

NOVALIS, NIETZSCHE, AND THE RHETORIC OF ENCHANTMENT

by

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## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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This work reopens the question of Nietzsche's relationship to Early German Romanticism through critical readings of moments of enchantment in the writings of Novalis. It unveils the seemingly conciliatory gestures of enchantment as moments of discord between subject and figure, self and world. These readings attend to the tropes, ironic registers, and performative dimensions of texts that occlude rather than facilitate a strict demarcation between Novalis and Nietzsche. That the thinkers in question are shown to anticipate their critical reception is consonant with the present work, which, in foregrounding both the entanglement between self and language and the materiality of reading, attunes itself to enchantment as the manifestation of compulsion, imposition, and ecstasy.

The principle of continuity that allows Nietzsche and Novalis to be read and to read each other is asceticism. Its secret ally, following Nietzsche, is the absolute will to truth. In its function of assigning an aim to the aimless, asceticism provides for both truth and its incessant undermining, for form as well as flight. It engenders a mode of expression that is only as true as it is provisional. Through a reading of Nietzsche's Apollonian and Dionysian as the collision of epistemological anxiety and its anthropological stopgap, this work advocates an operation of double-reading

that views the conceptual sphere itself as palliative and the nonconceptual as the possibility of an ascetic flight from ossification. In setting such double-reading into motion, this work traces the subterranean relations between Novalis and Nietzsche that allow the proto-Modernism of the former to interrogate the residual Romanticism of the latter.

An erudite study that combines problems of representation with discussions of the theater, painting, and music, this work seeks to reenchant questions of interpretation and reading that constantly threaten to petrify into all-too-self-evident truths.

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## CHAPTER I

### ASCETICISM AND FORM

[T]he form in which something may be thought,  
is not indifferent to what is thought.  
Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*

#### Preface

In the entirety of his published *oeuvre*, Friedrich Nietzsche mentions Novalis exactly once, and he does so as part of a discussion of asceticism.<sup>1</sup> One of a series of aphorisms in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* that dwell on this topic, Nietzsche's reference to Novalis is one of affinity:

Novalis, eine der Autoritäten in Fragen der Heiligkeit durch Erfahrung und Instinct, spricht das ganze Geheimniss einmal mit naiver Freude aus: "Es ist wunderbar genug, dass nicht längst die Association von Wollust, Religion und Grausamkeit die Menschen aufmerksam auf ihre innige Verwandtschaft und gemeinschaftliche Tendenz gemacht hat." (2:138)<sup>2</sup>

Even though Nietzsche is said to have read only the notebooks of Novalis as a young man, this citation dealing with the association of desire, religion, and cruelty is

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<sup>1</sup> There are two additional references to Novalis in Nietzsche's notebooks that concern the former's critique of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*. See Nietzsche *Kritische-Studienausgabe (KSA)* 13:457; 14:134. Hereafter cited by volume and page number.

<sup>2</sup> "Novalis, by experience and instinct one of the authorities in questions of saintliness, pronounces the whole secret with naïve joy: 'It is a wonder indeed that the association of voluptuousness, religion and cruelty has not long ago made men take notice of their intimate relationship and common intention.'" (*HAH* 101); This fragment of Novalis appears in *Werke, Tagebücher, Briefe* 2:765. Hereafter cited by volume and page number.

sufficient evidence for the relevance of Novalis for the entirety of his thought.<sup>3</sup> The invocation of Novalis, although part of a polemic against asceticism, is an expression of affinity rather than aversion. From the posthumously published “Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne” to *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, Nietzsche critiques the ascetic ideal entirely from within. He cannot do otherwise. The ascetic ideal is not a sickness that one can remedy; it is itself a remedy for the human—“*the sick animal*” (“*das kranke Thier*”)<sup>4</sup>—in the service of life. Cruelty in the form of mortification from within and without adheres in the ascetic ideal as a tool for sculpting a memory for the human animal. By fixing ideas through the horrific measures that enable measurement—in making a few ideas unforgettable through the infliction of pain—a degree of calculability is reached.<sup>5</sup> This element of cohesion, of giving form, strikes a precarious compromise within the self, whose existence is marked by an agonistic temporal horizon: “[S]eine Zukunft [wühlt ihm] unerbittlich wie ein Sporn im Fleische jeder Gegenwart” (5:367).<sup>6</sup> The ascetic priest, who alleviates suffering by assigning aim to the aimless, is the locus not only of the possibility of affirmation but of the affirmation of possibility. He is the embodiment of the ascetic ideal, “*der fleischgewordne Wunsch nach einem Anders-sein,*

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<sup>3</sup> “In the afternoons I usually read in uncle’s library; there I discovered Novalis (whose philosophical thoughts interested me).” (Quoted in Krell, *Infectious* 188); Krell cites Friedrich Nietzsche, *Jugendschriften 1854-1861*, ed. Hans Joachim Mette. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1994. 147-48.

<sup>4</sup> *GM* 257; 5:367; I have reversed the translator’s decision to put the emphasis on “sick” rather than on “the.” For a complete list of abbreviated titles, see Appendix.

<sup>5</sup> *GM* 192-193; 5:295-96

<sup>6</sup> “[H]is future digs like spurs into the flesh of every present moment.” (*GM* 257)

Anderswo-sein...: aber eben die *Macht* seines Wünschens ist die Fessel, die ihn hier anbindet" (5:366).<sup>7</sup> Asceticism provides for both fixation and dissatisfaction, for form as well as flight. As much as this wish-become-flesh smacks of negation and nay-saying, it is the precondition of both affirmation and beauty: "[D]iese Lust, sich selbst als einem schweren widerstrebenden leidenden Stoffe eine Form zu geben, einen Willen, eine Kritik, einen Widerspruch, eine Verachtung, ein Nein einzubrennen...hat zuletzt...auch eine Fülle von neuer befremdlicher Schönheit und Bejahung an's Licht gebracht" (5:326).<sup>8</sup> Even such a brief excursus into the sublime torture chamber of Nietzsche's genealogy suffices to caution against an innocent reading of Novalis' "naïve joy." The reference to Novalis is no mere aside; it touches the very core of Nietzsche's thought, in which affirmation is wedded to agony.

The wish to be somewhere else receives its emphatic diagnosis in a formulation that echoes important concepts that Nietzsche discusses elsewhere and using a different terminology: "*das asketische Ideal entspringt dem Schutz- und Heil-Instinkte eines degenerirenden Lebens*" (5:366).<sup>9</sup> This emphatic declaration restates the entire problematic of the Dionysian and Apollonian. The Apollonian, to recall the optical inversion with which it is illustrated in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, forms

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<sup>7</sup> "...[the] incarnation of the wish to be different, to be elsewhere...And it is precisely the intensity of his wishing that forges the fetter binding him to this earth." (*GM* 257)

<sup>8</sup> "[T]his urge to impose on recalcitrant matter a form, a will, a distinction, a feeling of contempt...has given birth to a wealth of strange beauty and affirmation." (*GM* 220; Translation modified)

<sup>9</sup> "*The ascetic ideal arises from the protective and curative instinct of a life that is degenerating.*" (*GM* 256); The translator inexplicably undoes Nietzsche's emphasis, a decision that I have reversed.

radiant patches “to heal a gaze seared by the gruesome night” (“zur Heilung des von grausiger Nacht versehrten Blickes”).<sup>10</sup> The night in question is the Dionysian, the name given to the terrors of prehistory, to which one cannot only never return, but to which one can never even *want* to return (Sloterdijk, *Thinker* 27). Whether the Apollonian and Dionysian are read dichotomously as culture vs. nature<sup>11</sup> or as appearance vs. the thing in itself,<sup>12</sup> its enlistment in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* in an historical narrative that traces the birth and death of tragedy and its possible revival in German music can only be palliative. In other words, the conceptual apparatus of the Apollonian and Dionysian is itself part of the curative instinct in the service of keeping the unbearable at bay. That the Apollonian compromise has always already been made makes any diachronic examination vie with the synchrony of the ascetic ideal. This is the site where the explication of the Apollonian and Dionysian folds back on itself; where the epistemological conceits of science collide with palliative aesthetics; where the tragic insight into the illusory status of the Apollonian veil reveals nothing more than an inevitably earlier concealment; where the ascetic ideal bites its own tail. It is this ironic labyrinth that Early German Romanticism calls home.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *BT* 46; 1:65

<sup>11</sup> Sloterdijk 27

<sup>12</sup> de Man *Allegories* 90

<sup>13</sup> Lacoue-Labarthe maintains that Jena Romanticism turns around the opposition between the Apollonian and the Dionysian. See *The Subject of Philosophy* 48.

That which makes the ascetic ideal interrogate itself and makes its discourse read itself in the light of its own presuppositions, is indicative not of that ideal's suspension, but of its most radical form: the absolute will to truth.<sup>14</sup> The most effective for being the "most secret and subterranean" ("die heimlichste und unterirdischste")<sup>15</sup> of allies, the will to truth upholds the ascetic ideal even after the death of God. After the loss of all transcendental grounds and absolutes, the will to truth—given fresh impetus with Luther's translation of the Bible into German vernacular—turns against itself: "Alle grossen Dinge gehen durch sich selbst zu Grunde, durch einen Akt der Selbstaufhebung: so will das Gesetz des Lebens" (5:410).<sup>16</sup> In this sense, the tree of knowledge is the tree of life, the unwavering pursuit of the former preserving and steering the resolve of the latter. "Life as a riddle or an epistemological problem" ("Leben als Räthsel, Leben als Erkenntnisproblem"),<sup>17</sup> common to the historical moments of both Novalis and Nietzsche, is yet another trick of asceticism in its mission to assign a purpose to the purposelessness of suffering. This redirection forms the lacuna between literature and philosophy, "the two activities of the human intellect that are both the closest and the most impenetrable to each other" (de Man, *Allegories* 103)—a divide that Novalis and Nietzsche straddle. The collision between the concepts of epistemology and aesthetics, between science and art, fractures the conceptual and generates a

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<sup>14</sup> *GM* 288; 5:400

<sup>15</sup> *GM* 291; 5:403; Translation modified.

<sup>16</sup> "All great things perish of their own accord, by an act of self-cancellation: so the law of life decrees." (*GM* 297)

<sup>17</sup> *GM* 201; 5:304

new form of expression only as true as it is provisional. Rife with Protestant overdeterminations, in which the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life, truth-claims for Nietzsche are always a form of being-towards-death: “Wir verewigen, was nicht mehr lange leben und fliegen kann” (5:240).<sup>18</sup> Irony and its trope, allegory, erupt out of the fractured conceptual landscape and, like prey desperately trying to elude their hunter, perpetually take flight from the snare of ossification.<sup>19</sup>

The Protestant legacy that sets the comprehension of truth and vivid representation at odds has left its mark on art and criticism alike. The same principle with which Novalis judged Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister* to be prosaic—the reproduction of the merely existent—is at work in Nietzsche’s interdiction of the supposed historical objectivity that seeks to describe “how it really was.”<sup>20</sup> Art, in addition to its function as a panegyric through the establishment of a “cult of the untrue” (“Cultus des Unwahren”),<sup>21</sup> assumes the role of critique when it positions itself against everything that masquerades as truth. This Adornian supplement to Nietzsche’s theory of art as the “counter-movement” (“Gegenbewegung”) to nihilism—a question Nietzsche hoped “to discuss more fully at another time” (*GM*

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<sup>18</sup> “We immortalize that which cannot lie and fly much longer.” (*BGE* 221); This is taken from the very last aphorism (#296) of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, in which Nietzsche fears that his “painted thoughts” are already becoming truths. That the very early essay, “Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im Aussermoralischen Sinne,” occupies itself with this same concern shows the pervasiveness of such tragic thought for Nietzsche’s entire *oeuvre*.

<sup>19</sup> This is the inverse of what Adorno refers to as the primal rage of the bourgeois *ratio* that, intolerant of anything outside of its grasp, pursues its object like a hunter its prey. See *Negative Dialectics* 22-3.

<sup>20</sup> *GM* 293-94; 5:405-407

<sup>21</sup> *GS* 163; 3:464



290)—enlists the self-conscious use of irony in Novalis and Nietzsche in a critique of the social conditions that neutralize art’s ability to be true by appropriating the latter as a force of consolation in the service of the former. If, following Adorno, art becomes eloquent in falling silent, the role of criticism is to trace the work’s logic of collapse. The abyss out of which the work speaks meaninglessly becomes the signifier of all that resists ossification.<sup>22</sup>

That the dissolution of form speaks in lieu of any overt content or “message” has ramifications for methodology. In putting Novalis and Nietzsche in configurative readings—in proximity, if not dialogue—my aim is not to distinguish sharply between them. Rather than strictly demarcate their respective spheres based on simple conceptual oppositions, I seek to reopen the question of their relationship by allowing them to read each other. Since such a methodology is more conducive to performance than description or conceptualization, I will defer to the following reading that operates under the principle that Heidegger identifies in Nietzsche’s thought of the eternal return: the thought is in the thinking.<sup>23</sup>

### **Playback: Irony and Method**

An infinite regress would have been necessary and, necessarily, avoided. An introduction, inevitably written last, bites its own tail in seeking to enclose and encompass that which no longer allows, and in fact never did allow, for closure or encompassment. That the individual chapters in this study also demonstrate this

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<sup>22</sup> Adorno *Aesthetic Theory* 26-7, 112-13; *Ästhetische Theorie* 47, 171-72; *Philosophy of New Music* 98-9; *Philosophie der neuen Musik* 121-22

<sup>23</sup> Heidegger *Nietzsche vol. 2* 11, 120, 169, 181-83

tendency is not merely in keeping with their method and subject matter, but inevitable. If already a faint echo of Nietzsche's "in spite of everything" has become audible, then what is at stake has in a sense been announced—and this "in a sense" is precisely what must be accounted for. It is a matter of a certain duplicity in the announcement manifested in the redundancy of introducing what has already (in a sense) introduced itself. Take by way of example the sentiment of the literary critic Franco Moretti, who, contemplating his own introduction, observes that he "would like to discard everything and start afresh" (*Signs* 1). The introduction always comes at the price of a fresh start. It will have been a return, a repetition of a structure, something played back. In addition to announcing what is to come, an introduction attests to the decay of that which it is meant to introduce. Its duplicity lies in the paradoxical coincidence of arrival and return, of emergence and decay, of the new with the always already old. Introductions, it seems, always arrive too late.

That the infinite regress of this logic implicates the individual chapters, sentences, words, letters, and so on is, in a sense, appropriate in reading works of Early German Romanticism. This very small yet ambitious group of young artists, theoreticians, philosophers, and scholars made crucial discoveries in the realm of linguistic theory, the gravity of which has yet to be fully grasped. The well-documented importance of Early German Romanticism, of which Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis are exemplary, for modern literary criticism has burdened both Romanticism and criticism with an excessive weight.<sup>24</sup> Its excess, however, is a

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<sup>24</sup> For an examination of the relationship between Early German Romanticism and contemporary literary theory, see Seyhan.

factor of its immeasurability. The loss of a transcendental ground to knowledge, of which Nietzsche's pronouncement of the death of God is but one belated iteration, is coeval with increasingly urgent examinations of the entanglement of language and consciousness.<sup>25</sup> With full knowledge of this problem, Nietzsche distinguishes the Romantics in the shadow of Kant by their inability to make a very important distinction: "Und was fand man nicht Alles — in jener unschuldigen, reichen, noch jugendlichen Zeit des deutschen Geistes, in welche die Romantik, die boshafte Fee, hineinblies, hineinsang, damals, als man 'finden' und 'erfinden' noch nicht auseinander zu halten wusste!" (KSA 5:25).<sup>26</sup> Nietzsche's specific targets in the first book of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* are Kant and Schelling, who found faculties of the mind on which to base their moral inclinations. This is a very rich indictment and one that could form the foundation for a strict demarcation or measurable interval between Nietzsche and the immediately post-Kantian intellectual climate. The pejorative use of the appellation *Romantik* would find countless echoes in Nietzsche's writings. Its discoveries would comprise a definitive work with a title such as *Nietzsche's Critique of Romanticism*, or for the more daring even something like *Nietzsche's Overcoming of Romanticism*. It would be complete, and, precisely to that extent, completely wrong.

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<sup>25</sup> De Man traces these examinations in Locke, Condillac, and Kant in "The Epistemology of Metaphor." See *Aesthetic Ideology* 34-50.

<sup>26</sup> "And what did they not find – in that innocent, rich, still youthful era of the German spirit, to which the malicious fairy, romanticism, piped and sang, in those days when one was not yet able to distinguish between 'finding' and 'inventing'!" (BGE 42)

The tools for debunking this method are close at hand. In the very next aphorism, in which Nietzsche bids the “new psychologist” —a characterization that Nietzsche would certainly fancy for himself—to carry over the critique of material atomism onto the structure of the soul, he effectively aligns himself with those very Romantics he had just decried:

Indem der *neue* Psycholog dem Aberglauben ein Ende bereitet, der bisher um die Seelen-Vorstellung mit einer fast tropischen Üppigkeit wucherte, hat er sich freilich selbst gleichsam in eine neue Oede und ein neues Misstrauen hinaus gestossen — es mag sein, dass die älteren Psychologen es bequemer und lustiger hatten —: zuletzt aber weiss er sich eben damit auch zum *Erfinden* verurtheilt — und, wer weiss? vielleicht zum *Finden*. — (5:27)<sup>27</sup>

The undecidability between *finden* and *erfinden* is not merely a concern for the new psychologists; it is an uncertainty to which they are condemned. Playing the first quote back, yet again after it has rung in the ear upon finding (and certainly not inventing) the same wordplay used in successive aphorisms, colors its first usage. The Romantics are now less innocent than Nietzsche first found them to be. They too are condemned to be ignorant of the difference between *finden* and *erfinden*. What is more, a certain duplicity of the playback has become audible in this wordplay. In announcing itself upon reading the second usage, the redundancy of reintroducing the first quote after it has (re)introduced itself makes another

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<sup>27</sup> “To be sure, when the *new* psychologist puts an end to the superstition which has hitherto flourished around the soul-idea with almost tropical luxuriance, he has as it were thrust himself out into a new wilderness and a new mistrust – it may be that the older psychologists had a merrier and more comfortable time of it – : ultimately, however, he sees that, by precisely that act, he has also condemned himself to *inventing* the new – and, who knows? perhaps to *finding* it. –“ (BGE 44)

overtone of the wordplay audible. That the first instance gets played back of its own accord makes the reader susceptible to the undecideability of the wordplay. The playback discovers the reader and not necessarily the other way around. Now it is not just a matter of finding or inventing, but of the inability to decide whether or not one has found or *has been found*, whether or not one has invented or *has been invented*. No longer merely a game, the thought that the reader too is implicated in in this play—as well as Nietzsche and the Romantics as readers—puts into play the question of innocence and condemnation. If the Romantics—whom Nietzsche pronounced innocent—are condemned to the undecideability of the wordplay *finden/erfinden*, and Nietzsche—unable to distance himself from the Romantics—displays an innocence in the face of his implication in the same problematic he attributes to them, where does the game end? A game traditionally understood plays itself out in the safe confines of arbitrary, predetermined rules, in a space closed off from the outside. What are the rules? Where is the measure? Who decides when the line has been crossed? Things have gotten serious and it is unclear how one is to get back to play. The inability to answer these questions is a factor of both innocence and condemnation. It is also the locus of a post-Kantian circumstance defined by the tension between interested and disinterested acts, epistemology and rhetoric, seriousness and play.

The closure that the traditional game establishes through arbitrary rules furnishes the model for Friedrich Schiller's concept of the human. He gives this principle emphatic expression in his *Ästhetische Briefe*: "der Mensch spielt nur, wo er in voller Bedeutung des Worts Mensch ist, und *er ist nur da ganz Mensch, wo er*

*spielt*" (20:359).<sup>28</sup> Human autonomy assumes the existence of a space (*Spielraum*) in which it is free from external disarticulations. It also assumes "a continuity between language and man, ...a control of man over language" (de Man, *Aesthetic* 151). As has already been demonstrated in the interplay between Nietzsche's aphorisms and the wordplay *finden/erfinden*, one is condemned to (and innocent of) interjections on behalf of language in the form of echoes, interruptions, and ensuing revisions.

Before reading this last sentence, for example, the entire apparatus of contamination elucidated above had no doubt already permeated Schiller's dictum.<sup>29</sup> To reintroduce then what has already introduced itself—if one were to point out, for example, that Schiller's concept of play is perhaps an invention that he hopes will be realized in the future—is to play back the disarticulations that prohibit the path back to play. Language has always already taken control of the human in the search of a comforting enclosure. This is a serious matter that literary theory has been condemned to negotiating.

To ask a Nietzschean question: "What does seriousness really mean" ("Was bedeutet aller Ernst?"),<sup>30</sup> assuming that Nietzsche is serious, is to approach the question of theory. The institutionalization of theory, its theorization, is predicated on the desire to read texts seriously and to specify what in theory and in texts is true. Seriousness according to Nietzsche is first and foremost a form of betrayal, a

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<sup>28</sup> "[M]an only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays." (107)

<sup>29</sup> For a sustained meditation on the law of contamination in Nietzsche, see Derrida "Nietzsche and the Machine" 235-48.

<sup>30</sup> *GM* 252; 5:361

property that it shares with theory. In an aphorism entitled, “*Der Ernst um die Wahrheit*,” he approaches the questions of seriousness with a wordplay: “Und ist nicht Alles, was wir *wichtig* nehmen, unser Verräther? Es zeigt, wo unsere Gewichte liegen und wofür wir keine Gewichte besitzen” (3:446).<sup>31</sup> To take something serious, to give it weight, betrays and weighs one down in two senses. In addition to showing others what one thinks is important, it gives one’s critics a base from which to launch their attacks.<sup>32</sup> Since every theory presupposes its own theory (whether of the subject, knowledge, language, history, or of socio-political relations, etc.), they are all, in some fashion, refutable.<sup>33</sup> Its most playful varieties seem at least to agree on one point: there is no outside of theory.<sup>34</sup> Readings are condemned to and presuppose theorization regardless of how innocent scholars may be of the theoretical implications of their studies. However, theories that bear witness to the play of signification or of the signifier also foreground a tragic insight that more conventional theories—those that insist on an ultimate and discernible meaning of a text, for example—try rigorously to avoid.

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<sup>31</sup> “And does not everything that we take *seriously* betray us? It always shows what has weight for us and what does not” (GS 144).

<sup>32</sup> Anyone who has ever been to a humanities conference knows that the following question is far from innocent: “Is there a particular literary theory, or perhaps a theory of art, that underpins your work?”

<sup>33</sup> For example, Terry Eagleton’s well-worn *Literary Theory: An Introduction* has been training graduate students how to “disprove” almost every mode of thought (he tactically leaves out Marxism and Feminism) for several decades now.

<sup>34</sup> This is one of the ramifications of Derrida’s enigmatic phrase: “Il n’y a pas de hors-texte.” (Quoted in Leitch, *Norton Anthology* 1825)

A much-quoted passage from Novalis' brief *Monolog*, in addition to answering Schiller's concept of play and human autonomy, expresses this insight most playfully: "Wenn man den Leuten nur begreiflich machen könnte, daß es mit der Sprache wie mit den mathematischen Formeln sei – Sie machen eine Welt für sich – Sie spielen nur mit sich selbst" (2:438).<sup>35</sup> That Novalis continues to insist on the separation between language and human autonomy by stressing the inability of a speaker to say what he means, and that Novalis additionally asserts that "proper conversation is merely a word game" ("das rechte Gespräch ist ein bloßes Wortspiel"),<sup>36</sup> gathers the increasingly haunting echoes contaminating the possibility of theory. The collision of language and autonomy, or the insistence on the autonomy of language, is compounded by the dissonance between epistemology and rhetoric. Not only can humans not say what they mean, texts cannot mean what they say. The epistemological import of the two statements clash with their rhetorical dimension. The declarative confidence of the latter ("This is") is undone by what it purports to say, while the desperate tone of the former ("If only") confirms the impossibility of carrying out its directive. Yet, the statements demand, in a sense, to be read. Their irony imposes an operation upon the reader who takes them seriously. Through their imminent logic of collapse, highly ironized texts such as those of Novalis and Nietzsche outline a tragic insight, the contours of which this introduction has attempted to trace while being traced by it. Before returning to the

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<sup>35</sup> "If one could only make people understand that it is the same with language as with mathematical formulae. These constitute a world of their own. They play only with themselves..." (PW 83)

<sup>36</sup> PW 83; 2:438



tragic insight and its relationship to irony, and in the spirit of the infinite regress, a detour through other attempts to read Nietzsche and Novalis together is necessary.

## Reintroductions

The more or less arbitrary decision to read Novalis with Nietzsche sheds its arbitrary character in the context of the history of the reception of Romanticism, a history in which Nietzsche is implicated. His critique of Romanticism is as familiar as it is generalized and owes much to the figure, whose lyric poetry has been said to have initiated the movement: namely, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.<sup>37</sup> In his *Gespräche mit Goethe*, one of Nietzsche's favorite books, Eckermann quotes the elder Goethe as saying that the Classical is healthy and the Romantic sick.<sup>38</sup> Many of Nietzsche's critiques of Romanticism are echoes of this statement—including the prominent aphorism 370 in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, in which Nietzsche specifies as Romantic that which results from an impoverishment of life as opposed to an overfullness—and therefore have very little to do with Early German Romanticism. The reason for this is that Goethe's decree was a reaction to Romantic literature in France, and although Goethe kept himself at a distance from the Early Romantics in Germany, the idea that one can impugn any thought that has been called "Romantic" is misguided for want of discrimination.<sup>39</sup> Ernst Behler focused the discussion

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<sup>37</sup> See Wellbery *The Specular Moment*.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Zammito 428

<sup>39</sup> See Richards 458, who points out that Goethe's statement was directed at French Romantic literature; see del Caro 82-5 for Nietzsche's reception of Goethe and del Caro 97 for his admiration of Goethe.

around Nietzsche's relationship to the Early German Romantic school in Jena some time ago and concluded that "in Nietzsche ist kaum ein Antagonismus gegen die Repräsentanten dieser Schule wahrnehmbar" ("Nietzsche" 59). He additionally calls Nietzsche's concept of Romanticism a "Klischeebegriff" (68) in which Jena does not fit (65). The affinities that Behler sees between Nietzsche and Jena are their use of irony and the reinterpretation of tragedy from an Aristotelian conception of catharsis to one centered on the Dionysian. Irony and the Dionysian are the concepts around which the present study turns.

Another interpreter of Nietzsche's relationship to Jena insists, "irony is not a proper way of understanding Nietzsche's texts" (Norman 518).<sup>40</sup> This is correct but not conclusive. Irony is not a "proper" way of understanding Nietzsche's texts or anything else, for irony is the principle of disarticulation of the proper. It is the trope of impropriety. Irony short-circuits rigid demarcations between Nietzsche and Novalis so that any attempt to define them conceptually, for example in terms of immanence vs. transcendence, is bought at the price of a fundamental insight that surfaces in the work of both of these thinkers: the law of contamination performed above. Such determinations rely on an exegetical or referential method that not only presupposes the closure of the Nietzsche-text and the Novalis-text, but also privileges the text's "aboutness"—as if the text could say what it means—over the materiality of language and the dissonance between epistemology and rhetoric from which the text's performative dimension (its irony) springs.<sup>41</sup> Any proper,

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<sup>40</sup> I offer a more sustained critique of Norman's claims in chapter 6 of this study.

measurable definition of the relationship between the thought of Nietzsche and Novalis is condemned to the uneasy realm of *finden/erfinden*, even if one is innocent of this dimension.

This is the crux of the matter—of what matters in reading Novalis, Nietzsche, and how criticism is to respond. One cannot just say something without it falling prey to the banalities of aboutness or to its ideological misappropriation; rather, it must be performed. It is a matter of taking into account both the resistance to closure in Nietzsche and Novalis and the law of contamination according to which thought is prefigured and disfigured. The question of appropriation is inextricably linked with the question of language, the subject, nihilism, and criticism. The coherence of these categories is a factor of that which resists cohesion: irony as permanent parabasis. A term in rhetoric, parabasis is, following de Man, “the interruption of a discourse by a shift in the rhetorical register” (*Aesthetic* 178). As de Man continues to elucidate this operation of Friedrich Schlegel’s, permanent parabasis interrupts “not just at one point but at all points...irony is everywhere, at all points the narrative can be interrupted” (179). For those who cannot help but find it ironic that de Man—a thinker, whose thought has perhaps more than any other in 20<sup>th</sup>-century literary criticism, been labeled nihilistic—is to be enlisted to combat nihilism, it should be kept in mind that de Man’s program is also provisional and susceptible to interruption. Irony is not the final word; it is not merely the disfiguration of narrative. To the contrary, it keeps one word from being final. As such, it is an integral part of what Thomas Pfau has called “the ideal of Romantic

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<sup>41</sup> See Adrian del Caro for another example of referential reading on the subject of Nietzsche’s relationship to a broadly conceived Romanticism.

pedagogy,” that is “a process in which the narrative fantasy of organic development is continually punctured by the interventions of thought, at once unrelentingly reflexive and provisional” (“Introduction” 29). Inseparable from this conception of an interminable and ceaselessly agile education is the uneasy pairing of mourning and affirmation, which characterizes the historical moments and styles of both Nietzsche and Novalis.<sup>42</sup> Irony—as well as its trope, allegory—is not merely the undoing of what is said; it is the process of collapse that simultaneously mourns the loss of the grounding absolute and affirms an open future.<sup>43</sup>

### ***Ecce Homology***

Irony as permanent parabasis shares with the Apollonian and Dionysian relation a structural as well as an anthropological principle, a homology that reveals a strong continuity in Nietzsche’s thought. Echoes of Friedrich Schlegel’s unsettling assurance in his essay, “Über die Unverständlichkeit,” that a world suddenly become perfectly comprehensible would be truly horrifying<sup>44</sup> can be heard in Nietzsche’s

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<sup>42</sup> I am extending the following observation of Derrida’s in “Nietzsche and the Machine” to the period around 1800: “[S]omething is happening at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth for thinking to want to affirm the future...something is perhaps happening to humanity in the crossover from the nineteenth to the twentieth century for affirmation, for an affirmation of the future or of an opening onto the future, to be marked within a discourse of apparent destruction or mourning.” (219)

<sup>43</sup> For allegory as the trope of irony, see de Man *Aesthetic Ideology* 61, 69. For an account of the affirmative and creative potential of collapse or destruction, see Derrida “Nietzsche and the Machine” 219 and Derrida *Writing and Difference* 35.

<sup>44</sup> “Wahrlich, es würde euch bange werden, wenn die ganze Welt, wie ihr es fordert, einmal im Ernst durchaus verständlich würde.” (240); “Truly, you would be quite horrified if your request were answered and the world would all of a sudden

late treatment of the Dionysian as “the incapacity *not* to react” (“die Unfähigkeit, *nicht* zu reagieren”).<sup>45</sup> This privileging of suddenness and compulsion shows the shadow side of the preoccupation with the unintentional that the earlier generation of Schiller and Lessing endeavored to assimilate to the unaffected harmony of a subject touched by grace.<sup>46</sup> By contrast, Nietzsche bids us to imagine “dissonance assuming human form” (“eine Menschwerdung der Dissonanz”),<sup>47</sup> for which Novalis’ suggestive fragment, “the human – metaphor” (“Der Mensch – Metapher”),<sup>48</sup> is more than a prefiguration. The latter is, simply by the sheer force of enigma, both a product and illustration of the former. Regardless of what Novalis may have intended with his formulation, the urge to give it a meaning bears witness to the mechanism against which meaning is constituted. A riddle on the order of Nietzsche’s “I forgot my umbrella,” the conjoining of human and metaphor states in the most precise terms, the most general of dilemmas:<sup>49</sup> that of the interpenetration of subject and figure, and the inaccessibility to a stable perspective outside of the problematic. The sense of enclosure is guaranteed by the Apollonian veil, which allows just enough consistency and calculability to enter consciousness so as to

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become, in all seriousness, comprehensible.” (Quoted in de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology* 183)

<sup>45</sup> *TI* 84; 6:117

<sup>46</sup> Calhoun *Affecting Grace* 28-9

<sup>47</sup> *BT* 115; 1:155

<sup>48</sup> Translation mine; 2:351

<sup>49</sup> For the iconic treatment of Nietzsche’s posthumously published note, “I forgot my umbrella,” see Derrida *Spurs* 123-43.

make life manageable. It follows that the Dionysian condition is not, as de Man provisionally reads it, “an insight into things as they are” (*Allegories* 91-2). Nor does it “[reveal] the illusory nature of all ‘reality’” (*Allegories* 92). The Dionysian is rather the visceral shudder when, to quote Nietzsche quoting Schopenhauer reading Kant, “the principal of sufficient reason...appears to sustain an exception” (“indem der Satz vom Grunde...eine Ausnahme zu erleiden scheint”).<sup>50</sup> Since this is the limit against which language is constituted, its contours are traceable albeit incomprehensible. The Dionysian is the moment of excess, of the inassimilable remainder, that, in being constantly and necessarily veiled, rescues the dynamism of the Apollonian and Dionysian from the hypostatization of any recuperation that seeks to pin them down—a rescue from stasis accomplished precisely through the possibility of aberrancy. This is the game that Dionysus plays with himself. It is the realm of being bound, of compulsion, imposition, and ecstasy, in other words, of *enchantment*.

“Novalis, Nietzsche, and the Rhetoric of Enchantment” explores the complex and enigmatic relationship between Nietzsche and the cultural legacy of German Romanticism through moments of enchantment. Rather than exegetically transcribing Nietzsche’s statements concerning Romanticism and its traditional representatives such as Goethe, Schleiermacher, or Wagner, I seek to distill a more subterranean process that reframes Nietzsche’s engagement with Romanticism as a haunting—something he can neither openly accept nor escape. Shared tropes such as the shipwreck, the pathos of distance, descent, and aesthetic appearance among

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<sup>50</sup> *BT* 17; 1:28

others, allow Nietzsche to read Novalis and vice versa, and reveal Nietzsche's thought as a dynamic coming-to-terms with Romanticism that operates on the level of form, trope, and irony. Seemingly the most removed from Nietzsche, who defines himself against everything thought to be overtly Romantic and for whom such moments are "stammering translations," these instances of enchantment veil and thus betray the anxieties about the entanglement of subject and figure that lend them their power—anxieties that Nietzsche worked his entire life to exorcise. They are the guises in which religion sought its displaced afterlife in the attempt to ground human experience amidst post-Enlightenment crises, of which the French Revolution became the fervent emblem. Romantic resonances in the tropes and irony in Nietzsche set the stage for readings that set Novalis' texts into motion in order to enact performances illuminating the proto-Modernism of the latter and the residual Romanticism of the former.

## CHAPTER II

### SHIPS AT SEA: ALLEGORIES OF THE VANISHING SUBJECT IN NOVALIS,

### NIETZSCHE, AND J. M. W. TURNER

*Objective is the fractured landscape, subjective: the only light in which it glows.*  
Theodor Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*

*Boats are never far away when one is handling figures of rhetoric.*  
Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*

#### Introduction

The modern shipwrecked subject is one who must confront its entanglement with representation as imminent alterity. This engenders a preoccupation with compulsion that manifests itself in the magical snare of rhythm that, whether as the oscillations of a pendulum, the vibrations of music, or as pounding waves, is heard everywhere. The rhetorical counterpart of the shipwrecked subject is allegory, which the Romantics untethered from its 18<sup>th</sup>-century variant in which an image corresponds mechanically with an idea. Likewise the aesthetic principle behind modern landscape painting as practiced by C. D. Friedrich, Romantic allegory presents only the gap that irreconcilably separates the subject from the world. Traditionally read as the trope of Romanic longing, allegory, as it operates in such paintings, offers the eye no possibility of repose. The legend of Arion in Novalis' *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* is here inscribed in a constellation that also includes aphorism 60 of Nietzsche's *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* and several of J. M. W. Turner's late seascapes. Individually and collectively, these materials pit the subject against the force of the sea. The Sirens-episode in Homer's *Odyssey* provides a foil for the modern aesthetic sensibility, which is haunted by the shipwreck that



Odysseus avoids. The afterlife of this ancient episode radiates in the constellation at hand: Novalis, Nietzsche, and Turner each attempt effectively to undo the process, which Horkheimer and Adorno discern in Odysseus' struggle, in which art renounced its right to be true. The "most pregnant moment" in Lessing's *Laokoon*, in which the maximum tension is attained within the limits of self-composure, provides the counter-example for moments in Novalis, Nietzsche, and Turner when the integrity of the subject is sacrificed for absolute abandon.

### **Novalis' Robinson Crusoe and the Recession of Land**

Like his fictional enthusiast Heinrich von Ofterdingen, Novalis derived his knowledge of the sea voyage from books. One of these was Defoe's enormously popular *Robinson Crusoe*, translated into German within a year of its original publication in 1719.<sup>51</sup> In a letter from June 1793 to his brother Erasmus marking the latter's departure from home and following commencement of a new position arranged by their father, he calls *Robinson Crusoe* "ein höchst lehrreiches Buch" and "das Handbuch des klugen Mannes" (1:536).<sup>52</sup> In further lauding the book's pedagogical value for children, Novalis echoes Rousseau's estimation of *Robinson Crusoe* in his *Emile*: "an object of interest for all ages, and of which one has a thousand ways to make agreeable to children."<sup>53</sup> Rousseau continues with an appeal

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<sup>51</sup> Wigger 195

<sup>52</sup> "...a highly instructive book...the handbook of a smart man." (Translation mine)

<sup>53</sup> Quoted in Watt *Myths of Modern Individualism* 174. The translation is also Watt's. I draw heavily from this work for the reception of Defoe's text by Rousseau and Coleridge.

to readers to identify with Robinson as if, in the words of one commentator, “the solitary man on a desert island was the soundest judge of the usefulness of everything” (Watt 174). He even suggests that the novel be modified for this purpose, beginning with the shipwreck and ending with the rescue. A more figurative understanding of *Crusoe* appears in Novalis’ *Das allgemeine Brouillon* written in late 1798, where the author calls Fichte’s ego: “ein Robinson – eine wissenschaftliche *Fiktion* – zur Erleichterung d[er] Darstellung und Entwickl[ung] d[er] *W[issenschafts]L[ehre]* – so der Anfang d[er] Gesch[ichte] etc.” (2:645).<sup>54</sup> Fichte’s *Ich* succumbs to the radical critique of first principles leveled at any understanding of reality prior to presentation,<sup>55</sup> a Romantic insight that illuminates in Novalis’ two references to *Robinson Crusoe* a shift away from philosophical determinations of truth toward literary production and the investigation of the power of language.<sup>56</sup> Novalis displaces the Enlightenment ideal of individual autonomy, for which *Crusoe* served as a model, onto the realm of representation that recedes rather than originates from the self as a ship leaving harbor.

This indefinite interval between Novalis’ letter from 1793 and his notebook entry from 1798 will have encapsulated the entire problematic to be dealt with, save

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<sup>54</sup> “Fichte’s ego—is a Robinson Crusoe—a scientific *fiction*—to facilitate the presentation and development of the *Doctrine of Science*—like the beginning of history etc.” (AB 132)

<sup>55</sup> Novalis hereby prefigures on the level of semiotics Marx’s *Grundrisse*, in which he critiques the penchant for using “Robinsonades” as “history’s point of departure” (as in Rousseau and Ricardo) as opposed to its being “a historic result.” (83)

<sup>56</sup> Seyhan 40; For an in-depth account of Novalis’ critique of Fichte see O’Brien 77-118; Molnár 29-94.

for the problematic itself resists any attempt at closure. An infinite horizon appears once the subject confronts its status as a figural marker and becomes a necessary fiction, in which neither the self nor the not-self can be posited as “fixed points of reference” (Seyhan 39). The interpenetration of subject and figure is irreversible and cannot be disentangled. Their “rigorous separation” being impossible, they instead submit to “an exchange of properties that allows for their mutual persistence at the expense of literal truth” (de Man, *Allegories* 112). An unavoidably arbitrary origin, Novalis’ Robinson Crusoe provides a point of embarkation for this exchange between subject and figure. If the individuated self, as intimated by Novalis and as stated by de Man, “is a mere metaphor by means of which man protects himself from his insignificance” (de Man, *Allegories* 111), then that self is as a ship on a boundless ocean, always already shipwrecked.

Allegory and irony, suspended as they are between subject and figure, are the tropes of embarkation. The subject, run aground on the shoals of language, is manifested in the self-conscious employment of allegory and irony in philosophical and literary texts, an aesthetic practice that simultaneously suspends and amplifies the inherited discord between philosophy and literature. Philosophy, through its excessive honesty, comes to confront its figural presuppositions and literature, through its dissimulation, becomes a bearer of unexpected truths.<sup>57</sup> Both Novalis and Nietzsche write in the wake of this interpenetration. Landscape painting in the tradition of C. D. Friedrich provided its visual corollary.<sup>58</sup> The empty expanse of

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<sup>57</sup> Choi 184-85

<sup>58</sup> Koerner *Caspar David Friedrich* 29

Friedrich's canvases is just one manifestation of the tendency toward abstraction of radically autonomous art, a delimitation bought at the price of its imitative capacity.<sup>59</sup> Severed from the world as the sign from the referent, landscape painting signified neither the natural world nor the subject; it rendered the unbridgeable gap between them iterable. This and other gaps form the focal point of this chapter, in which, following the vertiginous logic of allegory, I read the brief legend of Arion—a mere two pages in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*—in light of two disparate moments: Nietzsche's own allegory of Romantic longing and the British landscape painter J. M. W. Turner's late-seascape *Snowstorm*. I pay particular attention to the rhythm and materiality of the various materials. The musical relations of allegory, as I will demonstrate, join with the primacy of the ear at the expense of sight. Rather than reading the primacy of hearing as a "descendent of the Lutheran Reformation, which...robbed the German of the serene joy of the eyes he had during the Middle Ages and gave him in exchange a nostalgic ear, the insatiable and metaphysical thirst for music,"<sup>60</sup> I read it as a reaction to the scientific rationalism that privileged sight in order to sever the beholder from what is beheld. That rhythm, music, and landscape began (to anticipate a fragment from Novalis) *creeping in everywhere* indicates their noncompliance with this arid logic. I also depart from the Kantian understanding of hearing, in which hearing oneself speak forms the ground of a transcendent interiority that can be placed in a hierarchy with the genius

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<sup>59</sup> Choi 186; I rely heavily on Adorno's *Ästhetische Theorie* for this chapter.

<sup>60</sup> Liébert 12; Liébert cites from Ernst Bertram's *Nietzsche: Attempt at a Mythology*, but I have been unable to locate the passage he cites.

(ultimately the poet), God, and nature.<sup>61</sup> To follow this route is to skip over many gaps as well as some significant details in the legend of Arion, details and gaps that form the allure and elusiveness of allegory's magical snare. The oscillation or vibration between allure and recession, self and figure, hearing and sight, and the distance of mimesis (*actio in distans*) as opposed to the distance of identification and disengagement furnish this discussion with its parameters.

The metaphors of the sea voyage, with its antecedents in Defoe and in countless myths and legends, including Homer's *Odyssey*, contribute to the mythical air of Novalis' novel-fragment *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. Heinrich's painful departure from his father's house echoes the shipwrecked Robinson Crusoe, his feelings upon separation likened to being stranded on a foreign coast ("wie auf ein fremdes Ufer gespült").<sup>62</sup> The resurfacing of the sea voyage in *Ofterdingen* positions itself in opposition to the land-locked journeys of the mules of the 16<sup>th</sup>-century picaresque novel (and, one should add, of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*), which replaced "the wonder of the open sea...by a slow and regular progress; daily, tiresome, often banal" (Moretti, *Atlas* 48). Heinrich does, of course, travel by road, but the incessant insertions of the mythical in the form of fairy tales and dreams makes it complicit in what Moretti calls the novel's "most ambitious wager: to be the bridge between the old and the new, forging a symbolic compromise between the indifferent world of modern knowledge, and the enchanted topography of magic story-telling" (*Atlas*

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<sup>61</sup> Derrida "Economimesis" 19

<sup>62</sup> 1:250; "...washed up as if it were on a foreign shore." (Novalis Trans. Palmer Hilty 26); Hereafter cited solely by page number

72). The bridge cannot be analogized back into the interrupted form of *Ofterdingen*, which unfolds in episodes connected by the narrative fiction of a main character. Heinrich's position in the novel echoes Horkheimer and Adorno's reading of *The Odyssey*: "Noch ist die innerliche Organisationsform von Individualität, Zeit, so schwach, daß die Einheit der Abenteuer äußerlich, ihre Folge der räumliche Wechsel von Schauplätzen...bleibt" (Horkheimer 46).<sup>63</sup>

The metaphor of the sea voyage is a figure of groundlessness, the experience of which Nietzsche locates somewhere between myth and science, in other words, in the uneasy conceits of knowledge as such. So it is that the Nietzsche of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* directs his amazement at the advancements of science in the face of the uncertainty of judgment: "[Es macht] uns eigentlich ein Erstaunen..., *wie sehr* die Ergebnisse der Wissenschaft Stand halten!" (3:411).<sup>64</sup> In historicizing his own standpoint in reference to a "bygone age" when the fairy tale was the domain of the marvelous, Nietzsche specifies science as the inverse parallel rather than the antithesis of the fairy tale. According to him, fairy tales induced a dizzying sense of groundlessness in an age when it was feared that the resources of disenchantment would become absolute, whereas modern science, precisely because of the inability of thought to ground itself, resurrects the marvelous: "Einmal den Boden verlieren! Schweben! Irren! Toll sein! — das gehörte zum Paradies und zur Schwelgerei früherer Zeiten: während unsere Glückseligkeit der des Schiffbrüchigen gleicht, der

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<sup>63</sup> "The inner organization of individuality in the form of time is still so weak that the external unity and sequence of adventures remains a spatial change of scenery..." (48)

<sup>64</sup> "[W]e are really amazed how *well* the results of science stand up." (GS 111)

an's Land gestiegen ist und mit beiden Füßen sich auf die alte feste Erde stellt — staunend, dass sie nicht schwankt" (3:412).<sup>65</sup> Living for Nietzsche, and eventually for Heinrich, is to have already embarked from all grounding principles, whether of epistemology, traditional religion, or individual autonomy. Embarkation, rather than confirming the Enlightenment ideal in which humanity and freedom are synonymous, is the recognition that neither land nor sea fulfills the promise of the Enlightenment: "Wehe, wenn das Land-Heimweh dich befällt, als ob dort mehr Freiheit gewesen wäre, — und es giebt kein 'Land' mehr!" (3:480).<sup>66</sup> This characteristically modern loss of liminal spaces, those areas where "apparitions used to appear" (Starobinski, *Enchantment* 3), makes space as such susceptible to the temporal disruption of the unexpected.<sup>67</sup> With Nietzsche, the paradox that "human beings living on land nevertheless prefer, in their imagination, to represent their overall condition in the world in terms of a sea voyage" (Blumenberg, *Shipwreck* 8), reaches its breaking point. In the absence of *terra firma*, the world of myth resurges in its dual function of containing the unknown through familiar referential fields and vivifying the wonder that spurns scientific discoveries through metaphorical expression (Moretti, *Atlas* 47).

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<sup>65</sup> "To lose firm ground for once! To float! To err! To be mad! That was part of the paradise and the debauchery of bygone ages, while our bliss is like that of a man who has suffered shipwreck, climbed ashore, and now stands with both feet on the firm old earth—amazed that it does not waver." (GS 111)

<sup>66</sup> "Woe, when you feel homesick for the land as if it had offered more freedom—and there is no longer any 'land.'" (GS 180-81)

<sup>67</sup> This view contrasts with the typical reading of the sea in Romanticism: "For the Romantic hero, real life is the sea, an intact place of freedom that insulates him from the triviality of the earthly sojourn." (Corbin 170)

The entanglement of science and myth is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the relationship between the sea voyage and the scientific revolution. Many notable inventions, such as the telescope, the chronometer, and the mechanical clock, owe their existence to the burgeoning overseas market and the awe inspired by the observation of the celestial bodies.<sup>68</sup> The mechanical clock, for example, was not originally invented for the banal purpose of telling time; it was developed “to reproduce the motions of the starry heavens” (Bronowski 244). The waning of this wonder in the face of mounting standardization and mechanization, the gradual adjustment of public and private life to the ticking of the clock, became anathema to and fuel for the Romantic interest in forms of compulsion that did not conform to regularity. The birth of the modern aesthetic sensibility, defined against everything ordinary, has at its core the experience of groundlessness which for Nietzsche threatened to become commonplace.<sup>69</sup> Novalis’ sparse references to *Robinson Crusoe* trace this contour and thereby impugn that work to the ordinariness Crusoe meticulously maintains on his island. With every notch on his post marking each new day, he widens the distance between the exemplarity of the autonomous individual and the Romantic suspicion that the clock and its concomitant

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<sup>68</sup> For a brief history of the development of the chronometer used to measure longitude, see Whitrow 139-46. For a more comprehensive history of the development of the mechanical clock, see Whitrow 99-139.

<sup>69</sup> *KSA* 3:431-32; *GS* 130-31



mechanization would consign the mythical experience of the shipwreck to the bygone era of myth.<sup>70</sup>

### **Listening Bound**

“Die Eltern lagen schon und schliefen, die Wanduhr schlug ihren einförmigen Takt” (1:240). This sentence—the first of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*—sets the tone for Novalis’ novel by way of a conspicuously literal anachronism. The historical Heinrich, said to have won the Wartburg song-competition in 1206, lived some five hundred years in advance of the late 17<sup>th</sup>-century invention of an accurate pendulum clock.<sup>71</sup> This likely innocent introduction of a modern invention into the novel’s medieval setting is typical of what Reinhart Koselleck identifies as an emerging superimposition of one temporal epoch over another. “Initially the result of overseas expansion,” the contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous invested the foreign with a sense of anachronism, thereby braiding new experience with the archaic. It also made knowledge susceptible to the contingencies of historical change, a development that both enabled a continuous view of history and burdened the present—splayed ever more acutely between memory and expectation—with the character of a rupture, “in which the new and the unexpected continually happened” (246). This comes in the wake of Leibniz’s critique of Newtonian physics. Contrary to Newton, who held space and time to be absolute, Leibniz believed them

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<sup>70</sup> See Watt for Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s critique of *Robinson Crusoe* as exemplifying the ordinary man who only does “what every man can imagine himself doing, thinking, feeling, or wishing for.” (155)

<sup>71</sup> Whitrow 120-31

to be relative.<sup>72</sup> Flatness and consistency here give way to unsettling complications for anyone trying to ascertain their position in the world. Matters were compounded at sea where the exact position of ships could not be fixed until the telescope and the clock had been perfected.<sup>73</sup> The word *Unruhe*, with which German names the balancing spring of a clock, was the basis for the analogy that Leibniz drew between clocks and the emotional disquiet that suspends the human subject between hope and fear.<sup>74</sup> That the reader encounters Heinrich lying “restless in bed” (“unruhig auf seinem Lager”)<sup>75</sup> solidifies Novalis’ debt to the constellation of mechanized time, sea faring, and anxiety for a protagonist in whom the hope of the sea voyage and the fear of shipwreck is combined.

Novalis’ notebooks are pervaded with a concern with rhythm, the ubiquitousness of which seems synonymous with inertia: “Jahreszeiten, Tageszeiten, Leben, und Schicksale sind alle merckwürdig genug durchaus *rhythmisch* – metrisch – tactmäßig... Rhythmus findet sich überall – schleicht sich überall ein... Sollt es bloß Einfluß der Trägheit seyn?” (2:401).<sup>76</sup> Rhythm, cast here as the common denominator of natural force and human aspiration, is as inexorable as it is sure. In distilling rhythm as the base of all life and according it a power of

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<sup>72</sup> Novalis’ temporal relativism can be garnered from his notebooks: “Jeder Mensch hat seinen individuellen Rhythmus.” (AB 544)

<sup>73</sup> Bronowski 240-41

<sup>74</sup> Leibniz *New Essays on Human Understanding* 166-67

<sup>75</sup> 15; 1:240

<sup>76</sup> “Strangely enough, seasons, days, life, and destinies are all entirely *rhythmical* — metrical — accented... Rhythm occurs everywhere — creeps in everywhere... There must be more behind this — might it be merely the influence of inertia?” (PW 109)

centrifugal subterfuge, Novalis is consistent with Adorno for whom “Schicksal ist Herrschaft auf ihre reine Abstraktion gebracht” (*Philosophie* 68).<sup>77</sup> Where rhythm reigns, individual autonomy is excluded, and yet they must coexist in the realm of enchantment. The principle of uniformity and agreement—the prerequisite of all rational thought—named and presupposed by the assertions of both Novalis and Adorno, toes the line of rational domination only in the service of disenchantment. The merchants, with whom Heinrich and his mother commence their journey to Augsburg, testify to the power of poetry to enchant: “Eine magische Gewalt üben die Sprüche des Dichters aus; auch die gewöhnlichen Worte kommen in reizenden Klängen vor, und berauschen die festgebannten Zuhörer” (1:256).<sup>78</sup> For rhythm, in addition to making humans spellbound, also makes them god-like, a capacity gained precisely by succumbing to its inertia. This is the utility of rhythm, in which Nietzsche sees the origin of poetry: when one lets rhythm permeate speech.<sup>79</sup>

[D]er Rhythmus ist ein Zwang; er erzeugt eine unüberwindliche Lust, nachzugeben, mit einzustimmen; nicht nur der Schritt der Füße, auch die Seele selber geht dem Tacte nach, — wahrscheinlich, so schloss man, auch die Seele der Götter! Man versuchte sie also durch den Rhythmus zu *zwingen*

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<sup>77</sup> “Fate is domination taken to the point of pure abstraction.” (Adorno, *Philosophy* 54)

<sup>78</sup> “The sayings of poets exert a magical power; they make even common words take on enticing sounds and intoxicate the spellbound listener.” (32)

<sup>79</sup> This is a paraphrase from aphorism 84 of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, in which Nietzsche reorders the phrase, *den Rhythmus in die Rede dringen lassen*. See *KSA* 3:440.

und eine Gewalt über sie auszuüben; man warf ihnen die Poesie wie eine magische Schlinge um. (3:440)<sup>80</sup>

Heard over longer distances as with a cry over water and audible even in the act of rowing a boat, poetry divulges what is already mythical in the sea voyage itself.

Known in German as *gebundene Rede* (literally, “bound speech”), poetry became for the ancients a principle of freedom.

That this notion of poetry as the vehicle of individuation was resurrected in the lyrical I in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century is less surprising than the general presumption that human autonomy was based on reason. Nietzsche, for all his nods to Classicism but also after a century of observing the faltering of the Enlightenment ideal, knew otherwise. As Ivan Nagel summarizes: “The act of autonomy, around which German classicism assembled itself, is modeled on magic, not on instrumental reason” (26). Novalis’ Romanticism distinguishes itself from Classicism through the loss of the faith that individual autonomy is possible without “a helpless relapse into servitude to monsters” (Nagel 93). This is nowhere more evident than in the legend of Arion, the first tale recounted by the merchants in *Ofterdingen*. They tell of a musician or *Tonkünstler* (literally a “tone-artist”), who, with his many valuables, sets sail to a foreign land only to be threatened mid-journey by the ship’s crew. The crew decides to take the poet’s riches and then throw him overboard. Arion pleads for his life but to no avail. He does, however, persuade the crew to allow him to play his

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<sup>80</sup> “[R]hythm is a compulsion; it engenders an unconquerable urge to yield and join in; not only our feet follow the beat but the soul does, too—probably, one surmised, the soul of the gods as well! Thus one tried to compel the gods by using rhythm and to force their hand: poetry was thrown at them like a magical snare.” (GS 139)

“swan song” after which he promises to throw himself overboard. Fearing that the magical song might soften their resolve, the crew plugs their ears in order to both grant Arion’s wish and still be able to fulfill their own. The song occasions a moment of enchantment: “Der Sänger stimmte einen herrlichen, unendlich rührenden Gesang an. Das ganze Schiff tönte mit, die Wellen klangen, die Sonne und die Gestirne erschienen zugleich am Himmel, und aus den grünen Fluten tauchten tanzende Schaaren von Fischen und Meerungeheuern hervor” (1:258).<sup>81</sup> Arion then leaps overboard and is, to his astonishment, immediately rescued by a “grateful” sea monster. The creature guides Arion to his desired location and recovers his treasure from the crew, who, due to infighting over the treasure, had lost control of the vessel and run aground. In pairing self-discovery and self-sacrifice in one gesture, the legend of Arion attests to what Nagel calls the “transcausally magical conjunction” (26) in which fate is requisitioned to provide its own antidote. Arion’s leap compels rather than causes the monster’s benevolent intervention, affirming with Goethe that the wholeness of the individual is dependent on the aid of “quite unexpected things from outside.”<sup>82</sup>

The subject of the legend of Arion is an art that, rather than imitating fate as does the monotonous ticking of the clock, has the intention of “notching the clock

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<sup>81</sup> “The musician began a magnificent, infinitely touching song. The whole ship rang with it and the waves resounded, the sun and the constellations appeared in the sky, and out of the green waters emerged dancing hosts of fish and sea monsters.” (34)

<sup>82</sup> Quoted in Nagel 26. Nagel does not provide a source for this quote.

face itself" (Hullot-Kentor 74).<sup>83</sup> Itself a moment of temporal dilation, the legend is meant to enchant Heinrich while thematizing enchantment. Possessing a form of "depth perception" in which, following Starobinski, "then" is complicit with "now" (*Enchantment* 5), enchantment lends itself to the rhetorical form of allegory, which offers a picture "to be not so much seen as seen through" (Heffernan 23). Likewise, the merchant's tale possesses an inner historicity. That the crew stuffs their ears to shelter them from Arion's song looks forward to the increasing disinterest with which emphatic music would be greeted by the public, and, more obviously, backward to Odysseus's circumnavigation of the Sirens in *The Odyssey*. The more immediate epic predecessor to the legend of Arion, however, is found in Herodotus, whose *Histories* contain an earlier version. Novalis' interpretation of Arion differs in several respects from the earlier account, but the main point of differentiation is in the renunciation of the differentiating detail. Arion leaps into the sea in Herodotus, whereas Novalis uses the more mysterious appellation of the abyss ("Abgrund"); Arion is rescued by a dolphin in Herodotus whereas in *Ofterdingen* it is a monster ("Unthier"). In the earlier account the reader knows Arion's exact travel plans and is privy to seemingly superfluous information such as his personal attire.<sup>84</sup> In *Ofterdingen* we know nothing of Arion's itinerary—only that he is traveling to a foreign land—let alone what he is wearing, save that he is in possession of a wooden

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<sup>83</sup> Hullot-Kentor is speaking about the hammerblows of fate in Mahler's 6<sup>th</sup> Symphony, but his language is appropriate for Arion's song, which is pregnant with modernism.

<sup>84</sup> For reading of the function of the detail in Herodotus's account of Arion, see Flory 413-17.

instrument and treasures significant not for their monetary value but as “Erinnerungen glücklicher Stunden und als Zeichen der Liebe und Dankbarkeit” (1:258).<sup>85</sup> The given details in Novalis’ interpretation—the crew plugs their ears, the “swan song,” deviations in plot—serve less to distract from the significance of the legend, as pull their associations into its mythical vortex. One could spend much time following up with every detail in search of meaning as if caught in the “magical snare” of the legend’s rhythm. The song itself does, however, command special attention.

Enchantment, although promising the end of history, is historical. The timelessness of Arion’s song, during which the sun and the stars appear simultaneously in the sky, is not beholden to a timeless formula. Effecting the rhythmic reconciliation of every observable entity, the Dionysian content of Arion’s song remains unheard. Like the crew members who stuff their ears, we have no access to the song itself. This is consistent with *Ofterdingen* as a whole. Although the novel chronicles the education of a poet, Heinrich never composes a poem. Only in its absence can the respective artworks intimate the animating principle of art as such. Heinrich’s poem would have to be *the* poem as Arion’s song is *the* song. Its harmonic effects need not mirror its content, which, in being withheld, bears the tendency of modern art gradually to renounce semblance. In rigorously positioning themselves in opposition to familiar, ossified (tonal) relations (whether that is understood in terms of harmony or “expression”), artworks impregnate themselves with the negative of genuine experience. The legend of Arion is complicit in this

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<sup>85</sup> “...reminders of happier hours and as tokens of love and gratitude.” (34)

drive to abstraction in modern art that, in mimicking subjective silence, registers objective trauma.<sup>86</sup> The music of Arion, precisely through its absence, calls attention to the means whereby its effect would be fulfilled. This accords with Novalis' theory of allegory. In contrast to the overt mechanism of traditional allegory, the Romantic variant presents the incessantly receding gap between sign and referent (Kuzniar, "Temporality" 70-2). Less the allegory of *something* than the allegory of *allegory*, its direction is indirection, its language musical: "Höchstens kann wahre Poesie einen *allegorischen* Sinn im Großen haben und eine indirecte Wirckung wie Musik etc. thun" (2:769).<sup>87</sup> Its opposition to closure, affirmed in the indeterminacy of Arion's song, allows it to speak musically, or to "speak meaninglessly" (Adorno, *Philosophy* 98). We hear nothing as literature turns to song.

That the Romantic allegory, bound as it is to musical speech, both creates and signifies distance implies its severance from the optics of scientific rationalism. In the tradition of "subjective self-disengagement" (Calhoon, "Non-Vital" 94), the eye stands opposed to the felt affinity between matter that makes Arion's song a force to be reckoned with.<sup>88</sup> Appropriately then, the legend of Arion commences with a visual marker emphasizing the connection between music and poetry:

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<sup>86</sup> See the epigraph from Adorno for this chapter.

<sup>87</sup> "At most poetry can have a generally allegorical meaning and exercise an indirect effect, as does music, etc." (Translation in Kuzniar, "Temporality" 72)

<sup>88</sup> Nietzsche corroborates this connection between music and felt affinity in aphorism 142 of *Morgenröte*, entitled "*Mitempfindung*." For a recent examination of this, see Calhoon "Of Non-Vital Interest."



In diesen Zeiten hat es sich unter andern einmal zugetragen, daß einer jener sonderbaren Dichter oder mehr Tonkünstler – wiewohl die Musik und Poesie wohl ziemlich eins seyn mögen und vielleicht eben so zusammen gehören wie Mund und Ohr, da der erste nur ein bewegliches und antwortendes Ohr ist – daß also dieser Tonkünstler übers Meer in ein fremdes Land reisen wollte. (1:257)<sup>89</sup>

The dashes isolate the congruence of music and poetry, ear and mouth, from the rest of the narrative while heightening the arhythmic stop and start of the narration, the flow of which is interrupted by an accumulation of nested clauses that postpone the main point to the very end. This syntactical dismemberment disrupts the compulsory power of rhythm discussed above. The brilliance of this device is potentiated when read as a mirror of other such caesuras. The anachronism of the ticking clock; the temporal gap entailed in narrating an ancient tale; the insertion of this tale into the larger novel; the indeterminacy of the legend (where is Arion going and why?); the suspension of Arion's song; the dashes; and now the stammer around the dashes all conspire in a concentrated underdetermination, the *mise-en-abyme* complicit in the distancing power of allegory. Hidden in and around the dashes and their cognates is the awareness that the representation that they fracture has endless vanishing points. The space between the letters begins to

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<sup>89</sup> “Among other things, in those ancient days it once happened that one of those singular poets or rather tone artists—although music and poesy may well be pretty much the same thing and perhaps only belong together like mouth and ear, since the mouth is only a movable and answering ear—it happened that this musician wanted to sail over the sea to a foreign country.” (33)

widen, but seeing a blank page would only provide a refuge for tired eyes, a sheltering stasis that the primacy of the ear is meant to oppose.

It is such an image that Nietzsche requisitions for a thinly veiled caricature of Romantic longing. He sets his stage—aphorism 60 of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*—in the surf and uses imagery strangely reminiscent of the legend of Arion:

Habe ich noch Ohren? Bin ich nur noch Ohr und Nichts weiter mehr? Hier stehe ich inmitten des Brandes der Brandung, deren weissen Flammen bis zu meinem Fusse heraufzüngeln; — von allen Seiten heult, droht, schreit, schrillt es auf mich zu, während in der tiefsten Tiefe der alte Erderschütterer seine Arie singt, dumpf wie ein brüllender Stier: er stampft sich dazu einen solchen Erderschütterer-Tact, dass selbst diesen verwetterten Felsunholden hier das Herz darüber im Leibe zittert. (3:424)<sup>90</sup>

This image of man's subordination to nature revives the synonymy of ear and mouth voiced by Novalis' traveling merchants. The symbiosis between an ear that listens and a mouth that merely moves and answers finds its parallel in the earth-shaker's aria and the waves that vibrate as if they themselves were singing. This compulsion strikes a stark counterpoint to the ability of Arion's song to compel both harmony and rescue. As yet there is neither stasis, nor comfort, let alone rescue. The seismological beat of the "Erberschütterer"—a reference to Poseidon—compounds

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<sup>90</sup> "Do I still have ears? Am I all ears and nothing else? Here I stand in the flaming surf whose white tongues are licking at my feet; from all sides I hear howling, threats, screaming, roaring coming at me, while the old earth-shaker sings his aria in the lowest depths, deep as a bellowing bull, while pounding such an earth-shaking beat that the hearts of even these weather-beaten rocky monsters are trembling in their bodies." (GS 123)

the intruding noise in a manner recalling the vaguely threatening tone of Novalis' fragment on rhythm: "Rhythmus...schleicht sich überall ein." Nietzsche bears witness to an anxiety already registered in *Ofterdingen*: that of a dominant monotony effecting not harmony but violent trembling. From out of the spirit of such music is born what seems to be a healing vision:

Da, plötzlich, wie aus dem Nichts geboren, erscheint vor dem Thore dieses höllischen Labyrinthes, nur wenige Klafter weit entfernt, — ein grosses Segelschiff, schweigsam wie ein Gespenst dahergleitend. Oh diese gespenstische Schönheit! Mit welchem Zauber fasst sie mich an! Wie? Hat alle Ruhe und Schweigsamkeit der Welt sich hier eingeschifft? Sitzt mein Glück selber an diesem stillen Platze, mein glücklicheres Ich, mein zweites verewigtes Selbst? Nicht todt sein und doch auch nicht mehr lebend? Als ein geisterhaftes, stilles, schauendes, gleitendes, schwebendes Mittelwesen? Dem Schiffe gleichend, welches mit seinen weissen Segeln wie ein ungeheurer Schmetterling über das dunkle Meer hinläuft! Ja *Ueber* das Dasein hinlaufen! Das ist es! Das ware es! — — Es scheint, der Lärm hier hat mich zum Phantasten gemacht? (3:424)<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> "Then, suddenly, as if born out of nothing, there appears before the gate of this hellish labyrinth, only a few fathoms away—a large sailboat, gliding along as silently as a ghost. Oh, what ghostly beauty! How magically it touches me! Has all the calm and taciturnity of the world embarked on it? Does my happiness itself sit in this quiet place—my happier ego, my second, departed self? Not to be dead and yet no longer alive? a spiritlike intermediate being: quietly observing, gliding, floating? As the boat that with its white sails moves like an immense butterfly over the dark sea. Yes! To move *over* existence! That's it! That would be something! It seems as if the noise here had led me into fantasies." (*GS* 123)

This aphorism is endlessly evocative, a characteristic that aligns it with the allegorical potential of the legend of Arion. Two readings that will prove to be connected are immediately relevant: the aphorism as an allegory of Romantic longing, and as an echo of the Dionysian and Apollonian relationship dramatized most extensively in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*.

The projection of a hovering, taciturn vessel is consistent with Nietzsche's denunciation of Romanticism in Book 5 of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, a corroborating reference for reading aphorism 60 as an allegory of Romantic longing. Romantic are those things born from life impoverishment as opposed to from overfullness: "...die an der Verarmung des Lebens Leidenden, die Ruhe, Stille, glattes Meer, Erlösung von sich durch die Kunst und Erkenntniss suchen, oder aber den Rausch, den Krampf, die Betäubung, den Wahnsinn" (3:620).<sup>92</sup> The quieter existence offered by the sudden appearance of the gliding vessel is the fulfillment of Romantic desire. Surrendering to the fantasies of the ghostly ship cannot, however, be divorced from the inscrutability of the image. Its sails act as veils that, as with allegory, demand to be seen through.<sup>93</sup> To allow the image of the ship to be the final resting place of reference (and the proximity to the ship and death here is unmistakable) would be to accept the "calm seas" that Nietzsche decries as a result of life impoverishment. By contrast, recognizing the veil of the sail is a refusal to

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<sup>92</sup> "...those who suffer from the impoverishment of life and seek rest, stillness, calm seas, redemption (sic) from themselves through art and knowledge, or intoxication, convulsions, anaesthesia, and madness." (GS 328)

<sup>93</sup> Jacques Derrida, in his reading of aphorism 60 of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, uses the homonym between sail (*la voile*) and veil (*le voile*) to highlight the indeterminacy of the image. See *Spurs* 37-55.

arrest the vanishing point of Romantic allegory. The ship, akin to the principle of individuation, only feigns the stability for which the self longs. As Derrida has shown, the calm apparition is but a metaphor for the indeterminacy of truth.<sup>94</sup> The aphorism's title, "*Die Frauen, und ihre Wirkung in die Ferne,*" makes it part of the endless detour in which "woman," far from merely veiling or uncovering the truth, marks the absence (necessarily another veil) wherever a truth is sought.

"Vorausgesetzt, dass die Wahrheit ein Weib ist —, wie?" as Nietzsche stutteringly states in the preface to *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, is not to locate truth in the essentializing ideas of woman or femininity, but to specify the essence of the truth: untruth (5:11).<sup>95</sup> That Nietzsche's allegory of Romantic longing does not find referential respite in the image, makes of it a Romantic allegory, or an allegory of allegory: the endless deferment of arrival, comfort, and knowledge whose antipode rests in the calm seas of the surety of truth, ontological stability, and a deathly stasis. As with the introduction to the legend of Arion, Nietzsche's allegory of allegory (*ad infinitum*) registers its stutter visually in the materiality of the dash: "Der Zauber und die mächtigste Wirkung der Frauen ist, um die Sprache der Philosophen zu reden, eine Wirkung in die Ferne, eine *actio in distans*: dazu gehört aber, zuerst und vor Allem—*Distanz!* (3:425).<sup>96</sup> Dashes in Nietzsche always warrant attention as he

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<sup>94</sup> Derrida *Spurs* 41-63

<sup>95</sup> "Supposing truth to be a woman – what?" (*BGE* 31)

<sup>96</sup> "The magic and most powerful effect of women is, in philosophical language, action at a distance, *actio in distans*; but this requires first of all and above all—*distance*. (*GS* 124)

once wrote that he prefers his dashes to his communicable thoughts.<sup>97</sup> The action of the dash is that of distancing, an a-semic marker that draws the entire aphorism into a vertiginous abyss that has its readerly equivalent in placing oneself back in the noisy surf. To demonstrate performatively that such noise is the precondition and impetus of Romantic allegory is to affirm less that Romantic allegory is the formal expression of mourning, than it is to highlight the inevitability of the repetition from disquietude to fantasy. To quote Thomas Weiskel: “indeterminacy signifies” (28).<sup>98</sup> This is, after all, the contour of the metaphoricity of the self. It seems that here too rhythm has crept in. The apparition is as graspable as it is avoidable. This brings us to the second reading of the aphorism.

The compulsion to look and to want simultaneously to go beyond looking, echoing as it does the desire to destroy the illusory appearance of semblance, provides but superfluous grounds to identify the aphorism with the Apollonian and Dionysian relationship as it is espoused in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*.<sup>99</sup> From the primal soup of noise is born the comforting Apollonian illusion in the image of a ship, the same metaphor borrowed from Schopenhauer to illustrate the principle of individuation. This continuity in Nietzsche’s thinking is only partially recanted in the same aphorism in which he impugns Romanticism as life-impoverishment.

Nietzsche here criticizes his misplaced hope for German music in his earlier work:

“Insgleichen deutete ich mir die deutsche Musik zurecht zum Ausdruck einer

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<sup>97</sup> Liébert 5, 209 n. 14

<sup>98</sup> For a discussion of allegory as mourning, see Seyhan 67-70.

<sup>99</sup> See especially section 24 of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*.

dionysischen Mächtigkeit der deutschen Seele: in ihr glaubte ich das Erdbeben zu hören, mit dem eine von Alters her aufgestaute Urkraft sich endlich Luft macht — gleichgültig dagegen, ob Alles, was man sonst Cultur heisst, dabei in's Zittern geräth" (3:620).<sup>100</sup> The earth-shaker and the trembling of everything proximate returns to qualify aphorism 60 not as a simple restatement of the cultural imperative outlined in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, but as a refinement of the mechanism of the Apollonian and Dionysian. The Dionysian content of aphorism 60 does not lie in its illustration and disavowal of that relation as such, but in the dissonance between its ironic treatment of the cultural material from which it is formed, Romanticism, and its inability to distance itself from that material by harnessing it in a stable image.

Nietzsche's aphorism, set as it is on the shore, invites comparison with one scholar's reading of the Romantic experience of that vantage point: "The sea-shore offered a stage on which, more than anywhere else, the actual spectacle of the confrontation between air, water, and land contributed to fostering daydreams about merging with the elemental forces and fantasies of being swallowed up, as it unfolded the mirages of what Ruskin was to call the pathetic fallacy" (Corbin 164). In adhering to Nietzsche's Apollonian and Dionysian, this prescient observation underscores those aspects of aphorism 60 that distance it from Nietzsche's earlier thought. That the mirage of the tranquil ship signifies death rather than an individuated life disrupts the reading of the aphorism as a mere illustration of the

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<sup>100</sup> "I reinterpreted German music for myself as if it signified a Dionysian power of the German soul: I believed that I heard in it the earthquake through which some primeval force that had been dammed up for ages finally liberated itself—indifferent whether everything else that one calls culture might begin to tremble." (GS 327-28)

Apollonian and Dionysian as well as demonstrates the complicity of the mirage with the subjective disembodiment of vision. It adheres to the Enlightenment taboo on the projection of one's "own felt aliveness" (Jonas 10). The pathetic fallacy, a phrase from Ruskin's monumental *Modern Painters*, would seem to contradict this. In general terms, the pathetic fallacy is "the curious attribution of human feelings to non-human subjects" (Rosenblum 36). However, rather than projecting vitality, the pathetic fallacy is defined by the subjugation of nature to the subject and therefore aligned with the disengagement and distancing of the static image (Ruskin 407). This is consistent with the aloof comportment of hovering over existence as a spectator—"still[], schauend[], gleitend[]." Such a defense mechanism harboring domination is at odds with the sympathy, or mimesis, that makes the subject, being "all ears," susceptible to force. This is the state reclaimed at the end of the aphorism through its renunciation of a final referent and the gesture of the dash. There are therefore two modes of distance at work: the dominating disembodiment of the static image (ultimately death), and the susceptibility to force characteristic of mimesis (*actio in distans*).

Hegel, in volume 2 of his *Ästhetik*, echoes the shift from the differentiating defenses of sight to the vulnerability of hearing in his description of the transformation of painting into music:

Die Aufhebung des Räumlichen besteht deshalb hier nur darin, daß ein bestimmtes sinnliches Material sein ruhiges Außereinander aufgibt, in Bewegung gerät, doch so in sich erzittert, daß jeder Teil des kohärierenden Körpers seinen Ort nicht nur verändert, sondern auch sich in den vorigen



Zustand zurückzusetzen strebt. Das Resultat dieses schwingenden  
Zitterns ist der *Ton*, das Material der Musik. (2:260-61)<sup>101</sup>

The loss of differentiation that occurs as painting becomes sound attests to what is already musical in Nietzsche's Romantic allegory. The performative metamorphosis whereby Nietzsche's renunciation of the stability of the image surrenders to an endless oscillation between noise and fantasy sets the aphorism to a rhythm recalling Leibniz's *Unruhe*. The pendulum-subject, swinging back and forth between fear and hope, noise and fantasy, underscores the instability of a self, for whom estrangement is the condition of life.<sup>102</sup> This is given deft expression in the legend of Arion, in which self-sacrifice and rescue, however blind they are to each other, coincide. The modern subject is as bound to listening as to ecstasy. The crew in the legend of Arion reserves the alternative for themselves. In stuffing their ears rather than being subjected to the compulsions of Arion's song, they practice the cunning that for the latter is a mute point. Only with the aid of the unexpected, the sea monster, does Arion survive. This vulnerability became the true subject of Romantic landscape painting.

Landscape painting underwent a decisive change just after the advent of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with Caspar David Friedrich's *Cross in the Mountains*, his altarpiece for the Tetschen Castle in northern Bohemia. That the first published review of the

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<sup>101</sup> "The *Aufhebung* of the spatial therefore consists here only in the fact that a determinate, sensible material gives up its peaceful separateness, turns to movement, yet so vibrates in itself that every part of the cohering body not only changes its place but also strives to replace itself in its former position. The result of this oscillating vibration is *tone*, the material of music." (Quoted in Sallis, *Transfigurements* 114)

<sup>102</sup> Rosen *Romantic Poets* 44

work in 1809 by the Neoclassicist aesthetic dogmatist Friedrich W. Basil von Ramdohr admonishes it as “true presumption when landscape painting wants to slink into the church and creep on to the altars” pinpoints both the historical and epistemological setting of an art form that, like Romantic allegory, signifies the void in the wake of the waning influence of the church. The remarks of Philipp Otto Runge that with the death of religions derivative of Catholicism “everything draws toward landscape” makes of the painting of natural forms a fulcrum of that which aspires toward formlessness.<sup>103</sup> For landscape painting in the tradition of C. D. Friedrich does not seek to portray nature in its materiality, but to use the material of paint to veil, and therefore represent, the inability of an unstable subject to refer to a stable referent.<sup>104</sup> It is to this tradition that the British landscape painter, J. M. W. Turner belongs.

Turner’s 1842 canvas, *Snowstorm—Steamboat off a Harbour’s Mouth* (Figure 1), is the point of confluence for all of the threads under discussion. The sea voyage, rhythm, abstraction, allegory all converge in this terrifying image of a steamboat being dwarfed by a snowstorm at sea. In capturing the “moment of ultimate vulnerability” when the vessel is subjected to the “superiority of environmental forces” (Rodner 473, 455), *Snowstorm* not only echoes the dire straits of both Arion and Nietzsche’s protagonist; it transfers that vulnerability onto the spectator through the centrifugal pulsations of the storm. That the ship’s disorientation is ours

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<sup>103</sup> I am indebted to Koerner’s *Caspar David Friedrich and the Subject of Landscape* for the quotations from Ramdohr (58) and Runge (162) as well as for the historical coordinates of landscape painting.

<sup>104</sup> Kuzniar “The Temporality of Landscape” 74



Figure 1. J. M. W. Turner, *Snowstorm—Steamboat off a Harbour's Mouth*, 1842 as well stands in opposition to the monotonous rhythm through which an emphatic aesthetic experience breaks. Its opposition to the ordinary is registered in the painting's law of form, which partakes in the tendency toward abstraction characteristic of much of C. D. Friedrich's work. A contemporary comment on the latter's *Monk by the Sea*, that "there was nothing to look at—no boats, not even a sea monster" (Rosenblum 13), specifies disorientation as the absence of the specific. As in Nietzsche's Romantic allegory, the eye finds no rest in *Snowstorm*. The canvas is so overwhelming that even a sea monster would appear as a saving grace. As it is, the centrally positioned steamboat is less a stable image to hold on to than a double of the spectator who, deprived of any "reference of observation," is helplessly "*in it*"

(Gowing 48). Ruskin's pathetic fallacy has no place on Turner's canvas, which subjects itself to the power of the elements rather than attempting to dominate and harness them through projection. It is the inverse of such semblance, not to be conflated with the realistic imitation of the storm, which gives the painting endless cause for reflection.

In breaking through the monotony by adhering strictly to indistinctiveness, *Snowstorm* aims to defeat nondifferentiation through its portrayal, a form of magic somewhere between imitation and mimesis that is doubled on a thematic level between the artist and the painting. This is the site of the legend recorded in the painting's full title: *The author was in this storm on the night the Ariel left Harwich*. Turner claims to have had himself bound to the mast of the ship for four hours in order to let the brunt of the storm guide his depiction. This autobiographical appendage to the painting, whether true or not, invites interpretation.<sup>105</sup> Like a modern Odysseus, Turner has himself bound and so experiences what, if one believes his account, he "did not expect to escape" (Gowing 48). That Odysseus uses cunning to sail safely past the Sirens distinguishes him from both Turner and Arion. Turner's gesture of surrender is akin to that of Arion, whose own rescue is met with astonishment. *Snowstorm* is the fruit of this surrender, the artwork that the legend of Arion withholds. The Dionysian content of the former is, however, an echo of the latter. The silence of Arion's song, the effect of which is the harmonious soundings of the earthly and celestial, resounds in Turner's canvas, in which realism and

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<sup>105</sup> Scholars are mixed as to the verity of Turner's account. Those who believe the account are Gowing 48; Heffernan 198-99.

abstraction paradoxically coincide.<sup>106</sup> The tendency toward abstraction in modern art prefigured in the absence of Arion's song finds its realistic corollary in the boundlessly churning sea. Its centrifugal subterfuge was not lost on its contemporaries, one of whom complained that it resembled "soapsuds and whitewash."<sup>107</sup> This dismissal not only attests to the painting's distance from aesthetic norms, but also to the inability to reconcile "pure form" and the concrete.<sup>108</sup> One would, therefore, be doing violence to the allegorical potential of *Snowstorm* to reduce it to an image of steam power vs. the force of nature, or even of the principle of individuation vs. that of nondifferentiation. In order not to sacrifice the evocative to an evocation—this being the principle of Romantic allegory, as demonstrated in the reading of Nietzsche above—it is the gap between abstraction and the concrete, between figuration and the literal that is given voice.

Such a radical renunciation of semblance is paired, via Turner's account of being bound to the mast, with the subjective disengagement of imitation. The mast of the steamship, a thin vertical, is oddly visible against the raging storm. The insistence on its visibility is reminiscent of the fantasies of Nietzsche's spectator, who, coerced by the noise of the crashing waves, spots a comforting apparition of a tranquil, gliding ship. In positioning himself in the only area of the painting where the tumultuous elements give way to gentler clouds and spray, Turner distances

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<sup>106</sup> Ruskin 158; Ruskin praises the accuracy of the depiction.

<sup>107</sup> Quoted without citation in Reynolds 190.

<sup>108</sup> According to Ronald Paulson, "the actual working out of the structure of forms was in a radical sense [Turner's] real subject." (69)

himself from his traumatic ordeal through its (amended) representation. Such imitation is at odds with the susceptibility and compulsions of the Dionysian, defined by Nietzsche as “the incapacity *not* to react” (“die Unfähigkeit, *nicht* zu reagieren”).<sup>109</sup> This mimetic comportment asserts itself whenever the gap of Romantic allegory becomes iterable and it is tempting to read Turner’s tale as just such a reaction to veil the indeterminacy of the coincidence of abstraction and materiality.<sup>110</sup> Seeing beyond this tale is the corollary of seeing beyond the sails and veils in Nietzsche and to once again assume the susceptibility of being “all ears.” A figure of endless repetition, aphorism 60 finds its visual reduction in the vortex structure of *Snowstorm*, itself but a thematization of its imminent constitution, in which the figural and literal collide.

Listening to *Snowstorm* is to attune oneself to the means it enlists in the service of meaning. The discordance between abstraction and materiality, the collision of which is indirect, aligns it with allegory. Just as the distinguishing details in the legend of Arion (the treasure, the sea monster, the plugged ears, etc.) embark in promise of the fulfillment of an allegorical meaning only to pull their associations into its mythical vortex, so too does the account of Turner bound to the mast merely serve to enunciate the gap, the jagged demarcations of which it threatens to veil. For Turner’s tale can no more verify the reality of the scene than it can evade the abyss to which his every stroke attests. It can only submit itself to the vibration of the

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<sup>109</sup> *TI* 84; 6:117

<sup>110</sup> Paulson 69; Paulson reads the literary appendages to Turner’s paintings as just such a veil to make the works more appealing to the public, who expected the differentiations of historical painting.

painting, an ebb and flow of attraction and evasion. Turner had no illusions about the latter tendency. When approached by a reverend, whose mother had experienced a similar storm at sea, and was told that she liked the painting, Turner reacted in a tellingly irritated manner. Here is Turner's recollection of the encounter:

"I did not paint the picture to be understood, but I wished to show what such a scene was like. I got the sailors to lash me to the mast to observe it; I was lashed for four hours, and I did not expect to escape, but I felt bound to record it if I did. But no one had any business to like the picture."

"But my mother once went through just such a scene, and it brought it all back to her."

"Is your mother a painter?"

"No."

"Then she ought to have been thinking of something else." (Gowing 48)

*Snowstorm* is not to be grasped, but surrendered to. Turner's dismissiveness mirrors and refracts the reverend's all-too-easy identification, which substitutes identity for vulnerability. In truth, the reverend's mother had an experience completely foreign to Turner's. He did not happen to be in a storm at sea and then recollect it as she did. He, as a *painter*, had himself *lashed* to the mast, and then felt *bound* to record it if he survived. Again, the comparison with the Sirens-episode in Homer is relevant. Whereas Odysseus reaches the solution that allows himself to sail safely past the Sirens by neutralizing the effect of their song, Turner, rather than trying to avoid danger, exposes himself directly to it. If, following Horkheimer and

Adorno, Odysseus's safe passage is the representation of the aboriginal moment when the fulfillment of art is renounced, then Turner's abandon is the attempt to return to a moment before art had renounced its right to be true. The quick identification with the image comes at the expense of hearing, a comportment at odds with the disengagement of sight. Turner, like the *Tonkünstler* Arion before him, saves the singular occurrence from the reduction to repeatability. This is the dream that is projected back into the myth of the Sirens's song. Just as the Romantics "wanted to conjure the image of divine light not to behold the deity as its source above, but to illuminate a damaged nature below" (Hullot-Kentor 200), so too do Turner and Novalis save their works from easy-identification (Novalis through the absence of Arion's song, Turner through his snub) in order to provide a measure with which to salvage the unrepeatable from the clutches of the same. That, as Gowing puts it, Turner "treasured the experience like a private possession" (45) makes of the reverend's mother (at least in Turner's eyes) a crew member hungry for Arion's treasure and unwilling to subject herself to his song. Turner's recourse, like Arion's, is to plunge himself into the abyss of his art.

Literally, or almost, for the center of *Snowstorm* is a black steamboat that seems to bleed into the storm. An ominous apparition, its wheel can barely be made out. The figure of the ship was used by Schopenhauer and adopted by Nietzsche to illustrate the principle of individuation: "Wie auf dem tobenden Meere, das, nach allen Seiten unbegrenzt, heulend Wellenberge erhebt und senkt, auf einem Kahn ein Schiffer sitzt, dem schwachen Fahrzeug vertrauend; so sitzt, mitten in einer Welt von Qualen, ruhig der einzelne Mensch, gestützt und vertrauend auf das principium



individuationis" (KSA 1:28).<sup>111</sup> The embarkation of the subject—a shift marked by the insight into the incommensurability between signifier and signified—is also the occasion of Romantic landscape painting, in which “the assertion or will of the subject” is forfeited for “a relativism resulting from the loss of a stable, fixed referent or object of representation” (Kuzniar, “Temporality” 74). To call *Snowstorm* an allegory of subjectivity, then, serves less to append a stable referent to the image as to hollow out the ground beneath the subject. The harmony between representation and world is supplanted by the dissonance of the indefinite interval. Schopenhauer, for whom the experience of music is central to his philosophy, analogizes musical intervals in a manner bearing on this indistinctness: “[T]he impure discords, giving no definite interval, can be compared to the monstrous abortions between two species of animals, or between man and animal” (259). Extending Schopenhauer’s musical analogy to the subject, the Nietzsche of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* bids us to think “eine Menschwerdung der Dissonanz” and then, after a dash, divests the thought of analogy: “— und was ist sonst der Mensch?” (1:155).<sup>112</sup> Novalis reduces the formulations of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche to a deft formula. An entry in his notebooks from 1798 reads simply: “Der Mensch – Metapher” (2:351). The dash, an indefinite interval, suspends subjectivity between what it connects and partitions,

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<sup>111</sup> “Just as the boatman sits in his small boat, trusting his frail craft in a stormy sea that is boundless in every direction, rising and falling with the howling, mountainous waves, so in the midst of a world full of suffering and misery the individual man calmly sits, supported by and trusting in the principium individuationis.” (BT 16-17)

<sup>112</sup> “...dissonance assuming human form – and what else is man?” (BT 115)

neither of which can lay claim to presence.<sup>113</sup> Written in the same year as the figural reading of *Robinson Crusoe*—and by synecdoche a restatement of the shift between his two references to Defoe’s adventure novel—this late note makes of the subject something monstrous: an absence that must rely on something from outside to allow it to appear. Its appearance, however, remains an apparition. Whether a ghostly vessel or a smudge of black paint, it will lead back to the dash. The sea monster in the legend of Arion takes on a new significance as the possibility of signification. Far from a merely fantastical element, it is constitutive of subjectivity as such. Its involvement, however unstable, is necessary for life. It is only with this abyssal thought in mind that one can call the legend of Arion or Turner’s *Snowstorm* an allegory of subjectivity, an eccentricity that landscape painting made its subject: inherent and incessantly impinging alterity.

### **The Moment of Petrification**

The legend of Arion is preceded in Novalis’ novel by a discussion on the proper domains of poetry, painting, and music. The tentative conclusion reached by the merchants that music and the plastic arts are tethered to the external world whereas poetry is a completely inner art seems to give primacy to poetry. This is rethought under various guises in Novalis’ notebooks, in which aesthetic forms are mediated through each other.<sup>114</sup> Without analyzing closely Novalis’ synesthesia, the discussion framing the legend of Arion is significant in that it shows that the legend

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<sup>113</sup> de Man *Allegories* 112; Choi 183

<sup>114</sup> See, for example, fragments 102 and 323 in *Das allgemeine Brouillon*. A comprehensive examination of Novalis’ synesthesia would warrant its own study.

implies and implicates poetry, music, painting, and sculpture. That there is no consensus among the Romantics as to which art form is primary, whether poetry, music, or landscape, accords with their general program of uniting the arts. It is against the danger that differences between the various media would be effaced that Lessing wrote his *Laokoon*. These limits specify poetry as a temporal art depicting a sequence whereas painting is limited to a single instantaneous impression. A model of Neoclassical aesthetics, Lessing's *Laokoon* provided the Romantics with a foil for their synesthetic ruminations. The young Nietzsche, infatuated with Wagner, also wrangled with Lessing's delimitations as evidenced to this letter to his friend Erwin Rohde in 1869: "Natürlich ist mir Wagner im höchsten Sinne förderlich, vornehmlich als Exemplar, das aus der bisherigen Aesthetik unfaßbar ist. Es gilt vor allem kräftig über den Lessingschen Laokoon hinauszuschreiten: was man kaum aussprechen darf, ohne innere Beängstigung und Scham" (*SB* 3:63).<sup>115</sup> Nietzsche's repulsion, one of the reactions that Lessing seeks to spare the beholder, is tempered in a later aphorism in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*:

*Kein Marterbild.* — Ich will es machen wie Raffael und kein Marterbild mehr malen. Es giebt der erhabenen Dinge genug, als dass man die Erhabenheit dort aufzusuchen hätte, wo sie mit der Grausamkeit in Schwesterschaft lebt;

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<sup>115</sup> "Wagner was naturally the greatest help to me, above all as an exemplar ungraspable by past aesthetics. It is above all a matter of getting beyond Lessing's *Laocoö* [sic]: which one can hardly dare say without inner anxiety and shame." (Quoted in Liébert 44)

und mein Ehrgeiz würde zudem kein Genügen daran finden, wenn ich mich zum sublimen Folterknecht machen wollte. (3:548)<sup>116</sup>

Withholding cruelty is one of the objects of Lessing's pregnant moment—"this moment, and the point from which this moment is viewed, [that] cannot be chosen with too great a regard for its results" (19)<sup>117</sup>—the model of which he sees in the Greek sculpture that is his treatise's namesake. In immortalizing the moment just prior to the scream, the sculptors have spared the beholder the disgust that the facial contortions would otherwise provoke. Lessing shows himself to be of a piece with Nietzsche in stopping short of the torturous grimace, but is in a sense precisely the "Folterknecht" that Nietzsche derides. In rendering the moment before and after legible, Lessing's pregnant moment still intimates the torture that it withholds, a "concealment" ("Verhüllung") that Lessing dignifies as "a sacrifice which the artist made to beauty (17).<sup>118</sup> Such martyrdom effects a counter-intuitive reversal of roles: Lessing betrays his cruelty at the hands of Nietzsche.

The distinction that allows the prior and succeeding moments to be intimated aligns Lessing's *Laocoon* with the broader aesthetic regime of the 18<sup>th</sup> century that included history painting and a form of allegory in which the representation had a specific referent. Romantic allegory, by contrast, signifies the

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<sup>116</sup> *No image of torture.*— I want to proceed as Raphael did and never paint another image of torture. There are enough sublime things so that one does not have to look for the sublime where it dwells in sisterly association with cruelty; and my ambition also could never find satisfaction if I became a sublime assistant at torture." (*GS* 250)

<sup>117</sup> "...jener einzige Augenblick und einziger Gesichtspunkt dieses einzigen Augenblickes, [der] nicht fruchtbar genug gewählt werden kann." (64)

<sup>118</sup> "...ein Opfer, das der Künstler der Schönheit brachte." (62)

gap between self and world, sign and referent, and ultimately between self and figure. This is what makes Romantic landscapes allegories of subjectivity. The differentiating details surrender to the indistinctness of abstraction or to indirection in the absence of a stable referent. The Romantic answer to Lessing's Neoclassicism includes the possibility of poetically representing instantaneousness, something evidenced in the legend of Arion by the simultaneous appearance of the celestial bodies after which Arion leaps into the abyss. Another answer lies in the temporalization of painting. Turner's *Peace—Burial at Sea* of 1842 (Figure 2) is exemplary. The painting, like the legend of Arion, portrays the imminent submersion of an artist. It depicts the sea burial of Turner's friend, the painter David Wilkie. Arion's song finds its visual corollary in the torch, the illogical illumination of which, although signaling the presence of the divine, brings into focus the absolute limit of intelligibility: death itself.<sup>119</sup> The details veil the occurrence that the light would seem to illumine with the tenacity of Nietzsche's Apollonian:

Die hellste Deutlichkeit des Bildes genügte uns nicht: den dieses schien eben sowohl Etwas zu offenbaren als zu verhüllen; und während es mit seiner gleichnissartigen Offenbarung zum Zerreißen des Schleiers, zur Enthüllung des geheimnissvollen Hintergrundes aufzufordern schien, hielt wiederum

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<sup>119</sup> Koerner describes C. D. Friedrich's *Cross in the Mountains* as having "an illumination whose very illogic signals the presence of the divine, like the sun's eclipse in the Passion story." (120)

gerade jene durchleuchtete Allsichtbarkeit das Auge gebannt und wehrte ihm, tiefer zu dringen. (1:150)<sup>120</sup>



Figure 2. J. M. W. Turner, *Peace—Burial at Sea*, 1842

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<sup>120</sup> “Even the brightest clarity of the image was not enough for us, for this seemed to conceal something as much as it revealed it; and while its symbolic revelation seemed to invite us to tear the veil, to uncover the secrets in the background, its very illumination and complete visibility cast a spell on the eye, barring it from penetrating further” (BT 112)

Severing the ship in two, the illumination of the torch is blinding, the eye only being able to register the minute detail of the burial after some moments. This temporalization of the painting is complemented by the a priori vortex structure. Not as explicit as in *Snowstorm* but unmistakable, the vortex is intimated from the plumes of smoke and the angles of the sails. The wheel of the steamer completes the effect. Rather than being temporalized from something external to the work—the sequential before and after in *Laokoon*, for example—the temporalization occurs entirely from within. The darkness of the ship and sails juxtaposed with the blinding light of the torch recalls Nietzsche's metaphor used to intimate the Dionysian in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. It is

ein Phänomen, das ein umgekehrtes Verhältniss zu einem bekannten optischen hat. Wenn wir bei einem kräftigen Versuch, die Sonne in's Auge zu fassen, uns geblendet abwenden, so haben wir dunkle farbige Flecken gleichsam als Heilmittel vor den Augen: umgekehrt sind jene Lichtbilderscheinungen des sophokleischen Helden, kurz das Apollonische der Maske, nothwendige Erzeugungen eines Blickes in's Innere und Schreckliche der Natur, gleichsam leuchtende Flecken zur Heilung des von grausiger Nacht versehrten Blickes. (1:65)<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> "...a phenomenon which inverts a familiar optical one. When we turn away blinded after a strenuous attempt to look directly at the sun, we have dark, coloured patches before our eyes, as if their purpose were to heal them; conversely, those appearances of the Sophoclean hero in images of light, in other words, the Apolline quality of the mask, are the necessary result of gazing into the inner, terrible depths of nature—radiant patches, as it were, to heal a gaze seared by gruesome night." (*BT* 46)

The Dionysian, here analogized as an image of torture, does not merely resist figuration; the figure guarantees that the Dionysian can never appear as itself. Accordingly, Nietzsche's analogy is discordant. The inversion of the "familiar optical phenomenon" can only be accomplished figuratively.<sup>122</sup> The steamboat in *Peace*, its unnaturally black sails pregnant with symbolism, echoes the apparition in aphorism 60 discussed above. In seeming to provide a visual to the first half of Nietzsche's analogy, dark spots to heal the attempt to look into the sun, the painting attests to the impossibility of seeing beyond the figure. *Peace*, in tandem with Nietzsche's aphorism, figures the impossibility of seeing beyond figuration. This all smacks of a cruel and sadistic pleasure as does Kant's *Ding an sich*, and one can readily see how Romantic allegory reproduces this *Marterbild*: they both promise and infinitely defer the referent.<sup>123</sup> This dilemma would extend to all representation, a danger of which Nietzsche is well aware.<sup>124</sup>

Novalis' response to Lessing's *Laocoon* in *Das allgemeine Brouillon* presents an alternative:

Ließe sich nicht ein umfassenderer, kurz höhergrädiger Moment in  
Laocontischen Drama denken – vielleicht der, wo der höchste Schmerz in  
Rausch – der Widerstand in Ergebung – das höchste Leben in Stein übergeht.

(Sollte der Bildhauer nicht *immer* den Moment der *Petrefaction* ergreifen –

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<sup>122</sup> Warminski xxxv-lxi; Warminski devotes the better part of his "Prefatory Postscript" to a meticulous deconstruction of Nietzsche's analogy.

<sup>123</sup> KSA 364; This is Nietzsche's estimation of Kant's noumenal realm in the third essay of *Zur Genealogie der Moral*.

<sup>124</sup> de Man *Allegories* 103-18



und aufsuchen – und darstellen – und auch nur diesen darstellen können?)

(2:652)<sup>125</sup>

A moment of surrender and more, Novalis' moment of petrification is only asymmetrically related to Nietzsche's *Marterbild* or Lessing's pregnant moment. Whereas the pregnant moment, while rendering the before and after legible, attests to the visceral reaction that could possibly have descended on the beholder, the moment of petrification seeks to depict that giving-over ("Ergebung"). Additionally, Novalis does not merely privilege this moment of abandon. Through the emphases put on always ("*immer*"), the question as to whether the sculptor should only depict this moment becomes rhetorical. The sculptor should only *be able* to depict this moment. This is the answer to the problem encountered in Nietzsche's *Marterbild*, which, having crept into all representation, threatened to imprint all figuration with cruelty. The moment of petrification is the affirmation of the surrender inherent in representation. What is more and beyond the level of depiction, it wants to *be* this moment. In his *Ästhetische Theorie*, Adorno phrases it as follows: "Nicht nur Allegorien sind die Kunstwerke sondern deren katastrophische Erfüllung. Die Schocks, welche die jüngsten Kunstwerke austeilen, sind die Explosion ihrer Erscheinung" (131).<sup>126</sup> Romantic allegory not only signifies the gap between self and

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<sup>125</sup> "Mightn't it be possible to imagine a more comprehensive, i.e. a more sublime moment in the Laocoonian drama—perhaps there, where the greatest suffering is transformed into intoxication—resistance into surrender—and the highest life into stone? (Shouldn't the sculptor *always* seize the moment of *petrification*—and seek it out—depict it—and solely be capable of depicting this moment?) (AB 137-38)

<sup>126</sup> "Not only are artworks allegories, they are the catastrophic fulfillment of allegories. The shocks inflicted by the most recent artworks are the explosion of their appearance." (*Aesthetic Theory* 84)

figure but also allows that gap to signify. The explosion of appearance is the signifying power of the gap and its concomitant visceral response as the artwork, once seized by the artist, turns on him. Novalis describes this moment of seizure in a fragment in close proximity to that on *Laocoon*: In dem Augenblicke, als es ganz sein werden sollte, ward es mehr, als er, sein Schöpfer – er zum unwissenden Organ und Eigenthum einer höhern Macht. Der Künstler gehöret dem Wercke und nicht das Werck dem Künstler” (2:651).<sup>127</sup>

Ruskin, whose pathetic fallacy presupposed the artist’s command over his materials, attests to a tipping point in keeping with the abandon of the moment of petrification. In lauding the balance between a poet’s passion and his control over it as the criterion of “greatness,” Ruskin allows for an exception, as there is “always a point beyond which it would be inhuman and monstrous if he pushed this government, and, therefore, a point at which all feverish and wild fancy becomes just and true” (367). Similarly, Adorno will write in his *Philosophie der neuen Musik* that “[das Subjekt] ist gebrochen von der totalen Herrschaft, die im ästhetischen Bilde seiner eigenen Ohnmacht beschlossen liegt” (102).<sup>128</sup> If the legend of Arion already gives us an image of this powerlessness by placing the artist in a moment of danger and showing that his song is coerced rather than created through auto-poiesis or some other traditionally understood form of “genius,” then another of

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<sup>127</sup> “At that moment when it ought to have become entirely his, it became much more than he, its creator—and he became the unwitting instrument and property of a higher power. The artist belongs to the work, and not the work to the artist.” (*AB* 136)

<sup>128</sup> “The subject is fractured by the total domination that is evident in the aesthetic image of its own powerlessness” (82).

Turner's late seascapes continues this tradition of aesthetic multi-immolation with an image that confronts the beholder with the summa of the visceral. It is hard to imagine a canvas that embodies more fully Novalis' moment of petrification than Turner's *Slavers throwing overboard the dead and dying—Typhoon coming on* (Figure 3), first exhibited in 1840.<sup>129</sup> As in the legend of Arion, *Slavers* depicts humans being thrown overboard for the base gratification of one of the sea-faring parties. Its occasion is an actual historical event in 1781. The captain of a slave ship, in an abhorrently monstrous gesture, threw dead and dying slaves overboard to collect the insurance money that would be withheld if the human cargo made it to its destination. Most emphatically a rent seascape, *Slavers* is seared in two by the sun whose rays create a calm vertical. Beset on both sides by the ferocious activity of struggling enchained limbs, it is as if the serenity of the sun's wake forbids the presence of suffering. The symmetry of this turbulent image, partially an echo of the legend of Arion, is telling. On one side of the vertical is the slave ship about to be swallowed by the dark, bellowing typhoon. On the other side is a hint of blue sky complemented by two sea creatures swimming toward a female figure enveloped by a swarm of fish. That one of the sea creatures looks distinctly like a dolphin raises the enticing possibility that the legend of Arion, whether in Herodotus or Novalis, crept its way onto the canvas.

The aspects of history painting in *Slavers*, as gruesome as they are, act as a foothold by which to comprehend the painting as opposed to being seized by it. However, as with *Snowstorm*, *Slavers* is not something to be "understood" through a

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<sup>129</sup> Ruskin 158-59



Figure 3. J. M. W. Turner, *Slavers throwing overboard the dead and dying—Typhoon coming on*, 1840

quick identification with an external narrative. It cannot be reduced to a condemnation of slavery or cruelty. On the other hand, that Turner's waters may be said, as does Gowling, to have "infinite meanings" (51), attests to its allegorical magical snare. Its "bottomless overdeterminability," to borrow a phrase of Derrida's, is as diffuse as the rays of Turner's sun (*Margins* 243). Every detail could be enlisted in the service of illuminating a meaning, but, as the law of allegory decrees, only at the price of their ground. The sun would sow rays of relevance to every square of inch of the canvas. It is hard not to recall here Nietzsche's inversion of the "known optical phenomenon" and the blinding clarity of the torch in *Peace*. For Turner's sun, in exposing the spectator to its oppressive centrality, also attests to the impossibility

of its representation save for through the intermediary of pigment.<sup>130</sup> As in the Romantic landscape tradition, in which subject and figure exist in an indefinite interval, it is the gap between the proper sun and the material diffusion that signifies in *Slavers*. A figure of embarkation, the iterability of this gap is the corollary of the groundlessness of the subject. And if, as Paulson suggests, in *Slavers* even the air serves as a comforting intermediary between the viewer and the blinding sun (95), then there is something unsettling and monstrous in Nietzsche's assertion in aphorism 320 of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*: "Ich will für mich eine eigene Sonne schaffen" (3:551).<sup>131</sup> Given in response to an imaginary interlocutor who probes, "Wo kannst du dich in die Sonne legen, sodass auch dir ein Ueberschuss von wohl kommt und dein Dasein sich rechtfertigt?" (3:551),<sup>132</sup> how can the creation of one's own sun not also be, as it is for Turner, an image of torture? Once again, Novalis' moment of petrification supplies the answer: in affirming the surrender inherent in representation, in the *inability* to depict anything else but the moment of abandon and in surrendering oneself to this fate.

The concluding aphorism of *Morgenröte*—and this by way of conclusion—combines groundlessness with embarkation. Entitled "*Wir Luft-Schifffahrer des Geistes*," it uses the metaphor of a bird flying out across the vast expanses of the ocean in order to iterate the position of the embarked subject seeking knowledge.

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<sup>130</sup> Paulson 89, 93

<sup>131</sup> "I want to create for myself a sun of my own." (*GS* 254)

<sup>132</sup> "Where can you lie down in the sun so that you, too, reap an excess of wellbeing and your existence justifies itself?" (*GS* 254)

Some birds give up and cling to masts or rocky cliffs—one thinks immediately of Turner’s *Snowstorm* or Nietzsche’s aphorism on action at a distance. Other birds keep flying “wo Alles noch Meer, Meer, Meer ist!...Wohin reisst uns dieses mächtige Gelüste, das uns mehr gilt als irgend eine Lust? Wird man vielleicht uns einstmals nachsagen...dass aber unser Loos war, an der Unendlichkeit zu scheitern? Oder, meine Brüder? Oder? —” (3:331).<sup>133</sup> Nietzsche, like Novalis before him, is not allergic to infinite longing. Nietzsche makes much of this “Or?” at the end of *Morgenröte* in the section of *Ecce Homo* devoted to his earlier work: “Dies Buch schliesst mit einem ‘Oder?’, — es ist das einzige Buch, das mit einem ‘Oder?’ schliesst...” (6:330).<sup>134</sup> What is more, it is in the space or mode of this “Or?” that Nietzsche sees the affirmative nature of the book, a comportment that he illustrates with a rather bizarre image: “[Es liegt] vielmehr in der Sonne...rund glücklich, einem Seegethier gleich, das zwischen Felsen sich sonnt. Zuletzt war ich’s selbst, dieses Seegethier” (6:329).<sup>135</sup> Nietzsche, the sea beast! Flying into the distance or laying in the sun. An “Or?” *in lieu* of an oar. This is his affirmation: abandonment to the “rudderless signification” (de Man, *Aesthetic* 59) that, echoing Schopenhauer, makes of the subject a small boat being tossed on a boundless sea. Even Schopenhauer,

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<sup>133</sup> “...where everything is sea, sea, sea!...Whether does this mighty longing draw us, this longing that is worth more to us than any pleasure?...Will it perhaps be said of us ...that it was our fate to be wrecked against infinity? Or, my brothers. Or? —” (*D* 229)

<sup>134</sup> “This book ends with an ‘Or?’ – it is the only book which ends with an ‘Or?’ ...” (*EH* 96)

<sup>135</sup> “[I]t rather lies in the sun, round, happy, like a sea-beast sunning itself among rocks. In the end it was I myself who was this sea-beast.” (*EH* 95)

who bids that one stop longing, shares in this affirmative gesture for Nietzsche. Someone like Schopenhauer who, as Nietzsche tells us, played the flute everyday after dinner cannot be a pessimist.<sup>136</sup> Arion and Turner, two other flutists we never hear, let their affirmation resonate from their rent seascapes.<sup>137</sup> Their proximate allegorical representations, not to be reduced to a trope of longing, are harbingers of affirmation. In positioning themselves against the mere imitation of what exists – in the legend of Arion through its *mise-en-abyme* structure and the absence of Arion’s song—and in Turner through the tendency toward abstraction—allegory not only makes longing into a formal principle but also iterates the gap that signifies the affirmation of what could exist.

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<sup>136</sup> *KSA* 5:107; *BGE* 109

<sup>137</sup> Arion, so the legend in Herodotus goes, was the inventor of the Dionysian dithyramb and has a wooden instrument in Novalis’ version. See Gowing 45 for how Turner’s flute playing may have informed his use of color.

## CHAPTER III

### THE LIMITS OF AESTHETIC JUSTIFICATION: READING *DIE CHRISTENHEIT ODER*

#### *EUROPA* WITH NIETZSCHE'S "THEATER-EYE"

##### Introduction

*Die Christenheit oder Europa* is frequently used as evidence in the case for Novalis' reactionary political stance. Through an examination of its rhetoric, I aim to illuminate the ironies that call into question its easy enlistment in the service of anti-modernism. In charting the ascent to a viewpoint from which to survey history, a repeated synchronic figure surfaces in *Europa* that couples elevation with the fathomless depths that call into question the validity of the ascent. Nietzsche's concept of aesthetic justification outlines the same problematic, a concern that he approaches through what he calls the "theater-eye." This structural homology allows me to read *Europa* through the theater-eye and vice versa, while attending to their shared and overdeterminately Protestant concern with figures of redemption, on the one hand, and the ban on graven images on the other. Adorno's concept of truth-content—the index of hope in a work of art—provides the mediation for a reading of both *Europa* and Nietzsche's theater-eye that demonstrates what in them transcends the aesthetic justification of that which already and merely exists.

##### The Stage of History

The near absence of dramatic form during the decades following the French Revolution accords with the revolutionary aspirations of the Early German Romantics, who watched the political turmoil in France as viewers before a



theatrical spectacle.<sup>138</sup> The utopian hope that fueled the Revolution in France found its echo in the German spectators, whose own interior upheaval sought fitting representation in forms that placed the reader in isolation as opposed to in an audience. Kant: “Diese Revolution ... findet doch in den Gemütern aller Zuschauer (die nicht selbst in diesem Spiele mit verwickelt sind) eine Teilnehmung dem Wunsche nach, die nahe an Enthusiasm grenzt... (“Der Streit der Fakultäten” 85). This estimation resonates with the poetic imperative of the German Romantics—an imperative of interiority as eccentric and diffuse as it is utopian. Novalis did, however, make one attempt to imbue an audience with a fervor that can plausibly be called “revolutionary” in his speech, *Die Christenheit oder Europa*, given in November of 1799 at the “Meeting of the Romantics” in Jena.<sup>139</sup> Although in agreement with the Romantic turn away from public life, the absence of the theater nevertheless forms a lacuna in the writings of Novalis only heightened by the unfulfilled promise in his late fragments of a “[n]ew perspective on the theater” (“[neue] Ansicht des Theaters”).<sup>140</sup> *Europa* is, contrarily and according to him, wholly theatrical: “In einer *wahren Rede* spielt man alle Rollen – geht durch alle Charactere durch – durch alle Zustände – nur um zu überraschen – um den Gegenstand von einer neuen Seite zu betrachten.... Kurz eine Rede ist ein

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<sup>138</sup> Novalis did write two short pieces in dramatic form called “Dialogen” but they are almost unrecognizable as what one would reasonably call a “play” or piece of theater.

<sup>139</sup> For an account of the circumstances surrounding the “Meeting of the Romantics” and the immediate reception of *Europa*, see O’Brien 227-230.

<sup>140</sup> Translation mine; 2:756

monologisches Drama" (2:809).<sup>141</sup> As this passage suggests, a speech for Novalis cannot be read as the presentation of truth but as a work of theater with all of the mechanisms it implies.

*Europa* stages a philosophy of history following an emplotment of ascent characteristic of the bourgeois utopianism in the historical period surrounding the French Revolution. However, it is not my aim to return *Europa* to its own time and so reduce it to an illustration of "how it really was" in the vein of historicism. If, as Benjamin asserts, it is as a "moment of danger" that a historical narrative "flashes up," then it is noteworthy that the sudden intrusion that bade Novalis to speak on the stage of history is becoming ever more remote from a text which strikes contemporary ears as hopelessly bound to the past. With its reassuring insistence that "fortschreitende, immer mehr sich vergrößernde Evolutionen sind der Stoff der Geschichte...vergänglich ist nichts was die Geschichte ergriff" (2:735), *Europa* seems at an infinite remove from Benjamin's moment of danger.<sup>142</sup> However, that the tenacity of history—its *grip*, if not its availability—still speaks to modern ears already implies the urgency that Benjamin's moment of danger captures but fleetingly in a flash. The reason for this is part of the truth-content of *Europa*, the remainder of historical truth after its thematic content dissolves.<sup>143</sup> Although

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<sup>141</sup> "In a *true speech* one plays all the parts – goes through all characters – through all circumstances – just to achieve a surprise effect – to look at the subject from a fresh angle [...]. In short, a speech is a drama in monologue." (Novalis *Philosophical Writings* 15); Hereafter cited as *PW*.

<sup>142</sup> "Progressive, ever-expanding evolutions are the stuff of history...nothing captured by history is ephemeral" (*PW* 140)

<sup>143</sup> Hullot-Kentor 83

Novalis implicates himself in a utopian progressivism that no longer rings true, *Europa* cannot be read as a mere narrativization of history. “Denn,” as Sloterdijk writes in his reading of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (a text with many affinities to *Europa*), “was im Großen passiert, wird nicht erzählerisch erinnert, sondern theatralisch inszeniert.... Immer geht es in [modernen Geschichtsphilosophien] um eine dramatische Einmischung des Sprechers in ein Geschehen, das als weltgeschichtliches begriffen wird” (45-46).<sup>144</sup> *Europa* does not so much explain history as use (and abuse) it. Novalis, whose theory of the speech is predicated on an effect of surprise (“nur um zu überraschen”), relies on surprising effects. My aim is to elucidate these surprises—unbeknownst to Novalis, no doubt—while charting *Europa*’s course of ascent to a position in which history can be surveyed as it uneasily straddles the realms of art and power, of disinterest and interest.

Nietzsche, whose understanding of the theater is conditioned by the collapse of the spheres of interest and disinterest, links theatricality with the question of perspective informed by an insight into the entanglement of representation and one’s comportment toward the world. In *Morgenröte*, Nietzsche discusses such a precarious position in terms of what he calls the “theater-eye”:

Wie! du bedarfst noch des Theaters! Bist du noch so jung? Werde klug und suche die Tragödie und Komödie dort, wo sie besser gespielt wird! Wo es interessanter und interessirter zugeht! Ja, es ist nicht ganz leicht, dabei eben

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<sup>144</sup> “For that which occurs on the level of greatness is staged not in terms of narrative but in terms of theater... [Modern philosophies of history] always include the dramatic intervention of the speaker in a phenomenon that is understood as one of universal historical importance.” (*Thinker on Stage* 20)

nur Zuschauer zu bleiben, — aber lerne es! Und fast in allen Lagen, die dir schwer und peinlich fallen, hast du dann ein Pförtchen zur Freude und eine Zuflucht, selbst noch, wenn deine eigenen Leidenschaften über dich herfallen. Mache dein Theater-Auge auf, das grosse dritte Auge, welches durch die zwei anderen in die Welt schaut! (KSA 3:297)<sup>145</sup>

Reading *Europa* with the theater-eye is to put both into a configuration of ideas that elucidates their concepts, and also to approach *Europa* with the comportment of one who refuses to stay in his seat and attends to the mechanisms that make the speech more “interesting and interested.” The theater-eye also restates the problematic surrounding Nietzsche’s enigmatic pronouncement of the aesthetic justification of the world, necessitating an examination of this concept as well. A brief detour will attend to the complexities of Nietzsche’s theatricality and exactly what it means to read with the theater-eye, a discussion that will be followed by a reading of *Europa*’s rhetorical theatrics.

### **The Pathos of Distance: Aesthetic Justification and the Justification of Aesthetics**

After *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, in which attic tragedy is held to be the pinnacle of artistic achievement, Nietzsche adopted a stance of overt anti-theatricality: “Man

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<sup>145</sup> “What! You still need the theatre! Are you still so young? Grow wise, and seek for tragedy and comedy where they are better acted! Where things are more interesting and interested! It is not altogether easy, I know, to remain a mere spectator in these cases – but learn it! And then, in almost every situation you find hard and painful you will have a little portal to joy and a refuse even when your own passions assail you. Open your theatre-eye, the great third eye which looks out into the world through the other two!” (*Daybreak* 206)

erräth, ich bin wesentlich antitheatralisch geartet" (3:617).<sup>146</sup> The context of this pronouncement in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* is a critique of Wagner—the composer to whom *Die Geburt der Tragödie* was dedicated—in which theatricality is at odds with the personal conscience that the theater annuls “by the leveling magic of the great number” (“dem nivellirenden Zauber der ‘grössten Zahl’”).<sup>147</sup> The theater for Nietzsche is anathema to honesty: “[S]eien Sie doch ein wenig ehrlicher gegen sich selbst: wir sind ja nicht im Theater!” (3:618).<sup>148</sup> This sentiment is consistent with Nietzsche’s aversion toward the common in favor of solitude and the singular case, a concern running throughout his thought from the reductive and leveling effects of the concept in “Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge” to the polemics against herd morality in his latest works.<sup>149</sup> Although he refers to *Die Geburt der Tragödie* as “alien” (“fremd”) to him in his preface from 1886, the anti-theatrical stance of this early work is evident in its content if not in its delivery. The “strongly dramatized and individualized voice” coupled with the “rhetorical complicity of a sermon,” cited by de Man as manifestations of what he understands as a thoroughly theatrical work, should not blind one to its imperative of absorption (*Allegories* 93). Through a highly stylized narrative, Nietzsche foresees the revival of the engulfing theatrical experience of antiquity predicated on an elevated circumspection: “Ein Publicum von Zuschauern, wie wir es kennen, war den Griechen unbekannt: in ihren Theatern

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<sup>146</sup> “You will guess that I am essentially anti-theatrical[.]” (GS 325)

<sup>147</sup> GS 326; KSA 3:618

<sup>148</sup> “Do be a little more honest with yourself! After all, we are not in the theater.” (GS 325)

<sup>149</sup> For an examination of the singular case in Nietzsche, see Klossowski 76-7.

war es Jedem, bei dem in concentrischen Bogen sich erhebenden Terrassenbau des Zuschauerraumes, möglich, die gesammte Culturwelt um sich herum ganz eigentlich zu *übersehen* und in gesättigtem Hinschauen selbst Choreut sich zu wähnen” (1:59).<sup>150</sup> The emphasis on “*übersehen*” is duplicitous and fortuitous in its foresight. The spectator, on the one hand, can literally *oversee* the entire spectacle of the audience, the chorus, and the stage due to its concentric construction and can then, on the other hand, *overlook* its artificiality, or theatricality, and merge with the chorus. Nietzsche had hoped that Wagner’s operas would revive this absorptive experience of the theater and it is indeed Wagner’s opera house in Bayreuth that Nietzsche effectively describes.<sup>151</sup> However, by the time Nietzsche wrote his aphorism on the theater-eye, he had given up any hope in the possibility of Wagnerianism to make the public into more than idle spectators.

The fruit of this disillusionment is an understanding of the theater as neither absorptive nor as a refuge for the weary, but as a tool in the service of the widening of what he will eventually call the “pathos of distance” (“*Pathos der Distanz*”).<sup>152</sup> The pathos of distance enables one to oversee the entire spectacle, but not to overlook its mechanism: “Wer an sich der Tragödie und Komödie genug hat, bleibt wohl am Liebsten fern vom Theater; oder, zur Ausnahme, der ganze Vorgang — Theater und

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<sup>150</sup> “A public of spectators as we know it was something unknown to the Greeks; in their theatres it was possible, given the terraced construction of the theatre in concentric arcs, for everyone quite literally to *overlook* the entire cultural world around him, and to imagine, as he looked with sated gaze, that he was a member of the chorus.” (BT 42)

<sup>151</sup> Liébert 241 n. 64

<sup>152</sup> BGE 192; KSA 205

Publicum und Dichter eingerechnet — wird ihm zum eigentlichen tragischen und komischen Schauspiel, sodass das aufgeführte Stück dagegen ihm nur wenig bedeutet" (3:444).<sup>153</sup> The theater, having migrated into the spectator, allows an elevated position in respect to the spectacle. The interiorization of the theater, as Nietzsche specifies in aphorism 257 of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, is the work of an aristocratic and hierarchical society. Inner distance is a function of being the object of an external gaze "looking down and looking out" ("Ausblick und Herabblick") on "subjects and instruments" ("Unterthänige und Werkzeuge"). The "geheimnissvollere Pathos... die Herausbildung immer höherer, seltenerer, fernerer, weitgespannterer, umfänglicherer Zustände" (5:205)<sup>154</sup> is a function of power and subjugation. Nietzsche finds an analogous distancing of perspective in the Christian tradition:

Vielleicht giebt es ein Verdienst ähnlicher Art an jener Religion, welche die Sündhaftigkeit jedes einzelnen Menschen mit dem Vergrößerungsglase ansehen hiess und aus dem Sünder einen grossen, unsterblichen Verbrecher machte: indem sie ewige Perspektiven um ihn beschrieb, lehrte sie den

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<sup>153</sup> "Whoever finds enough tragedy and comedy in himself, probably does best when he stays away from the theater. Or if he makes an exception, the whole process, including the theater, the audience, and the poet, will strike him as the really tragic or comical spectacle, while the play that is performed will mean very little to him by comparison." (GS 142)

<sup>154</sup> "... more mysterious pathos...the formation of ever higher, rarer, more remote, tenser, more comprehensive states..." (BGE 192)

Menschen, sich aus der Ferne und als etwas Vergangenes, Ganzes sehen.”

(3:433-34)<sup>155</sup>

The close scrutiny paid to questions of sinfulness endowed sinners with the distance of a heavenly perspective, a temporal index the spatial attainment of which became based not on works (*Dienste*) but on the merit (*Verdienst*) of a personal faith. Such magnification *haled* the individual and, with a perspective that rendered the End of Days imaginatively accessible, fostered a distance within the self, whose finitude would be measured against eternity. Being justified before God entails a perspective of retrospection, in which the self could recoup the wholeness that sin, figured as the Biblical expulsion from Eden, disfigured. Justification becomes “just-if-I had not sinned.”<sup>156</sup>

A theater of the interior, the pathos of distance is an elevation born of humiliation that teaches, “die Kunst, sich für sich selber ‘in Scene zu setzen” (3:434).<sup>157</sup> The theatrical underpinnings of Nietzsche’s anti-theatricality, which make it possible for Nietzsche to set himself “in the scene” of ancient Greece, rely on an elevation (“Erhöhung”), both literal and figurative, that is not indifferent to the humiliation (“Erniedrigung”) that is its necessary counterpart. Nietzsche, to

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<sup>155</sup> “Perhaps one should concede a similar merit to the religion that made men see the sinfulness of every single individual through a magnifying glass, turning the sinner into a great immortal criminal. By surrounding him with eternal perspectives, it taught man to see himself from a distance and as something past and whole.” (*GS* 132-33)

<sup>156</sup> This is how being justified before God was explained to me in Sunday school by a YWAM missionary.

<sup>157</sup> “... the art of staging and watching ourselves.” (*GS* 133)



reiterate, is brutally clear on this point: without subjugation, there is no elevated subject.<sup>158</sup> This ambivalent posture that Nietzsche attributes to the workings of an aristocratic society and Christianity—one whose disembodiment relies on the subjection of bodies—is at the heart of Nietzsche’s early pronouncement of aesthetic justification in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*:

Denn dies muss uns vor allem, zu unserer Erniedrigung und Erhöhung, deutlich sein, dass die ganze Kunstkomödie durchaus nicht für uns, etwa unsrer Besserung und Bildung wegen, aufgeführt wird, ja dass wir ebensowenig die eigentlichen Schöpfer jener Kunstwelt sind: wohl aber dürfen wir von uns selbst annehmen, dass wir für den wahren Schöpfer derselben schon Bilder und künstlerische Projectionen sind und in der Bedeutung von Kunstwerken unsre höchste Würde haben — denn nur als *aesthetisches Phänomen* ist das Dasein und die Welt ewig *gerechtfertigt*: — während freilich unser Bewusstsein über diese unsre Bedeutung kaum ein andres ist als es die auf Leinwand gemalten Krieger von der auf ihr dargestellten Schlacht haben. (KSA 1:47)<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Benjamin’s pronouncement that there is “no document of civilization that is not at the same time a document of barbarism” is relevant here. See *Illuminations* 256; *Illuminationen* 254.

<sup>159</sup> “For what must be clear to us above all, both to our humiliation and our elevation, is that the whole comedy of art is certainly not performed for us, neither for our edification nor our education, just as we are far from truly being the creators of that world of art; conversely, however, we may very well assume we are already images and artistic projections for the true creator of art, and that our highest dignity lies in our significance as works of art – for only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* is existence and the world eternally *justified* – although, of course, our awareness of our significance in this respect hardly differs from the awareness which painted soldiers have of the battle depicted on the same canvas.” (BT 33)

A “painter’s vision” (“Vision des Malers”), as Nietzsche will continue, is required to watch the “living play” (“lebendiges Spiel”),<sup>160</sup> a vision that splays the subject between the two-dimensionality of the canvas and an eye that aspires to justify itself before the “true Creator,” who, as a surrogate for the subject, is subjected to the latter’s assumptions. Mirroring the dual sense of *übersehen* above, elevation depends on a humiliating oversight, in which the exteriorization of the canvas is contingent on the interiorization of the theater.

The pronouncement that “only as an aesthetic phenomenon is existence and the world eternally justified” has justifiably had many interpreters. This is one iteration of a concern that informs the whole of Nietzsche’s *oeuvre*. The seductive quality of its tone, worthy of a speech or even a sermon, guides de Man, ever weary of seduction, in his sober interpretation: “[T]he famous quotation, twice repeated in *The Birth of Tragedy*, should not be taken too serenely, for it is an indictment of existence rather than a panegyric of art” (*Allegories* 93). De Man hollows out the abyss beneath Nietzsche’s “famous quotation,” buttressed by an interpretation of Greek serenity (“Heiterkeit”) as the healing illusion after gazing “in’s Innere und Schreckliche der Natur” (1:65).<sup>161</sup> Calling it an “indictment of existence” also helps place its tune. It contains an echo of him who, according to both Nietzsche and Novalis, perpetuated (through indictment) the Christian worldview when it was in danger of dissolving. Namely, Martin Luther and his reading of the apostle Paul, in which salvation is achieved *sola fide*, “by faith alone”: “So halten wir es nu, Das der

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<sup>160</sup> *BT* 43; *KSA* 1:61

<sup>161</sup> “...into the inner, terrible depths of nature[.]” (*BT* 46)

Mensch gerecht werde...alleine durch den Glauben" (Luther 39). This verse, *Romans* 3:28, forms the unmistakable reference of Nietzsche's pronouncement of aesthetic justification, but there is another of Luther's translations that informs it as well. Paul, while reprimanding the Galatians for subsuming faith to the observance of the law, appeals to their own painter's vision: "[W]er hat euch bezaubert, das ir der Wahrheit nicht gehorchet? Welchen Christus Jhesus fur die augen gemalet war, und jzt unter euch gecreuziget ist" (179).<sup>162</sup> That the Truth of the crucifixion arrives by way of an image, in addition to illuminating a continuity with Nietzsche's aesthetic justification, harbors a surprising insight into Luther's *sola fida*. As Koerner puts it, "[I]n describing how verbal signifiers of Christ cast their signified in the form of an image...Luther suggested that, even for his faith without mediators, the reference of all references was a mediation still" (*Reformation* 167). "On the horizon of faith, at understanding's every edge, there arises everywhere only this stubborn image" (160). The "inscription [of faith] in the believer" (167) is the reproduction of that which Christ—the Word become flesh—was meant to suspend. Nietzsche demonstrates a remarkable attunement to the inversions surrounding the crucifixion: "Gott am Kreuze": "Es hat bisher noch niemals und nirgendwo eine gleiche Kühnheit im Umkehren, etwas gleich Furchtbares, Fragendes und Fragwürdiges gegeben wie diese Formel" (5:67).<sup>163</sup> Via Luther's Bible, "God on the

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<sup>162</sup> "Who has enchanted you, you for whom Jesus Christ was painted, before your very eyes, as the crucified one." *Galatians* 3:1. Quoted in Koerner *Reformation* 167.

<sup>163</sup> "...'god on the cross.' Never and nowhere has there hitherto been a comparable boldness in inversion, anything so fearsome, questioning and questionable, as this formula." (*BGE* 75)

cross” restates and underpins Nietzsche’s pronouncement of aesthetic justification as the inability to transcend mediation.

The reformulation of aesthetic justification in aphorism 107 of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* is continuous with that of *Die Geburt Tragödie*: “Als ästhetisches Phänomen ist uns das Dasein immer noch *erträglich*” (3:464).<sup>164</sup> Positioned directly before Nietzsche’s pronouncement of the death of God, this later instance of aesthetic justification makes explicit what was already implied earlier. His belief in the palliative nature of Greek art carries over into the fallen world of lost absolutes, in which existence is only *bearable* through fostering art as the “Cultus des Unwahren” (3:464).<sup>165</sup> It is this dire need that lurks behind the theater-eye as a “portal to joy,” a device requiring ever more urgency after even the theater has become unbearable. The theater-eye not only presupposes the death of God, but also the death of theater. As demonstrated in Nietzsche’s polemic against Wagner, the palliative function of art is bought at the price of its ability to be true: “[S]eien Sie doch ein wenig ehrlicher gegen sich selbst: wir sind ja nicht im Theater!” (3:618).<sup>166</sup>

Aesthetic justification here reveals itself as the justification of aesthetics. The possibility of a moment of truth in art, something Nietzsche found lacking in Wagner, is equally foreign to Kant. According to Nietzsche, Kant, in conceiving of the artwork from the perspective of the spectator instead of the artist, “[hat] dabei

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<sup>164</sup> “As an aesthetic phenomenon existence is still *bearable* for us.” (GS 163)

<sup>165</sup> “cult of the untrue” (GS 163)

<sup>166</sup> “Do be a little more honest with yourself! After all, we are not in the theater.” (GS 325)

unvermerkt den ‘Zuschauer’ selber in den Begriff ‘schön’ hinein bekommen” (5:346)<sup>167</sup> and consequently wrote about aesthetics without having an experience commensurate with Nietzsche’s: “... eine grosse *persönliche* Thatsache und Erfahrung, als eine Fülle eigener starker Erlebnisse, Begierden, Überraschungen, Entzückungen auf dem Gebiete des Schönen!” (5:347).<sup>168</sup> Nietzsche, by contrast, adopts Stendhal’s aesthetic in which art contains “une promesse du bonheur” (KSA 5:347).<sup>169</sup> If, following Adorno, Stendhal’s dictum “sagt, daß Kunst dem Dasein dankt, indem sie akzentuiert, was darin auf die Utopie vordeutet” (*Ästhetische Theorie* 461),<sup>170</sup> an existence that requires art to make it bearable is not worthy of glorification. The migration of the theater into a comportment toward the world—exemplified by the theater-eye—stands in an asymmetrical relationship with respect to the comportment of art toward an unendurable existence: it refuses to play along.<sup>171</sup> As a “portal to joy,” the theater-eye necessarily apologizes for the world it renders bearable. However, it does not merely displace the conciliatory power of art into perception. In indicting the theater that promises happiness, Nietzsche’s theater-eye partakes of the most radical aspect of Adorno’s aesthetic

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<sup>167</sup> “...without himself realizing it, smuggled the ‘spectator’ into the concept of beauty.” (GM 238)

<sup>168</sup> “... a strong personal experience, a wealth of powerful impressions, aspirations, surprises, and transports in the esthetic realm.” (ibid.)

<sup>169</sup> “a promise of happiness” (ibid.)

<sup>170</sup> “says that art thanks existence by accentuating what in existence prefigures utopia.” (*Aesthetic Theory* 311)

<sup>171</sup> Adorno *Ästhetische Theorie* 26; *Aesthetic Theory* 12

theory: if art is to have a function beyond that of consolation, it can only keep its promise by breaking it.<sup>172</sup>

It is for this reason that the decision to commence *Europa* by rhetorically situating an idealized image of medieval Catholicism as a device of elevation, sounds so humiliating: “Es waren schöne glänzende Zeiten, wo Europa ein christliches Land war, wo *Eine* Christenheit diesen menschlich gestalteten Welttheil bewohnte; *Ein* großes gemeinschaftliches Interesse verband die entlegensten Provinzen dieses weiten geistlichen Reichs” (2:732).<sup>173</sup> This image of a golden age is not a reactionary appeal to reinstate medieval Catholicism. The choice of Catholic medieval Europe as the setting for the projection of hope is tactical and consistent with Novalis’ aim: to combat a burgeoning nihilism through an appeal to shared meaning. The echo of “once upon a time” (“Es waren schöne glänzende Zeiten”) frames Catholic medieval Europe as a fairy tale, an aesthetic foil that binds humanity through a singular interest. Rather than a lost unity to be regained, the golden age in *Europa* projects the hope invested in the future back into the past. It is, following Starobinski, “the retrospective consolation of unhappy humanity” (*Enchantment* xiii).

It is on this idealization, truly a pathos of distance, that *Europa* basis its ascent to a quasi-Archimedean point from which to view history. Already a theater-

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<sup>172</sup> *ibid.* 461; 311

<sup>173</sup> “There once were beautiful, splendid times when Europe was a Christian land, when *one* Christendom dwelt on this continent, shaped by human hand; *one* great common interest bound together the most distant provinces of this broad religious empire.” (*PW* 137)

eye in the transfiguration of the unbearable into the joyous, Novalis' golden age in turn reveals Nietzsche's theater-eye as its reinscription.

### **(Dis)figurations of Historical Ascent**

Commencing at a metaphorical sea level, *Europa* follows a plot of figural ascent that has as its culmination the elevated vantage point of the present: "Jetzt stehen wir hoch genug um auch jenen oberwähnten, vorhergegangenen Zeiten freundlich zuzulächeln und auch in jenen wunderlichen Thorheiten merkwürdige Kristallisationen des historischen Stoffs zu erkennen" (2:746).<sup>174</sup> *Europa* plots its temporal course with topologies that render a semantics of stratification legible, the contours of which are determined by social stratification. This is consistent with Nietzsche's pathos of distance, the mysterious interiority of which is predicated on the interiorization of external hierarchies. As with aesthetic justification, the heights always presuppose the depths, and the elevated perspective enabling a view of historical crystallizations in *Europa* is no exception. The price of elevation is its inability to fully know its foundation. Novalis enlists an entire mechanism of rhetorical theatrics that simultaneously enable and negate the perspective to which they lead. Since reading with the theater-eye, of which *Europa's* ascent is but one historical crystallization, presupposes an awareness of the mechanisms of the theater—"the entire process" ("der ganze Vorgang") as Nietzsche says—the figures of height and depth must be read against their emplotment. For there to be a

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<sup>174</sup> "Now we are standing high enough to smile kindly even on those times past that were mentioned before, and even to recognize in those strange follies remarkable crystallizations of the historical substance." (PW 148)

“portal to joy,” there must be a torturous machinery from which one looks out. Nietzsche provides access to this ominous encasement.

Aphorism 38 of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, as well as combining the issues discussed so far—the theater, the pathos of distance, the comportment to history, and the question of redemption—foregrounds and performs the mechanism necessary to read Novalis’ “monological drama.” Its point of confluence is the French Revolution, the event that also provides Novalis with the impetus for *Die Christenheit oder Europa*:

Wie es zuletzt noch, in aller Helligkeit der neueren Zeiten, mit der französischen Revolution gegangen ist, jener schauerlichen und, aus der Nähe beurtheilt, überflüssigen Posse, in welche aber die edlen und schwärmerischen Zuschauer von ganz Europa aus der Ferne her so lange und so leidenschaftlich ihre eignen Empörungen und Begeisterungen hinein interpretirt haben, *bis der Text unter der Interpretation verschwand*: so könne eine edle Nachwelt noch einmal die ganze Vergangenheit missverstehen und dadurch vielleicht erst ihren Anblick erträglich machen. — Oder vielmehr: ist dies nicht bereits geschehen? waren wir nicht selbst — diese “edle Nachwelt”? Und ist es nicht gerade jetzt, insofern wir dies begreifen, — damit vorbei? (KSA 5:56)<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> “As happened lately, in all the clarity of modern times, with the French Revolution, that gruesome and, closely considered, superfluous farce, into which, however, noble and enthusiastic spectators all over Europe interpreted from a distance their own indignations and raptures so long and so passionately that *the text disappeared beneath the interpretation*: so a noble posterity could once again misunderstand the entire past and only thus perhaps make the sight of it endurable. – Or rather: has not this already happened? have we ourselves not been this ‘noble



Irony informs the tone, content, and principle of this aphorism in which the supposed clarity (“Helligkeit”) of modern times succeeds in draping an Apollonian veil over the unendurable events of the French Revolution. The spectators of the theater of revolution project their own “indignations and raptures” from a distance, signifying geographical distance as well as the pathos of distance that the interiorization of the theater enables. From “superfluous farce” to the tragedy of (mis)interpretation, Nietzsche sets a stage in which the French Revolution, far from being an historical watershed, merely serves as an example of a synchronic phenomenon: that of the text disappearing *beneath* the interpretation. In identifying with the “noble posterity” that subsumes “the text” to interpretation through the pronoun “we,” Nietzsche effectively aligns himself and the reader with the interpreters who have already caused the text to vanish. This topographical, metaphorical structure is one of *mise-en-abyme* insofar as the interpretation is (always) already constitutive of the text itself. This is perhaps the greatest irony of the passage as the event that is thereby transvalued also forms the historical nexus around which “the text” revolves. For “the text” as a singularity finds its semantic determination in the historical shift that, following Koselleck, “rendered such thoughts capable of expression” (35), namely the rhetorical shift from various histories in the plural, denoting accounts of an event (*Historie*), to history as a collective singular (*Geschichte*) (34)—itself an expression of the modern problematic in which “the determinations of experience are increasingly removed

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posterity’? And, in so far as we comprehend this, is it not at this moment – done with?” (*BGE* 67-68)

from experience itself" (4). Such a pathos of distance revalues the French Revolution that threatens to remain "superfluous" if it is only "closely considered" ("aus der Nähe betrachtet"). However unknowingly, Nietzsche historicizes his epoch by ahistorically identifying with those whose interpretations bury the text. That the "noble posterity" necessarily comes *too late* is a further attestation to the importance of the decades surrounding the French Revolution for Nietzsche's thought, as the temporalization of history that makes it possible to be "late" or "early" is its concomitant awareness (Koselleck 238-39). Nietzsche's spectators, splayed between belatedness and expectation, typify the "authentically temporal predicament" of German Romanticism (Koerner, *Caspar* 178). The contemporaneity of the noncontemporaneous that such an awareness presupposes structures a tragic insight in Nietzsche, in which the historical events that enable a glimpse into the text are always already thwarted by the interpretations from afar. Here again tragedy is the condition and the price of the pathos of distance. The "elevation and humiliation" of Nietzsche's earlier formulation returns to haunt a spectator whose "dizzying height" (Sloterdijk 42) is conditioned by the humiliation that "the text" is also but a necessary fiction. It is not only in need of interpretation; it *is itself* interpretation.

Concluding the aphorism is a question that participates in Nietzsche's uneasy grappling with notions of redemption, a way out of the dilemma of historical consciousness, the clarity of which is as true as its question mark is insistent: "Und ist es nicht gerade jetzt, insofern wir dies begreifen, — damit vorbei?" Ambivalence abounds in this sentence that, in gesturing toward a state in which elevation without

humiliation could be attained, underscores the imminent deferral of what can be grasped. The moment comprehension is thought to have been attained, the text is past, is “vorbei.”

The concealment of this knowledge is the condition of the golden age in *Europa*. In order for *Europa* to be able to keep its promise of happiness by breaking it—something that its image of a golden age falsifies—there must be something at work in the text from which there is no hope of escape. For Adorno’s aesthetic too, the ultimate heights are a function of the most vertiginous depths. This is exactly what Nietzsche’s aphorism provides, and which hollows out the abyss beneath Novalis’ following idealization.

Prior to the Reformation and the translation of the Bible into popular vernacular, the clergy guarded Scripture—Text as such—from the contingencies of interpretation and the conceits of personal faith. Novalis illustrates this with the topographical metaphor of a ship at sea:

Wie heiter konnte jedermann sein irdisches Tagewerk vollbringen, da ihm durch diese heilige Menschen eine sichere Zukunft bereitet, und jeder Fehltritt durch sie vergeben, jede Mißfarbige Stelle des Lebens durch sie ausgelöscht, und geklärt wurde. Sie waren die erfahrenen Steuerleute auf dem großen unbekanntem Meere, in deren Obhut man alle Stürme geringschätzen, und zuversichtlich auf eine sichere Gelangung und Landung an der Küste der eigentlichen vaterländischen Welt rechnen durfte. (2:732)<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> “How cheerfully each could accomplish his earthly tasks, since by virtue of these holy people a safe future was prepared for him, and every false step was forgiven by them, and every discolored mark in his life wiped away and made clear. They were

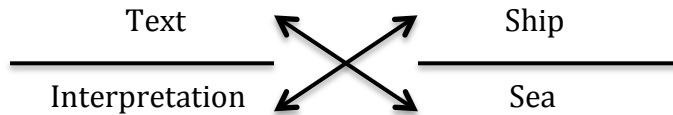
The inclusion of power-relations in the image of the golden age literalizes in a sense Adorno's insistence that the good can only be represented negatively. Novalis' promise of happiness is a consent to the very subjugation whose overcoming the golden age is meant to signify. The interminable elevation of *Europa*, mirrored in the spatial abyss of the "unknown sea," preserves this contradiction throughout. The temporal security that offers a stable future in return for a spotlessly clean present is the work of able helmsmen, the underwriters of a contract of Christian eschatology. Before Luther's *sola fida* believers could lean on the clergy, a safeguard against a confrontation with indeterminacy that would otherwise be waged alone.<sup>177</sup> That the clergy both float on the "unknown sea" and interpret it for the masses on board illustrates their precarious position, one that guarantees that in matters of knowledge, it is the unknowable that must be preserved.

The topological metaphors of ship and sea in *Europa* and interpretation and text in Nietzsche invite comparison. Keeping with the spatial configuration of Nietzsche's metaphor, the text finds its analogue in the ship and interpretation its analogue in the sea. The synchronic dimension of aphorism 38—the *mise-en-abyme* of text and interpretation illustrated by the French Revolution—ironizes the security of the ship in *Europa*. If the text is a matter of interpretation, then the ship is mired in the unknown. This takes the form of a chiasmic reversal:

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the experienced helmsmen on the great unknown sea, under whose protection all storms could be made light of, and one could be confident of a safe arrival and landing on the shore of a world that was truly a fatherland." (*PW* 137)

<sup>177</sup> "The word 'alone' (German *allein*)...is the inner 'kernel', as Luther put it, of the reformed Christian faith." (Koerner, *Reformation* 20)



Beyond the obvious point that the clergy also merely interpret Scripture, reading the synchrony of Nietzsche and Novalis together specifies the function of the clergy as not only preserving holy meaning, but of keeping the tragic insight at bay. The transfiguration of this arrangement into something past—into *history*—renders the unknown sea legible, a metamorphosis concurrent with the Reformation, itself coeval with the advent of modern printing. Novalis bemoans the loss of such unknowns through his characterization of “holy meaning” (“heiliger Sinn”) as a “sense for the invisible” (“Sinn des Unsichtbaren”).<sup>178</sup> This Romantic attunement in which meaning is a function of incomprehensibility, puts cognition and vivification at odds. To comprehend is to grasp something transpired and expired. The text, in being interpreted, is always *vorbei*. Accordingly, the “unknown sea” of Catholic medieval Europe, its vacuity as alluring as it is administered, can only be comprehended by way of the “dead letter.” Ascent in *Europa* is then a double-edged-sword that distances one from the holy meaning as it attempts to comprehend it, and that is always too late with regards to what it comprehends. That according to Novalis, the experienced helmsmen of the Church came *too early* (“Noch war die Menschheit für dieses herrliche Reich nicht reif, nicht gebildet

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<sup>178</sup> 2:734

genug”),<sup>179</sup> situates *Europa* at a point in history in which the temporalization of experience facilitated the disappearance of individual accounts (*Historie*) beneath impersonal forces (*Geschichte*), rendering the former a matter of interpretation and the latter that which interprets. The transfiguration of the “unknown sea” into interpretation extends the *mise-en-abyme* of aphorism 38 to the interpreters themselves. Interpretation interprets (itself).<sup>180</sup>

This diachronic attribute of “the text disappear[ing] beneath the interpretation” also bears on the conditions of the Reformation according to *Europa*. If “the text” can be understood as the Bible, not in terms of its materiality but in terms of the mystery surrounding it as an object mediated and guarded by the clergy, then it disappeared beneath Luther’s translation, an interpretation that deified the dead letter of Scripture at the expense of its aura of mystery: “Dem religiösen Sinn war diese Wahl höchst verderblich, da nichts seine Irritabilität so vernichtet, wie der Buchstabe” (2:737).<sup>181</sup> The destructive power of the dead letter obscures holy meaning—in this passage, the “religious sense” —and replaces it with the stubbornness of the Reformation image: God on the cross as yet another mediation, as shown above. The image of the crucifixion conceals rather than reveals God through the Lutheran notion of *deus absconditus*—“God hidden from a

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<sup>179</sup> *ibid*; “Humanity was not mature enough, not cultivated enough for this splendid kingdom.” (*PW* 139)

<sup>180</sup> The idea that interpretation interprets follows from the insight into the “the text” as a necessary fiction: “[I]s it necessary to posit an interpreter behind the interpretation? Even this is invention, hypothesis.” (*WP* 267)

<sup>181</sup> “This choice was highly damaging to the religious sense, since nothing destroys its responsiveness so much as the letter itself.” (*PW* 141)

fallen world” (Koerner, *Caspar* 177). “Pointing beyond by not pointing beyond” (Koerner, *Reformation* 167), the dead letter, like God on the cross, testifies to man’s distance from the divine.

A precondition of Nietzsche’s aesthetic justification, the death of God is also the justification of aesthetics. If the dead letter destroys by replacing the aura of the invisible with a visual marker, the “religious sense” can only be revived by what Novalis calls “the destruction of everything positive” (“[die] Vernichtung alles Positiven”).<sup>182</sup> Although *Europa* impugns the Reformation for disenchanting religion, Novalis’ plan to revive holy meaning owes much to the ban on graven images, a program to which Protestant iconoclasm devoted itself.

There is an inverse parallel between the iconoclasm of radical Protestantism and the antagonism in *Europa* toward the letter. Iconoclasm favors the word over the graven image while Novalis’ rhetorical glorification of medieval Catholicism puts the Reformation into remission. They both justify their position based on the intolerance of the representation being taken for the thing it represents. The gap between signifier and signified made the Bible appear as “the rough, abstract sketch of religion” (“der rohe abstracte Entwurf der Religion”),<sup>183</sup> a disembodiment that the clergy, the “experienced helmsmen,” endeavored to prevent through the subjection of bodies. Consistent with the ban on graven images, the linguistic gap complements the physical subjection that for Nietzsche fosters the *pathos of distance*, “jenes Verlangen nach immer neuer Distanz-Erweiterung innerhalb der Seele selbst”

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<sup>182</sup> *PW* 146; 2:743

<sup>183</sup> *PW* 141; 2:738

(5:205).<sup>184</sup> This precarious position, in which subjugation accompanies subjecthood as humiliation accompanies elevation, also defines Novalis' historical narrative, which, in its attempt to gradually ascend to a supra-historical position, has no choice but to exploit the dead letter that threatens to turn the project into a "rough, abstract sketch." The interest in the aesthetic problematic of abstraction engenders a Romantic pathos of distance insofar as the quest to express the inexpressible is predicated on and is constantly thwarted by the impossibility of the representation ever being the thing represented. That Novalis calls the letter the "ruin" of Christianity attests to the impossibility of an image to embody the divine coupled with the longing to represent such embodiment.<sup>185</sup>

The ruin, a figure of decay, disfigures comprehension. The temporal gap that in Nietzsche separates the moment of cognition from the attainment of its object aligns him with Novalis, whose characterization of the Enlightenment as a *faith* waxes Nietzschean in its irreverence and sarcasm:

Ein Enthusiasmus ward großmüthig dem armen Menschengeschlechte übrig gelassen und als Prüfstein der höchsten Bildung jedem Actionair derselben unentbehrlich gemacht.– Der Enthusiasmus für diese herrliche, großartige Philosophie und insbesondere für ihre Priester und ihre Mystagogen.

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<sup>184</sup> "...that longing for an ever-increasing widening of distance within the soul itself..." (BGE 192)

<sup>185</sup> "[B]is zu einer neuen Welt-Inspiration herrschte seine [das Christenthum] Ruine, sein Buchstabe mit immer zunehmender Ohnmacht und Verspottung." (2:735); "[I]t's ruin, the letter of it, reigned with ever-increasing impotence and mockery until the appearance of a new world inspiration." (PW 140)



Frankreich war so glücklich der Schooß und der Sitz dieses neuen Glaubens zu werden, der aus lauter Wissen geklebt war. (2:741)<sup>186</sup>

The metaphor of scaffolding that figures the Enlightenment as a patchwork of mere knowledge repeats the topology of the ship at sea, the leadership of the experienced helmsmen now displaced onto new “priests” and “mystagogues.” Novalis turns the contentious term “enthusiasm” back onto the faith, the program of which, following Horkheimer and Adorno, is the “disenchantment of the world” (3). That enthusiasm was synonymous with enchantment not only turns the weapons of the Enlightenment against itself, but also fashions a continuity between it and the Reformation. Equally concerned with eschewing unnecessary decoration, the Enlightenment expunges every trace of the sacred (“Spur des Heiligen”),<sup>187</sup> a point that Novalis ornaments with a base joke identifying France as the womb (“Schooß”) and seat, or ass (“Sitz”), of the new faith. In creating a platform for the Enlightenment, whether as a seat or a patchwork of knowledge, *Europa* posits the subterranean relations, the concealment of which can only superficially be called superficial.<sup>188</sup> As Nietzsche repeatedly iterates, it is a matter of *bearability*, a sober awareness that Novalis registers in saying that the arid rationality of the

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<sup>186</sup> “One enthusiasm was generously left for the poor human race and made indispensable as a touchstone of the highest education for every practitioner of it. It was enthusiasm for this splendid, magnificent philosophy and in particular for its priests and mystagogues. France was fortunate enough to become the birthplace and the seat of this new faith, that was stuck together out of nothing but knowledge.” (PW 144)

<sup>187</sup> PW 144; 2:741

<sup>188</sup> The language of superficially calling something superficial is Starobinski’s. See 1789 66.

Enlightenment was all that was “left” (“übrig gelassen”) and that it was “indispensable” (“unentbehrlich”). Just as the interpretation creates a text that conceals that it is, to use the language of *Europa*, “stuck together out of nothing” save interpretation, so too is the Enlightenment complicit in a reduction of interpretation to a self-negating knowledge.

The proximity of text, interpretation, and self-negation as a reduction to text is nowhere more evident in *Europa* than in the metaphor that figures the Enlightenment’s faith in knowledge as the sole survivor. It is an image of nihilism that in the wake of the hatred of religion “machte die unendliche schöpferische Musik des Weltalls zum einförmigen Klappern einer ungeheuren Mühle, die vom Strom des Zufalls getrieben und auf ihm schwimmend, eine Mühle an sich, ohne Baumeister und Müller und eigentlich ein ächtes Perpetuum mobile, eine sich selbst mahlende Mühle sey” (2:741).<sup>189</sup> The topologies, which have until this point signaled a discontinuity between above and below, whether as a ship or as a scaffold, now collapse into a monstrous continuity. That the mill, without the comfort of a human presence, swims on and is powered by the “stream of chance” aligns it with the mechanism at work in Nietzsche’s “text.” Although comprised of interpretations, Nietzsche’s text always precedes any recognition that could alter it. Interpretation is always already text, is *vorbei*. Like the mill, the text devours and reproduces itself. The elevation that characterized the earlier topological metaphors

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<sup>189</sup> “...turned the infinite, creative music of the universe into the uniform clattering of a monstrous mill, driven by the stream of chance and floating on it, a mill itself without builder or miller and really a true *perpetuum mobile*, a mill grinding itself.” (PW 144)

has collapsed into humiliation. As in Nietzsche it is the French Revolution that provides the historical reference, a “second Reformation,” that in *Europa* signals anarchy. This anarchy—the void after “the destruction of everything positive”—is also the generating element (“Zeugungslement”)<sup>190</sup> of religion, a postulation that *Europa* illustrates with an image of ascent and compulsion that prefigures Nietzsche’s redemptive gesture:

Wie von selbst steigt der Mensch gen Himmel auf, wenn ihn nichts mehr bindet, die höhern Organe treten von selbst aus der allgemeinen gleichförmigen Mischung und vollständigen Auflösung aller menschlichen Anlagen und Kräfte, als der Urkern der irdischen Gestaltung heraus. Der Geist Gottes schwebt über den Wassern und ein himmlisches Eiland wird als Wohnstätte der neuen Menschen, als Stromgebiet des ewigen Lebens zuerst sichtbar über den zurückströmenden Wogen. (2:743)<sup>191</sup>

If the monotonous death-mill is unbearable for Novalis, then this image of ascent is its Apollonian veil. Out of uniformity, the “higher organs” create form. The compulsory nature of the ascent (“Wie von selbst”) is consistent with the textualization of interpretation in Nietzsche. It also responds to Kant, whose essay “Was ist Aufklärung?” includes similar language with a different object: “Die

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<sup>190</sup> *PW* 145; 2:743

<sup>191</sup> “Man rises up toward heaven as if of himself when nothing more binds him, the higher organs step forth of themselves from the general uniform mixture and from the complete dissolution of all human propensities and powers, to appear for the first time as the original seed of mortal shape. The spirit of God moves across the waters and across the ebbing waves a heavenly island can be seen for the first time as the dwelling place of the new man, as the river zone of eternal life.” (*PW* 146)

Menschen arbeiten sich von selbst nach und nach aus der Rohigkeit heraus, wenn man nur nicht absichtlich künstelt, um sie darin zu erhalten" (60).<sup>192</sup> Written in 1784, on the eve of the French Revolution, Kant's partial intention is to assure his readers that such blood-letting need not occur, that it would be, in Nietzsche's words, superfluous ("überflüssig"). Such an overflow constitutes Novalis' post-Revolution answer to Kant, in which the faith in the maturity of man is superseded by a vision that makes of Kant's faith, again in Nietzsche's words, a farce ("Posse"). Rather than through optimism in the freedom of man and his faculty of reason, elevation in *Europa* is a matter of compulsion. More akin to Heidegger's "only a God can save us" than Kant's optimism, Novalis places his faith in an image of a "heavenly island." A vision of Biblical proportions, its echo of Genesis ("Der Geist Gottes schwebt über den Wassern") is not only in keeping with a philosophy of history that renders events repeatable—the French Revolution in *Europa* is "a second Reformation" ("eine zweite Reformation")<sup>193</sup>—but also projects the topological metaphor into an indeterminate future. The "heavenly island" is both memory and promise: a memory of the experienced helmsmen navigating over the unknown sea and a promise that such carefree times will return. It is also the memory of a promise, the promise of the experienced helmsmen to guide humankind to a safe landing "on the shore of a world that was truly a fatherland" ("an der Küste der eigentlichen vaterländischen Welt"). But that is not all. The

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<sup>192</sup> "People gradually work their way out of barbarism of their own accord if only one does not intentionally contrive to keep them in it." (Kant, *Practical Philosophy* 21)

<sup>193</sup> *PW* 145; 2:742

memory of a promise, following Nietzsche, is also the memorialization of the promise that, in grasping what is thought to be the text, comes up only with interpretations. The text becomes interpretation “wie von selbst” and the recognition of this tendency, always already too late to change it, crystallizes into a ruin bearing the name “*vorbei*.” This structure is repeated, as has been shown, over and over in *Europa* in which the promise of redemption is mired in the sea of the *too late*. This structure, that of the death-mill, is as much self-reproductive as self-devouring. An “unknown sea” accompanies every image of redemption, which is both necessary for redemption insofar as the unknown is the site of holy meaning, and also its deferral since the “unknown sea” necessitates that there be a ship, secure platform, or island over it. This vicious circle, which ensures that no promise of happiness exists without its memorialization in a ruin, is the structural principle of *Europa*.

### **The “Dizzying Heights” of Interested Spectatorship**

“Jetzt stehen wir hoch genug...” (2:746).<sup>194</sup> By the time *Europa* reaches an adequate height with which to oversee history, the ironies of the text, however concealed, have occluded this possibility.<sup>195</sup> The oversight is predicated on *overlooking* the mechanism of the text. The elevated perspective becomes, following

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<sup>194</sup> Now we are standing high enough...” (*PW* 148)

<sup>195</sup> To the extent that the ironies of *Europa* are self-conscious, its stated goal of attaining an elevated position from which to view historical crystallization becomes ever more remote: “It is a historical fact that irony becomes increasingly conscious of itself in the course of demonstrating the impossibility of our being historical.” (de Man, “Rhetoric of Temporality” 211)

Sloterdijk, a “dizzying height”: “Nothing comes closer to the truth than whenever the beautiful places itself as a fragile endurable thing before the *foundation* of the unbearable” (42). This “foundation” has accompanied every figurative ascent in Novalis’ speech through the necessity of requisitioning the figure of allegory, an *imposition* that, in illustrating historical crystallizations, entombs their semantic layers in a ruin. The ruin, as has been shown, stands in an ironic relationship with a notion of redemption, which it endlessly defers.

Part of the process of endless deferral, historical crystallization in *Europa* is legible to a spectator of history that, despite Novalis’ rhetoric when he arrives at the present, is not reducible to disinterested contemplation. Take for example Novalis’ polemic against the Enlightenment and its image of God as a spectator: “Gott wurde zum müßigen Zuschauer des großen rührenden Schauspiels, das die Gelehrten aufführten, gemacht, welcher am Ende die Dichter und Spieler feierlich bewirthen und bewundern sollte” (2:742).<sup>196</sup> What distinguishes the image of God as a disinterested spectator of the theater of scholars from the height of the present (“Jetzt stehen wir hoch genug”) is the interest integral to redemption. For Novalis this takes the form of the golden age that in *Europa* finds its retrospective fulfillment in the aesthetic foil of Catholic medieval Europe. A futural figure, the golden age is predicated on the desire born from emphatic aesthetic experience, an experience in which Kant’s disinterested contemplation only feigns an interest. Nietzsche’s theater-eye, by contrast, seeks a perspective “[w]o es interessanter und interessirter

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<sup>196</sup> “God was turned into an idle spectator of the great, moving spectacle performed by the scholars, a spectator who in the end was supposed to receive the poets and players ceremonially with hospitality and admiration.” (PW 145)

zugeht" (3:297), a position of elevation that looks down on the social pretenses of Novalis' Enlightenment theater. The interested spectator stands on the foundation of the unbearable, whereas God the idle spectator stands only on ceremony.

Such disinterest is not, however, superfluous. Its concomitant arid rationality exacerbates the difference between elevation and humiliation for the sake of making this difference legible to a "noble posterity." As the topographical ruins of *Europa* demonstrate, and in keeping with a Romantic sentiment that puts comprehensibility and vivification at odds, legibility is a function of decay. Following this contour in which the depths belong to the heights, *Europa* positions its ascent in uneasy proximity to a humiliating admission:

Dankbar wollen wir jenen Gelehrten und Philosophen die Hände drücken; denn dieser Wahn mußte zum Besten der Nachkommen erschöpft, und die wissenschaftliche Ansicht der Dinge geltend gemacht werden. Reizender und farbiger steht die Poesie, wie ein geschmücktes Indien dem kalten, todten Spitzbergen jenes Stubenverständes gegenüber. Damit Indien in der Mitte des Erdballs so warm und herrlich sey, muß ein kaltes starres Meer, todte Klippen, Nebel statt des gestirnvollen Himmels und eine lange Nacht, die beiden Enden unwirthbar machen. (2:746)<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> "Gratefully we wish to shake the hands of those scholars and philosophers; for this delusion had to be exhausted for the benefit of posterity, and the scientific aspect of things made valid. Then poetry, like a bejeweled India, will stand more captivatingly and more colorfully over against the cold, dead Spitzbergen of that stuffy understanding. For India to be so warm and splendid in the middle of the globe, both ends of it must be made inhospitable by a cold, rigid sea, dead cliffs, fog instead of the starry heavens, and a long night." (148)

The contours of *Europa's* ascent define the humiliation in proportion to and against which *Poesie* can shine. *Poesie*, as the vehicle of holy meaning, does not appear after the events in Novalis' historical narrative have crystallized; it has been there from the beginning. From the "unknown sea" to the cracks in the Enlightenment scaffold, *Poesie* subsisted on the amorphous chaos that the ruin of the letter could not hypostatize. Yet it too is a method of concealment, a form of ornamentation (*Schmuck*) that is as bound up with the ship and the scaffold as with what lies below. Like meaning, *Poesie* is a construction, a compulsion to make meaning in the face of ever more nihilistic surroundings. Novalis' historical narrative takes great pains to conceal this humiliation, making use of metaphoric stratifications to separate meaning and *Poesie* from power and the contingencies of interpretation. The chiasmic reversal, however, that Nietzsche's aphorism on the French Revolution allowed one to read into the idealization of Catholic medieval Europe is still operable, making it impossible to disentangle one strand from the other. The "Vernichtung alles Positiven" (2:743)<sup>198</sup>—Novalis' debt to the Protestant ban on graven images—that compels the "höhere Organe" upwards, collapses before the allegory, the figuration of the ruin that memorializes meaning as it ascends.

Novalis has a name for the lens that he asks his audience to cultivate: the "historical eye." It takes a "genuine observer" ("der ächte Beobachter")<sup>199</sup> to find holy meaning in the seemingly disconnected events of history: "Noch sind alles nur Andeutungen, unzusammenhängend und roh, aber sie verrathen dem historischen

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<sup>198</sup> "the destruction of everything positive" (*PW* 146)

<sup>199</sup> *PW* 146; 2:743



Auge eine universelle Individualität, eine neue Geschichte, eine neue Menschheit” (2:745).<sup>200</sup> The disjointed events that betray to the historical eye a “universal individuality,” owe their cohesion to a magical tool that illuminates the betrayal in the paradoxical notion of an individuality that claims to be universal. It is the “magic wand of analogy” (“Zauberstab der Analogie”),<sup>201</sup> as Novalis calls it, which connects the disconnected. As has been demonstrated, the analogies that allow a cohesive historical narrative to emerge from chaos make use of metaphors of topography that mark the repeatability that they afford with the disarticulation inherent to figuration. The “universal individuality” of the historical eye, far from being the god-like consciousness of the transcendental ego, is the index of the grammatization of the individual.<sup>202</sup> If *Poesie* is a method of concealment, what it conceals is the mechanism of the historical eye: the dead letter that *Europa* has been battling all along. This defines one of the central paradoxes of the Romantic theory of language: it is dead in its capacity to refer to anything (the Bible, for example, does not have religious sentiment as a referent, it is merely a scaffold), yet it is evaluated based on its power to foster the play of the imagination in its relentless attempt to approach the infinite, the divine, or meaning—a faith that can only be attained by the separation of the signifier from the signified, of which the ban on graven images is the cipher. The Romantic theory of language is mired in this vicious circle.

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<sup>200</sup> “All these things are only still hints, disjointed and rough, but to the historical eye they betray a universal individuality, a new history, a new humanity...” (PW 147)

<sup>201</sup> PW 146; 2:743

<sup>202</sup> “In speaking of irony we are dealing not with the history of an error but with a problem that exists within the self.” (de Man, “Rhetoric of Temporality” 211)

Such a return of the repressed letter and its ban does not mean that *Europa* does not succeed on some level. The “destruction of everything positive” holds another valence, this time of critique. It returns in the form of *reading*. For this, however, one must adopt Nietzsche’s theater-eye. Whereas the historical eye seeks meaning in the use of analogy, the theater-eye has renounced meaning in favor of an attunement to the mechanism of the perceived. In addition to reinscribing the golden age through teaching the aesthetic justification of existence—fostering the “cult of the untrue” that makes life bearable—the theater-eye recognizes the impossibility of transcending mediation. In this, it transcends the ability of art to merely console. The cult of the untrue is not allowed to have a good conscience. Through (and against) the theater-eye, the ban on graven images extends to the redemptive golden age itself. In collapsing under the weight of its own inability to figure the redemption that it retrospectively posits, *Europa* ceases to console an “unhappy humanity” (Starobinski, *Enchantment* xiii) through its false promise of happiness. Now in ruins, it can mirror the fractured landscape that its appeal for hope aesthetically justified.

## CHAPTER IV

### CRITICAL DESCENT: CAVERNS OF SUBJECTIVITY

*“Here is the prospect free, the spirit exalted.” — But there is an opposite kind of man who is also on the heights and for whom the prospect is also free — but who looks down.  
Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil**

#### Introduction

The cave, rather than being narrowly metaphorical, is also a physical enclosure in the service of what Hans Blumenberg calls “work on myth.” Work on myth, akin to the Apollonian in its function as a bulwark against the unbearable, makes the unfamiliar familiar. This forms the foil for a reading of Novalis’ notion of romanticization as a double discursive process, which, in endeavoring to make the familiar unfamiliar, has necessary recourse to work on myth. Lifting a veil, in other words, is to have already veiled the vacuity underneath. This interminably abyssal operation forms the matrix for my readings of various episodes in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. The hermit living in the cave in *Ofterdingen*’s central chapter, rather than simply a wise man able to help Heinrich in his journey, is a practiced ascetic, whose song reveals the stages in his own battle against the unbearable. The blue flower, the archetypical symbol of longing, does not merely help the narrative to cohere; it is a discontinuous imposition into the fragile subjectivity of Heinrich. When read through romanticization, it is as impossible to tell cohesion from dismemberment as description from inscription. Nietzsche also reads *Ofterdingen*—likely without having ever taken it in his hands—through aphorisms dealing with the temporal inversion of the error of causality, in which memory—the ground of subjectivity after the loss of the absolute—is a piled-up wreckage of false

interpretations. This necessary entanglement with error colors Heinrich's epiphanic moments of déjà vu. When Heinrich believes that something divine has been revealed to him, proximate passages demonstrate that they are rather repetitions of inscription. Work on myth, romanticization, and memory are all operations in which the subject is gripped and inextricably entangled. They are cavernous enclosures, not of comfort but of necessity. A dream of Walter Benjamin's forms prescient allegory of these matters of exposure and its mitigation, and serves as the departure point.

### **In the Grip of Descent**

Walter Benjamin's notebooks from 1938 contain the following curious dream:

*28 Juni.* Ich befand mich in einem Labyrinth von Treppen. Dieses Labyrinth war nicht an allen Seiten gedeckt. Ich stieg; andere Treppen führten in die Tiefe. Auf einem Treppenabsatze nahm ich wahr, daß ich auf einem Gipfel zu stehen gekommen war. Ein weiter Blick über alle Lande tat sich da auf. Ich sah andere auf andern Gipfel stehen. Einer von diesen wurde plötzlich von Schwindel ergriffen und stürzte herab. Dieser Schwindel griff um sich; andere Menschen stürzte[n] von andern Gipfeln nun in die Tiefe. Als auch ich von diesem Gefühl ergriffen wurde, erwachte ich. (*Gesammelte Schriften* 4:533-34)<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> "28 June. I was in a labyrinth of stairs. This labyrinth was not entirely roofed over. I climbed; other stairways led downwards. On a landing I realized that I had arrived at a summit. A wide view of many lands opened up before me. I saw other

Benjamin's dream, in its staging of a labyrinthine interior, pairs the exposure to perception with the loss of security that an interior is meant to provide. Reminiscent of a primal scene, the dream has all the trappings of a ready-made allegory. The ominous detail that "other stairways led downwards" places the entire dream, however brief, under the sign of descent. Gaps on either end of the "labyrinth of stairs" ("This labyrinth was not entirely roofed over") resist the stability that the idea of closure typically conveys. Another undisclosed (and non-closed) location, the summit, forms the vantage point from which seeing and opening oneself to perceivability inaugurates a contagious vertigo that infects the "I" of the dream, who awakes upon falling. The meager security offered by the summit landing proves to be an inadequate bulwark against the exposure that the labyrinth of stairs was adequate in concealing. Read allegorically, Benjamin's dream does much to elucidate an obscure concept, the illusiveness of which is due to its incommensurability with the conceptual; it is descent. More a *Begriff* than a concept to be grasped, its resistance to definition is consistent—perhaps the only thing that allows descent to cohere—with its mode of operation: it is that which grips *you*.<sup>204</sup> Benjamin's dream, far from being limited to the historical consciousness of 1938, bears resemblance to Novalis' critical operation of romanticization, a method to be deployed in what follows that can be called "descensional reading." If Novalis is at the tipping point of

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men standing on other peaks. One of these men was suddenly seized by dizziness and fell. The dizziness spread; others were now falling from other peaks into the depths below. When I too became dizzy, I woke up." (Adorno, *Aesthetics and Politics* 93)

<sup>204</sup> "Nietzsche attempts to say what Zarathustran affirmation is by calling it the very *Begriff* of Dionysos—not so much the 'concept' as the 'grasp' or 'grip' of the god." (Krell, *Infectious* 62)

ascensional to descensional logic,<sup>205</sup> Benjamin the historian, albeit retrospectively, fulfills in this dream the function that prompted Friedrich Schlegel to call the historian “ein[en] rückwärts gekehrte[n] Prophet[en]” (Schlegel 2:176):<sup>206</sup> it traces the contours of the history of thought and its concomitant anxiety as the shift from reflection on the absolute to reflection on the abyss. Situated on the far side of the spectrum, Zarathustra’s descent (“Untergang”) already inhabits the landscape that does not afford the view to which theory—in so far as theory is predicated on sight—aspires and which Benjamin’s dream casts ambiguously as either fleeting or resulting in vertigo. The dream accommodates both tendencies, which since Plato make up a curious dialectic in which the desire for an Archimedean point is paired with its increasing unbearability. But in contrast to Plato’s allegory of the cave and in keeping with Nietzsche’s critique of Plato, the eyes do not habituate themselves to the sun (the *telos* of theory) but rather suffer a sensory overload akin to what Fredric Jameson has called the “postmodern sublime”—the always already thwarted attempt to grasp the networks of power that underlay the overwhelming amount of archival material at the (post)modern-subject’s disposal.<sup>207</sup> Or perhaps theory is

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<sup>205</sup>This terminology is Krell’s: “[Nietzsche’s] thought describes an epochal turn in the history of Western thought from Hegel to Heidegger, which I define provisionally as the descent of reflection from the death of God to the death of human beings—the descent of reflection in both cases implying the demise of the metaphysical *logos*.” (*Infectious* 78-9)

<sup>206</sup> “...a backwards-looking prophet.” (Translation mine)

<sup>207</sup> “The technology of contemporary society is therefore mesmerizing and fascinating not so much in its own right but because it seems to offer some privileged representational shorthand for grasping a network of power and control even more difficult for our minds and imaginations to grasp: the whole new decentered global network of the third stage of capital itself.” (*Postmodernism* 37-8)

also an enclosure of sorts, a cavernous shelter that, following Hans Blumenberg, mediates the absolute exposure through which it defines itself and lets itself be defined (*Höhlenausgänge* 61). If absolute exposure is the unmanageable much-too-much, theory is what Nietzsche would call a “necessary fiction” without which life would simply be unendurable: the distillation of insight through the ascription of fixed relations and of systems with a claim to closure. This theory of (and as) the cave exposes the cavern that hollows out theory and aligns it with a process of mythification that *comprises* the conceptual, theoretical, and rational rather than obscuring them. There is a Nietzschean resonance in Blumenberg’s theory of “work on myth,” one that finds its echo in the first sentence of the second essay of *Zur Genealogie der Moral*: “Ein Thier heranzüchten, das *versprechen darf* — ist das nicht gerade jene paradoxe Aufgabe selbst, welche sich die Natur in Hinsicht auf den Menschen gestellt hat?” (5:291).<sup>208</sup> Promises are the privilege of those who can guarantee their fulfillment through the reliance on and production of calculability, a constancy that the human, by necessity forgetful, does not naturally possess. Blumenberg traces the calculability that promising presupposes back to a primal scene: early humans’ entrance into the cave.

### **Chthonic Asymmetry: Mythification and Romanticization**

The absolutism of reality is the appellation that Blumenberg gives the exposure that compelled early humans to take shelter in caves. The distant dispassion presupposed by theory finds its inauguration in the ability of early

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<sup>208</sup> “To breed an animal with the right to make promises—is not this the paradoxical problem nature has set itself with regard to man?” (*GM* 189)

troglodytes to focus their attention on a single point, that of the cave opening (*Work on Myth* 26).<sup>209</sup> Just as the shelter of the cave can be traced back from the calculability inherent in the ability to make promises, so does the absolutism of reality outside of the cave resonate with the terrors of the Dionysian. This state quite literally defies all comprehension, as comprehension is a tool set to work explicitly at this state's destruction: "Nothing wants to go back to the beginning that is the point toward which the lines of what we are speaking of here converge" (*WM* 21). Similarly, Sloterdijk in his reading of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* speaks of the inability not only of resources but also of the *will* to return to the absolute terror of the barbarous, an inability that for Nietzsche is synonymous with culture: "Nietzsche splits the Dionysian throng into two severely differentiated, almost oppositional choruses, which relate to each other like culture and nature or like civilization and barbarism. According to the author, a 'monstrous gap' separates the Dionysians of Greece from those of the barbarians, a gap the highly cultured individual will never again bridge—indeed, will never even be able to *want* to bridge" (27). Nietzsche himself provides another inability that defines the Dionysian—only subject to description by keeping it at bay—in a much later aphorism from *Götzendämmerung*:

Im dionysischen Zustande ist [...] das gesammte Affekt-System erregt und gesteigert: so dass es alle seine Mittel des Ausdrucks mit einem Male entladet und die Kraft des Darstellens, Nachbildens, Transfigurirens, Verwandeln, alle Art Mimik und Schauspielerei zugleich her austreibt. Das Wesentliche

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<sup>209</sup> Hereafter cited as *WM*.



bleibt die Leichtigkeit der Metamorphose, die Unfähigkeit *nicht* zu reagieren.

(6:117)<sup>210</sup>

Likewise one is unable to remove the Apollonian veil that allows Nietzsche's Dionysian to appear, and therefore the absolutism of reality must remain an abstraction characterized by the absence of calculability and inscription that constitutes memory; abstraction itself being an element in the process of mythification begun after entering the primordial cave.<sup>211</sup> The cave opening acted as a threshold dividing the absolutism of reality on the outside from what Blumenberg refers to as "the absolutism of images and wishes" (*WM* 8) on the inside. First, cave drawings depicted the hunt, and the narratives that eventually followed did more than kill time: they "killed fear" (*WM* 34). "Work on myth" (*Arbeit am Mythos*) as Blumenberg designates it encapsulates these narratives as well as the attempt to work through them. In either case, the directionality is set from the unfamiliar to the familiar.

The ability of reason to render myth obsolete succumbs to its complicity in myth in Blumenberg's account. Reason like myth itself is encompassed rather than

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<sup>210</sup> "In the Dionysian state [...] the entire emotional system is alerted and intensified: so that it discharges all its powers of representation, imitation, transfiguration, transmutation, every kind of mimicry and play-acting, conjointly. The essential thing remains the facility of the metamorphosis, the incapacity *not* to react." (*TI* 84); Incidentally, for Blumenberg affect already presupposes work on myth lest it mesh with the indeterminacy of the absolutism of reality (*WM* 21). This means that in keeping with his theory, Nietzsche's elucidation of the Dionysian in *Götzendämmerung* already has an Apollonian veil covering it in that the "Affekt-system" (one such veil) has been appropriated for the Dionysian.

<sup>211</sup> "Whatever starting point one might choose, work on the reduction of the absolutism of reality would already have begun." (*WM* 7)

excluded by work on myth. With the Enlightenment comes an uneasiness with the subterranean realm, which the light of reason cannot penetrate. The Romantic generation on the other hand reveled in darkness and descent. Perhaps no greater affront to this latter tendency exists than that mounted by Rousseau in his *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, a very late work of a thinker who hovers so enigmatically between Enlightenment and Romantic ideals:

The mineral kingdom possesses no intrinsic charm or attraction: buried deep in the bosom of the earth its riches seem to have been placed far from the eyes of men so as not to arouse their cupidity. [...] [The miner] scours the entrails of the earth and descends into its depths, risking his life and health, in search of imaginary gains to replace the true blessings which it offered him spontaneously when he was capable of enjoying them. He flees the sun and the light, which he is no longer worthy of seeing, he buries himself alive, and rightly so, since he no longer deserves to live in the light of day." (112-13)

It is hard to imagine a characterization more at odds with Novalis' view of mining and the underground "treasures," considered both literally and figuratively. There are historical factors for this discrepancy. Germany's late industrialization, coupled with the search for precious metals and gems in Germany as opposed to coal, lent mining and caves a luster prone to idealization and made it desirable as a metaphor for history, sexuality and the unconscious.<sup>212</sup> The metaphorical significance of the cave, however, lies in its refusal to be merely metaphorical. Whether it is called upon to signify subjective interiority, or the womb, its privileging as a primal site

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<sup>212</sup> Ziolkowski 18-63; For a more in-depth treatment of the cave as a metaphor for the unconscious see Calhoon *Fatherland* 97-116.

may owe nothing to its metaphorical heritage and everything to a metaphorical birth—or rather the birth of metaphor as outlined by Blumenberg. Metaphor with its logic of substitution is also an heir to the ability of early humans to divide their experience between inside and outside. The fear of death and decay, which the cave opening relegated to the outside, but whose conceptual apparatus—the possibility of being afraid *of something* as opposed to being absolutely fearful as such (the absolutism of reality)<sup>213</sup>—is chthonic in nature. Rousseau reverses this. The unfamiliarity that he ascribes to the subterranean realm, the so-called “imaginary gains” that the miner seeks, places him at the nexus between the process of mythification or work on myth—the attempt to make the unfamiliar familiar—and what Novalis refers to as romanticization—the desire to make the familiar unfamiliar.

The descent into the cave in the central chapter of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* is met with a fear *of something* that both establishes this as a return to the cave but also references the absolute fear that forms the impetus for early cave-dwelling, namely the numerous remains of bones and teeth, whose taxonomy (human or

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<sup>213</sup> The distinction that Blumenberg draws between *das Andere* (the other) and *der Andere* (the other one) is relevant here (*WM* 22) as is Nietzsche’s admonition of absolute knowledge in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*: “[H]üten wir vor den Fangarmen solcher contradiktorischen Begriffe wie ‘reine Vernunft’, ‘absolute Geistigkeit’, ‘Erkenntniss an sich’: — hier wird immer ein Auge zu denken verlangt, das gar nicht gedacht werden kann, ein Auge, das durchaus keine Richtung haben soll, bei dem die aktiven und interpretirenden Kräfte unterbunden sein sollen, fehlen sollen, durch die doch Sehen erst ein Etwas-Sehen wird.” (5:365); “[L]et us be beware of the tentacles of such contradictory notions as ‘pure reason,’ ‘absolute knowledge,’ ‘absolute intelligence.’ All these concepts presuppose an eye such as no living being can imagine, an eye required to have no direction, to abrogate its active and interpretive powers—precisely those powers that alone make of seeing, seeing *something*.” (*GM* 255)

animal?) remains ambiguous. Although the bones “appeared to be petrified” (“schienen steinartig geworden zu seyn”),<sup>214</sup> their possible origin is anything but immutable. The farmers, who are afraid to continue their descent, display a sensibility consistent with the representation of the subterranean in folk tales as a realm of punishment and misfortune, a superstition that Rousseau echoes.<sup>215</sup> Leading the expedition is the miner, whose assertions that the remains are a “trace of the ancient world” (“Überbleibsel einer uralten Zeit”)<sup>216</sup> follow the familiar Romantic insight that nature too is historical rather than intransient and monolithic. The remains thereby take on the character of the ruin, in whose guise, following Benjamin, “history does not assume the form of the process of an eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay.”<sup>217</sup> That “history has physically merged into the setting” (Benjamin, *Origin* 177-78) not only prefigures the discussion revolving around the narration of history that will eventually ensue deeper in the cave, but also provides a foil, but only partially, for Heinrich’s own questions vis-à-vis the remains, which he places in a precarious position between historical and eternal realms:

Wie [...] wäre es möglich, daß unter unsern Füßen eine eigene Welt in einem ungeheuern Leben sich bewegte? daß unerhörte Geburten in den Vesten der Erde ihr Wesen trieben, die das innere Feuer des dunkeln Schoßes zu

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<sup>214</sup> Novalis *Henry von Ofterdingen* Trans. Palmer Hilty 78; Hereafter cited solely by page number; 1:300

<sup>215</sup> Frank “Steinherz und Goldseele” 273

<sup>216</sup> Translation mine; 1:300

<sup>217</sup> Benjamin *Origin of German Tragic Drama* 178

riesenmäßigen und geistesgewaltigen Gestalten auftriebe? Könnten dereinst diese schauerliche Fremden, von der eindringenden Kälte hervorgetrieben, unter uns erscheinen, während vielleicht zu gleicher Zeit himmlische Gäste, lebendige, redende Kräfte der Gestirne über unsern Häuptern sichtbar würden? Sind diese Knochen Überreste ihrer Wanderungen nach der Oberfläche, oder Zeichen einer Flucht in die Tiefe? (1:300-301)<sup>218</sup>

Heinrich brings the heavenly and subterranean realms into uneasy proximity through a simultaneous ascent and descent, in which the decaying remains become the point of tangency for what an earlier episteme would have regarded as the correspondence between microcosm and macrocosm.<sup>219</sup> This passage, in addition to heralding an epoch whose knowledge is not secured by the mutually confirming spheres of the above and the below, also describes the transition in terms that partially, and irrevocably, sever Novalis' discipline of romance from mythification as discussed in Blumenberg. Whereas early humans entered the cave in order to flee, conceptualize, and thereby expunge the absolutism of reality through work on myth, the travelers in *Ofterdingen* enter (or re-enter) the cave to find the traces that lead back to the absolutism of reality. This process, the site of which Heinrich's questions

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<sup>218</sup> "How [...] would it be possible for an enormous world of life all its own to move around under our feet? For unheard-of creatures to carry on within the strongholds of the earth and be forced by the inner fires of the earth's dark womb to grow into forms gigantic in size and powerful of mind? Could these dreadful strangers, driven up by the penetrating cold, possibly sometime appear among us, while perhaps at the same time celestial guests, living, speaking forces of the constellations, might become visible overhead? Are these bones remains of their migrations to the surface or signs of their flight into the depths below?" (79)

<sup>219</sup> Foucault *The Order of Things* 172-73

effectively establish as its primal scene, is none other than romanticization itself.

Here is its most complete definition and imperative:

Die Welt muß romantisirt werden. So findet man den urspr[ünglichen] Sinn wieder. Romantisieren ist nichts, als eine qualit[ative] Potenzirung. Das niedre Selbst wird mit einem besseren Selbst in dieser Operation identifiziert. So wie wir selbst eine solche qualit[ative] Potenzenreihe sind. Diese Operation ist noch ganz unbekannt. Indem ich dem Gemeinen einen hohen Sinn, dem Gewöhnlichen ein geheimnißvolles Ansehn, dem Bekannten die Würde des Unbekannten, dem Endlichen einen unendlichen Schein gebe so romantisire ich es – Umgekehrt ist die Operation für das Höhere, Unbekannte, Mystische, Unendliche – dies wird durch diese Verknüpfung logarythmisirt – Es bekommt einen geläufigen Ausdruck. romantische Philosophie. *Lingua romana*. Wechselerhöhung und Erniedrigung. (2:334)<sup>220</sup>

Superimposed, the texts enter into a dialogical exchange. The probing question in the former (“*Wie ware es möglich*”) confronts the strict imperative of the latter (“*Die Welt muß romantisirt werden*”). Likewise, the question mark closing the former text finds a questionable exchange of elevation (“*Wechselerhöhung*”) and lowering (“*Erniedrigung*”) in the latter that prefigures the Nietzschean proposition, in which

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<sup>220</sup> “The world must be made Romantic In that way one can find the original meaning again. To make Romantic is nothing but a qualitative raising to a higher power. In this operation the lower self will become one with a better self. Just as we ourselves are such a qualitative exponential series. This operation is as yet quite unknown. By endowing the commonplace with a higher meaning the ordinary with mysterious respect, the known with the dignity of the unknown, the finite with the appearance of the infinite, I am making it Romantic. The operation for the higher, unknown, mystical, infinite is the converse – this undergoes a logarithmic change through this connection – it takes on an ordinary form of expression. Romantic philosophy. *Lingua romana*. Raising and lowering by turns.” (PW 60)

the depths belong to the heights, placing the subject in an unavoidable tailspin of humiliation (“Erniedrigung”). Just as every Nietzsche aphorism ends with an implicit question mark, so too do these two texts, considered in tandem, succumb to an overdetermination that marks the seemingly reciprocal gestures of elevating and lowering with a certain asymmetry. The simultaneous and reciprocal ascent and descent of the first text—the ascent of subterranean beings to the surface and the descent of celestial beings to the earth—are figured in the second text as making the familiar unfamiliar in the first operation and the unfamiliar familiar in the second operation. Read together, the topographic pairing of the first text—that of ascent and descent—acquiesces to the estrangement and familiarity of the second. There is, however, a fissure in these texts, an asymmetry, that in naming the unknown—that which is higher—marks it as familiar. Through the act of naming, the unknown takes on the familiar character that the operation of lowering seeks to reverse. This asymmetry is corroborated by the stunning imagery of the death of celestial beings in the first text as well as by the insistence in the second text that this operation is quite unknown (“ganz unbekannt”). The ramifications of this are twofold and correspond to the precise difference between work on myth, or mythification, and romanticization. First: the endeavor to describe the shift from the familiar to the unfamiliar is always already complicit in work on myth in that the description itself makes what is unfamiliar familiar. Here are echoed Blumenberg’s words: “Whatever starting point one might choose, work on the reduction of the absolutism of reality would already have begun” (*WM* 7). In this sense, there is no reversing this trajectory. Second: romanticization tears itself away from mythification the instant

that the unfamiliar in the second operation is recognized as familiar. In other words, once the gods have been submitted to historical decay and death (recall the ruin), the unfamiliar is unleashed, however impossibly, in the fractures of the proposition and inquiry themselves. The operation of lowering is revealed as another instance of making the familiar unfamiliar. When the abyss collides with the absolute, the abyss is the inevitable victor. This is the reign of the question mark, of the “dangerous perhaps” (KSA 5:17), that Nietzsche will later champion.

Romanticization belies a double discursive project that—if it is to occur—(recall that it is still quite unknown) must attend to its complicity in mythification, the gradual familiarizing of the unfamiliar, by never having recourse to a ground that could fix meaning once and for all. Novalis’ insistence that one will thereby find the original meaning again (“So findet man den urspr[ünglichen] Sinn wieder”) veils the endlessness of an operation that requires that one adapt to the dynamism of the familiar itself. But romanticization is no more synonymous with mythification than mythification presupposes an origin from which it proceeds. The always-already character of both processes precludes the existence of any ground that is not to be undermined. To romanticize one must be as Nietzsche describes himself in the preface to *Morgenröte*: “einen ‘Unterirdischen’ [...], einen Bohrenden, Grabenden, Untergrabenden” (3:11).<sup>221</sup> Blumenberg’s concept of work on myth is heir to romanticization insofar as the process whereby one arrives at a conception of the absolutism of reality (inevitably always only a concept) reverses the trajectory of

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<sup>221</sup> “[A] subterranean man [...], one who tunnels and mines and undermines.” (*Daybreak* 1)



work on myth and, in what one might call Nietzschean fashion, unearths the instant when language renders the unthought thinkable, or rather the moment when the inability of language to accomplish the task that the operation demands of it is revealed. Novalis' claim is then quite apt: it is a process that remains quite unknown.

### **The Hermit Sings: Music and the Fantasmatic Body**

The socializing function of memory for Nietzsche, the calculability that it instills, stands in marked opposition to the irrecoverable condition of absolute exposure entailed in the absolutism of reality. If this state is situated at the limits of the comprehensibility of the Dionysian, characterized by the fluid transformation of an inability not to react, then petrification, whether that of naming or of a self that purports to stand its ground, pairs the making-familiar of mythification with the individuation principle characteristic of the Apollonian. Romanticization, as demonstrated above, is akin to the Dionysian not only in its unveiling of Apollonian stability, but also in its disruption of any process that has been furnished with the surety of being able to lift a veil. It would be more accurate to speak of *un-veiling*, a double process that shows the illusory status of the veil but which thereby masks the vacuity that would otherwise present itself. Romanticization, then, engenders an endless process of masking and, as shown in its asymmetrical relation to mythification, is thereby complicit in the concealment that matches the shelter of the cave with the impetus of a self that, in its severance from other beings, seeks a firm ground on which to construct its edifices of selfhood.<sup>222</sup> The hermit, the figure

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<sup>222</sup> This is the shadow side of the Apollonian: separation.

best able to illustrate the precarious position of a subject splayed between the stability of concealment (the cave) and the concealment of stability (romanticization), is appropriated by Nietzsche in aphorism 289 of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* for a meditation, the contents of which are so fortuitous for the present chapter that they must be quoted in full:

Man hört den Schriften eines Einsiedlers immer auch Etwas von dem Wiederhall der Oede, Etwas von dem Flüstertone und dem scheuen Umsichblicken der Einsamkeit an; aus seinen stärksten Worten, aus seinem Schrei selbst klingt noch eine neue und gefährlichere Art des Schweigens, Verschweigens heraus. Wer Jahraus, Jahrein und Tags und Nachts allein mit seiner Seele im vertraulichen Zwiste und Zwiegespräche zusammengesessen hat, wer in seiner Höhle — sie kann ein Labyrinth, aber auch ein Goldschacht sein — zum Höhlenbär oder Schatzgräber oder Schatzwächter und Drachen wurde: dessen Begriffe selber erhalten zuletzt eine eigne Zwielight-Farbe, einen Geruch ebenso sehr der Tiefe als des Moders, etwas Unmittheilsames und Widerwilliges, das jeden Vorübergehenden kalt anbläst. Der Einsiedler glaubt nicht daran, dass jemals ein Philosoph — gesetzt, dass ein Philosoph immer vorerst ein Einsiedler war — seine eigentlichen und letzten Meinungen in Büchern ausgedrückt habe: schreibt man nicht gerade Bücher, um zu verbergen, was man bei sich birgt? — ja er wird zweifeln, ob ein Philosoph "letzte und eigentliche" Meinungen überhaupt haben *könne*, ob bei ihm nicht hinter jeder Höhle noch eine tiefere Höhle liege, liegen müsse — eine umfänglichere fremdere reichere Welt über einer Oberfläche, ein

Abgrund hinter jedem Grunde, unter jeder "Begründung". Jede Philosophie ist eine Vordergrunds-Philosophie — das ist ein Einsiedler-Urtheil: "es ist etwas Willkürliches daran, dass *er* hier stehen blieb, zurückblickte, sich umblickte, dass er *hier* nicht mehr tiefer grub und den Spaten weglegte, – es ist auch etwas Misstrauisches daran." Jede Philosophie verbirgt auch eine Philosophie; jede Meinung ist auch ein Versteck, jedes Wort auch eine Maske. (5:233-34)<sup>223</sup>

The arbitrariness that characterizes the ground, on which the hermit chooses to settle and on which the philosopher constructs his system, extends only partially to the rhetoric of listening with which Nietzsche's aphorism begins. It is not arbitrary that the ear should be enlisted and paired with the cave, a shelter that furnishes a level of secrecy to its interior. This is the setting of the central chapter of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, in which Heinrich and a miner hear what comes to be the

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<sup>223</sup> "One always hears in the writings of a hermit something of the echo of the desert, something of the whisper and shy vigilance of solitude; in his strongest words, even in his cry, there still resounds a new and more dangerous kind of silence and concealment. He who has sat alone with his soul day and night, year in year out, in confidential discord and discourse, and in his cave – it may be a labyrinth, but it may be a goldmine – become a cave-bear or treasure-hunter or a treasure-guardian and dragon, finds that his concepts themselves at last acquire a characteristic twilight colour, a smell of the depths and of must, something incommunicable and reluctant which blows cold on every passer-by. The hermit does not believe that a philosopher – supposing that a philosopher has always been first of all a hermit – has ever expressed his real and final opinions in books: does one not write books precisely to conceal what lies within us? – indeed, he will doubt whether a philosopher *could* have 'final and real' opinions at all, whether behind each of his caves there does not and must not lie another, deeper cave – a stranger, more comprehensive world beyond the surface, an abyss behind every ground, beneath every 'foundation'. Every philosophy is a foreground philosophy – that is a hermit's judgment: 'there is something arbitrary in the fact that *he* stopped, looked back, looked around here, that he stopped digging and laid his spade aside here – there is also something suspicious about it.' Every philosophy also *conceals* a philosophy; every opinion is also a hiding-place, every word also a mask." (BGE 216)

song of a hermit resonating through the caverns. Listening, following Roland Barthes, whose remarks harmonize with those of Blumenberg, presupposes the archaic alertness of one whose fear has become distinct enough so that all of nature becomes either predator or prey.<sup>224</sup> In keeping with the distinction that Blumenberg makes between the undifferentiated terror of the absolutism of reality (“das Andere”) and the focused fear of other beings (“der Andere”), Barthes’s characterization of the ear as a “funnel” that submits the otherwise indistinct noise to a process of selection and narrowing (248) mirrors the function of the cave opening that allowed early humans to focus their attention onto a single point. The silence and concealment that Nietzsche ascribes to the hermit places him in this tradition that gathers the ear, solitude, and the secret in a constellation.<sup>225</sup> The ability to listen for secrets is, for Barthes, indicative of a more advanced mode of listening that, in its quest to ascertain meaning, is attentive to “that which, concealed in reality, can reach human consciousness only through a code, which serves simultaneously to encipher and to decipher that reality” (249). This process of *unveiling* requires a subterranean attentiveness to meaning that treats every concealment, every silence, as part of the code. Nietzsche’s hermit, however, speaks rather directly and passes along the secret that Novalis’ hermit will attempt to withhold: that every ground, whether philosophical, epistemological, or self-compositional, conceals an abyss.

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<sup>224</sup> Barthes *The Responsibility of Forms* 248

<sup>225</sup> Incidentally, Kierkegaard, in the preface to *Either/Or*, also describes the sense of hearing in terms of the secret.

Treasure, which in Nietzsche's aphorism straddles the ambivalence of self-reflection that characterizes the solitary hermit ("Schatzgräber oder Schatzwächter"), finds its literal realization in Novalis' hermit, who buried his wife—his "Schatz" as it were—in the cave in which he made his dwelling. Treasure is also the impetus for the action in the legend of Arion, in which sailors decide to throw the singer overboard in order to abscond with his riches. The treasure for Arion, however—and this is decisive for a consideration of the hermit—does not have monetary value but rather serves as material memory, the loss of which Arion mourns as one would mourn the loss of a beloved: [Er] klagte in süßen Tönen über seine verlorenen Kleinode, die ihm als Erinnerungen glücklicher Stunden und als Zeichen der Liebe und Dankbarkeit so werth gewesen waren" (1:258).<sup>226</sup> After the collapse of the systems that for centuries grounded identity in either social or religious hierarchies, memory became by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the faculty that helped define and ground that which was *one's own*.<sup>227</sup> For Novalis it is the "*individual sense*—the element of individuation." As Adorno points out, the resonance of ownership in that which is *one's own* is as dubious as it is historical:

Der Satz, von Jean Paul wohl, die Erinnerungen seien der einzige Besitz, den niemand uns wegnehmen könne, gehört in den Vorrat des ohnmächtig sentimentalsten Trostes, der die entsagende Zurücknahme des Subjekts in die

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<sup>226</sup> "[He] lament[ed] in sweet strains the loss of his treasures, so precious to him as reminders of happier hours and as tokens of love and gratitude." (34)

<sup>227</sup> Wellbery *The Specular Moment* 241-42; Wellbery cites *Bildung* as the principal grounding system of identity that developed at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and that is still in place today. I do not disagree with Wellbery's claim, but merely want to demonstrate the function of memory within that phenomenon.

Innerlichkeit jenem als eben die Erfüllung einreden möchte, von der es ablöst. Mit der Einrichtung des Archivs seiner selbst beschlagnahmt das Subjekt den eigenen Erfahrungsbestand als Eigentum und macht ihn damit wieder zu einem dem Subjekt ganz Äußerlichen. Das vergangene Innenleben wird zum Mobiliar, wie umgekehrt jedes Biedermeierstück geschaffen ward als holzgewordene Erinnerung. (*Minima Moralia* 187)<sup>228</sup>

The hermit lays claim to various objects that function, I would like to suggest, as a supplement or prosthesis, including a complete coat of armor, an extensive library, and a table made from the stone slabs that house his late beloved. Wellbery suggests that material objects were too transitory to sufficiently serve as a grounding principle, “haunted” as they are by “instability,” since “[w]hatever object is present here and now can, at another place and in another moment, be absent” (208).

Novalis’ hermit seeks to avoid this contingency by receding into cavernous solitude, his various memory-infused objects providing “eine unterhaltende Gesellschaft” (1:304)<sup>229</sup> in an historical epoch that relied on oral or written narration to save memories in lieu of the more modern photo album. A fragment in *Das Allgemeine Brouillon* suggests that memory is musical as opposed to photographic or imagistic:

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<sup>228</sup> “The pronouncement, probably by Jean Paul, that memories are the only possessions which no-one can take from us, belongs in the storehouse of impotently sentimental consolations that the subject, resignedly withdrawing into inwardness, would like to believe the very fulfillment that he has given up. In setting up his own archives, the subject seizes his own stock of experiences as property, so making it something wholly external to himself. Past inner life is turned into furniture just as, conversely, every Biedermeier piece was memory made wood.” (*Minima Moralia* 166)

<sup>229</sup> “entertaining company.” (83)

“Das Gedächtniß treibt *prophetischen – musicalischen Calcül*. Sonderbare bisherige Vorstellungen vom Gedächtniß – als eine Bilderbude – etc. Alle Erinnerung beruht auf *indirecten Calcül* – auf Musik etc” (2:694).<sup>230</sup> This dynamic, futural operation of musical memory is reminiscent of Benjamin’s collector, whose books kindle anticipation rather than a nostalgic elegy (*Illuminations* 60), and whose ecstasy is preserved only by concealing the book’s contents (62). A similar act of concealment bears on the hermit, whose solitude and troglodytic dwelling also combat a more dangerous contingency elucidated by Adorno: that of memories fading with the passage of time or of being colored or contaminated by later experience: “Gerade wo sie beherrschbar und gegenständlich werden, wo das Subjekt ihrer ganz versichert sich meint, verschießen die Erinnerungen wie zarte Tapeten unterm grellen Sonnenlicht. Wo sie aber, geschützt durchs Vergessene, ihre Kraft bewahren, sind sie gefährdet wie alles Lebendige (*Minima* 187).<sup>231</sup> This warning, along with Nietzsche’s insight into the arbitrariness of stopping points and therefore of grounding principles, locates the hermit in the unstable position between the stability of concealment (to which can now be added memories protected by oblivion) and the concealment of stability (romanticization). The symmetry of this chiasmic reversal must not be allowed to conceal the asymmetrical relationship between mythification and romanticization as elucidated above. Mythification

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<sup>230</sup> “The memory carries out *prophetic – musical calculus*. Hitherto strange conceptions of the memory – as a picture booth – etc. All recollection is based on *indirect calculus* – on music etc” (*AB* 170).

<sup>231</sup> “Precisely where [memories] become controllable and objectified, where the subject believes himself entirely sure of them, memories fade like delicate wallpapers in bright sunlight. But where protected by oblivion, they keep their strength, they are endangered like all that is alive.” (*Minima Moralia* 166)

provides stability as it conceals the unfamiliar by differentiating particulars through the power of the proper name. Romanticization is complicit in mythification insofar as it is unable to expose the unknown that was veiled, but twists away from mythification by exposing the groundlessness imminent in its movement. The memories referenced by Adorno that retain their strength if they are protected by oblivion reveal this asymmetry. Memories are protected by a process that remains, and must remain, unknown: forgetting.<sup>232</sup> The operation that grants the memories a degree of stability, oblivion, is unstable in the sense that it cannot be experienced, thereby exposing the unstable guarantor of stability. This is the same process as romanticization. Romanticization, insofar as it is a discursive practice, is the promise, or the imaginative figuration, of forgetting that the process must remain unknown and of forgetting the oblivion that ensures the stability of mythification: the belief that in making something unknown familiar, one has actually inscribed the very thing that was unknown. Romanticization is a forgetting of a forgetting, or as Kittler, following Nietzsche's early essay on history, calls it, "the privilege of animals" (*Discourse Networks* 205). The scene of romanticization is primal.

The human is for Nietzsche a "naturally forgetful animal" ("dieses notwendig vergessliche Thier"),<sup>233</sup> whose memory was developed through the imposition of immense pain and suffering. Memory, or inscription, for him is as physical as a tattoo. Music, as Novalis' fragment on memory attests, is closer to the memories that

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<sup>232</sup> "Schlaf, Vergessen, und Tod sind die selbst unerfahrbaren Zumutungen des Verzichts auf die Konsistenz ausschöpfenden Erlebens, die erst Wirklichkeit von Fiktion definitiv unterscheidbar machen würde." (Blumenberg, *Höhlenausgänge* 16)

<sup>233</sup> *GM* 189; 5:292



are protected by oblivion and to romanticization: it is an “indirect calculus.” The hermit’s song, which Heinrich and his fellow spelunkers hear from afar (“aus einer fernen Tiefe”), and which tempts them to descend deeper into the cave, occupies an intermediary position, in which music indirectly discloses an abyss between inscription and oblivion:<sup>234</sup>

Gern verweil’ ich noch im Thale	Glad I dwell beneath the mountains
Lächelnd in der tiefen Nacht,	Smiling in the darkest night;
Denn der Liebe volle Schaale	Here of love are many fountains
Wird mir täglich dargebracht.	Flowing daily free and bright.
Ihre heiligen Tropfen heben	And her holy waters lift me
Meine Seele hoch empor,	With my thirsting soul on high,
Und ich steh in diesem Leben	Where, though still in life, I drift me,
Trunken an des Himmels Thor.	Drunken, heaven’s portals nigh.
Eingewiegt in seelges Schauen	Cradled there in adoration
Ängstigt mein Gemüth kein Schmerz.	Never dread can smite my soul;
O! die Königin der Frauen	Mother queen of every nation,

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<sup>234</sup> It may seem anachronistic to speak about the hermit’s material memory in terms of inscription, however Nietzsche’s concept of inscription and mnemotechnics need not be limited to Nietzsche’s own time. According to Friedrich Kittler inscription belongs to a later discourse network (that of 1900) whereas the discourse network of 1800 is, in the words of David Wellbery, characterized by “the discursive production of the Mother as the source of discourse production” (*Discourse Networks* xxiii). An examination of the hermit in terms of inscription is particularly apt, however, given that Nietzsche also views asceticism in terms of mnemotechnics in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*. See *GM* 192-93; 5:295-96.

Giebt mir ihr getreues Herz.

Make my heart all pure and whole.

Bangverweinte Jahre haben

Years by sorrow sped and craven,

Diesen schlechten Thon verklärt,

Glorified this humble clay

Und ein Bild ihm eingegraben,

And thereon a seal have graven,

Das ihm Ewigkeit gewährt.

Whence eternity alway.

Jene lange Zahl von Tagen

Now the tale of years I've tarried

Dünkt mir nur ein Augenblick;

Seems the twinkling of an eye;

Werd ich einst von hier getragen

When one day from her I'm carried,

Schau ich dankbar noch zurück. (1:301) I'll look backward gratefully. (79-80)

*“[T]o sing, in the romantic sense, is this: fantasmatically to enjoy my unified body”*

(288). Barthes marvelous formulation, in addition to identifying singing as a supplement or prosthesis that allows the singer to enjoy a semblance of unity, will also serve as a foothold for our descent into the hermit's song and his fantasmatic body, a journey we have already begun, and to which we will return shortly. The discontinuity that the singing of the song veils is betrayed in the second verse, in which smiling is contrasted with the dark of night. The prominence of “gern” as the initial utterance gives this second verse an “even though” quality. The rhetoric is one of defiance as the hermit smiles where others would presumably not. This possibility is afforded by the daily delivery of love in the second stanza (“der Liebe volle Schaale”), the fluidity of which intoxicates the hermit. Its regularity of delivery (“täglich”) is as prosaic as the morning paper and transfers a degree of

mechanization into the realm of the divine. The donor of this liquid love is the queen of women (“Königinn der Frauen”), whose drops wax sanguine as the last line of the third stanza intimates that it is from the heart that such drops originate. The background of suffering that haunts the previous stanzas is made explicit in the fourth, in which “years of sorrow” (“Bangverweinte Jahre”) imprint an image in clay (“Thon”), in a gesture recalling the terrible prehistory of memory as inscription in *Zur Genealogie der Moral* as well as in Blumenberg’s speculative anthropology. The hermit will go on to tell Heinrich and the miner of his brutal past as a crusader characterized by “dangers and change” (“Gefahren und Wechsel”) (1:304). The eternity afforded by the imprint in the clay is reaffirmed in his insistence that a strict regularity keeps anxiety at bay (1:303). The contentment afforded by such asceticism is the knowledge that a finite life will be repaid by an eternal afterlife, the time compression in the last stanza operating in accordance with the same principle that governs the hermit’s objects: it renders the past present.<sup>235</sup>

The heavenly commerce that the song contrives, however, is marked—one could say marred—by precisely the occasion that would elude such inscription, by a phantom of sorts: oblivion. What must be forgotten in order to secure the comfort that the song affords? The answer is, as will be shown, the song itself.<sup>236</sup> The regularity and familiarity of mythification in the hermit’s song is undermined by the act of reading it, which, akin to romanticization, tears itself away from its myth only to avail itself once more of a veil. Two synchronic overtones mobilize the song’s

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<sup>235</sup> As Novalis says elsewhere: “All memory is the present.” (*PW* 65)

<sup>236</sup> On the relationship between inscription, oblivion, and sublimation, see de Man *Resistance* 68-70.

medium, sound, against the security that the song repeatedly seeks to instate: they are the overtones of “Schaale” (bowl) and “Thon” (clay). These can be read alternatively as “Schalle” (sounds) and “Thon” (tone or sound). The attention paid to these overtones is not mere play, but render the principle of oblivion audible in the hermit’s song. They are not extraneous to the song, but integral to its logic and interpretation. The ability to hear “Schalle” where one reads “Schaale” displaces the donation of love from the divine realm to the hermit himself. The delivery is in the singing. This is corroborated in the third stanza, in which the hermit is revealed to sing his own lullaby in absence of any divine order that could rock him (“einwiegen”) to a complacent slumber. Reading “Thon” as sound as opposed to clay threatens to cloud the mythology of the song—its claim to divine commerce—with the transience of historicity. It is the song itself that has been subject to change over the years of sorrow, in which it underwent a process of purification (“Verklärung”), purging it of elements that would hinder its comforting effects. The synchronic overtones are traces of the song’s development that render the unification that the song seeks to foster a contrivance, a supplement or prosthesis for a fractured subject. The song is Romantic, not only in Barthes sense (“fantasmatically to enjoy my unified body”), but also in the sense of Novalis’ romanticization, in that the heavenly realm is debased while the common—the bowl, clay, and the song itself—are defamiliarized. In accordance with the principle of romanticization, the eccentric character of the overtones reinstates the myth as they are spoken or sung. They are akin to shutters that reveal the *mise-en-abyme* of the song (the groundlessness of the subject) ephemerally, providing the sheltered security that such closure affords,

while betraying a glimpse of their status as mythology. The shutter houses a shudder. The reading of the prosaic repetition of the song as an intrusion of the mechanical into the divine realm fulfills the first operation of romanticization (lowering), while the urgency of this regularity to veil a deep seated anxiety lends the song an element of ritual, thereby fulfilling the second operation (raising). In this respect the hermit has an affinity with the nightly howling of the iconoclasts in Kleists *Die heilige Cäcilie*, whose song sounds with clock-like precision after their encounter with “the violence of music.”<sup>237</sup>

The hermit’s song threatens to conform to the neutrality of voice, in which Barthes hears “a frozen world, one in which desire is dead” (280). That the hermit charges those who desire nothing more than to be “transplanted into the garden” (“die Verpflanzung in den Garten”)<sup>238</sup> with the task of writing history seems to confirm this. He does not need to plead for divine commerce, as the singing of the song fulfills the lack that the “years of sorrow” place at a safe distance in the past. The chiseled precision that they afforded is one of unity between the hermit and the divine realm. The sound is the vessel of divine love: the “Schale” is also a *Schall*. His song is not one of desire but one of a “compromise by which [...] a kind of low-grade contentment is achieved through the cultivation of distance.”<sup>239</sup> This contentment accords with the regularity of what Slavoj Žižek has called “the deadly sobriety of icy everyday life” (*Parallax* 158), and, although the hermit’s song lays claim to a certain

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<sup>237</sup> The full title of Kleist’s tale is *Die heilige Cäcilie oder die Gewalt der Musik*.

<sup>238</sup> 84; 1:305

<sup>239</sup> Calhoun “F.W. Murnau” 648

intoxication (“Trunken an des Himmels Thor”), his arbitrary immobility recalls the stubbornness of Nietzsche’s hermit, who secretly harbors “etwas Unmittheilsames und Widerwilliges, das jeden Vorübergehenden kalt anbläst.”<sup>240</sup> Heinrich’s musings while beholding the bones and remains in the cave also has a bearing on the hermit’s frigid singing, although they received anything but an icy reception.<sup>241</sup> He asks whether the bones are remains from the descent of celestial beings or the ascent of subterranean giants “driven up by the penetrating cold” (“von der eindringenden Kälte hervorgetrieben”). Following Blumenberg’s speculative anthropology of the cave, the penetrating cold that provides the impetus for the subterranean being’s ascent is nothing other than mythification, or the process of familiarization through representation. The terror of absolute exposure outside of the cave yields to a fear that can be rigidly fixed onto a particular and if not expunged then at least managed. This is the primal scene of the everyday, which is a complex composite of frozen relations. Heinrich’s questions, in addition to romanticizing everyday life, contain a further myth that relegates the hermit to a bygone age. The questions, read as the parallel movement of two texts—the ascent of the modern subject and the descent of heavenly beings, the death of God—position Heinrich in an historical moment that viewed itself in the crosshairs between past and future; one that would herald a new age. In fixing meaning

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<sup>240</sup> “... something incommunicable and reluctant which blows cold on every passer-by.”

<sup>241</sup> “Es war, als empfing er erwartete Gäste in seinem Wohnhause. Es ist doch schön, daß ihr mich besucht, sagte er[.]” (1:302); “It was just as though he were receiving expected guests at his home.” (81)

through representation, the subject makes the chaos of the absolutism of reality manageable. Through the operation of romanticization, one renders the other of the process of mythification imaginatively accessible. Applied to the hermit's song, romanticization yields the critique of Nietzsche's hermit, for whom every stopping point, every fixed relation, is shown to be arbitrary. Nietzsche reads Novalis' hermit as he reads the German soul generally: "Die deutsche Seele hat Gänge und Zwischengänge in sich, es giebt in ihr Höhlen, Verstecke, Burgverliesse; ihre Unordnung hat viel vom Reize des Geheimnissvollen; der Deutsche versteht sich auf die Schleichwege zum Chaos" (5:185).<sup>242</sup> Romanticization is also a secret path to chaos, but one that recognizes chaos as a veil, as another appellation for a monstrous gap that one not only will never be able to bridge, but that one "will never even be able to *want* to bridge" (Sloterdijk 27). Oblivion must intervene as it does in the hermit's song and provide, in absence of such desire, another gap, another veil over that which cannot be communicated.

### **Heinrich and the (In)coherence of Meaning**

Heinrich, in endeavoring to escape the monotony of everyday life, lacks the rigidity of a stable self that the hermit, precisely in order to mask a lack, fabricates. His lack of desire is secured in the oblivion resonating in his voice and throughout the cave, a naturalized bourgeois interior housing the objects securing those

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<sup>242</sup> "The German soul has corridors and interconnecting corridors in it, there are caves, hiding-places, dungeons in it; its disorder possesses much of the fascination of the mysterious; the German is acquainted with the hidden paths to chaos." (BGE 175)

memories that reinforce the narrative of his self. The groundlessness masked by the oblivion in the hermit's song is set in relief by a sure memory that forms a bulwark against the desire that would use such lack as an impetus to emanate. Such stability is bought at the price not only of desire but also of the ability for something unexpected to occur, whereas Heinrich is subject to constant penetration by unexpected sensations that take on the character of shots from a cannon of which the encounter with the hermit is but one example. These otherwise chance occurrences that impose themselves on Heinrich draw their coherence from a desire that translates their contingency into meaning through an inversion of temporal relations that the structure of the *Bildungsroman* fosters and reproduces. This at least is Nietzsche's reading of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, made in all likelihood without so much as glancing at Novalis' novel-fragment:<sup>243</sup>

Vom Traume auszugehn: einer bestimmten Empfindung, zum Beispiel in Folge eines fernen Kanonenschusses, wird nachträglich eine Ursache untergeschoben (oft ein ganzer kleiner Roman, in dem gerade der Träumende die Hauptperson ist). Die Empfindung dauert inzwischen fort, in einer Art von Resonanz: sie wartet gleichsam, bis der Ursachentrieb ihr erlaubt, in den Vordergrund zu treten, — nunmehr nicht mehr als Zufall, sondern als "Sinn". Der Kanonschuss tritt in einer *causalen* Weise auf, in einer anscheinenden Umkehrung der Zeit. Das Spätere, die Motivierung, wird zuerst erlebt, oft mit hundert Einzelheiten, die wie im Blitz vorübergehn, der Schuss folgt... Was ist geschehen? Die Vorstellungen, welche ein gewisses

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<sup>243</sup> See note 3 above.



Befinden *erzeugte*, wurden als Ursache desselben missverstanden. —

Thatsächlich machen wir es im Wachen ebenso. (KSA 6:92)<sup>244</sup>

The positing of a cause-creating drive in this aphorism in *Götzendämmerung* is a Romantic gesture to the extent that fabrications and discoveries are indeterminate. Nietzsche playfully allies himself with the Romantics in the first book of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* when, in the aphorism directly following a critique of Kant's notion of *a priori* synthetic judgments—the basis for the possibility of metaphysics—in which he chides Kant and the Romantics for their inability to distinguish between finding (“finden”) and inventing (“erfinden”) (5:25), he lauds future psychologists who no longer subscribe to the mythology of the soul—a category in which he would include himself—by ascribing to them that task for which he had just criticized the Romantics: “[Z]uletzt aber weiss er sich eben damit auch zum *Erfinden* verurtheilt — und, wer weiss? vielleicht zum *Finden*” (5:27).<sup>245</sup> Nietzsche's Romantic gesture has much to say about a novel, in which finding something is reduced to finding someone else's invention.

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<sup>244</sup> “To start from the dream: on to a certain sensation, the result for example of a distant cannon-shot, a cause is subsequently foisted (often a whole little novel in which precisely the dreamer is the chief character). The sensation, meanwhile, continues to persist, as a kind of resonance: it waits, as it were, until the cause-creating drive permits it to step into the foreground – now no longer as a chance occurrence but as ‘meaning’. The cannon-shot enters in a *causal* way, in an apparent inversion of time. That which comes later, the motivation, is experienced first, often with a hundred details which pass like lightning, the shot follows.... What has happened? The ideas *engendered* by a certain condition have been misunderstood as the cause of that condition. – We do just the same thing, in fact, when we are awake.” (TI 61)

<sup>245</sup> “[H]e has also condemned himself to *inventing* the new – and, who knows? perhaps to *finding* it.” (BGE 44)

The continuity in terms of the translation of contingency into meaning between dreams and waking life is, in *Ofterdingen*, a function of that entity, the primacy of which Heinrich confirms in a dream: the Romantic symbol. True to Nietzsche's reading, the blue flower—the archetypal Romantic symbol of desire and that which facilitates the cohesion of meaning—has its origin in a distant encounter that is only allowed to pass from the mysterious background and enter the foreground of the proper narrative via a subject, whose identity is more a function of grammar than substance. That Nietzsche views the subject as a fiction engendered by the belief in grammar (6:77-8), accords with the appellation that divests this subject, “the stranger” (“der Fremde”), of everything save that which permits his words to foster the connections between the individual and society that, with the aid of symbolic representation, comprise the *Bildungsroman*.<sup>246</sup> The stranger is the teacher of the blue flower. However much its appeal to the natural object bids connections to gather around it organically, the blue flower divides and dismembers as much as it connects. This is evident upon its first appearance in the novel, a passing remark that holds the keys to unlock its duplicitous character. The mysterious stranger, whose stories about the flower enjoy an audience of multiple listeners, enamors only Heinrich: “Keiner von uns hat je einen ähnlichen Menschen gesehen; doch weiß ich nicht, warum nur ich von seinen Reden so ergriffen worden bin” (1:240).<sup>247</sup> Whereas an ascensional reading of the blue flower would focus on

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<sup>246</sup> For a further examination of the cohesive function of symbolic representation in the classical *Bildungsroman*, see Moretti *The Way of The World* 60-4.

<sup>247</sup> “None of us has ever seen a person like him. Still I can't understand why I was the only one to be so touched by his stories.” (15)

the seemingly organic connections that gradually mold Heinrich into a mature poet, a descensional reading must attune itself to the fractures and discontinuities that are exposed whenever an unbridgeable gap is concealed by a connection. That Heinrich is seized (“ergriffen”) by the tales of the stranger, inaugurates a process whereby the cohesion of meaning fostered by the organic growth of the blue flower is accompanied by a concomitant shock, an imposition of the unexpected that the memory, through its habituation to the cause-creating drive, seeks to mask. An unpublished note of Nietzsche’s written about the same time as the above aphorism states it as follows:

Das Gedächtniß erhält aber auch die Gewohnheiten der alten Interpretat[ion], d.h. deren irrthümliche Ursächlichkeiten...so daß die “innere Erfahrung” in sich noch die Folgen aller ehemaligen falschen Causal-Fiktionen zu tragen hat[. U]nsere “Außenwelt”, wie wir sie jeden Augenblick projiciren ist versetzt und unauflöslich gebunden an den alten Irrthum vom Grunde: wir legen sie aus mit dem Schematicismus des “Dings”[.] (13:459)<sup>248</sup>

Nietzsche recognizes the schematism of things, a companion to Kant’s notion of a *priori* synthetic judgments, as the invention of a faculty whereby such judgments are possible. This does not, however, speak against their necessity for preserving thought by providing it with a “ground.” Nietzsche’s well-known axiom that error is a condition of life preserves truth as that which can be endured only by those who

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<sup>248</sup> “But memory also maintains the habit of the old interpretations, i.e., of erroneous causality—so that the ‘inner experience’ has to contain within it the consequences of all previous false causal fictions. Our “outer world” as we project it every moment is indissolubly tied to the old error of the ground: we interpret it by means of the schematism of ‘things[.]’” (WP 266)

wish to live dangerously and without the ground that Kant's faculty would provide. The causal interpretation that grounds Kant's possibility in a faculty, another mysterious subject, also forms the basis for memory and thought itself. As Nietzsche makes clear, it is ultimately a matter of possession and power: "Der ganze Erkenntniß-Apparat ist ein Abstraktions- und Simplifikations-Apparat — nicht auf Erkenntniß gerichtet, sondern auf *Bemächtigung* der Dinge" (11:164).<sup>249</sup> The schematism of things is a function of the inversion of time whereby things in the world become things *for us*. The Nietzschean resonance and Kantian concerns of Blumenberg's work on myth is clear: in order for seeing to translate into seeing *something* an entire apparatus must intervene that, bearing the error of all previous causal interpretations, makes what is radically other (the absolutism of reality) familiar and bearable.

The nonclosure<sup>250</sup> of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* manifest in its lack of clear beginning or end mirrors the fluidity of its titular character, who, as opposed to the collectedness of the hermit, is characterized by a distraction tending toward the immaterial. Distraction, the inevitable companion to the *Bildungsroman* in which the protagonist is shaped by the world around them, is embodied by Heinrich, whose powerlessness before the blue flower recalls the gravitational pull of the Sirens's song in *The Odyssey*. His life severed into before and after by the tales of the blue

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<sup>249</sup> "The entire apparatus of knowledge is an apparatus for abstraction and simplification—directed not at knowledge but at taking possession of things." (WP 274)

<sup>250</sup> For an in-depth study of nonclosure in Novalis, see Kuzniar *Delayed Endings* 72-132.

flower, Heinrich can merely reminisce about his bygone corporality: “Sonst tanzte ich gern; jetzt denke ich lieber nach der Musik” (1:241).<sup>251</sup> The corporeal nature of the dance allies it with the bodily concerns that Heinrich has been made to renounce in favor of a longing that is at odds with a collected interior. Was it not for the blue flower that, following Nietzsche’s reading, transforms chance into meaning, there would be little left of Heinrich save the grammatical function of his name. The blue flower, in its ambivalent role as that which guarantees meaning and coherence to otherwise chance encounters as well as that which has unexpectedly imposed itself upon Heinrich, has left a scar that manifests itself as déjà vu. Heinrich not only exemplifies Nietzsche’s characterization of humans as “the incarnation of forgetfulness” (“dieser leibhaften Vergesslichkeit”),<sup>252</sup> but also the archaic residue that accompanies the return of that which has been imprinted. If, following Adorno, “an archaic anxiety descends everywhere that the illusory world of convention appears in front of us” (Hullot-Kentor 268) then Heinrich’s encounter with the stranger harbors a primal charge registered in *Ofterdingen*’s first line: “...die Wanduhr schlug ihren einförmigen Takt” (1:240).<sup>253</sup>

Among the many examples of déjà vu in *Ofterdingen*,<sup>254</sup> a particularly pertinent episode occurs after an encounter with an old miner, who, prior to leading

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<sup>251</sup> “Once I liked to dance; now I prefer to meditate on music.” (15)

<sup>252</sup> *GM* 192; 5:294

<sup>253</sup> “...the clock on the wall was ticking monotonously.” (15)

<sup>254</sup> Some notable examples include: Heinrich’s encounter with the merchants, whose talk of ancient poets arouses déjà vu (1:256), and his intimation that he should have a lute without the faintest idea of its function before meeting Zulima. (1:280)

Heinrich and various townspeople into the nearby caves, praises mining through lofty speech and song. His musical ode has a faintly familiar ring for Heinrich: "Es dünkte Heinrichen, wie der Alte geendigt hatte, als habe er das Lied schon irgend wo gehört" (1:297).<sup>255</sup> The miner consoles the uneasy townspeople, fearful of the caves in question due to bones and animal remains at its entrance and nocturnal singing ("Nächtzeit Gesänge") emitting from its opening, with the assurance that "ein singender Geist aber gewiß ein wohlthätiges Wesen sey" (1:298).<sup>256</sup> Apparently ignorant of the legend of the Sirens in Homer and their dangerous allure, this consolation inspires a hallucination in Heinrich that is a Sirens-encounter in its own right:

Die Worte des Alten hatten eine versteckte Tapetenthür in ihm geöffnet. Er sah sein kleines Wohnzimmer dicht an einen erhabenen Münster gebaut, aus dessen steinernem Boden die ernste Vorwelt emporstieg, während von der Kuppel die klare fröliche Zukunft in goldnen Engelskindern ihr singend entgegenschwebte. Gewaltige Klänge bebten in den silbernen Gesang, und zu den weiten Thoren traten alle Creaturen herein, von denen jede ihre innere Natur in einer einfachen Bitte und in einer eigenthümlichen Mundart vernehmlich aussprach. Wie wunderte er sich, daß ihm diese klare, seinem Daseyn schon unentbehrliche Ansicht so lange fremd geblieben war. Nun übersah er auf einmal alle seine Verhältnisse mit der weiten Welt um ihn her;

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<sup>255</sup> "When the old man had finished, it seemed to Henry that he had heard the song somewhere before." (75)

<sup>256</sup> "...a singing ghost would certainly be benevolent." (76)

fühlte was er durch sie geworden und was sie ihm werden würde, und begriff alle die seltsamen Vorstellungen und Anregungen, die er schon oft in ihrem Anschauen gespürt hatte. (1:299)<sup>257</sup>

Heinrich seems to experience the happiness through connectivity that the Sirens's song promises while retaining the "presence of mind that," following Horkheimer and Adorno, "forces an existence from nature." That the Sirens "know everything that ever happened on this so fruitful earth" but "demand the future as the price of that knowledge" (33),<sup>258</sup> makes of Heinrich's epiphanic moment a Sirens-encounter as successful as it is illusory. In opposition to Nietzsche's appeal in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* not to succumb to the metaphysics that position humans on a higher plane than the rest of nature, Heinrich does not approach himself "...with stopped-up Odysseus ears, deaf to the siren songs of old metaphysical bird-catchers" (*BGE* 162).<sup>259</sup> Seduced by the self-ingratiating and lofty speech of the miner, he believes

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<sup>257</sup> "The words of the old miner had opened a secret tapestry door within him. He saw his own little room hard by a lofty cathedral from whose stone floor the solemn past arose while from the dome the bright and cheerful future soared singing in golden cherubs toward the past. Mighty tones trembled in the silver singing, and all creatures came in by the wide doors and each one clearly expressed its inner nature in a simple petition in its own peculiar language. How he marveled that this clear view, already indispensable to his very existence, should have been unknown to him so long. Now he surveyed at a glance all his relations to the wide world around him, felt what he had become through it and what it would become to him, and grasped all the strange concepts and impulses he had often felt in contemplating it." (77)

<sup>258</sup> "Sie wissen 'alles, was irgend geschah auf der veil ernährenden Erde' ...Wer ihrem Gaukelspiel folgt, verdirbt, wo einzig immerwährende Geistesgegenwart der Natur die Existenz abtrotz. Wenn die Sirenen von allem wissen, was geschah, so fordern sie die Zukunft als Preis dafür[.]" (33)

<sup>259</sup> "mit [...] verklebten Odysseus-Ohren, taub gegen die Lockweisen alter metaphysischer Vogelfänger." (5:169)

that he can grasp his moment in history and, like the dreaming Benjamin on a mountaintop, survey the world below with the sureness of someone whose future is heralded by singing cherubs. Heinrich's ascensional consciousness is, however, destabilized by two subsequent passages that coincide with his descent into the cave. Insofar as, to quote Horkheimer and Adorno again, faith's "fanaticism" is the "occasion of its untruth" (20), the desperation of this moment—that it is "indispensable to his very existence"—gives this phantasmatic interior the appearance of a cage, into which an "old metaphysical bird-catcher"—one thinks of the stranger—must imprison Heinrich if he is not to dissipate into thin air; so fluid is his subjectivity.

The first passage in question is the scene of romanticization in the form of Heinrich's inquisitiveness while beholding bones and other remains cited above. Whether the remains in the cave are indicative of subterranean beings ascending to the surface or of celestial beings descending (and expiring!) echoes the simultaneous and respective ascent and descent of the "solemn past" ("ernste Vorwelt") out of the cavernous stone floor and the "bright and cheerful future" ("klare fröhliche Zukunft") from the dome. The coupling and echo of the cathedral setting by the moribund cavern resonates with Nietzsche's description of the cathedral as the tomb of God,<sup>260</sup> and, in a more proximate resonance, the faint echo of the descending celestial beings casts a shadow on the singing cherubs, who usher

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<sup>260</sup> The last sentence of Nietzsche's well-known parable of the madman in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* reads: "Was sind denn diese Kirchen noch, wenn sie nicht die Gräfte und Grabmäler Gottes sind?" (2:482). ["What after all are these churches now if they are not the tombs and sepulchers of God?" (GS 182)]



in a future the cheerfulness of which is darkened by Heinrich's subsequent (and therefore future) musings. The echo is, however, as little indifferent to what is thought to be its initiatory impression as is the future to the past. Here, as in the discussion of the hermit above, an aphorism on memory in Adorno's *Minima Moralia* is relevant:

Wie kein früheres Erlebnis wirklich ist, das nicht durch unwillkürliches Eingedenken aus der Totenstarre seines isolierten Daseins gelöst ward, so ist umgekehrt keine Erinnerung garantiert, an sich seiend, indifferent gegen die Zukunft dessen, der sie hegt; kein Vergangenes durch den Übergang in die bloße Vorstellung gefeit vorm Fluch der empirischen Gegenwart. Die seligste Erinnerung an einen Menschen kann ihrer Substanz nach widerrufen werden durch spätere Erfahrung. (*Minima Moralia* 187-88)<sup>261</sup>

The temporal reversal whereby the present “draws the past too into its vortex” (“die Vorzeit selber in ihren Schlund hineinzieht”)<sup>262</sup> echoes Nietzsche's explication of the translation of chance occurrences into meaning through the tyranny of the cause-creating drive. That the aforementioned schematism of things—understood as the retroactive abstraction and making-familiar of an otherwise unbearable set of stimuli—is reproduced through the memory, puts bearability and the fullness of

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<sup>261</sup> Just as no earlier experience is real that has not been loosed by involuntary remembrance from the deathly fixity of its isolated existence, so conversely, no memory is guaranteed, existent in itself, indifferent to the future of him who harbours it; nothing past is proof, through its translation into mere imagination, against the curse of the empirical present. The most blissful memory of a person can be revoked in its very substance by later experience. (166)

<sup>262</sup> *Minima Moralia* 167; 188

history at odds.<sup>263</sup> If the absolutism of reality, which also rests on a retroactive reconstruction, can be viewed as the shadow side of Heinrich's epiphanic moment of connectivity between himself and the world of things, then Heinrich's subsequent pondering of the possible descent and demise of the divine realm (the weathered remains of celestial beings) brings his prior epiphany under the tyranny of a present that takes the form of romanticization. The latter passage revises and qualitatively alters the former, effectively marking the song of the cherubs, whose singing heralds the cheerful future, with the discomfiting thought that their voices will never be heard.<sup>264</sup> That death marks the spot not only of the room of the cave in which Heinrich sees the remains, but also of romanticization itself, confirms one of Novalis' most affirmative axioms: "Der Tod ist das romantisierende Princip unsers Lebens" (2:756).<sup>265</sup>

The second subsequent passage that destabilizes Heinrich's seemingly epiphanic Sirens-encounter is the well-known episode in which Heinrich is drawn to a book in the hermit's subterranean library, the contents of which mirror the material *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. In it are images of his past, present, and intimations of his future. In accordance with the double discursive operation of

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<sup>263</sup> I am not referring to Benjamin's notion of the fullness of history in *Über den Begriff der Geschichte*, but the Nietzschean one in aphorism 337 of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, in which the appellation "humanity" ("Menschlichkeit") is only conferred upon those who can endure "in an enormously generalized way...the "immense sum of grief" that forms history. (GS 268)

<sup>264</sup> The proximity of Novalis to Kafka's "The Silence of the Sirens" here is unmistakable.

<sup>265</sup> "Death is the Romanticizing principle of our life." (PW 154)

romanticization, the ambivalent book episode is caught between the stability of concealment and the concealment of stability that have been identified with mythification and romanticization respectively. That the book along with the blue flower and the Sirens-encounter underscores the symbolic totality constitutive of narrative cohesion, makes of it an element of mythification, the shadow side of which confirms Moretti's explication of the principle tension in the *Bildungsroman*: "[M]eaning, in the classical *Bildungsroman*, has its price. And this price is freedom" (*The Way of the World* 63). Heinrich finds the script only to find that his life has been scripted. The stability that meaning affords conceals the freedom that would flourish in its absence. Or does it? Meaning is also subject to the structure of mythification and romanticization, the asymmetry of which not only partially reproduces the myth that it seeks to unveil, but also, in *un-veiling*—wherein the prefix "un" denotes not the lifting of the veil, but rather the *undoing* of the compartment that the veil fosters—conceals the stability of the prior veil, thereby using the element of mythification to (at least partially) undo its spell. Following this logic, the book episode is also complicit in the concealment of stability, the chiasmic reversal of romanticization. If the hermit's book calls the coherence of the Sirens-encounter into question, thereby calling meaning and connectivity into question as something scripted, then the element of cohesion is also the occasion of its disruption. At work here is the duplicity of the blue flower, that, in addition to allowing the elements of the novel to cohere—the various tales and encounters—also points back to its shadowy genesis in the story of the stranger, whose own story (like a priori synthetic judgments) is kept concealed. This double structure is

recalled whenever there is a moment of cohesion. It is not coincidental, although chance has a tendency to turn into meaning, that the blue flower will end up being a “forget-me-not” (“Vergißmeinnicht”):<sup>266</sup> its premonition of hope is irrevocably tied to the error of the old interpretations of a memory that, following Nietzsche, transports its insecurity and possibly illusory nature.

Although romanticization, like *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* itself, has no end, it would be a mistake to align it with the incessant outward radiance of the Romantic symbol. The symbol, following Goethe’s canonical definition, is the attempt to ascend to the general from a particular that already lays claim to the universal. Since allegory, on the other hand, comprehends the particular from the general, it is equally alien to romanticization. Both the allegory and symbol are ascensional in the sense that they posit the organic interplay that makes the transfer from the universal to the particular possible. These are the lofty spheres that romanticization is meant to transfigure. Allegory, however, has an anorganic valence. It is descensional not because it moves from the universal to the particular, but because it moves from the world of phenomenality to the material inscription of the letter.<sup>267</sup> Just as the hermit has to forget his song in order to secure his divine commerce, so too do the instances of Heinrich’s déjà vu chart the grammatization of the self rather than revelation. Blumenberg’s work on myth is the retroactive anthropologization of

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<sup>266</sup> 161; 1:376

<sup>267</sup> de Man *Resistance* 68

a process of grammaticization or “enlanguaging” from which there is no escape.<sup>268</sup> Romanticization, one task of which is to reanimate what Hegel calls the “icy and barren” fixed relations of allegory, necessarily has recourse to the same material letter; its operation of unveiling is inevitably to veil again with each turn.<sup>269</sup> That no additional turn can stop the turn toward error, that its starting and stopping points are therefore arbitrary, is not to impugn it.<sup>270</sup> Romanticization is a gesture of leaving the cave and stepping out into the open. It is a flight from the petrifying immobility of the cave into the abyssal dynamism of the absolutism of reality. Its descent is an ascent to a vantage point of limitless exposure, where it, like the protagonist in Benjamin’s dream, surveys what it can and waits for vertigo to set in.

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<sup>268</sup> The term, “enlanguaging,” is a translation of Sloterdijk’s “Versprachlichung,” which he understands as the inherent tendency in *physis* to become language. See Sloterdijk 67-9, 83-4; Interrogating the relationship of this notion to de Man (or Adorno for that matter) simultaneously forms the scope of and exceeds the bounds of the present study. Such a project would, however, assuredly be an exercise in romanticization.

<sup>269</sup> Quoted in de Man *Resistance* 68

<sup>270</sup> “One more ‘turn’ or trope added to a series of earlier reversals will not stop the turn towards error.” (de Man, *Allegories* 113)

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMONING THE PHANTASMIC: VAMPIRISM IN NOVALIS' *HYMNEN AN DIE*

#### *NACHT* AND NIETZSCHE

*Don't you sense a long concealed vampire in the background  
who begins with the senses and in the end is left with,  
and leaves, mere bones, mere clatter?  
Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science**

#### **Introduction**

Commencing with an unperformable stage direction in Part II of Goethe's *Faust*, and continuing with aphorisms in Nietzsche's corpus on the economy of representation, I uncover a text at work in Novalis' *Hymnen an die Nacht* that, in foregrounding the materiality of language, disrupts its narrativization of a Romantic religion. Part deconstructive reading of the *Hymnen* and part examination of the relationship of Novalis to Nietzsche, my exploration of textual materiality demonstrates how the Romantic ideal of an organic language that "originates like flowers" relies on the resurrection of dead matter: language as writing. This perversion constitutive of the rhetoric of organicism is literally punctuated in the *Hymnen*, in which a suggestive couplet pairs absolute fulfillment with absolute vacuity: "Zu suchen haben wir nichts mehr – / Das Herz ist satt – die Welt ist leer." A syntactic puzzle, the dash separating and linking the two halves of the second verse functions according to Derrida's "logic of the hymen," in which a mechanism that feigns identity between two incommensurables pits corporality against textual machinery. Novalis' emphasis on both the body and the materiality of the text forms the poles of an inexorable tension in the *Hymnen*. This aligns him with Nietzsche,

whose anti-Classical sensibility toward corporality (“Wir lernen den Ekel um!”) forms the terms of critique waged on Novalis’ handling of textual corporality.

### **The Vampire as Body and Representation**

During the festive procession in the grand hall of the King in the second part of Goethe’s *Faust*, a pair of stage directions tentatively proclaims a poetic revolution that, unlike the announcement of the poets, must remain unrealized:

*Der Herold kündigt verschiedene Poeten an, Naturdichter, Hof- und Rittersänger, zärtliche sowie Enthusiasten. Im Gedräng von Mitwerbern aller Art läßt keiner den andern zum Vortrag kommen.... Die Nacht- und Grabdichter lassen sich entschuldigen, weil sie soeben im interessantesten Gespräch mit einem frisch erstandenen Vampyren begriffen seien, woraus eine neue Dichtart sich vielleicht entwickeln könnte. (165)<sup>271</sup>*

This stage direction is all the more self-reflexive in its attempt to refer to something external, and, inversely, all the more a performance for the impossibility of putting it on stage. Such animation of the otherwise inanimate finds fitting representation in a figure called back from the grave. The Vampyr, whose sudden appearance is charged with drama, is said to embody a new poetry, which could have no theatrical equivalent. Instead it remains a phantasm. Erich Trunz, in his commentary to the

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<sup>271</sup> “The Herald announces various Poets: Nature Poets, Court Singers, Chivalric Minstrels, Sweet Singers, and Rhapsodists; in the press of rivals competing for attention, none will allow another to declaim [...]. Poets of Night Thoughts and Graveyard Poets beg to be excused, since they have just become involved in a most interesting discussion with a Vampire visibly fresh from his grave, which might possibly permit the development of a new poetic genre.” (*Faust* Trans. Stuart Adkins 137)

*Hamburger Ausgabe* of Goethe's works, suggests that the enigmatic vampire could plausibly allude to an English novel by J.W. Polidoro called *The Vampyre*, or to the works of E. T. A. Hoffmann. While Truntz refers to no specific work of Hoffmann's, *Der Sandmann* is exemplary in its treatment of the animation of a lifeless doll. Goethe's own comment that "[d]er Dichter ... ruft als ein wahrer Romantiker das Gespensterhafte hervor" (*Faust II* 597),<sup>272</sup> accords with the Romantic aspiration for a language that, akin to the emergence of the vampire, springs up like a natural organism. Despite this engagement with the organic world and the aim of a rhetoric that, following Paul de Man, "combines the poetic seduction of beginnings contained in the word 'entstehen' [to originate] with the ontological stability of the natural object" (*Rhetoric* 5), Romanticism is possessed of what Manfred Frank has called a "cold heart," an inwardness that, while animating the inanimate, submits the living to petrification ("Steinherz" 351). Frank's example is indeed *Der Sandmann*, in which the amorous relationship between the poet, Nathaniel, and the doll, Olympia, parodies Novalis' *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, whose protagonist is mechanically drawn to his beloved by apparitions of the blue flower. For Nietzsche, the rhetoric of the organic but also of mechanization, when applied to the world, makes too many concessions to anthropomorphism, of which he is a passionate opponent: "Davor ekelt mir. Hüten wir uns schon davor, zu glauben, dass das All eine Maschine sei; es ist gewiss nicht auf Ein Ziel construiert, wir thun ihm mit dem Wort 'Maschine' eine

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<sup>272</sup> "The poet ... as a true Romantic, summons the phantasmic." (Translation mine); Truntz cites this comment as a reference to a work from the French dramatist Prosper Mérimée [1803-1870] called *La Guzla* [1827], a collection of ballads revolving around mystical themes.



viel zu hohe Ehre an" (3:467).<sup>273</sup> A teleological concern presumably sharpened by its resonance with the Deist notion of the world as a clockwork, Nietzsche's denunciation situates anthropomorphism in the shadow of a grand specter (God) whose incessant resurrection in grammar exhibits affinities with Goethe's vampire, a figure he relegates to the mechanism of theater.<sup>274</sup> Although Romanticism's concern for the natural object frequently manifests itself in the contemplation of the flower, the vampire is more suited to characterize the *mise-en-abyme* that pairs "the desire ... to be reborn in the manner of a natural creation" (*Rhetoric* 6) with a critique of the accessibility of a stable origin out of which something that is not monstrous could be born.

Novalis' *Hymnen an die Nacht*, a cycle of poems that, suspended as they are between poetry and prose, do not merely prefigure the poetic revolution proclaimed in Goethe's *Faust*.<sup>275</sup> Constitutive of the *Hymnen* is a performance paralleling that of Goethe's vampire, which, via Nietzsche's own engagement with this figure, pits the promise of fulfillment against the desensualization inherent in representation. The economies that such considerations illuminate provide an index that eschews a relationship of influence or indebtedness between Nietzsche and Novalis. The latter's emphasis on both the body and the materiality of the text forms the poles of

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<sup>273</sup> "This nauseates me. Let us even beware of believing that the universe is a machine: it is certainly not constructed for one purpose, and calling it a 'machine' does it far too much honor." (*GS* 167)

<sup>274</sup> "Ich fürchte, wir werden Gott nicht los, weil wir noch an die Grammatik glauben..." (6:78); "I fear that we are not getting rid of God because we still believe in grammar..." (*TI* 48)

<sup>275</sup> For an examination of the *Hymnen* as prose poems *avant la lettre*, see Monroe.

an inexorable tension that disrupts the more general narrative levels of the *Hymnen* in their explication of a Romantic religion. This allies him with Nietzsche, whose anti-Classical sensibility toward corporality simultaneously forms the terms of critique waged on Novalis and the haunting by that same figure to which Nietzsche is relentlessly subjected.

Nietzsche appeals to the figure of the vampire in aphorism 372 of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* to illustrate the desensualization that forms the bulwark of idealists against that which could lure them away from their world: “the cold realm of ideas” (“dem kalten Reiche der ‘Ideen’”).<sup>276</sup> With no small amount of modesty, the aphorism questions the seductive capacity of ideas vis-à-vis the senses, a relationship Nietzsche frames with a plot of haunting:

Nun möchten wir heute geneigt sein, gerade umgekehrt zu urtheilen (was an sich noch eben so falsch sein könnte): nämlich dass die *Ideen* schlimmere Verführerinnen seien als die Sinne, mit allem ihrem kalten anämischen Anscheine und nicht einmal trotz diesem Anscheine, — sie lebten immer vom “Blute” des Philosophen, sie zehrten immer seine Sinne aus, ja, wenn man uns glauben will, auch sein “Herz”. Diese alten Philosophen waren herzlos: Philosophiren war immer eine Art Vampyrismus. (KSA 3:624)<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> GS 332; KSA 3:623

<sup>277</sup> “We today are inclined to make the opposite judgment (which actually could be equally wrong), namely that *ideas* are worse seductresses than our senses, for all their cold and anemic appearance, and not even in spite of this appearance: they have always lived on the ‘blood’ of the philosopher, they always consumed his senses and even, if you will believe us, his ‘heart.’ These old philosophers were heartless; philosophizing was always a kind of vampirism.” (GS 333)

Haunting philosophy is a usurer who makes desensualization the price of ideas. Between Plato, who feared the allure of the senses, and the Modern idealist's weariness of the body, Nietzsche registers a shift predicated on an economy of impoverishment. His fragment culminates in a paragraph that invokes one of Nietzsche's most inexorable demons:

Fühlt ihr nicht an solchen Gestalten... etwas tief Änigmatisches und Unheimliches? Seht ihr das Schauspiel nicht, das sich hier abspielt, das beständige *Blässer-werden* —, die immer idealischer ausgelegte Entsinnlichung? Ahnt ihr nicht im Hintergrunde irgend eine lange verborgene Blutaussaugerin, welche mit den Sinnen ihren Anfang macht und zuletzt Knochen und Geklapper übrig behält, übrig lässt? — ich meine Kategorien, Formeln, *Worte*... In Summa: aller philosophische Idealismus war bisher Etwas wie Krankheit, wo er nicht, wie im Falle Plato's, die Vorsicht einer überreichen und gefährlichen Gesundheit, die Furcht vor *übermächtigen* Sinnen, die Klugheit eines klugen Sokratikers war. — Vielleicht sind wir Modernen nur nicht gesund genug, um Plato's Idealismus *nöthig zu haben*? Und wir fürchten die Sinne nicht weil — (3:624)<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> "Looking at these figures...don't you have a sense of something profoundly enigmatic and uncanny? Don't you notice the spectacle that unrolls before you, how they become ever paler — how desensualization is interpreted more and more ideally? Don't you sense a long concealed vampire in the background who begins with the senses and in the end is left with, and leaves, mere bones, mere clatter? I mean categories, formulas, *words*.... In sum: All philosophical idealism to date was something like a disease, unless it was, as it was in Plato's case, the caution of an over-rich and dangerous health, the fear of *over-powerful* senses, the prudence of a prudent Socratic.— Perhaps we moderns are merely not healthy enough *to be in need of* Plato's idealism? And we are not afraid of the senses because—" (GS 333)

Many readers of Nietzsche, when confronted with this interpretation of Plato, may wonder what sort of vampire would allow the Platonism that he has supposedly been trying to overturn suddenly to appear as the veil of an overwhelming sensualism.<sup>279</sup> In breaking off before stating that modern senses are simply not powerful enough to pose any sort of threat, Nietzsche leaves the reader to speculate while stressing once again the progressive desensualization he so detests. Ideas rather than the senses are the new target. “Categories, formulas, *words*”: these are part of the mechanism of thought that, appearing analogically as “bones and clatter,” the vampire has laid bare. The vampire has stripped the ideas of that which makes them seductive, thereby exposing their “cold heart.” However, since the apparently “cold and anemic” ideas live off the blood of the philosopher, and “not even in spite of this appearance” (“nicht einmal trotz diesem Anscheine”), the ideas in their very “working” (their representation) necessarily disembody what they claim to elucidate. Novalis is implicated in this economy of impoverishment, which has its implicit target in a brand of Romantic irony. In such irony, following Peter Szondi, the subject, in becoming an object for itself, creates a distance that can only be synthesized by the subject’s self-reflection whereby “the world exists only as appearance.” With every ascent to a new level of reflection, “[t]he existence of the world and of oneself becomes more and more one of appearance, and reflection becomes ever emptier” (63).

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<sup>279</sup> Heidegger reads Nietzsche as the culmination of metaphysics. See Heidegger *Nietzsche*.

The figure of the vampire returns in Nietzsche's notebooks and situates de-vivification in the moment of representation itself. Nietzsche is here refuting the received opinion that artists are extraordinarily passionate:

1) ihr Vampyr, ihr Talent mißgönnt ihnen meist solche  
Verschwendung von Kraft, welche Leidenschaft heißt 2) ihr Künstler-Geiz  
behütet sie vor der Leidenschaft.

Mit einem Talent ist man auch das Opfer eines Talents: man lebt unter  
dem Vampirism seines Talents, — man lebt ———

Man wird nicht dadurch mit seinen Leidenschaften fertig, daß man sie  
darstellt; vielmehr, man ist mit ihnen fertig, *wenn* man sie darstellt  
(12:472).<sup>280</sup>

Artists are not necessarily passionate because the passion they may possess is squandered in the act of representing. Art is a matter of remains, of material that the figure of the vampire makes contiguous with corporality. The avarice (*Geiz*) of artists insulates them like the skin insulates the body, veiling all that would cause disgust: "Das *aesthetisch*-Beleidigende am innerlichen Menschen ohne Haut — blutige Massen, Kothgedärme, Eingeweide, alle jene saugenden pumpenden

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<sup>280</sup> "1) their vampire, their talent, grudges them as a rule that squandering of force which one calls passion 2) their artist-*avarice* insulates them from their passion.

If one has a talent, one is also its victim: one lives under the vampirism of one's talent. One lives ———

One does not get over a passion by representing it: rather, it is over *when* one is able to represent it." (*WP* 431; Translation modified). Nietzsche widens the gap further between the artist and the work of art thereby dispelling the myth that an "analogy by contiguity" is sufficient in proving that the work is the expression of the artist: "An artist must resist the temptation to 'analogy by contiguity,' which would persuade him that he, himself, is what he imagines and expresses. The truth of the matter is that if he were that thing, he would be unable to imagine or express it." (*GM* 235)

Unthiere ... Dieser durch die Haut *verhüllte* Leib, der sich zu *schämen* scheint! ... *Wir lernen den Ekel um!*" (9:460-61).<sup>281</sup> Nietzsche's seemingly Baroque sensibility, marked by revel in disgust, figures the mechanics of the body as a vampire of sorts, which, in being cast as a sucking and pumping monster, makes of the vampire in Goethe's text the prophet of a poetic revolution concerned not only with the economy of representation, but also with a return of the body. Nietzsche's note, whose oddly suggestive "man lebt ———" reverberates with a Frankensteinian "It's alive!," is but one instance of this revolution. It has its antecedents in Novalis, a poet more likely to be categorized under the vampiric-idealism that drains the body of its physical life than as the vampire that confronts the Classical sensibility with the body in its creatureliness.

### **Anatomy and Vivisection**

"Novalis, eine der Autoritäten in Fragen der Heiligkeit durch Erfahrung und Instinct, spricht das ganze Geheimniss einmal mit naiver Freude aus: 'Es ist wunderbar genug, dass nicht längst die Association von Wollust, Religion und Grausamkeit die Menschen aufmerksam auf ihre innige Verwandtschaft und gemeinschaftliche Tendenz gemacht hat'" (2:138).<sup>282</sup> This is one of the only

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<sup>281</sup> "What is aesthetically insulting in the inner human being, the human being stripped of its skin: bloody clumps of matter, filthy intestines, entrails, the whole sucking pumping monster [...] This body *veiled* by the skin, the body that seems to be ashamed of itself! [...] *We shall learn to rethink nausea!*" (Quoted in Krell, *Infectious* 190-91)

<sup>282</sup> "Novalis, by experience and instinct one of the authorities in questions of saintliness, pronounces the whole secret with naïve joy: 'It is a wonder indeed that

occasions that Nietzsche mentions (not to mention cites) Novalis by name in his writings. The naiveté that he ascribes to Novalis in his pronouncement of the confluence of lust, religion, and cruelty betrays Nietzsche's own innocent adherence to the Novalis myth propagated by his early editors and consolidated by a century of readers.<sup>283</sup> Nietzsche foregrounds elsewhere the shortcomings of a naïve readership and points to the errors in his reception of Novalis: "Es ist nicht leicht möglich, fremdes Blut zu verstehen: ich hasse die lesenden Müssiggänger. Wer den Leser kennt, der thut Nichts mehr für den Leser. Noch ein Jahrhundert Leser — und der Geist selber wird stinken" (4:48).<sup>284</sup> Such a duration marked by a gradual decay not only exhibits affinities with the vampire of idealism, but also recasts the aforementioned disgust ("Ekel") at the body as the failure of readers to come to terms with the materiality of the body as well as of the text. Whether Novalis has "done anything" for the reader is immaterial, but his *Hymnen an die Nacht* punctuate both the body and textual materiality.

If one were to anthropomorphize, the *Hymnen* are also "sucking, pumping monster[s]" of sorts with valves opening and closing, channels of text funneling into other channels of varying widths, and references circulating throughout a patch-

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the association of voluptuousness, religion and cruelty has not long ago made men take notice of their intimate relationship and common intention." (HAH 101)

<sup>283</sup> See O'Brien 11-73. O'Brien's lengthy examination of the Novalis myth revolves around the thesis that the figure of Sophie is one of Novalis' most enduring poetic creations that his early editors, L. Tieck and F. Schlegel, reproduced in order to fuel the mystique of the poet known to his school friends by the decidedly less mystical appellation, "Fritz the flirt."

<sup>284</sup> "It is not at all easy to understand the blood of another: I hate those readers who are idlers. Whoever knows the reader will do nothing more for the reader. Another century of readers — and the spirit itself will stink." (Z 35)

work of forms, tenses, and clauses all sutured together by dashes, breaks, and spacing. Myth and religious iconography are paired with rather explicit sexuality to charge a very personal narrative of desire with significance of Biblical proportions. The *Hymnen* are often read as Novalis' most complete explication of a sort of Romantic religion.<sup>285</sup> However, the configuration of materials proposed here with its valences of the vampire lends itself to a perspective more nuanced in its dismantling of a text that could be said to "explicate" a religion or anything else. I would not, however, dispute that this is what the *Hymnen* are "about." Indeed, they present an alternative cosmo-theological narrative that supplants, or reinterprets, the Judeo-Christian account of Genesis, and additionally, albeit in a fashion more mischievous than devotional, invests the resurrection of Christ with a narrative of redemption in which the transcendental signifier of Romantic *Poesie* takes possession of the figure of Jesus. This rather familiar narrative makes use of a mechanism, the vivisection of which reveals a more anatomical text at work in a poetry cycle that lives off the circulation of reference: the life-blood of narrative. *Poesie* in the *Hymnen* both supplants the figure of the Passion and succumbs to the remains that, following Nietzsche, make the material of art and passion mutually exclusive.

The *Hymnen* are bookended by instances of vampirism that wed the ingestion of the world with desensualization. This cycle of hymns tracks toward a couplet, in which fulfillment is put in uneasy proximity to absolute absence: "Zu

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<sup>285</sup> See O'Brien 256-71; Timm 101-13



suchen haben wir nichts mehr – / Das Herz ist satt – die Welt ist leer” (1:177).<sup>286</sup>

The ambivalence of these verses is only heightened by their apparent logical facility that the dash in the second verse facilitates. It begs an *ergo*: the heart is full *therefore* the world is empty. However, such a closed economy is not only incommensurate with the nonclosure that Novalis otherwise systematically promotes, but with the enigmatic dash itself. Therefore, a hasty ascription of causality to the verse can only serve as a placeholder of an absence, the site of possible occurrences.<sup>287</sup>

The initial hymn, the first appearance of vampirism that frames the cycle, foregrounds the ingestion of the world with a metaphoric of breathing:

Wie des Lebens innerste Seele athmet es der rastlosen Gestirne Riesenwelt,  
und schwimmt tanzend in seiner blauen Flut – athmet es der funkelnde,  
ewigruhende Stein, die sinnige, saugende Pflanze, und das wilde, brennende,  
vielgestaltete Thier – vor allen aber der herrliche Fremdling mit den  
sinnvollen Augen, dem schwebenden Gange, und den zartgeschlossenen,  
tonreichen Lippen. (1:149)<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> “We have no more to search for here—/ The heart is full [–] the world is empty.” (Trans. Dick Higgins 41). Hereafter cited simply by page number. Higgins supplants the final dash with a comma, a decision that I have reversed.

<sup>287</sup> I am not the first to treat the dash in the *Hymnen* as a disruption of causality. Chad Wellmon, in an article exploring Novalis’ engagement with the anthropological studies of the time, makes a similar gesture. See Wellmon 458.

<sup>288</sup> “As life’s inner soul it’s breathed by the Giant-world of countless stars, and swims dancing in its blue tide — the glittering, ever-peaceful stone breathes it, the sensuous sucking plant, the wild and burning and so many formed beast — but above all that splendid stranger with sense-filled eyes, with gliding gait and gently closed, rich-toned lips.” (11)

The anthropomorphization that invests stars and stones with breath gradually wanes in proportion to the concretization of the images in relation to their respective life functions. The stars and stones, the most anthropomorphic of these figures, could not be said to breathe. But one immediately associates the “sensuous sucking plant” with imbibing water, and the “splendid stranger” completes the concretization with the “rich-toned lips” that evoke the rounded posture of one who sucks in. The hymn’s celebration of light is ostensibly one of linearity and symmetry. Where there is breath, however, there is blood, and the circulatory system to which the stranger belongs pumps in excess of the passage’s referential function. The passage threatens to succumb to the economy of absolute loss that is a possible interpretation of the couplet cited above, in which the stranger’s full assimilation of the world through the coincidence of concretization and anthropomorphization is bought at the price of a world bereft of life. The concretization of images finds completion at the seat of anthropomorphism itself: the “sense-filled” eyes of the stranger, who, in breathing in the light “above all” (“vor allen”), reestablishes the hierarchy over which anthropomorphism reigns. Linearity and symmetry give way to a figure of endless repetition, a short circuit in the narrative. The stranger is the remainder and reiteration of the aforementioned dash that, guarding the way out, feigns an opening only to pull shut for fear of lack of breath, blood, and reference.

Enter the night, whose introduction sets up a juxtaposition bound to trap the reader in search of dichotomies. However, as Novalis parts the light from the darkness it does not follow that they are to be understood as forming a simple opposition, or that they can be tidily disentangled. Rather, the night and the light

oscillate around a vortex figured by a complex network of veiling that renders its “site” undecidable: “Abwärts wend ich mich zu der heiligen, unaussprechlichen, geheimnißvollen Nacht. Fernab liegt die Welt – in eine tiefe Gruft versenkt – wüst und einsam ist ihre Stelle. In den Sayten der Brust weht tiefe Wehmuth” (1:149).<sup>289</sup> The world that a moment ago seemed plentiful now appears impoverished, and the utopia is returned to its rightful place.<sup>290</sup> In deferring the paradise where all creatures have their fill, the hymn anticipates the dash that parses the latter half of the couplet cited above: “Zu suchen haben wir nichts mehr –/ Das Herz ist satt – die Welt ist leer.” The fulfillment of the light is veiled by reflection on the night without the addition of an *ergo*, a reassuring causal relationship that, in so temporalizing their difference (*if this, then that*), might make the desert avoidable that the night renders visible. In the absence of such a relationship, the night veils the light with the urgency of an imposition that occasions a shudder.<sup>291</sup> This veil that reveals nothing more than a prior concealment takes the form of images of the past— “Fernen der Erinnerung, Wünsche der Jugend, der Kindheit Träume” (1:149)<sup>292</sup>— that flash before the speaker, whose photographic potential is commensurate with a

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<sup>289</sup> “Away I turn to the holy, the unspeakable, the secretive Night. Over there, far, lies the world—sunken in a deep pit—desert, its place lonely. In the heart’s strings, deep melancholy blows.” (11; Translation modified)

<sup>290</sup> Utopia, from the Greek *ou* (not or no) and *topos* (place), means that without a place.

<sup>291</sup> On the shudder, see Adorno *Ästhetische Theorie* 363-65; *Aesthetic Theory* 244-46.

<sup>292</sup> “Memory’s distances, a young man’s wishes, childhood’s dreams” (11)

mechanism of devivification.<sup>293</sup> If, like allegory, the photographic image arrests time only to sever the tie between it and the continuity characteristic of the ideal world of the symbol, the apparatus whereby just enough light is let in to flash an image of darkness is the height of alterity. That the memories are naturalized and come “like evening mist after the sun has set” (“wie Abendnebel nach der Sonne Untergang”)<sup>294</sup> underscores the mechanical inevitability of their origination and places them at odds with the instability of the speaker. Temporality is inserted here, but as a painful knowledge that is garnered whenever early German Romanticism finds what de Man once called its “true voice”:

[W]hereas the symbol postulates the possibility of an identity or identification, allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and, renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference. In so doing, it prevents the self from an illusory identification with the non-self, which is now fully, though painfully, recognized as a non-self. It is this painful knowledge that we perceive at the moments when early romantic literature finds its true voice. (de Man, “The Rhetoric of Temporality” 207)

Following de Man, the veil of the first hymn is the allegorization of an idealized image that opens a void between the self and its false identification, a vacuity which floods with tragic knowledge. The idyllic images—the less than innocent anthropomorphism that affects a world full of meaning—return to haunt the

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<sup>293</sup> Benjamin *Illuminationen* 253; *Illuminations* 255

<sup>294</sup> 11; 1:149

speaker now aware that the images were affectations. The “true voice” of the *Hymnen* can then sing its melancholy tune: “Sollte [das Licht] nie zu seinen Kindern wiederkommen, die mit der Unschuld Glauben seiner harren?” (1:149).<sup>295</sup>

Such a shutter-shudder, which will continue to impose itself in various guises both exo- and esoteric, forms the collision that for Novalis engenders the image of the beloved (“die Geliebte”). A prefiguration of Nietzsche’s Apollonian and Dionysian, in which appearance always already casts a veil over the unbearable, the beloved marks the instant of the night’s imposition, something unspeakable (“unaussprechlich”), whose appearance guarantees that it will only be “[t]he sober sign of a far-off power” (“[d]as ernste Zeichen einer fernen Macht”).<sup>296</sup> That the beloved is both the sun (“Sonne der Nacht” [1:151]) and daughter of the night underscores its liminal status while specifying its function as a mediator with the seductiveness of a genetic narrative.<sup>297</sup> However, just as the gap between the Apollonian and Dionysian can never be bridged (or, recalling Sloterdijk, can never even *want* to be bridged),<sup>298</sup> the cohesive function of the beloved depends on a certain dysfunction hinted at in the fourth hymn.

Here, a variety of questions posed by the speaker and addressed to the light combine the concern of anthropomorphism with the possible primacy of each of the

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<sup>295</sup> “Should [the light] never come back to Its children, who’ve waited for it with simple faith?” (11)

<sup>296</sup> 27; 1:163

<sup>297</sup> “[G]etreu der Nacht bleibt mein geheimes Herz, und der schaffenden Liebe, ihrer Tochter.” (1:157); “[M]y secret heart stays true to the Night, and to creative Love, her daughter. (19)

<sup>298</sup> Sloterdijk *Thinker on Stage* 27

terms of light, night, and beloved (who takes the formal pronoun “Sie”): “Kannst du mir zeigen ein ewig treues Herz? Hat deine Sonne freundliche Augen, die mich erkennen? fassen deine Sterne meine verlangende Hand? Geben mir wieder den zärtlichen Druck und das kosende Wort? Hast du mit Farben und leichtem Umriß Sie geziert – oder war Sie es, die deinem Schmuck höhere, liebere Bedeutung gab?” (1:157).<sup>299</sup> If anthropomorphism is a function of the hierarchizing power of the human figure (“der herrliche Fremdling”) in the first hymn, then the question as to whether the sun recognizes the speaker specifies a relationship that is at most asymmetrical with the anthropomorphism in the first case. Recognition is, following de Man, foremost the recognition of a void or distance that the sun, in its availability as something to be ingested, eschews. Necessarily a figure of distance, the night recognizes the (mis)recognition of the “I” and, akin to the Apollonian as an appearance of appearance, marks its distance as a vanishing point of the “I”’s collapse. Recognition, in this sense, is that which keeps the moment of tragic separation at bay. Such a precarious compromise, registered ironically as an “ewig treues Herz,” necessitates an attunement to delicate impressions (“zärtlichen Druck” and “leichtem Umriß”), a bulwark against more forceful encounters. The primacy of the light or the beloved remains indeterminate, it being unclear whether the light adorns the beloved or the beloved the light. The dysfunction between them summons a micrological attunement to the text that constantly plays with the

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<sup>299</sup> “Can’t you ever show me a heart that stays true forever? has your sun got friendly eyes to recognize me? do your stars take my desiring hand? and return my tender touch and loving word? have you decorated them with colors and subtle shapes—or was it she, Love, who gave your jewels a higher, dearer meaning?” (19-21)

rhetorical shift between “tenderness” (*zart, Zärtlichkeit*) and the more sudden “tear” (*zehren*). The beckoning of a tender touch blends with the gentle outline of decoration, the formulation of which—“Umriß” and “geziert”—scarcely mask the tears (*Riß* and *zehren*) that separate the light of fulfillment from the fulfillment of the beloved.

The fulfillment of the beloved in the *Hymnen* is at odds with the integrity of the body, that physical monument to the Apollonian. The first hymn, in its course from light to night to beloved, concludes with the desire for a vivisection, a desire consistent with the beloved who is the marker of inconsistency: “[Z]ehre mit Geisterglut meinen Leib, daß ich luftig mit dir inniger mich mische und dann ewig die Brautnacht währt” (1:151).<sup>300</sup> The wish to be torn apart, to be dismembered in Orphic or Dionysian fashion, accords with the association of voluptuousness, religion and cruelty, that Nietzsche admired in Novalis. *Zehren* also has the sense of consumption, a translation that bears on the densensualization of Nietzsche’s vampire, and which pairs the return of the body in the *Hymnen* with the theme of its spiritualization, the desire to “airily” and “innerly” (“inniger”) – intimately but also with the sense of interiority – mix with the beloved. The spiritualization of voluptuousness is echoed in the verse section of the fourth hymn directly after an allusion to the Christian iconography of the cross, a tradition that Novalis continues to invest with the most scandalous imagery: “Hinüber wall ich, / Und jede Pein / Wird einst ein Stachel / Der Wollust seyn. [...] O! sauge Geliebter, / Gewaltig mich

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<sup>300</sup> “[T]ear my body with spirit fire, so I can mix with you more inwardly, airily, and then the wedding night will last forever.” (13)

an, / Daß ich entschlummern / Und lieben kann" (1:159).<sup>301</sup> That these lines defy translation is commensurate with the impossibility of bridging the temporal gap opened up by the present-tense pilgrimage ("Hinüber wall ich") and the desire, always futural, to be wholly consumed. "Wallen" has the sense of either to float or to wander, an ambiguity that summons a collision between the weightlessness of abandon and the burden of agency. The imperative "saug" is unambiguously a form of ingestion, but whose variants of "to suck" or to "breathe in" can heighten or tame the sexually charged stinger, or sting ("Stachel")—inevitably phallic—and voluptuousness ("Wollust"). If Novalis' philosophy begins with the "germ of the first kiss," his religiosity begins with an act of violation: "Gewaltig mich an."<sup>302</sup>

The temporal gap between the present of the "I" and the anticipated fulfillment of desire is the site of another act of violation, the occurrence of which is marked by its inability to occur. As such it can properly be called a utopia, a realm in which fulfillment and desire are one: "nun wach ich – denn ich bin Dein und Mein – du hast die Nacht mir zu Leben verkündigt – mich zum Menschen gemacht"

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<sup>301</sup> None of the translations that I have seen do justice to the brutal eroticism of these lines. "Stachel," possessing definite phallic overtones, is completely omitted in the Higgins translation, and he renders "Saug" (from "saugen": to suck) by the tamer "breathe." "I float over there, / And each pain / Is somehow a sting / Of delight. [...] O! Breathe me, Love, / Ravish me, / So I can pass on to sleep / And to love." (21-3)

<sup>302</sup> That Novalis makes the mediator, rendered suggestively as "Mittelglied," the condition of his sense of religion in the well-known *Blüthenstaub* fragment (2:256-61), underscores the violence and uncanny allure of mediation in its attempt to bridge the unbridgeable.



(1:151).<sup>303</sup> Such a dysfunction of difference, in which fulfillment and desire are synonymous, follows what Derrida has called the logic of the hymen.<sup>304</sup> An anagram of *Hymne*, the hymen feigns the identification between incommensurables. As its Latin translations of both “marriage” and “membrane” make clear, it unifies by marking an absence in a relationship in which not only the difference between desire and fulfillment is suspended, but “also the difference between difference and nondifference” (Derrida, *Dissemination* 209). As Derrida is careful to point out, this does not indicate identity, but fusion as *confusion*, and such a dysfunction of the difference between two terms cannot be equated with the fullness of the signified. Rather than semantic, the hymen is a matter of syntax, a contiguous relationship foregrounded in the dash. The copula “ich *bin* Dein und Mein,” in its precarious position between multiple dashes, is itself a dash of sorts, its implicit equal sign as vacuous as the dash “Das Herz ist satt” – “Die Welt ist leer.” The vacuity also indicates confusion within the self (“Dein und *Mein*”), framing “waking” as a fall into humanity (“du hast...mich zum Menschen gemacht”), which is synonymous with a fall into the syntactical snare of language. Novalis and Nietzsche are in close proximity here, as the “subject” for Nietzsche is a function of the seduction of grammar.<sup>305</sup> Being “human” in the *Hymnen* then is to succumb to the seduction of the beloved and to desire the confusion and dysfunction that she announces.

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<sup>303</sup> “[N]ow I wake—for I’m yours and mine—you called the Night to life for me, —humanized me” (13)

<sup>304</sup> Derrida *Dissemination* 175-226

<sup>305</sup> *KSA* 5:11-12, 31, 6:78; *BGE* 31, 47, *TI* 48

## Dematerialization

The dysfunction of difference revealed with the appearance of the beloved is more than nothing. What remains, following Derrida, is the Dream. Freed from its complicity in the old opposition between waking and sleeping, a dichotomy that the *Hymnen* also suspend, the Dream, “at once perception, remembrance, and anticipation (desire)” but “really none of these” (*Dissemination* 211), is the residue of reference when the referent is suspended. The hymen is the illustration of an image without a model “out of which flows Dream” (209), to adopt the language of Mallarmé’s *Mimique*, the subject of Derrida’s reading, and whose language is very much in keeping with the spiritualized voluptuousness of Novalis’ *Hymnen*. These considerations *comprise* the third hymn, which can be read as an amplification of the moment the beloved appears. What seems like the almost obligatory reference to Novalis’ graveside encounter, often furnishing the biographical reading of the hymn, is not uninteresting, but, in keeping with a logic in which the referent has evaporated, it is the function of the third hymn in the cycle that interests me more.<sup>306</sup>

If the appearance of the beloved marks the absence of the site of a dysfunction of the difference between difference and nondifference—the hymen—then the third hymn is an amplification of a moment that cannot be reduced to the logic of “if...then....” As a microscopic study of an instant of textual malfunction, of

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<sup>306</sup> Novalis’ journal contains impressions that he would adopt for the third hymn during a visit to his late fiancé’s grave on May 13, 1797. See *Werke, Tagebücher, Briefe* 1:463.

the hymen “out of which flows Dream,” this most well-known *Hymne*, is framed as Dream as such: “—It was the first and only dream—” (“– Es war der erste, einzige Traum –”).<sup>307</sup> Offset by dashes, the end of the hymn foregrounds the materiality of the text while specifying the nature of the dematerialization that it concludes. It begins, however, in the wake of the tragic insight when, following de Man, the non-self is “fully, though, painfully recognized as the non-self (207).” The “I,” speaking with the “true voice” of Early German Romanticism, recounts standing at “the barren hill” shedding bitter tears in anxiety-ridden isolation and petrification:

Einst da ich bitter Thränen vergoß, da in Schmerz aufgelöst meine Hoffnung  
zerrann, und ich einsam stand am dürren Hügel, der in engen, dunkeln Raum  
die Gestalt meines Lebens barg – einsam, wie noch kein Einsamer war, von  
unsäglicher Angst getrieben – kraftlos, nur ein Gedanken des Elends noch. –  
Wie ich da nach Hülfe umherschaut, vorwärts nicht konnte und rückwärts  
nicht, und am fliehenden, verlöschten Leben mit unendlicher Sehnsucht hing.  
(1:153)<sup>308</sup>

An amplification and repetition of the tragic insight in the first hymn, the “I” occupies an oppressive space and suffers the paralysis of what Nietzsche calls the “loneliest loneliness” (“einsamste Einsamkeit”). Such absolute loneliness forms the occasion for the appearance of the demon in aphorism 341 of *Die fröhliche*

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<sup>307</sup> 17; 1:155

<sup>308</sup> “Once, when I poured out bitter tears, when my hope dissolved in pain and scattered, and I was standing alone at the barren hill which hid the shape of my life in its narrow, dark space—alone, as no one could be more alone, driven by unspeakable anxiety—strengthless, with just one thought left of need. —As I looked around for help, could not look forward and not backwards, and hung on fleeting, extinguished life with infinite craving[.] (17)

*Wissenschaft* that speaks of the “greatest weight” (“grösste Schwergewicht”), the eternal recurrence of the same: “Die ewige Sanduhr des Daseins wird immer wieder umgedreht — und du mit ihr, Stäubchen vom Staube!” (3:570).<sup>309</sup> The dust in Nietzsche recalls the arid, barren hill in the third hymn, which pairs the possibility of salvation—the barren hill has unmistakably Biblical overtones—with one’s powerlessness in the face of death: dust to dust. If part of the eternal recurrence of the same is that the tragic insight recurs eternally, then the third hymn partakes of the eternal return as a moment of endless repetition. However, whereas in Nietzsche one is summoned to affirm the inevitability of the tragic insight, in Novalis the tragic insight summons the beloved as an imposition:

[D]a kam aus blauen Fernen – von den Höhen meiner alten Seligkeit ein Dämmerungsschauer – und mit einemale riß das Band der Geburt – des Lichtes Fessel... Zur Staubwolke wurde der Hügel – durch die Wolke sah ich die verklärten Züge der Geliebten. In Ihren Augen ruhte die Ewigkeit – 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 – “ (1:155)<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>309</sup> “The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!” (GS 273)

<sup>310</sup> “[T]hen came from blue distances—from the peaks of my old blessedness, a twilight spectacle—and with one stroke my birth’s bond ripped—Light’s chains...The hill became a cloud of dust—through the cloud I saw the transfigured features of my beloved. In her eyes rested the forever—I took her hands, and my tears were a glittering unrippable bond. Years by the thousands flew off to the

To experience the imposition of the beloved is to undergo an experience in the Heideggerian sense, in which “something befalls us, strikes us, comes over us, overwhelms and transforms us,” something “not of our own making” which we “endure” and to which we “submit.”<sup>311</sup> The unmistakably Dionysian overtones ring through the disintegration of necessary fictions—birth, an idea of a ground, measurable time—every necessary fiction save one: reconciliation with the beloved. As John Sallis has demonstrated in reference to some of the more unifying aspects of the Dionysian,<sup>312</sup> the experience of the Dionysian is a reconciliation, just not a reconciliation with the self.<sup>313</sup> The affinities with de Man’s concept of allegory are unmistakable. Just as reconciliation for Sallis eschews the integrity of the self, recognition in de Man is one of the self’s imminent alterity. This reconciliation with something that is not the self, as shown above, casts the possibility of unification as a shutter out of one’s control, as an Apollonian veil that does not presuppose that the principle of individuation necessarily refers to the individuation of the individual. As a dream, the third hymn does bear on the Apollonian, but the

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distance like storms. On her neck I wept overjoyed tears at the new life. —It was the first and the only dream— (17)

<sup>311</sup> Lacoue-Labarthe *Poetry as Experience* 98; Lacoue-Labarthe is quoting Heidegger’s *Unterwegs zur Sprache*.

<sup>312</sup> Sloterdijk *Thinker on Stage* 27-8; As Sloterdijk points out, there are two Dionysians in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*: one that is unendurable, and another, in which the conciliatory rhetoric strikes one as belonging in a socialist manifesto.

<sup>313</sup> Sallis *Crossings* 42-75; Sallis’s reading of the *Die Geburt der Tragödie* shows how the Dionysian and Apollonian “twist” away from Schopenhauer’s metaphysics, in a reading that aligns them with Derrida’s hymen.

Apollonian shorn of any essence that it could be said to “represent.” It is rather Dream flowing out of the hymen.

Nietzsche mimics the image of dematerialization in section 20 of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, where he frames the Dionysian encounter in terms echoing the third hymn: “Ein Sturmwind packt alles Abgelebte, Morsche, Zerbrochene, Verkümmerte, hüllte es wirbelnd in eine rothe Staubwolke und trägt es wie ein Geier in die Lüfte” (1:132).<sup>314</sup> The dematerialization of the storm of dust coupled with ascension demonstrates how seductive Romantic tropes were for the early Nietzsche. But beyond any question of possible “influence,” Nietzsche’s text is, to use a phrase of Derrida’s, “haunted by the ghost” (*Dissemination* 202) of the *Hymnen*. In other words, in addition to referring only to itself, *Die Geburt der Tragödie* is always open to other texts. Akin to a desire that is its own fulfillment, the text is simultaneously closed and open. It is the instantaneousness of this simultaneity that Nietzsche approaches in a prior account of the Dionysian: “Man wandele das Beethoven’sche Jubellied der ‘Freude’ in ein Gemälde und bleibe mit seiner Einbildungskraft nicht zurück, wenn die Millionen schauervoll in den Staub sinken: so kann man sich dem Dionysischen nähern” (1:29).<sup>315</sup> Nietzsche effectively mediates between music, a durational art, and painting, which is apprehended all at once. What is here figured as a descent (“in den Staub sinken”) underscores, together with the later account,

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<sup>314</sup> “A storm seizes everything that is worn out, rotten, broken, and withered, wraps it in a whirling cloud of red dust and carries it like an eagle into the sky.” (BT 98)

<sup>315</sup> “If one were to transform Beethoven’s jubilant ‘Hymn to Joy’ into a painting and place no constraints on one’s imagination as the millions sink into the dust, shivering in awe, then one could begin to approach the Dionysiac.” (BT 18)

the duality of the Dionysian: one of reconciliation and enduring, the other of destruction and unendurable; both valences of the Dionysian mark the occasion of self-abrogation.

Access to the Dionysian is as impermissible as the breaching of the hymen. There is always another fold, always something *more* that renders approximation an asymptote. What is more, infinite approximation, like imitation without an original or a sign without a referent, has nothing on which to base its teleology. It is synonymous with the dematerialization that forms the occasion for the appearance of the beloved in Novalis and the Dionysian encounter as illustrated by Nietzsche. Another instance, by way of conclusion, is found in Adorno's *Ästhetische Theorie*, where Nietzsche's use of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is mirrored in Adorno's illustration of the synchronic phenomenon in question—the sudden appearance of the beloved—in terms of aesthetic perception and analysis:

In großer Musik wie der Beethovens, aber wahrscheinlich weit über die Zeitkunst hinaus, sind die sogenannten Urelemente, auf welche die Analyse stößt, vielfach großartig nichtig. Nur wofern sie dem Nichts asymptotisch sich nähern, verschmelzen sie als reines Werden zum Ganzen. Als unterschiedene Teilgestalten aber wollen sie immer wieder bereits etwas sein: Motiv oder Thema. Die immanente Nichtigkeit ihrer Elementarbestimmungen zieht integrale Kunst hinab ins Amorphe; die Gravitation dorthin wächst, je höher sie organisiert ist [...]. Dem Blick auf die Kunstwerke aus nächster Nähe verwandeln die objektiviertesten Gebilde sich in Gewimmel, Texte in ihrer Wörter [...]. Das Besondere, ihr Lebensmoment,

verflüchtigt sich, unterm mikroskopischen Blick verdampft seine Konkretion.

(7:154-55)<sup>316</sup>

The acute dismemberment that befalls works of art under micrological study is indicative of a volatilization that, in sapping its “vital element,” lays bare what is most concrete—not the concrete content, but the non-vital remains. A function of gravity, the raw material of the work continually asserts itself against the abstraction that would render the work’s particular content visible. The evaporation of content, however, is not synonymous with the absence of content, or rather this absence *forms* the content: “Das Herz ist satt – Die Welt ist leer.” As in the *Hymnen*, the beloved for Adorno appears in the displacement of volition from the self to the material. As if alluding to the memories of childhood in the first hymn that haunt the speaker and allegorize the initial utopic vision, the individual elements *want* to be something previously existent. The asymptotic movement of the individual elements in approaching nothingness, one of infinite approximation, can arrive at nothingness as little as Nietzsche’s compression of Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy” to one instant can arrive at the Dionysian. Standing guard between nothingness and content, the figure

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<sup>316</sup> “In great music such as Beethoven’s—and probably this holds true far beyond the range of the temporal arts—the so-called primal elements turned up by analysis are usually eminently insubstantial. Only insofar as these elements asymptotically approximate nothingness do they meld—as a pure process of becoming—into a whole. As differentiated partial elements, however, time and again they want to be something previously existent: a motif or a theme. The immanent nothingness of its elementary determinations draws integral art down into the amorphous, whose gravitational pull increases the more thoroughly art is organized [...]. When artworks are viewed under the closest scrutiny, the most objectivated paintings metamorphose into a swarming mass and texts splinter into words [...]. Under micrological study, the particular—the artwork’s vital element—is volatilized; its concretion vanishes.” (*Aesthetic Theory* 100-101)



of the asymptote in Adorno is the Dream that, as the confusion between nothingness and content, forms content as the appearance of the beloved. Between the desire for fulfillment in content and the satisfaction of content attained, the elements “meld” (“verschmelzen”) in a fusion that, following the logic of the hymen, stages the dysfunction of difference as identity.

To call the evaporations of the third hymn and the passage in Adorno amplifications of a synchronic phenomenon is to say no more than that they are repetitions of the failure to approach the moment of aesthetic perception, Nietzsche’s Dionysian. Their status as representations effectively banish them from the realm of insight into the unendurable moment that such representation makes imaginatively accessible. Shorn of the referent, one can do nothing but imitate, as that is the nature of representation itself; it is its vampire. The *Hymnen* are a succession of such, but they are not reducible to this formulation. They do not, in other words, merely narrate the impossibility of narration. Rather, they animate the mechanism whereby the impossibility of narration appears to be the narration of possibility. The hymen “out of which flows Dream” names this residue of reference in the absence of a referent. As sure as there will always be a remainder will the beloved appear as the imposition of content, meaning, and life on which a vampire will feed: “O! sauge, Geliebter, Gewaltig mich an” (1:159). As the referential function, the beloved is inevitably resurrected as a phantom or monster, a gesture that specifies the Romantic longing for words to originate like flowers (“wie Blumen entstehen”), as the desire to raise the dead. The stage direction in Goethe’s *Faust* is

thus very apt: “Der Dichter ... ruft als ein wahrer Romantiker das Gespensterhafte hervor” (*Faust II* 597).<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>317</sup> “The poet ... as a true Romantic, summons the phantasmic.” (Translation mine)

## CHAPTER VI

### SYNTACTIC MIGRATIONS: TRACING THE SUBLIMITY OF DISCIPLESHIP

#### IN SCHILLER, NIETZSCHE, AND NOVALIS' *DIE LEHRLINGE ZU SAIS*

##### Aberrations of Play

Schiller's letters *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* systematize an ambiguity that would forever complicate the storied distinction between freedom and necessity. This ambiguity is saved for the very last letter, in which Schiller traces the development of the play-instinct (*Spieltrieb*) in ancient Germanic man, who in the process of self-adornment makes beauty an end in itself: "Nicht zufrieden, einen ästhetischen Ueberfluß in das Nothwendige zu bringen, reißt sich der freyere Spieltrieb endlich ganz von der Fesseln der Nothdurft los, und das Schöne wird für sich allein ein Objekt seines Strebens. Er schmückt sich" (20:408).<sup>318</sup> The standard translation of these letters renders the subject of this second sentence as "he," when in fact the German pronoun "er" could as easily refer to *Spieltrieb*—the more likely possibility given that the play-instinct, not the Germanic ancestor, is the subject of the previous sentence. This reductive translation occludes the autonomy of the drive, which, in a paradox that feeds the aforementioned ambiguity, frees itself from utility, which the *Ästhetische Briefe* denounce from the outset. The slippage (in the translation) from "it" to "he" runs

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<sup>318</sup> "Not content with introducing aesthetic superfluity into objects of necessity, the play-drive as it becomes ever freer finally tears itself away from the fetters of utility altogether, and beauty in and for itself alone begins to be an object of his striving. *Man* adorns himself." (Schiller. Trans. Wilkinson and Willoughby 211)

counter to the migration of adornment (*Schmuck*), in which the play-instinct, usurper of agency, *expresses itself*.

As the mediator between the opposing drives of sense (*Sinntrieb*) and form (*Formtrieb*), Schiller's play-instinct was meant to synthesize the instabilities of the self and thereby form a whole as sovereign as it is beautiful. The dictum in the 15<sup>th</sup> letter on aesthetic education—"der Mensch spielt nur, wo er in voller Bedeutung des Worts Mensch ist, und *er ist nur da ganz Mensch, wo er spielt*" (20:359)<sup>319</sup>—is the most explicit statement on the relationship of play and humanity, which, in twice iterating completeness, couples the fullness of meaning with a teleological concept of the human. If man, in the words of Adorno, "with the consummation of his sovereignty leaves behind the spell of sovereignty's aim" ("mit der Vollendung seiner Souveränität läßt...den Bann von deren Zweck unter sich"),<sup>320</sup> then the emancipation of the play-instinct in the 27<sup>th</sup> letter disrupts the Classical teleology of freedom and beauty. The autonomy of the play-instinct, an aberration over which neither Schiller nor his translators have any control, is bought at the price of the stability of the self. No longer fixed on the tracks of synthesis, the self that emerges at the end of the *Briefe* is as beautiful as it is directionless. This is indicative of a larger aesthetic shift that in past decades was more comfortably discussed under the dichotomy Classical/Romantic. If Romanticism (and Modernism more generally) is defined, as Bohrer suggests, by "the implosion of the sublime into the beautiful" (85), then the disruption of the teleology where humanity and the beautiful merge is

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<sup>319</sup> "[M]an only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and *he is only fully human being when he plays.*" (107)

<sup>320</sup> *Aesthetic Theory* 197; *Ästhetische Theorie* 293

the moment where Schiller, despite his best efforts, becomes emphatically Romantic.

The last of Schiller's *Briefe* both stages the emergence of Romanticism from Classicism and disrupts the imperative of *Bildung* common to both. The work of Novalis and the Jena Romantics more generally are complicit in such a program of socialization. There is, however, an important distinction to be drawn between Schiller's conception of *Bildung* and the one that informs Novalis' *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*. An unfinished and fragmentary novel, *Sais* takes as its template Schiller's "Das verschleierte Bild zu Sais," in which a young man meets an early grave after defying warnings not to lift the veil that conceals Truth. Schiller's understanding of *Bildung* is modeled on the ancient Greek idea of *paideia*, the system of education aimed at forming men into ideal members of the hierarchical polis. Revolving around a semantics in which intellectual, moral, and physical development confirms the ideality of the existing hierarchy, the *telos* of *paideia* cannot withstand the imposition of a disfiguring power. The "implosion of the sublime into the beautiful" is as anathematic as the relationship between meaning and syntax.<sup>321</sup> They are, however, entangled in one another in a manner not reducible to mere opposition. As one scholar has stated with reference to Schiller, "[t]he Beautiful...is not simply the Other of the Sublime but its revocation" (Calhoon, *Affecting Grace* 168). The moment in Schiller's *Briefe* when the play-instinct splinters off from the teleology of freedom and beauty is not only a matter of syntax and a sublime shock, it is also the

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<sup>321</sup> According to de Man, meaning is dependent on and incommensurable with a-semantic, differential markers. See de Man *Allegories of Reading* 268-69; See also Warminski's introduction to de Man's *Aesthetic Ideology* 17-8.

precondition of the form of *Bildung*, or discipleship, that *Sais* both espouses thematically and performs ironically. The collision between the (beautiful) teleology of completeness and the (sublime) disarticulations of figuration prefigured in Schiller's text and affirmed in Novalis is taken up again in Nietzsche, for whom the instabilities that such a collision usher in threaten even the most modest *telos* of *Bildung*, the formation and reproduction of a society.

### **Dissimulation and the Artifice of Nature**

The autonomy of the play-instinct stands in a synecdochal relationship to the category of the aesthetic in a historical moment when the aesthetic, far from covering up political issues, becomes the very arena in which to interrogate such problems.<sup>322</sup> It is as an *imposition* that the aesthetic appears in late 18<sup>th</sup>-century thought, a dynamic of which Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft* is exemplary. As Nietzsche saw clearly and as de Man reiterates, Kant did not write his Third Critique out of a love of art but to complete the project of his first two Critiques.<sup>323</sup> Necessity, the contrary of the freedom toward which Schiller's play-instinct was meant to gesture, entangles the aesthetic with nature, the sphere in which man has no control.

In its migration from ornament to autonomy, the imposition of the aesthetic amplifies the dissonance inherent in the coinage "play-instinct," a shift that

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<sup>322</sup> For more on the view that the aesthetic makes problems of politics accessible to interrogation see White 1-9. This runs counter to the thesis, made most forcefully by Terry Eagleton, that the aesthetic sphere provides an arena where political problems could be eschewed. See Eagleton's *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*.

<sup>323</sup> *KSA* 5:346-47; de Man *Aesthetic Ideology* 70-90.

Nietzsche takes up in aphorism 356 of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* with reference to socialization. Here Nietzsche charts two migrations between nature and art as they pertain to man's vocation. He distinguishes between times in which men adopt, or more likely are forced into, an occupation with which they then gradually identify. Freedom of choice and the possible roles one might have played are forgotten with the contingencies and moods that led them to a certain position: "Tiefer angesehen, ist aus der Rolle wirklich Charakter *geworden*, aus der Kunst Natur" (3:595).<sup>324</sup> He juxtaposes this migration from art to nature with more democratic ages, in which the faith that facilitates the identification with an occupation is supplanted by the freedom of experimentation. In these ages, the impression that one could assume any role leads to self-improvisation and "all nature ceases and becomes art" ("alle Natur aufhört und Kunst wird").<sup>325</sup> The self-experimentation of such "actors" is bought at the price of calculability. Nietzsche assigns this posture to the Greeks but adds that it is palpable in the contemporary age and runs counter to the pragmatic impulse of the "great architects," who are able to erect solid edifices that transcend the lifetimes of their individual components:

Es stirbt eben jener Grundglaube aus, auf welchen hin Einer dergestalt rechnen, versprechen, die Zukunft im Plane vorwegnehmen, seinem Plane zum Opfer bringen kann, dass nämlich der Mensch nur insofern Werth hat,

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<sup>324</sup> "Considered more deeply, the role has actually *become* character; and art, nature." (GS 302)

<sup>325</sup> GS 303; 3:596

Sinn hat, als er *ein Stein in einem grossen Baue* ist: wozu er zuallererst *fest* sein muss, "Stein" sein muss... Vor Allem — nicht Schauspieler! (3:596-97)<sup>326</sup>

The solidity necessary for an architecture of and for the future is less a matter of an immutable nature than of a *grounding faith*. As with the aesthetic justification espoused in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* according to which man only has value as a work of art created by impersonal forces, Nietzsche traces the displacement of man's value from the successful integration into a lasting society toward the affirmation of deception and dissimulation. This is also evidenced in the first migration in which the internalization of appearance is based on deception and forgetting—the freedom to choose one's vocation being "a merely apparent freedom" ("eine anscheinende Freiheit").<sup>327</sup> Freedom is falling victim to one's own good performance, an operation that the aphorism underscores in its ironic performative register. As a tropological-referential text it *acts* like it is about the difference between architects and actors, between the passage from art to nature, on the one hand, and from nature to art on the other. Herein lies the instability. In the first passage nature was never nature. It was falling victim to one's good performance. In the second, art does not cease with art. The experimenters really *become* actors. Art reverses back into nature. The reversal back and forth is interminable and it becomes impossible to tell art from nature, actors from

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<sup>326</sup> "For what is dying out is the fundamental faith that would enable us to calculate, to promise, to anticipate the future in plans of such scope, and to sacrifice the future to them—namely, the faith that man has value and meaning insofar as he is *a stone in a great edifice*; and to that end he must be *solid* first of all, a 'stone'—and above all not an actor!" (GS 303)

<sup>327</sup> 3:595; GS 302



architects. This bodes ill for the calculability necessary for building a society. In so falling silent, the aphorism ironically performs the truth, the conclusion, Nietzsche emphasizes: *Wir Alle sind kein Material mehr für eine Gesellschaft*" (3:597).<sup>328</sup> However, it is a truth that speaks as a veil covering the void of the text, a text that speaks meaninglessly. Like Schiller's play-instinct, Nietzsche only speaks as a performative aberration. This shift from trope to performance will become increasingly important as I approach the respective treatments of the veil of Sais in Nietzsche and Novalis.<sup>329</sup>

Before turning to *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*, the opening section of which builds to an image of grand architectonics, a passage from *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* will help demonstrate how close Nietzsche and Novalis are in matters of the interpenetration of nature and art. The merchants who accompany Heinrich and his mother on their journey to Augsburg have this to say about nature:

Die Natur will selbst auch einen Genuß von ihrer großen Künstlichkeit haben, und darum hat sie sich in Menschen verwandelt, wo sie nun selber sich über ihre Herrlichkeit freut, das Angenehme und Liebliche von den Dingen absondert, und es auf solche Art allein hervorbringt, daß sie es auf mannigfaltigere Weise, und zu allen Zeiten und allen Orten haben und genießen kann. (1:255)<sup>330</sup>

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<sup>328</sup> "All of us are no longer material for a society." (GS 304)

<sup>329</sup> For a discussion of trope vs. performance, see de Man *Aesthetic Ideology* 132-33.

<sup>330</sup> "Nature herself also wants to derive a pleasure from her great artfulness and hence transformed herself into human beings; thereby she takes delight in her own glory, abstracts the charm and delight from things, and presents this charm and

Nature, traditionally bound up with questions of a static essence, meaning, and truth, is here entangled with human handiwork in a dynamic temporal relation ensuring that its reflective enjoyment can feed on ever-changing multiplicities. In seemingly taking the emancipation of the play-instinct as its departure, nature in Novalis affirms that beauty and wholeness—figured in this passage as “charm and delight”—preclude the autonomy of the individual. A sublime recognition, the idealized image of nature as aesthetic beholder has as its shadow-side the finitude and instability of a self that, following de Man, seeks “refuge against the impact of time in a natural world to which, in truth, it bears no resemblance” (de Man, “The Rhetoric of Temporality” 206). Fully encompassed by nature, the self delights in the infinite variation of nature’s gaze all the while aware that, “in truth,” it bears no resemblance to the natural world. The surety of bearing resemblance would transgress the limit that delimits knowledge, as a semantic construction, from nature.

The problem is made more explicit in *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais* in a passage that, as opposed to presenting a crossing between realms, sets up an intraversable gap: Man kann nicht sagen, daß es eine Natur gebe, ohne etwas überschwengliches zu sagen, und alles Bestreben nach Wahrheit in Reden und Gesprächen von der Natur entfernt nur immer mehr von der Natürlichkeit” (1:207).<sup>331</sup> A natural law of sorts—a “human handiwork” of nature, as it were—the gap between nature and language is

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delight only in such a manner that she may have and enjoy it always and everywhere in a more varied way.” (31)

<sup>331</sup> “It is bombast to speak of one nature, and all striving after truth in discourse about nature only removes us farther from the natural.” (*The Novices of Sais* Trans. Ralph Manheim 29); Hereafter cited solely by page number.

unbridgeable. Nature exists at a distance from our determinations of it and these determinations are always something effusive (“überschwenglich”), lacking in reserve. The “truth” is always in excess of and distant from nature, an arrangement that, as well as providing nature with ever new charms on which to gaze, aligns Novalis with Nietzsche, for whom truth is not some “unifying principle” but rather a form of dissimulation, “just one mask among others.”<sup>332</sup> This is a repetition of the linguistic excess that disrupted the ability of the play-instinct to bridge the gap between form and sense. Language as mediation, precisely in its aberrancy and excess, becomes domination: the imposition of an absolute limit.

This displacement of truth vs. nature to dissimulations and its comportments traces the migration of Schiller’s play-instinct from adornment (play) to autonomy (instinct). Pointing out that this slippage is constitutive of its name is not merely *überschwenglich*, but names the excess that forms the implosion of the sublime onto the Germanic ancestors who were invested by Schiller with the aspiration to beauty and even perfection. Smacking of a grand architectonics, the teleology in Schiller’s *Aesthetische Briefe* is disrupted in an aphorism by Nietzsche, called “*Architektur der Erkennenden*,” in which sublimity and the thought that I have been outlining border on the synonymous. Bemoaning the lack of quiet places for reflection in big cities, Nietzsche, in aphorism 280 of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, imagines the ideal setting in which to think his thoughts: “Bauwerke und Anlagen, welche als Ganzes die

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<sup>332</sup> Greaney 73

Erhabenheit des Sich-Besinnens und Bei-Seitegehens ausdrücken" (3:524).<sup>333</sup>

Nietzsche, in his architectural fantasy, distinguishes these spaces of contemplation from churches, the *vita contemplativa* from the *vita religiosa*. The reason he gives for doing so resurrects the problematic of the play-instinct in the form of *prosopopoeia*. Religious buildings do not merely house religious ceremonies; they *speak* unfree ("befangene") thoughts.<sup>334</sup> Their speech is one of otherworldliness and eschatology, a variation on the teleology of the play-instinct that, in its syntactic slide from mediation to domination, shifts from a position of structural necessity (for the coherency of Schiller's text) to unlimited abandon. The new architecture seeks to mimic this migration by relying on an artifice befitting the passage in *Ofterdingen*, in which an always already artificial nature harnesses that which feigns autonomy for its aesthetic enjoyment. Here is Nietzsche's astonishing fantasy: "Wir wollen *uns* in Stein und Pflanze übersetzt haben, wir wollen *in uns* spazieren gehen, wenn wir in diesen Hallen und Gärten wandeln" (3:525).<sup>335</sup> The translation by possession in the first clause from man to plant, stone and, by extension, to edifice is completed in the second clause, in which one *is* the translation—the stroll ("wandeln") being the modality of metamorphosis (*Verwandlung*). Nietzsche's ponderous edifice is the site

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<sup>333</sup> "...buildings and sites that would altogether give expression to the sublimity of thoughtfulness and of stepping aside." (GS 226-27)

<sup>334</sup> "... diese Bauwerke reden eine viel zu pathetische und befangene Sprache, als Häuser Gottes und Prunkstätten eines überweltlichen Verkehrs, als dass wir Gottlosen hier unsere Gedanken denken könnten." (3:525); ["The language spoken by these buildings is far too rhetorical and unfree, reminding us that they are houses of God and ostentatious monuments of some supramundane intercourse; we who are godless could not think our thoughts in such surroundings." (GS 227)]

<sup>335</sup> "We wish to see *ourselves* translated into stone and plants, we want to take walks *in ourselves* when we stroll around these buildings and gardens." (GS 227)

of an artifice that views the self from the standpoint of nature as the “will to deception” and dissimulation, a construction that encloses and delimits, rather than providing a foil for, the “will to truth.”

The foundation of Nietzsche’s sanctuary of thought is shaky, the faith in a ground having been ripped away with the grounding faith (“Grundglaube”) that makes grand plans possible. Nietzsche is not a stone in a great edifice. He is a tracer, a seismograph that, in resurrecting the ghost (the aberration) of the play-instinct, simulates subjecthood by translating himself into nature as an entity of dissimulation. The insight into the artificiality of nature (and therefore of the self) informs the idea of *Bildung* in *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*, in which acts of transportation and positioning run counter to the solidity of architectonic planning.

### **Allegories of Edification**

The first part of Novalis’ *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*, a work whose concern with questions of *Bildung* and truth are registered in the title, builds to the completion of an architectural figure. The passage recounts the highly symbolic departure and return of a child, who, after having been away all night, reappears at dawn with a stone, the placement of which affects a moment of enchantment:

In unsere Mitte trat er bald, und brachte, mit unaussprechlicher Seligkeit im Antlitz, ein unscheinbares Steinchen von seltsamer Gestalt. Der Lehrer nahm es in die Hand, und küßte ihn lange, dann sah er uns mit nassen Augen an und legte dieses Steinchen auf einen leeren Platz, der mitten unter anderen Steinen lag, gerade wo wie Strahlen viele Reihen sich berührten.

Ich werde dieser Augenblicke nie fortan vergessen. Uns war, als hätten wir im Vorübergehn eine helle Ahnung dieser wunderbaren Welt in unsern Seelen gehabt. (1:203)<sup>336</sup>

The completion of the structure, a literalization of fulfillment, is that much more enigmatic set against the unarticulated status of the site itself. We are never told what the structure is, only that the stone allowed itself to be perfectly positioned at its radius. Far from Nietzsche's solid "stone in a great edifice," the structure in the first part of *Sais* strikes one as more of a scaffold over a ruin than a foundation for a grand architecture. The perfection of the placement thinly veils the anxiety-ridden void that such a figure, in its desperation, cannot help but call to mind. Significant is the temporal symbolism of the construct that finds completion at sunrise after a long, lonely night. In this sense, the affectations of the teacher and the narrator mirror the structure itself: this is not a scene of fulfillment, but of recovery. Indeed the entire first section of *Sais* reads as a recovered speech in the wake of what Thomas Weiskel refers to as the "reader's sublime": "elaborations...[abounding] in the metaphorical associations which have rescued the possibility of meaning from the ambivalent excitement of incomprehension" (31). It is such a possibility of meaning that *Sais* promptly announces. "Wonderful figures" discernable in everything from human lives to plants, from crystals to eggshells, engender a state

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<sup>336</sup> "Soon the novice stepped into our midst with ineffable joy in his face; he was carrying a humble little stone, of a strange shape. The teacher took it in his hand and kissed it a long long while, then he looked at us with tears in his eyes and laid the little stone in an empty space among other stones, where many rows came together like spokes.

Never shall I forget those moments. It was as though our souls had known a bright and fugitive presentiment of this wondrous world." (13)

of being—*Ahndung*—in which the figures seem to form the key to the natural figures. Novalis refers to this, the grand cipher of nature, as the *Chifferschrift*. Yet *Ahndung*, although induced by the patterns, resists their rigidity: “[A]llein die *Ahndung* will sich selbst in keine feste Formen fügen, und scheint kein höherer Schlüssel werden zu wollen” (1:201).<sup>337</sup> In order for the seemingly dichotomous relationship between the ephemeral enchantments of *Ahndung* and the positioning of the stone to appear in their full significance, it is necessary to explore the logic of figuration and its relationship to signification via the sublime in *Sais*.

As demonstrated in the readings of Schiller’s play-instinct and Nietzsche’s architectural fantasy, the sublime is proximate to the disarticulations of completeness. The translations and metamorphoses from art to nature and nature to art exhibit “the sublimity of thoughtfulness (“sich Besinnen”)” and reveal a fracture in the continuity of the locals and pathways that would lead from one to the other. *Sais* is a continuation of this thought. That the sublime in *Sais* is a petrifying force would seem to contradict this: “Das Erhabne wirkt versteinend...” (1:224).<sup>338</sup> However, such petrification is not indicative of the certainty that comes with solidity but rather of the inevitability of form in the face of alterity. “Könnte die Natur nicht über den Anblick Gottes zu Stein geworden seyn? Oder vor Schrecken über die Ankunft des Menschen?” (1:224),<sup>339</sup> asks one of the novices. It is here a matter of the

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<sup>337</sup> “...but our surmise takes on no definite forms and seems unwilling to become a higher key.” (3)

<sup>338</sup> “The sublime has power to petrify...” (91)

<sup>339</sup> “Might nature not have turned to stone at the sight of God? Or from fear at the advent of man?” (91)

cut and the clearing. That which cuts a figure, if it is to be meaningful, does so in the wake of a presentation that presents nothing but the possibility of presentation itself.<sup>340</sup> This presentation without figuration that characterizes the sublime is then anterior to the figures such as the *Wunderschrift* in *Sais*. The rigidification in the sublime moment casts the cipher of nature in a new light. The figures do not appear as such, but only as the glow in the void defined against everything which cuts a figure.<sup>341</sup> The fleeting character of such an appearance (of the possibility of appearance) is mirrored in *Ahndung*, a state that uneasily straddles the modes of recovery and dissolution. The transitional or translational character of this state is evident in the alchemical analogy used to elucidate it: “Ein Alcahest scheint über die Sinne der Menschen ausgegossen zu seyn. Nur Augenblicklich scheinen ihre Wünsche, ihre Gedanken sich zu verdichten. So entstehen ihre Ahndungen, aber nach kurzen Zeiten schwimmt alles wieder, wie vorher, vor ihren Blicken” (1:201).<sup>342</sup> *Verdichten*—the verb used to describe the near coherence of *Ahndung* as a thickening, consolidating, or intensification of thoughts—also evokes poeticizing (*dichten*), an overtone that, in its imminent liquidation of solidity, charges the aftermath of *Ahndung* with an “as if” quality. It is as if *Ahndung*, in order to resist the

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<sup>340</sup> My reading of the sublime in *Sais* is indebted to Lacoue-Labarthe’s “Sublime Truth” in the collection *On the Sublime*. ed. Jeffrey Librett.

<sup>341</sup> “That which is, insofar as it is, does not cut (any figure) but glows and scintillates in the night without night, in the beyond-night of the void, which is the clearing itself.” (Lacoue-Labarthe, “Sublime Truth” 96)

<sup>342</sup> “It is as though an alkahest had been poured over the senses of man. Only at moments do their desires and thoughts seem to solidify. Thus arise their presentiments, but after a short time everything swims again before their eyes.” (3-5)



cutting that would otherwise render the figurations of the *Chifferschrift* prosaic, must itself succumb to the dissolution that defines *dichten* against *verdichten*. It is always a dynamic translation, the articulation of which depends on its disarticulation. Like the play-instinct that, due to the play of syntax in which the signifier slides between signifieds, *Ahndung* cannot position itself squarely so that, unlike the ray-patterned edifice, everything lines up.

More than a figure of endless repetition, the oscillation between the sublime recurrences of figuration and dissolution, as mentioned above, represents the possibility of presentation. This possibility follows the shift from a tropological to a performative language in Nietzsche's aphorism on the loss of the grand architects necessary for *Bildung*. Just as Nietzsche's aphorism was shown to be complicit in the problematic that it aims to elucidate, so too does Novalis' novel-fragment read itself. As a tropological system, *Ahndung* seems to provide the key to the *Chifferschrift* as if the signifier could somehow reach the signified. The performative dimension of *Sais*, however, stages its various meditations as a recovery of the possibility of meaning after the tragic insight that *Ahndung* can no more do without its dissolution than referential meaning can do without grammar. Akin to the play-instinct, this threat is also the key to discipleship in *Sais*, the promise of which stands opposed to the fixed relations that would occlude *Ahndung*. On one level, the play-instinct promises the freedom of the self and *Ahndung* promises the coherence of the *Chifferschrift*. However, just as the play-instinct threatens the integrity of the self, *Ahndung* resists the fixity of denotative meaning. On another level, the possibility of this threat constitutes their promise as that which stonewalls, so to speak, the

reification that would close-off the *Chifferschrift* or make the play-instinct absolute. Their eccentric status stands opposed to the horror that, following Adorno, “die Verdinglichung der Beziehungen zwischen Menschen jegliche Erfahrung anstecke und buchstäblich zum Absoluten werde” (*Ästhetische Theorie* 106).<sup>343</sup> The ability of the play-instinct—the threat of the representation to impinge on individual autonomy—to literally become absolute would mean that the representation effects perception to a degree that rules out the possibility of freedom. The play-instinct says: where “he” was, “it” shall be. The splintering-off of the play-instinct (what de Man would call its ideological aberration) that constitutes my reading not only identifies the movement of a destructive principle, but also makes such ideological aberrations into a resistance to the interdictions that the play-instinct presages. It is the promise that names the threat.<sup>344</sup> This is also hinted at in Nietzsche’s architectural fantasy. Nietzsche’s contemplative architecture is to be expunged of the rhetorical dimension of churches that overdetermines the thoughts that can take place there. The obvious contradiction (that Nietzsche would have to constantly build new buildings for contemplation for them to resist reification) he counters by the wish to be translated into a plant, a Romantic resurrection of the hope that the

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<sup>343</sup> “...the reification of relations between humans would contaminate all experience and literally becoming absolute.” (*Aesthetic Theory* 67)

<sup>344</sup> Derrida’s thought on the “logic of contamination” in Nietzsche is also relevant to my reading of Schiller’s play-instinct and Novalis: “Possible contamination must be assumed, because it is also opening or chance, our chance. Without contamination we would have no opening or chance. Contamination is not only to be assumed or affirmed: it is the very possibility of affirmation in the first place...Threat is chance, chance is threat.” (Derrida, “Nietzsche and the Machine” 248)

play-instinct as fashioned by Schiller was meant to embody.<sup>345</sup> So it is with the *Chifferschrift* in *Sais*. Not to be confused with the hieroglyphs that adorn the temple of *Sais* for which a key could actually decipher its stable meaning, the allure of the *Chifferschrift* consists in its syntactical inability to reach its object.<sup>346</sup>

The duplicity and entanglements of *Ahndung* is mirrored in the professions of the poet (*Dichter*) and scientist (*Naturforscher*):

Wenn diese [Dichter] mehr das Flüssige und Flüchtige mit leichtem Sinn verfolgten, suchten jene [Naturforscher] mit scharfen Messerschnitten den innern Bau und die Verhältnisse der Glieder zu erforschen. Unter ihren Händen starb die freundliche Natur, und ließ nur todte, zuckende Reste zurück." (1:207)<sup>347</sup>

Whereas poets operate in the realm of the fluid and fleeting, scientists carve open nature like a surgeon dissects a corpse. The "dead, quivering remains" form the locus of the entanglement. The final utterance of the initial voice in *Sais* links these remains with the visible world: "und sey nicht alles, was man sehe, schon ein Raub des Himmels, eine große Ruine ehemaliger Herrlichkeiten, Ueberbleibsel eines

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<sup>345</sup> The desire to resist reification occupies the very important final aphorism in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, in which Nietzsche worries that his "painted thoughts" will soon become solidified into truths. See *KSA* 5:239-40.

<sup>346</sup> Calhoon "Language and Romantic Irony in Novalis' *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*" 55-7

<sup>347</sup> Poets have lightheartedly pursued the liquid and fugitive, while scientists have cut into the inner structure and sought after the relations between its members. Under their hands friendly nature died, leaving behind only dead, quivering remnants..." (27)

Schrecklichen Mahls?“ (1:211).<sup>348</sup> This passage is immediately preceded by the insight that humans cannot help but mimic natural forms and that, although these forms seem to provide the key to nature’s secrets, following their infinite variation is the road to madness. *Sais* is riddled with references to acts in which humans mimic natural forms. In addition to the patterns of the *Chifferschrift* with which *Sais* commences, the teacher then tells the disciples how as a young man he would trace the pattern of stars in the sand and look for similarities in all of the natural world (1:202). The line between the discipleship of infinite variation and the madness of expecting arrival traces the possibility of the recovery of meaning in *Ahndung*, a state that harbors its own infinite rhythm of form and dissolution. If nature is not to petrify into dead scraps, the posthumous convulsions must provide the germ to continue the madness of an infinite longing that, in imitating nature, provides nature with the metamorphosis and variation that it enjoys. In *Sais* this is called “der Geist der Natur” (“the spirit of nature”).<sup>349</sup>

In a letter to Archim von Arnim in 1803, Clemens Brentano registers his uneasiness over a collection of Novalis’ fragments in a manner entirely in keeping with the motif of ingestion that runs throughout *Sais*: “Doch ist seine Verlassenschaft an Fragmenten sehr merkwürdig, es ist als sehe man in ein vom Schweinemetzger geschlachtetes und am Laden ausgespanntes Universum und bei jedem Gedärm eine Nummer, und über alles ein Register. Es ist ein ängstliches

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<sup>348</sup> “...and is not indeed everything we see a rape of heaven, a desolation of former glories, the remnants of a hideous feast?” (43)

<sup>349</sup> 1:211; 27

Buch.”<sup>350</sup> Devoid of the prosaic numbering that makes Novalis’ collection of fragments reminiscent of a butcher shop, *Sais*—the incompleteness of which barely scratches the surface of Brentano’s anxiety over a hacked-up universe—is also “ein ängstliches Buch.” Anxiety-ridden not merely due to the well-documented disorientation of the criss-crossing voices, or of the tropological instability of *Ahndung*; its anxiety lies in its performative dimension as a text that, insofar as it has read itself, is an act predicated on the recovery of meaning after a sublime moment.<sup>351</sup> A sudden recognition for the reader, the imminent performance of *Sais* is something it shares with all art works that, regardless of their medium, imprint the beholder with the allegory of their collapse.<sup>352</sup> The completion of the ray-patterned edifice with the perfect stone is a repetition and thematization of this logic of dissolution and recovery, its symbolic coherence making up part of a larger allegory. Discipleship, a form of *Bildung*, is predicated on recognizing the refractory potential of the syntactical play of the *Chifferschrift* that, in its inability to reach its object, presents the possibility of presentation without succumbing to the hypostatizations of figuration. Its edification, as opposed to being produced through solidity, hangs on this allegorizing potential. This sublime logic of presentation defines Novalis’ representation of the veil of Sais.

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<sup>350</sup> Quoted in Utz 215

<sup>351</sup> For an examination of the criss-crossing voices, including their possible identity, see Géza von Molnár “The Composition of Novalis’ ‘Die Lehrlinge zu Sais’: A Reevaluation” 1008-9.

<sup>352</sup> See Adorno: “Artworks have the imminent character of being an act, even if they are carved in stone, and this endows them with the quality of being something momentary and sudden.” (*Aesthetic Theory* 79)

## Un-Veiling Sais

Kant, in his Third Critique, identifies the two most sublime utterances as the Old Testament ban on graven images and the inscription on the temple of Sais (Lacoue-Labarthe, "Sublime" 71-4). Both Moses's admonition against making "the likeness of anything which is in heaven or in the earth or under the earth" (71) and the Egyptian inscription that separates mortals from "all that is and that was and that shall be" (72) with a veil, are sublime in the traditional sense of presenting the impossibility of presenting the divine. They also seem to posit the existence of something that cannot be represented and thereby demonstrate their complicity in what Nietzsche, in a fortuitous fragment from the *Nachlass*, terms "the pleasure in creating forms" ("die Lust...am Erfinden von Gestalten").<sup>353</sup> Literally a leftover, this fragment on the human propensity to invent or discover forms has its literary corollary in Novalis' scientists, whose characterization as "Scheidekünstler" (1:228) aligns them with the cuts and delimitations of the graven image. The poets, by contrast, have as their object the fluid and fleeting that finds its corollary in the frustratingly elusive veil of Sais. That the poet reworks ("verarbeitet") the scraps of the scientists into a "tägliche Nahrung" recalling Luther's "daily bread," mediates between the Biblical denunciation of the ability of man to represent the divine and the perspectival knowledge that makes up man's only reality, referred to by Nietzsche as "a means of nourishment" ("ein Mittel der Ernährung").<sup>354</sup> Perception

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<sup>353</sup> Translation mine; 11:608

<sup>354</sup> Translation mine; 11:609

in Nietzsche is an active process of ordering, creating form and making-common that, in accordance with the phenomenal world in *Sais* as “Ueberbleibsel eines Schrecklichen Mahls” (1:211), stages the self as a tool of the stomach —“wenn nicht selber eine Art von Magen!” (11:609)<sup>355</sup>—that feeds off the scraps of the always already perceived (11:609). This “vom Schweinemetzger geschlachtete[] und am Laden ausgespannte[] Universum,” to borrow Brentano’s characterization of Novalis’ fragments, makes up the sole reality behind which no “An sich der Dinge” (11:609) is to be found. If, following Adorno, the aesthetic dimension of the ban on graven images is the impossibility of making an image *of something*, reality according to Nietzsche is in sympathy with that ban.<sup>356</sup> It is as impossible to get behind the gastronomic assimilation of Nietzsche’s world as it is to lift the veil of *Sais*.

Nietzsche’s treatment of the veil of *Sais* similarly deals with the attempt to abstract a grounding reality from the active perception of man that *creates* something to see and hear as soon as nothing presents itself to be seen or heard (11:608). In the opening aphorism of Book 2 of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, Nietzsche admonishes the “sober” realists who think that they see the world as it really is: “vor euch allein stehe die Wirklichkeit entschleiert, und ihr selber wäret vielleicht der beste Theil davon, — oh ihr geliebten Bilder von *Sais*!” (3:421).<sup>357</sup> Nietzsche

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<sup>355</sup> “...if not itself a stomach of sorts!”

<sup>356</sup> *Ästhetische Theorie* 106; *Aesthetic Theory* 67

<sup>357</sup> “As if reality stood unveiled before you only, and you yourselves were perhaps the best part of it—O you beloved images of *Sais*!” (*GS* 121)

continues saying that the sober realists are in fact drunk on “a primeval love” (“eine alte uralte ‘Liebe’”) <sup>358</sup> whereby any ultimate reality is untenable due to the impossibility of subtracting human contributions, including their animality, from it. The hints of the primordial put this aphorism in proximity to the Apollonian and Dionysian, itself a reinterpretation of the inscription on the temple of Sais. The redetermination of truth following the Apollonian and Dionysian relation as “just one mask among others” (Greaney 73) sheds new light on both Novalis’ use of the veil of Sais and the relationship between Nietzsche and Early German Romanticism more generally.

One of the more recent attempts to describe Nietzsche’s relationship to Jena Romanticism does so with explicit reference to the treatment of the veil of Sais in Nietzsche and Novalis. <sup>359</sup> This attempt focuses on the Fichtean dimensions of the Novalis fragment, in which the veil is lifted: “Einem gelang es – er hob den Schleyer der Göttin zu Saïs – Aber was sah er? er sah – Wunder des Wunders – Sich Selbst” (2:374). <sup>360</sup> Based on a Fichtean interpretation of this fragment, in which the veil is lifted to uncover a self sure in the knowledge that a process of synthesis between self, other, and absolute is at work within it, the fundamental distinction is set between Novalis and Nietzsche as transcendence vs. immanence. The difference is a basic one: Whereas Novalis concerns himself with access to the truth behind the

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<sup>358</sup> *GS* 121; 3:421

<sup>359</sup> Judith Norman “Nietzsche and Early Romanticism” 501-19

<sup>360</sup> “One person succeeded—he lifted the veil of the goddess at Saïs—But what did he see? he saw—wonder of wonders—himself.” (*PW* 76)



veil, Nietzsche has seemingly outgrown such youthful exploits as evidenced in the 1886 preface to *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*: “[M]an wird uns schwerlich wieder auf den Pfaden jener ägyptischen Jünglinge finden, welche Nachts Tempel unsicher machen, Bildsäulen umarmen und durchaus Alles, was mit guten Gründen verdeckt gehalten wird, entschleiern, aufdecken, in helles Licht stellen wollen” (3:351-52).<sup>361</sup> Important enough to reproduce almost verbatim in the epilogue of *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, Nietzsche’s treatment of the veil of Sais continues in a manner that (re)traces the migration of truth from a transcendental determination to one of dissimulation discussed in various guises above:

Nein, dieser schlechte Geschmack, dieser Wille zur Wahrheit, zur “Wahrheit um jeden Preis”, dieser Jünglings-Wahnsinn in der Liebe zur Wahrheit — ist uns verleidet: dazu sind wir zu erfahren, zu ernst, zu lustig, zu gebrannt, zu tief...Wir glauben nicht mehr daran, dass Wahrheit noch Wahrheit bleibt, wenn man ihr die Schleier abzieht; wir haben genug gelebt, um dies zu glauben. Heute gilt es uns als eine Sache der Schicklichkeit, dass man nicht Alles nackt sehn, nicht bei Allem dabei sein, nicht Alles verstehn und “wissen” wolle. (3:352)<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>361</sup> “[O]ne will hardly find us again on the paths of those Egyptian youths who endanger temples by night, embrace statues, and want by all means to unveil, uncover, and put into a bright light whatever is kept concealed for good reasons.” (GS 38)

<sup>362</sup> “No, this bad taste, this will to truth, to ‘truth at any price,’ this youthful madness in the love of truth, have lost their charm for us: for that we are too experienced, too serious, too merry, too burned, too *profound*. We no longer believe that truth remains truth when the veils are withdrawn; we have lived too much to believe this. Today we consider it a matter of decency not to wish to see everything naked, or to be present at everything, or to understand and ‘know’ everything.” (GS 38)

Nietzsche's restraint before, and even disinterest in, the secrets behind the veil puts him at odds with the quest for truth under which much of Romanticism has been understood. If he is not on the path of the Egyptian novices, he may however still be on the path of the Early German Romantics. Noteworthy is the echo of this statement in a passage of *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais* referred to above, in which the search for the truth about nature distances one from nature. Even the assumption that there is one nature is lacking in reserve (*überschwenglich*), a charge that can also be leveled against the use of Novalis' fragment on Sais as evidence for his supposed transcendentalism. There is more than one Sais in Novalis, and rather than focus on the small morsel of a fragment, a reading of the veil as it appears in *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais* lends itself to more nuanced understanding of Nietzsche's relationship of Novalis. Nietzsche, not unlike the poet in *Sais*, can then vivify the remains (*Nachlass*) of Novalis, a scientist by trade.

“Wir glauben nicht mehr daran, dass Wahrheit noch Wahrheit bleibt, wenn man ihr die Schleier abzieht.” Nietzsche's gesture, which may seem to distinguish him from Novalis, is limited to the extent that the latter's representation is not interrogated as to its performative dimension. In fact, Nietzsche merely restates in exegetical fashion what Novalis' text already performs. The shift from the tropological to the performative adds a sublime quality to the two most sublime utterances according to Kant and to Novalis' veil of Sais. They not only present “the ‘fact’ that there is the nonpresentable” (Lacoue-Labarthe 90), for this “fact” is itself a representation. The indirectness of the ban on graven images and the inscription on the temple of Isis—“the model of the esoteric utterance itself” (90)—makes them

meta-sublime statements. That the truth can never position itself in such a way that it could actually speak—the “syntactical equivalent...of an oxymoron” (91)—occludes, through its position in *Sais*, any reading that would reduce it to a reassuring idealist or transcendental narrative. To repeat: *Sais* does not provide any lesson that could be used as a “stone in a great edifice.” Rather than being an image of grand architectonics, the veil of Sais in Novalis, appropriately, takes the form of *mise-en-abyme*. The layering is humorously vertiginous. Not only is the scene in a novel-fragment; not only is it told to a youth confused after listening to the well-known “criss-crossing voices”; not only is it recounted in the form of a fairy tale by a stranger who leaps into the narrative from out of the blue; not only does it appear in a fairy tale, the protagonists of which (Hyacinth and Rosenblüthchen) embody a heightened artificiality;<sup>363</sup> in addition, the stylized youth in the fairy tale must also be dreaming in order to gain access to the veil: “Unter himmlischen Wohlgedüften entschlummerte er, weil ihn nur der Traum in das Allerheiligste führen durfte” (1:218).<sup>364</sup> It is under these circumstances that the reader finally encounters the veil:

Es dünkte ihm alles so bekannt und doch in niegesehener Herrlichkeit, da schwand auch der letzte irdische Anflug, wie in Luft verzehrt, und er stand vor der himmlischen Jungfrau, da hob der den leichten, glänzenden Schleyer,

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<sup>363</sup> Calhoon “Language and Romantic Irony” 58-9; Calhoon’s observation that the artificiality of the fairy tale bleeds over into the novel (the objects in the temple start speaking to each other after the conclusion of the fairy tale) is exemplary of the Romantic insight into the power of the representation to affect the thing it represents.

<sup>364</sup> “Amid heavenly scents he fell asleep, for only a dream could take him to the holy of holies.” (67)

und Rosenblüthchen sank in seine Arme. Eine ferne Musik umgab die Geheimnisse des liebenden Wiedersehns, die Ergießungen der Sehnsucht, und schloß alles Fremde von diesem entzückenden Orte aus. (1:218)<sup>365</sup>

An interpretive decision needs to be made here. On some level this is indeed an unveiling. The veil is lifted, whereas in Nietzsche it is not: transcendence vs. immanence. However, given the hyper-indirection and irony of its position in *Sais*, its meta-sublime utterance of truth, it also (per)forms the tragic insight that Nietzsche will echo. Upon lifting the veil Hyacinth receives what he had all along: his beloved Rosenblüthchen. That Hyacinth is enveloped by intoxications (love and music) that expel everything foreign recalls Nietzsche's realists, who, drunk on "a primeval 'love'" think that they apprehend reality unveiled: "Und was ist für einen verliebten Künstler 'Wirklichkeit'?" (3:421).<sup>366</sup> This primordial love is the shadow side of "the pleasure in creating forms" encountered in the *Nachlass*; it is the always already veiled nature of reality dramatized by Nietzsche throughout his corpus as the relationship between the Dionysian and Apollonian. The "primal soup" of the Dionysian, as it is called in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, only nourishes when given form by the Apollonian. The truth does not remain the truth when the veil is drawn because the truth of the truth is the tragic insight into the inevitability of veiling

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<sup>365</sup> "It seemed to him all so familiar and yet of a radiance such as he had never beheld; the last trace of earth vanished as though dissolved in air, and he stood before the heavenly maiden. He raised the light, shimmering veil, and Rose Petal sank into his arms. A distant music surrounded the mysteries of the lovers' meeting, the outpourings of yearning, and excluded all that was alien from this lovely place." (67)

<sup>366</sup> "And what is 'reality' for an artist in love?" (GS 121)

itself.<sup>367</sup> This splintering of reality as a function of the supplementary logic of the aesthetic reinscribes the migration of Schiller's play-instinct into the relationship between Nietzsche and Early German Romanticism. Nietzsche's thought is not "fundamentally hostile to that of Jena Romanticism" (Norman 513). In a repetition of the primal scene of Romanticism with which I began, *he* is haunted by *it*.

The tragic insight into the inevitability of veiling in Nietzsche, in which "life itself has become a *problem*" ("das Leben selbst wurde zum *Problem*"),<sup>368</sup> does not lead to the impoverishment with which he will distance himself from everything Romantic.<sup>369</sup> It leads rather to a second innocence, a Romantic resonance that makes of Nietzsche a disciple of Novalis' *Sais*. This innocence delights in "a mocking, light, fleeting, divinely untroubled, divinely artificial art" ("eine spöttische, leichte, flüchtige, göttlich ungehelligte, göttlich künstliche Kunst").<sup>370</sup> A reading of *Sais* with an eye to its ironic performative register is just such an art. That this dimension of Novalis' texts "hide[s] itself among the refinements of decay" ("sich unter die

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<sup>367</sup> For a similar reading attuned to gender see Wellbery *The Specular Moment* 63; See also this rigorous formulation in Lacoue-Labarthe "Sublime Truth": "But what is produced in Isis's sentence—and this is probably the reason why it has been so fascinating—is that telling the truth about itself, telling the truth of the truth and unveiling itself as the truth, truth (unveiling) unveils itself as the impossibility of unveiling or the necessity, for finite (mortal) Being, of its veiling. Speaking of itself, unveiling itself, truth says that the essence of truth is nontruth—or that the essence of unveiling is veiling. The truth (the unveiling) unveils itself as veiling itself." (91)

<sup>368</sup> *GS* 36; 3:350

<sup>369</sup> *KSA* 3:620; *GS* 328

<sup>370</sup> *GS* 37; 3:351

Raffinements des Verfalls [versteckt]”),<sup>371</sup> to borrow from Nietzsche’s description of Wagner’s overture to *Die Meistersinger*, speaks for my characterization of Nietzsche as a disciple of *Sais*. Many Romantic texts, as Thomas Pfau has observed, predetermine (or at least overdetermine) their “belated, critical articulation” through a logic “of producing community and stability through the subtly regulative play of an aesthetic model continually anticipating and predetermining the conditions of its belated critical reception and elaboration” (Pfau, “Introduction” 32, 33). That the critique that attempts to position Nietzsche squarely against “Romanticism’s allegedly symptomatic (or aesthetic) ideology may, in fact, constitute but a repetition, a supplemental effect *of* that very symptom” (Pfau 30) can be corroborated by one final image from *Sais*.

After the recounting of the tale of Hyazinth and Rosenblüthchen, a group of travelers arrive at the temple of Sais and begin musing in a manner that mirrors the earlier criss-crossing voices. Their goal is to find traces of the language of the “Urvolk...dessen entartete und verwilderte Reste die heutige Menschheit zu seyn schiene (1:230).<sup>372</sup> Such belated reception must content itself with the ruins (“Trümmer”) of their language. The bookending of *Sais* with the completion of an enigmatic edifice and the search among ruins not only repeats on a larger scale the constitution and dissolution of *Ahdung*, but also thematizes and overdetermines Novalis’ own critical reception.

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<sup>371</sup> *BGE* 170; 5:180

<sup>372</sup> “...primeval race, whose degenerate and barbarous remnants the men of the present appear to be[.]” (113)

*Sais* not only reads itself; it also reads the reader. Tracings and migrations then, but not mere repetition. Just as the threat of the shift between the tropological and performative dimensions of the treated texts (illustrated most concisely through the migration of the play-instinct) contains the promise of the metonymical splintering that undoes the tyranny of any reading, so too does the tragic insight into the inevitability of such un-veilings shape its own promise. Nietzsche calls this, in an echo of Romantic rhetoric, a “second dangerous innocence” (zweit[e] gefährlicher[e] Unschuld)<sup>373</sup>—one that delights in the joy born of the depths, a depth not born of Truth but of the sublimely tragic insight into the truth of the Truth. This lesson, which Nietzsche characterizes as “superficial—*out of profundity*” (“oberflächlich — *aus Tiefe!*”),<sup>374</sup> forms a community not predicated on the rigidifying architectonics of *Bildung*, but on the flight from petrification.

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<sup>373</sup> GS 37; 3:351

<sup>374</sup> GS 38; 3:352

## APPENDIX

### KEY TO WORKS CITED

#### Works by Nietzsche

<i>KSA</i>	<i>Kritische Studienausgabe</i>
<i>BGE</i>	<i>Beyond Good and Evil</i>
<i>BT</i>	<i>The Birth of Tragedy</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>Daybreak</i>
<i>EH</i>	<i>Ecce Homo</i>
<i>GS</i>	<i>The Gay Science</i>
<i>HAH</i>	<i>Human all too Human</i>
<i>TI</i>	<i>Twilight of the Idols</i>
<i>WP</i>	<i>The Will to Power</i>

#### Works by Novalis

<i>AB</i>	<i>Das Allgemeine Brouillon</i>
<i>PW</i>	<i>Philosophical Writings</i>



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