Beating the Odds: Sophie Albrecht (1756–1840), a Successful Woman Writer and Publisher in Eighteenth-Century Germany

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The example of the German writer, editor, publisher and actress Sophie Albrecht provides noteworthy insights into female commercial authorship in the late eighteenth century. Considering her family background and early education, her subsequent career choices and her achievements in networking with like-minded representatives of the German cultural scene, it becomes clear that she stood a good chance of becoming a successful professional writer. Albrecht fought for the recognition of a small literate, and even smaller literary audience in rivalry with male colleagues. Despite inequality, Albrecht succeeded in this artistic as well as entrepreneurial challenge, and even occasionally outperformed idolised contemporary male writers, such as Schiller. Her example demonstrates the ways in which gendering processes worked in favour of male cultural achievements from the very beginnings of media history, and how reception history has solidified this.

The late eighteenth-century German writer, editor, publisher and actress, Sophie Albrecht, was born at a time when the role of women was reduced to their function in the family. Albrecht beat the odds against succeeding as a writer by launching a dual professional career in commercial authorship and professional acting during the 1780s. Specifics on how she entered the literary market, her professional and entrepreneurial qualities in dealing with advertising and publishing networks, provide insights into her progressing literary and financial accomplishments. In contrast to this initial success, she also experienced setbacks and financial hardship later on in life. Albrecht received enormous attention during her early career, but was practically forgotten by

the second half of the nineteenth century. It was not until the late 1970s, when the new wave of feminism began drawing attention to the “disappeared” German women writers of the past that she became of interest again. Feminist scholars started academic study of Albrecht’s work in the late 1980s and since then, scholarly attention to her oeuvre has rapidly intensified.¹

This chapter presents detailed background to Albrecht’s familial origins and education, her strategies to a successful career path in publishing and life as a celebrated author. In many ways, she overcame societal and gendered asymmetry in eighteenth century Germany and even exceeded the professional preconditions of the expanding German book market.

Biographical Clues for a Unique Career as a Writer

Despite the fact that Sophie Albrecht has now found her place in German literary studies, verifiable evidence surrounding her birth remains scarce.² The first known piece of information is a baptism date entry from 6 December 1756 in the Baptismal Register of St. Bonifatius Church in Sömmerda, Thuringia. It was customary then to baptise children three days after birth, so a possible birth-date can be deduced.³ The register shows that Albrecht was born into a privileged, highly educated and intellectually outstanding family with sensitivities towards the Enlightenment movement. Johanna *Sophia* Dorothea Baumer was the eldest daughter of Rebecca Johanna Maria Christina Baumer (?–† 1782), née

1 For a comprehensive overview of feminist research done on Albrecht during the past 39 years, see: Berit C.R. Royer, “Sophie Albrecht, ein künstlerisches Phänomen in Literatur und Theater des 18. Jahrhunderts - Gender, Rezeption und die Arbeitsgemeinschaft mit ihrem Ehemann”, in *Verehrt. Verflucht. Vergessen. Leben und Werk von Sophie Albrecht und Johann Friedrich Ernst Albrecht* ed. Rüdiger Schütt, Hannover 2015, 314–21.

2 The following biographical information is in addition to: Berit C.R. Royer, *Sophie Albrecht (1757–1840) im Kreis der Schriftstellerinnen um 1800: eine literatur- und kulturwissenschaftliche Werk-Monographie*, Diss. UCD, Ann Arbor 1999, 30–102; Berit C.R. Royer, “Die Literatur der Schriftstellerin Sophie Albrecht (1757–1840) und ihrer Erfurter Kolleginnen als frühfeministischer und literaturgeschichtlicher Beitrag zur ‘Dalbergzeit’ (1772–1802)”, in *Aufklärung in der ‘Dalbergzeit’* ed Michael Ludscheidt, Erfurt 2006; and Royer, “Sophie Albrecht, ein künstlerisches Phänomen”.

3 Verification in form of a birth certificate cannot be obtained. Entry in the Baptismal Register. “Father: Johann Paul Baumer, Medical Doctor here. Mother: Rebecca Johanna Maria Christina, née Tüntzel from Tuntzenhausen. 1. Godmother: Chamber Master’s wife Johanna Sophia, widowed Jackelius, in Zeitz; 2. Godmother: Anna Maria Dorothea Tüntzel, wife of Georg Tüntzeles, lord of the manor, and judiciary in Tuntzenhausen.” [This and all subsequent translations are by me, BCR].

Tüntzel von Tunzenhausen and Johann Paul Baumer (1725–1771).⁴ Her mother came from the noble family of Tüntzel whose origins can be traced back to the Electorate of Saxony. During the seventeenth century, Gabriel Tüntzel, a solicitor, Count Palatine and Elector of Privy, was one of their most recognised family members.⁵ Exact information on family ties within this aristocratic family, and its affiliations with other noble families, are difficult to reconstruct. Nonetheless, aristocratic interconnections were partially responsible for Sophie Albrecht's privileged living and future working conditions. Henriette von Montenglaut was a friend and fellow writer, and she emphasised in her biographical sketch⁶ that Sophie's mother belonged to a "highly educated, old aristocratic family whose name never escaped her lips".⁷ Yet, little information was provided other than that Albrecht's mother was descended from noble origin and that she had been "her [daughter's] leader" in life.⁸

It makes it all the more remarkable that she chose a bourgeois husband, and intentionally descended the social scale in German feudalistic society. She disregarded the usual adherence to social status with an unacceptable marriage: this was in fact no small thing for a woman, who had no impact on her social position otherwise. She bravely left the privileged position she had been born into and married her love, Paul Baumer, a practising medical doctor in Sömmerda, very near Tunzenhausen. Baumer had studied medicine in Halle, Saxony, and received a doctorate at the University of Erfurt, Thuringia. The University of Halle was one of the centres (1694) for the reforming Enlightenment movement and provided credentials for an outstanding academic career.

4 Sömmerda belonged from the end of the thirteenth century to the imperial city of Erfurt, Thuringia, and thus to the Archbishopric of Mainz, Germany.

5 Johann Siebmacher, *Wappen-Buch*, Nürnberg 1701/05 and 1772, 143, suspected Meissen, Saxony, to be the place of origin for the family. Johann S. Müller, *Des Chur- und Fürstlichen Hauses Sachsen, Ernestin- und Albertinischer Linien Annales von 1400 – 1700*, Leipzig 1700, 318, mentioned the presence of G. Tün[t]zel in 1621 among the "whole Electoral House of Saxony" at the Imperial Court in Vienna. See also: Adam Geisler, "Bruchstücke aus dem Leben der deutschen Dichterin Sophie Albrecht" in *Gallerie edler deutscher Frauenzimmer*, Bd.1, Heft 1, Dessau und Leipzig 1784, 142.

6 Henriette von Montenglaut, "Biographische Skizze der gewesenen Schauspielerin und noch immer still-wirkenden Dichterin Sophie Albrecht in Hamburg, nebst einer Aufforderung an die Deutsche Künstlerwelt", in *Der Freimüthige*, Berlin 1828. Source material is scarce about Sophie Albrecht, often not reliable but a few contemporaries are more trustworthy. For a list, see: Royer, "Sophie Albrecht, ein künstlerisches Phänomen", 227–28, footnote 51.

7 Montenglaut, "Biographische Skizze", 958. "Ihre Mutter gehörte, nach Sophiens gegentlicher Erzählung, einem hoch gebildeten, alt adligen Geschlecht, an, dessen Name aber nie ihren Lippen entschlüpfte."

8 Geisler, "Bruchstücke", 150, "ihre Leiterin".

Although he initially began as resident doctor in 1749 in Sömmerda, he later moved his family to Erfurt to take up a professorship. In January 1765, Baumer became Professor of Medicine, and, in February, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy.⁹ He advanced further academically in 1767, and was commended for his service to the university,¹⁰ as well as for his contributions to the reform of medical studies and for his various writings on the medical treatment of patients. As the younger brother of the eminent physician, Johann Wilhelm Baumer (1719–1788), who was also co-founder and first secretary of the 1754 founded “Churfürstlich-Mayntzischen Gesellschaft oder Akademie nützlicher Wissenschaften”¹¹ in Erfurt, he had an influential position in society. Paul Baumer was also a member of that Academy, and additionally won the contest of the Prussian Academy of Sciences in Berlin tendered by Frederick the Great in 1764. As a professor at the Faculty of Philosophy, he would entertain literary interests with his famous relative, Christoph Martin Wieland,¹² and had relationships with several other scholars of his time. The Baumer family had a significant influence in the academic elite and, through the noble origins of the wife and mother, Christina, certain privileges in aristocratic society.¹³

9 Information about J.P. Baumer and his famous brother Johann Wilhelm, see: Friedrich W. Strieder, *Grundlage zu einer hessischen Gelehrten und Schriftsteller Geschichte*, Bd.1, Göttingen 1781, 296; Michael Thiel, *Albrecht, Arzt, medizinischer Volksschriftsteller, politische Belletristik*, Berlin 1970.

10 *Medicinische Biographie* ed. August Brüggemann, Halberstadt 1829, 345.

11 This Academy of Sciences is the third oldest academy in Germany, and among its most famous members were: J.C. Adelung, J.C. Gottsched, J.W. v. Goethe, A. & W.v. Humboldt, J.G. Meusel, F.v. Schiller, C.M. Wieland. Chamber President of around 1785 was Karl von Dacheröden, father of Sophie's close friend Caroline von Dacheröden, later wife of W. v. Humboldt. See: J. Kiefer, *Bio-bibliographisches Handbuch der Akademie Gemeinnütziger Wissenschaften zu Erfurt 1754–2004*, Erfurt 2005.

12 There was a widely branched relationship between the Baumer and Wieland family: Sophie Albrecht's aunt Dorothea Wilhelmine Charlotte Baumer was married to the youngest brother of Wieland's mother Regina Catherine, the physician, Johann Joducus Kick (1726–1811), who resided in Hamburg. Wieland had been placed in 1749 as a student of philosophy in Erfurt at his professor's and Uncle's house, Johann Wilhelm Baumer. In 1750, he fell in love with his cousin Sophie Gutermann, who became the famous writer, Sophie von La Roche. Although they did not marry, they remained friends all their life. Wieland became the editor to La Roche's bestseller novel *Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim*, and probably initiated contact with Sophie Albrecht. In 1769, Wieland was still a professor in Erfurt, but in 1772 he followed the call of Duchess Anna Amalia of Saxony-Weimar to take over the education of her sons. He remained as a Councilor in Weimar, even after the accession to the throne of Karl August. See among others: *Wieland Briefwechsel*, BW 20.1, Berlin 2007, 355; Peter-André Alt, *Schiller*, Bd.1, München 2009, 543; and Montenglaute, “Biographische Skizze”, 958.

13 The importance of the connection to the large aristocratic Dalberg family is described in Royer, “Die Literatur”.

In addition, there were also noteworthy relations with bourgeois merchant families in Erfurt. This resulted in all respects in an exceptionally privileged family constellation, which promoted an unusual head start in life for Sophie Albrecht. The privileges of her origin shaped her upbringing and education, which later furthered her professional career.

Education, Starting Point as a Writer, Editor and Publisher in the Baltic States

At this point, it is useful to reflect on the education of the female population in Germany at that time in history. There was generally no formal education for girls, and the distribution of knowledge that the female population was permitted to receive in order to influence their position in society, was entirely supervised by senior family members. The lack of an established school system for girls' instruction, as well as enforced gender segregation resulted in low educational and, consequently, societal status for women. Although there was mention of a "Women's Academy" in the early Enlightenment movement – as was discussed, for example, in the moral weekly *Der Patriot* in 1724¹⁴ – there remained stiff resistance to academic or merely institutionalised education for girls for another 150 years. The university was then a gendered space and exclusively the domain of men.¹⁵

In contrast to the ways of the broad, female population, Sophie Albrecht had experienced an unusually privileged upbringing, namely one in which books and intellectuals surrounded her. Paul Baumer's desired objective for his eldest daughter was to study medicine – just as the first female medical doctor in Germany, Dorothea Erxleben, who had graduated at his Alma mater. The study of medicine was accomplished at least in the initial stages: Albrecht's close friend, the writer, journalist and publisher, Adam Geisler, described her medical skills in wound care and bloodletting.¹⁶ Nonetheless, the exact extent of Albrecht's studies and instruction can only be speculated.¹⁷ Montenglaut

14 *Der Patriot*, Nr. 3, 20.1.1724, Hamburg 1724.

15 Beatrix Niemeyer, "Ausschluss oder Ausgrenzung? Frauen im Umkreis der Universitäten im 18. Jahrhundert", in *Geschichte der Mädchen- und Frauenbildung* eds Claudia Opitz, Elke Kleinau, Band 1, Frankfurt/New York 1996.

16 Geisler, "Bruchstücke", 160: "[...] wenn sie Dienste leisten kann, so ist sie gleichwol im Stande den übelriechensten Schaden zu verbinden" And: "Sie läßt sich selbst und mit eigener Hand zur Ader."

17 Since Sophie Albrecht's future husband, Johann, left a record of what he studied with his professor Paul Baumer, it is feasible that she received the same instructions in: "Physics, metaphysics, logic, anatomy, medicine, midwifery, semiotics, and attended private lectures

noted her father's intention to stimulate her "rich genius" appropriately.¹⁸ It is verified that in addition to Albrecht's medical training, she received lessons in rhetoric, theology and modern languages.¹⁹ As an adult, she comprehensively studied philosophy: in 1784, she worked continuously on a draft of a "theory of soul",²⁰ influenced by the Theosophy of Emanuel Swedenborg. Swedenborg's teaching had a substantial influence on Albrecht's later poetry production, especially on her love poems of the 1780s.

After Albrecht had suffered a traumatic brain injury during her early teenage years, her father opposed the study of medicine and advised a less strenuous academic routine for his daughter. Tragically all education came to a halt when Baumer died in September 1771. His sudden death resulted in several life changes: Albrecht was forced to take more responsibility in the household as the elder of the family's two daughters, and especially after her mother had gone blind. Nonetheless, she still managed to study literature ("Lektüre") on her own, and worked on her poetic talents ("dichterisches Talent")²¹ between the ages of 15 to 18. Up to her father's death, instruction was restricted to academic learning only, and he had even placed a strict ban on her visiting the theatre. Albrecht first saw a professional theatre performance during her travels to Hamburg at the age of 19.²² This experience was likely a formative moment which influenced her career choices for the future. She later used her privileged education to subsequently search for and realise professional achievement in artistic, rather than academic fields.

This new stage of life initially started in collaboration with her husband, Johann Friedrich Ernst Albrecht.²³ The starting point of their relationship was back in Albrecht's parents' house in Erfurt, when Johann began his medical studies at the local university. He became a lodger at his professor Paul

and internships." Compare: Franz-Ulrich Jestädt u. Thomas Kaminski, "Druck- und Verlagsgeschichte als Rekonstruktion eines Lebensfragments", in Schütt, *Verehrt*, 66–67.

18 Montenglaut, "Biographische Skizze", 958: "der Vater, [bemühte sich seiner] Tochter eine Erziehung zu geben, die [...] ihrem reichen Genie Gelegenheit gab, sich in den schönsten Blüten zu entfalten [...]."

19 Geisler, "Bruchstücke", 143, mentioned toward Albrecht's rhetorical skills in childhood: "Sie war im Stande alles Gegenseitige zu verteidigen [...]." With regard to her modern language skills: she translated the song of Shakespeare's Desdemona, *Othello*, into: "Lied der Desdemona: Ein armes Mädchen saß und sang", music by Franz Strohbach, Prague 1792. See: *Jahrbuch der deutschen Shakespeare-Gesellschaft* 37 (1901), 96.

20 Compare: Geisler, "Bruchstücke", 158. He pointed out her manuscript of "Seelen-Lehre" for the year 1784.

21 *Ibid.*, 155.

22 *Ibid.*, 163.

23 From this point referred to as 'Johann'.

FIGURE 10.1 Sophie Albrecht. Christian Gottlieb Geyser, 1742–1803
SOURCE: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (PUBLIC DOMAIN)

Baumer's residence in late March 1769; Sophie was twelve years old at the time and Johann almost seventeen.²⁴ On 16 January 1772, Johann received his doctorate in medicine and, on 16 June 1772, the two teenagers got married. The first of two children, their daughter Charlotte, was born almost exactly to the day nine months after their wedding ceremony; their son Wilhelm was born another 14 months later.²⁵ Meanwhile, Johann lectured at the Faculty of Medicine and taught from the Summer term of 1772 up until 1776 in Erfurt. He then decided to become the personal physician of Count Karl Reinhold Manteuffel (1721–1779) in Estonia, and travelled with him within the Baltic countries, as well as Russia. It was just when the spouses were drawn to Tallinn that the joint interests of literature and theatre first resulted in literary publications.

24 *Ibid.*, 152. Johann was born on 11 May 1752, in Stade near the northern German city of Hamburg.

25 Dorothea Johanna Charlotte Albrecht was born on 14 March 1773 [† 13 October 1839], and Carl Sigmund Wilhelm on 5 July 1774 [† 26 December 1845]. Compare Royer, "Sophie Albrecht, ein künstlerisches Phänomen", 322, footnote 32.

By late 1778, the Albrechts established their own publishing company, which marked their point of departure towards independent literary publications.²⁶ The exact reasons for the founding of the publishing house “Albrecht und Compagnie” are not known. Nonetheless, some freelance writers during this period began to emancipate themselves from the old-established publishers for very good reasons: low honoraria and loss of intellectual property due to the absence of copyright laws were the most common drawbacks. Even famous writers such as Wieland grew tired of the old-established publishers’ scams, and began with self-publishing. In fact, Albrecht’s relative Wieland was a prime successful role-model for initiating self-publishing in Germany ever since the publication of his periodical *Der Teutsche Merkur* in 1773. In addition, the spread of literacy in Germany was the one crucial social development that helped further the reading experience since mid-century and make books accessible to a larger audience. Although the actual reading public in German speaking countries might have been as small as 2 per cent,²⁷ the German book market was nevertheless rapidly expanding and a ‘reading revolution’ was well on its way. A combination of all of the above was likely convincing enough for the Albrechts to give the publishing business a try.²⁸

The first publication by “Albrecht und Compagnie” was the almanac *Ehstländische poetische Blumenlese*²⁹ in the beginning of the year 1779. Sophie Albrecht wrote a large number of poems for the almanac and the preliminary (iii–v) pages. The preliminary contains Albrecht’s only known and surviving reflection on poetics: according to her, the essence of poetry draws its inspiration from something higher, spiritual, beyond our grasp. Though, without extensive reading and study, poetic genius could not manifest itself – this was in fact an important statement from a young poetess in favour of women’s education. Albrecht also provided a total of 31 poems, more than half of all the

26 Although Johann’s father was also an MD, it is noteworthy that his maternal grandmother Regina Elisabeth Kolbe, née von Stern (1692–1767), belonged to the *von Stern* family who founded their printing company in 1614 in Lüneburg, which happens to be Germany’s oldest printing press still operating today in its fourteenth generation.

27 Figures for literacy among the German population (23 million) range between 1–2 per cent for the time frame; among them mainly aristocrats, clerics, and the upper-middle-class. The poet Jean Paul estimated the literary audience to around 300,000 readers.

28 These reasons were not only sufficient for Wieland and Klopstock but also for the founding fathers of the “Buchhandlung der Gelehrten” in Dessau (1781–85), which is yet another prime example for this development among writers.

29 *Ehstländische poetische Blumenlese für das Jahr 1779*, eds Albrecht, J.F.E. und Sophie, Weisenberg 1779. And one year later: *Estländische poetische Blumenlese für das Jahr 1780*, eds Albrecht, J.F.E. und Sophie, Leipzig u. Reval 1780. Spelling of the titles for the *Estonian Almanac of Poetry* are different in 1779 and 1780.

contributions to this first issue of the Estonian almanac of poetry. It contains eighteen orthonyme poems,³⁰ and was the first major public platform for her as a young writer, and most likely just a trial balloon. Albrecht's husband Johann was merely responsible for organisational or commercial supply to the first edition of the Estonian almanac in 1779, since no orthonyme contribution of his can be traced. The contemporary journalist and critic A.B. Moskwa, who wrote an article about publishing companies in *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* 1788³¹ looked at Sophie Albrecht retrospectively as the sole editor of the Estonian almanacs.

Noteworthy is the lyrical forerunner "Romanze" to Sophie Albrecht's most noted piece of literature by feminist reception so far, the drama *Theresgen*³² from 1781. The poem "Romanze"³³ was anonymously published and already displays Albrecht's critical scepticism toward the patriarchal institution of marriage. This is particularly remarkable within the context of contemporary gender debates, and proves her early sympathy to radical politics that challenged the established order. Albrecht's poems include themes of love, friendship,³⁴ of loss, and the longing for death,³⁵ and therefore represent in their unconventional social criticism an unparalleled literary expression in late eighteenth-century Germany.³⁶ Feminist and gender-oriented readings of Albrecht for the past 39 years unanimously support the view that her depiction of passionate hetero- and homoerotic love from a female perspective in poetry and prose make her unique for the period. The scandal caused by Albrecht's critical poetry within the established societal and gendered order of the time is perhaps beyond our grasp today. Therefore, excerpts from contemporary review periodicals of 1779 onwards might have a sobering effect.³⁷

Review journals provided the reader with guidance to the multitude of new publications and magazines, and were continued in the tradition of scholars'

30 For another six poems she used several pseudonyms; seven more poems attributed to her are listed as anonymous.

31 *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, No. 155, Jena u. Leipzig 1788, 28 June, 719. *ALZ* was incidentally the competing review journal to the *ADB*.

32 For a comprehensive overview of feminist research on Albrecht's drama *Theresgen* see: Royer, "Sophie Albrecht, ein künstlerisches Phänomen", 316–18, footnotes 5–16.

33 *Ehstländische poetische Blumenlese*, 78–88.

34 Berit C.R. Royer, "Begleittext", in *Bunte Kinder schwarzer Nacht*, Brussels 1997.

35 Berit C.R. Royer, "Einführung", in *Vorwärts, vorwärts sehn' ich mich*, Brussels 2001.

36 Royer, *Sophie*, 103–79, for an overview of Albrecht's poem production with an introduction to poetry by German women around 1800.

37 For an extensive overview of reception history with a large number of excerpt quotes from contemporary periodicals see: Royer, "Sophie Albrecht, ein künstlerisches Phänomen", from page 327 onwards.

journals. There were review contributions to publications by women, but admittedly women were usually viewed neither as learned individuals, nor as public figures. Moreover, exclusively male reviewers provided review contributions to such journals and, implicit gendering strategies must be regarded as a correction to women leaving their designated gender roles.

Nonetheless, Johann Christoph Adelung, a member of the Academy of Sciences that Albrecht's uncle, Wilhelm Baumer, had founded in Erfurt, praised her poetry in *Allgemeines Verzeichniß Neuer Bücher*.³⁸ It is possible that Sophie Albrecht used her family network to make herself known within the cultural scene and publishing business. This strategy seems all the more convincing since reviewers, who often wrote anonymously in "the most important review organ of the late German Enlightenment movement (1765–1806)",³⁹ the *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek*, habitually criticised almost all works, but especially those written by women. In this case, a certain "Mpr" saw in Sophie Albrecht's poem "An den Tod" (To Death) a lyrical expression that "appeared tolerable" in the Estonian almanac.⁴⁰ At the same time, he ridiculed her poem "An meine Freundin T." (To My Girlfriend T.) in a sarcastic fashion. Albrecht parried "Mpr.s Sticheleyen" (Mpr's taunts) in the postscript to the next almanac as follows: "As far as the whimsical assessment in the Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek is concerned, it looks too much like a lampoon as to get worked up about it."⁴¹ Presumably, she took the review as slander as it was the only time that she commented on critics at all.

For the second edition to the Estonian almanac of 1780, the Albrechts acquired the privileges for the "Calendarium" (Russia) by Catherine the Great, whose silhouette is prefixed to this volume. The couple might have even met her personally during one of their alleged journeys to Saint Petersburg.⁴²

38 J.C. Adelung, *Allgemeines Verzeichniß Neuer Bücher: mit kurzen Anmerkungen*, Leipzig 1779/80, 685; About *EB*, 1779 & 1780: "Wenn man auch in diesen Sammlungen nicht die Namen der ersten deutschen Dichter findet, so enthalten sie doch viele gute Stücke unter welche die von Sophie Albrecht besonders genannt zu werden verdienen."

39 Helga Brandes, "Buch und Zeitschriftenmarkt, Frauenzimmer-Journale und Literaturkritik im 18. Jahrhundert", in *Zeitdiskurse, Reflexionen zum 19. und 20. Jahrhundert als Festschrift für Wulf Wülfing* eds Roland Berbig, Martina Lauster and Rolf Parr, Heidelberg 2004, 314.

40 Compare: *ADB*, Bd.37, Reviewer "Mpr.", Berlin u. Stettin 1779, 485–88.

41 *Estländische poetische Blumenlese*, 166: "Was die schnurige Beurtheilung in der allgemeinen deutschen Bibliothek betrifft, so sieht sie einem Pasquill zu ähnlich, als daß man sich überhaupt darüber einlassen könnte."

42 Commercial interests must have been predominant for acquiring the calendar privileges since no other reasons are otherwise comprehensible for catering to Catherine the Great's interests. Johann became one of her harshest critics later on. The Albrechts had moved

Calendar privileges had proven profitable economically, and were also extremely lucrative for the treasury of the respective country.⁴³ The first almanac from 1779 had been sold for 12 groschen, and the second for eight, which was an inexpensive retail price. With an estimated limited edition of perhaps 150 sold copies each, the revenue for both almanacs could not have been great.⁴⁴ Presumably, the net profit for sold copies was about half the purchase price.⁴⁵ The business strategy used to increase the profit margin for the second almanac edition through the acquisition of the calendar privileges was therefore a clever move: the going profit rate for calendar privileges was about 400 Gulden or 266 imperial thaler per edition. The second almanac sold for 8 groschen and could have fetched them a net income of 25 imperial thaler (plus 266 thaler on calendar privileges) to a total of 291 thaler. The first almanac edition might have only earned them 37 thaler.⁴⁶ Considering that a lower middle-class family averaged a yearly income between 200 to 500 imperial thaler⁴⁷ at the time, an estimated net profit of perhaps 328 imperial thaler for both almanacs is a tight profit margin, and averages to only 164 thaler per annum. However, the trial stage for Albrecht's enterprise is paramount for this early publication phase, since there was evidently little need for an income, as Johann received a salary for his family as personal physician.

This second Estonian almanac from 1780 contained Albrecht's poem "Als ich ihn erwartete" (When I was Waiting for my Lover), which was later plagiarised by Friedrich Schiller in 1796.⁴⁸ Although Schiller's poem was

their publishing business during the year 1779 from Wesenberg (Rakvere) to Reval (Tallinn), Estonia.

43 Werner Faulstich, *Die bürgerliche Mediengesellschaft*, Göttingen 2002, 151.

44 For pricing see: Adelung, *Allgemeines Verzeichniß*, Neuer Bücher 685, entries 1196 and 1197, for each edition. According to contemporary currency conversion: 21 groschen were worth one thaler; 24 groschen averaged an imperial thaler (Reichstaler). I will elaborate on estimates for the purchasing power of old currencies in connection with Albrecht's two volumes of poetry below. On the topic of old German currency conversions, see: Helmut Kahnt, Bernd Knorr, *Alte Maße, Münzen und Gewichte, ein Lexikon*, Mannheim 1986.

45 Reinhard Wittmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels*, München 1991, 151. Wittmann refers to the customary calculation of expenditures or rather profits into 1rd for honoraria, 1rd for production costs, and 1rd for distribution. Since the Albrechts were mainly responsible for distribution, and for very limited author honoraria, their net profit might have been as high as half the purchase price.

46 Both editions of the Estonian almanac were cheaply made, and all the copies I have seen personally were flawed with incorrect pagination, a few pages and text missing inconsistently here and there.

47 A servant had an annual income of only 1 imperial thaler during that period.

48 It was subsequently canonised as Schiller's poem "Die Erwartung" (Expectation). See: Royer, *Sophie*, 160. The canonisation process is additionally demonstrated by musical settings

clumsier and exaggerated in comparison with the original, his version was handed down by literary tradition as German canonisation worked almost exclusively in favour of male cultural achievements. Additional extensions to this second volume were Albrecht's short prose texts, and the musical settings: one of her poems "An sein Portrait" (To his Portrait) was set to music by the Erfurt-based musician, Peter Weimar. Later that year "Albrecht and Compagnie" published *Lieder mit Clavierbegleitung* (Songs with Piano Accompaniment),⁴⁹ which contained a selection of six Sophie Albrecht poems, and was sold for 12 groschen.

Opinion-makers and their critique might have contributed to the fact that no other native Estonian poems were published in this volume. Aside from Johann Gottfried Herder, with his collection of folk songs *Volkslieder*,⁵⁰ the Albrechts alone published native language Estonian songs in their otherwise exclusively German poem collection in this period.⁵¹ It also seems that decisive criticism against Sophie Albrecht as a poetess, though not made public in writing, had surfaced after the publication of the first Estonian almanac.⁵² However, a loyally inclined audience was still supportive of her for many years to come. During the short Baltic period, two overlapping groups of friends and supporters can be traced: the first consisted of dedicated middle-class men and women of letters, theatre lovers, active members of the Enlightenment movement, Freemasons and Illuminati; the second was comprised of the nobility, who often (but not exclusively) took part in the former groups and levelled

of Schiller's "Expectation" through famous musicians. Furthermore, by visual artists: one hundred years after Schiller's death, a series of postcards were published by the painter Emil Klein, *6 Bilder aus Schillers Leben*, Stuttgart 1905 (Six Pictures from Schiller's Life). In it you will find an illustration for the "Expectation" which had been converted into the context of Schiller's life: there is the image of him on a garden bench, expecting the arrival of his future wife, Charlotte von Lengefeld. The original connection with Sophie Albrecht was completely gone by then.

49 Georg Peter Weimar, *Lieder mit Clavierbegleitung, für Liebhaber eines leichten und fließenden Gesanges*. Reval u. Leipzig 1780. "Dem Churtrierischen Kammerherrn Herrn Baron F.H. von Dalberg unterthänigst gewidmet von G.P. Weimar". By S. Albrecht: "An den Tod", 4–5, "Romanze", 6–7, "Verschwiegenheit", 8–9, "An den Schlaf", 12–13, "Die ersten Veilchen", 29, "Als ich ihn erwartete", 30–33. A number of poems by Albrecht were set to music in this period and later on.

50 Herder, *Volkslieder, nebst untermischten andern Stücken*, 11, Leipzig 1779.

51 See also: Liina Lukas, "Estonian Folklore as a Source of Baltic-German Poetry", *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 42/4 (2011), 496.

52 The introductory poem by Sembard (F.G. Arvelius) "to Sophia" allows that assessment. Perhaps one reason why Sophie Albrecht's first play was published anonymously: *Lau-schen ist auch gut ein Singspiel in zwey Aufzügen von einem Frauenzimmer*. Reval u. Leipzig 1780. (Sheet music is missing.)

out class differences.⁵³ It is likely though that Albrecht's sympathetic reception among the aristocracy was also attributable to her mother's noble birth.

After the death of Count Manteuffel during the summer of 1779, Sophie and Johann Albrecht began their return to Erfurt, Thuringia. They handed over the remaining Estonian branch of their publishing business to a partner by the autumn of 1779, and by early 1780 had devoted themselves to their next projects back in Germany. They had plans for more publications by different authors in their own publishing house "Albrecht und Compagnie", a bookstore, a lending library, and the publication of the periodical *Erfurtische Gelehrte Zeitung*. All these activities took place in the home of Sophie Albrecht in Erfurt,⁵⁴ but which parts exactly were covered by which marital partner, cannot be reconstructed with certainty. It was said that Sophie Albrecht was responsible for the editing of Johann's texts.⁵⁵ However, it is unknown if she was also involved in "Albrecht und Compagnie's" publisher program of yet another 39 publications between 1779 and 1786. The fact that she had her share in the management of the bookstore in Erfurt enabled the distribution of Sophie von La Roche's almanac *Pomona*, and the PostScript in the letter that the editor wrote to Albrecht in 1786. La Roche had asked her there for the belated payment of a sum of money.⁵⁶

Departure for Independent Publications, Advertisements and Networks

Sophie Albrecht's next career move toward independent publications for her own two volumes of poetry from 1781 and 1785 is remarkable. In fact, her publication activity became independent from her husband and also from the publishing house "Albrecht und Company". She took over the marketing for

53 This information can be extracted from the analysis of Albrecht's occasional poems in her almanacs, and from analysing lists of subscribers of the two volumes of poetry from 1781 and 1785.

54 See: Helga Brück, "Sophie Albrecht, Schauspielerin und Dichterin (1757–1840)", in Reihe *Bemerkenswerte Erfurter* (vii), *Thüringer Allgemeine Zeitung*, Erfurt 1994.

55 Montenglaut, "Biographische Skizze", 962. This article contains, although deliberately defamiliarised and anonymised, many correct biographical details about S. Albrecht. Unfortunately, only this alienated version is obtained. Accurate information is to be located in a hitherto lost letter from Montenglaut to the Chamberlain and "Legationsrat" Jakob Ignaz von Cruickshank, as she wrote to Goethe in her letter from 9 February 1828. See letter: Brief GSA 28/128-Weimar.

56 See: Royer, *Sophie*, letter appendix/Briefanhang, 366.

the two upcoming volumes of poetry by disengaging from the joint venture with the publishing company. Whereas before, she had published her work by “Albrecht und Compagnie”, as for example with her “Singspiel”, a popular form of light opera, *Lauschen ist auch gut* from 1780, now, she just commissioned (“in Commiſſion”) the company to provide distribution for the upcoming volumes. The reasons for this new business strategy are unknown, and can only be speculated: perhaps, she wanted to secure the sole copyright of her intellectual property by untying her own publications from the company, and/or she simply wanted to be financially in charge of her own book projects.

Having said that, since the beginning of the year 1781, she had prepared the first orthonyme publication of her book of poetry and drama *Gedichte und Schauspiele*.⁵⁷ Aside from the two dramas, it contained three prose texts and 73 poems⁵⁸ with the aforementioned critical content. She had dedicated her first volume to her Tallinn-based friend, Dorothea Tidebühl, née Kelch. Albrecht advertised for this issue by mid-1781 in periodicals, such as the *Gothaische Gelehrte Zeitungen*,⁵⁹ *Berichte der allgemeinen Buchhandlung der Gelehrten*,⁶⁰ as well as in Wieland’s *Der teutsche Merkur*,⁶¹ among others. The announcement in the German Mercury was a smart move on her part, because it had more than 2000 subscribers⁶² and was promising, with respect to public attention for her book project. In the ad, she elaborated on information about content and prices for early subscription (called “Praenumeration”), later prices at bookstores (referred to as “Commission”), and postal delivery costs. The best deal for purchase was early subscription with advanced payment of 20

57 Sophie Albrecht, *Gedichte und Schauspiele*, Erfurt 1781.

58 Some poems and short prose texts from the Estonian almanacs were published here again, but most are first editions.

59 *Gothaische Gelehrte Zeitungen auf das Jahr 1781*, 49 (20 June 1781), Gotha 1781, 408: “[...] Der Termin der Pränumerat[i]on, die hier die Ettingersche Buchhandlung annimmt, steht bis den 1sten Sept. d. J. offen.”

60 *Berichte der allgemeinen Buchhandlung der Gelehrten vom Jahre 1781*, Dessau und Leipzig 1781, 509.

61 “Über *Gedichte und Schauspiele* von Mad. Albrecht”, in *Der teutsche Merkur*, ed. Wieland, Weimar 1781, 286–87. An announcement written by herself: “Für diesen Band soll der Pränumerationspreis zwanzig Groschen, den alten Louisd’or zu fünf Thaler gerechnet, seyn. Der Termin ist bis den September dieses Jahr offen, nachher wird eine Buchhandlung es in Commiſſion bekommen, und für 1 Rthlr. 8 Gr. den Liebhabern überlassen. [...] Auf zehn Exemplare wird eins, und auf zwanzig die drey folgenden frey gegeben, und bis Leipzig, Frankfurt, Hamburg und Lübeck werden die Exemplare frey geliefert. Nähere Oerter genießen diesen Vortheil auch. Erfurt, den 1. Junius 1781.”

62 Karin Stoll, *Christoph Martin Wieland: Journalistik und Kritik*, Bonn 1978, 58.

groschen until 1 September 1781. Afterwards, the price for the book increased to 32 groschen (equal to 1 imperial thaler and 8 gr.). If 10 copies were pre-purchased, one was given for free; for 20 copies, 3 were given for free. Postal delivery was included in the price for German cities as far as Leipzig, Frankfurt, Hamburg, and Lübeck; closer regions received the same deal. Albrecht also called for a favour from her “known and unknown friends” (both male and female), to hand out the advertisement, and to accept upfront payment for the early purchases.⁶³

The ad in the German Mercury included her private mailing address, which she provided for forwarding the money from the “collection” and pick-up of pre-sold copies. She promised to print the names of early subscribers in the respective volume of poetry, and she did. Her business acumen as a publishing woman did not miss its target: she managed to win many collectors, and she pre-sold the book 174 times with their help. She had a simple edition printed (bound in strong cardboard, a leather book spine and with plain endpapers) as well as a precious edition (bound in leather with pink, black and blue marbled endpapers, bottle-green book sections and gold-embossed book spine).⁶⁴ However, she noted no price difference between the two editions in her ads. The early subscriber rebate was 12 groschen per book, with the currency conversion of 24 groschen per imperial thaler. With the estimated circulation being 250 for this edition,⁶⁵ and 174 pre-sold books, the approximate revenue was 5912 groschen, or about 246 imperial thaler. Less all costs of materials and services, such as engravings, paper, typesetting, printing, book binding, shipping and distribution possibly amounted again to a net profit of half of the total books sold to about 123 thaler. That can be regarded as a comfortable profit for a first, and entirely independently made book project.⁶⁶

63 Albrecht called for in the ad at Wieland's *DtM*, German Mercury. Compare: “[I]hre bekannte und unbekannte Freunde und Freundinnen, sich, wenn es ihnen gefällig ist, dieser Sache gütigst zu unterziehen, diese Anzeige auszutheilen, und den Vorschuß darauf anzunehmen.”

64 The University Library of Hamburg, Germany, has both editions in their rare book collection. Even the simple edition was not as cheaply made as the Estonian almanacs.

65 Estimate by: Royer, *Sophie*, 44.

66 As mentioned above, a plain middle-class family was able to manage a living with 200–500 imperial thaler per year. A high official's income in that period, such as in court circles, amounted to around 1,000 imperial thaler annually. Thus, the winning margin for the publication could be located in the lower income area of a modest middle-class family. However, in 1832, Sophie Albrecht had to make do with only 42 thalers per year; this sum does not reflect steady inflation over 50 years, and not even regional differences in currency exchange rates. It just shows that a person could survive with a lot less money.

Key to the successful selling of copies was the effort of many women.⁶⁷ They had taken over sales in up to 28 cities or towns.⁶⁸ Ever since the publication of the Estonian almanacs, Albrecht's criticisms of gender roles, social order and class hierarchy were publicly known and, thereby, highlight the extent of her loyal and efficient network. This network consisted primarily of the middle-class, but also of aristocrats, which suggests classification of this circle of women in a politicised context.⁶⁹ Barbara Evers determined through her research that, contrary to popular belief, the female readership sought the unusual and unconventional in poetry by women.⁷⁰

Albrecht's ability to network with her loyal like-minded female friends made her pass on tasks for her publication project. Just as she herself promoted Sophie von La Roche distribution of the almanac *Pomona* through an ad in *Erfurtisches Intelligenz-Blatt*⁷¹ with the collection of praenumeration and money for pre-sold copies, or Friedrike von Kamiensky's volume of poetry and prose *Meine Muse*,⁷² Albrecht's friends supported her: the reciprocal nature of friendship helped her entrepreneurial prospects and empowered all women involved. The initiated discourses on femininity, subjectivity and identity models by Albrecht, were first echoed in her own network of friends, before they reached greater audiences. Women had otherwise no direct access to institutionalised forms of power and established politics, which makes an early

67 This entrepreneurial phenomenon was simultaneously observed with female editors of women's magazines. Compare: Ulrike Weckel, *Zwischen Häuslichkeit und Öffentlichkeit, Die ersten deutschen Frauenzeitschriften im späten 18. Jahrhundert und ihr Publikum*, Tübingen 1998, 596: "In bisher ungekannter Zahl traten sie unter ihrem Namen auf Subskriptionslisten in Erscheinung und ermöglichten durch ihre Abnahme immerhin mindestens acht Frauenjournalen weiblicher Herausgeber ein Erscheinen über ein bis zwei oder sogar mehr Jahre. [...] Aus einem Diskurs über Frauen und ihre »weibliche Bestimmung« wurde hier ein Diskurs von Frauen."

68 The analysis can be determined through early subscription lists for the book: it yielded a nearly 34 per cent stake of female buyers and an approximately 66 per cent stake of male buyers. As it appeared from this first volume though, it was mainly women who provided more buyers in a city or town. This can be deduced from the numerical order of a listed number of books sold to one woman. This numerical sequence of copies sold is missing in volume 2 due to the different marketing strategy: subscription instead of praenumeration.

69 An evaluation of this network for its early feminist potential is discussed in: Royer, *Sophie*, 44–50, and: Royer, "Sophie Albrecht, ein künstlerisches Phänomen", 330.

70 Barbara Evers, *Frauenlyrik um 1800, Studien zu Gedichtbeiträgen in Almanachen und Taschenbüchern der Romantik und Biedermeierzeit*, Diss. Bochum 1991, 12.

71 Compare: *Erfurtisches Intelligenz-Blatt*, Stück 46, Erfurt 1782, 354–55.

72 Albrecht's name on subscription list to Friederike von Kamiensky, *Meine Muse*, Naumburg 1786, x1.

feminist interpretation for this networking circle of women writers around Albrecht feasible. This observation must be perceived in the context of bourgeois emancipation, and the democracy movement in the run-up to the French Revolution.

It is not known what Johann thought about his wife's independent business venture, her literary works, her criticisms of gender roles, social order, and about her circle of loyal friends. In any event, he worked for her continuously, at least on an organisational level. However, the public attention she received by some review journals and the overall reception of her literary work, which was entirely in masculine hand, was divided.⁷³

Albrecht's literary work following her drama and poetry from 1781 was the first of her three-volume novel *Aramena, a Syrian story*,⁷⁴ which was published at Georg Jacob Decker's in Berlin between 1782 and 1786. Novels have traditionally sold better than poetry, and presumably the publisher was hoping for guaranteed success by the already well-known writer. He sold the three-volume, elaborately leather-bound novel, for two thalers and 12 groschen.⁷⁵ However, honoraria (and/or royalties), circulation figures and subsequent literary success for this novel are unfortunately unknown.⁷⁶ Albrecht's friend and colleague at the Saxon Court Theatre, the director, Friedrich Reinecke, praised the novel and made reference to positive reviews in periodicals.⁷⁷ The anonymous reviewers in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek* of 1783 and 1788,⁷⁸ though, harshly criticised the novel (as already expected from this periodical). Whether this was a fair assessment or not is impossible to reconstruct. Nonetheless, it appears that Albrecht's critical poetry and drama was read and preferred by her loyal audience.

73 For more background on the couple's entrepreneurial partnership as well as excerpts from reception in review magazines, see: Royer, "Sophie Albrecht, ein künstlerisches Phänomen", 330–331.

74 *Aramena, eine syrische Geschichte, ganz für unsere Zeiten umgearbeitet von S. Albrecht*, Berlin 1782–86.

75 For pricing see: *Die deutschen Schriftstellerinnen des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Schindel, Bd. 1, Leipzig 1823, 8–9.

76 In 1773, Klopstock received 12 thaler per paper sheet; see: Wittmann, *Buchhandel*, 146. One sheet held 16 printed pages. Computation for *Aramena*: 1782 Bd. I, 360 pages, 23 sheets; 1783 Bd. II, 380 pages, 24 sheets; 1786 Bd. III, 336 pages, 21 sheets. If Albrecht had received as much as Klopstock per sheet, the estimated honoraria would have amounted to 816 thaler.

77 Johann Friedrich Reinecke, *Biographien einiger deutschen Schauspielerinnen*, Kopenhagen u. Leipzig 1787, 17.

78 *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek*, Bd. 55, 2. St., Berlin u. Stettin 1783, 414–15, reviewer pseudonym "S"; Bd. 83, 1. St., Berlin u. Stettin 1788, 136–37, reviewer pseudonym "ZF".

By the mid-eighties, Sophie Albrecht had acquired significant knowledge of the mechanisms of the cultural scene and the expanding book market. Ever since 1776, she and her husband visited the Leipzig book fair annually, to either present their own new publications, or to network with other writers and publishers.

Albrecht's second volume of poetry and prose essays, including "Fragmente aus dem Tagebuch einer Unglücklichen" (Fragments from the Diary of an Unfortunate Woman) from 1785 was again an independent made publication. Once more "Albrecht und Compagnie" just acted as distributor for her book, and she simply commissioned the company to provide that service ("in Kommission", that is, Commission).⁷⁹ She therefore kept all copyright privileges as an author for herself, and was solely responsible for the financing. The new edition of poetry and short prose was announced by Sophie Albrecht in 1784, and informed the reader anew about price advantages for early subscribers. However, just "Subscription" was invited this time, not in advance payments ("Praenumeration"). This second book was dedicated to her friend Antoinetten von Dalberg, Abbess of St. Mergen, Cologne, and sister of her benefactor, Karl Theodor von Dalberg. Albrecht advertised for her new book project in *Journal von und für Deutschland*,⁸⁰ stating her personal forwarding mailing address in Mainz. The time for publication was the beginning of the Leipzig book fair in the spring of 1785. The early subscription price was again 20 Saxon groschen, but the subsequent pricing for bookstores (Commission) was now at one gulden and 30 kreuzer (equal to one imperial thaler); the price advantage was only at four groschen. This is believed to be an indication of her achieved literary success, since the financial incentive for early subscription was eight groschen lower than before. It is likely that the success of her poetry was so great that it was no longer necessary to demand advance payment, or to offer a more profitable early subscription advantage. Again, she published both a simple and precious edition. This second volume of poetry was subscribed to by an additional 161 readers, which amounted altogether to 405 subscribed copies. An increase of about 60 per cent of buyers could be recorded, and also an extension to readers in other European countries.⁸¹ The gain in subscribed

79 As a matter of fact, only her two volumes from 1781 and 1785 were distributed by "Albrecht und Compagnie" (in Kommission), aside from the very last company publication during that period: *Skizzen aus dem Klosterleben* in 1786. Although I have not seen the book myself, it seems possible that Sophie was involved in it artistically as well.

80 *Journal von und für Deutschland*, 1 (July-December 1784), 67, and "Supplement Register".

81 According to former state borders: Holland, Switzerland, Austria; according to present state borders, additionally: Poland, and the Czech Republic.

copies was 231, and the proportion of bookstores and publishers as buyers had tripled. Having said that, the number of unnamed early subscribers had also increased by 73 persons for this volume to altogether 77, and was therefore 95 per cent higher than in the first volume. That might have had something to do with the already known critical content of her poetry. With an estimated circulation of 500 copies⁸² for this edition, less all expenses (of a little less than half an imperial thaler per book), this possibly resulted in a net profit of around 220 thaler. In summary, by the mid-1780s, Sophie Albrecht had managed to secure a loyal readership for herself, and also achieved a handsome profit as a writer and publisher.⁸³

The reviews of the second volume were correspondingly more numerous, more extensive, and appeared in a larger number of periodicals. Some reviewers praised her with exuberance, called her the German Sappho, and assessed her work even more favourably than Goethe's.⁸⁴

The Theatre Stage as a Multimedia Extension for the Literary Career

The transition to Sophie Albrecht's additional career as an actress had already begun in 1783. She had launched her dual professional career in commercial authorship and professional acting successfully by the mid 1780s. In addition to acting she also appeared on stage as a declamation artist, and was a sought after public speaker. The novelty effect for contemporaries must have been enormous since she, as a woman, combined her professional accomplishments as a writer, declamation artist, speaker, and actress, clearly rooted in the public sphere of the German cultural scene. Needless to say, her daring enterprises were an enormous violation against the female gender role.

Some of her biographers mentioned in connection with her daring career move as an actress, the necessary approval from her husband and her reputable family. They also pointed out Johann's likely negotiations for conditions in her contracts with respective theatre directors.⁸⁵ Theatre directors preferred the commitment of married actresses in order to avoid the immoral projections of

82 Estimate at: Royer, *Sophie*, 44.

83 This was her last independent publication, since the established book trade had destroyed most self-publishers by the mid-eighties and drove a good number of daring publishing projects, such as the aforementioned "Buchhandlung der Gelehrten" – but also "Albrecht und Compagnie" (1786) – into ruin.

84 For a comprehensive overview of review articles for this edition with excerpts, see: Royer, "Sophie Albrecht, ein künstlerisches Phänomen", 332–38.

85 Geisler, "Bruchstücke", 29. Compare also: Royer, *Sophie*, 60.

the audience from the outset. However, mutual professional interest in the theatre stage was predominant in both of the Albrechts: Johann's interest was apparent ever since his first drama publications of the mid-1770s. Though he did not pursue a career as an actor, he instead pursued that of a playwright. From the late 1780s, he staged some of his dramas⁸⁶ at the *Kurfürstlich Sächsisches Hoftheater* (Electoral Saxon Court Theatre) where his wife was the celebrated star, seasonally performing in Dresden, Leipzig and Prague. Sophie Albrecht was engaged there as leading actress for over 10 years, between 2 May 1785 and 28 September 1795. Although Johann was only moderately successful as a playwright, his merit as an author lay more in key political novels.

First in autumn of 1783, Sophie Albrecht had officially started her career as an actress in Gustav Friedrich Wilhelm Großmann's theatre company. One of her signature roles was "Louise" in Friedrich Schiller's drama *Love and Intrigue*. For the premiere on the 13 April 1784 in Frankfurt am Main, she met Schiller and they made friends instantly. About a year later, she accelerated her acting career by signing up with the aforementioned Pasquale Bondini's *Kurfürstlich Sächsisches Hoftheater* (Electoral Saxon Court Theatre) in Leipzig. She immediately became the crowd favourite and the guarantor for large audiences, as is evident from the various playbills of the time.⁸⁷ It was posted in the *Ephemeriden der Litteratur und des Theaters* how much she was welcomed into her engagement in Leipzig.⁸⁸ The *Magazin der sächsischen Geschichte* promptly made the next move in welcoming her.⁸⁹ Albrecht used her popularity and stage presence to hold specially composed speeches for the stage and to have them printed, such as the "Abschiedsrede von Leipzig" (Farewell Speech from

86 Compare his drama collection: J.F.E. Albrecht. *Dramatische Werke für das Hoftheater in Dresden gearbeitet*. Prag 1790. Therein: *Zieh aus Herr Bruder!*, *Fürstenglück* und *Die Engländer in Amerika*. The drama *Zieh aus Herr Bruder!* was performed for example on 11 October 1789 in Leipzig. His wife was the leading female actress. Compare: Playbill advertising at Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig, i.e. Inventory No. MT/693/2006.

87 The Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig owns many playbills. The audience was attracted by Albrecht's specially indented and printed name with big letters to see her in various roles: On 16 April 1785 in the tragedy *Graf von Esser*, Inventory-No.: MT/658/2006; and in the female leading role of "Ophelia" in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* on 19 April 1785, No. MT/659/2006, also on 8 October 1791, No. MT/743/2006; "Desdemona" in Shakespeare's *Othello* for example on 19 June 1795, No. MT/952/2006; last in this role there on 28 September 1795, No. MT/993/2006.

88 *Ephemeriden der Litteratur und des Theaters*, ed. C.A. Bertram, Berlin 1785, 143, 288, and 394.

89 *Magazin der sächsischen Geschichte* II, Dresden 1785. Segment: "Vermischten Dresdner Nachrichten", 707.

Leipzig) on 16 October 1785,⁹⁰ the “Abschiedsrede von Prag” (Farewell Speech from Prague) on 3 September, 1786,⁹¹ or the “Rede bei Eröffnung der Bühne in Leipzig” (Speech at the Opening of the Stage in Leipzig) on 10 April 1787;⁹² to mention a few.

She was praised in rapturous poems by contemporaries and admired, both as a poet and an actress. The critic and poet F.V. Freitag summed it all up in a poem about Sophie Albrecht and insisted that the two gods for literature and drama provided the laurel in her honour.⁹³ On a single page, the *Magazin der sächsischen Geschichte* claimed: “Madam Albrecht is the goddess of our stage” and a few lines below: “That she is the first of all now living poets, I dare to bestow boldly.”⁹⁴ The euphoria that her stardom triggered both as poet and actress for contemporaries was unparalleled, and created a kind of media presence that was unknown before. It can be described as a multi-media artistic presence of her person in the press as well as with the theatre audience. Her star was rising in every aspect, but also economically: Sophie Albrecht’s financial independence was partly attributable to her book sales, a considerable inheritance, and her unusually high salaries as an actress.⁹⁵ Her financial success meant a personal freedom that was out of the ordinary experience of

90 “Farewell Speech from Leipzig” on 16 October 1785: “Abschiedsrede im Charakter der Louise in *Verbrechen aus Ehrsucht* von Sophie Albrecht. Leipzig, 16.10.1785”, in *Dresdner Museum: Zwey-monatsschrift*, ed. H. Keller, Heft 2, Dresden 1786, 9–10.

91 “Farewell Speech from Prague” on 3 September 1786: “Abschiedsrede bey dem Schluß der Vorstellungen der Bondinischen Gesellschaft in Prag. Von Sophie Albrecht am 3. Sept. 1786”, in *Theaterkalender auf das Jahr 1787*, ed. H.A.O. Reichard, Gotha 1787, 245–47.

92 “Speech at the Opening of the Stage in Leipzig” on 10 April 1787; Reinecke, *Biographien*, 18–20.

93 This example by F.V. Freytag in: *Theater-Kalender auf das Jahr 1786*, Gotha 1786, 12–13. Poem: “An Sophie Albrecht”: “Tief eingepägt, gesichert vor dem Sturm/ Der Zeit, war hier Dein Nahme edles Weib!/ Zwei Götter hielten Lorbeern über ihm/ Weil beider Götter Priesterin Du bist.”

94 Compare: *Magazin der sächsischen Geschichte*, 1786, 528: “Madam Albrecht ist die Göttin unsrer Bühne”, and: “Daß sie unter allen jetztlebenden Dichterinnen die erste sey, getraue ich mich keck zu erweisen.”

95 About the inheritance, see: Geisler, *Galerie edler deutscher Frauenzimmer*, Band 2, Heft 3, 1785, Anhang: “Nachholungen zu Madame Albrecht”, 194–97: “[die Erbschaft betrug] wenigstens 12 bis 16 000 Thaler”. Regarding her salary as an actress, see: *Annalen des Theaters*, ed. C.A. Bertram, Berlin 1788, 123: it amounted then to 1000 thaler, annually. She was the highest paid actress at the Electoral Saxon Court Theatre, earning as much as, for example, Adelung as Councilor in his position as Chief Librarian. See: *Magazin der sächsischen Geschichte*, 1787, 443. In 1795, she was paid a salary of 1400 thalers; she was the actress with the highest income and only her male counterparts earned more. See: Hans-Werner Engels, “Johann Friedrich Ernst Albrecht (1752–1814) und das National-Theater in Altona”, *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Hamburgische Geschichte*, 86 (2000a), 14.

most middle-class women in the period. She invested her money in various ways, and made her own financial decisions.⁹⁶ At the same time, during the mid 1780s, her marriage to Johann failed, and he remained a financial burden on her for the rest of her life. Although the couple did not divorce during that time frame, both engaged publicly in extra-marital affairs.

Sophie Albrecht was a sought after poet who had published her poetry at least once per year in many select magazines between 1780 to 1807, including Christoph Martin Wieland's *Der teutsche Merkur*,⁹⁷ in Sophie La Roche's famous women's magazine *Pomona*,⁹⁸ in Gottfried August Bürger's *Musenalmannach*,⁹⁹ in Friedrich Schiller's *Thalia*,¹⁰⁰ in the remarkable women's publishing project *Museum für Frauenzimmer*,¹⁰¹ in *Taschenbuch zum geselligen Vergnügen*,¹⁰² and in Johann Heinrich Voß' *Musenalmannach*.¹⁰³ From one of the few surviving letters of Albrecht to the editor Heinrich Voß, dated 14 March 1792,¹⁰⁴ it appears that he had specifically asked for a contribution to his almanac. Unfortunately though, information regarding honoraria from poem contributions in this period is limited. It was customary to supply an author with a few copies of the periodical, or other print media, instead of monetary honoraria.

96 In the letter of her lover, Ferdinand von Hahn (1768–1799/1802?), to his mother from 25 May 1788, he stated that she wanted to settle his debts with the selling of bonds. This suggests that she had invested her money in different ways. See letter in: Hans-Werner Engels, "Die bizarre Ehe von Sophie und Johann Friedrich Ernst Albrecht - Dokumente zu zwei Prominenten der Goethezeit", in *Auskunft*, Bd.21, Heft 1, Nordhausen 2001, 16.

97 "Die ersten Blümchen, die ich fand" (music by Corona Schröter), in *Der teutsche Merkur*, ed. Wieland, 2. Vierteljahr, Weimar 1780, 200.

98 Sophie von La Roche ed., *Pomona für Deutschlands Töchter*, Heft 3, Speier 1783. Therein: "Lied" with music, 250; Heft 10, therein: "Der Wächter", 969–970; "An das Meer", 971–972.

99 *Musenalmannach*, ed. G.A. Bürger, Göttingen 1785. Therein: "Lied", 166, "Entschluß", 176.

100 *Thalia*, ed. Friedrich Schiller, 1. Bd., Heft 2, Leipzig 1786. Therein: "Morgenlied", 69–70.

101 *Museum für Frauenzimmer von einigen Mitschwestern*, 4 quarters, Erstes Quartal, Weißenfels und Leipzig 1790: dedicated to Sophie von La Roche and with a poem in honour of "An Sophie Albrecht", and by herself: "Das Veilchen". Zweites Quartal dedicated to Elise von der Recke. In *Viertes Quartal* "Der Frau Kriegsräthin Reinhold am 17. März 1790" by Sophie Albrecht.

102 *Taschenbuch zum geselligen Vergnügen*, ed. Johann E.F.W. Müller, Leipzig 1791. Therein: "Wenn einstens", 60, "Lieblich ist [...]", 60, "Die grausamste Tyrannin [...]", 63, "Zypressen [...]", 63, "Mit doppelter Wonne [...]", 63.

103 *Musenalmannach*, ed. J.H. Voß, Hamburg 1793. Therein: "Frühlingslied", 106.

104 A letter from S. Albrecht to Johann Heinrich Voß from 14.3.1792, Call no.: ASL 18 / Mediennummer: HS017035923, University Library Leipzig. The obtained letter corpus of Sophie Albrecht and her contacts as a whole is unfortunately particularly small. See: Royer, *Sophie*, letter appendix / Briefanhang, 364–75.

The independent success of Albrecht, who did not have to be the muse of a famous man was a rare phenomenon in Germany. Her social contact with many writers, numerous celebrities, and royalty was significant. She performed in Prague before the last Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, Francis II, and his entire court under “expressions of the loudest applause” on 31 July 1792.¹⁰⁵ The stories about her renowned acquaintances are endless.

Moreover, she was the only German woman writer in the late eighteenth century, who had witnessed the publication of a complete edition of her poetry, drama and prose during her lifetime. Her third volume of poems with continued prose essays, “Fortgesetzte Fragmente aus dem Tagebuch einer Unglücklichen” (Continued Fragments from the Diary of an Unfortunate Woman), appeared in 1791. This third volume being part of the complete edition, along with the second edition of her two first volumes, was published at Richter in Dresden. Albrecht’s complete three-volume edition was sold for two thalers, 12 groschen, which must have resulted in a good profit for the publisher. With an estimated circulation of 700,¹⁰⁶ one could expect takings around 1,000 imperial thaler altogether. However, it is hard to say which part of the profit Sophie Albrecht did receive herself for this complete edition. At the height of her literary success, financial independence through inheritance along with her high salary as an actress, honoraria or royalties from book sales may not have been so important. As it may be, the prestige of publishing with the noted publishing house Richter in Dresden was sufficient honour for her during this period in her life.

Contemporary reviewers met Sophie Albrecht’s third volume of poetry with prose essays again in an ambiguous fashion.¹⁰⁷ There were ample supporters from her network, as well as critics from old-established periodicals. Nonetheless, she simply continued with her artistic production of literary texts and gathered an enthusiastic, benevolent and loyal audience around her.

In 1792, her estranged husband, Johann, resumed his publishing business in Prague (until 1795). The couple still continued with a business relationship, mutually engaged in some joint ventures, and it was said that Sophie supported

105 Compare: *Annalen des Theaters*, ed. Bertram, Berlin 1792/93, 104–5: “[Unter] Ausdrücken der lautesten Zufriedenheit Dero Beyfall über die Vortrefflichkeit des Stücks und das gute Ensemble der Schauspieler.” Further visits of performances by the Emperor on 9 August, 13 August, and in the evening before his departure, on 15 August 1792.

106 Estimate see: Royer, *Sophie*, 44–45.

107 For an overview with excerpts from review periodicals see: Royer, “Sophie Albrecht, ein künstlerisches Phänomen”, 399–442.

Johann's publishing business. He published a collection of songs based on Sophie Albrecht's selected poems set to music by Franz Strohbach: among them was her translated "Song of Desdemona" from Shakespeare's *Othello*. Further publications of hers in that time frame appeared in the journal *Apollo*: "Die vergebliche Mühe" (The Futile Effort), set to music by Friedrich Heinrich Himmel.¹⁰⁸ In Johann's monthly periodical *Exkorporationen*, she also published some of her poems and prayers.¹⁰⁹ It is not quite clear, if Albrecht had any part in the editing or publishing activity of "Albrecht und Compagnie" herself during that time frame. A contemporary¹¹⁰ thought so, however, and attributed the edition of Wilhelmine von Gersdorf's three-volume novel *Die Familie Wahlberg* in 1792 to her. If it was Sophie Albrecht, who promoted her close friend's writing, she might have also been responsible for the publication of Gersdorf's drama collection *Dialogen* in 1794; the year thereafter published *Neue Schauspiele* (New Dramas).¹¹¹

During the same year, Sophie Albrecht published some of her poems with the radical intellectual Gottfried Vollmer in *Neue Blumenlese*.¹¹² By the early 1790s, her political involvement with the democratic movement, the Freemasons, and with French revolutionary followers intensified.

Publications in Northern Germany, the Altona National Theatre, and Indissoluble Financial Entanglements

Biographers described Sophie Albrecht's increasing dissatisfaction as an actress working under the direction of her colleague and adversary, Christian Wilhelm Opitz, at the *Kurfürstlich Sächsisches Hoftheater* (Electoral Saxon Court Theatre). Incidentally, Opitz was an enemy of the democratic

108 Franz Strohbach, *Zwölf Lieder von Sophie Albrecht für das Fortepiano gesetzt von Franz Strohbach*, Teil 2, Prag 1792. Therein: "Lied der Desdemona: Ein armes Mädchen saß und sang". Translated by S. Albrecht. And: Friedrich Heinrich Himmel, "Die vergebliche Mühe": Lied v. S. Albrecht, *Apollo*, *Monatsschrift*, ed. A.G. Meißner, 4/6 (1793); 4/2 (1793), therein: "Ein Felsengrund schien seine Liebe, und Ewigkeit war sein Eid"; Lied.

109 *Exkorporationen*, *Monatsschrift*, ed. J.F.E. Albrecht, Dresden u. Leipzig 1791. Therein: "An J.K.R. an seinem Geburtsstage", 681–83, "An Minna", 689–93, "An Sophie" 694–98 (lyrical answer by her friend Wilhelmine von Gersdorf). In September 1791: "Gebete" (7), 854–66.

110 *Literarische Beyträge zu einer nützlichen Bücherkunde für gebildete Frauenzimmer*, J.G.C. Müller, Nürnberg 1823, 118.

111 Wilhelmine von Gersdorf, *Die Familie Wahlberg*, 1792; *Dialogen*, 1794; *Neue Schauspiele*, 1795, all published at Prag und Leipzig.

112 *Neue Blumenlese deutscher Originalgedichte und Uebersetzungen für das Jahr 1794*, Thorn 1794.

movement to which Albrecht belonged. As a result, she bowed out from her enormously successful and lucrative engagement at the court theatre in Leipzig. Her last recorded performance was on 28 September 1795 in the role of “Desdemona” in Shakespeare’s *Othello*.¹¹³ She left Saxony during the autumn in 1795 to play guest roles in Hamburg, though no theatre engagement was offered to her there. As a consequence, she opened the Altona National Theatre¹¹⁴ together with her estranged husband Johann in the immediate Danish neighbouring town of Altona on 1 September 1796. On stage she gave speeches¹¹⁵ for special occasions, played the female lead roles,¹¹⁶ moved on with her activities as a writer, and continued to carry on her public life amidst the society of Hamburg and Altona. The Freemasons held her in high regard and in 1796, she was elected Grand Mistress of the Sisters “Carl zum Felsen” lodge in Altona.¹¹⁷ Additionally, more of her religious prose appeared during this period, such as “Frömmigkeit wird belohnt” (Piety is Rewarded)¹¹⁸ and “Die reiche Anna” (The Rich Anna)¹¹⁹ in the collection of Johann Albrecht’s *Trümmer der Vergangenheit* (Remnants of the Past). Furthermore, she published some poems in his politically-oriented magazine *Todtenrichter*,¹²⁰ and even more poems and orated speeches appeared in several other magazines.

113 Compare: Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig, Playbill Inventory No. MT/993/2006.

114 A number of contributions have already been written about the Altona National Theatre and its importance for the democratic movement in Germany, including: Engels, “National-Theater in Altona”; Royer, *Sophie*, 77–103; Walter Grab, *Demokratische Strömungen in Hamburg und Schleswig-Holstein zur Zeit der ersten französischen Republik*, Hamburg 1966, 177–84; Paul Th. Hoffmann, *Die Entwicklung des Altonaer Stadttheaters*, Altona 1926.

115 For example: “Antritts-Rede bey Eröffnung des National-Theaters in Altona am 1sten September 1796 von Sophie Albrecht”, in (among others) *Journal der neuesten Weltbegebenheiten* 9 (1796), 574–76.

116 Poster reads: “Am 1. September 1796, wird im neu eröffneten Altonaer National-Theater mit *Julius von Sassen*, [Trauerspiel, 4 Aufzüge, von Heinrich Zschokke, womöglich die Uraufführung, B.R.] eröffnet. Personen: [...], Henriette, - wurde von Sophie Albrecht gespielt.” Staatsarchiv Hamburg. The extent of her acting repertoire would go way beyond the scope of this contribution.

117 See: Hans-Werner Engels, ‘*Carl zum Felsen*’: *Vorgeschichte und Gründung der Altonaer Loge*, Hamburg 2000b.

118 In *Trümmer der Vergangenheit. Aus ihren Ruinen ans Licht gebracht*, 2. Teil, Hamburg 1797.

119 In *Trümmer der Vergangenheit. Erzählungen aus dem Dunkel der Vorzeit*, 3. Teil, Hamburg 1801.

120 *Todtenrichter, Ein periodisches Werk, Vom Verfasser der dreyerley Wirkungen* [J.F.E. Albrecht], 2. Bde., Altona 1796 & 1797. Therein: 1. Bd., 1796: Gedicht “Am Grabe einer Freundin”, 95–96, und “Fantasie”, 255–56.

A divorce from Johann was supposed to have taken place during the year 1798, and speculations about a marriage with her long-time lover, Ferdinand von Hahn, were mentioned, but this cannot be verified.¹²¹

From 1797, she turned to the genre of Gothic novels and published them in Altona with Friedrich Bechtold, owner of the most important Jacobin's publishing company in Germany. The first of the two novels was *Das höfliche Gespenst / Ida von Duba* (The Polite Ghost / Ida of Duba).¹²² This extraordinary novel provides an entirely woman-centred narration about the period of mourning of a protagonist living in seclusion. There, a female ghost attempts to selfishly seduce the protagonist to receive redemption for her misdeeds against her mother. This is one of the earliest examples of a female homoerotic epic in Germany.¹²³ The critic for the *Allgemeiner Litterarischer Anzeiger*,¹²⁴ however, simply mentioned Albrecht's new publication without describing the content at all. Two months later, the supplement of the same periodical¹²⁵ published the retail price for the book *Das höfliche Gespenst / Ida von Duba* at 16 groschen (by 1805 the price for the novel had increased to 20 groschen). Albrecht was greatly praised there for her full achievements as a writer, and additionally for her new novel. Referring to Albrecht as "Madame S. A." already well known to the literary audience as one of the prime women writers in Germany, the reviewer rated the novel a "pleasant gift, especially to the fair sex, [and] a very entertaining reading." Like many reviewers before and after him, he made sure to hint that the target audience was exclusively female.¹²⁶

As early as 1799, reference was made to the next Gothic novel by Albrecht *Graumännchen oder die Burg Rabenbühl* (Graumännchen or the Castle Rabenbühl) in *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*.¹²⁷ The "Intelligenzblatt" of *ALZ*¹²⁸ then used a multiple-page announcement and included rating of the new Gothic

121 Royer, *Sophie*, 91. There is no documentary evidence of a divorce from Johann, and the same applies to the alleged marriage to her lover Ferdinand von Hahn. See: Royer, "Sophie Albrecht, ein künstlerisches Phänomen", 348.

122 Published under altogether three titles: *Legenden / Das höfliche Gespenst. Legende* (1797) and *Ida von Duba das Mädchen im Walde* (1805).

123 See analysis in: Royer, *Sophie*, 242–56.

124 *Allgemeiner Litterarischer Anzeiger*, 12. April 1798, Leipzig 1798, 602–3.

125 *Allgemeiner Litterarischer Anzeiger*, Beilage zu No. CII, 29. Juni 1798, Leipzig 1798, 1037–38.

126 Unfortunately, the extent of reception from review periodicals between 1795 and 1808 goes beyond the scope of this contribution.

127 *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung vom Jahre 1799*, Jena und Leipzig 1799, iii.

128 *Intelligenzblatt der ALZ vom Jahre 1799*: 323, 407–8, 629 (and with mentioning the price), 1077.

novel, provided by the publishing company.¹²⁹ The advertisement was overall about Albrecht's popularity and the quality of her writing, the price of this novel at 16 groschen, and its availability from the upcoming Leipzig book fair.¹³⁰ The novel *Graumännchen oder die Burg Rabenbühl*, which was published as a "ghost story", portrays a young woman developing emotional maturity against the backdrop of her family history. By using motifs from fairy tales, which originated from the rich tradition of the French fairy tales by Marie C. d'Aulnoy, Marie J. L'Héritier de Villandon and Charles Perrault, Albrecht contributed with her work also crucially to the Brothers Grimm's later version "Rumpelstiltskin" (*Rumpelstilzchen*, 1812). This novel was so popular that it was translated into Dutch in the year 1801.¹³¹ The outstanding attribute of Albrecht's writing practice was the inclusion of the tradition of Women's Writing, which contributed to the continuing recovery of its literary historical memory.

During the same period, the composer K.W. Ulbricht set to music Albrecht's poem "Der Kummer verschmähter Liebe" (The Grief of Rejected Love)¹³² as declamatory piece with musical accompaniment for the piano; this edition was sold in 1801 for 10 groschen. In 1804, Albrecht's complete three-volume edition of poetry, drama and short prose from 1791 was sold off at Richter's for the first time. Thirteen years after first publication, a special discount was given: the price was reduced from two thaler, 12 groschen to one thaler, 12 groschen. The complete edition must have sold well until then.¹³³

Four years later, in 1808, Albrecht's *Romantische Dichtungen* (Romantic Poetry)¹³⁴ appeared with the radical intellectual Gottfried Vollmer once more as

129 This is the "Buchhandlung der Verlagsgesellschaft", which was managed by Evers and Schmieder in the absence of Vollmer; all representatives of the radical democracy movement and Masonic brothers. During the same period, Albrecht's friends Félicité de Genlis, Elise Bürger, and Henriette von Montenglaut published at Vollmer's.

130 Compare: *Intelligenzblatt der ALZ vom Jahre 1799*: "Von der beliebten Schriftstellerin Sophie Albrecht erscheint in bevorstehender Leipziger Oster-Messe ein neuer Roman [...]. Derselbe Beyfall, welcher ihren frühern Arbeiten zu Theil ward, wird auch dieser neuen für die Unterhaltung bestimmten Schrift nicht entgehen. Wir glauben den Dank der Lesewelt zu verdienen, wenn wir die Anzeige davon vorläufig erscheinen lassen, und zugleich dadurch die Erwartung und Aufmerksamkeit zum voraus darauf lenken."

131 Compare: Sophie Albrecht, *Het grauwe mannetjen of De burgt Ravenkuil, Eene Geesten Geschiedenis van Oud Duitschen Oirsprong*, [Translator unknown], Amsterdam 1801.

132 K.W. Ulbricht, "Der Kummer verschmähter Liebe" von Sophie Albrecht; als Deklamationsstück mit musikalischer Begleitung [...], Dresden 1801. Announced in *Intelligenzblatt zu Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* IX (June 1801), 36.

133 *Zeitung für die elegante Welt. Intelligenzblatt* [...], 39 (6 September 1804), 14.

134 *Romantische Dichtungen, aus der älteren christlichen Kirche*, Sophie Albrecht, Hamburg und Altona 1808.

publisher, and was sold for 12 groschen. It is difficult to determine how large the circulation, sold copies, and respective profits for these publications ultimately were for the author. It is striking, however, that her publications almost completely ceased at this time around 1808. That might have been due to personal, as well as political and economic reasons. The occupation of northern Germany by Napoleon's troops, the Continental Blockade and its devastating economic effects might have all contributed to her silence as a writer. At the same time, her withdrawal from the literary public might have had also something to do with the anti-egalitarian backlash that accompanied the late Napoleonic age, which changed the role of women drastically again. After a brief period of emancipation, women were again strictly relegated to domesticity. Women and the public sphere had become once again incompatible.¹³⁵

A Room of One's Own, but No Money to Maintain It: Final Thoughts

Sophie Albrecht was one of the most unusual artistic personalities of the German-speaking cultural areas: she had been able – as writer, editor, publisher, declamatory artist, and public speaker – to mobilise coordinated networks in the public sphere. She knew how to deal effectively with publishers and achieved handsome profits through her publications. Particularly noteworthy are her networks among like-minded women, and her fabulous dual professional career in the performing arts. What could only be hinted at was her involvement in the democracy movement, apparent through writings, contacts with politically, equally-disposed people, her memberships in Masonic lodges and her active support of revolution followers.¹³⁶ She was ahead of her time, and received well by her immediate like-minded and copious circle of active supporters. However, conservative critics of established review organs mainly rated Albrecht's literary works as permissible or impermissible acts within social, and cultural gender role patterns. On the whole, it seems that reviewers can be categorised either as proponents or opponents of female artistic (and “learned”) activity in the late eighteenth century. They mentioned neither Albrecht's critical perspective on marriage, love, sexuality with men and women, friendship, nor her lack of specification in the class portrayals of her

135 Brandes, “Buch”, 310, mentioned this process in relation to the German writer Sophie von La Roche for this approximate time frame.

136 René-Marc Pille, “Eine Gruppe Sympathisanten der Französischen Revolution in Leipzig”, in *Die Französische Revolution, Mitteleuropa und Italien*, ed. Helmut Reinalter, Frankfurt 1992, 141–50.

protagonists. In brief, her essentially anachronistic effort to aim for modern democratic citizenship concepts for women collided with the immense discriminatory structure against them in society.

Sophie Albrecht's star began to decline as her political camp in the democracy movement in Germany lost influence and as the hope for women's equality in the aftermath of the French Revolution gradually lost its credibility. The late Napoleonic age, the occupation of Germany, and the wars that finally marked the end of that period, described the starting point of a new era of suppression. The Conservative Restoration put political opponents in their place after 1815 with repressive decrees, censorship measures, and the suppression of liberal newspapers. As a well-known participant of the democratic opposition, Sophie Albrecht could not recover her public esteem during the oppressive circumstances of the post Viennese-Congress era.

It was just as difficult for her circle of like-minded friends, other women writers. They were also struggling to support themselves financially with commercial authorship. In 1819, Albrecht's colleague and friend, Henriette von Montenglaut, asked the once successful writer for guidance:

Well, dear Sophie give me good advice, or even better bring yourself into action for me with distant theatres - just not in Leipzig, because of the fairs - because I'm just too much known among the circles with my real name. Also, I have published a small volume of poems, that Matthison has kindly reviewed - *Herbstblumen Kranz*.¹³⁷ Some I wrote for the *Morgenblatt*, and, after I had finished 2 dozen shirts for my sons with blind eyes through spectacles, I am now working on a small volume of stories that I want to publish at Göschen's for the hungry in the Ore Mountains. Everything was formerly self-published and therefore with little profit. - Just tell me how to deal with publishers, and how to make money with writing?¹³⁸

Montenglaut could no longer obtain a satisfactory answer from her friend: Albrecht herself could barely make do with odd jobs, a few thaler from royalties and those for her late husband Johann, who had passed away on 11 March 1814. With the loss of all her property and possessions,¹³⁹ between 1806 and 1814, the

137 *Herbstblumenkranz*, Darmstadt 1814.

138 Royer, *Sophie*, letter appendix / Briefanhang, letter by Montenglaut from 3 July 1819, 370–74.

139 Albrecht once owned the "Rose Garden", prime real estate along the Elbchaussee, Altona. She purchased this property in 1799, built a country house on the site, and lived there until 1806. For a description of all the valuable real estate she owned in Altona, see: Paul Hoffmann, *Die Elbchaussee, Ihre Landsitze, Menschen und Schicksale*, Hamburg 1966, 82–83. She had additionally purchased real estate at the Altona showpiece street

ruinous financial support for her estranged husband, and the pecuniary assistance to the Altona National Theatre, she never recovered and experienced continuing financial hardship for the remainder of her life. Although the city of Hamburg bestowed a small cottage on her in the 1820s at the “Hamburger Berg” for ten thaler annually,¹⁴⁰ she still remained in desperate need. She was active in literature again for a very short period, whenever the fight for the “room of one’s own” did not rob her of her creative inspiration. It was only when her friend Montenglaut secured a small pension by the “anonymous” Germany-wide appeal, that she wrote some poems for *Dresdner-Abend-Zeitung* in 1828 and 1832. More than that and a poem in a letter, probably from 1838, have not been preserved from this late stage of her life. She died on 16 November 1840 in Hamburg and was buried there in the cemetery in St. Georg.

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Palmaille in 1800, and on two other local roads; they were worth 27, 800 marks courant. Compare: Royer, *Sophie*, 91.

140 Montenglaut, “Biographische Skizze”, 974, and her letter to Goethe from 1828.

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