

# Ranke in the Lobby of the Archive: Metaphors and Conditions of Historical Research

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“Probably you have heard about the papers and collections of the Venetian Doge Mario Foscari. These papers contain a lot of the most important things. Besides fourteen cahiers there are more than a hundred volumes that I have to look through. Here [in the Viennese *Hofbibliothek*], I have a splendid and amorous tête-à-tête with the object of my love, a beautiful Italian [*eine schöne Italienerin*], and I hope, we will manage to procreate a prodigy of ‘Roman-Germanics’. Completely exhausted I rise at twelve o’clock. Then [Bartholomäus] Kopitar [Director of the Viennese *Hofbibliothek*] and I are heading slowly to the ‘White Wolf’, where we have lunch.” (Let. Ritter, 28 Oct 1827, Ranke 1890, 173ff, 175)

Leopold Ranke, writing to his friend and colleague Heinrich Ritter (1791–1869), depicted his encounter with *relazioni*, the reports of Venetian ambassadors, in a sensual language. As Ranke put it, the *relazioni*, their physical quality, transform into a female Italian body; he presented the historian’s intimate work with the manuscripts in the Viennese *Hofbibliothek* as well as its desired result, a further publication of his *Geschichte der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1514* as—metaphorically—having sex and procreating.<sup>1</sup>

## Outline

In spite of its apparent sensual quality, the quote from Ranke’s letter is deluding if taken for granted. The focus on this particular metaphor ignores the diverse political and administrative conditions of scholarly research faced by

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<sup>1</sup> Various scholars have made reference to Ranke’s emotionally charged description of his sources or to this quote (Benzoni 1990; Fulda 1996a; 1996b; Grafton 1994; 1997; Baur 1998). But it was not before Bonnie Smith’s pioneering piece of scholarship, *The Gender of History*, that Ranke’s and other historians’ gendered descriptions of ‘sources’ were investigated in the context of the exclusion of women from professional academic history during the nineteenth century (Smith 1995; idem 1998).

Leopold Ranke on his research mission between 1827 and 1831.<sup>2</sup> This essay examines the historian's maneuvers in the lobby of the archive as indicated in the letters written by the historian during his study tour, paying particular attention to the relationship between the metaphoric description of his work and the conditions of historical research. First, I briefly consider the particular type of material, personal letters,<sup>3</sup> in which Ranke described his work in rather sensual terms. When writing letters, Ranke deployed a particular writing strategy, the style of immediacy, in order to overcome the distance to his addressees; he produced "beautiful illusion" (Let. K. Varnhagen, 9 Dec 1827, Ranke 1949a, 126ff, 126). Secondly, I examine the archive policy of the Habsburg monarchy as indicated and reflected by the historian in his personal accounts. Dramatizing his search for *relazioni*, the historian reported in detail about the difficulties when seeking access to state archives on his study tour in Central Europe. By focusing on Ranke's initial failure to gain access to the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv* in Vienna and the subsequent approval of his second request in autumn 1827, I examine basic characteristics of the government's archive policy and the strategies and means of the historian to successfully overcome the threshold separating the spheres of the public and of the arcane in the Austrian Empire. Thirdly, I point out the impact of the government's archive policy on Ranke's research: waiting for

<sup>2</sup> This article presents some results of my research on the *Archive policy in the 19th Century*.

I presented my first interpretations of Ranke's letters at the Postgraduate School *Archiv, Wissen, Macht* at the University Bielefeld, at the Postgraduate School *Media of History—History of Media* at the Universities of Weimar, Erfurt and Jena, and at the Interdisciplinary Workshop *Cultures of Letter Writing* organized by Regina Schulte at the University of Bochum. Subsequently, I was pleased about the opportunity to present different versions of my essay at the conference *Historians at Work* organized by Henning Trüper, Niklas Olsen, and Bo Stråth at the *European University Institute* (EUI), at the conference *Histories: Unsettling and Unsettled* organized by Alf Lüdtke and Sebastian Jobs at the *Arbeitsstelle für Historische Anthropologie* at the University of Erfurt, and at the *Research Colloquium* of Alf Lüdtke. I thank both coordinators and participants of these academic venues for their critical remarks and helpful comments. Moreover, I owe thanks to Gerhard Fürmetz, Rebekka Habermas, Hans Medick, and Esther Schomacher; their expertise in different fields provided a rich resource of advice, support and criticism. I thank also the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG), the *Deutsche Akademische Austauschdienst* (DAAD), the *School of Slavonic and East European Studies* (SSEES), and *University College London* (UCL) for their financial support of my research.

<sup>3</sup> Due to the intricate history of the edition of Ranke's letter, this article is based on a close examination of all of Ranke's letters from the period in question which are available and have been published so far (Ranke 1890; Ranke 1949a; Ranke 1949b). For an instructive and helpful historical account and reflection of the edition of Ranke's letter see Muhlack 2007; Ramonat 2007. All quotations from foreign languages are translated by the author.

the government's decision and the approval of his requests was not without effect on Ranke's relationship to state officials, to his study tour, and to the nimbus of historical clues. Finally, I read Ranke's gendered metaphors against the backdrop of political and administrative conditions of historical research: Ranke's metaphoric language employs "emotion statements" (Reddy 1997, 331f); these very statements enabled the historian to display his bliss when finally working with his object of desire, the *relazioni*.

### Writing Letters, Producing Illusions

Writing letters to colleagues and friends, Ranke performed a regulated and trained social practice, resulting in elaborated literary forms. When contemporary historians quote and read certain phrases in an eclectic manner and identify their metaphorical language immediately with general developments of the historical discipline in the nineteenth century,<sup>4</sup> they ignore both the very conditions of research faced by Ranke and the specifics of the letters in which the famous historian represented his daily work. Leopold Ranke carefully composed his letters before he sent them off: he drafted a first version; sometimes he put aside a letter for a while before he wrote the final version to be submitted to the addressee (Let. F. Ranke, April 1829, Ranke 1949b, 120ff, 120; Editor's comment, 120, Footnote 1). Secondly, epistolary representation of events and experiences followed stylistic rules.<sup>5</sup> Time and again, Ranke drew on these rules by rendering his accounts of experiences and impressions: he explicitly referred to one of these rules; he evaluated his writing according to the required standards of letter writing; he main-

4 Furthermore, Ranke's utterance does not indicate a professionalization of the historical discipline in the nineteenth century. First, doing research in Vienna in 1827, Ranke had not yet established a historical seminar, the first of its kind and generally considered the motor of professionalization. Thus the gendered language in his letters written prior to the foundation of his *exercitationes historicae* in Berlin does not reflect this distinct feature of a later academic field of historical training and research (Smith 1995, 1154; idem 1998). Recent studies provide compelling cases which doubt the installment of a compulsory "research imperative" (Turner 1973) in the nineteenth century. (Moraw 1984; Baumgarten 1997; Paetschek 2001; Paetschek 2002; Lingelbach 2003). For a detailed critique of the genetic legend of the professionalization thesis see Müller 2004, 419ff.

5 These rules and maxims had already been articulated in the eighteenth century, e.g. *locus classicus* Christian F. Gellert, *Briefe, nebst einer praktischen Abhandlung von dem guten Geschmacke in Briefen* (1751); for a general overview of maxims and rules of epistolary writing see Nickisch 1969.

tained a fictitious dialogue with his addressee by raising questions in direct speech; or he mentioned this or that rule in order to shift the focus. Hence the conclusion “Enough and far too much of scholarly issues!” in a letter to Ferdinand Ranke (1802–1876), who was a trained philologist like his older brother Leopold (Let. F. Ranke, 16 Dec 1830, Ranke 1949b, 139ff, 141).

Letter writing ought to provide an immediate and direct communication between writer and reader(s), thus overcoming the distance and the means of communication. Immediacy was the implicit imperative of letter writing and should be reached by a particular mode of representation, i.e. a style of writing, which allowed for an alleged direct transmission of personal impressions and experiences. Hence Ranke’s thanks to Karl (1785–1858) and Rahel Varnhagen van Ense (1771–1833) for their “two beautiful letters” which created “the most beautiful illusion” in his mind (Let. K. Varnhagen, 9 Dec 1827, Ranke 1949a, 126ff, 126).

These “illusions” could take very different shapes depending on the exchange of words between writer and addressee. Letter writing reflects among other aspects the social relationship between writer and reader(s). Ranke’s metaphoric description took on, therefore, a slightly different form as he reported to his friend Bettina von Arnim (1785–1859) on his work with his favored manuscripts, the *relazioni*:

“You cannot believe what a weight of manuscripts containing issues all worth knowing is still waiting for me. Just imagine as much, possibly beautiful princesses, all accursed and to be redeemed.” (Let. Arnim, 6 Feb 1828, Ranke 1949a, 139f, 139)

Leopold Ranke once again identifies his material as female, but he resorts to a different, romantic metaphor as he describes his work in the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv*. A first explanation of the difference is that, writing to his friend Heinrich Ritter, the historian Ranke indulges in men’s talk. What is more, to comprehend fully the symbolic significance of the metaphoric language in his letters, one must read Leopold Ranke’s self fashioning against the social and political background that informed his research. In contrast to the metaphorical representation of his professional work, Leopold Ranke performed his archival research at a very early stage of the process in a field of forces in which the historian took the position of a (foreign) subject, hoping for the favor of the sovereign and his government. Access to state archives relied on the successful application of various means which helped to promote the historian’s research project.

### Before the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv* in Vienna

In September 1827, Leopold Ranke (1795–1886) left for Vienna. The trip was meant to last until the beginning of the new semester in October, but instead Ranke's research mission took three and half years. He traveled to Vienna, the newly acquired territories of the Habsburg monarchy such as Venice in the south of the Austrian Empire, and to various cities and towns in northern and southern Italy; finally, he returned to Berlin in 1831.

Ranke wanted to use *relazioni* of Venetian ambassadors. For Ranke, the ambassador's reports about the ongoing affairs at European courts allowed to trace major political events and their developments. A collection of these manuscripts by Mario Foscari (1696–1763), Doge of the Venetian Republic (1762–1763), was kept in the Viennese *Hofbibliothek*; yet another collection was preserved in the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv*, formerly known as the *k.k. Geheime Hausarchiv*. While Ranke had gained access to the *Hofbibliothek*, the use of the archive was a state affair. The use of archival material was at the discretion of the sovereign and, since 1762, in the hands of the state government. In February 1817, Prince von Metternich reminded the archive's principal that "without approval of the superior authority nobody whoever it may be" (Bittner 1936, 166) was allowed to retrieve any information. Leopold Ranke had *to ask* for permission to use materials kept in state archives for safe keeping; thus, he petitioned for access in autumn 1827. However, in spite of initially positive signals from various Austrian officials, Ranke's first attempt failed. He was not permitted to use the central archive of the Habsburg monarchy, the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv* (Let. Ritter, 4 Oct 1827, Ranke 1890, 171ff, 173). A writ of the state government's office responded to his request "as completely negatively as possible", as Ranke put it. The main concerns mentioned were: "Far too modern history. Rules. Alien to the archive" (Let. K. Varnhagen, 9. Dec 1827, Ranke 1949a, 126ff, 126).

The officials deemed the span of time the historian was interested in most to be too recent. Leopold Ranke was mainly concerned with developments in the European states from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century. However, the *Geheime Hausarchiv* founded by Queen Maria Thérèse (1717–1780) in 1749 was by no means designed to serve historians' curiosity about the past. The main purpose of the *Hof-, Haus- and Staatsarchiv*, was determined by its superior authority, the government of state. The archive was an integral part of the arcane sphere of the state; its main task was to participate in protecting and safeguarding the 'good order' of state and civil society. Safekeeping diplomas, agreements, and treaties, the archive

helped to secure the status quo and the legal order. The archive provided originals in case of legal conflict and thus guaranteed the country's order and 'welfare'. The archive's arcane knowledge should be advantageous to the government and its various subordinated administrative bodies by furnishing information required for efficient governmental rule; any historian's interest in the archive's holdings was secondary.

Furthermore, Leopold Ranke, a scholar in the pay of the Prussian state and a subject of the King of Prussia, was "alien to the archive" of a foreign state. In a letter to his younger brother Heinrich (1798–1876), Leopold Ranke reflected on the significance of the threshold he was about to cross:

"Allow me to confess something, which I have not entrusted to anybody so far. When one travels from Bohemia to Saxony, *on the border itself* there is a small circle of trees, the street has been extended and strewn with yellow sand. In Berlin and Dresden I was told so much about the different Austrian customs and character, so that I was more than ever filled with it: *I travel to a new country, uncertain of a good reception*. Enough, with this feeling I rose to inward prayer in that double circle of trees in spite of the noisiness of my neighbors: *Let me be well!*" (Let. K. Varnhagen, 9.12.1827, Ranke 1949a, 126ff, 126)

### Receiving a "good reception"

A "good reception", as Ranke put it, was the result of the successful promotion of his research matter. However, after Ranke had crossed the border, it took a while until the foreigner received a "good reception" (Let. H. Ranke, End of Nov 1827, Ranke 1890, 176ff, 177) in Vienna. A first condition of making a case was the historian's physical presence: Leopold Ranke appeared in the anteroom of the archive. He did not initiate the request to use the Austrian archive before leaving Berlin, but instead did so after his arrival in Vienna in autumn 1827. The same observation can be made about his subsequent sojourns. Whether in Venice (fall 1828) or Florence (spring 1829): whenever the researcher arrived in a city where he sought to enlarge his "collection" of material (Let. H. Ranke, 15 Nov 1829, Ranke 1890, 226ff, 227), he had finally achieved a position to submit his petition.

In Vienna, the historian was to be transformed from an "alien" to a well known person. In other words, the petitioner required an officially legitimized personal identity, if his request was to be approved by the state government. A first resource which provided Ranke with symbolic power

was his scholarly reputation preceding his arrival in Vienna in September 1827. To his brother Heinrich he wrote, “My last book is the reason of my joy. Everybody, so to speak, knows about my efforts and acknowledges them. I enjoy support in manifold ways” (Let. H. Ranke, End of November 1827, Ranke 1890, 176ff, 177).

In this letter, Ranke referred to his recent scholarly achievements. Several years earlier, in 1824, Ranke had successfully made an impact. After comparing various accounts of Italian history, he had not only noticed differences but also the secondary sources on which they all relied. Ranke had propagated a harsh *Critique of recent Historiographs* and published his own attempt at recent Italian history, *Geschichte der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494–1535*, based on Italian *relazioni* kept in the Royal Library in Berlin. Both his criticism and his own research earned him not only praise among various scholars and intellectuals in Berlin, but also the attention of leading state officials. Good contacts of his younger brother Ferdinand paved the way to a post in the Prussian Ministry of Cultural Affairs. “Everything had been planned in detail.”<sup>6</sup> Officials supplied with a copy of Ranke’s study were intrigued by his rigorous critique and investigation and, consequently, considered him a “restorer of history” (Dove 1888, 251) in the era of restoration subsequent to the Vienna Congress in 1815. As a result, Johannes Schulze (1786–1869), Court Counselor at the Prussian Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, and Heinrich von Kamptz (1769–1849), Director of the Prussian Ministry of Justice, approved Ranke’s appointment as extraordinary professor at the Friedrich Wilhelm Universität in Berlin in 1825. A first volume of his general investigation about *Fürsten und Völker von Südeuropa (Die Osmanen und die spanische Monarchie im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert)* was published before he left for Vienna in 1827.

However, scholarly reputation did not suffice for him to cross the threshold to the arcane world of the Austrian Empire. For Ranke, there was no doubt that the success of his research mission depended on the support of other “men”. To Bettina Arnim he wrote shortly after his arrival in Vienna: “You know, what I then had to look for in the first place: the library and the archive and the men, who are able to pave my way to them” (Let. Arnim, 21 Oct 1827, Ranke 1949a, 117ff, 119). However, Ranke required further means to contact those who might promote his petition. A reference letter written by Heinrich von Kamptz was the historian’s *billet d’entrée* to

<sup>6</sup> For further information about the ‘early Ranke’, the establishing of his scholarly reputation and his thinking on history see Muhlack 2006, 40; Schulin 1979, 44ff; Baur 1998, 74ff.

superior access to the Austrian state government. This recommendation allowed Ranke to contact directly the Counselor of Prince von Metternich, Friedrich Gentz (1764–1832) (Ibid.; Let. H. Ranke, End of Nov 1827, Ranke 1890, 176ff) and assure the state administration of the referred person's true intentions and professional identity.

In the span of time subsequent to Napoleon's defeat, the danger of scandalous revelations based on arcane knowledge loomed large.<sup>7</sup> Suffice to say, the agreement reached at the Vienna Congress in 1815 sought to restore the ancient order, but acknowledged certain changes and developments during Napoleon's imperialism in Central Europe. New states had been founded, existing ones aggrandized and many other states incorporated in spite of traditional legitimate claims. But political disorder affected the political map in Europe as much as the archives of the relevant states. One aspect of warfare during Napoleon's imperialism was a series of appropriations and re-appropriations of material deposited in the archives of defeated states. Various parts of the archive of the former Venetian Republic, for example, were to be found in Paris, in Vienna, and, finally, also in Venice. Whether conquered, occupied or dissolved, state archives of the defeated parties were ransacked and their holdings dismantled. As a result, the new proprietors lacked both an overview of their holdings and detailed knowledge about the contents of the newly acquired material. This situation put state governments and their administration in a delicate position. As the past provided a resource to furnish states with a restorative narrative, history was put into service; the task of the state administration was to quell scandalous revelations that could possibly undermine the legitimacy of the sovereign's rule and any of his territorial and fiscal claims.

It was not only Ranke's professional reputation, but his official recommendation which helped him to establish important contacts to members of the Austrian government. Hence, he was able to finally dissipate suspicions and doubts about his person and his interest in the arcane knowledge of the Austrian Empire. All this transformed his former status: the "alien to the archive" became a known, even appreciated, person among leading officials of the Austrian state (Let. Varnhagen, 9 Dec 1827, Ranke 1949a, 126ff, 129; Editor's comment, Ranke 1948a, footnote 1, 129).

It was not before Ranke issued a second request, albeit different in nature, that his attempt to gain access to the archive proved successful. This time, however, Ranke's request was not channeled through the ordinary

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<sup>7</sup> In regard to the political situation see Tucci 1990; on the history of Austrian state archives see Hochedlinger 2004.



administrative apparatus. On the contrary, his “case” enjoyed the personal support of “a man [...] who had the will and the ability: Mister von Gentz” (Let. Karl Varnhagen van Ense, 9 Dec 1827, Ranke 1949a, 126ff, 126). Friedrich Gentz referred the historian to Prince von Metternich (1773–1859), Minister of Foreign Affairs (1809–1848), who finally granted Ranke permission. (Let. H. Ranke, End of Nov 1827, Ranke 1890, 176ff, 178) While his first formal request earned him nothing but denial, his second attempt to access the archive proved efficient and resulted in a most informal request. He reports to Karl Varnhagen van Ense:

“On another day I gave Gentz a note without header or signature, containing only some more information about what I was looking for. This was passed on to the archive, and he pretty much gave me permission to access at least the Venetian part of the archive [deposited in the *Haus- Hof- und Staatsarchiv*].” (Let. K. Varnhagen, 9 Dec 1827, Ranke 1949a, 126ff, 127)

### Carrying out Research in the Arcane Sphere

Ranke had successfully circumvented “rules”. However, after having worked for several weeks in the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv* Leopold Ranke did not conceal his disappointment from Heinrich Ritter, for the Viennese *Hofbibliothek* contained “more important matters than the archive”. (Let. Ritter, 9 Dec 1827, Ranke 1890, 180ff, 181) However, only his success put him in a position to gauge the value of the material he was allowed to use. More importantly, he had finally managed to cross the threshold, and, thus, he had been permitted to enter the arcane sphere, albeit not without restrictions. In a short description provided in a letter to Heinrich Ritter in December 1827 the historian reveals the administrative governmental link of the archive:<sup>8</sup>

“It [the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv*] is a complete chancellery: one finds pens, pen-knife, paper-scissors etc. prepared, has one’s own enclosed working space. Usually, it gets slightly dark soon, and I enjoy the moment, when the principal calls ‘a light’

8 In this regard Vismann 2001, here 146. Despite the undoubted merits of Vismann’s investigation, one must consider the point brought forward by Esther Schomacher: “Since actors are not taken seriously on the level of theoretical reflection, the study tends to fall for the very result of examination: the governmental discourse of files, which disguises the fact that files are made, that they do not produce themselves.”; Schomacher 2005, 4, 109–111, 110f.

[*Liecht!*], and, subsequently, the servant brings two of them for everybody, who is working there.” (Ibid., 182)

The *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv* was part of the state government’s office of the Austrian monarchy; as such the archive was at the heart of the government’s state administration. It was this site of research, among others, where the historian sought to find original manuscripts, traces of the past. However, one cannot ignore the fact that the particular nimbus of this site impacted on the notion of trace, meaning the historical idea of truth and professional objectivity borrowed largely from the particular arcane status of the material.

The restricted access to the arcane, the requirement to ask, the lobbying in the anteroom of the archive and, finally, the spatial closeness to the administrative body as well as its close functional ties with the government: in short, the very fact of the threshold, separating the public and the arcane, bestowed both the material and its user with symbolic significance. The arcane sphere guaranteed authenticity of the material; using it awarded the historian and enhanced his professional position in the academic field. The arcane in both its material and symbolic significance appeared as inextricably interlinked with the profession’s notion of historical truth.

### Favor and Loyalty

However, Ranke’s penchant for state affairs whose historical truth was to be found in the archive made the historian dependent on the government’s archive policy. However, as state governments concomitantly relied on professional historians who provided them with national histories of their states (and as Ranke searched for *relazioni* not only in archives): one should not overdo this point. However, the historian’s position was vulnerable given his particular interest in state affairs in modern times. At a very early stage of the historian’s study, both the government’s archive policy and the historian’s research practice became inevitably interlaced.

The monitoring of the threshold to the arcane was not without consequences for Leopold Ranke’s relationship to the Austrian government. “Certainly, this time I am slightly bribed”, (Let. K. Varnhagen, 9 Dec 1827, Ranke 1949a, 126ff, 127) the historian admitted to Karl Varnhagen after Gentz and Metternich had swiftly approved his second request. Subsequently,

Ranke was well aware of his “obligations” (Let. Perthes, 12 Aug 1830, Ranke 1949b, 137f, 137) to the Austrian government, as Friedrich Gentz’s plea not only paved the way to the archive in Vienna, but also in Venice. Receiving the favor of his patron, the Court Counselor Gentz, as well as the goodwill of His Grace Prince von Metternich, Ranke took a very loyal attitude towards the Austrian government and assessed the political quality of his findings as he took notes from the *relazioni* in Venice in autumn 1830.

“Even if I was filled with the hatred of a Frenchman of the extreme left against Austria, then I would have serious problems extracting something from the material which could harm Your interests in the eyes of the public. In fact, such things are not to be found. I even believe that one could publish, for example, the Venetian *relazioni* of Leopold I’s reign, which are in Vienna and of which I found here and there one or the other, with obvious advantage.” (Let. F. v. Gentz, 26 Sept 1830, Ranke 1949a, 220f, 221)

Overall, he assured his patron about the harmless nature of his historical studies. Favor and goodwill required (the manifestation of) loyalty, if the petitioner did not seek to lose his sources of support.

### Waiting for Administrative Decisions, Choosing Sites of Research

Moreover, the archive policy affected Ranke’s research agenda. Making and approving a request was a time-consuming procedure. Consequently, Leopold Ranke had to reorganize his research and take evasive action in order to make the most out of his journey. First, the historian changed the site of research; for example, in Vienna Leopold Ranke resorted to the *Hofbibliothek* as he waited for the administration’s decision. For Ranke, every “house of knowledge” deemed promising to find further *relazioni* was to be approached. Whether the museum and the library in Prague, the municipal archive in Vicenza, the “private library” of the Marchese Gianfilippo in Verona, the libraries of the former cardinals in Rome, or the document markets in Venice, Ranke went wherever he could find his favored manuscripts, although archives remained the primary goal of his search.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Let. Ritter, 4 Oct 1827, Ranke 1890, 171ff, 171; Let. H. Ranke, 20/21 Nov 1828, Ranke 1890, 209ff, 211; Let. Ritter, 1 Aug 1829, Ranke 1890, 221ff, 221; Let. H. Ranke, 15 Nov 1829, Ranke 1890, 226ff, 227.

In Venice, however, the whole affair became more complicated and reveals how far the government's archive policy influenced the researcher's agenda. After Ranke's arrival in Venice in fall 1828, he presented his petition to use the archive and, subsequently, he began his work in the *Marciana* whilst waiting: "In pain I saw my treasure, the *finalrelazioni*, in a corner, barely protected, without cover and in disorder, bound together with a string, and here yet out of immediate reach" (Let. Perthes, 12 Oct 1828, Ranke 1949b, 108f, 109). It was, therefore, the *Marciana*, "rich and accessible", (Ibid.) which became Ranke's main working place. A couple of weeks later, however, his positive evaluation of the library gave way to some frustration. In November 1828, he revealed to his brother Heinrich:

"Most of the day I dedicated to the library. The investigations progress slowly, but by the hour. I find more mass, but not as much blood and spirit as in Vienna. The best, I hope, it still to come." (Let. H. Ranke, 20./21.11.1828, Ranke 1890, 209ff, 211)

However, Ranke had to wait for "the best" for quite a while. Approving Ranke's request took its time and so, in November 1828, he embarked on a research mission in the neighboring cities of the *Veneto* to exploit the archives and libraries of the region instead. But even after his return in December 1828, a conclusion regarding his matter had not been reached yet, so he decided to travel to Rome. It was not before August 1, 1829 that Ranke was able to write to his friend Heinrich Ritter from Rome about the approval of his request to use the archive in Venice.

Leopold Ranke was compelled to constantly adjust his own research strategy to the decisions of the state administration. Archive policy prompted research in other institutions such as libraries and museums as well as the reorganization of his research trip. The three and a half years his journey lasted was not his original plan. Although he toyed early on with the idea of traveling further into Italy while in Vienna (Let Arnim, 6 Feb 1828, Ranke 1890, 139f, 139), the prolongation of his research mission resulted in part from the administrative decision-making process: it was the archive policy which made Ranke continue with his journey and, finally, travel further down the peninsula of the Apennines.

In conclusion, Leopold Ranke performed and operated in a field that was heavily constrained as he embarked on his research expedition in the early nineteenth century. He took the inferior position of a foreign subject. It was this position from which he had to overcome a range of obstacles to achieve a "good reception". Staying in relevant places, Ranke could utilize

his reputation, but crucially relied on official references provided by the Prussian government in order to reach the object of his desire. Research in the arcane sphere, and this should not come as a surprise, was a state matter. Accessing the state archive depended on a good appearance in the anteroom of the archive, where Ranke had to lobby for his cause with tact and patience. All this was not without consequences for the historian's position, his research and his study trip. The favor of his patrons initiated the historian into the arcane sphere and, therefore, awarded the user with the symbolic nimbus of the arcane and enhanced his professional position. However, the permission to enter the arcane sphere subordinated the petitioner to both the goodwill of his patron(s) and the decision-making processes of the state administration. Ranke responded to these conditions in two ways. First, he sought to constantly prevent his fall from grace and assured rulers and state officials of his devotion and loyalty. Secondly, he considered the clock of the administration, its rhythms and speed, and thus reorganized time and again his timetable, the choice of his sites of research and his journey plans.

### Metaphors and Practices of Research

In reading Ranke's metaphorical descriptions about his work against the background of the conditions of historical research in the early nineteenth century, one cannot but notice the joy indicated in his letters about his work with the desired manuscripts. Whether he found a range of *relazioni* in the *Hofbibliothek* or was permitted to work in the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv*, the metaphoric description is indicative of Ranke's excitement and bliss.

In his letter to Heinrich Ritter he fashioned himself the lover who had productive sex with an Italian beauty; in his letter to Bettina von Arnim he portrayed himself as a prince bestowed with magical powers to redeem cursed princesses. Additionally, Leopold Ranke modeled his performance also on other, no less symbolically informed, metaphors. So he fashioned himself in a letter to Heinrich Ritter in October 1827 as "a Columbus of Venetian history" (Let. Ritter, 28 Oct 1827, Ranke 1890, 173ff, 176); in another letter to Karl Varnhagen van Ense he voiced, more modestly, his wish to become, "if not a Columbus, at least a kind of Cook of some beautiful, unknown island of world history" (Let. K. Varnhagen, 9 Dec 1827, Ranke 1949a, 126ff, 126).

Although Leopold Ranke was never compelled to venture out onto the high seas, he was tempted to draw on the exploring expeditions of Captain Cook and Christopher Columbus for he pictured himself transgressing the border which divided the established consensus and the unknown of the past. Digging in the libraries and archives of the Austrian Empire, Ranke thought to explore a *terra incognita*. Being the first historian, he took pride in touching and using manuscripts which had “not [been] used by anybody” before and thus could make his claim (Let Perthes, 28 Jan 1828, Ranke 1949a, 136ff, 137).

Whether lover, prince, or explorer, all of these metaphors share one characteristic: the notion of virile activity and power suggests he is acting whilst others are passive. However, the notion of masculine sovereignty barely coincides with the fact that Leopold Ranke, albeit actively involved in the lobbying in the anteroom in the archive, was an object of administrative procedures and a recipient of the sovereign’s goodwill and favor. As a foreign subject, Ranke held an inferior position: his stay in the archive was temporarily limited, the range of material he was allowed to use was confined, and the researcher’s mobility in the world of the arcane restricted (Let. K. Varnhagen, 9 Dec 1827, 126ff, 127; Let. F. Ranke, Ranke 1948b, 16 Dec 1830, 142; Let. Ritter, 28 Jan 1831, Ranke 1890, 227f). However, given his metaphoric accounts, it seems as if he was the master who held all strings in his hands when it came to work with original manuscripts. In fact, the metaphors delude the field of forces in which Ranke practiced his research. At least for these moments Ranke’s attempts at self-fashioning ignored the political and administrative obstacles he faced in the lobby of the archive and the effort he made in order to appropriate the very conditions in order to locate, access and appropriate the *relazioni*.

Both the metaphoric self-empowerment in his personal accounts and the inferior position of the researcher in the lobby of the archive went together very well. Leopold Ranke did not disguise the conditions of his research. Most often he did both in one and the same letter: he explained his difficulties as well as displaying his performance in metaphors (Let. Ritter, 4 Oct 1827, Ranke 1890, 171ff, 173; Let. K. Varnhagen, 9 Dec 1827, Ranke 1949a, 126ff; Let. H. Ranke, End of Nov 1827, Ranke 1890, 176ff). In the words of Anthony Grafton, Ranke dramatized his search for his favorite source. What is more, in doing so he carefully chose a range of “emotion statements” (Reddy 1997, 331) which enabled him to convey his affections. Drawing on the notion of the virility of the manly lover, or referring to the romantic idea of the prince bestowed with magical powers or employing

the image of the adventurous explorer who ventures onto the high seas to find a *terra incognita*, Leopold Ranke followed the contemporary maxim of letter writing, i.e. immediacy. In order to convey his emotional as well as intellectual experience of his favorite material, the *relazioni*, he aimed at producing an “illusion” in the minds of his addressees (Let. K. Varnhagen, 9 Dec 1827, Ranke 1949a, 126ff, 126).

Ranke’s metaphoric self-fashioning can be conceived as “emotives” (Reddy 1997, 331f), as a linguistic means to convey emotions (rather than *real* emotions). However, emotives, as William Reddy posits, have their own weight: they produce and change the constellation of things and persons. In the case of Ranke’s letters, one can distinguish two additional affects. First, reporting about work with the desired original manuscripts, the *relazioni*, in the archive and library, Ranke indicated an essential objective of his initial research mission. In this respect, it is worthwhile considering the historian’s peer pressure. Leopold Ranke was one of the researchers who enjoyed the privilege of leaving for a study tour. Like Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859) or Heinrich Leo (1799–1878), Ranke’s colleague and opponent at the *Friedrich Wilhelm Universität* in Berlin, Ranke was granted a stipend and the permission to leave and commissioned to deepen scientific insight; he was compelled to find something. Secondly and more importantly, drawing on the style of immediacy, Ranke asserted as well as produced the appearance of his historical findings: Ranke gave testimony about both the existence of the manuscripts which he claimed to have found and his own sensual experience of their material quality: gendered “emotives” in Ranke’s letters created the ‘illusion’ of *evidentia*, marking his scholarly distinction in the academic field—not exactly *avant la lettre*, but long before he presented any further historical investigations of all the clues he found in libraries and archives.

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