8 On the Move: Outcasts, Wanderers, and the Political Landscape of *Die Winterreise*

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The protagonist of *Winterreise* wanders through a landscape that is both real and imagined. Banished from one home but unable to conceive another, he follows a path that circles back on itself repeatedly, leading only to exhaustion and defeat. Yet while the singer of *Winterreise* appears to inhabit a lonely landscape, Wilhelm Müller's verses and their musical setting by Franz Schubert would also have evoked a concrete social world for their audiences, that of the road (*Landstrasse*). The road, by its very nature, was filled with people on the move, some of them (journeymen, pilgrims) heading purposefully from one place to another, but others with no particular destination, whose poverty, criminality, or "dishonorable" status banished them from their towns and villages. These last types, the "wandering people" (*fahrendes Volk*), had become well established as an object of public fascination and state scrutiny by the eighteenth century.

The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars of 1792–1815 added new numbers to the "wandering people," as armies crisscrossed the German lands, leaving a trail of destruction and forcing thousands of civilians to abandon their homes. The defeat of Napoleon would lead to a partial restoration of the European monarchical order, but not an end to the political forces that had arisen to challenge it. Over the next years, student nationalists and radical activists took to the road to assemble, discuss, and disseminate their ideas. After a crackdown on such activity in 1819, many fled the German lands into exile.

This social and political context lies largely below the surface of *Winterreise*, though at times it breaks through to become visible. But whether implicit or explicit, it formed part of the interpretive horizon in which this song cycle was conceived and received in early nineteenth-century Germany. With the theme of "outcasts and wanderers" as its guiding thread, this chapter explores the social world of the road in the German lands of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, while considering how the Napoleonic wars and their aftermath influenced the way Müller and his contemporaries came to see the road and its inhabitants.

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The "Wandering People"

Who exactly were the "wandering people"? One can gain a good sense from a decree issued in 1747 by the margrave of the small German territory of Baden-Durlach. The decree called for the roundup and arrest of

> vagrants and beggars, tramps and deserters, bagpipers and similar strolling minstrels, traveling students, unlicensed peddlers and hucksters of cheap wares, singers, bearers of grab bags and curios, gamers, magicians, tricksters, animal trainers, mountebanks, Jewish beggars, persons collecting alms for fires and the like without authorization, con artists, brush makers and tinkers of pans, pots, and baskets who are unknown and foreign to the land, also those . . . who lay about, beg, or falsely give themselves out to be journeymen.[1]

This ordinance was by no means unique: authorities issued hundreds of similar decrees from the seventeenth through the early nineteenth centuries, to varying degrees of effect.[2] What makes the Baden-Durlach decree interesting in the present context is the range of people and occupations it sought to ban, from begging to bagpiping.

Any visitor to a town or large village in the Holy Roman Empire would have been confronted with people asking for alms. During the Middle Ages, alms-giving was viewed as a Christian duty, and the poor were seen as the responsibility of their local community. Beginning around 1700, however, attitudes toward the poor hardened, as towns and territories adopted measures to expel beggars and the homeless from their borders. Once on the road, beggars often found it useful to spin stories to win the sympathies of potential alms-givers. Some claimed they were collecting funds to build a church or rebuild a village destroyed by fire, even producing "official" letters (often forgeries) attesting to the worthiness of their cause.[3] Others presented themselves as aristocrats who had lost everything through some stroke of bad fortune. So-called "strong beggars," however, used more forceful means to get what they wanted. Traveling in large groups, they might show up at a rural home and demand lodging, food, or money, threatening the inhabitants with arson if these were not forthcoming.[4]

As the 1747 decree indicates, authorities were also deeply suspicious of peddlers and others involved in the "itinerant trades." Because such peddlers operated outside the framework of the guilds, which regulated trade in the towns, they were often viewed with hostility by authorities determined to protect local sellers. There were also questions about their wares, which were seen as shabby and potentially harmful. Such was the case with sellers of printed matter, whose offerings included horoscopes, ghost stories, tales of murder, or, after 1800, "political" diaries, the latter often attached to the folk calendars routinely purchased by all classes of people.[5]

The "itinerants" also included minstrels and musicians, who arrived in towns from time to time, ready to sing a bawdy ballad or play a tune on the hurdy-gurdy. On church festivals or market days, they might be joined by magicians, jugglers, and animal handlers, or purveyors of attractions like peep boxes, puppet shows, and games of chance. These "players" were often viewed with hostility, not only by the authorities but also by the educated public, who saw their entertainments as "base arts that . . . hamper the progress of good taste and morality."[6] But the players, like the peddlers, came under suspicion also because their itinerant ways brought them into close contact with the *Gauner*.

The German word *Gauner* is perhaps best translated as "grifter." In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it was used to denote transients who engaged in various types of criminality. These might include "false begging," "false gaming," medical quackery, and counterfeiting, as well as pickpocketing, crop theft, and low-level burglary.[7] Insight into the lives and careers of these individuals can be gleaned from the *Gaunerliste*, published lists of wanted criminals that included names, aliases, known associates, physical descriptions, and criminal history. A significant percentage of the individuals mentioned in these lists were women, whose fraud and theft often formed part of a family division of labor, with the men perpetrating more violent crimes.[8]

The *Gauner* of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries inhabited a distinct subculture, the world of the *Kochemer* (derived from the Hebrew word for "clever" or "initiated"), as opposed to the world of the *Wittische* (the "dumb" or "honorable").[9] The *Kochemer* possessed their own dialect, *Rotwelsch*, which borrowed heavily from Hebrew, and a system of written signs and symbols known as *Zinken*. An encyclopedia article from 1815 reported that "as soon as someone is accepted among the *Gauner* he receives, alongside his surname, a group- or nick-name, for example, Lips Tullian, Cheese-Beer, Bavarian Sepp . . ."[10] The same article described the *Gauners*' favored abodes as forested areas near mountains and ravines, with isolated houses that could serve as hideouts.[11]

The close affinity of *Rotwelsch* to Hebrew is testimony to the role of Jews in the *Kochemer* world. Beginning in the 1300s, Jews had been expelled from most of the territories and towns of the Holy Roman Empire, and those Jews who remained tended to live in villages protected by a local knight. Other Jews turned to the ambulant occupations prevalent among the "wandering people," including peddling and cattle trading. Most of the "begging Jews" originated from Poland or Bohemia, where they had been driven out by pogroms and other forms of persecution. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, local and territorial authorities repeatedly issued decrees banning

"begging Jews" from their lands. Such bans were justified less on the basis of the Jews' begging (which mostly affected their fellow Jews) than the fear that they were carrying plague or some other disease.[12] In addition, Christians tended to associate Jews with fraud and deceit and assumed they were hiding money they had acquired dishonestly, a prejudice at the basis of the Grimms' fairy tale "The Jew in the Thorn Bush."

On the furthest margins of the *Gauner* world were the "Gypsies" (*Zigeuner*), a pejorative word for the itinerant Romani peoples who had lived on the margins of European society since the early modern era. Although the Romani were of South Asian origin, it was widely believed (including among some Romani) that they were from Egypt. Indeed, many Christians believed that they were condemned to wander after their ancestors had denied the holy family refuge on their flight to Egypt.[13] Like others among the "wandering people," the Romani engaged in itinerant, semireputable occupations like horse trading and small crafts, although their knowledge of fortune telling and medicine was valued among rural peasants.[14] But state authorities and most of the population viewed them as a menace more alien and threatening than even Jews. A 1783 treatise by Heinrich Grellmann described "Gypsies" as "useless for farming, useless for any type of industry. On the contrary, they make themselves irksome with their begging, cause harm with their hundredfold deceptions and, what is more, as thieves and robbers they bring insecurity into the state."[15]

The rise of absolutism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries contributed to a concerted attempt to criminalize the "stray riffraff" (*herrenloses Gesindel*).[16] Legal decrees, like the 1747 mandate quoted above, were part of a broader effort to expel unwanted populations from individual towns and territories. These decrees were backed up with threats of public whippings, forced baptisms (in the case of the Romani), even the death penalty. To keep foreign beggars and vagrants away, officials set up warning signs on the outskirts of towns or at highway crossings. These "Gypsy Posts" described, in graphic terms, the punishments to be meted out against those caught in a town or territory. Officials also organized "hunts" to capture and expel unwanted persons, with cash rewards for a good bounty.[17] By the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, most states had moved away from expulsion and toward confining vagrants in workhouses or conscripting them into the army. At the same time, officials took measures to make unauthorized travel more difficult, requiring all travelers to carry passports with information about the starting point, destination, and purpose of their journey.[18]

The Robbers

If Romani, beggars, and Jews made up the lowest ranks of the *Kochemer* world, then its aristocracy were the bandits who operated in the western parts of Germany and who attained a peak of notoriety in the period 1785–1814. In literature, bandits were often shown robbing the coaches of the rich and powerful, but in fact their methods varied considerably, from burglary to home invasion to murder, as did their targets, which included both wealthy merchants and impoverished peasants. This can be seen in the case of Johannes Bückler, nicknamed Schinderhannes (1779–1803), perhaps the most notorious robber of his era. The son of a flayer (*Schinder*), Bückler began work in his father's "dishonorable" occupation, but after being convicted of stealing cowhides he escaped prison and began a life on the run. Between 1797 and 1802, he was involved in some fifty-two crimes, including burglary, robbery, and murder. Many of these crimes were carried out along the border between the French-occupied Rhineland and the western territories of the Holy Roman Empire, as Schinderhannes appealed to the anti-French sentiments of the German population to win sympathy for his cause. In reality, he tended to target moderately wealthy farmers and especially Jews, whose Christian neighbors often reacted to their plight with indifference or even *Schadenfreude*.[19] On his arrest in 1802, Schinderhannes presented himself as deeply remorseful and yet also as a victim of circumstances, an essentially good man who had fallen in with the wrong crowd. One newspaper described him as "a powerful soul" who, under other circumstances, "would have won renown in the struggle for the fatherland."[20]

This image of Schinderhannes as an "honorable robber" built on tropes in a burgeoning literature on robbers. A classic in this genre was Friedrich Schiller's play *The Robbers* (1782), which portrayed a band of robbers as rebels against princely authority. The leader of the bandits, Karl Moor, is the wayward son of a count but a fundamentally moral person. His unjust expulsion from his father's patrimony leads him to reject the authority of the state and embrace the freedom of the bandit's life. "I am supposed to lace my body in a corset, and straight-jacket my will with laws," he complains early in the play. "The law never yet made a great man, but freedom will breed a giant, a colossus."[21] Under this banner of "freedom," the robbers carry out a series of atrocities that Moor eventually comes to regret, and at the end of the play he gives himself over to justice. But while *The Robbers* ultimately affirmed the legal-judicial order, it demonstrated a sympathy for its protagonist that would be typical of the robber plays and novels that appeared from 1785 to 1815, when the campaign against brigandage was at its height.[22]

The world of the road, including not just robbers but the wider "travel-ing people," left its mark on another classic of German literature, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795). Goethe's Wilhelm is a young man of means who abandons a career as a merchant and takes up with a loose band of actors (another itinerant and semi-reputable occupation). On his travels, Wilhelm befriends a thirteen-year-old tightrope walker and an aged harpist and invites them to join his troupe. After an unsuccessful performance at the castle of a nobleman, the troupe stops for a picnic alongside the road, and for a moment Wilhelm imagines himself the leader of a "wandering colony." Suddenly the troupe is attacked by robbers. In the ensuing gunfight, Wilhelm is shot, but he is nursed back to health and is able to carry on. In the end, Goethe's book fits into the genre of the "novel of education," which typically featured a young man on a journey of self-discovery. In *Wilhelm Meister*, the acting troupe and, more broadly, life on the road, are evoked as alternatives to the responsible life that Wilhelm initially abandons but eventually reclaims, albeit at a more enlightened level. Thus where Schiller's *Robbers* high-lighted the tragic opposition between freedom and social order, Goethe's novel imagined their successful synthesis.

The Post

For men and women of means, to take to the road usually meant to aim at a particular destination, with the goal of arriving there as quickly and comfortably as possible. In early nineteenth-century Germany, the most efficient way to travel long distances over land was by mail coach, which carried letters and paying travelers according to a set schedule.[23] The arrival of the mail coach was announced by the blowing of the coach driver's horn. (In Schubert's setting of "Die Post," the arpeggiated triplet-like eighth notes of the piano introduction imitate the postal horn's arrival call.) Those who wished to travel on the mail coach bought a ticket at a post station and then traveled to the next post station, where the coach would stop to change horses, a process that could take hours. Despite its slow pace, however, the mail coach became the basis for an emerging bourgeois culture of travel. As Klaus Beyrer notes, travel to faraway places came to be seen as a voluntary escape from quotidian existence, an opportunity to cultivate certain sentiments (awe, nostalgia), and a means of "freeing the bourgeois self from its shadow existence in the old aristocratic world."[24]

Yet if travel could be seen as an act of individual emancipation, to hop into a mail coach was also to deliver oneself to various forms of depend-ency and unfreedom. Whatever their rank or station in civil society, once

travelers departed the post station they (and their baggage) were very much at the mercy of the coach personnel and their individual whims. In his popular treatise *On Conversing with People* (1788), Adolph Freiherr von Knigge (1752–1796) offered advice on how to carry oneself while traveling. On the one hand, one should not be too extravagant with one's money, particularly in front of others, since this might make one a target. On the other hand, one should tip the coach personnel generously, since this would incline them to be helpful rather than unscrupulous toward the traveler.[25] Indeed, a traveler on the mail coach could be subject to all manner of scams, such as overcharges for wagon repairs or being forced to exchange currency unnecessarily (an issue at Germany's many internal borders). One could complain to the authorities, but that would only delay the journey, a fact scammers took into account.[26] There was also the chance that the coach might be robbed by bandits, though this danger loomed larger in literature than it did in reality. But this threat, too, showed that even the well-to-do could not completely avoid the world of the grifters and robbers when they ventured onto the road.

Revolution, War, Nationalism

The outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 generated considerable attention, even enthusiasm, in Germany. Yet only a few observers believed these events had a bearing on the German lands since, so the thinking went, their rulers had long embraced the cause of enlightened reform while the French monarchy had descended into bankruptcy and corruption. This attitude changed in 1792 as revolutionary France launched war against Austria and Prussia. After nearly suffering calamity in its opening campaigns, the French army found its footing and soon took the battle to the Low Countries and the western lands of the Holy Roman Empire. By 1795, Prussia had taken itself out of the war, leaving the Austrians to hold off the French on their own, which they managed to do only temporarily. By 1797, both Prussia and Austria had recognized France's annexation of the formerly German lands of the Rhineland. Here the French imposed revolutionary reforms, including religious toleration and the abolition of feudal rents. At the same time, they engaged in plunder and spoilage that turned the local populations against them. It was precisely in this region that robbers like Schinderhannes operated most successfully, moving back and forth between "French" and German territories and playing on the patriotism of the locals to avoid capture.

In 1799, Napoleon joined a coup d'état against the revolutionary regime in Paris and emerged as "First Consul" of France. Five years later, he

crowned himself emperor, challenging Europe's ancient dynasties with his own claims to imperial power. As First Consul and then as Emperor, Napoleon moved aggressively to redraw the map of Germany, overseeing the absorption of dozens of smaller territories by larger principalities like Baden, Bavaria, and Württemberg, which in turn entered into alliances with France. This reorientation of German loyalties, along with Napoleon's stunning defeat of the Austrians at Austerlitz in 1805, paved the way for the formal dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in August 1806, as Franz II of Austria, bowing to pressure from Napoleon, gave up the old imperial crown. Prussia had sat out these conflicts, but in October 1806 a series of provocations led King Friedrich Wilhelm III to declare war on Napoleon. The French forces proceeded to destroy the overmatched Prussian army at the battles of Jena and Auerstedt, before riding triumphantly into Berlin. In the ensuing peace treaty, Prussia lost nearly half of its territory and entered into an exploitative "alliance" with France. Napoleon's dominance in Europe seemed secured.

The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars left their mark everywhere in Germany, including the road. Soldiers had always been a major presence on highways, but now they moved in unprecedented numbers, with both sides fielding armies of well over one hundred thousand men. Whether friend or foe, the appearance of soldiers was never a welcome sight, and the arrivals of these enlarged armies often had the effect of a natural disaster, as they plundered food stores, requisitioned cattle, and impressed locals into service.[27] Once fighting began, destruction took place on a scale not seen since the Thirty Years War. Traveling to Mannheim in 1796, the philosopher Friedrich Schelling bore witness to the devastation caused by France's unsuccessful siege of the city a year earlier. "The whole way one sees dead horses to the right and the left, as well as tossed up and half destroyed embankments, ruined fields, and so forth. [. . .] As one comes into the city through the Heidelberg Gate, the traveler is confronted everywhere with scenes of devastation, particularly in the neighborhood of the gunpowder magazine that blew up."[28]

As French armies advanced toward German towns, their populations took to the road, fleeing for safety. Goethe's epic poem *Hermann and Dorothea* (1797) turns on the love between Dorothea, a destitute refugee from the western side of the Rhine, and Hermann, the respectable son of a Mainz innkeeper. At the outset of the poem, Goethe describes the thoughts of one Mainz resident as his neighbors rush out to witness the arrival of refugees:

> What curiosity won't do! Here everyone is running
> To look at the sad procession of pitiful exiles . . .

But I would not stir from my play to witness the suffering
Of good, fugitive people, who now, with their rescued possessions,
Driven, alas! from beyond the Rhine, their beautiful country,
Over to us are coming . . .[29]

Hermann and Dorothea culminates in a happy marriage, but the fate of most refugees was less certain. In Württemberg, the latter stages of the war coincided with a temperature drop that ruined crops and led to widespread hunger. A ban on emigration kept the population from leaving, but after the war, some 17,000 Württembergers departed for Russia, where they were welcomed by Tsar Alexander I.[30]

Most Germans viewed their sufferings through traditional frameworks of interpretation, e.g., as God's punishment for human sin or as a foreboding of the Last Judgement. However, an important segment of the educated public viewed the conflict through the lens of nationalism, arguing that the defeat and humiliation of Germany, and especially Prussia, signaled the need for a political reordering of the German lands along national lines. In a series of lectures in Berlin, Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) called for a rejection of French political and cultural hegemony and argued for the superiority of the German language, which, he alleged, had never been corrupted by interminglings with Latin. It was also in Berlin that Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778–1852) initiated the gymnastics movement (*Turnbewegung*), in which young men strengthened their bodies through a regime of exercise and training while being indoctrinated in anti-French nationalism. Such open Francophobia could not be endorsed by the Prussian monarchy, which remained officially allied with Napoleon. Nonetheless, Friedrich Wilhelm III and his ministers embarked on a series of reforms that were designed to strengthen Prussia economically and militarily, with a view to an eventual war against France.

In 1812, Napoleon launched an invasion of Russia, with the French Grande Armée supported by some 150,000 troops from Prussia, Austria, and other German allies. After some early victories, the invasion bogged down due to poor supply lines and the onset of winter. By December 1812, the commander of the Prussian contingent had concluded that Napoleon had no prospects of victory. After secret talks with his Russian counterpart, he declared the Prussian forces neutral, an act of insubordination that would come to be celebrated as a heroic act of resistance. Three months later, Prussia declared war on Napoleon. Friedrich Wilhelm III called on his subjects to make sacrifices on behalf of Prussia, suggesting he would introduce further reforms (including a parliament and a constitution) once the enemy had been defeated. A large army was quickly raised, while men of non-military age rushed to join the militia and the home guard. In

addition, patriotic women's associations were founded to raise money for the war effort and to support families of soldiers killed or disabled in the fighting.[31] It was in this moment of patriotic enthusiasm that Wilhelm Müller, then a university student in Berlin, volunteered for the Prussian army. He would see combat at the battles of Lützen, Bautzen, Haynau, and Kulm.[32]

The decisive battle of what would become known as the "Wars of Liberation" took place outside Leipzig in October 1813, as the combined forces of Prussia, Russia, and Austria (an ally since June) defeated Napoleon's army and forced him into retreat. By April 1814, Napoleon had surrendered and gone into exile, the Allies had marched into Paris, and the "legitimate" Bourbon king had been restored to the throne. Napoleon would return once more in March 1815, deposing the French king and raising an army before being defeated for good at Waterloo.

Restoration and Opposition

Since September 1814, representatives of Europe's great and small powers had been meeting in Vienna to decide on the contours of a post-Napoleonic order. The presiding spirit of the Congress of Vienna was the Austrian foreign minister Clemens von Metternich, who was deeply suspicious of the new political forces unleashed by the French Revolution. It would be wrong to describe Metternich simply as a reactionary – he supported religious toleration and the abolition of the slave trade, and he was willing to countenance constitutional government to a degree. But he was also determined that the monarchical order be re-established within Europe. For Germany, this did not entail a revival of the Holy Roman Empire and its hundreds of vanished territories. Instead, the surviving thirty-nine German states were organized into a "German Confederation" with no capital, no emperor, and a spare "constitutional act" holding them together. Although some German states implemented constitutions and parliaments, Austria and, most disappointingly, Prussia did not, this despite Friedrich Wilhelm III's repeated promises to do so, including, most explicitly, in an ordinance of May 22, 1815 that was issued while Napoleon was still on the loose.

For the student-veterans of the Napoleonic wars (including Müller), this was a most unhappy state of affairs. On their return to university, many of them joined nationalist fraternities, or *Burschenschaften*, pledging themselves to the virtues of "Germanness, militancy, chastity, and honor." In October 1817, on the fourth anniversary of the Battle of Leipzig and the 300th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, some 450 mostly

Protestant *Burschenschaft* members gathered for a days-long festival at Wartburg castle near Eisenach. While speakers called for the unification of Germany as a constitutional monarchy, several of Jahn's followers held a symbolic "book-burning" that featured writers deemed reactionary or anti-German. Among the books burned in effigy was a *History of the German Empire* (1814) by the playwright August von Kotzebue (1761–1819). This initiated a war of words between Kotzebue and oppositionists (both students and faculty) at the University of Jena that would grow increasingly bitter over the next two years.

Although Müller never joined the *Burschenschaft* movement (it did not reach Berlin until 1818), he developed close contacts with some of its guiding figures. After resuming his studies in 1815, he joined the Berlin Society for the German Language, which promoted the purification of the German language from French and other influences.[33] There he encountered Jahn, the nationalist firebrand August Zeune, and the Romantic-nationalist poets Clemens Brentano and Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, whose celebrations of German folk-song and the *Nibelungenlied* left their mark on Müller. Although a student of classical philology, he began to focus on medieval German literature, which brought him close to the Berlin historian Friedrich Rühs (who in 1816 publicly opposed citizenship rights for Jews). In general, Müller's views were typical of early German liberalism at this historical juncture: opposed to the current order, insistent on constitutional reform, but also firmly nationalist and (for the moment) anti-French.

The growth of nationalist agitation and student radicalism was deeply troubling to Metternich and many other conservatives, who viewed the nationalist movement as a new form of Jacobinism. Those fears seemed to be realized on March 23, 1819, when Carl Sand, a Jena student and a fanatical nationalist, assassinated Kotzebue in his Mannheim apartment.[34] After attempting unsuccessfully to kill himself, Sand was arrested and eventually tried, found guilty, and executed. In the meantime, police authorities in Prussia issued arrest warrants for a number of leading nationalists, including Jahn. At Metternich's urging, in September 1819 the German Confederation approved the Carlsbad Decrees, a series of four laws that required the disbanding of the *Burschenschaften*, tight supervision over universities, stricter press censorship, and a federal investigation into the dangers posed by "revolutionary machinations" in Germany. Several outspoken university professors lost their jobs, and a number of student radicals were thrown in prisons. Some, such as Sand's mentor Karl Follen, fled Germany altogether.

At the time of Sand's assassination of Kotzebue, Müller had just returned to Berlin from a year-long trip to Italy, so while some of his

acquaintances received unwanted attention from police investigators, he did not. Nonetheless, the events of 1819 left an impression on him. In a January 1820 dedication to a travel book, Müller described his mood as sober and "serious," because "the great Lenten season of the European world, looking forward to Holy Week and awaiting redemption, does not permit an indifferent shrug of the shoulders or capricious arrangements or excuses. Whoever cannot act in this era can at least remain quiet and mourn."[35]

Müller's sullen mood did not last, however. In March 1821, Greek nationalists launched a revolution against their Ottoman rulers, a development that thrilled Müller, who had been a supporter of Greek independence for years. The Philhellenist cause won support from a wide range of European figures, notably Lord Byron, but it held special appeal for German liberals, since supporting the Greeks was a way to challenge the conservative politics of Metternich and like-minded officials in Prussia. In the weeks after the outbreak of the Greek revolution, Müller wrote a series of "Greek Songs" (*Griechenlieder*), whose undisguised political content drew the ire of censors.

Müller appears to have written the poems that would comprise *Die Winterreise* just after the imposition of the Carlsbad Decrees, a moment when Germany seemed to have slipped headlong into political reaction. Where the Philhellenist poems are openly political, the *Winterreise* poems seem apolitical, with most of them consisting of dialogue between a spurned lover and a cold and inhospitable nature. Yet there are indications that the narrator's sense of betrayal is rooted in more than just a failed romance; indeed, at least one scholar has pointed to the influence on Müller of Schopenhauerian *Weltschmerz*.[36] But between the individualistic and the cosmic levels of signification, it is possible to interpose an additional reading of *Die Winterreise*, which treats its central narratives of betrayal and exile as a kind of political allegory.[37] This dimension of the poems would likely have been readily apparent to those who shared Müller's political convictions (including the Austrian Franz Schubert, himself an opponent of Metternich), but not so obvious as to draw the attention of the censors.[38] Moreover, this political message is given an additional social depth through the many allusions in *Die Winterreise* to the world of the road.

Thus we learn in the first song ("Gute Nacht") that the narrator has not only been expelled from his lover's house but is now an outcast from the entire town, condemned to wander the road, making him what he was before: a stranger (*fremd*). Müller's word choice brings to mind the stories of those who, through some misstep or misfortune, have been banished from their hometowns, as well as of those who have never had a home and

are condemned to wander, whether because of an ancient curse or religious hatred. Yet there are clues, too, that Müller understands *fremd* in the more modern political sense of being alien to a particular state. "The girl spoke of love, / Her mother even of marriage" denotes familial misfortune, but it also evokes Friedrich Wilhelm III's promise that victory over Napoleon would lead to the introduction of a parliament and a constitution in Prussia.[39] As James Brophy has shown, the theme of unkept promises figured heavily in the political songs of the immediate post-Napoleonic years, as lyricists urged Germany's rulers, especially Friedrich Wilhelm III, to carry through on their prior commitments.[40] But by the time Müller began writing the *Winterreise* poems, it had become clear that the Prussian king should never have been trusted. "Censorship and political inquisition . . . These are the trophies of the German Battle of Nations at Leipzig," he wrote in December 1819.[41] In "Die Wetterfahne," the narrator realizes too late that the weathervane atop the house of his "beloved" was a signal that when the wind shifted she would change her mind and her lover would become a "refugee" (*Flüchtling*), a word that could refer to those escaping war or those fleeing a persecuting state.

The narrator's expulsion from a home he thought he had gained (but never really had) elicits a variety of reactions. He cycles through nostalgia, false hope, bitterness, delusion, and rage, all while making his way through a bitter cold (indeed, the years 1816–1817 had been among the coldest on record). The narrator even suggests that it is this icy cold that binds him to the image of his lover; should the rushing currents of spring ever return, they would wipe away her memory forever. But if this last image suggests the possibility of revolution, such hopes are faint and grow still fainter as the cycle continues. Instead, we see the narrator gradually accepting the role of an outcast or outlaw. Even though he has committed no crime, he avoids the highways and travels along "hidden pathways" and through "snowy mountain tops," ever further from human community, or at least from those villagers content to see their needs fulfilled in dreams, but not in reality. By the end of the cycle, the narrator has acquiesced to his fate: to sing his songs alongside the hurdy-gurdy man, begging for coins, despised by all, always on the move.

Notes

1. Wolfgang Seidenspinner, "Bettler, Landstreicher und Räuber. Das 18. Jahrhundert und die Bandenkriminalität," in Harald Siebenmorgen (ed.), *Schurke oder Held? Historische Räuber und Räuberbanden* (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1995), 27–38 (27).
2. See Ernst Schubert, *Arme Leute: Bettler und Gauner im Franken des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Neustadt: Degener, 1983), 331–40.
3. Ibid., 223–33.

4. Ibid., 182–85; Uwe Danker, *Die Geschichte der Räuber und Gauner* (Düsseldorf: Artemis & Winkler, 2001), 67.

5. Schubert, *Arme Leute*, 234; James Brophy, *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere in the Rhineland, 1800–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 18–53.

6. Schubert, *Arme Leute*, 238.

7. See the entry "Gauner" from the 1815 *Brockhaus-Conversations-Lexikon*, excerpted in Michael Krausnick, *Von Räubern und Gendarmen: Berichte und Geschichten aus der Zeit der großen Räuberbanden* (Würzburg: Arena, 1978), 85–92.

8. Danker, *Geschichte,* 66.

9. Seidenspinner, "Bettler," 29–30.

10. "Gauner," in Krausnick, *Von Räubern,* 89.

11. Ibid., 90.

12. Schubert, *Arme Leute*, 172–73.

13. Martin Lange, *Räuber und Gauner ganz privat: Räuberbanden und die Justiz im 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert* (Marburg: Tectum Verlag, 2007), 77.

14. Danker, *Geschichte*, 57–58.

15. Heinrich Grellmann, *Historischer Versuch über die Zigeuner*, 2nd ed. (1787), excerpted in Beate Althammer and Christina Gerstenmayer (eds.), *Bettler und Vaganten in der Neuzeit (1500–1933): Eine kommentierte Quelleneditation* (Essen: Klartext, 2013), 238.

16. On this point, Seidenspinner, "Bettler," 30–31.

17. Danker, *Geschichte,* 264; Seidenspinner, "Bettler," 31.

18. Danker, *Geschichte,* 263–65.

19. Ibid., 18–21.

20. Ibid., 28.

21. Friedrich Schiller, *The Robbers/Wallenstein*, trans. F. J. Lamport (London: Penguin, 1979), 36.

22. On this, see Danker, *Geschichte,* 275–97.

23. On the post coach, see Klaus Beyrer, *Die Postkutschenreise* (Tübingen: Vereinigung für Volkskunde, 1985); Klaus Beyrer (ed.), *Zeit der Postkutschen: Drei Jahrhunderte Reisen 1600–1900* (Karlsruhe: Braun, 1992); Bruno Preisendörfer, *Als Deutschland noch nicht Deutschland war: Reise in die Goethezeit* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2015), 57–74.

24. Klaus Beyrer, "Aufbruch in die Welt der Moderne: Bürgerliches Reisen nach 1800," in Beyrer (ed.), *Zeit der Postkutschen*, 226.

25. Adolph Freiherr von Knigge, *Über den Umgang mit Menschen* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1977), 269.

26. Knigge, *Umgang,* 272.

27. On this, see esp. Ute Planert, *Der Mythos vom Befreiungskrieg: Frankreichs Kriege und der deutsche Süden: Alltag – Wahrnehmung – Deutung, 1792–1841* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2007).

28. Friedrich Schelling to his parents (Apr 3, 1796), in G. L. Plitt (ed.), *Aus Schellings Leben in Briefen* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1869), vol. 1, 101–2.

29. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Hermann and Dorothea*, trans. Ellen Frothingham (Boston: Roberts, 1879), 1–2 (translation modified by author).

30. Planert, *Befreiungskrieg,* 361–63.

31. On the Prussian mobilization, see esp. Karen Hagemann, *"Männlicher Muth und Teutsche Ehre": Nation, Militär und Geschlecht zur Zeit der Antinapoleonischen Kriege Preussens* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2002).

32. Erika von Borries, *Wilhelm Müller, der Dichter der* Winterreise: *Eine Biographie* (Munich: Beck, 2007), 34.

33. Friedrich Max Müller, "Wilhelm Müller," *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie (ADB).* www.deutsche-biographie.de/

34. See George S. Williamson, "What Killed August von Kotzebue? The Temptations of Virtue and the Political Theology of German Nationalism, 1789–1819," *Journal of Modern History* 72 (2000): 890–943.

35. Wilhelm Müller, *Rom, Römer, Römerinnen* (1820), as cited in "Wilhelm Müller," *ADB.*

36. See, e.g., Jürgen Hillesheim, *Die Wanderung ins "nunc stans": Wilhelm Müllers und Franz Schuberts* Die Winterreise (Freiburg: Rombach, 2017).

37. Borries, *Wilhelm Müller,* 150–52, also argues for the political significance of this cycle.

38. On Schubert's politics and their influence on his musical setting of *Die Winterreise*, see Reinhold Brinkmann, "Musikalische Lyrik, politische Allegorie und die 'heil'ge Kunst': Zur Landschaft von Schuberts *Winterreise*," *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 62/2 (2005): 75–97.
39. In this context, it is useful to compare Novalis's "Faith and Love, or the King and the Queen" (1798), which presented the royal marriage as a symbol of the Prussian monarchy.
40. Brophy, *Popular Culture,* 67, quotes Ludwig Uhland's "Am 18. October 1816": "Did you forget the day of battle, / . . . When the people rid you of your disgrace, / When you tested their loyalty / Now it's up to you, not to console with words, / But to honor what you promised."
41. Wilhelm Müller to Per Daniel Amadeus Atterbom (Dec. 12, 1819), in Maria-Verena Leistner (ed.), *Wilhelm Müller: Werke, Tagebücher, Briefe*, 5 vols. (Berlin: Gatza, 1994), vol. 5, 147–48.