

**Popular History and Fiction: the myth of August  
the Strong in German literature, art, and media**

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## **Short Abstract**

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This thesis concerns the function of fiction in the creation of an historical myth and the uses that that myth is put to in a number of periods and differing régimes. Its case study is the popular myth of August the Strong (1670-1733), Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, as a man of extraordinary sexual prowess and the ruler over a magnificent, but frivolous, court in Dresden. It examines the origins of this myth in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, and its development up to the twenty-first century in German history writing, fiction, art, and media. The image August created for himself in the art, literature, and festivities of his court as an ideal ruler of extremely broad cultural and intellectual interests and high political ambitions and abilities linked him closely with eighteenth-century notions of *galanterie*. This narrowed the scope of his image later, especially as nineteenth-century historians selected fictional sources and interpreted them as historical sources to present August as an immoral political failure. Although nineteenth-century popular writers exhibited a more varied response to August's historical role, the negative historiography continued to resonate in later history writing. Ironically, the myth of August the Strong represented an opportunity in the GDR in creating and fostering a sense of identity, first as a socialist state with historical and cultural links to the east, and

then by examining Prusso-Saxon history as a uniquely (East) German issue.

Finally, the thesis examines the practice of historical re-enactment as it is currently employed in a number of variations on German TV and in literature, and its impact on historical knowledge. The thesis concludes that, while narrative forms are necessary to history and fiction, and fiction is a necessary part of presenting history, inconsistent combinations of the two can undermine the projects of both.

# **Popular history and fiction: the myth of August the Strong in German literature, art, and media**

## **Long Abstract**

Madeleine Brook, Merton College

D.Phil., Hilary Term 2011

This thesis aims to do two things: first, to set out the debate that has existed for centuries about the relationship between history and fiction in the structuring and retelling of past events; second, to present a case study which illuminates the debate. It gained renewed prominence in the twentieth century with the work of Hayden White, and the increasing use of re-enactment practices in the presentation of the past for pedagogical and cultural purposes has brought the debate into the public area. The importance of memory in history has also been given significant recent attention, notably by Beth Goodacre and Gavin Baldwin, Vanessa Agnew, and Jan and Aleida Assmann – specifically in the fields of re-enactment studies, history, and memory studies. The questions that typically arise within the context of this (extremely broad) debate are questions that never seem to go away – what are the differences and similarities between the purportedly factual and the purportedly fictional structuring and retelling of the past? What are their respective functions in society and culture, particularly as forms of memory? To what degree do these functions overlap and with what effect? Is one more or less ‘useful’ than the other? Do forms of fiction undermine or support the claims and functions of history? Should they be separated and, if so, how? Is this even possible or is the influence of fiction on history and vice versa inevitable? If the

latter, can balance be achieved? Do different types of writers – that is, writers of scholarly history versus writers of historical fiction – approach the challenge of balance differently and are they successful? With the development of new media in addition to print, such as television and the internet, how have the challenges to practitioners of history and fiction respectively altered, if at all? In all of this, how do audiences react? Who is involved in ‘history’? That is, what are the networks that create ‘history’ as opposed to ‘fiction’, and with what purpose? How is history involved in national identity and how does this evolve over time? What is the role of fiction in creating an alternative reality beyond the historical record, which then takes on a life of its own? The thesis cannot solve these questions, but discusses them in the light of the case study it presents. It thereby contributes to an ancient debate that has recently become increasingly acute, especially with regard to the use to which history is put in evoking emotions in relation to the past.

The case study is the second aspect of this thesis. It seeks to examine the development of depictions of August the Strong, eighteenth-century Saxon Elector and King of Poland, in popular history and fiction. To do this, it takes an extremely broad period of a little over four hundred years from the end of the seventeenth century to the first decade of the twenty-first century. In the popular imagination, Friedrich August I of Saxony is an extraordinary figure and his soubriquet, ‘the Strong’, brings together a number of myths about him: his physical strength, his sexual prowess, his ambition, and, like a strong-man in a circus, his taste for theatrical display. He is also – in popular reception – the man responsible for the artistic and architectural flowering of Saxony’s capital city,

Dresden, whose historic centre, although destroyed in World War II, has now been largely restored and displays much of its former glory. In contemporary Saxony, August is a dominant historical figure, and his presence is growing in the national German consciousness through tourism in Saxony and his inclusion in popular history programmes that aim to address the issue of German identity. Despite increasing public knowledge about August, perhaps the most astonishing popular myth still retold about him is that he fathered over 300 children by an unknown number of mistresses, though it is, perhaps, not the most scandalous to our modern sensibilities (these are more likely to be outraged by his incarceration without trial of his longest-serving mistress, Anna Constantia von Cosel, for forty-nine years until her death in 1765). It might seem obvious that the tale of August's prolific paternity is largely a fiction, a myth, but it is nevertheless a piece of information that continues to be related by some modern historians with little or no qualification. The issue of the balance between historical 'fact' and 'fiction' in perceptions and depictions of August the Strong over a long period of time makes him particularly suited to a study of the history-fiction debate.

Chapter One functions as an introduction to the thesis. It sets out the theoretical debate led by historical practitioners and theoreticians, focusing particularly on the development of thinking behind historical re-enactment, but also on the recent ideas of historians on historical fiction as an academic practice and the way in which history is stored and used in memory systems. This is followed by an overview of historical and fictional works written and produced about or featuring August the Strong. Since August's actual political, military and cultural achievements are so much greater than the reductive view of him that

survives in the myth, a brief description of significant features and events in his life is given to illustrate the discrepancy and to demonstrate his place in European history and his relationship to his contemporaries.

Chapter Two explores the image of himself that August the Strong evolved at his court in Dresden, arguing that this is the first step in the creation of an historical legacy that mixes with fictional aspects. It surveys a selection of the architectural and artistic objects he had made, as well as his court festivities, asking what it is that they reveal about his political ambitions and how he used the arts to create not just an image of power, but also an image of a man with an immense variety of skills and abilities, both personally and politically. This chapter also examines an example of court literature, produced close to the end of August's life, the only surviving fragment of Johann Ulrich von König's epic poem *August im Lager* (1731), and examines it in the light of diplomatic relations with Prussia at the end of August's reign. This orchestrated image of personal and political power is then contrasted with the reaction against August in the work of Johann Christian Günther after his failure to gain the post of court poet in 1719.

In Chapter Three, the link is made between the image that August orchestrated in his court and the gallant style that was becoming increasingly popular in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Setting out first what contemporaries believed *galanterie* and the *homme galant* to be, this chapter then looks at literary works in which August appears in veiled form as a fictional protagonist and the epitome of the *homme galant*: *Der Europäischen Höfe Liebes- und Helden Geschichte* by Christian Friedrich Hunold (1705), and two short stories written by August's former mistress, Maria Aurora von Königsmarck. The

first ‘historical’ accounts of August’s life are those written by David Faßmann and Karl Ludwig von Pöllnitz in the years immediately after August’s death in 1733. Unlike the preceding literary works, these works are styled as biographies and bear some similarities to ‘secret histories’, although August is not hidden behind a pseudonym. These two authors’ works are evidently selective, even downright fictional in nature, but still maintain an image of August that is commensurate with that of the *homme galant*. However, as a result of their seemingly ‘factual’ appearance, it is these works that are taken up by future historians and fiction writers and are, in general, treated almost as objective historical sources.

The results of this are shown in Chapter Four, which shows the historiographical trend of the nineteenth century under the influence particularly of the Prussian ascendancy in Germany and the reaction against *galanterie*. While there is only slight variation within the negative depiction of August among historians as immoral and ‘un-German’, this chapter shows that he was a hugely flexible figure in works of historical fiction, a genre that was extremely popular among readers, more so than works of academic history. The literature examined here is almost exclusively ‘popular’, that is, written by non-canonical, but often extremely prolific, authors, and contrasts with the increasingly ‘high brow’ and professional work of historians in this period. Examples of literature that try explicitly to meld the two diverging fields of history and fiction are shown to be unsuccessful because they consistently undermine their own didactic project. Writers that take a more flexible approach to the role of history in their stories, however, are able to do much more with their work, and demonstrate a willingness to go beyond, even explicitly deny, the judgements of contemporary



historians.

The problem of a 'German' identity and its relation to history in a fraught political context is examined in Chapter Five, which covers the period of the GDR. While the historical figure of Friedrich II could be rejected by the GDR in its early stages in reaction to his significance in pre-1945 German identity and western imperialism, August the Strong represented a much more complex figure for East German identity formation. The tension between trying to distance a new socialist identity from an imperial and socially oppressive past, and the great importance of creating a politically acceptable history that was uniquely East German was played out in the debates surrounding the legacy of August the Strong. This was not just restricted to the heated arguments over how the material past of Dresden was to be handled after its bombing in 1945, a debate that continued right to the end of the GDR and beyond, but was also an important aspect of the historical literature about August which appeared up to the 1980s. Ironically, it was this particular aspect of the GDR's 'imperialist' past that formed a part of its cultural diplomacy with political allies in the east, during the early stages of its existence, encouraging an international socialist identity by promoting the literature of a nineteenth-century Polish author, Józef Ignacy Krasiński, who wrote numerous fictional works about August the Strong and his era. Predictably, though, it also opened up the possibility for modern authors, such as Joachim Walther, of critiquing the GDR regime and the way its society functioned, using the distant past to comment on the present.

The sixth chapter of the thesis brings the examination of the relationship between history and fiction into the twenty-first century, and examines

particularly the practice of re-enactment as it appears in treatments of August the Strong in biography, literature, and TV history. The problem of what Vanessa Agnew terms ‘the emotive turn’ in presenting history to the public is a significant issue in the handling of August the Strong for a pan-German audience. As a result his reputation as a lover continues to be the way in which the public are drawn into his story, but, all too frequently, other significant aspects of his reign are ignored, thereby actually perpetuating a myth that has long been recognized by experts as only part of the whole picture. Re-enactment is an important tool for the historical writer as well as the historian, but, particularly where it appears in modern media portrayals of history, it is not always used sensitively. The resulting product has the potential to confuse the reader or viewer and actually to undermine either or both the project of history and the project of historical fiction. This means that the questions of what is history and what is historical fiction, and how and when to combine the two continue to be relevant. The thesis concludes with some remarks on the continuing struggle for dominance between ‘academic’ and ‘popular’ versions of history, as illustrated by the example of August the Strong, and how the techniques of fiction, perhaps most easily demonstrated by the flexible boundaries present in the historical novel, mean that a text can move between spheres that consider it, on the one hand, a complete fiction, not to be taken seriously by those seeking historical knowledge, and, on the other hand, a valid historical source, often in a variety of ways, but the scope of which is not always fully explored.

This study contributes to two traditional areas of research: the role of fiction in history on one hand, and the perception of the historical figure of August

the Strong on the other. Among the studies about August the Strong, this thesis is unique in combining these two areas, previous surveys having focused mainly on tracing the traditional academic historiography portraying the Saxon elector-king. A range of texts, many of them not well known, are used to illustrate the findings of this thesis. The main texts examined are ‘published’ products in print or available in other hard formats, such as DVD. However, informal, ‘unpublished’ material in the public domain, for example, reader reviews on retailer websites, is valuable for gauging the modern public reaction to the place of fiction in history and also for giving some indication of what the lay public – a distinction is not always clear – believe they get out of what might be called popular ‘history products’. The thesis thereby aims to look at a range of voices in the production and perpetuation of historical myth and fiction, from the historians and writers to the recipients of the history product – reviewers, readers and viewers – with varying levels of historical awareness.

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### **A note on names**

In principle, names of the historical figures who feature in this thesis have been kept in the spelling of the language of their native country rather than anglicized. So the main figure of this thesis is referred to as 'August' rather than 'Augustus'. Other examples are 'Friedrich' rather than 'Frederick', 'Stanisław' rather than 'Stanislaus', and so on. I have made exceptions where figures are so well-known under their anglicized name that it is sensible to keep that form. So Peter the Great remains 'Peter' rather than the Russian 'Piotr'. The naming of locations follows the same principle. Where names or borders have changed over the course of time, an explanation is given.

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## **Abbreviations**

*ADB* Allgemeine deutsche Biographie

*FAZ* Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

*NDB* Neue deutsche Biographie

## Chapter 1: ‘zu des Dichters gutem absehen und zur erbaung’: history versus fiction and August the Strong.

### 1.1. History versus fiction and fictions as history.

As Duke of Saxony, Meissen, and Lusatia, he possessed the means to live of his own [*sic*]. As an Elector of the Holy Roman Empire, he wielded influence in the world, but not unlimited power. As commander of imperial armies in the campaigns of the Holy League he had a distinguished military reputation. As the father of some three hundred children [...] his personal prowess was beyond reproach. He looked a fitting successor to the great Sobieski.

Augustus the Strong's amours formed one of the wonders of the age, attesting no less to his catholic and cosmopolitan taste than to his phenomenal stamina. After a series of youthful adventures in Madrid and Venice, where he had variously disguised himself as a matador and a monk, he returned to Dresden in 1693 to the charms of his bride, Eberdine [*sic*], Princess of Bayreuth, to the labours of the Electoral Office, and to the cultivation of a covey of concubines – official, confidential, and top secret.<sup>1</sup>

This extract is taken from the first few pages of a chapter on the Wettin dynasty's period on the throne of Poland in a well-known general history of Poland, *God's Playground* (first published in 1981), by the eminent British historian, Norman Davies (b. 1939). Davies' work has been criticized in the past for relativizing the Polish policy towards Jews in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>2</sup> *God's Playground* has also been praised for its ambition – its huge chronological scope and its inclusion of a large variety of source material – but at the same time criticized for its sweeping generalizations, errors, and – apparently the fault of the publisher, rather than the author – the lack of more comprehensive footnotes and bibliography.

Nevertheless, it is almost invariably recommended as a highly readable, useful,

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<sup>1</sup>Norman Davies, *God's playground: a history of Poland*, 2 vols, revised edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), I, p. 372.

<sup>2</sup>See Benjamin Schwarz, 'God's Playground by Norman Davies', *The Atlantic Monthly* 290.5 (December 2002), p. 127.

and informative general history of Poland.<sup>3</sup> The extract given above epitomizes some of these pros and cons: on the one hand, a glance at the footnote related to this section reveals that it is based on the eighteenth-century English translation of *La Saxe galante* by Karl Ludwig von Pöllnitz, which demonstrates Davies' policy of looking beyond 'official' state sources for his historical material; on the other hand, there appears to be no critique of the source, which is by no means reliable. The result is that Davies repeats a number of more-or-less fictions and even makes outright errors in his introduction of August the Strong as prospective king of Poland – August the Strong did not have three hundred children, and, even if he did, he would not have fathered all of them by 1697, when he was twenty-seven years old. Moreover, Davies' reliance on that particular source leads him to continue his introduction of August – a section not quoted here – with a long paragraph characterizing his mistresses and their respective success with him, thereby immediately portraying August's life as dominated by sex and extramarital relationships before going on to analyse his political and military actions as king of Poland.<sup>4</sup> Rhetorically, however, the passage seizes the interest of the reader, and Davies is not the only historian to do this. It is the case that there are no adequate biographies of August the Strong in English, nor even in Polish until recently.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>See, for example, W. H. Zawadzki, 'Norman Davies' *God's Playground*', *English Historical Review* 99 (1984), 940-941; Piotr S. Wandycz, 'Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland*', *The American Historical Review* 88.2 (1983), 436-437; R. F. Leslie, 'God's Playground: A History of Poland. By Norman Davies', *International Affairs* 58.3 (1982), 538-539.

<sup>4</sup>Davies also seems to believe that among August the Strong's mistresses are two in particular who sought to obtain pensions from the king, one surnamed 'Hoym' and another surnamed 'Cosel'. In fact, 'Hoym' and 'Cosel' are the same person: Hoym was the married name of Anna Constantia von Cosel before her divorce in 1706. Since Pöllnitz does not separate Anna Constantia into two figures, it is unclear why Davies does.

<sup>5</sup>The only attempt by an English historian is *Pleasure and ambition: the life, loves and wars of Augustus the Strong, 1670-1707* (2001) by Tony Sharp, which covers only half August's reign and whose source material is almost exclusively the letters of the English ambassador to the Saxon court during this period. *August II Mocny* (1998) by Jacek Staszewski seems to be the only significant recent attempt by a Polish academic to give a full account of the life of August the

German biographies, however, do critique Davies' source and deny the story of three hundred illegitimate offspring, although they, too, referring to that same source, Pöllnitz, almost always describe August as a man of great, even extraordinary, sexual prowess. Much of the fictional literature written about August explores this aspect, too, and sometimes it is abundantly clear that the original material stems from the same source that the historians have used – Pöllnitz.

As some examples can show, the relationship between fiction and history has been discussed, debated, and analysed for hundreds of years and more. Attempts to distinguish between the two as having a different purpose have almost always also shown up their similarities. Aristotle (384 B.C.-322 B.C.) noted that the forms of the historian and the poet might be the same or similar, but their intent is different (and, indeed, that the poet probably has a more important function), the historian showing what *has* happened, the poet what *may* happen.<sup>6</sup> Sigmund von Birken (1626-1681) – independent poet, member (under the pseudonym 'Floridan') of the *Pegnesischer Blumenorden* which was dedicated to promoting the German language, and some-time court tutor at Wolfenbüttel to the Braunschweig princes Anton Ulrich (1633-1714) and Ferdinand Albrecht (1636-1687) – differentiated along Aristotelean lines between *Gedichtgeschichte* ('behalten zwar die warhafte Historie mit ihren haupt-umständen, dichten aber mehr neben umstände hinzu') and *Geschichtgedicht* ('tragen eine warhaftige Geschicht unter dem fürhang erdichteter Namen verborgen, sind in ihren umständen anderst geordnet, als sie sich begeben, und ihre Historie ist mit andern

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Strong.

<sup>6</sup>Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1451<sup>b</sup>, in *Classical Literary Criticism*, ed. by D. A. Russell and M. Winterbottom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 62.

umständen vermehret, die sich war-scheinlich begeben können') as having different purposes, though appearing in similar forms of narrative and/or verse. However, in his discussion of the relative merits of literary blending of history and fiction, Birken declared that the *Geschichtgedicht* was the most useful of the two because 'sie haben die freiheit, unter der decke die warheit zu reddten, und alles mit-einzuführen, was zu des Dichters gutem absehen und zur erbaung dienet; da man hingegen, in warhaften Historien, nicht allein die warheit nit allemal schreiben, noch die handlungen beurteilen darf, sondern auch nit alles darinn findet, womit man gern den verstand üben und zur tugendliebe bereden wolte'.<sup>7</sup> In the early nineteenth century, the historical novels of Walter Scott were popular reading across western Europe until the early twentieth century, and were praised for conveying history in their fictional form.<sup>8</sup> The Marxist literary theorist, Georg Lukács, who credited Scott with developing the true historical novel genre, noted that Scott's European contemporaries perceived the novelist's influence on the work of their own professional historians by increasing their attention to new sources.<sup>9</sup> Scott's peculiar achievement, according to Lukács, was his historical and narrative realism – a 'truthfulness of historical atmosphere' founded on the 'popular' interaction between characters of all classes, not simply exclusive attention to characters from one class or another, and showing these characters with all their human qualities –<sup>10</sup> in which he avoided 'false historicism and

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<sup>7</sup>See his 'Vor-Ansprache zum Edlen Leser', in Anton Ulrich von Braunschweig, *Die durchleuchtige Syrerin Aramena* (Nürnberg: Johann Hofmann and Christof Gerhard, 1669), no pag.

<sup>8</sup>For the European reception of Scott's work in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see, for example, various essays in Murray Pittock (ed.), *The reception of Sir Walter Scott in Europe* (London: Continuum, 2006).

<sup>9</sup>György Lukács, *The historical novel*, transl. by Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962; reprinted 1982), p. 30.

<sup>10</sup>Lukács, *The historical novel*, pp.51-52.

inartistic modernization', supposedly resisting the contemporary trend of using history to frame modern debates.<sup>11</sup> Nineteenth-century historians under the influence particularly of Leopold von Ranke may have claimed a distance from the kind of emotive narrative that marked out fictional history writing in the form of the historical novel genre, but the aesthetics of rhetoric still played an important part in their historical studies.<sup>12</sup> During the second half of the twentieth century, of course, the debate surrounding narrative and history took a more theoretical turn and has been dominated by the historical theorist Hayden White, who explicitly addressed the role of aspects of fiction, particularly narrative techniques and the structures and styles of language, in historical writing. White, too, distinguishes between that which can be observed and traced (historical events), and that which cannot and exists only as an imagined hypothesis (fictional events):

Historians are concerned with events which can be assigned to specific time-space locations, events which are (or were) in principle observable or perceivable, whereas imaginative writers – poets, novelists, playwrights – are concerned with both these kinds of events and imagined, hypothetical, or invented ones.<sup>13</sup>

He goes on to explain that the narrative forms used by the two types of writers – historians and imaginative writers – make the works they produce difficult to differentiate, and that narrative is not inherent in the world, but it is imposed by

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<sup>11</sup>Lukács, *The historical novel*, p. 66.

<sup>12</sup>Katrin Maurer, *Discursive interaction: literary realism and academic historiography in nineteenth-century Germany* (Heidelberg: Synchron, 2006), esp. chapter 1, pp. 21-49. Maurer explains that, although Ranke was particularly proud of his 'bare' style, which contrasted sharply with that of the contemporary historical novel, he nevertheless made heavy use of what she terms 'rhetorical *techné*', or 'rhetorical strategies of realism'.

<sup>13</sup>Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: essays in cultural criticism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 121.



society after the event, something he has elsewhere termed ‘emplotment’.<sup>14</sup> It is therefore open to influence by social and political ideologies held at the time of forming or critiquing the narrative. This has been criticized: historians constantly critique the work (and narratives) of other historians, so interpretations do not simply come to exist on the whim of a single historian, but are tested by a group.<sup>15</sup> Even so, history needs to be set into some sort of narrative, sequential – though this need not mean linear – form if it is also to be analysed and interpreted. This is something with which R. G. Collingwood would have concurred when, after the Second World War, he argued that historical imagination is key to historical knowledge and described the active critical thought process of the historian as ‘re-enactment’ of past experience:

The historian not only re-enacts past thought, he re-enacts it in the context of his own knowledge and therefore, in re-enacting it, criticizes it, forms his own judgement of its value, corrects whatever errors he can discern in it. This criticism of the thought whose history he traces is not something secondary to tracing the history of it. It is an indispensable condition of the historical knowledge itself.<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless, it is possible to see the potential for ideological influence in his thought through his emphasis on context. This did not mean simply acting out previous actions or trying to gauge the feelings of historical agents. The approach is a rational one which examines critically all the circumstances pertinent to a

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<sup>14</sup>Hayden White, ‘Historical emplotment and the problem of truth’, in *The History and Narrative Reader*, ed. by Geoffrey Roberts (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 275-389 (p. 376), originally published in *Probing the limits of representation*, ed. by Saul Friedlander (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 37-53.

<sup>15</sup>Mary Fulbrook, *Historical Theory* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 193-194.

<sup>16</sup>R. G. Collingwood, *The idea of history*, revised edn, ed. by Jan van der Drussen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 215.

particular event or decision.<sup>17</sup> It is also an approach that is intended to remind the historian not to take knowledge and understanding of any historical agent or event for granted. Giuseppina D'Oro has commented on Collingwood's use of examples from ancient history, pointing out that a modern perspective on the lives of those who lived in the past is not the same as the perspective of those who lived in the past on their own lives:

Collingwood introduces the idea of a distant past not to delimit the scope of re-enactment to the past rather than the present, but as a device to show that historians should not presuppose that they share the same assumptions as the agent whose thoughts they are trying to understand.<sup>18</sup>

It is unsurprising, therefore, that pedagogues have argued for the usefulness of Collingwoodian practices of history in the classroom. History should not be taught, they argue, as a series of events and dates, rather it should be taught as a process which encourages students actively to engage with historical evidence.<sup>19</sup> Role playing, in combination with critical thought is, therefore, an important tool in trying to achieve this.

Collingwood's ideas have also informed some motivations for the physical practice of historical re-enactment in the field – sometimes quite literally.<sup>20</sup>

Collingwood's 're-enactment' is itself a form of emplotment, through 're-thinking', tracing thought, but still subject – knowingly or unwittingly – to the

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<sup>17</sup>Collingwood, *The idea of history*, p. 215.

<sup>18</sup>Giuseppina D'Oro, 'Re-enactment and radical interpretation', *History and Theory* 43 (2004), 198-208 (199).

<sup>19</sup>See, for example, Robert Bain and Jeffrey Mirel, 'Re-enacting the past: using R. G. Collingwood at the secondary level', *The History Teacher* 15.3 (1982), 329-345; Teresa MacIsaac, 'From Collingwood to the teaching of historical thinking', *Teaching History* 84 (1996), 15-18.

<sup>20</sup>Beth Goodacre and Gavin Baldwin, *Living the past: reconstruction, recreation, re-enactment and education at museums and historical sites* (London: Middlesex University Press, 2002), pp. 32f.

historian's context of the act of re-thinking, and it is this that can make it problematic as an historian's tool. Re-enactment has a number of permutations in practice: probably the most familiar to the public is the large-scale battle re-enactment, but it also includes, amongst others, those individuals at museums and other historical sites who dress in historical costume as either a named or anonymous figure from history. They then present and interpret history to visitors and viewers. In general, re-enactment has an avowedly educational function – using historical imagination as a means towards (historical/cultural) self-knowledge – but the motivations of those who practise it are not necessarily limited to such altruism. In certain formats, at least, the didactic element has to compete with either personal or commercial priorities. This is an issue, for example, for the role of history and re-enactment in video games based on a certain event in the past, such as a Second World War battle.<sup>21</sup> More familiar to most will be the role that history and certain formats of re-enactment have on television and in film. Such programmes must be driven at least partly by financial considerations and viewing figures, which will encourage channels and producers to prioritize the entertaining element above any idea of providing information about history.

In addition, in the 1980s, historical re-enactment practitioner Jay Anderson identified a group of participants more interested in the element of escapism involved. He observed that some of these individuals carried their self-identification to the extreme of claiming that there had been a chronological mistake in the circumstances of their birth: they should have existed in another

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<sup>21</sup>Brian Rejack discusses the outcomes of such contradictory priorities in his article 'Toward a virtual reenactment of history: video games and the recreation of the past', *Rethinking History* 11 (2007), 411-425.

century. They therefore took part because they did not feel comfortable in their own contemporary society and saw re-enactment as an opportunity to be their ‘true’ selves.<sup>22</sup> The re-enactment of historical thought in living history practice is not, then, necessarily limited to the pure Collingwoodian understanding, but also spills out into the emotional, and, thus, into the anti-historical, as Collingwood would view it. Collingwood saw emotion as intrinsically linked to the biography, and therefore made a distinction between history and biography: as biography pertains to immediate experience, it is therefore too caught up in human emotions to be the true pursuit of historical knowledge.<sup>23</sup> Instead, as a result of its relationship to the emotions, biography is more comparable to *art*, more specifically located somewhere between what he terms ‘amusement art’ and ‘magical art’.<sup>24</sup> That is, between ‘art’ that generates emotion which is discharged in the act of amusement, and ‘art’ that generates emotion which is then intended to be discharged in a focused manner through a further, practical act – for example the rituals of religion which, by playing on the emotions, encourage the participant to ‘live a better life’ or ‘further the cause’.<sup>25</sup>

Current trends in re-enactment indicate that the emotive aspect is increasingly prevalent, so much so that it is calling into question the role of re-enactment in the acquisition of historical knowledge.<sup>26</sup> This concern had already

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<sup>22</sup>Jay Anderson, *Time machines: the world of living history* (Nashville, Tenn.: American Association for State and Local History, 1984), p. 186.

<sup>23</sup>Collingwood, *The idea of history*, p. 304.

<sup>24</sup>Collingwood, *The idea of history*, p. 304; R. G. Collingwood, *The principles of history and other writings in philosophy of history*, ed. by Jan van der Dussen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 70.

<sup>25</sup>R. G. Collingwood, *The principles of art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 66, p. 78, p. 87.

<sup>26</sup>See Vanessa Agnew, ‘History’s affective turn: historical reenactment and its work in the present’, *Rethinking History* 11.3 (2007), 299-312; Alexander Cook, ‘The use and abuse of historical reenactment: thoughts on recent trends in public history’, *Criticism* 46.3 (2004), 487-496.

been hinted at in 1988 by Richard Handler and William Saxton, who saw the so-called historical authenticity sought by participants as the search for ‘the coherence that storied lives exhibit, a coherence that our everyday, alienated lives lack’.<sup>27</sup> They also noted that participants in ‘living history’ demonstrated a limited reflexive awareness of the production in which they were involved: research into the character that an individual was to inhabit could be very self-consciously done, but the realities of the overall event’s positioning within the broader situation of the modern world could be conveniently overlooked.<sup>28</sup> This is reflected in a concept of the ‘magic moment’ when the re-enactor claims suddenly to feel an extraordinary affinity with the (kind of) figure they are re-enacting.<sup>29</sup> Though the re-enactor might be immersed in their role, they are nevertheless still subject to the systems of belief that they have acquired in their contemporary upbringing. A ‘magic moment’ also ignores the fact that a re-enactment actually requires the trappings of modernity and contemporary systems in order to take place at all, and that at the end of the day the re-enactor will (usually) leave the site of the re-enactment and return to ‘ordinary’ life.

The point for Collingwood, though it may still be argued that the kind of re-enactor described above has missed it, is that there is a link between historical knowledge and self-knowledge. As Collingwood described it in his autobiography, this clearly has ramifications at an individual and at a larger social or cultural level:

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<sup>27</sup>Richard Handler and William Saxton, ‘Dyssimulation: reflexivity, narrative, and the quest for authenticity in “living history”’, *Cultural Anthropology* 3 (1988), 242-260 (243).

<sup>28</sup>Handler and Saxton, ‘Dyssimulation’, 253-56.

<sup>29</sup>Handler and Saxton, ‘Dyssimulation’, 245.

If what the historian knows is past thoughts, and if he knows them by rethinking them himself, it follows that the knowledge he achieves by historical inquiry is not knowledge of his situation as opposed to knowledge of himself, it is a knowledge of his situation which is at the same time knowledge of himself. In re-thinking what somebody else thought, he thinks it himself. In knowing that somebody else thought it, he knows that he himself is able to think it. And finding out what he is able to do is finding out what kind of man he is. If he is able to understand, by rethinking them, the thoughts of a great many different kinds of people, it follows that he must be a great many kinds of man. He must be, in fact, a microcosm of all the history he can know. Thus his own self knowledge is at the same time his knowledge of the world of human affairs.<sup>30</sup>

This clearly has ramifications at both an individual and at a larger societal or cultural level: it is easy to see how the Collingwoodian idea of re-enactment might be used as a means to forming or exploring identity, whether as a window onto an emotional self or as a way of gaining greater understanding of the developments of society at large, and not simply what *was*, but also what *could have been*. Collingwood still avoids any implication of the involvement of emotion or feeling in this process, but re-enactment might be used by others as a window onto their emotional selves rather than a greater understanding of the developments of the world at large.

More recently, Vanessa Agnew has questioned whether contemporary historical re-enactment has in fact anything to do with historical knowledge at all. Referring to popular television history reality programmes in Germany, such as *Abenteuer 1900* (2004), *Abenteuer 1927* (2005) and *Windstärke 8: Das Auswandererschiff* (2005),<sup>31</sup> she argues instead that the sympathies of the

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<sup>30</sup>R. G. Collingwood, *An autobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 114f, as quoted in Bain and Mirel, 'Re-enacting the past', 338.

<sup>31</sup>These and a number of other, similar, programmes were based on the popularity of the British Wall to Wall series, which included *1900 House* (1999), *Edwardian Country House* (2002) and *Regency House Party* (2004).

(German) public are engaged by programmers in an attempt to reconcile the present with the past in the light of particular national contexts – here, this means post-reunification German-German relations.<sup>32</sup> In order to address such issues, re-enactment does not, however, have to limit itself to reality-based television programmes using grand-scale projects or to the experience of groups of volunteers. The emotional and emotive are also used in ostensibly more traditional/conservative media within the framework of re-enactment, through the relationships of authors, directors, actors, and viewers or readers.

Arguably, literary writers have traditionally been much more willing to admit the role of history and historical study in their work. Again, White has posited that subjecting the supposed historical document to literary criticism offers the historian a great deal of new information and the possibility of a new perspective on history itself.<sup>33</sup> In effect, his constant call is for historians to recognize and learn from the role of structures of fiction in their own work and in their sources. However, as Richard Slotkin, who also argues that writing historical fiction can be a useful tool for the historian, points out, ‘historians understand more about the stories they tell than can be proved according to the rules of their discipline’.<sup>34</sup> John Demos has commented on this, noting that not only does this of course mean that historians practise a kind of editorial censorship about how they are to tell their story, and so what they are going to include or exclude (emplotment or re-enactment), but also that they make editorial decisions about

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<sup>32</sup>Vanessa Agnew, ‘History’s affective turn: historical reenactment and its work in the present’, *Rethinking History* 11.3 (2007), 299-312 (302).

<sup>33</sup>Hayden White, ‘Historical discourse and literary writing’, in *Tropes for the Past: Hayden White and the history/literature debate*, ed. by Kuisma Korhonen (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2006), pp. 25-34 (p. 26).

<sup>34</sup>Richard Slotkin, ‘Fiction for the purposes of history’, *Rethinking History* 9 (2005), 221-236 (223).

how they are to ‘fill the gaps’ of provable history.<sup>35</sup> As a result he also desires historians to highlight the differences in their own work between sections that are ‘proven knowledge’ and ‘informed inference’, though he does not go so far as Slotkin in advocating writing historical fiction: although there is much overlapping between history and fiction, he maintains that the two are still distinct and should remain so.<sup>36</sup> Peter Burke identified this same problem when he commented that an increasing number of historians have recognized the subjective nature of history writing, that it ‘represents a particular point of view’, not ‘what actually happened’, so the historical narrator is also an unreliable narrator and needs to make him or herself known to the reader.<sup>37</sup> This echoes Agnew’s concerns about the nature of modern popular history. Though their respective viewpoints are slightly different – history as presented in popular visual media as opposed to ‘traditional’ history writing – nonetheless their common concern is how the consumer, whether reader or viewer, is made aware of the nature of the ‘history’ product.

This debate may be applied to Aleida Assmann's system of cultural *memoria* in which the ‘archival’ memory stores content until such time as it may be used in some kind of expressive format, the ‘functional’ memory.<sup>38</sup> In this sense, all history writing and all historical fiction writing is the functional memory output as the result of editorial selection from the archival memory of whichever

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<sup>35</sup> John Demos, ‘Afterword: notes from, and about, the history/fiction borderland’, *Rethinking History* 9 (2005), 329-335 (331).

<sup>36</sup> Demos, ‘Afterword’, 334-335; see also Beverley Southgate, *History meets fiction* (Harlow: Longman, 2009), pp. 174-176.

<sup>37</sup> Peter Burke, ‘History of events and the revival of narrative’, in *The History and Narrative Reader*, ed. by Geoffrey Roberts (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 305-317 (p. 310), originally published in Peter Burke, *New perspectives on historical writing* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), pp. 233-248.

<sup>38</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (Munich: Beck, 1999), pp. 27-31.



sources the writer has studied. For both Slotkin and Demos, historians must make a decision about what to select from their ‘archival’ memory, which may include information that cannot be verified in a scientific manner, for use in the ‘functional’ memory they are shaping. Nevertheless, there remains a problem highlighted by the quotation above taken from Davies’ history of Poland, which demonstrates that the boundaries of Assmann’s memory system are permeable: the product of ‘functional’ memory may actually become ‘archival’ memory, or else ‘functional’ memory may be represented as ‘archival’ when it is not, and this is particularly so in literature, whose polyvalence is such that it becomes a particularly problematic medium of memory.<sup>39</sup> This is an element of concern in Demos’s criticism, that the different types of ‘functional’ memory – for instance, according to Aristotelean differentiation between the purpose of the work of the historian compared to the purpose of the work of the poet –<sup>40</sup> should not be allowed to mix unnoticed within the same ‘functional’ memory output (e.g. a history book); there is a danger that the differences in their Aristotelean functions could be confused and both be allowed to revert into ‘archival’ memory. Equally, historical sources often sit somewhere in the ‘borderland’ between history and fiction, and if the historian either does not recognize a source as having that status or else does not highlight that to the reader, then outright falsehoods may be perpetuated and swallowed as fact.

Moreover, as Astrid Erle points out, ‘Medien sind keine neutralen Träger

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<sup>39</sup>See Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, pp. 138-142, on the respective tasks of the *Funktionsgedächtnis* and the *Speichergedächtnis*, and Astrid Erle, *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen: eine Einführung* (Stuttgart and Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 2005), pp. 144-166, for a discussion of the role of literature – especially fictional literature – as a medium of memory (here p. 148).

<sup>40</sup>Aristotle, *Poetics*, p. 62.

von vorgängigen, gedächtnisrelevanten Informationen'.<sup>41</sup> It is, then, not simply literature that is a problematic 'container' or 'conveyor' of memory/history, but any medium. This has become an issue of particular concern over the last twenty years for historians debating the use (and abuse) of 're-enactment' as a widely-used historical methodology. The increasing trend of often highly affective – not to mention extremely speculative – re-enactment in forms of popular history not only, so these historians warn, brings into question the purpose of 'history',<sup>42</sup> but also, as with the history/narrative/fiction debate, brings (scholarly) history deep into the realm of entertainment-based fiction in a form that does not always make clear where the borders are between the two, let alone where they are being crossed.

## **1.2. Overview of the historical literature and recent fiction publications.**

The literature of several centuries, both historical and fiction, concerning August the Strong, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, a man surrounded by extraordinary tales of sexual prowess, military ineptitude, and moral degeneracy, provides striking examples that illustrate this debate. This body of literature shows over and over again that works of fiction have a huge influence on the way that historical figures are perceived, even by historians. Moreover, this is not simply a historiographical trend of the past, but one that continues into the present, at times deliberately manipulated and exploited for (economic) advantage, at times unwittingly perpetuated.

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<sup>41</sup>Erle, *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen*, p. 124.

<sup>42</sup>For example, Agnew, 'History's affective turn', 299-312.

Historical studies of August the Strong are not as numerous as, for example, those of Prussia's Friedrich II with whom in the nineteenth century August was often compared, but a trickle of biographies and, increasingly, thematic investigations were published over the centuries. The earliest of these works are *L'histoire de Pologne sous le règne d'Auguste II* (1733) and *Histoire d'Auguste II. Roi de Pologne, électeur de Saxe* (1739) by Jean Baptiste Des Roches de Parthenay (1690-1766), *Das Glorwürdigste Leben und Thaten Friedrich Augusti, des Großen, Königs in Pohlen und Chur-Fürstens zu Sachsen* (1733) by David Faßmann (1685-1744), and *La Saxe galante* (1734) by Karl Ludwig von Pöllnitz (1691/92-1775). All three of these writers experienced a degree of popularity in their authors' native countries (France and Germany) and, in the case of Parthenay and Pöllnitz, abroad in translation.<sup>43</sup> However, as Chapter 2 explains, it was Pöllnitz's account, which is to a degree fictional, that shaped the historical accounts of August the Strong's life in the nineteenth century. During the nineteenth century it was relatively rare for historical studies focusing solely on the life of August the Strong to be published. Only the popular historian Friedrich Förster (1791-1868) dedicated an entire volume of his three-volume study *Die Höfe und Cabinette Europa's im achtzehnten Jahrhundert* (1836-1839) to an examination of August the Strong and his court. *Geschichte des Sächsischen Volkes und Staates* (1847) by Carl Christian Carus Gretschel (1803-1848) naturally included a section on the fortunes of Saxony in the eighteenth century

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<sup>43</sup>Parthenay's two-volume work was published in English in two volumes in 1734: *The History of Poland under Augustus II. which contains The great Dispute between the Prince and the Princes of Conti and Sobieski for the Crown: With the other important Transactions of his Life, and with which the best Account of the Government, Laws, Diets, Assemblies, manners of Electing their Kings, Power and Factions of the Nobility, Militia, Interest of the Republick, &c. is occasionally interspersed. Translated from the French of the Abbe' de Parthenay, By John Stacie, Esq* (London: for W. Lewis in Russel-Street, Covent-Garden, and F. Cogan at the Middle-Temple-Gate, Fleet-street, 1734).

under August II and his son, Friedrich August II. Other historians, generally Prusso-centric in their outlook even if they did not consider themselves *kleindeutsch* – for example, Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886), Karl Eduard Vehse (1802-1870), Friedrich Christoph Schlosser (1776-1861), Bernhard Erdmannsdörffer (1833-1901) – tended to subsume August into their survey of German powers in the previous century and treated him largely as a (negative) comparator to Friedrich Wilhelm I and Friedrich II of Prussia. Chapter 3 shows that, regardless of their background, nineteenth-century German historians tended to dismiss August the Strong either as a political failure and/or as morally corrupt. In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, Paul Haake published several short studies on the life and character of August the Strong in an attempt to correct what he viewed as a dearth of academic work on the Saxon ruler: *König August der Starke: eine Charakterstudie* (1902); *Die Wahl Augusts des Starken zum König von Polen* (1906); *August der Starke im Urteil seiner Zeit und der Nachwelt* (1922); *August der Starke* (1927); *Christiane Eberhardine und August der Starke: eine Ehe tragödie* (1930). Haake's intention was to research and publish the first full biography of August the Strong since the first half of the nineteenth century, but in the event, he only published partial studies over the course of two decades and was beaten to the publication of a biography by the art historian Cornelius Gurlitt (1850-1938) who published *August der Starke: ein Fürstenleben aus der Zeit des deutschen Barock* in two volumes in 1924, three years before Haake's appeared on the market. These works dominated German historical reception of August the Strong for the next fifty years, particularly in biographical studies. A few historians examined August's political actions and

cultural legacy in Dresden – *August der Starke und die Pragmatische Sanktion* (1908) by Albrecht Philipp (dates unknown); *August der Starke: Kunst und Kultur des Barock* (1933) and other studies by Erna von Watzdorf (1892-1976) – but early twentieth-century biographies and thematic studies of August's reign that contradicted Haake did not enter the historiographical mainstream.<sup>44</sup> A more dominant formal historical judgement of August did not appear until the revival of historical interest in him during the late 1970s and 1980s, around the same time that the reception of Friedrich II began to be revised. Among the works that appeared in this period are a double biography of August and his mistress, Countess von Cosel – the only biography of August the Strong to use this format – from the former FRG (Federal Republic of Germany), *Constantia von Cosel und August der Starke: die Geschichte einer Mätresse* (1984) by Gabriele Hoffmann, and two from the former GDR (German Democratic Republic) focusing on August alone, *August der Starke: Träume und Taten eines deutschen Fürsten* (1987) by Georg Piltz, and *August der Starke und Kursachsen* (1988) by Karl Czok.<sup>45</sup> Czok, in particular, may be credited with promoting August the Strong over the last thirty years as a figure worthy of attention by academics; he was the consulting historian on the popular TV mini-series *Sachsens Glanz und Preußens Glorie* (GDR, 1985-1987), and wrote and published a number of articles and

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<sup>44</sup>See Katrin Keller, 'Landesgeschichte zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik: August der Starke als sächsisches "Nationalsymbol"', in *Nach dem Erdbeben: (Re-)Konstruktionen ostdeutscher Geschichte und Geschichtswissenschaft*, ed. by Konrad H. Jarausch and Matthias Middell (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1994), pp. 195-215. Keller explains that Haake's reception and, indeed, his reaction to any negative reception of his own work on August was strongly coloured by Prusso-Saxon political antagonism, which was expressed in (Saxon) anger over the presumption of Prussian historians in writing Saxon history without considering its reception by Saxon scholars, pp. 202-203.

<sup>45</sup>Herbert Pönicke also published a short biographical study, *August der Starke: ein Fürst der Barock*, in 1972, but it is generally unsuitable for academic use, since it contains no notes and only the briefest of bibliographies. Piltz also lacks notes, but has a much more thorough and extensive bibliography.

books during the 1990s and early twenty-first century which continue to be published and republished. For example, *August der Starke und seine Zeit* was published in 1989 by Edition Leipzig, was then reissued in 2004, and again in paperback by Piper in 2006, 2008, and 2010. There can therefore be no denying the popularity of Czok's work, nor, concurrently, of August the Strong as an historical figure.

After the reunification of Germany in 1990, when the process of reconstructing Dresden's historic centre began in earnest, which included promoting the city as a centre for historic art and architecture, the number of publications, both for professional academics and the lay public, increased. Sold in the residential palace's museum shop, annotated catalogues of Dresden's art collections, with a focus on August the Strong, are proffered just as much to the tourist wanting a souvenir as they are as a useful reference source for the academic, for example, *Das Historische Grüne Gewölbe zu Dresden: die barocke Schatzkammer* (2007) edited by Dirk Syndram, Jutta Kappel, and Ulrike Weinhold. At the same time, many books have emerged that are aimed largely at this tourist public, and which are, by and large, collections of anecdotes claiming to 'reveal the truth' behind some of the more scandalous stories told about August – his legendary strength, love life, marriage, and children: *Die Ehetragödie von August des Starken* (1996), *Wahre Geschichten um August den Starken* (1997), and *August der Starke: wie er wirklich war* (2007) by Dieter Nadolski, *August der Starke und seine Mätressen* (2008) and *Er ist im Grund ein Melancholiker: Anekdoten über August den Starken* (2009) by Reinhard Delau, *Die Kinder August des Starken* (1994) by Dagmar Vogel, and *Der Daumeneindruck von August des*

*Starken: 16 königlich-sächsischen Miniaturen* (2007) by Ernst Günter von Husum are a few examples of what is available at very little cost. In the museum shop in Dresden's residential palace, these are sold next to works of fiction, mainly historical novels, which portray the imagined lives and relationships of August the Strong and those around him. The number of these also increases year on year: *Antonia – die schöne Polin: eine Liebe am Hofe August des Starken* (2010) by Renate von Rosenberg, *Die Königsdame: die Osmanin am Hofe vom August dem Starken* (2007) by Sabine Weigand, and *August und ich* (2006) by Evelyn Holst are the most recent publications focusing on August's mistresses. Some of the other figures around August have also recently been portrayed in fiction: Johann Friedrich Böttger (1682-1719), credited with the invention of European porcelain, in *Der Goldmacher* (2003) by Berndt List,<sup>46</sup> and Joseph Fröhlich (1694-1757), August's court fool, in *Der Narr und sein König* (2009) by Eberhard Görner. However, the translated novels of nineteenth-century Polish writer Józef Ignacy Krasiński (1812-1887) about eighteenth-century Poland and Saxony continue to be popular and widely available: *Gräfin Cosel: ein Frauenschicksal am Hofe August des Starken* (Polish: *Hrabina Cosel*, 1873), *Graf Brühl* (Polish: *Brühl*, 1874), *Aus dem siebenjährigen Krieg* (Polish: *Z siedmioletniej wojny*, 1875), *Feldmarschall Flemming* (Polish: *Skrypt Fleminga*, 1879), *König August der Starke* (Polish: *Za Sasów*, 1889), and *Der Gouverneur von Warschau* (Polish: *Starosta warszawski*, 1910).<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Böttger was also a popular figure for literary treatment prior to this, for example, Arthur Stiehl, *Goldene Berge: Roman aus dem Leben der Gräfin Kosel und des Porzellan-Erfinders Böttger* (Berlin: Rich. Bong, 1918) and Max Großmann, *Weißes Gold: historischer Roman über die Erfindung des Meißner Porzellans* (Berlin: Verlag der Nation, 1969).

<sup>47</sup>NB The notes to these translations in German usually refer to these six works as having been produced between 1873 and 1885. I have given more precise dates according to holdings in

These are only the most recent popular fictional accounts; literature in German, including translations from other European languages, portraying August the Strong goes back to the first half of the eighteenth century. Nor are fictional depictions of August the Strong limited to published literature, particularly from the early twentieth century onwards, though these are not always easy to trace, and where they are possible to find, often by accident. Some German examples of other media portrayals of August the Strong are *Der galante König* (silent film, 1920) directed by Alfred Halm (1861-1951), *August der Starke* (film, 1936) directed by Paul Wegener (1874-1948), *Die blauen Schwerter* (film, GDR/DEFA, 1949) directed by Wolfgang Schleif (1912-1984), *Sachsens Glanz und Preußens Glorie* (TV mini-series, GDR, 1985-1987) directed by Hans-Joachim Kasprzik (1928-1997), and as a minor character in *Adrienne* (operetta, 1926) by Walter Wilhelm Goetze (1883-1961).

It is clear that August the Strong and the stories that surround him have been of relatively consistent interest to historians, writers, and the public from the years of his own reign onwards and that he has developed into a cultural reference point, even if that reference point is not perceived as being of the same importance as Wallenstein or Friedrich II.<sup>48</sup> What is also clear is that, despite the rich variety of his life and even the notable successes of his reign (particularly in maintaining the economic wealth of Saxony), in general – and this will be made evident in this thesis – the popular portrayal by historians and writers, and the popular perception

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Germany, the United Kingdom, or Poland. However, in the case of *Za Sasów* and *Starosta warszawski*, I was unable to find copies dated within that period and have instead given the earliest dates for which I was able to locate copies.

<sup>48</sup>See, for example, Steffan Davies, *The Wallenstein figure in German literature and historiography 1790-1920* (Leeds: Maney, 2010), and Brent O. Peterson, *History, fiction, and Germany: writing the nineteenth-century nation* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005) for studies on the cultural importance of these two figures.



of August in the public eye is that his reign was marked by failure and that he was over-sexed. This seems a strangely over-simplified portrayal of August the Strong's life and achievements, as the account of his life given below demonstrates.

### 1.3. A brief overview of aspects of the life of August the Strong.

Friedrich August I, Elector of Saxony, later August II, King of Poland, was born on 12 May 1670, the second son of Johann Georg III, Elector of Saxony (1647-1691), and Anna Sophie, Princess of Denmark and Norway (1647-1717).<sup>49</sup> The young electoral prince was not especially known for his scholarly diligence, but his physical strength, which later earned him the soubriquet 'the Strong', was renowned, and one of his greatest interests, in his youth as well as adulthood, was the military.<sup>50</sup> Not long after his seventeenth birthday in 1687, August embarked on a two-year *Kavalierstour* of the courts of Europe. This journey, increasingly considered an important part of a young aristocrat's or nobleman's education and preparation for a career at court, took Friedrich August to several German cities, such as Nürnberg, Munich, Augsburg, Frankfurt am Main, and Vienna, to the cities and courts of south and central European states, such as Madrid, Lisbon, and Venice, as well as those in the north and west of Europe, such as Copenhagen,

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<sup>49</sup>I will differentiate between the historical figure and the fictional figure found in literature or film by referring throughout to the historical figure as 'August' rather than 'Friedrich August', both in his capacity as Elector of Saxony and as King of Poland. Where I refer to his character in a work of literature or media, I will use the name the author has given to him. Similarly, I will refer to the historical figure of his son as 'Friedrich August II' or 'Friedrich August' unless his fictional representative is named otherwise, for example, 'August III'.

<sup>50</sup>Georg Piltz, *August der Starke: Träume und Taten eines deutschen Fürsten* (Berlin: Neues Leben, 1986), pp. 17-19; Karl Czok, *August der Starke und Kursachsen* (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1987), p. 11.

Amsterdam, and Stockholm. An important influence on the way the young man would later style himself as ruler of Saxony was the time August spent at the court of Louis XIV of France (1638-1715). Louis XIV's court and rule has been perceived by historians as the classic example of an absolutist state, and under him the French fashion for *galanterie* flourished in the salons and courts of France.<sup>51</sup> In both these areas, as in so many others, from the late seventeenth century on, French influence was felt beyond French borders in German princely courts.<sup>52</sup> In 1695, August presented himself as the Saxon Sun King in the 'Vier Monarchien' carousel during Dresden's carnival celebrations, and, even late in his life, August continued to seek inspiration from Louis XIV's example, specifying for himself on the occasion of his son's marriage a costume modelled on the 'Rheingrafenkleid' made popular by the French king in the seventeenth century.<sup>53</sup>

In the years following his *Kavalierstour*, August fought in the Upper Rhine region and in the Spanish Netherlands against France in the War of the Palatine Succession (1688-1697) as a member of the Grand Alliance led by the Habsburg powers in Spain and Austria. In January 1691 August married Christiane Eberhardine von Bayreuth-Brandenburg (1671-1721) and five years later, she produced a son, Friedrich August II (1696-1763; later August III, King of Poland). He was their only child together. However, August's personal life was a varied one. He acknowledged a number of illegitimate children by several mistresses, including Hermann Moritz von Sachsen (1696-1750) by Maria Aurora von

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<sup>51</sup>See, for example, Alain Viala, *La France galante* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2008).

<sup>52</sup>T. C. W. Blanning, *The culture of power and the power of culture: Old Regime Europe 1660-1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 49-52.

<sup>53</sup>Jutta Bäuml, *Auf dem Weg zum Thron: die Krönungsreise Augusts des Starken* (Dresden: Hellerau, 1997), pp. 10-13; Claudia Schnitzer and Petra Hölscher, *Eine gute Figur machen: Kostüm und Fest am Dresdner Hof* (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 2000), pp. 138-140 and pp. 232-233.

Königsmarck (1662-1728; August's mistress from circa 1694 to 1696), commonly known as Maurice de Saxe and who made a highly successful military career for himself in French service. It was not uncommon for rulers of the time to entertain a series of extramarital relationships, as, indeed, Louis XIV had done. August's other official mistresses included Countess Anna Esterle (?-1738; also known as Joanna Hiserle von Chodau, née von Lamberg); a Turkish lady originally known as Fatima and then after her marriage as Maria Anna von Spiegel (dates unknown); Ursula Katharina von Lubomirska (1680-1743; later divorced and known as Princess (*Reichsfürstin*) von Teschen); Countess Anna Constantia von Cosel (1680-1765; previously von Hoym, née Brockdorff); a French wine merchant's daughter, Henriette Rénard-Duval (dates unknown); a dancer, Angélique Duparc (dates unknown); Maria Magdalena (or Marianna) von Dönhoff (1685-1730; née Bielińska); and Erdmuthe Sophie von Dieskau (dates unknown). Part of August's historical fame has been the number of his mistresses and the (often exaggerated) number of illegitimate children. Though some of these liaisons seem to have been established on the basis of sexual attraction, others had at least a degree of political impetus: for example, Ursula Katharina von Lubomirska was the niece of the Cardinal Primate of Poland, Michał Radziejowski (1645-1705), an important figure in Polish politics whom August hoped to win as a supporter for his reign.<sup>54</sup>

The unexpected death of his elder brother and Elector of Saxony, Johann Georg IV (1668-1694), with whom August had had a difficult relationship,<sup>55</sup> not only cut short the ambitions of the family of Johann Georg's mistress, Magdalena

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<sup>54</sup>Heinrich Theodor Flathe, 'Lubomirska, Ursula Katharina', *ADB* 19 (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1884), pp. 333-334.

<sup>55</sup>Piltz, *August der Starke*, p. 16; Czok, *August der Starke und Kursachsen*, pp. 11-12.

Sibylle von Neitschütz (1675-1694), it also made August the new Elector of Saxony.<sup>56</sup> Saxony was one of the economically strongest territories in the German-speaking world, with rich mineral, agricultural, and, increasingly, industrial resources, and over the course of his reign August managed to maintain and develop these economic advantages despite considerable external pressures on his inherited territories.<sup>57</sup> In the early years of his Saxon reign, August continued to establish his military reputation by joining the imperial campaigns against the Turks in 1695 and 1696, though these campaigns enjoyed only mixed success for the imperial allies.<sup>58</sup> He also began working towards achieving his political ambitions beyond Saxony by standing as a candidate for the Polish throne.

In 1696 the death of the Polish king, Jan III Sobieski (1629-1696), brought about a potentially critical moment in the balance of power in Europe between the Austrian Habsburgs and the French Bourbons. It resulted in the surprise election of Friedrich August I of Saxony to the Polish throne as August II of Poland. Jan III had been a Habsburg ally and had committed vital troops to the Habsburg forces in the wars against the Turkish threat in the east. Their potential removal from the scene of war following the death of Jan III would have meant a significant weakening of Habsburg power on both eastern and western fronts. It was therefore important for the Habsburgs to see a candidate on the throne who would be favourable to their interests.<sup>59</sup> The Polish throne was an elected succession, not a hereditary one, and candidates from across Europe, as well as from within Poland, competed for the crown. In addition to August, among the

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<sup>56</sup>Piltz, *August der Starke*, p. 27-33.

<sup>57</sup>Czok, *August der Starke und Kursachsen*, pp. 58-67 and p. 263.

<sup>58</sup>Bäumel, *Auf dem Weg zum Thron*, p. 14.

<sup>59</sup>Markus Milewski, *Die polnische Königswahl von 1697* (Vienna: Studienverlag, 2008), pp. 19-27.

prospective candidates were the son of the deceased king and imperial favourite for most of his campaign, Prince Jakub Ludwik Henryk Sobieski (1667-1737), Johann Wilhelm, Elector Palatine (1658-1716), his younger brother, Karl Philipp, Count Palatine (1661-1742; from 1716 Karl III, Elector Palatine), Leopold, Duke of Lorraine (1679-1729), Ludwig Wilhelm, Margrave of Baden (1655-1707), Maximilian II Emanuel, Elector of Bavaria (1662-1726), and the French-backed candidate, François Louis de Bourbon, Prince de Conti (1664-1709), as well as several others. August was a late entrant to the race and not initially considered to have much chance because he was not a Catholic, a basic and essential requirement for successful election to the Polish throne, but from the start, the contest was marked by intrigue and bribery conducted by all parties.<sup>60</sup> François Louis dominated most of the contest and his only serious opponent was thought to be Jakub Ludwik, who was actually aiming, in collaboration with his mother, for a successful Bavarian candidacy. Jakub Ludwik saw, not August, but the Count Palatine, Karl Philipp, as the most serious danger to this plan. However, August's candidacy created an opportunity for the French faction to test the strength of Sobieski support, thereby (unintentionally) disrupting the secret plans of the Sobieski party for a double candidacy of Jakub Ludwik and Max Emmanuel.<sup>61</sup> Jakub Ludwik withdrew from the contest in favour of Karl Philipp, with the hope that this would bolster Max Emmanuel's cause. Instead, this had the effect of sending supporters to the Saxon camp, an effect made all the more devastating in an extremely short space of time by the official announcement of August's conversion to Catholicism. The Prince de Conti's party felt forced preemptively to

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<sup>60</sup>Bäumel, *Auf dem Weg zum Thron*, p. 24.

<sup>61</sup>Milewski, *Die polnische Königswahl von 1697*, pp. 142-148.

announce François Louis as king, which in turn forced a counter-claim from the Saxon faction, thereby ending any Bavarian chances of success. The speed with which August's supporters were then able to organize themselves after the election in comparison to those of François Louis, beginning preparations for August's coronation in Kraków and bringing troops into the country ahead of any that François Louis was able to deploy from France, brought about the Saxon Elector's *de facto* victory in the election.<sup>62</sup> August was crowned King of Poland in 1697. In the early years of his reign, he continued his own and Poland's commitment to Habsburg military activity against the Turks in the east, which, for the Habsburgs at least, if not for the Polish Commonwealth, proved a successful enterprise resulting in the defeat of the Turks at the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699.<sup>63</sup>

The Polish result caused a stir, but not just because of the drama of the final stages of the election. Far more worrying for the Lutheran Saxon public was the fact that the ruler of the German state which had nurtured Martin Luther, the Reformation, and German Protestantism from its earliest days had openly converted to Catholicism. August attempted to assuage those fears by issuing a statement that his conversion would remain a private one that would not be forced on his Saxon subjects.<sup>64</sup> Even so, the Electress Christiane Eberhardine, a staunch Lutheran, refused to convert with her husband, never set foot in Poland, and was never crowned.<sup>65</sup> An undercurrent of Catholic-Lutheran tensions ran throughout August's reign, emerging in certain flashpoints like the events in the Polish town

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<sup>62</sup>Milewski, *Die polnische Königswahl von 1697*, pp. 148-150; Bäumel, *Auf dem Weg zum Thron*, pp. 20-21 and pp. 156-160.

<sup>63</sup>Robert Bideleux and Ian Jeffries, *A history of Eastern Europe: crisis and change* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 141-142, and p. 210.

<sup>64</sup>Bäumel, *Auf dem Weg zum Thron*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>65</sup>Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, 'Religion and the consort: two Electresses of Saxony and Queens of Poland (1697-1757)', in *Queenship in Europe, 1660-1815: the role of the consort*, ed. by Clarissa Campbell Orr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 252-275 (pp. 258-259).

Toruń in 1724 which resulted in several Protestants, including the town's mayor, being executed by Catholic forces and which aroused international interest, especially from Saxony's neighbour and rival, Prussia.<sup>66</sup>

August's decision to convert had been political, viewed as a way in which to expand his power and influence in the Holy Roman Empire and in Europe. The most immediate way to do this was with the prize of the Polish crown. A number of other events testify to the political nature of his Catholicism: his arrangements for the conversion of his son, Friedrich August II, to Catholicism in 1712, which also remained secret for some time and which was part of August's plan to secure the Polish succession after his death, and the marriage of Friedrich August to Maria Josepha of Austria (1699-1757), the eldest child of Joseph I (1678-1711), and heir presumptive to the Holy Roman Emperor, Karl VI (1685-1740). This marriage gave the Saxon Wettin dynasty a strong future interest in the failure of the Pragmatic Sanction of 1713, which excluded the children of Joseph I from the imperial succession in favour of those of Karl VI.<sup>67</sup> Ultimately, the decision to convert brought with it a large number of concomitant political problems which seemed at times to be on the verge of overwhelming Saxony and seemed to eclipse his early military successes. Not least of these was the Great Northern War against the supremacy of Karl XII of Sweden (1682-1718) in the Baltic from 1700 to 1721. Saxony's involvement, allied with Russia and Denmark, was a result of pursuing Polish interests in the Baltic region of Livonia. The expense of the war

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<sup>66</sup>Gotthold Rhode, 'England und das Thorner Blutgericht 1724', *Historische Zeitschrift* 164 (1941), 496-528 (509-510); Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, *Zwischen polnischer Ständegesellschaft und preußischem Obrigkeitsstaat: vom königlichen Preußen zu Westpreussen (1756-1806)* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1995), pp. 51-52.

<sup>67</sup>See Albrecht Philipp, *August der Starke und die Pragmatische Sanktion* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1908), esp. pp. 13-14.

was borne by Saxony, a cost which proved even higher when August failed to gain the support he had hoped for from neighbouring territories like Prussia. The demands for more taxation to fund August's army were not popular among the representatives of the Saxon *Landtag*, which then used them as leverage for protecting their own interests against electoral interference.<sup>68</sup> The Saxon army was unable to stand against Swedish forces and was defeated in 1701 at the Battle of Riga and in 1702 at the Battle of Kliszów, shortly after which Karl XII dethroned August, replacing him in 1704 with his own candidate, Stanisław Leszczyński (1677-1766). After the Battle of Fraustadt in 1706, August was forced to acknowledge Leszczyński as Polish king in the Treaty of Altranstädt. Swedish forces occupied Saxony until 1707, when Karl XII began to move against Russia.<sup>69</sup> The Swedish defeat at the Battle of Pułtawa in 1709 also opened an opportunity for a renewed Russo-Saxon alliance, which was concluded at Toruń the same year.<sup>70</sup> The war continued until 1721, but with the aid of Russian influence, August was able to regain the Polish throne and keep it – even during the challenge to his rule posed by the Tarnogród Confederation from 1715 to 1716 – until his death in 1733. This success came at the price, however, of increasing Russian influence in Poland and weakening the power of the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth.<sup>71</sup> August was also unable to expand his power in Poland to the extent he wished, so that he was unable to establish the hereditary succession of

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<sup>68</sup>Wieland Held, *Der Adel und August der Starke: Konflikt und Konfliktaustrag zwischen 1694 und 1707 in Kursachsen* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 1999), pp. 113-117.

<sup>69</sup>Robert I. Frost, *The Northern Wars: war, state and society in northeastern Europe, 1558-1721* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), pp. 229-231.

<sup>70</sup>Frost, *The Northern Wars*, p. 294.

<sup>71</sup>See, for example, L. R. Lewitter, 'Russia, Poland and the Baltic, 1697-1721', *The Historical Journal* 11 (1968), 3-34; Frost, *The Northern Wars*, pp. 326-327; M. S. Anderson, *Europe in the eighteenth century 1713-1783*, 3rd edn (London and New York: Longman, 1987), pp. 268-269; Jeremy Black, *Eighteenth-century Europe 1700-1789* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 284-287.



the Polish crown for his son. However, he was still able to ensure his son's success, because, although Friedrich August II had to go through an election procedure with the backing of Russia, he was, in the event, crowned King of Poland in 1734.

In addition to his rivalry with Karl XII of Sweden and his alliance, then increasing rivalry, with Peter the Great of Russia (1672-1725) as a result of Russian influence in Poland,<sup>72</sup> August's relationship with his immediate neighbour to the north, Friedrich Wilhelm I, King in Prussia (1688-1740), was also difficult, though August worked hard to alter this to the advantage of Saxony's security during his lifetime. Prussia viewed the expansion of Saxon influence in Europe with some suspicion, because it, too, had political ambitions to expand its power. Although in 1697 August was the first German prince to become a king, in 1701 Friedrich I (1657-1713) was the first German king in his own territories. Prussia refused to aid Saxony against Sweden in the Great Northern War, preferring to remain 'neutral', and took advantage of August's conversion to Catholicism to style itself the new protector of German Protestantism, in particular with regard to Protestants in Poland.<sup>73</sup> In the early 1720s, Prussia placed economic pressure on Saxony by conducting an 'excise war' (*Zollkrieg*) on Saxon trade. The aim of this was to keep Saxony weak, particularly during the years of the Great Northern War and immediately afterwards, so that Prussia might take advantage of the

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<sup>72</sup>In 1726 Russia signed an alliance with Austria which was based in part on the interest of both in keeping the balance of power in Poland in their own favour, rather than to the advantage of the incumbent Saxon kings. See Anderson, *Europe in the Eighteenth Century 1713-1783*, p. 264, and Peter H. Wilson, *German armies: war and German politics 1648-1806* (London: UCL Press, 1998), pp. 143-144.

<sup>73</sup>See Rhode, 'England und das Thorner Blutgericht 1724', 509-510.

opportunity to promote its own interests.<sup>74</sup> In the late 1720s, however, a series of diplomatic talks and visits between the two kings in Dresden and Berlin resulted in friendlier relations which would only be finally broken during the reigns of their respective sons in the Seven Years War from 1756 to 1763. These diplomatic talks culminated in 1728 in an extensive display of military manœuvres over the course of a month by the reinvigorated Saxon army, which had been reformed and trained with an eye to the Prussian military example. These manœuvres took place close to the town of Zeithain in Saxony.

August died in Warsaw on 1 February 1733, most probably as a result of complications from diabetes. He was buried in the royal crypt in the Wawel cathedral in Kraków and his heart taken to Dresden, where it was interred in the Catholic *Hofkirche* when it was completed in 1755. During his son's reign as Friedrich August II, Elector of Saxony, and August III, King of Poland, Saxony's position in Europe was significantly weakened. A very different character to that of his father, August III is sometimes termed 'the Weak', and considered to have generally withdrawn from active rule, delegating many of his responsibilities to his minister, Heinrich von Brühl (1700-1763).<sup>75</sup> Saxon involvement in the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) resulted in extensive destruction of Dresden at the hands of Friedrich II in 1760 and the financial ruin of the state.<sup>76</sup> Saxony had not achieved the greatness that August the Strong had hoped for. Nevertheless, the

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<sup>74</sup>Karl Czok, *August der Starke: sein Verhältnis zum Absolutismus und zum sächsischen Adel* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1991), pp. 9-10.

<sup>75</sup>Jacek Staszewski revises this view, which he points out stems from straightforward acceptance of nineteenth-century historiography in his biography *August III. Kurfürst von Sachsen und König von Polen: eine Biographie*, transl. by Eduard Merian (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1996), p. 7, pp. 168-169, and pp. 205-206. According to Staszewski, August III was actually a very hands-on ruler, but it was the radical change in court etiquette during his reign that meant he was not as visible a ruler as his father.

<sup>76</sup>Staszewski, *August III.*, pp. 219-220 and 238-239.

richness of his own life and its coincidence with rising Prussian power meant that he could not, as an historical figure, be entirely ignored by historians over the coming centuries and that he provided a rich source of inspiration for writers of fictional literature. In combination, historians and writers were able to create a myth of August the Strong which continues to be explored and made use of today.

#### **1.4. Thesis outline.**

With the exception of the survey of (mostly historical) texts by Paul Haake published in 1922 and an article by Katrin Keller in 1994,<sup>77</sup> there have been no studies charting and comparing the reception of the historical figure of August the Strong and his various portrayals in fictional literature. Nor, as demonstrated by the quotation given at the beginning of this section, do the writers of fiction or history concerning August always fully interrogate the foundation on which they construct their portrayals. The present study hopes to go some way towards rectifying this, though it does not claim to be exhaustive. It examines the development of the reception of August the Strong and his image in historical studies and literary fiction, taking into account some examples from other media, and investigates the divergences (if there are any) in portrayals given by the historians as opposed to the writers of fictional literature. It distinguishes between literary and historical works in general, but recognizes, like Demos, that there is an overlapping ‘borderland’ into which many of the works fall and examines the

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<sup>77</sup>Katrin Keller, ‘Landesgeschichte zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik: August der Starke als sächsisches “Nationalsymbol”’, in *Nach dem Erdbeben: (Re-)Konstruktionen ostdeutscher Geschichte und Geschichtswissenschaft*, ed. by Konrad H. Jarausch and Matthias Middell (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1994), pp. 195-215.

reasons for and results of this.<sup>78</sup> At the same time, it traces the works which are key to both the literary and historical reception of August the Strong in a given period. The study is thereby indebted to aspects of New Historicist methodology, in particular in viewing literary and historical works as often contextual to each other, though limits of space have made a truly broad cultural sweep unpracticable. It does not differentiate in general between ‘high’, canonical, literature and ‘low’ literature, but does exclude, for example, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century broadsheets, and, to a large extent, film, but includes twentieth- and twenty-first-century examples of romantic fiction and popular history.<sup>79</sup>

Due to the long chronological sweep of the study, which begins in the late seventeenth century and ends with works that appeared as recently as 2010, the material is presented largely chronologically rather than thematically or according to genres, with historical material examined alongside non-historical material. Although in the loose category of ‘non-historical’ material – which is the main focus of the study – there is a general preponderance of historical novels, this merely reflects, as far as I am able to judge, the greater proportion of that genre’s representation in comparison to other genres and media. However, the discussion begins with a combination of literary and artistic material embedded in eighteenth-century Saxon court culture, and moves from there to literary material beyond the Saxon court in the eighteenth century and a more popular reception extending into the nineteenth century, and, finally, to material from more mixed media sources, including television, contending that, in certain circumstances and

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<sup>78</sup>Demos, ‘Afterword’, 334-335.

<sup>79</sup>Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 10-11.

because they increasingly make use of the same or similar methodologies, the respective roles of the historian and literary writer have become so close as to be indistinguishable, though this need not always lead to an undermining of their respective projects.

As already noted, the material is relatively limited in quantity, although it is still too extensive for all genres to be covered in this thesis. Texts were therefore selected partly on the basis of their authors' relative significance in German literature, for example, König, Günther, Hunold, Königsmarck, Walther, and Roggenkamp, or their importance in the German historical canon or for their status as the architects of an 'historical' portrayal of August the Strong, for example, Pöllnitz, Förster, Ranke, and Czok. Authors who were particularly prolific in their portrayals of August the Strong, for example, Lubojatzky, or works that have been popular among readers or audiences, for example, the novels of Kraszewski or the TV series *Geschichte Mitteldeutschlands*, were also taken into account. Insofar as available works focus on particular aspects of the historical August the Strong, some selection was made in order to represent the thematic continuity of the materials' content: here, this means that many of the works in the study are concerned with the love life and mistresses of August the Strong. With the exception of a few, the authors and their works are generally not what might be considered 'canonical' and there are no bibliographies of literary works specific to this theme. The early survey of historical material up to the early twentieth century by Paul Haake mentioned above proved extremely helpful, but for the non-historical material there was no previous study that could help with selection. The Innsbruck database *Projekt Historischer Roman* proved a useful

tool for researching titles of historical novels from the nineteenth century onwards, and for identifying the locations of some extant copies.<sup>80</sup> Searches were limited to libraries and centres in Germany (Munich, Dresden, Leipzig, Berlin, Potsdam, and Göttingen) and the UK (Oxford and London) since the overall theme was the *German-language* reception history of the figure of August the Strong. For this reason Polish and English-language works were excluded unless they could be demonstrated as having been received in German translation. The study is therefore based on those works that have a persistent presence in major library collections or, for contemporary works, which are readily available to the consumer. Canonical names are retained while lesser-known or overlooked material is given a more prominent position in the reception of August the Strong and his image, thereby also allowing a new look at some of the critical debates concerning the presentation of history. This was further enabled by the chronological span of the study, though considerations of time and space have meant that some periods are not discussed in detail here, for example, the first half of the twentieth century, which saw a handful of relevant films produced, as well as some historical novels. There was also a popular major exhibition in 1933 in Dresden on the occasion of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of August the Strong's death, but, unfortunately, I was unable to obtain a copy of the catalogue. According to Dirk Syndram, this exhibition was rather atypical of national socialist cultural policy, and was part of a great push from the mid-1920s to market the electoral

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<sup>80</sup> *Projekt Historischer Roman*, <http://www.uibk.ac.at/germanistik/histrom/> [accessed 17 November 2010]. The criteria for inclusion in the database are quite specific: 'a) the text has to be a novel (fictionality, prose, at least 150 pages) and b) the plot must be situated in a time before the author was born (so historical investigations were necessary for the author to write it)', <http://www.uibk.ac.at/germanistik/histrom/docs/about-e.html>.

palace and its collections as a tourist destination.<sup>81</sup>

As the brief biography of August's life given above shows, the Elector-King was a ruler who had many interests and ambitions. However, later literature and history writing has tended to focus almost exclusively on the sexual aspect of him and his reign. For this reason, this study begins with an examination of the construction of August the Strong's official image at the court of Dresden during the period of his reign (Chapter 2), asking what it reveals about his political ambitions and how he wanted to be perceived as a ruler. The chapter will survey some of the artistic objects, buildings, and court festivities, discussing them as examples of some of the wide variety of media in which he sought to achieve this image. It will then focus on one of the last of August's diplomatic state occasions before his death, the so-called *Zeithainer Lager*, and the resulting fragment of official poetry produced by the court poet, Johann Ulrich von König, considering how this reflected diplomatic relations between Prussia and Saxony, and August's image as a powerful, even resurgent, ruler after the vicissitudes of his reign. This image of power through cultivation of the arts is then contrasted in a brief examination of the strong reaction against this image in epistolary poems by Johann Christian Günther. Chapter 3 examines the wider literary portrayal of August the Strong in his own lifetime, examining the development of an exaggerated image of *galanterie* that had its roots in August's own court, but which spread into more bourgeois gallant literature, making August the archetypal

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<sup>81</sup>See Dirk Syndram, 'Das Nutzungskonzept des Dresdner Residenzschlosses – fürstliche Selbstdarstellung und höfische Pracht', in *Wege für das Berliner Schloss/Humboldt-Forum: Wiederaufbau und Rekonstruktion zerstörter Residenzschlösser in Deutschland und Europa (1945-2007)*, ed. by Guido Hinterkeuser (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2008), pp. 197-214 (p. 201); Dirk Syndram and Peter Ufer, *Die Rückkehr des Dresdner Schlosses* (Dresden: Edition Sächsische Zeitung, 2006), p. 98.

*homme galant*. The chapter goes on to look at the first biographies of August after his death and their assimilation of the gallant image. As a result, it explores the role they play in the fiction/history debate surrounding August and asks, with reference to the concept of the secret history, how they compare in literary/historical status with some of the earlier literary portrayals. Chapter 4 follows the selective reception of this gallant image, particularly through Pöllnitz, in the Prusso-centric historiography of the nineteenth century, before observing the sheer variety of fictional portrayals produced by popular novelists of the period and their often radical differentiation from the historians' rather monolithic image. It also gives attention to the attempts of some of these texts to work in the highly contested 'borderland' between historical texts and fictional texts to convey historical knowledge, and asks whether these attempts – particularly where they seem to be more than literary rhetorical play on the nature of the historical source – were successful in bridging the two genres of writing, or whether they undermined their own stated project. The following chapter (Chapter 5) explores works produced in the GDR in the context of the historical and cultural policies of East Germany. It asks, first, whether, in the period immediately after the Second World War, the historical figure of August the Strong experienced the same historiographical backlash under East German socialism as that of Friedrich II, and, second, how the portrayal of August was tied for political purposes to GDR identity and its sense of historical and cultural continuity across time and geographical space. In examining a novel by Walter and the novels of Kraszewski, this chapter shows how literary history and literature itself may, in the first case, deliberately play with the uncertain division, not just between history and fiction,



but between fictional and historical sources to critique contemporary society, and, in the second, be used to bolster a political identity in spite of elements that would seem to be incompatible with it. The final chapter (Chapter 6) overlaps with the previous chapter slightly in chronology, but otherwise mainly examines works from the late 1990s to 2010. It takes up the critical debate surrounding the practice of re-enactment in presenting history to the public in a range of genres, contending that re-enactment has an important role in fiction-writing, and can be a useful and nuanced tool for the historian. It criticizes uses of re-enactment and of sources that, under examination, prove to contradict the declared project of the literary or historical work to an extent that is actually confusing for the consumer. The result can be that history is taken for fiction, and vice versa, by a public that, in many cases, is meant to be historically enlightened by the work.

## **Chapter 2: August the Strong's fabrication of his own image in the Saxon court.**

The myth of August the Strong began during his own lifetime and he himself was its first architect. He did this by means of an artistic programme aimed at expressing the relationship between the figure of a theoretically supreme ruler and the state, projecting through his court a complex image of power through a variety of media.

August was well known for the magnificence of his court in Dresden, where he cultivated and developed an artistic culture inherited from his father and grandfather. As during their reigns, August's court festivals encompassed annual carnival celebrations, state visits of European royalty, and the wedding celebrations of his son.<sup>82</sup> He continued to expand the royal palace, developing the rooms of the *Grünes Gewölbe* (Green Vault), in which were kept the collections of state treasures and curios, into a series of conceptual rooms designed to display groups of exhibits in a theatrical manner according to their material (bronze, ivory, silver, gold leaf, jewels, etc). Among his other building projects in Dresden were the construction of the Zwinger as an orangery, pleasure gardens, and exhibition space for his porcelain collection, and the development of the Taschenbergpalais next to the royal residence and of the hunting lodge at Pillnitz as residences for his mistresses. Among the best known of the artists and craftsmen he employed were the poets Johann von Besser (1654-1729) and Johann Ulrich von König (1688-1744), the sculptor Balthasar Permoser (1651-

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<sup>82</sup>Claudia Schnitzer and Petra Hölscher (eds), *Eine gute Figur machen: Kostüm und Fest am Dresdner Hof* (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 2000), p. 147.

1732), the architect Matthäus Daniel Pöppelmann (1662-1736), the painter Louis de Silvestre (1675-1760), and the goldsmiths Johann Melchior Dinglinger (1664-1731) and his brother Georg Friedrich Dinglinger (1666-1720). August's interest in developing the arts was also linked with an interest in expanding the economy. This was the basis for the development of the first European porcelain by the alchemist Johann Friedrich Böttger (1682-1719) and scientist Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus (1651-1708), which was then produced in the factory founded in Meissen in 1710.

As a result, the Saxon court under August the Strong, who had regal and imperial ambitions in Europe, was renowned during his own lifetime and later in the eighteenth century for its artistic flamboyance and magnificence. This reputation for magnificence was not entirely the result only of August's investment, but was based on a number of elements fostered by his predecessors with the express intent of bolstering their own public appearance, using visual show to affirm their legitimacy as rulers and their ambitions to expansion of power.<sup>83</sup> By the early eighteenth century Saxon splendour was such that it was renowned among contemporaries, a reputation partly created by Johann Christian Lünig (1662-1740) and Julius Bernhard von Rohr (1688-1742), the Saxon authors of the two best-known works on court ceremonial, *Theatrum ceremoniale historico-politicum* (1733) and *Einleitung zur Ceremonielwissenschaft der grossen Herren* (1733).<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>See Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, *Court culture in Dresden: from Renaissance to Baroque* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), especially chapter 5 on Johann Georg II's image (pp. 130-165).

<sup>84</sup>Both Lünig and Rohr cite August the Strong's court in their extensive reference works on court ceremony, which were also aimed at a non-courtly audience. See Johann Christian Lünig, *Theatrum ceremoniale historico-politicum, oder Historisch- und politischer Schau-Platz aller*

The shaping and expression of the Elector's image at the Saxon court in the eighteenth century extended into many and varied areas of court cultural production, which can be seen in the richness of the Saxon court collections. This is all due in no small part to August's cultivation of a retinue of artists and artisans employed specifically to provide him with the sorts of rich collectable items he so loved and to maintain the image of the Saxon court and its Elector-King. Though this 'economy of delight' was by no means unique to Dresden, nor to the reign of August II, and though, since at least the late sixteenth century, Dresden had been host to large numbers of foreign artisans brought in especially to serve the needs of the court,<sup>85</sup> in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the Saxon court changed direction. August's predecessors had looked to Italy for their artistic influences, but August turned instead to France and to Louis XIV.<sup>86</sup>

## 2.1. Portraiture.

August frequently presented himself in the garb of a Roman ruler or general, a common topos of state presentation of the period. The importance of costume to August II can be seen in his appearance in court festivals, but, like Louis XIV, whom he tried to emulate in many respects, he also wished to stylize himself in

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*Ceremonien, welche so wohl an europäischen Höfen als auch sonst bey vielen illustren Fällen beobachtet worden* (Leipzig: Moritz Georg Weidmann, 1719); Julius Bernhard von Rohr, *Einleitung zur Ceremonielwissenschaft der grossen Herren* (Berlin: Rüdiger, 1733), facs. edn. commented by Monika Schlechte (Weinheim: VCH, Acta Humaniora, 1990). See also Peter Baumgart, 'Der deutsche Hof der Barockzeit als politische Institution', in *Europäische Hofkultur*, ed. by Buck et al, II, pp. 25-43 (p. 25).

<sup>85</sup>Watanabe-O'Kelly, *Court culture in Dresden*, pp. 11-14.

<sup>86</sup>See Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, *Court culture in Dresden*, pp. 11-14 and pp. 204-212, and Michael Stürmer, 'An Economy of Delight: Court Artisans of the Eighteenth Century', *The Business History Review* 53.4 (Winter, 1979), 496-528.

portraits that referred to antiquity.<sup>87</sup> In some paintings, such as that by court artist Louis de Silvestre, *Allegorie auf den Abschied des Kurprinzen Friedrich August (II.) von seinem Vater, König August II.* (1715, see fig. 1), which depicts the electoral prince's farewell to his father as he embarked upon his eight-year travels around Europe, this was supplemented by allegory involving a number of Roman gods, including Mercury and Minerva, extolling (to the young prince) the virtues of wisdom and prudence. The painting itself was intended to be one of a series modelled on paintings by Charles Le Brun (1619-1690) for Louis XIV and would have lauded the life, accomplishments, and virtues of August II in a gallery of large-format paintings and Gobelin tapestries, a project which was, however, never completed.<sup>88</sup> Silvestre also executed a number of full-length, state portraits of August, at least three of which show him in full armour, draped in a rich cloak, grasping a sceptre-like instrument in one hand while the other hand gestures into the distance or rests boldly on his hip (see, for example, fig. 2). At least one equestrian portrait by the same artist depicts August in full armour on a rearing horse, a motif that is repeated in the small bronze sculpture by Jean-Joseph Vinache (1696-1754), executed between 1728 and 1730. This stood as the model for the famous golden rider (*der goldene Reiter*) statue of August II by Ludwig Wiedemann (1690-1754) erected in the market place of the Dresden Neustadt in 1736, which has become something of a symbol for the city (see fig. 3).<sup>89</sup>

The sort of allegorical content which August cultivated in his two-

<sup>87</sup>Watanabe-O'Kelly, *Court culture in Dresden*, pp. 204-210.

<sup>88</sup>Schnitzer and Hölscher, *Eine gute Figur machen*, pp. 208 and 216-217; Harald Marx, *Die Gemälde des Louis de Silvestre* (Dresden: Die Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, 1975), pp.54-55 and Cat. 10. See also Xavier Salmon, *Louis de Silvestre (1675-1760): un peintre français à la Cour de Dresde* (Versailles: Château de Versailles, 1997), pp. 24-27.

<sup>89</sup>Schnitzer and Hölscher, *Eine gute Figur machen*, pp. 219-220.

dimensional portraiture was also transferred to another medium: wax. In the Dresden Rüstkammer stands a life-size waxwork of August II, resplendent in full Polish coronation regalia and a specially made crown (see fig. 4). Although the mask for the face was not made until 1704, August had the original figurine made in Dresden in 1697 as a way of creating a record of his coronation in Kraków in which he became the first German king (although of a country outside his dynastic territories). Crown, orb, and sceptre were made especially for the figurine, and initially it was clothed in the armour August had worn in the wars against the Turks in 1695/96. His coronation cloak was brought to Dresden on August's return and placed around it. It was intended to be displayed as the centrepiece of a sort of tableau or 'gallery of heroes', in its own cabinet with a blue-painted 'sky' and flanked by the figures of Tsar Peter I of Russia and King Karl XII of Sweden.<sup>90</sup> The waxwork thereby stands in for the physical absence of August and wears the physical attributes of his greatest achievements in war and politics. Its staging in the 'gallery of heroes' singles him out, separates him from and raises him above contemporary rulers who were, lest it be forgotten, also his competitors on the European stage. Moreover, August is given the aura of a demigod through his place directly under the clear heavens.

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<sup>90</sup>Schuckelt, "Folget Das Türkische Serail", p. 70; Schnitzer and Hölscher, *Eine gute Figur machen*, pp. 223-229.

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AVAILABLE VIA ORA BECAUSE OF COPYRIGHT. THE IMAGE WAS  
SOURCED AT WIKIMEDIA COMMONS,*

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AugustII%26augustIII.jpeg> [4

FEBRUARY 2011]

Fig. 1: Louis de Silvestre, *Allegorie auf den Abschied des Kurprinzen Friedrich August (II.) von seinem Vater, König August II.* (1715), (from *Wikimedia Commons*, <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AugustII%26augustIII.jpeg> [accessed 4 February 2011]).

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[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Friedrich August der Starke von Pole  
n.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Friedrich_August_der_Starke_von_Polen.jpg) [4 FEBRUARY 2011]

Fig. 2: Louis de Silvestre, *Friedrich August I, Elector of Saxony, as August II,  
King of Poland* (1718), (from *Wikimedia Commons*, based on a photograph by  
Hans Peter Klut,

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Friedrich August der Starke von Pole  
n.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Friedrich_August_der_Starke_von_Polen.jpg) [accessed 4 February 2011]).



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[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Goldener\\_Reiter\\_nah.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Goldener_Reiter_nah.jpg) [4

FEBRUARY 2011]

Fig. 3: Ludwig Wiedemann, ‘Der goldene Reiter’ – Friedrich August I, Elector of Saxony, as August II, King of Poland (1728-1730), (from *Wikimedia Commons*, based on a photograph by ‘EddyD’,

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Goldener\\_Reiter\\_nah.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Goldener_Reiter_nah.jpg) [accessed 4 February 2011]).

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Fig. 4: Waxwork of August the Strong in coronation regalia (from Schnitzer and Hölscher, *Eine gute Figur machen*, p. 224).

## 2.2. Festivals.

August also used court festivals in the construction of his myth, beginning with those he staged to celebrate his accession to the Electorate in 1694. The two key events were the Grand Carousel and the so-called *Götteraufzug* or Procession of the Gods. The Grand Carousel is a costumed running at the ring held indoors at night. The Elector took part in it dressed as Alexander the Great and then as Mercury when leading the second quadrille. The choice of Mercury was not arbitrary: his namesake, Elector August (1526-1586), had also dressed as Mercury for a tournament in 1574. He, like August the Strong, had been a younger son who had acceded unexpectedly. Nicknamed 'Vater August', Elector August brought Saxony out of debt and bolstered its economy, particularly its important mining industry, for which the figure of Mercury was symbolic.<sup>91</sup> By parading as Elector August, August the Strong not only reminded his court and subjects of the considerable benefits of rule under a second son, but also declared that, just as his namesake ruled over an economic boom, so the fortunes and status of Saxony would be raised under him. The *Götteraufzug* of 1695 was also a bold statement of intent by August the Strong. Part of August's carnival festivities less than a year after he succeeded to the throne, this was a magnificent announcement of his status as elector. The *Götteraufzug* is described by Watanabe-O'Kelly as a pageant involving 126 roles played by members of the court and 600 'costumed figures' in all, with thirty-three floats.<sup>92</sup> Sixty 'gods' and seventy 'goddesses' processed

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<sup>91</sup>See Hellmuth Rößler, 'August, Kurfürst von Sachsen', *NDB* 1 (1953), pp. 448-450; Watanabe-O'Kelly, *Court culture in Dresden*, pp. 121-123.

<sup>92</sup>Watanabe-O'Kelly, 'Triumphall Shews', pp. 126-127.

through the streets of Dresden's centre before the eyes of the citizenry, from the electoral stables, snaking eastwards round via the Neumarkt, then south via Kreutzgasse to the Altmarkt, before finally returning to the stables.<sup>93</sup> Once again, August headed the procession as Mercury, the gods and goddesses of the court following behind, so that he could survey them as they arrived back at their starting point. August continued bolstering his image in this early stage of his reign through further references to elements of his predecessors' respective images. When Johann Georg II celebrated his investiture into the Order of the Garter in 1675 – and its anniversary in 1676 and 1678 – his celebrations linked the legend of St George with the classical myths of Jason and Hercules.<sup>94</sup> Hercules also presided over his celebrations of the Peace of Nijmegen in 1679.<sup>95</sup> When August succeeded to the electoral title in 1694, August also associated himself closely with Hercules by issuing a commemorative medal which had his portrait on one side and a depiction of Hercules in front of the Dresden cityscape on the other.<sup>96</sup> The continued vigour and strength of the electoral dynasty was demonstrated in this image.

Other links with the Saxon past were also visible through the planets, which had provided the theme for previous Saxon courtly festivities, such as those held by Johann Georg I on the occasion of his eldest son's christening in 1613 and by Johann Georg II in 1656 when he wished to impress upon his three younger brothers his superior status as ruler, a position to which he acceded in the same year. With the gods and the planets having closely aligned potential as themes, it

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<sup>93</sup> Watanabe-O'Kelly, 'Triumphall Shews', p. 127; Schnitzer and Hölscher, *Eine gute Figur machen*, p. 148, cat. 56-57.

<sup>94</sup> Watanabe-O'Kelly, *Court culture*, pp. 146-147.

<sup>95</sup> Watanabe-O'Kelly, *Court culture*, p. 152.

<sup>96</sup> Watanabe-O'Kelly, *Court culture*, pp. 193-194.

is unsurprising to find that August combines French and Saxon influences in future events. In 1709 August, having regained the Polish crown and on the occasion of Frederik IV, King of Denmark's visit to Dresden, restaged the *Götteraufzug*, this time taking the part of Apollo. In the wedding celebrations he planned and held in honour of the marriage of his son to the Habsburg princess, Maria Josepha, in 1719, August took up the theme of gods and planets once more, and during planning he took into account previous Dresden festivities.<sup>97</sup> Here, August presented himself variously as Apollo/Sol and, for the *Karussell der Vier Elemente*, appeared as the 'Chef des Feuers', thereby providing a thematic continuity and integrity. The continuity of court ritual and ceremony focussed on the ruler is of singular importance for the preservation and cultivation of his image in perpetuity<sup>98</sup>.

Nevertheless, the formality of the ceremonial involved was also imbued with (studied) informality, even in court festivals. Here, the role of the mistress could be particularly important, because at August's court she was a conspicuous woman and required to take part in 'public' events, even if her relationship to the king was an intimate one (in theory). For example, Anna Constantia von Cosel played a leading role in many of the games and races that took place during the festivities held in honour of King Frederik IV of Denmark in 1709. At the ladies' running at the ring, in which each lady was to be accompanied by two male partners, the selection of partners was supposed to be a matter of chance, each lady drawing lots. However, as August's mistress, Countess von Cosel 'drew' both

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<sup>97</sup>Watanabe-O'Kelly, *Triumphall shews*, p. 131 and p. 134.

<sup>98</sup>Cornelia Jöchner, 'Dresden, 1719: Planetenfeste, kulturelles Gedächtnis und die Öffnung der Stadt', *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 24 (1997), 249-270 (252).

her lover as one of her cavaliers and the visiting King Frederik as her coachman.<sup>99</sup>

Both men paid court to the countess in this scenario, which was a compliment paid not just to her but also to Frederik, who was given the honour of being permitted to lead and to be gallant to the most powerful woman at the Saxon court at this time. Although his predecessors had also led extramarital affairs, under August the Strong, the role of the mistress became much more formalized and integrated into the myth-making process as an important part of courtly ceremonial.

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<sup>99</sup>Watanabe-O'Kelly, *Triumphall shews*, pp. 128-129.

### 2.3. Gold, jewels, and Orientalica.

In contrast to these formal, state portraits with the styling and referencing appropriate to a ruler of August's ambition, status, and power, August also made use of smaller formats and innovative themes. The work of Johann Melchior Dinglinger and his workshop, frequently collaborating with Balthasar Permoser, includes some of the most famous works of art in Dresden, for example, the famous golden coffee service and the *Obeliscus Augustalis*. The three Dinglinger brothers, Johann Melchior (1664-1731), Georg Friedrich (1666-1720), and Georg Christoph (1668-1728), were the court goldsmiths and jewellers to August, and responsible for the conception and realization of many of the pieces of three-dimensional art, both small and large, which August collected avidly. These items were central to August's display of himself and, by extension, of his state.

August's imperial ambitions were signalled in subtle items which were nonetheless ostentatious in their magnificence, such as the golden coffee service (see fig. 5). In 1701, he ordered Dinglinger to pack up the service, which Dinglinger had begun in 1698, and have it sent to him in Warsaw. Although no doubt August took great pleasure in its virtuosity as a work, it would also serve as a symbol of his wealth and sophistication to the Poles, who had only recently elected him their king.<sup>100</sup> He may also have hoped that it would play a role in swaying his Polish subjects from their complaints; the Poles' dissatisfaction with his rule would combine with the invasion of Karl XII of Sweden to temporarily lose him the crown in 1702. Drinking coffee, the Turkish beverage, was the height

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<sup>100</sup>Dirk Syndram, Jutta Kappel and Ulrike Weinhold (eds), *Das Historische Grüne Gewölbe zu Dresden* (Munich and Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2007), p. 92.

of fashion, while at the turn of the eighteenth century it was also ‘the occasion for symbolic mastery over the both feared and admired Turk’.<sup>101</sup> August sought to express his political ambitions through the Turkish motif over and over again, in the coffee service in 1701, in his detailed construction of a Turkish palace as part of his son’s wedding celebrations in 1719,<sup>102</sup> and even in less formal surroundings, on a leather wall hanging at Schloss Moritzburg, dressed as a Turk and accompanied by his lover in the mid-1690s, Maria Aurora von Königsmarck.<sup>103</sup> The agreeably rich and luxurious styling of Turkish culture and ‘Orientalica’ had a considerable presence in August’s festivities and the collections of weapons and costumes of the court.<sup>104</sup> It was also a theme that had personal significance because August had been instrumental in the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in 1699 after winning a victory on behalf of the Holy Roman Empire at the Battle of Podhajce in 1698. Turkish themes at court therefore allowed August to display his military success and prowess, but it also allowed him to appropriate the role of Sultan, whether by dressing up as a Turk or more obliquely by displaying his readiness to consume the Turkish drink, and thereby state his ambitions. In Poland, the coffee service also pleaded August’s case as an ambitious ruler, but also as a ruler in line with Polish traditions of military action against the Turk.

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<sup>101</sup>Bethany Wiggan, ‘The politics of coffee consumption: Leipzig coffeehouse culture at 1700’, *Wolfenbütteler Barock-Nachrichten* 31 (2004), 24-36 (26).

<sup>102</sup>See Gregor J. M. Weber, ‘Alles getürkt: die lebensgroßen Figurenbilder im Türkischen Palais Dresdens’, in *Eine gute Figur machen*, ed. by Schnitzer and Hölscher, pp. 84-99.

<sup>103</sup>See Sylvia Krauss-Meyl, ‘“Die berühmteste Frau zweier Jahrhunderte”: Maria Aurora Gräfin von Königsmarck’, 2nd edn (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 2006), p. 125. Krauss-Meyl unfortunately does not give title, date, artist or inventory details of this.

<sup>104</sup>See Holger Schuckelt, ‘“Folget Das Türkische Serail”: Das Wachsfigurenkabinett Augusts des Starken, Kammertürken und Türkenkammer am Dresdner Hof’, in *Eine gute Figur machen*, ed. by Schnitzer and Hölscher, pp. 68-83, and Weber, ‘Alles getürkt’, pp. 84-99.



*THE IMAGE ORIGINALLY PRESENTED HERE CANNOT BE MADE FREELY AVAILABLE VIA ORA BECAUSE OF COPYRIGHT. THE IMAGE WAS SOURCED AT DIRK SYNDRAM, *SCHATZKUNST DER RENAISSANCE UND DES BAROCK: DAS GRÜNE GEWÖLBE ZU DRESDEN* (MUNICH AND BERLIN: DEUTSCHER KUNSTVERLAG, 2008), P. 93*

Fig. 5: Johann Melchior Dinglinger, golden coffee service (1698-1701), (from Dirk Syndram, *Schatzkunst der Renaissance und des Barock: das Grüne Gewölbe zu Dresden* (Munich and Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2008), p. 93).

Begun in 1719 to mark the occasion of the electoral prince's wedding to Maria Josepha of Austria, the *Obeliscus Augustalis* (see fig. 6) was presented by Johann Melchior Dinglinger to August around 1722. At 228 cm tall and 122 cm wide, it is constructed of precious metals and a variety of precious and semi-precious stones, as well as ivory, enamel, and so-called Böttger porcelain.<sup>105</sup> At the centre of the base of the obelisk, with a double crown of the electoral hat and the crown of Poland beneath a circle of sphinxes, is an enamelled profile portrait of August in Roman costume. The obelisk is in fact only 'half' a piece, since it is designed specifically to stand in front of a mirror so that the reflection behind it makes it appear whole. This is an imposing miniature monument, which draws on a mixture of references to antiquity: an ancient Egyptian architectural form, plus sphinxes, combined with 'Roman' styling in the cameos of August's face at the centre, surrounded by martial insignia. At the foot of the obelisk, small figures representing a number of different ancient nations stand or sit, variously guarding, applauding or gesturing towards the obelisk and the ruler it presents for admiration.<sup>106</sup> The requirements of this piece for its proper display mean that it must always be the centre of attention in any space, thereby reinforcing the centrality of August at the centre of any display, and lauding his personal wealth, political and martial power – suggesting also martial prowess in conquest – and the mineral and technological wealth of his territories. As a result of the mirroring technique it uses, the room in which the piece sits is doubled in the reflection of the glass, thereby giving the illusion that the space within which August may be

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<sup>105</sup>Böttger was the first in Europe to discover the secret of the much sought after and therefore costly porcelain. However, his early attempts resulted in not white but a sort of reddish-brown ware, which became known as *Böttgerporzellan* or *Böttgersteinzeug*.

<sup>106</sup>Syndram, Kappel, and Weinhold, *Das Historische Grüne Gewölbe zu Dresden*, pp. 134-135.

seen as central is therefore much larger than at first appears, alluding obliquely, perhaps, to August's as yet unfulfilled ambitions beyond Saxony. This interpretation is given credence by the obelisk's secondary function as a celebration of the marriage in 1719 of August's son, Friedrich August, to the Habsburg princess, Maria Josepha of Austria, through which August hoped to get closer to the imperial throne.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup>Syndram, Kappel, and Weinhold, *Das Historische Grüne Gewölbe zu Dresden*, p. 134.

*THE IMAGE ORIGINALLY PRESENTED HERE CANNOT BE MADE FREELY AVAILABLE VIA ORA BECAUSE OF COPYRIGHT. THE IMAGE WAS SOURCED AT DIRK SYNDRAM, JUTTA KAPPEL AND ULRIKE WEINHOLD (EDS), DAS HISTORISCHE GRÜNE GEWÖLBE ZU DRESDEN (MUNICH AND BERLIN: DEUTSCHER KUNSTVERLAG, 2007), P. 134.*

Fig. 6: Johann Melchior Dinglinger, *Obeliscus Augustalis* (c.1722), (from Syndram, Kappel, and Weinhold, *Das Historische Grüne Gewölbe zu Dresden*, p. 134).

## 2.4. Literature.

The court at Dresden, like other courts of its time, was the focus of literary production, just as it was the focus of artistic or artisanal work. The panegyric *Casualyrik* or *Gelegenheitsgedicht* was key to the representative economy of public court life, with poems produced on the occasion of certain events, or just in general, and submitted to the court through a number of channels. This was usually in the hope of obtaining some sort of reward, whether preferment or payment. In general, the production of panegyric *Casualyrik* was the symbolic expression of a relationship between the ruler and his people: the panegyric, as produced by the poet representing the dutiful subject, expressed affirmations of loyalty and admiration for the ruler, and explanations of the ruler's great works, while the ruler was, theoretically, bound to acknowledge the fulfilment of that duty in some way.<sup>108</sup> This could take the form of a ceremonial presentation of the poem (with promises by the ruler to read it) where the poem was itself part of a larger event.

### 2.4.1. Maria Aurora von Königsmarck.

In quantitative terms, archives demonstrate that events and celebrations in and around the Dresden court under August were the occasion for poets of diverse standing to try their hand at approaching their prince with their work. These

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<sup>108</sup>Kerstin Heldt, *Der vollkommene Regent: Studien zur panegyrischen Casualyrik am Beispiel des Dresdner Hofes Augusts des Starken* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1997), p. 65-68.

events could be visits of European potentates to the court, August's return from a period spent in Poland, birthdays, marriages, births, deaths, recovery from illness or carnival festivities, amongst others.<sup>109</sup> Likewise, the proffering of poetry to August could occur under more informal circumstances, particularly where the poet was the king's mistress and, indeed, an acclaimed poet in her own right, as was the case with Maria Aurora von Königsmarck (1662-1728). Königsmarck's nineteenth-century biographer, Friedrich Cramer, reproduces a few poems which he attributes to her, including the following ten-stanza poem, which he dates to 1697, the year in which he claims August appeared as Alexander the Great during some court festivities.<sup>110</sup>

Aléxandre n'eut point de maître,  
 Et ne souffrit point de rival.  
 Comme lui le ciel vous fait naître  
 Pour vaincre et n'avoir d'égal.  
 Ta foudre moins forte et moins prompte  
 Que votre bras terrasse et domte  
 Jeune et redoutable vainqueur.  
 Ajoutons pour palmes nouvelles  
 Jamais contre un héros des belles  
 Ne scurent moins garder le coeur.<sup>111</sup>

Königsmarck takes as her starting point the device that August bore on his shield: 'sans maître et sans rival' and elaborates the comparison between the Greek king and the ambitious young Saxon Elector. With a touch of poetic license, she states

<sup>109</sup>For example titles and poets, see bibliography in Heldt, *Der vollkommene Regent* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1997), pp. 307-368.

<sup>110</sup>Cramer's dating may be incorrect, since August appeared as Alexander the Great in the Grand Carousel in 1695.

<sup>111</sup>Reproduced in Friedrich Cramer, *Denkwürdigkeiten der Gräfin Maria Aurora Königsmarck und der Königsmarck'schen Familie. Nach bisher unbekannten Quellen*, 2 vols (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1836) II, p. 102. The odd contrast of informal and formal address in ll. 5 and 6 (*ta* and *votre*) is reproduced by Cramer, who makes no comment on it. It is unclear whether this is a deliberate mistake in the original or a typographical error on the part of Cramer or his publisher.

that, just like Alexander, August is strong and mighty beyond compare. His military might is then linked to his prowess as a lover with the coquettish play on words in the sixth stanza ‘votre bras terrasse et domte’ (your arm overcomes and tames), a sentiment that is made clearer when she declares that no woman can successfully defend her heart against August’s advances. Königsmarck picks up an element of his official image and, with it, nods to her own role at court. If her poem to August begins with the question of masters and mastery, it also ends – as much perception of August and his court has done subsequently – with mistresses and the importance of women at his court, thereby linking the political and love aspects of *galanterie*.<sup>112</sup>

**2.4.2. Johann Ulrich von König, *August im Lager, Helden-Gedicht. Erster Gesang, benannt: Die Einhohlung. Sr. Königlichen Majestät in Preussen allerunterthänigst gewiedmet. [...] Dresden, Gedruckt bey Johann Wilhelm Harpetern. 1731.***

In spite of the importance of the panegyric to the public image of the ruler, the court at Dresden had no official *Hofpoet* until 1719. Instead, poetry at court had been composed by the *Pritschmeister*, a position that essentially combined some of the functions of a poet, a court fool, and a court herald or chronicler, and was largely associated with entertainment. By the eighteenth century this role had been superseded by the requirements of the modern court. Courtly festivities had outgrown the capabilities of the *Pritschmeister* and the position itself was not as

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<sup>112</sup>The concept of *galanterie* will be examined in more detail in Chapter 3.

highly valued as it had been in the past.<sup>113</sup> During the seventeenth century, the *Pritschmeister* was increasingly criticized for his lack of poetic talent and, indeed, it was precisely to raise the quality and reputation of poetry at the Dresden court that in 1719 the position of *Pritschmeister* was effectively done away with and replaced with that of *Hofpoet*.<sup>114</sup> This decision coincided with the dynastically important marriage on 20 August 1719 in Vienna of the Electoral Prince, Friedrich August II, to the Habsburg Crown Princess, Maria Josepha. The festivities planned for the arrival of the bride in Dresden in September were spectacular: events celebrating the Habsburg-Saxon alliance carried on for twenty-eight days with particular emphasis on the suitability of the match and the important position that Saxony occupied within the contemporary constellation of European states. The marriage was not to be seen as simply a step up for the Albertine dynasty: it was to be a match between equals. August the Strong had dynastic pretensions to the Holy Roman Empire for his son and was already Imperial Vicar through his position as Elector of Saxony. Although Maria Josepha's marriage contract effectively renounced her claim to the throne, this did not mean that August would give up these pretensions. It was therefore important that his court and Saxony be presented in all its glory during the September festivities.<sup>115</sup> The role of *Pritschmeister*, now considered old-fashioned and not signifying a sufficiently high standing, would not be suitable for this, so the role was upgraded to that of *Hofpoet*.

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<sup>113</sup>For the function of the Pritschmeister and the development of the role see Kerstin Retemeyer, "Ein schiessen ohn Pritzschen Gesang, ist wie ein Glocken ohne Klang": Der Pritschmeister als Festordner und Narr', *Maske und Kothurn* 45.3-4 (1999), 93-117.

<sup>114</sup>Retemeyer, 'Der Pritschmeister als Festordner', 102; Heldt, *Der vollkommene Regent*, p. 55.

<sup>115</sup>Wolfgang Braunfels, 'Der Glanz der 28 Tage: Kaiserhochzeiten in Dresden 1719 und München 1722', in *Das Fest: Eine Kulturgeschichte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. by Uwe Schulz, (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1988), pp. 210-221 (pp. 211-212).



In August 1719, a competition took place, pitting four young poets against each other for the new position of *Hofpoet* to August the Strong and his court. This is not to say that poets had not been present there in the past, nor that they were not present there in the early eighteenth century, but that the role had not been formalized in this way: David Schirmer (1623-1686/87) composed occasional poetry for Johann Georg I from 1649 to 1683, while, under August, Johann von Besser (1654-1729) had the position of *Zeremonienmeister* at Dresden from 1717 until his death, and the poet and composer Constantin Christian Dedekind (1628-1715) had been active at court, though he was employed in Dresden as a musical director. For Besser, however, the role was a kind of retirement plan. He had previously been something of a favourite (as *Hofpoet* and as *Zeremonienmeister*) in Berlin, entering Prussian service under Friedrich Wilhelm I, Elector of Brandenburg, in 1680. By the time Friedrich Wilhelm I, King in Prussia, came to the throne in 1713, Besser's most creative period was behind him.<sup>116</sup> The new king streamlined his court personnel and Besser found himself without a position until he was invited to Dresden.<sup>117</sup> In fact, the role the winner of the poetry competition would occupy also included assisting Besser in his job of *Zeremonienmeister*, in addition to composing suitably representative

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<sup>116</sup>Early studies of Besser's oeuvre usually explicitly ignore his Dresden period as being of no artistic significance, especially where the author is Prussian. E.g. Wilhelm Haertel, *Johann von Besser, Sein Leben und seine Werke: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der deutschen Hofdichtung*, Literarhistorische Forschungen 46 (Berlin: Verlag von Emil Felber, 1910). Two chapters are dedicated to the work of Besser at the Prussian court up to 1706 by Sara Smart in her study of court literature, *The ideal image: studies in writing for the German court 1616-1706* (Berlin: Weidler, 2005), but even she stops short of addressing his Dresden period.

<sup>117</sup>Poems by Besser can be found in: [Johann von Besser], *Des Herrn von B. Schriften, Beydes in gebundener und ungebundener Rede; So viel man derer, Theils aus ihrem ehemahligen Drucke, theils auch aus guter Freunde schriftlichen Communication, zusammen bringen können*. (Leipzig: Bey Johann Friedrich Gleditsch und Sohn, 1711 [2nd edn., 1720]), and in: *Bibliothek deutscher Dichter des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts. Begonnen von Wilhelm Müller. Fortgesetzt von Karl Förster*. (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1838), XIV, pp. 331-48.

verse to mark important events at court. The winner, Johann Ulrich von König (1688-1744), even replaced Besser in this role upon his death. König is in fact better known to most as a librettist, though his epic poem *August im Lager* is the most famous of his occasional poetry for the Dresden court.

Nevertheless, as he occupied the two positions of *Hofpoet* and *Zeremonienmeister*, elements of which were formerly part of the job description for the *Pritschmeister*, it can come as no surprise that, despite König's supposedly higher status within the court economy, he still sometimes found himself playing the lowly, somewhat ambiguous role of a *Pritschmeister*, as is demonstrated in his role during the *Schnepperschiessen* in December 1719. Thinking up verse on the spot at an event largely devoted to pleasure and entertainment was a task that would previously have been performed by the *Pritschmeister*. This contrasts greatly with König's general standing as a poet, which was later confirmed by his theoretical work, *Untersuchung von dem Guten Geschmack In Der Dicht- und Rede-Kunst*, first published as an appendix to his edited collection of Friedrich von Canitz's poetry in 1727. König's main poetic task at court, however, was to compose poetry for special court occasions, and this he did regularly after his appointment in 1719. His best-known composition from this period was written towards the end of August the Strong's life in 1731.

The Saxon encampment at Zeithain in 1730 was comprised of military manœuvres on the lines of Louis XIV's manœuvres at Compiègne in 1698.<sup>118</sup> Present were August II, his son, the Electoral Crown Prince Friedrich August II, Friedrich Wilhelm I, King in Prussia (1688-1740), and his son, the Prussian

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<sup>118</sup>Watanabe-O'Kelly, *Triumphall shews*, p. 122.

Crown-Prince Friedrich II (1712-1786), and their retinues. This event, which is described in König's epic poem *August im Lager*, was the culmination of years of diplomatic negotiations with the Saxons' Prussian neighbours dating back to the Northern Wars in the first two decades of the eighteenth century. While Prussia looked to keep Saxony weak, thereby also providing itself with a buffer between it and the Habsburg territories, by first refusing to provide support in the Northern War and by then levying heavy taxes on Saxony's trade,<sup>119</sup> August sought in the wake of his weakened military and political position to strengthen the Saxon situation in Europe and its links with Poland by turning initially to its allies in Austria and England. In the mid-1720s, August's position within Saxony and therefore also the perception outside Saxony of his strength suffered when he seemed unable adequately to control his subjects when religious unrest broke out in the Polish city of Toruń in 1724 and in Saxony in 1726. The tumult in Toruń was used by Prussia to portray Saxony and its ruler as having failed in their Protestant duty, and Prussia then promoted itself as the main German power protecting Protestants in Europe by posting soldiers at the Polish border. It was thought desirable, now more than ever, that an agreement should be reached with Prussia.<sup>120</sup> From 1728 onwards a series of agreements eased the trade stand-off and saw the two countries apparently once more on friendly terms. Meetings had already taken place between the two monarchs and their respective sons in Berlin and Dresden in 1728.<sup>121</sup> Zeithain was a reflection of the new relationship between

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<sup>119</sup>Karl Czok, *August der Starke: sein Verhältnis zum Absolutismus und zum sächsischen Adel* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1991), pp. 9-10.

<sup>120</sup>Johannes Birgfeld, *Krieg und Aufklärung: Der Kriegsdiskurs in der deutschsprachigen Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of the Saarland, 2009), pp.251-252.

<sup>121</sup>These meetings had also resulted in court publications to commemorate the events. See Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly and Anne Simon (eds), *Festivals and ceremonies: a bibliography of works*

the two territories and an opportunity to display reassurance about the position of Saxony after a considerable period of instability and uncertainty: August displaying in a series of visually impressive military manœuvres to his contemporaries, to posterity, and to Friedrich Wilhelm and his son, Friedrich, in particular, a newly invigorated Saxon army after implementation of Prussian-inspired reforms had effected its transformation from a weak 15,000-strong force at the end of the Northern Wars.<sup>122</sup>

The huge scale of the event was to be reflected in the scale of the poem König was employed to compose. He had intended it to be printed in six parts assigned to each of the six stages of the Zeithain manœuvres and with the working titles respectively of ‘Die Einhohlung’, ‘Die Musterung’, ‘Die Kriegs-Übungen [*sic*]’, ‘Die Kriegs-Handlungen’, ‘Die Lustbarkeiten’, and ‘Die Scheidung’. Only the first part of the epic cycle *August im Lager* was completed and printed in 1731 on the insistence of King August himself.<sup>123</sup> Despite the panegyric description of August as divine, the poem as a whole is dedicated to ‘Sr. Königlichen Majestät in Preussen’ and his approval is also sought at great length, over several pages. Friedrich Wilhelm I, king and guest at the Saxon court, therefore receives praise commensurate with his status and that is not merely generic, but tailored to his specific achievements as a ruler. He is the hero and protector of Prussia, propagator of his ancestors’ glory, a martial expert without

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*relating to court, civic and religious festivals in Europe 1500-1800* (London: Mansell, 2000), pp. 37 and 60-61.

<sup>122</sup>Instability and crisis were frequently the reason for holding festivals in early modern Europe. See Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly, “The early modern festival book: function and form”, in *Europa Triumphans: court and civic festivals in early modern Europe*, ed. by J.R. Mulryne, Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly, and Margaret Shewring, 2 vols (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), I, pp. 3-18 (p. 5).

<sup>123</sup>König explains this in his introductory notes to the poem: ‘Vorbericht’, *August im Lager, Helden-Gedicht. Erster Gesang, benannt: Die Einhohlung* (Dresden: Johann Wilhelm Harpetern, 1731), no pag.

compare, constantly studying martial theory and practice, constantly developing his armed forces.<sup>124</sup> Ultimately, both kings were to have a part of *August im Lager* dedicated to them, though no planned dedications for the other four parts were specified in König's 'Vorbericht'.<sup>125</sup> August and Friedrich Wilhelm's parity of status was therefore to be maintained through the epic's external structure, as well as in the description of the two men. This balance is maintained in the kings' – and their respective sons' – behaviour towards each other: August and his son behave as impeccable hosts to their illustrious Prussian guests, making sure everything is always ready for Friedrich Wilhelm in advance of his arrival, and treating him and his son as friendly equals in their greetings.

Alß nun der hohe Freund sich unsern Zelten nah  
 Und unsern König schon zu Fusse kommen sah;  
 Er [Friedrich Wilhelm] selber von dem Pferd auch zeitlich abgestiegen,  
 Umarmten Beyde sich mit innigstem Vergnügen.<sup>126</sup>

'Brüderlich' the greeting might be, but it is firmly situated in absolutist ceremonial. According to König, this ceremonial gesture of equality and brotherhood is observed only by those of a certain prestigious group, none of whom are below a certain rank. This ceremony can only be enacted by men of equal rank, and the two kings of Saxony and Prussia remain at the centre of the choreography precisely because of this:

Und wie bey jenem nichts als Helden zu ersehn,  
 So sah man auch bey dem nur lauter Ritter stehn,

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<sup>124</sup>König, *August im Lager*, p. 2ff.

<sup>125</sup>König, 'Vorbericht', *August im Lager*, no pag. Johannes Birgfeld speculates that the other parts of the epic would have been dedicated to the Prussian and Saxon crown princes respectively, followed possibly by other, high-ranking, members of the two royal families, or else some allegorical or mythical figure relevant to the event, *Krieg und Aufklärung*, p. 257.

<sup>126</sup>König, *August im Lager*, p. 22.

Die in der Ordens-Tracht zu Fuß ihm [August] folgen müssen,  
 Den angelangten Gast nach Würden zu begrüßen.  
 Dann alles hielt er sonst für solchen Freund zu klein.  
 Es solte beym Empfang anitzt sonst niemand seyn,  
 Als einzig diese nur, die durch den Adler-Orden  
 Mitglieder allbereits gekrönter Häupter worden.<sup>127</sup>

Indeed, the apparent informality and fraternal behaviour of the two men is set in the context of the magnificence of August himself and those things over which he has power: the Saxon court, its retinue, and, just as significantly, the Saxon countryside. König takes full advantage of this diplomatic game being played on August's 'home turf'. Naturally, the magnificence, wealth, and beauty of the Prussian retinue are acknowledged regularly throughout, but the greatest attention is given to the Saxon display. Friedrich Wilhelm is frequently reduced to the role of amazed and impressed onlooker, while everything that Saxony has to offer, from nature, through human endeavour, to his final destination, the Saxon encampment, is produced for him to observe.

So stand nicht weniger der Preussen-Held betroffen,  
 Alß er, Verwundrungs-voll und wider alles Hoffen,  
 Da man den Sandigten den duncklen Wald verließ,  
 So schleunig auf den Zug und das Gefolge stieß,  
 Das von dem Forst-Hauß ab, wohin die Reise zielte,  
 Biß an den Wald hinan aufmercksam stille hielte,  
 Und, auf Augusts Befehl, so weit die Strasse gieng,  
 In Ordnung, Ketten-gleich, schön an einander hieng.  
 Das fruchtbar-edle Land, die durch verschiedne Wälder  
 So dick-umzogene grün-eingefasste Felder,  
 Die Dörffer wohlbewohnt, die Aecker wohlbepflügt,  
 Das Vieh, so Heerden-weiß auf freyer Weyde liegt;  
 Dieß alles war ihm zwar erfreulich zu betrachten,  
 Doch, alß er nun ersah die Feld- und Reuter-Wachten,  
 So manch erhabenes und fremd-geschmücktes Zelt,  
 Als so viel Wohnungen am Wege hingestellt,  
 Ihr glänzend-grünes Dach, die Stangen bunt bemahlet,

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<sup>127</sup>König, *August im Lager*, p. 22.

Die Knöpfe so verguldt, daß, wann die Sonne strahlet,  
 Und ihren Widerschein davon zurücke sendt,  
 Der Feuer-gleiche Glantz ein jedes Auge blendt.<sup>128</sup>

It is the sheer detail of the descriptions that is most impressive, often zooming in so close as to see a button, and bringing the reader's (and Friedrich Wilhelm's) eye in with it. Everything about 'Die Einhohlung' is 'ketten-gleich' and orderly, reflecting the nature of ordered military manœuvres and the processional organization of the festivities, so well-known from August's other festivals. The extent of the detail is similar to the level of detail that can be found in the ceremonial productions of other courts: the festival books that also used visual depictions of the processional events they described. The colours and uniform of each unit, the arrangement of tables at the joint breakfast, the type and behaviour of the horses are described in considerable detail. The latter in particular are singled out and each is depicted differently. The horse ridden by August's lieutenant-colonel, Anton Knauth, is described, for instance, like a fashionable woman:

Von Farben mancher Art war es getygart-bunt,  
 Doch meistens schwartz gefleckt auf einen weissen Grund,  
 Wie unser Frauen-Volck, das sich zu schmücken pfelet,  
 Mit schwartzen Pflästergen die weisse Haut belet.  
 Wie folgsam war das Thier! wie ernsthaft jeder Tritt!  
 Wie Schul-gerecht der Gang! wie rein ein jeder Schritt!<sup>129</sup>

All twelve horses from the *Reut-Schule* that follow Knauth are each paraded and led by their own groomsman, and are given individual characteristics of gait by

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<sup>128</sup>König, *August im Lager*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>129</sup>König, *August im Lager*, p. 37.

König. While the first is ‘feurig’, another ‘mehr schleicht als tritt’, another ‘folgt hier gelencksam nach, aus edler Furchtsamkeit’, and yet another ‘nicht eher friedlich geht, als auf den Schlag der Ruthe’.<sup>130</sup> Indeed, König refers to his description as attempting to ‘paint’ them. Although many European festival books from the period describing the events of a celebration limit themselves to text – prose, verse, or the libretto of the ballet or opera performed – illustrated festival publications were particularly common in German-speaking territories, and had been produced for August’s predecessors on certain, though very rare, occasions.<sup>131</sup> Gabriel Tzschimmer’s account of the visit to Dresden in 1678 of the three younger brothers of Johann Georg II of Saxony includes thirty illustrated plates, of which several are of equestrian events.<sup>132</sup> The horses depicted in König’s account are not all entirely uniform in stance, but rear up, champ at the bit, and try to twist the halter from the groomsmen who lead them. This individuality also extends to the more important people taking part: in König’s poem the leaders of the units are named, often in the text of the poem itself, as Anton Knauth is, while some may be labelled in an asterisked footnote, as is the case for Knauth’s immediate subordinates in the unit he leads, Johann Egidi Wilde and the three ‘pupils’ from the *Reut-Schule*, Johann Adolph Knauth, Friedrich Wilhelm Schieferdecker, and Christian Ludwig Pfeiffer.<sup>133</sup>

König uses these footnotes in a variety of ways that all point towards *August im Lager* as a form of rhymed festival book, rather than merely as a poem of welcome or praise. He explains locations pertinent to the progress of the

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<sup>130</sup>König, *August im Lager*, pp. 38-40

<sup>131</sup>Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly, ‘The Early Modern Festival Book’, pp. 13-14.

<sup>132</sup>See Watanabe-O’Kelly, *Triumphall shews*, pp. 111-122.

<sup>133</sup>König, *August im Lager*, p. 37.



Prussian train and sites where the Prussian and Saxon personages meet. This is a chance to extol the beauty and delightfulness of the Saxon countryside where there may not have been a chance in the verse. Dates and times at which certain members of court rode ahead to prepare for the court's arrival are specified; terminology, especially that which pertains to the Polish units, is explained; members of participating regiments and orders from Prussian, Saxon, and Polish sides are listed – sometimes at such length that the footnote takes up more space on the page than is devoted to the verse, and may even run over several pages. Finally, when all have arrived at the encampment, three tables are laid and ready for the entire party to eat. In the verse, König tells us that all three tables are heaving with a delicious and delightfully varied and luxurious three course meal.<sup>134</sup> In the extensive footnotes, he tells us who sat at which table, the size of the tables and the number of plates, while also noting that some courtiers were necessarily absent because they were responsible for entertaining other individuals. Indeed, quantity, quality, and variety are intrinsically linked from the very beginning of the poem, with the close association of the words 'schön', 'zahlreich', and 'vielfach': the reader is intended to be overwhelmed by the rhetoric, much as the Prussian entourage was overwhelmed by Saxon hospitality. König's final words in this first part of *August im Lager* emphasize once more the brotherly equality between August and Friedrich Wilhelm which he had already observed earlier between the two kings, but the sheer amount of ceremony throughout the poem shows that this is not a kind of intimate informality.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>134</sup>König, *August im Lager*, pp. 59-61.

<sup>135</sup>König, *August im Lager*, p. 63.

#### 2.4.2.1. The allegory of *Zwietracht* and *Eintracht* in König's *August im Lager*.

In the middle of König's versified account of the Prussian and Saxon journey to the encampment, as both Prussian and Saxon entourages stop on the journey to refresh themselves with wine and stretch their legs, König introduces an allegorical passage that reflects on the peace existing between the two countries and the difficult relationship that they have had in the past:

Alß nun die Könige mit ihren Printzen saßen,  
Und in vermengter Zahl, nebst allen Großen, aßen,  
Kam auch, unsichtbar zwar, die Mutter aller ruh  
Und Freundin der Natur, der Völcker Heil herzu.  
Durch ihre Gegenwart ist jeder Stand beglücket,  
Wird von der Schwester sie nicht tückisch unterdrücket.<sup>136</sup>

The two sisters are Harmony and Discord, the only two female figures to appear at this otherwise male-dominated state occasion. They are given a prominent position, thereby displaying their determinative role in the proceedings, for on their interaction and balance depend the diplomatic relations between Prussia and Saxony.

The use of allegory and symbolism in court iconography has already been mentioned briefly earlier in this chapter. The *Eintracht* and *Zwitracht* [*sic*] of König's poem were not actual participants in the events; although they mirror the pairing of the two kings of Prussia and Saxony, and their respective crown princes, neither of these allegorical female figures is the kings or the princes 'dressed up', nor do they insinuate which of the two kings might have been more

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<sup>136</sup>König, *August im Lager*, p. 26.

or less antagonistic and aggressive to the other over the previous twenty or thirty years.

This allegorical excursus takes place approximately half-way through the main description that makes up *Die Einholung*, which is in format itself something of a procession. Much of the parade's description, as is to be expected, is dedicated to military units which are distinct in their colours and are, for the most part, mounted or on foot. But there are allusions to carriages, suggesting the pomp and splendour of the event was not limited to the military, but also extended to more 'civilian' elements of the court. There are in total thirty-two carriages, all with six horses, but each designed for different purposes. Not all are designed purely for show, though they are nonetheless magnificent. Through hyperbolic comparisons with nature, König is able to suggest that they have symbolic significance, as the contrast between day and night with reference to the magnificence of the coaches seems to indicate:

[...] Wie eh der Wagen-Thron  
 Der Sonnen-Pferde war, in welchem Phaeton,  
 Wie uns die Fabel lehrt, von Hochmuth aufgeschwollen,  
 Dem weisen Phöbus gleich, die Welt umfahren wollen,  
 Bald aber Schimpf und Straff und eignen Fall geschaut;  
 So waren viere hier achtsitzig auch erbaut.<sup>137</sup>

Vor andern eilt herzu, so schnell als wie im Flug,  
 Ein gleichgewachsener ein kohl-pech-schwartzer Zug.  
 Wie manchmahl nur ein Stern den gantzen Himmel schmückt,  
 Wann man der Wolcken Feld bey Nacht geschwärzt erblicket,  
 So ist hier jedes Roß schwartz wie die Mitternacht,  
 Und nur ein weisser Stern erhebt der Stirne Pracht.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>137</sup>König, *August im Lager*, p. 48.

<sup>138</sup>König, *August im Lager*, p. 49.

None of these coaches is given the kind of significance that is allocated to the excursus of *Eintracht* and *Zwitracht*, who, König states, were not actually present in the flesh. Even so, the allegorical sisters are given an entourage through the story of their parentage, much as the courtiers' carriages have an entourage of *Wagenmeister*, *Vorreuter*, *Kutscher*, and *Knecht*. Their fathers are respectively *Frieden* and *Krieg*, and their mother 'die blasse Furcht'. Each has a pair of sons, *Ruhestand* and *Überfluß* on the one hand, and *Mein und Dein*, fathered by *Eigennutz*, on the other. The physical appearance of *Eintracht* in particular is also described very closely: she is a 'männlich-schönes Weib', with a lithe body in flowing robes of fittingly monochrome, but regal, 'purpur-roth', and, further reflective of unity, seamless, woven in one piece. Though she is additionally dressed in armour, her weapons and the emblems on them indicate unity, not bloodshed; her hair is woven into a single plait, the emblem on her helmet is a pomegranate, 'vielkörnigt, doch vereint in eine Frucht gerathen'.<sup>139</sup>

Indeed, the description is so detailed as to be almost equivalent to a visual image, so that *Eintracht* presents the versified equivalent of an allegorical carriage as the showpiece of this Saxon parade, taking the place of an engraving in a festival book. Though not visibly present, but clearly affecting all the court, she also sings a song blessing the Prusso-Saxon friendship, expressing hopes that it will be long-lasting, and warning of the possible consequences for each country should it fail.<sup>140</sup> König thereby introduces a further element of court festivities: a combination of dance and song, like an operatic ballet.<sup>141</sup> The aria sung by

<sup>139</sup>König, *August im Lager*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>140</sup>See König, *August im Lager*, pp. 34-36.

<sup>141</sup>Johann Georg II also staged operatic ballets during his reign: *Apollo und Daphne* and *Io* during

*Eintracht* and *Zwitracht* is fictional and never took place during the manoeuvres or at any other time. The composition of *August im Lager* is an extension of the diplomatic events of the day; the inclusion of fictional and allegorical elements is therefore also an extension of those real events, echoing the pattern of court ceremonial so important to the image of August.

August sought to achieve an image that would outlast him and that image was linked to his achievements and aspirations in war and in securing his state and dynasty. The production of his image by means of court art and the ceremonial surrounding, indeed, imbuing it, was a necessary element in getting his image across. However, the ability to invest in the extensive, varied, and international culture of art and artists at his court, and to be able to produce and afford items that were not always immediately functional, was also in itself a demonstration of the magnificence and power of August and his court. Like many rulers, he wanted to display himself as a successful military leader, and his portrayal of military strength, both personally and through his army, has been shown as intrinsic to his image as a strong and successful ruler able to maintain the integrity of his territories and his lineage, particularly important at times when his territories were under pressure through internal dissatisfaction and external threat. In doing so, he presented himself as a powerful figure at the centre of his court and beyond, linking his success to the prosperity of his lands, at once boasting about the rich resources at his disposal and intimating that, in Saxony, the richness of those resources was a result of his actions. He was to be considered the genius and instigator of all his achievement, his future ambitions, and those of his successors.

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is brothers' visit in 1678. See Watanabe-O'Kelly, *Triumphall shews*, pp. 118-120.

He displayed his visions for the future in his image, a future in which he desired that he and his dynasty would go far beyond the limits of their inherited territories, asserting themselves in the hierarchy of German princes through his elevation to kingship and through the imperial connections August had nurtured.

August's image at court was based on the use of a variety of images and media, some with recognizable ceremonial antecedents and some with more modern, political, echoes. The sheer range of objects used to project August's image was huge and has only been partially examined here. Nevertheless, together, they form a state image of August that aimed not simply at claiming power and ambition to more power in the future, nor even at simply displaying the wealth and rich resources of the Saxon state. In fact, these items go collectively towards portraying August both as a man and as a ruler of broad interests and abilities. This is not to say that he aimed at universal monarchy in Europe as such (though arguably this is what his imperial ambitions logically amounted to), but that he himself was a man of universal interests, capabilities, and knowledge, and that this was what made him an 'ideal ruler'. It is this 'universality' that also stands at the basis of the tension in the image between the maintenance of court ceremonial and the attempt to be seen to overcome it in informality. The ability effortlessly to negotiate the formal and the informal was vitally important for August as a ruler and to his image, and this was taken up by writers beyond his court in the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, the image August fabricated for himself as a man of universal interests and abilities soon became subverted in the highly selective and narrow image of August portrayed by later writers and historians.

## 2.5. The reaction of Johann Christian Günther to the court of August the Strong.

Not all of those within the ambit of the court accepted August's image of himself and his court – Johann Christian Günther (1695-1723) was one who did not.

August's Lutheran opponents linked his sexual morals to his new religion.<sup>142</sup>

Günther criticized August's relationship to the arts as reactionary and out of date, not to mention out of touch with contemporary developments in literature. His poems were a deeply personal reaction to his rejection by August and his court, but, unlike the works examined in this thesis by other writers, the criticism he expressed in his poems was kept in a more private sphere because they were sent as letters to friends.

Johann Christian Günther, later frequently lauded as one of the most important early eighteenth-century German poets, as a forerunner of Goethe and *Sturm und Drang*, yet also a symbol of the superseded baroque style, was one of the poets who failed to impress in the competition to find a *Hofpoet* in 1719.<sup>143</sup>

Günther had risen to some prominence on account of his poem on the popular military general Prince Eugen (François-Eugène, Prince de Savoie-Carignan;

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<sup>142</sup>Watanabe-O'Kelly, 'Religion and the consort', p. 262.

<sup>143</sup>Hans Dahlke, *Johann Christian Günther: seine dichterische Entwicklung* (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1960), pp. 128-129 and p. 209; Karl Konrad Polheim, 'Der Dichter Johann Christian Günther: Wirken und Wirkung', in *Johann Christian Günther (1695-1723). Oldenburger Symposium zum 300. Geburtstag des Dichters*, ed. by Jens Stüben (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1997), pp. 21-45. Catherine S. Sutherland argues that these are all clichéd responses to Günther's work and that Günther's relationship to the literary tradition was ambivalent, venerating the canon, but seeking a thorough-going reform of poetry that would go beyond stylistics; see Catherine S. Sutherland, *The lyric poetry of Johann Christian Günther as a paradigm of the transition from Baroque to Enlightenment* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Goldsmiths, University of London, 1991).

1663-1736), written after the victory over the Turks and the signing of the Peace of Passarowitz.<sup>144</sup> However, the young poet found himself unable to deliver what was required during the Saxon competition; it was too formulaic for him to find inspiration and show off his considerable skill as a poet. The four nominees were asked to demonstrate their competence in a variety of poetic forms, a task that Günther described in terms of classical horse dressage:

Denn als mein Pegasus vier Schulen machen sollte,  
So stund der lahme Gaul, als wenn er taumeln wollte.<sup>145</sup>

Disappointed though he was from a material point of view, as he had hoped to marry on the strength of the prestige and salary the position would have given him, Günther was also concerned by what he saw at the Saxon court, what he believed to be its unreasonable sycophancy, lack of honesty, and authentic feeling, as well as its functionalized poetry and functionalized poet. He explained some of this in a poem addressed to August after his failure in the competition:

[...] Die Großmuth ist bescheiden  
Und weis wie du, o Held, den Misbrauch nicht zu leiden,  
Daß jeder, der das Ohr mit falschen Saythen quält,  
Dir, was du bist und thust, aus Eigennuz erzehlt,  
Die Wort auf Stelzen setzt, aus Hochmuth dunckel schreibet  
Und dein so helles Lob in Nacht und Nebel treibet.<sup>146</sup>

Günther had to be cautious, for it must have been clear to him that criticism of the nature of life at court would also imply criticism of the prince. So he claims that

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<sup>144</sup>Johann Christian Günther, 'Auf den zwischen Ihro Kayserl. Majestät und der Pforte an. 1718. geschlossenen Frieden' in *Sämtliche Werke*, IV *Lob- und Strafschriften in zeitlicher Folge* (Leipzig: Karl W. Hiersemann, 1935), pp. 129-43.

<sup>145</sup>Johann Christian Günther, 'Unterthänigste Lobschrift auf Ihro Königlichen Majestät in Polen und Churfürstl. Durchl. von Sachsen, Herrn Friedrichs Augusti, unvergleichliche Thaten' in *Sämtliche Werke*, IV *Lob- und Strafschriften in zeitlicher Folge* (Leipzig: Karl W. Hiersemann, 1935), pp. 183-93, ll. 11-12.

<sup>146</sup>Günther, 'Unterthänigste Lobschrift', ll. 23-28.



he alone is driven by an impulse for simple truth (*Wahrheit*), while all the many other poets scramble to sing August's praises in ever more bombastic terms, merely in the hope of receiving some reward. This bombast actually detracts from August's virtues, according to Günther, and it is only his own simplicity that does the truth justice (l. 65-72). This is because the style of poetry favoured by the court to date no longer appropriately serves the purpose for which it is intended, that is, of creating and managing an enduring (and 'truthful') image for posterity.

[...] allein ich seh und weis,  
 Wie viel Verstand und Zeit und Kunst und Geist und Fleiß  
 Ein gründlich Werck begehrt, das Kluge lüstern machen,  
 Des Purpurs würdig seyn, der Richter Neid verlachen  
 Und ewig dauren soll. [...]<sup>147</sup>

Günther goes on to praise the city of Dresden and the River Elbe as a glittering jewel in August's crown and, thus, also as an important element in the reputation and image that August has created for himself and his court (l.219-280). Günther is well aware of the ways in which August promotes his court, although he focuses in his poem on the more frivolous of these (l.284-289). Yet of all the arts promoted by the Elector-King, it is poetry alone that remains figuratively in the cold, the lowliest, the least regarded of all the arts for lack of appropriate protection and endorsement by wealthy and powerful patrons. Günther presses his case that this is a specifically German malady:

Man drückt sie [poetry] in der Stadt, man spottet ihr bey Hofe  
 Und nennt sie nur aus Scherz die abgedanckte Zofe.  
 Dergleichen harter Schimpf geht ihrem Adel nah,  
 Worauf doch Rom, Athen und Franckreichs Ludwig sah.  
 [...] Wir Deutschen leyern noch, und hat gleich mancher Schwan  
 Sich etwan hier und dar mit Müh hervorgethan,

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<sup>147</sup>Günther, 'Unterthänigste Lobschrift', ll. 93-97.

So heists doch wohl nichts mehr als etwas anfangen.  
Was macht es? Kein August bestätigt ihr Verlangen.<sup>148</sup>

Günther points to the civilizations and cities commonly held up as ideal examples of cultural development and court fashion in this period: ancient Rome, ancient Athens, and France under Louis XIV. If the great cultures that formed the basis for so much of contemporary learning and art understood the value of poetry and actively encouraged it, then that policy should be maintained by patrons in the eighteenth century. The figure of Louis XIV brings that policy right up to date in terms of courtly and cultural reference points deemed fit for emulation. This is thus a direct plea to August to raise the standing of poetry at his court.

The poet reserves his more stinging criticism of and disappointment in the Dresden court and its prince for letters written to two acquaintances soon after the competition. Now the ‘truth’ of Saxon glamour, which he seems to praise in his *Lobschrift* to August, clearly sickens him, as he writes to his benefactor Gottlieb Milich in Schweidnitz (now Świdnica).

In Dresden sieht man nichts als lauter güldne Zeiten,  
Land, Dörfer, Stadt und Hof sind pracht- und jubelvoll.  
Wie geht’s am Helicon? Es riecht nach armen Leuten,  
Worunter ich gleichwohl viel Nettes dichten soll.<sup>149</sup>

Mount Helicon, home to the muses and source of poetic inspiration, is

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<sup>148</sup>Günther, ‘Unterthänigste Lobschrift’, ll. 311-324. The term ‘drücken’ in l. 311 is slightly ambiguous, meaning either that poetry is *printed* in the town, but dismissed as worthless at court or – my preferred interpretation – something closer to the verb ‘drängen’, indicating that poetry is persecuted in all areas of German society. See entry for ‘drücken’ in Jakob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, revised edn (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1983), vol. 6, 1432-1442 (1436-1437).

<sup>149</sup>Günther, ‘An Herrn Gottlieb Milich, Kayserl. Rath und Mannrechts Assessorem in Schweidnitz’ [‘Vergnügt dich, theures Haupt, ein Blat von Ehrfurchtsküßen’] in *Sämtliche Werke*, III *Freundschaftsgedichte und –briefe in zeitlicher Folge* (Leipzig: Karl W. Hiersemann, 1934), pp. 74-78, ll. 41-44.

uncultivated in the city of Dresden and yet the expectation is that its inhabitants should serve the shallow frivolity of the court. The low value of poetry at court is proven by the choice of winner, whose poetry, according to Günther, was contrived; he believes the winner was not selected for the quality of his verse but because he ‘noch der Pritsche mißt’ and ‘weil er nur ein beßrer Hofnarr ist’.<sup>150</sup> Günther has, in fact, put his finger on the problematic nature of the poet’s role at the Dresden court, which has been discussed above. That Günther is himself not prepared to play the *Pritschmeister*, which in previous centuries had been a perfectly respectable position in society, is indicative of changing attitudes among artists and writers, who, in the eighteenth century, increasingly turned away from wealthy patrons as a way of earning a living, seeking instead to maintain themselves by their art alone.<sup>151</sup> Yet in this transition period there is still great need for the wealthy and powerful to act as patrons to the struggling artist, as Günther rages against the two most prominent men in Europe in a letter to his Leipzig friend, Michael Christoph Brandenburg (1694-1766).

Du könntest, großer Carl, den armen Künsten rathen,  
Was aber hilft August, den kein Mäcenat treibt?<sup>152</sup>

In this section of the poem, Karl VI, Holy Roman Emperor (1685-1740), and August the Strong are played off against each other here as equally detrimental in

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<sup>150</sup>Günther, ‘An Herrn Gottlieb Milich, Kayserl. Rath und Mannrechts Assessorem in Schweidnitz’, ll. 50-52.

<sup>151</sup>Dahlke, *Johann Christian Günther*, p. 209.

<sup>152</sup>Johann Christian Günther, ‘An Herrn Brandenburg aus Mecklenburg, S. S. Theol. Stud. In Leipzig [Dresden, den 16. Aug. 1719.]’ [‘Freund, welchen Fleiß und Geist vom Pöbel unterscheidet’] in *Sämtliche Werke, III Freundschaftsgedichte und –briefe in zeitlicher Folge* (Leipzig: Karl W. Hiersemann, 1934), pp. 70-73, ll. 80-88 (ll. 87-88).

their ineffectiveness as patrons: the emperor does not have the will to support artists while the Elector-King fails as a promoter of poets and whose own great feats ('Wunder') fail to inspire.<sup>153</sup> Between them, these two men are the antithesis of the great patrons of the antique world, Gaius Cilnius Maecenas and Caesar Augustus (Octavian). The image that Günther gives of literature at the court of August the Strong is not a positive one, even if that image must also be coloured by Günther's unhappy experience there and the undermining of his own self-confidence that resulted.

Günther's lament for the state of literature at August's court is not one that is repeated in later criticism of the Saxon ruler. August's reign over an extraordinarily fruitful artistic court is rarely in doubt. However, Günther's bitter contrast between the conspicuous wealth and frivolity of the court, and the extreme poverty of many ordinary Saxon subjects is certainly echoed in nineteenth and twentieth-century works.

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<sup>153</sup>Kersten, *Die Freundschaftsgedichte und Briefe Johann Christian Günthers*, p. 149.

### Chapter 3: Beyond the Saxon court: August the Strong as eighteenth-century gallant archetype.

As we have seen in the case of Günther, while princes could seek to control their image within their own environment by orchestrating the media of ceremony of their own courts, they did not always have the same influence over images and impressions of them and their rule that their peers and contemporaries might create. There were censorship mechanisms in place, which did have the power to confiscate unlicensed publications, though they might not be successful in eliminating them entirely. This was the case, for example, with large numbers of popular prints, broadsheets, songs, and poems printed in advance of the *Zeithainer Lager*.<sup>154</sup> The printing of popular prints that would describe and comment on court, civic, and religious festivities was not at all unusual. What was unusual, however, was for longer, more formal publications to be produced about a ruler by others outside that ruler's court which were not officially sanctioned by them, in particular, publications about a ruler which were not, strictly speaking, factual, but fictional depictions of that ruler. There are certainly examples of rulers fictionalizing their own lives, as the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I (1459-1519) did in composing *Die Abenteuer des Ritters Theuerdank* (1517), but this was part of the official image-making machinery at court. August the Strong, by contrast, did not create his own fictional literary image in this way. He is unusual in that others wrote fiction that centred on his person. These authors – Maria Aurora von Königsmarck and Christian Friedrich Hunold – were both within and

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<sup>154</sup>Hans Beschorner, 'Beschreibungen und bildliche Darstellungen des Zeithainer Lagers von 1730', *Neues Archiv für sächsische Geschichte und Altertumskunde* 27 (1906), 103-151 (107-115).

beyond August the Strong's immediate court circle. Königsmarck, an acclaimed poet and reputed beauty, had briefly been August's mistress and had produced a son, Maurice, by him, but even after she had been displaced as August's mistress, and had entered the convent at Quedlinburg, she continued to visit the cities of north Germany and the Dresden court. Such were the good terms of her relationship with August that he even sent her on a diplomatic mission to Karl XII of Sweden in 1702. Hunold, however, came from an entirely different social sphere, had little contact with court circles, and was a writer and university lecturer by profession. Both were renowned for their so-called 'gallant' style.

Of course, biographical accounts were produced immediately after a ruler's death, and two examples published in the years immediately following August the Strong's death are examined in this chapter. The authors – David Faßmann (1685-1744) and Karl Ludwig von Pöllnitz (1691/92-1775) – were in attendance at various European courts over the course of their lives, including both the Saxon and Prussian courts. However, despite having spent considerable time serving at the Prussian court, neither writer seems to have expressed Prussian bias in their portrayal of August the Strong. Nevertheless, each 'biography' is problematic in its own way. Together with the writings of Hunold and Königsmarck, the image constructed for a reading public in these texts is of August as an *homme galant*. This is an image that chimes with August's official image to a large extent, but, strikingly, even where these depictions of August conform to the negative aspects pinpointed in the late seventeenth and eighteenth-century discourse on *galanterie*, August is still celebrated as an ideal to be admired, if not actually to be imitated.

Spanning the last few decades of the seventeenth century and the first few decades of the eighteenth century – approximately 1680-1730 – the German middle and upper classes acquired a new style of social interaction and social expression which came from the French court. *Galanterie* was a rhetorical system that could be brought to bear on all aspects of life, from how one behaved towards others, to how one expressed learning and knowledge, to a particular style of letter-writing, poetry, novels, the art of making conversation and so on.<sup>155</sup> At its heart lay the idea of promoting one's own interests by encouraging a positive image of oneself in the eyes of others through the ability to adapt and maintain an air of ease and politeness in all situations and in all sorts of company, and in order to achieve this a certain degree of dissimulation might be tolerated.<sup>156</sup> *Galanterie* received both praise and criticism alike from German contemporaries who saw both its uses for civilizing and cultivating self-discipline and virtuous behaviour in the individual, and its potential for encouraging immoral behaviours and attitudes.

It was asserted generally that the French were masters of gallant behaviour. As early as 1689, Christian Thomasius (1655-1728) held up French *galanterie* as the ideal for his fellow Germans, although even he believed that the French did not have a firm idea of the concept:

Aber ad propos [*sic*] was ist galant und ein galanter Mensch? dieses dürfte uns in Wahrheit mehr zu thun machen als alles vorige, zumahlen da dieses Wort bey uns Teutschen so gemein und so sehr gemißbraucht worden, daß es von Hund und Katzen, von Pantoffeln, von Tisch und Bäncken, von Feder und Dinten, und ich weiß endlich nicht, ob nicht auch von Äpfeln und Birn zum öfftern gesagt wird. So scheinet auch, als wenn die Frantzosen selbst nicht

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<sup>155</sup>Peter Hess, 'Galante Rhetorik', in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, ed. by Gert Ueding, (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996), III, pp. 507-523 (pp. 508-509).

<sup>156</sup>Hess, 'Galante Rhetorik', pp. 511-512.

einig wären, worinnen eigentlich die wahrhaftige *galanterie* bestehe. Mademoiselle Scudery beschreibt dieselbige in einer absonderlichen *conversation de l'Air galant*, als wenn es eine verborgne natürliche Eigenschafft wäre, durch welche man gleichsam wider Willen gezwungen würde einem Menschen günstig und gewogen zu seyn, bey welcher Beschaffenheit dann die *Galanterie*, und das *je ne scay quoy* [sic], wo von obgemeldter Pere Bouhours ein gantzes Gespräch verfertigt, einerley wären.<sup>157</sup>

For some, like Johann Christian Barth (dates unknown), *galanterie* was to be associated with virtuous and socially skilled behaviour. *Höflichkeit* and *galanterie* were intrinsically linked:

Damit man nun ein gründliches und deutliches Concept darvon habe, so sage ich: Die Höflichkeit ist eine Tugendhafte und galante Conduite, sich, so wohl in Wercken, als Worten bey Erwekung der Zeit und des Orts, nach dem Genie der Leute, mit welchen man umgehet, zu richten: Damit man sich recommandire, und also sein Glück befördern helffe.<sup>158</sup>

This in itself indicates exactly how flexible the gallant style and gallant behaviour could be: theoretically, the gallant had to be able to move successfully in all sectors of society. An essential element of this was the art of the compliment, to be practised both in conversation and in writing. The ability to ingratiate oneself with one's peers and superiors was important to an individual's mobility within that society:

Denn, wenn einer gleich lange noch so viel Reverence in Wercken

<sup>157</sup>Christian Thomasius, *Discours Welcher Gestalt man denen Frantzosen in gemeinem Leben und Wandel nachahmen solle? ein Collegium über des Gratians Grund-Reguln/Vernünfftig/klug und artig zu leben* [Christian Thomasius *Von Nachahmung der Franzosen. Nach den Ausgaben von 1687 und 1701*, Stuttgart: G.J. Göschen'sche Verlagshandlung, 1894, p. 11].

<sup>158</sup>Johann Christian Barth, *Galante Ethica, In welcher gezeiget wird, Wie sich Ein junger Mensch bey der Galanten Welt, Sowohl Durch manierliche Wercke, als complaisante Worte recommandiren soll* (Dresden and Leipzig: Gottfried Leschen, 1728), 3rd edn [in *Der galante Stil 1680-1730*, ed. by Conrad Wiedemann (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1969), p. 11].



spühren liesse, und so man ihn was fragte, mit einer plumpen Antwort heraus wischete, oder wohl gar ein Cophon prosopon da stünde, so würde er schlechte Grace zu gewarten haben; Au contraire sich in eine unvermuthete Verachtung setzen.<sup>159</sup>

Compliments had to be tailored to the audience as well as be imbued with a natural and appropriate emotion and expression, rather than a forced woodenness. As a result, guides on the composition of ‘gallant’ letters, poetry, and conversation proliferated, often with comments on their appropriateness for particular sorts of addressees. The guides written by the pseudonymous Talander (August Bohse, 1661-1740), Menantes (Christian Friedrich Hunold, 1680-1721), Amaranthes (Gottlieb Siegmund Corvinus, 1677-1747), and by Benjamin Neukirch (1665-1729) are just a few examples.<sup>160</sup> Guidance would be given on the type of, for example, letter to be written, whether a love letter, a panegyric to a patron, or simply a letter to a friend. Nonetheless, the gallant style’s overriding concern – unsurprisingly, considering its relationship to the compliment – was its focus on the expression of love. A great deal of effort was put into explaining the importance of paying due attention to the opposite sex, though generally behavioural instruction was exclusively aimed at men. Hunold’s guide *Die Manier höflich und wohl zu Reden und zu Leben, so wohl mit hohen, vornehmen Personen, seines gleichen und Frauenzimmer, als auch, Wie das Frauenzimmer eine geschickte Aufführung gegen uns gebrauchen könne* (1710) did address the manners of women, but relegated this section to the back of the book, and its mode of expression suggests that in reality this was more of a guide to enable men

<sup>159</sup> Barth, *Galante Ethica*, no pag.

<sup>160</sup> An indication of the extent of the popularity of such works is given in the list of (selected) titles of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century etiquette books, their authors, and the number of editions provided in Manfred Beetz, *Frühmoderne Höflichkeit: Komplimentierkunst und Gesellschaftsrituale im altdeutschen Sprachraum* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1990), pp. 106-107.

to judge how gallant women were being rather than to give women instruction on their role in *galanterie*.

However, the ability to express a well-turned compliment was not the only prerequisite for being a *galant*. Thomasius saw the French definition of *galanterie* as an ‘Air galant’ not only as lacking precision, but also as inadequately covering the term's complexity, and believed ‘daß es etwas gemischtes sey, so aus dem je ne scay quoy, aus der guten Art etwas zu thun, aus der manier zu leben, so am Hofe gebräuchlich ist, aus Verstand, Gelehrsamkeit, einem guten judicio, Höfflichkeit, und Freudigkeit zusammen gesetzt werde, und dem aller Zwang, affectation, und unanständige Plumpheit zu wider sey’.<sup>161</sup> This is clearly a definition that leans towards the political, especially as Thomasius sees ‘good’ *galanterie* as based partly in France, and, importantly, also in the behaviour of the princely court. Neither was Thomasius the only person to think along these lines: Hunold’s novels *Die lebenswürdige Adalie* (1702) and *Die Europäischen Höfe Liebes- und Helden-Geschichten* (1705) indicate that he, too, saw the basis for gallant behaviour in a courtly environment. Indeed, the court of Louis XIV was generally considered the ideal exemplar to be imitated and was, for this reason, a popular destination for young princes and noblemen on their *Kavalierstour*, which these young men took to broaden their horizons and to ‘civilize’ them in the manners of the European court.<sup>162</sup>

Even so, this did not mean that the *homme galant* existed only in a courtly environment. Universal politeness was to sustain society throughout and between

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<sup>161</sup>Thomasius, *Welcher Gestalt man denen Frantzosen*, p. 11.

<sup>162</sup>For an overview of the instructive content of the *Kavalierstour* and of the purpose of visiting foreign courts, see Mathis Leibetseder, *Die Kavalierstour: adlige Erziehungsreisen im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna: Böhlau, 2004), pp. 104-137.

the different social classes.<sup>163</sup> Many German novels of the period written in the gallant style have links to didactic literature clearly aimed at more middle class individuals. These novels are associated with the gallant style even if they appear at first glance to be situated within the older tradition of the courtly historical novel. Ziegler's hugely popular *Asiatische Banise* (1689), dedicated to August the Strong's older brother, Johann Georg IV, has always been considered a novel outlining exemplary behaviour for princes and for Johann Georg in particular – a 'Fürstenspiegel'.<sup>164</sup> In the mid-1990s, Pamela Currie reassessed this evaluation, arguing that, instead of existing for the elite spheres of society, *Asiatische Banise* had a more universal target audience and message.

It preached not dynastic aggrandisement but a traditional ideal of kingship as responsibility to the common weal. Kings are mortals under God, bound by the same moral rules as their subjects. And what happens to them is a lesson for the whole world. For *Die asiatische Banise* is addressed not simply to kings nor indeed to those who govern, but to all regardless of station, to whom it teaches a traditional, self-denying morality.<sup>165</sup>

For *galanterie*, the sentiment that was particularly universal was love, but the focus on love, while it provided a basic ideal for proponents and practitioners of *galanterie*, also invited criticism.

The erotic nature of much gallant poetry and certain aspects of gallant novels, as well as the apparently frivolous behaviour of *galants*, were not welcomed by some contemporaries. *Galanterie* was linked to immoral behaviour

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<sup>163</sup>Pamela Currie, *Literature as social action: modernist and traditionalist narratives in Germany in the seventeenth and eighteenth Centuries* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1995), p. 102.

<sup>164</sup>Hans-Gert Roloff, 'Heinrich Anselm von Ziegler und Klipphausen' in *Deutsche Dichter des 17. Jahrhunderts: ihr Leben und Werk*, ed. by Harald Steinhagen and Benno von Wiese (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1984), pp.798-818 (p. 802).

<sup>165</sup>Currie, *Literature as social action*, p. 85.

and the link was made to the growing market in novels or *romans*:

Es were ja sonst anderwärts Gottlosigkeit genug in solchen Büchern, die von nichts anders, als von hassen, morden, simulieren, läugnen, lügen-dichten, hindern Liecht führen, sehnen, brennen, und geilem wiheln &c. handeln, und dises alles, an ihrem Heros als Witz, Wolständigkeit, und Tugend noch dazu loben! Fürwahr, fürwahr! solche Sachen dienen wol under diejenige Leuth, bey denen huren, *salvo honore*, eine *Galanterie* begehen, ist, und *Histoire Galante* ein Lust-Geschicht von lauter Ehbrüchen bedeutet [...]. Sie kommen trefflich *à propos*, wo die Religions-Bediente *obligiert* sind junge Leuth zuunderweisen *à parler de femmes, & de galanterie, & à vivre en Cavaliers, en Courtisans, en gens du monde*, und dises noch selbst, als zum Ruhm von sich schreiben dörffen! Aber sonst ist ja zuerbarmen, daß Leuth die bessere *principia* haben sollten, mit so vil sehnen und seuffzen ob den *Roman*-Fablen und Buhler-Possen sitzen, und mit den verruchten alten Juden den *Thamus* helffen beweinen, und mit den Wandgemähen buhlen sollen! Dann so muß es einem nothwendig vorkommen.<sup>166</sup>

Gotthard Heidegger (1666-1711), a Swiss pastor and theologian, may have been writing in a period when the number of novels published every year was still very low, nonetheless the tenor of his criticism in this, and other aspects – despite refutation by others – resonated down the centuries. Indeed, this sort of criticism based on gallant literature's perceived bad taste and style caused it to fall out of favour with critics for a long period of time from the eighteenth century onwards.<sup>167</sup> Heidegger's criticism shows that the alternative view of the *galant*, far from being a model of courtly and courteous behaviour, was an individual bent on frivolous entertainment, a rake and scoundrel, who was out only for his own

<sup>166</sup>Gotthard Heidegger, *Mythoscopia Romantica: oder Discours von den so benannten Romans, Das ist Erdichteten Liebes- Helde[n]- und Hirten-Geschichten: Von dero Ursprung, Einrisse, Verschiedenheit, Nütz- oder Schädlichkeit: Samt Beantwortung aller Einwürffen, und vilen besondern Historischen, und anderen anmühtigen Remarques* (Zurich: David Gessner, 1698) [Facsimile edn. ed. by Walter Ernst Schäfer (Berlin and Zurich: Verlag Gehlen, 1969)], no pag. (italics in original).

<sup>167</sup>Peter Hess, 'Poetry in Germany, 1450-1700', in *The Camden House History of German Literature*, ed. by James Hardin, IV: Early Modern German Literature 1350-1700 (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2007), pp. 395-466 (p. 437).

personal glory, consorted with women of dubious reputation, and, silver-tongued, seduced honourable ones.

It is pertinent that such criticism emerged at the very time so-called secret histories were proving popular across Europe. They played with the concepts of historical fact and historical fiction self-consciously, and claimed to reveal – under the veil of a fictional encryption of persons and events – hitherto unknown political and personal scandals about the ruling classes, a claim that was not necessarily always true. They would claim to reveal the real ‘truth’ behind purported conspiracies at the courts of Charles II, James II, and of Louis XIV, political, sexual, or both. The earliest ‘secret histories’ were published in the early seventeenth century and were not limited to contemporary events. The publication in 1623 of the *Anekdotia* of Procopius of Caesarea (c.500-c.565) is an early example, though it was not translated until 1674. There was a large English and French-language market for secret histories, and women authors were particularly important in their production, for example, Eliza Haywood (1693?-1756), Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy (1650/51-1705), and Delarivier Manley (1663/c.1670-1724). In a period in which monarchs took great care that their self-presentation in public and private showed them to be strong, capable, and powerful rulers, secret histories could undermine that official image. Ultimately, they could also undermine the official versions of history produced by the court, ‘replot[ting] received accounts of recent political history along partisan lines’.<sup>168</sup> Consequently, the authors of secret histories are often viewed as early journalists, as, for example, Daniel Defoe (c.1659/1661-1731) is often described, making them

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<sup>168</sup>Rebecca Bullard, *The politics of disclosure, 1674-1725: secret history narratives* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009), p. 1.

useful sources for historians in later centuries.<sup>169</sup> What is more, the proximity of the secret history to gallant literature was recognized, if not always openly, by their authors.<sup>170</sup> The novel in general made a truth claim and had sought to defend itself against criticism, in part by distinguishing between different types of texts that combined history and fiction, as, for example, Sigmund von Birken did in his preface to Duke Anton Ulrich von Braunschweig's novel *Die durchleuchtige Syrerin Aramena* (1669) by coining the phrases *Gedichtgeschichte*, which contained the main elements of factual history with additional, invented, fictions to elaborate the story, and *Geschichtgedichte*, which, with a didactic purpose, either hid the events of a true history under a veil of fiction and added probable events, or was an entirely invented story.<sup>171</sup> The gallant novels continued this play, often by taking as their basis (scandalous) stories from the recent past of Europe's eminent dynasties – for example, August Bohse/Talander's *Amor am Hofe* (1689), or Johann Leonhard Rost's (pseud. Meletaon) *Helden- und Liebes-Geschichte dieser Zeiten* (1715) – or (scandalous) events from the upper and middle classes – for example, Christian Friedrich Hunold/Menantes' *Verliebte und galante Welt* (1700) – and encoding them in such a way as to make them more or less recognizable to their readers.

The *galant* and gallant writing gave rise to a tension between that which is public and official, and that which is secret and unofficial. Gallant behaviour was

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<sup>169</sup>For a discussion of the relationship between the early novel and 'news', see, for example, Lennard J. Davis, *Factual fictions: the origins of the English novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), esp. pp. 42-70. Though unavailable at the time of writing, a useful survey for anglophone literature of literary journalists will be provided by Doug Underwood, *Journalism and the novel: truth and fiction, 1700-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming in 2010).

<sup>170</sup>Bullard, *The politics of disclosure*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>171</sup>See Sigmund von Birken's 'Vor-Ansprache zum Edlen Leser', in Anton Ulrich, Duke of Braunschweig, *Die durchleuchtige Syrerin Aramena*, no pag.

political and aimed at increasing the individual's chances of success in public life. Therefore gallant behaviour was also mainly the preserve of men, as was made clear in the contemporary guides to gallant manners. Gallant literature was an extension of gallant behaviour and this explains why guides to behaviour and style proliferated in this period – gallant writing was also public. However, *galanterie* stepped into the private through the connection between the compliment and love. Here, too, it was as a means to a self-interested end of successfully achieving personal objectives.<sup>172</sup> It is, perhaps, the self-interestedness of gallant behaviour that made it so dubious for many commentators concerned with the morals of society. The court of August the Strong was seen as the epitome of courtly ceremonial as a particular kind of rhetoric displaying the universal abilities and interests of the ideal ruler, and so, linked to this, it also became the epitome of *galanterie* among German-speaking territories. This is reflected in the literature that took August as a key character and was produced within his own lifetime, but beyond the boundaries of his court circle in Dresden and Warsaw. The texts examined in this chapter present August the Strong as an *homme galant*. They also – although their titles do not state this explicitly – present themselves as ‘secret histories’ insofar as they present their events as generally not public events. Rather the adventures and occasions described by the texts are depicted as more or less private or little-known. Contrary to many of the English and French secret histories of the eighteenth century, however, these texts do not deliberately satirize or claim to unmask wrongdoing to the public.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>172</sup>Hess, ‘Poetry in Germany 1450-1700’, p. 433.

<sup>173</sup>Rebecca Bullard, *The politics of disclosure*, pp. 2-4. See also the collection of essays in *The Mémoires secrets and the culture of publicity in eighteenth-century France*, ed. by Jeremy D. Popkin and Bernadette Fort (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1998).

### 3.1. Christian Friedrich Hunold and *Der Europæischen Höfe Liebes- und Helden Geschichte* (1705).

Christian Friedrich Hunold (1680-1721), the son of a mill owner in Wandersleben, Thuringia, was one of the leading lights among gallant writers in German-speaking areas in the early eighteenth century, alongside August Bohse and Johann Leonhard Rost. He represented in certain ways both sides of the discourse on *Galanterie*: his spendthrift ways as a law student meant that by 1700, having moved from Jena to Hamburg, he had to earn his keep by writing *Gelegenheitsgedichte* and racy gallant novels under the pseudonym ‘Menantes’, starting with *Die Verliebte und Galante Welt* (1700), its gallant subject matter declared openly in the subtitle *In vielen annehmlichen und wahrhaftigen Liebes-Geschichten/Welche sich in etlichen Jahren her in Teutschland zugetragen*. The publication in 1706 of *Satyrischer Roman, In Unterschiedlichen/lustigen/lächerlichen und galanten Liebes-Begebenheiten*, which detailed the activities of Hamburg society, proved his undoing. Threatened by the scandalized local society, Hunold was forced to leave Hamburg, although this did not prevent him adapting and extending the tale, which was published in two volumes in 1710. Increasingly, however, Hunold now produced gallant ‘style guides’, whether for the composition of poetry, for conversation, or behaviour. These were doubtless more appropriate to a man seeking to redeem his reputation, or at least to move on from – though not necessarily to deny – his morally questionable youth. Hunold worked as a private tutor and completed his law studies in Halle in 1714, when he also married. His poetry was by this time more socially acceptable, with subjects relating to faith, or the praise of authority



figures. Part of this rehabilitative work may be seen in his preface to the volume of poetry written by Margaretha Susanna von Kuntsch (1651-1717) and published by her grandson, Christoph Gottlieb Stockmann, in 1720.<sup>174</sup> Nevertheless, despite his hard work to redeem his reputation, his fame even after his death relied principally on his novels, which contained tales of more or less concealed scandal and which continued to be published up to the middle of the eighteenth century. Their popularity inspired imitations, as well as ‘continuations’ by other authors. *Satyrischer Roman* was certainly his most notorious work, given the scandal it caused in Hamburg. However, if popularity is judged in terms of numbers of editions or reprints, Hunold’s most popular novel was *Der Europäischen Höfe Liebes- und Helden-Geschichte* (1705). In the first half of the eighteenth century, this novel was reprinted eight times, while Johann Georg Hamann (1697-1733) penned two continuations published in 1728 and in 1740, the first reprinted three times and the second reprinted once.<sup>175</sup>

The title of *Der Europäische Höfe Liebes- und Helden-Geschichte, der Galanten Welt zur vergnügten Curiosité ans Licht gestellet* is a disarmingly frank description of the book’s contents: it presents its reader with fictionalized and encrypted stories of the love lives of European royalty from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and stories of the battles they fought in the various conflicts of the same period. Few characters or locations are provided with their real names, but generally, at least for the most famous characters, they are simple enough to

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<sup>174</sup>See Jens-Fietje Dwars, *Das zu Unrecht vergessene Leben und Werk des vormalis berühmten Christian Friedrich Hunold alias Menantes* (Jena: quartus-Verlag Bucha, 2005).

<sup>175</sup>Hamann should not be confused with his nephew, Johann Georg Hamann (1730-1788), known as the ‘Magus of the North’. Hamann also wrote a very popular continuation of Heinrich Anselm von Ziegler’s (1663-1696) novel *Asiatische Banise* (1689). See Berthau, ‘Hamann, Johann G.’, *ADB* 10 (1879), pp. 455-456. Hamann’s continuations of *Europäische Höfe* will not be examined in the following.

work out and the fictional names are often, though not always, anagrams of the real thing. The stories about Philipp Christoph von Königsmarck (1665-1694; Silibert von Cremarsig), Johann Georg IV, Elector of Saxony (1668-1694; Albion), Afonso VI of Portugal (1643-1683; Alfonso, King of Torgapulia), William IV of Orange (1650-1702; Prince Iranio of Aurasia), Louis XIV of France (1638-1715; King Silvio of Gallia), and Georg Ludwig of Hanover (1660-1727; Prince Viciludo of Leburgino) before his accession to the English throne are presented episodically as ‘true’ tales told by various of these secondary characters or members of the entourage of the main character, Gustavus – August the Strong. Gustavus’ own story, of his travels round the various courts of Europe in a bid to rescue his true love, the Princess Arione von Thurabe (Christiane Eberhardine von Brandenburg-Bayreuth), from her supposed and then actual kidnappers, forms the overarching framework of the novel. The episodes and the framework are not separate, but interconnect with and intrude on each other throughout, as is the case, for example, with the narrative thread of Silibert von Cremarsig, who is variously a narrator and himself the subject of a story, as well as constituting a central figure for one of Gustavus’s own adventures: Gustavus attempts to rescue him from the clutches of Adina, Countess of Hircania (Sophia Charlotte von Kielmannsegg née von Platen, Countess of Darlington and of Leinster; 1675-1725).

The tales told in *Europäische Höfe* are not, so Hunold claims under the cover of his pseudonym in the book’s introduction, simply a kind of secret history, ‘[d]enn die Verrichtungen der Helden sind schon in vielen kostbaren Büchern entworffen, daß man hierinnen nichts neues zu wissen krieget; und derselben

geheime Liebes-Angelegenheiten zu berühren, ist so gefährlich als *curieus*'.<sup>176</sup>

Hunold explains that such stories run the risk of offending the high society individuals depicted and of damaging those who behold them by destroying their sense of *Ehrfurcht* or awe and reverence in the presence of such luminaries.

Instead, Hunold writes so as to inspire respect:

[...] und ich habe von Ehr-Erbietungs-würdiger Hoheit eine Sylbe zu schreiben, mich unwürdig geschätzt, wenn es nicht zu ihrem Ruhm gereicht, und bloß einen *Roman* ans Licht gestellet, der, wenn man auch den Schlüssel zu allen angenehmen Liebes-Geschichten hätte, schwerlich an dem geringsten Orte mich eines Mangels des gebührende[n] *Respects* überzeugen soll. Ob man aber ohne Vorstellung vieler verbotenen Liebes-Händel, ohne welche unterschiedliche *Romanen* bishero nicht gültig seyn wollen, dem hochgeneigten Leser einen angenehmen und nicht un-edlen Zeitvertreib verschaffen könne, wird Er selber urtheilen, wenn Er diese Bögen durchblättert, und erweget, wie viel die Erfindungen, schöne Umstände in der Liebe und eine *honnete* Schreib-Art, Vergnügen und *Estim* [*sic*] erwecken.<sup>177</sup>

Entertainment and the lessons of virtue are, of course, to sit side by side and give

Hunold the excuse to depict the less salubrious sexual exploits of his various characters. Showing the negative side of passion is necessary or else there could be 'an vollkommener Tugend kein so grosses *Delectament*, wo man an vollkommenen Lastern nicht Abscheu tragen müsse' and the figures would lack realism, for all the characters are painted according to what Hunold claims is the 'Original'.<sup>178</sup> The case Hunold makes for his book in the prefatory introduction is an ironic response to and defence of its title, which, provocatively enough, claims

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<sup>176</sup>Menantes [Christian Friedrich Hunold], 'Vorrede', *Der Europæischen Höfe Liebes- und Helden-Geschichte, Der Galanten Welt zur vergnügten Curiosité ans Licht gestellt* (Hamburg: Gottfried Liebern timer, 1705), no pag.

<sup>177</sup>Menantes, 'Vorrede', *Europæische Höfe*, no pag.

<sup>178</sup>Menantes, 'Vorrede', *Europæische Höfe*, no pag.

to lay these stories before ‘der Galanten Welt zur vergnügten Curiosité’, but there is no mention whatsoever of a more worthy or didactic purpose.

But of course there is didacticism of a sort in the text: ideal gallant behaviour in the various characters is frequently accompanied by a snippet of wisdom on the best way to comport oneself, or a verdict on a tricky situation is passed with universal application by the narrator. The tales of love involve a number of these, whether it is on recognizing the behaviour of those in love (or of being in love oneself) when Gustavus falls instantly in love with Arione, but only comes gradually to a realization of it, or on how to draw the admiration of women properly and appropriately. Similarly, Prince Iranio (William of Orange) does not seek to impress Princess Amariane (Princess Mary of England) through bombast, but treats her as he would all other women of his acquaintance, drawing this comment from the narrator of the first part of ‘Liebes- Und Helden-Geschichte Des Durchlauchtigen Printzen von Aurasien, Und der Printzeßin Amarianen’:

Denn wer allzu Liebens-würdig zu seyn begehret, ist es am wenigsten; und der den Vortheil nicht besitzt, den Damen zu Gefallen, ohne daß er es weiß, der wird alle Mühe und gezwungene Geschicklichkeit bey ihnen umsonst anwenden.<sup>179</sup>

The gallant knows when to apply his *galanterie* to achieve greatest advantage and, importantly, does not view love as a feeling to be gratified immediately or a feeling to be forced into existence in the object of one’s desire.

Various of the characters compose poems to send to each other and a great deal of plot explanation occurs through the medium of letters between lovers or

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<sup>179</sup>Menantes, *Europäische Höfe*, p. 344.

friends. To counterbalance or perhaps, better, to highlight the good composition and style of these letters and poems, Hunold has Silibert von Cremarsig read out to Gustavus and his other rescuers a love letter he wrote to his captor Adina while under the evil influence of a magic potion that made him love her artificially. The reaction of his audience to the letter is a conclusive verdict on its quality: they laugh at its forced style and over-dramatic declarations of love, and in particular the ‘unnatural’ address to Adina as ‘Schönste, Hochgeborne, Viel-Ehr und Tugend-reiche Contessin Excellenz, Englische Gebiehterin!’. This leads to a discussion of what is or is not a suitable way to address ladies, and the moral implications that result. The fashion for such address comes, according to Silibert, from Italy:

Ja, sagte Heroald, so mag es daher rühren, weil sich das Welsche Frauenzimmer auch der männlichen Bedienung sehr anmasset. Aber ich habe nicht gewust, daß eine so schöne Mode auch bey den Germanischen aufkommen will.

Es ist nicht unbillig, entschuldigte sie Printz Gustavus, denn weil man die Männer bishero Excellenz getituliret, daß sie in Staats-Sachen vollkommener als Damen sind, so kan man auch welch [*sic*] Frauenzimmer wegen der Capacité im Liebes-Cabinet mit einem so nachdrucklichen [*sic*] Ehren-Wort belegen, indem Excellenz nichts anders bedeutet, als daß man in einer Sache andere übertrifft.

Nun so heyrahte ich, schertzte Heroald, mein Tage kein Excellenzisches Fräulein.

Es ist euch auch zu rahten, sagte Gustavus zu ihm [...] <sup>180</sup>

Gustavus’s comment here appears as the ‘universal wisdom’ with particular application to the dichotomy of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ *galanterie*. In this case, ‘bad’ *galanterie* and its poor-quality expression has resulted from a forced or ‘unnatural’ passion, rather than a reasoned love. In this way, it may also be

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<sup>180</sup>Menantes, *Europäische Höfe*, pp. 866-867.

contrasted with Gustavus's thoughtful love of Arione.

Throughout the novel, and as befits the central protagonist of the work, Gustavus functions as the ideal *galant*. He is set up as an ideal of sorts from the beginning of the text, which starts the plot at around about the halfway point when Gustavus and Arione are separated, and she believes him murdered. Consequently, the first few tales told are retrospectives which explain how it is that Gustavus, the hero of the work, is apparently dead at its beginning. At this point the text's audience is told that he has a 'fiery spirit', is incredibly strong, keen to be a good ruler when he inherits his father's throne, and an accomplished performer of all appropriate princely activities: running at the ring, shooting, and wielding arms. Although temptations are put in his way to make him stray from his fidelity to Arione, he always remains steadfast. In Venice, a lady seeks actively to seduce him, but her erotic staging of his seduction fails to turn his thoughts from Arione, and he finds himself having to fight his way out of her palace alongside Villaro and Heroald.<sup>181</sup> Even the ladies at the court of Silvio cannot induce him to have an extra-marital affair, although they have more success with Gustavus's other companion, Heroald. In fact, although the Gallic ladies are keen to entertain themselves with the playing of a gallant game with Gustavus and his entourage to try to get him to fall in love with them, instead it is they who fall in love with him. Gustavus maintains a teasing friendship with Thersarie (Marie Thérèse de Bourbon, Princess de Conti; 1666-1732), but he is careful not to overstep the boundaries, for he believes 'daß die Treue am aller-edelsten, wenn man schöne Gelegenheit hat, untreu zu werden'.<sup>182</sup> In other words, it is the game of testing the

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<sup>181</sup>Menantes, *Europäische Höfe*, pp.86-96.

<sup>182</sup>Menantes, *Europäische Höfe*, p. 578.

boundaries of socially acceptable flirtation that is important in the appreciation of virtue and has, thereby, a didactic purpose. *Galanterie* is not a frivolous pursuit to be engaged in for mere entertainment. Indeed, Gustavus's restrained *galanterie* is what persuades Thersarie to help him escape Gallia and so forges alliances for him. However, to actually go beyond the game of flirtation and break those social boundaries would not be gallant. When Gustavus is finally reunited with Arione, he tells her all of his adventures, leaving nothing out, and she appreciates his honesty and enjoys his story-telling. The same cannot be said for flawed Heroald when he is reunited with his betrothed; his less controlled behaviour in Pirasi (Paris) means he must, with some guilt, conceal the truth of his activities from her.

Notably, Gustavus, in line with Johann Christian Wächtler's exhortations that the perfect *galant* should not praise himself or his exploits, does not tell any of the stories contained within *Europäische Höfe*.<sup>183</sup> He does, however, listen to the other tales and is present for the telling of some parts of his own. He also reads historical accounts assiduously, for he values the lessons they may give him and the inspiration they provide for his own actions.<sup>184</sup> Reading novels or *romans* is not viewed so positively: when Madame von Pamontese (Françoise Athénaïs, Marquise de Montespan; 1641-1707) reads a novel, this prompts an upsetting conversation with Silvio on the subject of her suspected infidelity to him.<sup>185</sup> Readers of *Europäische Höfe* need not be concerned, of course, that their own reading matter could be viewed as a symptom of immorality, because if they refer back to Hunold/Menantes' introduction, they will remember that they are reading

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<sup>183</sup> Johann Christian Wächtler, 'Pensum der praktischen Galanterie', *Commodos Manual Oder Hand-Buch, darinnen zu finden eine kurtze Methode zu einer galanten Conduite zu gelangen* (Leipzig: Lanckischens Erben, n.d.), in Wiedemann, *galante Stil*, pp.13-16.

<sup>184</sup> Menantes, *Europäische Höfe*, pp. 277-278.

<sup>185</sup> Menantes, *Europäische Höfe*, pp. 655-656.

an historical account, as good *galants* (like Gustavus) do – August the Strong himself is believed to have been an avid reader of contemporary novels such as Ziegler's *Asiatische Banise*.<sup>186</sup>

### **3.2. Maria Aurora von Königsmarck and Duke Anton Ulrich von Braunschweig's *Römische Octavia* (1677-1714).**

August's peers in German-speaking countries were acutely aware of events and personalities at other courts, and they, too, might express their view of these events in a public form. In the late seventeenth century, one well-known example of German princely artistic and literary patronage and production is the court of Duke Anton Ulrich von Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel (1633-1714). Not simply a prince who commissioned work by others, Anton Ulrich was a prodigiously productive writer himself, composing opera libretti, poetry, songs, and two novels for which he is particularly remembered: *Die durchlauchtige Syrerin Aramena* (1669) and *Octavia: Römische Geschichte*, also known as *Römische Octavia* (1677-1714). *Römische Octavia*, an extensive novel in several volumes, was published in instalments in a first edition between 1677 and 1707. A second, revised, edition with additional material was published between 1712 and 1714.

*Römische Octavia* is a complex, but highly structured, novel that makes extensive use of the episode within an overarching framework narrative ostensibly concerning the fictionalized plight of the historical Octavia, early Christian empress of Rome and Nero's first wife, who is portrayed in the novel as hiding

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<sup>186</sup>He even attempted putting pen to paper himself, but the attempt was short-lived and the 'novel' is only a few pages long. Czok, *August der Starke und Kursachsen*, p. 14.



with other Christians from Roman persecution in the catacombs beneath the city.<sup>187</sup> Creating the work was a laborious process, requiring precise historical knowledge, because the news and events of the Roman world, as they filter down to the hiding Christians correlate to real time, and the individual tales that constitute the episodes are so interrelated that the realization of their full significance within the novel, and even the significance of the novel itself, is only possible with reference to a network of other episodes.<sup>188</sup> The novel was also composed by a network of individuals: Duke Anton Ulrich, although the main author, was not the only person to have had a hand in it. Instead, it was subjected to a number of additional editors, including his former tutor Sigmund von Birken (1626-1681), and additional contributors of episodes, including Maria Aurora von Königsmarck.<sup>189</sup> Although the overall work is thought to reflect Duke Anton Ulrich's political and dynastic ambitions and frustrations, some of the episodes do not fit the framework quite so neatly.<sup>190</sup>

Maria Aurora von Königsmarck was one of August the Strong's earliest and most famous mistresses. In addition to being known for her relationship to August, and as the sister of the unfortunate Philipp Christoph von Königsmarck,

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<sup>187</sup>Stephan Kraft challenges Richard Alewyn's view that *Römische Octavia* is 'unlesbar' (cf. Richard Alewyn, 'Gehalt als Gestalt: Der Roman des Barock' in Richard Alewyn, *Probleme und Gestalten: Essays* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1974), pp. 117-132) in his article 'Verloren im Netzwerk: Überlegungen zur Unlesbarkeit der "Römischen Octavia" Herzog Anton Ulrichs', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 128.2 (2009), 163-178.

<sup>188</sup>H.G. Haile, 'Octavia: Römische Geschichte – Anton Ulrich's use of the episode', *Journal of English and German Philology* 57 (1958), 611-632 (623); Kraft, 'Verloren im Netzwerk', 168.

<sup>189</sup>Stephan Kraft, 'Galante Passagen im höfischen Barockroman: Aurora von Königsmarck als Beiträgerin zur *Römischen Octavia* Herzog Anton Ulrichs', *Daphnis* 28 (1999), 323-345 (323-324); Werner Schröder, 'Kritisches zur Edition der *Römischen Octavia* des Herzogs Anton Ulrich von Braunschweig', *Euphorion* 89 (1995), 335-347.

<sup>190</sup>Haile, 'Anton Ulrich's use of the episode', 614-615; Sara C. Dewhirst also examines Anton Ulrich's political agenda through the examples of other court productions in her article 'The provoked prince, or: virtue tested. Politics and festivities in the duchy of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel', *Modern Languages Review* 80 (1985), 80-89.

she was famous in her own right as an accomplished poet, librettist, and musician.<sup>191</sup> Born to a family of German-Swedish nobility with property in Sweden, Maria Aurora von Königsmarck spent much of her youth in and around Stade and Hamburg, although, as a member of the Swedish nobility, she was fortunate enough to benefit from the lingering influence at the Swedish court of the famously erudite Queen Christina (1626-1689) on education for women.<sup>192</sup> From 1698 she embarked on a religious life at the convent at Quedlinburg, although she continued to frequent other parts of Germany, including Berlin and Dresden. In her later years Königsmarck was held up as a shining example of female learning and female authorship by Georg Christian Lehms (1684-1717) in his compendium of women poets, *Deutschlands Galante Poetinnen* (1714).<sup>193</sup>

Königsmarck represents something of an unusual case in the contemporary production of August the Strong's image, because at various stages in her life she was either intimately involved in his court or else circling outside it, with a vested interest in it through her son with August, Maurice de Saxe (1696-1750). Already known and appreciated for her work on libretti in Hamburg, she first came to the court in Dresden soon after the disappearance of her brother Philipp in 1694, seeking help from the Elector of Saxony – who had known Philipp – in the matter

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<sup>191</sup>Philipp Christoph von Königsmarck is thought to have been murdered in mysterious circumstances for his supposed affair with Sophie-Dorothea von Celle, the estranged wife of Georg Ludwig, Elector of Hanover and later King George I of England.

<sup>192</sup>Sylvia Krauss-Meyl, *“Die berühmteste Frau zweier Jahrhunderte”: Maria Aurora Gräfin von Königsmarck* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 2002), p. 50.

<sup>193</sup>Georg Christian Lehms, *Deutschlands Galante Poetinnen Mit Ihren sinnreichen und netten Proben; Nebst einem Anhang Ausländischer Dames / So sich gleichfalls durch Schöne Poesien Bey der curieusen Welt bekannt gemacht, und einer Vorrede, Dass das Weibliche Geschlecht so geschickt zum Studieren / als das Männliche* (Frankfurt am Main: Anton Heinscheidt, 1715); see also Winfried von Borell ‘Georg Christian Lehms: Ein vergessener Barockdichter und Vorkämpfer des Frauenstudiums’, *Jahrbuch der schlesischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Breslau* IX (1964), 50-105.

of her brother's assets.<sup>194</sup> She soon became his mistress, and although the affair was relatively brief – really only long enough for her to bear him a son – she was a highly visible element of August's projection of himself, taking part in the procession of the Gods in Dresden on 7 February 1695. In this procession through the streets of Dresden, August appeared as Mercury, while Königsmarck appeared as Aurora, goddess of the Dawn, and was coachman to Apollo.<sup>195</sup>

The concept of maintaining an official mistress, a *maîtresse-en-titre*, in addition to a legitimate wife – in which the mistress of the king also had an important role to play in courtly ceremonial, and in the construction and maintenance of the royal image displayed to the rest of the (courtly) world – was relatively common throughout the courts of Europe in this period. The position of *maîtresse-en-titre* was one that commanded respect and could provide the office-holder with a great deal of power, either directly or indirectly. Some of the best-known examples of such women are Barbara Palmer (*née* Villiers; 1640-1709) and Louise de Kérouaille (1649-1734), mistresses of Charles II of England (1630-1685); Louis XIV of France's mistresses, especially Louise de La Vallière (1644-1710) and Françoise-Athénaïs de Rochechouart de Mortemart (known as Madame de Montespan; 1641-1704); Louis XV of France's mistress, Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson (known as Madame de Pompadour; 1721-1764); and Ehrengard Melusine

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<sup>194</sup>Walther Killy (ed.), *Literaturlexikon*, 2nd edn, 15 vols (Gütersloh, Munich: Bertelsmann, 1988-1993), VI, p. 434. The libretto authorship of Johann Wolfgang Franck's opera *Die drey Töchter Cecrops* (1680) (repr. in *Die Hamburger Oper*, ed. by Reinhart Meyer, 3 vols (Munich: Kraus, 1980), I, pp. 125-170), which was published anonymously, has been attributed to Königsmarck in the past, although Solveig Olsen disputes this in her article 'Aurora von Königsmarck's Singspiel *Die drey Töchter Cecrops*', *Daphnis* 17 (1988), 467-480. Her composition of the 'Singspiel' *Iphigenie* (1684) and her collaboration with Johann Mattheson and Johann Joachim Hoë on other operatic works is confirmed, however.

<sup>195</sup>The visual record of this is the festival work by Martin Klötzl, *Der von dem Chur-Fürsten zu Sachsen...Hertzog Friderico Augusto, In Dero Residence Dreßden/Donnerstags den 7. Febr. 1695... Aus dem Chur-Fürstl. Reit-Hause, durch das Müntz Thor, bey dem Stall etc, wiedrumb in obenbemeldtes Reit-Hauss, angestellte und gehaltene Götter-Auffzug*. (Dresden: n.p., 1697).

von der Schulenberg (1667-1743), mistress of Georg Ludwig, Elector of Hanover and later George I of Great Britain. These women provided important points of influence for particular causes and political interests, becoming gatekeepers to the royal chamber so that ministers often found it advisable to obtain the favour of the mistress if they were to successfully argue their case with their monarch.<sup>196</sup>

Although by 1697/1698 Maria Aurora von Königsmarck was no longer either August the Strong's mistress or an official member of court, she remained an important force for August as his representative: in 1702 she was appointed to conduct a diplomatic mission to Karl XII of Sweden (1682-1718) in the hope of negotiating peace. The mission was unsuccessful, but it signals the important role that women, even former mistresses, could play at August's court.

The role of the mistress and the high profile of women at August's Saxon court is explored in two stories included in *Römische Octavia*: 'Die Geschichte der Solane', in the fourth volume of the second edition, and 'Geschichte der Givritta', in the seventh volume of the second edition, published in 1712 and 1762

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<sup>196</sup>For an overview of English royal mistresses see Charles Carlton, *Royal mistresses* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990). See also Christine Pevitt Algrant, *Madame de Pompadour: mistress of France* (London: Harper Collins, 2003); Antonia Fraser, *Love and Louis XIV: the women in the life of the Sun King* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2006). The role of the royal mistress and the importance of the office in relation to the king's image has received sporadic scholarly attention until recently, though a few historians have made some important preliminary observations regarding the creation of a mistress's power and her importance as affirmation of the ability of the king to rule. See, for example, Sigrid Ruby, 'Die Mätresse als Günstling am französischen Hof des 16. Jahrhunderts: Zur Portraitkultur von Anne de Pisseleu und Diane de Poitiers', in *Der Fall des Günstlings: Hofparteien in Europa vom 13. bis zum 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Jan Hirschbiegel and Werner Paravicini (Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke, 2004), pp. 495-514; Thomas E. Kaiser, 'Madame de Pompadour and the Theaters of Power', *French Historical Studies* 19 (1996), 1025-1044; Helen S. Ettlinger, 'Visibilis et invisibilis: the mistress in Italian Renaissance court society', *Renaissance Quarterly* 47.4 (1994), 770-792 (esp. 770-773); Katherine B. Crawford, 'The politics of promiscuity: masculinity and heroic representation at the court of Henry IV', *French Historical Studies* 26 (2003), 225-252. Also insightful, though presented in a less scholarly style, are Anne Somerset's comments in her introduction to her book on women at the English court, *Ladies-in-waiting: from the Tudors to the present day* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984), pp. 1-11. The roles of several European queens, consorts, and mistresses from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries are examined in the essays contained in Clarissa Campbell Orr (ed.), *Queenship in Europe, 1660-1815: the role of the consort* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

respectively.<sup>197</sup> Both have been convincingly attributed to Maria Aurora von Königsmarck (1662-1728) on the basis of her correspondence with Duke Anton Ulrich and both focus on the actions of women at August's court rather than on August himself.<sup>198</sup> Comparison of the two female protagonists results in a version of courtly *galanterie* that was not acknowledged so frankly by the theorists, and reveals the tensions between the personal and the political for a ruler of the time.

'Die Geschichte der Solane' tells a version of Aurora's (Solane) own affair with August (Orondates).<sup>199</sup> The young Solane comes to the court of Orondates in hope of securing his help for her family against Bartoces (Georg Ludwig of Hanover). She makes a good impression on all the women at court, including the prince's mother Roxana (Anna Sophie of Denmark and Norway), his wife Olimpia (Christiane Eberhardine of Brandenburg-Bayreuth), and his brother's widow Orosmana (Eleonore Erdmuthe of Saxe-Eisenach). Inadvertently, she soon attracts the amorous attentions of Orondates, first through her singing and then through an accidental fall in which she lands in a position of obeisance at his feet.

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<sup>197</sup>The story of 'Solane' is currently available online as a pdf document edited by Stephan Kraft, 'Geschichte der Solane', *Zeitenblicke* 1.2 (2002): [www.zeitenblicke.de](http://www.zeitenblicke.de) [accessed 14.4.2010]. The story is included in the fourth volume of the second edition of *Römische Octavia* printed in Braunschweig in 1713. The production of the critical edition of *Römische Octavia* edited by Maria Munding and Rolf Tarot is ongoing and the volume which will contain the fourth 1713 volume is forthcoming [Anton Ulrich Herzog zu Braunschweig und Lüneberg, *Werke: historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, VI, 2 (= *Römische Octavia*, IV,2), (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, *forthcoming*).

<sup>198</sup>A letter from Königsmarck to the duke on the fall of Constantia von Cosel in December 1713 confirms this and is given in full, with a facsimile of the original, in Kraft, 'Galante Passagen', 324-327.

<sup>199</sup>This is the second episode in *Römische Octavia* to feature a heroine named Solane. The first – in the sixth volume of edition A, *Zugabe zum Beschluß der römischen Octavia*, published in Nürnberg in 1707 – portrays the story of Sophie Dorothea von Braunschweig-Lüneburg (1666-1726; also known as the Princess von Ahlden), who was imprisoned by her husband Georg Ludwig, Elector of Hanover and King George I of England (1660-1727), after her affair with Philipp Christoph von Königsmarck (1662-1694), brother of Maria Aurora von Königsmarck. See Stephan Kraft, *Geschlossenheit und Offenheit der 'Römischen Octavia' von Herzog August Ulrich: 'der roman macht ahn die ewigkeit gedencken, den er nimbt kein endt.'* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004), pp. 96-99. I use 'Solane' or 'Die Geschichte der Solane' to refer exclusively to the story attributed to Königsmarck's authorship.

Throughout elaborate and varied court festivities, which are described in considerable detail, she attempts to withstand his attentions to preserve her honour and the ‘purity’ of their relationship – erotic undercurrents are overlaid with an insistence on the platonic nature of the relationship between the two characters. This is made particularly difficult by Orondates’ antics, including tricking her into dressing up in matching white outfits, breaking into her room at night, dogging her footsteps at a ball to make sure no other man might pay court to her, and jealousy over the male friends of her youth. The story is also woven around Orondates’ political activities, including war against the Thracians (Turks) to improve his standing in Rome (Vienna, the seat of the Holy Roman Empire under the Habsburgs), and accession to a new throne after being elected king of Alanen (Poland). It is at this point that Solane finds herself truly betrayed by Orondates, whom she has considered in effect her soulmate, because he chooses a new woman to be at his side, Blanea (Johanna Theresia von Lamberg, Gräfin Esterle, d.1738). After this blow, Solane retreats into a religious life at the convent of Diana at Nujodunum (Quedlinburg).

‘Die Geschichte der Givritta’, written some time in 1713, paints a rather unflattering portrait of one of Aurora’s later successors in August’s affections, Anna Constantia von Cosel. Givritta (Anna Constantia von Cosel), having fallen pregnant and so into disgrace at the court of Olaus (Duke Anton Ulrich von Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel), has been returned to her father’s estate, which she seeks to escape through marriage to Fredeboldus (Adolph Magnus von Hoym, 1668-1723), a minister to the king of Daturia (Saxony) and Centaurien (Poland), Wilkinus (August). Fredeboldus and Givritta soon tire of each other, though when

they arrive at Wilkinus's court, Givritta sets out to gain herself a reputation for virtue, patience, and for being the long-suffering, but good-hearted wife of a man who does not seem to love her. The favour she gains at court is withdrawn – especially by the other women at court – when she breaks court protocol by addressing Wilkinus without introduction and then following him around. Initially, she assuages her husband's concerns by declaring that when she can no longer resist Wilkinus' charms, he will be the first to know and then he may dissolve their marriage. However, feeling his masculine pride and honour has been besmirched by his wife's behaviour with the king, Fredeboldus eventually approaches Wilkinus asking him either to stop courting Givritta or to arrange for them to be divorced. Wilkinus reluctantly agrees to make arrangements for their divorce, which prompts Givritta to begin pursuing her ambition of becoming his wife. Their sexual relationship is revealed to the story's audience through Givritta's numerous pregnancies. Meanwhile, her power at court and over the king increases exponentially. Wilkinus grows increasingly tired of her, yet he is afraid of her and her threats to kill herself and him if he does not remain faithful to her, and he permits her to have extraordinary political knowledge and influence: Givritta sits in unobserved on his meetings with his ministers and council, and when Wilkinus is absent in his war against Suertingus (Karl XII of Sweden), she assumes all power at court, reading the secret communications of the Daturian ambassadors at other courts and ordering Wilkinus' ministers around. A plot hatches to remove Givritta from Wilkinus' favour and when she travels to Peucinien (Warsaw) to join Wilkinus, she finds he has a new mistress and has sent her a letter telling her that he does not wish to lay eyes on her again. Maria Aurora

von Königsmarck also makes an appearance in this story as Augea, Wilkinus' wise confidante and foster mother to his son, Marcomir (Maurice de Saxe, 1696-1750). Augea attempts to give Fredeboldus advice about his attitude to the relationship between Givritta and Wilkinus, which he ignores.

The two heroines are clearly polar opposites: Solane is characterized by indirectly relating her appearance and her behaviour, in which she is of striking, though not conventional, beauty and is consequently, as Etienne Mazingue puts it, 'prudente, lucide, droite, et responsable d'elle-même [...] ; seule sa propre conscience, sa fierté, sa dignité la lient'.<sup>200</sup> Givritta's appearance belies her true character and this is made clear from the beginning with the opening words of the tale:

Daß Schönheit und Annehmlichkeit die größte [*sic*] Gewalt über der Menschen Herzen habe ist ganz unstreitig, doch läßt sich selten der Verstand in gleicher Wage [*sic*] mit ihr finden, weswegen ihr das größte Glück gefährlich ist, und öfters ihre Anschläge verderblich werden.<sup>201</sup>

Their heroines thus paired up – even if unintentionally by the editors of *Römische Octavia*, since the stories appear in different editions of the novel, one after the death of its orchestrator, Anton Ulrich – the episodes also display certain structural similarities which set them apart from the rest of *Römische Octavia*'s narrative. Both stories are introduced as coming from an external source: 'Die Geschichte der Solane' is explained as having been found by Antiochus Epiphanes

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<sup>200</sup>Cf. [Maria Aurora von Königsmarck], 'Die Geschichte der Solane', p. 610; Etienne Mazingue, *Anton Ulrich, duc de Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel (1633-1714): un prince romancier au XVIIIème siècle* (doctoral thesis, Université de Paris IV, 1974), II, p. 461.

<sup>201</sup>[Maria Aurora von Königsmarck], 'Die Geschichte der Givritta', in Anton Ulrich von Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, *Römische Octavia* VII,1, p. 361, (=Werke IX,1 p. 359).



in the rooms of a ‘virgin of Diana’, which he then has his doctor read out loud in the presence of his friends; ‘Die Geschichte der Givritta’ is also written down and comes into the possession of Vatinus, a courtier at Octavia’s court, via an acquaintance at another court. In both stories encryption is an explicit element; in both, it is made clear that names have been changed (and therefore they are to be read as *histoires à clef*). *Römische Octavia* is not in itself an ‘encoded’ novel, and so episodes that do require extensive ‘decoding’ acquire prominence within the narrative.<sup>202</sup> Both are introduced into the overall narrative as entertainment on the one hand and as medicine on the other: ‘Die Geschichte der Solane’ is read out by the doctor ‘die Zeit zu kürtzen’ as an ‘angenehme Artzeney’ that ‘gantz keine Wiedrigkeit verursachen würde können’, while ‘Die Geschichte der Givritta’ is read out ostensibly because Octavia appears unhappy, ‘so [die Geschichte] ihr vielleicht auch noch einige Aufmunterung würde geben können’.<sup>203</sup>

Yet there are some considerable differences in the framing of these two stories that affect the reader’s reaction to them. ‘Die Geschichte der Solane’ is quite clearly framed by a didactic claim. Before it is read out, Antiochus Epiphanes’s brother Antiochus Callinicus expresses his opinion ‘daß ein und anders darinnen wäre/ so zu vernehmen annehmlich zeyn würde’, and when the reading is finished, those around the sickbed voice their thoughts on the plot and character of Solane, whether she behaved properly in her dealings with the men

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<sup>202</sup>Other encoded episodes include a number of versions of the Königsmarck-Ahliden affair (first edition: ‘Geschichte des Julius Sabinus und der Eponnilla’, ‘Geschichte der Prinzeßin Solane’; second edition: ‘Geschichte der Rhodogune’, ‘Geschichte des Corillus’). However, ‘Die Geschichte der Solane’, by Königsmarck is the only autobiographical tale in the novel. Autobiographical encoded stories are relatively rare for late baroque and gallant literature, those by women even more so.

<sup>203</sup>[Königsmarck], ‘Die Geschichte der Solane’, p. 602; [Königsmarck], ‘Die Geschichte der Givritta’, *Römische Octavia* VII,1, pp. 359-360 (= *Werke* IX,1, pp. 357-358).

she encountered at Orondates' court.

Es muß wahrlich/ hube Dorpaneus Anses hierauf an/ als der Leib=Artzt weiter nichts zu lesen hatte/ diese Solane recht zu beklagen seyn/ da ihr dergestalt begegnet worden/ und würde meines Erachtens nicht unrecht gethan/ wann sie den Fürsten Cajus geheurathet hätte; gewisse Betrachtungen antwortete Antiochus Epiphanes/ und die Verehrung für einen Fürsten/ der diesen ihren Liebhaber befreundet/ haben sie davon abgehalten/ den sie dadurch zu beleidigen sich eingebildet/ wann der/ wie sie besorget/ das Umgehen des Orondates mit ihr/ anderst als wie es in der That gewesen/ würde ausgedeutet haben. Einem Freunde zu gefallen/ sagte hierzu Antiochus Callinicus/ sein Glück zu verschertzen/ ist mehr als großmüthig zu nennen. Solte man aber diesen Fürsten Cajus denn nicht errathen können? Ich will/ sagte Antiochus Epiphanes/ wie ich mir zuvor ausbedungen/ keine vorwitzige Fragen anhören noch weniger dieselbige beantworten/ wer hievon was errathen solte können/ wird so bescheiden seyn/ daß er die Verehrung für die Damen desfalls nicht aus den Augen setze.<sup>204</sup>

The liveliness of their discussion is evidence that the men have been drawn into the story and have been thoroughly entertained, while Callinicus's pithy statement provides a kind of general moral for the reader. All are stopped, though, by Epiphanes' reminder that the story has a basis in fact, and that precisely because he – or perhaps better: Anton Ulrich von Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel and Maria Aurora von Königsmarck – are aware that the behaviour described here could be 'misunderstood' as sexual, he urges them to take the more positive view of a virtuous woman sacrificing herself on the altar of friendship and loyalty to her lord.

The didactic function of 'Die Geschichte der Givritta' is more ambiguous. Although on the one hand the opening statement of the story is an obvious warning about human frailty and a repetition of the old adage that 'beauty is only

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<sup>204</sup>[Königsmarck], 'Die Geschichte der Solane', p. 658.

skin deep', on the other hand, the story's placing within *Römische Octavia* is not so clear-cut. While Callinicus is given a foretaste of 'Die Geschichte der Solane' by flicking through it and then declaring that it has some moral content worth hearing, 'Die Geschichte der Givritta' is introduced to Octavia in an indirect way. The interest of another queen at Octavia's court, Susanna, is piqued by Vatinius's description of *where* the story has come from, which gives authority to the veracity of the 'sonderbare Begebenheit' it tells. She is made further determined to hear the story when she remembers that another lady at Octavia's court, Rhodogune, has connections with the court of Queen Adargatis from which the story manuscript has come. Susanna reasons that 'Rhodogune von ein und anderm Nachricht würde geben können' and would be able to expand the story, not to mention reveal precisely who all the characters really are. In other words, Susanna is interested not because the story is morally edifying, but because it likely contains news that is rather salacious. Octavia herself is not very interested in hearing the story, and it is virtually forced upon her. She relents only because she does not like 'auf einige Weise sich jemanden mißfällig zu erzeigen [...], wie ungelegen es ihr auch kame, ihnen nicht abzuschlagen'.<sup>205</sup> Nor is the reaction to 'Die Geschichte der Givritta' as unequivocally positive as that to 'Die Geschichte der Solane':

Als Pythias mit Verlesung dieser Geschichte fertig ware, und alle Anwesende die liederlichen Begebenheiten der Givritta nicht mit solcher Vergnügung angehöret, als Vatinius sie ihnen angepriesen hatte, wie dann insonderheit Octavia ihren Unlust darüber öfters blicken laßen, ware es nunmehr an dem, daß sich Berenice und Rhodogune von da begaben, um ihre fürgesetzete Reisen

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<sup>205</sup> Anton Ulrich von Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, *Römische Octavia* VII, 1, p. 360 (= *Werke* IX, 1, p. 358).

anzutreten.<sup>206</sup>

The action of the main narrative then continues without any further discussion of the tale.

It is difficult to ascertain the significance of this reaction to ‘Die Geschichte der Givritta’ and what it could mean in relation to the dealings at the court of August the Strong. While the majority of *Octavia* is structured in a baroque style, these two stories contain characteristics that mark them out from the rest of the book and the favoured baroque virtues. ‘Die Geschichte der Givritta’ portrays characters who see marriage in turn as a way to escape their parents, as a way to escape boredom, or as a way to secure power. There is no true love and no *constantia*, the characters are psychologically realistic and ‘eine undenkbbare Konstellation für den barocken Idealroman, mit dem hier unverkennbar gebrochen wird’.<sup>207</sup> Instead of embodying a traditional virtue, Wilkinus is described in terms that make his *inconstancy* a necessary part of his existence. In turn, what strikes even the reader who has not read the rest of *Octavia* is that ‘Solane’ is given over to a great deal of individualistic, descriptive passages on the appearance and clothing of the characters. This is rarely the case throughout the rest of the work, where any descriptions of personal appearance are kept brief and in line with literary traditions.<sup>208</sup> There is some justification in describing these two tales as *galant* rather than baroque. This reasoning then favours the idea that Octavia is displeased by the discrepancy between her own

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<sup>206</sup>[Königsmarck], ‘Die Geschichte der Givritta’, *Römische Octavia* VII, 1, p. 398 (= *Werke* IX, 1, p. 400).

<sup>207</sup>Kraft, ‘Galante Passagen’, p. 338.

<sup>208</sup>Kraft, ‘Galante Passagen’, p. 340.

‘ideal’ (baroque) court and the kind of court and ruler that might tolerate the presence of such a woman as Givritta, a gallant court.

This not unreasonable explanation is still subject to a number of problems. As Kraft points out, elsewhere in *Römische Octavia*, the theme of the court mistress is dealt with just as realistically, for example in ‘Die Geschichte der Rhodogune’ and ‘Die Begebenheiten des Königs Sohemus von Sophene’.<sup>209</sup> In ‘Die Geschichte der Solane’, the male protagonist is just as lacking in *constantia* as in ‘Die Geschichte der Givritta’, yet this is not commented on negatively by the story’s audience. In fact, Wilkinus is frequently described as suffering ‘unter dem Joch der Beständigkeit’ and his continued faithfulness to Givritta causes alarm among his courtiers, ‘wobey man alle Hofnung muste schwinden lassen, ihn jemahls mehr unbeständig zu sehen’.<sup>210</sup> Kraft states that Givritta’s story and Wilkinus’s court stand in total ethical alienation from the court of Octavia:

Und so ist es nicht verwunderlich, daß Octavia aus ihrer idealen Romanwelt, in der sich alles um die wahre Liebe und um elementarische ethische Fragen dreht, nur voller Unverständnis herabblicken kann auf eine (sicherlich realere) Welt, in der die Unbeständigkeit triumphiert, in der die Liebe keine Lebensentscheidung mehr ist, sondern eine Frage von politischem Opportunismus – kurz auf die Mätressenwirtschaft des Hochabsolutismus.<sup>211</sup>

Yet it is strange that the ‘realistic’ treatment of the existence of mistresses at the absolutist court should suddenly receive such censure when it has been received more positively elsewhere, even when taking into account the problems of editing

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<sup>209</sup>Kraft, ‘Galante Passagen’, pp. 338-339 and fn 29; both stories are in the sixth volume of the second edition on pp. 624-628 and pp. 784-797 respectively.

<sup>210</sup>[Königsmarck], ‘Die Geschichte der Givritta’, p. 394 and p. 390.

<sup>211</sup>Kraft, ‘Galante Passagen’, p. 339-340.

that must have occurred with the publication of the seventh volume of *Römische Octavia* so long after the previous six. Indeed, the triumph of political opportunism over love is also present in ‘Die Geschichte der Solane’ when Solane is the victim of a court plot to remove her from Orondates’ affections.<sup>212</sup>

Instead, it is more appropriate to compare the behaviour of the two heroines, Givritta and Solane, since the behaviour of the heroes, Wilkinus and Orondates, with regard to the women around them is not so substantially different in the two stories that they should be the source of the censure. Givritta is portrayed as amassing power, even taking power that does not rightfully belong to her but to the king, and in particular as having power over men. She forces herself on a king who would rather keep their relationship low-key: although he has admitted to Fredeboldus that he is unable to stop giving attention to Givritta, Wilkinus is unable to give an explanation why, and he actively tries to persuade Givritta not to divorce her husband.<sup>213</sup> He is very aware of the importance of the married state, even if he is himself a serial adulterer, but, gallant as he is, Wilkinus can ‘der Givritta nichts verübeln’.<sup>214</sup> Interestingly, although Wilkinus appears infatuated by Givritta, he always puts political considerations first, or tries to: even though he is fascinated by her before he has even met her, Wilkinus does not travel to Daturia from Centauria until his political interests demand it.<sup>215</sup> Likewise, it is the political impact of her actions that causes the most arguments, as when she joins him on campaign in men’s clothing:

Seine Vergnügung aber konte nicht beständig seyn, weil ihre kühne

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<sup>212</sup>[Königsmarck], ‘Die Geschichte der Solane’, p. 645.

<sup>213</sup>[Königsmarck], ‘Die Geschichte der Givritta’, p. 370 and p. 378.

<sup>214</sup>[Königsmarck], ‘Die Geschichte der Givritta’, p. 378.

<sup>215</sup>[Königsmarck], ‘Die Geschichte der Givritta’, p. 362.

Aufführung ihm gar zu viel verdrießliche Händel anrichtete, worüber sie öfters in grossen Streit mit einander geriethen, [...] <sup>216</sup>

While Givritta makes it difficult for Wilkinus to maintain his image as authoritative ruler and considerate *galant*, Solane never seeks to amass power herself. Instead, she is raised up by the power of the king only, never actively takes power, yet she is clearly viewed by courtiers as having an uncomfortable amount of power over Orondates:

Um aber die übrige Zeit seiner Gegenwart mit den angenehmsten Ergötzlichkeiten hinzubringen/ ließ er ein Schloß auf einen erhabenen Berg von grünen Laub aufrichten/ welches als eine Festung anzusehen war; [...] Herennus nannte dieses Schloß den Pallast der Circe/ in welchen sie den tapffern Ulysses gefangen hielte/ konte auch ohne die gröste Ungeduld solches Gebäude nicht ansehen/ in welches Orondates einige kostbare Gast=Mahle anstellte/ und täglich etwas neues erdachte/ die Gesellschaft zu ergetzen. <sup>217</sup>

So both women are seen as a threat to the political order in some way and the court sees it necessary to remove them, even if the partiality of the author of the two stories leads her to portray Solane as an innocent party. The decisive difference between the two women and how they function within the dynamic of the court comes in how they deal with their rejection as mistresses and also in how they acquired that status in the first place. Solane withdraws quietly from the world by going into a convent/temple ‘allwo sie aller Welt=Liebe/ Haß/ Hoheit/ Unbestandt und Eitelkeit auf einmahl absagte/ doch so sehr sich nicht zu

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<sup>216</sup>[Königsmarck], ‘Die Geschichte der Givritta’, p. 380.

<sup>217</sup>[Königsmarck], ‘Die Geschichte der Solane’, p. 639.

beruhigen vermochte/ daß sie/ ohne Vergiessung vieler heissen Thränen/ ihrer unglücklichen Geschichte/ sich erinnern konte'.<sup>218</sup> This contrasts dramatically with Givritta, who tries to prevent her fall by following Wilkinus across Europe and instead of withdrawing gracefully, the manuscript of the story read out to Octavia's court sarcastically suggests 'ingleichen wartet Dolch, Gifft und Sarg, ob Givritta sich ihrer zu bedienen noch entschloßen verbleibet', a reference to Givritta's frequent – and never fulfilled – threats to kill herself when she sees her position in Wilkinus's heart threatened.<sup>219</sup> Givritta's first mistake at Wilkinus's court is to break protocol, in other words, she fails to follow court ceremonial; Solane, however, intuitively observes and follows the rules of August's court. Givritta has not accepted the reality of the mistress's status at a gallant court where the interests of the *homme galant* Gustavus/Wilkinus must come first and she must act in line with his instruction, while Solane has. I suggest that this may provide a more nuanced understanding of the different reactions these two stories elicit from their respective audiences in *Römische Octavia* and would go so far as to question that moral condemnation of the place of mistresses at August's court is the only possible interpretation of 'Die Geschichte der Givritta' in particular.

Neither Orondates nor Wilkinus (that is, August) are criticized for their lack of fidelity; it is instead seen as necessary to the position of each that he should have a mistress and not just one over his lifetime, but several. The external practices of both men – their entertainments, their conversation, and letters, and so on – fit approximately with those demanded of a *galant*, but their practice of love is one that neither pole of the gallant discourse discussed above takes into

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<sup>218</sup>[Königsmarck], 'Die Geschichte der Solane', p. 658.

<sup>219</sup>[Königsmarck], 'Die Geschichte der Givritta', p. 398.



account. The ideal of *galanterie* may have its basis in the court, but it does not allow for being too closely associated with the specific political conditions of court culture without being extremely puzzled by it. It is clear, however, from the two tales by Königsmarck that the success or failure of the man as ‘good’ *galant* rests to some extent on the chosen object of his *galanterie* recognizing, understanding, and conforming to the needs and rules of gallant behaviour.

Neither of the three gallant Augusts – Hunold’s and Königsmarck’s – go much beyond being received as fictional literature over the course of time, despite their origins either in personal experience or in a claim to veiled historical verisimilitude. Instead it is the sexual *galant* of Karl Ludwig von Pöllnitz’s August the Strong that really makes its mark on the historical and literary consciousness of posterity.

### **3.3. The ‘historians’: David Faßmann (1685-1744) and Karl Ludwig von Pöllnitz (1691/92- 1775).**

Immediately after August the Strong died in 1733 two writers brought out accounts of his life. Both David Faßmann and Karl Ludwig von Pöllnitz had travelled throughout Europe in their youth and although they were protégés of the Prussian court – they were both members of Friedrich Wilhelm I’s *Tabakkolleg* – they were both also employed in some capacity by the Saxon court.<sup>220</sup> However, at the time their histories of August the Strong were written, neither man was employed by Saxony, so neither of their works might be described as having been

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<sup>220</sup>Theodor Hirsch, ‘Faßmann, David F.’, *ADB*, VI, p. 580-581; Wilmont Haacke, ‘Faßmann, David’, *NDB*, V, p. 28; Koser, ‘Pöllnitz, Karl Ludwig Freiherr v P.’, *ADB*, XXVI, pp. 397-399; Hans Wolfram von Hentig, ‘Poellnitz’, *NDB*, XX, pp. 563-564.

written in the service of the Saxon court. If at all, they would be more likely to be coloured by Prussian sensibilities, but it is striking that they are not. *Das Glorwürdigste Leben und Thaten Friedrich Augusti, des Großen, Königs in Pohlen und Chur-Fürstens zu Sachsen* (1733) by Faßmann, and *La Saxe galante* (1734) by Pöllnitz are, however, extremely different works and have experienced significantly different receptions. Analyzing this reception is key to the reception of August the Strong by historians and fiction writers in subsequent periods.

### **3.3.1. David Faßmann and *Das Glorwürdigste Leben und Thaten Friedrich Augusti, des Großen, Königs in Pohlen und Chur-Fürstens zu Sachsen* (1733).**

Faßmann's account of the life of August the Strong is, in certain ways, a factual and matter-of-fact chronicle. It details locations, dates, and important individuals from August's birth until his death, particularly covering the war with Sweden over Poland. It also includes two extensive sections, first, on August's *Kavalierstour* based on the diaries of a preacher who accompanied him and, second, a particularly lengthy explanation of the Polish electoral system, as well as some coverage of August's festivities for the marriage of his son, Friedrich August II, to Maria Josepha of Austria in 1719 and the military manoeuvres of the *Zeithainer Lager* in 1728. In spite of the large amount of historical detail, however, *Das Glorwürdigste Leben und Thaten Friedrich Augusti* is notable first and foremost for its hyperbolic praise of its subject's character and virtues as a ruler and as an individual. Faßmann's description of August's birth gives a flavour of his style:

Wären die Astrologi in ihrer prætendirten Kunst richtig, so solte damals billig einer aufgestanden seyn, und der Welt vorhero gesaget haben: Daß am 12. May 1670. einer von denen grösten und besten Potentaten, so jemals in der Welt gelebet, gebohren sey, der eine so grosse Influentz in die Affairen von Europa, und auch anderer Theile des Erdkreises, haben würde. Allein damals war niemand zu Hause, der dieses sagen wolte [...]<sup>221</sup>

Faßmann's August embodies a number of virtues as a ruler and as a human being, but in everything August is somehow larger than life. Everything he is and everything he does is – or was – ‘prächtig’, and ‘magnifique’ in a way that raised him above his contemporaries.<sup>222</sup> Faßmann claims that August even made a considerable impression during his stay in Paris while on his travels as a young prince:

Er wolte incognito reisen und bediente sich eines fremden Nahmens. Nichts destoweniger ward er durch seine hohen Minen, und durch das Majestätische Wesen, welches aus seinem Angesicht heraus leuchtete, wie auch durch alle noble und vortreffliche Stellungen und Geberden, die man an seiner Person observirte, gar bald errathen. Eine geheime Krafft gieng aus seiner Seele heraus, welche die Hertzen und Augen aller andern Menschen an sich zog, und hier zeigte sich das wahre *je ne sçay quoi*, das denen Frantzosen fast beständig in dem Munde lieget.<sup>223</sup>

August apparently made such a favourable impression on Louis XIV that the French king wanted to keep him at his court. Faßmann does not hold back from saying that August outshone everybody at the Sun King's court, and intimates the frequent trope that exterior appearance – August's ‘hohe Minen’ and ‘Majestätische Wesen’ – are indicative of August's inner character. August is

<sup>221</sup>[David Faßmann], *Das Glorwürdigste Leben und Thaten Friedrch Augusti, des Großen, Königs in Pohlen und Chur-Fürsttens zu Sachsen, etc. etc. Mit aufrichtiger Feder in gehöriger Historischer Ordnung beschrieben. Nebst gantz sonderbaren Nachrichten von der Gewalt und Herrlichkeit, auch denen Prærogativen, eines Königs von Pohlen, desgleichen von seiner Erwehlung und Crönung, und denen vornehmsten Gesetzen dieses Königreichs* (Hamburg and Frankfurt: n.p., 1733), pp. 1-2.

<sup>222</sup>[Faßmann], *Das Glorwürdigste Leben und Thaten Friedrich Augusti*, p. 1011.

<sup>223</sup>[Faßmann], *Das Glorwürdigste Leben und Thaten Friedrich Augusti*, pp. 12-13.

‘leutselig’, ‘freundlich’, and ‘großmüthig’ to a degree that suggests he is almost superhuman, particularly when Faßmann recounts August’s dealings with Sweden in the Northern War.

Wie feindselig nun auch die Schweden sich immerfort gegen den gütigsten *Augustum* bezeugten, und was vor Tott sie ihn anthaten; so unterließ er seines Orts dennoch nicht, sich beständig gelinde und großmüthig gegen dieselben zu erweisen.<sup>224</sup>

Indeed, Faßmann claims that the Swedes are alone among all the European nations of the time in disliking August the Strong. His ‘Leutseligkeit’, ‘Freundlichkeit’, and ‘Großmuthigkeit’ are such that everybody was bound to love and respect him, and these qualities were part of August always wanting to do good, which he showed principally by being merciful to his enemies and those who rebelled against him.<sup>225</sup> Yet August was also modest and had a strong sense of himself as a mere human, according to the exemplary version Faßmann gives of his deathbed scene with his Roman Catholic confessor by his side:

Hätten Ihre Majestät geantwortet: Ich weiß gar wohl, daß ich ein grosser Sünder bin. Aber meine grosse Schwachheit erlaubet mir nicht, daß ich mich nochmals in eine umständliche Erzählung meiner Sünden einlasse. Indessen habe ich dieselben Gott abgebeten, auch sie hertzlich bereuet, hoffe dannenhero, daß er mir sie, um Christi willen, verzeyhen werde. Darauf hätte ihn der Beicht-Vater die Absolution nochmals ertheilet.<sup>226</sup>

Faßmann’s work is also notable for the way it handles points of potential criticism. Aspects of August’s personality or reign that might be construed as negative are glossed over or omitted entirely. The writer goes so far as to admit

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<sup>224</sup>[Faßmann], *Das Glorwürdigste Leben und Thaten Friedrich Augusti*, p. 531.

<sup>225</sup>[Faßmann], *Das Glorwürdigste Leben und Thaten Friedrich Augusti*, pp. 1013-1014.

<sup>226</sup>[Faßmann], *Das Glorwürdigste Leben und Thaten Friedrich Augusti*, p. 991.

that this otherwise forgiving and merciful man did instigate a severe investigation into the actions of Saxon troops after the defeat of General Johann Matthias von Schulenburg (1661-1747) at the Battle of Fraustadt (now Wschowa in Poland) on 13 February 1706 which resulted in the execution of a number of soldiers.

August's ruthless reaction to the news of defeat is soothed away by Faßmann's appeal to the reader to see August as human:

Aber man kan auch leichtlich gedencken, wie sehr die Post von diesem Unfall Sr. Majestät den König AVGVSTVM müsse geschmertzet und gekräncket haben? und es gehörte ein so grosses Gemüthe darzu, wie das Seine, um in dem Schmetzen nicht gänzlich zu unterliegen.<sup>227</sup>

Even more striking is Faßmann's treatment of the two aspects of his rule against which later historians would react negatively: August's many mistresses and his conversion to Roman Catholicism. Both of these would provide ideal opportunities for creating a black legend for August the Strong, particularly from a Prussian perspective, and, as will be shown, these elements were both strongly censured by historians in the nineteenth century.<sup>228</sup> However, August's sexual adventures are omitted entirely from Faßmann's 'history'. Anna Constantia von Cosel, who of all the women with whom he conducted affairs was August's mistress for longest, is mentioned only in connection with the role she played in the festivities held for the visit of Frederik IV, King of Denmark, in 1709, but not that she was August's mistress. Indeed, in Faßmann's version of history, it is not August who indulges in excessive luxury, but the Swedes when they occupy Saxony during the Northern War who consume vast amounts of wine and

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<sup>227</sup>[Faßmann], *Das Glorwürdigste Leben und Thaten Friedrich Augusti*, p. 539.

<sup>228</sup>Cf. Chapter 4.

expensive sugar – often at the same time, mixed and eaten with a spoon – and suffer extraordinary rates of venereal infection because of the booming prostitution business in their camps, while their king, Karl XII, nurses an unreasonable hatred of the Saxon elector.<sup>229</sup> Faßmann plays down Saxon criticism of August's Catholicism. Not only does he not take advantage of August's purported remarks to his Catholic confessor on his deathbed in order to show an example of the death of an unrepentant sinner, Faßmann declares that August's Saxon subjects were reconciled to their elector's conversion because of his virtues as a considerate and merciful ruler:

Nachdem sie aber an ihren allergnädigsten König und Herrn zurücke dachten, auch in Erwegung gezogen, mit was vor Freundlichkeit und Leutseligkeit seine Königliche Seele geschmücket gewesen; so legte sich ihr Kummer gar bald wieder, und sie versiegelten die gewisse Versicherung in ihrem Hertzen, daß niemals das Gewissen eines einzigen unterthanen, von einem so liebeichen und gerechten Fürsten, würde gekräncket, oder die geringste Gewalt in *Religions*-Sachen ausgeübet werden.<sup>230</sup>

There is no mention of the unrest which resulted from August's Catholicism, for example, the crisis caused when the conversion of his son to Catholicism became public knowledge in 1717.<sup>231</sup>

Faßmann's account therefore celebrates August as an ideal and a legendary, bordering on god-like, ruler. Faßmann's other work, for example, in the series *Gespräche in dem Reiche derer Todten* (1718-1739) was capable of conveying a degree of satire and criticism, and his works were often subjected to

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<sup>229</sup>[Faßmann], *Das Glorwürdigste Leben und Thaten Friedrich Augusti*, p. 501 and p. 583.

<sup>230</sup>[Faßmann], *Das Glorwürdigste Leben und Thaten Friedrich Augusti*, p. 248.

<sup>231</sup>Karl Czok, *August der Starke: sein Verhältnis zum Absolutismus und zum sächsischen Adel* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1991), p. 49.

censorship. The first edition of his work on August the Strong was confiscated by the censors, though the reasons for this are slightly puzzling, since it was reissued in 1735 with some extremely slight alterations in sections where brief mention had been made in the first edition of women other than August's wife, though these women were not labelled August's mistresses.<sup>232</sup> However, Faßmann is meticulous in providing dates and descriptions of events, especially in terms of, for example, numbers of troops and so on, and he reproduces a number of texts that would not be available to the ordinary reader, such as the diaries of the preacher who accompanied the young August on his *Kavalierstour*. In this respect, he was of use to future historians, and Faßmann continued to be cited by historians into the nineteenth century, for example, by Friedrich Förster (1791-1868) in the third volume of his work on the courts of Europe published between 1836 and 1839.<sup>233</sup> Yet after this period, Faßmann's work does not appear in the bibliographies of historians. He had written a similar biography of Friedrich Wilhelm I of Prussia which was published in 1735 and extended by a second volume in 1741. Some of the popularity of both his works on Friedrich Wilhelm and on August may have been due to the scandal of having been subjected to censorship, but, in the case of Friedrich Wilhelm at least, Faßmann failed to satisfy the historical sensibilities of a nineteenth-century audience, and this affected the reception of his biographies during that period:

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<sup>232</sup>Haacke, 'Faßmann, David F.', p. 28; Ludwig Lindenberg, *Leben und Schriften David Faßmanns (1683-1744): mit besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner Totengespräche* (Berlin: E. Ebering, 1937), p.50.

<sup>233</sup>Friedrich Förster, *Die Höfe und Cabinette Europa's im achtzehnten Jahrhundert* (Potsdam: Ferdinand Riegel, 1836-1839), III: Friedrich August II. König von Polen und Kurfürst von Sachsen; seine Zeit, sein Cabinet und sein Hof (1839).

Unfähig, die geistige Bedeutung Friedrich Wilhelms I. aufzufassen, bemühte sich F., seine Leser vornehmlich durch detaillierte Mittheilungen der auffälligen Lebensgewohnheiten des Königs zu unterhalten. Unabsichtlich hat er dadurch bewirkt, daß die späteren Schriftsteller, die aus dieser Quelle hauptsächlich schöpften, sich aus jenen Aeüßerlichkeiten ein völlig karrikirtes Bild des Königs zusammensetzten. Es gehört nicht zu den geringsten Verdiensten v. Ranke's und Droysen's, diesen Irrthum vernichtet und das Wesen und den Charakter des Fürsten in seiner vollen Originalität zur Anschauung gebracht zu haben.<sup>234</sup>

It is possible that the historians of the later nineteenth century took a similar view of Faßmann's work on August the Strong and so the source fell out of use.

Certainly the reception of August the Strong in the nineteenth century is very different to the image of August depicted by Faßmann in the eighteenth century, as will be demonstrated. The work of Karl Ludwig von Pöllnitz, however, and the image of August he depicted experienced a very different reception by historians and novelists alike.

### 3.3.2. Karl Ludwig von Pöllnitz and *La Saxe galante* (1735).

Karl Ludwig von Pöllnitz (1691/92-1775) was a notorious adventurer and writer born into an impoverished Thuringian noble family which could trace its roots back to the thirteenth century and had a tradition of service at the courts of Saxony and Brandenburg, as well as Bavaria and Bayreuth.<sup>235</sup> The young Karl Ludwig spent a great deal of time at the Prussian court and effectively grew up with the future king in Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm I (1688-1740). In Pöllnitz's adult life, a persistent lack of financial means induced him to embark on a military career that seemed to allow him to travel widely. His first travels lasted eighteen

<sup>234</sup>Hirsch, 'Faßmann, David F.', pp. 580-581.

<sup>235</sup>Poellnitz, Paul von, Bernhard von Poellnitz, and Max von Poellnitz, *Stammtafeln der Familie von Poellnitz* (Berlin: Carl Heyanns Verlag, 1893).



years (1710-1728) and he claimed in his memoirs that he had visited the major courts of Europe as well as many of the smaller ones of the German principalities. The result, it seems, is that he became a confidante to the great and good, and thus had a source of information for many of the scandals and gossip which he later wrote about. He was constantly plagued by gambling debts and tried to solve this in a number of ways, of which probably the least dubious money-making scheme was his writing, which he began while in his thirties. In general, Pöllnitz was always valued as an amusing and engaging dinner companion and, although also acknowledged as rather a shady, perhaps even dangerous character, Pöllnitz was made *Oberzeremonienmeister* to Friedrich II of Prussia in 1740. This did not, however, save Pöllnitz from an impoverished existence at the end of his life.<sup>236</sup>

If Pöllnitz's brief writing career – he wrote between 1732 and 1740 – was born of financial necessity and did not, as a rule, produce highly original material, it was in some respects a successful one. Several of his works were repeatedly reprinted in the years immediately after their composition, and certain works experienced an 'afterlife' of several centuries. *Histoire secrète de la duchesse de Hanovre* (1732) reproduced material from Anton Ulrich von Braunschweig's *Römische Octavia* (1677-1707) dealing with the story of Sophia Dorothea of Celle (1666-1726) and Philipp Christoph von Königsmarck (1665-1694), and was printed in translation, reprinted and reissued in 1734, 1735, and 1825. In 1734, Pöllnitz produced a number of popular texts: *Memoires contenant les observations qu'il a faites dans ses voyages et le caractère des personnages qui composent les principales cours de l'Europe* (reprinted and translated in 1735 and

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<sup>236</sup>Koser, 'Pöllnitz: Karl Ludwig Freiherr v. P.', *ADB*, XXVI, p. 397.

1738/39; this went into five editions in five years); *La Saxe galante* (translated and reprinted in 1735, and republished fairly regularly over the next 250 years); *État abrégé de la cour de Saxe sous la regne d'August III.* (translated in 1736); *Amusements des Eaux de Spa* (translated in 1735). Although his memoirs represent the most immediately popular of all his works, *La Saxe galante* and the type of gallant prince it depicts has greatest significance for the myth and historico-literary treatment of August the Strong.

The earliest translation of Pöllnitz's *La Saxe galante* was anonymous and given the title *Das galante Sachsen*, by which it is now most commonly known. However, it was also published later as *Liebschaften König Augusts von Polen* (1784) and 'edited' pseudonymously by Karl Ludwig Häberlin under the title *Galanterien und Liebes-Geschichten August des Starken* (1833). With varying additions of different introductory passages, commentaries, and, in one case, appendices, the story remains the same: a biography of August the Strong with exclusive emphasis on his love life, and the adventures and trials he (supposedly) experienced as a result.

The story begins with the scandal surrounding his brother, Johann Georg, and his mistress, Magdalena Sibylle von Neitschütz, with August starring in the role of defender of the honour and safety of his brother's wife, Eleonore Erdmuthe von Saxe-Eisenach, as well as the defender of his brother's and the state's reputation. August then goes on his tour of European courts, travelling incognito as the 'Graf von Meissen' and it is at this point that Pöllnitz announces the nature of the tale: 'Unter dieser Person begegneten ihm viele wunderliche Zufälle [*sic*], davon ich nur diejenigen hier anzuführen gesonnen bin, welche eingen [*sic*]

Einfluss in das gemeine Wesen haben'.<sup>237</sup> The heavy implication is that the number of August's romantic adventures far exceeds those described here, that they are literally innumerable. The German courts and other important courts in Europe are passed over with a mere mention. Although we know he travelled via Frankfurt, Strasbourg, and Paris first, his adventures, according to Pöllnitz, begin in Spain and progress from there to the cities of Italy. Almost all of the episodes related here in which August gains yet another mistress have a certain air of inevitability about them, and there is certainly no mention of a Lutheran preacher being one of his companions. Women, Pöllnitz makes clear, generally found him irresistible, even if he first had to subject them to intensive wooing:

[...] er bezeugte sich auch in seinen Liebes-Begebenheiten eben so unerschrocken, als er sich nachmahls mitten in den blutigsten Gefechten aufgeführt hatte. Je schwerer ihm die Eroberung [...] gemacht wurde, je würdiger achtete er sie seiner Bemühung.<sup>238</sup>

This attitude to sexual conquest is strikingly different to that of Hunold/Menantes's Gustavus. Gustavus does not at first know what to do with or even recognize feelings of love for what they are, and then remains a passive, but impeccably polite admirer, of other women, disentangling himself by force from the grasp of any overly-seductive ladies if necessary. Instead of wishing for friendship, Pöllnitz's August actively seeks women out and attempts to seduce them even where his advances are clearly unwelcome, as is the case in Venice in his encounter with the (married) Madam von Mocenigo, who, with some

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<sup>237</sup> [Karl Ludwig von Pöllnitz], *Das galante Sachsen Aus dem Franzoesischen übersetzt von einem Deutschen Nebst einer Vorrede und Zueignungs-Schrift an die galante gelehrte Welt. Amsterdam MDCCXXXV*. (Dortmund: bibliophilen Taschenbücher, 1979), p. 8.

<sup>238</sup> [Pöllnitz], *Das galante Sachsen[...]* Amsterdam MDCCXXXV, p. 18-19.

exasperation, finally manages to brush him off.<sup>239</sup> She stands out as one of the only women who succeeds in resisting August's charms. The relentless succession of women, married and unmarried, some very young, continues, as Pöllnitz portrays it, into August's old age, only to be halted by his fatherly love for his illegitimate daughter, the Duchess Orselska [*sic*]. Pöllnitz's August is therefore quite clearly the sort of libertine gallant that Heidegger and other critics of *galanterie* envisaged in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century.

Whether or not the intention of Pöllnitz's work was satirical is, in view of the uses to which the text was later put, an important question, but one that is difficult to determine. Pöllnitz, after all, was writing out of financial necessity and by explicitly viewing August the Strong's life through his love life, he was covering an area of August's biography that had been either implicitly ignored, for instance by Faßmann, or explicitly ignored, for instance by his French biographer, Parthenay.<sup>240</sup> Pöllnitz's aim is most likely to have been primarily to entertain by means of titillation and a certain degree of humour. The knowing introduction to the German translation in 1735 serves principally to explain why the anonymous editor or translator believes an introduction to the text to be unnecessary. Verdicts on the Saxon court bracket the main body of the text:

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<sup>239</sup> Florian Gelzer, *Konversation, Galanterie und Abenteuer: Romaneskes Erzählen zwischen Thomasius und Wieland* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2007), pp. 185-186; [Pöllnitz], *Das galante Sachsen [...] Amsterdam MDCCXXXV*, pp. 58-63.

<sup>240</sup> In his introduction, Parthenay states: 'Le Lecteur ne doit pas s'attendre à trouver dans mon ouvrage un journal amoureux de toutes les galanteries d'Auguste. Ce Prince l'un des plus galans de son temps, fourniroit matiere à bien des volumes; mais on doit se souvenir que ce n'est pas la vie du Roi de Pologne que j'écris; encore moins l'Histoire de ses amours; je me suis proposé de donner une idée juste de ce qu'il a fait comme Roi de Pologne depuis la mort de Sobieski jusqu'à la sienne. Je laisse à qui s'en voudra emparer mille Historiettes qui n'entrent point dans mon plan & dont mon état ne me permet pas la description. J'ai trop bonne opinion du public, pour craindre qu'il me fasse des reproches sur cette omission.' [Jean-Baptiste Des Roches de Parthenay], *Histoire de Pologne, sous le regne d'Auguste II.* (à la Haye: Jean van Duren, 1733), I, pp. xiii-xiv.

Niemahls hat Deutschland noch irgendwo so viel grosses und artiges an sich erblicken lassen als in Sachsen; vornehmlich aber zu der Zeit, als Churfürst Johann Georg der Vierte, und nach demselben Friederich August, König von Pohlen, in Sachsen regierten.<sup>241</sup>

Mit einem Wort, Friederich Augusts Hof war biss an das Lebens-  
Ende dieses grossen Königes, der ansehnlichste Hof in gantz  
Europa.<sup>242</sup>

However tongue-in-cheek, the text thereby ends up celebrating sexual prowess and masculinity more than it criticizes August's reputed exploits and his rule. The publication of the text in 'Amsterdam' is a dubious one and suggests that the censors would have taken a dim view of the contents of *Das galante Sachsen*, even more so than of Faßmann's 1733 biography. What is certain is that it was not received as satire later, but rather uncritically as an accurate source for the period and society it depicts, if not actually for its factual content. Literary critics in the late eighteenth century did not read it as a satire attacking Saxony and criticized it instead for its sexual content, saying that it contained 'bekanntlich [...] viele schlüpfrige Stellen', and for its use of language as too old-fashioned and containing too many 'Gallicismen'.<sup>243</sup> When Häberlin published his lightly edited version of Pöllnitz's text in 1833, in the wake of the unrest throughout Europe in 1831 and the French July Revolution in particular, he intended it to be a comment on the political situation in Braunschweig and the morals of the ruling class there.<sup>244</sup> Karl II, Duke of Braunschweig (1804-1873), had been deposed in 1830

<sup>241</sup>[Pöllnitz], *Das galante Sachsen [...]* Amsterdam MDCCXXXV, p. 1.

<sup>242</sup>[Pöllnitz], *Das galante Sachsen [...]* Amsterdam MDCCXXXV, p. 320.

<sup>243</sup>[Anon.], 'Liebschaften König August I. von Polen. Berlin, 1784. 344 S.', Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek, 1786, vol. 68, 157-158. There are, unfortunately, no reviews of Pöllnitz's work available earlier than this.

<sup>244</sup>Häberlin had been employed as an official in the duchy of Braunschweig from 1807; F. Spehr, "Häberlin, Karl F.", *ADB*, X, pp. 279-280 (p. 279).

and replaced by his brother Wilhelm (1806-1884). One of the reasons for Karl's unpopularity, though not the only reason he was deposed, was his spending habits during times of economic shortage among his subjects.<sup>245</sup> However, neither ruler was morally beyond reproach, as both entertained a succession of mistresses, and it is this that Häberlin picks up on as indicative, so he contended, of dreadful rulership.<sup>246</sup>

Importantly, though, it is *Das galante Sachsen* that has the greatest impact on the myth of August the Strong over the ensuing centuries by being adopted almost unquestioningly as an historical source, rather than a literary text. This happens relatively early with Häberlin remarking on Pöllnitz's usefulness as an observer of society.

[...] begabt mit einem feinen Beobachtungsgeist und tiefer Weltkenntniß, konnte es ihm nicht fehlen, daß er die Eigenthümlichkeiten seiner Zeit mit Schärfe aufzufassen und in seinen verschiedenen Memoiren auf interessante Weise darzustellen vermog.<sup>247</sup>

Even though Pöllnitz is openly acknowledged to be a writer of dubious reliability, compared in England in the nineteenth century to fictitious rogues such as Count Smorltork, Count Fathom, and Barry Lyndon, he remains a primary source for accounts of the Saxon court and a source for other historical topics well into the

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<sup>245</sup>See Bernhard Kiekenapp, *Karl und Wilhelm: die Söhne des Schwarzen Herzogs*, 2 vols (Braunschweig: Appelhans, 2000), I, pp. 161-197.

<sup>246</sup>H.E.R. Belani (Karl Ludwig Häberlin), *Galanterien und Liebes-Geschichten August des Starken, Königs von Polen und Churfürsten von Sachsen. Nach: "La Saxe galante du Baron de Pöllnitz." Frei und in Novellenform bearbeitet* (Neuhaldensleben: S.A. Eyraud, 1833), pp. 3-6; on Karl II's and Wilhelm's mistresses, see Kiekenapp, *Karl und Wilhelm*, I, p. 16 and pp. 45-72; Madeleine Brook, "'An intelligent foreigner'?: the English reception of Karl Ludwig von Pöllnitz in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries', *Angermion* 2 (2009), 77-89 (82-83).

<sup>247</sup>Belani [Häberlin], *Galanterien*, pp. 3-4.

twentieth century in Germany and elsewhere.<sup>248</sup> Ironically, Pöllnitz's attempts at historical writing were received badly by eighteenth-century critics. The reviewer of his posthumously published work *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des quatre derniers Souverains de la maison de Brandebourg Royale de Prusse* (1791, in German) destroyed its credibility as a piece of historical writing by listing at great length its numerous factual errors – but praised it as an enjoyable read and an excellent translation from French to German.<sup>249</sup> In the twentieth century, historian Paul Haake commented with particular reference to *Das galante Sachsen*:

[...] eine schlüpfrige Verherrlichung des Liebeslebens Augusts des Starken, ein tolles Gemisch von geistreichem Witz, Bosheit und Laszivität, von Wahrheit und Geflunker, literarisch Gebildeten und sittlich Unverdorbenen ein Greuel, Manna immer wieder den Lüsternen, die nach Sinneskitzel gieren, für den Historiker eine trübe, aber doch nicht nur das Milieu des damaligen Dresdner Hofes richtig wiedergebende, sondern auch im Detail brauchbare Quelle; vielleicht wird noch manche von Pöllnitz eingeflochtene, zunächst Zweifel weckende Anekdote durch andere Zeugnisse wenigstens zum Teil ebenso bestätigt [...]<sup>250</sup>

Historians may have developed more or less increased caution in using Pöllnitz as a source on the Saxon court of the eighteenth century and on August the Strong in particular, but he is certainly still used as a historically credible source in a way

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<sup>248</sup>Count Smorltork is a minor comedic character who is said to be writing a book on England and whose pronunciation is made fun of in *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (1836-1837) by Charles Dickens; Count Fathom is the cheating, swindling anti-hero of *The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom* (1753) by Tobias Smollett; Barry Lyndon is a member of the Irish gentry trying to make his way up in the world, specifically into the English aristocracy, *The Luck of Barry Lyndon* (1844, later reissued as *The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Esq.*) by William Makepeace Thackeray. 'An intelligent foreigner', *All the Year Round* 18:441 (May 1877), 245-250; see Brook, "An intelligent foreigner"?, 84-88.

<sup>249</sup>[Anon.], 'Mèmoires pour servir à l'histoire des quatre derniers Souverains de la maison de Brandebourg Royale de Prusse, par Charles Louis de Poellnitz, chambellan de Frederic II. Roi de Prusse etc. Berlin, chez Voss, 1791. Tome I. 394 Seiten. Tome II. 382 Seiten, ohne préface et supplément', *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* 1792, CVIII, 211-218.

<sup>250</sup>Paul Haake, *August der Starke im Urteil seiner Zeit und der Nachwelt* (Dresden: Wilhelm und Bertha v. Baensch Stiftung, 1922), p. 14.

that the early historian Faßmann, and the more literary productions of Königsmarck and Hunold, are not. As mentioned above, Norman Davies gives a description of August the Strong in his history of Poland (originally published in 1981 and republished many times since) for which it is clear, even without referring to Davies's endnotes, that the source material was Pöllnitz's *Das galante Sachsen*.<sup>251</sup> Less clear, however, because in this case Davies does not subject his source to any criticism, is that the tone of these comments is filtered through a nineteenth-century perspective which will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter.

### 3.4. Summary.

From these examples it is clear that the debate about the *homme galant* and *galanterie* played a significant part in the eighteenth-century public perception of and creation of August the Strong's image. August himself helped this through the way in which he constructed his image as an ideal ruler with a huge variety of interests and abilities supported by a state, Saxony, of varied sources of economic wealth. Although the role of the mistress at court was only one part of a complex machinery in this, it is notable that three out of the four accounts described here focused on August as a gallant lover, and this ranged from the faithful lover who could play the diplomatic – and platonic – game of gallantry to his advantage, through to the sexually predatory lover. Even the 'odd one out' text, Faßmann's emphatically non-sexual account, depicts August as a kind of lover, but as a man who can make himself beloved by others, not necessarily just women, and those

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<sup>251</sup> Norman Davies, *God's playground: a history of Poland*, 2 vols, revised edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), I, p. 372 and p. 430, fn. 4.



who do not love him are deemed beyond reason, possibly even mad. While Hunold is careful to depict August as an *homme galant* in quite a *bürgerlich* version of European courts, negotiating the sexual dangers of admittedly adventurous socializing, Faßmann's *homme galant* deploys his skills in a political setting to be an ideal ruler.

It is also worth noting that censorship of these depictions does not seem to have started until after August's death, possibly because these posthumous accounts were not encoded by changing names or transporting the events into imaginary locations, but also no doubt because of the change in tone at court and, therefore, the change in the projected image of the ruler that came about with the accession of August's son, Friedrich August II/August III.<sup>252</sup> Yet where censorship was involved, it also seems to have piqued public interest, as was the case with Faßmann's writings. Since the censors seem primarily to have been concerned with the sexual element as subversive, then these texts seem to some degree to be related to secret histories, which often satirized official versions of events by emphasizing sexual scandal, for which the gallant character had a lot of potential. The claims of secret histories to reveal the truth behind the official image tended to make them more credible sources for historians, and this position has only begun to be re-evaluated recently in the light of modern debates about the nature of historical narrative.<sup>253</sup> The effect of this uncritical use of certain kinds of

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<sup>252</sup>Staszewski, *August III*, p. 169.

<sup>253</sup>See also Bullard, *The politics of disclosure*, pp. 4-5 for comments on British scholarship in this field. There appears to be surprising little German scholarship on the German *Schlüsselroman* or *roman à clef* genre in the seventeenth and eighteenth century since Georg Schneider's bibliographic study *Die Schlüsselliteratur* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1951). Schneider points to the problem of defining the broad term *Schlüsselliteratur*, particularly as it appears in the German literary tradition until the 1950s under a variety of other terms (including Birken's seventeenth-century phrase *Geschichtsgedicht*), and as it includes a variety of genres, not just the novel (pp. 1-12).

sources is demonstrated in the reception of the texts described in this chapter: that arguably the least credible of the 'historical biographies', *Das galante Sachsen*, continues to be used by both novelists and historians well into the twenty-first century, and that the 'literary' adaptations of what was then contemporary history are largely ignored by all but students of literature. Königsmarck's stories are a particularly good example, as, although their provenance was discovered only relatively recently and although they clearly play out an agenda particular to the author, they demonstrably have the potential to provide useful information about the role of the mistress at court in the early eighteenth century and the role of women in the discourse surrounding *galanterie*.

## **Chapter 4: The eighteenth century through nineteenth-century eyes: history, literature, and August the Strong.**

The study, purpose, and literary depiction of history underwent a marked change in the nineteenth century. Efforts by historians to differentiate the subject of history from the literary products of authors turned the study of history into a discipline and a profession.<sup>254</sup> The consequences for the historical novel, which had developed out of texts which used stories or settings from the past and combined them with the products of the author's imagination, were considerable.<sup>255</sup> Novelists did not have the same access to archives that professional historians at universities did; their source material therefore had to consist of what was already in the public domain either as published material, which could be either primary or secondary sources, or as 'general knowledge' – information or stories passed down through an individual's education, or through a family or community. Literary authors, in other words, relied on some form of collective memory. Clearly, the two areas of writing would have to do increasingly different things: historians and academic history because they insisted on some sort of differentiation between 'popular' forms of history writing and writing as a result of the 'formal' study of history, literary writers because they were forced in response to justify their different approach. However, as Kathrin Maurer points out, there remained a tense connection between the study of history and aesthetics (of literature) of which historians such as Leopold von

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<sup>254</sup>See Donald R. Kelley, *Fortunes of history: historical inquiry from Herder to Huizinga* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 6-16.

<sup>255</sup>Brian Hamnett, 'Fictitious histories: the dilemma of fact and imagination in the nineteenth-century historical novel', *European History Quarterly* 36 (2006), 31-60 (32-34).

Ranke were particularly aware, and which manifested itself in their writing through the rhetorical devices and styles they chose to use or not to use in their effort to legitimize historical study as an academic discipline.<sup>256</sup> Likewise, it is also clear, certainly into the early part of the second half of the nineteenth century at least, that novelists had a variety of ways in which they attempted to overcome the problem of bringing accurate, well-founded history into the historical novel and were by no means entirely debarred from the task of conveying historical content to the reading public. Neither did they always repeat the views of the historians, even if both historian and novelist were frequently concerned with the same subject, for instance, Germanness and German unity.

#### **4.1. ‘Die Zeit der Selbstvergessenheit’: the eighteenth century according to nineteenth-century German historians.**

The eighteenth century, the period in which the early novel was associated with French influences, fell sharply out of favour in the nineteenth century.<sup>257</sup> Yong-Mi Quester shows that the denigration of French literature imported to Germany really set in during the second half of the eighteenth century, though the debate did not constitute sweeping condemnation in all areas.<sup>258</sup> When negative opinions about that particular epoch and its European rulers did set in, historians as well as novelists frequently held up the period as a warning against immoral, ‘un-German’ behaviour. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the popular

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<sup>256</sup>Kathrin Maurer, *Discursive interaction: literary realism and academic historiography in nineteenth-century Germany* (Heidelberg: Synchron, 2006), pp. 22-24.

<sup>257</sup>Carla Freudenreich, *Zwischen Loen und Gellert: der deutsche Roman 1740-1747* (Munich: Minerva, 1979), p. 45.

<sup>258</sup>Yong-Mi Quester, *Frivoler Import: die Rezeption freizügiger französischer Romane in Deutschland (1730-1800)* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2006), pp. 35-50.

historian, Friedrich Christoph Schlosser (1776-1861), commented in his history of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries:

Das Resultat dieser Bemerkungen über deutsches Leben und die Sitten jener Zeit ist, daß immer Glanz und Armseligkeit, Schulden, Kargheit und Prahlen mit Reichthum, Pracht und schmutziger Sparsamkeit an Höfen und im Leben der großen Familien verbunden und auf eine lächerliche Weise gepaart erscheinen.<sup>259</sup>

For German historians, the eighteenth century appeared as an anomaly in the linear development of German historical identity. For Carl Gretschel, however, writing on the eve of revolution, it was an anomaly that was associated primarily with the corrupt ruling classes and the educated elites. Gretschel places the poorer lower classes in the position merely of observer of their social superiors, too poor to take on such airs and graces, and therefore preserved from taking part in the moral turpitude and from losing sight of their Germanness:

Für den Deutschen war die Zeit der Selbstvergessenheit vollständig gekommen und die Undeutschheit der Fürstenpolitik ließ es zur Kraftäußerung eines Nationalgefühles nicht kommen. Zur gänzlichen Unterdrückung des politischen Gesamtsinnes der Deutschen wirkte vornehmlich die immer höher steigende Geltung des Franzosenthums mit. [...] Wie in anderen deutschen Ländern, so konnten auch in Sachsen solche Zustände auf die weiteren Kreise der Bewohner nicht ohne Einfluß bleiben, und sie fanden um so leichter Nachahmung, je häufiger Reisen in das Ausland gemacht und vielseitige anderweite Verbindungen mit demselben angeknüpft wurden, die den Gebildeteren der Nation Empfänglichkeit für Gegenstände beibrachten, welche man bisher in der Heimath nicht gekannt oder nicht geachtet hatte.<sup>260</sup>

Other historians viewed the eighteenth century as a distasteful but necessary part

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<sup>259</sup>F. C. Schlosser, *Geschichte des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts und des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts bis zum Sturz des französischen Kaiserreichs* (Heidelberg: J.C.B. Mohr, 1836), p. 251.

<sup>260</sup>C. Gretschel, *Geschichte des Sächsischen Volkes und Staates* (Leipzig: G.C. Orthauss, 1847), pp. 654-658.

of historical study, if only because omitting it would cause a gaping hole in the narrative of German history and, therefore, also of German identity. Yet there were dangers for the proudly objective historian of the eighteenth century, too, as Friedrich Förster (1791-1868) pointed out in the introduction to his history of the courts of eighteenth-century Europe:

Der Weltumsegler, welcher in unsern Tagen auf neue Entdeckungen ausfährt, darf sich nicht mehr mit der Hoffnung schmeicheln, das glückliche Eiland der Seligen zu finden [...]; will er zu den Quellen vordringen, deren Perlen und Goldsand noch nicht ausgebeutet sind, darf er sich nicht scheuen, an unwirthbarer Küste anzulegen und auf unwegsamer Bahn sich durchzuschlagen durch Gestripp und wildes Gethier. [...] Wenn wir aber bedachten, wie Capitain Roß fünf lange Jahre hindurch unter Eisbären und Eisbergen Haus gehalten hat: so gab uns dies Muth, daß es uns unter den Perrücken und Haarbeuteln, unter den Beichtvätern und Maitressen der Höfe zu Madrid und Versailles, zu Wien und Turin nicht schlimmer ergehen könnte.<sup>261</sup>

History itself was, therefore, a voyage of discovery, and the historian knew that some very unsavoury discoveries indeed might be made in certain epochs.

Förster's analogy of the intrepid explorer-historian tackling the dangerous eighteenth century highlights two problems. First, the nature of the historical source: argument could only be based on legitimate primary material, but determining what was a legitimate objective source was difficult, not helped by the fact that some sources may have appeared to the historian to be prurient or otherwise subjective. Second, the danger to the historian's morals and, consequently, also to that of his reader as, together, they studied the eighteenth century. At the same time as warning of the dangers of any acquaintance with eighteenth-century society, however, Förster could still titillate his readership with

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<sup>261</sup>Friedrich Förster, *Die Höfe und Cabinette Europa's im achtzehnten Jahrhundert* (Potsdam: Ferdinand Riegel, 1836), I, pp. v-vi.

the promise of such danger through his colourful analogy, for the historian could act as guide to his readers and could be relied upon to keep them safe from the dangers of the past.

#### **4.1.1. The ascendancy of Prussian historiography: Friedrich II vs August the Strong.**

However, if the entire eighteenth century was morally reprehensible to historians in the early nineteenth century, it was still the period in which they located the quickening development of German identity. This was then embodied in the eighteenth-century rulers of Brandenburg-Prussia, Friedrich I (1657-1713), Friedrich Wilhelm I (1688-1740), and Friedrich II (1712-1786). Even at this early period, the Prussian rulers were singled out, by Prussian historians, of course, from their eighteenth-century contemporaries as better – if only slightly so – than the rest. Their polar opposite and the figure depicted as archetypal of all that was considered wrong with the early eighteenth-century court was their Saxon neighbour, August the Strong. Förster points to the circumstances of August's election to the Polish throne as key to an understanding of the path that political history was to take later on, that is, the ascendancy of Prussia over Saxony and consequently the former's importance to German identity. Förster explains that, even before August was a contender for the Polish throne, the Great Elector, Friedrich Wilhelm I of Brandenburg, was asked if he would put himself forward as a candidate. He refused, declaring that he would not convert to Catholicism: “Da sei Gott vor,” rief er mit edlem Unwillen, “daß ich meinen Heiland verläugnen, das freie Wort Gottes aufgeben und unter des Papstes Tyrannei mein

Haupt beugen sollte! [...]”<sup>262</sup> The ascendancy of Prussia was thereby linked to moral integrity and Protestantism, which also preserved integrity of identity, while Saxony’s difficulties were linked to its elector’s display of moral flexibility and openness to non-German Catholic influences.

Historians in the second half of the nineteenth century tended not to phrase their depictions of August the Strong in quite such terms. Even so, although they would acknowledge his abilities, his weaknesses were still linked, though more distantly, to his perceived immorality. For Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886), August was a talented man, but easily distracted, with a particular taste for love affairs and political intrigue, preferring to achieve his ends via illicit or at least questionable means.<sup>263</sup> In Ranke’s opinion, it was August’s ambitions beyond his German territories that rendered Saxony impotent as a great power for the future and even placed August himself outside the pantheon of great men important for German identity:

Wäre es ihm gelungen [...] Böhmen sammt Mähren und Schlesien mit dem reichen Sachsenlande zu verbinden, wie einst die Lausitzen: dann emancipirt von der kaiserlichen Gewalt, welche Rolle hätte er in Deutschland spielen können!<sup>264</sup>

This role that Ranke hypothesizes would have been in some future beyond the eighteenth century, since for August the Strong there was no single ‘Deutschland’.

Bernhard Erdmannsdörffer (1833-1901) gave a more nuanced judgement of August II and his achievements. He likewise viewed much of August’s

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<sup>262</sup>Förster, *Die Höfe und Cabinette Europa’s*, III, p. viii.

<sup>263</sup>Leopold von Ranke, *Sämmtliche Werke* (Leipzig: Duncker und Humblot, 1874), XXVII-XXVIII, *Zwölf Bücher preußischer Geschichte*, pp. 187-188.

<sup>264</sup>Ranke, *Zwölf Bücher preußischer Geschichte*, p. 188.



character as immoral, personally and politically, even seeing in him a perpetrator of crimes against the concept of nation in his treatment of Poland. Nevertheless, Erdmannsdörffer recognized and admired August's determination and ability to achieve his ends.

Man kann – sieht man von allen moralischen Erwägungen ab – nicht leugnen, daß er die ergriffene Aufgabe [of winning the Polish throne] nicht nur mit verwegendem Muth und vollendeter Rücksichtslosigkeit, sondern auch mit großer Geschicklichkeit und kluger Berechnung zur Ausführung brachte.<sup>265</sup>

Unlike Ranke, who judged August's early Polish project of attaining the throne in terms of how it determined Saxony's role in an increasingly united nineteenth-century Germany, Erdmannsdörffer viewed it in terms of what it prevented and then enabled for eighteenth and nineteenth-century German development. By winning the Polish election, August had prevented the French candidate, François Louis de Bourbon, Prince de Conti (1664-1709), from increasing French influence in the area. Erdmannsdörffer commented that this was an important outcome for German history:

Friedrich August von Sachsen gehört nicht zu den preiswerthen Fürstengestalten seines Jahrhunderts; [...] aber damals konnte sein Sieg als ein namhafter Erfolg betrachtet werden, der auch dem deutschen Interesse zu Gute kam. Schweres Unheil ergab die Folgezeit – wer vermag zu sagen, welches Maaß des Verderbens sich über Deutschland ergossen hätte, wenn in jenem Wahlkampf der Deutsche dem Frazosen erlegen wäre.<sup>266</sup>

At least, then, there was a German on the Polish throne. Though corrupted by

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<sup>265</sup>Bernhard Erdmannsdörffer, *Deutsche Geschichte vom Westfälischen Frieden bis zum Regierungsantritt Friedrich's des Großen 1648-1740*, 2 vols (Berlin: G. Grote, 1893), II, p. 90.

<sup>266</sup>Erdmannsdörffer, *Deutsche Geschichte*, II, p. 95.

foreign influences, at least August was not actually a Frenchman; the ‘Verderben’ for Germany, had a French ruler been elected, would have been both political and moral, with devastating effect on ‘Germanness’.

#### **4.2. The flexibility of historical reception in the nineteenth-century historical novel.**

Prussians dominated nineteenth-century historiography and their verdict on August the Strong, even taking into account the various qualifications they put on it, is overwhelmingly negative: a figure who was not only morally questionable, but who failed to have the impact on a future Germany that his Prussian contemporary did precisely because of his faulty moral compass, which also nullified his importance in the formation of German identity. However, as Peterson points out in his book on the tensions between history writing and historical fiction in the identity-building project of the nineteenth century, ‘historians represented no more than half the discourse of history’ in this period.<sup>267</sup> The other half of this discourse was provided by historical novelists. Their novels were popular reading matter for the general public, and covered different and more varied topics than simply the great rulers and politics of a particular period in history, looking additionally and instead at areas of social history not covered by academics.<sup>268</sup> Alberto Martino’s lists of the most popularly borrowed authors from lending libraries in nineteenth-century Germany demonstrate the consistent popularity of the historical novel for a broadly middle-class readership. From the early nineteenth century and on into the early twentieth century authors known to

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<sup>267</sup>Brent O. Peterson, *History, fiction, and Germany: writing the nineteenth-century nation* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005), p. 32.

<sup>268</sup>Peterson, *History, fiction, and Germany*, p. 34-35.

have written historical novels and to have used the reign of August the Strong in at least one of them appear repeatedly on lists of successful authors held by German lending libraries. Among them are *Aurora, Gräfin von Königsmarck: ein Frauenschicksal um August den Starken* (1817) by Wilhelmine von Gersdorf (1768-1847), *Galanterien und Liebes-Geschichten August des Starken, Königs von Polen und Churfürsten von Sachsen* (1833) by H.E.R. Belani (the pseudonym of Karl Ludwig Häberlin; 1784-1858), *Friedemann Bach* (1858) by Albert Emil Brachvogel (1824-1878), *Ein Jahr aus dem Leben August des Starken* (1863) and other novels by Franz Lubojatzky (1807-1887), *Der Königssohn oder die letzten Tage August's von Polen* (1866) by Penseroso (the pseudonym of Ferdinande Heege, dates unknown), and *Die schöne Gräfin Cosel: Roman einer Geliebten Augusts des Starken* (1932) by Georg von Ompteda (1863-1931).<sup>269</sup>

The consequences this has for the depiction of August the Strong in this period, and therefore also for the importance ascribed to him as an historical figure, however implicitly, are considerable. Although, as will be discussed below, writers could still repeat the views of the historians or reinforce them through their use of primary sources, they were also able to open up August's fictional persona so as to describe a variety of character traits and redeeming features that historians did not allow for. It is also important to realize that writers of historical novels did not exclusively write about one historical figure or period. If they wrote about the figure or period of August the Strong, they were just as likely to write about the figure or period of Friedrich II, or of some other historical figure. While historians may have been preoccupied by the question of national identity

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<sup>269</sup>See Alberto Martino, *Die deutsche Leihbibliothek: Geschichte einer literarischen Institution (1756-1914)* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1990), esp. pp. 276-281 and pp. 404-417.

through history and focused on the role of Prussia, literary writers often went beyond both of those topics in their texts, though themes of ‘Germanness’ may have hovered in the background. The fictional personæ of August the Strong in nineteenth-century literature are a good example of this. Moreover, they parallel a number of the nineteenth-century fictional manifestations of Friedrich II as, for example, hero, father, or ‘fallible mortal’, a phenomenon also explored by Peterson.<sup>270</sup>

#### 4.2.1. August as scene-setting device.

A common device used by authors in their novels was to use the sub-title, ‘an historical novel set in the time of X’. X could be a figure or an epoch. Some examples are *Das schwedische Hauptquartier in Altranstädt oder Der Drei-  
Veilchen-Brokat. Ein historisch-romantisches Gemählde aus dem Großen  
Nordischen Kriege* (1830) by Robert Walthers, *Kerkerwonne. Historischer Roman  
aus dem Anfang des 18. Jahrhunderts* (1859) by Henryk Rzewuski and translated  
by W. Bachmann,<sup>271</sup> and *Röschen des Pfarrers Tochter von Taubenheim.  
Erzählung aus der Zeit Friedrich August des Starken* (1865) by Franz Lubojatzky. Each of these elicits certain expectations from the reader. As well as locating the action of the novel within a certain period – some time within the first thirty years of the eighteenth century – these sub-titles create additional reader expectations for the tone of the society depicted in that novel. This may be obvious from the rest of the title: Walthers’ *Das schwedische Hauptquartier* announces itself from

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<sup>270</sup> See Peterson, *History, Fiction, and Germany*.

<sup>271</sup> *Kerkerwonne* is generally listed as being by W. Bachmann. However, as Bachmann explains in his foreword, his work is in fact a translation of *Adam Śmigiełski Starosta Gnieźnieński* (1851) by Henryk Rzewuski (1791-1866), a Polish novelist and publicist.

the outset as a novel with a military setting, but the Northern War gives it more historical context. Readers are thereby prompted to refer back to what they know about the Northern War from other works they have read, fictional or non-fictional. Rzewuski/Bachmann's *Kerkerwonne* is vague, though if readers have read historians such as Schlosser or Förster, then this may well prompt them to expect the worst of the novel's characters, at the very least of its villains. The subtitle of Lubojatzky's *Röschen des Pfarrers Tochter* prompts similar expectations but goes beyond this because the title itself contains a tantalising juxtaposition of moral and social content. Röschen is a pastor's daughter, so, because of her relationship to a moral pillar of society, the village pastor, and therefore to the Lutheran church, the reader expects her to be a morally pure individual. Moreover, readers can locate her socially as belonging to the middle class, possibly not particularly wealthy, but certainly respected. At the other end of the title is the reference to 'Friedrich August [der] Starke', a man whom the historians depict as the epitome of the morally dubious eighteenth-century court in every sense, politically and personally, an image that to the nineteenth-century mind is reinforced by general knowledge of *La Saxe galante* (1735) by Karl Ludwig von Pöllnitz (1692-1775), the popular and salacious eighteenth-century work, which chronicles August's sexual adventures.<sup>272</sup> Morally, he is the opposite of what a pastor's daughter should be, and his social position at the upper end of the ruling classes, wealthy and powerful, is also distinctly different to that of a pastor. The juxtaposition is therefore a tantalising one for the reader, who, before they open the book and begin reading, is implicitly invited to postulate a number of awful

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<sup>272</sup>For the nineteenth-century English and German reception of Pöllnitz, see Brook, "“An intelligent foreigner”?”.

scenarios for the fate of Röschen, the pastor's daughter.

In fact, the eponymous heroine of the novel does not come into contact with Friedrich August. Instead, naive, beautiful, and pure Röschen is seduced by the local nobleman, Freiherr von Falkenheym, believing that he is in love with her and will marry her. However, he is persuaded by his relatives at the Dresden court that he should be setting his sights at a more conventional match appropriate to his social standing and wealth. Following their wishes, which are aided and abetted by the double-dealings of Falkenheym's servant, Edmund, the baron soon believes himself to be in love with another lady at court and ceases contact with Röschen. To her horror, Röschen finds herself pregnant. Unable, due to the sudden death of her mother, to go abroad for the birth, which would have enabled her to hide the pregnancy from the town and escape disgrace, she resorts to infanticide. Röschen is caught as she tries to bury the child, resulting in her trial and sentence to death. Although there are scenes in Dresden, the reader is only presented with the generally familial figures and close social acquaintances associated with Falkenheym and Röschen respectively. August therefore figures as a contextualising device for the plot which debates the issues of seduction, extramarital pregnancy, infanticide, and attitudes to unmarried mothers, particularly from the less privileged sections of society. On one side of the social fence: those who can, do as they please and assume money can do away with any problems; on the other side: those who must cope with the personal and social devastation caused by the actions of their social superiors. The anger of the lower classes in the face of social injustice simmers dangerously at an early point in the novel when another impoverished woman, Marliese Nitsche, is sentenced to

prison and is put on public display for having borne an illegitimate child. She completes her sentence but cannot bear the shame of her situation and, on her return to her home town, she throws herself into the river, drowning both herself and her child. The local crowd's mood menaces those who dare to throw insults at Marliese to such an extent that they are ultimately silenced.<sup>273</sup> A similar sympathy is shown to Röschen, who is posthumously idolised as a martyr to the injustice of sexual seduction by the aristocracy.<sup>274</sup>

Significantly, however, although Falkenheym, the young nobleman, functions as a representative of that part of society that exploits those below it, and although he eventually pays twice over for his wrong-doing towards Röschen (by marrying a woman who does not love him and is interested only in his money, and then by dying in terror during a haunting by Röschen's ghost), he is not without redeeming features. The narrator makes it clear that it is only Falkenheym's weak character that allows him to be manipulated away from his commitment to Röschen in the first place, and the deliberate suppression by Edmund of a letter from Röschen leaves him unaware of her pregnancy until after his engagement, when he can no longer repair the damage. His horror at his own actions and what it could mean for himself and those around him, not least his intended bride, is great, but this is not intended as an example of his callousness towards Röschen, but rather his misguidedness, for 'der Freiherr war nur leicht,

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<sup>273</sup>Franz Lubojatzky, *Röschen des Pfarrers Tochter von Taubenheim: Erzählung aus der Zeit Friedrich August des Starken* (Löbau: J.G. Walde, [1865]), p. 106.

<sup>274</sup>Infanticide was a popular literary and artistic theme in the late eighteenth century, reaching its height between 1772 and 1791. See Helen Fronius, 'Images of infanticide in eighteenth-century Germany', in *Women and death: representations of female victims and perpetrators in German culture (1500-2000)*, ed. by Helen Fronius and Anna Linton (Woodbridge: Camden House, 2008), pp. 93-112. Lubojatzky's exploration of the social and moral implications surrounding the infanticide theme (here with a particularly critical view of the role of the Lutheran church) therefore represents an extremely late literary example.

nicht schlecht, von Herzen'.<sup>275</sup> The extent to which Falkenheym is representative of the court society of Dresden implied by the associations of the novel's title is therefore limited. The name 'Friedrich August der Starke' is a contextualizing device for the plot, which centres on characters younger than those who determine the society in which they find themselves. Röschen is suffocated by her overbearing father and misled by her frivolous mother; Falkenheym is easily coerced by his elderly aunt and her friends at court. While these characters, and Falkenheym in particular, are products of their society – the immoral, frivolous, oppressive society of August's Dresden court – yet they are also out of step with it. The absent August the Strong is thereby implicitly portrayed as holding back social progress, and the novel intimates that it is the lower classes who will take it upon themselves to force change from below.

#### **4.2.2. August as legitimizing plot device.**

A second way in which a fictional August figure is used by authors in this period is as a legitimizing or enabling device. By this is meant a figure who does not feature in the main action of the novel, but who is used at useful points in the plot to put the seal of approval on the main character's actions, for example, giving permission for a marriage to take place and ensuring the novel's happy ending. Such a figure is far from the implicitly negative portrayal of the contextualising 'Friedrich August der Starke' of Lubojatzky's *Röschen*. The fictional August in Rzewuski/Bachmann's *Kerkerwonne* is an example of this. The Polish family Schmiegel is of noble descent but impoverished. The family's hopes rest on their

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<sup>275</sup>Lubojatzky, *Röschen*, p. 233



youngest member, Adolph, who is devoted to Sophie, the Wojwode Potocki's daughter. Having managed to gain the favour of the *Kron-Referendar* (crown prosecutor), Adolph joins his regiment and proves his worth in battle against the Turks in 1683. When the new Polish king, August, is elected, the narrator explains that the Wojwode is then removed from his post but still treated kindly and his sons are given posts in the new regime as royal officials. Potocki himself refuses to attend the new king, but this does not seem to affect how his sons are treated by August. When August is ousted by the Swedish king, Karl XII, Potocki's sons find themselves fighting against August out of respect for their father's politics, not because they agree with him. Once again the younger generation seems to be at the mercy of their elders, forced into a political and social situation they would rather change. Potocki discovers Adolph's requited love for his daughter and plots to lure him away and incarcerate him in an isolated castle, from where he is rescued by a poet friend. Adolph is then at liberty to engineer a campaign against the Swedes in Poland and is instrumental in August's return to power. Adolph confides the story of his love for Sophie to Tsar Peter during a meeting between the Polish king and his Russian ally, and August is soon persuaded to intervene with Potocki so that his young supporter may marry the woman he loves.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the period in which this novel was written and the Polish origin of its author, one of the main themes of *Kerkerwonne* is that of liberty from oppression. Adolph himself is a symbol of this, made more significant by the poet who rescues him from imprisonment in order that he might go on to play the role he is destined for.<sup>276</sup> The figure of the poet is here symbolic

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<sup>276</sup>[Henryk Rzewuski], *Kerkerwonne: historischer Roman aus dem Anfange des XVIII. Jahrhunderts*, trans. by W. Bachmann (Berlin: R. Decker, 1859), p. 241-242.

of literature and culture as the cultural guardian of Polish national consciousness, especially during the Third Partition of Poland from 1795, during which time Poland did not exist as a state.<sup>277</sup> Adolph is not the only figure with symbolic potential, however. Several characters argue for the role of August as a liberator for the Polish people, most particularly Adolph, who, disguised as a monk after his escape, passionately argues August's case to a travelling companion:

“Und wenn unser König [August] nichts gethan hätte, als daß er Kamieniec wieder an uns *gebracht* und uns von dem Tribut befreit, den wir den Tartaren in Pelzen *bringen* mußten, da hat er genug und so viel gethan, daß wir Alle und wenn wir hundert Leben hätten, sie für ihn in die Schanze schlagen müßten. Aber selbst abgesehen davon, ist es für unser Volk ein großes Glück, einen Fürsten auf unserem Throne zu sehen, der uns dessen Erblichkeit in Aussicht stellt, oder soll sich etwa das traurige Schauspiel des letzten Konvokations-Reichstags noch öfter wiederholen?”<sup>278</sup>

August is seen by Adolph as the ideal king who thinks to serve the people, rather than having his people wait upon him. Indeed, utterly contradicting the general opinion of the German historians, the narrator explains that August is the ruler ‘mit dem die nachmals sprichwörtlich gewordenen guten alten Zeiten anfangen’.<sup>279</sup> Of course, in this case, this is a view that enters Germany from Poland through the novel's translation and is therefore not originally German. However, it is nonetheless a view available in German within a relatively short period of the novel's original publication in Polish. Although Rzewuski does not appear in the lending library lists of most borrowed authors in the nineteenth century, the same lists show a considerable appetite for foreign language

<sup>277</sup> See Piotr S. Wandycz, *The price of freedom: a history of East Central Europe from the middle ages to the present*, 2nd edn. (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 140 and p. 154.

<sup>278</sup> [Rzewuski], *Kerkerwonne*, p. 249 (italics in original).

<sup>279</sup> [Rzewuski], *Kerkerwonne*, p. 151.

literature, which must have fed into the German public's view of history through literature, even if to a lesser extent than that produced by native German authors.<sup>280</sup> The overwhelmingly positive portrayal of August in *Kerkerwonne* should therefore not be discounted as outside the purview of the German reader.

The August of *Kerkerwonne* is a progressive and protective ruler, who not only symbolizes the liberation of entire nations from the oppression of exploitative foreign powers, but also actively liberates the individuals of the next generation from the social oppression of the generation that preceded them. Despite Adolph's defence of August to his travelling companion, it is nonetheless Adolph von Schmiegel who is portrayed as instrumental in the military defeat of Karl XII which enables the return of the Saxon elector-king after the Battle of Pułtawa on 8 July 1709:

Da ertönt auf beiden Seiten die Kunde, daß sich um einen Reiterknäuel die Entscheidung dränge. [...] Aber bald lichten sich die Reihen vor unseren Blicken, die Schaar dringt unaufhaltsam vor, an ihrer Spitze – Adolph von Schmiegel. Als König Karl diesen Namen nennen hörte, gab er den Befehl, ihn fortzutragen, und das Geschick dieses Tages und des nordischen Continents war entschieden.<sup>281</sup>

Adolph is, however, fighting for what August represents and for what his reign promises for his generation. His marriage to Sophie, through her wealth and position his social superior, is the concrete demonstration of union after division and the symbolic fulfilment of August's political promise.

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<sup>280</sup>See Alberto Martino, *Die deutsche Leihbibliothek*, p. 661f.

<sup>281</sup>[Rzewuski], *Kerkerwonne*, p. 265.

#### 4.2.3. Embellishing history: using aspects of August's life.

A third way in which the historical novelist used August the Strong was to take aspects of his life – real or invented – and embellish them. Theoretically, this would make August the main character in these kind of novels, or at least an important key figure, and make him more central to the plot. In fact, this happens only rarely, though of course the boundaries between the ‘types’ of historical novels making use of a particular historical figure are permeable. Examples of novels that embellish real or invented events pertinent to August's life are Lubojatzky's two novels, *Schloß Stolpen oder Erinnerungen aus dem Leben der Gräfin Cossell* (1853) and *Ein Jahr aus dem Leben August des Starken* (1863), and Penseroso's *Der Königssohn oder die letzten Tage August's von Polen* (1866). In each case, although August features largely as a character, yet the main plot or storyline is not about him. Instead, these examples deal respectively with the life of his longest-serving mistress, Anna Constantia von Cosel (1680-1765; here, ‘Cossell’), Elisabeth Rösner, the fictional daughter of the Lutheran mayor of Toruń, Johann Gottfried Rösner (1658-1724), who was executed in the aftermath of the Tumult of Toruń, and the fictitious secret illegitimate son of August the Strong, Leonat Lubomirsky, by his fictitious English mistress.

Arguably, in at least two of these novels – *Schloß Stolpen* and *Der Königssohn* – August functions again as a legitimizing or galvanizing figure for the actions of the main figures, Constantia von Cossell and Leonat Lubomirsky. Unlike the August figure of *Kerkerwonne*, though, in each of these novels he stands much closer to the main characters in the role of lover or mentor/father. These two Augusts are by no means the same character. The August of *Schloß*

*Stolpen* is a figure who is uncomfortable with the contradictions in his life between the personal and the political, arguing with his wife, Christiane Eberhardine, about both his conversion to Catholicism and his mistresses, until she finally accuses him of failing before God:

Langsam ließ der König die Hände von seinem Antlitz gleiten, sein Blick fiel auf sie. "Sie zwingen mich zu einer Antwort, die für Sie nur eine Anklage ist," sagte er, sich von dem Sessel erhebend. "Wenn Sie sagen, Gott sei *mein* Richter, so sage ich, er sei es zwischen uns Beiden, ich rufe *ihn* zum Richter, denn in Ihrer Seele ist keine Milde. Sie pochen auf Ihre Tugend und stellen sie mir gegenüber. Haben Sie ein Recht dazu? [...] Sie sahen meine Lebenslust, wie ich aufgeglüht in Freude bei Allem, was die Sinne reizt, wie ich vollkräftig, ein lebendig sprudelnder Quell, nach Mitgefühl strebte – Sie entzogen sich mir, Ihre Umarmungen waren kalt, ich hielt kein Weib an meinem Herzen, das voller Lust und Leben glühte wie ich, nein, eine starre Heilige [...]. Das drängte mich von Ihnen, das hieß mich die Freude da suchen, wo ich sie fand. Sie beugten sich unter das Joch der *Pflicht*, ich wollte *Freude* – so kam es, daß zwischen uns eine Scheidewand fiel. Verdammen Sie mich, wenn Sie können; doch ehe Sie es thun, richten Sie die Frage an Ihren Gott: warum hast du mich so kalt geschaffen und ihm Feuer in die Adern fließen lassen?"<sup>282</sup>

It is possible that Lubojatzky was a Catholic out of sympathy with Christiane Eberhardine's strong Lutheranism. It is certainly the case that the need for religious tolerance, often tied up with (positive) social change, is a theme in many of his novels, including *Schloß Stolpen* and *Röschen*. August himself feels forced to behave unnaturally by being forced to repress his personality by the strictures of oppressively moralistic elements in his life, represented by his wife. There is a fundamental mismatch between the way August wishes to express himself and the manner in which those around him do so. Time and again, August is not in control of the events around him; the political and the personal are brought together and

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<sup>282</sup>Franz Lubojatzky, *Schloß Stolpen oder Erinnerungen aus dem Leben der Gräfin von Cossell*, 2 vols (Dresden: Arnoldische Buchhandlung, 1853), I, pp. 228-229.

clash. The beginning of his affair with Anna von Cossell is engineered by his courtiers and advisors, the historical figures Johann Reinhold von Patkul (1660-1707) and Wolf Dietrich, Count von Beichlingen (1665-1725).<sup>283</sup> A number of plots against August go on under his nose, and their revelation to August is usually a manipulative effort on the part of one minister or another to entice a certain reaction from the king. As a result of his humiliation at the hands of the Swedish king, August is unable to prevent Patkul's execution, although he wants to:

Trotz der vielen Fehler seines Charakters behauptete doch als angeborene Eigenschaft seines Gemüthes die Milde den Vorrang, und nie war diese Tugend in einen heftigeren und ernsteren Conflict mit der ihm aufgezwungenen Nothwendigkeit gekommen, als eben zu der Zeit, wo Carl sein Wort in Sachsen zum Gesetz erhob, unterstützt von einer siegreichen Armee, die jede Verzögerung des Gehorsams an dem Besiegten und dessen Besitzthum zu strafen bereit war.

Carl hatte im Friedensvertrage als unerläßlich die Auslieferung Patkul's bedungen. Diesen Mann der Rache Carl's preiszugeben, dünkte dem König August unehrenhaft, er versuchte daher jedes Mittel, den schwedischen Sieger umzustimmen; er würde indeß eher einen Stein erweicht haben, als den Sinn seines Besiegers.<sup>284</sup>

Basically a good man, this August is constantly at the mercy of his political circumstances and, try as he might, he cannot separate his personal life or his personal feelings and principles from it.

Penseroso's August in *Der Königssohn* is able – despite the secret at the core of the plot – to demonstrate much more openly his positive, humane side.

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<sup>283</sup>Patkul was a Lithuanian aristocrat and favourite of August the Strong. His energetic work in the cause of the Lithuanian state is considered to have caused the Great Northern War, as it was at his instigation that Saxony allied with Denmark and Russia against Sweden in 1699. In 1707, after the conclusion of the Peace of Altranstädt, he was handed over to Swedish authorities who executed him on the wheel. Beichlingen was chancellor and *Oberhofmarschall* (lord steward) to August the Strong. Beichlingen fell from favour in 1703, before Constantia von Cosel became August's mistress, and the two did not meet until 1710.

<sup>284</sup>Lubojatzky, *Schloß Stolpen*, vol. 2, pp. 184-185.

Leonat Lubomirsky does not know who his father and mother really are, and believes instead that his aunt, the widowed Countess Lubomirska, is his mother. Even when Lubomirska explains the reason for August's unusually favourable treatment of Countess Helene Orzselska, a commoner he has brought to his court and who is his illegitimate daughter, Leonat does not subject the favourable treatment the king has given him to any critical examination. Instead, he is shocked that August, whom he idolizes, should have extramarital affairs and illegitimate children at all:

“Und wer ist ihr Vater?” fuhr Leonat zu fragen fort.  
 “Mein Gott! der König,” entgegnete die Gräfin; “darum beschützt er sie – deshalb hat er sie geadelt und an seinen Hof gezogen.”  
 “Wie! Der König?” rief Leonat, die Farbe wechselnd; “o - - das glaube ich nicht.”  
 “Es ist aber wahr,” erwiderte die Gräfin; “Du bist ein Kind, Leonat! Wenn Du älter und verständiger werden wirst, findest Du das begreiflich und zweifelst nicht daran. [...]”<sup>285</sup>

Not only has Leonat been kept at August's court, he is the king's particular favourite, having been given an education as a page and, when he expresses a wish to become a soldier rather than following the more bureaucratic career of diplomacy for which his academic aptitude seems to make him more suitable, not only does August grant his wish, he also gives Leonat his entire uniform as a present. Then, when Leonat admits that soldiering is not for him after all, August puts him into the diplomatic service without a murmur. This favouritism goes beyond mere career advancement, as August is also very fond of hearing Leonat read Italian poetry aloud, much as his biological mother used to, though Leonat is

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<sup>285</sup> Penseroso [Ferdinande Heege], *Der Königssohn oder die letzten Tage August's von Polen*, 4 vols (Leipzig: Carl Zieger, 1866), I, pp. 41-42.

unaware of this. The king's concern for Leonat when the young man collapses and falls ill after the shock of discovering that Helene Orzselska (who Leonat does not yet know is his half-sister) is to marry another man, is not that of a mentor towards his protégé:

Der König, ehe er ausstieg, neigte sich zu Leonat nieder, den der Kammerherr aus Vorsorge neben ihn gesetzt hatte. "Wie geht es Dir, lieber Leonat?" fragte er gütig; "ist Dir's ein wenig besser?"  
 "Ein wenig, gnädigster Herr!" entgegnete Leonat mit heiserer gepreßter Stimme.  
 "Gute Nacht, mein Sohn!" sagte der König weich; und Leonat fühlte die Lippen des Königs auf seiner Stirn [...].<sup>286</sup>

Penseroso's August, who dies at the end of the second volume of this four-volume novel, is a sentimental, loving father, whose biggest regret is that he did not treat the love of his life, Leonat's mother, the way she deserved. On his deathbed, with Leonat sitting by him, his remorse brings her forth in a dream to save him from the avenging spirit of another woman, most probably Constantia von Cosel (who was still alive at the time of August the Strong's death in 1733). August tries to make amends by ensuring the wellbeing and protection of his illegitimate son, and so he leaves a letter to his successor and only legitimate son, Friedrich August II (later August III of Poland) recommending Leonat to him.

The August the Strong portrayed by Penseroso is therefore similar to that of Rzewuski, insofar as he promotes and ensures the success of the next generation. This time the members of the 'next generation', despite their blood relationship to August in the novel, are not automatically part of the noble classes. Instead, they must either be raised up to that position by August himself, as is the

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<sup>286</sup>Penseroso [Heege], *Der Königssohn*, I, p. 139.



case with Helene Orzselska, or they are allowed the chance to find their own way in the world and, indeed, society, as Leonat does in England in his role as diplomat after August's death. His life there, which seems to hover on the threshold between the lower nobility and the gentry, takes on an increasingly bourgeois ('bürgerlich') tone, in that he is required to work in an office, has duties he must attend to, and leads a social life that does not involve frequent court entertainments. Helene Orzselska does not appear happy in her marriage and she suspects that she has made the wrong choice in wanting social advancement, but Leonat's existence in a less courtly world is one that involves marrying for love and, therefore, happiness. Although his father may have been a product of an entirely different society and the symbol of it, too, August is also the means by which Leonat is able to find his way in a very different, more 'modern' society. A break with the past is certainly made, but it is also suggested that without that rather dubious past a 'better' present/future would not be possible.

#### **4.2.4. Fiction acting as history: the historical source in fictional depictions of August the Strong.**

Works by Carl Schmeling and Eugen Hermann provide examples of the final variation on the historical novel and its use of the historical figure. Here, the novel's approach is to align itself quite closely with the activity of historians, though without the author necessarily claiming to be an historian himself. The 'truth' claim of the novelist writing a version of (supposedly less fictional) history manifests itself in a number of ways. Even Lubojatzky, a prolific writer of historical novels and very popular among the subscribers to lending libraries in

nineteenth-century Germany, hints that one of the purposes of his novel *Schloß Stolpen* is to try to rehabilitate the reputation of Constantia von Cosel:

Die offen auftretenden, sich zuweilen sogar mit ihrer eigenen Schande brüstenden Leidenschaften jener Zeit bilden den Grundton unserer nachfolgenden Schilderungen, zu deren Hauptfigur wir eine berühmte, in mancher Beziehung berüchtigte, jedenfalls aber von der großen Welt zu hart verurtheilte Frau [Constantia von Cosel] wählten. Ihr vielbewegtes, theils glänzendes, theils trauriges Leben bietet den reichsten Stoff zu einer des Lesers Aufmerksamkeit spannenden Erzählung. Im Voraus weisen wir jedoch jede Vermuthung, als wollten wir das Andenken an “das galante Sachsen” bei der Lesewelt erneuern, mit Entschiedenheit ab. Unsere Geschichtserzählung erstrebt einen edleren Zweck, als der Frivolität zu huldigen.<sup>287</sup>

Taken from the opening paragraphs of *Schloß Stolpen*, these words tread a fine line between the novel's fictional status and a claim to be writing history. The entertainment value of the past and of the life of Constantia von Cosel in particular is mentioned explicitly, but entertainment is not, according to the text, the primary aim of the novel. Lubojatzky or the narrative voice of the novel does not go so far as to claim that what follows is what ‘really happened’, nor is there a claim to be actively reassessing or critiquing history in the manner of an historian, but there is nonetheless the claim that, while history (and historians) have evaluated the eighteenth century itself correctly as ‘shameful’ and ‘frivolous’, it has misjudged the roles of individual lives during that period and their importance for the past and the present. Although it may not be the main message or moral of the tale the novel tells, this introduction clearly states that it will attempt a revision of historical opinion.

Two examples of novels which take the work of historians and their effect

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<sup>287</sup>Lubojatzky, *Schloß Stolpen*, pp. 3-4.

on or use for the public to different areas are *Fedderic von Norrmann* (1856) by Carl Schmeling and *Erste Liebe August des Starken* (1865) by Eugen Hermann (the pen name of Eugen Hermann von Dedenroth; 1829-1887). At first glance, Hermann's work is simply a novel of entertainment with a scandalous plot telling the tale of the young Prince Friedrich August's amorous exploits in Spain while he was on his tour of European courts between 1687 and 1689. Indeed, the book's publisher, Gustav Behrend, shows himself to be in the business of publishing novels of entertainment, and Hermann to have penned a number of other novels or novellas under the heading of 'entertainment', with a series advertised in the flyleaves of *Erste Liebe August des Starken* called 'Eisenbahn-Unterhaltungen'. Hermann's work, *Erste Liebe August des Starken*, is clearly based on the first half of Pöllnitz's *La Saxe galante*. Hermann follows Pöllnitz's structure closely, opening with the affair between Johann Georg IV of Saxony and Magdalena Sibylle von Neitschütz and the antagonism it caused between the elector and his younger brother, Friedrich August (later August the Strong). Like Pöllnitz, Hermann also tells of Johann Georg's attempt to kill his wife, Eleonore Erdmuthe von Sachsen-Eisenach, and cites these events as the cause for Friedrich August's departure from Dresden and his tour of Europe. The main plot of the novella then goes on to place Friedrich August in Spain. His adventures there – the bullfight and his dramatic and tragic affair with the unhappily married Marquise von Manzera, which are also both related in *La Saxe galante* – are embellished with the additional plotlines of intrigue against Friedrich August's life by certain members of the court in Dresden in revenge for other love affairs, and the plight of Ines Velazquez who is trying, with her father's help, to escape the unwanted

sexual attentions of Don Gustos y Rivertera, the corrupt and powerful chief of police and intendant of the Inquisition.

The text's relationship to its source is not always openly acknowledged. Certainly if the reader has already come into contact with Pöllnitz's work, then the quantity of original and reused material is entirely clear, even if Pöllnitz's value as an historical source remains uncertain. If the reader has not read Pöllnitz, however, then the novella's status as fact and/or fiction becomes even more confusing. Hermann gives two sources for the content of *Erste Liebe August des Starken*: Pöllnitz's *La Saxe galante* is cited in a single footnote as an historical source, confirming that the Madrid bullfight in which Friedrich August is supposed to have taken part to such acclaim really did take place, and a document written by the monk involved in Friedrich August's seduction of the Marquise von Manzera is claimed to exist which is also supposed to chronicle Friedrich August's further adventures in Europe:

Wenige Blätter weiter, und die Chronik erzählt von den neuen Liebesabenteuern, die den galanten Prinzen bald die unglückliche Marquise vergessen ließen. Er machte Eroberungen in Venedig und Rom, überall wußte der Mann, dessen reiche Abenteuer auf diesem Felde fast unzählbar sind, Herzen zu gewinnen und zu brechen.<sup>288</sup>

This last seems with high probability to be a veiled reference to Pöllnitz again, whose account does continue on in the manner described by the novella's narrator. The author thereby tries to make two sources out of one – one that is (supposedly, or at least within the framework of the novella) historically credible and verifiable, and another that may or may not be considered fictional by the reader,

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<sup>288</sup>Eugen Hermann [Eugen Hermann von Dedenroth], *Erste Liebe August des Starken* (Berlin: Gustav Behrend, 1865), p. 168.

depending on whether they give credence to the document's survival and preservation by the characters described in the story. The manner in which each of these 'sources' is brought into the novella may encourage or discourage belief in their credibility, the first outside the plot itself as a marginal, the second within the plot and claimed as the main basis for it. The text as a whole is a product, marketed as a piece of entertainment for the reader – perhaps to occupy the time on a train journey! – so the overall effect is one of a game played with the reader's sense of the boundary between history and fiction. This is done without disturbing the general view of historians that the early eighteenth century and August the Strong in particular were morally corrupt and that the actions of individuals were highly sexualized, though it is also worth mentioning that the general reader would not necessarily have perceived the Prussian bias of much official historiography.

Another example of the combination of history and fiction is provided by Schmeling's *Fedderic von Norrmann* (1856). This, too, is published as part of a series, this time in a larger, magazine-like format instead of the octavo format of all the other works discussed in this chapter. The publishers preface the work with a kind of mission statement explaining what they intend the series to be and what the reader should get out of it:

Die Verlagshandlung glaubt sich ein ganz besonderes Recht auf die von Jahr zu Jahr steigende Theilnahme des Publikums dadurch erworben zu haben, daß sie sich in dieser Zeitschrift das Ziel gesetzt, nur historische Novellen zu liefern.

Die Geschichte ist und bleibt die anziehendste und lehrreichste Lektüre für jeden denkenden Leser. Nicht allein lernen wir durch das genauere Bekanntwerden mit derselben einerseits die Vergänglichkeit alles Irdischen, die Nichtigkeit aller menschlichen Bestrebungen *gegen den*

*gewaltigen Flügelschlag des Zeitgeistes* erkennen, sondern wir erfahren andererseits zugleich, wie Großes und Staunenswerthes im Laufe der Jahrtausende, so weit hinauf, als die Schriftsprache und Bruchstücke des Geschehenen aufbewahrt hat, zu allen Zeiten von den großen Männern aller Nationen, welche die Geschichte für würdig gehalten, einige Blätter in ihrem nie endenden Buche zu füllen, geleistet worden ist.

Was wir an unserer Zeit, befangen von Meinungen und Vorurtheilen, nicht erkennen können, das lernen wir an der Hand des kundigen Geschichtsschreibers im Spiegel der Vergangenheit mit Leichtigkeit kennen.

In dem vorliegenden Lieferungswerke, das sich in der Zeit seines Bestehens einen über ganz Deutschland verbreiteten Leserkreis erworben hat, wird dem Leser nicht ein trockenes Geschichtswerk geboten, sondern es werden die erhabenen Vorgänge in der Geschichte im Gewande des Romans vorgeführt. Der von der Arbeit und Anstrengung des Tages Ermüdete soll in seinen Mußestunden nicht abgespannt, es soll seinem Geiste neue Nahrung, seinen Kenntnissen Bereicherung geboten werden.

Der Wahrheit der Geschichte wird trotz der Form kein Abbruch gethan, kein Iota an ihr gemodelt, eingedenk des Spruches: "*Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht!*"<sup>289</sup>

The publisher reaffirms the usefulness and attractiveness of the study of history for its factual content and its moral potential. Interestingly, he seems to claim that this study is an observation of and a continuation of a struggle with and against a bygone moment in history, both in the past and in the present. That is to say, a significant component of history itself is deemed to consist of struggles against the status quo of society (the *Zeitgeist*), and later generations learning about those past struggles represent a continuation of that struggle, this time against the status quo of their own society and its received opinions and prejudices. This struggle is then connected to the reading of the series of historical novels published in the publisher's series, *Fata Morgana*. The chosen title of the series is a strange one in view of the claims the publisher makes about its purpose, since a 'fata morgana' is a mirage, something that is not really there or changes the shape of the thing it

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<sup>289</sup> *Fata Morgana: Spiegelbilder aus der Vergangenheiten aller Völker. Original-Novellen treu nach authentischen Geschichtswerken*, VI (Berlin: Albert Sacco, 1856), n. pag.

presents. Despite this, the publisher claims that the dryness of reading works of history is relieved through framing it in the structures and conventions of the novel, but then goes on to deny that this might in any way affect the quality and veracity of the historical knowledge, criticism, or analysis contained therein. In other words, the reader of this series is to understand that these novels are pretty much equivalent to scholarly works on the subject based on archival research, thereby justifying the series' sub-title, 'Original-Novellen treu nach authentischen Geschichtswerken'.

The novelistic 'clothing' of history in *Fedderic von Norrmann* is provided by the story of the eponymous hero, who, orphaned as a young man, is sent out into the world with a certificate of nobility but without knowing who his real parents are. He falls in love with the daughter of a Danish minister but must work his way up in the world before he can win her and, thanks to the great similarity he bears to Karl XII of Sweden, finds himself involved in the fortunes of the Northern War, variously providing services, willingly or unwillingly, for Peter the Great of Russia, Karl XII of Sweden, and August the Strong of Saxony and Poland. The exploits of Fedderic are punctuated by the political events of the war, such as treaties and meetings between political and military allies and/or opponents, at which he is, thanks to the vagaries of his fortunes, often present in some way. These events serve as suitable moments in which to situate the historical content of the novel. This is done on the one hand by ensuring a correct chronology and description of the purpose of these meetings, and on the other hand by giving characterizations of the European leaders involved, for 'wenn ja Etwas Zeitperioden genau zu charakterisiren im Stande sein könnte, so ist dies das

Leben und Treiben der Regenten, die Art ihrer Regierung und ihre Höfe'.<sup>290</sup>

Characterization of the rulers therefore comprises most of the historical element of *Fedderic von Norrmann*.

At intervals, the narrator compares the four rulers – Peter the Great, August the Strong, Frederik IV of Denmark, and Karl XII of Sweden – involved in the Northern War, sometimes in pairs and sometimes all together. This usually comprises a discussion of their relative 'greatness', with the narrator consistently declaring that Peter did not deserve this label. Karl XII is described as a 'fiery genius', Frederik IV as a dutiful and responsible ruler in unfortunate circumstances, and August as 'edelmuthig' and a talented general betrayed by Polish self-interest. Peter is deemed to display only the façade of a quality that the other three possess in abundance: humanity.<sup>291</sup> The portrayal of these rulers seems therefore to be rather contradictory: their morals are often clearly depicted as at odds with propriety, but this is only brought to bear on an overall judgement of the individual ruler when it suits the narrator or author's prejudices and to a certain extent regardless of the outcome of the events of the conflict, the account of which is supposed to provide an historically reliable framework for the text as a whole. In their meeting in the town of Birzen (now in Lithuania: Biržai) in February 1701, near the Polish-Lithuanian border, the two allies, Peter the Great and August the Strong are initially characterized as follows:

Peter allein erhielt den Beinamen des Großen, den er als Regent, als Gründer eines großen Reiches verdient, der ihm aber wohl kaum zu theil geworden sein möchte, wenn sein Leben das eines Privatmannes gewesen und seine Neigungen sich bei einem gewöhnlichen Menschen gezeigt

<sup>290</sup>Schmeling, *Fedderic von Norrmann*, p. 177.

<sup>291</sup>Schmeling, *Fedderic von Norrmann*, p. 244.



hätten.

August dagegen ging leer aus, und selbst der Heldenglanz, welcher ihn durch die für das Haus Oesterreich gegen Frankreich und in der Türkei erfochtenen Siege umgab, schwand nach dem Kriege mit Karl XII., so daß zwar die Geschichte uns seinen Namen aufbewahrt, aber ungerechter Weise ihn nicht als denjenigen eines bedeutenden Regenten hervorhebt.

Und doch besteht sein ganzes Vergehen nur darin, daß er sich zu einem Schritte verleiten ließ, der ihn in unabsehbare Wirren und sein Land in die Gewalt eines mächtigen Feindes bringen sollte.<sup>292</sup>

This expresses the opinion that the name ‘the Great’ would not have been given by history had Peter’s morals been taken into account and implies that August was just as, if not more, deserving of such a label as a result of his early military career. However, this judgement utterly ignores at this stage August’s own ‘Neigungen’ for extramarital affairs. Strangely, in view of this judgement, the two men are very quickly shown as two of a kind, as both men host celebrations on the successful conclusion of their alliance. Although the monarchs have deliberately made the two-week meeting a fairly sombre affair, ‘ohne Glanz und Gepränge’, because it would be inappropriate considering the context of the Swedish threat, time is still made for ‘Vergnügungen der Art, wie sie Peter und August liebten’:<sup>293</sup>

Am zweiten gab der Czar seinen Gästen ein Fest, welches bis spät in die Nacht hinein dauerte, und am dritten richtete König August dagegen ein Gastmahl aus, welche Feste an Zwanglosigkeit und geräuschvoller Heiterkeit ihres Gleichen suchten.

Denn nachdem August sowie Peter gesehen, was ihnen übrigens einige Worte klar machten, daß sie sich nicht vor einander zu geniren nöthig hätten, überließen sie sich rückhaltslos ihren ein wenig extravagirenden Neigungen, die an den damals im Norden noch üblichen geräuschvollen Festen Gefallen fanden.

Besonders jedoch huldigten Beide den Damen, und der König von Polen überließ es gern dem Czaren, für die Unterhaltung seiner Freundin,

<sup>292</sup>Schmeling, *Fedderic von Norrmann*, p. 177.

<sup>293</sup>Schmeling, *Fedderic von Norrmann*, p. 178.

der Gräfin Königsmark, zu sorgen, nachdem er Klara erblickt hatte.<sup>294</sup>

The similarity of the two monarchs makes the earlier judgement on August and Peter rather perplexing. The portrayal of these two kings frequently centres on this sort of scenario: luxury, festivities, and an inappropriate interest in the opposite sex. Here, Klara, a fictional character, is the love interest of the novel's hero, an interest which she returns, and she is therefore all the more uncomfortable with August's advances.

This portrayal of August, mixed though it is with portrayals of other historical figures of the period, really seems to struggle with its place in a piece of historical fiction that claims to be more history than fiction. If compared with the views of historians given at the beginning of this chapter, it appears highly revisionist, admitting August's moral weaknesses but declaring him to be a far superior individual in terms of his humanity and his political and military acumen than he is given credit for by historians in the early to mid-nineteenth century. Yet this is done at such odds with the remarkably similar depiction of the figure of Peter the Great that the divergence begins to look like a comparison between the German and the non-German, or Germanic and non-Germanic virtues – that is, until August's interaction with the fictional characters is examined, though this is, admittedly, generally limited to brief encounters. Klara is uncomfortable with his addresses to her and Fedderic finds it difficult to hide his low opinion of August's method of waging war, which strikes him as not entirely honest.<sup>295</sup> This suggests a criticism of August – and the period – very similar to that of the moral judgements of mid-nineteenth century historians and turns the disparity in the depiction of

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<sup>294</sup>Schmeling, *Fedderic von Norrmann*, p. 179.

<sup>295</sup>Schmeling, *Fedderic von Norrmann*, p. 190 and p. 249.

August and Peter into anti-Slav sentiment. The fictional element of the novel is therefore also allowed to express or imply a judgement on an historical figure and it is not entirely commensurate with the view expressed by the narrator in his role as historian-commentator. Moreover, these two elements – history and fiction – are fairly clearly distinct from each other in their style and form. The history element takes on a matter-of-fact tone, stating the occurrence of events as they occur chronologically, and containing some analysis of the characters of the rulers as shown above, while the fictional element involves dialogue and, generally, though not entirely, removes itself from the field of activity of the historical figures. This suggests that while an attempt is made to make clear the division between history and fiction, in line with the purposes of the series, the novel does not entirely succeed in bringing the two together to form a coherent historical judgement for the reader, precisely because the opinions expressed are so much more to do with personality and character than with the war itself.

#### **4.3. Summary.**

The historical judgements of historians and novelists have been shown to be very far from the same thing. Novelists particularly may express a huge variety of views or even ignore the moral concerns of historians to exploit the sheer entertainment value of familiar stories. Historians, although they frequently express themselves in a literary style, generally seek to raise their subject above the novelistic. However, the divergence of the overall views still tends on either side towards demonstrating the extent to which a particular historical figure – here, August the Strong – is or is not relevant to the contemporary reader and

society. The historian postulates hypothetical scenarios in which August might have had significance for nineteenth-century Germany – if only he *had not* converted to Catholicism, if only he *had not* sought the Polish crown – but does not explore them further, and translates morals into politics. The novelist, who is less limited to the political aspects of history than the historian, is free to explore the potential significance of August for nineteenth-century values by examining the relationship of the personal and the political more carefully, and it is here that the value of the unpleasant parts of history, as described by Förster, becomes most fruitful. The novelist realizes Förster's analogy of the journey of history by showing that, far from being an anomaly among the figures considered to represent exemplary and specifically 'German' virtues, certain figures of the eighteenth century, such as August the Strong, could be presented as progressive and instrumental in helping to bring about modern society, often by attaching them to modern concerns, such as the liberty of peoples or the rights of the individual. Here, the morals of the individual are not always the equivalent of their political decision-making, indeed the two are often seen in contention within the historical figure. It is worth noting, though, that in the examples given in this chapter, the least consistent judgement on historical figures, certainly in terms of their worth, appears in Schmeling's work in which the novelist comes closest to occupying explicitly the role of the historian, so that he has to separate the fictional and historical elements of the text quite artificially, making this perhaps the least successful way for the novelist to achieve his aims of combining history and fiction.

## Chapter 5: August the Strong and cultural politics in the GDR.

### 5.1. The politics of the past in the GDR.

The founding of the German Democratic Republic in 1949 on socialist principles involved an uneasy relationship between East German authorities and ideologues and the new country's history. The fact of the Second World War and its resulting devastation – physical as well as psychological – provided an opportunity for Germans to redefine themselves over the coming decades. The official approach taken in the GDR was to distance itself from what it termed 'imperialist' history – which also included Germany's immediate fascist past under Hitler – and the western international powers associated with it, and to align itself with communist USSR in the east. Officially, this line continued throughout the forty-year existence of the East German state: as late as the 1980s, history books stated that the defeat of German fascism in 1945 was due mainly to Soviet forces, and the revival, through revolution, of the German nation in the East due mainly to Soviet influence and effort.<sup>296</sup> The belief in a tradition of social and political revolution was key to the way the GDR handled its history and its own identity.<sup>297</sup>

The physical devastation of the country brought about by the war provided a good excuse for removing some of the buildings most closely associated with German imperialism. The ruins of the Berlin *Stadtschloss*, situated within the Soviet-occupied zone and probably salvageable, were razed in 1950 under Walter Ulbricht to make way for an enormous parade ground and, later, the concrete and

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<sup>296</sup>See, for example, Joachim Streisand, *Kulturgeschichte der DDR: Studien zu ihren historischen Grundlagen und ihren Entwicklungsstadien* (Cologne: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1981), esp. pp. 71-75.

<sup>297</sup>Jan Herman Brinks, *Die DDR-Geschichtswissenschaft auf dem Weg zur deutschen Einheit: Luther, Friedrich II. und Bismarck als Paradigmen politischen Wandels* (Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus, 1992), p. 7.

glass *Palast der Republik*. The ostensible reason for the building's removal was that it symbolized Prussian militarism (even though the palace had housed an art museum since the early twentieth century), and therefore also its association with Hitler and German fascism, since Hitler had modelled himself on Friedrich II.<sup>298</sup>

Architecturally destroyed in the Allied bombings of 13-15 February 1945, Dresden presented the GDR authorities with the opportunity to rebuild it in a vision of a socialist city and society. When Walter Ulbricht set the first stone at the Altmarkt on 31 May 1953, he explained how he saw Dresden's mission in the new state:

Das neue Dresden wird durch das Leben in seinen Mauern und auch durch sein architektonisches Bild den historischen Sieg der Arbeiterklasse über die kapitalistische Gesellschaftsordnung widerspiegeln. Wir werden ein Dresden errichten, von dem jeder Bewohner mit Stolz und voll innerer Bindung sagt: Das ist meine Stadt. Es geht jedoch nicht nur um die Rekonstruktion der Stadt, um den Neuaufbau, sondern um die sozialistische Umgestaltung der Stadt auf allen Gebieten des gesellschaftlichen Lebens, der Wirtschaft und der Kultur.<sup>299</sup>

This characteristic emphasis on the 'Arbeiterklasse' would seem to be in direct contrast to much of the historic centre of Dresden, which contained many buildings originally erected by or on behalf of the Saxon electors and kings. This heritage was to be largely cut from the identity of the new (East) Germany and, where it was retained, its interpretation was to be refocused. Combined with a

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<sup>298</sup>Stefanie Flamm, 'Der Palast der Republik', in *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, ed. by Etienne François and Hagen Schulze, 3 vols (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2001), II, pp. 667-682 (p. 680); Frank-Lothar Kroll, 'Friedrich der Große', in *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, ed. by François and Beck, III, pp. 620-635 (p. 630-635).

<sup>299</sup>Walter Ulbricht's speech, 31 May 1953, Stadtarchiv Dresden, Akte Stadtbauamt 172, as quoted in Matthias Lerm, *Abschied vom alten Dresden: Verluste historischer Bausubstanz nach 1945*, 2nd edn (Leipzig: Forum, 1993), p. 110.

chronic lack of funds, it is unsurprising that the residential palace of the Saxon electors and kings in Dresden remained in its ruined state until after the reunification of the two Germanies. Significantly, however, although the palace remained in ruins, it was not blown up or replaced in the rebuilding of the city. Indeed, Dresden's citizens frequently questioned the necessity of destroying many of the bombed out buildings which had formed landmarks on their cityscape, while local historians and preservationists worked hard to demonstrate their value.<sup>300</sup> In the case of the residential palace, this included a variety of storage facilities and offices for governmental ministries and institutes.<sup>301</sup> Indeed, arguments for saving the palace appear to have been given a significant boost by the return from the USSR of the city's art collections in 1956 and 1958. In 1961 the head Saxon conservator Hans Nadler (1910-2005) wrote a letter to the GDR's Ministry of Culture, declaring that the most appropriate place to display these collections was in the palace as the most central point of the city. A year later, Max Seydewitz (1892-1987), former prime minister of Saxony and general director of the Saxon State Art Collections in Dresden, joined Nadler in this call, albeit, according to Dirk Syndram, reluctantly.<sup>302</sup> Lack of funds meant that the reconstruction of the palace did not even begin to take shape until the 1980s, but it was, at least, preserved.<sup>303</sup> The conflict of ideas about what should happen to the city centre was particularly visible in the feud between the city mayor, Walter

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<sup>300</sup>Lerm, *Abschied vom alten Dresden*, p. 40 and p. 111; H. Nadler, 'The Castle as a ruin', in *The revival of Dresden*, ed. by W. Jäger and C.A. Brebbia (Southampton and Boston: WIT Press, 2000), pp. 49-65 (p. 54).

<sup>301</sup>Nadler, 'The Castle as a ruin', p. 53 and pp. 55f.

<sup>302</sup>Dirk Syndram, 'Das Nutzungskonzept des Dresdner Schlosses – fürstliche Selbstdarstellung und höfische Pracht' in *Wege für das Berliner Schloss/Humboldt-Forum: Wiederaufbau und Rekonstruktion zerstörter Residenzschlösser in Deutschland und Europa (1945-2007)*, ed. by Guido Hinterkeuser (Regensburg: Schnell&Steiner, 2008), pp.197-214 (p. 202).

<sup>303</sup>Syndram, 'Das Nutzungskonzept des Dresdner Schlosses', p. 204.

Weidauer (1899-1986), and the art historian and former employee of the Saxon State Art Collections, Fritz Löffler (1899-1988). Weidauer pushed for the concept of a total reconstruction along socialist lines, much as Ulbricht did, and is reputed to have said, ‘Das sozialistische Dresden braucht weder Kirchen noch Barockfassaden.’<sup>304</sup> This was in direct opposition to Löffler’s position, which favoured a more historically sensitive reconstruction of the city that would emphasize its status as a royal residence. Löffler’s vigorous campaigning on behalf of preserving the historic appearance of Dresden, particularly through the publication of his book *Das alte Dresden* (1955), was a thorn in Weidauer’s side. At an SED Dresden council meeting in September 1958, Weidauer clearly saw Löffler as emblematic of ideological opposition:

Man führt einen Kampf gegen das Neue und versucht, unsere Absichten zu druckkreuzen. Auf der einen Seite spricht man von der Wiederherstellung aller Kirchen und niemand sollte dagegen etwas wagen, daß es nicht realisiert wird. Gegenwärtig gibt es eine ganze Menge von Genossen, welche leider die Sache immer wieder unterstützen. Auch Herr Löffler ist einer von denen, welcher radikal alles der Arbeiterklasse verweigern möchte.<sup>305</sup>

Attitudes in the GDR on how its material history should be treated were clearly not uniform. But where the interests of the authorities and the public converged or could be brought to converge, then work continued. Restoration work on certain buildings began as early as 1945, and the first of Dresden’s iconic buildings to attain any significant level of reconstruction was the Zwinger, which had originally been built under August the Strong between 1709 and 1728 as an

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<sup>304</sup> As quoted in Astrid Pawasser, ‘Dresdens Weg: wie damals, nur schöner’, *Das Parlament* 16/17 (16-23 April 2007), p. 11.

<sup>305</sup> As cited in Lerm, *Abschied vom alten Dresden*, p. 148.



orangery, a site for courtly entertainments and to house some of his collections. Over the course of the centuries, it had taken on the public functions of a gallery and museum, housing the Saxon art and sculpture collections. Its reconstruction after 1945 envisaged that it would regain those functions and thus be a building for the public that demonstrated the artistic wealth of the GDR. Small areas of the Zwinger were in a condition to be open to the public from 1951 and the *Gemäldegalerie* was opened in 1956 as part of the city's 750-year celebrations.

The emphasis on the reconstruction of public buildings and on the 'new' Dresden as a city for the workers seems to indicate that associations with Dresden's royal and electoral past were, if the party line gained the upper hand, to be at least pushed into the background, if not totally ignored. Ulbricht's and Weidauer's comments would certainly support this. At the same time, however, it is also clear that wholesale reinvention of the city's identity was simply not possible. Its history as a city of artistic and architectural heritage, not least due to its position as a royal residence, had to be acknowledged if not actually interpreted as a positive aspect of the city's social history. The 750-year jubilee celebrations in Dresden were the ideal propagandistic opportunity for the SED (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*) to show Dresden off to powers in the East and West as a model of socialist politics and society, but tensions were still visible. On one hand, the iconic *Goldener Reiter* statue of August the Strong was restored to its place on the Neumarkt, and seemed a recognition of the city's royal and electoral heritage. In contrast, the equestrian statue of Friedrich II was removed from its place on Unter den Linden in Berlin in 1951 and was not restored until thirty years later. On the other hand, however, the historical section

of the jubilee parade was much smaller than was normal for similar events of the period and was given a socialist interpretation. The floats that depicted August the Strong and his son, Friedrich August II, followed a particularly strong socialist line by being pushed by people dressed in rags. The image is emphatically negative and critical of the Saxon kings: the period in which Dresden attained much of its significance as an artistic and cultural centre was reinterpreted as one in which ordinary people were exploited by the ruling class. The fact that the art purchased by those rulers could now be accessed by the public was acknowledged in the parade.<sup>306</sup> However, that this was the case was also – according to the official line – due to the efforts of Socialism in the form of the Soviet army, which had taken the Saxon collections into ‘protection’ in Moscow at the end of the Second World War.<sup>307</sup> In fact, the return of much – though by no means all – of these collections in 1956 and 1958 was in response to a similar programme by the Western Allies and was a political decision that tied the fledgling East German state to the Soviet Bloc countries.<sup>308</sup> Indeed, the mid-1950s were a fruitful time for such programmes of pointed diplomacy through the restoration of art collections, as the GDR also engaged in a similar exchange with its ideological neighbour to the east, Poland. Poland did not undertake such an exchange with the FRG.<sup>309</sup>

Historiography in the GDR did not, however, remain static over the course of four decades. The historiographical treatment of figures like Friedrich II,

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<sup>306</sup>See Ulrich Rosseaux, ‘Das ambivalente Jubiläum: die 750-Jahr-Feier Dresdens 1956’, *Dresdner Hefte* 87 (2006), 50-59 (52-53).

<sup>307</sup>‘Editorial: the Dresden pictures’, *The Burlington Magazine*, No. 640, XCVIII, July 1956, pp. 221-225 (p. 221)

<sup>308</sup>See Grigori Kozlov, ‘Entscheidung in Moskau’, *Dresdner Hefte* 87 (2006), 5-9.

<sup>309</sup>Uwe Hartmann, ‘Geschenke vom Brudervolk?: Anmerkungen zur Rückführung von kriegsbedingt verlagerten Kulturgütern zwischen der DDR und der Volksrepublik Polen’, *Kunstchronik* 56 (2003), 302-307 (303-304).

Bismarck, and Martin Luther underwent significant change and development. Initially treated as figures who had exploited, betrayed, or otherwise let down the working classes in the class struggles of their respective epochs, by the 1970s and 1980s, these views were being revised as part of the GDR's constant search for its own identity, whether in conjunction with or in contrast to the perceived identity of the FRG (Federal Republic of Germany) in the West.<sup>310</sup> All three of these figures had pan-Germanic significance for German historical identity, so the relationship between East and West in the second half of the twentieth century over their cultural ownership was often fraught with difficulties.<sup>311</sup> This chapter discusses whether treatment of August the Strong in historical and fictional works in the GDR follows a pattern similar in its rise and fall of opinion to that of other major historical figures in the search for an East German identity and heritage, and examines the possible reasons for differences in this.

With the dissolution of the *Länder* in the GDR in 1952 and their conversion to administrative *Bezirke*, and the insistence of the GDR on its sovereignty as a separate state, interest in the heritage and identity of the individual German states underwent considerable change in the first decades of the GDR's existence. The emphasis of identity formation instead turned from, for example, formal history narratives involving kings and figures of state to that of *Heimat* in the regions. The focus was on attempting to foster 'everyday' social and cultural practices in order to encourage an emotional attachment to the newly

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<sup>310</sup>Brinks, *DDR-Geschichtswissenschaft*, pp. 9-12. See also Robert F. Goeckel, 'The Luther anniversary in East Germany', *World Politics* 37 (1984), 112-133 (114-116); Stephen P. Hoffmann, 'The GDR, Luther, and the German Question', *The Review of Politics* 48 (1986), 246-263 (248); Edgar Wolfrum, 'Die Preußen-Renaissance: Geschichtspolitik im deutsch-deutschen Konflikt', in *Verwaltete Vergangenheit: Geschichtskultur und Herrschaftslegitimation in der DDR*, ed. by Martin Sabrow (Leipzig: Akademische Verlagsanstalt, 1997), pp. 145-166 (pp. 160-161).

<sup>311</sup>See, for example, Goeckel, 'The Luther anniversary in East Germany', 124-127.

formed East German state or at least of ensuring public agreement with state policies, if not actually private agreement.<sup>312</sup> East German *Landesgeschichte* experienced a difficult period in which it was officially viewed as ‘die Inkarnation der Relikte einer reaktionären Variante der “bürgerlichen Geschichtsschreibung”’ and after the university reforms of 1968, *Landesgeschichte* was removed from the university curriculum entirely.<sup>313</sup> Yet in the 1970s, there was a revival of interest in the concept of similar *Ländergeschichte*, and it was once more seen as another way of fostering patriotism, ‘über die Heimatliebe die Verbundenheit mit dem Staat zu stärken’.<sup>314</sup> In this, Saxony is a special case in that Leipzig University, then Karl-Marx-University, was instrumental in maintaining research into regional history after 1952 until 1968 in the face of efforts to centralize the subject in Berlin and uncertain funding.<sup>315</sup> The *Sächsische Heimatblätter* were founded in the 1950s and by the mid-1960s had given rise to a daughter publication, the *Jahrbuch für Regionalgeschichte*, but they were the only examples of publications of their type in the GDR into the 1970s.<sup>316</sup> Although Karlheinz Blaschke is well

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<sup>312</sup>See Jan Palmowski, *Inventing a socialist nation: Heimat and the politics of everyday life in the GDR 1945-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Palmowski uses James C. Scott's model of the ‘public transcript’ to explore the relationship the ordinary GDR citizen had with the state through the concept of *Heimat*.

<sup>313</sup>Ulrich Heß, ‘Sachsen im 20. Jahrhundert: Wiederentdeckung einer Region oder Neukonstruktion einer regionalen Identität?’, in *Nach dem Erdbeben: (Re-)Konstruktionen ostdeutscher Geschichte und Geschichtswissenschaft*, ed. by Konrad H. Jarausch and Matthias Middell (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1994), pp. 288-303 (p. 289); Manfred Unger, ‘Die Historische Kommission des Landes Sachsen 1945-1956’, in *Geschichtsforschung in Sachsen: von der Sächsischen Kommission für Geschichte zur Historischen Kommission bei der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig 1896-1996*, ed. by Reiner Groß (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1996), pp. 74-102 (pp. 93-94); Reiner Groß, ‘Möglichkeiten und Grenzen landesgeschichtlicher Arbeit in der DDR’, in *Geschichtsforschung in Sachsen: von der Sächsischen Kommission für Geschichte zur Historischen Kommission bei der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig 1896-1996*, ed. by Reiner Groß (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1996), pp. 103-115 (p. 105).

<sup>314</sup>Helga Schultz, ‘Die DDR-Geschichtswissenschaft in der Mitte der siebziger Jahre: Paradigmawechsel oder konservative Wende?’, in *Die DDR-Geschichtswissenschaft als Forschungsproblem*, ed. by Georg G. Iggers et al, [*Historische Zeitschrift Beihefte* (New Series) 27 (1998)], pp.227-239 (p. 233-234).

<sup>315</sup>See Unger, ‘Die Historische Kommission des Landes Sachsen’, pp. 94-96.

<sup>316</sup>Katrin Keller, ‘Landesgeschichte zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik: August der Starke als

known as a staunch defender of Saxon *Landesgeschichte*, indeed of *Landesgeschichtswissenschaft* in general, during the four decades of the GDR's existence, it was not until Karl Czok – also an active supporter of German *Landesgeschichte* – began publishing his studies of August the Strong in the 1980s that GDR historians began seriously to turn their attention to him.<sup>317</sup> In his 1987 study *August der Starke und Kursachsen*, Czok principally looks back at the work of nineteenth-century historians and, especially, at the very early twentieth-century studies of Paul Haake and Cornelius Gurlitt, and calls for a more nuanced reassessment of the largely negative views of the Saxon elector and Polish king that they espouse. Blaschke's exclusion from Czok's work is easily explained by their respective positions within the GDR establishment: while Czok was awarded the professorship for *Landesgeschichte* at the (then Marxist) Karl-Marx-University in 1966, Blaschke was denied the same chair because of his stigmatization as a 'bürgerlicher Historiker', his refusal to bow to the political motivations of the study of history under the SED, and consequently his perceived excessive openness to the West.<sup>318</sup> Presumably as a consequence of his place within the establishment, Czok's work, while not entirely uncritical, is also imbued with a degree of conservatism when he comments with reference to class

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sächsisches "Nationalsymbol"', in *Nach dem Erdbeben: (Re-)Konstruktionen ostdeutscher Geschichte und Geschichtswissenschaft*, ed. by Konrad H. Jarausch and Matthias Middell (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1994), pp. 195-215 (p. 204); Groß, 'Möglichkeiten und Grenzen landesgeschichtlicher Arbeit', p. 107.

<sup>317</sup>Notwithstanding the earlier publication of Herbert Poenicke's *August der Starke. Ein Fürst des Barock* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1972), it is Karl Czok who was able to promote, through the large number of his publications, examination of August the Strong in recent decades. For Czok's activities in service of *Landesgeschichte* during the GDR period, see Groß, 'Möglichkeiten und Grenzen landesgeschichtlicher Arbeit', pp. 103-115.

<sup>318</sup>For Blaschke's career and reputation as a historian, see Hans K. Schulze, 'Karlheinz Blaschke zur Feier des siebenzigsten Geburtstages', in *Landesgeschichte als Herausforderung und Programm: Karlheinz Blaschke zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. by Uwe John and Josef Matzerath, (Leipzig: Verlag der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997), pp. 1-6.

divisions that ‘der Absolutismus erwies sich als unfähig, die Zunahme und Bewegung der Armen und Verelendeten einzudämmen’.<sup>319</sup> However, Czok is also concerned to highlight that August did not rule for the sake of preserving power for himself, but had the good of his people at heart.<sup>320</sup> Czok’s August the Strong is a man open to technological innovation, employing both ‘ordinary’ people and the nobility on the basis of merit in order to balance power and to best promote his interests as ruler.<sup>321</sup> Conservatism and innovation go hand in hand, as he seems to go so far as to recommend caution in the GDR’s emphasis on rehabilitating Friedrich II and Prussia:

Mit nationalen Interessen hatte er [August] nichts im Sinne. Doch darin unterschied er sich nicht von anderen Fürstlichkeiten und absolutistischen Herrschern, schon gar nicht von den Hohenzollern.<sup>322</sup>

This dichotomous trend of identifying potentially positive innovative processes or developments under figures otherwise deemed oppressors and exploiters of the working class was also identified by Western academics by the 1980s as a characteristic of the GDR’s new assessment of its Prussian past.<sup>323</sup> This dichotomy was clearly not restricted to a single figure or region.

Czok’s comments on the comparability of Friedrich II and August the Strong also indicate that he viewed the surge of interest in the former as a chance to promote the latter, possibly even to go some way towards balancing the view of

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<sup>319</sup>Karl Czok, *August der Starke und Kursachsen* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1988), p. 265.

<sup>320</sup>Czok, *August der Starke und Kursachsen*, p. 266-67.

<sup>321</sup>Czok, *August der Starke und Kursachsen*, p. 271.

<sup>322</sup>Czok, *August der Starke und Kursachsen*, p. 273.

<sup>323</sup>Of course, the West was also in the process of reassessing Friedrich II. See Kroll, ‘Friedrich der Große’, pp.633-635; Schultz, ‘Die DDR-Geschichtswissenschaft in der Mitte der siebziger Jahre’, pp. 234-235 and p. 236.

Friedrich II as a great German national figure promoted by nineteenth-century historians. However, while the increase of historical reassessments of Friedrich II and Prussia in the 1970s and 1980s also brought with it a renewed interest in literary and dramatic examinations of the subject after the more negative depictions of the 1950s, the same pattern was not precisely replicated in the relationship between historical and literary considerations of August the Strong in the same period.<sup>324</sup> While ‘ownership’ of historical figures with pan-Germanic importance gave rise to rivalries between the two Germanies during this period, the same cannot so easily be said of August the Strong at this time. While *fictional* literature dealing with him written in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries goes some way towards claiming him as a figure for both East and West Germans, prior to that August was primarily viewed as Saxon and therefore belonging to the heritage and history of East Germany.<sup>325</sup>

History in the GDR was viewed as a vital tool in the search for identity, useful (theoretically) in the formation of a society based on a socialist ideology. Yet the perceived need to create a cultural and political break with the past in order to make a new one meant that the GDR was a society dominated by history. Unsurprisingly, then, the historical novel was an important genre in GDR literature from the state’s earliest years. It was a popular genre in the 1950s here, while in other parts of Europe it was experiencing a decline, and it was a genre

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<sup>324</sup>See Patricia Herminhouse, ‘Die Preußen kommen! Preußisches Erbe in der neueren DDR-Literatur und Geschichtsschreibung’, in *Die Literatur der DDR, 1976-1986*, ed. by Anna Chiaarloni, Gemma Sartori, and Fabrizio Cambi (Pisa: Giardini, 1988), pp. 381-391. Herminhouse mainly analyses dramas on Friedrich II, such as *Der Müller von Sanssouci* (1957) by Peter Hacks, *Germania Tod in Berlin* (1977) by Heiner Müller, and *Die Preussen kommen* (1981) by Claus Hammel. She makes reference to the unfinished novel, *Die traurige Geschichte von Friedrich dem Großen* (1962) by Heinrich Mann, but notes that ‘In literarischen Werken der 80er Jahre wird vielmehr der Prozeß der Wiederaneignung des preußischen Erbes als die historische Bürde dieses Erbes einer kritischen Beleuchtung unterzogen’ (p. 386).

<sup>325</sup>Cf. Chapter 6.

that was of particular interest to those GDR authorities devoted to steering their state's artistic and literary output.<sup>326</sup> The historical novel made up a significant proportion of published fiction genres well into the 1970s, which not only suggests a considerable market for it, but also a system that promoted it. This becomes most striking if the many hurdles of scrutiny a book had to overcome before permission to publish was granted are taken into account.<sup>327</sup> In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the arts were designated a tool in the task of building a socialist society, and literature was given the task of educating the people.<sup>328</sup> One consequence of this was that authors tried to create positive heroes to act as political role models for a readership that was encouraged to imitate them.<sup>329</sup> However, the historical novel could also be a double-edged sword in the mission to create identity in the new state: a story set in the past could disguise criticism of the regime with its claim to historical realism.<sup>330</sup>

## **5.2. The nobility of the artist as craftsman and the artistic nobility of the king in Kurt Arnold Findeisen's *Der goldene Reiter und sein Verhängnis* (1954).**

The earliest literary treatment of August the Strong in the GDR was by the Saxon writer, dramatist, and poet Kurt Arnold Findeisen (1883-1963), who also wrote under the pseudonym Wendelin Dudelsack. He began publishing in his early twenties and continued until shortly before his death, earning himself the

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<sup>326</sup>Kurt Habitzel, 'Der historische Roman der DDR und die Zensur', in *Travellers in time and space: the German historical novel*, ed. by Osman Durrani and Julian Preece (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2001), pp. 401-421 (p. 401).

<sup>327</sup>Compare the publication lists given in the appendix of Friedrich-H. Schregel, *Die Romanliteratur der DDR: Erzähltechniken, Leserlenkung, Kulturpolitik* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1991), and Habitzel, 'Der historische Roman der DDR', p. 402.

<sup>328</sup>Schregel, *Die Romanliteratur der DDR*, pp. 62-70.

<sup>329</sup>Schregel, *Die Romanliteratur der DDR*, p. 95.

<sup>330</sup>Habitzel, 'Der historische Roman', p. 408.



*Lessingpreis des Landes Sachsen* in 1929 and the *Literaturpreis der Stadt Dresden* in 1956. His focus as a writer was that of ‘Heimat’ on the one hand, with most of his novels, poetry, and editorial work focusing on German, and often specifically Saxon, subjects, and that of the artist on the other. Subjects included figures such as Robert Schumann, Franz Schubert, Bach, Händel, Brahms, Ludwig Richter, Johann Gottfried Seume, Paul Fleming, and Johann Strauß.<sup>331</sup> His 1954 novel *Der goldene Reiter und sein Verhängnis* is in this vein, the plot covering the changing fortunes of Dresden under the rule of August the Strong and his successors, Friedrich August II, Friedrich Christian (1722-1763), and the regency of Prince Franz Xaver (1730-1806) on behalf of Friedrich August III (1750-1827; Friedrich August I, King of Saxony from 1806). The story is told through a fictional edited ‘memoir’ by the character of the royal librarian, Moritz Rüger, with a preface and epilogue by his sculptor son, Christoph. Moritz’s account of the rise and fall of the city is told through the prism of his close acquaintance with the city’s premier artists and craftsmen, in particular Balthasar Permoser (sculptor; 1651-1732), Johann Melchior Dinglinger (goldsmith; 1664-1731), Matthäus Daniel Pöppelmann (architect; 1662-1736), and Joseph Fröhlich (court fool; 1694-1757).<sup>332</sup>

The successive rulers of Saxony do not appear in the novel except when they are mentioned by other characters. Moritz does, however, provide brief characterizations of them and of their ministers. He describes August in terms of Roman and Greek gods, as a Jupiter, a Hercules, and a Bacchus, jovial, strong, but

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<sup>331</sup> Joachim Ret, Egon Sartorius, Helmut Donner, and Hans Heiningen (eds), *Schriftsteller der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (Leipzig: VEB Verlag für Buch- und Bibliothekswesen, 1961), p. 48.

<sup>332</sup> Findeisen also wrote about Dinglinger in an earlier prose work, *Der Goldschmied Johann Melchior Dinglinger und sein Glück* (1951).

a ‘Weinkenner’ rather than a ‘Trunkbold’, whose attraction to Venus is part of his role as a god. He also asserts that this sort of image, and especially the prevalence of extramarital sex, was part of the tradition at the Saxon court and integral to the way it was thought at the time that the court-centred state should function.<sup>333</sup>

Moritz himself does not express particular criticism of August or others of the upper classes in the first few chapters of the novel, though a critical tone is by no means absent from his voice. This gradually increases as Moritz grows older and is prompted and encouraged by the radical voice of Permoser in the first half of the novel, and by the critical voice of Fröhlich in the second half, especially after the deaths of Permoser and then of August the Strong himself. The excesses and the luxury of the upper classes only exacerbate and ignore the suffering of the lower classes; the upper classes are seen by Permoser and Fröhlich as exploiting the workers. For Permoser, Johann Friedrich Böttger (1682-1719), the alchemist who developed European porcelain, serves as the embodiment of this:

“Wie kommen überhaupt die Fürsten dazu, einem, der nichts verbraucht, eine Schlinge um den Hals zu legen?” rief er. “Wie kommen sie dazu, zu behaupten: Der Mann gehört mir, weil er Gold machen kann oder Porzellan oder sonstwas? Wer hat ihnen ein solch Privilegium eingeräumt? Wie kommen sie überhaupt zu ihren vielen Vorrechten? Alles usurpiert, alles angemäßt, alles geraubt! Der Teufel soll die Welt holen, die so was zuläßt!”<sup>334</sup>

The artist and worker here are merged into one, so that the artist is the worker.

This is brought home later in the novel when, after the death of Dinglinger, it is found that his royal clients have not been paying promptly for their commissions,

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<sup>333</sup>Kurt Arnold Findeisen, *Der goldene Reiter und sein Verhängnis* (Berlin: Verlag der Nation, 1954; 1990), p. 58.

<sup>334</sup>Findeisen, *Der goldene Reiter*, p. 55.

and, later, under August III, when Moritz sees a long line of craftsmen outside the minister Heinrich von Brühl's palace, not queuing, as he initially thinks, for alms and food, but to demand (many for the umpteenth time) payment for the services they have provided in order that Brühl may live in his excessive luxury.<sup>335</sup> The end of Moritz's memoir and Christoph's epilogue are united in a call for social reform, even social revolution:

Es springt in die Augen, daß hier nicht nur der einzelne einzeln schuldig befunden werden kann, sondern daß eine Gesamtschuld den Verhältnissen zur Last gelegt werden muß. Solange Fürsten und Fürstendiener auf Grund überlieferter Anschauungen mit einem Staat wie mit einem Privatbesitz wirtschaften können und solange die Vorrechte bevorzugter Schichten den allgemeinen Menschenrechten hohnsprechen, solange kann es nicht besser werden. Zu dieser Erkenntnis dringe ich [Moritz] immer mehr durch; es fängt an, mich zu verdrießen, daß andere die Tyrannei der Verhältnisse stumpf und domestikenhaft hinnehmen, ohne darüber nachzudenken. Auch ist mir klar, daß jeder, dem der Seifensieder aufgegangen, von der Kritik zum Handeln fortschreiten muß.<sup>336</sup>

Christoph himself writes excitedly in the aftermath of the French Revolution and declares this to be the great turning point in history towards freedom. This is the new dawn that will knock the numerous arrogant 'goldene Reiter' of the rich and powerful from their pedestals.

Nevertheless, Christoph's argument for these golden horsemen is not that they should be entirely removed from history, but that they should be acknowledged within the new (socialist) world he claims is arriving:

Der goldene Reiter! Kann er hinwiederum nicht von der Zeit, die ihn überwand, mit der Großmut des Siegers angesprochen werden als die

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<sup>335</sup>Findeisen, *Der goldene Reiter*, p. 205.

<sup>336</sup>Findeisen, *Der goldene Reiter*, p. 284.

Symbolisierung eines eigenwilligen und zugleich spielerisch übertreibenden Daseinsdrangs, der seiner Epoche dadurch ein eigen Gesicht gab, daß er über seine irdische Körperlichkeit hinaus am Rausch der ewigen Schönheit teilhaben wollte und im unvergänglichen Reiche der Kunst stündlich und täglich zu neuen Offenbarungen unterwegs war?

Der goldene Reiter! Mag er also immerhin im guten wie im bösen in diesen Aufzeichnungen einen gleichnishaften Auftrag durchführen, nachdem er für uns seinen historischen Namen abgeworfen hat zugleich mit dem, was an seiner Inkarnation verneinend war. Das Ja seines Wesens, das die Schöne liebte, sei für diese Blätter zugleich seine Rechtfertigung!<sup>337</sup>

This plea – that art should be appreciated for art's sake, regardless of the negative values of the system from which it sprang – mirrors the depiction of August in this novel. August is the 'goldene Reiter', identified with the golden equestrian statue depicting him that stands on the Neustädter Markt in Dresden and more figuratively as representative of all princely leaders. August, although negatively portrayed because of the princely rule he represents, is nevertheless conceded as having provided some benefits to his country, not the least of which is his great collections of art of all kinds, some of which he has displayed to the public. Importantly, though with the exception of Böttger who is regarded as a prisoner, it is his relationship with his artists, craftsmen, and scientists that differentiates him from his peers. Under him, art and artists in Saxony are able to flourish. Dinglinger, who is explicitly characterized as similar in temperament to August the Strong, emphasizes to the young Moritz the international nature of artistic production in Saxony, saying '[...] Es kommen hier allerhand Leut' zusammen, haha! [...]'.<sup>338</sup> August is a man who can tolerate criticism and, because he also values talent, this is why the likes of Permoser and Fröhlich are hired and

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<sup>337</sup>Findeisen, *Der goldene Reiter*, p. 301.

<sup>338</sup>Findeisen, *Der goldene Reiter*, p. 17.

retained, in spite of their outspokenness. The older, and now more socialist, Moritz allows August this at his death:

Und der König selber? Wenn man von den ihm angedichteten tausend Tugenden auch so manche fallenlassen muß bei genauerem Hinsehen, so erscheint es billig, ihm eine trotz allem zu belassen: er war ritterlich. Schon aus dieser Ritterlichkeit heraus wäre es ihm nie in den Sinn gekommen, seine großen Hofkünstler, so sehr sie ihm bei Gelegenheit heimlich oder öffentlich widerstrebten, gänzlich im Stich zu lassen.<sup>339</sup>

The deaths of August II and his most significant artists, or ‘Goldfasane’, as they are termed, represent a caesura in the political and artistic fortunes of Saxony. August III is entirely disengaged from the responsibilities of rule and dedicated only to his collections of paintings, while, as noted above, Brühl’s extensive artistic patronage is not a benign force.<sup>340</sup> As a result of this and the war that comes to Saxony with the Prussian invasion, the country is ravaged and its artists scatter, making it difficult to train up a new generation of artists. For example, Moritz finds it difficult to find a suitably skilled sculptor with whom to apprentice his son Christoph.

A great deal of blame is laid at the door of the Prussians in addition to August III and Brühl, in line with the general backlash against Friedrich II that occurred after the Second World War and at the time when the novel was written. It is the invading Prussian who imposes the sacking without notice of all the staff at the Dresden opera; only the intercession of the Saxon Electoral Prince Friedrich Christian helps a few other artists in these difficult times. The appearance of

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<sup>339</sup>Findeisen, *Der goldene Reiter*, p. 169.

<sup>340</sup>This is an echo of nineteenth-century critical views on Heinrich von Brühl and August III’s rule. Cf. Pp. 149-151; Staszewski, *August III.*, p. 7.

Friedrich II in his simple uniform might impress Moritz favourably, but he is also convinced that the man is ‘kalt und eitel’.<sup>341</sup> Indeed, the relationship of the artist to Prussian royalty is entirely the opposite of that of the artist to August the Strong. In one of his many fits of pique about what he views as the (unjustly) subservient role of the artist in the service of August the Strong, Permoser threatens to go off to Berlin and join the service of Friedrich Wilhelm I (1688-1740). But when he ventures up to Berlin to demonstrate his skills when the young Friedrich II is on the throne, he discovers a very different atmosphere to the respectful one he had imagined:

Aber er hätte doch seinerzeit verlauten lassen, der preußische König habe ihn nach Berlin gerufen.

“Gewiß, der vorige! Jetzt ist doch eben der mit dem Korporalstock dran. ’s scheint freilich auch schon früher nicht viel losgewesen zu sein mit dem Berliner Verständnis für Kunst. Dem Schlüter haben sie das Leben schwer genug gemacht, wie ich erfahren hab.”<sup>342</sup>

Permoser contrasts the two radically different courts of Berlin and Dresden and finds the Prussian more virtuous, more humble in its understanding of the relative status of earthly power in the face of what Permoser terms ‘ein[e] höher[e] Macht als Fürstenmacht, Respekt vor, na ja, vor dem Himmel’. But a tyrant and a penny-pinching court ‘wo man den Groschen dreimal umdreht’ is not to Permoser’s taste as an artist either, so he remains in Dresden.<sup>343</sup>

Findeisen’s novel makes a number of socialist arguments about the inequalities of a class system. It also makes the case for viewing the artist both as

<sup>341</sup>Findeisen, *Der goldene Reiter*, pp. 245-246.

<sup>342</sup>Findeisen, *Der goldene Reiter*, p. 70. Andreas Schlüter (1664-1714), sculptor and architect to Elector Friedrich III of Brandenburg (1657-1713).

<sup>343</sup>Findeisen, *Der goldene Reiter*, pp. 69-70.

worker – as noted above – and as king. This is done very explicitly, once more through Permoser, who screams angrily, “[...] Er ist König, und ich bin Künstler, das ist genau dasselbigte!”<sup>344</sup> The same point is made through Moritz’s comparison of the court jeweller Dinglinger with August the Strong. Both, he claims, have a jovial, yet also saturnine, nature and, of all the court artists, it is Dinglinger with whom August best gets along. August entertains a large number of mistresses, while Dinglinger marries and is widowed several times, so the two men are by no means represented as essentially identical characters in their values and approach to life. But through this comparison the reader is invited to see what may be the ‘better’ side of August’s royal status. Indeed, it is Dinglinger who frequently defends August against Permoser, reminding him of their good working conditions. This does not prevent Dinglinger being proud of his artist/worker status in the same way as Permoser is.

“Jawohl”, sagt er, und der Sohn der alten Freien Reichsstadt in ihm reckte sich einen Zoll höher, “ein Goldschmied hat ein Wappen und eine Krone, die trägt er unsichtbar mit sich herum.” Aber schon meldete sich in ihm seine große Bescheidenheit, denn er setzte hinzu: “Mein Vater war ein Messerschmied, was immer ein edel Handwerk gewesen, und meine Mutter war eine Goldschmiedstochter, auch war ich wie meine lieben Brüder bei tüchtigen Goldschmieden in der Lehre, so ist das alles nicht weiter verwunderlich.”<sup>345</sup>

In tracing his dynastic line, Dinglinger merges in himself the worker, the artist, and the man of noble lineage. Clearly this makes claims for the equal status of the worker and the artist in a newly socialist Germany in 1954, but it also pleads for a more objective view of the role of the nobility in history. Some aspects of August

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<sup>344</sup>Findeisen, *Der goldene Reiter*, p. 56.

<sup>345</sup>Findeisen, *Der goldene Reiter*, p. 147.

the Strong – otherwise the class enemy – are incorporated into the figure of Dinglinger, and indeed the fairly close and tolerant relationship August is depicted as having with his artists make him a less clear-cut and negative figure than that of Friedrich II. The nobility of kingship may be conferred on the artist/craftsman but the inverse of this is also implied: the nobility of the artist is conferred on August by virtue of his promotion of the arts in general.

It is clear from the outset that the whole novel is to be read in the light of the defeat of Germany in World War II and the founding of the GDR in 1949. Moritz's son, Christoph, speaks of himself in his introduction to the memoir, and of the generation that came after his father and after the great wars of eighteenth-century Germany as belonging to those who 'der großen Wende der Zeit eine neue Menschenwürde danken'.<sup>346</sup> The political and social caesura may be great, but the narrators Christoph and Moritz make clear that this great 'Wende' was foreshadowed in history. On one hand, this highlights for the reader the intended parallels with modern Germany, but, on the other, it also highlights the need for the present to engage with the past, not simply try to ignore or forget it. This is at a time in the twentieth century when Dresden was still largely in ruins, most of its art collections and treasures in Soviet possession, and considerable doubt hanging over the question of how to approach the task of rebuilding the city and what it should stand for in the new Germany. In all, this novel stands very much in the camp of those who argued that Dresden should remain a city of culture and art, that it should retain its identity as 'Elbflorenz'. But it goes beyond simply acknowledging the role August played as a noble patron of art in shaping the city

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<sup>346</sup>Findeisen, *Der goldene Reiter*, p. 5.



and blurs the boundaries between elector-king, artist, and worker, thereby giving this historical figure a positive socialist spin when his historical peers, especially Friedrich II, were subject to negative socialist revision of a kind that would not be reconsidered for another twenty years.

### **5.3. Infantilization of society and authority in Joachim Walther's *Bewerbung bei Hofe* (1982).**

If Findeisen's *Der goldene Reiter* pleaded for a socialist vision of the artist as worker, as well as an ideal relationship between the (historical) arts and the new GDR regime, Joachim Walther's (1943-) novel *Bewerbung bei Hofe*, published close to the end of the GDR era in 1982, makes a similar plea, but with much greater background criticism of the realities of a Socialist regime. By the time of the novel's publication, Walther already had a history of difficulties with the GDR authorities and with censorship, having been made redundant in the late 1960s from his job as editor with a publishing house, after refusing to comply with instructions to reject a piece he had already accepted for publication. *Bewerbung bei Hofe* was itself the victim of the tortuous censorship process for literature in the GDR. Johann Christian Günther's (1695-1723) failed attempt in 1719 to become court poet to August the Strong is told through the fictional diary of the poet and master of ceremonies to the Dresden court, Johann von Besser (1654-1729), with the addition of real material, such as Günther's poetry. Written with clear parallels between what Walther terms 'Feudalabsolutismus' and the social and artistic conditions under GDR socialism, the novel was subjected to close scrutiny by the authorities. Several years later, after the *Wende*, Walther wrote

gleefully of the censor's report:

Das Schöne daran war, daß er sich alle Jacken anzog, die ich in den Text gehängt hatte, und siehe da: sie paßten hervorragend, wie auf den Leib geschneidert. Zudem war der Mann historisch wenig belesen, was ihn selbst dokumentarische Passagen bemißtrauen ließ [...].<sup>347</sup>

The result was that publication of *Bewerbung bei Hofe* was delayed by two years.

The issue of the historical or fictional status of the text or texts in the book is deliberately highlighted and blurred by Walther in his prefatory note, entitled 'Die subjektive Authentizität erfundener Tatsachen', in which he declares that his novel treads quite a fine line between fictional and 'real', historical text.

Diese Veröffentlichung beabsichtigt nicht primär die Suggestion antiquarischer Echtheit. Deshalb wurden Orthographie, Interpunktion und heute unzumutbare Bizarrerien dieses in spätbarockem Deutsch verfaßten Tagebuches dem Sprachgebrauch unseres fortgeschrittenen Jahrhunderts angeglichen.

Allerdings ohne Rhythmus und Färbung des Stils zu beschädigen und, das sollte sich von selbst verstehen, inhaltlich etwas aus aktuellen Rück- oder Absichten abzuändern oder auszulassen. Wohl aber einzufügen mit bestem Wissen und Gewissen und aus gegenwärtigem und, zugegeben, persönlichem Interesse an der Geschichte: Stockende Nässe, einseitig sich nährende Insekten, mehrere dilettantisch geführte Kriege und moderne Schadstoff-Emission hatten beträchtliche Teile des Originalmanuskriptes zerstört.<sup>348</sup>

Walther's 'Originalmanuskript', which purports here to have been originally a single text, has been linguistically modernized and embellished precisely in order to make it relevant to his modern readership and to bring history into the present –

<sup>347</sup> Joachim Walther, 'Jacken, die ich in den Text gehängt hatte', in *Zensur in der DDR: Ausstellungsbuch: Geschichte, Praxis und "Ästhetik" der Behinderung von Literatur*, ed. by Ernst Wichner and Herbert Wiesner (Berlin: Brinkmann und Bose, 1991), pp. 26-27.

<sup>348</sup> Joachim Walther, *Bewerbung bei Hofe*, 4th edn (Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1987), p. 7.

after all, he argues, there is a demand for it. However, the designation of the book as an historical novel was imposed against the wishes of its author by his publishers.<sup>349</sup> By neutralizing the text as an image of the past in his preface, Walther effectively declares his novel to be an analogy for his readership's present.

On one hand, *Bewerbung bei Hofe* is a comment on the difficulties for exceptional literary – or indeed any artistic – talent to make itself publicly known and celebrated in a system that refuses to sanction any art that does not put itself entirely at the service of the regime. Günther, although acknowledged to be an extremely talented poet, finds himself unable to smother his criticism of the effects of August the Strong's regime and the behaviour of those in power, and unable to bring himself to take on the code of behaviour demanded by the court. Consequently he fails to gain the position of court poet. On the other hand, the novel goes beyond commenting on censorship of art to a representation of a society in which everybody is involved in some form of censorship. Monitoring themselves and each other, individuals scramble to maintain or improve their social position through a semi-acknowledged system of espionage, bribery, and nepotistic patronage, whether they recognize the self-perpetuating coerciveness of the system or not. Johann von Besser, seeking to secure his position at court by promoting a protégé but wanting to make sure he is not about to scupper his chances by backing a politically dubious individual, employs a spy to follow Günther and bring him regular reports on his background, work, and movements in Dresden. Besser admires Günther's poetry and even recognizes a version of his

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<sup>349</sup> Reinhard Andress, 'Feudalabsolutistisches Barock und DDR-Literaturverhältnisse: Johann Christian Günther in Joachim Walthers Roman *Bewerbung bei Hofe*', *Studies in GDR Culture and Society* 10 (1991), 181-195 (186).

younger self in the young poet. Yet his sympathy alternates with exasperation in the face of Günther's refusal to work within the constraints of the court's or society's practices. Still, Besser acknowledges that the purpose of art has been hijacked by this regime and by the damaging effects on society of pervasive censorship. Tired of the existence he has found himself living, first at the Prussian court as *Ober-Zeremonienmeister* and then as court poet to August the Strong, he comments 'Ich bin des Lobens, nicht des Lebens müde. Und loben muß ich, um zu leben'.<sup>350</sup> Increasingly, he finds he lacks the energy to survive on his own wits in this environment, but neither is he motivated enough to opt out of it, partly because he is secretly resigned to it. Attempting to find value in mere existence, mostly, ironically, through valuing hierarchy, results in a quantitative rather than qualitative, and thereby rather empty, approach to life. Besser measures his importance in the Prussian court by how close he is to the king: 'da glänzte ich hinter dem Hofmarschall und vor den Generalmajoren auf der 17. Position, man stelle sich das vor: ich, Johann von Besser, der Siebzehnte in Preußen nach dem König!'<sup>351</sup> Instead of trying to measure his merit as an artist by comparing his work with that of other poets, he measures his achievements by age, listing significant poets, writers, theoreticians, and others by their longevity rather than their cultural achievement.<sup>352</sup>

This is a world populated by officials and dignitaries of varying, and often very slight, significance within the hierarchy; despite the fact that Günther's presence in Dresden is due solely to the fact that he is to be put forward as a candidate for court poet to August the Strong and his court, little time is devoted

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<sup>350</sup>Walther, *Bewerbung bei Hofe*, p. 17.

<sup>351</sup>Walther, *Bewerbung bei Hofe*, p. 17.

<sup>352</sup>For example, Walther, *Bewerbung bei Hofe*, pp. 24-25.

on the page to physical interaction between the king and the poet (or indeed to interaction between the king and any of his other artists). This is restricted to the event of Günther's audience at court in which he competes with the untalented and ridiculous *Pritschmeister* Poisson. Yet August is also ever-present in the unofficial court diary that Besser keeps, appended to the entries of his own diary. These are simple statements of the monarch's activities that day, without particular reference to his character or moods. Instead, the reader is encouraged to think of the court as an extension of the king, and these are both characterized through sex. Members of the court and high-ranking members of the city take part in orgies hosted by ministers or the unofficially sanctioned 'escort' business of Madame Zawadzka. Günther is encouraged to write titillating poetry in order to get into August's good books. Power and impotence run through the novel, from Besser's impotence as a courtier, as a sexual partner, and as a poet, through to August's own appearance of power, yet impotence in political matters. This is amply illustrated during Günther's audience with him: he sees magnificent apparel and a group consisting of monarch, mistresses (the ex-mistress Maria Aurora von Königsmarck and the current mistress Christine von Osterhausen), courtiers, and servants arranged for the greatest visual impact, but with the impressive façade showing cracks:

Trotz des Puders und der Schminke sah ich [Besser], wie schlaff die Haut geworden, wie schwer die Augenlider, wie der einstmals reckenhafte Körper nunmehr nur noch massig wirkte, wie der Mund fast schmerzlich lächelte und wie sich unterm Kinn ein zweites und ein drittes zeigte: man sah dem König heuer seine neunundvierzig Jahre an, die Jugend, die zur Schau zu stellen er sich immerdar

bemüht, war vorbei [...] <sup>353</sup>

Even his voice is not entirely congruent with the image, speaking both German and French with an extremely strong Saxon accent.

The audience cannot come to an end quickly enough for August, who, distracted by the sound of meal preparations in the neighbouring dining room, tells the candidates and their seconds to hurry up with their submissions. When judging between the two candidates, August relies not on his own opinion, but on those of the women accompanying him, consulting both, but paying more attention to the frivolous opinions of Osterhausen, who favours Poisson, than the literary critique of Königsmarck, who does her best to encourage Günther. Besser may see in August the glimmerings of his former self under his ageing and tired exterior – ‘trotz alledem verblieb dem Angesicht das Majestätische durch [...] den Blick, der zwar getrübt und träge, doch im Zentrum der Pupille noch immer so gefährlich glimmte wie bei einem müden, alten Löwen’ <sup>354</sup> – but he is given over entirely to the pleasures of the flesh and entertainment, stating impatiently “Langweilen könn Mir Uns auch bei den Akzisesachen, da is kee Poete vonnöten!” <sup>355</sup>

Throughout the novel, it is clear that it is not the king who has control of matters of state or over his people, but the bureaucratic machine beneath him. Even so, August symbolically represents his country and metaphorically the GDR. Interested only in possessing power, August has, whether purposely or not, effectively abdicated all actual political power to his ministers and their

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<sup>353</sup> Walther, *Bewerbung bei Hofe*, p. 279.

<sup>354</sup> Walther, *Bewerbung bei Hofe*, p. 279.

<sup>355</sup> Walther, *Bewerbung bei Hofe*, p. 283.

underlings. He is in turns kept and keeps himself in a state of apparently uninterested torpor through appeals to his love of the sensual, so that he only has the appearance of power. Günther makes the point forcefully to his erstwhile patron, Besser, just before he leaves Dresden.

Die Religion des Königs [...] ist allein die Macht, dafür betet er und preßt das Land, indem er scheinheilig die Hände faltet, und doch: Was ist das für ein König - ein König ohne Krone? [...] Zentralgewalt braucht Männer, nicht diese gepuderten Menuett-Tänzer, die grausam sind, weil sie sich fürchten und weichliche Wünsche hegen wie diese: Man müsse in den Herzen der Untertanen regieren, völlige Unterwerfung der Menschen komme nur aus der Zuneigung, nicht aus der Furcht - so wird die eifrig studierte Weiberpsyche zur Staatsdoktrin, und Tricks, mit denen man vielleicht im Bette glänzen kann, zur hohen Politik, sie demonstrieren Macht durch Glanz, doch unter der Glasur nagt Rost [...] <sup>356</sup>

The point is clearly demonstrated in the behaviour of August's subjects: Besser, finding his independence as a poet taken away from him – a process in which he has been in part complicit – turns to sensual activities to try to fill the gap. He recognizes his sexual impotence as starting around the time his housekeeper began to trust him less, as he became more involved in the court bureaucracy and its modes of expression, but he continues to attempt to engage in sexual activity with her and other women. The Saxon populace, though they grumble about high taxation and high food prices, though they are unenthusiastic at the prospect of displays of state, are nonetheless swept along by the grandeur of the Electoral prince's wedding in 1719. Besser comments on the effect at the end of his three-week diary, using the procession for the newly-wed royal couple as an example. Looking out at the crowds from within a carriage in the procession, he seems at

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<sup>356</sup>Walther, *Bewerbung bei Hofe*, p. 345.

once resigned and despairing at the cycle of self-delusion and oppression that unfolds time and again:

Weshalb beschreibe ich diesen beispiellosen Aufwand so ausführlich? Aus Gewohnheit? Weil es zu meinem Amt gehört? Mitnichten. Weil ich wieder einmal anschaulich vorgeführt bekam, wie derlei detaillierter Pomp, wie diese höheren Orts organisierte Pracht auf den einzelnen derart überwältigend wirkt, daß er nicht anders kann, als diese imposanten Herrlichkeiten und ergo deren gleichermaßen imposanten Urheber herzlich zu bejubeln. [...] Die Stadtpfeifer bliesen so bemüht in ihre Hörner und Oboen, daß ihnen die Hals- und Stirnadern vaterländisch schwellen, und das Volk gaffte und freute sich so rückhaltlos, daß ich mich fragte, was all die polizeilichen Vorsichtsmaßnahmen, Wachen und Mandate sollten. Das niedere Volk nahm das königliche Jubelfest offenbar als eine, auch als seine Gelegenheit zum Feiern. Ist es nicht immer so: Erst mault das Volk, dann aber läßt es sich von dem grand Arrangement, von Pracht und Glanz hinreißen und klatscht begeistert in die Hände, geradeso, als wär's ein riesenhaftes Kind, das nie erwachsen wird.<sup>357</sup>

Infantilization, or the constant search for the next fix of sensual entertainment above intellectual engagement in the most general sense, comprises the main complaint of Walther's novel. Where the maintenance of power for its own sake becomes the end goal, Walther depicts a society in which coercion is everywhere, not least within individuals themselves, and the pattern is repeated from top to bottom. This is a society which, unlike Findeisen's vision of the ideal socialist relationship between artist and patron, will tolerate no criticism, particularly emanating from the arts, which fulfil a public role. However, by removing criticism from the public eye, employing or publishing only those who agree with the party line, and substituting 'Glanz' for political acumen and integrity, those in power risk not only disengaging the populace from politics, but also from

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<sup>357</sup>Walther, *Bewerbung bei Hofe*, pp. 424-425.



themselves, thereby actually damaging their own power. Blinded by their own propaganda – August the Strong, the SED, the GDR authorities in general – the powerful have actually rendered themselves impotent, or at least dubious, as a credible political authority, hence Günther's cry, "Was ist das für ein König – ein König ohne Krone?"

#### **5.4. Józef Ignacy Kraszewski (1812-1887): forging historical and literary links with political allies in the GDR.**

The two novels just discussed came at either end of the GDR period and seem to indicate a development in the perception and utilization of the historical figure of August the Strong which is the inverse of the historiographical treatment of Friedrich II. However, to infer this from two novels separated by nearly thirty years would be questionable, especially since the second of the novels experienced such difficulties in getting published. In fact, the general public in the GDR would have had greater access to the August the Strong of a different author altogether, one who was not original to the literary scene of the GDR or even German, but who was nonetheless instrumentalized in a process of identity formation during the existence of the GDR: the so-called 'Sachsen-Trilogie' consisting of the novels *Gräfin Cosel*, *Brühl* and *Aus dem siebenjährigen Krieg* by the nineteenth-century Polish writer, Józef Ignacy Kraszewski (1812-1887). He also wrote three other Saxon novels – *König August der Starke*, *Flemmings List* and *Der Gouverneur von Warschau*. The prevalent theme in all these is the Polish national character and the lot of the Polish nation. In *Gräfin Cosel* and *König August der Starke*, Kraszewski creates in his depiction of August in particular to

create a literary figure who is the epitome of all that is least desirable in a national character. In both novels this is emphasized through August's juxtaposition with a fictional Polish, or at least 'semi-Slavic', character. In *Gräfin Cosel* this is the impoverished Polish nobleman Raimund Zaklika and in *König August der Starke* the half-Sorb, half-Saxon character Zacharias Wittke. However, only *Gräfin Cosel* was published in German during the GDR period, while *König August der Starke* was first translated in 1995 by Kristiane Lichtenfeld for the publishing house Aufbau. The discussion of Kraszewski's novels in this chapter will therefore be limited to *Gräfin Cosel*.

Kraszewski had been exiled from Poland in 1863 as a result of his associations with anti-Partition groups and lived for most of his remaining life in Dresden. He had, however, already made a name for himself as an author as a young man, including some limited reception of his work in Germany in literary magazines, from as early as 1835. In the *Magazin für die Literatur des Auslandes* in 1856, the critic and Polish teacher, Johannes Nikolaus Fritz, hailed Kraszewski as 'der Wiederentdecker der polnischen Novelle'.<sup>358</sup> Kraszewski's output was wide-ranging and extensive: several hundred works, including novels, short stories and sketches, dramas, journalistic writing, reviews, historical studies, and poetry, as well as his roles as editor and publisher.<sup>359</sup> Kraszewski was also widely criticized for the effect his 'Vielschreiberei' had on the quality of his work, but close to the end of Kraszewski's life in 1880, Robert Waldmüller could still write

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<sup>358</sup>Johannes Nikolaus Fritz, 'J.I. Kraszewski, der Wiederentdecker der polnischen Novelle', *Magazin für die Literatur des Auslandes*, No. 44, 10 April 1856, as quoted in Eduard Merian, 'Zur Kraszewski-Rezeption in Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert', in *Józef Ignacy Kraszewski (1812-1887): Seine Werke und ihr Widerhall*, ed. by Eduard Merian (Leipzig: Karl-Marx-Universität, 1988), pp. 6-17 (p. 8).

<sup>359</sup>For a more detailed account of Kraszewski's activities, see Józef Bachórz, 'Józef Ignacy Kraszewski', *Wirtualna Biblioteka Literatury Polskiej/Virtual Library of Polish Literature*, <http://literat.ug.edu.pl/> [accessed 4 November 2009].

of the extraordinary literary influence the author had on the cultural awareness of his fellow Poles.<sup>360</sup> Although he lived in Germany for three decades, he published exclusively in Polish, working to encourage a Polish national cultural consciousness and arguing for ‘die nationale Freiheit unterdrückter Völker’.<sup>361</sup> In Germany, Kraszewski fell into disrepute in 1884, when he was arrested on charges of espionage. Although he was found innocent, this seems to have signalled the end of his official reception by contemporary German-language media and he died in Geneva in 1887.

This brief sketch of Kraszewski’s life and work give some indications of why he might have been useful to the general cultural policy of the GDR: as a significant Polish author associated with the Polish nationalist movement, dissemination and promotion of his work was an ideal way to encourage cultural links to the GDR’s immediate neighbour and fellow socialist state to the east, thereby turning its back on cultural links to the west. Engaging with Kraszewski’s work was a simple way to encourage this interest in and identity with other socialist countries, as well as begin to develop an East German identity, and it started early. The (East) German revival of interest in Kraszewski’s work occurred in the early 1950s, when *Gräfin Cosel* was published in a new German translation by Greifen publishing house and, in 1956, in regular instalments in the literature column of the newspaper *Sächsisches Tageblatt*, the official mouthpiece of the pro-SED Liberal-Democratic Party.<sup>362</sup> The novel was, and remains, the best-known of the ‘Sachsen-Trilogie’. Along with the other two novels, *Brühl* and *Aus*

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<sup>360</sup>Robert Waldmüller, ‘Ein polnischer Romandichter’, *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*, No. 37, 9 September 1880, pp. 587-588 (p. 588).

<sup>361</sup>Horst Hennig, ‘Zum Geleit’, in Merian (ed.), *Józef Ignacy Kraszewski*, p. 5.

<sup>362</sup>*Sächsisches Tageblatt: Organ der Liberal-Demokratischen Partei Deutschlands*, 11. Jahrgang, No. 290 (4 December 1956) - 12 Jahrgang, Nr. 62 (14 March 1957).

*dem siebenjährigen Krieg*, and a selection of further Kraszewski titles, it was translated by Alois Hermann, Professor of Polish Literature at the Humboldt University, and his wife Lieselotte Hermann. Kraszewski's œuvre is vast and so it would seem logical that selectivity, ideally on the basis of literary quality and interest, would be the key to the translation into German and publication of his work. However, as Eduard Merian noted in 1988, the translators and their publisher, Karl Dietz, manager of the publishing house Greifen, made their decision on the basis of the 'Möglichkeit und Nützlichkeit ihrer Herausgabe'.<sup>363</sup> It is difficult not to read into this phrase, quoted from a paper given at a conference in Leipzig in 1987 marking the centenary of Kraszewski's death, the influence of official GDR cultural policy on the publication of Kraszewski's work during this period.

The Polish original of the first novel in the Saxon trilogy, *Hrabina Cosel*, was published in 1873 and was first translated into German by Christine von Thaler in 1880 from a French translation, whereas the later translation by the Hermanns was based on the Polish texts. It tells the story of the relationship between August and his most infamous mistress, Constantia von Cosel. The story begins circa 1704 at a drinking party in the palace in Dresden, in which a bet on the man with the most attractive mistress results in the unpopular – and not terribly attractive – minister for excise and taxation, Adolf Hoym, declaring his own wife, Constantia, whom nobody has ever seen at court, to be the most beautiful. To prove it, he must send for her from her isolation in rural Laubegast. August inevitably falls for Constantia and, gradually, the feeling is reciprocated.

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<sup>363</sup>Merian, 'Zur Kraszewski-Rezeption', p. 15.

However, only when he produces a document promising to marry her, should he ever be widowed, does Constantia finally demand a divorce from her husband and agree to the relationship with the Saxon elector. The relationship develops happily for several years amid the glamour of Dresden, even during its occupation by the Swedes during the Great Northern War. Frequently with the aid of Raimund Zaklika, an impoverished Polish nobleman at court infatuated with Constantia and charged by the elector with her safety, Constantia dexterously avoids the machinations of several courtiers (in particular the *Statthalter* Prince von Fürstenberg (1656-1716) and Count Flemming (1667-1728), the prime minister) to unseat her in August's affections. Her fall comes when August regains the Polish throne, so that he has to spend considerable periods of time away from her. His courtiers in Warsaw and in Dresden seize the opportunity, preventing her from joining him in Poland and plotting successfully with the family of a prospective new mistress, Marie Dönhoff. To Constantia's humiliation, she is forced to leave Dresden for the palace at Pillnitz in order to make way for the new mistress. All the while she refuses to surrender to any of August's messengers the document in which he promised marriage, because it is a symbol of her honour. This she has given to Zaklika to hide, and he also helps her escape Pillnitz to Berlin. Constantia proceeds to live anonymously in Berlin, though her lifestyle and mode of expressing herself soon brings disapproval from the court of Friedrich Wilhelm I of Prussia, and she is required to leave, this time for Halle. Knowing that she is now technically a prisoner, she sends Zaklika out into the world, temporarily not in her service. It is only a matter of time before she is formally taken back across the border into Saxony – August is still trying to obtain the promissory document,

which she refuses to hand over for anything in the world, so he arranges to have her deported by claiming to the Prussian king that she has plotted against August's life. The remainder of the plot concerns itself primarily with Constantia's captivity and her numerous escape attempts, many organized by Zaklika. She is taken to the castle at Stolpen in 1716, where several further escape attempts fail, and Constantia then devotes herself to contemplation of the Bible. Zaklika still contrives to see her, obtaining a post as an officer at the castle. In 1728 Constantia dares a final escape attempt, against the advice of Zaklika. The attempt fails, resulting in Zaklika's death. Constantia secretly removes from Zaklika's body the document August gave her and returns to her castle prison, where she remains for the rest of her days, even when, after August's death, she is offered her freedom. Kraszewski depicts her later years very briefly, noting the events of the Seven Years' War, her intellectual commitments, her turning away from Christianity and, finally, her death on 31 March 1765.

Karolina Kurzak has recently noted Kraszewski's use of the theme of (sinful) luxury in *Gräfin Cosel*. For Kurzak, the opening of the novel makes a clear statement of the destructive relationship between the abuse of luxury, i.e. moral turpitude, its links with western capitalism and 'progress', and the disintegration of real power:<sup>364</sup>

Er brach Hufeisen und Menschen, überwand Trauer und  
Schicksalsschläge, ihn vermochte nichts unterzukriegen. In ganz  
Deutschland, ja in ganz Europa brillierte sein berühmter Königshof,  
der alle anderen überschattete. Keiner übertraf ihn an Herrlichkeit,  
an erlesenem Geschmack und herrschaftlicher  
Verschwendungssucht, keiner tat es ihm darin auch nur gleich.

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<sup>364</sup>See Karolina Kurzak, 'Noble faces and beautiful souls: luxury in J.I. Kraszewski's *The Countess Cosel*', *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies* 19.1-2 (2005), 117-142 (126).

In diesem Jahr allerdings erfuhr August eine Niederlage.<sup>365</sup>

According to Kurzak, August justifies his amorous pursuit of his finance minister's wife, Constantia Hoym (later von Cosel), by arguing for the appropriateness of their coupling – her beauty and his power as external indications of inner worth mean they make the perfect couple on the political stage.<sup>366</sup> The deceptiveness of August's appearance – and conversely the strong link between Constantia's outer beauty and her inner values – becomes abundantly clear to Constantia and the reader when he discards her. Constantia acknowledges the depth of her disillusionment with the society in which she finds herself and refuses to compromise her own values and honour:

“Glaubt Ihr, ich beklagte den Verlust der Paläste, des Ansehens und der Gunst? Nein, mir tut es weh, daß ich auf keine Menschenseele mehr bauen kann, daß ich überall Gemeinheit sehe, daß ich mich vor mir selbst ekle und mein Selbstvertrauen eingebüßt habe. Gebt mir sein Herz wieder, und ich verzichte auf alles in der Welt! Ich habe ihn geliebt, mein ganzes Leben bedeutete er mir. Er war mir Held und Gott zugleich auf Erden. Aus dem Helden wurde ein Gaukler, die Gottheit wälzt sich in der Gosse... Was bleibt mir noch in diesem schmutzigen und widerlichen Dasein!”<sup>367</sup>

Kraszewski fully develops the symbolic potential of August and Constantia by creating a fictional counterfoil character through which to channel much of the moral of his tale: Raimund Zaklika. He is physically the mirror-image of August, but his air is far more modest.<sup>368</sup> Zaklika even matches the king's physical

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<sup>365</sup>Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, *Gräfin Cosel: Ein Frauenschicksal am Hofe Augusts des Starken*, transl. H. Sauer-Žur, 2nd edn. (Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1986), p. 6.

<sup>366</sup>Kurzak, 'Noble faces and beautiful souls', 130.

<sup>367</sup>Kraszewski, *Gräfin Cosel*, p. 233.

<sup>368</sup>Kraszewski, *Gräfin Cosel*, p. 21.

strength when August insists on a demonstration. It is not called such, but the scene is a serious competition: although August does not lose, neither does he win, and while Zaklika is rewarded with a minor position at August's court in Dresden, he is warned not to test the patience of his lord by getting overly confident. The physical similarities starkly underline the social contrast between the two men. While August was introduced at the beginning of the novel as a man of pomp, glitter, power and, ultimately, defeat, Zaklika is so poor he cannot purchase the status symbols of his social rank and is not even able to afford smart clothing to appear before August.<sup>369</sup>

Zaklika's poverty and then dependence on August is emasculating, but the reader is already fairly certain of Zaklika's moral virtue, and therefore also his heroism, through the striking contrast with August's negatively drawn character. Kraszewski makes Zaklika so poor that he cannot afford to go out and fight for his country as a nobleman, but he is given a purpose equivalent to fighting for his country when he sees Constantia. When Zaklika is charged by August with safeguarding her, Kraszewski's symbolic constellation is complete. Where Constantia fallen from grace and imprisoned for the rest of her life represents a Poland essentially rubbed out of physical existence and out of the minds of the outside world in the nineteenth century, August is the 'foreign' power whose attributes are – by contrast with Zaklika's – emphatically not Polish.

The concept of using a female figure to represent a country or nation is old and widespread, and has been used in both the visual arts and literature. For Poland, the female representation is Polonia, most famously in Jan Matejko's

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<sup>369</sup>Kraszewski, *Gräfin Cosel*, p. 21.



painting *Polonia. Rok 1863* ('Poland. 1863'; 1864) which commemorates the defeat of the 1863 January uprising in Poland: dark-haired Polonia and her companion, a blonde Lithuania, are forced to sit in the centre of a large smithy and have their hands shackled by the representatives of the partition powers. However, the historical figure that is most frequently associated with representations of Poland in literature and drama is the princess Wanda, daughter of the legendary king Krak, who is made queen by popular consent and then drowns herself to escape the clutches of an invading German prince, Rüdiger.<sup>370</sup> From the sixteenth century onwards, accounts of the Wanda narrative in literature and art increasingly emphasized the sacrificial nature of Wanda's death and moved from identifying her with the River Vistula to identifying her with Poland itself.<sup>371</sup> Constantia von Cosel is therefore not the most obvious symbol of Poland in Kraszewski's allegory of Polish values, most especially since even her historical links with Poland are via her association with August. There are a number of possible reasons why Kraszewski chose to depict a German heroine rather than a more obvious Polish one. It may lie in Kraszewski's interest in Polish history: his novel *Stara baśń*, which is the first of a series of 29 novels depicting Polish history takes place in the ninth century; the Wanda story, located much earlier than that, may

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<sup>370</sup>See Albina L. Kruszevska and Marion M. Coleman, 'The Wanda theme in Polish literature and life', *American Slavic and East European Studies* 6 (1947), 19-35.

<sup>371</sup>As, for example, in the play *Wanda królowa polska* (Wanda, Queen of Poland; first performed 1 April 1807) by Tekla Teresa Łubieńska (1767-1810). Both the play and the dramatist are thought to have had close links with Zacharias Werner and his play *Wanda, Königin der Sarmaten* (1808), see Kruszevska and Coleman, 'The Wanda theme', pp. 32-33. For German-language treatments of the Libussa and Wanda myths as state-founding myths in the nineteenth century, see Ritchie Robertson, 'Women warriors and the origin of the state: Werner's Wanda and Kleist's Penthesilea', in *Women and Death: Warlike Women in the German Cultural Imagination*, ed. by Sarah Colvin and Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2009), pp. 61-85. There are also a number of relatively well-known paintings from the 1850s which depict the recovery of Wanda's body from the Vistula by, for example, Maksymilian Antoni Piotrowski (1813-1875) and Aleksander Lesser (1814-1884), see Hanna Widacka, 'Mit o królowej Wandzie w grafice XVI-XIX wieku', *Roczniki Biblioteczne* 51 (2007), 85-101.

simply have been too mythical, and it is the case that the Polish romantic poets in the first half of the nineteenth century – whose work contributed to the national consciousness in Poland – generally did not use the Wanda myth, preferring other figures instead.<sup>372</sup>

Another element of the answer may lie in the antagonistic role of the German Rüdiger figure in the story of Wanda. Tekla Teresa Łubińska's play, *Wanda królowa polska* (1807) emphasizes the antagonism between Poland and Germany, but it can hardly be maintained that at the time of writing *Gräfin Cosel* or his other Saxon novels Kraszewski harboured deep animosity towards the Germans: he had settled in Dresden and become a German citizen. In the memoirs of his travels in the late 1850s and early 1860s, while he was not uncritical of certain aspects of the German population he encountered, Kraszewski nonetheless had several positive things to say about the German way of life, including its free society and industriousness.<sup>373</sup> Certainly his opinion of Germans and Germany as a whole suffered on his arrest in 1883 – Christine von Thaler (1853-?), the first translator of *Gräfin Cosel*, who styled herself 'die letzte Liebe des großen Dichters [...] Kraszewski', cites a letter from him in which he declared he would never return to Germany again<sup>374</sup> – but that was after the Saxon novels were written.<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>372</sup>Kruszewska and Coleman, 'The Wanda theme', 33.

<sup>373</sup>See, for example, Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, *Reiseblätter*, trans. by Caesar Rymarowicz, ed. by Johannes Kalisch (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1986), pp. 214-15. The date of the original publication of the translation by Caesar Rymarowicz is unknown, but Kraszewski compiled the memoir using notes taken from his travels in 1859 and supplemented them with observational sketches in 1874.

<sup>374</sup>Christine von Thaler (Christa del Negro), *Fantasia...Das Lebensbuch der ersten deutschen Journalistin*, ed. by Rudolf Schade (Berlin: Verlag der Gesellschaft deutscher Literaturfreunde, 1929), p. 8 and p. 281.

<sup>375</sup>See Kersten Bunke, 'Einige Bemerkungen zu Kraszewskis Deutschenbild', in *Józef Ignacy Kraszewski (1812-1887): Seine Werke und ihr Widerhall*, ed. by Eduard Merian (Leipzig: Karl-

It is also possible that Kraszewski was not looking for a character whose mode of defending her honour was to kill herself, as Wanda does. That may be heroic and also save her people from enslavement by a German prince, but this is not the point of *Gräfin Cosel*, in which the exemplary hero is not the title character. Were this fictional Constantia von Cosel to kill herself, there would be no difficult character for the hero to serve selflessly. Instead, having fallen for the apparent charms of August, which Kurzak characterizes as the charms of modernity and the West, Constantia/Poland must endure her imprisonment/Partition for the sake of preserving her honour, virtue, and integrity.<sup>376</sup> Zaklika is an ideal figure, whose modesty, humility, lack of complaint, and self-sacrificing service send an exemplary message to Kraszewski's Polish public. Reduced throughout his life to the kind of servitude that is unseemly in a man of his rank, he is nevertheless raised up through his 'undercover' devotion to Constantia. Even in circumstances where he believes an escape plan to be inadvisable or downright dangerous, Zaklika is prepared to put his life on the line for her if she demands it. Zaklika receives very little thanks for this dedication and ultimately he is killed 'in the line of duty'.

Kurzak's modern interpretation and the points outlined above are useful when considering the reasons why *Gräfin Cosel* might have been translated and published ahead of other novels by Kraszewski in the early years of the GDR. Of course the negative image of August, by contrast with Zaklika, his association with excessive luxury, and undesirable western values, would have been in line with the kind of literary and historical propaganda the GDR wished to

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Marx-Universität, 1988), pp. 70-77.

<sup>376</sup>Kurzak, 'Noble faces and beautiful souls', 141-142.

promulgate. Any perception of the West as more powerful because more glamorous than the East could well turn out to be an illusion and readers in the GDR should beware. Moreover, it was possible to turn Kraszewski's own project of building a national consciousness for the Poles to similar purpose for the GDR. As a 'good August' from their eastern border, the figure of Zaklika represents an ideal opportunity for holding up an exemplary figure for the behaviour of the newly socialist citizen of the GDR, as modest, moral, unassuming, and always working for the best interests of his/her country to the point of self-sacrifice.

### **5.5. Adapting Kraszewski's novels for TV: addressing (East) German identity in *Sachsens Glanz und Preußens Gloria* (1985-1987).**

Speculative though these assertions are, it is certainly true that *Gräfin Cosel* was the most popular of the Saxon novels in this period. In addition to the translation and newspaper serialization noted above, the Polish television channel TVP filmed an adaptation of the novel for broadcast in cinemas and on television in 1968,<sup>377</sup> and in the 1980s GDR television produced its own adaptation of the trilogy as a TV mini-series of six feature-length episodes: *Sachsens Glanz und Preußens Gloria*, broadcast over the Christmas and New Year periods of 1985 to 1986, and at Christmas 1987. However, the series – and the first two episodes covering Kraszewski's *Gräfin Cosel* in particular – had to navigate a number of considerable political obstacles before it could be produced and then aired.

The director, Hans-Joachim Kasprzik, and the scriptwriter, Albrecht Börner, drew their inspiration for their mini-series from the chants of football fans

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<sup>377</sup> See 'Hrabina Cosel' on *Film polski* <http://www.filmpolski.pl/fp/index.php/121661> [accessed 16 December 2010].

in the early 1970s, who they claimed had grown up without (official) regional identities, yet were clearly identifying themselves with regions such as Thuringia and Prussia. Dealing with the overlooked and ignored topic of the regional and historical dichotomy between Saxony and Prussia seemed a promising opportunity for connecting with popular thought as well as for reconsidering the negative contemporary judgement of the role of Prussia in German history, for which Kraszewski's novels seemed ideal.<sup>378</sup>

However, the production process proved a convoluted one, as the production team had to contend with the contradictory preferences of a series of divisional managers for a cycle of feature films or a series, debates about the acceptability of Kraszewski as a bourgeois author, and the issue of actors leaving the GDR for the FRG.<sup>379</sup> Funding was a particularly difficult problem, as other, more politically acceptable films were given priority. Kasprzik and Börner proposed a number of scenarios in which their project could still go ahead, though considerably compromised: either filming only the third and fourth parts based on *Brühl*, which would result in the exclusion of the characters of August the Strong and Friedrich II, or omitting parts two and four, in effect halving *Gräfin Cosel* and *Brühl*. In the end, it was decided to omit the first two episodes, that is, the entirety of *Gräfin Cosel*.<sup>380</sup> This was a difficult decision precisely because of its recognized popularity as a text and thus its usefulness as a way to introduce the audience to more difficult material, as Börner later acknowledged:

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<sup>378</sup>Albrecht Börner, *Sachsens Glanz und Preußens Gloria* (Jena and Quedlinburg: Dr. Bussert & Stadeler, 2007), pp. 326-327; Dirk Jungnickel, "'Sachsens Glanz und Preussens Gloria': Werkstattgespräch mit Albrecht Börner zur Stoffentwicklung und Entstehungsgeschichte unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Preußenbildes in der DDR', in *Der Wandel des Preußenbildes in den DDR-Medien*, ed. by Rainer Waterkamp (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1997), pp. 19-33 (p. 19).

<sup>379</sup>Börner, *Sachsens Glanz und Preußens Gloria*, pp. 327-328.

<sup>380</sup>Börner, *Sachsens Glanz und Preußens Gloria*, p. 328.

Das Weglassen der ersten beiden Teile war natürlich bitter und zerschlug unsere Konzeption, die populäre Cosel-Geschichte als Zugpferd für den Zyklus zu benutzen und an das historisch Bekannte anzuknüpfen. Aber wir standen vor der Alternative: Entweder so oder gar nicht.<sup>381</sup>

As a result of the popularity of the films, both in the GDR and elsewhere, however, it was decided that the omission should be rectified, and the *Gräfin Cosel* episodes were filmed and broadcast two years later.<sup>382</sup> It is in this film that the audience most encounters August the Strong. Indeed, the weakness of his son, August III, in the other four parts becomes most striking only in conjunction with the portrayal of August the Strong in *Gräfin Cosel*.

Certain scenes make this point clear and are evidently set up as contrasting parallels: the opening images of *Gräfin Cosel* (part 1) present August the Strong with his back to the camera and facing an elaborate mirror, and dressed impressively in full armour and a robe. Looking over his shoulder into the mirror, the viewer watches him reach for a crown and place it on his own head. He is alone in the room (see fig. 7). The scene then cuts to a coronation scene, showing row upon row of courtiers, both men and women, before August's exit as king of Poland cues the opening titles of the film. The next scene gives the lie to this grandeur as an expression of power by displaying August's defeat at the hands of Karl XII.<sup>383</sup> By contrast, August III is never portrayed as anything other than weak-willed: the second part of *Brühl* opens with August III's coronation. The

<sup>381</sup> Jungnickel, "Sachsens Glanz und Preussens Gloria", p. 27.

<sup>382</sup> A selection of viewer responses (all, perhaps unsurprisingly, largely positive) were published in the East German magazine *FF dabei*, Heft 5 (27 January 1986 to 2 February 1986), p. 2.

<sup>383</sup> Hans-Joachim Kaspzrik (dir.), *Sachsens Glanz und Preußens Gloria* (GDR, 1985-1987), part 1 of 6 'Gräfin Cosel', broadcast 25 December 1987.

new king wants everything to be as it was under his father, and so there is a similar shot of August III standing before a mirror, in full coronation regalia, and with a crown and orb next to him. August III reaches for the crown, but unlike his father, he hesitates, and neither raises it nor places it on his head. Instead of standing alone, August III has all his various ministers in attendance in this scene (see fig. 8). The off-screen narrator intones, ‘Es bleibt nur eine Differenz: anstelle von August den Starken steht sein Sohn – August der Schwache!’<sup>384</sup>

The cycle therefore implies that the strength of Saxony, despite military defeats under August the Strong, will deteriorate under August III, that the political future of the country under August the Strong was more certain, or at least in more secure hands. This does not mean, though, that August the Strong is portrayed as a positive figure. *Gräfin Cosel* picks out his numerous extramarital adventures for particular attention, especially those while he is away on manoeuvres in Flanders in the company of Prince Eugen of Savoy and the Duke of Marlborough. Initially August is able to be quite ruthless about taking decisive action he knows will be unpopular, even in defeat, declaring, for example, that he cannot, in the circumstances, shy away from violating the nobility’s traditional exemption from taxation. But he increasingly neglects matters of state in favour of drowning his sorrows in frivolity: it is while he is away in Flanders that his mistress, Constantia von Cosel, becomes heavily involved in directing matters of state, in particular the raising of revenue. This initiates the plotting to introduce her downfall. The situation by no means indicates that August is entirely defeated

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<sup>384</sup>Hans-Joachim Kasprzik (dir.), *Sachsens Glanz und Preußens Gloria* (GDR, 1985-1987), part 4 of 6 ‘Brühl’, broadcast 22 December 1985; the parallel is confirmed in the text adaptation of the film script by Albrecht Börner, *Sachsens Glanz und Preußens Gloria* (Jena and Quedlinburg: Dr. Bussert & Stadel, 2007), p. 169.

as a political and military force in Europe, as among the final scenes of *Gräfin Cosel* are the military manoeuvres put on display by August for the benefit of his Prussian neighbour, the so-called *Zeithainer Lager*. While Friedrich's ministers mutter to him that this is all simply empty showing off, that the Saxon army has had its day, Friedrich drily comments that the soldiers still seem to have a pretty good aim. This scene additionally demonstrates August's control over himself: although the display of cannon appears to have been successful, it is pointed out that Stolpen provides a much more challenging task for these weapons as it is built on much harder stone. Everybody present knows that this is where Constantia von Cosel is held, but August overcomes his internal struggle to maintain the upper hand in this delicate situation and gives the order to continue the demonstrations at Stolpen.<sup>385</sup>

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<sup>385</sup>Kasprzik (dir.), *Sachsens Glanz und Preußens Gloria* (1985-1987), parts 1 and 2 of 6 'Gräfin Cosel', broadcast 25 December 1987 and 27 December 1987.



*THE IMAGE ORIGINALLY PRESENTED HERE CANNOT BE MADE FREELY AVAILABLE VIA ORA BECAUSE OF COPYRIGHT. THE IMAGE WAS SOURCED AT HANS-JOACHIM KASPRZIK (DIR.), SACHSENS GLANZ UND PREUßENS GLORIA (GDR/DEFA, 1985-1987), PT. 1 (1987).*

Fig. 7: August stands alone before his coronation (Kasprzik (dir.), *Sachsens Glanz und Preußens Gloria*, pt. 1 (1987)).

*THE IMAGE ORIGINALLY PRESENTED HERE CANNOT BE MADE FREELY AVAILABLE VIA ORA BECAUSE OF COPYRIGHT. THE IMAGE WAS SOURCED AT HANS-JOACHIM KASPRZIK (DIR.), SACHSENS GLANZ UND PREUßENS GLORIA (GDR/DEFA, 1985-1987), PT. 4 (1985).*

Fig. 8: August III stands in front of the mirror before his coronation (Kasprzik (dir.), *Sachsens Glanz und Preußens Gloria*, pt. 4 (1985)).

This first part of the film cycle (although produced and broadcast much later than the other two parts) finishes by showing August the Strong as having brought Saxony into a relatively strong position in the relationship between Saxony and Prussia. He is by no means a straightforwardly negative character, and, much like the characters of the Prussian kings, he is shown to be both successful as well as unsuccessful as a ruler, and capable of cruelty in his personal life. In this respect, it is unsurprising to learn that the filmmakers worked closely with the historian Karl Czok, whose evaluation of August the Strong closely resembles his depiction in *Sachsens Glanz und Preußens Gloria*.<sup>386</sup>

Apart from the more nuanced depiction of August the Strong, the striking difference to Kraszewski's novels is the absence of the fictional contrast to the Saxon elector, Raimund Zaklika. He is replaced in this adaptation with the (also fictional) German nobleman, Olaf von Rosen. Kraszewski's main intention of encouraging a Polish national consciousness is thereby entirely excluded from Kasprzik's film and the plot – and any underlying message it holds for the audience – becomes entirely Germano-centric. Von Rosen also falls in love with Constantia, but unlike Zaklika, the extent of his character's symbolic value as a 'good August' is muted. He is not compared in any way with the physical attributes of August, and he is already in August's service when he first sees Constantia. Von Rosen is marked out by his unswerving devotion to her, but he does not die in the attempt to help her escape. This means that although both Kraszewski's novel and Kasprzik's film deal with issues of national identity, they do so in markedly different ways, Kasprzik eschewing Kraszewski's extreme

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<sup>386</sup> Cf. Pp. 186-187.

symbolism for greater exploration of the historical figures and relationships. The Germano-centric nature of the films, however, even if restricted to East German regions, also seems to indicate that the need to forge or maintain links with political neighbours has receded in the 1980s, to be replaced with peculiarly German questions of identity.

## **5.6. Summary.**

The trajectory that the depiction of August the Strong in the GDR takes does not go from straightforwardly negative to cautiously positive as does the historiography of other figures of the period, in particular Friedrich II. It is true that, like the tensions surrounding assessment of those figures, depiction of August the Strong was tied to the debate in the GDR about national identity, but in contrast August did not have to solely represent the negative aspects of royal power and culture. Because the historiography of August preceding the mid-twentieth century was already so profoundly negative, the reaction against him after the World War II could not be negative as it was with Friedrich II. Instead, as a figure who had had little posthumous influence individually on the formation of Germany as a whole, but with considerable regional impact as Saxon ruler and to the east, August opened up a range of possibilities for GDR writers and authorities to explore what they thought their socialist society should (or should not) be. The increasingly critical tone of the depictions of August in the 1980s is less a result of historical reassessment than it is a reassessment of the socialist system in the GDR.

## Chapter 6: Romance, history, and re-enactment: August the Strong in post-*Wende* literature and media to 2010.

It has been quite evident in previous chapters that the popular literary image of August the Strong from the eighteenth century onwards has usually been partnered with stories involving women, most commonly one or another of his mistresses, and of these women, the most common character has been Anna Constantia von Cosel, although Maria Aurora von Königsmarck is also represented.<sup>387</sup> This trend continued into the early twentieth century with a number of popular novels taking Anna Constantia as their main protagonist, for example, *Die schöne Gräfin Cosel* (1932) by Georg von Ompteda (1863-1931), while early film versions of August's life, for example, *Der galante König* (1920) directed by Alfred Halm (1861-1951), tended to focus on his amorous adventures with a view to titillate and scandalize. This focus shifted quite radically in the east during the GDR period, in which the main characters tended to be male and more or less featured as craftsman-workers, such as August the Strong's court artists – with the possible exception of *Sachsens Glanz und Preußens Gloria*, which featured several strong female roles. During the closing years of the twentieth century after the *Wende* and the first decade of the twenty-first century, however, the majority of literary considerations of or uses of August the Strong's life and character once again chose a strategy that viewed him through and focused on a female perspective. Once again, these works, with few exceptions, took up the

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<sup>387</sup> Königsmarck appears in the product of her own pen in Anton Ulrich von Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel's *Römische Octavia*, but also as the heroine of Wilhelmine von Gersdorf's proto-feminist historical novel, *Aurora, Gräfin von Königsmark* (1817).

story of Anna Constantia von Cosel.<sup>388</sup> Constantia von Cosel was born in 1680 to Anna Margarethe and Joachim Brockdorff at the family property of Gut Depenau in Holstein. She was lady-in-waiting to Sophie Amalie, Princess of Holstein-Gottorp, at the courts of Gottorp and then of Braunschweig-Lüneburg. In 1703, Constantia married Adolf Magnus von Hoym, minister for taxation at the Saxon court in Dresden. The unhappy marriage ended in divorce in 1706, by which time Constantia was August's *maîtresse en titre*. She gave birth to the first of three surviving children by him in 1708 – Augusta Constantia (1708-1728), Friederike Alexandra (1709-1784), and Friedrich August (1712-1770). In 1706 Constantia was also elevated to the status of *Reichsgräfin*. In 1716 she was imprisoned in Burg Stolpen without trial, ostensibly as a result of her refusal and then inability to produce the secret marriage contract August had given her at the beginning of their relationship, although it is likely that political concerns played a part. Despite outliving August, the one person to whom she might have posed a political danger, she remained a prisoner in Burg Stolpen until her death in 1765. The scandal of her life, her relatively low aristocratic origins, coupled with her meteoric rise to glamorous prominence, the associated apparent sexual licentiousness, followed by her abrupt, mysterious, and complete fall from grace at a relatively early age, never to be seen again, have been fertile ground for narrativization.

The works that are given as the examples and case studies in this chapter represent in their totality a new dynamic in the way in which ('academic') history and fiction have joined forces in presenting history to a lay public. In some

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<sup>388</sup>The exceptions are Sabine Weigand, *Die Königsdame: die Osmanin am Hofe von August dem Starken* (2007), whose protagonist is Fatime, August's Turkish mistress, and Renate von Rosenberg, *Antonia – die schöne Polin: eine Liebe am Hofe August des Starken* (2009).

respects this is achieved simply by refining what others attempted in the past, most particularly the mission of combining didactic, source-based history with entertainment declared, for example, by the publishers of the nineteenth-century *Fata Morgana* series of magazine novels. This new dynamic seems to be rooted in what might be termed by some – in some cases pejoratively – as the 'feminization' of history presented for general public consumption, expressed through its increasingly emotional content and its close affinity, in some cases, to romantic fiction. In the case of works about or using associations with August the Strong, this 'feminization' also includes the trend of greater attention to female figures. Several works will be the basis of this examination – a selection of episodes from the TV history series *Die Deutschen* on ZDF and *Geschichte Mitteldeutschlands: Gesichter, Geschichten, Geheimnisse* on MDR, an historical biography, a modern romance story, and a novel. All use women linked to August – though not always Constantia von Cosel – as their ostensible subject, though in at least one case, she is not the primary topic but serves more as a vehicle for other concerns. Furthermore, all these works make use of historical re-enactment in some form or another. This re-enactment differs according to the genre to which each work belongs and the circumstances in the works in which re-enactment is undertaken. Usually a practice associated with the physical staging of historical events or the experiential strand of contemporary history teaching, these works demonstrate that textual re-enactment is a highly nuanced tool that may be used by authors to engage their readers with a character and with their didactic purpose. Textual use of re-enactment also shows tendencies already observed by historians and theoreticians such as Vanessa Agnew, Robert Bain, Jeffrey Mirel, Beth Goodacre,

and Gavin Baldwin in the more usual modern re-enactment formats, for example, in ‘reality’ history programmes involving lay volunteers, which use emotion to address contemporary dilemmas at the expense of presenting precise historical knowledge.<sup>389</sup> In contrast to such programmes, however, the works discussed here are highly self-reflexive and self-conscious about the mode of re-enactment they are using and why. The current extensive debate surrounding the method of re-enactment and its links with fiction shows the considerable challenge it presents to historians, but its opportunities are also demonstrated in some of the fictional works given here.

### **6.1. *Die Frau im Turm* (2009) by Viola Roggenkamp, novel.**

A novel that really highlights the importance of history to the greater understanding of self is Viola Roggenkamp’s (\*1948) novel *Die Frau im Turm*. It is one of the latest additions to the increasing volume of literature taking as its subject figures from the early eighteenth-century court at Dresden, though it should be noted that the fictional depiction of August the Strong, although he is in some respects an important figure in the main character’s development, occupies a fairly peripheral position in the narrative.<sup>390</sup> *Die Frau im Turm*, like the other texts discussed in this chapter, takes up a strategy of parallel texts, here blurring the boundaries between past and present, and between the real and the re-enacted individual, and exploring the role of the past in forming (an individual’s) identity. Roggenkamp, herself from a German-Jewish family, is well-known for dealing

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<sup>389</sup> Cf. Pp. 16-20.

<sup>390</sup> *Die Frau im Turm* was published by S. Fischer Verlag in March 2009, as was Eberhard Görner’s illustrated novel about August der Starke’s favourite court fool, Joseph Fröhlich, *Der Narr und sein König* (2009).



with German-Jewish themes, in particular in her best-known work, *Familienleben* (2004).<sup>391</sup> This, by her own account, included a certain amount of autobiographical material, and two main themes included in *Familienleben* recur throughout the rest of her work: post-Holocaust Jewish identity in Germany, particularly among children of Holocaust survivors who are born after the end of World War II, and the relationship between children and parents, most often the relationship between daughters and mothers.<sup>392</sup> *Die Frau im Turm* problematizes both these themes, but adds the further, complicating, aspects of German-German relations after reunification and of identity for German-Jews of the former GDR in a post-reunification society.

Roggenkamp tells two stories in parallel: on the one hand that of Masia Bleiberg, illegitimate daughter of Wibke Tischner, a gentile West German, and Masin (known as 'Max') Bleiberg, a German Jew who went to the GDR and never returned. The year is now 1999, Masia is in her early thirties and still living with her mother in Hamburg, failing to find properly paid, permanent work, and convinced of the virtues of the former GDR. Masia is consumed by the desire to find out about her Jewish father and the need to confirm or create within herself some sort of Jewishness, two goals which are made problematic by her own mother. Wibke is not Jewish and so Masia finds that she cannot simply claim her Jewishness by blood. What is more, Wibke is ambivalent about her daughter's search for her father, giving her only little, heavily edited, information about him

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<sup>391</sup> An English translation by Helena Ragg-Kirkby was published by Virago in 2007 under the title *The Spectacle Salesman's Family*, and it was also translated into Italian and Dutch in 2005. Roggenkamp's other successful publications include *Erika Mann – eine jüdische Tochter* (2005), *Frau ohne Kind: Gespräche und Geschichten einer Tafelrunde* (2005) and *Tu mir eine Liebe: Meine Mamme* (2002).

<sup>392</sup> See Henrik Flor, 'Interview mit Viola Roggenkamp', on *Familienleben*, for *Literaturtest*, [www.literaturtest.de](http://www.literaturtest.de) [accessed 11 June 2009].

and the relationship they had as a couple. When Masia's best friend, the rather tubby August Kuhl, decides to make a film about Constantia von Cosel, she joins him and his leading lady, the call-girl and porn actress, Janina Helle, on a research trip to Dresden as his expert on all things Jewish. Once in Dresden, Masia's father, who has been calling himself Maurice since his arrival in the GDR, is quickly located: he works as a concierge in Hotel Kempinski, located in the reconstructed Taschenbergpalais, originally built by August the Strong for Countess von Cosel. Masia and Max/Maurice form a tentative relationship in which both hesitantly rediscover the Jewish aspect of themselves, although he points out to her that he is not just Jewish, but also German. Masia, meanwhile, continues to help August with his film research, during which he dresses her in a Constantia von Cosel costume and, with a feeling of increasing liberation, she parades through the centre of Dresden to the applause of onlookers. The combination of this, the final meetings with her father, and the start of a relationship with August coalesce to bring about in Masia a feeling that she can make sense of who she is, and so she begins to write it down.

On the other hand, and alternating with the chapters that take place in 1999, is the story of Constantia von Cosel in the years of her imprisonment in Burg Stolpen until her death. These chapters chart the repetitiveness of her existence in captivity and her preoccupation with her former lover, August the Strong, but primarily her fictional interest in and exploration of Judaism, under the guidance of the young Jew who visits her in Stolpen, Moische Schieber. She deepens her knowledge through study of works of philosophy and religion, and her room is filled with piles of books, her own library. Ultimately, Constantia

turns fully to Judaism, eating kosher, and keeping Jewish rituals and holidays. The two figures who accompany Constantia are Moische and Lenchen Simmern, a girl from the local town who is assigned to be Constantia's maid and who has none of the usual training required of a lady's maid or lady-in-waiting. Others who encounter Constantia in her rooms at Stolpen are the commander of the castle, Wettel, and also visitors from the court in Dresden: August's minister, Flemming, and her two children, Friedrich August and Friederike Alexandra (her second daughter, Augusta Constantia, is dead). When Constantia dies, her children have her books burnt, but because Moische – now executed – was a model Jew, local Jewish outlaws come to Constantia's grave to say Kaddish for her. They do this for Moische's sake more than Constantia's, although the novel ends on the line 'Damit die Seele dieser Frau nicht übersehen werde beim Sammeln des Lebens'.<sup>393</sup>

Roggenkamp's main character, Masia, tries to inhabit a number of re-enacted roles throughout her life in an effort to affirm her Jewish identity as opposed to her German identity. She is, however, constantly disappointed in this – as, for example, in her attempt as a child to recreate the effect of a concentration camp internee or, when she is older, being confronted by an American, red-haired rabbi who tells her, much to her bemusement, that looking Jewish is not in itself sufficient basis for being considered Jewish –<sup>394</sup> usually because she finds that expectations about what constitutes Jewishness are not based on simple and unchanging or concrete criteria formulated simply as a result of historical circumstance or accident of birth, but are far more complex than that. She turns to

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<sup>393</sup>Roggenkamp, *Die Frau im Turm*, p. 426.

<sup>394</sup>Roggenkamp, *Die Frau im Turm*, p. 31 and p. 69.

her parents to find out more about who she is and why, but finds that the truth about her parents' relationship is not quite as simple as she had imagined: her 'history' as told to her by her mother, Wibke, does not match the information her father, Max, provides. When Masia confronts her mother with this, the only way in which the two women can deal with the emotional impact of this revelation is at a remove through written re-enactment of the event of confrontation (Masia writes a transcript of the telephone conversation she has with her mother) and of the meeting of Wibke and Max in the 1960s (Wibke gives Masia a typed account of her meeting with Max/Masin in 1963, written shortly after the event).<sup>395</sup> Masia does not realize that writing (re-enacting) an account of a traumatic event (like the telephone conversation), precisely because it arouses difficult emotions, might be most easily dealt with at a remove from oneself.

Masia comes only gradually to this realization, but the reader of *Die Frau im Turm* is reminded of it constantly through the figure of Constantia von Cosel. At the beginning of each 'eighteenth-century' chapter, Constantia von Cosel watches herself in a mirror in a continuum of time and space invoked by repetition and variation:

Die Cosel erwacht. Die Cosel erwachte. Die Cosel ist erwacht. Die Cosel steht am Fenster. Die Cosel stand am Fenster. Die Cosel hatte am Fenster gestanden. Die Cosel sieht sich am Fenster stehen, wie sie am Fenster gestanden haben wird, Tag um Nacht um Tag um Nacht. Festung Stolpen, früher Morgen, kalt.<sup>396</sup>

A single statement is repeated in (almost) all possible grammatical, and therefore also chronological, permutations – the present, past, pluperfect, and future perfect

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<sup>395</sup>Roggenkamp, *Die Frau im Turm*, pp. 352-358.

<sup>396</sup>Roggenkamp, *Die Frau im Turm*, p. 46.

tenses. The further repetition of this formula, with some variations, at the beginning of each chapter, and the use of the future perfect in particular, are a signal to the reader that the division between the two historical worlds of the eighteenth-century and 1999 is a highly permeable one. Indeed, as such, they are a further signal to the reader to look for parallels between the characters inhabiting each historical environment. This grammatical play serves to demonstrate the flexibility of time perception and, with the use of a reflexive verb, also the changes in perception of the self that is a key theme throughout the book, i.e. space perception.

The play with space and time is a structural feature of the book from the very beginning: the story opens in 1761 in Constantia von Cosel's tower room, where a man, Masius von Bleiberg, is paying her a visit. She asks him questions about the world outside, including which women are currently in positions of power, and then about himself. He responds by telling her how he reached her:

Der Weg zu ihr ist weit gewesen, über zwei Jahrhunderte, er hat ihn im Flug oder besser gesagt in einem Zug zurückgelegt, lesend in einem Buch, er liest gern im Zug [...]. Er sei nach Belieben ein Passant, ein Vorübergehender, ein neugieriger Zeitgenosse, wo immer man ihn brauche gegenwärtig.<sup>397</sup>

Masius tells her of department stores and twentieth-century fashions, in return she tells him, or the reader is told, of her life before her imprisonment. She defends the king who imprisoned her: "Der König war einsam und hat sich gefürchtet in der Gemeinsamkeit."<sup>398</sup> Here, Constantia understands the reasons for her imprisonment as psychological, and she seeks and gives guidance with lines from

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<sup>397</sup>Roggenkamp, *Die Frau im Turm*, p. 11.

<sup>398</sup>Roggenkamp, *Die Frau im Turm*, p. 22.

the Torah. These are to guide both the reader and Masia: ‘Gedenke der Tage der Urzeit, erwäget die Jahre vergangener Geschlechter, frage deinen Vater, daß er dir künde, deine Alten, daß sie dir ansagen.’<sup>399</sup> Significantly, Constantia has outlived her generation and society, and has been separated from them physically and through the passage of time, but, as the opening lines of her chapters show, she is constantly examining and re-examining herself, and, through the repetition of those lines, the reader is also constantly examining and re-examining past, present, and future.

In a less abstract way, it is this examination and re-examination that also marks Masia: she has turned to her immediate past – her parents – for some of her history and identity, but the task of making Masia ‘whole’ does not only lie with them, but also with August Kuhl, the director. He takes her quite out of her comfort zone by dressing her in the Cosel costume originally intended for Janina Helle and parading her through Dresden. Initially passive, she then throws herself into the role of re-enacting Constantia von Cosel. The effort this requires transpires to be something natural; being Constantia von Cosel is intrinsic to Masia's own personality and existence: ‘Sie konnte sich nicht ansehen, sie schämte sich, diese Frau im Spiegel so lange unter strengem Verschuß gehalten zu haben. [...] Masia war berauscht von der Frau, in der sie steckte.’<sup>400</sup> These two sentences describe an inversion that occurs within Masia and are surrounded by a description of the change in the relationship between Masia and August, and also in Masia's understanding of who she is. By the end of the few paragraphs that this episode lasts, August is a spectator, taking pleasure in watching her and the

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<sup>399</sup>Roggenkamp, *Die Frau im Turm*, p. 23.

<sup>400</sup>Roggenkamp, *Die Frau im Turm*, p. 369.

response of Dresden society. Masia is, however, not just performing: she is referred to as ‘Cosel’ at this point in the text, not ‘Masia’. Even August, who is not costumed, is perceived and expresses himself in a way that suggests he, too, is part of the re-enactment. Despite his modern appearance, August is not treated as another member of the crowd by those who see them. They are both welcomed and accepted in a way that Masia has never been in her life:

Im Café Cosel wurde applaudiert, als sie eintraten. Sie [Masia] grüßte mit leicht erhobener Hand und lächelte freundlich in die Runde. August blieb ein paar Schritte zurück, um zu beobachten, um für sich einzufangen. Der Pächter des Café Cosel kam herzugeeilt, verneigte sich, und sie ließ sich die Hand küssen. Der Mann bestand darauf, die Cosel und ihren Begleiter zum Frühstück einzuladen. August und sie nahmen gerne an.

“So ist das eben”, sagte er [August] leise zu ihr, “die hohen Herrschaften kriegen immer alles umsonst, und auch unsere Werktätigen vergessen ihre aktive und selbstlose Arbeit am Klassenkampf, da Eure Exzellenz Dero schönes Antlitz zeigen und damit dem Volk die Ehre erweisen.” Und wirklich sahen alle zu ihnen herüber, lächelten, freuten sich.<sup>401</sup>

August highlights the inconsistent behaviour of a society with supposedly socialist ideals when faced with the glamour of a monarchical, absolutist past by changing the style of his language half-way through his whispered statement. Having used modern German while he speaks of a modern society, his address to Masia is antiquated, as if he were addressing Constantia von Cosel. Two periods of time momentarily co-exist in the same space: in their bodies, language, reception, and the abandonment of ‘modern’ principles.

The alternation of time in each chapter forces the reader to continually replay the constellation of psychological relationships that build up between

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<sup>401</sup>Roggenkamp, *Die Frau im Turm*, pp. 369-370.

Constantia/Moische/Lenchen and Masia/Max/Masius/(Janina). The parallels between these and other characters are not entirely complete, but they are deliberate, according to the author:

So wie der Cosel in der heutigen Zeit die Figur der Masia Bleiberg gegenübersteht, haben auch andere Romanfiguren aus der Vergangenheit ihr Gegenstück im Heute. Moische Schieber findet seine Entsprechung in Max Bleiberg, Masias Vater, und auch in der Person des Jossi Gift, ein deutscher Jude aus Israel [...]. Lenchen, die Dienstmagd der Cosel, könnte eine Wiedergängerin haben in Janina Helle, einer jungen Frau aus Dresden. [...] Im Drehbuch zum Cosel-Film spielt Janina Helle die Rolle der polnischen Mätresse, gehaßt von der Cosel, und auch Masia und Janina Helle sind sich übrigens nicht grün.<sup>402</sup>

The re-enactment of character is thus similar to, but not the same as, that used in Evelyn Holst's *August und ich*, discussed below. 'Time travel' is an important part of the story, insofar as this term adequately describes the meeting between Masius and Constantia in the first chapter and the continual references to time in the following chapters. However, there is no sense of a modern-day character being the 'reincarnation' of an historical figure, rather the role of the historical re-enactment here is a psychological one, which only really spills out into the physical close to the end. Instead, re-enactment is used through shifts in perspective, of which the reader is constantly reminded.

Roggenkamp's novel is a complex meditation on the multi-faceted heritage carried by the generation of modern Germans (and young German Jews particularly) who grew up not really remembering the ethnic, political, and religious upheavals and disasters of the twentieth century. Readers might (with some justification) feel that it tries to do too much with so many difficult and

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<sup>402</sup>Constanze Neumann, 'Interview mit Viola Roggenkamp', (March/April 2009), [www.fischerverlage.de/microsite/buch/Roggenkamp/home](http://www.fischerverlage.de/microsite/buch/Roggenkamp/home) [accessed 11 June 2009].



emotive debates, even that it attempts to be too ‘literary’.<sup>403</sup> In that light, there is a certain irony that it does not achieve what its central character must learn: balance in personal identity by examining all aspects of heritage in personal history, genetic, ethnic, national, emotional, and even a past that can no longer be truly experienced because it is so long past. Masia tries to re-enact a number of these for herself to understand more, but it is not until she re-enacts, as it were, a deeper past in the present, in the company of others also taking part that she finally comes to some understanding of and satisfaction with who she is and could be.

**6.2. Geschichte Mitteldeutschlands: Gesichter, Geschichten, Geheimnisse (MDR): ‘Gräfin Cosel: Aufstieg und Fall einer Mätresse’ (2005) and ‘Die vergiftete Mätresse: wie August der Starke an der Macht kam’ (2008); and Die Deutschen II (ZDF): ‘August der Starke und die Liebe’ (2010), TV programmes.**

Post-Wende German-German relations, identity and ritual are ostensibly at the forefront of the following examples of re-enactment. Though not the same as the kind of reality television projects that Agnew focuses on, these television series bear similarities to them insofar as they are not concerned with the individual but

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<sup>403</sup>In a review for *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Sandra Kegel commented: ‘Eine Frage aber bleibt: Warum hat die wunderbare Erzählerin Viola Roggenkamp diese waghalsige Konstruktion bemüht? Den beiden bemerkenswerten Biographien folgt man jeweils gebannt; ihre Verknüpfung aber wirkt zu gewollt. Zurück bleibt ein Nachgeschmack von Künstlichkeit.’ See Kegel, ‘Die Freiheit nehm ich mir’, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 12 March 2009, <http://www.faz.net/s/Rub4A285C3CD96B4BD4B33430B85E00A3D4/Doc~E103FA0F54C1F4BF09CB573A6222716F6~ATpl~Ecommon~Scontent.html> [accessed 17 December 2010]. See also the review ‘Die Frau im Turm’ by Dominik Nüse (17 March 2009) for the online portal for popular modern literature review, *literature.de Das Literaturportal*, who commented: ‘wer sich an sich ständig wiederholenden Kapitelanfänge wie “Die Cosel steht am Fenster. Die Cosel stand am Fenster. Die Cosel hatte am Fenster gestanden.” erfreuen und für sich daraus bildungsbürgerliches Kapital gewinnen kann, für den sollte es nun mit diesem Buch keine langweiligen Sonntagnachmittage mehr geben,’ <http://www.literaturnetz.com/index.php?/2009031710077/Buch/Belletristik/Die-Frau-im-Turm.html> [accessed 17 December 2010].

with group dynamics.<sup>404</sup> The regional broadcasting corporation, MDR (*Mitteldeutsche Rundfunk*), has produced several seasons of history documentaries since 1996 – also the year in which the channel was launched – under the title of *Geschichte Mitteldeutschlands: Gesichter, Geschichten, Geheimnisse*; likewise, the larger national broadcaster ZDF (*Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen*) has produced a similar series entitled *Die Deutschen*, currently in its second series.<sup>405</sup> Both series are expressly intended to address the question of identity, whether to explore the identity of the nation, as it were ‘where the Germans come from and who they are’ (*Die Deutschen*), or to actually create a sense of regional identity (*Geschichte Mitteldeutschlands*). The mission of *Geschichte Mitteldeutschlands* is slightly hidden by the fact that it is not explicitly declared in the programme itself, but can be found – after some searching – online, where the identity-forming mission is attributed to MDR’s first head of television, Henning Röhl, by Winifred König, project manager for *Geschichte Mitteldeutschlands*.<sup>406</sup> In contrast, *Die Deutschen* states clearly at the beginning of each episode an understanding of the historically fragmented nature of ‘Germany’ into a large number of small states and principalities, but *Geschichte Mitteldeutschlands* is much vaguer about the geographic, cultural, or political limits of its project, and this is partly due to the terminology which it must use as a programme made by *Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk*. In use since the early nineteenth century, the term ‘Mitteldeutschland’ is notoriously problematic, as it has been used to refer to a grouping of territories,

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<sup>404</sup> Programmes such as *Abenteuer 1900* (2004), *Abenteuer 1927* (2005), and *Windstärke 8: Das Auswandererschiff* (2005). See Agnew, ‘History’s affective turn: historical reenactment and its work in the present’, *Rethinking History* 11.3 (2007), 299–312.

<sup>405</sup> ZDF’s first series of *Die Deutschen* was broadcast in autumn 2008.

<sup>406</sup> “‘Wir machen kein Historikerfernsehen!’: Gespräch mit Winifred König und Dirk Otto,” (2 October 2008) at <http://www.mdr.de/geschichte/projektteam/5713320.html> [accessed 31 March 2009].

and to certain geographical or cultural features, and these designations have shifted over the course of time.<sup>407</sup> For MDR, however, ‘Mitteldeutschland’ is associated with the three federal states it serves: Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, and Thuringia.<sup>408</sup> The series itself presents an approximately 1000-year history of this region to the public in a prime time Sunday evening slot. The format initially presented the full 1000 years along thematic lines in each episode. This was quickly found to be unsustainable and, in response to falling viewing figures, in 2002 the format switched to focus on a biographical format with the idea that an individual’s life could reflect the era in which they lived. However, a very particular sort of life was deemed appropriate by the production team, as the director Dirk Otto commented:

Inzwischen hat sich gezeigt, dass es die cleverste Variante ist, ein Leben zu erzählen, weil das erstmal eine Art Dramaturgie vorgibt, die überschaubar ist für jemanden, der die historischen Hintergründe nicht kennt. Wenn sich in diesem Leben dann eine Fabel finden lässt, existenzielle Konflikte, ein Gegenspieler, dann ist es der Idealfall, um von einer Epoche im Spiegel einer Biografie zu erzählen.<sup>409</sup>

The desire to provide historical instruction of a sort is clear, but this is evidently subordinated to the desire to entertain through drama and excitement. The need to give the historical aspects a narrative framework is ideally provided by the chronological limits of a biography. Stories are to be told that almost amount to the legendary; if these figures are not already

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<sup>407</sup>Jürgen John, ‘Gestalt und Wandel der “Mitteldeutschland”-Bilder’, *‘Mitteldeutschland’: Begriff—Geschichte—Konstrukt*, ed. by Jürgen John (Rudolstadt/Jena: Hain, 2001), pp. 17-68 (esp. pp. 18-22).

<sup>408</sup>Tilo Felgenhauer, Mandy Mihm and Antje Schlottmann, ‘The making of *Mitteldeutschland*: on the function of implicit and explicitly symbolic features for implementing regions and regional identity’, *Geografiska Annaler* 87B (2005), 45-60 (46).

<sup>409</sup>Dirk Otto in “Wir machen kein Historikerfernsehen!”, <http://www.mdr.de/geschichte/projektteam/5713320.html>.

part of popular historical ‘lore’, then they soon will be:

Das Schicksal müsste verwoben sein mit den großen Ereignissen der Epoche, damit man beides erzählen kann, ein spannendes Leben, in dem sich auch die Epoche mit den Schlüsselkonflikten spiegeln lässt.<sup>410</sup>

The format of *Die Deutschen* is similar, insofar as it takes the lives of important historical figures and, through them, comments on certain key events in history. The two programmes seem therefore to ‘rethink the thoughts of a great many’ in order to demonstrate to the viewer that they (to paraphrase Collingwood) ‘must be a great many kinds of people’ and place them within an historical context. There is a difference between the two (in addition to the very apparent disparity in the two programmes’ respective budgets) in their use of re-enactment through actors. *Geschichte Mitteldeutschlands* generally uses acted scenes that are silent while an out-of-shot narrator speaks over them, while *Die Deutschen* makes extensive use of (invented) dramatic dialogue between actors. There is also a difference in their use of professional historians: *Geschichte Mitteldeutschlands* tends, in general, not to use them except as consultants for the making of the programme, and the focus in supplementary material linked to the episodes, for example, online, is often on the writers of the episodes (for example, live online chats between episode writers and the viewing public after the broadcasting of an episode). In contrast, *Die Deutschen* features historians or otherwise expert ‘talking heads’ quite extensively, both within the episodes and in extra material online. As will become clear in the examination of episodes relating to August the Strong, this very much affects the nature of ‘history’ or ‘fiction’ presented in these

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<sup>410</sup>Dirk Otto in “‘Wir machen kein Historikerfernsehen!’”, <http://www.mdr.de/geschichte/projektteam/5713320.html>.

programmes and how they are received by the public.

The format of these two programmes both distances and pulls the audience in to the stories they are viewing. On the one hand, distance is encouraged through the interruption of the actors' dramatic re-enactment by the appearance, variously, of professional experts or a change of 'scene' from an acted section to panning shots of documents, works of art, or relevant locations. On the other hand, however, the use of re-enactment – silent or with dialogue – in the first place is specifically intended to encourage an emotional response from the viewer. Each episode of *Die Deutschen II* is accompanied on the programme website by extra material designed especially for use in the classroom. In the material accompanying the episode 'August der Starke und die Liebe', the emotional content of the re-enactment methodology is specifically cited as a beneficial didactic tool:

Der didaktische und methodische Wert dieses Films für den Schüler liegt besonders [...] in der nachgestellten Darstellung von Schlüsselszenen, die die Emotionalität ansprechen und eine Unmittelbarkeit des (Mit)Erlebens ermöglichen, womit das Thema an Eindringlichkeit gewinnt.<sup>411</sup>

The school material for the series was compiled by ZDF in association with the Verband der Geschichtslehrer Deutschlands e.V. The booklets include a summary of each episode, a summary of the didactic methodology, an explanation of some of the themes included in the episode that might be relevant to a school history lesson, a small selection of further reading (including *Wikipedia* entries, as well as

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<sup>411</sup> 'Materialien für den Unterricht – Folge 6: August der Starke und die Liebe', *Die Deutschen II* (ZDF, from 14 November 2010 – ongoing at time of writing), <http://www.diedeutschen.zdf.de/ZDFde/inhalt/20/0,1872,7390964,00.html> [accessed 12 December 2010].

ZDF's own dedicated pages) followed by a number of questions and activities aimed mainly at students in *Sekundarstufe II*, but also students in *Sekundarstufe I*. In the didactic statement above and the use of professional historians, *Die Deutschen* makes a claim to be a 'history programme', but also to draw in its audience through an appeal to the emotions. Although the production team of *Geschichte Mitteldeutschlands* makes no claim to be a history programme in the same vein – indeed, although the word 'Geschichte' is in the title of the series, Winifred König, the series' editor, emphatically stressed in an interview in 2008, 'Wir machen kein Historikerfernsehen, wir machen Fernsehen am Sonntagabend 20:15 Uhr für ein ganz breites Publikum'. In the same interview Dirk Otto went so far as to say, 'Wir machen Docutainment,' and linked the series' entertainment value with the viewing figures.<sup>412</sup> Those who make the MDR series are, therefore, under no illusions about the relationship between history and entertainment in their product. Nevertheless, encouraging viewer participation in the programme – the '(Mit)Erleben' of which the school materials for *Die Deutschen* speaks – is attempted through a number of devices online, for example, live online discussions with the writers of selected episodes or, a recent development for the last two series, an online quiz in which the winner is given the opportunity to take a small role (as a peasant, craftsman, court lady, or similar) in the filming of one of the following series' episodes.<sup>413</sup> This gives the opportunity for viewers to identify with the historical figures before them, although it is small and

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<sup>412</sup>Winifred König and Dirk Otto in "Wir machen kein Historikerfernsehen!", <http://www.mdr.de/geschichte/projektteam/5713320.html>.

<sup>413</sup>'Sieben Fragen zur "Geschichte Mitteldeutschlands"', <http://www.mdr.de/geschichte-mitteldeutschlands/2010/7752254.html> [accessed 28 October 2010]. The winner of the 2009 competition was a 'court lady' in the episode broadcast on 7 November 2010 about Empress Adelheid of Burgundy (931-999).

conditional on accepting the conditions of the contextual production process of the programme. Indeed, from the beginning, the subject matter in *Geschichte Mitteldeutschlands* has been chosen with an eye to the emotive impact of the narrative on the viewer. The emphasis on a moral through dramatic narrative is unavoidable here, even if there is a claimed interest in using these to provide historical background information. What, however, is deemed to be ‘background information’? On inspection, it turns out to be some fairly important historical events: the Great Northern War, August’s election to the Polish throne, Saxony’s rivalry with neighbouring Prussia. This generally applies to both the MDR and ZDF television programmes. One of *Geschichte Mitteldeutschlands* most successful episodes up to 2008, ‘Gräfin Cosel: Aufstieg und Fall einer Mätresse’, told the story of August the Strong’s most famous mistress, her youth, rise to power, then subsequent spectacular fall from grace, and her incarceration in Castle Stolpen in Saxony in 1716 until her death forty-nine years later. Parallel to this, indications are given of August’s involvement in his war against Sweden and his resolve to regain the Polish throne – scenes of August standing over a board devising strategy, misty shots of firing cannon or marching soldiers’ legs. These montage scenes are, by and large, the only indications of the political and military problems facing Saxony during these years. Likewise, the ZDF episode, ‘August der Starke und die Liebe’ quite clearly, from its title onwards, prioritizes the depiction of August’s love life over and above the political issues of his time as elector-king, although in doing this, the episode is at great pains to explain the importance of the role of the king’s mistress. There can be no doubt that this is an important area to be explored, but it may well be doubted whether this is the most

important aspect of the so-called ‘Augusteische Zeit’ that needs to be conveyed to the young audience which *Die Deutschen* explicitly targets. The target age group of *Die Deutschen* is itself a rather problematic issue. Although the intention is, like *Geschichte Mitteldeutschlands*, to reach as broad an audience base as possible, its advertising style in 2008 – Martin Luther raising his hand in the ‘peace’ sign or Friedrich II sporting a bandanna and body piercing – and the school material on the website make clear that the main target is school children and young people. Early viewing figures suggested an impressive success rate in general, with a figure between five and seven million watching the first episode of the first series, and such was the popularity of the programme over all that it was given a second series. Yet at least one report on the viewing figures gives such a crude demographic breakdown of these figures as to make the statistics as combined with the purported mission of the programme to bring German history to the younger generations of the nation virtually meaningless, citing 1.98 million 14-49-year olds out of a total of 6.48 million viewers. A typographical error seems likely here since, if correct, this would mean that well over two-thirds of the viewers were well outside the target group audience of the programme and – high viewing figures and popularity aside – must bring into question whether ZDF have achieved their ostensible didactic and pedagogical aims in the programme.<sup>414</sup>

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<sup>414</sup>See Jens Schröder (‘Mr. Analyzer’, media blogger), ‘Sensationserfolg “Die Deutschen”: Qualität und Quote schließen sich nicht aus’, 27 October 2008, [http://meedia.de/nc/background/meedia-blogs/jens-schroeder/mr-analyzer-post/article/sensationserfolg-die-deutschen--qualitt-und-quote-schlieen-sich-nicht-aus\\_100012682.html](http://meedia.de/nc/background/meedia-blogs/jens-schroeder/mr-analyzer-post/article/sensationserfolg-die-deutschen--qualitt-und-quote-schlieen-sich-nicht-aus_100012682.html) [accessed 12 December 2010]. For a more official press release on general viewing figures, see also ‘5,45 Millionen Zuschauer sahen “Napoleon und die Deutschen”: ZDF-Reihe “Die Deutschen” bleibt weiter zuschauerstark’, 17 November 2008, <http://www.presseportal.de/pm/7840/1302763/zdf> [accessed 12 December 2010]. Some comments on the marketing strategy of *Die Deutschen* are made in a review by Sven Felix Kellerhoff, “‘Die Deutschen’: Tausend Jahre Geschichte als TV-Serie verpackt”, 25 October 2008, <http://www.welt.de/fernsehen/article2621844/Tausend-Jahre-Geschichte-als-TV-Serie->



Indeed, it is to be doubted whether either of these programmes actually fulfils the claims it makes about its status as history or ‘docutainment’/entertainment products. While *Die Deutschen* makes habitual use of professional historians on screen, at no point (certainly in ‘August der Starke und die Liebe’) is there any mention of the (written) historical sources on which their analysis and judgement is based. Although the programme is certainly popular, from the beginning, reviewers and online commentators doubted that it would fulfil its remit of ‘historical education’ in combination with exploring a national German identity through its fractured history, although some conceded that it might inspire further interest in those who had previously had no knowledge of the subjects and might even recommend it as entertaining.<sup>415</sup> MDR and *Geschichte Mitteldeutschlands*, however, have an entirely different remit and intentionally veer towards being entertaining rather than being concerned with the niceties of historical methodologies. Arguably, removing the visible, visual presence of the historian from the programme does this quite well: the episode ‘Gräfin Cosel: Aufstieg und Fall einer Mätresse’ had only one consulting historian and explains that Constantia von Cosel’s fall from grace neutralized her political influence on August. The implication is that Constantia might have had sufficient influence to prevent him from pursuing the Polish throne, which might possibly

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[verpackt.html](#) [accessed 12 December 2010], and further indications of the continued targeting of a young demographic by the second series launched in 2010 is given in ‘Zweite “Die Deutschen”-Staffel zuerst bei ZDFneo’, 13 September 2010, [http://www.dwdl.de/story/27862/zweite\\_die\\_deutschenstaffel\\_zuerst\\_bei\\_zdfneo/](http://www.dwdl.de/story/27862/zweite_die_deutschenstaffel_zuerst_bei_zdfneo/) [accessed 12 December 2010].

<sup>415</sup> See, for example, the reader-viewer responses to some reviews published online: Kellerhoff, ‘“Die Deutschen”: Tausend Jahre Geschichte als TV-Serie verpackt’, and Bernd Gäbler, ‘Guido Knopp, der ZDF-Weihnachtsmann’, 10 November 2008, <http://www.stern.de/kultur/tv/die-medienkolumne-guido-knopp-der-zdf-weihnachtsmann-645069.html> [accessed 12 December 2010]. It should also be noted that a large proportion of the criticism from reader-viewers stems from their expectations of history programmes involving Guido Knopp, a prolific media historian who is also an important member of the production team for *Die Deutschen*.

have taken Saxony on a very different path in the later eighteenth century.<sup>416</sup> The episode mentions and comments on sources, but there are no ‘authority figures’ in the form of professional historians to distract from the main (quite speculative) thrust of the episode. Contrast this, however, with the 2008 episode ‘Die vergiftete Mätresse’, which departs from the 2005 format in one significant way: it makes use of historians on screen. This episode has one consulting historian, who also appears in the episode alongside four others. The event in history explained in this episode is the sudden death of August the Strong’s older brother, Johann Georg, not long after the death of his controversial young mistress, Magdalena Sibylle von Neitschütz. Usually, the event is explained along the following lines:

Magdalena Sibylle is thought to have contracted smallpox. During her illness and after her death, Johann Georg refused to leave her body and, through being in such close proximity (he is often said to have kissed her as she died), also contracted the disease and so died within weeks of his mistress. Contemporary rumours of witchcraft are generally dismissed as superstitious nonsense. This programme, however, insists that this does not account for a number of medical and circumstantial anomalies, including the fact that there was no outbreak or epidemic of smallpox in Dresden at the time the two young people died. Instead, it is speculated that they were both slowly poisoned over a number of weeks in a plan to put the younger electoral prince on the throne. It is even suggested that August the Strong must have had knowledge of such a plot, even if he was not

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<sup>416</sup>Dirk Otto (dir.), ‘Gräfin Cosel: Aufstieg und Fall einer Mätresse’, *Geschichte Mitteldeutschlands: Gesichter, Geschichten, Geheimnisse* (MDR and Ottonia Media, DVD, 2005).

actively involved in it himself.<sup>417</sup>

Although both episodes make reference to primary sources – court diaries, town records, letters – and to (eighteenth and nineteenth-century) secondary sources, only the second sees fit to supplement these references with appearances of modern professional historians to analyse the events and archives. This interrupts the narrative re-enactment of the story by actors which is the main feature of most, if not all, previous episodes, and places the analysis of the evidence closer to the centre of the programme. The two episodes thereby use re-enactment strategies to very different effect in what the ‘history’ presented achieves: the first story of Countess Cosel is very well known, but attempts to make the viewer imagine what might have happened had she been able to prevent her fall from grace (and therefore the different impact that August the Strong would have had on Saxony’s future development), while the second story of Johann Georg IV’s death asks the viewer to imagine what, with some considerable probability, did happen, though it can never be proven beyond doubt. The blurred boundaries caused by inconsistent presentation overall undermine the argument made in ‘Die vergiftete Mätresse’, whether the claims are verifiably probable or not, because it is placed within the category of presenting history almost solely for entertainment – much like the ‘Cosel’ episode – rather than presenting history for conveying historical knowledge (and, by implication, conveying self-knowledge). Likewise the more ‘entertaining’ and speculative aspect of previous series and episodes is thrown into question by such an episode as ‘Die vergiftete Mätresse’ which brings a certain amount of scholarly rigour to the programme.

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<sup>417</sup>Hans-Michael Marten (dir.), ‘Die vergiftete Mätresse: wie August der Starke an die Macht kam’, *Geschichte Mitteldeutschlands: Gesichter, Geschichten, Geheimnisse* (MDR and Ottonia Media, DVD, 2008).

Both of these programmes are, however, quite clearly popular history programmes. Their balance of scholarly methods, re-enactment, and fiction is unlikely to satisfy entirely those consumers looking exclusively for the authority of scholarly rigour in research or even those whose main goal is to be thoroughly entertained by the (historical) story placed in front of them. This is made particularly difficult within the context of a long-running series, where directorial approaches may vary in detail, even the concept of the programme may change from series to series according to market research, and sometimes there may not be a guarantee of further series.

The rest of this chapter will be devoted to an examination of textual approaches – published biographical studies or novels – which are, generally, by their nature single works and not as subject to the kind of compromises that are made within a televisual context.

### **6.3. *Constantia von Cosel und August der Starke: Die Geschichte einer Mätresse* (1984) by Gabriele Hoffmann, biography.**

Re-enactment in conjunction with biography and with Constantia von Cosel had already begun to be used in written texts in the 1980s. Gabriele Hoffmann's biography of Constantia von Cosel is the only one of its kind to date. Her research was extensive, covering both official documents and personal correspondence between the figures at August der Starke's court, and to pursue it she was granted considerable time in the archives in the GDR. The book won the *Historischer Sachbuchpreis Schloß Berg* and in 2007 had reached its nineteenth edition, testimony both to its popularity and to its scholarly rigour. The biography's

scholarly credentials are borne out by an examination of the book's structure:

Hoffmann intersperses her chapters with italicized personal notes, explaining her thought process, her research material, her reservations about particular interpretations, and so on.<sup>418</sup> She also meticulously notes archival references, quotes extensively from original sources, and includes both an extensive bibliography of scholarly literature and a thorough index. Trained as an historian, Hoffmann is nevertheless also a journalist and an author of historical fiction.<sup>419</sup> She puts these skills to use in her biography of August's mistress. Although she, quite rightly, decided that in order to do biographical justice to Constantia von Cosel, she also had to draw in the events of August's political existence as Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, yet she could not resist fictionalizing some of the figures of the time. Hoffmann freely admits this in her foreword:

Ich konnte der Versuchung nicht widerstehen, eine Innenansicht von Personen zu entwerfen, von denen ich doch in den Archiven nur wenige Selbstbekenntnisse fand. Ich bringe sie in kleinen romanhaften Rahmenkapiteln, die die historischen Kapitel begleiten [...]. Ein solcher Interpretationsversuch ist reizvoll für den Biographen und zugleich gewagt: Indem ich das Belegbare zusammenfasse, verlasse ich es auch.<sup>420</sup>

Most, though not all, of these chapters pertain either to Constantia or to August and their love story. Hoffmann's comment is, at first glance, reminiscent of one of Collingwood's criticisms about biographies, that they have to do with feelings and

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<sup>418</sup>A strategy also used by Sigrid Damm in *Christiane und Goethe* (1998).

<sup>419</sup>Hoffmann has worked for radio stations *Norddeutscher Rundfunk* and *Radio Bremen*, and for the weekly news magazine *Stern*. She is the author of several historical novels, including *Amas Atoll* (2002), *Die Schiffbrüchigen* (2001), and *Sommerhelden* (1985). Hoffmann is also one of the expert historians to appear in the episode 'August der Starke und die Liebe' for ZDF's second series of *Die Deutschen*, commenting particularly on the role of the mistress at court in late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century Europe.

<sup>420</sup>Gabriele Hoffmann, *Constantia von Cosel und August der Starke: Die Geschichte einer Mätresse* (Erlangen: Nebel, 1984), pp. 8-9.

emotions more than with historical knowledge. However, the implication here is that Hoffmann, aware of the potential leanings of the biography, has circumvented the problem by isolating such fictional material within her chapter framework. Indeed, as discussed below, she further qualifies this statement in the first of her historical chapters.

Hoffmann goes on to describe seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century life in the area around Gut Depenau, where Constantia grew up, beliefs and practices common to the era, and so on. This is paralleled by information on events on the broader German stage, especially the Saxon court. Delineating historical context is important for Hoffmann to be able to reconstruct Constantia's personal life:

Über das Denken und Fühlen der Mätresse haben nur sehr wenige Zeugnisse die Jahrhunderte überdauert. Ich spüre ihrer Kindheit und Jugend nach, weil ich hoffe, aus ihrer Erziehung und ihren alltäglichen Erlebnissen erfahren zu können, wie sie wohl sich und andere sah. Ich bin neugierig auf den Gutsalltag vor dreihundert Jahren.<sup>421</sup>

The 'Innenansicht' of which Hoffmann speaks in her introduction therefore appears to be more in line with Collingwoodian ideas. She looks to find the probable views and opinions of her subject in the beliefs and social systems of her subject's period. Regardless of whatever reservations historians may have about the status of biography, it is the case that a biographical work must place its subject in an historical context in order for the reader to fully comprehend the individual under discussion and their significance.<sup>422</sup> It is also true that biography – as is the case with history in general – is the product of a certain historical

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<sup>421</sup>Hoffmann, *Constantia von Cosel*, p. 28.

<sup>422</sup>Maurice Mandelbaum, 'A note on history as narrative', *The history and narrative reader*, ed. by Geoffrey Roberts (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 52-58 (55-56).

and/or authorial context and is consumed within a certain historical context.<sup>423</sup>

German-German relations are not the underlying theme here. Hoffmann, writing at around the beginning of scholarly interest in women's history, tries to do two things: describe court life in Germany at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and correct the previously accepted image of Constantia that had been propagated by popular historians and novelists for many years as a kind of power-hungry harridan.<sup>424</sup>

However, the phrase 'über das Denken und *Fühlen* der Mätresse' is problematic and suggests that there is an emotive side to Hoffmann's agenda. Hoffmann actually opens her book with a novelistic chapter. Dated 23 July 1727, it depicts the putative musings of the elderly and ailing King August in Pillnitz on the one hand, and those of Constantia in her incarceration in Burg Stolpen. This immediately colours the way in which readers perceive the rest of the information they are given. The date given is that of the day August went to Burg Stolpen to test some new weaponry. August is introduced as he dreams about Constantia, before his other relationships – private ones and those of state – are commented on. August's thoughts turn constantly to Constantia, how ultimately he still prefers her of all his mistresses, his fantasy of taking her away from Burg Stolpen and back to Dresden to show her how much has changed since she has been away. In the second half of the chapter, Constantia is also shown first in her current surroundings, the reality of her imprisonment, and then her thoughts turn to the past and the way August has treated her. The impression is constantly one of 'if

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<sup>423</sup>David Carr, 'Getting the story straight: narrative and historical knowledge', in *The history and narrative reader*, ed. by Geoffrey Roberts (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 197-208 (p. 199).

<sup>424</sup>This starts with Aurora von Königsmarck's pointed tale 'Die Geschichte der Givritta' in Anton Ulrich von Braunschweig-Lüneberg's *Römische Octavia* (1712) and Karl Ludwig von Pöllnitz's depiction of Constantia von Cosel in his popular work *La Saxe galante* (1735).

things had been different': August imagines that if Constantia had been a man, they would have been inseparable; Constantia thinks of the other kings of Europe who married their mistresses. Both are depicted as missing each other, August most especially as missing a part of himself, 'Er lag ganz still und wartete, daß die Angst vorüberging, die alte Angst, etwas verloren zu haben',<sup>425</sup> 'Er sehnte sich nur noch nach Constantia'.<sup>426</sup> The scene is thereby set for the telling of a failed romance and the reader is told fairly explicitly that these two were true lovers, separated by circumstance and the needs of state.

The tone of this is picked up in the rest of the biography. It is notable that Hoffmann employs emotion and 're-enactment' creatively where she has explicitly recognized that there is a lack which has forced her 'off-script' into a potential 'magic moment' of (emotional) re-enactment. This occurs in two ways: first, where she acknowledges that there is insufficient source material to fully substantiate her academic thesis, and, second, where she feels a compulsion to satisfy herself and express an impression. The result is an empathetic view of Constantia as a woman at odds with her time in her attitudes and beliefs about the nature of love; a woman who has a relationship with a powerful man who is himself nevertheless subject to manipulation by the forces of state and his ministers. The romantic nature of this does not restrict itself to the deliberately novelistic chapters of the biography, but seeps into the main work. The description of the moment August and Constantia meet at a ball thrown by the king is particularly telling:

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<sup>425</sup>Hoffmann, *Constantia von Cosel*, p. 10.

<sup>426</sup>Hoffmann, *Constantia von Cosel*, p. 18.



August, dieser den Frauen gefährliche Mann, hat dichte Wimpern um die blitzenden braunen Augen und einen bräunlichen Teint. Sein Gesicht ist breit und fest, und er trägt sein eigenes langes und lockiges dunkles Haar. Über der Nase hat er eine senkrechte Falte, seine Augenbrauen sind dicht und schwarz. Er hat einen großen Mund, üppige Lippen und im Kinn ein Grübchen. Er ist größer als Constantia, von ordentlicher Manneslänge, und wohlgebaut.

Constantia hat schon viel über ihn gehört. Auf seiner Kavalierstour hat er in Spanien bei einem Stierkampf dem Stier mit einem Streich das Haupt vom Rumpf geschlagen. Als er einem Bären im Ringkampf die Zunge aus dem Rachen reißen wollte, büßte er einen Finger ein. Silberne Teller hat er wie Papier zusammengerollt. Doch seine große Liebenswürdigkeit trifft sie unvorbereitet, sein Charme.<sup>427</sup>

The physical description of the King of Poland is extremely loaded, so that he appears as the archetypal hero of a romance: his eyes are not simply brown, they flash, his face is not just broad but also *fest*. The rather flowery, slightly old-fashioned, term *ordentliche Manneslänge* conveys the idea that he is – to put it equally coyly – ‘all man’, but his physique is also aesthetically pleasing, he is *wohlgebaut*. The naturalness of his masculinity is emphasized in the mention of his attractive hair, which is not worn under a wig, as was the fashion of the day. This description is followed by a brief list of some of the more fantastical of August’s feats of physical strength and derring-do, from the grand gesturing of the bullring to the seemingly banal, almost domestic detail of the tableware. This is a well-rounded man, however, because he is not all coarse brute strength, he has charm. He has a soft side that is reserved for women, as is also suggested by the text in its structure: the phrases *dieser den Frauen gefährliche Mann* and *seine große Liebenswürdigkeit trifft sie unvorbereitet* bracket the beginning and end of a two-paragraph passage.

The text between the two phrases does not simply describe August’s

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<sup>427</sup>Hoffmann, *Constantia von Cosel*, p. 88.

appearance and his strength. It also explains, as, it would seem, Hoffmann the biographer-author sees it, his twofold appeal to women: his appeal to women in general, which is also timeless and thus includes modern female readers of Hoffmann's biography, and to Constantia in particular. One of the appeals of reading romantic novels is being able to put oneself into the figure of the heroine and experience what she experiences.<sup>428</sup> This is therefore a significant point at which the reader is invited to identify strongly with Constantia, the heroine, if he or she does not already do so. Given Hoffmann's comments discussed previously, it may also be reasonable to suppose that this is also the case for the author. Moreover, here is a description of a man remarkably similar to the kind of hero preferred by the readers of romance novels in the American town of Smithton whose reading habits the literary scholar Janice Radway analysed in the early 1980s:

[...] they [the readers] prefer to see the heroine desired, needed, and loved by a man who is strong and masculine, but equally capable of unusual tenderness, gentleness, and concern for her pleasure. [...] Throughout their discussions of particular books, they repeatedly insisted that what they remembered and liked most about favorite novels was [...] the hero's recognition of his own deep feelings for the heroine and his realization that he could not live without her. While the women want to feel that the heroine will be protected by the hero, they also seem to want to see her dependency balanced by its opposite, that is, by the hero's dependence on her.<sup>429</sup>

This also tallies with Hoffmann's depiction of August's yearning for Constantia in her first fictional chapter. The final fictional chapter, before the epilogue, explains that it is considerations of state that prevent August and Constantia from being

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<sup>428</sup>Janice A. Radway, *Reading the romance: women, patriarchy, and popular literature*, 2nd edn. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), p. 67.

<sup>429</sup>Radway, *Reading the romance*, p. 81.

together, and hints that August is psychologically a weaker man without her at his side, 'Er konnte nicht mehr, er wollte nicht mehr'.<sup>430</sup> Ultimately, though, this is a biography with a claim to scholarly rigour, so the historical end to the romance cannot be changed. Even allowing for the fact that this would be considered a 'failed' romance (there is no 'happy end'), the combination of romance strategies with the writing of an account of history and the overall image of a woman before her time heightens the potential for close (female) reader identification with Constantia, but it also allows for a considerable degree of sympathy with the historical figure of August as trapped within the confines of contemporary politics at court and on the international stage. This is hardly the image of August that is described by several historians – mostly men – in the relevant episodes of both *Die Deutschen II* and *Geschichte Mitteldeutschlands*, where the sexual element of the court is sometimes described in a way that suggests a moral judgement similar to nineteenth-century historians' dismissal of the eighteenth-century court.<sup>431</sup> Importantly, Hoffmann's depiction of August as a romantic figure is speculative only and it is done largely by means of the addition of fiction.

#### **6.4. *August und ich* (2006) by Evelyn Holst, romantic novel.**

Evelyn Holst's historical romance, *August und ich*, as a work of fiction not constrained by the demands of scholarship, is able to take the reader to the next level of individual identification and re-enactment. Holst's work has been

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<sup>430</sup> Hoffmann, *Constantia von Cosel*, p. 428.

<sup>431</sup> Blaschke exclaims forcefully that August and his older brother were 'eine verworfene Gesellschaft von jungen Männern, die nur ihren Geschlechtstrieben nachgingen', in 'Die vergiftete Mätresse' (approximately six minutes into the episode).

described as generally dealing with ‘sogenannten Frauenthemen’<sup>432</sup> – broadly speaking this means that her main protagonists are modern women dealing with their relationships with friends, family members, and lovers.<sup>433</sup>

*August und ich* is such a work: in 2005, 38-year old Constanze Graf, a self-confessed fan of all things to do with August the Strong, has a small catering business and an apparently happy marriage with two daughters. However, she discovers that her husband, Richard Graf, is having an affair with a much younger woman. From Hamburg, she follows them to Dresden, to the hotel in the Taschenbergpalais, where they are staying. In Dresden she receives a magical bracelet from another ‘ordinary’ woman, which, she is told, will enable her soul to travel ‘dahin, wo sie vorher schon war’.<sup>434</sup> Unable to confront her husband there (though she steals his jumper, which he leaves on a chair in the hotel restaurant), she wanders around Dresden, eventually finding herself in front of the iconic *goldene Reiter* (the golden statue of August the Strong on horseback that stands in the Neustädter Markt in Dresden’s Neustadt). Constanze faints on the spot and wakes up to find herself in Dresden in 1704, having an argument with her husband, the minister Adolph Magnus von Hoym. From this point on, Constanze Graf experiences two worlds in approximate parallel through flashbacks. On the one hand, the ‘ordinary’ modern world and her middle-class family existence where her (rather weak) husband is having an affair: here, Constanze discovers that both she and Richard’s mistress (the reincarnation, or at least a representation,

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<sup>432</sup>‘Evelyn Holst’, *Wikipedia*, [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evelyn\\_Holst](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evelyn_Holst) [accessd 30 March 2009].

<sup>433</sup>Some examples of Holst’s other titles are: *Ein Mann für gewisse Sekunden* (Munich: Droemer Knaur, 1992), *Der Mann auf der Bettkante* (Munich: Droemer Knaur, 1994), *Verdammte Gefühle* (Munich: Droemer Knaur, 2000), *Dann geh doch* (Munich: Droemer Knaur, 2003). In general, her work is very female-centric, as further demonstrated by her weekly column in *BILD*, ‘Evas Welt’.

<sup>434</sup>Evelyn Holst, *August und ich* (Berlin: Ullstein, 2006), p. 98.

of Maria Magdalena von Dönhoff, Constantia von Cosel's successor as August's mistress) are pregnant, but Constanze suffers a miscarriage. Her marriage is over, and Richard leaves his wife and children, but the relationship continues for some little time until the birth of his mistress's child. On the other hand, she experiences an historical world in which her previous persona, Constantia von Hoym, divorces her husband and then becomes the passionate lover of August the Strong, also suffering his infidelities and a miscarriage, only to be imprisoned until the end of her life. The two historical 'true lovers' are destined never to meet again. Modern-day Constanze, however, is transformed by the experience. Not only does she find she is more able to rely on her teenage (and therefore moody) daughter for support than she had originally thought possible, she also determines never to let herself be badly treated by a man ever again and ignores Richard's attempts to contact her. In the closing pages of the romance, she encounters the modern reincarnation of (a reformed and repentant) August at the bar in the Taschenbergpalais hotel and love and passion reignite after centuries, but this time only if Constanze is the 'Boss', to which, in his need for her, August agrees.

In the early part of the novel Constanze, having read a great deal about her favourite German prince, tells her best friend Bettina all about August the Strong, his time, and his most famous mistress. The occasion is the arrangements for the menu Constanze is to prepare for Bettina's husband's birthday celebrations: Constanze suggests dishes from a book of baroque recipes served at August's table, Mario Süßengrath's *Der kulinarische König* (2004). When she describes August to Bettina, she leaves out the usual mythological comparisons (e.g. as handsome as Apollo and as strong as Hercules), preferring instead to give her

comparisons with modern celebrities whom Bettina can identify: “Er war dicker als Ottfried Fischer, sein Ego war größer als der von Dieter Bohlen und er hatte mehr Frauen als Udo Jürgens”, “Er war [...] der absolute Superstar, Brad Pitt und Robbie Williams in einer Person.”<sup>435</sup> She then goes on to explain the situation of Constantia von Cosel. Constanze’s role as a re-enactor has begun. Here, she is the third-person interpreter reproducing the story for her lay public with Bettina standing in for the reader, bringing her historical figures closer to her audience by transposing them into a modern context.<sup>436</sup> Bettina reacts and asks questions that a lay public might ask: “Geil aber grausam”, “Was für ein Mensch war sie überhaupt, diese Gräfin Cosel? Klingt ein bisschen nach Frau, die zu sehr liebt, oder?”<sup>437</sup> But by this point, Constanze has drifted off and is going through Constantia von Cosel’s family background in her head. Constanze’s third-person interpreter role thereby stops addressing the reader through Bettina as proxy and the reader is addressed more directly. The following chapter continues this while Constanze reads (and the text also quotes from) Józef Ignacy Krasiński’s novel, *Gräfin Cosel*.<sup>438</sup> At this early stage in the book, there is a distinct didactic style which gives the lay reader the basic historical details, but which is overlaid with identification with the historical characters: Constanze tries to exculpate August’s

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<sup>435</sup> Holst, *August und ich*, p. 20 and p. 25. There is also a sense in which the present – i.e. 2005 – is (re-)enacted for the benefit of the reader. The text is littered with references to popular culture from the turn of the century, e.g. the pop band *Rosenstolz*, the singer Eminem, as well as those personalities already mentioned.

<sup>436</sup> This is also something the downloadable school material for ‘August der Starke und die Liebe’, *Die Deutschen II* tries to do in one of its suggested classroom activities: ‘Berichten Sie mit Hilfe von Blog und Twitter, z.B. aus der Sicht von Graf Flemming über die Bewerbung Augusts um die polnische Königskrone, aus der Sicht der Gräfin Cosel über seine Beziehung zur Gräfin Dönhoff, aus der Sicht des Königs von Preußen über das prosperierende Kurfürstentum Sachsen’, ‘Materialien für den Unterricht – Folge 6: August der Starke und die Liebe’, p. 10.

<sup>437</sup> Holst, *August und ich*, pp. 22f.

<sup>438</sup> Originally published in 1873 as *Hrabina Cosel*. If the list of titles at the end of *August und ich* is an indicator of the texts that Holst used for researching her book, then she used the translation published by Aufbau Verlag in 2004.

treatment of Constantia, “Er wird schon seine Gründe gehabt haben”.<sup>439</sup> As in Hoffmann’s biography, it is made clear that August is still a desirable man to women, despite his treatment of his mistress, and Constanze’s view of him as desirable invites the reader to view him in the same way.

Constanze quickly moves beyond the position of third-person interpreter to something that is more akin to Jay Anderson’s re-enactment enthusiasts who feel an affinity with a particular past, ‘für mich war es [the story of August and Constantia] auf eine Weise wichtig, die ich leider nicht mit ihr [Bettina] teilen konnte’.<sup>440</sup> However, Constanze believes in reincarnation. She is able to go one step further than even the more extreme practitioner of re-enactment, for she does not simply believe that she *should* have been born in another century: Constanze finds that she really *was* born in another century and is thus the reincarnation of a former self. Her story then alternates between the modern present and the eighteenth-century past. The two existences deliberately mirror each other in terms of the types of events occurring to Constanze/Constantia and the emotions she feels. Constanze’s journey of personal self-discovery and knowledge is thereby shown to be one that is at once long past (eighteenth century), just past (modern day, retrospective voice) and yet still happening (eighteenth century, present voice), because it is happening within Constanze. The effect of the first-person present tense narrative in these sections is an invitation to the reader to do more than identify with Constanze at a remove, but to go so far as to read themselves into the figure of Constantia and her relationship with August. The immediacy of experience thus becomes the reader’s as well as the character’s.

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<sup>439</sup>Holst, *August und ich*, p. 26.

<sup>440</sup>Holst, *August und ich*, p. 24.

What is more, the implication is that this is the ‘true’ identity of Constanze/the reader. The act of re-enactment/reincarnation, through the idea of the flexibility of time, allows Constanze to bring the past back into her own modern life and edit it to her satisfaction in the present. The close identification between Constanze/Constantia and the reader that Holst encourages through using simple, but interrelated constructs of time means that the reader is also editing history to her satisfaction in the present. The kind of happy ending that is so vital to the successful romance novel according to Radway is thereby achieved.<sup>441</sup> An indication of the close identification with the protagonists of *August und ich* is shown in one reader’s reaction to Constantia’s fate and to the ending of the book:

Leider lässt sie [Constantia] sich im Laufe der Geschichte doch von August unterdrücken, was vermutlich damals normal war, mich aber nervt [*sic*] Das Ende ist (in beiden Welten) viel zu knapp erzählt, gerade in der “Neuzeit” hätten dem Happy End 20 Seiten mehr nicht geschadet.<sup>442</sup>

Dissatisfaction is reserved for the historical ‘facts’, which cannot be altered, of female existence in an earlier era. This reader does not exhibit unhappiness with the new ending for Constanze/Constantia *per se*, only that it was not drawn out long enough, and indeed the ending is rather abrupt. This suggests that the reader was not given sufficient opportunity to read him/herself into Constanze’s character at this stage in the story, so the credibility of this level of the re-enactment process is not consistently maintained by the author to the end of the narrative.

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<sup>441</sup>Radway, *Reading the romance*, p. 81.

<sup>442</sup>Online review of *August und ich* after a book purchase by ‘Happy-end-buecher’, 26 August 2008, [http://www.amazon.de/product-reviews/3746613078/ref=dp\\_top\\_cm\\_cr\\_acr\\_txt?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1](http://www.amazon.de/product-reviews/3746613078/ref=dp_top_cm_cr_acr_txt?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1) [accessed 19 November 2009].



Radway's study of readers of romance in the 1980s, mentioned above, found that the women who took part in the study saw reading and, specifically, reading of romance stories as necessary to their daily routine. Radway concluded that reading romances must serve some sort of psychological need in these readers and this was related to their need for privacy in the domestic environment.<sup>443</sup> The act of reading (romance) therefore suggests an act of individual ritual, which, at a basic level, provides the opportunity to escape the pressures of daily life and 'become' another person through the characters in the books, whose (love) lives are resolved 'satisfactorily'. Constanze is an example of a character who does this in her own life, selectively reading the type of story she identifies with (although through reading 'history books') and then 'becoming' her heroine. The reader of *August und ich* becomes a mirror image of Constanze, first by identifying affectively with her, and then, should they choose to, following the suggested reading on August the Strong and Constantia von Cosel at the back of the book. Engagement with the reader is made at least as active through this use of the affective, if not more so, than is the case in an audience's televisual experience of emotive re-enactment.

The suggested reading list at the back of the novel further highlights a point made by a few commentators when critiquing the history-fiction balance in *Die Deutschen*: perhaps the presence of fiction in works that make a claim to scholarly history should not be of such concern when it can inspire greater interest in those who previously knew nothing about a particular topic or figure.<sup>444</sup> This is

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<sup>443</sup>Radway, *Reading the romance*, pp. 58-61 and p. 91.

<sup>444</sup>For example, see the comments by 'Loki-Asgard' (11 November 2008) and 'georgy\_22' (10 November 2008) after Gäbler, 'Guido Knopp, der ZDF Weihnachtsmann'; and comments by 'Richtiger Schritt' (26 October 2008) and 'Sascha' (25 November 2008) after Kellerhoff, 'Tausend

very much what Holst seeks to achieve, or seems to seek to achieve, when she has her heroine re-enact and interpret the historical background, even if severely filtered through a romantic lens, and then follows the narrative with the list of suggested book titles. However, these titles include both fiction (novels by Józef Ignacy Kraszewski), non-fiction (e.g. *August der Starke und seine Zeit* (2006) by Karl Czok), and a mixture of the two (e.g. *Constantia von Cosel und August der Starke* by Gabriele Hoffmann), and there is no explanation to help the newly interested prospective reader to determine which title might belong to which type of writing. Kraszewski's novels are a case in point: although his Saxon novels are still popular with German readers, those readers often have little to no understanding of the nineteenth-century context in which they were written. Joanna Magacz, director of the Kraszewski Museum in Dresden, has observed that many visitors, who are usually there out of curiosity because they have read Kraszewski's novels, are frequently surprised to find that the author was not German at all, but Polish.<sup>445</sup> This lack of knowledge can also be seen in some readers' reactions to the history(fact)-fiction content of *Gräfin Cosel* – in one case damning the novel as a poor 'biography' full of errors – and their confusion about Kraszewski's motivations for writing his story in the way he did.<sup>446</sup> This poses interesting questions about the nature of 'national' canons of literature which are beyond the purview of this study, but it also allows the possibility that lay readers are often, though by no means always, unable to make the distinction between the

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Jahre Geschichte'.

<sup>445</sup>Interview with Joanna Magacz, Kraszewski Museum, 14 August 2008.

<sup>446</sup>See, for example, the purchasers' comments on *Gräfin Cosel* on the website of online retailer Amazon, specifically those of 'Karin Nielson' (3 March 2009) on the 'errors' contained in the 'biography' written by Kraszewski and by 'Bettie "Walkowski"' (5 February 2007) on Kraszewski's motivations for writing, [http://www.amazon.de/product-reviews/3746613078/ref=dp\\_top\\_cm\\_cr\\_acr\\_txt?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1](http://www.amazon.de/product-reviews/3746613078/ref=dp_top_cm_cr_acr_txt?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1) [accessed 19 November 2009].

real and imagined content of scholarly history writing and that of historical fiction. Neither should it be assumed that the lay reader can make it, since they do not have the specialist training. Therefore the responsibility to elucidate the nature of sources lies with the 'expert', whether they are a writer of fiction or a professional scholar, most particularly where it is clear that their aim in producing their work is to inform or educate. In this light, referring readers to yet another (politically and historically loaded) work of fiction in order that they may inform themselves through 'objective' history seems at the very least ill-advised.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

August the Strong appears everywhere in contemporary Dresden. He is not simply an historical figure whom locals credit with providing Dresden's architectural skyline or its artistic collections – he is a brand figure so successful that when an exhibition was held in Dresden in 2008 on the internationally less well-known Elector August I (1526-1586), advertising posters billed him as 'the other August'. August the Strong appears on local lottery tickets and as a guarantor for a brand of glue, and, in addition to his image on every imaginable type of souvenir or his 'favourite' foods available in many of the central Dresden cafes, tourists can buy postcards which allow them to cut out and construct their very own 'Hampelmann-August', or expensive jewellery modelled on that owned by the elector-king. Porcelain – specialist items from Meissen and more generic items – figures prominently, and at least two cafe-restaurants offer the chance to 'meet' either or both August the Strong and Constantia von Cosel, even though the building in which one is situated never housed or served either of them. Christiane Eberhardine is generally invisible in all this, as she largely was in Dresden in life. After the art collections and buildings, local tourism trades very much on those clichés by which August is frequently characterized: his spending and eating habits, porcelain, and his mistresses. Some of this may seem almost offensively frivolous, and, of course, similar tourist opportunities can be seen in other historic locations across Germany and Europe. For the city of August the Strong, however, it does have a certain appropriateness. He used his women, his wealth, and the wealth of his territories to promote himself – and, with possibly some qualification regarding his pursuit of 'absolutist' power, this meant he was also

promoting Saxony – in eighteenth-century German and European politics.<sup>447</sup>

Having ensured that he was a highly visible ruler through his court festivities, the use of all these aspects to continue promoting Saxony as a desirable destination hardly seems out of place. ‘Es kommen hier allerhand Leut’ zusammen’ is a comment from and on a (fictionalized) past that continues to be a remarkable (and actual) truth.<sup>448</sup>

Even so, August’s sixteenth-century ancestor, August I, who is also known popularly as ‘Vater August’, also presided over a successful reign that established the cultural and economic basis on which his successors were able to build.<sup>449</sup> Despite this success, his reign is not so close to the forefront of popular consciousness as that of August the Strong, whose material legacy and legend have captured the historical and popular imagination. There can be no doubt that the Prussian-Saxon antagonism played a crucial role in this.<sup>450</sup> Ultimately, however, the history of August the Strong’s reception, from its beginnings up to the present day, seems to coalesce into the representative, symbolic figure, not of August, but of ‘Woman’, with which he is constantly coupled and which appears repeatedly in various sculptural, figurative, or metaphorical forms. During his own reign and the eighteenth century, he turned himself into the epitome of the *homme galant*, whose representative object is woman, without which he cannot fulfil his public, political functions. Subsequent changes in the balance of power among the German-speaking territories over the following 150 to 200 years meant that this increasingly had to compete with a Prussian-imposed view of (official)

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<sup>447</sup> Czok, *August der Starke und Kursachsen*, pp. 265-267.

<sup>448</sup> Walther, *Bewerbung bei Hofe*, p. 17.

<sup>449</sup> Watanabe-O’Kelly, *Court culture in Dresden*, p. 9 and p. 80.

<sup>450</sup> As is described in Keller, ‘Landesgeschichte zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik’, pp. 197ff.

history, and of August the Strong in particular, that still echoes in formal history and among professional historians to this day. In examples of modern popular literature and popular history, it is the stories of his links with the women around him that are used to encourage interest in this element of regional and national history, or that are used to channel ideas about the nature of and possibilities for the individual's existence in modern German society. He is a man who always seems to appear in a pair, never alone, which may well make him ideal material for being, as he is fondly termed in Dresden, 'Unser August'. Judgements on his person in any given period constantly veer between polar opposites – successful or unsuccessful elector, king, or military commander, politically astute or fatally distracted by frivolous concerns, morally corrupted and corrupting or an essentially good man trapped in the confines of court ceremony, the man responsible for stunting the national potential of an entire state or a symbol of progressive thinking and behaviour enabling future development, scheming, controlling, and in control, or ruled by others more scheming than he, and, finally, exploitative tyrant or ideal romantic hero. These views can be expressed by both fiction writers and historians, but at the heart of the reasons given for the respective view there will almost always be a reference to August's relationship with the opposite sex.

Although much of this image can be traced back to the certain elements of the image August fabricated of himself at court, these two are by no means the same thing by another name. It seems doubtful that August deliberately set out to orchestrate an image of himself as a womanizer. Rather, he used women within a rhetorical aesthetic to express his power and ambitions, thereby putting the gallant

style into practice. However, its reception by historians particularly and, to a lesser extent, writers was, and continues to be, coloured by the repeated use of certain sources – in other words, usually Pöllnitz's *La Saxe galante* – filtered through a moralizing nineteenth-century lens. Other contemporary popular accounts, which, though also problematic, take the form of more conventional biography, are rarely brought forward as a point of comparison with Pöllnitz's account. Less titillating, these sources do not move the reader much and this is crucial. Although modern historians have begun to be concerned about certain ways in which history is presented to the public, especially in the media, and they continue to debate and discuss their own forms of history writing, it is clear that the 'affective turn' in history occurred much earlier than the twentieth century, and at a methodological level even more basic than narrative or structural form: selection of sources, which in themselves provoke the emotions of the reader. If Slotkin and Demos disagree about the extent to which historians themselves should compose their own historical fiction alongside their scholarly historical writing, worrying about the ability of the uninitiated reader to differentiate between the two, they do not consider the effect that repeated and, perhaps, unwitting use of fictional accounts has on historians' writing. Pöllnitz is constantly cited, but rarely critiqued beyond noting his unreliability before using him as a good source for historical 'atmosphere'.

What is most intriguing about the relationship in the depiction of August between scholarly historians and more popular producers of history is that, whatever the 'official' view, the 'popular' one will usually out: his historical figure is flexible enough to bear both. From the nineteenth century onwards, the

claim of a large proportion of fictional depictions of August is that he has been historically misunderstood, and this applies to several more recent works of fiction, too. The role of fiction in this is evidently an ongoing one – while biographers experiment with including speculative fiction, and some fiction writers bring history lessons into their novels, media historians and producers invent dramatic scenarios without caveat for the sake of ratings figures, and the historical novel can, in the twenty-first century, itself be taken as an historical source, intentionally, ironically, and satirically, like Walther's *Bewerbung bei Hofe*, or unintentionally and literally, in ignorance of its context, like Kraszewski's *Gräfin Cosel* in the twenty-first century. Likewise, the origin and intention of some fictional accounts has only recently been discovered, and so it remains to be seen whether Königsmarck's depiction of August and the court under August at the turn of the eighteenth century will be taken into serious account by historians.



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