THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

WORLD, UNIVERSE, AND HETEROCOSM IN THE EARLY GERMAN ROMANTIC PROJECT OF UNIVERSAL POETRY (1795-1802)

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF GERMANIC STUDIES

BY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 2023

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Acknowledgements

I am grateful to all who have supported me in the pursuit of this project, whether directly or indirectly. Everyone who has been with me in this time has been part of the process.

Most importantly, I would like to thank my committee members, Catriona MacLeod, Christopher Wild, Eric Santner, and David Wellbery. All of you have inspired me with your intellectual energy; you are examples without which I could not have even envisioned this project. I would like to thank Catriona especially for getting me into Romanticism in late 2019, then giving me free rein to alternatingly frolick and trudge through the endless reflections of Romantic la-la-land. Thank you to Christopher for welcoming me into the Germanic Studies community at UChicago and for remaining and indispensable mentor and interlocutor, to Eric Santner for your careful and precise feedback, and to David Wellbery for your generosity and willingness to engage so deeply with my ideas. Beyond my PhD committee, I extend profound thanks to Gabriel Trop: your bold and insightful readings of Novalis have inspired me, as has your gracious support for my work.

For guidance in my pedagogical pursuits, an immense thank you to Maeve Hooper, whose mentorship, support, and pedagogical brilliance have taught me how much creativity is possible in the classroom. You have made me the confident teacher I am today. Thank you also to Emily Anderson, for making possible the entire process of this PhD program on the administrative side.

Special thanks to my fellow graduate students in the Germanic Studies department, past and present, especially those who have read drafts and let me bounce some crazy ideas off of you. Your care, kindness, and generosity has made this journey through grad school feel meaningful and even – dare I say – fun! I could not ask for better colleagues and friends.

On a personal level, I am grateful to my parents, Andrea and Markus Wilhelm, and to my partner, Rachel. Your support for my intellectual endeavors has been unwavering and has carried me through some of the toughest moments of the process. Thank you for taking care of me and helping me finish in good spirits. Thank you to my friends Ari, Clara, Kele, Lili, and Naomi for cheering me through the final stages, and to all of my ravers, for working it all out with me, with and without words.

Finally, an enormous shout-out to all of my comrades in unionization, fellow-members of our freshly-certified Graduate Students United-UE Local 1103. Thanks especially to Clara del Junco for bringing me in, and to the many others who have tenaciously organized this union together: to Yaniv, Pascal, Kristin, Neomi, the Davids, and all of the original WAC-ers who were already at it in my first years of 2017 and 2018. Thank you to Andrew Seber, Michael Stablein, Rina Sugawara, Abigail Taylor-Roth, Laura Colaneri, Chris Wilson, Shannon Sheu, Rebekah Rosenfeld, Josh Babcock, Arunima Mehrotra, Umama Zillur, Audrey Williams, Elaine Colligan, Tomal Hossain, Matt Borus, Uday Jain, and hundreds more for your work, your support, your solidarity, and for never giving up.

Abstract

This dissertation analyzes the poetic practices and critical discourses of the early German Romantic project of progressive universal poetry through the works of Friedrich Schlegel, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and Novalis. I frame the project of Romantic universal poetry as a response to the representational challenges brought forward by Johann Gottlieb Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, which attempted to secure an Absolute for Idealist philosophy in the phrase *Ich=Ich*. As I argue, the Romantic idea of universal poetry is inspired by the form of Fichte's phrase, which, though failing to represent the Absolute as a completely unconditioned principle, provides the impetus for a Romantic theory of universal reflexivity. Romantic reflection does not coincide with or attain the Absolute, but its dynamic, oppositional movements represent the self's attraction to the unattainable ground of its existence.

One of the most important but under-analyzed modes in which universal reflection appears in early German Romanticism is through the idea of a multiplication of different worlds or world views. The concept of world becomes productive for the early Romantics as a mode of representing the relationships between works of art or even the sciences and reality, between different views conceived as worlds, between critical texts and works of art. Views become works, works become worlds, and worlds become mere views once again in escalating movements of reflective transformation that challenge the distinction between representational perspectives and the realities they designate. Within this constellation, the heterocosm (an inverted world such as a fairy tale world) serves as a means of representing reflective worldmaking as not only imitation or correspondence, but simultaneously as the production of reversals, illusions, and even oppositions. As I show, these mind-bendingly diverse reflections among different Romantic worlds and worldviews serve as means of simultaneously *suggesting*

the idea of an underlying reality or order (a universe, even) in which all worlds might be connected to one another, *and* of maintaining the irreducibility of reflection to a homogenizing higher principle. It is precisely through their simultaneous suggestion and suspension of the idea of a higher order that the Romantics are able to maintain a sense of dynamic mobility among different worldviews, a universality purely on the level of reflexivity. As a result of this intentional ambiguity, reflection however also never moves past the modality of suggestive correspondence and becomes an explicit technique of *poesis*. The Romantics' conception of universal reflexivity becomes a tool for diverse aspects of Romantic poetic theory and practice. It influences the development of new forms of artistic and literary criticism that reflect on the role of the critic in "remaking" works of art and in influencing different modes of cultural consumption; it contributes to the development of a specifically Romantic rhetoric and poetics, which questions the relationship between the desire for an pre-reflective origin and the illusory sense of immediacy that can be produced in reflection; and finally, it contributes to a critique of the Enlightenment's scientific optimism through constant perspectival juxtapositions that call into question the solidity of scientific first principles.

Introduction: The Project of Romantic Universal Poetry

If early German Romanticism had a unifying manifesto, this manifesto would certainly be the 116th *Athenaeum*-fragment, penned by Friedrich Schlegel, which declares Romantic poetry "eine progressive Universalpoesie."[1] Though famous today and often extracted from its context, Schlegel's declaration came to its first readers as merely one in an immense chaos of declarations: the several hundred fragments that appeared without title or authorial attribution in Friedrich and August Wilhelm Schlegel's short-lived journal, the *Athenaeum*, in 1798. Situated among the various witticisms and intellectual provocations authored by the Schlegel brothers and their friends Novalis and Friedrich Schleiermacher, the 116th *Athenaeum*-fragment was not an authoritative or final encapsulation of the Romantic project, but a manifesto that in its very form of appearance attests to the provocative sense of plurality meant by the Romantic project of universality.

A similar sense of plurality can be observed in the rhetoric of the fragment on universal poetry. While the goal of Romantic universal poetry is to unify, the form of unity that it tends toward is indeterminate, since *Universalpoesie* is, much like the collection of fragments, constituted entirely of distinct elements, the expansive variety of which undermines any attempt to coherently characterize it as a whole. Schlegel spends much of his time in the 116th *Athenaeum*-fragment listing the various elements that are connected by universal poetry:

> Die romantische Poesie ist eine progressive Universalpoesie. Ihre Bestimmung ist nicht bloß, alle getrennte Gattungen der Poesie wieder zu vereinigen, und die Poesie mit der Philosophie und Rhetorik in Berührung zu setzen. Sie will, und soll auch Poesie und Prosa, Genialität und Kritik, Kunstpoesie und Naturpoesie bald mischen, bald

[1] Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, ed. Ernst Behler with Jean-Jacques Anstett and Hans Eichner, 35 vols. (München: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1967), 2: 182. (This edition hereafter cited as *KFSA*.)

> verschmelzen, die Poesie lebendig und gesellig, und das Leben und die Gesellschaft poetisch machen, den Witz poetisieren, und die Formen der Kunst mit gediegnem Bildungsstoff jeder Art anfüllen und sättigen, und durch die Schwingungen des Humors beseelen. Sie umfaßt alles, was nur poetisch ist, vom größten wieder mehre Systeme in sich enthaltenden Systeme der Kunst, bis zu dem Seufzer, dem Kuß, den das dichtende Kind aushaucht in kunstlosen Gesang.[2]

Schlegel's description revels in multiplicity. Though intentionally in flux and perhaps impossible to definitively conceptualize, universal poetry is radically affirmative in its embrace of "alles, was nur poetisch ist." Rhetorically speaking, Schlegel's definition of universal poetry proceeds through stages of self-transcendence. He begins with a more or less graspable idea (universal poetry unites all genres of poetry), and then moves progressively beyond it, into different disciplines (rhetoric and philosophy), into a mixture of opposing critical concepts of poetry and the poetic (e.g., *Kunstpoesie* and *Naturpoesie*), and finally into the things depicted *by* poetry (life, society, a sigh, a kiss, and so forth), which are revealed as poetic *through* the process of universal poetry. Through this complex series of escalations, Schlegel undermines the conceptual stability of the unity of poetry that he initially projects, putting it into flux precisely by continually adding to what it encompasses. Universal poetry is more than just the totality of all works or genres of poetry, but also includes and connects all attempts to describe poetry (all categories and systems of critical analysis), as well as – at least potentially – all of the things described *by* poetry. In this sense, it is not so much poetry conceived of as an object, but as a process, as its progressive tendency of unification, of poeticization, of the transformation of the world into poetry. To be truly universal, universal poetry must become *everything*. Another way of putting this would be to say that in order to completely universalize poetry and make it encompass everything, the distinction between poetry and non-poetry, or poetry and the world –

[2] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 182.

the oppositions that make poetry intelligible *as* poetry in the first place – must be overcome. When fully realized, universal poetry would cease to exist as poetry, and would simply become the (poetic) universe.

Schlegel, however, does not go this far: he remains with distinct elements, conjuring this idea of totality by amassing particulars that portray the dynamic of poetic self-transcendence and universalization through the power of rhetorical suggestion. He also assigns universality to a particular *kind* of poetry – Romantic poetry – which is both a distinct type of poetry and the universal tendency itself. As Schlegel writes at the end of the fragment, "Die romantische Dichtart ist die einzige, die mehr als Art, und gleichsam die Dichtkunst selbst ist: denn in einem gewissen Sinn ist oder soll alle Poesie romantisch sein."[3] Though he calls the Romantic an *Art* (a type or a kind) of poetry and differentiates it from other forms, it is far from a genre (*Gattung*). Mereologically speaking, Schlegel describes the Romantic as an element (whether we can call it a part or a fragment is up for debate), but also as the becoming of the whole in the form of an infinite *Zusammenhang*. As that which moves between different poetic forms, connects them to one another, and makes *everything* poetic, it lacks essence or stable characteristics – it is universal in both a positive way (all-encompassing, all-mediating, infinitely characterizable) and in a negative way (impossible to pin down). As universal poetry itself, Romantic poetry is pure dynamism and connection.[4] It is "noch im Werden; ja das ist ihr eigentliches Wesen, daß sie ewig nur werden, nie vollendet sein kann."[5] Romantic poetry therefore occupies a unique position in relation to the other types and genres of poetry: on the one hand, it encapsulates and

[3] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 183.
[4] It is worth noting that the Romantics used *Poesie*, which I here call poetry, to refer to much more than just poetry in the traditional sense (verse), but as encompassing all of literature and the arts. I also use it in this way.
[5] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 183.

includes them all, playing with their interconnections, while on the other hand it also differs from them quite radically. It is "die einzige" of the various *Dichtarten* – the One – that is the essence of poetry itself, precisely because it also contains the All – the multiplicity of forms – but it therefore also has no proper form of its own. For this reason, it also remains constitutively open to new forms, to the formless, and to the world.

This dissertation takes as its point of departure the question of what early Romantic universal poetry means *in practice*. In other words, what are the poetic and rhetorical strategies by which this idea of poetry becomes realized? How do distinct poetic representations that we classify as belonging to early German Romanticism manifest the dynamism of *Universalpoesie* conceived as a form of poetry that connects all forms? Moreover, how can we understand the ultimate end goal of universal poetry, namely, the transformation of the world into poetry? What are the mechanisms by which this would be achieved?

Critical Debates: Representation and the Absolute in Early German Romanticism

There is an important philosophical background to these questions, to which Romantic universal poetry cannot be reduced, but from which its urgency as a literary and intellectual movement springs. This background can already be sensed in the idea of the universal (or perhaps more accurately, progressive universality) and remains important throughout the dissertation, even as I turn my attention away from philosophical discussions to focus on literary and rhetorical forms. Novalis, Friedrich Schlegel and Friedrich Schleiermacher, the three authors whom I discuss in this project (and who represent the most philosophically-inclined among the early Romantic circle) were involved in a lively philosophical debate in the 1790s, which followed in the wake of Kant's critical philosophy and was intensified by the publication in 1794 of Fichte's first

Wissenschaftslehre. This debate circulated around the question of whether philosophy could be grounded in a first principle, an Absolute. In his *Wissenschaftslehre,* Fichte had attempted to secure a first principle – a *Grundsatz* – for philosophy in the self-posited identity of the subject, which he formulates as *Ich=Ich*.[6] Each on a unique path, Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis, and Schleiermacher developed critiques of Fichte's Absolute on the grounds that what is meant by this Absolute (the indivisible unity of a highest, unconditioned, all-determining principle – the Being of the *Ich*) cannot be expressed in the form of a judgement, and in fact cannot be represented at all, in consciousness or through signs, without becoming determined, split from itself as reflection, ontologically voided, and thereby robbed of its absolute status.[7]

The intense twentieth-century scholarly interest in this philosophical debate was initiated by the work of Dieter Henrich, whose groundbreaking studies of Fichte and the constellation of thinkers around him began in the 1960s and gave rise to an entire intellectual-historical method known as *Konstellationsforschung*.[8] Among Henrich's students, Manfred Frank has given the most coherent and influential account (to this day) of early German Romantic philosophy and of the way in which the problem of the unrepresentability of the Absolute makes its way into early German Romantic aesthetics. In Frank's evaluation, broadly speaking, art jumps into the breach where philosophy reaches the limits of its capacity for representation. Rather than *represent* the

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[6] Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre*, in *Johann Gottlieb Fichtes sämmtliche Werke*, ed. I.H. Fichte (Berlin: Veit, 1845-46), 10: 83-328, at 94.

[7] In this part of the introduction, I focus primarily on the work of Novalis and his reception. On Friedrich Schlegel (more recently), see Elizabeth Millán, *Friedrich Schlegel and the Emergence of Romantic Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007). Schleiermacher has received less attention as a Romantic thinker, but his critique of Fichte (which is extremely close to Novalis's) is analyzed in Andreas Arndt, "Gefühl und Reflexion: Schleiermachers Stellung zur Transzendentalphilosophie im Kontext der zeitgenössischen Kritik an Kant und Fichte," in *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation: Der Streit um die Gestalt einer ersten Philosophie (1799-1807)*, ed. Walter Jaeschke, Philosophisch-Literarische Streitsachen 2 (Hamburg: Meiner, 1993), 105–26.

[8] This began with Dieter Henrich, "Fichtes ursprüngliche Einsicht," in *Subjektivität und Metaphysik: Festschrift für Wolfgang Cramer*, ed. Dieter Henrich and Hans Wagner (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1966), 188-232.

Absolute, however, Frank argues that art represents its *un*representability. If the philosophy of the Absolute had been an attempt to overcome Kantian dualism (between theoretical and practical reason), in Frank's narrative, early German Romantic aesthetics reinstates this dualism in a different form – this time between the Absolute and that which can be made available to representation and to consciousness. Though unable to represent the Absolute, art self-reflexively represents the Absolute's mode of (in)accessibility to representation, *in* representation, through a figure that Frank influentially terms the *ordo inversus* in reference to Novalis's studies of Fichte.[9] As Frank puts it: "Die epistemische Undarstellbarkeit des Absoluten findet ein Komplement in der ästhetischen Schau, die uns das Absolute gibt, indem sie es uns *nicht* gibt, nämlich *nicht reflexiv* vermittelt, sondern *als das reflexiv Undarstellbare* selbst wieder darstellt."[10]

In his account, Frank privileges specific aspects of Romantic aesthetics: wit, irony, allegory, and the fragment, as modes of presentation of the Absolute's unattainability. Among these forms, the fragment is worth dwelling on for a moment, since it is the form in which Schlegel presents the project of *Universalpoesie*. Frank writes,

> [Das Fragment] stiftet Einheit im Chaos, denn es beerbt die synthesewirkende Kraft der absoluten Einheit; aber es lenkt die Bindungskraft des Absoluten von der Unendlichkeit ab in die Einzelheit, d.h. es stiftet gerade nicht Totalität, sondern ein Gesamt ('Chaos') von Individual-Positionen, deren jede der anderen widerstrebt.[11]

[9] In this article, Frank (together with his co-author, Gerhard Kurz) theorizes a figure of reflection in Novalis's work that he conceives of as a double reflection: a reflection on reflection. I engage with this below. See Manfred Frank and Gerhard Kurz, "*Ordo inversus*: Zu einer Reflexionsfigur bei Novalis, Hölderlin, Kleist und Kafka," in *Geist und Zeichen: Festschrift für Arthur Henkel zu seinem sechzigsten Geburtstag,* ed. Herbert Anton, Bernhard Gajek, and Peter Pfaff (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1977), 75-97.
[10] Manfred Frank, *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik: Vorlesungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989), 244.
[11] Frank, *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik*, 297.

Several aspects of this description are helpful: for example, the fragment is a synthetic genre, but one that, by its very form, never produces an absolute synthesis, and indeed seems to foreclose such a synthesis because it remains on the level of particulars. Though insightful and even witty, no individual fragment represents a definitive or unassailable statement of truth, nor even a clearly defined part of an overarching claim of the fragment collection – all of the fragments make claims (often very provocative ones that represent challenges to thought), but none has authority. Moreover, there is no systematic hierarchy or synthesis to be had among the many fragments that make up the collection published in the *Athenaeum* – they form a "Gesamt" or a "Chaos." As a collection, the fragments make no specific claim, except perhaps that of their own varied, interconnected multiplicity. What is slightly misleading about Frank's description is his insistence on the sheer antagonism and disconnection between individual positions or fragmentary syntheses, a dynamic that he presents as key to the production of a "fragmentarisches Universum" – a sort of unintelligible, fractured totality. As Frank writes,

> Dieser dem Fragment eingewebte Widerspruchsgeist ist ein *notwendiger* Effekt der Detotalisierung oder Dekomposition der höchsten Einheit, die nicht mehr Einheit eines Ganzen (oder eines Systems), sondern lediglich Einheit eines Einzeldings und ohne systematische Bindung an die anderen Einzeldinge ist: Aus dem fragmentarischen Universum resultiert kein System, sondern 'Asystasie', 'Unbestand', 'Uneinigkeit', Inkohärenz, Zusammenhanglosigkeit.[12]

Given that he argues that the Romantics accept the idea of an ontological Absolute (merely positing it as unrepresentable), it is surprising that Frank insists on a "Detotalisierung oder Dekomposition der höchsten Einheit" – i.e., the unity of the All (conceived of as the complement to Absolute unity). While it is certainly the case that the All conceived of as the highest unity is not equivalent to any specific form of unity or collectivity embodied in the fragments (neither

[12] Frank, *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik*, 297.

wholeness nor chaos), it nevertheless occupies an important position in relation to them. The idea of the All is conceived in relation to each of these forms, and is suggested through the fact that these forms can be related to one another. Counter to Frank's interpretation, Schlegel therefore gives chaos a generative rather than purely decomposing function in relation to the idea of wholeness. As he writes in the *Ideen* (a later fragment-collection), "Nur diejenige Verworrenheit ist ein Chaos, aus der eine Welt entspringen kann."[13] Neither *Chaos* nor *Welt* is necessarily equivalent to the All in this fragment. Rather, Schlegel places these terms (and their implications of ordered unity and aggregate disorder) into a productive tension, challenging his reader to find a way of mediating between them by finding the potential for *Welt* within the idea of *Chaos*. Whether either of these terms in fact reaches the Absolute is a question that is intentionally left open: *Welt* serves as a potential stand-in for a coherent form of the unknown All, just as much as *Chaos* does. The All however remains constitutively beyond them, as that which is suggested by the connectibility of two apparently opposed forms.

Manfred Frank does not mention the project of universal poetry even once in his discussion of the Romantic fragments, or of Romantic aesthetics more generally. This omission is part of the polemical thrust of his project, which presents early German Romanticism as the intellectual-historical origin for the conception of modern consciousness as exiled from absolute knowledge, unable to conceptualize Being, and of modern art (beginning with Romanticism) as the representation of this consciousness.[14] Reading across the vast collection of fragments, however, it is simply not the case that the multiplicity of the fragments (even if we conceive it as

[13] Friedrich Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 263.
[14] Which is, in turn, a reaction against an older interpretation of Romanticism as "harmonietrunken und ins Absolute verliebt," as Frank puts it. See Frank, *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik*, 297.

a disorganized, chaotic multiplicity) automatically produces contradiction and "Zusammenhanglosigkeit"; rather, any attentive reader can observe many shared themes and structures of thought across the fragments – a *Zusammenhang*, or in fact various *Zusammenhänge*, that cannot be resolved into a definite form. The unsystematizable resonances among fragments and various groups of fragments invite constant further thought on the sorts of intellectual and poetic position(s) that they (individually and together) might articulate. Their unsynthesized, heterogeneous togetherness neither leads to mutual annihilation nor to a synthesis, but remains perpetually in suspension. In this state of suspension, the fragments represent stimuli for thought, dynamic impulses that both Schlegel and Novalis describe with the language of "Keim" (a germ for thought) and "Reiz" (stimulus).[15] In this sense, they represent the progressive energy of *Universalpoesie*: they produce connections that go through the motions of, but constitutively surpass, and thereby once again challenge conceptual synthesis.

More recently, critics have begun to push back against aspects of Frank's interpretation of early Romantic aesthetics and philosophy (especially its spin toward negativity and sharp dualisms), arguing for a relational conception of the Absolute that is not foreign to representation or inaccessible to knowledge. In her book *The Romantic Absolute*, Dalia Nassar reconceives of the Romantic Absolute as "a living nexus composed of different but related parts, or better, an internally differentiated unity" that is both phenomenologically present and exists as a cognitive

[15] And many other metaphors. E.g., in fragment #259, Friedrich Schlegel represents the project as follows: "A. Fragmente, sagen Sie, wären die eigentliche Form der Universalphilosophie. An der Form liegt nichts. Was können aber solche Fragmente für die größeste und ernsthafteste Angelegenheit der Menschheit, für die Vervollkommnung der Wissenschaft, leisten und sein? – B. Nichts als ein Lessingsches Salz gegen die geistige Fäulnis, vielleicht eine zynische *lanx satura* im Styl des alten Lucilius oder Horaz, oder gar *fermenta cognitionis* zur kritischen Philosophie, Randglossen zu dem Text des Zeitalters." Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 209.

ideal.[16] Nassar argues that the Romantics solve the problems of unity and multiplicity and identity and difference through the principle of organic unity, which represents "both *unity in the world* and *unity in thought* – a unity, however, that is not abstract or general, but concrete and internally differentiated."[17] What is useful about Nassar's approach is her effort to conceive of the self as *participating* in the Absolute conceived of "as reality, as world, as activity and life," rather than constitutively exiled from it, as Frank argues.[18] In this dissertation, I similarly focus on ways in which the Romantics portray the self as participating in a wider universe, especially in and through literature and art. However, I fundamentally disagree with Nassar's claim that the Romantics simply rejected the idea of an unconditioned ontological Absolute (a Being inaccessible to representation, prior to multiplicity), and replaced this with a metaphysical and epistemological model "inspired by the unity of the natural world."[19] While Nassar's reading is attractive insofar as it allows for an interpretation of Romantic thought as proto-ecological in its positing of a fundamental harmony between humanity and nature, which she argues is based on an ontological/metaphysical reality,[20] it fails to account for the fact that there is no stable formal

[16] Dalia Nassar, *The Romantic Absolute: Being and Knowing in Early German Romantic Philosophy, 1795-1804* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 5.
[17] Nassar, *Romantic Absolute*, 4.
[18] Nassar, *Romantic Absolute*, 27.
[19] Nassar, *Romantic Absolute*, 4 and 6. The full passage makes Nassar's position clearer: "The romantics became critical of both the notion of an unconditioned principle and of the deductive method employed in constructing a system based on a first principle. In its place, they sought to develop a system of knowledge that refers to or is inspired by the unity of the natural world. While Novalis came to the view that only the organic whole can adequately articulate relations among ideas, and Schlegel aimed to develop a 'system of fragments' modeled on the symbol of the plant, Schelling argued that systematic knowledge must, like nature, develop and transform. Importantly, for all three thinkers, the metaphor of the organism and organic unity was by no means merely heuristic – that is to say, it was not adopted simply to bring order onto an otherwise unordered world. Rather, they surmised that the kind of organization that is most evident in organic beings underlies all of reality, including nonliving (anorganic) substances, and for this reason should be the model for knowledge" (4). She thinks of this Absolute as ontological as well (77).
[20] See for example Dalia Nassar, "Romantic Empiricism after the 'End of Nature': Contributions to Environmental Philosophy," in *The Relevance of Romanticism: Essays on German Romantic Philosophy*, ed. Dalia Nassar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 296-313. Though she frames her project as a middle ground between the work of Manfred Frank and Frederick Beiser, she seems to very much follow Beiser's metaphysical approach. Beiser argues

template for the idea the unity of the All in early German Romanticism (not even nature) and that the Romantics both perpetually pointed toward, but also suspended and refused to stabilize the idea of an overarching (or underlying) order of things. In her interpretations, Nassar leans too far in the opposite direction of Frank's analysis: she for example attempts to refute the centrality of the *ordo inversus* in Novalis's thought past his *Fichte-Studien*,[21] and completely downplays the significance of irony in the work of Friedrich Schlegel.[22]

In a slightly different vein, but in dialogue with Nassar, Gabriel Trop argues for an "Absolute of attraction" in early German Romanticism. Trop's project is born out of an argument that the Absolute should be approached critically speaking "not according to what it is, or what it *is not*, but according to what it does and to the particular movements it generates in the order of thought and discourse."[23] This overall framing, with its emphasis on poetic and discursive effects, resonates with my project. Philosophically speaking, Trop agrees with Nassar (at least in this article) on the phenomenal presence of an ontological Absolute, but conceives of it as movement, attraction, and as a dialectic of organization and disorganization that moves through and dynamizes reflection, turning equivalences into non-equivalences and vice versa.[24] Re-reading Novalis's *Fichte-Studien*, Trop argues that the Absolute of attraction is a "second-order

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that human creativity for the Romantics was a manifestation of the creativity of nature (not, however, understood as theoretically constructed, but as metaphysical reality). See Frederick Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 21.

[21] E.g., "the ordo inversus plays no role in Novalis's conception of art" (Nassar, *Romantic Absolute*, 35). Though Novalis drops the *terminology* of the *ordo inversus* after his *Fichte-Studien*, the figure of inverted orders occurs all across his poetic works and his aesthetic theory (which is only developed in fragments). Nassar conceives of representation rather straightforwardly as a transformation (even *Bildung*) of the world into an ideal, as a harmonization, therefore, of mind and nature through the production of a second nature (*Romantic Absolute*, 56). Her approach seems more keyed to Schiller's aesthetics than to the Romantic project.

[22] Nassar, *Romantic Absolute*, 82-83.

[23] Gabriel Trop, "Novalis and the Absolute of Attraction," *Seminar* 50, no. 3 (2014): 276-294, at 276.

[24] While Trop is interested in physiological effects, he does not, like Nassar, utilize a model of organic unity. Trop, "Absolute of Attraction," 277.

absolute," a claim that he bases on Novalis's conception of "eine höhere Sfäre" than "Nur Seyn" (the latter of which is what Frank takes to be the Absolute).[25] Novalis calls this higher sphere "Leben," defining it as a "Schweben," a floating or oscillation between Being (the Absolute conceived of as identity) and Non-Being (signs, the representation of the Absolute).[26] *Schweben* is neither a synthesis (or harmony) nor an antagonism, but remains suspended between these poles – it constitutes what Trop calls an "attraction."[27] I return to this idea below in my own analysis of Novalis's reading of Fichte.

Interestingly, neither Trop nor Nassar return to one of the first critics who put forward the idea of a relational (or rather, reflective) Absolute in early German Romanticism, Walter Benjamin, whose formulation remains integral to my conceptualization of universality. This may be because Benjamin does not suggest an ontological conception of the Absolute at all, moving in a purely formalistic direction. In his dissertation, *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik in der deutschen Romantik* (1920), Benjamin argues that the Romantics understood the Absolute as a "Reflexionsmedium."[28] In Benjamin's reconstruction of the Romantic critique of Fichte, which is focused on Friedrich Schlegel, the Romantics were primarily interested in the *form* of Fichtean

[25] Trop, "Absolute of Attraction," 277. I discuss this passage in greater detail below.
[26] While I agree with the broad strokes of Trop's account, especially for its close attention to poetic effects and the idea of *Schweben* (which I return to below), his claims about the ontological qualities of the Absolute (specifically his conception of "Being as movement, oscillation, and differential drift") seem insufficiently substantiated by Novalis's *Fichte-Studien*, especially his analysis of the *Ich=Ich*, and appear modeled on semiotic patterns. Trop sidesteps the function of *Schweben* in mediating the distinction between Being (the Absolute) and Non-Being (signs) as set up by Novalis, and realigns *Schweben* with "Seyn" based on a different fragment by Novalis (see Trop, "Absolute of Attraction," 282). He does so in the interest of setting up the Absolute of attraction as a distinct form of ontology, indeed another form of Being (with a capital B). As he writes, "Being is not pure identity but a rhythm that unfolds amidst relations of tension" ("Absolute of Attraction," 283). This part of the argument, while highly interesting, contradicts what Trop writes elsewhere, e.g., in the chapter on Novalis in his recent book: Gabriel Trop, *Poetry as a Way of Life: Aesthetics and Askesis in the German Eighteenth Century* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015), 128.
[27] Trop, "Absolute of Attraction," 282. See also 283.
[28] Walter Benjamin, *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik in der deutschen Romantik*, ed. Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), 32.

reflection (which Benjamin calls "das Denken"), not in its content (the unified, unconditioned Being of the I, which posits itself in Fichte's *Tathandlung*).[29] The key insight of Benjamin's account arises from his description of the Romantics' ascent to a third level of reflection, which he terms "Das Denken des Denkens des Denkens"; this form goes one level beyond Fichtean reflection:

> Das Denken des Denkens des Denkens kann auf zweifache Art aufgefasst und vollzogen werden. Wenn man von dem Ausdruck 'Denken des Denkens' ausgeht, so ist dieser auf der dritten Stufe entweder das gedachte Objekt: Denken (des Denkens des Denkens), oder aber das denkende Subjekt (Denken des Denkens) des Denkens. Die Strenge Urform der Reflexion des zweiten Grades ist durch die Doppeldeutigkeit im dritten erschüttert und angegriffen.[30]

It is only at this third level, Benjamin argues, that reflection becomes fully self-referential and therefore need not be grounded in a relation to an object (i.e., Being or the *Ich* as an object of reflection). As Benjamin shows, the strict distinction between the poles of reflection is loosened at this level, and reflection begins to oscillate between what can be termed grammatically as a subjective and objective genitive, rather than being divided into a clearly defined subject and object.[31] Benjamin argues that the Romantics used this highly formalistic conception of oscillating reflection to conceive of the absolute medium of reflection not as the I, but as a pure and infinitely expansive "Zusammenhang" of reflection itself, which he aligns with "das

[29] "[B]ei Fichte bezieht sich die Reflexion auf das Ich, bei den Romantikern auf das bloße Denken, und gerade durch diese letzte Beziehung wird, wie sich noch deutlicher zeigen soll, der eigentümliche romantische Reflexionsbegriff konstituiert." Benjamin, *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik*, 24.
[30] Benjamin, *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik*, 26.
[31] Winfried Menninghaus has pointed to the inaccuracies in Benjamin's reading of Fichte and the Romantics, which includes (in Menninghaus's evaluation) the fact that he glosses over the problem of the objectification (*Vergegenständlichung*) of the Absolute in representation. As Menninghaus contends, the form of Benjamin's third-order reflection *does* present a solution to this problem, even if it does not clearly construct it as a problem to be overcome. See Winfried Menninghaus, *Unendliche Verdopplung: die frühromantische Grundlegung der Kunsttheorie im Begriff der absoluten Selbstreflexion* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1987), 34-47. I address the problem of objectification from a different angle in Chapter 1, in my discussion of Schleiermacher.

Medium der Kunst."[32] Winfried Menninghaus, who has reconstructed (and in parts, corrected and expanded) Benjamin's analysis of the Romantic critique of Fichte, elaborates Benjamin's concept as follows: "das Absolute ist nichts dem Wechsel Vorausliegendes oder ihm Entzogenes, sondern nichts anderes als die Totalität der als solche *nicht-absoluten* Glieder des Wechsels, identisch letztlich mit dem reflexiven Zusammenhang 'alles Wirklichen.'"[33] Using Benjamin's theory of reflection, Menninghaus recuperates early German Romanticism as a version of (post)structuralism *avant la lettre*.[34] While I ultimately argue *against* Benjamin's claim that the Absolute is a purely artistic continuum of forms as well as against Menninghaus's continuation of his approach,[35] his argument is remarkably close to Friedrich Schlegel's idea of universal poetry, which is based in an idea of a reflexive interconnectivity among different artistic forms. Even Menninghaus's contention that reality (*Wirklichkeit*) is a reflective *Zusammenhang* identical with reflection is true for the early Romantics in a certain sense, which I discuss below, but it should not therefore be taken for the Absolute.

Benjamin's and Menninghaus's formalistic descriptions of an infinitely capacious *Zusammenhang* or medium of reflection do not fully address the problem that Manfred Frank raises in his analysis of early Romantic philosophy: the contradiction between representation (or reflection) and the Absolute conceived of as pure, unconditioned Being. In order to be something

[32] Benjamin, *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik*, 35. See further: "Im frühromantischen Sinne ist der Mittelpunkt der Reflexion die Kunst, nicht das Ich. Die Grundbestimmungen jenes Systems, das Schlegel in den Vorlesungen als System des absoluten Ich vorlegt, haben in seinen früheren Gedankengängen ihren Gegenstand an der Kunst. Im also verändert gedachten Absolutum wirkt eine andere Reflexion. Die romantische Kunstanschauung beruht darauf, dass im Denken des Denkens kein Ich-Bewusstsein verstanden wird. Die Ich-freie Reflexion ist eine Reflexion im Absolutum der Kunst" (35).
[33] Menninghaus, *Unendliche Verdopplung*, 57.
[34] Menninghaus, *Unendliche Verdopplung*, 82.
[35] As I argue in Chapter 2 and already imply in my analysis of *Universalpoesie*, Romantic poetics is interested in aesthetic form's relationship to its dialectical opposites: the formless and the Absolute, conceived of as the unrepresentable epistemological and ontological bases for form.

more than pure, self-referential form, a self-enclosed system, and to gain a sense of fullness, of dynamic "Welthaftigkeit," as Winfried Menninghaus terms it, reflection must also be at least *believed*, if not precisely known, to be a reflection *of* something which it is not.[36] This something cannot simply be another element of the *Zusammenhang* of reflection. For Novalis, Friedrich Schlegel and Schleiermacher, who are writing in the wake of Fichte, this outside to reflection is unconditioned Being, an ontological Absolute, an ultimate unity that constitutively lies outside the grasp of reflection.

There is a middle ground to be found between Manfred Frank's position, which takes Romantic dissonance and fragmentation as expressions of the inaccessibility of the Absolute, and that of Menninghaus and Benjamin, which thinks of the Absolute as pure reflection, but it requires a different approach to the idea of the Absolute. Trop already moves in this direction by more carefully considering the relationship between the Absolute and reflection in terms of the idea of attraction and poetic effects, specifically when he notes that the Absolute (of Being, identity) seems to point to a yet-higher Absolute, which would seem a philosophical impossibility. While his concept of attraction is useful, I think it can be developed further. In relation to early German Romanticism, attraction is present, and in fact emphasized, as a literary motif (e.g., as erotic attraction, as gravitation, as an inexplicable pull, even *Sehnsucht*). However, cognitive, affective, and critical attraction on the part of the *reader* are also important effects, rhetorical effects, one could say, of both the self-theorizations and literary practices of the early Romantic movement, which seems to be geared toward intensifying the attractiveness of the

[36] Menninghaus, *Unendliche Verdopplung*, 151. Menninghaus tries to theorize this purely from within reflection, e.g., "Am einfachen Beispiel des Endreims: die symmetrische Rückkehr in sich, der er ist, ist er doch wesentlich als parekbatischer Durchgang durch die nicht reimenden Worte, als Ekstasis aus sich selbst. Und das gilt allgemein für jede Form des Parallelismus: Parallelen sind, was sie sind, erst kraft des parekbatischen Sprungs zwischen ihnen" (*Unendliche Verdopplung*, 203).

Absolute and of universality by presenting them in the modality of a promise, a mission, a motif, a hint, or even a seemingly foreclosed possibility.[37]

The idea of romanticization – conceived of as a literary and philosophical practice – lives from its ability to produce such effects. As Novalis puts it in another manifesto-like representation of the Romantic project, "Die Welt muß romantisirt werden."[38] While the process of Romanticization is premised on the production of "Schein" (and is therefore located entirely in the realm of reflection), it also conjures the idea of the infinite, specifically through the idea of a relationship between the infinite and the finite. As Novalis puts it,

> 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.[39]

The art of Romanticization consists in relating opposites – the high and the low, the known and the unknown, and the finite and the infinite – by endowing each reciprocally with the appearance of its other. Though it occurs entirely on the level of *Schein*, the overall operation of *Romantisieren* produces questions: is there an underlying relationship between these opposites? What is the condition of their relatability? What are the effects of the increasing overlay of opposites on the level of poetic effects? As Novalis contends, Romanticization recovers "den ursprünglichen Sinn" even through the production of *Schein*.[40] Without providing a clear answer,

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[37] In his book *Poetry as a Way of Life*, Trop theorizes attraction in terms of the idea of an aesthetic exercise: the "exercise-value" of a work of art or criticism consists in its ability to provoke particular movements of thought, specific interpretive practices and modes of engagement with both the text and the world. Trop, *Poetry as a Way of Life*, 10-11.

[38] Novalis, *Novalis Schriften*, ed. Paul Kluckhohn and Richard Samuel with Hans-Joachim Mähl and Gerhard Schulz, 6 vols. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960), 2: 545. This edition hereafter cited as *NS.*

[39] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 545.

[40] "Die Welt muß romantisirt werden. So findet man den urspr[ünglichen] Sinn wieder." Novalis, *NS*, 2: 545.

his statement intensifies the line of questioning by positing an original meaning, something to be recovered.

This is also where the critical debate sets in. In Frank's interpretation, this original sense would be a correct relationship to the truth, namely, the recognition that *Schein* can never attain the Absolute.[41] In Frank's reading, the reciprocal representation of opposites (the figure of the *ordo inversus*) is a mutual cancelling-out, an intentional production of contradictions that simply arrests thought. On the other hand, based on the same textual evidence, other critics have influentially read the imperative to Romanticize the world as a project of restoring metaphysical unity, one that even if it fails to reach this goal, posits metaphysical unity as an ideal to be progressively attained.[42] Others have tried to split the difference, reading *Frühromantik* as driven toward unity only on the level of representation, for example as the exclusively aesthetic production of unity that illusorily compensates for a metaphysical lack through the production of a vague sense of holism,[43] or as an attempt to produce a purely cultural, constructive – if not metaphysical – "einheitliche[s] Weltbild."[44]

My interpretation of early German Romanticism moves in a direction slightly different from these critical views, which try to define the conclusions or end goals of universal poetry

[41] Frank highlights that for Novalis, thought, too, is a "Kunst des Scheins," which must invert and even destroy itself to return to "Wahrheit." Frank and Kurz, "Ordo inversus," 78.
[42] This is Frederick Beiser's interpretation in *The Romantic Imperative* (2003).
[43] Recently, this interpretation has been put forward by Stefan Matuschek, in *Der gedichtete Himmel: Eine Geschichte der Romantik* (München: C. H. Beck, 2021), 11-12. "[Romantik] ist das Verfahren, die metaphysische Obdachlosigkeit durch imaginäre Bautätigkeit zu beheben. Das ist effizienter, als es zunächst klingt. Denn da die metaphysische ja keine reale, sondern nur eine metaphorische Obdachlosigkeit ist, die einen Bewusstseinszustand meint, kann sie, ja muss sie auf dieser Ebene auch beseitigt werden: Eine nur vorgestellte Heimat reicht hin. Romantik ist die Kunst, metaphysische Luftschlösser zu bauen. Sie wirkt, auch wenn man weiß, dass es Luftschlösser, also Einbildungen sind. In diesem Sinne ist Romantik das 'selbstgemachte' und als Selbstgemachtes bewusste Jenseits oder, um es etwas poetischer auszudrücken, der gedichtete Himmel." In line with this view, Matuschek reads Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* as "eine neue Heilsgeschichte" (*Der gedichtete Himmel*, 69).
[44] Ernst Behler, "Friedrich Schlegels Theorie der Universalpoesie," *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 1 (1957): 211-52, at 211.

and the project of Romanticization instead of lingering with the means through which such end-goals are suggested. They do not ask why Novalis never states what the "ursprüngliche[r] Sinn" to be recovered actually is, but instead respond to the seeming imperative to find this original meaning. The idea of recovering an original meaning is a provocation, and certainly both indexes and invites questions as to whether and how the idea of oppositional *Schein* might be related to any kind of origin or *telos*, or to an Absolute. Rhetorically speaking, it is important to observe that in Novalis's fragment, there is an analogy between the idea of opposites *within* reflection on the one hand, and the idea of the Absolute or an original meaning as the opposite *to* reflection, on the other. The analogy itself does not amount to an equivalence – it is merely suggestive. A similar tension (though along slightly different lines) can be observed in Friedrich Schlegel's fragment on Romantic universal poetry, which both relates distinct elements or genres of poetry to one another, but also moves beyond this, to the relationship between poetry and non-poetry, or poetry and the world: it suggests a higher unity through the relationships among different forms, but then seemingly transcends its own idea by subsuming what was initially taken as a highest unity under the same oppositional-connective rhetoric. In this way, the idea of a highest unity retains its generativity, its critical and cognitive attraction: it seems to go ever higher.

Being, Reflection, and *Schweben* in Novalis's *Fichte-Studien*

I believe there is a philosophical underpinning to these sorts of provocations, which run throughout the manifestoes and imperatives of early German Romanticism. In what follows, I provide an exploratory attempt at representing the philosophical line of thinking motivating these techniques through a reading of Novalis's *Fichte-Studien*. As Manfred Frank has emphasized, Novalis treats Fichte's phrase *Ich=Ich* as a "Scheinsatz," an illusory proposition that produces

what Novalis also calls an image (*Bild*) of the *Ich*, with which it must subsequently identify itself.[45] Novalis conceives of the act of reflection as an inversion through the metaphor of reflection as a mirror; the *Bild* or *Scheinsatz* is therefore, figuratively speaking, a reversed image of the Absolute, which Novalis identifies as the "nur Seyn" of the *Ich*.[46] While the *Ich* has "Seyn," the reflection, the *Ich=Ich* or "Bewußtseyn," is an "unrechtes Seyn," even, ontologically speaking, a "Nichtseyn."[47] Despite this inversion, however, these two reflective correlates correspond to one another somehow: after all, the *Ich recognizes* itself in reflection, and this recognition enables reflective thought. This fact – of the efficacy and recognizability of the *Scheinsatz*, despite its ontological deficiency – is what Novalis works to theorize and elaborate in the dizzying conceptual algebra of his *Fichte-Studien*. In Novalis's *Fichte-Studien*, we can speak of a need (or perhaps better, a drive) to identify the *Ich* as unified ontological Absolute with the *Ich=Ich* (the *Bild*, or *Scheinsatz*). Envisioning this process, we arrive at a phrase somewhat similar in form to Benjamin's third-degree reflection: *Ich = (Ich=Ich)*.[48] This reflection is both a double reflection (the second level of reflection Frank analyzes in his discussion of the *ordo inversus* – note the two "="), and a tripling of the reflected term *Ich*, which appears in three positions. In the *Fichte-Studien*, Novalis calls this a triple "Betrachtung":

[45] "Das Wesen der Identität läßt sich nur in einem *Scheinsatz* aufstellen. Wir verlassen das *Identische* um es darzustellen" (Novalis, *NS*, 2: 104); "Das Bewußtseyn ist folglich ein Bild des Seyns im Seyn" (*NS*, 2: 106). See also Frank, *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik*, 251.
[46] This is the basis for Frank's identification of the figure of the *ordo inversus* in Novalis's thought (*Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik*, 253-58). The evidence for this reading is plentiful, e.g.: "Es wechselt Bild und Seyn. Das Bild ist immer das Verkehrte vom Seyn. Was rechts an der Person ist, ist links im Bilde" (Novalis, *NS*, 2: 142).
[47] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 104 and 106. "wir stellen es [das Seyn] durch sein Nichtseyn, durch ein Nichtidentisches vor – Zeichen" (*NS*, 2: 104).
[48] The form of this phrase is different from Benjamin's, since we are dealing here with a reflective relationship between the *Ich* as Being on the one hand and reflection, or the *Scheinsatz* on the other (and not between three instances of reflection). We are therefore at a second degree of reflection, which involves a triplication of the reflected term.

> Jedes kann also 3fach betrachtet werden. Gegenstand der Ersten ist das Ding – Gegenstand der Zweyten die einfache Betrachtung – Gegenstand der Dritten die doppelte Betrachtung – weiter nicht.
>
> 1. Vorstellung des Objects.
> 2. Vorstellung der Vorstell[ung] 1.
> 3. Vorstell[ung] der Vorst[ellung] 2.[49]

In this note, level two would be the straightforward *Ich=Ich*, while the third is *Ich=(Ich=Ich)*. If we want to emphasize not the identity of the reflected term, but the difference at the heart of this third-level *Betrachtung*, this can also be represented in a series of different phrases, based on the different characteristics Novalis assigns to reflection: *Ich=Bild*; *Ich=Scheinsatz*; and *Seyn=Nichtseyn*, or unity=difference, for example. *Betrachtung* on this level highlights the opposition inherent to the reflective presentation of identity.[50] In fact, it begins to move toward the idea of a process of representation *through* opposition, representation as an oppositional process.

In the *Fichte-Studien*, Novalis also presents this relationship through the spatial metaphor of different spheres (*Sfären*), as an opposition and interpenetration of the spheres of Being and Non-Being, of self and image. The term "sphere" allows Novalis to think of the *Ich* and the *Ich=Ich* each metaphorically as containers or frames of reference for a specific *Gehalt* (a content

[49] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 150.

[50] Though Novalis represents reflection as inversion (a change of orientation) and the production of difference, nowhere does he think the second reflection as a "Selbstzerstörung des Denkens," as Frank argues, which would destroy reflection to return to a correct relationship to the truth (See Frank and Kurz, "Ordo inversus," 78). Novalis certainly plays a game of reorientation: "Das Bild an und für sich ist, wie gesagt, die verkehrte Oberfläche des Gegenstandes – unsre Beschreibung des Bildes wird aber […] wieder rechts ausfallen, wenn jene im Verhältnis zum Gegenstande links ist" (Novalis, *NS*, 2: 142). However, my sense is that Novalis is primarily interested in portraying the *process* of generating these reversals. In his notes, Novalis considers reflection not as something to be overcome, but as "die absolute oder totale Form," which although underlying thought, does not produce specific knowledge: "es sagt das Ding selbst ganz aus – lehrt uns aber nichts erkennen" (*NS*, 2: 172); he also calls this "die *reine* Form – weil hier eigentlich kein Prädikat ist, sondern nur die prädicirende Handlung" (*NS*, 2: 172). On the level of utterance, it says everything (it represents the structure of thought), but without producing concrete knowledge. Analogously to the *Athenaeum*-fragments, it has a performative quality (its force as an *Aussage*) that consists in the production of certain relations and reorientations for thought, but it is not explicitly producing knowledge (semantically, we could say, it is perhaps not exactly empty, but it gives nothing *definitive*).

or meaning). The sphere functions on the one hand as a metaphor for consciousness as a unified sphere of representation. Like the conception of a unified spherical world, the analogy of consciousness as *Sfäre* articulates the coherence and internal homogeneity of representations that occur within it. In reference to Fichte's *Ich=Ich,* which he conceives not only as an image or *Scheinsatz* but as a sphere, it represents the possibility of the synthesis of its distinct terms, the idea that they represent identity. As Novalis observes, in Fichte's *Ich=Ich,* the term *Ich* is portrayed as separated from itself, and yet is apprehended as one. Representationally, Novalis emphasizes that Fichte's *Satz* is both a parallelism ("ein philosophischer Parallelismus") and a triplicity.[51] On the triplicity, Novalis writes, "Ich bin ich. Grammaticalisch enthält er dreyfach idem"; this grammatical repetition also splits into three distinct operations that occur in the sphere of consciousness: "In dem Satze a ist a liegt nicht als ein Setzen, Unterscheiden und verbinden."[52]

On the other hand, Novalis also uses the term *Sfäre* to refer to the *Ich* as the pure intimacy of Being, which he somewhat paradoxically contends has an inside and an outside.[53] As he discusses Fichte's *Ich=Ich,* Novalis notes that if we are to accept the *Ich* as the absolute foundation for philosophy, then "D[ie] Sfäre des Ich muß für uns alles umschließen."[54]

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[51] Novalis, *NS,* 2: 104.
[52] The inconsistent capitalizations come from the original. Novalis, *NS,* 2: 104.
[53] Which is based on the opposition between Being and Non-Being, an opposition that Novalis is somewhat uncomfortable with, conceptually speaking. Though he opposes Being to Non-Being in many places (which I illustrate), he also for example insists, "An dem Nur Seyn haftet gar keine Modification, kein Begriff – man kann ihm nichts entgegensetzen – als verbaliter das Nicht-Seyn. Dis ist aber ein copulirendes Häckchen, was blos pro Forma dran gehängt wird – Es scheint nur so. Greift doch eine Handvoll Finsterniß" (Novalis, *NS,* 2: 106). This sense of a boundary gives Novalis a way of theorizing the *Ich*'s awareness of its own existence as a purely passive feeling, which Manfred Frank theorizes as a "nicht-thetische[s] Bewußtsein": "Es muß ein Bewußtsein geben, das nicht Reflexion ist, d.h. ein Bewußtsein, daß sich keinem Gegenstand – auch sich selbst als Reflex nicht – entgegensetzt, sondern ihm gleichsam innewohnt […]. Das ist – im Gegensatz zur Selbstreflexion – das *Selbstgefühl* […]. Das Gefühl hat den Status eines dem *Absoluten* (dem *Urseyn*) quasi koextensiven Bewußtseins" (Frank and Kurz, "Ordo inversus," 76-77).
[54] Novalis, *NS,* 2: 104.

In Novalis's discussion of the Fichtean representation of the Absolute, we therefore have not one, but at least two spheres: 1) that of the originary unity of the *Ich*, the sphere of Being (*Seyn*) which cannot be represented; and 2) the sphere of consciousness conceived of as representation or reflection (the dual/triplicate unity of the *Ich=Ich*, or *Scheinsatz*).[55] Novalis wants to hold these two spheres distinct, but also recognizes that they must encompass one another in order to make consciousness possible: as the representation of Being, consciousness tries to contain Being, while Being must somehow contain consciousness in order for consciousness to represent Being. He represents this as follows:

> D[as] Bewußtseyn ist die Sfäre des Wissens. […]
> Das Bewußtseyn ist ein Seyn außer dem Seyn im Seyn.
> Was ist aber das?
> Das Außer dem Seyn muß kein rechtes Seyn seyn.
> Ein unrechtes Seyn außer dem Seyn ist ein Bild – also muß jenes außer dem Seyn ein Bild des Seyns im Seyn seyn.
> Das Bewußtseyn ist folglich ein Bild des Seyns im Seyn.[56]

The fact that representation as "Seyn außer dem Seyn" is nevertheless "im Seyn" in the form of consciousness articulates a paradox – it suggests that *Seyn* exceeds itself, is actually boundless, and is capable of somehow containing *Nichtseyn* (the ontological status Novalis attributes to signs, specifically the *Bild* or *Scheinsatz*).[57]

It at this point that Novalis comes to the idea of *Schweben*, which Trop has foregrounded in his account of the Absolute of attraction. Novalis attempts to overcome the contradiction of "ein Seyn außer dem Seyn im Seyn" by positing a "höhere Sfäre," not of Being (*Seyn*), but "die

[55] Similarly, in his semiotic theory, Novalis thinks of the signifier and the signified as "in verschiedenen Sfären, die sich gegenseitig bestimmen können" (*NS*, 2: 108).
[56] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 106.
[57] "Wir verlassen das *Identische* um es darzustellen […] wir stellen es durch sein Nichtseyn, durch ein Nichtidentisches vor – Zeichen" (Novalis, *NS*, 2: 104). The idea of a Non-Being within Being is perhaps where Trop gets the idea of an oscillating, bifurcated ontology.

zwischen Seyn und Nichtseyn – das Schweben zwischen beyden – Ein Unaussprechliches, und hier haben wir den *Begriff* von *Leben*."[58] As Novalis thinks it, the condition of possibility for the compatibility between the *Sfäre* of consciousness/representation and that of the originary *Seyn* of the *Ich* is not given within either of these two spheres.[59] Their relationship can only be conceptualized through an additional mediator (or medi*um*), a "Mittelglied" that is also a sphere that encompasses – or floats in the middle between – Being (*Seyn*, the absolute sphere of the *Ich*) and representation (the *Ich=Ich*).[60] This higher sphere of *Schweben* cannot be represented directly and does not establish a definite relation between Being and representation.[61] Rather, it relates them to one another in an indeterminate way – as a dynamic floating or oscillation that cannot be grasped or conceptually pinned down.[62] Novalis repeats this same thought several pages later, when he contemplates an "absolute Sfäre ohne Gränze – alle andere Synthesen sind relative Sphären, i.e. Sfäre und Gränze zugleich. Sie enthält die Möglichkeit der Grenze

[58] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 106. As Novalis contends, "Leben ist ein aus Synthese, These und Antithese Zusammengeseztes und doch keins von allen dreyen" (*NS*, 2: 107).
[59] In his article on the *ordo inversus*, Manfred Frank discusses this in terms of the mutual exclusiveness of *Seyn* and *Gefühl* on the one hand, and *Reflexion* or *Wissen* on the other. I engage with the relationship between reflection and feeling in my first chapter.
[60] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 106. Formally speaking, this highest sphere is the relation implied in Novalis's third level of *Betrachtung* (discussed above) which tries to apprehend the relationship between Being and Non-Being (representation), in the form that I have represented as *Ich=(Ich=Ich)*.
[61] Some read this as a higher metaphysical unity that unites Being and representation. Recently, see for example Adrian Daub, *Uncivil Unions: The Metaphysics of Marriage in German Romanticism and Idealism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), whose work I engage with in Chapter 3.
[62] Theorizing the problem from a different angle (namely, the opposition between *Gefühl* and *Reflexion*, which correlate to *Ich* and *Ich=Ich*), Novalis writes of "die erste Handlung" (i.e., the *Urhandlung*, in which the Ich *feels* but does not know its own being – prior to representation), "die werden wir nicht gewahr, folglich fühlen wir diese, als nichtfrey. Warum wir sie nicht gewahr werden – weil sie das Gewahrwerden erst möglich macht, und folglich dis *in* ihrer Sfäre liegt – die Handlung des Gewahrwerdens kann ja also nicht aus ihrer Sfäre herausgehn und die Muttersfäre mitfassen wollen" (Novalis, *NS*, 2: 105). Similarly, Novalis contends that "darinn besteht gerade das Leben, das es nicht begriffen werden kann" (*NS*, 2: 106). As I understand it, the "höhere Sfäre" of *Schweben/Leben* is the same as the *Muttersfäre*, an observation that becomes important in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, which I discuss in the third chapter of the dissertation.

überhaupt."[63] We could theorize this possibility of a boundary ("Möglichkeit der Grenze überhaupt") as another sort of Absolute than the ontological Absolute – the boundless sphere that relates Being to representation, and unity to difference. Though Novalis begins from the idea of the ontological principle of Being as the Absolute, he here points to something that exceeds Being. In this sense, we can, with Trop, speak of something like a second-order Absolute, or of an Absolute beyond Being and Non-Being. (For the purposes of clarity, I will continue to refer to it as the "higher sphere" or "*Schweben*.")

If the basis for the *Ich's* relationship to its image, the *Ich=Ich*, is not given within either the sphere of representation or of pure Being, but rests in this higher sphere, we are led to an impasse: neither the sphere of the *Ich* (Being) nor the sphere of reflection (the *Ich=Ich*) operates in isolation. Novalis: "Kein Seyn, kein Schein – Kein Schein, kein Seyn – Sie sind die Gegensfären der absoluten Gemeinsfäre – die beyden Hälften einer Kugel – die Form und der Stoff der Kugel – beydes ist nichts ohne das Andre."[64] Through the idea of two halves, Novalis marks the interdependence of *Schein* and *Seyn*, which imply one another even though they are opposed and mutually exclusive. The two spheres (or halves) operate in relation to one another, on some unknown, ungraspable basis that is only represented through its *effects*: in the self's inexplicable recognition of itself in reflection, and in its drive to understand itself not just as reflection but as Being, in other words, in the drive to find ontological fullness in the sphere of

[63] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 140. The inconsistent spelling is Novalis's. In this note, Novalis calls the higher sphere "Synthesis," but hedges with his terminology: the synthesis is "keine eigentliche Synthese;" the word is simply a terminological placeholder born from his (triadic) thinking of the form of Fichtean thought in terms of the philosophical terminology of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. This terminology eventually fades after the *Fichte-Studien*; however, the triadic form of thinking remains present.
[64] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 183.

reflection. Novalis succinctly terms this the "Trieb, Ich zu seyn."[65] This drive is the manifestation or the *effect*, but also the representation, of the ungraspability of the higher sphere. As we can note, the drive itself seems to adopt the qualities of the higher sphere – it, too, appears as *Schweben* in the *Fichte-Studien*. It is plausible to think the idea of the higher sphere, then, as a projection of the self's attraction to Being, as a sort of origin that is more representative of the activity of striving (the drive itself) than anything else.

Schweben seems in fact to take over almost everything in the *Fichte-Studien*. Novalis aligns *Schweben* with the idea of reality (the sphere of reflection, produced by the *Ich*), which originates from *Schweben* but also somehow *is Schweben*. As he puts it, "aus diesem Lichtpunkt des Schwebens strömt alle Realität aus […] das *Schweben* – bestimmt, producirt die Extreme, das wozwischen geschwebt wird."[66] *Schweben* is "der Quell, die Mater aller Realität, die Realität selbst."[67] Though *Schweben* as a highest sphere cannot be grasped, it becomes "die Realität selbst" in two senses: first, reality is experienced through, and in fact *as*, the self's attempts to grasp itself in the reality within which it finds itself, and second, reality (even the concept of world) – becomes understood as derivative from a higher "Quell" or "Mater," which it embodies precisely in the form of its reflexivity. As Novalis notes, "[Das Ich] findet *sich, außer* sich. Diese Findung wird zur Ein- Innenfindung in der Wircklichkeit – in der theoretisch bestimmten Wircklichkeit, welches die Einzige für das Ich ist."[68] Because it does not have a firm relationship to Being, this reality is constitutively unstable, it is caught up in *Schweben*. This reality, however uncertain and potentially projective, is all that the *Ich* has. Rather than reflecting the *Ich* as

[65] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 121 is the first appearance of this particular phrase, which Novalis proceeds to repeatedly invoke throughout the *Fichte-Studien*. Trop makes this drive central in *Poetry as a Way of Life*, 137.
[66] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 266 (FS #555).
[67] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 266 (FS #555).
[68] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 150.

Being, however, it reflects the striving of the *Ich*, its "Trieb, Ich zu Seyn," which is also a form of *Schweben*.

Though still the opposite of the *Ich* from an ontological perspective, and unable to access the higher sphere that serves as the basis of its effectivity (or recognizability), Fichte's *Ich=Ich*, occupies a key formal function for Novalis, since it contains within itself the triadic structure of reflection (two reflective *relata*, and a basis for their relation, symbolized by the copula) that also leads him to the idea of the higher sphere. Thus, despite the fact that philosophy (and reality, and the *Ich*) no longer rests on a firm foundation or *Grundsatz*, as Fichte hopes for, but remains in a state of *Schweben*, the structure of the Fichtean *Scheinsatz* becomes the form for Romantic self-reflexivity. In aesthetic terminology, the *Ich=Ich* represents a *mise-en-abyme* of the larger structure of *Schweben* (i.e., *Ich=(Ich=Ich)*).[69] This allows it to become what Menninghaus and Benjamin theorize as an absolute form of reflection. Through its triadic form, it can project its relationship to what it is not (Being) and what makes it possible (the higher sphere) purely self-referentially, in the form of its own self-reflexivity. In other words, it can constitute itself in relation to what it is not, and carry this relation to an outside into its own internal relations.

[69] It therefore stands in what Novalis refers to as a schematic relationship to what it is not: "Jedes *verständliche* Zeichen also muß in einem *schematischen* Verhältniß zum Bezeichneten stehn." However, "Das Schema steht mit sich selbst in Wechselwirkung. Jedes ist nur das auf seinem Platze, was es durch die andern ist" (Novalis, *NS*, 2: 109). Though he moves from the idea of definite philosophical judgement (copulation, symbolized by the "=") to *Schweben*, Novalis continually emphasizes the importance of the triadic form of reflection throughout the *Fichte-Studien*, both in his continual use of conceptual triads to mediate unity and duality (such as thesis-antithesis-synthesis), and in his meditations on "Methode unsrer Wissenschaften. In der Monadik – Dyadik – Triadik –"; indeed, he contends that "Wissenschaftslehre ist Triadik" (*NS*, 2: 162). In a theologically inflected version, he puts this as follows: "Gott ist gleichsam ein absolut analytisches Glied – oder er enthält das Wesentliche d[er] These, Antithese und Synthese, ihren Geist unzertrennlich. Er ist alles Dreyes, ohne Eins zu seyn – und doch macht in der Darstellung die These den Anfang und d[ie] Antithese beschließt. Vater, Geist und Sohn" (*NS*, 2: 159-160). Novalis here seems to suggest the idea not of two competing Absolutes, as Trop suggests, but of three Absolutes, which are also two (duality) and one (unity).

Reflection thereby becomes its own subject, object, and medium.[70] Benjamin's formulation of the Romantic Absolute as a "Reflexionsmedium" remains persuasive for this reason, even though it attempts to bracket out the relationship between Being and representation. However, reflection is not "Ich-frei," as Benjamin argues.[71] Rather, the *Ich* is perpetually drawn *into* this reflective *Zusammenhang* both as that which is represented in it (the self finds itself in reflection) and as that from which reflection differentiates itself ontologically.[72]

In order to symbolize this relationship, Novalis rewrites Fichte's *Ich=Ich* as an equation not of identical terms, but of opposites: "Ich = N[icht]I[ch] – höchster Satz aller *Wissenschaft* und *Kunst*."[73] This phrase exhibits both the synthetic and divisive quality of reflection, and its internalized contradiction indexes the instability of the representation itself. Novalis's equation of opposites takes as its starting point the inexplicable recognition that occurs in self-reflection, but rhetorically projects it much further: if the self is capable of recognizing itself in what it is not (its own image, or the *Scheinsatz*), then it must be capable of recognizing itself in everything that is *Nicht-Ich* – in the entire represented universe, the infinite *Zusammenhang* of reflection, which both includes the *Ich* as reflection and excludes it as Being, as Absolute. Union with the universe, with all of reflection, may appear to absolutize the *Ich*, but it also risks being merely projective. The attractiveness of the conflation of opposites is also where Novalis's project of

[70] If one is to consider the Romantic Absolute as relational (as Benjamin, Trop, and Nassar suggest), it must be understood precisely as the triadic relationship between Being, representation (or Non-Being), and the higher sphere; this relation itself is neither purely ontological nor purely formal, but is reflected in the form of the Fichtean *Scheinsatz*, and thus in the internal structure of representation itself.
[71] Benjamin, *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik*, 35.
[72] As I am endeavoring to show, it is not, however, the origin of reflection. This origin is the higher sphere that mediates between Being and reflection.
[73] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 542. As Novalis contends, the *Nicht-Ich* becomes (like the *Scheinsatz*) the representation of the *Ich* precisely by virtue of this process of opposition: "Das N[icht]I[ch] ist das Symbol des Ich, und dient nur zum Selbstverstaendniss des Ich. So versteht man das N[icht]I[ch] umgekehrt, nur insofern es vom Ich repraesentirt wird, und dieses sein Symbol wird." Novalis, *NS*, 3: 246.

Romantisieren comes from, which portrays the paradox of self-recognition in reflection from within the structure of reflection itself. Through its operations of endowing the finite with an infinite *Schein*, and the infinite with the appearance of finitude, the process of Romanticization pushes the synthetic (but also oppositional) power of reflection to its limit. These operations conjure a promise of reconciliation, or of a recovery of an original meaning precisely through the production of *Schein*, by moving deeper into reflexivity (in this case a Romantic distortion of reality – the Romanticization of the world).

This is the productive tension that drives the Romantic project of reflective, poetic universalization. The task of Romantic universal poetry is to continually elicit the idea of a higher sphere of *Schweben* (as the basis for the interconnectivity of poetic reflection), and to envision this unrepresented basis through the modulations of reflection itself, which mirror the self's drive to recognize itself in what it is not.

World, Universe, Heterocosm: Forms of Romantic Reflection

If there is any sort of linear movement from Idealist philosophy to Romantic poetry – as Manfred Frank's narrative suggests – it is from a conception of reflection as theoretical determination based on a solid foundation in the *Ich* (as Fichte hopes for), to a conception of reflection that does not rest on such a foundation, but still somehow attracts the *Ich* – from *Grundsatz* to *Schweben*.[74] Early German Romanticism would thus move from a theoretically determined, stable world, to a floating, suspended sense of world in which theoretical

[74] This is not only Novalis's point. Friedrich Schlegel, for example, contends (though with slightly different vocabulary), "Wo die Philosophie aufhört, muß die Poesie anfangen. Einen gemeinen Standpunkt, eine nur im Gegensatz der Kunst und Bildung natürliche Denkart, ein bloßes Leben soll es gar nicht geben; d. h. es soll kein Reich der Rohheit jenseits der Grenzen der Bildung gedacht werden" (Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 261).

determination itself is no longer stably differentiated from poetic representation: both become ways of mediating, of producing, a sense of "world," which I here simply define as a reflective *Zusammenhang* in which the self finds itself, and with which it desires to coincide. This sense of *Schweben*, which becomes characteristic of both reality (as a reflective nexus) and the self's relation to it, is echoed in the proliferation of cosmic terms such as *Welt, Universum, Weltall, All, Weltsystem, kleine Welt, andere Welt,* and so forth, across the corpus of early German Romantic literature and theory. For the early Romantics, world becomes a means of representing both the dream of wholeness (the attainment of a higher sphere) and the oppositional quality of reflection itself, which always defines things (and worlds) according to what they are not. In addition to moving toward universality, the Romantic project of universalization (understood as the production of cosmic holism) therefore always moves back to distinct elements. Cosmic holism, totality, the universe, the *Weltall*, the *All* can only be suggested as the medium (an ungraspable *Reflexionszusammenhang*) in which distinct elements – small worlds – are connected to and reflect one another. As Novalis puts it, "Das Weltall zerfällt in unendliche, immer von größern Welten wieder befaßte Welten."[75]

It is important to note that despite all of this philosophical background, the early Romantics do not use cosmic terminology in a consistent or systematic way: they do not develop a *theory* of world or universe. Rather, their usages of these terms are primarily contextual, located in specific rhetorical constellations that generate oppositions and analogies among different ideas of world that attract but also destabilize the idea of higher unity and cosmic holism. One rhetorical gesture is especially worth noting in this regard. While there is no such

[75] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 331.

thing as an "underlying reality" to be mirrored or transformed by poetry (based on the philosophical standpoint I have outlined above), the Romantics nevertheless frequently invoke the term *Welt* in a neutral sense, as the object of reflection or as a reality that is interrupted by or contrasted with another, fictional or imaginary world. This idea is also present in the Romantic mission of transforming the world into poetry, as well as in the idea of Romanticization: world seems to be the substrate for these processes. As I read it, this ambiguity is intentional and self-reflexive. With all their mirroring imagery, the early Romantics invoke, play on, and challenge the more traditional understanding of reality as an underlying basis that is mirrored in poetry (conceived as *mimesis*).

The idea of *mimesis*, which suggests a fundamental difference between image and prototype, persists throughout early German Romanticism, not as a model of Romantic aesthetic theory, but as a way of indicating the powerful oppositionality intrinsic to self-reflexivity, which remains in constant dialectic with Romantic projections of wholeness and universality.[76] The idea of an "underlying reality" that is mirrored in poetic reflection remains powerful as an assumption that the Romantics state only in order to call it into question. We can observe this at work in the 116th *Athenaeum*-fragment when Friedrich Schlegel characterizes the activity of universal poetry through the idea of *Schweben*:

> Nur sie [die romantische Poesie] kann gleich dem Epos ein Spiegel der ganzen umgebenden Welt, ein Bild des Zeitalters werden. Und doch kann auch sie am meisten zwischen dem Dargestellten und dem Darstellenden, frei von allem realen und idealen Interesse auf den Flügeln der poetischen Reflexion in der Mitte schweben, diese

[76] See Mattias Pirholt, *Metamimesis: Imitation in Goethe's* Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre *and Early German Romanticism* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2012) for a recent attempt to recover the mimetic paradigm in early German Romanticism. Pirholt similarly connects the early Romantic reinvention of *mimesis* to the idea of the *ordo inversus* – to oppositionality. However, his theory does not address the concept of world, which is central to my investigation and cuts across the art/nature divide maintained by Pirholt.

> Reflexion immer wieder potenzieren und wie in einer endlosen Reihe von Spiegeln vervielfachen.[77]

Poetry is both a "Spiegel der ganzen umgebenden Welt," an image or *Bild* in the mimetic sense, and the mirror itself. As simply the mirror, it indexes what Novalis calls the higher sphere (its boundlessness as the "Möglichkeit der Grenze überhaupt"), while simultaneously moving deeper into reflection itself. As *both* mirror *and* image, it posits the idea of *Schweben* self-reflexively, and only implicitly suggests that the world itself is already a form of reflection. It is important, I think, that Schlegel does not state this directly, for he thereby provokes the opposite interpretation as well: by floating in the middle between two poles, *Schweben seems* to ascend to what Novalis calls the higher sphere, to some sort of mediation between the reflection and the unreflected (which in this case would be world as underlying, non-reflected reality). Schlegel's rhetoric hinges on the fact that *Schweben* is characteristic of both poetic reflection itself and of the projected higher sphere that would make reflection possible, authorizing its relationship to Being. Through the movement into a self-reflexivity of reflection, the boundlessness of the (inaccessible) higher sphere is mirrored in the boundlessness of reflection itself, which multiplies or "potentiates" itself in an endless row of mirrors, of worlds, of realities. The figure of the world as underlying reality stands in dynamic tension with the idea of the world as reflection, causing poetic *Schweben* to appear ambiguously as both a return to a pre-reflective state and as a self-reflexive potentiation, as a multiplication of reflective worlds. Within a sphere of heightened self-reflexivity, "das Dargestellte" – the world, like the *Ich*, like Being therefore in Novalis's *Fichte-Studien* – becomes incorporated into the activity of reflection, and is precisely what dynamizes it by making it appear as a return to something prior to reflection. This inverse and

[77] Friedrich Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 182-83.

apparently bidirectional movement both illusorily toward, and effectively away from, the origin in *Schweben* (symbolized by the idea of an original, underlying world) is a central rhetorical motif of Romantic poetics, and one that I return to throughout the dissertation.

We can observe this bidirectional rhetoric of reflection at work in the countless ambiguous ways in which the Romantics invoke cosmological terms to designate both the principle of underlying reality and the multiplicity of reflective forms. They do so as a means of disorienting their readers, of provoking them to rethink the commonplace distinction between representation and "reality" as a distinction among different forms or aspects of reflection itself. While Friedrich Schlegel contends in the 116th *Athenaeum*-fragment that universal poetry is both an image of the surrounding world *and* is that which floats between the two poles of "das Dargestellte" and "der Darstellende," i.e., a mirror, he also invokes the concept of world in different ways that contradict this usage. In another fragment in the same collection, he refers to poetry *itself* as an "Universum," which is represented by the "Weltsystem der Poesie" (i.e., the system of criticism) and which must be brought into motion through a Copernican revolution in the realm of criticism.[78] In this context, we can also return to a fragment that I quoted earlier: "Nur diejenige Verworrenheit ist ein Chaos, aus der eine Welt entspringen kann."[79] Here, world is a formal term that stands in opposition to chaos, which nevertheless contains the *potential* for a world: each represents the other and seems to be able to transform into it. In all of these cases,

[78] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 252. As Schlegel here contends, the true "Weltsystem" of poetry is not yet discovered, and it is the role of the Romantic critic – and Romantic poetry as *Universalpoesie* – to act as a Copernicus by disturbing the current mode of poetic classification. It is only through a change in perspective, and in fact the movement of the *viewer*, that the limited horizon of current criticism can be expanded and the true system approached. Criticism, in other words, must become mobile, like poetry itself. Though Schlegel entertains the possibility of finding the true "Weltsystem," and the Romantic critic must pass through a state of disorientation in order to approach it, and this state of disorientation mirrors the indeterminacy of the underlying universe.
[79] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 263.

Schlegel puts the terms world, universe, and poetry into play in specific rhetorical constellations that undercut the distinction between world and poetry by linking distinct perspectives. In a similar rhetorical movement, Schleiermacher invokes a physical universe in his speeches on religion, discussing the "Perturbationen im Laufe der Gestirne," which point to an even higher unity and a "kühnere Verbindung" than what is conceivable in the Newtonian system – it is this unknown, highest universe that Schleiermacher makes the object of his Romantic religion.[80] In these same speeches, however, he conceives of the very same universe as an enormous work of art of which the viewer only sees a limited part,[81] but then subsequently also calls the world "eine Gallerie religiöser Ansichten."[82] Universe is both underlying reality and a mediation of reality; it is reality conceived of as self-mediating, as infinitely self-reflective, as a total nexus of reflection that only appears in the multiplicity of forms. Moreover, for Schleiermacher it is also a reality into which the self becomes erotically and illusorily incorporated through an immersive embrace of reflection – in this sense, the dynamic reflexivity of the *Universum* also indirectly expresses the self's desire for unification.

There is a second side to the Romantics' rhetorical play with the idea of world as reflection: the idea of isolated fantasy-worlds, which like the universe are deeply attractive representations of possible total unification. In the dissertation, I call these worlds heterocosms, and the love for them heterocosmic desire. I borrow the term heterocosm, which was coined in 1735 by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (long before the inception of the Romantic project), to denote the sense of otherness and oppositionality that is characteristic of these reflective worlds.

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[80] Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern,* in *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Hans-Joachim Birkner, Gerhard Ebeling, Hermann Fischer, Heinz Kimmerle, and Kurt-Victor Selge (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984) 1.2: 185-327, at 226 (hereafter cited as *Reden*).
[81] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 225.
[82] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 251.

Baumgarten uses the term heterocosm to refer to fictional worlds, which he conceived in the terms of Leibnizian philosophy as possible worlds invented by the poet and represented in poetry.[83] Heterocosmic fictions, as Baumgarten contends, do not semantically refer to the actual world at all; rather, they possess their own form of truth, which is based on their internal consistency as representations.[84] Through his theory of the heterocosm, Baumgarten secures an autonomy for poetic worlds that was impossible under the regime of *mimesis*. While the Romantics do not use the term heterocosm (there is no direct line of reception to be drawn from Baumgarten to Schleiermacher, Novalis, and Friedrich Schlegel), Baumgarten's term illuminates some of the techniques of early Romantic worldmaking, and especially their relationship to *mimesis*.[85] The Romantics bring the idea of the heterocosm (which for them is just an "other" world or other form of reflection) back into contact with the doctrine of *mimesis*, but in a highly dialectical fashion: in their theorization, the very separateness or alterity of the heterocosm is what gives it its representational or "mimetic" capability (an indeed *mimesis* is hereby stretched beyond any recognizable definition).[86] Moreover, the representational capacity of the heterocosm is no longer in relation to an underlying reality prior to representation: heterocosms only point to

[83] Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Reflections on Poetry: Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus*, trans. Karl Aschenbrenner and William B. Holther (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), 55 (§52, 53). "Objects denoted by fictions are impossible in either of two ways, in the real world or in all possible worlds. Those which are absolutely impossible we shall call utopian. The others we shall term heterocosmic. […] Only true and heterocosmic fictions are poetic."

[84] As Frauke Berndt has argued, Baumgarten's heterocosm, because it has no existing referent but constitutes a world in itself, moves beyond mimesis to a much more self-referential form of modern aesthetics – quoting Derrida's "Double Session," she contends that Baumgarten's poet "mimes imitation." Frauke Berndt, *Facing Poetry: Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's Theory of Literature*, trans. Anthony Mahler (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 151.

[85] I am not the first to draw Baumgarten into dialogue with early Romanticism. Manfred Frank does so (though in relation to the idea of "Verworrenheit") in his *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik*, 47-48; Gabriel Trop also thinks Novalis's poetics, especially his motifs of death and the night, in relation to Baumgarten's theory of the heterocosm in *Poetry as a Way of Life*, 170-71.

[86] Analogously, Novalis argues that *Sein* and *Schein*, while opposed, are co-constitutive.

other heterocosms. The ensemble of all heterocosms is the infinite *Zusammenhang* of reflection, which the Romantics refer to as the *Universum* (and often also *Weltall*). Further, heterocosms – as well as their interrelations amongst one another – are often treated as projections of the imagination: as fictions, as objects of heterocosmic desire. In early German Romantic reflection (and specifically its cosmic inflection), we can therefore observe a combination and suspended interplay of three powerful theories of representation, represented by three different metaphors (mirror, lamp, heterocosm), which M. H. Abrams identifies but keeps quite separate in his monumental study on Romantic critical theory, *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1953).[87]

The relevance of the idea of the heterocosm is best illustrated by example. In his *Monolog*, Novalis envisions language as a separate, heterocosmic world: "[Es ist] mit der Sprache wie mit den mathematischen Formeln […] – Sie machen eine Welt für sich aus – Sie spielen nur mit sich selbst, drücken nichts als ihre wunderbare Natur aus …"[88] As he hereby suggests, language, like mathematics, possesses its own nature, a "wunderbare Natur" in fact, which consists, very similarly to Baumgarten's theory, in the immanent play of its own elements. While linguistic "nature" appears to be entirely self-referential, Novalis contends that its purely internal play is also what makes it expressive, relating it to other worlds – the sentence concludes: "…und eben darum [weil sie eine Welt für sich ausmachen] sind sie so ausdrucksvoll – eben darum spiegelt sich in ihnen das seltsame Verhältnißspiel der Dinge."[89] Novalis here

[87] Abrams differentiates these according to different possible foci of critical theory: the universe (i.e., nature, the basis for *mimesis*), the artist (from which the metaphor of the lamp comes), and the work (basis for the theory of the heterocosm). See M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), 6-28 (for the categorizing outline of the different foci), and 272-285 (for his discussion of the heterocosm specifically).
[88] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 672.
[89] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 672.

turns any straightforwardly referential conception of language on its head.[90] At the same time, however, he posits an analogy, specifically an analogy of shared self-referentiality and internal play, between the heterocosmic world of language and the world of things, one that he insists makes one the mirror of the other.[91] Through his theory of the self-referential expressivity of language, Novalis dialectically returns to a minimal conception of the resemblance between language and the *Dingwelt*, one that is produced on the basis of a shared sense of reflexivity.

Novalis's theory of poetry is based on the idea of forming connections between worlds, which is present through the idea of bringing the small world of language *into* reality. In his novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, he presents it as follows:

> Die Sprache, sagte Heinrich, ist wirklich eine kleine Welt in Zeichen und Tönen. Wie der Mensch sie beherrscht, so möchte er gern die große Welt beherrschen, und sich frey darinn ausdrücken können. Und eben in dieser Freude, das, was außer der Welt ist, in ihr zu offenbaren, das thun zu können, was eigentlich der ursprüngliche Trieb unsers Daseins ist, liegt der Ursprung der Poesie.[92]

In this definition, poetry entails an act of reflective boundary-crossing: its joy lies in the act of revealing "das, was außer der Welt ist, in ihr." The joy of bringing the heterocosm into reality evokes the idea of self-recognition in reflection, but does so purely through act of forming a relationship among worlds, of intervening in reflection to produce the impression of a total nexus.[93] Structurally speaking, the poetic act brings worlds into contact, nesting two different worlds *within* one another, thereby producing a synthesis of the opposites of reality (the "große

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[90] This is where Menninghaus's argument for Novalis as a pre-Saussure and pre-Derrida comes from. See *Unendliche Verdopplung*, 115-131.

[91] Though Novalis's familiarity with Baumgarten is questionable, his analogy of the isolated monadic worlds of things and signs is indebted to the same Leibnizian concept of pre-established harmony that underlies Baumgarten's aesthetics.

[92] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 287.

[93] While it seems to evoke it, the idea of "beherrschen" (a mastery over reflection) does not entail a total despotic control over the world, but rather entails an act of self-containment, which allows reflective activity to become free. I discuss these dynamics in Chapters 3 and 4.

Welt") and representation (the "kleine Welt"): the small world *outside* enters *into* the larger world of human life. A poetic representation conceived in this fashion appears like an *ordo inversus* within reality – it is more than a reflection of reality conceived of in the mimetic sense, but rather a simultaneous mirroring and reversal.[94] The conception of poetry as a reflective *reversal* becomes even more pronounced in Novalis's theory of the fairy tale, which he regards as the "canon" of poetry.[95] The fairy tale world is in simultaneous opposition and resemblance to the real world: "Die Welt des Märchens," Novalis writes in a much-quoted fragment, "ist die *durchausentgegengesetzte* Welt der Welt der Wahrheit (Geschichte) – und eben darum ihr so *durchaus ähnlich* – wie das *Chaos* der *vollendeten Schöpfung*."[96] Poetry in this conception is much more than just a microcosm of the larger world: it is an opposite to the world that resembles it precisely *because* it opposes it. It forms a heterocosm in the Romantic sense. The fairy tale as an oppositional heterocosm challenges not only the idea of a mimetic prototype, but that of an ideal world: it represents truth ("die Welt der Wahrheit") by opposition, and perfection ("vollendete[] Schöpfung") through chaos.

These are some of the movements of universal poetry. As I understand it, the idea of a self-reflecting universe is only another way of describing the idea of universal poetry, and world (or rather the heterocosmic multiplicity of mutually reflecting worlds) is only another way of naming the multiplicity of forms of reflection that are brought into contact in the project of universal poetry. From the perspective of universal poetry, both world and poetry are already forms of reflection, and they are made infinitely attractive by the self's desire to find itself in

[94] In this sense, it is analogous to the structure of consciousness, as Novalis theorizes it in the *Fichte-Studien*: "Das Bewußtseyn ist folglich ein Bild des Seyns im Seyn" (Novalis, *NS*, 2: 106).
[95] As he writes in *Das allgemeine Brouillon*, "Das Mährchen ist gleichsam der *Canon* der *Poësie* – alles poëtische muß märchenhaft seyn." Novalis, *NS*, 3: 449.
[96] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 281.

reflection, to see itself as one with the world and one with reflection. The ideas of transforming the world into poetry or of Romanticizing the world, which articulate this desire, are provocations not to necessarily fulfill this desire, but to reflect on how this desire is mediated by aesthetic *Schein.* In this regard, Romantic self-reflexivity, however formal and seemingly autonomous, does come back to the self (the implied reader or critic, and the selves portrayed in poetic worlds), as the source of the desire that moves through the project of reflective universalization, joining world, universe, and heterocosm, taking pleasure in the infinite process.

Chapter Descriptions

There are four chapters to this dissertation, which are divided up by author and work. In each chapter, I track the rhetorical and poetic methods by which a particular author portrays universality through the interrelationship of different worlds, or perspectives on the world. Beyond this, I also situate the particular forms and methods of early German Romantic poetics and theory as interventions in a broader field of aesthetic theories and practices of the *Goethezeit*, with which the early German Romantics are in constant dialogue. This study is not therefore a pure philosophical/theoretical analysis of the project of universal poetry, a simple demonstration of certain philosophical premises. Rather, I investigate how certain philosophical imperatives and questions shaped the aesthetic and critical practices of early German Romanticism, contributing to its uniqueness as a movement.

Chapter 1

The first chapter of the dissertation analyzes the rhetoric of Friedrich Schleiermacher's *Ueber die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (1799). In his *Reden,* Schleiermacher

proposes a unique, Romantic definition of religion as "Anschauen des Universums," which he insists is purely experiential and subjective, and thus foreign to philosophical attempts at generalization. As I argue, Schleiermacher thereby rethinks *Anschauung* (an important term for both Kant's and Fichte's philosophy) along aesthetic lines, in alignment with the idea of Romantic reflexivity. Counter to the prevalent reading of the *Reden*, I situate Schleiermacher's *Anschauung*, as well as the rhetoric he uses to describe and elicit "Anschauung des Universums," as an aesthetic concept that is in close dialogue with an emergent Romantic theory of art-description or *ekphrasis*.

Chapter 2

In the second chapter, I turn my attention to Romantic literary criticism, investigating the relationship between Friedrich Schlegel's critique of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795-96) and the project of Romantic *Universalpoesie*. Under Friedrich Schlegel's pen, Goethe's novel becomes the paradigm for a specifically Romantic, seemingly non-teleological model of formal *Bildung*, which I call heterocosmic: it progresses through a series of worlds, all of which seem to point to a higher and indefinite *Mittelpunkt*. For Schlegel, Wilhelm's vague aesthetic sensibility, which Schlegel calls "Sinn für das Universum," symbolizes the effect of Goethe's literary form on the reader's intuition of the wholeness of the work. While Goethe ultimately reinstates a classical aesthetic and teleological form of *Bildung* in the close of the novel through the retrospective clarifications provided by the Society of the Tower, thereby dispelling the sense of an "Universum," the novel nevertheless becomes key for Schlegel's development of both the concept of Romantic criticism and the idea of *Universalpoesie*.

Chapter 3

The third chapter is focused on Novalis's unfinished novel, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802), which is both a response to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* and an autonomous attempt to develop a Romantic apotheosis of poetry. As I show, Novalis deploys the family (a triadic structure reminiscent of his *Fichte-Studien*) as a form for differentiating and connecting various small worlds – both heterocosmic and microcosmic – within the novel. While the novel aims at a universalization of the family through the increasing interpenetration of these small worlds, the form of desire that both holds together and moves across families remains in a constant state of suspension, unable to completely possess its object. Instead of becoming a means for total unification, desire becomes a vehicle for movement between worlds, objects of affection, and forms of organization and disorganization.

Chapter 4

In the final chapter of the dissertation, I analyze the effects of Novalis's theory of reflexivity on another of his ambitious book projects, that of writing a Romantic encyclopedia. This project was never completed and remains only in the form of a vast collection of notes known as *Das allgemeine Brouillon*. I think through the notes themselves as exercises in simultaneously projecting ideals of unity and universality and controlling the desire to achieve these goals. As exercises in averting intellectual fixation and of putting scientific *Grundsätze* into a state of *Schweben*, Novalis's encyclopedic notes can be viewed as a critique of the intense scientific optimism of his time. However, scientific activity does not therefore become immobilized – it continues in what can be envisioned as an endless series of Copernican reversals. In this

capacity, as mobility and self-reflection, it becomes a source of a different sort of pleasure and freedom, one that Novalis calls the free feeling of an infinite world.

Chapter 1: "Anschauen des Universums": Schleiermacher's Romantic Religion and its Relationship to Early Romantic Art Criticism

Though Friedrich Schleiermacher is known today primarily as a Protestant theologian and the founder of hermeneutics, he was one of the core members of the early Romantic circle, a contributor to the *Athenaeum,* and an especially close friend and collaborator of Friedrich Schlegel's.[1] His speeches *Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern,* published anonymously in 1799, represent his most influential contribution to the early Romantic movement. In these speeches, Friedrich Schleiermacher defines religion Romantically, not as faith in God but as a pantheistic-sounding experience of "Anschauung und Gefühl" of the universe.[2] At the heart of this experience lies a contradiction, emphasized by the word "Anschauung": how could it be possible to see the infinite universe from a finite perspective, to regard its wholeness from within? In his speeches, Schleiermacher only intensifies this contradiction through his insistence that religious experience is unique to each individual, even deeply subjective. Religion for Schleiermacher is an "unmittelbare Wahrnehmung", an intimate feeling, and a "stille[r] hingegebene[r] Genuss" of the universe's activity upon the self.[3] Schleiermacher's anti-Enlightenment and anti-orthodox polemic against religious systems of any kind, and in fact against any conceptualization of religion that goes beyond the immediacy of the affective encounter, at times leads him so far as to claim that religious experience is isolated and unconnectable:

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[1] On the domestic and intellectual relationship of the two friends, see Andreas Arndt, "Eine literarische Ehe: Schleiermachers Wohngemeinschaft mit Friedrich Schlegel," in *Wissenschaft und Geselligkeit: Friedrich Schleiermacher in Berlin 1796-1802*, ed. Andreas Arndt (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 3-14.
[2] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 211. "Ihr Wesen ist weder Denken noch Handeln, sondern Anschauung und Gefühl. Anschauen will sie das Universum, in seinen eigenen Darstellungen und Handlungen will sie es andächtig belauschen, von seinen unmittelbaren Einflüßen will sie sich in kindlicher Paßivität ergreifen und erfüllen laßen."
[3] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 215, 219.

> Anschauung ist und bleibt immer etwas einzelnes, abgesondertes, die unmittelbare Wahrnehmung, weiter nichts; sie zu verbinden und in ein Ganzes zusammenzustellen, ist schon wieder nicht das Geschäft des Sinnes, sondern des abstrakten Denkens. So die Religion; bei den unmittelbaren Erfahrungen vom Dasein und Handeln des Universums, bei den einzelnen Anschauungen und Gefühlen bleibt sie stehen; jede derselben ist ein für sich bestehendes Werk ohne Zusammenhang mit andern oder Abhängigkeit von ihnen; von Ableitung und Anknüpfung weiß sie nichts, es ist unter allem was ihr begegnen kann das, dem ihre Natur am meisten widerstrebt.[4]

Instead of developing a single universal but homogenizing conception of religion, Schleiermacher makes the heterogeneity of the forms of religion and of religious experience essential to its very definition.[5] Interestingly, Schleiermacher's description, while deeply individualizing in its attempt to secure the uniqueness of religious experience, also veers into the aesthetic: a religious *Anschauung* becomes "ein für sich bestehendes Werk," much like Friedrich Schlegel's contention that a Romantic fragment "muß gleich einem kleinen Kunstwerke von der umgebenden Welt ganz abgesondert und in sich selbst vollendet sein wie ein Igel."[6] And while Schleiermacher rejects the idea of a "Kunstreligion," which would amount to a form of art-worship,[7] the form of universality that he develops in his speeches on religion is alike to the conception of reflexive universality articulated in the Romantic project of universal poetry. This

[4] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 215.
[5] This is the major reason why Schleiermacher rejects the Enlightenment concept of "natural religion" (an abstraction, not a practiced religion) and instead also theorizes religion through the positive religions. "Warum habe ich angenommen, daß die Religion nicht anders als in einer unendlichen Menge bestimmter Formen vollständig gegeben werden kann? […] Weil nehmlich jede Anschauung des Unendlichen völlig für sich besteht, von keiner andern abhängig ist und auch keine andere nothwendig zur Folge hat; weil ihrer unendlich viele sind, und in ihnen selbst gar kein Grund liegt, warum sie so und nicht anders eine auf die andere bezogen werden sollten, und dennoch jede ganz anders erscheint, wenn sie von einem andern Punkt aus gesehen, oder auf eine andere bezogen wird, so kann die ganze Religion unmöglich anders existiren als wenn alle diese verschiedne Ansichten jeder Anschauung die auf solche Art entstehen können wirklich gegeben werden; und dies ist nicht anders möglich als in einer unendlichen Menge verschiedner Formen, deren jede durch das verschiedene Princip der Beziehung in ihr durchaus bestimmt, und in deren Jeder derselbe Gegenstand ganz anders modificirt ist, das heißt welche sämmtlich wahre Individuen sind." Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 299.
[6] Friedrich Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 197.
[7] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 262. On the idea of an early Romantic *Kunstreligion*, see Bernd Auerochs, *Die Entstehung der Kunstreligion* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006).

form of universality is premised on the irreducibility of individual elements to one another or to the whole (their "Absonderung" and resistance), but nevertheless produces an indefinite impression of a greater whole, an *Universum* and universality, through a reflective mobility among distinct elements. It is the goal of this chapter to explore this concept of reflexivity as it is articulated in the *Reden*.

The most important challenge resulting from Schleiermacher's pluralistic conception of religion is the imperative to make religion communicable. On the one hand, if religious *Anschauungen* are subjective, individual, and, immediate (as Schleiermacher frequently repeats), how can they possibly become shared? On the other hand, it is precisely the possibility of a relationship between different perspectives, and thus a sense of religious community, that is central to Schleiermacher's conception of the universality of religious experience; his speeches on religion are in fact premised on the communicability of *Anschauung*. Schleiermacher's religion therefore somewhat resembles Kantian aesthetic judgment, which is characterized by universal communicability without a concept.[8] The importance of communicability underlies the rhetorical structure of the *Reden*, which are addressed to the "gebildete Verächter" of religion, an imagined group of hostile auditors. The purpose of the *Reden* is to initiate these "despisers" into Schleiermacher's universal religion by dispelling their preconceived notions and inviting them into the process of *Anschauen des Universums*. Within the speeches, Schleiermacher's polemical explanation of the nature of religion (and of what is *not* religion) is punctuated by a number of vividly metaphorical illustrations of *Anschauung.* These vignettes provide a means of positively articulating the essence of religion as *Anschauen des Universums* through the poetic

[8] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft,* ed. Heiner F. Klemme (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2009), 97-99.

interweaving of images, and simultaneously, through their seductive effect on the hostile reader, act as an invitation to become incorporated into the multiperspectival Romantic *Universum*. Schleiermacher's procedure does not follow a straightforward rhetorical strategy of producing a specific image or *Anschauung* in the mind's eye of his readers. His illustrations overflow with a series of layered images that, in their interrelationship amongst one another, embody the communicability of *Anschauungen* on the level of form, as mobile connectibility. It is therefore the rhetorical texture of Schleiermacher's speeches most of all that manifests the formal dynamic of the universe's self-representation in human experience. Ultimately, this rhetoric is intended to cultivate a way of looking and reading that exceeds the text of the *Reden* and turns back to the world of things: "denn die Kunstwerke der Religion sind immer und überall ausgestellt; die ganze Welt ist eine Gallerie religiöser Ansichten und ein Jeder ist mitten unter sie gestellt."[9]

This chapter is organized into two sections. I begin by situating Schleiermacher's *Reden* within late eighteenth-century debates about the relationship between religion and philosophy. Schleiermacher's definition of religion, I argue, represents an experiential and aesthetic rather than a rational approach to universality (though it is not therefore irreconcilable with rational views of the universe or universality). I use this context as a point of departure for differentiating Schleiermacher's notion of *Anschauung* from Fichtean *intellektuale Anschauung*, which the *Reden* intentionally challenge. As I show, Schleiermacher's religious *Anschauung* and *Gefühl* are less concerned with critiquing the ground of philosophical reflection (as the scholarly consensus up to now has suggested), than they are in developing a dynamic, aesthetic form of reflective *Anschauung* through the rhetorical framing and texture of the speeches. I demonstrate these

[9] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 251.

claims through a close reading of what is commonly referred to as the *Brautszene*, a descriptive vignette in which Schleiermacher describes religious *Anschauung* and *Gefühl* as an erotic unification with the *Universum*.

In the second section, of the chapter, I situate Schleiermacher's self-reflexive notion of *Anschauung* among more general trends in late eighteenth-century aesthetics. As I show, Schleiermacher's rhetoric both looks back to late Enlightenment models of descriptive poetics, which modeled themselves on classical *ekphrasis.* These models inform Schleiermacher's much more radical presentation of reflection as a form of religious *Bildung*. Beyond this, the *Reden* I demonstrate that the *Reden* are in close dialogue with emerging early Romantic forms of art criticism pioneered by A. W. Schlegel, Ludwig Tieck, and Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder. Reading Schleiermacher's *Reden* in connection with Wackenroder's *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* (1796), I demonstrate the alliance between Schleiermacher's conception of the infinitely reflective *Universum* and Wackenroder's rhetorical strategies for venerating and mythologizing Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*. Through these interventions, I establish a new discursive context for reading Schleiermacher's *Reden,* one that situates them as part of the Romantic project of *Universalpoesie*.

Section 1 – Philosophy and the "eigene Provinz" of religion

In his *Reden*, Schleiermacher works very hard, rhetorically speaking, to claim for religion an "eigene Provinz" within human life and mental activity distinct from the domains he calls "Metaphysik" and "Moralität."[10] By positioning religion neither as a direct representation of

[10] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 204.

philosophical truths nor as an instrument of moral education, but specifically as a form of experience, Schleiermacher reconceptualizes religion in a manner that breaks from its Enlightenment subordination to rationality and moral action. It had been common within the mid- to late-18th century *Spätaufklärung* to subordinate religion to morality or to value religion only as a more accessible or "popular" means of representing philosophical truths; this is especially apparent in Kant, Schleiermacher's major philosophical influence in the 1790s.[11] It is important to note however, that Schleiermacher's rendering of religion as an "eigene Provinz" in human mental life with a distinct essence (*Wesen*) does not separate religion from the domains of theoretical and practical philosophy in terms of a difference of its specific *objects*, e.g. by defining religion exclusively in terms of spiritual concerns, matters of faith, or theological questions.[12] Rather, Schleiermacher assigns the *same object* to religion, metaphysics, and morality – namely, the *Universum* – and defines the differences between the three of these disciplines in terms of human faculties and activities, that is, the relationship and approach each of them has to reality in general, and specifically the conception of the *Universum* as its unity.[13] Within this formulation, religion is "weder Denken noch Handeln, sondern Anschauung und

[11] See Bernd Auerochs, "Das Bedürfnis der Sinnlichkeit. Möglichkeiten funktionaler Äquivalenz von Religion und Poesie im 18. Jahrhundert," In *Der Ursprung des Konzepts um 1800*, ed. Albert Meier, Alessandro Costazza, and Gérard Laudin, *Kunstreligion: Ein Ästhetisches Konzept Der Moderne in Seiner Historischen Entfaltung 1* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 29–44 for an overview. As Auerochs shows, thinkers such as Kant and Fichte understood religion as a more pleasing, sensuous (but symbolic, distortive) form in which philosophical truths can be revealed – a stark contrast to Schleiermacher's own conception of religion: "Offenbarung besteht in 'versinnlichenden Vorstellungen reiner Vernunftideen' [Fichte]. Und: 'Der Zweck aller dieser Belehrdungen ist kein andrer, als Beförderung reiner Moralität, und der der versinnlichenden Darstellung derselben insbesondre Beförderung reiner Moralität in dem sinnlichen Menschen'. In die Sinnlichkeit ansprechende Symbole verkleidet, sagt die Religion eine Wahrheit, die die Philosophie unentstellt zu sagen und auf die hin sie die Religion zu interpretieren weiß" (Auerochs, "Das Bedürfnis," 38).

[12] This means that religion, metaphysics, and morality are not mutually exclusive – they are simply different approaches or "perspectives." Though Schleiermacher differentiates the three "domains" from one another, his pluralistic model allows for the coexistence and simultaneous validity of multiple perspectives.

[13] "Stellet Euch auf den höchsten Standpunkt der Metaphysik und der Moral, so werdet Ihr finden, daß beide mit der Religion denselben Gegenstand haben, nemlich das Universum und das Verhältniß des Menschen zu ihm." Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 207.

Gefühl."[14] Because a specific *perspective*, represented by a set of human drives and faculties, lies at the root of each different mode of apprehending the universe, the explanation of the essence of each domain of human activity (religion, metaphysics, morality) must delve into the nature of these human faculties and drives and the forms of relation they make possible.[15] Schleiermacher's speeches are thus not intended to invalidate theoretical and practical reason, but to emancipate religion from them as a unique way of apprehending the unity of the *Universum* and the subject's place within it.

Though Schleiermacher very decidedly differentiates religion from philosophy in the second *Rede*, many critics have noted that the idea of religion discussed in the *Reden* has a close proximity to Idealist philosophy and can only be fully apprehended through its relation to the central questions of Idealism. Bernd Auerochs suggests that both early German Romantic art and religion can only be understood as representing an Absolute if one inhabits a philosophical standpoint (which Romantic writers such as Schleiermacher certainly experimented with). Auerochs argues that though art and religion, and not philosophy itself, are the privileged vehicles for the representation of the (philosophical) Absolute, Romantic art and religion cannot be understood apart from the set of philosophical assumptions that construct this vocation for them.[16] In making this claim, Auerochs implicitly reinscribes religion within the Enlightenment

[14] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 211-12.
[15] As Daniel Weidner writes, "Schleiermacher versteht, entsprechend der kopernikanischen Wende [Kants], Religion nicht von ihren Objekten her, sondern als besonderen Vollzug des Subjekts; anders als bei Kant ist dieser Vollzug aber nicht primär praktische und Religion daher kein moralisch notwendiger Vernunftglauben, sondern Anschauung und Gefühl." Daniel Weidner, "Geist, Wort, Liebe. Das Johannesevangelium um 1800," in *Das Buch der Bücher - Gelesen. Lesarten der Bibel in den Wissenschaften und Künsten*, ed. Steffen Martus and Andrea Polaschegg, Publikationen Zur Zeitschrift Für Germanistik 13 (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006), 435–70, at 450-51.
[16] "Und doch müssen die Frühromantiker auch den Standpunkt der Philosophie beziehen, um eben diese lebendige Vielfalt zugleich als ein Gefäß für metaphysische Wahrheit interpretieren zu können" (Auerochs, "Das Bedürfnis der Sinnlichkeit," 44).

narrative that religion is a popular, more accessible packaging for philosophical truths. The *Reden* themselves are heavily informed by Schleiermacher's reception of Kant and Spinoza, and have been read as performing a similar Romantic (philosophical) critique of Kant to the critique of Fichte through Novalis.[17] Providing another perspective on the issue, John H. Smith describes Schleiermacher's religion as a "vanishing mediator" in the intellectual culture around 1800 that was ultimately subsumed under Idealist philosophy.[18] According to Smith, Schleiermacher provided in the *Reden* "a way of formulating *the* philosophical desideratum of his generation, namely an underlying and absolute unity" that overcame Kantian dualism through recourse to a Romantic-Spinozist understanding of living, organic unity.[19] As Smith and Auerochs have observed, the fact that Schleiermacher's Romantic religion *answers* a philosophical question makes it particularly vulnerable to the loss of its carefully staked-out proper domain. It is specifically in Hegel's reception of the *Reden* in the essay *Glauben und Wissen* (1802) that Smith notes the way in which, counter to Schleiermacher's own goals, religion is taken back into the service of philosophy.[20] Though Schleiermacher is at pains to differentiate religion from philosophy in the *Reden*, these critical views thus suggest that his idea of religion either serves or is reincorporated into a more lasting philosophical agenda that concerns itself with the representation of the Absolute.

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[17] See Andreas Arndt, "Gefühl und Reflexion," 105-26.
[18] John H. Smith, "Living Religion as Vanishing Mediator: Schleiermacher, Early Romanticism, and Idealism," *German Quarterly* 84, no. 2 (2011): 137–58.
[19] Smith, "Living Religion," 143. See also the following remark from Smith's article: "once the possibility of an intuitive understanding of *organic unity* takes hold [in Romantic thought], both the *deus* and *natura* of Spinoza take on the distinctive form of Romantic *Naturphilosophie* and that *Naturphilosophie* takes on a terminology of divinization. Not only was the key insight of Spinoza now saved from atheism, but religious thought itself gained a new foundation and a special role in providing in turn the unifying and mediating force for philosophical thought." Smith, "Living Religion," 142.
[20] Smith, "Living Religion," 153-54.

This tension is worth pursuing, because the intellectual domain or discipline that Schleiermacher's *Reden* and their definition of religion are understood to belong to has heavily influenced the scholarly reception of his text – and it is also a central preoccupation of his speeches. A disciplinary and methodological argument forms the basis of my own intervention: as I take it, Schleiermacher's religion can only be understood as distinct from philosophical discourse if we attend to the rhetoric of his descriptions, which develop a mode of *Anschauung* that explicitly moves into an analogy with aesthetics, and therefore also entails an entirely different view of the universe and universality than the Idealist conception of an Absolute. The difficulty in the reception of Schleiermacher's *Reden* arises because visual metaphors play an essential role in both Idealist philosophy and Romanticism, centering around the shared word *Anschauung*. Since Schleiermacher is so heavily informed by his reception of Idealist philosophy, it is necessary to clearly demarcate how his conception of *Anschauung* moves away from, for example, Fichtean *intellektuale Anschauung.*

1.1 – *Anschauung* and *Gefühl* between Idealism and Romanticism

The highly contested term *Anschauung* is essential to both Kant's and Fichte's conceptions of consciousness, and Schleiermacher was highly aware of this in composing his *Reden*.[21] In both Kant's and Fichte's definitions, the visual metaphor of *Anschauung* or intuition describes a subjective representation of an object, which, in the case of self-consciousness, is the subject itself. Kant mobilizes the term *Anschauung* in his demonstration of the unity of apperception in the *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, and in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, *intellektuale*

[21] See Arndt, "Gefühl und Reflexion."

Anschauung describes the way the *Ich* posits and apprehends its own self-identity. As Manfred Frank demonstrates with reference to Kant's and Fichte's uses of the term, the controversy around *Anschauung* and self-consciousness in Idealism arose as a result of a philosophical problem: the difficulty of representing the identity of the subject in a visually-conceived relation of self-consciousness.[22] On the one hand, the idea of pictorial unity seems to at least partially motivate the importance of *Anschauung* for Idealist philosophy: *Anschauungen* function like discrete, unified images of consciousness. On the other hand, because self-consciousness is understood as a visually "reflective" process, it is impossible for the subject to encounter itself in a pure and immediate (and thus unified) way; instead of encountering *itself*, the subject encounters its own self-produced image of itself, which it must subsequently identify itself with. Manfred Frank has diagnosed the problem with Kant's and Fichte's models of *Anschauung* as the "Repräsentationsmodell des Bewußtseins," characteristic of German Idealism in which "die Bewußtseins-Beziehung [sich] geteilt [sieht] in einen Subjekt- und einen Objekt-Pol der Vorstellung."[23] Applied to self-consciousness, this becomes the "Reflexionsmodell des Selbstbewußtseins": the subject becomes its own object of reflection in the relation of self-consciousness.[24] As Frank contends, the self-reflecting subject only comes to know its reflected image evidently *as itself* through some kind of prior familiarity with itself, which furnishes the criterion for its identification of itself with its reflection in consciousness.[25] Frank demonstrates

[22] Manfred Frank, "Intellektuale Anschauung. Drei Stellungsnahmen zu einem Deutungsversuch von Selbstbewußtsein: Kant, Fichte, Hölderlin/Novalis," in *Die Aktualität der Frühromantik*, ed. Jochen Hörisch and Ernst Behler (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1987), 96-126.
[23] Frank, "Intellektuale Anschauung," 110.
[24] Frank, "Intellektuale Anschauung," 113.
[25] We can say the same of objects outside the self: concepts substitute for a more immediate relationship to the world through the senses. For this reason, conceptual knowledge of objects (like self-knowledge/self-recognition) only retroactively confirms its own prior basis in sensuous experience, which it can never fully incorporate or assimilate.

why this is philosophically problematic: "[a]ber damit ist zugleich gezeigt, daß die Vertrautheit-mit-sich vor-reflexiv bestanden hat und daß diese Reflexion, wenn sie gelingt, nur darin bestehen kann, diese *unmittelbare* Vertrautheit ausdrücklich (*mittelbar*) zu machen."[26]

This is where the Romantic critique of Idealism intervenes. For Romantic thinkers such as Novalis, Frank argues, *Anschauung* is problematic from a philosophical perspective because the subject's attempt to form its own immediate identity through self-consciousness results in a disruption of its unified selfhood: any attempt by the subject to conceive its own *pre*-reflective, i.e. immediate, unity cannot be classified as knowledge (*Wissen*), because this would require the introduction of mediating criteria for identification, i.e., concepts. It is precisely the *non-identity* of subject and object in the relation of *Anschauung* that – so the narrative goes – the Romantics attempted to overcome in their various critiques of Idealism. As Frank goes on to demonstrate, in Novalis, the subject's pre-reflective "Vertrautheit-mit-sich" becomes conceptualized instead as the *feeling* of a pure, self-identical being: an unknowable but felt pre-conscious ground for all possible knowledge that functions as a sort of inverse of *Anschauung*.[27] Andreas Arndt has been keen to note that Schleiermacher independently developed a critique of Idealist *Anschauung* very similar to that of Novalis, conceptualizing the "Grund" of knowledge in only slightly different terminology, as a pre-reflective unity of *Anschauung* and *Gefühl*. As Arndt puts it, "Der das Wissen ermöglichende transzendentale Grund ist nicht im Bewußtsein aufzusuchen, sondern ist als Grund bewußtseinstranszendent, obgleich im Bewußtsein 'präsent.'"[28] Until recently, most

[26] Frank, "Intellektuale Anschauung," 113.
[27] Frank, "Intellektuale Anschauung," 124-25. Manfred Frank also discusses this in relation to Friedrich Hölderlin, "Urteil und Seyn," in *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, ed. Jochen Schmidt, 3 vols. (Frankfurt a. M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1993), 2: 591-92.
[28] Arndt, "Gefühl und Reflexion," 117, see also 124. Arndt does not however address the specific semantics of *Anschauung* in the *Reden* or their coextensiveness with Kant's or Fichte's use of the term, except insofar as he reproduces Schleiermacher's term "ursprüngliche Anschauung" to describe a pre-reflective experience where

philosophical commentators have followed Frank in construing the Romantic project in its entirety as a quest for this original feeling or ground, which becomes the only possible immediate relationship to the Absolute. A difficulty however arises for the philosophical reading of Romanticism because the Romantic *feeling* of the Absolute cannot be formulated positively: it becomes inaccessible (at least to philosophy) because it cannot be reflected. Manfred Frank therefore refers to the Romantic conception of immediate subjective self-identity in feeling as a highly dialectical "docta ignorantia" of the Absolute.[29] In this reading, Romantic aesthetics (and in this case religion) are positioned at the limits of the knowable: using irony and fragmentation as a means of articulating an unconscious *Sehnsucht* for the Absolute, the Romantics would gesture poetically to what is unsayable and ungraspable in the transparent language of philosophy.[30]

1.2 – *Anschauung*, Language, and Reflection

Frank's astute philosophical reading of the Romantic critique of Fichte has inadvertently given rise to a scholarly consensus in literary evaluations of the *Reden* – which I hope to revise here – that Schleiermacher regards religious experience as incommunicable. As Kurt Nowak for example writes of religion in the *Reden*,

> Das innerste Geheimnis bleibt sprachlich und denkerisch uneinholbar. Sprache und Denken müssen im Widerstreit mit dem Geheimnis liegen, dessen ganze Fülle sich nur in der vorreflexiven Identität des Subjekts mit dem Unendlichen herstellt. In dem

intuition and feeling are unified. The analysis and/or critique of philosophical/conceptual visuality is not a concern for Arndt, and this is where my own analysis picks up.

[29] Frank, "Intellektuale Anschauung," 125.

[30] One extremely influential example of this reading in relation to Schleiermacher is found in Hermann Timm, *Die heilige Revolution* (Frankfurt am Main: Syndikat, 1978).

> Augenblick, da sich die Identität in Sprache und Denken zerlegt, hat sich bereits Entzweiung ereignet, deren Sprachgestalt exoterisch bleiben muss.[31]

Nowak emphasizes the unspeakability of religion by implicitly equating language and thought: according to his analysis here, linguistic representation, like thought, "zerlegt" or disjoints the pre-reflective identity of the subject with the infinite universe. Because language is not identical to religious experience, its form must be "exoteric" to it, as Nowak puts it. In making this argument, he takes Schleiermacher's laments about the indescribability of the moment of religious inspiration and the inevitability of misunderstanding at their word, deducing a linguistic model from them. This claim is echoed by Andreas Arndt, who argues that the original unity of intuition and feeling of the universe is incommunicable, for all communication entails reflective separation.[32]

Both of these readings (in fact almost all readings) of the relationship between religious experience and language hinge on the interpretation of a famous passage of the *Reden*, known as the *Brautszene*, or nuptial scene. In this highly illustrative scene, Schleiermacher presents the unity of *Anschauung und Gefühl* and the subject and *Universum* through the image of a bridal embrace. The description itself is, however, quite elaborately prefaced with a rhetorical concession – couched in philosophical language – that the unity of intuition and feeling is indescribable. I reproduce the passage here:

> Ehe ich Euch aber in das Einzelne dieser Anschauungen und Gefühle hineinführe, […] gönnt mir zuvor einen Augenblick darüber zu trauern, daß ich von beiden nicht anders als getrennt reden kann; der feinste Geist der Religion geht dadurch verloren für meine Rede, und ich kann ihr innerstes Geheimniß nur schwankend und unsicher enthüllen. Aber eine

[31] Kurt Nowak, *Schleiermacher und die Frühromantik. Eine literaturgeschichtliche Studie zum romantischen Religionsverständnis und Menschenbild am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 149.

[32] "In dem Reden über die Religion freilich ist diese Anschauung [des Universums] uneinholbar, denn dieses Reden ist, wie rhetorisch-poetisch auch immer, Reflexion, in der die ursprüngliche Anschauung immer schon als in Anschauung und Gefühl getrennt zur Sprache kommt." Arndt, "Gefühl und Reflexion," 124.

> nothwendige Reflexion trennt beide, und wer kann über irgend etwas, das zum Bewußtsein gehört, reden, ohne erst durch dieses Medium hindurch zu gehen.[33]

The problem Schleiermacher points out here is precisely the Idealist problem of representing the unity of pre-conscious experience in consciousness: "wer kann über irgend etwas, *das zum Bewußtsein gehört*, reden, ohne erst durch dieses Medium [der Reflexion] hindurch zu gehen" (emphasis mine). In what immediately follows, Schleiermacher goes on to describe the "unvermeidliche Scheidung" that occurs when intuition and feeling are separated for the purpose of a conscious "Betrachtung": as in the Idealist apparatus, consciousness is represented as vision. Religious experience is a fleeting moment *before* the emergence of consciousness: "Jener erste geheimnißvolle Augenblik, der bei jeder sinnlichen Wahrnehmung vorkommt, ehe noch Anschauung und Gefühl sich trennen […] ich weiß wie unbeschreiblich er ist, und wie schnell er vorüber geht, ich wollte aber Ihr könntet ihn festhalten…"[34] Religious *Anschauung und Gefühl* are unified in the first moment of experience, yet become separated when they are made available to conscious reflection.

It is true that in his lament over the disunification of *Anschauung* and *Gefühl* Schleiermacher conceives of verbalization, like visualizing consciousness, as a reflective process that disrupts the originary unity of intuition and feeling. He thereby somewhat performatively subjects his conception of immediate religious experience to the same critique that he and other Romantic writers had leveled at Fichte's famous *Ich=Ich*. Critics however generally take Schleiermacher at his word here, reading the lament over reflection and the loss of immediacy as a genuine frustration with the inability to express religion adequately, rather than a rhetorical

[33] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 220-221.
[34] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 221.

concession that prepares his unique overcoming of the problem. At its most extreme, this reading portrays Schleiermacher's most highly descriptive, metaphorical passages as expressions of a melancholic Romantic *Sehnsucht* or longing to bring the immediacy of inward experience into language. For the more deconstructively inclined, this longing then self-reflexively turns again into an abyssal awareness of the chasm between language and the immediacy of experience, which it is then the task of language to articulate. Hermann Timm paints an exemplary picture of this in his *Die heilige Revolution* when he writes: "Das Verbalisieren entäußert die Innerlichkeit ihrer nichtssagenden Leere, um sie qualitativ zu verwandeln zur Intimität des selbstreflexiven Wissens um Grund und Grenze alles Sagbaren."[35] Language, in far fewer words, here simply reflects its own limits, its inability to attain its origin.

While I agree that Schleiermacher foregrounds the reflexivity of language, I want to suggest that he does so in order to propose an *alternative* model of reflection, one that, rather than staging a self-negation of language, locates the origin of its reflective power in the connectivity of what he calls the *Universum*, which appears as the true origin. The *Universum*, for Schleiermacher, is not an identity or an Absolute, but a reflective, ever-increasing, never-stabilizing multiplicity, even a "Chaos" of interrelated worlds.[36] Its precise nature as a total *Zusammenhang* remains undefined, in the modality of Romantic *Schweben*: it is experienced but not known. In the erotic framework of Schleiermacher's *Brautszene*, this different conception of reflection means that sexual union results not in a fall from innocence (as Hermann Timm would

[35] Timm, *Die heilige Revolution*, 44.
[36] "Dieses unendliche Chaos, wo freilich jeder Punkt eine Welt vorstellt, ist eben als solches in der That das schiklichste und höchste Sinnbild der Religion" (Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 216).

have it),[37] but in an act of poetic procreation that both symbolizes and sustains the universe's ongoing self-reflection. Now for the scene itself:

> Flüchtig ist er [der erste Moment] und durchsichtig wie der erste Duft womit der Thau die erwachten Blumen anhaucht, schamhaft und zart wie ein jungfräulicher Kuß, heilig und fruchtbar wie eine bräutliche Umarmung; ja nicht *wie* dies, sondern er *ist* alles dieses *selbst*. Schnell und zauberisch entwikelt sich eine Erscheinung eine Begebenheit zu einem Bilde des Universums. So wie sie sich formt die geliebte und immer gesuchte Gestalt, flieht ihr meine Seele entgegen, ich umfange sie nicht wie einen Schatten, sondern wie das heilige Wesen selbst. Ich liege am Busen der unendlichen Welt: ich bin in diesem Augenblik ihre Seele, denn ich fühle alle ihre Kräfte und ihr unendliches Leben, wie mein eigenes, sie ist in diesem Augenblike mein Leib, denn ich durchdringe ihre Muskeln und ihre Glieder wie meine eigenen, und ihre innersten Nerven bewegen sich nach meinem Sinn und meiner Ahndung wie die meinigen. Die geringste Erschütterung, und es verweht die heilige Umarmung, und nun erst steht die Anschauung vor mir als eine abgesonderte Gestalt, ich meße sie, und sie spiegelt sich in der offnen Seele wie das Bild der sich entwindenden Geliebten in dem aufgeschlagenen Auge des Jünglings, und nun erst arbeitet sich das Gefühl aus dem Innern empor, und verbreitet sich wie die Röthe der Schaam und Lust auf seiner Wange. Dieser Moment ist die höchste Blüthe der Religion. Könnte ich ihn Euch schaffen, so wäre ich ein Gott – das heilige Schiksal verzeihe mir nur, daß ich mehr als Eleusische Mysterien habe aufdeken müßen.[38]

Though he prefaces this passage with a lament over the indescribability of the unity of intuition and feeling and the fleetingness of their union, the description Schleiermacher gives here has a quality of temporal and syntactic dilation aimed at developing, prolonging, and intensifying the reader's engagement with the experience. In the embrace of the lovers, visual intuition or *Anschauung* is transformed into erotic touch, and then back again into the reflection of the image

[37] "Es ist ein schmerzliches, ein leidvolles Gewahren, das sich des Objektes bemächtigt, indem der Akteur selbst darüber die Unschuld verliert. Der souveräne Zugriff erfolgt in einer krankheitsähnlichen Schwäche des Hingerissenseins, halbwegs zwischen dem Baum des Lebens und dem der Erkenntnis, wo sich der Besitzer und die Besessenheit komplementär gebrochen umarmen, ohne daß ihr Verhältnis irgendeine Hoffnung auf fernere Eindeutigkeit finden könnte" (Timm, *Die heilige Revolution*, 56).
[38] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 221-22.

of the beloved in the eye of the youth.[39] Schleiermacher here draws both thematically and formally upon the tradition of classical ekphrasis, a rhetorical technique that aims to produce an effect of *enargeia*, or vividness and seeming immediacy.[40] Classically speaking, the success of ekphrasis (as of art in general) lay in the ability to fool the observer or listener, creating the impression of direct witnessing in the case of ekphrasis, and the illusion of aliveness in painting and sculpture. One of the most well-known examples of this is Pliny's tale of Zeuxis and Parrhasius, but we may also think of the myth of Pygmalion as told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

If the myth of Pygmalion portrays the fulfillment of the desire for an image to come alive, breaking the barrier between representation and reality, in Schleiermacher's description we witness a different kind of transgression: the speaker himself *becomes* the beloved reflection or *Gestalt*. On one level, Schleiermacher's use of the first person already makes his persona into a sort of rhetorical image for readers to identify themselves with. But beyond this, in the scene's climax, the encounter with the beloved image or *Gestalt* turns not into a mastery over the image, but into an auto-erotic moment: the nerves and muscles the speaker's soul "penetrates" are none other than his own, and they are revealed as "one with" the universe, as soul and body are one. In terms of its gender dynamics, Schleiermacher's conception of the bridal embrace as a unification into a single body recalls the myth of Aristophanes from Plato's *Symposium*, which thinks of sexuality as an attempt to return to an original androgyny.[41] Friedrich Schlegel, Schleiermacher's most influential Romantic interlocutor and his roommate during this period, mobilizes the

[39] While shame is present in the moment of separation, perhaps as an awareness of diremption from total unity, it remains coupled with pleasure, "Lust." Moreover, on the level of form, the entire scene still reads as a picturesque, idealized, even idyllic despite the moment of bifurcation.
[40] Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 51.
[41] It thereby connects to a broad thematic field analyzed by Catriona MacLeod in *Embodying Ambiguity: Androgyny and Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Keller* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998).

conception of androgyny even more powerfully in his fragmentary novel *Lucinde*, which was published in the same year.[42] Moreover, in the phrase "ich liege am Busen der unendlichen Welt," we may see not only a nuptial embrace, but a mother-child relationship, a conception Friedrich Kittler would likely try to reinforce.[43]

Key for Schleiermacher's formulation of sexual union, the return to androgyny, or the mother-child relation, is its conflation with a return to unity with the cosmos, which makes this scene not only a return to a symbolic origin in an imagined past, but a return to an origin that remains present in every moment of experience (the *Universum*). The autoerotic relation conjured in Schleiermacher's description recalls the structure of Fichtean *intellektuale Anschauung*, but with the important difference that the self encounters itself as an image of something *else*. Thus, instead of a bifurcation of the self, which encounters its *own reflection* and must identify itself with it on some basis not contained in the act of reflection, Schleiermacher portrays the self as a reflection of the *Universum*: an *Anschauung des Universums* in the subjective rather than objective genitive meaning. In this sense, what I have called an "autoerotic" encounter is not purely self-reflexive or self-relational: Schleiermacher enacts a subtle role-reversal in which the supposed *maker* of images (Schleiermacher's rhetorical persona) becomes a reflection of the *more originary* rhetorical-reflective activity of the *Universum* as beloved, but also mother – something that he can only hint at through the conflation of self and image. Within this hall of mirrors, the *Universum*, though unrepresentable "in itself" acts as the condition of possibility for all reflection, and thus the "origin," so to speak,

[42] For analyses of Schlegel's thinking about androgyny, see MacLeod, *Embodying Ambiguity*, 66-90; see also Adrian Daub, *Uncivil Unions*, 96-104.
[43] According to the model in Friedrich Kittler, "Poet, Mother, Child: On the Romantic Invention of Sexuality," in *The Truth of the Technological World: Essays on the Genealogy of Presence*, trans. Erik Butler (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 1-16. I return to Kittler in Chapter 3.

of *all* of the poetic images in the description: the bridal embrace, the kiss of a virgin, and the breath of dew over the flowers, which, together with the speaker himself, appear as its multitudinous offspring. Indeed, Schleiermacher will refer to his nuptial scene not only as the highest flower of religion, but also as "die Geburtsstunde alles Lebendigen in der Religion."[44]

The linguistic and rhetorical model at work in this rhapsodic description does not aim for identity (as the discourse around the Absolute does in philosophy) or even stable referentiality, but for an endless multiplication of images that seems to engulf the desiring self. *Anschauung* in the context of the *Brautszene* is both mediated and immediate: individual *Anschauungen* are not just representations of the universe that would somehow stand outside it, separating it from itself (an impossibility, if the universe is conceived of as truly all-encompassing), but are conceived of as *parts* of the universe that reflect and reproduce its relentless inner activity. This is why Schleiermacher insists that it is "nicht *wie* dies, sondern er *ist* alles dieses *selbst*" in reference to his layered similes. Thus, although Schleiermacher can represent neither the self's union with the universe nor the unmediated unity of *Anschauung* and *Gefühl* directly to his audience (i.e. without recourse to signs), he demonstrates that the very affective, experiential qualities of religion are tied up with a rhetoric and an erotics of reflection that transform the immediacy of religious and aesthetic experience into the basis for further mediation. The infinite multiplication of reflection is particularly generative in the context of a Romantic discourse on religion, where it becomes the basis of religious *Mittlertum* and witnessing, a direct and persuasive transmission of religious experience. As Schleiermacher puts it: "[Die Religion] strebt wohl denen, welche noch nicht fähig sind das Universum anzuschauen, die Augen zu öfnen, denn jeder Sehende ist

[44] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 222.

ein neuer Priester, ein neuer Mittler, ein neues Organ…"[45] It is on this basis also that we must understand the fact that Schleiermacher repeatedly draws attention to the rhetorical qualities of religious communication; the rhetoric of the *Reden* is not a decorative "Schmuck" for religion, but is precisely the appropriate form of its representation.[46]

Section 2 – Rhetorical Traditions: *Ekphrasis* and the *Bildung* of the *gebildete Verächter*

In the *Reden,* Schleiermacher draws on a well-established tradition of rhetorical theory and practice in his evocations of religious experience. While the genre of ekphrasis (which I invoked briefly) was not known under this name in Schleiermacher's time, the visual and emotional effects associated with classical ekphrasis became important once more in 18th century Germany.[47] The idea of vividness or *enargeia* was of particular importance to the founders of aesthetics in the German *Aufklärung* (I here select Breitinger and Baumgarten as paradigmatic examples), who relied on canonical texts belonging to the classical ekphrastic canon to define the

[45] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 217. Novalis takes up the language of *Mittlertum* in a very similar spirit to Schleiermacher in his *Blüthenstaub* (1798) and *Die Christenheit oder Europa* (1800), the latter of which was directly inspired by Schleiermacher's *Reden*.

[46] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 268-269.

[47] What we now know as the modern ekphrastic tradition came into being through the 18th-19th-century reception of classical texts ranging from Quintilian's and Cicero's rhetorical manuals to Homer's *Iliad* and the *Imagines* of Philostratus the Elder and Younger. As Ruth Webb points out, many 18th-19th century authors whose thought now shapes the discourse around ekphrasis, such as G. E. Lessing and Paul Friedländer, did not use the word "ekphrasis" at all. Ruth Webb, "*Ekphrasis* ancient and modern: The invention of a genre," *Word & Image* 15, no. 1 (1999): 7-18, at 10. Ekphrasis in the modern understanding takes texts such as Lessing's *Laokoön* and Winckelmann's writings on the art of antiquity as foundational to the understanding of the relationship between words, images, and description. Though the term was not in use at the time in Germany, the application of "ekphrasis" as a generic designator to texts of the late 18th century is far from anachronistic: ekphrasis as a modern genre is largely defined by this era and its reception and transformation of the classics. The vocabulary used in the German texts of the era is instructive to our understanding of ekphrasis as a transforming genre at the time: Lessing in particular refers to particularly vivid poetic descriptions as "poetische Gemählde" and "Phantasien" using painting as a metaphor for successful poetry because of its vivid, illusionary quality. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laokoon, oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie*, ed. Friedrich Vollhardt (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2012), 112. These terms form somewhat of a bridge between classical "*phantasia*" (essential to the rhetorical theory of ekphrasis) and modern, romantic "Phantasie" –an investigation into the full *Begriffsgeschichte* exceeds the scope of this chapter, though an awareness of the ekphrastic tradition (broadly defined) informs my approach to Schleiermacher.

unique domain of the aesthetic. Stefanie Buchenau, who has traced the intellectual-historical line from Enlightenment aesthetics to Schleiermacher's own method, summarizes Johann Jakob Breitinger's valorization of poetry in the *Critische Dichtkunst* (1740) as follows:

> poetry resembles painting insofar as it faithfully imitates nature and produces an illusion of complete transparency. Like the Greek painter Zeuxis, who created a picture so similar to reality that it attracted the birds, the poet 'captivates and charms us, so that for a while by the force of his representations we forget where we are, and follow him willingly to where he intends us to be, so that we realize our pleasant error only on having been released from such a distraction and rapture and left to our own thoughts.'[48]

Pliny's tale of Zeuxis and Parrhasius, glossed in this brief quotation, brings forth one of the key characteristics of modern aesthetics that derives from the classical ekphrastic canon: the ability to produce "pleasant error" through mimetic illusions. In Breitinger's view, this illusory quality of poetry served not to mislead the reader, but was conceived as a tool of religious edification: poets like Barthold Heinrich Brockes were understood to reveal the *actual world* as a divine creation through their production of vivid poetic images.[49] Presaging Schleiermacher's technique in the nuptial scene, in this paradigm the poetic illusion enhances the reader's ability to look upon the world itself as an aesthetic unity, in other words enhancing rather than corrupting their relationship to reality. While in Schleiermacher's *Reden* the idea of "reality" is fundamentally unstable (insofar as it becomes aligned with pure reflection), the overall rhetoric is similar: figurative language leads back to the *Universum*.

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[48] Stefanie Buchenau, *The Founding of Aesthetics in the German Enlightenment: The Art of Invention and the Invention of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 88.

[49] Buchenau, *The Founding of Aesthetics*, 93. To illustrate her point, Buchenau summarizes Breitinger's analysis of a poem about a strawberry, written by Brockes: "According to Breitinger's commentary, the [poem's] comparison [of a strawberry] 'with such a familiar and pleasant phenomenon' lets even those who have never in their life seen a strawberry imagine its colour in their mind's eye. By making his representation as complete as possible, joining the 'images' from the different sense impressions and perspectives, Brockes renders a maximum number of characteristics and forms a global and synaesthetic 'picture' of the whole." The poem comes from Brockes' *Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott*.

This historical contextualization can be tied to the discussion of Schleiermacher's relationship to Idealism. The discipline of aesthetics came into being as an explicit alternative to philosophy: taking up Breitinger's innovations, Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten positioned his newly-invented discipline of aesthetics in response to what he saw as a lack of beauty, along with theological-practical and homiletic qualities, in the dominant Enlightenment philosophies put forward by Leibniz and Wolff, who had pioneered new *abstract* forms of representation.[50] Relying heavily on Aristotelian and Ciceronian rhetorical models, Baumgarten developed aesthetics as an intellectual discipline and form of representation that centers "Anschaulichkeit" (elsewhere termed "extensive clarity").[51] He thus engages the visuality of ekphrastic representation to produce an "understandability" (i.e. *Anschaulichkeit*) that speaks to the senses without recourse to conceptual abstractions or systematic rules. The goal of the poet, according to Baumgarten, should be to appeal to the senses and the imagination rather than the intellect, and aesthetic representations were judged on the basis of verisimilitude rather than truth.[52] As Buchenau shows, Schleiermacher's *Reden* bear the influence of Baumgarten's aesthetics and this Enlightenment tradition precisely in their privileging of sensuous representation over abstraction.[53] The tension between Idealist thought and Romantic aesthetics discussed above thus

[50] Stefanie Buchenau, "Kunstreligion und Vernunftabstraktion. Zur Genealogie des Konzepts vor 1800 (Baumgarten, Kant, Schleiermacher)," in *Der Ursprung des Konzepts um 1800*, ed. Albert Meier, Alessandro Costazza, and Gérard Laudin, Kunstreligion: Ein Ästhetisches Konzept der Moderne in seiner historischen Entfaltung 1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 89–102, at 93.
[51] Buchenau, "Kunstreligion und Vernunftabstraktion," 93. I leave Kant out of this narrative, but Buchenau discusses his relationship to both Baumgarten and Schleiermacher in this article. It would be worth pursuing Kant's role in this intellectual history in greater detail, but this undertaking exceeds the scope of this project.
[52] Breitinger, Bodmer, and Baumgarten all regarded poetry as possessing *rhetorical* function focused on verisimilitude rather than truth, thereby distinguishing it from philosophy. Verisimilitude, unlike truth, is judged based on reader-response and appeal to the senses rather than reason. Buchenau, *The Founding of Aesthetics*, 89. Hence my distinction of Schleiermacher's aesthetic religion from philosophical thought and representation, above.
[53] Buchenau, "Kunstreligion und Vernunftabstraktion," 99-100. Like many other commentators, Buchenau finds an opposition between language and the unity of intuition and feeling in Schleiermacher's *Reden* – she therefore foregrounds the role of art over rhetoric in the *Reden* as a kind of "sprachlose" form that corresponds to religious

harks back to the very origin of aesthetics as a form of representation (itself adapting the classics) that could reveal the created world by speaking to the senses and imagination. In Schleiermacher's Romantic reinterpretation, however, the world, or rather, *Universum*, is reflective activity itself: the rhetoric of *Anschauen des Universums* therefore becomes a reflection of reflection, a multiplication of the activity of the *Universum*, and not just a more sensuous representation of an underlying reality.

Schleiermacher's rhetoric is geared toward the conversion of his readers, those who despise religion.[54] This conversion is to occur by cultivating the reader's "Sinn und Geschmak" for the *Universum*: aesthetic sensibilities.[55] Similarly to the edifying (*erbaulich*) function of poetry in the Enlightenment theories of aesthetics, rhetoric in the *Reden* serves a program of *Bildung* that incorporates the existing education of the *gebildete Verächter* into Schleiermacher's universal religion by demonstrating their compatibility.[56] What is cultivated through this method is not a specific image of the *Universum*, but – through the descriptive style of the speeches, which conjure an infinite range of *Anschauungen* – a way of looking at anything and everything as a reflection of the *Universum*, of intuiting the *Universum* itself as reflection. Ekphrastic texts as old as Philostratus' *Imagines* performed such a didactic function: Philostratus "describe[s] examples of paintings in the form of addresses which [he] ha[s] composed for the young, that by

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experience. As I show here, this apparent opposition between language and feeling is not actually present in the *Reden*, and rhetoric plays a more important role in the structure of the text (and its theory of religion and religious communication) than has been remarked thus far.

[54] "Proselyten zu machen aus den Ungläubigen, das liegt sehr tief im Charakter der Religion; wer die seinige mittheilt, kann gar keinen andern Zwek haben, und so ist es in der That kaum ein frommer Betrug, sondern eine schikliche Methode bei dem anzufangen und um das besorgt zu scheinen, wofür der Sinn schon da ist, damit gelegentlich und unbemerkt sich das einschleiche, wofür er erst aufgeregt werden soll. Es ist, da alle Mittheilung der Religion nicht anders als rhetorisch sein kann, eine schlaue Gewinnung der Hörenden, sie in so guter Gesellschaft einzuführen." Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 211.

[55] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 212.

[56] This is precisely the aspect of the *Reden* that Friedrich Schlegel emphasizes in his "Notiz" on the *Reden*, published in the *Athenaeum*. Friedrich Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 275-81, at 276.

this means they may learn to interpret paintings" (295 K. 10-15).[57] What is cultivated here (also in an erotically charged framework) is an ability to see through the eyes of others, to experience their vision – this skill, which is developed through hearing descriptions, is then applied to the viewing of paintings.[58] Though Schleiermacher describes reflections of the *Universum* rather than works of art, the logic is similar: the production of vivid *Anschauung und Gefühl* through description gives the reader the tools to apprehend the *Universum* in any one of its reflections, not just in a particular testimony.[59]

2.1 – Religious Community and the *Universum*: Rhetorical Self-Staging

What is produced through this process is not just a way of looking but a community of readers, an aesthetic-religious public that itself resembles a multiperspectival *Universum*. In the *Reden,* the intersubjective connection brought about in successful rhetorical communication – where *Anschauung* becomes at least temporarily shared – serves as the basis of the "Gesellschaft" of religion and its harmonious coexistence. Schleiermacher highlights the importance of rhetorical style in this process:

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[57] Philostratus the Elder, *Imagines,* in *Philostratus the Elder, Imagines. Philostratus the Younger, Imagines. Callistratus, Descriptions,* trans. Arthur Fairbanks, Loeb Classical Library 256 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), 3-272.

[58] Ruth Webb's explanation of ekphrasis as a form of "perceptual mimesis" speaks to the structure of Schleiermacher's descriptions: "[i]t is the act of seeing that is imitated, not the object itself, by the creation of a *phantasia* that is like the result of direct perception. […] What is translated into words is not an object, residing in the material world, but a mental representation of that object, of the type that was thought in antiquity to lie behind all speech" (Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion*, 127-28).

[59] "Jede Form die es [das Universum] hervorbringt, jedes Wesen dem es nach der Fülle des Lebens ein abgesondertes Dasein giebt, jede Begebenheit die es aus seinem reichen immer fruchtbaren Schooße herausschüttet, ist ein Handeln deßelben auf Uns; und so alles Einzelne als einen Theil des Ganzen, alles Beschränkte als eine Darstellung des Unendlichen hinnehmen, das ist Religion…" Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 214. Further: „Jeder muß sich bewußt sein, daß die seinige [Anschauung] nur ein Theil des Ganzen ist, daß es über dieselben Gegenstände, die ihn religiös affiziren, Ansichten giebt, die eben so fromm sind und doch von den seinigen ganz verschieden, und daß aus andern Elementen der Religion Anschauungen und Gefühle ausfließen, für die ihm vielleicht gänzlich der Sinn fehlt" (Schleiermacher, *Reden,* 216-17).

> In einem großen Styl muß die Mittheilung der Religion geschehen, und eine andere Art von Gesellschaft, die ihr eigen gewidmet ist, muß daraus entstehen. […] Darum ist es unmöglich Religion anders auszusprechen und mitzutheilen als rednerisch, in aller Anstrengung und Kunst der Sprache, und willig dazunehmend den Dienst aller Künste, welche der flüchtigen und beweglichen Rede beistehen können.[60]

Counter to the prevalent Christian (and specifically Protestant) skepticism of artifice and elaborateness in religion, which viewed rhetoric only as an external means of presentation, rhetorical style as Schleiermacher presents it is not a case of unnecessary "Schmuk" [sic] but rather an appropriate measure of "Kraft und Würde" for this high subject.[61] Rhetorical communication gives rise to the "andere Art von Gesellschaft" Schleiermacher understands as religious rather than secular, serving (by way of its elicitation of shared intuitions and feelings) as the social fabric of religious life. On the one hand, Schleiermacher seems to be making the implicit argument that the *Reden* themselves are intended to give rise to a religious *Gesellschaft* through their effect on the reader. On the other hand, he also positions the rhetorical communication at the very core of his idea of universality: the power of rhetoric to generate shared *Anschauung und Gefühl* serves as the condition of possibility for a universal religion that reflects the multiperspectival *Universum*.

What begins as an excursus on the style of religious communication in the fourth *Rede* culminates in a full-fledged hypothetical scene of religious communication only a page later. In this scene Schleiermacher most explicitly reflects on the function of his own rhetorical persona, presenting the ideal of religious community as a polis-like scene:

> Er [der Redner] tritt hervor um seine eigne Anschauung hinzustellen, als Objekt für die Übrigen, sie hinzuführen in die Gegend der Religion wo er einheimisch ist, und seine heiligen Gefühle ihnen einzuimpfen: er spricht das Universum aus, und im heiligen Schweigen folgt die Gemeine seiner begeisterten Rede. Es sei nun daß er ein verborgenes

[60] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 268-69.
[61] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 269.

> Wunder enthülle, oder in weißagender Zuversicht die Zukunft an die Gegenwart knüpfe, es sei daß er durch neue Beispiele alte Wahrnehmungen befestige oder daß seine feurige Fantasie in erhabenen Visionen ihn in andere Theile der Welt und eine andre Ordnung der Dinge entzüke: der geübte Sinn der Gemeine begleitet überall den seinigen, und wenn er zurükkehrt von seinen Wanderungen durchs Universum in sich selbst, so ist sein Herz und das eines Jeden nur der gemeinschaftliche Schauplaz deßelben Gefühls. [62]

In this *mise-en-abyme* of the speeches, the classical model of *ekphrasis* and *enargeia* is most explicitly operative, down to the details of the imagined responses of *enargeia* (vividness or *Anschauung*) and *pathos* (feeling or *Gefühl*).[63] The orator speaks, and his audience apprehends his *Anschauung* – the experience becomes a communal one as the hearts of all become "der gemeinschaftliche Schauplaz deßelben Gefühls."[64] The "geübte Sinn der Gemeine" responds to the description in perfect accord with the orator's hypothetical speech – a marked contrast to the speech-situation of the *Reden*, in which the despisers rather than the observers of religion are addressed. Yet through the analogy between the real speech-situation of the *Reden* and the hypothetical orator's speeches, Schleiermacher rhetorically positions his readers as potential congregants. If readers immerse themselves in the scene, they can go so far as to inhabit it as auditors and participants, experiencing the success of the hypothetical orator's description; the wager of Schleiermacher's technique is that readers will take this step into the world of his description and experience themselves, at least temporarily, as pious auditors of a religious *Rede*. Through its high degree of self-reflexivity, Schleiermacher's rhetoric blurs the lines between real and imagined experience, and moreover between the *Anschauungen* belonging to various

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[62] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 269.
[63] Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion*, 98.
[64] Though Schleiermacher here seems to homogenize the response of the audience to the orator's speech, he argues elsewhere that each reader or listener will react to the *Universum*, as well as to the speeches, in a unique way – this diversity of possible responses signals a deviation from the classical theory that aligns with the pluralism of the romantic vision of the *Universum*. However, though the intuitions and feelings elicited by the description may not all be identical, it is necessary that they "resonate" with one another as parts of a higher aesthetic unity. Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 307-308.

persons. The scene of rhetorical accord only escalates from here. As the passage continues, Schleiermacher depicts a multi-layered melding together of persons and perspectives into a higher unity, which he figures as "ein höheres Chor,"[65] another unity in multiplicity which seems to absorb the congregation as a reflection of the *Universum*.

2.2 – Pictorial Openness and the Sense of a Higher Unity

Both the rhetorical scene of religious community and Schleiermacher's erotic rhetoric in the *Brautszene* function as invitations for readers to become a part of the total aesthetic process of *Anschauung des Universums*. While I have thus far discussed these scenes in terms of their relationship to classical rhetoric, they are also closely connected to a late eighteenth-century genre, the *Bildbeschreibung* or *Gemäldebeschreibung*. This genre became popular through the reception of Diderot's *Salons* (1761/65) and received a distinctly Romantic expression in Wackenroder's *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* and A.W. Schlegel's *Die Gemählde*, both products of the 1790s.[66] Emerging in the late 18th century, the *Bildbeschreibung* revitalized classical poetic templates, applying them to a distinctly modern practice of art criticism.[67]

Schleiermacher's rhetorical technique of absorbing readers into the universe conceived as a work of art stands in direct opposition to, but also suggestively parallels, what Michael Fried has described as the aesthetics of absorption mid eighteenth-century French painting, which he

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[65] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 269-70.
[66] See August Wilhelm Schlegel, *Die Gemählde: Gespräch*, ed. Lothar Müller (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1996), originally published in the first issue of the *Athenäum* in 1799, which explicitly mentions Diderot's *Salon*. See also Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, "Herzensergießungen eines Kunstliebenden Klosterbruders," in *Werke*, ed. Markus Schwering (Wilhelmshaven: Florian Noetzel Verlag, 2007), 13-127 (hereafter cited as *Herzensergießungen*).
[67] Hans Belting, *The Invisible Masterpiece*, trans. Helen Atkins (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

analyzes through Diderot's *Salons*. Describing a trend in French painting of the time to portray female figures in states of undress, Fried contends in his classic *Absorption and Theatricality* that certain seductive (and, to modern tastes, repugnant) details were intended to more thoroughly "screen th[e] audience out, to deny its existence, or at least to refuse to allow the fact of its existence to impinge upon the absorbed consciousness of [their] figures," in other words to maintain the sense of distance between painting and beholder.[68] As Fried contends, the sense of pictorial unity in French painting of the mid eighteenth century was developed through an aesthetics of absorption, where figures were presented as entirely oblivious of the beholder. The more risqué the scene, the more essential the maintenance of the pictorial boundary became.

In Schleiermacher's rhetoric, we can observe the opposite aesthetic effect, namely a repeated attempt to absorb his readers *into* the rhetorical scene he places before their eyes. However, the strategy of sexual provocation (especially its obsession with *Busen*) remains quite the same. Just as it was for early Romantic writers such as A. W. Schlegel, Tieck, and Wackenroder, the sense of (imagined) pictorial boundary-crossing is essential to Schleiermacher's notion of *Anschauung des Universums*: individual *Anschauungen* are never closed (pictorially unified, one might say), but instead remain constitutively open, both to the reader and to the higher unity of the *Universum*.

The aesthetic and pictorial openness of *Anschauung* becomes evident in Schleiermacher's comparison of the intuition of the universe to the viewing of an enormous work of art. Such a work's individual viewers may apprehend parts of it containing "ganz für sich schöne Umriße und Verhältniße," but a part must not possess a complete sense of unity or perfection, lest it

[68] Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and the Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 68.

appear as "ein Werk für sich."[69] In fact, it is precisely in the seeming deviations from "Ordnung und Harmonie" in an individual perspective that the viewer gains a presentiment of a higher whole. Schleiermacher applies this analogy to the laws of the universe itself, where the seeming lawlessness of nature seems to align it with aesthetic fantasy:

> Die Perturbationen in dem Laufe der Gestirne deuten auf eine höhere Einheit, auf eine kühnere Verbindung als die, welche wir schon aus der Regelmäßigkeit ihrer Bahnen gewahr werden, und die Anomalien, die müßigen Spiele der plastischen Natur zwingen uns zu sehen, daß sie ihre bestimmtesten Formen mit eine Willkür, mit einer Phantasie gleichsam, behandelt, deren Regel wir nur aus einem höheren Standpunkte entdeken könnten. Wie weit sind wir noch von demjenigen entfernt…[70]

Though individual perspectives are finite and lack a "höheren Standpunkt," their finitude becomes reconceived here as an aesthetic openness that evokes the sense of a higher unity. Moreover, the formal non-closure of specific religious *Anschauungen* opens them to a variety of possible combinations, which can proceed both horizontally among images such as the flower, the dew, and the bridal embrace in the nuptial scene, and vertically in relation to ever-higher orders of reflection.

It is through this upward movement toward, but never reaching, the highest standpoint, that Schleiermacher invites his readers to see themselves in the *Anschauung(en)* he presents to them. Combining images into new configurations and higher unities, Schleiermacher creates a dynamic flow of rhetorical visions into which the reader is strategically absorbed. In fact, Schleiermacher rhetorically moves his audience from a position of imaginary spectatorship of a work of art to one of participation, making "die Menschheit" itself the "Stoff" of the universe, conceived as a work of art:

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[69] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 225.
[70] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 226.

> Das größte Kunstwerk ist das, dessen Stof [sic] die Menschheit ist welches das Universum unmittelbar bildet und für dieses muss Vielen der Sinn bald aufgehn. Denn es bildet jetzt eben mit kühner und kräftiger Kunst, und Ihr werdet die Neokoren sein, wenn die neuen Gebilde aufgestellt sind im Tempel der Zeit. Leget den Künstler aus mit Kraft und Geist, erklärt aus den frühen Werken die spätern, und diese aus jenen. Lasst uns Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft umschlingen, eine endlose Gallerie der erhabensten Kunstwerke durch tausend glänzende Spiegel ewig vervielfältigt.[71]

In this particular iteration of the analogy between the universe and a work of art, humanity itself is both the image of the *Universum* and the beholder *within* the image. Schleiermacher calls his readers into service as the priesthood (*Neokoren*) devoted to the interpretation and *Vervielfältigung* (multiplication) of the images in the "temple of time." Through the act of *Auslegung*, the readers/priesthood in this scene participate in the activity of the universe, which persistently produces "neue Gebilde," mirroring and entwining images in a process echoing Friedrich Schlegel's description of *Universalpoesie* as infinitely potentiated reflection.[72] As is typical of Romantic *Universalpoesie* as theorized by Friedrich Schlegel, an infinite and unified whole here multiplies into an endlessly reflective series of individuals that collectively gesture toward it, both through their interrelations amongst one another and their symbolization of the greater whole.

Most characteristic of Schleiermacher's approach is the fact that the *Universum* itself is the agent of the verb *bilden* (which becomes clear through the pronoun "es" in the second sentence of the passage). *Bilden* can mean two things: to form or educate something or someone, and to reflexively take or develop into a particular form (e.g. "die Kunstwerke bilden eine Reihe," the works of art form a row together). As that which is "forming" (*bilden*) a work of art

[71] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 264-65.
[72] As described in the 116th *Athenäum* fragment: "Und doch kann auch sie am meisten zwischen dem Dargestellten und dem Darstellenden, frei von allem realen und idealen Interesse auf den Flügeln der poetischen Reflexion in der Mitte schweben, diese Reflexion immer wieder potenzieren und wie in einer endlosen Reihe von Spiegeln vervielfachen" (Friedrich Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 182-83).

whose material or *Stoff* is humanity, the *Universum* is here described as a self-forming, self-reflecting, living work of art. Humanity is the object of *Bildung* and only sometimes its agent – as Schleiermacher writes just a few pages earlier, "[d]as Universum bildet sich selbst seine Betrachter und Bewunderer."[73] By comparing the experience of the universe to the reception and reproduction of a self-forming work of art, Schleiermacher implicitly makes the experience of an aesthetic illusion into the template for an *immediate* experience of the world, thereby perhaps inviting the conclusion that there is no substantive difference between representations of the universe and the activity of the universe itself. Through this remarkable act of ventriloquization, Schleiermacher suggests that the artist is merely a prophet, an inspired medium for a more universal force of reflection and representation.

2.3 – Schleiermacher and Wackenroder: Reflection and Immediacy

As he discusses the relationship between art and religion in the third speech, Schleiermacher cites Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder's *Herzensergießungen eines Kunstliebenden Klosterbruders*, a text published in 1796, which exerted an important influence on then-emerging early Romantic art criticism.[74] Though Schleiermacher's *Reden* use art as a metaphor for religion and Wackenroder's *Herzensergießungen* present art through a religious lens, the two authors make use of similar self-reflexive rhetorical strategies to address the problem of representing the infinite or universal through finite means. For Wackenroder, who

[73] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 251.
[74] Schleiermacher: "Religion und Kunst stehen nebeneinander wie zwei befreundete Seelen deren innere Verwandtschaft, ob sie sie gleich ahnden, ihnen doch unbekannt ist. Freundliche Worte und *Ergießungen des Herzens* schweben ihnen immer auf den Lippen und kehren immer wieder zurük weil sie die rechte Art und den lezten Grund ihres Sinnens und Sehnens noch nicht finden können. Sie harren einer näheren Offenbarung …" (Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 263 [emphasis mine]).

mythologizes the famous artists of the Renaissance, the infinite seems to be perpetually out of reach, except through a select canon of major works of art including those of the great Renaissance artists Dürer, Raphael, and Da Vinci.[75] These masterpieces are understood as superhuman: they give physical and sensuous form to an absolute Idea of Art, making it accessible to the imagination and senses. However, as Hans Belting has highlighted, the very idea of the masterpiece is a retroactive construction of Romanticism. According to Belting's analysis of the Romantic mythologization of Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*, descriptions of art were what *made* specific works into masterpieces in the first place, and thus into the embodiment of an aesthetic Absolute or Idea of art.[76] As Belting argues, Romantic descriptions of famous works of art occupy a kind of liminal position in relation to "real" art: they do not lay claim to themselves *being* masterpieces, but they produce the idea of the masterpiece, endowing existing works of art with a new absolute or ideal essence. The Romantic artist himself did not produce masterpieces, but – as is the case with Wackenroder, as well as A.W. Schlegel – descriptions of masterpieces, myths of great artists, and theories of the origin and purpose of art. Wackenroder's *Herzensergießungen* are explicitly represented as mere "Blätter, die ich [the persona of the art-loving friar] anfangs gar nicht für den Druck bestimmt" and "sonst unbedeutende Worte" that he only hopes will resonate with young aspiring artists who "lesen mit derselben Liebe, mit der ich

[75] The supposed decadence of romantic art (or at least its inability to produce masterpieces) is brought to life in the figure of Joseph Berglinger, the tragic church musician portrayed at the close of the *Herzensergießungen*. See "Das merkwürdige musikalische Leben des Tonkünstlers Joseph Berglinger," in *Herzensergießungen*, 108-27.
[76] Belting is interested in the idea of the "Absolute" or the "idea of art" and not the revelation of a world or universe, reflecting his dependence on the Idealist construction of the issue of representation. "The 'image in one's mind' is the visible idea of art itself. By a convenient shift of meaning, the idea of art became synonymous with the Madonna's beauty, so that he could mention the Madonna when in fact he meant art. The transcendent, flawless work was created with a mysterious perfection that was beyond the scope of conventional knowledge about art." Belting, *The Invisible Masterpiece*, 56.

geschrieben habe."[77] In these pages, Wackenroder venerates great works of art such as the *Sistine Madonna*, idealizing both the works and the artists that produced them in a series of vignettes.

The paradoxical result of this procedure, Belting argues, is a kind of disembodiment of the masterpiece, which loses its historical and sensuous specificity when it is venerated through descriptions that give it a chameleon-like appearance.[78] I would differ from Belting's evaluation that Romantic descriptions of art produce this effect by accident, in other words that they are not formally designed to achieve this effect. Wackenroder knows very well that descriptions excite the imagination and even cause readers to forget about the work that stands in front of them: in the words of his art-loving friar, "Ein schönes Bild oder Gemälde ist, meinem Sinne nach, eigentlich gar nicht zu beschreiben; denn in dem Augenblicke, da man mehr als ein einziges Wort darüber sagt, fliegt die Einbildung von der Tafel weg, und gaukelt für sich allein in den Lüften."[79] This statement about the indescribability of a work of art and the substitution of the description for the work is immediately followed by two *Gemäldeschilderungen* in which religious paintings are presented through poems. These poems do not so much present the paintings themselves, but ways of looking at them, even remaking them in the imagination. In the *Herzensergießungen*, Wackenroder does not attempt to exactly reproduce the sensuous form of the original masterpiece in another medium, e.g. by rendering its shapes and colors in minute detail (August Wilhelm Schlegel comes much closer to this in his dialogue *Die Gemählde*).

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[77] Wackenroder, *Herzensergießungen,* 14.

[78] Belting, *The Invisible Masterpiece,* 53. According to Belting the beholder's imaginative reconstruction of the painted image (which made it a masterpiece in the romantic sense) was "an enigma that no one at that time attempted to investigate." Belting, 54. I would differ from this evaluation in suggesting that the imaginative reconstruction of works of art is exactly what is being self-reflexively theorized in romantic descriptions of art such as Wackenroder's.

[79] Wackenroder, *Herzensergießungen,* 49. The monk narrator of the *Herzensergießungen* presents his descriptions of the paintings humbly, as "Proben, die mir von selbst in den Sinn gekommen sind, um der eignen Art willen, ohne daß ich diese Art für etwas sehr vorzügliches halten mag, doch zu jedermanns Ansicht hersetzen will."

Rather, he presents dramatic poetic miniatures in the *Gemäldeschilderungen*, and in other pieces such as "Raffaels Erscheinung" he presents his reader with anecdotes that animate existing masterpieces from the perspective of a particular Romantic poetics focused on (divine) artistic inspiration.

"Raffaels Erscheinung," an art-historical hagiography that (fictionally) documents the origin of the *Sistine Madonna* in a divine vision granted to the painter Raphael, is particularly interesting in this regard. This tale moves far away from the idea of description – offering no details of the Madonna's appearance – but instead crafts a relationship between the idea of divine apparition and painterly inspiration. Wackenroder presents this as follows:

> Einst, in der Nacht, da er, wie es ihm schon oft geschehen sei, im Traume zur Jungfrau gebeten habe, sei er, heftig bedrängt, auf einmal aus dem Schlafe aufgefahren. In der finsteren Nacht sei sein Auge von einem hellen Schein an der Wand, seinem Lager gegenüber, angezogen worden, und da er recht zugesehen, so sei er gewahr worden, daß sein Bild der Madonna, daß, noch unvollendet, an der Wand gehangen, von dem mildesten Lichte strahle, und ein ganz vollkommenes und wirklich lebendiges Bild geworden sei. […] Es habe ihn mit den Augen auf eine unbeschreiblich rührende Weise angesehen, und habe in jedem Augenblicke geschienen, als wolle es sich bewegen; und es habe ihn gedünkt, als bewege es sich auch wirklich.[80]

In the conclusion to Wackenroder's anecdote, it is this last image which Raphael holds in his mind as he completes the Madonna: "…und nun sei es ihm gelungen, die Mutter Gottes immer so, wie sie seiner Seele vorgeschwebt habe, abzubilden."[81] Belting is correct to observe that the image in the mind of the artist and – by extension, if we follow the rhetoric of the anecdote – of the recipient seems to overtake the specific details of the image itself. As I take it, Wackenroder is very much aware that the gaze a viewer brings to a painting (and thus the way the painting appears in the mind's eye) is discursively constructed. His own fictional anecdote participates in

[80] Wackenroder, *Herzensergießungen*, 18.
[81] Wackenroder, *Herzensergießungen*, 19.

this discursive construction while metaphorically presenting its own intervention as analogous to the "hellen Schein" of the moon that completes the image of the Madonna in Raphael's imagination. To put it succinctly: the ray of moonlight is to the image of the Madonna for Raphael as the text of the anecdote "Raffaels Erscheinung" is to the *Sistine Madonna* for a viewer of the painting. The anecdote stages painting itself as an unstable medium that is only brought to perfection through a chance encounter with something external to it: a ray of light – an anecdote, a commentary – which illuminates it in just the right way. The result of this intervention is a dynamization of the image: in Wackenroder's legend, Raphael's Madonna appears to be moving. "Es habe ihn mit den Augen auf eine unbeschreiblich rührende Weise angesehen, und habe in jedem Augenblicke geschienen, als wolle es sich bewegen; und es habe ihn gedünkt, als bewege es sich auch wirklich." That is, at precisely the moment in which Raphael finally "grasps" the image of the Madonna in his mind and becomes capable of reproducing her likeness in his paintings, she comes alive and seems almost ready to leap off the canvas. Just so, Wackenroder's myth of the artist transfigures the *Sistine Madonna* into the apotheosis of Romantic art, into an image that is moving (affectively, emotionally) for the viewer precisely by intervening between the viewer and the work, thereby generating the sense of reflexivity between viewer and work that makes this sort of response possible.

Schleiermacher engages in a similar strategy in the *Reden* – the central difference is that the *Universum* is all-encompassing, not distinct like a masterpiece. It has no historical identity in the sense that Wackenroder's masterpieces do and is impossible to view on its own. However, the representational strategy at work in both texts is remarkably similar. Without the intervention of reflection, there would be no movement in the image, no life, no relation between viewer and

painting, self and universe. In this regard, reflection itself, though ostensibly an obstacle to immediacy, is precisely what makes the experience of immediacy possible.

Conclusion

> Sie sind unter einander ein Bund von Brüdern – oder habt ihr einen innigeren Ausdruk für das gänzliche Verschmelzen ihrer Naturen, nicht in Absicht auf das Sein und Wollen, aber in Absicht auf den Sinn und das Verstehen? Je mehr sich Jeder dem Universum nähert, je mehr sich Jeder dem Andern mittheilt, desto vollkommner werden sie Eins, keiner hat ein Bewußtsein für sich, jeder hat zugleich das des Andern, sie sind nicht mehr nur Menschen, sondern auch Menschheit, und aus sich selbst herausgehend, über sich selbst triumfirend sind sie auf dem Wege zur wahren Unsterblichkeit und Ewigkeit.[82]

As I have argued throughout this chapter, the idea of the *Universum*, though seemingly an all-encompassing reality, is premised on communicability, on the production of reflections. We can observe this in the excerpt above, a description of "Geselligkeit in der Religion": the process of approaching (*sich nähern*) the *Universum* occurs via communication with others (*Mittheilung*), and this in turn leads to the unification of persons into a greater whole – figured as a choir, an academy, a brotherhood –, the sharing of consciousness, and a complete triumph over one's own individual selfhood.[83] Through the act of communication, the *Universum* is constituted not as a "one" but as a collectivity: the individual's subjective experience is transformed into a reflection of the *Universum* that becomes shared among the religious *Gesellschaft* (which itself, in turn, reflects the *Universum*, and so on). The unification here envisioned is not a destruction of individuality: Schleiermacher describes "das gänzliche Verschmelzen ihrer Naturen, nicht in

[82] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 291.
[83] See also the end of the second *Rede*: "Strebt darnach schon hier Eure Individualität zu vernichten, und im Einen und Allen zu leben, strebt darnach mehr zu sein als Ihr selbst, damit Ihr wenig verliert, wenn Ihr Euch verliert; und wenn Ihr so mit dem Universum, soviel Ihr hier davon findet, zusammengefloßen seid, und eine größere und heiligere Sehnsucht in Euch entstanden ist, dann wollen wir weiter reden über die Hofnungen, die uns der Tod giebt, und über die Unendlichkeit zu der wir uns durch ihn unfehlbar emporschwingen" (Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 246-47).

Absicht auf das Sein und Wollen, aber in Absicht auf den Sinn und das Verstehen," in other words a blending-together of essences on the level of meaning and interpretation.

This returns our attention to the importance of appropriate reception in the *Reden* and in the poetics of the Romantic *Universum* more broadly. The project of religion as *Anschauen des Universums*, like the project of *Universalpoesie* (under which I slightly anachronistically subsume Wackenroder's text as well), necessarily entails an initiation of the reader into a particular way of reading and seeing. And while it describes "Geselligkeit in der Religion," the passage quoted here also reads as a direct description of Romantic *Symphilosophie*. It reflects Schleiermacher's enchantment with his then-roommate Friedrich Schlegel (who urged the young preacher to compose these speeches) and his participation in the early Romantic circle of poets and thinkers to whom Schlegel introduced him: Novalis in particular would respond enthusiastically to the published *Reden*, and mentions Schleiermacher (almost) by name in *Die Christenheit oder Europa*, as a "Bruder" who (in a Catholocizing gesture) "hat einen neuen Schleier für die Heilige gemacht, der ihren himmlischen Gliederbau anschmiegend verräth, und doch sie züchtiger, al sein Andrer verhüllt."[84] The *Reden* found strong resonance with the Romantics, but Schleiermacher would be heavily criticized by his fellow clergyman Samuel Gottfried Sack for proclaiming in the *Reden* views that would have never been acceptable coming from the pulpit, and doing so in a style inaccessible to the ordinary churchgoer. [85] As a

[84] Novalis, *WTB*, 2: 747.

[85] In one of the most critical evaluations of Schleiermacher's *Reden*, a letter written in June 1801, Friedrich Samuel Gottfried Sack calls the *Reden* "eine geistvolle Apologie des Pantheismus, […] eine rednerische Darstellung des Spinozistischen Systems" that he finds irreconcilable with Schleiermacher's work as a preacher: "Sie werden es als ein Mann thun [Predigen], der von diesem allen in seinem Herzen nichts glaubt, der sich nur zu den Irrthümern und Aberglauben des Pöbels herabläßt, und um nicht anstößig zu werden noch Redensarten gebraucht, die bei ihm selbst gar keinen oder einen durchaus verschiedenen Sinn haben. Was ist ein Prediger, der das Universum für die Gottheit hält, dem Religion nichts weiter ist als eine Anschauung des Universums…" Quoted in Schleiermacher, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 1.2: LXII n. 202.

portrayal of "Geselligkeit in der Religion," the symphilosophic "Akademie von Priestern" and "Chor von Freunden" Schleiermacher conjures in the fourth *Rede* as the pinnacle of religious community comes across as potentially elitist, aristocratic, and removed from the realities of religious life.[86] Sack's accusation that Schleiermacher engaged in a sort of double-speak as preacher and Romantic writer cannot be easily dismissed, and we too should take a critical eye to limitations of the religious community here envisioned. As fictional, literary speeches, the *Reden* are addressed to the *gebildete Verächter* of religion and thus aimed at an academic, or at least cultured, audience – the salon-goers of Berlin, Jena, and Weimar – not least among which were Schleiermacher's Romantic compatriots. The rhetorical purpose of the *Reden* was not to address a congregation but rather to claim Romanticism for religion (and religion for Romanticism) in the eyes of the educated classes embroiled in the controversies surrounding this burgeoning movement.

Though Schleiermacher promulgates a Romantic program of *Bildung* centering around the cultivation of a particular mode of experiencing the *Universum* as a multiperspectival unity, Sack's criticism is indicative of the fact that his universal vision requires a suspension of disbelief, a willingness to become involved in the process of infinite reflexivity. Even in the context of the *Reden* and their rhetorical situation, readers who are persuaded by the speeches become initiated into the Romantic religious *Universum* while the others are condemned to remain perpetually excluded and profane: "In jeder [Sprache] bleibt das Heilige geheim, und vor den Profanen verborgen. Laßt sie an der Schale nagen, wie sie mögen; aber weigert Uns nicht den Gott anzubeten der in Euch sein wird."[87] We here reach the limits of the aesthetically and

[86] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 291.
[87] Schleiermacher, *Reden*, 326.

rhetorically mediated universality espoused in the *Reden*: it is up to the reader to decode the language of the speeches and access their theory of reflexivity. As Dirk von Petersdorff points out, Schleiermacher's *Reden* are characterized by a "romantische[s] Changieren zwischen Esoterik und Universalität"[88]: we can observe a persistent tension between their universalistic vision and the exclusivity of the small community of educated readers to which they were addressed. Though we should not go so far as to conclude, with Sack, that Schleiermacher's *Reden* advance an idea of religion completely incompatible with his own religious practice as a pastor, we can observe that despite their universalistic ambitions, the speeches do not speak to everyone equally. The Romantic vision of universality (with all of its erotic and religious motifs) is a provocation, one that richly rewards close reading of its reflexive dynamics, but which may also result in dismissals: of Romanticism as a mere *Kunstreligion*, of the movement of *Universalpoesie* as mere *Schwärmerei*, or, in later modernity, a form of escapism or kitsch.

[88] Dirk von Petersdorff, *Mysterienrede. Zum Selbstverständnis romantischer Intellektueller* (Tübingen: Max Niemeier Verlag, 1996), 296.

Chapter 2: "Sinn für das Universum" and the Project of Romantic *Universalpoesie*: Friedrich Schlegel's Criticism of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*

Schleiermacher's *Reden* owe much of their terminology and rhetorical flavor to the influence of Friedrich Schlegel, who was his roommate and his closest collaborator while the two friends lived in Berlin between 1797-99.[1] Before Schleiermacher wrote about "Anschauen des Universums," Schlegel had already used the term "Sinn für das Universum" prolifically in his essay on Goethe's paradigmatic Bildungsroman, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795-96). Schlegel's essay was published in the second issue of the early Romantic journal, the *Athenäum*, in 1798. Though perhaps not as famous today as *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774), Goethe's novel exerted an enormous influence on the poets of the early Romantic circle, and Friedrich Schlegel famously named it – along with the French Revolution and Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* – as one of the three major tendencies of the age.[2] The age in question, the turn of the century in western Europe around 1800, was marked by intense political, intellectual, and aesthetic upheavals. In his fragment on the three tendencies of the age, Schlegel casts these movements as contributions to a single revolutionary Zeitgeist that he and his romantic contemporaries sought to embody, even to radicalize in their own way. Though *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* has often been read retrospectively by twentieth- and twenty-first century

[1] See Andreas Arndt, "Eine literarische Ehe," 3-14.
[2] Friedrich Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 198 (#216). "Die Französische Revolution, Fichtes Wissenschaftslehre, und Goethes Meister sind die größten Tendenzen des Zeitalters. Wer an dieser Zusammenstellung Anstoß nimmt, wem keine Revolution wichtig scheinen kann, die nicht laut und materiell ist, der hat sich noch nicht auf den hohen weiten Standpunkt der Geschichte der Menschheit erhoben. Selbst in unsern dürftigen Kulturgeschichten, die meistens einer mit fortlaufendem Kommentar begleiteten Variantensammlung, wozu der klassische Text verloren ging, gleichen, spielt manches kleine Buch, von dem die lärmende Menge zu seiner Zeit nicht viel Notiz nahm, einer größere Rolle, als alles, was diese trieb."

critics as a politically and aesthetically counter-revolutionary novel, the Romantics (especially Friedrich Schlegel) sought to recuperate and intensify the revolutionary tendencies they found within it – on an explicitly formal level.[3] Goethe's novel was poetically "revolutionary" insofar as it markedly deviated from the dominant Enlightenment notion that literature should contribute to moral pedagogy, and instead developed an aesthetics bound to no external moral or aesthetic rules.[4] For Schlegel, it thereby contributed to his own sense that the establishment (here a dogmatic critical authority) might be overturned permanently, giving way to a state of aesthetic mobility or dynamism: his 1798 essay on Goethe's novel points to the possibility of neither an aesthetically "schulgerechte Beurteilung" of this great work, nor of a direct interpretation of its "Personen und Begebenheiten" as representations of specific moral or social types – both approaches, he states, would diminish it, "als wenn ein Kind Mond und Sterne mit der Hand greifen und in sein Schächtelchen packen will."[5] In contrast, Schlegel reads the work as exerting a sort of autonomous development or *Bildung*. For Schlegel, the novel is nothing but "Poesie, reine, hohe Poesie," a divinely organic "göttliche[s] Gewächs."[6]

Despite Schlegel's high praise, the early Romantics did not uncritically accept Goethe's novel, and Novalis (perhaps its most avid student) even outright condemned it.[7] As (for them) *the* paradigm-setting model of a poetic *Bildungsroman, Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* set a benchmark that the early Romantics would ultimately try to surpass in their project of *Universalpoesie*. In keeping with this, all of the early romantic novelists attempted to supersede

[3] For the counter-revolutionary interpretation, see for example Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*, trans. Albert Sbragia (London: Verso, 2000).
[4] This line of interpretation, which credits Schlegel with the invention of immanent criticism on the basis of his reading of Goethe's novel, is prominently represented in Walter Benjamin, *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik*, 66.
[5] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 133.
[6] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 132 and 133.
[7] I discuss Novalis's reception of *Wilhelm Meister* in detail in Chapter 3.

Goethe's novel through their own creations: Ludwig Tieck's *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* (1798) was published first, followed by Friedrich Schlegel's *Lucinde* (1799), and Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802). In this chapter, I focus on Schlegel's essay on *Wilhelm Meister*, reading it as an attempt to develop a romantic poetics and concept of criticism from Goethe's novel that is inspired by many of its formal tendencies but resists what Schlegel diagnoses as its final movement toward narrative and formal closure.

As I take it, Schlegel's critical reading of Goethe's novel attempts to move it in the direction of a greater totality than it constitutes as a single work, and toward a romantic theory of universal poetry. It is no coincidence that the 116th *Athenäum*-fragment, the famous manifesto of romantic poetry as a "progressive Universalpoesie" was published in the same issue of the journal as Schlegel's essay on Goethe, in which he uses the term "Sinn für das Universum" to describe both a readerly response to the latter's novel, and the subjective disposition of its protagonist. Schlegel's terms *Universum* and *Sinn für das Universum*, which he never explicitly defines, produce a variety of resonances: they suggest an overarching holism or sense of totality, but this sense remains intentionally unstable. Theoretically speaking, it is possible to connect these terms to the holism of the poetic work (conceived of as an aesthetic totality), to the novel's capacity to reflect the world, or, more abstractly, to some absolute conception of art that determines and underlies all artistic production and thus the novel itself. As I argue in this chapter, Schlegel's *Universum* and *Sinn für das Universum* refer to something that can be all of these things at once, and more: on the one hand, he uses them to point to a dynamic relationality that permeates the very fabric of (aesthetic) experience but cannot be fixed in a particular object or set of relations, since it is that which all objects and relations are, and are made possible by. On the other hand, *Universum* and *Sinn für das Universum* are constantly being produced,

reflected, and modulated through particular finite relations (which he often calls worlds), whether these be immanent within a work of art, among different works that enter into relation with one another, or between a work of art and the "real" world. As I show in this chapter, Schlegel writes about Goethe's novel in a way that both highlights all of these possibilities and refuses to settle on any specific instance of them, preferring the process of unfolding and the development and intensification of relations (a non-teleological *Bildung* of interlocking, mutually reflecting worlds) over the stabilization of a particular product or a specific delineation of the nature of the *Universum*. For this reason, Schlegel's critique of Goethe's novel is directed toward the novel's ending, which stabilizes the relationship between its imaginary and social worlds, retrospectively clarifies its action in relation to its finally-revealed *telos*, and thereby sacrifices its sense of free, purely poetic *Bildung* to a more specifically defined (and thus finite) sense of artistic and social totality.

In what follows, I pursue the relationship between the autonomous poetic *Bildung* Schlegel admires in his reading of *Wilhelm Meister*, and his invocation of cosmological metaphors to describe poetic forms and the aesthetic sensibilities they elicit. In the first section of the chapter, I trace the origin for Schlegel's phrase *Sinn für das Universum* within the novel, where it encapsulates the subjective disposition of the novel's eponymous protagonist, Wilhelm. This is perhaps surprising, since Wilhelm is first introduced to readers as a young man who is in love with an actress and fancies himself an artist, but is essentially in love with his own illusions (I theorize this as his "heterocosmic desire"). For Schlegel, the attraction of this character is not his narcissism or naïve self-aggrandizement, but his relentless tendency to perceive his world aesthetically as a beautiful whole, a sensibility that leads to false conclusions in his immediate surroundings but suggestively aligns with the novel's harmonious overall picture of his journey

of *Bildung*. Schlegel highlights this parallel, using the cosmic metaphor to portray the reader's intuition of the novel's unfolding world as a reflection of Wilhelm's illusory sense of totality: both share a *Sinn für das Universum*; the heterocosm resonates in the larger world of the novel. As becomes clear through Schlegel's rhetorical use of the cosmic motif, the logic of *Bildung* (formation, education, development) being developed in his analysis of the early books of Goethe's *Bildungsroman* is not reducible to the protagonist's spontaneous internal development, but operates in and across the reflective relations between Wilhelm's illusions of holism and his larger world, which itself turns out to be a beautiful illusion crafted for both him and the reader. In Schlegel's portrayal, Wilhelm's subjective *Bildung* is situated in this interplay of intra-diegetic "worlds," which the reader experiences proleptically as belonging to an unfolding possible *Universum* – a total relational context, the work of art as a yet-unknown, progressively developing whole.

In the second section of the chapter, I turn to Schlegel's much less positive evaluation of the final books of the novel, in which Wilhelm's education – which involves running away from home and joining a theatrical troupe – is revealed to have been guided by a secret society (the Society of the Tower) that has made his education its goal. Wilhelm's movement from the world of the theater into the world of the Society of the Tower produces an aesthetic shift in the novel: the reader's and Wilhelm's vague *Sinn für das Universum* is dispelled by the Society of the Tower's retrospective clarification of the various mysteries that had given the novel its premonitional appeal. Wilhelm's seemingly-autonomous *Bildung* in the world of theatrical illusions thus appears externally determined, as part of a theater of *Bildung* constructed only in order to be overcome. I tease out the distinction Schlegel makes between these aesthetic modalities as two distinct but related models of *Bildung* and totality: one that locates totality in

the work of art (a "classical" monocosmic aesthetics that hinges on aesthetic closure and teleological *Bildung*), and a "romantic" heterocosmic aesthetics that thinks totality along the lines of *Sinn für das Universum*, and *Bildung* as something only actualized in the movement and dynamic relation between worlds, and which therefore also always necessarily exceeds the boundaries of a specific world or work of art. As I show, Schlegel both pits these tendencies against one another and points to their mutual imbrication, thereby setting up Goethe's novel as both a classical totality and a romantic, self-reflexive work of art, and making it available for his conception of *Kritik*. I conclude by exploring the avenues that my foregoing analysis opens up for understanding the romantic project of *Universalpoesie.* As I argue, both *Universalpoesie* and *Kritik* develop a fundamentally heterocosmic disposition that transforms *Sinn für das Universum* into an active poetic force of continued and intensified reflection.

Section 1 – "Sinn für das Universum" and the *Bildung* of the Novel

In the opening of his essay on *Wilhelm Meister*, Friedrich Schlegel represents the genesis of the novel as a cosmogony: "Ohne Anmaßung und ohne Geräusch, wie die Bildung eines strebenden Geistes sich still entfaltet, und wie die werdende Welt aus seinem Innern leise emporsteigt, beginnt die klare Geschichte."[8] In this lyrical opening simile for the formation of the novel, Schlegel seems to recall the blossoming imagination of Goethe's eponymous protagonist, Wilhelm, who figuratively gives birth to a new world as he imagines his future with the theater and his lover Mariane, an actress. His portrayal of Wilhelm's subjectivity as a silently unfolding "strebender Geist" suggestively transforms it into an image of the Romantic *hen kai*

[8] Friedrich Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 126.

pan (a harmonious unity of the One and All) and a metaphor for the novel itself. He thereby quite obviously glosses over the illusory nature of Wilhelm's feeling of harmony with the world at the beginning of the novel. Rather than only a "falsche Tendenz,"[9] Wilhelm's cosmic imagination becomes (somewhat ironically) the central metaphor in Schlegel's description of the early books of the novel. At stake for Schlegel in this opening simile is not an attempt to recuperate Wilhelm's subjective disposition as somehow the origin of a spontaneous imaginative *Bildung* of the individual; rather, Wilhelm's seemingly cosmogonic subjectivity, which Schlegel characterizes as *Sinn für das Universum*, becomes the point of departure for Schlegel's description of the novel's own self-revelatory *Bildung* of its seemingly endlessly transforming world (a formal dynamic), and the affective tenor of pleasurable expectation that Goethe creates through his portrayal of Wilhelm.

At the core of Schlegel's suggestive equation of Wilhelm's subjectivity with a romantic *Sinn für das Universum* is a tendency that motivates many romantic novels and narratives (even beyond the early Romantic period), which I call "heterocosmic desire" as a shorthand way of describing a wishful desire for, and often vision of, an "other" world, around which an entire character-type is constructed. Heterocosmic desire represents a wish that a heterocosm (i.e., a world that is explicitly marked as different) might actually be representative of the wider order of the universe. Goethe's Werther, who observes and takes pleasure in a "kleine[] Welt zwischen Halmen" as he lies in the grass at Wahlheim contemplating the lives of insects, intuiting in them a greater sense of cosmic harmony, is perhaps the most canonical instance of this type; Wilhelm's *actual* harmony with his world (as opposed to Werther's painful disharmony with his)

[9] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 141.

however makes him a more desirable figure for the early Romantics.[10] As I discuss in this chapter and in Chapter 3, in early German Romanticism, the idea of heterocosmic desire becomes a tool for the project of romantic universal poetry (specifically its highly dialectical form of reflexivity), nowhere more prominently than in Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. Goethe contributes much to the development of this model of heterocosmic desire, though for him it leads to different outcomes, as we can see in the endings of *Die Leiden des Jungen Werthers* and *Wilhelm Meister*, which do not culminate in a romantic poeticization of the entire world. Though Schlegel does not analyze Wilhelm's subjective disposition in great detail (instead situating it in a larger formal dynamic of the novel), it is worth excavating the structure of heterocosmic desire that informs the many parallels Schlegel draws between Wilhelm, the reader, and the novel's development of its own holism to elucidate the broader meaning of *Sinn für das Universum* within the Romantic imaginary.

1.1 – Heterocosmic Desire

In the first book of the novel, in the passage that likely forms the basis for Schlegel's opening description, Goethe casts what Wilhelm experiences as the union of self and world as a symptom of his immature imaginative and erotic investments, comparing it to the creation of a deficient work of art. The passage in full is as follows:

> Dagegen schwebte Wilhelm glücklich in höheren Regionen, ihm war auch eine neue Welt aufgegangen, aber reich an herrlichen Aussichten. […] Er glaubte den hellen Wink des Schicksals zu verstehen, das ihm durch Marianen die Hand reichte, sich aus dem stockenden, schleppenden bürgerlichen Leben herauszureißen, aus dem er schon so lange

[10] Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2001), 7. Werther rather wishfully takes this tiny kingdom to represent the underlying order of the cosmos at large – and on a lesser scale, the beautiful idyll of Wahlheim. However, he struggles with *expressing* this sense of harmony; this struggle with self-expression foreshadows the primary conflict of the novel: his alienation from his social world, which is related to his obsession with an unattainable love object, Lotte.

> sich zu retten gewünscht hatte. Seines Vaters Haus, die Seinigen zu verlassen schien ihm etwas Leichtes. Er war jung und neu in der Welt, und sein Mut, in ihren Weiten nach Glück und Befriedigung zu rennen, durch die Liebe erhöht. Seine Bestimmung zum Theater war ihm nunmehr klar; das hohe Ziel, das er sich vorgesteckt sah, schien ihm näher, indem er an Marianens Hand hinstrebte, und in selbstgefälliger Bescheidenheit erblickte er in sich den trefflichen Schauspieler, den Schöpfer eines künftigen Nationaltheaters, nach dem er so vielfältig hatte seufzen hören. Alles, was in den innersten Winkeln seiner Seele bisher geschlummert hatte, wurde rege. Er bildete aus den vielerlei Ideen mit Farben der Liebe ein Gemälde auf Nebelgrund, dessen Gestalten freilich sehr ineinanderflossen; dafür aber auch das Ganze eine desto reizendere Wirkung tat.[11]

Unaware of his beloved Mariane's involvement with another man (nor of any of the other worries she conceals from him), Wilhelm is portrayed developing a fantasy of a "neue Welt" in which he will be married to Mariane, become an actor himself, and finally ascend as the progenitor of a new German national theater, thereby escaping the narrow confines of his family's bourgeois life. Through the perspective of Goethe's ironic but parental narrator, this ever more extravagant vision is described as the product of an oxymoronic "selbstgefällige Bescheidenheit" that reflects the fulfillment of Wilhelm's wishes, but very little of an underlying reality. It is therefore marked not only as ego-centric, but also as an aesthetically deficient "Gemälde auf Nebelgrund" characterized primarily by its charming effect of wish fulfillment – it has no external medium, but exists purely in the mists of the imagination. Moreover, the entire composition is based only on *one* external sign: Mariane, who represents "den hellen Wink des Schicksals" because her love for Wilhelm represents the fulfillment of his wishes in the external

[11] Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2008), 34 (I.9). The "Dagegen" at the beginning of this passage refers back to Mariane's comparatively poor prospects as the narrator portrays the precarity of her position between two lovers: her wealthy suitor, Norberg, whom she does not love, and Wilhelm, whom she loves but whose future prospects are uncertain. The imminent danger of the two lovers' meeting threatens to dissolve both relationships and leave her hopeless (and as we later find out, pregnant with Wilhelm's child, then dead).

world.[12] This lone signal serves as the precarious basis for the unfolding of Wilhelm's entire imaginary world.

The nexus of illusion and desire for realization represented here is a repeated motif in the first book of Goethe's novel, and can be described as characteristic of Wilhelm's subjectivity as long as he remains enamored with the theater. This tendency governs the majority of Wilhelm's "apprenticeship," in which he essentially pursues only the fulfillment of his own wishes. By the time we encounter the vision quoted above, we have watched Wilhelm regale his rather nonplussed lover Mariane with lovingly recalled stories of his childhood fascination with puppetry during one of their nightly rendezvous: these stories serve as a sort of primal scene for his heterocosmic disposition. (While Wilhelm narrates, Mariane repeatedly dozes off in his arms, tired from a night of work on the stage, but manages to convince him she is listening. Readers, however, are gripped by the suggestive parallels between Wilhelm's story and his present situation.) In the memories he recounts to Mariane, Wilhelm's childhood love for the theater appears as an experience of enchanted spectatorship accompanied by a subliminally erotic desire to enter the sacred space behind the mystical theatrical curtain or "Schleier" of the puppet theater, and to master the illusion he takes such pleasure in experiencing.[13] For the young boy, this movement would lead to a wish fulfillment analogous to the one we witness in his vision of a new world with Mariane (whose name is etymologically related to "Marionette").[14] As we find

[12] Wilhelm experiences Mariane as the coming-to-life of the theatrical muse he has imagined since his childhood (and wrote a poem about at that time): he says to Mariane, "Doch es ist kein Gedicht, es ist Wahrheit und Leben, was ich in deinen Armen finde…" (Goethe, *Meister*, 32 [I.8]).
[13] Goethe, *Meister*, 16 (I.3).
[14] In the Middle Ages, the French word "marionnette" referred to a statue of the Virgin Mary used in a puppet theater – it subsequently became the general term for a puppet held by strings. "Mariane" is also derived from the Virgin Mary. See *Le Trésor de la Langue Française informatisé*, s.v. "marionnette," accessed March 3, 2023, via *Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales*, https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/marionnette.

out however, the young Wilhelm not only wants to get behind the curtain, but wants to be on both sides of it at once: "ich wünschte, zugleich unter den Bezauberten und Zauberern zu sein, zugleich meine Hände verdeckt im Spiel zu haben und als Zuschauer die Freude der Illusion zu genießen."[15] Through his godlike mastery of the "kleine Welt"[16] of the puppet theater as puppeteer, Wilhelm attempts to become the agent of his own wish fulfillment. The pleasure involved here of course relies on an important act of self-deception, which is condensed in the idea of being on both sides of the curtain. The curtain – or veil – is the barrier that, aesthetically speaking, makes the theatrical illusion possible (it rises at the beginning of the performance and institutes the idea of a fourth wall). Wilhelm desires to transgress this barrier in order to become the enchanter himself, but does not want to break the sense of illusion or enchantment that the barrier sustains. He therefore has to imagine himself in both positions at once, either by disavowing his own hand in the theatrical action (it must remain "verdeckt") to maintain the illusion, or by disavowing the boundary between illusion and reality entirely in a form of play one might associate with the childhood playworld.[17]

Though this position is impossible, it represents a certain sort of utopian (and auto-erotic) impulse that promises to place Wilhelm in a world that conforms entirely with his own desires. It forms the paradigm of what I call heterocosmic desire. This structure has parallels to the romantic idea of the *hen kai pan* (a unity of the One and All), which is reflected here in 1) the almost godlike sense of control over an imaginary world (an active valence of total union) that is

[15] Goethe, *Meister*, 17 (I.4).
[16] Goethe, *Meister*, 21 (I.6).
[17] For an analysis of play in *Wilhelm Meister* and Goethe's works more generally, see Elliott Schreiber, "Narcissus at Play: Goethe, Piaget, and the Passage from Egocentric to Social Play," in *Play in the Age of Goethe: Theories, Narratives, and Practices of Play Around 1800*, ed. Edgar Landgraf and Elliott Schreiber (Lewisberg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2020), 117-42.

simultaneously experienced as 2) the passive enjoyment of a poetic illusion that completely conforms to one's wishes (a passive valence of total union). Not only can we observe a parallel to Schleiermacher's Pygmalion-like absorption into his own description of *Anschauung des Universums* in the nuptial scene of the *Reden* (Chapter 1) – echoes of this positioning are also to be found in Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, which represents a distinct Romantic attempt to outdo Goethe's novel (the focus of Chapter 3). As Novalis's protagonist Heinrich puts forth in his conversation with his mentor and soon-to-be father-in-law Klingsohr,

> 'Die Sprache […] ist wirklich eine kleine Welt in Zeichen und Tönen. Wie der Mensch sie beherrscht, so möchte er gern die große Welt beherrschen, und sich frei darin ausdrücken können. Und eben in dieser Freude, das, was außer der Welt ist, in ihr zu offenbaren, das tun zu können, was eigentlich der ursprüngliche Trieb unsers Daseins ist, liegt der Ursprung der Poesie.'[18]

Like the puppet theater to Wilhelm, language is a "kleine Welt" to Heinrich, and the origin of poetry lies in a desire for mastery and control over it. In Heinrich's conception, poetry, conceived as mastery of the small world of language, leads to a different engagement with the larger world: it allows the poet to reveal "das, was außer der Welt is, in ihr," thereby in a certain sense transgressing the boundary between the heterocosmic "kleine Welt" and the world at large. Heinrich's description of the affective result of this act is "Freude" and the satisfaction of a drive (*Trieb*). It resonates with the structure of wish fulfillment that informs Wilhelm's naïve engagement with the theater. The echoes between these attitudes toward artistic production suggest that, though obviously flawed and self-deceiving, Goethe's protagonist Wilhelm represents an important inspiration for the Romantics' adaptation of heterocosmic desire as the driver for their project of universal poetry. As I illustrate in Chapter 3, Novalis chooses to

[18] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 287.

complicate the structure of wish fulfillment through his own unique technique of reflexive universalization, which can be conflated with neither Schlegel's conception of *Kritik* nor Goethe's *Bildung* of his protagonist and novelistic world. This means that although heterocosmic desire operates as a shared drive (*Trieb*) for poetry and is consistently associated with "small worlds" and their relationship to a larger world (or other worlds), it is adapted to different aesthetic purposes by different writers.

Goethe's own attitude toward his protagonist is one of ironic indulgence, which is displayed in his narrator's seeming generosity (but critical diagnosis) of Wilhelm's theatrical fantasies. Often through Wilhelm's own words, Goethe portrays his early attempts in puppetry as aesthetically and socially flawed if regarded as theater rather than childhood games.[19] In his attempts with the puppet theater, Wilhelm recounts that his excess of imagination often resulted in deficient creations, "Ich überließ mich meiner Phantasie, probierte und bereitete ewig, baute tausend Luftschlösser und spürte nicht, daß ich den Grund des kleinen Gebäudes zerstört hatte."[20] Like the painting on misty ground referenced in the first quotation from the novel (Wilhelm's "neue Welt"), the *Luftschloss* lacks a foundation or *Grund* that would give cohesion and plausibility to the illusion the young boy is attempting to create: because it lives on fancy alone and is never executed to completion, it holds appeal only as an object of childhood play (*Spiel*), but never materializes into a representation fit for spectators (a *Schauspiel*). Rather than craft a coherent illusion, Wilhelm produces isolated elements – costumes, scenes, props – that, as toys, function as metonymic vehicles for access to imaginary worlds that exist only for his own

[19] Elliott Schreiber analyzes the analogies between these sorts of scenes in Goethe's *Meister* and Goethe's own autobiography, in which Goethe makes a distinction between childish and mature artistic production. See Schreiber, "Narcissus at Play," 130-31.
[20] Goethe, *Meister*, 23 (I.6).

pleasure. Despite his sense of having overcome the obstacles characteristic of his childhood puppeteering as he tells Mariane these stories, a similar dynamic remains at work in Wilhelm's continuing – and rather extreme – attachment to both her and the theater as the means of escape from his bourgeois life.[21] Much like Wilhelm's hallowed puppets and props, Mariane and her various possessions and items of clothing function metonymically as the privileged vehicles of access to the imaginary world of the theater, a world transfigured by his own love.[22] Even Mariane's sleepiness during Wilhelm's narration repeats this dynamic, as she is not drawn into his childhood world, but herself becomes an immobile prop for the narration. In this way, Goethe's narrator makes it evident that Wilhelm has not actually progressed from childhood *Spiel* to artistic *Schauspiel*, or from a playworld constructed purely for his own pleasure to a world shared with others who are not mere extensions of the self. Wilhelm therefore also still envisions his passage from his bourgeois-familial world to the world of theater on the childhood model: as the lifting of a veil – the passage to the other side of a theatrical curtain – or rather, the permanent removal of the barrier. "Wenigstens bekenne ich," says Wilhelm to his mother, complaining of his family home's excessive decoration,

[21] Goethe, *Meister*, 15 (I.3). "'Es ist eine schöne Empfindung, liebe Mariane', versetzte Wilhelm, 'wenn wir uns alter Zeiten und alter, unschädlicher Irrtümer erinnern, besonders wenn es in einem Augenblicke geschieht, da wir eine Höhe glücklich erreicht haben, von welcher wir uns umsehen und den zurückgelegten Weg überschauen können. Es ist so angenehm, selbstzufrieden sich mancher Hindernisse zu erinnern, die wir oft mit einem peinlichen Gefühle für unüberwindlich hielten, und dasjenige, was wir jetzt entwickelt *sind*, mit dem zu vergleichen, was wir damals unentwickelt *waren*. Aber unaussprechlich glücklich fühl ich mich jetzt, da ich in diesem Augenblicke mit dir von dem Vergangnen rede, weil ich zugleich vorwärts in das reizende Land schaue, das wir zusammen Hand in Hand durchwandern können.'"

[22] On the function of metonymy in Goethe's novel (from a psychoanalytic angle), see David Wellbery, "Die Enden des Menschen: Anthropologie und Einbildungskraft im Bildungsroman bei Wieland, Goethe, Novalis," in *Seiltänzer des Paradoxalen: Aufsätze zur Ästhetischen Wissenschaft* (München: Hanser, 2006), 70-117, at 97-99. For Wellbery, the various metonymic objects in the novel function as substitutes for an originary absence or lacuna (*Leerstelle*) pertaining to the origin of the self, which – as I demonstrate here – more obviously appears in Goethe's text as the groundlessness (and implied aesthetic and structural deficiency) of the "Gemälde auf Nebelgrund" and the "Luftschloss." In both cases, a sense of holism or totality is established through a metonymic procedure.

> daß mir diese gestreiften Wände, dies hundertmal wiederholten Blumen, Schnörkel, Körbchen und Figuren einen durchaus unangenehmen Eindruck machen. Sie kommen mir höchstens vor wie unser Theatervorhang. Aber wie anders ist's, vor diesem zu sitzen! Wenn man noch so lange warten muß, so weiß man doch, er wird in die Höhe gehen, und wir werden die mannigfaltigsten Gegenstände sehen, die uns unterhalten, aufklären und erheben.[23]

When the curtain seemingly magically rises in the theater, the separating wall between the real world and a new, different world is temporarily suspended. The theater becomes the privileged site of Wilhelm's wish fulfillment precisely because he still equates the fulfillment of his wish to reign over the "kleine Welt" of the theater with the aesthetic pleasure of spectatorship, a temporary immersion into an alternate reality or world of the imagination, imagining himself on both sides of the curtain. Wilhelm extrapolates this logic to the real world, but not to any practical effect: he imagines the walls of his own home as theatrical curtains – as a decorative covering that, once removed, will allow him to enter the world of his dreams. He thereby conflates the active labor involved in the production of a theatrical illusion (or of the world that he wishes to live in) with the simple gesture of unveiling – the raising of the curtain. Mariane, the vessel for Wilhelm's imaginative projections of a life with the theater, is likewise metonymically represented most prominently by the veil that Wilhelm surreptitiously takes from her during their rendezvous. Ironically, Wilhelm however finds in the lifting of this veil not an access to Mariane and the theater, but a note from Norberg, Mariane's other suitor, whom she had concealed from Wilhelm. This veil therefore serves precisely to destroy the "neue Welt" of love that he had hoped to access through it, and leads to a temporary disillusionment of Wilhelm's auto-erotic theatrical fantasy at the end of Book One. It also demonstrates that Wilhelm's painting on misty ground structurally cannot integrate intrusions from a world beyond

[23] Goethe, *Meister*, 10 (I.2).

Wilhelm's own imagination into its ego-centric sense of totality. As Manfred Engel has demonstrated, in the discourse of the late eighteenth century, Wilhelm's disposition would be categorized as *schwärmerisch* in its precarious attempt to project a subjective, ego-centric inner fantasy onto the wider world.[24]

As we see in the following books of the novel, Wilhelm's desire for a world that conforms to his own wishes, though briefly set back, nevertheless motivates his entire "apprenticeship," leading him to leave the enclosed world of his bourgeois home, join a traveling theater, and encounter various characters who participate in his education. In this way, his entirely ego-centric heterocosmic desire does in fact (at least seemingly) lead him beyond his own self-enclosed imaginary world, and through the various twists and turns of his journey of theatrical *Bildung*.

1.2 – *Sinn für das Universum*: The Reflection of Heterocosmic Desire

As we can now more clearly see, Schlegel's description of the opening of the novel as the birth of a world "ohne Anmaßung und ohne Geräusch" – in other words, as noiseless, unassuming, even innocent – is deliberately inaccurate if purely intended to represent Wilhelm's subjective disposition, which tends toward the passionate, extravagant, and *schwärmerisch*. Schlegel by no means downplays Goethe's protagonist's tendency toward these naïve fantasies, but persistently connects them to a readerly "Wohlwollen" and "Heiterkeit," which derive from a faith that Wilhelm's years of apprenticeship will have a happy ending, that the "Vorempfindung

[24] See Manfred Engel, "Die Rehabilitation des Schwärmers: Theorie und Darstellung des Schwärmens in Spätaufklärung und früher Goethezeit," in *Der ganze Mensch: Anthropologie und Literatur im 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Schings (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1994), 469–498, at 490.

der ganzen Welt in ihm" will unfold "zu einem schönen Bilde."[25] Rather than on Wilhelm as a subject, Schlegel's focus seems to be on Goethe's portrayal of his protagonist and his world as a harmonious overall picture, in which Wilhelm's *schwärmerisch* flights of fancy are not as pathological as they seem, but rather contribute to his *Bildung* in spite of their falsity. As I have suggested, Wilhelm's heterocosmic desire propels him out into the world. Schlegel's description moves us a level higher, inviting us to consider the larger world in which Wilhelm finds himself as *itself* a work of art. In this context, the innocence, purity, and lack of presumption that Schlegel attributes to Wilhelm and the narrative, through deliberately inaccurate characterizations of Wilhelm himself, are intended to highlight his ignorance (and the seemingly coincidental fact) that the world he lives in is *already* somehow constructed for his pleasure and education, despite the erroneousness of his unbounded fantasies. In contrast to Wilhelm's "Gemälde auf Nebelgrund," as Goethe's narrator terms it, Schlegel characterizes the novel's opening in the following way:

> Die Umrisse sind allgemein und leicht, aber sie sind genau, scharf und sicher. Der kleinste Zug ist bedeutsam, jeder Strich ein leiser Wink und alles ist durch helle und lebhafte Gegensätze gehoben. Hier ist nichts was die Leidenschaft heftig entzünden, oder die Teilnahme sogleich gewaltsam mit sich fortreißen könnte. Aber die beweglichen Gemälde haften wie von selbst in dem Gemüte, welches eben zum ruhigen Genuß heiter gestimmt war.[26]

Carrying on the painterly metaphor Goethe used to characterize Wilhelm's fantasy of a new world with the theater and Mariane, Schlegel emphasizes aesthetic characteristics of Goethe's novelistic writing that run in direct opposition to Wilhelm's groundless "Gemälde auf

[25] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 129. See also 2: 127: "Mit wohlwollendem Lächeln folgt der heitre Leser Wilhelms gefühlvollen Erinnerungen an die Puppenspiele, welche den neugierigen Knaben mehr beseligten als alles andre Naschwerk, als er noch jedes Schauspiel und Bilder aller Art, wie sie ihm vorkamen, mit demselben reinen Durste in sich sog, mit welchem der Neugeborne die süße Nahrung aus der Brust der liebkosenden Mutter empfängt."
[26] Schlegel, *KFSA,* 2: 126.

Nebelgrund." Though light, the outlines of Goethe's moving novelistic paintings are exact and sharp as opposed to Wilhelm's undifferentiated figures, and in contrast to Wilhelm's overinvested *Schwärmerei* for Mariane, nothing inflames the reader's passion or imagination excessively. As Schlegel suggests, Goethe makes his protagonist's fanciful imaginations the subject of tranquil enjoyment for his readers by embedding his character in a world that, despite minor dissonances, seems directed precisely toward the fulfillment of his wishes. This endows even the anticipation of a shattered illusion (e.g., his future with Mariane) with an optimistic glow. The reader follows the story "nicht frei von Besorgnis" but remains overall in a state of "Genuß" even through the harsh "Mißlaut" of the first book's closing.[27]

In his characterization of the novel's opening as a cosmogony and the unfolding of a "strebender Geist," Schlegel thus highlights the ambiguity that constitutes its appeal as a Romantic narrative of *Bildung*: a protagonist gives birth to new (but false) worlds of the imagination in an imaginary world that is simultaneously also giving birth to *him* (in a way that the protagonist cannot imagine), *and* opening itself to its readers. In Schlegel's analysis, *Bildung*, which means "formation," "development," or "education" thus designates several aspects of the novel at once: 1) the dynamic of the protagonist's self-generative *Bildungstrieb*, which is actually his false, heterocosmic tendency,[28] 2) the collection of characters and events in his world that seem to merely coincidentally (yet all the more obviously) contribute to his education (*Bildung*), and 3) the formal unfolding of the novel's world, which itself continually develops its own holism: "[d]er angeborne Trieb des durchaus organisierten und organisierenden Werks, sich

[27] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 127-28. This mode of portrayal is also the primary difference between Werther and Wilhelm.
[28] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 136.

zu einem Ganzen zu bilden."[29] As Schlegel contends, the work is both "organized" and "organizing," just as the protagonist is characterized by both an "unendlicher Bildungstrieb" and a "grenzenlose Bildsamkeit," a simultaneous activity and passivity that allows others to take pleasure in educating him, and readers to take pleasure in observing the process.[30] This reciprocal action between the heterocosmically-oriented protagonist and his wider world constitutes a different sort of harmony than what Wilhelm imagines in his intuition of a "neue Welt" – it demonstrates a unity of the One protagonist and the All of his world on the level of the composition itself, in the mutual reflection and interaction between different elements and levels of the artistic representation, despite their seeming oppositions to one another. This form of reflexivity, which systematically moves beyond the subject – or any single node of reflection – is the most important structure in Schlegel's analysis of the novel, and is key to his romantic literary theory. At the center of this dynamic is Wilhelm's imagined theatrical heterocosm, which sustains the ongoing tension between these reciprocal movements of *Bildung*. The fact that Wilhelm errs – because he imagines and desires a different world than the one he lives in – gives rise to this ambiguity and ensures that Wilhelm's educational journey does not appear as a mere allegory in which self and world seem to operate according to a principle of pre-established harmony, i.e., as microcosm and macrocosm.[31] Rather, the developmental dynamism of the unfolding novelistic world hinges on a sense of internal differentiation and counteractivity, in which reflection is not mere repetition. Wilhelm's heterocosmic tendency thus symbolizes

[29] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 131.
[30] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 129.
[31] This sort of view is essential to an Enlightenment aesthetics, represented in (for example) Friedrich von Blanckenburg's *Versuch über den Roman*. On the microcosm-macrocosm structure in his theory of the novel, see Kurt Wölfel, "Friedrich von Blanckenburgs Versuch über den Roman," in *Deutsche Romantheorien: Beiträge zu einer historischen Poetik des Romans in Deutschland*, ed. Reinhold Grimm (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum Verlag, 1968), 29-60, at 56.

(especially at this early point) the sense of autonomy that Schlegel so admires in each part of the novel and aligns with the novel's quality of self-representation.

For Schlegel, what is most important about Wilhelm's fantasies of new worlds is their vague, premonitory quality, which gives them a wider significance than the immediate realm of wish fulfillment, and suggests the possibility of further connections that have not yet been made. Interestingly, Schlegel consistently returns to the way in which readers share Wilhelm's premonitory sentiment as they respond to the various signals or hints (*Winke*) that appear in every stroke of Goethe's narration. Wilhelm's premonitory attitude in fact serves as the template for the *Sinn für das Universum* that Goethe's novel requires of its readers. The basis of this parallel lies in the interpretive position readers are placed in vis-à-vis the novel's overall course of *Bildung*. Though they know more than Wilhelm does thanks to the narrator's interventions, readers similarly must perpetually interpret various narratorial hints (*Winke*) to divine what is next to come. The events that appear to Wilhelm as signs of his destiny (e.g., Mariane represents "den hellen Wink des Schicksals") appear to readers as a different sort of sign, pointing to the way in which Wilhelm's world seems constructed for his pleasure, despite the erroneousness of the new world he imagines for himself. Schlegel makes the parallel between Wilhelm and the ideal reader quite explicit:

> Wer aber echten systematischen Instinkt, Sinn für das Universum, jene Vorempfindung der ganzen Welt hat, die Wilhelmen so interessant macht, fühlt gleichsam überall die Persönlichkeit und lebendige Individualität des Werks, und je tiefer er forscht, je mehr innere Beziehungen und Verwandtschaften, je mehr geistigen Zusammenhang entdeckt er in demselben.[32]

[32] See Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 134; see also 2: 129, with the same phrases purely in reference to Wilhelm. N.B. Schlegel uses the phrase "Sinn für das Universum" in print before Schleiermacher does in the *Reden.*

According to the same premonitory structure, readers apprehend other characters than Wilhelm does as heralds of the arrival of a new, higher world in the novel. Not Mariane, as Schlegel notes, but the arrival of a stranger near the end of Book One – who introduces himself to Wilhelm, but whom the narrator pointedly does not name to the reader[33] – is the agent of the novel's *Bildung*. Schlegel describes this character as an otherworldy alien: he enters the narrative "[a]llein und unbegreiflich, wie eine Erscheinung aus einer andern edleren Welt," as a signal of the "Höhe zu welcher das Werk noch steigen soll."[34] Though readers are not initiated into the specific qualities of the stranger's world of origin (which is quite literally kept a secret until the end of the novel and the conclusion of Wilhelm's education, but seems "heterocosmic" compared to Wilhelm's world), the stranger's arrival and opinions hint at the *Bildung* Wilhelm will experience throughout the novel. In this way, readers are placed in a position similar to Wilhelm despite the fact that they are given more information than him: they can take pleasure in the premonition of a "new world" which in this case is the product of a novelistic rather than theatrical illusion.

In the parallel he constructs between Wilhelm and the reader in his analysis of Book One, Schlegel frames reading as a subtle sort of seduction into the novelistic illusion: "Der Geist fühlt sich durch die heitre Erzählung überall gelinde berührt, leise und vielfach angeregt," as the reader is subtly invited into a world that already seems familiar through narratorial sleight of hand.[35] It is important for Schlegel that readers not resist this seduction, but allow themselves "dem Eindruck eines Gedichtes [sich] ganz hinzugeben" in the full receptivity of feeling –

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[33] Goethe, *Meister*, 68-69 (I.17). "Der Fremde nötigte seinen Führer, [in ein Wirtshaus] hineinzutreten und ein Glas Punsch mit ihm zu trinken; zugleich gab er seinen Namen an und seinen Geburtsort, auch die Geschäfte, die ihn hierhergebracht hätten, und ersuchte Wilhelmen um ein gleiches Vertrauen. Dieser verschwieg ebensowenig seinen Namen als seine Wohnung."
[34] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 128.
[35] See Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 126-127.

"[d]ies ist das Erste und Wesentlichste."[36] In this context, *Sinn für das Universum* appears to mean something like an experience of immersion in the aesthetic work, an immediate experience of its world as though one is already a part of it. On the other hand, the sense for the universe that hereby emerges is by no means incompatible with reflective thought. As Schlegel contends, "[w]ir müssen uns über unsre eigne Liebe erheben, und was wir anbeten, in Gedanken vernichten können: sonst fehlt uns, was wir auch für andre Fähigkeiten haben, der Sinn für das Weltall."[37] Schlegel here almost precisely replicates the phrase *[Sinn für das] Universum* with "Weltall" (a synonym, but with a Germanic, rather than Latin etymology), in reference to an analytical form of reflection that engages actively rather than passively with the work. These two forms of engagement, though diametrically opposed to one another, seem compatible in Schlegel's view. As he contends in reference to the novel, "[es] schärfen und bilden sich Begriff und Sinn gegenseitig."[38] And he therefore suggests,

> So mögen wir uns gern dem Zauber des Dichters entreißen, nachdem wir uns gutwillig haben von ihm fesseln lassen, mögen am liebsten dem nachspähn, was er von unserm Blick entziehen oder doch nicht zuerst zeigen wollte, und was ihn doch am meisten zum Künstler macht: die geheimen Absichten, die er im stillen verfolgt, und deren wir beim Genius, dessen Instinkt zur Willkür geworden ist, nie zu viele voraussetzen können.[39]

Schlegel represents this readerly stance in similarly visual (though more scientific) terms to those Goethe uses to represent Wilhelm's childhood attempt to get behind the curtain of the puppet theater. In both cases, there is an attempt to uncover the concealed mechanism behind the beautiful "Hülle," or "Kleid" of the work.[40] Its connotations are once again erotic, but in a more sinister sense: Schlegel describes how the reader "möchte immer tiefer dringen, bis in den

[36] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 130.
[37] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 131.
[38] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 135.
[39] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 131.
[40] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 131.

Mittelpunkt wo möglich, und möchte wissen, wie das Ganze konstruiert ist."[41] For Schlegel, it is a "Genius" or "Dichter" (Goethe himself, we may suppose at this point) who seems to peek through the veil of his own magnificent prose.[42] Whether this hidden genius of the work can actually be found is not evident from Schlegel's description, just as it remains questionable whether the readerly *Sinn für das Universum* has the potential to become a coherent vision of the whole. Are readers in fact supposed to find the *Mittelpunkt* they seek, or are they merely replicating Wilhelm's fanciful wish to master the small world of the theater?

Schlegel's project of criticism seems to hinge on this question. On the one hand, *Sinn für das Universum* holds a key place in his thought about the work of art and its tendency toward a greater sense of holism. On the other hand, this same sense seems to tempt one to reduce the work, to get behind it to some sort of essence which would destroy it (as Wilhelm destroyed his puppet theater in building his countless *Luftschlösser*). As I take it, though, Schlegel does not raise it in order to persuade or caution us in either direction; rather, he develops this parallel in order to highlight a dynamic of reflection (which he calls *Bildung*) that moves through Wilhelm to the reader and the structure of the work itself, in which each individual node of reflection, like a heterocosm, suggests the whole, participates in it, and yet also errs or diverges from the whole in some significant way. Though Wilhelm in a certain sense is suggested to be the *Mittelpunkt* of the work at this point, his self-absorptive disposition seems always to point beyond itself to other poetic structures that lie beyond the limits of his imagination: his centrality is constitutively eccentric. For this reason, *Sinn für das Universum* is both a concrete image of what can be

[41] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 131.
[42] A few pages earlier, Schlegel stages the reader wishing to understand "jeden Blick, jede Miene des durch das Werk sichtbaren Dichtergeistes," a phrase that the editors of the critical edition tells us he had toned down from a more obvious reference to veiling: "jeden Blick, jede Miene des durch den Schleier des Werks, sichtbar hervorschauenden Dichtergeistes" (*KFSA* 2: 128 n. 2).

described, to borrow Schlegel's language, as a universal "tendency" in the work, but also represents a potential false path. If we read Schlegel's irony correctly, his consistent return to the idea of a *Mittelpunkt* foreshadows the final revelation of the work's governing *Mittelpunkt*, which no reader would be capable of divining at this point. At the same time, it implies not that we must search harder for the center, but that the work has multiple possible centers among which truly critical reflection must be capable of moving.

The reflections between Wilhelm and the reader are two aspects of a larger dynamic of *Bildung* that Schlegel tracks in the first books of the novel; attributing it to the form of the novel itself, he calls this dynamic "[d]er angeborne Trieb des durchaus organisierten und organisierenden Werks, sich zu einem Ganzen zu bilden."[43] For Schlegel, the work itself exhibits a drive toward *Bildung* – and specifically a holistic *Bildung* – that produces a *Sinn für das Universum*, a global and vague sense of possible holism, which results not in the revelation of the whole, but in a proliferation of reflective relations, and a movement among finite points and systems of reflection. This drive is shown on every level of the novel's organization. In his description of Book One, Schlegel praises the narrative technique in *Meister* by which "auch das Beschränkteste zugleich ein ganz eignes selbstständiges Wesen für sich, und dennoch nur eine andre Seite, eine neue Veränderung der allgemeinen und unter allen Verwandlungen einigen menschlichen Natur, ein kleiner Teil der unendlichen Welt zu sein scheint."[44] In this structure, which Schlegel recapitulates again and again in his essay, it is not the whole itself that is revealed, but a collection of partial views and details that are presented in certain suggestive relationships. At the same time, these details are so carefully worked out that they seem to gain

[43] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 131.
[44] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 127.

autonomy, especially when (as in the case of Mariane's veil for example) their meaning is constantly shifting and pointing to other facets of the novel's reflective dynamic. Glossing the various strategic character oppositions of Wilhelm and Mariane, and Wilhelm and his more economical friend Werner in Book One, Schlegel describes the entire book in purely formal terms, as "eine Reihe von veränderten Stellungen und malerischen Gegensätzen," the individual chapters of which each also form, "jede für sich ein malerisches Ganzes."[45] On a higher level of organization, Schlegel contends that the books of the novel each represent "eine neue Szene und eine neue Welt" even as they connect to one another serially: "auch hier kommen die alten Gestalten verjüngt wieder; auch hier enthält jedes Buch die Keime des künftigen und verarbeitet den reinen Ertrag des vorigen mit lebendiger Kraft in sein eigentümliches Wesen."[46] As a collective, the books of the novel (at least up to a certain point) make up a "Suite von Bildungsstücken," an almost scientific gradation of different forms and modalities of the dynamic of *Bildung* that moves through the novel.[47] Because the larger whole – the *Universum* – that these examples of *Bildung* are developing toward is not yet apparent, they seem to be arranged together seemingly purely for aesthetic effect, for the pleasure of their manifold interrelations and the promise of a higher union.

For Schlegel, the game of formal interconnections between various modalities of *Bildung* develops a relationship between particular parts and an all-encompassing whole in terms of an ontological and mereological independence of the parts, which balance their own unique, strongly differentiated holistic forms (i.e., their "selbstständiges Wesen") with the sense of an

[45] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 128-29.
[46] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 135.
[47] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 142. Schlegel's use of the word *Suite* as opposed to *Reihe* (series) might be interpreted as a reference to Abraham Gottlob Werner's method of scientifically categorizing rocks and minerals in graded "suites," a technique that becomes fascinating to his student Novalis.

even higher whole, an *Universum*, that is not fully represented. Key for Schlegel is that the parts are not mere instruments of the whole: each book of the novel is a "System für sich," "eine neue Szene und eine neue Welt," and therefore the best, most ideal book of the novel (in his evaluation) is the third one, which is the most "frei und unabhängig vom Ganzen."[48] Given their strong differentiations from one another (and as we will see – their non-correspondence to the eventual whole), these individual worlds form heterocosms – and not microcosms – in relation to the suggested higher whole. At stake in these claims about the independence of the parts is a project of aesthetic autonomy according to which beautiful form must not be subordinated to and represent a larger social agenda (e.g., as it had been in the Enlightenment use of sentiment to educate),[49] nor even some specific aesthetic philosophy or set of rules. For this reason, Schlegel contends,

> Obgleich es also den Anschein haben möchte, als sei das Ganze ebenso sehr eine historische Philosophie der Kunst, als ein Kunstwerk oder Gedicht, und als sei alles, was der Dichter mit solcher Liebe ausführt, als wäre es sein letzter Zweck, am Ende doch nur Mittel: so ist doch alles Poesie, reine, hohe Poesie.[50]

The love Schlegel attributes to the poet here stands for the sheer pleasure of "Poesie," which seems to exist only for and through itself, as it ceaselessly multiplies itself in reflection.

As I want to suggest, Schlegel characterizes the novel's *Bildung*, and its development of a *Sinn für das Universum*, as a basic dynamic of its serially unfolding narration.[51] Though seemingly oriented toward the development of a "higher" whole and constantly producing premonitions thereof, *Bildung* actually proceeds according to a principle of horizontal

[48] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 135 and 138.
[49] Dorothea von Mücke, *Virtue and the Veil of Illusion: Generic Innovation and the Pedagogical Project in Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991) provides an excellent study on this.
[50] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 132.
[51] This sort of reading seems especially important since the novel was first published in a series of four volumes between the years of 1795-96.

continuation that forms relationships among members in the series of *Bildungsstücke*, and resembles the movement of an arabesque.[52] As Schlegel observes, the books composing the novel, though highly differentiated, are united by the same "Mittel der Verknüpfung und der Fortschreitung," which connect the parts to one another and thereby prefigure the higher unity of the novel's universe.[53] Each part of the novel, though internally unified, contains certain elements that seem to point beyond it:

> Auch im zweiten Bande locken Jarno und die Amazone, wie der Fremde und Mignon im ersten Bande, unsre Erwartung und unser Interesse in die dunkle Ferne, und deuten auf eine noch nicht sichtbare Höhe der Bildung; auch hier öffnet sich mit jedem Buch eine neue Szene und eine neue Welt; auch hier kommen die alten Gestalten verjüngt wieder; auch hier enthält jedes Buch die Keime des künftigen und verarbeitet den reinen Ertrag des vorigen mit lebendiger Kraft in sein eigentümliches Wesen […][54]

Through the means Schlegel describes here, Goethe balances the inner organization of each book of the novel (its status as an autonomous "Welt," "System," and "eigentümliches Wesen") with the sense of interconnectivity that allows each book to anticipate the next. Schlegel casts these transitions in a language of otherworldly appearance, which suggests that the dynamism of the novel derives from a strategic interpenetration of individual intra-diegetic "worlds" or heterocosms that are not (at least initially) completely intelligible to one another. The foreign or "otherworldly" elements are embedded in one particular narrative world, yet possess the quality of *Winke* or hints that allows them to point beyond their local significance. At this early point in the novel (and Schlegel's essay), it is not yet clear that these signs do anything but connect the

[52] On the relationship between the arabesque and the novel (presented in Schlegel's "Brief über den Roman,"), see Günter Oesterle's useful study, "Arabeske und Roman: Eine poetikgeschichtliche Rekonstruktion von Schlegels Brief über den Roman," in *Studien zur Ästhetik und Literaturgeschichte der Kunstperiode*, ed. Dirk Grathoff and Erwin Leibfried (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1985), 233-292. Oesterle defines three main characteristics of the arabesque: disinterested play, transformation of given material (which he aligns with the sentimental), and infinite continuability ("Arabeske und Roman," 240).
[53] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 135.
[54] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 135.

books of the novel to one another in a series and draw on the reader's interest – it is therefore almost possible to identify the serial connectivity of the series of intradiegetic worlds presented in the novel with the development of a *Sinn für das Universum*, since the whole is not yet fully in view.

Section 2 – The Work of Art and the Universe: *Kritik* and *Universalpoesie*

For Schlegel, the novel's developmental dynamic fundamentally changes in the final few books of the novel, when Wilhelm's meandering journeys with his friends in the theater are revealed not to be a spontaneous *Bildung* at all, but to have been intentionally facilitated by a secret society (the Society of the Tower) into which Wilhelm is initiated near the end of the novel. For Schlegel, the movement from Wilhelm's illusory sense of artistic control over a theatrical heterocosm to the Society of the Tower's reasonable control over the world that had facilitated his *Bildung* produces great ambivalence. On the one hand, this move eradicates the ambiguity and open-endedness that had given the first parts of the novel its appeal; it thereby abandons the sense of premonitory *Bildung* through the theatrical heterocosm in favor of a more practical, teleological *Bildung* for a "Kunst zu leben" oriented once again toward a coherent, stable, and normative social world, the world in which the novel find its aesthetic closure.[55] This aspect, which I turn to first, is the major criticism that the Romantics (Novalis even more so than Schlegel) level against Goethe's novel. On the other hand, the fact that, as Schlegel observes, "das eine unteilbare Werk in gewissem Sinn doch zugleich ein zwiefaches, doppeltes ist" gives

[55] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 143. A longer version of the quotation: "Wir sehen nun klar, daß es nicht bloß, was wir Theater oder Poesie nennen, sondern das große Schauspiel der Menschheit selbst und die Kunst aller Künste, die Kunst zu leben, umfassen soll. Wir sehen auch, daß diese Lehrjahre eher jeden andern zum tüchtigen Künstler oder zum tüchtigen Mann bilden wollen und bilden können, als Wilhelmen selbst."

him cause for admiration.[56] The doubleness of the work exemplifies a self-reflexive and self-transcending tendency that the Romantics sought to adapt for their own poetic purposes. It becomes foundational for Schlegel's concept of criticism, which also emerges in his essay on *Wilhelm Meister* and paves the way for the romantic project of *Universalpoesie*.

2.1 – Wish Fulfillment and the Theater of Education

Though the Society of the Tower is behind many of the coincidences and hints that had run throughout the previous books, it is not until the fourth volume (Books Seven and Eight) that their origin is revealed to both Wilhelm and the reader and, according to Schlegel, "das Werk gleichsam mannbar und mündig [wird]" – we note that it is not Wilhelm who becomes mature, but the work.[57] The maturity of the work, as Schlegel puts it, consists in the coherent articulation of its principle of *Bildung*, and thus also the revelation of the general rule that had governed its development. On the level of content, which Schlegel glosses rather quickly, this rule is the Abbé's system of education. This mysterious figure's sole principle of education is to facilitate (i.e. create the conditions for, not immediately provide) the easy fulfillment of the wishes and desires of his pupils so that they learn to distinguish error from truth, and to find their true calling in life.[58] At Wilhelm's initiation, the Abbé and the other members of the Society of the Tower

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[56] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 346.

[57] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 143. The word "mannbar" in this context carries an additional gendered valence. The word originally means mature in the sense of "marriageable" (not manly, as one might expect), and was usually used to describe marriageable women. It is possible that, in keeping with the overall ironic tone of his essay, Schlegel intentionally uses contradictory terms to highlight the ambivalence of the sense of maturity conveyed in Goethe's novel. For a definition and etymology of "mannbar," see *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Wilhelm und Jakob Grimm*, s.v. "mannbar," accessed April 6, 2023, via *Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache (DWDS)*, https://www.dwds.de/wb/dwb/mannbar.

[58] This is first portrayed in the *Bekenntnisse einer Schönen Seele* (Book Six): "der Oheim habe sich durch den Abbé überzeugen lassen, daß, wenn man an der Erziehung des Menschen etwas tun wolle, müsse man sehen, wohin seine Neigungen und Wünsche gehen. Sodann müsse man ihn in die Lage versetzen, jene sobald als möglich zu befriedigen, diese sobald als möglich zu erreichen, damit der Mensch, wenn er sich geirret habe, früh genug seinem

emerge as the behind-the-scenes directors of Wilhelm's journey with the theater, which culminated in his successful performance as Hamlet in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (facilitated by the Society of the Tower's intervention as the ghost of Hamlet's father). At Wilhelm's initiation, it is revealed that the course of theatrical *Bildung* – which was oriented toward Wilhelm's success as an actor – was intended to cure him of his *Schwärmerei* and his desire to join the theater, which according to the logic of the Abbé, was only born of the fact that it was not yet fully satisfied (having been constantly interrupted in the past by unfortunate mishaps and errors). Within the Abbé's educational program, Wilhelm's theatrical wish is therefore revealed as the instrument rather than the driving force of his education.[59]

In the final books of the novel, Wilhelm's erratic, imaginative *Bildung* in the theater is recast as an elaborate real-world theatrical production staged by others for his education, not as an artist, but as an individual who must overcome the temptation of the theatrical illusion and learn to live in the real world. Mirroring his ascent to directorship in the puppet theater, Wilhelm's initiation into the Society of the Tower consists in a passage into the hidden space behind the curtain of his own education. Rather than the small, heterocosmic world of the theater, however, the Society of the Tower concerns itself with the world at large: the very fabric

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Irrtum gewahr werde, und wenn er das getroffen hat, was für ihn paßt, desto eifriger daran halte und sich desto emsiger fortbilde" (Goethe, *Meister*, 431 [VI]), and then repeated at Wilhelm's initiation into the Society of the Tower: "'Nicht von Irrtum zu bewahren, ist die Pflicht des Menschenerziehers, sondern den Irrenden zu leiten, ja ihn seinen Irrtum aus vollen Bechern ausschlürfen zu lassen, das ist Weisheit der Lehrer. Wer seinen Irrtum kostet, hält lange damit Haus, er freuet sich dessen als eines seltenen Glücks, aber wer ihn ganz erschöpft, der muß ihn kennenlernen, wenn er nicht wahnsinnig ist'" (509 [VII.9]). The obvious case of *Wahnsinn* in the novel is the beautiful soul, whose confessions form Book Six.

[59] Friedrich Kittler has analyzed the connection between the Abbé's program of education and the newly-emergent educational paradigms of Goethe's own time, which hinged on the elicitation and fulfillment of childhood wishes, tying these to the emergence of a concept of individual *Bildung*. See Friedrich Kittler, "Über die Sozialisation Wilhelm Meisters," in *Dichtung als Sozialisationsspiel*, ed. Friedrich Kittler and Gerhard Kaiser (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 13-124. From a slightly different angle, Franco Moretti has analyzed the novel as an attempt to harmonize individual desire and the compromises entailed by socialization: See Moretti, *Way of the World*, 15-74.

of Wilhelm's reality, but also, beyond this, matters of international trade and finance. The Society's approach to its tasks mirrors and transforms Wilhelm's desire to be on both sides of the theatrical curtain at once, only this time the "Gewebe" of the curtain is the world itself. As the mysterious stranger tells Wilhelm already in Book One,

> Das Gewebe dieser Welt ist aus Notwendigkeit und Zufall gebildet; die Vernunft des Menschen stellt sich zwischen beide und weiß sie zu beherrschen; sie behandelt das Notwendige als den Grund ihres Daseins; das Zufällige weiß sie zu lenken, zu leiten und zu nutzen, und nur, indem sie fest und unerschütterlich steht, verdient der Mensch, ein Gott der Erde genannt zu werden.[60]

Unlike Wilhelm's precarious imaginary position on both sides of the theatrical curtain, the in-between position of reason that the stranger presents here is firm and unshakeable. Humanity, he contends, secures this position and exerts control by distinguishing (rather than conflating, as Wilhelm does) the "two sides" of the world, necessity and chance. The result of the clear distinction between necessity and chance is human's ascent to a status of "Gott der Erde," which in this case consists in the control – even exploitation – of all contingencies.[61] This rational, even instrumental control of the world forms a complementary opposite to Wilhelm's imaginative control over the small world of the puppet theater, which refuses to differentiate between the two because it equates the passive pleasure of aesthetic enchantment with a divine sense of control (a conflation that is only possible in the interior world of the imagination). The importance of this opposition becomes all the more clear in retrospect. At the early moment in the novel when this

[60] Goethe, *Meister*, 71-72 (I.17).

[61] The control of *Zufall* is incredibly important in Wilhelm's *Bildung*, which seeks to prevent the sort of coincidental mishaps that had characterized his early experiments with the theater, and thereby lead him to the success that will cure him of his theatrical obsession (which it takes to be spurred on by Wilhelm's dissatisfaction). The theater as a site of contingency is explored in Elliott Schreiber, "Narcissus at Play," 126. Its role in his *Bildung* is also explored in Anja Lemke, "Philologisch-philosophische Arabesken: Schlegel liest Goethe und Fichte," in *Formästhetiken und Formen der Literatur: Materialität – Ornament – Codierung*, ed. Torsten Hahn and Nicolas Pethes (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2020), 167-184. Lemke argues that the Society of the Tower always seems to make appearances at important moments of contingency (or possibility) in Wilhelm's life during the course of his *Bildung*.

conversation occurs, the stranger's advice to Wilhelm appears only as an admonition against Wilhelm's tendency to interpret chance events as *Schicksal* or destiny. (*Schicksal*, as Goethe's constellation of terms implies, consists in a mystifying conflation of chance and necessity that apprehends the real world as a sort of high drama – a work of art.) Yet as we later see, the Society of the Tower, though ideologically rejecting *Schicksal* as an external force, paradoxically *does* play the role of destiny in the novel's aestheticized unfolding so long as it remains concealed, thereby temporarily strengthening Wilhelm in his illusions and allowing him to live inside a living work of art that aligns with his own fantasies.[62] Schlegel, who does not make the theatrical metaphor central in his analysis of the final books, does note at least this when he describes how the Abbé plays the role of *Schicksal*.[63] Only once the theater of *Bildung* is unmasked – and the world itself is demystified – does the distinction between chance and necessity become evident both to Wilhelm (in the course of his own life), and to readers in the form of the novel's *Bildung*, which no longer reflects itself in a purely coincidental, unmotivated fashion.

In Schlegel's essay, the revelation of the Society of the Tower's more teleological sense of *Bildung* means that the novel is not in fact purely oriented toward "Poesie" as "zugleich Mittel und Zweck" as he had earlier suggested,[64] but toward "die Kunst zu leben":

> Wir sehen nun klar, daß es nicht bloß, was wir Theater oder Poesie nennen, sondern das große Schauspiel der Menschheit selbst und die Kunst aller Künste, die Kunst zu leben, umfassen soll. Wir sehen auch, daß diese Lehrjahre eher jeden andern zum tüchtigen Mann bilden wollen und bilden können, als Wilhelmen selbst. Nicht dieser oder jener Mensch sollte erzogen, sondern die Natur, die Bildung selbst sollte in mannichfachen Beispielen dargestellt, und in einfache Grundsätze zusammengedrängt werden.[65]

[62] Kittler points to the hidden mediation required for this sense of wish-fulfillment, aligning it with the establishment of an entire discourse network of *Bildung*, "Über die Sozialisation," 99-114.
[63] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 146.
[64] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 131.
[65] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 143.

At the point where the heterocosmic forces of "Theater oder Poesie" (i.e., the imagination) are revealed as instrumental drivers of education and not the spontaneous dynamic of *Bildung* itself, they are also revealed – or put in their place – as only one facet of the much larger "große[s] Schauspiel der Menschheit." This real-world theater (one could almost say a *theatrum mundi*), which extends far beyond Wilhelm's own *Bildung*, is directed by the Society of the Tower, "die geheime Gesellschaft des reinen Verstandes," which Schlegel identifies as the finally-revealed *Mittelpunkt* of the novel.[66] At this key point, the reflexivity of the work also changes. The reflexive play of parallel structures of *Bildung* that had centered on Wilhelm's heterocosmic tendency gives way to a different organization, in which the seemingly coincidental resonances and reflections among different levels and aspects of the representation become part of a stable structure of intentional *Bildung*, the goal of which is precisely to control contingency.[67]

2.2 – *Lebenskunst* and the "klassische Welt" of the Novel

There is a distinct difference between the idea of becoming absorbed into a work of art (a fundamentally Romantic, heterocosmic desire), and the notion of *Lebenskunst* that Schlegel uses to describe the "Bildungslehre" of the Society of the Tower. Both constitute an aestheticization of life, but the distinction between the two aligns quite precisely with what I would call a monocosmic classicism, which conceives of the artwork as a self-enclosed, self-generating totality (and an analogy for life, conceived of as a continuous entelechy) on the one hand, and a heterocosmic, polycosmic Romanticism on the other, in which the work of art's relationship to

[66] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 145.
[67] See note 61 above.

life is conceived of as fluid and contingent, as a simultaneous representation and distortion (or more positively: transformation) of life. As Schlegel contends, in critique of Goethe, the monocosmism of the classical *Lebenskunst* cannot conceive of itself without an outside, an *object* of *Bildung*, and therefore reflects itself in a gesture of assimilation.

Though he never specifically defines *Lebenskunst*, Schlegel suggests that this sort of art is not of the same kind as the art of poetry and the theater, especially as it appears to Wilhelm. If we follow Schlegel's observations, the *Lebenskunst* practiced by the members of the Society of the Tower is of a more technological sort than the theatrical arts – it involves a practical manipulation and governance, even remaking, of the world and of people. The originator of the Society of the Tower, the Oheim (uncle), serves as the paradigm for this practice. Within the inset *Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele*, which form the sixth book of the novel, the Oheim first appears more or less *incognito* to both Wilhelm and the readers. In Schlegel's rendering, "[er] ruht im Hintergrunde dieses Gemäldes, wie ein gewaltiges Gebäude der Lebenskunst im großen alten Styl, von edlen einfachen Verhältnissen, aus dem reinsten gediegensten Marmor."[68] Schlegel's architectural metaphor for the uncle derives from the novel itself, where his niece, the "Beautiful Soul" (who is generally only interested in her inner world), is astounded by her admiration for the architecture of her uncle's castle, the skillful arrangement of which makes it appear to her as a "kleine Welt."[69] In conversation with her, the Oheim briefly articulates his own ideology of *Bildung* in architectural terms: "Das ganze Weltwesen liegt vor uns, wie ein großer Steinbruch vor dem Baumeister, der nur dann den Namen verdient, wenn er aus diesen

[68] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 142.
[69] Goethe, *Meister*, 413 (Book Six – no chapter divisions). This phrase ("kleine Welt") is repeated several times in relation to the Society of the Tower, e.g., by Jarno immediately prior to Wilhelm's initiation (*Meister*, 507 [VII.9]). Schlegel by contrast always characterizes the world of the Society of the Tower as "groß" (*KFSA*, 2: 143).

zufälligen Naturmassen ein in seinem Geiste entsprungenes Urbild mit der größten Ökonomie, Zweckmäßigkeit und Festigkeit zusammenstellt."[70] Comparing the human to a god, the uncle suggests that the world is matter, "nur Element," a collection of "Naturmassen" waiting to be formed into a coherent whole by the creative architectural spirit.[71] This active orientation is of course a direct opposite to the Beautiful Soul (who only works on – and ultimately empties out – her inner world), and indirectly to Wilhelm as well, whose heterocosmic desire, as I have shown, produces misty compositions that are anything but economical, purposive, and "fest," as the uncle puts it. As Schlegel speculates, the uncle seems to have laid his own foundations: he never had an apprenticeship, but was "sein eigner Lehrer," who unlike Wilhelm, "[hat] mit männlicher Kraft […] die umgebende Natur zu einer klassischen Welt gebildet, die sich um seinen selbstständigen Geist wie um den Mittelpunkt bewegt."[72]

It is no coincidence that Schlegel calls the uncle's mansion and estates a "klassische Welt," a term that opposes him to the Romantic qualities of the characters to whom Wilhelm feels a spontaneous affinity early on in the novel: Mignon, and Augustino (the Harpist).[73] Unlike Mignon and the Harpist, who are defined by their displacement from, and yearning (*Sehnsucht*) for, their lost homes and thereby exemplify another sort of otherworldly (or heterocosmic) existence manifested in their beautiful songs, the uncle builds his own solid world around him, gradually and methodically collecting elements of art, science, trade, philosophy, and even people into his orbit. Though his death is announced in Book Seven, he seems to continue to

[70] Goethe, *Meister*, 416-17 (VI).
[71] Goethe, *Meister*, 417 (VI).
[72] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 142. Proleptically pointing toward the continued development of the *Bildungsroman* in the nineteenth century, Moretti aligns what I here call classical *Lebenskunst* (with Schlegel) and he calls "the art of living" with an aestheticization of private, bourgeois "everyday life." See Moretti, *Way of the World*, 32-38.
[73] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 146; see also 132.

occupy this role since his castle forms the setting for Book Eight. By characterizing the uncle as the *Mittelpunkt* of a classical world that he himself forms, and the only true "selbstständiger Geist" of the novel, Schlegel casts classical aesthetics as a monocosmic, expansionist structure, the *Bildung* of which consists in the assimilation of outside elements to its one emanating center of power. This aesthetic paradigm of *Bildung* firmly distinguishes between the active principle of *Bildung* (the Oheim's "schöpferischer Kraft") and the passive "zufällige Naturmassen" that it conforms to its ordering principles.[74] The temple formed by the "architektonische Naturen" of the Abbé, the uncle, and Lothario becomes Schlegel's metaphor for the work itself, which recasts everything as a component of its own edifice. As Schlegel contends, "Der vierte Band ist eigentlich das Werk selbst; die vorigen Teile sind nur Vorbereitung."[75]

The classical world and aesthetic of the Society of the Tower sheds new light on the sense of *Bildsamkeit* and receptive *Sinn* that is key to Wilhelm's highly reflexive *Bildung* in the earlier books of the novel.[76] Within the concentric framework that becomes apparent at the end of the novel, Wilhelm becomes the passive material for a *Bildung* that belatedly turns out not to have originated with him. As Schlegel asserts, the Society of the Tower gets the best of Wilhelm ("hat ihn zum besten") by allowing him to be led by his willful desires only to rob him of his free will: "[n]ach einigen leichten Krämpfen von Angst, Trotz und Reue verschwindet seine Selbstständigkeit aus der Gesellschaft der Lebendigen. Er resigniert förmlich darauf, einen eigenen Willen zu haben; und nun sind seine Lehrjahre wirklich vollendet."[77] In contrast to characters such as Mignon, the Beautiful Soul, or the Harpist – all of whom seem to be unable to

[74] Goethe, *Meister*, 417 (VI).
[75] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 3: 146.
[76] As Moretti notes, *Bildung* "requires […] a *pliant* character" (*Way of the World*, 21).
[77] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2:144.

occupy stable social roles within the Society of the Tower because of their recalcitrant otherworldly orientations, and seem fated to die in order to become useful to it – Schlegel suggests that at the end of the novel Wilhelm finally attains the height of the passive "Bildsamkeit" that is required for him to willingly occupy the paternal (and subsequently spousal) role that the Society of the Tower assigns him in order to produce in him "die Tugend eines Bürgers."[78] Though we could think of Wilhelm's journey of *Bildung* as a beautiful work of educational art by the Society of the Tower, Schlegel contends that the novel moves *beyond* Wilhelm and his individual education at the precise moment at which such an interpretation offers itself to us. His essay, too, increasingly moves away from Wilhelm in favor of describing the aesthetic effect of the Society of the Tower's world. In the final instance, Wilhelm is not quite *gebildet* but merely "taken care of" by the Society of the Tower; he in other words seems never to attain a truly autonomous development, at least in Schlegel's portrayal.[79] Unclear here is whether Schlegel thinks the novel engages (formally speaking) in *Bildung* anymore at all, or whether it has moved from *enacting Bildung* as its own developmental dynamic to a mere *representation* of *Bildung* "in mannichfachen Beispielen […], und in einfache[n] Grundsätze[n]." In this larger structure, Wilhelm functions not as the prime example, but as one of many possible examples of *Bildung*, a member in a collection formed by the many individuals in the orbit of the Society of the Tower. As Schlegel notes, the representational strategy at work

[78] Goethe, *Meister*, 517 (VIII.1). The narrator describes Wilhelm's new attitude toward the world after his initiation as follows: "Er sah die Welt nicht mehr wie ein Zugvogel an, ein Gebäude nicht mehr für eine geschwind zusammengestellte Laube, die vertrocknet, ehe man sie verläßt. Alles, was er anzulegen gedachte, sollte dem Knaben [Felix] entgegenwachsen, und alles, was er herstellte, sollte eine Dauer auf einige Geschlechter haben. In diesem Sinne waren seine Lehrjahre geendigt, und mit dem Gefühl eines Vaters hatte er auch alle Tugenden eines Bürgers erworben."

[79] "Für Wilhelmen wird wohl endlich auch gesorgt: aber sie haben ihn fast mehr als billig oder höflich ist, zum besten" (Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 144).

here is no longer simply oriented toward readerly pleasure in the discovery of the various resonances of the work, but becomes allegorical and purposive.[80] The pleasing relationships, parallels, and oppositions readers had observed in the early parts of the novel become part of a broader, more general, and more normative system of *Bildung*, examples of different possible forms of development. As mere exemplary representations of possible trajectories of *Bildung*, the characters have potential, Schlegel ironically adds, as "ein unerschöpflicher Stoff und die vortrefflichste Beispielsammlung für sittliche und gesellschaftliche Untersuchungen."[81] These examples of *Bildung* seem to fit perfectly among the many different collections of natural curiosities, books, and works of art that are collected within the mansion that forms the setting of Book Eight (which, we assume, belonged to the nameless Oheim, the originator of the Society of the Tower). This impression is reinforced by the fact that Wilhelm finds his own grandfather's art collection, which had been sold in his childhood, there among many other works of art.[82] Its incorporation into the larger art collection seems to symbolize his own position as one more member of the Society of the Tower's collection of human *Bildungsstücke*.

For Schlegel, this is a complete formal remaking of the novel insofar as it transforms the free and seemingly coincidental play of beauty that had characterized Wilhelm's theatrical life

[80] "Überhaupt gleichen die Charaktere in diesem Roman zwar durch die Art der Darstellung dem Porträt, ihrem Wesen nach aber sind sie mehr oder minder allgemein und allegorisch" (Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 143).
[81] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 143.
[82] In a certain sense, the presence of these artworks continues the seductive, illusory dynamic that had characterized Wilhelm's former *Bildung*. Schlegel does not focus on these aspects, since his analysis moves entirely away from Wilhelm in the discussion of the final books of the novel. Upon his first entrance into the house, the following museal scene greets Wilhelm: "Marmorne Statuen und Büsten standen auf Piedestalen und in Nischen geordnet; einige schienen ihm bekannt. Jugendeindrücke verlöschen nicht, auch in ihren kleinsten Teilen. Er erkannte eine Muse, die seinem Großvater gehört hatte, zwar nicht an ihrer Gestalt und an ihrem Wert, doch an einem restaurierten Arme und an den neu eingesetzten Stücken des Gewandes. Es war, als wenn er ein Märchen erlebte" (Goethe, *Meister*, 528 [VIII.2]). Wilhelm then finally meets Natalie immediately after seeing the painting that had been his childhood favorite, the image of the sick prince (*Der kranke Königssohn*). The scene is almost theatrically staged, with blinding lights and all.

into something more instrumental, which stably differentiates between the agent and object of *Bildung*. Aesthetically speaking, this adds up to a stable distinction between structure and ornament. The large collection of minor characters that had previously been introduced as sources of endless interest become in Schlegel's evaluation nothing more than "Marionetten, allegorisches Spielwerk," decorative elements (*Verzierungen*) in its sublime architectonic "Tempel," which bears an increasing resemblance in Schlegel's essay to the mausoleum within the Oheim's castle.[83] Implicit in Schlegel's metaphorical shifts at the end of the essay is an argument that free, heterocosmic *Bildung* becomes sarcophagally contained within the architectonic machinery of the Society of the Tower, which is symbolized by Mignon's artistically and technologically elaborate funeral.[84] Her funeral sheds new light on Schlegel's description of the end of the novel as the point at which "die Kunst eine Wissenschaft und das Leben eine Kunst sein wird."[85] Cloaked under Schlegel's ironic adulation of the sublime, "gediegen und hinreißend" aspects of the novel's ending is the suggestion that the transformation of life into art and art into science refers less precisely to Wilhelm, who attains nothing but "bescheidne Liebenswürdigkeit" by the end of the novel,[86] than it does to Mignon, whose death and funeral serves as a central image in the final paragraphs of Schlegel's essay. For Schlegel, Mignon's elaborate funeral represents the posthumous transformation of a life into art, an art which coincides in Goethe's novel with the science of embalming.[87]

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[83] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 146.
[84] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 145.
[85] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 128.
[86] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 144 and 145.
[87] Mignon's embalming is described as a "Kunst" in the novel. As the Abbé recounts, "Aber wenn die Kunst [des Arztes] den scheidenden Geist nicht zu fesseln vermochte, so hat sie alle ihre Mittel angewandt, den Körper zu erhalten und ihn der Vergänglichkeit zu entziehen. Eine balsamische Masse ist durch alle Adern gedrungen und färbt nun an der Stelle des Bluts die so früh verblichenen Wangen. Treten Sie näher, meine Freunde, und sehen Sie das Wunder der Kunst und Sorgfalt!" Goethe, *Meister*, 595 (VIII.8).

On a more general level of form, Schlegel is in pursuit of a model in which contingency (and its implication of formlessness) is not a threat to poetic form, but is transfigured into a poetic principle that signals a possible coincidence of the two. As a "formless," prosaic genre, the novel is the prime site for negotiating this issue. As Günter Oesterle, and more recently Anja Lemke, have shown, Schlegel's theory of the novel as an arabesque (which is presented in his "Brief über den Roman" in 1800) thinks it as a form in which contingency becomes productive; the arabesque's constant transgression of boundaries (between text and image, image and ornament, etc.) serve as a means of generating an ongoing series of perspectival shifts that mirror the novel's hybridization of different genres and its revaluation of seemingly "accidental" or non-formal characteristics (under one view) as aspects of a newly emerging form (under another view).[88] This line of thought runs parallel to what I have described as the novel's early movement among interpenetrating worlds and levels of *Bildung*, which generates a *Sinn für das Universum*: what appears contingent or unintelligible in one world and from one point of view resonates in another, related one, and the resonance itself is also seemingly contingent insofar as it appears (at least initially) to be aesthetically free and unmotivated. The *Sinn für das Universum* that thereby emerges can be described as a global but indefinite sense of infinite further possible connectivity, which begins to challenge even the distinction between form and formlessness, and life and art through its perspectival mobility.

The ambiguous word *Willkür* also plays an important role in Schlegel's interpretation of the role of contingency in the dynamic of *Bildung* in Goethe's novel, and in making the distinction between its classical-monocosmic and romantic-heterocosmic aspects. In the first two

[88] See Anja Lemke, "Philologisch-philosophische Arabesken," 171 and 176-77; Oesterle, "Arabeske und Roman," 233-292.

thirds of his essay, Schlegel generally refers to the "Geist" or "Genius" that moves through Goethe's *Meister* and animates its course of *Bildung* as possessing a near-divine "gebildete Willkür," which suggests an underlying freedom or capriciousness in the novel's play of formal reflections.[89] For the Romantics, *Willkür* usually signals precisely the polyparadigmatic (polycosmic) reflective mobility that I have outlined in relation to *Sinn für das Universum*. Schlegel canonizes the association of this word with the romantic project in the 116th *Athenäum*-fragment, the manifesto of Romantic *progressive Universalpoesie* (which he publishes in the same volume of the journal in which the essay on *Meister* appears): "Sie [die romantische Poesie] allein ist unendlich, wie sie allein frei ist, und das als ihr erstes Gesetz anerkennt, daß die Willkür des Dichters kein Gesetz über sich leide."[90] *Willkür* in this context is a lawlessness, which I conceive not as a negation of laws in general, but a movement from one possible law to another, and thus a refusal to settle on one – elevated to the status of a law. In Goethe's novel, on the other hand, Schlegel finally defines the *Willkür* of the novel as its internal law and reigning *Mittelpunkt*: "der eigentliche Mittelpunkt dieser Willkürlichkeit ist die geheime Gesellschaft des reinen Verstandes, die Wilhelmen und sich selbst zum besten hat, und zuletzt noch rechtlich und nützlich und ökonomisch wird."[91] With the alignment of *Willkür* with *Verstand* and economic utility rather than the free poetic imagination, Schlegel creates the impression that the seemingly free and Romantic *Willkür* of the previous books of Goethe's novel is in fact only a masked form

[89] In his first mention of the search for the *Mittelpunkt* of the work (discussed on page 103 above), Schlegel gestures toward "die geheimen Absichten, die er [der Dichter] im stillen verfolgt, und die wir beim Genius, dessen Instinkt zur Willkür geworden ist, nie zu viele voraussetzen können" (*KFSA* 2: 131); he later returns to "das Göttliche der gebildeten Willkür" (134); the "fast beispiellose Willkürlichkeit der Verflechtung mit dem Ganzen" of the sixth book (2: 141).
[90] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 183.
[91] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 145.

of (classical) despotism that finally brings all contingent elements under its one formal paradigm and into its one world, rather than a Romantic series of interlocking heterocosms.

2.3 – Autonomy and *Kritik*

Thus far I have emphasized the distinction between Classicism and Romanticism that Schlegel makes in his evaluation of the end of Goethe's *Meister*, thinking through it in terms of a loss of autonomy and Romantic poetic *Willkür* – or an obtainment of autonomy at the cost of a distinction from non-autonomy, an active force of *Bildung* from its receptive (or recalcitrant) matter. A discerning reader would however note that from another angle, the novel's final revelation of the Society of the Tower constitutes a formal paradigm shift and gesture of self-transcendence that seems to break it open even further, at least from the perspective interpretation – instead of producing a definitive culmination, its internal paradigm shift results in a fundamentally ambivalent sense of closure, in which much seems to have been sacrificed. Though he criticizes the classical aesthetic, Schlegel also seems to admire this movement from one aesthetic paradigm to another, and he therefore tries to recuperate it in order to make Goethe's novel available to Romantic *Kritik* and *Universalpoesie*. He later writes, in a segment of the *Gespräch über die Poesie* (1800), rather admiringly, that *Wilhelm Meister* is "zweimal gemacht, in zwei schöpferischen Momenten, aus zwei Ideen. Die erste war bloß die eines Künstlerromans; nun aber ward das Werk, überrascht von der Tendenz seiner Gattung, plötzlich viel größer als seine erste Absicht, und es kam die Bildungslehre der Lebenskunst hinzu, und ward der Genius des Ganzen."[92] Formally speaking, this places the novel on a level with

[92] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 346.

Schlegel's favorite "romantic" works from a previous age: Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (the latter of which is in fact remade in Goethe's novel).[93]

As I take it, Schlegel's recovery of the doubleness of the work, and his contention "daß das eine und unteilbare Werk in gewissem Sinn doch zugleich ein zwiefaches, doppeltes ist" is an attempt to re-romanticize Goethe's novel by pointing to the seeming internal necessity of differentiating its classical model of autonomy and totality against Wilhelm's illusion of autonomy during his *Bildung*.[94] Without this internal differentiation, the work would come across as a straightforward, dogmatic enactment of a particular program of *Bildung* in poetic garb – this is why the novel treats Wilhelm's education (and his heterocosmic desire) and does not tell the story of the Oheim's autodidacticism. In Schlegel's line of interpretation, the very idea of aesthetic autonomy cannot subsist on its own; it requires at the very least a differentiation against a false sense of (contingent, illusory, actually passive) autonomy in order to become intelligible as such. Without its internal change of premise (its reflexive self-transformation), the work would not be intelligible as an aesthetic totality, nor would it be available to the form of criticism Schlegel discusses in his essay, as I will show. This imbrication of a "unified" totality with an inherent duality – articulated most clearly in Schlegel's own phrase that collapses duplicity and indivisibility[95] – echoes a consistent structure of thought in early German Romanticism wherein a unity (or identity) cannot be understood only through itself, but depends on some form of alterity or reflection in order to constitute itself.[96] Autonomy as pure or absolute

[93] "Eine ebenso auffallende Duplizität ist sichtbar in den beiden künstlichsten und verstandvollsten Kunstwerken im ganzen Gebiet der romantischen Kunst, im *Hamlet* und im *Don Quixote*" (Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 346).
[94] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 346.
[95] "daß das eine und unteilbare Werk in gewissem Sinn doch zugleich ein zwiefaches, doppeltes ist" (Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 346).
[96] As Winfried Menninghaus for example puts it, "Der Roman gilt den Romantikern als Inbegriff reflexiver Selbstkonstitution, weil er nicht durch Gattungsschranken *von außen* definiert oder limitiert ist, sondern sich ganz

individuality is not possible; it always constitutes itself in a wider, potentially infinite network of reflexivity, beginning with its own self-reflection. Schlegel does not thereby reduce the work to its first impulse (Wilhelm's vague and self-deceptive *Sinn für das Universum*), but strategically challenges a reading that would view its autonomy as possible under a *single* self-developed paradigm, thereby casting the work as progressive and self-transcending – counter to its own classical ideology. Though he does not lay out a specific argument for this claim, he seems to thereby interpret what he identifies as the "classical" and "romantic" paradigms in the novel not only as competing tendencies, but as tendencies that could be demonstrated to mutually necessitate one another. For this reason, he also speculates that "diese große Kombination eröffnet eine ganz neue endlose Aussicht auf das, was die höchste Aufgabe aller Dichtkunst zu sein scheint, die Harmonie des Klassischen und Romantischen," of monocosmic and heterocosmic forms of reflection.[97]

The doubleness Schlegel attributes to the work also presages Schlegel's conception of criticism as a technique of "die Darstellung von neuem Darstellen," which points to an *Universum* in a more active sense than *Sinn für das Universum*, which appears as a primarily receptive stance in his essay "Über Meister."[98] Before he introduces this definition of criticism, Schlegel already contends that Goethe's work both represents and judges itself. The work, which

durch sein *inneres* 'Spiel', in dem alle Gattungen und ihre Vorgaben gemischt sein können, konstituiert. Für das reflexive 'Spiel des Dualismus' bedarf es der (mindestens) 'zwei Centra', und kraft dieser konstitutiven Duplizität in sich ohne ein vorausgesetztes *Erstes*, ohne das *eine* transzendentale Signifikat ist der Roman ein '*absolutes* Buch', das sich selbst trägt" (Menninghaus, *Unendliche Verdopplung*, 159).

[97] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 346.

[98] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 140.

cannot be judged according to any prevailing "Gattungsbegriff," can only be understood on its own terms.[99] Therefore, he continues,

> Vielleicht soll man es also zugleich beurteilen und nicht beurteilen; welches keine leichte Aufgabe zu sein scheint. Glücklicherweise ist es eben eins von den Büchern, welche sich selbst beurteilen, und den Kunstrichter sonach aller Mühe überheben. Ja es beurteilt sich nicht nur selbst, es stellt sich auch selbst dar.[100]

Rather than immunize the work from all criticism or commentary (as one might also guess), the novel's quality of self-representation seems for Schlegel to proleptically envisage a new form of criticism that continues the reflective dynamic that the work begins immanently. Though the "Kunstrichter" becomes useless when faced with Schlegel's work, the critic (who in a certain sense is also an artist and a poet) comes to take his place. The critic is tasked with a higher representational task that the *Kunstrichter*, who merely subsumes the work under a general set of rules. When he finally begins his exposition of *Kritik,* Schlegel differentiates it in several ways. *Kritik* is not equivalent to mere "Charakteristik," which communicates "was die Sache eigentlich sei, wo sie in der Welt stehe und stehn solle."[101] This is of course also a representation of the work, but it does not accomplish the transformative work that Schlegel insists is key to both the internal dynamic of Goethe's work (and thus its self-representation and self-judgement) and to true criticism. As I take it, this is because the *Welt* in which the characteristic places the work is no different than the social and historical world in which it initially appears – it thereby only

[99] "dieses schlechthin neue und einzige Buch, welches man nur aus sich selbst verstehen lernen kann, nach einem aus Gewohnheit und Glauben, aus zufälligen Erfahrungen und willkürlichen Foderungen zusammengesetzten und entstandnen Gattungsbegriff beurteilen; das ist, als wenn ein Kind Mond und Gestirne mit der Hand greifen und in sein Schächtelchen packen will" (Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 133).
[100] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 133-134.
[101] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 140.

solidifies a "Wahrnehmung" of the work, as Schlegel puts it, but does not expand or modify its range or the context of its intelligibility.[102]

The true critic on the other hand "[will] das schon Gebildete noch einmal bilden […]; er wird das Werk ergänzen, verjüngern, neu gestalten," a practice that echoes precisely the work's shifting paradigm of *Bildung*.[103] The critic must thereby carry on the work's internal reflective dynamic, in the sense that Walter Benjamin canonized as immanent criticism in his dissertation on Romanticism.[104] On the other hand, as Schlegel contends, the work must be divided into pieces and related to the highest possible unity, the "Weltall":

> Er [der Dichter und Künstler] wird das Ganze nur in Glieder und Massen und Stücke teilen, nie in seine ursprünglichen Bestandteile zerlegen, die in Beziehung auf das Werk tot sind, weil sie nicht mehr Einheiten derselben Art wie das Ganze enthalten, in Beziehung auf das Weltall allerdings lebendig und Glieder oder Massen desselben sein könnten. Auf solche bezieht der gewöhnliche Kritiker den Gegenstand seiner Kunst, und muß daher seine lebendige Einheit unvermeidlich zerstören, ihn bald in seine Elemente zersetzen, bald selbst nur als ein Atom einer größern Masse betrachten.[105]

As I take it, Schlegel's dizzying turns of phrase here are intended to demonstrate that the status of parts (which he designates through a proliferating vocabulary of *Glieder, Massen, Stücke, Bestandteile, Elemente,* and *Atom*) is fundamentally contingent, and the critic has the ability to place parts into new and different relations to various sorts of wholes (moving from *das Werk* to *das Weltall* or *größere Massen*).[106] Schlegel here clearly differentiates between two sorts of

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[102] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 140. For the same reason, Schlegel also discourages "eine bloße Darstellung des Eindrucks," which he likens to bad descriptive poetry and calls "überflüssig" (2: 134). One could go even further and suggest that the sense of *Welt* as the ordinary world – the "worldly" world – is consciously kept distinct from the Romantic aesthetic conception of *Welt* (the difference between the two is signaled primarily by the contextual framing and tone).
[103] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 140.
[104] Benjamin, *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik*, 66.
[105] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 140-141.
[106] It is worth noting here that whether parts are understood as organic *Glieder* or arbitrary *Massen* is a matter of perspective: they might be *Glieder* in relation to one whole, and *Massen* in relation to another. In line with his thinking on the arabesque (which continually transgresses structure-ornament distinctions), he here challenges the stability of mereological divisions by conceiving of them as perspective-bound.

critics: the ordinary critic on the one hand, and the poetic critic ("der Dichter und Künstler") on the other. The ordinary critic destroys the "lebendige Einheit" of the work by *either* scientifically dissecting it into its "ursprüngliche Bestandteile," *or* placing it in relation to a "größere Masse" as a mere atom. This is to say, the ordinary critic *chooses between* dividing up the work on the one hand (i.e., demonstrating "how it works" – its internal structure), and situating it in a greater context on the other (as I take it, relating it to a specific but finite concept). Neither of these actions constitutes a renewed *Bildung* of the work, though both go beyond a mere reproduction of the work's impression in the world in which it already appears (the characteristic).

To engage in a truly renewed *Bildung*, the poetic critic reconceives the parts of the work as living (*lebendig*) parts of the *Weltall* – a term that Schlegel of course never defines. Walter Benjamin explores the possible implications of this statement in his *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik in der deutschen Romantik*, albeit in a somewhat theological, and perhaps overly dialectical vein: "Die Kritik opfert um des Einen Zusammenhanges willen das Werk gänzlich."[107] For Benjamin, the *Weltall* is basically a single "Zusammenhang," which he aligns with the Idea of Art as a

[107] Benjamin, *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik*, 80. I am sidestepping Benjamin's highly dialectical interpretation of the irony of Romantic criticism, which he argues attempts to make the work indestructible precisely through the destructive process of criticism. In my evaluation, the tenor of his interpretation gives away the fact that it contributes more to Benjamin's own theory of indestructibility (which is carried on in his *Trauerspiel* book) than it does to a reconstruction of early Romantic literary theory. Perhaps this is Benjamin's own attempt at a continued *Bildung* of Schlegel's concept of criticism. I include the relevant quotation here to give the general impression of Benjamin's argument: "Die bestimmte Form des einzelnen Werkes, die man als Darstellungsform bezeichnen möge, wird das Opfer ironischer Zersetzung. Über ihn aber reißt die Ironie einen Himmel ewiger Form, die Idee der Formen, auf, die man die absolute Form nennen mag, und sie erweist das Überleben des Werkes, das aus dieser Sphäre sein unzerstörbares Bestehen schöpft, nachdem die empirische Form, der Ausdruck seiner isolierten Reflexion, von ihr verzehrt wurde. Die Ironisierung der Darstellungsform ist gleichsam der Sturm, der den Vorhang vor der transzendentalen Ordnung der Kunst aufhebt und diese und in ihr das unmittelbare Bestehen des Werkes als eines Mysteriums enthüllt. […] es ist ein Mysterium der Ordnung, Offenbarung seiner absoluten Abhängigkeit von der Idee der Kunst, seines ewigen unzerstörbaren Aufgehobenseins in derselben. […] Sie stellt den paradoxen Versuch dar, am Gebilde noch durch Abbruch zu bauen: im Werke selbst seine Beziehung auf die Idee zu demonstrieren" (81).

"Reflexionsmedium" and a continuum of forms. As a counter to Fichte's subjective Absolute, it is a purely formal, self-reflexive/self-referential network that has no relationship to ontology:

> Methodisch beruht die gesamte romantische Kunsttheorie auf der Bestimmung des absoluten Reflexionsmediums als Kunst, genauer gesagt als der Idee der Kunst. Da das Organ der künstlerischen Reflexion die Form ist, so ist die Idee der Kunst definiert als das Reflexionsmedium der Formen. In diesem hängen alle Darstellungsformen stetig zusammen, gehen in einander über und vereinigen sich zur absoluten Kunstform, welche mit der Idee der Kunst identisch ist. Die romantische Idee der Einheit der Kunst liegt also in der Idee eines Kontinuums der Formen.[108]

Benjamin relates this idea to the notion of romantic *Universalpoesie*, which he argues is "die Idee der Poesie selbst; sie ist das Kontinuum der Kunstformen."[109] For Benjamin, reflection is a purely formal process that occurs within works of art: it is not subjective or ontological at all but constitutes an "Ich-freie Reflexion" that occurs purely within the medium of art and is actualized in the form(s) of individual works.[110] This interpretation of Schlegel's concept of *Kritik* resonates with my own claims insofar as it captures the status of works of art (or individual aspects of them) as individual nodes within a larger network of reflection, which Benjamin calls a medium (though my emphasis is on the *possibility* of connectibility and further reflection – and thus the processual dynamism of reflection). For Benjamin, Romantic poetry and criticism constitute an attempt to connect works of art to one another and to thereby intensify and transform poetic, formal reflection itself into ever-shifting forms. In relation to Schlegel's essay, this set of claims is corroborated by the fact that Schlegel considers Goethe's treatment of Hamlet (and thus an intertextual movement or *Übergang* from one work to another) in *Wilhelm Meister* as the highest form of *Kritik*. As Schlegel states, Goethe's "Ansicht des *Hamlet* ist nicht sowohl Kritik als hohe

[108] Benjamin, *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik*, 82.
[109] Benjamin, *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik*, 83.
[110] Benjamin, *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik*, 35.

Poesie. Und was kann wohl anders entstehn als ein Gedicht, wenn ein Dichter als solcher ein Werk der Dichtkunst anschaut und darstellt?"[111] In this line of thought, only the poet is a true critic, and only a poetic work can engage in a truly "organic" renewed *Bildung* of a work. Though the world of Goethe's work is fundamentally different than that of Shakespeare's (which Schlegel describes as "einen verwilderten Garten der lüsternen Sünde"), particular similarities nevertheless draw the two works together: the "retardierende Natur" of both, which (significantly) becomes part of the theory of the novel for Goethe, and the "Geist der Betrachtung und der Rückkehr in sich selbst," which is characteristic of Wilhelm's subjective disposition.[112] By drawing these aspects of Shakespeare's work into his own, Goethe remakes *Hamlet* as part of a new work of art, situating it in his own aesthetic world as both the poetic subject and form that allow Wilhelm to reach the pinnacle of his theatrical *Bildung*. As Schlegel writes in the *Gespräch über die Poesie*, true criticism can make "jede andre selbstständige Gestalt der Poesie" and "die Blüte und der Kern fremder Geister" into "Nahrung und Same für seine eigne Fantasie."[113] This sort of remaking of a canonical work into material for another would align with what Benjamin calls a "Kontinuum der Kunstformen," insofar as it creates a transition – and thus also continuity – between individual works through a process of aesthetic transformation. Since this *Kontinuum* cannot be represented in itself, it appears only in these concrete instances of formal reflection and transformation; the role of a critic like Schlegel is to draw these together in a higher-level theoretical reflection on art.

[111] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 140.
[112] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 139-140. Not to mention the internal doubleness Schlegel finds in both works, but which does not appear in his discussion of *Kritik*.
[113] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 284.

Conclusion – *Universalpoesie* and the *Universum*

Though Benjamin's theory is lucid and productive, I am skeptical that what he calls the "Kontinuum der Kunstformen" can be equated with Schlegel's *Weltall* or *Universum,* and thus also with the Romantic project of *progressive Universalpoesie.* His interpretation raises the question of how a purely formalistic conception of art as a self-referential system can "reflect" a world, especially given that both Goethe and Romantics like Schlegel make the world-like (and heterocosmic) quality of art an explicit theme in their literary theory and practice. Winfried Menninghaus, who takes Benjamin's theory to its structuralist-poststructuralist apex, asks a similar question:

> Daß das virtuell unendliche Spiel poetischer Reflexion in Theorie und literaturkritischer Praxis der Romantiker selbst zum (absoluten) 'Gehalt' der Kunst avanciert, dieser Befund beantwortet noch nicht per se die Frage, wie der absolute Reflexionszusammenhang – mit Benjamins Worten – als 'erfüllt' im Sinne einer intensiven Darstellung von 'Welt' gelten kann (I 35). Oder anders formuliert: wie kann das musikalisch-grammatische Spiel der Selbstreflexion trotz oder besser kraft seiner Immanenz eine 'unendliche Fülle' (S 12, 377ff.) in sich bannen, statt nur 'leerzulaufen' und gleichzeitig diese 'leere Selbstbespiegelung' als das Eins und Alles der Kunst auszugeben?[114]

Even if we do not posit an absolute self-enclosure of language, the play of differences alone does not make a world, and does not account for the "Welthaftigkeit" of Romantic reflection.[115] In my estimation, both Benjamin and Menninghaus fail to sufficiently take into account the Romantics' focus on the (hetero)cosmic qualities of aesthetic illusion. The point of connecting a work to the *Weltall* in the act of criticism consists in relating the one work not only to other poetic works, a poetic tradition, and so forth, along the lines of a critical intertextual model, but also in unbounding the poetic work into a larger imagined cosmos in which poetry and life, cosmos and

[114] Menninghaus, *Unendliche Verdopplung*, 196.
[115] Menninghaus, *Unendliche Verdopplung*, 151.

heterocosm, reflect, and may even be identified with another as themselves reflections of a higher sphere.[116] Importantly, the worldlikeness of a work is represented by both Schlegel and Goethe as an effect of an aesthetic illusion and a subjective wish to immerse oneself in a world of the imagination, to live in a reality of beautiful form, as Wilhelm does in his theatrical heterocosm. In this context, the "differential" quality of poetic worlds, i.e., heterocosms, is not only a function of the differentiation intrinsic to the system of signs (i.e., the Saussurean model), but consistently connects this to the differential relationship between signs and the realities the subject thinks and imagines itself to be a part of. Because *Poesie* is fundamentally heterocosmic, the lines of transmission from poetry to a greater sense of world, beyond, above, and between poetry and an "underlying reality" are not direct, but play with the illusory quality of poetry, using it as a means of theorizing the entanglement of reflection and that which is constitutively ungraspable in reflection.

Schlegel and his romantic contemporaries proceeded from the premise that poetry and the world share an inner affinity that is itself poetic, and which points to a higher *Zusammenhang* between Being and reflection that can only be desired, but not grasped. This potential for relatability is articulated in their conception of an all-encompassing *Universum* (which is another name for reflection, but one that rhetorically relates reflection to something beyond itself, the idea of an underlying reality). As Schlegel writes in the opening of the *Gespräch über die Poesie*,

> Unermeßlich und unerschöpflich ist die Welt der Poesie wie der Reichtum der belebenden Natur an Gewächsen, Tieren und Bildungen jeglicher Art, Gestalt und Farbe. Selbst die künstlichen Werke oder natürlichen Erzeugnisse, welche die Form und den Namen von Gedichten tragen, wird nicht leicht auch der umfassendste alle umfassen.

[116] I here have in mind the "höhere Sfäre" that Novalis refers to in his *Fichte-Studien*, between Being and Non-Being, between the Absolute and reflection, etc., which is also identified with the idea of *Schweben.*

> Und was sind sie gegen die formlose und bewußtlose Poesie, die sich in der Pflanze regt, im Lichte strahlt, im Kinde lächelt, in der Blüte der Jugend schimmert, in der liebenden Brust der Frauen glüht? – Diese aber ist die erste, ursprüngliche, ohne die es gewiß keine Poesie der Worte geben würde. Ja wir alle, die wir Menschen sind, haben immer und ewig keinen andern Gegenstand und keinen andern Stoff aller Tätigkeit und aller Freude, als das eine Gedicht der Gottheit, dessen Teil und Blüte auch wir sind – die Erde. Die Musik des unendlichen Spielwerks zu vernehmen, die Schönheit des Gedichts zu verstehen, sind wir fähig, weil auch ein Teil des Dichters, ein Funke seines schaffenden Geistes in uns lebt …[117]

The plenitude of an aestheticized nature here functions as the material, a simile, and the origin and inspiration for an endlessly proliferating poetry. Poetry is not identical to nature, but it articulates the human's manner of participation in the world: humanity delights in "das eine Gedicht der Gottheit, dessen Teil und Blüte auch wir sind – die Erde," precisely because it perceives the world poetically, as fundamentally in touch with the human imagination. Through and in poetry, one could say, the human being conceives of itself as a part of the world. This tautological *a priori* of Romantic poetry is a sort of belief in the unity of humanity and the larger world, and of poetic reflection and the very condition of reflection that connects it to an ontological reality, the Absolute. Conceived of as *progressive Universalpoesie*, Romantic poetry takes this relationship into account, making it a theme of its own reflective procedure. As Schlegel puts it in the 116th *Athenäum*-fragment, Romantic poetry unites and mixes "Kunstpoesie und Naturpoesie," and poeticizes "das Leben und die Gesellschaft."[118] It mediates and transgresses the boundaries between art, criticism, and that which is poetic but artless; it therefore extends "bis zu dem Seufzer, dem Kuß, den das dichtende Kind aushaucht in kunstlosen Gesang." It does this through the act of poetic reflection:

> Nur sie [die romantische Poesie] kann gleich dem Epos ein Spiegel der ganzen umgebenden Welt, ein Bild des Zeitalters werden. Und doch kann auch sie am meisten

[117] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 285.
[118] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 182 (#116).

> zwischen dem Dargestellten und dem Darstellenden, frei von allem realen und idealen Interesse auf den Flügeln der poetischen Reflexion in der Mitte schweben, diese Reflexion immer wieder potenzieren und wie in einer endlosen Reihe von Spiegeln vervielfachen.[119]

Poetry, Schlegel contends, floats in the middle between the representing and the represented, the real and the ideal (as he puts it here) like the transparent *Schleier* that lies between Wilhelm and the world of his dreams: it both makes the interplay between these worlds possible and holds them apart by standing between them, infinitely potentiating its forms of reflexivity. Schlegel articulates a similar idea in Fragment #238, where he calls Transzendentalpoesie "eine Poesie, deren eins und alles das Verhältnis des Idealen und des Realen ist […]. Sie beginnt als Satire mit der absoluten Verschiedenheit des Idealen und Realen, schwebt als Elegie in der Mitte, und endigt als Idylle mit der absoluten Identität beider."[120] Such a poetry, he contends, should represent this relationship within itself precisely as Goethe's work does, "in jeder ihrer Darstellungen sich selbst mit darstellen, und überall zugleich Poesie und Poesie der Poesie sein."[121]

As I am arguing, the self-reflexivity of romantic *Universalpoesie* is not a pure self-reflection on the *form* of art, but simultaneously constitutes a reflection on the relationship between reflection (which constitutes "world" as a sphere of reflection) and its ontological ground (the reality of world). The only "proof" of *Universalpoesie* – if there is one at all – lies in its ability to self-perpetuate, in other words to maintain the pleasure of the aesthetic illusion and the sense of harmony with the world. In this sense it represents a qualified recuperation of Goethe's images of the *Luftschloss* and *Gemälde auf Nebelgrund*, since it draws its life from an

[119] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 182 (#116).
[120] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 204 (#238).
[121] Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 204 (#238).

aesthetic effect and not from a particular self-generated structure or firmly anchored set of poetic postulates. It is for this reason that the Romantics place such strong emphasis on love as the connective tissue of their universal poetry: Novalis calls it "das Unum des Universums," and Schlegel begins his *Gespräch über die Poesie* with a meditation on love: "Alle Gemüter die sie lieben, befreundet und bindet Poesie mit unauflöslichen Banden. […] Jede Muse sucht und findet die andre, und alle Ströme der Poesie fließen zusammen in das allgemeine große Meer."[122] As I show in the following chapter, in his novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, which is very much a reply to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, Novalis makes the idea of love itself into the symbol for the desire to grant ontological reality to reflection.

[122] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 248; Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 284.

Chapter 3: Universalizing the Family in Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*

> Die Poësie bildet die *schöne* Gesellschaft, oder das *innere Ganze* – die Weltfamilie – die schöne Haushaltung des Universi […]. Durch *die Poësie* wird die höchste Sympathie und Coactivitaet – die innigste, herrlichste Gemeinschaft wircklich.[1]

No work of the German *Frühromantik* engages in a poetic transformation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* more intensively than Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, which channels the structure of heterocosmic desire exemplified by Goethe's protagonist, Wilhelm, into an "Apotheose" of Romantic poetry as *Universalpoesie*.[2] In this sense, it accomplishes what Friedrich Schlegel poses as the task of the poetic critic, namely the dissolution of the work into a larger "Weltall," or universe. This "Weltall" is not the "Idee der Kunst" in an abstract sense, but a concrete poetic artifact (a novel) that constructs itself as a poetic world, or rather, a collection of interconnected, interpenetrating worlds.[3] Whether Novalis saw his novel specifically as a fulfillment of Schlegel's task of poetic criticism is up for debate, but he certainly conceived *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* as a rewriting of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*: not only does its motif of a curiously harmonious poetic education echo Goethe's novel, but Novalis intended to publish the novel with the same publisher, title layout, and typeface as *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. Due to his death at the age of twenty-nine, in March of 1801, Novalis was neither able to finish writing the novel nor see it published in this format. In 1802, the novel-fragment *Heinrich von*

[1] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 372-73.
[2] Novalis, *NS*, 4: 323. Letter to Ludwig Tieck from February 23, 1800.
[3] In this sense it instantiates the idea of a Romantic *Universum*. Here and throughout the dissertation, I treat *Weltall* and *Universum* as synonyms, in keeping with the way they were used by the writers themselves. For a discussion of the "Idee der Kunst," which derives from Walter Benjamin's interpretation of the Romantic Absolute as a *Reflexionsmedium*.

Ofterdingen appeared in print for the first time under the editorship of his friends Friedrich Schlegel and Ludwig Tieck, with a different publisher.[4]

Though he was initially an enthusiastic reader of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* and particularly admired its style, Novalis's evaluation of Goethe's novel took a remarkable turn for the worse while he created the plans for *Heinrich von Ofterdingen.* In his private notes and a letter to Tieck from early 1800, Novalis scathingly dismisses Goethe's work as "ein Candide gegen die Poesie," a "poëtisirte bürgerliche und häusliche Geschichte," and a "Wallfahrt nach dem Adelsdiplom."[5] As I understand it, Novalis comes to his sudden dismissal of Goethe's novel while attempting to conceive of the role of family structures in the Romantic project of *Universalpoesie,* and specifically his own *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. Though as Friedrich Kittler has shown, the nuclear, bourgeois family plays a central role in the representation of the erotic dynamics of poetic reception and creation in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (an aspect that Novalis takes up in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*),[6] Goethe's shortcoming vis-à-vis the romantic conception of universal poetry lies in his subordination of aesthetic pleasure to the project of ethical human self-realization in the world. In order to attain an ethical standpoint at the end of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre,* Wilhelm must overcome the ego-centrism of his heterocosmic wish, and recognize a world beyond his own self, which is symbolized by his son, Felix, and the selflessness of his soon-to-be wife, Natalie. While Novalis initially idealizes Natalie, he becomes disillusioned with the world-view represented by the Society of the Tower, the larger extended

[4] Goethe's publisher was Unger, and Novalis' novel appeared in his posthumous works with the publisher Georg Andreas Reimer. On the publication details of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, see Paul Kluckhohn and Richard Samuel, introduction to *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, *NS* 1: 183-192, at 186.
[5] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 639 and 646.
[6] See Kittler, "Über die Sozialisation Wilhelm Meisters."

family into which Wilhelm becomes incorporated at the end of the novel.[7] In contrast to Schlegel, who contrasts the Classical and Romantic formal paradigms of the novel, Novalis's final critique of Goethe hinges on what he sees as the latter's privileging of "Oeconomie," a base, material, instrumental, and socially-determined conception of the familial *oikos*, over "Poesie" in the novel.[8] As Novalis remarks, Wilhelm's final arrival in an "economical" family calls his entire theatrical journey into question: "Sonderbar, daß ihm seine Zukunft, in seiner Lage, unter dem Bilde des *Theaters* erschien. Wilhelm soll oeconomisch werden durch die *oeconomische* Familie, in die er kommt."[9] For Novalis, the economical family (the Society of the Tower) stands in for a conception of the world at large as a space that humanity, like the Oheim or the Abbé, must learn to govern and form according to a higher vision, the antithesis, therefore, of the theater as a space of attraction and unbounding of the self through illusion.

Novalis's response in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* is not to eliminate the family or even downplay it as a site from which poetic fantasy and heterocosmic desire emerge, but to work toward an increased identification of world, poetry, and the family, and even a poetic conception of economy.[10] Rather than oppose poetry (as the site of heterocosmic desire and ego-centric

[7] For example, Novalis compares of the queen of Prussia (Luise) to Goethe's Natalie in his published collection *Glauben und Liebe*. Novalis, *NS*, 2: 498.
[8] E.g., "Künstlerischer Atheïsmus ist der Geist des Buchs. Sehr viel Oeconomie – mit prosaïschen, wohlfeilen [sic] Stoff poëtischer Effect erreicht" (Novalis, *NS*, 3: 639). "Es ist eine Satyre auf die Poësie, Religion, etc. Aus Stroh und Hobelspänen ein wolschmeckendes Gericht, ein Götterbild zusammengesezt. Hinten wird alles Farçe. Die Oeconomische Natur ist die Wahre – *Übrig bleibende*" (*NS*, 3: 646).
[9] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 639.
[10] Before his excoriating critique of Goethe began to take hold, Novalis had explicitly admired Goethe's Romantic style in terms of an *aesthetic* rather than instrumental economy. See Novalis, *NS*, 3: 326. As Gabriel Trop remarks, "*Heinrich von Ofterdingen* does not critique economy so much as *romanticize* it: to rob the discourse of its solid ground by putting it back out to sea." See Gabriel Trop, "Transcendental Loosening and Hyperbolic Procedure: The Movements of the Absolute in Novalis and Hölderlin," 8, accessed on May 25, 2023, https://www.academia.edu/37073279/Transcendental_Loosening_and_Hyperbolic_Procedure_The_Movements_of_the_Absolute_in_Novalis_and_H%C3%B6lderlin; this article is an English translation (by Gabriel Trop) of an article originally published in French: Gabriel Trop, "Fléchissement transcendantal et procédé hyperbolique: Les mouvements de l'absolu chez Novalis et Hölderlin," in *Arts et Sciences du Romantisme Allemand*, ed. Daniel Lancereau and André Stanquennec (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2018), 153-180.

Schwärmerei) to the economical family (as the space of human self-realization), Novalis transforms the family into a poetic structure replete with erotic dimensions.[11] The family becomes a figure for poetic reflexivity rather than a salutary opposite to it. Heterocosmic desire is thereby also no longer represented as ego-centric, but rather as closely (and positively) entangled with familial and erotic relationships. On all of the novel's levels of diegetic reality, families provide frames for each embedded (heterocosmic) narrative and dialogue in the novel, as well as structuring the primary level of the diegesis (Heinrich's journey).[12] Narratively speaking, the family serves as a means of placing characters in particular relationships (familial roles) that are perpetually reconfigured through love, marriage, and procreation.[13] In this sense, the family forms a relational structure much like poetry (conceived of as reflection) and world (conceived of as a unity of the manifold or a sphere of reflection). It is along these lines that I here analyze Novalis's progressive universalization of the family and poetry in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*.

The family's universal potential is already signaled in Novalis's conception of *Poesie* as that which forms the *Weltfamilie* (the epigraph to this chapter), which is part of his 1797 studies

[11] Novalis's idiosyncratic rethinking of the family as a *form* in relation to Goethe's novel even prior to the writing of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* is evident throughout his notes: for example, in his description of Goethe's style in the first book of *Wilhelm Meister* through the *analogy* of a well-ordered bourgeois family, but without explicit comment on the actual depicted family (*NS*, 3: 326); and his organization of the characters in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* into three distinct "Familien" that have nothing to do with the characters' actual familial relations (*NS*, 3: 312). In both of these cases, family operates as an analogy for poetic structure.

[12] One can, therefore, speak of an "absolute family" in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, a phrase I borrow from Friedrich Kittler, but analyze differently. See Friedrich Kittler, "Die Irrwege des Eros und die 'absolute Familie': Psychoanalytischer und diskursanalytischer Kommentar zu Klingsohrs Märchen in Novalis' Heinrich von Ofterdingen," in *Psychoanalytische und psychopathologische Literaturinterpretation*, ed. Bernd Urban and Winfried Kudszus (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1981), 421-470.

[13] As Heidi Schlipphacke has shown, eighteenth-century writers (Goethe foremost among them) conceived of the family as a constellational approach to portraying individuals, an aesthetic mode of grouping that produces individual roles relationally; I take Novalis to continue this approach, but in a much more radical sense. Heidi Schlipphacke, *The Aesthetics of Kinship: Form and Family in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2023), 2.

of the Dutch thinker François Hemsterhuis (1721-1790). For Novalis, the familial triad (the nuclear family) is a small and private world that, in its separateness from the public sphere, mirrors language's status as "eine kleine Welt in Zeichen und Tönen."[14] (We may also remark that the triadic form of the family mirrors the triadic form of reflection already present in Novalis's *Fichte-Studien*.[15]) If language, however, is a small world exclusively theorized as *outside* the world (a heterocosm), the family is a structure of world that can exist both outside of diegetic reality (e.g., in embedded narratives) and inside of the narrative world, as the structure of the primary level of the diegesis (Heinrich's home family). None of these worlds is completely isolated. Rather than presenting narcissistic, self-isolating heterocosmic desire as an obstacle to proper family formation (as Goethe does), Novalis frames love as an analogue to poetic reflection, portraying both family and poetry as parallel and mutually reinforcing, mutually reflective structures of world in the novel. Indeed, love and poetry not only constitute the small worlds of language and the family, but they also serve as means of reproducing and unbounding them. Just as poetry satisfies "de[n] ursprüngliche[n] Trieb unseres Daseyns" by revealing that which is outside the world, within it, the idea of the *Weltfamilie* entails an expansion and universalization of the familial microcosm (by both physical and symbolic reproduction) and the formation of a self-reproducing cosmic-poetic-erotic *oikos*, which Novalis calls "die Schöne Haushaltung des Universi."[16] In this process, different versions of the "kleine

[14] I am here referring to Heinrich's definition of poetry in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, which I quoted in the previous chapter as an instance of the paradigm of heterocosmic desire: "Die Sprache […] ist wirklich eine kleine Welt in Zeichen und Tönen. Wie der Mensch sie beherrscht, so möchte er gern die große Welt beherrschen, und sich frei darin ausdrücken können. Und eben in dieser Freude, das, was außer der Welt ist, in ihr zu offenbaren, das tun zu können, was eigentlich der ursprüngliche Trieb unsers Daseins ist, liegt der Ursprung der Poesie" (Novalis, *NS*, 1: 287).

[15] See the introduction, pp. 22ff.

[16] As Schlipphacke notes, citing Lawrence Stone, the nuclear family is (ideologically speaking), increasingly walled off as "a social unit cut off from ties to kin and other extrafamilial networks" in the eighteenth century (*Aesthetics of*

Welt," understood as both familial and poetic worlds, become increasingly connected to one another. Their mutual reflections, superimpositions, and synthetic couplings embody the movement of a dynamic economy (or "Haushaltung") of infinite reflexivity – the poetic universe. Poetic and amorous relations, which parallel one another in the two forms of the "kleine Welt," are hereby united as the fabric of Novalis's Romantic *Universum,* which remains modeled on the triadic structure of the initial family, but expands endlessly, as one universal life-process. In this universal process, poetic reflection and procreation are two parallel means of producing thirds through a process of coupling in a movement that perpetually produces new worlds and families.

In this chapter, I identify and analyze two erotic and reflective modalities in the novel through which Novalis unfolds the process of familial universalization: 1) a suspended, controlled, or "balanced" form of desire, which is associated with reflections that never resolve into definitive correspondences; and 2) an "identifying" desire for total unification and commingling so extreme that it threatens to destroy selfhood and violate the boundaries of reflective separation. As I show, the balanced form of desire governs Heinrich's acts of poetic reception in the first part of the novel, building up the sense of *Erwartung* that gives it its title (and which is a reply to Goethe's portrayal of Wilhelm's false expectations of a new world). On the level of family structures, this modality corresponds to the maintenance of a stable familial world through the mother, who acts as the controlling instance for Heinrich's desire, preventing him from becoming attached to any worldly objects of desire other than her. The desire for total unification on the other hand, corresponds to the idea of crossing into a poetic world as well as

Kinship, 5). Novalis's key gambit in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* lies in the analogization, and increasing interpenetration, of worlds or families *within* the novel's primary world and small worlds or families *outside* it, such that the novel's entire sense of reality becomes heterocosmic and these boundaries begin to dissolve. In this sense, Novalis undermines the separation of the nuclear family while simultaneously mythologizing it.

the idea of sexual unification between two lovers (in this case, Heinrich and Mathilde). This second form of desire holds the threat of a conflation of the nonidentical, and of a destructive crossing of boundaries. As I however show, Novalis consistently portrays this form of desire as intensifying poetic reflection and producing offspring. In this sense, it always both relies on and produces non-identity in a manner that holds the idea of total unification at bay. As I argue, Novalis works toward an identification of these two forms of desire in the novel, especially in its second half, in the birth of Astralis, the child of Heinrich and Mathilde, which coincides with the advent of a new poetic world.

My reading of the novel is inspired by, but diverges in significant ways from one of the most influential interpretations of familial structures in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, and Novalis's works more broadly: Friedrich Kittler's analysis of Novalis's mythologization of the family as a structure of socialization.[17] Kittler's illumination of the universalizing role of the mother in the nuclear family (and of what is coded as incest with the mother) and his close reading of Klingsohr's fairy tale lay the groundwork for my analysis. In contrast to Kittler's approach, however, I focus on the family as a formal principle for the unity of the manifold (and the manifoldness of any unity), therefore not as a social entity but as a means by which Novalis portrays a transindividual form of poetic reflexivity – specifically by aligning it with love. I also primarily pursue the unfolding of the main plot in the novel (Heinrich's family) and discuss the embedded narratives, including Klingsohr's tale, only in passing. My method leads to different results than Kittler's. In his various readings of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, Kittler argues that the novel instantiates the movement from the pre-modern clan to the private nuclear family (which is

[17] This begins with Friedrich Kittler, "Über die Sozialisation Wilhelm Meisters"; Kittler expands his reading of Novalis, which is more of a footnote to Goethe in this earlier work, in "Die Irrwege des Eros" (1981).

governed by the mother), and thus also from exogamy to endogamy.[18] As I show, Novalis is more interested in a *coincidence* of endogamy and exogamy, and family and clan, than in privileging one over the other – it is only through this coincidence that the nuclear family can become the template for an entire poetic *Universum* (which thereby becomes both triad and clan).

This chapter is organized into two main sections according to the two erotic modalities I point to above. The first section is devoted to analyzing the idea of amorous equilibrium, reflection as non-coincidence, and the maintenance of cosmic and familial boundaries through the mother (somewhat similar to Kittler's analysis of endogamous relations). As I show in this section, Novalis's conception of suspended, balanced desire however also borrows from the thinking of François Hemsterhuis, whose philosophical dialogue "Alexis, ou sur l'age d'or" (1787), connects the idea of the control of desire (which Hemsterhuis terms *moralization*) to a theory of poetic reception, specifically in relation to the tale of the Golden Age. In Novalis's novel, Heinrich's desire for the blue flower is controlled not through his own agency, but through his mother's unconscious intervention. Through her love, which balances Heinrich's orientation toward the otherworldly, the mother maintains the family as a sphere from which Heinrich is not yet fully differentiated, and which seemingly prevents him from experiencing erotic attachments and complete recognitions in reflection. On the level of form, Novalis produces this sense of suspension by maintaining a strict separation between narrative causality and reflection (which is inspired by Goethe's narrative technique, analyzed by Friedrich Schlegel

[18] Kittler, "Die Irrwege des Eros," 442; See also Kittler's two essays, "Poet, Mother, Child: On the Romantic Invention of Sexuality," and ""*Heinrich von Ofterdingen* as Data Feed," chapters one and eight of *The Truth of the Technological World: Essays on the Genealogy of Presence*, trans. Erik Butler (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 1-16 and 99-121.

as the novel's spontaneous *Bildung*). Under this formal and affective regime, desire for a beloved, as well as the sense of a higher world, remains entirely subliminal as *Erwartung* or *Ahnung*.

In the second section of the chapter, I turn my attention to the ways in which Novalis transforms the family through the desire for total unification, which proceeds from a moment of recognition between lovers. In broader context, Novalis's depiction of this form of desire is influenced both by his thinking of the relationship between representation and the Absolute, and by the debate between Hemsterhuis and Herder on the relationship between love and selfhood. As I show, though ostensibly moving toward total unification, in *Die Erwartung* Novalis portrays the love between Heinrich and Mathilde as mediated in a number of different ways: through the image of the blue flower, but also through a handoff between parents in the context of a larger family household (in this configuration, endogamy and exogamy begin to coincide). Moreover, once symbolically and familially authenticated, Heinrich's and Mathilde's love becomes both reflectively and sexually productive in the transition to *Die Erfüllung*, giving rise to both offspring (in the form of Astralis) and to countless images, even a "neue Welt," as recorded in Astralis's poem, the opening to *Die Erfüllung*.[19] This sense of productivity, of sexual and reflective multiplication, challenges the idea of an underlying metaphysical unity, or rather portrays such a unity as intrinsically plural, heterogeneous, and even chaotic. As I argue, this sense of chaos and anarchy is symbolized by the idea of the clan, which serves as the complement to the absolute triad of Heinrich, Mathilde, and Astralis. The coexistence and even conflation of these two versions of the family demonstrates that if there is a familial (or

[19] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 318.

metaphysical) origin, this origin cannot be possessed or fixed, because it is always in tension with itself. It is only through this tension – which love and desire perpetually move across and animate – that new worlds can be born.

Section 1 – Amorous Equilibrium: Heterocosmic Reflexivity in the Mother-Sphere

Novalis first introduces his protagonist, Heinrich, to readers in a state of psychic peril, at risk of becoming not exactly like Goethe's Wilhelm Meister, but like Hyacinth, the protagonist of Novalis's fairy tale, "Hyacinth und Rosenblüthchen," who becomes consumed by a strange and alienating desire and eventually abandons both his beloved and his home after hearing the narratives of a visiting stranger.[20] Similarly, after hearing a stranger tell tales of a blue flower, Heinrich lies awake alone while his parents sleep, pondering his strange and powerful attraction to a mysterious flower that he has never seen. The blue flower, which enters into the novel's world as an entirely foreign transplant, threatens to disrupt Heinrich's sense of reality:

> So ist mir noch nie zu Muthe gewesen: es ist, als hätt' ich vorhin geträumt, oder ich wäre in eine andere Welt hinübergeschlummert; denn in der Welt, in der ich sonst lebte, wer hätte da sich um Blumen bekümmert, und gar von einer so seltsamen Leidenschaft für eine Blume hab' ich damals nie gehört.[21]

The blue flower here comes to stand uniquely and enigmatically for the alterity of the "andere Welt" of the stranger's tales, the aspect of its world order that makes it a heterocosm and not a mere imitation of Heinrich's lived reality.[22] It thereby becomes a metonym for a global and

[20] "Hyacinth ist ganz versessen auf seine Gespräche gewesen, und hat sich um nichts bekümmert […] [Er] hat einen ganz neuen Lebenswandel begonnen. Rosenblüthchen hat recht zum Erbarmen um ihn gethan, denn von der Zeit an hat er sich wenig aus ihr gemacht und ist immer für sich geblieben" (Novalis, *NS*, 1: 93).
[21] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 195.
[22] In its metonymic function in the narrative: in both cases, the cosmic-aesthetic effect, which Goethe calls the "Reiz des Ganzen," takes precedence over the definition of its individual parts. Yet whereas for Goethe this effect is diagnosed as an aesthetic deficiency (namely an inattention to detail, and a disregard for reality), Novalis makes it the basis of his novel's meditation on the role of alterity in the representation of cosmic unity.

undefined sense of a different world, or an alternative order of things. This premonition mirrors Wilhelm's sense of a "neue Welt" at the beginning of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*; however, the sense of alterity that Heinrich experiences is much more profound than Wilhelm's dream of founding a new German national theater hand-in-hand with his muse, Mariane. Even while it remains inarticulate and undefined, Novalis elevates Heinrich's desire for a different, unknown world as a potentially universal (or transcendent) form of desire, precisely because of its non-correspondence to reality. As Heinrich thinks to himself, "Nicht die Schätze sind es, die ein so unaussprechliches Verlangen in mir geweckt haben […]; fern ab liegt mir alle Habsucht: aber die blaue Blume sehn' ich mich zu erblicken."[23] Unlike the treasures also mentioned in the stranger's narratives, which arouse a baser but more recognizable form of desire (specifically *Habsucht*, a greed for possession), the blue flower gives rise to a "*seltsame* Leidenschaft" (emphasis mine): it has no obvious this-worldly value and cannot be possessed or fully incorporated into Heinrich's sense of his own self or world. The risk it poses to Heinrich is not the risk of falling into narcissism, but the opposite: a risk of total self-dispossession in a quest for an apparently imaginary entity, and by extension, of the loss of a connection to his own reality.

In the midst of this alienation, Heinrich's encounter with the blue flower gives rise to an equally mysterious yet profound sense of presence and familiarity that seems to contradict the flower's isolation from Heinrich's world. As Heinrich remarks, "mir ist seitdem alles viel bekannter."[24] Heinrich recalls legends of a speaking nature, and begins to feel (all in the space of this first night) "als wollten [die Thiere und Bäume und Felsen] allaugenblicklich anfangen [zu

[23] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 195.
[24] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 195.

sprechen], und als könnte ich es ihnen ansehen, was sie mir sagen wollten."[25] To Heinrich, the blue flower's world seems allied to a distant and legendary past in which humanity and nature were unified through a shared language. The strength of Heinrich's premonition is striking ("als könnte ich es ihnen ansehen"); it suggests a powerful wish to commune with nature, and, by extension, the blue flower.[26] This presentiment however also articulates a second-degree wish: not just to *see* the blue flower again, but to legitimize Heinrich's desire for it by imagining the "andere Welt" of the flower (which here appears as both nature and the world of legends and tales) united with his own. In this way, Heinrich's *heterocosmic* desire for an otherworldly entity gives rise to a desire for a higher cosmic unity (an *Universum*, one could say) that would unite his world with that of the blue flower. Such a union would both explain and legitimize Heinrich's mysterious attraction to the blue flower and allow him to realize his wish to see it again. In the initial moments of the narrative, this higher unity is not given – it presents itself in the form of a wish that leads him into a purely interior dream-world.

Cosmic unity comes to Heinrich the next morning, upon his awakening, and removes him from the state of peril in which readers first encounter him. Heinrich's mother awakens him from his dream of the blue flower and reinscribes his heterocosmic fantasy within the endogamous love relations of the familial *oikos*. The mother's embraces (an ongoing motif in the narrative, beginning in the first chapter) produce, albeit in a limited way, the sense of cosmic unity

[25] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 195.

[26] Hyacinth seems to think similarly to Heinrich, though Novalis does not give readers access to his interiority at the beginning of the tale. Hyacinth however acts on his desire to commune with nature (which is already speaking to him, too): "Höhlen und Wälder waren sein liebster Aufenthalt, und dann sprach er immer fort mit Thieren und Vögeln, mit Bäumen und Felsen, natürlich kein vernünftiges Wort, lauter närrisches Zeug zum Todtlachen. Er blieb aber immer mürrisch und ernsthaft, ungeachtet sich das Eichhörnchen, die Meerkatze, der Papagay und der Gimpel alle Mühe gaben ihn zu zerstreuen, und ihn auf den richtigen Weg zu weisen" (Novalis, *NS*, 1: 91). Instead of recognizing what is in front of him (Rosenblüthchen, toward whom all of nature points him), Hyacinth travels far away from his home to the goddess Isis to find what he already had at home.

Heinrich longs for while he lies awake at night when the novel opens, wondering about the blue flower. After the flower's marvelous phallic growth and transformation in his dream, which culminates with the appearance of a face in its calyx, Heinrich's dream is interrupted:

> Sein süßes Staunen wuchs mit der sonderbaren Verwandlung, als ihn plötzlich die Stimme seiner Mutter weckte, und er sich in der elterlichen Stube fand, die schon die Morgensonne vergoldete. Er war zu entzückt, um unwillig über diese Störung zu seyn; vielmehr bot er seiner Mutter freundlich guten Morgen und erwiederte ihre herzliche Umarmung.[27]

Precisely at the erotic climax of Heinrich's dream (a moment of astounding defamiliarization), the mother's voice draws Heinrich into the familiar space of his familial home, the "elterliche Stube." Though she interrupts his marvelous dream, the mother's voice, along with her bodily embrace, are presented formally as continuations of the "Verwandlung" of the flower's center into a face; these transformations coincide with the transition between the world of the dream and the primary level of diegetic reality.[28] On an affective level, the mother allows Heinrich to transfer his intense feelings from the flower onto her (in this sense, she also symbolically corresponds to it), but she thereby also defuses his sexual excitement (*Entzückung*), which mellows into a more sociable "Freundlichkeit" that mirrors her "Herzlichkeit." While she functions as an ontological origin to which Heinrich perpetually returns, his mother (and particularly her body[29]) therefore also functions as a buffer for Heinrich's desire, which is transferred onto her but never becomes incestuous.[30] In this sense, the mother both maintains and

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[27] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 197.

[28] The continued sense of transformation past the space of the dream has a sheerly coincidental quality (coordinated by the mere simultaneity of an "als") that is certainly a nod to Goethe's style of presentation in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, where chance interruptions similarly carry over into suggestive reflections. I discuss this technique in greater detail below.

[29] On the function of the maternal body in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, see Alice Kuzniar, "Hearing Woman's Voices in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*," *PMLA* 107, no. 5 (1992): 1196-1207.

[30] This does not mean that she is not an erotic object for him. As Kittler contends, the mother and father in the novel represent Ginnistan and the Scribe from Klingsohr's fairy tale (in addition to the mother and father from the tale),

controls Heinrich's heterocosmic desire in tandem with his love for her: she enables a continuity between distinct orders of reality (preventing them from becoming isolated – Hyacinth's problem), but thereby also forecloses their synthesis or conflation, which would result in a lapse into *Schwärmerei* (Wilhelm Meister's problem), and, as her moderation of Heinrich's desire implies, a transgression of the prohibition on incest.[31] As Benjamin Specht notes, analyzing the *Schwärmer* motif in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, the novel is missing the one "wesentliche Bedingung […]: eine Diskrepanz zwischen geistig-subjektiver Projektion und der vorfindlichen Wirklichkeit."[32]

While she implicitly represents a culmination of the dream of the blue flower (another of its transformations), the mother more explicitly acts to translate Heinrich's vision of the blue flower into the discursive and libidinal space of the familial *oikos* (specifically as a reflection *of* it). She helps the father, who had insisted that "Träume sind Schäume," to recall his own dream of a magical flower, which he reads as related to the passion through which Heinrich was conceived.[33] Heinrich's mother thereby not only sutures the relationship between the flower's

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but they do so in word, and not in action: "So entsprächen die Eltern im Roman exakt dem Schreiber und der Ginnistan, wenn sie die Schrift bzw. die Phantasie nicht nur in Worten verträten. Denn auf Handlungsebene ist der Vater so wenig Schreiber, daß er ein Handwerk ausübt, und die Mutter so wenig inzestuöse Phantasie, daß sie auf der Reise nach Augsburg, die der Mondreise von Eros und Ginnistan entspricht, folgenlos mit Heinrich in einem Zimmer schläft" (Kittler, "Die Irrwege des Eros," 449). Kittler's observations on the distinction between word and action in the novel (of which he primarily analyzes the first half) correspond to what I describe below as the lack of narrative causality exerted by the various reflections Heinrich encounters throughout the first half of the novel – a state of affairs that changes when he meets Mathilde.

[31] Heinrich's state of suspension is therefore a complete inverse to Wilhelm's *Schwärmerei*. Wilhelm conflates the heterocosm and reality, and thereby becomes cut off from others, living in an isolated world of his own illusions. Heinrich, by contrast, never conflates distinct realities thanks to the intervention of his mother, and remains integrated into his social world, becoming an ideal receiver of heterocosmic discourses that continually expand his latent sense of *Ahnung*.

[32] Benjamin Specht, "Die Aufhebung des Schwärmers: Zum Wandel eines anthropologischen Konzepts bei Novalis," *KulturPoetik* 9, no. 1 (2019): 45-67, at 64.

[33] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 198. Notably, in the father's dream, the mother (his love object) and the blue(?) flower are held separate from one another in a fashion that mirrors the separation between narrative causality and the various reflections (heterocosmic and familial) that are embedded in the narrative, until Heinrich meets Mathilde. I discuss this separation in greater detail below.

heterocosm and the small world of the family (herself symbolizing this relationship), but specifically helps to situate Heinrich's heterocosmic desire as a reflection of a familial structure of generation. As the father remarks, "Mutter, Heinrich kann die Stunde nicht verläugnen, durch die er in der Welt ist."[34]

In the first chapter of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, Novalis presents his readers with an image of poetic and amorous equilibrium, which is established by the sense of erotic transferrability between heterocosmic desire and familial love. Heinrich's desire for the blue flower, which threatened to withdraw him from the world in the opening passage (where we encounter him in nocturnal solitude) is balanced by his mother's love, which draws him back into the familial home, the triad of mother, father, and child. The centrifugal pull of Heinrich's heterocosmic desire is balanced by the centripetal force of love, which Novalis calls "das Unum des Universums" in his fragments, and which is embodied by the mother in the novel.[35] Through the unexplained entanglement of the mother and the flower, and of poetic reflection and familial generation, Novalis however avoids instating a dualism between these tendencies; rather, he portrays them quite suggestively as two sides of one libidinal and poetic economy, the internal laws of which are not fully apparent, but are suggested through the various coincidences that allow Heinrich's desire to remain balanced. Together with Heinrich, readers are left in the dark as to the actual connection between the blue flower of the stranger's tales and the flower of Heinrich's father's dream, between this latter flower and Heinrich's mother, between the stranger

[34] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 199. He continues: "In seinen Reden kocht der feurige wälsche Wein, den ich damals von Rom mitgebracht hatte, und der unsern Hochzeitsabend verherrlichte. Damals war ich auch noch ein andrer Kerl. Die südliche Luft hatte mich aufgethaut, von Muth und Lust floß ich über, und du warst auch ein heißes köstliches Mädchen." After these remarks, Heinrich's mother prompts his father to recount his dream from that time, in which the mother appears in close connection with a magical (blue?) flower.
[35] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 248.

the father encountered long ago and the stranger who told Heinrich of the blue flower, and so forth. Like Heinrich's desire, which is suspended by the intervention of his mother, these images reflect one another, producing expectations of an underlying relationship, but nothing more. The small world of the family mirrors the poetic heterocosm, redirecting and dispersing its attractive force precisely to the degree that these two worlds are parallel to one another while remaining non-equivalent, seemingly connected by an unknown law.

1.1 – Moralizing Desire: Novalis, Hemsterhuis, and the Golden Age

Novalis develops his concept of an amorous equilibrium,[36] which relies on the regulation of desire through the balance of different stimuli, in part through his engagement with the work of François Hemsterhuis, a Dutch Neoplatonist moral philosopher whose works became popular in Germany in the late eighteenth century and who had an important, if only recently more recognized, influence on Novalis's entire generation.[37] It is through his encounter with Hemsterhuis that Novalis conceives of desire and love as modalities of one metaphysical, transindividual force, and therefore not as purely driven by the ego (as it is portrayed in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, for example). For Hemsterhuis, desire has a metaphysical significance: it is a "universal" attractive quality common to both matter and human souls, modeled on an analogy between Newtonian physics and Platonic desire for a return to the One.

[36] The concept of equilibrium had a wider significance around 1800, in and across scientific, philosophical, anthropological, and poetic discourses. For a recent critical discussion of the multiple facets of this discourse, especially the idea of *dynamic* equilibrium, see Gabriel Trop and Jocelyn Holland, introduction to "Equilibrium," ed. Gabriel Trop and Jocelyn Holland, special issue, *Germanic Review* 92, no. 2 (2017): 121-124.
[37] On the broader reception of Hemsterhuis's thought in Germany, see Gabriel Trop, "Hemsterhuis as Provocation: The German Reception of his Early Writings," in *The Early Writings of François Hemsterhuis, 1762-1773*," ed. and trans. Jacob van Sluis and Daniel Whistler (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022), 36-51. I cite Hemsterhuis's "Letter on Desires" from this recent translation.

Within Hemsterhuis's system, morality constitutes the ability to direct desire to the correct objects.[38] As Hemsterhuis theorizes it, desire (especially human desire) must be balanced with the objects available to it, which is a challenge in a modern, fallen world riven by disequilibrium.[39] In his philosophical dialogue, "Alexis, ou sur l'age d'or" (1787), Hemsterhuis theorizes the relationship between the ideal of equilibrium and the current human condition of disequilibrium through the narrative of the Golden Age.[40] The discussion of the Golden Age in this dialogue is constructed as a defense of poetry (specifically of the poetic representation of the Golden Age); through a somewhat complex argument, Hemsterhuis presents the indirectness of poetic representation as a means of assisting in the regulation of desire, and thus also the reattainment of an equilibrium of desire with its objects in the present age. Novalis's *Ofterdingen* is heavily inspired by this theory; his theory of poetry as "die schöne Haushaltung des Universi" (i.e. as a universal regulating principle) is formulated in response to this dialogue, which I take as a point of departure for my analysis of the novel's construction of a universal family.[41]

In "Alexis," Hemsterhuis introduces the idea of the Golden Age through his interlocutor, Diocles, as a fictive state of past (metaphysical) equilibrium and harmony, in which human desires and their objects corresponded to one another perfectly, the earth stood vertically on its axis, there were no seasonal changes, and so forth. The present age, Diocles recounts to Alexis,

[38] Hemsterhuis, "Letter on Desires," 81-82.
[39] In a "forced state," as he refers to it in the "Letter on Desires," 85.
[40] François Hemsterhuis, "Alexis ou de l'age d'or / Alexis oder vom goldenen Zeitalter," in *Oeuvres philosophiques, Édition critique*, ed. Jacob van Sluis (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 574-661. The German translation within this critical edition is Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi's, which was initially published in Riga in 1787, and which subsequently appeared in German in the third volume of Hemsterhuis's *Vermischte Philosophische Schriften*. Novalis had access to this edition, but often freely translated passages himself from Hemsterhuis's original French. I use the German here to give an impression of the resonance between Hemsterhuis's vocabulary and the German philosophical terminology in use in the late eighteenth century. For more on the timeline of Novalis's Hemsterhuis-Studien, see Hans-Joachim Mähl, introduction to *Philosophische Studien des Jahres 1797* in *NS*, 2: 299-344, at 360-378.
[41] Notably, Hemsterhuis says very little about the family in his writings – this is Novalis's elaboration on his theory. I explore this point below.

is separated from the Golden Age by a supernatural catastrophe that fundamentally and lastingly changed both the quality of the world – giving rise to imbalance, variability, and contradiction – and fundamentally altered the human spirit.[42] Having recovered from the cataclysm, Diocles notes, humans still possess desire (specifically a desire for wholeness – which is conceived as a sort of metaphysical drive to perfection[43]), but the now-imbalanced world has become inadequate to their desires and they are unable to form a clear image of what it is that they desire.[44] Lacking any adequate object due to the disturbance of the originally fulfilled and fulfilling metaphysical order of the Golden Age, desire in the present, fallen world becomes indefinite and even destructive. Humans possess an "unbestimmter, gränzenloser Trieb" that drives them beyond the satisfaction of their physical desires: "so schritt er [der Mensch] weiter, in der eiteln und thörichten Hoffnung, in der Menge dieser endlichen und bestimmten Gegenstände jenes dem großen und unbestimmten Triebe, der ihm keine Rast ließ, angemessene Unendliche zu finden."[45] It is worth noting in passing that this idea (minus the destructive connotation) is almost directly carried over into the first fragment of Novalis's *Blüthenstaub*: "Wir suchen überall das Unbedingte, und finden immer nur Dinge."[46]

In his defense of the tale of the Golden Age, Diocles contends that humans still intuitively *recognize* what they desire when they encounter it – or its image: hence the attractiveness of the fictitious tale of the Golden Age. Poetic representation in Hemsterhuis's

[42] "Wegen der scheinbaren Widersprüche, die er in der kreisenden Natur gesehen hatte, irrte [der Mensch] lange in einem zweifelhaften Schimmer zwischen dem Wahren und dem Falschen, dem Guten und dem Bösen. Er hatte die Kennzeichen der Wahrheit verloren, und haschte nun, dumm und unbesonnen, nach dem Wunderbaren, als einem eiteln Schatten seiner ehemaligen Größe" (Hemsterhuis, "Alexis," 617).
[43] Specifically a "Vervollkommnungs-Princip" (Hemsterhuis, "Alexis," 589).
[44] Hemsterhuis, "Alexis," 619.
[45] Hemsterhuis, "Alexis," 639.
[46] Novalis *NS*, 2: 413.

rendering represents the indefinite, infinite goal of all human striving in the *present* world in the form of an isolated an unattainable fictional past, a sort of "state of nature" in which nature itself was different.[47] The tale of the Golden Age elicits the desire for a world in which happiness is possible through the effect and the seeming evidence (*evidentia*) of its representation of human happiness in another world, a leap that seemingly circumvents, but is not incompatible with, rationalization.[48] Hemsterhuis's defense of poetry thereby connects rhetorical/poetic *effects* with deeper metaphysical truths. Hemsterhuis's conception of the Golden Age (together with its various heterocosmic analogues)[49] mediate what Novalis appropriates as a transcendentalization of desire: desire for another world (a heterocosm) becomes an indirect and proleptic form of a desire for a total cosmic unification, for a return to a state of balance and harmony in the present

[47] It therefore forms part of a wider canon of modern "heterocosmic" thinking about human nature, among which are situated works like Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality* (1755) or Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), but also Kant's *Mutmaßlicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte* (1786) and Schiller's *Etwas über die erste Menschengesellschaft nach dem Leitfaden der Mosaischen Urkunde* (1790).

[48] As Diocles explains to Alexis, poetic representations can express truths that are *felt* to be true before they are completely understood. The poetic manner of perception and expression (which ties into Hemsterhuis's theory of genius), accomplishes in an instant (or flash, *Blitz*) a synthesis of ideas that can only gradually and retroactively be proven to be true through rational thought. In the Golden Age, Diocles contends, this form of expression was completely and simultaneously transparent to the understanding, but is now hampered by the slowness of human cognition, which has lost some of its senses through the cosmic cataclysm. In this way, Diocles represents poetry, and its specific ability to generate immediate and complex intuitions, as both the *link to* the lost Golden Age (insofar as it represents a limited and proleptic recovery of a lost sense), and as a non-rational *proof of its existence* through its effects on spectators or listeners, who indirectly recognize the object of their infinite desire in it (Hemsterhuis, "Alexis," 629). This dimension of Hemsterhuis's conception of poetic representation is largely ignored by Hans-Joachim Mähl, who discusses the influence of Hemsterhuis on Novalis in his monumental study, *Die Idee des goldenen Zeitalters im Werk des Novalis: Studien zur Wesensbestimmung der frühromantischen Utopie und zu ihren ideengeschichtlichen Voraussetzungen* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1965), see especially 266-287. Mähl notes the relationship between Hemsterhuis's Golden Age and Rousseau's state of nature, but does not analyze the rhetorical purposes or effects of this form of representation.

[49] Novalis makes many different ideal worlds into the objects of what he calls representative faith – a belief in the ability of representations to make the absent present. E.g. in *Das allgemeine Brouillon*, Novalis writes: "Die ganze Repraesentation beruht auf einem Gegenwärtig machen – des Nicht Gegenwärtigen und so fort – (Wunderkraft der *Fiction*.) Mein Glauben und Liebe beruht auf *Repraesentativen Glauben*. So die Annahme – der ewige Frieden ist schon da – Gott ist unter uns – hier ist Amerika oder Nirgends – das goldne Zeitalter ist hier – wir sind Zauberer – wir sind moralisch und so fort" (Novalis, *NS*, 3: 421). Novalis defines faith explicitly in *Das allgemeine Brouillon* as "ein […] transmundaner Actus" that pertains only to states of affairs in another world (which are felt as immediately present). Novalis, *NS*, 3: 420.

world. In *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, we can observe this in Heinrich's wish for a higher cosmic unity as he contemplates his attraction to the blue flower.

The danger in this process is that desire might become unbalanced, *schwärmerisch*, overtaken and thrown into disarray by the representation of balance, if the idea of the Golden Age is not understood as a figurative mode of portrayal or a universal phenomenon. In "Alexis," Hemsterhuis intervenes in a debate around *Schwärmerei* that (as is evident in the example of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*) generally associates this phenomenon with an excess of imagination, often identifying it as a form of overinvestment in works of art.[50] In his defense of poetry, Hemsterhuis proposes a unique solution. He subsumes the *Schwärmer*, together with states of rage (*Wuth*) and madness (*Wahnsinn*), under the broad category of prejudice (*Vorurtheil*), but attempts to recuperate poetry, and thus the representation of the Golden Age, as a non-rational (or pre-rational) form of representation that he calls *Begeisterung* and *Eingebung*.[51] These latter forms of representation and intuition bring the Golden Age back in the indefinite modalities of anticipation and remembrance, producing a connection to the wider world rather than a sense of alienation. Prejudice on the other hand, as Hemsterhuis recounts in a long digression, is a fixation of desire to one single dominant *Vorstellung* or representation that is isolated from all others (rather similarly to an unattainable heterocosm), and thereby overtakes

[50] On the broader context, see Manfred Engel, "Die Rehabilitation des Schwärmers," 469–498.
[51] Hemsterhuis, "Alexis," 595 and 633. These are close relatives to *Schwärmerei*, which authors such as Lessing and Wieland had attempted to rehabilitate as means of representation aimed at higher truths rather than at sheerly subjective projections. It was also therefore represented as aesthetically and communicatively successful, in opposition to *Schwärmerei*. See Engel, "Rehabilitation des Schwärmers," 472, and Specht, "Aufhebung des Schwärmers," 51.

a weak constitution.[52] This *Vorstellung* derives its power from its incommensurability with other experiences and ideas in an undeveloped mind:

> Je mehr jene […] eingesogene starke Vorstellung widersinnig, wunderbar, unbegreiflich, mit den im Kopfe vorgefundenen Begriffen unvereinbar ist, desto mehr wird sie hehr gehalten werden, Wurzel schlagen, bekleiben, und in einem thätigen Geiste alle angränzenden Vorstellungen an sich ziehen, wie der Magnet alle um ihn her liegende Eisentheilchen sich aneignet, und, ohne sich von ihnen trennen zu lassen, sie alle mit seiner eigenthümlichen Kraft schwängert.[53]

One can almost imagine the blue flower here, taking root within Heinrich's mind, attracting not only all of his wishes, but the novel's entire diegetic reality to it in the process, infusing – even impregnating – them with its otherworldly power. However, this is not exactly what Hemsterhuis has in mind in "Alexis," and Novalis, too, mobilizes this idea only in order to transform it. Though he emphasizes the qualities of "das Wunderbare" and the incomprehensible as root causes of prejudice, Hemsterhuis demonstrates the effects of prejudice not through the example of an overactive poetic imagination, but through a depiction of philosophical dogmatism, where *Vorurteil* gives rise to intractable sectarian conflicts between, for example the Epicureans and Stoics, who risk going mad if their prejudices are too thoroughly challenged.[54] *Vorurteil* is associated with *Urteil*, which should not be an effect of poetic representation. Diocles' defense of poetry and the idea of the Golden Age is therefore an implicit lesson on how to engage with poetic representations.[55]

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[52] "Es ist eine starke, lebhafte, vereinzelte und von den gemeinen Begriffen entfernte Vorstellung, die sich in dem Kopfe eines Kindes oder eines unaufgeklärten Menschen ansetzt" (Hemsterhuis, "Alexis," 595).
[53] Hemsterhuis, "Alexis," 599.
[54] Hemsterhuis, "Alexis," 595-99. The temporal dimension of Hemsterhuis's argument is extremely complex: while poetic representations such as the tale of the Golden Age both recall past states and anticipate a yet-unrealized future state (thereby surpassing reason in a *Blitz*), they must not be *prematurely* conflated with reality and thereby ossify into judgements. *Urteil* must not surpass itself and become *Vorurteil*. In this sense, the proleptic and analeptic qualities of poetic representations such as that of the Golden Age represent both an aid and a risk to reason insofar as their instantaneity surpasses the linear progression of rational thought – their relationship to judgement must be carefully controlled.
[55] In the process, Hemsterhuis represents suspicion against poetry as itself a form of prejudice.

Hemsterhuis portrays the distinction between appropriate poetic reception and *Vorurteil* through the distinction between free and unfree desire. Unfree desire, the product of *Vorurteil*, is any desire too dominated by a single conception of its object, which stands in for the end-goal of happiness (even eclipsing it) rather than serving as a *means* to attaining it, preventing engagement with other possible objects of desire. This is the case with Wilhelm's vision of a "neue Welt," which is dominated by his attraction to Mariane (whom he "judges" as his theatrical muse). Wilhelm's dominant *Vorstellung* becomes a fixed idea that blinds him to all other potential objects of desire, and to reality in general; when he is disappointed by Mariane's infidelity, he feels as though he may go mad. For Novalis, Goethe's portrayal of Wilhelm's pathological attachment to certain ideas does injustice to the unique qualities of poetic representation, which lie precisely in its ability to free desire from fixation on specific objects due to its figurality. As Novalis laments regarding *Meister*, "Das Romantische geht darinn zu Grunde – auch die Naturpoësie, das Wunderbare […] Das Wunderbare darinn wird ausdrücklich, als Poesie und Schwärmerey, behandelt."[56] In *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, Novalis recuperates and plays up precisely the aspects of poetry that might initially be judged as leading to *Schwärmerei*, but prevents them from ever stabilizing into an incorrect *Vorurteil*. He does so at first by reflecting the blue flower in ways that do not offer up a decisive interpretation, and then later by representing the correspondence between Mathilde and the blue flower as far from the exclusive basis for the successful relationship between Heinrich and Mathilde (a point I take up in the following section).

[56] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 639.

The first strategy corresponds to what Hemsterhuis describes in "Alexis" as "free" desire. Free desire is not tethered to one singular *Vorstellung*; the wise man, Diocles argues, will never be dominated (*unterjocht*) by his imagination's or his moral sensibility's attraction to a particular idea, but will regard them "als Mittel […] den Genuß zu erhöhen, oder seiner Selbstthätigkeit, seinem Willen mehr Schnellkraft zu geben."[57] The wise man, Hemsterhuis hereby contends, is the man who – like the poet – controls his imagination and desire and productively uses them to increase his freedom or *Selbstthätigkeit* (which notably coincides with an increase in pleasure, *Genuß*). As Hemsterhuis argues, desire is in fact the origin of free will, and freedom consists in a mastery over one's desires and *Vorstellungen* for the maximization of pleasure.[58]

It only follows that free poetic creation and appropriate poetic reception represent the apex of such self-mastery – this is a conclusion Novalis draws in the second half of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, in his discussion of *Meisterschaft*, which is also a reply to Wilhelm's apparent failure to attain artistic mastery in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*.[59] Novalis repeats this thought across many of his fragments and notes, e.g., in the plans for *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, where he envisions the ideal poet:

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[57] Hemsterhuis, "Alexis," 593.

[58] This aspect of Hemsterhuis's thought seems to be largely overlooked. Mähl views Hemsterhuis as propagating a purely passive (or receptive) conception of harmony; this reading of harmony as purely passive is reproduced more recently in Nassar, *Romantic Absolute*, 42.

[59] In the conversation between Sylvester and Heinrich, Novalis presents both *Fabellehre* and *Tugend* as variations on what he calls "Meisterschaft": "Jede durch Nachdenken zu einem Weltbild umgearbeitete Neigung und Fertigkeit wird zu einer Erscheinung, zu einer Verwandlung des Gewissens. Alle Bildung führt zu dem, was man nicht anders, wie Freyheit nennen kann, ohnerachtet damit nicht ein bloßer Begrif, sondern der schaffende Grund alles Daseyns bezeichnet werden soll. Diese Freyheit ist Meisterschaft. Der Meister übt freye Gewalt nach Absicht und in bestimmter Folge aus. Die Gegenstände seiner Kunst sind sein, und stehn in seinem Belieben und er wird von ihnen nicht gefesselt oder gehemmt. Und gerade diese allumfassende Freyheit, Meisterschaft oder Herrschaft ist der Trieb des Gewissens" (Novalis, *NS*, 1: 331). In this passage, Novalis continually circles from passive *Neigung* to active formation and mastery, and back to *Trieb*. In this sense, activity and passivity increasingly coincide when *Bildung* reaches its end-goal of *Meisterschaft*. "Gewissen" (conscience) is also a term from Hemsterhuis, specifically his "Letter on Man and his Relations" (1772) and is associated with the idea of a "moral organ," which preoccupied Novalis in many of his philosophical notes but lies beyond the scope of this chapter to explore.

> Dem Dichter ist ein ruhiger, aufmercksamer Sinn – Ideen oder Neigungen die ihn von irrdischer Geschäftigkeit und kleinlichen Angelegenheiten abhalten, eine sorgenfreye Lage – Reisen – Bekanntschaften mit vielartigen Menschen – mannichfache Anschauungen […] – keine Anheftung an Einen Gegenstand, keine Leidenschaft im vollen Sinne – eine vielseitige Empfänglichkeit nöthig.[60]

Notably, Novalis's protagonist, Heinrich, never attains this sort of mastery on his own, but is free, poetic, and *empfänglich* only within the context of the familial structures in which he is embedded, and which both inspire and regulate his imagination and his desire. Though Novalis perhaps envisions free self-controlled desire as a potential end goal for Heinrich, this goal is not reached in the parts of the novel he completed. The fact that equilibrium is made a function of the family, which *reflects* the poetic heterocosm, is an innovation unique to Novalis, one that implicitly calls the idea of self-mastery (and of individual autonomy overall) into question.[61]

Novalis's conception of amorous equilibrium as it appears at the beginning of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* is the product of a balancing of different forms and directionalities of desire, which flow from person to person, from poetic heterocosm to dream-world, and through the small world of the family. As I understand it, Novalis takes on Hemsterhuis's conception of poetic representation as the opposite of judgement (i.e., as reflective correspondence, but not identity – as figural resemblance, in other words), and exports it to the idea of familial love,

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[60] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 335-36. For a thorough discussion of Novalis's vision of poetry as a technique of the self and a form of asceticism, see Gabriel Trop, *Poetry as a Way of Life*, 147-149. Trop connects Novalis's techniques to what he conceives of as a "physiological Absolute" in connection with Novalis's study of John Brown's doctrine of excitability. While the connections are persuasive, my sense is that Novalis holds any direct physiologization of the Absolute in suspense, viewing it instead as a form of relation (which as I argue, is symbolized by the family-as-world).

[61] It is possibly inspired by Johann Gottfried Herder, whose response to Hemsterhuis's "Letter on Desires" I turn to in the following section. In a passage that seems to anticipate Novalis's "schöne Haushaltung des Universi," Herder notes that the regulation of desire "macht zwar allen Genuß unvollständig, es ist aber der wahre Takt und Pulsschlag des Lebens, die Modulation und Haushaltung des Verlangens, der Liebe und aller Süßigkeiten der Sehnsucht." Herder's remarks are only in passing, but his vocabulary seems to take hold in Novalis's writings. Johann Gottfried Herder, "Liebe und Selbstheit: Ein Nachtrag zum Briefe des Hr. Hemsterhuis über das Verlangen," in *Zerstreute Blätter: Erste Sammlung* (Gotha: Carl Wilhelm Ettinger, 1785), 309-346, at 340.

specifically the love between mother and son, which may never become incestuous. This also sheds light on the unique way in which Novalis transcendentalizes love and desire in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*: he analogizes the form of poetic representation (representation, but non-coincidence) to the structure of desire itself (in which love may not become sexual, but remains suspended), and to the relationship between worlds (which relate to one another without becoming equivalent).

1.2 – Reflective Equilibrium and the Expansion of the Maternal World

In its state of poetic and erotic equilibrium, the small world of Heinrich's home family appears as a limited version of the Golden Age.[62] This is not to suggest that it is in a state of metaphysical perfection – after all, Heinrich is not communing with nature, though he fantasizes about it. Rather, the family exists in a state analogous to Hemsterhuis's portrayal of the "final" Golden Age. At the end of his dialogue with Alexis, Diocles explains that the final Golden Age will be achieved not through a return to the represented original state of happiness in which all physical needs are met (a point humanity has already long surpassed through scientific advances), but through an act of free self-limitation on the part of humans, through which they bring their desires into balance with the world available to them.[63]

[62] Alice Kuzniar, by contrast, argues that Heinrich is in a fallen state. See Alice Kuzniar, *Delayed Endings: Nonclosure in Novalis and Hölderlin* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 102.

[63] "Dieses [dritte goldene Zeitalter], mein lieber, wird eintreten, wenn die Wissenschaften des Menschen so weit werden vorgerückt seyn, als er sie mit seinen dermaligen Organen bringen kann: wenn er die Gränzen seiner Einsichten in den ihm erkennbaren Seiten des Weltalls deutlich sehen, wenn er das ungereimte Mißverhältnis zwischen seinen Begierden und allem irdischen Genusse wahrnehmen, beim Anblicke der seltsamen hieraus entspringenden Wirkungen umkehren, und ein heilsames und richtiges Gleichgewicht zwischen seinen Begierden und den in seiner gegenwärtigen Wirkungssphäre begriffenen Gegenständen finden, wenn er endlich, bereichert mit allen Einsichten, deren seine Natur hienieden fähig ist, mit solchen die glückliche Einfalt seines ersten Zustandes verbinden, und dieses mit jenen ausschmücken wird" (Hemsterhuis, "Alexis," 643).

In the opening *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, there is no free (or, for that matter, intentional) self-limitation on the part of any character. The sense of amorous equilibrium in the opening chapter appears strangely spontaneous, even coincidental. Novalis adopts this technique, in which formal correspondence appear, at least initially, as narrative coincidences, from Goethe, who portrays Wilhelm Meister carried along in seemingly coincidental harmony with his setting despite his pathologically ego-centric imaginative worldview.[64] As I discussed in the previous chapter, Friedrich Schlegel makes much of this dynamic in his essay "Über Goethes Meister," and it becomes a source of fascination for Novalis as well. As Novalis writes in response to the first book of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, while still in the positive phase of his reception of the novel, "die Accente sind nicht logisch sondern (metrisch und) melodisch – wodurch eben jene wunderbare romantische Ordnung entsteht – die keinen Bedacht auf Rang und Werth, Erstheit und Leztheit – Größe und Kleinheit nimmt."[65] It is this "wunderbare romantische Ordnung" that produces the pleasurable impression of a higher unity without the appearance of logic (in fact, contrary to all logic) and forms the basis of Novalis's portrayal of the family as a beautiful "Haushaltung des Universi" in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*.[66] For Novalis, this "Haushaltung" is a distinctly *poetic* conception of economy (as the rule of the *oikos*), which becomes a counterpoint to the instrumental, anti-poetic "economic" ending of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* as Novalis

[64] This harmony is only belatedly revealed to be the result of the Society of the Tower's intervention.
[65] He continues: "Die Beywörter gehören zur Umständlichkeit – in ihrer geschickten Auswahl und ihrer oeconomischen Vertheilung zeigt sich der poëtische Takt. Ihre Auswahl wird durch die Idee des Dichterwercks bestimmt" (Novalis, *NS*, 3: 326).
[66] While Manfred Engel argues that Novalis's avoidance of causality in the novel is due to its status as a "transcendental" novel, I don't think the technique can be so cleanly reduced to a philosophical program. Moreover, causality is present, it is simply separated from reflection. Manfred Engel, *Der Roman der Goethezeit. Band 1: Anfänge in Klassik und Frühromantik* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1993), 480. "Der Sinn dieser figuralen Bezüge besteht zum einen darin, jede empirische Kausalisierung von Heinrichs Lebensgeschichte abzuwehren: Heinrichs Lebensweg ist rein transzendentale Konstruktion ohne jede äußere Determination."

describes it later on. In contrast to Goethe, Novalis rejects the idea of a higher intentionality, a human intelligence that must govern the sense of harmony in the narrative: he never reveals a higher instance within the narrative that dictates or produces its sense of formal equilibrium.[67] The sense of harmony as experienced by the protagonist therefore also never appears in an ironic light in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* – it appears as a poetic mystery, producing a sense of expectation that a higher (poetic, metaphysical) unity or harmony might eventually be revealed.

Novalis depicts the sense of harmony in the poetic world of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* as the result of the mother's mediation. The mother fulfills her role not as a conscious mediator or creator of reality, but as one who loves, and by virtue of her love, unifies. Her intervention therefore appears less as a conscious manipulation than as a natural effect of her being, even a physical one: as the maternal body from which Heinrich originates, she is also the one to which he perpetually returns.[68] As unconscious mediator, the mother becomes Novalis's instrument for maintaining a strict separation between narrative action (i.e., causality in the narrative) and the play of reflections among different images, worlds, and families that appear in the novel – that is, for producing the idea of spontaneous harmony. As a case in point, the image of the blue flower exerts no obvious causal force in the narrative. The stranger's narrative of the blue flower sets off a chain of reflections (which become an object of thought and discussion) and thereby seems to move the plot forward without actually doing so. It is the mother (a symbol for the blue

[67] As Manfred Engel remarks, the narrative is therefore characterized by a sense of pre-established harmony between different worlds; I tend to think it's more of a spontaneous, seemingly accidental harmony, in line with my discussion of Friedrich Schlegel's reading of Goethe's *Meister*. Engel, *Roman der Goethezeit*, 480. See Chapter 2, p. 99 for my perspective.

[68] Though already reflected and reflective, it can be loosely compared to the "Muttersfäre" Novalis names in his *Fichte-Studien*, which provides the condition of possibility for the self's recognition of itself in reflection, but only in the modality of *Schweben*, i.e., without synthesis. Novalis, *NS*, 2: 105. I expand on the relationship between the mother and the *Fichte-Studien* in the following section.

flower, but certainly not its equivalent) who initiates the journey from Eisenach to Augsburg, which is actually a journey toward *her* former home. Causally speaking, this journey has nothing to do with the blue flower.[69] Through this division of roles, Novalis avoids an obvious allegorical interpretation and also ensures that Heinrich can remain a pure, childlike receiver of discourse while his mother acts to move the primary narrative forward. And still, through an act of seeming poetic magic, the movement of the journey coincides with a multiplication of reflections of Heinrich's poetic desires; these reflections are embedded in the main plot without ever interfering with it.

As long as Heinrich remains with her, his mother represents the larger sense of reality within which the novel plays out: as the mediator of familial harmony, she constitutes the novel's sense of "world." Formally speaking, she represents the unity and integrity of the primary level of diegetic reality. Because she accompanies Heinrich on his journey (and in fact initiates it), Heinrich's departure from his home in Eisenach is therefore not a complete taking-leave of the home; rather, it is an opening of the home into the wider world – a mobilization that allows it to become ever more expansive: thinner (as "primary" level of diegetic reality), but therefore also more porous and all-encompassing.[70] It is this sense of expansion that I will focus on for the

[69] When Heinrich and his mother leave for Augsburg, "Johannis" (the date mentioned in the father's prophetic dream) has already passed. Novalis, *NS*, 1: 202. As I read it, this noncoincidence does not mark a missed opportunity, but an intentional suspension of the link between heterocosmic realities (dreams, prophecies, etc.) and the primary diegetic reality of the novel.

[70] While intuiting in this separation from his home "die erste Ankündigung des Todes," Heinrich is comforted by the presence of his mother along the journey. "Die Nähe seiner Mutter tröstete den Jüngling sehr. Die alte Welt schien noch nicht ganz verlohren, und er umfaßte sie mit verdoppelter Innigkeit" (Novalis, *NS*, 1: 205). Through the shifting valence of the pronoun "sie," the mother's presence at this moment of departure is also a presence of the "alte Welt," for which the mother becomes a traveling stand-in. David Wellbery notes this as well in his essay, "Die Enden des Menschen: Anthropologie und Einbildungskraft im Bildungsroman bei Wieland, Goethe, Novalis," in *Seiltänzer des Paradoxalen: Aufsätze zur Ästhetischen Wissenschaft* (Munich: Hanser, 2006), 70-117, at 114. Wellbery argues that at this moment, "Der trostbedürftige Jüngling steckt noch in den Fesseln der Einbildung, der Täuschung objekthafter Darstellung bzw. inzestuöser Liebe ausgeliefert," a predicament that is only solved through the death and liquefaction of the mother, as represented in Klingsohr's fairy tale ("Die Enden des Menschen," 115).

remainder of this section. As Heinrich moves through his journey from Eisenach to Augsburg with his mother, he enters into various symbolic familial triads that reflect his home family, but to which he never becomes fully bonded thanks to his mother. He encounters a number of quasi-fathers (the merchants, the crusaders, the miner, the hermit) and a symbolic beloved and child (Zulima and the young child), but never perceives them as such.[71] With an acute formalistic accuracy, all of Heinrich's encounters with tales and discourses of other worlds occur within triadic configurations that formally reflect his original familial triad, but seem to preclude the creation of a lasting bond to the degree that they are presented as purely coincidental configurations, as sites of discursive transmission but not of erotic or familial attachment.

Through these quasi-familial configurations, Heinrich encounters various reflections of his own desire for the blue flower and the alien world of the stranger's narratives: the merchants theorize about poetry and tell Heinrich a fairy tale, the crusaders and Zulima present opposing but similarly attractive views of the Orient, and the miner and hermit-historian tell Heinrich about how they acquired their arts, which seem to prefigure Heinrich's own acquisition of an art. Each of these episodes both confirms Heinrich's heterocosmic desire (specifically his orientation toward poetry's ability to make present the mysterious, the hidden, and the otherworldly), thereby intensifying his sense of *Erwartung* or *Ahnung*, and relativizes it by connecting it to a different set of ideas and representations. Culminating with Heinrich's encounter of his own

My own sense is that though the mother is made transcendent (and immanent) by death – relegated to a different world, just as Mathilde is upon her death – there is no substantial functional difference between the mother's physical presence in the embrace and her immanent, "liquid" presence in the *Aschentrank*, which semiotically invert one another: she is always present physically but inaccessible semantically; she provides a guarantee of unity among representations, which is apprehended as a cosmic unity, but also forecloses the fixing of desire upon a single object (herself included).

[71] A summary of the triads: 1) Heinrich-mother-merchants, 2) Heinrich-crusaders-virgin, 3) Heinrich-Zulima-Child, 4) Heinrich-mother-miner, 5) Heinrich-hermit-Marie von Hohenzollern.

image in a book in the hermit's cave, the many stations of Heinrich's journey represent a series of reflections that never settle on a single meaning nor definitively correspond to his own experience; rather, they seem to refract, multiply, and disperse it even while hinting at the possibility of some underlying connection.[72] Heinrich's muted anticipatory state can be read as a counterpart to Hemsterhuis's conception of *Vorurtheil*: instead of an overhasty judgement (prejudice) and a dominant *Vorstellung* that draws everything to itself like a magnet, the blue flower is presented as the producer of a *Sinn* or *Ahnung* that precedes and even defers judgement, inviting a series of resemblances that disperses all of its reflections into different directions since it cannot become equivalent with any of them.[73] This sense of simultaneous centripetality and dispersal is mirrored in Heinrich's relationship to his mother, which is a strong erotic attachment that must remain perpetually below the threshold of explicitly sexual desire.

Though Heinrich neither becomes definitively bonded to any of the other "families" he meets, nor to any reflections of the blue flower or his own poetic destiny, he nevertheless experiences a profound interior transformation, which Novalis presents as an expansion of his inner space.[74] As the narrative progresses, Heinrich's interiority seems to become ever more

[72] Though he meets Mathilde at the end of his journey, the teleology of Heinrich's journey of *Bildung* is questionable, since it does not lead him toward an increasingly decisive relationship to reality, nor do the episodes preceding their meeting factor into the success of his amorous relationship. My reading accords in many respects with Alice Kuzniar's reading of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* in *Delayed Endings*. Kuzniar argues that "the initial chapter of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* establishes an *exemplary* structural pattern that is repeated at different intervals throughout the work. It initiates or generates a series of narrative insets, each of which attempts anew the process of encapsulation" (*Delayed Endings,* 108). They do not, however add up to a teleological movement.

[73] If Hölderlin (whose thought parallels Novalis's in this regard) had conceived the structure of judgement as an originary division, an *Ur-teilung*, then Novalis here seems – in a dialectical reversal of this idea – to work to defer the *Ur-teilung* by multiplying reflective nonequivalencies. See Friedrich Hölderlin, "Urteil und Seyn," in *Sämtliche Werke Und Briefe*, 2: 502-3. My analysis of the role of the mother in the first half of the novel (below) makes this clearer.

[74] This sense of expansion in turn corresponds to a heightening of the sense of *Erwartung* or *Ahnung* in the narrative, which seems to be working toward a revelation.

porous, almost entirely made up of portals: windows and doors open within his mind;[75] his small interior "Wohnzimmer" becomes a portal to a sublime cathedral in his mind, even potentially the whole world.[76] While it lies before Heinrich's inner eyes fully revealed, this world remains "stumm" within him – unsynthesized, in a state of anticipatory *Schweben* while he remains in the embrace and the world of his mother.[77] This sense of an unsynthesized contiguity of spaces is mirrored in the form of the novel itself, which is dominated by inset narratives and discourses that nevertheless remain more or less uninterpreted and unrelated to the progression of the plot.[78] In this process, the primary world of the narrative, the mother's world, fades increasingly into the background, narratively speaking, itself becoming "heterocosmic," a "Zwischenreich" much like the Romantic Middle Ages in which the novel is set.[79]

This sense of silence and non-synthesis – both erotic and poetic – is portrayed as the result of a series of affective neutralizations that occur between the poetic episodes that structure

[75] "Mannichfaltige Zufälle schienen sich zu seiner Bildung zu vereinigen, und noch hatte nichts seine innere Regsamkeit gestört. Alles was er sah und hörte schien nur neue Riegel in ihm wegzuschieben, und neue Fenster in ihm zu öffnen. Er sah die Welt in ihren großen und abwechselnden Verhältnissen vor sich liegen. Noch war sie aber stumm" (Novalis, *NS*, 1: 267-68).

[76] I am here referring to Heinrich's vision in the fifth chapter of the novel, which begins as follows: "Es war ihm, als ruhte die Welt aufgeschlossen in ihm, und zeigte ihm, wie einem Gastfreunde, alle ihre Schätze und verborgenen Lieblichkeiten. […] 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" (Novalis, *NS*, 1: 252).

[77] Carsten Lange interprets this topographical construction of (psychic) inner space as a Romantic way of theorizing the unconscious. Lange traces the sense of spatial differentiation in psychic space to the form of the fairy tale, which is similarly premised on the strict differentiation of spaces. See Carsten Lange, "Tapetentüren und geheime Kammern: Zur Struktur und Funktion des verborgenen Raums in Erzähltexten der Romantik," in *Raumkonfigurationen der Romantik*, ed. Walter Pape (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 239-250.

[78] There is a sense of scalar and topological reversal to Novalis's construction of inner space (as well as diegetic form) that seems closely tied to his theory of the *ordo inversus*, which I outline in the introduction to the dissertation. The embedded heterocosmic reflections topologically represent Novalis's idea, from the *Fichte-Studien*, of "Ein Bild des Seyns im Seyn," a reversed image of the *Ich* that paradoxically appears within it (Novalis, *NS*, 2: 106); see also the introduction to the dissertation, pp. 18ff. Though a close reading of these inversions is beyond the scope of this chapter, it represents a promising direction for future research.

[79] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 204.

Heinrich's journey. Along the journey to Augsburg, Novalis displays Heinrich embracing his mother after each of the heterocosmic (and symbolically familial) encounters during which she is not present, in a gesture that replicates his awakening from the dream of the blue flower. These embraces represent the only encounters between the order of symbolic reflexivity (and of discursive transmission) and that of the primary familial plot that occur throughout this first period of the novel. Though they are brief and rather unmarked narrative moments, they are key interventions that exert strong effects. Zulima's story, juxtaposed with the songs of the crusaders, is a striking example: this encounter represents one of the most powerfully affecting episodes for Heinrich, who is separated from his mother as soon as he enters the company of the crusaders. In this raucous company, Heinrich is enticed by the crusaders' "prächtiges Schwerdt," and "fühlte sich von einer kriegerischen Begeisterung ergriffen" as soon as he feels it in his hand (the phallic connotation of this gesture, which echoes the end of his dream of the blue flower and foreshadows the sword in Klingsohr's tale, should not be lost on us here).[80] Unlike many of the embedded tales, to which Heinrich's responses are not narrated, the song of the crusaders, which tells of the recapture of the holy tomb (a symbolic representation of a *Jungfrau* to which Heinrich is attracted), brings his soul into "Aufruhr," from which only his mother's intervention coincidentally removes him.[81] Heinrich leaves the castle and encounters Zulima, who offers him an opposing narrative of the crusades, as well as a different familial configuration. Paired with

[80] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 231.

[81] "Heinrichs ganze Seele war in Aufruhr, das Grab kam ihm wie eine bleiche, edle, jugendliche Gestalt vor, die auf einem großen Stein mitten unter wildem Pöbel säße, und auf eine entsetzliche Weise gemißhandelt würde, als wenn sie mit kummervollen Gesichte nach einem Kreuze blicke, was im Hintergrund mit lichten Zügen schimmerte, und sich in den beweglichen Wellen eines Meeres unendlich vervielfältigte. Seine Mutter schickte eben herüber, um ihn zu holen, und der Hausfrau des Ritters vorzustellen. Die Ritter waren in ihr Gelag und ihre Vorstellungen des bevorstehenden Zuges vertieft, und bemerkten nicht, daß Heinrich sich entfernte" (Novalis, *NS*, 1: 233).

the child, she represents a potential beloved for Heinrich, but also – importantly – a sister.[82] Zulima's narrative has a similarly powerful effect on Heinrich to the crusaders' sword and song, arousing in him the sentiment of "eine wunderliche Verwirrung in der Welt," and "einen heftigen Beruf […] ihr Retter zu seyn."[83] As with the preceding encounter, none of these feelings are translated into actions: after his encounter with Zulima, Heinrich returns to his mother, who absolves him of his confusion and his drive to action. The presentation is surprisingly anticlimactic, to the degree that it appears almost dismissive: "Er erzählte ihr vor dem Schlafengehn, was ihm begegnet sey, und schlief bald zu unterhaltenden Träumen ein."[84] The mother's status as a mobile *oikos* or "alte Welt" marks all of Heinrich's embraces of her as returns to the source, which remains ever-present. Her presence remedies his strong feelings, preventing his reception of heterocosmic narratives from ever passing over into a definitive bond to a new world or family. After Heinrich returns to his mother, Zulima's story, which had been so powerfully affecting, seems demoted in status to a mere fairy tale, a source of *Unterhaltung* like the dreams that follow it, rather than a harsh reality of the world that Heinrich, too, lives in. Thanks to these soothing interventions, Heinrich's path therefore never errs from its goal: he successfully meets his intended beloved in Augsburg at the end of his journey, which proceeds without incident or detour.[85]

By leading Heinrich on his journey, the mother in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* occupies a function analogous to that of the Society of the Tower in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*.

[82] Zulima exclaims, "O! mir ist, als glicht ihr einem meiner Brüder, der noch vor unserm Unglück von uns schied, und nach Persien zu einem berühmten Dichter zog" (Novalis, *NS*, 1: 236).
[83] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 238.
[84] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 238.
[85] In this sense, it is the opposite of Wilhelm's *Bildung*, which represents a complete deviation from the purpose of his journey (financial transactions for his father). As we find out at the end of Goethe's novel, however, this apparent deviation was also a carefully guided path of education.

However, unlike this secret society, the mother herself is motivated by no higher purpose other than the love that she already embodies. Rather than conceal it behind a theatrical curtain, Novalis chooses to represent the mother's role as a sort of unconscious mediation, motivated by her own *Trieb* to return to her familial home. As a result, Heinrich's amorous and poetic success at the end of the journey appears as a spontaneous, natural accord, rather than as an intentional manipulation of reality. By virtue of her pure being (which echoes the immanence of Heinrich's own feelings), the mother moves Heinrich through various episodes of a poetic education and safeguards him from excessive attachment to any particular character or representation outside of his familial frame, eventually guiding him into the arms of his destined beloved. She delivers her final maternal embrace after Heinrich's first kiss with Mathilde, authorizing it without ever directly speaking of it with him. Instead, the *place* of arrival (Augsburg) stands in for the simultaneous attainment of the beloved, who comes from the mother's own place of origin:

> Heinrich stand, wie im Himmel. Seine Mutter kam auf ihn zu. Er ließ seine ganze Zärtlichkeit an ihr aus. Sie sagte: Ist es nicht gut, daß wir nach Augsburg gereist sind? Nicht wahr, es gefällt dir? Liebe Mutter, sagte Heinrich, so habe ich mir es doch nicht vorgestellt. Es ist ganz herrlich.[86]

Section 2 – Amorous Unification and Familial Transformation

With the appearance of Mathilde in the sixth chapter of the novel, the sense of amorous equilibrium that had maintained Heinrich's home family in its state of immanence seems to shift. Novalis signals this through a rare direct intervention of his narrator at the beginning of the chapter, which also summarizes the spatial dynamics I point to in the previous section:

[86] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 276.

> Heinrich war von Natur zum Dichter geboren. Mannichfaltige Zufälle schienen sich zu seiner Bildung zu vereinigen, und noch hatte nichts seine innere Regsamkeit gestört. Alles was er sah und hörte schien nur neue Riegel in ihm wegzuschieben, und neue Fenster in ihm zu öffnen. Er sah die Welt in ihren großen und abwechselnden Verhältnissen vor sich liegen. Noch war sie aber stumm, und ihre Seele, das Gespräch, noch nicht erwacht. Schon nahte sich ein Dichter, ein liebliches Mädchen an der Hand, um durch Laute der Muttersprache und durch Berührung eines süßen zärtlichen Mundes, die blöden Lippen aufzuschließen, und den einfachen Accord in unendliche Melodien zu entfalten.[87]

As the narrator promises, Mathilde will "unlock" Heinrich's silent mouth with a kiss, awakening the soul of the world (*Weltseele*!) that appears locked within him. In this sense, the narrator suggests the advent of a new world, the externalization of the tremendous cosmos that has been accumulating inside of Heinrich. As the daughter of the poet Klingsohr and the girl of the blue flower, Mathilde promises to become a mediator of Heinrich's poetic destiny, the life he was born for, and to help him speak out his world, unfolding the "einfachen Accord" of his small family into "unendliche[] Melodien." Through the correspondence between Heinrich's dream and diegetic reality, and of his poetic destiny with its this-worldly manifestation instituted by the appearance of Mathilde, the novel breaks with the formal paradigm that had been held in place by Heinrich's mother, which relied on a strict separation between (symbolic) reflection and narrative causality. Heinrich acts upon his desire for Mathilde; he views her as the girl of the blue flower, "de[n] sichtbare[n] Geist des Gesanges," and "eine würdige Tochter ihres Vaters" (the court poet, Klingsohr) and immediately falls in love with her.[88]

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[87] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 267-68.

[88] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 277. The literal and symbolic levels are still somewhat held apart: Heinrich becomes Klingsohr's student and Mathilde's lover, but Mathilde is not portrayed actually becoming his poetic muse and her relationship to the blue flower remains a private insight for Heinrich. Heinrich's premonition that she will dissolve him into music ("Sie wird mich in Musik auflösen") does not bear out in this part of the novel, but is constructed as an *Erwartung* that must be fulfilled in the second half of the novel.

In comparison with the women of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, Mathilde appears as a combination of Mariane, the poetic muse, and Natalie, the ideal beloved. Novalis presents Mathilde much like Natalie, who comes to Wilhelm first as a seemingly divine (Amazonian) apparition while he lies wounded after an ambush, and then only appears to him again much later as the embodiment of a different sort of image, Wilhelm's beloved painting, *Der kranke Königssohn*. Mathilde's face similarly appeared to Heinrich first in an apparitional dream – in the center of the blue flower – before he meets her in reality. Similarly to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre,* this meeting of image and reality in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* is not intentionally sought out by the protagonist, but happens once again by poetic coincidence (and by external, "familial" interventions). However, there is also an important difference between these encounters. The appearance of the painting of *Der kranke Königssohn* before Wilhelm's crucial meeting with Natalie symbolically presents her as the fulfillment of the sick prince's wish (with which Wilhelm had identified himself since his childhood), and thus as the cure for both Wilhelm's lovesickness and his overidentification with the painting.[89] And yet, though the painting symbolizes Wilhelm's relationship to Natalie (specifically the erotic significance she holds for him), the coincidence of *Bild* and *Wirklichkeit* functions in the novel as the final overcoming of Wilhelm's conflation of aesthetic and sexual wish-fulfillment: it frees him from his subjection to poetic enchantment. Thus, though image and reality suggestively coincide in Wilhelm's final wish-fulfillment, they only do so in order to become more

[89] On the wider symbolism of the painting in the familial structures of the novel, see Hellmut Ammerlahn, *Imagination und Wahrheit: Goethes Künstler-Bildungsroman 'Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre'* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), 356-61.

thoroughly separated from one another. In Novalis's *Ofterdingen* by contrast, Mathilde is also Mariane, and a willing, idealized Mariane at that: she becomes his poetic muse.

Though Heinrich's affect – his desire, specifically – becomes exponentially more intense upon his meeting with Mathilde, Novalis avoids the threat of *Schwärmerei* by presenting the love between these two characters as externally authorized, not only symbolically, through the image of the blue flower, but familially, through the two lovers' parents.[90] Novalis represents Heinrich's attraction to Mathilde as a transformation of his love for his mother, who had been associated with the blue(?) flower (of Heinrich's father's dream) from the very beginning of the novel. In this regard, his (exogamous) love for Mathilde is modeled on an endogamous love relation. Moreover, Heinrich encounters Mathilde in his mother's city – and in fact *household* – of origin, which suggests that the union of the two lovers represents a coincidence between exogamy (i.e. the avoidance of incest through marriage outside the family) and endogamy (intra-familial love and/or marriage), only endogamy at a higher level. Novalis narratively stages Heinrich's coupling with Mathilde as a handoff between parents, who form the larger endogamous context for their relationship: Heinrich's mother delivers him into the hands of Klingsohr and the arms of Mathilde, in her own father Schwaning's house. Schwaning's house forms the familial basis for the two lovers' coupling: though Mathilde and Klingsohr are not blood relations of Heinrich and his mother, they are represented as members of the same extended familial household. In this sense, we can speak of a transformation or transfer from one familial triad to another (Heinrich becomes bonded to Mathilde and Klingsohr instead of his mother) that actually occurs within the context of a higher familial unity guaranteed by

[90] This is very similar to Wilhelm's relationship to Natalie, which is decided for him by the Society of the Tower, the "economical" family that Novalis rejects.

Schwaning – his house, as Kittler fails to acknowledge, represents a sort of clan.[91] Thus, though Heinrich might be seen to conflate the heterocosm and reality and become a potential *Schwärmer* when he identifies Mathilde as the girl of the blue flower, the two lovers' coupling (as well as her status as the mediator of Heinrich's becoming-a-poet) is so intensely overdetermined on the level of the main plot that it appears destined rather than just chosen.

In Heinrich's new familial configuration, Klingsohr takes on a position similar to that of Heinrich's mother, as the enabler of discursive and amorous bonds. Emphasizing the efficacy of the new familial triad, which is no longer erotically muted as it was with Heinrich's mother, Novalis portrays Klingsohr unofficially marrying Heinrich and Mathilde at the end of the seventh chapter, constituting the three as a family unit: "Sie umschlangen sich zugleich. Klingsohr faßte sie in seine Arme. Meine Kinder, rief er, seyd einander treu bis in den Tod! Liebe und Treue werden euer Leben zur ewigen Poesie machen."[92] Klingsohr's embrace gives the love between Heinrich and Mathilde a connection to the poetic arts that proceeds through an identification of life, love, and poetry.[93] Moreover, Heinrich and Mathilde are connected to poetry in a practical sense, as pupils and children of Klingsohr, a connection that once again (from a different angle: sibling-sibling) makes their relationship appear endogamous. Triadic

[91] If we think of this in terms of triads, we can see the mother's return to Schwaning as (re-)constitutive of an older triad (Schwaning and Heinrich's parents), of which one member is merely absent. Heinrich's mother's bonding to her father replaces her bond with Heinrich, who then becomes free for the triad with Klingsohr and Mathilde. While it may seem excessive to think at this level of formalism, the triadic scheme seems to me to be motivated in several ways: as a form of (religious) trinitarianism which is also mirrored in the Holy Family (Novalis for example plans for both familial triads and a "Dreyeiniges Mädchen" [*NS*, 1: 342]); and as an echo of triadic galvanic chains, which Novalis uses in Klingsohr's fairy tale as a means of (re-)igniting life in lifeless characters (e.g., in the awakening of Freya [*NS*, 1: 310]). Kittler also makes a strong case for the mother in Klingsohr's fairy tale as the implicit third term in each of the *three* marriages – he however views the mother's presence as an *exclusion*. See Kittler, "Die Irrwege des Eros," 437 and 443.

[92] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 284. As Novalis seems keen to emphasize, this gesture also renders the marriage endogamous.

[93] Heinrich and Mathilde are connected to one another in three key moments proceeding from each term in the triad: Heinrich's oath (*NS*, 1: 277-78), Klingsohr's embrace, and Mathilde's oath, which I discuss below. See note 107 below for the full quotation of Heinrich's oath.

gestural *tableaux* of these three characters recur throughout the chapters at Augsburg: Heinrich speaks to Klingsohr while holding Mathilde's hand;[94] he embraces him immediately upon waking from his troubling dream of Mathilde's death;[95] and Klingsohr creates the space for Heinrich and Mathilde's tête-à-tête conversation in the eighth chapter. In all of these scenes, erotic and discursive transmission coincide with one another in gestural configurations that emphasize a triadic structure of both love and communication, and thus the formation of a new familial frame that operates as another "kleine Welt" within the narrative.

2.1 – Love, Judgement, and the Question of the *Urgrund*

With this coupling – not only of Heinrich and Mathilde, but of Heinrich and poetry through Klingsohr – the novel appears to have moved out of the space of the maternal suspension of desire and the deferral of meaning (which was a result of Heinrich's undifferentiated bond to his mother), and into that of *Urteil*, conceived of as both an erotic and philosophical act.[96] In his important study on the metaphysics of marriage in German Romanticism and Idealism, Adrian Daub has pointed to the use of the term "copulation" for both marriage and philosophical judgement, analyzing a wider Romantic-Idealist discourse that emerges the parallel between these forms. As Daub notes, writers such as Hölderlin, Fichte, and the young Hegel, contemporaries of Novalis, conceived of marriage and judgement alike as modes of representing

[94] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 276. "Im Feuer des Gesprächs ergriff er unvermerkt ihre Hand, und sie konnte nicht umhin, manches was er sagte, mit einem kleinen Druck zu bestätigen."
[95] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 279. "Klingsohr stand vor seinem Bette, und bot ihm freundlich guten Morgen. Er ward munter und fiel Klingsohr um den Hals. Das gilt euch nicht, sagte Schwaning. Heinrich lächelte und verborg sein Erröthen an den Wangen seiner Mutter." This example shows a more complex familial constellation in which Heinrich transfers his love for Mathilde (who is not present in the room, only in the dream) onto various parental figures.
[96] We can here recall that up until this point, the countless heterocosmic reflections in *Die Erwartung* seem to have been delaying *Urteil* in the space of *Vor-Urteil*.

simultaneously the division and reflective recovery of a pre-existing (unrepresentable) metaphysical unity – the Absolute.[97] As Daub insightfully notes, Novalis, somewhat differently from his contemporaries, poses love as an *alternative* to judgement.[98] While I agree with this point, I read Novalis's conception of love in a slightly different way than Daub does (as an expression of a monistic metaphysics). While love in Novalis's work may represent a *drive* toward metaphysical unity that becomes manifest in the relationship among lover and beloved, my sense is that it does not restore this unity through the unification of lovers, nor does the possibility of amorous unification "prove" that love has a metaphysical basis. Rather, for Novalis love is a modality of reflection. It is an activity of simultaneous unification and multiplication (i.e., both union and procreation) that prevents total unification even while seemingly moving toward it: love brings together the lovers only to create thirds, to perpetuate the process of love. As I read it, love is therefore at the borderline of being a metaphysically unifying concept for Novalis. It represents a desire for or drive toward, but not necessarily the existence of, what Novalis refers to in the *Fichte-Studien* as the unrepresentable "higher sphere" of *Schweben* that relates the spheres of Being (the Absolute) and reflection to one another, making possible the self's recognition of itself in reflection – which in the case of love is represented as a *seemingly* predestined recognition between self and other.[99] The relation between the higher sphere and the

[97] As Daub puts it, summarizing broadly: "In judging, a preexisting *hen kai pan* (we will encounter it as Seyn) was divided through the logical 'connecting word' of the copula. Self and other as well as symbolic logic co-originate in this first division: the self and the other, because it is the positing of an I that first subdivides Seyn into the I and the Not-I; symbolic logic, because predication in the shape of a judgment (of the type 'A is b') presupposes the synthetic unity that it nonetheless necessarily severs (into A and b, in this case). Any synthetic work the judgment is able to perform ('synthetic' in the simple sense of bringing together, rather than the Kantian sense, since analytic judgments are capable of this as well) thus both feeds on an antecedent unity and obscures that unity" Daub, *Uncivil Unions*, 76.

[98] As Daub contends, "love, marriage, and family are ways of coding and decoding that provide richer access to the outside world than the mechanistic determinations of propositional judgement." Daub, *Uncivil Unions*, 116.

[99] As Novalis writes in a much-quoted fragment, "Statt N[icht]-I[ch] – Du" (*NS*, 3: 430).

amorous (reflective) bond is represented in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* through Heinrich's "suspended" relationship with his mother, which cannot become sexual, and yet which *seems* to enable and form the template for his relationship with Mathilde, which does become explicitly erotic. Both women are incarnations of love. In this sense, what Daub writes about love as "tautological," i.e., as furnishing its own ground, is true:

> Love is at base both the result and the condition of the I/Thou distinction – it allows for recognition and difference at once. Love is, in a very straightforward sense, "between" two separate things, and it to some extent annuls or suspends their separation. On the other hand, however, Novalis recurs to love as an *Urgrund*, as something that subtends all reality, allowing for the recognition of sameness between two separate entities in the first place. Paradoxically, then, love (as ground) would furnish the basis for love (as the bringing together of I and Thou).[100]

While Daub develops his analysis primarily in relation to Novalis's fragment collection *Glauben und Liebe*, applying it to the representativeness of the king and queen's marriage relative to the Prussian *Volk*, the passage I quote here can equally (and perhaps even more accurately) be read as a description of the familial transformation of love in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. Without the triadic familial framework (which I see as an essential component of Novalis's presentation), love in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* reproduces the paradoxes of judgement: it is possible to read the relationship between Heinrich's mother and Mathilde as one of substitution (and thus a recurrence to the structure of judgement). Having facilitated the connection between Heinrich and Mathilde, the mother disappears from the narrative after her final appearance after

[100] Daub, *Uncivil Unions*, 113. Tautology, as I take it, is simply another way of conceiving the triad. Novalis models all of his tautologies on Fichte's *Ich=Ich*, which, he notes in the *Fichte-Studien*, is a statement of identity that is grammatically "dreyfach idem," but also "ein philosophischer Parallelismus": it is one, two, and three simultaneously (Novalis, *NS*, 2: 104). We can conceive of the triad as representing various different constellations of unities in plurality (and Novalis indeed never settles on just one of these): subject-object-sign; thesis-antithesis-synthesis; self-world-poetry; life-death-poetry; father-mother-child (or other familial configurations); and so forth. For an analysis of tautology, but in the form of "Poesie ist Poesie" as a key form of Novalis's poetics and philosophy (and as a direct response to Fichte's *Ich=Ich*), see Gabriel Trop, *Poetry as a Way of Life*, 123-142.

Heinrich's dream of Mathilde's death.[101] In this sense, Heinrich's maternal origin – the *Urgrund* of love – appears to become obscured by the new relationship she makes possible. On the other hand, both women belong to a larger and more complex familial household, in which the movement from the mother to Mathilde is not the erasure of an *Urgrund*, but the revelation of an even higher one (in this case represented by Schwaning as the patriarch of the clan) that unites two small familial constellations. Within this larger household, there is a sense of interchangeability between love objects, which become curiously superimposed as they mutually reflect one another. Mathilde is presented as a transformation of the mother (and therefore of love) just as much as she can be understood as the embodiment of music and the earthly version of the blue flower; in this sense, her presence does not so much obscure that of Heinrich's mother, but transforms Heinrich's embrace of the "alte Welt" (of the mother) into an embrace of the "neue Welt" that opens itself to him through his love for Mathilde.[102] Within the larger household, this new world *is* also the old world, and both women are equal embodiments of love, which is the relation between members of the family and not an attribute of a specific person in isolation, though it also produces the identities of specific persons as roles within the family. Though forming distinct worlds (and therefore also contexts for love and desire), familial triads reflect and transform into one another to the degree that they serve as vehicles for the same set of amorous forces. Within this shifting familial framework, the idea of an *Urgrund* becomes

[101] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 279.

[102] The idea of love opening a new, higher world first comes up explicitly in the Atlantis fairy tale, after the princess's first meeting with the boy in the woods. Her feeling closely resembles Heinrich's state at the beginning of the novel, but associated with love rather than poetry (which her love explicitly distances her from, only to become reunited with it again at the end of the tale): "Es konnte vor der einzigen helldunklen wunderbar beweglichen Empfindung einer neuen Welt, kein eigentlicher Gedanke in ihr entstehen. Ein magischer Schleyer dehnte sich in weiten Falten um ihr klares Bewußtseyn. Es war ihr, als würde sie sich, wenn er aufgeschlagen würde, in einer überirdischen Welt befinden" (Novalis, *NS*, 1: 217).

increasingly contingent. It can be guaranteed by certain master terms (heads of household, in the case of the family), but only temporarily. Roles are perpetually shifting as relationships are formed and dissolved, through the cycles of birth, death, marriage, aging, and so forth.

For Novalis, love, like poetry, is not only unifying, but is transformative and self-reproducing: as pure relation, in fact, pure attraction, it makes all relations possible and can only be represented in the shifting and multiplication of relations. For this reason, the increasing interchangeability and transfer of familial roles is key to Novalis's poetics of amorous-poetic transformation. In pair of sonnets that opens the novel (its "Zueignung"), poetry appears in the present world "in ewigen Verwandlungen" that are presented as the transformations of love relations (15).[103] These transformations begin with the deictic transformation of the speaker's mother (the origin of a "Trieb") into a beloved, and culminate with a metaphorical transformation of the transforming power of song itself into a mother, at whose breast the speaker is carried, seemingly into the heavens.[104] In these poems, it is not only the mother who becomes a beloved and poetry, but the speaker himself who moves between states: of childhood and adulthood (and back), from the indefiniteness of an amorous-poetic *Trieb* to love for a

[103] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 193.

[104] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 193. In the first sonnet, the addressed "Du" of the poem is presented first as the maternal originator of a poetic "Trieb" to enter the world, whose love is a protection throughout all of earthly life: e.g., "Mit deiner Hand ergriff mich ein Vertrauen, / Das sicher mich durch alle Stürme trägt" (3-4). Further: "Ist nicht mein Herz und Leben ewig Dein? / Und schirmt mich deine Liebe nicht auf Erden?" (10-11). In the final stanza of the same sonnet, the lyrical Thou becomes the beloved, a poetic muse, "Denn Du, Geliebte, willst die Muse werden, / Und stiller Schutzgeist meiner Dichtung seyn" (13-14). The second sonnet makes explicit the connection between the mother-beloved and song as a power of transformation: "In ewigen Verwandlungen begrüßt / Uns des Gesangs geheime Macht hienieden" (1-2); the transformation of the mother into the beloved through the deictic shifting of the lyrical "Du" is hereby presented as the earthly instantiation of the transforming power of music. This secret power once again appears in a maternal guise ("An ihrem vollen Busen trank ich Leben" [9]), but this time infantilizes the poetic speaker, who seemed to have grown up at the end of the first sonnet. The second sonnet closes with an image that recalls the Madonna and child: "Da sah ich sie als Engel zu mir schweben, / Und flog, erwacht, in ihrem Arm dahin" (13-14). In the arms of his angelic mother-beloved, the lyrical speaker is transported from sleep to waking, and from the present world into an uncertain "dahin" that seems to partake neither (or both) of the "hienieden" nor the "dort" with which the second sonnet opens. Rather, it suggests a Romantic floating between worlds.

beloved, from sleep to waking, and from the present world to a poetic realm in the arms of his Madonna-like poetic mother. Alice Kuzniar has argued that women in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* are possessors of poetic language and prefigure the transformations the male poet undergoes – rather than being reduced to dead, silent signifiers that enable the male poet's development (as some critics have argued), women in the novel represent "a paradigm of ongoing female metamorphosis[,] [which] is held up to the protagonist as a model for development more viable than that of phallocentric, teleological *Bildung*."[105] As I would add, these metamorphoses are themselves always relationally constructed, through familial and erotic relationships that are also (increasingly) poetic relationships. Women are not only poetic models for an alternate form of *Bildung* (namely, metamorphosis), but attractors for Heinrich, whose own roles are formed specifically through his relationships with them.[106]

While I have used the relationship between the mother and Mathilde to represent the relationship between the unattainable "higher sphere" of Novalis's *Fichte-Studien* and relationships internal to reflection, neither of these women is entirely equivalent to a metaphysical concept for Novalis, especially as they have appeared thus far in the narrative: as I have argued, the mother unifies one "kleine Welt" (Heinrich's nuclear family) and does not allow reflection and reality to coincide. Mathilde, too, remains a finite beloved in *Die Erwartung*, regardless of Novalis's prophetic dream, and is not ontologically equivalent to the

[105] Kuzniar, "Hearing Woman's Voices," 1202. Kuzniar here explicitly argues against Kittler's interpretation of the silencing of women in Friedrich Kittler, *Aufschreibesysteme 1800/1900* (München: Fink, 1985).
[106] Both Alice Kuzniar and James Hodkinson, who write about feminine *Bildung* and genius, downplay the role of eroticism in the processes they analyze, casting women primarily as prototypes and/or teachers which the protagonist must emulate. As I am arguing here, this sort of emulation is unthinkable for Novalis without the mediating power of love, which serves as the driver of these processes. If we are, as Hodkinson suggests, truly moving "beyond gender," we must also move beyond the individual, and to an analysis of the absoluteness of the reflective amorous bond and the familial generations it produces. See James Hodkinson, "Genius Beyond Gender: Novalis, Women, and the Art of Shapeshifting," *Modern Language Review* 96, no. 2 (2001): 103-115.

blue flower (in fact, Heinrich does not even tell her about the blue flower). Thus, despite the sense of unification between Heinrich and Mathilde, Novalis still carefully maintains the boundaries of the novel's overarching sense of diegetic reality, which Heinrich never transgresses.[107]

2.2 – Amorous Unification and Reflexive Multiplication

While Klingsohr plays an important role in facilitating Heinrich's and Mathilde's relationship (as their father and teacher) in the new familial triad, Novalis also repeatedly undermines his role in favor of a feminine, maternal lineage – not least, perhaps, because Klingsohr is also a stand-in for Goethe, whom Novalis pits his novel against.[108] It is Klingsohr who contends that "die Liebe ist stumm, nur die Poesie kann für sie sprechen" while Mathilde enters the room, thereby suggesting a division of labor between the male poet (who stands for *Kunstpoesie*) and the female lover/beloved, who symbolizes *Naturpoesie*.[109] As soon as Klingsohr leaves the room, however, Heinrich and Mathilde begin an extended amorous

[107] In other words, he never inaccurately or self-deceptively takes a representation for reality. Heinrich's oath, taken at the window before his dream of Mathilde's death, is significant in light of the later birth of Astralis, the sidereal human (which I discuss below): "Euch, ihr ewigen Gestirne, ihr stillen Wandrer, euch rufe ich zu Zeugen meines heiligen Schwurs an. Für Mathilden will ich leben, und ewige Treue soll mein Herz an das ihrige knüpfen. Auch mir bricht der Morgen eines neuen Tages an. Die Nacht ist vorüber. Ich zünde der aufgehenden Sonne mich selbst zum nieverglühenden Opfer an" (Novalis, *NS*, 1: 277-78). In Astralis's poem, "Zeugen" as witnessing is intimately tied to "Zeugen" as procreation; here, we might speak of the stars' witnessing of Heinrich's oath as a foreshadowing of their relationship to his and Mathilde's progeny.

[108] Kittler, for example, notes this, and also (unfortunately incorrectly) argues that Sylvester is Fichte. If anything, though I am skeptical of clear allegorizations, Sylvester represents Hemsterhuis, given the content of the conversation (the idea of *Gewissen*, which is directly taken from Hemsterhuis). See Kittler, "Heinrich von Ofterdingen as Data Feed," 108 and 119.

[109] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 287. The full passage: "Es ist recht übel, sagte Klingsohr, daß die Poesie einen besondern Namen hat, und die Dichter eine besondere Zunft ausmachen. Es ist gar nichts besonderes. Es ist die eigenthümliche Handlungsweise des menschlichen Geistes. Dichtet und trachtet nicht jeder Mensch in jeder Minute? – Eben trat Mathilde in's Zimmer, als Klingsohr noch sagte: Man betrachte nur die Liebe. Nirgends wird wohl die Nothwendigkeit der Poesie zum Bestand der Menschheit so klar, als in ihr. Die Liebe ist stumm, nur die Poesie kann für sie sprechen. Oder die Liebe ist selbst nichts, als die höchste Naturpoesie."

conversation, in which both are receptive and active, and neither is silent (we may also note that prior to his meeting with Mathilde, Heinrich, too, was described as "stumm"). This conversation represents a new form in the novel: Heinrich's and Mathilde's voices are separated neither by paragraph breaks nor by any narratorial interjections, but form an almost monologic discourse separated only by dashes. In the space of this conversation, the amorous couple seems to infinitely reflect itself, both coalescing into what appears as a single self-echoing voice, and unfolding into countless additional resonances that once again present love as being modeled on familial prototypes.

The sense of simultaneously formal and erotic unification that Novalis conjures in Heinrich's and Mathilde's amorous conversation is in dialogue with a debate between Herder and Hemsterhuis on the nature of love (and desire) as a drive toward unification. Herder published his own translation of Hemsterhuis's "Letter on Desires" in *Der Teutsche Merkur* in 1781, followed by his own essay, "Liebe und Selbstheit," which he presented as a "Nachtrag" to the letter (despite it being longer than the letter itself).[110] While in his "Letter on Desires" Hemsterhuis argues that "the absolute goal of the soul, when it desires, is the most intimate and perfect union of its essence with that of the desired object," Herder objects, noting that such a perfect union would destroy the soul altogether – love must therefore have boundaries.[111] As Herder contends, "unser isolirtes einzelnes Daseyn" is both the boundary and the ground for love: "Wir sind einzelne Wesen, und müssen es seyn, wenn wir nicht den Grund alles Genusses, unser eigenes Bewußtseyn, über den Genuß aufgeben, und uns selbst verliehren wollten, um uns

[110] See Gabriel Trop, "Hemsterhuis as Provocation," 44-48 for details on the publication history, as well as the broader trend of Hemsterhuis-reception that Herder's *Nachtrag* gave rise to.
[111] Hemsterhuis, "Letter on Desires," 80.

in einem andern Wesen, das doch nie wir selbst sind, wieder zu finden."[112] For Novalis, the self is not the basis for love, desire, or enjoyment, even if love and desire represent, as Herder highlights, a recognition of the self in the other, enabling a certain (relational) construction of selfhood. Between Heinrich and Mathilde, love also represents the recognition of a higher familial *Grund* that transcends their specific relationship; this *Grund* acts as a third term that both makes possible their reflective unification and portrays this unification as a simultaneous multiplication (of reflection itself). Novalis presents Heinrich's and Mathilde's love – which quite literally represents a mixing of voices, even consciousnesses – through a simultaneous proliferation of reflections, through which the couple's relationship appears as an instantiation of a more universal force of love.

Heinrich's and Mathilde's amorous conversation circles around the eternal nature of love, of which Mathilde's dead mother serves as an important representation. In this sense, too, the mother as *Urgrund* remains present as a third term in the couple's amorous dyad, the guarantor of their love as more than just a finite and temporary relation, but also as an indicator of the coincidence of endogamy and exogamy.[113] Mathilde relates the death of her mother to Heinrich, and her mother's image soon becomes dissolved into that of Mary, "die himmlische Mutter," to whom Mathilde prays, and Mary in turn becomes the image Heinrich sees in Mathilde.[114] Heinrich prays to Mathilde as "die Heilige, die meine Wünsche zu Gott bringt," and instead of her earthly form, he sees a "wunderbare[s] Bild[,] [dass] deine Gestalt durchdringt und mir

[112] Herder, "Liebe und Selbstheit," 337-338.
[113] Klingsohr is only important here as her eternal devotee, who mourns her even after many years.
[114] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 288. Their conversation also ends with an invocation of Mathilde's mother as the guarantor of the couple's eternal love. "Ach! Schwör es mir noch einmal, daß du ewig mein bist; die Liebe ist eine endlose Wiederholung. – Ja, Heinrich, ich schwöre ewig dein zu seyn, bey der unsichtbaren Gegenwart meiner guten Mutter. – Ich schwöre ewig dein zu seyn, Mathilde, so wahr die Liebe die Gegenwart Gottes bey uns ist. Eine lange Umarmung, unzählige Küsse besiegelten den ewigen Bund des seligen Paars" (*NS*, 1: 289-90).

überall entgegen leuchtet," an "ewiges Urbild" that Mathilde also sees in him.[115] Both lovers are nested in a series of reflections, images of an endless series of prototypes that both see in one another. As an endlessly reflective dyad, the couple gestures out from itself (and also from love to religion) while becoming monologically unified, symbolizing a higher *Urbild* that forms its third term, a God that is both masculine and feminine, both an image and a desired Absolute. As Alice Kuzniar has noted, prior to this conversation, Novalis already presents both Heinrich and Mathilde as echoes.[116] Mathilde's voice is "wie ein fernes Echo"[117] while Heinrich conceives himself as "das Echo, der Spiegel des ihrigen [Wesens]."[118] Rather than reading Mathilde as a "pure voice, without an origin," and thus as the originless voice that Heinrich must emulate, as Kuzniar does, we might in this context see their mutual echoic status as an indication of their membership in (and representativeness of) what they perceive as an absolute family of love, which reflects and reproduces itself continually, both biologically and symbolically. In this family, love is the bond, the force of both attraction and reproduction, that both unites and makes possible the countless reflections of parents and children, lovers and beloveds, divinities, saints, and worshipers, thereby appearing (as Heinrich puts it at the end of the conversation) as "eine endlose Wiederholung," a phrase that reminds us of the tautological quality of love.[119] By portraying Mathilde and Heinrich as members of this family of love, and their coupling as its reflective multiplication, Novalis presents their relationship not as a stabilization of love into a single finite relationship, but as a simultaneous unification and dispersal that maintains love as a

[115] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 289. Mathilde: "Ich verstehe dich, lieber Heinrich, denn ich sehe etwas Ähnliches, wenn ich dich anschaue."
[116] Kuzniar, "Hearing Woman's Voices," 1201.
[117] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 271.
[118] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 277.
[119] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 289-90.

mobile – and increasingly universal – force. In this sense, the love between Heinrich and Mathilde reproduces the sense of mobility between representations that Heinrich's mother had guaranteed before his arrival in Augsburg, though their love is consummated in a mixing of voices and beings, rather than suspended in the immanence of the maternal sphere.[120]

2.3 – *Die Erfüllung*: Unbounding Worlds and Families

Though Heinrich and Mathilde envision their transfiguration and assumption into heaven through the "Flammenfittiche" of love in a manner that anticipates one of the several possible endings of Novalis's *Ofterdingen* with a "Verklärung," and thus a transfer between earthly and celestial worlds, their conversation does not identify love with poetry.[121] Nor does Heinrich reveal certain key details to Mathilde which would seal her identity as his poetic muse: their conversation does not confirm Mathilde's identity as the blue flower, nor does Heinrich tell her of his dream of her death and the magic word she says to him. Rather, in Heinrich's new familial triad, the distinction Klingsohr draws between love and poetry before Heinrich and Mathilde's tête-a-tête remains partially true. Though Mathilde (and the love between Heinrich and Mathilde) is not *silent*, we can observe a distinct familial division of labor between Klingsohr as poet-

[120] "Keinen Gedanken, keine Empfindung kann ich vor dir mehr geheim haben; du mußt alles wissen. Mein ganzes Wesen soll sich mit dem deinigen vermischen. Nur die grenzenloseste Hingebung kann meiner Liebe genügen. In ihr besteht sie ja. Sie ist ja ein geheimnißvolles Zusammenfließen unsers geheimsten und Daseyns" (Novalis, *NS*, 1: 289). Passionate love as a desire for complete mixture and the loss of one's own self seems only the other side of the coin to the immanence of Heinrich's loving relationship with his mother, which suspends desire to the degree that Heinrich is not yet fully differentiated from his mother. Novalis hereby presents affective states as dialectical moments in the production and dissolution of selfhood through relationships with others.

[121] Instead, it identifies love and religion, which could be seen as a third "absolute" structure in the novel, but which lies beyond the scope of this chapter. "Wer weiß, ob unsre Liebe nicht dereinst noch zu Flammenfittichen wird, die uns aufheben, und uns in unsre himmlische Heimath tragen, ehe das Alter und der Tod uns erreichen. Ist es nicht schon ein Wunder, daß du mein bist, daß ich dich in meinen Armen halte, daß du mich liebst und ewig mein sein willst? – Auch mir ist jetzt alles glaublich, und ich fühle ja so deutlich eine stille Flamme in mir lodern; wer weiß ob sie uns nicht verklärt, und die irdischen Banden allmählich auflöst" (Novalis, *NS*, 1: 289). For the plan of a "Verklärung" at the end of the novel, see Novalis, *NS*, 1: 340 and 344.

teacher and Mathilde as lover and beloved to Heinrich. This division is also formally present as the clear distinction between Mathilde's and Heinrich's near-monologue and the dialogue between Heinrich and Klingsohr on the subject of poetry (which preceded it), as well as Klingsohr's fairy tale, which occurs in the subsequent chapter. Though the familial triad of Heinrich-Mathilde-Klingsohr is both poetically and amorously efficacious, it appears not to be fully synthesized. Similarly, Novalis maintains the separation between levels of diegetic reality, throughout *Die Erwartung*: Klingsohr's fairy tale serves as a *mise-en-abyme* of the novel as a whole and depicts the crowning of Eros in an eternal kingdom, but its action is still clearly separated from the novel's primary level of diegetic reality, just as it was during the space of Heinrich's journey.[122] While they are parallel and harmonious as elements of one single family, love and poetry do not interpenetrate or become one, just as Mathilde and Heinrich only fantasize about a complete commingling of their selves.

In *Die Erwartung*, we can broadly summarize, Novalis constructs a parallel between poetry and love, portraying both as dynamic forms of reflection and eventually as symbolic members of one family (symbolized by Klingsohr and Mathilde). Formally speaking, the many embedded heterocosmic discourses reflect the main level of the plot, generating *Ahnungen*, but never pass over into it – Heinrich's heterocosmic desire remains suspended, and he never physically enters a fantastical world. Likewise, the many broken-up families Heinrich encounters on his journey remain separate from him and from one another. Though familial transformation is possible through coupling and marriage, symbolic familial relationships never become conflated with actual familial relations: Mathilde is suggested to resemble Heinrich's mother, as

[122] An analysis of Klingsohr's fairy tale remains beyond the scope of this chapter, but as I have noted, Kittler's reading of it serves as one of the theoretical springboards for my view of the novel.

well as her own mother, but they remain distinct characters. Heinrich's coupling with Mathilde mirrors the story of the miner, who similarly marries his teacher's daughter (who also dies), but the stories are not conflated with one another. It is not until the beginning of *Die Erfüllung*, the second part of the novel, that the distinction between levels of diegetic reality, as well as of families, and even of gendered and familial roles, begins to become blurred. *Die Erfüllung* opens with the implied death of Mathilde and the birth of Astralis, the celestial and possibly genderless "siderische[r] Mensch[]."[123] It is only in the opening of the second part of the novel that reflection (as parallel, resemblance) passes over into something different, into both unification and bifurcation of people (through procreation) and of worlds (poetic creation): it is only at this point that we can say that love and poetry transform reality itself and begin to transgress the boundaries Novalis carefully upheld throughout *Die Erwartung*.

Before diving into the analysis of Astralis's poem, I would like to briefly situate it in relation to the familial structures of the main narrative action in *Die Erfüllung*, and the possible endings of the novel. On a basic level, Astralis is implied to be the child of Mathilde and Heinrich, as Novalis's posthumous notes imply: "Heinrich und Mathildens wunderbares Kind" is planned to appear as a character at the end of the novel, with the reunion of the two lovers in "einer einfachen Familie."[124] Astralis thereby forms the third term in yet another familial triad, and as the child of Heinrich and Mathilde embodies amorous *and* poetic reflection's generative,

[123] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 341-42. From Novalis's posthumous notes: "Geburt des siderischen Menschen mit der ersten Umarmung Math[ildens] und Heinrichs. Dieses Wesen spricht nun immer zwischen den Kapiteln. Die Wunderwelt ist nun aufgethan." Tieck glosses it as follows in his accompanying report: "der Geist, welcher den Prolog in Versen hält, sollte nach jedem Kapitel wiederkehren […]. Durch dieses Mittel blieb die unsichtbare Welt mit dieser sichtbaren in ewiger Verknüpfung. Dieser sprechende Geist ist die Poesie selber, aber zugleich der siderische Mensch, der mit der Umarmung Heinrichs und Mathildens geboren ist" (Novalis, *NS*, 1: 360). I use gender neutral pronouns for Astralis because Novalis does not explicitly assign them a gender, but simply refers to them as a child, "Mensch," or "Wesen," and they are implied to be androgynous in the opening poem.
[124] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 345.

procreative power. This family is however far from complete at the beginning of *Die Erfüllung*, where we encounter Heinrich alone, in a perilous state analogous to (though far more disoriented than) the one we find him in at the beginning of *Die Erwartung*. In fact, he is not called Heinrich at all, but "der Pilgrimm," until the girl Zyane introduces him by name to Sylvester.[125] While this designation initially appears as an alienation of Heinrich's character, it is soon revealed as a role in yet another (pseudo-)familial configuration. Mathilde occupies the role of the mother and saint, and mysteriously speaks to Heinrich out of a tree, then appears to him in an enchanted "Strahl" that emanates from this same tree and heals him of his melancholy.[126] Though hereby reintroduced into the narrative, Heinrich's and Mathilde's bond has been recast from one of lovers to a religious and only symbolically familial constellation of "Pilger" and "Mutter" (i.e. the Virgin Mary) that crosses the boundaries between worlds in a manner that was not possible in *Die Erwartung*. Heinrich's vision is not a dream, a poem, or a tale (i.e., an inset held separate from the diegesis), but a bizarre and miraculous distortion of reality.[127] The effect of this distortion is not however one of disorientation (for Heinrich, at least), but one of reorientation. Heinrich experiences Mathilde's intimate yet far-removed presence as soothing, much like that of his mother in *Die Erwartung*:

> Der heilige Strahl hatte alle Schmerzen und Bekümmernisse aus seinem Herzen gesogen, so daß sein Gemüth wieder rein und leicht und sein Geist wieder frey und frölich war,

[125] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 319, 325.
[126] Mathilde speaks words that we might attribute to the Virgin Mary (who perhaps speaks ventriloquistically through her): "Ich habe mir diese Stätte ausersehn um mit meinem Kindlein hier zu wohnen. Laß mir ein starkes warmes Haus hier bauen. Mein Kindlein hat den Tod überwunden. Härme dich nicht – Ich bin bey dir" (Novalis, *NS*, 1: 321).
[127] The "Strahl" that emanates from the tree completely distorts the space-time continuum: "er sah durch den Strahl in eine ferne, kleine, wundersame Herrlichkeit hinein, welche nicht zu beschreiben, noch kunstreich mit Farben nachzubilden möglich gewesen wäre." This strange space seems to be held together not by physical forces, but by love: "alles was zu sehn war nicht gemacht, sondern, wie ein vollsaftiges Kraut, aus eigner Lustbegierde also gewachsen und zusammengekommen seyn" (Novalis, *NS*, 1: 321-22).

> wie vordem. Nichts war übriggeblieben, als ein stilles inniges Sehnen und ein wehmütiger Klang im Aller Innersten.[128]

We appear to have returned to the structure of muted and free-floating desire with which the novel began, with one important difference. As divine mother, Mathilde is still Heinrich's dead beloved, but she also becomes "Unsre Mutter": the mother of both Heinrich and the girl he meets under the tree, Zyane, indeed as divine Virgin, the mother of all.[129] It is Zyane who reveals to Heinrich that "Du hast mehr Eltern," in a statement that explicitly marks what we already intuit in the apparition of Mathilde as a confusion and increasing superimposition of different familial roles.[130] In this configuration, Heinrich appears in many guises simultaneously: as a symbolic father, but also sibling to Zyane (and a literal father to Astralis, though this is not discussed in the primary diegesis), as a mourning lover of Mathilde, and as a child of Mathilde, who is his divine Mother. In this sense, he occupies every possible familial role at once, but only in a symbolic fashion. Adrift in all of these superimposed familial roles, Heinrich remains primarily a pilgrim, both at home everywhere and always journeying homeward.[131] His muted, suspended desire, while regulated by Mathilde, is also mirrored by the simultaneous availability and unavailability of a familial configuration that would stabilize Heinrich's identity.

Though only a short fragment of *Die Erfüllung* was written, the text in its present state, together with Novalis's plans for the novel's second half, indicate that he planned for it to end with a familial unification. The shape of this family cannot be easily established. Among other

[128] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 322.
[129] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 325.
[130] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 325.
[131] The juxtaposition of family and home is key context for the famous quotation about returning home: "Wer war dein Vater? Der Graf von Hohenzollern. Den kenn' ich auch. Wohl mußt du ihn kennen, denn er ist auch dein Vater. Ich habe ja meinen Vater in Eysenach? Du hast mehr Eltern. Wo gehen wir denn hin? Immer nach Hause" (Novalis, *NS*, 1: 325).

things, Novalis's notes indicate a plan to reunite family members who had been portrayed as separated by death or distance in *Die Erwartung*: already in the first chapter, Zyane is revealed as the daughter of Marie von Hohenzollern, the hermit's deceased wife ("Maria," as Zyane calls her); everything points to an eventual reunion of this family when Heinrich meets the hermit again.[132] On the other hand, Novalis's superimposition of different stories and characters, who had already seemed to reflect one another in *Die Erwartung*, seems to challenge the idea of a straightforward unification of families along biological lines. He repeatedly suggests in *Die Erfüllung* that these reflective correspondences are actually familial lineages. Zyane for example, who like Zulima comes from the Orient and has lost a brother, already seems to know Heinrich's story: "Sie erzählt ihm seine eigne Geschichte – als hätt' ihr ihre Mutter einmal davon erzählt."[133] Unless Heinrich and Zyane share a mother (which is suggested to be the case), this is impossible. Zyane moreover insists that her father, Friedrich von Hohenzollern, is also Heinrich's father.[134] Even the inset narratives are to become part of the novel's expanding family:

> Klingsohr ist der König von Atlantis. Heinrichs Mutter ist Fantasie. Der Vater ist der Sinn. Schwaning ist der Mond, und der Antiquar ist der […] Bergmann […] auch das Eisen. Der Graf von Hohenzollern und die Kaufleute kommen auch wieder. Nur nicht zu streng allegorisch. Kayser Fridrich ist Arctur. Die Morgenländerinn ist auch die Poësie. Dreyeiniges Mädchen."[135]

Rather than strict allegory and exact identification, Novalis aims for a superimposition and interpenetration of roles and families in what no longer appears as an easily intelligible familial

[132] Novalis, *NS*, 325. The hermit also suggests this in *Die Erwartung*: "Wie lange wird es währen, so sehn wir uns wieder, und werden über unsre heutigen Reden lächeln. Ein himmlischer Tag wird uns umgeben, und wir werden uns freuen, daß wir einander in diesen Thälern der Prüfung freundlich begrüßten, und von gleichen Gesinnungen und Ahndungen beseelt werden" (Novalis, *NS*, 1: 266).
[133] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 343. The other details about Zyane are also set forth in these posthumous notes.
[134] See note 131 above.
[135] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 342.

structure (though triads remain important). Familial roles and correspondences that appeared to be only symbolic in *Die Erwartung* seem to be literalized here, but in this process, the structure of familial generation is completely confused, as is the very concept of personhood. How can Heinrich, for example, have two fathers? How can a girl be triune? There is a sense of lawlessness and chaos that emerges here, precisely through the attempt to make sense of the fascinating reflections that remained strictly separated into different worlds and families in the first half of the novel. Indeed, the complex cast of character roles in Klingsohr's fairy tale (which encompasses metals, human faculties, parental roles, royal offices, and mythological figures) seems to be the template for this chaotic mixture, which gives the impression of a disorienting and constantly shifting "Schauspiel" of different roles and characters.[136] As Novalis speculates in his fragments, "Wunderliche Mythologie. Die Mährchenwelt muß jezt recht oft durchscheinen. Die wirckl[iche] Welt selbst wie ein Mährchen angesehn."[137] Though on the one hand Novalis imagines the return of a simple familial triad at the end of the novel ("Das Buch schließt just umgekehrt wie das Märchen – *mit einer einfachen Familie*"[138]), he also suggests the exact opposite: "Das ganze Menschengeschlecht wird am Ende poëtisch. Neue goldne Zeit"[139]; and, even further, "Menschen, Thiere, Pflanzen, Steine, Gestirne, Flammen, Töne, Farben müssen hinten zusammen, wie Eine Familie […] oder Gesellsch[aft] wie Ein Geschlecht handeln und sprechen."[140] This version of the ending (which Tieck canonizes in his report), culminates with a

[136] I am here thinking of the theatrical references in Klingsohr's fairy tale, e.g., Fabel: "Das Innere wird offenbart, das Äußere verborgen. Der Vorhang wird sich bald heben, und das Schauspiel seinen Anfang nehmen" (Novalis, *NS*, 1: 310). Theatrical role-playing (which also returns us to *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*) would be one way of thinking of Novalis's play with different familial and character roles in his plans for the end of the novel.
[137] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 343.
[138] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 345.
[139] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 347.
[140] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 347.

cosmic marriage of the seasons, in which time and space themselves are overcome.[141] Where Kittler argues for a stark distinction between the family and the clan (*das Geschlecht*), and a movement from the latter to the former, I see an attempt to unite the two or to portray them as mutually imbricated structures of reflection, which is indicated by the equal possibility of these two possible endings.[142]

2.4 – Heinrich-Mathilde-Astralis: Familial Triad and Reflective Chaos

It is from this standpoint that we can turn to Astralis's poem, which most concentratedly articulates the logic of unity and multiplicity, of ordering and confusion, represented in the many variations on the family and the world in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*.[143] In this poem, the opening to *Die Erfüllung*, Novalis explicitly portrays Astralis's birth as a coincidence of unification and multiplication that anticipates the two possibilities for the family at the end of the novel. Interestingly, Astralis remains excluded from the main narrative in the novel, serving as a poetic speaker of the prologue, but is never mentioned in Novalis's plans for the end of the novel (aside from the possible ending with a simple familial triad). Instead of including Astralis in the

[141] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 355 (Novalis's version) and 369 (Tieck's reconstruction).
[142] This interpretation becomes especially pronounced in Friedrich Kittler, "Poet, Mother, Child." In more modern (and perhaps accurate) terms than a conflation of endogamy and exogamy, we can call this an identification of family and kinship structures. Kinship is generally theorized as a form of familial relation that exceeds the nuclear family, and may also encompass relationships beyond those of biological generation and siblinghood. See Heidi Schlipphacke, *Aesthetics of Kinship*, 15-18, for a discussion relating contemporary theories of kinship and the family to the eighteenth-century context. Novalis's increasingly semiotic and formalistic representation of the family seems to move even past this idea, into the realm of pure fiction, fairy tale, and mythology. The relationship between Novalis's idea of the *Geschlecht* or of the clan and the idea of kinship (as theorized in recent decades) is something I would hope to unpack in greater detail in further iterations of this project.
[143] This poem has received relatively less scholarly attention than Klingsohr's fairy tale and other prominent episodes in the novel, and is typically read primarily for its mythological content, not for the philosophical/poetic structures I track here. See for example Sophia Vietor, *Astralis von Novalis: Handschrift – Text – Werk* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2001); Edith Borchardt, "The 'Astralis'-Poem by Novalis as Creation Myth," in *Modes of the Fantastic: Selected Essays from the Twelfth International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts*, ed. Robert A. Latham and Robert A. Collins (Westport, Conn. and London: Greenwood, 1995), 129-136.

narrative, Novalis plans for "Eingangs und Schlußgedichte und Überschriften jedes Capitels. Zwischen jedem Capitel spricht die Poësie" – Astralis, as the surrounding notes suggest, is to be the speaker of these poems as well.[144] Novalis thus places Astralis in an explicitly parergonal position relative to the novel as a whole: they and their poem function as a connector that is simultaneously included and excluded from the novel.[145] Just as the first prologue, the "Zueignung" that opened *Die Erwartung*, had linked Heinrich's family of origin to his new family in Augsburg through its portrayal of the transformation of the mother into the beloved (and the power of poetry), so too does the Astralis poem make connections between distinct elements of the narrative – only it does so at a higher level. Astralis's poem acts as a threshold connecting the first and second parts of the novel:[146] it recounts the unnarrated events of Astralis's birth and awakening as well as Mathilde's death, which never appear in the primary level of the diegesis, and thereby forms the sole link between the otherwise discontinuous halves of the novel. Moreover, Astralis melds the formerly distinct realms of the narrative, blending "heterocosmic" (i.e., embedded, distinctly "fictional") elements with what had been portrayed until now as the primary level of diegetic reality in *Die Erwartung*.[147] This strategy paves the way for the increased interpenetration of the primary diegesis with inset poetic elements in the second half of the novel. While it performs a connective function, Astralis's poem is itself divided into two halves: a first half that recapitulates *Die Erwartung* and describes the otherwise

[144] Novalis *NS*, 1: 341. Also see note 123 above.
[145] I define the *parergon*, with Derrida, as a framing element that is both an ornamentation to the work, and an "hors-d'oeuvre" or "by-work" (which appears to be a translation of *Beiwerk*). Jacques Derrida, "The Parergon," *October* 9 (Summer 1979): 3-41.
[146] In the fragmentary plans for the second part of the novel, Novalis describes the poem and its setting as "*Ein Kloster*. höchst wunderbar, wie ein Eingang ins Paradies" (Novalis, *NS*, 1: 340).
[147] I discuss the references to Klingsohr's fairy tale below, but the references to the primary narrative are even more obvious: e.g., "Denkt an den Kuß nach aufgehobnen Tisch" (24). Novalis, *NS*, 1: 317.

unnarrated events through the aforementioned combination of elements, and another half that portrays the birth of a "neue Welt" (47), which looks ahead to *Die Erfüllung*.[148]

Astralis also fulfills a double function within the familial triad. As personified *Poesie*, Astralis would seem to pre-exist the relationship that results in their birth, forming both its ground *and* its outcome (as its progeny and *Bild*).[149] Directly addressing the reader, Astralis notes their presence in the first meeting of the lovers in Augsburg, "Ihr kennt mich nicht und saht mich werden – / Wart ihr nicht Zeugen, wie ich noch / Nachtwandler mich zum erstenmale traf / An jenem frohen Abend?" (13-16).[150] Novalis's use of first-person pronouns makes possible a reading of Heinrich and Mathilde not as separate people at all, but as reflections of one consciousness, that of Astralis, which however never appears in the novel. In this sense, the poem can also be read as a rewriting – along amorous and poetic lines – of the triplicity of Fichte's *Ich=Ich* as a familial triad (and, I note in passing, as a rewriting of the holy Trinity).[151] The birth of Astralis is characterized by the same problems as the Fichtean *Ich=Ich*, which Novalis calls a "Scheinsatz" in the *Fichte-Studien.*[152] As the child of Heinrich and Mathilde, Astralis comes into being through their union. In this sense, they are the *result* of the unification

[148] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 318. The two halves of the poem are almost equivalent: its first half covers lines 1-46 and its second lines 47-90.
[149] Since Astralis is the sidereal human, we might imagine this *Bild* as a *Sternbild*, as a composite image formed of points, an idea suggested by their affinity to the Phoenix from Klingsohr's fairy tale, who also appears once in the tale as a constellation. When Fabel is in the underworld, she sees the Phoenix in this form: "Sie sah durch die Öffnung hinaus, und erblickte das Sternbild des Phönixes" (Novalis, *NS*, 1: 302).
[150] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 317.
[151] This would not be the only time Novalis rewrites the Trinity. He does so already in "Die Christenheit oder Europa" (1799) a speech composed in enthusiastic response to Schleiermacher's *Reden*. "Das Christenthum ist dreyfacher Gestalt. Eine ist das Zeugungselement der Religion, als Freude an aller Religion. Eine das Mittlerthum überhaupt, als Glaube an die Allfähigkeit alles Irdischen, Wein und Brod des ewigen Lebens zu seyn. Eine der Glaube an Christus, seine Mutter und die Heiligen. Wählt welche ihr wollt, wählt alle drei, es ist gleichviel, ihr werdet damit Christen und Mitglieder einer einzigen, ewigen, unaussprechlich glücklichen Gemeinde." See Novalis, *NS*, 3: 523.
[152] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 104.

of two reflected elements, which reproduce (semiotically and physically) to produce a third, which becomes the image of their unity: "Nicht einzeln mehr nur Heinrich und Mathilde / Vereinten Beide sich zu Einem Bilde. – / Ich hob mich nun gen Himmel neugebohren" (40-42).[153] Novalis similarly conceives of consciousness as a *Bild* separate from Being in the *Fichte-Studien*.[154] Though Astralis as image is "one," this image merely represents a transformation of the amorous dyad into a different kind of dyad: that between amorous unification and its image.[155] This dyadic separation coincides with the creation of a "neue Welt" (47), and is the transition-point in the poem. It is marked by a reversal of the cosmic order, the darkening of the sun, and the transformation of the world into a grave (88). We might here recall that in the *Fichte-Studien*, Novalis conceives of the *Scheinsatz* as a "Nichtseyn."[156] Though initially the image of the two lovers' unification, the birth of Astralis also seemingly results in their separation into Being and Non-Being, which is signalled by Mathilde's death.[157] (As should be clear however based on the death of Mathilde rather than Astralis, there is no direct line to be drawn from Novalis's *Fichte-Studien* to this poem; rather, the problems of reflection and identification are evoked only to be set into motion in different and unexpected ways.)

While Astralis is the *Bild* of the two lovers (and thus the *result*[158] of their union), they are also the consciousness, and moreover the "Mittelpunkt" and "Quell" of all desire (*Sehnsucht*)

[153] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 318.
[154] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 106.
[155] Which is also signalled by Astralis's position outside the narrative, as parergon.
[156] "wir stellen es durch sein Nichtseyn, durch ein Nichtidentisches vor – *Zeichen*" (Novalis, *NS*, 2: 104).
[157] As implied in the end of the first part of the poem: "Ich hob mich nun gen Himmel neugebohren, / Vollendet war das irrdische Geschick / Im seligen Verklärungsaugenblick, / Es hatte nun die Zeit ihr Recht verlohren / Und forderte, was sie geliehn, zurück" (42-46). Novalis, *NS*, 1: 318.
[158] Manfred Frank analyzes the role of the origin as *Resultat* in the *Fichte-Studien*. See for example Frank and Kurz, "Ordo inversus," 77.

and lust (*Wollust*) (8-11), the origin of the force through which the lovers meet.[159] In this sense, Astralis also both precedes and seems to contain the two lovers. As Astralis's movement "gen Himmel" (42) after their birth signals, their birth is *simultaneously* the production of a separate image and seemingly a movement toward or into what Novalis terms the higher sphere of *Schweben* in the *Fichte-Studien*, the unrepresentable ground for the identification between Being (the self) and Non-Being (reflection) that is represented through the reflexivity of the image (or *Scheinsatz*).[160]

Similar to the dynamic I discuss in Schleiermacher's *Reden* (the nuptial scene), heterosexual coupling and procreation hereby also begin to appear autoerotic.[161] In the *Reden*, Schleiermacher's rhetorical persona embraces the *Universum*, which thereby becomes his beloved, his mother, and his body in a reflexive multiplication of roles. The same goes for Astralis's poem (though even more radically), in which the three elements of the familial triad come together in an image of floral pollination that seems to precede their differentiation. Astralis is portrayed as the flower, the dual-gendered unity within which this union occurs ("Ich duftete, die Blume schwankte still / In Goldner Morgenluft" [19-20]). As a flower, Astralis is pollinated by Heinrich's and Mathilde's first kiss ("Da sank das erste Stäubchen in die Narbe, / Denkt an den Kuß nach aufgehobnen Tisch" [23-24]). Through a dizzying overlay of human and plant anatomy, Novalis presents this first moment of fertilization between Heinrich and Mathilde (the flower's sexual organs) as the pollination of a scar, which anticipates the bifurcation of the amorous dyad through the emergence of the separate *Bild* (and the death of Mathilde). *Narbe*

[159] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 317.
[160] "Sollte es noch eine höhere Sfäre geben, so wäre es die zwischen Seyn und Nichtseyn – das Schweben zwischen beyden – Ein Unaussprechliches, und hier haben wir den *Begriff* von *Leben*." Novalis, *NS*, 2: 106.
[161] See Chapter 1, p. 58.

however can also refer to the opening in a flower's pistil, its female organ, through which the pollen enters into it and fertilizes the *ovum*: the Grimms' dictionary shows the compound variants "Samennarbe" and "Kelchnarbe" in connection with this botanical meaning.[162] Given that Mathilde's face first appeared to Heinrich in the blue flower's calyx (*Kelch*) in his dream, and as the apex of a phallic extension of his own body,[163] this kiss – which is also figured in Heinrich's dream as the transmission of a secret word[164] – can be plausibly figured as a moment of simultaneously oral and sexual *self*-fructification, in which mouths and reproductive organs are one.[165] From one perspective (where the flower is read as a curiously feminized phallus – the pistil), the kiss can be read as an act of autofellatio, a powerful figure of *Selbstberührung* in which it is not Astralis but Heinrich who is the one who symbolically contains all three terms, fertilizing himself as he kisses the girl of the blue flower.

Like Astralis and Heinrich, Mathilde, too, is placed in an all-encompassing, absolute position in the poem, specifically in her death, which elevates her as mother of all – a role that is only reinforced in *Die Erfüllung*. Her ascent to this status in the poem coincides with the traumatic bifurcation of worlds, and of absolute unity into the poles of identity and representation. Though apparently exiled from the world of the living, Mathilde also seems to be the *embodiment* of the new world that begins in the second half of the poem, which Novalis

[162] See *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm*, s.v. "Narbe," accessed June 30, 2023, via *Wörterbuchnetz*, www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/narbe. The same overlay of meaning exists in English, where the end of the pistil is called the "stigma." See *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "stigma, n.," accessed June 30, 2023, via *OED Online*, https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/190242?redirectedFrom=stigma.
[163] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 197.
[164] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 279.
[165] As are ears. As the merchants remark, "…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" (Novalis, *NS*, 1: 211).

represents as a grave-like womb[166] into which ashes fall in a repetition of the initial figure of pollination: "Zum weiten Grabe wird die Welt, / In das, verzehrt von bangen Sehnen, / Das Herz, als Asche, niederfällt" (88-90).[167] Pollen becomes the ash of a burnt heart (the mother from Klingsohr's fairy tale), which falls into a feminine vessel that formally echoes the flower's calyx and the bowl from which the mother's ashes are consumed in Klingsohr's fairy tale.[168] In this regard, it is not *only* Astralis who represents unification in the poem, but all three members of the familial triad who could be regarded as encapsulations of the entire triad (and of different dyadic oppositions), based on different configurations of the images that flow together, reflecting and transforming into one another in the space of the poem.

The same sorts of tensions are present in the poem's structuring of worlds: the unification of Heinrich and Mathilde coincides with a bifurcation of worlds (the implied death of Mathilde, who is survived by Heinrich) *and* the birth of a new (third?) world. The ontological status of the "neue Welt" is highly ambiguous. On the one hand, its grave-likeness makes it appear as a sort of "Geisterwelt" beyond death. In relation to the *Fichte-Studien*, the entry into a world of the dead would represent the self's ultimate attempt to find itself in reflection – precisely by crossing into the realm of Non-Being, which Novalis aligns with reflection.[169] In this sense, it dialectically represents the ultimate dream of granting ontological status to reflection through the very renunciation of Being. (As Novalis notes in the plans for the end of the novel, "Der Tod ist

[166] Though the grave as *womb* is not explicit in Astralis's poem, Novalis clearly adapts this image from his *Hymnen an die Nacht*, in which the connection is explicit (but more clearly gender-reversed). From the sixth hymn: "Hinunter zu der süßen Braut, / Zu Jesus, dem Geliebten – / Getrost, die Abenddämmrung graut / Den Liebenden, Betrübten. / Ein Traum bricht unsre Banden los / Und senkt uns in des Vaters Schooß" (Novalis, *NS*, 1: 157 [25-30]).
[167] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 319.
[168] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 312. I adapt the idea of the feminine vessel from Alice Kuzniar, "Hearing Woman's Voices," 1199-1200.
[169] In this sense, as Novalis writes, "Sterben ist ein ächtphilosophischer Act" (Novalis, *NS*, 2: 374).

des Lebens höchstes Ziel."[170]) Mathilde's death however also prefigures – or represents the desire for – a higher unity of worlds, a unity of Being and Non-Being in a higher sphere, in which *Leben* (which Novalis aligns with *Schweben* in the *Fichte-Studien*) and *Poesie* are one.[171]

The image of ashes falling, associated with Mathilde's death, recalls Herder's "Liebe und Selbstheit," which Novalis both cites and critiques in the Astralis poem. Herder is skeptical of love as total unification, which he aligns with sensuous, corporeal love (i.e., sex) and figures as an all-consuming fire. As Herder argues, sexual love "zerstört sich selbst, oder zerstört ihren Gegenstand mit durchdringenden fressenden Flammen, und Beyde, das Liebende und das Geliebte, liegen sodann wie ein Häufchen Asche da."[172] The flames and ash index the danger of annihilation latent in the desire for total unification (Hemsterhuis's definition of desire), which arrests itself precisely as it achieves its goal. Novalis does not avoid this threat of annihilation, but represents it simply as a movement into another world, thereby as an intensification of the tension (the division between lovers) that had motivated the desire for unification in the first place. Mathilde's death therefore also continues and transforms the imagery of love and sexual fructification, no longer arresting the infinite process of love by destroying the reflective *relata* (as Herder's image suggests), but intensifying it. Novalis reflexively portrays the process of death (ash falling) as a reflection of a life-process (pollination), analogous to the reflection of Being in Non-Being (i.e., reflection) in the *Fichte-Studien*. On an affective level, Astralis's poem also portrays love and desire through their opposites: pain and "bange[s] Sehnen" (89). At the end of the poem, love is explicitly figured as a wounding process, as an eternal *Schmerz* that

[170] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 350.
[171] For Novalis's equation of *Leben* with *Schweben*, see Novalis, *NS*, 2: 106.
[172] Herder, "Liebe und Selbstheit," 324.

represents the polar opposite and complement to the *Wollust* with which it opened: "Wer sich der höchsten Lieb' ergeben, / Genest von ihren Wunden nie" (81-82).[173] Though the poem ends with an image of death (thereby providing the lead-in to the diegetic action of *Die Erfüllung*), it does not return to a completely static state: there is no recovery (*Genesung*), and thus also no return to a state of rest, of irreducible unity or wholeness. Rather, the seeming consummation of the desire for unity only represents and gives rise to its intensification.

In the same way, the birth of a poetic world is more so an intensification of reflection than a return to an *Urgrund*, whether an ontological Absolute or a higher sphere of *Schweben* prior to (and mediating between) both Being and reflection. Or rather, the *Urgrund* is represented as a chaotic "Zeugungselement," akin to the "Zeugungskraft" that births Astralis.[174] The new world, as Novalis presents it, is an inversion that, reminiscent of a solar eclipse, "verdunkelt den hellsten Sonnenschein" (48).[175] This new world has many faces: it is not only a grave, but "Der Liebe Reich" (59), "das große Weltgemüth" (63), and a dream-world (72). In fact, it seems to have no real "nature" (if we can call it this); rather, it is simply movement, reversal, in which "Wehmuth und Wollust, Tod und Leben / Sind […] in innigster Sympathie –" (72-73, 79-80). The absence of a true return to absolute unity is marked by Novalis's striking out of his explicit reference to the unity of the One and All ("Eins in allem und Alles in Einem" [53]), which the editors chose to leave in the published version of the poem.[176] Novalis replaces the unity of the One and All with "*Jedes* in Allen," a chaotic mixture of everything that produces "tausend neue

[173] "Wollust ist meines Daseyns Zeugungskraft" (8). Novalis, *NS*, 1: 317 and 319.
[174] See the previous note on *Wollust*. I derive the idea of a "Zeugungselement" from Novalis's "Die Christenheit oder Europa": "Wahrhafte Anarchie ist das Zeugungselement der Religion. Aus der Vernichtung alles Positiven hebt sie ihr glorreiches Haupt als neue Weltstifterin empor" (Novalis, *NS*, 3: 517).
[175] Novalis, *NS*, 1: 318.
[176] On the publication history of the Astralis poem, see Sophia Vietor, *Astralis von Novalis*, 61-81.

Gedanken" (71), and with a chiasmatic figure of the mutual metamorphosis of worlds: "Die Welt wird Traum, der Traum wird Welt / Und was man geglaubt, es sey geschehn" (72-73).

In these decisions, I see a definitive movement away from a conception of absolute unity and the poetic restoration of metaphysical holism, and toward a different sort of dialectic, internal to reflection itself: the distinction between reflection as an ordering force of making distinctions, of maintaining boundaries (and, by proxy, familial unity in the form of the triad), and as a disordering one, which crosses boundaries and multiplies reflections to such a degree that all sense of orientation becomes lost – reflection becomes anarchic.[177] In the movement toward chaos or anarchy, which is already anticipated in Klingsohr's fairy tale (specifically Ginnistan's play for Eros), Novalis pushes the idea of a reflective anticipation of a higher unity to its limit, portraying *Erfüllung* as a fullness of reflection that spins out into uncontrollable distortion, a pleasurable-painful sense of disorientation. In the novel, this distortion is also represented as the proliferation of the family into the complex kinship structure of the *Geschlecht*[178] and as a polymorphousness of desire, which transforms in the poem from "sanftes Ringen" (21), "Wehmuth, Lieb', und Ahndungen" (34), into "Entzündung" (17), "Verlangen" (6), "Wollust" (8), "Sehnsucht" (10), "[G]ier[]" (69), "Schmerz[]" (83), and "bange[s] Sehnen" (89).

[177] This dialectic is similarly evident in Friedrich Schlegel's remark that "Nur diejenige Verworrenheit ist ein Chaos, aus der eine Welt entspringen kann" (Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 263). He makes a similar statement in his *Rede über die Mythologie*: "Aber die höchste Schönheit, ja die höchste Ordnung ist denn doch nur die des Chaos, nämlich eines solchen, welches nur auf die Berührung der Liebe wartet, um sich zu einer harmonischen Welt zu entfalten, eines solchen wie es auch die alte Mythologie und Poesie war" (*KFSA*, 2: 313).

[178] Which in turn seems to be poetically tied to the insurmountability of sexual and gender difference (as the basis for heterosexual androgynous union) for Novalis, which remains in place despite all the polymorphousness of his imagery, as one of the central ways of figuring the tension between Being and reflection. Catriona MacLeod notes a similar phenomenon in Friedrich Schlegel's conception of androgyny, which similarly draws on plant analogies, in *Embodying Ambiguity*, 84.

Conclusion

In *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, Novalis presents (familial, erotic, reflective, cosmic) chaos as alike to order rather than strictly opposed to it, to precisely the degree that Klingsohr's fairy tale can be read as a *mise en abyme* of the novel as a whole. In a well-known fragment where he theorizes the fairy tale, Novalis refers to the fairy tale world as "die *durchausentgegengesetzte* Welt der Welt der Wahrheit (Geschichte) – und eben darum ihr so *durchaus ähnlich* – wie das *Chaos* der *vollendeten Schöpfung*."[179] As Novalis contends, the fairy-tale world reflects the true world precisely *because* it differs from it so radically: it is both the opposite of perfection and its generative medium. As he notes, the fairy tale represents a sort of state of nature, a proto-world from which the world emerges, and a sort of post-world: "Die Zeit der allg[emeinen] Anarchie – Gesezlosigkeit – Freyheit – der *Naturstand* der *Natur* – die Zeit vor der *Welt* (Staat.) Diese Zeit vor der Welt liefert gleichsam die zerstreuten Züge der *Zeit nach der Welt* – wie der Naturstand ein *sonderbares Bild* des ewigen Reichs ist."[180] In this regard, the fairy tale, like the "neue Welt" that foreshadows *Die Erfüllung*, represents another sort of Golden Age, the opposite but also the complement to Hemsterhuis's Golden Age (which is based in an idea of balance).[181] If Hemsterhuis's Golden Age, which makes its way into *Die Erwartung* in the form of Heinrich's harmonious familial world, is premised on controlling desire by preventing total unification, Novalis's *other* Golden Age moves past the point of unification, through an unbounding that drives desire into overabundance, and once again results in dispersal, the impossibility of fixing

[179] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 281.
[180] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 280.
[181] We can recall that Novalis plans for a "neue goldne Zeit" at the end of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. Novalis, *NS*, 1: 347. This is also the type of Golden Age Gabriel Trop argues Novalis envisions in "Transcendental Loosening," as an age in which there is an "overabundance of gold" (20).

desire to a specific object. Desire in this case is both perpetually fulfilled and unfulfilled at the same time: it becomes the driver for the novel's endless series of transformations, its cosmic and erotic interplay, which in turn becomes an endless source of fascination on the part of the reader.

Curiously, this entails that the structure of desire remains relatively constant throughout the novel, seeming to repeat and intensify itself while never qualitatively changing: at each level, desire is both a unifying and dispersing force, just as the family both expands into a clan and returns to itself as a nuclear triad. In this sense, *Erwartung* and *Erfüllung* are also the same.[182] In Novalis's universal family, desire remains mobile and suspended, as beloveds become mothers, sisters, and children. Though poetry and the family finally coincide in a poetic *Universum*, its eroticism, together with the relationship between representation and reality, remains permanently both suspended in the very act of conflation.

[182] It is highly likely that Novalis comes up with this structure based on his reading of the Old and New Testament of the Bible as a repetitive structure in *Das allgemeine Brouillon*: "Die Bibel fängt herrlich mit dem Paradiese, dem Symbol der Jugend an und schließt mit dem ewigen Reiche – mit der *heiligen Stadt.* Auch ihre 2 Hauptbestandtheile sind ächt *Großhistorisch*. (In jedem Großhistorischen Gliede muß gleichsam die große Geschichte symbolisch verjüngt liegen.) Der Anfang des neuen Testaments ist der 2te, höhere Sündenfall – und der […] Anfang der neuen *Periode*: Jedes Menschen Geschichte soll eine Bibel seyn – wird eine Bibel seyn. Xstus ist der neue Adam. Begr[iff] der Wiedergeburt. Eine Bibel ist die höchste Aufgabe der Schriftstellerey" (Novalis, *NS*, 3: 321). I return to the idea of the Bible in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Encyclopedic Exercises: Novalis's *Das allgemeine Brouillon*

In this chapter, I turn to Novalis's encyclopedia project, *Das allgemeine Brouillon*, which represents what I understand as the most radical exercise in reflexive universalization in the early German Romantic movement. Though Novalis actively compiled and edited his encyclopedia project for only a few months in the fall of 1798 while immersed in his scientific studies at the Freiberg mining academy (subsequently abandoning it to pursue his novel projects), his interest in the form of the encyclopedia had been fermenting for years, spurred by the eighteenth-century obsession with collecting and systematizing knowledge.[1] Already in the early 1790s, and well before his now-famous *Fichte-Studien*, in a fragment titled "In pigritiam" (*trans*. against idleness), Novalis had proclaimed that "Alles soll zu Encyclopaedieen gemacht werden," thereby expressing the impetus that would reverberate through his encyclopedia project.[2] Similarly to his novel, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, which plays with the intensification but also the control of desire, Novalis's project of universal encyclopedistics is driven by a desire for encyclopedic unification that the project itself seems to disperse. The classical image for the unification of knowledge, the *enkyklios paideia* (the circle of knowledge), is strikingly absent from Novalis's meditations on the idea of the encyclopedia, as is the medieval presentation of the encyclopedia as a mirror. [3] Instead, Novalis models his theory of encyclopedistics on the template of the Bible,

[1] See Richard Yeo, *Encyclopaedic Visions: Scientific Dictionaries and Enlightenment Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 11.
[2] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 18. The fragment is retitled "Über Enzyklopädien" in the *Novalis Schriften* edition.
[3] On the classical function of the encyclopedia, see for example Ulrich Dierse, *Enzyklopädie. Zur Geschichte eines philosophischen und wissenschaftstheoretischen Begriffs* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1977); on the encyclopedia as a mirror, see Yeo, *Encyclopaedic Visions*, 5.

understood as a book that contains all books, the ideal of all books.[4] In his reflections on the Bible, Novalis however inverts this logic of containment. Rather than the Bible containing all books or stories, Novalis contends that every story should become a Bible: "Jedes Menschen Geschichte soll eine Bibel seyn – wird eine Bibel seyn. […] Eine Bibel ist die höchste Aufgabe der Schriftstellerey."[5] In his encyclopedistics, he contemplates the procedures for "Erhebung eines Buchs zur Bibel," and announces his encyclopedia project to Friedrich Schlegel as the development of an "Universalmethode des Biblisierens," a concept that echoes his early imperative to make everything into encyclopedias.[6] Biblicizing is an exercise in elevating particulars to a universal status, of trying to contain the universal book from the perspective of that which the universal book purportedly contains within itself.[7] Instead of portraying the All as One, therefore (in a circle of knowledge or a single book, the Bible), Novalis envisions the presentation of the All through *each* element, therefore as a more intensely self-reflexive version of the All, one that somehow contains itself, encyclopedically, from every possible perspective. The goal of encyclopedic writing is not to synthesize the All into a One, but to intensify the sense of an interconnected All: "Die Mannichfaltigkeit der Methoden nimmt zu – am Ende weiß der Denker aus *Jedem* Alles zu machen – der Phil[osoph] wird zum Dichter."[8]

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[4] Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel came to this idea separately, but realized they were both working on the idea of the Bible while corresponding with one another in the fall of 1798. Responding to Friedrich Schlegel's announcement of his Bible project, Novalis writes, "Du schreibst von Deinem Bibelprojekt und ich bin auf meinem Studium der Wissenschaft überhaupt und ihres Körpers, des *Buchs* – ebenfalls auf die Idee *der Bibel* gerathen – der Bibel als des *Ideals jedweden* Buchs. Die Theorie der Bibel, entwickelt, gibt die Theorie der Schriftstellerei oder der Wortbildnerei überhaupt, die zugleich die symbolische, indirekte Konstructionslehre des schaffenden Geistes abgibt." Novalis to Friedrich Schlegel, Freiberg, November 7, 1798, in *Friedrich Schlegel und Novalis: Biographie einer Romantikerfreundschaft in ihren Briefen*, ed. Max Preitz (Darmstadt: Hermann Gentner Verlag, 1957), 132-134, at 132.

[5] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 321.

[6] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 365; Novalis to Friedrich Schlegel, Freiberg, November 7, 1798, in *Friedrich Schlegel und Novalis*, 132.

[7] In this sense, it is the inverse of Biblical exegesis.

[8] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 406.

Though it seems mind-boggling, the logic behind this last statement is similar to the rhetoric of Friedrich Schlegel's 116th *Athenaeum*-fragment, which goes beyond the combination of all genres of poetry into one universal idea of poetry, and suggests a poeticization of the entire world, thereby transcending the distinction between poetry and non-poetry that makes the idea of poetry intelligible in the first place. The idea of a centralization of poetry passes over into a process of multiplication and dispersal that undermines the very conceptualizability of poetry as a unity, transforming instead into an infinite, self-reflexive *ensemble* of distinct elements and perspectives. The same goes for the encyclopedia. In his fragment "in pigritiam," Novalis similarly moves past and inverts the idea of combining the arts and sciences (and in fact all of knowledge) into one encyclopedia, and proclaims that all the world should be transformed *into* knowledge (i.e. as a multiplicity of encyclopedias), just as Friedrich Schlegel projects the transformation of the world into poetry. He thereby similarly erodes the very distinction between the encyclopedia and its outside, turning the idea of one book inside out. In this universal form, the idea of the encyclopedia would only be intelligible from the perspective of the correspondences among distinct, heterogeneous elements (kernels or grains of knowledge, individual syntheses), which point to the idea of an All, a total encyclopedia, without stabilizing it or making it fully manifest.

From this perspective, the idea of an encyclopedic book becomes increasingly questionable both in genre (as differentiated from the novel, for example) and in terms of its bibliographic form (as "one" book). In practice, this is also very much the case. While Novalis repeatedly mentions the idea of a "Buch" or a "Lehrbuch" throughout his encyclopedic notes

(perhaps as an ideal),[9] the project itself, which he had referred to privately as *Das allgemeine Brouillon*, remains in a mostly disorganized, unfinished state (a draft, or even sketch, as the word "Brouillon" implies). It is a collection of 1,151 handwritten notes of varying length, which various editors and publishers have organized and reorganized many times. In the *Brouillon*, Novalis edits and compiles many of his philosophical and scientific notes, seeming to want to produce a synthesis of his entire learning: reading through the *Brouillon*, one will find traces of the *Fichte-Studien*, as well as Novalis's notes on Kant, Hemsterhuis, and his scientific studies, revised for the purposes of his encyclopedia project. Novalis edited the *Brouillon* at least once, striking out some parts (especially notes with purely personal significance) and adding categorizing titles to a vast number of them, likely intended as encyclopedic lemmata. Yet even after this round of editing, a system of encyclopedic organization remains difficult to find – the idea of an overarching project is hinted at in countless different ways but remains purely in the modality of an imperative. As Novalis remarks in a note he later struck out, "Die Ordnung *meiner Papiere* hängt von meinem Wissensch[afts] System ab. Bezeichn[ung] aller meiner Gedanken und Register dieser Verzeichnungen. *Revision der Gedanken*."[10]

Like many encyclopedia projects of the eighteenth century, Novalis's undertaking becomes increasingly self-reflexive and self-reproducing, such that a second encyclopedia (or at least an index to one) might be required to contain the encyclopedia project. While growing ever larger and more self-referential, the idea of an encyclopedic book remains dispersed in various

[9] E.g., "Mein Buch soll eine scientifische Bibel werden – ein reales, und ideales Muster – und Keim aller Bücher" (Novalis, *NS*, 3: 363); "(Versuch eines) vollständiges(n) Lehrbuch(s) des Synkriticismus, oder Versuch eines Instruments zum ewigen Frieden (im Reiche des Wissens.)" (Novalis, *NS*, 3: 346); "Mein Buch muß die kritische Metaphysik d[es] *Recensirens*, des Schriftstellens, des Experimentirens, und Beobachtens, des Lesens, Sprechens etc. enthalten. Klassification aller wissenschaftlichen Operationen. Bildungslehre d[es] allg[emeinen] wissensch[aftlichen] Organs" (Novalis, *NS*, 3: 361).
[10] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 372.

fragmentary notes that envision the idea of the encyclopedia as a practical goal. In this chapter, I read Novalis's *Brouillon* in terms of the relationship between the theory and practice of encyclopedic writing that becomes visible in his notes, and in terms of the tensions Novalis thereby exposes in the encyclopedic ideal of unity and encapsulation. As I show, the process of encyclopedic writing is both an expression of the desire to create a universal encyclopedia (specifically one that would create a total system of representation), and a method of controlling this desire through self-observation. It constitutes a form of endless activity already signaled in the title of Novalis's early fragment, "In pigritiam": encyclopedism is a cure against idleness.

This chapter is organized into two sections. In the first section, I contextualize Novalis's *Das allgemeine Brouillon* as a reaction to the crisis of the encyclopedia – and more widely, the explosion in book-publication – in the late eighteenth century. In a *Dialog* published in 1798, Novalis takes up these issues, (somewhat ironically) celebrating the flood of apparently valueless books by presenting these books as evidence of the self-reproducing activity of a total system. The tensions that run through Novalis's *Dialog* provide a lens for my analysis of the *Brouillon*, in which Novalis envisions the characteristics of a total system and the methods for achieving it, but in a fashion that thwarts its complete realization. For Novalis, the idea of a total system becomes an impetus for encyclopedic activity or exercise, which Novalis aimed to develop into a sort of teaching, a "Konstruktionslehre des schaffenden Geistes," which he however never positively formulated.

In the second section of the chapter, I read Novalis's encyclopedic exercises for their potential as critiques philosophical first principles across the *Brouillon*, as interventions into the scientific culture of his time. In his notes, Novalis repeatedly foregrounds the attractiveness of first principles, which function as ideals, even "gods" that guide scientific activity. Novalis treats

these principles as theoretical fictions, pointing to the ways in which self-constructed first principles move scientific activity not only toward self-realization, but also toward self-transcendence. Novalis presents these ideals as not only progressive, but recursive insofar as they point back to the specific decisions and even wishes of those who produce them. This becomes especially apparent in Novalis's valorization of Copernicanism, which becomes for him both a figure of scientific progress (especially through the idea of Kant's Copernican revolution in philosophy), but also one of suspension, of *Schweben*.

Section 1 – Bibliographic Productivity: Unity and Excess

Novalis began his encyclopedia project in a time of crisis for the genre. Though encyclopedias proliferated in the eighteenth century, which was often dubbed the "Age of Encyclopedias," their number, their voluminousness, and the prevalence of *incomplete* encyclopedia projects (including the ambitious project a *Deutsche Encyclopädie*), was symptomatic of the impossibility of keeping pace with the rapid acceleration of knowledge-production and the concomitant explosion of the print market in the second half of the eighteenth century.[11] In a *Dialog* composed in 1798 (more or less contemporaneously with *Das allgemeine Brouillon*) and likely intended for publication in the *Athenäum*,[12] Novalis transforms the crisis of systematization into a vehicle for Romantic play with unity, multiplicity, and transformation. In

[11] See Yeo, *Encyclopaedic Visions*, 11ff for a broad overview. On the aborted attempt during Novalis's time to produce a German encyclopedia (which Novalis was aware of), see Willi Goetschel, Catriona MacLeod, and Emery Snyder, "The *Deutsche Encyclopädie* and Encyclopedism in Eighteenth-Century Germany," in *The Encyclopédie and the Age of Revolution*, ed. Clorinda Donato and Robert M. Maniquis (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co, 1992), 55-62.
[12] Novalis, *NS* 2: 661-64. This "Dialog," simply numbered 1, is the first in a series of six dialogues written on a continuous series of manuscript pages. Richard Samuel notes that the dialogues appear to have been carefully prepared for publication, all evidence suggesting the *Athenäum* as the target venue: see Richard Samuel, "Einleitung" in *NS*, 2: 655.

the "Dialog," two fictional interlocutors – A and B – discuss the freshly-printed catalog for the upcoming book fair in Leipzig. A, a typical *Aufklärer*, laments the proliferation of print (evident in the length of the catalog: "Welche Last Buchstaben"), which he calls a "Bücherseuche."[13] The excess of books, A contends, can only be mitigated through progress and systematization, in which, ideally, "jede Messe gleichsam ein systematisches Glied in der Bildungskette wäre."[14] B by contrast favors the chaos of print, portraying it as an immense source of wealth. To illustrate this idea, B adopts the language of mercantile capitalism, portraying books as Germany's greatest natural resource:

> Die Entdeckung dieser mächtigen Minen in Deutschland, die mehr, als Potosi, und Brasilien sind, und die wahrhaftig eine größere Revolution machen und machen werden, als die Entdeckung von America, fällt in die Mitte dieses Jahrhunderts. Wie haben wir nicht seitdem schon an wissenschaftlicher Gewinnung, Aufbereitung und glänzender und nuzbarer Bearbeitung zugenommen. Wir holen jetzt überall die rohen Erze oder die schönen Formen zusammen – schmelzen jene um und wissen diese nachzuahmen und zu übertreffen.[15]

Through this extended comparison of the book fairs to mines in the colonies, ideas to ore, and reading and criticism to techniques of extraction, refinement, processing, and recirculation, B presents German bibliographic productivity ironically as a means of compensating for Germany's lack of natural resources and colonial territories, its inadequacy as a nation and empire. While it is affirmative in tone, the ironic underside of B's comparison remains evident in the tensions between systematicity and excess, quality and quantity of books, and the dulling and sharpening of the senses that results from excessive reading, which run throughout the dialogue.

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[13] Novalis, *NS*, 2, 661. For a discussion of the anxieties around the overproduction of books in the late eighteenth century, as well as a comparison of Novalis's *Brouillon* to the French *Encyclopédie*, see Chad Wellmon, "Touching Books: Diderot, Novalis, and the Encyclopedia of the Future," *Representations* 114, no. 1 (2011): 65-102.
[14] Novalis, *NS* 2: 661.
[15] Novalis, *NS* 2: 661.

While ostensibly directed toward intellectual consolidation and self-assertion, the flood of books calls the very idea of "wissenschaftliche[] Gewinnung" that B envisions into question.

As A notes, skeptical of B's perspective, neither knowledge nor readerly pleasure increase proportionally to the quantity of books – rather the opposite. In fact, one good book, A contends, could be the object of "lebenslängliche[] Beschäftigung […] Gegenstand eines nie sich erschöpfenden Genusses."[16] Why, then, bother with reading or publishing more books? A continues:

> [I]st es nicht am Ende besser Einen schönen Gegenstand sich durchaus zuzueignen, als an hunderten vorbeyzustreichen, überall zu nippen und so mit vielen oft sich widersprechenden halben Genüssen zeitig genug sich die Sinne abzustumpfen, ohne etwas dabey gewonnen zu haben?[17]

Interlocutor A here opposes two tendencies that Novalis explicitly seeks to bring to coincidence in his novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, and which his interlocutor B also subsequently points out make up a false dichotomy. In *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, love or desire as a transcendental force is both – and increasingly simultaneously – a force of unification (as the basis of familial unity, and as the attraction to an ideal beloved) and one of dispersal and proliferation, even chaos (of reflections, of children, of familial roles). In the novel, these forces are closely tied to one another, reciprocally balancing and representing one another in a complex network of reflections. In the *Dialog*, B's response to A is similarly couched in an analogy with love and procreation. As B contends, "Wenn ich das Glück hätte, Vater zu seyn – Kinder könnt ich nicht genug haben – nicht etwa 10-12 – hundert wenigstens."[18] And while he imagines at least a hundred children,

[16] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 663.
[17] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 663.
[18] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 664. This idea is reminiscent of the "unzählige Enkel" at the end of Novalis's fairy tale of "Hyacinth and Rosenblüth" in *Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs* as well. Novalis presents this proliferation as characteristic of a different (fairy-tale) time, in which "die Menschen so viele Kinder [bekamen], als sie wollten—" These lines conclude the tale. Novalis, *NS*, 1: 95.

he insists that he would have only one wife. B makes his love for one ideal woman the basis for a fantastical, physically impossible number of children. We could read these children as indexical signs of the lovers' sexual acts, representatives that multiply in proportion to the boundlessness of the love between the parents who generate them. On the other hand, as love objects themselves, the children seem potentially to represent the dilution of the love between parents.

This circular, apparently self-inverting logic does not only apply to amorous unification, but is a general assumption for B. In a series of escalations that mirror and intensify the dynamic of procreative multiplication, B makes the familial metaphor into a figure for the proliferative transformation of various other singular ideals into countless different variations: one "Geist" shall be transformed into a hundred or even a million, one "Frau" shall be transformed into "soviel Weiber, als es giebt," and even *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (which seems to occupy a similar function to the Bible for Novalis) shall be endlessly multiplied: "Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre – haben wir jezt allein – Wir sollten soviel Lehrjahre, in demselben Geist geschrieben, besitzen, als nur möglich wären – die sämmtlichen Lehrjahre aller Menschen, die je gelebt hätten –"[19] The rhetoric of this closing passage dazzles the mind – it is difficult to keep up with. As A notes, right before cutting off the conversation, "Mir schwindelt schon."[20]

With this conclusion, the *Dialog* does not promise to resolve the disorienting excess that results from the proliferation of books, even if B, Novalis's Romantic mouthpiece, embraces it. Through B's perspective, Novalis presents bibliographic productivity as the result of a love for an ideal and a drive for self-realization that takes many forms and even inheres in A's focus on systematicity: Germany's economic emulation of the colonial powers of Europe, countless

[19] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 664.
[20] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 664.

authors' (perhaps even Novalis's) poetic emulation of masterpieces such as Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, and even, if we think of the German encyclopedia edited by Köster and others,[21] the attempt to produce a better and more comprehensive encyclopedia than the French *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and d'Alembert. Instead of attaining their ideals through some form of centralizaiton, these processes produce offspring, thereby seeming to intensify the problem they are meant to address. As books proliferate, their economic and readerly value decreases; as the encyclopedia becomes ever more voluminous, its function of concentrating knowledge becomes increasingly diluted; it merely adds to the flood of paper. In this sense, the attempt to attain an ideal – to encompass the whole – is self-defeating.

Novalis's encyclopedia project, *Das allgemeine Brouillon*, seems to be riven by these same contradictions. As a project of creating an encyclopedic book, or a "scientifische Bibel," it becomes exhausting, spinning out of control and thwarting its own realization precisely to the degree that its author tries to realize it.[22] On the other hand, in the *Dialog*, Novalis treats the ostensibly valueless mass of books being printed every day as more than just obstacles to the realization of the ideal. This however requires a fundamental reframing of the issue. As B remarks, shifting from the mining analogy to an organic metaphor, every book bears its fruit, even if only to fertilize the ground it grew in.[23] On one level, we can read this as a commentary on the new areas of cultural production and the development of new reading, writing, and publishing publics through increases in literacy, access to print, and the overall exchange of ideas. In this sense, Novalis paints a picture of a growing and complexifying media ecology of

[21] Goetschel, Macleod, and Snyder, "The *Deutsche Encyclopädie* and Encyclopedism in Eighteenth-Century Germany."
[22] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 363.
[23] "Es ist kein Buch im Meßkatalog, das nicht seine Frucht getragen hat, und hätt es auch nur den Boden gedüngt, auf den es wuchs" (Novalis, *NS*, 2: 662).

print. What is most important here, however, is that from the perspective of certain readers, seemingly useless or valueless books *are* in fact sources of enjoyment. As B contends, "Sie sind nur für das Ganze, für uns Tautologieen; der schlechteste Roman hat wenigstens den Freunden und Freundinnen des Verfassers ein Vergnügen gewährt."[24] Novalis here makes a distinction between local perspectives within the book market (i.e. limited niches) and an overarching perspective (which one could call an encyclopedic, systematic perspective[25]), arguing that the increase in the book market can only really be appreciated from the standpoint of the local.[26] And yet, while local pleasures may not be intelligible to other readers based on a standard of good taste, the logic of reading as a form of "Vergnügen" is universal. Interlocutor A had valued books based on precisely the same criterion (under the name "Genuss").

In this *Dialog*, Novalis connects this to an economic model, which is also shared in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*: an economy of pleasure, not value. Through the miner figure in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, Novalis expounds an economics concerned not with the concentration or accumulation of value, but rather with the idea of the circulation and dispersal of goods and values, which he portrays as the expropriation of the King of Metals (gold) himself.[27] The goal of

[24] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 662.
[25] i.e., that of d'Alembert's encyclopedic chart, which he presents as a "world map" of knowledge. See Jean le Rond d'Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia of Diderot*, trans. Richard N. Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 48.
[26] Chad Wellmon pursues a similar idea (thinking books as stimuli for particular feelings, and tracking local as opposed to overarching perspectives), but draws slightly different conclusions; he thinks of an encyclopedia of "touch" and of materiality as a means of overcoming "the gap between cognition and sensation" and a modern sense of alienation from nature. See Wellmon, "Touching Books," 94. In contrast to Wellmon, I focus on a tension between the desire for an ideal or Absolute, and a practice of dwelling with particulars on the other; not that this makes up for, or overcomes, the unattainability of the Absolute through knowledge, but that it leads to a different sort of Absolute – one of activity or *Tätigkeit*. I discuss this in the following section of this chapter.
[27] In the first song, it is the miner, who possesses nothing, but merely extracts, who is the "Herr der Welt" (Novalis, *NS*, 1: 248 [44]). In the second song, the king of a subterranean castle (whom the first song identified as gold) is gradually brought to the surface – he thereby loses his power: "Je mehr er nun zum Vorschein kömmt / Und wild umher sich treibt auf Erden: / Je mehr wird seine Macht gedämmt, / Je mehr die Zahl der Freyen werden" (*NS*, 1: 250 [49-52]). On Novalis's sense of economic inversion, see also Gabriel Trop, "Transcendenal Loosening," 20-21.

the miner – as of the writer (and I would add, the Romantic encyclopedist) – is to enable the maximal *circulation* of gold and not its possession by any one person. Novalis envisions this circulation as causing an *overall* increase in pleasure and "Leben" throughout the entire world (which is a market, but also seemingly a body).[28] As Novalis's miner in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* contends, nature wants to belong to everyone.[29] In this light, we can read Novalis's constant calls for the pluralization of bibliographic ideals (be they the encyclopedia, the Bible, or *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*) as a means of circulating and making common property of what he refers to in the *Dialog* as "die gedruckte Natur," of *using* the attractive power of ideals to further increase productivity, and thereby also enjoyment.[30] Rather than attempt to possess printed nature in the form of an exhaustive encyclopedia or perfect book, a good writer and encyclopedist should recognize himself as already participating in the process of its ongoing reproductive, self-enjoying process, in which books must continually pass from hand to hand and circulate through the system of publishing.

While Trop emphasizes overproduction and surplus (of gold), I emphasize circulation and the analogies to other processes.

[28] As B remarks to A, "Lieber – ist nicht das Geld zum Beleben da-?" Novalis, *NS*, 2: 662. This thought is already expressed in *Glauben und Liebe*, #10: "Gold und Silber sind das Blut des Staats. Häufungen des Bluts am Herzen und im Kopfe verrathen Schwäche in beiden. Je stärker das Herz ist, desto lebhafter und freigebiger treibt es das Blut nach den äußern Theilen. Warm und belebt ist jedes Glied, und rasch und mächtig strömt das Blut nach dem Herzen zurück." Novalis, *NS*, 2: 486.

[29] "Die Natur will nicht der ausschließliche Besitz eines Einzigen seyn. Als Eigenthum verwandelt sie sich in ein böses Gift, was die Ruhe verscheucht, und die verderbliche Lust, alles in diesen Kreis des Besitzers zu ziehn, mit einem Gefolge von unendlichen Sorgen und wilden Leidenschaften herbeylockt. So untergräbt sie heimlich den Grund des Eigenthümers, und begräbt ihn bald in den einbrechenden Abgrund, um aus Hand zu Hand zu gehen, und so ihre Neigung, Allen anzugehören, allmählich zu befriedigen" (Novalis, *NS*, 1: 245).

[30] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 662. Trop refers to infinite reproductivity and pleasure in very similar terms as a "physiological absolute," highlighting its relationship to John Brown's physiology, which is based in a principle of excitability. See Trop, *Poetry as a Way of Life*, 135.

1.1 – The Idea of a Total Encyclopedic System

In *Das allgemeine Brouillon,* Novalis seems to have in mind a similar process for Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* to the one that he envisions for Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*: an endless multiplication. As he writes in the *Brouillon,* "Es giebt eine phil[osophische], eine kritische, eine Mathem[atische], eine poëtische, eine chemische, eine historische *W[issenschafts]L[ehre]*."[31] Just he wishes for "die sämmtlichen Lehrjahre aller Menschen, die je gelebt hätten,"[32] Novalis here contemplates the notion that every science has its *Wissenschaftslehre*. While apparently laudatory of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, Novalis's concept of a multiplication of *Wissenschaftslehren* seems antithetical to the Fichtean idea of an Absolute, even the opposite of it. In connection with the economic and ecological analogies of the *Dialog,* it sounds like an expropriation of the Absolute, which by making it available to every science would also disperse its centralizing power.

The *Brouillon* is littered with imperatives and bold claims reminiscent of B's escalating rhetoric of multiplication. In his notes on encyclopedistics, Novalis projects the idea of a total scientific system analogous to the total self-reproducing economy of print that B suggests through his various analogies. He however envisions this system very differently from B. B makes local judgements on the basis of a system that he does not fully represent, but which the reader must deduce is present as the basis for his claims. In the *Brouillon,* Novalis explicitly thinks through the nature of such a system and, in seeming contradiction to B, conceives it as a practical goal for a science of encyclopedistics (which forms the most frequent heading among Novalis's notes in the *Brouillon*). In a pair of notes from early on in the manuscript, under the

[31] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 321.
[32] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 664.

heading of encyclopedistics, Novalis describes any "true" science as having a double universality, i.e., as itself becoming encyclopedic in an absolutely total sense. As he contends, this would be achievable through a practical process of applying the sciences to one another:

> ENC[YCLOPAEDISTIK]. Doppelte Universalität jeder Wahrhaften W[issenschaft] – Eine entsteht, wenn ich alle andern W[issenschaften] zur Ausbildung der Besondern benutze. – Die Andre, wenn ich sie zur Universalwissenschaft mache und *sie selbst unter sich* ordne – alle andre Wissenschaften, als ihre Modificationen betrachte. Den Ersten Versuch der letztern Art hat Fichte mit der Phil[osophie] unternommen. Er soll in allen W[issenschaften] unternommen werden.[33]

He reiterates this thought several times throughout the *Brouillon*, in different forms:

> ENC[YCLOPAEDISTIK]. *Universale Poetik* und vollst[ändiges] System der Poesie. Eine Wissenschaft ist vollendet, *1.* Wenn sie auf alles angewandt ist – *2.* Wenn alles auf sie angewandt ist – *3.* Wenn sie, als abs[olute] Totalitaet, als Universum betrachtet – *sich selbst* als abs[olutes] Individuum mit allen übrigen W[issenschaften] und K[ünsten], als relat[iven] Individuen, untergeordnet wird.[34]

An important element at play in this pair of notes (and in Novalis's *Brouillon* more generally) is the process of oppositional representation that Novalis puts into action in his *Fichte-Studien*, which is based on the idea that the *Ich* is represented through what it is not (the *Scheinsatz*, the *Nicht-Ich*, etc.).[35] Novalis's operations of *anwenden*, *unterordnen*, and so forth seem to be geared

[33] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 269.
[34] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 272.
[35] Another way of representing this process, through the perspective of another layer of Novalis's massive corpus of notes: Starting from Fichte, Novalis begins from the insight that "man [versteht] das Ich nur insofern es vom N[icht]I[ch] repraesentirt wird. Das N[icht]I[ch] ist das Symbol des Ich, und dient nur zum Selbstverständniß des Ich. So versteht man das N[icht]I[ch] umgekehrt, nur insofern es vom Ich repraesentirt wird, und dieses sein Symbol wird" (*NS*, 3: 246). Novalis treats subject-object relationships and signifier-signified relationships as reversible: each defines the other. In this regard, the symbol becomes increasingly also a medium (a *Reflexionsmedium*, one could say). The *Nicht-Ich* as symbol of the *Ich* becomes a medium or tool through which the *Ich* apprehends and understands itself. In his discussion of the sciences, Novalis turns the awareness of this fact into an imperative: "Behandlung der Wissenschaften und jedes einzelnen Gegenstandes als *Werckzeug* – und Experimentalstoff zugleich" (*NS*, 3: 452). It is not just the sciences that are treated interchangeably as tool and material, but every object, too, has the potential to become a scientific tool and even a source of encyclopedic classifications. Novalis thus continues: "*Thätige Ansicht* – thätiger Gegenstand. (Ansicht der Welt durch ein Krystall – durch eine Pflanze – durch einen Menschenkörper etc. Ähnliche Experimentation)" (*NS*, 3: 453). In fact, "Jeder Gegenst[and] läßt sich (beynah) zum Obj[ect] einer bes[ondern] Wissenschaft machen" (*NS*, 3: 452). Under Novalis's pen, subject, object, and medium become interchangeable, trading their roles in different semiotic configurations. Novalis's encyclopedic notes can be viewed as exercises in envisioning such role-reversals. The ultimate goal of these processes, which

toward the production of oppositions through which different elements of the encyclopedia (the sciences, but also the "alles" they are applied to) would determine one another to become a total system. Novalis therefore does not start with an absolute *Grundsatz*, but begins from the idea of infinite elements and partial forms of organization, represented by the currently imperfect sciences and their objects.[36] By Novalis's logic, the perfection of the sciences would be achieved through an infinite process of reciprocal determination, both among the sciences and between the sciences and their objects. The limits or end-goals of this process would be the two forms of universality (individuality and universality) that Novalis posits in his note. What "double universality" really represents is the complete and exhaustive definition of an individual in a perfect, completely self-enclosed, self-referential system, a system of total relativity. In such a system, every individual member would be a path to both the system as a whole, to any other individual, and to relationships among other individuals. Novalis states this in another note:

Novalis repeatedly envisions, is a coincidence of opposites: "Ein Obj[ect] so gut, wie ein Subject, kann zum Classificationsprincip dienen. Man kann das Eintheil[ungs]princip umgekehrt nach den Eintheilungsgliedern Classificiren – und in diesem gegenseitigen Classificiren und ihrem völligen Zusammentreffen liegt die Auflösung und Probe des Classificationsprocesses. Einth[eilungs] Gr[undsatz] und Eingetheiltes müssen sich gegenseitig erschöpfen" (*NS*, 3: 367). Novalis does not reject hierarchical classification as such, but rethinks it as a reciprocal process that would ultimately be consummated in a "gegenseitig[es] [E]rschöpfen" of that which is classifying and classified, systematizing and systematized, in other words in a coincidence of the passive and active sides of the scientific operation. In this idea, we can recognize traces of the "Trieb, Ich zu seyn" from the *Fichte-Studien*, transformed into a relationship among systems and their elements – in this regard, the *Trieb* seems to become a simultaneously organizing and disorganizing force for the system itself: it produces, but also wishes to overcome, distinctions.

[36] As Jonas Maatsch has argued, Novalis's encyclopedia project can be understood as "eine umgekehrte Wissenschaftslehre […], insofern sie nicht die grundlegende Philosophie formuliert, um sie auf die Wissenschaften anzuwenden, sondern die Wissenschaften im Zusammenhang darstellt, um darin die Philosophie zu erkennen." Jonas Maatsch, "Enzyklopädie als Darstellung der Philosophie: Novalis' Morphologie des Wissens," in *Darstellung und Erkenntnis*, ed. Brady Bowman (Paderborn: Mentis, 2007), 181-94, at 185. Maatsch theorizes Novalis's encyclopedic method in relation to Goethe's morphology, as a living, even organic *Zusammenhang* of the sciences that can be intuitively grasped as an idea through the interrelationship among the parts or elements. E.g., "In der so verstandenen Idee verbindet sich die konkrete Fülle des Anschaulichen mit der Allgemeinheit des Begriffs" (Maatsch, "Enzyklopädie als Darstellung," 189). The only problem with this approach is that it does not account for the fact that the intuitability idea (as well as its status *as* idea) is also fundamentally undermined through the process of its representation.

"*Jedes Glied* eines *Systems* ist eine Function / 1. des Systems. / 2. mehrerer Glieder. / 3. jedes andern Gliedes."[37] In this impossible, total system, the very idea of science would in a certain sense be abolished because everything would be both a system and an individual, whole and part, and therefore both a distinct thing (i.e. an element) and a sign of everything else. The total system would arrive at a point where "Jedes in Allen dar sich stellt," a point at which it might not even be a system anymore, but a chaotic universal *Reflexionszusammenhang*.[38]

As Novalis's mention of "Universale Poetik" implies, this process is related to Romantic project of *Universalpoesie*, which similarly works toward a simultaneous unification and universalization of *Poesie* by connecting all genres of poetry to one another, but also by moving beyond the bounds of poetry to make *everything* poetic, thereby eroding the distinction between poetry and non-poetry, poetry and world.[39] Much like universal poetry, Novalis's projection of the perfection of the sciences represents a practical ideal that is only ever "im Werden," as Friedrich Schlegel puts it in the 116th *Athenaeum*-fragment.[40] It cannot be represented, but can only be actualized suggestively, as a higher *Zusammenhang* that unites a set of practices and ideas. In the case of *Universalpoesie*, this practice is the reflective movement of poetry itself, even as practiced in the 116th *Athenaeum*-fragment. Just as Friedrich Schlegel's fragment represents universal poetry *poetically*, Novalis's represent systematization *systematically*, but only through an interplay among different systems, and these systems and their objects.

While we can observe a structural similarity between them, there is a much stronger tension in the presentation of a total system than there is in the idea of universal poetry. Poetic

[37] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 392.
[38] The quotation is from the Astralis poem in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. Novalis, *NS*, 1: 319 (67).
[39] See my discussion of *Universalpoesie* along these lines in the introduction to the dissertation, pp. 1-4.
[40] Friedrich Schlegel, *KFSA*, 2: 183.

representation is an art of *Schein*, of potentially illusory representation, which remains (for both Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis) in a state of *Schweben*. Systems on the other hand seem to require rigorous determination, consistent laws or forms of ordering that are geared toward clarification and knowledge production. By taking the idea of systematization to its extreme (and by doing so without providing a firm *Grundsatz*), Novalis seems to challenge these ideas, calling the very idea of a total system into question even as he presents it as a practical ideal. On the other hand, he seems to harbor at least some level of belief, if not in the realizability of a total system, at least in the efficacy of the practice of applying the sciences to one another and producing analogies between them. From the perspective of B the *Dialog*, this efficacy would lie in the reproduction of the very idea of the total system, as well as an increase in pleasure. As I understand it, similar ideas motivate Novalis's practices in the *Brouillon*.

1.2 – Forms and Practices of the *Brouillon*: Making and Unmaking

As something "im Werden," it is perhaps apt that Novalis's encyclopedia project was never finished. The *Brouillon* remained preparatory work that Novalis himself viewed as too formless and unwieldy to be shared. Unlike the fragments published in the *Athenaeum*, the notes composing *Das allgemeine Brouillon* are not fully edited; they are in various states of development, sometimes merely listing ideas to be explored later in point form, and on other occasions overflowing the aphoristic form of the fragment into two- to three-page beginnings of essays that lose or alter their argumentative thread partway through. As Hans-Joachim Mähl, the

editor of the authoritative critical edition of *Das allgemeine Brouillon* argues,[41] the *Brouillon* should by no means be considered a collection of fragments, but "eine gedankenreiche, den ganzen Kosmos menschlichen Wissens umspannende *Materialsammlung*" that would eventually take the form of a book.[42] As evidence for his claim against fragmentariness as a formal characterization of the *Brouillon*, Mähl draws on one of Novalis's notes:

> Meine Hauptbeschäftigungen sollen jetzt 1. Die Encyclopaedistik. 2. ein Roman. 3. der Brief an Schlegel seyn. Im leztern werde ich ein Bruchstück aus 1. so romantisch, als möglich, vortragen. (Soll es eine Recherche (oder Essai), eine Sammlung Fragmente, ein Lichtenbergischer Commentar, ein Bericht, ein Gutachten, eine Geschichte, eine Abhandlung, eine Recension, eine Rede, ein *Monolog* oder *Bruchstück eines Dialogs* etc. werden?)[43]

Evident from this passage is the fact that, at the time of writing, Novalis was certain neither of the final form of the whole of his encyclopedia project, nor of even a particular part (even a fragmentary "Bruchstück") of it, and considered it to be capable of taking a number of different forms. Reading this passage, Mähl attributes to Novalis a "Stilwillen" that was never to settle on a single form of presentation for the encyclopedia. As Mähl puts it, "der Geist der Enzyklopädistik bedingt vielmehr eine enzyklopädische Vielheit der Ausdrucksformen."[44] The only definitive formal characterization of the eventual Romantic encyclopedia, Mähl contends, is that it would become a differentially constructed scientific *organon,* "das seiner Form nach die universale Tendenz des Inhalts zu spiegeln hätte."[45] Beyond this particular statement, Mähl's reading leaves the question of precisely *what* such a form would unanswered, as his primary goal

[41] See Hans-Joachim Mähl, introduction to *Das Allgemeine Brouillon* in *NS*, 3: 207-41; Hans-Joachim Mähl, "Novalis und Plotin. Untersuchungen zu einer neuen Edition und Interpretation des 'Allgemeinen Brouillons,'" *Jahrbuch des Freien Deutschen Hochstifts* (1963): 139-250.
[42] Mähl, "Novalis und Plotin," 238; see also 214.
[43] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 277-78.
[44] Mähl, "Novalis und Plotin," 235.
[45] Mähl, "Novalis und Plotin," 237.

is to establish an authoritative critical edition of the manuscript, a source text that reflects the original (chronological) order of the notations that compose the *Brouillon*. As editor rather than critic, Mähl's goal is to establish a clear picture of the "Werkstatt" of Novalis's thought – the process by which he developed his encyclopedic thinking.

The few scholars who have more recently ventured to discuss the form of *Das allgemeine Brouillon* have analyzed the notes in line with the idea of the *Werkstatt* as "Texte der Übung" and as experiments, even techniques of cultivating certain forms of attention and intellectual practice rather than as fragments in the strict sense.[46] I follow a similar thread, but with a specific view to the relationship between these practices and the idea of the book or encyclopedic system, one that, as Elisabetta Mengaldo notes, remains unresolved.[47] In relation to the idea of an encyclopedic book, Novalis's sketchy notes appear as a hoard of materials, but not exactly as a beginning of a cabinet of curiosities or universal library, nor as a polymathic fullness of knowledge (other, primarily Renaissance models for the encyclopedia).[48] The *Brouillon* is neither a well-curated nor an exhaustive collection. In fact, it is unclear whether it is a collection at all: accumulation might be a better word for it.[49] For the forensically-minded (e.g. Hans-Joachim Mähl), the notes of the *Brouillon* form a map to Novalis's archive, but only through

[46] The quotation comes from Rahel Villinger, "Gedankenstriche: Theorie und Poesie bei Novalis," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte (DVjs)* 86, no. 4 (2012): 547-77, at 561. See also Elisabetta Mengaldo, "Bausteine zu einer Vorgeschichte der Skizze: Zur Rhetorik und Poetik von Entwurf und Notiz bei Novalis und Arnim," in *Poetik der Skizze: Verfahren und diskursive Verortungen einer Kurzprosaform vom poetischen Realismus bis zur frühen Moderne*, ed. David-Christopher Assmann and Stefan Tetzlaff (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2020), 21-35.
[47] Mengaldo, "Bausteine," 30.
[48] Yeo, *Encyclopaedic Visions*, 10. See also Stefan Willer, "Enzyklopädien: Formen für das Ganze des Wissens," in *Formen des Ganzen*, ed. Eva Geulen and Claude Haas (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2022), 441-463. Willer contrasts encyclopedic systematicity with the model of polymathy, the latter of which is based in "der Kunstfertigkeit, das vorliegende Wissen in einer Fülle von Teilen zu präsentieren" (Willer, "Enzyklopädien," 445).
[49] While the notes display a dynamic of proliferation in line with the ambitions of the *Dialog* (the dispersal of ideals), the notes themselves accumulate in a private collection in a way that possibly challenges Novalis's economic/ecological model of circulation.

clues uncovered by the archivist. There are no citations to speak of in the *Brouillon*, only occasional transcriptions from other sources that briefly interrupt the movements of Novalis's own thought.

I read the notes in the *Brouillon* as the accumulated remains of a process of thought. They represent intermediary products in a process of refinement similar to B's description of the processing of ore in Novalis's *Dialog*. In this regard, the word "Brouillon," which is derived from the French, becomes significant. In French, *brouillon* as a noun means something like a draft or sketch, but as an adjective refers to something that is specifically disordering and confusing.[50] On the level of process, *brouillon* is an intermediary stage; it suggests a movement both toward an intelligible form of holism or systematicity (a projection of the encyclopedia) and something that can be cast off upon arrival at the whole. Novalis calls these products "Mittelresultate" – they are neither final forms nor intentionally made objects, but are byproducts of the intellectual process.[51] On the level of genre, the *Brouillon* can be compared to Lichtenberg's *Sudelbücher*, which similarly have a connotation of waste-production, of practice, process, and exercise.[52] While Lichtenberg's notebooks have been read as a means of knowledge-production and attaining new intellectual insights however, Novalis's *Brouillon* seems to be targeted toward displaying, but also calling into question – even suspending – the process of knowledge-production, just as his *Dialog* calls the idea of "wissenschaftlicher Gewinn" into question, replacing it with an idea of stimulation and pleasure.[53]

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[50] *Le Trésor de la Langue Française informatisé*, s.v. "Brouillon," accessed Nov. 28, 2022, via *Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales*, https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/brouillon.
[51] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 372.
[52] Markus Wilczek, "*Ab.* Lichtenberg's Waste," *The Germanic Review* 87, no. 4 (2012): 305-24.
[53] On Lichtenberg's practice, see Petra McGillen, "Wit, Bookishness, and the Epistemic Impact of Note-Taking: Lichtenberg's *Sudelbücher* as Intellectual Tools," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 90, no. 4 (2016): 501-28.

As Rahel Villinger has suggested, Novalis's notes cultivate a particular form of attention, "ein besonderes Vermögen unbestimmter Aufmerksamkeit, sich diverser scheinbar zufällig zeitgleicher Vorkommnisse oder Begebenheiten mit gewisser Unschärfe simultan bewusst zu sein."[54] This indefinite, floating form of attention has a strong similarity to what Friedrich Schlegel describes as "Sinn für das Universum," and which for Novalis aligns with an attenuated form of desire exemplified in Heinrich's subliminal *Ahnung*. In this sense, the notes create an expectation of encyclopedic unity but never fulfill it by providing the complete system they continually project and speculate on. They maintain and perhaps even intensify the seeming presence of the encyclopedic ideal, but only as something that can never be possessed.

On the other hand, there is also a distinctly practical orientation in Novalis's notes, an idea of endless activity that is quite the opposite of Heinrich's (or Wilhelm's) passivity. This activity is present in the countless verbs through which Novalis describes the procedures of encyclopedistics: *ausbilden, benutzen, machen, unternehmen, vollenden, anwenden, unterodnen, experimentieren, classificiren, erschöpfen, repraesentiren, berühren*, and so forth.[55] These verbs describe processes that would need to be performed *ad infinitum* (to the point of *Erschöpfung* for the thinker) in order to achieve Novalis's idea of a total encyclopedia. Novalis however also thinks of these processes as a means of cultivating the self, of developing a certain form of doctrine or "Lehre." In a letter to Friedrich Schlegel, he refers to his encyclopedistics as "die symbolische, indirekte Konstruktionslehre des schaffenden Geistes."[56] Whether this *Lehre* really

[54] Villinger, "Gedankenstriche," 562.
[55] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 246, 269, 272, 332, 367, 452.
[56] Novalis to Friedrich Schlegel, Freiberg, November 7, 1798, in *Friedrich Schlegel und Novalis*, 132.

shines through in the form that Novalis intended is unclear. In a note from further on in the corpus, he seems to criticize his own undertaking:

> Wer addiren könnte und wollte nichts thun, als aufs Gerathewohl herum addiren, der gliche jenem, der denken könnte, und nun aufs Gerathewohl herumdächte. (wie ich z.B.) Beyde thäten wohl, wenn sie sich Regeln ihres Verfahrens erfänden – sich Fertigkeit nach diesen Regeln zu verfahren erwürben – und nun *schöne* und *nüzliche* Denk und Additionsexempel vollständig ausführten.
>
> Jede W[issenschaft] ist ein vollst[ändiges] Denk*exempel*.[57]

Even if the products are disjointed, the idea of a doctrine – presented in *exemplary* fashion through particular forms of activity or "Verfahren" – remains an important motivation.

Section 2 – Novalis's Critique of Scientific First Principles

While Novalis may not have succeeded in developing a positive and consistent formulation of his science or *Lehre* of encyclopedistics, the *Brouillon* is nevertheless an excellent example of critical practice. In particular, the *Brouillon* makes important interventions into the climate of scientific optimism in Novalis's own time, a climate that he absorbed through his scientific education and his career as a mining engineer.[58] While pursuing his scientific studies at the Freiberg mining academy, Novalis was surrounded by scientific theories of universal principles, universal substances, and universal laws explaining the entire cosmos in various disciplines, each of which threatened to overflow the boundaries required for a traditional encyclopedic classification.[59] Among others, Novalis studied John Brown's theory of

[57] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 406.
[58] See Gerhard Schulz, "Die Berufslaufbahn Friedrich von Hardenbergs (Novalis)," *Jahrbuch Der Deutschen Schillergesellschaft: Internationales Organ Für Neuere Deutsche Literatur* 7 (1963): 253–312. More recently, see Jürgen Daiber, *Experimentalphysik des Geistes: Novalis und das romantische Experiment* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2001).
[59] This mereological conception is still present in d'Alembert's introduction to the French *Encyclopédie*, where he conceives of the encyclopedic system (a hierarchical classification of the sciences, presented at the beginning of the

excitability, Johann Wilhelm Ritter's experiments in galvanism, Antoine Lavoisier's innovations in chemistry (propagated and extended in Germany by Lampadius, a professor at the Freiberg academy), Pierre-Simon Laplace's work in astronomy and physics, and Abraham Gottlob Werner's geology and mineralogy.[60] Each of these sciences sought to reorganize the universe according to its own principles and laws, its own system of forces, substances, and first principles, paralleling the philosophical search for an Absolute. Novalis takes this idea up in his *Brouillon* in a note where he rhetorically opens up the scientific "monotheism" of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, i.e., its reliance on a first principle, into a polytheistic (perhaps even pantheistic) configuration.[61] As he observes,

> Jede W[issenschaft] hat ihren Gott, der zugleich ihr Ziel ist. So lebt eigentlich die Mechanik vom Perpetuo mobili – und sucht zu gleicher Zeit, als ihr höchstes Problem, ein *Perpetuum mobile* zu construiren. So die Chymie mit dem Menstruo universali – und dem *geistigen* Stoffe, oder dem Stein der Weisen. Die Phil[osophie] sucht ein erstes und einziges Princip. Der Mathem[atiker] die Quadratur des Zirkels und eine Principalgleichung. Der *Mensch – Gott.* Der Mediciner ein Lebenselixier – eine Verjüngungsessenz und vollk[ommenes] Gefühl und Handhabung d[es] Körpers. Der Politiker einen vollkommnen Staat – Ewigen Frieden – *Freyer Staat*.[62]

In his treatment of these tendencies in plurality – as a pantheon of universalistic tendencies – Novalis rhetorically emphasizes the distinct particularities of their individual tendencies toward universality, which he chooses to juxtapose in an explosively diverse list of examples. His

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alphabetized dictionary of the arts and sciences) as a world map, in which the specific arts and sciences form individual countries and territories. See d'Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse*, 47-48.

[60] See Gerhard Schulz, introduction to Novalis's *Freiberger Naturwissenschaftliche Studien*, in *NS*, 3: 3-33, at 5-6. As Schulz observes, "[ü]berall ging es […] darum, ein einziges Prinzip, einen einzigen Stoff zu finden, der den vielfältigen, zum Teil neu entdeckten Erscheinungen einzelner Wissenschaften und vielleicht dem Leben überhaupt zugrunde lag."

[61] The various tensions running through this fragment to mind Novalis's *Mittlerfragment* in *Blüthenstaub*, which projects a combination of the pantheistic and monotheistic gods: "So unverträglich auch beyde zu seyn scheinen, so läßt sich doch ihre Vereinigung bewerkstelligen, wenn man den monotheistischen Mittler zum Mittler der Mittelwelt des Pantheism macht, und diese gleichsam durch ihn centrirt, so daß beyde einander jedoch auf verschiedene Weise nothwendig machen" (*NS*, 2: 445).

[62] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 296.

combination of fantasy, superstition, science, and religion under a single banner foregrounds the ambiguity of scientific "progress," which is precisely what these scientific ideals seem to motivate. "Jede Wissenschaft hat ihren Gott," the provocative synthesis of religion and science under which the various examples are gathered, suggests an intrinsic contradiction at the heart of scientific universalism: the various "gods" or "goals" of the sciences – shorthand for their universalistic tendencies – appear as forces driving the sciences to transcend their own limitations, to create conceptual heavens adequate to their gods. In this framing, the search for a single principle in each science comes across as an undertaking enabled, even driven by fantasy, and thus as a dynamic of progression toward self-transformation, the overcoming rather than the achievement of rigorous scientific principles. This also means that Novalis implicitly divests the sciences of any strictly referential function in depicting the world: if they depict a world at all, this world is an ideal world – a conceptual heaven – which each science wishes to realize. One way of reading this is to conceive of the sciences as partaking in a similar world-transforming mission as the Romantic project of universal poetry.

As this analogy suggests, Novalis does not make his critique of scientific first principles purely in order to undermine the validity of scientific thought or even to abolish the idea of first principles. Rather, he does so in order to emphasize the fact that first principles are made rather than pre-given: they are not actually absolute. Rather, these principles represent tools for scientific activity. As Novalis points out in another note, this means that first principles can be viewed as expressions of human freedom rather than of external necessity:

> Jeder Anfang ist ein Actus der Freyheit – eine *Wahl* – Construction eines abs[oluten] Anfangs. / Fichtens Ich – ist ein Robinson – eine wissenschaftliche *Fiction* – zur Erleichterung d[er] Darstellung und Entwickl[ung] d[er] *W[issenschafts]L[ehre]* – So der

> Anfang d[er] Gesch[ichte] etc. – Schilderung des phil[osophischen] Naturstandes – eines isolirten Princips – oder Begriffs.[63]

Scientific fictions occupy a function analogous to that of Hemsterhuis's Golden Age (discussed in the previous chapter) insofar as they represent a fictional state of nature that is separated ("isolated," as Novalis puts it) from the philosophical system, like Robinson Crusoe's island. On the one hand, theoretical fictions function as tools for the representation (*Darstellung*) and development (*Entwicklung*) of scientific systems and thought processes. One way of reading this is to interpret the sciences as thought experiments, which construct artificial worlds (much like artificial, controlled experimental environments) in order to maintain a conceptual purity that enables the attainment of knowledge that would be unattainable under other circumstances. Jürgen Daiber interprets Novalis's *Brouillon* as a practice of experimentation along these lines, modeling it on scientific experimentation:

> Der andere Blick auf die Welt dient dazu, mittels der Gedanken eine Welt zu konstruieren, die der vorhandenen Realität nicht entspricht. Die Konstruktion dieser gedanklich erzeugten Welt hat die Funktion, zu unbekannter Erkenntnis vorzustoßen, die vorgegebenen Pfade des Denkens durch das Neuarrangement angeblich vertrauter Befunde zu verlassen.[64]

While Daiber is correct to observe that in Novalis's view the sciences (like poetry) no longer simply depict the world as it is, but *construct* worlds that do not directly correspond to reality, it is unclear whether *Novalis's* method in fact leads to the discovery of new scientific territories, as Daiber puts it.[65] As I discussed in connection with Hemsterhuis's Golden Age in the previous chapter, the idea of a state of nature or Golden Age symbolizes something other than what it

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[63] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 405.
[64] Daiber, *Experimentalphysik des Geistes*, 24.
[65] Daiber, *Experimentalphysik des Geistes*, 28-30. Daiber is here not referring to new insights about the mind (or the semiotic process) that produces the thought-experiments, but to scientific discoveries that map back onto the empirical world.

appears to portray. For Hemsterhuis and for Novalis, the Golden Age becomes a symbol of the ideal *relation* between human desires and their objects (namely, an equilibrium). Rather than promise the transformation of the world, the tale of the Golden Age thereby becomes a lesson in the control of desire. The idea of a "Robinson" contains a similar lesson. In addition to *facilitating* a thought process, the idea of a "Robinson" (as Novalis calls Fichte's *Ich*), also requires a recursive reading. Crusoe's island is not a map to uncharted territory, but a map of the European mind that produces it. A theoretical *fiction* points back to its maker, to the choice ("Wahl") through which it gains its efficacy and legitimation. This is the sort of *Lehre* I take Novalis to be developing in the *Brouillon*.

In the *Fichte-Studien*, Novalis reads Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* (specifically the formula: *Ich=Ich*) similarly, not as a representation not *of* the Absolute *per se*, but of a process of thought and representation that tries to account for the self's recognition of itself in the sphere of reflection, as well as its desire to coincide with its own reflection.[66] As Novalis argues in his *Fichte-Studien*, the *Ich* (as Being) enters into the system of thought as a fiction of itself, as "Nichtseyn," thus as an opposed and belated image of what it already is.[67] Though it is a fiction, the reflected *Ich* nevertheless exerts a sort of power, both within the system of reflection (which reproduces and reflects it as its first principle), and over the thinker, the self that tries to conceive itself as the origin of this system of reflection in which it finds itself embedded, but which it can

[66] See the Introduction, p.19.

[67] As Novalis writes, in the *Brouillon*, elaborating on the *Fichte-Studien*, "Der Anfang ist schon ein späterer Begr[iff]. Der Anfang entsteht später, als das Ich, darum kann das Ich nicht angefangen haben. Wir sehn daraus, dass wir hier im Gebiet der *Kunst* sind – aber diese künstliche Supposition ist die Grundlage einer ächten Wissenschaft die allemahl aus *kuenstlichen Factis* entspringt. Das Ich soll construirt werden. Der Philosoph bereitet, schafft künstliche Elemente und geht so an die Construction. Die *Naturgeschichte* des Ich ist dieses nicht – Ich ist kein Naturproduct – keine Natur – kein historisches Wesen – sondern ein artistisches – eine *Kunst* – ein Kunstwerck." Novalis, *NS*, 3: 253.

never become unified with. Novalis's note on the scientific gods plays up the element of desire (or of drive – *Trieb*) inherent in this process. He expresses the attractiveness of reflection precisely through his inclusion of impossible and occult ideas such as a "Lebenselixier" and the philosopher's stone, which simultaneously serve to challenge the reader to reflect on their unattainability – their status as fictions.

For Novalis, this contradiction at the heart of reflection is what makes it productive, but not in the sense of producing knowledge of the unknowable, or making possible the impossible. In the *Fichte-Studien* (in a note that serves as the template for his remarks on the scientific gods), he connects the unattainability of the ontological Absolute within reflection to the emergence of an endless activity.

> Alles Filosofiren muß also bey einem absoluten Grunde endigen. Wenn dieser nun nicht gegeben wäre, wenn dieser Begriff eine Unmöglichkeit enthielte – so wäre der Trieb zu Filosophiren eine unendliche Thätigkeit – und darum ohne Ende, weil ein ewiges Bedürfniß nach einem absoluten Grunde vorhanden wäre, das doch nur relativ gestillt werden könnte – und darum nie aufhören würde. Durch das freywillige Entsagen des Absoluten entsteht die unendlich freye Thätigkeit in uns – das einzig mögliche Absolute, was uns gegeben werden kann und was wir nur durch unsere Unvermögenheit, ein Absolutes zu erreichen und zu erkennen, finden. Dies uns gegebene Absolute läßt sich nur negativ erkennen, indem wir handeln und finden, daß durch kein Handeln das erreicht wird, was wir suchen.[68]

Free activity, as opposed to unfree activity (which might be construed as an idol-worship of first principles), lies in an act of "Entsagen," as Novalis puts it, a renunciation of the Absolute as an object of possession. This act of renunciation is not a renunciation of scientific and philosophical activity, but of the attainability of a first principle, an absolute ground for philosophy or science, within reflection (or scientific activity) itself. As I read it, Novalis's very mode of portrayal of

[68] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 270. The connection to the note on the scientific gods is evident in its continuation: "Dis ließe sich ein absolutes Postulat nennen. Alles Suchen nach *Einem Princip* wär also wie ein Versuch die Quadratur des Zirkels zu finden / Perpetuum mobile. Stein der Weisen./"

the sciences' search for gods, which he points out are fictions, is intended to provoke this sort of renunciation (and perhaps even constitutes it for its author). The act of renunciation is not a simple dismissal of the Absolute, however; it is more so a recognition of the nature of scientific activity – its dependence on something beyond it, the thinker's own drive to coincide with his image – than a repudiation of scientific activity as such.

2.1 – Novalis's Copernicanism: Scientific *Schweben*

Novalis formulates these critiques against the background of a modern conception of knowledge as a representation that is no longer grounded in a belief in the resemblance between things and signs.[69] As Novalis's notes demonstrate, the order of knowledge is no longer understood to directly, mimetically correspond to the order of nature as it had in the ancient model of the *enkyklios paideia* and its Medieval and Renaissance reinventions.[70] One major mode in which this reorientation of modern scientific consciousness appears in the eighteenth century is through the idea of the Copernican revolution, which serves as a visual metaphor for the contingency of the human point of view of the world. Novalis takes up this metaphor in the *Brouillon*, where it becomes an important motif for representing scientific consciousness.

As Hans Blumenberg has shown, first in his *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, and subsequently the monumental *Genesis of the Copernican World*, Copernicus's discovery of the heliocentric cosmos – which replaced the former Ptolemaic geocentric model – became a major force in defining modern scientific consciousness, especially in the eighteenth century.[71] As

[69] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1994).
[70] See Ulrich Dierse, *Enzyklopädie.* See also Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 38.
[71] Hans Blumenberg, *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, trans. Robert Savage (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010); Hans Blumenberg, *The Genesis of the Copernican World*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1987).

Blumenberg contends, Copernicus's theory was received as what he calls an "absolute metaphor" for the human positioning in the cosmos rather than a mere model of the solar system. Displaced from its symbolic throne in the center of the cosmos (and as the endpoint of a natural teleology), humanity had to come to terms with its *eccentric* (read: inferior) position.[72] The upshot, as Blumenberg shows, was that, though no longer the teleological center of all of nature, humanity was still capable of *understanding* nature from the eccentric position it occupied within the cosmos (overcoming certain optical illusions in the process); this intellectual feat came to constitute the highest of human achievements and gave rise to a different form of anthropocentrism.[73] Blumenberg importantly connects this to the emergence of Idealist philosophy (by which Blumenberg means not Kant, but Schelling, Fichte, and so on), which, as he puts it, "deal[s] with the Copernican disillusionment by revaluing it as a condition of possibility of a new self-consciousness that pushes its eccentric position outward until it becomes and exterior one."[74] For Blumenberg, this move into a position outside of the cosmos is tied to the principle of human self-assertion that he associates with modernity.

While in conversation with this intellectual tradition, Novalis's encyclopedia project markedly diverges from the modern narrative of human self-assertion even as it focuses on the agent of scientific investigation as a maker of ideals. Instead, Novalis transforms Copernicus into the originator of a modern conception of scientific relativity. For Novalis, Copernicus thereby becomes a different sort of figure for scientific activity, conceived of not as the overcoming of

[72] Blumenberg, *Paradigms for a Metaphorology,* 102.
[73] "Yet even where the positive implications of Copernicus's achievement are grasped, this occurs via the 'detour' of its metaphorization: man, no longer ensconced at the center of creation, is celebrated as a being that, even after it has forfeited its presumed teleological preeminence, still proves capable of contesting its existence and securing for itself its own, 'self-centered' universe." Blumenberg, *Paradigms for a Metaphorology,* 101-102.
[74] Blumenberg, *Genesis of the Copernican World*, 75.

human limitations, but as a process of continual reorientation and reversal that highlights the interdependence of scientific perspectives, even those that seem diametrically opposed to one another, as a condition for human knowledge. The general validity that Novalis attributes to a "Copernican method" (so to speak) appears in note #517 from the *Brouillon*: "ENC[YCLOPAEDISTIK]. Wie Copernikus machens alle gute Forscher – Aerzte, und Beobachter und Denker – Sie drehn die Data und die Methode um, um zu sehn, obs da nicht besser geht."[75] The characteristic Copernican gesture, as Novalis frames it here, consists in an experimental "turning around" of data and method that he generalizes beyond the discipline of astronomy. One way of interpreting this (which is quite dominant in the scholarship on Novalis) is to think of this "reversal" according to the figure of the *ordo inversus*, as explained by Manfred Frank: faced with the problem of representing the "ground" of knowledge in consciousness, reflection reflects itself again, taking its own activity as its object, and thereby comes to see this reflection as an inversion of reality. This argument, which is based on a reading of Novalis's *Fichte-Studien*, takes his play with reversals to articulate a critique of Idealism as out of touch with reality, even destructive of it. (As an aside, it is worth noting that Manfred Frank and his coauthor Gerhard Kurz open their article by pointing to the Copernican revolution as the origin of the conception of modern thought as reflective reversal.[76]) Though Novalis *does* engage in a recursive, higher-order reflection on the nature of scientific representation throughout the *Brouillon* (and conceives of representation as involved in a process of "turning around"), his phrasing – which is about reversal as a way of making things "work better" ("obs

[75] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 355.
[76] "Denkbar wäre eine problemgeschichtliche Darstellung des neuzeitlichen Denkens als Analyse seiner Verwendung der Metapher der Umkehrung. Seit der kopernikanischen Wende als eine Kette von einander überholenden Steigerungen sich verstehend, wird es während der französischen Revolution, als deren Reflex es sich erkennt, seiner Reflexionsform inne" (Frank and Kurz, "*Ordo inversus*," 75).

da nicht besser geht") – does not imply the sort of negative self-destruction of reflection that Frank finds in the *ordo inversus, nor* does it try to merely conform reality to thought.[77] Rather, it points to an intrinsic mutability and openness in representation itself.

In his note on Copernicus, Novalis is directly adopting the pragmatic language Kant uses in his preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, where he presents his transcendental philosophy as a way out of the "Verlegenheit" (awkward position) in which metaphysics up until this point has found itself:

> Es ist hiemit eben so, als mit den ersten Gedanken des *Copernicus* bewandt, der, nachdem es mit der Erklärung der Himmelsbewegungen nicht gut fort wollte, wenn er annahm, das ganze Sternheer drehe sich um den Zuschauer, versuchte, ob es nicht besser gelingen möchte, wenn er den Zuschauer sich drehen, und dagegen die Sterne in ruhe ließ.[78]

In order to gain the confidence of his readers, Kant rhetorically presents his entire reorientation of philosophy as a more or less pragmatic, even experimental, intervention that makes the human faculties the "fixed" or "ruling" elements of its system because they facilitate the process of creating a consistent representation. As Blumenberg has pointed out, Kant does not hereby lay claim to "reversing" the Copernican revolution by any means (or even rely on Copernicus); he here simply maintains that the *purpose* of his reorientation is to generate a theory that serves the human intellect.[79] Novalis maintains and even intensifies the experimental quality of this sort of activity in the *Brouillon*, but the better outcome of these reversals is not a straightforward conception of scientific progress or even the production of a more consistent representation of the world – rather, it turns back on the idea of the viewer, interrogating the very idea of "better."

[77] Frank and Kurz, "Ordo inversus," 78.
[78] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, ed. Jens Timmermann (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998), 21.
[79] See Blumenberg, *Genesis of the Copernican World*, 612.

Novalis writes directly about Kant as Copernicus in note #460, which precedes the one I quote above. This note is a long meditation on how one chooses the criteria that form the basis of one's scientific system, and works across analogies between philosophy, astronomy, and natural history. Early on in the note, Novalis equates scientific "criteria" with "characteristics" (*Merkmale*), since the word *Merkmal* becomes important in the following passage (whether these *Merkmale* are characteristics of objects or representations remains open).[80] Only at the end of his extended series of scientific analogies does Novalis arrive at the Copernicus-Kant connection, as a sort of summation of his analogical meditation:

> Die Einheiten oder die einzelnen Merckmale sind Planeten – die sich um ein Hauptmerckmal, als die Sonne bewegen. Die Gesetze ihrer Verhältnisse und gegenseitigen Bewegungen und Veränderungen umfaßt ihre Theorie, wie denn alle Theorie Astronomie ist. Ihr Natursystem ist ihr Lebenssystem – das System ihres Mechanismus.
>
> Auch hier hat der Ptolemaische und Tycho de Brahesche Irrthum geherrscht. Man hat ein einzelnes, untergeordnetes Merckmal zum Hauptmerckmal gemacht und dadurch sind falsche einseitige Systeme entstanden. Auch hier hat der optische Betrug, daß um das Eine Merckmal, worauf man sich fixirte, die Himmelskugel mit ihren Welten zu drehen schien, geherrscht – und zu täuschenden Schlüssen veranlaßt. Hier hat Kant die Rolle des Copernikus gespielt und das empirische Ich nebst seiner Außenwelt als Planet erklärt und den Mittelpunct des Systems im Sittengesetz oder ins moralische Ich gesetzt – und Fichte Neuton ist der Gesetzerfinder des innern Weltsystems – der 2te Copernikus geworden.[81]

This passage, with its emphasis on reign (*herrschen*), declaration (*erklären*) and legislation (*Gesetzerfinder*), conceives of the scientist almost politically, as the inventor of scientific laws based on his scientific point of view, and assigning creative or legislative force to his scientific representations. Beyond this, the language of *Merkmal* (which contains the verb "merken" – to notice), as well as the idea of "fixing" one's attention on particular characteristics, highlights the

[80] Quite simply "*Kriterien = Merkmale.*" Novalis, *NS*, 3: 335.
[81] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 335.

importance of perception – and specifically the direction of attention – in producing scientific representations. As Novalis seems to imply, one can misdirect one's attention and thereby arrive at false conclusions and optical illusions, but it is also possible to correct these errors by reorienting one's perspective. His focus on perception and legislation represents both an imitation and a significant deviation from Kant, who enshrines the laws of human cognition (as opposed to those of the object) in his critical system, but does not regard them as so utterly mutable or relative.

Novalis here seems to be getting at a form of consciousness that recognizes the legislative power of perception as representation but thinks of it as capable of modification and reorientation to the same degree that it modifies or reorients its world. The maintenance of perspectival mobility is essential: in Novalis's note, "falsche einseitige Systeme" are the result of becoming too "fixed" on one particular main characteristic (*Merkmal*), a perspective from which they may seem to be complete, but which becomes retroactively revealed as an optical illusion. Earlier on in this same note, Novalis contrasts complete and incomplete systems and individuals, attributing a sort of mechanical clockwork-motion (which recalls the Newtonian system) to complete systems, and "ein Fortstreben, ein *Unbefriedigtsein*, eine Lücke – eine *Schranckenlosigkeit*" to incomplete individuals.[82] I take this to mean that for Novalis, the "completeness" of systems is itself a relative characteristic, which means that incompleteness and completeness, and truth and falsity, also begin to enter this game of reorientations as characteristics of representations, and can be transformed into their opposites, depending on one's orientation. Though complete systems *seem* to generate more coherent representations (and

[82] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 335.

by extension, worlds), the boundless interconnection and interconnectibility between systems and worlds can only be realized through a process of incompletion, conceived of as a perspectival shifting.

Within this larger constellation, Copernicus represents a historical point of inception for the trend of intellectual reorientations in modernity, from one astronomical model to another, and then (by analogy) into philosophy, and from one philosophical system to the next. With his multiplication and radicalization of Copernicanism, Novalis suggests that the result of the Copernican revolution is not the establishment of a new, permanent cosmological order (as Kant, Copernicus, Fichte, or Newton might have hoped), nor a different sort of teleologically oriented movement toward perfection, but rather a new, permanent sense of relativity and dynamism in the realm of knowledge. This relativization can be interpreted on one level as a way of highlighting the citational and historical quality of (modern) scientific representations as one of the conditions of their intelligibility – which subsequently becomes central to Novalis's own practice. By "citational" and "historical" quality, I mean their non-originality, in other words that the concept of Copernican and encyclopedic *re*orientation implies previous orientations, or other discourses, as models: Novalis's encyclopedic practice of combining and analogizing scientific perspectives and concepts seems to play on this, as does the fact that the *Brouillon* (and in fact Novalis's entire philosophical *oeuvre*) consists of notes on, and criticisms of, *other* systems such as Kant's or Fichte's. It thereby seems to highlight its own lack of self-sufficiency, or lack of a proper world: as a practice of moving from one representation to another, of generating continual intellectual reorientations and hybrid perspectives, it appears to have no permanent position at all. Novalis repeats this thought several times in the *Brouillon*: e.g in note #622. "D[ie] Phil[osophie] macht alles *los* – relativirt das Universum – Sie hebt wie das Copernikanische

System die *festen* Puncte auf – und macht aus dem Ruhenden ein Schwebendes."[83] *Schweben*, one of the key terms of Novalis's philosophy and poetics, refers to the suspension of fixed points of knowledge somewhere between "rest" and "motion," the result of a constant translation between two or more systems and worlds rather than being firmly grounded in just one.[84] Provocative, unproven statements like "all theory is astronomy" or "every good scientist is a Copernicus"[85] – which are found throughout the *Brouillon* – can be read as repetitive attempts to force this sort of translation, and to absolutize the principle of an analogy and kinship among discourses. The possibility of knowledge within this framework does not lie in the correspondence between a scientific system and an underlying, pre-representational reality; rather, the reality of scientific systems (if I can be permitted to call it that) lies in their degree of translatability, which also means: not in their internal coherence, but in their ability to relate to other representations, and to move beyond their original domains.

Conclusion

Novalis never arrives at a coherent formulation of his encyclopedism, and instead amasses a collection of relativities, because his conception of the relationship between the sciences is purposely incoherent, more interested in perspectival mobility than positive knowledge. The position Novalis assigns to the encyclopedic thinker is in *all* discourses at once (hence the appeal of the encyclopedia as a collection), but absolutely committed to none; it therefore entails a vast

[83] Novalis, *NS*, 3: 378.
[84] In the *Fichte-Studien*, Novalis reads "Schweben" as life and as the "Mater aller Realität, die Realität selbst" Novalis, *NS*, 2: 106 and 266. As he continues in note #622 from the *Brouillon*, "Sie [die Philosophie] lehrt die Relativitaet aller Gründe und aller Eigenschaften – die unendl[iche] Mannichfaltigkeit und Einheit der Construktionen Eines Dinges etc." Novalis, *NS*, 3: 378.
[85] Translations mine, from quotations in-text above.

potential for the construction of different worlds through various discursive syntheses without ever fully constructing any one of them. Along these lines, he writes in a different unpublished fragment collection from the same time,

> Welche unerschöpfliche Menge von Materialien zu *neuen* individuellen Combinationen liegt nicht umher! Wer einmal dieses Geheimniß errathen hat – der hat nichts mehr nöthig, als den Entschluß, der unendlichen Mannichfaltigkeit, und ihrem bloßen Genusse zu entsagen und irgendwo *anzufangen* – aber dieser Entschluß kostet das freye Gefühl einer unendlichen Welt – und fodert die Beschränkung auf eine einzelne Erscheinung derselben –
>
> Sollten wir vielleicht einem ähnlichen Entschlusse unsrer irrdisches Daseyn zuzuschreiben haben?[86]

We can here imagine Novalis surrounded by his own scribbled notes and papers like the demiurge before creating the world, enjoying the potential of infinite possible worlds and scientific systems. Curiously, the word "entsagen" returns here, mirroring Novalis's idea of the renunciation of the Absolute in the *Fichte-Studien*. As he implies in this note, the process of reorientation itself can become excessive, resulting in an accumulation of materials that is antithetical to the economy of circulation presented in the *Dialog*. Infinite chaos must become a world, if only temporarily.

[86] Novalis, *NS*, 2: 534.

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