

The Liberation from Napoleon as Self-Liberation: The Year 1813 in the Letters of Rahel Varnhagen

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Biographical accounts of Rahel Levin's (1771–1833) life in 1813 unanimously speak of her self-sacrificial commitment to wounded soldiers. According to such accounts, her care for the soldiers almost exhausted her finances, and she overstrained herself physically to such an extent that she broke down completely afterwards. No account, however, questions the reasons for her actions, they seemed to have been inevitable and, in view of the things that took place on the battlefield, a simple necessity. Heidi Thomann Tewarson, one of Rahel Levin's biographers, summarizes her role as »Organisatorin einer Hilfsaktion« (Thomann Tewarson, 1988, 96) [the organizer of a relief operation] and further elaborates how scrupulously she kept track of her spending and the use of the funds entrusted to her.¹ Much more biographical relevance is attached, however, to her baptism, on the occasion of which Rahel Levin adopted the name Antonie Friederike, and to her marriage on September 27th, 1814 to Karl August Varnhagen von Ense (1785–1858), fourteen years her junior. Instead of glossing over the year of 1813 simply as an interim of suffering, the following study aims to reconstruct – to the extent that this is possible – the reasons for the almost excessive humanitarian aid rendered by Rahel Levin not only in Berlin in the spring, but also in Prague in the autumn. Thomann Tewarson finds »eine große Anzahl [...] zeit- und kulturgeschichtlicher Themen« [a large number of topics relating to contemporary and cultural history] in the letters from this year (Thomann Tewarson 1988, 99). In the following, these topics will function as sources for the reconstruction of a woman's war-time quotidian history.

By focussing on one detail, i.e. charpie (the dressing material of the time when caring of the wounded), a »récit en miniature« will be attempted, i.e. a narrative constructed around insignificant details, as in accordance with the theoretical position of New Historicism. Rejecting »totalisierend[e] Gesamtbehauptungen und Metanarrationen« (Baßler, 19) [totalizing global assertions and meta-narrations], New Historicism empha-

sizes the details and the plurality of small-scale stories that allow the wider picture to become visible in the smaller one. It is in such a procedure that the master narrative finds its antipode antithesis and its abstractions become undone. The historical snap-shot of the year 1813 offers a synchronous account of military developments (Napoleon's defeat), social upheaval (the emancipation of the Jews), and literary discourse (Rahel Levin's relationship to the Romantics). This simultaneous network is to be reconstructed here by using the example of Rahel Levin's letters. As a Jewish woman, Rahel Levin was implicated in all of these discourses and her letters offer evidence of her decisive steps towards self-liberation in this year.

Berlin, April 1813: Plans for an Army Hospital vs. Germanophile Publications

On March 16th, 1813, with Prussia's declaration of war on France, the fighting recommenced. Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835) was a Prussian ambassador living in Vienna at the time. It was his duty to persuade the imperial court to form an alliance with Prussia and Russia against Napoleon. Only in June would Austria finally join.

In the spring, Varnhagen was in Hamburg and belonged to the staff of Colonel Tettenborn; there he was responsible, among other things, for the selection of army doctors and for the provisioning of the army hostipals. His letters from May to July highlight General Davoust's occupation of Hamburg and the devastation of the city by the French. As an eye-witness, Varnhagen gives impressive testimony² of the historical events that supplied Friedrich Spielhagen with the backdrop for his novel *Noblesse oblige* (1888) (see also the essay by Sammons in this volume).

At this time, Caroline de la Motte Fouqué (1775–1831) had her *Ruf an die deutschen Frauen* [A Call to German Women] released by her publisher Julius Eduard Hitzig.³ Both the content of this appeal and Rahel's reaction to it in her letter to Varnhagen from April 5th reveal the initial reasons behind her humanitarian action during the course of the year. Since it meanders repeatedly around the same themes, it is difficult to boil down Motte Fouqué's appeal to its central points. The most important point made, however, is clearly the duty of women to send men to the impend-

ing battle and to take their place at home: »Keine von allen deutschen Frauen möge durch feige Thränen des Mannes Entschluß wankend oder ihm den ernsten Schritt schwer machen.« [Of all German women, may none allow the man's resolve to waver through her cowardly tears or render his grave step more difficult to take] (Motte Fouqué 168). In order to make the heroism she demanded believable, Motte Fouqué took recourse to examples from Germanic history and tradition: »Der Riesegeist der alten Germania schreitet durch unsere Provinzen, er ist es, der unsern Männern, unsern Söhnen, unsern Brüdern die schimpflichen Ketten unwürdiger Knechtschaft löst.« [The giant spirit of Germania strides through our provinces, it is that which frees our men, our sons, our brothers from the ignominious chains of unworthy servitude.] (Motte Fouqué 165)

This historical reassurance leads her finally to the constitution of a national character which, on the one hand, is generated by reflecting back on the history and supposed characteristic attributes of the German people:

»Uns ist unser Vaterland fremd geworden; die Entwicklung der Zeit hat so viel daran verschoben, gerührt, beschnitten und hinzugethan, dass aus dem, was man National=Charakter nennt, ein Ding entstanden ist, von dem man nicht weiß, ob man darüber weinen oder lachen soll. Es thut uns daher Noth, das Eigenthümliche deutscher Natur aufzusuchen.« (Motte Fouqué 174)

[Our Fatherland has become foreign to us; time's progression has displaced so much of it, stirred it up, cut from and added to so much of it, that a thing has emerged from what we call national character about which we do not know whether to cry or to laugh. It is thus necessary for us to seek out that which is particular to the nature of the Germans.]

On the other hand, this national character expresses itself in the personal behavior of each individual woman – to whom the appeal is indeed directed:

»Für die Freiheit und Ehre des deutschen Landes soll deutsches Blut fließen, [...] Sie ist da, tief in der Wurzel deutschen Seyns da; das äußerlich Hemmende soll das Schwerdt vertilgen, das innerlich Lähmende die leise, sichere Hand der Frauen wegräumen. Einmal und hauptsächlich durch die Behauptung eigenthümlicher Würde, sodann durch den Geist, der von dieser ausgeht in häusliche und gesellige Verhältnisse, sich offenbart in Tracht, Sprache, und als Gipfel von allem, in der Bildung der Kinder.« (Motte Fouqué 173-174)

[For the freedom and honor of the German country, German blood should flow, [...] She (i.e. freedom, GMR) is there, deep in the roots of German being;

outward impediments should be destroyed by the sword, inner hesitations should be swept away by the gentle, assured womanly hand. It is mainly through the assertion of our particular dignity, then through the spirit emanating from this in domestic and social circumstances, and through the social standards revealed in habit, in language, and, as the pinnacle of all, in the education of children.]

Motte Fouqué reminded her readers to meet the requirements of the present, a reminder motivated by her view that all domains of life were interconnected. This comprehensive cultural and historical view makes her writings – if one ignores the political manifesto – a beyond-by valuable source of everyday history of her time. The *Ruff* and the *Die Geschichte der Moden* [1829-30, History of Fashion] share the same educational purpose and illuminate each other mutually; in both, the author tries to represent apparently marginal everyday phenomena as important indications of social development (Kabus, in: Motte Fouqué 26).

However, whenever she comes to speak of the determination of women, her innovativeness suddenly wanes. In such cases, one finds her confining women to conventional behavior (»the gentle, assured womanly hand«) and to legitimate margins of womanly activity (»domestic and social circumstances«, »the education of children«). In the concluding appeal, in which she makes the female essence and person the starting point of reform, the gender-political codification finds its culmination:

»Edle germanische Frauen! Unsern Händen ist das künftige Loos deutscher Geschlechter anvertrauet! Ich wiederhole es, laßt uns in Sprache, Tracht, geselligem Verkehr und einfach edler Haltung uns selbst bewahren, und die Ehre unserer Nachkommen retten. Von uns gehet das Licht aus, laßt es still, bescheiden, fromm und sicher leuchten.« (Motte Fouqué 178)

[Noble German Women! To our hands is entrusted the future fate of generations of Germans! I repeat: Let us remain true to ourselves in our language, habit, social intercourse and simple, noble bearing, and so save the honor of our offspring. The light emanates from us; let it shine calmly, modestly, piously and clearly.]

The cultural norm of passivity and immobility to which women were bound in educational texts and fiction between 1770 and 1830 could hardly allow any other pattern of behavior. If they were to remain cut off from all possibilities of active engagement, their bodies had to become the residual guarantee of reform, figured here in salvational terms. One must read the emphatic metaphor of the hands in this sense – the hands which preserve »the future fate of generations of Germans« and »the light«. The form of address »Noble German women!« and, even more so, the series of epithets

of feminine virtues both point to the definition of an exclusive circle within an elevated social class. Incipient signs of the »Regenerierung des Adels« [regeneration of the nobility] (Ueding 53), which belonged to the basic Romantic idea of the state, are present in Motte Fouqué's appeal; not only Adam Müller (1779–1829), but also Achim von Arnim (1781–1831) and Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) would identify themselves with the notion of a class-based society which met (in the form of a constitution, for example) the demands of the bourgeoisie (Ueding 53–54).

Rahel Levin, however, rejected the *Ruff* with utter disdain: »Hier schicke ich Dir Frau von Fouqué ihren Aufruf. Gott im Himmel! wie durchaus erbärmlich! sie wußte absolut nichts, als daß sie einen schreiben wollte [...]« [I'm sending you Frau von Fouqué's Appeal. God in the heavens, how pitiable! She knew nothing except that she wanted to write one.]⁴

Levin accuses Motte Fouqué of drawing upon »alle Mythologien der Welt« [all the mythologies of the world], which however is a simple exaggeration; Motte Fouqué preferred to make reference to Germanic tradition, however complicated the results of her contextualization. One must call to mind here, for example, the *christlich-deutsche Tischgesellschaft* constituted in Berlin on January 18th, 1811 (Berghahn 284–292) in order to understand the nature of the connection made at the time between Christianity, patriotism, Teutonic spirit, and anti-Semitism. Fouqué's allusions are embedded in the literary patriotism of the Wars of Liberation; one finds many (frightening) examples of this prevalent discourse, which – with few exceptions (e.g. Heinrich von Kleist's dramas *Die Hermannsschlacht* [The Battle of Hermann] and, in mythologically deferred mode, *Penthesilea*) – were very influential at the time but are now only of interest to literary historians.⁵

In order to contradict this sort of implication, Rahel Levin introduced on her part another model of national identity:

»[D]aß wir Deutsche heißen und sind, ist eine Zufälligkeit; und die Aufblaserei, dies so groß hervortreten lassen zu wollen, wird mit einem Zerplatzen dieser Thorheit endigen. Jedes zu Verstand gekommene Volk soll brav sein; und die Freiheit haben, es zu sein. [...] Dies muß jedes europäische, christliche, Gott in sich selbst erkennende Volk; und jedes solches muß dies allen anderen Völkern gönnen und wünschen: und nicht sich prahlerisch *allein* dazu ernennen, ausschreien und brüsten.« (Varnhagen, GW 5, 32)

[The fact that we are Germans and are so called is a coincidence; and the puffed-up vanity of attaching prominence to this circumstance will end with this folly bursting asunder. Every people which has found reason should be good; and

it should have freedom to be so. [...] This is the obligation of every European, Christian people which recognizes God in itself; and every such people must grant this to and wish it for all other peoples, and should not arrogantly name itself alone as deserving of this, proclaiming it loudly, and boasting about it.]

The choice of Christian Europe as standard, implicitly negating the Germanophilia inherent in Motte Fouqué's text, represents a rejection of the patriotically motivated demarcation from the French and the polemics directed against their cultural influence; Motte Fouqué, in Levin's view, takes recourse to an all too easy argument by attacking the French language.⁶ In this point, Rahel Levin defended her own existence, one part of which lay in the past, i.e. her salon, whereas the other – i.e. her christening – would become an integral part of her social future. All representations of the salons of the Romantics emphasise the influence of French salon culture (most recently: Berghahn 236). The work of integration done by just this sort of social intercourse to reunite the »getrennten Sphären von Religionen und Ständen« [the separate spheres of religions and classes] (Berghahn 248) was implicitly endangered by a renaissance of political and cultural nationalism. With 1806, a phase of renewed social exclusion began which was caused by a mixture of the military-political catastrophe following the battle of Jena that year, the political as well as cultural nationalism of the time, of which the Romantic variety is the most important here, and also the growing influence of religion. These were all taking place at the time of the Edict of Emancipation of 1812, which stipulated mainly that the special laws applied to the Jewish population (among others, special taxes and vocational limitations) were to be suspended. They were now given the right to settle both in the city or in the country and to be appointed as schoolteachers and municipal administrators. Access to state offices and to the military followed in 1814 in a separate military service act. Through this edict, the Jews became »Einländer und preußische Staatsbürger« [subjects and citizens of the Prussian state] (Thoman Tewarson, 1988, 73).

Even Humboldt had a role in the prehistory of the edict; before being signed on the 21st of March, 1812, it had to pass through various ministries and departments, in the process of which it was also presented to Wilhelm von Humboldt. The latter made his case confidently for consistent, unqualified equality. The consistency of his position was a result of his conviction that the emancipation and immediate suspension of the special legal status of the Jews would usher in their assimilation and integration

into the Christian state (cf. Berghahn 270-276). However, while the Edict of Emancipation of 1812 was effective on a formal level, it failed to alter the »Macht der Majorität« [might of the majority] (Barnouw 93), which is something clearly apparent in statements made by Humboldt and his wife in their letters.

It must have struck Rahel Levin even more, however, that Motte Fouqué turns her attention so thoroughly to married women and mothers, as in the following:

»An uns ist es jetzt, zu entbehren, das Unterbrochene zu ergänzen, den getheilten Hausstand zusammen zu halten, Ordnung, Ruhe und Klarheit überall zu verbreiten, in gläubiger Zuversicht die Fähigkeit bewahrend, großen Widervärtigkeiten begegnen zu können.« (Motte Fouqué 171)

[It is now we who must do without, complete that which was left unfinished, hold together a divided household, spread order, calm and clarity, preserving in pious confidence our ability to confront great tribulations.]

What resonates all too clearly in this statement are the existential conditions of the land-owner and mother of four and thus the prerequisites of the sort of life from which Rahel, although her alimony was abundant, had to remain excluded. Motte Fouqué's appeal struck at the very core of her endeavors, since she had just experienced a disappointment of great consequence which may be considered as one of the catalysts of her reaction. Her efforts to organise an army hospital stood in stark contradiction to the manifesto's requirement of passive womanhood:

»Als im Anfang durch einige Herren der Stadt bei mir zuerst ersonnen war, daß Frauen hier ein Lazareth stiften sollten, wozu wir dreißig Vorsteherinnen aus allen Ständen und Religionen gewählt hatten, welche die Prinzessinnen um ihr Präsidium bitten sollten, faßte ich das ab, was diese Dreißig in die Zeitungen sollten setzen lassen. [...] Die Prinzessinnen und ein Konseil von Herren haben alles umgestoßen zu einer Einrichtung, die mir nicht gefällt. Geld kommt aber viel zusammen.« (Varnhagen, GW 5, 33)

[When the idea came to me at first by way of a few gentlemen of the town that the women here should found an army hospital, for which we had chosen 30 directors from all classes and religions who were to request of the princesses that they yield their executive powers, I composed the text that these 30 were to have printed in the newspapers. [...] These princesses and a council of gentlemen overruled everything, creating an establishment I do not like. Much money is nevertheless being collected.]

The Jewish woman must have felt cheated in more than one way: Not only was the initiative wrenched from her; in addition, the organization – which

in its integrating function was meant to embrace all classes – became appropriated by a circle of noble ladies and gentlemen for whom overcoming class boundaries could hardly have been of any interest. This episode should be seen as providing the background for her own hectic form of charity, which she mentions in the same breath:

»Diesen Morgen muß ich noch nach Hemden laufen, die Markus giebt: ich muß es, weil ich mich keine Mühe, kein Klättern, keinen Weg, keine Anrede, und Rede mit gemeinen Leuten verdrießen lasse: weil ich denke, je schneller die Hülfe, desto mehr ist die Hülfe [...].«⁷

[This morning, I must go and fetch some shirts that Markus will give me. I must do this, because I will not allow myself to be distressed by the effort, by idle chatter, by the length of the journey, by the greetings and speech of the common folk, because I believe that the faster the help arrives, the more help it will be.]

Rahel Levin's action neither required legitimation, nor was it selective; it was based solely on the immediate need, following the principle of »bis dat cito dat« (the faster the help, the greater the help). Furthermore, it was conceived as an integrative action with the »common folk«.

For her, the sabotage of her work for the army hospital represented an insult which could be only slightly compensated by the fact that the subsequent bad management of the hospital created a scandal:

»Unser großes Lazareth war in einem *schrecklichen* Zustand!! wegen unordentlicher Einrichtung und Deprädation. Kaum erfuhr es aber die Stadt, so war ein General=*Aufstand*. Jeder schrie, lief, und gab. [...] Wäsche aller Art, Betten, [...] Essen, wo immer hundertundfünfundzwanzig Frauen kochen ließen; keine schlief, keine ruhte mehr; [...] Die Herz ist unendlich thätig: ich sporne sie noch mehr. [...] Gäben doch die Christen so wie die Juden! dann wäre hier wenigstens keine Noth.« (Varnhagen, GW 5, 48)

[Our great army hospital was in a horrific condition because of disorderly maintenance and depredation. As soon as the town caught wind of this, there was a general uprising. Everyone cried out, and hurried to give. [...] All kinds of clothing, beds, [...] food, wherever it was possible to arrange for 125 women to cook; no one slept, no one rested any longer; [...] – Herz is untiringly active: I spur her on still more. [...] If only the Christians gave like the Jews do! Then there would be nothing wanting here.]

The vividness and attention to detail conveyed by this letter is only truly apparent in juxtaposition with other reports from these months. »Die Herz ist unendlich thätig: ich sporne sie noch mehr.« [Herz is untiringly active; I spur her on still more.] (GW 5, 48) – this sentence reappears in a long letter from April 20th, 1813, to Varnhagen in Hamburg. Upon an investi-

gation of the memoirs of Henriette Herz (1764–1847), who is mentioned in the letter, all one finds regarding her impression of the situation is the laconic remark: »Ich erzähle nicht von den Zeiten der Freiheitskriege, und wie Mann und Weib, Alt und Jung, Arm und Reich seine Pflicht tat, und vielfach noch weit über diese hinaus, und mit welcher Freudigkeit.« [I haven't related anything about the time of the Wars of Liberation, and how man and woman, old and young, rich and poor did their duty, many of them going well beyond this, and with such joy.] She forbids herself »in die Einzelheiten [...] einzugehn« [to go into the particulars] of how everyone »mitwirkte und mitlitt« [acted and suffered together] at the time so as not to injure the »bescheidene Anspruchslosigkeit« [modest selflessness] that they all showed back then.⁸

In view of such a cursory glossing over of everyday realities by Herz, Rahel Levin's account simply seems more valuable as a documentation of daily life. Also, Rahel Levin's letters call into question the universal charity emphasised by Henriette Herz; it is clear that the stronger commitment lay on the side of the Jews. Above all, the Berlin letters provide an explanation of Rahel Levin's later rapid action in Prague, where she received an opportunity to put the knowledge she had gleaned into practice.

Breslau, May 1813: The Flight from Familial Ties

After the French troops' evacuation from Berlin and Prussia's declaration of war on its former ally France, Rahel Levin left Berlin and settled in Prague with her brothers Moritz and Ludwig. There, she hoped to live more securely and cheaply and to avoid the expenses of billeting,⁹ although she was certainly not without means, and thus could have held out in Berlin. The journey from Berlin via Breslau like all travelling by women was considered an unwomanly activity.¹⁰ In a more concrete way, the journey also represented a large expenditure on her part: »Ich esse gut mit Dore und vollauf, für etwas weniger als zwölf Münzgroschen. Spare wo ich kann. Doch Reisen – Koffer ausbessern, Unvermuthetes, Zölle, Trinkgelder, Stricke, Mauthen, alles kostet Unberechenbares.« [I eat well with Dore, and plentifully, and for somewhat less than 12 pennies. I save whenever I can. But travel – mending the bags, unexpected occurrences, customs, gratuities, ropes, tolls – it all costs an amount one cannot predict]

(Varnhagen, GW 5, 82). Considering the physical hardship she underwent on top of that, for example the completely unfurnished room she took on the way in Reinerz (a town near Breslau), in which she was forced to sleep in a bed of straw (Varnhagen, GW 5, 82, 85), one must ask why she did nothing to avoid such extremes. A close reading of the letters can provide the answer.

Her financial situation became urgent when she relinquished the silver she had taken with her from Berlin to her elder cousin in Breslau.¹¹ Shortly afterwards, she had a severe quarrel with her elder brother Markus, who reproached her for not having turned to him instead of informing another relative about her lack of money. What her brother feared the most was that the old silver would have been melted down along with their parents' monogram. For this reason, Rahel would then explicitly ask the uncle in a letter not to sell the silver to a third party. This confrontation gives a poignant example of her twofold dependency. Not only was the sister dependent on the support of her brothers; she was also becoming repeatedly dragged back into the cultural mold and set of interests espoused by the Levin family. In a letter to Varnhagen, she describes the burden of her familial affiliation:

»So eben hatte ich einen harten Strauß mit Markus, der ganz empört ist, daß ich dem Onkel meine Armuth durch das Silber entdeckt habe: »Das hast Du doch bei Gott! nicht nöthig, ich oder Moritz hätte Dir doch auch hundert Thaler darauf geliehen« [...] Ich soll noch die *Reiche*, die besorgt wird, *spielen*, für seine Ambition.« (Varnhagen, GW 5, 85-86)

[I just had a bad fight with Markus, who is rather angry that I revealed my poverty to my uncle through the silver: »That you did not need to do, by God! I or Moritz could have lent you another 100 talers on top of that« [...] For his ambition, I am obliged to play the rich woman who is provided for.]

Barbara Breysach gives a very vivid account of the everyday effects of this familial bond; the family remained »eine kulturelle Insel« [a cultural island] of Jewish culture within the dominant German one, albeit one »ohne verbindliche Orientierung an neuen Verhaltensmustern« [without a binding orientation to new models of behavior].¹² In the course of 1813, the ambivalence would intensify. On the one hand, the sister was being let down financially; directly before this time, i.e. in the fall of 1811, her brothers had reduced her annual income from 1200 to 800 Reichsthaler (cf. Thoman Tewarson, 1988, 94); on the other hand, she was trying to

find independent financial means which would allow her to distance herself from her family:

»Noch sprach ich nicht reinen Wein: aber ich fühle, es kommt. [...] Den Onkel nannte er einen *fremden* Mann! Wenn *der* fremd ist! [...] Siehst Du! das ist mein größtes Leid: wär' ich *Einmal* von deren Interesse geschieden! Aber Gott giebt es mir! So wie er mir Dich so spät gab!« (Varnhagen, GW 5, 86)

[I haven't spoken my mind as yet, but I feel it coming. [...] He called my uncle a stranger! As if he were a stranger! [...] You see, that is my greatest woe! If I could one day just be cut off from their concerns! But this is given to me by God, just as He gave you to me so late!]

Prague, June to August 1813: Everyday Life in the Anticipation of War

Rahel Levin arrived in Prague with her brother Ludwig Robert (1778–1832) on 1 June 1st after failing to find accommodation in Breslau.¹³ There she shared lodgings until September 1814 with the actress Auguste Brede¹⁴ at 681 Fleischhackergasse. At the time, Prague was a center of both diplomatic and military action against Napoleon; simultaneously, it had become a refuge for many of her Prussian contemporaries who had fled for various reasons. Ludwig Tieck, for example, was in Prague and, with Rahel, frequented the theater in which Auguste Brede performed (Varnhagen, GW 5, 143). Carl Maria von Weber lived in the same house as Rahel Levin, so they saw each other often (Varnhagen, GW 5, 130).

A delicate situation was occasioned by her meeting with Clemens Brentano (1778–1842), who was involved in a row with Varnhagen. The two had met in Halle in 1806; in the course of an encounter in Teplitz in 1811, an insulting statement was made about Rahel Levin, and her reactions to this in the letters represent a substantial, if indeed partial source for this dispute. On April 24th, 1812, Varnhagen had given Brentano two slaps in the face, retaining the manuscript of the tragedy *Aloys und Imelde* as a forfeit (as Varnhagen noted on the manuscript). Such was the backdrop for their meeting in 1813. Brentano had, with Tieck's help, sought out Rahel Levin in Prague and – if one is to credit the letter from June 10th – attempted, in long conversations marked by strong emotions on his part, to explain his standpoint. In Rahel's words:

»Ich sah ihn, ohne die geringste Emotion. Er kam in die allerheftigste. Erzählte mir seine Katastrophe mit Dir ganz genau, bis zu Thränen. [...] Er erzählte mir von allen seinen Frauen, Schwestern, Freunden, Ehen, Achim, Schlegel; *von allem*. Ich ihm *von nichts*.« (Varnhagen, GW 5, 126, 127)

[I looked at him, without the slightest emotion. He was seized by increasingly strong ones. He related his catastrophe with you to me quite exactly, during which he broke down in tears. [...] He talked about all his women, sisters, friends, marriages, Achim, Schlegel; about everything. I told him about nothing.]¹⁵

In addition both to daily meetings with old acquaintances like Friedrich von Gentz and Wilhelm von Humboldt and to her regular correspondences, Rahel re-established contact with Caroline von Humboldt, who was in Vienna with her five children.¹⁶ The family was separated from 1809 to 1810, Wilhelm having been engaged in service for the Prussian government as Director of the Section for Public Worship and Education [*Sektion für Kultus und Unterricht*], only being reunited with his family in 1810 upon becoming ambassador at Vienna. During the decisive final phase of the war of the Allies against Napoleon, Caroline stayed behind for the most part as Humboldt spent time at the Prussian headquarters and in the vicinity of State Chancellor Hardenberg. Only in November 1814 would the family move back to Berlin, this in order to avoid the household costs raised by the Congress.¹⁷

Caroline von Humboldt shared the same social stance and personal life as Caroline de la Motte Fouqué whose ideas Rahel resented clearly. With Humboldt, however, Rahel found a common level of understanding – at least temporarily. The exchange between Rahel Levin and Caroline von Humboldt in 1813 is genuinely unique; its contents are reflected, but with quite different accents, in the letters between the Humboldts and in Rahel's correspondence with Varnhagen. Still, all the letter exchanged share the common context of the war and its results for daily life between the sites of battle.¹⁸

In a long letter sent from Prague to his wife, Caroline, dated July 25th, 1813, Humboldt described the political process, especially addressing the question of whether and when the war with the French might be redeclared. In this context, he mentions some of the refugees who were in the city, including Rahel Levin:

»Die kleine Levi [...] ist ziemlich unverändert. [...] Sie hat mich sehr agaciert, allein was soll man mit der Judenmamsell? Gentz versichert zwar noch immer, sie sie die geistreichste Frau auf Erden. Man muss auch des Geistes entbehren können. Ich bleibe also unerbittlich.«¹⁹

[Little Levi [...] is rather unchanged. [...] She has aggravated me much, but what is one to do with the Jewish mam'selle? Gentz still assures me that she's the most brilliant woman on the earth. One must also be able to do without the wit. Thus I remain implacable.]

The scornful tone that Wilhelm strikes here is astonishing considering their past acquaintanceship in Paris.²⁰ After severing contact with Finkenstein in the Summer of 1800, Rahel Levin had travelled to the French capital as the companion of Countess Karoline von Schlabrendorff. There, she often met the Humboldts, whom she had first encountered in Henriette Herz's Berlin salon. Breysach calls the letter »einen plumpen Versuch sozialer Degradierung, der seine Ursachen auch in einer Abwehr ihrer Präsenz als Frau im männlich dominierten Geistesleben haben kann.« [a crude attempt at social degradation which could also be attributed to a rejection of her presence as a woman in male-dominated intellectual life] (Breysach 135). Anti-Semitic reservations were nothing extraordinary in the circles in which she moved; both of the personal scandals discussed above are proof of this.

But there is more to Humboldt's comment than that. Rahel Levin used the years 1813 and 1814 in a pragmatic, determined manner to secure her future husband's chances in the redistribution of political power and to legitimize and consolidate the legal status she had just gained. The provocation thus had less to do with her Jewish background and more with her own character, which enabled her to establish herself anew, i.e. to build up stable relationships outside of the family and to compensate successfully for the limitations of class by virtue of her personality alone. It is at this point that her self-perception had to collide with conventional gender roles present in the Humboldts' letters. Wilhelm's letters to his wife in these tension-filled months bespeak this in clear terms: again and again, he assures her of how highly dependent he is on her as the resting point of his life and the legitimation of his action. Certainly, such passages in the letters are moving even today, but they reveal nevertheless the rigid, dichotomous division of gender roles.²¹ One finds a corresponding reflection of this attitude towards women and the female sex in Humboldt's essays *Über den Geschlechtsunterschied* [On the Difference between the Sexes] (1794) sowie in dem *Plan einer vergleichenden Anthropologie* [Outline of a Comparative Anthropology] (begun 1794, but unpublished), in which he made a case for the complementarity of the sexes and succinctly captured and codified the static, pre-individual ideal of femininity.²²

Caroline, for her part, took up the topic of Rahel Levin once again on August 10th:

»Die Levi schreibt, wie sie zu der Gräfin Schlabrendorff zurückgekommen sei, sitzt Herr v. Humboldt da. »Er behandelte mich äußerst gleichgültig, bekannt und nicht unhöflich, war sehr launig, und wir mussten in der kurzen Zeit lachen. Doch finde ich ihn anders als sonst. Er sieht sehr wohl aus, und wenn es sich für einen Menschen seines Alters schickte, so würde ich sagen, er hat mehr Aplomb wie ehemals, selbst sein Scherz ist ihm gleichgültiger, und wenn er ihn sonst mit einer gewissen Schnelle sagte, die diese Gleichgültigkeit dramatisch darstellen sollte, so ist es jetzt reine Natur, und nun ganz graziös.«

Diese letzte Bemerkung habe ich erstaunend hübsch gefunden.« (Humboldt, 1910, 91-92)

[Levi writes how Herr v. Humboldt was sitting there when she returned to Countess Schlabrendorff. »He treated me with the utmost indifference, familiarly and not impolitely, was very jocular, and we had to laugh after little time had passed. I find him, however, to be different than usual. He looks very well, and if it were proper for a man of his age, I would say that he has more aplomb than ever, he is more indifferent even to his jokes, and if he did tell them before with a certain swiftness which was supposed give dramatic expression to this indifference, it is now purely natural, and indeed quite graceful.«

I found the last remark to be astonishingly well-put.]

The last sentence in particular gives evidence of the contradictory reactions which Rahel Levin's conversation provoked. The »social degradation« of her birth was counterpoised by the involuntary respect exacted by her gift for observation and her ability to express herself. Even if some ulterior motive may have ultimately been at play, the »astonishingly« superior ability displayed by Rahel Levin won Caroline over, at least to the extent that she found the passage worth citing to her husband.

These letters exchanged between the married couple should be borne in mind, so that one can appreciate the shift in focus revealed by the letters exchanged by Rahel Levin and Caroline Humboldt in the fall of 1813. The strategic ulterior motives recede temporarily as the war and its impact on humanity begin to impose their all-dominating presence.

Prague, September and October 1813: Care of the Wounded and Patriotic Identification with Prussia

The care of wounded soldiers of the time was centered around a then common dressing material, charpie, which receives continual mention in the letters. Caroline referred to it on October 1st: »Ich schicke dir, Liebste, eine kleine Quantität Charpie, ich hoffe die größeren Quantitäten Charpie und Bandagen sind dir richtig zugekommen« (Leitzmann 115). [I will send to you, dearest, a small quantity of charpie, hoping that you have correctly received the larger quantities of charpie and bandages]. Rachel Levin wrote back on October 18th: »Auch will ich dir sagen habe ich alle 5 Sendungen Binden charpie etc: richtig erhalten.« (Leitzmann 123) [I also want to mention that I have correctly received all five parcels of bandages, charpie etc.]. The German »Scharpie« goes back to the French term »charpie« and refers to linen which is plucked or torn into strips and pieces to serve as surgical wool, albeit one which was by no means aseptic.²³ The repeated mentioning of charpie in Rahel Levin's letters serves as a »leitmotif« for tracing the daily life in battle zones or in the cities and countryside near to them. It would be an inaccurate simplification, though, to say that women restricted themselves to the negotiation and organisation of humanitarian support without simultaneously sharing the patriotic rhetoric. On the contrary, the letters of both women show a constant alternation between the two discursive modes. Both features – the participation in patriotic discourse and the communitive charitable engagement – occur in their correspondence with remarkable frequency. To Rahel, these activities offered a release from her familial and social frustration, one which she embraced, as she herself emphasized, with unusual vigor. This rarely experienced robustness of constitution left her again in the moment in which this assistance was no longer required.

In a letter sent to Caroline von Humboldt from Prague on September 7th, 1813, following the Battles of Katzbach and Kulm, Rahel mentions all aspects of her charitable activity:

»Du mußt, du kannst durch deinen Einfluß, ich kenne ihn ganz; durch deine ausbreitete Bekandschaft und dein Gewicht in Wien, bey den Damen eine Einsammlung, schnell bewirken; mit all deinen Kräften. Sehen sie, die Damen auf uns Preußinnen was wir thaten: mit keinem Stolz, mit recht kann ich wir sagen. Kurtz: auf den Straßen, im Koth, liegen unsere – der allürten alle – Verwundete umher. Die Stadt thut was sie vermag an geben und thun; Ärzte, Hebammen, Judenmädel

die man besonders lobt und nennt, verbinden auf den Wagen die sie bringen in den Straßen. Zu 100 solcher Wagen stehen hintereinander: man kann nicht gehen. wir schiken Essen, Wäsche, was wir vermögen. Diese Menschen waren das Bollwerk mit ihren Leibern dieser, eurer Prowinz [sic].« (Leitzmann 96-97)

[You must, you can, with the help of your influence – I know it so well – in the wide circles of your acquaintance und through your social impact in Vienna, quickly start a collection among the ladies of society; with all your might. Look at us, [Viennese] ladies, at us Prussian women and what we did: and it is not out of pride, but with full justification, that I can say us. In short: on the streets, in the dirt, the wounded soldiers are strewn about – the wounded soldiers of all allied armies. The city does what it can to give and to help: surgeons, mid-wives, Jewish girls, who receive particular mention and praise, bandage their wounds in the streets, upon the carts on which they are transported. About a hundred such carts stand in a row: no one can pass through. We send food and linen and whatever else we can afford. With their bodies, these men formed the bulwark of this – your – country.]

The entire chaos taking place in the streets of Prague is represented by a series of enumerated hardships and impressions. She tries to capture the sheer bulk of wounded soldiers in their thronging physical presence both numerically (»100 solcher Wagen« [a hundred such carts]) and metaphorically (»das Bollwerk mit ihren Leibern« [the bulwark with their bodies]). At the same time, she singles out two groups from this picture of general confusion: firstly, the »Preußinnen« [Prussian women], among whom she counts herself (»mit recht kann ich wir sagen« [with full justification can I say we]), and secondly the »Judenmädel die man besonders lobt und nennt« [Jewish girls, who receive particular mention and praise]. The image mirrors her own situation; in it we see simultaneously the two groups spanning the transition between »Jewish mam'selle« to Prussian woman, a transition which Rahel finally succeeds in making.

This patriotic identification pervades Rahel Levin's letters, replete as they are with emotional outbursts as in the letter from September 15th, 1813, sent to Vienna: »Blücher und Bubna sollen wieder gesiegt haben. Mir schaudert! die Boten: ach! ich kann Gutes immer nicht glauben. Und immer unsere Preußen. Karoline wenn ich einen sehe, und einer sagt ik bin en Preuße; *vergebe* ich. Ach! das gefühl kennst du nicht.« (Leitzmann 106) [It is said that Blücher and Bubna have once again achieved victory. I shudder! The messengers: alas, I am still unable to believe that good things can happen. And always our Prussians. Caroline, whenever I see one, and he says ‚I'm a Prussian,‘ I could die. Alas! You don't know the feeling.]

Neither food nor dressing material were available, and for this reason we see Rahel Levin entreating her friend to render assistance:

»Schickt, ich bitte euch! weder das *gouvernement* noch die Stadt allein vermögen die *Zahl* zu bestreiten: das *Land* muß helfen: *wie bey uns!* Heute regnet's auf den Wunden Menschen mit Wundfieber! [...] Sie liegen hungrig schmachtend im *Koth*. Werfe dich in den Wagen, und fahre umher. [...] Du sihst meine *agitation*. Es ist nicht Schwäche allein: wenn du gesehen hättest, die 8 Tage; wenn du *sähest*. [...] Und so lange der Frieden nicht proclamirt ist, bereitet euch *vor* in Wien, auf Verwundete! Leider ist das hier *nicht* geschehen.« (Leitzmann 96-97)

[I beg you, do send something! Neither the government nor the city people themselves can take care of the sheer multitude; the entire nation must help, as we did! Today the number of the soldiers' wounds is compounded by streams of men with wound fever that endlessly pour in. [...] They lie in the dirt, languishing in hunger. Throw yourself into your carriage und drive around. [...] You can see my agitation. It is not only frailty: If you had seen it those eight days – if you were to see it now. [...] As long as peace has not been proclaimed, you should prepare yourself in Vienna to take in wounded soldiers! Unfortunately, this has not been the case here [i.e. in Prague].]

Having profited from her experiences with the badly organized army hospital in Berlin, she overtook the leadership for provisioning and care.²⁴ In the process, she came in very close proximity to the wounded, as her letter from September 15th shows. She took constant action in order to alleviate their distress:

»[S]o will ich ihnen kochen lassen: und ihnen Hemden und Socken [sic] spenden. *Das* ist zu nothwendig für arme kranke Geplünderte Abgerissene. [...] Es geht ihnen ohnerachtet sie sehr bedürftig und beklagenswerth sind etwas besser: es ist mehr Ordnung schon; sie haben Madratzen. Stroh, Lappen doch was man nur in den Straßen siht muß Einem was man nur besitzt abloken und Thränen und Herz und Seele. Gestern ging ich gebend in der Sonne umher: und als ich Einem gab, kam eine Bauersfrau mit einer schwehren Butte auf dem Rücken, und gab dem selben einen Kreuzer: recht Mutter: sie antwortete mir viel auf bömisch, und wischte sich Thränen ab. So geht's immer weg. man möchte vergehen. Sag Karoline! wird uns Gott diesen Vertheidigungskrieg nicht gewinnen lassen?« (Leitzmann 101).

[And so I'm going to arrange someone to cook for them; and donate some shirts and socks. That is all too necessary for the poor, sick, plundered, down-and-out people that they are. [...] Although they are very needy and pitiful, they are doing somewhat better: Things are already more ordered; they have mattresses. Straw and rags, but what one sees in the streets must move one to give everything possible and tears, heart, and soul to boot. Yesterday, I ran around in the sun, giving things, and as I was giving to one person, a farmer's wife came by with a

heavy vat on her back, and she gave him a kreutzer. You were right, mother: she answered me at length in Bohemian, wiping away her tears. And so it goes on. It makes one want to die. Tell me, Caroline! Will God not let us win this defensive war?]

Although this account, like many other of her letters, is punctuated by patriotic remarks, the physical reality nevertheless remained the focus of its author. The identificatory and emotionally unguarded behavior she exhibits becomes particularly clear in comparison with a description given by Wilhelm von Humboldt. After the battle near Leipzig, he rode over the battlefield in the company of Hardenberg, writing about his experience to Caroline on October 20th, 1813:

»Es war dies das erste Schlachtfeld, das ich sah, und ich habe nun erst einen Begriff davon. Es liegen noch eine Menge von Toten darauf, die meisten halb oder ganz nackt ausgezogen, oft mehrere übereinander. Die meisten lagen mit ausgestreckten Armen auf dem Gesicht, wo man erst das Homerische »die Erde mit den Zähnen nehmen« recht versteht und einsieht. Ein armer Hund suchte immer an einer Stelle herum und war nicht wegzubringen. Man sah keinen Toten, aber er hatte gewiss irgendeine Spur seines Herrn. Wie wir an einem Ort waren, wo mehrere Tote lagen, bemerkte ich, dass ein scheinbar Toter noch eine Hand rührte. Wir ritten heran, er hatte eine starke Kopfwunde, aber zuckte noch. Wir ließen Leute herankommen, und obgleich er gar kein Zeichen gegeben hatte, dass er unsere Bemühungen für ihn hörte oder achtete, so fühlte er nicht so bald, dass man ihn anfasste und ihm half, als er alle Kraft zusammennahm und sich mit aufhalf. Wir brachten ihn ins Dorf, er sprach aber gar nicht und ist vermutlich doch gestorben.« (Humboldt, 1910, 149-150).

[This was the first battlefield that I saw, and only now do I have an idea of how it really is. A multitude of dead bodies are still lying here, most of them either half-naked or fully unclothed, often many atop each other. Most lay with arms extended over their faces, and only by the sight of them can one truly appreciate and understand Homer's phrase »biting into the earth with one's teeth«. A poor dog kept searching around in one area and wouldn't be removed. There was no sign of a dead man there, but it most certainly had discovered a trace of its master. When we were at a place where many dead men were lying, I noticed the hand of one who appeared dead still stirred. We rode up to him, he had a severe wound to the head, but he was still twitching. We summoned men to come to help, and although he gave us no sign that he heard or noticed our efforts, as soon one took hold of him and helped him, he gathered all his strength and tried to raise himself up. We brought him to the village, but he uttered not a word and probably he died after all.]

Humboldt adopts a distanced attitude in the face of suffering. His elevated position on horseback protects him and gives him an aesthetic perspective

that allows him to view his immediate environs through the medium of an antique text. At this time Humboldt was working hard at a translation of Aeschylus; involuntarily and unexpectedly, the view before him supplied the artistic reality of the text with real experience »where one [...] truly appreciates and understands«. He was elevated over the situation both intellectually and physically, and was able to maintain this distance, for help was provided by his and Hardenberg's having »men come to help«. Later too, in the city, the encounter with the injured men in St. Thomas' Church transformed before his eyes into an atmospheric »sight« and a »spectacle«. He registers bodily details, but remains aloof from both the bodies and the people:

»Den Nachmittag ging ich in der Stadt bei den Verwundeten und Gefangenen herum. In der Thomaskirche liegen an 700 gefangene und verwundete Franzosen, von denen heute abend seit dem 16. und 18. noch keiner verbunden war. Von dem lugubren Anblick der halbdunklen Kirche mit dem dumpfen Gewinsel und Gestöhn hat man keinen Begriff. Die Gefangenen herdenweise von den Kosaken wegtreiben zu sehen, ist auch ein eigenes Schauspiel.« (Humboldt, 1910, 150)

[In the afternoon I went into town, circulating among the injured and the captives. About 700 captive and wounded Frenchmen lie in the St. Thomas' Church, among which this evening, since the 16th and the 18th (October, i.e. the dates of the Leipzig battle) none were bandaged. One cannot conceive of the dismal sight of the half-darkened church and the muffled whining and moaning. To see the Cossacks driving the captives away in great herds is also a spectacle in its own right.]

As Caroline von Humboldt wrote to Varnhagen on October 23rd, 1813, Rahel was at the same time tirelessly active in Prague²⁵ and experienced her bodily strength as a personal victory:

»Gott giebt mir eine *besondere* Gesundheit hier, zu den Erschütterungen, und zur Thätigkeit. Du glaubst es vielleicht nicht: aber ich habe nicht einen *Augenblick* Zeit seit ich den Soldaten helfe. Aber wie glücklich bin ich! Ich kann helfen: womit habe ich das *verdient*? Warum helf ich ihnen, Sie nicht mir? [...] *Große große* Gnade hab ich schon in diesem Kriege erfahren; auch schon zu Hause: ich konnte sehr Gutes wirken, mit meinen beschränkten mittlen, und elendem Rahmen.« (Leitzmann 106-107)

[God gives me a particular sort of health here, to cope with the shocks and for activity. Perhaps you don't believe it, but I have not one moment of free time since I've been helping the soldiers. But how happy I am! I can help; how did I deserve this? Why do I help them, and they not me? [...] I have already experienced great, great grace in this war, at home already too: I could do great good with my limited means and under wretched circumstances.]

Conclusion

In March 1814 this charitable activity came to an end – an end Rahel Levin herself would define with considerations of where she would go next. She consulted Caroline in long letters not only about this question, but also about a possible meeting and treatment by David Ferdinand Koreff, whom Caroline met in Vienna and who also treated her. Then Rahel married Varnhagen, and Caroline visited a spa for her health. In a further extant letter from June 5th, 1818, they address each other with the formal »Sie«. The closeness of the weeks of common aid never returned.

In the correspondence of these two couples, who experienced the fighting in different places, the private and simultaneously political perspective of the year 1813 becomes apparent. During the couples' respective conversations, one question was raised again and again: How and where should Humboldt/Varnhagen engage himself after the war? In the letters written between the women, however, such questions remained unraised or lingered below the communicative threshold; they refer rather to the immediate present and the demands placed by it.

Achieving a place in the »kultivierten gesellschaftlichen Elite« (Barnouw 98) [cultivated social elite], of which the Humboldts could claim to be the spokespeople, was not a certain prospect for Rahel Levin, but she came closer to achieving this aim. The chance was given to her by the short, anarchic year of 1813, with the misery of war which temporarily loosened otherwise rigid class limitations. The end of the war also meant the end of the legitimizing contexts for action she had created for herself with her engagement in charity work; but she knew how to take advantage of the acquaintances she had made in the time of need in order to mediate a position for Varnhagen, which in turn would facilitate their marriage and life together; Rahel wrote to Varnhagen on April 26th, 1814 (Varnhagen, GW 5, 332): »Gehe nur zu Humboldt; mache ihm ja die Kour! Sie schreibt mir sehr lieb und theilnehmend, und setzt voraus, Du gehst zu ihm.« [Just go to Humboldt; court him! She writes very nicely and sympathetically to me, and assumes that you will go to him.]

About ten years later, in her educational text »Frauen in der großen Welt« [Women in the Wide World] (Berlin, 1826), Caroline de la Motte Fouqué would complain about the social development which, in her eyes, was responsible for bringing about »immer größere Individualität und Egozentrik« [ever greater individuality and egocentrism] (Kabus, in: Fouqué,

24). Her insistence on a renaissance of more conventional forms of social contact reveals her strongly negative reaction to the cataclysms of the Napoleonic Wars and a desire to strengthen the old class order anew.²⁶ An exemplary provocation of this order is provided by the irrevocable integration of a woman like Rahel Levin, who by her own efforts was able to secure a position in society as Frau von Varnhagen. Considering this, the term »Wars of Liberation« takes on a highly ambiguous meaning.

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This article has been translated by Eric Kuchle, Heidelberg.

Notes

- 1 Thomann Tewarson, 1988, 98; this volume also includes a facsimile of one of the extant letters.
- 2 Being in Tettenborn's staff, Varnhagen's perspective is unavoidably subjective; in addition, he also contributed to the *Deutscher Beobachter*. The letters from July 13th and 22nd, 1813, especially report on the devastation of the city and the treatment of its inhabitants, Varnhagen, GW 5, 133: »In Hamburg sieht es schrecklich aus, man presst Geld und Geld, und zeigt es unverhohlen, dass einem nichts daran gelegen ist, nachher in zehn Jahren aus dieser Stadt keine Einkünfte ziehen zu können. Wer kann, wandert aus. Die reichsten Leute müssen persönlich an den Schanzen arbeiten, alle prächtigen Alleen vor den Thoren sind umgehauen und die Stämme zu Pallasaden gebraucht.« [It looks appalling in Hamburg. They collect ever more money, and make no secret of the fact that the last thing they want is to be unable to make revenues from the city in ten years. Those who can, emigrate. The richest people have to work personally at the entrenchments, all the splendid avenues before the gates have been laid waste, the trunks of their trees used as palisades.]
- 3 The appeal must have appeared between April 3rd and 5th; this can be ascertained from a letter from April 3rd, 1813, Varnhagen, GW 5, 25-26: »Apropos! heute ist, für vier Groschen Kourant, auch zum Landesbeitrag, von Frau Fouqué ein Aufruf für Frauen bei Hitzig angekündigt.« [Apropos! Today, an appeal to women by Frau Fouqué has been announced at the price of four pennies courant, and the proceeds shall be a contribution to the state.] The title page noted explicitly: »Die Einnahme fürs Vaterland« [proceeds for the Fatherland], i.e. the profits earned were conceived as a contribution to the mobilization. – Also, »Landesbeitrag« [contribution to the state] referred to the additional donations and proceeds for military campaigns which were collected in varying ways, e.g. the benefit concerts Rahel Levin mentioned to Varnhagen in a letter from April 20th, 1813, cf. Varnhagen, GW 5, 50-51.
- 4 Varnhagen, GW 5, 32. Kabus (in: Motte Fouqué 39) mentions Rahel's contemptuously horrified reaction, however without pursuing the further implications of this and, above all, failing to recognize the status of this letter as a first-rate example of reception on her

- part. In spite of Fouqué's »patriotically tinged nostalgia« in this manifesto, Kabus grants Fouqué a mediate stance between the progressive and the restorative, but Rahel's letter shows that at least her Ruf an die deutschen Frauen was rather understood as a disavowal of women's claims to participation in the public sphere. Cf. also the essay by Arnold-de Simine in this volume.
- 5 Schulz offers both a thematic overview and a selection of texts by Ernst Moritz Arndt, Theodor Körner, as well as Heinrich von Kleist. Essen shows how the battles against the French represented a major influence both thematically and in terms of the conception of individual characters using the example of Kleist's *Die Hermannsschlacht*. The most important genre, because of its wide circulation, was poetry, whose function is investigated by Weber.
- 6 Motte Fouqué was not alone in this opinion; Henriette Herz, too, devoted much attention to the notion of the dominance of the French as one in which little national sentiment was manifested, cf. Schmitz 174: »Bei der ohnehin so gesunkenen Kraft des Vaterlandsgefühls vollendete die Macht und der Zauber der Sprache des Feindes den Sieg derselben. Jetzt strafte sich die Torheit, dass man mit Hintenansetzung der schönen vaterländischen Sprache die französische zur Modespache, zu derjenigen gestempelt hatte, in welcher allein man sich mit Feinheit und Anmut auszudrücken vermöge, und dass die französische Literatur vorzugsweise die geistreiche sei.« [In the already so reduced strength of feeling for their Fatherland, the might and the magic of the language of the enemy sealed their victory. It was now that the foolishness of disregarding the beautiful language of the Fatherland and making French the fashionable language, so that the latter was stamped as the only language in which one could express oneself with refinement and grace and that French literature was seen especially as the literature of wit, punished itself.]
- 7 Varnhagen, GW 5, 48; here, »klätern« means »reden, schwätzen«. The often mentioned Marcus Robert (1772–1826) is the eldest brother, who had taken over the family business after his father's death in 1790.
- 8 Schmitz 193. Henriette Herz wrote her memoirs between 1823 and 1829; these notes were added by the Berlin writer Joseph Fürst, along with recorded accounts of conversations, to a corpus of memoirs, which was first published in 1850. Cf. Schmitz 435–436.
- 9 Cf. the letter to Varnhagen from April 3rd, Varnhagen, GW 5, 26, 27: »Die Noth kann doch kommen, und dann habe ich kein Reisegeld mehr, also muß ich vor der Noth weg. Könnst' ich kalkuliren, was ich hier mehr brauchen muß, als meine Einnahme, so blieb ich: ich reise nicht gerne durch marschirende Truppen, nicht gerne ohne sehr sichere Begleitung, nicht gerne, wenn ich meine Heimath für eine ganz reizlose unsichere neue aufgeben muß [...].« [The need could always still come, and then I'll have no more travel money, so I must leave before this happens. If I could calculate what I will need beyond my income, I would stay: I don't like to travel through marching troops, without a secure escort, or if I have to give up my homeland for a rather charmless, unsafe new one.]
- 10 Until well into 18th century, travelling was the privilege of wealthy aristocrats, whereupon and because of that travelling became an emancipatory, social-revolutionary gesture on the behalf of the bourgeois bound up with both the desire to appropriate the world beyond that of book-learning and, when the journey was documented, satisfying

the autobiographical needs of the traveller. Women did travel, as well, but only in exceptional cases or for urgent reasons. With the expansion of the institution of the post, travelling became safer for women and lent itself better to planning; inside the carriage, women were again domesticized and protected while still having left their homes; cf. the excursus on female travel in Krug 323-326.

- 11 Varnhagen, GW 5, 84: »Als ich in Breslau war, sagte ich dem Onkel, ich hätte noch zwanzig Louisd'or und fünfzig Thaler Kourant; und sechzehn Paar silberne Messer, Löffel, Gabel, und einen Vorlegelöffel bei mir: die hätte man mir im bloßen Silber, ohne Façon, schon hundertundzehn Taler taxirt: ich möchte sie gerne hierlassen, ob er mir hundert Thaler dafür geben wollte, so verlöre er gewiß nichts dabei.« [When I was in Breslau, I told my uncle I still had 20 louis d'ors and fifty talers in Prussian currency; I also had 16 pairs of silver knives, spoons, forks, and a serving spoon with me. These had been taxed in pure gold to the amount of 110 talers, without the ornaments. I would like to leave them with him. If he would like to give me 100 talers for them, he would certainly lose nothing by it.] The »Onkel« actually refers to a cousin, Lipmann Meyer, who was the same age as her father; he finally gave her 150 talers for the silver, whereby it remains unclear whether the cutlery was thus sold or rather simply left behind as a pledge. A Friedrichsd'or was a gold coin (exchange value: 5 talers und 3 pennies); a reichstaler/taler/kourant was a silver coin (exchange value: 90 kreuzers or 24 pennies). On the currencies cf. Varnhagen, 2001, 602-603.
- 12 Breysach 106. The most telling occasion motivating Breysach's representation is a family festivity held on the first wedding anniversary of her sister Rose, which Rahel Levin described in detail in a letter from February 9th, 1802, addressed to this very sister.
- 13 As a result of a lot-drawing, Ludwig Robert was supposed to enlist in the universal militia (Landwehr). This he circumvented by fleeing to Breslau and Prague., cf. Varnhagen, 2001, 919-920.
- 14 Auguste Brede was a friend of Count Bentheim, who was in turn a friend of Varnhagen; he stayed on the Count's estate during the Winter of 1811, and in 1812 they were together in Prague for another Winter. It was thanks to Varnhagen's mediation that they were provided during these months with an amply furnished and comfortable room in an otherwise overrun Prague.
- 15 For a biographical chronology cf. Varnhagen, GW 12, 323-337. In the revised form of the play, Brentano lent features of Varnhagen to both Comingo and Lussan and had them get into a fight over family papers, cf. Schulz, 292-325. On the basis of this communication, Varnhagen gave back the manuscript in the fall of 1814. This conflict bore an unfortunate similarity to the one between Achim von Arnim (1781-1831) and the young Moritz Itzig (1787-1813) when the latter, challenged by mocking speeches, challenged Arnim to a duel. When Arnim refused, Itzig attacked him and was sentenced to a minor punishment. The case was discussed widely in Berlin, serving Ludwig Robert as the inspiration for his bourgeois tragedy *Die Macht der Verhältnisse* [The Might of Circumstances]. Both scandals are characteristic of the anti-Semitic sentiment of those years. For more on the clash between Itzig and Arnim and on Robert's encrypted representation of the scandal in his bourgeois tragedy *Die Macht der Verhältnisse* cf. Rösch 413-414.
- 16 Wilhelm von Humboldt and Caroline von Dacheröden had married in Erfurt on June 29th, 1791, living at first on the Dacherödens' estates; their first two children were born

- in this period. Upon Wilhelm's and his brother's becoming economically independent with the death of their mother on November 1st, 1796, they both went to Paris, where Theodor was born in January 1797; in May 1800, their daughter Adelheid followed; in May 1802, Gabriele was born. Humboldt's position of Prussian envoy to the Papal Court necessitated relocating in Italy, where their son, Wilhelm, died of fever on August 15th, 1803. Their stays alternated between Germany and Italy, constantly overshadowed by the developments of European politics, as well as by the birth of two more children (Louise in 1804; Gustav in 1805; both died within two years after birth).
- 17 For more details, cf. (among other sources) Humboldt, 1991, 259-271.
- 18 On the data and the military decisions between the first encounter in August 1813 (Battle of Katzbach) and the final battle near Leipzig on October 16th, 1813, cf. Nipperdey 82-101.
- 19 Humboldt, 1910, 80. Rahel Levin sensed the rejection very well; she wrote about her encounter with Humboldt in a letter to Varnhagen on July 30th, 1813: »Wilhelm Humboldt boudirt mich; ich sah ihn nur einen Augenblick bei Gräfin Schlabrendorf, die Dich grüßt [...].« [Wilhelm Humboldt is ignoring me; I saw him for only a moment at Countess Schlabrendorf's, who sends you her greetings.] cf. Varnhagen, GW 5, 141, cf. Sanders vol.1, 166.
- 20 The condescending tone was an integral part of the behavioral code held by the couple; during the same period, i.e. on July 28, 1813, Caroline wrote from Vienna to her husband, cf. Humboldt, 1910, 73: »Die kleine Levi will, wie ich höre, in Prag die Auflösung der Dinge abwarten. Sie soll sehr herunter an ihrer Gesundheit sein.« [Little Levi wants, I have heard, to wait for things to resolve themselves in Prague. Her health is supposedly going rather downhill.] And in another letter to Humboldt from August 6th, Humboldt, 1910, 87: »Die arme kleine Levi! es wird sie doch schmerzen, dass Du so unerbittlich gegen sie bist. [...] Von Dir schreibt sie wunderhübsche Sachen.« [Poor little Levi! It probably pains her that you're so adamantly against her. [...] She writes wonderfully nice things about you.]
- 21 When Wilhelm informed Caroline on August 11, 1813 that after Prussia, Austria too – and at his own instigation – had now declared war on France, he announced his intention to make a short stay in Vienna. His letters to his wife show how strongly dissociated the relative realms of action of man and woman had become, however emotionally sensitive they remained to each other as partners, cf. Humboldt, 1910, 96-97: »Sonst aber kann ich in acht bis zehn Tagen, vielleicht früher, bei Dir sein. Ich freue mich unendlich darauf. Wir machen dann alle Vorkehrungen gemeinschaftlich. [...] Ich muß hier schließen, süßes, teures Wesen. Ewig mit ganzer und inniger Seele Dein H.« [Otherwise, I will be able to be with you again in eight to ten days, maybe sooner. I look forward to this infinitely. We will make all provisions together. [...] I must close here, sweet, dear creature. I remain eternally with the wholeness and the depths of my heart, your H.] – On August 21st, he announced his intentions to travel to Vienna, cf. Humboldt, 1910, 105: »Ich schreibe Dir, liebe Li, heute nur zwei Worte, aber ich bin unendlich glücklich, denn ich reise morgen abend unfehlbar um 8 Uhr zu Dir ab. Wie ich mich freue, kann ich Dir nicht sagen. Mein besseres Leben ist nur bei Dir, und Dich einige Tage lang wiederzusehen, Deine süße, liebe Stimme zu hören, die teuren Augen zu küssen, wird mich unendlich glücklich machen.« [I'm writing only two words to you today, dear Li, but I am infinitely happy, for tomorrow I'm leaving without fail at

- 8 o'clock in the evening to go back to you. I can't tell you how much I look forward to this. My better life is only with you, and to see you again for a few days, to hear your sweet, beloved voice, to kiss your dear eyes will make me infinitely happy.]
- 22 Cf. Humboldt, 1903, 311-334: *Über den Geschlechtsunterschied und dessen Einfluss auf die organische Natur* (1794) [On the Difference between the Sexes and its Influence on Organic Nature]. In this work, Humboldt differentiated between male and female qualities, e.g. reason vs. fantasy, productive vs. receptive powers, »in the former a striving which is keenly productive, in the latter an effort to conserve through bonding«, cf. 326; he finally stressed however the unity of nature in the interdependence and complementarity of both powers. The article *Über männliche und weibliche Form* [On Male and Female Form], also published in the *Horen* in 1795 (cf. Humboldt, 1903, 335-369), uses these categories in the contemplation of antique statues; the last essay, *Plan einer vergleichenden Anthropologie* (cf. Humboldt, 1903, 377-410), which wasn't published, rests in its argumentation on the differentiation between woman and man he had already expounded.
- 23 Charpie was extracted by means of picking apart broad bands of linen. After 1870, it was replaced by loosely woven cotton (gauze). One could sterilize the dressing materials through steaming them at a temperature of over 100 degrees Celsius or by using iodoform. Cf. Brockhaus *Konversations-Lexikon*, vol. 4, 112. – One of Rahel Levin's contemporaries, i.e. the Dresden painter Wilhelm von Kügelgen (1802-1867), described this activity in his much-read memoirs with ironic distance, cf. Kügelgen 149.
- 24 For a particularly gripping description, see the letter of September 2nd, 1813, Leitzmann 109-110.
- 25 Cf. Leitzmann 124-125: »Von unsrer lieben Freundin Rahel empfangen ich jetzt öfter Briefe. Sie hat das seltne Glück gehabt einen theuren Freund zu pflegen, und selbst unmittelbar thätig für die Hülfbedürftigen sorgen zu können.« [I now receive letters more often from our dear friend Rahel. She has the rare fortune of caring for a dear friend, and of being able to provide help directly to those who need it.] The friend whom she took care of especially was Alexander von der Marwitz (1787-1814), whom she had known since 1809. He died in action on February 11, 1814 in the battle of Montmirail.
- 26 Motte Fouqué admonished women in *Die Frauen in der großen Welt* [Women in the Wide World] to combat society's egotism and the compulsion for women to gain status through their conversational and harmonizing abilities. She was also outspoken in her demands for the cultural reorientation of the Germans to their own heritage. Cf. Wägenbaur 68-77.

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