International Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences Studies
Volume 5 Issue 12 ǁ December 2020
ISSN: 2582-1601
www.ijahss.com

'Der Wanderer In Italien' (1818): Heinroth's View About Italy

Serena Spazzarini
University of Genoa (Italy)
Department of Modern Languages and Cultures

ABSTRACT : *Johann Christian August Heinroth was the first doctor in Europe to hold a chair of Psychiatry and constantly wrote substantial medical-scientific papers. Under the pseudonym of Treumund Wellentreter, he also published the 'Gesammelte Blätter'. The 'Blätter', result of a work of the 'poetic psychiatrist', as Peter Kaiser put it, includes fifteen hundred pages of lyrical, epic and dramatic 'revelations' which betray the author's feeling for the 'romantic horizon' and give tangible proof of his piety. 'Der Wanderer in Italien. Epigrammatisch-elegisch', published within the first volume of the 'Blätter', is Heinroth's work about Italy. This present work intends to examine this text, to point out how Heinroth uses Italy to recount his youthful Wanderung and how, in the unusual contact with Italian Nature and Art, the author consolidates its bond with God and his homeland.*

KEYWORDS : *Italian Journey, Italy, J. Christian August Heinroth, Travel Literature, Wanderung*

I. BIOGRAPHY

Johann Christian August Heinroth was born in Leipzig on January 17, 1773 and was the first doctor in Europe to hold a chair of Psychiatry. Son of the surgeon Christian August Heinroth and Johanna Elisabeth (née Nicolai) Heinroth spent his childhood together with his younger brother and sister under the austere care of his father and the tender care of his mother.

He received private lessons from a tutor until 1782 and enrolled at the prestigious *Nicolaischule*, the institute directed by Georg Heinrich Martini (1722-1794). He remained there until 1791, winning the esteem of both teachers and colleagues. During this time, Heinroth began to write poems, take violin lessons and study as well as work as a foreign language tutor. He enrolled at Medical School in 1791 and soon obtained an apprenticeship under Doctor Schirmer, one of the most distinguished doctors in his field. He went to Italy as Count Rosamowsky's personal doctor in 1801, but the journey ended prematurely due to the Count's sudden death in Rome. On his way home, the young doctor decided to stop in Vienna and resume his medical studies under the guidance of Professor Johann Peter Frank.

Following the death of his parents, Heinroth returned to Leipzig, where he graduated in 1805 defending his dissertation *Medicinae descendae et exercendae ratio*. He married in 1809. He started working as a doctor at the *St. Gorgenhause* hospital in 1814, where he treated many mentally ill patients. After having successfully defended his dissertation *De voluntate medici, medicamento insaniae hypothesis*, he started teaching three years later. He went on a trip to France in 1820. He obtained the Chair of Medicine and was awarded the honorary title for state officials seven years later. He became Dean in 1842 and held that prestigious academic position until his death on October 26, 1843 (Demme 1844 [1]).

As Marneros points out, Heinroth gave his first lectures and practiced as a doctor during the years in which Psychiatry obtained a specific classification (Reil 1808 [2]) and the establishment of the first chair in the academic field (Marneros 2009: 599-600 [3]; Marneros & Pillman 2005 [4]). The establishment of an extraordinary chair of 'psychische Therapie' (Steinberg 2004: 305-306 [5]) - also called 'Chair of Psychotherapy' in modern scholarship (Marx 1990: 351-381 [6]; Marx 1991: 1-25 [7]; Steinberg & Himmerich 2012: 256-268 [8]) - in Leipzig on 21 October 1811 reflected both that social awareness of some prominent political personalities and the recognition of Heinroth's scientific abilities. A key role was certainly played by Gottlob Adolph Ernst von Nostiz und Jänckendorf (1765-1836), the then Conference Minister of the *Geheimer Rat* actively involved in a 'social-conservative-philanthropic' mental health reform movement. Besides, Heinroth's ability to harmoniously combine medical science within the sphere of *Seelenheil* ('salvation of the

soul') corresponded to the academic profile that was required (Steinberg 2004: 305 [5]). Heinroth was and is internationally known for this achievement. After him, Justus Wilhelm Martin Radius (1797-1884) continued holding lessons in Psychiatry - integrating them within a Chair that initially included Hygiene and General Pathology - and only in 1878 did Paul Flechsig (1847-1929) obtain an extraordinary Chair of Psychiatry (Steinberg 2004: 307 [5]).

However, it is also worth remembering that Heinroth is frequently referred to in current medical, psychiatric and psychological literature for having contributed to the beginning of a debate in the German-speaking context between two opposing schools of thought: the 'psychics' and the 'somatic'. Heinroth took inspiration from the theories of Georges Ernst Stahl (1660-1734) and coined the successful expression 'psychisch-somatisch' (psychic-somatic), hence 'psycho-somatic'. The link between psychic and the somatic was thus identified (Diebold 2016: 651-656 [9]; Fossa Arcila 2012: 127-138 [10]).

II. WORKS

Heinroth constantly wrote substantial medical-scientific papers. Commissioned by Gleditsch and written under the pseudonym of Treumund Wellentreter, he also published the *Gesammelte Blätter* [11] [12] [13] between 1818 and 1827 in Leipzig. This work, developed from a 'poetic psychiatrist', as Peter Kaiser put it, includes fifteen hundred pages of lyrical, epic and dramatic 'revelations' which betray the author's feeling for the 'romantic horizon' (Kaiser 2007: 129 [14]) and give tangible proof of his piety.

Heinroth's work about Italy - *Der Wanderer in Italien*. *Epigrammatisch Elegisch* - was published for the first time in 1818 within the first volume of the *Gesammelte Blätter* under the title *Poesien*. In the foreword, probably written by the publisher, the reader is informed that the author wished to provide 'some nourishment to the mind and soul of like-minded people' (Heinroth 1818: III [11]). Heinroth had thus decided to report 'the best, warmest and clearest moments of his life' (Heinroth 1818: III [11]). By reading the author's preface, it is soon clear what 'nourishment' of the soul Heinroth was referring to: the Beauty of Creation and the peacefulness of the soul, thus alluding to the Love of God, which that Beauty has created and that peacefulness granted. And the author is again alluding to God when, shortly after, he confesses his nostalgia for an inner fulfilment he has not achieved yet, since his goal is 'still far' (Heinroth 1818: 5 [11]).

Der Wanderer in Italien is included in the third part of this first book. It includes a short introduction followed by six parts. Each part is about an Italian city, except the third and fifth which deal with the poet's journey from Florence to Naples and a tour throughout the Gulf of Naples, respectively. The metre is the one which is typically found in elegies and epigrams, that is the elegiac couplet, as shown by the alternation of a dactyl hexameter and pentameter. Heinroth's epigrams preserve the purpose of the ancient epigrams, namely stopping the memory of a life, an exploit, an 'offer' and wittily portray scenes, people and places; the elegiac poems, especially the Latin ones, feature a nostalgic and melancholic tone which also shines in his autobiographical reflections.

III. HEINROTH'S VIEW ABOUT ITALY

The poet introduces the collection of poems making a comparison with the *heimisches Land*, his 'homeland', far from which he perceives an air that 'magically plays with his breast and blows new feelings in him' (Heinroth 1818: 267 [11]). Only a few lines later, it is clear that it is not just the air that one physically breathes but, by extension, the complex of environmental conditions that allow this German Wanderer to feel how, beyond the border, he has not left only a harsh landscape mountain, but a 'rougher consciousness, a deeply earnest life, worries, moderate efforts' (Heinroth 1818: 267 [11]). In the two short pages of the introduction, the poet shows the reader an Italy in which Nature is generously benevolent and Art is a tangible sign of the existence of a glorious past. Passing through Vicenza, Verona and Padua, the cities that the traveller mentions here, the explosion of wonder is such that hexameters and pentameters are linked to each other in a crescendo of exclamations.

The first Italian city the author deals with is Venice. The poet arrives here in the middle of November (Heinroth 1818: 275, 282 [11]) by ship and the city appears before him like an epiphany. While the majestic buildings are catching the traveller's sight, a boatman suddenly approaches the boat he was travelling on to offer him oysters with lemon (Heinroth 1818: 271 [11]). From this moment on, the Wanderer goes through either unpleasant or foreign aspects of his homeland, rather than describing the beauties of the city: the confused dins of the gondoliers, the laments of beggars, the cramped bedrooms and sleepless nights (Heinroth 1818: 272, 277 [11]). In fact, he dislikes most of them apart from a show of dancers, probably dancing at a theatre, where the

image of a *liebliches Kind*, a 'pretty little girl', fascinates and conquers (Heinroth 1818: 275 [11]), an image that brings to the mind of the reader Goethe's *Venezianische Epigramme* (1796). The unfamiliarity that the poet perceives here, however, is so acute that it soon leads him to exclaim: 'Everything is foreign to me in these streets crossed by the sea, like it is at the lively market: Customs, clothes and people' (Heinroth 1818: 274 [11]). Like a romantic Wanderer, Heinroth makes a journey to distant or foreign lands driven by the quest for self-knowledge. Overwhelmed by the sense of unfamiliarity, the traveller therefore seeks contact with a Nature that, in fact, already exists within himself: looking up to the sky, among the clouds, he glimpses the moon and immediately recognizes it as the one that *daheim*, 'at home', lit up the villages, the fields and a couple of people walking in its light, that is the poet in the company of a friend (Heinroth 1818: 274-275 [11]). During his leave from Venice on a boat that rocks unsteadily, the poet expresses his sense of vanity before God who manifests himself through the mysterious and terrible forces of Nature. Then he turns his gaze to heaven and invokes love for mortal men, in the Christian expectation of a redemptive sympathy for their sins. In a foreign land, the traveller no longer feels abandoned to himself but, like Klopstock, finds in Nature the space in which God's plans become tangible. This is the end of the first part.

After sailing on the river Po, Heinroth continues his journey towards Florence on a small coach (Heinroth 1818: 288 [11]). After passing Ferrara and Bologna, he indulges in a reflection on the difficulties of the journey that vanish from his mind 'like a dream' as soon as he starts thinking about his family and life at home (Heinroth 1818: 289 [11]). The poet's *Wanderung* is therefore not a means but a goal of his Christian journey. Heinroth always finds traces of a loving and protecting God. While observing the horse proceeding cautiously on the edge of a precipice he thinks: 'So does a protective God ensure the path of every man' (Heinroth 1818: 291 [11]). The traveller in Italy does not search for himself, but rather finds confirmation of his faith in God, the one that gives him the strength to face life's difficulties. When he is in 'the most beautiful city' (Heinroth 1818: 272, 277 [11]), Florence, he visits the Uffizi museum, described as 'the temple of art' (Heinroth 1818: 294 [11]), with its priceless treasures. Here his gaze is once again filtered by a Christian point of view. He wishes to interpret God's tangible signs: in front of portraits or sculptures, he examines beauty as a tangible manifestation of the divine will or as an opportunity to meditate on human emotions in a Christian way as in the case of the Laocoon statue (Heinroth 1818: 295-296 [11]). For a fleeting instant, however, he starts enjoying the place (Heinroth 1818: 303 [11]): then, a storm splits the sky and suddenly the man returns to the real meaning of his journey and his mind focuses on his *verlassene Heimath*, his 'abandoned homeland' (Heinroth 1818: 304 [11]). With this sad and nostalgic tone, the section soon ends with the image of a *Fremder, fern vom heimischen Land, dienend, verlassen, allein* (Heinroth 1818: 305-306 [11]), a servant of Swiss origin who knocks on the poet's door, making him painfully regret his homeland.

The third section is about the winter journey that leads the traveller from Florence to Naples, passing through Rome. In this part, the tone dominates some sharp and nipping epigrams, which deal with further unpleasant aspects that the traveller discovers in Italy: bad roads, irregular and dangerous slopes, abundant rain and cold, terrible storms, sooty overnight shelters, poor food, disturbed sleep (Heinroth 1818: 310-318 [11]). Once again, however, the author filters these negative aspects with a Christian approach: there is in fact the awareness of having to overcome the tests of life and the ethics of accepting difficulties and pain, which should be overcome with great patience and solid willpower. The first and last elegy of this part, which frame the pains that Heinroth endures, once again provide the key to reading this *Wanderung*: men must not give in when facing difficulties or weaknesses, but keep in mind that the final goal of their journey will reward them for their suffering. In the first elegy the poet states: 'The most troubled days always prepare the brightest [...] the strengths get trained in battle' (Heinroth 1818: 309 [11]). Again, Heinroth's journey is his goal, the moment of earthly existence in which he must show his strength as a Creature of God and part of a divine plan. In the last elegy, Heinroth finally seems to find Italy as he had dreamed of, like the land of Hesperia, which is here an earthly metaphor of a much more sought-after reward (Heinroth 1818: 320 [11]).

The fourth part, which is about the poet's stay in Naples, begins with an elegiac comparison between the emotions of Christmas Eve and those that the Heinroth feels at night on his arrival. With this image, Heinroth describes the almost childlike wonder of finding the city lit by candlelight (Heinroth 1818: 321-323 [11]). Even during the day, Heinroth is not disappointed by Naples. He enjoys the breathtaking view and curiously observes the swarm of people and goods at the port and on the streets. Beggars are obviously here too, but it is not uncommon to see them playing *morra* (Heinroth 1818: 325-327 [11]). After the miracle of the liquefaction of St. Januarius' blood, Heinroth describes the moving devotion of the people from Naples who pay homage to the dead Christ on Good Friday (Heinroth 1818: 328-331 [11]). He takes the opportunity to once again attest to his faith in a higher Truth: participating in that devotion, Heinroth exclaims 'I understand you, honestly: you love the truth in images. Everyone honestly loved the truth in images' (Heinroth 1818: 331 [11]). Among the people celebrating with dances and songs, Heinroth stops to piously meditate and starts enjoying the

view of the girls who dance to the rhythm of chestnuts (Heinroth 1818: 332 [11]). The part ends at the dawn of spring and its blossoming, which go hand in hand with a feeling of renewed vigour (Heinroth 1818: 333-334 [11]).

In the fifth part, the poet tells about the tour he dedicates to explore the extraordinary Gulf and the surroundings of Naples. Among all these descriptions, however, climbing Vesuvius dominates by extension and number of details. Heinroth writes eight elegies about this. After a long account of the journey taken early in the morning to reach the foot of the volcano, he once again meditates upon the need of a great willpower to reach a goal (Heinroth 1818: 347 [11]). Reaching the summit, however, Heinroth is overwhelmed by disappointment as he sees other peaks in front of him, including Monte Somma, which he perceives as higher than Vesuvius. Behind this anxiety of reaching the top one can perceive a metaphorical struggle, a *Streben* upwards, understood not as a physical place, but rather as God, the Wanderer's highest coveted height. Immediately after this trip, the poet ends this part with the elegies about Pompeii. He describes his emotions when looking at the recently unearthed city and the traces of life and culture which are inexorably frozen in time (Heinroth 1818: 350 [11]).

The last section deals with his stay in Rome. Despite the first elegy hints at Heinroth's melancholy farewell from Naples, the poet soon joyfully praises Rome where 'everybody can set his mind free' (Heinroth 1818: 356 [11]), thanks to Art. Unlike the other parts, in this one the author does not indulge in persistent existential reflections. This time he is essentially interested in celebrating the magnificence of Rome and its arts. Heinroth wanders the streets of the city with amazement and wonder and he even indulges in imaginary monologues in front of the monuments, like with the Colosseum, which silently listens to his words. Addressing the Roman amphitheatre directly, personified as a giant 'ready to protect the city with its mighty limbs' (Heinroth 1818: 338 [11]), the poet recalls what happened inside those ancient walls. Admiring the ruins of the city, Heinroth continues to praise the wonders of ancient Rome and does not shy away from reporting how merchants and hosts enrich themselves by exploiting these exceptional treasures (Heinroth 1818: 363 [11]). A little further on, the unexpected confession that in this city a beloved would have reserved him a 'delightful joy' (Heinroth 1818: 365 [11]), would suggest the presence of a Faustina-like woman of Goethean memory: however, unlike *Römische Elegien* (1795), a woman praised by our poet does not exist in flesh and blood since the beloved here is Rome itself. The section continues with an overview of the many places or monuments seen and visited by Heinroth, with the Vatican and its precious rooms in the foreground. With another image that recalls Goethe, this time his *Wanderers Nachtlied* (1780), the poet concludes his *Wanderung* and takes leave of Rome enjoying the 'heavenly peace' and 'earthly peace' (Heinroth 1818: 388 [11]).

IV. CONCLUSION

Heinroth's 'Italian' work is thus the mature fruit of the doctor-poet, who uses Italy as a scene to recount his youthful *Wanderung*, romantically experienced as a reconciling moment of his own existence, during which he consolidates its bond with God and his homeland in the unusual contact with Nature and Arts. A God and a homeland that, however, were not for everyone, but only for those who, like Heinroth, could afford the privilege of possessing a genuinely *Biedermeier* soul. It is worth mentioning here in closing that this piece of work was meant for a specific audience that had nothing to do with common people, to whom this kind of literature certainly was not addressed.

REFERENCES

[1] L. Demme (et al.), Biographische Skizzen über Heinroth, in L. Demme (Hrsg.), *Annalen der deutschen und ausländischen Criminal-Rechtspflege. Begründet von Dr. Julius Eduard Hitzig und fortgesetzt von Dr. Wilhelm Ludwig Demme. Sieben und Zwanziger Band, oder der Zweite des Jahrgangs 1844. April, Mai, Juni*. (Altenburg: Verlag von Julius Helbig, 1844) 345-356

[2] J.C. Reil, Ueber den Begriff der Medicin und ihre Verzweigungen, besonders in Beziehung auf die Berichtigung der Topik der Psychiaterie, in. J.C. Reil, J.C. Hoffbauer (Hrsgg.), *Beyträge zur Beförderung einer Kurmethode auf psychischem Wege. Erster Band*. (Halle: Curtsche Buchhandlung, 1808) 161-279

[3] A. Marneros, Die Psychiatrie hat 200. Geburtstag. Ein Grund zum feiern?, *Nervenarzt, 5*, 2009, 598-604

[4] A. Marneros, F. Pillman, *Das Wort Psychiatrie wurde in Halle geboren. Von den Anfängen der deutschen Psychiatrie* (Stuttgart: Schattauer Verlag, 2005)

[5] H. Steinberg, Die Errichtung des ersten psychiatrischen Lehrstuhls: Johann Christian August Heinroth in Leipzig, *Nervenarzt, 3*, 2004, 303-307
[6] O.M. Marx, German romantic psychiatry. Part 1, *History of Psychiatry, 1*, 1990, 351-381
[7] O.M. Marx, German romantic psychiatry. Part 2, *History of Psychiatry, 2*, 1991, 1-25
[8] H. Steinberg, H. Himmerich, Johann Christian Heinroth (1773-1843): The First Professor of Psychiatry as a Psychoterapist, *Journal of Religious Health*, 51, 2012, 256-268
[9] L. Diebold, A. Garbe-Noel, Qu'apporte le «psychisch-somatisch» de Heinroth à la métapsychologie freudienne?, *Annales Médico-Psychologiques, 174*, 2016, 651-659
[10] P. Fossa Arcila, Cuando el alma sufre, los genes lloran: revisitando el concepto de psicosomático, *Revista de Psicología GEPU, 3 (2)*, 2012, 127-138
[11] [C.A. Heinroth], *Gesammelte Blätter von Treumund Wellentreter. Erster Band: Poesien. Zweiter Band: Prosaische Aufsätze* (Leipzig: Gleditsch, 1818)
[12] [C.A. Heinroth], *Gesammelte Blätter von Treumund Wellentreter. Dritter Band: Prosa und Poesie* (Leipzig: Gleditsch, 1820)
[13] [C.A. Heinroth], *Gesammelte Blätter von Treumund Wellentreter. Vierter Theil* (Leipzig: Hartmann, 1827), also published under the title *Heitere Stunden*
[14] P. Kaiser, *Religion in der Psychiatrie. Eine (un)bewusste Verdrängung?* (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2007)