

*Should a necrology of Adele ever be written, who so ever it might be,  
it certainly must depict your intimate life together and all that you have done for her.  
Your name ought not to be parted from Adele's,  
and I imagine you would not want that either.*  
--Otilie von Goethe to Sibylle Mertens-Schaaffhausen,  
September 14, 1849

## Forward

In southern Bonn, in the park of the Secretary of Climate for the United Nations, stand two ancient looking trees: one is a knotty, twisted Indian bean tree and the other a sweeping cedar. This is where it all began. In the spring of 1828, and very much in love, Sibylle Mertens and Adele Schopenhauer moved back here to the Auerhof, as it was called then. *I think you could best compare us to an old couple that found each other late in life, and then married. If she were to die—I would throw myself immediately into the Rhine, as I could not exist without her,*<sup>1</sup> wrote Adele in a letter to her first love, Otilie von Goethe. The daughter of a famous author, Johanna Schopenhauer, and the sister of a then unknown philosopher, she had come to the Rhine region in search of a new beginning. In Sibylle Mertens (*née* Schaaffhausen), a contemporary of hers, and a scholar and collector of Antiquity, she had found the love of her life. For two decades they shared their joys and their sorrows. They deceived and disappointed each other, became estranged and later reconciled, they cared for and stood by each other. It is said that Sibylle planted the cedar herself, and, according to the legend, their mutual friend Annette von Droste-Hülshoff<sup>1</sup> planted the Indian bean tree next to it. Eventually, the Auerhof residence would be transformed into a neo-gothic castle, and the Federal Ministry would replace Sibylle's greenhouse with an antiseptic-looking extension. Today, only the park and the two trees remain.

The afterworld would only vaguely remember Adele Schopenhauer as Goethe's *enfant cheri*<sup>2</sup> and as *the terribly unbearable sister of the philosopher*.<sup>3</sup> The silhouette artist, writer, and literary agent had a peculiar lot in life. Ridiculed by men during her lifetime, they called her *ugly duckling*.<sup>4</sup> One day in

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<sup>1</sup> Annette von Droste-Hülshoff is considered to be the most important female German poet of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

1845, as she road through the streets of Rome in a carriage, Friedrich Hebbel<sup>2</sup> stood there with his *cannibal-like laughter*, as a friend threw mud at her *for her horrible ugliness*.<sup>5</sup> Adele did not fare much better after her death either. In Schopenhauer scholarship, she was said to have been prudish yet man-crazy, and all the while incapable of *arousing men's desire*.<sup>6</sup> In 1912, Paul Kühn described her as frustrated by *fantasies of love that degenerated into the grotesqueness of an old maid*, and that *she turned her torrid friendship with Otilie into a veritable cult*.<sup>7</sup> Walther Ottendorff-Simrock saw Adele Schopenhauer, in 1960, as a woman unable to move on with her life, as someone who *clung to her friend Sibylle with the fervor of a lonely heart*.<sup>8</sup> As late as 1991, when Ludger Lütkehaus called for a new perspective on the philosopher's little sister, he still read her diaries as those of a *girl who had grown old without ever having been loved, and who sentimentally carried on with overheated emotions, without ever facing reality*.<sup>9</sup> Even more recent scholarship, such as Gabriele Büch's work, appears to be at odds with Adele's *sentimentality and excessive feelings* for Otilie. The prudish derision and hesitating unease of such characterizations signify that, for more than a century, editors and readers of Adele Schopenhauer's letters and diaries have stumbled over her way of loving. And in the face of a long-standing taboo against same-sex love, of the three published Schopenhauers, Adele has remained the pale one, the deplored, and the derided one.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, love between women was not taken seriously by bourgeois society and thus, as was the case in the Early Modern Period, it was not sanctioned either. But when women first began to revolt against their expected three-fold purpose—that is, wife, mother, and head of household matters<sup>10</sup>—it was their love that carried a particular kind of social dynamite. Unsettled by his sister and her friend, Arthur Schopenhauer attempted to declare their lifestyle to be, essentially, non-existent. His invectives in *Ueber die Weiber (On Women)*—a text that is perhaps unsurpassed in the world literature of misogyny—are implicitly directed against women like them: pioneers who broke down the boundaries established for women of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in science, culture, politics, and, of course, in love.

While history has generally overlooked her *life companion*<sup>11</sup> with the famous last name, Sibylle Mertens was virtually erased from cultural memory altogether. As a scientist, a patron of the arts, an active democrat, and as a lover of women, she challenged society as well as her own family. In her friend Droste's words, she endured *a truly hellish marriage*,<sup>12</sup> and her six children retaliated against the *madness* of her *eccentric friendships*<sup>13</sup> by conducting years-long civil disputes over the estate. When Sibylle Mertens found herself libeled and ostracized, and forced to scrutinize her love affair with

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<sup>2</sup> German poet and playwright, (1813-1863)

Adele Schopenhauer, was also when the very first modern notion of the lesbian identity also began to develop. And this newly named “homosexuality”<sup>3</sup> arrived with its twin, “homophobia.” Sibylle Mertens has the distinction of being one of the first women to feel its effects. Immediately after her death, her children auctioned off her collection, scattering her things to the four winds. Robbed of her life’s work, Sibylle Mertens ought to have passed into silence.

Thanks to thousands of letters and diary entries, the story of love between Adele Schopenhauer and Sibylle Mertens can be reconstructed. With powerful and striking right-angled pen-strokes, Sibylle composed rich, humorous, and often self-deprecating letters. Adele, by contrast, reflected her life with a delicate and clear hand—like a psychologist, constantly undergoing a kind of ruthless self-analysis. Just as my predecessors did, I read their self-portraits with a view from today. Consciously and unconsciously, we biographers can only interpret the past as children of our own time. Seeking to assign value to their experience, despite its difference, we cannot set aside our own historically dependent horizon of experience. Today—after women’s liberation, and in the face of the growing recognition of gays and lesbians—we no longer need to write off what Sibylle and Adele wrote to each other as mere sentimental rhetoric. We can call it by its proper name, a declaration of love: *I love you, constantly, openly, dearly. I worship you, I trust you without reservation, without error and without end.*<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The word *Homosexualität*, as it is understood today, was first coined in Germany in 1869. The use of the word spread quickly and was standardized as part of the methodology of taxonomy in practice by doctors and scientists in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Excerpts from  
**Part II – Together 1828-1834**

*I love her:*  
**Adele and Sibylle**

It was mid-September, 1827, when Adele Schopenhauer traveled to Cologne, *that strangely angular city, full of churches nuns, priests & the first national liveries that lack in grace, it all appeals to me—I could live quite well here.*<sup>1</sup> She stayed with the Brahl family; the husband worked as Privy Finance Council and his wife was a childhood friend of Johanna Schopenhauer. The somewhat imprecise yet *very kind recommendation of M. von Mertens,*<sup>2</sup> however, would have to wait: as Adele arrived in Cologne, Sibylle had just given birth to her sixth child, Augusta Henrietta Ludovica. It would not be until the following January that Adele Schopenhauer would make her first appearance at the Mertens' salon.

*To recount it would be too much,*<sup>3</sup> Adele to Otilie, rather suggestively of their first encounter. For Sibylle's part, she was electrified. She noticed immediately that it was not only the daughter of a famous writer who stood before her, but *a being of her own kind.*<sup>4</sup> She took in Adele's grandiose voice. As a salon guest, Adele was clever, urbane, and versed in literature, art, and languages—and Sibylle courted her fiercely. *When I think of all that she has done to win me & with such pure intentions—how she lost her point & turned into pure sentiment—that, my Otilie, is too great & too curious to trust to some slip of paper that you just leave lying around.*<sup>5</sup>

Despite her large circle of acquaintances, Sibylle Mertens had only one close friend in the immediate vicinity, the doctor's wife, Mrs. König. Her good friend, Annette von Droste-Hülshoff lived far away in Munster. Adele Schopenhauer stuck out among the Cologne patricians and the professors' wives in Bonn. Not only because of her education, abilities in recitation, or her silhouette-making skills, but because she was unmarried and placed no value on pleasing men. Presumably, Adele also would have mentioned her attachment to Otilie von Goethe. Taken altogether, these signals emboldened Sibylle.

Many years earlier, at a Belgian boarding school, Sibylle had fallen for a girl who would eventually become the Countess Landsberg. *As a young girl, I loved that Luise so very much.*<sup>6</sup> And after twelve years of being unhappily married, the 31-year old was open, curious, and hungry for life. And

so, in the following spring, when she moved back to the Auerhof with her children, she invited Adele to accompany her.

Adele Schopenhauer found her new friend to be *quite amiable and very witty*. With admiration, she recorded Sibylle's manifold interests: *her favorite subjects are mythology & history, she most enjoys reading the old Latin authors in translation, works on her Spanish, plays piano masterfully, and is interested in art, in classical antiquity, paintings, poetry—everything that is beautiful & grand.*<sup>7</sup> Being herself in search of a fresh start, she followed Sibylle southward along the Rhine and rented her own room not far from the Auerhof, in the Godesberg Pension. Since Louis Mertens managed the Schaaffhausen Banking House<sup>4</sup>, the two friends were free to spend *the entire day with each other.*<sup>8</sup> They worked in the garden together, enjoyed nature as it awoke, and looked after the children (who were then between six months and ten years of age). The two women continued to get to know each other better, *in closest cohabitation*. When Adele became a bit ill, Sibylle took care of her: *this gentle and nobly bred woman stood in the kitchen and cooked for me, so that I would not receive anything injurious nor anything prepared that did not suit my disposition*. Sibylle did everything for Adele, she came to her side *in heat & storm, by day & by night—she would have lay down on the floor & eaten nothing but bread & water if it would have been a delight for me*. Adele was quite sure that *she had never been so loved* in her entire life, and was amazed that after all the privations with Otilie how this was happening. She had *not once seemed petty to me*. *And she does not just fancy me, she loves me, humanly and naturally, with all my flaws, reprimanding & praising me.*<sup>9</sup>

With slight hesitation, this caught hold of Adele as well. *I again have a human and tender penchant in my heart, which had been turned to stone by all my sorrows—for a woman, who in essence is like you & I, though there is still something different from us both in her*, she told Otilie in a vague letter from April 1828; *My acquaintance with Mertens is capable of having influence over my life to come.*<sup>10</sup> But by May of that year, she burst out, *I could summarize it all and tell you with a word: I love her*. As anxious as she was detailed, Adele described her new girlfriend and their relationship. *She is so good, so benevolent, so divinely compassionate, but more than anything she was very sensitive. She possesses the gift of understanding, a quiet comprehension, the gentleness of the finest upbringing, and the higher of the most pure emotions*. Adele's excitement did not, however, blind her: *Her faults are pride, obstinacy tempestuousness—from time to time, she has moods, of which she is only partially master. A second fault is her disregard for particular little social formalities, & a frequent & rather too prominent oddness of mind. I criticize her often and ever so sternly, indeed very harshly*. It was exactly this sense of reality and the ability to be critical that distinguished this new love: *there is nothing in*

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<sup>4</sup> The Schaaffhausen Banking House (*Schaaffhausen'sche Bankverein*) was one of the first joint-stock Banks in Germany, and eventually became one of the founding entities of today's Deutsche Bank.

Mertens that I might not be able to bring to light with all my strength, nothing which troubles me or restrains me, and that is why there is a complete and mutual trust between us,<sup>11</sup> Adele wrote Otilie, I know her flaws, and it is precisely because I do not deify her in the slightest, and because of this I will remain with her as long as I breathe.<sup>12</sup> Adele was happy to greet Sibylle as the savior who could raise her from the depths of her depression. *She succors my withered being, she lightens the chain that weighs me down and that is why I love her with gratitude, because she is my benefactor—she has melted the icy shell of my heart!* And in May of 1828, she already correctly foresaw the course of things: *how I love her I will never again love anyone.*<sup>13</sup>

With Sibylle in her life, Adele was finally able to cut the cord with Otilie; though she continued to compare her new love to the old one. *She constantly reminds me of you there is a profound amount of you in her, only she is cleverer & you have more spirit, she is more thorough, you a more versatile scholar—otherwise you are so similar—that I can hardly believe my eyes. She, however, is suited for real life—this was a blow against the unpractical Otilie, who was also raised by only her mother—she was brought up by her father.* In 1828, there was still a sense of mourning over the lost love mixed in with Adele's joy over her new love: *she satisfies me, in heart & mind—though she does not enchant me as you often did, with that something that only you possess, & for which I have no words, & which no one will ever be to me.*<sup>14</sup> Because Adele had always elevated Otilie to such an ideal, she was almost disappointed at first with the earthly reality of Sibylle. *I think that, other than you, I have never loved so; no being has ever stepped so humanly near to me or been so understanding. Circumstances, inclinations, everything is just right—only you did I love more purely!*<sup>15</sup> Concerned about declaring her love for another, Adele requested shyly: *if you can overcome this, my dearest heart, tell me so when you write what you think of her and of me.*<sup>16</sup> Although she had freed herself from her former love, she still wished for Otilie's blessing.

Otilie's response to this confession came six weeks later, and it was as short as it was friendly: *All that you do, be it to tie yourself to such a being, brings me joy,*<sup>17</sup> wrote Otilie, and then went on, full of metaphor, to muse about her own volatile course in life. Adele realized then that her second great love would not be a disappointment, and, anchored firmly in reality, it could be a love for life.

During their first spring together—that honeymoon on the Auerhof—Sibylle was happier than she had ever been. She asked Adele to stay with her. But her girlfriend was only on a kind of extended vacation from Weimar, and her future was still uncertain. At first, Adele had to refuse the invitation, as it seemed to her to be simply too unrealistic: *I will never discuss the idea of living with M., as I will stay with mother as long as she is alive—, but the very fact that Sibylle wanted this was enough for celebration. Nevertheless, this beautiful and actually so very reasonable of plans I will carry in my very being as a sacred image.*<sup>18</sup> That which Adele had spent years demanding of Otilie in vain, Sibylle had offered of

her own accord. In order to arrange a life together that accounted for their respective familial obligations, Johanna Schopenhauer would have to be convinced to move to the Rhine region. Weimar was expensive, and with Johanna's salon now passé, and the Rhine *en vogue*—her mother was hard pressed to counter Adele's argument. And so, on May 20, 1828, she set out to explore the region. *My mother is coming along, Adele wrote Otilie, I am delighted, but still quite apprehensive and afraid.*<sup>19</sup>

When Johanna Schopenhauer arrived at the Plittersdorf landing pier on the new paddle steamer, which had only been in use for a year, Sibylle was well aware that the daughter would only be able to remain if she could win over the mother. So she summoned all of her charm and the comforts of her riches to persuade Johanna to move to the Rhine. *Being pampered from every side, Johanna was consequently so pleased with the inexpressibly charming Godesberg, that in the face of all these lovely, delightful, splendid things around me, she fell into a veritable daze.*<sup>20</sup> Adele, too, felt happy—and relieved.

In a letter to the aging Goethe back in Weimar, she described in great detail how she and Sibylle had gone through the newest volumes of his *Collected Works*, which Johanna had brought with her: *I am enjoying the double pleasure of searching for that which is unfamiliar to me, finding the well-known passages for Märtens, who delights in my reading aloud. Old Schaaffhausen, her father, had given her the kind of education that acquainted her more with the ancients than with our poets; a residence in Italy & extended close contact with Wallraf encouraged her in this direction. Now I am unexpectedly finding that rare joy of introducing a fully cultivated and highly educated mind with much of your writings, and the unbelievably rich faculty of understanding, the intellectual labor that with lightning's speed turns the new into something that is understood through and through. This grants me all the more pleasure, since I am—with respect to my own mother tongue & my countrywomen—sure that I am of the right understanding. I do hope one day to bring her to you, dear father—we have simply nothing to which I could compare her, although she often reminds me of Otilie in particular.*<sup>21</sup>

Their joint Goethe studies were brought to an end when mother and daughter Schopenhauer temporarily departed. On August 1<sup>st</sup>, they traveled via Cologne and Aachen to Brussels, Ghent, Bruges, Antwerp and then back, via Maastricht. The impetus for this trip, which would separate Adele and Sibylle after six months of daily life together, was not only to satisfy her mother's *Amüsier Wuth*—her constant need to be entertained<sup>22</sup>—Johanna also needed material for her new book. After their return, the Schopenhauers spent two more weeks in Godesberg before

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<sup>5</sup> Ferdinand Franz Wallraf (1748-1824) was a scientist, theologian, and one of the most prominent collectors of art and fossils from Antiquity to the Middle Ages in Cologne. He willed collection to the city of Cologne, most of which can be viewed at the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum.

traveling back to Weimar to make all of the preparations necessary to relocate to the Rhine in the following year.

In order to have Adele back as soon as possible, Sibylle personally searched for appropriate accommodations for mother and daughter. By the end of November she was already able to send them the blueprints for an apartment that, *deducting the costly interest, is all we can wish for*,<sup>23</sup> Johanna wrote with disappointment. And with that, it began to dawn on Sibylle that her dream of being with Adele could still fail on account of the Schopenhauers' modest income. In those days, Adele lived on 350 Thaler per year, which was the largest yield that the 5% annual interest on her remaining capital of 7000 Thaler could permit. Johanna only received 300 Thaler per year from her Muhl retirement. With that income they certainly would not be living it up. The Mertens, by contrast, had assets of *something over 200,000 Thaler*.<sup>24</sup> Faced with this difference, Sibylle stepped into the breach. She and her husband still owned the Zehnthof residence in the town of Unkel, which they had previously used as a summer home. Though they had in the meantime rented it to her half brother, Carl Schaaffhausen, he consented to move out. With her Christmas letter in 1828, Sibylle sent a special gift: She offered Adele the Zehnthof, to rent, so that Johanna could keep up appearances, but still well under market.

Johanna Schopenhauer accepted immediately. The lease was to start in May 1829. A few pieces of furniture were left in the house—yet another discreet gesture of support for the cash-strapped Schopenhauers. Sibylle, the great gardener, promised to take care of the gardens in time and to fill the beds with *good, hardy artichokes*, Johanna's *favorite vegetable*.<sup>25</sup> Though the garden would belong to the Schopenhauers, the vineyard would remain the responsibility of the Mertens. (At least this would be the reason given as to why a room in the house would be reserved for Sibylle—an arrangement she made with her girlfriend, so that she would always have cause for spending the night.)

While Sibylle Mertens carried on the business of relocating the Schopenhauers to the Rhine, her girlfriend prepared for their joint studies, and learned Spanish expressly for that purpose. As a gift for Sibylle, she painted a table with flowers, which she then proudly showed Goethe when they lunched together. The day after, she sent him a few pastes, impressions of Sibylle's gems made of gypsum. As such, Sibylle must have been the main topic of conversation at lunch that day. During this time, Adele spent most of her days assisting her mother with authorial tasks. *Many a brilliant novel by Johanna Schopenhauer was delivered to the public with fine engraving and characteristic elaborateness, whose design*

issues from her daughter Adele.<sup>26</sup> However, neither mother nor daughter ever spoke much of their actual collaboration.

In the spring, Adele was to travel ahead, in order to furnish the Zehnthof residence. The 63-year-old Johanna placed great value on comfort, and gladly let her daughter accomplish it all alone. Adele, in turn, was more than happy to spend time with her girlfriend without maternal supervision. On May 9, 1829, she took off in a hurry, *as my little pet is eager & I even more so.*<sup>27</sup> By the 14<sup>th</sup>, she was united with Sibylle at the Auerhof.

***I cannot live without her:***  
**At the Zehnthof**

The task of transforming *this truly tastelessly built house* in Unkel into a cozy home was not easy. *Mertens did not consider the difficulty of bringing it in order alone, 4 hours from Bonn in the country, 3 hours from her, with unfamiliar servants. I have received the house & garden in a devastated condition. As the workers have done nothing, I have had to move in, without furniture or tableware, not to mention other necessities.* The best thing about the former *Zehnten-Scheune*<sup>6</sup>, which today is the site of a retirement home, was its magnificent location: directly on the Rhine, south of the Siebengebirge<sup>7</sup>, and it was still easily accessible to the Auerhof (on the other side of the river), by boat. However, with her health ailing, Sibylle's familial and social obligations often prevented her assisting Adele. Though the start of this era was far from euphoric, *I have hours where I am completely content, when she is alone with me and nothing particularly bothers us when we are working on her estate.*

The already bumpy train-ride into their new life together threatened to derail completely when Johanna Schopenhauer arrived on July 2<sup>nd</sup>. *The furniture was not ready, the weather foul, Mertens is suffering ever so, she probably has consumption, my mother suffered through far more commotion than I expected, she was very much out of sorts. In addition, my Cologne cookee could not tolerate country life and simply quit—in short, all the great misfortunes which I had already suspected burst in with such might that I was neither master of my time nor of my pen. Unkel is a beautiful place but our house is down in the valley, surrounded by green hills, but the rooms*

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<sup>6</sup> A building originally designed as a warehouse where farms in the Middle Ages could store up resources as tithe.

<sup>7</sup> The Siebengebirge is a very scenic range of hills along the Rhine, stretching southeastward from Bonn (literally, “seven mountains”).

*are also humble, so much is still lacking and a palace it most certainly will never be. That was just the start of mother's loftiness in an ever so difficult situation.<sup>1</sup>*

To avoid a catastrophe, Sibylle herself finally lent a hand. Adele could not have been any less amazed by her friend's talent and practicality: *This wonderful being unfolds herself in a two-fold manner, and so profusely that I do not know with what I could compare it*, she wrote the elderly Goethe. *During the day, she works with the carpenter locksmith, vintner & farmer, gilder upholster, in short, with all the craftsmen as a capable expert and as a competitive advisor, with her delicate hands she lifts monstrous loads, and she is always thinking and doing as a pragmatist, hitting the nail on the head. In the evenings, she reads mythological texts with mother or translations of antique works, or together with me your writings. I am delighted about the latter, the fresh understanding & the precise way she figures things out, and yet with Horace or historical Latin scholars there is a rather exceptional pleasure that comes over me. —As your Iphigenia comports herself to the ancient tragedian, that is, I would say, how Sibylle's mind reacts to the writers of Antiquity and to the newer scholars. The manner in which she comprehends beauty, & locates where only its traces can be seen, the way in which she responds to them—in fact, she vividly reverberates them—is neither like the ancients nor comparable to the readings and understandings of our philologists or historians, but still analogous to them. Her mind stands “between both, so subtly, a middle ground of a distinct & graceful kind.” Sibylle reads differently than all other women that I thus far have seen read such things, one feels that she has been in the company of brilliant men since her youth, has seen their point of view, and adopted just enough of it so as to avoid damaging her own uniqueness. In doing so, she is utterly without vanity, she has such a pure enjoyment of this business, as is not usually so with women, since our sex is not easily so selfless. It is, of course, the same for me! Now then, to be sure that I am portraying Sibylle to you with more fidelity: the woman is still neither erudite nor pedantic, she is not even accustomed to speaking about her favorite things. This gave her words a youthfulness that sweeps me along. Her elaborate portrait suggests that Adele assumed her surrogate father took great interest in her new companion.*

Thanks to Sibylle's industrious efforts, everything in Unkel nonetheless turned out just fine. Johanna was pleased with the elegant Weimar décor in that curious house, and enjoyed the wonderful garden with its apricot trees and beds of strawberries even more. And so, over the course of that summer, an everyday rhythm was established in which Sibylle took as much part as she could: *Mertens and I, nevertheless braving the weather, travel by covered barque to see each other every 3-4 days, and most often then for a few days at a time, we spend the nights alternatingly in each other's houses, such as the storm permits.<sup>2</sup>*

In that summer of 1829, it became clear to both of them that they were neither able nor willing to be without one another. *It seems to be my destiny that her welfare and her woes should be so closely*

*tied to my own. I think we will not be parted just so. She is alive in me, and in this new life together she is absolutely essential to me; her love, her devotion preserves me. Just like the previous year, when Adele Schopenhauer first told Ottilie von Goethe about Sibylle Mertens, she compared the two great loves with each other. But this time the new love was victorious: I cannot remember such an intimate friendship in my life. You always radiated too much beauty into my soul; to me your beauty was too incorporeal, too heavenly, if you will. Adele had stopped deifying Ottilie, and was looking back critically on the pedestal on which she had placed her. The fact that her relationship with Sibylle, which she had wistfully begun in the previous year, was now so down-to-earth sustained her in the reliability of everyday life. In many ways, she is more ordinary. And because of this, I find myself doing things for her—things I never did for you—and I do therefore place myself at her service, a position I could never assume with you. With you it was something super-human, if you will, and, at the very least, it was something particular to you. That's why I was always so desperate when you were ill; I would try to be just gentle enough with you so as to avoid hurting you. With Sibylle I don't need to be so exacting: her shortcomings, idiosyncrasies, habits, complaints, madness, and all the rest of her whole being are summa summarum familiar to me, and I am fine with them, and I love her just as she is. Adele finally felt she had arrived. I think you could best compare us to an old couple that found each other late in life, and then married. If she were to die—I would throw myself immediately into the Rhine, as I could not exist without her.<sup>3</sup>*

A poem of Adele's, which Sibylle kept her whole life, makes it clear that they had indeed “married”:

*With a ring for S.*

*My little love is a tiny thing,*

(Sibylle was not quite as tall as Adele)

*Reaching only to my heart,*

*I enclose her in a little ring,*

*It is no jest on my part!*

*Jewels, pearls are indeed small,*

*That's why you set them in a ring.*

*In a greater ring our world is set*

*With still many thousand more,*

*They twinkle in the bright array*

*of this ring through which they wander—*

*You however are my only world*

*In this ring that holds us together!<sup>4</sup>*

In August 1829, the still rather sickly Sibylle moved completely into the Zehnthof residence, accompanied by her youngest, Auguste, who was not yet two years old. Thanks to Adele's care, Sibylle's health improved noticeably. *There is something fairytale-like in the calm here. In the evenings we read or handcraft. During the daytime, we attempt to push through and work despite the rain: writing, sewing, knitting. The days are indistinguishable from one another. We are, nevertheless, all three (Mertens, Mama, and I) of such excited spirit, with all the frictions amongst us we kept our talents from hibernating.*<sup>5</sup> Renewed, Adele and Sibylle read Goethe together, comparing the recently published second edition of *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* with the 1821 version. The first volume of Otilie's journal, *Chaos*, arrived from Weimar as well. And with Goethe's goodwill and support, it continued to be published weekly. Adele and Sibylle had barely finished reading the anonymous poems and short commentaries when they *straightaway made their own terrible verses*<sup>6</sup>, so that they too could appear in *Chaos*. Adele wallowed in her *weltschmerz* and Sibylle in *longing desire*.<sup>7</sup> They even played supporting roles in Johanna Schopenhauer's publishing efforts, like her travel essay, *Ausflug an den Niederrhein und nach Belgien im Jahr 1828 (Excursion on the lower Rhine and to Belgium in 1828)*, which was based on the Schopenhauer's trip from the previous year. The description of the Cologne Carneval, Abraham Schaaffhausen's collection of paintings, and Ferdinand Franz Wallraf's merits (having rescued a large cache of Roman and Medieval works) reflect Sibylle's contribution.

Sibylle spent at least six, perhaps even eight, weeks in Unkel—far away from her children, her husband, and all of her responsibilities. Louis Mertens, who already eyed Adele Schopenhauer with deep suspicion, had to begin asking himself why it was that his ailing wife would not rather recover in the comforts of their fully furnished summer house. It was obvious that she was avoiding both him and their children in favor of her new friend. And so, almost immediately upon her return, the war between the two Mertens broke out again. *Her husband treats her very harshly, very crudely and she is ever so unhappy, without actual guilt, although she could perhaps have tamed him and would have won him over a bit more with another approach,*<sup>8</sup> thought Adele. Sibylle, on the other hand, was neither capable nor interested in wrapping him around her little finger with diplomatic charm. Giving in was essentially a foreign concept, *kneeling is indeed not my forte.*<sup>9</sup>

For Adele Schopenhauer, Louis Mertens was the revenant of Auguste von Goethe, the unbearable husband who had stood in her way earlier. She let Otilie know that she *bated* him—he is *either mad or truly a tyrant, all eschew him as well*. That her yearning for an exclusive relationship with a woman would once again remain unfulfilled because of a husband was something that pained her

deeply. *As long as I had no one who loved me enough that I should become their sole motive in life, I was miserable, Mertens would most certainly have been that person who could have belonged to me, and who could live both in and with me, but these other relationships tear & pull at us both from all sides and these petty restrictions in life claim their right to her! These things are all so familiar you need no explanation! One tortures her to death, & I am tortured until I am tired & weak.* Completely frustrated, her thoughts turned decidedly unchristian: *Seldomly stirs a wish other than that the Devil should want to take that [Louis] M., so that I would be free, with her, but he gives him the most splendid good health instead.*<sup>10</sup>

Since the devil never answered her wish, she begged Sibylle in the fall of 1829 to get a divorce. What seemed conceivable to a Protestant from Thüringen, however, was not even an option for a Catholic under the purview of the Napoleonic Code. French law only permitted divorce in cases of gross abuse and in adultery, for which a breathtaking double-standard was in effect: While a man could divorce an unfaithful wife, she only had the right to do so when the husband actually brought his lover into their household. *Sibylle will not ask for a divorce*, determined Adele, deeply disappointed. *I have once again erred. Not in that we moved here, that was necessary and is good so, but in all my desires for my lonely future.* Though Sibylle, too, was anything but happy with the situation and placed her hopes on the time after Johanna Schopenhauers death: *recently Sibylle asked me, if when I would be alone I would stay with them, if I would want to live in their house and without a moment's consideration I answered no—never! Life with her is a joy but with him a misery.*<sup>11</sup> And so, they would have to wait many years until they could realize their shared lifelong dream.

Under Napoleonic Code, a wife taking a *female* lover was not recognized as grounds for divorce. Given to the conceptions of female sexual desire at that time, what Sibylle was committing with Adele Schopenhauer was not in fact infidelity—today, of course, it would be seen as such. And this love affair was clear from the very start of their time together at the Auerhof in 1828; Adele told Otilie, *This last time, I saw her all of the time, since I resided with her every week for several days, at last we slept in one room so as to stay together*<sup>12</sup>. And for this purpose, they used a *french bed that sleeps two*. One month later, and full of delight, she cried: *I feel so good when I am near her, in her arms.*<sup>13</sup>

The female form attracted Adele—and, with the exception of Louis Stromeyer, she found all men to be physically repellant. She would gladly have been Otilie's *lover*.<sup>8</sup> Or, like *the body of the new Venus*—the cast of an ancient Roman statue she had seen in Frankfurt in 1822—that set her off in a *tumult of desire*.<sup>14</sup> Hiram Powers' sculpture of the provocatively undressed *Slave that was set out for sale at the Bazaar* enraptured Adele. *What softness lays in the delicate play of muscles of this ideally beautiful and yet so*

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<sup>8</sup> Here Adele used the masculine form *Liebhhaber* (rather than feminine, *Liebbaberin*).

*very real of bodies, whose skin is so soft as silk that one thinks oneself to be touching it!*<sup>15</sup> So it was more than likely that she desired the woman with whom she felt herself to be married, and whose husband stood so cursedly in her way.

Sibylle Mertens lived in a marriage with all the customary rights and duties of her day, though it seems questionable whether her children were conceived out of desire. Letters to a friend in Berlin, Henriette Paalzow, make it clear that Sibylle's marital strife began in *that dark bridal chamber* and with the *strange and uncertain violence of this man*.<sup>16</sup> Sibylle likely felt herself to be sexually degraded by her husband—"my master," Herr Mertens.<sup>17</sup> And as such, she longed for the *love that would come as passion*,<sup>18</sup> but lived, according to Henriette, really in the *fervor of the hot-house*.<sup>19</sup> And her encounters with Adele Schopenhauer appeared to have unleashed further marital consequences. Sibylle was just thirty when her last child was born—and the unhappily married couple had nonetheless produced children with ease. At a time without effective contraception, even more offspring should have followed. After she became acquainted with Adele and their *antique love*<sup>20</sup> she would never again become pregnant. Louis Mertens thus had every reason to see Adele Schopenhauer as an enormous disruption to his marriage.

Despite this, he could not make allegations of an extra-marital affair. Lust and love between women was seen as *quantité négligeable*. This was, however, not always the case. According to the *Peinliche Gerichtsordnung*<sup>9</sup>, which was in effect until the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, all 'unchaste' same-sex activities were considered to be offenses punishable by death by burning. *Punishment of the unchaste, so plainly against nature. Idem such a person with cattle, man with man, woman with woman, as they are committing unchaste acts, they have also forfeited their lives, and one should, according to custom, sentence them to death by fire.*<sup>21</sup> Any acts named—and there were others, such as sex with a heathen or with the devil—were considered "Sodomy" and would be prosecuted. Even as late as 1721, in Halberstadt, which at that time belonged to Prussia, Catharina Margaretha Linck was sentenced to death under this law. Living as a man under the name Anastasius Lagrantinus Rosenstengel, she married a woman and used a *stuffed male member constructed from leather*.<sup>22</sup> In juridical commentary as in the case law, doubts were ever increasing as to whether women could physically be united at all. In 1787, Jacob Cella, a legal scholar, wrote that *the most obvious thing to assume would be that a woman could not in fact commit*

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<sup>9</sup> Also known as the *Constitutio Criminalis Carolina*. This was the penal code for capital crimes under Charles V. beginning in 1532.

*sodomium sexus with another woman: in that this, be it with or without an artificial male instrument, merely comes from unchaste playfulness, for which the imagination plays a greater role than the reality.*<sup>23</sup>

Such assumptions issued from a new conception of the sexes, as was developed by Rousseau, Diderot, Schiller, and Wilhelm von Humboldt starting at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. With it, women were denied any autonomy at all, beginning with their bodies and their desires. The Idealist philosopher, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, emphasized that: *in the unspoiled woman, no sex drive expresses itself, and no such drive resides in her, but rather it is only love; and this love is the natural drive of a woman to satisfy a man. It is a drive that nevertheless demands its satisfaction: but this satisfaction is not the fleshly satisfaction of the woman herself, but rather that of the man; for the woman it is only the satisfaction of the heart.*<sup>24</sup> The time of the *Peinliche Gerichtsordnung*—which had taken women’s desire so seriously that any deviation from it was punishable by death—was over at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Women could not anatomically carry out “*Beyschlaf*” (intercourse). According to this new notion of female desire, their separate form of lust was considered harmless, or at most laughable, and as such it was no longer punishable by law. Under Napoleonic law that was applicable to the Rhine region in Sibylle’s day, unchaste activities between women were never mentioned, never punished.

And so, what was deemed to be an anatomical impossibility, could then also never have existed. One of Sibylle’s salon guests, the classical philologist Friedrich Gottlieb Welcker, argued against the poet’s love of women in his work, *Sappho freed from a dominant prejudice* (1816). Goethe, who knew better, shredded the work *that would be better left unknown*. He considered Welcker’s attempt to *speake German* on the matter of women’s love to be a failure. In the end, there was said to be *no German words that could be found for the unseemly Greek and Roman concepts.*<sup>25</sup> In actuality, Adele Schopenhauer and Sibylle Mertens themselves had no other terms or concepts available to them beyond words that were as vague as they were universal, namely “love” and “friendship.” Adele, for example, attempted to portray her partner to Ottilie with the help of these terms, without offering much assistance or clarity to her readers born since then: *[Sibylle] M. has never had a love affair, at nineteen years of age she was married off, her relationship with [Louis] M[ertens] is the same as that of yours with A[uguste]. You can imagine that the depth and purity of her feelings of friendship that [Sibylle] M. has is a rare one.*<sup>26</sup> The juxtaposition of love on the one side and friendship on the other side is astounding in the face of Adele’s vows of love to her “friends.” It would be precisely because Sibylle never had an affair with a man—according to her logic—that her friendship (implicitly intended to mean with women) would then be particularly pure and deep. Were “love affairs” always what we today would

term as heterosexual per se, and “friendships” always homo-social, potentially homosexual? The coinage, “Homosexuality,” wouldn’t be constructed for several years after Adele’s und Sibylle’s deaths, in 1869. The lesbian identity, which many women who love women developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is based on assumptions that did not exist at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, the very idea first required the notion of autonomy developed among bourgeois women. In their day, women only existed—legally and socially—through male guardianship, be it father or husband. *Lesbians*, who could derive their own sense of self from their attraction to women, are something that Adele and Sibylle historically could never have been. Despite this, they did live on the threshold of sexual modernity—they experimented with and suffered the consequences of this new paradigm of a lesbian identity.

Given the inherent linguistic ambivalence, the negation of feminine desire itself also provided women like Sibylle Mertens and Adele Schopenhauer a certain amount of free reign. The fact that they shared a bed was hardly worth discussing, much less hiding. Louis Mertens and Sibylle’s social circle reacted sharply to her revolting against the bourgeois expectation of the subordination of women. That Sibylle neglected being at the side of her husband and children was far more scandalous than having a female lover. Additionally, Sibylle stood out visually to her contemporaries as a *somewhat strange woman*.<sup>27</sup> Many compared her to a man—Adele being the first to do so: *she writes with much audacity, almost manly, at times she has the humor and irony of a very pure young man*.<sup>28</sup> Ernst aus’m Weerth, Sibylle’s archeological foster son, described her as a *woman who has been endowed with the force of a man, an amazing looking woman, who often appears unfeminine, without actually being unfeminine*. He also criticized her behavior in social engagements where she tended to be more interested in the wellbeing of everything other than what the womanly profession permits.<sup>29</sup> Henriette Paalzow spoke of *the masculine veil*<sup>30</sup> of her inclinations. And Sibylle’s cousin, Hubert Schaaffhausen, noticed her *will of almost manly determination*.<sup>31</sup> Because of *her scholarly, determined, and chivalrous appearance*<sup>32</sup> she could even have been taken for man, a Chevalier at that. Sibylle Mertens was clearly different than all the other ladies: *her clothing often stood out*<sup>33</sup>; despite her sable fur, pearls, diamonds, and grand eveningwear she did not conform to the norm. While Adele Schopenhauer broke with the expectations of femininity as an ugly bluestocking, Sibylle Mertens provoked with the style and attitude of a well-bred gentleman, or what today we might call *butch*.

Excerpt from

### Part III – Separated 1835-1842

#### *Women form a nation unto themselves:*

#### Frauenliebe<sup>10</sup>

Laurina Spinola was of another opinion. She sent Sibylle Mertens letters of yearning that were supposed to entice her back to Genoa. With ever-new turns of phrase, Laurina reassured Sibylle that, grateful for her love, she lived only for her: *God, help me show you this fire of love and enthusiasm I have for you.* In her dreams and daydreams, Sibylle provided her *such a sweet sensation that I was filled with joy all day.*<sup>1</sup> And Laurina made no secret of the fact that she missed her physically. Sibylle's things would have to serve as surrogates: *I love you so much so that I love everything that comes in contact with you and the things you've worn.*<sup>2</sup> Day after day, she wore Sibylle's pinafore, at night she brought her handkerchief to bed with her. Laurina pressed her ring to her heart and kissed it whenever she looked at it. She wished fervently for a portrait of Sibylle, and longed even more so for the scent of her body: *have mercy, if any visitors come to us send with them something worn often by you this autumn.*<sup>3</sup> The cologne and the strands of hair that Sibylle subsequently sent were not enough for Laurina. She eventually begged Sibylle for—worn undergarments: *you must send me some chemisettes like the one you've given me, but ones well-worn by you.* Conscious of how daring her request was, she added: *indulge this whim that I have of wanting things that are yours, but I love you so much.*<sup>4</sup> The garments passed through customs without hindrance.

Sibylle Mertens and Laurina Spinola could not have been nourishing any realistic hopes for seeing each other soon. Both were bound to their respective familial obligations. They relocated their love affair to the pages of an intense correspondence, of which only Laurina's side is preserved. Sibylle must have reassured her that Adele posed no threat to her, and Laurina tried not to be jealous: *you love me too much and tell me so in such fiery words that there's no doubting it, for without it, I must tell you that I would be indeed quite jealous.*<sup>5</sup> An elegiac tone began to creep into Laurina's love-letters as her physical condition had continually deteriorated since Sibylle's departure. In March 1837, she was bed-ridden, and, by June of that same year, the 31-year old was beginning to doubt that she would

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<sup>10</sup> In referring to the love of women (who have or desire relationships that are romantic and/or sexual with other women) without anachronistically applying concepts of a modern "lesbian" identity, the author uses the term "Frauenliebe," literally translated: women's love.

ever recover: *I love you more than ever: throughout my illness I wrapped myself of the things you've given me, your ring I've drenched in tears, it must be returned to you if I... I refuse to say the word for fear of hurting you, ah!*<sup>6</sup> In September, she still asked Sibylle for a letter of recommendation for her political associates, Mazzini and the brothers Ruffini. They needed to emigrate from Switzerland to London, and would then try to find work as Italian teachers in England. Beginning at Christmas, Laurina's health was so poor that they began to prepare for the worst. *Mertens is in dreadful spirits, her dearest friend is dying*, Adele Schopenhauer reported to Otilie von Goethe. Sibylle kept Adele updated, even if there were limits to her empathy: *beyond that, she has not seen to my affairs, and left me in the highly unpleasant position of lacking money, all of this weighs down so heavily on your Adèle.*<sup>7</sup>

Laurina died on March 11, 1838. The news reached Sibylle ten days later. *She died, and her last broken word was my name!*<sup>8</sup> For three days, Sibylle cried continuously. On the fourth day, she began a diary where she dedicated her memories and sorrows to only Laurina, her love. *Never will they end, my grief for you, my pain! But from here on your remembrance will be the sacred shrine of my innermost heart, and that which I do not care to share with these cold little people around me—the knowledge of your virtue and your love—that shall be recorded in this book and faithfully preserved.*<sup>9</sup> And just as Laurina had surrounded herself with Sibylle's gifts during her illness, Sibylle now gathered Laurina's around her: a chess table, silver flowers, a black vase, and the traveling bag that Laurina had embroidered. She could do nothing more than torture herself with the image of Laurina's decomposing body whenever she remembered, despairingly, her smile, her mouth, her hands. *Will I find you again, recognize you again in that land from which we've been brought no tidings? Will you love me, will you understand me, as you did here? The belief in it calls me to suicide, the disbelief to despair! O save me from both, glorified soul! The memory of you will be a safeguard against my own self.*<sup>10</sup>

In the abyss of her grief, Sibylle began to reflect about her kind of love. These reflections make the "Laurina Diary" a unique document, providing a window into the self-image of a woman who loved women during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. *My friendship with you was a passion,*<sup>11</sup> she professed, in French, the language she had spoken with Laurina. It was not possible to communicate such a love, so she felt, to others much less to herself. *I cannot speak to anyone about all of my emotions; for who would understand me? If it is like an enigma to myself included, my mind is missing every key, and its solution only my heart thinks.*<sup>12</sup> She loved women differently than those theorists of a chaste femininity conceived of women's friendships—without even having a word or a term for it. She only knew that she had to hide how passionately she loved them. *And yet I would not be permitted to speak of this aloud*

*without running the risk of being seen as a hysterical Schwärmerinn<sup>11</sup>! So pathetic is this life, so small the human being!<sup>13</sup> Trapped in the images and conceptions of her time, she dreamt of Laurina as the man of her life: If the qualities of your soul and of your Heart could be found in a man, if a man could love as you do—something no man has ever done, and never will be able to—this man would have been the happiness and misery of my life; for I would have lived and would have died for him, sacrificing everything for his sake, all of my relationships, all of my affections, my whole existence, my life, my eternity, perhaps even you; for a man with your virtues and your love would be a God!<sup>14</sup> After Laurina's death, only bitterness remained—to have met the love of her life only to lose her again immediately. Protect me from madness and suicide! she begged the deceased. O! I am so wholly abandoned and alone!<sup>15</sup>*

On the day she wrote those lines, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 1838, Johanna Schopenhauer also passed away, far off in the city of Jena. Her death occurred just as quietly and as easily as she had conducted her life. *It came so suddenly—I was in Weimar, was fetched, and arrived 2 hours too late!* Adele wrote her brother. *I know that she was completely cared for—but I will never forget & will never fully recover from having been fetched too late.<sup>16</sup>* Adele was deeply affected indeed, but also relieved. For years, she had been waiting for life without her mother. Now she was finally free. Sibylle had just barely heard the news of Johanna's death when she invited Adele to come and live with her for good. Laurina was dead, and Sibylle still felt close to her. However, Adele was not only estranged from Sibylle, there was still the issue of her husband, Louis: *because [Louis] Mertens treats me so humiliatingly I can hardly stand it,<sup>17</sup>* a life under his roof would be unthinkable to her.

Instead she tried to come to grips with her newly independent existence; and that meant first dealing with the torturous financial situation. The fact that Johanna Schopenhauer had disinherited her son three times did not help much. As her only assets, Johanna had retained a one-ninth stake in the Schopenhauerian estates in Ohra near Danzig. With her passing, Adele now owned three-ninths, while Arthur had to make do with his two-ninths. *Thus the second-born daughter now possesses more than I, the son and heir of the grandfatherly inheritance. So be it.<sup>18</sup>* Had he contested the will and demanded a legal share he would have also had to take over a portion of Johanna's debts. He preferred to let Adele have the modest dues and considerable responsibilities, as she would report everything to him about the remaining goods and chattels. He also took no part in their mother's gravestone. In order to pay off the debts, the heiress had to pawn books, pearls, a Renaissance painting by Paolo Veronese, and *for a while she taught for 8 Groschen.<sup>19</sup>* At first, she planned to open a girls' boarding house with her friend, Allwina Frommann, where she could teach German and French. But instead of enjoying the

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<sup>11</sup> *Schwärmerin* = A woman who is overly romantic, swoons, or gushes.

unsure fruits of independence, Allwina preferred to move to Berlin, taking a position as housemaid in the home of a Prussian secretary. Despite this, Adele succeeded in sorting out her finances using the Muhl retirement, the revenues from the Danzig property, the interest from her remaining capital, and a modest lifestyle.

Freed from the most distressing of her concerns, the 41-year old asked herself what she wanted to do with the rest of her life. She would most have wanted to become an illustrator, but in order to create master copies of her drawings and aquarelle paintings she would need to learn to etch. She spent a year trying to figure out how and where she—an unmarried, aging, bourgeois woman—could find an engraver’s studio to learn this. Initially, she reached for the most obvious thing: editing and releasing her mother’s literary remains. Johanna had worked on her autobiography right up until her death. She died just after she had gotten into the section on the French Revolution. Like today, the right moment for publication was of vital importance in the book market—and Johanna’s memoir needed to appear while the memory of her was still fresh. Adele revised the unfinished manuscript; in 1839, it was published as a two-volume set by Westermann in Braunschweig, under the title, *Jugendleben und Wanderbilder (Life as a Youth and Scenes of Travel)*.

In all of her undertakings after her mother’s death, Adele Schopenhauer would be hindered by her status as a single woman. She was only conditionally considered to be legally responsible and competent; she even needed a guardian. To Arthur’s chagrin, she did not choose him, but rather a childhood friend and contemporary, Gustav Asverus, a lawyer from Jena. He made this burdensome limitation easier for her. The cornerstone of any woman’s bourgeois existence was marriage, and Adele felt this from all sides—that her life had been *botched at the foundation for a woman*.<sup>20</sup> Despite this she was ultimately happy to remain single. *Were I married perhaps it would be even worse, thus!*<sup>21</sup> Since she felt that *the thousand-fold crudeness, severity, & brutishness of men* did not suit her. Adele despised *the nature of men, which always just wants to seize that which is elevated so as to arrange it a wee bit to the side, amongst themselves*.<sup>22</sup> Men would not take women seriously, and their veneration was actually a form of oppression: *most, even the reasonable ones, view us as poetic beings, that’s why they don’t give us any civil rights on earth*.<sup>23</sup> In her opinion, this led to a division in society. *In Germany, women stand as if in an oasis—if they are very educated—& they form a nation unto themselves*.<sup>24</sup> The sense of community that Adele and other intellectual women experienced in this firm dissociation from men might represent a prototype for the kind of group consciousness that gave so many women in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the power for political action.

While Adele Schopenhauer only expressed her criticism of the patriarchal organization of society to date in her letters and private conversations, Anna Jameson devoted her entire published work explicitly or implicitly to the question of women—worldwide. She even wrote on the subject of living conditions for indigenous women in Canada, from her unique perspective. In fall 1836, when her husband sent for her, she was to go to Toronto, where he had been working for the last three years as Attorney General. The biggest promotion possible had been put within his reach, but in order to become the Chancellor of Upper Canada (the highest post in the British Colony), however, Robert Jameson required a bourgeois family life. He had already attracted attention in Dominica as a drunkard, and in Toronto he lived alone in a semi-finished house. His wife was supposed to help provide respectability and a distinguished home.

With a similarly strategic—but altogether different—intention, Anna set out on her harrowing trip across the Atlantic, across both stormy and calm seas. She acquiesced to her husband for those couple of months, furnished his house on Lake Ontario, and afforded him a proper bourgeois reputation. For her surrender he was rewarded with success: by the beginning of March 1837, Robert Jameson had been named Vice-Chancellor. And when his salary doubled she demanded compensation for her efforts: separation with mandatory financial support. Like Adele, she had suffered financially during the previous years. Her husband had only provided for her intermittently, and her income as a writer could not cover her parents and sisters, not to mention the entire household with Ottilie von Goethe that she had dreamed of. She now demanded a portion of the salary that she had helped secure for her husband (with whom she no longer wanted to live). And yet, she did not want a divorce—married, she was socially far better off than divorced.

Robert Jameson hesitated at first. In her endearing German, Anna complained to Sibylle: *If I have to stay here, then I will die by disastrousness, by dullness, by wickedness, by painfulness, shortly by all possible urses that are the worst and the nastiest.*<sup>25</sup> In June 1837, she left her husband and started out across the Great Lakes. At Niagara Falls, she unpacked Sibylle's portrait and showed her the magnificent wonder of nature: *Ab! How much have I to tell you! Love me—as I love you!*<sup>26</sup> She traveled along Lake Erie to Detroit, and from there she went by steamboat, crossing Lake Huron to Mackinaw. From there she set out through regions in which no European women had ever before set foot. To get to Sault Ste Marie on Lake Superior, she spent ten days in a canoe made of tree bark, being paddled by five “half-blood” Indians. Despite the parching sun, millions of mosquitoes, and harsh nights camping on rocks, Anna was delighted. From Sault to the Manitoulin Islands was another four-day canoe ride. There she attended a gathering of thousands of Ottawa, Chippewa, Potawatomi, Winnebago,

and Menomonee, whose favor the government purchased with gifts such as cloth, needles, and knives. Anna used the opportunity to get to know these indigenous cultures. In a canoe, she even dared to go down white water rapids, and ceremoniously received the Chippewa name, *the woman of bright foam*.<sup>27</sup> Afterwards, she began her return trip through Penetanguishene at the southern point of the Georgian Bay, she rode in a palanquin to Lake Simcoe, and then from there it was back to Toronto. She had been on the move for two months—she had been the very first to see and experience things that had been previously unknown to any European woman.

After such a journey, she could tolerate her husband now less than ever. Once in New York, she awaited the payments from the out-of-court settlement, and turned her travel impressions into a very personal book, *Winter studies and summer rambles (1838)*—a book that continues to be read and enjoyed by those interested in historical travel writing. In *Winter studies*, Anna Jameson uses German literature to escape the backwater town of Toronto, a place trapped in bone-chilling cold, and, in her opinion, filled with half- or even completely uneducated residents (among whom she also counts her husband). Reflections on Goethe's conversations with Eckermann, *Tasso*, *Iphigenia*, *Clavigo*, as well as Grillparzer's *Sappho* and *Medea* serve as a civilized antidote against the Canadian melancholy. *Summer rambles*, by comparison, is a portrayal of her excursion into native cultures, which she uses as a lens to criticize the oh-so-Christian Western World. She praises the Chippewa for their relaxed mode of child-rearing, she extols their medicine, and their conduct of war—which rejected rape as unmanly. Everywhere she went she observed the position of women. The life of a European settler's wife, for example, seemed to her to be far less worthwhile than that of a native mother. And she blasted Toronto's small-town society and its colonial administration—the head of which was her husband.

The unprecedented tour among native Indians made Anna Jameson famous in both the Old and New Worlds. When the book appeared in 1838, she was living in London again, separated from her husband, on a 300£ yearly allowance. Critics of the work, in what was a predominantly male field, were annoyed by the forceful feminist tone. Unlike her earlier texts, she explicitly argued for something more radical; it was showered with protests. There were nevertheless also voices of support. With relish, Anna Jameson cited her friend Anne Procter's assessment: *The men, she says, are much alarmed by certain speculations about women; and, she adds, well they may be. For when the horse and ass begin to think and argue, adieu to riding and driving.*<sup>28</sup>

Of all the women around Sibylle and Adele, Anna Jameson turned out to be the most visible and explicit feminist. She became a pioneer of the first women's movement—the model, which the following generation of British suffragettes would eventually credit, many of whom grew up in her

feminist salon in London. Anna Jameson is perhaps best known as the author of a courageous essay on the fatal consequences of girls' work, "Condition of the women and the female children" (1843). Her call for the education of girls and women as a means of improving the standard of living for all, regardless of gender, is nowhere near outdated.

In the six articles that make of up the basis of her work, Anna Jameson directed her feminist credo towards Ottilie von Goethe. After God created man and woman as *equally rational beings with improvable faculties, equally responsible for the use or abuse of the faculties entrusted to them, equally free to chuse the good and refuse the evil*. The reference back to God was more than politic—many opponents of women's emancipation ultimately argued that this same God had intended women to be second-class in the very act of creation. Anna's doctrine of equality was seen as radical, and she did well by playing the devout one who was only following the gospel. Since she took the idea that women and men are different yet equal as her starting point—*equally tho' differently endowed*<sup>29</sup>—she belongs to the mothers of the so-called differential feminism, which continues to be discussed today.

If "Feminism is the theory, lesbianism is the praxis," as was the saying during the second women's movement in the late 1970's, Anna Jameson indeed began to give up hope for Ottilie von Goethe—and yet she couldn't keep herself from her. *Anna really has the deepest, innermost, & constant devotion to you*, wrote Adele Schopenhauer, realizing that Anna had slipped into the unsatisfying roll that she herself had once occupied: *but mind you, friendship can never fill your soul, that was indeed exactly the mistake of my earliest youth, one which cost me a great deal; and that I learned only by giving it all up. Since then I have remained devastated in some measure in my life and nothing has ever displaced that in me. But I can make no reproach, I'd made mistakes and misunderstood because I never calculated. In a similar way, I erred once again with Sibille, but not so painfully, nor so nobly, by then I already wanted various other things—a certain future, sacrifice, etc. etc. Oh, believe me, I judge myself ever so harshly*. She even begged Ottilie not to behave as she had with her; not to feign intimacy with Anna, suggesting that which she never intended after all. *I still deem it to be decidedly unjust when you intervene so much in Anna's life, you give her to little & she is now so effusive and torn from her proper nature, by Vienna, by this long life together. You are the poesy of her being—I beg you to remain so. May it not come true: you could make her ever so miserable in the long run.*<sup>30</sup> Adele's empathy for Anna was all the more selfless in that *I don't actually like her.*<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, it seemed Adele's concerns were unfounded. Ottilie had done nothing but consistently destroy Anna's dreams with her rotating cast of lovers. When Anna returned from Canada, Ottilie had fallen hopelessly in love with Gustav Kuhne, a newspaper editor ten years her junior. *I suppose you cannot help these fancies made up of passion,*

*temperament, sentiment, ennui, and God knows what. All you say to me is of this Kuhne you used to say of [Mr.] Story, and it may end the same. But O! may God forbid! how miserable you make me, Ottilie!*<sup>22</sup>

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## Forward

<sup>1</sup> Adele Schopenhauer to Ottilie von Goethe. July 1 [1829] (155a)

<sup>2</sup> Karl Immermann's Diary. (1984, 634), October 1837.

<sup>3</sup> Herbig 1958, 130.

<sup>4</sup> Anselm Feuerbach's Diary. (1852, Vol. 1, 298), July 1815.

<sup>5</sup> Friedrich Hebbel (1970, 193, 194) to Elise Lensing, January 30, 1845.

<sup>6</sup> Kühn 1911-12, vol. 2 491, 494, 492-3.

<sup>7</sup> Ottendorff-Simrock 1960, 38.

<sup>8</sup> L 25

<sup>9</sup> Büch 2002, 77.

<sup>10</sup> Campe 1789, Table of Contents.

<sup>11</sup> Ottilie von Goethe to Sibylle Mertens. January 1, 1850, H153.

<sup>12</sup> Annette von Droste-Hülshoff to Levin Schücking, September 12, 1842, HKA IX.1, 358.

<sup>13</sup> Adele Schopenhauer to Ottilie von Goethe. July 3, [1846] (123).

<sup>14</sup> Sibylle Mertens to Adele Schopenhauer. March 8, 1836. HASK 1056/13.

## *I love her: Adele and Sibylle*

<sup>1</sup> Adele Schopenhauer to Ottilie von Goethe, [September] 22, [1827] (143a).

<sup>2</sup> Johanna to Adele Schopenhauer, May 9, 1828, Houben <sup>2</sup>1929, 364.

<sup>3</sup> Adele Schopenhauer to Ottilie von Goethe, March 1, [1828] (147b).

<sup>4</sup> Stromeyer 1875, Vol. 1, 148.

<sup>5</sup> Adele Schopenhauer to Ottilie von Goethe, April 30, [1828] (153).

<sup>6</sup> Sibylle Merten's Diary, April 1, 1843. HASK 1056/6, 2, 69.

<sup>7</sup> Adele Schopenhauer to Ottilie von Goethe, [May 19, 1828] (152a).

<sup>8</sup> April 30, [1828] (153).

<sup>9</sup> [May 19, 1828] (152a).

<sup>10</sup> April 30, [1828] (153).

<sup>11</sup> [May 19, 1828] (152a).

- <sup>12</sup> June 8, 1828 (151).  
<sup>13</sup> [May 19, 1828] (152a).  
<sup>14</sup> April 30, [1828] (153).  
<sup>15</sup> June 8, 1828 (151).  
<sup>16</sup> [May 19, 1828] (152a).  
<sup>17</sup> Ottilie von Goethe to Adele Schopenhauer, July 2, 1828, Oettingen 1913, 202.  
<sup>18</sup> Adele Schopenhauer to Ottilie von Goethe, [May 19, 1828] (152a)  
<sup>19</sup> April 30, [1828] (153).  
<sup>20</sup> Johanna Schopenhauer (1870, 10, 7, 8) to Karl von Holtei, September 26, 1828.  
<sup>21</sup> Adele Schopenhauer to Goethe, July 14, 1828 (9).  
<sup>22</sup> Adele Schopenhauer to Ottilie von Goethe, March 1, [1828] (147a).  
<sup>23</sup> Johanna Schopenhauer to Eduard d'Alton, November 28, 1828 Houben <sup>2</sup>1929, 389.  
<sup>24</sup> Adele to Arthur Schopenhauer, January 25, 1832. L 326.  
<sup>25</sup> Johanna Schopenhauer to Louis Mertens, January 18, 1829, Houben <sup>2</sup>1929, 398  
<sup>26</sup> Walther von Goethe 1849.  
<sup>27</sup> Adele to Johanna Schopenhauer, May 11, 1829, GSA 84/I, 2, 3.

***I cannot live with out her: At the Zehnthof***

- <sup>1</sup> Adele Schopenhauer to Ottilie von Goethe. July 1-9, [1829] (155a, b).  
<sup>2</sup> Adele Schopenhauer to Goethe, July 18, 1829 (10).  
<sup>3</sup> Adele Schopenhauer to Ottilie von Goethe. July 1, [1829] (155a).  
<sup>4</sup> Schopenhauer 1920, Vol. 1, 139.  
<sup>5</sup> Adele Schopenhauer to Goethe, End of September 1829 (12).  
<sup>6</sup> Adele Schopenhauer to Ottilie von Goethe, [October] 20, [1829] (159a).  
<sup>7</sup> Ottilie von Goethe 1968, 39.  
<sup>8</sup> Adele Schopenhauer to Ottilie von Goethe, August 19, [1828] (149).  
<sup>9</sup> Sibylle Mertens to Ottilie von Goethe, February 5, 1835, H44.  
<sup>10</sup> Adele Schopenhauer to Ottilie von Goethe, [August] 10, [1829] (158a, b).  
<sup>11</sup> October 18, [1829] (156).  
<sup>12</sup> [May 19, 1828] (152a).  
<sup>13</sup> June 8, 1828 (151).

- <sup>14</sup> TB 2, 152, August 18, 1822
- <sup>15</sup> Schopenhauer 1848a, Nr. 30, February 4, 120.
- <sup>16</sup> Henriette Paalzow to Sibylle Mertens, November 19, 1833. HASK 1056/11.
- <sup>17</sup> Sibylle Mertens to Wilhelm Wach, April 22, 1835. HASK 1056/13.
- <sup>18</sup> Henriette Paalzow to Sibylle Mertens, February 20, 1834. HASK 1056/11
- <sup>19</sup> April 28, 1835, HASK 1056/13.
- <sup>20</sup> November 19, 1833. HASK 1056/11.
- <sup>21</sup> *Peinliche Gerichtsordnung* [1532] 1984, 81.
- <sup>22</sup> Steidele 2004, 192-193.
- <sup>23</sup> Cited according to Derks 1990, 43.
- <sup>24</sup> Fichte [1796] 1845, 311.
- <sup>25</sup> Goethe Vol. 11.2, 370, 369.
- <sup>26</sup> Adele Schopenhauer to Ottilie von Goethe, [May 19, 1828] (152a).
- <sup>27</sup> Johanna Schopenhauer (1870, 55) to Karl von Holtei, August 25, 1829.
- <sup>28</sup> Adele Schopenhauer to Ottilie von Goethe, [May 19, 1828] (152a).
- <sup>29</sup> aus'm Weerth 1859, 100, 85, 85.
- <sup>30</sup> Henriette Paalzow to Sibylle Mertens, June 5, 1833, HASK 1056/11.
- <sup>31</sup> Schaaffhausen 1858. 714.
- <sup>32</sup> aus'm Weerth 1859, 100.
- <sup>33</sup> Schaaffhausen 1858. 713.

### ***Women form a nation unto themselves: Frauenliebe***

- <sup>1</sup> *dieu comment te le peindre ce feu d'amour et d'enthousiasme que j'ai pour toi ... une si douce sensatione que j'en ai etée heureuse toute la journée.* Laurina Spinola to Sibylle Mertens, March 14, 1837. HASK 1056/14.
- <sup>2</sup> *je t'aime tant que je t'aime tous ce qui te touche et ce que tu as porté.* February 4, 1837. HASK 1056/14.
- <sup>3</sup> *fais moi la grace si quelques etrangers vient chez nous envoyes moi quelque chose que tu aies portée beaucoup cet automne.* August 29, 1836. HASK 1056/14.
- <sup>4</sup> *il faut absolument que tu m'envoyes quelque chemisettes comme celle que tu m'as données mais que tu aie bien portées [...] aime cette folie que j'ai de vouloir des choses de toi mais je t'aime tant.* February 4, 1837. HASK 1056/14.
- <sup>5</sup> *jealous tu m'aimes trop et tu me le dis avec certains mots de feu qu'on peut pas en douter, car sans ça je t'assure que je le serais joliment.* December 9, 1836. HASK 1056/14.

<sup>6</sup> *je t'aime plus que jamais: tout le long de ma maladie je me suis enveloppée de tout ce que tu m'as donné ta bague je l'ai arrosée de larmes on devait te la rendre si je... je ne veux pas dire le mot pour ne pas te faire souffrir ah!* June 19, 1837. HASK 1056/14.

<sup>7</sup> Adele Schopenhauer to Ottilie von Goethe, December 27<sup>th</sup> [1837] (47).

<sup>8</sup> Sibylle Mertens to Ottilie von Goethe, November 29 1839. (nach 19)

<sup>9</sup> Diary of Sibylle Mertens, March 24, 1838. HASK 1056/4 (30, 9)

<sup>10</sup> March 25 1838. HASK 1056/4 (30, 10)

<sup>11</sup> *Mon amitié pour toi était une passion.* March 10, 1838 HASK 1056/14 (30, 21).

<sup>12</sup> March 31, 1842. HASK 1056/4 (30, 27)

<sup>13</sup> April 1842. HASK 1056/4 (30, 30)

<sup>14</sup> *Si les qualités de ton âme et de ton Coeur pouvaient se rencontrer dans un home, si un homme pouvait aimer comme toi, ce que nul homme n'a jamais pu, et ne pourra jamais, cette homme aurait fait la félicité et le Malheur de ma vie; car j'aurais vécu et je serais morte pour lui, je lui aurais tout sacrifié, toutes les relations toutes mes affections, tout mon existence, ma vie, mon éternité, toi même peut-être; car un homme avec tes vertus et ton amour serait un Dieu!* May 10, 1838. HASK 1056/4 (30, 21)

<sup>15</sup> April 16, 1838. HASK 1056/4 (30, 18)

<sup>16</sup> Adele to Arthur Schopenhauer, April 17, 1838. L 392.

<sup>17</sup> Adele Schopenhauer to Ottilie von Goethe, [April 1839] (64).

<sup>18</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer to Carl Labes. July 12, 1838. Hü 179.

<sup>19</sup> Adele to Arthur Schopenhauer, January 10, 1849, L 484.

<sup>20</sup> Ottilie von Goethe to Sibylle Mertens. January 16, 1835. H 41.

<sup>21</sup> Adele to Arthur Schopenhauer. November 24, 1843. L 456.

<sup>22</sup> Adele Schopenhauer to Ottilie von Goethe. [January 1835] (35).

<sup>23</sup> April 2, [1835] (36b).

<sup>24</sup> June 6, 1836 (40c).

<sup>25</sup> Anna Jameson to Sibylle Mertens. January 4, 1837. COS 62.

<sup>26</sup> June 25, 1837. COS 67.

<sup>27</sup> Jameson [1838] 1965, 135.

<sup>28</sup> Jameson [1838] 1965, XIII.

<sup>29</sup> Erskine 1915, 332.

<sup>30</sup> Adele Schopenhauer to Ottilie von Goethe May 28, [1837] (44b)

<sup>31</sup> June 6, 1836 (40b).

<sup>32</sup> Anna Jameson to Otilie von Goethe. March 31, 1838. Needler, 1939, 102.