Clemens Brentano's "Sound-Thing" (*Klingding*)
Homophonic Translation in German Romanticism

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Résumé : Ce chapitre analyse « Der Einsiedler und das Klingding », œuvre satirique écrite en 1808 par Clemens Brentano. Ce texte méconnu recourt à la traduction homophonique pour promouvoir l'ironie et l'esprit ludique du romantisme opposés aux convenances bourgeoises des Lumières tardives. Il fut publié en plein débat sur la place du sonnet dans la littérature allemande. L'œuvre est en effet composée de multiples sonnets, dont l'un est traduit homophoniquement du grec vers l'allemand. Le principal objet de sa moquerie sont les positions traditionnalistes de Johann Heinrich Voß, célèbre traducteur d'Homère. Nos analyses s'emploient à reconstituer la stratégie politico-culturelle sur laquelle s'appuie cette traduction homophonique dans le contexte d'une satire de l'esprit philistin de son époque.

1 Introduction

The verse satire "Der Einsiedler und das Klingding" ("The hermit and the 'sound-thing'", 1808) by Clemens Brentano, published as part of a debate with Johann Heinrich Voß concerning the legitimacy of the sonnet in German language, features a Greek sonnet that is echoed by a German sonnet which partly offers a homophonic translation of the Greek into German. Brentano's text is certainly not among the canonical texts of this author and thus of German Romanticism. Neither has it been discussed as part of the history of homophonic translation. This chapter makes a case for this mostly forgotten piece of work, reading it as the attempt to promote the force of lyric sound as a means to overcome the limitations of philistine existence.

To make this point, it is first necessary to outline the context, particularly the differences between the classicist Voß and the Romantics regarding the adaptation of foreign and/or historical poetic material such as the sonnet. I will then analyse Brentano's

text and draw conclusions as to the poetic and politico-cultural position it tries to establish. In order to do this, I will link the satire both to the Romantic concept of the philistine, and to the tradition of homophonic translation in comedy.

2 The Sonnet War of 1808

In four consecutive issues of the *Jenaische Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, appearing from the 1st to the 4th of June 1808, Voß, the renowned translator of Homer's epics into German (1781 and 1793), published a text entitled "Sprache und Dichtung" ("Language and Poetry") which, under the pretext of reviewing the sonnets of Gottfried August Bürger, contained a vehement dismissal of the sonnet as a genre of German poetry. As a reaction to this, Joseph Görres, Brentano, and Achim von Arnim anonymously published a series of texts in von Arnim's *Zeitung für Einsiedler* that satirically refuted Voß' classicist stance. The first of these texts is Görres' "Die Sonnettenschlacht bei Eichstädt" ("The Battle of/against the Sonnets near Eichstädt/at Eichstädt's"), which bears the subtitle: "Jenaische Literaturzeigung. Junius 1808 Nr. 128–31" and appeared on the 29th of June 1808. The specification "bei Eichstädt" has a double meaning: "Eichstädt" was the surname of the editor of the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*. However, in combination with "Jena" the word also certainly reminded the public of the Battle of Jena-Auerstedt in which Napoleon had defeated Prussia in 1806, leading to a six-year occupation of Prussia by the French. The same issue of the *Zeitung für Einsiedler* also contained Brentano's text, whose full title is as follows: "Der Einsiedler und das Klingding, nach der Schlacht bei Eichstädt. Ein Clairobscür für die Lesewelt, Seitenstück zu Fritzchens Reise durchs A B C" ("The hermit and the 'sound-thing', after the battle near Eichstädt/at Eichstädt's. A 'chiaroscuro' for the reading world, side-piece to Fritzchen's travels through the ABC"). As a special issue of the *Zeitung für Einsiedler*, von Arnim later published the "Geschichte des Herrn Sonnet und des Fräuleins Sonete, des Herrn Ottav und des Fräulein Terzine. Eine Romanze in 90+3 Soneten [*sic*]", which will not be taken into account by this essay.[1] From the titles, one can already infer the whimsical tone of the three friends' response to Voß' ardent attack on the sonnet. The texts are full of allusions and make use of various techniques of parody and pastiche. Their tendency towards sharp contrasts and pithy wit is explicitly indicated in the term "Clairobscür", designating a well-known painting technique that sharply contrasts the depicted figures with a dark background. In order to assess the status of homophonic translation in Brentano's text, however, one must firstly try to understand Voß' major points of critique.

Voß' article promotes a thoroughly classicist use of language in poetry. Only apparently, some of his presuppositions signal a certain proximity to proto-Romantic

1. It has only recently been established, mainly by the work of Friedrich Strack, that Brentano authored "Der Einsiedler und das Klingding" (Strack, Friedrich, "Clemens Brentano und das 'Klingding', Bemerkungen zur 'Sonnettenschlacht bei Eichstädt' in der 'Zeitung für Einsiedler"', *Jahrbuch des freien deutschen Hochstifts* 2009, p. 253-287). Two recent editions of Brentano's text, identical in both text and commentary, can be found in the Brentano, Clemens, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, vol. 21.1: *Satiren und Kleine Prosa*, ed. Maximilian Bergengruen *et alii*, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 2013, p. 93-98, and Von Arnim, Achim, *Werke und Briefwechsel. Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe (Weimarer Ausgabe)*, vol. 15: *Zeitung für Einsiedler*, ed. Renate Moering, Berlin/Boston, De Gruyter, 2014, p. 321-325. I quote from the first edition. Volume 15 of the von Arnim edition also contains the texts by Görres' (p. 318-230) and von Arnim (p. 463-521).

positions of lyric poetics such as Johann Gottfried Herder's. Voß claims that lyric poetry first and foremost is the articulation of "Naturlaut" ("sounds of nature"), nourished by a language's "unwiderstehlicher Lebenskraft"[2] ("vital force"). His critique of Bürger's sonnets, however, makes it very clear that what Voß has in mind is a carefully balanced poetic 'soundscape', a pre-harmonized language which foresees the regular distributions of the different vowels in a text and the exclusion of certain sound combinations as not harmonic. For example, Voß laments the fact that modern German has lost the diversity of its vowels to the advantage of the 'e', which in many cases replaces the 'a's or 'o's of older word forms—a circumstance that requires particular attention from the poet lest his poem become monotonous.[3] The same holds with regard to the combination of consonants.[4] That said, Voß vehemently defends the suitability of the German language for classicist verse-making. Provided that the 'eternal', *a priori* given rules of "Wohlkang"[5] ("harmony") are respected, German poems are said to be equal to if not better than poems from Greek antiquity. It is clear, however, that the innovation of poetic form is not a priority in Voß' poetics—and therefore his methods for the adaptation of primarily antique verse, e. g., in his translations, are certainly not Romantic.

Before the background of these preliminaries, one of Voß' main objections against the sonnet is that its promoters have mistranslated the very term 'sonnet'—and thereby mis-adapted the poetic form itself.[6] The first of the two mistranslations of the term that Voß mentions has it that the sonnet is a poem which accentuates sound. This etymology is (rightly) attributed by Voß to Martin Opitz and Georg Rudolf Weckherlin. From this mistranslation it follows for Voß that the genre has been subject to an abundance of experiments with the sound of language—dismissively, he speaks of the "tinkling" ("Pinkepank"[7], "Geklingel"[8], "Gebimmel"[9]) of the modern sonnet. Voß particularly dislikes sonnets that preferably use 'female' rather than 'male' cadences, i. e., lines ending on an unstressed syllable rather than lines ending with a stressed syllable. For him, such a one-sided prioritisation of one sound pattern leads both to an unbalanced sound in itself ("Mistöne"[10]) and to an incongruity of sound and sense.

The relation of sound and sense is also at stake in the second mistranslation of the term sonnet into German, which Voß mentions briefly. It is, in fact, a homophonic translation. It relates 'sonnet' to the German "so nett" ("so nice").[11] The ingenuity of this translation (which was totally dismissed by Voß) lies in the fact that it interprets the name for a genre that prefers sound over sense, by its sound—and thus precisely captures the effect of the sonnets' "Gebimmel". All in all, given the misinterpretation

2. Voss, [Johann Heinrich], "Sprache und Dichtkunst. Göttingen, bei Bietrich: *G. A. Bürgers* Sonnette, in den letzten Ausgaben der Bürgerschen Gedichte. 1789, 1796 und 1803", *Jenaische Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, No. 128-131 (06/01/1808-06/04/1808) (col. 409-440), col. 410.

3. *Ibid.*, col. 421 *sq.*

4. *Ibid.*, col. 422-424. For the critique of Bürger's sonnets on the basis of these general arguments, see col. 426-432.

5. *Ibid.*, col. 420.

6. *Ibid.*, col. 410-413.

7. *Ibid.*, col. 409.

8. *Ibid.*, col. 413.

9. *Ibid.*, col. 414.

10. *Ibid.*, col. 426.

11. *Ibid.*, col. 412.

of the genre by its supporters, Voß does not see it as a medium for poetic re-creation: It can never be a "Phönix"[12], as he argues with reference to one of Boileau's formulation; it cannot rise from a dead tradition.

Görres' response to Voß' very serious argumentation changes the tone to outright whimsical satire. Given that in his text Voß repeatedly speaks of sonnets as "Dinger" ("things"), Görres coins the term 'Klingding' as a new name for the sonnet. His short prose text describes Voß' attack as a poetic massacre. He depicts Voß as a "großen Mohrenkönig"[13], ("big Negro king") who commands an army of "Hexametern und Pentameters, von Jamben, Trochäen und Anapästen, saphischen [*sic*] und alkäischen Oden, anakreontischen abgedankten Liedern und großen jonisch epischen Schweinkopfphalanxen"[14] ("hexameters and pentameters, iambs, trochees and anapaests, sapphic and alcaic odes, anacreontic abdicated songs and great ionic epic pig's heads' phalanxes") and brutally extincts the 'nation' of the sonnets. The main argument that this army sent by a "Heidengott" ("pagan god") brings up against the sonnets is that "der Vogel Phönix sey nicht unter ihnen" ("there is no phoenix among them"); and the commander adds that "sie seyen alle tieckisch, und da konnte er sie in der Seele nicht leiden, weil er selbst bekanntlich antikisch ist"[15] ("they were all in Tieck's manner, which he could not stand as he was antique"). Opposing the Romantic poet Ludwig Tieck, who was particularly interested in the revival of poetic formats from the Romance languages, this pun with antiquity is in itself a *malendendu*, a homophonic intralinguistic translation—from German into German.

This notwithstanding Görres' text only vaguely engages with Voß' arguments concerning the sound of poetry. It provides the occasion for Brentano's verse satire in that it transposes Voß' arguments into an epic narrative, in that it recounts, in the end, the rebirth of the sonnets in the form of epigrams ("ein einzig Klingding hat oft tausend Stechdinger gegeben"[16]; "one sound-thing often produces a thousand sting-things"), and in that it reports that one single sonnet, the child of a Greek father and a (German?) mother who died in the battle, "ist in einer Guitarre oder Korset glücklich durch die Vorposten gekommen"[17] ("luckily passed the outposts in a guitar or in a corset").

3 It's All Greek to Me

Brentano's text takes up Görres' narrative, but it re-adjusts both the style of the satire and its politico-cultural impetus. In its form, Brentano's satire is a drama *en miniature*, written mostly in the form of sonnets. The only *dramatis personae* are a hermit and the only surviving sonnet, which is, as it turns out, bilingual by origin. Making use of the very form Voß attacked enables Brentano to over-accentuate the characteristics of the genre that Voß incriminated. He thereby also takes up and outrivals Voß' own attempt to satirically caricature the form of the sonnet in the

12. *Ibid.*, col. 414.
13. Görres, "Die Sonnettenschlacht", *op. cit.*, p. 319.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 318 *sq.*
15. *Ibid.*, p. 319.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 320.
17. *Ibid.*

"Klangsonate" ("sound sonata") at the end of his treatise.[18] As a caricature of this caricature, Brentano's text makes it obvious that Voß vilifies a rather inoffensive and harmless poetic form—which is a strong point in case, even if Brentano himself was not altogether convinced that the sonnet as a genre was fit for poetic innovation.[19]

Already in its setting, Brentano's text articulates a politico-cultural position that is contrary to almost everything Voß stands for. The scene of action is a hermit's hut close to the battlefield from which the Greek-German sonnet flees. By placing a hermit centre stage, Brentano relates his piece to the journal it is published in, the *Zeitung für Einsiedler* ("Journal for hermits"). From von Arnim's announcement of the journal and from other satirical projects of Brentano's, one can infer what the figure of the hermit might stand for. Von Arnim announces his journal in January 1808 as the "allgemeinst[e] Zeitung" ("the most general journal") and designs it for the benefit of "vieler sonst unnütz beschäftigter Leute, welche die Veränderungen der letzten Jahre aus ihrem Amte, Familien-Kreise, Ueberflusse herausgerissen" ("many otherwise uselessly occupied people whom the changes of the last years have pulled out of their offices, their families and their exuberance").[20] These people, whom von Arnim calls "neu[e] Einsiedler" ("modern hermits"), are certainly not conceived as partisans of the Romantics, but rather as members of the bourgeoisie who have been taken out of their philistine routines by the defeat of the German states in the previous years (of which the battle of Jena-Auerstedt was the climax). Before and after 1808 both Brentano and von Arnim engaged in pithy satires of the "Philister"—the bourgeois philistine[21]—thus the implicit identification of the *Zeitung für Einsiedler* with the 'modern hermits' must be read ironically: according to Friedrich Schlegel's definition of irony, it is to be considered both a mere joke and pure earnestness.[22] Brentano's famous speech about the philistine, which, in a first version, he allegedly held in 1799/1800, and then again in 1811 when it also was published, makes it very clear that the main characteristic of the philistine, his self-complacency—only surpassed by his parochial inability to go beyond his personal horizon—is to be overcome by Romantic imagination, even though it is, in a very general sense, the precondition of life. This makes it the main goal of the satire of the philistine to perform what Günter Oesterle calls a "Lachexorzismus"[23]. The Romantics attempt to exorcise the

18. Strack's pivotal article, "Brentano und das 'Klingding'", which provides a very detailed commentary to the context of the text as well as insightful explanations of the text itself, reads Brentano's satire as the (successful, though mostly incomprehensible) attempt to outrival his opponent in outmatching even the worst visions of the sonnets' "Gebimmel" Voß himself was capable of.

19. For a general account of the productive reception of the sonnet in German Romanticism see Borgstedt, Thomas, *Topik des Sonetts, Gattungstheorie und Gattungsgeschichte*, Tübingen, Niemeyer 2009, p. 426-467.

20. Von Arnim, Achim, "Ankündigung der allgemeinsten Zeitung, Zeitung für Einsiedler herausgegeben von einer Gesellschaft", *in Werke und Briefwechsel*, vol. 15, p. 1-3, here p. 1.

21. For an account of Brentano's and von Arnim's satires on the philistine, see Dembeck, Till, "Transzendentale Exklusionen, Philister, Juden, Zigeuner und Deutsche bei Achim von Arnim, Clemens Brentano und Johann Gottlieb Fichte", *in* Bunia, Remigius, Dembeck, Till, Stanitzek, Georg (Eds.), *Philister, Problemgeschichte einer Sozialfigur der neueren deutschen Literatur*, Berlin, Akademie-Verlag, 2011, p. 253-283.

22. Schlegel, Friedrich, "Lyceums-Fragmente", *in Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, vol. I.2: *Charakteristiken und Kritiken (1796–1801)*, ed. Hans Eichner, Munich, Schöningh, 1967, p. 147-163, here p. 160.

23. Oesterle, Günter, "Juden, Philister und romantische Intellektuelle, Überlegungen zum Antisemitismus in der Romantik", *Athenäum, Jahrbuch für Romantik* 2 (1992), p. 55-89, here p. 85.

philistine aspects of their own existence—knowing very well that this attempt must ultimately always fail.

It is obvious that Voß, in his stubborn stance against poetic innovation, qualifies as a prime philistine—indeed later on Brentano attacked him as the favourite poet of the philistines.[24] In Brentano's satire the hermit is also a philistine—but contrary to Voß, he is also in the process of overcoming his philistine limitation. He consists, as the text has it, of "Nature" ("er selbst [ist] aus Natur"), but both his environs and clothes are made of nothing but antiquated writing ("Makulatur", "Korrektur", and "Litteratur")—a prime attribute of the dried-out philistine.[25] When he confronts the fleeing sonnet, which speaks Greek to him, he hears only what he already knows, i. e., German. Thus, the Greek sonnet is not at all Greek to him, after all. In this respect, he is indeed very limited in his comprehension and evidently also sufficiently self-complacent. However, as an observer of the battle against the sonnets, the hermit articulates his compassion for the sonnets in one real and one alleged sonnet (a poem that is entitled "Sonnet" even though it does not meet the form of a sonnet). The first real sonnet describes the battle and the reincarnation of the sonnets as "Stechdinger", "stinging things", i. e., mosquitos, and it wishes death upon the perpetrator: "Last das Gypskrokodill [i. e., Voß] still am Idyllennile / Herodisch schlummer steif im Mückenmord erstarren"[26] ("let this crocodile of plaster quietly at the idyllic Nile / in the manner of Herodes, sleeping and stiff, die by mosquitos' murder"). In the second sonnet, the hermit articulates hope for the sonnets, if only in the expectation of a death that leaves no (compromising) traces, and decides to sing a song of victory for them. This third poem contrasts Zion as the bride of Christ with Babel and seems to be only loosely related to the confrontation between the sonnets and Voß. The first two poems are rich with internal rhymes[27] and assonances, and they consist almost only of 'female' cadences—which are all characteristics of the sonnet that Voß explicitly and strongly dislikes.

Following this prelude, the fleeing bilingual sonnet approaches the hut of the hermit, and addresses him with lines which the hermit homophonically translates one by one to himself. The Greek sonnet was not written by Brentano (who was himself bilingual, like the sonnet, but did not know Greek, like the hermit). He took it from a collection of Greek sonnets published by August Bhöck under the pseudonym of Christian Schneider. Following this, the Greek sonnet "laughs about this loudly in German" ("lacht hier über laut auf deutsch"), and backwardly enters the hermit's hut, "während es sich selbst übersetzet"[28] ("whilst translating itself"). Once again, the hermit answers each line, thus producing yet another sonnet. While listening to the self-translation of the Greek sonnet, the hermit gets increasingly aroused by the appearance and conduct of the intruder, realising that 'it' is not male, but female, and

24. Brentano, Clemens, "Der Philister vor, in und nach der Geschichte, Scherzhafte Abhandlung", *in Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, vol. 21.1, p. 113-184, here p. 154.

25. Brentano, "Der Einsiedler und das Klingding", *op. cit.*, p. 93.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

27. The online dictionary *beolingus*, provided by the Technical University of Chemnitz does not have an English translation of the German "Binnenreim", but suggests to try "dinnertime". If one presupposes that this suggestion was generated on the basis of automated corpus analysis, this indirectly proves homophonic translation to be an integral part of any translation.

28. Brentano, "Der Einsiedler und das Klingding", *op. cit.*, p. 96.

finally recognising in it his own beloved ("seine Geliebte"[29]), wearing the Greek sonnet, made by "mein Christian Schneider"[30], as a corset to walk through the battlefield unharmed. The text ends like a fairy-tale with the announcement that the hermit and his beloved/the sonnet married and begot many children, all of them "Vierlinge und Drillinge"[31], i. e., sonnets.

It is obvious that Brentano does everything to ridicule the serious discourse of Voß, the philistine, and to make it evident that his fight against the sonnets is not only triggered by base motivations, but also directed at an enemy whose threat exists only in Voß' imagination. However, Brentano's satire does not only subvert Voß' classicism, but also posits a Romantic alternative to it, which becomes visible in the technique of the description, and particularly in the homophonic translations, which can be seen in the following table which displays, on the left side, the first part of the conversation between the hermit and the sonnet (with transliterations of the Greek text to better highlight the homophonies) and, on the right side, the second part, which comprises a semantic translation of the Greek text into German. [32]

Einsiedler. Griechisches Sonnet.	Einsiedler. Griechisches Sonnet.
Es pocht, ich fasse Muth, wer da? mir will schier [grausen	Ei seht mir doch den tollen Schelm von hinten
Μῶν οἶσθα κεῖνον ἦμερον κράτιστον	O kennst du jenes mächt'ge Sehnsuchtsleiden,
mon oistha keinon imeron krátiston	
(Aristokratensohn , sagt er) aus welchem Lande?	In Wolfshaut will das Böcklei sich verhüllen,
Τοῦ παιδιώδους φιλτάτου τ' ἀγῶγος,	Nach tändelhaftem allerliebstem Streiten,
tu paidiódus philtátu t agonos	
(Er sagt, bei dich, o thus, viel da) – gewiß die [Heidenbande	Und weiche Reime ihm die Zipfel füllen
Ἔρωτος ποὔπερ πλεῖστός ἐστιν ὦνος	Worin des Eros Sold und Minnebeuten,
érotos uper pleistos estin onos	
(Herodes nennt er sich) mein Herr ob bleib er [draußen.	Ei! Ei! der erste Vierling will sich finden
Καρπουμένοισι χαρμάτων μέγιστον.	Des Freudepflückers aller Seligkeiten.
karpumenoisi charmáton megiston.	
(Er klagt, er sei gar matt) Hier gibt's kein Kind zu [schmaußen	Komm her, du Maskenäffchen, laß dich schinden,
Φιλημάτων γὰρ εἰ δίδωσι μισθόν,	Und will der Küsse Lohn er mir bereiten,
philematon gar ei didosi misthon	
Ja, Mißton viele matt Ton zierknarrt er im Sande	Ja, schlage nur nicht aus, du g[r]iechisch Füllen,
Οὐ 'γὼ φθονήσω τῷ κλέει Πλάτωνος	Mag Platons hohen Ruhm ich nicht beneiden,
u go phthoneso to kléei Platonos	
Oft äß' er und sein Kleeblatt Kleie ich verstande	Sprich nicht so golden, Fließ, du bist ja wüllen,
Οὐ 'γὼ φθονήσω τοῖς θεοῖς αἰῶνος·	Und nicht der Götter seelge Ewigkeiten,
u go phthoneso tois theois aionos	
Ich mische mich nicht drein, drum weicht von [diesen Klausen.	Den zweyten Vierling seh ich her sich winden,
Παῖς γὰρ φίλη πάντων καλῶν ἄριστον.	All Gut schwindt an geliebter Mägdlein Seiten.
Pais gar phile panton kalon ariston	

29. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
32. *Ibid.*, p 96 *sq.*—The transcription of the Greek follows Renate Moering's commentary in Brentano, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, vol. 21.1, p. 426; the indication of the homophonic correspondence, which Moering offers with reference to the work of Strack, has been slightly modified.

Ja ja, gar viel Band ohn, kahl ohn, er ist ohne,
Φεῦ· πρόσθ' ὁ ποῦς ἄγει με, πρόσθεν ἀεί··
Pheu prosth o pus agei me, prosthen aei
Ja prost! Ich kenn dein bieder Prost, dein kindlich
[Eiei,
Τῶν ἡδονῶν ἔτ' οὐδέν ἐστι καλόν·
ton hedonon et uden esti kalon
Im Wei[hnacht]skuchen schnappst du nach der
[Königsbohne.
Ἄλλως δὲ πῦρ τὴν καρδίαν με κάει.
allos de pyr ten kardian me kaei.

In derlei Heuderlei leg Osterhaas dein Maiey,
Ἐν οὐ λυτοῖς δεσμοῖσι κάρθ' ἑάλων.
en u lytois desmoisi karth healon
Des Moisis Garten selbst trägt keine Wünschelruth
[dir

Ὦ ἄνερ, τί καυχᾷ ταῖς φρεσὶν ματαίαις,
o ner ti kaucha tais phresin mataiais,
O närrscher Matheis, Glatteis ist, sei auf der Huth
[hier.
Εἰλημμένος ταῖς φροντίσιν κραταιαῖς·
eilemmenos tais phrontisin krataiais;

Eisbrei sei Reisbrei! ei, Breieis reiß *schnell* von
[*hinnen*,
Greep Mücken Hempken greeper mit den andern
[Spinnen.

Ach liebes Kind wie schön steht Eigenlob dir!
Ach vorwärts treibt der Fuß mich immer
[vorwärts!
Doch dreh dich erst herum, sonst gehst du
[Thorwärts,
Den Freuden alle Schönheit ist vergangen.;

Glaubs gern, wenn erst ein Drilling sich entschob
[dir,
Umsonst in Feuer loderst du empor Herz!

Der artge Drilling trillert süßen Ohrscherz,
Unlößlich harte Banden mich umfangen,

O trillre dich herum, trill mich nicht weiter

O Mann, was rühmst du dich mit eitlen
[Sinnen;
Der zweyte Drilling ach su bists's mein Christian
[Schneider.
Da mächt'ge Sorgen fesselnd sich umspinnen.

Brentano's dialogue follows an old tradition of homophonic translation in comedy: In *Poenulus*, written by Titus Maccius Plautus around 200 BC, a character from Carthage speaks Punic—which a person pretending to understand Punic translates homophonically into Latin.[33] Similar (presumed) misunderstandings of foreign and mostly classical languages can be found in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* (1598) where a character named Dull habitually takes the schoolmaster's Latin to be plain English.[34] In Andreas Gryphius' comedy *Horribilicribrifax Teutsch* (1663), a rather simple-minded person called Cyrille takes the French, Greek or Latin phrases uttered by others to be German. It is a running gag in this comedy that Cyrille often falsely believes to have been insulted as a whore—translating the Greek and Latin "ἀληθῶς, purè" as "alte Hure"[35] or the French address "Bonjour, Bonjour, Madame Cyrille" as "o Hure / o Hure Mame Zyrille!"[36]. It is evident that homophonic translation in this tradition is mostly used in order to unmask a mind who, in his or her limitedness, understands everything literally—and tendentiously interprets any speech, which they cannot grasp, in terms which they already know and take for granted.

Obviously, the hermit's homophonic translations are also quite tendentious in this sense. Not only does he ignore the foreignness of what her hears, but he also tends to perceive such words that allow him to associate the sonnet to his own previous

33. See Duckworth, George E., *The Nature of Roman Comedy, A Study in Popular Entertainment*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1971 [1952], 354 *sq.* See also Beatriz de la Fuente Marina's chapter in this book.

34. See Dumitrescu, Irina, "Literary Multilingualism in Everyday Life, The Case of Early Modern Vulgaria", *in* Dembeck, Till, Uhrmacher, Anne (Eds.) *Das literarische Leben der Mehrsprachigkeit, Methodische Erkundungen*, Heidelberg, Winter, 2016, p. 95-111, here p. 108-111.

35. *Ibid.*, 26.

36. *Ibid.*, 89.

thoughts. At first, by taking the Greek adjective 'κράτιστον' ('mighty') to be a part of the German word "Aristokratensohn" ("son of an aristocrat"), which is, of course, derived from this very Greek word, the hermit is lead to the suspicion that the sonnet might be a pagan thief. The sonnet's words "bei dich, o thus, viel da" ("at your's [?], o, do it, there is much") leads him to evoke "die Heidenbande" ("this pagan lot")—which refers back to Görres' description of Voß as the envoy of a pagan god. The hermit's subsequent insight that the intruder is called "Herodes", makes him even more suspicious, as this allows him to interpret the sonnet's wish for food as the desire of the biblical children's mass murder for human flesh: "Hier gibt's kein Kind zu schmaußen" ("there is no child to eat here"). The hermit's homophonic mistranslations thereby expose not only his limited cultural horizon, but also his prejudice against those who participate, willingly or unwillingly, in the battle he observes from his hut.

Beginning with the Greek sonnet's second quatrain, however, the hermit gets drawn into the seductive sound of Romantic poetry which, according to Voß' accusations, is so characteristic of the modern sonnet. At first, he agrees to the Greek sonnet's alleged confession that it produces nothing but inharmonious sound: "Mißton viele matt Ton zierknarrt er im Sande" ("discord, many faint notes he adorn-creaks into the sand")—which is an obvious reference to Voß' poetics of harmonic sound. Then, the hermit increasingly perceives similar 'discord' in the Greek of the sonnet, as in "Kleeblatt Klei" ("shamrock bran"), "gar viel Band ohn, kahl ohn, er ist ohne" ("very much tape without, bald without, he is without"). This preponderance of assonances and internal rhyme does not make the hermit's speech senseless, as his responses continue to have a certain consistence. He associates alcohol ("Prost") and harmless childrens' play with what her hears: "kindlich Eiei" ("infantile babbling"), "Wei[hnacht]skuchen" ("Christmas cake"), "Osterhaas" ("Easter rabbit"), "Maiey" ("may egg"). The mention of "Köhnigsbohne", which refers to a tradition of Epiphany, relates back to his second alleged sonnet, and his speech also alludes to Voß' own poetry (e. g., "Heuderlei" quotes a typical interjection of Voß' poetry [37]). Following a rather mysterious allusion to Moses and his rod—"Des Moisis Garten selbst trägt keine Wünschelruth dir" ("there is no dowsing rod for you even in Moses' garden"; *cf.* Exodus, 17:1-6)—, the hermit in the last line of the second triplet and in the coda of the sonnet finally succumbs to seemingly delirious sound play, in extending the homophonic translation of "ματαίαις", "Matheis" (=St. Matthew's day, the beginning of winter) into a series of internal rhymes and assonances: "Glatteis [...] Eisbrei sei Reisbrei! ei, Breieis reiß" ("black ice, let ice mash be rice mash! o, mash ice tear"). In the very end, the hermit evidently realises that the sonnet is in danger, continuing the Greek syllables "Εἰλῃ", which he takes to mean "eile" ("hurry"), with the words "schnell von hinnen" ("quickly, away") and cautioning the sonnet against the "Hempken greeper", which is low German for "house cricket desolator" and once more designates Voß, the warlord, who, back on the battlefield, still fights against the "stinging things".

All in all, the hermit's homophonic (mis-)interpretation of the Greek sonnet, accomplishes at least two things: It integrates the Greek poem into the satire, although, on the level of its sense, it does not have anything to do with the rest of the text.

37. See the commentary of Renate Moering in Brentano, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, *op. cit.*, vol. 21.1, p. 415 *sq.*

It is, as the immediately following translation shows, a rather trivial specimen of its kind. Moreover it converts the parochial misunderstanding of the hermit-philistine into proto-Romantic poetic productivity. The hermit's naive *malendendu* thereby already performs the affection of the philistine through Romantic poetry, which the marriage of the hermit and his beloved—dressed up as a bilingual sonnet—finally legalises. The hermit, being the ideal addressee of the *Zeitung für Einsiedler* and thus of Brentano's satire, is enabled by the force of poetic sound to overcome the philistine self-limitation which Voß, the archetypical philistine, personifies.