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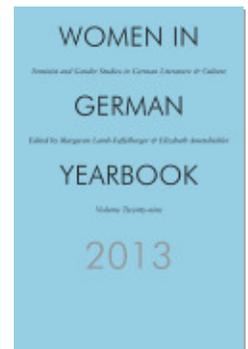
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# The Political Voice in the Writings of Friederike Brun (1765–1835)

CINDY K. RENKER

Friederike Brun (1765–1835), salonnière, poet, and travel writer, lived and wrote during a time of great political change in Europe. Witnessing firsthand or learning of the violence, wars, and oppression ravaging the Continent during the Revolutionary, Napoleonic, and Restoration eras, it comes as no surprise that these experiences inspired political commentary in her writing. This essay will not only show how Brun's poems, travelogues, and letters are permeated with her political sentiments but will also argue that Brun's writing career, encompassing several decades, lays open how her political thinking changed over time. The writings of Brun, a contemporary and friend of Madame de Staël, offer another example of women's interest and participation in political discourse at the end of the Age of Enlightenment.

## Introduction

The outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 brought irreversible change to Europe. The shift in the political climate on the Continent was particularly felt during the ascension and rule of Napoleon, the Napoleonic Wars, and the Restoration era. Concerned about the political changes in the tumultuous decades of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, some women took up the pen to document them and also to voice their personal political opinions. Women's political views, like those of their male counterparts, changed over time: from initial enthusiasm for both the French Revolution and later for Napoleon to feelings of disgust about the Revolution's shocking violence and disillusionment with Napoleon's opportunistic and tyrannical rule.

Women's participation in political discourse during these traumatic decades has yet to be adequately documented. Aside from the 2007 study *Women against Napoleon* (Maierhofer, Roesch, and Bland), women's attitudes and opinions about the political changes of this time were largely

excluded from scholarship; only studies on Madame Germaine de Staël (1766–1817), who serves as the prime example of a woman political thinker, are available (see Berger and Szmurlo). While less outspoken and more conventional than her friend Madame de Staël, Friederike Brun (1765–1835) also documents the changing European politics in her writings. Making use of different genres, she offers us a glimpse of the evolution of her political opinion over the course of several decades. Passionate yet guided by propriety and convention, Brun’s political voice permeates her poems, travelogues, and letters.

Rosa Olbrich’s dissertation from 1932 provides the first study of the different genres of Brun’s oeuvre and offers a summary of the reception of her writings by her contemporaries. Brun’s private letters document not only the friendships she maintained with influential women thinkers and writers of her time, such as Madame de Staël and Caroline von Humboldt (1766–1829), but also provide evidence to the close attention she paid to the political developments and how they affected her and her friends’ lives.<sup>1</sup> In addition to her private correspondence, her poems—rife with political fervor—provide fascinating insights into her sentiments regarding political events. In his article “Friederike Brun (1765–1835): In Tears Too There Is Joy,” Brian Keith-Smith mentions that some of Brun’s late poems responded to “political developments” (147), but he does not take her earlier poetry into account. Furthermore, in 2000, Keith-Smith and Herman Moens republished Brun’s travelogue *Briefe aus Rom* (1816, Letters from Rome). This book has sparked interest in Brun’s political stance, especially because her travelogue is a firsthand account of the French occupation of Rome and teems with anti-Napoleonic fervor. However, while Keith-Smith in his introduction to Brun’s travelogue alludes to the political aspect of her work, he does not analyze her political views in depth. Kari Lokke’s 2007 article on *Briefe aus Rom* also does not provide a comprehensive evaluation of Brun’s political stance, even though it makes a valuable contribution as a first thorough reading of one of Brun’s prose works.

This study draws on Brun’s writings—both poetry and prose—to examine the great political developments in Europe of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as seen through the eyes of a well-read, well-connected, and well-traveled woman. I explore Brun’s various writings across genres (poetry, travelogues, and letters) and over the course of her lifetime in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of her evolution as a political thinker and participant in the political discourse of her time.

## The Development of Brun's Political Voice

Brun's upbringing and travels laid the foundation for her interest in the political affairs of her homelands (Germany and Denmark) and Europe. She was born Friederike Sophie Christiane Münter in Gräfontonna near Gotha in the Duchy of Sachsen-Gotha-Altenburg, now Thuringia, in 1765. Her parents were the Lutheran pastor Balthasar Münter (1735–93) and Magdalena Sophia Ernestine Friederike von Wangenheim (1743–93). When Friederike was only four weeks old, Dr. Münter moved his family from his native Germany to Copenhagen, where he became the parish pastor for the German congregation of St. Petri Church and a leader of the German community in the Danish capital. Her father's circle included many notables, and Friederike was introduced early on to thinkers, writers, and notable political figures who frequented her parents' home. She was educated mostly by her father and at times by the tutor hired to instruct her brother. Well read in the literature of her time, she counted Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1734–1803) and Johann Andreas Cramer (1723–88) among her favorite poets (Renker 151–54). In addition to her native German and fluent Danish, she was also well versed in French, Italian, Spanish, and to some extent English (Keith-Smith, "Friederike Brun" 146).

At age seventeen, Friederike married Constantin Brun (1746–1836), a Danish consul and businessman, with whom she soon traveled to St. Petersburg and mingled with power players of her time. In subsequent years, Friederike continued to travel across much of continental Europe (the German territories, France, Switzerland, and Italy), increasingly without her husband, in the hope that the milder climates of the south would be beneficial for her and her children. On her journeys, she visited with notable personalities such as Johannes von Müller (1752–1809), Friedrich Schiller's wife, Charlotte von Lengefeld (1766–1826), Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), Christoph Martin Wieland (1733–1813), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), and Klopstock. While traveling through Switzerland she stayed with Madame de Staël and Karl Viktor von Bonstetten (1745–1832), and after spending five consecutive years in Switzerland and Italy, she ended her travels in 1810. Her husband had sent her an ultimatum to return to Copenhagen immediately or lose custody of their children. She spent the last twenty-five years of her life in or near the Danish capital, where she was visited by and corresponded with many notable friends and acquaintances from across

Europe. In addition to Bonstetten, Madame de Staël, and Caroline von Humboldt, she wrote to Friedrich von Matthisson (1761–1831) and J. C. L. Sismondi (1773–1842). Moreover, in both the Bruns' Copenhagen residence and their country estate, Sophienholm, she hosted a salon frequented by intellectuals, writers, artists, and dignitaries (aristocrats, ministers, diplomats, consuls, and generals) from several European nations, including from France and England, whose politics she opposed. Therefore, she was always well informed about current political developments.

Brun's political voice was thus influenced not only by personal observation on her journeys through a Europe that was ravaged by the violence of the French Revolution and, later, the Napoleonic Wars but also by her frequent conversations with many important public figures and intellectuals. She wrote in her native German, with the occasional letter in French or Italian, and frequently contributed to several notable literary journals, such as Schiller's *Horen* (see Holmgren), Wieland's *Teutscher Merkur*, *Neues Schweizerisches Museum*, Jacobi's *Iris*, Voss's *Musenalmanach*, or *Das deutsche Magazin*. In addition to writing for these periodicals, Brun wrote three collections of poetry—*Gedichte* (1795, Poems), *Neue Gedichte* (1812, New poems), and *Neueste Gedichte* (1820, Newest poems)—whose publication was supported and encouraged by her mentor and friend Friedrich von Matthisson. Her first collection of poetry appeared in four editions and her second in two, while her last collection was published one time only (Olbrich 57–58), which shows that her fame faded toward the end of her life. Her travel writings enjoyed reasonable popularity in her day, with some of them republished in second and third editions. Today, Brun's writings are regarded as artistically mediocre (Hoff 213–14).

Nevertheless, Brun's poetry and travelogues can offer us insights into her increasingly strong political sentiments. In her travel writings she reports on the political chaos around her. These texts, published between 1782 and 1833, offer valuable accounts of political events that she witnessed firsthand on her journeys through Europe. When Brun was affected by an event she had not witnessed personally, she chose to express herself through poetry. In addition, through her prolific correspondence with friends, which increased significantly after her return to Copenhagen in 1810, she was kept well informed. In turn, she unreservedly shared her personal political opinions in her letters.

Brun's work can be divided into three creative phases, each marked

by a particular political leaning. The first phase reflects her idealistic approval of the initial stages of the French Revolution and ends with her disappointment about its transformation from the principles of liberation to violent oppression. The second phase reveals her growing dislike of France, particularly of Napoleon, and also shows her rejection of the arrogance and political domination of the British. In the third phase, Brun demonstrates patriotism for Germany but soon takes up a pan-European stance and longs increasingly for the stable and peaceful restoration of the old order.

### **First Phase (1782–1802)**

The first phase of Brun's work reveals little political consciousness. In 1782, her first journey takes her, among other places, to Hamburg, where she spends time with Klopstock, whose poetry she had studied and tried to emulate since an early age. She also travels to Weimar and meets with Herder and Wieland. She makes no references to the generally calm political climate in the territories through which she travels. Nevertheless, in her diary she notes that Wieland is wary of patriotism, which he finds only useful for republics (*Tagebuch* 89–90). Here, Brun merely reports on Wieland's political viewpoint and does not add her own commentary or offer her own opinion. Yet her note shows that she spoke with influential thinkers and writers about politics and their political viewpoints. Wieland's opinion obviously was important enough to her to mention it in her travelogue.

In her first collection of poetry, published in 1795, we find a poem that suggests Brun's early approval of the French Revolution, in which she poeticizes her own republicanism.<sup>2</sup> "Grabschrift auf Georg Forster" (Epitaph for Georg Forster [99]) is dedicated to the ethnologist, travel writer, and revolutionary Georg Forster (1754–94) from Mainz, with whom Brun stayed for several days in 1791 (see Keith-Smith and Moens, *Briefe* xxv).<sup>3</sup> She lauds the recently deceased "son of liberty" ("Sohn der Freiheit" [99]), thus referring to his active role in helping to organize the Republic of Mainz (1792–93). In this poem, Brun considers liberty to be a God-given right: "the Father sent [it] down to us for our salvation" ("die vom Himmel herab sandte der Vater zum Heil" [99]). Brun, like Forster, welcomes the political changes and liberation of several western German territories by the French. Her praise of Forster also reveals her opposition to the Prussian forces who had destroyed the short-lived

liberty of the Mainz Republic in 1793. Using the allegorical personification of the “goddess” for liberty, Brun laments that she “has fled the blood stained earth” (“wandte [die Göttin] sich schnell von der blutigen Erde” [99]). The brutal dissolution of the first free republic on German soil ultimately led to Forster’s death in his Paris exile in January 1794. Soon thereafter, Brun’s support for the French Revolution and its ideals changed drastically.

Brun’s second journey, one year after the outbreak of the French Revolution, takes her through the German states, Switzerland, and France. In Paris she visits art galleries and theaters (see Keith-Smith and Moens, *Briefe* xxv). The first volume of her *Prosaische Schriften* (Prosaic writings) is an account of her journey from Montpellier to Marseille in 1790 with a detailed report on the damage from recent fighting and rioting (33–34, 38, 44). On her trip through Switzerland in 1795, Brun offers her first reaction to the pain and suffering as a result of political unrest in the name of liberty. In the foreword of her *Tagebuch einer Reise durch die östliche, südliche und italienische Schweiz* (Journal of a journey through eastern, southern, and Italian Switzerland), she describes the political climate and how it had affected her travels when local fighting had forced her to leave the area or change her travel route: “Alas I had barely arrived there when misfortune seemed to have followed me and before my eyes I had the whole disgust of the senseless making of republics and the imposed seal of liberty” (iii).<sup>4</sup> Here, Brun not only voices her irritation with the political unrest that inhibits her travels but also expresses her disillusionment with republicanism. She can no longer support France, because it spreads by force its ideals of equality and liberty throughout the rest of Europe. In this travelogue, which Brun prepared for publication in 1798 and 1799, she expresses for the first time her staunch disapproval of French expansionist politics. Only three years after the epitaph for Georg Forster, in which she welcomed republicanism and lauded the ideal of freedom—for all that has come from France to Germany—she rejects the French way of bringing about political change. Her stance against republicanism is also strongly influenced by the fact that the French military is involved in battles in Switzerland to establish a Helvetic Republic (Powers 32). According to Olbrich, Brun’s anti-French sentiments stem from her love for Switzerland, where she stayed for long periods of time in 1790, 1795, 1801, and 1805 (25–26). Moreover, her friendship with Swiss residents Madame de Staël and Bonstetten, who had to flee the French occupation, also is cause for her growing displeasure with France’s foreign policy.

## Second Phase (1802–1816)

The second phase of Brun's writing shows a significant increase in her political commentary. Moreover, her second poetry collection, *Neue Gedichte* (New poems), from 1812, reveals a considerable shift in her political focus from hailing the ideal of equality and liberty to decrying the plight of the people who are suffering under the ravages of war. This shift can be explained by the historical events that affected her homeland of Denmark. Between 16 August and 5 September 1807, the people of Copenhagen suffered through the bombardment by the British, who used "congreve rockets" (developed by Sir William Congreve in 1804 for the wars fought between the British East India Company and the kingdom of Mysore in India) that caused devastating fires. The assault destroyed 30 percent of Copenhagen's buildings and killed more than two thousand civilians. Brun wrote three poems—"Die Erfinder" (The inventors), "Die Leichenfeier" (The funeral), and "Die Rache" (The revenge)—as reaction to this horrifying event. They reflect her aversion to England, which parallels and supersedes her negative feelings toward France during her first poetic phase.

"Die Erfinder" (44–45), an ode, laments in its first stanza the spilled blood of the young and old for "fatherland, justice and / liberty" ("Vaterland, Recht, und / Freiheit" [44]). In subsequent verses we learn whose blood was spilled, by whom, and where. While the occasion and impetus for writing the poem was the bombardment of Copenhagen, about which Brun had read in a newspaper account while staying in Italy (*Neue Gedichte* 185), she condemns British expansionism under which the people of India cry out in despair. She sides with the Indian people, whose country is almost under complete British control by the early nineteenth century. She bemoans their suffering under British dominion and criticizes the English for exploiting India for its resources. Brun's anti-English sentiment is reflected in her choice of words, such as "bandits of the sea" ("Räuber des Meeres" [44]) in the third verse. It is worth noting that Brun's disapproval of British colonial expansionism is somewhat surprising because her native Denmark held minor colonial interests in India in the early nineteenth century. Also, her husband had served as the royal commissioner for the Danish Asia Company in India for a period of time.

In "Die Leichenfeier" (*Neue Gedichte* 46–48), Brun grieves for the Danes who were the victims of British aggression in 1807 when the English retaliated against Denmark's alliance with Napoleonic France. Once

again, she condemns the British for their hostility and wishes for the downfall of their global empire: “May your artificially pieced together superstructure sink in the dust, Britannia!” (46).<sup>5</sup> However, it is not so much the political conquest by the British that she finds most reprehensible in this poem but rather the nature of warfare itself. Although Brun’s travel writings reveal her loathing of Napoleon’s wars and even rebuke the alliance between Denmark and France, it is the terror and destruction that the new British weapon had caused in her hometown and that thus supersedes her antipathy for Napoleon’s dreadful conquests. Her sole concern in “Die Leichenfeier” is for her “sweet most beloved fatherland” (“süßes geliebtestes Vaterland” [47]), which has been robbed of its beauty and reputation by the “tyrants of the sea” (“Meertyrannen” [46]). The poem has the zeal of a patriotic song, repeatedly calling out “Oh fatherland” (“O Vaterland” [47]). In her annotation to this poem, Brun decries the fact that the Danes did not burn down the British fleet in retaliation for the bombardment of Copenhagen. This, she explains, would have saved the Danes’ national honor (*Neue Gedichte* 185). Even though Brun mourns the loss of life of many innocent people, she pleads for restoring Denmark’s national pride through vengeance.

In “Die Rache” (*Neue Gedichte* 49–53), Brun calls out for revenge and voices her dismay about the betrayal of the Danes by the British. The position she takes here is ironic, since the British had attacked Denmark for siding with the French and thus betraying their long-standing alliance with the British. In this fiery battle hymn, written in Italy in reaction to the news about Copenhagen’s fate (*Neue Gedichte* 185), Brun calls upon the powers of heaven and sea to punish the “criminals” (“Verbrecher” [51]) who have attacked the innocent, peace-loving people of the north. She curses the British for mocking “the holy union of peace” (“des Friedens heiligen Bund” [51]) and asks for a devastating surge to punish them: “Thrust, [. . .] the thundering wild / floods / down on the criminals” (“Stürz, [. . .] die donnernden wilden / Fluthen / Auf die Verbrecher” [51]). Brun argues that Denmark must seek revenge because “peace and / loyalty / and love” (“Fried’ und / Treue / Hoffnung und Liebe” [49]) are lost in Europe, which suffers through war, violence, conflict, bondage, and suffering.

There are other poems in *Neue Gedichte* in which Brun mourns the old order of Europe, which has been reduced to rubble by broken alliances and warfare. While she does not yet call for a unified Europe, these sorts of evocations show her concerns for the whole of Europe and her

longing for peace. For example, in “Johannes Müllers Stimme aus dem Grabe” (Johannes Müller’s voice from the grave [152–54]) she laments the loss of the old order in Europe by reiterating the political attitude of her deceased friend and Swiss historian Johannes von Müller: “Gone are the former states all sunk into rubble” (“Hin sind die Staaten der Vorwelt all’ in / Trümmer gesunken” [152]).<sup>6</sup> She repeats her deep sense of loss for the order of Europe that now lies in ruins and expresses her yearning for peace after the “chaos of the night” (“Chaos der Nacht”) in the poem “And den edlen Greis” (To the noble aged [173–75]).

Brun’s concern for the political future of Europe as a whole and her dislike of England are less evident in her travel writings, which she composed at the same time as she wrote her *Neue Gedichte*. Instead, Brun expresses once again her profound antipathy for France in general and for Napoleon in particular. This may be due to the fact that during her travels she witnessed the dire consequences of Napoleon’s wars firsthand, while she had only secondhand knowledge of the devastation that the British bombardment of Copenhagen had brought upon the Danes.

On her journeys between 1802 and 1810, Brun witnesses destruction, devastation, and death in some of the areas through which she travels. Because of what she sees, the ideals that the French Revolution had once embraced and that she had supported have become a distant memory. Napoleon’s seemingly unstoppable conquest of the Continent overshadowed her earlier dreams of political renewal. During the years that Brun traveled through the south of Europe, Napoleon had dissolved the established order of central Europe by demolishing the thousand-year-old Holy Roman Empire and had begun to invade Russia. In the records of her travels from 1802 to 1810, Brun’s aversion against Napoleon and his politics pervade her reports. The first part of *Römisches Leben* (Roman life) from 1802 describes the town of Marino and blames the profound suffering of the town’s people on the French occupation and the resulting insurrection (12). Her reports about the miserable state of the town and the hunger crisis of its people are very detailed. While travelling from Geneva to southern France and Italy in the winter of 1806/07, Brun admits that she (and her friends) had neither anticipated nor realized the fundamental political and social changes that the French Revolution would bring: “We happy ones speak of revolution daily, we think we are acquainted with all of its stirring ideas. However, we had no idea what it involved” (*Reise* 130).<sup>7</sup>

The most significant and revealing travel account from this time period is the travelogue *Briefe aus Rom* (Letters from Rome) from 1816. During her last extended stay in Rome from 1807 to 1810, Brun wrote lengthy letters to her brother Friedrich Münter, the bishop of Zealand. These letters provide a fascinating, detailed account of the tumultuous years of the French occupation of Rome and the standoff between Napoleon and Pope Pius VII. Brun supports the pope because she believes he is the only one who dares and is able to stand up to the French emperor by opposing his liberalization of existing laws that secure the established order. During her stay in Rome she personally experiences the French oppression of the local population and the clergy and hears of the kidnapping and confinement of Pope Pius VII by the French. It comes as no surprise, then, that her critique of Napoleon reaches its height during this time.

Her anti-Napoleon sentiments, however, do not hinder her from being acquainted with many French notables in Rome. Time and again, she names French dignitaries whom she values as individuals. She attends dinners, balls, and concerts hosted by them. Her letters give detailed descriptions of important social functions and events. Yet, as she recounts a ball hosted by the French general Count Miollis (1759–1828), she is quick to point out that she usually stays away from the French and tells how she supports the local population in its passive defiance of the occupiers: “I try to avoid any kind of contact with the French in town. [. . .] and yet the Gouverneur-General showers us with pleasant-ries” (see Keith-Smith and Moens, *Briefe* 11).<sup>8</sup> Brun knew of the difficulties that her friend Madame de Staël had to endure due to her outspoken political opposition to Napoleon. Therefore, these letters were published (as a travelogue) only after Napoleon’s final defeat because they surely would have drawn his ire. Also, Brun had no intention of openly opposing Napoleon: “Indeed may nothing be brought against the argument that an earlier publication of these letters would have gotten a stronger reaction. Had they been published particularly in 1809, here and there, they truly would have been nothing less than a declaration of war” (1).<sup>9</sup> Later, in personal letters to Madame de Staël, most of them written in 1812 and 1813 (i.e., before Napoleon’s defeat at Leipzig), Brun allowed herself to be more open in expressing her displeasure with the French ruler (Walser-Wilhelm and Walser-Wilhelm 79–125). Still, her use of initials (F. B. or F. Br.) shows that she remained cautious about voicing her political opposition to Napoleon, even in her private correspondence.

### Third Phase (1816–1824)

During the final phase of her writing career, Brun published her last book of poetry, *Neueste Gedichte*, in 1820, and in 1824 she published “Lieder für Hellas” (Songs for Hellas) together with her autobiography, *Wahrheit aus Morgenträumen* (Truth from morning dreams).<sup>10</sup> These poems no longer exhibit Brun’s anti-French or anti-British sentiments. Instead they are a demonstration of her idealistic patriotism for Germany that evolved into a distinct pan-European attitude after Napoleon’s final defeat and the restoration of the old order in Europe by the Congress of Vienna. This last shift in Brun’s political perspective is partly based on the fact that the German states had played a significant role in freeing Europe from Napoleon’s tyranny. In her autobiography, she explains that during her travels she learned to respect and appreciate many different peoples and their cultures and, therefore, does not feel that she can belong to or embrace only one single nation: “To which nation I actually belong, I really don’t know; and that might be the cause for my complete lack of exclusionary patriotism, which enables me to keep an open mind, heart, and eyes for the merits and afflictions of the peoples and nations that I’ve observed” (see Keith-Smith, *Wahrheit* 5).<sup>11</sup> Brun no longer believes in an “exclusionary patriotism” but in a pan-European cause. She envisions a free and peaceful Europe wherein all nations can exist in the established order.

Although Brun had abhorred the devastation of the French Revolutionary Wars, she initially greeted the Wars of Liberation with great enthusiasm and deemed them necessary for the future of Europe. This view is expressed in “Nemesis” (*Neueste Gedichte* 30–31) and in the poem “Als ich vom Aschenkegel des Vesuvs auf noch glühender Lava den Mond untergehen sah” (When from Vesuvius’s volcanic cone I saw the setting moon in the still glowing lava [40–41]). In the latter, Brun compares the fiery display of Mount Vesuvius to the fierce conflicts raging on the Continent that she deems necessary for a strong political future: “Those streams of lava and ash strew / seeds for future harvests” (“Jene Gluth-und Aschenströme streuen / Saamen für der Zukunft Erndten aus” [41]). This attitude is reiterated in “Der Eichenkranz” (The oak wreath [42–45]), in which she poeticizes war as a necessary means for the re-establishment of the old order and envisions the European world under the leadership of “Germania.” However, she sees these hopes dashed when Napoleon reenters the European stage once more after his escape from exile on the island of Elba. In “Bonaparte’s Rückkehr von Elba”

(Bonaparte's return from Elba [46]), she airs her anxiety that his return to the throne would only bring additional death and destruction.

In "Lieder für Hellas," Brun repeats her call for war to free Europe from subjugation but places it in a different context. Here she takes up her pen for a Greece that suffers under Turkish occupation. Much like battle hymns, these poems address German and European youth and call for their help to liberate the Greek from their oppressors. In a footnote to the third triad, Brun lashes out against her old nemesis England and condemns the nation's support for the Turks (see Keith-Smith, "Reader" 68). Moreover, the poem "Gebet für Griechenland" ("Prayer for Greece" [66–67]) utilizes the English anthem "God Save the King"—albeit in an ironic fashion—to ask for the blessing and victory of Greece. It is her nation "Germania" that was the victor over the French at the Battle of Leipzig in 1813 and that, Brun believes, is capable of delivering Greece and defeating the Turks: "Oh teach them the fight that you won / Germania when, at the Battle of the Nations / your sons wrest themselves from the Frankish yoke, / to awaken to exalted pride" (64).<sup>12</sup> It becomes clear that Brun believes that fighting for Europe's peaceful future under German leadership has become necessary and inevitable.

While after 1810 Brun no longer traveled but stayed in Copenhagen, several of her travelogues were published in first or second editions. Moreover, she corresponded extensively with friends and acquaintances from around Europe who kept her informed about current events. We have to turn to these letters to gain further insights into the evolution of Brun's political thinking. Brun remembers past events and sentiments, as in an 1812 letter to Caroline von Humboldt (whom she had befriended when living in Rome) in which she passionately articulates her antipathy against England (see Keith-Smith, "Reader" 115). Other letters to Humboldt reveal Brun's reactions to news about political developments in Denmark, the German territories, and the rest of Europe, with particular emphasis on Napoleon's victories and defeats. She also voices her opinion about the Congress of Vienna (1814–15), her fears that Germany may find itself at the brink of its own revolution since the conservatives refused to make concessions to the liberal and nationalistic forces, and her hope for lasting peace: "In Vienna a new day is now beginning! But it won't yet dawn for the time being! If only Germany's Constitution of Estates would be openly proclaimed" (qtd. in Foerst-Crato 119).<sup>13</sup>

During the second decade in the nineteenth century, nationalistic sen-

timents expressed in violent uprisings began to increase in the German territories (e.g., Brun's brother witnessed students riots during his stay in Göttingen and Heidelberg [see Keith-Smith, "Reader" 116]). At this stage in her life Brun is torn between the fight for liberation and preserving peace in the name of conservatism. She desperately fears another outbreak of violence, which, in the case of Greece, she had deemed necessary for the liberation from oppression. Now she is convinced that war cannot lead to a peaceful future for Germany and Europe. In 1819, Brun shares her trepidation over "the simmering rage of these youth" ("der gährenden Wut dieser Jugend") and their "fanatical hatred of all other nations" ("fanatischer Haß aller andern Völker") in one of her letters to Caroline von Humboldt (qtd. in Keith-Smith, "Reader" 116). The development of Brun as a writer and political thinker over the course of three creative phases thus accumulates into this concern for Europe as a whole, and peace and justice for its people.

## Conclusion

Through her extensive travels Brun developed an interest in the political future for Denmark and the German territories and for the whole of Europe. She witnessed the ravages of revolution and war and became a fervent supporter of peace between the European nations. Her poetry, travelogues, and letters illustrate how and to what extent cosmopolitan women of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries voiced their political sentiments. By studying Brun's poetry and prose, we can follow her views about the political developments throughout her lifetime and gain a better understanding of why and how general and personal political sentiments enriched women's writing during the Revolutionary, Napoleonic, and Restoration eras. Furthermore, we learn about the ironies and inconsistencies in the development of Brun's political stance. Her attitude changed from admiring the French Revolution and its attempt to bring about equality, brotherly love, and liberty for all, to being horrified about the violence, death, and destruction that the people of Europe experienced, to rejecting Napoleon's brutal expansionism. Napoleon's sweeping military advances across the Continent caused her to embrace a nostalgic conservatism. She longed for peace and therefore began to idealize the restoration of old regimes. At the end of Brun's life, her writings reveal a lack of vision for a liberated future and a new order for Europe (Foerst-Crato 109).<sup>14</sup> Ultimately, what motivated her to take part in the

political discourse of her time was not political ideology but rather her deep ethical sentiment and her strong personal belief in peace and justice for all.

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## Notes

1. On de Staël see Walser-Wilhelm and Walser-Wilhelm, which contains the letters exchanged between Bonstetten and de Staël and Brun and de Staël. Bonstetten's letters to Brun were published by Matthisson in 1829. Brun's letters to Bonstetten and to other contemporaries such as Matthisson are not published. On von Humboldt see Foerst-Crato.

2. I use the first edition of Brun's three collections of poetry. Brun added new poems to some later editions.

3. All translations are mine.

4. "Ach kaum war ich dort angelangt, so hatt' ich auch schon wieder das Unheil im Nacken und den ganzen Ekel der unsinnigen Republikenbäckerey und des aufgedrunghenen Freyheitsstempels vor Augen."

5. "Es sink' in den Staub, / Brittania, hin / Dein künstlich gethürmeter Wunderbau!"

6. Brun notes that she quotes from the foreword of Müller's fourth book of his multivolume history of Switzerland, which is indicated by her use of quotation marks (*Neue Gedichte* 194).

7. "Wir Glücklichen sprechen alle Tage das Wort Revolution aus, wir glauben mit allen den berührenden Ideen desselben vertraut zu seyn. Allein wir ahnden nicht was es in sich faßt."

8. "Ich vermeide sonst jede Art von Umgang mit den Franzosen hier. [. . .] und dennoch überhäuft der Gouverneur-General uns mit Höflichkeit."

9. "Zwar möchte sich der Behauptung, daß die frühere Bekanntmachung dieser Briefe noch größere Wirkung hervorgebracht haben würde, nicht viel entgegensetzen lassen. Wären sie besonders im Jahr 1809 [. . .] im Druck erschienen, sie hätten fürwahr hier und da einer Kriegserklärung gleich gegolten."

10. Keith-Smith republished Brun's autobiography as volume 11 of the *Encyclopedia of German Women Writers* in 2000. All quotes are from this edition.

11. "Zu welchem Volk ich nun eigentlich gehöre, weiß ich wirklich nicht; und daher mag wohl mein gänzlicher Mangel an ausschließender Vaterlandsliebe herrühren, welcher mir Sinn, Herz, und Augen offen erhalten hat, für die Vorzüge und Gebrechen der Völker und Länder, so ich gesehn."

12. “O lehre sie den Kampf, den du bestanden / Germanien, als in Völkerschlacht / Dem Frankenjoch sich deine Söhn’ entwanden, / Zu hohem Selbstgefühl erwacht!”
13. “[N]un fängt es an in Wien zu tagen! Aber hell wirds wohl noch fürerst nicht werden! Wäre doch erst Deutschlands Ständische Konstitution rein ausgesprochen [. . .].”
14. See Brun’s letter to Caroline von Humboldt from 18 June 1814 (Foerst-Crato).

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