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Vineta

The Vineta Sage and its Reception in German Literary Texts from the 1820s to 1989

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for the degree of Ph.D.

November 2018



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Declaration

I hereby certify that this thesis is all my own work and that I have not obtained a degree in this University, or elsewhere, on the basis of this work.

Máire O Broin

November 2018

Vineta

The *Vineta Sage* and its Reception in German Literary Texts from the 1820s to 1989

Summary

The dissertation explores the myth of the sunken city of Vineta, supposedly destroyed in the twelfth century, and its reception in German literature from the 1820s to the late twentieth century. It analyses the reports in the medieval chronicles of Adam of Bremen and Helmold of Bosau, who describe the city on the coast of the Baltic Sea. These reports are the major source of the story that was later passed on in the form of a legend.

The creative literature that was written about the sunken city during the period under consideration is examined. The main versions of the Vineta myth are analysed and compared with the information contained in the chroniclers' reports. The transmission of myths and legends is discussed, and their importance as repositories of cultural memory is highlighted.

A large number of works in different literary genres is analysed, and the instrumentalisation of the myth in different time periods is discussed. While some of the creative texts are a development of the original legend, others use the sunken city in a metaphorical sense. The different motifs are set out and relevant texts examined with a view to determining how particular motifs are used to reflect contemporary philosophical, political and social ideas.

Texts referring to Vineta by writers such as Heinrich Heine, Wilhelm Müller, Jura Soyfer, Günter Grass and others are analysed and discussed. The malleability of the Vineta trope becomes evident through the variety of texts and the purposes that they serve. It is clear that, despite its supposed destruction, Vineta has continued to remain relevant, and still does so in modern times.

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Vineta

The *Vineta Sage* and its Reception in German Literary Texts from the 1820s to 1989

Background and Introduction

Stories of lost civilisations, disappeared lands, cities and people are common to many cultures. Some of these stories are well known. Names such as Atlantis and Hy-Brasil, for example, perhaps because of their mythological origins, tend to evoke a certain sense of romance, coupled nevertheless with some curiosity as to whether they did in fact exist, and if so where they might have been located. Others, where more historical, geographical or supporting documentary evidence is available, tend to be received with a greater understanding of the horror and tragedy visited on those caught up in the events. Among these one might include Pompeii, Herculaneum and Troy.

Between these two types of story, however, are others, some quite well known, others less so, which may be supported by some limited or less definitive documentary evidence, but which have been passed on from generation to generation in such a manner as to make it difficult if not impossible to establish the true facts. Among these is the story of Vineta, the mythological trading centre on the Baltic, said to have disappeared under the waves in the twelfth century, but still the subject of research, literary and artistic endeavour, and speculation some nine hundred years later.

Myth and legend

The *Vineta Sage*, the story of the lost city of Vineta, has both legendary and mythical components.¹ The legendary element arises from the fact that the story can be said to have

¹ While the term *Sage* is used throughout the dissertation specifically in relation to the Vineta story, the terms 'myth' and 'legend' are also used as the nearest equivalent and most appropriate English terminology. According to OED Online Definitions, in general usage the terms 'myth' and 'legend' may be used interchangeably. In contrast with a myth, a legend may be popularly regarded as having some historical,

historical, though unauthenticated roots, being based on the reports of Adam von Bremen and other chroniclers. The mythical aspect stems from the subsequent development of the story, the additions and interpretations of storytellers which went far beyond anything that had been reported on by the chroniclers. The relationship between history and myth is one that regularly occupies the minds of anthropologists, folklorists and historians. In his *Myth and Meaning*, with particular reference to some of the myths of the native Americans, anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss asks “where does mythology end and where does history start?”² That question, or rather its inverse — where does history end and mythology begin? — is very relevant in the Vineta story. From the historical point of view, the different versions of the myth all have one thing in common: they have their origin in the reports of Adam von Bremen and Helmold von Bosau, i.e. in historical, or quasi-historical documents. The enhancement and re-interpretation of the facts contained in these reports by storytellers add a mythical component, through the utilisation of pre-existing tropes from both Christian and secular traditions. Understandably, many of the tropes and motifs used by storytellers were those with which audiences were familiar and which were already an established and regular part of myths that had existed for generations, as, for example, the biblical story of the Deluge or the story of Atlantis.

Why study Vineta literature?

One might reasonably ask why the story of Vineta might be regarded as sufficiently important to merit examination or study. The answer is to be found in the impact it has had both locally and further afield, and in the utilisation of the theme across a broad range of literary and artistic genres over long periods of time. In contrast with other lost towns and cities, some of which are no doubt better known, the Vineta myth has resonated particularly with local communities, some of whom have been able to identify in a personal way with elements of the story. If one compares, for example, the Vineta myth with that of the more widely-known Atlantis, it is clear that the former has had, and

though unauthenticated, basis. Legends may be evidence to support past events that actually happened, but myths do not have any supporting evidence for past events.

² Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 38.

continues to have a more immediate impact, albeit within in a much more restricted area, than the latter. Among the reasons for this are the very significant lapse of time between the supposed destruction of Atlantis and Plato's description of it, and the lack of precise information as to its location. In describing Atlantis Plato spoke of an island civilisation which had disappeared more than nine thousand years before his time — a civilisation, therefore, about which neither he nor his contemporaries could have had any personal knowledge. Furthermore, while recognising that the versatility of myth may allow it to transcend boundaries of time, it is nevertheless contended that in their genesis texts, images or other productions are significantly influenced by the understanding, mores and conditions of their time, as well as by the attitudes and experiences of their writer or producer. It is logical to assume that their subsequent reception and interpretation, irrespective of when that occurs, is in its turn similarly influenced, and it follows, therefore, that attempts to interpret Plato's texts have also been made more difficult with the passage of time. Though he gave a large amount of detail about the physical layout, appearance and wealth of the island, in his *Dialogue of Critias*, Plato gave only scant information as to its location, stating merely that Atlantis had been situated in the Atlantic, outside the Pillars of Hercules, and was larger than Libya and Asia together.³ The imprecise nature of this information, particularly when one bears in mind the fact that in the *Dialogue of Timaeus* the men of Atlantis are said to have extended their territory by conquering large areas, including “the parts of Libya within the columns of Heracles as far as Egypt, and of Europe as far as Tyrrhenia”, resulted in the search for Atlantis being particularly broadly based, covering areas as far apart as the western Mediterranean and the Black Sea and even further afield.⁴ The broad areas of research, aided no doubt by the fact that the initial reports of Atlantis came from the pen of a person of the stature of Plato himself, have almost certainly contributed significantly to making the Atlantis myth well known.

³ Plato, *Critias*, in *Collected Dialogues*, edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton University Press, 1989), 1214.

⁴ Plato, *Timaeus*, in *Collected Dialogues*, edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton University Press, 1989), 1159.

Though the similarities with Atlantis have often been noted and Vineta has been referred to as the ‘Atlantis of the North’, the story of Vineta is much more localised, immediate and personally relevant for the inhabitants of the coastal areas of the Baltic and the North Sea.⁵ Adam von Bremen’s account was written while Vineta — which he referred to as ‘Jumne’ — still flourished and, despite the confusion later caused by disputes as to its exact location, the trading centre is generally accepted to have been situated within a considerably more restricted area, namely off the northern coast of Germany, on the Baltic or the North Sea. Though there is no evidence to suggest that either of the two principal chroniclers, Adam von Bremen and Helmold von Bosau, ever visited Vineta, or in the case of Helmold the remains of the sunken city, their relative proximity to the supposed location — Bremen in North-Western Germany and Bosau on the Plöner See in Schleswig-Holstein respectively — may conceivably have given them both the advantage of at least some familiarity with the territory and perhaps even with the reputation of the putative trading centre. Furthermore, their chronicles were written less than one hundred years apart, i.e. within a period that could allow the information to be regarded as “kommunikatives Gedächtnis”, communicative memory, and this fact might legitimately be regarded as affording it a greater degree of authenticity.⁶ In addition, the fact that the northern coastline of Germany has always been subject to storm floods, and that the struggle to contain the sea and protect life, land and property continues to the present day, means that local communities too were able to identify much more readily with the story of the sunken city, take ownership of it and use it for the benefit of their community.

A further notable difference that makes the story of Vineta worthy of closer examination is the fact that, in contrast with other lost cities and towns whose story ended with their destruction, Vineta might still be said to live on in its own continuous present. In addition to the fact that historians and archaeologists have conducted archival and physical searches for the location of the sunken city, thus ensuring that it remained in public consciousness,

⁵ Ingrid and P. Werner Lange’s book *Vineta, Atlantis des Nordens* (Leipzig: Urania-Verlag, 1988) is a case in point.

⁶ Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*. 6. Auflage (München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2007), 56. Assmann defines communicative memory as the historical experience of contemporaries, relating to a limited shifting temporal horizon of eighty to one hundred years. See also Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture*, trans. by Sara B. Young (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 28.

writers, artists and musicians have been inspired to utilise the story of its loss in a manner that has both preserved the memory of that loss and created a new life from what remains. With reference to creative literature in particular it is clear that from the first half of the nineteenth century onwards, through the Empire, the First World War, the Weimar Republic, World War II and DDR times Vineta has been preserved and has continued to exist through the work of its creative writers, not only in the literature that has been woven around it but also in the belief invoked in some of the *Sagen* that its inhabitants continue to lead their lives on the sea bed, hoping for release, and that the sunken city rises from time to time above the waves, a belief that nowadays redounds to the benefit of the local economy, through attracting increased tourism. Vineta lives in the rocks that form the Vineta Bank or reef off the coast of Usedom, still a potential source of danger for boatmen, in the occasional *fata Morgana*, said to be created by atmospheric conditions on the surface of the sea, in the muffled tolling of the bells which sailors claim to hear from the deep. Vineta lives too in its ongoing attraction for locals and tourists alike, as well as in the stories and poems that excite people's imagination, and in the dramas and entertainments based on the myth that entice people from far and near, with accruing benefits for local communities. This is particularly so in more recent times, when the Vineta Festspiele on the island of Usedom have proved to be an annual attraction, not only encouraging visitors to the island but also employing local people in all aspects of theatrical production, both directly and through job creation schemes.

Documentary evidence for the existence of Vineta

The fact that there is some documentary evidence for the existence of an important trading centre called Jumne, which later came to be known as Vineta, has no doubt added significance to the story and caused it to be treated more seriously. That documentary evidence comes from a number of sources:

Ibrâhîm ibn Ja'qûb

One of the earliest references to what is assumed to have been Jumne/Vineta occurs in the report by the Arabic Jew, Ibrahim ibn Ja'qûb, of his journey to the Slavic lands in the middle of the tenth century. The report was discovered in a manuscript called *Buch der*

Wege und Länder, produced by the scholar Abu Obaid Abdallah al-Bekri in Córdoba in c. 1080 and later translated into Russian and then German.⁷ Ibn Ja‘qûb is variously said to have been a Jewish-Moorish salesman, an African slave handler and an emissary from the court of Caliph Hakam II at Córdoba. Whatever his origins, it appears that he was welcomed at the court of the Emperor Otto I, and claimed that he learned from the Emperor of a large city on the ocean on which he reported as follows:

Im Westen [...] lebt ein slawischer Stamm, der das Volk Ūbâba genannt wird. Er wohnt in sumpfigen Gegenden vom Lande des Mescheqgo nach Nordwesten. Sie haben eine große Stadt am Weltmeer, die zwölf Tore und einen Hafen hat [...].⁸

It is clear from the few details given that this “große Stadt am Weltmeer” was of some considerable size.⁹ Furthermore, though the fact that the city is not named clearly reduces the value of the report, Georg Jacob, who translated and annotated Ibrahim ibn Ja‘qûb’s report, expresses the view “es ist offenbar Jumne mit der Jomsburg gemeint, die man mit großer Wahrscheinlichkeit auf Usedom [...] sucht [...]”.¹⁰ While the marshy landscape might suggest the North Sea or Baltic coastline, it is suggested that Georg Jacob’s opinion is, however, little more than an assumption that reflects the imprecise nature of definitive information regarding the location of Jumne/Vineta. Many researchers would point to the Jomsborg as being a Viking settlement which was situated on the island of Wolin in modern Poland, and not on the island of Usedom as he suggests.

Later in his account, speaking of the richness of the Slavic lands in general and of their extensive trade, Ibrahim ibn Ja‘qûb states:

⁷ Georg Jacob, *Arabische Berichte von Gesandten an germanische Fürstenhöfe aus dem 9. und 10. Jahrhundert*, ins Deutsche übertragen und mit Fußnoten versehen von Georg Jacob. In the Series *Quellen zur deutschen Volkskunde*, hrsg. von V. v Geramb und L. Mackensen (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1927), 2.

⁸ Ibrahim ibn Ja‘qûb, quoted in Jacob, 14. Mescheqgo is the Polish Herzog Mieszko I, (c. 960–992), who apparently made repeated attempts to extend his territory westwards. See also Klaus Goldmann and Günter Wermusch, *Vineta: Die Wiederentdeckung einer versunkenen Stadt* (Bergisch Gladbach: Gustav Lübbe Verlag, 1999), 79.

⁹ The figure of twelve gates is probably used here as a means of indicating the importance of the city rather than its actual size. Arab geographers gauged the size of a town by the number of gates rather than inhabitants. See Widukind, *Sächsische Geschichten*, edited by Paul Hirsch (Leipzig: Verlag der Dykschen Buchhandlung, 1931), 187, note 3.

¹⁰ Jacob, 14.

Die Slawen [...] bewohnen von den Ländern die ergiebigsten an Fruchtbarkeit und reichsten an Lebensmitteln. Sie befließigen sich des Ackerbaues und Unterhaltserwerbes [...]. Ihre Waaren gehen auf dem Lande und dem Meere zu den Rûs und nach Konstantinopel.¹¹

Abundance and far-flung trading connections are features that emerge repeatedly in connection with Vineta.

Adam von Bremen

Approximately one hundred years later, in c. 1072, Adam von Bremen, a cleric who had been appointed 'Magister' at the Bremer Domschule by Archbishop Adalbert, was given the task of writing the history of the diocese of Hamburg and began his *Hamburgische Kirchengeschichte*, in which he collated all the available material, both written and oral, regarding the diocese, including the lands occupied by the Slavs.¹² The dedication of his history to Archbishop Liemar, Adalbert's successor, was written in 1076, though Adam continued to add material up to about the year 1080.

Adam's account of the city which later became known as Vineta is said to be the most important and reliable report of the existence of a large rich trading centre in historical western Pomerania.¹³ He calls his city 'Jumne' and describes its location as follows:

Hinter den Liutizen, die auch Wilzen heißen, trifft man auf die Oder, den reichsten Strom des Slawenlandes. Wo sie an ihrer Mündung ins Skythenmeer fließt, da

¹¹ Ibrahim ibn Ja'qûb, quoted in Jacob, 16.

¹² Adam von Bremen, *Hamburgische Kirchengeschichte*, 3. Auflage, hrsg. von Bernhard Schmeidler (Hannover und Leipzig: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1917). Also Adam von Bremen, *Bischofsgeschichte der Hamburger Kirche*, in *Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters. Freiherr vom Stein Gedächtnisausgabe*, Bd. XI (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1961).

¹³ Ingrid und P. Werner Lange, *Vineta: Atlantis des Nordens* (Leipzig: Urania-Verlag, 1988), 24. The authors characterised Adam's report as "[das] wichtigste und vertrauenswürdigste Zeugnis vom Dasein einer 'großen, reichen Handelsstadt' im historischen Vorpommern," though it should be pointed out that they had also earlier expressed the view that "Homers Troja, Platons Atlantis und Vinetas goldene Zinnen [...] sind phantasievolle Zeugnisse vom Selbstgefühl, von der Weltsicht unserer Vorfahren, niemals völlig verlässliche Wegweiser oder gar klare Quellen der Geschichte. Fraglos schließt das keineswegs aus, daß ihnen ein 'historischer Kern' innewohnt" (p. 8).

bietet die sehr berühmte Stadt Jumne für Barbaren und Griechen in weitem Umkreise einen vielbesuchten Treffpunkt.¹⁴

Adam goes on to describe the cosmopolitan and well-to-do nature of Jumne and the open-minded attitude of the inhabitants:

Es ist wirklich die größte von allen Städten, die Europa birgt; in ihr wohnen Slawen und andere Stämme, Griechen und Barbaren. Auch die Fremden aus Sachsen haben gleiches Niederlassungsrecht erhalten, wenn sie auch während ihres Aufenthaltes ihr Christentum nicht öffentlich bekennen dürfen. Denn noch sind alle in heidnischem Irrglauben befangen; abgesehen davon wird man allerdings kaum ein Volk finden können, das in Lebensart und Gastfreiheit ehrenhafter und freundlicher ist. Die Stadt ist angefüllt mit Waren aller Völker des Nordens, nichts Begehrtes oder Seltenes fehlt.¹⁵

The description of this rich trading centre of Jumne has been copied and repeated over centuries and has come to be regarded as the accepted starting point for research and investigation of its location, as well as the inspiration for the creation of literary and artistic works. It is popularly regarded as the first fairly reliable information referring specifically to the town which, following inaccurate transcription by copyists and some attempts at Latinisation, later became known as Vineta. Nevertheless, while the majority of researchers tend to regard Adam von Bremen's report as proof of the existence at the time of a major trading town at the mouth of the Oder, many point to its inadequacies in pinpointing the exact location of the town, and some query the reliability of elements of the report.

It is assumed that Adam must have used a map to illustrate his verbal description. According to Klaus Goldmann, a particularly reliable copy of Adam's work, dating to the twelfth century, and in the possession of the National Library in Vienna, used to contain a 'Mappa Terre Saxonie', but unfortunately this has been lost. However inaccurate it may have been, Goldmann maintains that its existence might have provided much-needed

¹⁴ Adam, quoted in Lange, 25.

¹⁵ Adam, quoted in Lange, 25.

information.¹⁶ As it is, the search for Adam's Jumne has occupied the minds and thoughts of archaeologists and scientists, historians and geographers, to say nothing of storytellers and poets, through the centuries right down to the present time and will, no doubt, continue to do so in the future.¹⁷

Helmold von Bosau

About one hundred years after Adam von Bremen, the preacher Helmold von Bosau, (c. 1120–1177) wrote his *Chronica Slavorum* (*Slavenchronik*).¹⁸ In his chapter entitled *De civitate Vinneta* Helmold described the area as follows:

Der andere Fluß, die Oder, verläuft nordwärts mitten durch die Stämme der Wenden [...]. An seiner Mündung in das Baltische Meer lag einst die sehr angesehene Stadt Vineta [in der lateinischen Vorlage 'Iumnetā']. [...]. Unter allen Städten, die Europa umfaßte, war sie gewiß die größte, von Slawen vermischt mit anderen Griechen- und Bauernvölkern bewohnte [sic]. Ja, auch zureisende Sachsen erhielten die gleiche Erlaubnis zum Aufenthalt, wenn sie nur, solange sie blieben, nicht öffentlich als Christen auftraten. Bis zum Untergang dieser Stadt waren nämlich alle Bewohner von heidnischen Bräuchen irregeleitet, sonst aber konnte man an Sitten und Gastlichkeit keine anständigeren und mildherzigeren Leute finden. Reich an Waren aller Länder, besaß jene Stadt alle Annehmlichkeiten und Vorzüge. Ein König der Dänen soll diesen höchst wohlhabenden Platz mit einer

¹⁶ Goldmann, 83.

¹⁷ One of the problems in locating Jumne is to understand exactly what Adam von Bremen meant by the 'Odermündung.' At the mouth of the Oder the river flows into the Oderhaff lagoon from which three separate smaller rivers emerge — the Peenestrom, the Swine and the Dievenow (Dziwna). These flow west, north and east respectively, between and along the coasts of the islands of Usedom and Wolin and eventually enter the sea. In recent years it has been suggested that there could also have been a further outlet in Adam's time. Research and satellite photographs taken in the late 1990s after major storms seem to indicate that the original bed of the Oder may have been still further west, leading Klaus Goldmann, former head curator of the Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte in Berlin, to formulate his theory that Jumne/Vineta was, in fact, situated in what is nowadays the Barther Bodden, (Goldmann, 268–270). Furthermore, it must be remembered that sea-level changes in the intervening centuries may have altered the landscape to such an extent that Adam's description bears little relationship to the modern aspect of the area.

¹⁸ Helmold von Bosau, *Helmolds Slavenchronik*, hrsg. vom Reichsinstitut für Ältere Deutsche Geschichtskunde, 3. Auflage, bearbeitet von Bernhard Schmeidler (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1937).

großen Flotte angegriffen und völlig zerstört haben. Die Überreste sind noch jetzt vorhanden.¹⁹

While the similarities with Adam von Bremen's text are clear, what is immediately striking is the use of the past tense and two different names, 'Iumneta' in the body of the text and 'Vinneta' in the chapter heading. By Helmold's time the city no longer existed, though he claimed that its remains were still to be seen. His contention that a Danish king was responsible for the destruction is also interesting. In all probability there were frequent attacks on Jumne and other trading centres on and around the Baltic coast in the Middle Ages. It must be remembered that Viking raids were a regular occurrence, to the extent that it was said that in the Summer months Denmark in particular was almost denuded of able-bodied men, the majority of whom were harrying overseas.

As to Helmold's sources, P. Werner Lange, maintains that he borrowed his information regarding the period before 1066 entirely from Adam von Bremen; for the period 1066 to *c.* 1115 Helmold used oral tradition and manuscripts and for subsequent years up to *c.* 1171 he relied not only on written documents, but also on eye-witness accounts and on his own personal experience.²⁰

Confusion regarding the name

Many researchers are critical of Helmold von Bosau and see in his name 'Iumneta' the beginning of centuries of confusion. It is clear, however, that Helmold was not single-handedly responsible for changing the name. The process of change is more likely to have been a gradual one, in which he too played a part. The fact that his chapter heading uses the name 'Vinneta' may indicate that a number of different names were already in use by Helmold's time.

In transcribing handwritten texts, or recording oral interviews, while errors of grammar and syntax may be avoided through understanding of the context, problems frequently arise in regard to proper nouns, i.e. placenames and personal names. Particular features

¹⁹ Helmold, quoted in Goldmann, 89–90.

²⁰ Lange, 52.

inherent in mediaeval script also cause problems. The letters ‘u’ and ‘v’, for example, were interchangeable until late in the Middle Ages, as were the letters ‘i’ and ‘j’, and capital letters were not necessarily used for proper nouns. According to Władysław Filipowiak, archaeologist, historian and former Director of the National Museum of Szczecin in Poland, (d. 2014), the name ‘Jumne’ was transcribed as ‘Jum’, ‘Jom’, ‘Jumneta’, and even ‘Niniveta’, ‘Jummuveta’ and ‘Lumneta’.²¹ The versions ‘Uimne’ and ‘Uimneta’ also appeared. The ‘Jumne’ of Adam von Bremen, non-capitalised, written ‘ivmne’ and given a Latinised ending, becomes the ‘ivmnetā’ or ‘iumneta’ of Helmold von Bosau. The subsequent omission of the first letter and the splitting of the letter ‘m’ into ‘in’ easily transforms the name into ‘Vinneta’, and thence to ‘Vineta’.²²

Whatever the historical or orthographical development of the name, most researchers accept that Adam’s ‘Jumne’ became the ‘sagenumwobene Vineta’, the catalyst for a body of creative literature, which continues to inspire the imagination of writers, poets, artists and musicians down to the present day.

Equation of Jumne with Julin/Wolin

What is less widely accepted and has given rise to discussion and dispute over several centuries is whether ‘Jumne’ was in fact Julin/Wolin, the town on the island of Wolin in modern-day Poland, where the Viking fortress, the Jomsborg, was situated. This debate has gone on over centuries, with arguments on both sides and contrary positions being

²¹ Władysław Filipowiak, *Wolin Vineta: Die tatsächliche Legende vom Untergang und Aufstieg der Stadt*. (Rostock: Hinstorff Verlag, 1992), 30. Władysław Filipowiak spent many years researching in the town of Wolin and claimed to have unearthed the lost city of Vineta there, on the site of the Viking fortress, the Jomsborg.

²² According to Goldmann another possibility was put forward by the Danish historian Jakob Langebek in his *Scriptores rerum Danicarum* in 1772, and accepted by other researchers: that the letters ‘iu’ and ‘ui’, (written ‘iv’ and ‘vi’), may have been transposed. This would give the following result: ivmne → vimne → vimneta → vinneta → vineta. Goldmann, 88–89. See also Lange, 26. That there was continuing confusion and interest in the name over many years may be gauged from the *Mecklenburgische Reimchronik* of Ritter Ernst von Kirchbach, who in 1378, at the request of Duke Albrecht II of Mecklenburg, redrafted Helmold’s text and added his own variations. His verse on the development of the name is interesting, but cannot presumably be given any more credence than the rest of his additions: “und von der Stad Wynneta,|so nennet man sy Winthi,|zu rechten nam als Wandali |als Wynneta wart verstört,|ich hans gelesen und gehört,|daz sy widder buwete sus.|mechtig der Keysir Julius,|und nante sy do Julyn,|nu nennet man sy Wollin”. See J. W. Barthold, *Geschichte von Rügen und Pommern*, erster Theil (Hamburg: Bei Friedrich Perthes, 1839), 407.

adopted and then in some cases later revised.²³ While a definitive answer may never be forthcoming, one of the positive outcomes is that the debate has served to keep the story alive.

Did Vineta really exist?

The existence of Vineta, under whatever name it may be known, may forever remain a mystery. Despite the best efforts of chroniclers, scientists, archaeologists, historians, folklorists and indeed concerned local people, the sunken city has guarded its secrets up to the present day. There are many who have claimed to have solved the puzzle, to have unlocked its gates and displayed its secrets. On the spot investigation, examination, excavation, with ever-increasing technical know-how and expertise have led to claim and counter-claim of discovery, but though some have been more convincing, and indeed more convinced than others, yet all in their own way have foundered on the rocks of doubt and have failed to produce hard evidence. In more recent years German reunification has resulted in a resurgence of interest and renewed research, as sites in the former German Democratic Republic have been opened up and investigated. While the subject may be of great academic interest, particularly to historians and archaeologists, it is suggested that the answer is in fact unimportant. As long as the memory of Vineta remains and inspires the imagination of poets, artists, writers and musicians, the sunken city continues to fulfil an important function.

²³ Goldmann maintains that the idea that Jumne and Julin/Wolin were the same place gained the upper hand in the later Middle Ages, to the extent that an edition of Adam von Bremen's text, published in 1595 by Erpold Lindenbrog, actually substituted 'Julin' for 'Jumne'. Part of the reason for this was that the extant copies of the *Gesta Danorum* of the Danish historian, Saxo Grammaticus, equated the two places. See Goldmann, 92.

The proliferation of the legend

The question must be asked, however, as to why the legend of Vineta has continued to be told in so many different ways down through the centuries. One of the factors that may have had a significant effect in this regard is that noticeable fluctuations in climate and weather conditions occurred on a regular basis throughout the mediaeval period, from about 1300 to 1900, in what became known as the Little Ice Age. These included not only dry, warm periods, leading to poor harvests and drought, but also catastrophes, such as storms and major floods, with major loss of life and property. In his *Klimageschichte Mitteleuropas*, Rüdiger Glaser highlights the period 1550–1850 as particularly significant in this regard:

Die Ausarbeitungen haben deutlich gemacht, dass Klimakatastrophen in Mitteleuropa ein ständiger Begleiter waren. Dies gilt für alle angesprochenen Varianten wie Gewitter, Stürme und Hochwasser. [...]. Als besonders katastrophenreich hat sich der Abschnitt der Kleinen Eiszeit 1550–1850 herausgestellt.²⁴

Though the North Sea and Baltic coasts are well accustomed to their continuous battle with the sea, it is not surprising that catastrophes such as major storm floods would serve not only to keep myths of sunken lands and destroyed cities like Vineta in the minds of the people, but that their memory would also be perpetuated in the literature, art, music and other creative works that stemmed from such events.

According to Rüdiger Glaser research has also shown that rivers too were responsible for causing significant flooding in the Little Ice Age. Among the rivers specifically mentioned in this regard is the river Oder, at whose mouth Jumne/Vineta was reported to have been situated.²⁵ This in turn may be presumed to have resulted in increased awareness of the sunken city.

Another factor that may have helped to preserve the memory of Vineta and caused it to

²⁴ Rüdiger Glaser, *Klimageschichte Mitteleuropas: 1000 Jahre Wetter, Klima, Katastrophen* (Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 2001), 208.

²⁵ Glaser, 209.

remain an attractive trope in literature and in the arts is the apparent status of the sunken city itself. The documentary evidence for the existence of a large trading centre at the mouth of the river Oder, which disappeared within a relatively short time of its being reported upon, is undoubtedly of significant interest, and the necessity or desire to account for its disappearance has allowed for an imaginative response on the part of artists and writers of all kinds. Furthermore, the location of the sunken city has also perhaps influenced to some degree the volume and the genres of writing that characterise the creative literature on Vineta, as well as those who have written on the theme. It is true to say that some well known writers have been attracted by the Vineta theme and have used the sunken city as a motif. One might include here Heinrich Heine, Wilhelm Müller, Theodor Fontane, Jura Soyfer and Günter Grass. The theme of Vineta has, however, been more prevalent among regional or local *Heimat* writers, whose works do not form part of the broad canon of German literature, but whose interest and concerns might be regarded as more immediate. That *Heimat* writers predominate is understandable, not alone because of the interest in *Heimat* in nineteenth century Germany, but also in the context of the relative remoteness of the location, which may be presumed to have had at least some impact on the dissemination of knowledge about the sunken city. Though Vineta is generally thought to have been on the Baltic coast off the island of Usedom, it is also claimed to have been on the island of Wolin in modern-day Poland. Furthermore, in some of the creative writing it is said to have been on the North Sea coast.

In this context a further point also arises. As in many other countries, the theme of sunken or disappeared towns, villages, castles, churches and bells is not uncommon in Germany.²⁶ One has only to think of the not insignificant number of myths and legends on the theme produced by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm among others.²⁷ In none of these, however, does a coastal location feature; the lost areas are generally concentrated in lakes, rivers or other wet or marshy land. In this regard it must be remembered that Germany's coastline is

²⁶ See for example Ulrich Benzel: *Das Schloß im Streitzigsee; Die Glocken von Wurchow; Kloster Marienthron*, in *Pommersche Märchen und Sagen*, Band I (Kallmünz: Verlag Michael Lassleben, 1980), 138–141. Also *Untergegangene Städte*, in *Norddeutsche Sagen, Märchen und Gebräuche*, hrsg. von Adalbert Kuhn und Wilhelm Schwartz (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1972), 41.

²⁷ Among examples are *Die Moorjungfern; Der Ochsenberg*, and *Arendsee*, in *Deutsche Sagen*, hrsg. von den Brüdern Grimm (München: Winkler-Verlag, 1956), 142–143.

limited in extent, and that the coastal areas of the North Sea and Baltic are comparatively thinly populated. It is understandable that legends relating to the sea or coastal areas might proliferate among writers living in or familiar with those areas, but not, perhaps, among those whose experience does not extend to this type of environment. Furthermore, many sunken villages or buildings are noteworthy only because of their disappearance, whereas the fact that Vineta was reputed to be an important trading centre no doubt added to the significance and spread of the story. Though not alone as a victim of the sea or of storm floods, Vineta, because of its size and importance, has a certain sense of uniqueness in the German context.²⁸

Aims and scope of present study

While elements of the Vineta story, and in particular the search for the sunken city, have been looked at in the past, no wide-ranging study has been undertaken of the creative literature, nor of the instrumentalisation of the legend and the multiplicity of purposes that Vineta has served and continues to serve. The present study aims to fill some of these gaps. The fundamental objectives are therefore as follows: to examine the creative literature regarding the sunken city of Vineta, including the Vineta myth and other literary genres, covering the period from the late Romantic to the late twentieth century; to discuss the different motifs used in the literature and to show how the Vineta trope has been utilised to highlight both positive and negative aspects of political and social developments; to discuss the importance of myths as repositories of cultural memory, containing “stories about a common past, which offer orientation in the present and hope for the future” and form part of what has been called “foundational history”²⁹; to discuss how myths are passed on from one generation to the next; to consider the background and development of the Vineta myth and compare it with the information provided in

²⁸ The market town of Rungholt on the island of Strand in the North Sea disappeared in 1362 after the second Marcellus storm tide (‘Grote Mandrenke’). Detlev von Liliencron’s poem, *Trutz Blanke Hans*, commemorates the event — see Detlev von Liliencron: *Trutz Blanke Hans*, in *Gedichte*, Kapitel 71 (Verlag Projekt Gutenberg-DE, 2017). The island of Strand was again destroyed by storm tides in the 1600s, and now all that remains are the peninsula of Nordstrand, the island of Pellworm and some islets called the Halligen.

²⁹ Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture*, trans. by Sara B. Young (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 32, 34.

chroniclers' reports; to discuss how the background and attitudes of some writers have influenced the manner in which they utilise Vineta as a motif to inform or create awareness of societal issues; to bring to light a body of literature that has tended to be overlooked through passage of time, historical circumstance and lack of awareness.

While the story of the sunken city in its simplest form may be taken at face value simply as an interesting and informative account of the demise of an important centre of population and trade, a somewhat closer examination will show that the motif has been used as the catalyst for the elaboration of a body of literature which has served to highlight historical, social, political, and religious developments in Germany and German-speaking countries over a long period of time.

Though some creative pieces utilise the story merely as a framework or background within which to set a tragic or even a romantic tale for the enjoyment of readers, closer perusal of the literature shows the legend being used not alone for its intrinsic creative possibilities, but also as a tool to promote awareness, to enlighten and in some cases to influence opinion. The sunken city has also been depicted as a refuge, a safe haven designed to anchor a people within the security of a familiar culture, or to encourage a return to a tried and trusted ethos.

It is this multiplicity of functions that has given rise to the necessity to consider in the present study a broad range of creative literature, across a variety of different genres and over a wide timescale. Though undoubtedly elaborated first as an orally transmitted myth, used for the purposes of entertainment, explanation and forewarning, and later collected and written down as a *Sage*, its most widely-known and probably most significant utilisation has been in the poetic expression of Romantic sentiment. This in no way detracts, however, from the effective transmission of the theme not alone into other genres of creative literature — novels, poems, dramas and short stories — but also into other codes of creative endeavour, in the form of dramas, operas and songs. Vineta has proved to be a multi-faceted motif, whose versatility, coupled with the skill of its many interpreters, has enabled it to be used in a variety of different ways.

Research and Methodology

Two poems, written almost simultaneously in the 1820s, utilising the same trope, but in very different ways, set to music by different composers and performed by various different choirs up to the present day, formed the basis for research into what other material might be available in regard to a sunken city off the coast of Germany. Heinrich Heine's *Seegespenst* and Wilhelm Müller's *Vineta* both make use of the motif, and their titles, when considered together, hint at a sense of mystery at their core.³⁰ A survey of library catalogues showed that a large number of texts of different kinds were available about the sunken city of Vineta, texts that could be broadly divided into three categories — firstly historical, or at least quasi-historical, secondly reports of archaeological and other searches for the location of the sunken city, and thirdly creative literature. The collection of this literature was facilitated through libraries and academic institutes mainly in Germany, with some texts also being found online and through Irish, British and French libraries.

It became clear on reading the literature that the theme of the sunken city had given rise to a variety of different approaches among writers, particularly creative writers. Perusal of the creative literature indicated that it too could be categorised in various ways — for example by differences of detail in the myth as collected and written down, by genre, motifs, historical events, apparent aims and motives of the creative writer. What was also particularly noticeable was the fact that the theme was used not alone to describe past events, but also in some cases to portray social and political developments current at the time of writing and to anticipate potential future events. The myth appeared to be unrestricted in time and of broad application. It was decided therefore to examine all of these aspects further with a view to establishing the background to the legend, the scope of the motif, and the manner and effectiveness of its utilisation by different writers for different purposes.

³⁰ Heinrich Heine, *Seegespenst* in *Sämtliche Werke I/1, Buch der Lieder*, Düsseldorf Ausgabe, hrsg. von Manfred Windfuhr, bearbeitet von Pierre Grappin (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1975), 384–385; Wilhelm Müller, *Vineta*, in *Wilhelm Müller. Werke, Tagebücher, Briefe*, Band 2, "Gedichte 2", hrsg. von Maria-Verena Leistner (Berlin: Gatzka, 1994), 64.

The time frame selected was dictated partly by the volume of creative texts available, and also by a desire to proceed from a base of what might loosely be termed ‘factual’ texts — those based on the original reports of Adam von Bremen and other chroniclers — to more imaginative compositions. It was decided therefore initially to compare and contrast the different versions of the myth that had been collected and published from the first half of the nineteenth century onwards. These myths all have the same basic core or framework, in that they describe Vineta using motifs from the chroniclers’ reports, but they vary in the details added by storyteller, collector or editor, no doubt depending on circumstances such as location, intended audience or readership. It was then proposed to examine how the theme was further creatively developed beyond the re-telling of the myth, through different time periods, into different genres and with different emphases up to the late twentieth century. While some of the creative literature might be said to be an embellishment of the original legend, other works use or refer to the sunken city in a metaphorical sense. Still others utilise the legend in a manner designed to reflect or promote contemporary ideas, to create awareness and influence society. It is clear also that some motifs could be and are used to represent diametrically opposed ideas.

In addition to works by German writers, a number of which were in low German, Vineta served as a theme for some Austrian writers such as Jura Soyfer, Marie-Eugenie delle Grazie, Christina Busta and Felix Braun, as well as writers from non-German speaking countries, such as the Swedish Nobel prizewinner Selma Lagerlöf. Furthermore, some texts were also translated into other languages, as for example E. Werner’s *Vineta* which was translated into English and Italian.³¹

In examining the range of creative texts that came to light, it became clear that the Vineta theme resonated not alone with writers of different eras and genres, but also with those of differing philosophies and world views. It was evident that the malleability of the theme allowed it to be handled in a variety of ways and with varying interpretations. In order to pursue this particular aspect, it became important to select from among the texts those which would best illustrate the scope of the motif and the uses to which it had been put over the years.

³¹ E. Werner, *Vineta* (Leipzig: Verlag von Ernst Keils Nachfolger, 1900). E. Werner was a pseudonym for Elisabeth Bürstenbinder (1838–1918).

Structure of dissertation

The dissertation is divided into six chapters, the first of which deals with an analysis of the main versions of the *Vineta Sage* as recounted by different writers, with a final chapter consisting of summary and conclusions. Other chapters consider how the legend was developed and the uses which it served in different time periods.

Chapter 1: The *Vineta Sage*

In Chapter 1 the importance of myths and legends as a source and an expression of cultural identity is considered. Possible origins of the *Vineta* myth are proposed. The oral transmission of the legend is discussed, and some of the creative devices used by storytellers are outlined. The motifs encountered in the reports of the chroniclers Adam von Bremen and Helmold von Bosau are set out, followed by an analysis of the three main versions of the legend as collected and written down by folklorists, for the purpose of establishing how and to what extent the motifs used correspond with those encountered in those reports. Differences between the various versions of the legend are highlighted.

Chapter 2: *Vineta* Literature from the 1820s to 1870, with particular reference to Heinrich Heine and Wilhelm Müller

This chapter covers the period from the 1820s to *c.*1870. Interest in *Vineta* increased significantly in this period and the sunken city came into its own as a vehicle for the expression of sentiments typical of the era. Among the works examined are Wilhelm Müller's *Vineta*, later set to music by Johannes Brahms among others, and Heinrich Heine's *Seegespenst*, two of the most widely-known poems about the sunken city.³² The period was also characterised by publication or re-publication of collections of legends which included the *Vineta* legend, and the production of an opera called *Vineta oder am*

³² Wilhelm Müller, *Vineta* in *Wilhelm Müller. Werke, Tagebücher, Briefe*, Band 2, "Gedichte 2", hrsg. von Maria-Verena Leistner (Berlin: Gatzka, 1994), 64; Heinrich Heine, *Seegespenst* in *Sämtliche Werke I/1, Buch der Lieder*, Düsseldorfer Ausgabe, hrsg. von Manfred Windfuhr, bearbeitet von Pierre Grappin (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1975), 384–385.

Meeresstrand by Richard Wüerst which was performed on a number of occasions in the 1860s, as for example in Bratislava in 1863 and Hamburg in 1868.³³

Chapter 3: Vineta literature from 1871 to 1918

In Chapter 3 developments in Germany following the 1871 Unification are discussed, and the fact that Vineta was used as an ideal metaphor to illustrate all types of change is examined. A large volume of creative literature was produced in the period, much of it the work of lesser known or *Heimat* writers, though one also finds references to Vineta among better known writers such as Theodor Fontane and Oskar Loerke. The wide range of motifs covered in mediaeval reports of the existence of Vineta, and in the story as subsequently transmitted, have resulted in the legend of the sunken city being sufficiently broadly based to allow it to be used as both a positive and a negative symbol, sometimes even within the same creative work. This is particularly so in some of the works of Imperial Germany considered in the chapter, particularly B. Paul's novel *Die versunkene Stadt* and E. Werner's *Vineta*, where the sunken city can be taken to represent destruction and loss as well as friendship and love.³⁴

Chapter 4: Vineta literature from 1918 to 1945

The suitability of Vineta as a metaphor for loss is particularly important in the Weimar period, when Germany was undergoing the trauma of the losses inflicted under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. The motifs of loss, instability and the desire to seek out and find a place of origin or secure home are particular features, therefore, of the creative literature of the period. Though not in the area of creative literature, it is also noticeable that the number of reports about the search for Vineta increased substantially.

The period from 1933 to 1945 is characterised by two contrasting works, each portraying an attitude reflective of the era, yet indicative of diametrically opposed ideas on the part of the writers. Paul Bendlin, in his long poem, *Geisternacht in Vineta*, uses the risen city

³³ Richard Wüerst, *Vineta, oder am Meeresstrand*. Große romantische Oper in drei Akten (Berlin: Bote & Bock, 1863). The opera was also performed in Breslau and in Mannheim, but it has not been possible to establish the dates of these performances. See *Watson's Art Journal*, Vol 8, No. 20, page 295, 7 March 1868.

³⁴ B. Paul, *Die versunkene Stadt: Ein Bild aus ferner Vergangenheit* (Leipzig: Verlag und Druck von Otto Spamer, 1879); E. Werner, *Vineta* (Leipzig: Verlag von Ernst Keils Nachfolger, 1900).

of Vineta as a backdrop, against which he tells the history of Pomerania through the medium of the spirits of its dead leaders.³⁵ What is particularly noticeable in the poem, however, is the manner in which the poet welcomes the progress of the nation towards National Socialism. The most striking work of the period is however the short drama *Vineta*, by Austrian dramatist, Jura Soyfer, in which the author uses the sunken city as a metaphor for Vienna and attempts to warn his compatriots of the dangers they face with the rise of Nazism.³⁶

Chapter 5: Vineta literature from 1945 to 1989

The volume of creative literature referring to Vineta is not large in this period, though local *Heimat* organisations did continue to publish journals or yearbooks in which there was reference to the sunken city, or occasionally stories or poems about it. What is also noticeable is the fact that a number of works using the Vineta motif were either based outside Germany or produced by writers living or publishing outside Germany. References to Nazism and the war abound, with Paul Bühler's drama *Vineta*, for example, depicting the sunken city as a microcosm of Nazi Germany, while also portraying both good and evil in society.³⁷

As in earlier periods, Vineta is used in several cases as a symbol of change. The sunken city, which experienced the most catastrophic and fundamental transformation in its existence, is an appropriate vehicle to depict the far-reaching changes in German society following the Second World War. It is worth noting, however, that the changes portrayed in some of the Vineta literature relate not only to society as a whole, but also reflect the personal circumstances and experiences of the individual writers. This element is discussed in Chapter 5, with particular reference to Friedrich Franz von Unruh's *Vineta* and Fritz Brustat-Naval's novel *Leb wohl, Vineta*, subtitled *Roman einer seefahrenden*

³⁵ Paul Bendlin, *Geisternacht bei Vineta* (Misdroy: Misdroyer Zeitung, 1935).

³⁶ Jura Soyfer, *Vineta*, in *Das Gesamtwerk*, edited by Horst Jarka (Wien: Europaverlag, 1980). Soyfer's *Vineta* was originally written in 1937.

³⁷ Paul Bühler, *Vineta* (Dornach: Literarischer Verlag, 1972).

Jugend.³⁸ Günter Grass's *Die Rättin* juxtaposes aspects of Vineta's past with twentieth century social issues.

Chapter 6: Summary and Conclusions

The final chapter gives a brief summary of the findings regarding the progress of the Vineta legend as a theme throughout many decades and its utilisation as a metaphor to represent many different political, social, and personal ideologies, viewpoints and attitudes. What began as a seemingly factual account of the existence of an important early medieval trading centre, developed in the short term into a tale of tragedy and loss. With the passage of time the breadth of motifs used in the original description, allied with the skill and imagination of storytellers, writers and poets enabled the story of the sunken city to become part of the inherited tradition of its land, its people and the broader literary canon. It is clear that Vineta in its wide cultural and literary representations, from its early beginnings as a reputedly important trading centre onwards, has continued to play a role in the history, traditions and life, as well as in the economy of its region and its land.

³⁸ Friedrich Franz von Unruh, *Vineta* (Düsseldorf: Vier Falken Verlag, 1948. Also Bodensee: Hohenstaufen-Verlag, 1965); Fritz Brustat-Naval, *Leb wohl, Vineta* (Stuttgart: Henry Goverts Verlag, 1967).

Chapter 1

The Vineta *Sage*

The importance of *Sagen*

Folk-tales, legends and myths may be said to be foundation stones on which are built both cultural identity and a means of expressing that identity. They are an integral part of the fabric of a community, helping to articulate its background, characteristics, ethos and values. They create an awareness and a sense of identification both within the community itself and outside, and in many cases are the first stage in the elaboration of a corpus of creative endeavour which defines the community and gives it identity and status within the framework in which it is situated. In a wide-ranging discussion in which he attempts to draw up a comprehensive list of the characteristics of *Sagen* — mythological stories or legends — Leander Petzoldt postulates:

Die Sage ist eine spezifische anthropologische Form von Realitätserfahrung und -erfassung auf der Ebene eines prä-rationalen Bewußtseins. Sie versucht Vorgänge, die dem einzelnen Individuum unerklärbar erscheinen, durch mythisierende und symbolisierende Darstellung zu deuten.³⁹

Though generally springing from unauthenticated sources, *Sagen* may have a basis in reality, expressed in terms or concepts that may be unfamiliar to a modern audience or readership, but which nonetheless have a certain underlying validity or evoke principles that remain constant.

In establishing the cultural and psychological breadth of a community, man-made boundaries of administrative or political origin may have little relevance. Lines drawn on maps, though they may have a significant effect in civil matters, have little real influence on cultural identity, which tends to be marked more by parallel experience and similarity of environment. Inhabitants of alpine or coastal areas, for example, though they may

³⁹ Leander Petzoldt, *Einführung in die Sagenforschung*, 3. Auflage (Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2002), 59. Subsequently referred to as Petzoldt, *Einführung in die Sagenforschung*.

spring from different countries, or a variety of political, administrative and linguistic backgrounds, tend to have as much, if not more, in common with one another than with their fellow countrymen whose circumstances and life experience may be radically different.

For those living in coastal areas, the sea is particularly significant. It can function as a benevolent friend and provider of employment, food, transport and communication, as a feared enemy whose sudden violent moods may cause disruption or destruction of life and land, or as the core or kernel of spiritual and cultural identity. In communities, towns and villages along the coasts of the Baltic and the North Sea the sea functions as a channel of communication, binding people together and providing for the creation of a collective consciousness based on common circumstances and understanding. This is particularly evident in the correspondence of their stories, folk-tales and legends, many of which tell of shared experience, of life subject to the impact of a powerful and unpredictable force that exerts an inestimable influence for both good and evil.

That is not to say, however, that the cultural patrimony of every community is identical. Within a community both individuals and groups personalise and make their own of the shared experience by adding, subtracting, or changing details of their stories and traditions in order to make them more relevant to their situation and their needs and circumstances at any given time. Astrid Erll refers to this process as “acts of cultural remembering [that] seem to be an element of humans’ fundamental anthropological make-up”.⁴⁰ Stories are as varied as those who tell them. What is certain, however, is that every person and every community has a story, and the retelling and transmission of that story results in the creation of a collective memory and an acceptance of what might be called a shared version of the past, or a foundation mythology that reflects the self-image of the community and is shared to a greater or lesser extent by its members.

The continual re-emergence of the same themes and topoi and their adaptation and remodelling in myths and legends provide both a continuity and a diversity, and potentially lead to a variety of literary and artistic creations that define a people’s identity and provide a unifying cultural bond. Factors such as political, social or scientific

⁴⁰ Erll, *Memory in Culture*, 13.

developments, outside the control of the community, may alter beliefs and understanding with the passage of time, and make previously held viewpoints redundant or invalid. That is not to say, however, that the perceptions of any generation are wrong, but simply that they are not fixed or immutable. This becomes very evident in considering the utilisation of the *Vineta Sage* by different writers and in different time periods.

Some possible origins of the *Vineta Sage*

One of the primary functions of legends and myths is didactic and explanatory. Environmental, social and cultural facts, situations and phenomena are frequently explained or rationalised through myths, which are in effect vital storehouses of information of a historical, sociological and psychological nature. A story such as the destruction of a supposedly significant coastal trading centre would have resonated strongly with coastal dwellers, who could easily identify with the many hazards of their location, and it is understandable that it should proliferate across both the immediate and wider communities. The dangers faced by communities of the North Sea and Baltic coasts were both environmental and man-made. Any one of them could have caused destruction and provided the catalyst for the creation of the *Vineta Sage*. Among the environmental phenomena were coastal erosion, land loss and inundation through rising sea-levels, the great ‘Sturmfluten’ or storm-tides that plagued the coasts of the North Sea and the Baltic, and the existence of the Vineta reef or Vineta bank, an underwater area of large boulders off the coast of Usedom. Man-made events included Viking raids from the sea, invasions over land by German feudal lords attempting to expand their territories or re-possess lands vacated by their forebears during the ‘Völkerwanderung’, and Christianising missions, in particular the various Missions to the Wends. The Baltic coast of Pomerania was subject to all of these throughout its history, and both land and people were indelibly marked by such events, which were largely outside their control.

Environmental dangers

Research has shown that from the very earliest times the southern coastline of the Baltic was subject to regular flooding and loss of land. In his book *Die Ostsee* Hansjörg Küster explains that the rise in sea levels was particularly significant in the area:

Der kontinuierliche Anstieg des Wasserspiegels war dort besonders stark. [...]. Immer mehr Moränenschutt wurde vom Wasser überflutet und aufgenommen, ein Stück Land nach dem anderen brach ab.⁴¹

At a given stage sea levels rose at a rate of 2.5 centimetres per year, or an equivalent of two and a half metres per century. The inhabitants of the southern Baltic coast saw the sea move ever closer.⁴² Granted, all of this happened over many thousands or even millions of years. Added to this was the fact that both North Sea and Baltic coasts were subject to violent storm floods, which caused major loss of life, land and livestock.⁴³ The sea was a constant threat which plagued coastal dwellers through the centuries and periodically inflicted destruction, pain and loss. Nevertheless it was also a facet of existence which was so interwoven into the fabric of society that it determined not alone the daily life of the individual but also marked the customs, norms and traditions of the community. It was an integral part of people's lives; they were intimately connected with it and could not have continued to exist without it. It is not surprising, therefore, that along the whole Baltic and North Sea coasts, stretching across community and land borders, there should have developed a body of folklore closely bound up with the sea in all its aspects, and that this should have been passed on from generation to generation. Understandably too, stories of major disasters gripped people's imagination, were disseminated widely and spread from one community to the next, with broad details remaining more or less constant, but modifications being made to accommodate local perceptions.

Es [das Meer] fraß sich Kilometer für Kilometer ins Landesinnere hinein und vernichtete Landstrich für Landstrich. Wohnplätze der Menschen versanken in den Fluten. An der gesamten südlichen Ostseeküste, von Schleswig-Holstein bis

⁴¹ Hansjörg Küster, *Die Ostsee* (München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2002), 75.

⁴² Küster, 85–86.

⁴³ In 11th/12th centuries, i.e. when Vineta is said to have been destroyed, Schleswig-Holstein records relating to the Baltic area report major floods in 1010, 1020, 1075, 1094, 1102 and 1114. In the North Sea the Saint Julian flood of 1164 is said to have led to the deaths of 20,000 people. See Marcus Petersen and Hans Rohde (eds.), *Sturmflut* (Neumünster: Karl Wachholtz Verlag, 1977), 38.

Litauen, und ebenso an der Nordseeküste gibt es Geschichten darüber. Am bekanntesten ist an der Ostsee die Geschichte der untergegangenen Stadt Vineta.⁴⁴

So the Vineta legend was born — a legend designed to inform, to explain frightening occurrences, and perhaps also used to strike terror into the hearts of an uneducated people.

Man-made dangers

The political and religious history of Pomerania may also be said to have facilitated the development of the Vineta legend. From a geographical point of view Pomerania was a frontier zone with two important borders — a sea border and a land border. The land border, though it may have seemed physically more solid, was in many ways just as unstable as the sea border, being subject to change through repeated invasion and conquest, leading to political reorganisation. The sea border, fluid and amorphous in appearance and very much subject to the vagaries of nature and the resulting fracturing and remodelling of the coastline, was also subject to physical change through enemy intervention, albeit over a more limited period of time, as for example during the Viking invasions.

From earliest times Pomerania was repeatedly invaded and occupied. During the Migration of the Tribes of early medieval times (*c.* 600), for example, Slav tribes moved in from the East to replace the Germanic tribes who had moved further south, both in search of new agricultural land and to escape from the Huns.

The Viking raids which began in the first quarter of the ninth century and continued well into the latter half of the eleventh century had a profound effect on the lands bordering the Baltic. Not alone were coastal areas subject to invasion and destruction, but the establishment of settlements along the coast by the Vikings allowed them to penetrate also into the interior.

The situation was further complicated during the early part of the tenth century, with German feudal expansion to the east beginning under King Heinrich I and continuing under his son, Otto I, who later became Holy Roman Emperor and tried to extend and reinforce his father's conquests. Otto established bases and, in co-operation with the

⁴⁴ Küster, 86.

Christian church, founded a number of bishoprics with the aim of breaking the resistance of the Slavs or Wends through the introduction of Christianity.

Christianisation and feudal expansion went hand in hand in what was in effect a symbiotic relationship, and the forays of Christian missionaries might in many ways be regarded as just as much an invasion as the eastward expansionist endeavours of the Holy Roman Empire. In fact the activities of Christian missionaries were possibly even more harmful than those of land-seeking German overlords, in that they attempted to destroy the ethos of the people, through denigrating their gods and their beliefs, rather than simply robbing them of their lands and possessions.

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries feudal expansion and Christianising missions continued and the dividing line between mission and crusade became steadily more blurred. Bishop Otto von Bamberg led missions to Pomerania on at least two occasions, in 1124 and 1128, baptising, according to his biographers, in excess of twenty thousand converts. Historian Dietmar Lucht describes the bishop's visit to Usedom in 1128:

Das erste Ziel Bischof Ottos war der Ort Usedom, wohin Herzog Wartislaw I. die Großen des von ihm neuerworbenen Landesteils geladen hatte. Auf diesem Usedomer Landtag im Juni 1128 wurde die Annahme des Christentums beschlossen und die Taufe der Versammelten sofort vollzogen. Daran erinnert noch heute das Kreuz auf dem Usedomer Schloßberg [...].⁴⁵

The commitment of these converts to the new religion is doubtful, however, and many are said to have reverted to paganism as soon as the bishop left.

In 1147 German feudal lords called for yet another crusade against the Wends. Participants in this crusade received the same spiritual privileges as the warriors in the Second Crusade to Syria and Palestine in 1147–1148.⁴⁶ All of these events happened at or around the time when Vineta is thought to have disappeared, i.e. some time in the hundred years between the reports of Adam von Bremen (c.1070) and Helmold von Bosau (c.1160) and they are particularly relevant in the context of the development of the *Vineta Sage* and the creative

⁴⁵ Dietmar Lucht, *Pommern: Geschichte, Kultur und Wirtschaft bis zum Beginn des Zweiten Weltkrieges* (Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1998), 22.

⁴⁶ Richard Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe* (London: Fontana Press, 1998), 487–490.

literature later written about the sunken city. Between physical destruction arising from both natural and man-made causes and psychological destruction resulting from the attempted extinction of beliefs, traditions and customs, communities sought to rationalise, explain and come to terms with what was happening to and around them.

The Development of the *Sage*

It is understandable that a community which feels itself under threat from any source should take action to protect itself. Such action has both positive and negative results, one of the more positive being the development of an enhanced sense of community solidarity and an increased awareness and appreciation of cultural identity. This collective consciousness frequently finds expression in the factual and/or creative portrayal of the situation in which the community finds itself. In the case of the inhabitants of the Baltic coast of Pomerania it may be presumed that the wish to preserve the memory of the disasters that had befallen them, and also to protect themselves, their lands and possessions, and future generations from destruction from whatever source, were the principal motives that gave them the impetus to tell their story. Both naturally-occurring phenomena and man-made disasters needed to be recalled, explained and rationalised in the minds of the people and to be passed on as a warning or as a lesson in how to foresee and if possible prevent such catastrophes, or at least mitigate their effects. For a largely uneducated population, without literacy skills, the method of dissemination of such information was word of mouth.

Legends, folk-tales and stories were therefore created, developed and passed on orally from one generation to the next, from one area to the next, from one storyteller to the next. Understandably stories were circumscribed and delineated by the perceptions and limitations both of the storyteller and his listeners, by a general lack of scientific knowledge or understanding, and by the beliefs and superstitions of the people.⁴⁷ Each storyteller elaborated his own set of tales, based to a greater or lesser extent on fact, and

⁴⁷ Waltraud Woeller, *Volkssagen zwischen Hiddensee und Wartburg*, zusammengestellt und interpretiert von Waltraud Woeller (Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1979), 9.

tailored to suit his audience, thereby creating a three-way relationship between story, storyteller and audience, as outlined by Leander Petzoldt:

Sagen haben [...] einen engen Bezug zur Lebenswelt des Erzählers und seines Publikums, dadurch wirken sie unbewußt auf das zwischenmenschliche und gesellschaftliche Verhalten des einzelnen.⁴⁸

This relationship may be assumed to have had an impact on content, as well as on the language and delivery of the story, through emphasising particular aspects and reducing others, introducing elements of exaggeration, and creating what has been called “a complex interweaving of both fantasy and reality in the process of memory” that no doubt served to make the myth more memorable.⁴⁹ The mingling of elements of fantasy with the ‘reality’ of what was remembered in folk memory about the destruction of Vineta in no way detracted from the overall memory of the event, but served merely to highlight variations in the experience, perception and understanding of different observers and receivers of the narrative. In this context it should be borne in mind that any examination of the function of memory as a component in the production of literary works in general will make it clear that the transformation of memory into fiction is a recognised phenomenon. Memory in this case may be regarded as a synonym for experience, or experienced events. While the relaying of experience in fictional guise is a common device employed by creative writers, the transformation of memory into myth is a much more fundamental and lengthy process, and one which has long-lasting, broadly-based results. Myth may be seen as a basic component in the creation of what Jan Assmann has called “cultural objectivations”, that function as carriers of memory and include the creative literature, art, music and other manifestations that testify to and transmit

⁴⁸ Petzoldt, *Einführung in die Sagenforschung*, 59.

⁴⁹ Roger Kennedy, *Memory and the Unconscious*, in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, edited by Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (Fordham University Press, 2010), 179.

knowledge of the past.⁵⁰ Myths become embedded in societies' cultural memory.⁵¹ They play an important role as mediators of memory and their transformative effect lies in their preservation of that memory through the adoption and acceptance of the myth as part of a broad canon that defines or identifies a group, as well as highlighting values and creating a sense of unity among the members of the group.

In the case of the Vineta *Sage*, while it is clear that the content is important in its storyline and motifs, the preservation of the memory of events through the *Sage*, and the acceptance of the *Sage* as part of inherited tradition, are also important. Furthermore, perusal of the different versions of the *Sage*, and in particular of the various literary texts that developed from it, shows that while the myth may have been modified to reflect the norms and standards of different eras, or the message that individual narrators or writers wished to convey, the basic core remains the same. In other words, the memory of an event or events that provided the catalyst for the development of the myth remains an integral part of the story to a greater or lesser extent. At times that memory is explicitly recalled, at others metaphorically transmitted, on still further occasions conveyed simply through the use of a single word — 'Vineta'.

In relation to content, motifs and modes of expression, it is true to say that myths about submerged lands, towns and villages are not uncommon, and the Vineta *Sage* shares many of the features of such myths. It is also important to recognise, however, that there are other aspects that belong purely to Vineta. These are what differentiate the Vineta *Sage* from other myths, and make it unique. They include the emphasis on cosmopolitanism, Adam's claim that Jumne/Vineta is said to be the largest city in Europe, its heathenism, the fact that Christians are accepted, provided they do not practise their religion openly.

The essential elements of the story are based largely on a very simple outline, using motifs from Adam von Bremen's report, with the addition of the information supplied by Helmold von Bosau to the effect that Vineta had been destroyed — the implication being

⁵⁰ Jan Assmann, *Communicative and Cultural Memory*, in Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning (eds), *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2008), 110.

⁵¹ Claudia-Florentina Dobre, Introduction. In Dobre C. & Ghiță C. (Eds.), *Quest for a Suitable Past: Myth and Memory in Central and Eastern Europe* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2017), 1–10. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7829/j.ctt1v2xth1.4>

that this had happened in the hundred years since Adam von Bremen had reported on its existence. What is particularly noticeable in the manner in which the destruction is reported in the later *Vineta Sagen* is that very few versions report the reason for the destruction as given by Helmold, i.e. that a Danish king had attacked and destroyed the town. The most significant and common motif added is that the people of Vineta had become arrogant and godless and had been punished by God for their sinful lives.

The motif of punishment by God is not uncommon in myth. In his *Sage von der untergegangen Stadt*, folklorist Franz Schmarsel postulates that all German *Sagen* relating to the destruction of cities, towns or other locations as a punishment for the godlessness of their inhabitants have their origin in two literary monuments of antiquity, namely Ovid's story of Philemon and Baucis and the story of the destruction of Sodom in the Book of Genesis. Oral tradition is of secondary significance to these literary works. While the theme of destruction wrought on a sinful population through the intervention of an angry God is common to many cultures, each culture makes it its own and adapts it to suit its particular circumstances.⁵² In German folk-literature, for example, the theme of the sunken city has been continuously re-worked and has been and continues to be 'nationalised'. The motifs used in the Philemon and Baucis story and in the story of the destruction of Sodom continue to be used, though not necessarily in exactly the same form and indeed in many cases they are adapted to suit the demands of a different era and culture:

Wir finden die einzelnen Motive der Philemonsage resp. Sodomsage allerdings nicht immer genau in der selben Gestalt in der Volksüberlieferung wieder. Sie sind vielfach entstellt, durch ähnliche Motive ersetzt [...].

Mit solcher Veränderung müssen wir rechnen, denn sie ist charakteristisch für jede Wandersage, [...] die einen Durchgang durch verschiedene Zeitperioden und damit auch Kulturperioden genommen hat.⁵³

⁵² Franz Schmarsel, *Die Sage von der untergegangen Stadt* (Berlin: Verlag Emil Felber, 1913). Kraus Reprint, (Liechtenstein, 1977), 1, 18.

⁵³ Schmarsel, 19.

Schmarsel highlights also the biblical story of the Deluge in the Book of Genesis, but points out that while there is an obvious relationship between flood stories and the story of the Deluge, important elements of the latter are significantly different and give rise to different structures and motifs.⁵⁴ He mentions, for example, the total destruction of the earth which occurs in the Deluge story and which requires advance arrangements for the protection of all species, so that human and animal life may again flourish. This is not a feature of the *Vineta Sage*, though in one particular version it is said that one man, “der fromm war”, escaped the flood on horseback.⁵⁵

If one examines the *Vineta* literature from an ecocritical perspective it is clear that weather, climate, and the natural environment feature as regular motifs, and in some cases might even be said to be omnipresent ‘characters’ in texts. Of its very essence the *Vineta Sage* is a myth with an inherent environmental core, of which natural elements such as the sea, waves, water and floods are an integral part. In many cases, however, in the different versions of the *Sage*, environmental references go well beyond the basics necessitated by the storyline, and introduce motifs such as cloud pictures or mirages floating above *Vineta*, as well as rain or mist, darkness and light, all of which are used to heighten the atmosphere or increase tension. Furthermore, literature developed from the *Sage* makes ample use of tropes such as concern for nature, and environmental research, while anthropomorphic elements and pathetic fallacy also feature strongly in some of the creative texts.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Schmarsel, 17–18.

⁵⁵ Adalbert Kuhn und Wilhelm Schwartz (eds.), *Norddeutsche Sagen, Märchen und Gebräuche* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1972), 28. Originally published in Leipzig by Brockhaus in 1848.

⁵⁶ See for example discussion in Chapter 5 on Günter Grass’s novel, *Die Rättin*. (Darmstadt: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1986), and Paul Bühler’s drama, *Vineta* (Dornach: Literarischer Verlag, 1972), in both of which environmental research is an important theme; also, in Chapter 3, discussion on Richard Nordhausen, *Die versunkene Stadt* (Hannover: Adolf Sponholtz Verlag, 1911), a novel in which personification of the elements features strongly, and the river is described as a treacherous monster lying in wait for its prey.

The Vineta *Sage*

When one compares the different versions of the *Vineta Sage*, as collected and written down by folklorists, with the reports of Adam von Bremen and Helmold von Bosau, what is immediately striking is the manner in which the apparently factual reports have been added to and embellished. The whole process of the creation of the Vineta legend could in fact be regarded as threefold, from the initial reports of the chroniclers, complemented by the experience of the people, to the oral transmission of a creatively enhanced story, to written dissemination through the collection of the story and its publication, often as a further extended narrative. A fourth phase sees the subsequent creative development of the legend and its utilisation as a base for imaginative compositions of various kinds.

If one uses the chroniclers' reports as a baseline and proceeds from them to an examination of the creative literature, one can see that there is a steady development in the Vineta legend, both in the manner of its treatment and the use which is made of it – from the chroniclers to the storyteller, to creative development of the *Sage*, to its adaptation and development into other genres, to the utilisation of Vineta as a symbol for Utopia as well as of physical, psychological, and social destruction. The attraction of the myth lies both in the simplicity and in the breadth of the motifs used — characteristics which allow it to be adapted to suit often diametrically opposed situations in very different locations and across different time periods. Motifs such as death, punishment, arrogance, godlessness, misuse of wealth, can be found in many if not all cultures, in all generations, but every negative attribute presupposes and allows for the existence of its opposite. The same may be said of the basic thesis behind the Vineta myth: destruction engenders its opposite, and the destruction or disappearance of Vineta is not total — it leaves something behind, be it simply a memory or a trace — and that in turn may lead to a new though different creation. At a philosophical and psychological level it generates a collective cultural memory that finds expression in the production of creative works in various media and contributes to a sense of identity and identification. The *Vineta Sage* and the body of literature emanating from it are clear examples of this cultural memory, reflecting the truth of Astrid Erll's thesis that "literature manifested in all genres [...], both popular and 'trivial' literature as well as canonized and 'high' literature have served — and continue

to serve — as media of memory”.⁵⁷ At a physical level it involves the presence of reminders such as the Vineta reef, the Vineta Kreuz in Koserow, and the “Landweg nach Vineta”, one of a number of pathways which are said to lead from different parts of Usedom to the ruins of the sunken city.⁵⁸ There is also a Vineta museum, as well as buildings, streets, boats, and clubs, all bearing the name Vineta — in essence what Siobhan Kattago refers to as “sites of memory [which] contain the remains, traces, ruins and fragments of the past” and furthermore “as ciphers [...] not only point to the afterlife of something that occurred in the past, but also frame and shape the content of what is remembered”.⁵⁹ Moreover, nowadays Vineta might even be said to have described a full circle, in that it again enriches its environment through the development heritage centres, festivals and other attractions.⁶⁰ Even a cursory examination of the uses to which the sunken city has been put shows that Vineta as a theme has always been, and continues to be both hard-working and hard worked.

Motifs in the Chroniclers’ Reports regarding Jumne/Vineta

In order to establish the main elements of the story of Vineta it is necessary to look at the reports of both Adam von Bremen and Helmold von Bosau, the texts of which are given in Appendices A1 and A2 respectively.⁶¹ Examination of those reports shows the main themes to be as follows.

⁵⁷ Erll, *Memory in Culture*, 144.

⁵⁸ A. Haas, *Usedom-Wolliner Sagen*, Zweite Auflage, gesammelt und hrsg. von A. Haas (Stettin: Verlag von Arthur Schuster, 1924), 143–144.

⁵⁹ Siobhan Kattago, *Introduction: Memory Studies and its Companions*, in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Memory Studies*, edited by Siobhán Kattago (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016).

⁶⁰ In recent years a resurgence of interest in Vineta has resulted in a number of events being organised on an annual basis. These include the *Vineta Festspiele*, a theatre festival organised by the Vorpommersche Landesbühne, which takes place in Zinnowitz on the island of Usedom. Other events take place on Easter Sunday, when, according to legend, Vineta is said to rise from the sea-bed.

⁶¹ Adam, *Bischofsgeschichte*, 263; Helmold, *Slawenchronik*, 83.

Adam's report regarding Jumne (Vineta) (c. 1075)

- Location: “Wo sie [die Oder] an ihrer Mündung ins Skythenmeer fließt [...] da bietet die Stadt Jumne [...] einen vielbesuchten Treffpunkt”.
- Name: Jumne
- Size of town: “Es ist wirklich die größte von allen Städten, die Europa birgt [...]”.
- Inhabitants: “in ihr wohnen Slawen und andere Stämme, Griechen und Barbaren [...] auch Sachsen”.
- Hospitality: “man [wird] [...] kaum ein Volk finden können, das in [...] Gastfreiheit[...] freundlicher ist”.
- Religion: “[...] noch sind alle in heidnischem Irrglauben befangen [...]. Die Fremden aus Sachsen [dürfen] während ihres Aufenthaltes ihr Christentum nicht öffentlich bekennen”.
- Riches: “Die Stadt ist angefüllt mit Waren aller Völker des Nordens, nichts Begehrtes oder Seltenes fehlt”.

Helmold's report (c. 1170)

Helmold both paraphrased and quoted from Adam von Bremen's Report. Two additional elements which feature in Helmold's Report are:

Name: Helmold used two names in referring to the city, viz. *Iumneta* and *Vinneta*. Many researchers regard these either as an attempt at Latinisation of the name used by Adam von Bremen, or as an error in transcription from Adam's manuscript.

Destruction: Helmold used the past tense in referring to the city and mentioned its destruction by a Danish king:

Ein König der Dänen soll diesen höchst wohlhabenden Platz mit einer großen Flotte angegriffen und völlig zerstört haben. Die Überreste sind noch jetzt vorhanden.⁶²

It is clearly unlikely that these chronicles/reports would have been read by or even available to an uneducated people. Nevertheless, the very fact that they were written down

⁶² Helmold, *Slawenchronik*, 83.

meant that Jumne's fame was already widespread and that its destruction was common knowledge. It can be assumed that the story was therefore told, and could be added to or subtracted from as the occasion demanded. The storyteller could work on it, weaving his own versions to suit his audience at any particular time.

In this context it is important to remember that the principal function of the chronicler was to record historical events in the order in which they occurred and, frequently, at the time of their occurrence; the storyteller, on the other hand, was required to assimilate these events at a later stage, and to convey them in story form to an audience. He needed to convince, or at least engender suspension of disbelief among his audience, and to entertain. Simple statements of fact were not, therefore, sufficient. The storyteller needed to elaborate on and to embellish the facts, in order to make them more striking and more memorable. In the *Vineta Sage*, for example, it would not be sufficient merely to say that the inhabitants of Vineta were godless; in order to reinforce that idea among the audience, examples of their godlessness would have to be given. Storytellers used a variety of motifs to illustrate their point, at times highlighting some elements of the story at the expense of others.

Principal versions of the Vineta *Sage*

First version

There are three main versions of the *Vineta Sage*. One of the oldest and most frequently encountered of these is the version given in Appendix B.1, taken from the *Volkssagen von Pommern und Rügen*, a collection by J.D.H. Temme which was published in 1840. and referred to by folklorist Alfred Haas as “die älteste pommersche Sagensammlung”.⁶³ Temme's version of the *Sage*, sometimes with additions or alterations, was later used and/or acknowledged by other collectors, editors and publishers, including Bäßler, Haas,

⁶³ J.D.H. Temme, *Die Volkssagen von Pommern und Rügen* gesammelt von J.D.H. Temme (Berlin: Nicolaische Buchhandlung, 1840), 23–27; A. Haas, *Usedom-Wolliner Sagen*, zweite Auflage, gesammelt und hrsg. von A. Haas (Stettin: Verlag Arthur Schuster, 1924),v. Subsequently referred to as Haas (1924).

Thieme, Falkenberg, Röllecke and Seydel.⁶⁴ Furthermore the importance of Temme's collection was also recognised by Ulrich Jahn, the noted folklorist whose reputation earned him the title "der pommersche Grimm".⁶⁵ In 1886, concerned that Temme's work was no longer available and anxious to preserve the myths, legends and customs of Pomerania for his fellow countrymen and for future research in the areas of mythology, dialect, ethnology and customs, Ulrich Jahn published his *Volkssagen aus Pommern und Rügen*, in which he reproduced many of the legends of his predecessor.⁶⁶

In the introduction to his *Volkssagen* Temme sets out his claim regarding the integrity of his collection:

Jede Sage ist mit der gewissenhaftesten Treue wiedergegeben, so wie sie entweder noch unmittelbar im Munde des Volkes oder in den Chroniken aufgefunden ist.⁶⁷

Some of the *Sagen* in the collection are attributed to oral sources, being designated 'mündlich'. In relation to the Vineta *Sage*, however, Temme acknowledges among others Thomas Kantzow's (d.1542) *Pomerania* and Johannes Micrälius's *Altes Pommerland*, (c. 1640), as well as Barthold's *Geschichte von Pommern* (1839), the *Acten der pommerschen Gesellschaft für Geschichte und Alterthumskunde* and other similar publications.⁶⁸ A comparison between the first two paragraphs of Temme's *Sage* and the following extract from Kantzow's *Chronik von Pommern* makes it clear that Temme made much use of Kantzow's work in his description of Vineta:

⁶⁴ Ferdinand Bäbler, *Sagen aus allen Gauen des Vaterlandes* (Berlin: R.v.Decker-Verlag, 1856), 65. Also in Karl Koch, *Vineta: Die von den Meereswellen verschlungene Wendenstadt in Prosa und Poesie* (Stettin: Verlag Arthur Schuster, 1910), 5–10; Haas (1924), 140–144; Karl Thieme, *Sagen der versunkenen Stadt Vineta und andere Sagen der Inseln Usedom-Wollin* (Swinemünde: Druck und Verlag W. Fritzsche, 1925), 9–22; Hans Falkenberg (ed.), *Fahren und Wandern zu den pommerschen Sagen von Stettin bis Usedom-Wollin* (Schwabach: Falkenberg, 1993), 165–169; Heinz Röllecke (ed.), *Die Stadt Wineta*, in *Das große deutsche Sagenbuch* (Düsseldorf: Zürich: Artemis und Winkler, 1996), 166–167; Renate Seydel (ed), *Usedom, ein Lesebuch* (München: Ullstein Taschenbuchverlag, 2000), 182–184.

⁶⁵ Ulrich Jahn, *Volkssagen aus Pommern und Rügen*, Siegfried Neumann and Karl-Ewald Tietz (eds.) (Bremen: Edition Temmen, 1999), 23. Subsequently referred to as Jahn (1999).

⁶⁶ Ulrich Jahn, *Volkssagen aus Pommern und Rügen* (Stettin: H. Dannenberg, 1886), 159. Subsequently referred to as Jahn (1886),

⁶⁷ Temme, xii

⁶⁸ Temme, 27.

Wineta ist gewest eine gewaltige Stat, welche hatte eine gutte Hafen vor alle umbliegende Volcker, und nachdem viel von der Stat gesagt wirt und das auch schyr ungleublich ist, so wil ich des wes erzellen. Es solle gewest sein so gros eine Stat, als zu der Zeit Europa eine haben mochte, welche bewohnet haben durcheinander Greken, Slaven, Wende und ander Volcker. Es haben auch die Sachssen Macht gehapt, da zu wohnen, doch das von denselben Volckern keiner den Christentumb habe berhomen und bekhennen müssen. Dan alle Burger seint abgottisch geplieben bis zu entlicher Zerstorung und Unterganck der Stat. Sunst aber von Zucht, Sitten und Herbergen solt man kawm irgentz fromer Volck noch ires gleichen spüren. Die Stat ist von allerley Kauffwahr aus allen Landen erfüllt gewest, hat alles gehapt, was nhur seltsam, lustig und nottig gewest ist. Dieselbe Stat solle ein Khonig aus Denemarcken durch eine grosse Schiffung und Krieg erobert und zerstoret haben. Es seint noch vorhanden Beweising und Gedechnus der Stat [...]. So weit Helmoldus, der geschrieben hat ungefer vor IIII C Jar.⁶⁹

Kantzow quoted and acknowledged Helmold von Bosau, who in his turn had relied on Adam von Bremen's account; Temme's *Sage* can therefore be said to go back to the original written source of information about Jumne/Vineta.

The Vineta myth as written down by Temme clearly involved some selection on his part as to the material to be included; the collector might be regarded, therefore, as taking the place of the storyteller in his choice of motifs.

The version of the *Sage* produced by Temme is impressive in its attempt to give a balanced account of the then available intelligence and opinions about the sunken city. It might effectively be said to provide a synthesis of the art of the chronicler or historian with that of the storyteller, in the sense that two possible explanations for the disappearance of Vineta are given, the first of which is in a more historical vein, while the second bears all the attributes of a folktale. In the first instance the destruction of the city is attributed to Swedish and Danish forces, who, having been called by the Vinetans to help in establishing peace between two opposing groups, used the opportunity to sack the city and

⁶⁹ Thomas Kantzow, *Des Thomas Kantzow Chronik von Pommern*, hrsg. von Georg Gaebel (Stettin: Verlag Paul Niekammer, 1897), 35.

escape with its treasures. Temme then provides an alternative view, gleaned from folk-belief, namely that the city was destroyed by a wrathful God as a punishment for the sins of its people.

A further significant element in Temmé's *Sage* is the fact that the inhabitants of the sunken city are said to continue living among the ruins of Vineta, and are depicted as leading a normal and not unhappy life on the sea bed:

In der versunkenen Stadt ist noch immer ein wundersames Leben. [...]. Manchmal gehen sie [die Einwohner] fröhlich und geschäftig einher; manchmal bewegen sie sich in langsamen Trauerzügen, und man sieht dann, wie sie einen Sarg zum Grabe geleiten.⁷⁰

Second version

The second version of the Vineta *Sage* is that produced by Adalbert Kuhn and Wilhelm Schwartz in their *Norddeutsche Sagen, Märchen und Gebräuche*, first published in 1848, (Appendix B.2), and later used, with variations, by Ulrich Jahn, Friedrich Ranke, and Leander Petzoldt among others.⁷¹ The difference between this second version and that of Temme may well be accounted for by the fact that the second version is said by its collectors to have been obtained orally from Swinemünde and Heringsdorf. It is a much shorter version of the *Sage*, and is not as well honed nor polished as a *Sage* emanating from a written source. There is only one explanation given for the destruction of the city: punishment wrought by God on a people who had become godless and sinful. There is, however, a further element given in the *Sage* which does not appear in Temme's version, namely the fact that one God-fearing man escaped the disaster on horseback.

⁷⁰ Temme, 26.

⁷¹ Kuhn und Schwartz, 28; Jahn (1999), 159; Friedrich Ranke, *Die deutschen Volkssagen* (München: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1910), 236–237; Leander Petzoldt, (ed.), *Deutsche Volkssagen* (München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1978), 169. Subsequently referred to as Petzoldt, *Deutsche Volkssagen*.

Third version

The third version of the *Vineta Sage* is that edited by Albert Burkhardt (Appendix B.3) and published in his *Vineta: Sagen und Märchen vom Ostseestrand*.⁷² This *Sage* develops more fully one of the themes encountered in Karl Thieme's *Sagen der versunkenen Stadt Vineta*, namely that of the young shepherd boy who finds himself in the sunken city one Easter Sunday morning.⁷³ In his bibliography Burkhardt acknowledges the work of Thieme, Temme, and Haas.

Burkhardt initially evokes the ongoing life in the city under the sea. He does so by allowing the young shepherd boy, who apparently knows nothing about Vineta, wander through the streets of the city which has just risen from under the waves. Though conscious of the obvious wealth of his surroundings, the boy is primarily struck by the eerie silence that pervades the streets and the market place where stallholders wave to him, begging him to buy their wares. He cannot do so — he possesses not a single penny.

Later, on returning to his sheep on the strand, the young shepherd hears the story of the sunken city from an elderly fisherman and learns that, had he had even a penny to buy the wares of the inhabitants of Vineta, the sunken city would have been released from the bed of the sea.

One of the interesting aspects of Burkhardt's *Sage* is that it portrays the ongoing plight of the inhabitants of the sunken city and evokes their overwhelming desire for freedom, as they silently gesticulate to the young shepherd boy and offer him their wares. In this, Burkhardt's *Sage* provides a direct contrast with Temme's version, in which the inhabitants are said to lead a happy and contented life on the seabed.

Other versions of the Vineta *Sage*

Among the versions of the *Vineta Sage* that cannot be said to have been copied directly from any of those mentioned above are those found in earlier compilations of Alfred Haas, as well as the *Sagen* of M. Mancke, Otto Wobbe, Werner Jansen, Heinrich Karstens,

⁷² Albert Burkhardt, (ed), *Vineta: Sagen und Märchen vom Ostseestrand* (Rostock: VEB Hinstorff Verlag, 1969), 5–9.

⁷³ Thieme, 10–11.

Waltraud Woeller, and E. Maier, K-E Tietz and A. Ulbricht.⁷⁴ These are for the most part, however, merely newly-written versions of the Vineta story and, with the exception of Haas's *Rügensche Sagen* and M. Mancke's *Sagen und Erzählungen aus den Seebädern Swinemünde, Heringsdorf, Misdroy* contain no additional information or motifs beyond those encountered in the three main versions of the *Sage*.

The more significant of the two exceptions is the very long *Sage* by M. Mancke, in which Vineta is destroyed twice — first of all by Danish troops and then some years later by an angry God. In the first instance, both Swedes and Danes have been called to the aid of warring factions in Vineta. Rather than help, however, they have instead laid siege to the city which eventually falls to the Danes. According to Mancke the immediate cause is the treachery of the son of Prince Waldemar of Denmark. Having pretended to fall in love with Thielva, daughter of the Governor of Vineta, the young Dane convinces her to meet him at night in a hut in her father's garden, bringing with her the key to open the gate leading to the seashore to allow him in. Unsurprisingly he arrives accompanied by Danish troops, who overrun the city and slaughter large numbers of its inhabitants. Thielva, distraught at the deception of her lover, throws herself into the sea and drowns. This story within a story might be seen as an elaboration of Helmold von Bosau's statement that "ein König der Dänen soll diesen höchst wohlhabenden Platz mit einer großen Flotte angegriffen und völlig zerstört haben".⁷⁵

Mancke's *Sage* continues with an account of a later destruction of Vineta. With the passage of time the city has bloomed again, its wealth once more causing people to become arrogant and godless. The immediate cause of destruction on this second occasion is the refusal of the people to accept Christianity. Christian monks, led by a bishop, arrive

⁷⁴ A. Haas, *Rügensche Sagen*, (Bergen, Rügen: Verlag Walter Krohnsz, 1939), 15. Subsequently referred to as Haas (1939). The *Rügensche Sagen* were originally published in 1891 in Greifswald by Verlag Ludwig Bamberg and by 1939 had run to nine editions. A. Haas, *Pommersche Sagen* (Berlin-Friedenau: Hermann Eichblatt Verlag, 1912), 7–8. Subsequently referred to as Haas (1912); M. Mancke (William Forster), *Sagen und Erzählungen aus den Seebädern Swinemünde, Heringsdorf, Misdroy* (Swinemünde: Verlag Heinrich Dehne, 1901), 103–112; Otto Wobbe, *Wurans Vineta binah erlöst würd*, in *Pommern geliebt und unvergessen* (Leer: Verlag Gerhard Rautenberg, 1989), 59–60; Werner Jansen, (Hrsg.) *Die Volkssagen* (Hamburg: Georg Westerman Verlag, 1923), 165–166; Heinrich Karstens, *Deutsche Lande an der Ostsee* (Hannover: Schlütersche Buchdruckerei-Verlagsanstalt, 1966), 106–107; Woeller, 42–43; Elke Maier, Karl-Ewald Tietz und Adelheid Ulbricht, (Hrsg.), *Aus Pommerns Sagenwelt 2*, ausgewählt und neu erzählt (Peenemünde: Verlag und Vertrieb Axel Dietrich, 1994), 17–18.

⁷⁵ Helmold, *Slawenchronik*, 83.

in the harbour, claiming to have been sent to teach and baptise the people of Vineta. They are refused admission to the town and threatened by the elders. The bishop and monks are forced to depart, but not before the bishop warns the Vinetans that God's patience with them is at an end and they are about to be destroyed:

Wehe! Wehe! Wehe! über Dich, Vineta, Du stolze Stadt! Wehe! Wehe! dreimal
Wehe! Die Langmut Gottes ist zu Ende – Fürchterliches steht Dir bevor! Schon
sehe ich Heerscharen herbeiziehen, die das Verderben mit sich bringen, um Dich
vom Erdboden zu tilgen! Wehe – wehe Dir, stolze Stadt!⁷⁶

There is an interesting parallel between the Bishop's warning in this case and that of the 'Wasserfrau' who appears in the *Sagen* of Burkhardt, Maier et al., and Woeller in order to warn the Vinetans that their town will be destroyed unless they mend their ways.⁷⁷ The Vinetans, however, merely laugh in scorn at the Bishop's warning, and, as soon as he and his monks depart, set about organising a festival and offering sacrifices in honour of their god, Swantewit. The storm breaks, the waves reach higher than the city walls, Vineta is engulfed. The following day, returning fishermen find only heavy seas where their town used to be. Mancke finishes the *Sage* by quoting from Wilhelm Müller's poem, *Vineta*:

Aus des Meeres tiefem tiefem Grunde
Klingen Abendglocken dumpf und matt
Uns zu geben wunderbare Kunde
Von der schönen, alten Wunderstadt.⁷⁸

Significance of Mancke's version of the Vineta *Sage*

Mancke's version of the *Sage* is particularly significant in that it is the only *Sage* amongst those under consideration in which the destruction of the town is attributed directly to the Vinetans' refusal to accept the Christian message. It is a *Sage* born of the fear of the people of Pomerania that their reluctance to embrace Christianity may have invited

⁷⁶ Mancke, 110.

⁷⁷ See p. 69, this Chapter. Also Burkhardt, 9; Maier et al., 17; Woeller, 43.

⁷⁸ Wilhelm Müller, *Vineta* in *Wilhelm Müller. Werke, Tagebücher, Briefe*. Band 2, Gedichte 2. Hrsg. von Maria-Verena Leistner (Berlin: Gatzka, 1994), 64. See discussion of poem in Chapter 2, p. 86.

retribution, and is therefore a much more powerful version that could well have been used to great effect by missionaries in order to encourage or frighten heathen people into accepting the new faith.

The motifs illustrating godlessness are present in this *Sage*, as in all others, but in this case they are further reinforced by the deliberate rejection of Christianity, compounded by the decision to organise a pagan festival once the missionaries have departed. In the context of eleventh and twelfth century attitudes, however, when “Wendish paganism was, or was becoming, organized, funded and warlike”, the attitude of the Vinetans is understandable.⁷⁹ Pagan gods were expected to make their followers rich, as the pagan gods of the inhabitants of the southern Baltic had reputedly done. Growth in urban prosperity was taking place in many areas of the Baltic coast, among them Wolin and Usedom, a fact confirmed by later archaeological investigations, and this fostered gratitude to the gods, who were credited with having been responsible for the success of their worshippers. It is not surprising therefore that the Vinetans would be unwilling to accept a poor God, whose followers preached poverty and love of one’s neighbour.

There is an echo in Mancke’s *Sage* of the treatment meted out to the missionary priest Bernhard, who embarked on an evangelising mission to Pomerania in the early 1100s. He was “a man of humble disposition who travelled about barefoot and unkempt to preach the word”.⁸⁰ His poverty and demeanour failed to impress the Pomeranians, however, and his mission was unsuccessful. He subsequently advised Bishop Otto von Bamberg: “go there with a noble retinue of companions and servants and a plentiful supply of food and clothing. Those who, with unbridled neck, despised the yoke of humility will bow their necks in reverence for the glory of riches”.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Fletcher, 441.

⁸⁰ Fletcher, 457.

⁸¹ Fletcher, 458.

Examination of subject matter and motifs in the Vineta *Sagen*

The subject matter and motifs in the Vineta *Sagen* might broadly be divided into two main groups, namely those that arise from the reports of the chroniclers, and those that are a creative development of the storyteller or the collector/writer, and are designed to give greater impact or to enhance particular elements to suit local audiences. The first group might be regarded as reflecting the shared knowledge or collective memory of the people, and consist mainly of physical and moral descriptions of Vineta and its inhabitants.

Name, size and location of Jumne/Vineta

Three basic items of information, developed briefly by some of the storytellers, relate to the name, size and location of the town:

Name. The chronicles of Adam von Bremen and Helmold von Bosau gave rise to confusion regarding the name of the important trading centre on the Baltic, with Adam referring to it as ‘Jumne’ and Helmold transcribing this as ‘Iumneta’ and ‘Vinneta’. In the *Sagen* too a number of different names occur, some presumably arising through the efforts of the storyteller to localise the story, while others may have arisen through the association of the events with similar happenings in known geographical locations. Among the names given to the sunken city in the *Sagen*, other than ‘Vineta’ or ‘Wineta,’ are “Venedig”, “Fenedich”, “Niniveh”, and “Niniueta”.⁸² The name ‘Niniveh’, with various transcriptions could have arisen in a number of ways. Wladyslaw Filipowiak ascribes the name ‘Niniveta’ to an incorrect transcription of Adam von Bremen’s chronicle:

Die *Hamburgische Kirchengeschichte* wurde schon im 12. Jahrhundert oft abgeschrieben. In den Handschriften jener Zeiten tauchen andere Schreibweisen auf, manchmal Schreibfehler, hin und wieder wohl auch Latinisierungsversuchen geschuldet. Aus Jumne entwickelte sich [...] nicht selten Niniveta.⁸³

⁸² “Venedig” in Haas (1912), 7. Also in Jahn (1999), 159 and Maier et al., 17; “Fenedich” in Jahn (1999), 159; “Niniveh” in Haas (1939). Also A. Haas, *Pommersche Wassersagen*. (Greifswald: Verlag Karl Moninger, 1923), 38. Subsequently referred to as Haas (1923); “Niniueta” in Haas (1923), 38.

⁸³ Wladyslaw Filipowiak, *Vineta Wollin: Die tatsächliche Legende vom Untergang und Aufstieg der Stadt*, (Rostock: Hinstorff Verlag, 1992), 30.

It is but a short step from ‘Niniveta’ to ‘Niniveh’ and not surprising that this should occur in the oral collection of a *Sage*. It is also possible, however, that an association was made between the ancient Assyrian city of Nineveh on the banks of the Tigris, which was excavated for the first time in the 1820s, at a time when Romantic interest in the past was high, and when collecting of myths and legends was common. As in Vineta, there was no shortage of water in Nineveh. The city was bisected by the Khawser, a tributary of the Tigris, and water was brought from the hills by eighteen canals. Nineveh was also surrounded by a great wall, surrounded by moats and pierced by fifteen gates — another feature that has echoes of Vineta.

The name ‘Venedig’, with a more German-looking transcription ‘Fenedich’, may be assumed to have arisen through the association of the engulfed island trading centre of Vineta with Venice, the most famous mediaeval maritime republic, built on an archipelago of islets and mud banks in the middle of a lagoon. The importance of Venice as a leading sea-power declined at the end of the sixteenth century and it is not surprising that parallels might be made in the *Sagen* between Venice and Vineta.

A further derivative of the name occurs in the *Pommersche Wassersagen*, where Alfred Haas reports that, according to Kantzow, local farmers referred to the city as “Klein-Venedie”:

Daß der Name Vineta nicht von Anfang an so sicher und feststehend gewesen ist, wie in der jetzigen Volksüberlieferung, bezeugt uns Thomas Kantzow, der u.a. berichtet: ‘Die Veneter haben gepauet die Stat Vineta, die die Pauren an dem Orte Klein -Venedie heißen’.⁸⁴

Haas also points out, however, that outside of Pomerania names such as Veneten, Venedig, Fineten, and Ninifeh were commonly found in connection with places destroyed by flood.

Continuing confusion and interest in the name over many years may be gauged from the *Mecklenburgische Reimchronik* of Ritter Ernst von Kirchbach, who in 1378, at the request of Duke Albrecht II of Mecklenburg, redrafted Helmold von Bosau’s text, and added his

⁸⁴ Haas (1923), 37.

own variations. His verse on the development of the name is interesting, but cannot presumably be given any more credence than the rest of his additions: “und von der Stad Wynneta, | so nennet man sy Winthi, | zu rechten nam als Wandali | als Wynneta wart verstört, | ich hans gelesen und gehört, | daz sy widder buwete sus. | mechtig der Keysir Julius, | und nante sy do Julyn, | nu nennet man sy Wollin”.⁸⁵

Size. In their chronicles both Adam and Helmold claimed that Jumne/Vineta was the largest city in Europe. Though this would seem to be an exaggeration, historian Ludwig Giesebrecht points out that in the eleventh century mediaeval writers like Adam von Bremen would have thought of Europe as meaning simply heathen Europe, as opposed to those areas occupied by Christians of both Greek and Roman traditions. According to Giesebrecht, Adam would have referred to Christian Europe as ‘Großeuropa’.⁸⁶

Reference is also made in a number of *Sagen* to the size of Vineta, with comparisons being made with other major centres of the time. According to Thieme and others, the city was “größter als irgend eine andere Stadt in Europa, selbst als die große und schöne Stadt Konstantinopel”.⁸⁷ Röllecke described it as “umfangreicher [...] denn irgendeine andere in Europa”, Jahn spoke of the city as “eine große mächtige Stadt” and according to Jansen Vineta was “eine der größten und reichsten Städte der Alten Welt”.⁸⁸

Location. One of the aspects of the story of Vineta which has most exercised researchers over the centuries is its location. It is clear that Adam von Bremen’s siting of Jumne at the mouth of the Oder can be interpreted in a number of different ways. Discussions have gone on and continue up to the present day. As already mentioned, a new theory developed in the late 1990s by Klaus Goldmann and Günter Wermusch, has placed the sunken city

⁸⁵ Ernst von Kirchbach, *Mecklenburgische Reimchronik*, quoted in Barthold, 407.

⁸⁶ Ludwig Giesebrecht, *Wendische Geschichten*, erster Band (Berlin: Rudolph Gaertner, Amelangsche Sort.-Buchhandlung, 1843), 28.

⁸⁷ Thieme, 9; Bäßler, in Koch, 5; Falkenberg, 165; Haas (1924), 140; Seydel, 182; Temme, 24; Woeller, 43.

⁸⁸ Röllecke, 166; Jahn (1999), 159; Jansen, 165.

in the Barther Bodden, considerably further west than the generally accepted locations of Usedom and Wolin.⁸⁹

There is brief reference in all the *Sagen* to the location of the sunken city. A number of *Sagen* – namely Bäbler, Falkenberg, Haas, Röllecke, Seydel, and Temme – refer to it as being “An der nordöstlichen Küste der Insel Usedom”.⁹⁰ Karstens places Vineta simply on the “Nordküste der Insel Usedom”, while Thieme and Burkhardt are a little more precise in their placing of it near Koserow.⁹¹ Kuhn und Schwartz, Petzoldt, and Jahn all place the sunken city about a quarter of a mile from the Streckelberg on Usedom, with Ranke specifying about a half a mile from the Streckelberg and Jahn adding that it is not far from Zinnowitz.⁹² Mancke also locates the sunken city off Usedom, in front of the Streckelberg, between Heringsdorf and Zinnowitz, while Jansen refers to it as being “eine halbe Meile von Stadt und Insel Usedom”.⁹³ In another *Sage* in which Haas acknowledges both Wilhelm Meinhold and Friedrich Körner, Vineta is supposed to have stood on the Streckelberg, “welcher zwar nur 150 Fuß hoch ist, aber die Aussicht über einen weithin ausgedehnten Flächenraum eröffnet”.⁹⁴

In the early twentieth century a summary of the positions of different experts published in the monthly review *Unser Pommerland* showed that one in three claimed that the city was on the island of Wolin, and that Rudolf Virchow, the well-known pathologist and anthropologist, had excavated it there in 1896.⁹⁵ Historically the islands of Usedom and Wolin were both part of Pomerania. It might be expected, therefore, that *Sagen* designated as Pomeranian might place the sunken city as frequently on one island as on the other. This does not, however, seem to have been the case with the Vineta *Sage* and a large

⁸⁹ Klaus Goldmann and Günter Wermusch, *Vineta: Die Wiederentdeckung einer versunkenen Stadt* (Bergisch Gladbach: Gustav Lübbe Verlag, 1999).

⁹⁰ Bäbler, in Koch, 5; Falkenberg, 165; Haas (1924), 140; Röllecke, 166; Seydel, 182; Temme, 24

⁹¹ Karstens, 106; Thieme, 9; Burkhardt, 5.

⁹² Kuhn und Schwartz, 28; Petzoldt, *Deutsche Volkssagen*, 169; Jahn (1999), 159; Ranke, 236.

⁹³ Mancke, 103; Jansen, 165.

⁹⁴ Haas (1924), 146.

⁹⁵ *Vineta*, in *Pommersche Rundschau in Unser Pommerland*. 11. Jg. 1926. (Stettin: Verlagsbuchhandlung und Druckerei Fischer und Schmidt, 1926), 333.

majority of the *Sagen* under consideration have placed the sunken city in or near the island of Usedom rather than Wolin. Even in the *Usedom-Wolliner Sagen* two of the three *Sagen* which tell of the location of Vineta place it on or near Usedom.⁹⁶ The third, which Haas attributes to an oral source in the town of Wolin, places Vineta at the Jordansee, north-east of the seaside resort of Misdroy (present-day Międzyzdroje) on the island of Wolin.

It is conceivable that the reason that the majority of *Sagen* relate to Usedom rather than Wolin springs from the fact that though remains of Slav settlements have been found on Wolin, the town of Wolin was not engulfed by the sea, but rather repeatedly attacked by the Danes, culminating in its total destruction in 1184.⁹⁷ The ‘Untergang’ was therefore more gradual and less dramatic, and, because the reason for it could be easily explained, it was less likely to provide the stuff of which *Sagen* are made.

A further point that may have contributed to a majority of *Sagen* placing Vineta on Usedom rather than Wolin relates to the relative position of both islands. In 1815 Vorpommern, i.e. the area west of the river Oder, and Hinterpommern, between the Oder and the Vistula, were united in one Prussian province of Pomerania, with Stettin as its chief town. Though the islands were part of Pomerania, the Oder formed a natural boundary, bisecting the eastern tip of the island of Usedom, and creating two distinct areas which, though they belonged to the same province, may have resulted in a social and psychological separation between the inhabitants of both islands. The earlier *Sagen*, on which subsequent literary texts and stories were based, had been collected during or shortly after the German Romantic period. German Romantics were concerned with Germany’s past, with its traditions and its folk culture, and it is understandable, therefore, that *Sagen*, Märchen, Volkslieder and folk traditions, all of which helped to keep the past alive, should have been attributed more frequently to an area which might have been seen as closer to the German mainland, and therefore more authentically German. After 1945 the natural boundary formed by the Oder was formally recognised, and almost the whole

⁹⁶ Haas (1924), 95,140.

⁹⁷ Goldmann, 108.

of historical Pomerania, with the exception of the area west of the Oder, became part of Poland.⁹⁸

Cosmopolitanism, hospitality and religious tolerance

Cosmopolitanism. The cosmopolitan nature of Jumne/Vineta and the openness of the inhabitants to people of other cultures and religions was stressed by both Adam von Bremen and Helmold von Bosau and re-echoed in many of the *Sagen*. In the following passage, Temme seems merely to have paraphrased the reports of Adam and Helmold:

Es haben darin allerlei Völker gewohnt, Griechen, Slaven, Wenden, Sachsen und noch vielerlei andere Stämme. Die hatten allda jedes ihre besondere Religion; nur die Sachsen, welche Christen waren, durften ihr Christentum nicht öffentlich bekennen, denn nur die heidnischen Götzen genossen eine öffentliche Verehrung. Ungeachtet solcher Abgötterei waren die Bewohner Winetas aber ehrbar und züchtig von Sitten, und in Gastfreundschaft und Höflichkeit gegen Fremde hatten sie ihres Gleichen nicht.⁹⁹

Hospitality. The hospitality of the Wends is well documented, a fact recognised, according to Theodor Fontane, by chroniclers of the era:

[Die deutschen Chronikschreiber jener Epoche, Widukind, Thietmar, Adam von Bremen sind sich] einig [...] in Anerkennung der wendischen Gastfreundschaft. Um Aufnahme zu bitten hatte der Fremde in der Regel nicht nötig; sie wurde ihm wetteifernd angeboten. Jedes Haus hatte seine Gastzimmer und immer offene Tafel [...]. Je freigebiger der Wende war, für desto vornehmer wurde er gehalten und für desto vornehmer hielt er sich selbst.¹⁰⁰

It is not surprising, therefore, that Wendish hospitality should have featured in chroniclers' reports and also in many of the *Sagen*.

⁹⁸ About twenty percent of the island of Usedom, west of the river Oder, (c. seventy-two square kilometres) forms part of the Polish voivodeship of West Pomerania.

⁹⁹ Temme, 24. See also Bäbler, in Koch, 5; Falkenberg, 165; Haas (1924), 140; Röllecke, 166; Seydel, 182; Thieme, 9.

¹⁰⁰ Theodor Fontane, *Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg*, dritter Teil, *Havelland*, hrsg. von Gotthard Erler und Rudolf Mingau (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1991), 24.

Religious tolerance. While the Vinetans were tolerant of the different religions of the various ethnic groups who inhabited their town, it is clear that there existed a certain tension in relation to Christianity. It is worth noting, however, that the limitation imposed on the Sachsen, who were Christian, related only to the public practice of their religion and did not involve any prohibition on their being part of the community of Vineta.

The role of religion in the Vineta Sage

The whole question of religion is one which is dealt with in a very peripheral manner in the *Sagen* – this despite the fact that religious belief, or at least belief in a superior spiritual being, who exacted retribution for a sinful lifestyle, is central to the whole *Vineta Sage*. If one compares the attitudes to heathenism and to Christianity respectively – though references to both are limited – what emerges is that it is the *practice* of heathenism which is seen as evil, while in the case of Christianity the evil relates rather to lack of acceptance. In other words, heathenism is seen as intrinsically evil, while the evil associated with Christianity lies in the failure either to accept conversion, or, if converted, to respect its values and observe its norms. Furthermore, other than saying that Vineta was heathen, none of what might be termed the ‘historical’ *Sagen* — those *Sagen* which merely relate the story of Vineta without using it as background for their own literary creation — expand further on this element. There is, for example, no reference to heathen gods, nor to their having been pleased or displeased at the behaviour and lifestyle of the Vinetans. In the majority of *Sagen* it is clear that the God whom the Vinetans angered is the Christian God. Even where this is not specifically mentioned, references such as “der gerechte Zorn Gottes” and “der Herr”, in their use of singular nouns point to the monotheistic God of Christianity.¹⁰¹

To a certain extent the *Sagen* might be said to be a type of literary representation or model of the transition between heathenism and Christianity. They relate that the Vinetans were heathens, display for the most part a negative attitude to heathenism and in conclusion invoke a series of Christian motifs to complete their story, as for example the fact that the destruction of Vineta is supposed to have taken place from Good Friday to Easter Sunday or that the bells can be heard ringing on the sea-bed to call people to church.

¹⁰¹ Temme, 25; Kuhn und Schwartz, 28.

The attribution of blame to the Vinetans

The attribution of blame to the Vinetans for their own misfortune is achieved in the *Sagen* largely through further development of two specific points made in the Chronicles, namely the heathenism of Vineta and the wealth of its inhabitants. These characteristics of the Vinetans were reported on by both Adam and Helmold, though not as vices on the part of the people and without any specific conclusion being drawn from them. In the *Sagen*, however, their destructive effects are highlighted through the use of various motifs.

Negative impact of heathenism. Both Adam von Bremen and Helmold von Bosau report that the inhabitants of Vineta were heathens:

“Noch sind alle in heidnischem Irrglauben befangen”.¹⁰² (Adam von Bremen)

“Bis zum Untergang dieser Stadt waren nämlich alle Bewohner von heidnischen Bräuchen irregeleitet [...]”.¹⁰³ (Helmold von Bosau)

The chroniclers, though making their negative attitude to heathenism clear through the use of such words as ‘Irrglauben’ and ‘irregeleitet,’ do not develop the point further. The same attitude is adopted in many of the *Sagen*. As already mentioned, Temme and those who reproduced his *Sage* explain that only heathen gods were publicly venerated in Vineta. They then go on to comment unfavourably on the idolatrous ways of the heathens.¹⁰⁴ At the time heathens were looked on as worshippers of false gods, and their customs and traditions were regarded with suspicion. The heathenism of Vineta allowed the storyteller, therefore, to portray the inhabitants of the town as sinful and godless and hence deserving of punishment.

Excessive wealth. Temme, Haas and Thieme make clear that the excessive wealth and godlessness of the heathens gave rise to their becoming arrogant and self-indulgent and

¹⁰² Adam, quoted in Lange, 25.

¹⁰³ Helmold, quoted in Goldmann, 90.

¹⁰⁴ Temme, 24.

led ultimately to the destruction of Vineta: “Solcher Reichtum und das abgöttische Wesen der Heiden brachten [...] die schöne und große Stadt ins Verderben”.¹⁰⁵

Among the other motifs used to highlight the sinfulness of the Vinetans are misuse of bread, failure to observe religious duties, and meanness or greed.

Misuse of bread. This is one of the motifs most commonly used to indicate sinfulness in the different versions of the Vineta *Sage*. Bread was looked on as a gift from God and effectively the staff of life, in both a physical and a spiritual sense. Deliberate misuse or defiling of bread was regarded as an insult both to God and to one’s neighbour. There are several ways, according to the *Sagen*, in which bread was misused by the inhabitants of Vineta. Alfred Haas refers to it in all three of his Vineta stories. In his *Pommersche Sagen* he comments that the women of Vineta misused bread in a shameful manner by using it to clean their children: “Das Brot, die herrliche Gottesgabe, mißbrauchten die Frauen in schamloser Weise, indem sie die kleinen Kinder damit reinigten”.¹⁰⁶ In the *Usedom-Wolliner Sagen* he claims that this misuse of bread was done deliberately, “aus reiner Wollust”.¹⁰⁷

This particular form of abuse also features in Temme’s version of the Vineta *Sage*, as well as in those of Jahn, Falkenberg, Seydel and Thieme. The last mentioned adds further to the sin by commenting that the bread was made “aus feinstem Mehle”.¹⁰⁸

Another form of abuse of bread occurs in Haas’s *Rügensche Sagen* and in Maier’s *Sage, Die Krösliner Kirchenglocke* where a Vinetan woman angers God by using bread as stepping stones across a stream: “Da hat einst eine Frau, um trockenen Fußes über den Wasserlauf schreiten zu können, aus Übermut Brot hineingeworfen, daß es unsern Herrgott im Himmel verdroß”.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Temme, 24. See also Thieme, 17; Haas (1924), 141.

¹⁰⁶ Haas (1912), 7.

¹⁰⁷ Haas (1924), 142.

¹⁰⁸ Thieme, 17.

¹⁰⁹ Haas (1939), 15.

Maier's *Sage*, *Die gottlose Frau*, sets out clearly the sin associated with misuse of bread and foodstuffs. When an arrogant Vinetan woman angrily orders sacks of corn to be dumped in the sea the ship's captain remonstrates with her:

Seht, [...] das war das Beste, was ich auf der ganzen Erde finden konnte [...].
Nichts ist kostbarer. Dies gibt Armen und Reichen Nahrung und erhält ihnen so die
Gesundheit und das Leben [...]. Was gibt es besseres?¹¹⁰

Despite his pleading, however, she refuses to give the corn to the poor and insists that it be dumped. When the deed is done, a voice from heaven is heard calling: "Weh' dir, weh' dir, das letzte Korn vergeudet, so hab' auch heut' den letzten Bissen Brot gegessen!"¹¹¹ The woman finds herself unable to eat, and despite consulting many doctors, starves. Similarly in another of Maier's *Sagen* a Vinetan child, who rejects a gift of a piece of bread from a fisherman and tramples on it, wastes away and dies.¹¹²

A large number of the *Sagen* mention that bread was used to stop holes in the walls. The oldest of these, that edited by Kuhn und Schwartz and published in 1848, mentions it as one of a number of examples of the Vinetans' godlessness: "Aber die Leute darin sind gar gottlos gewesen, haben kleine Löcher in den Wänden mit Brot verstopft [...]"¹¹³

This motif is in direct contrast to the wealth and sumptuousness of Vineta as described generally in the *Sagen*. It must surely appear strange, even to the most naive of listeners, that a town whose houses were reportedly like palaces, adorned with marble pillars and decorated with gold and silver, would use bread to repair holes in the walls. Clearly the storytellers, in their efforts to stir the imagination of their audience, used the everyday image of bread as one with which their audience was familiar. An audience which was probably not well-to-do and for whom bread was an important part of their daily diet might be expected to be shocked by the misuse and waste of an important foodstuff, and would have been convinced of the enormity of the crimes of the inhabitants of Vineta.

¹¹⁰ Maier et al., 18.

¹¹¹ Maier et al. 18.

¹¹² Maier et al., 20.

¹¹³ Kuhn und Schwartz, 28. See also Jahn (1999), 159; Ranke, 236; Thieme, 17; Burkhardt, 8; Petzoldt, *Deutsche Volkssagen*, 169; Woeller, 43.

The motif of the misuse of bread and flour is one which is widely used in folk-tales as an illustration of sinfulness. Other misuses documented in North German folk-tales include the use of bread to dry a staircase washed in milk; bread used to make steps up to the front door of a house; flour scattered on the kitchen floor in place of sand.¹¹⁴

A further element which needs to be taken into consideration in relation to the misuse of bread is the recognition of bread not alone as a physical foodstuff, but also as a spiritual food. In the context of demonstrating serious sin on the part of the Vinetans, while the examples of the desecration of bread given in the different versions of the *Vineta Sage* relate to the misuse of bread as a foodstuff, one is nevertheless also conscious of the symbolism of bread as representing the Eucharist. The deliberate desecration of the sacred host is a feature of many folk-tales.¹¹⁵ It is understandable therefore that the motif of the misuse of bread in whatever form should have been incorporated into their stories by the storytellers as evidence of extreme wickedness.

Failure to observe religious duty. Ulrich Jahn's version of the *Vineta Sage* mentions that though there were several churches in Vineta, they were always empty, as nobody thought it necessary to attend religious service:

obgleich viele Kirchen in Venedig [sic] standen, so befanden sich doch des Sonntags die Prediger immer ganz allein in den weiten Räumen, da es niemand mehr für nötig hielt, dem Gottesdienste beizuwohnen.¹¹⁶

While this particular theme occurs only once in the *Sagen* under consideration, it is quite commonly found in other literary works on Vineta.

¹¹⁴ J. van der Kooi und T. Schuster, *Die Amriksdobbe in Die Frau, die verlorenging* (Leer: Verlag Schuster, 2003), 305.

¹¹⁵ See Karl Drescher, (ed.), *Johann Hartliebs Übersetzung des Dialogus Miraculorum von Cäsarius von Heisterbach*. (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1929), 257. As a reaction to supposed desecration of the Host by the Jews, serious riots took place in Franconia in 1298 and in Silesia in 1453 and the suspicion or accusation of having engaged in the abuse of the Host was used up to the end of the sixteenth century as justification for the persecution of non-Christians, particularly Jews.

¹¹⁶ Jahn (1999), 159.

Greed, meanness and lack of gratitude. It is not surprising that the accumulation of wealth in Vineta should be exploited by storytellers to indicate miserliness, greed and ingratitude on the part of the inhabitants. Fables such as *Die goldenen Eier von Vineta*, and *Die goldene Henne in Vineta*, illustrating greed, are given with minor variations by Falkenberg, Jahn, Thieme, and Maier et al.¹¹⁷ *Das blinde Roß*, describing the ingratitude of his master towards an elderly blind horse, is given by Falkenberg, Thieme and Maier et al.¹¹⁸ In each of these stories the negative characteristics are ascribed to one individual only, rather than to the Vinetans in general, though in two cases the same undesirable traits are also later attributed to the Vinetans in general: “Denn nachdem die Einwohner so überaus reich geworden waren, verfielen sie in die größte Verschwendung und Üppigkeit”.¹¹⁹

Otto Wobbe’s Sage, *Wurans Vineta binah erlöst würd*, contains a more powerful condemnation of the Vinetans in the sense that the writer causes an inhabitant of the town – the Bürgermeister himself – to admit that the sinfulness of the people of Vineta has been responsible for a curse being put on them:

Up uns’ herrliche Stadt Vineta liggt en gräsigen Fluch! Vonwägen uns’ groten Sünnen und Gottlosigkeit müßten wi up ‘n Meeresgrund versacken, un blots alle dusend Jahr is uns dat vergünnt, wedder an Gottes schöne Welt uptaudükern [...].¹²⁰

This particular approach is not found in any of the other *Sagen* under consideration, but does feature in other literary works, as for example in Kurt Heuser’s novel, *Abenteuer in Vineta* and Ernst Wolfram’s opera, *Vineta*.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Falkenberg, 169; Jahn (1999), 159; Thieme, 11; Maier et al., 20.

¹¹⁸ Falkenberg, 167–168; Thieme, 13–17; Maier et al., 21.

¹¹⁹ Thieme, 17; See also Falkenberg, 166.

¹²⁰ Wobbe, 60.

¹²¹ Kurt Heuser, *Abenteuer in Vineta* (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1933); Ernst Wolfram (Dichtung) und Reinhold L. Herman (Musik), *Vineta : romantische Oper in drei Aufzügen* (Berlin: Otto Drewitz, 1891).

Riches and wealth of Vineta

Both Adam von Bremen and Helmold von Bosau emphasise the wealth, sumptuousness and high standard of living in Jumne/Vineta. This theme is repeated and developed in all the *Sagen* and specific examples are given both of the level of wealth and of the excesses to which it gave rise.

The most common motifs used to describe the wealth of Vineta relate to the widespread and excessive use of gold and silver, the magnificence of the houses, the luxurious dress of the inhabitants and the richness of the food and drink. The following extract from the *Pommersche Sagen* of Alfred Haas, though not including all the motifs used in the *Sagen*, provides a good example of the type of detail given in many cases:

Die Stadt Vineta soll zur Zeit ihrer Blüte so reich und schön gewesen sein, daß sie im ganzen Küstengebiet der Ost- und Nordsee nicht ihresgleichen hatte. Die Häuser, in welchen die Leute wohnten, glichen kleinen Palästen: sie waren aus Marmor erbaut und mit vergoldeten Zinnen geschmückt [...]. Zu den Mahlzeiten nahmen sie nur die auserlesensten Speisen, und den Wein tranken sie aus silbernen und goldenen Gefäßen, wie sie selbst in den Gotteshäusern nicht schöner und prächtiger zu finden waren. Die Hufe der Pferde waren statt mit Eisen vielmehr mit Silber oder gar mit Gold beschlagen [...]. Die Kügelchen, mit welchen die Kinder auf der Straße spielten, bestanden aus reinem Silber, und wenn sie über eine Wasserfläche “Butterbrot werfen” wollten, so benutzten sie dazu nichts anderes als blanke Taler.¹²²

Gold, silver and precious metals. The following folk-song evokes the theme most commonly found in the *Sagen* to describe the wealth of Vineta – that of the widespread use of gold, silver and other precious metals.

Mit Zentnern wägen sie dort das Gold
Und würfeln um Edelsteine,
Goldspindeln haben die Frauen hold

¹²² Haas (1912), 7.

Und silberne Tröge die Schweine!¹²³

An examination of the different versions of the Vineta *Sage* shows the following motifs:

- everything in Vineta glittered with gold, silver and marble: “Vineta [...], in der hat alles von Gold und Silber und Marmor gegläntzt”.¹²⁴
- children played with silver ‘Taler’ on the street: “überhaupt war Silber so gewöhnlich in Vineta, daß man [...] die Kinder auf der Straße mit Silbertalern spielen ließ”.¹²⁵
- children used ‘Taler’ to skim across the waves: “wenn sie über eine Wasserfläche ‘Butterbrot werfen’ wollten, so benutzten sie dazu nichts anderes als blanke Taler”.¹²⁶
- horses were shod in silver or gold: “Die Hufe der Pferde waren statt mit Eisen vielmehr mit Silber oder gar mit Gold beschlagen [...]”.¹²⁷
- bells were made of silver: “Die Glocken wurden nur aus Silber gemacht [...]”.¹²⁸
- people drank from gold and silver goblets: “Wein tranken sie aus Bechern von purem Silber oder Gold”.¹²⁹
- pigs ate from golden dishes or troughs: “Die Schweine ließen sie aus goldenen Trögen fressen, und selbst die waren ihnen noch nicht gut genug”.¹³⁰
- city gates were made of bronze and other precious metals and richly decorated: “Die Stadttore waren aus Erz und mit reichen Schmiedearbeiten [...] geziert”.¹³¹

¹²³ Mancke, 104.

¹²⁴ Kuhn u. Schwartz, 28. See also Petzoldt, *Deutsche Volkssagen*, 169; Ranke, 236.

¹²⁵ Mancke, 104. See also Bäßler, in Koch, 6; Burkhardt, 8; Falkenberg, 165; Haas (1924), 141; Haas (1912), 7; Maier et al., 17; Röllecke, 166; Seydel, 182; Temme, 24; Thieme, 11; Wobbe, 59.

¹²⁶ Haas (1912), 7; Maier et al., 17.

¹²⁷ Haas (1912), 7. See also Burkhardt, 8; Falkenberg, 165; Haas (1924), 141; Maier et al., 17; Temme, 24; Thieme, 17; Woeller, 43.

¹²⁸ Mancke, 104. See also Bäßler, in Koch, 6; Burkhardt, 8; Falkenberg, 165; Haas (1924), 141; Röllecke, 166; Seydel, 182; Temme, 24; Thieme, 11; Woeller, 43.

¹²⁹ Burkhardt, 8. See also Haas (1912), 7; Maier et al., 17; Woeller, 43.

¹³⁰ Jahn (1999), 159. Also Burkhardt, 8; Kuhn u. Schwartz, 28; Petzoldt, *Deutsche Volkssagen*, 169; Ranke, 236; Thieme, 17; Woeller, 43.

¹³¹ Jansen, 165. See also Bäßler, in Koch, 6; Burkhardt, 8; Falkenberg, 165; Haas (1924), 141; Jahn (1999), 159; Mancke, 104; Röllecke, 166; Seydel, 182; Temme, 24; Thieme, 11; Woeller, 43. Some *Sagen* report that after the destruction of Vineta, the city gates and large amounts of gold, silver, precious metals and marble were salvaged by the Swedes and brought to Wisby on Gotland. Thieme, 18.

- Vineta had many gates and towers surmounted by decorated gilded battlements: “Vineta hatte viele Türme und Tore, die mit goldenen Zinnen und Knöpfen verziert waren”.¹³²
- silver and gold utensils were used in households: “[...] Silber und Gold. Längst waren Teller und Schüsseln daraus hergestellt [...]”.¹³³

Other motifs used to describe the wealth of Vineta

- Houses: richly decorated: “Von den Häusern war eines immer prunkvoller gebaut als das andere, mit Fenstern aus buntem Glas, mit Säulen von weißem Marmor und Alabaster, mit reich verzierten Giebeln und die vergoldeten Ziegel ihrer Fassaden tauchten die Straßen in hellen Glanz und Schein”.¹³⁴
- Food: Vinetans had only the best of food : “Zu den Mahlzeiten nahmen sie nur die auserlesensten Speisen [...]”.¹³⁵
- Dress: People of Vineta were magnificently dressed: “So trugen die Männer lange pelzbesetzte Mäntel und federgeschmückte Barette. Die Frauen gingen kostbar in Samt und Seide gekleidet, und vom Halse hingen ihnen schwere, mit Edelsteinen eingelegte Goldketten herab”.¹³⁶
- Abundance of goods: In many of the *Sagen* Vineta is described as a major trading centre – “der Handelsmittelpunkt zwischen dem germanischen Süden und den slawischen Völkern des Ostens”.¹³⁷ Consequently the city was regularly visited by merchants and ships from many lands and there was a very large variety of goods available: “ihre Läden waren angefüllt mit den seltensten und kostbarsten Waren, und es kamen jahraus jahrein Schiffe und Kaufleute aus allen Gegenden und aus den entferntesten und entlegensten Enden der Welt dahin”.¹³⁸ The motif is further developed in Burkhardt’s version of the *Sage* when the young shepherd boy is shown

¹³² Karstens, 106.

¹³³ Karstens, 107. See also Jansen, 165.

¹³⁴ Burkhardt, 5. See also Haas (1912), 7; Maier et al., 24; Mancke, 104; Wobbe, 59; Woeller, 43.

¹³⁵ Haas (1912), 7. See also Burkhardt, 8; Maier et al., 17.

¹³⁶ Burkhardt, 5. See also Maier et al., 24; Wobbe, 59.

¹³⁷ Jansen, 165.

¹³⁸ See Bäßler, in Koch, 6. See also Falkenberg, 165; Haas (1924), 141; Röllecke, 166; Seydel, 182; Temme, 24; Woeller, 42.

the most luxurious brocades, silks and other expensive materials by the sales people of the sunken city.¹³⁹

Vineta 'wafelt'

One of the most important themes in the *Vineta Sage* which does not arise directly from the chronicles is the reported regular re-appearance of the sunken city over the waves. This particular aspect of the *Vineta* story is taken up in many of the *Sagen* and is common throughout much of the creative literature. The re-appearance of *Vineta* is frequently linked in the *Sagen* to Christian religious feasts or special days, which again suggests a link between the story of *Vineta* and the Christianisation of Pomerania. The motif occurs in the *Sagen* as follows:

Vineta rises on Easter Sunday morning. The 'resurrection' of *Vineta* on Easter Sunday morning mirrors the Resurrection of Christ from the dead and provides a link with Christianity. A parallel is drawn in some of the *Sagen* between the destruction of *Vineta* and the death and resurrection of Christ, as evidenced by the fact that in those *Sagen* the destruction of the city is said to have lasted from Good Friday to Easter Sunday:

Und am Ostermorgen, denn vom stillen Freitage bis zum Ostermorgen soll der Untergang von *Vineta* gedauert haben, kann man die ganze Stadt sehen, wie sie früher gewesen ist; sie steigt dann, als ein warnendes Schattenbild, zur Strafe für ihre Abgötterei und Üppigkeit mit allen ihren Häusern, Kirchen, Toren, Brücken und Trümmern aus dem Wasser hervor, und man sieht sie deutlich über den Wellen.¹⁴⁰

The attitude to the re-appearance of *Vineta* varies, with Haas and those who used his work as source material referring to the surfacing of the city as a warning symbol, while in one *Sage* the fearfulness of the occasion is highlighted as a "Schreckenbild" rather than a

¹³⁹ Burkhardt, 5. Also Maier et al., 24. It is claimed in some *Sagen* that after *Vineta* was destroyed, her trade transferred to Wisby on the island of Gotland. See Temme, 25; Bäßler, in Koch, 7; Falkenberg, 166; Haas (1924), 142; Seydel, 183. In another *Sage* in his collection Temme says that *Vineta's* trade went "theils nach Wisbi in Gothland, theils nach Julin auf der Insel Wollin [...]", (Temme, 27).

¹⁴⁰ Haas (1924), 143. Bäßler, in Koch, 9; Falkenberg, 167; Seydel, 184; Temme, 26. Maier et al. add that *Vineta* rises early on Easter Sunday morning; Burkhardt, 9, and Thieme, 20, limit the re-appearance of the city to once every hundred years, with Thieme adding that the re-appearance lasts for one hour.

“Schattenbild”.¹⁴¹ Mancke merely says that the sunken city can be seen on Easter Sunday, looking just as it always did, with its towers and battlements, its gates and palaces.¹⁴² The version of the *Sage* given by both Ulrich Jahn and Kuhn und Schwartz however, is in complete contrast with the others, as it evokes the joy of the sunken city at being freed even on a temporary basis: “[...] alljährlich am heiligen Ostermorgen erhebt es sich aus der Flut, und tanzt und springt freudig über den Wogen”.¹⁴³

Vineta rises at other times. The sunken city is also reported to rise to the surface on Johannistag, the feast of St. John the Baptist, on 24 June. This too is a Christian feast, celebrated in many parts of the Christian world, perhaps as much for its connection with mid-Summer as for its religious significance.

In his *Pommersche Sagen*, Alfred Haas explains that there are different opinions as to when the sunken city appears:

die einen sagen es wäre am Johannistage; die anderen meinen, Vineta zeige sich an demselben Jahrestage, an welchem es einst untergegangen sei, und das sei eben der selbe Tag, an welchem auch Cuxhaven durch eine Sturmflut zerstört worden sei.¹⁴⁴

In relation to its appearance on Johannistag, Haas specifies in one of his *Usedom-Wolliner Sagen* that the sunken city is supposed to appear at midday on that day; it is visible, however, only “als ein Schemen, als ein nebelhaftes Bild [...]”.¹⁴⁵

A *Sage* which is different from all others is that of Otto Wobbe, written in Plattdeutsch, in which the Bürgermeister explains that the sunken city appears once every twelve years: “[...] un blots alle dusend Jahr is uns dat vergünnt, wedder an Gottes schöne Welt

¹⁴¹ Röllecke, 167.

¹⁴² Mancke, 112.

¹⁴³ Kuhn u. Schwartz, 28; Jahn (1999), 159.

¹⁴⁴ Haas (1912), 8.

¹⁴⁵ Haas (1924), 145.

uptaudükern [...]”.¹⁴⁶ This may, perhaps, reflect the adherence of the low German population to an imperial rather than a metric system of numbering.

In his short *Sage, Vineta auf Usedom*, Heinrich Karstens reports that elderly people on the island of Usedom claim to have seen through the mist a large city on the surface of the sea, above the ruins of Vineta, while sailors have occasionally seen the tops of towers protruding from the water.¹⁴⁷ Sightings of the sunken city are said to have had serious consequences for some sea-farers: “Schiffer sehen noch [...] die Straßen der untergegangenen Stadt und segeln nicht selten in ihre Thore ein, sind aber alsdann verloren”.¹⁴⁸

Background to stories about re-appearance

While the re-appearance of Vineta is not a feature in the chronicles of either Adam or Helmold, it might be held to be a logical development of the destruction of the city as reported by Helmold von Bosau. If, as Helmold stated, the city was destroyed by a Danish king, then it is conceivable that it could have been rebuilt; the process could in fact have been repeated more than once. This particular scenario features in a number of *Sagen*.¹⁴⁹ It is not beyond the bounds of possibility, therefore, that stories of the re-appearance of Vineta over the waves may have their origin in its revival after destruction, perhaps on more than one occasion.

It would appear to be more likely however that stories of the re-appearance of the sunken city are linked with the appearance of a *Fata Morgana* or type of mirage which has been documented along the coastlines of both the North Sea and the Baltic. Wilhelm Meinhold, theologian, author and one time head of the Stadtschule in Usedom, attributes such occurrences specifically to the area where Vineta is supposed to have been located, close to the Streckelberg on the island of Usedom and he gives an example of how vivid and

¹⁴⁶ Wobbe, 60.

¹⁴⁷ Karstens, 107.

¹⁴⁸ Karl Nernst, *Wanderungen durch Rügen*. hrsg. von Ludwig Theoboul Kosegarten (Düsseldorf: Dänzer'sche Buchhandlung, 1800), 68. Also Haas (1924), 145.

¹⁴⁹ Falkenberg, 165; Haas (1924), 141; Röllecke, 166; Seydel, 182; Temme, 24; Thieme, 17.

convincing they can be, even for experts whose background should permit them to understand the origins of such phenomena:

Einst [...] als ich in der Gesellschaft eines Geometers jenes große Schauspiel erwartete, erschien mitten im Meere eine Stadt mit Thürmen, Häusern, Thoren und Mühlen, und zwar in so täuschender Wahrheit, daß der Mann trotz der geographischen Unmöglichkeit sich nicht vom Gegentheile überzeugen wollte und schon anfing zu messen, als plötzlich das Phantasma verschwand.¹⁵⁰

Friedrich Ranke in the *Deutsche Volkssagen* attributes the re-appearance of Vineta specifically to such a phenomenon:

Die zahlreichen Sagen von versunkenen Küstenstädten [...] fanden ihre Nahrung immer wieder in den eigenartigen und sehr eindrucksvollen Luftspiegelungen, die gerade am Meeresstrand bei klarem Wetter oft weitentlegene Orte und Landschaften für ein paar Stunden mit überraschender Deutlichkeit über dem Horizont erscheinen lassen. [...] So ‘tanzt und springt’ am Ostermorgen Vineta ‘freudig über den Wogen.’¹⁵¹

Possibility of Vineta being released

The theme of releasing the sunken city from its bed on the bottom of the sea is one that occurs in a limited number of *Sagen*. In most cases the ability to see and potentially release the sunken city is confined to a child born on a Sunday, a “Sonntagskind,” who, according to Mancke “bekanntlich mehr sieht als zehn andere Menschenkinder”.¹⁵² In Burkhardt’s *Sage* an old sailor explains to the young shepherd boy, a “Sonntagskind”, who had found himself in the sunken city on an Easter Sunday morning, that if he had had even a “Pfennig” to buy the wares of the traders in Vineta, the city would have been freed and would have remained on land. The same motif is found in Thieme’s *Sage* — though in this

¹⁵⁰ Wilhelm Meinhold, *Humoristische Reisebilder von Usedom* (Stralsund: Verlag der C. Löfflerschen Buchhandlung, 1837), 199. Also Haas (1924), 145.

¹⁵¹ Ranke, 237.

¹⁵² Mancke, 112.

case the shepherd boy is said to have been a “Johannessonntagskind” – and in Otto Wobbe’s Plattdeutsch *Sage Wurans Vineta binah erlöst würd*.¹⁵³

The desire of the people of Vineta to be released from the curse that has condemned them to the sea-bed comes across strongly in these three *Sagen*. In Wobbe’s *Sage* the Bürgermeister expresses the wish of the Vinetans to live a life that is pleasing to God and promises to give the young boy the city and all its riches if he will help them:

‘Süh, denn sünd wi erlöst von uns’ Schann un Qual un känen wedder en gottgefällig nieg Läben anfängen! Schenk uns den Dreier, Fritzing, un dei ganze Stadt mit all’ sienen Rieckdom un Schätzen sall die tauehüren!’¹⁵⁴

Vineta continues to ‘live’ on the sea-bed

That life continues in the sunken city on the bed of the sea is a theme that follows logically from the reported regular re-appearances of Vineta. This continuing life on the sea-bed features in different ways in many of the *Sagen*. Everyday life is evoked by Temme and those who acknowledge his work and in Mancke’s *Sage*:

Wenn das Wasser ganz still ist, so sieht man oft unten im Grunde des Meeres in den Trümmern ganz wunderbare Bilder. Große, seltsame Gestalten wandeln dann in den Straßen auf und ab, in langen faltigen Kleidern. Oft sitzen sie auch in goldenen Wagen, oder auf großen schwarzen Pferden.¹⁵⁵

Bells sound from the deep

Another motif that is used to illustrate the ongoing life in the sunken city relates to the church bells, which, it is said, can frequently be heard sounding from the deep. Most of the *Sagen* give witness to this particular occurrence. In many cases the occasions on which the bells are heard are linked in some way with religion or the Christian church; others make no such reference:

¹⁵³ Thieme, 21; Wobbe, 59–60.

¹⁵⁴ Wobbe, 60.

¹⁵⁵ Temme, 26. See also Bäßler, in Koch, 8; Falkenberg, 167; Haas (1924), 143; Mancke, 112; Röllecke, 166; Seydel, 184; Thieme, 20.

- bells ring for Vespers.¹⁵⁶
- bells ring on Sunday morning to call the Vinetans to church and can be heard by a “Sonntagskind.”¹⁵⁷
- bells ring on Johannistag between 11 am and 12 noon.¹⁵⁸
- bells can be heard on quiet Sundays echoing in a ghostly fashion over the sea.¹⁵⁹
- bells ring and sing to announce the end of the working day.¹⁶⁰
- bells can be heard ringing out from the sunken towers when the sea is calm.¹⁶¹
- bells can be heard by whoever sails over the place where Vineta sank.¹⁶²

The dangers inherent in hearing the bells of the sunken city is highlighted in some *Sagen*:

Das ist allerdings nicht ganz ungefährlich. Denn man sagt, daß der, der die Glocken von Vineta gehört hat, mit unwiderstehlicher Gewalt von der Meerestiefe angelockt wird, bis er selbst da unten ruht.¹⁶³

Ruins of Vineta on the sea-bed

It is not only in its re-appearances that Vineta lives on; it lives too through its ruins, through their investigation over centuries and through their recurrence as a motif in the *Sagen*. In the most frequently encountered *Sagen* – those of Temme and folklorists who used his work as source material – reference is made to the ruins of a large old city which are to be seen in the sea off the north-east coast of the island of Usedom. Most of these *Sagen* go on later to describe the ruins of the sunken city lying on the sea-bed:

¹⁵⁶ Bäßler, in Koch, 8; Falkenberg, 167; Haas (1924), 143; Röllecke, 167; Seydel, 184; Thieme, 20; Temme, 26.

¹⁵⁷ Haas (1924), 145.

¹⁵⁸ Burkhardt, 9; Haas (1912), 8.

¹⁵⁹ Jansen, 166.

¹⁶⁰ Mancke, 112.

¹⁶¹ Karstens, 106.

¹⁶² Woeller, 43.

¹⁶³ Haas (1912), 8. Also Haas (1924), 145–146; Burkhardt, 9.

Wenn man nämlich von Wolgast über die Peene in das Land zu Usedom ziehen will, [...] so erblickt man bei stiller See bis tief, wohl eine Viertelmeile in das Wasser hinein eine Menge großer Steine, marmorner Säulen und Fundamente. Das sind die Trümmer der versunkenen Stadt Vineta. Sie liegen in der Länge, von Morgen nach Abend. Die ehemaligen Straßen und Gassen sind mit kleinen Kieselsteinen ausgelegt; größere Steine zeigen an, wo die Ecken der Straßen gewesen, und die Fundamente der Häuser gestanden haben. Einige davon sind so groß und hoch, daß sie Ellenhoch aus dem Wasser hervorragen; allda haben die Tempel und Rathäuser gestanden. Andere liegen noch ganz in der Ordnung, wie man Grundsteine zu Gebäuden zu legen pflegt, so daß noch neue Häuser haben erbaut werden sollen, als die Stadt vom Wasser verschlungen ist. [...]. Die Breite der Stadt ist aber größer als die von Stralsund und Rostock, und ungefähr wie die von Lübeck.¹⁶⁴

While Adam von Bremen's account clearly cannot tell anything of the ruins of Vineta – the destruction had not yet happened – Helmold von Bosau, having reported that the city had been destroyed by a Danish king, commented: “Die Überreste sind noch jetzt vorhanden”.¹⁶⁵ This is one of the reasons – but not the only one – why the ruins of the sunken city are referred to in the *Sagen*. Over many years the Vineta Reef, or supposed ruins of Vineta, were a feature of the sea-scape off the coast of Usedom. Pomeranian chronicler Thomas Kantzow (d.1542), in his *Chronik von Pommern* tells of a visit in c.1538 and describes the layout of the stones on the sea-bed:

So bin ich auch sampt andern hinzugefahren und hab es eigentlich besehen, aber kein Mawrwerck ist mehr da [...]. Allein seint die grossen Fundamentstein noch verhanden und liegen noch so an der Rhege, wie sie unter ein Hawse ligen pflegen [...]. Darunter seint so grosse Steine an vielen Orten, das sie wol ellenhoch uber Wasser scheinen, als das man achtet, sie werden ire Kirchen und Ratschewser daselbst gehapt haben. Die andern Steine aber liegen feyne noch in der Ordnung und zeigen sichtlich an, wie die Gassen seint in die Lenge und Qwere gegangen.

¹⁶⁴ Temme, 25. Also Bäßler, in Koch, 8; Falkenberg, 166; Haas (1924),142; Seydel,183; Thieme, 18.

¹⁶⁵ Goldmann, 90.

[...]Und wie wyr hin und widder uber die Fundamente fhureten und die Gelegenheit der Gassen anmerckten, sahen wyr, das die Stat in die Lenge ist gebawet gewest und hat sich mit der Lenge erstreckt von Osten ins Westen. Nhun tiefet aber die Sehe, [...] darum khan man die ubrige Grosse der Stat nicht alle sehen. Aber was wyr sahen, deuchte uns, das es wol so gross war, als Lubeck.¹⁶⁶

The similarities between Kantzow's account and that of Temme are obvious.

Various events over the centuries kept the existence of the Vineta reef in the minds of the people. In 1771, for example, two Dutch ships foundered on the reef and a number of sailors drowned.¹⁶⁷ As a result the president of the Pomeranian provincial government in Stettin, Julius von Keffenbrink, was ordered by the Prussian court to have the whole question of Vineta investigated. According to Waltraud Woeller, who, in the opinion of ethnologist, Siegfried Neumann, "gehörte zu den bekanntesten Folkloristen in der ehemaligen DDR, the president "entdeckte nun mit preußisch-scharfem Blick auf dem Meeresboden Dinge, von denen die Sagenerzähler noch nicht einmal geträumt hatten, als da sind: Schiffs- und Artilleriearsenale".¹⁶⁸

In his *Wikinger an unseren Küsten*, historian Lutz Mohr claims that the Commission of Inquiry into the disaster came to the conclusion that not alone were remains of marble and alabaster columns visible but church bells were also heard.¹⁶⁹ According to Mohr, the cult of Vineta spread to such an extent that local fishermen rowed visitors out to the site and convinced them that they could see people moving in the sunken city. Nobody could be persuaded to investigate further until 1798, when a Scottish diver was employed to investigate whether the stones were suitable for use in the construction of the pier in Swinemünde. The diver "fand an den Felsbrocken keine Bearbeitungen von

¹⁶⁶ Kantzow, 36.

¹⁶⁷ The Dutch freighters were not the only ships to run into trouble on the reef. It happened on many occasions, sometimes with very serious consequences. In 1891, for example, the passenger steamer 'Cuxhaven' was damaged on the reef and three of the crew lost their lives. See Koch, 24.

¹⁶⁸ Siegfried Neumann, *Waltraud Woeller*, in *Fabula*, Vol. 46, Issues 1–2, pp. 139–140 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005); Woeller, 44.

¹⁶⁹ Lutz Mohr, *Wikinger an unseren Küsten* (Heimatverein Wiek/Rügen, 1998), 18.

Menschenhand und kam zu dem Schluß, daß es sich hier um submarine Findlinge handelt. Ein Teil der Steine wurde dann für den dortigen Molenbau gehoben”.¹⁷⁰

On 21 June 1827, Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm, later to become Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia, visited the Vineta reef and was feted by the local people. Wilhelm Meinhold composed a poem in his honour.¹⁷¹

At the beginning of the twentieth century, geologist Wilhelm Deecke stated that in his opinion the large stones of the Vineta reef were in fact the remains of megalithic tombs or dolmens.¹⁷² Others disputed this, claiming that they were simply erratic boulders which had been deposited by the melting ice at the end of the Great Ice Age. It is clear that whatever the origin of the reef may have been, it has served an important purpose in keeping alive and disseminating the story of the sunken city of Vineta.

Attraction of the sunken city

This motif is found in a number of the *Sagen*, and is a good example of the manner in which some motifs can be used in both a positive and a negative manner. The desire to rediscover one’s origins is expressed in a positive sense through the recognition of the sunken city as both the origin and the ultimate goal, in some cases for the individual, in others for society as a whole. To sink into the depths of the sea, to be at one with Vineta, to experience its pain, but also its security, are themes that recur not alone in the *Sagen*, but in all genres of Vineta literature. Some *Sagen* claim that anyone who sees the wonders of the sunken city under the waves and hears its bells is lucky, is continually drawn back to the location and does not rest until he too is on the seabed:

Wenn einmal jemand das Glück gehabt hat, die versunkene Stadt und ihre Herrlichkeit auf dem Meeresgrund zu schauen und die aus der Tiefe dumpf heraufschallenden Töne ihrer Kirchenglocken zu hören, [...] wird er durch eine rätselhafte, unüberwindliche Gewalt getrieben, immer von neuem nach jener Stelle

¹⁷⁰ Mohr, 18.

¹⁷¹ Wilhelm Meinhold, *An des Kronprinzen von Preußen Königliche Hoheit, bei Dero Besuch der angeblichem Trümmer von Vineta*, in Karl Koch, 44–45.

¹⁷² W. Deecke, *Vineta*, in *X. Jahresbericht der Geographischen Gesellschaft zu Greifswald*. (Greifswald: Verlag der Geographischen Gesellschaft, 1907), 49.

im Meere hinauszufahren. [...]Und das geht so lange fort, bis die geheimnisvolle Tiefe ihn selbst verschlungen hat.¹⁷³

On the other hand, some *Sagen* regard this attraction and the desire to join the sunken city as dangerous.¹⁷⁴

Temme too warns that it is dangerous to go near the Vineta reef in the dark or in stormy weather. Any ship that dares to do so “[wird] ohne Gnade [...] an die Felsen geworfen, an denen es rettungslos zerschellt, und keiner, der darin gewesen, kann aus den Wellen sein Leben erretten”.¹⁷⁵

Advance warning of destruction

This particular motif, which echoes the Genesis story of Sodom and Gomorrah, and Ovid’s *Sage* of Philemon and Baucis, occurs in a limited number of the Vineta *Sagen*. In Burkhardt’s *Sage* an image of Vineta appears over the sea three months, three weeks and three days before the disaster. Experienced people recognise this as a warning sign and advise the inhabitants to leave the town. Some weeks later a further warning is given by a “Wasserfrau”, who rises out of the sea in front of the town and cries out three times in a loud voice:

Vineta, Vineta, du rieke Stadt,
Vineta sall unnergahn,
wieldeß se het väl Böses dahn!¹⁷⁶

The inhabitants of Vineta pay no attention to the warnings and ultimately pay the price for their indifference. Nobody is saved. In Woeller’s *Sage* the inhabitants of Vineta also disregard the warnings of thoughtful people who realise that the arrogance, pride and extravagant lifestyle of the people must lead to disaster.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ Haas (1924), 145–146.

¹⁷⁴ Haas (1912), 8; Burkhardt, 9.

¹⁷⁵ Temme, 27. See also Bäbler, in Koch, 9; Falkenberg, 167; Haas (1924), 143; Seydel, 184.

¹⁷⁶ Burkhardt, 9; also Maier et al., 17.

¹⁷⁷ Woeller, 43.

In Mancke's *Sage* the warning is given directly by a bishop who has come with his monks on a Christianising mission. It is given in a somewhat similar manner to the warning of the "Wasserfrau" in Burkhardt's *Sage*: as he hastens towards his boat to leave the town which has rejected him and his message, the bishop cries out to the watching Vinetans, warning them that God's patience is at an end, that disaster awaits them and that they will be wiped from the face of the earth.¹⁷⁸

Alfred Haas's *Rügensche Sagen* contains an unusual version of the Vineta *Sage*. As the *Sagen* were collected on the island of Rügen it is understandable that in this case Vineta is said to have been in that area, located between the Greifswalder Oie and the island of Ruden. In order to punish the inhabitants for their arrogance and wasteful lifestyle God caused the east wind to blow for seven years, with the result that peripheral coastal areas were flooded and broke away from the mainland and Vineta was submerged. One devout man was warned by a voice in the middle of the night, however, and escaped on a white horse ahead of the incoming waves.

This *Sage* is notable for its combination of Christian and heathen motifs. "[Der] Herrgott im Himmel", i.e. the Christian God, was displeased at the lifestyle of the inhabitants of Vineta and punished them. The white horse, however, is a heathen symbol. The animal was regarded as sacred and played an important part in rituals at the major heathen temple of the god Swantewit at Arkona on the island of Rügen. According to Fontane, the heathen Wends also thought that Swantewit rode the horse on forays against his enemies:

Auch hier in Arkona diente das 'weiße Pferd' zur Zeichendeuterei. [...]. Nicht selten fand es des Morgens mit Schaum und Schmutz bedeckt in seinem Stall; dann hieß es, Swantewit selber habe das Pferd geritten und es im Streit gegen seine Feinde getummelt.¹⁷⁹

The particular motif which depicts one religious man as being saved from the disaster occurs also in other *Sagen*. In these cases, however, no advance warning is given and though the individual himself escapes, the horse does not survive; it collapses and dies on

¹⁷⁸ Jahn (1999), 159; Mancke, 110.

¹⁷⁹ Fontane, 31.

arrival in Koserow.¹⁸⁰ A didactic and/or religious motive might be attributed to this motif: a god-fearing person is saved; an animal, significant in heathenism, but which in Christian teaching does not have a soul, perishes. Christianity lives, heathenism dies.

Conclusion

The motivation of Adam von Bremen in writing his report on the trading centre of Jumne was presumably nothing other than to fulfil the task he had been set by the Archbishop of Hamburg to write the history of that diocese. He could hardly have foreseen that over the succeeding centuries his work and that of one of his earliest copyists, Helmold von Bosau, would continue to be examined, dissected, discussed and developed, to the extent that almost a thousand years later its effects would still be felt across literary, artistic, cultural and economic fields.

Though the accuracy of both reports has frequently been called into question and elements of each have given rise to much confusion, their overall effect has been predominantly positive. Not alone have they resulted in the creation of the *Vineta Sage* or legend, which in turn has contributed to a heightened sense of identity and community, but as the story of the sunken city has been added to and embellished over the centuries, a body of literary works has been created which has contributed significantly to the cultural patrimony of the Baltic and to a lesser extent the North Sea coasts. It is important to note, however, that despite being elaborated on by various storytellers and collectors over the years, and produced in different versions, the basic story of Vineta has remained largely true to the original reports of the chroniclers, with the same motifs and tropes recurring regularly, albeit with varying emphases.

¹⁸⁰ Jahn (1999), 159; Kuhn und Schwartz, 28; Petzoldt, *Deutsche Volkssagen*, 169; Ranke, 236; Thieme, 18.

Chapter 2

Vineta Literature from the 1820s to 1870, with particular reference to Heinrich Heine and Wilhelm Müller

It is scarcely surprising that some of the most significant creative works about Vineta came to be written from the late Romantic period through to the late 1860s. The *Vineta Sage*, and the literature based around it, contain many of the stock themes that were hallmarks of the period, among them an interest in folk tales, in the past, in nature, in religion and in a return to an era of love and appreciation of beauty. The involvement of self and the expression of personal emotion dominated Romantic thought. Gero von Wilpert speaks of the “Steigerung des schöpferischen Ich ins Universale, Unendliche, Elementare, Poetisierung des Lebens, durch Vereinigung von Geist und Natur, Endlichkeit und Unendlichkeit, Vergangenheit und Gegenwart”.¹⁸¹ This vision of the self as being the central creative element in the universe was particularly prevalent among the Romantics, whose outpourings of emotion might justifiably be seen as “the revelation of the heart’s own property [...] the poetry of confession”.¹⁸² The desire to become reunited with an idealised past, to return to a ‘remembered’ or imagined utopia, was frequently articulated, and the fact that the memory of that past could be no more than “a dull reflection of the original experience” and that there could in fact be no way back was not significant.¹⁸³ As may be seen in some of the Vineta texts of the period, a welcome for approaching death, or the expression of “the death wish which is the ultimate Romantic vision” was sufficient in itself to cover the gap in authenticity and assuage desire.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ Gero von Wilpert, *Sachwörterbuch der Literatur* (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 2001), 704.

¹⁸² Robert M. Wernier, *Romanticism and the Romantic School in Germany* (New York: Haskell House, 1966), 29.

¹⁸³ Aleida Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization*, trans. by Aleida Assmann and David Henry Wilson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 91.

¹⁸⁴ H.B. Garland, *A Concise Survey of German Literature*, 2. edition (London: Macmillan Press, 1976), 83.

As one progresses through the literature of the later Romantic era towards a more realistic and earth-bound philosophy of life, one can still find a continuation of the language and modes of expression that characterised the work of the earlier Romantics, though accompanied at times by an apparently satirical response to what might be regarded as emotional overstatement, or by a sense of self-deprecating irony that perhaps evolves more from a desire to temper the excesses of extreme Romanticism than from a genuine rejection of Romantic ideology.

Interest in nature resulted in the sea being a frequent motif, not only in the literature, but also in the music and art of the Romantic and later nineteenth century periods. One thinks, for example, of Caspar David Friedrich's paintings of both land and seascapes of his native Baltic coast. Though none of his works relate specifically to Vineta, paintings such as *The Monk by the Sea* (1808) and *Meeresstrand im Nebel* (1807) evoke a sense of mystery and solitude that is in harmony with the atmosphere created in and by the Vineta legend. Musically one thinks of Felix Mendelssohn, whose music "embodies aspects of the natural world and constructs these into a metaphoric landscape of inner life".¹⁸⁵ His *Hebrides Overture (Fingal's Cave)*, for example, might be regarded as a personal response, born of music, to a physical scene, and may be 'read' as drawing upon his experience of the island of Staffa and its cave.¹⁸⁶ According to Charlotte Purkis, Department of Performing Arts, University of Winchester, "the music recalls the amazing acoustics of the place, with resounding crashing waves, a sense of powerful climax as the waves strike the cave in the storm, the rising and falling of the sea followed by moments of deep calm, and the soaring echoes of seagulls".¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Michael Steinberg, *Listening to Reason* (Princeton University Press, 2004), 98.

¹⁸⁶ In *Die Nordsee, dritte Abtheilung*, Heinrich Heine speaks warmly of Felix Mendelssohn, the "wundermächtige Knabe," whose concert he had attended in Berlin. In his second letter from Berlin, dated 16 March 1822, he had already mentioned that he was looking forward to the concert, at which the young Mendelssohn was to have his first public performance. (It seems that Heine may have been wrong — Mendelssohn is in fact said to have made his first public performance in 1818, at the age of nine!). See Heine, *Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke, Band 6*, Düsseldorf Ausgabe, hrsg. von Manfred Windfuhr, bearbeitet von Jost Hermand (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1973), 150, 20. Subsequently referred to as Heine, *Gesamtausgabe*, 6.

¹⁸⁷ Charlotte Purkis, *Listening for the Sublime: Aural-Visual Improvisations in Nineteenth-Century Musical Art*, in Tate Papers, No. 14 (London: Tate Publishing, 2010).

Closely allied with the theme of the sea is another motif — namely the sound of bells ringing in the deep. As already indicated, this is a motif that occurs in many versions of the *Vineta Sage*. It is furthermore an element that appears in virtually all tales about sunken lands. In the nineteenth century the tolling of a bell was an important symbol of collective identity within a community — particularly within rural communities — serving not alone to monitor the passage of time, but also to convey a message or a call and to “create a territorial identity for individuals living in range of its sound”.¹⁸⁸ It is understandable therefore that the muffled tolling of a bell from the seabed should continue to provide an auditory marker of the existence of a sunken community and an audible link between life on land and that on the sea-floor. The sound of a bell indicates a continuing presence, manifesting itself through the water to the surface, then echoing into the surrounding air, uniting past and present in a continuum of sound.

The motifs of sea and sound are frequently complemented by another theme dear to the Romantics, namely that of myth. Utilisation and adaptation of myths and legends was based on individual rather than collective memory, and personal reception and understanding of the past. Furthermore, the potential of myth to “exhibit both a foundational as well as a contra-present dynamic”, in other words to accept and thereby legitimise existing systems, ideas and understanding or to reject them and long for an earlier supposed utopian society, is a facet of myth that complemented and aided the expression of Romantic ideas.¹⁸⁹ The *Vineta Sage* was particularly useful in this regard, in that it portrays the ongoing marriage of past and present, through the continuation of life in a different medium on the seabed, as depicted in some versions of the *Sage*, as well as having a basis in reality that ensures that it continues to be a realistic reflection of the environment of the coastal area within which it is situated and the life of its people.

¹⁸⁸ Alain Corbin, *Village Bells*, trans. by Martin Thom (London: Papermac: an imprint of Macmillan Publishers, 1999), 95.

¹⁸⁹ Erll, *Memory in Culture*, 34.

Vineta literature from the 1820s to 1870

In addition to the collections of *Sagen*, including the *Vineta Sage*, that proliferated in the nineteenth century, other publications also helped to disseminate and to keep alive the story of Vineta. Among these were Wilhelm Meinhold's *Miniaturgemälde von Rügen und Usedom* and his *Humoristische Reisebilder von Usedom* together with J.W. Barthold's *Geschichte von Rügen und Pommern*, all of which gave a large amount of detail regarding the search for Vineta over the centuries, and other happenings which reinforced belief in the existence of a sunken city beneath the sea.¹⁹⁰ It is, however, in the area of creative literature, mainly poetry, that the lost city of Vineta really attained its long-lasting fame and that the most widely known works of literature on the subject came into being. The lack of a definitive history of the town, the nebulousness of the information and events surrounding not only its existence but also its demise, and the consequent lack of linear progression in the narrative allowed poets and writers of all genres to make their own of the story, and to adapt it to suit the needs and vision of their generation. The obvious gap in memory could be filled through the imagination of the poet or writer, ensuring that what memory lost in terms of authenticity it could gain in terms of creativity.¹⁹¹ The elements that characterised the story lent themselves successfully to the utilisation of the myth as a vehicle for the expression of typically Romantic sentiments. Poets and artists were not in any way restricted by mundane facts and could allow free rein to their imagination, without fear of repercussion.

Among the most significant works of creative literature of the period are Heinrich Heine's poem *Seegespenst* and Wilhelm Müller's *Vineta*, as well as Ferdinand von Freiligrath's *Meerfahrt*.¹⁹² These later became known not only as poems in their own right, but also as

¹⁹⁰ Wilhelm Meinhold, *Miniaturgemälde von Rügen und Usedom* (Greifswald: C.A. Koch, 1830); Wilhelm Meinhold, *Humoristische Reisebilder von Usedom* (Stralsund: Verlag der E. Löfflerschen Buchhandlung, 1837); J.W. Barthold, *Geschichte von Rügen und Pommern* (Hamburg: Friedrich Perthes, 1839).

¹⁹¹ Aleida Assmann, 91.

¹⁹² Heinrich Heine, *Seegespenst*, in *Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke, Band I/1, Buch der Lieder*. Düsseldorf Ausgabe, hrsg. von Manfred Windfuhr, bearbeitet von Pierre Grappin (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1975), 384–385. Subsequently referred to as Heine, *Gesamtausgabe I/1*; Wilhelm Müller, *Vineta*, in *Wilhelm Müller. Werke, Tagebücher, Briefe, Band 2, Gedichte 2*, hrsg. von Maria-Verena Leistner (Berlin: Gatzka, 1994), 64. Subsequently referred to as Müller, *Werke*; Ferdinand von Freiligrath, *Meerfahrt*, in *Ferdinand Freiligraths sämtliche Werke*, hrsg. von Ludwig Schröder, erster Band (Leipzig:

song lyrics, when they were set to music by several different composers, including Johannes Brahms, August Reuß and Karl Loewe, thus providing another medium of transmission of the Vineta myth.¹⁹³

Heinrich Heine's *Seegespenst*

While Heine's *Seegespenst* is by far the most significant of the poet's writing on the theme of the sunken city and the one that gained the widest audience or readership, it is not his only treatment of the topic. The motif of the sunken city also features in prose works of the poet, as, for example, in *Aus den Memoiren des Herren von Schnabelewopski*, as well as in *Die Romantische Schule* and in later volumes of *Die Nordsee*. As is the case with *Seegespenst*, however, neither name nor location is specified.¹⁹⁴ While it is generally accepted that the sunken city in *Seegespenst* represents the lost city of Vineta, it should, nevertheless, be pointed out that the fact that the poem was written following Heine's sojourn on the island of Norderney in the North Sea means that his unnamed sunken city could also conceivably be taken as referring to one of the North Frisian islands, whose destruction by storm floods is well documented. As already mentioned, the market town of Rungholt, for example, disappeared in 1362 as a result of the second Marcellus storm

Max Hesses Verlag, um 1907), 58. Subsequently referred to as Freiligrath, *Sämtliche Werke*.

¹⁹³ August Reuß, *Seegespenst*, in *Melodramen*, Op. 21, No. 1. Lyrics by Heinrich Heine (Leipzig: Kistner, c. 1904); Johannes Brahms, *Vineta*, No. 2, in *Drei Gesänge*, Op. 42. Lyrics by Wilhelm Müller (Bremen: Aug. Fr. Cranz, c. 1868), composed originally for six voices and performed frequently by choirs up to the present day; Carl Loewe, *Meerfahrt*, op. 93. Lyrics by Ferdinand von Freiligrath. Recorded on the CPO label. Loewe, *Lieder & Balladen*, Vol. 16, Catalogue No: 9995622, Roman Trekel (baritone), Cord Garben (piano), release date 1 Jan. 2000.

¹⁹⁴ (i) In *Die Nordsee*, dritte Abtheilung, for example, Heine speaks of fishermen's stories of seeing church towers and hearing church bells chiming from the sea bed. He then quotes from Müller's *Vineta*. See Heine: *Gesamtausgabe* 6. Düsseldorf Ausgabe, hrsg. von Manfred Windfuhr, bearbeitet von Jost Hermand (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1973), 150. Subsequently referred to as Heine: *Gesamtausgabe*, 6; (ii) In *Aus den Memoiren des Herren von Schnabelewopski*, Schnabelewopski tells of occasionally gazing down into the sea in an unsuccessful attempt to see the sunken towns, where the inhabitants, transformed into various kinds of fish are reputed to continue to live. He has, however, heard bells tolling from the deep. See Heine, *Aus den Memoiren des Herren von Schnabelewopski*, erstes Buch, Kap. VI, in *Heines Werke*, sechster Teil, hrsg. von Helene Herrmann und Raimund Piffin (Berlin: Deutsches Verlagshaus Bong, c. 1910), 95; (iii) In his *Romantische Schule*, Heine refers to sunken towns when lauding Goethe's prose: "Diese Prosa ist so durchsichtig wie das grüne Meer, wenn heller Sommernachmittag und Windstille, und man ganz klar hinabschauen kann in die Tiefe, wo die versunkenen Städte mit ihren verschollenen Herrlichkeiten sichtbar werden". See Heine, *Die Romantische Schule*, erstes Buch, in *Gesamtausgabe* 8/1, Düsseldorf Ausgabe, hrsg. von Manfred Windfuhr (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1979), 161.

tide ('Grote Mandrenke'). The town was reputed to have been on the island of Strand in the North Sea. In 1634 Strand again suffered major devastation, when much of it was washed away in the second 'Grote Mandrenke' storm tide, and the smaller islands of Nordstrand, Pellworm and some Halligen were formed.

Heine's *Seegespenst* was written between August and December 1825 as part of the *Nordsee I* cycle of poems, which Heine originally referred to in his letters as *Die Seebilder*.¹⁹⁵ It was published in *Reisebilder, Erster Theil* in May 1826, and in *Buch der Lieder* the following year. It is of interest not only as a poem in its own right, but also because it may be regarded as reflecting the ambivalence of Heine's attitudes both to the Romantic poetry of the early nineteenth century and to his own religious philosophies.¹⁹⁶

In many of the poems of the *Nordsee I* cycle the sea provides the background to the emotional outpourings of the poet. It is clear that, despite the fact that in the mid 1820s Heine was attempting to distance himself from the conventions of Romanticism, he continued to use Romantic motifs in his lyrics. In this regard Stefanie Kreuzer comments "Heine's ambivalente Einstellung zur Romantik, die sich gleichermaßen durch seine Nähe und Bewunderung sowie seine oftmals ironische Distanzierung ausdrückt, zieht sich nicht nur seine lyrischen Texte durch. Auch für *Seegespenst* ist die Romantiktradition von besonderer Bedeutung."¹⁹⁷ This conclusion is borne out by the fact that the whole basis of *Seegespenst* is founded on myth, a trope favoured by the Romantics, and that other typically Romantic motifs also feature. The vision of the sunken city, which takes up about one half of the poem, serves as a backdrop or vehicle to enable the poet express his emotions. The sea in *Seegespenst* is at the confluence of empirical reality and submerged consciousness, perhaps at the meeting point between a more critically viewed

¹⁹⁵ Heine, *Gesamtausgabe I/2*, Düsseldorf Ausgabe, hrsg. von Manfred Windfuhr, bearbeitet von Pierre Grappin (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1975), 996. Subsequently referred to as Heine, *Gesamtausgabe I/2*.

¹⁹⁶ Heine, *Gesamtausgabe I/2*, Düsseldorf Ausgabe, hrsg. von Manfred Windfuhr, bearbeitet von Pierre Grappin (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1975), 996. Subsequently referred to as Heine, *Gesamtausgabe I/2*.

¹⁹⁷ Stefanie Kreuzer, »Und schaute tiefer und tiefer – / Bis tief, im Meeresgrunde«. Zur träumerischen ›Versenkung‹ in Heinrich Heines *Seegespenst*, in Bernard Dieterle u. Hans-Walter Schmidt-Hannisa (Hrsg.), *Der Traum im Gedicht* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2017), 113.

Romanticism and a move towards Realism. Romanticism lies on the sea bed, Realism on the surface. The poem, (see Appendix C.1), describes in detail the poet's vision of a sunken city as he leans over the edge of a boat, staring into the depths of the sea. In contrast with the more usual description of Vineta, Heine locates his lost city in the North Sea rather than in the Baltic, does not give it a name and describes it as being "alterthümlich niederländisch". Nevertheless the picture he paints corresponds to a large extent with the descriptions given in the legends and stories about Vineta. This is evident, for example, in the fine clothing of the inhabitants – the men "mit weißen Halskrausen und Ehrenketten", the silk-clad young women and the "bunte Gesellen in spanischer Tracht" – details of which serve to highlight both the wealth and the cosmopolitanism of the town.¹⁹⁸ Other typical Vineta motifs include the ornately decorated town hall and the distant sound of bells and organ music coming from the large cathedral. It is worth noting, however, that Heine's sunken city is clearly portrayed as Christian, and that the elderly women hastening to the cathedral with hymn books and rosary beads in their hands have no fear of being seen practising their religion in public.

It is clear that Heine has absorbed and made his own of the legend told to him on the island of Norderney, and later recounted by him in his prose essay in *Nordsee III*:

Man sagt, unfern dieser Insel, wo jetzt nichts als Wasser ist, hätten einst die schönsten Dörfer und Städte gestanden, das Meer habe sie plötzlich alle überschwemmt, und bey klarem Wetter sähen die Schiffer noch die leuchtenden Spitzen der versunkenen Kirchthürme, und mancher habe dort, in der Sonntagsfrühe, sogar ein frommes Glockengeläute gehört.¹⁹⁹

The level of detail in the description of the sunken city and its inhabitants permits the reader to picture it clearly, to the extent that it could even be said that he becomes almost part of the scene. Thomas Bourke in his study of late and post-Romantic literature comments:

¹⁹⁸ Heine, *Gesamtausgabe I/1*, 384–385.

¹⁹⁹ Heine, *Gesamtausgabe 6*, 150.

Heine's Stadt im *Seegespenst* ist [...] biedermeierlich detailliert. Allerdings hat das eine romantisierende Funktion im Rahmen des Gedichts: der Leser soll sich in Identifizierung mit dem 'Ich' in diese submarine Welt so sehr vertiefen, daß Traum beginnt, realer als die Wirklichkeit an der Meeresoberfläche zu werden.²⁰⁰

Heine's legend terminates at the point where the city has been described. There is no reference to other elements of the *Sage* such as the greed of the inhabitants or the sunken city's occasional reappearance, which one can presume the poet must have heard on Norderney; there is in fact no attempt to progress the narrative beyond the simple description of the vision of the sunken city on the sea bed, and Vineta serves merely as a mythical stage set, a starting point for the poet's Romantic reverie. The main character in the poem is, in fact, the poet himself. His 'ich', the very first word in the poem, sets him firmly, though briefly, on the stage. The two verbs used in the first lines – *lag* and *schaute* – create an impression of indolence and lack of activity, with the manner of his staring into the sea in a dreamlike fashion serving to distance him from his immediate surroundings. In contrast with the inactivity on the surface, the real action of the poem in the first three stanzas might, in fact, be said to take place on the bed of the sea, where the inhabitants of the sunken city go about their daily lives — an element that features directly in some versions of the Vineta *Sage*.

The poet's reaction to the mysterious shudder of the distant bells re-introduces him into the action as he evokes the deep sense of longing and sadness which overcomes him. He envisions the warm, red drops of blood falling down upon the high-gabled roof of an old house, at the window of which sits a melancholy young girl, her head leaning on her arm "wie ein armes vergessenes Kind."²⁰¹ He recognises in the young girl the loved one he has lost and has been seeking for years, and he desires to be at one with her:

Und ich komme hinab zu dir,
Und mit ausgebreiteten Armen

²⁰⁰ Thomas E. Bourke, *Stilbruch als Stilmittel* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter D. Lang, 1980), 237.

²⁰¹ Heine, *Seegespenst*, in *Gesamtausgabe I/1*, 384–385.

Stürz' ich hinab an dein Herz²⁰²

The poet's wish to sublimate himself and join with his lost love has strong echoes of the "verzehrende Sehnsucht und ewiges Streben" of Romanticism, a desire that is often expressed but remains unfulfilled.²⁰³

Suddenly the action shifts, however, and returns to the surface, as the captain becomes aware of the impending danger to his passenger and acts to prevent it, grabbing the poet's foot and pulling him back from the edge of the boat with the cry "Doktor, sind Sie des Teufels?"²⁰⁴ This sudden break in atmosphere creates what might effectively be described as "ein Desillusionierungsmoment eines sonst intakten romantischen Stimmungsgedichts"²⁰⁵ and might be seen as an attempt by the poet to distance himself from Romanticism. It is also, however, reminiscent of an event in E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Der goldene Topf*, published some twelve years before *Seegespenst*, when the student Anselmus, crossing the Elbe by boat, suddenly lunges forward and is about to plunge into the water to join the golden snakes who seem to have bewitched him. The boatman grabs him, crying "ist der Herr des Teufels?"²⁰⁶ There would seem to be some justification in the suggestion that Heine's possible "literary borrowing" of this event might be regarded as a "humorous self-ironic example of the perils involved in romantic daydreaming".²⁰⁷

In *Seegespenst* the captain's intervention creates a dramatic break in the atmosphere, causing a disruption that is not alone physical, but also spiritual or psychological. For the reader or listener there is a sense of shock, of sudden rude awakening, as the poet distances himself from Romanticism in a device which might legitimately be called "eine

²⁰² Heine, *Seegespenst*, in *Gesamtausgabe I/1*, 384–385.

²⁰³ Gero von Wilpert, 704.

²⁰⁴ Heine, *Seegespenst*, in *Gesamtausgabe I/1*, 384–385.

²⁰⁵ John Fetzer, *Die romantische Lyrik*, in *Romantik-Handbuch*, edited by Helmut Schanze (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 2003), 333.

²⁰⁶ E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Der Goldene Topf*, in *Fantasiestücke in Callot's Manier*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, Band 2/1, hrsg. von Hartmut Steinecke (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1993), 238.

²⁰⁷ James M. McGlathery, *The Suicide Motif* in E.T.A. Hoffmann's 'Der Goldne Topf.' Monatshefte, vol. 58, no. 2, 1966, p. 116. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/30160773.

ganz besondere Art der Desavouierung von Sentimentalität”.²⁰⁸ It makes of the poem an effective example of what has been called “Heine’s characteristic combination of elegy and irony, seriousness and humour, illusion and disillusion, which in the final punch line tumbles into a tragic sobriety”, and effectively symbolises the poet’s struggle between the typically Romantic escape into illusion and the pull towards reality.²⁰⁹

It might also be said, however, that there appears to be a certain sense of artificiality in the manner of Heine’s apparent rejection of Romantic sentimentality in the poem. Despite the similarity with Hoffmann’s *Der goldne Topf*, one gets the impression that the poet remains conscious of the expectations of his audience or readership, and, perhaps not wishing to disappoint, or perhaps in order to protect his image, adds a sudden ironic twist that effectively separates him from committed Romanticists. As a result Heine’s *Seegespenst* can come across as a carefully constructed and orchestrated poetic composition rather than an expression of deeply-felt Romantic emotion. Nevertheless, whatever the poet’s motivation may be, the fact remains that in *Seegespenst* Heine both uses and rejects Romantic ideology, in a manner that bears out the opinion expressed by Detlef Kremer, “Indem er sich als sentimentalischen Dichter ausweist, ironisiert er dies und kann im Schutz der Ironie Elemente des romantischen Diskurse tradieren”.²¹⁰

The theme of rejection continues and is strengthened in the next poem in the cycle, *Reinigung*, in which the Romantic reverie, so abruptly and deliberately disturbed by the action of the ship’s captain at the end of *Seegespenst*, is banished completely by the poet, who warns the ‘vision’ to stay on the bed of the sea and trouble him no more:

Bleib du in deiner Meerestiefe,
 Wahnsinniger Traum,
 Der du einst so manche Nacht
 Mein Herz mit falschem Glück gequält hast,
 Und jetzt als Seegespenst

²⁰⁸ Beate Otto, *Unterwasser Literatur: von Wasserfrauen und Wassermännern* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2001), 70.

²⁰⁹ Bernadette Malinowski, *German Romantic Poetry in Theory and Practice*, in Dennis F. Mahoney (ed), *The Literature of German Romanticism*, Vol. 8 (Rochester: Camden House, 2004), 165.

²¹⁰ Detlef Kremer, *Romantik: Lehrbuch Germanistik*, 3. Auflage (Stuttgart: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2007), 314.

Sogar am hellen Tag mich bedrohest –
Bleib du dort unten in Ewigkeit [...].²¹¹

Here the poet's desire to be cleansed of the hypocrisy and cant of Romanticism which have long troubled his soul is expressed even more strongly:

Und ich werfe noch zu dir hinab
All meine Schmerzen und Sünden,
Und die Schellenkappe der Thorheit,
Die so lange mein Haupt umklingelt,
Und die kalte, gleißende Schlangenhaut
Der Heuchelei,
Die mir so lang' die Seele umwunden,[...],
Und es jauchzt die befreite Seele.²¹²

The positioning of *Seegespenst* immediately after *Meeresstille*, within the *Nordsee I* cycle, gives a certain validation to a suggestion by Pierre Grappin that both may originally have been one poem, subsequently reworked and divided by Heine. Grappin bases his opinion firstly on the use of the word 'aber' in the first line of *Seegespenst*, which seems to refer back to a preceding event or at least to the existence of a previous sentence; secondly on the fact that the two parts of the original poem, despite similarity of ideas, developed in different ways, the first section being a realistic description of a boat trip, while the second became a Romantic vision of a long lost city beneath the waves, allowing the poet to express his feelings of sadness and loss: "Heine hat den Text [...] getrennt, weil sich die beiden Teile zu gegensätzlich entwickelten: gegenüber der Realistik der Szenen in Nordsee I, IX [*Meeresstille*] trat die Vision in Nordsee I, X' [*Seegespenst*]"²¹³ This suggestion is strengthened by the fact that Heine is reputed to have paid particular attention to the classification of his lyrics in cycles and for the appropriate positioning of each lyric within its cycle. Gerhard Höhn in his *Heine-Handbuch* maintains in fact that the

²¹¹ Heine, *Reinigung*, in *Gesamtausgabe I/1*, 388.

²¹² Heine, *Seegespenst*, in *Gesamtausgabe I/1*, 384–385.

²¹³ Grappin, in Heine, *Gesamtausgabe I/2*, 1028.

position of a poem within a cycle can affect its meaning: “Der Sinn eines jeden Gedichtes [wird] letztlich durch seine Stellung im Gesamtgefüge bestimmt”.²¹⁴

It is suggested, however, that there could also be a case for considering not alone *Reinigung*, but also the following poem, *Frieden*, as part of an extended sequence, chronicling not alone the experience but also the emotional responses to the boat trip.²¹⁵ Similar motifs and thought processes characterise all the poems and the names of the last two — *Reinigung* and *Frieden* — evoke the progress of the poet’s thoughts — the cleansing from his soul of the destructive emotions and ideas that have haunted him, followed by progress towards a certain spiritual peace, through recognition and acceptance, whether temporary or permanent, of his current reality.

While it is accepted that the ‘Ich’ of a poem cannot be regarded as referring specifically to the poet himself, it is also true that the poet’s personal experience has an important part to play in his choice both of subject matter and of mode of expression. Among the elements of Heine’s life that were particularly to the fore in the mid-1820s, one must acknowledge his comparatively recent conversion from Judaism to Christianity, which had a significant effect on him. His baptism into the Protestant church in June 1825 was an event that caused the poet much anguish and uncertainty. Conversion was not unusual for Jews at the time and many who had become integrated into German society converted to Protestantism in order to facilitate professional life, their adherence being frequently nominal rather than sincere. Heine himself regarded his conversion as his “Entréebillett zur europäischen Kultur”.²¹⁶ Nevertheless he remained deeply troubled. In a letter to Moses Moser, his confidant in matters religious, in December 1825, he speaks of the “Bürgerkrieg in meiner Brust” and makes it clear that his decision to be baptised was based purely on practical and economic grounds, and that he would be unhappy if Moser were to think otherwise: “Es wär mir sehr leid, wenn mein eignes Getauftseyn Dir in

²¹⁴ Gerhard Höhn, *Heine-Handbuch*, zweite Auflage (Stuttgart: Verlag J.B.Metzler, 1997), 60.

²¹⁵ Heine, *Reinigung*, in *Gesamtausgabe I/1*, 388. *Frieden*, in *Gesamtausgabe I/1*, 390.

²¹⁶ R.C. Holub, *Troubled Apostate: Heine’s Conversion and its Consequences*, in R.F. Cooke (ed.), *A Companion to the Works of Heinrich Heine* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002), 229–250.

einem günstigen Lichte erscheinen könnte”.²¹⁷ A further letter, on 9 January 1826, confirms his continuing disquiet, and he goes so far as to say that he regrets his baptism. He recognises, however, that he himself is the source of his unhappiness: “wer mich am meisten quält, das bin ich noch immer selbst”.²¹⁸ Pierre Grappin maintains that the *Nordsee I* cycle of poems contain a number of examples of Heine’s internal conflict: “Die Gedichte der Nordsee zeigen manche Spuren dieses Bürgerkriegs in der eigenen Brust, und der jubelnde Lobgesang auf das Meer ist nicht frei von trüben Bildern und bitteren Worten der Enttäuschung”.²¹⁹

The duality of philosophies on the part of the poet also allows, however, for another interpretation of *Seegespenst* — the possibility that the young girl at the window may be regarded as an allegorical figure representing the Judaism abandoned by Heine, a thesis supported by Grappin in a further reference to Heine’s apparent inner turmoil at the time:

Es kann wundernehmen, daß Heine wenige Monate nach seiner Taufe im Juni 1825 dem Mädchen nachtrauert, welches eine Allegorie der hebräischen Tradition ist. In der Tat entspricht das ganz seiner inneren Widersprüchlichkeit in diesen Monaten.²²⁰

In support of his thesis Grappin points out that in most of Heine’s love lyrics the poet claims either to have been deserted by his lover, or that they have agreed to part. In *Seegespenst*, on the other hand, Heine depicts his lover as having been forgotten, the implication presumably being that he too has ‘forgotten’ his Jewish faith. Grappin also suggests that the length of time that the young woman has remained isolated among strangers — five hundred years in an early version of the poem, and hundreds of years in

²¹⁷ Heinrich Heine, *Brief an Moses Moser, 14. Dez. 1825*, in *Heinrich Heine Briefe: Erste Gesamtausgabe nach den Handschriften*, hrsg. und eingeleitet von Friedrich Hirth, erster Band, *Briefe 1815–1831* (Mainz: Florian Kupferberg, 1965), 242. Subsequently referred to as Heine, *Briefe*. In the same letter Heine says that he had been in the temple on the previous Saturday and had heard Dr. Salomon speak against Jews who were unfaithful to the beliefs of their forebears and decided to be baptised “von der bloßen Hoffnung eine Stelle zu bekommen”.

²¹⁸ Heine, *Briefe*, 249–250.

²¹⁹ Grappin, quoted in Heine, *Gesamtausgabe I/2*, 997.

²²⁰ Grappin, quoted in Heine, *Gesamtausgabe I/2*, 1032.

the final authenticated version — would indicate that the poet is not merely recapitulating on personal erotic experiences, but speaking of a more fundamental desertion, namely his formal abandonment of the religion of his forebears. Furthermore, Karl Hessel, editor of a number of volumes of Heine's poems, articulated somewhat similar views in 1892, when he stated:

Auf diese vergessene im Meer der Zeiten untergegangene Gestalt, die trauernd da sitzt wie die trauernde Jungfrau Jerusalem in dem Klagelied Jeremiä, auf sie träufelt das Herzblut des Dichters hinab, ihm ist, als öffneten sich wieder die kaumgeheilten Wunden.²²¹

Whether or not one accepts the thesis that the young woman represents the poet's abandoned Judaism, there is little doubt but that religion forms a significant link between the three poems, *Seegespenst*, *Reinigung* and *Frieden*. They might be regarded as forming in effect a sequence, in which the poet initially evokes his sense of loss and unhappiness at having rejected his patrimony and desires to be reunited with what he portrays as his lost love; then however, in *Reinigung*, he confirms his original rejection, by banishing the spirit that haunts him into the depths of the sea, and finally, in *Frieden*, sees Christ as saviour of the world — apparently indicating his acceptance of his new situation as a Christian. Heine did not admit to being a Christian and referred only obliquely, if at all, to his baptism in private correspondence with family and friends. His ambivalence and unease continued to be reflected in his work. Nevertheless, just as his vision of the young abandoned girl in *Seegespenst* might be taken as representing Judaism, so too may his vision of Christ in *Frieden* show that Christianity as well as Judaism, occupied his mind and his thoughts. Furthermore his evocation of Palm Sunday, where palm-bearing, white-robed Jews welcomed Christ, the first Christian, to Jerusalem, seems to reflect a hope that Judaism and Christianity could merge and become one:

Die Vision eines versöhnenden Heilands, Friedensfürsten und Weltretters, wie sie im Gedicht *Frieden* entwickelt wird, zeigt, daß er den Weg einer Annäherung und Verbrüderung von Juden und Christen angestrebt hat. Der Titel des Gedichts ist

²²¹ Karl Hessel, quoted in Heine, *Gesamtausgabe I/2*, 1032.

irenischer Art: denselben allmächtigen Gott und rettenden Messias könnten alle anerkennen.²²²

Such recognition and acceptance of both the Christian God and the Jewish Messiah would eliminate the dual philosophies and ambivalence of thought that so marked Heine.

It should also be pointed out that in the chroniclers' reports there is little reference to religion, other than the fact that Christians who came from Saxony were not allowed practise their religion openly. Nevertheless in *Seegespenst* there is a clear Christian, perhaps Catholic motif, as the poet envisions brown-clad elderly ladies hurrying to the church with hymn books and rosary beads in their hands.²²³ In *Reinigung* the poet refers to his "gottverleugnende, engelverleugnende, unseelige Seele", again an apparently Christian image, and in *Frieden* Christ figures as the saviour.²²⁴ There is therefore in the three poems a sense of progression towards active Christianity — a clear indication that religion is very much on Heine's mind.

Wilhelm Müller's *Vineta*

Wilhelm Müller's *Vineta*, a poem in the cycle *Muscheln von der Insel Rügen*, was written almost contemporaneously with Heine's *Seegespenst*.²²⁵ Müller's cycle of poems seems to have been inspired by his holiday on the island of Rügen at the end of July 1825, at approximately the same time that Heine was holidaying on Norderney. *Muscheln von der Insel Rügen* was submitted to Brockhaus in December 1825 and, according to Cecilia

²²² Grappin, in Heine, *Gesamtausgabe I/2*, 1035.

²²³ In sharp contrast with the image of silk-clad girls and brightly clad young men wandering in a carefree manner in the streets, the use of the word *getrieben* with reference to the elderly rosary bead-bearing ladies hurrying towards the church — "getrieben von Glockengeläute und rauschendem Orgelton"— strikes a somewhat jarring note. It seems to create an implication of compulsion, and moves the description of the sunken city from a somewhat lethargic and unemotional observation of a pleasant uncomplicated scene towards a more disquieting and uneasy image of life on the seabed, as the poet speaks of the "geheimnisvoller Schauer" of the distant tolling bells. *Vineta*, hitherto unthreatening, becomes mysterious and strange, a Gothic image.

²²⁴ Heine, *Gesamtausgabe I/1*, 388, 390.

²²⁵ Müller, 64.

Baumann, was first published in the autumn of 1826 in *Urania aus dem Jahre 1827*.²²⁶ Though also inspired by the legend of the sunken city and containing many typically Romantic motifs, Müller's *Vineta* is very different from *Seegespenst*. In the first place the poet identifies the city and gives it a name – 'Vineta.' This may spring from the fact that Müller heard the story of the sunken city on the island of Rügen in the Baltic, not far from one of the reputed locations of the sunken Vineta, where knowledge of the myth may be presumed to have been current.²²⁷ Heine's information, on the other hand, came from the East Frisian island of Norderney in the North Sea, an area also subject to significant land loss, but where the legend of Vineta does not appear to have been as widespread. Müller's poem is simple, consisting of six four-line stanzas, written as it were at some remove from the poet himself. What is immediately striking when one compares it with Heine's *Seegespenst* is that while Heine paints a detailed picture of the sunken city on the seabed and uses the tolling of the bells only as a catalyst linking the vision with his own emotional response, Müller begins with the muffled sound of bells from the deep. He reduces the descriptive elements of the sunken city to a minimum, referring only to the ruined towers of the 'alte Wunderstadt', and the golden sparkle on the water which indicates their presence on the the seabed: "Ihre Zinnen lassen goldne Funken / Widerscheinend auf dem Spiegel sehn".²²⁸ His reading of the auditory environment, which contrasts with the visual stimulus evoked by Heine, generates an emotional response whose expression is significantly more muted. Furthermore, in direct contrast with Heine who personalises the emotional response to himself, Müller looks initially to others and speaks of the fatal attraction of the bells for the boatman, who repeatedly ignores the dangerous cliffs in order to approach the site and re-experience that magical sparkle.²²⁹ It is only in the last line of the fourth verse that Müller begins his inward reflection, and

²²⁶ *Urania auf das Jahr 1827* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1827), 285–312. See also C. Baumann, *Wilhelm Müller: The Poet of the Schubert Song Cycles* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1981), 54.

²²⁷ In *Muscheln von der Insel Rügen* Müller refers to the sunken city as "Vineta, die zwischen Pommern und Rügen in das Meer gesunken seyn soll". See *Urania 1827*, 311.

²²⁸ Müller, *Werke*, 64.

²²⁹ In his explanatory note about Vineta, Müller refers to the fishermen as follows: "Die Schiffer hören die Glocken derselben aus dem Grunde des Meeres heraufklingen, und das Widerscheinen [sic] ihrer Zinnen nennen sie das Wafeln, eine nordische Fata Morgana". See *Urania*, 311–312.

effectively only in the last verse that it culminates in the Romantic expression of his desire to plunge into the deep and become part of an idealised underwater Utopia. The deep tolling of the bell awakens in him a desire for the love that his heart has once known, for the beautiful world which he still sees in his dreams, a world into which he wants to sink, into which he feels called by angel voices:

Und dann möcht ich tauchen in die Tiefen,
 Mich versenken in den Widerschein,
 Und mir ist, als ob mich Engel riefen
 In die alte Wunderstadt hinein.²³⁰

The typically Romantic death wish of this last stanza is reminiscent of Heine's desire to unite with the young woman whom he sees in his vision. Unlike Heine, however, Müller does not specifically mention a long-lost beloved, and makes only oblique reference to the emotions evoked by the sound of the bells, which bring to his heart "wunderbare Kunde von der Liebe, die geliebt es hat".²³¹ In her essay *Wilhelm Müller's Poetry of the Sea*, however, Margaret Richardson points out that *Vineta*, which dates from the happiest period of the poet's life, is one of the few subjective poems that Müller ever wrote. It is "suffused with the afterglow of his love for Luise Hensel and has that subtle sweetness which clings to the remembrance of a passion from which time has taken the sting of disappointment".²³²

Another significant difference between the two poems is the fact that in *Seegespenst* the vision and the poem itself are abruptly ended by the intervention of the ship's captain, and the vision is subsequently banished by the poet in the following poem. In *Vineta*, on the other hand, the poet's expressed desires are left in suspense, giving a sense of incompleteness to the poem. It is as if the expression of the desire is an end in itself and the poet requires no further action or statement of intent to satisfy him. In true Romantic fashion he evokes and seemingly accepts the unrequited nature of Romantic love, where

²³⁰ Müller, *Werke*, 64.

²³¹ Müller, *Werke*, 64.

²³² Margaret Richardson, *Wilhelm Müller's Poetry of the Sea*, in *Modern Language Review*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Modern Humanities Research Association, 1923), 330.

absence may be as deeply felt as presence — perhaps indeed at times more deeply, in that it allows for greater expression of melancholy — and the intensity of rejection may be even more powerful than that of fulfilment.

According to J.S. Nollen, Heine and Müller “appear to have been practically independent of each other” as poets of the sea, and there is nothing to suggest that the fact that both wrote poems about the sunken city is anything other than coincidence.²³³ The two poems, *Seegespenst* and *Vineta* were written within the same time frame, but it would appear that neither poet could have had access to the other’s work in advance of its publication.

Müller’s *Vineta* is a good example of the clarity and simplicity of verse referred to by Heine, when he wrote to Müller on 7th June, 1826, some months prior to the publication of *Vineta*: “Ich glaube erst in Ihren Liedern den reinen Klang und die wahre Einfachheit, wonach ich immer strebte, gefunden zu haben. Wie rein, wie klar sind Ihre Lieder [...]”.²³⁴ Müller died unexpectedly in September 1827, at the age of thirty-three, less than a year after the publication of *Vineta*. Heine had quoted four lines from Müller’s *Vineta* in *Die Nordsee, Dritte Abtheilung, (Nordsee III)*, which was published in the first edition of *Reisebilder II* in April 1827.²³⁵ In *Nordsee III*, written on the island of Norderney, Heine refers again to the sunken city of Vineta, which he claims is a true story: “Die Geschichte ist wahr; denn das Meer ist meine Seele”.²³⁶ In this he seems to personify the sea— it is his soul, his innermost being, and cannot lie. He then quotes the third verse of Müller’s *Vineta*:

Eine schöne Welt ist da versunken,
Ihre Trümmer blieben unten stehn,
Lassen sich als goldne Himmelsfunken
Oft im Spiegel meiner Träume sehen.²³⁷

²³³ J. S. Nollen, *Heine and Müller*, in *Modern Language Notes*, Vol.17, No. 4, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1902), 109. Subsequently referred to as Nollen, in *Modern Language Notes*.

²³⁴ Baumann, 117.

²³⁵ Heine, *Gesamtausgabe* 6, 150.

²³⁶ Heine, *Gesamtausgabe* 6, 150.

²³⁷ Heine, *Gesamtausgabe* 6, 150. Also Müller, *Werke*, 64.

By quoting Müller's lines Heine personalises them to himself. It is he who often sees the ruins of the sunken city reflected like golden stars in his dreams. In making the lines his own Heine identifies himself publicly with Müller. It is as if he is ensuring in advance the fulfilment of the sentiments expressed in his letter of 7 June 1826, "Ich bin eitel genug zu glauben, daß mein Name einst, wenn wir beide nicht mehr sind, mit dem Ihrigen zusammengenannt wird [...]".²³⁸

Müller's *Vineta* has been set to music several times, both for choir and individual voice. The best-known of these settings is that by Johannes Brahms, written originally for six voices and nowadays frequently performed by full choir.²³⁹ Another use of Müller's text is referred to — though without enthusiasm — by Hans Emons in his *Musik in Utopia*, when he speaks of song-writer Achim Reichel's transposition of Müller's *Vineta* into a ballad for use on tourist boat trips to the Vineta Reef, and Reichel's claim that his work is intended to reconcile rock music with lyric poetry. According to Emons:

Ein Song, der als Animation für touristische Bootsausflüge zum Vineta-Riff vor Koserow [dient], und die Lyrik Wilhelm Müllers [...] sind gänzlich verschiedene Welten; eine wie auch immer geartete Versöhnung von Lyrik und Rockmusik ist hier nicht auszumachen.²⁴⁰

Ferdinand von Freiligrath's *Meerfahrt*

Originally published in 1838, and probably written in 1835, Ferdinand von Freiligrath's poem of twelve four-line stanzas, *Meerfahrt*, is said to have been inspired by the story, *Der arme Thoms oder die versunkene Stadt*, which appeared in the *Morgenblatt* in January 1835, in a series entitled *Bilder aus dem Seeleben, in Märchen und Sagen*.²⁴¹ (Summary of story in Appendix C.3).

²³⁸ Heine, in Nollen, *Modern Language Notes*, 105.

²³⁹ Johannes Brahms, *Vineta*, No. 2 in *Drei Gesänge*, Op. 42. Lyricist: Wilhelm Müller (Bremen, Aug. Fr. Cranz, c. 1868).

²⁴⁰ Hans Emons, *Musik in Utopia* (Berlin: Frank & Timme GmbH., 2015), 53.

²⁴¹ Ferdinand von Freiligrath, *Sämtliche Werke*, 57–58; Anon: *Der arme Thoms oder die versunkene Stadt*, in *Bilder aus dem Seeleben in Märchen und Sagen*, in *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände*, Jg.29, Nos. 3–7, 1–8 Januar 1835.

Though couched in very different terms, Freiligrath's poem *Meerfahrt* is in many ways a reiteration of a number of elements of Thoms' story and many of the thoughts and images contained in the story have been utilised in the poem. In the introductory stanzas, for example, the poet makes use of a fairy tale — a device also employed in Thoms' story — in that he likens the sea, through which the sunken city is visible, to the glass coffin in which the body of Snow White was laid in the fairy story *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.²⁴² Just as Snow White lay dead, but present and visible within her coffin, so also does the sunken city lie dead, yet present and visible in the waters of the sea that have engulfed it. While no precise indication of location is given in the story in the *Morgenblatt*, Freiligrath's city is Julin, a factor which indicates a familiarity on the part of the poet with the Vineta story and the search for the sunken city. Julin, a mediaeval settlement on the island of Wolin at the mouth of the Oder, was one of the places suggested as the location of Adam von Bremen's 'Jumne', later transcribed as Vineta.

As in Thoms' story, there are no inhabitants to be seen in the eerily silent streets of Freiligrath's sunken city. There is, however, an impression of life in abeyance, as if, like Snow White herself, the city and its people might re-awaken and arise again. This sense of suspended animation is increased by elements in the description of the physical environment, with the glow of the palaces seen through the water, the gloomy-looking towers rising upwards and the colourful shimmering of the church windows. The hulking shoals of fish wriggling around and gazing with glassy eyes through windows and doors at the sleeping inhabitants add to a feeling of expectation and even tension.

Auf Straßen und Märkten ungeschlacht
 Treibt sich der Fische Gewühl.
 Sie glotzen mit glasigen Augen dumm
 In die Fenster und in die Türen hinein!²⁴³

²⁴² The strange pipe-playing musician in Thoms' story has clear echoes of the story of the Pied Piper of Hameln. The story of *Sneewittchen*, (later *Schneewittchen*, Snow White) had been published by the Brothers Grimm in their first collection of *Grimms' Fairy Tales* in 1812.

²⁴³ Freiligrath, *Sämtliche Werke*, 58.

As is the case in Heine's *Seegespenst* and Müller's *Vineta*, Freiligrath too expresses the desire to be at one with the sunken city:

Ich will hinunter! ich will erneun
Die versunkene Pracht, die ertrunkne Luft!
Die Zauber des Todes will ich zerstreun
Mit dem Odem meiner lebendigen Brust!²⁴⁴

In this case, however, the poet does not seek a lost love, metaphorical or otherwise, as in Heine's *Seegespenst*, but wishes to break the spell of death and bring the sunken city back to life.

An alternative, yet complementary interpretation of the final stanzas might be to regard them as a further reference to Thoms' story and Hanny's demise and supposedly continuing life with his lover in the sunken city. The last stanza in particular would support this interpretation — below on the sea bed lies the ancient splendour, while above is the song of the fisherman. Everything continues to exist in different, though closely-linked realms:

Er lebt in den Häusern der alten Zeit,
Wo die Muschel blitzt, wo der Bernstein glüht.
Unten die alte Herrlichkeit,
Oben ein Fischerlied.²⁴⁵

The language used, in particular the present tense active verbs 'lebt', 'blitzt' and 'glüht', adds to the impression of ongoing life, albeit on a different plane. The combination of past and present on the sea bed, the fisherman's song present on the surface and the poet's vision of wakening the sunken city to its future all coalesce to provide a picture of a society in which the past is not over, but rather forms part of a continuum leading through the present and into the future. This is one of the elements that has made the Vineta motif a constant over the centuries — the fact that the sunken city never dies, but rather continues to adapt to changing circumstances and to lend itself to manipulation as required

²⁴⁴ Freiligrath, *Sämtliche Werke*, 58.

²⁴⁵ Freiligrath, *Sämtliche Werke*, 58.

by different ideas and ideologies. In this it is an effective mirror of a society in the process of constant modification and development. It is also particularly suitable for the expression of the Romantic death wish — in reality a Romantic life wish for a utopian existence beyond the present, in a longed-for place, or with a loved one or love object from the past which continues to live in an eternal present.

Richard Wüerst's opera, *Vineta, oder am Meeresstrand*

The widespread knowledge and popularity of Vineta can be gauged from the fact that two operas based on the theme of the sunken city were premiered outside Germany in the 1860s. One of these, *Vineta*, composed by Jan Nepomuk Škroup, with libretto by Hermann Schmid, was first performed in Prague in 1863.²⁴⁶ The other, *Vineta, oder am Meeresstrand*, by Richard Wüerst, had its first performance in Bratislava in December 1862.²⁴⁷ Wüerst's opera, the central theme of which is the search for a life beyond the present and a desire to be united with a loved one, is based on a folk-tale by Friedrich Gerstäcker.²⁴⁸ Wüerst's adaptation of Gerstäcker's story contains many of the motifs found in *Der arme Thoms oder die versunkene Stadt*, on which Ferdinand von Freiligrath's poem, *Meerfahrt* is also based.²⁴⁹ In contrast with Freiligrath's poem, and with those of Heine and Müller, in which the greater part of the action takes place on the sea-bed, however, Wüerst's libretto is largely based on land, close to the Baltic strand, where the main character, a forester named Bruno, has become infatuated with a beautiful young girl in a white robe, whom he has seen wandering on the beach. He becomes steadily more alienated from his wife and can think of little other than the strange girl. He spends hours on the beach watching and dreaming.

²⁴⁶ Jan Nepomuk Škroup, *Vineta*, (Prague: C. Schreyer & Ignaz Fuchs, 1863). Libretto by Hermann Schmid.

²⁴⁷ Richard Wüerst, *Vineta, oder am Meeresstrand*. Große romantische Oper in drei Akten (Berlin: Bote & Bock, 1863).

²⁴⁸ Friedrich Gerstäcker, *Die versunkene Stadt*, in *Aus der See* (Leipzig: Commissionsverlag von Heinrich Hübner, 1855), 11–150. Gerstäcker's folk-tale also forms the basis of the libretto of another opera called *Vineta*, composed by Rudolf Mors and first performed in Bielefeld in 1968.

²⁴⁹ Anon., *Der arme Thoms oder die versunkene Stadt*, in *Bilder aus dem Seeleben in Märchen und Sagen*, in *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände*, Jg.29, Nos. 3–7, 1–8 Januar 1835. See Appendix C.3 for summary.

Bruno knows the story of Vineta, though, unlike others, he has never heard bells ringing from the deep, nor seen the tops of towers under the water. He realises that the girl must come from the sunken city and desires nothing more than to join her on the sea-bed. When eventually she rises out of the sea, she turns out to be Benita, daughter of Melchior, ruler of Vineta. She laments the cold and darkness of her grave under the waves. Despite her protestations, Bruno, having declared his undying love for her, insists on accompanying her back to Vineta. He is not, however, allowed to stay, as he fails a test aimed at proving that he has cut all ties with life in the sun on the surface.

His overwhelming desire eventually causes Bruno to throw himself from the cliff into the sea, watched, unknown to himself, by Benita, who has abandoned her family and her underwater home in search of him. When his body is recovered from the sea, Benita collapses and dies. Nature is in harmony, the sea begins to churn, clouds mask the moon, the thunder rolls and the lightning flashes. Melchior and his people rise out of the sea. The choir of Vinetans chants; two souls are now on their way to heaven, their hearts will be buried in a mussel and coral coffin on the sea-bed. Melchior and the Vinetans, with the bodies of Bruno and Benita, sink once more into the sea, as the storm abates and the villagers sink to their knees, giving thanks that they have been spared.

In many ways Wüerst's opera might be said to have strong echoes of Heine's *Seegeespenst*. Through its linking of past with present, of life on the sea bed with that on the surface, and, to an even greater extent than in Heine's poem, through the interaction of the people of Vineta with those living on land, the opera extends further into the realm of myth. By throwing himself into the sea, Bruno puts into effect what might be called the death wish expressed in Heine's poem. In the latter situation, however, where the poet is prevented by the action of the ship's captain from fulfilling his wish, the possibility of later accomplishment remains, and one is left with a sense of expectation as to what might ensue. In Bruno's case, his action leads directly not alone to his death but also to that of Benita. Though their hearts will be buried in a mussel and coral coffin on the sea bed, there is no suggestion that they will have a life together.

Vineta as protector or defender

Apart from the commonly encountered motifs in the Vineta literature of the 1820s to 1870 — the use of myth, the desire to unite with a lost love or place, the sound of bells — there are also some motifs that are used only occasionally. The most significant of these occurs in the poem *Meeresgesicht*, by Karl Ringhoffer, a poem which is very different from most of those encountered in the period in question, in that the sunken city is portrayed as a protector or defender of Germany.²⁵⁰ According to Heinrich Pudor, the poem, which deals with an event associated with the Battle of Stralsund in 1809, is “wohl d[as] beste[] dichterische[] Erzeugnis über Vineta”.²⁵¹ Pudor dates the writing of the poem to the year 1809, the year which features as a sub-title of the poem and in which the battle of Stralsund took place. It seems more likely, however, that the poet, Karl Ringhoffer was the historian and writer of that name, author of several works on the history of the Hohenzollerns and of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, who was born in 1854 and died in 1906. This would indicate a much later date of writing. The Battle of Stralsund, in which Prussian Major Ferdinand von Schill’s Freikorps was decimated and their leader killed, took place in 1809, during the Napoleonic Wars.

The first two lines set the atmosphere of the poem: “Stralsund ist gefallen, der Schill ist tot,| Gott schütze Deutschland in höchster Not”. Having escaped from the battlefield, where many of his comrades lie dead, one of Schill’s hussars, Hans Daland, gallops through the forest and across the plain towards the sea, bearing a letter for the king, given to him by Major Schill before he was killed, and pursued by about fifty French soldiers. Reaching the coast, Daland is faced by a high tide that is churning and foaming before him. He calls on the wild sea for protection:

²⁵⁰ Karl Ringhoffer, *Meeresgesicht*, in Karl Koch: *Vineta: Die von den Meereswellen verschlungene Wendenstadt in Prosa und Poesie* (Stettin: Verlag von Arthur Schuster, 1910), 41–43.

²⁵¹ Heinrich Pudor, *Vineta in der Dichtung*, in *Unser Pommerland: Monatsschrift für das Kulturleben der Heimat*, hrsg. von der Heimatvereinigung ‘Unser Pommerland’ (Stettin: Verlagsbuchhandlung und Druckerei Fischer und Schmidt, 1926), 321–322.

Du traute Ostsee, du heilige Flut,
 in deiner Tiefe ruht es sich gut!
 Nun türme du deinen Wogenschwalm
 dem Feinde entgegen als starken Wall.²⁵²

As the enemy rush towards him, bells are heard ringing from the deep; towers, steep-gabled houses and ghostly figures rise to the surface, singing a mournful song that sounds harsh and unpleasant against the tolling of the bells. Vineta has risen to protect Germany. Then an image of Roland rises from the waves, brandishing in a threatening manner a heavy stone shield, a symbol of protection. The pursuing enemy troops, pale-faced and terrified, shrink back from the ghostly figures, turn their horses around and retreat. The bells become silent, Vineta sinks once more, the sea becomes calm. Hans Daland springs from his horse and kneels in prayer, thanking God for saving him and asking for protection for “das teure deutsche Vaterland”.

The image of Vineta portrayed in Ringhoffer’s poem is unique in the nineteenth century, and is in stark contrast with other poems of the period, in that the sunken city is portrayed as an active participant in life on the surface, rather than a long-lost utopia on the bed of the sea. Vineta is seen as playing a positive role in protecting Germany. It is noteworthy also that the sunken city’s appearance is in no way intimidating for the Prussian hussar. In contrast with the effect the events have on his French pursuers, Hans Daland’s appeal to the sea and the coming of the sunken city and its inhabitants to his aid, together with the mythical figure of Roland, seems neither to surprise nor terrify him. There is, furthermore, an important and somewhat unusual coalescence of ideologies in Hans Daland’s actions and the events portrayed in the final stanzas, indicating both a recognition and an acceptance of possible ideological differences both within and between the sunken city and nineteenth century Germany. The appeal to the sea and the positive response from a mythical city might be seen as pagan rituals, while kneeling to express thanks and uttering a prayer for the protection of his homeland are clearly addressed by Hans Daland to a Christian god.

²⁵² Ringhoffer, in Koch, 42.

Other less frequent motifs in Vineta literature in the period

There are also some other less commonly used motifs in the Vineta literature of the period. Among these might be included descriptions of the natural environment, including forests, flowers and greenery, which though clearly not part of the original Vineta narrative nevertheless reflect the aesthetic leanings of the period. Examples are to be found in Freiligrath's *Meerfahrt*, where Snow White is "bekränzt mit Blumen, duftend und schön", while Wüerst's opera has Gertrud, wife of Bruno the forester, picking wild berries in the forest and returning home "mit Schätzen des Waldes beladen".²⁵³ Eichendorff's poem *Meeresstille* provides another good example.²⁵⁴ Written in 1835 as part of his *Novelle, Eine Meerfahrt*, the poem is not specifically about the lost city of Vineta. Nevertheless the image portrayed of the land beneath the sea contains many of the elements associated with the Vineta story — towers and beautiful buildings, trees and flowers and the sound of bells.

One of the features that differentiates the Vineta literature of the 1820s to 1870 from some of the other narratives about the sunken city, in particular those of the twentieth century, is the fact that in this period it is frequently only the descriptive elements of the narrative that are utilised, romanticised and at times even enhanced. Magnificent buildings, beautiful gardens, old-fashioned richly dressed inhabitants, ethereal-looking women, the sound of bells — all are used to create an aesthetic framework for the expression of deeply-felt emotion on the part of the writer. The story of the disappearance of Vineta, as told in the *Sagen*, plays a minor role, if any, and the theme of destruction does not feature. The sunken city is generally regarded in a positive light, merely providing a setting for the poet's reverie, or in a limited number of cases acting as protector of what might be seen as its people, as, for example, through reclaiming the bodies of Benita and Bruno in Wüerst's opera, or coming to the aid of Germany in Ringhoffer's poem. Vineta is also seen as a metaphor for a utopian existence, an existence that is beyond the reach of the poet, but the expression of which allows him to articulate his own longings or feelings of

²⁵³ Freiligrath, *Sämtliche Werke*, 57; Wüerst, 5.

²⁵⁴ Joseph von Eichendorff, *Meeresstille*, in *Gedichte, Epen und Dramen*, dritte Auflage (Stuttgart: Verlag J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1978), 371.

sadness or regret. The instrumentalisation of the myth might therefore be said to be largely passive in the period, with Vineta occasionally being portrayed as a secure hidden presence that could be expected to play an active role in times of need.

Chapter 3

Vineta literature from 1871 to 1918

Following the unification of Germany under Emperor Wilhelm I in 1871 the industrial revolution progressed exponentially, resulting in major changes not alone in the economy and the work place but also increasingly in society as a whole. Within a relatively short time, social change brought about a shift in what might be termed the balance of power in society, with a rise in the living standards and the expectations of the lower socio-economic groups, and a resulting diminution, or, at least on the part of the upper classes, a fear of diminution in the power of the elites. In uniting ‘Kleindeutschland,’ i.e. Germany without Catholic Austria, Bismarck as Chancellor may have managed to exclude some of the potentially less ‘German’ elements of the proposed new Empire, thus perhaps easing somewhat the process of unification. Nevertheless divisions in German society still remained across political, regional and confessional lines, giving rise to a significant degree of unrest and instability across all strata of society.

The upward trend in economic growth that had taken place throughout much of the nineteenth century following the formation and expansion of the Zollverein or German Customs Union to include most of the German States, continued at an even greater pace after the establishment of the Empire. One of the most significant long-term results was increasing urbanisation, as people moved from the land into the large cities in search of work and a better life style. In addition to this internal migration from within the Empire, large numbers of foreign workers moved in, principally from the east, and that, combined with a decline in mortality and an increase in average life expectancy due to better living conditions, resulted in a significant increase in the population of the Empire. In effect, despite the emigration of almost two million inhabitants mainly to North America, between 1880 and 1893, the population of the Empire increased by *c.*

58 per cent over a period of thirty years.²⁵⁵ The effect on both country and city was profound: in some cases small country-based enterprises (e.g. ‘cottage’ industries) collapsed, as increasing mechanisation made large-scale factory production quicker and cheaper. Some of the more isolated regions became denuded of their populations, particularly of their young people, as these moved from the land to more populous areas in search of work. In urban areas on the other hand, despite difficulties relating to the provision of housing and other necessities, there was positive development, with the establishment of new industries and growth of ancillary services.

The population of Pomerania was not affected by demographic change to as great an extent as other regions. While there was a certain amount of movement to Berlin, and to Stettin, the state capital, Pomerania as a whole remained largely rural. A not insignificant impact on the population and culture of Pomerania and other Prussian states was, however, made by the large influx of Polish migrant workers. While many of these were seasonal agricultural workers, employed during the summer months to fill the gaps left by German inhabitants moving to work in industry in the cities, still others moved west on a permanent basis with their families. The net result was that in some parts of the German Empire, particularly in the industrial areas of the Ruhr and in the eastern provinces of Prussia, there was a significant Polish minority, which was feared by the authorities as potentially inimical to German nationalism. In the minds of the Prussian government this meant that these provinces should be ‘Germanised’, with the result that Bismarck embarked on a “Kulturkampf of a special kind” in the East.²⁵⁶

Cultural developments

The sweeping demographic changes had a significant effect on all aspects of life in the Empire. Not least among these were cultural developments. It was recognised by the authorities and those involved in public policy that in order to create a unified State it was important that people should not forget the past, but rather incorporate and come to

²⁵⁵ Volker R. Berghahn, *Imperial Germany, 1871–1914* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1994), 43.

²⁵⁶ Berghahn, 115.

terms with it, accepting it as part of the history and formation of the new Empire and as part of a continuum in the process of establishing a unified nation. It was therefore necessary that Germans be reminded of their shared past, of what they had together experienced or imagined as possible; that in some instances a shared memory be created, so that the inhabitants of the new Empire might be encouraged to accept, adapt to and forge a common future.

The efforts made to engender national pride and create a unified state from a large number of small states, were reflected in all areas of cultural activity. At official level, for example, matters such as choice of a national anthem, a flag representing the whole of the Empire, national symbols, monuments and festivals exercised the minds of the Emperor and government. Artists such as Anton von Werner were commissioned to paint major national events such as the Proclamation of the German Empire and key moments and personalities in the Franco-Prussian War, and to design the Berlin Victory Column and other memorials symbolising the history, achievements and unity of the German Empire. The Niederwald Monument near Rüdesheim, with its statue of Germania, personifying the German people, holding the new imperial crown and sword, was commissioned specifically as a symbol of unification of the German Empire, and completed in 1883. Meanwhile, monuments and buildings regarded as being potentially of national importance, which were already in course of construction prior to unification, were pushed towards completion. Such were the Cologne Cathedral and the Hermann statue in Detmold, dedicated by the Emperor Wilhelm I in 1875. Matthew Jefferies categorises all these edifices as “an important tool in the construction of identities, serving to anchor myths and symbols in the consciousness of the people, and providing a focal point for ceremonies and festivals”.²⁵⁷ They formed in effect what might be termed “sites of memory”.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ Matthew Jefferies, *Imperial Culture in Germany, 1871–1918* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 62.

²⁵⁸ Erll, *Memory in Culture*, 23. Erll maintains that Pierre Nora’s definition of “lieux de mémoire”, sites of memory, can include “geographical locations, buildings, monuments and works of art, as well as historical persons, memorial days, philosophical and scientific texts, or symbolic actions”.

Cultural developments at regional and local level

While at imperial level conscious efforts were made to create a sense of national unity, it was equally important that similar objectives be pursued at regional and local levels. In common with other regions, therefore, it was necessary that Pomerania identify and promulgate what was particular to its area, to enable it to assert its unique identity and engender a sense of regional pride in its inhabitants, as well as contributing to the overall aims of the empire.

In this context the relative remoteness of the area, its rural character, poor infrastructure and location near both land and sea borders of the Empire caused particular difficulties. The province could not, for example, expect the creation of major expansionist projects that might provide its inhabitants with a sense of working together towards large-scale economic growth. Nor could it depend on an influx of young people with the energy, entrepreneurial skills and initiative needed to embark on plans for significant social and economic development. In these circumstances it was imperative that the province seek to build on its past, in an effort to create a present and a future that could play a full part in the new Empire. As myths or legends can be as revealing of local and ultimately national identity as any statement of philosophy or belief, and may be much more accessible to the population at large, it is not inconceivable that the *Vineta Sage* may have been regarded as providing an opportunity to exploit the heritage of the region, to inform, educate and imbue Pomeranians with a sense of pride, enabling them to make their contribution as cultural equals in a nation of diverse cultural strands. It was important therefore that the story be disseminated as widely as possible at local, regional and national levels.

The importance of *Heimat*

One of the significant elements in the forging of regional and local identities was the *Heimat* movement. According to Alon Confino, Germans “manufactured *Heimat* as a set of shared ideas about the immemorial heritage of the German people in local and

national history, nature and folklore, [...]”.²⁵⁹ Furthermore, *Heimat* “looked to the past for reassurance of uniqueness on the local and national level in times of political, economic and cultural homogenization” and also emphasised the uniqueness of the locality vis-à-vis the State, and of Germany itself vis-à-vis European and North American standardisation.²⁶⁰ Recognition of the importance of nationhood, and the even greater importance of localness, in helping to develop a sense of belonging both to the region and the nation, was fundamental in the context of Vineta.

The *Heimat* movement had many facets, among which were the celebration of local festivals and traditions, the construction of national monuments, the organisation of lectures and seminars on local and national history, the staging of dramas. For the purposes of the current study, one of the most significant elements of the movement towards the end of the nineteenth century was the publication by local *Heimat* associations of books or journals specific to their area, namely ‘Heimatbücher’. These ‘Heimatbücher’ dealt with the local area under headings such as history, geography, nature, lifestyle, traditions and customs. Their style was informal rather than academic, personal rather than detached, frequently written by the local teacher or priest in a manner designed not only to inform and educate but also to enliven and awaken the interest of the people, as well as engendering enthusiasm and loyalty to the locality and the nation. ‘Heimatbücher’ aimed to form a bridge between past and present; to preserve national roots while at the same time embracing modernity. They were an important element in Vineta literature, both factual and creative.

In relation to the development of *Heimat* literature in Pomerania, historian Horst Hartmann maintains that the motivation of the *Heimat* movement was twofold: firstly an increasing concern for low German dialect in general, particularly Pomeranian Plattdeutsch; secondly a growing interest in Pomeranian literature past and present.²⁶¹ Perusal of some of the journals of the *Heimat* associations in the area — notably *Unser*

²⁵⁹ Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 98.

²⁶⁰ Confino, 98.

²⁶¹ Horst Hartmann, *Geschichte der Regionalliteratur Pommerns von den Anfängen bis zum Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts: Einleitung*. (Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 2010).

Pommerland — and some of the publications of local historians, as for example Karl Koch's *Vineta, die von den Meereswellen verschlungene Wendenstadt in Prosa und Poesie*, bears out this view.²⁶² Furthermore, in addition to featuring new writing, the publications of the *Heimat* associations and local historians also occasionally re-published or provided a useful overview or catalogue of older material.²⁶³

The monthly publication *Unser Pommerland* frequently published articles on Vineta, covering such aspects as the various attempts to locate the sunken city, the visits of prominent personalities to the reputed remains of the town and short stories and poems celebrating the sunken city, some of which were in Plattdeutsch. The material was designed to appeal particularly to the local population, and reflected their experience or the experience of people with whom they could identify.

Vineta literature in the German Empire

In the context of the development and utilisation of the Vineta theme in the imperial age a number of different aspects and functions need to be considered. First of all there is the mythological or quasi historical background, as testified to by chroniclers such as Adam von Bremen, Helmold von Bosau and others. To evoke the past glories of Vineta, albeit at a remove of several centuries, was to share in its reflected greatness and promote a feeling of pride among the inhabitants of the area where it had been located. Even the fact that it had been destroyed was significant and added potentially to its usefulness. Many other notable cities and cultures had also been swept away over centuries and indeed millennia, and their fame far outlived their demise. With the

²⁶² *Unser Pommerland: Monatsschrift für das Kulturleben der Heimat*, hrsg. von der Heimatvereinigung 'Unser Pommerland' (Stettin: Verlagsbuchhandlung und Druckerei Fischer und Schmidt). *Unser Pommerland* was founded in 1912 by the *Heimat* association of the same name, under the editorship of Hugo Kaeker (1864 – 1940), as a “monthly publication for the cultural life of the homeland”; Karl Koch, *Vineta. Die von den Meereswellen verschlungene Wendenstadt in Prosa und Poesie* (Stettin: Verlag Arthur Schuster, 1910).

²⁶³ In many cases, however, dates of original publication are not given, nor is there background information on the authors, many of whom, though well known in their own locality, were not established writers at national level.

passage of time Vineta too might be regarded as being part of this pantheon of world cultures.

Secondly, the development of the story — the additions and subtractions necessary in order to accommodate it to the purposes of different writers and audiences, or adapt it to the requirements of different eras and philosophies — led to its being transposed across a series of different genres, each appropriate to the message to be conveyed, the skill and talent of the writer and the interests, understanding and social and educational background of the intended readership or audience.

Thirdly, the fact that the Vineta theme was used across a variety of genres meant that the story of the sunken city became known across a wider readership or audience. The result was that the name ‘Vineta’ could evoke images associated with the narrative of the sunken city, and could be used as a motif in its own right, without necessitating further explanation. This allowed the name to be used, and its significance understood, as the title of a creative work, or as a metaphor within a creative work that had nothing to do with Vineta itself, but which dealt with similar themes.

The Vineta literature of the period might be divided into four groups of literary genres, namely myth or legend, novels, poetry and drama/opera, with myths and legends, novels and poetry forming the major part of the creative literature. While similar motifs occur within all genres, it is clear that Vineta symbolises different things to different writers, with some seeing the sunken city as a symbol of unity and love, or a longed-for utopia, while others regard it as representing death, destruction and loss. In many cases, particularly in longer texts, both positive and negative aspects of the theme occur within the same piece of writing.

The continuing importance of myth

The importance of myth as an expression of the essential spirit of a nation had been recognised as far back as the late eighteenth century and continued into the imperial age. In seeking a new, specifically German mythology, to replace biblical and classical mythologies and unify modern society, “scholars and amateurs alike scoured forgotten [stories of] Germanic deities or lost knightly epics. [They] collected fairy tales and

produced huge tomes on German folklore and mythology”.²⁶⁴ This fascination with myth and recognition of its importance in creating a sense of nationhood continued in the new Empire, with the result that some of the major literary and artistic works of the period sprang from a desire to evoke and give expression to the tales of Germany’s mythical past. A prime example of this is to be found in Richard Wagner’s opera cycle, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, first performed in Bayreuth in 1876 and reputedly the “first national achievement of the united German Nation”, composed, according to Wagner himself, out of confidence in the German spirit.²⁶⁵

This awareness of the value of myth, of the power of what might be termed the shared sub-conscious to create a sense of unity and stability among peoples, was not however confined merely to large-scale productions destined for upper middle class audiences, but also resulted in the collection and diffusion of familiar local myths and legends to a broader population, through for example the publication of volumes of local stories, some of which might be expected to become known far beyond the boundaries of their region of origin. While initially many of these collections were published comparatively locally — in Greifswald, Swinemünde and Stettin for example — others were published in Berlin and Munich, which suggests interest and dissemination outside the area of origin.

Many collections of Pomeranian and North German myths and legends were published during this period, as for example those collected by reputedly one of the most noted Pomeranian folklorists of the time, Alfred Haas.²⁶⁶ Other folklorists too published collections in the period, among them Ulrich Jahn, M. Mancke and Friedrich Ranke.²⁶⁷ In all cases the story of Vineta was reproduced in more or less its original form, with

²⁶⁴ George S. Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany* (University of Chicago Press, 2004), 2.

²⁶⁵ J.G. Robertson, *A History of German Literature* (G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1902), 598.

²⁶⁶ Alfred Haas, *Rügensche Sagen und Märchen* (Greifswald: Ludwig Bamberg, 1891); *Sagen und Erzählungen von den Inseln Usedom und Wollin* (Stettin: Burmeister, 1904); *Pommersche Sagen* (Berlin-Friedenau: Hermann Eichblatt Verlag, 1912).

²⁶⁷ Ulrich Jahn, *Volkssagen aus Pommern und Rügen* (Stettin: Dannenberg, 1886); M. Mancke (Wm. Forster), *Sagen und Erzählungen aus den Seebädern Swinemünde, Heringsdorf, Misdroy* (Swinemünde: Verlag von Heinrich Dehne, 1908); Friedrich Ranke, *Die deutschen Volkssagen*. Part 4 in the series *Deutsches Sagenbuch*, ed. by Friedrich von der Leyen (München: C.H.Beck’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Oskar Beck, 1910).

only slight modification of the details given in Adam von Bremen's account and an occasional addition or expansion of material. The stories as told were therefore significant, in that they served to keep the classic version of the Vineta myth alive, while providing a base which other writers might develop or use in whole or in part across different genres.

Some of the *Heimat* literature also fulfilled the same function. The factual element of the reports of the ongoing search for the sunken city kept the story in the minds of the people.²⁶⁸ Furthermore, many of the poems and short stories tended to be based on the experience of local people or visitors who claimed to have seen Vineta rise above the waves or to have heard its bells, thus keeping alive not only the classic motifs of the original legend, but also some of the later additions of storytellers and writers. A good example is to be found in Fritz Kähler's *Vineta*, a poem of four stanzas of four lines each. It is a report of a Fata Morgana, as fishermen on the way home from Swinemünde see Vineta in all her splendour rising before them out of the sea and subsequently disappearing again into the depths. It describes the riches of the sunken city in a manner consistent with the information given in the Vineta legend.²⁶⁹

The importance of myth was also expressly recognised in other genres, as, for example, in E. Werner's novel *Vineta*, where the author, describing the atmosphere at sunset on the little island near where Vineta once stood, suggests that there is some truth in the old myths, which were, after all, created by people and still live on in the human heart:

Es liegt doch etwas in den alten Sagen, was sie weit hinaushebt über den Aberglauben, und man kann ein Kind der neuen Zeit sein und doch voll und ganz die Märchenstunde erleben, in der das alles wieder lebendig wird. Es waren ja Menschen, welche die Sagen schufen, und ihre ewigen Rätsel, wie ihre ewigen Wahrheiten ruhen noch heute tief in der Menschenbrust.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ Further impetus was given to the story in July 1891 when the passenger ship *Cuxhaven* ran aground on the Vineta reef, resulting in the death of three crew members.

²⁶⁹ Fritz Kähler, *Vineta*, in Karl Koch, *Vineta. Die von den Meereswellen verschlungene Wendenstadt in Prosa und Poesie* (Stettin: Verlag von Arthur Schuster, 1910), 37.

²⁷⁰ E. Werner, *Vineta* (Leipzig: Verlag von Ernst Keils Nachfolger, no publication date), 74.

Main motifs in Vineta literature from 1871–1918

Christian/religious motifs

In his essay on *Confessionalism* Gangolf Hübinger emphasises the continuing effects of Christianity, which “lent essential shape to all phases of political and cultural life in the German Empire”.²⁷¹ This contention is borne out by much of the Vineta literature of the imperial age, as one of the most significant motifs across all genres from the late nineteenth to the early years of the twentieth century is that of Christianity, and in particular the opposition of Christianity and heathenism. It is clear that the theme of Vineta is inextricably linked with religion in writers’ minds, which may presumably be attributed not alone to the fact that many of the Sagen claim that Vineta was destroyed because of its godlessness, but also to the socio-cultural factors pertaining at the time of writing.

In the works published between 1870 and 1918 Christian and other religious motifs are used in some cases apparently for reasons of historical interest or accuracy, in others perhaps indicative of concerns and fears at the growth of Catholicism in this area of Northern Germany, in still others reflecting the growth of anti-Christian ideologies and anti-Semitism.

The fact that religion is a regularly recurring topos throughout the body of creative literature, is perhaps also indicative of an accepted truth concerning the sunken city, which has remained as part of inherited tradition and which surfaces in the myths, legends and other literary genres: religion was regarded as having played a central role in the dissemination of the Vineta story and therefore became inextricably linked with the sunken city in the minds of the people. Furthermore, much of the creative literature about Vineta was produced in or immediately after a period of heightened religious awareness and tension following Bismarck’s ‘Kulturkampf’ against Catholics, an era when religious practice was high and atheism tended to be regarded as an eccentricity of intellectuals or socialists. It is not surprising, therefore, that the motif should feature

²⁷¹ Gangolf Hübinger, *Confessionalism*, in *Imperial Germany: A Historiographical Companion*, ed. Roger Chickering (Westport, Conn. and London: Greenwood Press, 1997), 157.

in creative literature. The original references to Christianity in relation to Vineta arose in a period when Northern Germany was converting from paganism to Christianity; the motifs used in relation to that period, therefore, sought to highlight the sinfulness and undesirability of paganism and the necessity to belong to the ‘true Church.’²⁷² The question arises then as to why Christian motifs continued to be important in nineteenth and twentieth century Vineta literature. It is significant that from the latter half of the nineteenth century onwards, confessional tension, a latent feature of German society, became an ever-increasing phenomenon. The ‘Kulturkampf’, which began in Baden in the 1860s and spread during the early years of the Empire to all areas of imperial Germany, was particularly strong in Prussia, and was used by Bismarck to pass language and religion laws in an attempt to ‘Germanise’ the Polish minority. Though the ‘Kulturkampf’ waned during the 1880s, tensions did not abate and its effects continued to be widely felt, to such an extent that it has been claimed that “confessional divisions between Catholics and Protestants had a stronger impact on German society at the beginning of the twentieth century than did the opposition between Christian and non-Christian [...]”.²⁷³ In relation to Vineta, therefore, whereas the original Christian references in the chronicles and in oral legend may well have arisen from Christian/pagan conflict, the nineteenth and twentieth century motifs could be said to be inspired for the most part by Christian/Christian, Christian/Jew or Christian/non-believer consciousness. Tension between Christians could embrace not only Catholic/Protestant conflicts but also internal conflict between reactionary or fundamentalist and modernist groupings within both Protestantism and Catholicism. Vineta’s proximity to the Polish border, or, in the period between 1795 and 1919, to where the Polish border had been prior to partition, meant that a sizeable population of Poles had been absorbed into that area of Germany situated on the Baltic. In contrast with the German majority, the Polish population was mainly Catholic and it was feared they were less enthusiastic about the concept of a German Empire. The level of both religious and national tension was therefore significantly increased in the region. It is understandable that such tensions

²⁷² Paradoxically, it is interesting to note that German Christian missionaries were involved in their own attempts at conversion in Africa and Asia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, both before and after the formal beginning of German colonisation.

²⁷³ Hübinger, *Confessionalism*, 177.

should have resulted in a greater awareness of religious and national issues and that these issues would be reflected in literature and other creative works.

Texts with substantial religious and/or political content

Among the works that have a large amount of religious and/or political content are *Die versunkene Stadt*, a novel by B. Paul, *Vineta*, a three-act opera by Ernst Wolfram and Reinhold Herman, M. Haase's long poem, *Vineta*, and a long poem by Max Berthold Schmidt entitled *Vineta: Ein Sang aus Deutschlands Vorzeit*.²⁷⁴ These works contain many of the same motifs as those found in the chroniclers' reports, though the description of Vineta varies in some respects. In Paul's novel, for example, Vineta is portrayed as a Christian town, its Wendish inhabitants having accepted the new religion either voluntarily or by imposition. This is also the case in Josef Seiler's poem *Vineta*, a simple composition of three five-line stanzas, in which the sunken city is referred to as a holy city, a place of pilgrimage, whose processional song, 'Salve Regina', sung in supplicatory manner by the monks, failed to save it from destruction by the sea. The song is now whispered by the waves on starry nights.²⁷⁵ The sunken city is more often depicted, however, either as a cosmopolitan town, embracing people of many different cultures and religious backgrounds, or as a heathen city. In the poems of both Haase and Schmidt and in Wolfram's opera the inhabitants of Vineta are heathen.

The juxtaposition of heathen and Christian ways of life, systems and values, the high level of mutual distrust between Christians and heathens and the intervention of natural forces are central themes in all the works. Furthermore the texts provide interesting insights into the difficulties encountered by Christian missionaries in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and the confessional and political unrest that was a feature of imperial German society in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

²⁷⁴ B. Paul, *Die versunkene Stadt: Ein Bild aus ferner Vergangenheit* (Leipzig: Verlag und Druck von Otto Spamer, 1879); Ernst Wolfram (Dichtung) und Reinhold L. Herman (Musik), *Vineta: romantische Oper in drei Aufzügen* (Berlin: Eigentum des Komponisten; Druck von Otto Drewitz, 1891); M. Haase, *Vineta, eine Sage* (Leipzig: Druck und Verlag von Fr. Richter, 1894); Max Berthold Schmidt, *Vineta: Ein Sang aus Deutschlands Vorzeit* (Leipzig: Kommissions-Verlag der Amthor'schen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1903).

²⁷⁵ Josef Seiler, *Vineta*, in Karl Koch, 31. Seiler's poem was set to music for male-voice choir by both Franz Abt and Ignaz Heim. See Franz Abt, *Op.163 - Fünf Gesänge f. vier Männerstimmen* (Leipzig: Senff, 1859); Ignaz Heim, *Vineta* (Edition HUG, catalogue no. GH9358).

Difficulties of Christian missionaries

The poem *Vineta* by M. Haase, Parish Priest of Hasestrom, gives a striking account of the difficulties encountered by Christian missionaries and of the godlessness and wickedness of the Vinetans. The poet places his Vineta on the island of Wolin and gives in the first three sections a large amount of background historical information about Viking invasions and the forced conversion of Pomerania to Christianity.²⁷⁶ Though he calls his poem a *Sage* he gives a much broader creative account than in the *Sagen* based on the chroniclers' reports. In addition, the fact that he writes in verse facilitates the use of hyperbole and poetic devices designed to support and fit the metric pattern, with a consequent broadening and ornamentation of the text.

Haase describes the efforts of Christian missionaries to convert Vineta to Christianity. The first visit, that of Bishop Bernhard in 1122, ended in failure, as the Vinetans wanted a rich and powerful god and could not accept a barefoot impoverished monk as representative of such. When, in anger at their attitude, Bishop Bernhard tore down and burned the statue of the god Odin, he was banished from Vineta and warned not to return. In 1124 Bishop Otto von Bamberg arrived with all the trappings of wealth and appeared initially more successful. Despite the best efforts of the heathen priests, the new religion was embraced. Vineta's acceptance of the Christian message was however insincere and with the passage of time the true concern of the inhabitants for nothing other than status, wealth and possessions re-established itself:

So war das Christentum Vinetas
Nichts weiter, als ein herrliches Gewand,
Womit die schöne Stadt sich schmückte [...].
Die Selbstsucht wohnte in den Häusern,
Die Sucht nach Gold und Gut, nach Putz und Land,
Nach dem Genuß und dem Vergnügen,
Nach unerlaubter Lust und Sinnlichkeit [...].²⁷⁷

²⁷⁶ One of the violent episodes highlighted relates to Stettin where, although the town council had already adopted the new teaching, Bishop Otto ordered the statue of the god Triglaf to be cut down and its three heads sent to the Pope. See Haase, 11.

²⁷⁷ Haase, 13.

Many of the other motifs encountered in the historical *Sagen* are to be found in Haase's poem – the wealth of Vineta, the fact that the children played with gold in the streets and that the bells of the sunken city sounded in the evening to call people to prayer. The poet's motivation for and description of the destruction of Vineta is however completely different from anything encountered in the historical *Sagen*. As Vineta moves steadily further away from Christian values, one person — Astrid, granddaughter of the watchman Sasgard — continues to lead a god-fearing and prayerful life. The mayor's son, Gerd, falls in love with her and she with him. In order to keep the two young people apart the Mayor throws his son into jail and schemes successfully to have Astrid burned as a witch. This crime against an innocent girl results directly in the destruction of the town, when her grandfather, Sasgard, avenges her death by hacking a hole in the dyke to let the sea in. As the town is engulfed the voice of the the old man is heard:

‘Es ist das Meer, das eure Stadt zerwühlt! [...].
 Vineta sinkt, – ihr seid verloren;
 Das ist des Türmers Rache für sein Kind.’²⁷⁸

While the immediate cause of the destruction is Sasgard's revenge for the death of his grandchild, the poet does not fail to point out, both at the beginning and at the end of the *Sage*, that the Vinetans have brought the wrath and punishment of God upon themselves through their sinful life. The repetition in the final section of some of the lines of the opening results in the *Vineta Sage* forming a balanced framework within which the whole story is situated:

Vineta ist nicht mehr! – wo sie einst stand,
 Da brausen jetzt des Meeres Wellen
 Und künden rauschend von dem Zorn des Herrn,
 Von Sünde, Schuld und Trotz des Menschen.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁸ Haase, 106.

²⁷⁹ Haase, 2, 107.

Distrust in and between Christian and non-Christian communities

The high level of mutual distrust and fear between Christian and non-Christian communities is particularly evident throughout B. Paul's novel which is set in 1160, when "erst fünfzig Jahre verflossen [sind], daß der heilige Otto [...] unser Wendenvolk taufte und zu Christen machte".²⁸⁰

The small heathen community at the centre of the action – 'Wirth' Warenfried, with servants and family members – lives on a spit of land some distance from the town of Vineta, across the sand dunes. They have been banished from the island of Rügen by Danish invaders, because they refused to convert to Christianity, and have been led by their house gods to the shores of Usedom, where, with the consent of the authorities and having paid a large contribution in gold and silver, they have been granted "Land, Wald, freie Jagd und Fischerei" and a guarantee that they will be allowed to live in peace, "ungestört [...] in ihrer Sitte und Weise".²⁸¹ They have established their new home, their 'Heidenhof', where they pursue their daily lives according to the customs of their people. They form no part of the Vineta community and are effectively excluded from the social life of the town. They feel that their gods are angry, have abandoned them and fled before the Christian God who is reputed to be so powerful.

The Christians of Vineta, who were converted from paganism to Christianity only a generation previously, fear the heathens and their gods and keep them at a distance, to such an extent that Pater Vincenz, the parish priest of Vineta, promises "er wolle getreulich, so oft er es vermochte, Weihwasser um die Grenzen des heidnischen Gutes sprengen, daß kein böser Geist herüberkommen könne zu der gesegneten Christenstadt".²⁸² Christian preachers in Vineta also strongly condemn the heathen way of life and threaten "Höllenstrafen und ewige Verdammniß" on anybody who has anything to do with the heathen population.²⁸³

²⁸⁰ Paul, 31.

²⁸¹ Paul, 33.

²⁸² Paul, 33.

²⁸³ Paul, 44.

Christian dislike of the heathens is also starkly portrayed on the evening when Bishop Gerold, ill and exhausted, together with his monks, en route to the monastery in Vineta, arrive at the Heidenhof seeking shelter from the storm. The Wirth, despite the objections of Hildburg, who does not want to have anything to do with the Christians, extends a warm welcome to the travellers, but with the exception of the Bishop and one other priest, the monks keep as far away from their heathen hosts as possible:

So weit wie möglich setzten sich die Priester von den Heiden an die Tafel [...].
Mit finsternen Blicken starrten die Gäste die fremde Umgebung an. Einige
beteten, Andere flüsteren lateinisch mit einander [...].²⁸⁴

The opposition of Christian and pagan worlds is simply, yet clearly portrayed here, the strangeness and unfamiliarity of the pagan establishment reflecting the correspondingly surreal atmosphere created by a group of people whispering to one another in Latin.

One of the monks, Roderich, in an excess of rabid zealotry, begins to preach at the heathens and when the Wirth attempts to stand up for the heathen gods rants furiously at him:

‘Gefäß der Finsternis, nicht rede ich von dem Baal, den ihr anbetet, sondern von dem Herrn, dem Gotte der Auserwählten, der mächtig in Streit ist. Wehe über euch und eure Kinder, ausgestoßen seid ihr aus der Seligkeit der Himmel und die Hölle wird euer Theil sein; denn euch umgiebt das Heil und ihr nehmt es nicht. [...]. Euere Gebeine soll die Sonne bleichen, euere Seelen sollen in Finsternis versinken [...].’²⁸⁵

Monk Roderich is supported by one of his companions, a fat monk who urges the heathens to consider carefully what Roderich has said, as the Spirit speaks through him.

The words of the two monks evoke the attitude and language used by those who, seeing it as their duty to try to convert pagans to Christianity, seem to have employed the methods of a conquering army in so doing. Participants in some of the twelfth century

²⁸⁴ Paul, 52.

²⁸⁵ Paul, 53.

Christianising Missions to the Wends received the same spiritual privileges as the warriors in Crusades to Syria and Palestine, who were involved in recovering by force the Holy Land from the Saracen Muslims. It may well be, therefore, that both mission and crusade were seen as similar activities and that the methods employed in both were the same.

The arrival of a Jewish salesman and his daughter, seeking shelter in the Halle, causes further discomfiture for the missionary priests, who find the company of Jews no more acceptable than that of heathens. Finding themselves with no alternative other than to spend the night in the Heidenhof, monk Roderich and the fat monk retire to the cowshed “[denn] ihnen schien die Nähe des Viehes angenehmer als die von Heiden und Juden”.²⁸⁶ In this, perhaps, they are typical not only of the attitudes of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when Vineta and its surrounds were being subjected to the attentions of proselytising missionaries, but also of the nineteenth century when the fear and mutual distrust between Christian and Jew was prevalent.

The Christian priests in Paul’s novel were prepared to be unscrupulous in the methods they used to convert people to Christianity. A good example of this is given later in the novel when Roderich, now Prior of the Vineta monastery, manages to lure Wirth Warenfried’s daughter, Ruotlieb, to Vineta on the pretext that her sister Sigruna is ill and calling for her, and then attempts to hold her against her will and to force her to convert to Christianity. Ruotlieb manages to escape through a window and uses the bell in the middle of the town square to summon the Town Council to her aid.²⁸⁷ The ensuing violent argument between the Mayor and the Prior, who claims to be subject only to the laws of God and not those of the town, illustrates clearly that, despite the acceptance of Christianity by the Vinetans, there is still considerable ill-feeling towards the Christian priests, a sentiment that reflects perhaps the distrust of the Catholic Church as an institution, which resulted in the 1870s in measures being taken to reduce its power. Among such measures were for example the displacement of Polish clergy in Prussia

²⁸⁶ Paul, 58.

²⁸⁷ There is a direct parallel here with the legend *Das blinde Roß*, in which the old horse, starved and ill-treated by his master, rang the town bell and summoned the Council of Vineta to his aid. See Falkenberg, 167–168; Thieme, 13–17; Maier et al., 21.

from their traditional role of overseeing schools and their replacement by government officials, as well as the dissolution of monasteries and the proscription of the Jesuits.

A corresponding distrust of Christians and particularly of Christian priests is also felt by the heathens. This is very evident in the attitude of Hildburg, mother of Sigruna and Ruotlieb, who is devoted to her heathen gods and prays regularly in the holy grove. She does not want to let Bishop Gerold and his followers in when they arrive at the Halle seeking shelter from the storm, saying “Laßt die Priester der Christen nicht ein in die Halle der Heiden. Uebeles bringen sie; wehrt ihnen den Eingang”.²⁸⁸ The traditional hospitality of the Wendish heathens prevails, however, and the Wirth welcomes the visitors.

Hildburg’s distrust of Christians again becomes evident at a later stage when Bishop Gerold sends her a bottle of herbal remedy, as he had promised. She throws it into the sea, saying “nichts will ich von diesen weißen Priestern der Christen; ihr Sinn ist falsch und sie suchen uns mit Künsten zu bezwingen”.²⁸⁹ Her distrust of priests has also been passed on to the younger generation. In reply to Pribislaw’s question as to what she knows about Christian priests, Sigruna gives a reply that both typifies and explains the attitude of the heathens to those whom they see as having misled them:

‘Sie verführten viele unseres Volkes, die alten Götter zu verlassen, sie versprachen ihnen viel Schätze und Güter;[...]. Als jene abtrünnig und ehrlos wurden, [wich] Heldenkraft und Sieg in Männerschlacht von ihnen. Sie wußten nicht mehr, was gut und was übel war, und vergaben ihren Feinden [...]. Sie lassen sich in Ketten schlagen und kommen elend um, anstatt mit dem Schwerte in der Hand freien Männertod zu sterben.’²⁹⁰

²⁸⁸ Paul, 51.

²⁸⁹ Paul, 64.

²⁹⁰ Paul, 75.

Not alone did the Christian missionaries direct the heathens away from their gods, therefore, but they also seemed to strip them of their manliness, and of the fierceness and courage in battle that was said to be an integral part of the ethos of the Wends.²⁹¹

It is scarcely surprising that when the Wirth's grandson, Sigurd, leaves to found a new home for his family, one of his aims is to ensure that he and his family will be protected from Christian priests: "die neue Halle, die ich gründe, soll uns Schutz geben gegen deine Priester, du stolze Christenstadt Vineta".²⁹²

While Paul's empathy with the heathen population is evident from his sympathetic description of them, of their way of life and customs, the situation is reversed in Max Berthold Schmidt's long poem of approximately seven thousand five hundred lines, *Vineta: Ein Sang aus Deutschlands Vorzeit*, where the poet's description of the behaviour of the heathen population might be said to denigrate heathenism and to depict its adherents as intrinsically evil.²⁹³

The poem has much in common with Paul's novel in that it deals with the destruction of Vineta as a current event and seems to have been conceived as an exposé of the onward march of Christianity during the twelfth century. It is in effect both historical and creative in that the story is based around historical characters whom the poet engages in both historical and fictional events, reflecting the ethos and perspectives of the time. In contrast with the situation in Paul's novel, Schmidt's poem represents Vineta as a heathen town. The tension between Slav and Saxon, heathen and Christian is the primary motif. It is evoked in the hatred felt by the heathen Pribislav, son of the Obotrite Slav prince Niklot, for the Christian Jutta, whom his father, a widower, has married; the intensity of his feeling culminates in Pribislav's attempt to murder his stepmother after his father's death. Janko, Niklot's servant, when ordered to take Jutta

²⁹¹ Theodor Fontane, *Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg: Dritter Teil: Havelland*, ed. G. Erlert and R. Mingau (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1880), 24.

²⁹² Paul, 143.

²⁹³ Max Berthold Schmidt, *Vineta: Ein Sang aus Deutschlands Vorzeit* (Leipzig: Kommissions-Verlag der Amthor'schen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1903). It has not been possible to find information on either B. Paul or Max Berthold Schmidt.

to safety in Vineta, fears the reaction of the heathen people of the town on seeing the Christian wife of their heathen prince openly acknowledge her Christian faith:

‘wenn sich die Gattin des Niklot dort zeigt –
wenn sie die Kniee vor dem Gotte der Christen,
offen den Glauben bekennend – dort beugt. –
[...] alle die finsternen, schlummernden Geister
werden, so fürcht’ ich – durch dich dann geweckt.’²⁹⁴

His concern is subsequently shown to have been justified when the fear and odium which the heathen people of Vineta bear for Jutta culminates in the blood-thirsty hunt and murder of Jutta and her brother Eberhard by a drink-fuelled heathen mob on the feast of the god, Triglav. Nature, however, unleashes her power and exacts revenge, engulfing the town and its inhabitants and sending them to a bed on the bottom of the sea.

As in Paul’s novel, the fear and hatred of the heathens for the Christians is reciprocated by similar feelings on the part of Christians for the heathen population. Fear of the heathen Wends is shown to be more than justified in the beginning of the poem by their invasion of Lübeck and the bloody slaughter of its inhabitants. At the end of the poem, the poet’s attitude to the heathens and their three-headed god, Triglav, is portrayed in his description of the celebrations on the feast-day of the god. Excess reigns; moderation is regarded as sinful; Triglav smiles on the inebriated:

Wer heute mäßig – der frevelt an Triglav,
der nur den Trunkenen gnädiglich lächelt –
hoch soll Begeistrung sein Standbild umlodern,
rauschend von Jugendlust sei es umfächelt.’²⁹⁵

The forward march of Christianity allied to political expansion is physically portrayed at the end of the poem by the arrival of Saxon troops on top of the cliff, led by the Saxon Duke Heinrich der Löwe. Their progress has been signalled at intervals throughout the

²⁹⁴ Schmidt, 187.

²⁹⁵ Schmidt, 235.

poem. Instead of the prosperous cosmopolitan trading town they had expected to find, however, they are greeted by a flat expanse of sea covering the place where Vineta used to be; the Duke stares in disbelief

Staunened da sieht er – den Augen nicht trauend,
 zischend und brandend das stürmische Meer –
 bis zu den Füßen des zitternden Pferdes
 wälzt sich die Woge – die gelbliche – her.
 Wo einst Vineta so herrlich gestanden,
 schauet das Auge nur kochende Flut,
 wo einst die Kuppeln – die Türme sich hoben,
 schlägt jetzt die Welle in schäumender Wut.²⁹⁶

Further examples of Christian and heathen attitudes are found in Ernst Wolfram's opera, set to music by R.L. Herman.²⁹⁷ The opera, which was first performed in the Hoftheater in Kassel in 1891, is set in the first half of the sixteenth century, with the action taking place alternately on the Baltic coast, inhabited by Christians from Thüringen, and in the sunken city of Vineta, where the principal characters are Phoenicians. Vineta, the story of which is introduced by the Choir in four verses, is once more depicted as a heathen city, as explained by an old fisherman:

‘Du weißt es, wie die Sage geht,
 Daß die Heidenschaft dort unten steht,
 Und daß sterben muß, wer den Zauber erspäht.’²⁹⁸

As in Paul's novel the heathenism of the sunken city is portrayed as a living and vibrant aspect of the lives of the inhabitants, who worship the gods Astarte and Baal Moloch.

The mutual dislike and fear of Christians and heathens is very evident throughout the opera. The Christian Hildegard, for example, fearful for the life of her husband Magnus,

²⁹⁶ Schmidt, 261.

²⁹⁷ Ernst Wolfram (Dichtung) und Reinhold L. Herman (Musik), *Vineta : romantische Oper in drei Aufzügen* (Berlin: Eigentum des Komponisten; Druck von Otto Drewitz, 1891).

²⁹⁸ Wolfram, 32.

is scarcely less so when she hears that he is alive in the heathen Vineta: “Er lebt! – doch schlimmer ist’s als Tod! Seine Seele verloren”.²⁹⁹ At the end of the opera fear of Christianity is again manifest, as Hildegard, in her struggle to escape back to normal life, cries out “Gott, du allein hilfst in der Noth” and begins to pray the Our Father. Albertus, the necromancer, warns the assembled heathens to stop her or they will be lost: “Lasst sie nicht beten, sonst seid ihr verloren”.³⁰⁰

Comparison/Opposition of Christian and heathen customs

The correspondence of Christian and heathen customs is another theme that surfaces in Paul’s novel. The small heathen community living outside the gates of Vineta is portrayed as leading an active spiritual life, with its days, months and seasons being ordered according to the movements of nature and a desire to please or appease the gods. It is clear that many of their customs and rituals mirror those of their Christians neighbours. While the Christian children in Vineta talk about the forthcoming Christmas festivities and the coming of the Christ child, for example, the heathen children make preparations for the festival of Fro, the god of light, which takes place at the end of November, on the same day that the Christians in Vineta celebrate another festival, the ‘Andreasfest’:

Weiß gescheuert waren alle Gebäude des Hofes, zierlich die Geräthschaften in den Schuppen geordnet, daß nichts im Hofe umherlag und den Zorn der Ordnung heischenden Götter errege. In der Halle waren Tannenzweiglein am Boden umhergestreut und Gewinde von Immergrün, Epheu und Stechpalmen bekränzten die Wände. Hinter dem Herrensitz hingen schöne Felle, auch die Sitze waren mit Wolfsfellen bedeckt. Im Hofe richteten die Knaben das große Julrad vor, und in der Kammer der Frauen breiteten Hildburg und Sigruna die Festgewänder aus.³⁰¹

²⁹⁹ Wolfram, 35. Hildegard’s sentiments are reminiscent of those expressed by Sigruna in B. Paul’s novel, as she fears for the soul of her sister, Ruotlieb, if she dies a heathen.

³⁰⁰ Wolfram, 44.

³⁰¹ Paul, 44.

Though Pribislaw, the young Christian from Vineta, avoids going into the Halle, he often goes to the Heidenhof and watches or listens unseen. On the feast of the god Fro, he is unable to quell his curiosity about the heathen customs of his friends and watches from a distance as they prepare to sacrifice a wild boar in the holy grove. Discovered by Kanut, the swineherd, who pulls him away from the edge of the grove, he later climbs a tree outside the Halle and watches for hours the celebrations going on within, – the feasting, the passing around of the ‘Methhorn’, the telling of stories about Fro and other heathen gods and the singing.

The celebration is not unlike the Christian Christmas celebration which takes place a short while later and which in its turn is followed from afar by the heathen children, who listen to the music rising from the church in Vineta:

Da stieg der Loblied der Christen gen Himmel; durch die offenen Kirchenpforten zog der feierliche Ton; etwas drang zu den Heidenkindern, welche am Waldrand standen, sie lauschten andachtsvoll auf die einzelnen Klänge, die durch die Luft kamen, wie Stimmen vom Himmel. – ‘Horch’ flüsterte Ruotlieb, und faßte der Schwester Gewand, ‘ihr Gott ist ihnen geboren’; schweigend standen sie eine Weile, [...].³⁰²

Shortly after the Fro festival the heathens prepare for ‘die heiligen zwölf Tage’, during which the gods are said to move through the land. Delicious meals are prepared and laid out in case the gods wish to eat on their journey; the heathens themselves, however, eat only fish and porridge during this period as they prepare for the coming of the new year. The twelve days are reminiscent of the ‘Twelve days of Christmas’ in the Christian tradition, the period between the Christian feast of Christmas and that of the Epiphany.

The impartiality of nature, which treats both religions equally, is evoked in the unifying image of the stars shining on both heathen and Christian festivals — “Der Mond schien klar auf die Schneewelt an der Ostsee, mit ihm viel tausend Sterne. Sie blickten zugleich auf die Feier der Christen und jene der Heiden” — thereby bringing into stark relief the

³⁰² Paul, 49.

contrast with the behaviour of man and his inability or unwillingness to compromise vis-à-vis his fellows.³⁰³

There is, however, also a negative side to the customs, or more correctly the behaviour, of Christian and heathen communities as portrayed in some of the Vineta literature. In Schmidt's poem, for example, there is a clear parallel between the unrestrained celebration of the Christian feast of Saints John and Paul and the even wilder excesses of the heathen feast of Triglav. The aftermath of both is, however, significantly different. In Christian Lübeck, the Wends are the victors and slaughter many of the Christian inhabitants. In heathen Vineta, though the heathens' murderous intent results in the deaths of Jutta and Eberhard, nature itself rises up to avenge them and the sea engulfs the whole town in its fury. The arrival of the Saxon Heinrich der Löwe, leader of the Christianising crusade to the Wends, on the cliff above the town immediately after the disaster seems to indicate that Christianity itself has triumphed. Nature – or the Christian God – has taken sides against the heathens.

Effects of the imposition of Christianity on heathens

The negative effects of the imposition of Christianity on heathen populations is a significant motif in B. Paul's novel. The struggle of many of the heathen population who find themselves forced to accept the new religion is evoked in the personage of the old nurse, "die alte arme Amme", and in the stories she relates about the coming of Christianity to the town:

Widerwillig sind damals Viele zur Taufe geschritten wie eine widerstrebende Herde, die hingetrieben wird, wo sie nicht hin will [...]. Mit Klagen und Weinen haben sie Abschied genommen von ihren Göttern.³⁰⁴

She later expands on these stories, telling Bishop Gerold how fire and the sword were used by his predecessors to destroy the symbols of heathenism and force Christianity on the people:

³⁰³ Paul, 49.

³⁰⁴ Paul, 31.

‘Mit Feuer und Schwert habt ihr das Gedenken eingebrannt in unsere Seelen, das waren lustige Mittel! Lang ist es her, da war der heilige Bischof, den sie Otto nannten,³⁰⁵ in der Stadt und Alles wurde anders [...]. Um die Trümmer unseres Gottes Triglaf tanzten die Gassenbuben und die Feuer brannten auf dem Platz. “Wer nicht für uns ist, ist wider uns”, rief der heilige Bischof. “Rechts das heilige Taufwasser für die, die uns gehören wollen, links das Feuer für die Anderen und mögen sie zur Hölle fahren”’.³⁰⁶

Though she now publicly professes faith in the new religion, it is clear that the old nurse still has a yearning for former times. She cannot forget how beautiful many of the heathen celebrations were, nor can she erase from her memory the contempt and disrespect with which the heathen gods were treated by the conquering Christians:

‘Es war doch schön damals, wenn wir die Feste feierten, als wir jung waren [...]. Jesus stehe mir bei, und vergieb mir, ich kann es nicht vergessen, wie sie unseren Gott Triglav zerschlugen, als es hieß, er sei ein machtloser Götze [...].’³⁰⁷

At the same time, she does not wish people to be reminded that she was once a heathen – “[denn]die Erinnerung bringt Verachtung”.³⁰⁸ This admission is in itself an indictment of the population which has turned its back on the old ways. The turmoil of the times, of attacks by both proselytising Christians and marauding Vikings, of a town under constant threat of invasion by sea and land, is reflected in the personality of the old woman and the duality of her attitudes.

At a later stage, when Vineta has been destroyed by the Danish King Waldemar and his Viking warriors, the old woman, who has escaped to the Heidenhof, voices her perplexity at the fact that in Vineta Christians have once more murdered Christians. Unlike the pagan priests and gods who had tried to stand by their people, Christian

³⁰⁵ Paul, 102. The reference is to Bishop Otto von Bamberg who led a number of Christianising missions to Pomerania in the twelfth century.

³⁰⁶ Paul, 102.

³⁰⁷ Paul, 31.

³⁰⁸ Paul, 31.

priests saved only themselves and their treasures and the Christian God closed his ears to the cries of his people:

‘O, du heiliger Otto!’ rief sie, ‘hast dir so schön die Seelen gezogen, hast dir so klug die Schäfchen zusammengetrieben. Ha, ha. – ist ein Wintersturm gekommen, hat Alles verweht wie Spreu! – Drunter und drüber geht es da unten, sind die Christen gekommen über die Christen, hei, wie die Kutten der Kahlköpfe flogen in Flucht und Kampf, wie sie wimmerten um die Schätze des Klosters, wie sie baten um ihr Leben. Aber die Heiligen waren fern und der Christengott hat sich die Ohren zugestopft, damit er nicht das Schreien der Seinen hörte, denen er nicht helfen konnte [...]. Die alten Götter sind doch besser, ei, ei! [...], weißt du, wie muthig unsere Priester vor unserem Triglaf standen, die Streitaxt der Christen erschlug sie und ihn.’³⁰⁹

The old woman epitomises the psychological confusion which continues to exist in the minds and hearts of many who have been forced to accept the Christian message, – a confusion that seems to lead towards a disaster of no less magnitude than that of the floods which subsequently engulf them. It seems as if physical extinction is the natural culmination of the intellectual indoctrination to which they have been subjected.

A similar mental turmoil is echoed later by Sigruna, the heathen girl from the Heidenhof who has recently converted to Christianity, and who realises with some bitterness that “die Hirten hatten die Herde treulos verlassen und Heiden und Juden waren der Trost der Sterbenden”.³¹⁰

She wonders at the fact that heathen and Jew, in the personages of her sister, Ruotlieb and the Jewish girl, Lea, can bring as much comfort to the dying and the wounded as she herself does as a Christian. As the flood engulfs the town, Sigruna worries too as to whether Ruotlieb, who has refused to convert to Christianity, is facing eternal damnation:

³⁰⁹ Paul, 155–156.

³¹⁰ Paul, 159.

‘Gerechter Gott, soll diese Seele, [...] die rein ist wie die Seele eines Engels, auf ewig verloren sein, nur weil sie nicht getauft ist auf dem Namen Jesu Christi?!
Nein, du gerechter Gott, es kann nicht so sein.’³¹¹

While she prays with all the fervour of her being in the face of the rising flood waters and lifts Ruotlieb, who bears the pallor of death, in her arms, it appears to her as if the heavens open before her eyes and she sees her Christian friends, Pribislaw and Bishop Gerold in the foreground, surrounded by light, and beside them

eine lange Reihe von weißgekleideten, lichtumflossenen Gestalten. Sie sah viele bekannte Gesichter, und sie wußte, es waren unter ihnen von ihren [heidnischen] Vorfahren, von denen gesagt wurde, daß sie groß und gut in ihrer Weise gewesen. – Ganz im Vordergrund der langen Reihe sah sie sich und Ruotlieb Hand in Hand stehen, auch umstrahlt von himmlischem Licht.³¹²

She realises that all have been saved, all those “ [...] die dem Lamme gefolgt sind, nicht nur dem Namen nach, nein die auch wie der Erlöser ihr Kreuz auf sich genommen und in Liebe und Treue hienieden gewandelt [...]”.³¹³ Therefore, confident in the knowledge that Ruotlieb and herself will also be saved, she prepares to embrace death.

While Sigruna comes to this knowledge as she faces the end of her life, the confusion which is obvious in her thinking and in that of the old Amme may be presumed to reflect attitudes widespread among the converts to Christianity, thereby giving further credence to the argument that it is possible that the real destruction of Vineta was the psychological destruction of the spirit, ethos and culture of a people, which was achieved by forceful means where necessary. Such an interpretation shifts the onus of responsibility from the victims themselves onto external forces, be they Viking marauders in search of spoils or Christian missionaries attempting to impose their beliefs. From this standpoint, the moral of the Vineta story serves to illustrate the

³¹¹ Paul, 163.

³¹² Paul, 164.

³¹³ Paul, 164.

potential consequences of violence and oppression rather than those of pride and arrogance.

Motifs of destruction, tragedy and loss

The story of Vineta provides a powerful metaphor that reflects much of the history of Germany itself, including that of Pomerania and its neighbours and the coastal areas of the Baltic and North Seas. The destruction of the trading centre of Vineta has been used repeatedly in the creative literature to mirror the devastation and loss caused by such disparate elements as storm flood, boundary changes and societal developments.

In this context it might correctly be said that the imperial age in itself was not one characterised by major land loss for political reasons. In fact, even allowing for the loss of Austria, which did not form part of the new Empire, the adherence of states such as the kingdoms of Bavaria, Württemberg and Saxony and the Grand Duchies of Baden and Hesse with the states of the North German Confederation to form the new German Empire in 1871 may even be perceived as gaining territory.

Nevertheless, the effects of the constant divisions and shifting borders of the nation which had taken place over preceding centuries, culminating in the creation of an Empire which to many inhabitants must have seemed an artificial construct, might still be regarded as having an impact on people's lives in that it highlighted the potentially temporary nature of administrative structures. In addition the large-scale movement of people towards urban centres and the abandonment of traditional ways of life following unification must also have engendered a sense of loss, particularly in areas of relatively low economic development such as Pomerania.

In her dissertation *Contesting Borders: German Colonial Discourse and the Polish Eastern Territories*, Kristin Kopp points out that in the 1890s “the metaphorical image of Germany under the threat of flood had gained widespread currency”.³¹⁴ This flood, however, consisted not of water, but of people:

³¹⁴ Kristin Leigh Kopp, *Contesting Borders: German Colonial Discourse and the Polish Eastern Territories*. Dissertation submitted [...] for degree of Doctor of Philosophy (University of California, Berkeley, 2001).

It was Slavs from the East who threatened the German nation, Slavs from Russia who were mounting pressure at the nation's eastern border, and also Germany's own Slavs as they joined the westward industrial migration, or merely followed in its wake, flowing into Germany to fill in the spaces left behind by Germans moving west.³¹⁵

According to the historian, Elisabeth Drummond, the Poles were thought to constitute “a Slavic flood, which would overwhelm the German empire”.³¹⁶

The metaphor of a flood had also earlier been used by the Alldeutscher Verband (Pan-German League) with reference to the Slavs:

Auch wir [in der Ostmark] können erzählen, wie deutsche Erde verloren geht. Unterwaschen, durchbrochen, weggespült. [...]. Wer hat sie nicht gekannt, die Vorwerke, die uns die slawische Flut entrissen hat? So manche Schutzwehr, die einst an der deutschen Sprachgrenze stand und fest und dauerhaft erschien, ist der Brandung des slawischen Meeres zum Opfer gefallen.³¹⁷

Such images may be presumed to have served to crystallise fears and increase concern about the Slavic threat to Germany's eastern provinces, and to have helped to make myths like that of Vineta increasingly relevant.

From the point of view of engendering awareness and concern in the population, Bismarck's attempts in the 1870s and 1880s to Germanise the Polish provinces, initially through measures controlling language and religion enacted under the ‘Kulturkampf’, and later through a government-sponsored project for ‘inner colonisation’ or German colonisation of these areas, meant that the Polish question was kept firmly before the minds of the people. In the 1890s the Ostmarkenverein, through publication of its journal *Die Ostmark* and other activities, also kept alive Germany's fear of further

³¹⁵ Kopp, 100

³¹⁶ Elizabeth A. Drummond, *To build a powerful dam against the Polish Flood: Culture and Nature in German Ostmarkendiscurs*, quoted in Kopp, 131.

³¹⁷ Anon, *In der Brandung*, in *Alldeutsche Blätter* 7. Beilage (Alldeutscher Verband, 15 November 1892), 81.

diminution and dilution through ‘invasion’ of its eastern provinces. The resulting unease on the part of the Germans encouraged a desire to define and secure their patrimony and to claim ownership of and promote all things German, be they physical, cultural or spiritual. This desire resulted in an increase in national pride, coupled with literary and artistic expression of ‘German-ness’. Such expression may well have been responsible for a proliferation of texts on subjects such as the lost city of Vineta.

Furthermore, a significant event in Pomerania, which must also have contributed to a sense of loss, occurred during the night of 12–13 November 1872, when a major storm flood, the Baltic Sea Flood, caused widespread death and destruction over a large area of the Baltic coast from Denmark to Pomerania.³¹⁸

The image of flood water engulfing their territory continued therefore to be kept before the Germans. Furthermore it is not inconceivable that in the minds of the people, this devastation of their territory may have mirrored the land loss already experienced over the centuries through coastal erosion, destruction by storm floods and inundation caused by rising sea levels. Vineta, through her legends, had already become a symbol of loss in mediaeval times; she now came to represent continuing territorial dispossession. The nature of the loss experienced, not simply loss of land, but loss of home, of family, of culture, of context, was such as to leave an indelible imprint on the lives of those involved.

The theme of devastation and loss is reflected in much of the Vineta literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in different ways. In some of the literature a sense of loss is conveyed through the inundation and destruction of the location of the action and its inhabitants; in other cases the principal character is consumed by a feeling of loss of his homeland and by a deep longing for Vineta, which he identifies either as the lost abode of his youth or as the Utopia to which he aspires; elsewhere the overwhelming desire of the inhabitants of the sunken city to be released from the bed of the sea, to return once more to normal life, reflects their sense of loss. Furthermore

³¹⁸ The Baltic Sea flood cost the lives of almost three hundred people on the Baltic coast; almost three thousand homes were destroyed or at least badly damaged and more than fifteen thousand people left homeless as a result. The flood also highlighted once again the vulnerability of the region to the elements and the threat of loss which was a constant feature of the area.

loss of homeland also brings with it the sacrifice of personal relationships and friendships.

Destruction of people and place

The utilisation of Vineta as a symbol of destruction is most striking in Ferdinand Freiligrath's poem, *Wilhelm Müller, eine Geisterstimme*, published in December 1872, shortly after the Baltic Sea Flood.³¹⁹ According to Erich Scheil the destruction caused by this flood had an impact throughout the whole of Germany and resulted in the elderly Ferdinand von Freiligrath publishing a poem in the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*, in which he compared the devastation with the destruction of Vineta.³²⁰ In the poem Freiligrath uses the sunken city of Vineta as a symbol of the destruction visited on the land and its people. No explanation is required — the name 'Vineta' is sufficient in itself to evoke the devastation:

Vineta allerorten,/ Vineta weit und breit!
 Nicht Zinnen stolz und Pforten/ Und Glocken alter Zeit –
 Nein, frisches, warmes Leben/ Und Lieb' und Treu' von heut,
 Iach in den Tod gegeben – / O bittres, bittres Leid!³²¹

It seems from the somewhat unusual title of the poem that the poet links the lost city of Vineta with Wilhelm Müller's poem *Vineta*, written in 1825 and one might initially be led to expect a restatement of Müller's Romantic vision of the sunken city. It soon becomes clear however that while there are some similarities with earlier Romantic poems, this poem of Freiligrath's goes way beyond the inward-looking Romantic musings of Heine and Müller and also of Freiligrath's own poem *Meerfahrt*, written almost forty years earlier, in all of which the sunken city is romanticised and portrayed as a type of Utopia, a mysterious and longed-for destination in which the poet wishes to

³¹⁹ Ferdinand von Freiligrath, *Wilhelm Müller: Eine Geisterstimme*, in *Ferdinand von Freiligrath Werke*. Bd. I, Teil 3 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1974. Nachdruck der Ausgabe Berlin 1909), 64–65. Subsequently referred to as Freiligrath, *Werke*.

³²⁰ Erich Scheil, *Die Insel Wollin in Dichtung und Sage*, in *Die Insel Wollin: Ein Heimatbuch und Reiseführer*, ed. Peter August Rolfs (Husum: Druck und Verlagsgesellschaft, 1984), 152. Nachdruck der Ausgabe von 1933.

³²¹ Freiligrath, *Werke*, 65.

immerse himself. A short nostalgic reminiscence includes a typically Romantic reference to the sunken city, as Freiligrath looks back on earlier happy days spent in the area:

O ferne, ferne Tage!/
Einst sucht' ich Muscheln hier,
Sang froh zum Ruderschlage/
Meerfrische Lieder mir!
Pries Mönkguts ros'ge Bräute –/
Dazu dann, dumpf und matt,
Scholl nachts mir das Geläute/
Der alten Wunderstadt.³²²

There is an echo of Müller's *Vineta* in the use of “dumpf und matt”, adjectives also used by Müller to describe the muffled tolling of Vineta's bells from the deep.

Freiligrath's Romantic evocation of days spent on Rügen however swiftly gives way to a word picture of the utter devastation of the land and annihilation of the community:

Kein Land mehr! Boot und Nachen / Umschlagend im Gebraus!
Mit Knirschen und mit Krachen/ Zertrümmert Haus bei Haus!
Und bleiche Wöchnerinnen,/ Die Haare wehnd im Wind!
Und Väter, schier von Sinnen/ Um ihr ertrinkend Kind!³²³

In its concern for the human suffering caused by the flood, Freiligrath's poem differs substantially both from those of Heine and Müller and from his own earlier work. In *Seegespenst* Heine had used the sunken city merely as a backdrop for an outpouring of emotion, while both Müller's *Vineta* and Freiligrath's *Meerfahrt* expressed the poet's wish to be united with the sunken city.

In *Wilhelm Müller — eine Geisterstimme*, however, the suffering of the people – hundreds of whom died, while thousands were left homeless – is an important motif. One can see the movement away from the egocentric inward-looking attitudes of Romanticism towards a much more practical down-to-earth pragmatism on the part of the poet.

In the second half of the poem Freiligrath demonstrates his continuing interest and concern for the political issues of the day. His call to those struggling in the flood waters

³²² Freiligrath, *Werke*, 65.

³²³ Freiligrath, *Werke*, 65.

to have courage, that help is on its way from all over the land, reflects the call for unity that has continued for most of the nineteenth century in Prussia, as well as the continuing political, social and confessional strife that dogged the early years of the German Empire.³²⁴

Many other works also use the name ‘Vineta’ as a negative symbol of death and destruction. In Paul’s *Die versunkene Stadt*, for example, the heathen family who live outside the town of Vineta are always conscious of the fact that Ragnarök, the end of the world, is approaching. Before her death, Hildburg, mother of Ruotlieb and Sigruna, foretells the end of the world and the wars and destruction that will precede it. She warns the heathen children that they must not forsake their gods:

‘Ragnarök, das Ende der Welt, die Götterdämmerung ist nah. [...] unsere Götter [sind] müde der Wenigen, die sie noch ehren. Sie warten der Dinge, die da kommen werden; Fimbulwinter, der böse Winter, wird kommen, der drei Sommer verschlingt [...]. Und dann kommt das Ende.[...].

Streitet für die Götter bis zuletzt, daß Niemand sagen kann, ihr habt sie verlassen in der Noth’.³²⁵

The destruction of Vineta, which occurs in two phases, is Hildburg’s Ragnarök in microcosm. In mid-September 1172, Danish invaders, having already destroyed Julin, arrive by night, led by King Waldemar, who springs from his ship, shouting “So nehme ich Besitz von deinem Lande, du stolze Stadt Vineta, wir wollen dich demüthigen wie deine neidische Schwester Julin, und dich der Erde gleich machen”.³²⁶

³²⁴ Albin Mittelbach’s short poem, *Sturmflut am Vinetastrande*, also describes the destruction caused by the great storm flood of November 1872. In contrast with Freiligrath’s poem, however, it simply describes the desolation and loss of life caused by the flood, without further political comment. The poet succeeds in evoking a sense of despair and hopelessness, through repetition of the cry “Herr, hilf in der Not!” at the end of each stanza. There is no reference to Vineta other than in the title of the poem. See Karl Koch, 47.

³²⁵ Paul, *Die versunkene Stadt*, 70.

³²⁶ Paul, 147.

The Vinetans defend their gates and walls vigorously, but the Danes succeed in piercing the walls and entering the town. The slaughter which ensues is vividly portrayed by the author:

Leichenhaufen versperren den Weg, hier und da stand ein Haus in Flammen,
aber vom Himmel goß der Regen in Strömen und löschte den Brand.

In den Pfützen mischten sich Regenwasser und Blutströme, und ein schauerliches
Schreien, Wimmern, Fluchen und der Schall von Schwertern und Schilden tönte
durch einander.³²⁷

Two weeks later, as the long-tailed blood red star still shines in the heavens over the town, a violent storm arises, whipping up the waves, flooding the meadows between the woods and the town and eventually pounding against the walls of the town and flooding in through the gaps made by the Danes. Vineta and its remaining inhabitants are engulfed, the storm completing the annihilation begun by the Danes. Vineta thus comes to represent the destruction of the world, the Ragnarök of the heathens.

The description of the destruction given by B. Paul is very similar to that in M.B. Schmidt's poem *Vineta* and also in Ernst Wolfram's opera *Vineta*, with nature unleashing its fury and devastating the town in each case.

A similar motif provides the central theme in Richard Nordhausen's novel, *Die versunkene Stadt*.³²⁸ Despite the fact that it does not specifically deal with Vineta, the novel contains several references to the sunken city, and is significant in that it portrays a location and action different from but complementary to that encountered in most of the Vineta literature. Nordhausen's novel is urban-based, in Berlin, thus reflecting the increasing urbanisation of the Empire. The main theme of the novel is destruction, in this case the destruction caused by the so-called industrial progress and modernisation of the Gründerzeit, the early years of the German Empire, as old ways of life are swept away in the cause of industrial and commercial development. References to the sunken city make it clear that a parallel is being drawn between the destruction of part of the old

³²⁷ Paul, 147.

³²⁸ Richard Nordhausen, *Die versunkene Stadt* (Hannover: Adolf Sponholtz Verlag, 1911).

Berlin suburb of Kölln am Wasser for the purposes of erecting a modern shopping centre, and the destruction of Vineta. The area is run-down and impoverished, frequently flooded by the river, which seeps into the basements of the houses and undermines the foundations. To Johannes Hopf, whose tanning business is gradually being eroded by the modernisation of methods of production, and whose house risks being destroyed by the seeping waters of the river Spree, the damage inflicted by the river recalls the floods that cause havoc in his father's homeland on the North Sea. He discusses the matter with Georg Scharner, son of his tenant, the shoemaker Scharner, and reacts angrily to Georg's statement that progress cannot be halted:

‘Ach, – ihr ewiger Fortschritt [...]. Ich muß immer an Vaters *Heimat* denken, ans Oldenburgische und die Nordsee wenn ich vom Fortschritt höre [...]. Die See kommt heran, steigt und steigt, klettert immer höher, schreitet unablässig fort – und das alte Haus stürzt zusammen. [...] was ist das für ein Fortschritt, der hunderttausend ins Elend wirft [...]. Sie wissen, von der man noch die Glocken läuten hört, wenn das Schiff drüber hingeht – Vineta.’³²⁹

Georg Scharner, who has been born and reared in the Berlin suburb, and who, despite distancing himself from his roots, still remains at heart a “Bürger der versunkenen Stadt aus weichmütiger Gewohnheit”, betrays his old neighbours and his family in his attempts to climb the social ladder.³³⁰ He provides information to developers which enables them to proceed with their project to demolish houses and to build a shopping centre, thereby destroying Johannes Hopf's home as well as those of his neighbours. Scharner's father, a shoemaker with the soul of a poet, who had spent his life in the area, had dreamed of finding himself a little corner in a wood beside the sea, where he could live in peace. Despite his social climbing, Georg later feels a certain regret at having helped to destroy “die abscheulichen, die fürchterlichen Baracken” and feels that he too

³²⁹ Nordhausen, 32.

³³⁰ Nordhausen, 212.

‘mit den Augen des Vaters ein Vineta in der Lagune sucht, und mit den Augen des Herrn Hopf die zerstörte Heimat’.³³¹

The duality of the author’s perception of Vineta is evident in this last statement, in the sense that while Vineta is primarily used to portray destruction, in this particular instance the impression conveyed is that Scharner, like his father, sees the sunken city as a utopia, as something to which he would wish to aspire.

Several of the motifs associated with the Vineta story are used in the novel. This is particularly so in the final chapter where, as in the Vineta literature of Paul, Schmidt and Wolfram, nature appears to co-operate in the destruction. The dual elements of water and fire — in this case the searing fiery heat of the sun — prepare to wreak destruction on the city. The levelling of the old terraces of houses has already been accomplished, the lives of the inhabitants irrevocably changed. Earth and air too co-operate in the destruction, as the flattened earth of the cleared site is suddenly whipped up into dust by the wind and twists and hisses with temporarily renewed life. The use of pathetic fallacy — the co-operation of the elements, the personification of the river which seems to lie in wait, watching its prey intently — all combine to portray destruction in a manner as evocative as that encountered in any of the stories of the destruction of Vineta:

Seltsam, wie bewegungslos der Fluß liegt! Ein tückisches Ungeheuer, das nach Fraß giert und kein Glied reckt, keinen von seinen tausend Fangarmen spielen läßt, um nur ja das Opfer nicht zu warnen. Auf wen wartet der Fluß?³³²

Georg Scharner has gone to the building site, in an attempt to negotiate some form of settlement with Johannes Hopf who regards him as responsible for the destruction of his home and business. As he waits beside the chain bridge over the Spree, the weather begins to change. A rising wind heralds the oncoming storm and whips up the dust of

³³¹ Nordhausen, 226.

³³² Nordhausen, 227.

the building site, forcing Georg to close his eyes and mouth— “Die Asche der versunkenen Stadt, dachte er. Aber er lächelte nicht bei dem Gedanken”.³³³

Hopf arrives and betrayer and betrayed meet. The sense of impending annihilation is increased through the bestialisation of Johannes Hopf, as, foaming at the mouth, he looks at Georg and anticipates his revenge. Georg realises he is in danger and is going to be attacked.³³⁴

Nature unleashes her fury. The atmosphere becomes increasingly reminiscent of the story of the sunken city, through the use of motifs which are frequently used in the Vineta literature to portray the destruction of Vineta. A black cloud hanging over the Lustgarten begins to increase threateningly in size and the day darkens. As a white flash of lightning lights up the darkness and the thunder roars like a lion, the river begins to foam and bubble up threateningly and a heavy downpour begins, like a sea of water battering down on the earth.³³⁵ The elements continue to wreak havoc and the end comes ever nearer:

Die ganze Straße, der brausende und siedende Fluß, die stürzenden Fluten standen im blauen Feuer. Als stürze auch am jenseitigen Ufer die Häuserreihe ein, als verschlinge das Meer mit einem Aufschrei die ganze Stadt [...].

Der Fluß stieg, stieg wieder. Ein dunkler See glotzte, wo die Bauplätze lagen ... nein, wo vor Zeiten die Stadt am Wasser gestanden hatte, die versunkene Stadt. [...] die Regenmassen fielen, und der Fluß stieg noch, und der See breitete sich weiter über die Ruinen.³³⁶

The calm that descends gradually after the storm, as the flood spreads out to cover the ruins of the destroyed houses, is again typical of Vineta literature. Just as Heinrich der Löwe appeared on the cliff above the sunken Vineta and prayed silently while the sea

³³³ Nordhausen, 227.

³³⁴ Nordhausen, 229.

³³⁵ Nordhausen, 229.

³³⁶ Nordhausen, 230.

still foamed below and the storm moved away and just as, following the destruction of the pagan temple in Vineta, Hildegard and the choir prayed the Our Father on the cliff, while the sea still churned and the dark clouds disappeared, so too does Johannes Hopf come back into the picture, the mildness and apparent timidity of his demeanour showing that his anger is spent, his revenge complete: “Johannes Hopf kam des Weges gelaufen. Allein und scheu. Er blickte sich nicht um”.³³⁷ Though not said, it seems that Georg Scharner too has met a destructive ‘Vineta’.

Vineta as a symbol of unhappiness and tragedy

Perhaps one of the best known works that uses Vineta primarily as a metaphor for unhappiness and tragedy is Theodor Fontane’s *Effi Briest*.³³⁸ In the novel, Effi, the seventeen-year old bride of provincial governor Baron von Innstetten, has moved with her husband to the small town of Kessin on the Baltic. Here she meets Major von Crampas, the new commandant of the district militia, with whom she has an extra-marital affair. The novel deals with the fallout of this affair, setting the conflict of the individual characters against the background of Prussian attitudes and the social milieu of the time.

Fontane may have had a number of reasons for choosing the town of Kessin as one of the primary locations of the action in *Effi Briest*. While he might not perhaps be considered a travel writer in the modern sense of the term, descriptions of the landscapes of his youth frequently feature in his writings. The imaginary town of Kessin seems to have been based on Swinemünde, the seaport on the Baltic, where he spent part of his childhood, and where he also presumably heard of the sunken city of Vineta. Fontane makes several references to Vineta in his writings, describing it as having been located near Kessin. In his description of the Blumenthal forest, for example, he compares the atmosphere in the forest as being akin to that of Vineta:

³³⁷ Schmidt, *Vineta*, 261; Wolfram, *Vineta*, 45; Nordhausen, 230.

³³⁸ Theodor Fontane, *Effi Briest*, (Stuttgart: Reclam Universal-bibliothek, 1983). Subsequently referred to as Fontane, *Effi Briest*.

Etwas von dem Zauber Vinetas ist um ihn her, und die Sage von untergegangenen Städten, verschwunden in Wasser oder Wald, begleitet den Reisenden auf Schritt und Tritt.³³⁹

In his autobiographical novel, *Meine Kinderjahre*, he explains to his new tutor that he and his friends had gone by boat over the supposed location of the sunken city.³⁴⁰

The reference to Vineta in *Effi Briest*, however, is more comprehensive. On one of their outings to the beach, Effi mentions to Crampas that each time she had seen the red flags fluttering on the marker buoys during the Summer she had thought of Vineta.³⁴¹ Crampas then assumes that she knows Heine's poem, *Seegespenst*, and when she does not, proceeds to tell her the story.

While Crampas claims to know Heine's poetry by heart, he does not quote the poem directly, but proceeds to paraphrase the story incorrectly, claiming that the poet, on seeing the sunken city beneath the waves, wishes to plunge into the sea from the boat, in order to join the women in bonnets walking to Mass in the cathedral. Contrary to Crampas's interpretation, however, the poet's wish is rather to be reunited with the melancholy young girl, sitting at a window, her head leaning on her arm, "wie ein armes vergessenes Kind".³⁴² Crampas's misrepresentation of the poem may be interpreted in a number of ways. Effi herself is like a lost child, lonely and frequently feeling abandoned as her husband's work keeps him from home. Vineta, the lost city beneath the waves, seems to be an image of her unhappiness and to reflect her loneliness. Through its own destruction and loss it is a harbinger of the destruction and death that

³³⁹ Theodor Fontane, *Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg*, Zweiter Teil: *Das Oderland*, ed. G. Erler and R. Mingau (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1991), 401. Fontane presumably also linked the lost city of Blumenthal with the story of Vineta.

³⁴⁰ Theodor Fontane, *Meine Kinderjahre* (Berlin: Verlag F. Fontane & Co., 1894), 221. There are also references to Vineta in *Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg*, Dritter Teil: *Das Havelland*, ed. G. Erler and R. Mingau (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1991), 21.

³⁴¹ Fontane, *Effi Briest*, 153.

³⁴² Heine, *Gesamtausgabe I/1*, 384–385.

await Effi. Crampas, a society man and known amorist, uses the story of the lost city to highlight Effi's own sense of loss and abandonment, as he pursues her for his own ends and attempts to encourage her to accept his advances.

Vineta as a symbol of a longed-for destination

In much of the creative literature of the imperial era the sunken city is recognised as a desired destination, the home of the writer's childhood to which he wishes to return or to which he aspires. This longing is very evident in the collection of poems of Gustav Herrmann, entitled *Vineta*, in which the poet expresses his desire to be united with the Vineta of his youth.³⁴³ In the first poem of the collection, which bears the title *Vineta* and consists of seventeen stanzas of four lines, the poet greets the Vineta of his childhood days, whose magic still lives on in him. He sees the empty streets, windows shining like a crystal grave, marble terraces with fish swimming through them. All is at peace. Here there is no worry, no fearful hope. Living and dying are all one. He addresses the sunken city:

So nimm mich auf in deine stillen Arme
Auch ich bin müde, möchte wunschlos sein –
An Hoffnung arm, doch überreich an Harmen
Zieh ich in deine klare Ruhe ein.³⁴⁴

And yet there is still a faint flame within him that wants to light up before humanity. Though apparently expressing a desire for death, it seems that the song of life still has a strong attraction for him. He struggles, but cannot silence his deep longing:

Und doch glimmt zehrend noch in mir die Flamme
Die vor den Menschen flackernd leuchten will
Und wie ich auch den eitlen Wunsch verdamme —
Das sehrende Verlangen schweigt nicht still.

This mixture of emotions on the part of the poet may well spring from a certain sense of dissatisfaction with his life. As one educated and interested in fine arts and music, he

³⁴³ Gustav Herrmann, *Vineta* (Leipzig: Giesecke und Devrient, 1908).

³⁴⁴ Herrmann, 15.

found himself obliged, on the death of his father, to take over the management of his family's tobacco and export business for a period of some years, until 1914, when he was able to return to more artistic and literary pursuits. His *Vineta*, written in 1908, stems from this period in business, a factor that may account for the ambivalence of attitude and emotion displayed in the poem.

Nevertheless, towards the end of the poem, he seems overwhelmed by despair, as ghostly voices remind him that he is unimportant, no more than a grain of sand in eternity, and that the fruits of the tree of life are transitory. He feels drawn by the bells of the sunken city sounding from the deep, encouraging him and calling out to him — “Kehr ein – in meinem Frieden ruhst du gut!” In his desire to return to the innocence of childhood, to rid himself of the adult emotions of desire, love and hate, he welcomes Vineta:

Da steigen schon empor die stillen Gassen
 Da leuchtet schon des alten Kirchturms Knauf
 Weit von mir werf' ich Sehnen, Lieben, Hassen!
 Ich grüße dich – Vineta – nimm mich auf! ³⁴⁵

The sunken city in this case is clearly a metaphor for a different kind of existence, a lifestyle that might be more pleasing to the poet. It may be that Gustav Herrmann did in fact reach his Vineta some years later, when he returned to active involvement in the cultural life of Leipzig, organising interviews and events with literary figures and artists, becoming involved as a freelance reporter of musical and theatrical evenings, as well as writing poetry, plays and a novel.

Vineta as a symbol of loss of relationship or friendship

The use of the name ‘Vineta’ as a synonym for loss is a feature of a number of works in the period. Among these are M.E. delle Grazie's play, *Vineta*, and Oskar Loerke's short story *Vineta*. Though both works use the title ‘Vineta’ they deal principally with loss of relationships or friendship.

³⁴⁵ Herrmann, 17.

M.E. delle Grazie's *Vineta*, one of a collection of four one-act plays published in 1903 under the title *Zu Spät*, concerns the realisation and admission on the part of two people, the well-to-do, but unhappily married Baroness Maria Sußdorf, and her brothers' former tutor, Johannes Noltsch, now a missionary priest, that they had been in love with one another twelve years previously.³⁴⁶ At the time, Noltsch, unaware that his feelings were reciprocated, had been unwilling to do or say anything which might upset the arranged marriage between Maria and the wealthy Baron Sußdorf. In order to cope with his sense of loss he became a missionary and went to work in China. Twelve years later at Easter time, the pair meet again by chance, and the truth emerges, too late. The local pastor had asked the Baroness to provide a night's accommodation for a friend of his, without giving the friend's name. The friend arrives, and turns out to be Johannes Noltsch. It becomes clear that both he and the baroness are very moved at seeing one another, but both accept that their relationship cannot progress. When Noltsch and the Baroness speak of their feelings for one another, a longing for times past and a deep sense of personal loss, so characteristic of some of the themes encountered in Vineta literature, pervade the atmosphere. Recognising that they must part, Noltsch promises that once a year at Easter, when flowers are blooming and bells are ringing, he will write to Maria. He asks her to read the letter in the conservatory, as she looks out into the green of the garden and remembers the springtime of their earlier years. Then, for a brief moment, they will be united, separated neither by sea, nor land nor time.

Vineta motifs surface in the play on a number of occasions, again providing a framework within which the action occurs. At the beginning, Karlchen, the young son of the Baroness, complains about a long passage which his tutor has given him to learn by heart. It concerns the island of Wolin where mother and son had spent a holiday two years previously. The mother reminds him of the various places they had visited on the island and Karlchen adds Vineta to the list; he had heard local fishermen in Wolin talk

³⁴⁶ M.E. delle Grazie, *Zu Spät: vier Einakter: Vineta* (Leipzig: Druck und Verlag Breitkopf und Härtel, 1903).

about it. Karlchen gets his mother's permission to sit beside the lake as he learns his text, "weil es dort fast so ist, wie es die Fischer von Vineta erzählen!"³⁴⁷

When Johannes Noltsch leaves, Karlchen comes to ask his mother to hear him recite his passage about Vineta. As the child tells of the fishermen who claim to have seen the sunken city rise above the waves, and of those who at Easter, when the dunes are clad in green shoots, seem to hear bells sounding from the deep, the Baroness breaks down in tears. Her Vineta — the utopia she has never known — and Noltsch's promise to write in spring seem to echo through the words of the child, filling her with a sense of loss.

Another work that uses the sunken city to illustrate loss of friendship is Oskar Loerke's novel, *Vineta*, for which he received the Kleist prize in 1913. The story is more broadly based than M. delle Grazie's play, in that it portrays not alone loss of friendship or relationship, but also evokes the confusion and indecision prevalent in Germany in the early part of the twentieth century.³⁴⁸ Though the story is called *Vineta*, there is little direct reference to the sunken city, which seems to serve more as a metaphor for the psychologically fragile main character, Hermine, whose strangely troubled personality and withdrawn behaviour are central elements in the story. Hermine herself is a symbol of Vineta, and she will suffer a similar fate. Her fascination with and fear of thunder storms and floods provides an immediate link with the *Vineta Sage*, as does the fact that she is a 'Sonntagskind', born on Easter Sunday. Hermine's mother, Frau Katharina, worries at her daughter's melancholy attitude and difficulties in engaging with other children, apart from her friend Edwin Maßholder. According to her mother, "ihr Kind erschien unter der Dorfjugend durch manche Seltsamkeiten wie ein weißer Rabe unter lauter schwarzen"³⁴⁹.

There is direct reference to Vineta only once in the novel. This occurs on the evening of the death of Elisabeth, the fourteen-year old daughter of the mayor of the local town and

³⁴⁷ Delle Grazie, 11.

³⁴⁸ Oscar Loerke, *Vineta* (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1907). Loerke's first published story.

³⁴⁹ Loerke, 7.

friend of the young Hermine. As Elisabeth lies ill in bed, the two friends begin to play with toy boats belonging to Elisabeth's brother, pulling them to and fro in a large basin of water. Hermine, sensing that the time for play is coming to an end, stares into the water and, rippling the surface slowly with her fingers, suddenly begins to recount with intensity the *Vineta Sage*. She extols the shining gates of precious metal, the magnificent parades and funeral processions through the streets, the silver bells ringing out from the high towers. Elisabeth seems very moved by the story, and begins to pull the boats again, staring intently into the water, in a manner reminiscent of Heine's *Seegespenst*. It is as if she too is standing on the edge and can distinguish domes and towers below. Then all becomes silent, and through the silence comes a ringing sound.³⁵⁰

Asking for her school slate and pencil, Elisabeth swiftly draws a strange outline on it, under which she writes 'Vineta', throws the drawing into the water, and with growing excitement begins to pull the boats again back and forth over the 'sunken city'. Shortly afterwards she sinks back on her pillow unconscious, and later that evening dies. It is as if she is fulfilling a death wish, and has chosen to pursue life in the sunken city. Like Vineta, she too has perished, and for her parents and friends Vineta once more becomes a symbol of loss.

As Hermine grows up, she becomes increasingly strange and withdrawn, suffers from serious episodes of soul-searching, anguish and depression and feels herself an outcast from society. She finds it extremely difficult to make up her mind between her various suitors, and, though she eventually marries her former tutor, Herr Karp, continues to be absorbed by thoughts of the others. She becomes increasingly depressed and eventually after a year of marriage she dies.

The motif of the sunken city does not appear explicitly again in Loerke's text, other than the fact that Hermine, as she approaches her own death, recalls briefly the memory of the story she had told Elisabeth as she lay on her death bed. Loerke's *Vineta* is however permeated throughout by an atmosphere of mystery, confusion and fear, evoked through the use of many Vineta-type motifs — tolling of bells, ghostly sounds, sultry or stormy weather, death — all of which show a deep understanding of the legend on the part of

³⁵⁰ Loerke, 36.

the writer, and provide a good example of how a comparatively minor narrative strand may inspire not alone the title, but also determine the atmosphere and emotional intensity of the novel.

Positive motifs of life, love and unity

One of the features of the creative literature on Vineta is that not alone has the legend of the sunken city formed the basis of stories of destruction and death, but it has also been used in a positive manner, allowing it to portray situations of unity and love.

The work which best illustrates these positive motifs is E. Werner's romantic novel, *Vineta*, in which the author uses the sunken city as a positive symbol of life, forgiveness and unity.³⁵¹ The novel is set on the Baltic coast, near where Vineta once stood, and while it is not directly concerned with the story of Vineta itself, the motif of the sunken city is used repeatedly and acts as a unifying force between two young cousins— one Polish, one German – whose families and estates have been split by the historical circumstances of their time, but who are destined after many struggles to become man and wife. The two young people, the German Waldemar Nordeck and the Polish Wanda Morynska, have absorbed through their different upbringing the ethos, particularly the enmity, between their respective peoples and for much of the novel remain deeply inimical to one another. They seem, nevertheless, to be very much in tune with nature and, shortly after they have met for the first time in many years – Wanda's family having returned from enforced exile in Paris – Waldemar brings Wanda to the 'Buchenholm', a small island of beech trees, to watch the sun sinking into the Ostsee at sunset. Both are deeply affected by the atmosphere as they gaze out over the place where Vineta is said to have sunk. It is as if a whole magic world awakens in their sub-conscious, as both are led through the mysterious song of the sea towards a vision of the sunken city:

Es war die alte mächtige Melodie des Meeres, [...], die mit ihrer urewigen Frische jedes Herz gefangen nimmt.[...]. Waldemar und seine jugendliche Gefährtin mußten diese Sprache wohl verstehen, denn sie lauschten ihr in atemlosem

³⁵¹ E. Werner, *Vineta*. Achter Band in *E. Werners gesammelte Romane und Novellen* (Leipzig: Verlag von Ernst Keils Nachfolger). No publication date, but the Oxford Companion to German Literature (Third edition, 1997) gives the date of the Collection as 1893–1895. E. Werner is a pseudonym for Elisabeth Bürstenbinder (1838–1918).

Schweigen, und für sie klang auch noch etwas andres mit hindurch. Aus der Tiefe der Flut schwebten die Glockenklänge zu ihnen empor, und es legte sich ihnen um das Herz [...]. Den purpurnen Wellen aber entstieg ein schimmerndes Luftgebild. Es schwebte auf dem Wasser; es zerfloß im Sonnengold und stand doch klar und leuchtend da, eine ganze Welt voll unermessener, nie gekannter Schätze, von ihrem Zauberglanz umwoben, die alte Wunderstadt – Vineta.³⁵²

The sunken city's appearance and the serenity of the atmosphere that is woven around it seem to indicate that strife and tensions, though painful, can be overcome. This first vision of the sunken city unites the thoughts and desires of the young people for only a fleeting moment, however. Still virtual strangers they return to C., but the memory of that day remains with them.

The second appearance of the sunken city occurs four years later on the Autumn evening of a hunt at the Wilicza estate, when Waldemar and Wanda meet by chance near a small lake in the woods, not far from the border. The threatening atmosphere surrounding the still, dark lake, and the mist, which grows increasingly thicker as darkness falls, suddenly give way to a vision of the mighty branches of beech trees lit by the setting sun and the wide span of the blue sea in the background turning to reddish gold as it welcomes the sinking orb. Then suddenly the sunken city appears and bells are heard tolling from the deep:

aus der Lichtflut [...] stieg sie wieder auf, die alte Wunderstadt der Sage, umwoben von Märchenduft und Zauberglanz [...] und aus der Tiefe klangen die Glocken Vinetas, immer voller, immer mächtiger [...].³⁵³

It seems as if Vineta has come to rescue them from the mists, perhaps even from themselves. The ancient trading city, whose wealth and very existence depended on the sea, recognises no land or national boundaries. The desire with which Vineta has imbued Waldemar and Wanda takes no cognisance of the fact that they are radically different in their allegiances and their ethos, one being German and the other Polish. The sunken city seems to be trying once more to bring the two young people closer, as it had done on the

³⁵² Werner, 74.

³⁵³ Werner, 170.

evening at the Buchenholm some years before. Shortly after their experience on the Buchenholm, following a misunderstanding, they had parted as enemies; now Vineta seems to be guiding them towards one another again:

[...], aber was jene Stunde ihnen gegeben, das hatten sie beide doch nie wieder empfunden; erst an diesem düsteren Herbstabend wurde es wieder lebendig. Und als die Erinnerung jetzt zu ihnen herüberwehte, da versanken die Jahre, die dazwischen lagen, versanken Haß, Streit und Erbitterung, und nichts blieb zurück als das tiefe unaussprechliche Sehnen nach einem ungekannten Glück, das zum erstenmal aufgewacht war unter den Geisterklängen Vinetas [...].³⁵⁴

In the lead-up to the crisis in Wanda's life, as she finally comes to realise that she loves Waldemar, the sunken city plays an increasingly important role. Vineta appears with increasing frequency as a leitmotif and seems to accompany and encourage the young people on their journey towards one another. Each appearance of the sunken city seems to strengthen further the memory of their first visit to the Buchenholm and to heighten the desire and longing which they experienced on that occasion. It is as if the sunken city is playing an active role in helping the young people come to terms with suppressed memories that have threatened to overpower their relationship up to now.

Finally, alone in her room at Rakowicz, and having been warned by her aunt that no Morynska woman has ever betrayed her people, Wanda struggles to decide whether to warn Waldemar of impending danger from Polish insurgents. The sunken city surfaces once more in her imagination and she realises that Vineta has been present to her at some of the most critical times in her encounters with Waldemar. It has supported her throughout, and is now forcing her to acknowledge the obstacles she had placed in the way of their relationship and opening her mind to the significance of its appearance in their lives:

Seit jenem Herbstabend am Waldsee war es so oft wieder emporgestiegen, [...]. Auch jetzt stand es urplötzlich wieder da, wie von Geisterhand hervorgerufen, mit seinem goldig verklärenden Schein. [...]. Sie hatte Trennung und Entfernung zwischen sich und den Mann gestellt, den sie hassen wollte, weil er nicht der

³⁵⁴ Werner, 170.

Freund ihres Volkes war. [...]. Nur in einem hatte die Sage wahr gesprochen: die Erinnerung wollte nicht verlöschen, das Sehnen nicht schweigen, und mitten hinein in Haß und Streit, in Kampf und Widerstand klang es süß und geheimnisvoll wie der Glockenklang Vinetas aus dem Meeresgrund.³⁵⁵

At the end of the novel, when Waldemar and Wanda have finally declared their love for one another and are about to be married, it is as if a full circle has been described. The two young people are once again together at the Buchenholm, having bid farewell to Wanda's father, Graf Morynski, as he sails into exile, to be followed shortly by his sister, Fürstin Baratowska, Waldemar's mother. The marriage of Waldemar and Wanda will unite the two young people, renewing the alliance between the Nordeck and Morynski families, the one German, the other Polish, a relationship born on this occasion of love and mutual consent. Their love has overcome hate and strife and it stretches across the boundaries of race and State, linking not only the young people themselves but also the estates of Wilicza, Rakowicz and Altenhof:

Die alte Meeressage hatte ihnen doch wahr gesprochen. Seit jener Stunde, wo ihr Zauber die beiden jugendlichen Herzen umspann, waren diese in ihrem Bann geblieben, und der Bann hielt sie fest trotz Entfremdung und Trennung; er zog sie mächtig zu einander als um sie her alles in Haß und Streit aufloderte, und führte sie siegreich durch all die feindlichen Gewalten bis zu dieser Minute.³⁵⁶

It is as if the taming of Waldemar, the maturing of Wanda and the subjugation of the overpowering emotions which had engulfed the young couple and threatened their safety and happiness, had been brought to a successful conclusion, through the intervention and guidance of Vineta:

Ringsum wogte die blaue See, und über den Buchenholm strömte das volle goldene Sonnenlicht. Das Meer sang wieder seine alte ewige Melodie, aus Windesrauschen und Wellenbrausen gewoben, und dazwischen tönte es fern und

³⁵⁵ Werner, 258.

³⁵⁶ Werner, 363.

geheimnisvoll wie Glockenklang — der Geistergruß Vinetas aus der Meerestiefe.³⁵⁷

Vineta does not appear, but her bells, sounding from the deep seem to mark the ending of an old life and the beginning of a new one. It is significant that the final appearance of the leitmotif does not involve an actual appearance of the sunken city itself. Vineta, having fulfilled her promise and given to the young people “die Ahnung eines unendlichen Glückes”, is now content to rest in the deep and let them get on with their lives.³⁵⁸

Julius Kieckhaefer’s *Im neuen Vineta*, a comedy in three acts, published c. 1900, is not directly concerned with the sunken city, but uses the Vineta motif as a symbol of love and integrity.³⁵⁹ The play, which might be termed a comedy of manners, concerns the trials and tribulations of four couples as they begin either to form relationships or to become reconciled with one another. All are guests at the ‘new Vineta’, a hotel in Koserow on the island of Usedom, close to the site of the sunken city, where the proprietor, Herr Hecht, tries to impress them with his own version of the Vineta story, modified to suit the circumstances as required:

Vineta war eine Stadt, die hier vor mehren Tausend Jahren gestanden hat [...]. In ganz stillen Vollmondnächten, wenn Niemand in der Nähe, dann läuten die Glocken von der versunkenen Stadt herauf.³⁶⁰

Challenged as to whether he or anybody else has ever heard these bells, Hecht admits that “so ungefähr vor zehntausend Jahren hat es mal ein junges Mädchen gegeben, und deren Ur-Urgroßmutter hat es ganz, ganz deutlich gehört”.³⁶¹

To the requirement of there being a full moon, he adds a number of qualifications which he says are necessary to permit somebody to hear the bells: “Es muß ein Sonntagskind

³⁵⁷ Werner, 364.

³⁵⁸ Werner, 74.

³⁵⁹ Julius Kieckhaefer, *Im neuen Vineta* (Berlin: Schenk. um 1900).

³⁶⁰ Kieckhaefer, 13.

³⁶¹ Kieckhaefer, 13.

sein [...]. Das junge Mädchen darf nicht über zwanzig Jahre alt sein [...]. Und darf noch nie einen Mann betrogen haben”.³⁶² This last stipulation becomes significant later in the play, initially as a double-edged sword, when Herr Hecht plays a recording of bells on a hidden gramophone. Fräulein Lehmann, not realising the bells are false and believing that only innocent people can hear them, tells her suitor, Sascha Müller, that he has an innocent girl in his arms. Later, having realised that the bells were false and that Müller’s love was equally untrue, she accuses Müller of falsity, but is in turn reminded that her own innocence is therefore also in question.

The ‘real’ bells of the sunken city play an important part in the dénouement, when, as Fritz Römer declares his love for Cecilie, she exclaims “Horch, was ist das, die Glocken von Vineta? Träume ich nur? Oh, wie schade!”³⁶³ Römer reassures her, however, “kein Traum, holde Wirklichkeit! Bei Vollmond, mit einem geliebten Wesen im Arm hört man die Glocken von Vineta – Sie läuten unser Glück ein!”³⁶⁴ Frau Lehmann too hears the bells of the sunken city and Herr Hecht uses the opportunity to tell her that they are “so echt wie meine Liebe zu Ihnen”.³⁶⁵

The use of the Vineta motif in Kieckhaefer’s play is, therefore, very similar to the manner in which it is used in Werner’s novel, with the sunken city seeming to endorse the relationships that have been formed.

Sound in Vineta literature

Continuing or new life in the sunken city is a regular motif in the creative literature of the period from 1870 to 1918, a phenomenon which is frequently indicated by the presence of sound. While the motif occurs across all genres, it is particularly prevalent in the *Heimat* poems. The range of sounds associated with the Vineta story is varied — the music of the waves, their crashing against the cliffs during a storm, the sound of oars cutting through the water, the tolling of bells or the sound of singing from the deep.

³⁶² Kieckhaefer, 15.

³⁶³ Kieckhaefer, 56.

³⁶⁴ Kieckhaefer, 56.

³⁶⁵ Kieckhaefer, 57.

Sound presupposes activity or movement of some kind, and often the sounds associated with the Vineta story are indicative of human activity. Furthermore, in the creative literature, the story of the sunken city and its sounds have frequently been transposed into music, thus enabling the story to be told through another medium and allowing it to resonate with a wider audience.

In the period 1870–1918, not alone was Ernst Wolfram’s opera, *Vineta*, composed, but several poems either had references to music or were set to music in their own right.³⁶⁶ Among these is Julius Gersdorff’s poem *Vineta*, set to music for male voice choir by Carl Heinrich Döring, in which the waves sing a song of lost fidelity and love, as if the sunken city is lamenting its fate from the bed of the ocean.³⁶⁷ Johannes Maaß’ drinking song, *Vinetas Zecher*, set to the music of *Gaudeamus Igitur*, speaks of the splendour of Vineta and celebrates its ongoing life on the sea bed, from where the clinking of glasses can still be heard on summer evenings. Nevertheless the revellers are reminded that life is short, and they will one day lie in the “Todestal” that is Vineta.³⁶⁸ Richard Bartz’s poem, *Vineta*, in which the poet refers to the sunken city as “die stolze Kaufherrnstadt”, has a range of different sounds, both environmental and human, from the song of the sea, to the dull plash of the oars as they dip into the water, the dull roar of the storm tide and the cries of the Vinetans as they sink to the bottom of the sea.³⁶⁹ Georg Busse’s poem *Vineta* tells the story of the sunken city and gives brief, though nevertheless succinct references to the wealth and irreligious lifestyle which caused the downfall of the Vinetans. The poet associates singing with a sinful life-style, referring to “die singende Sünde” and the fact that Vineta always sang, but never prayed. The bells of Vineta now

³⁶⁶ Ernst Wolfram (Dichtung) und Reinhold L. Herman (Musik), *Vineta: romantische Oper in drei Aufzügen*, (Berlin: Eigentum des Komponisten; Druck von Otto Drewitz, 1891).

³⁶⁷ Julius Gersdorff, *Vineta* in Karl Koch, 48.

³⁶⁸ Johannes Maaß, *Vinetas Zecher*, in Karl Koch, 49. Maaß’s poem was later set to the music of *Gaudeamus Igitur* — reflecting a consciousness not only of the brevity of life as demonstrated by the Vineta Sage, but also of the existence of student fraternities or ‘Burschenschaften’, which became popular in Germany in the nineteenth century. A ‘Burschenschaft’ called ‘Vineta’, said to be named after a corvette of the Prussian Navy, was established in Heidelberg in 1879.

³⁶⁹ Richard Bartz, *Vineta* in Koch, 35.

sound from the deep, testifying to the continuing existence of the sunken city on the sea bed. For Busse it is a sad sound, as if an undying love were buried alive in the sea.³⁷⁰

What is noticeable about the above *Heimat* poems is that some sounds are portrayed in a positive manner while others are regarded as negative. Furthermore the existence of sound complements and adds a certain credence to the suggestion that life is continuing in a different element. That life may only be in the mind or imagination of the hearer, as in the case of Richard Bartz's poem, but it testifies to a continuing 'presence' of the sunken city as a stored memory, an acoustic remnant of the past.

Overview of Vineta literature 1871–1918

In summary it might be said that the texts written and published during the period 1871–1918 demonstrate clearly that the multi-dimensional nature of the *Vineta Sage* resulted in its having a malleability that has allowed it to be used to portray varied and at times apparently contradictory attitudes, philosophies and beliefs across a variety of situations, time scales and locations. The broad range of genres produced in the period, including novels, drama, opera, poetry and *Heimat* literature, has ensured not alone that the story of the sunken city reached a wide audience and readership, but also that the name *Vineta* became a symbol in its own right, requiring in many cases nothing other than the repetition of the name to convey a message. It is clear from the variety of texts studied that the constant, the *Vineta Sage*, can be and has been interpreted and utilised in many different ways. In the period 1871–1918 it has served political, historical, psychological, moral and anthropological purposes. It has highlighted religious bigotry, as well as religious tolerance. Transposed to an urban location it has served to illustrate the detrimental effects of economic progress when allied with greed. While no doubt creating fear, it has also created wonder and enjoyment. It has served to educate and illustrate, and helped build a sense of unity, purpose and local and national pride, particularly in an era when political leadership sought to establish and build a new empire.

³⁷⁰ Georg Busse, *Vineta* in *Velhagen und Klasings Monatshefte* 1905, Vol. 2 (174), and in *Pommerland: ein Heimatbuch.*, edited by Hermann Kasten und Karl Müller (Leipzig: Friedrich Brandstetter, 1926), 400.

Chapter 4

Vineta literature from 1918 to 1945

The defeat of Germany in the First World War was followed by a period of acute instability, as government, politicians and people struggled to come to terms with new realities. The November Revolution of 1918/1919, the forced abdication of Emperor Wilhelm II, the process of transition from an imperial democracy to a parliamentary democratic republic, and in particular a sense of humiliation and injustice at the treatment of Germany under the Treaty of Versailles, all contributed to a heightened feeling of insecurity and doubt concerning the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Weimar Republic. Contributing to the overall instability was the fact that though Germany had experienced major economic growth in the thirty years prior to the outbreak of the First World War, by the time the war was over the German mark was worth only half of its pre-war value.³⁷¹ A period of hyperinflation followed, which the government of the new Weimar republic seemed unable, or perhaps unwilling to deal with. Unemployment rose exponentially, hunger riots took place and the currency collapsed.

Though the situation improved somewhat between 1924 and 1929, with Germany experiencing a period of relative stability, the world economic crisis of 1929–1930 again rocked the nation, bringing massive long-term unemployment and leading to increased poverty and a consequent lack of social status.

Though the Weimar Constitution was a genuine attempt to create a democratic republic, in practice it never managed to gain the confidence of the people. This was largely due to the failure of the government to deal effectively with the economic situation, and with the discontent arising as a result of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, under which Germany forfeited approximately thirteen percent of its European territory and almost seven million inhabitants. Austria too suffered significant losses. Under the terms of the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, which was signed in September 1919, the Austro-

³⁷¹ Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 62.

Hungarian Empire was dissolved, and the German-speaking areas which formed the new Austrian Republic also lost substantial territory and inhabitants. The loss of territory and displacement of peoples contributed in no small measure to the sense of instability and dispossession. It must be remembered however that while loss of territory and/or possessions is traumatic and psychologically damaging, it is not the only factor that causes upset among ordinary people. All change is capable of causing insecurity, whether it results in loss or gain, and the border changes and political and administrative restructuring that resulted from the treaties had a significant long-term effect on both Germany and its neighbours. So too had other provisions of the treaties, as for example the war guilt clause, under which Germany and its allies were forced to accept responsibility for having started the war, and the war reparations provisions which imposed huge reparations payments. Given all the circumstances and bearing in mind the natural desire of people to seek security and stability within what they recognise as being part of their heritage, it is not surprising that interest in local culture, history and myth was affected and shaped by the turbulent political and social context of the time.

Vineta literature in the Weimar Republic 1918–1933

The volume of literature about Vineta continued to grow in the Weimar period, with emphases more appropriate to the age. The question of the location of the sunken city, which had been the subject of argument, and in some cases of actual physical investigation, for centuries past was frequently debated in publications such as *Unser Pommerland*, the *Heimat* magazine begun in 1912, thus keeping the story alive. While many of the publications originated in Pomerania itself, the significance and level of diffusion of the Vineta story may also be gauged from the fact that some, both factual and creative, originated, or were at least published, in other places — for example in Berlin, Leipzig, Göttingen, Frankfurt and Hamburg.³⁷² In his short book, *Vineta, die von den Meereswellen verschlungene Wendenstadt in Prosa und Poesie*, editor Karl Koch had

³⁷² Carl Schuchhardt, *Arkona, Rethra, Vineta* (Berlin: Hans Schoetz, 1926); Richard Hennig, *Wo lag Vineta*, in Mannus-Bücherei, 53, hrsg. vom Reichsbund für Deutsche Vorgeschichte, (Leipzig: Curt Kabitzsch Verlag, 1935); Ludwig Horn, *Vineta: Erinnerungen eines Heimatsuchers* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1926); Rolfs und Burkhardt (eds.), *Usedom und Wollin* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Moritz Diesterweg, 1925); Werner Jansen, *Die Volkssagen* (Hamburg: Georg Westerman Verlag, 1923).

referred to Richard Hennig’s article in the 1906 edition of *Daheim*, in which the author comments that while legends of sunken castles and villages are commonplace in northern Germany, none of them are as well known as the name Vineta, “den alle Welt im deutschen Vaterlande kennt”.³⁷³ Richard Hennig, a native of Berlin and professor at the Verkehrshochschule in Düsseldorf, continued to produce articles on the location of the sunken city during the Weimar period, in publications such as *Unser Pommerland*, the *Historische Zeitschrift* and the *Mannus-Bücherei*.³⁷⁴

The Director of the Berlin Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Carl Schuchhardt, described by Richard Hennig as “der ausgezeichnete Altmeister der Völkerkunde”, published in 1926, in his *Arkona, Rethra, Vineta*, what historian and folklorist Alfred Haas describes as a revised and extended version of reports of the proceedings of the Berlin Academy of Sciences.³⁷⁵ According to Haas, the second and third sections of Schuchhardt’s work in particular — Rethra and Vineta — deal with questions long in dispute, and endeavour, through careful study of historical sources and on-site archaeological investigations, to provide definitive answers. The point is made here merely to illustrate the widespread interest in and knowledge of Vineta.

Another feature of Vineta literature in the Weimar period is the fact that a number of publications appeared, in which a lot of the material previously published on Vineta was discussed, listed, or reproduced, thus enabling the reader or researcher to follow developments in the Vineta story over the centuries, particularly in the search for the sunken city. The publications included monographs and edited volumes by writers such as Hermann Kasten and Karl Müller, Erich Scheil, Adolf Hofmeister, and Rolfs and Burkhardt, while articles by Heinrich Pudor and Adolf Hofmeister appeared in journals

³⁷³ Karl Koch (Hrsg), *Vineta, die von den Meereswellen verschlungene Wendenstadt in Prosa und Poesie* (Stettin: Verlag von Arthur Schuster, 1910), 22.

³⁷⁴ Richard Hennig, *Die Lösung des Vineta-Rätsels*, in *Unser Pommerland*, Heft 6 (Stettin: Verlagsbuchhandlung und Druckerei Fischer und Schmidt, 1925); Richard Hennig, *Auf nach Vineta*, in *Unser Pommerland* (Stettin: Fischer und Schmidt, 1926), 212–213; Richard Hennig, *Wo lag Vineta*, in *Mannus-Bücherei*, 53, hrsg. vom Reichsbund für Deutsche Vorgeschichte (Leipzig: Curt Kabitzsch Verlag, 1935), 111–113.

³⁷⁵ Richard Hennig, *Die Lösung des Vineta Rätsels*; Carl Schuchhardt, *Arkona, Rethra, Vineta*, 2. Auflage (Berlin: Hans Schoetz, 1926); Alfred Haas, *Arkona, Rethra, Vineta*, in *Unser Pommerland* (1926), 373. Haas’s article is a review of Carl Schuchhardt’s book of the same name.

such as *Unser Pommerland* and the *Monatsblätter der Gesellschaft für pommersche Geschichte und Altertumskunde*.³⁷⁶

In the area of creative literature, collections of Pomeranian and North German myths and legends continued to be published during the period, in some cases being revised or extended versions of previously published material. Vineta appears in all the collections, either through re-telling of the legend itself, or utilisation of the name of the sunken city as a motif representing areas lost to the sea, lakes or other stretches of water.³⁷⁷

In some cases the legend has been used in its entirety as a motif in a longer story. This is particularly so in the case of *Die Stadt auf dem Meeresgrunde*, a chapter in *Die wunderbare Reise des kleinen Nils Holgersson mit den Wildgänsen*, by the Swedish writer Selma Lagerlöf, the first woman to win the Nobel prize for literature in 1909.³⁷⁸ Commissioned by the Swedish National Teachers' Association to write a geography reader for public schools, the book was first published in Swedish in 1906 under the title *Nils Holgerssons underbara resa genom Sverige (Nils Holgersson's wonderful journey across*

³⁷⁶ Hermann Kasten und Karl Müller (eds.), *Pommerland: Ein Heimatbuch*, (Leipzig: Friedrich Brandstetter, 1926), 385–392, 400; Erich Scheil, *Die Insel Wollin in Dichtung und Sage*, and *Die Insel Usedom in Dichtung und Sage*, in *Die Insel Wollin: Ein Heimatbuch und Reiseführer*, edited by Peter August Rolfs. Nachdruck der Ausgabe von 1933. (Husum: Druck und Verlagsgesellschaft, 1984.)152–157,119–127; Adolf Hofmeister, *Der Kampf um die Ostsee vom 9. bis 12. Jahrhundert* (Greifswald: Verlag Ratsbuchhandlung L. Bamberg, 1931); Rolfs und Burkhardt (Hrsg), *Usedom und Wollin* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Moritz Diesterweg, 1925), 6–10, 39–40; Heinrich Pudor, *Vineta in der Dichtung*, in *Unser Pommerland: Monatschrift für das Kulturleben der Heimat*, hrsg. von der Heimatvereinigung 'Unser Pommerland' (Stettin: Verlagsbuchhandlung und Druckerei Fischer und Schmidt, 1926), 321; Adolf Hofmeister, *Die Vineta-Frage in Monatsblätter der Gesellschaft für pommersche Geschichte und Altertumskunde*, Nr. 6, 46. Jahrgang (Stettin, 1932), 81–89.

³⁷⁷ Werner Jansen, *Die Volkssagen* (Hamburg: Georg Westerman Verlag, 1923),165; A. Haas, *Pommersche Wassersagen* (Greifswald: Verlag von Karl Moninger, 1923),37–38; A. Haas, *Usedom-Wolliner Sagen*, zweite Auflage (Stettin: Verlag von Arthur Schuster, 1924),140–144. Haas here adds further detail to the legend as told by Temme (1840), in that he mentions an old path which the people of the village of Loddin traditionally called 'der Landweg nach Vineta.' He also comments that when Meinhold was researching the Vineta story a century previously he had been told of a number of other paths which reputedly led to the town; Karl Thieme, *Sagen der versunkenen Stadt Vineta und andere Sagen der Inseln Usedom-Wollin* (Swinemünde: Druck und Verlag von W. Friszsche, 1925), 9–22; A Haas, *Rügensche Sagen*, neunte Auflage (Bergen, Rügen: Verlag von Walter Krohß, 1939), 15. In these *Sagen* Vineta is said to have also been known as 'Niniveh'. The *Sagen* were originally published in 1891.

³⁷⁸ Selma Lagerlöf, *Die Stadt auf dem Meeresgrunde* in Rolfs und Burkhardt (Hrsg), *Usedom und Wollin*, (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Moritz Diesterweg, 1925), 6–10. There is a slightly longer version of Lagerlöf's story in Hermann Kasten und Karl Müller (eds.), *Pommerland: Ein Heimatbuch* (Leipzig: Friedrich Brandstetter, 1926), 385–392.

Sweden). It was published in English in two volumes in 1906 and 1907, and in German in the nineteen twenties and thirties.³⁷⁹ In it Selma Lagerlöf describes the journey of Nils Holgersson, a Swedish schoolboy, over the different provinces of Sweden, on the wings of a goose. The writer is said to have spent time studying the flora and fauna of Sweden, as well as the folklore and legends of Swedish provinces, before beginning to write. The book appeared at least twice in German during the Weimar period, and the chapter describing Nils Holgersson's experience of finding himself unexpectedly in the sunken city appeared separately, in particular in some of the *Heimat* publications in Pomerania. According to Erich Scheil, Lagerlöf's treatment of Nils Holgersson's visit to Vineta is masterly.³⁸⁰

From the point of view of Vineta literature, it is interesting that the German legend of Vineta was included in what is essentially a geographical description of Sweden. It is, however, made clear in the story that the sunken city is in Pomerania. Furthermore it should be remembered that, according to one version of the legend, Vineta's trade passed to the town of Visby on the Swedish island of Gotland after its destruction.³⁸¹ Selma Lagerlöf had published a story called *I Vineta* in 1899, in which she equated Visby in Sweden with Vineta and that story was later translated into English.³⁸² All of these factors, allied to the historical links between Sweden and Pomerania, presumably resulted in the story of Vineta being well known in Sweden.

³⁷⁹ Selma Lagerlöf, *Wunderbare Reise des kleinen Nils Holgersson mit den Wildgänsen* (München: Verlag von Albert Langen, 1920); Selma Lagerlöf, *Niels Holgersens wunderbare Reise mit den Wildgänsen* (Leipzig: Hesse und Becker Verlag, 1931).

³⁸⁰ Erich Scheil, *Die Insel Usedom in Dichtung und Sage*, in *Die Insel Wollin: Ein Heimatbuch und Reiseführer*, Band 2, hrsg. von Peter August Rolfs. Nachdruck der Ausgabe von 1933. (Husum: Druck und Verlagsgesellschaft, 1984), 127.

³⁸¹ See Temme, 25; Bäbler, 7; Falkenberg, 166; Haas (1912), 142; Seydel, 183.

³⁸² Lagerlöf, *The Tale of a Manor and other Sketches* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1922), 199–226.

Main motifs

Vineta as place of origin or desired destination

While the recognition of Vineta as the place of origin or as a desired utopia has been a feature of the creative literature across different eras, it is understandable that it should be particularly so in the Weimar period. The psychological impact of the events of the First World War and its aftermath engendered feelings of insecurity and instability, giving rise to a heightened desire for a return to some form of stable environment or safe haven. It is unsurprising that a longing for security might be somewhat assuaged by thoughts of a return to Germany's mythological past, particularly to those elements of the past that portrayed a prosperous, stable and open society, as depicted in the Vineta legend.

One of the works in which Vineta is identified as a place of origin or homeland is *Träume in Vineta* by Felix Braun, an Austrian writer of Jewish origin, who later converted to Catholicism, and spent the years from 1939–1951 in England in order to escape persecution by the Nazis.³⁸³

The structure of the work might be regarded as reflecting to a certain extent the writer's personal journey, in that he locates his *Träume* within the framework of an introduction or 'Eingang' dealing largely with reminiscences of his youth, and an 'Ausgang' or epilogue where he prepares to return to his life's journey. In between he assembles a collection of his previously published short stories and legends, with no direct connection with the sunken city, and written over a number of years, from 1909 to 1917.

In the 'Eingang' the narrator, having stood for a long time at the railing of an emigrant ship, watching the setting sun sinking into the sea, suddenly realises that the ship has stopped and that he is alone on deck.³⁸⁴ He descends through all three decks; all are empty, even the cabin of the young golden-haired Norwegian woman, whom he has tried

³⁸³ Felix Braun, *Träume in Vineta: Legenden* (München: Georg Müller Verlag, 1919).

³⁸⁴ Braun, 1–4. The initial location chosen by the writer — an emigrant ship — may presage his later emigration to England.

unsuccessfully on a number of occasions to engage in conversation.³⁸⁵ Noticing a gangway he continues to climb downwards. One cannot avoid the impression that he is descending through layers of time into his past. He reaches the bottom and finds himself in an empty town — from the title of the work presumably Vineta, though the description is very much at odds with that normally given in the Sagen. This is Vineta after the destruction, engulfed by the sea and bearing all the hallmarks of a dead city, denuded of its population, with empty abandoned houses and a heavy silence all around — a metaphor perhaps for Germany destroyed by war. The only signs of life are strange-looking plants. The pavements are moss-covered and the Gothic towers of the cathedral, in which hang two large bells, are covered in seaweed and algae. The narrator comes upon a garden, not far from the central square, picks and smells an asphodilla flower and immediately feels as if he is disappearing into a mist. He sits down on a bench. Above him the sky has a strange appearance and there is a roaring sound like the sea:

‘[...] ich hörte jetzt ein Rauschen. Ich sah empor und merkte, daß der Himmel hier rauscht, wie sonst nur das Meer rauscht. Wolken waren nicht auszunehmen, doch unablässig bewegten sich große und kleine Schatten an diesem wunderbaren Himmel. Der Mond ging auf, [...]. Er zitterte, wie in Wasser gespiegelt, und als im Wasser schwebende trübe Lichtreflexe zeigten sich fremde Sterne’.³⁸⁶

He is apparently unsurprised at the sight of an ancient frigate lying across the street — one cannot avoid thinking of abandoned artillery on a deserted battlefield — and walks on towards the edge of the town, finally reaching what he seems to recognise as his father’s house:

‘Dann war es mir, als ob das letzte Haus am Rande der Stadt, wo die riesige Mauer hinzieht, mein Vaterhaus wäre. Ich öffnete die schwere Pforte und trat ein. Als ich

³⁸⁵ There is an echo of Heine’s *Seegespenst* in the narrator’s description of and desire for the young blonde Norwegian woman. In this case, however, the object of desire is, or has been present, and has not encouraged potential advances on the part of the narrator.

³⁸⁶ Braun, 3.

die Treppe erstieg, überkam es mich wie von meiner Kindheit her. Da war mein Zimmer'.³⁸⁷

It is as if the soldier is returning home from battle.³⁸⁸ He finds food and wine in the cupboard, eats his fill, then lies on his bed, not to sleep, but to remain awake, to keep watch.

Waves of impressions engulf him and visions of his life glide before him — “multilayered fragments of memory, odd bits of debris from the past, dream elements, gaping absences” — a palimpsest of memories rising, superimposing themselves one on another and fading again.³⁸⁹ The images that rise before his mind evoke what the narrator calls “der Traum früher Tage”, the dream of other days.³⁹⁰ It seems as if he is watching himself from a distance and again experiencing the emotions he felt at various times, emotions that may have been suppressed from childhood or youth and that he may now perhaps resolve. He sees the cities along the Rhine and the plains of the Danube and a little man on a scrawny horse disappearing into the deep, into his origins, only to re-emerge changed:

‘Es kamen Wellen geflossen, stiegen hoch, überschlugen sich, versanken; [...] aus dem schon in vielen Farben schwankenden Geflute erhoben sich Gesichte und glitten dahin. Ich sah ein Getümmel von Gestalten, immer wieder erkannte ich mich unter ihnen [...]. Ich sah die Städte am Rhein und die Ebenen der Donau und der kleine Mann auf dem dürren Pferde schwand in die Tiefe, in seinen Ursprung hinab, aus dem ich ihn anders wiederkommen sah’.³⁹¹

The twelve stories that follow have no direct connection with Vineta, but the sunken city provides a supportive frame, within which subconscious memory allows the narrator to re-experience not alone personal memories of childhood and earlier years but also the

³⁸⁷ Braun, 4.

³⁸⁸ Braun did not have personal experience of military life as he was judged unfit for service. He served instead in the *Kriegsfürsorgeamt*, where he presumably learned of the difficulties of soldiers at the Front, as well as those of invalided or disabled war veterans.

³⁸⁹ Kennedy, 181.

³⁹⁰ Braun, 4.

³⁹¹ Braun, 4.

legends and myths which have helped create and anchor his cultural background. Some, like stories of Attila and the Nibelungen, are tales of Germany's historical or mythological past. Others are simple legends, some of which are set in Austria, the author's homeland. Each story is however linked to the next by the realisation on the part of the narrator that he is in a waking dream; he feels as if he is under water, envisioning past events or experiencing past emotions.

The dreams of the past begin to fade, and in the 'Ausgang' the narrator makes his way with difficulty back to the boat, anxious lest he should miss it, slipping on the moss and algae under his feet and pushing his way through shoals of scaly fish, octopuses and crabs that slap against his face and hands.³⁹² Guided by a light, which he later discovers is the sun, he reaches the gangway of the ship, just as it is about to be pulled up, and climbs into the boat, to which the passengers have already returned. The young Norwegian girl, whom he had previously tried to engage in conversation, is on deck, carrying strange flowers in her hand, which she says the captain had gathered on the island where they had landed. She walks away, leaving him with a feeling of abandonment and the sadness of departure.

Braun's story differs significantly from that of many other writers of Vineta literature, in the sense that while the narrator identifies strongly with the sunken city and feels secure and at home there, he in no way feels tied to his past, nor does he wish to remain there. Vineta holds him for a while, allowing waves of thoughts, dreams and memories of the past to engulf his mind, but the sunken city does not attempt to retain him. He has progressed and moved beyond it, accepting that life has changed and willing to adapt to the changes. Just as "der kleine Mann auf dem durren Pferde" re-emerges from the deep a different person, so too does the narrator, having briefly re-experienced his origins, return willingly to the ship to pursue his different life journey.³⁹³ Though the book was published in 1919, one cannot avoid the impression that it foreshadows the significant changes that the writer will make many years later, firstly in becoming a Catholic after the death of his father and then in 1939, through fear of the Nazis, moving to England. Braun remained in England for more than ten years, until 1951. During part of that time he taught

³⁹² Braun, 225–226.

³⁹³ Braun, 4.

literature and art history at third level in Durham, Liverpool and London. He returned to Vienna in 1951 following the Austrian government's encouragement of writers and artists to return home.

Attitudes to death

The nature of the Vineta legend means that the theme of death is present in much of the literature about the sunken city. The attitudes towards death can vary substantially however, from terror, to resignation or acceptance, to welcoming or even longing for death as a release from a life that is in effect no more than a living death. Occasionally a number of contrasting death-related motifs may even occur within the same work, as for example in Erich Arndt's three-act romantic tragedy, *Vineta*.³⁹⁴

One of the most striking motifs used by Arndt is that of people enduring what might be called a 'living death', a concept that has particular relevance, given that the play was written not long after the end of the First World War. The continuous political, economic, physical and cultural upheavals suffered by German society over many decades, coupled in particular with the extreme trauma experienced during the course of the War and its aftermath, makes such an image realistic and understandable, from the point of view of both the writer and his audience or readership.

The play takes place on board the 'Albatros' in the North Sea, in the middle of the eighteenth century. The boat, though damaged, has come through a bad storm and the prevailing sultry heat and fiery red glow of the evening sky, as well as the story of the sunken city as told to two children by one of the crew, highlight the sense of mystery and menace permeating the atmosphere on board ship. A multiplicity of emotions — vengeance, despair, violence, acceptance, resignation — are experienced by the main protagonists in the play, perhaps understandably so in light of the fact that the author, a neurologist, no doubt encountered at close quarters the complete range of human emotions

³⁹⁴ Erich Arndt, *Vineta: Eine romantische Tragödie* (München: Die Wende, 1921).

in the course of his professional career, which spanned the First World War and its aftermath.³⁹⁵

Vengeance and death are personified in the character of Stiena, second wife of ship's captain Christian Rassow, whose desire for revenge against both her former lover, Knut Dragmar, and her husband, Christian Rassow, who she discovers is Dragmar's father, is central to the action. The story of Vineta, which Stiena overhears boatman Christoph Ehmke telling the children, has a significant effect on her and she draws from it many of the images which she uses to portray the psychological destruction of her spirit through the treachery of Knut Dragmar. After Knut's betrayal, she felt as if she were lying on the dark bed of the sea, full of hatred and murderous thoughts, "Ich lag verflucht auf finstern Meeresgrund, und Haß und Mord schliefen gesellt mit mir in fürchterlicher Tiefe".³⁹⁶ Speaking to her former lover, Stiena accuses him of having killed her spirit, "Ihr habt die Seele meiner stolzen Jugend in den Tod gejagt".³⁹⁷

She is consumed by a desire for revenge and appears to try to justify or explain this desire by asking the boatman, "Verfluchte können keine Gnade geben, Christoph, nicht wahr? Denn sie haben auch keine empfangen — meinst Du nicht so?"³⁹⁸ Stiena plots to sink the ship and its passengers with the aid of the young cabin boy, Claas Paalzow, who has agreed to damage further the spot on the hull which had sprung a leak during the storm and to destroy the pumps to prevent the water being pumped out.

In the course of the drama it becomes clear that other murders have preceded those now planned. Rassow confesses to his wife that in a fit of jealousy he had killed the husband of Gold-Marei, his former lover and mother of his son, Knut Dragmar. Stiena too has been guilty of murder, having drowned the woman with whom Knut Dragmar in his turn had betrayed her. This deed has destroyed Stiena and robbed her of her soul. The metaphor she

³⁹⁵ Erich Arndt (1872–1938) was a 'Nervenarzt' in Greifswald and in Meiningen (Thüringen) from c. 1909 onwards. There is no record of his having taken active part in WWI, but it may be assumed that because of his profession he encountered many war victims, perhaps those suffering from shell shock or other post traumatic stress disorders. After WWI he worked in Waldenburg (Schlesien).

³⁹⁶ Arndt, 64.

³⁹⁷ Arndt, 45.

³⁹⁸ Arndt, 21.

uses to describe her state of mind evokes the sunken city of Vineta, its ruined splendours mirroring the destruction of her young soul, once innocent and pure as the morning dew, but now riven with guilt as she goes through life with bloodied hands:

‘Unschuldig war ich, rein wie Morgentau. [...] Mit blutbefleckten Händen geh’ ich jetzt durchs Leben [...]. Zugrunde ging ich, lag zerbrochen und versunken da, wie tief im Meer mit allen Tempeln, allen Herrlichkeiten der jungen Menschenseele [...]’.³⁹⁹

She too, like Vineta, is long dead, and she explains to Knut Dragmar that he is speaking with the ghost of a dead woman, “Ihr sprecht mit einem Geiste, Dragmars Knut, mit dem Gespenst von einer toten Frau. Sie ist versunken längst, und längst ertrunken”.⁴⁰⁰ Her belief that the faithlessness of her lover killed her soul also comes across in her conversation with boatman, Christoph Ehmke, when she asks whether he thinks it possible to be already dead, while still alive, “Meint ihr nicht, Christoph, es könnte auch schon im Leben gestorben sein?”⁴⁰¹ Ehmke is not, however, as philosophical as the captain’s wife and answers simply, “So lang noch de Sünn schient, lewt man ümmer noch, gnädige Fru”.⁴⁰²

Arndt’s play also makes use of a contrasting motif often found in the Vineta literature however — the fact that death may be regarded in a positive light, as a welcome release and a means of returning to one’s place of origin or home. This is very evident as the drama progresses towards the tragedy of the sinking of the ship, and Stiena seems to assume the character of death and welcomes her return to the bed of the sea, to her origins, to the mother who bore her:

³⁹⁹ Arndt, 28.

⁴⁰⁰ Arndt, 45.

⁴⁰¹ Arndt, 22.

⁴⁰² Arndt, 22.

‘Wir sinken alle still, friedlich nieder in das Meer, das uns erzeugt, gebar, erhielt auf seiner Flut, an seinem Strand. Nun schlingt es uns hinab, und, ihre Kinder, ruhen wir an der großen Mutter Herzen’.⁴⁰³

She knows that those who die with her in the sinking ship will not be of the same mind. She herself is not responsible, however; it is fate itself that has ordained that they sink into the deep grave, from which, as sailors, they have been separated only by thin boards:

‘Klagt mich nicht an, die Tote nicht, die gnadenlos Verfluchte, klagt Euer Verhängnis an! Euer Schicksal ist’s, das Euch versenkt ins ungeheure Grab, auf dem Ihr schon von Kindheit an auf dünnen Brettern, kaum fester als ein Sarg, geschwebt’.⁴⁰⁴

As death approaches, Stiena, accompanied by Knut Dragmar, seems to become increasingly withdrawn from normal life. She makes no attempt to save herself, but insists that Christian Rassow, her husband, take his place in the life-boat. To his question “Hat denn Euch beid’ der Böse in die Welt gesetzt?” she gives an enigmatic answer:

‘Leb’ Dir und Deinen Kindern! Zu uns gehörst Du nicht.[...]. Ich bin nicht mehr was ich vor Stunden war [...]. Du bist uns fremd; mit Dir kann selbst der Tod uns nicht vereinen’.⁴⁰⁵

It is as if she already belongs to another realm, a stranger to her husband. A haze surrounds her. She attempts to get Knut Dragmar to leave, but he refuses, saying “Ich bleibe bei Dir, bist Du ein Unhold, Nixe, bist Du der Meerestiefe Gottheit und heilig Rätsel”.⁴⁰⁶

As Stiena and Dragmar discuss what happened between them in the past, and his betrayal of her, it becomes clear to Stiena that his love for her is genuine. The Vineta motif surfaces again in her comparison of herself to a damned spirit, who, like Vineta, rose from the deep and brought death and destruction to all who approached her. Now, however, she

⁴⁰³ Arndt, 55.

⁴⁰⁴ Arndt, 55.

⁴⁰⁵ Arndt, 62.

⁴⁰⁶ Arndt, 63.

is freed from the bonds of her hatred and at peace with Dragmar, her saviour, as they prepare to sink, like the golden gates of Vineta, back into the sea:

Die goldnen Tore sinken nieder [...] – doch selig sinken sie, entsühnt, erlöst vom Fluche, und im stillen Frieden ruht der Retter mit dem durch Liebe freigesprochenen Gespenst.⁴⁰⁷

Dragmar opens the door of the cabin and Stiena welcomes with open arms the approaching waves, across which the golden sun of morning seems to have illuminated a shimmering path:

‘Du ew’ges Meer, es kommen Deine Kinder! Sie wollen ruhen. Sie kommen schuldbeladen, doch freigesprochen durch der Liebe freie Göttlichkeit, und schuldlos wollen sie in Deiner Reinheit und in Deiner Ruhe schlafen’.⁴⁰⁸

The calm confidence with which they face death and final judgment is further emphasised by their belief that God will be a merciful judge — “Der nimmt uns wohl in seinem Sternentempel auf, wo Lieb-Erlöste still in sel’gen Scharen wohnen”.⁴⁰⁹

The manner in which both Stiena and Knut Dragmar welcome their approaching death and return to the sunken city on the bed of the sea, echoes sentiments found in much of the creative literature regarding Vineta. In this case, however, the desire to die is particularly strong, and death seems to provide not only a welcome return to what they see as their spiritual home in the sea, but also a release from guilt, an opportunity for expiation of past sins. Such sentiments might be seen as understandable in the aftermath of the First World War, at a time when the morality of engagement in bloody conflict and experience of its devastating effects left deep and lasting psychological scars on the minds of many.

Vineta: the name as motif

The significance of the name ‘Vineta’ and its acceptance as a motif in its own right is attested to by its use in the title of a number of works which are not specifically concerned with the sunken city and in which there is little or no subsequent reference to the Vineta

⁴⁰⁷ Arndt, 64.

⁴⁰⁸ Arndt, 64.

⁴⁰⁹ Arndt, 64.

story. The fact that the works in question do not necessarily tell stories of destruction — which one might expect of writers whose knowledge of Vineta is limited to the fact that the city was destroyed by flood — but use the name also to represent love and friendship, is indicative of a high level of understanding of the story of Vineta within the German-speaking world and beyond. Vineta is accepted as a metaphor not only for death, destruction, evil and greed, but also for positive virtues such as friendship, love, loyalty and generosity — a clear example of the flexibility of the motif. Among the works in question is Hans Eschelbach's largely autobiographical work, *Vineta: erlebtes und erträumtes*.⁴¹⁰ It seems possible that the catalyst for Eschelbach's use of "Vineta: erlebtes" in the title was his childhood memory of the destruction caused by the Rhine bursting its banks in his hometown of Bonn. The young child was very impressed by the lumps of ice thrown up by the flood, which stripped the bark from the lower half of the trees in the Ulmenallee, while rats fled before the rising flood waters. He still remembers the hissing steam rising from the yellow ice-laden water as the workmen, having repaired broken lead pipes, tipped the glowing coals from their braziers into the flood. The struggle between water, ice and fire remains in his memory.

While specific reference to the sunken city does not occur until the end of the book, Eschelbach's 'erträumtes Vineta', the Vineta of his imagination, is a positive symbol, where the power of friendship and love enables one to transcend the humdrum and often sad reality of human existence and to experience, perhaps even momentarily, a vision of something beyond oneself. The narrator recounts a number of his positive experiences as a teacher, as for example when difficult or disabled students responded to his interest in them and the help he gave.⁴¹¹ Though he does not link these experiences specifically with the sunken city, it is clear that where other writers may see Vineta as representing death and destruction, the writer sees in the sunken city a metaphor for kindness, for goodness and concern for others. For Eschelbach this is part of the legacy of Vineta.

The only direct reference to the sunken city in Eschelbach's work occurs in the context of the writer's relationship with his old school inspector, Joseph Wolter, later to become his

⁴¹⁰ Hans Eschelbach, *Vineta, erlebtes und erträumtes* (Bonn: Veritas-Verlag, 1926).

⁴¹¹ Eschelbach, 36–47, 72.

brother-in-law, with whom he has maintained the type of friendship which survives long periods of separation. Vineta's bells ring out in celebration when the two friends meet, even after many years of separation: "Immer ist es köstlich, wenn wir uns nach Jahren der Trennung wiederfinden: wir brauchten uns nur ansehen, und alle Glocken Vinetas läuten".⁴¹²

In linking such positive experiences with the name Vineta, Eschelbach shows an understanding of the Vineta story which goes beyond what might be expected of somebody who does not appear to have had family links nor to have spent any significant period of time in the area where the sunken city reputedly stood.

A similar understanding of the significance of the sunken city occurs in Ludwig Horn's autobiographical novel, *Vineta. Erinnerungen eines Heimatsuchers*.⁴¹³ There is no reference to Vineta other than in the title. Nevertheless Horn uses a motif common to much of creative literature about Vineta — the search for home and the recognition of Vineta as representing one's origins and the place to which one wants to return. By using Vineta as a metaphor in the title, Horn shows his own knowledge of the story as well as an expectation that his readers will be familiar with it.

Christian/religious motifs

While the unification of Germany in 1871 under Prussian leadership had led to the strengthening of Protestantism, the provisions of the Weimar Constitution of 1919 granted freedom of belief and religious practise to all residents of the German State. The Constitution did not provide for a State church, with the result that Protestantism, though by far the largest religious grouping in the State, with approximately sixty-five per cent of the total population, was no longer the established or state-sponsored religion in Prussia. Admission to State offices was not dependent on religious adherence. Catholics could occupy leadership positions in government and Jews played an active role in cultural life. Nevertheless the Catholic population's distrust of the State, which had greatly increased during Bismarck's anti-Catholic 'Kulturkampf' measures of the 1870s,

⁴¹² Eschelbach, 94.

⁴¹³ Ludwig Horn: *Vineta. Erinnerungen eines Heimatsuchers*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1926)

continued to exist. In addition feelings of resentment arose among many Protestant clergymen at the changed status of their church and what they perceived as a loss of prestige. Furthermore, the rise of Socialism, as evidenced by the continuing growth of the SPD, and the increasing threat of Communism due to expanding Communist Party membership, all contributed to a growing sense of unease, particularly among reactionary and conservative elements of the population.

Insofar as Vineta literature is concerned, religious and ideological motifs continued to feature in the 1930s, with one of the best examples being found in *Abenteuer in Vineta*, a novel by Kurt Heuser, which might with some justification be said to straddle both Weimar and Nazi eras.⁴¹⁴ In addition to having “die Duftigkeit eines Traumes, die Leichtigkeit eines Märchens [und] die Farbigkeit einer Allegorie”, the novel is described as being full of references and innuendos in relation to the period in which it was written, thus giving it also “die gedankliche Schwere einer Problemdichtung”.⁴¹⁵ This characteristic of the novel is understandable in the context of Heuser’s own background and diverse experience. A qualified lawyer, supposedly destined to follow in his stepfather’s footsteps and embark on a career in banking, he instead opted to study tropical agriculture and spent some years as a cotton planter in Portuguese East Africa, where he also began to write.⁴¹⁶ Returning to live in Germany in the early thirties he wrote *Abenteuer in Vineta*. The setting of the novel within a mythical long-lost city facilitates a distancing of himself from the centre of the action, a distance that might be said to be all the greater because of his absence of some years abroad. It also perhaps reflects his personal experience, as the Vineta of the legend, originally very much on the periphery of the German landmass and now separated both in time as well as visually by its location on the seabed, is effectively just as remote as was Heuser’s temporary African home. The choice of Vineta might be

⁴¹⁴ Kurt Heuser, *Abenteuer in Vineta* erste bis vierte Auflage (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1933). Published in 1933, with the date of writing given elsewhere as 1932.

⁴¹⁵ Willi Fehse, *Der Simpl.-Hund apportiert Bücher*, in *Simplicissimus*, Heft 52, Jg. 37. 26.03.1933. p.618. (*Simplicissimus* 1896 bis 1944 (Online Edition), hrsg. von der Klassik Stiftung Weimar der Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek).

⁴¹⁶ In his essay *Die Insel Wollin in Dichtung und Sage*, Erich Scheil refers to Heuser as “der afrikanische Farmer”. See Erich Scheil, *Die Insel Wollin: Ein Heimatbuch und Reiseführer*, hrsg. von Peter August Rolfs. Nachdruck der Ausgabe von 1933, (Husum: Druck und Verlagsgesellschaft, 1984), 152. *Abenteuer in Vineta* was written after Heuser’s return to Germany. He later became known as a writer of film scripts.

seen as a safe option, one which does not require him personally to adopt a position in relation to political, economic or social developments in Germany, while at the same time allowing him to explore or at least expose the ideas and ideologies which exist in his homeland.

There are myriad ideas and influences, the expression of which necessitates a broad panoply of motifs in the novel. As in earlier works by the author, the setting is alien to normal everyday experience, but in this case the choice of location allows the author to give free rein to his imagination.⁴¹⁷ While clearly aware of the legend of Vineta, it is only in his imagination that the author can experience the sunken city. By introducing a broad, though comparatively modern time-scale within his story — one of the main characters, Gottfried Sternsupp, is said to have arrived in the sunken city when it last surfaced a hundred years ago — the author can cover a period of which he might be expected to have some experience, whether directly or indirectly. In the novel the writer describes the events occurring during a mythical twenty-four hour release of the sunken city. There is a broad assortment of ideologies, values, customs and fashions, as well as mention of such ‘modern’ inventions as telephones, lifts, buses and planes. References to ideological and political ideas and systems abound, as for example when Hannes Wahn, the main protagonist, endorses the Vinetans’ assumption that he is in fact the Prince of Wales, and claims that as people are now living in a time of republics and constitutional monarchies, in the field of taste there can only be one will, his own — that of the Führer!⁴¹⁸ Thus, within the space of a few words different political structures and ideologies are outlined, without the personal position of the author being clarified in any way. What is also immediately striking is the breadth of the images and allusions that the author uses. Though the time allotted to the action is limited, and the broad spectrum of references and motifs condensed within a narrow framework of words, Heuser succeeds in painting a picture of a society in the course of change. Religion and moral standards are among the central themes in the novel, and the story might conceivably be classified as a ‘Gesellschaftsroman’, in that the Vinetan society portrayed is as integral a part of the novel

⁴¹⁷ Many of Heuser’s earlier works were based in Africa, where he spent some years as a cotton planter, and evoked not only the landscape but also the people he encountered.

⁴¹⁸ Heuser, 247.

as are any of the characters. The story describes hour by hour the day spent by Hannes Wahn, who in the early morning mist on a strand at the edge of the Baltic, feeling he wants to die after the loss of the woman he loves, but yet unwilling to kill himself, wades out into the shallow sea. Having removed his shoes and socks and thrown them away, he feels under his feet what he initially thinks is a dead seal. On investigation he discovers the body of a drowned man and pulls him ashore. The victim is dressed in the strange clothing of an earlier age. Opening the man's leather purse, Wahn finds gold and silver minted coins, embossed with the names and heraldic symbols of far-distant cities, together with a parchment giving the man's name as Michael Kammerloh from Vineta. As he buries the victim in the sand, Wahn hears the distant ghostly sound of bells coming closer, from the sea, and when the mist clears and the sun's rays appear over the horizon he sees Vineta rise before him and finds himself in the main square of the sunken city, surrounded by crowds of people. Vineta has just been released for a period of twenty-four hours from the sea-bed, as happens every hundred years, and its inhabitants flock to the square and the cathedral. Wahn notices that while the dress of the people is no different from what he would normally expect to see in any modern city — and not at all like that of the drowned man he has just buried — their clothing seems wet, with buckles and metal buttons rusted and leather covered in mould. Their hair looks as if they have just emerged from the water. The red brick gables of the houses remind Wahn of Stralsund or Lübeck, but he notices that the copper roof of the council building is covered with a greenish mud, while the eaves, window ledges and pillars are draped with seaweed and sea-moss.

The religious atmosphere of the town is immediately established, as the people's first thought is to give thanks for their release, which they know is temporary:

so früh am Morgen ihres neuen Lebens und eben erst aus der langen Finsternis entlassen schien kein anderer Gedanke als Dienst und Dankbarkeit in [den Einwohnern] zu wohnen.⁴¹⁹

Wahn finds himself being propelled along by the movement of the crowds in the direction of the cathedral, from which emanates what appears to be the voice of a preacher, interspersed regularly by an imploring cry from thousands of voices, the words of which

⁴¹⁹ Heuser, 30.

Wahn eventually manages to distinguish, “Was sollen wir tun? Mein Gott, was sollen wir tun?”⁴²⁰

As the crowds emerge from the cathedral, Wahn hears the voice of a young man, cry out, “Wenn am heutigen Tag kein Tropfen Blut vergossen wird, dann werden wir frei. Das haben die Propheten gesagt, ja, sogar aufgeschrieben haben sie das”.⁴²¹

This is the first reference to the theme of blood, which recurs several times during the course of the day, evoking in some cases images that may be regarded as Christian or at least semi-religious in character. Wahn and some of the crowd are puzzled as to what the young visionary means. Is it the blood of Christians or of all of the people? Does it refer perhaps to the prohibition on eating meat? A number of biblical statements are proposed as solutions and discussed in an equable manner, and it is made clear that not all the people are Christian. Nevertheless, the suggestion that it might be Christian blood implies that bloody conflict between Christian and non-Christian is not unknown to the Vinetans.

A feature of Heuser’s Vineta is that while the Christians “kannten vielleicht kein anderes Buch als die Bibel”, they are not generally depicted as being inimical towards non-Christians.⁴²² Nevertheless, they are suspicious of outsiders and fearful of their potentially evil influence on their city. Gottfried Sternsupp, a Hamburger who arrived in the sunken Vineta some hundred years ago, explains to Hannes Wahn: ‘Sie haben da sehr strenge Gesetze [...]. Sie wollen es schaffen, indem sie zur Tugend und Bescheidenheit ihrer Vorfahren zurückkehren [...]. Grade aus diesem Grund glauben sie doch, es könnten schlechte Sitten von irgendwo, vom Ausland, hereingebracht werden [...]’.⁴²³

This attitude of the Vinetans might be said to reflect the desire of some sections of 1930s Germany to live in a world of fixed values and unchanging standards and their unwillingness to embrace modernity. Sternsupp further emphasises the Vinetans’ concerns by warning Hannes Wahn not to do anything which might arouse suspicion that he has

⁴²⁰ Heuser, 32.

⁴²¹ Heuser, 35.

⁴²² Heuser, 49.

⁴²³ Heuser, 115.

Communist tendencies, “Vor allem hüte dich, in den Verdacht des Kommunismus zu geraten, sonst bist du geliefert”.⁴²⁴ Fear of Communism was particularly prevalent in Weimar Germany, with the German Communist Party being seen by the National Socialists as threatening the growth of their party.

Sternsupp’s description of the test to which he was put before being accepted in Vineta is indicative of the serious manner in which the inhabitants regard their religion. Summoned before a committee of professors in black robes, chaired by the philosopher Hotzenplotz, he finds himself being questioned on his religious knowledge, in a manner reflective of the Inquisition and apparently designed to establish his adherence to and understanding of religious orthodoxy as well as his attitudes: “Mich stellten sie ans Kopfende und dann fragten sie und fragten den Großen und den Kleinen Katechismus; nicht nur die Gebote, sondern auch: Was bedeutet das?”⁴²⁵ Sternsupp claims that his strict upbringing ensured that he passed with flying colours.

The Vinetans are, however, so confident of the upright and trustworthy nature of their womenfolk, explains Sternsupp, that an unknown law-maker had in former times decreed that the acceptance by a Vinetan woman of an outsider as her wedded husband, before God and the people, was in itself sufficient guarantee of his worth as a person, a Christian, and the future father of Vinetan children, and entitled him to citizenship of Vineta without further conditions.⁴²⁶

Motif of blood

The motif of blood, already encountered in the warning of the young visionary outside the cathedral, is encountered on a number of other occasions throughout the novel, and is notable for the diversity of situations, both positive and negative, that it symbolises. In the chapter entitled “Die dritte Stunde”, Hannes Wahn stubs his toe against a shard of glass and begins to bleed to such an extent that he fears it will never stop:

⁴²⁴ Heuser, 115.

⁴²⁵ Heuser, 115–116.

⁴²⁶ Heuser, 118.

Das Blut rann und rann. Es war unnatürlich, daß es gar nicht von selber zu fließen aufhören wollte, und aus einer verhältnismäßig so geringfügigen Wunde! [...] es war wie ein Bann oder eine Gespensterei des Klimas, welche verhinderte, daß sich die Wunde nach der natürlichen Weile schloß.⁴²⁷

In the Vineta context, the possible explanation of the unusual bleeding – a magic spell or a ghostly intervention of the climate – reflects two themes that are fundamental to the myth: was the destruction of the town the result of a naturally-occurring phenomenon such as climate change or storm flood, with consequent rises in sea-levels, or was there some paranormal or supernatural intervention, unexplainable within the limitations of human understanding. Heuser here again demonstrates his understanding of the Vineta story and, more importantly, his ability to use it to symbolise the physical and psychological losses suffered by Germany both during and after the First World War. Germany's life blood, spilled in the war, continues to be spent through cession of territory and people, together with monetary and other payments as reparations under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. There seems to be no end to the loss.

A further possible reference to war and the spilling of blood occurs in the fact that Wahn sees an apparent enemy among the onlookers, a man whom he recognises as an opponent, his shadow-side, different from him in every way, who leans forward in pleasurable anticipation at the possibility of watching Wahn bleed to death. When, after treatment by the doctor, it becomes clear that Wahn is out of danger, his adversary tries to turn the crowd against him by reminding them of the stricture of the young man that no blood should be spilled, and accusing Wahn of bringing the wrath of God down on the town through his carelessness.⁴²⁸

At the other end of the spectrum blood is used as a life-giving symbol in the "Vierzehnte Stunde" when the Krebshändler, a wealthy fish merchant and father of Esther, the young woman with whom Wahn has fallen in love, throws himself on the sand in an excess of fear for his fleet before the rising storm. With hands outstretched, as if to receive gifts or plead for mercy, he feels a large drop of blood fall from the cloud into his hand:

⁴²⁷ Heuser, 56.

⁴²⁸ Heuser, 61.

[Er] warf sich auf die Erde, stieß sein altes, edles und zerfurchtetes Lordgesicht in den Sand und breitete die Handflächen aus, wie um Geschenke und Gnaden zu empfangen. Aber nichts spürte er als einen einzigen dicken Blutstropfen, der aus der Wolke in seine Hand gefallen war.⁴²⁹

He fears that, unknown to him, somebody may already have broken the law and spilled blood, thus leading to the immediate destruction of the town.⁴³⁰ He is in despair at the relentless progress through the twenty-four hours of normal life that the Vinetans are granted every hundred years, a twenty-four hour day that represents human life in microcosm, but without the release of death at its end. Yet he realises that there is no point in trying to combat fate:

‘wenn der Untergang der Stadt unabwendbar und Schicksal ist, dann wird er sinnlos nur dadurch, daß wir uns gegen ihn sträuben. Uns war gewährt, in hundert Jahren vierundzwanzig Stunden zu leben, zu sterben war uns aber versagt’.⁴³¹

Despite being condemned to live on the sea bed, and being granted a mere twenty-four hour release every hundred years, the Vinetans were not ready to die, “Der Tod kam, aber er fand uns nie bereit”.⁴³² Today, however, the *Krebshändler* wishes to prepare for death. He licks the spot of blood from his hand and seems to gain courage and strength from it: “er war eine süße Nahrung, die erste Speise, die er an diesem Tag zu sich genommen hatte; und sie erfüllte seine Adern mit Kraft wie Brot und Wein”.⁴³³ The links with Christianity are obvious —it is almost as if he experiences the blood as a viaticum, a symbol of the blood of Christ which prepares and nourishes him. It is worth noting that while the motif of blood, as previously encountered, had been used in a negative way, as

⁴²⁹ Heuser, 261.

⁴³⁰ The first reference to the prohibition on spilling blood was made by the young visionary outside the cathedral, and presumably related to Jewish law (Heuser, 35). The current reference to law (Heuser, 261) could conceivably relate to the restrictions imposed on Germany by the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles.

⁴³¹ Heuser, 262.

⁴³² Heuser, 263.

⁴³³ Heuser, 263.

a symbol of destruction and loss of life, it is now used in a positive manner, supporting life and imbuing the *Krebshändler* with the courage he needs to face what lies ahead.

St. Sebastian motif

Closely linked with the motif of blood is the recurring Sebastian motif, which plays a central role in Heuser's novel. The Christian martyr Sebastian is depicted in a life-like fresco which Hannes Wahn discovers on the inside of a public building. The overtly sexual depiction of the young Christian martyr, whom Wahn addresses as "du pfeilgespickter Braten Sebastian" is shocking in its incongruity:

Dieser Martyrerjüngling war schlank und hübsch wie ein Valentino, und wie er sich in seinem brennenden Schmerze wand, war das schmale rote Tuch, das als einziges seine Blöße bedeckte, im Begriff, von seiner Hüfte zu gleiten, und wurde durch nichts gehalten als durch seine Rute, die sich wie die eines brünstigen Hirsches reckte. Seine Augen waren geschlossen, sein Mund aber lächelte, als ob er die Qualen der Wollust erleiden mußte und nicht den Tod. [...]. Dies hier, dies war berechnet, bis auf den winzigen, herzförmigen Blutstropfen, der dem Leidenden von der Lippe sickerte. Mich würgte der Ekel vorm Anblick dieses Dulders; ich wurde zum Moralisten vor ihm; und doch, und doch war er so wunderschön gemacht, daß ich mich kaum von ihm trennen konnte.⁴³⁴

The image of a young man prepared to sacrifice his life for his religious beliefs is in sharp contrast with his being depicted as taking sensual pleasure in the torture being inflicted upon him. His portrayal in such a manner has the effect of reducing the value of his sacrifice and hence the value of the principles and beliefs for which he is prepared to make such a sacrifice. The ambivalence of Sebastian's attitude is also mirrored in the duality of Hannes Wahn's response: though sickened at this portrayal of the Saint, he nevertheless finds it difficult to drag himself away from the beauty of the fresco. At a later stage in the novel Wahn finds himself being compared with this portrayal of Sebastian, when Esther

⁴³⁴ Heuser, 50.

admits before the Court that when she gave herself to Wahn during the storm “er glich in seiner Ekstase ungemein unserem Sebastian”.⁴³⁵

The blasphemous portrayal of Sebastian in the fresco is followed by a description of the irreligious portrayal of the Virgin Mary in some of the ‘Marienbilder’:

ihr Lächeln ist betörend und gleicht mehr dem Versprechen einer Geliebten, zur Nachtzeit zu kommen, als dem mütterlichen Verzeihen, das die jungfräuliche Mutter Gottes dem armen Sünder gewährt.⁴³⁶

One cannot avoid the conclusion that the images in both of these cases are a reflection of the sexual licentiousness of the Weimar era. Furthermore, both images serve to highlight the tension between believer and non-believer, Christian and heathen, proselytiser and proselyte which is inherent in much of the literature regarding Vineta. Heuser’s description of the lengths to which the artists of Vineta had gone in the luxuriance of their creations, even to the point of profanity, is also perhaps indicative of an increasing secularisation of religious concepts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in the sense that what once might have been regarded as a spiritually uplifting image or model of behaviour is now both executed and viewed in a hedonistic manner.

‘Und so kam es, daß ich in öffentlichen Hallen gewaltige Freskogemälde entdeckte, von einer so unheimlichen Schamlosigkeit des Entwurfs und der Gestaltung, als hätte ein liebestoller Schwarm von Malern seine Phantasie toben lassen, daß ich, der ich doch nicht prüde bin, die Augen niederschlug und errötete. Ja, so war es mit allem: Nach einem schwellenden Aufschwung der schöpferischen Kräfte hatte die Kunst die Grenze nicht nur des Erlaubten sondern auch des Möglichen überschritten, sie war übersteigert und wucherte überall wie Krebs’.⁴³⁷

Later in the day Hannes Wahn, apparently influenced by the Vinetans’ repeated references to Sebastian, in his ‘vision’ of the approaching destruction of the town sees himself naked, tied to a stake in the middle of the market-place, being pierced to the heart by arrows shot

⁴³⁵ Heuser, 402.

⁴³⁶ Heuser, 51.

⁴³⁷ Heuser, 49–50.

from the shadowy windows of the surrounding houses, and yet in a strange way feeling himself to be immortal:

‘Es gab jedesmal einen schrecklichen, schnellen Schlag, der ganz durch meinen Leib riß. Aber es war nur ein Schrecken und beinahe kein Schmerz, obwohl ich doch das Blut an mir herunterrinnen sah, warm und dunkelrot. Und ich mußte lächeln, weil sie mir damit nichts antun konnten [...]. Und wie der letzte Pfeil mitten mein Herz durchbohrt hatte, da war mir sehr wohl; aber ich lebte [...]. Und ich lächelte abermals [...] weil ich nun ganz genau fühlte, daß ich unsterblich war’.⁴³⁸

The significance of Sebastian for the Vinetans is not clarified until the last hours of the day, when the twenty-four hours of freedom granted to the town every hundred years is approaching its end. At that stage one of the masked judges at the Court before which Hannes Wahn has been called to trial and whose voice Wahn recognises as that of the philosopher Hotzenplotz, explains that while the curse put on the town arose as a result of the arrogance and godlessness of the inhabitants, the destruction had taken place immediately after the return home of a Vinetan fleet which had attacked the island of Rhodes, then in the hands of non-believers, and carried off treasure stolen from the destroyed temple of Jerusalem. Instead of returning the treasure to Jerusalem, however, the raiders had brought it home to Vineta and it was now hidden behind the picture of Sebastian.⁴³⁹ The Vinetans had convinced themselves that the treasure was safer with them than in Jerusalem – in reality they regarded the treasure as part of their own wealth – and though they had been advised by their religious leaders that it must be disposed of in the sea so that they might be released from the curse, they had again lost the opportunity to do so on this one day of freedom granted to them every hundred years.

It is difficult to assess Heuser’s philosophy in *Abenteuer in Vineta*. The broad range of motifs and references in the novel serves to highlight the image of the author as an independent spectator, observing what going on around him without making judgments, expressing opinions or proposing solutions. Perhaps it is this quality of not getting

⁴³⁸ Heuser, 404.

⁴³⁹ Heuser, 406. This choice of hiding place provides further evidence of a profane use of the saint by the inhabitants of Vineta.

involved that allowed the author to work, and to be permitted to work as a writer of film scripts during the Nazi era. Nevertheless the fact that he co-wrote the script for the Nazi propaganda film, *Ohm Krüger*, must give rise to the question of whether or not he was a Nazi sympathiser. While no definitive biography of Heuser is available, the publisher Gottfried Bermann Fischer in his obituary of the writer points out that like so many of his generation Heuser became silent under the pressure of barbarianism.⁴⁴⁰ Insofar as writing books is concerned, that seems to be true — Heuser produced no books between 1934 and 1967, though in that period he wrote more than fifty film scripts. Two events of note which give an indication of Heuser’s attitude to the Nazis are reported to have occurred during the Third Reich. Firstly, Bermann Fischer, a Jew and then head of S. Fischer Verlag, reports that the writer provided accommodation for him and his family in his house in Grunewald, on the outskirts of Berlin, when they left their own house at the Nicolassee through fear of the Nazis; he later accompanied them on their flight to Switzerland.⁴⁴¹ Secondly, Heuser is said to have refused Goebbels’ demand that he write the film script for an antisemitic film, *Jud Süß*, on the basis that he had a lot of Jewish friends, a refusal which was later referred to by Marcel Reich-Ranicki as a “historisches Nein”.⁴⁴² The film, produced in 1940, was said to be one of the most notorious and successful antisemitic films produced in Nazi Germany.⁴⁴³ Heuser’s behaviour in these instances would not indicate allegiance to or sympathy with National Socialism.

⁴⁴⁰ Gottfried B. Fischer, *Nachruf auf Kurt Heuser*, in *Die neue Rundschau*, Heft 3, 1975. p. 543.

⁴⁴¹ Gottfried B. Fischer, *Nachruf auf Kurt Heuser*, in *Die neue Rundschau*, Heft 3, 1975. p. 543.

⁴⁴² Marcel Reich-Ranicki, *Historisches Nein*, in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Nr. 145, 27 Juni 1975, p. 21.

⁴⁴³ <http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/holoprelude/judsuss.html> (accessed: 23 February 2016).

Vineta literature from 1933–1945

The advent of Adolf Hitler as Chancellor in 1933 marked the end of the Weimar Republic and brought sweeping changes in political, administrative, social and cultural life in Germany. In the cultural sphere those in favour of the régime saw these changes in a positive light and expressed their approbation through their creative work. On the other hand those who were not in favour found themselves excluded, their work banned or destroyed, their freedom curtailed. While many were forced into silence or emigration for their own protection and that of their families, others found alternative modes of expression, succeeding in dissimulating through the use of artistic and literary devices such as allegory, metaphor or fable.

In the period 1933–1945 two works stand out which display contrasting attitudes on the part of their authors. The first of these is Paul Bendlin's *Geisternacht bei Vineta*, published by the Misdroyer Zeitung in 1935.⁴⁴⁴ Bendlin, a military administrator in Berlin, was also author of *Heimat* ballads about Pomerania and a history of Pomerania for school and home. His nationalist sympathies, as evident in his poem, might be regarded as being in harmony with his occupation as military administrator, and were presumably also the cause of his poem being banned by the Deutsche Verwaltung für Volksbildung in the Soviet zone after World War II.⁴⁴⁵

His long poem, *Geisternacht bei Vineta* — over five hundred lines in all — has as its subtitle *Eine historische Vision* — a historical vision. Published in 1935, the poem tells the history of Pomerania through the spirits of its past leaders and heroes, who appear as ghostly shadows, accompanied by their armies and followers, and relate the stories of their times. The poet's inspiration may well have come from Adolf Pompe's *Pommernlied*, written in 1850, which became a regional anthem in Vorpommern (Western Pomerania), the first two lines of which Bendlin quotes at the beginning of his poem:

⁴⁴⁴ Paul Bendlin, *Geisternacht bei Vineta* (Misdroy: Misdroyer Zeitung, 1935).

⁴⁴⁵ *Liste der auszusondernden Literatur*, hrsg. von der Deutschen Verwaltung für Volksbildung in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone, zweiter Nachtrag (Berlin: Deutsche Zentralverlag, 1948). *Geisternacht bei Vineta* is no. 524 on list.

‘Wenn in stiller Stunde Träume mich umwehn
bringen frohe Kunde Geister ungesehn, [...]’.⁴⁴⁶

Before any of the spirits appear, however, Vineta rises in all her glory, her golden towers and silver portals glowing like Asgard in the light of thousands of flaming torches. Then as the Norse gods, Odin, Freya, Thor and Baldur come south across their rainbow bridge into Pomerania, the graves of long dead heroes open and they emerge one by one, led by Odin’s Valkyries, to tell the history of the land through the ages, from the coming of the earliest tribes through to the Hitler era.

The use of Vineta as a backdrop to the history of Pomerania prior to the coming of Christianity — in Bendlin’s poem the city sinks again when Christianity has been established and the heathen gods disappear into the mists — highlights the importance of the sunken city in the history of the region. Nevertheless, when the spirit of Herzog Wartislaw appears and addresses his Wendish followers, though he refers positively to the splendour of Vineta he treats the disappearance of the wondrous city almost casually, saying “Die große Handelsstadt, sie mußte untergehen, | Doch andere Städte sind erstanden hier im Lande”.⁴⁴⁷ The destruction of the large trading centre does not appear to evoke any sentiment of regret in the dead leader. It is as if nothing matters but the march of the nation towards a new day, bringing the eventual arrival of National Socialism.

It would appear from the poet’s evocation of the past, his extolling of the German spirit that brought industriousness and traditions into the land, the manner in which he paints in a positive light the various developments over the centuries, as for example the coming of Christianity and later of the reforms introduced by Johannes Bugenhagen, and in particular his warm welcome of the Hitler regime, that he is endeavouring in his poem to awaken a high level of nationalistic pride in his countrymen.⁴⁴⁸ His linking of the National Socialist swastika with the sun wheel symbols of pagan Vineta reflects the *völkisch*

⁴⁴⁶ Gustav Adolf Pompe, *Das Pommernlied*, in *Pommern-Fibel* (Hamburg: Christoph v.d.Ropp, 1953), 46.

⁴⁴⁷ Bendlin, 8. Herzog Wartislaw is presumably Duke Wartislaw I (c. 1091–1135), first historical ruler of the Duchy of Pomerania and founder of the Griffin dynasty.

⁴⁴⁸ Johannes Bugenhagen, born in Wolin in 1485, was Martin Luther’s confessor in Wittenberg and later introduced the Protestant Reformation in Pomerania and Denmark.

ideology of extreme nationalism and seems to be intended to provide reassurance that the coming of the Hitler era is a logical development in the progress of the nation :

Und seht! Am Himmel strahlt ein Flammenzeichen!
 ein Hakenkreuz erglänzt in wunderbarem Schein!
 Ein Sonnenrad, schon in Vinetas Mauern
 Vom alten Pommernvolke einstens hoch verehrt.
 Und eine Stimme spricht von lichten Himmelshöhn:
 ‘In diesem Zeichen sei euch Heil und Sieg beschert!...
 Der neue Geist hat Sieg und Heil errungen;
 Das Hakenkreuz erstrahlt am deutschen Herd’.⁴⁴⁹

The link with Germany’s mythical past is further strengthened as the bells of the sunken city ring out in apparent approval and, as the spirits of the dead heroes begin to fade away they raise their hands and cry out, also appearing to show their acceptance of the new regime:

‘Sieg Heil dem Führer und auf Wiedersehen...
 Auf bald’ges Wiedersehen im schönen Pommerland’.⁴⁵⁰

The poet ends his poem by looking forward to a new dawning of the German spirit permeating the world and, just as he had done at the beginning of the poem by quoting lines from Adolf Pompe’s *Pommernlied*, legitimises and supports his aspirations by quoting the last two lines of Emanuel Geibel’s poem *Deutschlands Beruf*, expressing the hope that the world and humanity at large might benefit from German attitudes and ways: “Es mag am deutschen Wesen, | an deutscher Art, die Menschheit und die Welt genesen”.⁴⁵¹

Jura Soyfer’s *Vineta*

The most striking work from the Nazi period that uses the Vineta motif is Jura Soyfer’s drama, *Vineta*.⁴⁵² Soyfer (1912–1939), son of a wealthy Jewish industrialist, whose family

⁴⁴⁹ Bendlin, 20–21.

⁴⁵⁰ Bendlin, 22.

⁴⁵¹ Bendlin, 22.

⁴⁵² Jura Soyfer, *Vineta*, in *Jura Soyfer: Das Gesamtwerk*, ed. Horst Jarka (Wien: Europaverlag, 1980), 628–647. (Subsequently referred to as Soyfer).

fled the Ukraine during the Bolshevik revolution, was reared in Vienna from the age of ten and died in Buchenwald early in 1939. According to Horst Jarka, editor of Soyfer's collected works, his multilingual upbringing — Russian, French and later on German were spoken in the Soyfer household — “provided him with a sensitivity to linguistic nuances which was heightened by attending Karl Kraus' lectures and reading his famous satirical magazine *Die Fackel*”.⁴⁵³ The ‘red Vienna’ in which Soyfer grew up was a place of violent conflict between conservative, reactionary and left-wing camps, and Soyfer became involved at an early age with the Socialist party. Having joined the Socialist Association of High-School Students, he published satirical pieces in their journal. Later, as a university student, he wrote poems and satirical pieces for the *Arbeiter Zeitung*, the official publication of the Austrian Social Democrats and became well-known among the left opposition within the party and highly critical of the weakness of the leadership. Soyfer “celebrated the imminent collapse of capitalism [...], attacked the Austrofascists, the Nazis in Germany and in Austria, the trend towards authoritarianism [...]. The passionate indignation of [his] poems made them perhaps the most rebellious voice in the revolutionary chorus of Party propaganda”.⁴⁵⁴

Following the suspension of parliament by Chancellor Dollfuss in March 1933 and the suppression of the Social Democrats in February 1934, Soyfer and many of his Social Democrat colleagues joined the underground Communist party, which they saw as offering “the only effective resistance against Austrofascism as well as the Nazi danger from across the border”.⁴⁵⁵

With no further outlet for his writings in the Socialist press and knowing that as a left-wing Jew he would be unlikely to get employment as a teacher under the austrofascist regime, Soyfer abandoned his studies and concentrated on honing his writing skills. In late 1935, having managed to get part-time employment with the *Wiener Tag* newspaper, to

⁴⁵³ Horst Jarka, quoted in Soyfer, 533.

Karl Kraus, Austrian writer, journalist and satirist, who renounced his Judaism, founded a newspaper, *Die Fackel* in 1899 in which he launched attacks on subjects such as hypocrisy, psychoanalysis, corruption of the Habsburg empire and nationalism of the pan-German movement.

⁴⁵⁴ Horst Jarka, quoted in *It's up to us: Collected Works of Jura Soyfer*, edited, translated and with an afterword by Horst Jarka (Riverside, CA: Ariadne Press, 1996), 535. (Subsequently referred to as Jarka).

⁴⁵⁵ Jarka, 540.

which he contributed theatre and film reviews as well as other articles of a cultural nature, he also became involved in the underground theatre subculture, inhabited for the most part by left-wing intellectuals, many of whom were Jewish, where he contributed “plays that challenged the cultural machinery whose sterility he criticised in the *Wiener Tag*”.⁴⁵⁶

Soyfer’s *Vineta*, written in 1937, before Hitler’s annexation of Austria, but at a time when the government was effectively fascist and the country was faced with the very real threat of take-over by German National Socialists, is one of a number of ‘Mittelstücke’ written for cabaret performance in an attempt to alert the Viennese to the growing danger facing their society.⁴⁵⁷ Soyfer’s use of the Vineta theme is in stark contrast with that of most of the nineteenth and early twentieth century writers. The longing for the past, which characterises much of the Vineta literature of Romantic, Imperial and Weimar eras, is here replaced by a vision of the sunken city as a dystopia, a dead society.

Soyfer paints a stark and painful picture of the sunken city as a decaying world, inhabited by ‘dead’ people who are devoid of any human sentiment or feeling, incapable of expressing themselves other than through constant repetition of stereotyped clichés, considerably less life-like and making less impact than stylised stick figures. These ‘Vinerer’ (Vinetans) are used by the playwright as a symbol of the inhabitants of Vienna in the period between the two world wars, where twentieth century ‘Wien-eter’ lead a type of half-life, plagued by unemployment and insecurity and coming increasingly under the yoke of fascism, while at the same time maintaining a veneer of normality.

In his essay *Vineta oder die untergegangene (alte?) Welt*, Tamás Lichtmann, professor of German Literature and later of Jewish Cultural History at the Universities of Debrecen and Budapest respectively, outlines Soyfer’s aim as follows:

In *Vineta* sollte [...] die Erstarrung, die Leere und Sinnlosigkeit der zeitgenössischen Wiener Gesellschaft dargestellt werden, und es sollte eben die

⁴⁵⁶ Jarka, 547.

⁴⁵⁷ Soyfer, 628–647. Mittelstücke were short dramas, about fifty minutes in length, which occurred in the middle of a cabaret, preceded and followed by song/dance/other routines. They were generally political and satirical or comic in character, designed to focus attention on political, social and economic situations or problems. Soyfer’s first Mittelstück, *Weltuntergang*, had been staged at the ABC Theater in 1936.

Vision der großen Kälte, der Alptraum des Unterganges, die ‘Wien-eter’ erwecken.⁴⁵⁸

Soyfer’s choice of Vineta as a vehicle to portray both the reality of what was happening in Austria in the period between the two World Wars and his vision of the doom awaiting his countrymen demonstrates once more the widespread knowledge of the Vineta story. Life in the sunken city, described in some of the Sagen as if it were nothing other than everyday life continuing in a different element after the cataclysmic flood, is depicted here in all its lifelessness. The sunken world portrayed by Soyfer is like a nightmare, a dark gloomy vision of a timeless and inanimate world, a place without hope. Normal order has collapsed and though the city still continues to exist spatially on the bed of the sea, its existence is a mere timeless and moribund sham. The sunken city of Vineta is used as a metaphor for Vienna, which in turn represents Austria, a country about to be ‘sunk’ by Hitler and the National Socialists. The ‘reality’ of life in the sunken Vineta is brought into sharp relief in a manner not previously encountered among writers on the theme, while at the same time a similar frightening reality is being actualised in Vienna as the city approaches the catastrophe firstly of the Anschluss and later of the second World War. The process is two-way: Soyfer’s device of using Vineta to represent Vienna results in the sunken city attaining once more a life of its own, albeit a ‘half-life’ which contrasts sharply with the image of the bustling ‘größte von allen Städten, die Europa birgt’, described by Adam von Bremen and other chroniclers. This ‘half-life’ is a reflection of what Soyfer sees happening in Vienna. Vineta, the eleventh-century utopia, is portrayed as a twentieth-century dystopia, in which the inhabitants lead a nightmare existence, symbolising the daily reality of life in Vienna in the inter-war period.

Vineta, according to Horst Jarka, is Soyfer’s radical reversal of that principle often quoted by the Viennese: “Happy is he who forgets what cannot be changed”.⁴⁵⁹ Soyfer’s drama is, in effect, a call for change, for the retention of memory and awareness of how things

⁴⁵⁸ Tamás Lichtmann, *Vineta oder die vergangene (alte?) Welt*, in *Német Filológiai Tanulmányok XXII* (Debrecen: Kossuth Lajos Tudományegyetem, 1994), 96–97.

⁴⁵⁹ Jarka, 557. The song *Glücklich ist, wer vergisst, was nicht zu ändern ist* is the finale to Act I of *Die Fledermaus* (Johann Strauss), the classic Viennese operetta, premiered in 1874, and still performed by the Vienna State Opera every year as part of New Year celebrations. The motto is said to date back to Kaiser Friedrich III of the Holy Roman Empire, Archduke of Austria from 1457.

were and can be. He describes the struggle of the hero of the play, Jonny, who “desperately tries to stay alive in this city of the dead [and] to destroy the illusion that holds captive the people around him”.⁴⁶⁰ Jonny, the old sailor who is effectively the narrator of the action, recounts his arrival in Vineta and his accommodation to and semi-acceptance of ‘life’ in the dead city. He qualifies for citizenship of the sunken city without difficulty, through his ability to forget even why he wants to continue to live, thereby fulfilling, according to the Town Clerk, the minimum requirements for citizenship:

Stadtschreiber: ‘Warum wollen Sie leben?’

Jonny (betroffen): ‘Weiß nicht’.

Stadtschreiber: ‘Sie wissen nicht?’

Jonny (wie gelähmt): ‘ich hab’s es vergessen’.

Stadtschreiber: ‘Gut. Genügt für die Minimalansprüche. Füllen Sie obrige Antworten auf diesem Formular aus, und Sie bekommen die Urkunde’.

Jonny: ‘Was bekomme ich?’

Stadtschreiber: ‘Die Bürgerurkunde der Stadt Vineta’.⁴⁶¹

Having officially become a citizen of Vineta, Jonny becomes absorbed by and into life in the sunken city. He is, however, determined to live. His definition of living, as outlined to the beggars he meets outside the Cathedral, is nevertheless typical of that of bourgeois Viennese society of the thirties, “Ich werde reich sein. Ich werde in die Höhe kommen und dann werde ich leben”.⁴⁶² His ability to live is conditional on his becoming rich and he can begin to live only when he has amassed sufficient wealth. Lichtmann sees in Jonny’s aspirations an example of the egoism of capitalist middle-class Vienna. That same capitalism with its over-emphasis on materialism is said to have caused the downfall of the fabled Vineta: “Das Reichwerden wird zum Eigennutz und Selbstzweck, und führt zur Erstarrung wie bei den alten Bewohnern dieser kapitalistischen Welt”.⁴⁶³

Jonny subsequently marries Senator Hanson’s daughter, Lilie. He becomes in his turn a senator, lays foundation stones by the score for housing projects which will never come

⁴⁶⁰ Jarka, 557.

⁴⁶¹ Jarka, quoted in Soyfer, 636.

⁴⁶² Soyfer, 638.

⁴⁶³ Lichtmann, 103.

to fruition, fills his life with activity which in the context of a dead society is completely meaningless. He is an archetypal representative of Viennese society of the late nineteen thirties, a symbol of the upright Viennese burgher, satirised by Soyfer throughout the play, who ceases to think for himself and accommodates himself to the circumstances in which he finds himself. In writing his cabaret-style play Soyfer hopes, however, that the Viennese burgher may recognise himself or his contemporaries, and may be encouraged to resist any move to take over his country or deprive him of his independence.

Soyfer's play is peopled with characters like Jonny. In Scene Eight, for example, the soldier waiting in the trenches for the call to battle is another such. The senselessness of war is clearly portrayed in this scene. The principle of forgetting, which has a decisive function throughout the whole drama, is at the core of the action. The soldier is happy in his conviction that his heroism will be remembered, that his deeds will not be forgotten. He knows that the bugle is going to sound shortly to call him to attack. He is content to obey and does not question the order to advance on the enemy. The only problem is, he has forgotten who the enemy is! The fact that the soldier does not know who his enemy is, is not fiction, but rather reflects the grotesque absurdity of reality as experienced in the first World War.⁴⁶⁴

In Soyfer's *Vineta* forgetting is a basic principle of civilisation, a philosophy of life. The ability to forget, to banish thoughts and memories from one's mind and thereby make daily reality more acceptable, is perhaps the only means of survival in a system that is outside the realm of general human experience. It is a principle that is promulgated by the town council, who clearly believe that "public forgetting is a vital undertaking for public bodies, not merely in order to terminate a past no longer serviceable to contemporary life [...], but as a mode of speech and action that preserves the polity's ability to reinvent itself, to begin anew [...] in response to uncertainties that threaten its integrity".⁴⁶⁵ Soyfer's *Vineta* exists in space, but has no temporal existence. Its inhabitants are encapsulated in an eternal present, circling on a never-ending merry-go-round that remembers no beginning and foresees no end. Yesterday, today and tomorrow have become petrified into timelessness.

⁴⁶⁴ Lichtmann, 102.

⁴⁶⁵ Bradford Vivian, *Public Forgetting: the Rhetoric and Politics of beginning again* (Penn State University, 2010), 59.

The past has been forgotten. Hope too no longer exists, as hope can exist only within time — one can hope only for the future.

Forgetting is an integral part of timelessness. In forgetting, the past is wiped out, one lives only in the present. The very act of forgetting, however, is in itself proof that there is something to forget, that there was, in fact, a past. A recognition of that past appears from time to time among the inhabitants of the sunken city. The town clerk, for example, the symbol of order and authority, is one of the very few people who realise the true situation in the town. He seems to have a memory of the past, a knowledge of what transpired in Vineta. He knows that the city is dead, but he is afraid to pass that knowledge on to the ordinary citizens. Vineta knows no real life, therefore it cannot die:

Stadtschreiber: ‘Vineta ist tot, aber Vineta weiß es nicht [...]. Wir leben nicht, und wir können nicht sterben. Wir altern nicht, wir hassen nicht, lieben nicht, fürchten nicht. Wir kämpfen um nichts mehr, wir erhoffen nichts. Denn worauf hoffen, wenn die Zeit stehengeblieben ist und gestern und morgen eins sind? Aber außer der Senatoren weiß niemand von der Affäre und darf niemand davon wissen [...]’.

Jonny: ‘Tot und weiß es nicht!’⁴⁶⁶

The town clerk’s admission that the senators, i.e. the government, also know the true situation in the sunken city might again be regarded as a reflection of the position in Vienna, where a weak chancellor Schuschnigg endeavours to maintain law and order in a country whose independence is threatened by the growing power of the Austrian Nazis, who favour amalgamation with Hitler’s Third Reich.

To Jonny’s question as to why the town clerk himself does not tell the people of Vineta what he knows, the latter explains, “ich? Also warum? Erstens, weil’s mir Spaß macht; zweitens, weil mein Schweigen einträglich ist, — drittens, weil ich Angst hab”.⁴⁶⁷ The reasons given are in themselves indicative of characteristics of the Austrian authorities. Firstly, keeping the people in ignorance engenders a feeling of power and enjoyment of that power; secondly, the town clerk does not wish to jeopardise his position and risk losing the financial benefits accruing from it; thirdly, he fears that if the illusion of life

⁴⁶⁶ Soyfer, 640.

⁴⁶⁷ Soyfer, 640.

which is maintained in the sunken city were to be destroyed, if people were to realise, to remember, then what little exists might be swept away. The town clerk, therefore, colludes with the authorities in hiding the true situation from the people.

From the town clerk's explanations, and also from the fact that with the exception of some references to time, his conversation is generally logical and free of the repetition and clichés characteristic of the ordinary inhabitants, it appears that he does, in fact know the true story of Vineta. Nevertheless, it is his duty to forget and he therefore undertakes philosophical studies and endeavours to make the art of forgetting into a science that he shares with others. Jonny is sceptical at his claim that he is known in scientific circles as a great thinker:

Jonny: 'Oho! Sag einmal, Herr Professor, worüber kannst du nachdenken, wenn du nicht einmal über das Einfachste nachdenken darfst — über das Leben? Wenn's geradezu deine Pflicht ist, das Wichtigste zu vergessen?'

Stadtschreiber: 'Sehr logisch. Ich denke über das Vergessen nach. Eine Philosophenschule hat sich um mich geschart. Wir nennen uns den Vergessenskreis'.⁴⁶⁸

Occasionally too other inhabitants seem to have fleeting memories of the past, as for example when Lilie, on being asked by Jonny whether she knows what a woman who loves feels when her husband goes off to war, replies in a confused manner, "Liebster — ich glaube — einmal, vor langer Zeit — hab' ich's gewußt, aber ich hab's — ich hab's vergessen".⁴⁶⁹

It would appear from the above that there are two types of forgetting in Vineta. In the case of the ordinary citizens, while they may occasionally have a vague recollection of a previous existence, their forgetting seems rather to be a confusion, a memory deficit, an involuntary state over which they have little or no control. In the case of the town clerk, however, one gets the impression that forgetting is a deliberate act — it is part of his duty to excise his memory of the past. His forgetting might rather be called a 'disremembering', a conscious elimination of the past from his thoughts and mind. As is clear

⁴⁶⁸ Soyfer, 643.

⁴⁶⁹ Soyfer, 642.

from his conversation with Jonny, however, the motives behind his forgetting are in no way altruistic; his forgetting serves both himself and the authorities. Furthermore, as a good public servant, he has encouraged the practice of forgetting among his compatriots through the establishment of his philosophical group, the “Vergessenskreis”, the ‘Forgetting Circle,’ thereby promoting the appeal of forgetting as a way of life and increasing the number of people involved in what might be called ‘active forgetting’.⁴⁷⁰

The difficulty of living among ‘dead’ people who exist outside an empirical time-frame haunts Jonny from time to time, particularly when he, alone of all the inhabitants of the sunken city, continues to grow old. On arrival in Vineta he determines to try to lead a normal life there. He wants to live, as he explains to the beggars outside the cathedral:

Jonny (erbittert): ‘Ja, ihr sanften Vollidioten, ich will leben. Ich weiß nicht mehr, warum, wozu, für wen, weil ich das alles hier bei euch vergessen habe. Aber verdammt, ich will es trotzdem [...]. Auch wenn die Zeit hier stehengeblieben ist [...]. Ich weiß nicht, wer diese Gegend verhext hat. Aber ich werde leben. Arbeiten. Punktum!’⁴⁷¹

Later, however, Jonny, now fully aware of the story of Vineta, and having realised the truth of the town clerk’s words, “Du wirst nicht lebendig sein können, allein unter Abgeschiedenen”, tries to explain to the prisoner that there is in fact another kind of existence, a world where night follows day, where the sun shines and grain is sown and reaped, where human beings are born to live, love, hate and eventually die; that one does not have to live within the confines imposed by a society like Vineta.⁴⁷² As Jonny speaks to a prisoner, one seems to hear clearly the voice of Jura Soyfer urging the Viennese, and through them all Austrians, to choose the way of democracy and resist the political ideology of the National Socialists:

Jonny: ‘Hör mir jetzt zu, Mensch! Es gibt eine Welt, die anders ist. Dort wechseln Tag und Nacht, und es wird Frühling und Winter und wieder Frühling; Stürme ziehen, Sonne scheint; Korn wird gesät, geerntet und neu gesät — ohne Ende.

⁴⁷⁰ Soyfer, 643.

⁴⁷¹ Soyfer, 638.

⁴⁷² Soyfer, 644.

Menschen werden geboren, wachsen wie das Korn. Weil sie ein unruhiges Herz mitgekriegt haben, müssen sie lieben und hassen, solange sie da sind, und sie werden alt und sterben. Und neue Menschen werden geboren zum Hassen, zum Lieben, zum Altwerden, zum Sterben — ohne Ende. Und dies alles hat keinen anderen Sinn als sich selbst. Aber das ist ein großer Sinn, denn es heißt: Leben. Verstehst du?⁴⁷³

Jonny's evocation of another life clearly makes no impression on the prisoner. He too has become oblivious to everything outside his immediate existence, though one might perhaps detect at least a spark of regret or recognition of a past state of awareness in his "Ich weiß nicht mehr" in response to Jonny's question as to whether he might in the past have had a desire for normal life.⁴⁷⁴ This awareness of the banality and lifelessness of life in Vineta has always remained in Jonny's sub-conscious and it surfaces from time to time. At this point his statement regarding the existence of real life, though it had left the prisoner unmoved, seems to take root in Jonny's mind and become imbued with an unquenchable energy of its own. Determined to grasp what he sees as his last chance to stay alive, he turns to his father-in-law, Senator Hanson and his retinue who have come to inspect the prison, and announces that he is going to tell the truth in public, the truth that he has helped them to keep secret. Despite the best efforts of the town clerk to prevent him from doing so, he tears open the barred window and shouts out to the Vinetans that their world is dead.⁴⁷⁵

After a moment's silence during which the Vinetans remain frozen in their positions, they come to an automaton-like life, spewing out their stock phrases in a jerky, unco-ordinated manner. Whatever semblance of normality there had been, now ceases to exist and the Vinetans are seen as puppets, reacting mechanically and mindlessly to the will of a master puppeteer. If they were 'dead' before, they had at least managed to maintain some spark of half-life. Now, however, that spark has been extinguished, the town clerk's worst fears

⁴⁷³ Soyfer, 645.

⁴⁷⁴ Soyfer, 645.

⁴⁷⁵ Soyfer, 646.

have been realised. Soyfer's message is clear. His 'Wien-eter,' the citizens of Vienna, are heading the same way, towards the death of their society.

As Jonny's account of his Vineta experience ends and the action switches back to the tavern, Soyfer again affirms his message even more strongly in Jonny's final speech:

'Freilich, hab' ich oft gedacht, es gibt in der Wirklichkeit keine Stadt in der Welt, die so ist wie dieses Vineta. Aber wenn einmal eine Sturzflut kommt, ein großer Krieg, eine große Barbarei, ob da nicht die ganze Welt zu Vineta wird? [...]. Da müßten wir doch alle unsere ganze Kraft dransetzen, wir alle und sofort, daß die Sturzflut nicht kommt, und dann wär's doch sehr eilig, denn man könnte ja auch nicht wissen, wann sie kommt. Ob sie nicht vielleicht schon ganz nahe ist, vor der Tür von dem Drecklokal da vielleicht. Und das wäre zum Fürchten [...]' ⁴⁷⁶

Jonny's words were to prove prophetic. The dreaded 'Sturzflut' was indeed to come very soon afterwards, with Hitler's annexation of Austria in March 1938.

Speech and Dialogue

One of the most important features of Soyfer's *Vineta* is the language of the inhabitants of the sunken city. It is clearly not only in the purely physical sense that the city of Vineta and its occupants have been destroyed; the language of the people too, or more correctly their ability to communicate, has been eroded to the point where logical conversation is no longer possible. In the cabaret-style play he has chosen to convey his message, Soyfer's dialogue

läßt nur die Mechanik des Absurden herrschen, in einer Sprache, die keine mehr ist, in Worthülsen zerfällt, die kein Verstehen schaffen, nur mehr als Instrumente der Beherrschung 'funktionieren'. In der Unmöglichkeit des Gesprächs demonstriert das Stück Soyfers Erkenntnis von der Sprachverarmung in einer Zeit inflationistischer Sprachmanipulation. ⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁶ Soyfer, 647.

⁴⁷⁷ Jarka, quoted in Soyfer, 23.

While the impoverishment of language has not yet, in pre-Anschluss Vienna, reached the depths that it will later reach under the Nazis, Soyfer's use of language in *Vineta* shows that he is particularly aware that limitation of expression and the resultant curtailment of communication, conversation and emotion strips people of their individuality, and can “paralyse them as personalities [...] and turn them into atoms in a huge rolling block of stone”.⁴⁷⁸

A further dimension is added to the manipulation and impoverishment of language through the use of repetition, which has the effect of limiting the language used in the play, thereby restricting the opportunity for verbal witticisms or linguistic nuances. In addition it serves to emphasise the mindlessness of the inhabitants, whose conversation is limited to a small number of stock phrases, repeated to the point of absurdity. To a large extent, rather than relying on word-play and verbal nuances or allusions, *Vineta* has a more obvious or even burlesque form of wit, where the act of repetition in itself provides the comic effect.⁴⁷⁹

The destruction of speech and the lack of ability to communicate are an integral part of the downfall of any community. When words are used as tools designed to dissimulate, or to limit rather than enhance understanding, then speech becomes a means of control and of subjugation, ultimately leading to the breakdown of social structures. This is very evident in Scene Two, for example, where the watchman's literal interpretation, or perhaps even deliberate misinterpretation of Jonny's words, leads to complete incomprehension and lack of communication:

Jonny: ‘Sie müssen zugeben, Herr, für einen ertrunkenen Seemann ist der mündliche Verkehr mit Ihnen ziemlich anstrengend’.

Wächter: ‘Ich regle den Verkehr’.

Jonny: ‘Hab’ ich schon gehört. Aber wieso eigentlich? Was für einen Verkehr?’

Wächter: ‘Den geregelten Verkehr. Ordnungsgemäß’.

⁴⁷⁸ Victor Klemperer, *The Language of the Third Reich*, Bloomsbury Revelations Edition (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 23.

⁴⁷⁹ One might be reminded here of the *Sprechgedichte* or experimental sound poems of a later Austrian poet, Ernst Jandl, whose use of repetition and word play, while providing a comic effect, in no way masked the philosophical or political message he wished to convey.

Jonny: ‘Zweifellos. Was mich stört, ist nur, daß ich hier überhaupt keinen Verkehr sehe. (*Keine Antwort*) He! Sie! Ich frage: Gibt es hier einen Verkehr?’

Wächter: ‘Ordnungsgemäß, nein!’

Jonny: ‘Und?’

Wächter: ‘Ich regle denselben’.⁴⁸⁰

The watchman’s inability, or perhaps refusal, to understand the word ‘Verkehr’ as signifying anything other than vehicular traffic and his standard mechanical response once he hears the word repeated mean that no logical conversation can be pursued, nor can Jonny get the information he requires. It is unclear whether the watchman’s inappropriate responses arise from his narrow life experience, inhabiting as he does a ‘dead’ world, or from a more sinister innate desire to control the situation.

Another defining feature of the language of the play is the constant repetition of meaningless clichés, which provide an automatic response in many different situations and bear witness to the definition of “language which writes and thinks [...]”.⁴⁸¹ Clichés eliminate the necessity for thought, other than of course the decision about which cliché to use in any given situation. Lichtmann draws a parallel between the clichéd speech of the inhabitants of the sunken city and the everyday speech of the Viennese bourgeoisie in the period between the two World Wars, a speech defined by the use of cabaret-style clichés underlining the difficulties and senselessness of their lives.⁴⁸²

A further result of this clichéd speech is that a pretence of communication is conveyed — there are no awkward silences — without any real communication taking place. People are alienated from one another and indeed from their own inner selves by a barrier of sound and words. They spout phrases almost as if surrounding themselves with a protective wall that allows no penetration. There is no sense of engagement on the part of the speakers in anything they say; there is no expression of feeling, nor of human emotion in their statements which sound more like grammatical exercises than real speech. Their dialogue is “ein Symptom der Sprachverarmung, in dem Sinne, wie es im Gedicht Soyfers *Das Lied*

⁴⁸⁰ Soyfer, 632.

⁴⁸¹ Klemperer, 27.

⁴⁸² Lichtmann, 97.

des einfachen Menschen formuliert ist: ‘Wir sind das Echo eines Phrasenschwalls |Und Wiederhall des toten Wiederhalls’⁴⁸³.

Cliché-ridden speech has also another important function, however. It is an important means of self-protection in a situation where what one says may be overheard by or reported to inimical authorities. This element of Soyfer’s play no doubt also stems from 1930s Vienna, and indeed from a long Austrian tradition of surveillance and monitoring of popular opinion by secret police and agents of the State. Following the French Revolution the powers of European state security services to monitor popular opinion and root out subversion and dissent were considerably increased and nineteenth century Austrian secret police were “commonly regarded as the most effective in Europe [...]. They censored the media, intercepted the mail, and monitored the conversations of individuals”.⁴⁸⁴ To continue to survive in such an atmosphere requires the adoption of protective measures and a high degree of vigilance in all aspects of one’s behaviour and speech.

The absurdity of everyday conversation in the sunken city is further highlighted by conversations that appear normal on first hearing, but are subsequently shown to be no more than repetitive leitmotifs which are as much a characteristic of the individual as is their physical appearance. When Jonny meets the Councillor’s wife for the first time in Scene Three she tells him of her plans to join her husband and daughter:

Jonny: ‘Die Dame will, wie ich sehe, ja selbst eine Schiffsreise antreten’.

Dame: ‘Ja, mein Herr, ich warte auf das Schiff. Ich will zu meinem Mann fahren. Er und meine kleine Tochter erwarten mich. Sie hat blonde Haare und heißt Hannelore’.⁴⁸⁵

Thus far, the conversation sounds very reasonable, though it quickly becomes clear, when Jonny asks where the husband and daughter are, that this lady too is a true Vinetan — she has forgotten where they are and does not know where she is going!

⁴⁸³ Lichtmann, 105.

⁴⁸⁴ Evan Burr Bukey, *Hitler’s Austria* (Chapel Hill and London: University of California Press, 2000), x.

⁴⁸⁵ Soyfer, 633.

The same few lines regarding her husband and daughter are repeated continually by the Councillor's wife throughout the play; in fact this seems to be the full extent of her conversation. The absurdity of the dialogue is heightened by the fact that none of the people to whom she imparts this information give any indication that they have heard it before. A multiplier effect is achieved in Scene Ten when Jonny's wife, Lilie, conveys the same information to her mother as if it were news, and the mother receives it as such. This exchange between mother and daughter highlights even more worrying aspects of Viennese life: family relationships too are confined within the limits of language and those limits are inter-generational.

The meaningless dialogue of the inhabitants of Soyfer's *Vineta* shows a steady decline into total confusion, eventually culminating in the senseless babble which is unleashed when Jonny insists on telling the Vinetans in Scene Ten that their world is dead. While the content of their babble is not specified, it seems clear from the stage directions that even the mindless repetitive phrases have now been further broken down into a disconnected jumble of words. It is almost as if the sounds of chaos, of tumult and confusion, of war itself, are being reproduced. The mechanical response of the Vinetans to Jonny's announcement sweeps away the veneer of normality which has largely prevailed among the inhabitants of the sunken city up to now.

One must finally ask how effective is Soyfer's use of the Vineta theme as a symbol of the break-down and potential destruction of Viennese and Austrian society. Apart altogether from the phonetic similarity between the names, the parallels drawn by the playwright between life in the sunken city and in 1930s Vienna are both striking and shocking. In juxtaposing life in the two cities, Soyfer depicts the situation in the Austrian capital not alone as empty, meaningless and stultified, but, more alarmingly still, as hopeless. It must be remembered that Soyfer has no knowledge of the inhabitants of Vineta after its demise. The characters he depicts are therefore Viennese, not Vinetan. The characteristics and behaviour with which he endows them — the lack of communication, be it through fear of possible consequences or simply an inability to commit oneself, the empty senseless cliché-ridden speech, the willingness to compromise by accommodating oneself to a life-style imposed by circumstances outside one's control — all these are characteristics of Viennese society in the period between the two World Wars. It is easy to understand,

therefore, why Soyfer is afraid, why he tries to wake Vienna up before it is too late, before Vienna, like the fabled Vineta, perishes on the rock of its own egoism. The vehicle he chooses to convey his message — a fantasy-play about a sunken city — is extremely effective. No one can dispute the characteristics he attributes to a long-dead city, and few can fail to recognise the twentieth-century model on which he has based his *Vineta*.

Whether Soyfer's play could serve to any extent as a warning to the Viennese is doubtful however. It must be borne in mind that the petrification of the Vinetans — hence, in Soyfer's mind the Viennese — in the present means that not alone are they themselves physically trapped in an unending present, but that the qualities and characteristics which propelled them into this situation also become part of that present and are thereby fixed and immortalised. One can therefore understand the apparent hopelessness in Soyfer's call, as heard in Jonny's final speech, when he sets out the moral in the Vineta story and makes a final attempt to awaken the Viennese to the danger of being overcome, like the Vinetans, by the 'Sturzflut' — in this case the flood of Nazism.

On the other hand it might also be argued that goodness, justice and right also exist in the world, and that while with the benefit of hindsight it can be claimed that the playwright's words, in common with those of many of his contemporaries, proved to have little effect in the circumstances of the Hitler era, it is nevertheless incumbent upon writers such as Jura Soyfer to continue to challenge society to examine carefully the direction it is taking. It is for this reason that Soyfer's play remains relevant to the present day and will remain so into the future.

Chapter 5

Vineta literature from 1945 to 1989

As in the preceding periods, a number of volumes of myths and legends, containing the Vineta myth, were published during the period 1945–1989.⁴⁸⁶ In some cases these were re-issues of previously published material, as for example the *Norddeutsche Sagen, Märchen und Gebräuche*, originally published in Leipzig in 1848 and re-published by Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim in 1972. The 1848 Leipzig publication was dedicated by the editors to King Friedrich Wilhelm IV, whom they referred to as the magnanimous patron or sponsor of the work. Friedrich Wilhelm's interest in the Vineta legend had already been demonstrated by his visit to the Vineta reef in 1827. In addition to the text of the legend, some volumes contained background information on the origins of the story and the history of the area. This is particularly so in the case of Erich Rackwitz's *Geheimnis um Vineta*, subtitled *Legende und Wirklichkeit einer versunkenen Stadt* in which the author/editor gives three versions of the Vineta legend, as written or noted down by three different writers, Ludwig Bechstein, Alfred Haas and Karl Thieme.⁴⁸⁷ He then examines the historical background relating to the existence of this major trading centre in the Baltic, including the attacks carried out by the Danes and other groups of invaders from the North, and also deals with the various attempts over the years to locate the sunken city, and the finds that were uncovered both by chance and in the course of archaeological investigation of potential sites. The location of the sunken city continued

⁴⁸⁶ Heinrich Karstens, *Vineta auf Usedom*, in *Deutsche Lande an der Ostsee* (Hannover: Schlütersche Buchdruckerei. Verlagsanstalt, 1966), 106; Albert Burkhardt (hrsg.), *Vineta, die Stadt auf dem Meeresgrund*, in *Sagen und Märchen vom Ostseerand* (Rostock: VEB Hinstorff Verlag, 1969), 5–9; Adalbert Kuhn u. Georg Schwartz (hrsg.), *Vineta*, in *Norddeutsche Sagen, Märchen und Gebräuche* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1972), 28; Leander Petzoldt (hrsg.), *Vineta*, in *Deutsche Volkssagen* (München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1978), 169; Waltraud Woeller, *Volkssagen zwischen Hiddensee und Wartburg* (Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1979), 42–46.

⁴⁸⁷ Erich Rackwitz, *Geheimnis um Vineta* (Berlin: Der Kinderbuchverlag, 1969).

to be a matter of discussion, dispute and investigation during the period, with research being conducted inter alia by the Director of the Westpomeranian (later National) Museum of Stettin, Wladyslaw Filipowiak, (d. 2014), over a long number of years, beginning in 1952. Filipowiak's research led him to conclude that Vineta had been situated on the island of Wolin, i.e. in modern Poland. The results of his investigations were published in 1992.⁴⁸⁸ In addition, early Slav culture was the subject of study by Joachim Herrmann in his book *Zwischen Hradschin und Vineta*, while Ingrid and P. Werner Lange in their *Vineta: Atlantis des Nordens* examined the origins of the legend, and the various investigations and attempts to locate the sunken city over the centuries, and also analysed the arguments for and against different locations.⁴⁸⁹

While the overall volume of creative literature about Vineta published in the period is not large, interest did not wane at local level, and *Heimat* organisations continued to publish occasional articles. The paucity of creative literature may, perhaps, be at least partly accounted for by the creation in 1949 of the German Democratic Republic, which separated the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern from the West, and this, together with the fact that the German-Polish border agreed in the aftermath of World War II bisected the eastern tip of the island of Usedom, effectively resulted in the island being one of the most remote points in the north-eastern part of Germany. One of the effects of the creation of the GDR was to make this area of Germany largely inaccessible to the West for over forty years, thereby preventing students or researchers from the West from working or studying there and effectively limiting knowledge of the area to a much smaller cohort of potentially interested persons or groups.

Two particular features stand out in the creative literature of the period. Firstly, while the legend itself is retold in full or in part in some of the works, it nevertheless remains somewhat peripheral to the central story or action, which in some cases is based outside

⁴⁸⁸ Wladyslaw Filipowiak und Heinz Gundlach, *Wolin Vineta: Die tatsächliche Legende vom Untergang und Aufstieg der Stadt* (Rostock: Hinstorff Verlag, 1992).

⁴⁸⁹ Joachim Herrmann, *Zwischen Hradschin und Vineta* (München: Verlag Otto Sagner, 1971); Ingrid und P. Werner Lange, *Vineta: Atlantis des Nordens* (Leipzig: Urania-Verlag, 1988).

Germany.⁴⁹⁰ Secondly, it is noticeable that a number of works are by non-native Germans or by German writers living or publishing outside Germany. To a certain extent it might be said that such separation from the country enables the writer to be more dispassionate and to remain detached from the everyday reality of life in post-war Germany.

A case in point is Paul Bühler's drama *Vineta*, in which most of the action takes place in Greenland, with some scenes set in Vineta.⁴⁹¹ Though some of Bühler's work was published in Germany, *Vineta*, subtitled *Ein Mythos aus dem 20. Jahrhundert*, was published posthumously in Dornach, Switzerland, where Bühler, a native German, from a pietistic background, and an enthusiastic member of the Wandervogel Youth Movement in his earlier years, spent most of his life from the age of twenty onwards, attached to the Goetheanum, the headquarters of the Anthroposophical Society.⁴⁹² As a student of theology and philosophy in Tübingen in 1923, Bühler had met Rudolf Steiner, the founder of anthroposophy, and had been fascinated by his ideas and his writings. He moved to Dornach, became involved with the Anthroposophical Society, and became secretary to the editor of the weekly newsletter of the society, *Das Goetheanum*. In 1963 he became editor, a position which he held until his death in 1966.

⁴⁹⁰ There are two exceptions to this in the literature studied. Carl Budich's poem *Die Glocken von Vineta*, is a simple descriptive poem about the destruction of the town. It was published both in *Pommersche Saat* (Monatsblätter für Gestaltung von Heimatabenden, hrsg. von der Pommerschen Landsmannschaft, 1–15 Jg., 1951–1962), 252, and in *Pommern 1953*, hrsg. von der Pommerschen Landsmannschaft (Leer, Ostfriesland: Verlag Rautenberg und Möckel, 1952), 116. The second example is the song, *Vineta* by the GDR rock group *Die Puhdys*, the lyrics of which were written by Wolfgang Tilgner and are a simplified retelling of the Vineta Sage. The song is available on *Die Puhdys LP Album*, on the AMIGA label, Catalogue No. 855348, produced in the GDR in 1974.

⁴⁹¹ Paul Bühler, *Vineta* (Dornach: Literarischer Verlag, 1972).

⁴⁹² Tracing its roots to a group of German students that began meeting in 1895, the Wandervogel movement was officially formed in 1901 as a back-to-nature youth organization emphasizing freedom, self-responsibility, and the spirit of adventure. See Wikipedia <http://www.wandervogel.com> [accessed 8 November 2018].

Anthroposophy is a philosophy founded by Rudolf Steiner. It presumes the existence of a spiritual world that is accessible to man through inner development. Steiner has described anthroposophy as “a path of knowledge, to guide the Spiritual in the human being to the Spiritual in the universe”. According to Steiner “only they can be anthroposophists who feel certain questions on the nature of man and the universe as an elemental need of life, just as one feels hunger and thirst”. See Steiner, Rudolf, *Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1973), 13.

Vineta as a metaphor for Germany

Bühler's *Vineta* is a four act drama, published posthumously in 1972, and characterised by anthroposophist Friedrich Hiebel as “ein dramatisches Gedicht von großer Vielschichtigkeit und Aktualität”.⁴⁹³ An analysis of the drama from historical, social and ecocritical perspectives demonstrates the accuracy of Hiebel's assessment and also highlights its continuing relevance in modern times. There is a complex mixture of motifs, including some which could be regarded as referring to the Christianisation of Northern Germany and the southern Baltic coast. Its main thrust, however, relates to the National Socialist and post-war periods and it is clear that the story of *Vineta* and its destruction, as reported in the chronicles and handed down through oral and written transmission, could still in the twentieth century be utilised to portray effectively a Germany devastated by war and its aftermath. Concern for climate change, for refugees and migrants, and for disreputable leadership, makes the drama particularly relevant also in the twenty-first century. *Vineta*, the location of which is never precisely indicated, other than the fact that it is on an island close to Greenland, may be seen as a metaphor for Germany, the Germany of the National Socialist era and of the aftermath of the Second World War. It also bears a similarity to the *Vineta* of the legend, in that both good and evil coexist there and the town is potentially destroying itself through the arrogance and superficiality of its leadership and many of its inhabitants. Good exists in the personages of the scientist Jansen, and Thurid, daughter of Kalksmit, ruler of *Vineta*; evil in the person of Kalksmit himself, a Hitler-like character, who prevents boatloads of refugees from landing, banishes the weak and disabled and fears that Jansen might encourage the people of *Vineta* to repentance, thus undermining their confidence in the administration and thwarting his unspecified plans for the town. While his attitude to refugees and the disabled may be seen as reflective of National Socialist ideology, the idea of repentance might perhaps be regarded as pertaining more to Christianisation or missionary programmes. It is also a motif found in many of the *Sagen*, as for example those of Burkhardt, Maier et al, and

⁴⁹³ It has not proved possible to trace the origin of Hiebel's statement. It forms part of an assessment of Bühler's *Vineta* published in the catalogue of the Antiquariat Liberarius Frank Wechsler, Königsstrasse 13, 19230 Hagenow. It is a particularly succinct and accurate assessment.

Woeller, in which a ‘Wasserfrau’ appears in order to issue a warning to the Vinetans to repent.⁴⁹⁴

Jansen fears for Vineta. An idealistic meteorologist, he has been engaged by Kalksmit to measure sea levels and the thickness of the ice in and around Greenland. In his opinion there is evil in the air around Vineta, a malevolent spirit “begrinst was nicht auf irdische Wohl ausgeht, [...] wird von der Trägheit Vinetas herabbeschworen und wird alle wie eine Herde Marionetten bewegen”.⁴⁹⁵ There are echoes here of Jura Soyfer’s *Vineta*, in which the townspeople became almost depersonalised and puppet-like to such an extent that they no longer seemed to behave independently and their speech was ridden with clichés.⁴⁹⁶ In Bühler’s play too the author characterises the speech of the inhabitants of his Vineta as “rissig und alt”, cracked and old, as if belonging to a different era, the speech of a society that is in stasis or decline.⁴⁹⁷

The town is threatened from within by the superficiality, lethargy and gullibility of its inhabitants, who allow themselves to be manipulated by false leaders. Jansen cannot bear to see his homeland and its people destroyed and wants to undertake the research project in Greenland in order to escape from his environment and be independent. His desire reflects that of many German thinkers, among them artists and musicians, writers and philosophers, who decided to leave Germany during the Nazi era and work from abroad, in the hope of being able both to protect themselves, their families and their art and to serve their country better. Jansen does not know exactly what is threatening Vineta. All he knows is that he can no longer continue to measure the seas around the island and see the steady decline. As he explains to Thurid “ich kann nicht länger den Meeresspiegel von Vineta messen und zusehen, wie das Niveau sinkt und Menschen zugrundegehen”.⁴⁹⁸ He does not want to become “ein ergebener Registrierapparat [...] für die Katastrophen, die

⁴⁹⁴ Burkhardt, 9; Maier et al., 17; Woeller, 43.

⁴⁹⁵ Bühler, 14.

⁴⁹⁶ Jura Soyfer, *Das Gesamtwerk*, ed. Horst Jarka (Wien: Europaverlag, 1980), 628–647.

⁴⁹⁷ Bühler, 15.

⁴⁹⁸ Bühler, 17.

in der Luft hängen”.⁴⁹⁹ The temporal element in the use of the *Vineta Sage* is important in this case, as the writer, through the character of Jansen, projects the motif of destruction into the future, rather than the past as in the *Sage*, and he fears the possibility of disaster caused by issues that are of particular concern in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, namely lack of care for the natural environment and for people’s emotional needs. Jansen is convinced that the future can no longer depend either on nature or on love, “aus der Natur kommt unsere Zukunft nicht mehr. Auch nicht aus dem, was man so Liebe nennt”.⁵⁰⁰ These are aspects of modern life which have had a determining influence on Bühler’s own life, as evidenced through both his membership of the Wandervogel movement as a young person, and his adherence to anthroposophy.

Having spent a year alone in Greenland, taking and recording measurements of the ice and atmosphere, Jansen feels depressed, abandoned by his friends and increasingly conscious of the dark side of his personality. He calls on his shadow side to be either his echo or his opponent and is shocked when the Shadow arises as a *Doppelgänger* before him. In the course of their verbal jousting, the Shadow causes images of the horrors of war to parade before Jansen: a group of ash-grey mummies, carbonised in the powder factories of Europe; a group of white-clad figures with bowed heads, who, according to the Shadow, were responsible for beheading troops of soldiers; a hundred thousand long procession of Indians, Chinese, Koreans, Abyssinians and other races, all victims of war and all, according to the Shadow, not accepted or welcome in Vineta and heading northwards to make their complaints and seek justice from the eternal judge of the universe. The Shadow seems to be playing a dual role — Jansen’s echo and his alter ego — at times suggesting that the latter seems to have lost his sense of priorities, at others encouraging him to avenge the evils done to society. He tells Jansen that the eternal court sits above the ice-layer, a mere eight hundred metres up, and suggests that the meteorologist should exact retribution by setting up a burning glass to attract the heat of the sun, causing the ice to melt into the sea and flood the continents. The references to flooding, the streams of refugees and victims, and post-war retributions are carefully interwoven to paint a picture

⁴⁹⁹ Bühler, 17.

⁵⁰⁰ Bühler, 17.

of a society that is seen as bearing responsibility for the conflict, is itself barely beginning to emerge physically from the trauma, and is still suffering the emotional wounds of its involvement — all of which reflect feelings prevalent in post-war Germany.

Bühler's *Vineta* depicts the sunken city of Vineta as a microcosm of Nazi Germany. In addition to the motifs already mentioned, many others abound. The expansionist policies of the Nazis, for example, are reflected in Kalksmit, when on arrival in Greenland he challenges Jansen as to why he has not erected the Vinetan flag, thereby laying claim to the territory. To Jansen's reply that a golden cross was already erected there and that a feeling of holiness prevailed, Kalksmit answers "Das nenn' ich Verrat" —I call that treachery — and grabbing a small flag from outside the cave in which Jansen has been living he stands it upright into the ice.⁵⁰¹ This failure on the part of Jansen to fulfil his duty by erecting the flag is later also deplored by the dignitaries of Vineta, who are clearly also supportive of their leader's ambitions.

Kalksmit's speech to the people of Vineta on his return from Greenland is reminiscent of the high-flown rhetoric of the Nuremberg rallies, with the Vinetan leader promising to provide sporting and leisure facilities in order to improve the physical fitness and courage of the nation, to organise competitions and bring the best sportsmen and record holders from other countries — the British for salmon fishing, the new Germans for mountain climbing, the Finns for running, the Blacks for boxing and the Norwegians for ski-jumping. He promises to revitalise trade and furthermore encourages the people to get rid of intellectuals and burn works of philosophy. He envisages a new Vineta, a peaceful society of established and unchanging norms, an unquestioning society of blind faith, not troubled by the question 'why?' Kalksmit's support among the Vinetans is clear, as he departs accompanied by the town's dignitaries, advising them to ignore Jansen's call for Vineta to become a refuge for displaced persons, a call which is supported by Kalksmit's daughter, Thurid.

Bühler uses a number of other motifs that are also strongly evocative of National Socialist ideology and actions. Among these are the burning of books by a group of students and

⁵⁰¹ Bühler, 30.

the attitude to the disabled which the town administrator displays in his conversation with Thurid. Both events take place at the harbour, where a sailing boat lies waiting to embark refugees. As a group of singing students moves away, singing *Gaudeamus igitur*, a smouldering pile of ash remains, leaving traces of works of philosophy, poetry and religion. The administrator has come to the harbour to look at what he regards as the flourishing town and at the same time witness the departure of the disabled and weak who have been refused refuge. His attitude to them is typically National Socialist — “wer wollte die noch Menschen nennen?”— “who would call them people?”⁵⁰² Then, challenging Thurid, he asks whether she would wish to rear cripples and the unintelligent as people: “die Bleiköpfe, Krüppel, die Dummen und Deppen! Vielleicht wollen Sie diese zu Menschen erziehn?”⁵⁰³

Further motifs from the Nazi period are, for example the fact that Jansen is imprisoned on the word of a police informant who accuses him of refusing to recognise that Vineta’s trade is booming and the harbour busy with the coming and going of ships. Furthermore the Olympic Games are said to be about to begin in Vineta, and crowds await the arrival of the Olympic torch — a diplomatic sham, according to Jansen. This has clear echoes of the holding of the Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936, in a politically charged and tense atmosphere. A motif reminiscent of the Berlin airlift of 1948–49 occurs, when Jansen arranges for shipments of food into Vineta. His purpose is to counteract a boycott which has been organised by those who have been forced to emigrate, in the hope that Vineta may be starved into allowing them to return. His actions are seen as treachery by the emigrants, though some are grateful that he has arranged for them to have the right to establish a new home in Greenland.⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰² Bühler, 42.

⁵⁰³ Bühler, 43.

⁵⁰⁴ Bühler, 50.

Vineta — place of destruction and place of hope

Bühler's *Vineta* is notable for its depiction of both positive and negative characteristics of the sunken city, a feature which is commonly found in many of the *Sagen*. Both positive and negative aspects are conveyed principally by the meteorologist, Jansen, whose role might to a certain extent be regarded as that of an objective narrator as well as an active participant in the action. Jansen describes Vineta, both as he experiences it, and as he thinks it should be. In this he is aided, at times subconsciously, by the other characters in the drama. Jansen sees the attitudes and conduct of Vineta in a negative light — its lack of humanity, its lethargy and superficiality, its acceptance of the rule of unworthy leaders. This is Vineta of the *Sage*, Vineta in destructive mode, a Vineta that is heading for catastrophe. The accuracy of his views is amply demonstrated by the behaviour of Kalksmit, ruler of Vineta, whose ill treatment of the poor and the needy reflects an attitude based on National Socialist principles.

On the positive and idealistic side Jansen envisions the sunken city as a place of hope, a utopia or longed for destination and a goal to which he aspires. It is a philosophy and way of life, a state of mind rather than necessarily being linked to any one place. A practical reflection of Jansen's ideal is to be seen in Thurid's concern for emigrants and care for sick and disabled children.⁵⁰⁵ The Vineta of which Jansen dreams is carried within himself, as he tells Thurid on his return from his year of research in Greenland. In answer to her question as to whether they can move there he replies "überall, wo man den Menschen baut, da is für uns Vineta".⁵⁰⁶ He clearly sees it too as a place of service.

Jansen is Bühler's alter ego; his idealism reflects that of the author, whose adherence to anthroposophy and love of nature presumably indicated a desire to look beyond the purely materialistic and live a highly principled life in the service of others. Jansen's idealised Vineta might be regarded as a metaphor for Dornach, to where Bühler moved. It could therefore be said that the sunken city has a dual function in Bühler's drama: in its negative iteration Vineta, the Vineta of destruction, is a metaphor for a Germany still suffering

⁵⁰⁵ Bühler, 40.

⁵⁰⁶ Bühler, 72.

from the experiences and the after effects of World War II, whereas Jansen's ideal Vineta represents Dornach, where the author chose to spend his time in pursuit of his vision.

Towards the end of the play, however, Jansen, now with Thurid an emigrant from Vineta, is despondent and feels that something more is demanded of him than he has yet been able to give. He believes that Vineta should be the place from which a new society and a new way of living should emerge, a place of renewal, the foundation stone of a new culture, the creator of a new art, “aber Vineta? Seine Luft muss noch die Luft der Zeit werden! Sein Gestein eine Kultur erbauen! Sein Licht die neue Kunst schaffen!”⁵⁰⁷

Although he believes that the spirit of the times are on the move and will invoke the aid of the great masters of the past, he fears that the waves of hatred and spiritual alienation that engulf his homeland will not allow access to things of the spirit. He longs to return to Vineta and, when he hears that war has broken out there, wants to help free his homeland. Thurid, nor can he ally himself with her father Kalksmit, the leader who is also in effect an enemy of Vineta. As Jansen falls back dying, supported by Thurid, he asks despairingly, “O, so sage doch, wohin kann man heute noch mit seiner Liebe Sinnlosigkeit?”⁵⁰⁸

reminds him that there is no army that he can join — he cannot join the enemy troops attacking Vineta. His dilemma reflects that of Germans who were opposed to Hitler and the National Socialist regime — to stay or to leave, to oppose from without or, more perilously, from within, to remain silent or to speak out. As Jansen dies, hope is provided by an elderly Vinetan exile, a hope that reflects Jansen's own desire for his homeland, “Er wird nach dem Tod ein wahrer Mäzen werden”.⁵⁰⁹ Jansen will continue to promote the arts, albeit in a different element. As Bühler's alter ego he knows that it is in the creation and embracing of a new culture, a new way of life, that the future of Vineta, of Germany, lies.

⁵⁰⁷ Bühler, 73.

⁵⁰⁸ Bühler, 78.

⁵⁰⁹ Bühler, 79.

The last scene of the drama, set in Vineta, contains an element of hope. As Kalksmit sits alone two choirs of spirits of the dead arrive, the first of which is a group of soldiers who died in the war, and who maintain that their early death has atoned for their mistakes. It is clear however that they blame Kalksmit for the war. The second is a choir of benevolent spirits who claim that they are embarking on a new life and building new Christian temples. As Kalksmit hears another sound at the door he wonders whether further accusation are to be made and asks “will ein neuer Vorwurf gellen, will die Rache hier herein?”⁵¹⁰ When Thurid enters, accompanied by a mongoloid child and other sick children, Kalksmit initially appears to reject her, saying “bringst du die Verstossnen wieder?”⁵¹¹ Nevertheless as the voice of the spirit of Jansen calls out for human sympathy and as Thurid asks that the new ‘Gotteslieder’ be allowed in, Kalksmit in his dying breath calls on Thurid to open the door to the choir of blessed spirits, thus seeming to indicate that there is some hope for Vineta.

Vineta as a mirror of war-time and post-war events

While Paul Bühler’s drama is perhaps the best example of the utilisation of Vineta as a metaphor to reflect events and society in Germany from the 1940s onwards, it is not alone in its portrayal of the war and post-war periods. Another work that merits mention in this regard is Fritz Brustat-Naval’s novel *Leb wohl, Vineta*, subtitled *Roman einer seefahrenden Jugend*.⁵¹² Brustat-Naval, author of several books on sea-faring and on the war-time activities of U-Boats and battleships, was an officer in the German Navy during the Second World War. Though classed as a novel, *Leb wohl, Vineta* might be regarded as at least partly autobiographical, as the main character, Frederik Naval, bearing a similar surname to the author, recalls his life as a seaman, sailing for different companies on a large number of ships and oil tankers to many different parts of the world and then later, as an officer in the German Navy, serving in the Second World War. Despite the name of the book, Vineta itself does not play a major role, being treated more as a framework within which to set the story, to mark both the beginning and the end. The Vineta saga is

⁵¹⁰ Bühler, 81.

⁵¹¹ Bühler, 82.

⁵¹² Fritz Brustat-Naval, *Leb wohl, Vineta* (Stuttgart: Henry Goverts Verlag, 1967).

told in a preface at the beginning of the book, in a version that varies in some small details from that based on the report of Adam von Bremen. The differences would not seem however to be of any great significance, though Brustat-Naval's location of Vineta near the island of Ruden, at the mouth of the Peene river, in the west of Usedom, may be taken as reflecting the importance of Peenemünde, also near the mouth of the Peene, which was well known as the production centre of the V-2 rocket during World War II. As a 'Stabsoffizier' in the German War Navy, Brustat-Naval must presumably have been aware of the significance of Peenemünde. Adam von Bremen on the other hand had located the trading centre at the mouth of the river Oder, a much broader area which allowed for a number of different points of entry to the sea.⁵¹³

Another difference in Brustat-Naval's version of the legend is that all the inhabitants of Vineta were allowed practise their religion openly, whereas Adam von Bremen's report stated that Christians were not allowed do so. In addition Brustat-Naval specifies that amber was the principal product traded, whereas Adam von Bremen did not say what was traded. In relation to the destruction of the town, Brustat-Naval states that the wild sea broke in suddenly and destroyed Vineta. There is no reference to the people being punished for their arrogance, as is the case in most versions of the *Sage*; nor to the town being destroyed by a Danish king and his warriors, as was claimed by Helmold von Bosau one hundred years after Adam von Bremen's report. Other than a brief reference to the German battleship, *SMS Vineta*, which was commissioned in 1899, and served in various overseas campaigns and also briefly in WWI, there is no further mention of the sunken city of Vineta until the end of the novel.⁵¹⁴

In the final chapter, appropriately called *Die große Flut* — though in this case it is a flood of people rather than water— Brustat-Naval describes the evacuation of German troops and thousands of refugees fleeing to the West from Danzig, the Hela peninsula and other eastern ports in 1945, as the Red Army moves in from the East. There would seem to be little doubt but that the author is writing from personal knowledge of events of the time.

⁵¹³ The Oder might potentially be regarded as entering the sea at any one of three locations. It flows initially into the Szczecin Lagoon and then forms three branches, the Dziwna, Swina and Peene, all of which empty into the Gulf of Pomerania.

⁵¹⁴ The *SMS Vineta* was scrapped in 1920.

From late 1944 until the end of the war, the surface fleet of the Kriegsmarine was heavily engaged in providing artillery support to the retreating German land forces along the Baltic coast and in ferrying civilian refugees to the western parts of Germany in large rescue operations. Large parts of the population of eastern Europe fled the approaching Red Army, fearing Soviet retaliation and mass rape and killings. The Kriegsmarine evacuated large numbers of civilians in the evacuation of East Prussia and Danzig in January 1945, in what was known as Operation Hannibal, and also provided important assistance in the evacuation of the fleeing German civilians of Pomerania and Stettin in March and April 1945. In the first week of May 1945 over 150,000 people were evacuated from the beaches of Hela.

In the novel, Frederik Naval has been appointed Sea-Transport Officer and is responsible for the orderly evacuation of German citizens. After a number of weeks, following the departure of the last ship and under heavy fire from the approaching Russians, he manages to flee in a minesweeper.

Some years later, Frederik Naval, now sailing under the flag of the German Federal Republic, captain of a new ten-thousand ton ship, the *Aegir*, revisits Lulea, the Swedish port near the Arctic Circle that he had first visited as a fifteen-year old kitchen boy on board the steamer, the *Gunther*. At first sight Lulea seems not to have changed. Then suddenly, as he walks along a path towards the ship, with the scent of pinewood and birch in the air, he recalls the little fifteen-year old sailor he had been, rushing back to the *Gunther* as it hooted impatiently, fully laden, ready to depart and waiting for him. He realises that everything has changed; his old home in Stettin is gone, Stettin itself has changed. Nothing ever remains the same — technology, ships, flags and fatherlands. Only man himself does not change; his external appearance may alter with the passage of time, but inside he remains the person he has always been. Naval accepts the changes; he knows that those who cannot accept the present can never come to terms with the past. Another era has dawned — “Vineta ist untergegangen” — Vineta has disappeared.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹⁵ Brustat-Naval, 240.

For Frederik Naval, and hence for the author, Vineta symbolises a past that is now over. All that remains are impressions and memories that surface from time to time. The silhouette of Stettin, the ‘Greifenstadt’ of his youth, appears from time to time on the golden horizon of his imagination; in this, perhaps, he equates Stettin with Vineta.⁵¹⁶ But the eyes on the clock face of the castle tower are closed and the *Gunther* has long departed. All has changed. Stettin has now become Szczecin, Danzig is called Gdansk, Hela has become Hel, the Oder is now the Odra, and Vineta is no more. All the ports of the past have closed. Nobody knows what has become of them; they have vanished like sand in the sea.⁵¹⁷

Vineta as a symbol of change

While Brustat-Naval’s novel highlights some of the more obvious cultural and administrative changes that took place in Germany in the immediate post-war period, there was in fact broad change across very many aspects of life. It is understandable therefore that the motif of Vineta should feature regularly in the literature of the period. The sunken city, whose destiny it was to experience the most catastrophic and fundamental transformation in its very existence — from a reputedly thriving and important commercial hub to a destroyed underwater ruin and thence to a fragment of memory — might be regarded as the ultimate symbol of change, and can justifiably serve as a metaphor for societies in course of change. It is worth noting however that the changes portrayed in some of the Vineta literature relate not alone to society as a whole, but are based to a large extent on the personal circumstances and experiences of the individual writer. In this context another novel of the period, Friedrich Franz von Unruh’s *Vineta* is an interesting study.⁵¹⁸ The writer, a career army officer who had been seriously wounded in the First World War and worked as a journalist in the Weimar Republic, experienced many vicissitudes in his ideological adherence during the course of his life. As a stern critic of National Socialism, he wrote a series of articles for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in

⁵¹⁶ The author calls Stettin a ‘Greifenstadt’ because of its coat of arms — a griffin’s head, bearing a gold crown — symbol of the Griffin dynasty, who ruled Pomerania from the twelfth century until 1637.

⁵¹⁷ Brustat-Naval, 240.

⁵¹⁸ Friedrich Franz von Unruh, *Vineta* (Düsseldorf: Vier Falken Verlag, 1948. Also Bodensee: Hohenstaufen-Verlag, 1965). Subsequently referred to as Unruh (1948) and Unruh (1965), respectively.

February 1931, in which he criticised the dark philosophy, disreputable leadership and criminal policies of the Nazi party.⁵¹⁹ Later, however, on Hitler's accession to power in Germany, he made his peace with the new régime and in fact tended to move towards the extreme right. He no longer wrote newspaper articles, turning instead to writing novellas.

In another apparent volte-face after the War, it seems, according to Helmuth Kiesel, in his review of *Friedrich Franz von Unruh: Werke*, a six-volume edition of Von Unruh's work, published in 2007, that on seeing photographs of inmates of concentration camps and hearing details of atrocities committed by the Nazis, Unruh embarked once more on condemnation of National Socialism and opposition to those who tried to deny or trivialise Nazi crimes. Nevertheless his cultural nationalism did not allow him to regard these crimes as unique, and so he arrived at ways of looking at the situation that were diversionary and explanatory, without, however, suppressing or denying the facts. The result was that he was soon read only in conservative nationalist or anti-modernist circles.⁵²⁰

Unruh's *Vineta* is a story set within the framework of the re-visit of the main character, the engineer Bernt Wilke, to the mysterious town which he had discovered some years previously, in an effort to trace a girl, Kora, with whom he had fallen in love on his first visit. The main part of the story is a re-telling of his first sight of and visit to the town which seemed to rise out of the lake, a vision which reminded him of his home on the North Sea, where the Hallig islands often seemed washed away and then occasionally reappeared as if out of the deep, giving rise to legends and stories of enchanted sunken cities. On that occasion, attracted by the atmosphere created by the appearance of the town, Bernt hired a rowing boat and set out across the lake towards it.

The story is broadly based on the Vineta legend and contains many of the motifs normally found in the Vineta story, but it also differs from it in a number of significant ways. It is as if the writer, though using the title *Vineta*, wishes to extend the theme beyond the

⁵¹⁹ Helmuth Kiesel, *Der vergessene Bruder* (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, No. 270. 18.11.2008: Feuilleton, p. 36). Subsequently referred to as Kiesel, *Der vergessene Bruder* (FAZ, 18.11.2008). It is a review by Kiesel of *Friedrich Franz von Unruh: Werke*. Kritische Werkausgabe, ed. by Leander Hotaki (Freiburg: Rombach Verlag, 2007).

⁵²⁰ Kiesel, *Der vergessene Bruder*, (FAZ, 18.11.2008)

confines of its North German home, and in so doing effects changes that reflect not alone his own alternating ideologies but also the changing society and structures of the post-war era. The format of the story — Bernt’s re-imagining of his first visit while on the way to his second one — might perhaps be regarded as springing from the writer’s own repeated re-assessment of his ideological and political positions and his return to ideas previously abandoned. Bernt too returns to relive his previous experiences, in an effort to re-establish his link with Kora, or at least explain why he had not been able to return as he had promised on the day of his departure.

Among the more obvious differences in Unruh’s *Vineta* is the location of the town. Rather than being located on the Baltic or even the North Sea, Unruh’s Vineta is situated on a lake in Southern Germany, a location far from the coast, and one which allows the action to relate to a much broader area of Germany. The town itself, with its old fashioned houses, well-tended gardens, orchards, trees and flowers, and its decorated doors, balconies and gables, is clearly well-to-do, but nevertheless shows no sign of the wealth or opulence traditionally associated with Vineta. The only reference to gold is to the effect that the gables and towers shine like gold in the early morning sunlight. Nevertheless there is a sense of mystery and attraction about the town. As Bernt approaches in his boat, he hears a light whirring sound coming over the lake and sees something shimmering coming towards him, with wing-like sails propelled by the wind. It passes over him, moving towards the town, hovers for a while like a symbol over the surface of the water and then gradually disappears into the blue. As he watches it disappear, Bernt experiences a deep desire to entrust himself to the water and, swimming away from the boat, feels an immense freedom and a sense of space, not alone around and above him, but also rising from the depths, from where he feels a shuddering coldness. Climbing back into his boat he feels renewed, as if he has shaken off the shackles of the professional engineer Bernt Wilke and has been born again. This theme of renewal is a recurring one in Unruh’s *Vineta*.

Another significant difference in Unruh’s story is the presence of a Christian cathedral in the town square. In the version of the story published in 1948, Bernt goes into the cathedral; in the 1965 version he does not do so. In both versions, however, he notices the life-sized statues of the wise and foolish virgins in the church porch — a powerful symbol

of two currents of opinion or attitudes that one might expect to find prevalent in a society which has suffered the trauma of war, firstly the reactionary attitude of maintenance of the status quo, portrayed by the foolish virgins, and secondly the forward-looking preparedness and willingness to embrace change. Bernt is particularly struck by one of the figures, a wise virgin who is tending her lamp and is clearly well prepared for whatever may arise in the future. He later establishes that Kora, whom at this stage he has not yet met, was the model for this statue.

Later in the evening, as night approaches and stars begin to appear, Bernt and Kora, having met, and spent several hours in one another's company, descend the steps towards the harbour. They pause, looking out over the lake, and Kora quietly begins to quote from Hölderlin's *Brod und Wein* — "die schwärmerische die Nacht kommt".⁵²¹ Bernt, as if caught up in a whirlwind of emotion, continues the verse. The feeling of intoxication experienced by both, as they begin to realise their burgeoning love, is reflected in the sense of mystery in the atmosphere surrounding them. As they lean on the quay wall looking into the water, Bernt tells her a legend from the north, from his homeland, without however mentioning the location. Kora immediately recognises it as the story of Vineta. Bernt's version of the legend, however, makes no mention of arrogance, pride or greed on the part of the inhabitants of the sunken city, and blames a storm flood for its destruction. Furthermore, when the town rises, once every hundred years, it can only be seen and possibly released by a Sunday's child, not on payment of one penny as in many versions of the legend, but rather if the child knows and utters the one word which will break the curse.

Unruh's choice of Vineta and of Hölderlin's verses on the coming of night as metaphors might be regarded as a clear indication both of a longing for the past and of the desire for change that reflect his mind set. Night becomes a link, the present between a past of which something must be retained and valued, and a future which promises a new life. This link between past, present and future and the insubstantial and fleeting nature of the present are illustrated in Unruh's story in a number of ways. In the earlier part of the day, during

⁵²¹ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Brod und Wein*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, Frankfurter Ausgabe, ed. D.E. Sattler (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 2008), 469.

his swim, Bernt had experienced the coldness emanating from the bed of the lake, a symbol of the past from which the town seemed to have risen. He had later watched swallows darting swiftly and effortlessly in and out of holes in the bank along the shoreline, their present abode, to the heights of the blue sky, both earthly dwellers and heavenly messengers.⁵²² Now, as Bernt and Kora gaze into the bottom of the lake, he is struck by the frightening thought that all could change in an instant, the present could become past and no tomorrow could ever compare with today.⁵²³ As he is later to find out, everything does change, and his plan to spend the rest of his holidays with Kora, once he has collected his belongings, is thwarted by an urgent confidential work assignment abroad, to which he is obliged to respond without having an opportunity to let Kora know.

Initially, thoughts of Kora and the feeling of closeness with her despite their separation, together with satisfaction with the demands of his assignment, keep Bernt motivated, but, as time passes, difficulties with workers on the project, accompanied by deep emotional distress, lack of sleep, constant dreaming of Kora and the feeling of having lost even her image in his mind, begin to plague him. Unruh's description of Bernt's state of mind and gradual descent into depression evoke the unease, sense of instability and even trauma that he and many of his contemporaries experienced when beset by the ideological, social and structural changes in Germany in the post-war period. These sentiments are further evoked later, on Bernt's return to Vineta, a return that he has longed for during his three year absence on his work assignment. His initial feelings are again of disappointment and a sense of loss when he witnesses the changes that have taken place in the town of which he has dreamt so often, his imagined utopia.

The noise of construction is everywhere, as a new wide road is being built along the lakeside. Beyond the harbour is a strand with a bright red diving tower, where children in colourful swimsuits slide down a water slide. On the road up to the market place, the once beautiful old houses have been painted in bright colours and buses now rumble past, filled with people on their way to work, while hairdressers' shops are full of customers and shop windows are filled with goods. The whole image created is one of modernisation and

⁵²² Unruh (1965), 14.

⁵²³ Unruh (1965), 17.

progress, but Bernt experiences a sense of regret at the disappearance of the town he had loved in the past. He wonders why he has come. He knows nothing about Kora. She too must have changed, she may even be married and be a mother by now. Like the Vineta of his dreams, Kora represents a past whose passing he regrets. Neither he, nor anybody else, knows the word that will release the past and make it present once more.

Then, however, his moments of despair become a future of possibility and promise, as Bernt sees Kora among the crowds in the market place. She grows pale on seeing him; together they move away from the crowd. She remains silent as he tries to explain why he had not returned as promised. Then, through her tears, she quotes once more from Hölderlin's *Brod und Wein*, "Heilig Gedächtnis auch, wachend zu bleiben bei Nacht".⁵²⁴

The night through which they have suffered is about to turn into a new day. As they stand on the busy street, under a red and white striped awning, with the smell of petrol and sun in the air, Bernt looks into Kora's eyes and sees his long sought destiny, the Vineta he had thought lost.

Vineta as a metaphor for the afterlife

The desire to return to Vineta, to see it as one's destiny, is a frequent theme in the Vineta literature of all periods. In the poetry of the Austrian writer, Christine Busta, however, that particular motif is even more strongly expressed. Born in Vienna in 1915, where she died in 1987, Busta was a lyric poet and writer of children's books, who won many honours and literary prizes including the *Großer Österreichischer Staatspreis für Literatur* in 1969. In contrast with many other writers, her understanding of the ultimate destination is one which springs from a deeply Catholic viewpoint, rather than expressing simply a human longing for a return to the past, to one's place of origin, or even to a happier state in this world. The poet sees the ultimate destination as the afterlife, a safe haven for the poor in spirit, for those who have retained the innocence of childhood. Vineta is a metaphor for that afterlife, for heaven.

⁵²⁴ Hölderlin, 469.

To get to Busta's afterlife one has to pass through the doorway of death, a natural process signifying not an end, but rather a new beginning. In the poem, *Blick in die Tiefe*, for example, the meek, and the poor in spirit who have reached the afterlife, as promised in the New Testament, rest safely in the shade of the ruins of moss and grass-covered walls, protected by the strong but gentle roots of plants and flowers with no name.⁵²⁵ This evocation of the ruined city of Vineta, said by the poet to be “aus dämmerndem Gold und Schatten”,⁵²⁶ is an effective harmonisation of the world of nature with the peace and security of the sunken city, an unchanging place, no longer touched by worldly concerns and providing a secure haven for those who reach it. In addition to biblical motifs, the poem also contains pagan references, speaking for example of the streets echoing melodiously “von den Tritten lautloser Opfertiere”,⁵²⁷ thus synthesising two important aspects of the sunken city — Vineta, the pagan trading centre, which may have been converted to Christianity, forms a bridge between the old and the new, between the pre-Christian and Christian eras, and has therefore the right to be portrayed as both pagan and Christian.

A later poem of Christine Busta's also equates Vineta with death and the afterlife. The title *Oktoberabend in Venedig* does not necessarily lead one to expect references to Vineta or to death, but here again the poet uses the sunken city as a metaphor to convey the decay that lies behind the seeming splendour of marble, porphyry and gold. Vineta, representing the shadow side of Venice, silently gives way to the rats, while the sea penetrates through locked doors, “Vineta neigt sich still den Ratten, das Meer geht durch verschlossene Tür”.⁵²⁸ Even the bronze statue of the lion of St. Mark on its granite column is ‘dying’, as metal and stone are gradually eaten away by salt from the sea.

A reference to the river Styx introduces the motif of the afterlife and dwelling place for the spirits of the dead. The black gondolas, sometimes regarded as being like coffins

⁵²⁵ Christine Busta, *Blick in die Tiefe*, in *Lampe und Delphin: Gedichte* (Salzburg: Otto Müller Verlag, 1955). Quoted in Marilyn Scott, *Venice/Vineta as a Metaphor in the Poetry of Christine Busta*, in *Modern Austrian Literature*, Volume 18, No. 1, 1985, p. 87

⁵²⁶ Busta, *Blick in die Tiefe*, quoted in Scott, 87.

⁵²⁷ Busta, *Blick in die Tiefe*, quoted in Scott, 87.

⁵²⁸ Christine Busta, *Oktoberabend in Venedig*, quoted in Scott, 85.

because of their shape and colour, are like cradles, rocking gently on the water — an acknowledgment by the poet that only those of child-like innocence may enter the kingdom of heaven, as well as a recognition of death as part of the natural cycle of life, a beginning as well as an end. The gondolas of Venice/Vineta transport the dead to the river Styx, the boundary between earth and the afterlife, their ultimate destination, their Vineta.

Vineta — unattainable utopia

Christine Busta's poetry is not the only connection between Vineta and literary rodents. In Günter Grass's novel, *Die Rättin*, published in 1986, the dialogue between the eponymous anthropomorphised She-rat and the narrator is interspersed with a number of different narrative strands.⁵²⁹ In one of the strands a group of five women, all of whom have been active in the struggle for women's rights, are on an expedition in the Baltic in a research vessel called *Die neue Ilsebill*, the official purpose of which is to investigate an increase in the jellyfish population. Shortly into the voyage, however, the women learn that another objective of their captain Damroka, who regularly seeks advice and has secret conversations in Plattdeutsch with the Flounder, is to discover the lost city of Vineta, a mission the reason for which becomes doubly clear when the narrator explains that Vineta was a Wendish settlement that had really existed, where women had been in charge, and which could only be released by women:

Doch diese Stadt soll es wirklich als wendische Siedlung gegeben haben. [...]. Es sollen in dieser Stadt während langer Zeit die Frauen das Sagen gehabt haben, bis eines Tages die Männer mitreden wollten. Am Ende führten die Herren das Wort. Gepraßt wurde und goldenes Spielzeug den Kindern geschenkt. Worauf Vineta mit all seinem Reichtum unterging, auf daß die versunkene Stadt eines Tages erlöst werde von Frauen natürlich, fünf an der Zahl, deren eine wendischen Ursprungs sei und Damroka heiße.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁹ Günter Grass, *Die Rättin*. (Darmstadt: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1986).

⁵³⁰ Grass, 100. It is interesting also to note the parallel between Günter Grass's description of Vineta as originally being a place where women held sway, and Ibrâhîm ibn Ja'qûb's report of the existence of a town ruled over by women, situated between the land of the Slavic Rus' tribe and the city which researchers claim may have been Jumne/Vineta. Ibrâhîm ibn Ja'qûb claims that his report is true, as he received his

Though one or two of the women, in particular the oceanographer and the helmswoman, are initially reluctant to take part in such a mission, they are assured by another member of the group, referred to simply as the ‘old woman’, that Vineta is exactly where they will want to go in the end, as there is nowhere else, “Genau dahin werdet ihr hinwollen am Ende. Bleibt doch nichts übrig”.⁵³¹ For this particular group of women, actively involved in women’s affairs, there is no other choice. In his *Musik in Utopia* Hans Emons points out that these are new elements introduced by Grass into the Vineta narrative, “Neu ist die Verknüpfung des Vineta- Mythos mit einer frauenemanzipatorischen Utopie, die dort ihre Heimat sieht “weil anderswo kein Platz ist.””⁵³²

Having left the port of Visby on the island of Gotland, the research vessel enters the waters of the German Democratic Republic, still occasionally putting out nets and measuring the intake of jellyfish. Once in GDR waters, however, the five women find themselves accompanied by constant singing, the singing of the common jellyfish, *Aurelia aurita*, which seems to increase when they are sailing due south in the direction of Vineta, but otherwise abates. The narrator believes that the jellyfish are singing to guide the women on their way — “es sind Jubelchöre, die *Die neue Ilsebill* begrüßen und den Kurs des Schiffes leiten” — a belief that is further strengthened by the fact that the officers on the border patrol boat who check the identity papers of the ship cannot hear the singing.⁵³³ In his *Musik in Utopia*, however, Hans Emons contends that the singing of the jellyfish is a warning sign, a symbol of the ‘Wasserfrau’, who in some versions of the *Vineta Sage* rises up to warn the Vinetans that disaster will be visited on them unless they amend their ways.⁵³⁴ On balance, however, it would seem that this interpretation is not borne out either by the reaction of the narrator or by the fact that later, when the women begin to quarrel among themselves and in particular when the helmswoman claims that Damroka’s regular

information from “Hüto (Otto), der König von Rûm”, (Otto I, Holy Roman Emperor). See Jacob, 14.

⁵³¹ Grass, 99.

⁵³² Emons, 54.

⁵³³ Grass, 260.

⁵³⁴ Emons, 54.

conversations with the Flounder are creating unease among the other women, the singing stops and the shoals of jellyfish disappear.

Damroka later tells the women a couple of different versions of the story of Jumne/Vineta, in one case claiming that the Wendish settlement of Jumne was destroyed by Vikings and Danes, later rebuilt and called Vineta. Another version has the menfolk of Vineta fighting among themselves and killing one another, while a third tells of the arrival of a group of people from the Weser, on the feast of St. Martin in 1284. The men in the group were unwilling to accept female supremacy or participation in government, and so began the downfall of Vineta. It is clear that in his instrumentalisation of the Vineta motif Günter Grass has broadened the scope of interpretation to encompass many of the different issues and debates of his time.

When the women eventually arrive over the sunken city and peer into the depths, each seems to see her own particular desired image spread beneath her. The helmswoman, for example, sees it as a woman's paradise, a hospitable haven which she has long desired, the predestined goal of their journey. Damroka sees the ornately decorated high-gabled houses, the towers, the half-timbered warehouses that speak of the possibility of wealth. What they all find inspiring are the buildings and squares that are clearly dedicated to women's interests — "Überall entdecken sie Gehäuse und Plätze, geeignet, die Frauensache auszutragen, das Frauenrecht zu wahren, ihr Frauenreich zu errichten".⁵³⁵ What is also particularly noticeable is the fact that, in complete contrast with the majority of descriptions of the sunken city in Vineta literature, Grass's Vineta is clean, the buildings and streets not covered with mould or seaweed, "Wie putzsauber die Stadt ist. Nirgendwo haften Tangbärte, kein Dach, kein Torbogen von Algen verkrautet".⁵³⁶

The women react positively to the well-kept appearance of the sunken city; they dress solemnly and with care and prepare fastidiously for their entry to Vineta, as if about to embrace their long-awaited inheritance. Finally ready, they peer once more over the side of the boat into the depths. This time, however, the situation is very different — Vineta

⁵³⁵ Grass, 320.

⁵³⁶ Grass, 320.

has changed, with dark shadows darting here and there. The town is overrun with rats, in every building, at every corner, on every ledge and rooftop. They stream into and out of the churches, the town hall and every public building. Rats have claimed Vineta and it is as if they are challenging the women, saying “wir sind schon da. Vineta ist besetzt, vergeben, behaust. Keine menschliche Herrschaft, kein Frauenreich findet hier Platz”.⁵³⁷ As the women come slowly to realise that there is no place for them, unless they are prepared to live among the rats, a blinding flash rends the sky and they seem to disappear in a blast of all-consuming heat. Mushroom clouds appear in the west, south and north. Everywhere there is devastation. Minutes later bombs explode.

The five women later appear, injured and crawling around on the deck of *Die Neue Ilsebill*, calling on the Flounder to rid Vineta of rats and make it a women’s city once more. There is a certain irony in their appeal to the Flounder. Though previously they have felt only resentment, because of his regular conversations in Plattdeutsch with Damroka, to which they were not privy, they now seem to attribute human powers of intervention to him. One gets the impression that they have not yet fully absorbed the truth of their situation: there is no place for them, there is no Flounder, nor are there any fairy tales. Humankind is in the process of destroying itself and its habitat, and to attempt to reach Vineta, their utopia, is futile — it is unattainable.

Overview of Vineta literature from 1945 to 1989

Creative texts concerning Vineta were not plentiful and were slow to appear in the post-war period. With one exception, the earliest of the texts in this study are poems dating to the nineteen fifties, the most significant of which were written by the Austrian poet, Christine Busta, though some material relating to the sunken city was also to be found in *Heimat* journals in the early fifties. The same pattern is evident in the *Vineta Sage*, as collections in which it appeared were published mainly from the nineteen sixties onwards.

⁵³⁷ Grass, 324.

It is interesting to note that the earliest text in this study, Friedrich Franz von Unruh's novel *Vineta*, published originally in 1948, differs from a number of the later texts in that it could be said to be the most clearly creative. The author uses motifs based broadly on the Vineta Sage, without however using material from the recent past.⁵³⁸ This may in fact be one of the reasons why it was published within a few years of the end of the war — it contains no assessment of war-time events. From an ecocritical perspective Unruh's text succeeds in creating an atmosphere of beauty and calm, through portraying aesthetic images of orchards, flowers, trees and the lake — images that are not common in the Vineta literature of the period 1945 to 1989, where the emphasis has tended to be on environmental and social problems.

Insofar as the other texts of the period are concerned, it is clear that for some writers the post-war period was a time of remembrance and reflection. For others there was a recognition and acknowledgment of the past, accompanied at times by acceptance, and by concern at political and social developments; nevertheless there was also an element of hope for a different and better future. As was presumably the case with literary and creative endeavour in general, writers on the theme of Vineta, or those who instrumentalised the myth in any way, needed time to absorb, assimilate and come to terms with the events of the war years. They required even longer perhaps to convey their message in a dispassionate and effective manner. The further one moved away from the war, the easier it was to look back, to relive and to reassess.

This is particularly noticeable in some of the later texts, particularly those written in the late sixties and early seventies, as for example Brustat-Naval's novel *Leb wohl, Vineta*, which from a historical point of view is quite factual and realistic, and therefore more instantly recognisable to a modern readership.⁵³⁹ Though very different in content, Paul Bühler's drama *Vineta* also utilises themes and motifs, with which those who experienced or learned about the war years would be familiar.⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁸ Friedrich Franz von Unruh, *Vineta* (Düsseldorf: Vier Falken Verlag, 1948).

⁵³⁹ Fritz Brustat-Naval, *Leb wohl, Vineta* (Stuttgart: Henry Goverts Verlag, 1967).

⁵⁴⁰ Paul Bühler, *Vineta* (Dornach: Literarischer Verlag, 1972)..

As one moves further into the post-war decades it is clear that serious social and environmental problems come increasingly to the fore — issues such as the treatment of the underprivileged or disabled, ecological concerns, the status of women, and proliferation of nuclear arms feature in the work of writers like Günter Grass, whose novel *Die Rättin* is particularly strong on social problems.⁵⁴¹ Through his appropriation of the Vineta Sage and his awareness of and concern for contemporary issues, Grass manages to reinterpret and use the story of Vineta creatively in a particularly effective manner, without nevertheless offering facile solutions.

In summary therefore it might be said that insofar as the instrumentalisation of the Vineta Sage is concerned, the creative literature of the period from 1945-1989, through its similarities and contrasts with that of previous periods, displays a unifying whole, but one that broadens and stretches the boundaries into areas not previously encountered, areas that serve not only to give further life to Vineta but also open up the possibility of further extended development of the theme.

⁵⁴¹ Günter Grass, *Die Rättin*. (Darmstadt: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1986).

Chapter 6

Summary and Conclusions

To follow the progress of the story of Vineta from its beginnings up to recent times is to pursue a wide variety of strands of human experience, from historical and environmental to religious, personal and societal. In examining the legend from the very earliest references onwards it is clear that it has always inspired not alone those who might be regarded as having a legitimate and understandable proprietorial interest — namely those living in the shadow of the type of event that may have precipitated the destruction of what was thought to be an important trading centre — but also those who have used the legend to highlight either personal or societal aspects of their everyday reality. It seems probable too that as long as the *Vineta Sage* remains as part of inherited tradition, it will continue to be utilised in ever more creative ways, to explain and educate, engender pride and encourage, and frighten and warn.

Review of the literature referring to the lost city of Vineta has shown that from earliest times it excited the imagination of the people. As far back as Ibrahim ibn Ja‘qûb, Adam von Bremen and other mediaeval chroniclers it was a subject for discussion, debate and wonderment. Ibrahim ibn Ja‘qûb, it will be recalled, based his report of the existence of a major trading centre on information obtained from the Holy Roman Emperor Otto 1 (died 973), who is reputed to have known well the extent and the boundaries of his kingdom. Ibrahim ibn Ja‘qûb did not name the trading centre, but his report is generally regarded as referring to the town that later became known as Vineta. Adam von Bremen, in accordance with his brief to write the history of the diocese of Hamburg, reported on the existence of a trading centre he called ‘Jumne’. He did not visit Jumne, but relied on information obtained from various sources, principally “aus sachkundiger mündlicher Überlieferung unserer Alten”.⁵⁴² He made brief reference to attitudinal or behavioural

⁵⁴² Adam, *Bischofsgeschichte*, 163.

issues, noting the open-mindedness and generosity of the inhabitants, as well as the fact that people of all religions were welcome, but that Christians were not permitted to practise their religion openly. The main thrust of Adam's report, however, was geographical; he described the location as being at the mouth of the river Oder, though his description was not sufficiently precise to enable definitive location of Jumne. A century later Helmold von Bosau followed the same pattern, quoting extensively from Adam's report, with the addition of one significant detail, namely that the town, which he variously called 'Iumneta' and 'Vinneta', had been destroyed by a king of the Danes.⁵⁴³ This had presumably happened in the hundred years or so since Adam had written his report.

As the potentially factual story was further transmitted, being appropriately modified in order to be consistent with the cultural background, beliefs and assumptions of its various recipients at different stages, it began to assume the character of a myth, through the addition of philosophical and moral elements that at times became more important than the purely physical reality. Later still it was left to the imagination of creative artists, writers, poets and musicians to see in Vineta a metaphor for their times, their situation, their country, their life. Its flexibility allowed it to be used across a broad range of different contexts. The sunken city on the Baltic became a metaphor or an allegory that could be transposed to other locations, to other eras, to other environments and peoples. It assumed a life beyond the merely physical or terrestrial. Its reality was questioned, researched both physically, through archaeological and geographical investigation, and archivally through examination of historical documents and texts. What is in fact remarkable in the whole Vineta story is the manner in which a simple, factual, though essentially unauthenticated report of a medieval chronicler became the catalyst for the involvement of experts and scholars across many disciplines, as well as creative and interested people across a broad spectrum of society.

As a supposedly significant mediaeval trading centre and cosmopolitan town, Jumne was no doubt important in its own right. It might also be said however that its demise, irrespective of how it occurred and traumatic as it may have been, resulted in its remaining

⁵⁴³ Helmold, quoted in Goldmann, 90.

significant, albeit in a very different way. Its fame lay at least partly in its disappearance. Initially the story was transmitted orally from one generation to the next, with the narrative being added to or subtracted from depending on whether the purpose was merely to report — as in the case of chroniclers and historians — or entertain and encourage reflection, as in the case of the storyteller. Thus orality played a major role in keeping the memory of Vineta alive.

With the spread of literacy a further medium of transmission became available, a medium that in the overall context was very effective, in that it facilitated broader dissemination of the Vineta myth as well as a greater possibility for individual personal reception and interpretation on the part of the reader. The written myth did not, however, have the flexibility of the oral version, as it could not very easily be changed or modified to suit the circumstances of the receiver. This was counterbalanced to a certain extent through the collection and publication of different versions of the myth by folklorists and writers. The essential core remained the same, but details varied depending on the particular writer and point of collection.

A third element that kept the memory of Vineta alive was the fact that the search for the ruins of the sunken city went on concurrently, exciting interest not only in but far beyond the boundaries of the supposed location. Reports of these investigations and searches appeared in local and regional journals and other publications.

With the passage of time the Vineta myth began to achieve even greater dissemination, as writers and other artists further broadened their utilisation of the theme through the production of works in a variety of different media and genres, thereby creating a large body of work based on or around the subject of the sunken city. In the area of creative literature, one of the most striking features is the diversity of ways in which writers have instrumentalised the theme and the motifs of the original legend for a variety of sometimes contrasting or contradictory purposes, to evoke different philosophies and situations, whether personal, societal, religious or political. The adaptability of the theme, together with the imagination and skill of different writers has ensured that Vineta has remained a subject of research, debate, and literary and artistic endeavour.

Themes and motifs in Vineta literature

It is evident that there is a broad range of texts and a correspondingly large number of themes and motifs within the creative literature on Vineta. In general, the motif of loss is one of the most significant, and it appears in some form in virtually all the texts. While there is an element of hope of rescue through a ‘Sonntagskind’ in some versions of the *Sage*, in reality the very essence of the *Vineta Sage* is loss, though it is a loss that also left traces behind. Vineta itself, in its physical presence, was lost to the sea, to the land, to its inhabitants and those with whom it engaged. What has not been lost, however, in the different versions and developments of the legend is the memory of the sunken city, which has been preserved in the minds of the people, and transmitted through different media. Analysis of the literature has, however, shown that while in the *Vineta Sage* the loss that is highlighted is that of the town and its people, in the creative literature in general the motifs of loss are more broadly based, and include loss of love, friendship or trust, loss of freedom, livelihood, home or possessions, loss of language or identity. The loss experienced may be personal, social or cultural, or indeed contain elements of all three. Some of the texts finish at the point of destruction, leaving the reader with a certain sense of finality and hopelessness; in others the loss is not necessarily total, in that it may be at least partly, if not wholly alleviated through recognition and, more importantly, acceptance of a new emergent reality. An example of this has been seen in texts such as M.E. delle Grazie’s one-act play, *Zu Spät: Vineta*, in which Baroness Maria Sußdorf and Johannes Noltsch, accommodate themselves to their present situation by admitting their earlier undeclared love for one another and their current feelings of regret.⁵⁴⁴ Johannes Noltsch has already taken the serious step of becoming a missionary priest in China, in an effort to combat and overcome his sense of loss, and the baroness has married and has a son. There is no going back for either of them. They agree, however, to keep in touch by letter every Easter, at which time they will be united, at least temporarily in spirit, across continents. To do so will bring at least some small alleviation of their sorrow. Though the motif of Vineta is secondary to the main action of the play, its use in the title in this case is indicative of its importance and acceptance as a motif symbolising loss.

⁵⁴⁴ M.E. delle Grazie, *Zu Spät: vier Einakter: Vineta* (Leipzig: Druck und Verlag von Breitkopf und Härtel, 1903).

It is not surprising that the most personal and inward-looking utilisation of the Vineta theme is to be found in the poems of the late Romantic and post-Romantic periods, in which poets such as Heinrich Heine, Wilhelm Müller and Ferdinand von Freiligrath express their desire to be at one with the sunken city, to return to it as their place of origin, to rejoin their lost loves there.⁵⁴⁵ In some of the works the poet sees the sunken city in the depths below, as he peers over the edge of a boat, and he longs to plunge into the deep. He envisages the sunken city as a utopia to which he wishes to return. Though descriptions vary, the language used, even in the expression of deeply-felt emotion and desire, is generally poetic, calm and tranquil in character. Vineta is evoked as a romantic place, where life still goes on, or is perhaps temporarily in abeyance, awaiting its re-awakening.

As one progresses through the later decades of the nineteenth and into the early twentieth century, the emphasis shifts from internalised emotion, through a greater awareness of relationships with the natural environment, to the instrumentalisation of Vineta in a broader manner as a vehicle for mapping political and social change and its effects on local populations. A novel such as E. Werner's *Vineta*, for example, illustrates the political and personal difficulties arising for those affected by border changes, while Richard Nordhausen's *Die versunkene Stadt* provides a realistic exposé of some of the problems encountered as a result of industrial progress and modernisation.⁵⁴⁶ The publications of *Heimat* writers help not alone to educate but also to create a sense of local and national pride and unity, and to encourage and energise the people of the newly created empire.

Moving into the post-World War I period and the rise of National Socialism one can see an even greater political thrust in the manner in which the Vineta theme is utilised and handled. Subjects such as death and loss feature frequently — understandably so in the context of Germany's defeat in the war and the imposition of what were regarded as punitive terms under the Treaty of Versailles. It is however in the 1930s that the most interesting and significant creative works appear and the political leanings of their authors are made manifest. Paul Bendlin's poem *Geisternacht bei Vineta* and Jura Soyfer's drama

⁵⁴⁵ Heine, *Seegespenst*, in *Gesamtausgabe I/1*, 384–385; Müller, *Vineta*, in *Müller. Werke*, 64; Freiligrath, *Meerfahrt*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, 58.

⁵⁴⁶ E. Werner, *Vineta* (Leipzig: Verlag von Ernst Keils Nachfolger); Richard Nordhausen, *Die versunkene Stadt* (Hannover: Adolf Sponholtz Verlag, 1911).

Vineta are good examples of what might be considered the diametrically opposed views of their respective writers.⁵⁴⁷ Bendlin, through his literary device of causing the ghosts of important historical figures of the past to appear and describe or justify their actions when alive, manages to evoke the history of Germany from earliest times. The last word tableau in his long poem shows the swastika, which he welcomes as a symbol of the rise of National Socialism. Soyfer, on the other hand, tries to warn the people of Vienna against the rise of Nazism. In so doing he presents the inhabitants of *Vineta* as a metaphor for the Viennese. The inhabitants of Soyfer's *Vineta*, his so called 'Wien-eter' are portrayed as mindless puppets, unable to think for themselves and limited in their speech to stock phrases and clichés, which effectively mean very little and are a barrier to true communication.

The creative literature of the post-World War II period is characterised by references to and descriptions of some of the events of the Nazi era and by demands for change in society. Paul Bühler's play *Vineta*, for example, the aim of which is to call for a new order, uses motifs such as the Nazi rallies, the burning of books, and the banishment of the infirm and disabled to illustrate the moral degeneracy of society and the need for radical change.⁵⁴⁸ Other writers also are prepared to accept change, but seek to combine it with the best of what has gone before. An example is to be found in Friedrich Franz von Unruh's novel *Vineta*, in which the writer causes Bernt, the main protagonist, to return after a long absence, in search of his girl friend, Kora. On arrival in *Vineta*, Bernt sees the many modern changes that have taken place. This is no longer the *Vineta* of the *Sage*, but a modern town with crowds of people, cars, and brightly-coloured shops. He finds that Kora, though hesitant because of his long unexplained absence, is nevertheless unchanged in her love for him. Bernt has re-found his *Vineta*, the person for whom he has yearned. Another element in the *Vineta* literature of the later decades of the twentieth century is the portrayal of increasing social problems. In his 1986 novel, *Die Rättin*, Günter Grass uses a historically broad range of motifs. He succeeds in recounting the myth of *Vineta*, setting it against the background of a desire on the part of the female protagonists to return to

⁵⁴⁷ Paul Bendlin, *Geisternacht bei Vineta* (Misdroy: Misdroyer Zeitung, 1935); Jura Soyfer, *Vineta*, in *Jura Soyfer: Das Gesamtwerk*, ed. Horst Jarka (Wien: Europaverlag, 1980).

⁵⁴⁸ Paul Bühler, *Vineta* (Dornach: Literarischer Verlag, 1972).

what was thought to be a utopian existence, while at the same time using the Vineta story to highlight modern social issues such as the status of women, nuclear proliferation and environmental problems.

One might ask what purpose has been served or what has been achieved by the use of the Vineta theme. In the first place it is clear that the malleability of the subject has enabled it to be utilised as a metaphor to illustrate a broad range of human emotions, situations and experiences, both positive and negative, personal and societal. Furthermore, as knowledge about the sunken city has broadened and been disseminated through both creative works and archaeological research, the name ‘Vineta’ is regarded increasingly as a motif in its own right and requires little explanation of its origin, background or meaning. In addition, the multiplicity of motifs arising from the original chroniclers’ reports, allied with the storytelling ability of the narrators who passed on the legend, and the literary skill and imagination of novelists, poets, dramatists and other writers, have enabled the theme of Vineta to be used as a road map illustrating major events in the history of Germany and their effects on the population. Vineta may have been physically destroyed, but its spirit lives on in the multiplicity of creative works that have been facilitated through its story and the numerous reference to it in works not directly concerned with that story.

Vineta past, present and future

That Vineta had a past — at the very least a past in the chronicles — is beyond dispute, though it is clear too that the sunken city was known at various times by different names and claimed by different places. Vineta has left an indelible legacy in collective memory, a legacy that has found expression in myths and legends, as well as in oral and written reports of genuinely held beliefs and traditions that have been handed down over the centuries. Taking into account the fact that “a central function of remembering the past within the framework of collective memory is identity formation”, it is suggested that the whole concept or idea of Vineta has left a significant imprint on the identity and lives of both the inhabitants of the area where the sunken city reputedly stood, as well as on all

who have experienced the story of Vineta through other media of transmission.⁵⁴⁹ Though the physical Vineta of the chroniclers' reports is no more, the sunken city lives on in the collective memory and imagination of those who dream about it; in the minds of those who see its demise as a reflection of everyday reality; in the sense of community pride it engenders in its local area; in the financial rewards it continues to bring to its region and its people in modern times, in the form of increased tourism and the development and provision of the necessary ancillary services that accompany it; in the interest and excitement it creates among those who follow stories of its occasional re-appearance, or who claim to have personally witnessed it emerge above the waves. Vineta continues to inspire poets, writers, artists, musicians and all involved in the artistic community. Vineta still raises questions for academics, researchers and people with an interest in the story. It is clear that the 'life' of the sunken city will continue as long as there is a community that identifies culturally with it; as long as there are people with imagination who are inspired to create and produce ever more sophisticated and modern adaptations of the Vineta narrative and to pass on their knowledge to their own and succeeding generations; and as long as there are historians and archaeologists who pursue with increasingly sophisticated and effective technological know-how and equipment the location of the sunken city and report on their findings.

Broader relevance of Vineta in the twenty-first century

Finally one might ask whether the story of Vineta has any broader relevance in modern times. Leaving aside the more obvious and easily demonstrable benefits which no doubt accrue from economic, touristic and cultural developments on the North Sea and Baltic coasts, it would seem that in the twenty-first century the story of Vineta has in fact relevance on a scale that is potentially far-reaching and even more significant than the position it occupied before it was destroyed. To take one contemporary example: the whole question of climate change and in particular rising sea levels and coastal flooding is clearly of immense global importance and is exercising the minds of scientists, climatologists, mathematicians and engineers. A recent scientific paper argues that the

⁵⁴⁹ Erll, 17.

Baltic Sea, as a regional sea where the impact of regional and global change is accumulating quickly, can “serve as a time machine to study consequences and mitigation of future coastal perturbations” and that it “stands out in providing a strong scientific foundation and accessibility to long-term data [...]”.⁵⁵⁰ Is this relevant in relation to a city called Vineta, that is reputed to have sunk in the Baltic, and the creative literature that has been built around it? Perhaps not directly; but the history of the trading centre of Vineta, together with that of all the other sunken towns, villages, lands and people, and of the major storm floods that have plagued the Baltic and North Sea coasts, has succeeded not only in cementing the story in the minds of the people, but also in motivating research into the potential for further environmental disasters and the formulation of increasingly sophisticated and effective methods of preventing and dealing with them. It has also encouraged and indeed compelled authorities to act, and it continues to do so.⁵⁵¹ Anyone who has experienced the wild North Sea and Baltic surges and storm floods, who has seen the high water mark measurements recorded on the facades of public buildings in coastal towns and cities, viewed the half washed away remains of earlier dikes, now long redundant and replaced by increasingly higher protective structures placed along a reducing hinterland, or witnessed the significant erosion of the coastline in Niedersachsen, Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, cannot but feel obliged to make themselves aware of the history of towns such as Vineta, and to encourage action to prevent further devastation. It is clear that Vineta still demands attention, and still continues to serve in the twenty-first century.

⁵⁵⁰ Thorsten B.H. Reusch et al., *The Baltic Sea as a Time Machine for the Future Coastal Ocean*, in *Science Advances*, Vol. 4, no. 5 (Washington D.C: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 2018), 11.

⁵⁵¹ The German branch of EUCC (European Union Coastal Conservation), *Küsten Union Deutschland e.V.* was established as an NGO in 2002, for the purposes of strengthening activities within the field of Integrated Coastal Zone Management.

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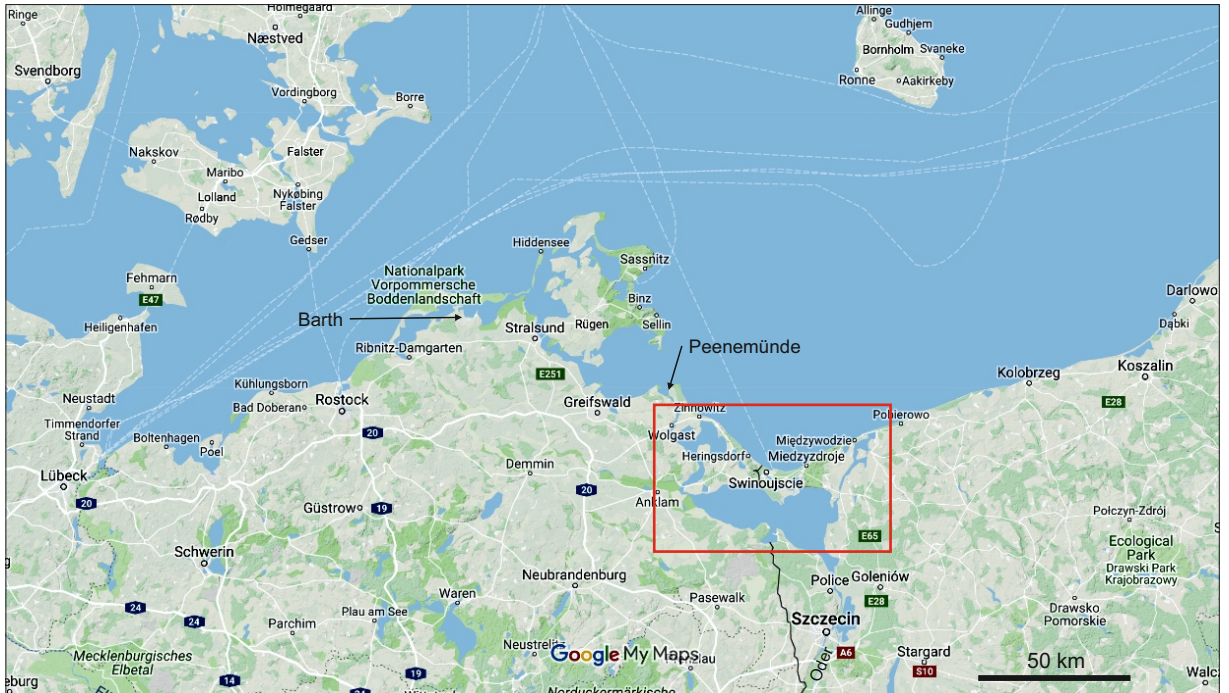
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Map of part of southern Baltic and adjoining landmasses.
 A rectangle delimits the area shown in map below
 (based on Google Maps; downloaded 17/11/2018)



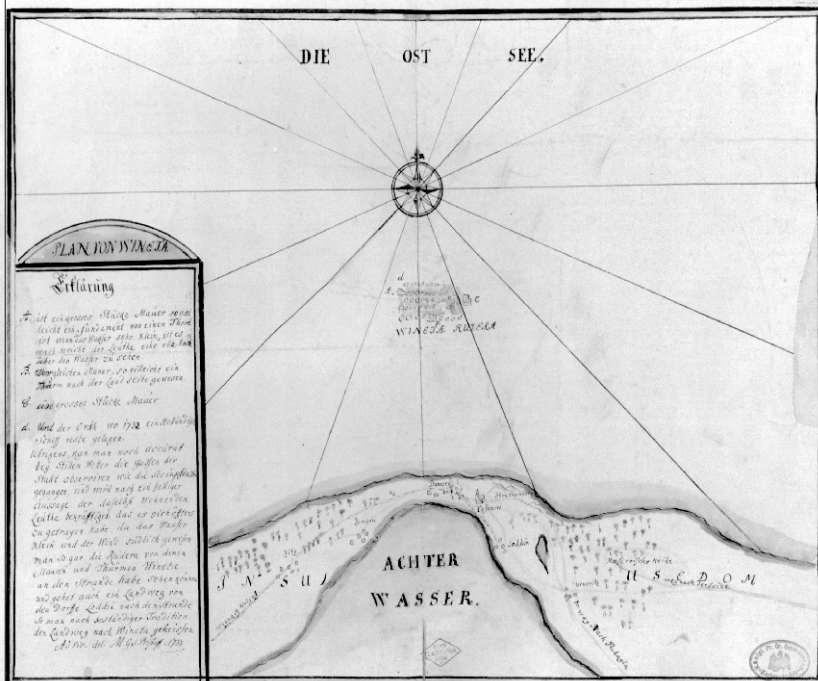
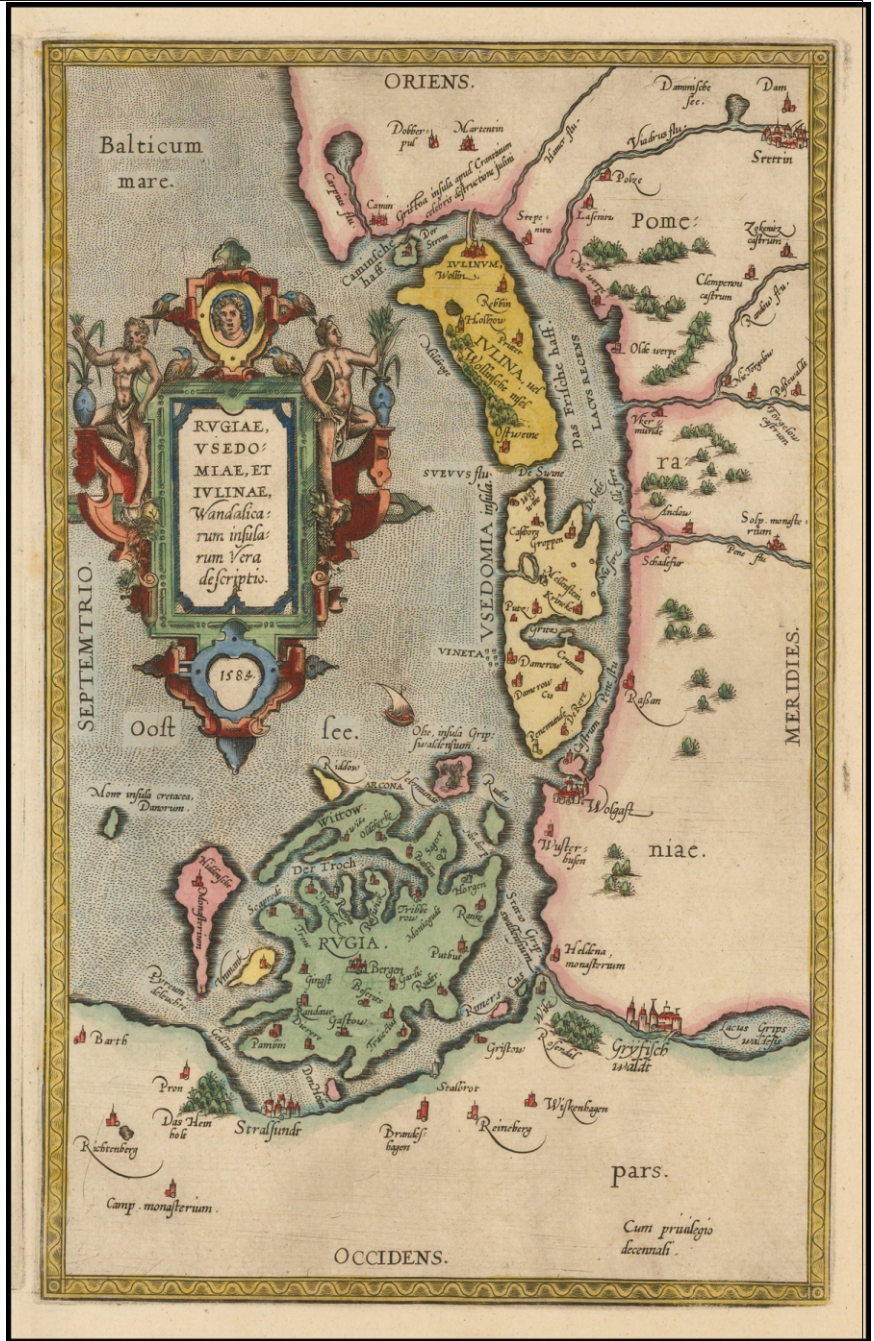
Detailed map showing the islands of Usedom and Wolin, the German/Polish border, and three outflows of the river Oder, Peenestrom (1), Swina (Swine) (2) and Dziwna (Dievenow) (3).
 (based on Bing Maps; downloaded 17/11/2018)

Map of part of Baltic showing the islands of Rügen, Usedom and Wolin

Vineta is shown off Usedom

Map by Abraham Ortelius (1584)

Note orientation: top is east



Plan von Wineta 1733

Map shows the ruins of Vineta in the southern Baltic off Damerow, close to the narrowest point of the island of Usedom

Map by Gottlieb Samuel Pristaff

Source: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz

ADAM VON BREMEN,
 HAMBURGISCHE
 KIRCHENGESCHICHTE.

DRITTE AUFLAGE

HERAUSGEGEBEN VON

BERNHARD SCHMEIDLER.

HANNOVER UND LEIPZIG
 HAHNSCHE BUCHHANDLUNG.

1917.

LIB. II, CAP. XXI. XXII.

XXII^a. Ultra Leuticios^b, qui alio nomine Wilzi^c di- (19).
 cuntur, Oddara^d flumen occurit, ditissimus amnis^e Sclyva-
 5 niae^f regionis^g. In cuius ostio, qua Scyticas^h alluitⁱ paludes,
 nobilissima civitas Iumne^{k.1} celeberrimam^l prestat stationem
 Barbaris et^m Grecis, qui sunt in circuitu^l. De cuius pre-
 conio urbis, quia magna quaedam et vix credibilia reci-
 tantur, volupe arbitror pauca inserere digna relatu. Estⁿ
 10 sane maxima^o omnium, quas Europa claudit, civitatum^o,
 quam incolunt Sclavi cum aliis gentibus, Grecis et Barba-
 ris; nam^p et advenae Saxones parem cohabitandi legem
 acceperunt, si tamen christianitatis^q titulum ibi morantes
 non publicaverint. Omnes enim adhuc paganis ritibus
 15 oberrant^{r.2}, ceterum^s moribus et hospitalitate nulla gens
 honestior aut benignior poterit inveniri. Urbs illa merci-
 bus omnium septentrionalium nationum locuples nihil non
 habet iocundi^t aut rari. Ibi est Olla Vulcani³, quod in-
 colae Grecum ignem vocant^u, de quo etiam meminit Soli-
 20 nus⁴. Ibi cernitur Neptunus triplicis naturae: tribus^v enim
 fretis alluitur illa insula⁵, quorum^w aiunt unum esse viri-
 dissimae speciei, alterum subalbidae, tertium^a motu furi-
 bundo perpetuis saevit tempestatibus.

Adam schildert die große Handelsstadt an der Ostsee so:

»Hinter den Liutizen, die auch Wilzen heißen, trifft man auf die Oder, den reichsten [»ditissimus« – besser: prächtigsten oder wasserreichsten, vgl. dazu die Übersetzung von Helmolds Werk] Strom des Slawenlandes. Wo sie an ihrer Mündung ins Skythenmeer fließt [wörtlich: »in cuius ostio, qua Scyticas alluit paludes«: In jener Mündung, wo sie die Skythischen Sümpfe bespült], da bietet die sehr berühmte Stadt Jumne für Barbaren und Griechen in weitem Umkreise einen vielbesuchten Treffpunkt. Weil man sich zum Preise dieser Stadt allerlei Ungewöhnliches und kaum Glaubhaftes erzählt, halte ich es für wünschenswert, einige bemerkenswerte Nachrichten einzuschalten. Es ist wirklich die größte von allen Städten, die Europa birgt; in ihr wohnen Slawen und andere Stämme [wörtlich: »Sclavis cum aliis gentibus«, also: Slawen *mit* anderen Stämmen], Griechen und Barbaren. Auch die Fremden aus Sachsen haben gleiches Niederlassungsrecht erhalten, wenn sie auch während ihres Aufenthaltes ihr Christentum nicht öffentlich bekennen dürfen. Denn noch sind alle in heidnischem Irrglauben befangen; abgesehen davon wird man allerdings kaum ein Volk finden können, das in Lebensart und Gastfreiheit ehrenhafter und freundlicher ist. Die Stadt ist angefüllt mit Waren aller Völker des Nordens, nichts Begehrtes oder Seltenes fehlt. Hier steht ein »Vulkanstopf«, die Einwohner sprechen von »griechischem Feuer«, auch Solinus gedenkt seiner. Hier zeigt sich Neptun in dreifacher Art, denn die Insel wird von drei Meeren umspült [wörtlich »bespült«, für »umspült« hätte »circumluitur« statt »alluitur« stehen müssen], eins davon soll von tiefgrünem Aussehen sein, das zweite weißlich; das dritte wogt ununterbrochen wildbewegt von Stürmen.

ADAM VON BREMEN

Source:

Goldmann, K. and G. Wermusch: *Vineta* (Bergisch Gladbach: Gustav Lübbe Verlag, 1999), 83

HELMOLDS SLAVENCHRONIK

HERAUSGEGEBEN VOM

REICHSINSTITUT

FÜR ÄLTERE DEUTSCHE GESCHICHTSKUNDE.

DRITTE AUFLAGE

BEARBEITET VON

BERNHARD SCHMEIDLER.

AN H A N G :

DIE VERSE ÜBER DAS LEBEN VICELINS
UND DER BRIEF SIDOS.

HELMOLDI PRESB. CRONICA SLAVORUM. L. 1.

De civitate Vinneta^k. II.

Ad. II, 19.

In cuius ostio^a, quab^b Balthicum alluit pelagusⁱ, quondam fuit nobilissima civitas Iumnetae^c, prestans celeberrimam stationem barbaris et Grecis, qui sunt in circuitu. De cuius preconio urbis, quia magna quaedam et vix credibilia recitantur, libet aliqua commemorare digna relatu. Fuit^d sane maxima omnium, quas Europa claudit, civitatum, quam incolunt Slavi cum aliis gentibus permixtis^d, Grecis et barbaris. Nam et advenae Saxones parem cohabitandi^e licentiam acceperunt, si tantum Christianitatis titulum ibi commorantes non publicassent. Omnes enim usque ad excidium eiusdem urbis^g paganicois^f ritibus oberrarunt, ceterum 10 moribus et hospitalitate nulla gens honestior aut benignior potuit inveniri. Civitas illa mercibus omnium nacionum locuples nichil non habuit iocundi aut rari. Hanc civitatem opulentissimam quidam Danorum rex maxima classe^g stipatus funditus evertisse refertur⁴. Presto sunt adhuc antiquae illius 16 civitatis monumenta^h. Ibi cernitur Neptunusⁱ triplicis naturae: tribus enim fretis alluitur illa insula, quorum aiunt unum esse viridissimae^k speciei, alterum subalbidae, tertium motu furibundo perpetuis sevit tempestatibus.

Appendix A2 (German ver.)

Hier nun der Bericht des Helmold von Bosau über die Stadt »Vinneta«:

»Wo nun Polen endet, gelangt man zu den sehr ausgedehnten Landen der einst Wandalen, jetzt aber Wenden oder Winuler genannten Slawen. Als erste kommen die Pommern, deren Gebiet sich bis zur Oder erstreckt. Dieser wasserreichste Strom des Slawenlandes entspringt im tiefsten Bergwalde der Mährer, die östlich von Böhmen wohnen, wo auch die Elbe ihren Lauf beginnt. Anfangs fließen sie nicht weit voneinander entfernt, doch dann nehmen sie verschiedene Richtung. Die Elbe strömt nach Westen und bespült mit dem Oberlauf (das Gebiet) der Böhmen und Sorben, trennt durch den Mittellauf die Slawen von den Sachsen und durch das Ende ihrer Bahn den Hamburger Kirchensprengel vom Bremer, bis sie ihr Ziel erreicht und in den britannischen Ozean mündet. Der andere Fluß, die Oder, verläuft nordwärts mitten durch die Stämme der Wenden, indem er die Pommern von den Wilzen scheidet. An seiner Mündung in das Baltische Meer lag einst die sehr angesehene Stadt Vineta [in der lateinischen Vorlage »Iumneta«], welche den rings wohnenden Barbaren und Griechen einen weitberühmten Stützpunkt bot. Weil zum Preise dieser Stadt viele, oft kaum glaubliche Geschichten umgehen, sei es erlaubt, an einiges Erwähnenswerte zu erinnern. Unter allen Städten, die Europa umfaßt, war sie gewiß die größte, von Slawen vermischt mit anderen Griechen- und Barbarenvölkern [wörtlich: »quam incolunt Slavi cum aliis gentibus permixtis, Grecis et barbaris« (von Slawen, vermischt mit anderen Stämmen, Griechen und Barbaren)] bewohnte. Ja, auch zureisende Sachsen erhielten die gleiche Erlaubnis zum Aufenthalt, wenn sie nur, solange sie blieben, nicht öffentlich als Christen auftraten. Bis zum Untergange dieser Stadt waren nämlich alle (Bewohner) von heidnischen Bräuchen irregeleitet, sonst aber konnte man an Sitten und Gastlichkeit keine anständigeren und mildherzigeren Leute finden. Reich an Waren aller Länder, besaß jene Stadt alle Annehmlichkeiten und Vorzüge. Ein König der Dänen soll diesen höchst wohlhabenden Platz mit einer sehr großen Flotte angegriffen und völlig zerstört haben. Die Überreste sind noch jetzt vorhanden. Das Meer sieht man dort in dreifacher Gestalt: drei Sunde [wörtlich wie bei Adam: »fretis«, also: Meere] bespülen nämlich jene Insel, deren einer ganz grünes, der zweite weißliches Aussehen haben soll, während der dritte in fürchterlicher Bewegung durch dauernde Stürme wütet.«²⁰

Source:

Goldmann, K. and G. Wermusch: *Vineta* (Bergisch Gladbach: Gustav Lübbe Verlag, 1999), 89

Die

Volkssagen

von

Pommern und Mügen.

.. Gesammelt

von

J. D. S. Lemme.



Berlin, 1840.

In der Nicolaischen Buchhandlung.

14. Wineta.

An der nordöstlichen Küste der Insel Wifedom steht man häufig bei stillem Wetter in der See die Trümmer einer alten, großen Stadt. Es hat dort die einst weltberühmte Stadt Wineta gelegen, die schon vor tausend und

mehr Jahren wegen ihrer Laster und Wollust ein schreckliches Ende genommen hat. Diese Stadt ist größer gewesen, als irgend eine andere Stadt in Europa, selbst als die große und schöne Stadt Constantinopel, und es haben darin allerlei Völker gewohnt, Griechen, Slaven, Wenden, Sachsen und noch vielerlei andere Stämme. Die hatten allda jedes ihre besondere Religion; nur die Sachsen, welche Christen waren, durften ihr Christenthum nicht öffentlich bekennen, denn nur die heidnischen Götzen genossen eine öffentliche Verehrung. Ungeachtet solcher Abgöttereien waren die Bewohner Winetas aber ehrbar und züchtig von Sitten, und in Gastfreundschaft und Höflichkeit gegen Fremde hatten sie ihres Gleichen nicht.

Die Einwohner trieben einen überaus großen Handel; ihre Läden waren angefüllt mit den seltensten und kostbarsten Waaren, und es kamen Jahr ein Jahr aus Schiffe und Kaufleute aus allen Gegenden und aus den entferntesten und entlegensten Enden der Welt dahin. Deshalb war denn auch in der Stadt ein über die Maßen großer Reichtum, und das seltsamste und lustigste Leben, das man sich nur denken kann. Die Bewohner Wineta's waren so reich, daß die Stadthore aus Erz und Glockengut, die Glocken aber aus Silber gemacht waren; und das Silber war überhaupt so gemein in der Stadt, daß man es zu den gewöhnlichsten Dingen gebrauchte, und daß die Kinder auf den Straßen mit harten Thälern sollen gespielt haben. Solcher Reichtum und das abgöttische Wesen der Heiden brachten aber am Ende die schöne und große Stadt ins Verderben. Denn nachdem sie den höchsten Gipfel ihres Glanzes und ihres Reichtums erreicht hatte, geriethen ihre Einwohner in große bürgerliche Uneinigkeit. Jedes von den verschiedenen Völkern wollte vor dem anderen den Vorzug haben, worüber heftige Kämpfe entstanden. Zu diesen ries

fen die Einen die Schweden, und die Andern die Dänen zu Hülfe, die auf solchen Aufruf, um gute Beute zu machen, schleunig aufbrachen, und die mächtige Stadt Wineta bis auf den Grund zerstörten, und ihre Reichthümer mit sich nahmen. Dieses soll geschehen sein zu den Zeiten des großen Kaisers Karl.

Anderere sagen, die Stadt sei nicht von den Feinden erobert und zerstört, sondern auf andere Weise untergegangen. Denn nachdem die Einwohner so überaus reich geworden waren, da verfielen sie in die Laster der größten Wollust und Ueppigkeit, also daß die Eltern aus reiner Wollust die Kinder mit Semmeln wischten. Dafür traf sie denn der gerechte Zorn Gottes und die üppige Stadt wurde urpfählich von dem Ungeßüm des Meeres zu Grunde gerichtet, und von den Wellen verschlungen. Darauf kamen die Schweden von Gothland her mit vielen Schiffen, und holten fort, was sie von den Reichthümern der Stadt aus dem Meere herausfischen konnten; sie bargen eine Unmasse von Gold, Silber, Erz und Zinn und von dem herrlichsten Marmor. Auch die ehernen Stadtthore fanden sie ganz; die nahmen sie mit nach Wisbi auf Gothland, wohin sich auch von nun an der Handel Wineta's zog.

Die Stelle, wo die Stadt gestanden, kann man noch heutiges Tages sehen. Wenn man nämlich von Wolgast über die Peene in das Land zu Usedom ziehen will, und gegen das Dorf Damerow, zwei Meilen von Wolgast, gelangt, so erblickt man bei stiller See bis tief, wohl eine Viertelmeile in das Wasser hinein eine Menge großer Steine, marmorner Säulen und Fundamente. Das sind die Trümmer der versunkenen Stadt Wineta. Sie liegen in der Länge, von Morgen nach Abend. Die ehemaligen Straßen und Gassen sind mit kleinen Kieselsteinen ausgelegt; größere Steine zeigen an, wo die Ecken der Straßen ge-

wesen, und die Fundamente der Häuser gestanden haben. Einige davon sind so groß und hoch, daß sie Ellenhoch aus dem Wasser hervorragen; allda haben die Tempel und Rathhäuser gestanden. Andere liegen noch ganz in der Ordnung, wie man Grundsteine zu Gebäuden zu legen pflegt, so daß noch neue Häuser haben erbaut werden sollen, als die Stadt vom Wasser verschlungen ist.

Wie weit die Stadt der Länge nach sich in das Meer hinein erstreckt hat, kann man nicht mehr sehen, weil der Grund abschüssig ist, das Steinpflaster daher je weiter, desto tiefer in das Meer hineingeht, auch zuletzt so übermooset und mit Sand bedeckt ist, daß man es bis zu seinem Ende hin nicht verfolgen kann. Die Breite der Stadt ist aber größer als die von Stralsund und Rostock, und ungefähr wie die von Lübeck.

In der versunkenen Stadt ist noch immer ein wundersames Leben. Wenn das Wasser ganz still ist, so sieht man oft unten im Grunde des Meeres in den Trümmern ganz wunderbare Bilder. Große, seltsame Gestalten wandeln dann in den Straßen auf und ab, in langen faltigen Kleidern. Oft sitzen sie auch in goldenen Wagen, oder auf großen schwarzen Pferden. Manchmal gehen sie fröhlich und geschäftig einher; manchmal bewegen sie sich in langsamen Trauerzügen, und man sieht dann, wie sie einen Sarg zum Grabe geleiten.

Die silbernen Glocken der Stadt kann man noch jeden Abend, wenn kein Sturm auf der See ist, hören, wie sie tief unter den Wellen die Vesper läuten. Und am Ostermorgen, denn vom stillen Freitage bis zum Ostermorgen soll der Untergang von Wineta gedauert haben, kann man die ganze Stadt sehen, wie sie früher gewesen ist; sie steigt dann, als ein warnendes Schattenbild, zur Strafe für ihre Abgötterei und Ueppigkeit, mit allen ihren Häusern, Kirchen,

Thoren, Brücken und Trümmern aus dem Wasser hervor, und man sieht sie deutlich über den Wellen. — Wenn es aber Nacht oder stürmisches Wetter ist, dann darf kein Mensch und kein Schiff sich den Trümmern der alten Stadt nahen. Ohne Gnade wird das Schiff an die Felsen geworfen, an denen es rettungslos zerschellt, und keiner, der darin gewesen, kann aus den Wellen sein Leben erretten.

Von dem in der Nähe belegnen Dorfe Leddin führt noch jetzt ein alter Weg zu den Trümmern, den die Leute in Leddin von alten Zeiten her „den Landweg nach Wineta“ nennen.

Th. Rangow, Pomerania, I. S. 40. 51.

Micräsius, Altes Pommerland, I. S. 97. 98.

Pommersche Mannigfaltigkeiten, von E. G. H. Gesterding, S. 405—408.

Val. ab Eickstedt, Epitome Annalium Pomeraniae, p. 10.

Gesterding, Pommersches Magazin, I. S. 138. IV. S. 62. 211.

Berliner Kalender für 1837. S. 179—182.

Rühs, Pommersche Denkwürdigkeiten, S. 383.

Barthold, Geschichte von Pommern. I. S. 419.

Dönniges, Wineta, oder die Seekönige der Jomsburg, S. 100 bis 102.

Acten der Pom. Gesellsch. für Gesch. und Alterth. = Kunde.

Norddeutsche Sagen, Märchen und Gebräuche

aus

Meklenburg, Pommern, der Mark, Sachsen,
Thüringen, Braunschweig, Hannover,
Oldenburg und Westfalen.

Aus dem Munde des Volkes
gesammelt und herausgegeben von

Adalbert Kuhn und Wilhelm Schwartz

34.

Bineta.

Mündlich aus Swinemünde und Heringsdorf.

Etwa eine Viertelmeile vom Strelitzberg, einem Vor-
gebirge Ugedoms, hat vor uralter Zeit eine große reiche
Stadt Namens Bineta gelegen, in der hat alles von
Gold und Silber und Marmor gegläntzt, aber die Leute
darin sind gar gottlos gewesen, haben kleine Löcher in
den Wänden mit Brot verstopft, und ihre Schweine aus
goldenen Trögen fressen lassen, und selbst die waren ihnen
noch nicht gut genug. Da beschloß der Herr, die gott-
lose Stadt untergehen zu lassen, und an einem schönen
Sommertage erhob sich plötzlich ein Wetter, die Wellen
brachen über die Stadt herein und begruben alles. Nur
ein einziger Mann, der fromm war, setzte sich auf sein
schnelles Pferd und eilte davon, die Wogen stürzten hin-
ter ihm her, allein er entkam glücklich nach Coserow und
da war er gerettet; sein Pferd aber stürzte auch sogleich
tobt unter ihm zusammen. — So ist Bineta untergegan-
gen, aber alljährlich am heiligen Ostermorgen erhebt es
sich aus der Flut, und tanzt und springt freudig über
den Wogen.

VINETA

Sagen und Märchen vom Ostseestrand

Herausgegeben von Albert Burkhardt

Vineta, die Stadt auf dem Meeresgrund

An einem Ostermorgen hütete ein Schäferjunge seine Herde nahe dem Strande von Koserow, und wie er so über die weite See blickte, die, in der Sonne schimmernd, ruhig dalag, stieg mit einem Male eine alte, ehrwürdige Stadt aus dem Wasser empor. Gerade vor ihm tat sich das hohe, reich verzierte Tor in der Mauer auf. Erstaunt und wie von einem Trugbild geblendet saß er da. Dann aber sprang er auf und lief neugierig hinein.

Die Wächter, bärtige Männer mit Speißen und Hellebarden, ließen ihn ungehindert hindurch, und gleich sah er sich mitten unter Menschen, die sonderbar altertümlich, aber prächtig gekleidet waren. So trugen die Männer lange pelzbesetzte Mäntel und federgeschmückte Barette. Die Frauen gingen kostbar in Samt und Seide gekleidet, und vom Halse hingen ihnen schwere, mit Edelsteinen eingelegte Goldketten herab. Von den Häusern war eines immer prunkvoller gebaut als das andere, mit Fenstern aus buntem Glas, mit Säulen von weißem Marmor und Alabaster, mit reich verzierten Giebeln, und die vergoldeten Ziegel ihrer Fassaden tauchten die Straßen in hellen Glanz und Schein.

Eilig lief der Junge auf und ab, ihm wurde unheimlich zumute, denn alles in dieser seltsamen Stadt geschah ohne den geringsten Laut: stumm bewegten sich die Menschen auf den Straßen, stumm drängten sie sich auch um die Tische auf dem Markt, wo Kaufleute ihre Waren ausbreiteten und stumm ihre Stoffballen entrollten: schimmernden Samt, glänzenden Brokat, leuchtende Seide, hauchdünne Spitzen, dazu

weiche Decken und schwere Teppiche. Vor Staunen blieb der Junge stehen. Da winkte ihm einer der Kaufleute zu, und als er weiterlaufen wollte, winkte er wieder und lachte freundlich, breitete dabei herrlichen Stoff aus und bot ihn dem Jungen an, doch der schüttelte den Kopf. Woher sollte er, ein armer Schäferjunge, denn Geld haben, um etwas zu kaufen? Jetzt aber begannen auch die anderen Kaufleute ihm zuzuwinken, ihre schönsten Sachen holten sie hervor, um sie ihm anzubieten. Was sollte er nur tun?

Da streckte er ihnen seine beiden leeren Hände hin, nun mußten sie doch verstehen, daß er nichts hatte. Der Kaufmann zeigte ihm ein kleines Geldstück und wies auf seinen ganzen Tisch voll Ware, und der Junge suchte in allen Taschen seines alten Anzugs, allein, er wußte, daß er nicht einen Pfennig besaß. Traurig und enttäuscht sahen ihm alle zu.

Da lief er eilig durch die Straßen und durch das hohe Tor zurück zum Strande und zu seinen Schafen, und als er sich umwandte, schimmerte vor ihm in der Sonne nur wieder die See, und nichts war mehr zu sehen von der schönen alten Stadt, von Pracht und Glanz. Lautlos, wie sie emporgestiegen, war sie wieder in den Fluten versunken.

Betrübt und nachdenklich saß der Junge noch am Strand, als ein alter Fischer vorbeikam, sich zu ihm setzte und ihn ansprach: „Höre, wenn du ein Sonntagskind bist, so kannst du heute, am Ostermorgen, die Stadt Vineta aus dem Meer steigen sehen, die hier vor vielen, vielen Jahren untergegangen ist.“

„Oh, ich hab sie gesehen!“ rief der Junge und berichtete dem alten Mann, was er erlebt hatte und daß die Stadt dann gleich wieder verschwunden war.

Der Fischer nickte bedächtig und begann nun zu erzählen, was ihm von Vineta bekannt geworden war: „Siehst du,

Appendix B3 (cont.)

hättest du auch nur einen Pfennig gehabt und damit bezahlen können, so wäre Vineta erlöst und die ganze Stadt mit allem, was darin ist, an der Oberfläche geblieben.

Diese Stadt Vineta ist einst größer gewesen als irgendeine andere Stadt in Europa, größer selbst als die gewiß sehr große und schöne Stadt Konstantinopel, und ihre Bewohner waren über alle Maßen reich, da sie mit allen Völkern der Erde Handel trieben und ihre Schiffe aus allen Teilen der Welt die schönsten und kostbarsten Waren brachten. Ihre Stadttore waren aus Erz und die Glocken aus Silber, welches überhaupt für so gewöhnlich galt, daß man die einfachsten Dinge daraus herstellte und die Kinder auf der Straße sogar mit Silbertalern Klingpenning spielten.*

Je mehr Reichtum in Vineta Einzug hielt, desto mehr verfielen die Bewohner aber auch dem Hochmut und der Verschwendung. Bei den Mahlzeiten aßen sie nur die auserlesensten Speisen, und Wein tranken sie aus Bechern von purem Silber oder Gold. Ebenso beschlugen sie die Hufe ihrer Pferde nur mit Silber oder Gold anstatt mit Eisen und ließen selbst die Schweine aus goldenen Trögen fressen. Und Löcher in den Häuserwänden verstopften sie mit Brot und Semmeln.

Drei Monate, drei Wochen und drei Tage vor dem Untergang der Stadt erschien sie über dem Meer mit allen Häusern, Türmen und Mauern als ein deutliches, farbiges Luftgebilde. Darauf rieten alte, erfahrene Einwohner allen Leuten, die Stadt zu verlassen, denn sehe man Städte, Schiffe oder Menschen doppelt, so bedeute das immer deren sicheren Untergang. Aber man gab nichts auf diese Warnungen und verlachte sie nur. Einige Wochen danach tauchte eine Wasserfrau dicht vor der Stadt aus dem Meer und rief dreimal mit hoher, schauerlicher Stimme, daß es laut in den Straßen widerhalte:

Appendix B3 (cont.)

„Vineta, Vineta, du rieke Stadt,
Vineta sall unnergahn,
wieldeß se het vål Böses dahn!“

Auch darum kümmerte sich keiner, alle lebten weiter in Saus und Braus, bis sie das Strafgericht ereilte. In einer stürmischen Novembernacht brach eine furchtbare Sturmflut über die Stadt herein. Im Nu durcheilte der riesige Wogenswall die Straßen und Gassen, und das Wasser stieg und stieg, bis es alle Häuser und Menschen unter sich begrub.

Daß man Vineta erlösen kann, wenn es alle hundert Jahre am Ostermorgen, auftaucht aus dem Meere, hast du ja schon erfahren und erlebt, wenn es dir auch nicht glückte. Wisse nun noch, daß die silbernen Glocken der versunkenen Stadt am Johannistag in der Mittagsstunde aus der Tiefe heraufklingen, daß aber jeder, der ihren dumpfen, traurigen Tönen lauscht, eilends davongehen muß, er wird sonst unwiderstehlich angezogen von ihrem Klang und folgt ihm nach, bis er selbst da drunten ruht.“

X.

Seegespenst.

Ich aber lag am Rande des Schiffes,
Und schaute, träumenden Auges,
Hinab in das spiegelklare Wasser,
Und schaute tiefer und tiefer –
5 Bis tief, im Meeresgrunde,
Anfangs wie dämmernde Nebel,
Jedoch allmählig farbenbestimmter,
Kirchenkuppel und Thürme sich zeigten,
Und endlich, sonnenklar, eine ganze Stadt,
10 Alterthümlich niederländisch,
Und menschenbelebt.
Bedächtige Männer, schwarzbemäntelt,
Mit weißen Halskrausen und Ehrenketten
Und langen Degen und langen Gesichtern,
15 Schreiten über den wimmelnden Marktplatz,
Nach dem treppenhohen Rathhaus',
Wo steinerne Kaiserbilder
Wacht halten mit Zepter und Schwerdt.
Unferne, vor langen Häuser-Reih'n,
20 Wo spiegelblanke Fenstern
Und pyramidisch beschnittene Linden,
Wandeln seidenrauschende Jungfern,
Schlanke Leibchen, die Blumengesichter
Sittsam umschlossen von schwarzen Mützchen
25 Und hervorquellendem Goldhaar.
Bunte Gesellen, in spanischer Tracht,
Stolziren vorüber und nicken.
Bejahrte Frauen,
30 In braunen, verschollnen Gewändern,
Gesangbuch und Rosenkranz in der Hand,
Eilen, trippelnden Schritts,
Nach dem großen Dome,
Getrieben von Glockengeläute
Und rauschendem Orgelton.

35 Mich selbst ergreift des fernen Klangs
Geheimnißvoller Schauer!
Unendliches Sehnen, tiefe Wehmuth,
Beschleicht mein Herz,
Mein kaum geheiltes Herz; –
40 Mir ist als würden seine Wunden
Von lieben Lippen aufgeküßt,
Und thäten wieder bluten, –
Heiße, rothe Tropfen,
Die lang und langsam niederfall'n
45 Auf ein altes Haus, dort unten
In der tiefen Meerstadt,
Auf ein altes, hochgegiebeltes Haus,
Das melancholisch menschenleer ist,
Nur daß am untern Fenster
50 Ein Mädchen sitzt,
Den Kopf auf den Arm gestützt,
Wie ein armes, vergessenes Kind –
Und ich kenne dich armes, vergessenes Kind!

 So tief, meertief also
55 Verstecktest du dich vor mir,
Aus kindischer Laune,
Und konntest nicht mehr herauf,
Und saßest fremd unter fremden Leuten,
Jahrhunderte lang,
60 Derweilen ich, die Seele voll Gram,
Auf der ganzen Erde dich suchte,
Und immer dich suchte,
Du Immergeliebte,
Du Längstverlorene,
65 Du Endlichgefundene, –
Ich hab' dich gefunden und schaue wieder
Dein süßes Gesicht,
Die klugen, treuen Augen,
Das liebe Lächeln –
70 Und nimmer will ich dich wieder verlassen,
Und ich komme hinab zu dir,
Und mit ausgebreiteten Armen
Stürz' ich hinab an dein Herz –

75

Aber zur rechten Zeit noch
Ergriff mich beim Fuß der Capitän,
Und zog mich vom Schiffsrand,
Und rief, ärgerlich lachend:
Doktor, sind Sie des Teufels?

Source:

Heine, Heinrich: *Seegespenst*, in *Sämtliche Werke I/1, Buch der Lieder*, Düsseldorf Ausgabe, hrsg. von Manfred Windfuhr, bearbeitet von Pierre Grappin (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1975)

Vineta

Aus des Meeres tiefem, tiefem Grunde
Klingen Abendglocken dumpf und matt,
Uns zu geben wunderbare Kunde
Von der schönen alten Wunderstadt.

In der Fluten Schoß hinabgesunken,
Blieben unten ihre Trümmer stehn.
Ihre Zinnen lassen goldne Funken
Widerscheinend auf dem Spiegel sehn.

Und der Schiffer, der den Zauberschimmer
Einmal sah im hellen Abendrot,
Nach derselben Stelle schiffte er immer,
Ob auch ringsumher die Klippe droht.

Aus des Herzens tiefem, tiefem Grunde
Klingt es mir, wie Glocken, dumpf und matt.
Ach, sie geben wunderbare Kunde
Von der Liebe, die geliebt es hat.

Eine schöne Welt ist da versunken,
Ihre Trümmer blieben unten stehn,
Lassen sich als goldne Himmelfunken
Oft im Spiegel meiner Träume sehn.

Und dann möcht ich tauchen in die Tiefen,
Mich versenken in den Widerschein,
Und mir ist, als ob mich Engel riefen
In die alte Wunderstadt herein.

Source

Müller, Wilhelm: *Vineta*, in Wilhelm Müller: *Werke, Tagebücher, Briefe*,
Band 2, hrsg. von Maria-Verena Leistner (Berlin: Gatzka, 1994)

**Summary of *Der arme Thoms oder die versunkene Stadt*, on which
Ferdinand von Freiligrath's poem *Meerfahrt* is based**

Der arme Thoms oder die versunkene Stadt was originally published in the *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände*, in January 1835.¹ The story concerns an elderly sailor, Thoms, a raconteur and weaver of sea tales, who lives in a little dilapidated hut on the strand, and is one day persuaded to tell his audience of fishermen and other locals about an experience he had as a boy.

The young Thoms used to go fishing with his father. One day, however, having heard stories of a wealthy sunken city on the sea bed, he decided to row out on his own, and as he looked over the side of the boat he saw ornate palaces, beautiful houses and streets under the waves. The streets and market place of the town were empty. Thoms later confided in his friend Hanny, whose immediate reaction was that it would be wonderful to go to the sunken city, awaken the beautiful girls who had slumbered there for hundreds of years and persuade them to give them some of the treasures of the sunken city. Thoms, however, was angry at the suggestion and reminded his friend that, as Christian in the village had told them, those down below had been banished as punishment for their sins. Suddenly, while talking, the two boys saw a strange-looking couple, dressed in old-fashioned clothing walking on the beach, who beckoned to them and then disappeared into the mist.

Some time later, a strange musician from Bohemia appeared in the village, playing his pipe. He was distrusted by the older people, but the young people followed him to the bar. His music was so lively and attractive that they began to dance, but when he changed to slower and more melancholy music a sadness pervaded the atmosphere. Suddenly a storm arose and strange white ghostly faces appeared at the windows of the pub, terrifying those within. The musician began to play, however, and the figures disappeared. This gave Hanny the idea that the musician had magical powers and might be able to release the inhabitants of the sunken city.

Some time later, Thoms and Hanny rowed the musician out to the place where Thoms had seen the sunken city, and they asked him to play. Very reluctantly, having warned them that to do so could mean death, he began to play mournful music. Little by little the tops of trees and bushes

began to appear above the surface of the water, followed by walls, houses, steps and paths, and eventually a whole town. The sound of bells from the deep, filled Thoms with horror

¹ Anon., *Der arme Thoms oder die versunkene Stadt*, in *Bilder aus dem Seeleben in Märchen und Sagen*, serialised in the *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände*, Jg.29, Nos. 3-7, Januar 1835. In the Notes in Teil VI of Julius Schwering's edition of *Ferdinand von Freiligrath Werke II* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1974), 123, the story is referred to as *Der alte Thomas oder die versunkene Stadt* [sic].

Appendix C3 (cont.)

and a sense of dread. Then the door of one of the houses opened and a procession of men and women emerged, among them a beautiful girl, clad in sumptuous clothes and wearing a crown on her golden hair. When she looked at the two boys, Hanny was overcome with emotion and burst into tears. The musician stopped playing and gradually the vision clouded over and disappeared. Against a rising storm Thoms rowed for home, unaided by Hanny who was sunk in thought.

Hanny was so smitten with the beautiful girl that he went into a decline, lost all interest in life and began to spend his days alone, day-dreaming on the beach, looking out to sea and yearning for his lost love. One day, however, the old-fashioned couple appeared again on the beach, this time accompanied by the beautiful young girl, and, when they had left, Thoms and Hanny found a gold ring on the strand at the place where they had stood. Hanny became convinced it was a message from the girl, saying that she loved him, and asking him to join her in her home on the bed of the sea. Eventually, in a vivid dream, he pictured himself arriving in the sunken city, awakening his lover who claimed she was now saved, being accepted as one of the inhabitants and crowned leader. Realising, however, that he was in the city of the dead and that he must escape, he thought he heard Thoms' voice calling him and saw his arms stretching out towards him. He awakened and later told Thoms about his dream. On the following day Hanny threw himself into the sea and was never seen again.

Fifty years later, as Thoms tells the story to his listeners on the beach, he is asked whether he believes that Hanny now lives on the sea bed with his lover. He refuses to answer, preferring to keep his beliefs to himself. Nevertheless, when a small boat comes towards them, tossing about on the stormy sea, Thoms jumps up excitedly, saying that Hanny has come back to get him. The oarsman turns out to be a boy from the village, returning late from fishing. Thoms is forced to admit that those taken by the spirits of the sea never return: "wen die Geister der Tiefe einmal erfaßt haben, der sieht das Licht des Tages nie wieder".² Some days later Thoms dies and is carried to his grave by the villagers. His hut is gradually washed away by the sea.

² *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände*, Jg.29, No.7, p. 26, Januar 1835.

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