna’s heroics who is sent to the court of the Dauphin ahead of the Maid to report the news of her victory. Raoul describes the young woman appearing on the battlefield as if out of nowhere to urge on the beleaguered and demoralized French troops and personally lead them on a daring charge into enemy lines. In order to convey the full force of this narrative, the passage needs to be quoted at length:

[...] aus der Tiefe des Gehölzes plötzlich
Trat eine Jungfrau, mit behelmtten Haupt
Wie eine Kriegsgöttin, schön zugleich
Und schrecklich anzusehen, um ihren Nacken
In goldnen Ringen fiel das Haar, ein Glanz
Vom Himmel schien die Hohe zu umleuchten,
Als sie die Stimm’ erhub und also sprach:
Was zagt ihr tapfre Franken! Auf den Feind!

¹⁰¹ Warner, *The Image of Female Heroism*, p. 60.

Und wären sein mehr den des Sands im Meere,
 Gott und die heil'ge Jungfrau führt euch an!
 Und schnell dem Fahnenträger aus der Hand
 Reiß sie die Fahn' und vor dem Zuge her
 Mit kühnen Anstand schritt die Mächtige.
 Wir stumm vor Staunen, selbst nicht wollend, folgen
 Der hohen Fahn' und ihrer Trägerin,
 Und auf den Feind stürmen wir.
 Der, hochbetroffen, steht bewegungslos
 Mit weit geöffnet starrem Blick das Wunder
 Anstaunend, das sich seinen Augen zeigt—
 Doch schnell als hätten Gottes Schrecken ihn
 Ergriffen, wendet er sich um
 Zur Flucht, und Wehr und Waffen von sich werfend
 Entchart das ganze Heer sich im Gefilde,
 Da hilft kein Machtwort, keines Führers Ruf,
 Von Schrecken sinnlos, ohne rückzuschau'n,
 Stürzt Mann und Roß sich in des Flusses Bette,
 Und läßt sich würgen ohne Widerstand,
 Ein Schlachten war's, nicht eine Schlacht zu nennen! (1.9.954-81)

Johanna's resolve is contrasted with the debilitating indecision of the male soldiers, who are prevented from taking action by their reasoned hesitation in the face of the numerically superior enemy. While the French officers "continue to look to each other for council and find none" (*miteinander noch / Rat [suchen] und nicht [finden]*) (951-2), the protagonist wastes no time in assuming control over the situation and ordering to attack. Her speech is defined by a radical forcefulness that allows her to override the soldiers' individual judgment and spur them on to concerted, effective action. Her words, together with her subsequent symbolically charged gesture of seizing the flag and rushing at the enemy, form a seamless continuum of speech and action free from the disruptive influence of thought. This attack inverts the situation at the outset of the battle: Now it is the enemy who is paralyzed with indecision and whose leaders are deprived of their ability to command. Unable to regain the composure to act as a unit, the English and Burgundian force collapses in retreat and is quickly annihilated by the French.

This charge marks a pivotal moment both in the battle and the larger war between France and England. Not only does the victory—which interrupts a string of traumatic military setbacks for France—provide proof that the invaders can be beaten; the way in which Johanna instigates the attack represents the overcoming of a leadership crisis that previously prevents the French from taking the initiative in the conflict. The first allusion to this crisis comes from Bertrand, the neighbor who in the prologue brings the protagonist her helmet; explaining to Thibaut and Raimond why the Dauphin and his forces have been unable to mount an effective resistance to the invasion, Bertrand portrays the French army as suffering from a fatal deficit in morale and impervious to the efforts of its leaders to instill discipline:

Was nützt der Führer Mut, der Helden Arm,
Wenn bleiche Furcht die Heere lähmt?
Ein Schrecken, wie von Gott herabgesandt,
Hat auch die Brust der Tapfersten ergriffen.
Umsonst erschallt der Fürsten Aufgebot.
Wie sich die Schafe bang zusammen drängen,
Wenn sich des Wolfes Heulen hören läßt,
So sucht der Franke, seines alten Ruhms
Vergessend, nur die Sicherheit der Burgen. (Prologue.3.275-83)

The fear among the French soldiers of their seemingly invincible foe overwhelms their sense of obedience to their officers, whose commands are thus deprived of their force and reduced to mere noise. This situation is exacerbated by the Dauphin's overindulgence in expensive amusements, which deprives the monarch of the money needed to pay his troops. Facing the prospect of fighting without compensation, the soldiers—in the words of the royal officer Dü Chatel—"mutter and threaten to withdraw" (*drohen murrend abzuziehen*) (1.2.494). This multi-voiced grumbling (*murren*) serves as a metonym for the forces of internal dissent driving the army to disintegration.

What is needed is a kind of leadership—and, indeed, a kind of speech—powerful enough to overcome the perception of the enemy's invulnerability and to offer an incentive other than a

financial one for the troops to remain and fight. This need is highlighted by the opening sequence of the first act, in which the Dauphin, Dünois and Dü Chatel discuss the news that the Constable of France—i.e. the supreme commander of the French army—has resigned his position because of having lost faith in the French cause and, as Dünois puts it, because “he can no longer witness the horror” (*er kann den Greul / Nicht länger ansehen*) of French defeat (1.1.451-2). Tellingly, this character is never shown on stage nor is he ever directly named; indeed, he signals his resignation by having his sword delivered to Karl, a formal gesture that underscores his physical absence. This absence reveals that the French lack a figure of overarching authority able to support the flailing officers and provide a unity of purpose to the army’s efforts. At stake here, however, is not simply the question of who will fill the Constable’s vacant position, for the exchange between the Dauphin and the two officers makes it clear that the French require a leader with qualities that the previous Constable lacked. Though Karl and Dünois disagree about whether his resignation should have been accepted, both regard him as *mürrisch* or “surly”—a word that anticipates Dü Chatel’s description of the disgruntled soldiers—and difficult to get along with. The Dauphin adds that he “wanted to lord over us without condition” (*unverträglich uns nur meistern wollte*) (1.2.458). The Constable thus reflects at the level of command the dissent among the troops. What the French need, then, is a leader who is firmly loyal to the Dauphin, capable of demanding absolute obedience from the soldiers and willing to assume the mantle of command even in a moment of despair.

With the Constable gone, Karl’s courtiers look to the Dauphin to take the decisive action necessary to reverse the war’s momentum, yet the monarch proves unable to overcome his conviction that he is ultimately powerless to affect the outcome of the war. Urged by Dünois to fight for “the crown of his fathers” (*[seiner] Väter Krone*) and to defend “with the sword of chivalry” (*mit ritterlichem Schwert*) his “property and the honor of noble women” (*Eigentum und*

edler Frauen Ehre) (546-9), the Dauphin instead places his hopes on the prospect of discord festering between the English and their most important French ally, Duke Philipp of Burgundy. At the same time, Karl tries, in the spirit of chivalry, to challenge Philipp—who has joined the enemy out of anger for the Dauphin’s complicity in the murder of his father—to settle their differences with a duel, an invitation the Duke recognizes and dismisses as a desperate ploy. Over the course of the act, Karl vacillates from extremes of optimism and despair: Temporarily buoyed by the announcement from his mistress, Agnes Sorel, that she intends to sell her jewelry in order to raise much-needed funds for the war effort, he is almost immediately thereafter devastated by the news that his mother, the Queen Isabeau, is publicly supporting his rival for the crown of France, the English king Henry Lancaster.

Finally, though, the Dauphin becomes fixated on the idea that “a dark, frightful curse” haunts his dynasty, the Valois, due to the “atrocities” committed by his mother and that he, along with his entire lineage, must inevitably fall victim to it.¹⁰² This fixation proves unshakeable, even when Sorel recasts the his father’s insanity and the untimely deaths of his older brothers as evidence that providence has selected him personally for the task of defeating the English and rejuvenating the war-ravaged French nation.¹⁰³ Resolved not to be a source of further catastrophe

¹⁰²

Ist es nicht wahr?

Ein finster furchtbares Verhängnis waltet
Durch Valois Geschlecht, es ist verworfen
Von Gott, der Mutter Lastertaten führten
Die Furien herein in dieses Haus,
Mein Vater lag im Wahnsinn zwanzig Jahre,
Drei ältere Brüder hat der Tod vor mir
Hinweggemäht, es ist des Himmels Schluß,
Das Haus des sechsten Karls soll untergehn. (1.5.776-84).

¹⁰³

O! nicht umsonst

Hat dich ein gnädig Schicksal aufgespart
Von deinen Brüdern allen, dich den jüngsten
Gerufen auf den ungehofften Thron.
In deiner sanften Seele hat der Himmel
Den Arzt für alle Wunden sich bereitet,

for the country, Karl openly contemplates renouncing his claim to the throne, a sentiment that causes Dünois to chide the Dauphin for uttering a thought unbefitting “the speech of a King” (*die Sprache eines Königs*) (1.5.825). Yet when Karl persists—going so far as to order his army across the river Loire, a move that makes clear his intention to cede the entire north of France to the enemy—the Count, too, gives up hope in his leader. Furious, Dünois curses the Dauphin:

Nun so kehre
Der Seigesgott auf ewig dir den Rücken,
Wie du dem väterlichen Reich. Du hast
Dich selbst verlassen, so verlaß ich dich.
Nicht Englands und Burgunds vereinte Macht,
Dich stürzt der eigne Kleinmut von dem Thron.
Die Könige Frankreichs sind geborne Helden,
Du aber bist unkriegerisch gezeugt. (850-7)

Challenged by Dünois and Sorel to believe in himself, Karl is unable to summon up the reserves of confidence he requires in order to view himself as anything other than a victim of powers beyond his control. As a result, the relationship between the Dauphin and his top commanders dissolves into bitter recriminations and falls prey to the forces of disunity that imperil the army as a whole.

Word of the protagonist’s triumph immediately reverses this split, and provides the impetus for reconciliation between Karl and Dünois. “Embrace, Princes!” the Dauphin’s chancellor, the Archbishop of Reims, urges as he relates the news, “let resentment and discord now disappear, for Heaven itself has declared for us” (*Umarmt euch Prinzen! / “Laßt allen Groll und Hader jetzo schwinden, / Da sich der Himmel selbst für uns erklärt*) (1.9.933-5). Victory restores a sense of moral certainty, which proves to be a necessary ingredient for the reemergence of unity among the French leaders. Johanna strengthens this newfound confidence and solidarity when she arrives at

Die der Parteien Wut dem Lande schlug,
Des Bürgerkrieges Flammen wirst du löschen,
Mir sagt’s das Herz, den Frieden wirst du pflanzen,
Des Frankenreiches neuer Stifter sein. (1.5.786-95)

the Court to pledge allegiance to the Dauphin. By recognizing Dünois as an impostor and ordering him to return to his rightful place, the protagonist reestablishes the hierarchy previously threatened by Karl's indecisiveness.¹⁰⁴

Johanna completes this rehabilitation of royal authority when she identifies Karl as the true object of her mission. She proves this by demonstrating her intimate familiarity with the innermost thoughts and desires of the Dauphin. Claiming to have seen the monarch “when nobody saw him but God” (*wo [ihn] niemand sah als Gott*) (1.10.1012), she recounts the content of his private prayers from the previous night:

Es waren drei Gebete die du tatst,
Gib wohl acht, Dauphin, ob ich dir sie nenne!
Zum ersten flehtest du den Himmel an,
Wenn unrecht Gut an dieser Krone hafte,
Wenn eine andre schwere Schuld, noch nicht
Gebüßt, von deiner Väter Zeiten her,
Diesen trändenvollen Krieg herbeigerufen,
Dich zum Opfer anzunehmen für dein Volk,
Und auszugießen auf dein einzig Haupt
Die ganze Schale seines Zorns. (1022-31)

In contrast to the traditional narrative concerning the first meeting between Joan and the Dauphin, Schiller's depiction suggests that the protagonist recognizes the monarch not because of his royal aura, but rather because she empathizes with him as a person. Nevertheless, this scene still functions to confirm Karl's legitimacy as the ruler of France—only with a difference. What matters here is not primarily his biological descent from the previous ruler, but rather the love for his people that manifests itself in his readiness to sacrifice his claim to the throne and even his own life in order to ensure the continued prosperity of his people. By listing his prayers in this act of identification, Johanna redefines what it means to be King in terms of this absolute love for the

¹⁰⁴ This point has been previously made by Wild, *Theater der Keuschheit*, p. 438.

people. The play thus imbues the interaction between the prophet and the ruler with a particularly radical significance: Instead of merely affirming Karl in his role as the rightful king, Johanna's act of recognition functions to interpellate the future monarch, recruiting him for what the play presents as a profoundly new ideology of political authority. This ideology centers on conception of the relationship between the sovereign and his subjects as a fundamentally emotional bond, one rooted in their shared language and sense of a common destiny. By singling out the Dauphin's ostensible affection for his people as the one quality that, more than any other, entitles him to wear the crown, Johanna's serves to enact this new kind of bond between ruler and subjects.¹⁰⁵

At this same time, however, this act implicitly empowers the Maid—and, by extension, the common people she claims to represent—by positioning her as the supreme arbiter of the ruler's love. Johanna's role, too, undergoes a process of formation in this scene. Rejecting the Constable's sword when it is offered to her, she proclaims that “my Lord will not be granted victory through this instrument of wordly power” (*Nicht durch dies Werkzeug irdischer Gewalt / Ist meinem Herrn der Sieg verliehn*) (1.10.1143-4). Her role as a leader is not authenticated by conventional ritual, but rather by what she is willing to do in the service of her patriotic ideal. This model of leadership is the focus of the next section.

¹⁰⁵ Mareen von Marwyck argues that Karl is characterized from the beginning as a representative of modern, “bourgeois values” (*bürgerlich Werte*)—specifically, the desire for a peaceful, quasi-egalitarian coexistence among his subjects. His inability to reconcile this desire with the brutal reality of worldly politics, though, also makes him a symbol for the “tragedy of Enlightenment culture” (*Tragik der Aufklärungskultur*). I would add to this that the Dauphin's encounter transforms his tragic attitude into a potent, modern ideology of sovereignty. Mareen von Marwyck, *Gewalt und Anmut. Weiblicher Heroismus in der Literatur und Ästhetik um 1800* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2010): pp. 180-1.

3. The Leadership of the Good Shepherd

Though love of the people may make the Dauphin worthy to be king, it also renders him ineffective as a military leader. Indeed, it is a desire to protect his long-suffering people from further bloodshed that motivates his potentially catastrophic decision to retreat south of the Loire. Karl justifies this decision by invoking the Biblical judgment of Solomon (1 Kings 3:16-28), likening his dilemma to that of the mother who must surrender her child to a rival in order to spare the infant from being cut into two:

Umsonst verschwend' ich meines Volkes Leben,
Und meine Städte sinken in den Staub.
Soll ich gleich jener unnatürlichen Mutter
Mein Kind zerteilen lassen mit dem Schwert?
Nein, daß es lebe, will ich ihm entsagen (1.5.820-4)

The irony of this comparison is that, by crossing the Loire, Karl would effectively cede the entire north of France to the enemy, thus splitting the country between a northern half dominated by the English and a southern half remaining under the control of the Dauphin. Even if retreating would bring a temporary halt to the violence, doing so would place the very existence of the French as a people in jeopardy. As Dünois argues, the identity of the French as a nation presupposes the willingness of individual subjects to risk their lives for the good of the whole, especially when they are commanded to do so by their legitimate ruler. “The people must sacrifice themselves for their king,” the Count contends, declaring this to be “the fate and law of the world.” A nation that does not happily risk everything to preserve its honor is, in Dünois’ view, “worthless.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Für seinen König muß das Volk sich opfern,
Das ist das Schicksal und Gesetz der Welt [...]
Nichtswürdig ist die Nation, die nicht
Ihr Alles freudig setzt an ihre Ehre. (1.6.844-8)

Both Karl and his courtiers attribute his shortcomings as a leader to his apparent untimeliness, to a disposition that makes him better suited to be a ruler of a country in peacetime rather than one at war. Bemoaning his seeming inability to act the part of the national hero, he admits to feeling inadequate to the challenge of uniting a people made restive by crisis:

Die rauhe sturmbewegte Zeit
Heischt einem kraftbegabtern Steuermann.
Ich hätt' ein friedlich Volk beglücken können,
Ein wild empörtes kann ich nicht bezähmen,
Nicht mir die Herzen öffnen mit dem Schwert,
Die sich entfremdet mir in Haß verschließen. (1.5.796-801)

This metaphor of the ruler as the steersman of a ship is an important one, and I will have reason to return to it later. For now, though, it should be noted how the Dauphin sees his untimeliness manifested in a deficit of resolve that prevents him from intervening decisively in the unruly present. Accordingly, he expresses sympathy for the project undertaken by the dispossessed Provençal King René to restore “the old times” (*die alten Zeiten*) by founding a Court of Love where the traditional culture of courtly poetry can be reinvigorated (1.2.517). As Dünois sardonically points out, however, such endeavors have not enabled René to maintain control over his kingdom. The Count expresses disgust that Karl himself should be found “surrounded by clowns and troubadours, solving tricky riddles and staging gallant parties for Sorel” as if the Kingdom were in “the most profound state of peace.”¹⁰⁷ Urging the monarch to recognize and respond appropriately to the gravity of the situation, Dünois admonishes him that Karl will deserve to crown himself with love’s myrtle” only once he has “boldly taken back the crown of his ancestors through rivers of enemy blood”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ [Ich finde ihn] – hier! umringt von Gaukelspielern
Und Troubadours, spitzfind’ge Rätsel lösend
Und der Sorel galante Feste gebend,
Als waltete im Reich der tiefste Friede! (1.1.447-50)

¹⁰⁸ [...] hast du dir aus Strömen Feindesbluts

Lacking the requisite quality of decisiveness, the Dauphin needs Johanna to infuse his cause with a sense of urgency. With her surprising victory over the English on the road to Chinon, the protagonist demonstrates that she hesitates neither to gamble with the lives of her compatriots nor to cause “rivers” of enemy blood to flow. Unlike Karl, she does not simply talk about sacrificing herself, but is ready to do so while leading troops into battle and thus in a way that can effect a real transformation of the conflict. In contrast to his moral self-questioning, Johanna is defined by the absolute refusal to be hindered in any fashion in the pursuit of her mission. When La Hire advises her to refrain from directly participating in combat, she replies by rebuking him for trying to circumscribe the role assigned to her by Heaven: “Wer darf mir Halt gebieten? Wer dem Geist / Vorschreiben, der mich führt? Der Pfeil muß fliegen, / Wohin die Hand ihn seines Schützen treibt” (2.4.1516-8). Johanna completes the model of political authority that draws its basic impetus from the Dauphin’s love of the people; she imbues this model with affective force and translates it into a source of collective action.

The Maid represents a kind of leadership that is informed by traditional paradigms while being at the same time fundamentally new. In addition to understanding her mission in terms of her role as prophet, Johanna also defines this mission as a continuation and expansion of her previous role as shepherd; in abandoning her father’s sheep in order to tend “another herd,” she transfers her duty to protect and guide from the livestock to the soldiers and people of France. This understanding of her calling bears a striking resemblance to the paradigm of “pastoral power” isolated and analyzed by Michel Foucault in his lecture course “Security, Territory, Population” (1977-78) as well as in a more condensed version in his famous Tanner lectures “Omnes et

Die angestammte Krone kühn erobert,
Dann ist es Zeit und steht dir fürstlich an,
Dich mit der Liebe Myrten zu bekronen. (1.2.549-52)

Singulatim” (1979).¹⁰⁹ As Foucault shows, this paradigm—which understands the political authority of a deity or human leader as analogous to the relationship between a shepherd and his flock—originated in the cultures of the ancient Orient, and finds exemplary expression in the Hebrew Bible. There, for instance, the image of the shepherd taking his flock out to pasture is used to describe God’s role in guiding the chosen people to the Promised Land through the actions of his prophets, Moses and Aaron.¹¹⁰ Foucault argues that this theme is almost entirely absent from Classical literature and philosophy, which prefers figures such as that of the helmsman on a ship to illustrate the qualities of an ideal leader. The responsibilities of this latter figure—which, tellingly, is the same figure cited by the Dauphin when lamenting his inadequacies as a ruler—pertain first and foremost to the safety of the vessel more than that of any particular individual on board; the pastoral leader, in contrast, exhibits a concern with the well-being of the flock as a whole as well as that of each and every individual. This concern manifests itself through constant acts of kindness intended to address the specific needs of each member in the flock. The pastoral leader exerts power over a people rather than over a territory. Indeed, the very presence and actions of the shepherd/leader are what cause the people/flock to assemble and come into being as a group; without such leader, the group would inevitably disperse.¹¹¹

According to Foucault, the leadership of the shepherd is defined by a basic “paradox,” one that is particularly important for the way the paradigm of pastoral power is reformulated as a

¹⁰⁹ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78*, ed. Michel Senellart et. al., trans. Graham Burchell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). Michel Foucault, “‘*Omnes et Singulatim*’: Toward a Critique of Political Reason” in *Power*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley et. al. (London: Allen Lane/The Penguin Press, 1997): pp. 298-325.

¹¹⁰ Foucault cites Psalm 77:20 “Like a flock / hast Thou led Thy people, by Moses’ and by Aaron’s hand.” *Omnes et Singulatim*, p. 301.

¹¹¹ Foucault, *Omnes et Singulatim*, p. 302.

“problematic” during the Christian Middle Ages: Though, on the one hand, the shepherd is necessary for the very existence of the flock, on the other hand, his leadership depends on a principle of utmost devotedness that entails willingness to sacrifice himself to protect the herd. Moreover, his absolute obligation to each individual member of the flock requires him to risk the safety of the entire group if doing so becomes necessary in order to rescue an imperiled individual. Foucault finds that this theme is expressed in a particularly emphatic fashion in Biblical and Rabbinical depictions of Moses in his pre-prophetic role as shepherd. This discourse portrays the later founder of Israel as being ready to leave his herd undefended in order to search for a lost sheep. Counterintuitively, such risk-taking does not mark Moses as a bad shepherd; indeed, after he finally discovers the wayward individual and returns with it to the larger group, “it turns out that the flock he was prepared to sacrifice was nonetheless saved, symbolically, precisely by the fact that he was prepared to sacrifice it.”¹¹² It is this radical care for the individual that justifies the shepherd’s stewardship and unification of the flock.

Karl and Johanna both demonstrate a readiness to risk their own lives for the greater good in a way that exemplifies the paradigm of pastoral leadership. Karl is willing to gamble his life by challenging the Duke of Burgundy to a duel that the Dauphin believes will resolve their conflict and ultimately reunite the country; Johanna, for her part, believes she is called not only to distribute death, but also, ultimately, to become its victim.¹¹³ Yet what ultimately distinguishes Johanna from Karl is her ability to project the shepherd’s paradoxically individualizing and collectivizing

¹¹² *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 129.

¹¹³ “Doch weggerissen von der heimatlichen Flur,
Vom Vaters Busen, von der Schwestern lieber Brust
Muß ich hier, ich muß—mich treibt die Götterstimme, nicht
Eignes Gelüsten,—euch zu bitterm Harm, mir nicht
Zur Freude, ein Gespenst des Schreckens würgend gehn,
Den Tod verbreiten und sein Opfer sein zuletzt! (2.7.1658-1663)

concern for the people of France. This is particularly evident in the different ways in which they respond to the rebellious Duke of Burgundy. The Dauphin views the Duke's insurrection primarily through the prism of courtly culture and accordingly seeks to resolve their conflict through conventional means—specifically, by adjudicating their differences through the ritual of personal combat. The shortcomings of this perspective are made clear by Burgundy's rejection of Karl's challenge. Having already seized control of nearly half the country with the help of the English, Philipp no longer feels bound to the traditional order; for the Duke, the principle of might makes right supersedes chivalric notions of justice.

Johanna's own approach to overcoming the schism between the Dauphin and the Duke unfolds during her battlefield encounter with Philipp at the conclusion of the second act. By the end of this encounter, the Maid succeeds in convincing—indeed, compelling—the Duke to abandon his English allies and rejoin the Dauphin's side. She does so by highlighting their shared national identity: In an echo of her earlier confrontation with Karl—a scene that occupies an analogous position at the end of the preceding act—Johanna interpellates Philipp as her compatriot, claiming him as a member of a national “family” in which a bond of patriotism outweighs differences of class as well as personal and dynastic rivalries. When Burgundy first approaches her on the battlefield, he appears with the visor of his helmet closed; Johanna, however, notes the Burgundian insignia on his armor and refuses to return his attack, declaring instead that “no French blood shall flow!” (*Kein französisch Blut soll fließen!*). This idea—that the Dauphin, the Duke and their respective supporters should be united by their supposed ties of blood against the foreign invaders—forms a leitmotif in her ensuing appeal to the Duke. Urging him to reconsider his hostility, she reproaches him for his willingness to do harm to his own compatriots:

Wer ist der Feind,
Den deine Blicke mordbegierig suchen?

Dieser edle Prinz ist Frankreichs Sohn wie du,
Dieser Tapfre ist dein Waffenfreund und Landsmann,
Ich selbst bin deines Vaterlandes Tochter.
Wir alle, die du zu vertilgen strebst,
Gehören zu den Deinen. (2.10.1730-6)

In this implicitly egalitarian statement, the Duke, the illegitimate aristocrat Dünois, the knight La Hire and even the commoner Johanna are all children of the same “fatherland.” Johanna extends this notion of kinship between the combatants to include the Dauphin, positing a familial resemblance between the ruler and Burgundy: “Ehrwürdig / Ist uns das Antlitz, selbst im Feindeshelm, / Das unsers Königs treue Züge trägt” (1739-41). Such a statement is all the more audacious since the conflict between Philipp and Karl has its origin in the former’s suspicion that the latter is responsible for the murder of the Duke’s father. By portraying the Duke and the Dauphin as belonging to the same family, Johanna endeavors to supplant the relationship between Philipp and his dynastic predecessor with an alternative relationship of blood between compatriots; in so doing, she takes the radical step of invoking a new, distinctly national order capable of surpassing the preexisting rivalries that doom the older, chivalric code.

In addressing to the Duke, the protagonist consciously avoids the conventional language of rhetorical or rational persuasion, instead speaking to him plainly and appealing directly to his emotions. For Johanna, such rhetorical naiveté affirms the authenticity of her overtures to Philipp; “The art of speech is foreign to [my] mouth” (*die Kunst der Rede ist dem Munde fremd*) (1793), she asserts when he initially resists her pleas. This strategy proves extremely effective, as Burgundy himself attests:

Verstrickend ist der Lüge trüglich Wort,
Doch ihre Rede ist wie eines Kindes.
Wenn böse Geister ihr die Worte leihn,
So ahmen sie die Unschuld siegreich nach. (1772-5)

The Duke finds this lack of rhetorical sophistication both fascinating and profoundly suspect. Indeed, despite her ostensible refusal to fight him, Burgundy perceives himself to be under assault from the Maid; rebuffing her entreaties, he denounces her as a “siren” and accuses her trying to captivate him with the “flattering tone” and “snares” of her speech while intimidating him with the “fiery darts” of her eyes.¹¹⁴ Johanna’s speech, in this imagining, is an extension of her military campaign against the enemies of France. Like Raoul in his earlier address to the Dauphin, Burgundy attributes to the Maid a singular ability to combine word and (military) action. In this instance, though, the function of such speech is not to unleash a wave of destruction against a larger force of enemies, but rather to undermine a single opponent from within by drawing out powerful, repressed feelings.

This scene forms a striking contrast with a thematically analogous moment from the beginning of the same act, when the Queen Isabeau placates a conflict between the Duke and the English commanders Talbot and Lionel. Reproaching the men for their divisive, reciprocal recriminations, Isabeau reaffirms the bond between the two allies by reminding them of the mutual benefit they derive from cooperating with each other. Chastened by this argument, Talbot concedes that “a noble heart gladly acknowledges when it has been defeated by reason” (*Ein edles Herz / Bekennt sich gern von der Vernunft besiegt*) (2.2.1368-9). Johanna’s success in convincing Burgundy to switch sides, however, suggests that ties established on reason and joint advantage are weaker than those animated by emotional fervor; affirming the Maid’s claim to be divinely called, Burgundy declares, “Mir sagt’s das Herz, sie ist von Gott gesendet” (2.10.1804). This

¹¹⁴ Mit süßer Rede schmeichlerischem Ton
Willst du Sirene! deine Opfer locken.
Arglist’ge, mich betörst du nicht. Verwahrt
Ist mir das Ohr vor deiner Rede Schlingen
Und deines Auges Feuerpfeile gleiten
Am guten Harnisch meines Busens ab. (1742-7)

formulation notably reverses the victory of reason over the “heart” posited by Talbot. For Johanna, this triumph of passion—which manifests itself in a sudden outburst of tears from the Duke—marks a climactic point of reconciliation and fulfillment; in his tears, “peace, the golden sun of feeling emerges.” She quickly adds, though, that “he is conquered, he is ours!”¹¹⁵ Johanna is able to overcome the divisions of the civil war by establishing the overarching dominion of emotional identification over the rival factions.

What makes this change of heart even more radical is the way it is patterned after the model of a religious or intellectual conversion.¹¹⁶ Indeed, the idea of a “turn” or “reversal” implicit in the very etymology of ‘conversion’ is invoked by Burgundy in describing the surge of emotions unleashed by the Maid’s appeal: “Wie wird mir? Wie geschieht mir? Ist’s ein Gott / Der mir das Herz im tiefsten Busen wendet!” (1799-800). Like iconic converts from St. Paul to St. Augustine, the Duke attributes the transformation of his sentiments to divine intervention, a notion that here underscores anew the influence of subconscious, non-rational factors in bringing about this shift. Johanna understands her role in this interaction in similar terms; she portrays herself as concerned not only with winning Burgundy as a military and political ally, but also with redeeming a lost compatriot. “I want to rescue you by pulling you over to our pure side!” (*Ich will dich rettend / Herüberziehn auf unsre reine Seite!*), she tells the wary Duke (1765-6). The desire to “save” Philipp suggests that her appeal is aimed not only at incorporating Burgundy and his supporters

¹¹⁵ Er ist gerührt, er ist’s! Ich habe nicht
 Umsonst gefleht, des Zornes Donnerwolke schmilzt
 Von seiner Stirne tränentausend hin,
 Und aus den Augen, Friede strahlend bricht
 Die goldne Sonne des Gefühls hervor.
 —Weg mit den Waffen—drücket Herz an Herz—
 Er weint, er ist bezwungen, er ist unser! (1805-11)

¹¹⁶ The idea of conversion and its history is summarized in: Pierre Hadot, “Conversio, Umkehr” in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Vol. 1, ed. Joachim Ritter (Basel: Schwabe, 1971), pp. 1033-6.

within the larger contingent of French forces, but also at colonizing his very soul in a way that anchors his commitment to the French cause at a level of thought that is both more emotional and—in the spatial metaphor invoked by the Duke himself—“deep” than the calculation of ritual obligation or personal interest.

By staking claim to this emotional core of Philipp’s being, Johanna enters into the kind of individualizing relationship with the Duke that Foucault posits as a defining feature of the bond between the shepherd and his flock. The Maid must recruit Burgundy to the Dauphin’s cause because such a concern provides the unifying principle for the rejuvenated France. This new national collective is formed through the accumulation of individuals rather than through the military and political prowess of the sovereign. Johanna reaffirms this principle in the ensuing act, when she risks the reconciliation of the Duke and the Dauphin by demanding that Philipp also forgive the royal officer Dü Chatel. Dü Chatel, who killed the Duke’s father under Karl’s orders, is initially asked to leave the scene so as not to “poison” the rapprochement.¹¹⁷ Johanna, however, immediately points out his absence upon entering the room herself, and, insisting that “a reconciliation is meaningless if it does not completely free the heart” (*eine Versöhnung / Ist keine, die das Herz nicht ganz befreit*) (3.4.2043-4), pleads to invite him back in. After the Maid persuades Burgundy to forgive Dü Chatel, the reconciliation between the two men is sealed by a tentative moment of understanding, one marked by the soldier’s attempt to read into the eyes of the Duke.¹¹⁸ By facilitating this act of forgiveness, Johanna fulfills the role ascribed to her by the

¹¹⁷ This is demanded by the Burgundian knight Chatillon, who is sent ahead of the Duke as an emissary. Referring to Dü Chatel, Chatillon declares: “Hier she ich Einen, dessen Gegenwart / Den ersten Gruß vergiften könnte” (3.2.1893).

¹¹⁸ This moment is noted in the stage directions for the scene: “Dü Chatel tritt einige Schritte näher und sucht in den Augen des Herzogs zu lesen.”

Dauphin of “sanctifying” the new alliance between the royalist and Burgundian factions.¹¹⁹ Like the flock of the shepherd Moses, Johanna’s France can only be truly redeemed and restored if each and every individual of French blood is integrated into the national collective.

Immediately after Philipp forgives Dü Chatel, Johanna counsels the Dauphin:

Sei immer menschlich Herr im Glück, wie du’s
Im Unglück warst—und auf der Größe Gipfel
Vergiß nicht, was ein Freund wiegt in der Not,
Du hast’s in der Erniedrigung erfahren.
Verweigre nicht Gerechtigkeit und Gnade
Dem letzten deines Volks, denn von der Herde
Berief dir Gott die Retterin. (3.4.2085-91)

Johanna’s abandonment of her herd here becomes a symbolic act, one that points to a new kind of relationship between sovereign and subject. Even though the ruler may enjoy greater prominence than his subjects, he owes these subjects a debt of gratitude for their readiness to fight and die for him, a readiness embodied—and, indeed, enacted—by the Maid. It is to be her legacy to serve as the symbolic guarantor of the new, more egalitarian form of political governance.

4. A Crisis of Prophetic Calling

The end of hostilities between Duke Philipp and the Dauphin Karl marks a pivotal moment in the war between France and England: With the two most powerful aristocrats in France finally joined in a united front against the invaders, victory is suddenly within sight for Karl and his allies. Accordingly, the rapprochement between the two leaders gives rise to talk of the imminent peacetime, talk that immediately turns to the question of what role the country’s prophetic savior is to play in the future governing regime. Karl, eager to show gratitude to Johanna, elevates her

¹¹⁹ Johanna enters scene wearing a wreath on her head instead of her helmet. Upon seeing her, Karl asks, “Du kommst als Priesterin geschmückt Johanna, / Den Bund, den du gestiftet, einzuweihn?” (3.4.2026-7).

into the nobility and promises to find her a husband worthy of her new station. This announcement instantly elicits offers of marriage from both the Count Dünois and the soldier La Hire, both of whom the monarch deems to be excellent candidates. With this choice of prospective spouses, Johanna's future prosperity, like that of her country, seems guaranteed.

Ultimately, however, this scene proves to be a very different kind of turning point, one that anticipates the tragedy's shift toward catastrophe in the third and fourth acts. The catalyst for this peripeteia is the encounter, only a few scenes later, between Johanna and the English leader Lionel; though the Maid quickly succeeds in disarming and defeating the enemy knight, she inexplicably hesitates as she prepares to deliver a fatal blow, and instead allows her opponent to escape unscathed. Troubled by this surprising failure of resolve, Johanna begins to question whether she is still worthy to be a prophet. While caught in the throes of self-doubt, she is confronted by Thibaut, who mysteriously reappears amid the festivities for Karl's coronation to publicly denounce his daughter. The elder d'Arc accuses Johanna of employing the aid of demonic forces and dares her to attest that she can still be counted among "the holy and pure" (*den Heiligen und Reinen*). Despite being urged by her comrades to declare her innocence, the Maid refuses to defend herself against these charges, offering only silence in response to her father's tirade. When a startling peal of thunder in the sky above seems to confirm that the young woman has indeed provoked the wrath of Heaven, her fate is sealed: She is banished from the French camp and left to wander the French countryside in exile, joined only by her former suitor Raimond.

From the perspective of this outcome, the reconciliation between the Duke and the Dauphin appears as a brief lull in the plot, a tentative resolution that collapses all too quickly. Despite this semblance of calm, however, the scene in question exposes a rift between Johanna and her aristocratic supporters that has significant repercussions for what comes after. To the surprise of

Karl and his courtiers, Johanna is not inclined to accept the Dauphin's generosity, and is especially wary of his plan to marry her off to one of his followers. Rebuffing both of her noble suitors, the young woman tactfully, but firmly reminds the court that she is expressly forbidden her from taking a husband:

Hoch ehrt mich dieser edeln Ritter Wahl,
Doch nicht verließ ich meine Schäfertrift,
Um weltlich eitle Hoheit zu erjagen,
Noch mir den Brautkranz in das Haar zu flechten,
Legt' ich die ehrne Waffenrüstung an.
Berufen bin ich zu ganz anderm Werk,
Die reine Jungfrau nur kann es vollenden.
Ich bin die Kriegerin des höchsten Gottes,
Und keinem Manne kann ich Gattin sein. (3.4.2196-2204)

As Johanna emphasizes to the courtiers, the success of her mission depends on her ability to inhabit the role of the Maid, a figure whose status as an instrument of divine justice is affirmed by her deliberate choice to abstain from sexual, erotic, and matrimonial ties; if, as Johanna declares in the prologue, it is her readiness to commit herself to such ideal of chastity that elevates her "above all earthly women," then any deviation from this ideal would fundamentally repudiate her calling.

This refusal, however, puts Johanna at odds with Karl and his Court, who regard her marriage as promising a welcome return to normalcy after the upheaval of the war. Absent the existential crisis of invasion and civil conflict, the courtiers see no reason for the Maid to continue refraining from a conventional female existence devoted to family life and childbirth. Indeed, they assume she will inevitably be drawn to such an existence once her concern for the fate of her country has subsided: Declaring that "woman is born to be man's loving companion" (*dem Mann zur liebenden Gefährtin ist / Das Weib geboren*) (2205), the Archbishop predicts that, having fulfilled her duty to God, Johanna will "return to the gentler sex that she has denied and that is not called to the bloody work of war" (*wiederkehren zu dem sanfteren / Geschlecht, das [sie]*

verleugnet [hat], das nicht / Berufen ist zum blut'gen Werk der Waffen) (2211-3). Karl, for his part, tells her that, with peace, “joy returns to every breast and more tender feelings awaken in every heart” (*kehrt die Freude / In jeden Busen ein, und sanftere / Gefühle wachen auf in allen Herzen*) (2237-9). For the Dauphin and his supporters, Johanna’s embrace of family life heralds the restoration of the traditional gender order upended by her participation in the war. As Karl’s allusion to the reemergence of erotic sensibility makes clear, this regime of gender relations is grounded, above all, in the biological and dynastic necessity of sexual reproduction. According to this logic, her decision to take a husband is important because doing so would signal the end of the state of exception symbolized by her chastity as well as the revival of the reproductive cycle, a revival that also has a political logic in that it offers a means of replenishing a population devastated by years of war.¹²⁰

For the Maid, being incorporated within this immanent cycle of death and rebirth would defeat her purpose of mission to symbolize transcendent ideals of spiritual purity and national destiny. In her rejoinder to Karl, Johanna warns the Dauphin against pursuing a course of action that would profane her and render her useless as a conduit of divine revelation:

¹²⁰ Prior to Johanna’s entrance, the cost in lives inflicted by the war is invoked briefly by Karl (“Wie viele Todesopfer mußten fallen, / Bis wir uns [i.e. the Dauphin and the Duke] friedlich konnten wiedersehen” (3.2.1914-5)) as well as at greater length by the Archbishop. Addressing Karl and Philipp together, the prelate underscores both the irrevocable toll inflicted by so much death and the inevitability of renewal through the birth of a new generation of French subjects:

Die Toten stehen nicht mehr auf, die Tränen,
Die eurem Streit geflossen, sind und bleiben
Geweint! Das kommende Geschlecht wird blühen,
Doch das vergangne war des Elends Raub,
Der Enkel Glück erweckt nicht mehr die Väter. (2000-4)

Koschorke contends that the political and religious authorities of France also need for Johanna to marry so that that the transformative social energies unleashed by her mission can be brought back under control. As a prophetic messenger of Heaven, moreover, the protagonist threatens the status of the Archbishop as an official representative of God. Koschorke, “Geschlechterpolitik,” p. 249. Julie D. Prandi argues that the tension between Johanna’s role as prophet-warrior and the conventional expectations placed her as a woman—which does not figure in earlier, Classical depictions of women-warriors—reveals Schiller’s modern, “sentimentalizing” treatment of the play’s protagonist. Julie D. Prandi, “Woman Warrior as Hero: Schiller's *Jungfrau von Orleans* and Kleist's *Penthesilea*” in: *Monatshefte* 77:4 (Winter 1985): pp. 403-414, here pp. 404-5.

Dauphin! Bist du der göttlichen Erscheinung
Schon müde, daß du ihr Gefäß zerstören,
Die reine Jungfrau, die dir Gott gesendet,
Herab willst ziehn in den gemeinen Staub? (3.4.2247-50)

By offering to reward the young woman with marriage and an improvement of her worldly status, the Dauphin risks recognizing the Maid personally while neglecting the broader significance of her prophetic mission. Karl, in other words, is in danger of conflating the physical medium of revelation with its sacred content. Johanna also sees a threat in the husband the monarch would seek out for her. In her imagining, such a husband would desecrate her with his very desire: “Der Männer Auge schon, das mich begehrt, / Ist mir ein Grauen und Entheiligung” (2263-4). This fixation on the erotic male gaze as a source of defilement is telling; if, as her exchange with the Dauphin suggests, she fears being reduced to a purely physical being incapable of conveying a transcendent or spiritual meaning, her aversion to such a gaze shows how this anxiety centers on how others perceive her. The erotic gaze poses a danger for her mission because it would diminish the charisma she projects through her forceful, inspired personality to a mere sexual attraction that would normalize her and rob her life of its unique importance.

In an illuminating reading of the Lionel scene, Wild argues that it is precisely the experience of being “profaned” by the gaze of the English knight that triggers the Maid’s disastrous loss of resolve. Such a reading draws support from the stage directions for the scene, which explicitly link the sudden reluctance that overpowers Johanna in the decisive moment to an exchange of glances between her and the English knight. According to these directions, Johanna starts to falter when she looks her opponent in the face while preparing to kill him; in this instant, his gaze “takes hold” of her and paralyzes her.¹²¹ As Wild points out, this sequence suggests that

¹²¹ The stage directions read as follows: “*In diesem Augenblicke sieht [Johanna Lionel] in’s Gesicht, sein Anblick ergreift sie, sie bleibt unbeweglich stehen und läßt dann langsam den Arm sinken.*“

her hesitation cannot be attributed solely to Lionel's gaze. Rather, what causes her to waver is her recognition that he is looking back at her.¹²² It is with this recognition of herself in the gaze of another that she perceives herself to be defiled in the way foreshadowed in her exchange with the Dauphin. Her experience of defilement, that is, occurs through a disruptive awareness of herself as a being perceived by another. This awareness unsettles the self-conception as a warrior-prophet and woman of destiny established by her earlier experience of calling; if she is previously able to compare herself to "the bodiless spirits, who do not love in the earthly way" (*die körperlosen Geister, die nicht frein / Auf ird'sche Weise*) (2.7.1609-10), the encounter with Lionel compels her to admit to the gulf separating her from such spirits, "the immortal, the pure, who do not feel, who do not weep!" (*die Unsterblichen, die Reinen, / Die nicht fühlen, die nicht weinen!*) (4.1.2602-3). No longer able to sustain this illusion of corporeal and emotional invincibility, she is forced to acknowledge her essential worldliness along with the physical and moral limitations on her agency that such a condition entails.

It is worth noting again that Johanna experiences her crisis of confidence only once the prospect of a French victory clearly emerges on the horizon; indeed, it is the very possibility of peace that first puts pressure on her sense of divine purpose. The source of this pressure is not only her fear of marriage and sexual defilement, but also the end of the war itself. Johanna is unprepared to outlive the conflict; as she reveals previously, she believes it to be her destiny to suffer the same violent death on the battlefield she has brought to scores of enemy soldiers. Even as her survival seems inevitable, the voice of inspiration remains silent about the peacetime.¹²³ Lacking such

¹²² "Sie wird in diesem 'Augenblick' gewahr, daß Lionel sie sieht; technischer ausgedrückt, daß der präexistente Blick, der sich in Lionels 'Anblick' konkretisiert, immer schon auf ihr geruht hat, und daß nur ihre Blindheit sie davor bewahrt hat, diesen als solchen wahrzunehmen." Wild, *Theater der Keuschheit*, p. 452.

¹²³ Johanna lets this be known when replying to Archbishop's prediction that she will want a husband after the war's end:

Ehrwürd'ger Herr, ich weiß noch nicht zu sagen,

guidance, Johanna can only see a destiny for herself in battle, and is thus unnerved by the break in the fighting that results from the Dauphin's reconciliation with Philipp. Beseeking Karl to signal the return to combat, she complains that "this truce stresses and frightens me" (*mich preßt und ängstigt diese Waffenstille*) (3.4.2267). She expresses relief, in contrast, when a herald arrives with the news of an impending enemy attack: "Schlacht und Kampf! / Jetzt ist die Seele ihrer Banden frei" (3.5.2272-3). Empowered and liberated by the war that has made her a symbol of collective resolve, Johanna perceives the imminent peace as a constraint.

The specter of the war's end plays a decisive role in raising the stakes of the protagonist's mission. This can be seen in her encounter with the ghostly Black Knight, which immediately precedes the duel with Lionel. The Knight—who is never definitively identified in the play¹²⁴—appears ostensibly to warn Johanna about the catastrophe awaiting her; after luring her away from the battlefield, he admonishes her to turn back before she reaches the gates of Reims, the traditional site of the French coronation ceremony and the primary objective for Karl and his forces. Cautioning her not to become overly fixated on worldly fame, he portrays her previous success as a streak of good fortune that will inevitably turn against her:

Dir gnüge der erworbne Ruhm. Entlasse
Das Glück, das dir als Sklave hat gedient,
Eh es sich zürnend selbst befreit, es haßt
Die Treu und keinem dient es bis an's Ende (3.9.2422-4)

Was mir der Geist gebieten wird zu tun;
Doch wenn die Zeit kommt, wird mir seine Stimme
Nicht schweigen, und gehorchen werd' ich ihr.
Jetzt aber heißt er mich mein Werk vollenden [...] (3.4.2214-8)

¹²⁴ As Guthke notes, the scholarship on *Jungfrau* has struggled to arrive at a consensus interpretation of this figure. The Black Knight has been variously read as Death itself, the evil spirit Thibaut attributes to Johanna's oak, an agent of Hell sent to distract the protagonist from her mission, the ghost of the slain English commander of Talbot, and even as a disguised angel. Guthke, "Jungfrau," p. 458.

Commentators have frequently noted the implicit allusion to the baroque Vanitas motif in the Knight's pronouncements.¹²⁵ Less appreciated, however, is the echo of the Maid's own condemnation of the English invaders of France in her first prophetic speech. As Johanna previously depicts the seemingly inexorable triumph of the English as simply a precursor to their eventual downfall, so, too, does the Knight invoke her own astonishing success on the battlefield as a telltale sign that her doom is near. This interpretation of her victories contrasts sharply with the Maid's own understanding of her role; ignoring completely the supposedly redemptive purpose of her mission, the Knight implies that she is caught in the same cycle of earthly striving, rising, and falling as her enemies. The Black Knight has been read as a projection of Johanna's own sublimated anxieties¹²⁶, and, indeed, there is a crucial overlap between this warning and her fear—expressed in her dispute with the Dauphin and his courtiers—of not being allowed to project a transcendent significance. In both scenes, she is faced with the possibility that the meaning and legacy of her mission will not extend beyond her victory over the English—in other words, that her message about the providential destiny of her country and the involvement of the divine in human affairs will be irrevocably lost.

If the prologue shows how Johanna proves herself worthy of becoming her country's savior by seizing the symbolic resources of a specific place and moment and mobilizing these resources to articulate a vision of national destiny, then the approaching end of her mission poses the question of whether this vision can be sustained beyond its original context of war and political crisis. This

¹²⁵ Marie-Christin Wilm, for example, argues that the Knight's warning about the fickleness of fortune reflects the animating principle of Baroque tragedy. Marie-Christin Wilm, "Die Jungfrau von Orleans, tragödientheoretisch gelesen. Schillers *Romantische Tragedie* und ihre praktische Theorie" in *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 47 (2003): pp. 141-70, p. 156.

¹²⁶ According to Alt, the Knight is "Sinnbild der aufsteigenden Skepsis, die Johanna angesichts ihrer Aufgabe befallen hat." Alt, *Schiller*, p. 522.

question is implicit in her dispute with the Dauphin and her courtiers over whether she should marry, a dispute about the fate of her body that underscores its importance as the (imperiled) medium of her prophetic message. In that scene, the survival of her prophetic message is revealed to be threatened by the succession of human generations from which Johanna is previously—and perhaps only temporarily—able to exempt herself. Her encounter with the Black Knight points to a similar danger, namely, that her mission could fail to transcend the seemingly arbitrary swings of fortune and human history. This danger is made real for Johanna when the sight of Lionel’s gaze directed at her shatters her belief in her own physical and spiritual inviolability. Deprived of this illusion, she is left struggling to sustain her earlier faith in her heroic destiny.

As soon as Johanna succumbs to this despair, she loses the aura that causes both friend and foe to regard her as a supernatural being. This can be seen in Lionel’s response to her panicked invocation of the “sacred Virgin” (*Heil’ge Jungfrau*) after succumbing to hesitation: “Why do you call upon the Sacred One?” (*Warum nennst du / Die Heil’ge?*) he asks the young woman, “She knows nothing about you; Heaven does not concern itself with you” (*Sie weiß nichts von dir, der Himmel / Hat keinen Teil an dir*) (3.10.2479-81).¹²⁷ In the absence of inspired self-assurance, the Maid seems to him to be neither divine nor demonic, but rather just an ordinary woman. Without her core of resolve, Johanna can no longer represent transcendent ideas. This sense of alienation from her original purpose also resonates in her soliloquy at the start of the fourth act, a speech that begins by evoking the contrast between her private anguish and the collective sense of jubilation among the French after the capture of Reims by Karl’s army:

Wer nur zum Stamm der Franken sich bekennet,
Der ist des Namens stolzer sich bewußt,
Erneuert ist der Glanz der alten Krone,
Und Frankreich huldigt seinem Königssohne.

¹²⁷ See also the analysis of this moment in Wild, *Theater der Keuschheit*, p. 454.

Doch mich, die all dies Herrliche vollendet,
Mich rührt es nicht das allgemeine Glück,
Mir ist das Herz verwandelt und gewendet,
Es flieht von dieser Festlichkeit zurück,
In's brit'sche Lager ist es hingewendet [...] (4.1.2530-8)

Shaken by her experience on the battlefield, Johanna becomes obsessed with Lionel. With her innermost feelings thus concentrated on the enemy, she becomes, in a literal sense, an empty signifier; while she outwardly remains a symbol of victory for the French, this significance is no longer supported by the inspired personality that previously animates her mission.

Lacking the psychological and emotional security offered by this sense of inspiration, Johanna loses control over her mission and the symbols associated with it.¹²⁸ To her consternation, Karl decides to reward her by allowing her to march with her personal standard in the parade to the cathedral where he is to be crowned. The Maid learns of this decision from Dünois and the soldier Dü Chatel, who seek her out in order to deliver her flag. When Johanna sees the image of the Virgin Mary, however, she is instantly thrown into a panic, convinced that the image of the Virgin Mary on the banner has come to life to express opprobrium for the heroine's failings.¹²⁹ Though startled by this reaction, the two men nevertheless force the flag in her hands and lead her away to the parade.¹³⁰ The urgency of including her in the parade indicates the degree to which the Maid has become an indispensable part of the ideological apparatus supporting Karl's rule, a fact

¹²⁸ Jan Mieszkowski rightly notes that the "fight" by the protagonist "to control the iconographic systems organizing the religious force she claims to represent" is a major theme of the play, starting with the moment in which she first seizes the mysterious war helmet from Bertrand's hands. Jan Mieszkowski, "The Pace of Attack: Military Experience in Schiller's *Wallenstein* and *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*" in: *Goethe Yearbook* 16 (2009): pp. 29-46, here p. 39.

¹²⁹ Seeing the image, Johanna perceives Mary to be glowering angrily at her: "Seht wie sie herblickt und die Stirne faltet, / Zornglühend aus den finstern Wimpern schaut!" (4.3.2737-7)

¹³⁰ These directions read as follows: "[Dünois and Dü Chatel] dringen [Johanna] die Fahne auf, sie ergreift sie mit heftigem Widerstreben und geht ab [...]"

that the newly crowned king himself makes clear in his coronation speech when acknowledging her contribution:

Von Gott allein, dem höchsten Herrschenden,
Empfangen Frankreichs Könige die Krone.
Wir aber haben sie sichtbarer Weise
Aus seiner Hand empfangen.
Zur Jungfrau sich wendend.
Hier steht die Gottgesendete, die euch
Den angestammten König wieder gab,
Das Joch der fremden Tyrannei zerbrochen!
Ihr Name soll dem heiligen Denis
Gleich sein, der dieses Landes Schützer ist,
Und ein Altar sich ihrem Ruhm erheben! (4.11.2950-9)

In an inversion of their first encounter, here it is Karl who points out Johanna and proclaims her significance for the future of France. Rather than merely recognizing her accomplishments, though, he endeavors to instrumentalize her, portraying her intervention in the war as singular proof of divine sanction for his rule. By noting her role in bringing about the political restoration of France, moreover, he casts her as a foundational figure comparable to Saint Denis, the country's patron saint. Showing that he is well aware of the emblematic power such a figure can hold, he declares his intent to memorialize her as a focus of national piety. Such a gesture suggests that it is now Karl who seeks to control the country's symbolic resources, and that he is willing to appropriate the legacy of the Maid to do so.

This (well-meaning) attempt at exploitation undergoes a radical and disturbing turn, though, when the king addresses Johanna herself. After first offering again to reward the prophetess, he suddenly changes course, beseeching her instead to reveal the true nature that supposedly resides beneath her outward appearance as a simple shepherdess:

Wenn du von Menschen bist gezeugt wie wir,
So sage, welches Glück dich kann erfreuen;
Doch wenn dein Vaterland dort oben ist,
Wenn du die Strahlen himmlischer Natur

In diesem jungfräulichen Leib verhüllt,
So nimm das Band hinweg von unsern Sinnen
Und laß dich sehn in deiner Lichtgestalt,
Wie dich der Himmel sieht, daß wir anbetend
Im Staube dich verehren. (2961-9)

In awe of the Maid, Karl convinces himself that she is no mere emissary of Heaven, but is rather herself a divine being. In so doing, he takes his previous confusion of the medium and message of Johanna's revelation to a new extreme, conflating the mortal heroine with the transcendent ideal of purity she represents. It is, however, his apparent willingness to prostrate himself, as king, before this supposedly supernatural being that reveals what is ultimately at stake in this confusion: Such a gesture of subordination threatens to undermine the very edifice of French sovereignty the heroine's mission is aimed at restoring, an edifice that centers on the ideal of the dynastic monarch as a supreme authority and national father figure. His offer to cede his authority to Johanna, moreover, threatens to negate her earlier act of designating him the true ruler of France. In honoring the Maid, Karl risks forgetting her vision of the country's political and historical identity.

Tellingly, it is at this point that Thibaut emerges from the crowd with his own request for Johanna to reveal her authentic self. Unlike the king, though, the elder d'Arc does not suspect that his daughter is a supernatural being; rather, he intervenes to expose her as a charlatan bent on attaining worldly prestige at all cost. This suspicion originates, for Thibaut, in an oracular-seeming vision about the young woman that he recounts to Raimond earlier in the play, and that now seems to be validated by Karl's speech to her:

[ich hab' Johanna] gesehn
Zu Rheims auf unsrer Könige Stuhle sitzen,
Ein funkelnd Diadem von sieben Sternen
Auf ihrem Haupt, das Zepter in der Hand,
Aus dem drei weiße Lilien entsprangen,
Und ich, ihr Vater, ihre beiden Schwestern
Und alle Fürsten, Grafen, Erzbischöfe,

Der König selber, neigten sich vor ihr. (Prologue.2.114-21)¹³¹

In this—profoundly ambiguous—vision, Johanna supplants Karl as the symbolic focus of the French state, uniting aristocrats and commoners in shared adoration of her regal splendor. In the prologue, Thibaut interprets this dream as a warning about the “idle yearning” (*eitle Trachten*) of the young woman’s heart, i.e. her supposedly unwholesome desire for a better life away from her native village. What at first appears to be an insight into her concealed egotism, however, becomes, in light of the king’s speech, an omen of her tyrannical ambition. D’Arc thus believes himself compelled by “God’s judgment” to accuse her before the king and her court and reveal the insidious nature behind the façade of the heroic Maid.¹³²

Interestingly, the accusation that the elder d’Arc levels at the Maid combines suspicion about the source of her inspiration with both skepticism about her political motives and a critique of the theatricality involved in her mission. This latter critique is directed not only at Johanna herself, but also at the French people and their leaders, whom Thibaut scolds for their apparent credulity: “Gerettet glaubst du dich durch Gottes Macht? / Betrogner Fürst! Verblendet Volk der Franken! / Du bist gerettet durch des Teufels Kunst” (4.11.2974-6). The ambiguity of this charge is underscored by the word *Kunst*, which in this context can mean either ‘deception’ or ‘art’; the French have allowed themselves to be fooled by a form of trickery that is also a dramatic performance. Thibaut continues:

¹³¹ The significance of this vision for the coronation scene is apparent from the fact that it is recalled on stage by Johanna’s sister Louison shortly before the decisive confrontation between the Maid and her father:

Der Traum des Vaters ist erfüllt, daß wir
Zu Rheims uns vor der Schwester würden neigen.
Das ist die Kirche, die der Vater sah
Im Traum und alles hat sich nun erfüllt.
Doch der Vater sah auch traurige Gesichte,
Ach, mich bekümmert’s, sie so groß zu sehn! (4.7.2808-2812)

¹³² Thibaut introduces himself to the crowd as “[Johannas] jammervoller Vater, / Der die Unglückliche gezeugt, den Gottes / Gericht hertreibt, die eigne Tochter anzuklagen.“ (4.11.2970-2)

Nicht ich, du aber rasest,
Und diese hier, und dieser weise Bischof,
Die glauben, daß der Herr der Himmel sich
Durch eine schlechte Magd verkünden werde.
Laß sehn, ob sie auch in des Vaters Stirn⁴
Der dreisten Lüge Gaukelspiel behauptet,
Womit sie Volk und König hinterging. (2977-2983).

With these words, Thibaut articulates publicly the self-doubt that haunts Johanna privately since her encounter with Lionel.¹³³ The elder d'Arc portrays her mission as inherently ridiculous, casting doubt on the notion that "a mere maid" could ever be a vessel and instrument of divine revelation. He endeavors to destroy her influence over her comrades by exposing the aura of sanctity she has acquired as a mere spectacle (*Gaukelspiel*).

Thibaut, however, is hardly an enlightened critic of religious subterfuge, and it is for this reason that his harangue ultimately redeems Johanna's mission. Rather than try to expose the young woman as a fraud, he acts out of the conviction that she has fallen under the sway of demonic forces; earlier in the act, he declares to Raimond that his intervention is aimed at rescuing her from eternal damnation, even if it means jeopardizing her mortal existence.¹³⁴ He thus believes he is allied with Heaven in challenging Johanna, and, when it suddenly begins to thunder above them, he interprets this meteorological coincidence as an expression of divine support for his case: "Antworte bei dem Gott, der droben donnert! / Sprich, du seist schuldlos," he commands his daughter (4.11.3021-2). For Thibaut—as well as for the onlookers to the scene—the tumult in the sky proves Johanna's guilt. Yet Johanna herself understands the storm differently. As she reveals to Raimond at the beginning of the next act, she regards the thunder as a sign that she has been "purified": "Dieser Sturm der Natur, / Der ihr das Ende drohte, war mein Freund, / Er hat die Welt

¹³³ In a similar vein, Benthien suggests that Johanna's confrontation with Thibaut marks the transformation of her private "Scham" into a public display of "Schuld." *Tribunal der Blicke*, p. 128.

¹³⁴ "Lebt ihre Seele nur, ihr Leib mag sterben" (4.8.2845).

gereinigt und auch mich” (5.4.2175-7). Instead of damning Johanna, the storm purifies her, cleansing her of doubt. More to the point, it restores her faith that she is a focus of divine concern. Together with Thibaut’s accusation, the storm establishes a religious and dramatic context in which the performance of her prophetic role can be felicitous.

In a letter to Goethe from April 3rd, 1801, Schiller says of *Jungfrau*—which by then was nearing completion—that “the conclusion of the penultimate act is very theatrical and the thunderous *deus ex machina* will not fail to have a effect” (*der Schluß der vorletzten Acts ist sehr theatralisch und der donnernde Deus ex machina wird seine Wirkung nicht verfehlen.*)¹³⁵ Though this statement refers specifically to the dramatic impact that the coronation scene is supposed to have, it is also possible to describe the scene itself and the situation it portrays as distinctly theatrical, especially since it takes place in an open, civic space and in front of an audience portrayed as being a national public.¹³⁶ In this respect, the scene is comparable to Johanna’s first meeting with Karl in Chinon; both scenes center on a transformative act of interpellation that restores the hope of a principle agent involved in the rejuvenation of France. Like Karl, Johanna must be recruited into a dramatic context of divine concern by someone else—in this case, her father. Within this context, however, she enjoys considerable freedom in interpreting her situation, eventually reframing the supposed proof of her condemnation as a sign of divine affirmation.

If the conclusion of the war spells the end of the context that enables Johanna to articulate her vision of French destiny, then the confrontation with her father suggests that the power of this vision can be recuperated through a certain kind of performance. This has profound implications

¹³⁵ Schiller, *Klassische Dramen*, p. 627.

¹³⁶ Johanna’s brother-in-law Claude Marie says of the crowd assembled for the coronation “Ist’s doch, als ob / Halb Frankreich sich zusammen hier gefunden!” (4.4.2770-1)

for drama itself as well as for the legacy of the original Joan of Arc. In the final section of this chapter, I discuss these implications and consider the play's relationship to history.

5. Johanna's Task and Schiller's Task

The scenes leading up to Johanna's denunciation and exile are important not only for the gradually unfolding catastrophe they depict, but also for the extent to which they depart from the narrative enshrined by the cultural memory of Joan of Arc. Though there are many invented details in the prologue and first two acts *Jungfrau*, the play begins in the third act to reimagine the fate of the prophetic Maid entirely. Starting with the scene in which Karl and Philipp agree to peace—a reconciliation the original Joan did not live to witness¹³⁷—Johanna consistently finds herself in situations such as her encounter with the Black Knight or her fight with Lionel that have no direct equivalent in the official narrative of the heroine's life. Instead, these scenes give rise to an alternate narrative, one that eschews the familiar story of Joan's trial and execution in favor of a focus on the struggle of the Maid to preserve the integrity of her prophetic mission in the face of self-doubt and worldly temptation.

This divergence grows even more pronounced in the play's fifth act. As the act opens, the Maid finds herself in desperate straits: Abandoned by the king and his courtiers, she is left to roam the wilderness of the countryside with only Raimond, her former suitor, for company. Her situation soon takes an even bleaker turn, however, when she is discovered by an enemy patrol and subsequently captured. Imprisoned and awaiting execution, she becomes a witness to the renewed conflict between the French and English after Karl and his army—having been alerted by Raimond

¹³⁷ The Treaty of Arras, which established peace between Charles VII and Philip of Burgundy and indeed the alliance of the latter with English, was not signed until 1435, four years after the death of Joan of Arc.

to her plight—attack their enemies in the hope of freeing her. In the ensuing battle, though, the English quickly take the upper hand, forcing Johanna to listen helplessly as her captors cheer the seemingly imminent rout of Karl's forces. Desperate, she prays to God for aid, and then miraculously breaks through the heavy chains used to contain her. After pushing past her guards and on to the battlefield, she cuts through the English ranks to reach Karl, who is encircled by the enemy. Johanna succeeds in rescuing the imperiled French monarch, but does so at the cost of her own life; fatally wounded in the fight, she expires in the arms of the grateful king. In silence, the Karl and his army honor her by draping her lifeless body in their battle standards until she is obscured completely from view.

That the play thus concludes with a scene of commemoration is both fitting and ironic. It is fitting because Johanna's redemption reflects the author's most clearly articulated motivation for writing the play, namely, the desire to rehabilitate Joan of Arc from the trivializing view of her legacy popularized by Voltaire's *La Pucelle d'Orléans*. This aim, of course, parallels not only the outcome of the play itself, but also the fate of the historical Maid, whose sentence was overturned some twenty years after her death at the instigation of Charles VII and her family.¹³⁸ What is perhaps more ironic about the ending of *Jungfrau*, however, is the fact that Schiller remembers Joan in *Jungfrau* by entirely fictionalizing the circumstances of her demise. Indeed, the ritualistic gesture of covering her in the flags of the French army can be read as a reference to the dramatist's approach to his historical model; for Schiller, it seems, it is only possible to stage Joan by deviating

¹³⁸ The process of Joan's vindication began in 1450, when a church official named Guillaume Bouillé appealed to Charles to investigate the trial that had sentenced the heroine to death. Casting doubt on this sentence had a clear political advantage for the monarch, whose victory over his Anglo-Burgundians opponent could be considered tainted as long as he was believed to have allied himself with a heretic. Joan's mother, Isabelle Romée personally petitioned for her daughter's rehabilitation at the Cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris in 1455. Warner, *The Image of Female Heroism*, p. 188.

entirely from the known facts of her life. But what does reimagining the heroic Maid in this way mean for the memory and legacy of the historical figure?

The most compelling evidence that *Jungfrau* is aimed at rehabilitating its historical subject anew can be found in the poem “Voltaires Püçelle und die Jungfrau von Orleans” (1801), which Schiller composed shortly after finishing work on the drama itself. This poem is generally regarded as a direct response to the initial reluctance about the play’s subject matter expressed, above all, by the dramatist’s patron, Duke Carl August of Weimar. In a letter to Schiller’s sister-in-law, Caroline von Wolzogen, the Duke wrote about *Jungfrau*: “Das Sujet ist äußerst scabrös, und einem Lächerlichen ausgesetzt, das schwer zu vermeiden sein wird, zumal bei Personen, die das Voltairsche Poëm fast auswendig wissen.”¹³⁹ As this quotation suggests, what gave Carl August pause about Schiller’s play was less the historical material itself than the enduring popularity of Voltaire’s treatment, which the Duke feared had irrevocably branded the story of the Maid as ridiculous. Schiller had considerable reason for wanting to rebut this sentiment, especially since he would require the Duke’s permission to stage *Jungfrau* in his hometown of Weimar.¹⁴⁰

Accordingly, “Voltaires Püçelle und die Jungfrau von Orleans”—as its very title suggests—endeavors to draw a clear contrast between the two works, even going as far as to portray the Schiller’s play as an antidote to the immoderate and ultimately vapid ribaldry of the French mock epic. In the poem, this comparison takes the form of a more general distinction between the aims of satirical literature—which is figured as the forces of “wit” (*Witz*) and

¹³⁹ Reprinted in: Schiller, *Klassische Dramen*, p. 646.

¹⁴⁰ In addition to this ostensible concern regarding the suitability of the play’s subject, the Duke was likely motivated by the fear the play could tarnish the reputation of his mistress, the actress Karoline Jagemann, who regularly played the female lead in productions staged in Weimar. Even after Karl August had a chance to read the play, Schiller and Goethe experienced considerable difficulty in gaining permission to perform it in the city. The Weimar premiere of *Jungfrau* finally took place on April 23rd, 1801, almost two years after the original premiere in Leipzig. For further discussion of this conflict, see: Martin, “Die Jungfrau von Orleans,” p. 187.

“derision” (*Spott*)—and those of true “poetry” (*Dichtkunst*). While satire is obsessed with exposing elevated subjects to ridicule, poetry endeavors to illuminate and celebrate human greatness. This contrast is especially pronounced when it comes to religious topics, about which satire exhibits an excessive and destructive cynicism: “[Der Witz] glaubt nicht an den Engel und den Gott, / Dem Herzen will er seine Hoheit rauben, / Den Wahn bekriegt er und verletzt den Glauben” (4-6).¹⁴¹ Though satire may stem from a commendable desire to combat the dangerous absurdities of religious fanaticism, such literature, in practice, fails to distinguish between fanaticism and another, supposedly more authentic form of spirituality, one Schiller associates with a core of human emotionality and creativity symbolized by the heart. Such spirituality should be cherished for the way it ennobles the believer by serving as a medium for sublime ideas and powerful feelings. Incapable of acknowledging such lofty sentiments, satirical literature is inevitably limited to pursuing the worldliest of motives—namely, to profit financially by indulging the fickle tastes of the “wild market” (*wilden Markt*) (17).

Poetry, in contrast, appeals to a much smaller, yet more enduring audience, the “beautiful hearts” (*schöne Herzen*) that “ignite for the great and magnificent” (*für das Hohe, Herrliche entglühn*) (15-16); such individuals are endowed with a “noble sensibility” (*edle[n] Sinn*) that they find reflected and affirmed by “nobler figures” (*edlere[n] Gestalten*) like Schiller’s heroine (18). Though emblematic of an earlier era and an uncultivated, “childish race” (*kindlichem Geschlechte*), the Maid nevertheless proves, in the dramatist’s depiction, to be a fitting subject for poetry, which elevates her among “the ageless stars” (*den ewgen Sternen*) like the heroes of Greek mythology to be admired for all time (10). “You are a creation of the heart! You will live forever”

¹⁴¹ The poem is also known as “Das Mädchen von Orleans,” the title it received when it was republished in 1803. Friedrich Schiller, “Das Mädchen von Orleans” in: *Gedichte*, ed. Georg Kurscheidt (Frankfurt a. M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1992): p. 227.

(*Dich schuf das Herz! Du wirst unsterblich leben*), the poem declares, addressing the character of Johanna directly; a product of intense feeling—her own and perhaps Schiller’s as well—the Maid resonates with readers and theatergoers possessing the kind of refined sensibility needed to appreciate poetry. Like poetry itself, she functions as a medium that draws this temporally dispersed group of individuals together and helps perpetuate their transcendent values.

If the purpose of the formal legal proceedings that officially rehabilitated the historical Joan of Arc was to overturn her conviction for heresy, the literary rehabilitation of the Maid alluded to by Schiller in “Voltaires Püçelle und die Jungfrau von Orleans”—and supposedly attempted in *Jungfrau*—is aimed at overcoming modern skepticism about her radical spirituality. Accordingly, the dramatist rejects not only the religious and moral norms that formed the basis for her original sentencing, but also the standard of wit deployed against her by Voltaire. In their place, Schiller proposes an altogether different criterion for affirming her inherent virtue and that of her mission—namely, the force of emotion that her story is capable of arousing in theatergoers and readers. By diverging in such a pronounced way from the official narrative of Joan’s life, moreover, *Jungfrau* takes this criterion to an extreme. Not only is it irrelevant, for Schiller’s purposes, whether the words and actions conform to an ideal of truth as defined by a theological or rational standard; it is also beside the point whether the character who appears on stage conform in every respect to the historical figure whom she ostensibly portray. What matters, ultimately, is that the depiction of the Maid move the audience—or, at least, those readers and theatergoers whose cultivated sensibilities allow them to moved.¹⁴²

¹⁴² Peter Pfaff also sees *Jungfrau* and “Voltaires Püçelle und die Jungfrau von Orleans” as pitting historical legend against historical reality in order to justify the former on the basis of its greater power for motivating collective identification. Peter Pfaff, “König René oder die Geschichte. Zu Schillers *Jungfrau von Orleans*“ in: *Schiller und die höfische Welt*, eds. Achim Aurnhammer, Klaus Manger and Friedrich Strack (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1990): pp. 407-21, here p. 420-1. See also: Pott, “Heiliger Krieg,” p. 116.

In order to understand how Schiller works to bring about this rehabilitation in the play itself, it is worth considering how he renders the original finding of guilt against Joan. I have already noted the surprising fact that *Jungfrau* does not depict her trial for heresy, and even seems to excise it from her story entirely. There is, however, a scene that functions as a kind of substitute for such a depiction—namely, the one in which Thibaut confronts his daughter at Karl’s coronation. The parallel here to the historical trial is established by the basic situation of a young woman being forced by an older man to testify in her own defense against an allegation of religious and moral transgression. It is telling, however, that the play deviates from history with regard to the figure who compels this testimony. By replacing Pierre Cauchon—the bishop of Beauvais who presided over Joan’s trial and remains the most notorious of her judges—with the elder d’Arc, Schiller fundamentally alters the meaning of this ordeal. In so doing, he begins the process of developing a new standard for evaluating the Maid and her legacy. Though Thibaut, ostensibly like Cauchon and his colleagues, accuses Johanna of allowing herself to fall under the sway of demonic forces¹⁴³, such a charge carries different implications coming from an individual who does not speak with the force of an ecclesiastical or juridical hierarchy. Rather than the demonstrated command of theological or legal discourse that would enable him to adjudicate whether her words and actions veer from established doctrine, it is his status as Johanna’s parent that allows him to claim authority over the young woman. Accordingly, the specific charge he levels against her is not one of heresy, but of pretense, of pretending to speak for Heaven; in other words, what is at issue in his interrogation of Johanna is the authenticity of her professed beliefs.

¹⁴³ The ecclesiastical court that tried and condemned Joan of Arc determined the voices she claimed to hear were not, as she asserted, those of the archangel Michael and the saints Catherine and Margaret, but rather belonged to the “malign spirits” Belial, Satan and Behemoth. Warner, *The Image of Female Heroism*, p. 117.

Since Thibaut lacks official office, however, the only way for him to make his accusation credible is by showing that his own words are more authentic than those previously uttered by his daughter. To this end, he appeals to a notion of common sense, scoffing, as noted above, at the willingness of the French and their leaders to believe that a young woman could be a source of divine revelation. Despite the religious framing of this attack, such derision bears a superficial resemblance to the polemical kind of ridicule employed by Voltaire. Just as important, though, is the fact that the elder d'Arc risks Johanna's life in speaking out. Similar to the mode of frank speaking famously identified by Foucault as *parrhesia*¹⁴⁴, it is Thibaut's readiness to sacrifice something precious to him for the sake of the truth that confirms he is not speaking idly and falsely; as the Duke of Burgundy reasons, "one has to believe the father who testifies against his own daughter!" (*dem Vater muß man glauben, / Der wider seine eigne Tochter zeugt!*) (4.11.2997-8).

In Thibaut, Johanna confronts the specter of the origin she has sublimated in articulating and accepting her prophetic calling. Not only does he explicitly remind her of her gender and lowly social rank; he also recalls her troubling association with the Druids' tree ("[unterm Zauberbaum] verkaufte sie / Dem Feind der Menschen ihr Unsterblich Teil, / Daß er mit kurzem Weltruhm sie verherrliche" (4.11.2992-4)). At the same time, his very presence is a testament to her biological genesis and thus of the physicality she previously seeks to repress by likening herself to an incorporeal spirit. Finally, he represents the pragmatic worldview of the people in their native village who refuse Johanna's plea to take up arms against the invaders, a worldview fixated on the maintaining the continuity of earthly life to the exclusion of transcendent values like freedom and patriotism. The Maid decisively rejects such pragmatism when she elects to accept her calling and

¹⁴⁴ Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, ed. Joseph Pearson (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001), p. 15-6.

leaves the village; in Thibaut's harangue, however, pragmatism returns in the form of his conviction that her prophetic calling is nothing more than a vapid spectacle.

If, as I have argued above, Thibaut's denunciation of his daughter has the paradoxical effect of curing her of her self-doubt, then this confrontation with her origin also plays a crucial role in her recovery. The performative context in which this recovery occurs is made possible by the intense superstition of the elder d'Arc, a mentality that reflects the repressed paganism of their home. In the scene in question, such superstition is expressed, above all, in Thibaut's attempts to identify tangible signs of Johanna's demonic affiliations. He thus urges the members of the crowd to look at her arm for the "spots" (*Punkte*) with which, supposedly, "Hell has marked her" (*die Hölle sie gezeichnet hat*) (4.11.2995-6); moments later, he is able to point to the sudden thunder above as proof of God's wrath. In so doing, though, he reinserts into the scene the kind of symbolic energy that originally inspires Johanna's mission; as in the prologue, the presence of such energy is indicated figuratively by a metaphor of electrical discharge, namely, the storm itself. Though the Maid seems, at first, not to react to his accusations, her later conversation with Raimond reveals that this tempest—or, rather, her idiosyncratic understanding of what it signifies—provides the impetus for her restored sense of calling.

Thibaut thus constitutes an origin that is both a source of renewal for Johanna's mission and a potential obstacle that the Maid must overcome. If this origin offers the substance for the usable past that animates her mission—a past she features prominently, for example, in the speech she delivers when introducing herself to Karl for the first time—it can also be mobilized by Thibaut to discredit her. Johanna's otherwise marginal status as a woman and a commoner—one who, moreover, comes from a village still undefiled by the presence of the invaders—makes it possible for others to view her as spiritually pure and unmotivated by political and social ambition, yet

Thibaut's denunciation of her, along with the vaguer threat of the impending peacetime, reveals that such autonomy is fundamentally limited as long as this origin can be questioned.

Johanna cannot challenge her father's accusations because she cannot articulate her own innocence. For her comrades witnessing her humiliation at the hands of her father, it seems evident that the Maid can bring the entire disturbing spectacle to an end swiftly by forcefully denying Thibaut's allegations. "Oh, speak! Break this dreadful silence! We believe you! We firmly trust you!" (*O rede! Brich dies unglücksel'ge Schweigen! / Wir glauben dir! Wir trauen fest auf dich!*) pleads Agnes Sorel, adding, "A word from your lips, a single word would be enough for us" (*Ein Wort aus deinem Mund, ein einzig Wort / Soll uns genügen*) (4.11.3001-4). La Hire, for this part, suggests that a simple display of assertiveness would be enough to cause the elder d'Arc to back down: "Die Unschuld / Hat eine Sprache, einen Siegeblick, / Der die Verleumdung mächtig niederblitzt!" (3010-3). In addition to revealing the courtiers' ignorance of the inner conflict afflicting Johanna, such appeals also forget that she originally proves her prophetic calling to Karl and his supporters by actions rather than words—i.e. by winning her first battle before she introduces herself to the monarch. Likewise, she is only able to prove herself innocent of Thibaut's charges through an act of military valor, one that attests, once again, to the power she draws from her faith in her calling.

Johanna's heroic rescue of Karl proves to be the ultimate realization of her prophetic vision. Not only does she save the king and bring about the final defeat of the English invaders; she also, in dying, completes the reestablishment of France as a nation. Awakening briefly from the state of unconsciousness that overcomes her following the battle, she asks where she is, and is told by Philipp: "Bei deinem Volk Johanna! Bei den Deinen!" (5.14.3520). That these words are spoken by the former leader of the dissident faction in the civil war shows how Johanna unites the country

in appreciation of her heroism. This victory also marks the realization of her earlier prediction of her own death on the battlefield, a prediction that now reveals itself to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. It is by enacting through her own deeds the truths she speaks that she answers her father, and, indeed, surpasses him: If Thibaut previously seeks to discredit her by casting doubt on the authenticity of her calling, then this triumph—and her self-sacrifice—proves, in definitive fashion, that her faith in this calling is genuine than the stable world order evoked by the elder d’Arc (and, in even more pointed fashion, by the Black Knight). Finally, her death concludes her mission in a way that prevents it from being appropriated and compromised by the king and his court. In this way, the Maid secures her legacy.¹⁴⁵

In dying, Johanna overcomes her origin and the limitations of her worldly existence to become a symbol for future generations. Such a triumph remains tentative, however, as long as the figure of the Maid can be made into an object of ridicule by satirists like Voltaire. For her legacy to be protected from this threat, sympathetic writers like Schiller must seek to make a case for her in the modern court of public opinion. Drama provides a particularly apt medium for this rehabilitation, since it is uniquely suited for portraying the Maid in action. The play suggests repeatedly—in the aftermath of her first victory, in the scenes set on the battlefield and in her rescue of Karl in the final act—that the true force of Johanna’s prophecy only manifests itself when she takes direct part in the war and endeavors to make her words a reality. Schiller works to portray the powerful effect of such initiative in the reactions of onlookers like the knight Raoul as well as in his stage directions (which can also be understood as aimed at the play’s reading audience). The climactic confrontation between Johanna and Thibaut provides a model for how the establishment

¹⁴⁵ For a critique of the way Schiller allows his portrayal of war in *Jungfrau* to culminate in a moment of “personal and national catharsis,” see: Elizabeth Krimmer, “Transcendental Soldiers: Warfare in Schiller’s *Wallenstein* and *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*” in *Eighteenth Century Fiction* 19:1-2 (Fall 2006): pp. 99-121, especially p. 121.

of a new performative context can allow the figure of the Maid to be revived and made useful again. Performance—whether by actors on stage or in the imagination of the reader—offers, for Schiller, the key to rescuing Joan from Voltaire’s attacks.

Though the task of rehabilitating the Maid may be daunting due to the ostensibly obsolete kind of spirituality that defines and motivates her self-image as a prophet, the transgressive, yet principled way in which she understands and embodies this role allows the example of her life to resonate beyond the immediate circle of her contemporaries. *Jungfrau* underscores this notion with its conspicuous deviations from authorized accounts of Joan’s life, an aspect of the work that points to the relatively low priority given to historical accuracy in Schiller’s approach to portraying the Maid; rather, the play is aimed at dramatizing this basic attitude of autonomy. This attitude emerges, above all, in Johanna’s relationships to paternal figures like Thibaut and Karl as well as to potential lovers like Raimond, La Hire, Dünois and Lionel, many of whom are invented or adapted specifically for the play.¹⁴⁶ Such an approach raises the question, however, of whether the audience of *Jungfrau* is being asked to empathize with the historical Joan of Arc herself or with the dramatic construct Johanna.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Thibaut, Raimond and Lionel are all fictional. The father of the historical Joan of Arc was named Jacques. For a list of which characters are historical and which invented by the dramatist, see: Schiller, *Klassische Dramen*, pp. 664-5.

¹⁴⁷ Going back to Christian Friedrich Hebbel, who insisted that Johanna belongs in a wax museum, critics have attacked Schiller for using dramatic and theatrical effects to distract from a protagonist who is, in Gerhard Sauder’s often cited formulation, nothing more than a “Kunstfigur” without a recognizably human personality. Sauder, “Jungfrau von Orleans,” p. 160. More recently, Daniel Fulda has echoed this criticism by arguing that Schiller’s depiction of the Maid marks a decisive break with the Enlightenment program of using drama to socialize audiences by causing them to empathize with the humanity of the characters on stage. If Johanna succeeds in provoking an emotional response, it shows that readers and theatergoers are just as capable of empathizing with a superhuman protagonist. Daniel Fulda, “Menschwerdung durch Gefühle—Gefühlerregung durch eine Übermenschliche: Schillers ‘Jungfrau von Orleans’ zwischen Aufklärung und Romantik” in: *Emotionen in der Romantik: Repräsentation, Ästhetik, Inszenierung*, eds. Antje Arnold and Walter Pape (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012): pp. 3-20.

The play is, in any case, a deliberate act of myth-making, one that anticipates the more politicized renditions of Joan that would emerge in the ensuing decades and centuries. *Jungfrau*, however, distinguishes itself by exposing the artifice involved in such an act. While doing justice to the core of authentic, radical belief that makes the story of the heroic Maid a source of endless fascination for generation after generation, Schiller suggests that her memory is flexible enough to be adapted in accordance with modern sensibilities. For an author looking to establish a public sensitive to transformative ideals, such a figure offers a powerful, usable past.

Chapter Three:

Prophecy, Sociability and Authenticity in Achim von Arnim's "Melück Maria Blainville"

In Achim von Arnim's famous tale "Isabella von Ägypten, Kaiser Karl des Fünften erste Jugendliebe," the future Charles V—who would go on to rule as arguably the most powerful of the Habsburg emperors—accidentally meets and falls in love with the beautiful gypsy princess Isabella while exploring a deserted house where she has taken refuge. A convoluted series of events, however, keep the would-be lovers apart, and they are granted only a single instance of sexual fulfillment. Even after they are reunited near the end of the story, Charles' excessive desire for wealth and power—as symptomized, above all, by his fascination with Isabella's mandrake, a magical anthropomorphic root capable of discovering hidden treasure—alienates the young woman, and convinces her to leave the emperor and rejoin her people. From this point, the lives and careers of Charles and Isabella diverge radically: Whereas Isabella travels with the Gypsies back to their ancestral homeland of Egypt and, by giving birth to a son, succeeds in founding both a nation and a dynasty, her erstwhile lover presides over a decaying empire incapable of surviving in its entirety after his death.

"Isabella" was originally published in the text now known as the *Novellensammlung von 1812*, a collection of four tales joined by a frame narrative. Although all four of the tales are linked

by certain formal and thematic similarities, “Isabella,” which appears first in the collection, is most clearly tied to the story that immediately follows it; indeed, this story, “Melück Maria Blainville, die Hausprophetin aus Arabien”—which is the focus of the current chapter—is even portrayed by the narrator of the *Novellensammlung* as a “twin sister” (*Zwillingschwester*) of “Isabella.”¹⁴⁸ Like “Isabella,” “Melück” centers on a fictional woman of non-European descent whose fate unfolds against a distinctive historical backdrop—in this case, the south of France on the eve of the French Revolution. As in the first tale, moreover, the title character of “Melück” assumes a considerable degree of agency in her story, an agency that, in large part, stems from her use of magic. She also, like the gypsy princess of the preceding story, becomes romantically involved with a European aristocrat who, despite his superior social status, proves to be her moral inferior.

At a more fundamental level, though, “Melück,” like “Isabella,” is the story of a missed opportunity. As Dorothea von Mücke has shown, the protagonist of the latter story can be read as embodying the political good fortune that the emperor Charles allows to slip through his fingers due to his single-minded fixation on acquiring power.¹⁴⁹ Melück, in contrast, is a Cassandra-like figure whose warnings about the future go disastrously ignored. Specifically, she foresees the political chaos and violence that ultimately result from the Revolution, and—in a speech that builds into oracular pronouncement—forcefully challenges the naïve vision of national and historical redemption articulated by supporters of the revolutionary project. For this, she is labelled—first derisively, then later admiringly—a prophet.

¹⁴⁸ Achim von Arnim, *Die Novellensammlung von 1812* in *Achim von Arnim Werke*, Bd. 3, ed. Renate Moering (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1990): 613-893, here p. 744. All future references to this text will be indicated in parentheses.

¹⁴⁹ Dorothea von Mücke, *The Seduction of the Occult and the Rise of the Fantastic Tale* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2003): pp. 202-3.

One of the most celebrated features of prophecy is its fundamentally contrarian stance, the readiness of the prophet to reject consensus and to articulate, in its place, an alternate—and possibly deeply unsettling—vision of the present or future. Indeed, this attitude of dissent represents a crucial component of the prophet’s spiritual or moral authority; such dissent underscores the radical singularity of the prophet’s vision, the quality that elevates their speech and distinguishes it from more conventional forms of social and political prognosis.¹⁵⁰ An utterance cannot be prophecy if it is capable of receiving universal assent from the very moment it is issued.

In general, prophetic speech is defined by what could be called—to adapt Michel Foucault’s term—the prophetic “game.”¹⁵¹ In the case of prophecy, this game is constituted by a set of implicit rules that distinguish divine revelation from human speech as well as true prophecy from false. These rules are outlined in Deuteronomy by none other than Yahweh Himself (speaking through Moses): “You may say to yourself, ‘How can we recognize a word that the LORD has not spoken?’ If a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD but the thing does not take place or prove true, it is a word that the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; do not be frightened by it” (Deut 18:21-22). This characterization suggests that individual prophetic utterances initially exist in a relationship of dissent to the utterances of rival prophets as well as, potentially, to other pronouncements by the same prophet. It is only once the prognosis contained

¹⁵⁰ For a sustained reflection on the ways prophecy differs from rational prognosis, see the essays collected in: *Prophetie und Prognostik. Verfügungen über Zukunft in Wissenschaften, Religionen und Künsten*, eds. Daniel Weidner and Stefan Willer (Munich: Fink, 2013).

¹⁵¹ In the interview published as “The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom,” Foucault defines “games of truth” as ways in which, “in scientific discourses, the human subject defines itself as a speaking, living, working individual. He further notes that such games represent a major focus of his research going back to *The Order of Things*. Michel Foucault, “The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom,” trans. P. Aranov and D. McGrawth in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin, 1997): pp. 281-301, here p. 281. What I here call the “prophetic game” can perhaps best be compared to the “game” that Foucault regards as a central to the ancient Greek ideal of freespokeness or *parrhēsia*. See, for example: Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth* ed. Frédéric Gros, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2008), p. 12.

in the utterance comes to pass that it can be singled out as revelation and the moment in which the utterance is originally delivered regarded as a moment of inspiration.

This means, though, that there is an interval between the initial moment of inspired utterance and the moment in which this utterance is acknowledged as prophecy, during which time the truth-teller can be dismissed or ignored outright. As Yahweh warns the prophet Ezekiel:

[Your people] come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear your words, but they will not obey them. For flattery is on their lips, but their heart is set on their gain. To them you are like a singer of love songs, one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument; they will hear what you say, but they will not do it. When this comes—and come it will!—then they shall know that a prophet has been among them. (Ezek 33:31-33)

The eventual fulfillment of the oracular pronouncement, however, demands a revision of the original, dismissive assessment of the truth-teller and the situation in which they spoke. In retrospect, what once seemed a mundane utterance becomes a moment of redemption. This process of reappraisal is as much a part of what defines the truth of prophecy as the content of the prophetic utterance itself.

I call attention to this feature because it is important for understanding the depiction of prophetic speech in “Melück” and, in particular, the role of the story’s prophetic protagonist. Like Schiller’s Johanna, the title character of Arnim’s tale is a marginal figure, though one whose marginalization has more to do with her ethnicity than her gender or social station. Like Johanna, moreover, Melück is able to translate this marginal status into a form of charisma. In her case, however, such charisma manifests itself in social capital and artistic acclaim rather than moral or political leadership. At least at first, her prophetic warning is incapable of enacting change.

Arnim’s story thus presents an example of a figure whose importance as a prophet is not defined by her ability to inspire others and form a movement, but rather by her role as a truth-teller as well as, more specifically, by the way her career follows the basic pattern of dissent and

validation exemplified by Old Testament prophets like Ezekiel. As I hope to show, this pattern takes on a unique significance in “Melück” because the way it is used to encode a specifically Romantic poetics of authenticity along with a broader critique aimed at eighteenth century models of sociability and public discourse. In the pre-revolutionary France of the story’s setting, Melück’s prophetic warning is marked as exceptional not only due to its dark vision of the future, but also because it violates prevailing norms of social discourse. Such norms, which are anchored in a classical ideal of universal intelligibility, ostensibly serves to encourage the clarity of the linguistic signifier regardless of context and the identity of the speaker. By violating these norms with a pronouncement motivated by personal concern and informed by personal experience, Melück exposes the fundamental limitations of this model. Her prophecy, moreover, offers a counter-model in the form of an utterance whose meaning stems from its situational properties and the conditions of its reception.

1. Resolution and Catastrophe

The plot of “Melück” can be outlined as follows: Fleeing political upheaval on the Arabian Peninsula, the title character arrives in the French Mediterranean port of Marseille several years before the outbreak of the French Revolution. There, after receiving baptism and briefly undertaking a postulancy in a local convent, she decides to pursue a career in acting. Her seemingly natural talent along with her exotic background and considerable personal charm endear her to the local aristocracy, and she soon becomes a sought-after guest at salons and social gatherings.

At one such gathering, Melück meets and becomes infatuated with the Count Saintree. Saintree, however, is hopelessly in love Mathilde, a Parisian noblewoman deemed to be an inappropriate match for a man of his station. Nevertheless, Melück succeeds in seducing the

lovelorn Count, and the two begin a passionate affair. To her dismay, though, Saintree abruptly cuts off ties after he receives permission from the King to marry Mathilde.

Though the Count tries to hide his dalliance with the beautiful foreigner from his new wife, she eventually finds out about the relationship and grows intensely jealous. In order to placate her, Saintree agrees to a test of his loyalty, promising to sabotage Melück's theatrical debut by loudly jeering the performance. Saintree agrees, and true to his word, whistles disapproval of his former lover when she appears on stage. As soon as he does so, however, he is struck by a mysterious pain that quickly develops into a life-threatening affliction.

With his health rapidly deteriorating, the Count receives a visit from his former school comrade Dr. Frenel, an explorer and scholar of the Orient. After hearing of Saintree's apparent illness, Frenel declares the Count to be cursed and points to Melück, whom he identifies as a "heart-eating sorceress" (*herzfressende Zauberin*), as the culprit. Intent on saving his friend, the Doctor confronts the Arab woman with this knowledge, and succeeds in convincing her to overturn the curse. Once she does so, however, she informs Frenel that her act of psychically devouring the heart of the Count has inextricably bound him to her, and that the curse cannot be fully ameliorated unless she remains nearby. Desperate, Mathilde agrees to this condition, and the couple welcome the foreigner into their home, where she serves first as a housekeeper and later as a governess to the couple's children.

At this point, the narrative skips over a period of eight years—during which time Melück, Saintree and Mathilde lead a bucolic existence on the Count's country estate—and takes up the story in the early days of the Revolution. Saintree, Mathilde and Frenel all enthusiastically greet the upheaval as a salutary project of political and social renewal. Only Melück expresses skepticism about this promise; in a speech of admonishment that quickly builds into a dire oracular

pronouncement, she describes a future dominated by political stasis and escalating violence against the country's traditional elites. To Frenel's consternation, moreover, Melück predicts that both she and the Count will lose their lives to this violence, and that the Doctor will refuse to help them despite being in a position to do so.

Though this warning is dismissed by Frenel as the ranting of a "new prophet," the subsequent breakdown of political order in the province proves her fears to have been justified. Despite the worsening situation, Saintree refuses to emigrate, leaving the family vulnerable to anti-aristocratic retaliation. This threat finally comes to fruition when the estate is beset by an angry mob and both the Count and Melück are taken prisoner. Putatively under the command Frenel as the representative of the central government in Paris, the mob is in reality led by the demagogue Saint Lük, a former aristocrat who earlier in the story is humiliated by Melück due to his villainous behavior. In keeping with the Arab woman's prophecy, a furious Saint Lük enacts his revenge by stabbing her while Frenel watches on helplessly, an act that—due to her earlier enchantment of the Count—results in the simultaneous death of Saintree.

Before dying, though, Melück alerts the Doctor to the place where Mathilde and her children are hiding in the castle, and, with the mob distracted, he seeks them out and helps them escape. Together, they flee to Switzerland, where the Countess and her children find refuge among her relatives. Once there, however, Frenel decides that he is unable to live with his feelings of guilt and commits suicide.

This narrative thus ends with Mathilde the lone survivor among the story's core cast. At this point, the narrator identifies himself as an acquaintance of the Countess, and reveals that he has learned of the events recounted in the tale from Mathilde herself. Claiming to have arrived at a "vision" (*Anschauung*) of the title character by observing the powerful feelings she expresses

while speaking of her friend, this unnamed figure concludes his narrative by declaring, cryptically, that Melück, despite having been merely the “prophet of a house,” was worthy to have served as the “prophet for an entire occidental world for generations” (*Prophet einer ganzen abendländischen Welt für Jahrhunderte*) (776).

As should be clear from this summary, the plot of “Melück” is divided into two halves portraying, respectively, the formation of the ménage à trois centered on the story’s main characters, and the subsequent destruction of this unconventional domestic arrangement at the hands of a revolutionary mob. These two halves follow nearly opposite narrative arcs. The first unfolds as a comedy: The potentially fatal threat posed by the love triangle of Melück, Saintree and Mathilde is averted at just the right moment by their reconciliation and incorporation into a single family unit. The second half, in contrast, takes a distinctly tragic turn, one that culminates in death for three of the four principle characters and the consequent unravelling of the resolution achieved in the first half.

This two-part structure—as well as the complex relationship between narrative, history, and tragedy it suggests—have been much discussed in the secondary literature on “Melück.” In a brief, but often cited interpretation, Wolfgang Frühwald—for whom the trio of Saintree, Melück and Mathilde represents an allegory of the fraught psychological dynamic between the poet and the forces of fantasy and poetry—argues that the fate of the protagonist and her erstwhile lover evoke the death of fantasy and the consequent silencing of the poet due to the numbing rhetoric of political demagoguery; at the same time, though, the Count and the Countess implicate themselves in the destruction by initially voicing support for the Revolution and the anti-poetic rationalization

of society it promises.¹⁵² Bodo Plachta, in contrast, regards Melück as the primary bearer of guilt in the story due to her allowing herself to fall in love with Saintree, a capitulation to her passions that leaves her open to being compromised by the aristocratic *Scheinwelt* he exemplifies.¹⁵³ Like Plachta, Claudia Nitschke reads the story as expressing a critical attitude toward pre-revolutionary French society at large. In her reading—which focuses on the role played by Saintree in setting the final catastrophe into motion—this catastrophe is the result of the Count’s fundamentally erroneous desire to separate erotic lust from romantic love as well as the “hypertrophic concept of reason” that he invokes to justify this desire.¹⁵⁴ Such motivated reasoning in matters of love is revealed in the story to be analogous to the initial optimism with which Saintree, Mathilde and Frenel greet the Revolution.¹⁵⁵ Axel Dunker, finally, sees a parallel between the reification (*Vergegenständlichung*) and autonomization of language that occurs with Melück’s curse and the consequential realization of philosophical ideas in the Revolution.¹⁵⁶

In keeping with the overarching thematic concern of this dissertation, my examination of “Melück” focuses on the most prominent prophetic utterance in the tale, namely, the speech of warning that the title character delivers to her friends at the start of the story’s second half. Since Melück offers what can be read as a critique directed at specific notions of history and reason that she—and presumably the text itself—attributes to the protagonists of the French Revolution, it is

¹⁵² Wolfgang Frühwald, “Achim von Arnim und Clemens Brentano“ in *Handbuch der deutschen Erzählung* (Düsseldorf: Bagel, 1981): pp. 145-58, here pp. 150-1.

¹⁵³ Bodo Plachta, “Die Darstellung der Französischen Revolution in Achim von Arnims Novelle “Melück Maria Blainville” in *Literatur in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 23:4 (1990): pp. 299-310, here p. 304.

¹⁵⁴ Claudia Nitschke, “Unanständige Wiedergänger. Liebe und Revolution in Erzählungen von Arnim und Eichendorff“ in *Weimarer Beiträge* 55:2 (2009): pp. 221-49, here p. 228.

¹⁵⁵ Claudia Nitschke, “Unanständige Wiedergänger,“ p. 229.

¹⁵⁶ Axel Dunker, “‘Diese wahrhaft morgenländische Seele.’ ‘Orient’ in Achim von Arnims Erzählung ‘Melück Maria Blainville. Die Hausprophetin aus Arabien’” in *Der Deutschen Morgenland. Bilder des Orients in der deutschen Literatur und Kultur von 1770 bis 1850* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2008): pp. 137-60, here pp. 147-8.

tempting to regard this speech in isolation as an authorial commentary on recent history. Regardless of whether such a reading is justified, however, my approach here is aimed instead at highlighting the thematic and formal function of the speech within the text as a whole. In concrete terms, this means that I seek to understand the speech in terms of its role in anticipating the shift in narrative modes from comedy to tragedy. Specifically, I seek to understand what implications this speech has for the protagonist's complicity in the problematic of guilt that motivates the outbreak of catastrophe.

My analysis highlights three facets of Arnim's story. I begin by investigating the significance of decorum in the story, focusing, in particular, the specific set of values encoded in such conventions of speech and behavior and elucidating their function in resolving the crisis that emerges in the first half of the story. Then I turn to the prophetic speech delivered by the title character at the start of the story's second half. In addition to anticipating the unravelling of the tentative resolution achieved earlier in the story, this speech complicates the role of this character in crucial and interesting ways. Finally, I consider why the story is labelled an anecdote. This genre description, I contend, implies a model of reception that has important implications for the story's depiction of prophetic speech as a form of communication endowed with a unique set of performative qualities.

2. Enlightenment Sociability between Decorum and Sensibility

When Melück appears on stage for the first—and last—time in her brief acting career, she does so in the role of the eponymous Queen of Athens from Racine's 1677 tragedy *Phèdre*. This detail is telling due to the conspicuous parallels between the plot of "Melück" and that of Racine's play. Both center on an older woman who indulges in a socially inappropriate attraction to a

younger man only to be rejected in favor of a less problematic rival. In *Phèdre*, the object of this misplaced desire is the Queen's own stepson, Hippolyte. Like Melück, Phèdre reacts to her would-be lover's rejection by becoming uncontrollably enraged and subsequently condemning the young man with her speech—in her case, by allowing her maid to level a false accusation of rape against him. The threat posed by this choice, moreover, is the same—namely, the demise of both the principal protagonists.

Arnim's tale, however, departs from its dramatic predecessor with respect to the way this catastrophe is realized. *Phèdre* ends with the heroic death of Hippolyte while battling a sea monster—the fulfillment of a curse placed on him by his infuriated father, Thésée—followed by the suicide of the guilt-ridden Queen. In “Melück,” in contrast, the disastrous outcome of the title character's speech is initially averted by the decision on the part of Saintree and Mathilde to accept the Arab woman into their family. This decision marks the reconciliation of the conflict motivating the curse as well as the healing of Melück's emotional trauma. It is only after the outbreak of the French Revolution that the curse reemerges.

What makes this deferment of calamity possible? A key factor is the arrival of Doctor Frenel and his subsequent intervention on behalf of Saintree. It is Frenel who first identifies Melück as the source of the mysterious affliction plaguing the Count and who ultimately compels her confession. The doctor does so by drawing on the considerable learning he has acquired in his scholarly travels through the Orient.¹⁵⁷ As a scholar, explorer and revolutionary politician in the mold of the German Jacobin Georg Forster, Frenel leads the exemplary life of a scientist and Enlightenment man of letters, and it is his pursuit of this vocation that makes him uniquely suited

¹⁵⁷ As the narrator confirms: “Frenel hatte wirklich im Morgenlande aus wissenschaftlichem Interesse alle die geheimen, so wie die öffentlichen Künste der wunderbar schönen Färberei in Wolle, der Bereitung herrlicher Wohlgerüche die aber geheim gehalten werden, aufgesucht und mit seltener Anstrengung ergründet“ (761).

to containing the threat posed by Melück. His apparent victory over her enchantment thus seems to represent the triumph of the Enlightenment over the supernatural and occult.

Yet it is ultimately not Frenel's intercession alone that brings resolution to the conflict between Melück and Saintree. Significantly, the title character is moved to help her former lover not by the threat of exposure, but rather by Frenel's depiction of the Count's suffering. Thus forced to confront the pain she has caused, Melück is brought to tears and immediately agrees to comply with the Doctor's demands.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, it is not the return of the Count's coat—i.e. the fetish object that Melück uses to enact the curse—that finally saves Saintree, but rather the agreement reached between the protagonist, the Count and the Countess to live together. As Melück reveals to the Doctor, Saintree can only be fully restored by her proximity to him, and, without her nearby, he will continue to lack the "inner heart of life." This agreement, however, requires a gesture of renunciation from both Melück and Mathilde: Melück is compelled to abstain from further pursuing her earlier erotic relationship with the Count while Mathilde must tolerate the presence of the woman who was once her rival for his affections. This double act of renunciation is made possible by their shared love for Saintree as well as by a mutual understanding between the two women achieved during their initial meeting shortly after Frenel confronts Melück.

Like Frenel's earlier interview with the protagonist, this encounter—though only touched on briefly in the text of the story—is revealing. After being informed by Frenel of Melück's advice, Mathilde takes it upon herself to meet with her former adversary face-to-face and invite her to live in the home of Count and the Countess as if she were Saintree's "closest kin" (*nächste Verwandte*). This offer provokes an—in the words of the narrator—"surprising" reaction from the protagonist:

¹⁵⁸ "Indem er ihr das Elend seines Freundes schilderte, zerfloß sie in Tränen und meinte, warum er sich nicht früher selbst an sie gewendet [...]" (763)

“Melück beschaute die klaren sanften Züge der Gräfin, während sie sprach, mit einem überraschenden Wohlwollen; sie ward von diesem Edelmute ihrer Liebe begeistert, der selbst die Eifersucht aufzuopfern wagte, eine freie Zuneigung zu der liebenswürdigen Gräfin sprach mit“ (764). It should be noted that physical presence—the primary ingredient in the Count’s recuperation from the curse—also plays a significant role in this scene; if Mathilde’s invitation is viewed as a speech act that constitutes the *ménage à trois* in the Count’s residence, then what makes this utterance felicitous is Melück’s ability to gaze into the face of the Countess. This underscores another key factor in the scene, namely, the bond of empathy that forms between the two women: Melück accepts Mathilde’s proposal, in part, because she is able to “see through” the “clear” features of the Countess and recognize the purity of her intentions.¹⁵⁹ The protagonist is disposed to trust her ostensible competitor, moreover, because she finds Mathilde in this moment to be personally sympathetic. This emotional connection is instrumental in allowing them to set aside their earlier differences and found a new life together with Saintree.

In summary, the deferment of the curse can be ascribed to several different factors: the empirical knowledge possessed by Frenel, a virtuous renunciation of personal vanity on the part of Melück and Mathilde, and, finally, the relationship of reciprocal empathy that forms between the two women and Saintree. These factors represent a set of key values for the pre-revolutionary French society that provides the backdrop for the story. It is these values that distinguish the modern society of “Melück” from the ancient one of *Phèdre*, and that ostensibly enable the former to tame the destructive forces of passion and violence evoked by tragedy. Indeed, not only do such values allow the main characters to ward off catastrophe; they also allow the forces of tragedy to

¹⁵⁹ This image completes a crude racial dichotomy introduced previously when the narrator describes the face of the protagonist after Frenel exposes her as a sorceress: “[Ihre] Gesichtsmuskeln bewegten sich untereinander, wie ein chinesisches Feuerwerk, mit allen seinen Farben” (763).

be sublimated and channeled toward the creation of a novel, more utopian existence, i.e. the idyllic and isolated life the new, unconventional family enjoys on Saintree's estate.

To provide further context for this claim, I want to take a broader view and consider how the values in question are reflected in the portrayal of pre-revolutionary French society in the first half of the story. First, though, I need to make one last observation about the sequence of events that culminate in the apparent nullification of Melück's curse—namely, that this resolution is achieved through a series of conversations. Specifically, there are three such interactions: The first of these is the initial conversation between Frenel and Saintree that allows the Doctor to diagnose the Count's affliction as the result of sorcery; the second occurs when Frenel confronts Melück and forces her to confess to being the source of the curse; and the final conversation is the one in which Mathilde invites the protagonist to join her family. This is significant because—as I want to show now—pre-revolutionary society is characterized in the story largely by depictions of conversation and other forms of linguistic sociability.

This society figures in the story not only as a social and cultural setting in which the characters interact with each other, but also as a collective character in its own right and even—at the very beginning of the story—as a focalizer for the narrative. To be more precise, this group exerts a concerted agency in the narrative by passing verdict on or otherwise responding to actions taken by the protagonist and her friends¹⁶⁰ as well as by initially welcoming Melück into their ranks and later—after she becomes too publicly vocal about her anger with Saintree following the end of their affair—ostracizing her. This latter aspect is particularly consequential in terms of the

¹⁶⁰ This statement needs to be qualified: The society in question is ostensibly comprised of many diverse individuals, and the narrator occasionally calls attention to the differing opinions they express about the protagonist. The first instance of such a debate occurs when Melück first makes known her decision to leave the cloister in order to pursue a career on the stage: "Viele nannten ihre Frömmigkeit und ihre Taufe, die erste Rolle und mußten eingestehen, daß dieser Debüt gelungen; andre entschuldigten sie mit dem Vergnügen, das sie sich von ihr versprochen und mit dem Spotte, den sie aus ihr, gegen die Frömmelnden anwenden konnten." (748)

motivation it provides for the protagonist. Here it should be specified that the segment of society with which Melück primarily comes into contact—and from whose point of view her character and choices are evaluated—is an elite stratum that the narrator refers to as the “idle aristocratic world” (*müßige vornehme Welt*), and that entrance into this milieu offers her a life of companionship in the form of constant social gatherings and a devoted group of youthful “admirers” (*Verehrer*). This group accordingly exerts considerable influence over the protagonist’s fate, and Melück herself has reason to win their approval.

Members of this idle aristocracy are recognizable by a quality of “social decorum” (*gesellige Schicklichkeit*) in speech and action that Melück must acquire to join their ranks. Her efforts in this respect are spectacularly successful, producing a marked change in her outward demeanor that is perceived, by French observers, as a radical transformation of her entire character:

Wie sie erst durch ihr fremdes Wesen überrascht hatte, so viel Sinn zeigte sie bald für gesellige Schicklichkeit; ihr ganzes Wesen nahm die Sitte der Stände an, unter denen sie lebte. Sie versagte sich die Art Beweglichkeit und Nachlässigkeit, die bei uns nur niederen Ständen eigen und erlaubt ist, sie beschränkte ihre Bemerkungen auf die allgemeine Fassungsgabe und das alles, wie es schien, ohne Zwang, in leichter Gewöhnung, durch eingebornes zartes Gefühl. (748)

There are several things worth noting about this passage. First, the ideal of personal behavior and expression that informs the (aristocratic) perspective reproduced here expressly serves to distinguish the elite of Marseille from the classes below them. Second, this ideal encodes a—distinctly classical—set of values: self-control, conscientiousness, universal intelligibility, etc. Third and finally, the seeming ease with which Melück adopts these mores is seen by the ideal aristocrats as proof of her inherent virtue—or, more specifically, that she possess a certain kind of sensibility that allows her to intuit what is expected of her without having to be told explicitly.

What kind of behavior is implied by this standard, and why is it so important? A clue can be drawn from the incident that ultimately causes Melück to be ostracized from this society—an

embarrassing confrontation with Saintree that transpires soon after the Count ends their affair. This episode plays out as a contest between the former lovers for the sympathies of onlookers, one in which Saintree takes the upper hand because he ostensibly has better command of his emotions. Though Melück initially tries to gain an advantage over the Count by surprising him at a social gathering to which—unknown to Saintree—both have been invited, her powerful feelings for him soon cause her to lose control over herself, and she finds that she “cannot refrain” (*sie kann es nicht lassen*) from levelling accusations against him “in front of everyone” (*vor allen Leuten*). Unfortunately for her, the other partygoers deem this display of emotions to be far less credible than the relative apathy shown by the Count.¹⁶¹ Even though Saintree shares complicity with Melück in the affair—indeed, is more culpable because his involvement in the relationship is sexual rather than purely romantic—his apparent emotional distance makes it seem implausible that he would commit to such a rash and transgressive course of action.¹⁶²

This scene can be better understood if it is read alongside two other responses to erotic rejection in the story, one that exemplifies socially acceptable behavior and one that does not. The first of these is the response exhibited by the group of admirers that forms around Melück. Following her acceptance into the polite society of Marseille, the protagonist begins to attract potential suitors; one by one, however, each finds that his advances are rebuffed by the mysterious

¹⁶¹ “Er liebte sie soviel weniger, als sie ihn liebte, kein Wunder, wenn er gegen sie in diesem Steite überlegen erschien. Sein Zurückziehen von ihr, schien ein Sieg der Tugend und ihr ganzes Betragen wurde seit dieser Stunde verdächtig” (757).

¹⁶² It is worth comparing this scene to the reaction Saintree provokes when he first arrives in Marseille after being banned from the court in Paris due to his inappropriate relationship with Mathilde. By openly expressing his feelings of loss and melancholy—including by constantly wearing the distinctive blue coat that later figures prominently into Melück’s curse—the Count initially poses an irritating presence in the city’s cultivated circles: “[Saintree] war als der lebenswürdigste Mann aus der großen Welt bekannt, aber seine Laune machte ihn selten geneigt, alle Vorteile dieses guten Rufs zu ernten. Frauen, die sich ihm in Marseille aufdrängten, wußte er von nichts so ausführlich, so feurig, so hinreißend, als von seiner geliebten Mathilde zu unterhalten; immer trug er denselben Rock von blauer Seide, den er beim Abschiede von ihr getragen, auf dessen linker Brust ihre Tränen gefallen, was er einer Verwandten vertraute und bald alle wußten.“ (750)

foreigner. Rather than react angrily, however, the suitors uniformly withdraw from her presence to await “patiently” (*ohne Ungestüm*) another chance at satisfying their desire. Indeed, this shared experience of rejection even leads to the formation of a spirit of comradery among the suitors, who together engage in good-natured speculation about the mutual object of their affections.¹⁶³

The second example is the conduct displayed by the former knight—and Melück’s eventual murderer—Saint Lük. Having first briefly encountered the protagonist when she arrives in France at the beginning of the story, Saint Lük later appears in Marseille intent on seducing the woman he believes unjustly slipped through his grasp. He even goes as far as to swear “in ritual fashion” (*feierlich*) to his friends that he will spare no cost or effort in accomplishing this aim (a gesture that, notably, earns him the ridicule of even his friends).¹⁶⁴ Accordingly, he undertakes the devious scheme of trying to drug her drink during a social outing; whether by simple canniness or magical insight, however, Melück discovers this ploy and switches their drinks. The resulting embarrassment makes it impossible for Saint Lük to show his face in the city again.

These examples show how ideal of decorum cultivated by the aristocratic elite of Marseille serves to regulate excessive emotionality and prevent violence. The successful functioning of this ideal is exemplified by Melück’s admirers: Though they experience rejection by the protagonist,

¹⁶³ Notably, this speculation serves to limit the expression of embittered sentiments and deflatory rumors about the protagonist: “Mehrere von [Melücks Verehrer] wurden durch das gemeinsame Ziel ihres Strebens vertraulicher mit einander, untersuchten gemeinschaftlich, ob [ihrer] Widerstand, Keuschheit, List oder Überdruß zu nennen sei. Die meisten stimmten für dieses letzte, teils weil ihr Aussehen mehr einer gescheiterten Frau, als einem unerfahrenen Mädchen gliche; auch folgerte man aus dem Wenigen, was man von ihrer Geschichte wußte, aus ihrer Fügsamkeit und Gewandtheit, daß sie wohl nicht in den Grenzen des gewöhnlichen Lebens morgenländischer Frauen geblieben sei. Die verdorbnen Seelen suchten nach ihrer Art irgend einen lasterhafteren Grund ihrer Entfernung vom Laster, und suchten darüber allerlei Gerüchte in Umlauf zu bringen; doch blieb dies Bemühen, bei der Würde ihres Betragens, ohne Erfolg.” (749)

¹⁶⁴ “Die Begierde, jene kurze Bekanntschaft ausgezeichnete Augenblicke zu erneuen, führte [Saint Lük] zur Melück; sie entzückte ihn und als er von seinen Freunden die Schwierigkeit ihres Besitzes vernommen, schwor er ihnen feierlich, daß er sie zu Lande erobern wolle, was es koste, da sie ihm auf dem Meere durch so sonderbaren Zufall entrissen sei. Man neckte ihn mit diesem Schwure, als er auf den gewöhnlichen Eingängen der Intrigue gänzlich abgewiesen wurde.“ (749)

they do not react angrily. Instead, they contain their thwarted desire by projecting it on the hope of a future relationship with the beautiful foreigner. Moreover, they prove able to channel this desire into an alternate form of sociability, namely, friendship with their fellow disappointed suitors. Saint Lük, in contrast, leaves himself no such recourse. By swearing an oath to possess the Arab woman at any cost, he deliberately abandons self-restraint both in word and deed. The sanctimonious nature of the oath itself subjects him to the mockery of his companions. Such mockery anticipates the greater humiliation he suffers when his unscrupulousness is exposed by Melück's trick. It is also the appearance of having lost self-control that causes the protagonist herself to lose face when she confronts Saintree in front of their peers. By surrendering herself to her feelings, she allows herself to be perceived as a disruptive element within the ordered world of the aristocracy and is consequently marginalized.

Yet the practice of such decorum by the idle aristocracy is not without a fundamental flaw, one that is manifested in the false vindication of the Count that results from his public quarrel with Melück. Despite being aware of his own guilt, Saintree appears blameless due to his relative emotional detachment in the moment; the very code of decorum that condemns Melück for her outburst allows the Count's hypocrisy to go unpunished. Having been born into this courtly society, the Count is skilled at hiding his emotions and deceiving others about his true intentions; as the narrator observes, he is "all too well-practiced" in the "techniques of illusion."¹⁶⁵ More

¹⁶⁵ The context for this remark is the first private encounter between Saintree and Melück in her home. The Count, who visits the protagonist to help her prepare for her premiere as Phèdre, is convinced by her to take off his treasured blue coat and place it on a life-size mannequin so that he can better demonstrate the recitation of a specific passage. Once he does so, however, the mannequin, seemingly by magic, applauds his performance: "Erst erschrak der Graf, doch allzugeübt in der notwendigen Verstellungskunst, äußerte sich dieses Schrecken nur in einem Blicke, dann verlor er sich in einem Scherz, indem er bestimmt glaubte, Melück habe durch eine künstliche Einrichtung diese Bewegung hervorgebracht. Sie aber schien fast ohnmächtig von dem Schrecke dieses Ereignisses; sie versicherte, diese Einrichtung der Puppe nicht zu kennen." (753) It should be observed that Melück proves here to be better at feigning extreme emotions.

generally, the discrepancy between inner self and outward demeanor among the aristocrats of Marseille is signaled by the anonymity of the witnesses who comment on the story. Such commentary lacks the sincerity that would bind it to an individual perspective; it is the disembodied speech of a collective.

If this flaw does not prove immediately fatal to the reconciliation achieved between Melück, Saintree and Mathilde, it is because of the sympathetic ties that form between the three characters, ties that allow Melück to feel the suffering of the Count despite his earlier mistreatment of her and allow Mathilde to connect on a personal level with her rival despite the trouble the Arab woman has caused the Countess and her husband. Such acts of forgiveness exemplify the conciliatory power ascribed to sensibility in German and European culture of the late eighteenth century. What allows this ideal to be so effective here is the exceptional sincerity attributed to both Mathilde and Melück. I have already discussed the passage in which this quality is figuratively ascribed to Mathilde through the narrator's description of her "clear" features. Yet Melück, too, initially distinguishes herself with her sincerity when she is approached by several prominent women of Marseille during her time in the convent. As the narrator describes this encounter: "Die geistreiche, mehr tieferste, als scherzende Art, im Gegensatz des damals allgemein beliebten lächelnden Leichtsinns, womit sie alle neuen Verhältnisse des Landes, dem sie sich jetzt zuzählte, auffaßte und ausfragte, belebte die Lust der Frauen immer mehr, sie zu besuchen" (747). Though this quality ostensibly sets Melück apart from the "frivolity" (*Leichtsinn*) that characterizes the typical demeanor adopted by the French, the positive impression that she makes on the women of Marseille indicates that such sincerity is appreciated by the idle aristocracy. If this same society is later incapable of recognizing the authenticity of Melück's accusations against the Count, it suggests they are not being consistent in upholding their ideals.

It remains for Melück, Mathilde and Saintree to exemplify these ideals in the private life they establish for themselves on the Count's country estate. Their life on this estate represents a utopian existence in which truth, self-restraint and sympathy makes possible the banishment of all conflict. Ultimately, however, this harmonious existence proves fleeting. I will discuss why this is the case in the next section, when I take a closer look at Melück's prophetic warning.

3. The False Prophecy of Revolution

The catalyst for this speech is the reunion of the story's central cast under the sign of the burgeoning Revolution. Frenel, who has been away on yet another scholarly expedition to the Orient, is drawn back to France by revolutionary propaganda expressing "new hopes" for the "renewal of all the country's circumstances" (*Erneuerung aller Verhältnisse des Landes*) (766). Arriving in the harbor of Marseille, he is greeted by Saintree, Mathilde and Melück, who have also taken notice of the new ideas in circulation. There, gripped by what the narrator portrays as the general euphoria of this early revolutionary period, the three French characters express a shared sense of optimism about a future under a new, more egalitarian order. One after the other, Saintree, Mathilde and Frenel each reveal their personal aspirations for this regime: For Saintree, the Revolution promises to disseminate among all levels of society the ideals of honor and virtue previously reserved for the aristocracy, giving rise to a nation in which "heroes emerge from all houses" (*Helden [treten] aus allen Häusern hervor*). The Countess, for her part, foresees the emergence of a universal human family, one united by "the same informal pronoun" (*ein gleiches vertrauliches Du*). Finally, Frenel—who has been led by the "writings of the time" (*Schriften der Zeit*) to expect a "universal moral improvement" (*allgemeine Volksbildung*) extending to all

stations of French society—predicts the dawning of a “glorious existence” (*herrliches Dasein*) for the French people in a new “empire of reason” (*Reich der Vernunft*) (767).

It is at this point that Melück interrupts to make known her own, very different vision the revolutionary future. Dismissing outright her friends’ vision of collective fulfillment, she describes instead a formerly cohesive nation and society riven by conflict between the leaders of the Revolution, the marginalized groups they seek to empower, and an aristocracy forgetful of its traditional role in protecting society and its institutions. Rather than undergo reform in line with universal values of virtue, fraternity and reason, life in the formerly thriving country will be brought to a halt in the midst of a public discourse dominated by “empty chatter” (*leeren Schwatzen*). Lines of communication and transportation will become increasingly precarious as ships fall into disuse and disrepair and bandits patrol the highways. Hunger, once limited to a relative few, will become a universal phenomenon while the entire populace will feel compelled to celebrate in public the country’s supposed prosperity and independence. Nevertheless, neither the old nor the new elites will escape retribution and death, having been rendered powerless by the elevation of reason to the level of a supreme authority beyond all human control.

Undergirding this cataclysmic vision is a skeptical conception of human agency, one that regards the possibilities for the kind of collective actualization promised by the Revolution as fundamentally limited. The Arab woman deems it hubris on the part of the revolutionaries to expect to be able—with the mere use of reason—to improve “in the blink of an eye” an order that has reached its present form through a centuries-long process of evolution.¹⁶⁶ For Melück, the issue is

¹⁶⁶ “Wie soll die Vernunft in einem Augenblicke in die Welt kommen, nachdem sie in den tugendreichsten, tätigsten Jahrhunderten sich nur immer als eine seltne Fremde gezeigt hat, die sich kaum der drückendsten Not verständlich machen konnte, und sich eben in der Begründung dieser Abstufungen weltlicher und geistlicher Gewalt zuerst äußerte[?]” (767).

one of communication and consensus-building; in her view, the Revolution is doomed by the profound challenge in forming the kind of collective will required for a total reform of society through reasoned debate. “How is reason is supposed to promote great deeds,” Melück asks her friends, “when the men of reason you admire more than anyone on earth do nothing and accomplish nothing other than to speculate and to contradict each other’s speculations?” Without such agreement, the leaders of the Revolution will be forced to resort to unsavory means to realize their intentions, means to which the Revolution—along with the ideal of reason itself—will ultimately fall hostage: “I say to you,” she warns, “the men of reason will have to pawn the word so that all sorts of unreason will not only be said aloud, but also put into action. Deeds performed in the name of reason will destroy reason.”¹⁶⁷

This critique highlights a critical shortcoming in the model of public discourse exemplified by the idle aristocracy of the story’s first half. In the crisis of revolution, Melück suggests, the ideals of decorum and self-restraint central to this model would be powerless to contain the anarchic forces unleashed by the empowerment of the masses: “Hört, so wie ich euch jetzt überschreie, weil ihr die Schicklichkeit noch bewahren möchtet, die mir nie so notwendig gewesen ist, so werdet ihr vom rohen Haufen tausendmal überschrien werden, und wie ihr jetzt meinewegen verlegen sind, soviel mehr werdet ihr es euretwegen werden” (768). Lacking the cultivation of the aristocratic elites, these masses will feel no compulsion to show self-restraint in speech and cede public discourse to the self-appointed leaders of the Revolution. Without such restraint on the part of the people, public discourse is rendered useless as a forum for negotiating

¹⁶⁷ “Wie soll die Vernunft zu einer Tätigkeit erheben, wenn die vernünftigsten Menschen, die ihr auf Erden achtet, nichts tun und vollbringen, als spekulieren und in diesen Spekulationen einander widersprechen. Ich sage euch, die Vernünftigen werden das Wort leihen müssen, um all Unvernunft nicht bloß zur Sprache, sondern auch zur Tat zu bringen, und in dem Namen jener, wird geschehen, was diese Verdirbt” (767-8).

the divergent interests of different groups and consequently becomes merely a way for the group with the loudest voice—i.e. the majority—to assert total control over the life of the nation.

As the above quotation suggests, Melück does not merely describe the rhetorical assault of the masses, but also employs the same kind of unrestrained speech herself in delivering her warning. To the considerable chagrin of both Saintree and Frenel, her forceful pronouncements soon draw the attention of passersby in the busy harbor, which causes the two men to try in vain to calm her. Melück, however, refuses to be pacified, and even mocks them for their powerlessness in the face of such speech. The situation echoes that of the earlier scene in which she publicly confronts Saintree about his decision to end their relationship; once again Melück gives vent to her passions in a disruptive public outburst. In this instance, though, her violation of decorum is deliberate, and aimed at revealing the limits of such norms. In order to speak the truth to her friends, Melück must dispense with such decorum, and do so even though it unsettles them (and threatens to provoke a violent response¹⁶⁸). Her speech provides a concrete example of how these prevailing norms obstruct frank and true speech.

But how does Melück come to be in possession of this truth? Why does she, alone among her friends, recognize the threat posed by the Revolution? As it turns out, Melück has directly witnessed the consequences of political upheaval; as she confides to Frenel in an earlier scene, it was a popular uprising in her homeland—one secretly instigated by enemies of her father, the Emir—that forced her to become a refugee. This revelation is significant because it continues a pattern established previously—when Frenel identifies Melück as the source of Saintree’s curse—in which an insight drawn from empirical experience has a decisive impact on the plot. In the

¹⁶⁸ Saintree ultimately does result to force in order to compel Melück’s silence. After finally losing patience with her predictions, she takes her “violently” (*gewaltsam*) by the hand and leads her home (769).

context of the title character's prophetic speech, moreover, this basis in empirical knowledge distinguishes her dire predictions about the Revolution from the optimistic speculations voiced by Saintree, Mathilde and Frenel. This contrast is especially pronounced in the case of Doctor, who is portrayed by the narrator as being both the most intellectually capable of the group and the most deluded about the revolutionary project. Frenel's long absence from France, the narrator asserts, has made it impossible for him to bring his "sharp talent for observation" (*scharfe Beobachtung*) to bear on matters pertaining to his home country as well as rendered him more susceptible to the seductions of propaganda.¹⁶⁹

Significantly, this is not the only instance in the story of a character allowing himself to become dangerously reliant on speculative knowledge. Earlier, Saintree resorts to a "comforting theory" (*gefällige Theorie*) when he feels compelled to justify himself his participation in the affair with Melück. Accordingly, he excuses his seeking sexual gratification through his relationship with the Arab woman by positing an—ultimately arbitrary—conceptual distinction between such "lower," carnal pleasure and the "higher" love that binds him to Mathilde. By enabling him to prolong the affair and creating the temptation for him to deceive Mathilde, this logic is an important factor in motivating the potential for tragedy at the end of the first half.¹⁷⁰

In both situations, theoretical speech is defined by a physical distance separating the character in question from the object of speculation. Frenel falls victim to the revolutionary ideal of France because he has been away from the country; Saintree, for his part, is only capable of

¹⁶⁹ "Frenel kannte Frankreich am wenigsten, er war zu lange abwesend, um seine scharfe Beobachtung geltend zu machen; die Schriften der Zeit hatten ihn aber auf eine allgemeine moralische Volksbildung vorbereitet, die leicht das Resultat der allgemeinsten, menschlichsten Philosophie zu einem herrlichen Dasein, zu einem Reiche der Vernunft ausführen konnte." (767)

¹⁷⁰ "[Saintree] behauptete, die ganze Welt sei von zweierlei Liebe besessen; unbeschadet der höheren, glaubte er sich der Araberin in dem niederen Sinne ergeben zu können, wenn es Mathilden nur verschwiegen belibe, und dies wurde seine einzige Sorge." (755)

developing his theory of love with Mathilde away in Paris; once she makes known her imminent arrival in Marseille, the Count promptly ends his relationship with Melück. Two further examples underscore this thematic association of theoretical discourse with absence. First, the narrator's characterization of the Revolution as inspired by a collective desire to fulfill "certain favorite whims of a few authors" (*gewisse Lieblingsgrillen einiger Schriftsteller*) implies—by leaving the authors in question anonymous and attributing their influence to written, as opposed spoken, discourse—that the uprising has no firm origin; rather than physical distance between subject and object, theoretical discourse is here marked by a lack of an identifiable subject and even by a kind of disembodiment. Second, the charge levelled by Melück that the leaders of the Revolution "do nothing other than speculate" suggests that there is a fundamental discrepancy between the debates waged between the revolutionaries and the everyday life in the nation they aspire to improve.

Melück's own prophetic speech presents a striking contrast to such disembodied discourse. As noted above, her general demeanor is characterized from the beginning of the narrative as conveying an air of sincerity in a manner that distinguishes it from the frivolity supposedly typical of the French. This distinction between sincerity and frivolity is continued in the story's second half when her prophetic warning is juxtaposed with the "favorite whims" (*Lieblingsgrillen*) articulated by the writers who inspire the Revolution. Her greater sincerity is further established by her physical presence when issuing this warning. The fact that she delivers her speech in a way that openly violates norms of decorous behavior—a fact to which Melück herself conspicuously alludes while speaking—ostensibly attests to the truth and importance of what she says. The title character addresses her companions despite the danger that doing so could embarrass or offend them and thus jeopardize her relationship to them. Like the users of *parrhēsia* described by

Foucault, Melück takes a risk in speaking out, and this implicitly serves to affirm her sincerity.¹⁷¹ This risk—and the corresponding proof of her authenticity—is greater due to her presence in the scene, which renders her vulnerable to an emotional reaction or direct retaliation from her listeners.

There is another, even more important way in which the prophetic speech employed by Melück differs from the discourse of theory: In contrast to the latter, such speech prompts effective action. I have shown how the Arab woman criticizes the revolutionaries for their inability to produce a governing consensus on the basis of rational debate and norms of social decorum. This inability, in Melück's portrayal, is symptomatic of a fundamental problem in converting words into action using the ideal of reason Frenel and the leaders of the Revolution take as their guiding principle (“Wie soll die Vernunft zu einer Tätigkeit erheben?”). Though the writings of the revolutionary authors prove capable of provoking a desire for fundamental reform among the populace of France, this intervention is depicted by the narrator as nothing more than a distraction from the nation's true historical mission.¹⁷² Ultimately, the revolutionaries cannot bring about the new age of social and political equality they envision.

Once again, the key factor that distinguishes the speech used by Melück is her sincerity, which serves an important metadiscursive function in rendering her pronouncements into performative utterances. This can be seen in the scene in the story's first half when she curses Saintree. Ostensibly inhabiting the role of Phèdre, she is instead motivated from the moment of her initial entrance on stage by her desire to seek revenge on her former lover, whose presence in the theater has been made known to her by a mutual acquaintance. The result is a kind of radical

¹⁷¹ Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, p. 11.

¹⁷² The narrator describes the disruption the emergence of revolutionary ideology brings to the lives of the main characters in the following manner: “In dieser Ruhe waren beinahe acht Jahre vergangen, ehe der Wunsch nach Erneuerung aller Verhältnisse des Landes, um gewisse Lieblingsgrillen einiger Schriftsteller zu verwirklichen, die Aufmerksamkeit von der notwendigen historischen Entwicklung jedes Volkes ablenkte [...]“ (766).

authenticity: Rather than portray her character in a conventional fashion, she speaks her lines of dialogue with an inappropriate “forcefulness” (*Heftigkeit*) as if “possessed by an evil spirit.” Even worse, she visibly scans the audience for Saintree, a gesture that the theatergoers (falsely) regard as evidence she has forgotten her lines and that thus breaks the fourth wall of the stage.¹⁷³ This continues until she finds the Count, at which point she addresses her lines to him directly: “Jetzt sprach sie fort, ihre starren Augen auf den Grafen gerichtet, bald leise, bald heftig, als wenn ein Sturmwind vor ihrem Munde rauschte, der die Worte willkürlich verschlüge” (759). Her speech at this moment, which blatantly violates the norm of universal intelligibility, is interpreted by the audience as a failure of acting, and accordingly prompts laughter and jeering. Her emotional declamation, however, has the intended effect of interpellating the Count. After first joining in the jeering—and thus completing his betrayal of his former lover—Saintree immediately falls victim to the curse. Melück’s open expression of her real emotions behind the mask of Phèdre transgresses the boundaries of dramatic fiction to impact the world beyond the stage.

Likewise, Melück’s prophetic warning ultimately takes on a performative dimension. This does not happen when she first delivers the speech, but rather only once her predictions are confirmed. When Saintree and Melück are captured by the mob that attacks the Count’s residence, Frenel—who is present as a representative of the central government in Paris—ostensibly finds himself in a position to save them. He cannot do so, though, because the mob is not in his control; instead, the crowd is led by Saint Lük, who has reinvented himself as a revolutionary demagogue. Consequently, the Doctor finds himself powerless to stop the disgraced knight from murdering

¹⁷³ “Jetzt trat Phädra auf—allgemeine Stille; aber wie erschrecken alle Freunde der Melück, als sie nicht mit der Schwäche nach großer Leidenschaft, die sie sonst so herrlich darzustellen wußte, die ersten Worte sprach: N’allons plus avant...sondern, wie von einem bösen Geiste besessen, mit Heftigkeit die Worte herausstieß und im ganzen Hause umherblickte, als hätte sie ihre Worte verloren, und suche sie auf den Lippen der Zuschauer zusammen, die freilich meist alle die Stelle auswendig wußten und leise vor sich hersagten.“ (759).

both captives. Yet this confirmation of Melück's prophecy has an expected beneficial effect. Seeing these predictions fulfilled—and recognizing the truth of her speech—Frenel is reminded of the last request the Arab woman made to him before being attacked by Saint Lük, namely, to find Mathilde and her children in their hiding place and rescue them from the wrath of the mob. This reminder enables Saintree to overcome his passivity and act to save the remaining members of the family. Thus—even though Melück's prophecy is initially ignored and does not prevent the story's catastrophic denouement—this warning does succeed in mitigating disaster. It is in this way that her prophecy ultimately proves superior to the false prophecy of the Revolution.

4. A Prophetic Anecdote

In this final section of the chapter, I turn my attention to the question of the story's genre. "Melück" bears the descriptive subtitle: "Eine Anekdote." Yet the tale would hardly seem to qualify as an anecdote in any conventional sense of the term. At around thirty pages in the version of the text contained in the *Deutscher Klassiker Verlag* edition of Arnim's works, "Melück" is neither extremely short nor particularly "pointed," two of the key qualities the *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft* evokes as constitutive features of the genre.¹⁷⁴ Nor—to name another attribute often associated with the anecdote—is the title character and central figure of the story a historical person. Why, then, would Arnim employ this term, and what does it entail for the interpretation of the story?

I want to propose that this subtitle functions to evoke a scenario of oral transmission and that it thus can be understood as referring to the fictional sequence of events through which the

¹⁷⁴ According to the *Reallexikon*, an "Anekdote" is a "kurze, pointierte Geschichte, die einer wirklichen Person nachgesagt wird." Heinz Schlaffer, "Anekdote" in *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft*, Bd. 1, ed. Klaus Weimar (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007): 86-9, here p. 87.

narrative of “Melück” is made available to the reader. The key moment of this sequence is a scene that occurs at the very end of the story, when the narrator reveals his own personal connection to the story via his relationship to Mathilde, and describes how he heard the tale from her. At the center of this exchange is Melück herself, whose distinctive—and, for the narrative, decisive—personality must be reconstructed from the Countess’ traumatized memory.

This episode is important for my reading of the tale because it represents a further instance in which Melück and her prophetic intervention are reevaluated in the light of later events. Indeed, with the story of the narrator’s encounter with Mathilde, the story notably enacts the work of revision that I described in the introduction to this chapter as defining the reception of prophecy. I argue that this revision once again functions to endow her prophetic warning with a new and different kind of performative energy.

Before proceeding further with this analysis, though, it would be useful to reconstruct the understanding of the anecdote current in the early nineteenth century. The anecdote was a focus of acute literary interest during this time, and the period witnessed many attempts to define the (famously undefinable¹⁷⁵) genre. For Johann Christoph Adelung, the anecdote recounts a historical “incident” (*Umstand*) that is supposedly secret, otherwise unknown or culled from the private sphere; the general fascination with these accounts, he adds, motivates certain individuals to become “anecdote hunters” (*Anekdoten-Jäger*) or “anecdote catchers” (*Anekdoten-Fänger*) who pursue such stories “in an unseemly or excessive manner” (*auf eine unschickliche oder übertriebene Art*).¹⁷⁶ In “Nachricht von den poetischen Werken des Johannes Boccaccio” (1801),

¹⁷⁵ Surveying a number of different attempts to theorize the genre, Paul Fleming writes that “about the only thing most anecdote theorists agree upon is that there is often little agreement about what an anecdote is.” Paul Fleming, “The Perfect Story: Anecdote and Exemplarity in Linnaeus and Blumenberg” in *Thesis Eleven* 104:1 (2011): 72-86, here p. 74.

¹⁷⁶ “ein geheimer unbekannter Umstand, ingleichen ein kleiner unwichtiger Umstand des Privat-Lebens. Daher der Anekdoten-Jäger, Anekdoten-Fänger, der auf eine unschickliche oder übertriebene Art nach solchen geheimen und

Friedrich Schlegel illuminates the genre most closely associated with the Italian writer, the novella, by likening it to the anecdote. As Schlegel writes, the novella is:

eine Anekdote, eine noch unbekante Geschichte, so erzählt, wie man sie in Gesellschaft erzählen würde, eine Geschichte, die an und für sich schon einzeln interessieren können muß, ohne irgend auf den Zusammenhang der Nationen, oder der Zeiten, oder auch auf die Fortschritte der Menschheit und das Verhältnis zur Bildung derselben zu sehen. Eine Geschichte also, die streng genommen, nicht zur Geschichte gehört, und die Anlage zur Ironie schon in der Geburtsstunde mit auf die Welt bringt.¹⁷⁷

Such definitions—which single out the brevity of the anecdote or its focus on discrete, otherwise neglected episodes as attributes that distinguish the genre from conventional historiography—are particularly applicable to the group of short narratives Arnim published under the title “Anekdoten zur Zeitgeschichte” during his fleeting tenure as editor of the *Preußischen Correspondenten* in 1814; these stories, much like the more well-known anecdotes printed by Heinrich von Kleist in the *Berliner Abendblätter*, center on incidents from the time of the Napoleonic wars that occasionally feature key figures of the period (usually the French emperor himself) in the margins, but more often concern unnamed or otherwise unimportant individuals who exemplify contemporary issues or attitudes.

Yet there is another definition of the anecdote that is just as relevant for the kind of story presented in “Melück.” According to this understanding of the genre, the anecdote aims to provide a glimpse into the personality of a historical individual by highlighting a telling, though neglected utterance or deed. In a short essay entitled “Ueber den Werth der Anekdoten” (1784) published in

kleinen Umständen haschet.“ Johann Christoph Adelung, “Die Anekdote” in *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der hochdeutschen Mundart mit beständiger Vergleichung der übrigen Mundarten, besonder aber die oberdeutschen*, zweite vermehrte und verbesserte Ausgabe, Bd. 1 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1970): p. 284. Interestingly, the Grimms’ *Deutsches Wörterbuch* does not contain an entry on the anecdote, but only on the “Anekdotenjäger.”

¹⁷⁷ Friedrich Schlegel, “Nachricht von den poetischen Werken des Johannes Boccaccio“ in *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, Bd. 2, Abt. 1, ed. Hans Eichner (München: Schöningh, 1967): 373-96, here p. 394.

Christoph Martin Wieland's *Teutsche Merkur*, Albrecht Christoph Kayser defines the genre as a narrative containing an "characterizing expression" of a person's "heart or spirit" (*eine charakterisierende Herzens- oder Geistesausserung*).¹⁷⁸ Noting, however, that the insight provided by such a brief narrative is fundamentally limited and that a single individual can manifest ostensibly contradictory attributes¹⁷⁹, Kayser ultimately concludes that an anecdote offers at best an "uncertain" (*unsichere*) indication of personal character, and laments the supposedly fashionable tendency to invoke such accounts in judging others; like Adelung, moreover, he is critical of those who "hunt" for revealing anecdotes.¹⁸⁰ As the entry on the genre in the *Reallexikon* points out, there was, indeed, an increasing vogue in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for collections of anecdotes, which were frequently referred to in the subtitles of such collections as *Charaktergemälde* (character portraits).¹⁸¹ Arnim himself suggests a link between the anecdote and life-writing when, in a letter mailed during a stay at his rural estate in Wiepersdorf with his wife, Bettina, and her brother, Clemens Brentano, he reports to his correspondent, Fredrich Carl von Savigny, of the trio's preoccupation with composing "biographies, that is to say, anecdotes."¹⁸²

"Melück" demonstrates features of both the anecdote as a retelling of an isolated incident and the anecdote as a revealing sketch of an individual psyche. Like the former, the series of events that comprise the narrative are "historical"—a quality established here by the fact that they unfold

¹⁷⁸ Albrecht Christoph Kayser, "Ueber den Werth der Anekdoten" in *Der Teutsche Merkur*, 1784, 2. Vierteljahr: 82-6, here p. 82.

¹⁷⁹ Kayser, "Werth der Anekdoten," p. 83.

¹⁸⁰ Kayser, "Werth der Anekdoten," p. 84.

¹⁸¹ Schlaffer, "Anekdoten," p. 88.

¹⁸² "Seit einigen Tagen schreiben wir dreie [i.e. Arnim, Bettine and Clemens Brentano] hier [in Wiepersdorf] miteinander Biographieen, das heißt Anekdoten." Quoted in: Clemens Brentano, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, Bd. 19, ed. Gerhard Kluge (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1987): p. 698.

against a recognizable historical backdrop, i.e. the French Revolution—without being implicated in any broader continuum of historical causality. Like the latter, however, the story centers on—and is devoted to illuminating—the personality of a single individual. This focus is hinted at in very title of the “anecdote,” yet is only made explicit with the account of the narrator’s meeting with Mathilde. During this visit, the narrator discovers the Countess to be still traumatized by the loss of her husband and friends as well as greatly alarmed by a life-threatening illness afflicting the children. The weight of these concerns on her are paradoxically communicated to the narrator through the medium of a “wordless” emotional intensity that he describes as “great and sublime” (*groß und erhaben*) (776). In addition to a sense of “devastation” (*Nichtigkeit*), this emotionality takes the form of a profound feeling of “admiration” (*Bewunderung*) for her “great friend Melück,”

eine Bewunderung, die [Mathilde] in manchem Augenblick außer sich setzte, sie entrückte, daß sie aus der Fülle des Wortlosen, das in ihrer Seele wogte, in einzelnen Äußerungen, die höchste Anschauung dieser wahrhaft morgenländischen Seele in mir erweckte, der es genügte, Prophet eines Hauses zu werden, dem sie durch Leidenschaft angeeignet, während sie fähig gewesen wäre, Prophet einer ganzen abendländischen Welt für Jahrhunderte zu werden. (776)

In telling the story of the “House Prophet,” the narrator endeavors to do what the traumatized Countess cannot—namely, to assemble her “individual utterances” into a coherent memory of Melück that can be disseminated to the wider world. This hermeneutic project thus has the recuperative aim of restoring a person and a teaching in danger of being lost both due to her self-marginalization and due to the destructive forces of history.

Indeed, it is to history itself that the narrator, in a telling passage, ascribes the blame for the catastrophic outcome of his story. This passage occurs immediately prior to the start of the second half, when the narrative has arrived at a tentative ending with the main cast taking up joint residence on Satinree’s country estate. At this crucial juncture, the narrator explains why he cannot end the story, positing a fundamental tension between the direction taken by the story thus far and

the less auspicious trajectory of history: “Wir wünschten mit diesem Bilde der Unschuld die Geschichte schließen zu können: die Geschichte begnügt sich aber nicht mit schönen Bildern des Glücks” (766). With a pun on the double meaning of the German word ‘Geschichte’—i.e. ‘story’ and ‘history’—the narrator introduces history as a poetological corrective for the overly optimistic outlook exhibited by the tale up to this point; though the tragic guilt unleashed in the first half of the narrative—a guilt stemming both from the affair between Melück and Saintree and the former’s subsequent cursing of the latter—initially appears to be averted and supplanted by the “image of innocence” emerging from life on the Count’s estate, such a resolution fails to convince in light of the historical catastrophes produced by the Revolution and the ensuing Napoleonic Wars.

Complicating this idea, however, is the narrator’s own account of how the Revolution comes to France. As noted previously, the impetus for the Revolution is attributed to a disembodied collective “urge” (*Wunsch*) for national “renewal” inspired by a few unnamed authors. The narrator later insists that radical dissatisfaction with—and the ensuing turn to violence against—the existing regime can “in no way” (*keineswegs*) be ascribed to increasing deprivation among the lowest echelons of society; rather, such subversive tendencies stem entirely from “a kind of middle class” (*irgend eine Mittelklasse*), who, having “outgrown” their previous “circumstances” (*Verhältnisse*), find that they cannot ascend further without entirely transforming the “overarching distribution of wealth (*Vermögensstand*) and conditions of prestige (*Ehrenverhältnisse*) in the country.”¹⁸³ The implication—for the narrator, at least—is that the outbreak of revolutionary violence is ultimately arbitrary; through change of a magnitude envisioned by the Revolution may itself be inevitable, the drastic step of abolishing the old order to create a new one is not. Indeed,

¹⁸³ “[Die] Ärmeren sind es keineswegs, die gewaltsame Revolutionen der Staaten aufgären, es ist irgend eine Mittelklasse, die über ihre Verhältnisse hinausgewachsen, die höhere nicht erreichen kann, ohne den allgemeinen Vermögensstand und die Ehrenverhältnisse der Nation zu verwandeln.” (769)

the very desire to fundamentally transform society prevents its otherwise inexorable improvement: Such an urge “diverts” (*ablenkt*) the attention of the nation away from its “necessary historical development” (*notwendigen historischen Entwicklung*).

Arnim’s anecdote thus presents itself as beating an—ultimately fleeting—retreat from the carnage of history within the much larger deviation from history marked by the Revolution. The complex interplay of historical necessity and its opposite, contingency, suggested by these passages invites a return to the question of the anecdote and, in particular, to what is arguably one of the most important twentieth century attempts to answer this question, Joel Fineman’s 1989 essay “The History of the Anecdote: Fiction and Fiction.” Like Schlegel, Fineman posits that the anecdote exists in a fundamental tension to history as a “grand narrative” of a nation, period or other long-term phenomenon. The anecdote is “a *historeme*,” “the smallest unit of historiographic fact” that demonstrates a “peculiar and eventful narrative force.”¹⁸⁴ As such, it offers a disruptive counterweight to the tendency in the tradition of grand historiographic narrative to subsume distinct incidents within an overarching telos of historical becoming. For Fineman, this means that

[The] anecdote is the literary form that uniquely *lets history happen* by virtue of the way it introduces an opening into the teleological, and therefore timeless, narration of beginning, middle, and end. The anecdote produces the effect of the real, the occurrence of contingency, by establishing an event as an event within and yet without the framing context of successivity, i.e., it does so only in so far as its narration both comprises and refracts the narration it reports.¹⁸⁵

By isolating a particular incident within a larger historical continuum, the anecdote undermines the perception of historical necessity established by the incorporation of multiple events in a sequential narrative, and allows a vital element of contingency to be recovered. As Paul Fleming

¹⁸⁴ Joel Fineman, “The History of the Anecdote: Fiction and Fiction” in *The New Historicism*, ed. H. Aram Veenser (New York: Routledge, 1989): 49-76, here p. 57.

¹⁸⁵ Fineman, “The History of the Anecdote,” 61.

argues, Fineman regards anecdotes as “[creating] a space for something new to emerge, that is, something utterly unexpected that re-organizes any sense of predictable chronology”; such tales, in this understanding, make it possible for “history (as the unforeseeable) to truly happen.”¹⁸⁶

Fineman’s attempt to understand the anecdote as a genre fundamentally concerned with questions of contingency offers an intriguing model for how to read “Melück.” For even if the story is fictional and thus not an anecdote in the strictest sense, it is nevertheless, like an “authentic” anecdote, shaped on a formal level by the disruptive force of contingency. This is not only true of the way the story relates to the history of the French Revolution and French history generally, but also of the role played by the protagonist, who represents a fictional—and, indeed, contingent—insertion into the historical events of the Revolution. Melück is a figure of contingency in that both her origin and her ultimate fate resist being explained solely in terms of an overarching narrative about the Revolution. The character—as well as the anecdote told about her—thus functions to alienate the familiar understanding of the Revolution evoked by the narrator’s depiction of history as a corrective or limiting influence on the outcome of the story. Specifically, the anecdote deprives the Revolution of its apparent necessity as the supposed product of an underlying historical destiny.

From the very beginning of the narrative, Melück appears under the sign of contingency or, more specifically, “chance” (*Zufall*). Her initial arrival in France is made possible “by a fortuitous gust of wind” (*durch einen glücklichlichen Winstoß*) that allows her ship, a Turkish merchant vessel, to avoid being boarded by the corsairing Knights of Malta and escape into the safety of a French harbor; the near-miss leaves the disappointed Knights feeling as if *Zufall* itself

¹⁸⁶ Fleming, “The Perfect Story,” 75.

has frustrated their aims and offended their honor.¹⁸⁷ This sentiment is reiterated by Saint Lük, who at this point is the Knights' leader; upon his return to land, he immediately declares his intent to possess the beautiful Arab who had been "ripped from his grasp through such a remarkable chance" (*ihm [...] durch so sonderbaren Zufall entrissen sei*). When he schemes to take advantage by slipping an opiate into her drink, however, his plan is foiled by an apparent *Zufall* that causes her to switch their glasses.¹⁸⁸ Saintree, prior to the start of his affair with the protagonist, wonders at the *Zufall* that has enabled him to win "such a marvelous friend."¹⁸⁹ Later, after he ends their relationship, he is surprised to encounter her *zufällig* at a social gathering, where she quickly proceeds to berate him publicly for his supposed betrayal.¹⁹⁰

It should be noted that, in each of these instances, *Zufall* is only one of several possible explanations for the incident provided by the narrator; each incident, furthermore, is ultimately shown to have an underlying cause that is obscured by the invocation of chance. Indeed, much of what is portrayed inexplicable about the arrival of the protagonist in France and her subsequent fate can be explained by the revelation, later in the story, that the Arab woman possesses magical powers. Once this is made clear, it becomes possible to regard Melück as directly responsible for facilitating her vessel's escape from the Maltese privateer, for switching glasses with Saint Lük, and for seducing Saintree.

¹⁸⁷ "Die Ritter glaubten sich sogar durch den Zufall, der ihnen das Schiff entrissen, in ihrer Ehre gekränkt [...]" (745).

¹⁸⁸ "Melück, ohne von irgend jemand gewarnt zu sein, hatte aber, entweder die Geschicklichkeit, oder den Zufall für sich, die Gläser unbemerkt zu vertauschen, so daß Saint Lük zum Gelächter aller aus der Gesellschaft fortgetragen werden mußte [...]" (750).

¹⁸⁹ "[...] er strömte in Freude über, eine so herrliche Freundin durch den Zufall gewonnen zu haben" (754).

¹⁹⁰ "Zufällig traf er sie in einer Gesellschaft, wo sie ihn, er aber nicht sie erwartet hatte [...]" (757).

Before taking further stock of these observations, it would be useful here to specify what was at stake in discussions of *Zufall* or chance in the early nineteenth century. The *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* notes that chance is bound up in the philosophical tradition with questions of causality. More specifically, the idea of chance is typically invoked to indicate that a particular event has either no cause or no known cause. Consequently, the idea has long aroused suspicion that it is merely an “empty” term, one that masks the lack of a convincing explanation for certain phenomena. Like Fineman’s concept of contingency, moreover, chance presents a figure of contrast to notions—such as destiny, providence or natural determinacy—that presuppose a successive continuity of events.¹⁹¹ As Reinhart Koselleck has shown, this opposition plays an important role in a key problematic of historiographic discourse in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Prior to the eighteenth century, Koselleck argues, chance was commonly understood as “fortune” and thus as either as a divine intervention into human history or a symptom of historical impermanence. With the Enlightenment and the development of rational historiography, however, historians began to look for ways to explain past transformations without resorting to now ostensibly outmoded theological notions. Chance was increasingly seen less as an independent factor in human history and more as a projection of individuals who lack the knowledge that would enable them to explain the underlying cause or causes of an event. By reducing chance to a matter of perception, Koselleck contends, it became possible for the emergent intellectual trends of historicism and the philosophy of history to conceive of history as a force of teleological necessity

¹⁹¹ J.C. Schmidt, “Zufall” in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Bd. 12, ed. Joachim Ritter et. al. (Basel: Schwabe, 2004): 1408-24, here pp. 1408-9.

that, in the form of Hegel's "cunning of reason," evades direct human cognition. This hallowing out of the idea thus emerged as a defining feature of modern historical experience.¹⁹²

"Melück" dramatizes the insight that fortune or contingency are effects of perspective by only gradually introducing the story's title characters and her capabilities and only doing so through from other characters' respective points of view. In the second half of the story, though, the opposite happens: The presentist perspective of Saintree, Mathilde and Frenel causes them to interpret the Revolution as a necessary and positive historical development. In other words, they see necessity where there is none, revealing that necessity, too, can be illusory. The narrative thus enacts a poetics of history based on consistently circumscribing characters' historical interpretations. Such a poetics is aimed at encouraging a way of thinking about history that accounts for the fundamental limitations of human perspective across time and embraces the task of constant historical revision

Above, I alluded to the situation that greets the narrator during his visit to Mathilde's home. During this visit, the children of the Countess are seriously ill. These children are the last surviving reminder of the happy life she once led together with Saintree and Melück on the Count's estate; indeed, these children, which are said to bear a "particular resemblance" (*besondere Ähnlichkeit*) with their Arab governess, represent a powerful visual testament to their unconventional family. Their loss would thus symbolically represent the loss of this memory. The children, however, ultimately recover, an outcome that coincides with Mathilde's telling of her friend's story to the narrator. With the telling and retelling of this narrative as an anecdote—one grounded in the

¹⁹² Reinhart Koselleck, "Der Zufall als Motivationsrest in der Geschichtsschreibung" in *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1979): 158-75.

personal perspective of an eyewitness—the memory of Melück and her prophetic legacy are preserved despite her absence.

Coda:

The Future of Romantic Prophecy

Moses, Muhammad, Johanna and Melück: The prophetic protagonists surveyed in this dissertation share a conviction that they speak for a supreme authority in a time of crisis, a time defined by the very absence of such authority. This crisis can be a collective one—persecution, invasion, revolution—as works like *Moses*, *Jungfrau* and “Melück” demonstrate. Or it can be personal such as the loss of faith suffered by Goethe’s Mahomet, or the disturbing hallucinatory experiences that plague Günderröde’s version of the same prophet. In either case, the prophet’s task is ostensibly restorative in nature—namely, to reestablish a lost sense of existential security. None of the prophets discussed here, however, engages in a straightforward act of recuperation. Rather, the prophet helps to facilitate a metamorphosis of the person or group in question that often renders them more empowered than before. This is most evident in the plays discussed in Chapter 1 that center on prophetic founders of religions and polities; it would be difficult to deny the transformative legacy of either Moses or Muhammad, leaders who—if tradition is to be believed—rose from obscurity to create communities that endure to the present day. Yet as I have argued, it is also possible to ascribe a revolutionary influence to Johanna, who—despite apparently seeking merely to rehabilitate the French monarchy—implicitly reimagines the ideological basis of

sovereign rule in her country. Melück presents the only exception, dying tragically after her warnings about the dangers of revolution are ignored; even this fate, though, at least points to the possibility of an alternate future in which France and Europe are allowed to pursue the providential destiny evoked by the protagonist in her prophetic speech.

In this regard, all the characters treated in this dissertation, apart from Melück, could be considered great individuals of history in the sense evoked by von Hammer in his prologue, and even Arnim's protagonist is portrayed in the final lines of her story as a potential world-historical individual. The prophet's mission assumes, in the Romantic imagination, the quality of a historical event or transformation. It is for this reason that the authors discussed here make such an effort to use historical and ethnographic knowledge or authentic cultural texts to situate their protagonist within a distinctive historical and cultural context. The figure of the prophet offers these writers a case study for how such a context can change, and for how political and cultural innovation can emerge from certain sorts of individuals and situations. At the same time, however, the unique kind of reception experienced by prophets and their pronouncements suggests the different ways in which history and historical memory can link chronologically disparate moments. If Schiller is willing to deviate from a careful historical reconstruction of the Hundred Years' War in *Jungfrau*, it is because the enduring relevance of Joan of Arc has as much to do with the mythic force of her story—a myth the author deliberately seeks to revive and cultivate—as with its effect as a material cause of present circumstances.

Though the prophets considered here are protagonists in their respective texts, they notably depart from conventional ideals of individual heroism in one important respect—namely, the way they perceive and present themselves as being compelled to speak and act rather than doing so of their own volition. This renunciation of personal will takes several different forms for these

prophets, from the progressive and seemingly compulsory amplifications of Mahomet's hymn to Johanna's vow of purity and Melück's aggressive and indecorous speech to her friends. As these examples illustrate, the surrender of individual will or self-control paradoxically enables the Romantic prophet to recover a kind of religious or political agency on an alternate, extrapersonal basis. The radical nature of this displacement is indicated by the fact that—as I have shown—the source of the prophet's calling is never unambiguously identified as a divine authority. The lingering mystery of this source further underscores the demotion of human consciousness as a sovereign actor in history. Even if the prophet effectively intervenes in a crisis, they do so without fully comprehending what allows them to do so.

It is hardly surprising that writers living in a period marked by reform and revolution would be interested in the nature of historical transformations and especially in the origin and metamorphosis of political sovereignty. Concern about the fate of projects such as the French Revolution or the Napoleonic Code clearly resonate in the texts at the center of this dissertation, from the various scenarios of national founding or refounding to Arnim's explicit depiction of revolutionary mob violence. In this regard, the tension between autonomy and heteronomy I have been describing can be understood as a reflection of contemporaneous debates about the source of political sovereignty, debates in which sovereignty could be alternately attributed to the monarch, the law, the general will or some other political force. If the Romantic prophet exemplifies these contests, though, he or she is also called to adjudicate them: This is the case, for example, when Johanna affirms Karl as the legitimate king on the novel basis of his care for the people, or when she and Melück invoke history to relativize the claims of political rationality. As a figure who both exerts the appeal of an exceptional individual and embodies a transcendent principle, the prophet

represents a kind of authority that is neither entirely conventional nor purely situational; the prophet is thus well-suited to mediate between new and traditional forms of sovereignty.

For the prophet to be a credible figure of fundamental renewal, he or she must in some way transcend the conflicts that dominate the existing society, or, in the case of G nderrode’s Mohamed, distance himself from his previous involvement in these conflicts. In the texts considered here, the prophetic protagonists acquire this credibility by occupying a position symbolically associated with a kind of origin. G nderrode’s and von Hammer’s versions of Muhammad as well as Klingemann’s Moses do this by assuming a role of fatherhood; indeed, it is telling that these figures are so often paired with younger male characters like Nahlid or Josua who function as ersatz sons. This role also befits their legacy as political and religious founders or “fathers” of religious and political movements. Goethe’s Mahomet, in contrast, is portrayed as a child whose youth and innocence absolves him of a commitment to a traditional religious affiliation.¹⁹³ Johanna and Mel ck, for their part, must foreswear the role of mother, abjuring sex and the chance to have children in order to assume moral and political authority. It is also notable that, unlike their male counterparts, neither is allowed to establish a new religion or polity, but instead are called to sacrifice themselves to bring about a kind of renewal or healing.

* * *

Having reached the end of this investigation into the role of prophets and prophecy in the literature of European Romanticism, I want to conclude with a few examples drawn from the future of Romantic prophecy. Arguably the most famous successor to the Romantic prophet is the title character of Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (1883-1885). Spurred on by A.-H.

¹⁹³ Interestingly, in his memoir, Goethe describes an alternate conception of the play in which an older Mahomet would have sung his hymn to the night sky accompanied by his wife, children and an entire caravan of fellow tribespeople. Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, p. 686.

Anquetil-Duperron's 1771 translation of the *Zend-Avesta*, the founder of Zoroastrianism was just entering into European consciousness when Goethe began work on his *Mahomet* drama. As Nietzsche himself reveals in *Ecce Homo*, the attraction of this figure consists in his historical and intellectual priority in relation to better known prophetic founders like Jesus and Muhammad—above all, with regard to his development of a cosmology centered on the notion of an eternal conflict between forces of good and evil. Yet it is not only his historical status as the originator of a world-changing idea that makes him appealing for Nietzsche, but also the conceit that the prophet could be the first one to recognize the fundamentally flawed nature of this idea and thus call for a revision.¹⁹⁴ This already radical model of prophetic reception is made even more subversive by the way the narrative of Zarathustra's mission is revised from one book to the next, raising the possibility that this corrective gesture could be endlessly repeated.

A more direct descendent of the Romantic prophet can be found in Richard Wagner's "poetic sketch" (*dichterischer Entwurf*) *Jesus von Nazareth* (1848), which can be understood as reimagining the Christian Messiah as the prophetic founder of Christianity. This sketch outlines Wagner's abandoned plan to write a drama about Jesus Christ that removes any trace of the miraculous from his story. The title character is called to serve as a "doctor" and "teacher."¹⁹⁵ A key early scene shows him reviving the twelve-year-old daughter of a tax collector after she is

¹⁹⁴ "Man hat mich nicht gefragt, man hätte mich fragen sollen, was gerade in meinem Munde, im Munde des ersten Immoralisten, der Name Zarathustra bedeutet: denn was die ungeheure Einzigkeit jenes Persers in der Geschichte ausmacht, ist gerade dazu das Gegenteil. Zarathustra hat zuerst im Kampf des Guten und des Bösen das eigentliche Rad im Getriebe der Dinge gesehen,—die Übersetzung der Moral in's Metaphysische, als Kraft, Ursache, Zweck an sich, ist sein Werk. Aber diese Frage wäre im Grunde bereits die Antwort. Zarathustra schuf diesen verhängnisvollsten Irrthum, die Moral: folglich muss er auch der Erste sein, der ihm erkennt. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* in *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, eds. Giorgio Colli andazzino Montinari, Abt. 6, Bd. 3 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1969): pp. 253-372, here p. 365.

¹⁹⁵ "Jesus [...] lehret das Volk. Trost und Seligsprechung: vom Himmelreich im Menschen; seine Sendung zu ihnen als Arzt, als Lehrer." Richard Wagner, "Jesus von Nazareth. Ein dichterischer Entwurf." In: *Dichtungen und Schriften, Jubiläumsausgabe*, ed. Dieter Borchmeyer, Bd. 2 (Frankfurt a.M.: Insel): pp. 214-72, p. 218

mistakenly believed to have died; Jesus intervenes by correctly diagnosing her coma-like illness. Witnesses, however, spread the rumor of her supposed resurrection, thus establishing the Nazarene's reputation as a miracle-worker. Jesus' own death is explained as being a kind of "transfiguration" (*Verklärung*) rather than a "miraculous sign" (*Wunderzeichen*). In this depiction, Christ allows himself to be crucified in the full awareness that he cannot return from the dead. His "sacrifice" (*Opfertod*) functions instead as a symbolic act that inspires the further dissemination of his teaching.¹⁹⁶

This treatment of the subject matter reveals the influence of David Friedrich Strauss' biography *Das Leben Jesu kritisch bearbeitet* (1835-1836), which inaugurated the mythological study to Jesus' life. The conception of Jesus as a mythological figure, however, takes on a unique significance for Wagner in light of contemporaneous revolutionary activity in Germany. In this portrayal, namely, the Nazarene begins his career with a choice: He can either assert his rights as a descendent of David, ascend to the throne as King of the Jews, and lead his people in a revolt against the Rome, or he can declare himself an heir of Adam, the first man, and claim the "supreme authority over the world" (*oberste Herrschaft über die Welt*) as a spiritual leader of all humanity.¹⁹⁷ By choosing the latter option, Jesus foreswears military and political power in the present in favor of an enduring legacy as a mythic icon. In Wagner's depiction, myth-making thus surpasses political solidarity as a means of establishing a collective identity.

It is worth considering one last reincarnation of the Romantic prophet. The following sonnet is included in Rainer Maria Rilke's *Der neuen Gedichte anderer Teil* from the year 1908:

¹⁹⁶ Wagner, "Jesus von Nazareth," p. 226.

¹⁹⁷ Wagner, "Jesus von Nazareth," pp. 227-8.

Mohammeds Berufung

Da aber als in sein Versteck der Hoh,
sofort Erkennbare: der Engel, trat,
aufrecht, der lautere und lichterlohe :
da tat er allen Anspruch ab und bat

bleiben zu dürfen der von seinen Reisen
innen verwirrte Kaufmann, der er war ;
er hatte nie gelesen – und nun gar
ein *solches* Wort, zu viel für einen Weisen.

Der Engel aber, herrisch, wies und wies
ihm was geschrieben stand auf seinem Blatte,
und gab nicht nach und wollte wieder : *Lies*.

Da las er : so, dass sich der Engel bog.
Und war schon einer, der gelesen *hatte*
und konnte und gehorchte und vollzog.¹⁹⁸

In contrast to Goethe and Günderröde, Rilke here largely conforms to the official narrative of Muhammad's calling to prophesy: While praying alone in the cave al-Ḥirā', the future prophet is visited by the angel Gabriel and commanded to "read" from the Qur'an. Mohammed at first refuses, citing his illiteracy, but the angel remains insistent. Finally, Mohammed relents, and suddenly finds that he can read the text as if he always knew how.

Rilke begins the story *in medias res* with the appearance of the angel in Mohammed's place of refuge. Possibly because an educated audience at the early twentieth century could be assumed to have a basic familiarity the life of the Muslim Prophet, Rilke does not provide a backstory for the title figure in the way that Günderröde does for her character. The focus remains on the central tension between the two figures, neither of whom are named in the body of the poem. Remarkably, the poem succeeds in externalizing inspiration to a greater degree than the dramatization produced

¹⁹⁸ Rainer Maria Rilke, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Rilke-Archiv, Bd. 1 (Frankfurt a.M.: Insel, 1955): p. 638.

by Goethe and Günderröde; inspiration here is motivated by the charged dynamic between the angel and Mohammed rather than a process situated in the Prophet's psyche.

If the sonnet contains an echo of Romantic prophecy, though, it is in the final stanza, which depicts the seamless transition from reading, to obeying to doing. The very act of reading and reciting changes Mohammad, transforming him into a prophet. Indeed, this act even alters his prior life, making him retroactively into someone who could always utter revelation. In a forceful performative gesture reminiscent of Goethe's Mahomet, the prophet forms himself into a voice for his mission.

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