Studia austriaca
ISSN 2385-2925

Michiel Rys
(Leuven)

Between Nationalist and Cosmopolitan Visions of Fraternity The Prefigurative Role of the French Revolution in Victor Hugo's introduction to «Paris guide» (1867) and Robert Hamerling's «Danton und Robespierre» (1871)

ABSTRACT. This article analyses the ways in which fraternity is imagined in Victor Hugo's introductory essay to *Paris guide* (1867) and *Danton und Robespierre* (1871), by the Austrian poet Robert Hamerling. Both texts use the French Revolution as a pretext to articulate a cosmopolitan vision that has to be understood as a reaction to the political tensions in the prelude to and aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71). By reconstructing how Hugo and Hamerling intervene in a broader debate on the question of nationalism and internationalism, this article sheds more light on how literature was a vehicle for cosmopolitan views.

1. Introduction: The legacy of the French Revolution

When we think of the French Revolution of 1789, two things promptly come to mind. The first is the revolutionary trinity – the slogan «liberty, equality and fraternity». The second is universal human rights as the codification of the rupture with feudal politics of privilege and exception established by Enlightenment philosophy. The scholarly debate on both dimensions of the revolutionary legacy still rages. One of the main issues is the status of the third element of the revolutionary slogan, «*fraternité*», in its problematic relation to the universality of human rights. The question is who is allowed to take part in the brotherhood and therefore entitled to solidarity and political or legal recognition. This question is linked to the problem of the practical implementation of national and human rights, which was unravelled by Karl Marx (*Zur Judenfrage,* 1843) and Hannah

Arendt (*The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 1951). Indeed, as many scholars have repeatedly stressed in their footsteps, a problem arises as soon as the allegedly *universal* human rights can only be preserved by way of *national* citizenship: they were redefined in the "Declaration of the Rights of Man *and the Citizen*". Only those who are recognised as members of a national community on the basis of *ius soli* or *ius sanguinis* are sure of protection. There is a contradiction between the equal rights and freedom of every human subject on the one hand and the national fraternal solidarity bond on the other. This contradiction leads to a split in humanity and universal fraternity, rendering some humans more valued than others and some brothers more fraternal than others. Therefore, fraternity is perhaps the most problematic term of revolutionary trinity because it can be interpreted as a socially exclusive concept that results in a spiral of biopolitical violence perpetrated against physical human bodies and their bare right to exist.

The problematic nature of the concept of fraternity builds the backbone of the considerations to come. This contribution will attempt to illuminate how the tension between particularity and universality (i.e. nationalism and internationalism) is discursively played out in literary texts written and published in the prelude to and aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71) – that is, at a time of heightened international tension. In particular, two key texts will be examined as a diptych taking part in the same broader conversation: Victor Hugo's essay for *Paris guide par les principaux écrivains et artistes de la France* (1867) will be compared to Robert Hamerling's tragedy *Danton und Robespierre* (1871). While Hugo's text still received ample scholarly attention, the Austrian poet Hamerling, who was popular in his own time, has now largely fallen into oblivion. As this essay will show, both authors share a Romantic consciousness and a strong belief in Enlightenment ideals. They both believe in the irrepressible advancement of humanity to international fraternity, which they link with the events of 1789. They both find themselves confronted with the nationalist reality of increased hostility between France, Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Hugo's and Hamerling's texts respond in their own ways to this tensional situation. This essay will compare Hugo's and Hamerling's reactions to the increasingly

aggressive nationalism that culminated in the Franco-Prussian War, France's defeat in Sedan and German unification in 1871. The first part will discuss Hugo's text *Paris* in light of Jacques Derrida's critical reflections on the concept of fraternity in *The Politics of Friendship*. The second part will confront Hugo's concept of brotherhood with Hamerling's tragedy *Danton und Robespierre*. My reading will track the tragedy's embeddedness within a broader intertextual field of other German accounts of the French Revolution. An aspect of particular interest is the role both Hugo and Hamerling attribute to their own nations in the development of a pan-European universal fraternity.

2. Jacques Derrida and Victor Hugo: Fraternity beyond fraternity

Beyond doubt, the political lexicon of modernity is marked by the foundational legacy of the French Revolution, wherein concepts such as the nation-state, sovereignty, political representation, filiation and citizenship were (re)defined. Whereas 1789 symbolizes this rupture, one should not forget the continuities with the pre-revolutionary political tradition. Derrida shows, for example, that all these canonical terms bear the mark of an idea of friendship that is itself the result of a tradition that goes back to Aristotle's definitions of friendship and the Christian idea of the brother. This is where problems arise. Derrida shows how the friend or the brother is an example of a longstanding "phallocentric" – that is, "phallogocentric" – politics of the white male subject: it is potentially exclusive with respect to women, foreigners and others. Put differently, traditional concepts of friendship tacitly reinforce inequality and possibly even mechanisms of repression. Derrida renounces this notion of friendship and searches for an alternative that is to be found in an experience of «infinite alterity» and equality apart «from the phallogocentric schema of fraternity». According to Derrida, this was the original democratic promise that a new social and political organisation could take as its ultimate horizon: «There is no democracy except as equality among everyone». Still, this horizon is to be considered the promise of democracy that carries in itself the same invitation to act as does friendship:

> Friendship is never a present given, it belongs to the experience of expectation, promise, or engagement. Its discourse is that of prayer [a discourse that is neither true nor false, M.R.], it inaugurates, but reports (*constate*) nothing, it is not satisfied with what is, it moves out to this place where a responsibility opens up a future. (Derrida 232)

By virtue of democracy being a promise, Derrida sees a structural analogy between it and the practices of true friendship. Both are inclusive and take into account the reciprocity, equality and mutual responsibility they originally imply.

Throughout *The Politics of Friendship* Derrida shows how intellectuals such as Jules Michelet and Victor Hugo try to go beyond the traditional exclusionary concept of friendship with an Enlightenment utopia of universal democratic *liberté* and *égalité*. Derrida argues that their specific use of the term fraternity might trump the good intentions of the authors in question, who eventually hold onto a discourse in which a dynamic of inequality and hierarchy could re-emerge. Whereas they envision universal solidarity, a latent nationalist subtext remains in the use of words such as "homeland" and "great nation". According to Derrida, this vocabulary establishes a connotation of inferiority and superiority that makes the legacy of the French Revolution – *liberté*, *égalité* and *fraternité* – the model or guide for other populations that do not (yet) understand fraternity. A French «national singularity gives the example of universal friendship of fraternity». (Derrida 238) Michelet's and Hugo's choices of words suggest that they see their own nation as a catalyst of history and an epicentre from which a future utopia will expand over the European continent and the world. On top of that, these distinctions run parallel to a linear concept of history in which history progresses towards an ideal state of things or a perfect community. Derrida argues that this rhetoric runs parallel to the rhetorical strategies of nationalisms and ethnocentrisms and calls this an «exemplarist logic» in which France embodies «the necessary initiation to the homeland of all mankind» (Derrida 237).

Victor Hugo's essay on Paris, written as a preface to a guide to Paris as host of the 1867 World Exhibition, is an exemplary case that illustrates the tension between nationalist particularity and universal humanity. Hugo is

giving in to what Derrida calls «the vertigo of French exemplarity», since for him, indeed, «fraternity is universal only in first being French» (Derrida 264). As Hugo himself states, Paris is the «microcosme de l'histoire générale», and «le fait local y a un sens universel» (Hugo vi). Paris, «le point vélique de la civilisation», prefigures and represents «le continent fraternel» of the future (Hugo xix). In Paris, a unity of ideal and reality is achieved. «Cette vague figuration de ce qui sera dans ce qui est, Paris l'esquisse» (Hugo xxiv). In a religious tone, Hugo sees the French capital as the place where «progrès entre en matière» and where «la multitude […] se sent Peuple» (Hugo xix-xx)[1]. As the «tête» of France and Europe, Paris has merely one function: «la dispersion de l'idée», «le profonde éclairage des esprits» (Hugo xxvi-xxvii). The progress that Hugo evokes is built on a belief in the advances made by human reason and science, which will lead the way to a new age of the politics of reason:

> Tous les faits suprêmes de notre temps sont pacificateurs. La presse, la vapeur, le télégraphe électrique, l'unité métrique, le libre échange, ne sont pas autre chose que des agitateurs de l'ingrédient Nations dans le grand dissolvent Humanité. Le mot Fraternité n'a pas été en vain jeté dans les profondeurs, d'abord du haut du Calvaire, ensuit du haut de 89. Ce que Révolution veut, Dieu le veut. (Hugo xxiii-xxiv)

Hugo's idealism is ignited by the universal human rights declared in the revolutionary Paris of 1789. 1789 gave birth to «les idées qui ont la vie et l'avenir» (Hugo xxxii). He sees this as a breaking point in a history that is itself described as the «ascension humaine» (Hugo xxvi). For Hugo, the

[1] In the first volume of *Homo Sacer*, Giorgio Agamben has famously described the difference between multitude and people as the motor of biopolitics, which is ignited as soon as the right to live of those apart from the people is questioned. The difference of multitude and people can result in disciplinary or bloody violence against human life in the name of the latter. Those excluded from the group called "the people" have the legal status of what Agamben calls «bare life»: they embody a form of life that lives only at the grace of those in power and can be killed without a murder being committed. Hugo's understanding of progress does not reckon with the possibility of biopolitical violence. Instead, it envisions the necessary but peaceful unity of multitude and people (Agamben 176-180).

present Paris encapsulates the *past* and refers to the *future* at the same time. In fact, Paris unites liberty («le vrai») associated with Jerusalem, art («le beau») embodied by Athens and power («le grand») represented by ancient Rome: Paris is a «logarithme de trois civilisations rédigées en une formule unique» (Hugo xxvi). This way, Paris symbolises the fulfilment of history – that is, Hugo's dream of eternal peace and fraternity. In other words, Hugo's *Paris* articulates an Enlightenment version of politico-theological millennialism: it articulates an absolute and universal fraternity growing out of national brotherhood. Hugo sees in Paris a *fraternity beyond fraternity* in a *time beyond time*.

In the light of the increasingly tensional relationship between France and Germany, one recurring theme in Hugo's essay strikes the reader. Whereas Hugo urges all nation-states over the whole world to take on a pacifistic stance to establish universal fraternity, he explicitly and repeatedly addresses his discourse to Prussia. Prussia represents one pole in what Hugo construes as a dichotomy; on the one hand are the progress and Enlightenment of Paris and on the other are the absolutism and despotism of Prussia:

> Le caporalisme, c'est l'absolutisme. C'est Narvaèz. C'est Bismarck. Le despotisme est un paradoxe. L'omnipotence militaire et monarchique offense le bon gout. (Hugo xxvii)

Hugo's comparison of Bismarck with the failed coloniser Narvaèz is clearly intended ironically. The same mocking tone resonates in his description of some Prussian political symbols and theatrics:

> Le roi de Prusse est grand. Il a sur sa monnaie une couronne de laurier, sur sa tête aussi. C'est à peu près un César. Il est en passe d'être empereur d'Allemagne. Mais Paris sourira. C'est terrible. Que faire à cela? Sans doute, les uniformes du roi Prusse sont beaux; mais vous ne pouvez pas forcer Paris à admirer la passementerie de l'étranger. (Hugo xxviii)

Obviously, this statement rhetorically inverts the roles of Paris and Prussia: the former should not admire the latter, but the other way around. Hugo shows how Paris has to be admired as the «centre nerveux» of Enlightenment, progress and civilisation (Hugo xxvii).

However, this ironic mode and the focus on Parisian supremacy contrast with an appeasing statement at the end of the essay in which Hugo appeals to the Germans. As a *poeta vates* who is able to interpret what is happening around him, Hugo foresees the Franco-Prussian War. He makes use of nationalist arguments in his plea for peace: The French and German peoples each have an *essence* that one can discover in their names:

> Est-ce vous qui attaquez, Allemands? Est-ce nous? A qui en veut-on? Allemands, All men, vous êtes Tous-les-Hommes. Nous vous aimons. Nous sommes vos concitoyens dans la cite philosophie, et vous êtes nos compatriots dans la patrie Liberté. Nous sommes, nous Européens de Berlin et de Vienne. France veut dire affranchissement. Germanie veut dir Fraternité. Se réprésente-t-on le premier mot de la formule démocratique faisant la guerre au dernier? (Hugo xlii)

On the basis of the nations' names, Hugo presents peace as a necessary outcome, even if the threat of war with Germany seems to suggest otherwise: «Il semble, à voir de toutes parts se constituer les *landwehrs*, que ce soit le contraire qui se prepare; mais ce contraire s'évanouira» (Hugo xxiii). The last part of his Paris essay, entitled «Déclaration de Paix», shows that the «union continentale» between all nations is «imminent» and «urgent» (Hugo xxiii). As Jakob Burckhardt so famously stated, the French Revolution unleashed a storm that still raged in the second half of the nineteenth century in debates on national and social issues. Hugo anticipates their resolution.

3. French exemplarism in German historiographic and political discourses

Hugo's text is organised around three crucial elements. First, the French Revolution of 1789 is seen as the commencement of a new era. Second, the universal human rights of 1789 are considered a guideline for the gradual path to universal democracy and peace. Third, this political theology is sutured with a latent nationalist thread that expressively denounces Prussian domestic and foreign political affairs. Exactly these elements are the target of political and historiographical discourses of the German nationalists writing in the so-called «Nachmärz», the period between the failed revolution of 1848 and the German unification in 1871. German national-liberal

accounts of the French Revolution generally counter all three points in order to propagate something else. First, they tend to defend the idea of an orderly reform "from above" instead of a proletarian revolution "from below" that supposedly ends in chaos and bloodshed. Second, they reject universal laws to promote political realism or pragmatism. Especially after the failed revolutions of 1848 in Germany and Austria, political idealism was more than ever considered to be too ineffective, abstract or other-worldly to provide real solutions (Stemmler 84-107; Becker 18-29)[2]. Complementary to this is a preference for an economic "laissez-faire" policy instead of state intervention. Literary texts about the French Revolution mirrored this political and economic liberalism[3]. Third, the German cultural memory of the French Revolution often voices the pursuit of a shared cultural and political German identity.

A common denominator is the role attributed to the figure of Maximilien Robespierre. As a kind of synonym for the guillotine, his name connotes the aforementioned things German national-liberals dismiss: revolutionary bloodshed, rigid idealist politics and statist economics. These three arguments against Robespierre's politics are associated with the idea that the "body politic" has a "Volksgeist", a national character, its own spirit or substance. A leader should have a clear understanding of the laws inherent in the nature of the state, and he/she should act accordingly. Politics is deemed a natural science; politicians are regarded as empiricist scientists who are involved with the health of the state. This hegemonic "dispositive"

[2] The rejection of a politics based on philosophy is a typical reaction. One of the first to take this stance is Johann August Starck in his book *Der Triumph der Philosophie im achtzehnten Jahrhundert* (1803). It is a cliché in historiography to state that the French Revolution was led by unworldly intellectuals, lawyers and writers. Referring to an influential representative of this inadequate interpretation, Keith Baker calls this the «Tocqueville syndrome» (Baker 23). 1848 was a catalyst to spread the mantra of political pragmatism. Most tellingly, the inventor of the term «Realpolitik», Ludwig von Rochau, was in fact an idealist left disillusioned after 1848 (Bew 2016; cf. Stemmler 84-107 and Weigel 9-18).

[3] See Peter Horwath's outdated but useful reading of Austrian revolutionary plays in the second half of the nineteenth century (Horwath 26-40).

is not only articulated in political theory but also found its way into other discourse types, notably in historiographical texts about the French Revolution. Historiographical works and popular encyclopaedias of the Nachmärz-period, such as Meyer's, Brockhaus's and Pierer's lexica, describe the historical figures of Mirabeau and Danton, certainly not Robespierre, as prefigurations of the dominant views of political pragmatism. One of the most influential overviews of the Nachmärz period is Heinrich von Sybel's *Geschichte der Revolutionszeit*. One of the key threads in Sybel, himself a national-liberal politician, is the liberal mantra that freedom means that a populace is able «nach den Gesetzen des eigenen Wesens zu leben» (Sybel II 10). The French revolutionaries from 1789 onward were allegedly led by an «Irrthum über das Wesen der Freiheit, der die Revolution nicht bloß durch die Schäden des Nationalcharakters verdarb, sondern auch mit dem innersten Bestand desselben in Widerspruch brachte» (Sybel II, 10). A conservative like Constantin Franz is sceptical about Rousseau's concept of a social contract. He, too, defines freedom as a community that is organised «nach ihren eigenen Trieben» (von Hippel 239). A liberal from a more leftist side, Wolfgang Menzel, evaluates Robespierre's and Napoleon's failures in the French Revolution with the argument that neither understood the inner nature of the French people (Menzel 1866).

Time and again, we find the theorem of national character, "Volksgeist", that Gustave Le Bon, at the end of the nineteenth century, would call "mass psychology". One of the important voices in the German-speaking world on this topic is Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, one of the founders of the scientific study of folklore. His work *Die Naturgeschichte des Volkes als Grundlage einer deutschen Social-Politik* (1873) describes how nations are comparable to organisms and possess historically singular identities. This theorem has consequences for Riehl's notion of freedom. In a lecture on this topic, he separates a French from a German concept of freedom. His logic is informed by nationalism:

> Frei sein heißt dem Franzosen: über Andere herrschen. Dem Deutschen dagegen ist Freiheit: von Niemandem beherrscht warden. Jeder soll unabhängig sein nach seiner Art, und wäre er auch nur ein Narr auf eigene Faust. (Riehl 264)

The stereotype of the French as inborn imperialists is a cliché in the Nachmärz period and is often linked to the attitude of Napoleon III. Important with regard to the scope of my essay, however, is that the universality of human rights is seen as a symptom of an alleged megalomania of the French people, who supposedly try to force their own ideas on the rest of Europe during (and after) the Revolution. According to Riehl and many of his contemporaries, the French have an inner urge or an irrepressible instinct to forcefully convert other nations to their own ideals. Not only Riehl, but also Sybel and Otto Gervinus interpreted the Franco-German rivalry beginning in 1789 in terms of a national or racial conflict of Celto-Roman despotism and German liberty. Reversing the French exemplarist fraternity discourse found in Hugo's *Paris*, these Prussian and Austrian historiographers try to prove the inferiority of the French and the superiority of the German approach. Another authoritative and illustrative voice, Heinrich von Treitschke, in 1861 describes French freedom as «die Unterdrückung aller natürlichen Neigungen» and the highest degree of «Knechtschaft». For Treitschke, the government of Napoleon III is merely the latest example of a deeper instinct going back for centuries:

> Nicht zufällig, fürwahr, regt sich der leidenschaftliche Gleichheitsdrang vornehmlich in jenem Volke, dessen keltisches Blut immer und immer wieder seine Lust daran findet, sich in blinder Unterwürfigkeit um eine große Cäsarengestalt zu scharen, mag diese nun Vercingetorix, Ludwig XIV. oder Napoleon heißen. (Treitschke 12)

In contrast with the French, the German idea of freedom allegedly is able to institutionalise and protect the liberty of every individual citizen and of the market. As the last example, we can cite Ludwig Häusser's interpretation of history, according to which the French people have always acted in accordance with …

> … seinem beweglichen, reizbaren und wandelvollen Wesen, das die Römer schon den alten Kelten nachsagten: kein anderes Volk ist so geartet, zwischen zügelloser Freiheit und Unterwerfung unter den ärgsten Despotismus hin und her zu schwanken, kein anderes hat auch die elastische Kraft bewährt, von gewaltigen Ideen erfüllt zu großen

> Thaten sich aufzuraffen und unter dem Despotismus selbst, in den es zurückgesunken, ein kriegerisches Heldenthum zu entfalten, einer halben Welt Gesetze vorzuschreiben, mit Verachtung aller Ideen, die es eben erkämpft. (Häusser 6)

Häusser claims that Robespierre's doctrine of republican virtue is incompatible with such a volatile nation. The terror of the guillotine was a violent attempt in order «die französische Gesellschaft nach einer gemachten Doktrin zurecht zu zimmern und zuzuschneiden, das Volk erst zu schaffen für die neue Ordnung, nicht umgekehrt» (Häusser 438-439).

This overview points out that, generally, three elements recur in the historiographical imagination of the French Revolution. First, the condemnation of Robespierre's terror in the name of an abstract ideal runs parallel to an approval of "Realpolitik". Second, this type of politics is described as the counterpart to what can be seen as a precursor to the concept of mass psychology. Third and last, the French character is held to be capricious, imperialist and centralist. In summary, the German critiques of French exemplarist logic only reverse the roles in favour of their own ideas of freedom, politics and the nation. The following sections of this essay will examine the ways in which Robert Hamerling reconfigures these pretexts and reacts not only to the Franco-Prussian hostility but also to Austro-Prussian dissent.

4. Robert Hamerling: Nationalism and idealism

Robert Hamerling (1830-1889) was an Austrian writer of epic poems (*Venus im Exil*, 1858; *Ahasver in Rom*, 1865; *Der König von Sion*, 1869; *Homunculus*, 1888) and a tragedy (*Danton und Robespierre*, 1871). Beginning with his experience in the revolution of 1848, Hamerling was both an idealist and a nationalist. In his correspondence before the Austro-Prussian War in 1866 and in his autobiography of 1889, he repeatedly articulated his vision of a "Großdeutsche Lösung", a Greater German Solution. On top of that, he pleads for the exclusion of the non-German nationalities that at that time were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Seefranz 409-438). He adhered to the typical definition of a nation as a cultural unity. In a letter to his friend Franz Raab (24.06.1866), he comments on the events of 1866 that superseded his ideal:

> Daß wir Deutsch-Österreicher für jetzt aus Deutschland ausgeschieden werden sollen, ist sehr schlimm, aber wenn die Ausscheidung Österreichs aus dem Bunde den österreichisch-preußischen Zwiespalt, der Deutschland bisher getrennt hat und immer trennen würde, wirklich ausgleicht und es dem übrigen Deutschland möglich macht, sich zu consolidiren, so mögen wir uns patriotisch über eine Maßregel trösten, die doch auf jeden Fall nur provisorisch ist. An das consolidirte Deutschland werden sich die deutschen Provinzen Österreichs gewiß wieder anschließen wollen, und der Volkswille wird entscheidend sein, besonders wenn einmal ein deutsches Parlament versammelt ist und die Nation selbst die Angelegenheiten in die Hand nimmt. (Cit. Klimm 242)

Whereas the German separation would only be temporary, Hamerling legitimates his ideal as an unavoidable outcome of the deeper «Volkswille». With the ethos of a *poeta vates* he claims he knows what the people wants and where human history in general is headed. Accordingly, he maintains that the poet is allowed to take a stance in timely political quarrels but must warn his contemporaries not to lose sight of the unquestionable universal moral laws. This is where Hamerling shows himself to be an idealist: he is a champion of the ethical laws of humanity that protect men from being crushed by the violence of others or the state. As he will illustrate in his tragedy *Danton und Robespierre*, even the most sublime goals, such as the implementation of the universal laws of humanity, do not justify all means.

4.1 Hamerling's tragedy Danton und Robespierre

Starting with Georg Büchner's *Danton's Tod* (1835), every play on the French Revolution stages the terroristic phase of Maximilien Robespierre (1792-1794) as the conflict between ideal and reality. The terror regime is marked by the death of many of Robespierre's political opponents, the most famous being Danton. Eventually, Robespierre himself ended up under the guillotine in July 1794 (the events of Thermidor) after being accused of aspiring to a dictatorship. The violence of the guillotine is shown as the outcome of a rigid application of ideals to a reality – temporarily – that does not fit. Suggesting that Robespierre embodied his ideals, Jules Michelet would

describe Robespierre as a «system» as much as a human being (Michelet II, 762). At least starting with Heinrich Elsner's biography *Maximilian Robespierre* (1838) and Alphonse de Lamartine's famous *Histoire des Girondins* (1847), the contradiction between his utopian vision of a perfect community and the outcome of extreme violence is depicted as the mystery of Robespierre. Lamartine's account was a benchmark to diffuse the idea that the people were not yet ready for the plans of Robespierre, who could therefore be stylised as a figure far ahead of his time and as a martyr for his ideas (Knapp 1989). Hamerling's play pushes this tradition a step further in two ways, on which the latter part of my essay wants to elaborate. First, it gives the *content* of Robespierre's ideas a specific interpretation. Second, it makes a slight distinction in the *reason* why the people were not ready for his social utopia.

Concerning the first dimension, Robespierre in Hamerling's representation sees himself as a visionary leader whose policies are translations of the people's will. His authority is based on insight into what the masses want and need: his authority is a variant of the dispositive of "Realpolitik". The leader does not rule according to his own private will but according to the «blind» urge: «eines zwar blinden, aber infalliblen Ganzen» (Hamerling VI, 40-42). This is Hamerling's idea of democracy and republicanism. There is no social or political antagonism between the ruled, who cannot phrase their urges, and the ruler, who puts into words the deeper impulses of the people: both are two sides of one medal. Therefore, the leader does not need to use «Szepter», «Schwerter» or «Gewalt»: his authority is backed by Enlightenment and reason and grounded on the *volonté générale*. Moreover, the leader is also a chosen one: «Wahrhaft bewußt gehen den Weg nur wenige Auserwählte. Diese Wenigen sind Regulatoren, Lenker, Förderer, Bahnbrecher – sie haben den großen Zweck vor Augen – und einzig diesen» (Hamerling VI, 40). Hamerling shows how Robespierre mistakes the will of the French people for the deeper longing of the whole of humanity; he takes the *national particular will* for the *goal of universal humanity*. Hamerling suggests that Robespierre's untimely vision was the cause of the problematic use of terror and the unfortunate result of the revolution. In other words, the events of Thermidor are the outcome of the conflict between national reality and universal ideals.

This brings us to the second dimension. Hamerling adds a distinguishing feature that refers to the national-liberal historiographical accounts in the German-speaking world: Robespierre's failure has to do with what is depicted as French mass psychology. Hamerling stages this in the dramatic conflict of the idealist *Robespierre* and the «gebor'ner Sansculotte», the people's man, *Danton*. Indeed, Danton's characterisation is reminiscent of the clichés about the French "Volkscharakter"[4]. He embodies a feudal, aristocratic tradition of leadership. Danton wants to be born in a past time «als man noch zu Pferde steigen und den Säbel in die Faust nehmen mußte, um zu gelten» (Hamerling VI, 49). In comparison with Robespierre's rational law, which leaves no room for exception or privilege, Danton's own ambition and rule according to his mood are perfectly in line with the capriciousness of the French people in its entirety:

> DANTON. In unserem lieben Frankreich weht veränderlicher Wind; die Franzosen haben ihre Schwächen, ihre Gewohnheiten, ihren Kitzel, ihre tollen Tage, schwärmen heute für die Republik, morgen vielleicht für etwas anderes. Wohl denen, die die Zeit erleben, wo ihr Weizen blüht. Wartet ab, duckt Euch, verschlaft den Sturm. Donnerwetter! Ihr seid ein Prinz – wer kann die Dinge berechnen? Die Franzosen sind zu allem kapabel. (Hamerling VI, 46)

Danton's revolutionary conduct is ignited by «ein dummer Instinkt» instead of Robespierre's «tote[r], hölzernsteife[r] Ideengötzen» (Hamerling VI, 49).

Moreover, Hamerling rewrites the antagonism between the French people and Robespierre as the dichotomy between Praetorians and Puritans. The representation of Robespierre as a Puritan (Cromwell) is an element already present in Lamartine's description of "the Incorruptible" (Lamartine I, 40). Hamerling takes this image a step further. He relates Danton's glorious «zu Pferde» to the alleged imperialist attitude of the French nation. Danton is an exemplary figure and embodies the people's longing for a vain,

[4] This is characteristic for Hamerling's *Danton und Robespierre* only. In his epic poems, which also deal with the tragic failure of uncompromisingly idealist politicians such as Jan von Leyden, this nationalist sub- and intertext is missing.

chivalrous dictator who successfully, «zu Pferde» and «mit dem Säbel», leads the nation to military victory in his imperialist quests across the continent (Hamerling VI, 43-46). The other way round, the French people also *wants* to be subjected to such a strong and central leader who satisfies its thirst for glory. The French people grants authority to dictators because of its psychological predisposition:

> ROBESPIERRE. Ich sehe den Franzosen wie er ist, und ahne wie er sein wird immerdar! Von den Orgien der Freiheit wird er immer wieder zurück zu den Orgien des Despotismus taumeln: denn seiner Ziele höchstes bleibt des Ruhmes schwindelnde Befriedigung, und wer diese ihm bietet, dem wird er dienen als Sklave. Frei sein will er, ja! Doch lieber noch als frei sein, will er glänzen, siegen, erobern! O mein Volk! nicht früher wirst du dauernd frei, bis das Geschick dich dauernd erst erniedrigt – bis geheilt du bist vom maßlosen Fieber der Ehrbegier in deiner Brust! (Hamerling VI, 131-132)

In Hamerling's configuration, the French people seek a «Cromwell» or a «Robespierre zu Pferde». The latter phrase is Mme. de Staël's description of Napoleon, who appears at the end of the play with news about the latest military successes abroad. Again, the French people's reaction to Napoleon's messages reveals its susceptibility to its desire for glory. Hamerling reintegrates the «zu Pferde» as a leitmotiv in his own representation of Danton, St. Just and Napoleon. *Intra*textually, the phrasing refers to what the people want its leader to embody; *inter*textually, the expression is also linked with the national-liberal historiographical tradition summarized in the previous section of this essay.

4.2. Anacharsis Cloots' parade in comparison to Hamerling's foreword: Aggressive nationalism and beyond

The first act ostensively plays out the friction between nationalist and cosmopolitan types of fraternity. As part of the festivities for the Cult of Reason, a German count sympathizing with the Jacobin cause, Anacharsis Cloots, organises a festive parade meant to depict the necessary *and* imminent fraternisation of all nations:

> CLOOTS. Erlaubt mir Freunde, Bürger,
> Daß ich mich hier aufstelle mit den Meinen,
> Vertretern, Abgesandten aller Völker
> Der Erde, die am heut'gen schönen Fest
> Darbringen wollen ihre Huldigung
> Dem großen Frankenvolk – zum Unterpfand
> Der nahenden Verschmelzung aller Völker
> Mit euch, Franzosen! […]
> DER STELZFUß. Nicht mehr als billig, daß sich alle Völker der Erde der französischen Republik unterwerfen. (Hamerling VI, 21)

This scene reveals the complete mismatch between the production and reception aesthetics of Cloots's theatrical parade. The French citizens interpret his concept of universal fraternity as an imperialist vision in which the French nation is not only deemed the guiding country but also a superior people. The process of fraternalisation is misread as a process of submission. This misunderstanding is the direct consequence of the "Volksgeist" that makes the French interpret utterings of Cloots and Robespierre, for example, as tokens of an imperialist attitude. This way of representing things corresponds to the German nationalist image of the French as a power-hungry people that thinks it is allowed to implement its own ideas as universal categories. The typically French figure of the «Stelzfuß» refuses to accept equality amongst nations:

> CLOOTS. Wir vertreten hier die Raçen und Völker der Erde. Alle wollen und müssen sich Frankreich anschließen. Ihr habt Gleichheit aller Franzosen eingeführt. Aber alle Menschen, alle Völker sind gleich –
> DER STELZFUß (zornig). Was? Alle Völker gleich? Die Franzosen wären nicht besser als andere? Nieder mit dem Aristokraten!
> CLOOTS. Versteht mich recht. Paris wird die Hauptstadt der Erdkugel sein. Es wird kein Reich England, kein Reich Spanien, sondern nur ein Departement England, ein Departement Spanien geben. Es wird keine Deutschen mehr geben, keine Engländer, keine Franzosen –
> SANSCULOTTE. Donner und Doria! keine Franzosen? (will auf ihn losgehen)

Hamerling stages the capricious and imperialist French national character time and again as the reason why not only Robespierre but also Cloots remains misunderstood.

Whereas the conflict between nationalist-hierarchical and cosmopolitan-egalitarian concepts of fraternity at first sight seems unsurmountable, Hamerling immediately suggests that there might be a way out in a more distant future:

> CLOOTS. Hört mich nur aus. Alle Menschen werden Menschen sein, und Brüder, und freie Republikaner. (Zu Danton gewendet.) Meine Überzeugung ist immer gewesen, daß alle Völker zu einem einzigen verschmolzen werden –
> DANTON (Ernsthaft, ihn auf die Schulter klopfend.) Das glaub' ich auch, lieber Cloots!
> CLOOTS. Und ich sage, daß diese Zeit schon da ist –
> DANTON. Das – hm! Weißt du das gewiß, lieber Cloots?
> CLOOTS. Das Volk aber, an welches zunächst sich alle andern schließen müssen, ist das französische. (Mit oratorischem Pathos.) Denn das französische Volk ist das freieste, und ein Volk, das frei ist im Innern, wird nie nach Außen den Eroberer, den Unterdrücker spielen! (Hamerling VI, 26)

As Danton says, the time is not yet ripe for a fraternity beyond national fraternity and imperial conquest. And the same idea of untimeliness is exactly the one Hamerling's figure of Chenier – not by accident a poet – explicitly states with respect to Robespierre's Enlightenment vision of politics:

> CHENIER. Der meint eine Idee zu haben; aber sie hat ihn. Er ist ihr Narr. – Sieh dir nur einmal die einzelnen in dieser bunten Gesellschaft an, betrachte, was sie vorstellen und erstreben – die wenigsten von ihnen sehen danach aus, als ob sie das Ideal des Rousseauschen und Robespierreschen Bürgers zu verwirklichen Lust hätten. Robespierre wird noch viel, viel zu tun haben, bis ganz Frankreich nach seinem Modell mit dem Messer der Guillotine zugeschnitten ist.
> DAVID. Freund, ich habe dich für einen Demokraten gehalten – du bist geheimer Royalist –
> CHENIER (Lachend). Fürchte nichts. Bin trotz alledem, was ich gesagt, Demokrat, und wer sich so nennt, der ist entweder Republikaner oder ein Narr. Wenn es nach hundert Jahren noch einen König mit Scepter und Krone und einem glänzenden Hofstaat gäbe, so würde man ihn so lächerlich finden wie den Dalai Lama oder den weißen Elefanten von Siam […]. (Hamerling VI, 100-101)

Chenier hints at a republican future in which Robespierre's concept of democratic leadership will become a reality without the need for revolutionary terror and mass deception to model the world on a rigid idea. He takes on the role of *poeta vates* that Hamerling himself claims in his own time. Whereas the play identifies «Franzosentum» as the obstacle on the path to universal fraternity and Enlightenment politics, it does not itself show *how* this impediment can be overcome – hence Robespierre's belief that the French will remain the same «immerdar» (cf. supra). A foreword added to the edition published after the Battle of Sedan in September 1871 nuances Robespierre's pessimism. It appeals to the German enthusiasm after the victory of Sedan. By way of explicitly grasping the latent nationalist tones in the tragedy, the paratext articulates a belief in progress with respect to the quarrels of Hamerling's own time. The playwright emphasises the actuality of his tragedy and shows himself as a *poeta vates* who perfectly comprehends where the world is positioned in the present and is headed for in the future. Apparently, nationalist issues precede socio-political ones:

> Zwei Tendenzen beherrschen die Gegenwart: die nationale und die sozialpolitische. Wer ein tieferes Verständnis hat für das Wehen des Zeitgeistes, dem ist es eine Tatsache – die als solche hingenommen werden muß, sie mag gefallen oder nicht –, daß gewisse nationale Fragen noch vor der sozialpolitischen zur Lösung drängen. Aber doch nur eine Episode ist der Kampf, den die Nationalitäten unter sich ausfechten wollen, bevor sie gefahrlos und ohne Mißtrauen sich verbrüdern, in der großen Bewegung der modernen Zeit, und nur vorübergehend kann eine Darstellung, wie die der Bestrebungen jener ersten Vorkämpfer einer neuen Ordnung der Dinge, außerhalb der geistigen Tagesströmung stehend erscheinen. (Hamerling VI, 7)

This foreword was only possible because of the implicit nationalism in the tragedy itself that Robespierre's tragic insight about «Franzosentum» exemplifies: The French people will only be free as soon as «das Geschick» or destiny tames its imperialist pride (cf. supra). Hamerling sees Sedan as a crucial event loaded with potentiality – that is, as a turning point in history: «Die Geschichte ist in ein neues Stadium getreten. Das Frankreich Robespierres erscheint nach dem Tage von Sedan für dan Augenblick, – aber auch

nur für den Augenblick – beinahe vorsündflutlich» (Hamerling VI, 7). The implication of this remark is clear: Germany (i.e. Prussia) was an instrument of destiny because it was a catalyst in defeating the French and in taming their supposedly "wild" nature. In doing this, the Germans paved the way for an age of republicanism and fraternity that was premature back in 1789. This interpretation of historical events remains Hamerling's opinion until 1889, the year of his death, when his autobiography *Stationen meiner Pilgerschaft* was published:

> Das Denker- und Träumervolk hatte sich endlich zu einer großen deutschen Tat erschwungen – zur ersten wirklichen deutschen Nationaltat, zur ersten im Laufe der Weltgeschichte, die es mit vereinten Kräften und allein vollbrachte. […] Durch die deutsche Tat von 1870-71 wurde zum Heile der Völker das politische Übergewicht Frankreichs, das Napoleon III. wieder auf einen Gipfelpunkt erhoben hatte, das einschüchternde "Prestige" der vermeintlichen französischen Unbesiegbarkeit zerstört. (Hamerling XIII, 234-235)

In both his foreword and his autobiography, Hamerling stresses the historical role of Germany and articulates his own German nationalist sentiment. His choice to speak of Germany and not Prussia leaves aside the fact that Austria chose not to intervene in the Franco-Prussian War. In Hamerling's mind, there is only *one* German cultural entity. In contrast with the repugnance towards Robespierre's state terror, moreover, the violence perpetrated for the so-called «große deutsche Tat» is not considered illegitimate collateral damage. Nevertheless, Hamerling imagines a new order of things after the violent dispute between nations; shortly, nations will peacefully and freely coexist as equal powers.

5. Conclusion

As Derrida states in his criticism of Hugo, Hamerling's utopian "fraternity beyond fraternity" is constructed around the idea that in the human race some "brothers" are superior to others. Both critically reflect the nationalist discourses of their times and try to point at a universal fraternity and "democracy-to-come" yet are unable to go beyond them. Both Hugo

and Hamerling maintain that fraternity must disperse itself from a focal point; neither Hugo nor Hamerling excludes an aspect of difference and inequality between groups of people. Their thinking unites a nationalist logic with a cosmopolitan outlook. Their discourse remains indebted to the rhetorical strategies of ethnocentrism and nationalism. Hugo's and Hamerling's visions of cosmopolitanism make use of nationalist feelings to inspire their own national audiences for a peaceful post-nationalist and republican future that realises the ideals of 1789. In addition, both claim that the realisation of these ideals is necessary and unavoidable from a historical point of view. Put this way, Hugo's and Hamerling's accounts of the French Revolution serve as injunctions that urge their audiences to act in the present and to fulfil the democratic and fraternal promises of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution.

Bibliography

Agamben, Giorgio. 1998. *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Baker, Keith. 1999. *Inventing the French Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bew, John. 2016. *Realpolitik. A History*. New York: Oxford University Press.

de Lamartine, Alphonse. 1848. *Histoire des Girondins,* 8 Bände. Paris: Furne.

Derrida, Jacques. 2005. *The Politics of Friendship*. Translated by George Collins. London, New York: Verso Books.

Elsner, Heinrich. 1838. *Maximilian Robespierre, Dictator von Frankreich*. Stuttgart: Scheible.

Hamerling, Robert. 1910. *Sämtliche Werke in sechzehn Bänden. Mit einem Lebensbild und Einleitungen herausgegeben von Michael Marie Rabenlechner*. Leipzig: Hesse & Becker.

Häusser, Ludwig. 1867. *Geschichte der Französischen Revolution. Herausgegeben von Wilhelm Oncken*. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung.

Horwath, Peter. 1973. "The Literary Treatment of the French Revolution. A Mirror Reflecting the Changing Nature of Austrian Liberalism (1862-1899)". *Austriaca* vol. 6, no. 1, 26-40.

Hugo, Victor. 1867. *Introduction au livre Paris guide, par les principaux écrivains et artistes de la France*. Paris: Lacroix, Verboeckhoven et Compagnie, pp. i-xliv.

Klimm, Peter. 1976. *Zwischen Epigonentum und Realismus. Studien zum Gesamtwerk Robert Hamerlings*. Wien: Verlag der wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaften Österreichs.

Knapp, Gerhard. 1989. "Der Mythos des Schreckens. Maximilien Robespierre als Motiv in der deutschen Literatur des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts". *Schreckensmythen/Hoffnungsbilder. Die Französische Revolution in der deutschen Literatur*, edited by Harro Zimmermann. Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, pp. 174-221.

Menzel, Wolfgang. 1866. *Geschichte Europa's vom Beginne der Französischen Revolution bis zum Wiener Congreß 1789-1815*. Stuttgart: Krabbe.

Michelet, Jules. 2009. *Die Geschichte der Französischen Revolution. Aus dem Französischen von Richard Kühn und F. M. Kircheisen. 2 Bände*. Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins.

Riehl, Wilhelm Heinrich. 1873. *Freie Vorträge*. Stuttgart: Cotta.

Seefranz, Catrin. 1994. "Die schöne Nation. Robert Hamerlings ästhetische Reichsgründung". *Literatur und Nation. Die Gründung des Deutschen Reiches 1871 in der deutschsprachigen Literatur*, edited by Klaus Amann and Karl Wagner. Wien, Köln, Weimar: Böhlau, pp. 409-438.

Starck, Johann August. 1804. *Der Triumph der Philosophie im achtzehnten Jahrhunderte*. Augsburg: Rosenblatt.

Stemmler, Peter. 1996. "Realismus im politischen Diskurs nach 1848. Zur politischen Semantik des nachrevolutionären Liberalismus". *Bürgerlicher Realismus um die Gründerzeit*, edited by Edward McInnes, Gerhard Plumpe and Rolf Grimminger. München: Hanser, pp. 84-107.

von Hippel, Wolfgang. 1989. *Freiheit, Gleichheit, Brüderlichkeit? Die Französische Revolution im deutschen Urteil von 1789 bis 1945*. München: DTV.

von Sybel, Heinrich. 1853-1879. *Geschichte der Revolutionszeit. 5 Bände*. Düsseldorf: Buddeus.

von Treitschke, Heinrich. 1919. *Die Freiheit*. Leipzig: Insel Verlag.

Weigel, Sigrid. 1996. "Der Nachmärz als Laboratorium der Moderne". *Nachmärz. Der Ursprung der ästhetischen Moderne in einer nachrevolutionären Konstellation*, edited by Thomas Koebner and Sigrid Weigel. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, pp. 9-19.