Shahzad Bashir, Matthias Engmann, Martin Mulsow,
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Afterword: parting the self

This section consists of four case studies in which human selves are either observed or theorised as being subject to disaggregation. Each article highlights a distinctive facet of the interdependence between processes of individuation and dividualisation, whereby we see our collective theoretical interest play out in diverse sociohistorical settings. Juxtaposing data spread between sixteenth, seventeenth, and nineteenth-century Europe and seventeenth-century India and Iran, we note convergences while retaining cognizance of historical contingencies and specificities of literary forms.

The articles are concerned with the self's construction as an entity that is, simultaneously, embedded in a social setting and differentiated from it. In our work, dividuality is an especially productive interpretive gesture rather than a straightforward descriptor. This approach allows us to correlate cases that are starkly disparate on the surface. We notice an overarching commonality in that the self's divisibility always indexes freedom of human action to various degrees. Thinking of the self as divisible affords access to the complexity of our historical and philosophical interlocutors that would be obscured if we were to insist on individuality as the primary fulcrum of analysis.

Our cases are concerned with social settings in which human subjects confront a plurality of ideas and practices as a stark quotidian fact. To take up the contributions in chronological order, *Riccarda Suitner's* work is concerned with the religious situation in sixteenth-century Venice, a site where the diversification of religious (and other) thought associated with early modern Europe bubbles up all over the place in the archive. Following stories of individuals – above all belonging to the first generation of Venetian Anabaptists – who confront this world through interaction, absorption, resistance, and continual change, the self's hybridity seems to be a relevant phenomenon in a society still dominated by the principle of religious and confessional conformity. A series of social, economic, cultural and confessional factors made it possible for part (albeit a tiny one) of the population of the Venetian Republic of the mid-sixteenth century to develop the feeling that they had been given the potential to choose the confession most suited to their own inner needs. This interplay of individual choice and an approach definable as 'confessional eclecticism', lacking in dogmatic coherence and loyalty to a single confession, shows that pluralism and the fragmentation of the self could be considered an integral part of individualization.

The massive seventeenth-century work on Persian poets and poetry, written in India and explored here by *Shahzad Bashir*, also showcases a vast world of ideas and literary patterns. In this case, however, the in/dividuality paradigm helps to parse the single-authored work into a multiplicity of self-expressions that are anchored in the difference between prosaic and poetic first-person speech. Bashir's literary analysis raises the important question of how we imagine the author as a human subject. One possibility is to see the prosaic/poetic difference as a formalization of the dividual self that we can presume to have been the author's personality in his lived environment. However, the literary difference has its own logic tied to diachronic discursive continuities in the way Persian literature can be considered a tradition. We then need to be cautious about extrapolating directly between literary topoi and existential and social claims about the author. Concentrating on dividuality as reflected in the literary form cautions against buying into straightforward paradigms for the human subject. Rather, dividuality works as a conceptual intervention that invites more complex ways of understanding the text and the society where it was created; (on the question of the relationship between author and text see also III.2).

The dynamic between literary expression and confessional or personal identity plays out in a parallel but different way in *Martin Mulsow's* analysis of pseudonymous theological works from seventeenth-century Europe. Here authors deliberately operationalize dividuality as a way to contend with the world and to seek advantage within it through highly sophisticated rhetorical means. Mulsow draws on Bakhtin's concept of 'dialogism', which has been developed for the analysis of the many voices included in modern novels. In the scholarly field however, Mulsow emphasizes, dialogism does not produce a 'wild' polyphony, as Bakhtin claims for the texts of Rabelais, but a highly controlled, tactically accurate balance. In this sense the dividuality of such authors as Jean Le Clerc, Noel Aubert de Versé, or Theodor Ludwig Lau is to be assessed: it is a very carefully weighted dividuality, which knows all shading from innocent to criminal, as in Jean Aymon. Mulsow complements dialogism and dividuality with the notion of relational authorship, which describes not the several persona in one author but rather the several authors behind one work.

Mulsow ends on a note about Søren Kierkegaard. This provides the transition to *Matthias Engmann's* contribution. Engmann's work on Kierkegaard's conceptualization of the ever-transforming self posits this self as an entity suspended in the interstice between the fragmented experience of ordinary time and space and the felicitous unity attributed to God. Kierkegaard's advocacy, aimed at processes of self-reflection, is manifested in both his theoretical work and in his famous pseudonymous practice that deliberately leverages the self's dividuality as a basis for his philosophy.

Our cases highlight individuation and dividuality as co-constituting processes. Using these terms heuristically allows us to bring the interdependency between self and society into higher relief. Transplanting theoretical insights between the articles illuminates common topics, such as: the relationship between migration and identity formation; literary ingenuity as a means for inventing, or escaping from, selves; notions of connections between the interior and exterior parts of the human person; and the effort to simultaneously authorize and de-authorize the self that is a pervasive feature of the human condition. While there is a 'prosaic self' in Balyani (Bashir), there is an 'editor self' in Le Clerc (Mulsow), and in Kierkegaard pseudonymous selves frame the interaction between the different possible existential positions (Engmann). While the Italian heretics of the sixteenth century were still overwhelmed by the plurality of possible dogmatic deviances and reacted with eclectic and fluid theological views (Suitner), the late seventeenth century theologians deliberately mirrored the complex discussions in their works and strategically chose sides or changed allegiances (Mulsow). In Kierkegaard, the play with pseudonyms is employed in order to make the search for truth 'fluid' again in a static Biedermeier situation of external Christianity (Engmann). In Persianate India, the 'poetic self' in Balyani finds the freedom to talk in an antinomic and embodied way (Bashir).