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Aesthetic Exercises and Poetic Form  
in the Works of Hölderlin, Novalis, and Rococo Poets

by

Gabriel Stephen Trop

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

German

and

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in the

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of the

University of California, Berkeley

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Professor Niklaus Largier  
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Fall 2010

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## Abstract

### Aesthetic Exercises and Poetic Form in the Works of Hölderlin, Novalis, and Rococo Poets

by

Gabriel Stephen Trop

Doctor of Philosophy in German and Medieval Studies

Professor Winfried Kudszus, Chair

In the treatise *Aesthetica* (1750), Alexander Baumgarten describes the aesthetic exercise as a training of the senses through which innate sensual and spiritual proclivities are developed and perfected. He formulates aesthetics not merely as an epistemological theory, but as a way of life capable of generating a happy human being. Throughout the course of the eighteenth century, the aesthetic exercise functions as a model for poetic practices, both in the production and reception of poetry.

For Hölderlin, the harmony of the natural and historical world is not something given, but something that one has to be trained to perceive amidst the facticity of suffering and violence. The deliberate confusion of Hölderlin's poetry, triggered by complex syntactical structures and a dense semantic texture, challenges the human mind to find evidence of the divine in its own mental and poetic self-organization. Disjunction and chaos eventually triumph over organization, leading to a form of aesthetic exercise that undermines rather than bolsters a conception of nature and history as self-organizing, harmonious systems.

Novalis rejects a philosophical conception of the absolute in favor of a "physiological absolute," redefining the absolute as an intensification of stimulation rather than a realm of undifferentiated identity. For Novalis, poetry exercises the mind by generating imaginative multiplicities and differences, continually overturning orders of representation, and creating magnetically attractive signs and permeable poetic spaces. In *Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs*, Novalis uses poetry to disorganize the normative structure of institutionalized regimes of bodily and mental exercise, thereby differentiating the aesthetic exercise from disciplinary forms that produce stable subjects.

Following Baumgarten's definition of the aesthetic, which fuses sense perception and artistic activity, the rhetoric of Anacreontic and Rococo poetry functions as an exercise in sensory cognition. Anacreontic poetry, in some of its manifestations, imaginatively constructs a space of unbounded play that extracts the human being from its normative anchoring points: God, bourgeois economic rationality, the use of public reason, epistemological progress, the family structure, and boundaries between life and death, among others. Such poetry develops signifying practices divested of attachments to

transcendent realms of meaningfulness. Instead of melancholy, trauma, and genius, it gravitates towards the pleasure of repetition, the immanence of play, and the possibility of an imaginative deviation from one's own patterns of selfhood.

*For Talja*

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## Acknowledgements

There are words that, when spoken, simply fall from the lips, dying almost as soon as they are born; perhaps registered and acknowledged by others in the world at the moment of their enunciation, they cause a minor vibration, a temporary provocation, a small but significant excitement of the mind or movement between souls, and then they are gone, they have already passed into the inaudible and imperceptible totality of irretrievable worlds. No extended or tangible trace remains that they ever entered the space of the living.

And then there are words that, when spoken, they remain, they become extended things, they curl about the brain, drawing thought into their magnetic sphere of influence. Some trace of these words will remain at least as long as the mind keeps coming back to them, if not longer through the works and deeds into whose essential fabric they might one day be woven. These words too one day will die, but they have an extensive and intensive property that, for whatever reason, has endowed them with duration, expansion, and power. Their physical presence disappears, but they continually enter into reality vicariously, through a thought, an impulse, a spontaneous or subterranean pattern of the body, the mind, the person.

Words do not exercise a monopoly over this power of infiltration, which may travel along any sensual channel in any medium, but it is chiefly to words, and more specifically to those words that seem to be endowed with the magical property of attraction, to which this dissertation owes its existence. Such words have been spoken between myself and my dissertation advisor, Winfried Kudzus, often in his office, where the sun would flood space with such an intensity that it stung the eyes, where everything that was uttered seemed to partake in an ongoing process of condensation and to acquire weight and depth. Soon enough I knew that these words would eventually wind their vicarious way into reality. And here they are, a large number of them incarnate in this work, and I can only hope that the work reflects the intensity of the affect that generated it. If these words have missed the mark or if they are otherwise deficient, the failure lies in my own limitations, inclinations, and flaws.

I am incapable of mentioning all of the other people who have guided me, helped me, and encouraged me in the process of producing this study. I would nevertheless like to express my particular gratitude to the other members of my dissertation committee. Tony Kaes, who was one of the main reasons I came to Berkeley, has been an unwavering source of intellectual stimulation and personal support since my arrival in California. Likewise, for those who are familiar with the work of Niklaus Largier, the signs of his influence will be noticeable throughout this dissertation; in particular, I owe to him an awareness of the importance of spiritual exercises for aesthetics when, in a seminar on Baroque literature, we read together the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola. Finally, I was lucky enough to attend Leslie Kurke's seminar on Archaic Greek Poetry, an experience that I have not forgotten and will not forget. As an outside reader, she has been patient, thoughtful, and available. As a professor, I stand in her debt; without her, I would never have comprehended the extent to which the poets of Ancient

Greece represent a limit point of poetic artistry. Pindar and Anacreon would have remained obscure and impenetrable to me without her guidance and expertise.

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My family—my mother and stepfather, my father and stepmother, my sister and grandparents—are such a part of my identity that I am unable to distinguish what comes from them and what comes from myself. My grandmother, her love for life and her wisdom in life, is a constant source of wonder for me. My father and my stepmother have been critical intellectual partners that have introduced me to dynamic modes of thought in psychoanalysis and in everyday ways of being. Fiery debates with my stepfather have forged my intellectual identity, and I do not know who or where I would be without his influence. And without my mother's love of art, of music, of nature, I would be dead to so many of the things that animate me and make my life meaningful.

And finally, to Sonja: Not all things that ought to have been always come into being, but I am continually inspired by your presence, your personality, your intelligence, your passion. I promise to always make the movement of infinity.

## Introduction: Attraction and Critique

The subject of the following study approaches literary texts from the following hypothetical perspective: what would it mean to make a work of art the focal point of one's practices of life, what forms of perception would such a movement provoke, what patterns of thought and behavior would it imply, what sort of deviation from one's own tendencies would it entail, and what sort of value, if any at all, would such an exercise hold for the person who undertakes it? The question is intended as an experiment in thought and language, an attempt to generate the imaginative play of points of contact and divergence across permeable boundaries between self and work, to erode and perhaps reposition these boundaries. Such a critical practice seeks to increase the intensity of aesthetic experience, to unlock the magnetic potential of the work of art, to transform everything in it, around it, touched by it, into an *attraction*, to make our mind continually return to it, question it, and be filled by it.

There are many different ways to conceptualize art as a way of life. Becoming an artist—the act of bringing some tangible thing into the world that previously did not exist and making it a potential point of attraction for others, drawing others' attention to it and allowing them to respond, either to reject it or perhaps to say: *verweile doch*—represents the most direct path into the life of art, into life as art.

But there are also, to borrow a phrase from Hölderlin, *eccentric pathways* that can cultivate art as a point of attraction in life practices. One of these pathways includes the practice of criticism. Criticism, as I have imagined it, increases the attraction potential of works of art. Its goal is not to generate knowledge about the work—or not *only* to generate knowledge—but to tangibly and intensively increase its pull over the mind and the body. Such a goal does not seem to require anything methodologically revolutionary. This particular study—which investigates poetry's effect on ways of perceiving the world and associating ideas, words, forms and affects—draws upon the traditional methodologies that have ingrained themselves in the practice of literary criticism. Linguistic analysis, historical contextualization, speculative intertextuality—no technique is off limits in the attempt to recast the work of art as an entity that can draw sentience into its orbit, interacting with, perturbing, reconfiguring or otherwise exerting its influence over patterns of action and experience.

However, a critic who has set for himself or herself the goal of making the work of art into such an exercise for thought walks a fine line between the poles of validity and intensity.<sup>1</sup> For the two spheres do not always harmonize. Seen from the perspective of

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<sup>1</sup> I understand intensity not as the Deleuzian passage of pure difference, as *intensities*, but rather as something that itself can be manipulated, intensified, and generated in patterns of action and experience. Husserl defines interest as "eine *das Bemerken fördernde Kraft*." Edmund Husserl, *Wahrnehmung und Aufmerksamkeit. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1893-1912)*, Husserliana, ed. Thomas Vongehr and Regula Giuliani, vol. 38 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2004) 108. For Husserl, novelty creates stimulation, and "Die Reizung hier [in novelty] besteht in einer *Intensitätssteigerung*, die der bezüglichen Intention ein stärkeres Gewicht im ganzen Interesse verleiht" (107). The maintenance of intensity serves as a continual process of *renewal* through which an object retains its hold over interest. Interest presupposes and maintains an attraction to the object, and it is in this sense of serving interest as something that "encourages our capacity to notice" that I refer to intensity and attraction as the goal of criticism. Husserl, although he is exploring

increasing the exercise-intensity of the work of art, the worst possible outcome of the critic's investigation would consist in universal assent. Perfect consensus would hasten the death of the work's attraction. If everything has been illuminated about Goethe's *Faust*, why write about it, why make it into a continual object for thought and critical activity? And yet, we return again and again to the work. It is not necessarily because we want to *know* more about it, but because we believe in its ability to continually open new vistas for experience, affect, and action. And when we do want to know more about a work, this is often because knowledge itself can function as a stimulus, as a draw into the work's domain. In certain cases, one must adopt a conscious strategy of provocation—one that challenges the hegemony of the claims of knowledge over the work of art's power—in order to restore to the work of art its ability to attract.

The second worst possible outcome for the critic, however, would consist in universal dismissal and ridicule. For to provoke overwhelming repulsion or remain utterly incomprehensible to others would seem to contribute little—at least in one's activity as a critic—to the work of art's ability to graft itself onto mental and bodily practices or become a focal point for patterns and styles of life.

The form of absorption that I am describing—a state that holds pre-reflective, embodied action and critical reflection in tension—understands the artwork as an aesthetic exercise. To call the work of art an exercise does not intend to denigrate it or reduce it to a mere function in the optimization of an organism's self-regulation.<sup>2</sup> Rather,

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structures of consciousness, nevertheless describes movements of the mind that make possible the exercise value of the work of art. Deleuze, on the other hand, understands intensity as the production, transmission, and movement of differences: "The expression 'difference of intensity' is a tautology. Intensity is the form of difference in so far as this is the reason of the sensible. Every intensity is differential, by itself a difference." Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Continuum, 2007) 281. However, Deleuze's concept of intensity (which by itself does not imply any *exercise*), can be channeled into Husserlian intensity, understood as a dynamic of the mind/body nexus that can in turn generate an attraction to experience. From the perspective of the exercise, however, even the Husserlian concept of intensity appears inadequate to describe the *attractive* intensity of the work of art. The attractive intensity of a work designates not a feature of immediate presence to consciousness—nor any structure that makes this presence possible—but the work's ability to seep into the mind and the body, to penetrate gradually and profoundly, to enter the very fabric of the self as if in a slow burn. For Deleuze, however, if the work of art can be conceptualized as an intensity, it can then pass through the sensible without trace since it describes the movement of pure difference. What, however, retains this intensity as something to which one always returns and relates? There must be some other power, some force other than difference to describe this process, and I have chosen the word "attraction" to refer to this other force. My interpretation of Novalis partially explores the possibility of merging Husserlian and Deleuzian intensity as an implicit point of departure, although I conceive of Novalis' poetic exercise as an exercise in *attraction*, and not merely in differences. For Novalis, *pure* difference is just as conceptually impossible—and more importantly, poetically *sterile*—as pure identity or pure indifference. On pure difference and pure identity as concepts that presuppose one another, see Manfred Frank, *Was ist Neostukturalismus?* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984). For Novalis, there is no purity in conceptual life. The concept of attraction attempts to follow the movements of mind, body, self, world outside the poles of identity and difference, being and non-being, the one and the multiple. I owe a debt of gratitude to Vladimir Micunovic for pointing me in the direction of Husserl's astonishing work on *Aufmerksamkeit* and *Wahrnehmung* in his *Nachlass*.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Sloterdijk defines the "exercise" as follows: "Als Übung definiere ich jede Operation, durch welche die Qualifikation des Handelnden zur nächsten Ausführung der gleichen Operation erhalten oder verbessert wird, sei sie als Übung deklariert oder nicht." Peter Sloterdijk, *Du mußt dein Leben ändern* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008) 14. The exercise therefore becomes inscribed in the maintenance of the organism,

the exercise value of a work permits it to become an inextricable part of one's identity, or on the contrary, to disrupt the self-sufficiency of one's identity, to occasion a brief respite from the ceaseless claims of self and community.<sup>3</sup> The concept of exercise refers to that process by which an activity in the world attempts to form, influence, perturb, or otherwise generate patterns of thought, perception, and action.<sup>4</sup> The exercise value of a work designates the degree to which it performs or might perform this task—for an individual, for a community, for others not yet born.

Exercise refers here not solely to bodily activity, but to a way of being, a way of coping within, reacting to, and acting upon the world, a way of expressing a "view" on the world through action—in short, a concept more akin to the Greek *askēsis*. Foucault, influenced by Pierre Hadot's analysis of spiritual exercises, studied the way in which

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in its functionality and optimization, in short, in its ability to become a being of a higher order. The aesthetic exercise, however, need not fit into such a schema. As the maintenance of an attraction, it does not have to be integrated into any economy of productivity or functionality as such, for the organism or for the world. The subordination of the work of art to an exercise in the optimization of an organism potentially imposes its own purposes on the work, making it speak with only one voice instead of with many, and reducing the chances that the work will provoke in this organism a thought, a state, an affect, of unexpected novelty. The reduction of exercise solely to optimization appears particularly problematic in the domain of art. If there were a work of art that were associated with breakdown in a system, if it were to attract the mind to *failure*, if it were to see in this failure not a deviation from the goal, but the very challenge and calling of the human being, would one exclude this work from the sphere of those who exercise? Hölderlin's poetry stands as a testament to the possibility of collapse as a world for the mind, to the *importance* of failure as an attraction for thought, an organization of sound and text that short-circuits the attempt to fashion the human being as an organism who exercises only for maintenance and optimization.

<sup>3</sup> In *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault says, "As for what motivated me, it is quite simple; I would hope that in the eyes of some people it might be sufficient in itself. It was curiosity—the only kind of curiosity, in any case, that is worth acting upon with a degree of obstinacy: not the curiosity that seeks to assimilate what it is proper for one to know, but that which enables one to get free of oneself." Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure, The History of Sexuality*, Trans. Robert Hurley, vol. 2 (New York: Vintage, 1985) 8. For an excellent analysis of Foucault's concept of *askēsis*, and an analysis of this quote in particular, see Edward F. McGushin, *Foucault's Askēsis* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern UP, 2007) xii. McGushin discusses philosophy not merely as an exercise, but as a *poiesis*, as a form of "artistic transformation of life" (286). This thought has implications not merely for philosophy, but for *art* itself, which may also function in its own ways as a transformation of life.

<sup>4</sup> The concept of exercise therefore shares much in common with Bourdieu's *habitus* and has been explored from the perspective of theories of social and linguistic performativity. According to Judith Butler, "The social life of the body is produced through an interpellation that is at once linguistic and productive. The way in which that interpellative call continues to call, to take form in a bodily stylistics that, in turn, performs its own social magic constitutes the tacit and corporeal operation of performativity." Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997) 153. While practices of reading, thinking, and imagining are inextricably bound up with the social, there remains an irreducibly *non-iterative* component to the aesthetic exercise inasmuch as the imagination is continually exploring a new landscape or returning to an old landscape with new eyes. The practice of the mind-body action implied in the aesthetic exercise, while conditioned by social practices, cannot be used, for example, to *interpellate* a subject. As Foucault suggests, *askēsis* may also free a subject from any given *habitus*. Aesthetic *askēsis* as the production of a way of being—as outlined by Baumgarten in the *Aesthetica*—creates and practices patterns in the mind-body nexus and in perceptive imagination such as binding and unbinding the world of phenomena, rehearsing memory and prognostication, making present that which is absent, focusing attentiveness on detail, foregrounding absence in presence, intensifying stimulative interest, creating coherence out of contingent events, making contingent a chain of events that appears necessary, etc.

ancient practices aimed to produce certain patterns of thought and action, "technologies" of selfhood. By immersing himself in ancient practices of sexuality, he attempted to rethink and intensify counter-practices to those of his own historical-cultural moment, understanding philosophy as an exercise of the self:

The 'essay'—which should be understood as the assay or test by which, in the game of truth, one undergoes changes, and not as the simplistic appropriation of others for the purpose of communication—is the living substance of philosophy, at least if we assume that philosophy is still what it was in times past, i.e. an "ascesis," *askēsis*, an exercise of oneself in the activity of thought.<sup>5</sup>

Philosophy may open or suggest alternative practices for the self through the activity of *thought*. Thought, however one conceives it, designates a cognitive activity that is deeply intertwined with the domain of philosophy. The specific movements of thought associated with philosophical inquiry do not, however, exert a monopoly over the exercises of the self. Other forms of receptivity irreducible to the operations of reflective thought or critical examination may in their own way contribute to other practices of selfhood.

This particular study examines aesthetic exercises. The aesthetic exercise fuses two conceptual spheres: *ἄσκησις* and *αἴσθησις*, exercise and sense perception. Exercises that function aesthetically are not only associated with the specific domain of "art"—but designate a material presence that enters through the senses and interacts with perceptual capacities. These exercises can only be tested within a particular sensual or embodied experience in the world. The practice under investigation, aesthetic exercises, ought to be distinguished from spiritual or philosophical exercises. Unlike most philosophical or spiritual exercises, the work of art does not have to give an account of its own exercise value, nor does it dictate how it ought to be taken up into the practices of those who receive it. It does not make an explicit claim to ground or develop patterns that would ultimately prescribe the way a life ought to be led or the way the mind ought to be trained. Poetry can be didactic, but didacticism is neither a necessary or sufficient condition for poetry.<sup>6</sup>

Instead, the work of art exercises its influence almost magnetically, attempting to draw people into its world with its particular gifts and its promise—of beauty, honor, elevation, humor, immortalization, edification, critical reflection, propaganda, stimulation, release, or whatever else it purports to offer. Its influence depends

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<sup>5</sup> Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure* 9.

<sup>6</sup> If Rilke's archaic torso tells you, "Du mußt dein Leben ändern," it does not tell you *how* or *why*. The poem itself does not even specify the identity of the "you"; is the torso addressing the poet himself or is it addressing the reader of the poem? Is the poet directing the imperative at himself, or is the poet channeling this imperative to the reader? Moreover, the authority of the verse *of* the poem differentiates itself from the authority of the statue *in* the poem. Unlike the power of the statue itself, whose authority originates from its dispersed gaze, the verse would lose its attractive force if it were to specify anything about itself at all other than the basic command, either the source of its own authority or precisely what the "you" must do. The command is so formal and empty that it is almost not a command; neither the statue nor the poem says, "you must become better." Compare Sloterdijk, *Du mußt dein Leben ändern* 37-51.

completely on the interpretive practices of the individual or community within its orbit, and these practices can be open or closed to its claims.<sup>7</sup> For one community, poets may function as sages and sources of wisdom, part of a cultural background that articulates and holds up shared values and norms; for another, poets are entertainers, marginally important producers of cultural objects, harmless at best, nothing more and nothing less.

Whereas spiritual exercises often advance a claim to universal validity and generate an exercise-value through the practices associated with philosophical thought—reading, repeating, meditating—aesthetic exercises make no such similar claim to validity, nor do they make a pretension to transparency or univocity of purpose. The response to art and any particular exercise value it harbors is both culturally conditioned and particularized by any given individual. Odysseus listening to his own story in the mouth of another bard reveals song not merely as a social activity, but also as that which can touch an individual in a particular manner.<sup>8</sup> Already for Homer, both creating and responding to poetry can reveal the virtuosity of the hero. When Odysseus narrates, his control over words both manifests his particular excellence and adds to his renown by disseminating his tale. The same virtuosity occurs when he listens, a skill in which he shows equal if not more mastery. For song may be his destiny, but it is only felt as destiny in the act of its own reception, in the tears shed by Odysseus and in the folds of his mantle that both reveal and obscure the response to his own narrative. Homer never ceases to draw attention to the interaction, or rather the dissonance, between the particularized response of a listener and the public context of poetic performance. Even the Sirens function as proxies for the epic poet, claiming knowledge of all things that happen on the earth, and more specifically knowledge about the events at Troy.<sup>9</sup> The epic

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<sup>7</sup> See Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class: The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1980).

<sup>8</sup> While the minstrel's song describes Odysseus as victor, Homer portrays Odysseus' reaction to his own narrative as one who has been vanquished: "This song [of Odysseus' victory at Troy] the famous minstrel sang. But the heart of Odysseus was melted and tears wet his cheeks beneath his eyelids. And as a woman wails and flings herself about her dear husband, who has fallen in front of his city and his people, seeking to ward off from his city and his children the pitiless day; and as she beholds him dying and gasping for breath, she clings to him and shrieks aloud, while the foe behind her smite her back and shoulders with their spears, and lead her away to captivity to bear toil and woe, while with most pitiful grief her cheeks are wasted: even so did Odysseus let fall pitiful tears from beneath his brows. Now from all the rest he concealed the tears that he shed, but Alcinous alone marked him and took heed, for he sat by him and heard him groaning heavily." Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. A. T. Murray, Loeb (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1984) 297.

<sup>9</sup> "Come hither, as thou farest, renowned Odysseus, great glory of the Achaeans; stay thy ship that thou mayest listen to the voice of us two. For never yet has any man rowed past this isle in his black ship until he has heard the sweet voice from our lips. Nay, he has joy of it, and goes his way a wiser man. For we know all the toils that in wide Troy the Arviges and Trojans endured through the will of the gods, and we know all things that come to pass upon the fruitful earth." (445-7) Pietro Pucci analyzes the diction of the Sirens' song as an allusion to the *Iliad*, thereby attempting to draw upon Odysseus' feeling of nostalgia for the moments of his greatest glory. Pietro Pucci, *The Song of the Sirens* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998) 1-10. Pucci also notes that the Sirens seem *not* to know everything that comes to pass on the earth, since they "fail to see what happens before their eyes, for it escapes them that Odysseus is bound fast to the ship's mast and they do not know that his companions hear neither him nor their song" (8). Or perhaps they do know what is happening, and they sing not to lure Odysseus into their den, but in full awareness that their own words will be ineffective as traps, but effective as words that will eventually be transmitted via the mouth of Odysseus himself. The Sirens' song therefore advances a claim for *transmission* as an *epos*, as

poet knows what the audience wants to hear, and one of Odysseus' greatest feats consists in the way he responds to his own story, a story that exercises such a power of attraction that it forms the main temptation and the sign of mastery for its own protagonist.

The aesthetic exercise designates less a poetic form than a way of reading, an absorptive and attentive focus that probes, analyzes, gathers, associates in order to uncover the latent and potential exercise value harbored in each work, a tentative and provisional response to the question: what sort of self does this text call into being, what practices of life does it invoke? To be sure, there are numerous examples of texts that could be considered exercises in the strict sense of the term. Rhetorical manuals, poetic imitations, and sketches or drafts are written to function as *études*, as instruments used to develop one's own skills, rather than as products intended for display and reception. Even these derivative works, exercises in the strict sense, may produce an aesthetic askesis in the larger sense.

In 1750, the aesthetic exercise emerges explicitly not merely as a reading technology, but as a technology of the self. Alexander Baumgarten develops the concept of aesthetic exercises to designate the way in which the work of art and the practices associated with making and receiving art can train cognition and produce the "happy aesthete," the *felix aestheticus*. This aesthetic technology is quite different than the one implied by the text as *étude*. From the aesthetic exercise as Baumgarten develops it, one does not merely learn this or that particular skill, to fashion words "well" or to rhetorically manipulate your audience. Baumgarten correlates the act of producing, receiving, and imitating poetry and the cognitive acts stimulated by this process as an induction into an entire way of being in the world.

Certain texts have been more successful at producing meaningful social practices and generating patterns of human action than others. The intensity of aesthetic askesis travels along a spectrum of texts and their corresponding textual communities. At the limit point of one end of the spectrum one may find sacred and religious texts and texts that throw a culture's implicit or explicit values and norms into relief: the Bible, the Homeric epics, Dante's *La Divina Commedia*. In the *Stanze di Raffaello* in the Vatican, Dante appears in both secular and sacred frescoes, in *Parnaso* and in *La disputa del sacramento*. The numerous commentaries that were written in the wake of the *Commedia* testify to the force it exerted over the imagination of its time, to its status as a work that presents in earthly form the order and the pull of the divine. Heidegger claims that the work of art makes clear to a culture how it lets beings appear as that which they are; the Greek tragedy differentiates and reveals to its audience "was heilig ist und was unheilig, was groß und was klein, was wacker und was feig, was edel und was flüchtig, was Herr und was Knecht."<sup>10</sup> Because the sacred appears as one of the most important ways in

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they imbue their own act of song with an intensified attractive force, hence rendering it *worthy* of transmission. Finally, since Odysseus himself narrates the Sirens' song as an *epos*, he resignifies the effect of his own story on his mind. Previously, when he hears his own story from the mouth of another bard, the imaginative effect of the song recalls not his glory as a hero, but reduces him in his present sorrow to the state of the vanquished. When he tells the same story in the Sirens' song, or a condensed version of it, through his own mouth, he reestablishes mastery over his own narrative; it becomes a glorious source of attraction rather than a signifier of his present misery.

<sup>10</sup> Martin Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," *Wegmarken*, vol. 5, Gesamtausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977) 29. For a clear account of Heidegger's ontology of art that has shaped

which art "lets beings be," Heidegger reads Hölderlin's poems as sacred texts. Heidegger's attempt to make these texts into sacred documents implanted a force of attraction in Hölderlin's work, one whose presence still manages to draw or repel depending upon one's relation to Heidegger. On the other end of the spectrum, one may encounter texts that are not as readily associated with establishing practices or producing human types: bagatelles, humoristic texts, or even products that make no claim to being art—inscriptions, road signs, anything that can *signify*. These texts too, however, can become the subject of an aesthetic exercise. The aesthetic exercise is generated not from the object itself or its intrinsic properties, but from the attempt to weave it into our identities, our actions, and our commitments.

The notion that art—all forms of *poiesis*—can alter, influence, enhance, or even shape one's way of being in the world infuses poetic practices long before Baumgarten articulates this idea in his *Aesthetica*. In Horace's Ode IV.11, the poet says, "minuentur atrae / carmine curae,"<sup>11</sup> and the ode performatively confirms its own representation of itself as a measured activity driving away melancholy, diminishing the black bile circulating in the body. In Wolfram's *Parzival*, Parzival falls into a trance-like state when three drops of blood in the snow conjure the cheeks of his beloved: "sus begunder sich verdenken, / unz daz er unversunnen hielt" (283.16-7).<sup>12</sup> An imaginative association takes hold of the knight, he loses his capacity to reason; captivated by a vision of his beloved, held fast in the clutches of desire, he affirms in a state of absorption the beauty of the divine creation. Although Wolfram turns this spiritual and erotic scene of mystical transcendence into a burlesque comedy, a scene in which the sacred and the secular orders literally collide, he nevertheless reveals an awareness of the way in which sensual input may suddenly take hold of the mind, seize the body, and transport the human being into a mode of perception qualitatively different than that of quotidian reality.

To fully illuminate the history of art as a history of aesthetic exercises, as an investigation into the way in which art and its formal particularities produce certain cognitive states correlated with specific intensities of being, would require a horizon much more vast than can be offered by this study. It would require, above all, going backwards and forwards in time as well as sideways into other languages and other cultural spaces.

Moreover, although poetry forms the central focus of this study, the scope of the aesthetic exercise is not limited to language. The sculpture of Laocoön became an exercise and a challenge for the interpretation of antiquity in eighteenth-century Germany.<sup>13</sup> In France, Fragonard's paintings play with the gaze, making the work an attraction for the eye and an incitation for the viewer to discover hidden provocations that

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my thinking about the subject, see Hubert L Dreyfus, "Heidegger's Ontology of Art," *A Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005). However, I do not share Heidegger's belief that a work of art only "works" in relation to a culture's understanding of being. In my view, this requirement for the work excludes from consideration what could otherwise be called works of art—works that may not be working for an entire culture, but do manage to work for individuals as attractions for thought.

<sup>11</sup> Horace, *Opera*, ed. D. R. Shackleton Baily (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1985) 127.

<sup>12</sup> Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, ed. Karl Lachmann, 6 ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998) 287.

<sup>13</sup> See Richard Brilliant, *My Laocoön: Alternative Claims in the Interpretation of Artworks* (Berkeley: U C Press, 2000).

often remain unseen.<sup>14</sup> In the twentieth century, Jim Jarmusch's *The Limits of Control* constructs the cinematic experience as an imaginative exercise of the highest order, the production of a human being whose style of life is governed by the maintenance of aesthetic concentration. Of all possible mediated forms, it is perhaps music that may integrate itself most intimately into our patterns of behavior and into the very space of our mental organization, coordinating affect and phenomenon in ways that often evade our direct awareness. However, music can become an aesthetic exercise, an attempt to shape a certain way of receiving or interpreting phenomena. The compositions of John Cage show how sound can become transformed into music through a redirection of intentional consciousness and an act of concentration.

In this study, however, I focus on language, and more specifically on poetic language. The self-imposed limitations on this horizon of inquiry arise not merely out of pragmatic concerns and personal inclinations, but out of historical considerations as well: Baumgarten himself, despite his desire to incorporate all the arts in his account of sensory knowledge, nevertheless uses poetry as the primary medium for the aesthetic exercise.<sup>15</sup> History, in this study, furnishes an important—even essential—means of restoring to works their ability to attract and exercise the mind. The Anacreontic poets of eighteenth-century Germany are almost unreadable for a modern audience. Their poems eschew the normative tendencies of modern aesthetics: genius, originality, depth, lexical variation, affective intensity, rhythmic complexity—almost everything of value according to contemporary criteria of aesthetic worth is absent from this poetry. And yet, when one considers Gleim's *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern* from the perspective of how it interacts with ways of making sense of the world in its localized time and place—it cannot but appear as a masterpiece in its specific exercise of the senses and the imagination.

History therefore appears as an important strategic horizon for a reconsideration of the exercise value of any aesthetic object. In Borges' "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote," the narrator, partially inspired by an idea he finds in Novalis about the possibility of *total identification* with an author, imagines that the twentieth century French writer has rewritten Cervantes' *Don Quixote* word for word. He compares the two versions of the same text, one written by Cervantes and the other by Menard, and discovers several important differences. The style of the text, for example, must be evaluated differently depending upon authorship: "Menard's archaizing style—who is after all a foreigner—suffers from some affectation. This is not the case with the style of his precursor, who handles the Spanish of his time with ease."<sup>16</sup> The same semantic content, produced at different times by different people, provokes a difference in the way a text is read and interpreted. That is why a translation, or an imitation, or any supposedly

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<sup>14</sup> Jennifer Milam, *Fragonard's Playful Paintings* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2006).

<sup>15</sup> However, Baumgarten does see poetry as only one form of art among many; he himself conceives of aesthetics as a science of sensory knowledge encompassing music, dance, and the plastic arts. See Frederick Beiser, *Diotima's Children: German Aesthetic Rationalism from Leibniz to Lessing* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009) 122.

<sup>16</sup> "El estilo arcaizante de Menard—extranjero al fin—adolece de alguna afectación. No así el del precursor, que maneja con desenfado el español corriente de su época." Jorge Luis Borges, "Pierre Menard, Autor del Quijote," *Obras Completas*, ed. Carlos V Frías, vol. 1 (Barcelona: María Kodama y Emecé Editores, 1989) 449.

derivative form of art, in fact may function as its own exercise for any given community, and not merely *as* a derivative work. The translation of Anacreon's songs by Götz and Uz does not merely communicate what was once attributed to Anacreon, but interacts with, appeals to, and reconfigures its own time and place in ways specific to its own textual form.

Although history has been chosen as one point of entry in order to intensify the power of certain texts to attract and exercise the total sensual apparatus, it too has its limits. A certain ineliminable degree of anachronism—or, considering the Greek *anachronizein*—the inevitable presence of lateness that characterizes phenomenality as such—can be productively channeled into the work of art as an aesthetic exercise. Speculation, the exploration of possibilities rather than facts, also appears as a necessary precondition for an attempt to enhance the specifically *aesthetic* qualities of a work of art. Formal elements—rhythm, tempo, diction, structure, or whatever formal particularities happen to manifest themselves in the act of reading—intensify the aesthetic exercise, and any time we speak of the role these formal elements play in producing meaning and provoking cognitive states, more often than not, we are speculating.

To be sure, an understanding of genre can help one evaluate the meaning of form. However, the rules of genre, although helpful for delineating the horizon of an aesthetic exercise and drawing out its specific attractive force, do not exhaust the particular interface between form and consciousness. In addition to considerations of genre, the movement of concentration should be counterbalanced by an oppositional, nominalistic pull, namely to read a poetic artifact as it presents itself immediately to the senses. One of the best models for this countermovement could be described as a sort of phenomenological *epochê*, a bracketing of everything outside of the experience of the text. Such a technique would not intend to reveal the essence of the object or structures of consciousness, but to examine and intensify the states of the mind-body-text system in potential acts of aesthetic reception.

To read texts as aesthetic exercises requires a movement toward the intensity of form, not merely as something bound to genre, nor as the manifestation of a poetic rule, nor as something that can be or ought to be completely historicized, but as experience, as point of attraction, a quantum of energy that, sometimes imperceptibly, introduces a new thread into the weft of work and consciousness.

Because the attempt to consider a work of art as an aesthetic exercise both historicizes and dehistoricizes at one and the same time, invariably including a certain amount of anachronism and speculation in its movements of thought, it may also appear to some readers as unacceptably arbitrary. Critical practices that do not reduce the speculative, the anachronistic, and the arbitrary to a minimum generally encounter a hostile environment in discourses geared toward consensus. However, in the attempt to reconstruct a work's value as an aesthetic exercise, the speculative, the anachronistic, and the arbitrary constitute, at the very least in their capacity as limit-points, integral components, indeed structural necessities, of critical activity. The question is not how to suppress or avoid these potentially parasitic qualities inherent to the genre of criticism, but rather, how to place them in relation to the counterbalancing tendencies toward knowledge, historical accuracy, and coherence also claimed as the domain of the critic.

In the attempt to negotiate these tendencies, I have limited my investigation to the specific time and cultural space in which the aesthetic, as a discipline and as a way of conceptualizing human ways of knowing, becomes explicitly formulated as a potentiality for thought. In 1735, Alexander Baumgarten wrote a treatise entitled *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema* about the relation between cognition and poetry, the forms of knowledge presupposed and generated by poetry, and the normative poetics that such an undertaking implies. One of his tasks consisted in clarifying the relation between poetic texts and cognitive states: "cogitationem aliquam poeticarum imaginem animo concipere laboro."<sup>17</sup> In this treatise, he coined the term "aesthetics" (*aestheticae*) as the analysis of "inferior cognition," which includes knowledge generated both by immediate sensory perception and by the imagination, whereby the latter is understood as the ability to make present in the mind something that is absent to the senses.

Gleim and Uz, both of whom were writing Anacreontic poetry at the time, were students at Halle, and they were not only familiar with Baumgarten as a professor at the university, but they continually referred to Baumgarten's treatise in their correspondence. To what degree the ideas in this treatise shaped their poetic activity is not made explicit. It does not seem that Gleim and Uz sought "aesthetic knowledge" in their Anacreontic poems. And yet, one may read their poetry as a certain form of exercising the mind, of as a stimulation of poetic thoughts (*cogitationes poeticae*), even though Baumgarten does not use the term "aesthetic exercises" until 1750. Whereas Baumgarten attempts to link aesthetic experience and the so-called higher forms of cognition—mathematics, logic, geometry—to a higher order of truth and reason, Gleim's *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern* dissociates his own poetic activity from metaphysical truth, religious piety, ethical universality, social and economic productivity, indeed, any movement toward transcendence.

In this study, I examine three regimes of aesthetic exercises, each using poetic form in its own way to shape patterns of perception and to provoke ways of associating and dissociating words, things, and bodily-mental states. These regimes crystallize around Hölderlin's late hymns and sketches, Novalis' philosophical and poetic texts, and Anacreontic and Rococo lyric. In certain cases, the text often points to its own sensual formal activity and its own lyrical voice as the specific type of being it seeks to produce, a being that I often simply call "the poet." Baumgarten calls this being the "happy aesthete" (*felix aestheticus*), and it describes a person for whom the production and reception of poetry appears an integral part of the ideal human life.

Part I focuses on the work of Friedrich Hölderlin. For Hölderlin, the harmony of the natural and historical world is not something given, but something that one has to be trained to perceive amidst the facticity of suffering and violence. The deliberate confusion of Hölderlin's poetry, triggered by complex syntactical structures and a dense semantic texture, challenges the human mind to find evidence of the divine in its own mental self-organization. Poetry becomes an exercise in tension, stretching human cognitive capacities to the point of breaking such that they may better perceive latent divine order. In Hölderlin's case, disjunction and chaos eventually triumph over organization, leading to a form of aesthetic exercise that undermines rather than bolsters a

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<sup>17</sup> Alexander Baumgarten, *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus*, ed. Heinz Paetzold (Hamburg: Meiner, 1983) 4.

conception of nature and history as self-organizing, harmonious systems.

In Part II, turning to the work of Novalis, I argue that Novalis rejects a philosophical conception of the absolute in favor of a "physiological absolute," redefining the absolute as an intensification of stimulation rather than a realm of pure identity. For Novalis, poetry exercises the mind by generating imaginative multiplicities and differences, continually overturning orders of representation, and creating magnetically attractive signs and permeable poetic spaces. The aesthetic exercise uses fiction to posit inaccessible realms that continually overturn orders of representation, drawing, negotiating, and effacing boundaries—between life and death, pagan and Christian, self and other. The affirmation of life through a negation of boundaries in turn undermines regimes of disciplinary normalization in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. In *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*, the poetic space of the fairy tale organizes language, nature, and knowledge differently than the institutionalized regimes of bodily and mental exercise characteristic of the school at Sais. The aesthetic exercise, in this case, perturbs disciplinary regimes of exercise that attempt to produce normatively stable subjects, seeing *disorganization* as an integral part of a process of self-overcoming. Like *Die Hymnen an die Nacht*, the fairy tale attempts to clear a space where perturbation and difference become possible, pushing the mind into novel imaginative spaces.

Finally, stepping back in time, I examine the work of Anacreontic and Rococo poets in the middle of the eighteenth century. Some Anacreontic poets—above all Gleim in his *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern*—develop their aesthetic activity not in relation to any absolute ideal, but rather, as a complete disavowal of all transcendental structuring schemas as such. Their poetry embraces pure immanence through the pleasure of repeated vocalic, thematic, and syntactic patterns. By replacing all transcendental organizing elements—God, virtue, economic productivity—with a seemingly derivative poetry of imitation and repetition, they develop a form of aesthetic exercise detaching human beings from their own culture's way of organizing and making sense of phenomena. The Anacreontic form therefore represents a lost poetic exercise in pleasure, one that would soon be overcome by competing poetic paradigms: the attempt to link poetry to religious experience (Klopstock), poetry as education into ethical autonomy (Schiller), the cult of genius and personalized expression (Herder and Goethe), or the fantastic as a source of novelty (Romanticism). Pleasure itself, however, generates its own forms of novelty, its own way of loosening the hold of social and cultural norms and revealing the contingency of these norms.

Chronological, and even logical order would seem to dictate that I move in the opposite direction, from the Anacreontic poets to Hölderlin's hymns. However, I have opted for a movement toward increasing lightness. If this dissertation, which analyzes aesthetic exercises, also intends to *be* one, albeit in a modest and limited form, the exercise that I have chosen is one toward immanence rather than transcendence. In an age that seems fixated on trauma, melancholy, and violence, it seems to me a necessary corrective to hold open the possibility for joy, lightness, and play.

Lightness, joy, and play are not the opposite of *askesis*; rather, they can be a product of it. Lightness, the dissociation of phenomena from higher orders of intelligibility or meaningfulness, appears to be one of the more difficult styles of life for a

human being to adopt. Even the immanence of Anacreontic poetry requires the movement of concentration and exercise.

Johannes de Silentio, in Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, describes a knight as one who can make the movement of affective and temporal concentration, gathering the intensity of a whole being into a single mental desire and a single moment of consciousness:

For the knight will then, in the first place, have the strength to concentrate the whole of his life's content and the meaning of reality in a single wish. If a person lacks this concentration, this focus, his soul is disintegrated from the start, and then he will never come to make the movement, he will act prudently in life like those capitalists who invest their capital in every kind of security so as to gain on the one what they lose on the other—in short, he is not a knight. Secondly, the knight will have the strength to concentrate the whole of the result of his reflection into one act of consciousness. If he lacks this focus his soul is disintegrated from the start and he will then never have time to make the movement, he will be forever running errands in life, never enter the eternal....<sup>18</sup>

Such is the way that Johannes de Silentio envisions the commitment to a single phenomenon in the world, to a person, a task, a desire. The movement described by Johannes consists in a thought experiment, a cognitive act, and a conscious decision to make this experiment permeate every moment of one's existence. This wish enters into one's very identity such that one cannot be *the same person* if one were to give up this wish. It requires a threefold concentration: a single object that attracts greater than all other objects, a single desire that overcomes all other desires, and a single act of consciousness that expands into every act of consciousness. When a critic makes a text into an aesthetic exercise, this movement of concentration, as a receptive activity entering into the world of the text, represents an ideal limit point in the thought experiment.

This form of concentration, one that culminates in an absolute commitment, seems almost impossible—and perhaps undesirable—for critical activity as a form of *askesis*. It seems impossible for the simple reason that, to borrow a concept from Baumgarten, art appears often as *heterocosmic*, disclosing worlds whose logic, coherence, and frames of reference are different than our own. Although Baumgarten designates heterocosmic truth as the ability to imagine contingent appearances—in an imagined or literary world—as "possible elements of another universe" (*possibilia alterius universi*),<sup>19</sup> thereby conforming to the metaphysical truth of sufficient reason, it may also stand as a reminder to the critic that one may make the movement of concentration in many different literary worlds, one may cross heterogeneous imaginative spaces without making any one of them the absolute. The same critic can engage equally intensively with Hölderlin's hymns and Anacreontic odes despite the almost opposed attractions they generate. The critic's ability to feel multiple attractions—contrary to Johannes de Silentio's claim—may actually *enhance* the intensity of experience. More

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<sup>18</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Alastair Hannay (London: Penguin, 2003) 72.

<sup>19</sup> Alexander Baumgarten, *Ästhetik*, trans. Dagmar Mirbach (Hamburg: Meiner, 2007) 419.

importantly, the attraction to multiple aesthetic worlds impedes the dogmatic identification with only one world, one style of life, one imaginative landscape. As an example of the contrast between truth in the strict sense of the term and heterocosmic truth, Baumgarten cites two lines from the *Panegyricus Messallae* in which the narrator, after having described the wanderings of Odysseus, describes two diverging possibilities:

Atque haec seu nostras intersunt cognita terras  
Fabula sive novum dedit his erroribus orbem....<sup>20</sup>

Whether these events happen in our lands  
Or whether the story gives to these wanderings a new world....

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<sup>20</sup> Baumgarten, *Ästhetik* 422.

# Part I: Organization, Bifurcation, Instability

## Chapter 1: The Improbable Coherence of Contingent Things: Aesthetic Exercises in the Work of Alexander Baumgarten

### 1. The Birth of Aesthetics and *Homo Exercitans*

If it belongs to one of the possibilities of human beings to exercise not merely their bodies, but also their minds, and through this exercise to modify their outlook on the world and their way of being in the world, it follows that the human organism is endowed with a plasticity that continually reveals its own existence as an open project. To regard the human being as one who practices, as *homo exercitans*, gives to the human being the perpetual status of being unfinished.

In classical antiquity, the malleability of the human was the *conditio sine qua non* of philosophy. Pierre Hadot has demonstrated that philosophy in classical antiquity, beginning at least with Socrates, consisted not merely in a set of doctrines about the world, but rather, in regimes of spiritual exercises that "correspond to a transformation of our vision of the world and a metamorphosis of our personality."<sup>21</sup> The genre of philosophy as spiritual exercises flourished in the schools of the Stoics, Epicureans, and Skeptics in Hellenistic and Roman antiquity. The writings associated with these schools do not merely activate the reflective capacities of the mind in the attempt to arrive at a true picture of the world or a description of the good life; according to Hadot, they "are the result, not merely of thought, but of the individual's entire psychism."<sup>22</sup> The primary purpose of a spiritual exercise is transformative, and it culminates in the production of a total way of being: a way of seeing, a way of thinking, and a way of acting in the world.

A spiritual exercise therefore refuses to recognize the boundary between philosophical discourse and other contexts of life; the success or failure of the exercise depends upon a permeability and interdependence in the relationship between words and concrete beings. There is therefore an implicit philosophy of language at work in the very notion of a spiritual exercise. In the exercise, language does not merely store information, it does not communicate mental contents, it does not express thought, nor is its central function performative in the sense of introducing an entity into a social reality, but rather, language becomes imbued with the potential of shaping one's very processes of thought and being in the world.<sup>23</sup> The insight into language to be drawn from the practice of

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<sup>21</sup> Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, trans. Michael Chase, ed. Arnold Davidson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) 82.

<sup>22</sup> Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life* 82.

<sup>23</sup> Paul Rabbow, in his groundbreaking work *Seelenführung*, explores the connection between textual practices (mainly reading and writing) and their "psychagogic" function. Paul Rabbow, *Seelenführung*:

spiritual exercises is that language itself, whether implicitly or explicitly, contains an exercise value. To speak is not merely to communicate, to express, to perform a socially meaningful act, nor does speaking let the realm of appearances shine forth. To speak is to practice, to *exercise* thought, to generate patterns and rhythms in behavior, consciousness, body. All linguistic acts therefore harbor an exercise value ranging from a relative minimum to a relative maximum, from the seeming self-evidence of phatic communication to the challenge of poetic form, from the utterance that negligibly and imperceptibly acts on one's total organism to the word that irrevocably and decisively alters patterns of being.

Propagandists, behaviorists, and psychoanalysts have, to a certain extent, always been aware of the exercise value of linguistic acts.<sup>24</sup> And yet, the exercise value of language need not to be reduced to a crude form of psychic manipulation and self-deception. The exercise value of artistic practices—and here one would have to include all sensate forms in this rubric and not merely the reception and production of language—makes possible a conception of art not as performative but as *transformative*, that is, as a specific manner in which any concrete life integrates ways of producing and receiving art into its mental and bodily patterns of existence. Although one may find traces of artistic practices and discourses that presuppose and thematize the exercise value of their own activity in almost all historical periods, it appears in an explicit and concentrated form at the origin of aesthetics as a discipline in the eighteenth century. Specifically, aesthetics as a discipline does not begin merely with an attempt to formulate a theory of the beautiful, nor even as a pretext for an epistemological reevaluation of sensory knowledge, but also as a technology of the self. Alexander Baumgarten, in his *Aesthetica* (1750), formulates a new form of practice—the *aesthetic exercise*—that explicitly unfolds the way in which art, its production and reception, can produce certain patterns of selfhood.<sup>25</sup>

In Baumgarten's work, the concept of aesthetics was linked first and foremost to the type of knowledge derived from sense experience, or *aisthesis*. Even for Baumgarten, however, the development of aesthetics as an exploration of knowledge generated by sense perception could not be separated from the work of art and its beauty, whose very existence helped to justify his project. Baumgarten's legacy has generally been evaluated within the framework of a history of epistemology. His main contribution to epistemology consists in his rehabilitation of sensory knowledge, in turn undermining Descartes' and Leibniz' prioritization of clear and distinct ideas—which are properties of the mind and not of sense experience—as the only ground for true and certain knowledge.<sup>26</sup> For Leibniz, sense perception is "confused" because it cannot be analyzed

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*Methodik der Exerzitien in der Antike* (Munich: Kösel, 1954) 218-22. The act of reading and writing trains and forms the soul and institutes new patterns for the mind. He goes on to link this form of linguistic exercise with psychoanalysis, and specifically with forms of "suggestive" therapy (284-89).

<sup>24</sup> The formative interaction between language and affect is almost self-evident, as Rabbow notes: "Es ist bekannt und augenscheinlich—die einfache Selbstbeobachtung lehrt es—, daß man sich durch das Aussprechen des Gedankens, des Gefühls stark in der Richtung des Gedanken- und Gefühlsinhalts beeinflussen kann." Rabbow, *Seelenführung: Methodik der Exerzitien in der Antike* 202.

<sup>25</sup> Although Baumgarten is considered the "father" of aesthetics, Beiser puts forth convincing reasons to see Christian Wolff as equally important in the founding stages of aesthetics as a discipline. Beiser, *Diotima's Children: German Aesthetic Rationalism from Leibniz to Lessing* 48.

<sup>26</sup> See Kai Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002) 6.

into its constituent parts the way geometrical objects can. And yet, sense perception can generate clear ideas according to the Cartesian definition of the term (as objects that are recognizable) inasmuch as sense objects can be perceived *as* objects.<sup>27</sup> The aesthetic therefore comprises the domain of sensory experience that is intelligible to human beings through recognition, and yet, refers to a form of knowledge ultimately impossible of being broken down into parts. A sense impression recognized as beautiful triggers a striking incapacity to localize the source of one's own pleasure, let alone analyze this impression. For Leibniz, the beautiful represents a paradigmatic case of the indefinable "je ne sais quoi" inherent in all sense perception.<sup>28</sup> Baumgarten considers the very upsurge of indeterminacy that makes itself so strongly felt in poetic works—the incapacity of sensory cognition to analyze the fullness of the beautiful object into distinct properties—as part of the beautiful, which in turn represents "*perfectio cognitionis sensitivae*" or the perfection of sensible knowledge.<sup>29</sup>

However, perhaps even more decisive than Baumgarten's rehabilitation of sense perception is his attempt to outline *practices* that correspond to this rehabilitation. Baumgarten calls these practices "aesthetic exercises," or *exercitia aethetica*. Although these exercises share features in common with rhetorical manuals that sought to provide rules for producing beautiful works of art, manuals such as Gottsched's *Versuch einer kritischen Dichtkunst* (1730) and Breitinger's *Critische Dichtkunst* (1740), Baumgarten emphasizes aesthetics as a practice that shapes one's very mode of perception, indeed, as a technology of the self.<sup>30</sup> At the inception of aesthetics as a discipline, Baumgarten opens the possibility for art not merely as a rule-driven form of production, but as a way of life that develops and transforms the very human sensory capabilities actualized in the aesthetic enterprise.

This work dedicates itself to a preliminary sketch of aesthetics as a way of life as it emerged in the eighteenth century, first by uncovering a conception of exercises linked to specifically aesthetic modes of being, and then by examining aesthetic artifacts themselves as aesthetic exercises. However, in the throes of the aesthetic exercise, works are no longer "artifacts," but parts of a living relationship.

An aesthetic exercise must be distinguished from a rigidly technological conception of exercise, one that would attempt to fashion the human being as a carpenter fashions a house or one whose end might approximate something like an optimized human being. This misconstruing of the concept of exercise may perhaps be traced to its association with a philosophy of the will, with radical and vigorous activity that intrudes

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<sup>27</sup> For a presentation of this important difference, see Manfred Frank, *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989) 45-6.

<sup>28</sup> Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Die philosophischen Schriften*, ed. C. I. Gerhardt (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1880) 449.

<sup>29</sup> Baumgarten labels the "confusion" that results from the increase of properties or distinguishing characteristics of the work of art as "extensive clarity," see Beiser, *Diotima's Children: German Aesthetic Rationalism from Leibniz to Lessing* 127.

<sup>30</sup> For the link between Baumgarten's aesthetics and the rhetorical tradition, see Wolfgang Bender, "Rhetorische Tradition und Ästhetik im 18. Jahrhundert: Baumgarten, Meier und Breitinger," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 99 (1980).

upon and actively shapes human life.<sup>31</sup> Peter Sloterdijk has linked the concept of exercises to an "Anthropotechnik" that forms and creates human nature.<sup>32</sup> On the contrary, an aesthetic exercise, for Baumgarten at least, does not necessarily presuppose an act of conscious intervention, and even implies an element of passivity. To be sure, a form of activity is involved, an act of concentration and engagement—but not necessarily an act of will as the attempt to bend reality, the body, or the imagination to a preconceived image or model of normativity. Language, above all, provides the context for a form of exercise that requires neither predetermined procedures, nor clearly articulated normative schemas, nor rule-driven regimes of discipline to produce different patterns of selfhood. The aesthetic exercise does not give the power of self-fashioning over to human decision-making strategies—which would represent a decidedly subject-centered mode of exercise—but opens and attunes the human being to other ways of associating phenomena, to the alterity of imaginary worlds. The openness and indeterminacy inherent to the aesthetic exercise—an indeterminacy that manifests itself in Hölderlin's poetry, for example—may generate a form of anxiety capable of setting the human being adrift in an ultimately incomprehensible world. On the other hand, this very openness and indeterminacy constitutes the condition of possibility of inspiration, of a sacred entry point through which the divine might travel in order to touch the realm of mortals with its palpable, and yet ultimately ineffable presence.

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<sup>31</sup> Hannah Arendt excoriates Epictetus' conception of philosophy as a training of the will, a philosophy that seems to culminate in the fantasy of willing reality itself. If the will were reducible to a desire for omnipotence—a desire that would ultimately end with its own impotence—"Man in that case would have been given a 'monstrous' faculty (Augustine), compelled by its nature to demand a power it is able to exercise only in the illusion-ridden region of sheer phantasy—the inwardness of a mind that has successfully separated itself from all outward appearance in its relentless quest for absolute tranquility." Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind: Willing*, vol. 2 (New York: Harcourt, 1978) 84. For Arendt, spiritual exercises constitute one more form of alienation from the world. Contrary to Arendt, Pierre Hadot attempts to show how Epictetus' and Marcus Aurelius' spiritual exercises contribute to a form of action; "il s'agit d'engager sa responsabilité et non plus de consentir, il s'agit d'entrer en relation avec des êtres, nos semblables, qui provoquent d'autant plus nos passions qu'ils sont nos semblables, des êtres qu'il nous faudra aimer, bien qu'ils soient souvent haïssables." Pierre Hadot, *La Citadelle intérieure: Introduction aux Pensées de Marc Aurèle* (Paris: Fayard, 1992) 199. Hadot sees stoic spiritual exercises precisely not as world alienation, but as an impetus for action with others. Whatever the case may be, the type of exercise we will be exploring in this study, the aesthetic exercise, is qualitatively different from the form of exercises articulated in Roman and Hellenistic philosophy. The aesthetic exercise, characterized as it is by formal indeterminacy, shapes the human precisely by liberating it from any attempt to "mould" the mind as if it were the raw material given to poetic language for the purpose of cohering with a philosophical doctrine.

<sup>32</sup> Sloterdijk sees "anthropotechnical" practices as attempts to optimize the human being's "immunity" against its potentially hostile environment: "Ich trage Materialien zur Biographie des *homo immunologicus* zusammen, wobei ich mich durch die Annahme leiten lasse, hier sei vor allem der Stoff zu finden, aus dem die Anthropotechniken sind. Ich verstehe hierunter die mentalen und physischen Übungsverfahren, mit denen die Menschen verschiedenster Kulturen versucht haben, ihren kosmischen und sozialen Immunstatus angesichts von vagen Lebensrisiken und akuten Todesgewißheiten zu optimieren." Sloterdijk, *Du mußt dein Leben ändern* 23. In this respect, he appears to be an heir of Epictetus, or rather, of Arendt's picture of Epictetus. However, he does not believe merely in marshalling the human will to optimize the human being, but rather, draws upon all possible biological and cultural techniques of producing an enhanced "immunological" organism.

## 2. The Redemption of Fallibility: Baumgarten's *Felix Aestheticus*

The importance of Baumgarten's grounding of the discipline of aesthetics does not consist merely in the rehabilitation of sensory knowledge.<sup>33</sup> From a philosophical perspective, the evaluation of Baumgarten as the champion of an epistemological rehabilitation of sensory experience is natural and correct.<sup>34</sup> However, more significant for the purposes of this study is Baumgarten's attempt not merely to make aesthetics into a new discipline, with its own epistemological validity, but to endow the aesthetic itself with an exercise value, that is, to make aesthetics into a set of practices that shape human patterns of behavior, thought, and action in the world. From its inception, aesthetics was considered a potential way of life just as much as an epistemological theory.<sup>35</sup> Philosophical aesthetics cannot be separated out from its actualization, which creates a new type of human being that Baumgarten calls the "happy aesthete":

Pulcritudo cognitionis... quum sit effectus pulcre cogitantis huius viribus vivis nec maior, nec nobilior... ante omnia delineemus aliquam genesin et ideam pulcre cogitaturi, CHARACTEREM FELICIS AESTHETICI, enumerationem eorum, quae in anima naturaliter pulcrae cogitationis causae propiores sunt. (26)<sup>36</sup>

As beauty of knowledge is brought about by the beautifully thinking being and is neither greater nor more noble than this person's living powers, above all else we will sketch the emergence and the idea of the beautifully thinking being, the CHARACTER OF THE HAPPY AESTHETE, as well as an enumeration of those things that are the more germane causes of beautiful thinking in the soul.

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<sup>33</sup> There remains no doubt that Baumgarten does indeed rehabilitate sensory knowledge, see Hans Rudolf Schweizer, *Ästhetik als Philosophie der sinnlichen Erkenntnis* (Basel: Schwabe, 1973). However, I wish to focus on a different aspect of his work, namely, not as it fits into the tradition of post-Cartesian epistemology, but how it integrates aesthetics into the tradition of spiritual exercises.

<sup>34</sup> Beiser notes that from the perspective of the history of aesthetics, Christian Wolff was in many ways more important than Baumgarten in establishing the philosophical engagement with art. However, he notes, "Baumgarten gives a much greater value than Wolff or Gottsched to the distinctive qualities of sensible cognition. His fundamental achievement in the rationalist tradition was that he gave a clear conceptual status and firm systematic place to these unique qualities." Beiser, *Diotima's Children: German Aesthetic Rationalism from Leibniz to Lessing* 122.

<sup>35</sup> Beiser singles out this aspect of Baumgarten's thought as well: "The beautiful spirit will not only be a poet by vocation, but a fully developed and all-rounded human being, someone who has the sensitivity and refinement to write verse as well as the acuity and subtlety to write philosophy. The program of aesthetic education developed by Schiller in his *Asthetische Briefe* already lies *in nuce* in Baumgarten's *Aesthetica*." Beiser, *Diotima's Children: German Aesthetic Rationalism from Leibniz to Lessing* 121.

<sup>36</sup> Citations to Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* will be taken from the following edition: Alexander Baumgarten, *Ästhetik*, trans. Dagmar Mirbach (Hamburg: Meiner, 2007). In general, I will cite the Latin followed by my own English translation.

Baumgarten's aesthetics does not merely rehabilitate sensory knowledge, but rather, constructs the type of human being for whom the knowledge and practice of the senses become a way of life.<sup>37</sup> Aesthetics poses the question not merely of the status of knowledge derived from the senses, but also interrogates the sort of human being who sees beauty as the inherent perfection of our sensory capacities. It is not enough merely to be a thinking being; one must think *beautifully*. The capacity to think beautifully is only open to thought that takes sense experience seriously. If, as Descartes and Leibniz claimed, knowledge can be generated only from purely rational, higher-order cognitive operations, such as the knowledge that one may have of geometry, then it cannot change, it remains eternal and immutable in a space of validity beyond the world of sense experience. If, however, knowledge includes that which one may derive from sense experience, this knowledge, in accordance with the world of the senses itself, is open just as much to ugliness as it is to beauty, to disorder as it is to order. To take seriously the domain of sense experience as a form of knowledge introduces *malleability* in the conception of the human being. The laws of geometry and logic appear to human beings unchangeable and universal; the laws of sense experience, however, are notoriously capricious and unreliable. If thought opens to sense experience, it introduces complexity into the attempt to differentiate good from bad, true from false, a task from which logical, mathematical, and geometrical knowledge appear exempt. Aesthetics therefore turns to the specific human being who recognizes sensory knowledge as the primary mode of access to the world, and attempts to construct a form of exercise that permits the human being to gravitate toward the beautiful rather than the ugly, the true rather than the false, the good rather than the bad. Baumgarten is not merely elaborating a philosophical doctrine, but developing a set of practices, a project that shares as much in common with the care of the self as prescribed in Roman and Hellenistic spiritual exercises as it does with Cartesian and Leibnizian rationalism. For ultimately, beauty describes not merely an ideal for the work of art, but a way of looking at the world that produces a happy and fulfilled human being.

Baumgarten calls this individual the "happy aesthete," a figure who is the product of both nature and art, *physis* and *techne*. To the character of the happy aesthete belongs therefore a "natural disposition" (*dispositio naturalis* [26]), as well as "aesthetic exercises" (*exercitia aesthetica* [38]). If one of these features is lacking, the happy aesthete cannot come into being. Only the aesthetic exercise unlocks, maintains, and augments the full potentiality of the sort of human being that develops his or her sensory capacities, the *felix aestheticus*.

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<sup>37</sup> For an interpretation of the "felix aestheticus" as a new type of human being, see Steffen Gross, *Felix Aestheticus. Die Ästhetik als Lehre vom Menschen. Zum 250. Jahrestag des Erscheinens von Alexander Gottlieb Baumgartens "Aesthetica"* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2001) 163-74. He does not focus, however, on the aesthetic as a form of exercise, but rather, as the articulation of a new conception of the human being. He claims, and rightly so, that "[Baumgarten's] *felix aestheticus* ist nicht der Künstler oder der Dichter in der engeren Bedeutung des jeweiligen Terminus, sondern der ganze Mensch in der höchst widersprüchlichen Ganzheit seiner Anlagen, Vermögen, und Möglichkeiten" (17). One might add that Baumgarten uncovers not merely new potentialities of the human from an aesthetic perspective, but also suggests new practices that would develop the specifically aesthetic, and hence malleable, tendencies of perception itself.

To the natural disposition of the happy aesthete belongs a catalogue of cognitive capacities. And yet, Baumgarten's list of natural aesthetic cognitive capacities cannot be reduced to a mere rationalistic attempt to enumerate or analyze aesthetic cognition into its constituent parts. To be sure, the "higher" cognitive capacities, such as the ability to analyze a subject into its predicates, are necessary conditions for happy aesthete. However, they are not sufficient conditions; the so-called "inferior" cognitive capacities form just as an important, if not a more important, part of aesthetic cognition, precisely because they provide the context whereby aesthetics may become a way of life, an induction into beautiful thought. Each of these inferior capacities, and each in its own way, gives way to an ethos; it encompasses a way of being in the world that takes a potential weakness or limitation of human sensory cognition and resignifies it into a potential source of strength. These so-called "natural" aesthetic cognitive capacities are open and flexible, and their very flexibility is what allows them to be honed and developed by the aesthetic exercise. Baumgarten's list of innate cognitive tendencies therefore ought to be seen as one of the first attempts to elucidate the specific domain of poetic cognition, and more specifically to illustrate how poetic activity can expand or deepen the dispositions, tendencies and potentialities that are present in everyday perception and cognition. Because the work of art—both its production and reception—hones and trains these cognitive capacities, Baumgarten opens the possibility of a continual interplay between the experience of art and acts of cognition in everyday life.

The cognitive dispositions that form the central prerequisites of the happy aesthete may be enumerated as follows: the ability to feel intensely with one's exterior and "interior" senses, and thereby to unify all of one's manifold cognitive capacities in order better to manipulate them; the ability to imagine past, present, and future objects that are absent to direct sensory intuition; the ability to discern proportion and measure; the ability to recognize something and remember it, which represents the faculty of *Mnemosyne*, the mother of the muses; the ability to separate and bind disparate moments in the imagination; the ability to judge what is beautiful; the ability to foresee and foretell the future; the ability to signify and coordinate thoughts and signs, that is, the ability *to express*.<sup>38</sup> Each of these capacities foregrounds the frailty of human sense perception and the concomitant lack of mastery at the core of all human experience. We can only be called upon to unify our faculties when they are inherently multiple and dispersed. We can only imagine the past, present, and future because we are inherently temporal beings,

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<sup>38</sup> These characteristics, which he labels the "inferior" dispositions (*dispositiones inferiores*) and lists in sections 30-37 of the *Aesthetica*, show Baumgarten at his most bold; even though these dispositions are "inferior," the happy aesthete cannot exist without them. They include the following dispositions: "acute sentiendi" [the disposition to feel acutely] (28), "dispositio naturalis ad imaginandum" [the natural disposition to make present that which is absent to sense experience] (28), "dispositio naturalis ad perspicaciam" [the natural disposition to perceive differences and similarities] (30), "dispositio naturalis ad recognoscendum et memoria" [the natural disposition to recognize and remember] (30), "dispositio poetica...combinando praescinendoque phantasmata" [the poetic disposition, which consists in binding and separating imagined appearances] (30), "dispositio ad saporem non publicum, immo delicatum... sensorum" [the disposition to fine, uncommon, even delicate judgment] (30), "dispositio ad praevidendum...et praesagiendum" [the disposition to foresight and to expect something that will happen] (32), "dispositio ad significandas perceptiones suas" [the disposition to put perceptions into signs] (32). Each of these dispositions would require extensive analysis in order to do justice to Baumgarten's influence in the history of aesthetics.

limited to our own particular point of view and our own particular finite access to the world. We give order to the world and perceive proportionality and symmetry in its design only when we expose ourselves to the potential chaos and confusion of sensible forms. We are capable of recognition and remembrance, and hence an artificially generated form of immortality, only when we tacitly acknowledge that all mortal life is marked by finitude. We bind disparate phenomena because without this binding capacity, the world would lose its intelligibility. If we feel the need to separate the beautiful from the ugly, the intuition of harmony granted by the beautiful is continually threatened by its own potential arbitrariness and mere subjectivity (a point that Kant made the cornerstone of his own aesthetic philosophy). If the poets are granted the gift of foresight, it is only to underscore the irreducible contingency that continually makes itself felt in the course of human history. And finally, if the aesthete, or rather, the poet, must have a natural disposition to coordinate thoughts and signs, these signs reveal the very struggle of the human mind itself in the process of attempting to make meaning.

Baumgarten's list of inferior capacities therefore lays the ground for the emergence of aesthetic cognition as a redemptive activity. The redemptive character of the aesthetic—a redemption that is made possible precisely because sensual perception itself is finite, contingent, and uncertain, and therefore in need of redemption—remains merely latent in Baumgarten's writings. Baumgarten himself stresses not the imperfection of sense perception, but rather, the aesthetic as precisely that which opens the human to perfectibility—as a continual process—through exercises. The very finitude, uncertainty and resistance to analysis characteristic of aesthetic cognition, or sensual perception in general, had given the rationalistic philosophical tradition good reasons to designate sensory cognition as an "inferior" capacity. What Baumgarten discovers is the potential lying dormant in this "inferiority." His focus on the aesthetic gives rise not merely to a new form of epistemology, or knowledge derived from the senses as such, but rather uncovers how sensory knowledge itself produces the human being as a malleable entity—as an unstable being, to be sure, but one whose very instability opens the human to never-ending projects of self-formation.

The aesthetic ultimately extends its own sphere not merely to a theory about sensible knowledge, but to practices that can be developed by engaging with the realm of the sensible. Baumgarten therefore grounds and makes possible an understanding of the specific poetic practices adopted by the main figures of this study as exercises not merely in poetic cognition, but in ways of interpreting, observing, and acting in the world. Each of the figures in this study deploys their own poetic form in an attempt to exercise and train one or more of these cognitive dispositions. Hölderlin's poetry, for example, depends to a large extent on the ability to bind and separate disparate phenomena. Novalis is continually concerned to "make present" that which is absent in the imagination. The Anacreontic poets' overturning of everyday forms of intelligibility presupposes and exercises the ability to discern differences and similarities. Each of these specific exercises will be examined in greater detail later in this study.

For Baumgarten, these dispositions necessitate the development of exercises in order to formulate a new paradigm of selfhood culminating in the figure of the happy aesthete. The range of natural desires of the happy aesthete corresponds to his or her cognitive dispositions:

Pecunia, opes, labor, otium comparatium, deliciae externae, libertas, honor, amicitia, vigor et valetudo corporis firma, virtutum umbrae, cognitio pulchra cum suo corollario virtute amabili, cognitio superior cum suo corollario virtute veneranda. (36)

Money, wealth, comparative leisure, external delights, freedom, honor, friendship, cheerfulness and strength of body, shadows of virtues, beautiful knowledge with its corollary of amiable virtue, higher knowledge with its corollary of admirable virtue.

The character of the happy aesthete therefore produces not merely a Cartesian "thinking being," but very much a being in the world and of the world. The aesthete is just as much a social being as an isolated ego, one who seeks to possess money to maintain the aesthete's activity, one who does not shun the delights of the external world but draws upon these delights as elements commensurate with the aesthete's own character. Baumgarten includes "shadows of virtues" (*virtutum umbrae*) as one of the potential objects of desire characteristic of the aesthete's natural dispositions. In an almost inconspicuous manner, he foregrounds the instability of desire that dwells in the aesthete; an attraction to the *shadows* of virtue rather than the virtues themselves may result from the natural talent unformed by exercises, and the naturally creative spirit (*ingenium*) may thereby remain "raw" or "unformed" (*rudis*) (40). Baumgarten nevertheless admits this instability in the very configuration of the natural dispositions of the aesthete. Each natural disposition harbors its own potential corruptibility, and nature alone cannot prevent the aesthete from becoming imbricated in a realm of negative appearances, where shadows overcome the virtues generated by beauty and reason.

To prevent the corruption of the dispositions and desires of the aesthete, Baumgarten recommends a regime of aesthetic exercises. The main characteristic of the aesthetic exercise is *askesis*, or the repetition of actions or thoughts that produces a way of being:

Ad characterem felicitatis aethetici requiritur... ἀσκησις et EXERCITATIO AESTHETICA, crebrior repetitio actionum in hoc homogenearum, ut sit aliquis ingenii ac indolis §§ 28-46 descriptorum consensus in datum thema... in unum cogitandem, in rem unam...ut habitus pulchre cogitandi sensim acquiratur. (38)

The character of the happy aesthete demands *askesis* and aesthetic exercises, the more frequent repetition of similar actions, so that there is an agreement between one's mental power and the character described in §§ 28-46 [that is, the natural happy aesthete as described above] in one thought, in one thing, so that he might gradually acquire the habit of thinking beautifully.

Baumgarten's use of the term *askesis* refers not to the denial of the flesh, but rather, to the spiritual exercise popularized among the school of the Cynics, a term that was virtually synonymous with the training of the mind through patterns of thought and bodily activity. The aesthetic is therefore an *ascetic*, but only in the more archaic sense of the term as one who exercises. Furthermore, the aesthetic exercise does not castigate the flesh, but rather, develops patterns of thought, cognition, and behavior precisely by means of the flesh. Aesthetic activity could be designated, in the largest sense of the term, as a provocation of the flesh—and not as a "disciplining" in the sense of submitting the flesh to a regime of self-negation nor even in the sense of following norms and rules.

The goal of the aesthetic exercise is to produce a unity between mental states and natural dispositions in the concentration of the mind on one thing (*in unum cogitandem, in rem unam*). It is through this act of concentration that one acquires the capability to "think beautifully." The aesthetic exercise modifies the self not by focusing on this self—not through Cartesian introspection—but rather, through directing its activity to an object. The act of concentration draws the subject away from its own consciousness and into the world of things, and in doing so, maintains, shapes, and refines its dispositions.

The continual maintenance and exercise of beautiful thought is necessary because the natural dispositions of the happy aesthete are constantly in danger of falling into torpor and inactivity. The aesthetic exercise provides a form of stimulation that revitalizes and augments natural dispositions: "Natura... nisi continuis exercitiis augeantur eius vel dispositiones vel habitus... decrescit, quantacunque ponatur, nonnihil ac torpescit" [Nature, if its dispositions or capabilities are not augmented by means of continual exercises, grows quite a bit weaker and degenerates, regardless of the extent to which it is endowed] (38). The purpose of the aesthetic exercise, however, is not to maintain the human being in a state of equilibrium with nature. Its primary goal is to stimulate and spur the continual drive to perfectibility. If aesthetic cognition shapes its own dispositions through a regime of successful aesthetic exercises, it nevertheless produces a being whose activity is characterized by continual restlessness. The happy aesthete therefore cannot be characterized as a fixed character with a given set of traits, even though Baumgarten believes he can isolate certain innate characteristics of the happy aesthete. One of the natural dispositions of the aesthete consists in an innate magnitude of the heart, or as Baumgarten emphasizes, the "MAGNITUDINEM... PECTORIS CONNATAM, instinctum in magna potissimum, praesertim apud attendentes, quam facilis inde transitus sit ad maxima" (36), the drive to achieve greatness, the instinct most driven toward greatness, above all in those who attend to how easy is the transition from great things to the greatest things. Greatness of spirit describes an indefinite drive to perfectibility, to the greatest of achievements, and as such, must remain indefinite. Greatness of heart describes not the property of a static entity, but the drive of a dynamic being.

The happy aesthete has been endowed with qualities as well as a set of practices that not only structurally prohibit inertia, but that become emblematic for the capacity to transcend, that is, to progress beyond one's initial situation. Rather than banishing contingency and danger from the sphere of the exercise, Baumgarten concedes that certain aesthetic exercises may corrupt the flesh, but that such exercises in no way invalidate the overall existence of aesthetic exercises. The aesthetic exercise is peculiar

because it does not seek to diminish the inherent contingency of sense perception, but rather, it draws upon this very contingency as if it were part of the voice of nature itself. Some forms of aesthetic exercise are incapable of being articulated in or reduced to rules. One may properly call such exercises "aesthetic" not only because they exercise capacities of human cognition, but also because these exercises themselves resist analysis. It is in this sense that aesthetic *exercises* (as exercises of the senses) themselves become *aesthetic exercises* (as exercises that cannot be "analyzed" into a predetermined set of properties): "Exercitia aesthetica... erunt 1) αυτοσχεδιασματα citra directionem artis eruditae, qua polleat exercendus, suscepta" [Aesthetic exercises will be undertaken as 1) improvisations without the direction of the learned arts by which the exercising person is strengthened] (42). Aristotle also refers to the emergence of poetry through improvisation (or literally, when the hand moves itself): "ἐγέννησαν τὴν ποίησιν ἐκ τῶν αὐτοσχεδιασμάτων" (*Poetics* 1448b).<sup>39</sup> And it is certainly from Aristotle that Baumgarten has taken his terminology. Yet whereas Aristotle integrates improvisation into an account of the beginning stages of how human beings create works of art, Baumgarten sees improvisation as central to the production of a total way of being, that is, of the aesthete.

Baumgarten, through the aesthetic exercise, aestheticizes the figure of the aesthete; some part of the aesthete's very way of maintaining his or her identity in the world will remain forever obscure and impenetrable to any form of cognition. He compares the nature of the aesthetic exercise to a child who learns but does not know exactly how or what he or she is learning.<sup>40</sup> Exercising happens not merely actively, but passively, as the exercise itself becomes integrated into spontaneous actions and reactions. "Exercetur ingenium natura pulcrum porro, iamque semet ipsum apertius... etiamsi nesciat, quid agat..." [The naturally beautiful mind will be exercised and strengthened and obviously exercises itself, even when it does not know what it is doing] (44). The aesthetic exercise works even when it is non transparent. And although the aesthetic exercise of spontaneity comprises only one type of aesthetic exercise—the other consisting in the *ars erudita*, or the learned arts—some aspect of the aesthetic will continually and irreducibly harbor the unconscious, opaque, and ultimately, unknowable presence of inspiration.

Despite an attraction to the complexity and richness of sensual perception, the need for constant stimulation, the spontaneity of natural self-organization, and the non-transparency of the aesthete's actions to his or her own conscious activity, Baumgarten's

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<sup>39</sup> Citations from Aristotle's *Poetics* will be taken from the following edition: Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Stephen Halliwell, Loeb (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1995).

<sup>40</sup> Krupp notes that there is an educational process at work in Baumgarten's account of the development from childhood to adulthood: from the boy, who spontaneously plays games, to the youth, who reads irregularly, to the man, who can formulate rules. "All that precedes the man is (now) marked by imperfection or deficiency." Anthony Krupp, "Cultivation as Maturation: Infants, Children, and Adults in Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's *Aesthetica*," *Monatshefte* 98.4 (2006): 533. However, it is worth noting that this "deficiency" of childish improvisation is necessary for the adult who is carried away by aesthetic inspiration; as a prerequisite for inspiration, the adult needs "Excitatio natura, iam in ipsis αυτοσχεδιασμασι," which is then refined by means of the *ars erudita*. In other words, the spontaneity of play prepares the adult for the spontaneity of inspiration, which, it is true, is qualitatively different than the spontaneity of children, but is nevertheless incapable of being reduced to rule-driven behavior.

aesthetics operates explicitly within the rationalist framework established by Descartes and Leibniz. Baumgarten believes strongly in the inherent correctness of rule-driven thought, and believes that one of the characteristics of the happy aesthete consists in the ability to "theorize," that is, the ability to develop normative rules for beautiful art: "Ad characterem felicitatis aesthetici generalem... requiritur μάθησις et DISCIPLINA AESTHETICA, theoria perfectior in materiam et formam pulchrae cognitionis propius influentium, ac ea per naturam solam" [For the general character of the happy aesthete, *learning* and aesthetic education is necessary, a theory about what influences the form and content of beautiful cognition that is more perfect than that which may be achieved through nature alone] (48). However, he emphasizes not the inherent truth of such rules, but more importantly, the transformative capacity that rules bring to the human mind, the way in which they drive the human being toward beautiful thought. The domain of aesthetics as a whole, however, cannot be reduced to rules precisely because of the "confused" nature of sensory experience, its impossibility of ever being broken down into constituent parts. Rules therefore take on a heuristic value, functioning as steering mechanisms, as controls on the development of the self that seeks out the perfection of sensible knowledge in the beautiful. According to Baumgarten "falsa regula semper peior, quam nulla," or a false rule is always worse than no rule (56). Moreover, if the ability to theorize belongs to the happy aesthete, so too does aesthetic inspiration. Inspiration, however, as a total state of being that, following Plato, is incapable of giving an account of itself or conceptualizing its activity according to rules, presupposes a nature that has already been "awakened" through improvisational exercises (*Excitatio natura... iam in ipsis αυτοσχεδιασμασι* [62]). Within the architecture of Baumgarten's theory, the aesthetic exercise of spontaneity prepares the human being for receptivity to actions that are ultimately outside of human control. The openness to inspiration, however, is balanced by the aesthetic exercise of the learned arts, or the *ars erudita*. The learned arts prepare the aesthetic individual for developing a theory of art, that is, for being able to intuit and select the rules that guide the aesthete's own aesthetic activity. The *felix aestheticus* therefore forms a bridge between contradictory tendencies, between the health of spontaneity and the need for control, between features of sensory perception that are ultimately impossible to analyze and a theory—in the sense of an ability to formulate rules—of the beautiful.

Baumgarten's aesthetics, from its inception, moves in a space that is at once philosophical and anthropological, that is, it modifies the rationalist devaluation of the senses in order to produce a new type of human being.<sup>41</sup> However, if aesthetics seeks to produce a subject, this production can in no way be seen as "anthropotechnical." The human being is not a tool to be developed and honed through the application of rules. In order to conceptualize the formation of the human being in a way consistent with its inherent finitude and openness, Baumgarten invents a new type of exercise, namely the aesthetic exercise. He situates the aesthetic exercise in a region located between spontaneity and order, between opacity and transparency of action. Above all, these exercises produce a subject who is never complete, but continually thirsts for beautiful thought, a form of mental activity that represents the perfection of sensible knowledge.

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<sup>41</sup> According to Friedrich Solms, Baumgarten's philosophy paved the way for anthropology as a new discipline. See Friedrich Solms, *Disciplina Aesthetica* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1990).

Whereas Leibniz saw the necessity of a well-ordered cosmos in the timeless, mathematical structures of the human mind, Baumgarten, by modeling the happy human being on sensory experience, opened not merely knowledge, but also the order of the cosmos itself to the contingency of human perception. At the same time he understood that only by opening the human being to their sensual experience does one have the ability to attune oneself—or to fail to attune oneself—with a potential order of the world. For Baumgarten, art exercises what one might call *Wahrscheinlichkeitssinn*. It is also for this reason that he adopted the Aristotelian conception of truth as probability; aesthetic truth is determined by what is "believable" or "relevant" in a work of art. He cites Terence's dictum in *Heautontimorumenos* as an example of aesthetic truth: "*Videre verum, atque ita, uti res est, dicere*" [You seem to speak truth and how the matter stands] (404). Aesthetic truth, or the truth of sense experience, stands continually under the sign of appearances, and as such, differentiates itself from purely logical truth by the integration of contingency into its sphere of consideration.

The principle of aesthetic truth as probability seems at first glance like yet another formulation of the principle of mimesis. And yet, probability as a feature of poetics for Aristotle and probability as aesthetic truth for Baumgarten draw upon two entirely different conceptions of probability. For Aristotle, the probability of a work of art was linked to its mimetic efficacy; works of art were effective when they gave not an exact, but a probable or necessary representation of a series of events (*Poetics* 1451a). Far from diminishing poetry's importance for Aristotle, the "law of probability" increases its gravity and philosophical value, for it thereby deals with universals of exemplarity, with "what such or such a kind of man will probably say or do" (*Poetics* 1451b), and not with singular events that did happen. For Baumgarten, aesthetic truth as probability does not refer merely to truth as universal exemplarity, but foregrounds the human being as one who can make worlds precisely *from* contingent singularities.

Baumgarten's account of contingency, or more precisely, contingent things (*contingentia*), surfaces in his conception of aesthetic truth. According to him, contingent things require relations to other contingent things in order to become intelligible: "contingent things cannot be represented as singular things unless they are possibilities of some total universe" (*contingentia non repraesentantur, ut singularia, nisi ut possibilia integri alicuius universi* [418]). Aesthetic truth emerges from generating coherence among contingent things. And this striving for aesthetic truth foregrounds yet another striking human capability, namely, the ability to invent other worlds. Baumgarten calls the particular form of truth peculiar to the aesthetic integration of contingent matters "heterocosmic" truth (*veritas heterocosmica*), or literally the truth of other worlds. Heterocosmic truth belongs only to the work of art as its inherent principle of emergence and to the activity of the happy aesthete as a way of making contingent phenomena cohere.

Aesthetic truth as probability therefore does not merely reconfigure the mimetic theory of art as it had been articulated in antiquity, subordinating action to what a specific type of person would or would not have done. Rather, mimesis as *probability* becomes understood as an expansion of the imagination that remains in general coherence with the laws of the cosmos as a whole. Baumgarten draws attention to the specific human capabilities that such an activity implies, and believes that the generation of probability

coheres with and emerges from the activity of the happy aesthete. However, the ability of human beings to produce probability, and thereby give birth to different worlds, opens up the possibility of overcoming the mimetic tradition from which it supposedly draws its legitimacy. Already Breitinger, in his *Critische Dichtkunst* (1740), had signaled the tension between the rules governing the imaginary world of the fantastic and the rules that apply to everyday reality, suggesting that this coherence often appears to be stretched to the point of rupture.<sup>42</sup> The overturning of the drive to imitate reality as it is given to the senses and to the mind occurs not only by appealing to the possibility of other worlds nevertheless coherent with cosmic order, but also by foregrounding the latent exercise value of such actions. *Aesthesis* becomes an exercise in probability. For according to Baumgarten, every work of art, and every activity that goes into producing it, has the potential to exercise the human being. And if the truth of the work of art is an exercise in probability, it amounts to an exercise that tests the human capacity to create order amidst a world that may at any point collapse into disorder.

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<sup>42</sup> According to Breitinger, "das Wunderbare in der Poesie [ist] die äusserste Staffel des Neuen, da die Entfernung von dem Wahren und Möglichen sich in einen Widerspruch zu verwandeln scheint." Johann Jakob Breitinger, *Critische Dichtkunst*, in *Schriften zur Literatur*, ed. Volker Meid (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1980) 136. For more on the concept of the fantastic, see Part 3, Chapter 1, Part 2 of this study.

## Chapter 2: The Persistence of the Fragile World

### 1. The Self-Organization of the Poetic Mind

Although Hölderlin's poetic activity has often been examined as a response to Kantian aesthetics—and Kantian aesthetics provides indeed the central vocabulary and the central framework for understanding his poetics—one has less often seen his indebtedness to Baumgarten.<sup>43</sup> And yet, Hölderlin construes poetry as an aesthetic exercise that activates and trains specific cognitive faculties in the midst of the poetic flow just as Baumgarten uses the production and reception of art to produce the *felix aestheticus*. Hölderlin's poetry concretizes the link between poetic cognition and the linguistic form-content matrices of the poems themselves, since it is only in the living perception of the poem, with its irreducibly sensual characteristics, that it can function as an exercise for both poet and reader. The exercise value of his poetry, however, responds to the specific challenges posed by Kantian aesthetics and subjectivity.

It is not merely that Hölderlin links poetry—the structure of the strophes, their moods, their contents, and the process of poetic production itself—to specific configurations between subject, object, and that which synthesizes subject and object, that is, to schemas of cognition proliferating in the wake of Kantian transcendental idealism. Rather, Hölderlin views the process of poetry itself as a cognitive exercise, as the activation of a mode of perception that is unthinkable outside of a specifically poetic context. For Hölderlin, poetry triggers an attunement to organization, one which attempts to recast moments of discontinuity as the necessary condition for the organic emergence of novelty. In this sense, Hölderlin's conception of the task of poetry does not stray far from certain features of Baumgarten's *felix aestheticus*, a person who is endowed with the capability of separating and binding raw poetic material. For Hölderlin, however, the ability to separate and to bind attunes the human being not merely to his or her own personal capacities, but to the forces of binding and dissolution that inhere in both nature and history, in time itself as natural and historical temporality.

Figures of disjunction in Hölderlin's poetry signify both the condition for the generation of novelty—novel patterns of cognition, novel relations to a transcendental reality, novel political structures—and the danger and threat of absolute dissolution. Hölderlin's later poetics can therefore be described as an agonistic poetics, or a poetics of bifurcation: poetry becomes that linguistic act revealing points of discontinuity as an absolute potentiality poised between the emergence of the new and the threat of chaotic

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<sup>43</sup> The literature reading Hölderlin in light of Kant is too copious to cite. For a recent example of a work investigating the relation between Kant's conception of religion and Hölderlin's own religious thought, see Ian Cooper, *The Near and Distant God: Poetry, Idealism, and Religious Thought from Hölderlin to Eliot* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney Publishing, 2008).

dissolution.<sup>44</sup> Hölderlin initially saturates his poetry with disjunction in order to provoke a unifying cognitive act from the reader; the rhetorical strategies for which he is famous, be it parataxis, hyperbaton, or *harte Fügung*, do not reflect a conscious attempt to mirror the disorganization of experience, but rather, provoke and stimulate the human ability to find or generate coherence.<sup>45</sup> And yet, in certain poetic productions, the formal emphasis on discontinuity overtakes its supposed poetological goal of integration into a higher-order unity. In Hölderlin's later odes—for example, in his revisions of "Patmos"—gaps in poetic form correspond to lacunae in schemas of transcendental organization, in signifying systems attempting to guarantee coherence—in God, in nature, in the purposiveness of history.<sup>46</sup> The willful exaggeration of disjunction as an aesthetic exercise eventually undermines its own purported cognitive efficacy.

In the context of eighteenth-century aesthetics, Hölderlin's formal complexity seeks to develop a new hermeneutic-cognitive response to the crumbling belief in traditional theological conceptions of natural order.<sup>47</sup> In the *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (1748), Hume had called into question the notion that one could, by analogy, infer the attributes of a divine being from a conception of nature operating as a harmonious, purposive system. As a response to Hume, in the *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Kant grants that human cognition is ultimately incapable of intuiting the totality of nature, but nevertheless insists on nature's teleological purposiveness as an a priori idea.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, in his essay "Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht," Kant links the purposiveness of nature to the potential development of a cosmopolitan political order:

Man kann die Geschichte der Menschengattung im Großen als die Vollziehung eines verborgenen Plans der Natur ansehen, um eine innerlich—und zu diesem Zwecke auch äußerlich vollkommene Staatsverfassung zu Stande zu bringen, als den einzigen Zustand, in

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<sup>44</sup> William Fitzgerald gives a sensitive reading of Hölderlin's "Patmos" from the perspective of the agonistic relation between horizontal (human) time and vertical (divine) mediation. See William Fitzgerald, *Agonistic Poetry: The Pindaric mode in Pindar, Horace, Hölderlin, and the English Ode* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1987) 72.

<sup>45</sup> Norbert von Hellingrath linked Hölderlin's "harte Fügung" to Pindaric poetic modes, whereas Adorno's "Parataxis" ascribes to Hölderlin's use of formal disjunction a refusal to submit the particular to the violence of identity. See Norbert von Hellingrath, *Pindarübertragungen von Hölderlin. Prolegomena zu einer Erstausgabe* (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1910) and Theodor Adorno, "Parataxis," *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, vol. 11 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997).

<sup>46</sup> Bart Philipsen remarks, "Das 'Subjekt' von H.s geschichtsallegorischer Geographie aber ist kein reflexionslogischer Erkenntnisakt, sondern ein Sprachwertungsprozeß. In den späteren Gesängen und erst nach den Entwürfen und späten Überarbeitungen nach 1803/04 wird es sich immer mehr in die oft apodiktische Zeichenhaftigkeit materieller Markierungen und Spuren zurückziehen, die als "Ausdruck, Zeichen, Darstellung" den verborgenen, prozessualen Zusammenhang des Ganzen zu bezeichnen und zu bewahren versuchen...." Bart Philipsen, "Gesänge," *Hölderlin-Handbuch*, ed. Johann Kreuzer (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2002) 352.

<sup>47</sup> For this element of Hölderlin's poetics in relation to "Patmos," see Jochen Schmidt, *Hölderlin geschichtsphilosophische Hymnen: "Friedensfeier", "Der Einzige", "Patmos"* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990) 185-288.

<sup>48</sup> See Paul Guyer, "Kant's ambitions in the third *Critique*," *Kant and Modern Philosophy*, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006) 538-87.

welchem sie alle ihre Anlagen in der Menschheit völlig entwickeln kann.  
(VIII, 27)<sup>49</sup>

Kant draws upon the self-organization of nature in order to derive the idea of historical development toward a self-sustaining political order in which all citizens of the world can actualize their self-determination in a manner compatible with the self-determination of others. Kant wishes to secure nothing other than the *idea* of the possibility of such a political order, one that might never be actualized, but that could nevertheless function in a regulative sense. The validity of such an idea seems to rest upon an interpretation of nature as a well-ordered system, thereby replacing a metaphysically grounded conception of progress with an a priori regulative principle of natural purposiveness.

Kant's interpretation of nature, however, belies a cultural pessimism and requires a sort of double vision; one must be able to simultaneously perceive the idea of a cosmopolitan political order as a possibility of nature as well as the cultural and political situation in which violence, war, and self-interest are the rule. Kant notes, "aus so krummen Holze, als woraus der Mensch gemacht ist, kann nichts ganz Gerades gezimmert werden" (VIII, 23). The teleological organization of nature, then, becomes a reserve for the unlikely possibility of a self-sustaining and just political order. And while Kant believes that the order of nature can be presupposed as an a priori regulative idea, he asserts in the *Kritik der Urteilkraft* that no analogical human activity exists—not even that of aesthetic production—through which one might conceptualize the self-organization of nature. For Kant, the idea of an "Analogon des Lebens" comes closer to "dieser unerforschlichen Eigenschaft" than that of an "Analogon der Kunst," although he eventually concedes, "Genau zu reden hat also die Organisation der Natur nichts Analogisches mit irgend einer Kausalität, die wir kennen" (V, 374).<sup>50</sup> Hence one cannot conceive of nature according to the model of creator and creation, subject and object, but rather as self-organization, as a purposive totality of life whose processes are ultimately inaccessible to human knowledge. One may postulate such organization as a "regulativer Begriff für die reflektierende Urteilkraft" (V, 375) but one may not intuit natural organization as such. The consequences of this ultimate inability to grasp the purposiveness of nature other than as a regulative idea cannot therefore provide criteria that would differentiate useless, unjust violence from violence that pushes human beings invisibly toward a cosmopolitan political order; indeed, every seeming act of injustice could theoretically be made comprehensible from the standpoint of a teleological schema of political organization.

This issue becomes critical in the wake of conflicting interpretations of the French Revolution; if thinkers—or poets—could invent a new way of reading nature, they might find signs to suggest whether politically revolutionary enterprises fit into a conception of nature as a purposive system. It is against this backdrop that one may view Hölderlin's poetic language, even at its most complex or most condensed: as an attempt to clear a path into the unseen configurations of a coherent natural order inaccessible to traditional

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<sup>49</sup> Immanuel Kant, "Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht," Akademie Textausgabe, Vol. 8 (Berlin: Walther de Gruyter, 1968) 15-32. All citations of Kant will follow the *Akademie-Ausgabe*.

<sup>50</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilkraft* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1968).

epistemological categories without falling into pre-Kantian metaphysics.<sup>51</sup> For Hölderlin, the organization of nature cannot exist merely in a transcendent realm, but it must be capable of being *felt*.<sup>52</sup>

The challenge to the poetic voice—for both poet and listener—becomes to discern order amidst the chaos of suffering and thereby justify the pain that accompanies unstable points of transition.<sup>53</sup> The cognitive state triggered by the operation of poetic language, far from reflecting a problematic consciousness, tests both the poet's and listener's ability to discern the thread of organization amidst confusion. Hölderlin then frames this cognitive state as a justification for revolutionary violence; the fate of political revolution depends upon the revelations of poetic language to one's own receptive activity. If consciousness can find and secure the thread of poetic language, then destabilizing revolutionary activity, which might otherwise appear as chaotic, meaningless terror, can be reinterpreted as the birth pangs of a new political order and reinscribed into a system of natural self-organization. As we shall see, Hölderlin's poem "Der Rhein" attempts to construct such a link between poetic cognition and revolutionary activity, a project that becomes more comprehensible in the context of Hölderlin's own poetological reflections.

## 2. Retention and Oscillation as Aesthetic Exercises

Hölderlin's poetological writings recast seemingly chaotic states as part of a process of emergent order. Although his fragment "Seyn, Urtheil" appears primarily as a philosophical text, it forms the foundation for Hölderlin's later poetological thought, and its central ideas resurface continually in his poetic work up until his final hymnic production before his so-called mental breakdown in 1806. In "Seyn, Urtheil," he delineates a realm of ontology that precedes and renders intelligible the central split between subject and object, a split that eighteenth-century thinkers experienced as the root of an epistemological crisis:

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<sup>51</sup> Ulrich Gaier notes the importance of systems-theoretical concepts for Hölderlin's conception of organization. He emphasizes the critical point that since Descartes, philosophers and natural scientists have used the concept of organization to link order *within* elements of a system to order *between* systems. See Ulrich Gaier, "Hölderlin und die Theorie der Organisation," *Text + Kritik* 7.96 (1996): 51-61. Hölderlin conceives poetic language as participating in each of these layers of organization. For an exhaustive account of Hölderlin's conception of the self-organization of nature, see Michael Luhn, *Organisation der Natur* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2007). Michael Luhn also understands poetry as an "experimental" procedure that justifies a posteriori the self-organization of nature as an ontological given (792).

<sup>52</sup> Hölderlin attempts to make this organization "fühlbar" in the harmonic alternation of tones (*Wechsel der Töne*), suggesting that if it were not felt, it would remain merely "ein leeres leichtes Schattenspiel" (MA II.78).

<sup>53</sup> Ralf Knübel discusses Hölderlin's suffering from a psychological perspective, and, based on an interpretation of some lines from the *Homburger Folioheft*, suggests that Hölderlin's poetry constructs a "house" that must continually be supported through song: "[Das Haus] scheint einzustürzen, wenn die Wände, die nur durch die Bilder des Gesangs erzeugt werden, nicht ständig erneuert werden." Ralf Knübel, "Hölderlins Leiden. Der poetische Prozess als Versuch der Selbstverständigung," *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch* 36 (2009): 162.

*Urtheil*. ist im höchsten und strengsten Sinne die ursprüngliche Trennung des in der intellectualen Anschauung innigst vereinigten Objects und Subjects, diejenige Trennung, wodurch erst Object und Subject möglich wird, die Ur=Theilung. Im Begriffe der Theilung liegt schon der Begriff der gegenseitigen Beziehung des Objects und Subjects aufeinander, und die notwendige Voraussetzung eines Ganzen, wovon Object und Subject die Theile sind.

[...]

*Seyn* –, drückt die Verbindung des Subjects und Objects aus.

Wo Subject und Object schlechthin, nicht nur zum Theil vereinigt ist, mithin so vereinigt, daß gar keine Theilung vorgenommen werden kann, ohne das Wesen desjenigen, was getrennt werden soll zu verletzen, da und sonst nirgends kann von einem *Seyn schlechthin* die Rede sein, wie es bei der intellectualen Anschauung der Fall ist. (MA II.49-50)

Judgment—*Urtheil*—can be broken down into the prefix "Ur" (originary) and the root "Theil" (part): an originary splitting. Hölderlin plays with the semantic and philosophical resonance between "splitting" and "judgment," for to form a "judgment" of something—drawing on Kant's theory of synthetic judgments—requires that a subject stand over and against a world of objects. For Hölderlin, the very condition of conceptual thought requires an originary splitting or differentiation such as that which takes place between subject and object. Fichte—Hölderlin's central interlocutor in this document—had noted that this split takes place *within* the subject itself as a foundational act of reflective consciousness; according to Fichte, in the formulation "Ich bin Ich," the subject posits itself as an object and only then can it reflect upon itself.<sup>54</sup> As such, *Urtheil* designates the split at the center of the subject that makes possible reflective thought. Being, on the other hand, designates *absolute* identity, a concept of identity that is quite different from the identity of two entities as *the same*. The access to absolute Being does not occur via reflection or discursive thought—which tends to analyze and synthesize, differentiate and unify—but via "intellectual intuition." Intellectual intuition designates a pre-reflective sensitivity to the *ground* of differentiation.<sup>55</sup> The ground of differentiation and identity is clearly not localizable in subject or object, but rather, designates the power by which subject and object appear *as* subject and object, and yet, also participate in absolute Being. As Kant argues and Hegel will confirm, the totality of this ground is not available to experience in a single act of cognition.

One might be tempted to think that Hölderlin's poetological writings and his poetry strive for an intuition of Being. And yet, such a goal, as Kant has shown, would be chimerical. Rather, Hölderlin puts on display the reversibility of Being and Judgment—thereby implying a *different* cognitive operation, one that enters into a space of oscillation

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<sup>54</sup> Dieter Henrich claims that Hölderlin's conception of *Urtheil* draws just as much from Fichte's philosophy of the subject than from Kantian a priori synthetic judgments. See Henrich, *Der Grund im Bewußtsein* 47.

<sup>55</sup> For a short discussion of the history of this concept from Kant to Schelling, see Annette Hornbacher, "Eines zu seyn mit Allem, was lebt...": Hölderlins 'intellectuale Anschauung', *Hölderlin: Philosophie und Dichtung*, ed. Valérie Lawitschka, vol. 5, Turm-Vorträge (Tübingen: Hölderlin-Gesellschaft, 2001) 24-47.

between the unity of intellectual intuition and the differentiation of judgment.<sup>56</sup> As we shall see, the poetic text, as well as the poetic consciousness invoked by this text, does not merely make visible this reversibility between Being and Judgment, but seeks to train the human being to perceive this reversibility in the act of poetic cognition.<sup>57</sup>

The materiality of the object, the paper upon which Hölderlin writes the text "Seyn, Urtheil," becomes emblematic for the approach toward a new modality of cognition. The text is written on small piece of paper torn from a book; on one side appears "Judgment," on the other side, "Being." The composition of the fragment—its recto-verso structure, such that Being is part of Judgment and Judgment part of Being, both forming not mere "opposites" of one another, but each constitutive of the other—itsself enacts an ontology that Hölderlin cannot fully capture conceptually.<sup>58</sup> As such, one cannot say that *Urtheil* can be derived from *Seyn* or vice-versa, but rather, that they are mutually constitutive.<sup>59</sup> Being cannot exist without identity and difference, just as identity and difference only exist because of something that makes them recognizable *as* identity and difference. The flip of the paper, the turn of the page, represents a passage from one mode to the other—and it *shows* the Being that cannot be conceptually articulated, as articulation itself would seem to enter into the play of identity and difference, and hence, the realm of *Urtheil*. These two terms are not merely held together by the recto-verso of a sheet of paper, but also by the activity of the reader, in whose perceptual field the words of one term disappear while the words of the other appear as the page is turned; and yet, by retaining the visual impression of the text in one's memory, these terms become virtually superimposed over one another even though they will never occupy the same spatio-temporal plane.

Although the system formed by reader and text operates in excess of conceptual articulation, one would be over-hasty to dismiss language as a vehicle for such a turning point. For Hölderlin's poetry and his poetological works attempt to show—through continually thematizing their own process of production, *die Verfahrensweise*—how

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<sup>56</sup> Dieter Henrich claims that some conception of "intellectual intuition" informs the totality of Hölderlin's poetic praxis. See Henrich, *Der Grund im Bewußtsein* 262. However, Annette Hornbacher makes a convincing case that Hölderlin changes his conception of intellectual intuition toward an "aesthetic" interpretation of this concept, that is, as an intuition of beauty. However, she collapses "memory" and "intellectual intuition" into one and the same process: "'Erinnerung' hat darum als Bewußtseinsform der poetischen Sprachfindung den gleichen Inhalt wie die 'intellektuale Anschauung' und kulminiert in Hölderlins Begriff der Freiheit." Hornbacher, "'Eines zu seyn mit Allem, was lebt...': Hölderlins 'intellektuale Anschauung'" 43. However, as I hope to show, Hölderlin uses memory to represent a thread that holds together the alternation of intellectual intuition and subject-object separation in aesthetic perception—and is therefore not equivalent to intellectual intuition as such.

<sup>57</sup> In Hölderlin's later doctrine of the *Wechsel der Töne*, intellectual intuition takes on a different function; as Annette Hornbacher notes, it becomes "ein Moment *innerhalb* des Tönwechsels.... [Die intellektuale Anschauung] ist jetzt der 'Grundton' des tragischen Gedichts." Hornbacher, "'Eines zu seyn mit Allem, was lebt...': Hölderlins 'intellektuale Anschauung'," 43.

<sup>58</sup> As Jamme and Völkel note: "Die Crux des Doppelblattes beseht eben darin, daß es von *beiden* Seiten gelesen und daß es *gewendet* werden kann." Christophe Jamme and Frank Völkel, ed., *Hölderlin und der deutsche Idealismus*, vol. 3.2 (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 2003) 356. Special thanks to Jeremy Brett for drawing my attention to the materiality of this work.

<sup>59</sup> In a letter to Christian Ludwig Neuffer, Hölderlin claims precisely to *advance* through the alternation between two different positions: "Mit meinem spekulativen *pro* und *contra* glaub' ich immer näher an's Ziel zu kommen" (MA II. 597).

Being also manifests itself through language, thereby dismantling the illusion that a supposedly conceptual medium operates only within the sphere of Judgment, *Urtheil*. One of the twelve conditions in a massive polyconditional sentence in his poetological essay "Wenn der Dichter einmal des Geistes mächtig ist..." describes how the poet takes hold of the poetic spirit, bringing about success at the most important moment (*Hauptmoment*), "wenn er eingesehen hat... beim Wechsel der geistigen Form *die Form des Stoffes in allen Theilen identisch bleibe*" (MA II.78). The purpose of Hölderlin's alternation of tones (*Wechsel der Töne*) which he articulates in later poetological essays—in which constellations of objectivity, subjectivity, or synthesis each enter into second-order constellations, each with a different set of cognitive intensities depending on the tone (lyric, epic, or tragic)—can best be understood within this larger framework of an originary identity that emerges from the dynamic of alternation itself.<sup>60</sup> The *insight* emerging from the poetic process itself prepares the poet for a receptivity to an internal logic of organization, one which illuminates the space *between* language and spirit as the space of poetic expression, that which lies "zwischen dem Ausdruck (der Darstellung) und der freien idealischen Behandlung" (MA II.81). The choice of material and the form of the poem, through the process of alternation between language and thought, becomes a conduit for the operation of a unity of Being and Judgment.

Critical to this project's success is the activation of memory, which designates the capacity to hold multiple—contradictory and complementary—tones in one and the same cognitive space.<sup>61</sup> In this context, Hölderlin's conception of memory should be differentiated from Platonic *anamnesis*, an elegiac remembrance of a lost relation to nature, or even a concrete memory associated with an intentional object. Although each of these conceptions of memory is present in Hölderlin's poetic work, Hölderlin's conception of memory foregrounds a cognitive act more akin to Husserlian retention than either Platonic *anamnesis*, elegiac remembrance, or a memory preserved from past experience. Rather, Hölderlin describes as essential the activation of memory itself as a power that binds disparate temporal moments. One ought to recall that for Baumgarten, the ability to "bind" constituted one of the central capabilities of the *felix aestheticus*. For Hölderlin, it is this cognitive faculty itself, not the particular object to which this faculty attaches itself—although the poet does require an object that nevertheless must be appropriate to remembrance as the act of temporal binding—that secures the existence of an ontological unity.<sup>62</sup> The very cognitive excitation provoked by the poetic spirit is that

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<sup>60</sup> For an exhaustive analysis of Hölderlin's *Wechsel der Töne*, see Lawrence J. Ryan, *Hölderlins Lehre vom Wechsel der Töne* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960). Szondi claims that the *Wechsel der Töne* solves a poetic dilemma, allowing Hölderlin to turn to "Hesperian" material and conceptualize history within his poetic production. Peter Szondi, *Einführung in die literarische Hermeneutik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975) 105-46.

<sup>61</sup> Johann Kreuzer has shown that memory constitutes the central binding feature of Hölderlin's poetology. See Johann Kreuzer, *Erinnerung: Zum Zusammenhang von Hölderlins theoretischen Fragmenten "Das untergehende Vaterland..." und "Wenn der Dichter einmal des Geistes mächtig ist..."* (Königstein: Anton Hain, 1985). Viewing memory not only as the cultural or historical memory of a past—as archive—but also as an act of cognitive "retention," however, also establishes a link between Hölderlin's poetic form and its connection to reading or listening activity, as I hope to show in my interpretation of "Der Rhein."

<sup>62</sup> See Johann Kreuzer, "Logik von Zeit und Erinnerung—Was unterscheidet die Wirklichkeit des Gesangs von der Form des Begriffs?" *"Es bleibt aber eine Spur / Doch eines Wortes": Zur späten Hymnik und Tragödientheorie Friedrich Hölderlins*, ed. Christoph Jamme and Anja Lemke (Munich: Fink, 2004).

of an exercise in making coherence amidst the difficulty of any such operation. This feature, integral to Hölderlin's poetological writings, reaches a limit point in the form of the writings themselves, in their long and complex syntax, in the piling up of conditional phrases, in a confusion of words that stretch the limits of retention at the same moment in which they proclaim its centrality. These works are also examples of *poiesis*, indeed, perhaps the most extreme of poetic experiments with cognitive retention. Hölderlin says of the poet:

... es ist seine letzte Aufgabe beim harmonischen Wechsel einen Faden, eine Erinnerung zu haben, damit der Geist nie im einzelnen Momente, sondern in einem Momente wie im andern fort dauern, und in den verschiedenen Stimmungen sich gegenwärtig bleibe... so daß in ihr das Harmonischentgegengesetzte weder als Einiges entgegensezt, noch als Entgegengesetztes vereinigt, sondern als beedes in Einem als einig engegengesetztes unzertrennlich gefühlt, und als gefühltes erfunden wird. (MA II.87)

Memory is less a relationship to the past than a focusing of the present, a concatenation of multiplicity in one and the same cognitive landscape. It is the thread created by memory amidst the alternation of tones that restores an awareness of poetry, consciousness, and history as a self-organizing totality. And yet, Hölderlin explicitly says that this originary unity is *invented or found (erfunden)* as something felt. "Erfunden" signifies both to invent and, in a more archaic sense, to find. For the troubadours, the word *trobar* (in French: *trouver*) shared the same ambiguity. Here, Hölderlin ontologizes this semantic ambiguity, one that has roots in the history of poetry, suggesting that invention and finding describe the same process.

To invent through language, at least according to Hölderlin's elaboration of the procedure of grasping the poetic spirit, is therefore to find an original unity that was always already there, one that is called forth through the faculty of remembrance. Hölderlin's phrase from "Andenken," "Was bleibet aber, stiften die Dichter" (MA I.475),<sup>63</sup> does not merely repeat the hackneyed claim of poetry to immortality, its ability to eternalize as handed down from Pindar and Horace, but rather, foregrounds the traces of the cognitive process by means of which the poet has phenomenologically provided himself with the evidence of originary being, that which "remains." The act of creativity and the gesture of "remaining" are therefore reversed: it is not that the poets create something that remains, but rather, that which remains, the poets bring into being. The creative process (*stiften*), one that is also a grounding or a foundational gesture, emerges from something remaining that predates this process, just as the phrase "stiften die Dichter" follows "was bleibet." Hölderlin therefore describes a form of remembrance that is surprisingly non-intentional; it is not "remembrance of" an original unity existing in the past, but remembrance itself—as cognitive act—that manifests this original unity in a moment of presence, and by extension, in the poetic word and the consciousness that listens to it.

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<sup>63</sup> All citations to Hölderlin's works, unless otherwise noted, are taken from Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, ed. Michael Knaupp, 3 vols. (Munich: Hanser, 1992).

Contrary to Adorno's thesis concerning Hölderlin's "parataktische Auflehnung wider die Synthesis,"<sup>64</sup> parataxis does not constitute the only—nor even the central—rhetorical figure through which the activation of memory enters both the process of poetic production as well as the formal properties of the poem itself. Adorno cites Hölderlin's conception of the "Inversionen der Perioden" to prove the importance of parataxis, but he does so by means of a problematic negative inference:

Die logische Stellung der Perioden, wo dem Grunde (der Grundperiode) das Werden, dem Werden das Ziel, dem Ziele der Zweck folgt, und die Nebensätze immer nur hinten an gehängt sind an die Hauptsätze worauf sie sich zunächst beziehen,—ist dem Dichter gewiß nur höchst selten brauchbar. (MA II.57-8)

Hölderlin does indeed critique hypotaxis as "unusable" in poetic rhetoric. One should not thereby conclude that by negating hypotaxis, he affirms parataxis as the central rhetorical strategy of his poetic activity. Indeed, the indeterminacy brought about by Hölderlin's negation of hypotaxis makes it questionable to pinpoint an exact linguistic form as the central element in Hölderlin's poetics. Furthermore, Hölderlin often uses parataxis as a foil for more complex syntactical structures, and if Hölderlin's particular stylistic deployment of parataxis does appear conspicuous, it nevertheless provokes cognitive states that imply or demand a binding function from the receptive activity of the reader as a precondition for the generation of meaning. Seen from this perspective, Hölderlin's parataxis takes on a function somewhat different than the gesture of disruptive resistance that Adorno wishes to claim for it.

Hölderlin suggests that the poet must activate the cognitive capacity of retention in poetry, testing the human capacity to "hold" a memory or to maintain its presence in the face of rapid alternation. He claims that inversions must be "größer und wirksamer" (MA II.57). The definition of a "period" according to the contemporary encyclopedist Sulzer—"eine Rede, oder wenn man will, ein für sich bestimmter und verständlicher Satz, der aus mehr andern Sätzen so zusammengesetzt ist, daß der volle Sinn der Rede nicht eher, als bey dem letzten Worte völlig verstanden wird"<sup>65</sup>—already underscores the hermeneutic process of understanding, or the parts whose temporary incomprehensibility takes on meaning only in the completion of a phrase. Hölderlin's attempt to increase the intensity of "inversions" therefore seeks to prolong the process of incomprehensibility, to stretch the boundaries of the intellect. Indeed, the passage as a whole would seem to downplay the importance of parataxis in Hölderlin's poetic project. Hölderlin's poetic form does not maintain the integrity of the particular against its subsumption in the general—as Adorno would have it—as much as poetically stimulate processes of retention, something that any rhetorical gesture of interruption or inversion would intensify. Hölderlin's poetics gives rise to a form that demands the strenuous deployment of cognitive attentiveness focused on the flux of poetry, and it derives from this cognitive

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<sup>64</sup> Adorno, "Parataxis," 476.

<sup>65</sup> Johann Georg Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste in einzeln, nach alphabetischer Ordnung der Kunstworter aufeinanderfolgenden, Artikeln abgehandelt*, ed. C. F. Blankenburg, vol. 3 (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1967) 664-5.

process its central pathway into the higher-order unity of Being and Judgment through language. For Hölderlin, the formal complexity of poetry does not bear the weight of a fallen world, but on the contrary, attunes the poetic spirit to natural self-organization through a regime of aesthetic exercises.

### 3. On Falling Apart and Coming into Being

Hölderlin's hymn "Der Rhein" was composed concomitantly with his doctrine of the alternation of tones.<sup>66</sup> He had noted the "law" (*Gesetz*) of the poem in the margins of the manuscript: a chiasmatic, triadic structure whereby the first two parts alternate equality and opposition between form and content and the third part signals reconciliation.<sup>67</sup> Importantly, in the third part of the poem, the concept of remembrance shifts from a recollection of origins to a form of memory as cognitive retention in the midst of poetic flux. Strophes 13–15 describe a bridal feast as the locus of reconciliation:

... aber die Unversöhnten  
Sind umgewandelt und eilen  
Die Hände sich ehe zu reichen  
Bevor das freundliche Licht  
Hinuntergeht und die Nacht kommt.

Doch einigen eilt  
Diß schnell vorüber, andere  
Behalten es länger.  
Die ewigen Götter sind  
Voll lebens allzeit; bis in den Tod  
Kann aber ein Mensch auch  
Im Gedächtniß doch das Beste behalten,  
Und dann erlebt er das Höchste.  
Nur hat ein jeder sein Maas.  
Denn schwer ist zu tragen

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<sup>66</sup> Hölderlin began composing this hymn in 1801 in Hauptwil; he first dedicated it to Heinse, although he later changed the dedication to Isaak von Sinclair, perhaps underscoring the importance of their common intellectual and political point of view, as will be discussed in the following interpretation. His later addition of Rousseau to the *Reinschrift* also suggests a more explicit politicization of the aesthetic and cognitive movements of "Der Rhein." See Jochen Schmidt's commentary on "Der Rhein" in Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, ed. Jochen Schmidt (Frankfurt am Main: DTV, 2005) 854–55. The purpose of this interpretation is not to comprehensively trace the progress of the poem—an undertaking that would require (and has produced) book-length studies. For such an attempt, see Bernhard Böschstein, *Hölderlins Rheinymne* (Zurich: Atlantis, 1968). I focus on the role of retention in the final strophes and its role in the apprehension of the reversible unity of Being and Judgment.

<sup>67</sup> Nägele claims that this law constitutes "eine Folge von chiastischen Entgegensetzungen und Entsprechungen." Rainer Nägele, *Hölderlins Kritik der poetischen Vernunft* (Basel: Engeler, 2007) 71. This "law" therefore links up the formal structure of the poem with the movement of consciousness as described within the poem—as well as movements that the poem beckons from the listener's interpretive activity.

Das Unglück, aber schwerer das Glück.  
Ein Weiser aber vermocht es  
Vom Mittag bis in die Mitternacht,  
Und bis der Morgen erglänzte  
Beim Gastmahl helle zu bleiben.

Dir mag auf heißem Pfade unter Tannen oder  
Im Dunkel des Eichwalds gehüllt  
In Stahl, mein Sinklair! Gott erscheinen oder  
In Wolken, du kennst ihn, da du kennest  
Des Guten Kraft, und nimmer ist dir  
Verborgten das Lächeln des Herrschers  
Bei Tage, wenn  
Es fieberhaft und angekettet das  
Lebendige scheint oder auch  
Bei Nacht, wenn alles gemischt  
Ist ordnungslos und wiederkehrt  
Uralte Verwirrung. (MA I.347-8)

The moment of reconciliation at the bridal feast foregrounds both an intersubjective and a transcendental disharmony, a dissonance that appears both between human beings themselves as well as between the divine and the human. However, the crux of the poem consists less in the reconciliation of oppositions as such (*die Unversöhnten*) than the *retention* of that which is only reconciled in a space of non-representation. Hölderlin himself characterizes an essential part of his poetology as the filling out of gaps through memory.<sup>68</sup> In the thirteenth strophe, the passing of time is both frozen and rushing by: at the banquet, those who are not reconciled *hurry* to offer one another their hands at a liminal time and space, a marriage feast in the twilight of a setting sun. And yet, those who are "unreconciled" appear fixed in a gesture of reaching that ultimately never arrives. If there is a space of reconciliation, it occurs precisely in the transition *between* strophes thirteen and fourteen, where the deictic "diß" ("Doch einigen eilt / Diß schnell vorüber") hints at a reconciliation but leaves it indeterminate. The gesture of reconciliation demands completion from the reader or listener; it achieves its goal only in the space of another consciousness, in a projected space between poetic lines.

The representation of this space in which both gods and mortals commingle does not appear *in* language, but *through* language, in the gaps of the poetic space itself as the locus of remembrance (*Erinnerung*). It becomes the task of the reader to remember *this*

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<sup>68</sup> For Hölderlin, memory and the filling out of gaps secure a historical narrative through which the "next step" becomes intelligible: "nachdem diese Erinnerung des Aufgelösten, Individuellen mit dem unendlichen Lebensgefühl durch die Erinnerung der Auflösung vereinigt und die Lücke zwischen denselben ausgefüllt ist, so gehet aus dieser Vereinigung und Vergleichung des Vergangenen Einzelnen, und des Unendlichen gegenwärtigen, der eigentliche neue Zustand der nächste Schritt, der dem Vergangenen folgen soll hervor" (MA II.73). This reading of Hölderlin also assumes a similarity between Hölderlin's attempt to hermeneutically fill out the "gaps" in poetry (and hence in nature and in history) and Wolfgang Iser's concept of "Leerstellen." See Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1978) 180-231.

cognitive state, the state of the in-between: "Doch einigen eilt / Diß schnell vorüber, andere / Behalten es länger." The words "this" and "it"—introducing yet another layer of indeterminacy into the order of deictic reference—refer not only to the imagined moment of reconciliation, but also self-reflectively to the poem itself: the poetic stream passes too quickly for some, whereas others retain "it" longer. When the poet foregrounds the retention of "this," he moves the domain of reconciliation into the space of poetic self-reflection. The desire to "retain" the stream of poetry, to hold something into place that is rushing by, places the figure of the river itself, "Der Rhein," the half-god figure of mediation between the divine and the human, in the place of the poetic stream of semantic content. Mediation becomes integrated into the immediacy of the poetic flow, itself "fixed" by the continual presence of the fleeting moment. The memory of the rush of poetry in which the germs of reconciliation lie dormant holds the key to keeping that which "is best" amidst the perpetual facticity of instability, indeed of misery and suffering: "bis in den Tod / Kann aber ein Mensch auch / Im Gedächtnis doch das Beste behalten, / Und dann erlebt er das Höchste."

To give an idea of the tenuousness of this image: the poem does not represent reconciliation as such, but rather, initiates a *potential* retention of a *temporary* state of *imagined* reconciliation between figures of opposition. Yet it is precisely this tenuous and imagined reconciliation that seeks preservation. Ironically, it is happiness, not traumatic experience, that triggers the desire for permanence and stability: "Denn schwer ist zu tragen / das Unglück, aber schwerer das Glück." Unhappiness does not abhor transience; indeed, misery wishes that the moment might pass. Happiness seeks eternity. As Diotima says in *The Symposium*, the principle text to which these lines allude, "love loves the good to be one's own forever" (206a).<sup>69</sup> The allusion to *The Symposium*, as well as the context of a wedding night, underscores the submerged erotics at the base of this act of retention. Hölderlin, however, reveals poetry as the place where the Socratic hero makes his home: "nur hat ein jeder sein Maas," where "Maas" refers to poetic meter, moderation, and a unit of measurement that appears relativized and particularized to each individual.<sup>70</sup> A wise man (*ein Weiser*), embodying the Socratic doctrine of Eros, can *retain* the balancing act between immediacy and reflection, poetic intoxication and sober contemplation. In *The Symposium*, only Socrates drinks as much as the other participants and retains full control over his cognitive functions. For the Socratic hero of the penultimate strophe, this reconciliation of immediacy and reflection no longer occurs in the liminal state of non-representation, but spreads from "Mittag" to "Mitternacht" to "Morgen," effectively creating a temporal continuum along which such cognitive activity operates. The reconciliation would seem fulfilled at this point. And yet: the one temporal modality omitted here is that of the *Dämmerung*—afternoon jumps to midnight and morning without a twilight or a dawn—that time of transition during which, in the immediately preceding strophe, the gesture of frustrated reconciliation had been frozen. Even in the supposed representation of permanent plenitude through the figure of Socratic drunken sobriety, the poet foregrounds a temporal gap that the listener must fill

<sup>69</sup> Plato. *Lysis. Symposium. Gorgias*, Loeb Classical Library, trans. W. R. M. Lamb, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1925) 205-6.

<sup>70</sup> For an extensive analysis of Hölderlin's concept of "Maas," see Elena Polledri, "... immer besteht ein Maas". *Der Begriff des Maßes in Hölderlins Werk* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2002).

in—and the content of this gap (twilight) refers this very process, as if in a perpetual hermeneutic loop, to the moment at the bridal feast in which the representation of reconciliation was first refused in its concreteness, but only admitted itself as a projection on the part of the listener. At the very moment of supposed plenitude, the poet, via an absence in the temporal continuum, sends the listener back to the space of twilight liminality between the thirteenth and fourteenth strophes. The very structure of these strophes attracts the listening consciousness to these gaps and involves the participation of consciousness in the lines' own poetic self-referentiality. It is this process of "filling in" gaps that retention is meant to make possible.

The final strophe, building upon this exercise of listener retention, thematically brings together individual perception, a conception of the divine, and as we will see later, political revolution. The choice of Sinclair as the hero of the poem is carefully motivated and cannot be merely understood as "the other," as Heidegger claims,<sup>71</sup> but refers back to the nexus of ideas that Hölderlin was exploring with Sinclair when he wrote "Seyn, Urtheil." Isaak von Sinclair, in manuscripts that have come to be called "Philosophische Raisonnements," claims that the unity of original identity and reflective differentiation, Being and Judgment, is only possible in aesthetic perception: "Die Verbindung aller Gesichtspunkte findet sich in dem der Aeisthesis."<sup>72</sup> The aesthetic perspective encompasses all points of view, according to Sinclair, and as such, aims to transcend the limitations of subject-centered thought. In the Fichtean terms employed by Sinclair, aeisthesis designates not merely the realm of art or the aesthetic, but rather, a positing that exceeds the positing of the subject, or rather, a form of positing outside of that which posits itself as a subject. Sinclair derives his account of "aeisthesis" etymologically from a reconstruction of the Greek as "Α ΕΙς (εαυτον) ΘΕΙΩΝ," a "not-into-itself" positing that Sinclair calls "ein höheres Setzen."<sup>73</sup> In later corrections to his manuscript, Sinclair wrote "athetic" above "aesthetic" in several instances, thereby moving the aesthetic closer to a non-positing, absolute realm—although he continued to regard the aesthetic not as a denial of reflection, but as "etwas *erscheinendes*, aber nichts *seiendes* und etwas was *nicht sein soll*.... Das Prinzip (richtiger Principium, Anfang, als Grundsatz) kann nicht athetisch, und muß also aesthetisch sein, ein Ganzes für die Imagination...."<sup>74</sup> Although the aesthetic designates the appearance of a totalizing perspective, it also alludes to the activity of sense perception—alluding to Baumgarten's conception of aesthetics—and hence its operation within a lower realm of sensual positing: "Das Wissen ist immer unvollkommen für das aesthetische, denn insofern es Product der Reflection ist setzt es

<sup>71</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlins Hymnen "Germanien" und "Der Rhein,"* Gesamtausgabe, ed. Susanne Ziegler, vol. 39 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1980) 287.

<sup>72</sup> Isaak von Sinclair, "Philosophische Raisonnements," in Hannelore Hegel, *Isaak von Sinclair zwischen Fichte, Hölderlin und Hegel: Ein Beitrag zur Entstehungsgeschichte der idealistischen Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1980) 268.

<sup>73</sup> Isaak von Sinclair, "Philosophische Raisonnements," 254. Manfred Frank translates Α ΕΙς (εαυτον) ΘΕΙΩΝ as "fortwährende Setzung, fortwährendes Sich-selbst-Setzen," a translation that presents an alternative reading of the Greek. Manfred Frank, *Unendliche Annäherung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997) 765. He reads ἀεί (continual, always) in Sinclair's formulation of aeisthesis, whereas the accusative ΘΕΙΩΝ in Hannelore Hegel's edition (which Frank mysteriously cites as ΘΕΙΩ) suggests that the ΕΙς designates "in, toward," and the alpha is an alpha privative. In other words, whereas Frank translates Sinclair's concept as "continual positing," an alternative reading would be "not-into-itself positing."

<sup>74</sup> Isaak von Sinclair, "Philosophische Raisonnements," 276.

immer die Urtheilung voraus die es ihm unmöglich macht die Einigkeit als bestehend zu denken, sich das aesthetische Ideal zu denken."<sup>75</sup> Sinclair opens up the semantic potentiality in the very concept of the aesthetic itself, revealing a continuum operating from sense perception (or for Hölderlin, the activation of poetic retention) to aesthesis as the binding force of all disparate points, from a lower aesthetic to an ideal aesthetic.<sup>76</sup> Hölderlin's poetological reflections, in dialogue with Sinclair, do not constitute a system in which one intuitively perceives the divine through some inexplicable, mystical form of cognition, but rather from the implicit cognitive organization present in the act of linguistic receptivity and creativity. In other words, Sinclair elevates Baumgarten's *felix aestheticus* into a human being that can move fluidly between posited and contingent phenomena and the realm of the absolute; the aesthetic human being, through the particular cognition triggered by the work of art, perceives the coherence of all phenomena in a perfectly intelligible unity.

In "Der Rhein," however, Sinclair does not merely concretize a set of ideas; his name itself becomes a poetic resource. Just as in the previous strophe, a generalized noun (a wise man) alludes to a particularized person (Socrates), so does the particularized person (Sinclair) reverberate with more general phonic possibilities. The name "Sinclair" itself combines light and dark, which could be "Saint Clair" (saint of light, "Sinclair" pronounced in French) or "Sin Clair" (sin, which in Latin functions as an adversative, or perhaps resonates with the Latin "sine," without light) depending on one's pronunciation. The epitome of aesthetic perception, or "creative reflection," appears as an oscillation between light and dark, a chiaroscuro in words, in this figure who weds a concrete personality with its own linguistic metaphoricity. Hölderlin, through Sinclair, a person whose name already suggests the heterogeneity of his poetic function, describes an intuition of the relation between Being and Judgment via different modes of perception that draw upon the chiaroscuro of Sinclair's name:

... nimmer ist dir  
 Verborgen das Lächeln des Herrschers  
 Bei Tage, wenn es fieberhaft und angekettet das  
 Lebendige scheinete oder auch  
 Bei Nacht, wenn alles gemischt  
 Ist ordnungslos und wiederkehrt

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<sup>75</sup> Isaak von Sinclair, "Philosophische Raisonnements," 269.

<sup>76</sup> Isaak von Sinclair, "Philosophische Raisonnements," 269. Manfred Frank notes that in this passage, two seemingly contradictory connotations in the concept of aesthesis come to the fore: "Man beobachtet... den Umschlag der zweiten (negativen) Bedeutung von 'Ästhetik' in die erste (positive), in der Ästhetik zu einem Verstandes-Ideal wird: zur Utopie sinnlich dargestellter Einigkeit." Manfred Frank, *Unendliche Annäherung* 765. However, Sinclair does not oppose two different conceptions of the aesthetic, but rather, attempts to integrate lower aesthesis, as well as reflection, into a process leading to an ideal, unifying form of aesthesis. In Manuscript A of Sinclair's philosophical papers, Sinclair uses a similar formulation, but without any semantic inversion in the concept of the aesthetic; indeed, in this variation, there is no discussion of "aesthesis," but rather, only pure practical or non-posed, aesthetic activity: "Das Wissen ist immer unvollkommen für das Praktische ((Athetische)), denn insofern es Produkt der Reflektion ist, setzt es immer die Urtheilung voraus, die es ihm unmöglich macht die Einigkeit als bestehend zu denken." Isaak von Sinclair, "Philosophische Raisonnements," 246. In this passage, Sinclair opposes knowledge to practical and non-differentiated immediacy (*athetic*), not to the aesthetic.

Uralte Verwirrung. (MA I.348)

The conceptions of daytime and nighttime seem negatively connotated in this passage, as if the divine smile—as the smile of the "ruler" of the gods—were somehow "shining through" a living force that is either "feverish" or "chaotic." Both perspectives, which could refer to reflection and immediacy, do not suffice to manifest the divine, since Isaak von Sinclair is singled out for his ability to know the divine *despite* the conditions brought about by day and night. Furthermore, these two modalities, day and night, are not mere allegories for cognitive positions; they also describe a poetic semiotics, language as "fiebrig" and "angekettet"—each word somehow connecting to every other word, even if syntactically they appear separated far from one another—and nevertheless chaotic and mingled. As Hölderlin says, "Doch einigen eilt / Diß schnell vorüber, andere / Behalten es länger." The use of hyperbaton in the final strophe, separating the "Dir" from its referent and the verb that completes its meaning, once again invokes the challenge of retention that poetic form puts to the listening consciousness.

The last strophe does not permit the facile resolution that one can intuit the divine in both semantic density (reflection) and the rush of the poetic experience (immediacy), in both the feverish "connection" of all things as discrete objects and the chaotic "mingling" of all things as belonging to absolute Being. The divine is never hidden from Isaak von Sinclair: "Bei Tage... / oder auch / Bei Nacht." For Hölderlin, retention amidst alternation fills out the gap between reflection and immediacy; poetic language does not *describe* this transition, but linguistically *reveals* it. The phrase used in the poem is "or also," "oder auch." A paradoxical relation emerges from the revelation of the divine, for taken together one of these prepositions potentially designates exclusion ("oder" in the sense of "either/or"), the other inclusion ("auch"). Hölderlin infuses the word cluster "oder auch" with its literal strangeness. In the very point of transition—which signals a Gestalt shift that would normally exclude the presence of night from day and vice versa—the connective tissue between the two lies dormant; the exclusionary force of the "oder" is not merely negated, but rather, transformed by the inclusionary force of the "auch." The "oder" as the order of the possible collides with and becomes attached to the "auch" as the order of the real. The "oder auch" structure therefore enacts poetically the turning of the double-sided page connecting Judgment and Being. If both reflection and immediacy appear negatively evaluated in the poem as elements that obscure the divine rather than those that reveal it (presenting the world as either feverish or chaotic), the hinge or the point of transition—the "or also"—appears precisely as that which participates in the revelation of the divine: this point or fulcrum between two perspectives affirms the moment of inclusion at the moment of separation. As far as I am aware, the phrase "oder auch" occurs in only one other instance in Hölderlin's poetic *oeuvre*: at the end of "Menons Klagen um Diotima," as the poet invokes multiple manifestations of the divine ("ihr Himmlischen," "ihr Weihstunden," "heilige Ahnungen," "ihr fromme Bitten," "ihr Begeisterungen," "ihr guten Genien"), asking them to remain until we—poet, beloved, reader, and the manifestations of the divine become inseparable in this "we"—meet again:

Bleibt so lange mit uns, bis wir auf gemeinsamem Boden

Dort, wo die seeligen all niederzukehren bereit,  
Dort, wo die Adler sind, die Gestirne, die Boten des Vaters,  
Dort, wo die Musen, woher Helden und Liebende sind.  
Dort uns, oder auch hier, auf thauender Insel begegnen... (MA I.295)

In this poem as well, "oder auch" occurs at the precise moment of a deictic shift, from there to here, simultaneously linking and separating the transcendent and the immanent. The shift, as it swivels around the paradoxical "oder auch," catapults the poetic voice into the beyond and the beyond into the fabric of the relation between first, second, and third person plurals, between "we," "you," and "they," creating a common network of pluralities.

The "oder auch" of Hölderlin's poetry therefore toggles between two different perspectives—one in which the experience of connection and separation appears, and one in which there is a ground outside of all subjectivity and outside of all objectivity, and yet interior to both, thereby intimating absolute Being, fusing originary confusion or non-differentiation and conscious reflectivity. In "Der Rhein," it is not the description of these two perspectives that leads to an intuition of the divine, but rather, the poetic performance of these two perspectives in the condensation of meaning and the flow of rhythm that occurs at the moment of transition. Hölderlin's poetry in particular attempts to enact linguistically the inseparability of originary unity and reflective consciousness, and it does so by provoking the paradoxical state of the "oder auch" in the consciousness of the reader. The "oder auch" reenacts the concatenation of Hölderlin's own poem as an aesthetic exercise.

One may therefore regard Hölderlin's poem as an exercise in the form of a phenomenological experiment. The eighteenth and early nineteenth century witnessed not only the birth of psychological experimentation, but also of phenomenological experimentation.<sup>77</sup> The successful poetic experiment, for Hölderlin, would secure an ontological interpretation of the world, one in which all supposedly disparate elements of life hang together. In his poetological writings, Hölderlin repeatedly uses the concept "vest," and this form of solidity or security is one of the central motivating forces behind his poetic project. As Hölderlin's poetological comments make clear, however, this process is far from inevitable. Hölderlin's concern with securing, holding tight, verifying, bears witness to the lack of a solid ground at the center of his project; the poetic revelation of the reversibility of Being and Judgment is meant to secure what the

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<sup>77</sup> Lambert, in his *Neues Organon* (1764), describes *Phänomenologie* as the attempt to move from the realm of appearances to that of truth: "Die Phänomenologie beschäftigt sich überhaupt damit, daß sie bestimme, was in jeder Art des Scheins real und wahr ist, und zu diesem Ende entwickelt sie die besondern Ursachen und Umstände, die einen Schein hervorbringen und verändern, damit man aus dem Schein auf das Reale und das Wahre schließen könne." Johann Heinrich Lambert, *Neues Organon oder Gedanken über die Erforschung und Bezeichnung des Wahren und dessen Unterscheidung vom Irrthum und Schein*, Vol. 2 (Leipzig: Johann Wendler, 1764) 421. Goethe, on the other hand, in his *Farbenlehre* (1810), would claim that there is a truth *in* the way colors appear to the eye. In this sense, he grounded a form of phenomenological experimentation that would only be recognized as such in historical retrospect. See David Seamon and Arthur Zajonc, ed., *Goethe's Way of Science: A Phenomenology of Nature* (New York: State University of New York P, 1998). Hölderlin pioneers a similar form of experimentation, although he uses poetic form as the central means to navigate the complexity of appearances.

intelligibility of myth gave to the Ancient Greeks and what theology ought to provide for Christians in an age in which both of these relations to reality are either no longer viable (myth) or are becoming less so (Christianity).

The poetic verification of Being/Judgment seeks to mitigate instability and uncertainty not merely vis-à-vis a new relation between the human being and nature, but through a new political order as well.<sup>78</sup> In Hölderlin's poetry, all is resonance; language, nature, the divine, human cognition, and a potential socio-political order—each semiotic layer sounds out the others through a dense web of interrelationships. This resonance model, as we have seen, is not unique to Hölderlin; even Kant had argued for an analogy (albeit one grounded in practical reason) between the purposiveness of nature and a teleological history of political organization.<sup>79</sup> Kant, however, believed that the mysterious operations of nature—as well as the ever-changing configurations of history—were fully inaccessible to human cognition, thereby opening up a gap between natural and historical order on the one hand and human subjectivity on the other. Hölderlin, unlike Kant, understands poetic activity as a mode of cognition through which the organization of nature lays itself bare *through* human signifying activity; he thereby seeks to reveal the Kantian gap between nature and subjectivity as an illusion by making poetic cognition part of the same textual fabric of nature. And if Hölderlin can poetically attune human cognition to nature, he can perform a similar operation—using the Kantian logic of analogy—in respect to political organization.

The resonance model of semiotic layering thereby permits Hölderlin to politicize the mental state of the reader in the flow of poetic cognition, fusing both text and perceptual consciousness into a cipher for an emergent nation.<sup>80</sup> Hölderlin's poetic form of the aesthetic exercise is unthinkable without this political subtext. In another

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<sup>78</sup> As Günther Mieth notes, "wie immer bei Hölderlin, bei dem wie bei kaum einem anderen Dichter dieser Periode das Politische mit dem Philosophisch-Ästhetischen und dem Dichterischen eine untrennbare Einheit bildet, ist diese Krise des politischen Bewußtseins auf das engste mit seinem ästhetischen Denken und Tun verbunden." Günther Mieth, *Friedrich Hölderlin. Dichter der bürgerlich-demokratischen Revolution* (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1978) 47.

<sup>79</sup> In a letter to Hegel in January 1795, Hölderlin writes: "Den Begriff der Vorsehung behandelst Du wohl ganz parallel mit Kants Teleologie; die Art, wie er den Mechanismus der Natur (also auch des Schicksaals) mit ihrer Zweckmäßigkeit vereinigt, scheint mir eigentlich den ganzen Geist seines Systems zu enthalten..." (MA II.569). Hölderlin's concept of "fate" signifies a historical and political teleology that operates in a manner similar to Kant's account of natural purposiveness. This interpretation of Kant—and the centrality of Kant's teleological conception of nature and political organization—continues to resonate throughout Hölderlin's poetic *oeuvre*. In another letter to Niethammer in March 1796, Hölderlin discusses the possibility of an intellectual intuition explicitly *without* the help of practical reason; he wants to find a principle in which the separation between subject and object disappears "ohne daß unsere praktische Vernunft zu Hilfe kommen müßte" (MA II.615). The capability to intuit this originary inseparability of subject and object requires the formation of an "aesthetic sense"—and it is this sense that Hölderlin's poetry intends to develop and train.

<sup>80</sup> Hölderlin writes to Isaak von Sinclair that the organization of natural phenomena in principle constitutes an anti-monarchical activity, since all elements depend on other elements: "die erste Bedingung alles Lebens und aller Organisation [ist], daß keine Kraft monarchisch ist im Himmel und auf Erden. Die absolute Monarchie hebt sich überall selbst auf, denn sie ist objectlos; es hat auch im strengen Sinne niemals eine gegeben" (MA II.723). Even a monarch is, to a certain extent, dependent on others; inasmuch as a monarch must organize himself or herself in a world with others, an "absolute" monarchy is an impossibility, just as is an absolute subject. Hölderlin's letter to Sinclair reveals explicitly the extent to which he politicizes his ontology and ontologizes his political philosophy.

poetological text, "Das untergehende Vaterland," Hölderlin makes explicit the reciprocal relationship between the human being, nature, and socio-political order. The movement that poetry initiates with its conception of alternation, or *Wechsel*, mirrors the logic of nations: "*Dieser Untergang oder Übergang des Vaterlandes* (in diesem Sinne) fühlt sich in den Gliedern der bestehenden Welt so, daß in eben dem Momente und Grade, worin sich das Bestehende auflöst, auch das Neueintretende, Jugendliche, Mögliche sich fühlt" (MA II.72). The affect generated by the alternation of tones, the feeling of continuity amidst chaotic fluctuation, reverberates with a hermeneutic procedure that Hölderlin applies to history and the potential development of a new state. The poetic procedure becomes the testing ground for this state's future validity.<sup>81</sup> The poet's attempt to secure the spirit—if successful—would interpret the birth of a republican state from revolutionary violence. The French Revolution, the violence of which had been disseminated and amplified in German media, becomes the testing ground for Hölderlin's poetic hermeneutics. Hölderlin's poetry, however, unlike Jacobin propaganda, concerns itself less with bringing the revolution into being than interpreting its consequences, its plausibility, its legitimacy.<sup>82</sup>

In "Der Rhein," Hölderlin once again uses a turning point to convey the reciprocity between human beings, nature, divine order, and finally, political revolution: "Dir mag... / ... gehüllt / in Stahl, mein Sinclair! Gott erscheinen." Either God appears wrapped in steel to Sinclair, or God appears to Sinclair wrapped in steel. The ambiguity brought about by the apposition purposefully blurs God and Sinclair, but only at the moment in which one or the other appears garbed in a symbol of violence. Steel would seem to refer literally to armor; but a god, hidden in steel, could just as easily metonymically stand for a blade, for a guillotine. Even Jesus said, "I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34).

The entire passage, however, occurs in the indeterminacy of the verb *mögen* (may), expressing possibility. In a move that parallels the cognitive stress triggered by the initial conditional sentence of "Wenn der Dichter einmal des Geistes mächtig ist," the last strophe suggests that if Isaak von Sinclair—and the listener—can retain the thread of memory through the alternation of the ancient "confusion" of night and the "chained"

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<sup>81</sup> Gerhard Kurz makes a convincing case for a link between Hölderlin's poetological statements and his revolutionary ambitions in Gerhard Kurz, *Mittelbarkeit und Vereinigung: Zum Verhältnis von Poesie, Reflexion und Revolution bei Hölderlin* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1975). My reading views Hölderlin's poetology less as an attempt to institute the republican order, but more to hermeneutically self-reflect on its historical viability, on its legitimacy in the face of violence.

<sup>82</sup> Many scholars accept the notion, advocated by Pierre Bertaux, that Hölderlin was a Jacobin. For more about Hölderlin's involvement in the ideals of the French Revolution and the supposed attempt to assassinate the Kurfürst of Württemberg, see the debate between Bertaux and Szondi: Pierre Bertaux, *Hölderlin und die Französische Revolution* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), and Szondi, *Einführung in die literarische Hermeneutik*. When Hölderlin was taken away to be interrogated concerning this incident, a document claims, "[er] schimpft beständig auf Sinclair und die Jakobiner und ruft in einem fort: *ich will kein Jakobiner bleiben, Vive le roi!*" Adolf Beck, *Hölderlin: Chronik seines Lebens* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1975) 98. With Bertaux, one might be inclined to claim that Hölderlin's words comprise a mere ruse undertaken for self-preservation; nevertheless, they show that he did consider himself to be a Jacobin. They may also potentially reveal disillusionment with the strategies of German Jacobins. To compound the issue, the document itself may not be reliable; at best one is left with speculation and ambiguity.

(*angekettet*) feverishness of day, then God would also reveal himself in steel—just as he reveals himself in nature, in the forest, in the sky. The poetic process intends to describe the conditions of possibility whereby revolutionary violence and pantheism become possibilities.

Hölderlin's poetry attempts to cognitively process the destabilizing existence of novelty and capture the experience of gaining security in poetic form. To successfully alternate between immediacy and reflection stimulates the process of retention—as an aesthetic exercise—in the poetic hermeneutic act, an act that, when applied to history, reinterprets radical change as the emergence of a more complete organic and political order. Such is the exercise given to the poet: to discern order at the point of dissolution. Hölderlin's poetry, however, reveals the tenuousness of this project; nature, the human being, and political organization, at points of transition between becoming (*Werden*) and dissolution (*Vergehen*), become concentrated in a tipping point between the birth of a new order and a descent into chaos.<sup>83</sup> Hölderlin restores to these transition points a sense of their urgency; the longing for stability holds open the abyss at his feet.

Hölderlin therefore shows the world falling apart *or also* coming into being. His poetry exercises human cognition poised between dissolution and emergence. To attribute this operation to a crisis inscribed within an always already damaged world goes against the grain of Hölderlin's poetic project, namely to uncover the process whereby disorder might be revealed *as* latent order.

And yet, the point of concentration, this paradoxical space of inclusion and exclusion, seems to continually call for its own repeated testing as evidence for the self-organization of natural, social and cognitive systems. Hölderlin's attraction to a mode of poetic cognition that seeks to secure the operation of the poetic spirit continually tempts itself with its own destabilization. In this sense, one might read his poetry as the attempt not merely to verify the dynamic order of nature and history, but to strengthen the human being's ability to perceive this order. In order to strengthen this capability, however, Hölderlin must test and expand its limits. Hölderlin's later poetic activity can therefore be seen as a provocation of the very breakdown against which poetry ought to secure the human being. The figure of bifurcation—one which becomes most forcefully expressed in Hölderlin's work on tragedy—seeps into his poetic production; alternative historical pathways, multiple forms of political organization, conflicting conceptions of the divine struggling between forms of polytheism, pantheism, monotheism—each division multiplies, intensifies, reproduces itself until the attempt to unify these strands becomes more and more tenuous. The principle of bifurcation constitutes a latent figure motivating Hölderlin's own poetry; individual poems become confronted with their opposing tendencies—as with "Der Rhein" and "Der Ister," or "Andenken" and "Mnemosyne"—or themselves split into different versions, self-bifurcating, such as is the case in "Patmos." Ultimately, Hölderlin seems to find himself in a world in which multiple bifurcation points overtake the possibility for integrating such points into a higher-order unity.

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<sup>83</sup> As Anke Bennholdt-Thomsen and Alfredo Guzzoni note, the possibility of the failure of historical self-organization only becomes an explicit part of Hölderlin's poetological thought in his "Anmerkungen zur Antigonä." See Anke and Alfredo Guzzoni Bennholdt-Thomsen, *Analecta Hölderliniana II: Die Aufgabe des Vaterlands* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004) 39.

## Chapter 3: Resistance to Harmony and the Limits of Order

### 1. Hölderlin's Poetics of Bifurcation

Hölderlin's poetic activity is bolstered by a paradox that may be described as an intensification of the disjunction between the means and the ends of poetry, between what it actually does with its language and the desire that supposedly generates it. In Hölderlin's case, this disjunction seems to continually doom poetry to fall short of satisfying the demands placed upon it.

For Hölderlin, the ostensible goal of the poet is motivated by the desire for unity, an overcoming of the division of self and world, a mediation of the divine and the earthly, an illustration of the points of difference in the world as belonging to the same system. Hölderlin's introduction to the second volume of *Hyperion* expresses the goal of the poet as follows:

Jenen ewigen Widerstreit zwischen unserem Selbst und der Welt zu endigen, den Frieden alles Friedens, der höher ist, denn alle Vernunft, den wiederzubringen, uns mit der Natur zu vereinigen zu Einem unendlichen Ganzen, das ist das Ziel all' unseres Strebens, wir mögen uns darüber verstehen oder nicht.

Aber weder unser Wissen noch unser Handeln gelangt in irgend einer Periode des Daseyns dahin, wo aller Widerstreit aufhört, wo Alles Eins ist; die bestimmte Linie vereinigt sich mit der unbestimmten nur in unendlicher Annäherung.

Wir hätten auch keine Ahnung von jenem unendlichen Frieden, von jenem Seyn, im einzigen Sinne des Worts, wir strebten gar nicht, die Natur mit uns zu vereinigen, wir dächten und wir handelten nicht, es wäre überhaupt gar nichts, (für uns) wir wären selbst nichts, (für uns) wenn nicht dennoch jene unendliche Vereinigung, jenes Seyn, im einzigen Sinne des Worts vorhanden wäre. Es ist vorhanden—als Schönheit. (MA I.558)

This pattern is typical of eighteenth-century poetry: there is an originary unity, the human being cannot intuit it, and yet, it must exist, and it makes itself manifest through beauty, in the self-organization of the natural world and in the poetic works of those who follow this order. What is atypical in Hölderlin's later poetic response to this goal is precisely that the poetry itself does not attempt to illustrate this unity on a formal or aesthetic level. It is not governed by the aesthetics of *beauty*. Rather, instead of attempting to unify opposites, it intensifies oppositional poles of attraction, it widens the gap between the human and the divine, it makes the possibility of a higher-order unity *difficult* rather than inevitable, *contingent* rather than necessary. Stylistically, Hölderlin's late poetry *challenges* the poet, the reader, indeed nature itself, to bear witness, to embody, and to reveal the presence of this higher-order unification of differences.

Hölderlin's poetry invites this challenge precisely by multiplying instances and intensities of unstable bifurcation points, not by illustrating the path of higher-order unity itself, or merely presupposing its existence, which Hölderlin claims would consist in "leeres leichtes Schattenspiel" (MA II.78). The increase in the points of bifurcation and in their instability, the intensification in the generation of contingency concerning the outcome of any historical or natural process, trains and attunes the mind to the possibility of order when faced with the overwhelming evidence of disorder.

Perhaps more clearly than elsewhere, it is Hölderlin's theory of tragedy that dramatizes the attempt to read order into the contingency of radical change, an attempt characterized, above all, by its difficulty. Sophocles' *Antigone* illustrates a culture at a point of transition in which contingency is multiplied. The actors in the drama appear in the thrall of a process of revolution, "von unendlicher Umkehr ergriffen, und erschüttert" (MA II.375). The drama attempts to capture this moment of transition as one in which time itself has betrayed the realm of the human. Tragic language therefore foregrounds disorder rather than order, although its central paradox consists in making present the necessity of such a betrayal of time in order to ultimately redress and repair the fractured course of history: "Sprache für eine Welt, wo unter Pest und Sinnesverwirrung... der Gott und der Mensch, damit der Weltlauf keine Lücke hat und *das Gedächtnis der Himmlischen nicht ausgehet, in der allvergessenden Form der Untreue sich mittheilt...*" (MA II.315-6). The tragedy must ultimately redress its own moment of betrayal, or the fact that the coming into being of a new order manifests itself phenomenally as decay to those in its midst. Its own form of representation therefore tends toward oblivion inasmuch as the discontinuity, rupture, and incomprehensibility characterizing the tragic moment will ultimately be replaced by the intelligibility of historical teleology. Hölderlin uses the concept of the caesura to designate the means by which the intelligibility of history intrudes in this moment of betrayal:

Dadurch wird in der rhythmischen Aufeinanderfolge der Vorstellungen, worinn der *Transport* sich darstellt, *das, was man im Sylbenmaaße Cäsur heißt*, das reine Wort, die gegenrhythmische Unterbrechung nothwendig, um nemlich dem reißenden Wechsel der Vorstellungen, auf seinem Summum, so zu begegnen, daß alsdann nicht mehr der Wechsel der Vorstellung, sondern die Vorstellung selber erscheint. (MA II.310)

The speeches of Tiresias mark both instances of the caesura in *Oedipus* and *Antigone*. Tiresias, as "Aufseher über die Naturmacht" (MA II.310), is the only agent capable of overseeing the totality of the order of nature amidst the horror and contingency of change. His speeches prevent the horror of the tragic action from achieving total domination over the culture's understanding of this very moment, for the moment appears precisely as monstrous to the populace; the tragic figure embodies "das Ungeheure, wie der Gott und Mensch sich paart" (MA II.315). The god, however, in this moment, is "nichts als Zeit" (MA II.316), that is, the logic of time itself at the point of its turning from one regime of intelligibility (perceptual, cultural, political) to another. The monstrosity therefore appears when the human being becomes *pure time* in the process of revolution, of a *Werden im Vergehen*. At the moment of revolution, to embody pure time,

is to become the revolutionary moment; the tragic figure must be torn into the sphere of the dead (*Vergehen*), but it is the function of the caesura to reveal this tragic downfall as the necessary precondition for organic growth, for novelty, for becoming (*Werden*).<sup>84</sup>

The tragic figure is incapable of seeing the order of its own participation in the moment of radical change, since this figure *embodies* it and is perfectly identical with it. The fate of the tragic figure appears monstrous precisely because the god has stepped out of its sphere and into the sphere of the human as pure time, an act that perturbs the human order and can only appear as a betrayal. The identity of the human with the god produces a *monstrum*, an ontological order that appears at first outside the order of nature. The moment of catharsis, however, purifies the tragic action by expelling the god from the human, a tragic action that "dadurch sich begreift, daß das gränzenlose Eineswerden durch gränzenloses Scheiden sich reiniget" (MA II.315). Only when the human and god separate can the human *comprehend* the actions of the divine, only when the human being does not embody time at the moment of pure potentiality when one form changes into another ( $t = 0$ ), can it look at its own moment from the vantage point of another temporal framework, from the perspective of a moment that has already begun the process of *becoming* ( $t > 0$ ).

If temporality itself, in the tragedy, consists in a betrayal—revealing itself to human beings as disorder rather than order, as death rather than life—Tiresias, by interrupting time as betrayal, in fact intimates the *restoration* of order, but only inasmuch as it foregrounds the necessity of death as part of the order of nature and history itself. Tiresias functions as "Aufseher über die Naturmacht," but it is this very power that pulls the tragic figure from the sphere of the living, "die tragisch, den Menschen seiner Lebenssphäre, dem Mittelpunkte seines innern Lebens in eine andere Welt entrückt und in die exzentrische Sphäre der Todten reißt" (MA II.310-1). The caesura, however, renders this tearing into the eccentric sphere part of the order of intelligibility itself; it poetically creates a space that appears from outside the domain of its own sphere of immanence, slowing down time, interrupting a form of temporality that is itself an interruption, thereby permitting the mind, in a brief moment of respite, to *grasp* the order that otherwise eludes it. And so it is also with the figure of the caesura in poetry, a break in the line that permits the mind to grasp, purely on the semantic level, what is being said. The caesura does break the line, but this rupture, as a formal-poetic gesture, in fact permits a form of intelligibility. Therefore with the figure of Tiresias, it is no longer the revolution *as* revolution that appears, or "der Wechsel der Vorstellung," but the order of

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<sup>84</sup> The caesura has been the subject of numerous interpretations. Many of these interpretations see in the caesura a figure of interruption, of perturbation, and hence, of melancholy inevitability. For example, Lacoue-Labarthe claims, "man forgets himself and forgets the God, 'because he exists entirely within the moment'; the God forgets 'because he is nothing other than time' (*Essays*, 1-7), and that is to say, the law of irreversibility: the 'this is irretrievable' of tragic destiny." Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "Hölderlin's theatre," *Philosophy and Tragedy*, ed. Miguel de Beistegui and Simon Sparks (London: Routledge) 131-2. Karin Dahlke, for example, claims, "Dieser Ort in der Mitte zwischen den beiden Hälften ist, wie schon in den vorherigen poetologischen Texten, der Ort des Todes und der Leere, ist der Ort einer Abwesenheit, der unter der Zäsur markiert wird von dem reinen Wort, das das Leiden ausspricht." Karin Dahlke, *Äußerste Freiheit. Wahnsinn / Sublimierung / Poetik des Tragischen der Moderne* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2008) 488. In my reading, the caesura renders the historical moment, if not transparent, than capable of being made intelligible.

history itself as continuous, without gaps, "die Vorstellung selber" (MA II.310). The caesura creates a bifurcation in the structure of the tragedy, but it is a bifurcation whose function is to reveal the organization of nature, or to resignify the contingency and anxiety of revolution as the latent operation of order. Its function is less to disrupt the action than to generate balance amidst disequilibrium, and therefore, lend credence to the Kantian teleology of nature and history that had previously appeared defunct when confronted with the tragic state of the suffering human being.

The theory of tragedy, although it occurs in a different genre and in a different tonality, therefore reduplicates the exercise value characteristic of Hölderlin's other poetic experiments. Only through honing the capacity of the mind to perceive order, to bind disparate phenomena, to construct unity out of difference and intelligibility out of complexity—a critical feature of Baumgarten's *felix aestheticus*—can evidence for an original unity be acquired. However, since such evidence can never be directly intuited, the exercise instigates an unending process of experimentation, one whose difficulty increases with every attempt to verify the order that it seeks to secure. Hölderlin's later poetic practices often seem to stretch the points of bifurcation to their limit horizons, generating instead a disequilibrium between disorder and order—in favor of disorder—whose differences are then incapable of being recuperated into any unity.

Another point of bifurcation emerges from Hölderlin's theory of tragedy that hints at this dynamic. It is not the bifurcation *in* each respective tragedy, but between the two tragic instances themselves, *Oedipus* and *Antigone*. The figure used by Hölderlin to describe the relation of *Oedipus* to *Antigone* in its placement of the caesura, "\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_ zu \_\_\_\\_\_\_\_\_" (MA II.369), sketches a pattern of intertextual differentiation and opposition that surfaces frequently in Hölderlin's later poetic works. Each work balances the other; at the same time, each position of the caesura demands its other, a process that can, in theory, continue multiplying and bifurcating ad infinitum for any discrete poetic instance. The balancing act of poetic works, in the permutation offered by Hölderlin, might therefore never end, for every work requires some other configuration outside of it to balance its own asymmetry. Just as Tiresias provides the caesura to Oedipus' insatiable curiosity and monstrous unification with the forces of time itself, so does *Antigone*, as a drama, provide a balance for *Oedipus*.

Inherent in Hölderlin's theory of tragedy, then, one may perceive the threat of continual bifurcation, an essential asymmetry—or in Hölderlin's language, *eccentricity*, a form that perturbs the unity of a closed system—that appears as a necessary condition for novelty, but whose instability continually demands its own reinscription in a different schema of order. And that which demands endless verification approaches the very problem at the core of the tragic, namely, Oedipus' problem itself as the desire to interpret the cosmos; as Hölderlin says, "*Eben diß Allesuchende, Allesdeutende ists auch, daß sein Geist am Ende der rohen und einfältigen Sprache seiner Diener unterliegt*" (MA II.315). Poetry, as the complex language that perpetually seeks meaning and interprets the world of appearances, appears to implode when faced with the simplicity and roughness of everyday language. The very solution proposed by the tragic form—a continual demand for a higher symmetry that repairs a fundamental asymmetry—reduplicates the pattern of its own weakness, namely, the continual interpretation of fate, the search for an ultimate meaning through the reproduction of bifurcations intending to

guarantee the stability of the natural, historical, and political system, but whose proliferation only ends up further destabilizing this system. One may feel this reproduction of bifurcations as a constant presence in Hölderlin's later poetic productions, one that eventually overwhelms and undermines the idea of the higher-order unity that would ground and justify the inherent breakdowns—the necessary injustices and betrayals—associated with the process of radical change.

"Der Rhein" suggests that a type of human being exists who is capable of holding conflicting cognitive states and signifying tendencies in harmonically opposed reciprocity at one and the same moment in time. Hölderlin's poetry, however, does not rest in the comfort of this assertion. "Der Ister"—although the poem is not named as such in the manuscript—seems to form a companion piece to "Der Rhein," and it introduces yet another system of divergences into Hölderlin's poetic corpus. The bifurcation occurs intertextually, in an intensification of the split between "Der Rhein" and "Der Ister" not merely as rivers, but as poems. The split between the two poems posits a problem for thought. In German, the following saying designates impossibility: "Rhein und Donau fließen nicht zusammen."

## 2. Hölderlin's "Der Ister" and Aporetic Consciousness

Jetzt komme, Feuer!  
Begierig sind wir  
Zu schauen den Tag,  
Und wenn die Prüfung  
Ist durch die Knie gegangen,  
Mag einer spüren das Waldgeschrei.  
Wir singen aber vom Indus her  
Fernangekommen und  
Vom Alpheus, lange haben  
Das Schikliche wir gesucht,  
Nicht ohne Schwingen mag  
Zum Nächsten einer greifen  
Geradezu  
Und kommen auf die andere Seite.  
Hier aber wollen wir bauen.  
Denn Ströme machen urbar  
Das Land. Wenn nämlich Kräuter wachsen  
Und an denselben gehn  
Im Sommer zu trinken die Thiere,  
So gehn auch Menschen daran.

Man nennet aber diesen den Ister.  
Schön wohnt er. Es brennet der Säulen Laub,  
Und reget sich. Wild stehn

Sie aufgerichtet, untereinander; darob  
Ein zweites Maß, springt vor  
Von Felsen das Dach. So wundert  
Mich nicht, daß er  
Den Herkules zu Gaste geladen,  
Fernglänzend, am Olympos drunten,  
Da der, sich Schatten zu suchen  
Vom heißen Isthmos kam,  
Denn voll des Muthes waren  
Daselbst sie, es bedarf aber, der Geister wegen,  
Der Kühlung auch. Darum zog jener lieber  
An die Wasserquellen hieher und gelben Ufer,  
Hoch duftend oben, und schwarz  
Vom Fichtenwald, wo in den Tiefen  
Ein Jäger gern lustwandelt  
Mittags, und Wachstum hörbar ist  
An harzigen Bäumen des Isters,

Der scheint aber fast  
Rückwärts zu gehen und  
Ich mein, er müsse kommen  
Von Osten.  
Vieles wäre  
Zu sagen davon. Und warum hängt er  
An den Bergen gerade? Der andre  
Der Rhein ist seitwärts  
Hinweggegangen. Umsonst nicht gehn  
Im Troknen die Ströme. Aber wie? Ein Zeichen braucht es  
Nichts anderes, schlecht und recht, damit es Sonn  
Und Mond trag' im Gemüth', untrennbar,  
Und fortgeh, Tag und Nacht auch, und  
Die Himmlischen warm sich fühlen aneinander.  
Darum sind jene auch  
Die Freude des Höchsten. Denn wie käm er  
Herunter? Und wie Hertha grün,  
Sind sie die Kinder des Himmels. Aber allzuredultig  
Scheint der mir, nicht  
Freier, und fast zu spotten. Nemlich wenn

Angehen soll der Tag  
In der Jugend, wo er zu wachsen  
Anfängt, es treibet ein anderer da  
Hoch schon die Pracht, und Füllen gleich  
In den Zaum knirscht er, und weithin hören

Das Treiben die Lüfte,  
 Zufrieden ist der;  
 Es brauchet aber Stiche der Fels  
 Und Furchen die Erd',  
 Unwirthbar wär es, ohne Weile;  
 Was aber jener thuet der Strom,  
 Weis niemand. (MA I.475-7)

The poem narrates the course of a river that does not seem to deliver that which it promises. It is, first and foremost, the story of a disappointment and an arrested development. The form of the poem itself appears cut off, in such a way that many critics have labeled the poem incomplete: four strophes, three of twenty lines each, the last strophe containing only twelve.<sup>85</sup> Whether the poem is incomplete or not is a matter of conjecture. However, if the poem is incomplete, it mirrors the course of the river that it describes. This incompleteness is fully appropriate to the character of the Danube, a river that is all too "patient" (*allzuredultig*), one that appears to travel in the wrong direction, one that is either too "content" (*zufrieden*) or "sad" (*betriibt*)—both variants can be found in the manuscript. Like the river itself, the poem grows, declines, and ceases abruptly, almost before its time. The river promises evolution—"Denn Ströme machen urbar das Land"—but culminates in incertitude, doubt, aporia.

The integrity of the strophes become compromised as the poem progresses. The first strophe appears complete and closed in itself. There is no enjambment and the end of the strophe corresponds to the end of the rhetorical period. The poem begins with the promise of potentiality, as if the object of desire—the sun and the blossoming form of a new culture—were close at hand. And yet, a test looms: "Und wenn die Prüfung / Ist durch die Knie gegangen, / Mag einer spüren das Waldgeschrei." The test, however, appears enigmatic, not merely because of the semantic and sonic dissonance introduced by the "Knie," but because the test itself appears poised between past and present, without any explicit indication of what would constitute success.<sup>86</sup> For one can "feel" the "Waldgeschrei" only as a sign that the moment of testing has come, not as a sign that the test has successfully been completed. The "Waldgeschrei" may even be associated not with birdsong, as is normally assumed, but with the battle cry of Germanic warriors, alluding to the passage in "Der Rhein": "Dir mag auf heißem Pfade unter Tannen oder / Im Dunkel des Eichwalds gehüllt / In Stahl, mein Sinclair! Gott erscheinen..." (MA I.348).<sup>87</sup> The forest is a space not of beauty, but of violence. The poem, however, turns abruptly away from this possibility: "Hier aber wollen wir bauen." The strophe ends with

<sup>85</sup> Jochen Schmidt, for example, calls the poem "wohl unvollendet." Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte* 1026.

<sup>86</sup> Rainer Nägele discusses how problematic the "knee" has been for interpreters of the poem, see Nägele, *Hölderlins Kritik der poetischen Vernunft* 103. He also says, "Eine Bedingung ist gesetzt: wenn einer, ein Einzelner, die Prüfung bestanden hat, dann mag dieser Eine spüren das Waldgeschrei." Nägele, *Hölderlins Kritik der poetischen Vernunft* 102. It seems to me, however, difficult to equate "wenn die Prüfung durch die Knie gegangen ist" with the successful completion of the test.

<sup>87</sup> Beissner notes in his explication of "Waldgeschrei": "Von den in Grimms deutschen Wörterbuch 13,1136 f. unterschiedenen drei bedeutungen (Jagdrufe, Vogelsang, kunstloser Gesang) trifft am ehesten die zweite zu..." Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, Stuttgarter Ausgabe, ed. Friedrich Beissner, vol. 2.2 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1951) 813.

a seemingly idyllic image of the human being drinking from the river, although this very gesture is something that the human shares in common with animals. Formally, the end of the strophe and the end of the rhetorical period coincide, leaving the image of the human being cultivating the land as the promise of future prosperity.

The second strophe, however, ends at a turning point that turns into a surprising and almost impossible perspectivization at the beginning of the third strophe:

Darum zog jener [Herkules] lieber  
An die Wasserquellen hieher und gelben Ufer,  
Hoch duftend oben, und schwarz  
Vom Fichtenwald, wo in den Tiefen  
Ein Jäger gern lustwandelt  
Mittags, und Wachstum hörbar ist  
An harzigen Bäumen des Isters,

Der scheintet aber fast  
Rückwärts zu gehen... (MA I.476)

The naming of the river, *Bäumen des Isters*, triggers a sudden interruption and a regression. The interruption occurs in the rhythm of the poem, cutting off the momentum of the dactylic rhythm leading to "des Isters" with the transition to free rhythm bordering on a trochaic inversion of the previous line. The appearance of the regression of the river corresponds to a reversal in poetic momentum, and the growth, which ought to be audible—"Wachstum" is "hörbar"—manifests itself as an audible slowness in the tempo of the poem itself.

Similar to the transition between the second and third strophes, the movement from the third to the fourth appears interrupted at the beginning of a temporal clause:

Aber allzuredultig  
Scheint der mir, nicht  
Freier, und fast zu spotten. Nemlich wenn

Angehen soll der Tag  
In der Jugend, wo er zu wachsen  
Anfängt, es treibet ein anderer da  
Hoch schon und Füllen gleich  
In den Zaum knirscht er, und weithin schaffend hören  
Das Treiben die Lüfte,  
Zufrieden ist der;  
Es brauchet aber Stiche der Fels  
Und Furchen die Erd',  
Unwirthbar wär es, ohne Weile;  
Was aber jener thuet der Strom,  
Weis niemand. (MA I.476-7)

The enjambment between strophes cuts the thought off before it can even begin to develop. In the manuscript itself, the writing appears compressed, marking a transition from a *Reinschrift* to draft-like handwriting. Finally, the poem appears severed at the end of the page, the twelve lines of the last strophe deviating from the pattern of twenty lines in the other strophes, marking a truncation. The flow of the poem itself is interrupted by the "other" river, the Rhine, whose excessive power, "es treibet ein anderer da," overwhelms the languid flow of the Danube and separates the temporal phrase—interrupted and forced into an extended hyperbaton—from its completion. The phrase, which in fact is quite simple, can be reformulated: "Nemlich wenn / Angehen soll der Tag in der Jugend / [...] / Ist der zufrieden [alternative reading: betrübt]." Namely when the day should rise, in youth, that river is content or sad.

In comparison to the Rhine, the Danube refuses to grow, and thus represents the danger of a failed formation, a *Bildung* gone awry.<sup>88</sup> When the river should be full of growth, it appears to rest complacent—or melancholy—in itself. It does not provide the sign that the poet needs, "Ein Zeichen braucht es, / Nichts anderes, schlecht und recht, damit es Sonn und Mond trag' im Gemüth', untrennbar...". Day and night, in "Der Rhein," refer to two semiotic and cognitive models, one referring to differentiation and binding, the other to chaos and indifference. Here too, what is sought is a model of representation that construes opposites as reversible and compatible modalities of being, a semiotic function in fact signaled by the idiomatic "schlecht und recht." In the expression "schlecht und recht," "schlecht" designates, according to Adelung, "redlich, rechtschaffen, der Billigkeit und dem Gesetze gemäß, im Gegensatze der krummen, unlautern Gesinnung."<sup>89</sup> The expression itself straightens out the crooked sign in the movement from "schlecht" to "schlecht und recht." And each part of the line in fact expresses the same sentiment, that of holding opposites in harmonic tension with one another, albeit in different registers: "Nichts anderes" [nothing different], "schlecht und recht," "Sonn und Mond trag' im Gemüth," "untrennbar." If the required sign, one which similarly appeared at the end of "Der Rhein," must function as a reversibility of Being and Judgment, identity and difference, presenting them as an indissoluble unity, the river does not fulfill this requirement.<sup>90</sup> Neither of the rivers, *as* poetic signs, seem to

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<sup>88</sup> Lawrence Ryan discusses the resonance between a politically infused *Bildung*, one that would lead to a functioning republican-democratic order, and Hölderlin's poetics: "Die selbständigen und durch und durch individualisierten, aber innig verbundenen Teile eines lebendigen Ganzen sind im politischen Zusammenhang sicherlich auch die Staatsbürger—die Ausbalancierung des Einzelnen und der Allgemeinheit im Staatsgefüge entspricht der Verteilung der poetisch evozierten Ganzheit und des stofflich Individualisierten in der poetischen Verfahrensweise. Fast könnte man sagen, ein republikanisch-demokratisch gebildeter Staat hätte Hölderlins Vorstellung eine 'poetische' Verfassung." Lawrence Ryan, "Was bildet aber, stiften die Dichter". Zu Hölderlins Konzeption von 'Bildung', *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch* 36 (2009): 49. If Ryan is correct, then *Der Ister* casts further doubt on the education of a subject that could function in a republican order; in the poem, there is only the dysfunctional Ister or the Rhine, full of potential, and yet, the river has not yet been "tamed" as in the poem of "Der Rhein."

<sup>89</sup> Johann Christoph Adelung, *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der hochdeutschen Mundart*, vol. 3 (Vienna: Bauer, 1811) 1510.

<sup>90</sup> Other critics do not see a disconnection between "das Zeichen" and the rivers themselves. Böschstein, for example, claims, "[es] ist darauf hinzuweisen, daß der Strom zum "Zeichen" wird... welches das Wesen eines Stromes transzendiert." Bernhard Böschstein, "Oden-Flüsse—Hymnen-Ströme," *Hölderlin-*

correspond to the poem's own metalinguistic ideal of sign function; both rivers, Rhine and Danube, function as signs, but both signs misfire. Each river seems "schlecht," but precisely not in the sense of "schlecht und recht"; even the Rhine does not travel straight ("seitwärts / Hinweggegangen"), and as for the Danube, "Was aber jener thuet der Strom, / Weis niemand."<sup>91</sup>

In the eighteenth century, the Danube was thought almost to disappear at the very moment of crossing over into the Swabian Alps, and this precise moment is described in the third hymn, where the river "hangs" on the mountains. Its development shows the transition from Being to non-Being, or in Hölderlin's own terms, it embodies not the coming-into-being in the passing-away (*das Werden im Vergehen*), but rather, a passing-away in becoming (*das Vergehen im Werden*). And if, as Hölderlin wrote in the preface to *Hyperion*, poetry manifests the unconscious desire for the unity of Being, "Der Ister" testifies to another possibility: that nothing will come to be. From the perspective of a perfect poetic teleology of nature, the development of "Der Ister" can only be described as an anomaly. The poem itself appears to foreground the possibility of a deviation that cannot be recovered into a history of Being, the impossibility of producing a representation of nature or history without gaps or blind spots.

Even the use of the Greek for the Danube—in previous poems, Hölderlin calls the river by its German name, *die Donau*—produces an ontological instability. The second strophe begins with this appellation: "Man nennet aber diesen den Ister." The very phrase produces a dissonance between what it claims and the language in which it makes this claim. The poem is written in German, and in German, *one* does not call the river "den Ister." The poet uses the impersonal pronoun "man" to refer to a set of communal practices that do not actually exist from its own standpoint of enunciation. In the third strophe, the poetic voice will use the Germanic "Hertha" to refer to the earth, suggesting a lyrical voice that travels between mythological spaces, or more precisely a voice that does not occupy any determinate place.<sup>92</sup>

In another sense, however, "Der Ister" is not merely a Greek word, but a concatenation of German words: *der "Ist er,"* as if the poem were questioning its own participation in Being. The phonemic resonance is eventually explicitly integrated into the poem itself. In the final strophe, one may read: "Zufrieden ist der," a phrase that questions the state of the river while transposing the Greek phoneme into German. From the manuscript, the line exhibits noteworthy ambiguities. Hölderlin had apparently originally written "ist der betrübt," with "zufrieden" appearing next to the line as a

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*Jahrbuch* 35 (2007): 201. One might add, precisely this "transcendence" of the sign does not appear to function in the poem.

<sup>91</sup> Rainer Nägele notes that "Nicht einmal, von welchem Strom hier die Rede ist, ist wissbar. Ist jener der Rhein oder der Ister?" Nägele, *Hölderlins Kritik der poetischen Vernunft* 128.

<sup>92</sup> Rainer Nägele has beautiful words to say about the word Hertha: "Die Sprachlichkeit des Namens Hertha wird im "Ister" syllabish sibyllinisch überdeterminiertes Echo in der Silbe *Her*. **Her**tha antwortet als Echo dem den Vers eröffnenden **Herunter** und im weiterhin tönenden Echo dem Namen dessen, der zum Ister als Gast geladen ist: **Herkules**. Und sie alle sind Echo des elidierten *her* der Fernangekommenen. Und wird auch die Silbe noch verkürzt auf den Buchstaben, von dem sie ausgeht, dem gehauchten H, so treten Hertha und Himmel im Pneuma dieses Hauches, der auch den herunterkommenden Höchsten haucht, aufs zärtlichste zusammen." Nägele, *Hölderlins Kritik der poetischen Vernunft* 127. Even in the sound *her*, which designates motion from somewhere but not necessarily *to* anywhere, the poem rests in a potentiality, not in a telos, one that also appears bifurcated between the Germanic and the Greek *Hertha* and *Herkules*.

correction to "betrübt" (FKA 7.465).<sup>93</sup> The variant is striking because it suggests an alternative that is not merely a stylistic improvement, but a diametrically opposed concept to its original formation. The replacement of "betrübt" with "zufrieden" at first seems to positively reevaluate the movement of the Danube. However, it simultaneously constructs the river as a site of diametrically opposite interpretations, flowing in a state of indeterminacy that the poet construes either as melancholy or contentment. A similar ambiguity is produced syntactically by the marginal emendation, as the line hesitates between multiple possibilities: "ist der betrübt," "zufrieden ist der," or even, were one to replace "betrübt" with "zufrieden, the line would read "ist der zufrieden." As it stands in the manuscript, the river bifurcates on both the semantic and syntactical axes, generating oppositional movements radiating from one and the same semiotic point of concentration.

Sattler, the editor of the historical critical edition of Hölderlin's works, suggests that the word "betrübt" is not crossed out, but underlined (FA 7.465). This proposition in fact opens up the Danube to its own problematic nature, constructing the river as a locus of potentialities manifesting themselves as co-existing and yet, mutually exclusive properties. If "betrübt" is underlined for emphasis, it functions even more intensively as a point of divergence from the overflowing energy of the Rhine. "Betrübt" carries the implication, especially in reference to water, of murkiness. The Danube, in direct opposition to the Rhine, presents the reader with a riddle, and far from being *Reinentsprungenes*, it alludes instead to the impure, *das Unreine*. The river occupies a space between being and non-being, contentment and despondency, clarity and contamination.

Both the poem and the river intensify contingency, or the possibility of divergent outcomes from one and the same narrative event, at foundational moments of cultural development. The poem begins with colonists who have come from the India across Greece to Germany and wish to use the Danube to establish a dwelling.<sup>94</sup> Their first desire is for fire, for heat, for the light of day. But the river, at least in Hölderlin's interpretation of Pindar's *Olympian 3*, offers shade and coolness, not heat, and therefore refuses the colonists' imperative, "Jetzt komme, Feuer!" In *Olympian 3*, Herkules travels to the land of the Hyperboreans, beyond the boundaries of the known world, to bring the shade of the olive tree back to Greece as part of the founding of the Olympic Games. According to Hölderlin's translation of *Olympian 3*, Herkules finds at the origins of the Danube the olive tree, "Die vormals / Von des Isters schattigen Quellen gebracht hat / Der Amphitryonide..." (MA II.193). He therefore places the space beyond the boundaries of the Greek world in his own cultural sphere. These boundaries, however, are permeable. Just as Isaak von Sinclair provides a model of one who can hold opposing states in a reversible balance in "Der Rhein," so in "Der Ister" does Herkules succeed in balancing the heat of Greece with the cool shade of the north, located across a boundary, beyond his own cultural space. He brings the shade in the form of the olive tree back to

<sup>93</sup> FKA refers to the following edition: Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, Frankfurter Ausgabe, ed. D. E. Sattler (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld, 2000).

<sup>94</sup> Hölderlin scholarship has belabored his fascination with cultural difference and displacement, the famed "Kulturwanderung" from east to west, from the Greek to the Hesperian. See Hansjörg Bay, "Die eigene Rede des andern'. Hölderlins Poetik des Fremden," *Die Ordnung der Kulturen. Zur Konstruktion ethnischer, nationaler und zivilisatorischer Differenzen 1750-1850*. Ed. Hansjörg Bay and Kai Merten (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006).

Greece and founds a cultural institution. Like Herkules, the colonists desire to cross a boundary and ground a culture, and they note that "Nicht ohne Schwingen mag / Zum Nächsten einer greifen / Geradezu / Und kommen auf die andere Seite." One cannot travel to the other side effortlessly, and one who only grasps that which is closest ("Zum Nächsten...greifen"), who remains within the boundaries of one's own culturally circumscribed space, will not achieve the goal. Herkules provides a model of one who, through strenuous exercise, in a movement so rapid that its poetic form manifests itself as swinging, *Schwingen*, manages to reach the other side.

However, the colonists desire fire, and they decide to establish their dwelling next to the Danube. The river, however, if one takes Herkules' journey as a paradigmatic instance of cultural foundation, offers only shade and coolness. One might speak, then, of a performative refusal by the river to grant that which the colonists desire, of a dislocation in time and space—they have arrived at the wrong river at the wrong point in time—that seems to thwart the colonist's goals. For above all, they desire duration, a culture that can exist over time, and for this they require furrows, holes and water in order to sustain themselves. The river, however, does not seem to grant them this duration:

Es brauchet aber Stiche der Fels  
Und Furchen die Erd',  
Unwirthbar wär es, ohne Weile;  
Was aber jener thuet der Strom,  
Weis niemand. (MA I.477)

The Danube neither confirms nor rejects the success of founding a culture and creating duration over time. The failure of the Danube operates more on a hermeneutic level than on a literal level; it presents the mind with an illegible, unreadable sign at a critical moment of cultural emergence.

In this poem, which is at first concerned with the conditions whereby cultural moments may acquire lasting meaningfulness, the poetic and semiotic stabilization of meaning itself misfires. The legibility of the river depends upon the ability to cognitively attune the human being to perceive difference as a higher-order unity, "Ein Zeichen braucht es / ... damit es Sonn / Und Mond trag' im Gemüth, untrennbar / Und fortgeh...." Both rivers in the poem, however, do not function as signs that would facilitate—or even permit—the ability to read opposition in the light of any higher-order intelligibility. Rivers as such form networks, not neat linear patterns of progression. In addition to the organic non-linearity in the ecology of rivers, the poem itself holds open the bifurcation between the Rhine and the Danube. Even the Rhine does not go forwards, but rather, sideways: "Der andre / Der Rhein ist seitwärts / Hinweggegangen." Although this sideways movement in fact proves to be a sign of health, forward motion is nevertheless conspicuously absent from the poem.

Moreover, both rivers represent a fluid imbalance in humoral-pathological terms. The Rhine appears choleric and the Danube melancholic or phlegmatic, the Rhine "knirscht" and the Danube is "betrübt" or "zufrieden." Physiologically, the rivers do not fulfill their function, which is to stimulate the "joy" of the divine being, "Darum sind jene [Ströme] auch / Die Freude des Höchsten." The rivers, however, circulate in a humoral

economy in which the sanguine, the desired humoral presence, appears precisely as lack. In this instance, the rivers seem to diverge not merely from their semiotic and cultural-foundational purposes for human beings, but for the divine as well.<sup>95</sup>

In "Der Rhein," the river achieves the sanguine state after its moment of breakthrough, although this state is never represented in "Der Ister." In "Der Rhein," the river's intensity, its transgression of boundaries, has been sublimated into cultural productivity:

Und schön ists, wie er drauf,  
Nachdem er die Berge verlassen,  
Stillwandelnd sich im deutschen Lande  
Begnüget und das Sehnen stillt  
Im guten Geschäfte, wenn er das Land baut  
Der Vater Rhein und liebe Kinder nährt  
In Städten, die er gegründet. (MA I.344)

The river has progressed from its juvenile and adolescent state to that of adulthood, eventually becoming a father and bestowing life. "Der Ister," however, portrays the Rhine at the moment before its breakthrough, at its most chaotic and constrained. It restores the river to the state of potentiality before its development toward the mature state visible in "Der Rhein," when it has subdued its drive to self-assertion and achieved a balance of opposing tendencies—activity and passivity, assertion of self and loss of self—thereby becoming *beautiful*, a balance one may hear in the harmonious alliterations of "s" and "g" in the above strophe. In "Der Ister," however, the sound of the Rhine bears no resemblance to its later, beautiful state. It is not "Wachstum" that becomes "hörbar," but dissonance and violence, marked by the collision of "n" and "z," "m" and "k," "k" and "n," *in den Zaum knirscht er*. The river struggles against containment, even breaking free of the dative and biting *into* his bridle, *in den Zaum*. The Rhine, the paradigmatic river for an idealized and beautiful cultural sublimation of energy, is thrown back to its state of potentiality at a point of bifurcation, when, not yet satisfied, it still clamors for release.<sup>96</sup>

In "Der Ister," Hölderlin notes that "Stiche" are necessary for the development of a durable human community and economy. The "Stiche" refer, in all likelihood, to the moment in which a stream breaks through the chain of mountains and draws new

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<sup>95</sup> Between the Rhine and the Danube, one may therefore perceive different paradigms of textual fluidity and corporeal fluidity. Albrecht Koschorke notes in reference to the literary culture of *Empfindsamkeit* that textual fluidity sublimates the model of humoral-pathological streams: "So bieten die Empfindsamen nicht nur das Weinen, die literarisch beförderte Rührung, sondern auch die Vorgänge des Lesens und Schreibens als solche eine Sublimierungsstufe des älteren Modells der physiologischen Ströme." Koschorke, *Körperströme und Schriftverkehr* 215.

<sup>96</sup> Joseph Vogl speaks of a "Zauderfunktion" that returns acts to their states of potentiality. In a certain sense, one may speak of "Der Ister" as a poem that—like the river—itsself performs a sort of *Zauderfunktion*. In other words, it is not that the river is "betrübt," but that it hesitates between being "betrübt" and "zufrieden." Vogl notes: "Im Unterschied zu verwandten Spielarten wie Unentschlossenheit, Trägheit, Ratlosigkeit, Willensschwäche oder bloßem Nichtstun, es hat vielmehr einen meta-stabilen Charakter und lässt gegenstrebige Impulse immer von Neuem einander initiieren, entfesseln und hemmen zugleich." Vogl, *Über das Zaudern* (Zürich: Diaphanes, 2007) 23. The Rhine and the Danube seem to inhabit precisely such a system of hesitation and equilibrium, regression and struggle.

boundaries, making possible agriculture and the development of human communities. In one of the *Pindar-Fragmente* entitled "Das Belebende," Hölderlin associates this very moment with the power of life itself, the movement from the inorganic to the organic. He associates "stechen" with the Greek κεντεῖν, in turn associated with centaurs (κεντεῖν and ταῦρος). Centaurs embody the spirit of the rivers themselves, inasmuch as they must, in an act of violence, break through the boundaries that constrain them and create new pathways, points of connection, and limits:

Der Begriff von den Centauren ist wohl der vom Geiste eines Stromes, so fern der Bahn und Gränze macht, mit Gewalt, auf der ursprünglich pfadlosen aufwärtswachsenden Erde.

Sein Bild ist deswegen an Stellen der Natur, wo das Gestade reich an Felsen und Grotten ist, *besonders an Orten, wo ursprünglich der Strom die Kette der Gebirge verlassen und ihre Richtung queer durchreißen mußte.*

Centauren sind deswegen auch ursprünglich Lehrer der Naturwissenschaft, weil sich aus jenem Gesichtspuncte die Natur am besten einsehn läßt.

In solchen Gegenden muß' ursprünglich der Strom umirren, eh' er sich eine Bahn riß. Dadurch bildeten sich, wie an Teichen, feuchte Wiesen, und Höhlen in der Erde für säugende Tiere, und der Centauer war indessen wilder Hirte, dem Odyssäischen Cyklops gleich; die Gewässer suchten sehnd ihre Richtung. (MA II.384)

Centaurs perceive the dynamics of nature as a process of constraint, a build-up of tension, a moment of breakthrough and release, and finally the creation of a new order, the grounding of a new culture. Centaurs embody this very process, and therefore are able best to observe the organization of nature as a cycle of revolutionary acts requiring violence before new orders can be generated. The organization of nature exhibits analogies with humoral pathology in this case as well, as if the tension generated by the mountains' constraint of the river requires release just as the imbalance of humors in the body requires blood-letting in order to restore equilibrium.

The bifurcation of the system of rivers, the Rhine and the Danube, foregrounds the possibility that the natural system will not, for whatever reason, be able to generate the movement of breakthrough and draw the necessary boundaries for the grounding of new cultural forms. While the Rhine appears poised to perform this function—something that the river does succeed in doing in the hymn "Der Rhein"—the Danube, on the other hand, in this particular manifestation, does not. Both rivers are portrayed poetically at moments of instability, when neither river's capacity to ground culture had yet become an inevitability. Inscrutable and unknowable, the river issues a challenge to the mind that would seek to guarantee the order of nature through any poetic exercise, suggesting that this task may ultimately end in aporia, if not in outright failure.

### 3. Hölderlin's "Patmos" and the Collapse of the Solid Letter

Hölderlin's "Patmos" belongs to a group of poems, traditionally labeled *Christushymnen*, that reveal his preoccupation with the Christian tradition, his attempt to articulate its place within a more comprehensive philosophy of nature.<sup>97</sup> The first version of this poem was dedicated to the Landgrave of Homburg in January 1803. Later, Hölderlin extensively reworked the text in versions that appear fragmentary, chaotic, and at certain points, barely intelligible.<sup>98</sup> It is difficult to form any definitive conclusions regarding the relationship between the earlier poem and the later texts due to the fragmentary nature of the latter. And yet, one must take into account the multiplicity of versions of the poem, the resonances and dissonances they create when they are read as fundamentally different versions of the same text.

"Patmos" internalizes Hölderlin's poetics of bifurcation, applying this pattern to its own textuality and its attempt to read the progression of history as a well-ordered system. Whereas other poems, such as "Andenken" and "Mnemosyne" or "Der Rhein" and "Der Ister" appear as bifurcations of one another, "Patmos" produces a self-bifurcation. The mutilation of the word itself, of its own linguistic process, corresponds to an interpretation of the Christian history of redemption that has become perforated with violence. The later reworkings of the poem, rife with decapitation, war and destruction—vivid images associated with the imagination of the French Revolution—seem to call into question the very project of a redemptive vision implied by the first version of "Patmos."<sup>99</sup> On the other hand, perhaps the violence itself *constitutes* this redemptive vision. The later fragments exhibit such a temporal blending between Christian history and French revolutionary history that the later versions of "Patmos" both make the Christian narrative into a narrative of violence (transposing the cultural situation of the eighteenth century onto scriptural history) as well as sacralize the violence of the French Revolution (transposing scriptural history onto the eighteenth century).

My goal is not to investigate how the poetic work expresses Hölderlin's ideological stance—much less to discern whether Hölderlin was "for" or "against" the Revolution—but rather, to examine how these ideological resonances intensify, break up, rearticulate, de-articulate both the lyric word and the larger poetic project of cultural transformation in which this word is invested. The collision of different temporal and

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<sup>97</sup> Recent scholarship has called into question the extent to which these poems can rightly be called "Christian"; the poet thematizes Christ as the brethren of pagan gods, in certain cases descending from Zeus himself. Anke Bennholdt-Thomsen and Alfredo Guzzoni argue that Christianity becomes absorbed into a polytheism that shares more characteristics with pagan antiquity than with Christian orthodoxy. See Anke Bennholdt-Thomsen and Alfredo Guzzoni, *Analecta Hölderliana: Zur Hermetik des Spätwerks* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1999) 126.

<sup>98</sup> See Jochen Schmidt's commentary in Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte* 1006.

<sup>99</sup> Hölderlin would have come into direct contact with the visible traces of the French Revolution in Bordeaux. Günther Mieth notes, "Die Place Dauphine, wo die Guillotine gestanden hatte, war wegen des blutigen Andenkens kaum noch bewohnt.... Vor allem aber war das allgemeine Bewußtsein der Bordeleser Einwohner noch derart stark von der revolutionären Zeit geprägt, daß sie von ihr—ohne gefragt zu werden—berichteten." Mieth, *Friedrich Hölderlin. Dichter der bürgerlich-demokratischen Revolution* 140.

mythological systems—pagan, Christian, and revolutionary—give rise to poetic formulations that do not seem to "cultivate" the solid letter, but rather, bear witness to its collapse. Hence the apparent ideological intensification that marks a shift from the first version to the later versions of "Patmos" gives rise to a more fractured poetic world, one in which revolutionary violence oscillates ambiguously between irredeemable destruction and potential salvation.

The first version of "Patmos" alternates between the first-person perspective and second-person address, between Christian monotheism and pagan polytheism, between the one and the many, weaving the web of relations into a comprehensive pantheistic philosophy of nature. In a passage addressed to the Landgrave of Homburg, the poet draws attention to the presence of the continually present sign of the divine:

Und wenn die Himmlischen jezt,  
So, wie ich glaube, mich lieben,  
Wie viel mehr dich,  
Denn Eines weiß ich,  
Daß nemlich der Wille  
Des ewigen Vaters viel  
Dir gilt. Still ist sein Zeichen  
Am donnernden Himmel. Und Einer stehet darunter  
Sein Leben lang. Denn noch lebt Christus. (MA I.452)

The sign of divinity, itself only legible through the poem's own stillness and sound, unites opposites in the act of reading, remaining "silent" even when the sky is thundering. Just as the semiotic operation underlying divine presence manifests itself in opposing orders of appearance, silence and sound, so too do descriptions of the divine proceed from the multiple (*die Himmlischen*) to the singular (*der Wille des ewigen Vaters*), moving from father and son, pagan (the thundering heavens standing metonymically for Zeus) to Christian, "Denn noch lebt Christus." Christ's continued presence manifests itself in the sign of the heavens, communicating silently to mortals, and under whose firmament one stands for the duration of one's life.

The divine is therefore always already there as a presence to be read. And indeed, the injunction at the end of "Patmos" calls to "cultivate the solid letter," and to interpret well that which exists:

Wir haben gedienet der Mutter Erd'  
Und haben jüngst dem Sonnenlichte gedient,  
Unwissend, der Vater aber liebt,  
Der über allen waltet,  
Am meisten, daß gepfleget werde  
Der veste Buchstab und bestehendes gut  
Gedeutet. Dem folgt deutscher Gesang. (MA I.453)

The "I" and "Thou" of the previous strophe have transformed into a "We." We, as human beings, unknowingly serve the earth and the light merely by virtue of being alive, that is

to say, unconsciously and unknowingly. According to the poet, however, the divine father prefers that a sign be actively cultivated, an injunction culminating in the hermeneutic task to "interpret well" that which exists, *bestehendes*, which is in turn made possible by human beings' belonging to that which subsists; the common root *stehen* appears in *bestehendes* and in the position of the human underneath the divine sign of nature, "Einer stehet darunter / sein Leben lang." Although the Landgrave of Homburg specifically desired an interpretation of the Bible that differentiated itself from the philological-critical methodologies of Enlightenment critics, the poet here expands the exegetical project to encompass not merely scripture, but all that exists, referring to a pan-hermeneutic process of interpretation.<sup>100</sup>

The "solid" letter itself recalls the "Zeichen / Am donnernden Himmel," that was to provide the link between the "I," the "Thou," the pagan gods and the Judeo-Christian tradition. "Der veste Buchstab" further refers also to the poem's own word, its continual foregrounding of signs not merely in nature, but in song, such as the appearance of "Ein Loosungszeichen, und hier ist der Stab / Des Gesanges, niederwinkend, / Denn nichts ist gemein" (MA I.452). Following the chain of signs from the "Loosungszeichen" to the "Stab des Gesangs" to "der veste Buchstab" moves toward a project of total redemption ("nichts ist gemein"). By conflating Christ/Dionysus as *logos* ("der frohlokende Sohn des Höchsten" [MA I.452]) and nature as text in the symbol of the solid letter, Christianity appears to become reconciled with nature—via an integration of Christ into the pantheon of the Greek gods—maintained by the act of interpretation or care for this letter (*pflügen*): of scripture, of nature, and finally, of poetry itself.

For the later Hölderlin, the hermeneutic injunction to interpret nature becomes correlated with the notion of revolution in some form. In *Hyperion*, the political revolution in contemporary Greece fails and a disenchanted Hyperion returns from an abortive revolutionary struggle only to confront the death of his beloved, the inability to see the divine in nature, and a correspondingly meaningless existence.<sup>101</sup> In a theoretical fragment from 1799, the renewal of the nation depends upon the correct interpretation of the relationship between human beings and nature: "Das untergehende Vaterland, Natur und Menschen insofern sie in einer besonderen Wechselwirkung stehen, eine *besondere* idealgewordene Welt, und Verbindung der Dinge ausmachen..." (MA II.72). The reciprocal organization of the nation, nature, and human beings reaches a flashpoint in the later "Patmos" fragments. The decline of the fatherland—accompanied by a hermeneutic crisis in which neither nature nor history can be "well interpreted"—finds its apparent resolution in the Christian narrative of redemption.

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<sup>100</sup> The Landgrave of Homburg had at first contacted Klopstock in order to write a poem that would recover the original spirit of the Bible, wresting it away from the domain of the Enlightened philologists and historicists. Klopstock, however, did not take up the Landgrave's offer. See Schmidt, *Hölderlin geschichtsphilosophische Hymnen: "Friedensfeier", "Der Einzige", "Patmos"* 185.

<sup>101</sup> Bertaux sees Hölderlin's entire oeuvre as a commentary on the French Revolution, and Lukacs claims that Hyperion is a *citoyen-Roman*. Pierre Bertaux, *Friedrich Hölderlin* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978). Compare Georg Lukacs, "Hölderlins Hyperion," *Werke* (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1964). Erotic fulfillment, nature, and the hope for political revolution are all intertwined with one another and each lead to dead ends in the work. *Hyperion* therefore may represent the attempt to rehabilitate a subject in despair through remembrance, letter writing, and human contact (i.e. through retelling his story to Bellarmin).

In the later version of "Patmos," two historical moments of regeneration—the French Revolution and the Christian history of salvation—become grafted together, mutually intermingling and contaminating one another with their historical potentialities. The juxtaposition of revolutionary imagery with scenes from the Christian tradition in the later revisions of "Patmos" injects a political dimension into Hölderlin's theological interpretation of the Christian narrative just as much as he imbues contemporaneous images of violence with theological significance. The main interpretive difficulty lies in understanding how revolutionary violence relates to the narrative of salvation. In the later fragments, it would seem that the poet uses revolutionary violence to problematize Christianity—and that in turn, this "problematized" Christianity then reflects back upon revolutionary violence as ultimately futile and senseless. The extent to which Hölderlin reformulates—indeed, inverts—the early formulations of "Patmos" becomes evident through comparing the first lines of the earlier poem with those of the later version:

Nah ist  
Und schwer zu fassen der Gott. (MA I.447)

The reworking of this opening in later versions appears as follows:

Voll Güt ist. Keiner aber fasset  
Allein Gott. (MA I.453)

The earlier version, "Nah ist / Und schwer zu fassen der Gott," formulates succinctly a problem that finds its resolution in the doctrine of the solid letter: the divine is all-encompassing not merely in a pantheistic sense, but also in the sense that it pervades culture, religious practice, and poetry itself. Hence the care of the solid letter—as hermeneutic activity that is attuned to the presence of the divine in the text of nature, the sacred scriptures, and the inspiration of song—does not necessarily "grasp" God, but revives points of mediation between the divine and the human. The opening lines of the later version, in contrast, appear fragmentary, enigmatic, and almost pessimistic. This formulation does not merely restate the earlier version, but in a certain sense, works in opposition to it, as one might glean from examining the verses on a purely formal level, where a striking topographical inversion becomes evident. One way of reading the rhythmic transformation is as follows:<sup>102</sup>

- ~  
~ - ~ - ~ ~ -  
  
to  
  
- ~ - / - ~ - ~ - ~  
~ - -

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<sup>102</sup> Boris Previsic points out that the first version "Patmos" utilizes a hexameter verse that is spread out over multiple lines. The subsequent versions of "Patmos" similarly break up the rhythmic integrity of the hexameter. Boris Previsic, *Hölderlins Rhythmus* (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld, 2008).

Whereas the earlier formulation incorporates God into the momentum of the rhythm, the later version detaches God from any sense of inner rhythmic pulse. Here, God appears as an accented word at the end of the second line, and although the poem is composed in free verse, the line functions almost catalectically, as if the word "God" were being deployed abruptly to cut the line. The rhythmic detachment of God from the metrical flow mirrors on a semantic level the excision of God from the opening sentence, "Voll Güt ist." God as the grammatical *subject* of the sentence drops out, becomes textually invisible as a feature of the poetic topography, whereas God as the *object* of the second sentence ("Keiner aber fasset / Allein Gott") must be read back into the first sentence in order to reconstruct its meaning.

The words "Voll Güt ist" allude to the problem of theodicy.<sup>103</sup> Each word refers to one of the divine attributes: totality, omnibenevolence, and omnipresence, or plenitude of being. Yet without the active constitution of meaning on the part of the listener or reader, the first three words threaten to dissolve into three disparate elements, mere attributes without any divinity that would provide the ground for their unity. The real subject of these first two lines is not even a human subject, but a negation of the human subject, a "no one": "keiner aber fasset / allein Gott." That no one can grasp God "allein" harbors a refined play word-play on the Spinozistic conception of divinity popularized by Lessing. Analyzing "allein" into its constituent parts produces "all" and "ein," articulating in microcosm the Heraclitan doctrine that the eighteenth century interpreted as the central tenet of pantheistic Spinozism: the *hen kai pan* or *die Alleinheit*.<sup>104</sup> And yet, the phonemes *all* and *ein*, the one and all, intended to signal divine perfection and totality, have become the concatenated emblem of a lonely God and an even lonelier creation, one cut off from the other: God as absent subject and unattainable object, the human being as negative presence unable to grasp God's perfection. In the opening lines, the figure of mediation appears as *lack* on the linguistic level; not only does "no one" grasp the divine alone, but the very grammar necessary to link the presence of God to the human being appears conspicuously absent. The divine and the human appear on opposite sides of a gulf whose connecting elements lie outside the scope of the lines' discrete formal construction.

These lines frame the question, in a fragmentary and provisional manner, whether or not a response to the problem of theodicy can be still be sought in the Judeo-Christian framework of salvation. Preoccupation with the redemption of history exists already in the earlier version of "Patmos" in the parable of the sower. There, the statement "Und nicht ein Übel ists, wenn einiges / Verloren gehet" (MA I.451)—the notion that some part of history may ultimately remain unredeemed—is shown to be the *wrong* way of conceptualizing the presence of the divine in time. This thought leads the poet down a path of imitating the divine through representation (making a "picture" of God) at the end

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<sup>103</sup> The work of Jochen Schmidt reveals to what extent the problem of theodicy was central for Hölderlin: "Die Theodizee und ihre kosmologische und geschichtsphilosophische Dimensionierung ist in Hölderlins Werk von grundlegender Bedeutung." Schmidt, *Hölderlin geschichtsphilosophische Hymnen: "Friedensfeier", "Der Einzige", "Patmos"* 226.

<sup>104</sup> For Hölderlin's relationship to Heraclitus, see Bennholdt-Thomsen, *Analecta Hölderliana: Zur Hermetik des Spätwerks* 120.

of which process the poet becomes rejected by the anger of the gods.<sup>105</sup> Ultimately, in the earlier version, the possibility of suffering unredeemed, of human destinies gone lost, is replaced by the ideology of the solid letter and interpreting well the divine, namely in a way that would justify the violence and the sacrifice necessary to achieve the ends of history.<sup>106</sup> The seemingly negative theology implicit in Hölderlin's opening lines do not merely show that—in a negative representation—the human cannot "grasp" the divine, but also that this very negativity throws the interpretation of history into a state of crisis.

The revisions of "Patmos" integrate this negative theological gesture into a historical moment in which the possibility of suffering unredeemed—in a Christian sense—appears palpable on the stage of world history. Indeed, the later versions emphasize that Christ does not die for human beings, but rather, human beings must die for Christ:

Vom Jordan fern von Nazareth  
 Und fern vom See, an Capernaum, wo sie ihn  
 Gesucht und Galiläa die Lüfte, und von Cana.  
 Eine Weile bleib ich, sprach er. Also wie mit Tropfen heiligen  
 Stillte er das Seufzen des Lichts, das durstigem Thier war oder  
 Dem Schreien des Huhns ähnlich, jenes Tages, als um Syrien, verblüht,  
 Gewimmert der getödteten Kindlein heimatliche  
 Anmuth wohlredend im Verschwinden, und des Täuffers  
 Sein Haupt stürzt und das goldene, lag uneßbarer und unverwelklicher Schrift  
 gleich  
 Sichtbar auf trokener Schüssel. Wie Feuer, in Städten, tödlichliebend  
 Sind Gottes Stimmen. (MA I.464-5)

Moments of violent suffering and points of redemption are interwoven in this passage so as to become indistinguishable. The miracles and baptisms performed by Christ—"Also wie mit tropfen heiligen / Stillte er das Seufzen des Lichtes"—amount to the attempt to silence or subdue moments of suffering in Christian history: Herod's massacre of the children in Syria and the decapitation of John the Baptist. When Christ "silences" this sigh for the light with "drops"—which recall both the ritual of baptism as well as the blood of Christ, an emblem of his own suffering—his service is intended to address and redress the scream of outrage that accompanies the suffering of history. And yet, the beheading of John the Baptist as well as the prevalent images of cities going up in flames recalls unmistakably the images of the French Revolution. Hölderlin blends the

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<sup>105</sup> After trying to imitate the divine, the poet sees this anger visibly: "Im Zorne sichtbar sah' ich einmal / Des Himmels Herrn, nicht, daß ich seyn sollt etwas, sondern / Zu lernen" (MA I.452). Jochen Schmidt interprets the notion that some things may go lost not as a false path, but as the reformulation of a more modest and rational interpretation of theodicy. To read this phrase in such a manner tears it out of context, for in the poem, precisely this thought begins the process through which the lyrical voice draws the ire of the gods. Compare Schmidt, *Hölderlin geschichtsphilosophische Hymnen: "Friedensfeier", "Der Einzige", "Patmos"* 288.

<sup>106</sup> See Bennholdt-Thomsen, *Analecta Hölderliana: Zur Hermetik des Spätwerks* 98. Bennholdt-Thomsen and Guzzoni agree that the presentation of theodicy at this point of the poem seems highly questionable in light of the later sense of despair, of having travelled down the wrong path.

catastrophic elements of Christian history with "das untergehende Vaterland"—which seems, in this context, to refer more to France than to Germany. Moreover, the poetic representation of the violence of the French Revolution as well as the terror in the Christian narrative of suffering seems to be emptied out of its potential for salvation, at least in the fragments that remain of the later version of "Patmos."

The poem nevertheless appears to have alighted upon a moment of potentiality: on the one hand, it gestures toward an ongoing hope for redemption, on the other, toward a budding despair stemming from the facticity of violence in history. The decapitation of John the Baptist becomes symbolic of this unresolved struggle, as his decapitated head inverts the Christian narrative of salvation through a negative representation of the Eucharist. The severed human head, unlike that of the divine, lies like a mere object in its place of rest. In contrast to the body of Christ, the Word become flesh ingested during the sacrament of Communion, this head is likened to "inedible writing" ("uneßbarer Schrift gleich"). Its appearance on a "dry" platter ("auf trokener Schüssel") testifies to the absence of blood, and hence to the impossibility of transubstantiation for the mere mortal.<sup>107</sup> In an earlier version, the allusion to wine was more explicitly emphasized through the use of the word "gepflückt" to describe John the Baptist's head (MA I.461). For the announcer of Christ, the mediator of the mediator, transubstantiation remains only a negative possibility.

The *uneßbare Schrift* therefore reveals the head of John the Baptist as incapable of embodying the immediacy of the divine as does Christ, traditionally the only true figure of mediation between the realm of the transcendent God and that of humanity. John the Baptist, a human mediator of the divine mediator, is *not* God, and the poetic word is not identical with the divine Word, the embodied *logos*. One may, of course, explain the negative Eucharist imagery of John the Baptist's head according to the temporality of Christian history itself. The Last Supper has not yet occurred in the poem, and the transubstantiation of Christ has not yet filled the bread and the wine with the immanence of divine presence. Yet the presence of the negative Eucharist in relation to John the Baptist's decapitated head remains enigmatic inasmuch as there is an obvious denial of divine immanence in the death of he who announces the coming of Christ. The poet himself—as mediator figure—becomes formally associated with Eucharistic sacredness, but emptied out of its redemptive potentiality.

If the head of John the Baptist paradoxically functions in the text itself as both an embodiment and a negation of divine immanence, the contemporaneous resonance of this scene with the violence of the French Revolution equally embodies and negates the immanence of the divine in human history. Because this decapitation functions as an emblem of the ultimate machine of the Terror, the text of John the Baptist's head appears

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<sup>107</sup> Nägele interprets the *uneßbare Schrift* of John the Baptist's head as the indigestible "excess" of the hermeneutic project. This suggestion is fruitful, but does not mention the importance of the religious context. Rainer Nägele, *Text, Geschichte und Subjektivität in Hölderlins Dichtung: "Uneßbarer Schrift gleich"* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1985) 2. Charles de Roche goes one step further and interprets this "writing" as a parody of the Eucharist: "Die Eucharistie ist in der Szene schon vom biblischen Text her gegenwärtig, der sie vor dem Hintergrund eines 'Abendmahls' spielen lässt und in der Darbietung des Hauptes auf der Schüssel die Parodie und Kontrafaktur des später geschilderten stellt." Charles de Roche, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Patmos. Das scheidende Erscheinen des Gedichts* (Munich: Fink, 1999) 198. I am claiming this passage is more than just a parody; it is a negative representation of the rites of the Eucharist.

as a complex cipher for the interwoven narratives of early Christian history and eighteenth-century revolutionary violence.<sup>108</sup> It does not suffice, however, merely to draw attention to the predominance of decapitation in the imagery of the poem in order to comprehend the relationship between revolutionary violence and Christianity. One can *hear* the fall of the guillotine as a structural principle at work in the rhythmic dynamics of the poem.<sup>109</sup> The following expressions of divine presence can be interpreted in the light of the stroke of the blade:

Voll Güt ist; keiner aber fasset  
Allein Gott. (MA I.453)

Or:

Johannes. Christus. Diesen, ein  
Lastträger möchte ich singen... (MA I.465)

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<sup>108</sup> The *uneßbare Schrift* of John the Baptist's head—so different from the *veste Buchstab*—may also function on a more elusive and hermetic level, although this hermetic and latent resonance results more from coincidence than from any concrete intertextual allusion. The hermetic potentiality of text is established by a correlation between John the Baptist's head as "unverwelklicher Schrift gleich" and an episode in Herodotus' *Histories*, which Bennholdt-Thomsen and Guzzoni consider as the principal source behind the image of "unwithering" script, see Bennholdt-Thomsen, *Analecta Hölderliana: Zur Hermetik des Spätwerks* 131. Histiaëus, in order to regain power in Miletus, shaves the head of his most trustworthy servant and cuts a message into his scalp in order to incite rebellion against the Persians. John the Baptist's head as "unwithering" script recalls the hidden and indelible writing etched into the slave's scalp. The original Greek, when read in a Christian context, resounds with religious significance: Herodotus uses ἀπόστασιν (apostasis) to designate the rebellion and τὰ στίγματα (stigmata) to describe the letters of the message cut into the scalp of the slave. When correlated with these potential intertextual resonances, the head of John the Baptist becomes a coincidental emblem of the ambivalent relationship between Christian imagery and revolutionary violence. The content of the message as an incitement to rebellion in turn references the notion of apostasy through the original Greek, *die Apostasie*, which Adelung defines as "die vorsetzliche Verlassung der wahren Religion, der Abfall." However, the form of the writing itself, described as stigmata (which in a Christian context denote the wounds of Christ that devout and often mystically-inclined Christians would receive as sympathy wounds), suggests a mystical communion with the suffering of Christ. The head of John the Baptist, embedded in a complicated network of textual and intertextual relations, draws revolutionary violence both toward the affirmation of Christianity in the form of the letter (the stigmata) and toward a denial of Christianity in the message itself (apostasy). The reference to Christianity through the stigmata, however, may also represent an intensification of the violence inherent the Christian tradition rather than an affirmation of its redemptive qualities, for the text underscores bodily suffering as the main point of contact between revolution and Christianity in its linguistic resonance.

<sup>109</sup> Nägele, referring to Jakobson's analysis from Scardanelli, says, "Am Ende steht die buchstäbliche Köpfung des eigenen Namens." Nägele, *Text, Geschichte und Subjektivität in Hölderlins Dichtung: "Uneßbarer Schrift gleich" 2-3*. Jakobson says, "Wenn man in den Namen Scardanelli und Hölderlin den ersten Vokal und was vorangeht streicht, ergibt sich, daß die Acht-Buchstaben-Reihe -rdanelli alle sieben Buchstaben der sequenz -lderlin in verstellter Ordnung wiederholt." Roman Jakobson, and G. Lübbecke-Grothues, "Ein Blick auf *Die Aussicht* von Hölderlin," *Selected Writings. Poetry of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry*, ed. Stephen Rudy, vol. 3 (The Hague: Mouton, 1981) 390. Although this linguistic ingenuity remains speculative, Nägele and Jakobson show that it is nevertheless possible to intimate violence from the formal manipulation of language itself.

The fragmentation in the rhythm reinforces the chasm that separates the poet-mediator from God. The principle of rhythmic dismemberment known traditionally as *harte Fügung* does not derive merely from the imitation of Pindaric verse,<sup>110</sup> but acquires renewed resonances by recapturing sonically and poetically the fall of the blade. Returning to the first line, it is as if God as subject were violently severed from the space of the poem. In the second passage—"Johannes. Christus. Diesen, ein / Lastträger möcht ich singen"—the rhythmic stops are coordinated with semantic dislocation. The poet could sing either the mediator or the God—who is also a mediator as Christ—thereby initiating a chain of mediation, disrupted only by an undecidability concerning *who* should be the mediator. The epithet "Lastträger,"—from the manuscripts it is difficult to tell whether the word even belongs in the passage—does not differentiate between the two forms of mediation. Both Johannes and Christ, each in their own way, carry burdens. Moreover, the word itself appears in the nominative, *ein Lastträger*, therefore moving the burden closer to the first-person lyrical voice, as if one might read: *ich, ein Lastträger, möcht singen*. Just as forms of mediation multiply themselves amidst shifting deictic signifiers, so too does the burden, moving between Christ, Johannes, and the poet himself, spread into and between the very space of signs.

Christianity and revolutionary violence appear to mutually implicate one another in the understanding of history with which the poetic voice continually grapples. The evaluation of revolutionary violence—whether or not such violence is justified for the creation of a future state—could be rendered intelligible by the redemption of sacred violence in the Christian tradition. The problem of theodicy then becomes central for the poet's attempt to interpret contemporary political struggle, as both Christian theodicy and the violence of revolutionary projects share the same temporal structure of justification: an ultimate end suffices to redeem seemingly unjustifiable means to achieve this end. However, if the theological structure of justification loses ground, the poet will be incapable of sustaining his role in the overall project of "interpreting well" the phenomenon of revolution. Hence the poet "would like" to sing Christ, John the Apostle, and other figures from Christian history, only to find himself incapable of doing so:

Johannes. Christus. Diesen, ein  
 Lastträger möcht ich singen, gleich dem Herkules, oder  
 Der Insel, welche gebannet, und angeblümt, sinnreich, erfrischend  
 Die benachbarte mit kalten Meereswassern aus der Wüste  
 Der Fluth, der weiten, Peleus. Aber nicht  
 Genug. Anders ist ein Schiksaal. Wundervoller.  
 Reicher, zu singen. Unabsehlich  
 Seit dem die Fabel. Und auch möcht  
 Ich die Fahrt der Edelleute nach  
 Jerusalem, und wie Schwanen der Schiffe Gang und das Leiden irrend in Canossa,  
 brennendheiß  
 Und den Heinrich singen. Aber daß uranfängs

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<sup>110</sup> Such is the thesis first advanced by Norbert von Hellingrath, the first editor of Hölderlin to apply philological rigor to his poetry. Hellingrath, *Pindarübertragungen von Hölderlin. Prolegomena zu einer Erstausgabe*.

Der Muth nicht selber mich aussezze. Schauen, müssen wir mit Schlüssen,  
Der Erfindung vorher. Denn theuer ists,  
Das Angesicht des Theuersten. Nemlich Leiden färbt  
Die Reinheit dieses, die rein

Ist wie ein Schwerdt. (MA I.465)

To sing "Christ" or "Johannes" entails that one must also sing the entire course of historical unfolding. The poet appears seduced by the blending of Christian and Pagan history; it is not "enough" for him to compare Christ to Herkules, since Christian history has introduced an element of the miraculous that escapes the realm of the pagan. And just as equally, the poet appears incapable of fully singing the Christian history that ensues, the Crusades and the denigration of Heinrich IV.<sup>111</sup> Not only does Heinrich IV's walk to Canossa iconographically put on display the triumph of sacred power over secular power, but the king himself, during a time of chaotic struggles for power, was later deposed, a movement which intensified civil strife at the beginning of twelfth-century German history. One wonders whether the poet would like to sing about the suffering of Heinrich in a valorizing manner—or perhaps to sing the king who was *deposed*. The suffering of the king is "irrend"—not merely as one who wanders in suffering, but rather, one who strays from the path. The "brennendheiß" may refer either to the Crusades—in which case the description is apt—or may signal a conscious inversion of the myth of Heinrich IV on the part of the poet, since Heinrich IV is rumored to have stood in the snow at Canossa. These lines reveal an intense ambivalence concerning the use of violence and the assertion of a sacred power. For the poet expresses doubts not just about his own ability to sing, but about the content of that which he *wishes* to sing: "Aber daß uranfangs / Der Mut nicht selber mich aussezze." On the one hand, the poet seems to wish that courage not "exclude" him from his task in singing these events; on the other hand, the verb "aussezzen" may equally designate the wish that courage would prevent him from "setting out" with the Crusaders, with those who take arms against the pagan world. His courage signals a wish both to be included in and excluded from the narrative of Christian history. At a point of indeterminacy, none of the models of history seem to function for the poetic voice's attempt to make violence intelligible.

The poet notes that "theuer ists / Das Angesicht des Theuersten." The representations of violence in sacred contexts reveal that human beings must pay dearly to hold on to a conception of the divine. The poet has not forgotten the Crusades, he desires to sing of religious wars, yet he finds this undertaking almost impossible—or desirable—"from the outset" ("uranfangs"). And although the history of religious strife and suffering for which the divine image is directly responsible "colors" the purity of Jesus, he nevertheless remains pure—as a sword.<sup>112</sup> Whether the blood spilled tarnishes

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<sup>111</sup> The famous *Gang nach Canossa* acquired a heavy nationalistic significance in 1872 when Bismarck claimed that Prussia would not grovel before the Pope in order to resolve the *Kulturkampf* between the Catholic Church and the Prussian state. It goes without saying that this ideological significance is not present in the eighteenth century, let alone in Hölderlin's verses. Rather, the lines referring to Heinrich IV are much more to be understood as the desire to sing of one who has "returned" to the Church and suffered for it—an act that the poet himself appears incapable of undertaking.

<sup>112</sup> Compare de Roche, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Patmos. Das scheidende Erscheinen des Gedichts* 213-15.

the image of Christ or whether Christ ennobles the power of the blade constitutes the central dilemma of the work—an ambivalence registered in Christ's phrase, "I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34).

The poet suggests that the duplicity of vision necessitated by a hermeneutic confrontation of violence appears impossible: in order to produce the song of such a religious perspective, one must be able to "see" with the "ends" of "invention" beforehand, that is, to be able to read the ends of history that would justify violent conflict: "Schauen, müssen wir mit Schlüssen, / Der Erfindung vorher." The phrase "mit Schlüssen"—alluding to the "ends" of history (the use of the plural already suggests the refutation of one redemptive teleological solution) that would redeem the violence arising from the incommensurability of systems of belief—recalls the "Schüssel" upon which rests the head of John the Baptist.<sup>113</sup> Evoking this moment in the poem is tantamount to a reminder of the violence incurred in religious narratives and projects of revolutionary violence that functioned as a negative, emptying-out of redemptive content from Eucharistic rituals. The resonance of these two moments in the poem, Jesus' sword-like purity and the head of John the Baptist, is effected linguistically by means of a shift in letters, a contamination of "Schlüsse" with the "Schüssel." And here one sees clearly: the doctrine of *der veste Buchstab* as the solid letter—along with the acceptability of the Christian eschatological history of redemption at the "end" of time—defeats itself ironically in the textual self-fragmentation of the later versions of "Patmos."

The defeat of the solid letter—which is, even in the first version of "Patmos" not quite so solid as it seems, as "vest" could be spelled either with a "v" or with a "f"<sup>114</sup>—erodes the theological foundations bolstering the attempt to read a well-ordered universe from a history of continual suffering. With this strophe, the intelligibility of Christian theodicy appears to become an issue for the lyrical voice. And yet, the Holy Spirit, as a consolation for the apostles after the death of Christ, reveals itself in the thundering skies—once again recalling Zeus—which in turn culminates in the violent grounding of a new state:

... Aber jene nicht  
Von Thränen und Schläfen des Herrn wollten  
Lassen und der Heimath. Eingeboren, glühend  
Wie Feuer roth war im Eisen das. Und schadend das Angesicht des Gottes  
wirklich. Denn  
    ihnen  
Wie eine Seuche gieng zur Seite der Schatte des Lieben.  
Drum sandt er ihnen  
Den Geist, und freilich bebte  
Das Haus und die Wetter Gottes rollten

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<sup>113</sup> De Roche also mentions the proximity of the "Schlüssel" to the "Schlüssen," but does not see this as a reflection on the doctrine of the solid letter. See Charles de Roche, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Patmos. Das scheidende Erscheinen des Gedichts* 212.

<sup>114</sup> In Isaak von Sinclair's copying of the manuscript and in the printed version in the *Musen Almanach für das Jahr 1808*, for example, one reads "Der feste Buchstab," not Hölderlin's formulation as "Der veste Buchstab," a difference that Sattler emphasizes in his historical critical edition (FA 8:69).

Ferndonnernd, Männer schaffend, wie wenn Drachenzähne, prächtigen  
Schiksaals, (MA I.466)

The gift of the Spirit culminates in a simile alluding to the founding of Thebes—albeit here, the teeth of the dragon, pregnant with a glorious fate, themselves are cut off in the poem before they can develop into warriors—who would nevertheless proceed to cut themselves down. The process leading to this climactic simile again merges Christian, pagan, and revolutionary narratives. The love of the divine is equated with that of the homeland, a love that is inborn like "fire in iron" ("Feuer...in dem Eisen") akin to a glowing and metallic weapon in the process of being forged. The shadow of the dear one, of the departed Christ, accompanies the disciples "like a plague." This shadow—the memory of the beloved and the yearning for his irrecoverable presence, as he is now "a shade"—spreads like a sickness. The Holy Spirit is sent in order to remedy this illness, and yet, it manifests itself in natural images that recall the Greek pantheon: the thundering skies, metonymy for Zeus, become prominent as one who "creates men." The political ramifications of this "gift" of the spirit become as ambivalent as the representation of Christ. The men who spring from the teeth of the dragon—literally springing from the ground of the homeland—are both founders of a new state as well as duplicitous bearers of civil strife. The passage in Ovid emphasizes the ambiguity of the metamorphosis in this ordinary scene of a new civil order:

"ne cape," de populo, quem terra creaverat, unus  
exclamat "nec te civilius insere bellis."  
Atque ita terrigenis rigido de fratribus unum  
comminus ense ferit; iaculo cadit eminus ipse.  
(Metamorphoses III 116-119)

["Do not strike," one of those who had been created with earth  
exclaims, "and do not graft yourself in civil wars."  
And thus he smites one of his earth-born brothers at close quarters  
With his rigid sword; he himself falls from a spear thrown from afar]

The verb *insero* (graft, sow) that the warrior uses in order to urge his brothers to lay down their arms—just as he himself cuts down one of his companions and is in turn struck by a spear—continues the sowing metaphor through which Cadmus raises the autochthonous army. Furthermore, this very metaphor was used by Hölderlin in the earlier version of "Patmos" in order to counter the notion that suffering may go unredeemed; the "Wurf des Säemanns," justifying that "nicht ein Übel ists, wenn einiges / verloren gehet," for "Ans Ende kommet das Korn," initiates a long process leading to the rage of the king of the gods (MA I.451). In the revisions of the poem, the sowing metaphor changes form; what was formerly deployed to describe a false teleology, a picture of history in which the ends justify the means, becomes in the latter versions an ambivalent display of violence leading to the foundation of a new state. The example of Thebes in particular, as the content of this foundational myth that is cut down at the moment of its own becoming, functions as a model of tyrannical kingship in *Antigone*, one that, as Hölderlin notes,



The folio page begins with an address to a heathen culture marked as "other" than that of normative Christian piety, *Heidnisches / Jo Bacche*. This call to the *techne* of heathen culture articulates a concept of "revenge" spanned between two temporalities: forward and backward, *Gerüchet oder vorwärts. Die Rache gehe / Nemlich zurück*. The "forward" temporality would seem to invoke change as revolution, whereas the backward-directed revenge—which, in a subjunctive mood, is either said to go backwards or is urged to go backwards by the poet—would seem to indicate some future point of time from which the evil deeds of the past would be subject to punishment. The poet fears for the present moment, lest God or the gods call forth a new flood to punish the godless among the mortals, *Und daß uns nicht / Dieweil wir roh sind, / Mit Wasserwellen Gott schlage*. The beginning of the verses suggests that the human being must learn "a heathen thing" (*heidnisches*), to learn the fate of one's hands (*der Hände Geschik*), in order to avoid the fate of the punishing god.

Yet in the context of the lines that follow, the exercise of one's hands seems to refer to the wielding of a weapon. The guillotine, a razor-sharp blade that spares the joints of the executioner—for a sword that is "geschliffen mittelmäßig gut" ends up ruining the joints, "die Gelenke verderbt"—hovers in the background of this strophe as a solution to the defective bluntness of the "secret knife." The sword ruins not only the "joints" (*Gelenke*) of the executioner, but also, the joints of time itself, the turning points that attach one discrete element with another and permit a turning or a rotation of the total system. In this passage, the human sword represents something that does not cut *well enough* and the divine manifests itself as something that, on the contrary, operates sharply, precisely, and efficiently. The guillotine appears not only to be commensurable with Christ's return, but even emblematic of the redemptive force of the divine itself. Hence at the end, the poet notes, "Auch so machet / Das Recht des Zimmermannes / Das Kreuz." The right of the carpenter makes the cross just as the poet speaks of the fatherland, whose revolutionary agents seem to be poised between challenging the authority of the divine in an act of hubris (*gleich Edeln Gott versucht*) and heros (*Ein Herz sieht aber Helden*).

Thus, on the same page in which the project of revolution becomes coextensive with Christian redemption, a potentially opposite formulation confronts the reader: it is not the guillotine that becomes idealized through association with the return of divine immanence into the world, but rather, it is the Christian conception of God that becomes tainted by spilled blood. In the passage immediately following the discussion of the "secret knife," the poet notes that the space of the fatherland must not become a coffin, a "small" space ("Daß aber uns das Vaterland / nicht werde / Nicht zusammengehe zu kleinem Raum / Zum kleinen Raum" [FHA 7.353]). On the contrary, the impulse to establish a fatherland cannot include a diminishing of its boundaries and the impulse toward violence. Instead of the revolutionary birth of nationhood established through the authority of the guillotine, poetry itself becomes the locus of a different form of expansive space. The poetic struggle against the fatherland as "too small of a space" reveals itself visually in the topographical lengthening of the line, musically in the multiplication of beats:

Daß aber uns

Das Vaterland  
nicht werde  
Nicht zusammengehe zu kleinem Raum.

Zum kleinen Raum. Schwer ist der  
Zu liegen mit Füßen [oder] den Händen auch.  
Nur Luft. (FHA 7.353)

This conception of the "fatherland" attempts to think beyond a purely spatio-temporal battleground ultimately shrinking to the confines of a coffin, but rather, redefines the nation through a more inclusionary conception of poetic space—only *air*, that which envelops all of the living and sustains the very process of life. It is not just fear for the poet's own death that emerges from these lines, but death as such. When the poet speaks of avoiding the coffin-like confines of a fatherland predicated on death, the conception would seem to enter into tension with the endorsement of violence found elsewhere on the page.

This violence is something that Hölderlin, in a famous letter to Böhlendorff in November 1802 during work on the first version of "Patmos," claims to have encountered during his journey to Bordeaux:

Das gewaltige Element, das Feuer des Himmels und die Stille der Menschen, ihr Leben in der Natur, und ihre Eingeschränktheit und Zufriedenheit, hat mich beständig ergriffen, und wie man Helden nachspricht, kann ich wohl sagen, daß mich Apollo geschlagen.

In den Gegenden, die an die Vendée gränzen, hat mich das wilde kriegerische interessirt, das rein männliche, dem das Lebenslicht unmittelbar wird in den Augen und Gliedern und das im Todesgeföhle sich wie in einer Virtuosität fühlt, und seinen Durst, zu wissen, erfüllt.  
(MA II.921)

The experience of the French countryside awakens a powerful attraction for the poet to the "violent element" in nature.<sup>116</sup> The searing quality of the light in France, the "fire of the sky," provides the impetus through which the poet, struck by the sun-god Apollo, transports himself into the world of Antiquity. The poet's receptivity to the destructive element of nature is correlated to an interest in the inhabitants of the French countryside, individuals who paradoxically embody both idyllic and warlike ideals.<sup>117</sup>

To talk about "warlike" nature in France at this time unmistakably conjures the spirit of the Revolution, the ripening of an ideology of democracy into catastrophic nationalist fervor. Hölderlin mentions the area surrounding the Vendée. In the area

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<sup>116</sup> Peter Szondi notes, "Die Frankreichreise riß Hölderlin aus der Dämmerung. Ihm begegnete dort *das gewaltige Element, das Feuer des Himmels*, um das seine Dichtung seit je kreiste, zugleich mit den Menschen des Südens, die sich in diesem verzehrenden Licht zu fassen wußten." Szondi, *Einführung in die literarische Hermeneutik* 211.

<sup>117</sup> See Jean-Pierre Lefebvre, "Hölderlin: Frankreich als Kur und als Krankheit," *KultuRRévolution* 35 (1997).

surrounding the Vendée, the Chouans, a group consisting largely of peasants and led by Royalists, undertook a series of counter-revolutionary violent uprisings beginning in 1793 and continuing intermittently until 1815 *against* the Terror. The "warlike" ethos among the peasants of this area was widely associated with counterrevolutionary violence.<sup>118</sup> Nevertheless, Hölderlin may be obliquely praising revolutionary violence by transposing it onto the ideologically safer region of the Vendée. What remains is Hölderlin's equation of "virtuosity" with techniques of warfare. Throughout the process of writing and revising "Patmos," the poetic voice would continue to be attracted to this violence while simultaneously probing the conditions whereby such violence could count as justifiable. As the brutality of the poetic imagery becomes more highly compressed, so do the representations of the Christian narrative appear increasingly ambivalent regarding their capacity to redeem acts of terror. The motion toward an interpretive poetic gesture that would secure a redemptive meaning for such violence in the later version of "Patmos" itself becomes truncated in the middle of its own simile, the description of the founding of Thebes. It leaves off at precisely the moment of potentiality in which a new civic order might emerge from a form of violence at first opposed to civic order. Moreover, the order that emerges from this violence triggers a series of violent revolutions that seem never to end and that never seem capable of generating a stable form of political organization.

Thinkers in the eighteenth and nineteenth century were highly invested in the attempt to read order into the chaos of history and to base political programs on this interpretive activity. As long as Hölderlin's desire to cultivate the solid letter remained limited to the attempt to uncover the immanence of the divine in nature, in human relations, and in those elements of Christianity that cohere with the concept of immediacy and mediation (Christ as God and man, Johannes as divine mediator through the word), the project remained on relatively stable ground. As soon as he began to explore history in a wider sense—in a way that brought together the catastrophes of Christian history with those of his own age—the solidity of this letter began to crumble.

### **Conclusion: Modalities of Poetic Being**

In "Urtheil, Seyn," Hölderlin discusses the problem of relating *Seyn* and *Urtheil* as an exercise in modal thought. He notes that "Wirklichkeit" and "Möglichkeit" both appear as concrete possibilities in acts of consciousness: "Es giebt für uns keine denkbare Möglichkeit, die nicht Wirklichkeit war" (MA II.50). These two modalities belong in consciousness as a self-relation; they presuppose the world of difference and separation, and hence are aligned with *Urtheil*. The concept of necessity, on the other hand, is aligned with reason, or in Kantian terms, with a postulate of practical reason, belonging not to the order of the real, but how the real ought to be: "Deswegen gilt der Begriff der Möglichkeit auch gar nicht von den Gegenständen der Vernunft, weil sie niemals als das,

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<sup>118</sup> The counterrevolutionary struggle also included a religious dimension, see Gabriel du Pontavice, *Les armées catholiques et royales au nord de la Loire: petite histoire des Chouans* (Loudéac: Yves Salmon, 1989).

was sie seyn sollen, im Bewußtseyn vorkommen, sondern nur der Begriff der Notwendigkeit" (MA II.50). The concept of necessity, however, does belong to the objects of reason, precisely because it postulates not possibility, but teleological order, how the world ought to be organized.

For Hölderlin, the order of necessity, which can only be formulated as postulate of reason, cannot appear concretely as a being, nor can it appear as a determinate possibility. Human beings cannot *perceive* necessity—or the harmonious organization of nature and history—they can only postulate it. However, to postulate necessity philosophically, as does Kant, constructs necessity as a regulative idea, it does not actually reveal the hidden order that is merely postulated as an idea of reason.

Poetry, for Hölderlin, as an appearance in the world, can only be conceptualized and produced as a reality and as a possibility. However, poetry can resignify the points of transition between orders of possibility and generate the affect of necessity; that which appears radically contingent to the evidence of the senses, in the poetic utterance becomes felt as necessity. For Hölderlin, poetry can generate a cognitive state wherein the modalities of possibility, reality, and necessity become present in one and the same act, a process whereby "Die Auflösung also als Nothwendige, auf dem Gesichtspunkte der idealischen Erinnerung wird als solche idealisches Object des neuentwickelten Lebens..." (MA II.73). The transition between radically different cultural and political orders, which appears as violence and revolution, makes manifest the order of divine necessity through the poetic act, and "die Auflösung des Unendlichneuen" is felt "nicht als vernichtende Gewalt, sondern als Liebe" (MA II.76).

Hölderlin is aware of the ambivalence of this project. To succeed in generating necessity would seem to eliminate precisely the moment of contingency, the state in which human freedom itself dwells: "Im Zustande zwischen Seyn und Nichtseyn wird aber überall das Mögliche real, und das Wirkliche ideal, und diß ist in der freien Kunstnachahmung ein furchtbarer, aber göttlicher Traum" (MA II.73). If poetry resignifies the gaps between being and non-being, making the possible real, and the real ideal, the one modality that disappears is that of the possible. Hölderlin therefore sees the success of a process of "idealistic remembrance" as both a terrifying, and a divine dream. His poetic practice itself appears characterized by the ambivalence of this goal, simultaneously desiring and fearing the full manifestation of the divine, which would in turn annihilate the realm of the human *as* a being who exists in the realm of the possible.

One may therefore detect a divergence in his poetic practices from that which his poetological texts often portray as the ideal to be actualized. In "Der Ister," in "Patmos," in "Mnemosyne," in "Hälfte des Lebens," indeed in countless other texts, Hölderlin's poetic utterance intensifies not the attraction toward idealistic remembrance, to divine necessity, but to its contrary, to the possibility that not all dissolution can be reintegrated into the order of the beautiful, to a re-opening of the space of contingency. If poetry consists in an exercise in modal cognition, the attempt to activate these modalities in one and the same poetic space, his later poems suggest the order of modalities lose their integrity. The poetic treatment of the real world, poised between the contingent world of possibility and the deterministic world of necessity, veers toward the contingent precisely because it is *poised* between these two modal views. To regard the real as necessary

entails that the divine become *implicated* in the violence of the real, a conclusion that becomes increasingly visible in the revisions of "Patmos."

Hölderlin's poetry initiates a movement of transcendental concentration, making language bear the burden of verifying the necessity of the real at the precise moment when the real appears only at a position of intensified possibility. In order to both preserve the divine dream of necessity and prevent the terrifying elimination of all possibility from human experience, he understood poetry as a form of modal reversibility, a space in which necessity and possibility could coexist in the same affective and poetic texture. To view the violence of the world as necessary violence, the presence of holy terror in the form of earthly suffering, to see any such *Räthsel* as *reinentstrungenes*—"Nemlich Leiden färbt / Die Reinheit dieses, die rein / Ist wie ein Schwerdt" (MA I.465)—raised a possibility that, it seems, even the gods themselves could not sustain.

## Part II: Imagination, Perturbation, Stimulation

### Chapter 1: Disequilibrium and the Movement of Poetry

#### 1. Poetry as a Way of Life

Poetry is not merely something that we do, a thing composed or enjoyed, one human activity among others. It is the atmosphere in which we live and breathe, or so it seemed for Novalis. He writes in a letter to Caroline Schlegel: "Man muß eine poëtische Welt um sich her bilden und in der *Poësie* leben" (HKA IV.275).<sup>119</sup> For Novalis, the form-generating activity of the human being does not merely create things, objects in the world, but rather, new worlds in which objects themselves find their home. It is in this sense, and this sense only, that Romantic poetry could be said to be absolute—or in German, *unbedingt*—for poetry is not a thing (*Ding*), but rather, a world in which things appear.

Novalis was fully aware of the difficulty—the impossibility—of ever being able to *live* poetry in the manner he described above. In the same letter, he writes to Caroline, "Jetzt leb ich ganz in der *Technik*, weil meine Lehrjahre zu Ende gehn, und mir das bürgerliche Leben mit manchen Anforderungen immer näher tritt" (HKA IV.275). The impossibility of ever being able to fully live in a realm of poetic enchantment suggests that poetry represents a task for thought rather than a universal ontology. Despite the fact that Novalis believes that all cognition contains an irreducibly fictional component, he often does not make a naive equation of life with poetic being, but rather, speaks in imperatives: "Die Welt muß romantisirt werden" (HKA II.545). Life does not begin as poetry, but it has the potential to become poetic. Every true Romantic is simultaneously a failed Romantic, as poetry must always cede to the demands of everyday life.

What, however, is poetry, according to Novalis, and from where does its claim over life originate? Although Novalis considers many different definitions of poetry, each of which illuminates certain facets of the poetic enterprise, one of his most striking statements about poetry culminates in a tautology: "Die Poësie ist durchaus personell und darum unbeschreiblich und indefinisabel. Wer es nicht unmittelbar weiß und fühlt, was Poësie ist, dem läßt sich kein Begriff davon beybringen. Poësie ist Poësie. Von *Rede(Sprach)kunst* himmelweit verschieden" (HKA III.685). In this instance, Novalis' definition of poetry would seem to be a non-definition, or a paradoxical one at best: the

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<sup>119</sup> References to Novalis, following the format (HKA Volume number.Page number) refer to the following edition: Novalis, *Schriften. Die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, ed. Paul Kluckhohn and Richard Samuel, 6 vols. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960).

defining characteristic of poetry is that it does not have any such defining characteristic. Poetry makes a scandal of the question: "What is it?" And yet, this non-definition says more about the Novalis' conception of poetry than any assertoric statement could hope to accomplish.<sup>120</sup>

Above all, the statement "poetry is poetry" does not assert that the ineffability of poetry can only be "felt" or "experienced," and hence, can only be approached outside of language. In order to understand why this is so, one must differentiate between the semantic content of the utterance and its value as a task for thought. The divergence between semantic content and exercise value may be considered a form of irony, but it is an irony that emerges in a gap between what a statement *claims* and what a statement intends to *produce* as a movement of consciousness. The exercise value of the utterance can only be unfolded by examining more closely its form. To anticipate the main argument, which will only become clear after a significant amount of philosophical explication: Novalis is not saying that the essence of poetry escapes language, but rather, that poetry *emerges from the logical, cognitive, and creative attempt to grasp a tautology*.

This interpretation of Novalis' conception of poetry explicitly diverges from the typical understanding of Romantic poetry as a variation on a theme of inexpressibility, its circumscription within the confines of an *Unsaßbarkeitstupos*.<sup>121</sup> If Novalis were truly claiming that poetry is feeling and cannot be expressed, one would have to say with Wittgenstein, "Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen."<sup>122</sup> The work of art would close itself to language, to thought, and become pure experience and pure immanence.<sup>123</sup> And yet, Novalis does not remain silent about poetry. If there is

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<sup>120</sup> Gerhard Schulz claims about these oft-cited poetological remarks that they seem to bolster the "irrationalist" interpretation of Romanticism: "Irritierende Gedanken bleiben sie, denn schließlich ist ein aporetischer Satz wie 'Poësie ist Poësie' im Grunde nichts anderes als die Abdankung aller Versuche, ihr mit Hilfe jenes begrifflichen Denkens näherzukommen, auf das nun einmal die Wissenschaft angewiesen ist." Gerhard Schulz, "Poesie als Poetik oder Poetik als Poesie?," *Novalis. Poesie und Poetik*, ed. Herbert Uerlings (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2004) 102. However, as I hope to show, *Poësie ist Poësie* actually condenses the poetic act to its most basic form, the tautology.

<sup>121</sup> Such, for example, has been, the usual understanding of the meaning of poetry for Novalis. His conception of poetry is usually assimilated to Schelling's notion of poetry as another form of intellectual intuition, or an intuition of the unrepresentable ground of being. René Wellek, for example, notes, "[Novalis] gives a more mystical twist to Schelling's theory and connects it more clearly with the special conception of poetry as dream and fairy tale. Poetry in Novalis is virtually identified with religion and philosophy, and the poet is exalted beyond any other human being. A sense of poetry, he recognizes, has much in common with a taste for mysticism." René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism 1750-1950. The Romantic Age*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981) 82. He proceeds to cite the above quote as evidence for his claim, and as I hope to show, by making poetry "indefinable" he does not make it the subject of an *Unsaßbarkeitstupos* or permit an "intellectual intuition" of absolute being, but rather, sees poetry as a continual perturbation and overturning of reflective orders, of ways of organizing the world. Poetry therefore functions more as stimulus than as mystical intuition.

<sup>122</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. C. K. Ogden (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1992) 156.

<sup>123</sup> Manfred Frank, for example, claims, "Nur die unausdeutbare Sinnfülle des Kunstwerks kann positiv zeigen, was sich nicht definitiv in Wissen auflösen läßt. So wird das Kunstwerk zur einzig möglichen 'Darstellung des Undarstellbaren' (NS III 685/6, Nr. 671)." Frank, *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik* 255. He provides much evidence to support this point of view. However, he neglects the apparent performative contradiction at the core of Novalis' fragments: Novalis keeps *representing* the unrepresentability of art. Therefore, when Novalis speaks of art as "representing the unrepresentable," he is

something about poetry that escapes articulation, it requires articulation to foreground its own transcendence from the very realm of articulation. On the contrary, then: poetry is not that which escapes articulation, but that which *calls out for* articulation. Here is the enigma of poetry, its *explicandum*: in its very irreducibility to language, it beckons language.

In the same passage, when Novalis claims that poetry must be felt in its immediacy, he is not relegating poetry to a matter of opinion, or poetry as a mere subjective feeling. If Novalis does claim that poetry can only be "felt," or known "immediately," one must distinguish between feeling as a subjective state, and feeling as a more primordial form of awareness. In Novalis' notes on Fichte's philosophical texts, written in 1795 and now known as the *Fichte-Studien*, feeling does not refer to a mere subjective emotion, nor is it opposed to reason as such. Feeling does, however, refer to a cognitive state that ultimately escapes the domain of reflection, the specific act of consciousness in which an "I" conscious of itself as a subject examines its own consciousness as an object. At the same time, feeling, as an originary awareness of self before this self has become an object for thought, makes reflection possible. There is a paradox at the heart of reflection: in order for the subject to recognize itself as an object, it must already know itself prior to its having become an object for itself. It is precisely this problem that motivates Fichte to claim that the I posits itself, so that one may speak of a "knowing" prior to the structure of subject-object reflection; according to Fichte, the self-positing I must be able to intuit its own act of positing, so that every intuition (*Anschauung*) is grounded in this original act of self-positing.

Novalis disagrees that Fichte's conception of a self-positing I can function as a solution to the problem of self-recognition in the act of reflection. The origin of self-recognition cannot be grounded in a subject that has an awareness of itself positing—an origin that would seem to merely reduplicate the very problematic structure of subjectivity when there is not yet a subject. Instead, Novalis deduces philosophy from a *feeling*, not from an act of positing: "Die Philosophie ist ursprünglich ein Gefühl. Die Anschauungen dieses Gefühls begreifen die filosofischen Wissenschaften" (HKA II.113). Feeling, unlike the Fichtean concept of self-positing, designates a more originary form of awareness, as pre-discursive, pre-reflective, and above all, pre-subjective.

Feeling designates a primordial contact with pre-reflexive givenness, a form of awareness operating prior to any possibility of reflecting upon that which is given to consciousness in a higher-order act of cognition. "Es muß ein Gefühl von innern, nothwendig freyen Verhältnissen seyn. Die Philosophie bedarf daher allemal *etwas Gegebenes*" (HKA II.113). Feeling, as that which brings us into contact with our own

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not necessarily claiming that art accesses a reality that is unavailable to reflective thought, but rather, that art sees this unrepresentability as a *generator* of representations, as part of the drive toward multiplicity. Frank's proposition, while well grounded and highly sophisticated, appears questionable from the perspective of the life of art: if he is correct, and art represents what is unrepresentable, then we no longer need to bother with interpreting the work of art, since its essence lies in making visible a non-articulable *feeling*, and any one interpretation necessarily misses this unrepresentable essence. However, Novalis explicitly ties this unrepresentability to the idea of an infinite poem, something to which we must keep returning, something that keeps working and keeps generating reflective orders of fictionality. And in this sense, the critic's imperative consists in generating as many different interpretive orders as possible, in drawing upon the representation of the unrepresentable as a *Fortsetzen*, the drive to language itself.

awareness before it can become an object for reflective consciousness, escapes all attempts at representation: "Die reine Form des Gefühls ist darzustellen nicht möglich. Es ist nur Eins und Form und Stoff, als componirte Begriffe, sind gar nicht darauf anwendbar" (HKA II.116). The act of representation presupposes a subject that represents some entity as an object for itself. Prior to representation, prior to reflection, there must be *something* to reflect. Only a pre-discursive, pre-reflexive feeling can access this originary something that then becomes an object for reflection. Feeling therefore has the unique capacity to be present both in consciousness and in an unconscious ground of givenness. Manfred Frank conceives of "feeling" as a "relationless intimacy" with one's self, or a *beziehungslose Vertrautheit*.<sup>124</sup> One would have to expand this definition not merely to a relationless intimacy with the self, but rather, with the world as well; for in this intimacy, there is presumably no "self" with which one could be intimate, but rather, merely the non-differentiated presence of givenness. If Novalis later refers to poetry as accessible only to feeling, he is not claiming that poetry is accessible only to an inarticulable emotional state, but rather that poetry comes into contact with the same pre-reflexive sphere of intimacy as the realm of this originary givenness.

For Novalis, feeling as a form of intimacy cannot merely be conceived as the absolute other of language or articulation. If one considers language merely as a differential system of signs—as representation—then language as such must exclude feeling as "relationless intimacy." However, when Novalis claims that "Poësie ist Poësie," and distinguishes it from rhetoric, or *Redekunst*, he is introducing another model for the operation of language at the basis of poetry, and it is from this model that we might perhaps be able to better understand not only what poetry is, but why it is important for life, why Novalis thinks it could become the very space in which we live. In order to think of poetry *as* poetry, as a pre-reflective intimacy that permeates all contexts of being, Novalis gives an account of language that cannot be reduced to a mere play of differences or to the attempt to *represent* something that has a specific content. Whereas rhetoric, or *Redekunst*, implies a conception of language as stylistic manipulation, poetry illuminates that by virtue of which human beings have awareness, both of themselves and of the world of phenomena. And yet, by opposing poetry to rhetoric, he is not claiming that poetry simply remains in the realm of the true, the natural, or the pure. Like cognition, it is made possible by identity with itself, but it must enter the realm of differences. The essence of poetry consists not in its connection to this realm of absolute being, but rather, in the *movement* from absolute being to a system of differences. Poetry therefore describes a movement toward deception, artifice, and impurity—and it is only by virtue of these impure modes of being that poetry can become a way of life, a task for thought, an activity that pushes the human being toward an intensification of his or her own finitude rather than an intuition of pure being or an escape from finitude as such.

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<sup>124</sup> See Frank, *Unendliche Annäherung* 809.

## 2. Originary Impurity and the Fiction of Truth

Let us return to Novalis' definition of poetry. "Poësie ist Poësie" (HKA III.685), says Novalis. The statement, written in 1800 shortly before Novalis' death, takes the appearance of a tautology,  $A=A$ . According to Novalis' studies of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* and from his reflection on Fichte's formula *Ich bin Ich*—Fichte's formula for the subject as a self-positing absolute activity—a tautology never merely reproduces an innocent claim of self-identity. At the center of the tautological assertion, in the space of the copula—indeed at the supposed Archimedian point of equivalence—lies a fundamental deception. Novalis begins his *Fichte-Studien* with the following statement:

In dem Satze *a ist a* liegt nichts als ein Setzen, Unterscheiden und verbinden. Es ist ein philosophischer Parallelismus. Um *a* deutlicher zu machen wird *A* getheilt. *Ist* wird als allgemeiner Gehalt, *a* als bestimmte Form aufgestellt. Das Wesen der Identität läßt sich nur in einen *Scheinsatz* aufstellen. Wir verlassen das *Identische* um es darzustellen. (HKA II.104)

The attempt to linguistically represent Being, the realm of the absolutely identical, can only take place within the differentiated world of appearances. It is because of this movement into the world of differences and individuation that the givenness of *Seyn* must be translated into the language of *Schein*. Even the tautological statement "*a ist a*," which expresses the identity of something with itself through the copula of Being, moves in the world of appearances. The very formula, by virtue of its entrance into the order of signs, reveals a duplicity of "*a*" just as much as identity; in the formula, there are two instances of the letter "*a*."<sup>125</sup> Moreover, the formula introduces a differentiation not merely in number, but in its ability to be opposed to other signs: the variable *A* exists in what Novalis calls the "determined form,"<sup>126</sup> an entity that can be opposed to all forms that are "Not-*A*." As such, no tautological formula can ever express a pure, perfect identity of Being: "An dem Nur *Seyn* haftet gar keine Modification, kein Begriff—man kann ihm nichts entgegensetzen" (HKA II.106).

Even "Nichtseyen" cannot be opposed to the realm of Being as such, since the very action of opposition is only made possible by the conception of Being as a copula binding two particulars—or as Novalis says, "ein copulirendes Häckchen, was bloß pro Forma

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<sup>125</sup> The duplicity of identity leads Menninghaus to speak of Romantic aesthetics as "unendliche Verdopplung." He notes that "in Novalis 'Wechsel' ... die Differenz 'das übergreifende Allgemeine [ist] und die Identität nur ein gleitender Effekt ihres Spiels.'" Winfried Menninghaus, *Unendliche Verdopplung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1987) 97. However, Being (*Seyn*) is just as necessary to the functioning of what I will call the *physiological* absolute, as it functions as a source of stimulation (the "negative" as such) that, by announcing its presence as an absence, increases and intensifies differentiation in a system.

<sup>126</sup> Form, for Novalis, expresses "was man in Beziehung denken muß," whereas content or *Stoff* designates "was man allein denken kann" (HKA II.172). Form is relational, whereas content admits of no relationality, and hence can only be conceived as an independent ground. Novalis' central problem consists in how this relationless substance, the realm of pure Being, nevertheless comes into contact with the realm of determinate beings, and hence with the realm of mortals.

dran gehängt wird" (HKA II.106). Being as copula, as the joining of identicals, covers up its own dissimulation. Therefore, a "copulirendes Häckchen" that joins two identicals together, thereby entering into a system of differences, is incapable of expressing Being as an absolute (*Seyn*), as undifferentiated, pure identity. The sentence expressing the most self-evident truth,  $A=A$ , becomes a *Scheinsatz*—that is to say, a proposition that is both deceptive inasmuch as it expresses *Schein* instead of *Seyn*, and one that is apparitional inasmuch as it moves into the world of appearances. The tautological sentence does not primarily express identity, but rather, produces a plurality through the world of signs, two instances of A instead of the expressionless silence of pure indifference.<sup>127</sup> As we shall see, for Novalis, every use of language presupposes the dynamic of the tautological sentence as the simultaneous and paradoxical production of differences through the attempt to express identity.

Later in the *Fichte-Studien*, Novalis calls the relationless realm of Being, the realm of purity, a necessary fiction: "Rein—was weder bezogen noch beziehbar ist... alles Reine ist also eine Täuschung der Einbildungskraft—eine *nothwendige* Fiction" (HKA II.179). The realm of pure being is a deception, and all attempts to retrieve Being remain irreducibly within the confines of the imagination.<sup>128</sup> For Novalis, purity is a fiction, since it can only enter the world as difference, as impurity. However, it is not merely that purity itself constitutes a *mere* lie, or a *mere* fiction, but rather, that fiction itself becomes the bearer of this false notion of purity. Fiction is endowed with the unique capacity not to purify the impure world—for according to Novalis' conception of Being, nothing that appears can be pure—but rather, and more radically, *to impurify* more intensively the world in its impurity. To impurify in this context means to move deeper into the world of appearances, to multiply differences rather than leading differences back to an originary unity.

The movement of Being as an intensification of impurity or differentiation appears already in the tautological statement " $A=A$ ," as the very statement itself moves *Seyn* into *Schein*—not merely as a movement into deception, but as a movement into *appearing*. Because the tautological statement cannot express Being in its fundamental non-relational indifferenciation—at best, it achieves "absolute oder totale Form" (HKA II.172), which is to say the pure relationality of a relationship and nothing more—it nevertheless throws both the particular phenomenon A and copulative Being into relief. The tautological statement functions not as a logical proposition, but as a revelatory one: it does not merely issue an empty claim of identity, and hence represent what would otherwise be a wholly superfluous statement, but the very utterance itself brings phenomena into a higher degree of clarity, or more precisely, a higher degree of distinction; "a" becomes *more distinct* (*deutlicher*) in the statement *a ist a* (HKA II.104).

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<sup>127</sup> As Menninghaus notes, "In diakritischer Reflexion entdeckt also Novalis schon im scheinbar unverdächtigsten Ausdruck der Identität mit sich ( $a=a$ ) eine Differenz, die diese Identität, qua Verdopplung in sich selbst, spaltet." Menninghaus, *Unendliche Verdopplung* 91.

<sup>128</sup> Alexander Schlutz, in his reading of Novalis' philosophy, emphasizes this point when he says, "As a mode of representation ("Darstellung"), in which the subject always appears as *both* philosophical reflection and poetical construction—both truth and illusion are the products of imagination—the work of art will always indicate that the unity of transcendental poetics can only be realized in the realm of the *ordo inversus* and hence *as a fiction*." Alexander M. Schlutz, *Mind's World* (Seattle: U of Washington P, 2009) 178.

Tautology not only moves within the realm of impurity, but brings this impurity into focus and makes it *clearer* or transfigures it. Furthermore, only the revelatory character of a tautological statement can index non-differentiated Being as a possibility for thought. The copulative or relational tautology emerging from the identity of two particulars triggers the postulation of absolute Being as an irreal, or imaginary realm. The tautology, far from resting in itself as a static equation, sets up the dynamic operation of an infinite process. It makes possible the *imagination* of absolute Being, but only by making absolute Being itself impossible. Identity and difference both constitute and exclude one another in the tautological statement, and it is from this paradoxical space that poetry—*Poësie ist Poësie*—is born.

The tautology can be regarded as the most poetical of poetical statements, not because it expresses the inexpressibility of absolute being, but precisely because it forces the movement from absolute Being into the manifold world of appearances. From the tautology, one may derive an important feature of Novalis' aesthetic attraction: the representation of Being, which cannot be thought without difference, does not *express* an inexpressible identity, but instead *produces* differences, a plurality of appearances.<sup>129</sup> This feature does not remain in its sphere as a description of the transcendental operation of language itself, but rather leads to its own exercise value, it frames *poetry as a practice*, as an imaginative way of life.

Not all linguistic acts produce this translation from Being into appearance, from *Seyn* into *Schein*, in the same manner. Novalis discusses two different modes of representation through which this originary translation takes place:

Wir verlassen das *Identische* um es darzustellen—Entweder dis geschieht nur scheinbar—und wir werden v[on] d[er] Einbildungskraft dahin gebracht es zu glauben—es *geschieht*, was schon Ist—natürlich durch imaginaires Trennen und vereinigen—Oder wir stellen es durch sein Nichtseyn, durch ein Nichtidentisches vor—Zeichen—ein bestimmtes für ein gleichförmig bestimmendes—dieses gleichförmig bestimmende muß eigentlich durchaus unmittelbar das mitgetheilte Zeichen durch eben die Bewegung bestimmen, wie ich—Frey und doch so wie ich. Geschmack und Genie. (HKA II.104)

In the first case, we represent Being through an imaginative movement, by moving from the supposed differentiation in the copula to an imagined reunification in a sphere of non-differentiation. Novalis labels this operation taste, or *Geschmack*. For Kant, to exercise aesthetic judgment allows one to move from private, sensual taste (*Sinnen-Geschmack*) to a more generalized form of validity (*Reflexions-Geschmack*).<sup>130</sup> According to Kantian aesthetics, taste designates a movement from the particular to the universal through the use of reflective judgment. Novalis' designation of the imaginative projection of a realm of absolute identity from the givenness of particulars draws upon this conception of taste. Representing the unrepresentable in the imagination introduces both an appearance and a

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<sup>129</sup> Menninghaus concentrates on this aspect of Novalis' philosophy in Menninghaus, *Unendliche Verdopplung*.

<sup>130</sup> Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* 214.

deception, since Being appears, but only through a construction of being as a composite, or as a unification of differences—hence as *artifice*.

The second pathway through which the presence of absolute Being makes itself felt occurs through Genius. Novalis' understanding of Genius departs from the notion of the sovereign artist through whose talent nature gives a rule to art, or Kant's formulation of genius as "die angeborne Gemütsanlage (*ingenium*) durch welche die Natur der Kunst die Regel gibt."<sup>131</sup> Rather, Genius is that power through which absolute, non-differentiated Being nevertheless touches the world of appearances and manifests itself in the world of signs: "wir stellen [das Identische] durch sein Nichtseyn, durch ein Nichtidentisches vor—Zeichen" (HKA II.104). The sign "Being" cannot be identical to the realm of pure identity; from the perspective of such identity, signs as such exist only in the realm of non-Being, since they are determined and differential, they are "bestimmt." And yet, this "determined" conception of Being, Being as a sign, whose sign character only becomes manifest as in the attempt to represent Being *qua* undifferentiated identity, presupposes a *determining* power that exists isomorphically with the determined sign, "ein gleichförmig bestimmendes" (HKA II.104). Novalis conceives absolute Being not merely as a space of non-differentiation, but as a ground of all appearances, permeating all signs—and hence the copulative sign "to be" as well.

Novalis' revelation of the absolute in aesthetic categories—namely through *Geschmack* or *Genius*—reveals less a conceptual distinction than descriptions of the oscillation inherent in the very attempt to conceptualize the absolute. Taste and genius are not oppositions, but chiasmatic reversals of one another. Taste moves from the particular to the absolute. Genius moves from the absolute to the particular. Taste occurs imaginatively from a space of differentiated finitude to absolute identity; genius moves from absolute identity into all differentiated phenomena. Taste attains the absolute through exercising the imagination, whereas genius lets the absolute touch all particulars through signs. The power of the absolute, a non-determined and non-differentiated power, filters into language and frees the realm of signs in the same way that it bestows freedom on subjectivity; the system of signs, by virtue of its contact with the realm of absolute Being, is "Frey und doch so wie ich" (HKA II.104).

Genius appears not as nature giving itself rules through art, but rather, in the immediate intimacy between signs and absolute Being. Language, then, exhibits the very same "relationless intimacy" or *beziehungslose Vertrautheit* with itself as does the human being; a form of self-feeling that links all appearances back to a realm of originary identity as its condition of possibility does not belong solely to human beings, but also to language. It is only when taste is united with genius, or when the imaginary and hence illusory nature of the absolute infiltrates all beings, that poetry, as the infinite exercise of the imagination, can in turn permeate every sphere of life. Novalis ends this thought by signaling that Genius too can only appear in the realm of the imagination: "Jenes ist bloßer Geschmack, dis Genie Geschmack" (HKA II.104). The poet as genius imaginatively posits the fictional realm of the absolute (*Geschmack*), and then lets this imagined absolute seep back into the world of concrete appearances (*Genie*).

Novalis famously claims in his "Monolog" that "Gerade das Eigenthümliche der Sprache, daß sie sich blos um sich selbst bekümmert, weiß keiner" (HKA II.672). It is the

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<sup>131</sup> Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* 307.

strange and wondrous property of language to exhibit the very structure of *self-feeling* characteristic of human sentience. As is the case with the human being, this relation of self-feeling or intimacy is incommensurable with discursive knowledge or reflective acts. No one can "know" this intimacy; although the human being knows *in* language, human sentience does not *know* language. In the "Monolog," Novalis is not claiming that people do not know *that* language cares only about itself, but rather, that they do not *know* language caring about itself. This particular activity of language is not open to analytical or discursive knowledge, which moves in the realm of differences, but rather, reveals itself only to the more primordial sensitivity of intimacy. And precisely the genius of language, which acts analogously to subjective genius, consists in letting absolute Being touch the realm of appearances through determinate signs. It is in this sense that language is feeling: not that every time a word is spoken, there is a corresponding affect, but rather, that signs have a sphere of intimacy with themselves in the same way as do human beings with themselves, namely in a pre-reflective identity with that which is given. Moreover, in the *Monolog*, although that narrator claims that language may access an originary realm of intimacy with itself, in this very articulation it excludes its own utterance from this intimacy: "Wenn ich damit das Wesen und Amt der Poesie auf das deutlichste angegeben zu haben glaubte, so weiß ich doch, daß es kein Mensch verstehn kann, und ich ganz was albernes gesagt habe, weil ich es habe sagen wollen, und so keine Poesie zu Stande kommt?" (KHA II.672). The narrator cannot claim to represent the truth of language, its identity with itself, as in the very attempt to grasp it reflectively in its intimate self-identity, language recedes.<sup>132</sup> Ultimately, the attempt to represent the relation of language to itself can only represent its own attempt to represent, it can speak only of its own desire for speech, its drive for language, its "Sprachtrieb" (HKA II.672).

Novalis' doctrine of poetry rests upon the following claim: language exhibits the same structure vis-à-vis the realm of absolute Being as does human sentience. Like human beings, it is the particularity of signs to partake in both an intimacy with Being as well as in a system of differentiation and limitation. Absolute Being itself exists in a precarious and paradoxical state, as it *requires* the articulation that excludes its very essence—as relationless intimacy—in order for this essence to appear *as fiction*. The central problem of poetry therefore appears in a parallel form to the problematic relationship between reflection and feeling: how can poetry manifest itself in language, in a system of differences, and simultaneously claim to operate within the same sphere as feeling, as pre-reflexive, pre-discursive givenness?

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<sup>132</sup> Ingrid Stroh Schneider-Kohrs claims that Novalis' "Monolog" exhibits the classical patterns of Romantic irony: "Was hier geschieht: das Sich-Durchsetzen und Wirklichwerden des Sinnes, des in diesem Text von der Sprache und ihrem Geheimnis Gemeinten, *kann und darf nicht Aussage werden*.... Nur *in actu negationis* kann der Sinnvollzug liegen, niemals in einer neuen Aussage." Stroh Schneider-Kohrs, *Die romantische Ironie in Theorie und Gestaltung* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1977) 264. One ought to add that irony can only be produced *in* and *from* these utterances, and therefore requires language in order to come into being. Romantic irony is therefore not merely the appearance of a negative, but the production of a positive, that is, a paradoxical generator of language.

### 3. The Inversion of Order and the Drive to Transcendence

For Novalis, the human being participates in both discursive knowing and non-discursive feeling, but can never make present these two forms of cognition in one and the same act of consciousness. According to Novalis, we have the capacity for both feeling and reflection, but when we reflect upon ourselves and the world, we constitute ourselves as subjects and the data given to us as objects. In the structure of subject-object cognition, feeling escapes from our field of view. As Novalis says: "Es [ein Gefühl] lässt sich nur in der Reflexion betrachten—der Geist des Gefühls ist da heraus" (HKA II.114). And yet, in reflection, we are aware of a state before this reflection, and it is precisely this state prior to reflection that we designate as feeling. It cannot be the case that when the subject begins to observe itself as an object, feeling then disappears—for feeling, as awareness of givenness, is not something that can fully disappear. "Der Zusammenhang zwischen Denken und Fühlen muß immer seyn—wir müssen ihn im Bewußtseyn überall finden können" (HKA II.117). Thinking and feeling must always be co-present in every act of consciousness. And yet, this very statement would seem impossible, since feeling, as relationless intimacy, would then come into a relationship—with thought. The same "relationless intimacy" characteristic of the human being's originary acquaintance with its self and its world must extend into the very faculty of reflection as well, must be identical to it, albeit in a peculiar manner.

Thinking and feeling cannot refer to two separate faculties that relate to one another, but rather, they must be part of one and the same act. Novalis calls this originary act an "Urhandlung." This originary act, however, can only be *known* in reflection. In reflection, however, one becomes aware of this originary act as precisely that which *excludes* feeling from its own reflective activity. Feeling is therefore present in reflection as the negative of reflection, as that which is unthinkable, unrepresentable, incommensurable, and unavailable to reflective thought. It is only through a hyperreflection, or a reflection on the very limits of reflection, that reflection and feeling may come to be regarded as the same act merely seen from different points of view. If feeling is only available from within reflection as its own negative, feeling and reflection must constitute inverted images of one another.<sup>133</sup>

The relationship between reflection and feeling must always therefore be subject to a reversal of perspective. This reversal, or as Manfred Frank emphasizes, this *ordo inversus*, aims to fill in the total sphere of human sentience by making present the blind spot of reflection, namely, the originary givenness of feeling.<sup>134</sup> Making present the blind spot of reflection in reflection reveals the hanging together of reflection and feeling, these supposedly mutually exclusive modalities: "*Hin* und *her* Direction. Sphäre erschöpft—Zusammenhang da" (HKA II.117). Such is Novalis' "Deduktion der Philosophie":

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<sup>133</sup> For a detailed account of this process, see Manfred Frank and Gerhard Kurz, "Ordo Inversus. Zu einer Reflexionsfigur bei Novalis, Hölderlin, Kleist, und Kafka," *Geist und Zeichen: Festschrift für Arthur Henkel*, ed. Bernhard Gajek Herbert Anton, and Peter Pfaff (Heidelberg: Winter, 1977), and Menninghaus, *Unendliche Verdopplung*.

<sup>134</sup> See Frank, *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik* 248-61.

Bedürfniß einer Philosophie im Bewußtseyn—scheinbares Schreiten vom Beschränkten zum Unbeschränkten—Reflexion darüber—Scheinbares Schreiten vom Unbeschränkten zum Beschränkten—Resultate dieser Reflexion—Resultate des Gefühls dieser Reflexion—Reflexion über diese Resultate nach jenen Resultaten—Gefundener Zusammenhang oder Philosophie. (HKA II.117)

Let us reconstitute the operations Novalis calls a "deduction" of philosophy. The philosophical project begins by feeling a need for philosophy. It feels this drive in a mode of reflection, or in consciousness. In consciousness, when we attempt to conceptualize the originary givenness of the world, we seem to be moving from our limited sphere, the sphere in which we are subjects reflecting on objects, to the sphere of the absolute, namely the sphere of feeling. Importantly, this is only a movement that appears in consciousness as a *seeming* progression, *ein scheinbares Schreiten*, for here we continue to operate in the realm of appearances in consciousness, in a reflective mode. From this moment on—indeed from the beginning of our first reflection, the first operation that could be labeled as knowing—all reflective thought occurs as a movement in appearances. However, when we reflect on this reflection, we understand that we are in fact seeing a movement toward the unlimited realm of feeling *from the limited perspective of reflection*. In order to see it from the perspective of feeling itself, which reflection excludes, we must reverse our reflection; in this second reflection, the activity of reflection interprets itself from an opposing point of view, namely as a movement not from reflection to feeling, but from feeling to reflection, from the absolute to the limited, *vom Unbeschränkten zum Beschränkten*. In the first pages of the *Fichte-Studien*, Novalis describes this act in the language of aesthetics as "Genie Geschmack."

If we appear to be moving toward the absolute, the absolute must appear to be moving toward us. Although each of these movements occurs only in reflection, the second, in which the absolute moves toward us, is a higher-order reflection, or a reflection upon a reflection from another point of view. This inverted reflection gives us a result for reflection, but it also gives a result *for the realm of feeling in reflection*, namely, as an inverted image of the first reflection. Philosophy, for Novalis, therefore consists in the reflection upon a reflection and an inverted reflection. In this reflection that reflects on two reflections—a still higher order reflection—the identity of feeling and thought, which occurs only in thought, emerges from the oscillation of opposing reflective movements. The continual inversion of thought establishes a pattern through which a reflection becomes raised to a higher order by becoming the object of another reflection. The attempt to retrieve the identity of feeling only leads to a multiplication of reflective acts, each one inverting its precedent. In the movement of cognition, Novalis detects an attraction toward inversion that continually overturns orders of representation. If the production of multiplicity and differences appears as one tendency of Novalis' aesthetic attraction, the continual overturning of orders of reflection may be considered as a second important contour of this movement.

#### 4. The Physiological Absolute

At a certain point in the *Fichte-Studien*, Novalis postulates that the continual inversion of acts of reflection does not bring the reflecting consciousness any closer to the absolute. In yet another inversion, the impossible attainment of the absolute itself becomes a new absolute:

Alles Filosofiren muß also bey einem absoluten Grunde endigen. Wenn dieser nun nicht gegeben wäre, wenn dieser Begriff eine Unmöglichkeit enthielte—so wäre der Trieb zu Philosophieren eine unendliche Tätigkeit.... Durch das freywillige Entsagen des Absoluten entsteht die unendliche freye Thätigkeit in uns—das Einzig mögliche Absolute, was uns gegeben werden kann, und was wir nur durch unsre Unvermögenheit ein Absolutes zu erreichen und zu erkennen, finden. (HKA II.270)

The passage represents a significant shift in Novalis' thinking, not because Novalis gives up the absolute and becomes a relativist, but more significantly, because he subtly redefines the absolute in terms of *drives*. Novalis defines a drive in the following manner: "Ein Fortsetzen in sich selbst ist ein Trieb" (HKA II.134). This drive, which Novalis expresses in Fichtean terminology as a type of positing—literally a positing forth, or a *Fortsetzen*—ultimately becomes the new absolute. The puzzle of the absolute, a realm that eludes predication and hence definition, shifts to an inquiry into the generation of life itself, into the enigma of the plurality of appearances. And it is here that philosophy merges with physiology, for both domains presuppose the structure of a drive that demands reproduction. Regarding *Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs*, the fixation on the philosophical at the expense of the physiological dynamics of the absolute has perhaps led to the misrecognition of the ending of the fairy tale of Hyacinth and Rosenblütchen. The absolute does not announce itself when Hyacinth lifts the veil of Isis only to discover his beloved—or the eroticized other—as the origin and telos of his own self. Indeed, the absolute as a vision or an intuition appears conspicuously absent from the fairy tale. Instead, countless generations of children form the telos of the fairy tale.<sup>135</sup> If there is an allusion to the absolute in the fairy tale, it consists not in the lifting of the veil, but in its final celebration of an *imagined* infinite reproductivity. For this reproductivity occurs not literally, but rather, as a reproductive capacity of the imagination; the countless children appear only as products of Hyacinth's dream life. The dynamic of the mind as a continual positing-forth, a *Fortsetzen*, announces the presence of this other form of the absolute more than the mystical appearance of the goddess, an absolute that consists more in movement than in image, more in differentiated succession than in immediate intuition.

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<sup>135</sup> Jocelyn Holland has convincingly articulated a central feature of Novalis' poetry as a poetics of procreation. She notes, "Countless children bless the union of Hyacinth and Rosenblütchen. Like the geometric series which ended with mankind as generation "infinity," the apprentice's narrative (also an "account" or *Erzählung*) can never be told to its very end, and has only symbolic completeness." Jocelyn Holland, *German Romanticism and Science: The Procreative Poetics of Goethe, Novalis, and Ritter* (London: Routledge, 2009) 103-4.

In the *Fichte-Studien*, philosophical-logical paradoxes of self-reflection reproduce patterns of physiological development. Already in the *Fichte-Studien*, Novalis turns to the natural sciences, to chemical, magnetic, or electrical experimentation, which each in their turn translate the basic facticity of the reproductive drive into their respective discursive spaces.<sup>136</sup> The concept of drive, the realm of the absolute as it generates its own particularity, merges with the concept of attraction; when Novalis thinks about the exchange relationship characteristic of the general and the particular, he draws his metaphors from natural scientific conceptions of force: "Die Zentripetalkraft nimmt durch Geschwindigkeit zu—liegt sie im Körper oder ist sie Anziehungskraft? / Magnet. Electricitaet/" (HKA II.192). It seems that the failure of philosophy to attain the absolute does not make Novalis a relativist, but a certain type of naturalist—that is, a *poetic naturalist*, a naturalist whose picture of nature includes his or her own imaginative structure of interpretation in nature itself.

Over the course of the *Fichte-Studien*, one may therefore observe a shift from a philosophical absolute to a physiological one, a definition of the absolute as undifferentiated ground to an understanding of the absolute as infinite activity. The second absolute is no longer linked to feeling, but rather, to the principle of life itself as the production of continual stimulation, as an excitation whose only purpose is to continually generate its own multiplicity of particulars.<sup>137</sup> The absolute exists no longer outside time, but rather, designates the operation of time itself; it is no longer a realm outside of space, but movement itself; it is no longer the deathless realm of the infinite, but the mortal and vulnerable desires of finite beings; it is no longer an absence of differentiation, but the multiplication of reflective orders continually overcoming themselves. The absolute can therefore be considered as a form of self-sustaining and self-generating exercise.

This second conception of the absolute, whose logic is dictated more by a notion of drive than by a pre-reflexive indifference of being, nevertheless presupposes the first absolute—absolute identity available to humans through feeling—as a continual source of perturbation, as that which prevents any particular order from making itself the absolute. If for the philosopher Alain Badiou, an absolute unpredictability destabilizes the normal procedures for generating truth in given frameworks of action, or in his terms, event perturbs and reconfigures being, for Novalis, Being *is* the Event.<sup>138</sup> And yet, for

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<sup>136</sup> See Jürgen Daibler, *Experimentalphysik des Geistes* (Göttingen: Vadenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001).

<sup>137</sup> Richard Hannah discusses the importance of art as *Gemüthsregungskunst* in Richard Hannah, *The Fichtean Dynamics of Novalis' Poetics* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 1981) 159-60. Also, for a study of Novalis' philosophy of language as stimulation, see Verena Anna Lukas, *Der Dialog im Dialog: Das Inzitatment bei Friedrich von Hardenberg* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000).

<sup>138</sup> Badiou's ontology is almost diametrically opposed to Novalis' reflections on Being, although they both value the disruptive power of the Event. Being for Novalis signifies the fictional imagination of a non-differentiated absolute identity. Being, for Badiou, consists in indifferent multiplicities; he starts from the multiple rather than the one. Because Novalis begins, on the other hand, from the *one*, he perceives multiplicity as outside the domain of pure Being. It is this drive to multiplicity that allows Novalis to see the realm of phenomena as such as a realm of fiction or deception that is itself coextensive with truth. Badiou, on the other hand, claims "Ontology, axiom system of the particular inconsistency of multiplicities, seizes the in-itself of the multiple by forming into consistency all inconsistency and forming into inconsistency all consistency." Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* (London: Continuum, 2005) 30. Because Being organizes inconsistency from an originary givenness of multiplicity, consistency and organization as

Novalis, the event-quality of being is not something that intrudes upon us, but something that human beings can excite within themselves as a source of imaginative stimulation, as an active overturning of reflective orders. It is therefore not the case that the first absolute becomes wholly supplanted by the second. Without the first absolute, the pristine and immobile realm of Being beyond beings, this second absolute as activity, as striving, as floating oscillation, would divest itself of its drive character. The motor of this new absolute, the temporal, spatial, finite absolute of drive, requires the impossibility of the first absolute *as* an impossibility, its basic incommensurability with the structure of human cognition.

All thinking of absolute identity requires a thinking of the simultaneous drive-character of identity differentiating itself. The central question of philosophy—which in turn holds open the possibility of a physiological philosophy and a philosophical physiology—appears not as the enigma of Being, but rather, in the enigma of beings, of concrete, particular, individualized entities. Novalis notes this peculiarity of the absolute when he notes that there must be "Der Trieb Ich zu seyn," a drive primordially coextensive with the absolute itself. Freud would later say, "Wo Es war, soll Ich werden," designating the formation of the ego as one poised between past (*war*) and future (*werden*), exhibiting a structure not unlike the movement from undifferentiated and impersonal chaos (*es*) to the bounded self (*ich*).<sup>139</sup> Novalis' ontological movement expresses a similar sentiment, although he concentrates the movement of individuation in the present, seeing himself as that sort of being that desires a self: "Was Ich seyn will, das bin ich" (HKA II.146). The statement should not be merely translated as: "What I want to be, I am," but rather, "That which wishes to be an I, that is the being I am," or rather, I am that being that manifests Being as wanting to be an I. At the same time, in the ambiguity of the phrase, Novalis has affirmed that he *is* what he wants to be; there is an affirmation of this individuation not merely as parasitical to perfect identity, but as a self-affirmation of differentiation.

Does the first absolute, the realm of undifferentiated givenness, nevertheless exist for Novalis? After all, Novalis' poetics seem to claim that the activity of the imagination in poetic intuition has access to the realm of the given in a manner that is impossible for reflective knowledge. What is denied to reflection is guaranteed to poetry. Schelling's poetic intuition similarly seems to foreground the priority of art as a means of making present that which can never become present in reflection. Seen from this point of view, Novalis' poetic enterprise therefore maintains the importance of the first absolute in two distinct manners. In philosophical thought, the absolute of undifferentiated givenness

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procedures are themselves "normalized," whereas the absolute inconsistency or rupture with this very process of generating consistency can only appear outside of Being as the Event. Novalis, on the other hand, sees Being as a negative for the imagination that attracts the imagination to it. It therefore establishes a different logic than the mere inconsistency of multiplicities, focusing rather on the *attractive* value of Being and its role in the generation of specific differences and points of indifference. However, Novalis' poetic practice suggests that a perturbational force need not refer to anything global that reconfigures procedures for generating consistency, but rather, it may also manifest itself on a microscopic level in many different situations. Being, for Novalis, functions as an imaginary Event that can be conjured up at will in imaginative aesthetic exercises.

<sup>139</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Neue Folge der Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*, Gesammelte Werke, ed. Anna Freud, vol. 15 (London: Imago, 1946) 86.

becomes a Kantian a priori regulative idea. We never achieve the absolute in thought, but we postulate it as a realm that we can approach through infinite approximation. In poetry, on the other hand, the unrepresentability of absolute being is itself represented; poetry has a privileged access to this absolute in a way that discursive thought does not. With respect to the absolute, two very different, and even contradictory images of Novalis come to the fore: philosophically, Novalis is a pragmatist; poetically, he is a mystic.

Although there is evidence for both of these interpretations of Novalis, we will attempt to pursue a different path, another way of integrating these dual conceptions of the absolute into Novalis' thought and poetic practice. On this path, feeling will no longer be portrayed as a mode of access to the absolute, but as disruption, disorder, as a perturbation of the validity and the self-sustainability of reflective thought and its concomitant institutional and social strategies of hegemony. The persistence of feeling fictionalizes not merely all mental operations—including the operation of reflection—but makes possible poetry as a way of life, as an *askesis*.<sup>140</sup> The absolute provides an impetus for a poetic exercise—an exercise that does not use poetry as a means of representing the unrepresentable, or intuiting an absolute identity, but rather, uses the very fictionality of the absolute *qua* feeling as an attempt to undo the stranglehold of reflective knowledge's grip on reality from within its own domain.

We have seen that there are two conceptions of the absolute in Novalis' thought. One absolute is feeling, the other is drive. The second absolute reinterprets the first as a motor, as a pretext for the generation of activity. The unrepresentability of feeling, or the irreality of the first absolute, leads to an awareness of the structure of all appearances as drive, movement, stimulation, excitement—it foregrounds the *reality* of the second absolute. And yet, the absolute of indifferent Being does not merely raise awareness about stimulation as a higher-order absolute; it also introduces, necessarily, the *fictional* as the central motor of the process of stimulation. It is not so much that *feeling* becomes responsible for the dynamic of the absolute activity, as the *fictionality* of feeling. That is, feeling and fictionality become concomitant, co-extensive spheres.

We have already mentioned Novalis' claim that "alles Reine ist also eine Täuschung der Einbild[ungs]Kr[aft]—eine *nothwendige* Fiction" (HKA II.179). He goes on to say:

Wahrheit—Fiction oder Schein. Die Einbildungskraft hat zweyerley Producte—das Wahre und den Schein. Einst schließt das Andre aus—negirt es. Identisch ist beydes—Schein ist Schein—Wahrheit—Wahrheit. Wahrheit ist die Form des Scheins—Schein die Form der Wahrheit. (HKA II.179)

For Novalis, truth can only exist in perfect identity. However, the necessary representation of identity in the form of the copula—its appearance within a system of

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<sup>140</sup> Herbert Uerlings notes, "Was Novalis... aber ganz besonders auszeichnet, ihn bereits von den allermeisten Zeitgenossen und wohl erst recht von uns Nachgeborenen unterscheidet, das ist das unbegrenzte Vertrauen auf die Fähigkeit des Menschen, sich *selbst* zu entwerfen." Herbert Uerlings, "Einbildungskraft und Poesie bei Novalis," *Novalis. Poesie und Poetik*, ed. Herbert Uerlings (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2004) 62.

differentiation *as* a copula—guarantees that there can be no truth *qua* perfect identity. There can only be truth as appearance. And yet, appearance negates truth *as* perfect identity. Truth and appearance collapse into one another, condition one another, become so inextricably intertwined with one another that they cannot be thought separately: "Schein ist die Urform der Wahrheit, des Urstoffs. Es ist die Wahrheit auf sich selbst bezogen" (HKA II.181). Ultimately, through this operation, it is not merely that truth becomes *fictionalized*—but more importantly, fiction, or *Schein*, becomes associated with the second absolute, namely, with drive as "ein Fortsetzen in sich selbst." (HKA II.134) The continuation of itself is the process whereby truth, in its absolute identity with itself, relates itself to itself—*die Wahrheit auf sich selbst bezogen*—and enters the world of appearance and relations:

Der Satz der Identität ist Satz der Wahrheit—Realitaet. Der Satz d[es] Widerspruchs—Satz des Scheins—der Negation. D[er] Satz d[es] zureichenden Grundes liegt in den beyden vorhergehenden—These—Antithese—Synthese.

Der Satz d[er] Identität ist dem Schein und d[er] Wahrheit eigen.

D[er] Satz d[es] Widerspruchs drückt ihr Verhältniß zu einander aus.

Der Satz d[es] zureichenden Grundes, oder besser exclusi medii tertii—das Verhältniß beyder zur Einbildungskraft oder ihrer gemeinschaftlichen Sphäre und zur Gegensphäre. (HKA II. 182)

Novalis formulates the relation between appearances and reality in three different logical propositions. Truth, as that which is identical with itself, applies universally to all phenomena, even to that of appearances or *Schein*, which also applies to the realm of the contradictory or the non-self identical. The proposition of sufficient grounds, or the notion that all individuals are grounded in a higher order or generality—*der Satz des zureichenden Grundes*—was developed by Leibniz to explain the movement from the realm of axiomatic, logical identity, to the realm of nature, from the science of mechanics (mechanical causal explanation) to that of dynamics (self-organization, or the harmonious operation of the whole).<sup>141</sup> And yet, Novalis associates this proposition with the law of the excluded middle, which holds that in the relationship between A and Not-A, there can be no third term; A and Not-A exclude one another, and are not merely opposed to one another. Such is the relation between truth and fiction—which exclude one another—and yet, each of them makes the other what it is and cannot be thought without the other. In the imagination, then, the only reality open to human beings, the realm of appearances is both identical and not-identical to itself.

Because both truth and appearance mutually require one another—or identity and contradiction—there is neither pure truth nor pure falsehood in our imaginative lives. All appearances are false truths and true fictions. The relationship between reality and appearance is therefore chiasmatic. The *ordo inversus* no longer functions as a philosophical technique to conceptualize the unrepresentable domain of feeling, but constitutes the internal dynamic of the fictional truth and true fictionality of all

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<sup>141</sup> For an analysis of the importance of Leibniz for Novalis, see Daniel Lancereau, "Novalis und Leibniz," *Novalis und die Wissenschaften*, ed. Herbert Uerlings (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1997) 188.

appearances. The *ordo inversus* is not the means whereby human beings attempt to reach truth, but the means whereby the essentially reproductive structure of the universe, its back and forth, self-generating, movement of oscillation, its joy in its own stimulation, provides evidence for itself through continually overturning orders of reflection. The *ordo inversus* is the great exercise not of Being, but of beings; it is less a philosophical procedure than a physiological dynamic. That is, the *ordo inversus* no longer functions as method to get closer to the absolute, but *becomes* the absolute itself, the absolute as the infinite stimulation of an infinite oscillation.

The excitation and stimulation generated by the *ordo inversus* as a physiological pattern of exercise manifests itself not in a failed cognition of Being, but in the organization of beings, where it may be observed as a part of Novalis' political theory. One may even see this pattern as an integral part of Novalis' imagination of the ideal state. For Novalis, the structure of the state is just as poetic as that of nature, and hence just as subject to the back and forth oscillation generated in the self-overcoming dynamic of stimulation. The monarchical and the republican forms of government reveal the same paradoxical relation of identity and difference and their impossible unity: "kein König ohne Republik, keine Republik ohne König" (HKA II.490). Mutually exclusive and heterogeneous political orders *constitute* one another. Similarly, Novalis' political essay *Glauben und Liebe* oscillates between two different spheres, the erotic relation of marriage and the political organization of the state. The interplay of difference and identity between the domestic and the political incite stimulation and push these spheres into processes of self-overcoming, refusing to unite them in a perfect and static equilibrium. As he states at the beginning of the essay: "Der mystische Ausdruck ist ein Gedankenreiz mehr" (HKA II.485). If the political world bears the stamp of the dynamic *ordo inversus*, the unification of differences that results from the impossibility of their perfect identity, it does so under the auspices of life as self-reproducing exercise. Worldhood itself—in all concomitant discursive domains, philosophical, political, ethical, natural, scientific—emerges from the power of stimulation that inheres in paradoxical thought-movements. These thought-movements reveal themselves as part of an internal drive toward a dynamic equilibrium, although the logical impossibility of perfect identity guarantees that such an equilibrium will never be reached.

We may now return to the question at the beginning of these reflections: what is poetry, or rather, how can poetry become that atmosphere in which we live? For Novalis, the omnipresent realm of fictionality, the inescapable logic of appearances built into human sentience assures that we always already exist as poetic beings. And yet, whatever poetry is, it must reproduce the chiasmatic dynamic of life itself. The poetic therefore requires the non-poetic as an intrusion of difference into the sphere of identity that maintains its own activity in perpetual motion. When Novalis says that "Poësie ist Poësie," (HKA III.685), he moves poetry into the domain of the tautological proposition of identity, whose main function, as we have seen, was not to express identity but generate difference. The generation of difference nevertheless depends upon an identity that makes difference possible. In poetry, language exhibits the same relationless intimacy with itself as do human beings that use reflection to make present feeling. It is this difference that differentiates poetry from rhetoric, or *Sprachkunst*, whose reflexive activity doesn't acknowledge its own participation in the relationless intimacy of feeling.

From this perspective, poetry as the making present of feeling creates what one might term differentiated *points of indifference*, that space in which *a* can be said to be identical with *a* even though one can *count* them as two, as differentiated. The point of indifference creates *attraction* between signs and allows them to seep into one another, to move toward one another, to perturb one another. In a sense, only a point of indifference makes possible the *ordo inversus*, for it is by virtue of this point of indifference that any reflection—as a reflection (and not, for example, as some other discrete content)—can be inverted.<sup>142</sup>

The relationless intimacy of language with itself nevertheless only manifests itself in the drive to difference, the differential system of signs. The analogical structure of language with the structure of human sentience carries over into the unfolding of poetic language; in both language and the human being, one may observe the same structure of non-coincidence with self-coincidence. Poetry is poetry. The tautological proposition is nothing other than a paradoxical generator that generates its own paradoxes, stimulating a potentially unending oscillation, or an *ordo inversus* that recasts the poetic absolute as a physiological drive.

The *ordo inversus*—the movement by which one reflects upon reflection as an attempt to make present the elusive identity of an originary self-feeling—does not bring the human being closer to truth or to an absolute, but rather, closer to the reproductive operativity of life. Poetry generates not the unity of being, but the multiplication of difference through a non-unified unity of non-identical identities. Language participates in a cosmos—one that Schelling describes in his *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur*—that is born from its continually frustrated attempt to be identical with itself, that is, in an originary state of disequilibrium. If there is an order to Being, it consists precisely in *provoking* its own difference from the world of beings, a process that in turn produces differences *in* the world of beings. Because these differences, however, are all generated in their common differentiation from a fictional realm of indifference that is required to sustain their identities *as* differences, they are nevertheless linked to one another, even if only fictionally. If pure indifference does not exist, neither does pure difference. That is why, even in fiction, the categories of identity and difference ultimately appear hopelessly inadequate to the movements of Novalis' poetry. There is no purity, and both identity and difference seem to demand purity in their conceptual spheres. Instead of identity and difference, there are multiple identifications and inversions, there is attraction, separation, communication, permeability, disruption, reconfiguration,

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<sup>142</sup> To this extent, it is misleading to characterize Novalis' theory of signs as a form of Derridean *différance*, as does Menninghaus: "In Anlehnung an Derrida könnte man die Gestalt der Reflexion als eine Gestalt der *différance* im Doppelsinn von Differenz und Aufschub beschreiben." Menninghaus, *Unendliche Verdopplung* 77. For Derrida, *différance* functions as an intrinsic—necessary and impossible—property of the system of signs, whereas Novalis sees *identity* as equally necessary, some part of the system that accounts for coherence, resemblance, attraction, and not mere or pure primordial indifference. That is why Novalis will later speak of "spheres" of indifference or "points" of indifference. Points and spheres of indifference are themselves parts of heterogeneous systems, and yet, they exhibit an internal coherence that allows them to present themselves as recognizably similar entities. Schelling will call the possible communication between such homogeneous spheres within a more global system of heterogeneity an "*Indifferenzpunkt*." These points of indifference—which are at the same time negotiators and generators of difference—allow signs to communicate, to gravitate toward other signs, toward affective, imaginative, and linguistic patterns.

intensification among these multiples. What begins as a philosophical approach to ontology ends by evading ontology as such. It is not *Being* that defines poetry, but *movement*. The philosophy of movement, or of attraction, as an alternative to ontology—one whose philosophical implications have not yet been fully explored, a task that exceeds the bounds of the current exercise in thought—appears as the proper domain of poetry. This is why, in Novalis' *Hymnen an die Nacht*, if there is an absolute at all, it is not the night or the space of mysterious non-differentiation, but the womb—a womb that is equally the space of being and of non-being, both identical and different with itself, the place where we were born when we came from nothingness into being, and the place where when we die, we move from being back into nothingness.

## Chapter 2: Stimulation and Disorganization in Novalis' *Die Hymnen an die Nacht*

### 1. Infinite Gaps and the Intensification of Making Present

Novalis, in the time leading up to *Die Hymnen an die Nacht*, wrote passages in his journal that would eventually be integrated into the poem itself. The journal has often been invoked as a source of biographical insight, one that provides a point of entry into the genesis of Novalis' poetic works.<sup>143</sup> Novalis and Sophie von Kühn were engaged on March 17, 1795. Sophie died on March 19, 1797. It was at this time that Novalis began conceptualizing *Die Hymnen an die Nacht*. The death of Sophie von Kühn, so the argument goes, constitutes the experiential core of Novalis' hymns. The third hymn recounts a scene of mourning over the grave of the beloved, the poet's despair, and the ensuing rebirth of the poetic spirit. The scene takes up images and impressions that Novalis recorded in his journal on May 12, 1797 (HKA IV.35-6). The "Sophie experience" became a cipher for the immediacy of the pregnant moment that gives birth to a work whose intensity can only have sprung from an authentic experiential content.

However, the journal in the eighteenth-century did not merely provide a context in which experience was recorded, but rather, made possible the transformation of the self through the process of writing.<sup>144</sup> The form of writing common in these journals, in which a self-relation becomes articulated in language, could at any moment be taken up into the attempt to expand or refine one's modes of perception. In the journal entry, one finds less biography than biotransformation, or an askesis of life in words.

It is not a biographical anchoring point that is to be sought here, but rather, the use of writing as a transformational context for perceptual and cognitive capacities. In one journal entry, Novalis turns his gaze toward these capacities: memory (*Gedächtnis*), observational attentiveness (*Beobachtungsgabe*), expression (*Ausdruck*), and presence of mind (*Besonnenheit*). Each of these mental operations was touted by Baumgarten as particular faculties developed by the aesthetic exercise.

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<sup>143</sup> The theses that understand the *Sophien-Erlebnis* as central to the interpretation of *Die Hymnen an die Nacht* have fallen out of favor. Heinz Ritter defends the thesis of an "Urhymne" concerning Sophie von Kühn in Heinz Ritter, *Der unbekannt Novalis. Friedrich von Hardenberg im Spiegel seiner Dichtung* (Göttingen: Sachse und Pohl, 1967). Uerlings gives many reasons why this thesis seems untenable. See Herbert Uerlings, *Friedrich von Hardenberg, genannt Novalis* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1991) 280-82. However, Dirk von Petersdorff has rearticulated the importance of the religious gesture in the identification of Christ with Sophie von Kühn. See Dirk von Petersdorff, "Die Auferstehung Sophie von Kühns in den 'Hymnen an die Nacht'," *Novalis. Poesie und Poetik*, ed. Herbert Uerlings (Niemeyer: Tübingen, 2004).

<sup>144</sup> See, for example, Sibylle Schönborn, *Das Buch der Seele* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1999). C. F. Weisse, in 1771, explicitly mentions the use of the journal as a pedagogical technology in order to generate increased self-reflection: "[Die Kinder] lernen dadurch genau auf ihre Handlungen acht geben...." C. F. Weisse, "Das Tagebuch als Erziehungsmittel," *Schwarze Pädagogik: Quellen zur Naturgeschichte der bürgerlichen Erziehung*, ed. Katharina Rutschky (Berlin: Ullstein, 1977) 185.

The journal entries themselves present an image of Novalis' relationship to Sophie von Kühn that is much more complex than the hackneyed claims of an eternal erotic transfiguration. Nor is it that Novalis merely transposes the love of the transcendent divine onto that of the physical and immanent corporality of the beloved. Rather, ever present in Novalis' diaries are writing techniques that serve the function of auto-stimulation. Sophie von Kühn—along with Christ—become subordinate to a regime of exercises designed to intensify experience and shape the writer's modes of perception. His meditations on Sophie von Kühn appear linked to the singularly aesthetic (in Baumgarten's sense of the term as one of the "inferior" cognitive capacities) capability of making present that which is absent.

At the end of the journal entry from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 29<sup>th</sup> of June, 1797, appear the following words:

*Xstus und Sophie* (HKA IV.48)

Novalis seems at first to be establishing a relation between the transcendent and the immanent through erotic inspiration.<sup>145</sup> To relate to the divine through one's own erotic attachment has literary predecessors and successors: Dante's Beatrice, Werther's Lotte, Gerard de Nerval's Aurelia, and Kierkegaard's ruminations on despair as a self-relation only cured by relating this self-relation to another—each relation, in its own way, either outlines a path to the divine or embodies and concentrates the divine in a living being. Similarly, Novalis places Christ and Sophie in relation to one another, although the terms of this relation remain indeterminate. Nevertheless, Sophie is typographically marked—underlined—with an intensified attraction, as if the divine were not merely setting one term in relation to another term, but rather, *moving* from one term to another, being displaced.

The absolute must continually be displaced because its very essence is not to have a place. Because the absolute is fully indeterminate, it escapes all reification. Schelling defines the absolute (*das Unbedingte*) as that which cannot become a thing, "*schlechterdings nicht als Ding gedacht werden kann.*"<sup>146</sup> Because it cannot become a thing—neither a subject, nor an object, nor anything that has properties—the absolute ought to be present everywhere, manifesting itself in all things. And yet, the absolute does not dissolve into pantheism, a religiousness in which the world of phenomena itself becomes infused with the divine. Nor can the absolute be characterized, as Hegel points out in his *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, as the night in which all cows are black. In the attempt to represent the absolute, it nevertheless remains attached to the world of appearances, to individualized beings, to the operation of language. It can only appear negatively, not as a thing, but as a movement between things.

As we shall see in *Die Hymnen an die Nacht*, the absolute is continually displaced between different figures that become fictional carriers of the inarticulable and non-

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<sup>145</sup> Uerlings describes the "Hin und her Direktion" characteristic of Novalis' poetics as "Narrative Konstruktion immanenter Transzendenz." See Uerlings, *Friedrich von Hardenberg, genannt Novalis* 229-32.

<sup>146</sup> Friedrich Schelling, *Vom Ich als Prinzip der Philosophie oder über das Unbedingte im menschlichen Wissen*, Sämtliche Werke, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856) 166.

conceptual fundament of Being (Night, Death, the Beloved, Christ, the Womb). The poem neither represents a moment of mystical intuition nor a continually frustrated attempt to represent the absolute, but rather, the multiplicity that is generated in the proliferation of different signs that, as fictional signs, are sustained by the productive power of the physiological absolute.

The displaced absolute is in fact motivated less by specific poetic or philosophical doctrines than by an almost compulsive addiction to self-stimulation. Novalis' diaries themselves reveal a multiplicity of discursive spaces, each of them driven by the tendency toward an increasingly rigorous attraction to intensified imaginative and physiological states. By turns, the journal entries drift in and out of generic forms: the self-relational confession, the daily admonitions of a hypochondriac, writing as a recording system, spiritual exercises characteristic of devotional writings—each of these discursive areas blends into one another and operate upon one another in Novalis' journal. Each of these discursive spaces, however, feed back into a process of autostimulation.

The gnomic utterance "Xstus und Sophie" finally emerges less from the desire to make the transcendent immanent or to make the immanent transcendent than the function of an autostimulative tendency inherent in the very process of writing. For Novalis, Sophie is just as transcendent as Christ, since her death ultimately provides the impetus for Novalis' own challenge to himself, namely to make present that which is absent. Sophie, and the love of Sophie (*Philosophie*), represents much less the attempt to grasp the divine than an unfolding and willful intensification of the very motor of life. Sophie constitutes an attractor that sets the terms of an aesthetic exercise designed to push the mind toward different imaginative realms.

Sophie, the writing of Sophie, cannot be separated from the *askesis* that manifests itself everywhere in the journal. The journal entries from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 29<sup>th</sup> of June begin with the following observation: "Den 16ten [Freitag] fühlt ich mich entsezlich träge und unlustig—so auch den 17ten früh—hier erwachte jedoch plötzlich, nach einer Befriedigung meiner fantastischen Lust, Vis et Robur. Ich beschloß künftig häufige körperliche Anstrengungen und Hut für Trägheit" (HKA IV.46). The self-diagnostic observation of the soul was no longer a matter of religious discipline, but contributed to the production of knowledge in the eighteenth-century discipline of *Erfahrungsseelenkunde*. However, in Novalis' case, self-observation serves not merely to record mental states, nor to compose an objectivistic description of the mechanism of the psyche. Rather, the recording process of writing itself seeks to both illustrate and provoke the stimulation of psycho-physiological states mired in inertia.

The inwardness of Pietistic religiosity paved the way for the development of introspection as a scientific technique of self-monitoring.<sup>147</sup> Moritz, who was active in establishing *Erfahrungsseelenkunde* as an autonomous discipline, describes the constraining and world-disclosive properties of disciplinary patterns turned inward in his novel *Anton Reiser*. Moritz' "Seelendiätetik" does not make a complete break with the disciplining of inwardness, but rather undertakes work on the self in order to bring the soul into a harmonious balance with its inherently contradicting tendencies; the goal of

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<sup>147</sup> See Fritz Stemme, "Die Säkularisation des Pietismus zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 72 (1953).

*Seelendiätetik* is "alle Seelenfähigkeiten, *verhältnismäßig gegeneinander* in dem möglichst vollkommenen Zustande zu *erhalten*."<sup>148</sup>

One may also see a form of *Seelendiätetik* in the journals of Novalis, but the dynamic structure of these dietetics differs from Moritz' attempt to create narratives that balance contradictions between different mental faculties. Like Moritz, however, Novalis analyzes and differentiates the mental faculties that he sees as essential to his development:

Mein Kopf war diesen Abend sehr hell. Ich fühle mich überhaupt um manchen Schritt vorgerückt. Auch mein Gedächtniß, meine Beobachtungsgabe und mein Ausdruck gewinnt. *Meine Besonnenheit* muß aber noch sehr steigern. Es giebt noch unendliche Lacunen. (HKA IV.48)

Novalis focuses on cognitive faculties—memory, attentiveness, expression, presence of mind—that belong to the aesthetic exercise. The process of knowing associated with these forms of cognition cannot be formalized or sublimated by higher-order logical or mathematical procedures. In the process of self-observation, Novalis uses writing as a technology for intensification, claiming that above all, his power of presence of mind (*Besonnenheit*) must increase.

One of the basic impulses of artistic production, one that has grounded, justified, and legitimized works of art since antiquity, consists in making present that which is absent. Mnemosyne, as Hölderlin knew well, is the mother of the muses. The attempt to bring that which is gone back into the world of the living, or to make the world of the present live long after it has ceased to be—such are the basic impulses behind memory and memorialization—has long been one of the central functions of art, and it even describes one of the central capacities of Baumgarten's *felix aestheticus*. Novalis also understands memory as an important faculty that can be exercised, but it is not this faculty in particular that he sees as central to his own self-formation in this context. Memory constitutes one cognitive capacity among others enlisted in the project of crafting an aesthetically autostimulating self. The ability to notice, to observe, *die Beobachtungsgabe*, which in a sense also makes present that which is latent or hidden, constitutes yet another such faculty. Expression places that which is thought, remembered, or noticed into a tangible form. It describes the means through which the absent not only becomes present, but becomes present for others as well.

Presence of mind, or *Besonnenheit*, occupies a special place in Novalis' journal entry. As a concept, it is connected to self-mastery, to control, to a self-organization of the mind whose analogical sphere of action points to the organization of the solar system. *Besonnenheit* infuses the mind with the power of attraction and repulsion that holds the cosmos in balance, and as such, it can be equated with the drive to life, to the physiologically driven propagation of forms. Novalis says elsewhere, "Licht ist Symbol der ächten Besonnenheit. Also ist Licht der Analogie nach—*Action*—der *Selbstriührung* der Materie. Der Tag ist also das Bewußtseyn des Wandelsterns..." (HKA II.619). The analogy between the world of appearances and the structure of the mind—an analogy that

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<sup>148</sup> Karl Philipp Moritz, "Zur Seelendiätetik," *Dichtungen und Schriften zur Erfahrungseelenkunde*, ed. Heide Hollmer and Albert Meier, vol. 1, Werke (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker, 1999) 837.

is already palpable in Kant's writings, but blossoms into a fully-fledged hermeneutic system in Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*—leads to a metaphorical isomorphism between the psychical and the physical realms. The mind organizes itself through *Besonnenheit* just as the natural world organizes itself according to the transcendental laws of attraction and repulsion.

When Novalis claims that his presence of mind, his *Besonnenheit*, must grow more intense—a process that presupposes the inexhaustible presence of lacunae—he reveals the drive to self-organization as part of an aesthetic exercise. The "lacunae," blind spots that can never be fully integrated into experience, become critical for this process inasmuch as they generate a challenge for presence of mind. Without these gaps in cognition, presence of mind would remain fixed in a mere static image rather than unfold in a dynamic process. Novalis' self-monitoring foregrounds the *lacunae* fueling his presence of mind:

Laß vorzüglich auch die Aufmerksamkeit auf gefälliges und vorsichtiges Betragen gegen den Vater nicht aus der Acht—hüte dich im Umgang mit Schlegeln—übe dich unaufhörlich in besonnener Wirksamkeit—*habe Söffchen stets vor Augen*—vergiß nicht die Kürze von 3 Monaten—übernimm dich nicht—*Sey mäßig*—und überlaß dich nicht zu sehr deinem Hange zu vexiren und zu belustigen—Jetzt schikt es sich doch nicht mehr recht für dich—wenigstens sehr mit Maas.

Xstus und Sophie (HKA IV.48)

Nestled between banal, almost cliché self-admonitions—obey your father, beware of the corrupting influence of your radical friend, be productive, do not take on too much work, be moderate, be polite—one can find a different sort of exercise, namely an exercise of the imagination, one whose success depends upon making the absent present: *habe Söffchen stets vor Augen*.

The demand to have Sophie continually before Novalis' eyes derives from the tradition of spiritual exercises through which the suffering of Christ was continually made present before the eyes of the believer.<sup>149</sup> Both Christ and Sophie enter into relation with one another, but this relation is itself subordinated to the imaginative practice that both of them stimulate in aesthetic cognition, one whose dynamic is revealed in the displacement from Christ to Sophie. Presence of mind, *Besonnenheit*, does not merely designate the ability of the mind to monitor and control its own activity. If presence of mind refers to the ability to make present, it nevertheless foregrounds the more originary lack that makes this activity an infinite project. Novalis perceives "unendliche Lacunen" that prevent total self-mastery and the total apprehension of any realm of absolute transcendence. Absence, however, does not remain mired in its own negativity, a perennial symbol of lack, but generates a different form of plenitude. For Novalis, a lack

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<sup>149</sup> Ignatius of Loyola, in his *Spiritual Exercises*, says, "Here it is to be noted that, in a visible contemplation or meditation—as for instance, when one contemplates Christ our Lord, Who is visible—the composition will be to see with the sight of the imagination the corporeal place where the thing is found which I want to contemplate." Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. Father Elden Muller (New York: Cosimo, 2007) 35.

is not a moment of pure negation; if it is not absolutely retrievable, neither is it absolutely irretrievable. The death of Sophie, her permanent and devastating loss, sets Novalis the impossible but never-ending task of making present, the forever abortive but forever productive attempt to bring that which has disappeared back into the space of appearances.

## 2. The Disruption of the Aesthetico-Physiological Economy of Balance

For the purposes of this study, the most important features of Novalis' aesthetic attraction may be enumerated as follows: 1) For Novalis, the attempt to represent the absolute leads not to identity, but to the multiplication of pluralities. 2) The absolute changes its function from grounding truth to generating reflections that continually invert previous reflective orders. 3) This philosophical or logical operation of the *inverted order*, orders that are linked with one another and made permeable by *points of indifference*, eventually becomes a theory of drives. Poetry, which continually overturns schemas of organization and makes these schemas, in all of their differences, permeable, lays bare the autostimulative dynamic of life.

These aspects of Novalis' *Fichte-Studien* are integrated into Novalis' poetry as attractions and tendencies of poetic form. The latent structure of life as the stimulation and multiplication of plurality and difference—which both hides itself and announces itself in the very being of appearances, in the movement from *Seyn* to *Schein*—is woven into the texture of the poetic utterance. So too, in *Die Hymnen an die Nacht*, does the poet's desire for death, the unrepresentable and unknowable other of life, in an analogous movement to that of the reflective subject's continually frustrated attempt to represent Being, ultimately produce differentiation, plurality, and expansive oscillation.

Novalis' *Hymnen an die Nacht* begin in a state of tension:

Welcher Lebendige, Sinnbegabte, liebt nicht vor allen Wundererscheinungen des verbreiteten Raums um ihn, das allerfreulichste Licht—mit seinen Farben, seinen Strahlen und Wogen, seiner milden Allgegenwart, als weckender Tag. Wie des Lebens innerste Seele atmet es der rastlosen Gestirne Riesenwelt, und schwimmt tanzend in seiner blauen Flut—atmet es der funkelnde, ewigruhende Stein, die sinnige saugende Pflanze und das wilde brennende, vielgestaltete Tier—vor allen aber der herrliche Fremdling mit den sinnvollen Augen, dem schwebenden Gange, und den zartgeschlossenen, tonreichen Lippen. Wie ein König der irdischen Natur ruft es jede Kraft zu zahllosen Verwandlungen, knüpft und löst unendliche Bündnisse, hängt sein himmlisches Bild jedem irdischen Wesen um. — Seine Gegenwart allein offenbart die Wunderherrlichkeit der Reiche der Welt.

Abwärts wend ich mich zu der heiligen, unaussprechlichen, geheimnissvollen Nacht. (HKA I.131)

The title of the poem—the hymns to the night (Novalis originally intended to call the poems "Nacht")—tells us that they will direct their attention to the night as the god to which they call. The poem begins, however, with praise of the day. The question that launches the poem would at first appear merely a rhetorical gesture, phrased negatively so as to provoke a positive response. It would seem to suggest: there is no living being who does not love the light above all other things. And yet—ultimately it does appear to take itself seriously as a question. The poetic voice does say: I turn toward the night, therefore *I* do not love the light above all other things. If these hymns initiate an entrance into the lyric world by praising the light, they begin with an act that provokes its own overcoming.

Just as *Die Hymnen an die Nacht* begin with a tension between rhetorical gestures, so might one see the poem as a series of aesthetic and formal movements that never resolve into a harmony that would permit the consciousness of the reader to stand still. Such an interpretation of *Die Hymnen an die Nacht* might seem surprising. The poem closes with the famous sixth hymn, the *Sehnsucht nach dem Tode*, the return to the resting place, the end of action, the becoming-inorganic of all dynamic forms of life. However, even when the poet finishes his poem with the seeming release of consciousness into a space of eternal rest, the poetic reworking of death functions as an exercise in finitude that contributes to the never-ending stimulative process of life itself.

That the attempt to approach death could be linked to the practical expansion of one's own selfhood was already hinted at in the *Fichte-Studien*. Here Novalis says "Entäußerung unsrer Ichheit—Nichtseyn durch Seyn ist unser theoretisches Ziel, Vergrößerung unsrer Ichheit—oder Seyn durch Nichtseyn—unser practisches Ziel./ Sie müßen im Widerspruch stehn, um im Ich zu seyn" (HKA I.145). The very form of *Die Hymnen an die Nacht* appears motivated by the idea that the negation of our selfhood, or the attempt to escape from the boundaries of subjectivity, can actually create conditions whereby selfhood becomes expanded.

*Die Hymnen an die Nacht* dramatize the process of an inverted form of reading in which readers are allowed—or even provoked—to read the text as an attraction to oppositional spaces, spaces that ultimately overturn hierarchical or teleological conceptions of order. Such is the function of death for Novalis: it provokes alternative ways of organizing phenomena that had previously been established as given. Finally, this very opening up of alternative orders of organization becomes characteristic of the reproducibility of life itself, as a physiological drive.

In the eighteenth century, the physiological discourses describing the mechanics of the body were often formulated in terms of theories of stimulation. Although the physiology of stimulation can be traced to antiquity, it acquires a new cultural relevance in the seventeenth century with Francis Glisson's *De Natura* (1672). In the middle of the eighteenth century, Albrecht von Haller develops an account of irritability describing the relationship of muscle contraction to the regulation of the nervous system, or irritability to sensibility.<sup>150</sup> Albrecht von Haller understands the sensibility as a capacity that

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<sup>150</sup> In Haller's *De partibus corporis humani sensilibus et irritabilibus* (1732), irritability and sensibility form the central powers of life. The irritable parts of the human body contract when touched by a foreign body, whereas the sensible parts of the body transmit an impression upon being touched.

transmits impressions from the body to the soul and vice versa, establishing physiology as a mediation between matter and spirit.<sup>151</sup>

In 1795, as Novalis was writing the *Fichte-Studien*, John Brown's treatise *Elements of Medicine* was published in German translation. Novalis' first written mention of Brown nevertheless appears only in 1798 in *Das allgemeine Brouillon*. Although the *Fichte-Studien* understand Fichtean Idealism as an exercise of the drive to life, and therefore show an increased sensitivity to philosophy as a physiological exercise, it is not until later that Novalis formulates thoughts explicitly marked by Brown's theory of medicine.<sup>152</sup>

In *Das allgemeine Brouillon*, Brown's thoughts permit Novalis to reconceptualize the Fichtean absolute subject, blending transcendental philosophy and the physiology of stimulation. Both Brown and Fichte share an important basic tendency that characterizes their respective projects, namely, the desire to ground the plurality of appearances in the universality and simplicity of a single principle. For Fichte, the principle of identity presupposed by the self-positing subject makes the human cognition of reality possible—and reality as such is unthinkable without this process of cognition. For Brown, the absolute and single principle consists in his definition of life as a self-sustaining system.

Life, for Brown, is defined by the ability both to be affected by external stimuli and internal states such that an organism can maintain itself functionally; living creatures are organized in such a way, "daß sie durch äussere Dinge sowohl, als durch gewisse ihnen selbst eigenthümlich Verrichtungen auf eine solche Art affizirt werden können, daß die ihren lebendigen Zustand charakterisirenden Erscheinungen, d.h. ihre eigene Verrichtungen eine Folge davon sind."<sup>153</sup> Organic matter distinguishes itself from inorganic matter in the ability to be affected, both by external agents and by its own internal functionality. The living being is therefore defined by a feedback loop in its own mechanisms of functionality, its ability to regulate and reproduce its own self-organization and its own forms of appearance. Brown calls the regulation of external and internal powers "excitability" or, in German translation, *Erregbarkeit*, while the powers themselves he calls *Erregung* or *erregende Potenzen*: "Die allgemeine Wirkung der erregenden Potenzen ist Empfindung, Bewegung, Thätigkeit des Verstandes und Gemüthes.... [Diese Wirkung] soll Erregung gennant werden."<sup>154</sup> Living beings begin their existence with a quantifiable amount of excitability. The exciting powers decrease the quantity of excitability over the span of life. When the balance between the exciting powers and the excitability is perturbed, the body may fall into illness. When either the exciting powers or the excitability reach a zero point, the body dies. Health consists in restoring the balance between stimuli and excitability, and although this balance itself can be restored, a certain quantity of lost excitability can never be recuperated.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> See John Neubauer, "Dr. John Brown (1735-88) and Early German Romanticism," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 28.3 (1967): 20.

<sup>152</sup> For a thorough account of John Brown's importance for Novalis' poetics, see John Neubauer, *Bifocal Vision* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1971).

<sup>153</sup> John Brown, *John Brown's System der Heilkunde*, trans. C. H. Pfaff (Copenhagen: Prost und Storch, 1796) 3.

<sup>154</sup> Brown, *John Brown's System der Heilkunde* 4.

<sup>155</sup> For a clear and succinct discussion of the importance of Brown's physiology for German Romanticism, see Neubauer, "Dr. John Brown (1735-88) and Early German Romanticism."

Brown's description of the effect of the powers of excitability, although framed in physiological terms, resonates with eighteenth-century theories of the work of art, specifically, with the concept of grace, the aesthetic stimulation of activity in the mind, and the intensification of affective life. Shaftesbury made a parallel between the movements of the body and those of the mind, and specifically viewing the mind as an organ that had to be exercised in the same manner as the body: "[Writers] have at least as much need of learning the several Motions, Counterpoises and Ballances of the Mind and Passions, as the other Students those of the Body and Limbs"<sup>156</sup> Hogarth conjoins the grace of painterly form with the motion of the eye itself, deriving the line of grace from the "love of pursuit... planted in our natures," one that leads the eye on a "wanton sort of chace [sic]."<sup>157</sup> For Hogarth, the line of grace triggers a response from the eye because of a disequilibrium in human nature, an originary form of energy drawing the eye to movement and pursuit rather than immobility and rest. This very disequilibrium, which implies an attraction to motion rather than stasis, leads Lessing to claim "stimulation" or "grace" (*Reiz*) for poetry rather than the plastic arts: "Reiz ist Schönheit in Bewegung, und eben darum dem Maler weniger bequem als dem Dichter."<sup>158</sup>

The German translator of Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty* translates line of grace as *Linie des Reizes*.<sup>159</sup> The translation is not an error; for Johann Georg Sulzer, *Reiz* is synonymous with *Grazie*.<sup>160</sup> However, whereas *Grazie* describes a way of being, a form of action that appears in and through the movement of bodies, *Reiz* nevertheless appears more nominalistic, designating the ability of one phenomenon to produce excitation in someone or something. Sulzer even misinterprets Winckelmann's philosophy of grace, claiming that Winckelmann uses *Grazie*, "um eine besondere Art, oder vielleicht nur eine gewisse Eigenschaft des Schönen in sichtbaren Form auszudrücken."<sup>161</sup> Winckelmann, however, does not see grace as a sensible quality of beauty as much as a way of life, explicitly stating, "Die Grazie ist ein Geschenk des Himmels, aber nicht wie die Schönheit: denn er ertheilt nur die Ankündigung und Fähigkeit zu derselben. Sie bildet sich durch Erziehung und Überlegung, und kann zur Natur werden, welche dazu

<sup>156</sup> Anthony Ashley Cooper Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Philip Ayres, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 103.

<sup>157</sup> William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*, ed. Joseph Burke (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1953) 24-5.

<sup>158</sup> Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laokoon*, In *Werke und Briefe*, ed. Wilfried Barner, vol. 5.2. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutsche Klassiker, 1985) 224.

<sup>159</sup> Simon Richter draws attention to the early discursive resonance between physiology and aesthetics through the notion of stimulus, or *Reiz*: "Mylius übersetzte das Werk [*The Analysis of Beauty*] ins Deutsche und gab ihm den Titel *Die Zergliederung der Schönheit*, der die im englischen 'analysis' latente Mehrdeutigkeit hervorkommen läßt. Damit wird bereits im Titel der Verfahrensweise Hogarths völlig entsprochen, der sich wie ein Physiologe ausschließlich auf die materiellen Eigenschaften des Kunstwerks konzentriert, und sich strikt distanziert von 'je ne sais quoi' oder Schönheitsmetaphysik. Von besonderem Interesse ist für die oben formulierte Untersuchungsthese die Übersetzung des grundlegenden ästhetischen Prinzips des Kupferstechers Hogarth von english 'line of grace' als 'Reizeslinie.'" Simon Richter, "Medizinischer und ästhetischer Diskurs im 18. Jahrhundert: Herder und Haller über Reiz," *Lessing Yearbook* 25 (1993): 85.

<sup>160</sup> Johann Georg Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste in einzeln, nach alphabetischer Ordnung der Kunstworter aufeinanderfolgenden, Artikeln abgehandelt*, ed. C. F. Blankenburg, vol. 2 (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1967) 974.

<sup>161</sup> Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste in einzeln, nach alphabetischer Ordnung der Kunstworter aufeinanderfolgenden, Artikeln abgehandelt*, vol. 2, 794.

geschaffen ist."<sup>162</sup> For Winckelmann, grace refashions nature through education and thought, uniting reason and pleasure, making a virtuoso out of the human subject who executes all tasks with lightness and ease.<sup>163</sup> Grace permits human beings to integrate the complexity of appearances into the simplicity of actions. Winckelmann's ontology of grace is unthinkable from the perspective of *Reiz* as stimulation, whose physiological function is to act upon the living being rather than express the capacity to embody the beautiful.

As a physiologist, Brown structures his ideal of health around a balance between exciting powers and the excitability. Brown therefore develops his ideal of health as a maintenance of equilibrium, that is to say, as the equivalent of a moral and aesthetic philosophy of grace. The creation of equilibrium results from the interaction of all exciting powers—which can be internal or external, psychic or physical—with the fixed quantity of excitability granted to the organism at birth. Brown's physiology, by assigning importance to both exterior and internal stimulation in the self-maintenance of the excitability, therefore makes possible an intensified interaction between psychic and physical processes: "Die Erhöhung der Sinne, der Bewegungen, der Geisteskraft und der Leidenschaften hängt von einer Erhöhung der Erregung in jedem ihrer Organe ab, welche außer andern Verrichtungen die Bewegung des Bluts durch dieselbe beschleunigt."<sup>164</sup> For Brown, mental and sensual activity provides stimuli that maintain and restore the functional operativity of the organism. The mind and the senses are not merely passive receptacles for data, but active participants in processes of life. The exercise of the senses may restore operativity in the functional self-organization of the organism: "Eine angenehme Uebung der Sinne ist ein kräftiges Erregungsmittel des ganzen Körpers..."<sup>165</sup> Regimes of aesthetic exercises in everyday life—not necessarily limited to the experience of works of art, but as pure sensory input—reconfigure the total system of the body.

Brown's physiology exerts a powerful attraction over Novalis, who sees both Brown and Fichte as thinkers that have opened up new possibilities for aesthetically driven autostimulation. Novalis explicitly relates Fichte's absolute ego—which, as we have seen, functions primarily as a generator of fictional propositions characterized by semiotic differentiation—and Brown's physiology of stimulation when, in 1797, he says, "Fichtes W[issenschafts]L[ehre] ist die *Theorie der Erregung*" (HKA III.383). At the same time, Novalis sees the limitations of both paradigms—Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* and Brown's physiology—as universal theories of the mind and the body. From a methodological perspective, Brown and Fichte make similar movements in thought. Just as Fichte seeks to lead the manifold and plural world of appearances back to the singular principle of the identity of the absolute subject, so does Brown attempt to integrate all acts of stimulation into the functionality of the closed system of excitability. Brown unwittingly subordinates the particular to the general, seeing in every individual manifestation of excitability merely a self-sustaining form of maintenance of excitability.

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<sup>162</sup> Johann Joachim Winckelmann, "Von der Grazie in Werken der Kunst," *Kleine Schriften, Vorreden, Entwürfe*, ed. Walther Rehm, 2nd ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002) 157.

<sup>163</sup> For an excellent interpretation of Winckelmann's concept of grace, see Eckart Goebel, *Charis und Charisma* (Berlin: Kadmos, 2006).

<sup>164</sup> Brown, *John Brown's System der Heilkunde* 89.

<sup>165</sup> Brown, *John Brown's System der Heilkunde* 83.

It submits all mental and bodily phenomena to the law of *functionality*. The very definition of life as the maintenance of excitability therefore forecloses on the possibility of any excessive or expansive multiplication of particularity, any drive to differentiation within this closed system.

Novalis objects to Brown's system not merely because Brown, reacting against the prevailing "chemical" conceptions of physiology and humoral pathology, reduces life to the mechanistic regulation of excitability. Novalis does claim, "Das Individuelle, *propter* *Genesin*, und *falsche* des Br[own'schen] Systems ist seine Neigung zur Mechanik" (HKA III.407). The more significant error in Brown's system, however, results from the attempt to make its own theory into a closed absolute. For Novalis, the operation of life must be dynamic, stretched between competing attractions:

Man muß diese polemische Beziehung [between the mechanistic and the chemical]—den Opposit[ions]theil seines [Brown's] Systems vom Allg[emeinen]—sein allg[emeines], eigentliches instinctartiges Wollen von seiner Privat und Temporelen *Absicht*, trennen... die beyden accidentellen System—die einander kritisiren—und aus deren *simultanen* Gebrach man die wahrhaften Mittelresultate erhält (wie in d[em] *Differential-calcul*. (HKA III.408)

Novalis, by positioning Brown's theory of stimulation in a higher-order systemic configuration, relativizes the theory itself and releases its own stimulative potential. Brown's theory cannot merely *describe* life, but it must also *participate* in it, it must, in its very form of utterance, embody the processes that it otherwise attempts to describe. To manifest this process, and not merely describe it, requires a double-movement, a "middle result" which does not rest statically in itself, but oscillates, like an infinite mathematical process, between differentiation and integration, between the attempt to break down and analyze differences and to recompose these differences in the larger system of which they are a function. Novalis invokes differential calculus not merely as a formal procedure that produces mathematical knowledge, but as a process, a form of life, and an askesis.<sup>166</sup>

The core of Novalis' objection therefore cannot be construed as "anti-mechanistic," but as a criticism of pure theory, of the disinterested and absolutizing point of view that hides itself from its own exercise value and its own status *as* a practice of life. Ultimately, for Novalis, it is not the mechanical paradigm that renders Brown's theory incomplete or false, but rather, the fact that it universalizes its own formulas without taking into account the individuality of particular beings. For Novalis, philosophical activity therefore opens and relativizes the closed system of physiology:

[Die Brownianer] fallen immer in Einen der vorigen Irrthümer in ihren Ausdrücken und Anwendungen zurück... da sie das Verfahren im Allgemeinen mit Buchstaben—nicht für jedes Individuum geltend

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<sup>166</sup> Daniel Lancereau notes: "Was ist der Wille zur Nacht anderes als eine Operation der Differenzierung? Im Gegensatz dazu ist der Wille zur Aufklärung ein Versuch der Integration." Lancereau, "Novalis und Leibniz." This nuanced reading of Novalis' "Wille zur Nacht" coheres with my reading of the final hymn as an exercise in an oscillation between differentiation and integration.

annehmen, sondern a und b, wie spezifische Classen ansehen, und nun den Vorrath von Kranckheiten, Mitteln und Individuen dahinein vertheilen—indem sie nicht *wahrhaft relativ*—mit allgemeinen Verhältnißformeln verfahren.

[...]

D[ie] Phil[osophie] macht alles *los*—relativirt das Universum—Sie hebt wie das Copernikanische System die *festen* Punkte auf—und macht aus dem Ruhenden ein Schwebendes" (HKA III.377-8).

Novalis' famous and oft-cited claim for the "relativity" of philosophy in fact appears as a response to the insufficiency of Brown's system, to its generalizing and absolutizing activity.<sup>167</sup> Philosophy functions as an antidote to forms of life that absolutize their own perspectives and thereby become rigid, static, mired in a state of rest or inertia, governed by aesthetic attractions to *balance* rather than continual *stimulation*. The relativism of philosophy does not merely emerge from the impossibility of grasping the absolute, but rather, frames itself as an exercise for thought that redresses the deficiencies of universalizing physiological theories, theories that ultimately seek to maintain equilibrium in the organism.

Novalis therefore ascribes a *physiological* function to philosophy itself. Philosophy negates any and all centripetal movements toward one anchored point of concentration, instead engendering *relations* between differences, contact points and dynamic associations between organisms and the world of appearances. The exercise of philosophy, or philosophy as *askesis*, generates *motion*; it does not merely uncover or refute truth or falsehood. A philosophical physiology would therefore not use general principles to eliminate differences or to lead all differences back to a more encompassing or originary identity, but rather, to intensify multiplicity, locality, and individuality. Novalis says, "*Alle Kr[äfte] sind lauter LocalKr[äfte]*" (HKA III.612). Brown, like Fichte, despite the seeming dogmatism of his theory and against his explicitly stated goals, nevertheless opens up forms of activity to the differentiation of stimuli and specificity of individual regimes of exercise.<sup>168</sup>

Just as Winckelmann sought a total way of life in the doctrine of grace, so too does Novalis believe that the physiological theory of stimulation produces life practices in which nature and art become indistinguishable from one another: "Die Medicin muß ganz anders werden. Lebenskunstlehre und Lebensnaturlehre." (HKA III.371) Brown's system, from a certain point of view, appears to Novalis too rigid and dogmatic to move from a description of life to a practice of life. In order to open this system, Novalis' exploits what he sees as one of its central conceptual weaknesses, namely, its understanding of sickness.

Novalis evaluates sickness positively at some times, negatively at others. On the one hand, philosophy becomes sick when it believes in its own ability to articulate a total

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<sup>167</sup> It is often abstracted from its context as a response to problematic physiological paradigms. See, for example, Theodor Haering, *Novalis als Philosoph* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1954).

<sup>168</sup> As Neubauer notes, "Novalis saw in Dr. Brown's theory idealistic and romantic features, although he considered the theory mechanical." Neubauer, "Dr. John Brown (1735-88) and Early German Romanticism," 377.

system of being, when it seeks completion and totality without comprehending the necessary and healthy presence of incompleteness as integral to its own activity: "Ein absolute Trieb nach Vollendung und Vollständigkeit ist Kranckheit, sobald er sich zerstörend, und abgeneigt gegen das *Unvollendete*, Unvollständige zeigt." (HKA III.384).<sup>169</sup> On the other hand, sickness may also appear as a perturbation of the excitability, a foreign element that disrupts the equilibrium of the system and generates new forms of individuation. Brown's physiology allows no room for this conception of sickness; according to Novalis, "*Kranckheit* hat Brown schlechterdings nicht erklärt" (HKA III.453). Brown believes that sickness and health form part of the same system, since sickness is nothing other than an imbalance in the relation between the exciting powers and the excitability. However, sickness must represent not merely a confirmation of the totality of the system of excitability, but rather, an individualizing power, one that struggles against the attempt to integrate life itself into one single explanatory framework. Novalis writes, "*Kranckheit* gehört zur *Individualisierung*..." (HKA III.681). Whereas Brown, whose physiology coheres well with the aesthetic model of grace, sees sickness as an imbalance, Novalis understands disequilibrium itself as an exercise of life and a formation of the mind: "*Kranckheiten* bes[onders] langwierige, sind Lehrjahre der Lebenskunst und Gemüthsbildung." (HKA III.686) For Novalis, sickness perturbs the system of equilibrium established by the physiology of excitability and stimulation and pushes the human being into different spaces of life. Brown, following Hippocrates, does not see health and sickness as ontologically distinct; instead, the organism becomes sick under sthenic (an excess of stimulation) or asthenic (a lack of stimulation) conditions, that lead to direct (when the dearth of the exciting powers leads to malfunction in the excitability) or indirect (when the excess of exciting powers occupies certain functions of the excitability, leading to breakdown) debilities. For Novalis, sickness may be caused by too much or too little stimulation, but it is not ontologically identical to the system of excitation itself: "*Kranckheit im eigentlichen Sinne* ist ein wunderbares Produkt des Lebens—was freilich durch zu viele oder zu wenige Erregung entstehn (Hunger und Ekel) kann—aber nicht sie selbst ist" (HKA III.602). Sickness can only be explained by appealing to a higher, latent order that demands disorganization as part of this very order. Brown's doctrine of excitability normalizes the state of health and sees sickness as something to be eliminated as quickly as possible. Novalis portrays sickness as part of the very structure of transcendence of life, as a novel form of positing-forth, *Fortsetzen*.

Every particular input into a system could therefore at various times appear either as overstimulation or understimulation. "*Reitze*," for Novalis, are "durchaus Relation" (HKA III.377). Stimulation, rather than leading human beings back to the identity of a single system of organization, is distinguished by its capacity to alter its essence, to become a positive or a negative, an overstimulation or a deprivation: "Sollte niche jede Kranckheit, jedes Leben zugleich—oder Successive sthenisch und asthenisch seyn—und d[ie] allg[emeinen] Br[ownschen] Sätze Grunds[ätze] jeder Kranckheit seyn" (HKA III.377). Novalis repurposes Brown's theory to individualize orders of relation rather than to fix beings in the stability of Being.

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<sup>169</sup> Uerlings notes that this thought "liest sich wie eine medizinische Interpretation des Ordo inversus." Uerlings, *Friedrich von Hardenberg, genannt Novalis* 177.

For Novalis, the physiology of stimulation provokes an expansion in exterior and interior sensory capacities: "Vermehrung der Sinne und Ausbildung der Sinne gehört mit zu der Hauptaufgabe d[er] Verbesserung des Menschengeschlechts, der Graderhöhung der Menschheit" (HKA III.318). The creation of a new type of human being depends upon a regime of aesthetic exercises, one that does not seek equilibrium as its goal, but a continual intensification in all spheres of sensory and spiritual cognition. The intensification would not neglect the corporeal at the expense of the mental, but simultaneously develop *Reizbarkeit* and *Sensibilitaet*, or exterior and interior stimulation: "es kommt nur vorzüglich auf Vermehrung und Bildung der Sensibilitaet und zwar auf die Weise an, daß die Reizbarkeit und der äußere Reitz nicht dabey leiden" (HKA III.318). The sensibility, which the physiologist Röschlaub uses to designate the activity of the brain and the nervous system, makes possible an embodied exercise of the soul. The soul, for Novalis, also has a sensory capacity—he speaks of "2 Systeme von Sinnen.... Ein System heißt der Körper, Eins, die Seele" (HKA II.546)—and he envisions the expansion of the senses equally as an expansion of the relation of both mind and body. Novalis seeks not equilibrium or balance between these two systems, but rather, the continual growth and intensification of both at the same time. Aesthetically, this change in the economy between the mind and the soul signals a shift from the (classicist) aesthetics of balance to an aesthetics of transcendence.

The full expansion of the mind, however, occurs only in a space beyond the physical-mechanical nexus of causality. Hence Novalis tends to portray the sensibility as a product of the soul rather than of the brain and the nervous system. However, it is primarily fantasy (*die Fantasie*), rather than sensibility, that functions as an "außermechanische Kraft" (HKA III.430). Fantasy, which may perturb the balance between the exciting powers and the excitability, leads to a source of stimulation not located in the mechanics of the feedback loop of stimulation. Fantasy produces a point from outside the physical-mechanical system that may disrupt this system. As a cognitive capacity, fantasy—like Heinrich von Ofterdingen's *blaue Blume*, which appears as a point outside the narrative framework that then organizes the narrative internally—reduplicates the logic of its own narrative manifestations in Novalis' texts, often coming from a point exterior to a specific bounded narrative space (e.g. in a fairy tale) in order to reconfigure the action inside this space.

In order to activate the expansion of sensual capacities, fantasy must short-circuit the mechanistic feedback loop of the stimulating powers and the excitability. From the physiological perspective, the fantasy produces illness. It produces "*logische Kr[anckheiten]*" (HKA III.385). Both the magical realist and the magical idealist—figures that invent either a pure object or a pure subject as the absolute ground of existence without any corresponding referent—exhibit the symptoms of such a sickness.<sup>170</sup> However, they are sick not only because their philosophical goals are

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<sup>170</sup> Frank, on the other hand, sees the magical idealist as a manifestation of "pathologische Philosophie": "Absolute Magie als Forderung an ein Individuum wäre der erste Grundsatz einer kranken Philosophie." Manfred Frank, "Die Philosophie des sogenannten 'Magischen Idealismus'," *Euphorion* 63 (1969): 109. Frank understands the sickness of magical idealism as a form of limitation, or as pathological philosophy. However, as an exercise, one could imagine a more positive role for the sickness of magical idealism, especially in oscillation with magical realism. The switching of frames from the fairy tale of Hyacinth and Rosenblüthchen to the speech of the "natural objects" might represent precisely such an operation.

impossible, and hence mere insanity, but also in a more positive sense: they disrupt the economy of stimulation that seeks to maintain the system in equilibrium and stasis. Sickness therefore provokes the individualization and transcendence necessary to make life into art, into a *Lebenskunstlehre*.<sup>171</sup> Novalis reframes the physiological absolute from the perspective of this provocation and self-disruption, whose transcendence belongs to the higher-order operation of life: "Der Act des sich selbst Überspringens ist überall der höchste—der Ursprung—die *Genesis des Lebens*" (HKA II.556). For Novalis, unlike for Nietzsche, the act of self-overcoming does not declare morality and religion as the repository of the values of the weak. Instead, every sphere of life, including that of morality and religion, provides the human being with the possibility of developing its capacities. Novalis does not wish to *overturn* values, but rather, to make them into a source of stimulation, a project that nevertheless demands the continual perturbation of its own forms of organization. Unlike Brown's physiology of grace in which the goal of health appears to consist in maintaining the equilibrium of a system, Novalis' physiology of stimulation seeks intensification, disorganization, a process of self-overcoming that displaces the functional concept of maintenance in favor of health as continual expansion.

### 3. Inverted Orders and Points of Indifference

In *Die Hymnen an die Nacht*, the dynamics of the physiological absolute unfold in poetic form itself, in the configuration of language as a proliferation and multiplication of differences predicated upon the continual overturning of order. Poetry does not give immediate access to "feeling" or provide human cognition with an intellectual intuition of Being (as it would in Schelling's philosophy of art). Rather, just as in reflective thought, feeling appears only negatively, so too in poetry does any conception of the absolute manifest itself negatively, as disruption, disorder, perturbation of the validity and the self-sustainability of any one reflective order.<sup>172</sup> The persistence of feeling—and its "unrepresentability"—opens up the capability of the human being to use poetry to continually negate and recreate its own limited, concrete, and hence fictional absolutes.

In the *Fichte-Studien*, Novalis shows how the presence of feeling, which is only present negatively, fictionalizes all linguistic acts—or turns them all into *Scheinsätze*.<sup>173</sup> The absolute becomes a form of physiological exercise that does not use poetic language

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<sup>171</sup> Before Novalis, Herder had articulated the notion that sickness could be used as a "Werckzeug" for the development of human capabilities: "denn wenn das Organ aus seiner Proportion mit andern gesetzt und also für den gewöhnlichen Kreis des Erlebens unbrauchbar worden ist, so scheint's natürlich, daß die innere rastlose Kraft sich nach andern Seiten des Weltalls kehre und vielleicht Eindrücke empfangt, deren eine ungestörte Organisation nicht fähig war, deren sie aber auch nicht bedurfte." Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Menschheit, Werke in zehn Bänden*, ed. Martin Bollacher, vol. 6 (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker, 1985) 197.

<sup>172</sup> Géza von Molnár emphasizes the importance of the "via negativa" as a point that distinguishes Novalis from Fichte. See Géza von Molnár, *Novalis' Fichte Studies: The Foundations of his Aesthetics* (The Hague: Mouton, 1970) 26.

<sup>173</sup> Schlutz notes, "the work of art will always indicate that the unity of transcendental poetics can only be realized in the realm of the *ordo inversus* and hence as a fiction." Schlutz, *Mind's World* 178.

to represent the unrepresentable or intuit absolute identity, but rather, uses the very fictionality of the absolute to disorganize any way of organizing the world that advances a claim to totality.<sup>174</sup> Poetry is power, but it is a very special type of power, a power not of discovering the unnameable, but of undoing the named.

One of the most striking features of *Die Hymnen an die Nacht* consists in its continual provocation of strategies of reading that are associational and differential. The light does not merely represent light, that is, the purely physical phenomenon; it seems to point beyond itself, referring to, for example, the phenomenal, the sensual, the rational, the realm of economic productivity. Similarly, the night does not merely refer to its purely denotative phenomenality, the time between the setting and rising of the sun. The night, at turns, invokes the noumenal, the holy oblivion of undifferentiated chaos, the fusion of *eros* and *thanatos*. If the poem contains any figures of multiplicity, heterogeneity and plurality, they are to be found in these supposed signs that stand in for the absolute, namely, the light and the night. Signs that in other contexts could easily be read as representations of the ultimately unrepresentable absolute therefore become integrated into a reading process that can only read these signs as other than they are—in other words, as absolutely non-identical with themselves. *Die Hymnen an die Nacht* do not attempt to represent the unrepresentability of the absolute. Instead, they put into practice how poetic signs *defer* representations of the absolute in different forms (night, the beloved, death, Christ, the father's womb), thereby in fact generating multiplicity and plurality in the very rhetorical fabric of the poem itself.

In any reading of the poem, one must therefore critically reflect upon the immediate impulse to see *through* the light and the night, to read them allegorically as other than they are. The light does not "represent" or "stand in for" the world of phenomena or intelligibility, nor does the night "represent" or "stand in for" the realm of the noumenal or unintelligible sacredness. Both the light and the night, as they unfold throughout the poem, enter into a chain of associations, and it is the flux of associations and relations that supersedes the moment of apprehension, or any notion of poetry as identical with Schelling's intellectual intuition of the absolute. In the first sentence, light becomes associated with the Cartesian extension, *res extensa (des verbreiteten Raums)*, with wondrous appearances that both constitute and exceed the order of nature (*Wundererscheinungen*), with positivistic discourses of the natural sciences (*mit seinen Strahlen und Wogen*), with the aesthetic, visible world (*seinen Farben*) and with omnipresence and idealized sovereignty (*seiner milden Allgegenwart*). What is striking about the light—and the night—is precisely the multiplicity of possible readings, each reading producing its own absolute, but each absolute being undermined by another possibility.

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<sup>174</sup> Novalis does speak of the "Kunst allmächtig zu werden—Kunst unsern Willen total zu realisieren." (HKA II.587). However, the art of totalizing the will becomes subordinated to the project of shaping the world, using the body as "Werkzeug zur Bildung und Modification der Welt" (HKA III.587). The attempt to totalize the will functions as stimulus not only by virtue of its unrealizability, but because there is a performative contradiction at the heart of the utterance. If "modification of the world" constitutes the telos of the attempt to totalize the will, Novalis nullifies even the desire for such a realization, since its completion would render the goal of modifying the world impossible and meaningless. The art of realizing the totality of the will only becomes meaningful—that is, only functions in its capacity to *modify* the given world—if it is never achieved.

In the turn to the night, the poetic voice of *Die Hymnen an die Nacht* never completely disavows the light and everything the light represents, but merely undercuts the claim of the light to total sovereignty. For sovereignty, or the claim to universal domination, appears as one of the hallmarks of the light: "Wie ein König der irdischen Natur ruft es jede Kraft zu zahllosen Verwandlungen, knüpft und löst unendliche Bündnisse, hängt sein himmlisches Bild jedem irdischen Wesen um" (HKA I.131). The light acts as the sovereign of nature, the sun having long been associated with figure of the monarch, an iconography that had been adopted and exploited by Louis XIV, *le Roi Soleil*. One of its central powers—a capability that places the light in the orbit of Baumgarten's aesthetic exercises—consists in associating and dissociating, binding and separating, synthesizing and analyzing the world of phenomena. The light makes possible the very appearance of the sensible and of the social order that guarantees intelligibility. Like the monarch, the radiation of light transmits a call, and the world of earthly appearances is exhorted to obedience.

When the poet turns his back onto the light—"Abwärts wend ich mich zu der heiligen, unaussprechlichen, geheimnisvollen Nacht" (HKA I.131)—not only does he signal his refusal of a regime of total sovereignty, but he enters into the orbit of an act of disobedience that could properly be called revolutionary.<sup>175</sup> On the level of poetic form, the gesture becomes more marked in print than in the manuscript. In the *Athenaeumsdruck*, there is a paragraph, or the equivalent of a strophic gesture in prose; the passage from the light to the night in the *Athenaeum* appears literally as a strophe, or a turning. However, in Novalis' manuscript, there is no such strophic turn that corresponds to a movement toward the undifferentiated space of holy, inexpressible night.<sup>176</sup> Although the political subtext casts the light as an almost tyrannical force, the mutiny against the light's claim to totality does not exhaust itself in ideology; the turn away from the sovereignty of light has nothing to say about the Jacobins or the Monarchists. And yet, in the oscillation produced by different writing technologies and recorded forms, between the hand and the printing press, the transition from day to night is both continuous and discontinuous, it is both stream of language and strophic turn.

The temptation to see the night as an attempt to express the inexpressible absolute or to refer to the space of indifferentiation may have some plausibility, but such a point of view only partially captures what is at stake in the night. The night does not refer; it acts. Its most important characteristic can be understood as a potentializing force, a form of poetic disorganization of schemas of intelligibility. The turn to the night directs itself against all accounts of natural organization modeled on a centripetal sovereign power; the fantasy of night functions as a perturbation that lies outside of the physical, mechanical, economic, or political system that disrupts and reorganizes these systems. Novalis writes in his comments on Schelling's *Von der Weltseele*, "Bildungskraft wird zum *Bildungstrieb* durch Störung eines fremden Principis" (HKA III.114).

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<sup>175</sup> Wm. Arctander O'Brien notes, "The regal praise of the first hymn signals a revolution in the works, an undermining of the Light as sufficient ground of 'appearance.'" William Arctander O'Brien, *Novalis: Signs of Revolution* (Durham: Duke UP, 1995) 259.

<sup>176</sup> The copy of the manuscript was taken from Henry Kamla, *Novalis' Hymnen an die Nacht. Zur Deutung und Datierung* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1945).

Both the light and the night therefore function less as signifiers and more as attractors. They both become associated not with any one particular absolute, but a way of organizing phenomena, a way of gathering them and disorganizing them. In the *Athenaeum* version, one sees the organization of light as a movement up the great chain of being. Stages of life are grammatically organized, each noun bearing a certain number of parallel adjectives that increase in complexity as one moves up the chain: "der funkelnde, ewigruhende Stein, die sinnige saugende Pflanze und das wilde brennende, vielgestaltete Tier— vor allen aber der herrliche Fremdling mit den sinnvollen Augen, dem schwebenden Gange, und den zartgeschlossenen, tonreichen Lippen" (HKA I.131). The poet progresses from the immobile stone to the sensuous plant to the savage animal, leading finally to the "herrliche Fremdling mit den sinnvollen Augen, dem schwebenden Gange, und den zartgeschlossenen, tonreichen Lippen." The poetic voice, in describing the phenomena touched by the light, organizes, classifies, and hierarchizes forms of Being from the inanimate to the vegetative to the animal to the human.

At the same time, as one travels toward the human being, the movement of the poem fluctuates in both substance and rhythm. The stone sparkles and rests eternally, both part of the creation and yet, static. The plant, *saugend*, lives through the transaction of fluids and, as *sinnig*, it seems to incline already toward reason. However, *sinnig*, according to Adelung, is "im Niedersächsischen noch jetzt figürlich für bedachtsam, bescheiden, behutsam."<sup>177</sup> Novalis, born close to Lower Saxony, may have been familiar with this use of the word. Poetically, it effects a slight acceleration from the eternally resting stone, one which gains momentum in the savagely burning animal, slowing down again with the human being, a being whose nature is to float, not to rest anchored to one place. The turn to the night and the potentiality for a disorganization of the order of the light that governs its appearance already announces itself in latent form. The human being appears to the poetic voice as a "foreigner," a *Fremdling*. If the human being appears as foreign, it may signal not that the human being is ontologically always already alien, but that the one who is speaking does not fully belong to the order of the human. To call the human being a foreigner reveals the speaking voice as both inside and outside the realm of the human. Moreover, the human being's expressivity manifests itself only paradoxically, as both silent and speaking, a being endowed with tenderly closed lips, *zartgeschlossen*, that are nevertheless musical, *tonreich*. Since the poet himself speaks, with lips open rather than closed, his own poetic activity already distances him from the figure he describes.

The poet therefore describes the realm of the light from the perspective of one who is at least partially outside its sphere of attraction. In the turn to the night, the poet does not merely become attracted to death, love, erotic fulfillment, and the ineffable realm of the noumenal. Rather, the turn to the night signals an alternative framework of organizing—or disorganizing—phenomena. Instead of the hierarchical chain of being, spaces are multiple, incompatible, metaphorical: the world is "in eine Tiefe Gruft versenkt," in "Saiten der Brust weht tiefe Wehmut," the poet desires to sink into "Tautropfen" (HKA I.131). Interior and exterior states are thrown together, mixed, non-delineated. "In andern Räumen schlug die lustigen Gezelte das Licht auf" says the poet

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<sup>177</sup> Johann Christoph Adelung, *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der hochdeutschen Mundart*, vol. 4 (Vienna: Bauer, 1811) 107.

(HKA I.131). It is not merely that the light appears in "other spaces," but rather, that the spaces of the night become other than the order and organization characteristic of day. This disorganizing gesture is even present in the organization of sound and rhythm, with the light gravitating toward dactyls, the night more toward iambic patterns. Rhythmically, however, the poem appears "mixed" in each section, which is why one must speak of tendencies and attractions rather than structures. The presence of the night—which is "zeitlos und raumlos" (HKA I.133)—serves to undermine the claim to totality of the space of the day, or one way of organizing appearances. It makes present an "other order" that disrupts the explicit claims of the day to omnipotence, which the poet explicitly designates *Allmacht*.

The disorganization of phenomena that the night instigates, which in turn undermines all claims to a singular or central figure of omnipotence, spurs the mind in its flight toward self-overcoming. To the night, the poet says, "Die schweren Flügel des Gemüts hebst du empor" (HKA I.131). The night as a symbol of indifferenciation does not raise the mind to a higher power; rather, it lifts the mind to a higher sphere by introducing difference into the poetic space, by disorganizing the light's schema of organization. Poetic stimulation, as we have seen, consists in finding a point outside of the system capable of perturbing the system. The poet recasts the continual overturning of order through the power of the night as an intensification of mental life.

If night initiates the undoing of a way of organizing the world, it follows that it must in turn provoke its own moment of overcoming. It does not negate itself, but rather, constructs an attraction to the light and to life, to its other, in order to maintain the tension that sustains its own power. The presence of the light makes itself felt at a turning point in the third hymn. This hymn, referring to passages almost verbatim from Novalis' journals about his visit to Sophie's grave, is not striking because of the core of experiential content it may or may not represent. Rather, it lays bare the dynamics of *Besonnenheit* that Novalis claims as the central cognitive faculty requiring exercise and stimulation.

It is not the authenticity of lived experience that links the third hymn and Novalis' journal, but the use of writing as a technology to refine the mind's capability to make present that which is absent. Poetry, as a form of making present, transforms the being of appearances, unlocking a differential oscillation at the core of tautological identity. In the third hymn, the tears of the poet register the differential process in the form of the tautology. The third hymn appears bracketed between an equation of tears, *Thränen=Thränen*. However, the tears at the beginning of the poem, while semiologically identical with the tears at the end, in fact undergo a differential metamorphosis. The hymn begins, "Einst da ich bittre Thränen vergoß" (HKA I.135), and ends with tears that have been transfigured by the presence and contact of the beloved, "An Ihrem Halse weint ich dem neuen Leben entzückende Thränen" (HKA I.135). The tears have become polarized or magnetized, moving from bitter to sweet, from mourning the loss of death to celebrating the promise of life.

The third hymn, which still stands in the attractive orbit of the night, nevertheless appears to organize phenomena in a way reminiscent of the light's form of organization in the first hymn, namely, in the movement from stasis to movement, from the inert stone to the floating human being. The hymn begins with the poet in a state of paralysis, as if

petrified: "Wie ich da nach Hülfe umherschaut, vorwärts nicht konnte und rückwärts nicht..." (HKA I.135). An appearance interrupts this stasis, "da kam aus blauen Fernen— von den Höhen meiner alten Seligkeit ein Dämmerungsschauer" (HKA I.135). The cascade of dawn makes present a redemptive moment in the past. As the presence of a liminal space between darkness and light, it introduces permeability between opposing spheres, and the poet becomes that floating being that was the domain of the human in the first hymn, "über der Gegend schwebte mein entbundner, neugeborner Geist" (HKA I.135). Both the inversion of the night, its overturning of the order of the day, and a sphere of indifferenciation—the *Dämmerungsschauer*—appear as necessary poetic preconditions for the transition from inertia to dynamic movement, from a being paralyzed in stasis to a being who floats.

In his "Physicalische Fragmente," which date from 1798, Novalis mentions the possibility of a chiasmatic movement between spheres of illness, each noted according to configurations of Brown's sthenic and asthenic, direct and indirect debilities. Although he crosses out a diagram of this schema, he notes that in the "Sphaere der Gesundheit," there is a "Saturationsgrenze," an "Indifferenzpunct," or a "Begehrungspunct" (HKA III.79). Anton Brugmans, in his *Philosophischer Versuche über die magnetische Materie* (translated into German in 1784), notes that the poles of a magnet are both separated and joined by a plane of indifference, a term that Joachim Ritter uses in his own galvanic and magnetic experiments.<sup>178</sup> Brugmans himself uses the term to describe the identity of *two* points along an iron bar, each of which appears imbued with an equal attractive force at any given distance from the end.<sup>179</sup> An indifference point, in a certain sense, functions as a magnetic translation of the concept of tautology, invoking the identity of two points,  $a=a$ . Novalis imbues *Indifferenzsfären*, however, with a physiological-aesthetic force, using indifference to link and blend mutually exclusive regions, body and mind, excitability and sensibility: "Synthesis von Seele und Körper—und Reitzbarkeit und Sensibilitaet. Sie gehn natürlich jezt schon in einander durch Indifferenzsfären— Realisirung, Ausfüllung der *Null* ist das schwierige Problem d[es] Künstlers der Unsterblichkeit" (HKA III.318).<sup>180</sup> The "artist of immortality" must fill out the zero of absolute identity, using points of indifference to *produce* differences. Differences must be *actively* produced through spheres of indifference, which in turn permit specific orders to

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<sup>178</sup> Holland discusses at length the importance of *Indifferenz* for representations of gender difference. See Holland, *German Romanticism and Science: The Procreative Poetics of Goethe, Novalis, and Ritter* 136-41.

<sup>179</sup> Brugmans describes the points of indifference as follows: "In jedem Stabe, er sey von Eisen oder Stahl, AC giebt es zwey Punkte M und N, die so beschaffen sind, daß, wenn man bey ihnen mit dem Streichen eines starken Magnets, womit man an einem Ende, wie in A, angefangen hat, aufhört, bald in A, bald in C keine magnetische Kraft hervorgebracht wird. Wenn man nämlich nur bis M gestrichen hat, so wird in A kein Magnetismus erscheinen; streicht man aber bis N, so wird er am andern Ende C mangeln; ob man schon, wenn man dies= oder jenseits der Punkte M und N mit Streichen aufhört, einen bemerkbaren Magnetismus an beyden Enden hervorbringt.

Da diese Punkte M und N von Niemand, so viel ich weiß, bemerkt worden sind, so will ich sie, wie es mir scheint, nicht ganz unschicklich, die *Punkte der Indifferenz* nennen, weil die Enden der Stäbe, die bis dahin gestrichen worden, auf die Pole einer Magnetnadel ohne Unterschied (indifferent) wirken, und beyde mit gleicher Leichtigkeit anziehen." Anton Brugmans, *Philosophische Versuche über die magnetische Materie* (Leipzig: Crusius, 1784) 69-70.

<sup>180</sup> Neubauer discusses the importance of "indifference" for health. See Neubauer, *Bifocal Vision* 101.

be overturned. The *Dämmerungsschauer* functions like a sphere of indifferenciation between the supposedly mutually exclusive codes of light and darkness, marking the transition between supposedly incommensurable regimes of organization.

The third hymn linguistically constructs an indifference point between light and dark, life and death, an indifference point that becomes intensified by the multiplicity of differential semantic possibilities concentrated along its grammatical plane of appearance. The manuscript version illustrates the indifference point more clearly than the printed version:

...—da kam aus blauen Fernen,  
Von den Höhen meiner alten Seligkeit ein Dämmerungs Schauer—  
Und mit einemmale riß das Band der Geburt,  
des Lichtes Fessel—Hin floh die irdische Herrlichkeit und  
meine Trauer mit ihr. (HKA I.134)

The word "riß" stands out at the midpoint of the line, and almost lies at the midpoint of the third hymn as a whole. The act of tearing is associated with birth, and yet, it is difficult to classify the verb as transitive or intransitive, and if transitive, it is difficult to decide which words form the subject and which the object. Ought one to translate: 1) "All of a sudden, the shower of dawn tore the band of birth, the light's fetters" or 2) "All of a sudden, the band of birth, the fetters of the light, broke apart" or 3) "All of a sudden, the band of birth tore the light's fetters." Most plausibly, the bond of birth and the fetters of the light stand in apposition (options one or two). However, even this apposition is not unambiguous. In the *Athenaeum* version, it is written thus: "und mit einemmale riß das Band der Geburt—des Lichtes Fessel" (HKA I.135). Isolated from the previous phrase, the bond of birth seems act as subject, to have torn the fetters of the light (option three). And yet, if the verb is read intransitively—a possibility, that, although unlikely, exists in Adelung for the verb *reißen*—the bond of birth and the fetters of the light become coextensive, almost identical expressions (option two). In the most likely reading, the storm of dawn is the subject, which tears the bond of birth, the fetters of the light (option one). In this case, it is the very figure of the point of indifference between light and dark, the dawn, that tears the bond of birth, that separates the poet from the world of light, from the world of the living—and thereby permits his entry into the world of the dead, the world in which his beloved dwells. And yet, even the point of indifference appears difficult to localize, it floats, as a merely potential force that breaks the bonds of birth and the fetters of the light.

When the poet reunites with the beloved, he seems to have crossed the boundary between life and death. And while this crossing is associated with the tearing of a bond (the bond of birth), another bond is put in its place (the bond of tears):

...ich faßte ihre Hände, und die Thränen wurden ein funkelndes,  
unzerreißliches Band. Jahrtausende zogen abwärts in die Ferne, wie  
Ungewitter. An Ihrem Halse weint ich dem neuen Leben entzückende  
Thränen.—Es war der erste, einzige Traum—und erst seitdem fühl ich

ewigen, unwandelbaren Glauben an den Himmel der Nacht und sein Licht,  
die Geliebte. (HKA I.135)

The tears of the poet, which at the beginning of the hymn were pouring from the eyes in the liquid effusion of despair, have become matter, solid, like the sparkling of the stone of the first hymn. The tears, therefore, invert the trajectory taken by the poet himself; if the tears have moved from dynamic to static (*Einst da ich bittere Thränen vergoß, da in Schmerz aufgelöst meine Hoffnung zerran to die Thränen wurden ein funkelndes, unzerreißliches Band*), the inverse holds true for the poet, namely, the static paralysis of the poet has transformed into the acceleration of time itself (*Jahrtausende zogen abwärts in die Ferne*). Millenia travel across the sky like clouds.

The vision itself spreads outwards over the totality of all visionary moments; it represents the first and *only* dream (*der erste, einzige Traum*). The dream induces a form of presence of mind, a *Besonnenheit*, that succeeds in making present the beloved. The anchoring point that sustains the poets' belief, however, appears as yet another manifestation of the dawn, but differentiated into its respective sources: the "Himmel der Nacht, und sein Licht, die Geliebte." The beloved therefore illuminates the night, thereby impurifying the purity of the night by introducing light into its domain. Even the supposedly homogeneous domain of night exists at a point of differentiated indifference with the light. Supposedly homogeneous or mutually exclusive spaces are made permeable through a membrane of indifferenciation—which Novalis had designated the sphere of health—in turn making possible the continual oscillation between heterogeneous spheres of being. There is no synthesis of heterogeneous spheres into one and the same order of being, merely the co-presence of differences that communicate, come into contact, influence one another, and oscillate between separation and unity.

If the attraction to the night therefore becomes coextensive with an undoing of order that reorganizes experience, culminating in continual stimulation, one may see this attraction at work in the relation between the fifth and sixth hymn. The fifth hymn paints a historical progression of the spirit that supposedly culminates in the Christian synthesis of light and dark, life and death.<sup>181</sup> The light and the darkness, which in fact reveal ways of organizing the world and disorganizing the world, become historicized in the fifth hymn. If, in the *Fichte-Studien*, Novalis describes difference and multiplicity as part of a cognitive or logical philosophical consequence of the attempt to conceptualize identity, he transposes this procedure onto the movement of history in the fifth hymn, foregrounding the (negative) presence of the absolute as a stimulative principle driving cultural and historical change.

At every stage of historical order, some element outside the cultural-historical system of intelligibility perturbs this order in order to provoke change. In the time before the advent of history, the organization of time was ruled by fate, "[es] herrschte vor Zeiten ein eisernes Schicksal mit stummer Gewalt" (HKA I.141). The "stumme Gewalt" of fate signals a relatively closed system. And indeed, in the Greek world, human beings

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<sup>181</sup> This historical-mythological narrative was popular in the eighteenth century, its main predecessor being Schiller's "Die Götter Griechenlands." For the details surrounding the controversy generated by Schiller's poem when it was published in 1788 in Wieland's *Teutsche Merkur*, see Mario Zanucchi, *Novalis—Poesie und Geschicklichkeit* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2006) 52.

exist in supposed harmony with nature and with the divine, naïve, like children: "ein ewig buntes Fest der Himmelskinder" (HKA I.143). Death appears as that which perturbs the supposedly harmonious system, therefore also overturning the "stumme Gewalt." Death, as the force of perturbation, surfaces as a poetic disorganization of rhythm, in the *Athenaeum* version marked by a change from prose to poetry: "Ein Gedanke nur war es, Ein entsetzliches Traumbild,

Das furchtbar zu den frohen Tischen Trat  
Und das Gemüth in wilde Schrecken hüllte.  
[...]  
Es war der Tod, der dieses Lustgelag  
Mit Angst und Schmerz und Thränen unterbrach. (HKA I.141)

Death simultaneously interrupts the seemingly imperturbable organization of life in antiquity, the tyrannical holism of prose, simultaneously setting the mind aflame and marking the transition to a godless and lonely rationalism. Just as in antiquity, there appears a way of binding phenomena that awaits interruption by the higher-order perturbational force of death: "Einsam und leblos stand die Natur. Mit eiserner Kette band sie die dürre Zahl und das strenge Maaß" (HKA I.145). The attempt to measure nature and mold it to fit mechanical and mathematical paradigms holds sway over the imagination: "Nicht mehr war das Licht der Götter Aufenthalt und himmlisches Zeichen—den Schleyer der Nacht warfen sie über sich. Die Nacht ward der Offenbarungen mächtiger Schoß" (HKA I.145). The night, which annihilates the Greek way of looking at the world, nevertheless bears in its own act of negation a latent redemptive power. The way of looking at the world that recognizes the power of death—as perturbation, as space of disorganization, and not merely as a sacred presence—appears only with the birth of Christ, an event that occurs (in deviation from actual historical chronology) after the onset of rationalism.<sup>182</sup>

The annunciation of death in the fifth hymn is always marked by an alteration of poetic form, usually from prose to meter and rhyme. Language marks the disorganization and reorganization of experience that death performs.<sup>183</sup> However—and such an insight seems also to cohere with Novalis' maligned essay, "Die Christenheit oder Europa"—Christianity seems to resignify death's function as a perturbation of life, instead leading to a stabilization of human history, to a synthesis of death and life in the way a community is organized. The fifth hymn concludes in an image of perfect synthesis:

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<sup>182</sup> Henry Kamla claims, "Der Kerngehalt der Hymne 5 ist somit der Nachweis, dass die christliche Weltansicht die einzig haltbare ist." Kamla, *Novalis' Hymnen an die Nacht. Zur Deutung und Datierung* 75. If this statement is true, then the sixth hymn once again disrupts the boundaries between pagan and Christian; the poet who desires to sink into the father's womb still *desires* the "Vorwelt" of pagan antiquity, and thereby does not merely interpret the Christian worldview as "die einzig haltbare."

<sup>183</sup> Mario Zanucchi offers a nuanced and complex reading of the fifth hymn, one that shows the overturning of orders as well as points of indifference between historical moments—or in his terms, shared characteristics by Christianity and antiquity—as part of the historical-philosophical movement in the text. He notes, importantly, that Christianity offers "die Möglichkeit, diese sinnliche Lust in gesteigerter Form wieder zu erfahren." Zanucchi, *Novalis—Poesie und Geschicklichkeit* 60. His analysis suggests that the interaction between overturned orders and points of indifference increases stimulation.

Nur eine Nacht der Wonne—  
Ein ewiges Gedicht  
Und unser aller Sonne  
Ist Gottes Angesicht. (HKA I.153)

Night, the realm of the son, and poetry—a trinity—appear linked together through an identity with the face of the divine. All differentiation, all heterogeneous spaces, merge in an act of concentration in the face of God. Difference as such is led back to identity, and the culmination of the teleological narrative appears to have come to an end in the embodied synthesis of night, the sun, and poetry, binding all human subjects together in the light of the divine, *unser aller Sonne*.

If the fifth hymn were the end of the cycle, then this teleology would in fact stand as given. There is, however, a sixth hymn. In the *Athenaeum*, the words *Sehnsucht nach dem Tode* are written above the hymn. However, the desire for death does not consist in a desire for stasis or rest, but rather, in a desire for death in its specific poetic manifestation, as it appears in *Die Hymnen an die Nacht*. In the hymns up to this point, death functions both as *perturbation* leading to the overturning of orders, and it also furnishes a *point of indifference*, a shared space that both unites and separates conceptually homogeneous spheres, rendering them permeable.

The sixth hymn itself overturns and disorganizes the historical narrative developed in the fifth hymn, thereby undermining the validity of the teleological narrative leading to perfect synthesis in Christianity. Even "Die Christenheit oder Europa," which appears to synthesize the heterogeneous spaces of church and state and articulate the desire for a universal, pan-European Catholicism, celebrates a fantasy of communal freedom, joy, and love of the multiplicity of religion as such: "das Wesen der Kirche wird ächte Freiheit" (HKA III.524), just as one of Novalis' definition of the Christianity is "das Zeugungselement der Religion, als Freude an aller Religion" (HKA III.523). However, if the fifth hymn prioritizes Christianity as a privileged form of religiousness, even if understood in its most basic, formal sense as the mere desire for transcendence, the sixth hymn disrupts this teleological schema.

In the sixth hymn, the poet describes an attachment to the "Vorzeit," or those cultural-historical moments of the fifth hymn outside the sterile paradigm of positivistic rationalism. The representations of the moments of the *Vorzeit* occur in three strophes. The organization of these strophes, however, does not correspond to the teleological schema established in the fifth hymn. Instead, a remarkable thing happens. In the manuscript, the poet performs the recapitulation of these historical moments *backwards*. The historical narrative appears in the form of a countdown or an inversion. In writing the last hymn, it would seem that Novalis saw the historical framework of the fifth hymn as something to be inverted:

O! einsam steht und tiefbetrübt  
Wer heiß und fromm die Vorzeit liebt.

3

Die Vorzeit, wo in Jugendglut  
Gott selbst sich kundgegeben  
Und frühem Tod in Liebesmuth  
Geweih't sein süßes Leben  
Und Angst und Schmerz nicht von sich trieb  
Damit er uns nur theuer blieb.

2

Die Vorzeit, wo noch blütenreich  
Uralte Stämme prangten  
Und Kinder für das Himmelreich  
Nach Qual und Tod verlangten.  
Und wenn auch Lust und Leben sprach,  
Doch manches Herz für Liebe brach.

1

Die Vorzeit wo die Sinne licht  
In hohen Flammen brannten,  
Des Vaters Hand und Angesicht  
Die Menschen noch erkannten,  
Und hohen Sinns, einfältiglich  
Noch mancher seinem Urbild glich. (HKA I.155)

Each of these strophes seems to correspond to a specific era in the historical narrative of the fifth hymn. The strophe labeled "3,"—a strophe that is ultimately restored to its final position in the *Athenaeum*—describes in broad strokes the passion of Christ, and the strophe labeled "1," which precedes the others in the *Athenaeum*, describes the immanence of the divine in antiquity. The rationalist worldview, however, appears absent, having been replaced by a strophe that seems to belong to multiple mythologies: the Greeks, the early Germanic tribes, the early Christians, and perhaps even the Jews. The historical teleology represents an order that can be inverted, swiveled around a second strophe that functions as a sphere of indifference. This sphere of indifference permits the disorganization of the order that was previously established in the fifth hymn and makes possible the repeated inversion and heterogenization of homogeneous spaces.

In this sixth hymn, supposedly representing a desire for death, the poet introduces a difference between that which is enunciated and its mode of enunciation: if the semantic content of the hymn expresses a world-weary desire for death as stasis, the way this desire is expressed inverts the order of the previous hymn, itself contributing to the stimulative dynamics of perpetual inversion. The poem institutes a performative contradiction between what is being expressed, the desire for rest, and what this expression is actually doing in the poem, namely disorganizing a previous order and thereby intensifying stimulation. The final lines of the poem, far from revealing a desire for death as stasis or a return to nothingness, therefore reveal the desire for death *in its*

*own literary manifestation*, that is, a desire for the potentializing and alternative-producing capacity of death that stimulates and urges onward the formal dynamic of the poem itself.

The final gesture of the poem appears reproductive in every possible sense, revealing figures of the divine that do not remain in one single image, but differentiate and multiply:

Hinunter zu der süßen Braut,  
Zu Jesus, dem Geliebten—  
Getrost, die Abenddämmerung graut  
Den Liebenden Betrüben.  
Ein Traum bricht unsre Banden los  
Und senkt uns in des Vaters Schooß. (HKA I.157)

Jesus, the beloved, the father, the womb: if any of these figures or spaces supposedly function as goal or telos of the poem, it is their multiplicity that astonishes the reader. Each figure becomes simultaneously differentiated and identified with the other. The final stanza undermines any attempt to maintain divisions between supposedly exclusive orders: the secular and the religious, the general and the particular, the male and the female, the heteroerotic and the homoerotic. In this final stanza, the womb (no mere *lap*, which, although a valid translation of *Schooß*, would nullify the attractive power of the sign)—the father's womb, which is also the space of the beloved and of Jesus, of the beloved-Jesus—crosses over each of these lines of demarcation. The womb, or the *Schooß*, appears as the ultimate point of indifferentiation. Even as a grapheme and phoneme, it is a near-palindrome—slightly off balance—suggesting a form of reading that may be propelled both forwards and backwards.

We have seen that in the *Fichte-Studien*, Novalis develops an account of the absolute that is physiological. This form of the absolute multiplies and develops drives that propagate—or posit forth (*ein Fortsetzen*)—life. The specific physiological absolute imagined by Novalis is a point outside of a coherent system that perturbs this system and pushes it into transcendence. The final image, the womb, the *Schooß*, reframes death, at least in poetic form, as the provocation of an inversion in the process of reading itself.

Novalis, an avid reader of Schelling, appears at one point fascinated by "Schellings Individualisirungs, besser Vermannichfaltigungstrieb der Natur" (HKA III.430). The differentiation and multiplication of nature constituted the very crux of Schelling's philosophical endeavors at this time, endeavors that are centered around a classic theological question framed in the language of idealism: why, if identity ultimately underlies all phenomena, does the absolute differentiate itself at all? There must be a drive for differentiation, one that produces multiple homogeneous spheres—the sun, the earth, gravity, warmth, material objects—in nature itself. In the *Erster Entwurf einer Philosophie der Natur* (1799), Schelling notes, "*Wo das Homogene sein Heterogenes berührt, wird es aus dem Indifferenzpunkt gesetzt* (die dynamische Trägheit in ihm gestört)."<sup>184</sup> Schelling describes the identity of multiple homogeneous realms—

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<sup>184</sup> Friedrich Schelling, *Erster Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 3 (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1858) 260.

what makes these realms perceivable *as* distinct—as a state of indifference (*Indifferenzzustand*).<sup>185</sup> The *point* of indifference occurs where two homogeneous realms touch one another, and such a point of indifference makes possible communication that alters the constitution of a supposedly homogeneous element, or in Schelling's terminology, *Mittheilung*. For Schelling, light is the exemplary medium of such communication, making visible the transmission of homogeneous spheres—for example, sun and earth—and the ensuing transformation of these spheres.

For Novalis, it is not the light that occupies the most concentrated point of indifference. Rather, Novalis establishes the movement of the poem as a movement between multiple points of indifference, of which death appears one among others. Moreover, death functions not merely as communication, but as perturbation, as a trigger of an inversion of given orders. Death consists in a point of stimulation outside of the system of excitability that disrupts the economy of excitation itself. Hence, in *Die Hymnen an die Nacht*, death appears to further the dynamic of life as continual overcoming.

*Die Hymnen an die Nacht* deploy a form of signification that appears highly paradoxical, concentrating in one and the same sign both the *irruption of difference*—the catastrophic impetus for a perceptual or historical shift in forms of organization—as well as a *point of indifference*, which is to say, a space that not only binds supposedly homogeneous spaces, but makes them permeable. The dynamic organization and disorganization of Novalis' *Hymnen* may be described as a dance between aesthetic stimuli that provoke disorder and stimuli that link spheres previously considered homogeneous (light and dark, night and day, life and death, male and female, Christianity and antiquity), ultimately contaminated with one another via points of indifference. Death, as a sign, inverts its own function of inversion, at times functioning as a perturbation that generates difference, and at other times functioning as a point of indifference that permits the communication between homogeneous-heterogeneous spheres (Paganism and Christianity, male and female, life and death).

The *Schooß*, more even than death, operates as an indifference point whose importance grows organically throughout the poem, accruing a magnetic or transcendental charge, until it finally appears to alternate an electric current, forming the plus and minus sides of a galvanic chain in the sixth hymn.<sup>186</sup> Hence in the first line of the sixth hymn, the *Schooß* appears as the grave—"Hinunter in der Erde Schooß (HKA I.153)"—and in the final line, which closes a circuit between beginning and end only by creating a collision of opposing meanings in the identity of one word, it conveys the sinking into a womb, an act of reverse birth, a dream that "senkt uns in des Vaters Schooß" (HKA I.157). If the end of the fifth hymn's teleological narrative unifies differentiated elements—night, poem, and light—in one image, a synthesis in the face of one God, the end of the sixth reveals a divine being differentiated into incompatible, but permeable spaces. The identity of the *Schooß* functions as a channel for moving between these differences. Both female and male, inorganic and organic, become disjunctively

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<sup>185</sup> Schelling uses the term *Indifferenzzustand* to describe how nature makes possible spheres of homogeneity. See Schelling, *Erster Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie* 260.

<sup>186</sup> Novalis was familiar with Ritter's galvanic experiments. See Holland, *German Romanticism and Science: The Procreative Poetics of Goethe, Novalis, and Ritter* 147.

conjoined, not synthesized, in the image of a sign whose very purpose is to reproduce itself in its own annihilation.<sup>187</sup>

Tension and release, the physiological motors of the bodily stimulation, governs the dynamic of the poem up to the end. It is the dream, however, that triggers the release. As the poet stresses, there is only one dream, namely, the midpoint of the poem itself, the third hymn, "Es war der erste, einzige Traum" (HKA I.135). The "Es" refers not merely to the vision of being reunited with the lover—which breaks the bond of birth only to restore another "funkelndes, unzerreißliches Band" (HKA I.135), release and tension—but to the poetic description of the vision itself. "Es war der erste, einzige Traum," namely, the dream that the poet had just described.<sup>188</sup> The poem produces its own erotic stimulation, which it then satisfies in the final lines of the poem: "Ein Traum bricht unsre Banden los / Und senkt uns in des Vaters Schooß" (HKA I.157). The sexual destination of the poem, its *telos*, appears not in union with the erotic beloved, but rather, in the womb of the father.

In his physiological fragments, Novalis writes, "Jede Sursaturation der Muskeln erregt ein heftiges Verlangen nach *Entladung*—Ausübung der Muskelkräfte. Bey der Erektion—etc. ist dieser heftige Trieb nach Muskelbewegung vorzüglich zu bemercken" (HKA III.180). The orgasm results not from a desire for the object itself, but from a desire to release tension in the body. This tension attracts human beings to the penetration of a boundary. Novalis writes, "Die Geschlechtsteile sind die höchsten äußern Organe, die den Übergang vom sichtbaren und unsichtbaren Organen machen (HKA III.264). For Novalis, the genitals themselves appear as spheres of indifference, permitting the transition from visible to invisible. In *Die Hymnen an die Nacht*, the poem constructs its own fantasy, *der erste, einzige Traum*, that it uses to intensify and prolong the process of tension and release, producing a movement between homogeneous-heterogeneous spheres, furnishing the emblem of an orgasm that never ends.

The *Schooß* appears as the beginning and ending, the alpha and omega of the sixth hymn. It may even form the central indifference point of the entire cycle, recurring ever more frequently and in ever more transcendently saturated spaces. The word itself functions less like a sign and more like a force of attraction, or more precisely, it reveals the force of attraction as an intrinsic element in the system of signification itself. The *Schooß* begins in the second hymn as a characteristic of the night, a power that "zum Himmel den Schoß macht" (HKA I.135); from this point of erotic concentration, it metamorphoses, becoming the space of the divine pagan god, "Des Meers dunkle, grüne

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<sup>187</sup> Wm. Arctander O' Brien notes, "The German word for 'lap,' *Schooß*, has already been used seven times in the *Hymns*—including the first line of the sixth—with its other meaning, 'womb.' An unspeakable difference between the 'lap' and the 'womb' of the father thus concludes the *Hymns* with a figure of the Absolute that remains impossibly poised between genders, a figure of a divine wholeness that cannot be expressed as such, but only in contradiction, at odds with language, positively unspeakable." Arctander O'Brien, *Novalis: Signs of Revolution* 270. He also notes, "The *Hymns to the Night* succeed at presenting 'the unrepresentable' (*das Undarstellbare*) because they 'present' it as the unrepresentable. Or more exactly: the *Hymns* present the unrepresentability of the unrepresentable." Arctander O'Brien, *Novalis: Signs of Revolution* 271.

<sup>188</sup> Winfried Kudszus underscores the importance of this movement back into the space of the third hymn, since the linguistic operations in the third hymn disrupt the teleological-historical narrative as well as any form of historicity that seeks to root the present in an originary moment. See Winfried Kudszus, "Geschichtsverlust und Sprachproblematik in den *Hymnen an die Nacht*," *Euphorion* 65 (1971).

Tiefe war einer Göttin Schooß" (HKA I.141), until it forms the indifference point between life and death in the sixth hymn. As a mirror image of itself, the womb can be inverted *ad infinitum* between the poles of being and nothingness. Or in Novalis' words: "Sollte es noch eine eine höhere Sphäre geben, so wäre es die zwischen Seyn und Nichtseyn—das Schweben zwischen beyden" (HKA II.106). Novalis' *Hymnen an die Nacht* ends in an image that ultimately refuses all schemas of dialectical progress, choosing instead to abide in a movement of oscillation and attraction.<sup>189</sup> It is not that the poem posits an absolute that it never attains; rather, as exercise, the poem is always achieving what it set out to do, it is always beckoning the reader to come back to its sphere of attraction. His fantasy is the infinite poem, the poem that never ends, something to which one always come back, an entity that, like every mortal, moves between life and death.

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<sup>189</sup> The "Wechselbestimmung" has been long identified as a central aspect of Novalis' poetics, see for example, Bernwald Loheide, *Fichte und Novalis. Transzendentalphilosophisches Denken im romantisierten Diskurs* (Amsterdam: Rodolpi, 2000) 114.

## Chapter 3: Chaotic Receptivity in Novalis' *Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs*

### 1. Pedagogical Discipline and Monotheistic Obedience

The intensification of debates in the eighteenth century centering around the formation of subjects as complete human beings, useful citizens, and paragons of virtue reached a flashpoint with the scandalous publication of Rousseau's *Emile*.<sup>190</sup> Following *Emile*, there emerged in Germany a number of debates concerning the methods and limits of subject formation. The process of education, which must be initiated at the earliest stages of life, presupposes a conception of the human being as a potentiality that can be shaped and influenced through various pedagogical technologies.

According to Herder, the organic and cultural development of one's individual capacities—a process whose complexity appears condensed in flexible and negotiable patterns of *Bildung*—initiates an infinite task: to actualize these capacities in a space shared with others, with natural inclinations, with the demands of civil society, with differing national characters, and indeed within the trajectory of the human race considered as a species being.<sup>191</sup> Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* probed, questioned, and experimented with conceptions of *Bildung*, although a univocal philosophy of *Bildung* is never articulated in the novel itself. Novalis, along with the other Romantics in Jena, noted with distress that Wilhelm Meister's reintegration into an ethic of diligent productivity belittled his artistic endeavors as juvenile poetic bohemianism. According to Novalis' interpretation of *Wilhelm Meister*, the attraction to art in the novel constitutes a trajectory that is ultimately subordinated to becoming a functioning part of a social machine.<sup>192</sup> Especially *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* appears to offer an alternative conception of the way in which human subjects ought or ought not to be formed.<sup>193</sup>

Novalis' other novel, left incomplete at his death, was intended not as a *Bildungsroman*, nor even as a counter *Bildungsroman*, but as a *Naturroman*. In the fragment that survives, however, it would be more apt to call the novel an *Erziehungsroman*. Although *Erziehung* in pedagogical contexts concentrates more specifically on the education of children and on externally imposed discipline than the internal development of one's capacities, the line between *Bildung* and *Erziehung* is nevertheless difficult to draw in the discourses of the eighteenth century. Kant

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<sup>190</sup> For an incisive analysis of the influence of Rousseau on German conceptions of *Bildung*, see Velkley, "The Tension in the Beautiful: On Culture and Civilization in Rousseau and German Philosophy," *The Legacy of Rousseau*, ed. Clifford Orwin and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1997).

<sup>191</sup> For a representation of Herder's philosophy of *Bildung*, see Jerrold Seigel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe since the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005) 332.

<sup>192</sup> See Rolf-Peter Janz, "Bildungsroman," *Deutsche Literatur. Eine Sozialgeschichte*, ed. Horst Albert Glaser, vol. 5 (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1980).

<sup>193</sup> For a presentation of the various attempts to read these two novels in relation to one another, see Uerlings, *Friedrich von Hardenberg, genannt Novalis* 444-58.

understands *Bildung* as part of *Erziehung* in *Über die Pädagogik*.<sup>194</sup> Nevertheless, if *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* responds in some way to *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, one could tentatively advance the claim that *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais* responds less to a literary model of cultivation, but rather, to the attempt to produce the human being through well-regulated disciplinary institutions.

Novalis' *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais* was written at the end of the "pedagogical century," an age in which educational institutions were transforming to meet the demands of capitalistic bourgeois society.<sup>195</sup> The novel, despite its polyphonic structure and its kaleidoscopic presentation of interpretations of nature, provides just as much insight into institutional mechanisms of discipline as it does into the Romantic philosophy of nature. The institutional structure at Sais both coheres with and deviates from eighteenth-century paradigms of educational institutionality. It seems at first that the institution is characterized by a greater discursive variety, a greater freedom in mobility, and a notable lack of oversight, one of the hallmarks of eighteenth-century disciplinary forms. One of the most remarkable differences consists in the fact that there is only, as far as one can see, *one* teacher at Sais. In 1777, Basedow, a leader of pedagogical reform, writes, "Die Zahl [der] Lehrer müßte *anfangs* der Zahl der Schüler beinahe gleich sein, damit jeder von ihnen nur gerade in dem Maß beschäftigt wäre, in welchem er geübt werden müßte..."<sup>196</sup> The teacher does not delegate authority or establish particularized regimes of practice, but construes his own form of exercise as a model to be imitated by the students.

The structure of the school at Sais follows the pattern of a centripetal force of attraction, mirroring the monotheistic tendencies associated with the school at Sais. At its center stands the teacher, and the teacher develops techniques for extending his authority over the discursive acts and over the very forms of perception of the children in the school. However, this authority does not exist by virtue of the organization of the school itself, or what one pedagogue refers to as "pädagogischer Totalitarismus."<sup>197</sup> The teacher generates authority less through direct observation than through personal charisma. His influence is more apparent in the manner in which he draws others linguistic acts into his orbit, cohering with Pestalozzi's representation of the ideal pedagogue: "Versichere dich also des Herzens deines Kindes, mache dich ihm notwendig.... Es soll dir trauen.... Es soll dem weisen Führer, dem richtig warnenden Vater gehorsam sein, aber der Führer muß nur zur Notwendigkeit befehlen."<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Kant understands *Bildung* as part of *Erziehung*. He says, "Die Erziehung schließt *Versorgung* und *Bildung* in sich." Immanuel Kant, "Über die Pädagogik," *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 9, Akademie-Ausgabe (Berlin, Leipzig: Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1910) 452. He says in the same essay, "Der Mensch braucht *Wartung* und *Bildung*. *Bildung* begreift unter sich *Zucht* und *Unterweisung*" (443).

<sup>195</sup> For a description of the eighteenth century as a "pedagogical century," see Notker Hammerstein and Ulrich Herrmann, ed., *Handbuch der deutschen Bildungsgeschichte: 18. Jahrhundert*, vol. 2 (Munich: Beck, 2005).

<sup>196</sup> J. B. and Campe Basedow, J. H. , "Von der eigentlichen Absicht eines Philanthropens," *Schwarze Pädagogik*, ed. Katharina Rutschky (Munich: Ullstein, 1777) 64.

<sup>197</sup> E. Trapp, "Erklärung des pädagogischen Totalitarismus," *Schwarze Pädagogik: Quellen zur Naturgeschichte der bürgerlichen Erziehung*, ed. Katharina Rutschky (Berlin: Ullstein, 1977) 150-7.

<sup>198</sup> J. H. Pestalozzi, "Wie der Erzieher die Wirklichkeit repräsentieren kann," *Schwarze Pädagogik*, ed. Katharina Rutschky (Munich: Ullstein, 1774) 395.

The teacher does allow, for example, other forms of discourse to emerge from within the center of the institution, making possible not merely differences in orders of rhetoric, but in ways of organizing the world of appearances. In contrast to the organization of time, space, and perception in the school at Sais stands the fairy tale of Hyacinth and Rosenblüthchen. The fairy tale presents an alternative model to the pedagogical tendencies on display at the school at Sais. The teacher and the institution represent a certain way of exercising the senses, a regime of aesthetic exercise that depends on categorizing, ordering, and classifying the world, creating boundaries between objects. The space of the fairy tale, however, produces an alternative form of exercise, one no less important to the development of the child, but one that cannot be integrated into the attempt to create bounded and disciplined behavioral and perceptual patterns. Rather than organizing and categorizing nature, the fairy tale forms an entry point into the exercise of the chaotic imagination sustained by mutual erotic attraction.

When Novalis writes *Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs*, the reputation of the famed temple in Egypt was considered by some to be the birthplace of monotheism. According to Schiller in the lecture *Die Sendung Moses*, Moses learns about monotheism from the Egyptians and imparts this doctrine to the Israelites. At the same time, the veil of Isis had long been associated with the secret essence of nature, delineating what can and cannot be known about nature and investing the maintenance of these limits with the power of the sacred. Schiller describes the coffin of Serapis as a relic whose initial marking of the distinction between the sacred and the profane degenerated into a corrupt exercise of authority:<sup>199</sup>

Unter diesen war eine heilige Lade, welche man den Sarg des Serapis nannte, und die ihrem Ursprung nach vielleicht ein Sinnbild verborgener Weisheit sein sollte, späterhin aber, als das Institut ausartete, der Geheimniskrämerei und elenden Priesterkünsten zum Spiele diente.... Keinem als dem Hierphanten war es erlaubt, diesen Kasten aufzudecken oder ihn auch nur zu berühren.<sup>200</sup>

Schiller's description draws attention to the use of secret and arcane symbolism as a mechanism for maintaining the interests of a class of priests. The transformation of the temple from sacred space to space of theatricality nevertheless depended upon the continued belief in the sphere of the transcendent, and it was through this belief that the priests bolstered their authority.

The transcendence of Isis, according to the famed inscription, was associated with the monotheistic god of the Israelites because it coincided with the Hebrew God's identity with Being itself. Schiller describes the inscription of Isis in *Die Sendung Moses*: "Ich bin alles, was ist, was war, und was sein wird, kein sterblicher Mensch hat meinen Schleier aufgehoben." For Novalis, the veil of Isis does not symbolize the demarcation between

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<sup>199</sup> In *Die Sendung Moses*, Schiller notes, "Unter einer alten Bildsäule der Isis las man die Worte: 'Ich bin, was da ist', und auf einer Pyramide zu Saïs fand man die uralte merkwürdige Inschrift: 'Ich bin alles, was ist, was war und was sein wird, kein sterblicher Mensch hat meinen Schleier aufgehoben.'" Friedrich Schiller, *Historische Schriften und Erzählungen I*, Werke und Briefe, ed. Otto Dann (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker, 2004) 461.

<sup>200</sup> Schiller, *Historische Schriften und Erzählungen I* 461-2.

acceptable and forbidden knowledge as much as foreground the human desire for Being. The novice at Sais seeks to become immortal in order to lift the veil: "wenn kein Sterblicher, nach jener Inschrift dort, den Schleyer hebt, so müssen wir Unsterbliche zu werden suchen; wer ihn nicht heben will, ist kein ächter Lehrling zu Sais" (HKA I.82). The desire of the novice to become immortal reveals an attraction to the unspoken half of the inscription, the extension of the divine over past, present, and future. Entering into the realm of Being presupposes an attraction to the immortal temporality of the goddess herself. The fairy tale of Hyacinth and Rosenblüthchen describes the lifting of the veil of Isis, implying that Hyacinth achieves the identification and the immortality sought by the novice. For Novalis, the desire to lift the veil appears not transgressive, but interpellates the novice to occupy his identity as a "true" novice.

Schiller's ballad, "Das verschleierte Bild zu Sais," however, institutes the boundary between acceptable and forbidden knowledge in order to punish those unable to control curiosity, the very driving impulse behind the advancement of knowledge itself:

Ein Jüngling, den des Wissens heißer Durst  
 Nach Sais in Ägypten trieb, der Priester  
 Geheime Weisheit zu erlernen, hatte  
 Schon manchen Grad mit schnellem Geist durchweilt,  
 Stets riß ihn seine Forschbegierde weiter...<sup>201</sup>

The drive for knowledge results in a fall into madness as the youth lifts the veil of Isis in order to see the truth:

Sei hinter ihm, was will! Ich heb ihn auf.  
 [Er rufts mit lauter Stimm] Ich will sie schauen.

Schauen!

Gellt ihm ein langes Echo spottend nach.

Er spricht's und hat den Schleier aufgedeckt.  
 "Nun fragt ihr, und was zeigte sich ihm hier?"  
 Ich weiß es nicht. Besinnunglos und bleich,  
 So fanden ihn am andern Tag die Priester  
 Am Fußgestell der Isis ausgestreckt.  
 [...]  
 "Weh dem", dies war sein warnungsvolles Wort,  
 Wenn ungestüme Frager in ihn drangen,  
 "Weh dem, der zu der Wahrheit geht durch Schuld,  
 Sie wird ihm nimmermehr erfreulich sein."<sup>202</sup>

The ballad, which appears to exhaust itself in the facile didacticism of its final line, illuminates the structure of disobedience on the level of poetic form. The echo

<sup>201</sup> Friedrich Schiller, *Gedichte*, Werke und Briefe, ed. Georg Kurscheidt, vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker, 1992) 242.

<sup>202</sup> Schiller, *Gedichte* 244.

supposedly emanating from the mysterious and sacred space—*Schauen!*—appears outside of the verse, an echo not merely in content, but also a formal echo, one that ultimately disrupts the integrity of the metrical line. The echo is a reflection of the speaker's own voice, but appears simultaneously to meld with the voice of the goddess, the shrill and mocking imperative of an other-worldly authority that dares its subject to disobey. Yet the source of this supposedly transcendent voice emerges from the configuration of the sacred space which itself generates the echo. If the sacred space provokes its own transgression, it nevertheless calls upon its power to punish. The readership, however, aligns itself more with the transgressive act than with the display of sacral authority. The readership itself becomes the prototype for "ungestüme Frager" indulging in the very pursuit of forbidden knowledge that characterizes the hubris of the youth. For Schiller, the cult of Isis therefore represents the temptation of disobedience through the excitation of a desire for knowledge. This temptation is to be found not merely in the parable itself, but in the structure of desire characteristic of the relation between text and reader.

The institution of Sais comes to exhibit at least two points of attraction in the imagination of late eighteenth-century German literature: on the one hand, it represents the birth of monotheism, an interpretation of the cosmos as a singular, transcendent divinity. On the other hand, it sets in place the structure of obedience that attempts to delineate the line between acceptable and forbidden knowledge. In Novalis' text, the teacher appears at the middle point of lines of force simultaneously pushing people outside of the institution and drawing people toward this institution. In a text saturated with multiple points of view, the teacher might seem to foreclose on the simultaneous and equal—indeed, polyphonic<sup>203</sup>—pull of the many voices to be heard in the narrative. As the fragment stands, the teacher has the last word. The problem of obedience is inscribed in the very relationship of the text and its readership; the readers are also tempted to grant this figure and the institution surrounding this figure a monopoly over the capacity to interpret nature.

## 2. The Tyranny of Order

In Schiller's ballad, the youth sees the embodied truth. The ballad does not cohere with the Kantian doctrine that there is an unknowable world of things in themselves, forever closed and inaccessible to human sentience. There is a truth to be known. And yet, if this truth is attained by improper means, "durch Schuld," it is not reconcilable with human happiness. The fulfillment of knowledge is associated with a guilt that renders joy impossible.

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<sup>203</sup> The novel may be polyphonic in the same way that Bakhtin interpreted Dostoevsky's novels to be polyphonic; his description of Dostoevsky's aesthetic sounds as if it were derived from *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*: "In contrast to Goethe, Dostoevsky attempted to perceive the very stages themselves in their *simultaneity*, to *juxtapose* and *counterpose* them dramatically, and not stretch them out into an evolving sequence. For him, to get one's bearings on the world meant to conceive all its contents as simultaneous, and to *guess at the interrelationships in the cross-section of a single moment*." Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984) 28.

In Novalis' text, Hyacinth and Rosenblüthchen appear rewarded—at least in the world of the dream into which Hyacinth enters in order to lift the veil—rather than punished, blessed with generations of children. There is no law forbidding Hyacinth to lift the veil or establishing boundaries between epistemological, cognitive, or ontological spheres. And ultimately, it is not the desire for knowledge that drives Hyacinth, nor is it knowledge that Isis imparts. Hyacinth appears first in the fairy tale as an enigma, as incomprehensibility itself, and above all, as one who is sick and in need of healing. What motivates him is unknown even to him.

In the larger economy of the novel, the space of the fairy tale represents an alternative to the institutional organization of the school at Sais. In this institution, the teacher "gathers" and organizes, reduces indeterminacy, focalizes dispersion, and gives order to processes that come into being at different levels of disorientation. The narrative begins in the first-person perspective of the novice. He hears a voice: "Wer wahrhaft spricht, ist des ewigen Lebens voll, und wunderbar verwandt mit ächten Geheimnissen dünkt uns seine Schrift, denn sie ist ein Accord aus des Weltalls Symphonie" (HKA I.79). The novice attributes this statement, which articulates the essence of the *logos*, to the teacher: "Von unserm Lehrer sprach gewiß die Stimme, denn er versteht die Züge zu versammeln, die überall zerstreut sind" (HKA I.79). The teacher is endowed with the capability of binding disparate elements, embodying the central point of the acts of discourse themselves. The utterances, which appear in the form of generalized statements, in fact are bound and gathered into the figure of the teacher, and it is above all language itself that circles around the teacher like planets around a star.

The teacher's philosophy consists in an extreme form of aesthetic askesis. According to the novice, "Oft hat er uns erzählt, wie ihm als Kind der Trieb die Sinne zu üben, zu beschäftigen und zu erfüllen, keine Ruhe ließ. Den Sternen sah er zu und ahmte ihre Züge, ihre Stellungen im Sande nach.... Er sammelte sich Steine, Blumen, Käfer aller Art, und legte sie auf mannigfache Weise sich in Reihen" (HKA I.80). The teacher has mastered the specific form of aesthetic exercise that subordinates itself to imitating the order of nature. The use of nature as an exercise in attentiveness formed part of the pedagogical practices of the time; Johann Georg Sulzer's *Vorübungen zur Erweckung der Aufmerksamkeit* contains a significant amount of natural description in the attempt to stimulate the mind.<sup>204</sup> However, the teacher does not merely view nature as an object, but as its own paradigm of organization. His specific exercise consists in attempting to organize nature just as nature seems to organize itself. He therefore stands in a negative relation to the miraculous and the wondrous, to the disorganization of experience that it provokes and the aesthetics that it produces. Breitingner had defined the wondrous as that

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<sup>204</sup> Wolfgang Schmale gives an example of "Schulbuchempfehlungen der Verordnung von 1782 für die protestantischen Schulen (Gymnasien und Lateinschulen) in Cleve-Mark," and in this recommendation, one may find Sulzer's *Vorübungen zur Erweckung der Aufmerksamkeit*. Wolfgang Schmale, "Die Schule in Deutschland im 18. und frühen 19. Jh.: Konjunkturen, Horizonte, Mentalitäten, Probleme, Ergebnisse," *Revolution des Wissens? Europa und seine Schulen im Zeitalter der Aufklärung (1750-1825)*, ed. Wolfgang Schmale and Nan L. Dodde (Bochum: Dieter Winkler, 1991) 723. In addition to "Beispiele" and didactic fables, one may find a highly detailed description of "Merkwürdigkeiten der Natur" that organize and describe nature as an exercise in attentiveness in Johann Georg Sulzer, *Vorübungen zur Erweckung der Aufmerksamkeit und des Nachdenkens*, vol. 3 (St Petersburg: Kayserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1814) 1-99.

which occurs when "eine Vorstellung unsern gewöhnlichen Begriffen, die wir von dem ordentlichen Laufe der Dinge haben, entgegen zu stehen scheint" (136). The teacher exercises himself in the art of putting nature into order, of organizing it, even against its will. Moreover, the power of the teacher extends to all the discursive utterances *in* the institution, not merely organizing natural objects, but organizing language itself. Every following discourse on nature, articulated from a different speaker and from a different point of view, nevertheless appears as parts of a "row," each with its proper place.<sup>205</sup>

As the natural objects later reveal, it seems that the self-organization of nature does not extend to the realm of the human, that there is not a mimetic or isomorphic relation between the movements of nature in themselves and how the human being perceives these movements. The teacher's approach to nature—organizing and placing natural objects in rows as exempla to be seen, observed, and constantly exhibited—itself does violence to the objects that it would otherwise revere. He displaces nature from its own forms of organization, generating a museum consisting of wonder cabinets rather than wonder itself. After the fairy tale of Hyacinth and Rosenblüthchen, the narrative shifts suddenly in a movement of Romantic irony, and the reader sees the story unfold from the perspective of the natural objects that the teacher himself has put into rows:<sup>206</sup>

Die weiten hallenden Säle standen leer und hell da, und das wunderbare Gespräch in zahllosen Sprachen unter den tausendfaltigen Naturen, die in diesen Sälen zusammengebracht und in mannigfaltigen Ordnungen aufgestellt waren, dauerte fort. Ihre innern Kräfte spielten gegen einander. Sie strebten in ihre Freiheit, in ihre alten Verhältnisse zurück. Wenige standen auf ihrem eigentlichen Platze, und sahen in Ruhe dem mannigfaltigen Treiben um sich her zu. Die übrigen klagten über entsetzliche Qualen und Schmerzen, und bejammerten das alte, herrliche Leben im Schoße der Natur, wo sie eine gemeinschaftliche Freiheit vereinigte, und jedes von selbst erhielt, was es bedurfte. "O! daß der Mensch" sagten sie, "die innre Musik der Natur verstünde und einen Sinn für äußere Harmonie hätte.... Er kann nichts liegen lassen, tyrannisch trennt er uns und greift in lauter Dissonanzen herum." (HKA I.95)

This passage—directly following the fairy tale of Hyacinth and Rosenblüthchen—

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<sup>205</sup> Daibler understands the "Reihe" as a more positive poetic principle: "Die Reihe ist jene Figur, mit der die nicht herstellbare Synthesis von Mensch und Natur sichtbar gemacht werden soll." Daibler, *Experimentalphysik des Geistes* 199. It seems, if one associates the "row" with the organization of discourse in the space of the institution, that the critical feature of a *row* is that it can be disordered, perturbed, broken.

<sup>206</sup> This shift in perspective is typical of Novalis' narrative techniques in *Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs*. Different narrative standpoints, for example, appear in the first and second sections of the text; whereas "Der Lehrling" takes the first-person perspective of a novice, "Die Natur," is told by a third-person, seemingly omniscient narrator. The latter vantage point not only provides an exterior point of view on the novice's psychological crisis—a quite different attitude than the more confident first-person narrative of the novice himself—but also makes possible the "speech of the natural objects," giving the readers insight into the processes of deception at work in the first section of the text.

problematizes the relation of the teacher to nature.<sup>207</sup> Indeed, the result of the teacher's own activity seems to contradict his purported identity as a gatherer of nature. His gathering activity itself, from the point of view of nature, divides and disperses phenomena rather than unifies them.

Ultimately, it is nature itself that bears the brunt of disciplinary action. The structural analogies between school and prison cannot escape even the casual reader in the context of this representation of the natural objects. The displacement of these objects causes inner strife as they play *against* one another; they strive for "freedom," being contained against their will; most of them are displaced, as only a few exceptional ones stand "in their actual places" and are therefore able to look on in relative peace; most consider this captivity a form of torture that has torn them from the places in which they belong, where they enjoyed "communal freedom." These words therefore correlate the teacher's activity with a form of tyranny that has undermined the freedom of nature in-itself. The teacher appears to mimic the activity of an enlightened despot. The natural objects suggest that an overabundance of reflective thought is responsible for this tyrannical form of organization. As such, the voices urge the reader to a different cognitive stance, namely that of feeling: "Lernt [der Mensch] nur einmal fühlen? Diesen himmlischen, diesen natürlichsten aller Sinne kennt er noch wenig" (HKA I.96). Feeling, however, never appears as a possibility for human beings; indeed, according to the *Fichte-Studien*, feeling is present only negatively as that which inverts reflective orders and pushes the imagination into the space of transcendence. To "learn" feeling would precisely initiate a process of an infinite inversion of orders. The natural objects claim, "durch das Gefühl... würde [der Mensch] Meister eines unendlichen Spiels und vergäße alle thörichten Bestrebungen in einem ewigen, sich selbst nährenden und immer wachsenden Genusse" (HKA I.96). The teacher's attempt to classify nature, bind and separate the world of phenomena through exercise, discourse, and *logos*, must be supplemented by a different sort of exercise, a play that results from the palpable, and yet ultimately absent, presence of feeling as a continual perturbation of the given world.

The very activity that the teacher performs with the natural objects, he performs with the novices themselves, deciding which novice may come and go and taking the novices from their families. The novice says, "Mehrere von uns sind von ihm gewichen. Sie kehrten zu ihren Eltern zurück und lernten ein Gewerbe treiben" (HKA I.80). And even when the teacher appears to renounce his authority, he nevertheless exercises control over the state of exception, the ultimate right of the sovereign. Among the children, "Eins war ein Kind noch, es war kaum da, so wollte er ihm den Unterricht übergeben" (HKA I.80). The child disappears without any explanation.

The voices of the natural objects present a narrative perspective revealing a potential false prophet in the figure of a teacher, a person committed not merely to knowledge of nature, but one who sees himself as the founder of a new gospel:

... der wird nur den für seinen Lehrer und für den Vertrauten der Natur

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<sup>207</sup> Some critics are in agreement with this interpretation of the teacher, see Schlutz, *Mind's World* 294. Jocelyn Holland notes, "Collectively, these voices express a dissatisfaction which threatens to undermine the pedagogical project of the temple." Holland, *German Romanticism and Science: The Procreative Poetics of Goethe, Novalis, and Ritter* 105.

erkennen, der mit Andacht und Glauben von ihr spricht, dessen Reden die wunderbare, unnachahmliche Eindringlichkeit und Unzertrennlichkeit haben, durch die sich wahre Evangelia, wahre Eingebungen ankündigen (HKA I.107-8).

He has called himself a teacher and has accepted the name; therefore he claims for himself the pronouncement of this "new" gospel, playing the role of a mediator that brings him closer to being the mouthpiece of God. And yet, the natural objects denounce precisely this aspect of the human being: "Seine Begierde, Gott zu werden, hat ihn von uns getrennt" (HKA I.96). The sophistication and complexity of the teacher's rhetorical elegance place the reader in danger of overlooking the problematic nature of the institutional structures within which such thought and behavior is controlled and organized by a charismatic individual. The voices of the natural objects, however, open up a narrative space that loosens the rhetorical mechanisms whereby the teacher maintains and reproduces his authority.

The teacher's rhetorical performances secure the admiration of the novices, an admiration that ultimately bolsters his position as master. One child appears not to fit into the order of the institution: "In die Ferne sah er schlecht, bunte Reihen gut zu legen wußte er nicht. Er zerbrach alles so leicht. Doch hatte keiner einen solchen Trieb und solche Lust am Sehn und Hören" (HKA I.81). After having left the school one day in a state of depression, he returns transfigured, carrying a stone, "ein unscheinbares Steinchen von seltsamster Gestalt" (HKA I.81). The teacher's reaction is to place this wonder of nature into one of his rows: he "legte dieses Steinchen auf einen leeren Platz, der mitten unter anderen Steinen lag, gerade wo wie Strahlen viele Reihen sich berührten" (HKA I.81). The teacher takes the wondrous stone, that which precisely cannot be fit into an order, and places it into an order. The moment is infused with an iconographical aura; the novice declares, "ich werde dieser Augenblicke nie fortan vergessen" (HKA I.81). And yet, from the discussion between the natural objects, it becomes clear in retrospect that at this precise moment, the teacher is in the process of making "nature" into "natures," dividing up and ultimately denaturing that which he wishes to elevate. What neither the reader nor the novice sees nor understands at this point is the pain, cruelty, and arbitrariness that forms the background of this act, something that is suppressed by the first-person narrative perspective. Beauty itself, the ordering of the world of phenomena, covers up the damage and trauma that the drive to order itself produces. For the rows that touch each other like rays of light—dispersed from some unified source—are later be revealed as elements struggling for space and suffering under the yoke of oppression. The teacher's gesture occupies an ambivalent space between—to recall Schiller's characterization of such moments—"ein Sinnbild verborgner Weisheit" and "Geheimniskrämerei."<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Schiller, *Historische Schriften und Erzählungen I* 461-2.

### 3. Education into Chaos

There is no core philosophy of nature in *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*. Instead, utterances foreground their own existence as perspectives, and there is no one perspective that claims validity over the others. Novalis, in one of the notes to the novel, asks "Ob der Naturlehre *eine wahre Einheit* zugrunde liegt" (HKA I.111) and in the fragment that exists, he seems to have denied this possibility. Instead of a hegemonic doctrine of nature, the text establishes relations between utterances, therefore floating between orders of representation. And such is indeed Novalis' conception of philosophy, namely, as a practice that abolishes fixed points and makes the inert and static elements of a system float. Philosophical relativism, as a set of relations between utterances and reflective standpoints, only becomes problematic if the goal of the speaker or the listener is to attain one absolute view that would supersede all others. Aside from the words uttered by the natural objects—which importantly take place outside of the realm of human eyes and ears, as if they were presenting the readers with a noumenal view of nature—there is one other narrative mode that does not cohere with the speech genre of argumentation dominating the institutional setting at Sais: the fairy tale.<sup>209</sup>

The fairy tale emerges after a moment of crisis and cognitive confusion assails the novice:

Der Lehrling hört mit Bangigkeit die sich kreuzenden Stimmen. Es scheint ihm jede Recht zu haben, und eine sonderbare Verwirrung bemächtigt sich seines Gemüts. Allmählich legt sich der innre Aufruhr, und über die dunkeln sich an einander brechenden Wogen scheint ein Geist des Friedens heraufzuschweben, dessen Ankunft sich durch neuen Mut und überschauende Heiterkeit in der Seele des Jünglings ankündigt. (HKA I.91)

It is not merely the sheer number of the voices that overwhelms the novice, but also the fact that each of them advances a claim to universal validity such that the novice cannot decide which is right.<sup>210</sup> It is the speech genre of the institutional setting—discursive argumentation—that triggers the crisis of the novice. The voices, "crossing themselves," create formal parallels to the natural objects placed against one other, each clamoring for their own space. However, these voices are motivated by the attempt to discover a unified, universal theory of nature, an attempt that, like all attempts to express an identity,

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<sup>209</sup> Jürgen Daibler reads the fairy tale not as standing in tension with the "crossing voices," but rather as *part* of the "row" of these discursive utterances: "der Märchenerzähler [bildet] nur eine unter den vielen Stimmen des unendlichen Gesprächs. Das Märchen wäre also lediglich ein Glied im Netzwerk der Stimmenreihen der Reisenden, des Lehrers, der Lehrlinge, etc. Ihm käme damit keine Schlüsselfunktion im Sinne des unendlichen Gesprächs zu." Daibler, *Experimentalphysik des Geistes* 202.

<sup>210</sup> Daiber claims, "Wichtig ist, daß diese Stimmen nicht in einem dialogischen Verhältnis zueinander stehen und einander nicht vom Wahrheitsgehalt des jeweils Gesagten zu überzeugen scheinen" Daibler, *Experimentalphysik des Geistes* 192. However, if these voices are not claiming universal validity explicitly, it is nevertheless the attempt to extract a truth, a "Wahrheitsgehalt," that instigates the crisis in the novice.

ends up multiplying difference.<sup>211</sup> The proliferation of differences in discursive multiplication provokes the crisis of the novice. The organization of discourse produces a pathological condition of excitation; the provocation of the crisis appears as a result of overstimulation, an excess of information that the novice appears incapable of processing.

The appearance of the "Geist des Friedens" coincides with the presence of a young companion who chides the novice for his loneliness and arouses him to embrace love and the power of erotic being. This is the voice that recounts the tale of Hyacinth and Rosenblüthchen. The role of the "Geist des Friedens" produces a temporal and a causal indeterminacy in localizing precisely what "cures" the novice; either the novice has already been cured before the fairy tale, or the fairy tale is instrumental in the cure itself. The fairy tale does not enter into any schema of causality, seeming to arrive from beyond the physical-causal nexus of empirical phenomena. Indeed, the "Geist des Friedens," as a point of transition between fairy tale and institution, seems to constitute an indifference point whereby the two regions become, in a relative sense, fused. This indifference point allows the fairy tale to function as an inversion of the order at the institution of Sais, a perturbation of the row of voices whose principle of operation is to put the world of phenomena—and language—into alignment. The fairy tale, which operates in the domain of the fantastic—according to an idea already present in Breitingen's *Critische Dichtkunst*—represents precisely that which *disrupts* the row of voices, and indeed, overturns the very act of setting into a row, organizing, and producing a coherent series.

Novalis remarks that a certain type of fairy tale can be useful: "Ein höheres Märchen wird es, wenn ohne den Geist des M[ärchens] zu verscheuchen irgend ein *Verstand* – (Zusammenhang, Bedeutung – etc.) hinein gebracht wird. Sogar *nützlich* könnte vielleicht ein Märchen werden" (HKA III.455). Novalis suggests that the fairy tale must have a meaning or fit into a context. In the case of Hyacinth and Rosenblüthchen, the "Zusammenhang" or "Bedeutung" emerges not just from the internal organization of the fairy tale itself, but in its relationship to the framing narrative. The fairy tale is constructed to fit the situation of the despairing novice, and thereby succeeds in creating a "Zusammenhang" between two different orders of narration. However, the relation between the two orders of narration, between the novice's experiences at Sais and the world of the fairy tale, is neither a parallelism nor an opposition. The two orders converge at some points and diverge at others.<sup>212</sup>

The narrative of Hyacinth and Rosenblüthchen nevertheless coincides with an act of regeneration, itself associated with alternative frameworks of temporal and spatial organization. Novalis remarks in a fragment linked to Hyacinth and Rosenblüthchen, "Die Zeit der allg[emeinen] Anarchie—Gesetzlosigkeit—Freyheit—der *Naturstand* der *Natur*—die Zeit vor der *Welt* (Staat.)" (HKA III.280). If one sees the realm of the teacher and the institution as a state in microcosm—as the attempt to impose order by organizing

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<sup>211</sup> Petersdorff discusses the text as an "unendliches Gespräch in seiner immanenten Pluralität, in seiner Negation materieller Finalität, seinem Verzicht auf wissenschaftstheoretische und strukturelle Hierarchien und seiner Selbstreflexivität..." Dirk von Petersdorff, *Mysterienrede. Zum Selbstverständnis romantischer Intellektueller* (Tübingen: de Gruyter, 1996) 182.

<sup>212</sup> For an excellent analysis of the relation between the fairy tale and the school at Sais, see Ulrich Gaier, *Krumme Regel: Novalis Konstruktionslehre des schaffenden Geistes und ihre Tradition* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1970).

human beings—then the narrative space of the fairy tale momentarily bleeds into the world of the institution and of the state. The fairy tale makes reference to a time before the establishment of laws—ethical or moral laws, social contracts, or the laws separating phenomena from one another. And this time before laws or the drawing of boundaries—analogue to the cognitive act of feeling, which precedes and makes possible the order of reflection—announces itself in its differentiation *from* the given orders of the institution rather than transporting human beings back into the state of nature.

The fairy tale therefore begins not with an idyllic vision of the human being at one with nature, but rather, with a space in which the human being is already divided—cut off from others, not transparent to itself, in a state of difference with the world. The protagonist of the fairy tale, Hyacinth, is alienated from an already alien world, a figure that is both excessive and miraculous, "über die Maaßen wunderlich" (HKA I.91). Those around him are happy, while he, miserable, thinks only of nothing. He therefore appears at first under the sign of non-being: "Er grämte sich unaufhörlich um nichts und wieder nichts" (HKA I.91). Even his incomprehensible foolishness prefigures the death to come, as he speaks only "lauter närrisches Zeug zum Todtlachen" (HKA I.92). He is in love with Rosenblüthchen, a being that appears naturally as artifice, although this love is not directly associated with his discontent. Rosenblüthchen too seems to belong to the world of the dead, even causing those who look at her to wish to die: "[she] sah aus wie Wachs, Haare wie goldne Seide, kirschrothe Lippen, wie ein Püppchen gewachsen, brandrabenschwarze Augen. Wer sie sah, hätte mögen vergehn, so lieblich war sie" (HKA I.21). If everything around the two central figures appears animated and lively, these figures themselves nevertheless belong to a higher-order level of otherness, the others of a world that is already other.

The world of the fairy tale, however, is not wholly other. There exist points of contact between the two fictional characters, Hyacinth and the novice. Hyacinth, like the novice, appears in a state of despair and melancholy; like the novice, he has taken leave of his family; like the novice, his ultimate desire is to seek out Isis. Hyacinth also appears as the recipient of fairy tales within the fairy tale, and although the fairy tale *can* be useful, it denies its own utility in the tale itself: "Die Gans erzählte Märchen.... Allein der Mißmut und Ernst waren hartnäckig" (HKA I.91-2). Only an erotic attraction to Rosenblüthchen and a poem told by a lizard eventually force him to laugh, thereby drawing him from his despair. Yet another "fall" comes at the heels of this regeneration: Hyacinth is drawn from his attachment to Rosenblüthchen by an old man who gives him a book that no one can read, "ein Büchelchen... das kein Mensch lesen konnte" (HKA I.93). Hyacinth, like the novice, who cannot decipher the validity of the voices that cross themselves before him, appears in a state of aporia, attracted to the book but unable to glean its sense. Although indecipherability is normally positively connoted by the Jena Romantics, Hyacinth must burn the book before he can undertake his journey to Isis. The burning of the book both refuses and transfigures the *logos*, making possible an overcoming of one order of practice and its substitution for another.<sup>213</sup> It is the "wunderliche Frau" that convinces him to burn the book, and the "unzählige Enkel" of Hyacinth and Rosenblüthchen at the end of the fairy tale owe their existence to this

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<sup>213</sup> For the varying interpretations of the burning of the books, see Uerlings, *Friedrich von Hardenberg, genannt Novalis* 362.

woman. And yet, she too, like the old man, initiates a turning point, a moment when one course of life turns to another, the overturning of the order of the book and an entry into the order of eros, of Hyacinth's desire for Isis. The narrative structure of the fairy tale itself takes place in leaps, discontinuities, excitations and perturbations.

Hyacinth's desire for Isis, a figure that unites Christian and pagan iconography, both virginity and fertility—both veiled virgin and mother of all things—remains, like the figure herself, veiled and mysterious:

"Ich muß fort in fremde Lande," sagte er, "die alte wunderliche Frau im Walde hat mir erzählt, wie ich gesund werden müßte, das Buch hat sie ins Feuer geworfen, und hat mich getrieben, zu euch zu gehn und euch um euren Segen zu bitten. Vielleicht komme ich bald, vielleicht nie wieder. Grüßt Rosenblüthchen. Ich hätte sie gern gesprochen, ich weiß nicht, wie mir ist, es drängt mich fort.... Ich wollt' euch gern sagen, wohin, ich weiß selbst nicht, dahin wo die Mutter der Dinge wohnt, die verschleierte Jungfrau. Nach der ist mein Gemüt entzündet." (HKA I.93)

Hyacinth exists in a state wherein his mind is *inflamed*, "entzündet." He, like the novice, appears in a state of mental excitation. The novice is overexcited, however, by the movement of dispersion, of multiple crossing voices. Hyacinth, on the other hand, makes the movement of concentration; he is inflamed by a single object, although this single object will also prove to be multiple and duplicitous, when he lifts the veil of Isis only to discover his beloved Rosenblüthchen.

In his journey to the goddess, Hyacinth organizes sense experience in ways that diverge from the practices of the institution at Sais that provoke the crisis in the novice.<sup>214</sup> Whereas the discursive space of the institution overwhelmingly focuses on *sound*, Hyacinth, before he reaches Isis, travels through every space of sense perception: on the journey, he enjoys "einen frischen Trunk," the dwelling of Isis lies under "Palmen und andern köstlichen Gewächsen," he falls asleep "unter himmlischen Wohlgedüften," he seeks Isis amidst rooms "voll seltsamer Sachen auf lauter reizender Klängen und in abwechselnden Accorden," after lifting the veil he hears "eine ferne Musik"—however, when he lifts the veil, the sight itself is left unrepresented. The tale does not describe his *vision* of Rosenblüthchen, but merely how upon lifting the veil, she "sank in seine Arme" (HKA I.95). In the fairy tale, each sensory area appears stimulated, and yet, when the moment of plenitude arrives, the narrator leaves the corresponding sensory modality unfocalized, the vision itself appears only as a lack or a gap. The unrepresentable moment is therefore left, to a certain extent, unrepresented. And yet, it is precisely this moment, which is supplied by the imagination of the reader, that describes the most important step in the practice of the senses, a moment that would represent the culmination of aesthetic being, and whose absence in fact guarantees the exercise value of the fairy tale. Some part of sense experience always remains unsatisfied, and must remain unsatisfied as a

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<sup>214</sup> Ingrid Kreuzer discusses these voices as moving in a different acoustic-aesthetic space than the other discursive spaces in the novel. For her, the voices constitute a "Schallraum, dessen Grenze die Dimension des Hörens bildet." Ingrid Kreuzer, "Novalis' *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*. Fragen zur Struktur, Gattung und immanenten Ästhetik," *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schiller-Gesellschaft* 23 (1979): 288.

condition for generating and intensifying its own stimulation.

The two possibilities that he considers as possible end points of his journey—perhaps he will come back soon, perhaps never, as he says to his parents—are both true and false in the realm of the fairy tale. On one level, he is reunited with his family in the world of the dream. On another level—and this level remains unspoken and almost suppressed by the fairy tale itself—Hyacinth remains asleep in a desert oasis, and therefore both dies and lives immortally:

Sein Herz klopfte in unendlicher Sehnsucht, und die süßeste Bangigkeit durchdrang ihn in dieser Behausung der ewigen Jahreszeiten. Unter himmlischen Wohlgedüften entschlummerte er, weil ihn nur der Traum in das Allerheiligste führen durfte.

[....]

Er stand vor der himmlischen Jungfrau, da hob er den leichten, glänzenden Schleyer und Rosenblüthchen sank in seine Arme. Hyacinth lebte nachher noch lange mit Rosenblüthchen unter seinen frohen Eltern und Gespielen, und unzählige Enkel dankten der alten wunderlichen Frau für ihren Rat und ihr Feuer; denn damals bekamen die Menschen so viel Kinder, als sie wollten. (HKA I.95)

Only the dream can lead Hyacinth into the space of the absolute, where eternity and temporality unite in the "Behausung der ewigen Jahreszeiten." And yet, the entry into the absolute produces a bifurcation in Hyacinth himself, a double narrative ontology of the fictional-real and the fictional-dream.<sup>215</sup> The fairy tale accomplishes the duality of destiny through denying—and yet, nevertheless maintaining as a possibility—the temporal and spatial logic of its own reality. If the dream has the final word in the realm of the fairy tale, it is only at the cost of suppressing the alternate operation of real space and time, which, lurking in the background, points not to the procreative excess of Hyacinth and Rosenblüthchen, but to the sleep of Hyacinth in an oasis far away from his loved ones, in all likelihood, a sleep that can only be conceived as death inasmuch as he never awakens. In the middle of the dream, the narrator hints at Hyacinth's death; immediately before he sees the goddess, "da schwand auch der letzte irdische Anflug, wie in Luft verzehrt" (HKA I.95). The ontology of the dream, however, both bifurcates and supersedes that of the real in the fairy tale, producing a chiasmatic effect: if both Hyacinth and Rosenblüthchen seem dead amidst the living, they remain alive in the sphere of death.<sup>216</sup>

The fairy tale produces a double ontology in another and perhaps more important

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<sup>215</sup> See Voker Klotz, *Das europäische Kunstmärchen* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1985) 142. Alexander Schlutz also emphasizes this point: "[The fairy tale] takes place, after all, within a dream that is part of a fairy tale, which in turn is narrated by one of the many narrators within the complex texture of Hardenberg's Romantic novel." Schlutz, *Mind's World* 188. Schlutz focuses more on the *ordo inversus* as a narrative technique signaling the continual movement within an imagined space rather than an inversion of different frameworks of intelligibility, or ways of relating phenomena.

<sup>216</sup> Ulrich Gaier notes, "Geschichte der Fund und Vereinigung im Traum, so muß der Traum zugleich Wirklichkeit haben, dann wäre der Traum unreal, so hätte Hyacinth Rosenblüthchen gar nicht gefunden und nicht mit ihr leben und Kinder haben können." Ulrich Gaier, *Krumme Regel: Novalis Konstruktionslehre des schaffenden Geistes und ihre Tradition* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1970) 23.

sense inasmuch as it *duplicates* the very emblem of being, the fixed point of the institution and the central symbol of its authority, namely, the statue of Isis.<sup>217</sup> The statue itself—*Ich bin alles, was ist, was war, und was sein wird*—embodies the very fictionality of the absolute itself, a finite and physical presence that claims to represent itself the unrepresentable indifference of being. At the moment in which the fairy tale announces the presence of Isis in its own dreamspace, the *real*—and yet fictive—statue, as sensually manifest presence in Sais, must inhabit the same space as the speaking narrator and the listening student. And yet, the fairy tale makes from this *one* representation a double ontology, thereby revealing again the physiologically driven multiplication of difference as the product of a tautology. The fairy tale appears poetic—*Poësie ist Poësie*—inasmuch as it once again expands the space of the tautology, creating difference from the claim to absolute being. For Isis represents precisely this discursive act, the *claim* to represent the absolute, *Ich bin alles, was ist, was war, und was sein wird*—a claim that in the realm of philosophy, ends in pathology, but in the world of fantasy, where such a claim produces differentiation, individuation, and expansion, culminates in the health of self-overcoming, in a continual positing-forth, a *Fortsetzen*.

In the space of the dream, in the space of the fairy tale, Hyacinth succeeds in lifting the veil, and the goddess reveals herself not as *absolute Being*, but as a particular being, as Rosenblüthchen.<sup>218</sup> In a fragment, Novalis writes, "Einem gelang es—er hob den Schleyer der Göttin zu Saïs— / Aber was sah er? Er sah—Wunder des Wunders—Sich Selbst" (HKA I.110). In the fairy tale, this is indeed, in one sense, what happens. For although he sees Rosenblüthchen after lifting the veil, the erotic other or the "Not-I" in Fichtean terminology, in fact he sees her only in his own dream.<sup>219</sup> And yet, the dream

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<sup>217</sup> Gaier notes, "Der Ort, an dem Hyazinth Rosenblüthchen findet, ist als Behausung der Isis aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach Sais; zugleich muß es auch der Ort 'weit gegen Abend' sein, an dem Rosenblüthchen mit den Eltern und Gespielen wohnt. Auch die Zeit tritt in eine schwebende Verbindung; die Wohnung der Isis ist 'die Behausung der ewigen Jahreszeiten'; die Zeit schwebt hier zwischen Zeitlichkeit und Ewigkeit, Wechsel und Ruhe. Insofern kann auch der Ort der Isis nicht bloß jenes Sais sein, an dem die Lehrlinge sich das Märchen erzählen, sondern muß zugleich ein transzendenter Ort sein, eine Wohnung mit unendlichen Gemächern." Gaier, *Krumme Regel: Novalis Konstruktionslehre des schaffenden Geistes und ihre Tradition* 24. Gaier explains the duplicitous ontology by making the fairy tale into a "transcendent" space. However, the very act appears to me philosophical in Novalis' sense of the term: "[es] hebt wie das Copernikanische System die *festen* Punkte auf—und macht aus dem Ruhenden ein Schwebendes" (HKA III.377-8), making the very centripetal power of the institution a similarly floating system of points.

<sup>218</sup> Johannes Endres sees the veil itself as a "liminal" point; in his sensitive reading he notes: "Der Schleier, der solchen Vorgängen voranschwebt, wird zum Relais, zur 'Schwelle', die 'reziproke Übergänge' vermittelt. 'Permeabel' geworden, organisiert der 'Schleier' Bezüge, die um vieles komplexer sind, als es die Formeln vom 'Sozialisationstheater' oder vom 'sozialen Drama' suggerieren, Kulturmuster, die im wesentlichen auf linearen Prozessen basieren.... Worauf Novalis' Liminalitätskonzept abzielt, ist nicht Situierung, sondern 'Wechsel' um des Wechsels willen, der seinerseits zur Regel erhoben und auf Dauer gestellt wird." Johannes Endres, "Der Schleier des Novalis," *Novalis. Poesie und Poetik*, ed. Herbert Uerlings (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2004) 121-22.

<sup>219</sup> Arctander O'Brien says about Novalis' idea that the novice who lifts the veil finds only himself: "Such a resolution would be simple Fichteanism, and similar to the self-absorption of the novice: one would find that the 'Not-I' is merely a mask for the 'I,' or everything would lead back to 'oneself.' Instead, Hardenberg insists that one finds the 'beloved' outside oneself." Arctander O'Brien, *Novalis: Signs of Revolution* 212. However, to what extent is Rosenblüthchen really "outside" Hyacinth, since this reunion takes place in a dream?

does not thematize Rosenblüthchen as a mere reflection of Hyacinth. On the contrary, the veil reveals self-produced differentiation at the core of being. This differentiation does not emerge from mere indifference, but is shaped by erotic attraction and culminates in reproduction. However, the reproductive act, in a certain sense, remains merely imaginary, it misfires as *concrete* reproduction; instead, reproduction becomes subordinate to the physiology of the imagination, a positing that undoes a previously posited order, but one that then provokes its own overcoming. The lifting of the veil, and the logic of the dream, consists less in a positing of the I or even of the Not-I, but rather, in the bare activity of physiological being, a positing forth, a *Fortsetzen*, which was Novalis' definition of the drive.

Novalis' *Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs* suggests that health requires an act of self-differentiation, the ability to generate narrative spaces that are continually *other* than its frame. The dream, far from becoming the apotheosis of the fairy tale or the space of "absolute union," performs an instance of narrative self-differentiation within the fairy tale. The fairy tale, as one might recall, is incapable of curing Hyacinth in the space of the fairy tale itself. Only another narrative form, one that differentiates itself from the space of the dominant discursive system from within this system, appears capable of curing the sick individual. What the fairy tale is to the novice, the dream is to Hyacinth. Hence, what the "higher order" fairy tale reveals, is in fact the ability of language to produce self-differentiation from within seemingly coherent systems. The ability of discourse to interrupt the order of a framing narrative and differentiate itself from this frame is correlated to a movement deeper into imaginary ontologies, which in turn restore the sick individual to a state of health. Moreover, health is never *fully* restored, since Hyacinth partakes of a dual ontology that renders him either whole or asleep, or what is more likely, dead. Moreover, the function of the fairy tale in the larger narrative heals or distracts the novice from his despair, but precisely by *differentiating* Hyacinth and the novice: Hyacinth lifts the veil of Isis, the novice only *desires* to do so. Even Isis, the emblem of being, appears differentiated and multiplied. Each narrative frame generates a disequilibrium with another narrative frame that both stimulates desire, and yet, denies ultimate fulfillment—in the form of a perfect synthesis between differentiated spheres—for its listener or its protagonist.

Unlike Schiller's novice, Hyacinth does not seek *truth* behind the veil, but rather, something that remains undefined. Hyacinth's motivation remains unknown, as does his ultimate ontological status as living or dead. Concerning the drive to seek Isis, he knows only that "it" forces him somewhere ("es drängt mich fort"), an impersonal construction denoting an unspecified power. It is not the search for knowledge that motivates Hyacinth—if anything the burning of the illegible book symbolizes if not a direct renunciation of this search, at the very least an overcoming or transformation of this search—but rather, it is the "es" itself, the inarticulable feeling that pushes Hyacinth into continually differentiated spaces of narrative organization. Hyacinth's turn away from the book opens him to difference, a mode of being that in turn contravenes the univocal authority of the discursive acts characteristic of the institutional life at Saïs. Novalis himself remarks, "Die Welt des Märchens ist die *durchausentgegengesetzte* Welt der Welt der Wahrheit (Geschichte) – und eben darum ihr so *durchaus ähnlich* – wie das *Chaos* der *vollendeten Schöpfung*" (HKA III.280). The world of the fairy tale, by opposing itself

to the concrete appearances of truth and of history, exhibits a similarity to this world—in essence, opening up the space of the tautology where there is no true identity of indiscernibles, nor true indiscernibility of identicals. It is in the opening up of this unfolding of identity, unlocking the differentiation and disequilibrium that is there for all those with eyes to see— $a=a$ —and seeing in this movement, from the first  $a$  to the second, the movement of life itself, a *Fortsetzen*. It is also the space of poetry, *Poësie ist Poësie*, an operation wherein disequilibrium or perturbation is seen as constitutive of life. Novalis calls the fairy tale "vernünftige Chaos," "Chaos<sup>2</sup> oder  $\infty$ " (HKA III.281)—not pure difference as such, but the drive to differentiation, which sees in the overcoming of imaginative and reflective orders the only infinity of which the human being is capable.

#### 4. The End of Mastery

As a prelude to the fairy tale, the companion says to the despairing novice: "Du Grübler... bist auf ganz verkehrtem Wege. So wirst du keine große Fortschritte machen. Das Beste ist überall die Stimmung.... Wie kannst du nur in der Einsamkeit sitzen?" (HKA I.91) After the fairy tale, the reader is left with the following description: "Die Lehrlinge umarmten sich und gingen fort" (HKA I.95). The telling of the fairy tale represents an alternative model to the pedagogical rationality of the teacher, one that has an opposite effect on the novice. Whereas the teacher's institutional organization of nature is coordinated with pain and confusion, the confusion of the fairy tale is bound up with joy and erotic union. The act of telling the fairy tale itself produces a physical bond between the novices. It provides a stark contrast to the exercise of the senses preached by the teacher attempting to train naturally gifted minds:

Die ursprünglich günstige Anlage eines solchen natürlichen Gemüts muß durch unablässigen Fleiß von Jugend auf, durch Einsamkeit und Stillschwiegen, weil vieles Reden sich nicht mit der steten Aufmerksamkeit verträgt, die ein solcher anwenden muß, durch kindliches, bescheidenes Wesen und unermüdliche Geduld unterstützt und ausgebildet seyn. (HKA I.108)

Tireless diligence, loneliness, silence, exercise, attention, patience, and childish modesty—obedience—form the background of the teacher's pedagogical philosophy. The teacher is granted the final word in the fragment, adding to the deceptive aura of finality—the narrative remains, after all, incomplete—especially following the perspectives of the travelers preceding this speech, who acknowledge the authority of the teacher and the institution. He ends with his own self-portrait as an instructor of nature:

Mit Hülfe dieser erlangten Einsichten wird er sich ein System der Anwendung dieser Mittel bei jedem gegebenen Individuum, auf Versuche, Zergliederungen, und Vergleichen gegründet, bilden, sich dieses System bis zur andern Natur aneignen, und dann mit Enthusiasmus sein belohnendes Geschäft anfangen. Nur diesen wird man mit Recht einen

Lehrer der Natur nennen können, da jeder andre bloße Naturalist nur zufällig und sympathetisch, wie ein Naturerzeugniß selbst, den Sinn für die Natur erwecken wird. (HKA I.108-9)

The teacher therefore presents himself as the executive of a "rewarding business"—and the institution of Sais has established itself as such, bringing travelers to its doorsteps in search of the cult of knowledge. The system of experimentation, analysis, and comparison outlined by the teacher not only recalls the natural object's complaints concerning humankind's "division" of nature, but portrays his own practice as one that does not expose itself to the overturning of its own order. Finally, the teacher's characterization of his own evangelium as a "belohnendes Geschäft" recalls Novalis' own criticism of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. In a letter to Tieck dated February 23, 1800, Novalis notes: "ich sehe die große Kunst, mit der die Poësie durch sich selbst im Meister vernichtet wird—und während sie im Hintergrunde scheitert, die Oeconomie sicher auf festen Grund und Boden mit ihren Freunden sich gütlich thut, und Achselzuckend nach dem Meere sieht" (HKA IV.323). The teacher never strays into such a crass dismissal of the attraction of art and nature, and many of his pronouncements cohere with statements that one can find in Novalis' notes and fragments. Novalis writes elsewhere, "Man muß alle seine Kräfte üben und regelmäßig ausbilden—die Einbildungskraft—wie den Verstand—die Urteilskraft etc" (HKA II.257). The danger of the teacher's regime of aesthetic exercises lies in the prioritization of a specific way of training the senses and organizing the world that does not open itself to otherness, that does not itself *provoke* its own otherness. In this sense, one might very well say with Novalis—albeit with a different meaning: *die Poësie wird durch sich selbst im Meister vernichtet*.

In one of the paralipomena to *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*, one may find the following note:

Verwandlung des Tempels zu Sais  
Erscheinung der Isis.  
Tod des Lehrers.  
Träume im Tempel.  
Werkstatt des *Archaeus*.  
Ankunft der griechischen Götter.  
Einweihung in die Geheimnisse.  
Bilds[äule] des Memnons.  
Reise zu den Pyramiden.  
Das Kind und sein Johannes. Der Messias der Natur. *Neues Testament* – und neue Natur – als *neues Jerusalem*. (HKA I.111)

In this sketch, the fairy tale world bleeds into the frame narrative, different ontologies and cultural spaces come into contact: Egypt and Greece, polytheism and monotheism, Old Testament and New Testament. After Isis appears, the teacher dies. Why or how this happens, one will never know, but just as Hyacinth burns the book in the fairy tale, it seems that the novel produces its own movement of transcendence, one that requires overcoming the specific discipline of the senses represented by the teacher and his

institution.

According to the natural objects, the problem of the institution appears in its refusal to let its own system of organization be perturbed by the inarticulable presence of feeling. It does not allow itself to be touched by chaos. There is a space for the disciplining and exercise of the senses, but the more important exercise consists in an openness to the disruption of one's own ways of organizing the world.

### Conclusion: Incited Speech

Novalis, unlike Hölderlin, does not see poetry as an exercise that permits the human being to verify the order of nature and history, but rather, as the attempt to provoke disorder, to stimulate, and thereby to contribute to the process of continual overcoming governing the reproduction of life. Novalis' poetic works, however, cannot be reduced to this simple rule. They use their own formal organization and disorganization to carry the mind through different attractions and heterogeneous spaces, and one must follow the movements in order to enter into the dynamic oscillation of orders of reflection.

Novalis' *Fichte-Studien* themselves follow and disrupt the path of Fichte's thought by summarizing, questioning, diverting, and contaminating philosophical movements with personal reflections, scientific discourses, and imaginative digressions. However, certain propositions emerge from the *Fichte-Studien* that enter into the texture of the aesthetic works, attracting language and consciousness according to various orders of reflection and their perpetual inversion. The first movement in Novalis' paradoxical aesthetic attraction is taken when the attempt to conceptualize absolute Being in its undifferentiated, perfect identity, generates a multiplicity of beings, signs, thoughts, reflections. The central property of Being, as it appears to human thought, is *generative*. The second movement generates an inversion of orders, conceived initially as the attempt to approach *feeling*—an originary awareness before the self has been differentiated and acquired the boundaries of subject and object—by reversing the perspective of determinate reflective acts. The third movement displaces the concept of the absolute from the realm of Being itself to the physiological drive that propels this inversion of reflective orders into a multiplicity—a cohesive multiplicity that perpetually inverts itself across points of indifference. It is ultimately this absolute, whose central dynamic consists in the continual displacement of *figures, signs, or symbols* of the absolute, that stimulates and motivates aesthetic cognition to imaginative acts of self-overcoming.

In the works themselves, Novalis therefore does not attempt to *intuit* absolute Being, but rather, to make absolute Being appear *negatively*, as that which continually inverts orders of organization. Being appears as *pure perturbation*, and it manifests itself only in the so-called "indifference points"—in *Die Hymnen an die Nacht*, death, the beloved, the womb constitute indifference points, points at which orders of organization are both inverted and remain coextensive with the form of organization that they invert. In *Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs*, the "Geist des Friedens" and the embrace that signals a movement from the framing narrative to the fairy tale constitute such indifference points. However, the most important point of indifference can be found in Isis herself, the self-

differentiating and yet indifferent fictionalized emblem of being that permits the novice to move from institution to fairy tale to dream and back to the institution, establishing permeability between the realm of disciplinary authority and the disorganizing potentiality of fantasy.

The fairy tale exercises, in contrast to the organization of the institution at Sais, *self-differentiation*. It produces differentiated internal forms of organization, narrative consistencies and inconsistencies, shifting and relating ontological frames. The ontological destabilization of the fairy tale culminates in the dream and the ultimate incapacity to decide whether the dream represents a mere imaginary space or a higher reality. And if Hyacinth and Rosenblüthchen appear in one sense to attain the absolute, it never becomes manifest as an object for intuition, not even in the lifting of the veil of Sais. Rather, the absolute, as physiological stimulation, as movement and attraction, consists in a movement across indifference points between narrative frames—dream and fairy tale, fairy tale and Sais—and only in the penetration and interpenetration of these heterogeneous spheres does infinite imaginative reproducibility become possible, "unzählige Enkel" (HKA I.95).

The ending of the fairy tale appears to cohere with the generically similar happy end characteristic of many *Volksmärchen*.<sup>220</sup> However, the ending does not merely restore the order of bourgeois domesticity. Novalis takes this familiar topos, the generation of children and the sanctity of the domestic sphere, and transforms it into a physical manifestation of the physiological absolute as an act of continual imaginative positing, of *Fortsetzen*. The very form of the ending coincides with a narrative bifurcation that ironizes the integrity of the idyllic familial setting. According to the logic of the fairy tale itself—and such is Novalis' doctrine of "romanticizing the world"—the familiar topos is made unfamiliar, and the unfamiliar is made familiar. Hyacinth and Rosenblüthchen generate grandchildren that cannot be counted, that cannot be fit into any determinate order—not even into any order of stable ontology—and hence that overturn any attempt to fit the particularity of the phenomenal world into predetermined formal schemas of organization. Even this generative act *in* the dream, however, is correlated with an infinite imaginative positing *as* a dream, a projection of Hyacinth's own mental landscape.

*Die Hymen an die Nacht* and *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*, each in their own domain, generate unstable ontologies that permit the continual reversal of orders of reflection, a back and forth movement between life and death, dream and reality, self and other. Novalis induces a form aesthetic cognition that produces a type of being whose very activity is to *not be a subject*, that is, not to fit into any prescribed or disciplinary patterns of thought, behavior, ways of associating and dissociating ideas and entities, attempts to delineate the boundaries of the self. Being as perturbation, which multiplies differences as well as the possibility of their communion, constitutes the essential movement in the exercise of art. The oscillation produced between ontological levels moves the space of art away from ontology as such, and into the *non-ontological* realm of motion and

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<sup>220</sup> Daibler disregards the ontological instability provoked by the ending, instead making the fairy tale conform to the organization of the institution, "Als biedere Prosa [!], welche die angestrebte Harmonie von Natur und Geist zur unendlichen Aufgabe macht und die Reihe der suchenden Stimmen nicht abbrechen läßt." Daibler, *Experimentalphysik des Geistes* 212.

attraction.

In *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, the blue flower, the ultimate symbol of the *attractive* point of indifference that makes possible an inversion of different reflective orders, appears as the product of two entities: "des Fremden und seiner Erzählungen" (HKA I.195). The flower comes from outside the narrative before it has even become the core of the narrative, it is generated from a figure who is outside the text, and it cannot even be localized in one narrative, but rather, can only be thought across multiple narratives, "Erzählungen." The absolute can never be present, and it only remains effective when it is absent, precisely when it comes from the outside, appearing to the world of the human as from an alien world, a *heterocosmic* presence. Heinrich says, "Es ist mir oft so entzückend wohl, und nur dann, wenn ich die Blume nicht recht gegenwärtig habe, befällt mich so ein tiefes, inniges Treiben: das kann und wird Keiner verstehn" (HKA I.195).

One cannot stress enough that art, as exercise, does not merely present its own absolute ideal as merely unrepresentable or incomprehensible. The choice of unrepresentable Being as a source of incitation lures readers into divesting themselves of the will to interpret the work, the need for producing something in its light, the importance of *living* the work. One might be misled to believe that interpreting a poem always *misses the point*, because after all, the meaning of the poem remains ineffable. However, missing the point *is* the point. The ineffability of art cannot rest within its silent domain. On the contrary, what Novalis shows is that this ineffability, if it is functioning correctly, *generates* fictions, *multiplies* differences, *produces* interpretations, *incites* speech. The sphere of art does not represent the unrepresentable as much as *make present* the unrepresentable, as an intensity in the mind, a fever for thought, a contraction of the skin, a tension of the muscles, an organism in a state of total energy. Unrepresentability, if it plays a role at all in the exercise, must, as perturbation, flame the desire for presentation, it must bend itself to the play of points of indifference and inversions of orders. And for this process to function, one must be thoroughly inhabited *by* these orders—that is, there must be an *indifference point* between text and organism in the act of reading—so that the inversion of orders and the indifference points *in* the text are felt in experience itself. There is nothing so deadly for poetry than the idea that it represents the unrepresentable, and therefore, one no longer has to say anything about it. On the contrary: poetry intensifies the capacity of language to attract language to itself. It brings the body, the mind, the organism in its entirety along with it.

## Part III: Pleasure, Immanence, Novelty

### Chapter 1: Pleasure, Utility, and Transcendental Saturation

#### 1. The Contingent Coupling of Utility and Pleasure

The thought that a work of art might do nothing more than create pleasure, than add a quantum of energy to the amount of possible collective joy available to human experience, was a scandalous thought to a great number of philosophers, writers, and thinkers in the eighteenth century. The formula *prodesse et delectare*—to instruct and to delight—provided one of the central conceptual frameworks that permitted public intellectuals to construct, classify, comprehend, and justify the existence of the work of art. This paradigm of artistic productivity and receptivity, which coupled two heterogeneous codes to one another—the code of delight and the code of utility—arguably constituted the dominant aesthetic ideology before Karl Philipp Moritz and Immanuel Kant advocated the notion that artworks are autonomous, that they exhibit an inner purposiveness apart from any given social utility.

When Moritz, in 1785, articulated the "Versuch einer Vereinigung aller schönen Künste und Wissenschaften unter dem Begriff des *in sich selbst Vollendeten*" in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, he was concerned to differentiate the notion of aesthetic autonomy—or works of art that exist only for their own sake and not for any other exterior purpose—from both pleasure and function.<sup>221</sup> If the work of art is still capable of generating pleasure, it does so only as a by-product of its own internal perfection: "Sagt der Künstler: aber wenn mein Werk gefällt oder Vergnügen erweckt, so habe ich doch meinen Zweck erreicht; so antworte ich: umgekehrt! Weil du deinen Zweck erreicht hast, so gefällt dein Werk..."<sup>222</sup> A work that merely delights appears as an insufficient condition for any work's claim to being art.

The denigration of mere pleasure as an essential feature of the work of art is something that the aesthetics of autonomy shares with the doctrine of *prodesse et delectare* characteristic of Enlightenment poetics. According to the formula *prodesse et delectare*, supposedly derived from Horace, the work of art must delight *and* educate; the generation of mere pleasure signals a deficit in any work of art, a failure of the work to achieve its purpose. However, for Horace, *prodesse* and *delectare* do not necessarily belong together as part of a normative poetic doctrine: "Aut prodesse volunt aut delectare

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<sup>221</sup> For a description of the relation between the Horatian *prodesse et delectare* and Moritz' articulation of aesthetic autonomy, see Jonathan Hess, *Reconstituting the Body Politic: Enlightenment, Public Culture, and the Invention of Aesthetic Autonomy* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1999) 49-57.

<sup>222</sup> Karl Philipp Moritz, "Versuch einer Vereinigung aller schönen Künste und Wissenschaften unter dem Begriff des in sich selbst Vollendeten," *Schriften zur Ästhetik und Poetik*, ed. Hans Joachim Schrimpf (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1962) 7.

poetae / aut simul et iucunda et idonea dicere vitae" (*Ars Poetica* 333).<sup>223</sup> Horace, who is here speaking more descriptively about what poets do and not normatively about what they ought to do, notes that they either want to educate, to delight, or to say both delightful and useful things at one and the same time. Even poets who seek only to produce pleasure in their readers still merit the name of poets. This possibility, although overwhelmingly in practice during the eighteenth century, was nevertheless the subject of a deep cultural divide, with philosophers and poets attempting to elide Horace's first either/or possibility (either delightful or useful or both at the same time) into the normatively necessary conjunction of utility and pleasure (delightful *and* useful).

When Horace speaks of poetry as a form of speech that may convey both pleasant things and things useful for life, or *idonea vitae*, he is in all likelihood referring to didactic poetry—poetic forms such as Hesiod's *Works and Days* and Virgil's *Georgics* that conveyed practical knowledge. Gottsched, in one edition of his *Versuch einer kritischen Dichtkunst*, to his credit, interprets Horace's *prodesse* from such a historical-generic point of view, saying "Allein aus den eigentlichen Lehrgedichten muß die Sache so deutlich ins Auge fallen, daß die Absicht der Dichter auch das eigentliche Lehren gewesen sey."<sup>224</sup> Although Gottsched approaches Horace's dictum as a legitimation of didactic poetry as a genre (*das Lehrgedicht*), his intellectual rival, Johann Georg Breitinger, magnifies and anthropologically expands the meanings of *prodesse* and *idonea vitae*.

Breitinger, in his *Critische Dichtkunst* (1740), interprets the Horatian *prodesse* and *idonea vitae* as the attempt to harness pleasure in order to lead human beings to virtuous contentment. Aesthetic enjoyment becomes sublimated into the productive functionality of the work of art itself, namely, as the production of a normatively stable subject. After citing these lines from Horace's *De arte poetica*, Breitinger urges the reader to recall that "die Poesie, insoweit sie eine Kunst ist, die in der Nachahmung bestehet, nothwendig ergetzen muß, und dann ferner, daß alle Künste und Wissenschaften zu der Beförderung der menschlichen Glückseligkeit müssen gebraucht werden."<sup>225</sup> Breitinger, along with the vast majority of his contemporaries, inherits Aristotle's conception of poetry as an art of imitation, a creative activity that cannot fail to delight simply by virtue of its reproduction of the phenomenal world and the actions that occur within it. The act of reproducing the world—albeit according to schemas of probability (*Wahrscheinlichkeit*) rather than immediate and direct representation of factual occurrences—produces various forms of delight: delight in the skill of the artist, delight in one's own process of comparing representation with reality, and ultimately, delight in the wonder generated by the divergence of the work from one's given norms and forms of understanding. Because imitation itself cannot be separated from pleasure, Breitinger sees a danger inherent in a form of poetic activity that does not mobilize the pleasure of imitation in order to direct it toward the useful:

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<sup>223</sup> Horace, *Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica*, trans. H Rushton Fairclough, Loeb (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1991) 478.

<sup>224</sup> Johann Christian Gottsched, *Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst. Anderer Besonderer Theil, Ausgewählte Werke*, ed. Joachim Birke and Brigitte Birke, vol. 6/2 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1973) 500.

<sup>225</sup> Breitinger, *Critische Dichtkunst* 116-7.

...nichts in seinem rechten und vernünftigen Gebrauch könne ergetzlich seyn, was nicht zugleich nützlich ist. Demnach öffnen diejenigen, welche das Nützliche von dem Ergetzlichen sondern, zu dem schändlichsten Mißbrauche der Künste Thür und Thor, und machen solche zu Werckzeugen der garstigen Lüste.<sup>226</sup>

A self-referential problem at the heart of Breitinger's argument emerges from the tangled poetic codes of utility, pleasure, and mimesis. According to him, no "correct and rational application" of pleasure can be merely pleasurable; all such pleasure must always be useful. However, this repurposing of pleasure assumes its "correct and rational application," that is, by already subsuming pleasure to the law of utility. One may reformulate Breitinger's thought as a tautology: any correct and rational use of pleasure always produces a correct and rational use of pleasure.

The tautological structure of Breitinger's arguments obscures the inherent instability of the conjunction of pleasure and utility. Breitinger harmonizes pleasure in the receptive act with the very norms governing the production of the work of art, namely in mimesis, thereby constructing an isomorphism in the act of production and reception: both normative spheres—the production of a work of art and its effect on the viewer—are organized according to how they represent possible worlds. Pleasure, conceptualized as the pleasure of mimesis, however, in no explicit way includes its "correct and rational application" as a logical or phenomenological prerequisite for its own actualization in the work of art. Locating pleasure in the process of representation even foregrounds the possibility of an incorrect and irrational application of pleasure, a possibility that Breitinger even explicitly mentions. Hence those people that separate the useful from the pleasurable ("welche das Nützliche von dem Ergetzlichen sondern") abuse and pervert the formative dimension of the work of art.

His poetics therefore reveal pleasure and utility as two heterogeneous codes, and it is precisely the contingent nature of these two codes' conjunction that sparks his anxiety about those who would seek to separate them. However, if mimesis and pleasure appear inextricably linked to one another, the only code capable of generating utility is the code of utility itself. Instead of a proving an inherent link between pleasure and utility, Breitinger describes the operation of two parallel processes that may or may not coincide. The attempt to make pleasure productive—a project that justifies the existence of poetry according to Breitinger—appears, even in his own system, as a coupling of heterogeneous codes that can at any moment be uncoupled.

Utility for Breitinger describes that process by which the poet's own—supposedly stable and virtuous—character might be transferred onto that of his audience. Breitinger notes, "Ein Poet ist zugleich ein Mensch, ein Bürger und Christ.... folglich muß das Ergetzen, welches die poetische Kunst gewähren kann, den Menschen zur Beobachtung der natürlichen, bürgerlichen, und christlichen Pflichten aufmuntern...".<sup>227</sup> Breitinger reinterprets the Horatian *prodesse et delectare* as an anthropological imperative, as the potential to use poetry to create a certain type of subject rather than merely to convey information useful for life (*idonea vitae*). The poetics of imitation culminates not in the

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<sup>226</sup> Breitinger, *Critische Dichtkunst* 117.

<sup>227</sup> Breitinger, *Critische Dichtkunst* 117.

work's attempt to represent reality with a degree of plausibility, but rather, to use poetry to create a model human type, something to be imitated and coaxed into being through the pleasure generated by imitation itself. Nature, bourgeois or civil society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*), and Christianity become the three central organizing schemas that define the particular sort of human being to be interpellated by the work of art.

Breitinger links pleasure to what one may designate as transcendental organizing schemas, or frameworks of intelligibility that lie outside of the work of art and its pleasure but nevertheless anchor this work of art in the norm-generating practices of its creator and its audience. In the first half of the eighteenth century, the transcendental schemas of a work of art index the codes toward which the pleasure of the work must direct itself in order to produce a normatively ideal type of human being. As we have seen, utility and pleasure appear in fact as heterogeneous codes that may be coupled and uncoupled. For Breitinger, the conjunction of these codes in the work of art contributes to the project of producing an ideal human being, one whose ethical duties must be balanced between nature, civil society and Christianity. Breitinger's poet—a human being, a civilian, and a Christian—repurposes the pleasure of the poetic instance to create his own likeness: "ein Mensch, ein Bürger, und Christ."<sup>228</sup>

Breitinger's central philosophical maneuver, the binding of heterogeneous codes to one another in order to generate normatively stable human subjects, becomes an almost paradigmatic maneuver in eighteenth-century aesthetic theory. In Breitinger's case, the work of art hesitates at the edge of disorder or moral uncertainty, only to be pulled back from this edge by a second operational code (utility) that mitigates the risks of the first (mimetic pleasure).

The relation between pleasure and utility duplicates patterns of potential peril and concomitant stabilization visible in other aspects of Breitinger's conception of the work of art. In order to function, the work of art requires a charge of energy or an increase in attractive power that fascinates its viewers or readers and extracts them from the stultifying pull of habit. He attempts to harness this energy through his elevation of the fantastic, or *das Wunderbare*, to a generative poetic principle. At the same time, he only generates this energy by creating tension in the relationship between the fantastic and the probable, or *das Wahrscheinliche*. It is the destabilizing dynamic of this relationship—which threatens to undermine the anchor of the work of art in mimesis—that he redresses by once again fusing the heterogeneous realms (*das Wunderbare* and *das Wahrscheinliche*) that he himself had set in a seeming opposition to one another. The relation between the fantastic and the probable constructs a model of the work of art as a disjunctive synthesis of oppositional codes. If pleasure is to utility what the fantastic is to the probable, one may draw upon Breitinger's poetics to reconceptualize pleasure as an expansive and disjunctive force that allowing aesthetic patterns of existence to deviate from the organization of the world of appearances according to any given socio-cultural transcendental schema of intelligibility.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Breitinger, *Critische Dichtkunst* 117.

<sup>229</sup> My argument harmonizes in many points with the arguments made by Heinz Schlaffer in his *Musa Iocosa*. Schlaffer makes the following comment: "Das poetische Bild verdankt seine Existenz gerade seiner Nicht-Wirklichkeit und damit der bestehenden Wirklichkeit, die jene utopische Wirklichkeit jetzt noch im Zustand der Nicht-Wirklichkeit hält. Unter dieser generellen Bedingung von Poesie lebt auch der Scherz

## 2. Novelty and The Possibility of Other Worlds

Breitinger's conception of the work of art owes many of its features to ideas developed by other thinkers of the eighteenth century, most notably Dubos, Addison, and even his rival in Leipzig, Johann Christoph Gottsched. Breitinger, along with his compatriot Johann Jacob Bodmer, articulate many of their ideas in polemics explicitly or implicitly directed against Gottsched, who had attempted to establish a center of literary activity in Leipzig and had crafted his system of normative poetics roughly in line with classical ideals and the French interpretation of these ideals in Boileau. Bodmer and Breitinger's feud with Gottsched is perhaps most visible in their diametrically opposed evaluation of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Whereas Bodmer and Breitinger defend and enthusiastically embrace Milton's epic, seeing in it a new form of religious poetry and imaginative stimulation, Gottsched, whose ideals were much more aligned with forms of Enlightenment thought in France that often viewed the supernatural as mere superstition, finds Milton "viel zu abgeschmackt für unsre Zeiten, und würde kaum Kindern ohne Lachen erzählt werden können."<sup>230</sup> Gottsched does not disavow the fantastic, but he construes it more as "uncommon" and "strange" than as that which is physically inconceivable: "So wohl das Gute als das Böse kann wunderbar werden, wenn es nur nicht etwas gemeines und alltägliches, sondern etwas ungemeines und seltsames ist."<sup>231</sup> For Gottsched, the fantastic appears most effective when it stimulates and provokes attentiveness through the representation of uncommon actions rather than through acts that contradict the apparent order of nature. He claims, "Das Wunderbare muß noch allezeit in den Schranken der Natur bleiben und nicht zu hoch steigen."<sup>232</sup> It is precisely this hubris that Gottsched reproaches in Milton, in certain respects the father of fantastic literature in the German tradition, whose "adventurous Song, / That with no middle flight intends to soar / Above th' Aonian Mount..."<sup>233</sup> The fantastic, in order for it to be effective, must remain within the bounds of probability, or *Wahrscheinlichkeit*. Gottsched does not see anything inherent in the definition of the fantastic that necessarily enters into opposition with the probable.

For Bodmer and Breitinger, however, one can observe a tension in different attractive pulls generated by the fantastic and the probable. Whereas Gottsched diminishes this potential conflict in his account of the relation between the fantastic and

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doppeldeutig als Negation des Bestehenden vom Zugeständnis an dieses Bestehende, dessen Anderes er ist." Heinz Schlaffer, *Musa iocosa: Gattungspoetik und Gattungsgeschichte der erotischen Dichtung in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1971) 142. The goal of this study is to show how Anacreontic poetry functions as an aesthetic exercise, which in turn introduces elements of contingency into its own culture's values and normalizing discourses on the level of poetic form. I intend to follow some of these poems in their manner of perturbing these structures of intelligibility.

<sup>230</sup> Johann Christian Gottsched, *Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst. Erster allgemeiner Theil*, *Ausgewählte Werke*, ed. Joachim Birke and Brigitte Birke, vol. VI/1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1973) 238.

<sup>231</sup> Gottsched, *Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst. Erster allgemeiner Theil* 244.

<sup>232</sup> Gottsched, *Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst. Erster allgemeiner Theil* 246.

<sup>233</sup> John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, *The Poetical Works of John Milton*, ed. Helen Darbishire, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992) 6.

the probable, Breitinger intensifies this conflict and seeks nevertheless to synthesize these opposing tendencies. For Breitinger as well as Gottsched, *habit* appears as that which constrains and deadens the aesthetic sense: "Die Macht [der] Gewohnheit ist so groß, daß sie die Sinnen bindet, uns aller Empfindung beraubt, und in eine achtlose Dummheit versenket."<sup>234</sup> Although Breitinger also believes in the restraining counter-force of probability, his conception of poetry nevertheless calls upon the fantastic as a source of novelty characterized by its *difference* from one's own given normative frameworks of intelligibility. He defines novelty, or *das Neue*, as follows:

Alles, was selten gefunden wird, was der Zeit oder des Orts halber von unserer Einsicht allzuweit entfernt ist, was mit unsern Begriffen, Sitten und Gewohnheiten nicht übereinstimmt, und eben durch seinen fremden Aufzug die Sinnen kräftig einnimmt, und eine aufmercksame und angenehme Bewunderung in uns verursacht.<sup>235</sup>

For Breitinger, novelty does not exist as a property of the work of art, but emerges as result of the dynamic between work and reader. There is no concern with the novelty of the work of art as such, no interest in what differentiates the work from all those that came before it and makes it unique. Rather, novelty is located in the exercise; a repetitive and derivative work of art can, by the perceptual and mental generation of difference, achieve an intensification of novelty on the level of the exercise. Such a way of thinking requires that one detach oneself from the aesthetics of the genius and the corresponding reading technologies of the nineteenth century, where novelty will be displaced ontologically onto the artwork itself, and the main question will be: how is this work *unique* or how does this work *differentiate itself* from others in the same genre, rather than how does this work *introduce difference* a horizon of experience as a perceptual given, as an imaginative process, as a form of practice? This paradigm of novelty will similarly guide and underpin the Rococo and Anacreontic poetry of the period; as objects capable of being differentiated from one another, such poems are not novel, they are clearly repetitive and derivative—as exercises that introduce a gap in the imaginative interface between the poem and the cultural practices of intelligibility of its readership, each and every poem appears as a perpetual source of novelty.

For Breitinger, following Dubos, the force of habit requires perturbation in order for new patterns to be generated, and poetry provides the model for a form of novelty that increases human attentiveness through difference. This feature of his conception of poetic beauty appears in a state of tension with the other locus of beauty as mimesis, one that may be conceptualized as the widening gap between the pleasure of difference and the pleasure of similarity. In this context, Breitinger nevertheless claims novelty constitutes "[die] Urquelle aller poetischen Schönheit."<sup>236</sup> He cites Longinus—θαυμαστὸν δ' ὅμως ἀεὶ τὸ παράδοξον [that which is opposed to existing notions is nonetheless always wondrous]—in order to describe how the work of art uses novelty in order to move outside one's own epistemological boundaries, becoming, in the Greek sense of the word,

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<sup>234</sup> Breitinger, *Critische Dichtkunst* 121.

<sup>235</sup> Breitinger, *Critische Dichtkunst* 124.

<sup>236</sup> Breitinger, *Critische Dichtkunst* 136.

paradoxical.<sup>237</sup> The experience of novelty generates a dynamic scale along which one can gauge the degree to which any representation distances itself from one's given cultural or ethical habits and norms. Novelty moves along a continuum of "verschieden[e] Grade und Staffeln... je nachdem es mehr oder weniger von unsren Sitten abgehet, und sich entfernt."<sup>238</sup> Although Breitinger never disavows the principle of mimetic pleasure as an integral feature of the work of art, its power derives not merely from a correspondence between what is represented and what is experienced, but also from the presence of difference in values and ways of organizing the world.

Novelty taken to the extreme, a process that overturns given orders of representation in its wake, metamorphoses into the fantastic, or *das Wunderbare*: "wenn denn die Entfernung so weit fortgehet, bis eine Vorstellung unsern gewöhnlichen Begriffen, die wir von dem ordentlichen Laufe der Dinge haben, entgegen zu stehen scheint, so verliehret sie den Nahmen des Neuen, und erhält an dessen statt den Nahmen des Wunderbaren."<sup>239</sup> Breitinger's analysis of the fantastic, far from placing the work of art on a secure pedestal in which forms of representation and ethical norms that differ radically from those of its readers and viewers would be suppressed and submerged, chooses to emphasize the work of art's production of difference. The work of art instigates a process that widens this region of differences, gradually diverging from the orders of organization in the normative structures implicit in any reading community. The manifest presence of other ways of organizing the world harnesses the energy generated in this process of differential perturbation in order to catapult the audience out of the clutches of a torpor-inducing habit.

Breitinger focuses on the work of art as a realm in which a representation (*Vorstellung*) may be detached from a concept (*Begriff*). Later in the eighteenth century, for both Baumgarten and Kant, one of the central features of aesthetic experience constitutes its incapacity to be exhausted by conceptual thought. In his attempt to grapple with the particularity of the experience of art, Breitinger notes that art ultimately appears irreducible to any given conceptual schemata. More importantly, he functionalizes this insight, seeing in the work of art a powerful form of representation (*Vorstellung*) in which a community may be productively alienated from its own normative frames of reference (*Begriffe*).<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Breitinger, *Critische Dichtkunst* 130.

<sup>238</sup> Breitinger, *Critische Dichtkunst* 136.

<sup>239</sup> Breitinger, *Critische Dichtkunst* 136.

<sup>240</sup> Jill Anne Kowalik claims that Breitinger's definition of the fantastic "connects his poetics with Leibniz's system," arguing that "the wondrous in Breitinger's system comprises not those things we reject, but those things we may have never noticed but then eventually assimilate." Jill Anne Kowalik, *The Poetics of Historical Perspectivism: Breitinger's Critische Dichtkunst and the Neoclassic Tradition* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1992) 84. According to her reading, the fantastic does not "alienate" a reader from his or her own framework of organization. However, this interpretation of Breitinger tames the subversive elements of his theory. It also does not seem to take Breitinger at his word, seeing his intellectual sources (i.e. Leibniz) as more critical to his theory than that which he explicitly claims in terms that expand far beyond their technical philosophical usage. When Breitinger says that the fantastic consists in "was uns, dem ersten Anscheine nach, unsren gewöhnlichen Begriffen von dem Wesen der Dinge, von den Kräften, Gesetzen und dem Laufe der Natur, und allen vormahls erkannten Wahrheiten in dem Licht zu stehen, und dieselben zu bestreiten düncket" (131), he does not seem to be discussing something that we at first do not

The transition from the new to the fantastic does not mark a difference in degree, but in type. The fantastic work of art does not merely foreground a "different" way of organizing the world, but rather, triggers a seeming *contradiction* with one's own way of organizing the world, exposing readers and viewers to the contingency of their own norms and frameworks of intelligibility. As opposed to the merely new (*das Neue*), the fantastic "leget... den Schein der Wahrheit und Möglichkeit ab, und nimmt einen unbetrüglischen Schein des Falschen und Widersprechenden an sich.... In dem Neuen herrschet dem Scheine nach das Wahre über das Falsche; in dem Wunderbaren hat hingegen der Schein des Falschen die Oberhand über das Wahre."<sup>241</sup> The work of art establishes a site in which conflicting tendencies and heterogeneous codes—the true and the false, the fantastic and the probable, the useful and the pleasurable—enter into a tense relation with one another. Art makes visible and exaggerates the struggles that animate it and render it an object of attentiveness, although the ultimate victory of truth over falsehood, of plausibility over contradiction, of utility over pleasure, is never really called into question, even in the fantastic work: "Das Wunderbare muß immer auf die würckliche oder mögliche Wahrheit gegründet seyn."<sup>242</sup> However, for the fantastic to be grounded in the probable merely intensifies the structure of opposition and conflict at the core of the work of art. The fantastic and the probable form two mutually exclusive modes of discursive organization, a tension that Breitinger emphasizes by using one concept to invert the other:

Ich begreiffe demnach unter dem Nahmen des Wunderbaren, alles was von einem andern widerwärtigen Bildniß oder vor wahr angenommenen Satze ausgeschlossen wird....<sup>243</sup>

Ich verstehe durch das Wahrscheinliche in der Poesie alles, was nicht von einem andern widerwärtigen Begriff oder für wahr angenommenen Satz ausgeschlossen wird....<sup>244</sup>

The fantastic represents an inverted mirror image of the probable; whereas the fantastic includes everything that is excluded from sentences held to be true, the probable consists in everything that is not excluded from propositions held to be true.<sup>245</sup> To claim that the fantastic is grounded in the probable is tantamount to claiming that works of art are only

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notice, but rather, narrative elements that really contradict "our usual concepts" of the way the world makes sense.

<sup>241</sup> Breitinger, *Critische Dichtkunst* 136.

<sup>242</sup> Breitinger, *Critische Dichtkunst* 137.

<sup>243</sup> Breitinger, *Critische Dichtkunst* 136.

<sup>244</sup> Breitinger, *Critische Dichtkunst* 139.

<sup>245</sup> Jill Anne Kowalik claims that Breitinger is describing a Leibnizian "rejection of perception," which "means that 'petites perceptions' never 'rise' to that level of activity where they represent themselves in perception...." Kowalik, *The Poetics of Historical Perspectivism: Breitinger's Critische Dichtkunst and the Neoclassic Tradition* 84. This proposition seems aimed at those who would make Breitinger into a predecessor of Romanticism or of the Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*. Nevertheless, it does not seem to me that Breitinger is referring to Leibnizian rejection of perception; it is not the "petites perceptions" that make Milton's *Paradise Lost* a work of the fantastic, but rather, the fact that the work does not seem structured according to the laws of physical reality as we typically know them.

grounded upon the movement of a higher-order opposition between the fantastic and the probable: "je mehr das Wunderbare in einer Vorstellung steigt und wächst, desto mehr verbirgt und vermindert sich das Wahrscheinliche."<sup>246</sup> Breitinger establishes an almost drive-like economy of the work of art: those works that increase the fantastic to a maximum while diminishing the probable to a minimum arouse and excite the greatest force of attraction.

The attractive potentiality of the work depends upon the continual maintenance of an agonistic dynamic in the work's relationship to its readers. The work detaches itself from familiar modes of representation, but never completely: it must retain the thread of an attachment to the reader's frameworks of intelligibility in the form of *possible* worlds. The relation between the fantastic and the probable therefore takes the form of a disjunctive synthesis. At the same time, this disjunctive synthesis, by widening the gap between the fantastic and the probable, simultaneously expands the realm of the possible in order to permit the *appearance* of a complete negation of the laws that govern physical reality and ethical normativity.

In a move that duplicates the tenuous dynamic between utility and pleasure in works of art—where pleasure detached from utility opens up the possibility of works of art bearing no moral center—Breitinger uses the concept of the fantastic in order to move the work of art closer to its dangerous other, namely, the nothingness of the bare lie. He says, "falls das Wunderbare aller Wahrheit beraubt seyn würde, so wäre der gröbste Lügner der beste Poet, und die Poesie wäre eine verderbliche Kunst."<sup>247</sup> The fantastic therefore only generates the *appearance* or the *Schein* of contradiction and falsehood, and it is the logic of appearances—which nevertheless consists in maintaining the perpetual tension between truth and falsehood—that generates pleasure. For Breitinger, *Schein* makes fantastic art possible, for it is only in the appearance of a seeming contradiction that the work of art can be endowed with a perturbational force that nevertheless does not merely remain in the domain of the false. Poetic truth, or *poetische Wahrheit*, as a particular form of the appearance of truth, incorporates the appearance of falsehood into its own logic.<sup>248</sup> The fantastic, then, both makes possible and threatens this specific form of truth, or *poetic* truth; for a fantastic work that cannot be reintegrated into the world of plausibility consists in a mere lie.

The tensions on display in the work of art arise from its dual and seemingly conflicting purposes. One purpose is to imitate the world mimetically, and thereby remain attached to the world of perceivable reality, the world of truth. The other purpose, a purpose that Breitinger inherits from Dubos, is to stimulate and enliven the mind, a process that precisely requires deviation from the world as given to the senses. The stimulation of the senses, which requires novelty in the form of a departure from

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<sup>246</sup> Breitinger, *Critische Dichtkunst* 143.

<sup>247</sup> Breitinger, *Critische Dichtkunst* 137.

<sup>248</sup> Hans Peter Hermann notes, "Die Spannung zwischen Naturnachahmung und Imagination als die der Poesie eigentümliche Spannung zwischen Wahrheit und Schein wird in Breitingers "Critischer Dichtkunst" zum ersten Mal in einer deutschen Poetik benannt. Allerdings: diese Spannung als Einheit zu begreifen und adaequat zu formulieren, mußten Bodmer und Breitinger Späteren überlassen." Hans Peter Herrmann, *Naturnachahmung und Einbildungskraft* (Bad Homburg: Max Gehlen, 1970) 275. In my view, the fact that they do *not* formulate this tension as a unity makes possible the power of the fantastic, namely, as mobilizing the figure of *disjunction*.

normativity and a disjunction with received values and modes of representation, can only be reintegrated into the realm of truth through the category of appearances, or *Schein*. The work of art's dynamic and oppositional structure only exists because it remains tethered to these two purposes—mimesis and stimulation—each of which seems to contradict the other. Moreover, the pleasure generated from mimesis, which moves along the axis of resemblance, seems to contradict the pleasure generated from novelty, which moves along the axis of differentiation.

Another paradoxical consequence of Breitingner's conception of the work of art can be expressed as follows: perturbation, or the overturning of given schemas of organization, appears as one of the central mechanisms used to reproduce, stabilize, and maintain these very schemas. It is only through the stimulation of difference that the work of art generates a stable subject, or "ein Mensch, ein Bürger und Christ."<sup>249</sup> For Breitingner as for Baumgarten, the work of art ultimately consists in an *askesis*, that is, in a stimulation of attentiveness that produces certain types of human beings. However, the means of representation used by the work of art differ dramatically from its purported ends; according to Breitingner's understanding of the fantastic, works that *appear* inhuman, amoral, and non-Christian can nevertheless be used to generate human, moral, and Christian subjects. The fantastic mobilizes the irruption of the new and unexpected as a perturbational force in order to implement and stabilize the distinctions between true and false, right and wrong, noble and base. Ultimately, Breitingner fixes the perturbational force of the fantastic to the transcendental schema of intelligibility that he calls "the probable" and "the useful." The danger of a theory of art as a mere perturbational force lies precisely in its inability to account for the supposed presence of truth in art or to explain how art could, without such a tethering, remain even obliquely meaningful to those who experience it.

Although Breitingner seeks to channel the perturbational force of a work of art into the transcendental structure of intelligibility via the relation of the fantastic to the probable, this same operation appears latent in the relation between the pleasurable and the useful. For Breitingner, as we have seen, neither the "mere lie" nor the "merely pleasurable" artifact counts as a work of art. Any work must inscribe its conflicting tendencies in the field of the probable—which he defines as sentences capable of generating truth—and the useful, which he defines as a system of norms that produces a human being, a citizen, and a Christian.

Breitingner's emphasis on the fantastic as a means of perturbation, one that both makes possible and threatens the production of poetic truth in certain works of art, overshadows the other enabling and threatening operational process in the work of art, namely the pleasure of the work itself. Just as the work of art holds two heterogeneous codes in a disjunctive synthesis in the movement of poetic truth, namely the fantastic and the probable, so too does the *ascetic* function of the work of art, its attempt to produce certain subjects, depend upon the unification of the pleasurable and the useful. If mimesis generates pleasure from the process of comparison and reflection produced by an imitation, this pleasure must be compatible with utility; Breitingner says about the poet, "es ist nicht genug, daß seine Vorstellungen natürlich und wunderbar seyn, sondern sie

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<sup>249</sup> Breitingner, *Critische Dichtkunst* 117.

müssen auch ehrbar und nützlich seyn."<sup>250</sup> Just as the fantastic must be reintegrated into the probable, so must the pleasurable be redirected toward the useful.

If the fantastic enters into tension with a reader's habitual concepts and produces a moment of seeming falsehood that in fact participates in the generation of truth, one might ask whether or not pleasure exhibits a similar structure, namely that of a conceptual perturbation and a restabilization. Earlier Breitinger had noted that those who separate the pleasurable and the useful in works of art make them "zu Werckzeugen der garstigen Lüste."<sup>251</sup> It would seem, then, that pleasure without utility is just as dangerous as fantasy without probability. The stimulation of pleasure generated in the play of mimetic similarity and difference (for it is indeed both *difference* from the real as well as the similarity to it that engenders pleasure) may, without an anchoring in the useful, produce an effect in the human being that perverts or diverges from the normative sphere of the *human*, the *citizen*, or the *Christian*. For Breitinger, a work of art cannot merely be pleasurable, but must always also be productive of a normatively determinate human type, lest it risk producing the inversion of this type.

Unlike Breitinger, Gottsched admits the possibility of a morally unproductive poem, and his efforts at writing in the Anacreontic style may even represent examples of such didactic unproductivity. However, he does not view this form of poetry as the highest sort of which the human being is capable: "Viele [Gedichte] sind auch nur zum Scherze und zur Belustigung gemacht: und also haben sich die Verfasser derselben gleichsam in die Vollkommenheiten der größern getheilet. Sie erhalten dergestalt auch nur ein geringes Lob, weil zu einer einzigen poetischen Absicht, auch ein sehr seichter Geist und mäßiger Witz schon zulänglich ist."<sup>252</sup> Despite his denigration of the mere joke or the minor amusement, he does not ontologize poetry in such a way such as to deny such works the status of worthy poetic creations. In this difference between Gottsched and Breitinger, one may observe the intensification of the ontological burden that Breitinger has placed on poetry. For him, the fantastic opens up the potentiality for completely different ways of organizing the world. This understanding of poetry was not alien to Gottsched, but for Gottsched, the internal dynamics of poetry are not predicated upon the intensification of oppositional tension as they are for Breitinger.

If the fantastic constitutes the heart and soul of the poetic act for Breitinger, for Gottsched it is the fable that unfolds the potential of poetry as an imitation of nature: "Die Fabel ist hauptsächlich dasjenige, was der Ursprung und die Seele der ganzen Dichtkunst ist."<sup>253</sup> Gottsched uses the German "Fabel" as a translation of Aristotle's *μυθοσ*, or the binding and unbinding of possible events. As for Breitinger, the fable is neither completely true nor completely false: "In der That muß eine jede Fabel was Wahres und was Falsches in sich haben."<sup>254</sup> A fable is false inasmuch as it narrates a course of events that does not actually happen and does not belong to the world of actuality, and true inasmuch as it conveys a moral truth, or "einen moralischen Lehrsatz, der gewiß wahr

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<sup>250</sup> Breitinger, *Critische Dichtkunst* 120.

<sup>251</sup> Breitinger, *Critische Dichtkunst* 117.

<sup>252</sup> Gottsched, *Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst. Erster allgemeiner Theil* 140.

<sup>253</sup> Gottsched, *Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst. Erster allgemeiner Theil* 202.

<sup>254</sup> Gottsched, *Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst. Erster allgemeiner Theil* 203.

seyen muß."<sup>255</sup> A fable always remains in the modality of possibility and therefore never violates the order of nature; it is the "Erzählung einer unter gewissen Umständen möglichen, aber nicht wirklich vorgefallenen Begebenheit, darunter eine nützliche moralische Wahrheit verborgen liegt. Philosophisch könnte man sagen, sie sey ein Stücke von einer andern Welt."<sup>256</sup> Gottsched's conception of fable as a possible world—like Breitinger's poetics—is informed by Leibniz' and Wolff's elaboration of the doctrine of possible worlds, and as for these thinkers, no possible world can violate the basic laws of reason, or in Leibniz' terminology, necessary truths. Breitinger differs from Gottsched inasmuch as he locates the power of poetry in the intensification of tension moving along an increasingly widening rift between the fantastic and the probable, in a disjunctive synthesis that is willfully held open. For Gottsched, the fable only functions when inscribed in the world of *plausibility*—in the conjunctive synthesis between the fantastic and the probable—whereas for Breitinger, the fantastic and the probable enter into direct conflict with one another, and it is only in this tension that poetic truth can exist alongside the increased intensity of imaginative stimulation.

If Gottsched believes that a poetic work, by its very definition, can never contradict the order of nature, the pleasure associated with poetic creation similarly never presents a threat to the given order. Breitinger's expansion of the capacity of the poem—indeed his very elaboration of the mechanism of poetic truth—presupposes the ability of the work of art to seem to contradict any given way of organizing phenomena. Just as the fantastic may enter into explicit contradiction with orders of probability, so too is the pleasure of mimesis in danger of undermining utility. However, Breitinger never explores the potential of pleasure not redirected toward transcendental structuring schemas beyond its own plane of immanence to function as a similar form of perturbation as the fantastic.

The possibility of such a poetic act, one undergirded by pleasure as perturbation and perturbation as pleasure, nevertheless operated as a latent dynamic of certain poetic practices in the eighteenth century. The practices accompanying Rococo and Anacreontic poetry in the eighteenth century suggest an alternative poetics to those articulated by Breitinger or Gottsched.<sup>257</sup> Rather than using the fantastic as a source of tension generated by its contradiction with probable orders—or with order as such—forms of Rococo and Anacreontic eighteenth-century poetry perturb, undercut, and reorganize the

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<sup>255</sup> Gottsched, *Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst. Erster allgemeiner Theil* 203.

<sup>256</sup> Gottsched, *Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst. Erster allgemeiner Theil* 204.

<sup>257</sup> Rococo and Anacreontic poems have been seen as part of the Enlightenment, while simultaneously entering into tension with other aspects of Enlightenment attitudes (didacticism, moral improvement, normative universality). My purpose in this text is to examine the Rococo not in relationship to the Enlightenment, nor even to examine the stylistic features of Rococo poems and attempt to extract a unified "poetics" of the Rococo. I presuppose the notion that the Rococo, as with other so-called literary styles, movements, and genres, cannot be reduced to rules that would unambiguously permit scholars to be able to decide which poems "belong" to the Rococo style. And if one could articulate such rules, it is unclear what precisely would be gained from this discovery, or if such a study would add or detract from the analysis and interpretation of individual poems and their attractive force. I use the word "Rococo" purely as a heuristic concept and I hope that its flexibility and relative cohesiveness enables rather than weakens this study. I will examine individual poems that have been interpreted as commensurate with what has become known as the Rococo style, and while I acknowledge the potential methodological and terminological problems that such a decision invokes, I will not dwell on these problems so that I can turn to the poems themselves. I will be focusing on Rococo poems that exhibit affinities to the Anacreontic style.

anthropological, social, and religious-cultural codes intent upon producing virtuous human beings, citizens, and Christians.<sup>258</sup>

It is well-known that not all examples of Rococo poetry can be called Anacreontic, and not all Anacreontic poetry is written in the Rococo style.<sup>259</sup> Strictly speaking, Anacreontic poetry explicitly links itself in either metrical form or thematic coherence to Anacreon and his imitators. In the eighteenth century, authors often used "Anacreontic verse" to refer to short poems that were satirical or humorous, some of which cohered with the Anacreontic verse form—which, after Gleim's *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern*, consisted in unrhymed iambic trimeter—others of which deviated from this form.

Only a select number of poets and poems writing in this style adopt poetic practices that are not transcendentally saturated, that do not attempt to form a human subject according to normalizing codes that operate outside of the poem itself and appeal to some metaphysical "beyond" in order to justify such norms. To be "transcendentally saturated" in this sense means to direct the poetic utterance toward some particular norm or ideal that could be linked to a socio-cultural, economic, or political imperative: Be a human being, be a citizen, be morally virtuous, be an economically productive member of society. In opposition to such transcendentally saturated imperatives, one may see in certain Anacreontic and Rococo poems a tendency toward detranscendentalizing play, or a linguistic provocation that imaginatively detaches the human being from its own given conceptual patterns, perceptions, habits and norms.<sup>260</sup> The latent poetics of these poems therefore function analogously to Breitingers analysis of the fantastic.<sup>261</sup> Rather than

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<sup>258</sup> To be sure, it is easy to integrate Rococo into a certain strand of Enlightenment poetics: the liberation of the senses, the loosening of religious dogmas, an anthropological conception of the human as a sexual being, and the diatetic stimulation of health through excitement, pleasure, and laughter. See Manfred Beetz, "Anakreontik und Rokoko im Bezugsfeld der Aufklärung—Eine Forschungsbilanz," *Anakreontische Aufklärung*, ed. Manfred Beetz and Hans-Joachim Kertscher (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2005).

<sup>259</sup> For this distinction, see Alfred Anger, *Literarisches Rokoko* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1962), 52-6.

<sup>260</sup> This interpretation of Rococo poetry has been articulated in various guises in the critical literature. Heinz Schlaffer notes, "Die Erotik, von den anderen Lebensäußerungen als amor bestialis abgetrennt und verurteilt, behauptet dagegen zuerst ihr Eigensinn, dann ihren Wert und schließlich ihre Überlegenheit, indem sie ihrerseits alle anderen Tätigkeiten—Krieg, Handel, Tugend und Denken—negiert, ihnen zur metaphorischen Verwendung in der erotischen Welt ironisch stattgibt... um sie durch den herabstimmenden Wechsel der Stilhöhe lächerlich zu machen und damit das Erotische so zu erhöhen, daß es sich als befriedigender Ersatz für die anderen scheinbar so wichtigen Bereiche des menschlichen Lebens ausweist." Schlaffer, *Musa iocosa: Gattungspoetik und Gattungsgeschichte der erotischen Dichtung in Deutschland* 97. The goal of this study is to locate the operation of this movement—a movement that Schlaffer attributes more to the erotic, but one that is equally present in the joke—on the level of poetic form. Moreover, I do not see love as *Ersatz* for the other important areas of life; rather, the Anacreontic ode seems to derive pleasure from the undermining of the very concept of importance as such, without any need for an *Ersatz* or some other source of importance. While I agree with much of Schlaffer's analysis, his disdain for Gleim as an "editor" of others works does not preclude his work from the very movement that Schlaffer reserves for the omnipotent power of the erotic. Schlaffer says, "Vor allem Gleim, Haupt und Organisator der anakreontischen Schule im 18. Jahrhundert, spielte dabei die Rolle eines Vor-Zensors, der seine moralisch-bürgerlichen Vorurteil als literarische Maßstäbe ausgeben konnte." Schlaffer, *Musa iocosa: Gattungspoetik und Gattungsgeschichte der erotischen Dichtung in Deutschland* 229.

<sup>261</sup> I have mentioned Steffen Martus' insight previously concerning the *Möglichkeitssinn* of the joke. Martus frames this insight according to the joke's activation of resemblances and differences: "Der 'Scherz' hat deutliche Affinitäten zum 'Wunderbaren', indem er den Möglichkeitssinn des 'Witzes' mit der 'Neuheit' verbindet. Damit rückt der 'Scherz' die zu vergleichenden Gegenstände zwar weiter auseinander als der

entering into contradiction with orders of plausibility by pushing the limits of the imagination, however, they disorganize their own cultural forms of normalization.

I do not claim that this exercise of disorganization constitutes an essential or defining characteristic of Rococo poetry as such, but rather, a potential attractor in some of its configurations. This poetic attractor is, however, strong enough and frequent enough to merit prolonged investigation. Gleim's *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern* stands as the apotheosis of Anacreontic aesthetics in this regard. The poems that exhibit this attraction to strategies of disorganization harness their own form of pleasure as a perturbational force—just as Breitinger drew upon the fantastic in order to disrupt the stultification and limitation of the mind through habit—but do not bend this form of pleasure to serve the formation of the civically virtuous, economically productive, or theologically pious human subject.

At the same time, it must be stressed that Anacreontic poetry operates wholly on the level of the aesthetic imagination, making no pretension to *actually* producing an Anacreontic subject in reality. Gleim writes in the preface to the second half of *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern*, "Schliesset niemals aus den Schriften der Dichter auf die Sitten derselben. Ihr werdet euch betriegen; denn sie schreiben nur, ihren Witz zu zeigen, und solten sie auch dadurch ihre Tugend in Verdacht setzen."<sup>262</sup> The identity that Gleim adopts as an Anacreontic poet differs from his quotidian and everyday identity. However, if the poet writes merely to display his wit, his definition of *Witz* seems to admit, even relish, the potential conflict with the dictates of virtue. This understanding of wit, as something that *might* operate according to laws other than those of virtue, constitutes neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for wit, but rather, something that Gleim emphasizes as a possibility for his particular aesthetic display. The imagined perturbation of social norms and codes of organization is not for that matter any less real. To effect change in the life of the mind nevertheless introduces novelty in the totality of contexts of being; thoughts, feelings, and affects, although invisible to the eye, do not exist in a space outside of the real.

These particular poems were conceived at a moment in which aesthetics as a discipline was beginning to take hold of the poetic and philosophical imagination. Gleim and Uz were students of Baumgarten in Halle, and Gleim pays ambivalent tribute to him—in a way that spares him the ridicule normally reserved for the philosopher—in his poem "An Herrn Professor A. G. Baumgarten in Frankfurth" in the second volume of *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern*.<sup>263</sup> Gleim, it seems, was continually misplacing and finding Baumgarten's dissertation *De nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus*, and at one point, after having relocated the text, he offered to send it to Uz.<sup>264</sup> Although in this treatise

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'Witz', aber ihre Ähnlichkeit muß gewahrt bleiben—auch das 'Wunderbare' ist ein Mögliches." Martus, *Friedrich von Hagedorn—Konstellationen der Aufklärung* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999) 73.

<sup>262</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 71.

<sup>263</sup> Johann Wilhelm Ludwig Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder*, ed. Alfred Anger (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1964) 94-5.

<sup>264</sup> On May 1, 1745, Gleim writes to Uz: "Ich habe unter den von Halle erhaltenen Sachen die Baumgart.[ensche] Disp.[utation] de nonnullis ad poema pertin.[entibus] mit s.[eligen?] Rudnicks Anmerkungen, wie auch einige von den Briefen, so sie mit ihm gewechselt, wiedergefunden. Soll ich sie überschicken?" Johann Wilhelm Ludwig Gleim, and Johan Peter Uz, *Briefwechsel zwischen Gleim und Uz*, ed. Carl Schüddekopf (Tübingen: Lauff, 1899) 75-6. One year later, in June 1746, Gleim writes: "A propos

Baumgarten uses poetry to develop a science of sensory knowledge, or "επιστημη αισθητικη,"<sup>265</sup> he nevertheless subjects sensory knowledge to the Leibnizian notion of perfectibility, a conception ultimately directed toward the celebration of the divine origin of the world: "Quum enim, tanquam civitatis divinae quotaecunque portiones, obligemur ad talia carminibus consignanda quae virtutem et religionem promovent, factumque illud etiam sit per omnes fere temporum vicissitudines" [For just as we are part of the city of God, however many we happen to be, so are we obligated to attest to such things with songs that promote virtue and religion, just as has been done by all throughout the vicissitudes of the ages].<sup>266</sup>

Georg Friedrich Meier, who popularized Baumgarten's work and corresponded with the poets from Halle, wrote in his *Gedancken von Schertzen* (originally published 1744) that "ein Schertz eine sinnliche Erkenntniß und Vortrag derselben sey."<sup>267</sup> He claims that "die gantze Untersuchung der Regeln zu schertzen, auf die Grundsätze der Aesthetic, gebauet werden müsse."<sup>268</sup> Meier uses Baumgarten's aesthetics to analyze the joke as a literary genre, thereby endowing the joke with an aesthetic exercise value. According to Meier, the perfect joke presupposes the coordination of sensitive cognitive capacities familiar from the rationalist tradition of thought, namely *Witz*, or "[die] Fertigkeit, die Uebereinstimmungen der Dinge auf eine deutliche Art zu erkennen"<sup>269</sup> and *Scharfsinnigkeit*, or "die Fertigkeit, die Verschiedenheiten oder den Unterschied der Dinge zu erkennen."<sup>270</sup> Jokes engage the capacity to differentiate and relate, thereby activating the sensitive faculties of readers. Although Meier submits the aesthetic exercise of the joke to the doctrine of perfectibility of the human senses, remaining ultimately a metaphysician and a rationalist, he nevertheless sees the joke as a form of infinite activity, an oscillation between identity and difference that never ends: "Der Schertz muß ein kurtzer Inbegriff vieler Vergleichungsstücke seyn. Er muß so zu reden einem Abgrunde ähnlich seyn, in welchem man immer mehr und mehr erblickt, je länger man in denselben hineinsieht."<sup>271</sup>

The joke opens an abyss that initiates an endless play of similarities and differences. Meier does not seem to have lingered on the ramifications of his own insight, choosing instead to reintegrate the joke into the perfectibility of the human being, thereby nullifying its counterfactual attractivity. For the most part, Anacreontic poets such as Gleim and Uz do not base their poetic practices on the doctrines of Meier or

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habe ich ihnen Baumgart.[ens] Disp.[utation] de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus schon geschickt? Ich weiß wahrhaftig nicht, wie ich daran bin. Sie hat sich gefunden, aber ich weiß nicht, ob sie sie schon wieder haben. Wenn sie es mir nicht schreiben, so muß ich alle meine Papiere durchsuchen." Gleim, *Briefwechsel zwischen Gleim und Uz* 120-1. Gleim and Uz clearly developed ideas in reference to this text, although I have found little evidence that would make explicit the precise relation between Baumgarten and their poetic production at the time.

<sup>265</sup> Baumgarten, *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus* 86.

<sup>266</sup> Baumgarten, *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus* 46.

<sup>267</sup> Georg Friedrich Meier, *Gedancken von Schertzen* (Halle: Carl Hermann Hemmerde, 1754) 24. For the relation between Meier, Baumgarten, and the "Zweiter Hallescher Dichterkreis," see H.-J. Kertscher, *Anakreontik. Zweiter Hallescher Dichterkreis. Gleim, Götz, Rudnick, Uz* (Halle: Hallescher, 1993) 8-9.

<sup>268</sup> Meier, *Gedancken von Schertzen* 26.

<sup>269</sup> Meier, *Gedancken von Schertzen* 49.

<sup>270</sup> Meier, *Gedancken von Schertzen* 51.

<sup>271</sup> Meier, *Gedancken von Schertzen* 103.

Baumgarten.<sup>272</sup> And yet, Meier's interpretation of the joke as an aesthetic form that stimulates a cognitive interplay of identifications and differences does describe part of what makes possible the aesthetic exercise value of Gleim's Anacreontic poems. Gleim's poetry does initiate a play with sensuality, albeit generating pleasure in the senses' capacity to confuse, subvert codes, and generate alterity rather than redirecting sensory knowledge toward the hidden operation of a transcendent order—in other words, by intensifying and foregrounding the moment of *difference* or *novelty* between his poetic practices and the way his own culture organizes phenomena and dictates norms. Steffen Martus, in his book on Friedrich von Hagedorn, notes: "Der 'Scherz' hat deutliche Affinitäten zum 'Wunderbaren', indem er den Möglichkeitssinn des 'Witzes' mit der 'Neuheit' verbindet."<sup>273</sup> He expresses this thought almost as an aside, but it is a centrally important one in order to comprehend the relevance of the particular aesthetic exercise of Anacreontic poetry.

It may appear in hindsight that German literature did not develop aesthetic practices that would realize the potential of Breitinger's conception of the fantastic until far later, namely in the works of Romanticism.<sup>274</sup> And to be sure, Breitinger had intended to construe the fantastic as a practice underlying and generating great works of sublime grandeur, works such as Milton's *Paradise Lost*. And yet, even while Breitinger was writing, there existed poetic practices and products that were drawing upon the very power that lay at the origin of the fantastic, namely in the intensified disjunction between representations generated in art (*Vorstellungen*) and patterns of cultural intelligibility and normativity (*unsere gewöhnliche Begriffe*). Such works were there in plain sight, for everyone to see—not in the lofty products of the sublime imagination, but in the diminutive and seemingly insignificant form of the joke.

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<sup>272</sup> For a more thorough analysis of the relation between "Witz" and "Scherz," as well as a discussion of Meier's relation to the *Anakreontiker* from Halle, see Christoph Perels, *Studien zur Aufnahme und Kritik der Rokokolyrik zwischen 1740 und 1760* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rubrecht, 1974) 169-72.

<sup>273</sup> Steffen Martus, *Friedrich von Hagedorn—Konstellationen der Aufklärung* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999) 73.

<sup>274</sup> See, for example, Hans Peter Herrmann, *Naturnachahmung und Einbildungskraft* 275.

## Chapter 2: The Depth of the Surface and Anacreontic Reflexivity

### 1. Unbounded Play

In order to bring to light the movement of transcendental desaturation in Rococo poetry in the eighteenth century, it is perhaps instructive to examine the contrast between works that imbue their own poetic acts with the residue of the world of the beyond and those that divest the world of its anchor in transcendental schemas of organization. Perhaps nowhere can one better observe such a shift from transcendental resonance to poetic immanence than in the attempt to formulate poetic activity through the category of play.<sup>275</sup>

The concept of play, in its everyday usage, implies a delimitation: here, one is playing, there, where play ends, the business of real life begins. Play, then, does not refer merely to unbridled imaginative or sensuous activity, the pleasure of freedom and the freedom of pleasure. The very category of play seems to produce something like an ontological difference: it would seem that play must be bounded, set apart from another realm that is *not* play, in order for it to exist *as* play. Since at least the seventeenth century, however, the notion of unbounded play, or a form of play that refuses to differentiate itself from other contexts of existence, attains an increased cultural relevance.

In the mid-eighteenth century, a period in which one may observe the blossoming of the Anacreontic song as a poetic form in German speaking countries, an unbounded form of play manifests itself that is adamant in its absolute refusal of seriousness and of transcendence. Although Rococo and Anacreontic poetry was composed well into the nineteenth century and beyond, the collective development and popularity of this style as a culturally relevant form begins with Hagedorn and effectively ends with the *Sturm und Drang*. When Herder uses poetry to manifest and foment a specific national character and Goethe relegates Anacreon and Theocritus to lesser sources of inspiration by making Pindar the new muse of genius in "Wandrer's Sturmlied," the death knell of Anacreontic poetry and the Rococo style has been sounded.

One might be tempted to regard the Rococo form of aestheticizing activity—one that often seems to construe its own conceptions of poetic play as an integral part of life itself—as a predecessor to philosophies of aesthetic autonomy and to the aesthetics of German Romanticism. Both Rococo and Romanticism do share a common disdain of Enlightenment didacticism and a refusal to reduce poetry to its social-functional utility. However, Rococo and Anacreontic play must be differentiated from the form of

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<sup>275</sup> Jörg Neuenfeld has written a cultural history of play since Kant, although he does not examine the Anacreontic conception of play. Unlike culturally productive forms of play or forms of play that become subordinated to a framework of philosophical intelligibility, Anacreontic play does not claim to "produce" or reproduce the values of the society or forms of human life considered as normatively binding in the eighteenth century. Compare Jörg Neuenfeld, *Alles ist Spiel. Zur Geschichte der Auseinandersetzung mit einer Utopie der Moderne* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005).

aesthetically autonomous play of Romanticism. To be sure, like Schlegel's concept of "progressive Universalpoesie,"<sup>276</sup> Anacreontic play foregrounds itself *as* play, often universalizing itself across all contexts of life—at least from within its own poetic idiom—such that it does not seek to demarcate itself from a realm of non-play. The eighteenth-century Anacreontic style permits, even encourages, the erasure of an aesthetic ontological difference—the undoing of the demarcation: "here is play, there is life"—in its own poetic activity. However, unlike Romanticism, this erasure never becomes a total principle of life—remaining unbound only within the bounds of its imaginative game—nor does it ever become tethered to some higher purpose or philosophical interpretation of being in the world.

Moreover, Anacreontic or Rococo play, as poetry written by mostly bourgeois authors for a mostly bourgeois audience, never manages to incorporate itself into a total practice of life such as the Romantic poets intended to achieve. Schlegel's explicit goal was to render life itself poetic, "das Leben und die Gesellschaft poetisch machen."<sup>277</sup> The force of Rococo and Anacreontic poetry lies less in its attempt to poeticize life than in its perturbation and disruption of given patterns of life. It never attempts to become these very patterns, at least not in any other context than role-playing or self-stylization in epistolary correspondence.<sup>278</sup> The Anacreontic poets of in Halle were functionaries and pastors, and their poetry is forever at odds with the prose of their quotidian lives. Gleim writes in a letter to Uz, "Ich soll abermahl Secretair werden, und zwar bey dem alten Fürsten von Deßau. Ich soll morgen bereits abgehen, mich ihm zu zeigen, und zu versuchen, ob ich ihm gefallen werde. Wenn ich ihm vorkommen werde, wie eine anakreontische Ode, so werde ich gewiß den Abschied kriegen."<sup>279</sup> The Anacreontic ode therefore appears not as a universalizing form of activity, but rather, as one that distinguishes itself by its incompatibility with bureaucratic, economic, and bourgeois contexts of life. Gleim's Anacreontic poetry exerts a counterfactual force, breathing vitality into those whose daily lives appear incapable of generating the joyous affirmation of life that comes with the burden of civic and economic duty: "Die männlichen Jahre, bringen Sorgen, und Amtspflichten, und dem Alter fehlt es an Munterkeit und Feuer. Man muß in der Jugend Lieder dichten, und sie im Alter singen."<sup>280</sup>

If Gleim posits a tension between bourgeois (or more accurately: bureaucratic) duties and Anacreontic play, Romanticism would explore precisely this tension, albeit using the fantastic as its oppositional sphere to the bourgeois world. E.T.A. Hoffmann, for example, explores the boundaries between these two realms in many of his narratives—for example in *Der goldene Topf* and "Der Sandman"—and hypothesizes

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<sup>276</sup> Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, ed. Ernst Behler, vol. 2 (Munich: Schöningh, 1979) 182.

<sup>277</sup> Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* 182.

<sup>278</sup> There has been increased critical interest in the cross-dressing and role-playing in the *Gleimkreis*, see, for example, Simon Richter, "The Ins and Outs of Intimacy: Gender, Epistolary Culture, and the Public Sphere," *German Quarterly* 69 (1996). However, W. Daniel Wilson has recently cautioned against seeing in the epistolary correspondence anything but an elaborate imaginative game, see Daniel W. Wilson, "But is it Gay? Kissing, Friendship, and 'Pre-Homosexual' Discourses in Eighteenth-Century Germany," *Modern Language Review* 103.3 (2008).

<sup>279</sup> Gleim, *Briefwechsel zwischen Gleim und Uz* 74.

<sup>280</sup> Gleim, *Briefwechsel zwischen Gleim und Uz* 134.

about what an erasure or destabilization of such boundaries would entail. The Anacreontic code of pleasure represents an aesthetic modality that rivals the fantastic in its attempt to submit all areas of life to an imaginative overturning of zones of comfort. At the same time, essential differences remain in place; if Novalis seeks to continually overturn orders of representation and create permeability between homogeneous realms in a heterogeneous cosmos, Gleim appears more interested in maintaining the fundamental incompatibility of his own poetic activity and the world in which he lives, holding the disjunction open rather than oscillating between shifting orders of representation.

In the late eighteenth century, at the cusp of Romanticism, one may observe an anxiety concerning the limits of play, or rather, play as an aesthetic and anthropological category that presupposes and demarcates its own boundaries. This anxiety is especially clear in the wake of Kantian aesthetics, or in the attempt to find some manner of constructing a human subject that would be fully capable of being both a moral agent and a sensuous being. For Schiller, in his *Aesthetische Briefe*, two central human drives, the sensual drive and the form drive, which correspond respectively to the drive to be receptive to sensually given matter and the drive to actively form this matter, become reconciled through the play drive. Play reconciles the contingency and pleasure of sensuous perception with the necessity and morality of the autonomous human that gives itself the moral law. It is only through playing that the human being reconciles the contradictory drives of duty and inclination, contingency and necessity, sensuality and rationality, and becomes a total human being: "der Mensch spielt nur, wo er in voller Bedeutung des Worts Mensch ist, und *er ist nur da ganz Mensch, wo er spielt*."<sup>281</sup> To play, then, for Schiller, carves out a space in which sensual and moral imperatives harmonize. Schiller moralizes aesthetic practices and aestheticizes moral practices, using play to make the given reality of appearances compatible with the universal and immutable laws of reason. The purpose of the play drive appears to transcendently saturate its own activity through the harmonizing of two contradictory modes of being: "die Zeit *in der Zeit* aufzuheben, Werden mit absolutem Seyn, Veränderung mit Identität zu vereinbaren."<sup>282</sup> Play frames a project of transcendental askesis, a training of the human being that constructs this being in its relation to an eternal and timeless realm. In play, one frees oneself from time in time and reconciles the world of changing appearances with the eternal moral law.

However, Schiller, in the *Aesthetische Briefe*, uses play not merely to characterize the harmonization of inclination and duty through the freedom of imagination in aesthetic cognition, but also to demarcate the aesthetic realm from the ontology of everyday life. He notes, "daß der Dichter... aus seinen Grenzen tritt, wenn er seinem Werke Existenz beylegt, und wenn er eine bestimmte Existenz damit bezweckt."<sup>283</sup> For Schiller, play does not extend across all contexts of existence. Moreover, unlike Rococo poetry, play appears not at work *in* the aesthetic work itself as part of its formal structure, but merely as a drive that is excited in the reception of the work. The purely cognitive activation of the

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<sup>281</sup> Friedrich Schiller, *Schillers Werke*, Nationalausgabe, ed. Benno von Wiese, vol. 20.1 (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1962) 359.

<sup>282</sup> Schiller, *Schillers Werke* 353.

<sup>283</sup> Schiller, *Schillers Werke* 401.

play drive remains fundamentally incompatible with existence itself, a preparatory work of formation that readies the human being for concrete reality without actually constituting concrete reality as such. For Schiller, the anxiety around play becomes paradoxically articulated: the play drive draws boundaries in the very act of suspending them.

Even the authors that call into question the boundary between the imaginary and the real appear nevertheless to integrate aesthetic play into a higher-order seriousness. In 1804, Jean Paul writes, "Jedes Spiel ist eine Nachahmung des Ernstes, jedes Träumen setzt nicht nur ein vergangenes Wachen, auch ein künftiges voraus. Der Grund wie der Zweck eines Spiels ist keines; um Ernst, nicht um Spiel wird gespielt. Jedes Spiel ist bloß die sanfte Dämmerung, die von einem überwundenen Ernst zu seinem höhern führt."<sup>284</sup> Although one may question Jean Paul's own sincerity in this statement, it is nevertheless a legitimate and common maneuver in the early nineteenth century to use play to fulfill a higher purpose. Jean Paul specifically underscores the state of waking after the dream as the fulfillment of the dream itself; art is that liminal or transitional state from one stage of life to a higher one. Even Schlegel, who regarded the aestheticization of life as an absolute postulate, mobilizes aesthetic play as the endless quest for an unattainable transcendence, which, although never fulfilled and never able to be fulfilled, sustains the creative production of new imaginative ventures. Such, indeed, is Schlegel's definition of irony: "In ihr soll alles Scherz und alles Ernst sein, alles treuherzig offen, und alles tief verstellt.... Sie enthält und erregt ein Gefühl von dem unauflöselichen Widerstreit des Bedingten und Unbedingten."<sup>285</sup> For Schlegel, irony is *transcendental*; it refers continually to the absolute, its existence nourishes itself from the oscillation between the positing of a higher purpose and the repeated annihilation of this higher purpose. Irony has achieved its effect when language transfigures its own form and becomes infinite, triggering movements of continual progression and regression, creation and annihilation, tension and release.

Although one can find evidence for a concept of unbounded play in Anacreontic poetry, its signifying structure differs dramatically from the conceptions of unbounded play at work in Romanticism as well as an unbounded conception of play, yet to be examined, that was available in the seventeenth-century Baroque *Trauerspiel*. The difference may be articulated as follows: Anacreontic poetry displays a tendency toward *detranscendentalizing* play. Such play differs from both early modern conceptions of play and Romantic conceptions of play not merely in its explicit refusal of transcendence, but in its active combat against regimes that attempt to link immanence to transcendence. The world is flattened out, all anchoring or organizing discourses are stripped of their power: everything hovers, "alles schwebt."<sup>286</sup> The very lightness of Anacreontic verse pushes it toward a radical transcendental detachment without ever unfolding the potentially nihilistic ramifications of a world unchained from its horizons.

That such a concept of play could be mobilized in order to relativize human existence and stress its inherent nothingness can be seen already in the seventeenth

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<sup>284</sup> Jean Paul Richter, *Werke*, ed. Norbert Miller, vol. 5 (Munich: Hanser, 1987) 444.

<sup>285</sup> Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* 160.

<sup>286</sup> The saying has been attributed to Anton Webern, see Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998) 208.

century. Daniel Caspar von Lohenstein, in the dedication of *Sophonisbe*, articulates a conception of play that could be read as a manifesto of the Baroque poetics of the *Trauerspiel*.<sup>287</sup> In the *Trauerspiel*, the play of the cosmos itself becomes a transcendental organizing structure that renders the human being a mere toy, degrading the human to a thing subject to forces beyond its control. "Wer Schertz und Ernst vermischt / und mit der Klugheit spielt / Hat oftermals zu erst den rechten Zweck erzielt. / Ist der Natur ihr Werck nicht selbst ein stetig Spiel?"<sup>288</sup> When Lohenstein speaks of the seriousness of play, it is from the perspective of one who experiences the play of nature as a necessary and inescapable process signaling the nullity of human agency. The seriousness of play should not be mistaken here with Jean Paul's "higher" seriousness or Schlegel's transcendental irony. Play, for the Romantics, presupposes autonomy, both aesthetic autonomy as the independence of art from social utility and human autonomy as the imaginative capacity to produce one's own reality. For Lohenstein, the gravity of play signals precisely the heteronomy of the human subject, its continual capitulation to cosmological forces larger than itself.

In Lohenstein's *Sophonisbe*, play, as a natural force, culminates in the inevitability of mourning, and it is to this extent that his dedication appears to universalize the dynamics of the *Trauerspiel* as a mirror of the transcendent order of the world. In such a cosmos, everything plays with everything else, organizing the world of appearances, and yet, guaranteeing the nothingness of these appearances: "Der wilden Thiere Thun ist nichts nicht als ein Spiel; / Der Wallfisch lasset sich das Meerschwein nicht beschämen / Er spielt / wie dieses stets mit Menschen spielen will."<sup>289</sup> The doubled negation, *nichts nicht als ein Spiel*, a formula that Lohenstein uses frequently, does not merely execute a rhetorical flourish, but emphasizes the nullity of appearances. The play of the play itself, however, multiplies, organizes, and categorizes these appearances as forms of play, leading the differentiation of phenomena back to a schema of self-organization that does not leave room for meaningful human agency. Play, in a sense, exercises the true power of sovereignty: as a cosmic principle, it continually changes form, dictating the rise and fall of states and empires, ultimately illuminating a power against which disobedience is impossible. The air plays with the movement of the stars, the wind plays with waves that in turn plays with ships, animals play with one another—even the *Trauerspiel* becomes part of the inevitable structure of play, displaying its power in the very form of the spectacle: "Das erste Trauerspiel / das ihm [dem Kind] Verdruß erweckt / Hegt das verhaßte Hauß / das man die Schule nennet...."<sup>290</sup> The mourning plays, which were used in schools as tools of education, become examples of the disciplinary structure inherent in the very play of nature from which it is impossible to escape. Watching the play confirms the domination of the order whose mastery it proclaims.

The wonder associated with the coordination of the microcosm with the macrocosm therefore exhausts itself in the nothingness of the play of time: "Für allen

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<sup>287</sup> I would like to thank Niklaus Largier for drawing my attention to the importance of this dedication as a poetological document.

<sup>288</sup> Daniel Caspar von Lohenstein, "Afrikanische Trauerspiele," *Afrikanische Trauerspiele*, ed. Klaus Günther Just (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1957) 245.

<sup>289</sup> Lohenstein, "Afrikanische Trauerspiele," 246.

<sup>290</sup> Lohenstein, "Afrikanische Trauerspiele," 247.

aber ist der Mensch ein Spiel der Zeit. Das Glücke spielt mit ihm / und er mit allen Sachen."<sup>291</sup> Time, as the force to which all appearances are ultimately subject, stands in for absolute power. To step out of time through death in fact signals a capitulation to the laws of temporality rather than an escape from them. Lohenstein uses his own play—the play of the play—to examine the macrocosmic domination of nature, which recursively governs his own aesthetic activity. The play launches the spectators into the transcendent operation of time, itself characterized as the mere play of nature, in turn imbuing human existence with the arbitrariness of its own whimsicality. Just as humans play with objects, so too does nature play with humans; all of nature becomes synonymous with play as the texture and fabric from which the human being is woven. The play of nature plunges the world of appearances into impermanence and reveals every culture as in some sense relative and in another sense necessary: just as the Roman empire rises and falls, so must every regime of worldly governance grow and decay, eternally supplanted by another regime that follows this same pattern.

Although Romantic play and Baroque play, as expressed respectively by Schlegel's depiction of irony and Lohenstein's poetics of the *Trauerspiel*, appear diametrically opposed on one level, they cohere in what one might term their level of transcendental saturation. For both, play does not merely refer to the immanence of its own poetic activity, but points beyond itself either to the very structure of the logic governing appearances as such (Lohenstein) or to the structure of the human mind and its infinite attempt to imaginatively express the inexpressible (Schlegel). Lohenstein's play of transcendent nature, displaying and exercising its claim to universal domination, proclaims the ultimate nothingness of the sphere of the human. Schlegel uses the play of aesthetic experience in order to push the human being into an eternal process of self-overcoming. And although both develop unbounded concepts of play, they share with Schiller's aesthetic education the attempt to attach the very phenomenality of play to an operation indexing a beyond to the mere givenness of human sensual experience. Like both its Baroque and Romantic counterparts, and unlike Schiller's aesthetic education, Anacreontic play is unbounded, that is, it makes its way through the totality of appearances from within its own rhetorical space. The singularity of Anacreontic play in its most radical manifestations consists in the fact that, unlike each of the other paradigms of play, it divests itself of the very attraction to transcendence.

In a poem by Willamov entitled "Der menschliche Lebenslauf,"<sup>292</sup> play is universalized but not integrated into a higher-order schema of seriousness or transcendence. The poet reduces the course of human existence to its most basic elements. Play appears not, as it was for Lohenstein, the hidden mechanism of nature in which variegated and differentiated phenomena interact with and play with one another, a latent structure of self-organization, ultimately subjecting human activity to its impenetrable and capricious whims. It does not link the human being to the depth of its own nature, it does not push the human being toward an unattainable goal, nor does it attune the human being to its social calling or moral obligations. As a purely rhetorical gesture, Anacreontic play, as manifest in this poem, flattens out all human experience,

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<sup>291</sup> Lohenstein, "Afrikanische Trauerspiele," 246.

<sup>292</sup> Johann Gottfried Willamov, 1736-1777, was known in his time as the "German Pindar" because of his renewal of the Ode. See Rudolf Schreck, "Johann Gottlieb Willamov," (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1913).

reducing the actions of social figures associated with *gravitas*—the hero, the politician, and the poet—to the play of children:

Der menschliche Lebenslauf

Das Mädchen spielt mit Puppen  
Und putzt und spiegelt sich;  
Der Knabe spielt mit Trommeln  
Und Stöcken ritterlich.

Der Jüngling spielt mit Mädchen  
Und spielt auch mit dem Buch;  
Die Schöne spielt am Nachttisch  
Und spielet mit Besuch.

Mit seiner lieben Gattin  
Spielt auch der Ehemann,  
Wenn anders das Geschicke  
Es ihm gewähren kann.

Der Held spielt mit den Köpfen,  
Die Mars ihm anvertraut;  
Der Staatsmann mit Projekten  
Die er auf Hoffnung baut.

Der Dichter spielt mit Reimen;  
Und so spielt jedermann,  
Bis er gestört vom Tode,  
Nicht weiter spielen kann.<sup>293</sup>

The iambic trimeter with alternating feminine and masculine endings provides the rhythmic framework—as if the poem were a mere children's rhyme—in which an astonishing variety of serious human activities will be pulled into the orbit of play. Education, sexuality, war, heroism, state administration, and poetry itself are drawn into a system of equivalences. The central linguistic operation at work in the poem consists in stripping these forms of existence of their weight and depth, thereby making human endeavor appear not futile, but inconsequential. The inconsequentiality of human activity depends not upon the differentiation and hierarchization of social roles, but on the contrary, on the reduction of all spheres of life to the same basic notion of play. Play actualizes itself in this poem through a form of repetition—phonemic, semantic and rhythmic—that refuses to link violence, poetry, and political administration to any teleology surpassing that of children's games.

The structure of the poem establishes a reflexive isomorphism in the concept of play, the general emblem of which is the mirror with which the poem begins. The little

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<sup>293</sup> Johann Gottlieb Willamov, *Sämmtliche poetische Schriften*, vol. 2 (Vienna: Schraemel, 1794) 100-1.

girl looks in the mirror, she "spiegelt sich," and this gesture works its way into the organization of the poem itself, as at every stage of life, the form of the girl or the boy will embody the mirror image of the previous manifestation. If everything resonates, perhaps the most significant resonance reveals itself in sound. For the sonic concordance of "spiegeln" and "spielen" continues throughout the poem, as mirroring and playing become conjoined together. The female and male subjects appear as part of a larger poetic game of mirroring inversions made visible by the alternating subjects from strophe to strophe. The feminine element, however, is gradually supplanted by figures of masculinity, the last of which appears as death itself: "young girl/young boy," "boy/girl," "wife/husband" (this stanza technically only concerns the husband), "hero/politician," "poet/death." The image of the mirror, an image that incarnates the very structure of the poem itself, catches the stages of life as if they were caught up in a series of reflections. The process of reflection in the Rococo poem, however, does not point to any reality beyond itself, but more intensively to its own rhetorical game. Words become caught in the play of mirrors, in their own patterns of appearing, with each image, each strophe reflecting the last, reproducing and repeating a previous pattern rather than creating a new reality or referring to another level of reality.

However, the first two strophes mirror one another not by reproducing an identical structure, but by reversing this structure, by changing, as if in a row dance, the partners with which one plays. The play of the poem, however, does organize phenomena according to a logic of development that appears rooted only in caricatures of gender roles. The young girl that begins the poem appears fascinated by herself. However, the vanity of the little girl is not negatively inflected, as it conditions her own existence as an erotic object both for herself and for others. The girl who plays with dolls and mirrors will later play at sexual games at her "night-table," and she will play with her husband.

The attraction of the Rococo poem reproduces itself in a dynamic that could be properly termed autoerotic. The sexual game is connected to the literary act itself; the "boy" plays with "girls" and "books" (*Der Jüngling spielt mit Mädchen / Und spielt auch mit dem Buch*). Playing with books, especially for a boy who has just been playing with girls, resonates with the eighteenth-century preoccupation with reading and masturbation.<sup>294</sup> The reader, too, after all, plays with a book in the act of reading, drawn into the mirror of the text as part of the course of life, *Der menschliche Lebenslauf*, that the text itself describes.

In this mirror of erotic attraction, the suppressed presence of death and violence nevertheless surfaces as an ineliminable part of human life. And yet, as the most profound and most potentially traumatizing elements of existence, they have become stripped of their consequentiality, of their trauma, by becoming a subject of play. The little boy who plays with sticks and drums as a child will later play with the morbid fruits of warfare, the human heads granted to him by the god of war. The poem describes the

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<sup>294</sup> In one report by J. Oest and J. H. Campe, "Vollständiges System zur Verhütung der Selbstschwächung" (1787), reading becomes a temptation to masturbation. The authors suggest carefully choosing which books children should read: "Man wähle mit äußerster Sorgfalt die wenigen Bücher, welche Kindern in die Hände gegeben werden dürfen..." J. and J. H. Campe Oest, "Vollständiges System zur Verhütung der Selbstschwächung," *Schwarze Pädagogik*, ed. Katharina Rutschkey (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein, 1787) 314. Some of the most dangerous literature in this respect comprises, "Alle Poesien und prosaische Schriften, deren Gegenstand Liebe ist..." (314).

action of the hero, as a play with the heads of his enemies, in much the same way that it describes the girl playing with her puppets. Later in the eighteenth century, Schiller was scandalized by the notion that human life could be the object of a game. Anacreontic poetry desacralizes life itself, equating death not with pain or sin, but with an abrupt end to the game. For play does not describe, as it did for Lohenstein, the process by which life becomes subject to a law beyond human control. In Lohenstein's *Trauerspiel*, death provides yet another piece of evidence of nature's indifferent game with humans, and as such indexes the transcendent. In the context of the Anacreontic poem, however, because play is equated with life itself, death appears not as a part of the structure of play, but its other and its disruption—*so spielt jedermann, / Bis er gestört vom Tode, / Nicht weiter spielen kann*. It even breaks the pattern of the poem up until that point; death is the only subject that appears as a passive agent. Death itself does not play, it disrupts play; it indexes nothing but the cessation of the immanence of the game.

The semantic game continues in the play with fate, "das Gesckicke." Fate expresses the force that calls human beings to their destiny whether or not they have chosen it. In Hölderlin's "Hyperions Schicksalslied," the gods have no fate, they are "schicksalslos," as "die seeligen Augen / Bliken in stiller / Ewiger Klarheit" (MA I.745). For Hölderlin, human beings, who can never have a total view of the world and are therefore blind to the course of history, are those beings that, as subject to fate, are thrown "ins Ungewisse" (MA I.745). If fate designates an inaccessible reality to which human beings are blind in everyday life, Hölderlin's poetry saturates the poetic space with the self-organization of nature, placing a burden onto the poet as one who might or might not bear witness to this latent order through poetic language. In the Rococo poem, however, the concept of fate loses its attractive hold over the human imagination. In the case of "Der menschliche Lebenslauf," fate is downgraded to its "basic" definition, a definition summarized by Adelung as follows: "ein anhaltendes oder wiederholtes Schicken, im gemeinen Leben; von schicken, *mittere*."<sup>295</sup> In the eighteenth century, *das Gesckicke* is overwhelmingly used as a reference to fate, the overall plan of the cosmos that sends signals of its design to the human being as a reminder of their finitude and of their calling in the transcendent order. Here, it is quite simply the pretext for an erotic encounter, and the very figure of the beyond is folded into the immanence of sexual desire: "Mit seiner lieben Gattin / Spielt auch der Ehemann, / Wenn anders das Gesckicke / Es ihm gewähren kann."

If the course of human life ought to follow a progression, what becomes known later in the eighteenth century as *Bildung*, the Anacreontic poem revels in stasis, repetition, or even regression rather than organic unfolding. Its effectiveness depends upon a refusal of the very concept of maturation. The child in the Rococo poem often appears neither as image of an innocent, lost world, nor does it seek appear as a victim for its potential infractions against the norms of the world of adults:

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<sup>295</sup> Johann Christoph Adelung, *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der hochdeutschen Mundart*, vol. 2 (Vienna: Bauer, 1811) 607.

## Das Kind

Als mich die Mama  
Hänschen küssen sah,  
Strafte sie mich ab.  
Doch sie lachte ja,  
Als ihr der Papa  
Heut' ein Mäulchen gab.

Warum lehrt sie mich:  
Mädchen! mach's wie ich?  
Sieh, was andre sind.  
Nun ich solches thu'  
Schmäht sie noch dazu:  
Ach ich armes Kind!

Schwestern! sagt mir's fein:  
Ist mir, weil ich klein,  
Noch kein Kuß vergönnt?  
Seht! Ich wachse schon,  
Seit des Nachbars Sohn  
Mich sein Schätzchen nennt.<sup>296</sup>

The title of the poem is "Das Kind." Who is the subject of the poem? If it refers to the speaker, this "child" is already pregnant, telling her "Schwestern," a term often used to refer to female readership, "Seht! Ich wachse schon / Seit des Nachbars Sohn / Mich sein Schätzchen nennt." The title, "Das Kind," refers therefore just as much to the child to come, the baby in the womb of the speaker, as it does to the speaker of the poem herself. The speaker appears both as child and adult, as daughter and mother. At the same time, the child does not understand the significance of the punishment that would signify her acceptance of the law of the family, the mark of her passage from childhood to maturity. The mother punishes the child for kissing Hänschen while at the same time demanding that the child take her, a woman who kisses the child's father, as a model. The poem, hardly one that could be functioning mimetically, itself invokes the law of mimesis in order to undermine the authority of the mother: the speaker is punished because she imitates her maternal model, and she uses the model of imitation to question the punishment. The speaker, actually poised in a transitional state between childhood and adulthood, exists in a non-disciplinary space: the mother has not yet imposed her law, a law that undermines itself by the very logic of emulation through which the mother establishes her authority. The crux of the poem appears to lie in the problem of exemplarity: such is not merely the subject matter, but also the performance of the poem. The speaker appears either impossibly ignorant or cunningly naïve; in any case, she herself cannot function as an exemplar. The reader does not even know if the "Hänschen" of the first strophe is identical to the "neighbor's son" of the last strophe, implying the

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<sup>296</sup> Friedrich von Hagedorn, *Oden und Lieder in fünf Büchern* (Hamburg: Johann Carl Bohn, 1747) 91.

possibility of a speaker with multiple sexual partners. The poem, however, never once implies that the child represents a "negative" example, refusing to comment on its own divergence from disciplinary normativity. The child remains in a state in which the family structure has not yet produced its desired subject, unwittingly forming a counter model to this very structure. So too in Willamov's poem does the language of the child overtake all exemplary forms of life, attracting the heroism of the warrior and the skill of the politician into its own domain and modes of perception.

The culmination of Willamov's poem results in a reflection on its own activity, in the act of poetry in which playing and mirroring become ontologically identical: "Der Dichter spielt mit Reimen." The poet as subject or creator plays and writes that the poet plays and writes. All of the verses are grounded in this moment of self-reflexive folding: "sich spiegeln" becomes "sich spielen." Although the move performs the *mise-en-abyme* gesture of comic and ironic self-reflexivity, the poetic activity does not remain in a state of containment through only referring to itself, but spreads into other domains of life, most notably, those two roles that were seen as responsible for the fate of the nation: the national hero and the political administrator. Moreover, although death signifies a rupture in play—a moment of transcendence that threatens to explode the game as a game—the poem itself nevertheless robs death of its power to diminish the poet's own playful interpretation of human endeavor, since the poem performs and confirms its own metapoetic statement and its belonging to the realm of life: *der Dichter spielt mit Reimen*. The poetic voice has not yet been "disturbed" by death. Even poetry, to a certain extent, overcomes death as an intrusion of the beyond into human affairs—but not through a gesture of immortalization, but in its own sensuous activity. It succeeds in playing with the very phenomenon that would otherwise put an end to its own game.

Play refashions the human life, "der menschliche Lebenslauf," not by locating play as the ground of being, but by reflecting on the very absurdity of the reduction of life to play. The *Lebenslauf* in the eighteenth century was a written narrative of life. The emphasis on play cannot therefore be taken literally as a normative injunction to change one's life to bring it into line with narrative of the poem. Rather, the normative content of the poem disappears and is supplanted by a perturbation of the imagination of the reader: the universalization of play jostles against the everyday notion of the way life *ought* to be (*der menschliche Lebenslauf*), thereby emptying out its own utility as a source of normative legitimacy or as an accurate description of life. Such Anacreontic verse does not cease to demean—in the sense of making something less, and not more, meaningful—the human condition, and it is from the act of demeaning that emanates its attractive power.

## **2. Transcendentalizing the Senses: Brockes' *Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott***

I have been referring thus far to the "Anacreontic poem" and the "Rococo poem" in a general sense. This designation is purely heuristic, and to a certain extent problematic. The poets of the eighteenth century were not necessarily conscious of writing in a style that later epochs designated—in a pejorative sense, no less—"Rococo."

Furthermore, poets who at certain times wrote in the Rococo style, at other times composed dithyrambs, moralistic songs, religious poetry, or war poetry. One should not expect from the Rococo style a coherent program such as one finds in the *Sturm und Drang* or Romanticism, but rather, attractions and tendencies that operate within specific generic forms. And yet, as I stated previously, it is not my intention to attempt to demarcate the characteristics of the Rococo or Anacreontic style, and even less to evaluate whether or not it coheres with the tenets of the Enlightenment or anticipates forms of aesthetic autonomy in the later eighteenth century.

I am attempting to sketch the contours of a phenomenon that emerges contemporaneously with the development of aesthetics as a discipline. Aesthetics, as inaugurated by Baumgarten, does not merely reevaluate the importance of sensual knowledge for the domain of epistemology, but suggests how art, as a set of practices, can produce a certain type of human being by activating specific cognitive capacities. The aesthetic sphere itself introduces a certain degree of contingency in how this human being is formed, as it is modeled on finite and fallible cognitive functions rather than geometrical and mathematical certainty. The ability to train such cognitive acts, to alter methods of associating phenomena, of binding and loosening, remembering and forgetting, opens up a space wherein art may produce human beings that do *not* cohere, at least in their imaginative lives, with a culture's predominant patterns of subject formation—in schools, religious institutions, economic relations, political and administrative structures, and family life, to name a few such contexts that attempt to normalize cognitive and behavioral patterns.

The specific form of art that I am examining, a form that appears predominantly in Rococo and Anacreontic texts, I have called detranscendentalizing art. Once the aesthete has opened practices of life to the contingency of sense experience, he or she stands at a crossroads: does the aesthete lead the world of sensory experience and its contingent forms into the embrace of the divine or the comfort of geometrical and mathematical certainty, lead it upwards, so to speak, toward the realm of ideas, ideals, and perfectible forms—or does the aesthete tarry with the world of the senses, refuse to channel it into higher sphere, refuse to make it cohere with the dictates of utility? In the eighteenth century, certain poets and poems make the movement in one direction, others in the other, and hybrid forms are everywhere visible. Aesthetic activity that advances a claim to art and refuses to let its own activity be integrated into a higher purpose other than a maintenance of its own pleasure—even Moritz's and Kant's philosophy of aesthetic autonomy fails this criterion, since autonomy itself *becomes* the higher purpose—such is the phenomenon that is under investigation in the Anacreontic poetry presented here.

Outside of the Rococo or Anacreontic mode in the eighteenth century, however, language and sensuality tended to be transcendentalized, that is, used as sounding devices for the presence—or absence—of the transcendent, of the divine, of that which operates beyond the immanence of sensuality as such. Such an aesthetic technique was refined in the early eighteenth century and arguably constituted the dominant aesthetic ideology in lyric poetry for centuries thereafter, binding together poets such as Hölderlin, Novalis, Rilke, Benn, and Celan, among others.

As one of the first coherent and systematic attempts to transcendentalize the domain of pure sense experience stands Barthold Heinrich Brockes' *Irdisches Vergnügen*

in *Gott*. Gervinus claimed that "Brockes *emancipirte die Sinne*; dies ist sein großes Verdienst, ohne das in Deutschland nie eine Poesie werden konnte."<sup>297</sup> In a relative sense, this verdict may be true; however, Brockes did not so much *emancipate* the senses as much as *bind* them to the operations of a mind seeking the immanence of the transcendent. This collection of poems, appearing in multiple volumes from 1721 to 1748, uses poetry to link perception, empirical inquiry, and immediate affect to a metaphysical realm beyond human experience. The very title of the collection indicates the synthesis of two potentially disparate domains—at least disparate in a certain strand of Christian thought since St. Augustine—namely that of the earthly and that of the divine. Brockes' text establishes a paradigm of poetic activity that, just as Baumgarten was attempting to rethink the possibilities of human experience in relationship to the knowledge generated by the senses, links this aesthetic realm to the presence of the divine beyond the senses. The linking of the sensual to the transcendent infuses the immanence of human experience with the redemptive presence of the beyond, tethering not merely microcosm to macrocosm, but the realm of the senses to the realm of divine order.

Brockes' project thematizes itself as a rehabilitation of the earthly and the sensual that translates the religious concept of epiphany into physiological and aesthetic processes of transformation. Pleasure becomes channeled into an awareness of divine presence by formulating its own poetics as stimulation. One of his poems is entitled "Die uns zur Andacht reizende Vergnügung des Gehörs im Frühlinge, in einem Sing-Gedichte."<sup>298</sup> When the poem begins "Alles redet itzt und singet, / Alles tönet und erklinget, / Gott von Deiner Wunder-Macht!"<sup>299</sup> it includes within the "everything" that speaks and sings its own utterance. It functions as an example for its own proposition, and bears witness to its own validity. Not only do these lines link the world of appearances to the divine order, but they embed their own poetic utterance in the world of appearances as well, establishing and performing a binding procedure—from microscopic poetic utterance to the macrocosmic view of all things, from the world of earthly appearances to the presence of the transcendent God.

The "Einleitung" to Brockes' fourth volume of *Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott* (1731) understands the poetic stimulation of the senses as a gateway into the transcendent realm. It may be read as a poetic predecessor to Baumgarten's *Aesthetica*, a poetological and programmatic attempt to evaluate the specific claims and functions of sense perception. Brockes, as well as Baumgarten, endows the immersion in the world of the senses with a heightened exercise value, as the senses bring the human subject outside of its limited environment and provide compelling experiential and rhetorical evidence that the world is indeed of divine origin. According to Brockes, human perception constitutes the surest route to an affirmation of existence as a whole. Theodicy travels not through

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<sup>297</sup> Georg Gottfried Gervinus, *Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung*, 3 ed., vol. 3 (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1848) 529. Wolfgang Mauser writes, "Gervinus wurde nie widersprochen, es gilt aber zu klären, was es bedeutete, um 1700 die Sinne zu emanzipieren und in welchem sozialen und geistigen Raum dies geschehen konnte." Wolfram Mauser, *Konzepte aufgeklärter Lebensführung. Literarische Kultur in frühmodernen Deutschland* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000) 50.

<sup>298</sup> Barthold Heinrich Brockes, *Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott*, 7 ed., vol. 1 (Hamburg: Christian Herold, 1744) 21.

<sup>299</sup> Brockes, *Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott*, vol. 1, 21.

reason, the structure of the human mind, possible worlds or the principle of sufficient reason, as it did for Leibniz, but rather, through the evidence of the phenomenal world. The central point of attraction in Brockes' poems revolves around an empiricist theodicy. If, as Plato says, philosophy begins in wonder, so too does poetry, albeit only after overturning the Platonic doctrine of ideas and turning to sense perception itself. In Brockes' "Einleitung," as the human being steps out of the cave, this being experiences the wonder of the world through a systematically organized and sensually overwhelming influx of perceptual experience:

Wenn iemand irgendswo in einer Höhle,  
Allwo desselben Sinn und Seele  
Von aller Creatur und allem Vorwurff leer,  
In steter Dämmerung erzogen wär;  
Und trät' auf einmahl in die Welt,  
Zumahl zur holden Frühlings-Zeit  
Und sähe dann der Sonnen Herrlichkeit,  
Und säh' ein grün beblühmtes Feld,  
[...]  
Und hört' ein zwitscherndes Getümmel,  
[...]  
Und schmeckte tausend süsse Früchte,  
[...]  
Und röche Bluhmen mancher Arten,  
[...]  
Und fühlte sanfte laue Lüfte,  
Und fühlte Wunder-süsse Triebe  
Von einer zugelaßnen Liebe  
[...]  
Auf welche sonderbare Weise  
Würd' er sich nicht darob ergetzen!  
Würd' er sich nicht halb selig schätzen?  
Er bliebe gantz gewiß dabey,  
Daß er, aufs mindst' im Paradeise,  
Wo nicht schon gar im Himmel sey.

Und wir, die alle diese Gaben  
Unstreitig um und an uns haben,  
Empfindens minder als ein Stein;  
Ja machen uns, an deren Stelle,  
Das Paradeis fast selbst zur Hölle.  
Was mag daran wohl Ursach seyn?<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Barthold Heinrich Brockes, *Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott*, 3 ed., vol. 4 (Hamburg: Conrad König, 1745) 2-5.

The poem begins with a thought experiment, a hypothetical subject, anonymous, in a sensory deprivation chamber, who, much like the denizens of Plato's cave, lives in perpetual twilight. This twilight existence is put to an end not by climbing out of the cave into the realm of ideas, but by being born into the world of appearances. Metaphorically, the introduction to *Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott* describes the process of birth, reframing this process as a transformation from senselessness to sensuality. The poem can therefore be considered as a poetic and epistemological meditation on birth. The person in a cave functions parallel to the fetus, *Von aller Creatur und allem Vorwurf leer*, who leaves the womb and is confronted with the world of perception. All those who are thus born approach the world of sense experience with wonder. Brockes' poetry does not sing the glory of the creation as much as the glory of perceiving the creation, reflecting on it, organizing it, generating knowledge about it. If the center of Brockes' cosmos appears anchored in the transcendent point of the divine, his goal is to link back the world of the appearances to this divine point through a long, immense, and systematic organizing of the senses. In the nineteenth century, Rimbaud, whose goal is to arrive at "l'inconnu," and whose poetic persona departs from the eighteenth-century idea of the poet as "ein Mensch, ein Bürger, und Christ," instead becoming "entre tous le grand malade, le grand criminel, le grand maudit,"<sup>301</sup> conceives of poetry as an inverted aesthetic exercise: "Le poète se fait voyant par un long, immense et raisonné dérèglement de tous les sens."<sup>302</sup> Rimbaud's disorganization of all the senses in order to approach the transcendent unknown appears precisely as a mirror image of Brockes' attempt to approach the divine through the senses.

Seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, feeling—each sensory realm appears discrete, grouped together, with rare enjambment, suggesting that the senses themselves self-organize poetically, they reveal their own visible-invisible order to those who make their senses a poetic and perceptual divining rod. Poetic form thereby not only mirrors, but *makes visible* the organization of sensory experience. For Brockes, the central problem of the human being lies in the stubborn refusal to perceive the world, as subjects insensitive to the miracles around them, as if they were stones and hence frozen, dead: *Und wir, die alle diese Gaben / Unstreitig um und an uns haben / Empfindens minder als ein Stein*. Not to exercise oneself in the perception of the world—something that Brockes believes can be achieved through poetic taxonomy, or a revelation of the laws that constitute divine and natural order in poetry—turns the world into the opposite of what it in fact seems to be, namely, hell. The human being who refuses the call to perception therefore inverts the order of the creation, making it *fast selbst zur Hölle*. Brockes wishes to restore the primordial wonder of experience by returning human beings to their own perceptual and reflective capacities, thereby initiating a second birth. To be reborn has always been part of the rhetoric of Christianity, associated with the presence of Christ. For Brockes, rebirth is associated with attentiveness to sense experience, an attentiveness that is stimulated and fostered by his poetic epistemology.

Such poetry therefore initiates several steps in part of a poetic process of bringing human beings to a full experience of the immanence of the divine, one whose telos

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<sup>301</sup> Rimbaud, *Oeuvres Complètes*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, ed. André Guyaux (Gallimard: Paris, 2009) 344.

<sup>302</sup> Rimbaud, *Oeuvres Complètes* 344.

actually culminates in a transformation of perception through perception itself. Attention is concentrated and focalized on the givenness of experience. The manifold world of things appears at first highly differentiated, but each of these differences is led back to a divine source in which all things are unified, in which they all belong to the same world. However, this belongingness to the same world is largely invisible, although it manifests itself in the visible. In the poem "Spiel der Natur, in verschiedner Thiere verschiedner Bewegung," the poet notes, "Dieß Wunder-Werck, wie leider meist geschicht, / Sieht jedermann, und sieht es nicht."<sup>303</sup> Making the invisible visible occurs not merely through poetic rhetoric or reflection, but by any and all forms of mediated knowledge; Bayle's air-pump is invoked in order to show how air makes fire possible, how it makes sound possible:

Gar kein Feuer könnte brennen,  
Nichts würd' einer hören können,  
Nährte nicht so Ton als Gluth  
Unsrer Lüfte zarte Fluth.

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Wie man solches klärlich siehet,  
Wenn man sie von einem Ort  
Durch die Luft-Pump' auswärts ziehet  
Daß die Flammen alsofort  
Löschen, schwinden und vergehen.<sup>304</sup>

Brockes' invocation of Bayle's air-pump in his aesthetic affirmation of divine order places his poetic utterance along an epistemological divide, crossing a fault line drawn in the seventeenth century between apodictic knowledge generated by natural philosophy and empirical, provisional experimentation.<sup>305</sup> The poet does not fetishize direct or immediate sense experience as the only pathway into transcendence, but admits artificially *produced* experiences through experimentation as part of his empirical theodicy. At the same time, his appreciation of air initiates a logical-transcendental feedback loop: air makes possible sense experience, which in turn makes possible the human being's appreciation of air. The mediation of the experiment in the production of experience harmonizes with the wonder of the poetic gaze, fusing two supposedly disparate epistemologies: onto-theological natural philosophy, and inductive empirical experimentation. Brockes similarly tends toward an aesthetic, non-apodictic presentation of the divine order,

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<sup>303</sup> Brockes, *Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott*, Vol. 1, 158.

<sup>304</sup> Barthold Heinrich Brockes, *Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott*, vol. 2 (Hamburg: Christian Herold, 1734) 274.

<sup>305</sup> The air-pump became the focal point of contention in a debate between Hobbes and Boyle concerning the appropriate means for generating or securing knowledge, with Hobbes arguing that only natural philosophy can guarantee knowledge, and Boyle using experimental methodology to produce "matters of fact." See Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985). Interestingly, Shapin and Schaffer claim that Hobbes denied the validity of the experiments with the air-pump partially because the epistemological practices underlying these experiments did not cohere with his conception of divine order. Here, Brockes uses the air-pump to *link* physical reality and the divine order.

admitting technologies of knowledge-production—here understood as the production of *sense experience* and not of *knowledge*—in the attempt to make the latent and invisible cosmic order available to human reason. In Brockes' poetic universe, no perception is prosaic, and nothing seems incapable of being poeticized: the air-pump, extracted from its knowledge-producing and discursive context, no longer in the domain of mere *techne*, provokes the aesthetic experience of wonder.

In the process of tracing the manifold world of appearances back to a primordial divine origin, the poet inaugurates a perceptual anthropology that separates the human from the inhuman: only the human being is capable of perceiving the order of the world, and hence only the human being can poetically organize, enumerate, and catalogue the works of the creation. In "Spiel der Natur, in verschiedener Thiere verschiedener Bewegung," the act of noticing forms both the privilege and the imperative of human consciousness:

Willst aber du, o Mensch! ein Mensch, und nicht ein Stein,  
Bey diesem Wunder-Spiel der Creaturen, seyn;  
So laß dein Hertz, durch das Gesicht,  
Des Schöpfers weise Macht und Ordnung in den Wercken,  
Mit Andacht und mit Lust, bemercken!  
Dieß ist der Menschen Pflicht;  
Dieß ist es bloß, was sie von Thieren unterscheidet.<sup>306</sup>

The vision of the play of the world is perceived through the capacity of sight (*das Gesicht*), a form of perception that functions as a conduit to human affect through its ability to *notice* (*bemercken*). Such noticing, which will become one of the faculties to be trained in Baumgartens' *aesthetica exercitia*, fuses pleasure with duty (*der Menschen Pflicht*), and leads ultimately back to the inexplicable divine source of all things. The vision constructs a poetic exercise designed to alter the view of the human on its own status and participation in the cosmic order, in the ever-changing world of creaturely movement. In the poetic movement appears a condensation of ancient and Christian spiritual exercises, producing equanimity in the soul amidst the turmoil of the world:

Doch wer sich Gottes freut, auf Seine Wunder achtet,  
In allem Seine Huld und weise Macht betrachtet,  
An allen Orten Gott allgegenwärtig sieht!  
Wird, mit gelass'ner Seel' und fröhlichem Gemüth,  
Wenn andre mißvergnügt, um alles murrend, klagen,  
In friedlicher Gelassenheit,  
Was ihm begegnet, tragen.<sup>307</sup>

Brockes, instead of seeing miracles as works opposed to the natural order, views the entire natural order itself as a miracle. This miracle, however, must be continually made present to the human mind. All phenomena reveal this order, but the human mind must be

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<sup>306</sup> Brockes, *Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott*, Vol. 1, 158.

<sup>307</sup> Brockes, *Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott*, Vol. 1, 159

attuned to it through poetic language. Pleasure, admiration, and attentiveness form the central cognitive capacities exercised by poetry that train the human being to act in the world with joy and composure. The discontent of the world is relegated to a single dissonant line—*Wenn andre mißvergnügt, um alles murrend, klagen*—itself suppressed and submerged by the aesthetic exercise that surrounds and contains it.

For Brockes, poetic language stimulates an attunement to the divine organization of phenomena. Pleasure becomes channeled into this order-generating process, thereby saturating poetic language with the power of the transcendent:

Es scheint so gar der Nam' allein  
Ein Inbegriff des Frühlings-Lust zu seyn.  
Wenn etwa jemand spricht: es sang die Nachtigall;  
Kann fast des blossen Wortes Schall  
So viel zu wircken taugen,  
Daß in der meisten Hörer Augen  
Sich ein geheim Vergnügen zeigt.<sup>308</sup>

The transcendently saturated poetic word functions metonymically. Every singular noun not only embodies the whole cosmos of which it forms a part—therefore almost appearing monadological—but reveals this very metonymic strategy grounding the coherence of the divine totality. The name alone conjures an "Inbegriff des Frühlings-Lust," bearing the phenomenon and the affect in its very immediacy. However, unlike monads, words are not windowless, for each provides a view on something else, grounded as they are in the world of the senses and processes of perception. The word fuses cognitive channels of vision and sound—in *der meisten Hörer Augen*—and this impetus gives rise to the secret pleasure, *ein geheim Vergnügen*, of the poetic word. At the same time, Brockes leaves open the possibility that some ("in *der meisten Hörer Augen*") will be excluded from this ultimately incommunicable pleasure, a pleasure that Brockes nevertheless makes public despite its interior and secret nature. Even this aesthetic exercise cannot guarantee the shared perceptual affect of *all* listeners.

Inasmuch as poetry belongs to language, it can produce a secret pleasure of the word, whose bare sound excites a synesthetic imaginary process. The pleasure of the word, after all, appears before the *eyes* of most listeners (*der meisten Hörer Augen*), and hence not in the sound alone. And yet, the phrase that Brockes chooses—"es sang die Nachtigall"—appears striking both for its poetic and non-poetic qualities. On the syntactical level, the phrase appears ordinary. It belongs to an almost banal order of prosody. And yet, as with the air pump, every phrase, even the most cliché and trite, can be amplified by poetic concentration. If the mere sound of the phrase, "es sang die Nachtigall," suffices to excite the imaginary processes of the listener, it is because this phrase in particular is functioning metonymically for the act of poetry itself, for the very secret pleasure that the phrase itself supposedly excites and has excited in the poetic tradition. Walther von der Vogelweide's attempt to imitate the sound of the nightingale, *tandaradei*, represents only one of the many imitations of birdsong in order to express secret pleasure. Whereas Walther invents a new poetic sound to conjure the nightingale,

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<sup>308</sup> Brockes, *Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott*, Vol. 1, 63.

Brockes believes that pleasure can also be generated by mere designation, by the simple apparition of the word itself. And yet, he too uses the sonic properties of the signifier, rhyming *Nachtigall* with the very word that leads auditory experience back to its most basic form, *Schall*. It is as if the poem desperately wants to prove that even the most prosodic and banal of phrases—at this point an almost ridiculous metonymic trope for poetry—can be transformed into an epitome of poetic language through attentive pleasure in the secret and invisible harmony of the world made visible through sound.

Although the telos of Brockes' poetry culminates in an aesthetically motivated theodicy, the fact that this theodicy occurs through the senses and then is endowed with an exercise value for the human subject reveals the second-order tenuousness and fragility that accompanies any attempt to aesthetically or poetically justify existence. The "Einleitung" to *Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott* ends not in an assertion but a question: If attentiveness to the phenomenal world gives us access to divine order, how does one explain the fact of suffering, that the world in fact appears more aligned with hell than with heaven to those who live in it? In Brockes' poetry, divine order is not merely presupposed, but must be confirmed through the senses and continually made present to the senses. Without the evidence of the senses and the poetically intensified concentration on this evidence and the pleasure that it brings, the human being could easily be subject to despair. This fundamental doubt and the desire for order weave themselves into the very symbolic texture of the poetry itself, into its formal organization and the logic of its utterances. For Brockes, the phenomenal world does not function merely allegorically, nor even symbolically; for it is not that light symbolizes God, but rather, light *is* God: "Denn, sonder Glantz und Strahl Desselben Sonnen-Lichts, / Sind wir, nicht nur nicht schön; wir sind ein wirklich Nichts."<sup>309</sup> On the surface the poem makes a claim that sounds Augustinian: without God, humans are not divine creations, they are hence nothing and have no reality. However, more radically, without the light of the sun, that is, without the evidence of the senses, human beings are equally nothing. To be mere mind, or a windowless monad, would plunge the human being into a form of nothingness. The supposedly allegorical sign, *Glantz und Strahl Desselben Sonnen-Lichts*, is diverted away from its intended intentional object, God, and directed back toward the phenomenon, the light itself.

To gaze at and meditate upon the world of appearances through the evidence of senses may ultimately lead to the conclusion that existence cannot be affirmed, that all ends in suffering and pain. If Brockes is to be believed, redemption—not in the world of a beyond, but in this world, as the possibility of concrete human happiness, of a heaven on earth—lies hidden in plain sight, embedded invisibly in the visibility of the world itself. He turns the gaze inward to the processes of perception themselves, but this inward turn also rebounds onto the world of appearances, onto that which appears to the senses. There is therefore both a chasm separating and a bridge linking Brockes' *Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott* to Hölderlin's later reflections on the refusal of the phenomenal world to provide human beings with the indubitable redemptive evidence of its own connection to the divine. For both poets, poetry appears as evidence, as the ground upon which an affirmation of life succeeds or fails. If the ground gives way beneath Hölderlin's feet, it is partially because poetic language had been saddled with more than it could bear, with the

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<sup>309</sup> Brockes, *Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott*, Vol. 4, 14.

entire weight of the cosmos and its organization. Moreover, their understanding of language and the poetic medium diverge dramatically, and poetry thus possesses an utterly different exercise value for each of them. For Brockes, the word is transparently and self-evidently divine; the poet merely directs the attention of consciousness via the transparency of the sign to the divine order of appearances. For Hölderlin, language is anything but transparent. To intuit the divine is neither self-evident, nor a matter of merely directing attention to consciousness and through consciousness, to the world of appearances. The poetic spirit can only hold the divine fast, which is continually receding from the confusing realm of phenomena, when language proves capable of holding contradictory and multiple intensities and modalities in one and the same mental space, necessity, possibility and reality, the Greek and the Christian gods (polytheism, monotheism, pantheism), subject, object and absolute identity of both. One need only compare Brockes' "Es sang die Nachtigall," which manifests directly and immediately the thing itself and the divine order that underlies it with Hölderlin's poem "Hälfte des Lebens." In this poem, the world as it appears to the senses does not suffice to conjure up the redemptive presence of the divine—it is only in the completion of the poem in the mind of the reader, who may or may not provide the other half of life, that the divine may or may not become present:

Weh mir, wo nehm' ich, wenn  
Es Winter ist, die Blumen, und wo  
Den Sonnenschein  
Und Schatten der Erde?  
Die Mauern stehn  
Sprachlos und kalt, im Winde  
Klirren die Fahnen. (MA I.445)

In Hölderlin's later works, the poetic mind grappling with the sensory world—which does not always provide flowers, sunshine, shadows of the earth—appears incapable of guaranteeing the redemption that Brockes' promised it would deliver. At the very least, the act is poised in a fraught space between necessity, potentiality, and reality. Inasmuch as the poetic word directs its own exercise to the conditions of possibility of the appearance of the divine, Hölderlin's poetry, like Brockes, could be said to exist in a state of transcendental saturation; unlike Brockes, transcendental saturation does not *manifest* itself, but must be proven in the act of poetic reception. In Hölderlin's case, especially in the later odes, the poet stumbles *because* of the evidence of the sensory world. For Brockes, one need only open one's eyes and attend to the given. For him, only a mind confined to its own twilight reality, cut off from the colors of the sky, the sounds of animals, the smells of spring, the sweet taste of fruit and the feeling of love both spurned and reciprocated—exists truly in a state of nothingness.

### 3. The Alignment of Pleasure and Virtue

Brockes' turn toward the senses, toward poetry as an exercise that trains human beings to perceive the divine in earthly givenness, remains attached to the notion of transcendence. It turns its own language to the invisible anchor of all things, and therefore thematizes itself as a "secret" pleasure, *geheim Vergnügen*, or a pleasure that then becomes justified and elevated by its place in the divine order. Although his poetry can hardly be called Rococo poetry, which revolves around smallness, irony, erotic delicacy, friendship, wine, and women, Brockes nevertheless shares with this poetry a turn to this world.<sup>310</sup> And yet, from the perspective of its relationship to concepts of pleasure and utility, Rococo poetry appears precisely to invert Brockes' attempt to link the world of appearances to the invisible sphere that organizes these appearances.

However, if certain examples of Rococo poetry produce pleasure more from disorganization than from order, from perturbation more than from harmony, in de-transcendentalizing and de-sacralizing codes—religious, moral, political, and anthropological—that organize and make intelligible human life in the eighteenth century, not all such poems function in such a manner. On the contrary, the disorganizing and perturbational force of pleasure appears as a potentiality of the Rococo idiom rather than a fixed or necessary structure of the Rococo as a style. Moreover, differences and nuances in poetic tendencies emerge—even within the scope of the Rococo's poetics of immanence—that vary between geographical locales, individual poets, and even individual poems within an anthology.

One may therefore find numerous examples of poets who write in the Rococo style and also align their poetic work with points of normative anchoring. The notion of virtue, or *Tugend*, forms one such point of transcendental anchoring, and the concept appears not only overwhelmingly in pan-European sentimental literature of the period—Richardson, Rousseau, Gessner, Sophie von la Roche, to name but a few authors—but also in pedagogical contexts in order to designate those values and practices that enable and facilitate integration into bourgeois society. Rousseau's *Emile* describes the careful control and discipline required to produce the sort of subject that could become a virtuous citizen in a republic. For women, in Rousseau's *La nouvelle Héloïse* and Richardson's *Pamela*, virtue was often equated with the renunciation of sensual or self-interested desires for the sake of a higher value. The ideology of virtue in the eighteenth century often stands in tension with physical gratification, gravitating instead toward the glorious act of renunciation.

Nicolaus Götz, although integrated in the Halle circle of poets along with Gleim and Uz, refers continually to the concept of virtue in his poems, thereby reconciling the Anacreontic form with the content of virtue familiar from sentimental literature. His poetry therefore appears more transcendentially saturated inasmuch as he repurposes Anacreontic pleasure to reinforce the standards of reason, the order of nature, and the ethics of virtue. In *Versuch eines Wormsers in Gedichten* (1745), he presents the "Wünsche des Dichters": "O möcht ich, so wie ihr, geliebten Bienen, seyn! / An innerm

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<sup>310</sup> For a presentation of the main themes and motifs of Rococo poetry, see Alfred Anger, *Literarisches Rokoko*.

Geiste gros, obwohl von Körper klein."<sup>311</sup> Although he begins with a standard topos of Rococo poetry, namely the disproportionate energy contained in the small form, often symbolized by the bee, he frames this topos in terms of a relation between mind and body. The poet associates grandeur of mind, *an innerm Geiste gros*, which corresponds on the aesthetic level to the utility of the poem, with the smallness of the body, or the diminutive character of the Anacreontic song, *von Körper klein*. His verse, "An Kunst und Ordnung reich,"<sup>312</sup> fuses delight with utility. His poetic imperative aligns itself with the *prodesse et delectare*: "Bemüht den treuen Freund durch Nutzen zu ergötzen."<sup>313</sup> And finally, just as the poet wishes to be both small in body and large in spirit at the same time, so too do his poems intend to nourish the mind and the body: "So nahrhaft für den Geist, wie für die Sinnen süsse."<sup>314</sup> In Götz' extended metaphor, bees produce honey through diligence, and the structure of the poem nourishes the spirit through the sweetness of aesthetic experience. Götz transcendentalizes the Rococo style, establishing a bond between the bourgeois order of productivity and the productivity of the poet anchored in the diligence of the *homo faber*.

Götz utilizes Anacreontic poetry to celebrate the conjunction of art and order, seeing in his own verse a testament to both natural and artificial harmony. From Götz' poetry, it becomes apparent that the art of perturbation is not a universal characteristic of the Rococo style. The bee, perennial symbol of the small verse form, does not sting and therefore does not exercise its power of disruption. Lessing also uses the bee as a poetological symbol:

#### Die Biene

Als Amor in den güldnen Zeiten  
 In schäferliche Lustbarkeiten  
 Verliebt, auf Blumenfeldern lief,  
 Da stach den kleinen Gott der Götter,  
 Ein Bienchen, das auf Rosenblätter,  
 Wo es sonst Honig holte, schlief.

Durch diesen Stich ward Amor klüger.  
 Der unerschöpfliche Betrüger  
 Sann einer neuen Kriegslist nach.  
 Er lauschte unter Nelk und Rosen;  
 Ein Mägdchen kam, sie liebzukosen,  
 Er floh als Bien heraus, und stach.<sup>315</sup>

<sup>311</sup> Johann Nikolaus Götz, *Gedichte aus den Jahren 1745-1765*, ed. Carl Schüddekopf (Stuttgart: Göschen'sche Verlagshandlung, 1893) 5.

<sup>312</sup> Götz, *Gedichte aus den Jahren 1745-1765* 5.

<sup>313</sup> Götz, *Gedichte aus den Jahren 1745-1765* 5.

<sup>314</sup> Götz, *Gedichte aus den Jahren 1745-1765* 5.

<sup>315</sup> Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Frühe Schriften 1751-1753*, in *Werke und Briefe*, ed. Jürgen Stenzel, vol. 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker, 1998) 77.

Amor, the god of love, directs his own erotic energy not to any external object, but to his own poetic form, appearing "In schäferliche Lustbarkeiten / Verliebt." The bee, who otherwise produces honey, in this instance stings the god, producing an alteration in his strategic posturing. Lessing's poem describes and enacts a model of poetic perturbation and transference. The sting provokes a transformative shift in identity, and it is as if the very genre of the poem changes from the first strophe to the second. Amor, previously directed toward "schäferliche Lustbarkeiten," transforms into a deceiver who hides and awaits his prey. He appears capable of adopting a new identity, flying and stinging "as a bee." What it means to "sting" for Amor—whether he stings the girl in order to make her fall in love with another or for his own pleasure—is left unsaid. However, the sting of the bee presents Amor with a paradigm of action, a perturbation that catapults him from one identity to another. The poem of the title, "Die Biene," indicates this transference of identity: the first bee stings Amor, and Amor becomes the second bee. The title refers less to any concrete entity, and more to the process of becoming something different than what one once was, to the role that the Anacreontic poet himself adopts, the "als" (*floh als Bien*) that makes Amor not merely *like* a bee, but functionally and ontologically identical to a bee.

The girl in the poem will find herself similarly altered; for Amor, being stung initiates the transition from innocence to experience, from the pleasure of shepherds to the deceptive posturing of the seducer, from bucolic transparency to Anacreontic dissimulation. For those on the receiving end of the sting, the transformation will be similar. And the poem itself, which describes the sting, becomes the sting, an inexhaustible deception whose purpose is to clothe itself in beauty, in roses and violets, and to exact a transformational and transferable alteration of erotic identity. In Lessing's hands, the Rococo poem becomes catastrophic, the tiny and hidden disruption that produces a disproportionately large and visible systemic change.

For Götz, on the other hand, the bee represents a paradigm of social integration and collective action, a worker producing honey for the spirit through industriousness. Bourgeois identity appears confirmed rather than overturned through Götz' metaphorical bee. Although both Gleim and Götz write Anacreontic verse, their rhetorical and aesthetic strategies therefore appear diametrically opposed. Gleim, in his *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern*, rarely speaks of virtue, and if virtue occasionally appears in the poems, it is always ironized by the *pointe* that invariably demands: "Geh! Hole du dein blondes Mädchen, / Ich will die braune Doris holen."<sup>316</sup> In the poem "An Herrn Professor A. G. Baumgarten in Frankfurth," the poet addresses the professor of philosophy, noting his ability to excite the love of virtue in those who listen to him:

Durch die Kräfte deiner Lehren,  
 Zwangst du ihn zur Tugendliebe  
 O wie schafft man seinen Lehren  
 Solche Kräfte, solchen Seegen?  
 Lehrer, wenn du mich es lehrest,  
 O so will ich Mädchen zwingen,  
 Daß sie plötzlich schweren müssen,

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<sup>316</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 7.

Mich zu lieben, wenn ich liebe.<sup>317</sup>

The Anacreontic poet admires not the content of Baumgarten's doctrines, *die Tugend*, but rather, Baumgarten's rhetorical and productive power, his ability to shape the patterns of behavior of those who listen to him. The Anacreontic poet would retain the formal and rhetorical power of Baumgarten's discourse and replace the content of his doctrines with the diametrically opposed dictates of sensual lust. One may read this statement from an aesthetic-poetological perspective as well: the form of the aesthetic exercise remains, but its goals are inverted. Götz, on the other hand—and Uz would later join him in this regard with the publication of his "Versuch über die Kunst stets fröhlich zu seyn" (1760)—harmonizes his aesthetic exercise with the claims of virtue. Let no one be seduced by the similarity of their poetic forms or the seeming intimacy of their correspondence: a deep cleft divides Götz from Gleim, a line of demarcation that on one side aligns poetry with aesthetic utility, and on the other, deploys poetry as aesthetic perturbation.

Götz' fixation on virtue appears as one move in a larger tendency to aggrandize the Anacreontic form through transcendental saturation. In 1746, along with Uz, he translates Anacreon's poetry, or rather, the Anacreontea that most scholars falsely regarded as Anacreon's poetry (although debate had already begun to cast doubt on the authenticity of this corpus). In an introductory poem, he writes the following words set in bold and quotation marks:

"Was die Gratien geschrieben,  
Was Cythere selbst verbessert,  
Ueberlebet alle Zeiten,  
Und bleibt ewig liebenswürdig."<sup>318</sup>

For Götz, Anacreontic poetry establishes a link to a Classical tradition in which the words of the poet are still divinely inspired, meriting a claim to immortality that would seem inappropriate for a cultural object posing as a bagatelle. Götz' translation of Anacreon in fact frames itself as a translation of that which the Graces themselves have originally written and Aphrodite has improved. Anacreontic poetry is therefore always already an act of reception, a cultural translation. The derivative nature of Anacreontic verse assures its immortality, for it is not the unique and individualized cultural object itself that remains eternal, but rather, the values at the core of this object, the grace and beauty forever worthy of admiration. Götz, unlike Hagedorn's claim in the introduction to his *Lieder*, for example, still explicitly states that all poetic objects strive for a realm of existence beyond themselves, for an immortality of tradition that is assured by the universality of values across cultural contexts.

Götz' attempt to use Anacreontic poetry as a mode of harmonizing pleasure with virtue appears in its most concentrated form in "Das Vergnügen" (1774), a poetic and poetological reflection on the uses of pleasure rather than the immanence of purely sensual being. After more than thirty years, Götz continues his attempt to saturate the

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<sup>317</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 95.

<sup>318</sup> Johann Nikolaus Götz, and Johann Peter Uz, *Die Gedichte Anakreons und der Sappho Oden* (Carlsruhe: Michael Macklot, 1760) 51.

small, derivative form with transcendent forces that organize nature, construing Anacreontic pleasure as a cosmic pleasure principle. His poetry mimics and transplants rhetorical strategies familiar from Brockes' *Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott* into the more diminutive Rococo form. The poem begins with the following lines:

Das die weite Welt bewegt,  
Und sich auch in Würmgen regt;  
Das alleine gut und mild  
Unsre ganze Seele füllt:  
Das Vergnügen folget nur  
Sanften Trieben der Natur.<sup>319</sup>

Pleasure universalizes itself as a drive that expands throughout all of nature. It manifests itself in the lowliest of creatures, whose diminished status appears linguistically magnified, taken to the second power, in the diminutive *Würmgen*. It can equally be found in the most lofty and elevated of cosmic appearances, in the human soul (*Das... unsre ganze Seele füllt*), in turn linking the worm to the soul, and all human beings to one another. Its essence is, however, dynamic, stimulative, in perpetual motion, fulfilling much the same function that divine love did for Dante, "ma giàolgeva il mio disio e l' velle, / sí come rota ch'igualmente è mossa, / l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle" (*Paradiso* XXXIII.143-5).<sup>320</sup> If Dante's vision of divine love, however, moves as a concentric rotating force, regulating both human appetitive desire and the conscious operation of the will, for Götz, pleasure appears incapable of being localized, a diffuse and vague presence that evades the human being's attempt to demarcate its boundaries and fix its position. Already in the first line of the poem, the presence of pleasure announces itself as absence, post-positioned, deferred (*Das die weite Welt bewegt*). In fact it is this deferred nature of pleasure, marked by the initial absence of the substantive, that the tiny worm shares in common with the soul. When pleasure finally becomes concrete, it moves away from the world of individual beings and becomes a function of the organization of nature.

Although pleasure characterizes the organization of nature—or perhaps *because* it characterizes the organization of nature—it raises the problem of its own representability. It functions precisely as a sign that attracts, but that can never be fully captured or localized:

Keiner der es schildern will,  
Trift es; dann es hält nicht still.  
Es verfolgen heißt es fliehn;  
Es empfinden, nach sich ziehn.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> Johann Nikolaus Götz, "Das Vergnügen," *Lyrische Blumenlese*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Weidmanns Erben und Reich, 1774) 52.

<sup>320</sup> Dante, *Commedia*, ed. Emilio Pasquini and Antonio Quaglio (Milan: Garzanti, 1987) 1146.

<sup>321</sup> Götz, "Das Vergnügen," 52.

Pleasure continually evades and simultaneously produces the moment of poetic articulation itself. The poem, entitled "Das Vergnügen," produces pleasure by describing how the attempt to describe pleasure fails. For pleasure, it is less beauty that enchants, than novelty: "der Knospen Neuigkeit / Mehr, als Schönheit, es erfreut."<sup>322</sup> The pleasure that the poem describes corresponds to the pleasure produced by the poem itself, and in the search for the universal power that pervades all things, the poem points outward only to be directed back to its own activity. At first, the characterization of aesthetic pleasure as a combination of indeterminacy and novelty appears unsurprising in the intellectual contexts of the time. For Baumgarten, the aesthetic consists of the domain of "confused" sense impressions, perceptual instances that are impossible to be broken down into their constitutive elements. For Breitinger, the pull of the poetic imagination can only be conceptualized through novelty, and not through mimetic beauty alone. Götz' poem, however, disarms and defuses the potentially explosive pleasure of novelty, making it harmless. Instead of alluding to the possibility of difference and otherness, novelty appears incapable of ultimately dislodging pleasure from its circulation between the poles of morality and universal human cognition:

Freunde, wiß't ihr, wo ichs fand?  
 Wo ich es mit Blumen band?— —  
 Zwischen Tugend und Verstand.<sup>323</sup>

If the earlier half of the poem stresses the unlocalizability of pleasure, the final *pointe* in fact limits its potentially chaotic distribution, reigning it in and establishing its boundaries. The *pointe* in fact reverses the earlier tendency of the poem by moving the attraction of pleasure from ineffability and novelty toward its opposite, namely the universality of rationality and the moral law. For if, in other iterations of Anacreontic pleasure, one encounters a concept of pleasure that is *unbound*—nothing appears off limits, and that which is sacred may always be exposed to mockery—in this later example, published in 1774 after the gradual sentimentalization and the inward turn of religious poetry has made its mark on literary history, one sees the attempt to bind and limit the scope of pleasure itself. Where pleasure was previously incapable of being localized in the poem, it is now "found"; where it was previously movement and stimulation, it is now "bound"; where it previously sought novelty, it now operates between the twin poles of virtue and reason, *zwischen Tugend und Verstand*.

The poem does not quite reverse its previous characterization of pleasure, as it does not hold pleasure in its place, but merely delimits its sphere of activity. Ultimately, some part of pleasure retains its indeterminacy, moving *between* virtue and reason. Neither virtue nor reason will ever be able to fully govern pleasure, since it operates autonomously from these two capacities, although bound by them. Finally, the *pointe* itself corresponds to a linguistic excess, a triple rhyme, which continues but deviates from the pattern established in the rest of the poem. Götz attempts to channel the potential deviance of pleasure, limiting the scope of pleasure only by acknowledging the necessity of novelty and difference. And yet, as manifest by the triple rhyme, *fand, band,*

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<sup>322</sup> Götz, "Das Vergnügen," 53.

<sup>323</sup> Götz, "Das Vergnügen," 53.

*Verstand*, novelty and difference may operate only within the constraints of reason and morality, effectively nullifying any potentially radical perturbation in the pleasure of its own poetic act.

#### 4. Hagedorn and the Origin of Detranscendentalizing Art

It would be inaccurate, then, to suppose that all examples of Rococo poetry are concerned primarily with unbinding the bourgeois subject from the practices conditioning its production. If, on the other hand, one may discover among Rococo poets consistent attempts to disown and disorganize ways of being in the world, detaching readers from their values and normalizing practices, it must nevertheless be emphasized that such a style does not articulate a *total* way of being. Rococo poetry adopts roles, identities, and perspectives, which, like masks, can be taken on and off. At its inception at the beginning of the eighteenth century, it exists alongside other forms of writing poetry—didactic, moralistic, and religious, among others.

It is perhaps important to note that this sort of poetry does not merely begin in the eighteenth century *ex nihilo*, but draws upon a poetic tradition whose works were interpreted as harmonizing particularly well with the turn toward immanence and away from something "beyond" the life of the senses and its pleasures. The inscription of Rococo lyric within this tradition—in Anacreon, Horace, and Catullus—does not only make its own rhetorical maneuvers meaningful, but its explicitly derivative nature prevents the authors of Rococo lyric from falling into the mythology of the divinely inspired genius. No poem, however, inasmuch as it is a linguistic artifact—since language itself bears the traces of a history that points to an existence beyond its own utterances—could possibly attain a state where the attraction to transcendence reaches a zero point. In *Götzen-Dämmerung*, Nietzsche's oft-repeated insight that our belief in grammar, in a realm of Being that points to some real existence outside our experience, creates an attachment to transcendent operations: "Ich fürchte, wir werden Gott nicht los, weil wir noch an die Grammatik glauben..."<sup>324</sup> (II 960). However, Rococo poems muster their rhetorical force—which may be bolstered by various discourses, of happiness, of health, of the Western poetic tradition—to undermine the claims of other, more transcendently saturated discourses.<sup>325</sup> Such poems are not radically new, they do not attempt to isolate themselves from tradition or make a break with the past. Rather, they draw upon their poetic predecessors and on their predecessors' rhetorical maneuvers in order to effect a movement away from the attempt to ground human beings in metaphysics, in virtue, in the history of the nation, or in other codes that would exercise a monopoly about how human beings ought to be formed or how the world of appearances ought to be organized.

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<sup>324</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Götzendämmerung*, in *Werke*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, vol. 6.3 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1969) 72.

<sup>325</sup> Wolfram Mauser continually emphasizes the "diatetic" function of Anacreontic lyric, see Wolfram Mauser, "Anakreon als Therapie? Zur medizinisch-dietätischen Begründung der Rokoko-Dichtung," *Lessing-Yearbook* 20 (1988).

Friedrich von Hagedorn, a contemporary of Brockes and the most well-known of the earlier generation of poets in the eighteenth century, casts the Rococo idiom as a form of poetic writing focused entirely on immanence:

Zu eitel ist das Lob der Freunde  
Uns drohen in der Nachwelt Feinde,  
Die finden unsre Größe klein.  
Den jetzt an Liedern reichen Zeiten  
Empfehl' ich diese Kleinigkeiten:  
Sie wollen nicht unsterblich sein.<sup>326</sup>

Hagedorn's metapoetic interpretation of his own work at first appears as a rhetorical gesture, a mere topos of modesty, a disingenuous downplaying his own achievement. To read the final words as a mere statement of modesty, however, suppresses the novelty of this poetic gesture. For Hagedorn's songs, which are small both in form and in claim to greatness, are written explicitly for this world, renouncing—at least on an ironic and playful level—the desire to endure which had been one of the main characteristics of the poetic tradition since antiquity. Catullus had already both ironized and confirmed the notion of lyric poetry as an extension of the limits of human life, as he says of his *libellum*, "quod, o patrona virgo, / plus uno maneat perenne saeclo."<sup>327</sup> Catullus, who wishes that his little book, *libellum*, would last more than one generation, does not *preclude* the claim to eternity—which would satisfy the condition of lasting more than one generation—it merely relativizes this claim and ironizes it. Hagedorn's poems do not desire to subsist even more than one generation—in fact they explicitly negate this desire, *sie wollen nicht unsterblich sein*—exhausting themselves in their own specific time and place. At the same time, the poem renounces its claim to uniqueness, becoming part of an age distinguished by many songs. The Rococo poem, as Hagedorn understands it, distinguishes itself by being indistinguishable, or by renouncing its claim to individuality and idiosyncrasy. For the arbiters of culture, the "enemies" of minor poems who see greatness only in the sublime, such poems barely qualify as works of art. In Hagedorn's case, the poem truly only asserts itself and justifies its existence by making itself meaningless.

The refusal of immortality, uniqueness, and transcendence, the retreat into insignificance, meaninglessness, and pure immanence—each of these strategies invests the poetic word with the ability to diverge from eighteenth-century patterns of subject formation and value systems. The short lyric form popularized by Hagedorn, far from exhausting itself in a mere poetic game, elaborates a consistent and powerful model of poetics whose very claim of insignificance—"sie wollen nicht unsterblich sein"—facilitates novel forms of aesthetic activity and expands the realm of what can be said.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>326</sup> Hagedorn, *Oden und Lieder in fünf Büchern* 4.

<sup>327</sup> Catullus, *Catullus, Tibullus, Pervigilium Veneris*, trans. Francis Warre Cornish, Loeb, ed. G. P. Goold, 2 ed. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1988) 2.

<sup>328</sup> According to Steffen Martus, "Hagedorn war sich darüber im klaren, daß der 'Scherz' die aufklärerische Ordnung gefährdet...." Martus, *Friedrich von Hagedorn—Konstellationen der Aufklärung* 73.

Johanna Charlotte Unzer, or die Unzerinn, as a woman writing Anacreontic poetry, notes in her *Versuch in Scherzgedichten*:

Doch man könnte denken, es wäre unnatürlich, wenn ein Frauenzimmer vom Weine singt; weil es unter uns keine Trinker giebt, oder weil es eine Unartigkeit seyn würde, wenn ein Frauenzimmer zechen wollte; und eben so könne es nicht wohl angehen, daß sie die Liebe erhebt, weil es wider die Eingezogenheit unsers Geschlechtes ist, auch nur den Schein von sich zu geben, als wenn man viel Werk aus der Liebe machte. Allein ein anacreontischer Trinker, und ein anacreontischer Liebhaber, rühmt und rath bloß das Lieben und das Trinken, um einen Scherz zu machen, und ein Lachen zu erregen.<sup>329</sup>

Unzer's poems were popular enough for a second edition. Her preface addresses the difficulty of imagining a female poet that adopts the persona of a lover or a drinker—and yet, precisely the irrelevance of this poetic genre makes this move possible, expanding the realm of what could be spoken or written by women in the eighteenth century.<sup>330</sup> The attempt to frame her won work as a "mere joke" reveals to what extent Rococo and Anacreontic poetry diverges from "reality" and attempts to modify this reality at the same time.

It is the very nothingness of poetry that allows Unzer to modify her reality through expanding the possible roles that can be played by women. In the "Erinnerung bey der zweyten Auflage," she compares her own poetic activity to Hagedorn, ironically duplicating his presumed gesture of modesty while trying explicitly to differentiate herself from Hagedorn:

Wegen der neuhinzugekommenen Stücke habe ich weiter nichts zu erinnern, als was ich von allen überhaupt zu sagen habe, und was ich mit tausendmal mehr Rechte, als der *Herr von Hagedorn* von den seinigen sagen kann, auf den ich, dieser Bescheidenheit wegen, die uns andere Dichter alle schamroth macht, in der That einen kleinen poetischen Zorn geworfen habe: Den itzt an Liedern reichen Zeiten / Empfehl ich diese Kleinigkeiten, / Sie wollen nicht unsterblich seyn.<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> Johanna Charlotte Unzer, *Versuch in Scherzgedichten* (Halle: Carl Herman Hemmerde, 1753) 4-5.

<sup>330</sup> The novel as a genre allowing for possible spaces of transgression, or in Helga Miese's words, a "Raum der Übertretung," has been well documented. Helga Miese, *Die Unschuld und die Schrift. Deutsche Frauenromane im 18. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Helmer, 1992) 204. However, whether the poetic exercise translated into *real* liberation is difficult to say; see for example Susanne Kord on Anna Louise Karsch. Kord shows that Karsch's stylization as a "natural genius" did not necessarily work to her advantage, Susanne Kord, *Women Peasant Poets in Eighteenth-Century England, Scotland, and Germany: Milkmaids on Parnassus* (New York: Camden House, 2003) 87-89. However, it seems to me that Rococo poetry's explicit adopting of *roles* and an emphasis on its inherent *meaninglessness* expanded the possibilities for what could and could not be said and by what sort of person, or so Unzer seems to suggest in her preface.

<sup>331</sup> Unzer, *Versuch in Scherzgedichten* 11-12.

Unzer uses Hagedorn's denigration of his *Lieder* in order to justify her own poetic project. And although she reads Hagedorn's poetry as a topos of modesty, herself appealing explicitly to this topos in order to excuse her own writing in view of her femininity, this claim to nothingness nevertheless permits the introduction of novelty in the horizon of the imagination. It expands the realm of what can be said by women, even if Unzer ultimately must capitulate to her age's dominant understanding of what a woman ought to say. Her poems step back from the precipice of a fully liberated sexual desire and conflict with the codes of virtue. She addresses her fellow "Schwestern":

Dichtet schöne Lieder;  
 Singet von der Liebe!  
 Liebt ihr aber Männer;  
 O! so liebt nur einen,  
 Liebet ihn recht zärtlich,  
 Scherzt mit eurem Freunde:  
 So seyd ihr recht glücklich!<sup>332</sup>

Unlike her male counterparts, Unzer reinforces normative eighteenth-century conceptions of erotic activity and reproduces the acceptable rhetorical and behavioral codes of love: "liebt nur einen," love only one man. However, although she does not transgress the norms of virtue in poetry, she nevertheless adopts the role of the Anacreontic poet. While the content of the text appears normatively stable, the *gesture* of the text creates difference: the text itself and its play allow Unzer to alienate herself from her habitual role, if only imaginatively and if only in language. If her poem travels toward happiness in the love of one man, she nevertheless includes in her conception of happiness along the way—*Dichtet schöne Lieder; Singet von der Liebe!*—the writing of songs and singing about love, a confirmation of her own rhetorical game and identity as poet.

Unzer's need to defend herself and downplay her poetic achievements—indeed, Gleim felt compelled to make a similar remark differentiating his poetic persona from his "real" identity in his *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern*—reveals to what extent Anacreontic poetry entered into conflict with dominant norms of behavior. Unzer's poetic model, Hagedorn, had used the insignificance of his poetry in order to ironize one of the centripetal forces of organization in eighteenth-century life, namely the bourgeois family and its household order. He describes "Der ordentliche Hausstand" as one in which the man of the house remains inebriated all day while his wife plays with the neighbor:

Kaum rennt Crispin zum neuen Schmause  
 Und wittert angenehmen Wein:  
 So schleicht sein Weibchen aus dem Hause  
 Und führt den Nachbar selbst hinein.  
 Ihr ganzes Haus= und Wirthschafts=Wesen  
 Ist ordentlich und auserlesen.<sup>333</sup>

<sup>332</sup> Unzer, *Versuch in Scherzgedichten* 5.

<sup>333</sup> Hagedorn, *Oden und Lieder in fünf Büchern* 52.

Pleasure—the pleasure in the poem and the pleasure of the poem—aligns itself with the overturning of household order, of the *oikos*, both in an erotic and in an economic sense, for neither the man nor the woman fills roles that contribute to the reproduction of the household. Lest one would think wine or adultery appears as the "theme" of the poem—which indeed account for a great number of Anacreontic jokes—the poet makes explicit that the pleasure of the poem consists less in the inebriation of the man or the erotic exploits of the woman than in the negation of economic logic as such. "Ihr ganzes Haus- und Wirtschaftswesen / Ist ordentlich und auserlesen" is the refrain that keeps repeating itself as the *pointe* of the poem. The refrain serves as an ironic commentary or *explicatio* of the representation, which alters from strophe to strophe. In this structure, however, the very concept of order is disordered, an inversion registered on the semantic level by the ironic dissimulation that results from the dissonance between representation (what Crispin does) and explication (their economic and domestic space is well-ordered). Hagedorn's poem does not violate any specific injunction as much as allow the poet to play with and invert schemas of order and disorder. Whereas Hagedorn composes songs about virtue and ethics in his *Moralische Oden*, in his shorter songs, the insignificance of Anacreontic or Rococo poetry creates a space into which the functionality of bourgeois society cannot penetrate, in which its claims to universality falter. Such poetry becomes invested with the capacity to make contingent the patterns of behavior necessary for the reproduction of bourgeois society: the organization of the household and the laws of economic productivity. If such spheres represent one way in which the utility of any cultural product can be measured, the Rococo poem constructs its version of pleasure in direct contradiction to such utility.

Hagedorn's Rococo poems, which he gathers under the name of *Lieder*, initiate a gesture of perturbation and disorganization that will continue with the poets of later generations based in Halle, most notably Gleim and Uz. This perturbation, which in turn renders contingent ways of organizing the world that had been seen as necessary, becomes correlated with pleasure and delight, with humor and with irony rather than with the fantastic and the expansion of the imagination. In "Das Daseyn," Hagedorn attacks not merely the rules of bourgeois society, but the Cartesian conception of the world, or philosophical practices that attempt to reduce language to the operation of logic and generate a style of life from such an operation:

Das Daseyn

Ein dunkler Feind erheiternder Getränke,  
 Ein Philosoph, trat neulich hin  
 Und sprach: Ihr Herren, wisst; ich bin.  
 Glaub mir, ich bin. Ja, ja! Warum? Weil ich gedenke.

Ein Säufer kam und taumelt ihm entgegen,  
 Und schwur bei seinem Wirth und Wein:  
 Ich trink, o darum muß ich seyn.  
 Glaub mir, ich trink; ich bin. Wer kann mich widerlegen?<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> Hagedorn, *Oden und Lieder in fünf Büchern* 50.

Few readers of Hagedorn's poetry would suspect that a poem entitled "Das Daseyn" would undertake an analysis of Being or investigate the ontological grounds of human existence. In Rococo poetry, the philosopher almost always appears ridiculous, a figure who speaks in foreign tongues and organizes the world around ideas that appear incompatible with everyday life. Just as Voltaire's *Candide* sought to refute Leibnizian ontology with absurdity, so too does Hagedorn attack Descartes with Shaftesbury's "test of ridicule," a test that the philosopher inevitably fails. The failure of philosophy appears above all a failure of speech. The philosopher's utterance in the poem—"Ihr Herren, wißt, ich bin"—shifts the context of Cartesian ontology from meditation or thought, the dialogue of the self with the self, to a dialogue with others. It is in life with others that the philosopher appears doomed to ridicule. The drunk, whose statements are no less ridiculous than the philosopher's, throws himself into absurdity rather than attempting to adopt a form of language that excludes the absurd from its horizon of possible speech acts. Ontology itself, or the attempt to metaphysically ground the world, dissolves into a play of words. The drunk makes drinking, or one particular act, the ground of being, as opposed to the philosopher's "ich gedenke." The poem itself, however, opens the very attempt of grounding, of anchoring the world in a universal or logical form, to the barbs of ridicule. The drunk's victory over the philosopher therefore appears above all a poetic victory, a victory of language over thought. Not only does the drunk imitate the philosopher in rhyme and meter, mastering his iambs and feminine endings, but he becomes the better poet: the rhyme pair *entgegen / widerlegen* refutes the more clumsy pair *Getränke / gedenke*.

If there is one seemingly inviolable property that the Rococo poem holds up as its very reason for being, the element around which it turns and in which it exults, it is most certainly the health of the organism and the belief that sensual pleasure focuses, sharpens, and intensifies the vital power of the human.<sup>335</sup> The melding of the aesthetic sphere and the health of the organism, however, practically nullifies the opposing claims of virtue, social status or economic productivity as master codes dictating legitimate practices of life. In Hagedorn's "Die Land=Lust," the poet fuses mental and bodily health with a Rococo aesthetic manifesto incarnated in the body of the idealized peasant girl, who makes visible and embodies the attractive power of the poem itself:

Wie manche frische Dirne  
 Schminkt sich aus jenem Bach;  
 Und gibt an Brust und Stirne  
 Doch nicht den Schönsten nach.

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<sup>335</sup> Wolfram Mauser notes, "Die deutsche Rokokodichtung ist—vor allem in ihren besonders gelungenen Leistungen—nicht Nachahmung höfisch-spielerischer Formen und Gedanken im Kreis eines wohlhabend und gebildet gewordenen Bürgertums, sondern der Versuch, im Zusammenhang vielfältiger diätetischer Anstrengungen der Zeit, 'sinnliches Vergnügen' nicht nur zu fordern und theoretisch zu begründen, sondern in poetischen Inszenierungen auch vorzustellen." Mauser, *Konzepte aufgeklärter Lebensführung. Literarische Kultur in frühmodernen Deutschland* 324. Mauser's observation is doubtless correct. In the eighteenth century, it seems that the diatetic effect of poetry was coherent with a thorough disorganization of socio-cultural normativity. In Anacreontic poetry, health and the inversion of norms and values were able to be deeply intertwined.

Gesundheit und Vergnügen  
Belebt ihr Aug' und Herz,  
Und reizt in ihren Zügen  
Und lacht in ihrem Scherz.<sup>336</sup>

The poetic stylization of pastoral life, in a tradition that extends back to Theocritus' *Idylls* and Virgil's *Eclogues*, constructs identities that differ radically from those associated with the violence and chaos of heroic poetry or urban space.<sup>337</sup> The bucolic subject reconciles the claims of Eros and the toils of labor, functioning simultaneously as a proxy for poetic activity itself, both naturally given and artificially constructed. Hagedorn's peasant girl, the "frische Dirne," aesthetically embodies the Rococo style of poetic creation—and if ever there were any hint that such a style aims to imitate aristocratic sensibilities, the very existence of the peasant girl drives a wedge between Hagedorn's vision of the Rococo and the literature of courtly gallantry. The peasant girl, far from being merely raw or purely natural, however, ornaments herself artificially in the act of approaching nature, "schminkt sich aus jenem Bach." Health and pleasure manifest themselves in an act of vivification (*Gesundheit und Vergnügen / Belebt ihr Aug' und Herz*), one that traverses sense experience, attains the heart, re-exteriorizes itself in the traits of the face (*Reizt in ihren Zügen*), and becomes the very emblem of an Anacreontic joke (*Und lacht in ihrem Scherz*).

The final stanza of the poem constructs its ideal of wisdom as an aesthetic exercise, an exercise that precisely negates subject formation as a disciplinary binding:

Nichts darf den Weisen binden,  
Der alle Sinnen übt,  
Die Anmuth zu empfinden,  
Die Land und Feld umgibt.  
Ihm prangt die fette Weide  
Und die bethaute Flur:  
Ihm grünet Lust und Freude,  
Ihm mahlet die Natur.<sup>338</sup>

The exercise of the senses, one directed toward the gracefulness that manifests itself in all of nature, renders the act of reception and the act of creation indistinguishable. Merleau-Ponty discusses Cézanne's dictum that the landscape thinks itself in him, noting that in the act of painting, the most supposedly interiorized desires, intentions, perceptions, become so inextricably enmeshed with the givenness of the outside world that it no longer makes sense to distinguish between interior and exterior, subject and object.<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> Hagedorn, *Oden und Lieder in fünf Büchern* 90.

<sup>337</sup> Theocritus' *Idylls* invoke and thematize the problematic differentiation of pastoral poetry from heroic poetry, see Judith Haber, *Pastoral and the Poetics of Self-Contradiction: Theocritus to Marvell* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994).

<sup>338</sup> Hagedorn, *Oden und Lieder in fünf Büchern* 90.

<sup>339</sup> "The landscape thinks itself in me," he said, 'and I am its consciousness.'" Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-sense*, trans. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1991) 17.

Although Hagedorn is not concerned at all with the boundaries between subject and object, his poem articulates a form of practice in which the conception of the human being as an autonomous, closed individual already appears implausible. In the domain of the aesthetic exercise ([*der Weisen*] *der alle Sinnen übt*), the very conception of discipline as self-mastery or subject formation is replaced by an attentiveness that opens perception, allowing it to experience physical reality, *Die Anmuth zu empfinden, / Die Land und Felt umgibt*. The senses become the world that is at one and the same time interior and exterior to human experience. "Ihm malet die Natur," nature paints for the human being—or for the human being, nature paints. And yet, we know that nature does not paint, because to paint signified for those at the beginning of the eighteenth century precisely to imitate nature. The imitation of nature, the cornerstone of artifice and poetic creation, becomes located in nature itself; the poem naturalizes itself through artifice, and the drive to imitate nature forms a property of the landscape itself. The exercise of the senses allows nature to show itself as an artist, infusing perception itself with the delight of representation. Such an exercise releases the human from its constraints, "Nichts darf den Weisen binden." For Hagedorn, the aesthetic exercise does not discipline, but unbinds.

### 5. Goethe's *Annette* and the Opposing Attractions of Rococo Poetry

Goethe's first serious attempts as an author gravitate toward the Rococo style in his first poetry collection, unpublished during his lifetime, *Annette* (1767). Goethe is writing in the midst of the culture of wit in Leipzig, and the poems in this collection represent, in a certain sense, the apex of the Rococo style, its blossom and at the same time, the beginning of its obsolescence.<sup>340</sup> In this relatively late product of the Rococo, Goethe lays bare the tensions in the idiom itself as one poised between conflicting attractors: one tending toward transcendental schemas of organization, the other toward pure immanence; one toward immortality, the other toward the moment of presence; one toward virtue and the ethical, the other toward sensuality and immorality. Indeed, the struggle between the ethical and the daemonic that characterizes Goethe's later work appears as a latent structure of his first poetic manuscript, albeit manifesting itself in the opposing attractions of the Rococo idiom rather than as a theory of the cosmos. Does *Annette* exist in a tense state of dynamic equilibrium between these two attractions, between the pull toward sensuality, immanence, transience, and the pull toward the ethical, transcendence, immortality—or does it feel drawn more toward one point of attraction more than toward the other?

The opposing poles of attraction travel through the collection of poems along the axes of two pairs of two narratives, each explicitly labeled as narratives (*Erzählungen*) that differentiate these works from the other poems in *Annette*. One pair of narratives is entitled "Kunst, die Spröden zu fangen," the other, "Triumph der Tugend." The works are intended as parallel and oppositional representations of one another. The narratives of

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<sup>340</sup> Citations to *Annette* are taken from Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Der junge Goethe*, ed. Hannah Fischer-Lamberg, vol. 1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999) 175.

"Kunst die Spröden zu fangen" end with the victory of the seducer over the prude and imply the sought-after pleasure of sexual consummation in the second narrative: "Die Wangen glühten, und der Busen stieg. Da rief ich: Sieg! Sieg, Amor, Sieg!"<sup>341</sup> In these narratives, eros conquers ethics. However, they are followed by the other group of narratives entitled "Triumph der Tugend." In these works, the attraction of virtue proves the stronger force. The would-be seducer ends in defeat and resigned acceptance: "Es sank mein Arm, aus ihm zur Erd' sie [die Geliebte] nieder, / Ich betet', weint', und riß mich los, und floh."<sup>342</sup> The seducer relinquishes his victim, she falls to the earth, and he integrates himself into the ethical through prayer, shame, and renunciation. The following day, he meets with the beloved again, "Nieder / Zur Erde blickend stand / Ich da."<sup>343</sup> The last act of the poet draws the gaze to the very place where he let the beloved fall: toward the earth—and the gesture of defeat, looking to the ground, fuses eros, shame, renunciation, comfort in the solidity of the ethical.

These two pairs of narratives, one leading to consummation and the other supposedly to virtue, dramatize the potentiality of the Rococo style *as* a potentiality, namely, as an idiom that tends toward licentiousness but may at any moment be repurposed to fit the demands of virtue. *Annette* provides an inside glimpse into the attractive pulls of Rococo lyric, freezing the conflicting tendencies of the Rococo and holding them open in a perpetual state of disjunction, placing the reader at the unstable bifurcation point between these opposing attractions.

Does Goethe's *Annette* merely analyze the attractors of Rococo poetry poised between licentiousness and the ethical, or does it feel more pulled to one sphere over the other? Although the poetry seems to conclude with the "Triumph der Tugend," which in turn alienates the poetic voice from his persona as a seducer, it nevertheless maintains the line of attraction along the axis of immanence, perhaps, as the stronger pull.

The attraction to the sensual over the ethical, pleasure over virtue, appears concentrated in the figure of Annette herself, who acts as a magnetic node, pushing the entire collection stronger along the axis of immanence. In the second narrative, "Kunst die Spröden zu fangen," the narrator gives his account of the seduction of Charlotte. The narrator claims that Charlotte was "immer zurückhaltend, immer streng gegen mich, wie es meine Annette jetzt ist, wenn sie ihre Mutter beobachtet."<sup>344</sup> The narrator establishes an explicit link between Charlotte and Annette, suggesting that this particular narrative form, in which sensuality conquers ethics, has maintained a stronger resonance with the current state of the first-person lyric persona. Moreover, the first-person lyric persona only mentions Annette by name in this particular narrative. Hence, the "Triumph der Tugend," although it follows "Kunst die Spröde zu fangen" in the sequence of the collection, can only be read ironically when considering the first-person lyric persona's current affirmation of sensualism. He makes certain that the readers are privy to the nature of this relationship between Annette and himself:

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<sup>341</sup> Goethe, *Annette* 175.

<sup>342</sup> Goethe, *Annette* 179.

<sup>343</sup> Goethe, *Annette* 179.

<sup>344</sup> Goethe, *Annette* 173.

Annette an ihren Geliebten

Ich sah wie Doris bey Damöten stand,  
Er nahm sie zärtlich bey der Hand;  
Lang sahen sie einander an,  
Und sahn sich um, ob nicht die Aeltern wachen,  
Und da sie niemand sahn,  
Geschwind—Genug sie machtens, wie wirs machen.<sup>345</sup>

The poem doubles the voyeuristic act: Annette watches the couple in the act of love, and the reader projects this act onto the relationship between Annette and the first-person poetic persona. Doris and Dämöt look around to see whether or not their parents are awake, drawing another parallel between their own act of love and the relationship between the poetic persona and Annette; in front of her mother, Annette must always be "strict" (*streng*) with her lover, but when unobserved, they indulge in this very same erotic pleasure. And just as Annette conveys her own illicit act of voyeurism to her beloved, so too does her beloved then convey their own intimate posture to the readers of this poem, making the readers complicit as second-order voyeurs, while the author himself becomes—an exhibitionist.<sup>346</sup>

Annette's victory, as a persona and as a name, announces itself in the first poem of the collection, a dedication that constructs Annette as a synecdoche, a mere part of the book that can nevertheless stand in for the whole:

Warum sollt' ich, Annette,  
Die Du mir Gottheit, Muse  
Und Freund mir bist, und alles,  
Dieß Buch nicht auch nach deinem  
Geliebten Nahmen nennen?<sup>347</sup>

The identity of Annette, who unites transcendence (*Gottheit*), the mediation of transcendence (*Muse*) and immanence (*Freund*), therefore takes priority over the other poetic personae that appear in the same collection. Moreover, she becomes an emblem for Anacreontic poetry itself, as this poem alone of all the poems in the collection exhibits the traditional eighteenth-century Anacreontic meter popularized by the Halle *Anakreontiker*, iambic trimeter with a feminine ending. Annette, as a persona in the collection, flaunts her sexuality in the face of the opposing forces of virtue—thereby assuring the victory of Anacreontic sensual immanence over the moralization of the Rococo style in the struggle between these two tendencies that this collection so vividly dramatizes.

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<sup>345</sup> Goethe, *Annette* 187.

<sup>346</sup> Alfred Anger notes the *pointe* of the poem: "inderm [der Leser] den Fortgang der Doris-Dämöt-Episode errät, verrät er unfreiwillig sich selbst. Der eine Sünder ertappt den anderen; er hebt den Schleier und entlarvt—sich selbst." Alfred Anger, "'Annette an ihren Geliebten'. Ein Gedicht Goethes aus der Leipziger Zeit," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 37.3 (1963): 461.

<sup>347</sup> Goethe, *Annette* 167.

Goethe's *Annette* embodies the instability of the Rococo style itself, poised between the purely immanent affirmation of desire and the contradictory pull toward the sphere of the ethical. The poetic persona, however, reveals himself—and perhaps his readers as well, since they read Annette's letter out of the same voyeuristic impulses with which she watched the Doris and Dämot—as one pulled more to the attraction of immanence than to the ethical. Later, this very attraction would metamorphose and reconfigure itself as the pull of the daemonic, "eine der moralischen Weltordnung, wo nicht entgegengesetzte, doch sie durchkreuzende Macht, so daß man die eine für den Zettel, die andere für den Einschlag könnte gelten lassen."<sup>348</sup> The daemonic, however, as a transcendental-cosmological principle, departs from the pull of Rococo pleasure as the celebration of pure immanence, as the ripple of stimulation that comes from no point in the cosmos and remains caught in the pleasure of its own game.

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<sup>348</sup> Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens, ed. Peter Sprengel, vol. 16 (Munich: Hanser, 1985) 821-2.

## Chapter III: Anacreontic Play and the Disorganization of Transcendental Orders

### 1. Johann Ludwig Gleim's *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern*

The potentiality of Anacreontic play to function as a perturbation or displacement of social and transcendental symbolic codes of organization reaches an apex in Gleim's *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern*. The songs, widely read and imitated in the eighteenth century in German speaking countries, appeared in two volumes in 1744 and 1745. Gleim replaces transcendental functions—which I define as culturally informed ways of ordering phenomena, normalizing behavioral patterns, or linking the world of appearances to organizing principles operating beyond appearances—with the immanence of a universalized erotic desire and poetic pleasure.<sup>349</sup> The pleasure of Anacreontic poetry loosens the hold of transcendental codes in a similar manner to Breitingner's use of the fantastic, *das Wunderbare*, which confronts readers with differences from their own received cultural norms and habits in order to harness the novelty of the poetic act. The poems of *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern*, especially in the first volume, almost function as a catalogue of eighteenth-century forms of organization and their systematic poetic disorganization. The songs draw upon a set of poetic topoi, some of which can already be found in the corpus of Anacreontea itself, but they direct themselves to forms of intelligibility specific to eighteenth-century culture.

### 2. The Anacreontic Question and the Implosion of the Public Sphere

In "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung" (1784), Kant describes the necessary preconditions for Enlightenment as follows: "Zu dieser Aufklärung aber wird nichts erfordert als *Freiheit*; und zwar die unschädlichste unter allem, was nur Freiheit heißen mag, nämlich die: von seiner Vernunft in allen Stücken *öffentlichen Gebrauch* zu machen."<sup>350</sup> According to Kant, the use of public reason consists in the dissemination of one's opinions as a scholar in journals and books for an audience of readers: "Ich verstehe aber unter dem öffentlichen Gebrauche seiner eigenen Vernunft denjenigen, den jemand

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<sup>349</sup> I am aware that technically, the proper term is *transcendent* and not *transcendental* when referring to a conception of the world beyond appearances. However, I am not using the term "transcendental" in its Kantian sense, but rather I use this term to refer to social and cultural processes of normalization that generate order, intelligibility, judgments, norms in certain spheres of life—not all of which are "transcendent" (for example, the norms of familial piety are not "transcendent," beyond experience, but they are, in my sense, *transcendental*, because they organize behavioral patterns in a way that grounds or legitimizes the activity within their own sphere).

<sup>350</sup> Immanuel Kant, "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung," *Gesammelte Schriften (Akademie-Ausgabe)*, vol. 8 (Berlin, Leipzig: Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1968) 36.

als Gelehrter von ihr vor dem ganzen Publikum der *Leserwelt* macht."<sup>351</sup> Kant articulates what had long been part of the culture of eighteenth-century life, namely, the circulation of ideas through publications, written disputes, and public correspondence.<sup>352</sup> Gottsched and Bodmer and Breitinger had participated in one of the most famous literary debates of the eighteenth century, a debate that operated paradigmatically for what Kant would later construe as the public use of reason.

The public use of reason in this case fails Shaftsbury's test of ridicule for the Anacreontic poets in Halle. Gleim writes to Uz: "Ich weiß schon daß ihre Meinung von dem Streite zwischen Gottsched und den Schweizern mit dem meinigen übereinkommt. Sie machen sich beyde bey den Vernünftigen lächerlich."<sup>353</sup> In the letter correspondence, Gleim appeals to reason in order to underscore the absurdity of the debate between Gottsched and the Swiss critics. In his poetry, however, it is not the public use of reason that demarcates the line between the ridiculous and the valid; rather, the public use of reason is itself made ridiculous. Gleim's Anacreontic poet establishes a poetic identity that refuses to integrate itself or position itself in the debates of the scholarly world:

#### Der Gelehrte

Soll ich von den Zeitungsschreibern  
 Meinen Namen schreiben lernen?  
 Soll ich in dem Sterngewölbe  
 Neue Welten sichtbar machen?  
 Soll ich Wolfen oder Knutzen  
 Zweifelsknoten lösen helfen?  
 Soll ich Stoff und Sittenlehren  
 Für die Blätterschreiber stehlen?  
 Soll ich von den Bücherrichtern  
 Simpfn oder tadeln lernen?  
 Soll ich in der Weltgeschichte  
 Proben tapfrer Narren suchen?  
 Soll ich meinen Geist befragen:  
 Was er sei, und wo er wohne?  
 [...]  
 Soll ich Blei zu Golde schmelzen ?  
 Soll ich Rätze rathen lehren?  
 Soll ich Miltons Teufel schelten?  
 Soll ich Wunderwerke dichten?  
 Oder soll ich sie erklären?<sup>354</sup>

The poem, in its disdain of discourses associated with public rationality, ironically reveals its own awareness of these discourses. The use of the list, itself a form of second-

<sup>351</sup> Kant, "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung," 37.

<sup>352</sup> See Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990).

<sup>353</sup> Gleim, *Briefwechsel zwischen Gleim und Uz* 53.

<sup>354</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 28.

order organization of schemas of organization, becomes associated with a horizon of repeated and expected behavior—*soll ich?*—that the Anacreontic poet dismisses and refuses. In another poem, entitled "Lebenspflichten," the poet makes a counter-list, forms of pleasure become duties for life in a manner that differs radically from future attempts, such as that undertaken by Schiller, to fuse ethics and inclination: "Soll ich trinken? Soll ich lieben? / Soll ich tanzen? Soll ich lachen? / [...] / Ja, dis soll ich, und mein Vater / Lehrt es mich bei grauen Haaren, / und er nennt es: Lebenspflichten."<sup>355</sup> The list of *Lebenspflichten* of the Anacreontic poet inverts the list of the scholar.

In "Der Gelehrte," on the contrary, the poet refuses to enter precisely those discourses that attempt to generate normativity in an Enlightenment dialogue between equals in the public sphere. The poem composes a discursive list of language games aimed at the perfectability of human knowledge: the public use of reason (lines 1-2), the Copernican revolution in astronomy (3-4), metaphysical inquiries about doubt (5-6), the exercise of virtue (7-8), the judgment of literary criticism (9-10), the historiography of nationalism, heroism, and world history (11-12), disputations on the nature of the mind (13-14), the legitimacy of religious practices (15-16), alchemical experimentation (19), and principles of governance (20). The poem mocks its own form of enumeration, flaunting its superficiality with regard to the most pressing issues of the day, indifferent to all claims of epistemological advancement or validity.

The list concludes with a compressed representation of the debate between Gottsched—"Soll ich Miltons Teufel schelten?"—and Bodmer and Breitinger, "Soll ich Wunderwerke dichten?"<sup>356</sup> The poetic persona positions itself on neither side of the debate, thereby performatively refusing the demand of public reason that one take a stand and exercise judgment. Moreover, as a poetic practice, Anacreontic poetry coheres neither with Gottsched's didacticism nor with Bodmer and Breitinger's defense of the fantastic. However, like the fantastic, it alienates itself from the normalizing discourses and practices of its time, albeit by prioritizing pleasure and joy above all attempts to use public reason to generate normativity. The Anacreontic poet does not ignore the public sphere—the mere compilation of the list of public discourses suggests as much—but sidesteps its attempt to universalize itself and impose its patterns of behavior and thought over all written forms of discourse.

The scholar, as the gathering figure of Enlightenment reason, is the archenemy of the Anacreontic poet. The Anacreontic poet, above all, exercises his own aesthetic activity as an alternative not only to discursive reason, but also, to the particular forms of *reading practices* associated with the scholar:

Er, der Erbfeind meiner Freude,  
Soll sich blaß und elend lesen.  
Und dann will ich ihn befragen:  
Macht mich auch mein Mädchen elend?<sup>357</sup>

<sup>355</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 27.

<sup>356</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 28.

<sup>357</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 28.

The scholar's reading practices, which demand that one read until one is pale and miserable, contrast with the reading practices triggered by the poem itself, which excite, stimulate, and invigorate according to its own rhetorical movements. Regarding the differentiation between the Anacreontic poet's and the scholar's forms of discourse, ultimately, the poet beats the scholar at his own game. The final rhetorical gesture addresses the scholar directly with a question, ironically generating the public debate that at first was disdained. However, the question is not one that the scholar could take seriously. The question is designed only to reveal the superiority of the poet's form of life, the value of his eroticized and fetishized *Mädchen*—and his own culture of reading and writing—over a culture of reading and writing that attempts to judge, evaluate, analyze, understand.

In the act of reading the poem, the poet addresses his question not merely to the scholar, but rather, to the reader. Has his *Mädchen* made the reader of the text miserable—not the *Mädchen* as a real girl, but the *Mädchen* in its immanent presence as word, intensity, signifier, poetic topos, rhetorical game? The affect generated by the text confirms (or denies) the implicit claim that Anacreontic reading generates a form of pleasure that differs radically from the travails of scholarly reading. Moreover, it articulates a bond with its reader that is not predicated on consensus, but on affective harmonization, or rather, what the eighteenth century called sociability (*Geselligkeit*).<sup>358</sup>

For the poet, the question does not even need to be answered—and in the question that is not a real question, one finds the most important movement against Enlightenment public debate as a rational form of discourse among equal participants that submits all speech acts to the claims of logical and universal validity.<sup>359</sup> The Anacreontic question—*Macht mich auch mein Mädchen elend?*—is not dialectical. More important than the question itself is the final alliterative flourish, the delight of the letter *m* and its copulation with hard and soft iterations of *ch*. Indeed, what is the poem other than an extension and reproduction of insincere questions, questions that are not intended to be answered? This form of the question operates along a wholly different plane of activity than the question of the scholar, and it disavows the Socratic tradition of the question as a pathway into knowledge. It is, in the deepest and most superficial sense, rhetorical.

### 3. Anacreontic Impiety

In Gleim's "Der Schöpfer," the poet asks the gods: "Laßt mich auch einmal erschaffen," saying, "Ich verspreche Euch, liebste Götter, / Nichts als Mädchen zu erschaffen."<sup>360</sup> The poet's parody of theological creation may also be read as a poetological statement. The Anacreontic poet does not seek to create novelty or even beauty, but merely to reproduce and multiply objects of desire. Novelty is generated not

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<sup>358</sup> Such a bond would seem to integrate the Anacreontic lyric back into a certain tendency of the Enlightenment. For the "positive" interpretations of the utility of Rococo poetry in discourses of the time, see Perels, *Studien zur Aufnahme und Kritik der Rokokolyrik zwischen 1740 und 1760* 138-55.

<sup>359</sup> See Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*.

<sup>360</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 104.

in the poem, but by the exercise of the poem, by the difference that it introduces between its own detranscendentalizing poetics and the cultural framework of intelligibility of its readership. The poet does not produce anything new; rather, he claims for his idiom a *reproductive* poetics—more so even than Novalis—in the literal sense of the term: "Daß der Raum, bis an den Himmel, / Überall von Mädchen wimmelt."<sup>361</sup> His tower of Babel, reaching to the sky, saturates all space, and it is composed of the poet's own erotic desire projected onto the ethers and up to the heavens. The poet's unbounded desire undoes the vertically differentiating, hierarchizing logic inherent to theological creation. The transcendent, typically manifested by a vertical upwards journey to God or to the Idea, here becomes subject to a homogeneous flattening, just as the density of immanent desire is maintained and multiplied. If Hölderlin's poetry desires to move the vertical axis of the divine onto the horizontal axis of the sensual world, Gleim moves the horizontal onto the vertical, in essence eliminating all verticality through the expansive spread of reproductive immanence.<sup>362</sup> Anacreontic eros leads not to higher realms of ideality, but rather, to the repetition, multiplication, and diffusion of a self-sustaining desire.

In "Der Regenbogen," the poet captures the color of the cheeks of a woman during her first sexual encounter and fills the heavens with this color, preferring this imagined projection to a natural rainbow:

Laßt mir tausend solche Wangen  
Um den halben Himmel setzen  
Setzt sie mir in runder Ordnung  
Unter diesen Regenbogen.  
Plötzlich soll er sich verlieren,  
Denn er soll dem Wangenbogen,  
Wie der Mond, der Sonnen weichen.<sup>363</sup>

The beauty of nature and its own forms of self-multiplication and diffusion in the rainbow must yield to the *Wangenbogen*, the artificial creation of a poetic imagination. Sexual desire and the poetic organization of this desire surpass the order of the natural world, and even the glory of nature itself gives way to the rhetoric of artifice.

To portray the popularity of Anacreontic poetry in Germany as a response to Pietism suggests that these poets were merely reacting to their environments instead of actively developing the literary tradition to which they belong.<sup>364</sup> Nevertheless, Gleim believed that Pietism was a sect, and he sets the Anacreontic poem in opposition to it. After citing two lines from an anti-Pietistic poem to Uz, he notes: "Wenn sie einen Freund haben, den sie von dieser Secte abwendig machen wollen, so will ich ihnen das Gedicht überschicken."<sup>365</sup>

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<sup>361</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 104.

<sup>362</sup> Fitzgerald's interpretation of "Patmos" stresses how Hölderlin attempts to move the divine from the vertical to the horizontal axis of language, thereby increasing the agonistic properties of the poem. See Fitzgerald, *Agonistic Poetry: The Pindaric mode in Pindar, Horace, Hölderlin, and the English Ode* 48-72.

<sup>363</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 49.

<sup>364</sup> For a summary of the tension between religious institutions and Anacreontic poetry, see Perels, *Studien zur Aufnahme und Kritik der Rokokolyrik zwischen 1740 und 1760* 123-37.

<sup>365</sup> Gleim, *Briefwechsel zwischen Gleim und Uz* 55.

In the poems themselves, the poetic identity moves not only away from Pietistic forms of spirituality and inwardness, but from any form of religiousness that posits a law exterior to the operation of desire. In "Der Atheist," the poet threatens to deny God—or rather, the god of love—if he does not aid in the seduction of a prude:

Hast du mir nach drei Minuten  
Diese Spröde nicht gebändigt:  
O! so will ich in der vierten  
Dich und deine Mutter läugnen.<sup>366</sup>

The Anacreontic poet contaminates mythological and Christian forms of transcendence, or more precisely, displaces Christian forms of thought with his own mythological vocabulary. "Der Atheist," therefore, does not merely deny the mythological god of love, but the divine as such. While the denial of the divine is never made explicit, it nevertheless constitutes the main thrust of the *pointe*. The denial of Christ and Mary—*so will ich... / Dich und deine Mutter läugnen*—places the Anacreontic poet in the position of the wayward apostle; indeed, he *challenges* the divine, invoking heresy—precisely that which the divine order attempts to marginalize—as a form of power over the transcendent.

The mediation of the divine and the human, the very crux of Christian thought—an attractor that Hölderlin would make the centerpiece of many of his poetic projects—becomes downgraded to the facilitation of an erotic encounter, willfully confusing Christian iconography and the Rococo iconography of Cupid. In a poem entitled "Der Vermittler," the miraculous appearance of the god of love permits him to play the role of the intermediary, the otherwise despised figure of the *Kuppler*. It is one of the few poems in the *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern* that explicitly violate the laws of probability and draw attention to this violation, even referring to the fantastic, or *das Wunderbare*, in order to describe the appearance of the god from a rosebud: "welch ein Wunder! / Amor kam herausgesprungen."<sup>367</sup> Amor's miraculous appearance is framed as a redemption and a resurrection, literally repaying a debt of kisses, the "Schulden," that Doris owes to her lover. Rather than linking the realm of the divine and the human, however, he mediates between worldly lovers: "Schwebend flog er, wie ein Engel, / Zwischen mir und meiner Schöne."<sup>368</sup> After he has finished his mediation, he entrusts to his "Silfen" the task of gathering tears of joy in order to keep the lovers' kisses continually moist, "bis er zu der schönen Mutter / Wieder in den Himmel käme."<sup>369</sup> Finally, the poet urges disbelieving readers to see for themselves the "roses" that have blossomed on the breasts of Doris—fulfilling the desire to make the appearance of the god manifest in the flesh, "Könnt ich doch den blöden Schönen / Die Erscheinung sichtbar machen!"<sup>370</sup> The god, manifesting himself to redeem a debt, making himself visible by virtue of a miracle before rejoining his mother in heaven: it is not Christ, but the god of love, sent to unite two lovers and

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<sup>366</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 36.

<sup>367</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 9.

<sup>368</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 9.

<sup>369</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 12.

<sup>370</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 12.

provide visible evidence of his existence. If there is an Anacreontic faith, it is a faith not in the guarantee of the beyond, but in the immanence of desire in the visible world.

#### 4. The Copernican Revolution and the Anacreontic Eye

The movements of the stars have perennially pointed beyond themselves for those bound to the earth, signaling the existence of a cosmos much larger than the one given merely to human senses. At different times, the stars functioned as repositories of immortal deeds, texts upon which destinies were written, the evidence of a divine love animating and pervading all things, the source of astrological knowledge and the power of prophecy, the incomprehensible mystery of God, or the order of nature operating according to observable and mathematically comprehensible universal laws.<sup>371</sup> Gleim consecrates two of his *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern* to the figure of the stargazer, a figure that, as an emblem of the Copernican Revolution, in the eighteenth century embodies the transition from the epistemological limitations of the ancients to the technological and progressive epistemology of the moderns. In a general sense, the refutation of the geocentric world altered the very conception of God, the human being, and the cosmos, while simultaneously defining the methods and modes of generating evidence for that which may qualify as empirical knowledge.<sup>372</sup>

For Gleim, the stargazer, one who looks up to the sky rather than to the world as manifest before the senses, is a miserable figure, one who "ohne Scherz und Liebe, / Durch alle Nächte wachet."<sup>373</sup> The Anacreontic poet appears at first as one who is either incapable of or uninterested in the new technologies and apparatuses that produce empirical knowledge. When the stargazer asks the Anacreontic poet to look at the moon, the latter does not approach the moon as a scientific object, but instead, personifies it, portraying it metaphorically as a tyrant that nevertheless permits the other stars to shine:

So dulde doch, Tiranne,  
Bey deinem grossen Schimmer,  
Die kleinen Himmelslichter!  
Allein der Sternbeseher  
Beseufzte meine Dummheit,  
Und rief beim letzten Seufzer:  
Du Dummer, steh doch stille!  
Ich stand; er rief: Steh veste!  
Und legt auf meine Schulter

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<sup>371</sup> For an excellent representation of this history, see Hans Blumenberg, *The Genesis of the Copernican World*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987).

<sup>372</sup> Karl S. Guthke describes how the new technology of the telescope functioned as a crystallization point around which the fantasy of "new worlds" came into being, and it is perhaps against this form of practice that Gleim directs this particular Anacreontic song. See Karl S. Guthke, *Der Mythos der Neuzeit. Das Thema der Mehrheit der Welten in der Literatur- und Geistesgeschichte von der kopernikanischen Wende bis zur Science Fiction* (Frankfurt: Bern, 1983) 217-50.

<sup>373</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 33.

Ein Rohr, als wollt er schiessen.  
 Ich bat ihn um mein Leben,  
 Allein ich muß ietzt lachen,  
 Es fehlt ihm Rohr und Pulver,  
 Denn die vermeinte Flinte,  
 Das Rohr auf meiner Schulter,  
 War nur ein langes Auge,  
 Womit er durch die Lüfte  
 Den Mond herunter holte.<sup>374</sup>

The Anacreontic poet willfully excludes himself from both the scientific approach to natural objects and the *techné* that makes this approach possible. He misrecognizes not only the physical characteristics of the moon, turning the object into a poetic topos rather than an object for knowledge, but also misreads the technological symbol of the turn to modern science and the revolution of empirical knowledge, the telescope. The telescope appears to the poet not as a tool, but at first as a weapon, which forms the pretext for a display of stupidity that draws upon its own willful reserve of ignorance in order to ironize the demands of technology and knowledge. Finally, when he does grasp the function of the device, he calls it "nur ein langes Auge," thereby evading one of the most controversial epistemological debates and revolutions that marks the fraught division between the ancients and the moderns. Indeed, the telescope was not always considered an adequate artificial expansion of natural sense perception. As Blumenberg notes, "Copernicanism tore asunder the fit (which was already loosened, anthropologically) between the world and man's organs: the congruence between reality and visibility."<sup>375</sup> When the Anacreontic poet calls the telescope "nur ein langes Auge," he closes or overlooks the divide between the world and the human senses, a divide that was partially occasioned by the telescope and the subsequent insufficiency of the naked human eye to attain the truth of the world. For the Anacreontic poet, in this case, technology merely extends the sensual capacities of the human being. And yet, the Anacreontic poet does not seem concerned about the *fit* between the senses and the exterior world; more significant is that the artificial eye imposes a way of seeing that, in one sense, depoeticizes the world.

The empirical scientist, at first glance, only seems to be driven by knowledge, the desire to classify and measure, to use the laws of mathematics and geometry to bring the world of the beyond down to the realm of the human and fetch the moon from its place in the heavens. Empirical knowledge, after all, seeks to move aside the veil that nature uses to hide herself, even if, behind this veil, there appears only another veil.<sup>376</sup> However, scientific knowledge does not merely bracket the world beyond the senses; the ontology

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<sup>374</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 33.

<sup>375</sup> Blumenberg, *The Genesis of the Copernican World* 642.

<sup>376</sup> Blumenberg notes that in the seventeenth century, "the new 'world-optics' still enter the service of the Baroque metaphors for the world: The human eye penetrates through one new backcloth and stage set after another, into backgrounds that in their turn are also backcloths and sets." Blumenberg, *The Genesis of the Copernican World* 641. The Anacreontic poet's understanding of optics does not enter into the space of this bad infinity; indeed, he does not even turn his gaze to the stage behind the stage, but tears his eye away from the text of the heavens and toward the gaze that has been observing *him*.

of the transcendent belongs no longer merely to metaphysicians and theologians, but also to scientists and philosophers attempting to ascertain the secrets of nature in the form of universal physical and geometric laws. Hence, the stargazer's first impulse is to measure and classify the moon, to make it an object of knowledge: "Ich will im Monde / Die Thäler voller Tannen, / Und alle Wälder zählen; / Ich will die Berge messen..."<sup>377</sup> The stargazer sees the telescope as a tool that allows him to deploy *ratio*, to measure and count, a process that would seem at first merely aimed toward generating series of numbers.

Even for the stargazer, however, the attractions of erotic desire constitute a more primordial motivational force than the drive to knowledge or the desire to classify. He exclaims, "Im Monde wohnen Mädchens!"<sup>378</sup> The empirical, technologically mediated gaze upon the moon is channeled back into the domain of fantasy. Empirical technologies of vision become contaminated by the erotic imagination, fusing sensual desire and epistemological desire, the visibility of dancing girls and the visibility of forms of Euclidean geometry.<sup>379</sup>

Ich sehe kleine Mädchens;  
Sie tanzen unter Knaben,  
Sie tanzen nach Figuren,  
Nach Winkeln und Quadraten,  
Nach Kegeln und Cilindern,  
Nach Zirkeln und Ovalen,  
Und spielen mit dem Zirkel,  
Und stehn auf hohen Gipfeln,  
Und sehn mit längern Augen,  
Als Neuton und Kopernik.<sup>380</sup>

The claims, techniques, and methods of Newtonian and Copernican science, even in the case of the stargazer, are trumped by the more fundamental dynamics of eros. The "long eye" that astronomers use to probe the secrets of the universe is finally replaced by the even longer eyes of the girls dancing on the moon with angles and squares, cylinders and spheres. The theoretical sciences, whose exercise depends on sensual knowledge just as much as theoretical rationality, geometry and mathematics, are eventually overcome by the dynamics of the aesthetic itself, by the irreducible presence of the senses in the most basic empirical investigation. If Baumgarten wanted to channel sensory cognition into the development of an epistemological theory, the Anacreontic poet reclaims the senses from its epistemological sublimation, bringing it back into the irrepressible economy of physical desire.

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<sup>377</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 33.

<sup>378</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 34.

<sup>379</sup> Blumenberg describes how "Berkeley had asserted for the first time in 1709 that geometry does not have to do with the structure of optical space.... It is not without rational charm to see that a line leads from the ramifying consequences of Copernicanism for optical self-consciousness into the history of the origins of non-Euclidean geometries...." Blumenberg, *The Genesis of the Copernican World* 642.

<sup>380</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 34.

The Anacreontic poet regains interest after the stargazer conveys to him this geometrical and scientific sexual fantasy, succumbing for a short while to the temptation to see with the "eye" of the scientist:

Ach laß mir doch die Mädchen  
Mit meinem Auge sehen.  
Gleich grif er an mein Auge,  
Und sprach, wie Zaub'rer sprechen:  
Dis Auge werde länger.  
Indem er dieses sagte,  
Ließ ein vergnügtes Mädchen,  
Das mich und ihn beschau'te,  
Das mich und ihn verlachte,  
Die schwarzen Augen funkeln.  
Schnell rief ich: Weg vom Auge!  
Mein Auge soll nicht wachsen.  
Besieh' du deine Mädchens.  
Ich will mit diesen spielen.<sup>381</sup>

The poem locates the ultimate imaginary impulse driving the physical sciences not in a complete description of the cosmos or a theory of the universe, but rather, in the desire for a perpetual lengthening of the eye. Unsatisfied by the reality offered up by the visible world, incapable of pulling aside the veil that would reveal the secret essence of matter, the scientist attains satisfaction only by producing vision with an ever-expanding artificial eye, a fetishistic object that gathers and embodies the scientist's power. The Anacreontic poet rejects the techniques and tools that turn the eye into an enormous phallus, an organ that must continually grow, penetrating into deeper spheres of reality.

The stargazer's vision is contaminated by tendencies that are incompatible with the pure or theoretical scientific gaze. The true identity of the stargazer betrays itself in the intrusion of sexual desire into his pretension to knowledge: he is motivated by the same impulses as those that drive the Anacreontic poet, it is merely that his erotic intentionality is displaced onto a realm that can only be attained with an artificially lengthened, perpetually growing eye. At last, he betrays his own scientific identity when he speaks with the language of the counter-epistemological model of the empirical sciences themselves: magic. When the stargazer speaks as a magician—*wie Zaub'rer*—in order to "lengthen" the eye of the poet, he becomes the very figure from which the modern empirical scientist seeks to distinguish himself. The homoerotic posture in which the two men find one another compounds the epistemological shame of this scene when they appear not as the subjects of their own sovereign gaze, but as objects of the gaze of another, of a girl whose eyes register the homo/heteroerotic game unfolding between the poet and the stargazer.

The unconscious desire of the Anacreontic poet, all along, was to see with his own eye, "mit meinem Auge," that is, with an eye opposed to the hyper-phallic and fetishistic eye of the stargazer. The poet's epiphany arrives, however, when he ceases to

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<sup>381</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 34.

be the subject that sees, but himself becomes the object being seen by the *vergnügte Mädchen*, / *Das mich und ihn beschau'te*, / *Das mich und ihn verlachte*. He is catapulted out of a voyeuristic fantasy that attracts him to the invisible realm, a realm operating beyond the world of appearances inaccessible to naked sensory perception, by becoming the object of another's voyeuristic gaze. He thereby becomes subject—or object—of a test of ridicule that was once his privileged domain. Moreover, this female gaze tears the poet's eye from the text of the stars, from the attempt to locate meaning in the beyond or heal the rift between the realm of the senses and the hidden mechanisms of nature. For the poet, the model of vision that takes priority over all other models is neither microscopic nor telescopic, it is the regard that travels from one human being to another, eyes that may excite shame, scorn, pleasure, or desire. Such eyes bring human beings back into this world instead of catapulting them into a higher world or attempting to bring the higher world down to earth.

### 5. The Discipline of the Family and the Law of the *Muß*

The most obvious and most effective production of bourgeois subjects in the mid-eighteenth century—of citizens, Christians, human beings—crystallized around the organization of family life and depended upon the authority of the law of the father. Rococo poetry often addresses itself to fathers, to mothers, to sisters, to children—to all members of the family and therefore to the family structure itself—in ways that draw attention to the imperfect exercise of discipline in the organization of the family. Often, the Anacreontic poet simply bypasses this structure; Gleim's Anacreontic poet, in the poem "Die freie Liebe," prefers free love to marriage, and in this case comes dangerously close to the French libertine, an allusion that can be heard in his occupation with freedom, *la liberté*. Gleim's Anacreontic poet, unlike Götz, is not concerned with resolving the conflict between pleasure and virtue. On the contrary, he seeks to hold them apart, separating the codes of enjoyment and virtue, aesthetic pleasure and ethical utility: "Der allerwürdigste Genuß / Ein süßser und verschwiegener Kuß / Wird bitter durch das Wörtlein: Muß."<sup>382</sup> Throughout the poem, the poet celebrates the freedom to choose an erotic object outside of the institutional confines of marriage. However, the true freedom of "Die freie Liebe" consists not in the free choice of an erotic object, but in unfettered poetic activity. The discipline of the Anacreontic poet urges living beings to "exercise" themselves through humor, and it is only in this exercise that the Anacreontic definition of freedom emerges:

Es lebe, was sich scherzend übt!  
 Es lebe, was sich mir ergiebt!  
 Und doch dabei die Freiheit liebt,  
 Die Freiheit, meinen Schatz auf Erden.<sup>383</sup>

<sup>382</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 51.

<sup>383</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 52.

Freedom, a concept that would later become inextricably associated with autonomy, giving one's self the law, and the dignity or worth of the human being that emerges from the exercise of this power—in short, the moment of transcendence at the core of the human—itself becomes the final erotic object that the poet chooses. In this instance, freedom still doubles back on itself, but only inasmuch as it constitutes both the subject and the object of Anacreontic love. The poet is in love with the freedom of his own love, and such a freedom only manifests itself through the exercise of the poem itself. Freedom for the Anacreontic poet is a treasure *on earth* and *in the poem*, free to construe matrimonial love as a violation of the pleasure principle. If, according to the philosophy of autonomy, freedom consists in giving oneself the law, freedom in this case consists in the validation of an alternative order to the "*Muß*," something that is only possible poetically. In the wake of Pietism, marriage does not merely function as a guarantee of economic or familial stability, but mediates between the worldly and the divine, standing in for the divine order as such.<sup>384</sup> The divine order, the economic order, and the ethical order are all harmonized in the structure of marriage. The resonance between marriage and the ethical—later, figures such as Mittler in Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften* and Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* would continue to draw upon this link—dissipates into *poetic libertinism* in Gleim's poem. For the poet here does not merely attack marriage, but the ethical sphere as a whole, the *Muß*. The libertine, however, appears in the Anacreontic poem less as practice, and more as a joke, and it is in fact the joke—"Es lebe, was sich scherzend übt!"<sup>385</sup>—rather than sexual liberty that provides the condition of possibility of Anacreontic freedom.

Marriage stabilizes and reproduces the ethics of bourgeois society by reproducing the structure of the family. In the Anacreontic poem, however, the family, as a gathering space of norms and practices designed to reproduce its own structural stability, as the central set of relations that define, anchor, and propagate the identity of the bourgeois subject, loses control of its own ability to generate such stabilized subjects. In the poem, "An die Eltern," the poet relates what can only be described as a failure of discipline in the attempt to transfer subject-formation from the law of the father to the institutions of the Church and State. The eighteenth century is said to have discovered the individuality of the child, that is, the child as a problem for discourse and thought, demanding specific techniques of formation in all areas of life, in families, schools, and churches.<sup>386</sup> In *Emile*, Rousseau portrays the child as a being that demands constant attention and control; the slightest false input can disrupt the formation of the virtuous human being. Family life becomes organized according to the unrealizable ideal of total organization, an ideal that Rousseau expresses paradoxically as the formation of a free and autonomous subject through the omnipresence of control. All areas of life in which children are present become structured according to the potential effects they have on child development.

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<sup>384</sup> Ulrike Gleixner describes marriage in Pietistic bourgeois life as "Zwischen göttlicher und weltlicher Ordnung," see Ulrike Gleixner, *Pietismus und Bürgertum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005) 209-70.

<sup>385</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 52.

<sup>386</sup> See Ulrich Herrmann, "Pädagogisches Denken," *Handbuch der deutschen Bildungsgeschichte: Vom späten 17. Jahrhundert bis zur Neuordnung Deutschlands um 1800*, vol. 2 (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2005).

In contrast, the Anacreontic poet develops a practice of child development that decenters the structure of the family from the will of the father, inverting the hierarchization of the father-child relationship:

Väter! Nöthigt eure Kinder,  
Nie zum Lernen solcher Künste,  
Die sie nicht erlernen wollen.<sup>387</sup>

The poet's injunction to "listen to the child" does not escape the logic of discipline. On the contrary, such an ideology signals the intensified anxiety surrounding the importance of producing a stable identity for the child. And yet, a significant number of Anacreontic poems are drawn to the abnormality of child development, foregrounding pedagogical patterns that diverge widely from the normalizing practices of the time.<sup>388</sup> They direct themselves against the attempt to organize and normalize the life of the child that were characteristic of pedagogical innovations originating specifically from Halle, where Gleim wrote and published these poems. A. H. Francke (1663-1727) had established a famous school and orphanage at Halle dedicated to raising children in accordance with Pietist spirituality. And it was precisely Francke's Pietism that—albeit in an indirect and non-linear way—fueled a "pedagogical realism" that eventually led to the establishment of *Realschulen*, or schools that trained children from early stages to take up a practical profession in the reproduction of civil society.<sup>389</sup> Just years before the *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern* was published, Christoph Semler had founded the first *Realschule* in Halle in 1738.<sup>390</sup>

The poem "An die Eltern," however, focuses on a failed education, one in which the poetic persona reveals himself as a bad subject, incapable of being disciplined and formed in precisely those social roles whose central function is to guarantee the reproduction of disciplinary institutions:

Ich, sein Sohn, ward auch gezwungen,  
Aber hat es was gefruchtet?  
Erst sollt ich im schwarzen Kleide,  
Sorgen vor die Geister lernen,  
Weil es meine Mutter wollte;  
Doch es rette mein Vater  
Mich von solchen schweren Sorgen;

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<sup>387</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 22.

<sup>388</sup> However, there were also movements that ascribed to Anacreontic poetry a social-pedagogical function and attempted to bring these poetic practices in line with Enlightenment functionality. See Perels, *Studien zur Aufnahme und Kritik der Rokokolyrik zwischen 1740 und 1760* 138-55. The exercise values of the poems themselves, however, often stand in tension with the attempt to align them with the values of the Enlightenment.

<sup>389</sup> For a brief introduction to A. H. Francke, see Herrmann, "Pädagogisches Denken," 101-2.

<sup>390</sup> For a history of the development of the *Realschule* in Halle, see Wolfgang Neugebauer, "Niedere Schulen und Realschulen," *Handbuch der deutschen Bildungsgeschichte: Vom späten 17. Jahrhundert bis zur Neuordnung Deutschlands um 1800*, ed. Notker Hammerstein und Ulrich Herrmann, vol. 2 (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2005) 245-47.

Und da sollt ich, wider Willen,  
 Sorgen vor die Körper lernen;  
 Aber es erfuhr mein Vater,  
 Daß ich lieber gar nichts lernte.  
 Endlich nahm er mich beim Arme,  
 Führte mich zum Advokaten,  
 Und ermahnt ihn, daß ichs hörte:  
 Vetter lehre diesen rechten,  
 Halt ihn scharf, und gieb ihm Arbeit.  
 Hurtig gab sie mir der Vetter.  
 Köpfen, Hangen, Peitschen, Rädern  
 Sollt ich aus den Blättern lernen.<sup>391</sup>

The poem describes in its basic form a struggle for power over the formation of identity, a struggle that travels from the mother to the father to the school system. Even the school system is aligned with the family system, as the "Lehrer" is also a "Vetter." The mother wants the child to become a priest, to care for the soul. The father wants him to become a doctor, to care for the body. The failure of the child to be forced into caring both for the health of the soul and of the body leads the father to attempt to force the child to care for social order as a whole as a representative of the law. In each case, the child is to be made responsible for the reproduction and maintenance of institutions of discipline: the church, the hospital, the legal system. In each case, he either fails or deviates from the norms of disciplinary institutions whose very function is to guarantee the production of functional subjects.

The Anacreontic poet, when faced with the inevitability of a social role that appears fundamentally incompatible with his own inclinations and drives, attempts to open up the disciplinary space by amplifying the marginal elements of normalizing practices:

Aber gab er mir Prozesse  
 Von verlorenen Liebesbriefen,  
 Von willkommenen Nachtgespenstern,  
 Von ertappten Anverwandten;  
 [...]

Gleich war Kopf und Feder fleißig  
 Und mein Lehrer konnt es merken,  
 Daß ich nichts erlernen würde,  
 Als die Händel der Verliebten....<sup>392</sup>

Ultimately, the poet is forced to take up a legal apprenticeship, although his concentration on the "business of lovers" essentially renders him useless from the social-functional perspective of the law. In the normalizing practices that regulate the economy of crime and punishment, the poet makes himself marginal. From within the space of the

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<sup>391</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 22.

<sup>392</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 23.

institutions that dictate the valid forms of bourgeois life, he alienates himself from the normalizing practices that ground the reproduction of these institutions.<sup>393</sup>

## **6. The Non-Melancholic Sign: The Attraction to Death Approaches Zero**

Max Weber, in his study of the Protestant work ethic, describes the bourgeois subject as one who views its own economic activity as a *calling* (*Beruf*).<sup>394</sup> Economic expansion and the continual growth of capital respond to the call of a higher order, thereby suffusing the most quotidian of daily activities and economic responsibilities with the grace of the transcendent. However, just as the conception of a calling refers to a sphere of activity in life, so too does it govern death. For death, its manner, time and circumstance, also appears as a calling, an inevitable exit that comes for a specific person when the time of life has run its course. Death too operates economically, as in certain cases, it appears to the human being as the repayment of the loan that had been granted at the moment of birth. Upon dying, Socrates says that he owes Asclepius a cock; the economy of life and death is conceptualized upon a model of exchange, although Socrates' singular response overturns this logic, claiming death as a gift rather than life.<sup>395</sup>

Death, in its literary-historical manifestations, has appeared as a calling, as a power that demands repayment, and as a relativizing and individualizing force (princes and paupers are both subject to it; and when death calls, it calls for a particular individual, a call that cannot be deferred or transferred to another). Each of these attempts to characterize the power governing the movement between life and death, between this world and the next, in effect stabilizes and makes intelligible this boundary itself, reflecting upon it, functionalizing it, naturalizing it.

The attempt to approach death from the perspective of intelligibility, either making sense of death or making sense out of how such a thing could possibly make sense, involves human beings in a set of paradoxes for thought. Heidegger's attempt to locate death as a structure of intelligibility of *Dasein* can only understand death as an "impossibility" vis-à-vis the realm of intelligibility. As part of the way human beings make sense of world, death makes possible the realm of potentiality itself, loosening any particular culture's supposedly sovereign hold over the practices of every individual,

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<sup>393</sup> Jean Weisberger suggests that the process of self-alienation forms a central component of the role-playing of Rococo poetry, although he then reintegrates this alienation into the code of self-knowledge: "Le 'rôle' permet à l'acteur de se distancier de lui-même, peut-être donc de se mieux connaître." Jean Weisberger, *Les masques fragiles* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1991).

<sup>394</sup> Max Weber notes, "Nun ist unverkennbar, daß schon in dem deutschen Worte "Beruf" ebenso wie in vielleicht noch deutlicherer Weise in dem englischen "calling", eine religiöse Vorstellung—die einer von Gott gestellten Aufgabe—wenigstens mitklingt und, je nachdrücklicher wir auf das Wort im konkreten Fall den Ton legen, desto fühlbarer wird." Max Weber, *Die protestantische Ethik und der "Geist" des Kapitalismus* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1905) 35-36. His description of this word is followed by a lengthy excursus in a footnote about Luther's translation of the Bible and the translation of κλησις, or divine sanction, as *Beruf*.

<sup>395</sup> See Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995) 11.

introducing the necessary gap that allows *Dasein* to both be inevitably part of and yet free from its own culture's practices.<sup>396</sup>

Even for Heidegger, then, death, as a structure of intelligibility (*Sein zum Tode*) appears coextensive with freedom. Although his revision of death in *Sein und Zeit* inverts the everyday understanding of death as an end to life, in essence making possible *novelty* and the opening of new worlds, it nevertheless conceptualizes death as a structure of intelligibility. For Heidegger, to view death from the perspective of a structure of intelligibility, one that exercises an absolute potentializing power over that which appears as given or actual (making that which is intelligible suddenly appear meaningless or contingent, one way of organizing the world among others), draws the line between authentic and inauthentic *Dasein*.

In the context of a history of cultural forms that approach the phenomenon of death, the Anacreontic tradition appears singular in its refusal to regard death as a matter of ontological importance.<sup>397</sup> In a poem entitled "Die Wahl," the Anacreontic poet begins by reflecting on his own art, what he would call into being if he could paint and sing. The reflection darkens as the poet imbues himself with the power over life and death:

#### Die Wahl

Könnt ich malen, wie Apelles,  
Lauter Mädchens wollt ich malen;  
Könnt ich nur wie Orpheus spielen,  
Lauter Mädchens sollten tanzen;  
Könnt ich Todte lebend machen,  
Lauter Mädchens wollten leben;  
Aber könnt ich, wie ich wollte,  
Viele wieder sterben lassen,  
Viele sollten wieder sterben,  
Viele wollt ich überstreichen,  
Daß die ungemaleet blieben,  
Und vom ersten Tanz ermüdet  
Sollten viele nicht mehr tanzen.<sup>398</sup>

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<sup>396</sup> For Heidegger, death, as a structure of *Dasein* (*Sein zum Tode*), makes possible the possible as such and renders the shared world of intelligibility contingent, allowing *Dasein* to see the possibility of the impossibility of *das Man* and preventing *Dasein* from a form of intelligibility that derives solely from the dictates of publicly shared norms: "*Die nächste Nähe des Seins zum Tode als Möglichkeit ist einem Wirklichen so fern als möglich*. Je unverhüllter diese Möglichkeit verstanden wird, um so reiner dringt das Verstehen vor in die Möglichkeit als die der Unmöglichkeit der Existenz überhaupt.... Im Vorlaufen in diese Möglichkeit wird sie 'immger größer', das heißt sie enthüllt sich als solche, die überhaupt kein Maß, kein mehr oder minder kennt, sondern die Möglichkeit der maßlosen Unmöglichkeit der Existenz bedeutet." Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1967) 262.

<sup>397</sup> Death was a favorite subject of Anacreontic poets, see Perels, *Studien zur Aufnahme und Kritik der Rokokolyrik zwischen 1740 und 1760* 81.

<sup>398</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 19.

The line between life and death provides nothing more than the pretext to playing with art, a play that is nevertheless carefully structured. The poem has thirteen lines. The numerological significance embedded in the poem's own structure shifts the light Anacreontic mode into a darker imaginative and rhetorical space. A split in the center of the poem, occurring around line 7, marks the transition from life to death, or more precisely, from the power of imagined representational practices that give life to those that give death. In addition to moving from *eros* to *thanatos*, from the life drive to the death drive, the poem also marks a gender split, where life is associated with the female and death does not discriminate based upon gender: the poet calls into life only "Mädchens" (lines 1-6), but then wishes death upon a genderless multiplicity, "viele." Moreover, the poet moves ekphrastically through representations of representing that revolve around the central five lines (5-9), lines that themselves reduce the movement from death to life and life to death in their basic poetic structures (lines 5-6 fantasize about bringing the dead back to life, lines 8-9 about moving the living to the realm of the dead): from painting (lines 1-2), to music (3-4), to life (5-6), from death (8-9), back to painting (10-11), and then to music (12-13). Line 7, the central line around which the structural inversion turns, expresses the limitless desire of the imagination of the Anacreontic poet, a fantasy about the omnipotence of the poetic will: *Aber könnt ich, wie ich wollte*. The poem's carefully crafted thematic counterpoint substitutes for its lack of a rhyming structure: A (life in painting), B (life in music/dance), C (death to life), C (life to death), A (death in painting), B (death in music/dance). The mirror structure of the poem is duplicated in microcosm in lines 5-9: death to life, life to death.

In the second half of the poem, the poet explores the other side of an interpretation of art that emphasizes only its life giving properties, namely, art as murder, as death-wish. It unleashes a rage that would seem inappropriate for the Anacreontic poem were it not for the aestheticized witticism: "viele wollt ich überstreichen." In similar fashion, the dance of Orpheus becomes a dance of death. The "choice" that the poet mentions in the title is a choice not merely about aesthetic representation, but a fantasy about the power over life and death. Or so it would seem. For in fact, the next poem in *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern* is also entitled "Die Wahl," and it reduplicates the content of this poem—only with rhymes. The content of the poem is not arranged according to the same structural stringency as the previous version, only introducing the death-giving properties of art in line 18 out of a total of 24 lines.<sup>399</sup> It is as if Gleim wanted to make visible how thematic counterpoint can give rise to a formal structure just as intricate—indeed more so—than the structure of rhyme.

If, according to Meier, the joke opens an abyss of differences and similarities, the abyss of these poems lies not in the line between life and death, but rather, in a more important choice: to rhyme, or not to rhyme. "Die Wahl" refers primarily not to the choice between life and death, demarcating the line between being and non-being, but rather, to the poetic choice between the rhymed and non-rhymed versions, between a French-inspired song to be sung, or the unrhymed rhythms of Anacreon himself. The poet

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<sup>399</sup> One could also argue that the second version is not as dark as the first version, perhaps because it would have been "sung" by his "Mädchen," as he notes in the preface. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that precisely the poem he mentions in the preface treats thematic material that represents the poet's own capacity—even in other media—to give life *or* death.

notes in the introductory dedication, a fictional letter to his lover: "Als die Frau Dacier die Scherze des scherzhaftesten Griechen, den Damen angenehm machen wollte, musste sie ihn in ihrer *Muttersprache* unterrichten. Wenn deine Schwestern die Lieder auf dich singen sollen, so must du sie in Reime übersetzen, wie ich die Wahl (*pag.* 25) übersetzt habe."<sup>400</sup> The choice, *die Wahl*, occurs in sound, in a poetic form that situates the poem on opposing sides of a cultural divide: classicist or populist, past or present, Greek or French. Rhyme is not a matter of life and death; life and death is a matter of rhyme.

This poetic form, supposedly centered on pleasure, on immanence and life, nevertheless does not exclude death from its horizon of inquiry.<sup>401</sup> Indeed, this very form seems to demand the desacralization of what appears as the very realm of the sacred. As a matter of poetic importance, as a pretext for the play of life, death remains paramount.

The central task of Gleim's Anacreontic poet, when faced with death, may be formulated as such: how can one deflect the inevitable calling of death, one that calls us away from this world, pushing our spirit and our earthly deeds into the space of eternity? It is not the *denial* of death that motivates the Anacreontic poet, but its transformation. The Anacreontic poet is locked in a struggle with death, not to evade it—which would be impossible—but to loosen its attraction to mourning, melancholy, finitude, vanity, any frame of reference that would inevitably link death to transcendence. The poet fantasizes at first about making death more economically pliable: perhaps death can be bribed, or the debt can be transferred to another person. When death comes for the poet, he diverts the call of death through the call of his neighbor: "Hörst du nicht den Nachbar rufen? / Hol ihn nur, er wird dirs danken. / Tod du irrst dich!"<sup>402</sup> After attempting to settle his debt to death by exchanging his life for the life of another, the poet shifts codes from the currency of life and death to *actual* money: "Nimm das Gold, und laß mich leben."<sup>403</sup> In each case, lives can be exchanged, individuals are interchangeable, and the poet manipulates death as an economic agent. Life itself becomes as exchangeable, fluid, and insubstantial as money.

In "An den Tod," the poet fantasizes about transferring death not from himself to another, but between other people—his mother and his *Mädchen*—this time acting as an intermediary:

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<sup>400</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 4.

<sup>401</sup> Gleim's approach to death has been explored in a beautiful and insightful paper by Karl S. Guthke. Guthke sees Gleim's lyric as part of the turn to this world, and hence, as part of a strand of Enlightenment thought: "die anacreontische Lyrik als Dokument der aufgeklärten Zuwendung zu dieser Welt ist nicht nur im allgemeinen lebenssteigernd, sondern a fortiori in ihrer Behandlung des Todes. Solche Begegnung mit dem Tode wie in Gleims Scherzgedicht (so dürfen wir, nur halb in Scherz, die Lektion der Anekdote formulieren) fördert das Leben in 'dieser Welt', ja bewahrt es allererst." Karl S. Guthke, "Der Tod und die Mädchens—und Gleim. Behagen und Unbehagen in der Aufklärung," *Euphorion* 98.1 (2004): 25. He goes on to analyze the relation of Gleim's Anacreontic poetry to his later lyric, including his patriotic songs. In the later lyric, he nevertheless remains attached to "this life," but death becomes more traditional, regaining some of its power over the imagination; later Gleim will write: Der Tod, der stärkere Tod, der alles überwindet / [...] / Der wirft nun bald auch mich ins Grab. / Ach! Diesen Feind bewegt nicht Bitten und nicht Flehen, / Nicht List und nicht Betrug." Johann Wilhelm Ludwig Gleim, *Ausgewählte Werke*, ed. Leonhard Lier (Leipzig: Reclam, 1885) 194.

<sup>402</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 16.

<sup>403</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 16.

Tod, kannst du dich auch verlieben?  
 Warum holst du denn mein Mädchen?  
 Kannst du nicht die Mutter holen?  
 Denn die sieht dir doch noch ähnlich.  
 Frische rosenrote Wangen,  
 Die mein Wunsch so schön gefärbet,  
 Blühen nicht für blasse Knochen,  
 Blühen nicht für deine Lippen.  
 Tod! Was willst du mit dem Mädchen?  
 Mit den Zähnen ohne Lippen  
 Kannst du es ia doch nicht küssen.<sup>404</sup>

Death forms a pretext for underscoring the priority of the erotic attachment over the bonds of the family structure. Death, no longer a symbol of transience or the nothingness of human existence, itself plays the role of Anacreontic seducer. The poet literalizes the allegorical representation of death, although the embodied figure has no flesh. The emblem of the death's head, the visual iconography of death itself, makes the *pointe* of the poem possible: death, whose mouth consists in bones and teeth rather than lips (*Zähnen ohne Lippen*), cannot even properly play the role of lover. The similarity in appearance between the skeletal mother and fleshless death—death and the maiden becomes death and the mother, *die sieht dir doch noch ähnlich*—makes the mother a more appropriate erotic object. The poet, who subdues death by projecting his own identity onto it, simultaneously uses this projected identity to break the ties to his mother and nullify the laws of familial piety.

Even the death of the hero, one who dies the beautiful death in sacrifice for the *patria* or fatherland, king or nation, is stripped of its attraction to the sacred. The tradition of Anacreontic poetry manifest in the *Anacreontea*, in its very form, differentiates itself from the epic, whose primary function is to immortalize and disseminate the glory of the hero. The poems of the *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern*—although the final poems of the second volume refer explicitly to the events of the Second Silesian War between Prussia and Austria—do not bolster the ideology that will later undergird Gleim's most imitated work, the *Preußische Kriegslieder*. In the *Kriegslieder*, the events of the Seven Years' War are told from the perspective of a grenadier, who, as a simple soldier rather than an Achilles, nevertheless does not fully cohere with the usual figure of the mythical-nationalist hero. These songs, which fuse literary play with a burgeoning nationalistic consciousness, anchor their own idiom in transcendental points: God, Fatherland, and Friedrich II.<sup>405</sup> The Anacreontic poet, on the other hand, seeks an alternative to such organizing discourses (the divine, the nation, the sovereign)—without, however, actively undermining them:

Bin ich denn wie ein Fauler,

<sup>404</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 27.

<sup>405</sup> See Hans Peter Herrmann, "Krieg, Medien und Nation. Zum Nationalismus in Kriegsliedern des 16. und 18. Jahrhunderts," *"Krieg ist mein Lied". Der Siebenjährige Krieg in den zeitgenössischen Medien*, ed. Wolfgang Adam and Holger Dainat (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007) 31.

Im Lager meines Prinzen?  
Nein, wisse meine Thaten,  
Nein, wiß es, Gott der Krieger:  
Mein Prinz erobert Länder,  
Und ich erobre Mädchen.<sup>406</sup>

If the form of the joke exercises the ability to analyze and respond affectively to similarities and differences, in this case, the subversive *pointe* consists not in a direct negation of the prince, but in the comparison between the prince and the figure of the Anacreontic poet. The "und" of the final line simultaneously recognizes the legitimacy of the prince's endeavors while at the same time relativizing these endeavors by constructing an analogy between prince and poet. This analogy, however, which sets in motion a play of similarities and differences, exploits the high and low registers that inhere in the notion of "conquest" all the while refusing to hierarchize these registers, to evaluate one as more worthy than the other. The poet does not question the violence of war as such, but foregrounds its contingency, emphasizing the futility of the immortalization of the hero in the very banality of his own representations of wartime death. In a poem "An die Krieger," the poet asks the warriors, "Warum wollt ihr euch verbluten?"<sup>407</sup>

The Anacreontic poet often describes death—traditionally linked to the realm of the beyond—as the sudden disruption of life. Gleim's poem "Auf den Tod einer Nachtigall"—in which the nightingale seems to stand for the idealized Anacreontic poet—exemplifies one of the predominant strands of poetic practice in the Anacreontic attitude to death. The nightingale's attitude to death may be described as singularly non-philosophical: it does not make the end of life an object for thought. The nightingale shows no signs of the impending death that will overtake it, instead singing and warbling until, as the sudden and unexpected end of life, the end simply comes. What appears astonishing about the nightingale for the Anacreontic poet is precisely the *lack* of death as a signifier, its failure to announce itself or to manifest itself as a calling in the world of appearances: "Must er denn so schnell erblassen? / Gestern sang er noch so munter."<sup>408</sup> The nightingale refuses to allow death not merely to become the ontological ground of its being, but to exert its sway over any form of signifying activity:

Unter seinen hellen Tönen  
Klang kein Ton, wie Trauertöne.  
Warum sang er denn nicht traurig?  
Wollt er etwa, wie ein Weiser,  
Seinem Tod entgegen scherzen?<sup>409</sup>

For the Anacreontic poet, facing death without the slightest manifestation of melancholy or trauma occasions at first incomprehensibility, and then yields to wonder and admiration. For what designates the actions of a "wise man," undoubtedly a reference to

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<sup>406</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 116.

<sup>407</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 117.

<sup>408</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 43.

<sup>409</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 43.

Anacreon, consists less in control over death than control over how to integrate death into human signifying practices. Language itself does not, as it does for Benjamin in the *Trauerspiel*, bear the traces of the fallen human being, registering the transcendental weight of the beyond in its own system of signs.<sup>410</sup> On the contrary, Anacreontic language signals the possibility for the human being to deny its fallen condition, to refuse the fall into melancholy, trauma, and mourning. The Anacreontic poet therefore offers a counter-semiotic model to Benjamin's understanding of Baroque allegory. The language of the Anacreontic poet does not point beyond itself to any transcendental code that secures or disrupts its meaning. When faced with mortality, the goal of the Anacreontic poet is to make death a nullity, a sign at a zero state. This goal does not amount to ignoring death, for the ability to make death a nullity, to joke when faced with its imminence—although it appears natural to the nightingale—for the human being, demands the control and exercise that only one who is wise can muster.

One may therefore perceive an important difference between the nightingale's song and the song of the Anacreontic poet: unlike the Anacreontic poet, the nightingale does not register mortality—not even negatively—in its trilling expressivity. Ultimately, it is not the similarity between the Anacreontic poet and the nightingale that comes to the fore in the poem as much as their difference, a difference that emerges between the act of enunciation (the Anacreontic poet who approaches death as a perturbation, as a question or problem) and the ideal of wisdom represented (the nightingale that does not even register death, the being for whom death is a non-entity). The poet does not make this difference in the attitude toward death an anthropological one, claiming that only the human being has consciousness of mortality, and that the lack of consciousness on the part of the animal signals its exclusion from the order of sentience. Rather, the animal still functions as the model for a wise man, *ein Weiser*, albeit suggesting a way of being that the poet himself does not quite achieve.

The nightingale's refusal to recognize the power of the transcendent, its total absorption in the immanence of life, does not occasion a recognition of the impossibility of this ideal for the poet. Instead, the nightingale becomes the positive model for the poet—not because it sings so sweetly, but because, even at the moment of its demise, there is no trace of death in its song. Even at its most allegorical—for the poem "Auf den Tod einer Nachtigall" activates allegorical modes of reading, suggesting that what is really being discussed is not the death of a bird, but the death of another poet—the language of Anacreon does not fall into the clutches of the eternal, remaining instead moment *qua* moment. The very temporality of Anacreontic poetry refuses to make the moment anything more than a moment. Moreover, the Anacreontic poet cannot furnish a song of consolation for the survivors, because mourning itself appears only as a negative,

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<sup>410</sup> The Rococo and Anacreontic signifying systems stand in diametric opposition to Benjamin's conception of Baroque allegory: "Das ist der Kern der allegorischen Betrachtung, der barocken, weltlichen Exposition der Geschichte als Leidengeschichte der Welt; bedeutend ist sie nur in den Stationen ihres Verfalls. Soviel Bedeutung, soviel Todverfallenheit, weil am tiefsten der Tod die zackige Demarkationslinie zwischen Physis und Bedeutung eingräbt." Walter Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969) 183. The Rococo and Anacreontic stand in not merely stylistic opposition to Baroque allegory, but also in the manner in which signs carry the traces of the beyond; they are opposed in their very semiotic function. The Anacreontic sign empties itself out of the beyond, it approaches the state in which transcendence = 0.

as an impossibility in an idiom that would seek to rob death of all its annihilating, determinative power.

The poet of immanence refuses even the gesture of consolation. For the poetry of consolation is poetry of the grave, a *Grablied*. The movement of consolation makes death meaningful, gives it a semiotic value that confirms its attractive pull rather than seeking to reduce it to a zero state—an ideal that, at any rate, cannot be achieved, a fact to which the Anacreontic poet's practice itself testifies. Nevertheless, he cannot offer to the survivors a song of mourning. The *Grablied* seeks to overcome the eternity of death through its own, counter-movement of eternalization, something that the Anacreontic poet cannot—or will not—provide. Such a task is reserved for the poet of aesthetic transcendence, one who links the world of the senses to the world of the beyond:

O! es muß ein beßrer Dichter  
Diesen Vogel ewig machen.  
O! es muß ein beßrer Tröster  
Meines Freundes Trauer tilgen.  
Broks, der Herold seiner Brüder,  
Broks soll ihm ein Grablied singen.<sup>411</sup>

## 7. Absolute Poetry

In the first song of the *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern*, the poet describes himself as the "treuer Schüler,"<sup>412</sup> the true disciple of Anacreon, establishing a transmission of poetic knowledge and practice from antiquity to his own poetry. In this first poem, the poet has done much more than establish a link to antiquity: he has given himself an identity, a poetic persona modeled on Anacreon. The second song takes up the poet's Anacreontic identity, transposing it onto the formative logic of the bourgeois family. The poet becomes an accounting student ("Rechenschüler"): "Mein Vater lehrt mich rechnen / Er zälet Pfund und Taler; / Ich aber zäle Mädchens."<sup>413</sup> Both the first and the second poems describe the process of a transmission of knowledge. The poetic identity, however, both trumps and contaminates his bourgeois identity and the instrumental logic that permeates this sphere. In the first song, the poet has already declared himself a "Schüler" of Anacreon, and when he then becomes a "Rechenschüler," he interprets this activity through his primary poetic identity. Anacreon, if he does not quite overcome the law of the father, contaminates it, takes it up but displaces the main symbolic system, namely, the economic system and circulation of money. Gleim's tenure as a "Rechenschüler" culminates in a fantasy of social-sexual reproduction: "Er fragt mich / Wie viel beträgt die Summe? / Und wenn er mich so fräget / So denk ich ans Vermehren / Der Schwestern und der Brüder / Und lache, wenn ich rechne."<sup>414</sup> The

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<sup>411</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 45.

<sup>412</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 5.

<sup>413</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 6.

<sup>414</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 6.

universalization of Anacreontic play does not subvert the logic of bourgeois reproduction and render vain the domain of human activity; rather, the poet repurposes instrumental rationality, switching the code of money for that of biological reproduction.

The universalization of play as a generalized cognitive state can be observed in the poem "Geschäfte." This poem turns on itself, construing its own activity as a repeated form of bureaucratic uniformity, where every act reproduces the same patterns and generates the same attractive sign, the *Mädchen*, which functions as a reproductive poetic generator of reproduction:

### Geschäfte

Mir deucht, so oft ich schlafe,  
Schlaf ich bei lauter Mädchen;  
Und immer, wenn ich träume,  
Träum' ich von nichts als Mädchen;  
Und wenn ich wieder wache,  
Denk ich an nichts als Mädchen;  
Im Schlaf, im Traum, im Wachen  
Spiel ich mit lauter Mädchen.<sup>415</sup>

The line between work and play is incapable of being drawn in this poem: is play becoming tedious, or is the tedium of life becoming play? At first, the poem functions in an exemplary sense for the Anacreontic exercise of unbounded play. The poem iterates and differentiates physical and cognitive modalities—sleeping, dreaming, waking—all the while stressing their permeability with one another as well as their ultimate reduction to the realm of play. The opening line declares the primacy of an imagined eroticism, a mental impression expressed in terms of its probability or improbability: "Mir deucht," it seems to me, "so oft ich schlafe, / schlaf ich bei lauter Mädchen." Already the poet moves in the logic of appearances, not of realities. The appearance, however, refers not to the presence of women, but rather, to the poet's own bodily and mental activity; the "Mir deucht" applies to each of the temporal phrases, each of which in turn thematizes a corporeal or cognitive modality.

Here, in a highly compressed form, appears the Anacreontic cogito: the imagined reality of seeming overtakes every order of being, it projects itself across syntactical structures just as it permeates all instances of cognition. The logic of appearances, "mir deucht," subsumes every moment of sleep, every moment of dreaming, every moment of waking. Similarly, the "ich spiele" in the final lines applies itself across these very corporeal-cognitive states; in essence, then, the poem expresses an identity between the "Mir deucht" and the "Ich spiele," both of which have priority over unconscious and conscious corporeal and cognitive activities. Self-observation leads to a differentiation between various cognitive states according to their ontology (sleeping, dreaming, waking), only to collapse these differentiations in the higher-order activity of play.

The structure of the poem itself reveals a tension between its own production of cognitive differentiation and the effacing of this differentiation by a universalizing,

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<sup>415</sup> Gleim, *Versuch in Scherzhaften Liedern und Lieder* 14.

homogenizing principle of play. The operation of play appears nowhere more clearly than in the poem's own formal organization, in the structure of its poetic utterance. Three different realms with different ontologies and relations to consciousness and cognition—sleep, dream, waking—occur in roughly parallel syntactical structures, perturbed by minor differences that are overwhelmed by resemblances, by parallelisms. These cognitive realms enter into an identity with themselves, again linguistically perturbed by a slight differentiation in the elision of the "e" at the beginning of the even lines in order to fit the meter: *schlafe/schlaf*', *träumel/träum*', *wache/denk*. The difference between line 5 and 6, *wache/denk*, creates not a dissonance, but a variation that appears striking compared with the previous lines. The poem creates the difference only to elide it through the repeated syntactical pattern as well as the semantic equation of waking with thoughts about *Mädchen*: "Denk ich an nichts als Mädchen."

In this poem, then, the principle of play on a formal level reveals itself as the action of non-differentiation or indifference following a differentiation, following Meier's understanding of the joke as an abyss of resemblances and differences. Moreover, if Gregory Bateson describes an element in a system as a difference that makes a difference, this form of play introduces differences that then do not end up making a difference.<sup>416</sup> These differences matter only inasmuch as they perpetuate the activity of play itself, and difference as such becomes stripped of consequence.

In the Anacreontic cogito, as it appears in this poem, play does not differentiate between cognitive states and ontologies typically hierarchized according to their relation to reality, transcendent or otherwise. Jean Paul's later claim, "Jedes Träumen setzt nicht nur ein vergangenes Wachen, auch ein künftiges voraus,"<sup>417</sup> implodes under the indifference—the "non-differentiation"—of Anacreontic play. In Gleim's version, the same activity of play permeates both dream and reality: *Im Schlaf, im Traum, im Wachen / Spiel ich mit lauter Mädchen*.

Gleim calls this poem "Geschäfte." *Geschäfte*, or business transactions, appear as those activities against which play must define itself and that, a priori, exclude the presence of play: here, one is playing, there, where play ends, the business of real life begins. On the one hand, this is obviously ironic. All work appears to be play and vice versa; business and play collapse into one and the same principle, into an *indifference*, even though they are oppositions. On the other hand, in the letters of the Anacreontic poets, there is an increased sensibility to the fiction of their own idiom. Gleim notes that Anacreontic poetry is fundamentally incompatible with bourgeois identity. In their own words, Anacreontic poets create realms of absolute play that have ultimately no place in their everyday lives, dominated as they are by rules, bureaucracy, the pursuit of money, the administration of life. The split between play and business for them is only too palpable; hence their desire to create poetry in which this main difference, the differentiation of play itself from its lifeless other, holds no validity.

Anacreontic play radicalizes itself by defining its other—*Geschäfte*—as the logic of its own appearance. The *Mädchen* dominate the poet with just as powerful a voice as the call to economic affairs; they will not leave him alone. They work their way into every nook of the poet's conscious and unconscious life, infiltrating and saturating the

<sup>416</sup> See Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1972) 315.

<sup>417</sup> Jean Paul Richter, *Werke*, vol. 5, 444.

very space of his imagination. And yet, it is not mere business that appears on the page. It is the essence of the joke, that abyss of similarities and differences that does not permit one to differentiate whether business has become eros, or eros has become business. Perhaps here, *Geschäfte* must be resignified and bent toward its original meaning, toward its root, that is: "schaffen," to create, or in Greek, *poiesis*. No longer does *Geschäfte* refer to the business of everyday life, but rather, to that which one has created in poetry.

### Conclusion: The Death of Anacreon

In 1785, Goethe composed the poem "Anakreons Grab":

Anakreons Grab

Wo die Rose hier blüht, wo Reben um Lorbeer sich schlingen,  
Wo das Turtelchen lockt, wo sich das Grillchen ergötzt  
Welch ein Grab ist hier das alle Götter mit Leben  
Schön bepflanzt und geziert? Es ist Anakreons Ruh.  
Frühling, Sommer und Herbst genoß der glückliche Dichter  
Vor dem Winter hat ihn endlich der Hügel geschützt.<sup>418</sup> (MA II.1.101)

The poem sings the grave of Anacreon. It cannot be called Anacreontic, although it integrates elements of Anacreontic poetry into its own verse, most notably the diminutive forms "Turtelchen" and "Grillchen." The *locus amoenus*, with its roses and grapevines intertwining, marks not a space of erotic play, but of soft and wistful remembrance. While the content of the poem sings the death of Anacreon, the poem marks the death of Anacreontic poetry as a culturally relevant poetic form. The hexameter form already marks a difference from the Anacreontic ode, although elements of the ode surface as vestigial remnants of a bygone form. The happy poet has enjoyed only spring, summer, and fall, and although the winter inevitably arrives in death, his own grave protects him from the harshness of the elements.

In Gleim's Anacreontic odes, death is openly mocked. Goethe's poem cannot be called melancholic, but its humor nevertheless foregrounds the mortality of Anacreon, his movement from presence to past, from life to death. The *locus amoenus* appears in the first line deictically anchored in the "hier" of the rose, and in the final line one has moved toward the grave. In the last two lines of the poem, the poet has already surrendered Anacreon to the dead. This gesture is signaled by the shift from his initial anchoring in the present in the first line (*Wo die Rose hier blüht*) to the past in the last line (*Vor dem Winter hat ihn endlich der Hügel geschützt*). And whereas the first two lines move hypotactically according to the rhythms and creatures of life, multiplying views on the world of appearances along caesurae that place the "where" in the "here" (*Wo die Rose hier blüht, wo Reben um Lorbeer sich schlingen, / Wo das Turtelchen lockt, wo sich das*

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<sup>418</sup> Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Erstes Weimarer Jahrzehnt 1775-1786*, Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens. Münchener Ausgabe, ed. Hartmut Reinhardt, vol. 2.1 (Munich: Hanser, 1987).

*Grillchen ergötzt*), the poem shifts frames around the paratactic "Es ist Anakreons Ruh." The caesura that divides the question, *Welch ein Grab ist hier das alle Götter mit Leben / Schön bepflanz und geziert*, from the laconic response, *Es ist Anakreons Ruh*, marks the line between life and death. It is also along this caesura that the poem moves from organic hypotaxis in the first half of the poem, the connection and flow of all forms of life, to inorganic parataxis in the second half of the poem, the severing of the organism from its participation in the rhythms and motions of nature. This movement was already latent in the first line; although the poet first appears fascinated with the imagined landscape, with its dynamic and expansive motion and its interest in life, the intentional object around which his interest hovers is nevertheless a grave. Finally, after the paratactic caesura, the poem moves deeper into the past, into death, until finally, *endlich*, the grave mound protects the poet from the winter. For in line 5, if the poet moves into the past, it is nevertheless Anacreon's *life* that he describes as past: *Frühling, Sommer und Herbst genöß der glückliche Dichter*. In line 6, in the completion of the perfect tense, it is his death that appears in the past: *Vor dem Winter hat ihn endlich der Hügel geschützt*. However, the "here" of the poem is itself located in the springtime, *Wo die Rose hier blüht*, portraying both realms of life and death as irretrievably gone.

The protection that Anacreon enjoys from the winter is the protection of the grave: "der Hügel" in the phrase "Vor dem Winter hat ihn endlich der Hügel geschützt" functions metonymically and almost euphemistically for death itself. Such protection against winter applies not to Anacreon as an exception to the rule, as one whose being, dedicated to eros and life, has been spared hardship; it applies to every corpse that finds its ultimate resting place under the earth.

"Anakreons Grab" does not represent the grave of Anacreon as much as it marks the death of a certain way of thinking about the poetic word. Even the homage to the poet of pleasure and immanence is pulled into the orbit of death, wistful melancholy, and the virtuous display of a poetic talent that portrays itself—in hexameters—as having progressed beyond the style and the historical moment of Anacreon. The careful placement of caesurae, the considered relation between hypotaxis and parataxis—poetic form bears the meaning that the poem itself proclaims. Following the lyric of Goethe, there would be little room to take seriously a poetic idiom that purports to dedicate itself only to pleasure. And in its own way, the Anacreontic exercise of unbounded play created an imaginary space that permitted, if only for a brief amount of time, not only respite from the forces that were attempting to organize the world according to the dictates of truth, morality, God, productivity—but, as if in an aesthetic state of perennial carnival, the pleasure of seeing these forces imaginatively overturned.

## World Regeneration

Not a picture of the world, but how we envision ourselves moving toward it and away from it; not a clearly articulated set of systemic or functional relations, but states toward which processes tend over time; not the relatively static body of statements that can be brought under the rubric of knowledge, but the evolving, fluid, organizing and disorganizing, progressive and regressive flow at the intersection of mind and world, permeating mood, affect and thought—such are the domains proper to the movements of attraction.

In the *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* (1798), following Newton and Kant, Schelling describes the powers of attraction and repulsion as the transcendental conditions of possibility of any natural system: "Die allgemeinen Kräfte der Anziehung und Zurückstoßung aber, insofern sie Bedingungen der Möglichkeit einer Materie überhaupt sind, liegen jenseits aller Erfahrung."<sup>419</sup> All matter, continually in motion, requires the powers of attraction and repulsion in order to appear at all. Because these powers belong to the realm of the transcendental, they are themselves inaccessible to empirical inquiry. Attraction and repulsion are nowhere and everywhere. They announce their presence in the observation of the physical world interacting with itself and in the feeling of the mind as it strives to achieve its purposes and wishes: the mind pushes itself in one direction only to find itself pulled in another, as it encounters both resistance and success in its drive to self-actualization.

On the purely physical plane, Newton himself was hesitant to ascribe any predicate of existence to these powers.<sup>420</sup> Attraction and repulsion exhibit a paradoxical ontology: they refer to invisible forces implied by the movement of physical objects, and yet, they cannot be ascribed to the physical world itself. In Newton's *Principia*, they designate purely mathematical operations. And yet, if one moves away from the ontology of mathematics and into the physical world, they belong to the order of becoming, not of being, revealing all to be motion over time rather than points on a geometrical plane. For Schelling, the dynamic of attraction and repulsion also describes the movement of the mind, its relation to its self and its environment, always forming and being formed, acting on its environment and being acted upon.

Matter, in its dynamic phenomenal form, emerges from an originary disequilibrium, revealing, in Schelling's words, "ein *Bestreben* der Materie, aus dem Gleichgewicht zu treten und sich dem freien Spiel ihrer Kräfte zu überlassen."<sup>421</sup> According to Schelling, this very same disequilibrium makes possible not only the sphere

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<sup>419</sup> Friedrich Schelling, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1797) 104.

<sup>420</sup> Newton, in his *Principia*, distinguishes between two different orders of ontology, namely the mathematical and the physical. He applies the concept of attraction only to mathematical ontology: "I use interchangeably and indiscriminately words signifying attraction, impulse, or any sort of propensity toward a center, considering these forces not from a physical but only from a mathematical point of view. Therefore, let the reader beware of thinking that by words of this kind I am anywhere defining a species or mode of action or a physical cause or reason, or that I am attributing forces in a true and physical sense to centers (which are mathematical points) if I happen to say that centers attract or that centers have forces." Isaac Newton, *Philosophical Writings*, ed. Andrew Janiak (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004) 63.

<sup>421</sup> Schelling, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* 104.

of matter, but that of consciousness as well. Although the human being cannot directly intuit the play of attraction and repulsion in nature, it nevertheless remains in contact with these forces, since there is only *one* transcendental movement, namely that of a disequilibrium between opposing tendencies, and this transcendental logic governs both the world of phenomena and the tendencies of the human mind. Mind and nature become *analogs* of one another, they are made possible by one and the same logic. Schelling describes the process underlying cognition as movement toward "Unbeschränktheit," describing that point of attraction to which the human mind tends in its drive to actively shape its reality, limited by "Beschränktheit," which pulls the human being back into the world of appearances through receptivity, a necessary yielding to the physical world, the laws of ethics, the presence of others.<sup>422</sup> These "zwo einander widersprechende Tätigkeiten" appear "als nothwendige Bedingungen der Möglichkeit einer Anschauung."<sup>423</sup> Intuition, the ability to perceive both external and internal phenomena, is only made possible by the active and productive movement of the mind in tension with a necessary structural moment of resistance and receptivity. The mind is therefore always impeded in its desire for mastery over itself and over the world. Schelling describes the resistance that makes mind possible as that which pushes the human being toward "infinite approximation" of its own unlimited activity:

Denn darin liegt das Geheimnis unserer geistigen Tätigkeit, daß wir genötigt sind, uns ins Unendliche fort einem Punkt anzunähern, der ins Unendliche fort jeder Bestimmung entflieht... Hätten wir ihn je erreicht, so säne das ganze System unsres Geistes—diese Welt, die nur im Streit entgegengesetzter Bestrebungen ihre Fortdauer findet—ins Nichts zurück, und das letzte Bewußstein unsrer Existenz verlöre sich in seiner eigenen Unendlichkeit.—<sup>424</sup>

The activity of the mind requires a moment of resistance, one that emerges from an initial disequilibrium in mental organization itself, in order to come into being. The mind can never be perfectly identical with itself, and it is in fact this moment of non-coincidence with one's own activity that makes identity possible as something that can be felt and integrated into our practices. Perfect equilibrium would not only result in stasis, it would make identity as the presence of a self to itself impossible, consciousness would melt into a bad infinity, a nothingness. For Schelling, as for Fichte, self-relation consists not in a limitation, but in a continual *process*. As with the movement of attraction and repulsion, the mind's attempt to determine its reality only becomes meaningful when it encounters resistance and otherness, when its motion is produced not by a divine harmony, but by an

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<sup>422</sup> Schelling notes, "Allem Denken und Vorstellen in uns geht also nothwendig voran eine *ursprüngliche Thätigkeit*, die, *weil* sie allem Denken *vorangeht*, in so fern schlechthin—*unbestimmt*, und unbeschränkt ist. Erst nachdem ein Entgegengesetztes da ist, wird sie beschränkte, und eben deswegen *bestimmte* (denkbare) Thätigkeit. Wäre diese Thätigkeit unseres Geistes *ursprünglich* beschränkt, (so wie es die Philosophen sich einbilden, die alles auf Denken und Vorstellen zurückführen,) so könnte der Geist niemals sich *beschränkt* fühlen. Er *fühlt* seine *Beschränktheit* nur, in so fern er zugleich seine *ursprüngliche Unbeschränktheit* fühlt." Schelling, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* 134-5.

<sup>423</sup> Schelling, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* 135.

<sup>424</sup> Schelling, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* 135-6.

initial disequilibrium that always disrupts the attempt to achieve perfect identity with itself, total self-actualization.

This conception of the order of the cosmos and of the mind differs from earlier ontologies that interpret motion precisely as a sign of equilibrium and of harmony—either of the cosmos itself or of the divine presence that animates all of creation. The motion of attraction and repulsion posits disorder or disequilibrium as a structural necessity that makes both nature and experience possible. At the same time, this common root in disorder and disequilibrium makes the human mind and nature analogs of one another. The human being and nature cease to be alienated from one another, they cease to represent system and environment, instead becoming part of one and the same fabric. This unification of mind and nature is only made possible, however, through their common transcendental conditions of possibility, namely, the isomorphic, structural disequilibrium that produces infinite movement.

Although Schelling's *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* undertakes an epistemological and nature-philosophical enquiry, he draws upon one of the most powerful patterns of aesthetic askesis in the eighteenth century, namely the provocation of moments of non-identity in order to push experience toward a point that always recedes or exceeds the grasp of the mind, visible in Novalis' poetics of autostimulation, in Hölderlin's *Wechsel der Töne*, in Goethe's conception of the Daemonic, in the aesthetics of the Anacreontic joke, and in Schiller's conception of the sentimental poet. Schelling, by framing this dynamic in terms of attractive and repulsive powers of nature that have their analogs in the mind, articulates a latent aesthetic theory that differs from his own attempt to make art into an "intellectual intuition" of the absolute. Rather, if one were to make Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* into an aesthetics (much like Arendt reads Kant's aesthetic philosophy as a political philosophy), transposing its dynamics onto the order of language, music, the plastic arts, it would reveal signs as points of attraction and repulsion, pulling the mind and the body into spaces that are both strange and familiar, provocative and comforting.

In the works of Novalis and Hölderlin, language itself activates attractions and repulsions, harmonies and oppositions, and these patterns describe the particular exercise that their works evoke. Words are not discrete signifiers as much as markers of a system larger than their own particular form of representation, reference, or signification.<sup>425</sup> In Novalis' *Fichte-Studien*, the systems of cognition and language exhibit the same transcendental structure. Novalis sees signification itself, a system of differences that attempts but fails to represent identity, as analogous to the structure of cognition as a series of reflections that attempt but fail to express feeling. As with Schelling's philosophy of nature, an initial structural disequilibrium conditions the movement of the system. However, whereas Schelling's analogy between mind and nature roots both processes in the transcendental disequilibrium between creation and resistance, expansion and contraction, Novalis construes the task of language and cognition as a continual overcoming of orders linked by points of indifference. The decisive movement consists in

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<sup>425</sup> Thomas Pfau notes, "Novalis conceives of aesthetic form as ceaselessly evolving, progressing, and imbued with a magical aura. In its syntagmatic organization as 'text,' the aesthetic emulates life itself." Thomas Pfau, *Romantic Moods: Paranoia, Trauma, and Melancholy, 1790-1840* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2005) 57.

a continual intensification in the process of autostimulation, the capability to generate tension from any momentary release that pushes language and the mind further into unexplored spaces. For a system characterized by continual disequilibrium, stimulation can be the only absolute.

For the Anacreontic poets, the aesthetic exercise also emerges from a state of disequilibrium, or more precisely, from a divergence between poetic language and socio-cultural forms of intelligibility and normativity. The aesthetic exercise of pleasure in the joke generates a never-ending series of movements of resemblance and difference. As Meier states in his *Gedancken von Schertzen*, "Der Schertz muß ein kurtzer Inbegriff vieler Vergleichungsstücke seyn. Er muß so zu reden einem Abgrunde ähnlich seyn, in welchem man immer mehr und mehr erblickt, je länger man in denselben hineinsieht."<sup>426</sup> For Meier, the joke produces a sustained process of cognitive activity, a process that he himself designates as *aesthetic*. Caught up in a play of differences and similarities, it never progresses beyond itself into any realm of transcendent organization. The condition of its effectiveness as a form of play nevertheless consists in both an identification with and a divergence from the given. It therefore introduces novelty, or *das Neue*, into its exercise of aesthetic cognition, something that Breitinger wanted to claim exclusively for the domain of the fantastic. The fantastic produces novelty in stretching the boundaries of plausibility in the imagination. The Anacreontic poem produces novelty not through the alien experience of possible fictional worlds, but by producing difference in the imagination from patterns of intelligibility and processes of normalization in the *given* world, by loosening the pull—in the imagination, in the *aesthetic* exercise—of values in the public sphere, political administration, pedagogical formation, familial authority, religious piety, scientific and epistemological progress, nationalistic propaganda, economic productivity, and orders of life and death.

If the aesthetic exercise exerts its power by *producing* a state of disequilibrium for Novalis and the Anacreontics, the world itself exists in a state of disequilibrium for Hölderlin. For Hölderlin, the cognitive act associated with poetic language exercises the mind in the process of navigating, processing, and reinterpreting what appears as a world out of joint. For Hölderlin, poetry cannot restore equilibrium, it can only continually *reveal*, make present as evidence for oneself and others, the order that no longer appears self-evident. Poetry is a sustained cognitive process that attempts to digest the inedible world, a world that appears at first to bear only the signs of disharmony and violence, emptied out of possible redemptive content, as in the decapitated head of John the Baptist, *uneßbarer Schrift gleich*. Poetry addresses the constant need to interpret the world, to make it intelligible, to supply the connective tissue in a chain of discontinuous ruptures. The surprising gesture in Hölderlin's poetry, given its purported wish and desire, consists in its deepening and intensification of the experience of contingency instead of the attempt to poetically reduce or eliminate contingency. This intensification in contingency and bifurcation intends to fortify the mind in its task to resignify contingency as necessity, to give order to chaos, to put the world of the senses in touch with the power of the divine—to produce each of these seemingly contradictory modalities in one and the same act of cognition. For the world of appearances must

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<sup>426</sup> Meier, *Gedancken von Schertzen* 103.

appear both contingent *and* necessary if freedom is to be reconciled with divine order.<sup>427</sup> To make present the divine entails holding freedom, perception and determination—potentiality, reality, and necessity—in one and the same aesthetic-cognitive state.

In the "Anmerkungen zum Oedipus," Hölderlin notes that the language of tragedy must find its way among historical catastrophe, political disorder and the confusion of the senses, "unter Pest und Sinnesverwirrung und allgemein entzündetem Wahrsagergeist" (MA II.315). In the midst of a confusion of the senses, when signs cannot properly be read and the yearning for prophecy inflames the spirit of the age, tragedy must guarantee the order that none can perceive, "damit der Weltlauf keine Lücke hat und *das Gedächtnis der Himmlischen nicht ausgehet...*" (MA II.315-6). For Hölderlin, poetry attempts to close the gaps of history, to verify the organization of a higher-order harmony that is not directly accessible to human experience, but that manifests itself *through* human experience. It is not that poetry makes this order visible—precisely because it cannot ever be made visible—but rather, that it stimulates forms of cognition that aid in the intimation of order as such. Memory, the ability to perceive unity amidst difference, actions of binding and holding fast—such are the poetic and cognitive techniques that work their way into the very form of Hölderlin's poetry. The willful mixture of Christianity with antiquity, more than a mere concern with figures of divine mediation, attempts to think two different and contradictory forms of the divine in one and the same poetic space. The figure of bifurcation, which initially aids in the perception of the divine in "Der Rhein," in "Der Ister" becomes pure bifurcation, returning the world of phenomena to its initial state of contingency. The mind ceases to be able to hold heterogeneous spaces in one and the same cognitive act, the order of history succumbs to the confusion of the senses, language falls into its originary confusion, necessity disappears, the exercise has broken the spirit that it was meant to strengthen.

In 1806, the raving Hölderlin is taken to Authenrieth's clinic, in 1807, he is transferred to the care of Ernst Zimmer, where he lives in a tower overlooking the Neckar, writing the occasional poem until his death in 1843.

The poetry that he writes during this time speaks in a voice that is both different from and similar to the poetry composed before 1806. Over time, Hölderlin's poetry detaches itself from those anchoring points that, in his earlier poems, were to function as guarantors of order: the divine disappears, the I disappears, history disappears. In place of these tenuous signs appear seasons, the human being, friendship, vistas, shifting temporal frames, the name Scardanelli, a poet who always signs with subservience, mit *Unterthänigkeit*.

Hölderlin's final poetic creations, like those of the Rococo and Anacreontic poets, are poems of immanence.<sup>428</sup> Unlike the Anacreontic poets, his poems do not delight in

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<sup>427</sup> Scotus is the first philosopher that understands that freedom of the will and contingency mutually imply one another: "at the same moment the will has an act of willing, at the same and for the same moment it can also have an opposite act of willing." John Duns Scotus, *Contingency and Freedom: Lectura I 39*, ed. A. Vos Jaczn et. al (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994) 116. However, for Scotus, God has a foreknowledge of what he has willed (which, as a single act of will, must be contingent in order to allow for the freedom of the divine will), whereas for Hölderlin, human beings must be trained to perceive the necessity of contingent things and to hold contradictory and mutually exclusive modalities in one and the same cognitive space.

<sup>428</sup> An excellent recent study by Christian Oestersandfort examines Hölderlin's *Turmdichtung* from this perspective, revealing considerable connections between Hölderlin's latest poems and the tradition of

unraveling schemas of organization as such, they are neither ironic nor self-referential, and they do not willfully resist the order of their own world. They may still, however, be considered aesthetic exercises, and in some sense, they bear the name more appropriately than any of the other poems that have been examined in this study.

Baumgarten considered aesthetics as the science of sensory cognition. Sensory cognition refers both to an immediate givenness to the senses and to acts of the imagination, or the act of making present in the mind something that is not immediately given to the senses. Although imagination always functions as part of human cognition, as Kant would later demonstrate, there is a qualitative difference between aesthetic exercises that conjure a new reality *for* the senses (exercises of the imagination) and aesthetic exercises that focus on that which is given to the senses (exercises of perception). The former, exercises of the imagination, attempt to bring the invisible as such into the world of the visible, and they are always accompanied by the constant vibration between the imagined and the given. The latter, exercises of perception, describe, rework, investigate, intensify, and transfigure the immediate presence of experience—a project that culminates philosophically in Husserlian phenomenology. The poets we have examined thus far have been primarily concerned with the former type of aesthetic exercise, the exercise of the imagination.

And yet, to make perceptual givenness the source of its own aesthetic exercise produces a different form of attentiveness to the world, new points of focus are brought into relief, and the act itself illuminates the irreducible presence of invisibility—something that is unseen—as part of the visible world, as part of sense perception. Merleau-Ponty defines depth as "the dimension in which the thing is presented not as spread out before us but as an inexhaustible reality full of reserves."<sup>429</sup> The aesthetic exercise of immediate perception—which one may discover in Goethe's *Farbenlehre* and in Faust's opening monologue in *Faust II*—aims to transform experience starting from the givenness of the world to the senses. Such works exercise perception rather than the imagination, they direct attention toward the given rather than conjure the imaginary.

In the *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur*, Schelling claims that perception expands into realms operating beyond its immediate horizon, revealing a spatial and temporal organization that simultaneously transcends experience and transports the human being into the heart of this very transcendence. He describes this process as the "bliss of sight," the "*Wonne des Sehens*," a sensation derived from the interaction between the light and the eye:

Mit dem reichlichern Licht der Frühlingssonne erscheint auch aufs neue das immer wechselnde Spiel vielfach in einander fließender Farben auf der Oberfläche unserer Erde, die kaum vorher noch das einförmige Gewand des Winters getragen hatte, und das Steigen und Sinken, das Entstehen,

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"diatetic" poetry. He elaborates his thesis, following Winfried Kudszus, as follows: "Die Turmdichtung wird nicht als Produkt gestörter Psyche begriffen, sondern als ein Textkorpus, der den Motivbereich der Psyche einschließt." Christian Oestersandfort, *Immanente Poetik und Poetische Diätetik in Hölderlins Turmdichtung* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2006) 27. See also Winfried Kudszus, "Versuch einer Heilung. Hölderlins spätere Lyrik," *Hölderlin ohne Mythos*, ed. Ingrid Riedel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973).

<sup>429</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-sense* 15.

Wechseln, und Vergehen dieser Farben, ist das Maaß einer Zeitrechnung, die, überall gegenwärtig, uns in die Mitte der Natur selbst begleitet. Aus weiter Ferne erscheint uns das jugendliche Licht der Gestirne, und knüpft unser Daseyn an die Existenz einer Welt an, die für die Einbildungskraft unerreichbar, doch dem Auge nicht ganz verschlossen ist.<sup>430</sup>

The bliss of the eye emerges from the way in which the visible world reveals difference, becoming, absence, as part of its own presence to human perception. For Schelling, the visible moment does not exist as an atemporal snapshot, but carries the human mind into the operation of temporality itself. If Hölderlin's poetological goal was to discover "Das Werden in Vergehen," Schelling sees this very project less as a task for the poetic imagination, and more as part of the immanent visibility of the world, the world appearing in the act of perception itself. The visible world as something that *includes* its own temporality in its visibility—and hence does not graft time onto space like butter over bread—is *only* accessible to sense experience, and precisely not accessible to the imagination, which makes the absent present rather than seeing absence as part of presence. Schelling describes, in effect, another type of artist, one for whom every perceptual moment can disclose a work of art, one who continually attends to the absence that lines the givenness of the phenomenal world, one who sees in this aesthetic absence a mode of transport into other forms of intensity. For this artist, perception itself, *aisthesis*, carries its own otherness within it, and hence can put the human being in contact with this otherness at its core. However, the existence of temporal and spatial difference, the horizon on the eye that recedes and reveals some other part of the world to be seen, but cannot be seen, never becomes fully transparent to the eye—and yet, nor is it completely closed, or in Schelling's words, *nicht ganz verschlossen*. Schelling describes, in his rhapsody to the bliss of sight, a poetics of the *vista*, something that is both beyond and inside sense perception, or in the later Hölderlin's poetry: *die Aussicht*.

The following poem is regarded as Hölderlin's final poem, written days before his death:

#### Die Aussicht

Wenn in die Ferne geht der Menschen wohnend Leben,  
Wo in die Ferne sich erglänzt die Zeit der Reben  
Ist auch dabei des Sommers leer Gefilde,  
Der Wald erscheint mit seinem dunklen Bilde;

Daß die Natur ergänzt das Bild der Zeiten,  
Daß die verweilt, sie schnell vorübergleiten,  
Ist aus Vollkommenheit, des Himmels Höhe glänzet  
Den Menschen dann, wie Bäume Blüth umkränzet.

Mit Unterthänigkeit

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<sup>430</sup> Schelling, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* 85.

d. 24 Mai  
1748.

Scardanelli (MA I.938)

It appears at first as a poem of immediacy, a description of that which appears directly to the eye, the transmission of pure perception.<sup>431</sup> However, the second strophe does not merely describe what has been seen, but pronounces a judgment upon it. Moreover, it affirms not merely what is visible, but more specifically that which has been made visible in the first strophe. The second strophe affirms the implicit organization of the senses in the first strophe. The unfolding of the second strophe from the movement of the first, their continual attachment to one another, is marked in the poem by the all-important semicolon at the end of the first strophe.

The first strophe mixes temporal and spatial frames, spatializing time and temporalizing space. The poem begins with a temporal clause that has as its subject the life of men, a life that itself is spatialized inasmuch as it "dwells": *Wenn in die Ferne geht der Menschen wohnend Leben*. The second line begins with a spatial clause, *Wo in die Ferne*, but has as its subject an expanse of time, *die Zeit der Reben*. The title itself, "Die Aussicht," refers both to a spatial vista as well as a temporal prospect, a possibility in the future. To look at the visible world is also to experience the temporality of the visible world, a temporality that places it in a movement toward disappearance, at a vanishing point on the horizon. Even if the image of nature disappears into the distance, there nevertheless remains *des Sommers leer Gefilde* and *der Wald... mit seinem dunklen Bilde*. At the end of the first strophe, the phenomena that manifest themselves in closeness, and not as disappearance, appear in their own right empty or obscure.

And yet, the second half of the poem says *yes*. It says *yes* to nature, to perception, and more specifically, to its own poetic description of nature.

What, precisely, is being affirmed?

It is the dynamic of time that Hölderlin in his earlier poems felt to be so problematic, namely, that human perception contains gaps and absences, that there appear to be *Lücken* in the organization of time and space.<sup>432</sup> In the earlier poetological writings,

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<sup>431</sup> This poem has been extensively analyzed by Roman Jakobson. He shows, without any doubt, that the latest poems of Hölderlin are not unstructured acts of speech, but highly complex textures of thematic, syntactic, and semantic patterns. However, he tends to assimilate Hölderlin's later work to the poetological reflections of his earlier work. He says, "Falls wir, beispielsweise, das erste und das letzte Verspaar der *Aussicht* als den Anfangs- und Endpunkt des Gedichtes betrachten und die zwei inneren Verspaare als seinen Mittelpunkt, erkennen wir die Fülle und Mannigfaltigkeit ihrer tiefen Wechselwirkungen. Bis zu Hölderlins spätesten Gedichten, ja, in den letzteren vielleicht mit einer besonderen Eindringlichkeit, rechtfertigt sich des Dichters Überzeugung, 'wie innig jedes Einzelne mit dem Ganzen zusammenhängt und wie sie beide nur Ein lebendiges Ganze ausmachen, das zwar durch und durch individualisirt ist und aus lauter selbständigen, aber ebenso innig und ewig verbundenen Theilen besteht', (Brief an I. v. Sinclair vom 24. Dez. 1798, *H VI* 301)." Jakobson, "Ein Blick auf *Die Aussicht* von Hölderlin," 417. While I agree that one can read the later work in light of the earlier poetological reflections, I do not believe that the later works address the same concerns that Hölderlin was expressing earlier in his life. More specifically, I do not believe the later poems form "Ein lebendiges Ganze," nor are they "durch und durch individualisirt." Instead, they see the totality of nature as inherently *not* a whole given up to human perception, and the very lack of wholeness—a very different concept of plenitude—*constitutes* the perfection, *Vollkommenheit*, of the given.

<sup>432</sup> Oestersandfort de-emphasizes the gaps, obscurities, and dissonances in these poems. He claims, for example, "Das dunkle Bild (4) wird durch die Ergänzung zum hellen: 'des Himmel [sic] Höhe glänzet / [...]"

the dissonance of the world must be repaired in an "idealistic memory," a reconstruction of a course of events that resignifies discontinuities as the birth of a new order. In the process of poetic cognition, what is at first perceived as discontinuous and dissonant is integrated into a higher-order harmony that only becomes visible to the mind that has been trained by the poem's particular exercise of language.

In this later poem as well, there are gaps in space and time, blind spots that touch the world of things (*leer Gefilde*), time that travels either fast or slow (*die Natur... die verweilt* or *die Zeiten... die schnell vorübergleiten*), the remnant of a distance. Poetry foregrounds the ineluctable presence of differences, of gaps in perception itself, making these differences felt in the organization of sound and syntax. In the second strophe, time separates into two different temporal orders. There is nature, "die Natur," which lingers, "die verweilt." And there is the image of times, "das Bild der Zeiten," and these glide quickly by, "schnell vorübergleiten." The differentiation of time occurs in a syntactical structure that lifts each temporal modality out of their harmonization, creating a bifurcation in the flow of the poem that one can feel in the mind:

Daß die Natur ergänzt das Bild der Zeiten,  
Daß die verweilt, sie schnell vorübergleiten,

The difference between alternative temporal frames—"Natur" and "das Bild der Zeiten"—is introduced not merely through a semantic distinction, one lingering and the other flowing by, nor merely in the syntactical separation, but in the alteration of the pronoun forms "die" and "sie," introducing a deictic difference between these two temporal orders. And precisely this bifurcation—in effect, a double bifurcation, since it is a split within a line of a line that is already doubled in the form "Daß.../ Daß..."—occurs "aus Vollkommenheit":

Daß die Natur ergänzt das Bild der Zeiten,  
Daß die verweilt, sie schnell vorübergleiten,  
Ist aus Vollkommenheit, des Himmels Höhe glänzet  
Den Menschen dann, wie Bäume Blüth umkränzet.

What begins as an act of receding into distance in the first line of the poem (*Wenn in die Ferne geht der Menschen wohnend leben*) ends in the coming of fullness, in perfection. And yet, although the poem speaks with the language of presence, it is precisely the present moment in all of its plenitude that appears *absent* in the poem's vision of perfection.<sup>433</sup>

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dann' (7/8)." Oestersandfort, *Immanente Poetik und Poetische Diätetik in Hölderlins Turmdichtung* 143. However, it is not "das dunkle Bild" of the forest that is completed by nature, but "das Bild der Zeiten." Moreover, the second strophe, with its repetition of "Daß... / Daß..." constitutes an expansion of the first; they are linked by a semicolon. The darkness of the forest remains, and it is *this* darkness that represents perfection. It is not merely the harmony of the late poems, but the *dissonances* that cannot be taken as signs of mental disturbance—they too form part of the aesthetic affirmation of life.

<sup>433</sup> Bernhard Böschstein interprets Hölderlin's latest poems as a celebration of the transparency of nature, "Die winterliche Szene aber betritt [der Dichter] kaum, da in ihr der Geist selber sich in seiner Transparenz kundtut." Bernhard Böschstein, "Hölderlins Späteste Gedichte," *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch* 14 (1965/66): 47.

Hölderlin's later poems therefore do not operate according to the same poetological goals that motivate his earlier hymnic production, nor are they poems of total presence.<sup>434</sup> To analyze the later poems as continuations of his earlier poetological goals attempts to legitimize these later works by linking them to the earlier period in which his genius stands so plainly for all with eyes to see. However, this poetry can also speak on its own terms. It is true that the poem appears highly structured and organized. And yet, its structure and organization consists in the production of harmonious bifurcations, of shifting temporal and spatial frameworks that foreground absences and lacunae as part of the perfection of nature itself.

The poem produces two different points of attraction, two gestures, in the interface between the language of the poem and the movements of mind that it presupposes and institutes: one gesture splits phenomena, bifurcates time semantically and syntactically, creates and maintains distances, intensifies gaps and inversions, places the visible world in relation to the void (*des Sommers leer Gefilde*) and the darkness (*der Wald erscheint mit seinem dunklen Bilde*). The other gesture connects and intertwines phenomena, generates communication and resonance between spaces and signs, makes images, sounds, meanings embrace: *Leben* is *wohnend*, *wenn in die Ferne* becomes *wo in die Ferne*, *die Zeit der Reben* is taken up in *das Bild der Zeiten*, *Der Wald* is composed of *Bäume*, blossom crowns these trees, *Bäume Blüth umkränzet*, the soft alliteration of *Himmels Höhe*, whose heights hold the hope of higher resplendence, comes back down to earth, becoming *Bäume Blüth*, a blossom that blooms in sound, and from the initial disappearance of life going, *Wenn in die Ferne geht*, there emerges the perfection to come, *Es ist aus Vollkommenheit*. There is no higher order, no process of idealistic memory that fills in the gaps of time. The gaps remain as part of the perfect order of nature. It is as if the world of the senses—at times difficult, dark, sorrowful, at times joyous, blissful, ecstatic—were no longer demanding that everything be clear, distinct, without death and without pain, as if it were suggesting to us that harmony can only be born from dissonance.

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And yet, he emphasizes the partial and incomplete nature of these poems, "Zu solcher Totalität gehört, daß sie auch die Epochen einbezieht, die außerhalb ihrer selbst liegen. Was schon bei den Sommergedichten angedeutet werden konnte, jenes Drängen über den eigenen Moment hinweg, gilt in erhöhtem Maße von den Wintergedichten" (48). This observation suggests that Hölderlin can only approach immanence as something that bears its otherness within itself, something that will therefore never be capable of being totalized. However, it is this precise feature of the visible world, the fact that it opens *vistas* and does not present itself to the senses all at once, that Hölderlin sees as a mark of its perfection.

<sup>434</sup> Oestersandfort describes this difference as follows: "Das consolatorische, erbauliche und therapeutische Konzept der Turmdichtung entsteht aus einer nach 1806 gegenüber dem Spätwerk modifizierten Ausrichtung der Kunst." Oestersandfort, *Immanente Poetik und Poetische Diätetik in Hölderlins Turmdichtung* 347. However, he sees the basic tendency of these poems as the illumination of everything, as clarity, peace, comfort: "Wenn es in der Turmdichtung heißt, daß der 'ganze Sinn des hellen Bildes lebet', sind in diesem Vers die Grundprinzipien des diätetischen Konzepts enthalten. Der 'helle Sinn' wird dem 'dunklen' entgegengestellt und zum 'hellen' Geist, in dem das 'Bild' entsteht. Diese Erhellung des 'lebendigen Sinns' läßt auch die Turmdichtung zu einem diätetischen 'Kunstwerk des Lebens' werden." Oestersandfort, *Immanente Poetik und Poetische Diätetik in Hölderlins Turmdichtung* 346. In this last of Hölderlin's poems, however, one may observe light and dark in a simultaneous chiaroscuro of experience, and it is precisely this mixture that describes the affirmative content and formal movement of the poem.

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