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"Is Judah indeed the Teutonic Fatherland?" The Debate over the Hebrew Legacy at the Turn of the 18th Century[1]

Abstract: The article presents the eighteenth-century discussion on the place of Hebrew legacy within German culture. It argues that the exemplar of Hebrew poetry played a pivotal role in the work of a group of influential writers, especially members of the *Sturm und Drang* movement. As a reaction to anti-Biblical attacks by Deists and radical Enlightenment philosophers, German thinkers and poets posited the Old Testament as a model for sentimental and patriotic poetry. The Hebrew model acted as one of the cultural elements that allowed German literature of that period to distinguish itself from French-identified Neo-classical literature and develop its own stylistic and thematic avenues. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, new myths such as the Hindu-Aryan myth dethroned Hebrew myth from its central role in German identity. However, the search for the roots of German culture in Asia grew out of biblical scholarship, and only gradually disengaged from it.

The second part of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's early essay, *The Positivity of the Christian Religion* (*Die Positivität der christlichen Religion*, published 1795), bears the intriguing title "Is Judah indeed the Teutonic Fatherland?" (*Ist denn Judäa der Thuiskonen Vaterland?*). In it, the young philosopher notes that although the Germanic peoples had their own heroes, worshipped in poems, folk revels and sacred groves, when Christianity arrived in Germany:

> Das Christentum hat Walhalla entvölkert, die heiligen Haine umgehauen, und die Phantasie des Volkes als schändlichen Aberglauben, als ein teuflisches Gift ausgerottet, und dafür die Phantasie eines Volks gegeben, dessen Klima, dessen Gesetzgebung, dessen

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Kultur, dessen Interesse uns fremd, dessen Geschichte mit uns in ganz und gar keiner Verbindung ist. In der Einbildungskraft unseres Volkes lebt ein David, ein Salomon, aber die Helden unseres Vaterlandes schlummern in den Geschichtbüchern der Gelehrten, und für diese hat ein Alexander, ein Cäsar usw. ebensoviel Interesse als die Geschichte eines Karls des Grossen oder Friedrich Barbarossa.[2]

Hegel mourns the usurpation of the German peoples' original folk fantasy by Christianity, and its replacement by the fantasies and heroes of the Hebrews, a foreign, alien people. Hegel's critique of what he saw as the excessive influence of the Bible on German national culture expresses a prevalent resentment in German literary circles of the turn of the eighteenth century. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe also mocked the "Biblical deluge" to which German poetry was subjected prior to his arrival on the scene, lambasting the poets of the time for drawing inspiration from "Jewish shepherd songs."[3] Though clearly serving their own cultural projects, the criticism shared by these two commentators echoed a real phenomenon, namely the great excitement over the Bible and intensive engagement with Hebrew poetry during the formative era of modern German culture. Indeed, writing about and under the influence of Hebrew poetry may be considered one of the first trends to characterize a unique German cultural identity.

During the second half of the eighteenth century, the German principalities were the centers of European Bible research.[4] Many German writers treated the Hebrew Bible as an object of inquiry and a trove of metaphors. While the undermining of Scripture's credibility and authority is one of the hallmarks of the Enlightenment, the rise of a skeptical approach to Scripture did not lessen interest in the Bible.[5] Quite the contrary, anti-Biblical attacks by Deists and radical Enlightenment philosophers spurred some German philosophers, historians and poets to adopt Hebrew historical myth as a source of inspiration and to posit the Old Testament as a model for sentimental and patriotic poetry.

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2 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, "Die Positivität der christlichen Religion," in *Werke in zwanzig Bänden 1* (Frankfurt a.M: Suhrkamp, 1971), 197.

3 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Aus meinem Leben: Dichtung und Wahrheit* 2 (Tübingen: 1812), 139–140.

4 See Rudolf Smend, *From Astruc to Zimmerli: Old Testament Scholarship in Three Centuries.* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 35–40; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments von der Reformation bis zur Gegenwart* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969); Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 148; Henning Graf Rvenlow, hg., *Historische Kritik und biblischer Kanon in der deutschen Aufklärung* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1988).

5 For a discussion of German scholars' defense of the Old Testament's morality, see: Ofri Ilany, "From Divine Commandment to Political Act: The Eighteenth-Century Polemic on the Extermination of the Canaanites," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 73, 3 (2012): 437–461.

Unlike previous studies of German Biblical research that identify the field as one of the roots of anti-Semitism,[6] which is far too confining an approach for a full understanding of German Biblicist discourse, I would rather stress the link between these new forms of Bible-reading and the emergence of a German national identity. Given the several dozen monographs about the Hebrews published in the latter decades of the eighteenth century (bearing titles such as *Archäologie der Hebräer* or *Alterthümer der Hebräer*), one might even describe the era as a German-Hebraic Renaissance.[7] This extensive literature formed the backdrop to Johann Gottfried Herder's (1744–1803) *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie*, recognized by many as the seminal eighteenth century work about the Hebrews. Herder's writings formed the core of the German Hebraist discourse, and constituted an attempt to transform an apology for the Hebrew model into a religious-cultural bulwark against Classicism, Rationalism and Liberalism.

Several scholars have dealt with Herder's Hebraist writings. These include Daniel Weidner, who treats the conceptual and semiotic shifts that Bible-reading underwent during the eighteenth century;[8] Bernd Fischer, who discusses Herder's writings on the Hebrews in the context of his study of German national identity formation in eighteenth century literature, and presents the Old Testament as "the state's mythological-poetic paradigm" (*mythologisch-poetische Nationsparadigma*) underlying Herder's political philosophy; and Liliane Weissberg, who addresses Herder's discussion of the Hebrews in the context of his approach toward modern Jews, arguing that his praise of the Hebrews was meant to stress the difference between the ancient people and the Jews of his time.[9]

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6 See: Jonathan M. Hess, *Germans, Jews and the Claims of Modernity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Wolf-Daniel Hartwich, *Romantischer Antisemitismus: von Klopstock bis Richard Wagner* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005); Anders Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological anti-Semitism: German Biblical Interpretation and the Jews, from Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

7 For example: Johann Ernst Faber, *Archäologie der Hebräer* (Halle, 1773); Wilhelm Nicolaus Freudentheil. *Ossian und die Hebräischen Dichter \ Über die Siegslieder der Hebräer* (Leipzig, 1774); Johann Jakob Hess, *Geschichte der Patriarchen* (Zürich: Orell, Gessner, Füsslin und Comp. 1776); Heinrich Ehrenfried Warnekros, *Entwurf der hebräischen Alterthümer* (Weimar: 1782); Theodor Jakob Ditmar, *Geschichte der Israeliten bis auf den Cyrus* (Berlin, 1788); Johann Babor, *Alterthümer der Hebraeer* (Wien, 1794); Karl Wilhelm Justi, *Nationalgesänge der Hebräer* (Marburg, 1803); Friedrich August Carus, *Psychologie der Hebräer* (Leipzig, 1809).

8 Daniel Weidner, "Politik und Ästhetik: Lektüre der Bibel bei Michaelis, Herder und de Wette," in *Hebräsiche Poesie und jüdischer Volksgeist. Die Wirkungsgeschichte Johann Gottfried Herders im Judentum Mittel- und Osteuropas,* ed. Christoph Schulte (Hildesheim. u.a.: Olms 2003), 35–66.

9 Liliane Weissberg, "Juden oder Hebräer? Religiöse und politische Bekehrung bei Herder," in *Johann Gottfried Herder: Geschichte und Kultur,* ed. Martin Bollacher (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1994), 191–211.

By contrast to those scholars who identify a reverence for the ancient Hebrews exclusively with Herder's work, I seek to place this approach within a wider context. Reference to Hebrew poetry was a prominent characteristic of German literature of the period, especially among the writers of the *Sturm und Drang* circle of the mid-eighteenth century.[10] Furthermore, the Hebrew model allowed the German literature of the period to distinguish itself from the neoclassical literature identified with France, and to develop its own styles and themes.

In the discourse on the Hebrews that continued in the generation after Herder, the debate over the Bible was characterized by a dialectic tendency; an attempt to displace Hebrew myth from German culture and a simultaneous effort to build that same culture as an imitation of it. A tendency arose to write the Hebrew tradition out of German culture, first by describing it as "sensual" and "irrational," and later by invoking its foreignness. Goethe and Schiller led German culture into a long phase of Greek adulation, and Immanuel Kant's critical philosophy posited the ideal of a Christian religion anchored in rationality, where Scripture in general and the Old Testament in particular played only a minor role. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, new myths such as the Hindu-Aryan myth dethroned Hebrew myth from its central role in German identity. However, the search for the roots of German culture in Asia grew out of biblical scholarship, and only gradually disengaged from it.

I. Siona-Sulamith: Klopstock as Hebraist

As early as the mid-seventeenth century, German poets tended to portray their work as having descended from the poetry of the Bible. Many of these poets held to a theory according to which the biblical Fathers had invented or developed the art of poetry itself.[11] As the Old Testament is so much richer in poetry than the New Testament, "Hebrew poets" were seen as the theological "legitimation" of poetry. Besides theological legitimacy, German poets also referenced the authority of biblical poetry in order to defend the German language against other European poetic languages. The short history of German poetics (compared to its French, Italian and Spanish counterparts) spurred them to outline a genealogy tying German to the language of the Bible, i.e., Hebrew – a tongue

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10 On this topic, see also: Ofri Ilany, "Bein ẓiona le-teutona. Ha-model ha-ivri ve-reishita shel ha-tarbut ha-le'umit ha-germanit" [Ziona and Teutona: The Hebrew Model and the Emergence of German National Culture], *Historia* 28 (2012): 81–105.

11 Joachim Dyck, *Athen und Jerusalem: Die Tradition der argumentativen Verknüpfung von Bibel und Poesie im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (München: Beck, 1977).

considered, since the Church Fathers, to have been Adam's language – in an effort to refute views of German poetry as barbaric, provincial or coarse.

The accumulation of knowledge in the fields of European and Oriental philology and the consequent historicization of linguistic inquiry led to the rejection of this genealogical linkage between German and Hebrew – and to biblical history in general. European and Oriental peoples were now portrayed as belonging to different genealogies, and ethnographic descriptions and accounts resulted in a reclassification of the Bible and the Hebrew language in an "Oriental" context.[12]

Nevertheless, after the demise of the Hebrew-source theory, interest in the Hebrew language and in Hebrew poetry refused to wane. In fact, it can be said to have intensified. Although Hebrew was dethroned from its seat as the mother-tongue of the human race, claims of Hebrew's primacy persisted and were recontextualized. Hebrew poetry served as the ideal for the *Sturm und Drang* poets, headed by Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724–1803), in whose works biblical themes formed the basis for developing a Christian-sentimental style.[13]

German literary Hebraism was related to two contemporaneous cultural-conceptual phenomena. The first was a new conception of the Hebrew language and of Hebrew poetry as natural, primary and sublime, with imitation of the Hebrews a prominent feature in the sentimental style of *Sturm und Drang* poetry – a style intimately linked to pietist Protestantism. The second, no less important, phenomenon was the use of the ancient Hebrews as an alternative cultural-political model to the dominant Greco-Roman one. These two tendencies characterized Klopstock, a pioneer of German patriotic poetry and one of the fathers of modern German poetry. As Bernadette Malinowsky has shown, Klopstock signified a paradigm shift in the German lyrical tradition by rendering the poet as a modern prophet.[14] The poetry of the Hebrews inspired him to break free from rigid poetic rules and express strong emotion and spiritual forces. Klopstock's poetry is laden with biblical themes and Hebrew words. Many of his poems depict oriental, quasi-biblical landscapes. His ode *Siona* (1764) is addressed to a poetic muse described as a Hebrew harp player dwelling in a palm

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12 See Daniel Weidner, "'Menschliche, heilige Sprache.' Das Hebräische bei Michaelis und Herder," *Monatshefte für deutschsprachige Literatur und Kultur* XCV/2 (2003): 171–206.
13 See Denis Thouard, "Hamann und der Streit um die Poesie der Hebräer," in *Die Gegenwärtigkeit Johann Georg Hamanns: Acta des achten Internationalen Hamann-Kolloquiums an der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg 2002*, ed. Bernhard Gajek (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 2005), 321–334; Bernadette Malinowski, "*Das Heilige sei mein Wort.*" *Paradigmen prophetischer Dichtung von Klopstock bis Whitman* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2002), 72.
14 Malinowski, *Das Heilige sei mein Wort*, 59. See also Daniel Weidner, *Bibel und Literatur um 1800* (München: Fink Verlag 2011), 285–196.

grove and dancing by the source of the Jordan River: "Töne mir, Harfe des Palmenhains, / Der Lieder Gespielin, die David sang!"[15] Siona, who is also David's muse, appears in other Klopstock poems – on a "palm hill" (*Palmenhöh*), and sometimes under the names *die Siontin* or *Sulamith* – awarding the poet "the purple wreath of Sharon," and transforming him into the likeness of a psalmist.[16]

While Enlightenment philosophers tended to depict Hebrew poetry as coarse and vague, Klopstock defiantly claimed he favored "David's poetry" over Pindar's, to the extent that contemporary critics viewed him as a disciple of the biblical poets – especially for his free style. In his *Aesthetica in Nuce*, philosopher Johann Georg Hamann (1730–1788) extols Klopstock's virtues, offering him as a positive example of imitating the Hebrews:

> Das freie Gebäude, welches sich Klopstock, dieser große Wiederhersteller des lyrischen Gesanges, erlaubt, ist vermuthlich ein Archaismus welcher die rätzelhafte Mechanik der heiligen Poesie bey den Hebräern glücklich nachahmt.[17]

According to Hamann, Klopstock's biblical archaism offered a rebirth of the scriptural source and a revival of poetry itself. We find even greater adulation of Klopstock's biblical poetry in Herder, who addressed the poet as the "Assaph of our people" (*du Assaph unsers Volks*)[18] for rediscovering the Hebrew poetic tradition and passing it on to the German nation. This gift, he wrote, was not only an aesthetic achievement but also allowed the Germans to develop a form and style of their own, and thereby to end their mimicking of neighbor nations. He compared Klopstock's appearance to the resurrection of David, a moment of redemption for German poetry – a diachronic return to sacred history that signified the nation's cultural rebirth in the present. This merging of past and present constituted the basic structure of the Hebraist stream in German literature of the time.

In his sentimental poetry, Klopstock created a poetic-theological synthesis between German identity, Protestant belief and a passionate loyalty to the Old Testament and the Hebrew model. While rational Protestantism sought to supersede the Old Testament in order to bring Christianity closer to "natural religion," Klopstock extolled the virtues of a German Christianity in which Hebrew

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15 Friedrich Gottlob Klopstock, "Siona" [1764], *Sämtliche Werke 1* (Leipzig: G.J. Göschen, 1823), 179.
16 Friedrich Gottlob Klopstock, "Der Bach" [1766], *Sämtliche Werke 1* (Leipzig: G.J. Göschen, 1823), 211.
17 Johann Georg Hamann, "Kreuzzüge der Philologen. Aesthetica in nuce," *Sämtliche Werke* 2 (Wien: Thomas-Morus-Presse im Herder-Verlag, 1950), 215.
18 Johann Gottfried Herder, *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie* (Dessau 1782–3), 322.

myth played a leading role. In this form of Protestantism, the poetic material that imbues Christianity with meaning is actually the Hebrew, rather than some universal principle. Aided by the Old Testament, German-Christian identity was posited as the opposite of both Classicism and the Enlightenment. This view of Christianity can thus be construed as a reaction to the Enlightenment, while retaining the new elements of national pride and patriotism.

II. Beautiful and Pure Country Girl: Hebrew as Poetic Ideal

The mid-eighteenth century project of founding a national German literature was characterized by an effort to distinguish it from other European literatures which had previously served as models for German poets and writers. First and foremost, German poets wished to buttress the status of the German language itself as a literary tongue, especially with regard to the French. This formed the backdrop to a literary feud between German and French poets that reached its apex in mid-century, a feud defined by literary scholar Jürgen Fohrmann as "the quarrel of nations." Unlike the earlier "quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns" (*Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*), which took place mainly in France and questioned the ability of the moderns to measure up to the ancients, the later feud had a synchronic character. The poets of both nations faced off, each camp drawing its legitimacy from a different ancient source.[19]

German literary history attributes the new aesthetic values of the *Empfindsamkeit* (Sentimentalism) and *Strum und Drang* movements to the rise of a new bourgeois class of German readers who were alienated from the restrained, courtly aesthetics of the Classicist style. Many poets of the period wished to distance themselves from the influence of the French Classicist style as represented in Germany by Johann Christoph Gottsched (1700–1766). German poets and playwrights striving to formulate a cultural identity sought literary continuity with an ancient, privileged tradition. This, however, presented a difficulty, since classical – and especially Latin – poetry was identified with French poetry and the French language in general. Distinguishing themselves from Classicism necessitated choosing separate themes and searching for other sources of inspiration. Antiquary and critic Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768) proposed

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19 See Jürgen Fohrmann, *Das Projekt der Deutschen Literaturgeschichte* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1989), 74 f.

Greek poetry and art as a model for German culture.[20] In the decades that followed, this ideal fed Weimar Classicism, the literary movement led by Goethe and Friedrich Schiller (1705–1805), which took ancient Greece as its source of inspiration. But while they followed Winckelmann, another camp of German poets and writers extolled a different model during mid-century, namely the Hebrews. One of the pioneers of this group was Hamann, who called on poets and men of letters not to forgo the ancients, but, indeed, to move further than the Greeks that Winckelmann and his peers clung to. He used the biblical expression "broken cisterns" (*durchlöcherten Brunnen*, Jeremiah 2:13) to describe the Greek sources, calling the Hebrew texts "the most vital source of ancient times."[21]

No one responded to this call to return to the Hebrew source more enthusiastically than Johann Gottfried Herder, Hamann's friend and disciple. His early essay of 1769, *The Archaeology of the Hebrews* (*Archäologie der Hebräer*), heralded an intellectual-interpretive project that posited the Hebrews as an aesthetic and political ideal. Herder idolized Winckelmann for his approach to the ancient world, but criticized the exaggerated importance he attached to the Greek contribution. Following Hamann, he offered an alternative to the idolization of the Classical world in the form of "pilgrimages to the East" (*Wallfahrten nach den Morgenländern*). As conceived by Herder, the "Orient" (*das Morgenland*) preceded the Greeks, and thus offered a more primary source of culture in general – and of poetry in particular.[22] He did not clearly demarcate a cultural-geographic unit. To him, the document that embodied the Orient above all others was the Bible, which he consistently referred to as "Hebrew poetry."

This reawakening interest in biblical themes was not confined to theology and interpretation, but likewise imbued German poetry and theater. The Old Testament became a more popular theme than the New Testament.[23] This upsurge in biblical interest was fed by a new aesthetic sensibility that emerged in England and Scotland as well. During the Renaissance and the Baroque, He-

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20 See George S. Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 35–41. See also Karl Menges, "Particular Universals: Herder on National Literature, Popular Literature, and World Literature," in *A Companion to the Works of Johann Gottfried Herder,* eds. Hans Adler and Wulf Köpke (Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2009), 189–215.
21 Johann Georg Hamann, "Kreuzzüge der Philologen. Aesthetica in nuce," *Sämmtliche Werke 2* (Wien: Herder, 1950), 2, 211.
22 Daniel Weidner, "Ursprung und Wesen der Ebräischen Poesie," in *Urpoesie und Morgenland*, ed. Daniel Weidner (Berlin: Kadmos, 2008), 113–151.
23 For a comprehensive treatment of German biblical drama in the 18th century, see Johannes Schmidt, *Studien zum Bibeldrama der Empfindsamkeit*, Diss., Breslau, 1932.

brew had been viewed as a perfect language, an ideal that transcended the faulty languages born after the confusion of tongues that began with the fall of the Tower of Babel. In the middle of the eighteenth century, however, theologians, poets and critics began to find a new quality of naturalness, sublimity and emotionality in Hebrew speech and poetry. The most substantial development within this trend was the publication, in 1758, of the lectures of English Bishop Robert Lowth (1710–1787) by the orientalist Johann David Michaelis (1717–1791).[24] The influence of this book turned Hebrew poetry into a central theme in the German aesthetic-poetic discussion. Lowth depicted the Hebrews as an oriental nature-people, and read the Bible as a majestic poetic creation that preserved primary and natural modes of expression. According to Lowth, the biblical text was a noble expression of natural forces themselves, an unmediated overflowing of majestic forces, a tempestuous expression of the primeval soul. Lowth's claims flatly contradicted the views of the "Republic of Letters" at the time. Enlightenment philosophers tended to depict Hebrew poetry as coarse, nebulous and vague, created under the influence of the hot climes of the Orient. Even those scholars who did not question the Bible's authority mostly agreed that its beauty was inferior to that of classical poetry. It did not fit Aristotelian poetic principles.[25] Lowth rehabilitated oriental poetry by viewing Hebrew poets as natural bards who gave their feelings free rein.

This method of historical interpretation was adopted by a whole generation of German theologians and Bible scholars.[26] The two men responsible for introducing the new interpretive method into the German scholarly milieu were Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786), who wrote the first German review of Lowth's book;[27] and Johann David Michaelis, who published an edition of the book in Göttingen. According to Michaelis, Lowth's ideas inspired a theological transformation in him. He had came to recognize Scripture's human-historical, time-and-geography-contingent element, as well the national character of its authors.[28]

Heavily influenced by Lowth, Herder too depicted Hebrew as the most emblematic natural language in his *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie*. Alciphron,

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24 See Anna Cullhed, "Original Poetry: Robert Lowth and Eighteenth-Century Poetics," in *Sacred Conjectures. The Context and Legacy of Robert Lowth and Jean Astruc*, ed. John Jarick (New York: Clark, 2007), 25–47; Rudolf Smend, "Lowth in Deutschland," in *Epochen der Bibelkritik* (München: Kaiser, 1991), 43–62.

25 Sheehan, *Enlightenment Bible*, 153.

26 Stephen Prickett, *Words and The Word: Language, Poetics and Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 114.

27 Moses Mendelsohn, "Robert Lowth, De sacra poesi Hebraeorum," *Gesammelte Schriften 4* (Stuttgart: Friedrich Frommann, 1977), 20.

28 Smend, "Lowth in Deutschland," 43–48.

the more critical of the two interlocutors in this imagined dialogue, begins by describing Hebrew as "a poor, barbaric tongue" (*dieser armen barbarischen Sprache*) and goes so far as to compare it to the languages of the Huron Indians.[29] Herder's view is presented by Euthyphron, who does not deny that Hebrew is simple and unrefined but claims, on the contrary, that it is these very qualities that give it its special character. According to Euthyphron, Hebrew should be compared to "a poor but beautiful and pure country girl" (*schönes und reines Landmädchen*).[30] Indeed, the fact that the Hebrew language is poor in nouns and rich in verbs makes it a more vibrant, young and poetic language than its European sisters.

III. Goethe, Kant and the Decline of Hebraism

In the 1780s and 1790s, orientalists like Michaelis, Herder and others enjoyed considerable influence in literary circles. Echoes of these exegetical discussions can be found, for example, in Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*,[31] where, sitting by a well, the Romantic protagonist muses about the Bible's innocent atmosphere and "the patriarchal ideal" (*die patriarchalische Idee*) reveals itself to him. He goes on to imagine a pastoral biblical scene where "all of the ancient Fathers are associating by the well" (*alle die Altväter, am Brunnen Bekanntschaft machen*).[32] In his later works, however, Goethe displayed no great liking for the Hebrew ideal. In fact, he devoted no major piece to a biblical theme. He treats the Hebrew legacy with equanimity, as a matter reserved for children, women and commoners; and even described the affinity for the Bible as a sort of childhood disease suffered by German literature. Despite Herder's influence, Goethe clearly preferred the Classical ideal to the Hebrew one. His stance may have had a profound effect on the ensuing evolution of German literature.

While Hebraist research reached an apex in the German universities during the 1790s, biblical themes were not a significant aspect of the period's German literature, criticism and philosophy. While Goethe treated the Bible with sympathetic reserve, Immanuel Kant expressed animosity toward the Old Testament, seeking to write the Hebrew influence out of contemporary culture. Kant's stand on the Bible was influenced by his personal animosity towards Herder. He ex-

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29 Herder, *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie*, 1–6.

30 Ibid., 11 f.

31 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (Leipzig: Göschen, 1774), 11.

32 Ibid., 11.

pressed genuine abhorrence toward the older writer's biblical texts in his private correspondence, calling them *Schwärmerei* – excessive sentiment. He expressed a similar attitude toward the Bible itself. Referring to the Bible in his lectures on anthropology during the 1780s, he wishes that God had spared us that "oriental rubbish" (*orientalischer kram*)[33] and describes the "Jewish faith" as merely the political constitution of a "specific tribe" (*besonderer Stamm*).[34]

Kant's objection to Herder was not merely philosophical, but also aesthetic. He wrote that "Herder corrupts minds" (*Herder verdirbt die Köpfe*) with his sensual ideas,[35] and expressed doubts about Klopstock and the sentimental-ecstatic style he had introduced into German literature.[36] Kant disavowed the aesthetics and philosophy of *Sturm und Drang*, including the models and ideals that it celebrated.

IV. A New Bible: Hebraism's Reincarnations in the Romantic Period

In an October 1798 letter to his friend, Georg Philipp von Hardenberg, a.k.a. Novalis (1772–1801), Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) – the founding genius of German Romanticism – reviewed the literary situation, his mood, and his upcoming plans:

> Ich habe in der lezten Zeit manche Offenbarung gehabt, und ich würde Dich nun besser verstehn da ich die Religion verstehe [...]. Was mich betrifft, so ist das Ziel meiner litterarischen Projekte eine neue Bibel zu schreiben, und auf Muhameds und Luthers Fußstapfen zu wandeln.[37]

Unsurprised by his friend's ambitious plans, Novalis replied that Schlegel seemed to have read his mind. The Bible, he said, was "the ideal of any future book" and "every man's story must become a Bible" (*Jedes Menschen Geschichte soll eine Bibel seyn*). His biblical project was to have been embodied in his book,

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33 Immanuel Kant, "Reflexionen zur Anthropologie," in *Kants Gesammelte Schriften 15* (Berlin & Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter, 1928), 345.

34 Immanuel Kant, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft* (Königsberg: Friedrich Nicolovius, 1794), 176.

35 Kant, "Reflexionen zur Anthropologie," 399.

36 Ibid., 393. See: John H. Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's Critique of Judgment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 43.

37 Friedrich Schlegel in a letter to Novalis [Oct. 20, 1798], in *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe 24*, ed. Ernst Behler (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1958–1991), 183.

Heinrich von Ofterdingen, which was never completed. Writing a Bible became a sort of friendly jest between the members of their circle. In a letter to Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), Schlegel wrote that he hoped to spark Novalis's jealousy sufficiently to incite him to write "a Bible or a novel" (*eine Bibel oder einen Roman*). In a letter to Novalis, Schlegel made it clear that his words should be understood literally:

> Nun habe ich aber eine Bibel im Sinne, die nicht in gewissem Sinne, nicht gleichsam sondern ganz buchstäblich und in jedem Geist und Sinne Bibel wäre, das erste Kunstwerk dieser Art, da die bisherigen nur Produkte der Natur sind [...]. Mein biblisches Projekt aber ist kein litterarisches, sondern – ein biblisches, ein durchaus religiöses.[38]

The new Bible was to constitute the core of a modern religion that Schlegel was working on at that time. This Romantic religion would, under the influence of Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling (1775–1854), become a poetic "new mythology" made up of fairy tales (*Märchen*).[39] Schlegel saw this as the fruition of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's (1729–1781) prediction, in his *Education of the Human Race,* of "the new, eternal gospel" (*das neue ewige Evangelium*) that would complement the Old and New Testaments. According to Schlegel, this gospel would materialize in the form of a Bible which, like the original Bible, would include an entire set of books.[40] The idea of "the new Bible" is an embodiment of the Romantic relationship to Scripture. The biblical ideal was central to the cultural background of this generation of German writers, most of whom received a strict Protestant education. It was also an explicit *revolt against* the Bible, drawing its inspiration from historically unorthodox forms of Christianity. As Avraham Albert Avni has claimed, early Romanticism clearly moved away from Scripture in general, and from the Old Testament in particular.[41] Romanticism's literary project was to replace the Bible. The idea of positing literature as a substitute for the Bible also informed Herder's biblical project, apparently against his intentions.[42] Placing Scripture into an historical context

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38 Schlegel to Novalis, [Dec. 2, 1798], ibid., 204.

39 Manfred Frank, *Der kommende Gott: Vorlesungen über die Neue Mythologie* (Frankfurt a.M.: Surkamp, 2003), 123–153.

40 "Als Bibel wird das neue ewige Evangelium erscheinen, von dem Lessing geweissagt hat: aber nicht als einzelnes Buch im gewöhnlichen Sinne. Selbst was wir Bibel nennen ist ja ein System von Büchern." Friedrich Schlegel, "Ideen," *Athenaeum* 3 (1800), 20 (§ 95).

41 Abraham Albert Avni, *The Bible and Romanticism: The Old Testament in German and French Romantic Poetry* (Paris: Mouton, 1969), 22–26. See also: Stephen Prickett, *Origins of Narrative: The Romantic Appropriation of the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 182–186.

42 Sheehan, *Enlightenment Bible*, 172–176; Bernd Auerochs, *Die Entstehung der Kunstreligion* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 363–365.

– a practice shared by Michaelis, Herder and others – was a key element in dissolving the boundaries between sacred and secular texts. The conflation of Revelation and creative inspiration allowed Romantic poets to view their own work as a kind of "new revelation"; and the re-labeling of the Psalms as "national hymns" heralded a new national poetry. With the transformation of Scripture into literature, secular poetry and literature became a form of new Scripture.

Throughout the eighteenth century, the main attacks on Scriptural authority emanated from Deism and Rationalism. During the Age of Reason, the main bone of contention was the question of the Bible's morality and credibility. Philosophers and critics labeled the Hebrews cruel, sensual, crass and particular. They depicted the biblical Fathers as unrefined nomads, and the Hebrew state as a corrupt, oriental theocracy. In response to this attack, critics of universalism and liberalism adopted the Hebrew model as an alternative aesthetic and political ideal. But the emergence in the nineteenth century of new concepts and oppositions in German culture and thought affected the views of intellectuals toward the Bible and posed new challenges. The rise of nationalism in the early nineteenth century gave rise to new suspicions and unleashed criticism of the Hebrew influence on German culture. The question that took center stage was not whether the Bible was "rational," but rather, whether it belonged to German culture at all or was alien to it. German intellectuals, revisiting myth, sought an exclusivist national mythology. Hegel bemoaned the displacement of German folk fantasy (*Phantasie des Volkes*) by Christianity and its replacement with the foreign folk fantasy of the Hebrews. But as Hegel himself stated, biblical vocabulary was very much the fundament of German culture and political discourse. German intellectuals of the era thus had two main of avenues open to them – conserving the biblical idea of a chosen people while exchanging the Israelites for the German people; or exchanging Hebrew myth for "authentic" national myths that would inspire an organic national community.

V. Further East: from Judea to India

The first avenue, i.e. the use of a national-biblical rhetoric dominated German national discourse from its very inception. National imagery taken from the Old Testament was a feature of Klopstock, Johann Wilhelm Ludwig Gleim (1719–1803), and other patriotic poets of the Seven Years' War. During the anti-Napoleonic wars, poets and national propagandists such as Theodor Körner (1791–1813) and Friedrich Rückert (1788–1866) employed it in an even more pro-

nounced way. Rückert surpassed Klopstock in featuring biblical images along-side those derived from ancient Germanic history.[43]

The second avenue, i.e., the search for an alternative mythical source to re-place the Bible, was pursued by Romantic poets and intellectuals in the early nineteenth century, who then developed the myth of an Indian origin of European culture, and German culture in particular. An uncorrupted, wholesome refuge from Europe's political upheavals, Asia was depicted as the cradle of humanity, a source of life and culture. As August Wilhelm Schlegel stated in 1802: "if the Ori-ent is where the regeneration of the human race occurred, then Germany should indeed be considered the Orient of Europe." (*[W]*enn *der Orient, die Region ist, von welcher die Regenerationen des Menschengeschlechtes ausgehen so ist Deutschland als der Orient Europas zu betrachten*).[44] The Schlegels, Novalis and the other Ro-mantics identified the Vedic period as a golden age of poetry, clergy and leader-ship. They characterized India and the Sanskrit language by using the same quali-ties that were attributed, several decades beforehand, to Hebrew and the Hebrews – and which in both cases distinguished them from the Greek model.

Until the early nineteenth century, German writers did not distinguish clearly between traditional views of the Orient as the cradle of monotheism, and the adulation of Asia as motherland of all culture and poetry. As far back as Herder – who was the first German intellectual to express a significant inter-est in India – Asia was described as humanity's cradle but also as the site of religion and revelation. However, unlike his nineteenth-century followers, Her-der's philosophy of history did not clearly differentiate between the Indian source and the biblical source. As early as the 1770s, Herder had read transla-tions of ancient Indian literature by French orientalist Abraham Anquetil-Duper-ron (1731–1805) and depicted India as the cradle of poetry, religion and the sciences. According to his description, "on the mountain peaks of Tibet grew the most ancient hierocracy on earth" (*Auf den Tibetanischen Bergen herrscht die älteste Hierokratie der Erde*), namely "the castes of the Hindus" (*die Kasten der Hindus*). He believed that Asia was the source of all political structures, writ-ing and mythology.[45]

At first glance, Herder's enthusiasm for the Indian source-theory lies unea-sily with his adulation for the Hebrew model. Unlike his nineteenth-century fol-

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43 Wolf Kittler, "Geharnischte Sonette Friedrich Rückert als Dichter der Befreiungskriege," in *Friedrich Rückert. Dichter und Sprachgelehrter in Erlangen*, ed. Wolfdietrich Fischer (Neustadt/ Aisch: R. Gömmel, 1990), 35–46.
44 August Wilhelm Schlegel, *Kritische Schriften und Briefe 4* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1962), 37.
45 Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (Riga & Leip-zig: Hartknoch, 1784), 2:381.

lowers, his own philosophy of history did not clearly distinguish between these two ancient sources. To Herder, Vedic wisdom and Hebrew poetry were two different expressions of a single mythic entity, "the Orient," or "God's chosen land" (*recht auserwählter Boden Gottes*). In *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte*, he addresses biblical themes from the stories of the Fathers and Hebrew history.[46] The peoples of the Orient were depicted as nomadic shepherds who harbored "a childish humility" (*kindliche Ergebung*) toward God, hence their regimes were theocratic and patriarchal.[47] This view was inextricably linked to biblical interpretation, but contained a further element as well, that of civilizational history. The movement of history was portrayed as the progression of language and culture from their infancy in Asia to fruition in Europe:

> [B]emerken Sie den fortgehenden Gang der Cultur von Osten nach Westen, vom Ganges zum Ararat, von diesen Höhen Asiens den Zug der Völker in die Thäler der Welt [...]. Ostwärts um die größeste Höhe von Asien finden sich wahrscheinlich noch die ältesten Mythologien, Sprachen und Verfassungen der Völker [...] sie haben sich mit den Semiten fortgebreitet; zuletzt ward Kanaan der Winkel ihrer Aufbewahrung, und alle Umstände des Volks so eingerichtet, daß sie rein aufbewahret werden konnten.[48]

The myths, languages and regimes that grew by the Ganges were then conserved in Canaan, and passed down to the present through Hebrew poetry. Herder positioned the Vedas and the Bible along one continuous line. The Israelites were *not* the original people, and their language was *not* the mother of all tongues, but "one of the eldest daughters" of the "Ur-language" (*Ursprache*).

The Vedas occupied an increasingly important role in Herder's writing during the last two decades of his life. The Hebrews retained their status as a "holy people," but were moved to the margins of cultural history. Other writers working at the turn of the eighteenth century distinguished more rigorously between the Semites and the Indians. The English orientalist William Jones (1746–1794), founder of modern Indology, was the first European scholar to trace clearly the link between Sanskrit and European languages, scientifically grounding the theory of culture's Indian source.

The more the concepts of "progress" and "cultural development" became set into the narrative of gradual sophistication and refinement, the further were the Hebrews excluded from the privileged, central position they had occupied in the drama of ancient history. As Helmut Zedelmaier has claimed, sacred his-

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46 Johann Gottfried Herder, *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte* ([s.n.]: 1774), 250.

47 Ibid.

48 Herder, *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie*, 304 f.

tory was to become a "holy sidetrack" ("*heilige Nebenlinie*") within general history, with the Hebrews-Jews undergoing a gradual process of exclusion (*Ausgrenzung*) from the history of human civilization.[49] The Israelites still bore the religious tradition of the antediluvian world, but it was the idolatrous peoples around them, the offspring of Ham and Japhet, who were now endowed with cultural-civilizatory attributes. The religious simplicity that Herder had praised was depicted as primitive stubbornness and ossification.

Romantic longing for an Indian source grew within the German orientalist discourse of adulation of the East and of "Oriental poetry." At its inception, this discourse was not clearly distinguished from the Hebrew model. Schlegel's admiration for Sanskrit filled a similar cultural function to Klopstock's and Herder's adulation of Hebrew. As Goethe wrote in 1819, "the motive for all of our journeys to the Orient was Scripture." (*[A]lle unsere Wanderungen im Orient [sind] durch die heiligen Schriften veranlaßt worden*).[50] Indeed, the adulation of India was an extension of Hamann's religious-sentimental "pilgrimage to the East." The journey eventually led to completely different destinations.

VI. Conclusion: the Rise and Demise of the Hebrew Model

Patriotic German intellectuals used Hebraist aesthetic ideology to formulate their own cultural identity; yet the power of this cultural trend did not last long. Although Herder's concept of history and culture was one of the most important influences on turn-of-the-century Romanticism, the Hebraist element of his thought was not well received. As opposed to the *Sturm und Drang* poets of a generation earlier, the Romantics moved away from biblical influence in their writing. Like Herder and Klopstock, they glorified nature and authenticity, but their natural ideal was distinctly different. They were attracted to nature's dark and gloomy side. Their taste for irony and the fantastic and their treatment of the individual psyche led them to seek inspiration in fairytales, as well as in fictional medieval and pagan mythologies. They let biblical poetry fall by the wayside.

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49 Helmut Zedelmaier, "Die Sintflut als Anfang der Geschichte," in *Sintflut und Gedächtnis. Erinnern und Vergessen des Ursprungs*, eds. Jan Assmann and Martin Muslow (Wilhelm Fink Verlag: München 2006), 253–261.
50 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Noten und Abhandlungen zu besserem Verständniß des West-östlichen Divans," *Werke 6* (Tübingen: Cotta, 1827), 156 f.

The search for the authentic roots of the German language and the German people, alongside other developments in linguistics, compelled the German poets of the nineteenth century to search for the roots of their own mythology further east, in India. Like Klopstock and Herder, Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis pined for an ancient, mythic-poetic oriental culture that would offer an alternative to the Greek cultural-political model. However, they found this culture in the Indian Brahmins rather than in the Hebrew prophets.[51] Hebrew poetry was removed from the pedestal Herder had built for it as the universal source of all culture, and reconstrued as foreign and oriental.

The Hebrew political model was destined for successful immersion in the political imagination of the German public, since the Psalms and Luther's translation of the Bible constituted the main reading material of a majority of the population (aside from the very educated elite).[52] From the sixteenth century onward, German Protestant culture, like its Dutch and English counterparts, sustained a tradition of political Hebraism, i.e., the use of biblical language in community formation and dealing with enemies. However, this tradition was inextricably tied to religious and ecclesiastical identity, whereas the liberal discourse that grew out of the late eighteenth-century Enlightenment (and the political community it was interested in) attempted to build solid alternatives to religious community. For this reason, intellectuals like Schiller, Kant, and Hegel shied away from biblical language, and the trajectory of Herderian Hebraism diverged from the dominant mood of the period. The framing of biblical tradition as the national culture of an oriental people highlighted, for many writers, the mental remove between themselves and the people of the Bible, and rendered "the national Hebrew myth" totally foreign to their culture.

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51 Chen Tzoref-Ashkenazi, *Der romantische Mythos vom Ursprung der Deutschen: Friedrich Schlegels Suche nach der indogermanischen Verbindung* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2009).
52 See Franklin Kopitzsch, "Die Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Aufklärung als Forschungsaufgabe," in *Aufklärung, Absolutismus und Burgertum in Deutschland*, ed. Kopitzsch (München: Nymphenburg, 1976), 77.