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The silent language of the stars

Celestial configurations and transformation in Grillparzer's *Libussa*

Libussa is the mythical ancestor of the Premyslid dynasty and the Czech people. She has been immortalized in many forms, including the fairy tale by Johann Karl August Musäus, which offered Franz Grillparzer, an Austrian writer of the *Biedermeier* or *Vormärz* period, the structural elements for his play, first performed in 1874. In this article, Edith Borchardt discusses Grillparzer's version of the Libussa myth.

Libussa, the most beautiful, virtuous, and wisest of three daughters born to Duke Krokus and a dryad in the Bohemian forest, succeeded her father on the throne of Bohemia. When her subjects demanded a male ruler, she married the plowman Primislaus for love, rejecting nobler suitors on the basis of a riddle only he could solve. Under his rule, Bohemia flourished, attracting people from all corners of the empire, so that Libussa found it necessary to build a new city called Praha (Prague) on the river Moldava.¹

Grillparzer's treatment of the Libussa myth transcends the original story by providing profound insights into the psychic structure of his main characters, making them human and real and linking processes of individual development on the human plane with transpersonal events which affect the fate of an entire nation.

- 1 This is a summary of the structural elements of the 'Libussa' tale by Johann Karl August Musäus. The full English text is available at Projekt Gutenberg (consulted January 2, 2011): <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/32046/32046-h/32046-h.htm#libussa>>. The German text is found at Sagen.at (consulted January 3, 2011). <http://www.sagen.at/texte/maerchen/maerchen_deutschland/musaeus/libussa.html> as well as Projekt Gutenberg. With this article, I wish to pay tribute to Professor Heinz Politzer, author of *Franz Grillparzer oder Das abgründige Biedermeier*, who inspired my research and guided my career with his motto 'myth and psychology'.

Myth and magic: linking inner and outer worlds

In *Libussa*, Grillparzer artfully connects myth and psychology to link macrocosmic events of cultural transformation with microcosmic processes of personal maturation, integrating inner and outer realities to shape his imagined universe. Erich Neumann describes this process of myth-making in terms of centroversion: creating the self and its relation to the world by introversion and extraversion, deriving its content 'from outside and inside equally'.² Successive stages of personal development find expression in symbols and archetypes, eternal images which indicate the evolution of ego consciousness in mythological representations and have profound significance for different cultures and nations.³ With his allusions to circumpolar constellations whose stories mirror and foretell events in his fictional universe, Grillparzer inscribes an element of magic into his drama, providing a deep spiritual dimension while indirectly referring to the revolutionary upheavals of his own time and the changing world order.

Myth and history: Bohemian national revival

According to Carl Gustav Jung, myths are the dreams of mankind, representing the wishes and fears of an entire society.⁴ They are universal stories telling of beginnings and ends, creation and destruction, revealing cultural identity through the specific context of their imagery and defining the national character. Their heroes and heroines are held in high esteem, often possessing supernatural, magical, and mystical powers. Elements of a particular myth may merge with history, as is the case with Libussa, who is the legendary founder of Prague. The rediscovery of Libussa occurred with the first phase of the Bohemian national revival (1774-1800), an exploration of cultural origins, in part coinciding with the era of liberal reforms under the Habsburg monarch Joseph II (1780-1790). Enlightenment writers looking back at the Bohemian past and seeking new meaning in its legendary and historic figures during the second half of the eighteenth century reinvented them according to the principles of liberty, fraternity, and equality.⁵ In his play, Grillparzer combines the concept of an egalitarian, compassionate and

2 Erich Neumann, *The origins of consciousness* (Princeton 1954) 35.

3 Neumann, *The origins of consciousness*, xvi.

4 David Adams Leeming, *Mythology. The voyage of the hero* (New York 1998) 5.

5 Alfred Thomas, *The Bohemian body. Gender and sexuality in modern Czech culture* (Madison 2007) 24.

just Libussa with the legend of the Czech Amazons transmitted through Hájek of Libochan's *Czech Chronicle* of 1541, republished with commentary in the critical edition by Gelasius Dobner from 1761-1782. Grillparzer's writing of *Libussa* coincides with the second phase of the Bohemian national revival (1820-1848), which advocated political autonomy and emancipation from the Habsburg Empire.

The Libussa myth merges with history through its connection with the figure of Premysl, the plowman and legendary ancestor of the Premyslid dynasty, which provided the rulers of Bohemia for five centuries (800-1306). During that time, the Czech lands gradually grew in strength and prominence within the Holy Roman Empire. In 1212, Bohemia was declared a kingdom and Bohemian princes became hereditary kings, who expanded the Empire until the Premyslid dynasty came to an end in 1306 with the murder of Wenceslas III.⁶ The ancient myth, first told to legitimize and glorify Premyslid rule, was reinterpreted again in the nineteenth century.⁷ While Musäus during the Enlightenment evoked Bohemian national identity with his tale of cultural origins, Grillparzer (writing *Libussa* in the decades preceding the revolutions of 1848) indirectly questioned the hegemony of nations and existing regimes with the use of astral imagery in his play.

Grillparzer's sources: history, myth, and astronomy

Grillparzer's *Libussa*, written between 1822 and 1848 and performed for the first time at the Vienna *Burgtheater* in 1874, incorporates historical, mythical, and legendary elements from sources the author read in his childhood and youth. They include Musäus's *Volksmärchen der Deutschen* (1782) and *Die Töchter Kroks, Böhems Fürstinnen. Eine Geschichte des 8. Jahrhunderts*, published anonymously by Wallishauser in Vienna in 1793.⁸ Toward the end of 1821, Grillparzer also read Hájek's *Chronik vom Ursprung der Böhmen*,⁹ to which he alludes in an early draft of the play.¹⁰ Musäus found the legends dealing with the founding of the City of Prague in the *Historia Bohemica* by Dubravius and in *De Bohemorum origine ac gestis*

6 Efstathia Sioras, *Cultures of the world. Czech Republic* (New York 1999) 22.

7 Peter Demetz, *Prague in black and gold. Scenes from the life of a European city* (New York 1997) 29.

8 August Sauer and Reinhold Backmann, *Franz Grillparzer. Sämtliche Werke. Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe I*: 20 (Vienna 1939) 311-312.

9 Sauer and Backmann, *Franz Grillparzer*, 318.

10 Ibidem, 370.

Historica by Cardinal Aeneas Sylvius.¹¹ In her discussion of Grillparzer's sources and the various versions of the Libussa myth available to him, Thekla Pick also mentions Herder's adaptation in his ballad, *Die Fürstentafel* (1778), Brentano's drama, *Die Gründung Prags* (1815), and a chronicle of Bohemia written by Cosmas, deacon of the *Domkirche* in Prague in the early twelfth century. *The Programmheft der Salzburger Festspiele* of 1997 additionally lists the opera *Libussa* by J. C. Bernard with music by Konradin Kreutzer (1829) and the national heroic epic *Wlasta* by K. E. Ebert (1829), as well as a history of Bohemia (*Böhmen*) in three volumes by W. A. Gerles (1823).¹² In his father's library, however, Grillparzer in his youth also found a book by the French naturalist Buffon (1707-1788), which made a great impression on him and, as Grillparzer notes in his autobiography, almost drove him out of his mind with its description of planets, comets, and their 'Ur-Revolutionen'.¹³ Buffon's writings about astronomy must have inspired Grillparzer to allude to significant constellations foretelling important events in his play and to use signs of the zodiac to mark the stages in the cultural evolution of patriarchy from matriarchy, giving the historical myth of Libussa cosmic dimensions.

Meditative vision: stages of history and cultural evolution

Central to Grillparzer's *Libussa* is the notion of *Sammlung*,¹⁴ a meditative centering practiced by the three sisters in the play, who are visionaries belonging to an ideal sphere beyond the human realm. They have the gift of prophecy and the ability to read the future in the stars. Because of her encounter with Primislaus, Libussa leaves the mystic circle of her sisters. While her mission is to transform human society as ruler in her father's place, bringing divine order into earthly life, she is transformed as well.

11 Thekla Pick, *Grillparzer's 'Libussa'* M.A. thesis (New York 1910). For a thorough examination of Brentano's play, *Die Gründung Prags* and Grillparzer's *Libussa*, as well as their treatment of the Libussa tale by Johann Karl August Musäus (and a summary of the original myth), see John Pizer, 'The disintegration of Libussa', *Germanic Review* 73:2 (1998) 145-160. His analysis includes an overview of critical approaches by Grillparzer scholars.

12 Gundl Hradil ed., *Programmheft der Salzburger Festspiele* (Salzburg 1997) 9-10.

13 'Grillparzer, *Selbstbiographie*' in: Frank and Pörnbacher ed., *Sämtliche Werke* (München 1965) 34.

14 For an extensive discussion of this topic, see Paul K. Whitaker, 'The concept of "Sammlung" in Grillparzer's works', *Monatshefte* 41:2 (1949) 93-103.

Her married life and quotidian concerns in this world deprive her of her spiritual gifts. William C. Reeve attributes Libussa's loss of harmony with nature and the cosmos to her separation from the domain of her sisters in the process of individuation,¹⁵ i.e. the separation from the intuitive realm of the unconscious and transformation of the self on the human physical and mental plane. By assuming human form to marry a mortal man, Libussa sacrifices her divinatory powers, and her efforts to reclaim them in her role of priestess in the last act of the play are accomplished at the cost of her life.

As early as 1822, Grillparzer remarks how women are perceived in Slavic history to be visionaries,¹⁶ and in his play Libussa and her sisters Kascha and Tetka (with their female servants) are able to discern the development of human history, which takes place in several dialectical stages: 1) The initial reign of Libussa's ailing father, Duke Krokus, comes to an end at the beginning of the play while Libussa is gathering herbs to heal him. 2) With his death begins the Golden Age of Libussa, which Grillparzer designated as '*Frauenherrschaft des Gefühls*',¹⁷ an intuitive, idyllic reign that concludes with 3) the succession of Primislaus to the Bohemian throne. 4) In her prophecy at the end of the play, Libussa anticipates a new era beyond the materialism and utilitarianism under the rule of Primislaus, a future utopia in which intuition and knowledge are paired together and the gods will become immanent once more in human life. The transition from one age to another is prefigured each time by the trajectory of the planets and the configuration of the stars.

Planetary forces: teleology and historical transformation

At the beginning of the play, Libussa's servants Dobra and Swartka observe Mars, Jupiter, Cygnus and Lyra to determine what fate may have in store. The lower stars follow the sign of the Swan, symbol of transformation. With their powers of divination, the women connect events in the human realm with the sacred space they inhabit. Dobra foresees the death of Libussa's father Krokus in the conjunction of Jupiter and Mars: '*Wenn Mars und Jupiter sich so begegnen/Ist das die Stunde, die dem Leben droht*' (GL 9).¹⁸ [When

15 William C. Reeve, *Grillparzer's Libussa. The tragedy of separation* (Montreal 1999).

16 Sauer and Backmann, *Franz Grillparzer*, 370.

17 August Sauer, 'Apparat' in: *Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe* I:20, 319.

18 Franz Grillparzer, *Libussa* (Stuttgart 1997). All citations from the play refer to page numbers from this text, based on the critical edition by August Sauer and Reinhold Backmann with slightly modernized spelling. GL = Grillparzer's *Libussa*.

Mars and Jupiter conjoin this way/That hour dooms life to decay].¹⁹ The sign of Leo in Swartka's prophecy in the same act points beyond the zodiac to the symbol of Bohemian power: the lion in the country's coat of arms, indicating the rise of Bohemia. At first, Swartka believes she sees the sign of Virgo, but it is Leo instead (GL 21-22). Humanity is not yet ready for the Age of Virgo, which follows that of Leo. Swartka mentioned it erroneously. It is the future revealed in Libussa's vision preceding her death in the last act, the age which will follow the reign of Primislaus, whose rule, though prosperous, is characterized by the destruction of nature for the sake of progress and civilization.

The constellations Swartka refers to in Act I are the circumpolar stars of the northern hemisphere, visually indicating a circle with the polar star at its center at the terminal point of the elongated earth axis. This centering image corresponds to the mystic circle of Libussa and her sisters, whose insights are connected to the heavenly configurations. By entering the human sphere, Libussa loses the divine aspect of herself. Her wholeness is shattered, as indicated by the splitting of her belt (GL 6). No longer symbolizing eternal unity in an unbroken circle, it now has a beginning and an end, signifying chronological time and teleology. Libussa's veil and shoes lie scattered in the grass, alluding to the loss of her former centered self. Each sister was given such a belt with a centerpiece consisting of the images of their parents, revealing her origin and identity. By placing the three chains in a sacrificial bowl, the sisters were able to conjure up their father's spirit and seek his advice. On her return from her encounter with Primislaus, however, Libussa has lost the medaillon with the image of her mother. Primislaus removed it to find out her identity. This missing link becomes the impetus for the riddles that eventually bring the two together in matrimony.

The crown as circle image: the conscious return to origins

By leaving the circle of her sisters, Libussa represents the principle of individuation on a suprapersonal plane. Through her, the divine plan foretold in the stars becomes immanent in human existence. When Arcturus and Corona are fading from the northern hemisphere past midnight, this signifies the decline of Krokus and the dawning of the Golden Age of Libussa, followed by the reign of Primislaus. However, the waning of

¹⁹ All English translations of the German citations are mine.

Arcturus, a bright star in the constellation of Boötes (which, according to Webster, means 'plowman' in Greek) also predicts the eventual decline of patriarchy, as Libussa prophecies in her role as priestess in the last act. She foresees a time when the gods will return to earth and intuition will be paired with knowledge (GL 90). This new age will be the return to a former state on a higher level of consciousness, where power will be neither male nor female, where masculine and feminine rule will not follow in succession but exist together in harmony, resulting in actions guided by wisdom and clairvoyance. At the end of the play, the three sisters leave their golden belts as their legacy for the city dwellers of Prague. Kascha commands that a crown be made from them for the king who rules not in mythic but historic time. The crown will be a sign of the former presence of the three sisters on this earth, of origin and future. For Primislaus, the city of Prague serves as the threshold for progress and mercantilism, for fame and happiness, where idea becomes reality and body and spirit are united in one point through creative action (GL 79). It is the entrance to the *oikumene*, the inhabited world, which needs the blessing of Libussa to succeed. For Libussa, it is the place where her body and spirit part and she returns to the realm of her mother and her father, leaving her belt as symbol for the connection with the gods, in whom is beginning and end.

Power conflicts: transformation of the self and society

Reflecting in his diary on the device of the golden chain, Libussa's belt, Grillparzer dismisses it as empty technique, rational and constructed. Yet the entire drama hinges on it, since it is linked to the two riddles which bring Libussa and Primislaus together in a conscious effort of making their desires known. Libussa is aware that Primislaus is the only man who can solve her riddle, since he has the missing link, the medaillon or *Kleinod*, which will make the broken chain whole again. Primislaus, however, poses his own riddle when he brings the chain that he has cleverly obtained from Libussa's three Bohemian suitors while sending them back to Libussa with the medaillon he had stolen. Their courtship becomes a sparring game with serious consequences, because Libussa is displeased with having to solve the riddle Primislaus poses when he brings her the chain belt hidden under a cornucopia of flowers and fruits. Their struggle of wills results in his imprisonment and torture, from which he is freed only by acknowledging Libussa's authority as his regent and demonstrating the solution to her



Primislaus as prisoner of the Amazons in Libussa's castle. Photocredit "Salzburger Festspiele/Photo Schaffler".

riddle by inserting the missing link in the broken chain, the picture of her mother which, merging with Libussa's image, had taken root in his heart (GL 34). The love relationship between Primislaus and Libussa consists of a protracted verbal battle which only after a long struggle leads to their union. It is a power conflict on both a personal and political level. Barbara Lowatsch-Boomgarden discerns an 'intricate interplay of two converging story-lines' in *Libussa*: 1) the power struggle between the sexes, embodied by Libussa and Primislaus, and 2) the transition 'from a natural economy without written laws to a society oriented toward the state and material progress'.²⁰ The conflict between the lovers transcends personal individuation, since they are representatives of clashing world views in the evolvement of patriarchy from a mythical matriarchy in the history of civilization.²¹

Beyond the *hieros gamos*: the amazon and transformation

With profound psychological insight, Grillparzer presents the inner transformation of the two main characters in his play, revealing the human drama of their maturation process against the backdrop of societal and cultural changes. From the very beginning, Primislaus declares his intentions toward Libussa openly, asking her if she is not a woman he could hope to marry: 'Du bist kein Weib um das man werben könnte?' (GL

20 Barbara Lowatsch-Boomgarden, 'Salzburg Festival 1997. Running toward the millennium,' *Austrian Studies Newsletter* 9:3 (1977) 21.

21 Edith Borchardt, 'Grillparzer's *Libussa*. The tragedy of separation by William C. Reeve,' *Monatshefte* 95: 4 (2003) 671-672.

6) [You're not a woman I could court?] She replies, '*du hast's erraten*' (GL 6) [You guessed right]. Once Libussa becomes aware that her subjects want a masculine ruler and expect her to marry, her intentions are directed toward Primislaus as the only possible choice. She has not wanted to marry until then, because she idealized her father: '*...mein Vater, euer Fürst/War mir des Mannes ein so würdig Bild/Daß ich vergebens seinesgleichen suche*.' (GL 30) [...my father, who's your sovereign,/Seemed such a worthy image of a man/ That I in vain seek someone equal to him].

Libussa's psychological task in the play is to transfer the love she feels for her father to Primislaus as a lover. His task is to transfer love for his sister to Libussa. Their courtship is complicated by the fact that she does not want to subordinate herself to him, and Primislaus wants to conquer her without subjugating himself.²² From this results the battle of the sexes, corresponding to stage III in Ann Belford Ulanov's paradigm for individuation,²³ where the male psyche relates to the feminine on an individual rather than a collective basis, 'not to woman, but to *this* woman, not to sex, but in a sexual response to *this* person, not knowing himself as male, but as *this* particular man who knows his maleness in relation to *this* woman'.²⁴ The female psyche experiences stage III as the Amazonian phase in female individuation and maturation. The Amazon is the feminine archetype of the Virgin, which in its positive manifestation is true to the feminine principle, 'one which yields an identity where the woman feels she is a person in her own right and not simply a counterpart to the male'.²⁵ Her allegiance is to her own goals and principles rather than the fulfillment of male desire. Primislaus, in relating to Libussa, has to recognize her otherness while integrating the feminine into his own psyche on this new level of awareness. Once he has recognized Libussa's power and internalized her influence, Primislaus has accomplished his individuation in the maturation process. Only then can the real marriage take place, which has social and historical implications for an entire nation beyond the *hieros gamos* (the mystical marriage) of inner transformation and the mythical meaning of the king marrying the land.

22 Peter Stein, 'Polizeistaat im Paradies', *Bühne* 7/8 (1997) 19.

23 Ann Belford Ulanov, *The feminine in Jungian psychology and in Christian theology* (Evanston 1971).

24 Ulanov, *The feminine*, 230.

25 Ibidem, 205. As director of *Libussa* at the Salzburg Festival on the Perner-Insel in Hallein (1997), Peter Stein brilliantly depicted Libussa's realm and rule as an Amazonian state, externalizing the inner psychological development of the main characters on the stage.



Primislaus offering a cornucopia of grains and flowers to Libussa. Photocredit "Salzburger Festspiele/ Photo Schaffler".

Astral images: linking microcosmic and macrocosmic events

The silent subtext of the astral images in *Libussa* evokes the myths connected with the figures of the constellations, which allude to the distant past and transcend individual cultures while revealing the imminent future for Bohemia within the play and beyond it. Early in the first act Swartka observes the nocturnal sky past midnight, anticipating the dawning of a new day, a transitional time ushered in by the guiding light of Arcturus (GL 9), the brightest star in the northern hemisphere. It is part of the constellation of Boötes, the Cultivator or Plowman who, in astral lore, drives the Bears (Ursa Major and Ursa Minor) around the Pole Star, Polaris.²⁶

According to Ethelbert William Bullinger, Boötes was known among the ancient Egyptians as Smat, meaning 'one who rules, subdues, and governs'. They also called him Bau, 'the one to come'.²⁷ Any type of occupation that requires planning is influenced by Boötes. Grillparzer does not name Boötes specifically among the constellations in his text, but Arcturus is inevitably connected with the celestial image of the Plowman, the heavenly counterpart to Primislaus, the ruler of Bohemia, who is also the city planner and builder of Prague. The constellation of the Crown in the night sky of the northern hemisphere is located near the constellation of Boötes and perhaps for this reason, one version of the astral myth of Corona Borealis,

26 Ellie Crystal, 'Arcturus' (posted 1995-2010) <<http://www.crystalinks.com/arcturus.html>>.

27 Ethelbert William Bullinger, *The witness of the stars* (Grand Rapids 1967) 42-43.

'*die Krone*' mentioned by Swartka in Act I, claims that it belongs to Boötes.²⁸ Its disappearance in the dawning hours implies the end of the reign of Krokus and anticipates the eventual rule of Primislaus, who is elevated to his position through his marriage with Libussa.

Courting Libussa in Act III, Primislaus appears wearing a wreath made of grain stalks and corn flowers on his head,²⁹ and carrying a basket of flowers and fruits in which Libussa's belt is hidden, which he had cleverly exchanged for the medaillon in his encounter with Libussa's three suitors. He presents Libussa with his crown of grain, the golden diadem of nature (GL 52). Although Primislaus approaches her with profound humility, Libussa interprets his words as a challenge to her authority. The ensuing power struggle between them is resolved only after his incarceration and verbal submission to her, when she in turn asks for his protection from the people who demand his freedom (GL 71). As he produces the medaillon cleverly obtained from Libussa's servant Wlasta and places it in Libussa's belt, enacting the solution to her riddle, she recognizes his nobility and innate talent for leadership, bestowing on him the Bohemian crown in their union.

Corona Borealis, also called 'The Wreath of Flowers,' or 'Diadema Coeli',³⁰ is an open circle of stars which only the Greeks saw as a crown or wreath. The Shawnee tribe of Native Americans imagined it to be a group of dancing star maidens whose circle is incomplete because one of the maidens fell in love with a mortal warrior and left her celestial sisters to live with him, a myth echoing Libussa's separation from the circle of her sisters to marry Primislaus.³¹ In another version of this story, it is Hawk, a hunter, who captured the most beautiful of the maidens and took her home with him to be his bride. She, however, longed to return to her heavenly abode and, singing a magic chant, returned to the heavens, where she now appears as Arcturus, the bright star near the Crown, in the constellation of Boötes, the Plowman.³² In Grillparzer's play, Libussa cannot return to the meditative life of her sisters as an escape from the burdens of ruling Bohemia when she requests to do so, but the chant of her prophecy in the last act

28 'Corona Borealis' (posted June 10, 2010) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corona_Borealis>.

29 Grillparzer, *Libussa*. Stage instructions GL 52.

30 William Tyler Olcott, *Star lore of all ages* (New York 1911) 151.

31 Chandra, 'Corona Borealis' (posted August 1, 2008, Cambridge: Harvard Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics) <<http://chandra.harvard.edu/photo/constellations/coronaborealis.html>>.

32 Olcott, 151 <<http://www.aavso.org/myths-crb>> (posted May 7, 2010).

releases her from the bonds of human life. Libussa's death is prefigured in the constellation of Lyra, the lyre, with its allusion to the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice (a wood nymph, like Libussa's mother).³³

The secret language of the stars: history and politics

The poetic images of the constellations lend a kind of musicality and lyricism to the structure of the play, interlacing their archetypal stories with the events unfolding on the human plane. The eternal love stories inscribed in the heavens parallel the story of Premislaus and Libussa, but the secret language of the stars also comments on history and politics, interweaving intuitive and rational expression, images and ideas. In the first act of *Libussa*, Swartka observes fox, fish, and salamander (the lower stars) following the noble constellation of Aquila, the eagle, which leads the anonymous masses proceeding in the path of their leader, while the serpent reveals a threatening aspect (GL 9). The snake and the salamander are images from the coded language of alchemy, symbols for processes of individual and societal transformation, cabbalism and freemasonry. The astral images Grillparzer chose provide the gateway to diverse spiritual practices, offering a key to secret worlds and ideas concealed in their stories and analogies.

The eagle, like the crown, is a universal symbol of power adopted by many countries, among them the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, as well as the Austrian Empire which succeeded it. Grillparzer wrote at a time when the Bohemian lion had been swallowed by the eagle and the Kingdom of Bohemia had become an integral part of the multi-national Empire. He wrote at a time when monarchies and empires were threatened in the wake of democratic revolutions in France and America and the writings of Marx and Hegel were challenging philosophical systems and the structure of society. At a time of shifting political and economic paradigms, Grillparzer foresaw the dangers associated with progress and materialism, the change from an agricultural to an industrial urban society with harmful ecological consequences. As a liberal with conservative tendencies and a conservative with liberal tendencies,³⁴ he embodied his vision of shifting power relationships and the inevitable unfolding of history in the celestial configurations and the silent language of their images, multivalent in the stories connected with them and ambiguous as dreams. The waning of the

33 'Eurydice' (posted August 5, 2010) <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eurydice>>.

34 Günther Nenning, 'Die Welt wird Grillparzerisch' in: Monika and Michael Klein ed., *Grillparzer-Bilder 1991* (Innsbrucker Zeitungsarchiv 1993) 86.



Constellations, Northern Hemisphere, Source: John E. Pike, Director of GlobalSecurity.org.

constellations in Grillparzer's play implies the end of one era and the arrival of the next, not necessarily a brighter, more optimistic future, as Libussa indicates in her prophecy in Act V:

*'Nicht mehr mit blut'gen Waffen wird man kämpfen,
Der Trug, die Hinterlist ersetzt das Schwert.
Das Edle schwindet von der weiten Erde,
Das Hohe sieht vom Niedern sich verdrängt.
Und Freiheit wird sich nennen die Gemeinheit,
Als Gleichheit brüsten sich der dunkle Neid'. (GL 87)*

[No longer will they fight with bloody weapons,
Deception, treachery are the new sword.
All that is noble disappears from Earth,
High rank displaced by lowliness.
Baseness will take the name of liberty,
Dark envy boasting of equality].

Libussa's dark vision rings true in our time, a time of terrorism and global warming, ecological catastrophes, and economic fraud and greed. Like Libussa, Grillparzer speaks of truth veiled in parables, '*Wahrheit, nur verhüllt/ In Gleichnis und in selbstgeschaffnes Bild*' (GL 89) [Truth, veiled/ In parable and self-created imagery]. With his carefully chosen astral images, Grillparzer poeticizes his source material, giving it profundity with his insights into myth and psychology, philosophy, and the evolution of the world order.

What Peter Demetz calls 'a productive perversion of the Czech myth',³⁵ is more aptly described by Lorenz Mikoletzky as follows:

*'Alles, was der Autor im Laufe der Jahre über Mythos und Religion, Philosophie und die Kräfte der Seele, zu Staat, Recht, Besitz und Herrschertum gedacht hatte, wurde in die Geschichte der Gründerin Prags eingebracht.'*³⁶

[Everything the author had thought in the course of the years about myth and religion, philosophy and the powers of the soul, about government, justice, ownership, and sovereignty was incorporated in the story of the female founder of Prague].

Grillparzer, who agonized over the symbols to use in *Libussa* to capture the spiritual dimension of the play,³⁷ found them written in the stars. By alluding to the constellations in *Libussa*, Grillparzer creates patterns of correspondence between the heavens and the human sphere to illustrate in hermetic fashion the connection between the microcosmos and the macrocosmos: as above, so below, an axiom in *The Emerald Tablet* of Hermes Trismegistus,³⁸ which is the key to all mysteries and systems of magic effecting transformation on the physical, mental, and spiritual plane by acts of the imagination and acts of will. Her practice of *Sammlung*, an intense concentration achieved by the will of the spirit,³⁹ releases Libussa from her human existence at the end of the play and elevates her to the pantheon of the immortals.

35 Demetz, *Prague in black and gold*, 26.

36 Lorenz Mikoletzky, 'Ein Dichter der letzten Dinge' in: Monika and Michael Klein ed., *Grillparzer-Bilder 1991* (Innsbrucker Zeitungsarchiv 1993) 81.

37 T.C. Dunham, 'The circle image in Grillparzer's Libussa', *Germanic Review* 36 (1961) 125-136.

38 Concerning Hermes Trismegistus, *The emerald tablet*, "As above, so below," see Alan G. Hefner, 'The Mystica'. An on-line encyclopedia of the occult, mysticism, magic,... (posted 1997-2010) <http://www.themystica.com/mystica/articles/a/below_above.html>.

39 Paul Whitaker, 'The concept of *Sammlung*', 95.