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THE PULSE OF PROSODY: VERSIFICATION AND ANTIQUITY IN THE AGE OF WEIMAR CLASSICISM

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Abstract

This dissertation focuses on the manifold afterlives of Greek antiquity in the German-language poetry and poetics during the era of Weimar Classicism (1788-1805). I approach this thematic complex through the study of prosody situated at the confluence of poetry, philology, and philosophy. I argue that the unprecedented intensity with which prosody was theorized in the German-speaking lands during the late eighteenth century resulted from an encounter with the possibilities and pitfalls of an aesthetics turned toward ancient Greece. The artwork of ancient Greece served as a model for poetic production while at the same time figuring forth a radical historical alterity that provoked a pivotal investigation of the prosodic conditions of the German language. Prosody came to be conceived as a medium for presencing the poetic past, an embodied vehicle for a poetic memory residing not in the imitation of ancient poets, but rather in the stress of the syllable, in the organizing matrix of meter, in the propulsion of rhythm. Each chapter of this dissertation takes as its object of study one antique verse form (or, in the case of the fourth chapter, multiple verse forms) as theorized and practiced in German-language poetry and poetics around 1800. I show that in each instance, the poet's handling of the verse form gives rise to new models of poetic inheritance and continuity that overcome the imperative to imitate the ancients. These models find their point of communality in the rethinking of verse as a historically saturated form of embodied cognition produced by prosody.

Acknowledgements

> "When we bless the meal, whose name may I speak and when we / Rest from the life of each day, tell me, to whom give my thanks?" – Friedrich Hölderlin, *Homecoming*

While the question of thanking may pose problems for a poet seeking a new liturgical language in the face of the felt spiritual low-point of his time, it is less difficult for me, a modern day graduate student at the close of his dissertation. The sponsoring sources of my work have not absconded like the Greek gods but have accompanied me throughout in the form of my dissertation committee. I would like to thank, first, Catriona Macleod, who generously agreed to join my committee at a very late stage of the dissertation. In a short time I have benefited much from her guidance, in particular her pointing me towards feminist perspectives on my texts and emphasizing German Romanticism as Classicism's constant counterpart. Secondly, Mark Payne, who has been unfailingly open and accessible, for his knowledge and appreciation of the metricality of the Ancients. Without him I wouldn't have caught on to many seemingly small but fundamental metrical details that make poems move and moving. Thirdly, Eric Santner, who is a master interlocutor, for engaging with a project somewhat outside his wheelhouse. I have benefitted greatly by having a voice push me to think more broadly about the stakes of my project beyond the confines of the *Goethezeit*. And finally David Wellbery. It seems to me that David lives out Goethe's maxim that your duty is the "demand of the day," the day not just as presenting a series of jobs to be done but the day as an existential-ethical limit, the day as a measure not just of diurnal time but of human time to which each day one must rise anew. Beyond all that he has taught me about German literature, it is his exemplary embodiment of that life affirming activity that Goethe calls *Tätigkeit* for which I am most grateful. As for my friends

and family, the list of individual names is too long and the debt is too great to acknowledge here in full. I will instead quote Hölderlin's second letter to his friend Casmir Ulrich Böhlendorff. He writes, "I need your pure tones," and I think that is what you have given me, each in your own way, pure tones, the clarity, the refreshing sanity of spirit that sustains and supports.

Introduction

"Bewundert viel und viel gescholten Helena." This line of verse is one of the many I have bouncing around in my head. Dislodged from its context, the opening of Act Three of *Faust II*, it works on me like a musical motif, a snatch of sound that comes over me unbidden while taking a walk, or cooking dinner, or daydreaming, intervening on the rhythms of everyday life with its own insistent and imperious rhythm. *Be**wund**ert **viel** und **viel** ges**chol**ten **Hel**en**a***. A six-beat line, modeled on the iambic trimeter of Greek tragedy. The stress falls heavily on the repeated monosyllables ***viel** und **viel*** as the rhythm builds momentum to the proper name: ***Hel**en**a***. The meter denaturalizes the name, forcing a strong stress on the final syllable, a syllable that we would lightly read over were this a piece of prose. With the past participles chiastically positioned before the name – her reputation precedes her – *Helena* comes as a release after the prosodically calculated tension of the line. Indeed, when I recite this line to myself, I tend to dwell on the last syllable like a sigh of relief, a phonemic fermata: ***Hel**en**aaa***.

The Greek verse form upon which these lines are based made a deep impression on Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. In a letter to Johann Gottfried Herder dated 1. September 1786, he writes, "Ich bin in große Not geraten, die ich Dir sogleich anzeigen und klagen muß. Nach Deinem Abschied las ich noch in der Elektra den Sophokles. Die langen Jamben ohne Abschnitt und das sonderbare Wälzen und Rollen des Periods haben sich mir so eingeprägt, daß mir nun die kurzen Zeilen der Iphigenie ganz höckerig, übelklingend und unlesbar werden."[1] Sophocles' verse is registered as nothing less than a force of nature, an avalanche or an earthquake. And natural disasters, in Goethe's poetic universe, always embody revolution. His encounter with the

[1] Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke, Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche*, ed. Dieter Borchmeyer et al., 40 vols., (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985-2013) 1/5:1282.

Greek iambic trimeter itself registers a revolution in aesthetic experience. The contours of such an encounter were shaped by Johann Joachim Winckelmann. The statue descriptions in his 1755-1756 *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der Griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst* and his 1764 *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* unfold a new relation to the ancient artwork based not on dispassionate observation mediated by copies and second-hand accounts but on the unmediated encounter with the original. With this encounter came an imperative: to imitate the Ancients. I will return to this imperative shortly; for now I only want to note the Winckelmannian dynamic of Goethe's letter to Herder. The overpowering experience of the Greek original has an immediate effect on the poet's current artistic preoccupation: the versification of his *Iphigenie* drama. He continues, "Ich habe gleich angefangen, die erste Szene umzuändern. Damit ich aber nicht zu weit gehe, und Maß und Ziel festgesetzt werde, bitt' ich Dich etwa um 5 Uhr um eine Lektion. Ich will zu Dir kommen!"[2] It is clear from the urgency of the letter that what is at stake in the versification of *Iphigenie* is not merely imitating Sophocles' meter but capturing the rhythmic force of his verse. Goethe ultimately chose iambic pentameter as the meter commensurate to this task, but the rhythmic event of *Electra* resonates just as powerfully in the opening of Helen's monologue that still rings in my ears today.

Poetry impresses itself on our bodies, imprints itself on our memories, lodges itself in our ears. We recall bits and pieces of poetry, lines or half-lines, recited in grade school or read in a college English class. The verses that make an impression on us are not necessarily the most significant or the most profound. They may strike us as little more than a jingle or a beat. This suggests that poetry's pressure, its mnemonic power, resides first and foremost in its sound rather than its sense; that meter, rhythm, rhyme, syllable stress, sound patterning, line breaks – all those devices that can be placed under the rubric of poetic "prosody" broadly conceived – constitute

[2] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/5:1283.

the prime movers of poetic memory; that the stress of a syllable, the weight of a rhyme, contrives to get under our skin. In this dissertation, I focus on prosody's cultural memory, the activation of its historically saturated resonances in the poetry and poetics of the era of Weimar Classicism, commonly dated from Goethe's return from Italy in 1788 to Friedrich Schiller's death in 1805. At stake in the prosody of this period is the very life of poetry, its ability to renew itself, to transmit itself, to make its home within us.

The "Classicism" in "Weimar Classicism" typically has two meanings. It denotes the canonical status texts composed during this era achieved and it denotes the centrality to these texts of ancient Greek culture as a model of imitation. My dissertation intervenes on both these meaning of the Classical. There is a fundamental aporia at the core of the Winckelmannian injunction to imitate the Ancients.[3] Winckelmann elevated Greek art to the level of a near Platonic ideality, thereby establishing it as the absolute norm for artistic production. Yet at the same time as he established this norm, he made it impossible to follow. Winckelmann's reputation as the first modern art historian rests on his efforts to understand Greek art in the context of the unique political, geographical, and climatological conditions from which it emerged and to narrativize the development of Greek art in terms of a rise and fall, a growth, flowering, and decay, thus portraying it as a completed, closed process. This sense of the historicity of Greek art, of its belonging to a unique historical moment that is not one's own, only increased in the decades after Winckelmann, particularly in the realm of poetics, where pioneering philologists worked out the singular linguistic conditions of Greek poetry. Yet if Greek art was produced under unique historical conditions, then it can no longer serve as

[3] Here I follow Peter Szondi, whose lecture series "Antike und Moderne in der Ästhetik der Goethezeit" delivered at the *Freie Universität* in 1970 remains, in my opinion, one of the best overviews of the poetics of the era. The lectures are reprinted in Peter Szondi, *Poetik und Geschichtsphilosophie I*, eds., Senta Metz and Hans-Hagen Hildebrandt, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1974) 13-265.

normatively binding for a different culture existing under different historical conditions. This aporia, consisting in the simultaneous ascription of ideality and historicity to Greek art, lies at the heart of what is conventionally called "Weimar Classicism." This aporia does not, however, result in a stagnating impasse. Rather, it provides the generative tension from which the works I study in this dissertation emerge. If "Weimar Classicism" is to be understood as more than the conventional designation for a literary-historical era that produced great works of literature guided by Greek models, than it should be understood in this sense: as the constant overcoming of its own ideal. This overcoming consists not in a simple rejection of its ideal but in its critical renegotiation. In this sense, each chapter of my dissertation can be read as a case-study in the overcoming of classicism. In each instance, I show that out of the rift fashioned by the two conflicting forces of history and the ideal new poetic models emerge that overcome the imperative to imitate the Ancients without relinquishing the ambition to inherit the aesthetic and cultural achievements of antiquity. To grasp Weimar Classicism from the perspective of its inner aporia is also to shift the meaning of "classical" as canonical. The canonicity of the works under question here resides neither in a sense of timelessness nor in a sense of timeliness. Timelessness mortifies art into a monument; timeliness reduces art to mere relevancy, locating its *raison d'être* in its immediate applicability to the present moment. When the German writers within the orbit of Weimar intellectual life around the turn of the eighteenth century set their sights on ancient Greece, they found there not an immediate reflection of their reality, but an historical alterity that confronted them with the historicity of their own moment while at the same time broadening the horizon of their present to encompass new possibilities of poetic creation. These possibilities, I want to argue, lay in the poignant and persistent pressure placed on language by versification, the power of prosody to punctuate the present with the past.

At the level of prosody, a basic distinction separates modern German verse from ancient Greek and Latin verse. The latter operates according to a "quantitative" system. The prosodically meaningful unit in this system is syllable *length*, which can be determined according to several simple rules. A syllable counts as long if it contains a long vowel or diphthong, or if it contains a short vowel separated by two or more consonants from the next vowel. By contrast, modern German-language verse rests on a "qualitative" system. The prosodically meaningful unit in this system is syllable stress. Determining when a syllable receives a strong stress or a weak stress proved far more difficult than determining syllable length in the Greek and Roman prosodic systems. While the distribution of stress in many multisyllabic German words is clear ("**Dicht**ung"; "ge**macht**") some compound words offer more ambiguity ("Ausdruck"; "Durchbruch"), while the stress of monosyllabic words remains largely determinable only within the context of a given line of verse. How is, for example, the phrase "Du liebst" to be stressed as a piece of poetry? Is it an iamb (◡ —), a trochee (— ◡), or a spondee (— —)? This is, in fact, the example that Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel uses in the section on versification from his lectures on aesthetics.[4] It is worth pausing on Hegel's treatment of versification, for in this dissertation I argue that even the most technical distinctions of prosody become a matter of profound philosophical importance in German-language poetics around 1800. This is on display in Hegel's lectures on aesthetics delivered between 1818 and 1829. These lectures look back on the era of Weimar Classicism and offer a summation of its thinking on versification. Indeed, the fact that a philosopher would interest himself with the technical details of versification already points to the philosophical stature that prosody achieved around 1800. Consider, for example, what Hegel makes of the antique prosodic system, whose central unit of sound is the syllable in

[4] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Werke*, eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 21 vols., (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969-1979) 15:315.

its temporal duration: "das Klingen [bleibt] noch in ungetrennter Einheit mit dem festen Zeitmaß seiner bestimmten Dauer, und in der Fortbewegung beider hat das Ohr dem Wert jeder einzelnen Silbe wie dem Gesetz in dem rhythmischen Dahinschreiten aller gleichmäßig nachzugehen."[5] The claim here is that the strictures of classical verse do not permit individual letters, syllables or words to burst forth in their semantic significance or likeness to other sounds. Sound remains seamlessly bound to the law of the determinate duration of long and short syllables, a law that the ear must follow carefully and evenly throughout the line, rather than, for instance, rushing to the end of the line for some all-important final sound. Modern versification ruptures this undivided unity of sound and meter. From out of the quantitative restraints of antique verse arises an overpowering qualitative counter-force: "das geistige Element, der Sinn der Silben und Wörten […]."[6] In the ancient quantitative system, the self is submerged in a stream of sound that flows according to the sensuous segmentation of time determined independently of the meaning of the words. In the modern accentual system, versification is yoked to subjectivity, prosody is injected with spirit. How "Du liebst" will be stressed prosodically depends not only what the meter prescribes, but also on what you or I intend to emphasize in that statement. Rather than obliging the ear to faithfully follow the succession of long and short syllables, the modern system forces the ear along in fits and leaps from the most semantically meaningful syllable to the next. This dynamic is exemplified in rhyme, which for Hegel constitutes the quintessential modern form of versification. Rhyme dominates the line. The ear lurches to the end of the line in search of the satisfaction of the same-sounding syllable. And in the satisfaction of the ear lies the satisfaction of the self. At the phenomenological level, rhyme consists in a cycle of remembrance and anticipation. In order for rhyme to work, the self must internalize sound as the ear departs

[5] Ibid., 15:308.
[6] Ibid., 15:309.

from one rhyme word and looks (or listens) forward to the next. In this process, the self not only hears the return of like sounds, it hears *itself,* becomes conscious of itself as active in the production of rhyme's significance.

In this philosophical account, the modern prosodic system did not supersede the ancient prosodic system by chance. The accomplishment of Hegel's aesthetics is to merge system with history, to grasp art forms and their attendant techniques as possessing an inner logic of development that is bound up with the movement of history itself. A complete picture of the imbrication of prosody and history in Hegel's aesthetics would at this point lead too far afield. It suffices to note that Hegel links the ancient prosodic system with sculpture as the consummate art form of ancient Greece, the art form in which inner and out are one; in which spirit achieves unalienated expression in sensuous form. By contrast, the modern prosodic system is linked with the Romantic (Christian) principle of interiority according to which spirit strives beyond its sensuous manifestation toward a higher, spiritual reconciliation that is the prerogative of religion and philosophy. This brief exposition of Hegel's conception of versification is intended to bring out the historical-philosophical dimension of prosody. This dimension is not unique to Hegel; it is the inheritance of a poetics forged under the sign of ancient Greece. Yet the norm-giving ideal identified in Greek poetry comes up against the historical reality of a modern prosodic system incommensurate with that of the Ancients. The aporia of classicism is inscribed into prosody itself. In this dissertation, I approach prosody as finely tuned seismograph that registers the shocks and shifts of philosophical thought and aesthetic practice, a medium in which the distances and recurrences of historical time achieve expression and the paradigms of Ancient and Modern attain their concrete form.

Some of the most vital contributions to the study of prosody today come from the field of

Anglo-American poetics. Yet there has been little cross-pollination of ideas between that field and German-language poetics. My dissertation sets these two sides into dialogue with one another. More specifically, my dissertation engages debates concerning "historical poetics," a contested term that is therefore difficult to define. Rather than attempting my own paraphrase, I borrow a definition from Jonathan Sachs writing in the introduction to a special issue on the topic in the journal *Literary Compass*. Historical poetics,

> might be thought of as a loosely correlated set of approaches to reading poetry built around a central insight: that the study of poetry should be historicized because the formal categories through which we understand poetry, especially genre and the various aspects of prosody, are themselves historical and thus unstable and changing. Recovering the plasticity of these concepts and the range of diverse poetic and interpretive practices through which they were understood prior to the formalization of literary studies as a university discipline helps to reveal the various kinds of cultural and political work that poetry has done. It also forces us to question our current critical and evaluative presuppositions by resurrecting previously vital but now-outmoded theories of how poetry should be written and read. By asking fundamental questions about what poetry is and how we evaluate it, poetry itself, now broadly understood in its historical contingency, emerges as an historical agent rather than a passive reflection of political and social change.[7]

In this dissertation, I am concerned not only with offering original interpretations and insights into much-discussed works of literature such as Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea* and Hölderlin's odes. I am also committed to comprehending these works within the context of the in many cases much less discussed prosodic treatises, reviews, philological studies, philosophical essays, manuscripts, and epistolary correspondences. This approach is necessitated by the very topic of my study, for the German-speaking philologists, philosophers, and poets around 1800 were already doing historical poetics. Indeed, the method of historicization central to historical poetics would hardly be thinkable without the pioneering work carried out in and around Weimar at the turn of the eighteenth century. It is precisely in their renewed engagement with the artwork

[7] Jonathan Sachs, "Introduction: Historical poetics," *Literature Compass* 17, no. 7 (2020): 1-3; 1.

of ancient Greece as an ideal for imitation that they discovered that its artwork did not – could not – serve as a timeless form canon; that the artwork was a product of historical contingency; that, to reuse Sachs' phrase, "the formal categories through which we understand poetry, especially genre and the various aspects of prosody, are themselves historical and thus unstable and changing." Yet, as I have already emphasized, the authors and texts with which I am concerned did not renounce the ideality of ancient Greece as an illusion and then commit themselves to studying its artworks with the objective of knowing what other people thought about them at other times. Rather, they sought to comprehend the historicity of ancient Greece while at the same time maintaining its exemplarity, its power to reach out across an abyss of time and teach them, move them, orient them on their own path of poetic production. They sought to make ancient Greece *live* within their work, and I argue that prosody was a central means for doing this.

This project of a poetic renaissance in prosody can also help show the limits of historical poetics. I think that the methodology of historical poetics can threaten to neutralize its object of study, to place it at a remove where it can no longer affect our own reading and response to poetry here and now but only tell us how people in the past read and responded to poetry. Consider, for example a passage from an article by Yopie Prins, along with Virginia Jackson one of the main proponents of historical poetics, in which she discusses a little-known prosodic treatise, *The Science of English Verse*, by the nineteenth-century American poet and composer Sidney Lanier:

> While Lanier's deconstruction and musical reconstruction of English meter might fail as a practical approach to scansion, practical application is not the point of historical poetics. There are other, more interesting questions. What response did Lanier get from his contemporaries, and can we read his ideas about sound in relation to nineteenth-century theories of acoustics and music or alongside other essays on prosody, like Edgar Allan Poe's "Rationale of Verse" or Coventry

> Patmore's "Essay on English Metrical Law"? How did these metrical debates contribute to Anglo-American literary culture, and what were the political and philosophical stakes of thinking about prosody?[8]

The implicit assumption of historical poetics as it is expressed here is that its objects of study are of primarily historical interest; that they cannot provide us with practical guidance on the workings of poetry any more than the Ptolemaic world-view can provide us with practical guidance on the workings of our solar system; that we now know better.[9] This may in fact be true for some prosodic treatises; they may be incompatible with more recent development in the study of prosody. Yet the approach of historical poetics implies that even the most recent work on prosody must be historicized, must be understood not as simple statements of fact but as historically conditioned constructs for recognizing and experiencing poetry. Is there, then, anything that lies beyond historicization? I think that Simon Jarvis brings out the issue fairly in a response piece to Prins' article cited above:

> I think there is one (under-articulated) belief in Prins's idea of historical poetics […]. This belief is that there is no part of poetics which does not stand in need of becoming historical or of being 'historicized.' The implication, I believe, is that because our ways of reading, writing, hearing, and performing rhythm and meter themselves are historically variable, we may not separate the scansion of verse, for example, from historical inquiry. The implication is that, although Lanier's science of verse can't be our science of verse, it and other documents like it can help us to develop a historically nuanced way of hearing, reading, and scanning the metrical verse of the past.[10]

In the chapters that follow, I aim to contribute to "a historically nuanced way of hearing, reading, and scanning the metrical verse of the past," but I also aim to show how the verse of the past

[8] Prins, "Historical Poetics, Dysprosody, and 'The Science of English Verse.'" *PMLA* 123, no. 1 (2008): 229-234; 233.

[9] For a related critique, David Nowell Smith, Smith, David Nowell. "Historical poetics and the register of history," *Critical Quarterly* 61 no. 1 (2019): 82-98. Taking a Heideggerian approach, Smith argues that historical poetics must not view that poem as a passive historical object to be contextualized, but rather as an agent shaping its own context and active in its own historicization.

[10] Simon Jarvis, "What is Historical Poetics?" in *Theory Aside*, eds. Jason Potts and Daniel Stout (Durham: Duke UP, 2014) 97-116; 100.

renders itself fleetingly yet repeatedly present – what the poet and critic John Wilkinson calls "repeatable evanescence."[11] For the presence and present of poetry is at stake in the prosody of Weimar Classicism. Prins and Jackson grant the presence of past practices of reading, writing, hearing, and performing rhythm and meter only insofar as these practices are ideologies to be dismantled. Yet is there something that moves us, that touches us in poetry that cannot be reduced to ideology? What are we left with once we have exposed the implicit biases of past poetic practices? Can we now read Emily Dickinson without a distorting ideological filter? I doubt this, for as Prins writes, "the sound of poetry is never heard without mediation, and we should attend to the medium."[12] Yet how should we attend to the medium without limiting ourselves to a permanent second-order criticism, a "metacriticism," a criticism of past criticism?[13] If the sound of poetry is never heard without mediation, then there is no such thing as *just* listening, *just* reading, *just* interpreting a poem, because these practices will always be freighted with the ideological assumptions of the past, and it is to these assumptions, rather than the poem itself – such a thing may be the construct of our reading practices – that, according to the proponents of historical poetics, we must turn. I do not deny Prins claim concerning the irreducibly mediated quality of sound in poetry. Even the sounds that seem the most intimate, most immediate, most profound – lines memorized in grade school, or when in love, or in the course of writing a dissertation – are enmeshed in complex webs of presuppositions about

[11] John Wilkinson, *Lyric in its Times. Temporalities in Verse, Breath and Stone*, (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019) 16.
[12] Prins, "Historical Poetics, Dysprosody, and *The Science of English Verse*," 229.
[13] Paul Fry raises this issue in a recent article engaging with historical poetics as elaborated in Virginia Jackson's *Dickinson's Misery*. Fry takes issue with what he sees as historical poetics' anti-hermeneutical model and advocates for the persisting importance of interpretation that is not exclusively focused on the medial circumstances of the poem. See Fry, "The New Metacriticisms and the Fate of Interpretation," *Modern Language Quarterly* 81, no. 3 (2020): 267-287. For Jackson's response piece, see her article "Historical Poetics and the Dream of Interpretation: A Response to Paul Fry," *Modern Language Quarterly* 81, no. 3 (2020): 289-318.

pedagogy and curriculum, about the occasions and affective dispositions of poetry, about scholarship and canonicity. When Goethe found himself overwhelmed by the rhythm of Sophocles, his experience was condition upon the meaning that he and his contemporaries ascribed to Sophocles and how they understood the workings of rhythm. It is the task of this dissertation to investigate the historical conditions of this experience. I am not arguing that we should limit our historicization so as not to spoil our immediate enjoyment of our favorite poems. What is needed – and what I attempt here – is a hermeneutics of verse embodiment that takes the pulse of prosody and sounds out the cultural depths of rhythm and meter rendered resonant by the poet's versecraft.

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I want to continue to elaborate the framework of my dissertation by way of short commentaries on three theoretical reflections by three key figures who shaped the German intellectual landscape in the latter half of the eighteenth century. From these theoretical reflections emerge conceptual *Leitmotivs* that reoccur throughout the following chapters.

Da die Naturgabe der Kunst (als schönen Kunst) die Regel geben muß: welcherlei Art ist denn diese Regel? Sie kann in keiner Formel abgefaßt zur Vorschrift dienen; denn sonst würde das Urteil über das Schöne nach Begriffen bestimmbar sein: sondern die Regel muß von der Tat, d. i. vom Produkt abstrahiert werden, an welchem andere ihr eigenes Talent prüfend mögen, um sich jenes zum Muster, nicht der N a c h m a c h u n g, sondern der N a c h a h m u n g, dienen zu lassen. Wie dieses möglich sei, ist schwer zu erklären.[14]

Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*

If judgments of beauty do not subsume their object under a concept, if the judgment "this rose is beautiful" does not ascribe to the rose an objective quality – beauty – but rather articulates a unique mode of emotionally relating to the object, then there can be no pre-established rules for

[14] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, ed. Wilhelm Weischdel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974) 244-245.

judging and bringing forth beauty. The aesthetic relation is a conceptually indeterminate relation. We cannot pick out some empirical quality of the object that makes it beautiful. We can only point to it and then point to ourselves, appealing to a pleasure that it provokes in us, a pleasure that lies not in mere personal preference or personal investment in the object, but rather in our shared subjectivity. How, then, is art possible? Painting, music, and poetry all have their rules for making, their conventions, their norms; they demand the mastery of inherited techniques. Yet none of this is enough to produce what Kant calls "schöne Kunst." No amount of mechanical mastery can guarantee beauty, because beauty cannot be brought forth by following a set of rules concerning proportion, harmony, and perfection. How, then, is art, *beautiful* art, possible? Kant's answer to this is, of course, the genius. Genius does not follow the rules of art; it *gives* art its rules. Genius does not *discover* pre-existing rules as Newton can be said to have discovered certain laws of nature; genius *invents* the rules of art. "Genius brings forth new ways of bringing forth."[15] While anyone can, in principle, retrace the logical steps that led Newton to his discoveries, this is not so in the case of genius, for genius itself cannot give a full conceptual account of its creation. Genius does not imitate because it brings forth something essentially new, something for which prior rules do not exist, and genius cannot be imitated because what it brings forth eludes conceptual determination. Yet this leads Kant to another problem, a problem that is threaded through his entire discussion of genius and artistic production. If art is, as Kant claims, the art of genius, and if genius is entirely opposed to the "N a c h a h m u n g s g e i s t e,"[16] then how is anything like an artistic tradition possible? How can one artist learn from another? How can the history of art be anything more than the history of sporadic geniuses emerging *ex nihilo* and leaving behind inimitable, inexplicable works of art? Kant responds to

[15] Michel Chaouli, *Thinking with Kant's Critique of Judgment* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press) 156.
[16] Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 243 emphasis in original.

these issues by ascribing *exemplarity* to the genius, indeed, he embeds exemplarity in its very definition: "Nach diesen Vorausssetzungen ist Genie: die musterhafte Originalität der Naturgabe eines Subjekts im freien Gebrauche seiner Erkenntnisvermögen."[17] The tension in the phrase "musterhafte Originalität" gives pause. Genius brings forth something new, something without precedent, yet in doing so, it sets a precedent. Exemplary originality reaches beyond the purely personal, the idiomatic, to articulate the impersonal, the universal in the work of art. The exemplarity of the example lies not in *Nachahmung* but in *Nachfolge*,[18] not in imitation but in inspiration. The inimitable artwork of genius spurs genius on to other inimitable artworks. Insofar as an artistic school can develop around genius, inspiration can become a kind of imitation of which Kant marginally approves. Yet, "diese Nachahmung wird N a c h ä f f u n g, wenn der Schüler alles n a c h m a c h t […]."[19] What I want to bring out here is the pressure placed on the whole semantic field of imitation. By arguing that there can be no rules for bringing forth beautiful objects, Kant calls into question the artistic paradigm of imitation, yet he is unable to dispense with it altogether. Indeed, the terms of imitation proliferate. Kant admits his difficulties in explaining how the artist relates to her model: "Wie dieses möglich sei, ist schwer zu erklären."[20] Kant's attempt at an explanation is the following: "Die Ideen des Künstlers erregen ähnliche Ideen seines Lehrlings, wenn ihn die Natur mit einer ähnlichen Proportion der Gemütskräfte versehen hat."[21] Yet this account of one artist stimulating another artist to creation threatens to fall back into a version of Socrates' account in Plato's *Ion* of poets as so many magnetized rings, transmitting their irrational inspiration from one to the other. Kant dismantles

[17] Ibid., 255.
[18] Ibid., 255.
[19] Ibid., emphasis in original.
[20] Ibid., 245.
[21] Ibid., 245.

the institution of *imitatio* without providing a fully fleshed out model of artistic influence or inheritance that could replace it.

The central texts with which my dissertation is concerned have moved beyond the aesthetics of genius, but the problem of imitation looms even larger. As we have seen, the tension between imitation and inimitability inheres in Kant's philosophy of aesthetic judgment as it does in Winckelmann's aesthetics. Kant's argument for the conceptual indeterminacy at once articulates a powerful philosophical justification for overcoming a rule-based poetics and at the same time leaves it unclear what could take the place of such a poetics once the aesthetics of genius proved to be an unsatisfying account of poetic making What is needed in the wake of Kant is a rethinking of the poet's relation to antiquity at the level of *poesis*. My dissertation is centrally concerned with tracing out the variegated results of this rethinking, a rethinking that also requires thinking beyond Kant. As an inquiry into the *a priori* conditions of possibility for aesthetic experience, Kant's account remained necessarily ahistorical. He is concerned with what makes us, as cognizing creatures, relate to the world aesthetically, not with what a particular culture held to be beautiful at a particular time. Yet one of the crucial insights of the generation of philosophers coming in the wake of Kant is that our cognitive faculties are not simply given but develop historically and that history is the history of humankind's coming to consciousness of itself as that being who *has* a history, that is to say, is guided by a meaningful and intelligible trajectory through time determined not by God but by the alternations of human consciousness itself. This claim proves enormously influential for a post-Kantian poetics seeking to orient itself on the model of ancient Greek art and poetry. Poetics in the age of German Idealism conceives verse in historical-philosophical terms. Its underlying claim is that a systematic poetics without history is empty; a history of poetics without system is blind. Without history, poetics can only

conceive verse forms as timeless givens abstracted from historical change. Without system, poetics can only record a list of historical usages lacking any internal logic, any innate expressive qualities that guides the development of verse forms and enables them to perdure in the midst of historical flux. The task for a post-Kantian poetics is to think history and system together. Verse comes to be conceived as having a history. Dactylic hexameter, for instance, the verse form of epic poetry from Homer to Virgil, is not a metrical abstraction but a historically saturated prosodic reality embedded in a concrete cultural context. Yet the verse form is not reducible to its historical moment, indeed, it possesses properties that allow it to transcend that moment and serve as an enduring resource for thinking and feeling in poetry across centuries and even millennia. As I will argue, the major philologists within the circle of Weimar cultural life around 1800 found in the dactylic hexameter the most *plastic* of antique verse forms. The hexameter, according to their metrical and rhythmic analyses, possess prosodically pronounced, statuesque contours that mark off each line as a clearly defined unit of verse, while at the same time maintaining enough pliancy that thousands of lines of hexametrical verse result not in monotony but in an immersive and expansive experience of rhythmic flow. The plasticity of the epic hexameter corresponds to what in the late eighteenth century are taken to be the two defining features of epic poetry: objectivity and totality. The epic poet does not insert herself into her poem, infusing it with her own impressions and emotions, but rather hovers above it, allowing events to unfold at a distance. The epic poem constitutes not a brief outburst of emotion but a visionary sweep that collects under its ken gods and heroes, history-shaping wars and ordinary objects, a jug of wine or the axle of a chariot. It constitutes an all-encompassing world whose rhythmic fundament is hexameter. The historical-philosophical rethinking of verse opens up a new field of possibilities for connecting with the past poetically after Kant's deconstruction of

the imitative model of artist pedagogy. Post-Kantian poetics at once inscribes history into verse forms and understands this history in terms of world-disclosive forms of consciousness. Composing in hexameter is no longer a matter of imitating Homer but of immersion within the horizon of epic consciousness.

Überhaupt wandelt das Wortlose in einem guten Gedicht umher, wie in Homers Schlachten die nur von wenigen gesehnen Götter.[22]

– Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, "Von der Darstellung'

This dictum from Klopstock's short 1779 dialogue aims at articulating the nature of poetic presentation, presentation understand not as evoking an image but as placing the poem's subject before the listener or reader, rendering it phantasmatically present. This presencing is a matter of affecting the listener or reader, moving her by the movement of the poem. For Klopstock, it is meter that achieves this effect. It is meter that expresses that which elides, that which is beyond or beside verbal expression. "Der Dichter kann diejenigen Empfindungen, für welche die Sprache keine Worte hat, oder vielmehr nur (ich sage dies in Beziehung auf den Reichtum unsere Sprache) die Nebenausbildungen solcher Empfindungen, er kann sie, durch die Stärke und die Stellung der völlig ausgedrückten ähnlichen, mit ausdrücken."[23] Metered language, language calculated for the strength of its stress, short-circuits the linguistic sign. The impact of the word reaches us with a speed that far outstrips the time it takes to process its semantic content. While the expression "mit ausdrücken" would suggest that the rhythmic motion produced by meter is an epiphenomenon, a secondary source of poetic presentation, Klopstock's poetics surpasses the place it proscribes to meter. Meter charges the words with that

[22] Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, "Von der Darstellung," *Gedanken über die Natur der Poesie: Dichtungstheoretische Schriften*, ed. Winfried Menninghaus (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1989) 172.
[23] Ibid., 171.

which is without words. It places a pressure on language that is the very pressure of our sensate existence rendered explicit, expressible. In Klopstock's account, poetic presentation produces pathos, it sets the soul into motion by setting syllables into motion. The rhythmic *perturbatio* provokes the passion of the soul.

Klopstock's poetic theory and practice remain idiosyncratic. For his contemporaries and the generation following after him, his poetics serve less as a new norm for poetic production than as a site of controversy and contestation, the occasion for a *parti pris* for one or the other of the positions in poetics articulated in the wake of his work. Goethe provides the most humorous iteration of the polarizing effects of Klopstock's poetics in Book Two of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, where he recounts the conflict between his father's preference for the rhyming German poets in the Anacreontic tradition and his children's' new-found passion for Klopstock's verse. One evening the young Johann and his sister get carried away reciting verses from the *Messias* as their father prepares for a shave. The recitation startles the barber and he pours the soap bucket over Herr Goethe in fright: "Da gab es einen großen Aufstand, und eine strenge Untersuchung ward gehalten, besonders in Betracht des Unglücks das hätte entstehen können, wenn man schon im Rasieren begriffen gewesen wäre." The confrontation between the poetic father and the *paterfamilias* ends in the latter's renewed interdiction against the former. Yet beyond the dynamics of this oedipal conflict, the anecdote humorously makes a serious point, a point that guides my thinking in this dissertation: poetry is a matter of being moved, and being moved is a matter of prosodic technique. Klopstock strove to delineate a poetics based not on metrical abstraction but on the prosodic palpability of the word. Prosody is a matter of palpability, of the pressures placed on language that provoke the experience of a rhythmic event. In this dissertation, I am concerned both with the accounts that poets, philosophers, and philologists

around 1800 gave of the rhythmic sensations of a given verse form, as well as the role prosody plays in constituting the poem's sense. Following Klopstock, I read that which is wordless in the words, the paralinguistic elements of language harnessed by verse, as the prime movers, and, at times, the main actors of the poem.

Ich habe noch nie so augenscheinlich mich überzeugt als bei meinem jetzigen Geschäft, wie genau in der Poesie Stoff und Form, selbst äußere, zusammen hängen. Seitdem ich meine prosaische Sprache in eine poetisch-rhythmische verwandle, befinde ich mich unter einer ganz anderen Gerichtsbarkeit als vorher, selbst viele Motive, die in der prosaischen Ausführung recht gut am Platz zu stehen schienen, kann ich jetzt nicht mehr brauchen; sie waren bloß gut für den gewöhnlichen Hausverstand, dessen Organ die Prosa zu sein scheint, aber der Vers fodert schlechterdings Beziehung auf die Einbildungskraft, und so mußte ich auch in mehreren meiner Motive poetischer werden. Man sollte wirklich alles, was sich über das Gemeine erheben muß, in Versen wenigstens anfänglich konzipieren, denn das Platte kommt nirgends so ins Licht, als wenn es in gebundener Schreibart ausgesprochen wird.[24]

–Schiller, Goethe dated 24 November 1797

In the autumn of 1797, Friedrich Schiller was in the process of recasting his *Wallenstein* drama, originally conceived in prose, into blank verse. This passage from his correspondence with Goethe gives a sense of what this process meant to him. Versification, in Schiller's account, constitutes a process of purification in which the noble is separated from the base. Under the jurisdiction of verse, the prosaic rules of the "Hausverstand" no longer hold sway. Schiller's terms here have a Kantian inflection. Verse is linked to the imagination, which, no longer bound by the concept of purpose, is left to its own devices, left to its own free play of associations in that realm of disinterested reflection that is for Kant the realm of aesthetic judgment. The fact that poetic speech is equated with rhythmic speech ("eine poetische=rhythmische [Sprache]") testifies to the importance of versification for Schiller's conception of the poetic. As he writes in the same letter, rhythm, as the ordered alteration of long and short syllables, urges the poet and

[24] Emil Staiger, ed., *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe*, (Frankfurt am Main; Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2005) 497.

reader, "von allem noch so Characteristisch-Verschiedenen etwas Allgemeines, rein Menschliches zu verlangen."[25] Versification submits the diversity of the literary work to the sole law of rhythmic repetition. Rhythm, for Schiller, is on the side of the universal. Rhythm constitutes the poetic unity of the linguistic manifold.

In his response to Schiller's letter, Goethe agrees emphatically with his linking of the poetic and the rhythmic, while slightly shifting the focus of Schiller's claim: "Alles Poetische sollte rhythmisch behandelt werden! Das ist meine Überzeugung, und daß man nach und nach eine poetische Prosa einführen konnte, zeigt nur, daß man den Unterschied zwischen Prosa und Poesie gänzlich aus den Augen verlor."[26] This insistence on difference, on determining and distinguishing the unique medial conditions governing each of the arts comprises a well-known component of aesthetic discourse since Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's 1766 *Laocoon* treatise. In this exchange between Goethe and Schiller, we begin to see the stakes of versification in the philosophical currents animating German-speaking intellectual life at the turn of the eighteenth century. A year later, in his famous *Athenaeum* fragment 116, Friedrich Schlegel would call for the fusion of poetry and prose in a celebratory gesture of liberation from the boundaries separating art and life. In contradistinction to the injunction to romanticize the world, the partisans of an aesthetics turned toward antiquity insist on versification as the means with which to insure the autonomy of the linguistic artwork. Versification came to be thought of as opposed to the "Hausverstand," to the nexus of instrumental reasoning that Hegel would call the "Prosa der Welt."[27] By arranging words according to their sound rather than their sense, the prosodic principles of versification were seen to lift language out of the flux of everyday speech and endow it with a harmonious order that it lacked in its quotidian communicative usage. What I see

[25] Ibid., 497.
[26] Ibid., 499.
[27] Hegel, *Werke*, 1:199.

at stake in this conceptualization of versification as an autonomizing act is a claim to the world-building function of verse. If for the Romantics the novel is the art form that can incorporate into its texture the heteroglossic richness of the world, for the Classicists verse is the art form that can create a world, transporting its beholders out of their absorption in the narrow confines of a finite reality not of their own making and into a sphere shaped by the human spirit. Rather than forging an untouchable artifact, a Grecian urn on display, versification transform its pre-given material, language, into an artwork that englobes the beholder in its own inner lawfulness, its own principles of prosody. This is of course, a tall order for verse. In the chapters that follow, I seek not simply to affirm this aesthetic agenda but to attend to the jointures and cracks in versification, the places where the prosodic pressure placed on language reveals the fault lines in the poem's design. I read versification as rendering a rhythmic event fraught with meaning and layered with the memory of past poetic practices.

I have organized the chapters of my dissertation around the neo-classical schema of poetic genres: epic, dramatic, and lyric, with a fourth chapter looking out onto the fate of these genres in post-Classical Weimar. Each chapter focuses on one verse form in its intertwinement with the history and horizons of expectation evoked by a given genre: dactylic hexameter, blank verse, and the Sapphic ode, while the fourth chapter engages Goethe's citational usage of ten different verse forms within one drama. Although I deal centrally with Goethe in this dissertation, the verse forms under question here draw into their orbit a wide range of writers working at the intersection of poetry, philology, and philosophy.

In Chapter 1, I concentrate on the most theorized verse form of the age: the dactylic hexameter of ancient epic poetry. As the verse form of Greek antiquity's most renowned poet, Homer, it becomes synonymous with Greek antiquity itself. Thus, the debates about hexametrical rhythm and its approximation in German-language verse focalize the possibilities and pitfalls of standing in a rhythmic relation to the past. Drawing on Hans Blumenberg's "metaphorology," I examine descriptions of dactylic hexameter by the pioneering philologists around 1800 as they strive to give expression to that which is wordless in the words: rhythm. There is no non-metaphorical description of rhythm, and I argue that the figurative language that results from the attempt to grasp the rhythmic essence of epic verse transfers the sculptural discourse of Winckelmann into the sphere of poetics. At once contoured and compliant, statuesque and supple, the dactylic hexameter is understood as the most *plastic* of verse forms. Through an analysis of the semantics of plasticity from its early-modern usage to designate a divine formative force inhering in an organism to Herder's *Plastik*, situated on the threshold between sculpture and poetry, I show that plasticity means more than pliability or flexibility; it encompasses connotations of divine creation, inner lawfulness and purpose, and aesthetic changeability. I then turn to Goethe's 1796-1797 hexameter poem *Hermann und Dorothea*, arguing that plasticity is at stake here at both the metrical and the semantic level. *Hermann und Dorothea* depicts a German town whose provincial way of life is threatened by an influx of refugees fleeing the French revolutionary Terror. Hermann, a youth from the town, falls in love with Dorothea, a refugee. The personal and the political intersect, and the question in both of these instances is how to adapt the old to the new, how to bear the (de)formative force of love and revolution without, on the one hand, retreating into a nostalgic and rigidified past, and on the other, capitulating to the chaos of the moment. My claim is that the hexameter in its plasticity

offers a paradigm for absorbing the shock of the new, of bending without breaking. This is exemplified in Goethe's approach to the verse. Goethe's colleagues demanded of his hexameter a metrical exactitude that the poet ultimately resisted, preferring poetic license to philological precision as a means to retain the plasticity felt in the Greek hexameter.

In Chapter 2, I turn to a meter unknown to classical antiquity: unrhymed iambic pentameter, otherwise known as "blank verse." Emerging out of a confluence of vernacular poetic traditions, blank verse rose to fame with the poetry of William Shakespeare and John Milton. In versifying his drama *Iphigenie auf Tauris* in 1787, Goethe chooses this consummate modern verse form as a means of achieving the rhythmic effects that he experienced in Sophocles' iambic trimeter without having to shoulder the burden of imitating Sophocles in his own verse form. Yet this requires a decisive refashioning of the meter. Through an analysis of blank verse prosody and its usage in German verse prior to Goethe, I show that its distinguishing feature is its tendency to prosodic *unboundedness*. Blank verse lacks the strong prosodic markers of the epic hexameter, thereby enabling a heightened freedom in versification, a freedom that, however, threatens to efface the bounds of the poetic line and render the verse nearly indistinguishable from prose. In his 1779 *Nathan der Weise*, Lessing exploits this prosaic tendency of blank verse to great effect, using a variety of prosodic techniques to erode the integrity of the line in order to achieve the spontaneity and dialogic reciprocity that undergirds his drama of interreligious exchange. Goethe inherits German blank verse in this prose-like state. His task in the versification of his *Iphigenie* drama consists in endowing blank verse with the metrical integrity and rhythmic force that he found in Sophoclean tragedy. Through a reading of Karl Phillip Moritz's 1786 treatise *Versuch einer deutschen Prosodie*, which Goethe credits with supplying him with the necessary knowledge to render his *Iphigenie* in blank verse, I show how

versification comes to be understood as shaping the aesthetic autonomy of the artwork. Moritz, whose aesthetic theory was elaborated in close partnership with Goethe, argues that in versification language ceases to function as a means to an external end, as tool for communication. Versification relocates the end of language within itself, in its own harmonious sounding forth. By setting a metrical limit to a syntactic unit, by subordinating sound to sense, Moritz maintains that versification raises language out of the quotidian sphere of finite means and ends, ennobling language into an artwork endowed with aesthetic autonomy. With this in mind, I turn to a reading of *Iphigenie auf Tauris*. My focus here lies on the versification's relation to dramatic structure. I argue that Iphigenie's opening monologue creates a rhythmic arena that is repeatedly threaten by what I call Orest's "a-metricality," his frequent verbal outbursts that cannot be contained within the established norms of blank verse. I relate these a-metrical cuts in the verse fabric to the play's preoccupation with dramatic binding and unbinding, with the tying of the tragic knot that, as Aristotle expounds in his *Poetics*, is typically unraveled through anagnorisis, or dramatic recognition. Through a critical engagement with seminal essays on the play by Theodor W. Adorno and Hans Robert Jauß, I argue for the centrality of versification to an understanding of the drama in tension with its own aesthetics and ethics of autonomy, ultimately advocating for a reading of the play as an "exit drama." The central struggle of the play is to leave Tauris, to exit the stage, to step out of the rhythmically bounded sphere of blank verse, an act that finds an ambivalent expression in the play's final, metrically truncated line.

In Chapter 3, I explore the relation between the doctrine of metempsychosis and the poetics of the ode. The doctrine of metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls, experiences a revival of interest in and around Weimar at the turn of the eighteenth century as German-

speaking intellectuals seek to imagine alternatives to the Christian afterlife. Through an analysis of Lessing's and Johann Gottfried Herder's writings on the subject, I argue that the idea of metempsychosis serves as a means to conceptualize a form of cultural continuity that would transcend the personal rupture of death and the historical rupture of political revolution. Lessing and Herder claim that it is not the individual with all her particularities who is reborn, but rather that which is most universal within her, her capacities for language, reason, and artistic expression as developed over millennia of human history. Accordingly, this metempsychosis does not take place in a metaphysical beyond, but in the here and now, as each person cultivates within herself capacities that transcend herself, connecting her with the past and projecting her into the future. Having set out this transformation in the doctrine of metempsychosis, I turn to Herder's writing on lyric poetry, of which the ode was taken to be the paradigm. My claim is that in these writings Herder develops a metempsychotic poetics. He conceives the intricate meters and strophic structures of the ancient Greek ode as basal forms of human expressivity. What sounds forth in, for example, the Sapphic or Alcaic ode, is not Sappho or Alcäus as individuals, but fundamental modalities of experiencing the world to which the verse forms named after them give contour and depth. At stake in Herder's metempsychotic poetics is the establishment of a lyric continuity based not on imitation but on sensation. To compose in the Sapphic or Alcaic ode strophe is not to imitate Sappho or Alcäus, but rather to partake in the metempsychotic conjuration of past forms of feeling. Against the background of a metempsychotic poetics, I turn to the odic production of Friedrich Hölderlin. While the intricacies of his meter have long been studied, the influence of the thought of metempsychosis on his poetics has received little attention. Through an analysis of a prose fragment, I illustrate Hölderlin's reception of Herder's thinking on metempsychosis before turning to a consideration of Hölderlin's single completed

Sapphic ode, his 1801 "Unter den Alpen gesungen." I attend to issues of address and poetic (in)vocation in this ode as they manifest themselves at the metrical level and engage with questions of odic expressivity and lyric continuity.

In Chapter 4, I focus on the fate of antique verse forms after the caesura of Schiller's death in 1805. I read Goethe's 1807-1808 "festival play" *Pandora* in conjunction with Hegel's 1807 *Phänomenologie des Geistes* and his 1818-1829 lectures on aesthetics. I argue that both Goethe and Hegel are fundamentally concerned with the fate of beauty in their time, a time whose historical conditions they find inimical to the ideal of beauty that they both locate in ancient Greece. Both Goethe and Hegel register the loss of this ideal as the loss not only of beautiful objects but also the loss of a world that nourished them. I show that the poetics of Goethe's *Pandora* offers a response to this predicament that parallels, and can be made intelligible by, Hegel's portrait of the artist in the post-Romantic era. Hegel argues that the entire history of art, the whole range of genres, styles, and forms, lie open to the contemporary artist, for art itself has become historical, a thing of the past in respect to its highest purpose: the phenomenal manifestation of the divine. Freed from this purpose, the paradigmatic modern artist for Hegel is the dramatist who sets up on stage as in a moving picture gallery so many historical *personae*. This is just what Goethe does in *Pandora*, not only on the level of the *dramatis personae*, who resemble philosophical types more than individual personalities, but also on the level of verse structure. On the basis of interpretations of key poetological passages in the play, I argue for reading *Pandora* as a verse anthology that exhibits its unprecedented array of verse forms *as* historical and therefore capable of being collected and curated in ways that create new constellations of meaning. Through the analysis of two distinct metrical patterns in the play, I show that verse's historicity is the source of its vitality in *Pandora.* Verse functions here not as a

transparent medium for communication but as a historically saturated rhythmic pull that indexes its own past usages. At the same time, Goethe employs these metrical patterns in historically unprecedented ways, thereby achieving a freedom from the imitative relation to antiquity and engaging antique verse forms in a synthesis with modern ones. This synthesis points to Goethe's ultimate divergence from Hegel: while Hegel sees no aesthetic solution to the retreat of the ideal, Goethe imagines a reconciliation of Ancient and Modern and a reemergence of beauty in the cultic festival, if only within the artifice of theater.

Chapter 1: Poetry and Plastik: On the German Hexameter around 1800

> "p l a s t i s c h e K r a f t […] ich meine jene Kraft, aus sich heraus eigenartig zu wachsen, Vergangenes und Fremdes umzubilden und einzuverleiben, Wunden auszuheilen, Verlorenes zu ersetzen, zerbrochene Formen aus sich nachzuformen."
> - Friedrich Nietzsche, *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben*

ut sculptura poesis

Hexameter verse is to the German-language poetics of the late eighteenth century what the Laocoon statue is to the nascent art-historical discourse of the same period: it is the crucible through which all poets with classicizing ambitions must pass; it is the contested site of an encounter with the laws and limits of an aesthetics rooted in a recourse to classical antiquity. No verse form is more intensely debated and theorized in the German-speaking world of letters; no verse form holds the same prestige around 1800. In the pride of place accorded to it, the hexameter comes to stand in *pars pro toto* for classical antiquity and its most celebrated poet, Homer. The meter of the Homeric epics is, then, a logical starting point for a study of the renewed engagement with classical verse forms in the era of Weimar Classicism. In pursuing this line of inquiry, I take seriously the analogy between poetry and sculpture, for this analogy leads us to the heart of the epic meter's theorization around 1800. In the attempt among philologists and poets to grasp the rules of the hexameter and their transferability into the German language, in their effort to articulate the verse's characteristic qualities, its unique rhythm, there arises a remarkably unified discourse on the meter that draws heavily from the semantic field of sculpture. This philological discourse crystallizes in metaphor: the hexameter proves to be the most manifold, the most pliant – the most *plastic* – of ancient verse forms. This characterization is as much the result of a reckoning with Goethe's 1797 hexameter poem *Hermann und*

Dorothea as it is an attempt to articulate the rhythmic essence of Homer's verse form. *Hermann und Dorothea* is at once the result of a sustained debate on the hexameter and provides the occasion for some of the most penetrating statements about the meter. The concept of plasticity that undergirds this debate offers a new point of entry into Goethe's poem. Plasticity proves to be at once metrical and social, at once structural and semantic; plasticity serves as a counter-force to the fluctuations of love and war that Goethe confronts in *Hermann und Dorothea*.

The Macrocosm and Microcosm of Verse

In an 1806 essay entitled "Latium und Hellas oder Betrachtungen über das classische Alterthum," Wilhelm von Humboldt declared the hexameter to be "der Inbegriff und der Grundton aller Harmonien des Menschen und der Schöpfung."[1] In order to understand the prestige of the hexameter around 1800, a prestige so great that Humboldt could elevate the verse form to a kind of cosmic principle, it is necessary to first take a microcosmic perspective. As philologists, translators and practicing poets, Humboldt and his classically inclined colleagues devoted themselves first and foremost to the study of the prosodic building-blocks of verse, its molecular makeup, as it were. The effort to articulate the verse's elemental rhythm – and the great rhetorical finesse that went into this attempt – first becomes intelligible against the backdrop of this molecular makeup. It is at the microcosmic level that the normative claims of antique verse confront the irrecoverable historicity of the prosodic system that made this verse possible. It is here that the conditions of Classicism are negotiated.

[1] Wilhelm von Humboldt, "Latium und Hellas oder Betrachtungen über das classische Alterthum," *Werke*, ed. Wolfgang Stahl, 7 vols. (Bonn: Mundus Verlag, 1999) 2:40. The essay was not published during Humboldt's lifetime.

This negotiation is exemplified in the prosodic thinking of Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, whose publication of his hexameter epic *Der Messias* between 1748 and 1773 proved pivotal for the subsequent flourishing of the verse form at the end of the eighteenth century. Klopstock begins his seminal 1779 poetological treatise "Vom deutschen Hexameter" with a seemingly small observation, namely that the trochee (—◡) has entered the German hexameter. The epochal importance of this lies in the fact that the trochee had no place in ancient Greek and Latin hexametrical verse, which is made up of dactyls (—◡◡) and spondees (— —). Thus the presence of the trochee in the German hexameter comes to represent for Klopstock the very incommensurability of two prosodic systems: "Ein völlig griechischer Hexameter im Deutschen ist ein Unding."[2] Perhaps surprising for a poet whose first published poem bears the title "Der Lehrling der Griechen," Klopstock considered the inability of replicating Greek hexameter to be a boon for German versification. For Greek meter is, to use Klopstock's term, "mechanisch."[3] It is based on a predetermined system of long and short syllables and their combination within words and phrases. By contrast, German meter rests upon what Klopstock calls a "begriffmäßige Silbenzeit."[4] The "longs and "shorts" of German verse – more precisely the syllabic stress – is determined by the semantic, grammatical and affective importance of words within a given verse line. Thus German verse is, for Klopstock, imbued with an inner necessity and intentionality that ancient Greek verse lacks. To pursue Klopstock's meditations on versification further would lead into the thicket of his highly idiosyncratic prosody. What I want to draw out here is that Klopstock recalls at the microcosmic level of meter the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* that had engaged France less than a century before him and that would be recapitulated at a

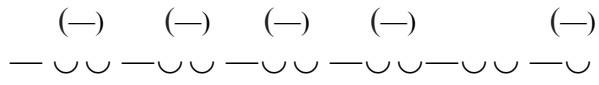
[2] Klopstock, "Vom deutschen Hexameter," *Gedanken über die Natur der Poesie*, 60.
[3] Ibid., 80.
[4] Ibid., 124.

philosophical level by Friedrich Schiller and Friedrich Schlegel at the end of the eighteenth century. Hans Robert Jauß locates the crux of the *Querelle* and its revival by Schiller and Schlegel in the tension between the idealization of the art of classical antiquity as the objectively beautiful and the insight into the irrecoverable historical conditions under which this art was created.[5] It is precisely this tension between the normative demands of an idealized, "classical" hexameter and the historical reality of two qualitatively different prosodic systems that Klopstock attempts to negotiate in "Vom deutschen Hexameter" and that drives the prosodic thinking of his successors. Goethe's hexameter, I want to show, constitutes a new answer to this problem. It articulates a response to what Peter Szondi characterizes as one of the central strivings of German aesthetics in the late eighteenth century: "die Moderne bejahen zu können, ohne die Antike zu verleugnen; der Antike treu zu bleiben, ohne das Eigene verleugnen zu müssen."[6]

With this aporia between the antique and the modern in mind, I want to turn to a consideration of the hexameter as a normative metrical schema. Goethe deviates from this schema in important respects, and part of the excitement of his hexametrical poetry lies in the friction between the regulative demands of the meter and the deviations from it in a linguistically realized line of verse. This makes it all the more important to consider the norm against which these deviations occur. What follows is a reading of the hexameter *qua* metrical schema. It elaborates the basic prosodic rules of the verse and in so doing attempts to bring out the salient elements that make possible the intersection of poetry and *Plastik* around 1800. The hexameter

[5] See Hans Robert Jauß, "Schlegels und Schillers Replik auf die 'Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes,'" in *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970) 67-106.
[6] Szondi, "Antike und Moderne in der Ästhetik der Goethezeit," 18.

can be represented by the following model, with a "—" represented a stressed syllable and a "◡" representing an unstressed syllable:



The hexameter allows for metrical substitutions. In ancient Greek and Latin verse a spondee can be substituted for a dactyl in the first four feet and in the final foot of the verse. The question of replicating spondees within the accentual system of German prosody constitutes its own sub-field within metrical debates around 1800.[7] It is in large part due to the relative rarity of spondees in German verse that Klopstock insisted on the legitimate place of the trochee in the German hexameter. The major practitioners of hexametrical poetry after Klopstock – Goethe, Schiller and Hölderlin – all took up their predecessor's principle of allowing the trochee as a substitute for the spondee. By contrast, Johann Heinrich Voß, Wilhelm von Humboldt and August Wilhelm Schlegel insisted with increasing vehemence that the trochee not be permitted in hexametrical verse. Indeed, in a 1827 note to his essay on Voß's translations of Homer, A.W. Schlegel claimed that Klopstock's case for the necessity of the trochee in the German hexameter had now been refuted by his (Schlegel's) own poetry.[8] It is not necessary to dwell on the details of this debate here. I want merely to note that whether or not one allows for trochees or insists on spondees, the hexameter permits the substitution of one verse foot for another. This lends the verse form a particular flexibility and multiplicity. Unlike the fixed metrical schemas of the ode forms, the hexameter grants the poet a degree of freedom in metrically shaping his verse line.

[7] See Andreas Heusler, *Deutscher und antiker Vers: der falsche Spondeus und angrenzende Fragen untersucht* (Strassburg: Trübner, 1917). Heusler's treatment of the spondee-debate is informative but highly polemical; his objective is to expound his own prosodic system based on musical notation as a corrective to what he sees to be persistent misunderstanding of the nature of German prosody.

[8] See August Wilhem Schlegel, *Sämmtliche Werke,* ed. Eduard Böcking, 12 vols. (Leipzig, Weidmann, 1846-1847) 10:189.

With possibilities for metrical subtitution in five of its six feet, the verse allows for a high degree of metrical variety. Yet there is an order to this variety, constancy within change. While the first half of the verse line encourages rhythmic fluctuation, the second half returns to regularity with the non-substitutable dactyl that makes up the fifth foot. The sixth and final foot, shortened by a syllable, likewise contributes to the stabilization of the verse. For if the line ended with a dactyl, it would be more difficult for the listener to distinguish the end of one line from the beginning of the next. The verse would give the impression of flowing over into the next line without marking a distinct pause. The shortened final foot accentuates the contours of the individual line, breaking ever so slightly with the flow in order to round-off the line into a discrete metrical whole. Yet this metrical whole must also be grasped at a higher level, for epic hexameter is stichic poetry, that is, poetry in which each line consists of the same metrical schema. It is this repetition of the same meter, with its numerous possibilities for internal variation, that allows the dynamic of the hexameter to emerge, its multiplicity within unity, its flux within order.

Not depicted in the metrical schema above are the different possibilities for the placement of caesura. In ancient Greek and Latin poetry a caesura is a break in the metrical flow within a verse foot. This break corresponds to the end of a word and the beginning of a new one. In German poetry, a caesura can more generally denote a pause within the verse line. This pause is often produced by punctuation and therefore corresponds to the end of a syntactic unit. In hexametrical verse the caesura is crucial to maintaining the flexibility and diversity of the poetic line while at the same time ordering it into clearly demarcated segments beyond the unit of the verse foot. Practitioners of the German hexameter after Klopstock took over the basic rules of caesura placement from classical prosody: a caesura may occur in the third or fourth foot, most commonly after the first syllable of the foot, in which case it is called (rather ineptly) a

"masculine" caesura, but it maybe also be placed after the second syllable of the third foot, a so-called "feminine" caesura. There are possibilities for caesurae outside the third and fourth foot as well. In particular, a secondary caesura is often employed in the second foot when the main caesura falls in the fourth foot. An additional option for variation in metrical flow is through dieresis, that is, the placement of a metrical break after, rather than within, the verse foot. An especially popular instance of this among the most rigorously classicizing poets and translators such as Voß and A.W. Schlegel is a caesura after the forth foot, a prosodic device called "bucolic dieresis" due to its frequent use among ancient poets working in the pastoral genre. In the German hexameter the use of bucolic dieresis functions as a mark of authenticity. By means of a metrical pause it places the poet within a classical tradition.

Excursus on the Amphibrach

While prosodic interventions such as bucolic dieresis serve to cite the tradition of hexametrical poetry, other metrical figures run against this tradition. It is worth considering one example of the later, namely the caesurae *post quartum trochaeum*. This "anti-classical" metrical figure exemplifies in miniature the demands of classicizing versification around 1800. In Greek and Latin hexameter a caesura after the second short syllable of the forth foot is generally avoided. In German hexameter it gradually became permissible, at least for poets who allowed themselves more licenses in their versification. A famous instance is the opening line of Goethe's verse epic *Reineke Fuchs*. Written in 1793 and published in 1794, *Reineke Fuchs* constitutes Goethe's first foray into large-scale hexametrical writing. Its versification is correspondingly exploratory, uninhabited by many of the rules insisted upon by Goethe's philologist colleagues. In the following scansion, a single vertical bar represents the end of a

metrical foot, a double vertical bar represents a main caesura and a slanted bar represents a secondary caesura.

— ◡ / ◡ | — ◡◡ | — ‖ ◡ ◡| — ◡ / ◡ | — ◡ ◡ | — ◡

Pfingsten, das liebliche Fest, war gekommen; es grünten und blühten[9]

In addition to the "correct" masculine caesura in the third foot, the semicolon after "gekommen" marks a pause *post quartum trochaeum*. A likely reason for the avoidance of a pause here is that it preempts the pronounced trochaic ending of the hexameter line.[10] We have seen that the truncated final foot is crucial to giving the hexameter the sense of an ending, the sense of a well-rounded whole rather than an incomplete metrical figure dangling over into the next line. Placing a caesura after the second syllable of the fourth foot gives the verse a momentary trochaic thrust, a false cadence, before stumbling along towards its proper end. It is this stumbling quality that provoked Voß's ire. For what results from such a caesura is the succession of two amphibrachs (◡—◡). Citing the ancient rhetorician Dionysius of Halicarnassus to back up his claims, Voß insists that the amphibrach "gehört […] nicht zu den schönen Rhythmen, sondern ist gleichsam gebrochen, und hat viel weibisches und unedles."[11] It is no wonder, then, that Voß, having been asked by Goethe to proofread his verse, wrote in a letter to his wife: "Goethes 'Reineke Voß' habe ich angefangen zu lesen; aber ich kann nicht durchkommen. Goethe bat mich, ihm die schlechten Hexameter anzumerken; ich muß sie ihm alle nennen, wenn ich aufrichtig sein will. Ein sonderbarer Einfall, den 'Reineke' in Hexameter zu setzen."[12] While

[9] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/8:659.
[10] Following the suggestion of Christian Wagenknecht, *Deutsche Metrik. Eine historische Einführung*, 5th ed. (München: Beck, 2007) 104.
[11] Johann Heinrich Voß, *Zeitmessung der deutschen Sprache. Zweite mit Zusätzen und einem Anhange vermehrte Ausgabe*, (Königsberg: Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1831) 102.
[12] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffen*, ed. Karl Richter, 21 vols. (München: C. Hanser, 1985-1998) 4/1:1027. For an extended discussion of Voß's criticism of Goethe's

Voß's dissatisfaction with Goethe's verse may seem pedantic, what is at stake is more than mere metrical correctness for its own sake. Voß's ultimate concern lies in the very rhythmic intelligibility of classical antiquity. The hexameter should be a "rhythmische deutlich begrenzte Periode […]."[13] A feminine caesura in the forth foot and the ensuing amphibrachs undermine this well-rounded whole. According to Voß, such a caesura was so rare in the verse of antiquity that the grammatician Terentianus had to invent one to use as an example.[14] Thus for Voß the amphibrach becomes a recalcitrant mark of metrical modernity, a modernity grown numb to the feel of antique verse.

A Metrological Poem: A. W. Schlegel's "Der Hexameter"

The prosodic rules of a verse form live in a productive tension with verse itself, with the phenomenal instantiation of form in a particular poem. It is therefore worth considering how the metrical schema is confronted, actualized, and exploited in a hexameter poem. Here A.W. Schlegel's poem "Der Hexameter" can serve as an example. What makes Schlegel's poem particularly fruitful for consideration is that it belongs to an overlooked subgenre of verse production around 1800, a subgenre that I would like to call "metrological" poetry: poetry that reflects on, theorizes and offers figures for the meter in which it is written.[15] Metrological poetry tends to be didactic and lightly polemical, seeking to both exemplify and expound the "correct"

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versification of *Reineke Fuchs* as well as Voß's influence on Goethe's hexameter composition more generally, see Clémence Couturier-Heinrich, "Autorität und Konkurrenz. Zur Reaktion von Goethe und Schiller auf Vossens Hexameterlehre und –praxis," in *Voß' Übersetzungssprache. Voraussetzungen, Kontexte, Folgen*, ed. Anne Baillot, Enrica Fantion and Josefine Kitzbichler (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015) 71-92.

[13] Voß, *Des Publius Virgilius Maro Landbau, Vier Gesänge* (Eutin: Und Hamburg: Bei dem Verfasser; Bei C.E. Bohn, 1789) xiv.

[14] Ibid. xix.

[15] A.W. Schlegel wrote a series of such poems collected under the title "Die Silbenmaße". They include "Der Hexameter," "die Elegie," "Der Jambe," and "Der Choliambe oder Skazon." Other examples include Klopstock's "Sponda" and "Siona," Schiller's "Der epische Hexameter" and "Das Distich," and Goethe's "Allerlieblichste Trochäen."

use of the meter. Yet as we have seen, what constitutes “correct” German hexameter is the subject of intense debate around 1800. Practically every aspect of the verse is contested, from the subtitution of metrical feet, to the placement of caesurae, to the prosodic nature of “long” and “short” syllables. The reason for the flourishing of the verse form around 1800 lies in this very contestation. Despite – or because of – its antiquity – its belonging to another culture and another prosodic system – the hexameter was not felt to be “natural,” to be an unquestioned given for the German language. It was rather a verse form that first had to be adapted, first had to be won for German poetry through a flurry of theorization and experimentation. Thus Schlegel’s poem should not be read simply as textbook hexameter but as one particularly rigorous experiment in the form. I cite the poem here accompanied by my own scansion.

— ◡ ◡ |— / ◡ ◡ |— — | — ‖— |—◡◡ | — —
Gleichwie sich dem, der die See durchschifft, auf offener Meerhöh'
— ◡◡|— — |— ‖ ◡ ◡ | — — |— ◡ ◡ | — —
Rings Horizont ausdehnt, und der Ausblick nirgend umschränkt ist,
— ◡ ◡ | — ◡ ◡ |— ◡ ‖ ◡ | — — |—◡ ◡|—◡
Daß der umwölbende Himmel die Schaar zahlloser Gestirne,
— — |— ◡ ◡ | — ‖—| — ◡ ◡ | — ◡ ◡ | — ◡
Bei hell athmender Luft, abspiegelt in bläulicher Tiefe:
— — | — ◡ ◡| — ‖ ◡ ◡|— ◡◡ /| — ◡ ◡|— ◡
So auch trägt das Gemüth der Hexameter; ruhig umfaßend
— ◡ ◡ |—◡ ◡| — ‖ ◡ ◡|—◡◡|— ◡ ◡ | — —
Nimmt er des Epos Olymp, das gewaltige Bild, in den Schooß auf
— ◡ ◡| — —| —◡◡ | —‖ ◡ ◡| — ◡ ◡ | — ◡
Kreißender Flut, urväterlich so den Geschlechtern der Rhythmen,
— ◡ ◡|—◡◡| — ◡ ‖ ◡ | — —| — ◡ ◡ | — ◡
Wie vom Okeanos quellend, dem weit hinströmenden Herrscher,
—◡ ◡| —◡ ◡| — ◡ ‖◡| — ◡◡ |—◡ ◡| — ◡
Alle Gewäßer auf Erden entrieselen oder entbrausen.

— — | — — | — —|— ‖ — |—◡ ◡ | —◡
Wie oft Seefahrt kaum vorrückt, mühvolleres Rudern
— —|— ◡ ◡ | — ‖ — | — ◡ ◡ | — — | —◡
Fortarbeitet das Schiff, dann plötzlich der Wog' Abgründe

— —| — /◡ ◡ | —‖◡ ◡ | — ◡ ◡ | — ◡ ◡|— —
Sturm aufwühlt, und den Kiel in den Wallungen schaukelnd dahinreißt:
— — | — — | — ‖ — | — ◡◡ | — ◡ ◡ |—◡
So kann ernst bald ruhn, bald flüchtiger wieder enteilen,
— ◡ ◡ | — ◡ ◡ | — ‖◡ ◡| —◡◡ /| — ◡ ◡ | — —
Bald, o wie kühn in dem Schwung! der Hexameter, immer sich selbst gleich,
— ◡ ◡ | — ◡ ◡|—◡ ◡ | — ‖◡◡| — ◡ ◡ | —◡
Ob er zum Kampf des heroischen Lieds unermüdlich sich gürtet,
—◡ ◡ | — — |— ‖ — | — ◡ ◡ | —◡ ◡ | — —
Oder, der Weisheit voll, Lehrsprüche den Hörenden einprägt,
—◡ ◡|—◡◡| — ◡‖ ◡|——| — ◡ ◡ | — ◡
Oder geselliger Hirten Idyllien lieblich umflüstert.
— — | — ◡ ◡| — ‖—| — ◡◡ | — ◡ ◡|—◡
Heil dir, Pfleger Homers! ehrwürdiger Mund der Orakel!
— —| —◡ ◡| — ◡ ◡ | — ‖— |— ◡ ◡| — ◡
Dein will ferner gedenken ich noch, und andern Gesanges.[16]

Schlegel's poem testifies to the flexibility that the substitution of verse feet and the placement of the caesura afford the hexameter. No two lines are the same. The alternation of dactyls and spondees, the wandering of the caesura from the third to the fourth foot, from the "masculine" to the "feminine" position, the frequent divergence between the end of a word and the end of a verse foot: all work to create a moveable metrical order, a steady current of variations within the repetition of stichic verse. With this prosodic pliability comes a syntactic pliability. Schlegel's poem begins with a four-line Homeric simile that encompasses two relative clauses and four prepositional phrases as the ocean, the sky and the stars spread themselves out before the seafarer. The syntax of "Der Hexameter" unfolds like a fan. The recurrent use of conjunctions and prepositions at line-beginning serve as pivot-points from which further modifications to the syntactic hierarchy can unfurl. Hexameter verse is eminently hypotactic verse. The clearly demarcated metrical boundaries of each line encourage the hierarchical build-up of logical connectors that animates what Erich Auerbach identifies as the "Grundimpuls des homerischen Stils […]: die Erscheinungen ausgeformt, in allen Teilen tastbar und sichtbar, in ihren

[16] A.W. Schlegel, *Sämmtliche Werke*, 2:32-33.

räumlichen und zeitlichen Verhältnissen genau bestimmt zu vergegenwärtigen."[17] It is worth pausing to consider Auerbach's claim in more detail, as his famous stylistic analysis of the *Odyssey* and the Old Testament in the first chapter of his *magnum opus* is indebted to the metrical thinking forged in the era of Weimar Classicism. Auerbach finds support for his reading of the *Odyssey* in a section of Goethe's and Schiller's letter correspondence in which they discuss the generic conditions of epic and tragedy.[18] The two poets identify "das Gesetz der Retardation" as a central stylistic element of the Homeric epic. Rather than striving inexorably forward towards a dramatic conclusion – this is the movement of tragedy – the Homeric epic digresses, dwells, eases the tension of the action by swinging back and forth between past and present. This retardation has the effect of giving each thing its aesthetic due. The epic poet "schildert uns bloß das ruhige Dasein und Wirken der Dinge nach ihren Naturen" and in doing so he leaves us "die höchste Freiheit des Gemüths […]."[19] Tragedy robs us of our emotional freedom. We are absorbed, riveted by the pathos and tension of the action. By contrast, the pacing of the Homeric epic bares us aloft in tranquil contemplation above the represented world and thereby allows us to freely exercise our own cognitive faculties. Auerbach's point of critique is that Goethe and Schiller raise this law of retardation to a criterion for all epic poetry. Yet the Old Testament episode of the binding of Isaac, which Auerbach wants to read as an epic narrative, serves as a counter argument to this presumed law. The actions leading up to the binding of Isaac are swift, fragmentary. The narrative rushes forward to the critical moment of God's intervention in Abraham's sacrifice of his son. Thus Auerbach argues that the law of

[17] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur* (Tübingen: Franke, 2015) 8.
[18] The section in question is made up of the letters dating from April 19, 21 and 22, 1797. Goethe subsequently published a substantially revised version of this exchange under the title "Über epische and dramatische Dichtung".
[19] Staiger, ed., *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe*, 375.

retardation is not universal but rather a particularity of Homeric style, a style not fully articulable through Goethe and Schiller's Kantian aesthetics of the free-play of the mental faculties: "Aber die Ursache der Erscheinung des Retardierens scheint mir in etwas anderem zu liegen, nämlich in dem Bedürfnis des homerischen Stils, nichts von dem was überhaupt erwähnt wird, halb im Dunkel und unausgeformt zu lassen."[20] What I hope my analysis of the hexameter thus far has shown is that this sensuous clarity of the world, this foregrounding of all things in their luminous existence – what Auerbach identifies as the "Grundimpuls" of Homeric style – is intimately bound up with the hexameter. The hypotactic style of Homeric epic, a style that accords each thing its clearly demarcated place within the epic universe, responds to the metrical pliability of the hexameter. This is not to say that hypotaxis is bound to hexameter – it is of course compatible with other verse forms and with prose. Rather, the law of retardation that Goethe and Schiller derive from the Homeric epics and that Auerbach identifies as a specifically Homeric mode of mimesis is tied the syntactic structures that the metrical makeup of the hexameter makes possible and even encourages. Schlegel's metrological poem renders vivid the possibility of replicating for German hexameter this Homeric relation between meter and syntax. "Der Hexameter" is also a virtuosic showpiece of rhythmic tone painting. To cite but two examples: in the line "Wie oft Seefahrt kaum vorrückt, mühvolleres Rudern" the belabored series of spondees mimic the toil of the sea voyage, while in the line "Sturm aufwühlt, und den Kiel in den Wallungen schaukelnd dahinreißt:" the heavy spondaic beginning, the subsequent string of dactyls and the lack of a clearly identifiable main caesura evoke the power of the storm as it swiftly pulls along the swaying ship. It is precisely this "nachahmender Ausdruck"[21] and

[20] Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 7.
[21] A.W. Schlegel, *Sämmtliche Werke*, 10:176.

"rhythmische Malerei"[22] that Schlegel criticizes in a 1793 review of Voß's Homer translations. Here Schlegel asserts his most rigorously classicizing position, laying claim to the sovereignty of rhythm over semantics. Just as Greek prosody is based on the distribution of syllables whose status as "long or "short" is determined independent of their relative grammatical and semantic importance, so too, according to Schlegel, should the German hexameter strive for this degree of metrical independence. That Schlegel nonetheless indulges in a great deal of rhythmic tone-painting in "Der Hexameter" is best explained by the playfully pedagogical quality of the poem, its didactic attempt to render the rhythmic dynamic of the hexameter as explicit as possible. Yet the poem is not merely playful, it also constitutes a serious reflection on the relation of meter to metaphor. The use of the sea voyage topos as a metaphor for the hexameter goes beyond the mere evocation of the Mediterranean atmosphere of the Homeric epics. It also figures the effect of the meter as submerging one into the all-encompassing context of a world.[23] Just as the sea-farer finds himself taken up in the broad sweep of the sea, so too the listener or reader finds himself *in medias res* conveyed upon a rhythmical journey, his "Gemüth" borne along by the rhythm of the hexameter. The likening of this rhythm to the flow of water in all its different forms – swift or slow, stormy or placid – provides an image for the metrical variety of which the verse form is capable. Schlegel's poem is, then, not only a virtuosic showpiece but also an

[22] A.W. Schlegel, *Sämmtliche Werke*, 10:178.

[23] In his distich "der epische Hexameter", Schiller likewise uses the topos of the ocean voyage, with its transport of the listener/reader into a boundless horizon of sky and sea, to figure the effect of the verse form: "Schwindelnd trägt er dich fort auf rastlos strömenden Wogen, | Hinter dir siehst du, du siehst vor dir nur Himmel und Meer." Schiller's famous metrological poem on the elegiac distich uses a different metaphor while still drawing on the paradigm of liquidity: "Im Hexameter steigt des Springquells flüssige Säule, | Im Pentameter drauf fällt sie melodisch herab." In Schiller's figuration, the elegiac distich, with its self-enclosed couplets, presents a far more limited world than the stichic verse of epic hexameter. The former is like a fountain, the later like an ocean. It is also worth noting Schiller's characterization of the hexameter line as a "flüssige Säule." As I will argue in the next section, this dynamic of fluidity and stability – this plasticity – is central to the understanding of the hexameter around 1800. See Friedrich Schiller, *Werke und Briefe*, 12 vols. (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1988-2004) 1:283.

attempt to exemplify at the microcosmic level of meter his own macrocosmic metaphor for the hexameter. Having sketched out the basic prosodic principles of the verse form, I want now to take a closer look at what could be called, borrowing a term from Nietzsche, "Anschauungsmetaphern" for the hexameter in the budding field of philology at the turn of the eighteenth century.

Metaphorology of the Hexameter: The Paradigm of Plasticity

Nietzsche famously characterized truth as the forgetting of the original "Anschauungsmetaphern"[24] with which we fashion our reality. For Nietzsche, what we call "concepts" are calcified encounters with the world; what we call "science" is the objectivization of anthropomorphic metaphors and the neutralization of the creative energies with which we use language not to describe the world as it is but to fashion the world *as* an image and *in* our own image. Hans Blumenberg's project of a metaphorology can be understood as an actualization of Nietzsche critique. Nietzsche's "Anschauungsmetaphern" find their correlate in Blumenberg's "absolute Metaphern." The latter are catachrestic figures, rhetorical residua without a corresponding concept, "'Übertragungen,' die sich nicht ins Eigentliche, in die Logizität zurückholen lassen."[25] Absolute metaphors, then, do not just gloss over or ornament otherwise literal language but rather function to fill in the gaps when confronted with phenomenon for which no non-figurative expression is available.[26] Poetic rhythm is an instance of such a phenomenon. When Klopstock writes, in reference to poetic rhythm, "Überhaupt wandelt das Wortlose in einem guten Gedicht umher, wie in Homers Schlachten die nur von wenigen

[24] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne," *Sämtliche Werke: kritische Studienausgabe*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, 15 vols. (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag; Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 1999)1:883.
[25] Hans Blumenberg, *Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie* (Suhrkamp: Frankfurt a.M., 2013) 14.
[26] Cf. Ibid., 173.

gesehnen Götter,"[27] he is at once pointing out the linguistic elusiveness of the phenomenon and providing a metaphor for it in the inscrutable machinations of the Homeric gods. Around 1800 philologists devoted great effort and ingenuity to provide words to "das Wortlose", thereby giving rise, to borrow Nietzsche's famous phrase, to a "bewegliches Heer von Metaphern, Metonymien, Anthropomorphismen […]."[28] The task of metaphorology is to tap into and reconstruct the inner logic of these metaphors, metaphors that underlie a theoretical discourse such as philology: "die Metaphorologie sucht an die Substruktur des Denkens heranzukommen, an den Untergrund, die Nährlösung der systematischen Kristallisationen […]."[29] In the case of metaphors for hexametrical rhythm, what occurs at the "Substruktur des Denkens" is, I want to argue, the transference of a sculptural aesthetics into the realm of a classicizing poetics. A.W. Schlegel's metrological poem "Der Hexameter' has, in fact, already provided us with an example of this transference. Although the dominant metaphor here is not that of sculpture but of the sea voyage, the figuration of the hexameter's flexibility in the ever-changing conditions of the sea itself belongs to a metaphorical paradigm for the verse form, a paradigm that I would like to place under the term of *plasticity*. We can trace the development of this paradigm further by considering a passage from the work of A.W. Schlegel's brother, Friedrich Schlegel, namely his unfinished *Geschichte der Poesie der Griechen und Römer*, the first volume of which was published in 1798. The *Geschichte* marks the culminating point of F. Schlegel's early studies in classical antiquity before going on to become the foremost theorist of Romanticism. The work is an ambitious attempt to produce a literary-historical counterpart to Winckelmann's epoch-making *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*. As we will see, F. Schlegel's treatment of the

[27] Klopstock, "Von der Darstellung," *Gedanken über die Natur der Poesie*, 172.
[28] Nietzsche, "Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne," *Sämtliche Werke* 1:880.
[29] Blumenberg, *Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie*, 16-17.

hexameter is correspondingly indebted to a Winckelmannian aesthetics. In the section on Homeric poetry F. Schlegel offers an elaborate account of the rhythm of the hexameter:

> Der Hexameter allein schien den Alten der unbestimmten Dauer des Epos angemessen; dies habe, sagt Aristoteles, die Natur selbst gelehrt und die Erfahrung bewährt. Das heroische Maß habe die größte Beharrlichkeit, die vollkommenste Gleichmäßigkeit und den stärksten Schwung. Seine Bewegung ist weder steigend noch sinkend, weder überspringend noch überfließend, weder männlich noch weiblich, weder gebunden noch zügellos. Ebenso unbestimmt, wie seine Richtung, ist auch sein Verhältnis der Kraft und Schnelligkeit. Sein Gesetz fodert nur sinnliche Einteilung und Ordnung der rhythmischen Massen, vollkommne Gleichheit der Teile, und klare Andeutung der Einschnitte. Er hat die Freiheit, von der raschesten Leichtigkeit bis zur langsamsten Schwere zwischen den verschiedensten Mischungen von Kraft und Schnelligkeit zu wechseln. Er allein weiß sich daher, wie die epischen Dichtart selbst, allen Gegenständen anzuschmiegen; und seine Mannigfaltigkeit wird durch die Vielheit der in ihm möglichen Abschnitte noch vermehrt.[30]

F. Schlegel's treatment of the hexameter can be read as an instance of what Blumenberg calls "Hintergrundmetaphorik."[31] A "metaphorische Leitvorstellung"[32] implicitly guides the passage without a metaphor explicitly being employed. On the surface the passage constitutes a descriptive unfolding of Aristotle's laconic statements on the hexameter in his *Poetics*. Aristotle's characterization of the verse form is limited to two predicates: the hexameter is "the most stately (στασιμώτατον) and dignified (ὀγκωδέστατον) of meters."[33] As grounds for this characterization, Aristotle evokes the verse's own "nature" (φύσις) and appeals to the "experience" (πείρας) of the heroic meter as appropriate to the narrative breath of the epic

[30] Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich Schlegel Ausgabe*, ed. Ernst Behler (München; Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh; Zürich: Thomas-Verlag, 1985-) 1:485-486. This passage originally appeared in his 1796 essay "Über die Homerische Poesie". Goethe was familiar with this essay, as he mentions it in a letter to Schiller dated 28. April, 1797.
[31] Blumenberg, *Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie*, 91.
[32] Ibid., 24.
[33] Aristotle, *Poetics*, ed. and trans. Stephen Halliwell (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995) 121.

poem.[34] That a verse form has its own "nature," that it cannot be applied to just any subject matter but rather has a unique rhythm that makes it appropriate meter for a particular artistic activity – this thought proves central to the theory and practice of the verse form around 1800. Indeed, the passage from F. Schlegel's *Geschichte* is an attempt to articulate in prose the experience of the meter's unique nature. It offers a kind of phenomenological registering of the verse's prosodic dynamic. Yet in his account Schlegel goes far beyond Aristotle, bringing to the fore features of the hexameter that are not to be found in the *Poetics*. This is where the "metaphorische Leitvorstellung" of the passage makes itself felt. Androgeneity is the central figure underlying his description. The appeal to gendered terms ("männlich" – "weiblich") evokes the androgynous fluidity of the meter, its sensuous adaptability to the objects of the epic world.[35] At the same time, the heavy use of negation ("weder…noch") works to purge the hexameter of the particular, teasing out the *substantia* of the meter underlying its *accidentia*. What remains is a geometrical clarity, a harmonious arrangement of a metrical manifold. In the depth of its descriptive submergence in the object and in its striving towards the ideality of reified form, Schlegel's passage on the hexameter owes much to Winckelmann's aesthetics. One can think here of the philosophical capstone to the *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, the section entitled "Von dem wesentlichen der Kunst," in which Winckelmann conceptualizes beauty as "ein aus der Materie durchs Feuer gezogener Geist[…]," a beauty whose forms are "einfach und ununterbrochen und in dieser Einheit mannigfaltig, und dadurch sind sie

[34] Ibid.
[35] Helmut Pfotenhauer has pointed to the androgynous body as a central figure in classicizing aesthetics around 1800. See "Gemeißelte Sinnlichkeit. Herders Anthropologie des Plastischen und die Spannungen darin" in *Um 1800. Konfigurationen der Literatur, Kunstliteratur und Ästhetik*, (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1991) 79-102.

harmonisch[…].”[36] In Schlegel’s reckoning, the hexameter likewise embodies the pliable ordering of a multiplicity into a unity that overcomes the inner strife, the duality (“steigend”-“sinkend,” “überspringend” – “überfließend,” “männlich” – “weiblich,” “gebunden” – “zügellos”) of reality.

Schlegel’s discussion of the hexameter in his *Geschichte der Poesie der Griechen und Römer* is but the most elaborate instance of the remarkable consensus that emerges around 1800 concerning what Aristotle calls the verse form’s “nature.” It is worth briefly considering a few more examples in order to get a fuller picture of this consensus. In a 1979 review of Goethe’s *Hermann und Dorothea*, A.W. Schlegel echoes his brother’s formulations when, after citing Aristotle’s famous characterization of the meter, he writes, “Der griechische Hexameter hat weder einen fallenden Rhythmus […] noch einen steigenden […] sondern er ist schwebend, stätig, zwischen Verweilen und Fortschreiten gleich gewogen, und kann deswegen, ohne zu ermüden, den Hörer auf einer mittleren Höhe in ungemeßne Weiten forttragen.”[37] As we have already seen in his metrological poem, A.W. Schlegel has a particular interest in the effect the meter has upon the listener. Here his description implies that the floating flexibility of the verse likewise elevates the listener, bearing him along a rhythmic height that, in its “Mannigfaltigkeit,”[38] does not draw him down into metrical monotony but rather opens up an broad horizon of possibility. And once more we find the hexameter defined less by any particular characteristics than by a harmonious hovering above all particularities that would pull it down from its unperturbed ideality into reality. Johann Heinrich Voß, in turn, emphasizes the rich pliancy of the verse in the preface to his 1789 translation of Virgil’s *Georgics*: “Jene vielfachen

[36] Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, ed. Wilhelm Senff (Weimar: Böhlau, 1964) 130.
[37] A.W. Schlegel, *Sämmtliche Werke*, 11:192.
[38] Ibid., 11:192.

Wendungen des Rhythmus sowohl, als diesen Reichtum des Wohllauts, verlangte der Hexameter, ohne Rücksicht auf seinen Inhalt, für sich selbst."[39] He writes further: "Der Hexameter sei überall schön durch Mannigfaltigkeit, auch durch Kraft und Würde, die schon als solche gefällt; und, wo er Stof findet, ausdrucksvoll."[40] In even more explicit terms than the Schlegel brothers, Voß aims to reveal the "nature" of the verse "für sich selbst," that is to say, derived solely from it metrical schema. Like the Schlegel brothers, what Voß finds is a "Mannigfaltigkeit" elevated by "Kraft und Würde," which can be read as loose translations of Aristotle's "most stately (στασιμώτατον) and dignified (ὀγκωδέστατον)." It is worth citing one more example to fill in the picture. Wilhelm von Humboldt, in his 1799 *Ästhetische Versuche über Goethes Hermann und Dorothea*, makes a brief but suggestive comment on the difference between modern, rhyming versification and the meters of the ancient poets: "der Reim giebt immer ein Colorit, das sich für sich allein dem Auge vorwaltend aufdrängt, da hingegen der Hexameter, so wie jedes alte Silbenmaass, seinen noch reicheren und glänzenderen Farbenschleier immer nur als ein bescheidnes Gewand um die Schönheit der Formen giesst."[41] Just as a vivid splotch of color pulls the eye towards it and demands its attention, rhyme's bright clang directs the ear swiftly to the end of the verse. The suggestion is that rhyme produces an aesthetic asymmetry, destabilizing the poetic line by prosodically privileging the rhyme word over the whole of the verse. Greek meter, by contrast, is like a technicolor robe that evenly adapts itself – here one could recall F. Schlegel's eminently plastic verb "anschmiegen" – to the contours of the body. In other words, antique verse, with its distribution of short and long syllables that can be ordered into verse feet, and these into larger metrical units, allows at once for a greater rhythmic variety and more measured dwelling on each segment of the verse line.

[39] Voß, *Zeitmessung der deutschen Sprache,* 189.
[40] Ibid., 190.
[41] W. von Humboldt, "Ueber Göthes Hermann und Dorothea," *Werke*, 3:199.

While at first glance Humboldt's metaphor for meter appears to be drawn thoroughly from the realm of painting, it in fact slides into a sculptural vocabulary. The robe of antique verse is liquefied. It pours ("giesst") itself evenly over the poetic line like plaster over a mold. One must imagine this robe not as concealing the body but as clinging to it, thereby disclosing its essential form. The Winckelmannian undertones of this description are evident. Winckelmann likened the very sensation of beauty to the pouring of a plastic cast: "Das wahre Gefühl des Schönen gleicht einem flüssigen Gipse, welcher über den Kopf des Apollos gegossen wird und denselben in allen Teilen berührt und umgibt."[42] To be sure, Humboldt's "Farbenschleier" encompasses "jedes alte Silbenmaass," but he accords pride of place to the hexameter. It is above all the "heroic" meter that reveals the give and take, the harmonious pliancy of Greek verse. These attempts by major figures in philology around 1800 to grapple with "das Wortlose" in the hexameter bear witness to the development of a classicizing poetics out of the spirit of a Winckelmannian aesthetics. The flexibility and rhythmic diversity that we observed in the verse's normative metrical schema find articulation in *plastic* metaphors that are drawn from Winckelmann's vocabulary of fluidity and ideality. Plasticity is the *tertium comparationis* that makes the analogy between sculpture and poetry possible. What is at stake in Goethe's hexametrical composition of *Hermann und Dorothea* is, I want to show, the expression of this – both rhythmic and political – plasticity.

Plastic Natures

I do not intend to use "plasticity" only as a synonym for "flexibility", "adaptability" or "elasticity." Rather, I want to tap into the deep sculptural connotations of the term, into its

[42] Winckelmann, "Abhandlung von der Fähigkeit der Empfindung des Schönen in der Kunst und dem Unterrichte in derselben," *Kleine Schriften, Vorredden, Entwürfe*, ed. Walther Rehm.)Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 1968) 217.

relation to the art of *Plastik*. In order to add a semantic depth to the term plasticity, it is worth considering the historical usage of the word *Plastik*. *Plastik* is the nominalization of the French *plastique*, which in turn derives from the Greek verb πλάσσειν or πλάττειν, "aus weicher Masse bilden, formen, gestalten."[43] However, the early usages of the term in the modern era are to be found not in the realm of art but in that of theology. An entry under the heading "plastique (métaphysique)" in Diderot's and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* outlines the arguments made by the English theologian Ralph Cudworth for the existence of "des natures *plastiques*".[44] As the *Encyclopédie* recounts it, Cudworth arrives at his theory of plastic natures through the attempt to navigate between the Syclla and Charybdis of two philosophical positions untenable for a Christian theologian. On the one hand, Cudworth seeks to combat the materialists who would see in the order and regularity of nature the result of blind, mechanical processes, thereby making of God a mere "spectateur oisif"[45] to his own creation. On the other hand, to claim that God is incessantly at work crafting the most minor details of the organic world – "c'est faire la Providence embarrassée, pleine de soins & de distractions […]."[46] Thus Cudworth posits the existence of a plastic nature, of an inner animating principle that guides the teleological

[43] Cf. *Kluge Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*, 25. ed. (2011), s.v. "Plastik."
[44] Claude Yvon (attributed), s.v. "plastique (métaphysique)" *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc*., s.v. "plastique (métaphysique)" eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert. University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project (Autumn 2017 Edition), Robert Morrissey and Glenn Roe (eds). https://artflsrv03.uchicago.edu/philologic4/encyclopedie1117/navigate/12/3248/?byte=7817796 (Accessed July 11, 2018)
[45] It is striking that the author of this entry uses a sculptural metaphor in order to illustrate the aporia of the materialist doctrine: "Ils [the materialists S.F.] rendent la même raison des effets de la nature, qu'un sculpteur, par example, rendroit de la maniere dont il auroit fait une statue, s'il disoit que son ciseau étant tombé sur tel ou tel endroit, il l'a creusé, que les autres sont demeurés relevés & qu'ainsi toute la statue s'est trouvée faite, sains qu'il eût dessein de la faire." Yvon, abbé Claude (attributed), s.v. "plastique (métaphysique)" *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc*.
[46] Claude Yvon (attributed), s.v. "plastique (métaphysique)" *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc*.

formation of organisms. As the *Encyclopédie* entry puts it, "La nature *plastique* est donc une espece d'artisan […],"[47] an artisan who, instead of forming his material from the outside, works from the inside as a divine force, what Johann Heinrich Zedler in his *Universal Lexikon* entry to "plastische Natur" defines as the "Bildungs=Krafft[48] behind the organism's lawful development. While this rather obscure seventeenth-century theological debate might seem a far cry from the use of the term *Plastik* around 1800 to designate the art of sculpture, the notion of a "plastic nature" is nonetheless illuminating for our tracking of metaphorical figurations of the hexameter. For as we have seen from the formulations by the Schlegel brothers, Voß and Wilhelm von Humboldt, what is at stake in the intense philological interest in the hexameter is not merely the empirical study of its prosodic rules and functioning, but rather the attempt to illuminate the meter from the inside, to grasp its inner operative principle. The fact that this principle finds it articulation in sculptural terms suggest an understanding of the meter as driven by plasticity, by the formation – "bilden," "gestalten" – of a world.

Herder's Plastik *as a Poetics*

Here Herder's 1788 essay *Plastik* proves instructive, for it is at once firmly situated within the realm of aesthetics – understood both as the study of sense perception and of art – while also retaining the theological connotations embedded in the term "Plastik." These connotations become dramatically explicit in the essay's central third section in which, having

[47] Claude Yvon (attributed), s.v. "plastique (métaphysique)" *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc*.
[48] Johann Heinrich Zedler, s.v. "plastische Natur", *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschafften und Künste* (Halle: J.H. Zedler, 1732-50). https://www.zedler-lexikon.de/index.html?c=blaettern&seitenzahl=351&bandnummer=28&view=100&l=de (Accessed July 11, 2018)

dwelt with loving detail on each individual body part of an imaginary Greek statue, Herder steps back to admire the whole: "*Gebildet* (πεπλασμενοι) *um und an*, und unser *Gebilde* (πλασμα) Form von regenden Lebenskräften des obersten Bildners […]."[49] This apotheosis of sculpture is the result of an ambitious attempt at a transvaluation of aesthetic values that takes its starting point in an incision within Lessing's famous distinction between poetry and the "plastic arts" of painting and sculpture. For Herder, painting is not "plastic" at all. Painting is art for the eye. It is predicated upon the observational distance from the object that the eye affords. To the extent that a painting seems three-dimensional, seems to have depth and contour, it merely *seems* – it is illusion, the play of colors and lines along a flat surface. Sculpture, by contrast, is art for the finger, for the hand; more than that, it is art for the body, for the experience of embodiment. Sculpture constitutes the disclosure of human form denuded of the deception of color, of the fluctuation of light and shadow. Sculpture is "*dargestellte, tastbare Wahrheit*:"[50] "dargestellt" in that it is *placed there before us*, a sensuous reality rather than a metaphysical illusion; "tastbar" in that the viewer is brought into *contact* with the sculpture, is no longer a viewer but a co-creator who, like the sculptor, feels each fold, each curvature of the marble. Through this emphatic distinction between painting and sculpture Herder reverses the hierarchy of sight over touch, a reversal that has anthropological implications as well. Herder posits the tactile sense as primary: it is the means by which we as children first grasp (in both the haptic and conceptual sense of this term) the world and in this grasping come to experience the immediate indubitability of our existence: "*Ich fühle mich! Ich bin!*"[51]

[49] Johann Gottfried Herder, *Werke*, ed. Martin Bollacher et al., 10 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985-2000) 4:296.
[50] Ibid., 4:253 italics in original.
[51] Ibid., 4:236.

These central claims of *Plastik* have been addressed in detail in the scholarship.[52] I have recapitulated them here in order to provide a background for my focus on a less explicit but nonetheless essential aspect of Herder's text, namely the relation between poetry and sculpture.[53] For while the expressed aim of Herder's essay is to posit a fundamental anthropological-aesthetic difference between painting and sculpture, what makes this difference possible, I want to claim, is the *similarity* between sculpture and poetry. Poetry is the implicit third term that undergirds Herder's argument. In other words, *Plastik* can also be read as a *poetics*. I want to illustrate this point by first considering Herder's treatment of the central Pygmalion moment, the moment the sculpture comes alive under the loving touch of the "Liebhaber:"

> sein Auge ward Hand, der Lichtstrahl Finger, oder vielmehr seine Seele hat einen noch viel feinern Finger als Hand und Lichtstrahl ist, das Bild aus des Urhebers Arm und Seele in sich zu *fassen*. Sie hats! die Täuschung ist geschehen: es lebt, und sie fühlt, daß es lebe; und nun spricht sie, nicht, als ob sie sehe, sondern taste, fühle. Eine Bildsäule kalt beschrieben, gibt so wenig Ideen als eine gemalte Musik; lieber laß sie stehen und gehe vorüber.[54]

This passage de-literalizes touch: one does not actually grope the statue. This point may be obvious but its implications are complex: the soul is substituted for the finger, a spiritual for a physical touching. Yet what does such a spiritual touching entail? The only contemporary review of *Plastik* criticizes its author for vagueness on precisely this point, a criticism that today's reader

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[52] For an extensive and insightful reconstruction of *Plastik* in the context both of Herder's early work and the Enlightenment preoccupation with sense-perception more generally, see Inka Mülder-Bach, *Im Zeichen Pygmalions*. *Das Modell der Statue und die Entdeckung der 'Darstellung' im 18. Jahrhundert* (München: Fink, 1998) 49-102.

[53] To my knowledge, the only study to focus on this relation in Herder's text is Inka Mülder-Bach, "Ferngefühle. Poesie und Plastik in Herders Ästhetik" in *Im Agon der Künste*, ed. Hannah Baader et al. (München: Fink, 2007) 451-465. Mülder-Bach argues that Herder finds in the imagined haptic contact with the statue a model for overcoming the discrepancy between *Empfindung* and *Ausdruck*, between feelings and the arbitrary linguistic signs used to express them. Thus in Herder's text sculpture functions "vor allem als Spender sinnlicher Valeurs, die die literarische Einbildungskraft imaginative (re)produziert." 463.

[54] Herder, *Werke*, 4:254 italics in original.

is likely to share.[55] Herder's relentlessly metaphorical formulations, formulations that verge on the surreal – the eye becomes a finger, the finger becomes a soul – are more suggestive than clarifying. Yet I believe that the second half of the quoted passage offers an answer – albeit an implicit one – to the meaning of this spiritual touching. The statue's vivification is concomitant with the soul's entry into a new mode of verbal expressivity: "und nun spricht sie [die Seele], nicht, als ob sie sehe, sondern taste, fühle." This spiritual touching, I would suggest, constitutes an act of literary description placed under the model of plasticity. Herder ends the paragraph with an admonition against "cold" description. The Pygmalion moment lies not only in the enlivening of the statue but also in the enlivening of the language used to describe it. The haptic implicates the verbal. To touch the statue spiritually would be to grasp it linguistically.

Yet what would a "warm" description look like? The central third section of the essay provides a model. As mentioned above, Herder here undertakes a description of an imaginary statue. He dramatizes his task with typical grandiosity: "Der Hauch dessen, der schuf, wehe mich an, daß ich bei seinem Werk bleibe, treu fühle und true schreibe!"[56] The evocation of divine creation, the apostrophe to an enlivening anima, the communion of feeling and writing: here we find the counterpart to the Pygmalion moment and the antidote to a "cold" statue description. Herder's description constitutes nothing less than a hermeneutic re-writing of a central section in Winckelmann's *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*. In "Von dem Wesentlichen der Kunst" Winckelmann follows up his philosophical exposition of beauty with a remarkably sober and geometrically precise account of the ideal proportions and appearance of

[55] The reviewer of *Plastik* for the 1779 issue of the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* writes, "Da unser Herr V[erfasser] die geheimnißvolle geistliche Bedeutung seines Betastens, Betappens, Befühlens im Dunkeln, nie definirt hat: so muß er doch nicht Leute für Gecken und Buben erklären, wenn ihnen dabei einfällt, was jedem Erwachsenen dabei einfallen muß." Cited in Herder, *Werke*, 4:1013.
[56] Ibid., 4:282.

the individual parts of the human body.[57] Herder's concern, by contrast, is not so much the proportions but the inner purport of human form. His synechdocal reconstruction of the body aims not at appearances but at the inner animation of the whole. This is the power of "der *plastische Sinn*."[58] It transforms surface into depth, it illuminates the part's relation to the whole. And this process of transformation is as much the prerogative of the writer as it is of the sculptor. The fact that Herder's own statue description has no corresponding artifact, no object outside the imagination, testifies to the departure from the art historical discourse of Winckelmann and Lessing in favor of the development of a poetics that takes sculpture as its model. In turn, it is first in literature that the Pygmalion moment occurs, that the statue overcomes its own mortification in marble to become the living product of the imagination, of the mind's own material: language.

To be sure, the poetics that Herder derives from the aesthetic principles of sculpture is not bound to any specific verse form. For the Schlegel brothers, Voß and W. Humboldt, plasticity is the domain of a particular manifestation of metered language: the hexameter. For Herder, as I have argued, that domain is rather his own prose. Nonetheless, I want to suggest that there is a specifically *epic* framework to Herder's understanding of plasticity. For the sculptor serves as a double of the epic poet: "Der Bildner steht im Dunkel der Nacht und ertastet sich Göttergestalten. Die Erzählungen der Dichter sind vor und in ihm: er fühlt Homers Minerva […] fühlt den Schritt Neptuns, die Brust Alcides, den Wink der Augenbranen Jupiters […]."[59] Like the blind poet Homer, the sculptor is enveloped in a divine darkness that heightens his creative powers. And what the sculptor grasps in this darkness, what he molds into touchable truth is the Homeric epithet. In his *Laokoon* essay Lessing had already theorized the plastic quality of the

[57] Cf. Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, 148-159.
[58] Herder, *Werke*, 4:281
[59] Ibid., 4:317.

epithet, deriving from poetry's temporal nature "die Regel von der Einheit der mahlerischen Beywörter," namely that poetry should use "nur eine einzige Eigenschaft der Körper […] und muß daher diejenige Wählen, welche das sinnlichste Bild des Körpers von der Seite erwecket, von welcher sie [die Poesie S.F.] ihn braucht." The accretion of adjectives stagnates the poem, freezing it into precisely that kind of verbal painting against which Lessing is arguing. By contrast, the single aptly chosen epithet evokes the sensuous presence of an artwork without betraying the temporal unfolding that is poetry's ownmost sphere of activity.[60] Herder takes over Lessing's insight into the epithet and makes it serves as a model for sculpture. Sculpture, for Herder, has an epic style. It renders the Homeric epithet palpable. While Lessing's project in *Laoccon* is to establish the boundaries of poetry and the plastic arts by articulating their respective semiotic conditions, Herder's project in *Plastik* is to establish the boundaries of painting and sculpture through a hermeneutic *rapprochement* between sculpture and poetry. With this final point in mind we can summarize the three dimensions of Herder's text that make it a central document in the thinking of plasticity at the crossroads of sculpture and poetry. *The theological dimension*: plasticity does not just signify pliability but also the pseudo-divine act of creation. The Pygmalion moment is the mythic expression of plasticity, the inner animation of the undivided organism. *The art-historical dimension*: as in the philological treatments of the hexameter, we see in Herder's *Plastik* the transfer into the realm of poetics the aesthetic values and insights drawn from the foundational art-historical studies of Winckelmann and Lessing. Herder seeks to think through and beyond this art-historical discourse by excavating its

[60] On this point see David Wellbery, *Lessing's Laoccon*. *Semiotics and Aesthetics in the Age of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009) 76. "They [epithets S.F.] create that sense of immediacy by virtue of which language comes to function like a work of the plastic arts […]. The choice of the painterly epithet repeats the gesture of a primordial act of naming: it characterizes the whole object in terms of its single most salient feature and thereby signifies the object in such a way that the reader can imaginatively ramify the linguistic representation and attain to a full intuition of the object."

hermeneutic core. This entails a shift in focus from the art-object to literary description itself.

The epic dimension. Although the poetics developed in *Plastik* are not localized in the hexameter, they are indebted to Herder's (and Lessing's) understanding of epic style. Epic poetry is the paradigm of linguistic plasticity. Its emphasis on the single, well-chosen epithet lends its gods and heroes a colossal, sculpted presence. It is this intersection between the colossal presence of a sculpted god and the spirit of Homeric poetry that, a decade after the publication of Herder's *Plastik*, Goethe would remark upon in suggestively laconic terms.

Juno's Head

In a passage from the *Italienische Reise* dated 6. January, 1787, Goethe writes of the colossal antique bust known as the "Juno Ludovisi," a copy of which he had acquired for his apartment in Rome: "Keine Worte geben eine Ahnung davon. Es ist wie ein Gesang Homers."[61] The rhetorical insistence on the bust's indescribability yields at once to the immediacy of a simile. Yet, in its brevity, this comparison serves less to give words to the bust than to strengthen the assertion of its unspeakable presence. Goethe gives no clue as to the *tertium comparationis* for his analogy. What does he see in the "Juno Ludovisi" such that he can relate it to Homeric song?[62] Yet, beyond the question of Goethe's response to this particular artwork, there is the remarkable fact that that such a direct comparison between a sculpture and a poem would be made at all. For Goethe, schooled in the aesthetic treatises of Winckelmann and Lessing, was well aware of the debates concerning the innate differences between the plastic arts and poetry,

[61] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/15.1:165.

[62] For a consideration of the fascination that this statue exerted on the aesthetics of Weimar Classicism, see Rolf-Peter Janz, "Ansichten der Juno Ludovisi. Winckelmann – Schiller – Goethe" in *Prägnanter Moment. Studien zur deutschen Literatur der Aufklärung und Klassik. Festschrift für Hans-Jürgen Schings*, ed. Peter-André Alt et al. (Würzburg: Konigshausen & Neumann, 2002) 357-372.

the incommensurability of their respective semiotic conditions of representation. In an advertisement for his journal *Propyläen*, which was to be a major, albeit short-lived mouthpiece for a classicizing *Kulturpolitk* at the end of the 18th century, Goethe notes, "So stand der reinen Ansicht griechischer Kunstwerke lange Zeit eine gewisse Vorliebe für Römische Antiquitäten, so wie eine unmittelbare Vergleichung mit Dichterwerken entgegen," and he goes on to credit Lessing with overcoming this "unmittelbare Vergleichung," "indem er das Verfahren des Poeten von dem Verfahren des bildenden Künstlers scharf zu sondern begann."[63] This advertisement to the *Propyläen* was published in 1799, twelve years after Goethe's comparison between the "Juno Ludovisi" and a Homeric song. It is tempting, then, to disregard the earlier statement as the outburst of an artist in the first throes of a transformative experience of antique culture, years before the stricter and more theoretically elaborate position of his first post-Italian decade. Yet our preceding analysis tells a different story. If Lessing's breakthrough in *Laocoon* is to demonstrate the necessity of approaching poetry and the plastic arts on their own terms, according to their own principles of representation, Herder's breakthrough in *Plastik* is to nuance Lessing's distinctions by establishing a subterraneous circuit between poetry and sculpture. It is this circuit that provides the electrical undercurrent for a classicizing poetics that takes the epic hexameter as its prototype. Goethe's simile is only the most immediate and intuitive expression of this connection between epic poetry and classical sculpture that was prepared by Herder and would crystallize in *Hermann und Dorothea* and its accompanying theorization by Goethe's contemporaries.

Goethe did in fact relate *Hermann und Dorothea* to sculpture. In a letter to Schiller dated 8. April 1797 he wrote that the representational principles of sculpture served as a guide for the

[63] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/18:659.

composition of his poem. It is worth quoting the passage *in extenso* in order to follow the sinuosity of the thought.

> Diejenigen Vortheile, deren ich mich in meinem letzen Gedicht bediente, habe ich alle von der bildenden Kunst gelernt. Denn bei einem gleichzeitigen, sinnlich vor Augen stehenden Werke ist das überflüssige weit auffallender als bei einem das in der Sukzession vor den Augen des Geistes vorbeygeht. Auf dem Theater würde man große Vortheile davon spüren. So fiel mir neulich auf daß man auf unserm Theater, wenn man an Gruppen denkt immer nur sentimentale oder pathetische hervorbringt, da doch noch hundert andere denkbar sind. So erschienen mir diese Tage einige Scenen im Aristophanes völlig wie antike Bareliefen und sind gewiß auch in diesem Sinne vorgestellt worden.[64]

This passage rekindles the thought of Lessing with an appeal to the vocabulary of simultaneity and succession. In letting himself be guided by simultaneity rather than succession, by the temporality of the plastic arts rather than poetry, Goethe ups the ante of his poem. For Lessing had taught that the plastic arts demand a reduction to the essential; that they cannot tolerate the same depth of detail as poetry, where details flit by in the imagination, the "Augen des Geistes." By taking the plastic arts as its model, the wager of Goethe's poem is to present a "sinnlich vor Augen stehenden Werke," a kind of verbal sculpture that, purged of all superfluities, appears to the reader as a totality. The fact that Goethe immediately applies this sculptural principle to the theater testifies to the alchemical intensity with which he and his colleagues thought through and beyond the central tenets of the early classical model inherited from Lessing. Theater is in Goethe's letter reenvisioned as a plastic art. Theater presents simultaneous constellations of actors in their sensible (as opposed to imaginary, mental) presence upon the stage as a whole, that is, as sculpture. This sculptural figuration suggests alternatives to "sentimental" and "pathetic" representation. Aristophanes serves as a guide for a new rapport with antiquity in the form of new sculpturesque groupings on the stage. Yet theater, of course, is not frozen like a bas-

[64] Staiger, ed., *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe*, 368.

relief but rather submitted to temporal succession. It is this detour through theater – for theater exhibits qualities of both the plastic and the linguistic arts – that allows Goethe to arrive at his own classical dictum: "Es kommt im Ganzen und im Einzelnen alles darauf an: daß alles von einander abgesondert daß kein Moment dem andern gleich sey, so wie bei den Characteren daß sie zwar bedeutend von einander abstehen aber doch immer unter Ein Geschlecht gehören."[65] Goethe's dictum drives at nothing less than the synthesis of succession and simultaneity, of poetry and the plastic arts. The suggestion is that *Hermann und Dorothea* achieves this: the steady succession of events in which each moment, each scene, each character distinguishes itself in its statuesque specificity while at the same time belonging to "Ein Geschlecht," one self-enclosed world that is the provincial village of Goethe's poem. This synthesis, I will argue, rests on the prosody of the poem. Without explicitly making the connection, Goethe writes in the same letter of his recent collaboration with Wilhelm von Humboldt: "Wir haben über die letzten Gesänge ein genaues prosodisches Gericht halten und sie so viel es möglich war gereinigt."[66] Could these efforts to "purify" the poem's meter itself be an expression of the sculptural principle of eliminating "das überflussige" in order to create a well-rounded whole?

The treatment of Goethe's hexameter in *Hermann und Dorothea* has in more recent scholarship tended to focus on the distancing effects of irony.[67] Following this line of

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[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid., 367.
[67] Cf. in particular Benjamin Bennett and Frank G. Ryder, "The Irony of Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea*: Its Form and Function" *PMLA* 90, no. 1 (May 1975): 433-446, and Jane K. Brown, "Schiller und die Ironie von *Hermann und Dorothea*," in *Ironie und Objektivität. Aufsätze zu Goethe*, (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1999) 168-179. Gerhard Kaiser likewise finds irony in "der distanzierende Hexameter," albeit as one pole of a verse-form that also has a universalizing effect: "Durchgehend verklären die epischen Formen die Kleinstadt zum Ensemble von Urbildern menschlicher Lebensformen. Aber der Vers des heroischen Epos ironisiert auch, an das Epos als traditionaelle Darstellungsweise des Heroischen gekoppelt, die kleinstädtische Verzopftheit, in der die Urbilder hier erscheinen, die Betulichkeit dieser Alltagsrealität." Gerhard Kaiser, "Französische Revolution und deutsche Hexameter. Goethes

interpretation, the immense cultural capital of the hexameter ironizes the bourgeois idyll that the poem describes. The small-town love story between Hermann, the shy and sensitive son of the local innkeeper, and Dorothea, a refugee fleeing the violent aftermath of the French Revolution, stands in stark contrast to the atmosphere of gods and heroes that the hexameter evokes. This juxtaposition between the heroic and the bourgeois, between a meter that recalls the *Iliad* and a plot that flirts with the comedic and bathetic, aims at more than a mere mockery of the small-mindedness and self-satisfaction of the bourgeoisie. At a deeper level, the juxtaposition calls into question the very possibility of epic poetry under the nascent conditions of modernity. The merit of the ironic reading lies in its unearthing of this profound ambivalence vis-à-vis the renewal of antique form in the absence of the antique world. Yet the ironic reading struggles to see beyond its own hermeneutic horizon. It is admittedly a difficult task to take *Hermann und Dorothea* at face value today, difficult not to ironize the poem's seemingly chauvinistic sententiousness that climaxes in Hermann's final speech in which he establishes himself as guardian of the Rhine against the French foe. "Keinen Hund, vor allem keinen jüngeren Hund," writes Oskar Seidlin, "lockt man mehr hinter dem Ofen hervor durch das künstliche und hochsteigernde Amalgam von deutsch bürgerlicher Lebensenge und homerischer Weltenweite, ein Amalgam, in dem vergangenen Generationen gern ihre stolze Besitzesfreude über das, was man hat, ihre eitle Zufriedenheit mit dem, was man ist, edeltönend verklärt sahen."[68] As Seidlin suggests, Goethe's

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Hermann und Dorothea nach 200 Jahre. Ein Vortrag" *Poetica* 30, no.1/2 (1998): 81-97; 96. Karl Eibl nuances the role of irony in Goethe's poem by distinguishing between the distancing effects of fictionality in general and poetic irony more specifically. Eibl ultimately prefers the term "Symbol-Synkretismus" to characterize the way in which the heroic and the seemingly trivial in Goethe's text reflect and refract one another. Karl Eibl, "'Anamnesis des 'Augenblicks.' Goethes poetischer Gesellschaftsentwurf in *Hermann und Dorothea*" *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 58, no. 1 (1984): 111-138.

[68] Oskar Seidlin, "Über *Hermann und Dorothea*" in *Klassische und moderne Klassiker: Goethe, Brentano, Eichendorff, Gerhart Hauptmann, Thomas Mann* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972) 20.

poem suffers under the weight of its own reputation. The skepticism of the ironic reading is as much a reaction to the reception history of *Hermann und Dorothea* as it is to the poem itself. In the nineteenth century the work attained the status of a national epic, a kind of foundation myth for the formation of a German nation-state: "Wann immer der deutsche Nationalismus im 19. Jahrhundert Höhepunkte erreichte, wurden *Hermann und Dorothea*-Zitate wie Losungen des Tages ausgegeben."[69] Against this background, the importance of calling into question the supposedly seamless fit between a Greek culture embodied in the hexameter and a German culture embodied in Hermann's small-town patriotism become clear. Without relinquishing the ironic reading's insight into the fault lines that separate the classical verse and the modern world, my reading seeks to place Goethe's hexameter back into its discourse around 1800 and in so doing to develop a reading that takes plasticity as its guiding principle. This principle navigates a path between the nationalist and the ironic readings. Plasticity aims neither at the pure affirmation of the existing order nor at the ironic distance from the possibility of social harmony but rather seeks a form that would be able to incorporate the foreign, the new – Dorothea, a gift from the gods, unbidden, breaking through – into the pre-established order of Hermann's universe.

Verbal Migrations: "schwanken"

I want to begin to address the function of plasticity in *Hermann und Dorothea* by focusing first not on meter but on a single word: "schwanken." In poetry it is enough that a word, however minor its lexical significance, be placed in a prominent metrical position, or be repeated, or be rhymed, for it to play a compositional role out of proportion with its slight

[69] Paul Michael Lützeler, "*Hermann und Dorothea*" in *Goethes Erzählwerk: Interpretation*, ed. Paul Michael Lützler and James E. McLeod (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1985) 226.

stature. A single word can become, as it were, a melodic kernel that lends the poem its compositional coherence. In a long poem, the stakes are even higher: how, over the course of hundreds or thousands of lines, does a poem maintain its structure without sagging under its own weight, without falling into monotony? One answer is, of course, the line itself. Meter, rhyme scheme, or a combination of the two, function as generative matrices. Each line, each rhyme, offers ever-new possibilities for linguistic creation. This is what Simon Jarvis calls the "melodics" of the long poem: meter and rhyme not as verbal mimesis, not as reinforcement of what the poem is purportedly saying, but as productive tension with the poem's overall design. "The long poem […] is a war to the life, in which line must show itself the equal of design, if the whole body is not to become sclerotic."[70] Poetic line versus plot line, in other words, prosody that creates its own melodic arc in interplay with the poem's *sujet*. And indeed, the verb "schwanken" functions in Goethe's poem much like an almost forgotten rhyme. Just when its reverberations have faded from the reader's memory, it resurfaces again with a renewed force. "Schwanken" functions as a linguistic cell that generates semantic clusters. Synonyms for "schwanken" proliferate. The reoccurrence of the word strives against the linearity of the narrative, demanding a vertical, paradigmatic reading that oscillates back and forth within the text as it tracks the word's proliferation. The semantic clusters centered on "schwanken" can be organized under two paradigms: the amorous and the revolutionary. It is, I want to argue, in the unfolding of these two paradigms that the role of plasticity in *Hermann und Dorothea* become clear. Plasticity provides the sustaining principle that navigates a new order between the poem's

[70] Jarvis, "The Melodics of Long Poems" *Textual Practice* 24, no. 4 (2010): 607-621; 617.

dominant poles, between the ossification of provincial German life and universal dissolution in post-revolutionary terror.[71]

"Schwanken": The Amorous Paradigm

The logic of *Hermann und Dorothea* operates according to the interpenetration of macrocosm and microcosm; what happens at the macrocosmic scale of the French Revolution finds its correlate in the intimate lives of the poem's protagonists. The amorous paradigm of "schwanken" is situated at this microcosmic level. The political revolution is reflected in a corresponding upheaval in the temporality of love. Hermann's father, the guardian of tradition, urges his son to pursue the youngest of three daughters from a neighboring family. His choice of bride for Hermann rests on the principle of the conservation and continuation of the same. A wife, with her dowry and her domestic labor, will ensure the economic security of the family. The temporal structure of the father's romantic model can best be expressed in the future anterior: for him it is a foregone conclusion that Hermann will have married the girl from next door. All will be as it has always been. In contrast to the father's vision of his son's romantic predestination, Hermann is radically given over to the present. During his first encounter with Dorothea, in which he bestows her with "Gaben" to distribute among her fellow refugees, he says "ich müßte den Zufall gehorchen."[72] At the moment of giving the "gifts" of food and supplies to Dorothea, she becomes for him a gift in a far more radical sense, appearing in his life unbidden and irresistibly, as though from above, beyond all rational calculations of his father.

[71] In my focus on "schwanken" I am indebted to Ilse Graham's reading of *Hermann und Dorothea*. Graham has teased out of the word the dynamic principle, the animating core of Goethe's poem. She also relates this to the hexameter: "What else is the metre Goethe chose for his Homeric idyll but modeled flow, rhythmicized repose?" Graham, *Goethe: Portrait of an Artist* (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 1977) 308.
[72] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/8:818.

Hermann's obedience to the moment brings us to his second encounter with Dorothea in song VII simply entitled "Dorothea". Goethe opens the song with the sole Homeric simile of the poem:

> Wie der wandernde Mann, der vor dem Sinken der Sonne
> Sie noch einmal ins Auge, die schnellverschwindende, faßte,
> Dann im dunkeln Gebüsch und an der Seite des Felsens
> Schweben siehet ihr Bild; wohin er die Blicke nur wendet,
> Eilet es vor und glänzt und schwankt in herrlichen Farben:
> So bewegte vor Hermann die liebliche Bildung des Mädchens
> Sanft sich vorbei, und schien dem Pfad' ins Getreide zu folgen.[73]

This Homeric simile puts to poetic use the representational models of painting and sculpture in the movement from the description of the sun as a "Bild" to the "Bildung" of Dorothea. The sequence of verbs "eilet", "glänzt", "schwankt" specify the sun's appearance such that its image becomes temporalized, thus making possible the comparison to the movement of Dorothea's "Bildung." This sequential unfolding recalls Goethe's letter to Schiller in which he envisions theatrical representation in terms of a sequence of antique bas-reliefs. And the "Auge" that beholds this vision is a Herderian one: the verb for seeing here is the haptic "fassen." Yet the thrust of the simile is precisely to illuminate the fleeting distance of Dorothea. She is imbued with the sensuous reality of sculpture but remains out of reach. The verb "schwanken," placed at the center of this poetic block, articulates the instability of the amorous situation. Like the sun whose setting lends light its particular brilliance, Dorothea appears here in the vividness of her own disappearance. And Hermann, in his likeness to "der wandernde Mann," is subject to a similar movement of retreat. While the simile evokes a man out for an evening walk, the verb "wandern" accrues another meaning in Goethe's poem. This is made clear by a later passage in which Dorothea asserts of herself, "ein wanderndes Mädchen ist immer von schwankendem

[73] Ibid. 1/8:859.

Rufe."[74] Here "wandern" possesses the valence of "auswandern". Dorothea has been driven from her home; her wandering is not that of the pleasure seeker but of the émigré. This resonance of "wandern" adds a twist to Goethe's Homeric simile. In his likeness to "der wandernde Mann" Hermann appears as displaced, unmoored from his social circle and in search of the elusive stability embodied in Dorothea. Thus the amorous paradigm shades into the political; the wavering vision of love momentarily casts Hermann as émigré.

This play of nearness and distance, surface and depth, continues throughout Song VII. Following upon the opening image of the wanderer, Dorothea appears to Hermann now with a heightened degree of epistemological certainty: "Fest betrachtet er sie; es war kein Scheinbild, sie war es | Selber."[75] The vision glimpsed in the Homeric simile is recast here as a "Scheinbild" in contrast to Dorothea's new corporeal presence. "Fest" – an antonym for "schwanken" – receives a prominent position at line-beginning, while the unusually strong enjambment of "Selber" lends an added weight to Dorothea's apparition. Yet this vision, too, will dissolve at a moment of heightened nearness, namely the iconic encounter of Hermann und Dorothea at the well:

> Und auf das Mäuerchen setzen
> Beide sich nieder des Quells. Sie beugte sich über, zu schöpfen;
> Und er faßte den anderen Krug, und beugte sich über.
> Und sie sahen gespiegelt ihr Bild in der Bläue des Himmels
> Schwanken, und nickten sich zu, und grüßten sich freundlich im Spiegel.

A light parataxis guides the passage. The repetition of "und" both isolates each action in its individuality and leads the reader sequentially through the action as it unfolds. One could very well imagine the scene playing out across an antique bas-relief. Yet as in the Homeric simile, the plastic principle of representation stands in tension with the irreality of the image. Hermann and

[74] Ibid. 1/8:863.
[75] Ibid., 1/8:860.

Dorothea encounter each other indirectly via their own image transposed onto the blue of the sky. It is a moment of intimacy mediated by a mirror, their "schwanken" reflected on the surface of the water. The amorous relation – the "und" in "Hermann und Dorothea" – is placed under the sign of this "schwanken." At stake in Hermann's courtship of Dorothea is precisely the overcoming of this amorous instability, the transformation of the radical contingency of their encounter into constancy. Yet the dynamic of "schwanken" is not limited to the diegetic level of narration. We are also witness to a certain swaying of representation between *Bild* and *Bildung*, between the painterly and the plastic. The poem is, as it were, in search of its own model of representation. The implications of articulating such a model can be brought into view by turning now to the second paradigm, revolutionary "schwanken."

"Schwanken": The Revolutionary Paradigm

In the opening song of *Hermann und Dorothea*, the apothecary, sitting safely among the villagers in the market square, furnishes a kind of epic teichoscopy of the refugee's arrival from across the Rhine. In the midst of his enumeration of their misery we find the following passage:

> Da entstand ein Geschrei der gequetschten Weiber und Kinder,
> Und ein Blöken des Viehes, dazwischen der Hunde Gepelfer,
> Und ein Wehlaut der Alten und Kranken, die hoch auf dem schweren
> Übergepackten Wagen auf Betten saßen und schwankten […].[76]

While the verb "schwanken" may be relatively inconspicuous here in the flow the apothecary's speech, this first instance of the word in the poem sounds a leitmotif that will regularly reassert itself. "Schwanken" is from the beginning tied to the refugees, to their precarious movement and their existential fragility. This opens up the paradigm of revolutionary "schwanken," the destabilizing element inserted into the pre-established harmony of Hermann's world. Nowhere is

[76] Ibid. 1/8:812.

this paradigm more emphatic than in the speech of Dorothea's first fiancé, who dies after leaving for Paris to fight on the side of the revolutionary forces. In his speech the revolutionary paradigm of "schwanken" experiences a *Steigerung* as we move from "schwanken" to "lösen," from destabilization to universal dissolution. The precarious balance tips over:

> Nur ein Fremdling, sagt man mit Recht, ist der Mensch hier auf Erden.
> Mehr ein Fremdling als jemals, ist nun ein jeder geworden.
> Uns gehört der Boden nicht mehr; es wandern die Schätze;
> Gold und Silber schmilzt aus den alten heiligen Formen;
> Alles regt sich, als wollte die Welt, die gestaltete, rückwärts
> Lösen in Chaos und Nacht sich auf, und neu sich gestalten.
> Du bewahrst mir dein Herz; und finden dereinst wir uns wieder
> Über den Trümmern der Welt, so sind wir erneute Geschöpfe,
> Umgebildet und frei und unabhängig vom Schicksal.[77]

Biblical wisdom[78] becomes metaphysical homelessness. Foreignness afflicts all in a world that threatens to reconstitute itself *as* world: revolution as cosmic reordering. *Re*ordering is key here; the old order does not simply disappear without a trace; "aus den alten heiligen Formen" emerge new forms.[79] And this process is described in plastic terms: "gestalten" and "bilden" are possible translations for the Greek πλάττειν. The vision here is of a new, plastic order freed from putatively God-given constraints. Yet the first fiancé's speech should not be equated with Goethe's own voice. The former's reckless revolutionary ardor serves as a foil to Hermann's more prudent pursuit of balance in the face of political upheaval. This contrast is brought out in a maxim spoken by Hermann in the Song V: "Der Jüngling reifet zum Manne; | Besser im Stillen

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[77] Ibid. 1/8:881.
[78] Cf. *Psalms* 119,19. "Ich bin ein Gast auf Erden; verbirg deine Gebote nicht vor mir."
[79] In a letter to Johann Heinrich Meyer dated 5. December 1796 Goethe employs a similar metallurgic metaphor to articulate his intentions in writing *Hermann und Dorothea*: "Ich habe das reine Menschliche der Existenz einer kleinen deutschen Stadt in dem epischen Tiegel von seinen Schlacken abzuscheiden gesucht, und zugleich die großen Bewegungen und Veränderungen des Welttheaters aus einem kleinen Spiegel zurück zu werfen getrachtet." Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/8:1199. The crucible and the mirror: both figures for the composition of the poem point to central scenes in the poem itself, namely the first fiancé's speech and the encounter at the well, respectively.

reift er zur Tat oft, als im Geräusche | Wilden, schwankenden Lebens, das manchen Jüngling verderbt hat."[80] The first fiancé succumbs to this wild, wavering life. His speech is instructive not in that it expresses Goethe's own view of the French Revolution but in that it poses in the most vivid terms the question of an adequate response to the existential instability that we have been tracking in the verb "schwanken." Goethe's poem is in search of a response to revolutionary change, a response that neither rigidifies itself in an obsolete order nor capitulates to the chaos of the new.

Dorothea's Foot

A statue, I want to argue, serves as a model for Goethe's response. There is a single scene in the poem in which sculpture is explicitly thematized. The scene comes at the end of the penultimate song. Hermann leads Dorothea back to his house, their path lit by the brightness of the full moon until gathering storm clouds obscure their way. This picturesque set-up is more than mere atmospheric evocation. Darkness renders a plastic encounter possible. Night is the Herderian darkness in which sight cedes to touch. The poem tracks this movement: "Und mit schwankenden Lichtern, durchs Laub, überblickte der Mond sie, | Eh' er, von Wetterwolken umhüllt, im Dunkeln das Paar ließ."[81] The surface play of wavering light gives way to the heightened intimacy of darkness as the pair finds its way feelingly forward. The wavering of the lights now becomes Dorothea's wavering as she attempts to blindly navigate the steps. Her misstep constitutes the crux of the scene:

> Aber sie, unkundig des Steigs und der roheren Stufen,
> Fehlte tretend; es knackte der Fuß, sie drohte zu fallen.
> Eilig streckte gewandt der sinnige Jüngling den Arm aus,

[80] Ibid., 1.8:835.
[81] Ibid., 1.8:870.

> Hielt empor die Geliebte; sie sank ihm leis' auf die Schulter,
> Brust war gesenkt an Brust und Wang' an Wange. So stand er,
> Starr wie ein Marmorbild, vom ernsten Willen gebändigt,
> Drückte nicht fester sie an, er stemmte sich gegen die Schwere.
> Und so fühlt' er die herrliche Last, die Wärme des Herzens,
> Und den Balsam des Atems, an seinen Lippen verhauchet,
> Trug mit Mannesgefühl die Heldengröße des Weibes.[82]

At first glance it would seem that the "Marmorbild" here entails not flexibility but rigidity, not enlivenment but mortification, a Pygmalion moment in reverse. Desire set against itself: not the loved object made flesh but the loving subject made stone. Yet the passage is built on a series of symmetries that overcome the initial imbalance. Breast sinks on breast, cheek on cheek. The warmth of Dorothea's heart meets the cold of Hermann's body turned marble. Hermann's rigidity is a counterforce to Dorothea's soft sinking. Dorothea, in turn, breathes life into Hermann. It is here that sculpture becomes *Plastik*. Dorothea's breath is the *anima* that enlivens marble from within. The pair embodies plasticity in the give and take of their gestures, as on an antique bas-relief. This reciprocity can be found even at the level of the verb. "Verhauchen" is commonly used in the context of dying, as in "den Geist verhauchen."[83] Thus Dorothea's act of giving Hermann new life is offset by the subtle implication of the loss of her own. Life and death are held in the balance. Out of Dorothea's wavering on her cracked foot arises a symmetry that the line "Trug mit Mannesgefühl die Heldengröße des Weibes" illustrates in its chiastic construction. The "schwanken" at the threshold, the potential transgression of the premarital embrace, gives way to the equipoise of a statuesque grouping.

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[82] Ibid.

[83] Compare the following line from Voß's translation of the *Odyssey*: "Lieber mit Einmal will ich den Geist in den Fluthen verhauchen." Voß, trans., *Homers Odyssee*, edited by Abraham Voß (Leipzig: Müller, 1837) 204.

Goethe's Forgetting of Meter

The thrust of my argument is not just to show that Goethe thematizes plasticity in his poem but that plasticity is tied to a specific verse form; that sculpture, which constitutes the central aesthetic object of early German Classicism, experiences a discursive transference to the realm of literature as a result of the attempt to articulate the unique rhythm of the hexameter; that the plasticity of the hexameter is formally at stake in *Hermann und Dorothea*. I want, then, to cast a closer look at Goethe's versification in *Hermann und Dorothea* in order to illustrate this final point. Goethe's philological consultants generally found his hexameter to be, simply put, bad. In the *Ästhetische Versuche* Humboldt singles out the hexameter as one of his rare objects of critique: Goethe "hat nicht einmal hier durch strenge Beobachtung der Regeln die nothwendige Correctheit erlangt."[84] In what sense was Goethe's versification incorrect? A glance at the revisions made to the poem by Goethe's philologist colleagues offers insight into this question. Goethe sent manuscript copies of *Hermann und Dorothea* to both Wilhelm von Humboldt and the son of Johann Heinrich Voß, granting them permission to make any corrections they saw fit. The main metrical corrections that they proposed can be grouped into the following categories: (1)*"false" dactyls*. Humboldt and the younger Voß were particularly attentive to verse feet in which an additional heavy stress fell on the second or third syllable. Voß pointed out an instance of both kinds of "false" dactyls in lines 143-144 of Song II, cited here with Voß's own partial scansion:

— — ◡ ◡ — ◡ ◡ — ◡ ◡ — ◡
Hof weg, da | stand noch das Thor des Hauses mit seinem Gewölbe,
— ◡ — —
Wie es jetzt | steht, es | war al | lein von | allem ge |blieben,[85]

[84] W. von Humboldt, "Ueber Göthes Hermann und Dorothea," *Werke*, 3:320.
[85] Goethe, *Epen*, ed. Siegfried Scheibe (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1958-1963) 2:221.

Voß offers the following correction:

— — | —⏑ ⏑| — ⏑ ⏑| — — | — ⏑ ⏑|—⏑
Hofraum. Siehe, da stand noch das Hausthor samt dem Gewölbe,
— ⏑ ⏑|— —|— ‖⏑ ⏑|— ⏑ |—⏑ ⏑| — ⏑
So wie es jezt dasteht, und allein wars übrig geblieben.[86]

In the first line Voß takes advantage of the compound noun to create a spondaic foot, while in the following line he displaces "jezt" to the second foot, replacing it with the lexically less significant "es" that helps build a more convincing dactyl. Voß's reformulation of these two lines points to another criticism shared between himself and Humboldt: (2) *lack of spondees*. In a letter dated May 6, 1797 Humboldt points out several instances in which a spondee could be won out of a false dactyl, as in line 24 of Song IV:

— — ⏑
Aufstieg den |

Wäre dieser prächtige Spondeus nicht zu retten?[87]

Goethe changed the line to

— — | —⏑⏑| —
Aufstieg steileren Pfads, […].[88]

Another instance is line 145 of the same song:

— — ⏑
Der sich | hingiebt wenn | cet.

Der prächtige Spondeus![89]

In his correction, Goethe shifts the "wenn" to the third foot in order to give the spondaic "hingiebt" its proper due:

[86] Ibid., 2:221 my scansion.
[87] Ibid., 2:188 Humboldt's scansion.
[88] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/8:830 my scansion.
[89] Goethe, *Epen*, 2:189 Humboldt's scansion.

— ◡ | — — | — ◡ ◡ |—◡ ◡ | — ◡ ◡| — ◡

Der sich hingiebt, wenn sich nicht Alle zum Ganzen bestreben.[90]

Humboldt's and Voß's effort to introduce more spondees into *Hermann und Dorothea* is indicative of a larger critique of Goethe's hexameter as (3) *lacking metrical variety*. The two philologists often pointed out passages in which the verse sounded monotonous and wooden. For Voß, this manifested itself in an inheritance of his father's fixation on the amphibrach, as in his commentary to the following line from Song VII:

— ◡ ◡ | — ◡ ◡ | — ◡ ◡|—◡ ◡ | — ◡ ◡ |— ◡

Oder ein Heben und Tragen, Bereiten und Schaffen für Andre.[91]

> Vielleicht ist hier der Verstoß gegen die Regel eine Zierde des Verses? Das ewig wiederkehrende der hier aufgezählten Dinge auch mag die ewig wiederkehrenden Amphibracchen wenigstens entschuldigen. Der Vers wird sehr schwer zu andern sein, wenn der Gedanke nicht einbüßen soll.[92]

Although the verse consists of dactyls, Voß hears anapests. His attention is focused on the metrically palpable semantic-syntactic units of the verse. The syntactic groupings displace the dactyls into a conspicuously amphibrachic rhythm. Voß made an unusual concession here by interpreting the clunky monotone of the meter as a mirror of the wearisome routine of the refugees. If Goethe's prosodic consultants had to resort to such readings in order to justify his versification, if they found his metrical composition to be in so many instances objectionable, in what sense can his hexameter be called plastic? Rather, is it not, to borrow August von Platen's phrase, "hölpricht"?[93] What led Humboldt to claim that the poetry of *Hermann und Dorothea* "ist mit dem Style der bildenden eng verschwistert […]"?[94] Humboldt himself reconciles his

[90] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/8:835 my scansion.
[91] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/8:864 my scansion.
[92] Goethe, *Epen*, 2:279.
[93] From the distich entitled "Hermann und Dorothea": "Hölpricht ist der Hexameter zwar; doch wird das Gedicht stets | Bleiben der Stolz Deutschlands, bleiben die Perle der Kunst." August von Platen, *Gedichte* (Stuttgart; Tübingen: J. G. Cotta, 1834) 405.
[94] W. von Humboldt, "Ueber Göthes Hermann und Dorothea," *Werke*, 3:235.

metrical criticism with his high regard for Goethe's verse by appealing to the poem's "Periodenbau:"

> Der Periodenbau ist so meisterhaft, dass es ein eignes Studium verdiente. Er schildert überall den Gegenstand selbst, folgt ihm in allen seinen Bewegungen, besitzt dabei einen so vollen Numerus des Wohklangs, schlingt sich so schön durch alle Teile des Rhythmus und durch die Verse hin und verbindet mit allen diesen Vorzügen eine so ungezwungene und natürlichen Leichtigkeit, dass er dadurch allein gewiss sehr viel zu der Objektivität beiträgt, die wir mit so vielem Recht an diesem Gedichte bewundern.[95]

What Humboldt designates with "Periodenbau" is the prosodic equivalent of the sentence. A poetic period encapsulates that interlacement of meter, syntax and semantics that makes up the grammar of the verse. It can be coterminous with the verse line or it can arc over multiple lines of verse. A poetic period reflects, as it were, the completion of a prosodic thought. It is in Humboldt's description of the "Periodenbau" of *Hermann und Dorothea* that the vocabulary of plasticity with which he used to describe the ancient Greek hexameter resurfaces. A prosodic order permeates, saturates the world. The serpentine capability of the verse to wrap itself around its objects, to adapt to them, lends the poem that objectivity which Humboldt posited, alongside totality, as the highest attribute of epic poetry. The prosodic penetration of the world, its endowment with an order, a solidity, a symmetry that reality lacks and that therefore raises the poem above reality into a totality, a totality that is not the encyclopedic collection of everything there is but rather the sculpting away of everything there need not be, everything one-sided and impressionistic, a sculpting away so that the poem may appear in our imagination like the sculpture in our intuition – as *one* object, an object whose parts are not isolated beauties but rather that thoroughgoing transfiguration of the poetic material by the mind's own activity into a whole for which Humboldt reserved the word "Form:" this is Humboldt's *desideratum* for epic poetry this is his claim upon *Hermann und Dorothea*.

[95] W. von Humboldt, "Ueber Göthes Hermann und Dorothea," *Werke*, 3:319.

Goethe responded with reserve to Humboldt's grand aesthetic agenda.[96] His reaction to Humboldt's suggestions for metrical corrections was likewise distanced. He made a limited number of changes to his verse in accordance with his colleague's recommendations. Humboldt claimed that Goethe intended to take over more of his corrections in a new printing of the poem, but he did not do so. Voß's vision for a stricter classicizing prosody fared even worse. Goethe made no changes whatsoever on the basis of Voß's suggested corrections, corrections that pertained to almost every line of *Hermann und Dorothea* and encompassed not only meter but also orthography, grammar and diction. According to Voß, the two had planned to go over the manuscript together and "[wollten] einmal ein ganzes Vierteljahr auf Hexameter verwenden,"[97] but the meeting never came to pass. As late as 1805 Goethe mentioned in a letter to his publisher that he intended to rework the poem "nach neueren prosodischen Überzeugungen,"[98] but he ultimately limited himself to minor corrections. Goethe's refusal to substantially revise his verse is, I believe, programmatic for his project of *Hermann und Dorothea*. It is a refusal in the form of a *forgetting of meter*. Forgetting in an eminently Nietzschean sense: not mere lassitude or

[96] His response is limited to two sentences in a letter to Humboldt from 26 May, 1799. Goethe eludes here to his work on a new epic poem whose theme – the death of Achilles – he hesitates to divulge lest Humboldt become concerned that "ich mir nicht etwa gar Ikarische Flügel zubereite." Cited in Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 2/4:678. The project did in fact have an Ikarian outcome. It was left unfinished in 1799. Ernst Osterkamp has argued that Humboldt's insistance on the objectivity of the epic led to the failure of Goethe's last foray into epic hexameter. Goethe couldn't reconcile the highly individualized, tragic theme of Achilles' death with his friend's demands for the epic. See Osterkamp, "Gesamtbildung und freier Genuß. Wechselwirkungen zwischen Goethe und Wilhelm von Humboldt" in *Wechselwirkungen. Kunst und Wissenschaft in Berlin und Weimar im Zeichen Goethes*, ed. Ernst Osterkamp (Bern: Lang, 2003) 133-154. Not only the demands of the genre, but also the demands of the meter can be cited as a reason for the abandonment of the project. Andreas Heusler has argued that with the *Achilleis* fragment Goethe had so thoroughly absorbed the classicizing prosody of his contemporaries that he no longer needed their revisions to make his verse more "correct." Yet the new-found rigor of the verse also entailed the loss of the plastic principle that guided the versification of *Hermann und Dorothea*. This metrical rigor proved to be as unsustainable as Humboldt's exacting definition of the epic. Cf. Heusler, *Deutscher und antiker Vers*, 115.

[97] Goethe, *Epen*, 2:185.

[98] Ibid. 2:195.

repression but the active artistic capacity, the *plastische Kraft* to assimilate that which one needs to project one's future, "die Kraft, das Vergangene zum Leben zu gebrauchen[…]."[99] Assimilation demands self-limitation. Only insofar as one lives within a self-imposed horizon, beyond which there is forgetting, does one have the capacity to take up the past and form it according to one's will. For Nietzsche, the former philologist, it is *Wissenschaft*, science, that has extended this horizon to infinity; it is science that has banished the bounded circle within which alone action is possible. The unboundedness of "der historische Sinn,"[100] its oversaturation in its own inassimilable knowledge: this for Nietzsche is the result of history's submission to science, a science whose objectivity is the state of the insomniac's unremitting vigilance that prevents the rejuvenation of sleep, of forgetting. The vast accumulation of knowledge leads less to a renewal of artistic technique than to knowledge *about* past artistic techniques. Art under the hegemony of "der historische Sinn" amounts to little more than "eine gleichgültige Convention, eine klägliche Nachahmung oder selbst eine rohe Fratze."[101] For Nietzsche, the accomplished artwork is formed in the atmosphere of "das Unhistorische:"[102] not the ahistorical, not the ignorance of one's own historical contingency, but rather the capacity to forget convention in the act of artistic creation. It is in this sense that Goethe's hexameter could be called "unhistorical." It does not strive to approximate antique verse. It does not attempt feats of authenticity. Plasticity emerges as a counter-principle to *Nachahmung*: not imitation but adaptation, not metrical devotion to an idealized past but the enterprising openness to the prosodic contingencies of the present. And this is Hermann's plastic power too: his givenness to the moment, to the apparition of Dorothea, without succumbing to the political utopianism that her apparition harbingers nor retreating into

[99] Nietzsche, "Vom Nuzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben," *Sämtliche Werke* 1:253.
[100] Ibid.1:295.
[101] Ibid.1:273.
[102] Ibid.1:252.

the calcified tradition of his father but adapting the one to the other. If there is one figure that encapsulates the nexus of poetry and *Plastik*, of hexameter and plasticity, of classicizing meter and political adaptability in *Hermann und Dorothea* it is perhaps the foot: the foot that Goethe sculpted in his last days in Rome, the verse foot, and Dorothea's cracked foot that finds a balance in Hermann's sculpted presence. In light of this semantic condensation in the figure of the foot, the parting advice of Dorothea's first fiancé rises to a metapoetic register: "setze nur leicht den beweglichen Fuß auf."[103]

[103] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/8:882.

Chapter 2: Blank Verse Bound and Unbound: The Aesthetics of Versification and Goethe's *Iphigenie auf Tauris*

> "This neglect then of rhyme so little is to be taken for a defect, though it may seem so perhaps to vulgar readers, that it rather is to be esteemed an example set, the first in English, of ancient liberty recovered to the heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of rhyming."
> - Milton, Preface to *Paradise Lost*

Homeric Blank Verse

"Denn wenn Homer, ein alter Deutscher im Zeitalter der Minnesinger, oder Luthers, frei von classischer Schulfüchserei und poetischer Pedanterei, gelebt hätte, so hätte er auch, – und das red't mir keiner aus, – seine Ilias in Jamben gesungen."[1] Thus Gottfried Bürger in his 1776 *Streitschrift* "An einen Freund über die deutsche Ilias." For Bürger, a successful translation of Homer should produce the illusion that Homer was a German, and blank verse is the meter with which to sustain this illusion. Bürger positions himself firmly against Klopstock, whose unremitting work on the *Messias* and accompanying poetological reflections laid claim to the hexameter as *the* priveledged meter for modern German-language epic poetry. For Bürger, the rhythm of the hexameter is an artificial constraint upon the German prosodic ear, an ear whose acoustic world is conditioned by the more unified rhythms of iambs and trochees. The insistance on the hexameter, Bürger argues, condemns German poetry to an epigonality audible in the forced declamation of verse in a meter ostensibly inimical to German speech patterns. Bürger's claims serve as the theoretical backing for his own experiments in a "jambisierte Ilias."[2] In 1771

[1] Gottfried August Bürger, *Werke,* ed. Eduard Griesbach (Berlin: G. Grote, 1885) 226.
[2] Ibid., 223.

he began publishing excerpts of his own translation of the *Iliad* into blank verse. Blank verse, then, would be the German poet's answer to the Greek hexameter; a verse flexible enough to accommodate the expansive scope of epic poetry while still upholding the nobility of its subject matter.

It was an answer that fell on deaf ears. The resonance of Klopstock's *Messias* assured the hexameter's status as *the* authoritative verse form for the translation and composition of epic poetry in modern German. Yet Bürger's advocacy for a "jambisierte Ilias" raises questions about the place of blank verse within the economy of classical verse forms around 1800. Blank verse was unknown to classical antiquity. It first achieved recognition in the German literary sphere due to its illustrious English pedigree. For Herder it was "das […] Miltonische Silbenmaß,"[3] but first and foremost it was known as the verse of Shakespeare. Thus it would seem that the meter stood in for a uniquely *modern* dramatic tradition, a tradition that eschewed the rules of dramatic form as they were codified in Aristotle's *Poetics* and reception since the Renaissance. Yet Goethe's choice of blank verse for his *Iphigenie auf Tauris* brought the meter into dialogue with the antique form canon, fashioning out of the meter of Shakespeare and Milton verse evocative of Sophocles and Euripides. This entailed a radical reform of blank verse as he had inherited it from Lessing. German poets and critics saw in unrhymed iambic pentameter the most *prosaic* of verse forms. It is for this reason that Klopstock calls it a "bloß scheinbares Silbenmaß"[4] and Goethe himself notes its tendency, "die Poesie zur Prosa herunterzuziehen."[5] In his 1799 *Nathan der Weise*, Lessing reinforced the prosaic pull of blank verse, using the naturalistic, speech-like tone achievable in the meter as the dialogic medium for inter-religious exchange. Goethe's handling of the meter works in the opposite direction. With the versification of his *Iphigenie*

[3] Herder, *Werke*, 1:576.
[4] Klopstock, "Vom deutschen Hexameter," *Gedanken über die Natur der Poesie*, 116.
[5] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/14:778.

drama he introduced a heightened order, regularity, and metrical integrity into the blank verse line. Yet this makes moments of metrical rupture in the play all the more significant. In my reading of *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, I want to attend to these instances of dramatic deviation from the metrical norms in order to show how the drama stages the tension between blank verse's tendency towards prosodic unboundedeness and the classical constraint of Goethe's versification. I will argue that this tension has implications for an understanding of the drama's central philosophical concerns.

The Binding and Unbinding of German Blank Verse

Gottfried Bürger's insistance on blank verse as "das *einzige, wahre, ächte, natürliche heroische Metrum unsrer Sprache*"[6] belies the fact that blank verse was anything but natural, anything but native to German-language poetry. It is in fact a complex import resulting from the confluence of multiple vernacular poetic traditions: the French *vers commun*, the Italian *endecasillabo* and the English *blank verse*.[7] Dating back to the 11th century, the *vers commun* is the oldest of these verse forms. *Vers commun* is a ten syllable poetic line with a caesura after the fourth syllable and with accents on the fourth and sixth syllable. The early 12th century *Chanson de Roland* secured its place as the standard meter for French epic poetry. The *endecasillabo* emerged in the 12th century out of the *vers commun* and became the most prestigious Italian meter, the meter of Dante, Petrarch, and Tasso. As the name indicates, the meter has eleven

[6] Bürger, *Werke*, 225 emphasis in original.
[7] See the entries for "Decasyllable" and "Blankverse" in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Roland Greene, 4th ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012). For a discussion of these intersecting traditions within the context of German versification see Alfred Behrmann, *Einführung in den neueren deutschen Vers: Von Luther Bis Zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1989) 30-43.

syllables, with the main stress following on the tenth syllable and additional accents generally falling on the fourth and sixth syllable. It was Chaucer who, coming into contact with these traditions, first fashioned a verse of five alternating stresses later known as iambic pentameter. Chaucer's verse was rhymed. It was not until Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey translated two books of the *Aeneid* into unrhymed iambic pentameter between 1539 and 1546 that modern blank verse – "blank" indicating "unrhymed" – was born. It is, of course, Shakespeare and Milton who represent the twin peaks of English blank verse. They pushed the verse furthest; they fully uncovered its flexibility and expressive range. In broad strokes, the development of English blank verse from the Earl of Surrey to Shakespeare and Milton can be characterized as a movement from formalism to flexibility, from belabored rigor to virtuosic freedom. The early composers in the form tended to avoid metrical substitutions (for instance the later very common substitution of a trochee for an iamb in the first foot). They likewise avoided strong enjambment and variation in the placement of the caesurae. Shakespeare's, and later Milton's, success in versification was due in large part to their embrace of these prosodic techniques. They discovered how far the meter could bend without breaking. As we will see, German blank verse followed a similar developmental arc as its predecessor. In order to grasp this development, I want first to pause to consider the basic prosodic principles of the meter.

German blank verse can be defined as an unrhymed line of five iambic (◡ —) feet with a variable caesura and a variable cadence, i.e. either a "masculine" (◡ —) or a "feminine" (◡ — ◡) ending.[8] It can be figured by the following metrical schema:

◡ — ◡ — ◡ — ◡ — ◡ — (◡)

[8] For an extensive treatment of the prosody of German blank verse see Rudolf Haller, "Studie über den deutschen Blankvers" *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literatur und Geistesgeschichte* 31, no. 3 (1957) 380-424.

The absence of rhyme, the variable caesura and the variable cadence are three prosodic factors that afforded great freedoms and great challenges for poets composing in the meter. To begin with rhyme: end-rhyme constitutes modern poetry's most powerful device for the delineation of the verse line. It furnishes a kind of phonetic evidence for the limit of the line. The ear-catching return of a vowel sound in a stressed syllable at line-end makes that end explicit. And rhyme tends to work against that great prosodic force for non-closure: enjambment. While rhyme encourages the ear to rest on the reoccurrence of the same sound, enjambment pulls the ear forward to the next line; while rhyme strengthens the closure of a syntactic unit, enjambment rests on the very non-coincidence of line-end and syntactic end. Thus with the removal of rhyme the verse line threatens to spill over, obscuring its integrity *as* verse. In Book 18 of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Goethe writes in regard to the dilemma of rhymeless verse: "Jedermann fühlte die Unsicherheit der Sache, man wollte sich nicht gerne wagen, und aufgefordert durch jene Naturtendenz griff man nach einer poetischen Prosa."[9] The "Unsicherheit der Sache" pertains to the absence of a prosodic principle to replace that of rhyme. As Goethe notes, the question of the "Sylbenwert"[10] in German was not yet decided, that is to say, the prosodic status of syllables in German remained unclear: were they to be weighed according to length or stress, and what guidelines were there for determining what the length or stress of a syllable in a given line of poetry would be?

As I will discuss below, Goethe found in Moritz's treatise on prosody answers to these questions. For now I want to note the situation before Moritz's prosody. Without the structuring principle of rhyme, and without a well-defined prosodic system like that of the ancient Greek or Latin, what prevents the "poetic sentence" from becoming merely a syntactic sentence, prose?

[9] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/14:778.
[10] Ibid. 1/14:788.

The situation is compounded by the variability of the caesura in blank verse. Indeed, the necessity of a caesura at all in blank verse is a matter of dispute. In comparison to the Alexandrine, the dominant verse form for German-language drama in the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century, blank verse seems decidedly unstructured. The steadfast caesura after the third stressed syllable in the Alexandrine divides the line into two metrically even halves and provides an anchorage point that blank verse lacks. The uneven number of stressed syllables in pentameter verse precludes a metrically symmetrical division. The line-end tends to further obscure the rhythmic *Gestalt* of the blank verse line. As we have seen, the non-dactylic final foot in the epic hexameter functions as a kind of closing formula that marks off one line from the next. And the more scrupulous prosodists like Voß and A.W. Schlegel guarded against an ill-placed caesura at line-end that would alter the closural dynamic of the line. Blank verse, by contrasts, lacks a conspicuous metrical cadence. At the very least, a feminine cadence marks a subtle break in the flow of the verse through the occurrence of two unstressed syllables in the transition from one line to the next (⏑ — ⏑ | ⏑ —) whereas a masculine cadence allows the metrical pattern to continue unabated (⏑ — | ⏑ —). Goethe was acutely aware of the difficulties of negotiating the cadence in blank verse. In his "Regeln für Schauspieler," under the sub-section "Rhythmischer Vortrag," he writes, "Hat man Jamben zu deklamieren, so ist zu bemerken, daß man jeden Anfang eines Verses durch ein kleines kaum merkbares Innehalten bezeichnet; doch muß der Gang der Deklamation dardurch nicht gestört werden."[11] Thus the actor must subtly mark off the verse line as an intelligible metrical unit without disconnecting the line from the one that precedes it. Yet this declamatory "Gang" itself proved to be a challenge to the development of German blank verse in the late eighteenth century. In comparison to what critics called the

[11] Ibid., 1/18:870.

"polymetric" verse of the ancients, that is, verse with metrical feet made up of three or more syllables, the alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables in iambic pentameter could sound rhythmically impoverished. We have seen that the epic hexameter was valued for its *Mannigfaltigkeit*. The poets cultivating the meter at the end of the eighteenth century found in it a moveable order, rich and flexible while at the same time maintaining a statuesque poise. By contrast, the iambic "Auf und Ab-Stil"[12] to borrow a phrase from Andreas Heusler, who still nursed a certain prejudice against the steady weighing of alternating unstressed and stressed syllables in iambic and trochaic verse, has the potential to produce a monotonous regularity. In his plaidoyer for blank verse, Bürger was at pains to prove that the verse form need not be monotonous,[13] and Herder likewise defended its potential for rhythmic variety.[14] This threat of monotony is the result not of the verse's rigor but its laxity. The lack of strong prosodic markers could lead to a contourless verse. What I want to bring out by dwelling on these prosodic details is that blank verse tends toward prosodic *Ungebundenheit*. In comparison to the complex metrical demands of the antique verse forms, blank verse allowed poets great liberties in their shaping of the verse line, but these liberties came with the risk of loosing the *Gestalt* of the line, of reducing the verse to a kind of shapeless, plodding prose.

The prosaic potential of blank verse exercised a strong influence on its development in German-language poetry. After a few isolated attempts in the meter in the seventeenth century, it gained traction around the middle of the following century. Jakob Bodmer's – prose – translation of Milton's *Paradise Lost* in the 1740s, as well as the growing reception of Shakespeare, made poets aware of the two great English masters of the meter. Early German blank verse exhibited a

[12] Andreas Heusler, *Deutsche Versgeschichte Mit Einschluss des altenglischen und altnordischen Stabreimverses*, 2nd ed., 3 vols.(Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1956) 3:137.
[13] See Bürger, "Gedanken über die Beschaffenheit einer deutschen Übersetzung des Homer, nebst einigen Probefragmenten," *Werke*, 203-204.
[14] See Herder, *Werke*, 1/576-580.

rigidity like that of its early English predecessor. What Goethe called the "insecurity" provoked by unrhymed verse led early practitioners of the meter in German to overcompensate by strongly favoring a strict correspondence between verse-end and sentence-end, an effect that could give the verse the highly-regulated, block-like feel of distichs, as one critic has noted in regard to the blank verse of Johann Elias Schlegel.[15] Wieland's 1753 play *Lady Johanna Gray*, the first German blank verse drama to be staged, already achieved a level of freedom and naturalness that would come to be associated with the meter, but it was first with Lessing's 1779 *Nathan der Weise* that blank verse achieved its status as *the* priveledged verse form for serious German-language drama, a status that it would hold for the next one hundred years.

Lessing's Blank Verse: The Prosafication of Poetry

Lessing's response to the prosaic qualities latent in the verse form was not to double-down on prosodic rigor in order to counteract these qualities, but rather to exploit them, thereby fashioning what Friedrich Schlegel called Lessing's "metrische Prosa."[16] Put differently, Lessing carried out in his *Nathan*, a *prosafication of poetry*. His prosodic maneuvers opened poetry up to its other. His blank verse constantly shades into prose. The approximation of prose in verse facilitates the drama's dialogic structure. Lessing found in blank verse a form capacious enough to accommodate the communication between religions that the drama drives at. Thus Lessing did not simply popularize blank verse, he realized its prosaic potential and established a norm for its usage, a norm towards which later poets composing in the form would have to orient themselves.

[15] Lucie Schädle, *Der frühe deutsche Blankvers: unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner Verwendung durch Chr. M. Wieland; Eine Versstilistische und literarhistorische Üntersuchung* (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1972) 39.
[16] Friedrich Schlegel, *Literary Notebooks 1797-1801*, ed. Hans Eichner (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957) 72.

It is against the backdrop of this norm that the stakes of Goethe's versification of his *Iphigenie* drama become clear. It is therefore worth dwelling on several details of Lessing's prosody.

Christian Wagenknecht has identified the numerous prosodic interventions that Lessing made in the blank verse of *Nathan der Weise*.[17] I want here to single out two of the most important interventions: enjambment and split lines. As Wagenknecht points out, Lessing ends lines with nearly any part of speech: prepositions, pronouns, articles, "zu" with verbs in the infinitive. Such logical connectors and lexically weak words create a strong sense of incompletion at line-end. They work against the verse line as a complete syntactic-semantic unit. The use of *antilabe*, that is, the division of a single verse-line between multiple speakers, constitutes another counter-principle to that of meter. Whereas *stichomythia*, the restriction of speech to a single metrical line, creates a sense of artificiality by subordinating speech to meter, *antilabe* affects a naturalness by mimicking conversational repartee in which speech does not conform so completely to metrical parameters. Indeed, in the give and take of split-lines it is often difficult to discern that the *dramatis personae* are speaking in verse at all. As an example of Lessing's complex handling of blank verse, consider the beginning of Act 1, Scene 4, in which Daja, the companion of Nathan's adopted daughter Recha, tells Nathan that she has caught sight of the Templar who saved Recha from a fire:

Vierter Auftritt

DAJA *Eilig herbei*. NATHAN.

DAJA. O Nathan, Nathan!
NATHAN. Nun?
Was gibt's?
DAJA. Er lässt sich wieder sehen! Er lässt
Sich wieder sehen!

[17] See Christian Wagenknecht, "Lessings Blankvers" in *Metrica minora: Aufsätze, Vorträge, Glossen zur deutschen Poesie* (Paderborn: Mentis, 2006) 263-264.

NATHAN. Wer, Daja? wer?
DAJA. Er! er!
NATHAN.
Er? Er? – Wann lässt sich *der* nicht sehn! – Ja so,
Nun euer Er heißt er. – Das sollt er nicht!
Und wenn er auch ein Engel wäre, nicht!
DAJA. Er wandelt untern Palmen wieder auf
Und ab; und bricht von Zeit zu Zeit sich Datteln.[18]

The first verse of this scene appears to be incomplete, but this is not the case. The two missing feet at line-beginning are to be found in the last line of the preceding scene. This technique, which Wagenknecht does not mention, is one of Lessings more radical interventions in the metrical line: dramatic structure interrupts prosodic structure. The arrival of a character on the stage functions as a caesura dividing the verse into two uneven halves. In addition to the heavy use of split lines in this passage, Lessing also employs his characteristically bold enjambment. In the sentence "Er lässt | Sich wieder sehn" the auxiliary verb is left dangling at line end, while in the phrase "auf | Und ab" the adverb "auf" is likewise isolated. There are also subtler prosodic techniques at work here. We have already considered how a masculine ending creates the sense of an uninterrupted flow of iambs, whereas a feminine ending marks an ever so slight break in the metrical sequence. In the cited passage there is only one instance of a feminine ending, namely in the line ending with "Datteln." Lessing goes out of his way to produce masculine endings, often dropping the final vowel from verbs at line end.[19] Finally, he creates the appearance of lines with six stresses by placing emphatic monosyllabic words in metrically unstressed positions,[20] for instance in Nathan's line:

— — ◡ — ◡ — ◡ — ◡ —
Er? Er? – Wann lässt sich *der* nicht sehn! – Ja so!

[18] Lessing, *Werke und Briefe*, ed. Wilfried Barner et al., 12 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985) 9:502-503.
[19] See Wagenknecht, "Lessings Blankvers," 263.
[20] See Ibid., 264.

When Lessing began work on *Nathan*, he wrote to his friend Karl Wilhelm Ramler that he had decided to compose the drama in verse because "der orientalische Ton, den ich doch hier und da angeben müsse, in der Prose zu sehr auffallen dürfte."[21] Yet Lessing's blank verse affects not a distancing, Orientalizing tone, but rather a conversational immediacy. In a drama dominated by the dialogical, by the progressive recognition of a common humanity through linguistic exchange, blank verse serves as the shared medium of this exchange. Blank verse is the language, or rather, the rhythm, in which Jew, Christian, and Muslim alike speak. Friedrich Schlegel was one of the first critics to recognize the importance of prose for Lessing's drama. In his 1797 *Charakteristik* of Lessing he wrote with his usual wit that *Nathan* "ist nur mit *die beste Prosa*, welche Lessing geschrieben hat […]."[22] In a typically Schlegelian paradox, Lessing produced a better prose by composing his drama in blank verse rather than in prose. I have argued that the early history of German blank verse is distinguished by a confrontation with the prosaic tendency poets found in the meter and that Lessing represents a decisive shift in this confrontation. He uses the tools of prosody against the meter. In versifying his *Iphigenie* drama, Goethe radically reenvisioned the blank verse that he had inherited from Lessing. Like Bürger in his experimental translations of Homer, Goethe sough in blank verse a modern counterpart to the verse of the Greek tragedians. This entailed not only a reform of blank verse but also a new conception of verse and versification itself.

[21] Lessing, *Werke und Briefe*, 9:1134.
[22] F. Schlegel, "Über Lessing" in *Kritische Friedrich Schlegel Ausgabe*, 2:121.

The Philosophical Aesthetics of Versification

In an entry from the *Italienische Reise* dated 8 September, 1786, Goethe wrote of the prose version of his *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, "es ist in poetischer Prosa geschrieben, die sich manchmal in einen jambischen Rhythmus verliert, auch wohl andern Silbenmaßen ähnelt."[23] That Goethe found in the prose version the tendency towards an iambic rhythm testifies to the felt affinity between prose and iambic pentameter that Lessing had exploited to great effect. It was perhaps this nearness of bank verse to prose that allowed Goethe to stylize the versification process as a rather intuitive endeavor: "Mein Verfahren dabei war ganz einfach: ich schrieb das Stück ruhig ab und ließ es Zeile vor Zeile, Period vor Period regelmäßig erklingen."[24] Yet this stylized ease belies the fact that the versification was a labor-intensive and a times fraught undertaking. At stake in the versification is the rhythmic relation of blank verse to antiquity. This is evident from a letter Goethe wrote to Herder on 1 September, 1786, just two days before his departure for Italy: "Ich bin in große Not geraten, die ich Dir sogleich anzeigen und klagen muß. Nach Deinem Abschied las ich noch in der Elektra des Sophokles. Die langen Jamben ohne Abschnitt und das sonderbare Wälzen und Rollen des Periods haben sich mir so eingeprägt, daß mir nun die kurzen Zeilen der Iphigenie ganz höckerig, übelklingend und unlesbar werden. Ich habe gleich angefangen, die erste Szene umzuändern."[25] Much in the spirit of Winckelmann, Goethe's striving for antique form was motivated by the overpowering experience of the ancient Greek artwork in its immediacy. And in a Winkelmannian aporia, the exemplarity of the ancient artwork was coupled with an awareness of the historical distance that separated the modern artist from the conditions of its production. The condemnation of modern verse as "höckerig, übelklingend und unlesbar" was typical among poets with classicizing ambitions. The

[23] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/5:1291.
[24] Ibid., 1/5:1294.
[25] Ibid., 1/5:1282-1283.

uncertainty regarding the placement of stress – or if modern versification was a matter of stress at all – and the dominance of alternating disyllabic feet (such as the iamb and trochee) could indeed make modern verse appear far inferior to the "polymetric" verse of the ancients.[26] Like Lessing before him, Goethe sought a modern verse form that would be commensurate to ancient Greek tragedy's iambic trimeter. For Lessing, following Aristotle, the predominant quality of iambic trimeter was its speech-like naturalness. For Goethe, the prevailing impression left by the iambic trimeter seems to have been its rhythmic expansiveness that allowed for the broad syntactic unfolding of sentences over multiple lines of verse. While Lessing pulled blank verse down towards prose in order to reclaim the felt naturalness of iambic trimeter, Goethe pulled blank verse back up to poetry in order recreate the rhythmic flow of the ancient verse.

No discussion of Goethe's versification of *Iphigenie auf Tauris* would be complete without a consideration of Karl Phillip Moritz's *Versuch einer deutschen Prosodie*. Moritz completed the work in 1786 on the cusp of his own sojourn in Rome during which he met Goethe and entered into an intense period of consultation and collaboration with him. In a well-know passage from the *Italienische Reise*, Goethe himself credits Moritz's *Versuch* with providing the decisive impulse for the versification of his drama: "Iphigenia in Jamben zu übersetzen hätte ich nie gewagt, wäre mir in Moritzens Prosodie nicht ein Leitstern erschienen."[27] Nonetheless, the *Prosodie* remains an understudied text, generally treated only

[26] Derek Attridge articulates the conundrum of the typical Elizabethan-era humanist faced with modern vernacular verse, a conundrum that 200 years later Goethe and his contemporaries would face in turn: "His feelings about English poetry would involve feelings about the English language; next to Latin it would seem crude and disorganized, without rules, without constant orthography, and (most important as far as verse was concerned) without any agreed division of syllables into long and short. He might well decide that before true verse could be written, the language itself must be reformed." *Well-Weighed Syllables: Elizabethan Verse in Classical Metres* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974) 92.
[27] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/5:1295.

with a passing mention in the context of the genesis of *Iphigenie auf Tauris*.[28] Yet the treatise is far more than an antiquated guide to German prosody; rather, it expounds a veritable philosophical aesthetics of versification.[29] The treatise, I want to show, offered not only technical advice but also a conceptual paradigm with which to figure the relation between modern German and ancient Greco-Roman prosody and to grasp the aesthetic significance of verse as a technique of organizing language.

In the *Versuch einer deutschen Prosodie* Moritz attempts to establish the first systematic account of German-language prosody in its historical specificity. In this sense it is a project deeply indebted to the aesthetic demands made by Herder and Lessing in their studies of the art and poetry of classical antiquity. Moritz does not council German poets on how to imitate the ancients, but rather on how to understand the laws and limits of their own verse vis-à-vis the verse of antiquity. He does not attempt to adapt the German language to Greco-Roman prosody but rather seeks to make explicit the prosodic rules specific to the German language, rules that

[28] In their commentary to the *Italienische Reise*, the editors of the Frankfurt Edition of Goethe's work question whether Goethe possessed a copy of Moritz's treatise during the critical months of the versification of *Iphigenie* and estimate that Goethe's discussion of it constitutes little more than a tribute to his deceased friend: "In Goethes *Iphigenie*-Briefen an Herder vom 13.1.1787 wird der *Prosodie* und ihrer Rolle nicht gedacht – der Passus erweist sich damit als pietätsvoller Einschub (Moritz was 1793 gestorben) bei der Redaktion" Cited in Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/15.2:1280. Yet Goethe's discussion of the *Prosodie*, even if *post facto*, demands to be taken, seriously in accordance with the major role played by Moritz throughout the *Italienische Reise*. Even without the treatise in hand, Goethe could have gleaned its technical aspects in conversation with Moritz, and, as I will argue, it's philosophical claims are in accord with the broader aesthetic project that Moritz and Goethe elaborated together in Rome.

[29] As Hans Joachim Schrimpf writes in one of the few serious studies of the *Prosodie*, "Was geschieht eigentlich, so fragt er [Moritz S.F.] sich, wenn aus Prosa Versdichtung wird, wenn der Übergang aus der Ordnung der Verstandessprache in die Ordnung der Verssprache […] geleistet wird." "Vers ist tanzhafte Rede. Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Prosodie aus dem achtzehnten Jahrhundert" in *Festschrift für Jost Trier zum 70. Geburtstag*. ed. William Foerste and Karl Heinz Borck (Köln: Böhlau, 1964) 386-410; 398.

poets had heretofore observed, "bloß nach einem natürlichen Gefühl des Richtigen […]."[30]

Goethe was clear about what he gleaned from Moritz's treatise:

> Es ist auffallend, daß wir in unserer Sprache nur wenige Silben finden, die entschieden kurz oder lang sind. Mit den anderen verfährt man nach Geschmack oder Willkür. Nun hat Moritz ausgeklügelt, daß es eine gewisse Rangordnung der Silben gebe, und daß die dem Sinne nach bedeutendere gegen eine weniger bedeutende lang sei und jene kurz mache, dagegen aber auch wieder kurz werden könne, wenn sie in die Nähe von einer andern gerät, welche mehr Geistesgewicht hat. Hier ist denn doch ein Anhalten, und wenn auch damit nicht alles getan wäre, so hat man doch indessen einen Leitfaden, an dem man sich hinschlingen kann. Ich habe diese Maxime öfters zu Rate gezogen und sie mit meiner Empfindung übereinstimmend getroffen.[31]

In other words, Moritz expounded the *relativity* of syllable length in German prosody. In his account, a syllable is "long" or "short"[32] according to its relative importance within a grammatical hierarchy. Moritz sets out this grammatical hierarchy in painstaking detail – a pronoun, for instance, is "long" when measured against a preposition or article, "short" when measured against a substantive, adjective, verb, interjection, adverb, helping verb, or conjunction. This is what Goethe means when he speaks of the "Geistesgewicht" of a syllable. The length of a syllable is dependent on its semantic-grammatical significance within a given line of verse. In Goethe's account, this systematization of syllable length cleared up an uncertainty plaguing German prosody: what is, for instance, the prosodic length of the word "ich," taken on its own? For Goethe, Moritz's "Rangordnung der Silben" provided a principle that removed the sense of capriciousness from German versification. Thus the *Prosodie* freed the poet from the double bind of either having to imitate an ancient prosody to which he could not do justice or being thrown back on his own language without having any coherent prosodic

[30] Karl Philipp Moritz, *Versuch einer deutschen Prosodie* (Berlin: A. Wever, 1786) iii.
[31] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/15.1:168.
[32] Moritz still thinks in terms of syllable length rather than syllable stress – indeed, an aspect of his project is to show that there *are* long and short syllables in German. Moritz does consider stress as well, but under the aspect of what he calls "Tonhöhe". One can give a syllable a particularly strong emphasis, but this effects its pitch, not its length.

principles to guide him. Moritz demonstrated the internal logic of German prosody. I want to argue, however, that the importance of the treatise for an understanding of Goethe's blank verse prosody goes beyond these rather technical aspects of versification. Moritz's treatise builds part of a larger aesthetic project, a project for which Goethe felt a strong affinity. The aesthetic stakes of Goethe's versification of *Iphigenie* come into view against the background of this project.

Moritz unfolds the conceptual kernel of his prosody on the basis of a distinction between thought (*Gedanke*) and feeling (*Empfindung*) in their relation to discourse (*Rede*). Thought rushes ahead of itself, pulling speech forward to the central idea. Thought is, as it were, the conceptual equivalent of rhyme. Thought subordinates the verse line to a single sustaining principle, thereby creating an aesthetic dissymmetry. Feeling, by contrast, dwells on the fullness of each syllable, no longer preoccupied with the content of what is being said: "Die Empfindung setzt voraus, daß der Verstand schon befriedigt ist."[33] Only when the understanding has been put to rest, only when speech is no longer solely a means for conveying a thought, does the reign of feeling begin. Feeling treats speech not as a vehicle for something else, something outside itself, but rather as its own internal end. In Moritz's words, "*Die Empfindung drängt die Rede gleichsam wieder in sich selbst zurück,* welche der Gedanke, wo möglich, aus sich selbst heraus, und in sich hinüber zu reissen strebt."[34] Feeling acts as a stave against the forward flow of thought. Moritz elaborates the particular purposiveness of poetry in the following way:

> Es ist hier mit der Rede fast, wie mit dem *Gange*. Das gewöhnliche Gehen hat seinen Zweck *ausser sich*, es ist bloß *Mittel* zu irgend einem Ziele zu gelangen, und nach diesem Ziele strebt es unaufhörlich hin, ohne daß es auf die Regelmäßigkeit oder Unregelmäßigkeit der einzelnen Fortschritte Rücksicht nimmt. Die Leidenschaft aber, der hüpfenden Freude z.B. *drängt auch den Gang in sich selbst zurück*, und die einzelnen Fortschritte unterscheiden sich nicht mehr dadurch, daß sie immer näher zum Ziele bringen, sondern sie sind sich unter

[33] Moritz, *Versuch einer deutschen Prosodie*, 27.
[34] Ibid., 26 italics in original.

> einander gleich, weil das Gehen nicht mehr nach irgend einem Ziel gerichtet ist, sondern mehr *um sein selbst willen* geschieht.[35]

Prose is like walking, poetry like dance. One walks, in Moritz's model, in order to arrive at a destination. In dance, the dancer goes nowhere because she has always already arrived at the destination in the very act of dancing.[36] Dance arises, in Moritz's anthropological account, out of the "Bedürfnis der Seele"[37] to feel its own movement, to regulate and replicate its emotions through the ordered rhythm of steps. Dance, in its absence of an external end, in its exultation in its own patterned movement, lays the groundwork for poetic meter. Meter allows syllables to resound for their own sake. It intervenes on meaning, takes words out of their original context and provides a counter-principle to their arrangement according to sense: their arrangement according to sound. It is in this complex intertwinement of sense and sound, of thought pulling the verse forward and feeling, sustained by meter, pulling the line back into itself, that each syllable is "veredelt,"[38] in its double role as bearer of meaning and integral part of a self-enclosed whole.

The *Prosodie* is, as it were, the practical side of Moritz's aesthetics. It renders his aesthetic theory applicable to versification. A brief look at Moritz's theoretical texts on aesthetics make the connection to his *Prosodie* readily apparent. In a 1785 essay Moritz describes beauty in much the same way in which he describes the backwards pull of metered speech: "Bei der Betrachtung des Schönen aber wälze ich den Zweck aus mir in den Gegenstand selbst zurück

[35] Ibid., 29-30 italics in original.
[36] "Bewegung um ihrer selbst willen, ein zweckentbundener Tanz um die eigene Mitte, die durch den ausgrenzenden Kreis gegen das zweckhaft Prosaische abgeschirmt wird, das ist nach Moritz das Wesen des Verses." Schrimpf, "Vers ist tanzhafte Rede," 400.
[37] Moritz, *Versuch einer deutschen Prosodie,* 34.
[38] Ibid., 41.

[…]."[39] Beauty raises its object out of the nexus of functionality that makes up everyday life. One does not use the artwork as a tool, for the artwork is only beautiful, only truly art, insofar as its purpose has been driven back into itself, that is to say, only insofar as the artwork's purpose is its own inner perfection, the harmony of its parts that build a self-referential whole, the contemplation of which raises one out of one's egotistical perspective and affords a glimpse of a totality in miniature, a totality that takes as its model that one true totality – nature – whose wholeness is, in our finitude, withheld from us. Moritz elaborates on this metaphysical view of art in his main aesthetic treatise, "Über die bildende Nachahmung des Schönen," written in Rome in close consultation with Goethe. Following Goethe's own paraphrase of Moritz's treatise:

> Der Zusammenhang der ganzen Natur würde für uns das höchste Schöne sein, wenn wir ihn einen Augenblick umfassen könnte.
>
> Jedes schöne Ganze der Kunst ist im kleinen ein Abdruck des höchsten Schönen, im Ganzen der Natur.[40]

If "Über die bildende Nachahmung des Schönen" sets its sights on the individual creator, on the genius whose *Tatkraft* intuits the totality of the world that the cognitive faculties are incapable of grasping, the *Versuch einer deutschen Prosodie* has as its focal point the artwork itself in its inner lawfulness. The elaboration of a *German* prosody is an effort to ground German poetry in its own self-determination, in the unfolding of an aesthetic order immanent to the German language itself. To compose poetry according to the external model of Greco-Roman prosody would be just that kind of bad *Nachahmung*, or *Nachäffung*, that Moritz rejects at the outset of his major aesthetic treatise. Antiquity still remains the reference point for Moritz, yet the relation

[39] Moritz, "Versuch einer Vereinigung aller schönen Künste und Wissenschaften unter dem Begriff *des in sich selbst Vollendenten*," *Werke*, ed. Heide Hollmer and Albert Meier, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1997) 2:943.
[40] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/15.2:907.

to this reference point has changed. German poetry should not seek to imitate, but rather to strive on its own terms to achieve the beauty of antique verse. *Nachahmung* as striving for the ideal: this is the principle that serves as the starting point for Moritz's main work on aesthetics. Imitation is here understood not as the application of an external canon of rules to the production of an artwork but as the bringing forth out of oneself and one's own time an artwork that strives in its internal harmony to achieve a beauty homologous to that of the ancients. Goethe's choice of blank verse for his *Iphigenie* drama testifies to this new understanding of *Nachahmung*. It is in choosing a distinctly modern verse form instead of attempting to imitate the iambic trimeter of ancient tragedy that Goethe could strive for a rhythmic force comparable to that which he found in Sophocles. This shift in the conception of *Nachahmung* goes hand in hand with a new understanding of verse and the generative act of versification as the intervention into the contingent flow of speech by means of prosodic principles which, by subordinating the communicative function of language to the harmonious arrangement of syllables according to norms immanent to the German language, bend speech back on itself and forms a self-referential circularity. Thus for Moritz versification is a process of aesthetic isolation in which a potentially infinite series of sentences are proscribed a metrical limit and thereby achieve a formal totality that concentrates within itself the otherwise ungraspable whole of nature.[41] In my reading of

[41] David Wellbery captures this conception of the art work's self-reference and formal closure in his commentary on Moritz's influence on Goethe's understanding of form as elabortated in the latter's sonnet "Mächtiges Überraschen": the sonnet "greift poetische Figurationen jener Prozesshaftigkeit auf, die Moritz als die Gewinnung eines vermittelten Bezugs zum Ganzen der Natur in der formalen Schließung des Werks theoretisch erfasst. Goethes Sonett lässt das ins Unendliche ausgreifende Streben, das sich mit dem Ozean verbinden will, in die Einfassung einer begrenzten ästhetischen Form einmünden. Diese formale Schließung polt die Fremdreferenz auf Selbstreferenz um; die ursprünglich nach außen gerichteten Energien werden in die interne Zirkulation der Werkeinheit eingeschleust. Das Ergebnis ist eine doppelte Spiegelung, deren Medium der 'Wellenschlag' des Verfußes selbst ist." Wellbery, Form und Idee. Skizze eines Begriffgsfeldes um 1800" in *Morphologie und Moderne. Goethes "anschauliches Denken" in den Geistes- und Kulturwissenschaften seit 1800*, eds. Jonas

Iphigenie, I will argue that the formal closure and integrity of the verse line play a central role in the drama's engagement with questions of autonomy and moral integrity, with enclosures and exits.

Stoking the Flame: Goethe's Versification of Iphigenie auf Tauris

In the same entry from the *Italienische Reise* in which he discusses the influence of Moritz's theory of prosody on his decision to versify his *Iphigenie* drama, Goethe also writes of the effect that a reading of the newly versified version had on his circle of friends in Rome. The painter Wilhelm Tischbein, Goethe reports, offered a metaphor for this new verse style. This metaphor provides striking insight into the effects of the versification.

> Da ich oben von einer Vorlesung sprach, so muß ich doch auch, wie es damit zugegangen, kürzlich erwähnen. Diese jungen Männer, an jene früheren, heftigen, vordringenden Arbeiten gewöhnt, erwarteten etwas Berlichingisches und könnte sich in den ruhigen Gang nicht gleich finden; doch verfehlten die edlen und reinen Stellen nicht ihre Wirkung. Tischbein, dem auch dies fast gänzliche Entäußerung der Leidenschaft kaum zu Sinne wollte, brachte ein artiges Gleichnis oder Symbol zum Vorschein. Er verglich es einem Opfer, dessen Rauch, von einem sanften Luftdruck niedergehalten, an der Erde hinzieht, indessen die Flamme freier nach der Höhe zu gewinnen sucht. Er zeichnete dies sehr hübsch und bedeutend. Das Blättchen lege ich bei.[42]

The drawing that accompanied the letter has been lost. One can only wonder if the metaphor is Goethe's own. In any case, its inclusion in the *Italienische Reise* suggests that it gets at something essential about the stylistic effect of the verse drama. While his friends had expected poetic prose in the style of his youthful *Götz von Berlichingen,* they received instead a work of muted composure. Yet stylistic restraint implies not an emotional numbing but rather a

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Maatsch (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014) 17-42; 32. Goethe's sonnet, with its emphasis on the activities of *hemmen*, *begrenzen*, and, most strikingly, *zurückdeichen*, draws heavily from the same semantic field as Moritz's *Prosodie*.

[42] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/15.1: 168-169.

concentration of dramatic energy. Following the metaphor, the gentle pressure that the verse version exerts on its own emotional core stokes the drama's flame. This sense of passionate yet self-possessed reserve results from the versification. Meter, to borrow from Tischbein's metaphor, serves as the poem's "Luftdruck." Goethe handled the blank verse line with unparalleled exactitude. As opposed to Lessing's frequent effacement of the verse-line with prose-like interjections, Goethe accentuates the integrity of each line with his more rigorous adherence to the metrical schema.[43] Yet the rule-abiding character of Goethe's blank verse is not synonymous with rigidity. His blank verse is exacting but not inflexible; his use of enjambment creates a cascading effect that works against an all too isolated line. For Goethe, the reform of blank verse did not imply the return to the couplet-like correspondence between verse-end and sentence-end that early practioners of the meter favored as a bulwark against the open borders of rhymeless verse. Rather, the measured pacing of the poetic *periodus*, imbued with a rhythmic gravitas, elevated the sentence out of the nebulous contingency of prose. Goethe characterized the first two acts of the now lost prose version of what was to be his second verse drama, *Torquato Tasso*, as possessing "etwas Weichliches, Nebelhaftes, welches sich bald verlor, als ich nach neueren Ansichten die Form vorwaltend und den Rhythmus eintreten ließ."[44] A similar effect can be observed in the transition of *Iphigenie* from prose to verse. This can be brought out

[43] Empirical studies have shown that Goethe's blank verse was the most rule-abiding among his contemporaries. Analyzing blank verse rule-violations of the sort (— ⏑) for (⏑ —), that is, of placing a trochee in a position that calls for an iamb, David Chisholm has shown that out of a sample of blank verse dramas, Goethe's use of the meter is considerably more regular than that of his contemporaries Schiller, Kleist, and Grillparzer, with only Hebbel, writing well after Goethe's death, composing a more rigorous blank verse. See David Chisholm, "Prosodische Aspekte des Blankversdramas. Eine Untersuchung zu sechs Dramen von Goethe, Schiller, Kleist, Grillparzer und Hebbel" in *Literaturwissenschaft und empirische Methoden*, eds. Helmut Kreuzer and Reinhold Viehoff (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981) 142-159.
[44] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/15.1:243.

by considering one passage of the play in both its prose and verse version.[45] The passage is taken from Act I, Scene 3, which constitutes an extended recognition scene in which Iphigenie retells the history of the House of Atreus before revealing her own identity to Thoas.

> IPHIG. Ein Haus erzeuget nicht gleich den Halbgott noch das Ungeheuer, eine Reihe von Edlen oder Bösen bringt zuletzt die Freude oder das Entsetzen der Welt hervor; Atreus und Tyest beherrschten nach ihres Vaters Tod gemeinschaftlich das Reich. Nicht lange so entehrt Tyest des Bruders Bett, und Atreus der tückisch lange schon einen Sohn des Bruders entwandt, und für den seinen auferzogen hatte, schickt diesen Sohn, sein Name war Plistenes, daß er dem Atreus nach dem Leben stehe, und seinen eigenen Vater in Geheim ermordern sollte. Es wird entdeckt, und Atreus tötet den Gesandten Mörder, wähnend er tötete seines Bruders Sohn. zu spät erfährt er, wem er umgebracht, und an dem Bruder sich zu rächen, sinnt er still auf unerhörte Taten.[46]

> Wohl dem, der seiner Väter gern gedenkt,
> Der froh von ihren Taten, ihrer Größe,
> Den Hörer dieser schönen Reihe sich
> Geschlossen sieht! Denn es erzeugt nicht gleich
> Ein Haus den Halbgott noch das Ungeheuer;
> Erst eine Reihe Böser oder Guter
> Bringt endlich das Entsetzen, bringt die Freude
> Der Welt hervor. – Nach ihres Vaters Tode
> Gebieten Atreus und Thyest der Stadt,
> Gemeinsam-herrschend. Lange konnte nicht
> Die Eintracht dauern. Bald entehrt Thyest
> Des Bruders Bette. Rächend treibet Atreus
> Ihn aus dem Reiche. Tückisch hatte schon
> Thyest, auf schwere Taten sinnend, lange
> Dem Bruder einen Sohn entwandt und heimlich
> Ihn als den seinen schmeichelnd auferzogen.
> Dem füllet er die Brust mit Wut und Rache
> Und sendet ihn zur Königsstadt, daß er
> Im Oheim seinen eignen Vater morde.
> Des Jünglings Vorsatz wird entdeckt; der König
> Straft grausam den gesandten Mörder, wähnend
> Er töte seines Bruders Sohn. Zu spät
> Erfährt er, wer von seinen trunknen Augen
> Gemartert stirbt; und die Begier der Rache
> Aus seiner Brust zu tilgen, sinnt er still

[45] See Beth Bjorklund, "Goethe's 'Iphigenie' in Prose and Verse" *Style* 21, no. 3 (1987) 439-463 for a detailed account of the diverse syntactic, morphological, and prosodic devices that Goethe used to versify his drama.
[46] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/5:158.

Auf unerhörte Tat. […].[47]

Iphigenie's verse speech commences with a reflection that has no equivalent in the prose version. With the versification of the drama comes a more universalizing mode of expression, yet one that often works against epigrammatic brevity: Iphigenie's rumination on fathers extends across four lines, coming to an end in the middle of the line. This is followed by another universalizing reflection of five lines, again terminating in line-middle. The shift of the main pause from the end to the center of the line is a distinguishing feature of this passage. Caesurae accumulate. Philosophical expansiveness gives way to a concentration of expression as Iphigenie takes up the narration of her ancestral past. While the prose version, with its series of "und's," exhibits a certain syntactic under-determination – one can think here of the "etwas Weichliches, Nebelhaftes" that Goethe mentioned in regard to the prose draft of Tasso – the verse version possesses sharp, clearly defined contours. Rather than obscuring the verse line, the enjambment and caesurae have the effect of accentuating it as Iphigenie narrates with measured self-possession the cycle of violence and revenge that haunts her family. The effect of the versification here is, to borrow Leo Spitzer's guiding term in his seminal essay on Racine, one of "klassische Dämpfung."[48] Spitzer draws an analogy with the soft pedal on the piano to capture the muted tone and cool distance of Racine's verse. The universalizing opening to the verse version of this passage from *Iphigenie* exhibits all the way down to the use of the indefinite article the "*Entindividualisierung*" that Spitzer identifies as a hallmark of Racine's "klassische Dämpfung".[49] Iphigenie's evocation of "*ein* Haus" adds a profoundly impersonal touch at a moment when it is not a question of just any house but rather the House of Tantulus – alongside

[47] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/5:565.
[48] See Leo Spitzer, "Die klassische Dämpfung in Racines Stil" *Romanische Stil- und Literaturstudien*, vol. 1 (Marburg a. Lahn: Elwert, 1931) 135-270.
[49] Ibid., 137.

Oedipus *the* tragic family *par excellence*. When Spitzer describes the narration of events in Racine's dramas, he could be describing Iphigenie's narration of her ancestral past: "Das Werden ist ersetzt durch gewordene Situationen, die einzelnen Etappen des Geschehens durch aufreihbare Fakta; wir bekommen statt des Stroms der Geschichte eine Perlenkette von Einzelsituationen."[50] Iphigenie's terse, enjambed narration of her ancestral past presents her own predicament not as a lived present but as a foregone conclusion: fate as a *fait accompli*. Yet this sense of inexorability and universal validity affords Iphigenie a sovereign distance from the facts she narrates, as though she were a spectator of her own fate. The scene draws its intensity, its inner flame, precisely from Iphigenie's self-possessed narration of violence. Here it is worth turning once more to Tischebein's "artiges Gleichnis oder Symbol," which, in its emphasis on the stylistic pressure exerted on the passions, has much in common with Spiter's "klassische Dämpfung." The flame in question in Tischbein's metaphor is not just any flame, but a sacrificial flame. The image is that of a burnt offering. Few images could be more resonant in the context of Goethe's play. At the outset of the drama, Iphigenie, herself a (near) sacrificial victim at the hands of her father, occupies the role of Tauritan priestess who has suspended the Tauritian custom of sacrificing all foreigners who land on their island. The metaphor, then, suggests a link between the self-contained, subdued verse line and the thematics of sacrifice, between style and the sacred. I would like now to begin to elaborate the nature of this link by turning to a consideration of the opening scene of *Iphigenie auf Tauris*.

[50] Ibid., 222.

Iphigenie auf Tauris as Exit-Drama

"*Schauplatz: Hain vor Dianens Tempel*."[51] The play's single setting constitutes more than a reverent restoration of the (neo-)Aristotelian unity of dramatic space. Juliana Vogel has argued in her book on dramatic entrances that with Goethe's Weimar plays the French neo-classical stage, with its murky depths that hide uncontrollable tragic forces, gives way to an immersive natural environment turned towards life.[52] The fecundity of nature suggests creative possibilities for growth and renewal beyond the damnation of tragic fate. The garden setting in particular serves as a "generativer Grund"[53] in which the principle of *natura naturans* reigns. In Vogel's reading, *Iphigenie auf Tauris* constitutes a confrontation between the tragic fate of the House of Tantulus and the anti-tragic force of the self-generating, self-rejuvenating natural setting of Goethe's garden theater. Vogel understands Iphigenie's opening monologue as a transformation of Diana's temple into a "natürliche Umgebung" that places the play under the perspective not of tragic necessity but of "Veränderlichkeit."[54] I want to add another dimension to Vogel's account of Iphigenie's entrance and its reconstitution of the stage. The stage functions as a sacred space, and it is Iphigenie's entrance that accomplishes this act of sacralization. In stepping onto the stage, she declares the grove "heilig" and a "Heiligtum."[55] Insofar as the stage is a sacred space, it is for Iphigenie at once a sanctuary and a prison. A sanctuary because it affords her a place and a role apart in Tauritian society, holding at bay – at least until Thoas' marriage proposal – claims upon her personhood. The sacred grove preserves Iphigenie's moral purity and, in its very enclosure, represents her unshakable integrity. Yet at the same time the stage, as sacred,

[51] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/5:554.
[52] See Juliane Vogel, *Aus dem Grund. Auftrittsprotokolle zwischen Racine und Nietzsche*, (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2018).
[53] Ibid., 142.
[54] Ibid., 139.
[55] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/5:555.

embodies human beholdenness to the gods. *Hain vor Dianens Tempel*: the play takes place against the backdrop of the goddess to whom Iphigenie owes her life und to whom she now dedicates her life. Her protection is bought at the price of her autonomy. She exercises not her own will but rather serves "Ein hoher Wille, dem ich mich ergebe […]."[56] Thus the stage, in its sacrality, spatializes the very drama of autonomy, the drama of Iphigenie's struggle between her obedience to higher powers outside of her – Thoas, the gods – and her obedience to the voice of humanity within her. Juliana Vogel has brought out Iphigenie's ambivalent position within the nexus of tragedy and nature as it is conditioned by theatrical visibility: "Die Figur bewegte sich in einen doppelt konditionierten Raum hinein, dessen Schatten dem Leben und dem Tod, dem Schicksal und dem Zufall der natürlichen Gegebenheit gleichermaßen angehören."[57] To this can be added another conditioning factor: verse. Iphigenie's opening monologue serves as a rhythmic exposition of blank verse that establishes, to borrow a phrase from Herder, an "Area des Rhythmus,"[58] that is to say, a clearly delimited space of rhythmic variation. "Über sie [die Area S.F.] hinaus reicht nicht leicht das Ohr ohne Verwirrung; in ihr unterscheidet es jeden veränderten Tritt des Tanzes der Silben."[59] The fact that the play begins with a long monologue, rather than, as in *Nathan der Weise*, a dialogical exchange, is crucial to the establishment of its distinct rhythmic dynamic. The cascade of blank verse comes to a pause only with he structural caesura of the second *Auftritt*, the rhythmic unity of the verse thus corresponding to the structural unity of the first scene. A closer look at the opening lines of this monologue will bring out the relation between rhythm and Iphigenie's ambivalent relation to the sacred.

Heraus in eure Schatten, rege Wipfel

[56] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/5:555.
[57] Vogel, *Aus dem Grund*, 143.
[58] Herder, "Alcäus und Sappho. Von zwei Hauptgattungen der lyrischen Dichtkunst", *Werke*, vol. 4:138.
[59] Ibid., 4:138.

Des alten heilg'en dichtbelaubten Haines,
Wie in der Göttin stilles Heiligtum,
Tret' ich noch jetzt mit schauderndem Gefühl,
Als wenn ich sie zum erstenmal beträte,
Und es gewöhnt sich nicht mein Geist hierher.[60]

The heavy iambs and end-stopped lines of the opening monologue resolutely resist the pull of prose. They establish a stately, controlled rhythm that takes full stock of each syllable. In the spirit of Moritz's *Prosodie*, the rhythm of these lines assert an aesthetic autonomy, demanding that the speech be taken not solely as a message but as an aesthetic whole bounded by its own immanent laws of versification. If, as Juliane Vogel has argued, the dramatic *Auftritt* consists in the entrance into visibility of a finite figure against an infinite ground – ground understood here not merely as the scenic background or offstage but as the very condition of phenomenality that shapes the figures on the stage – then the rhythm of the verse itself must be considered to take part in this ground. The verse that Iphigenie speaks shapes her and her world as much as the tragic background of her familial past and the sacred grove that encloses her. Iphigenie's entrance onto the stage coincides with her entrance into verse. She does not first step onto the stage and stand there before beginning to speak; she narrates her own entrance. More specifically, her entrance and her exit: "Heraus in," implies a double movement, both outwards and inwards. The fact that the scene takes place "*vor Dianens Tempel*" suggests that she emerges from the temple itself, but she does so with the same feeling as though entering into "der Göttin stilles Heiligtum." The prose version is more explicit on this point. The grove *is* the sanctuary: "Heraus in eure Schatten, ewig rege Wipfel des heiligen Hains, hinein ins Heiligtum der Göttin, der ich diene, tret' ich mit immer neuen Schauer und meine Seele gewöhnt sich nicht hierher!"[61] Iphigenie's narration of her own entrance onto the stage creates a sacred loop. She steps out of

[60] Ibid., 1/5:555.
[61] Ibid., 1/5:151.

the temple only to step into the divine space of the grove. Yet the protective seclusion of the space contrasts with Iphigenie's sense of unease within it. Every entrance into the grove re-stages the first entrance, as though in her entrance into visibility she were condemned to repeat the loss of an original being-at-home in the world. The grove is at once the marker of her exile and a safe-haven within this exile. In its crepuscular duality, its hovering between inside and outside embodied in the doubled spatial focus of "Heraus in," the grove renders visible Iphigenie's ambivalent position within the sacred. Conceived in spatial terms, the Aristotelian *praxis* at the core of the play's *mythos* consists in the effort to leave the grove, that is, to exit the stage. *Iphigenie auf Tauris* as exit-drama: this encapsulates the relation of the play's dramatic structure to its plot. To leave the grove, to step outside the sacred that has heretofore been the sponsoring source of Iphigenie's existence, would constitute nothing less than the overcome of the very *mythos*, the violent history of the house of Tantulus, that holds her there. Having discussed the role that verse plays in constituting the stage as the rhythmically bounded sphere of the sacred, I want now to show through an analysis of the central recognition scenes in the third act what role it has in breaking it.

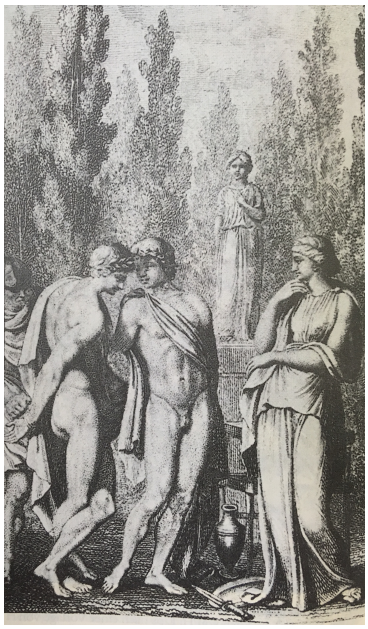

Figure 1: Titel page to Goethe's Schriften, vol. 3, printed in Leipzig in 1787 by Georg Joachim Göschen. Engraving by Johann Heinrich Lips.

The frontispiece to the third volume of the 1787 edition of *Goethe's Schriften*, in which the verse version of *Iphigenie auf Tauris* first appeared in print, consists of an etching by Johann Heinrich Lips. The etching depicts Orest and Pylades standing bound before Iphigenie. With their hands tied behind their backs, the scene provides the artist with the opportunity to openly portray the men's nude bodies in positions reminiscent of ancient Greek and Roman statuary. The statuesque grouping finds its compliment in the actual statue of Diana enclosed by trees in the background. The statue opens up a central space in which several objects are assembled like props on a stage: a table, an urn, and, in the extreme foreground, a knife. The knife is a curious addition – is it the instrument of human sacrifice, that custom suspended by Iphigenie in her role as Diana's priestess? Yet the context of the scene suggests another interpretation: the knife as the implement with which Iphigenie will cut the fetters of Orest and Pylades. The fact that this scene

served as the frontispiece for the first published edition of the verse drama underscores the significance Goethe ascribed to binding and unbinding as both metaphor and structural element of the drama. The frontispiece places *Iphigenie auf Tauris* under the Aristotelian problematic of *δέσις* and *λύσις*, of complication and denouement. The *Poetics* outlines the centrality of this dramatic pair for tragedy: "Every tragedy has both a complication [*δέσις*] and denouement [λύσις]: the complication comprises events outside the play, and often some of those within it; the remainder is the denouement. I define the complication as extending from the beginning to the furthest point before the transformation to prosperity or adversity; and the denouement as extending from the beginning of the transformation till the end."[62] The successful tragedian ties together multiple plot elements into a dramatically charged knot that, beginning with the moment of *peripeteia*, or reversal, unravels with an inexorable logic. Control is critical to the denouement. As Julian Vogel has shown, the tragic knot is a site of profound volatility. As a load-bearing structure, the knot is an "ebenso nützliche wie gefährliche Energiespeicher, die sowohl der Hemmung des Guten wie des Schlechten dienen."[63] The tying of the tragic knot, the drawing together of plot elements into a labyrinthine tangle, proves to be a perilous undertaking: "Die *desis* produziert eine Situation der Latenz, die die im Knoten eingelagerte Kraft in eine unbestimmte Gewalt zu verkehren droht. Als ein Ort der Hemmung, des Staus and der abgelenkten Kräfte birgt er die Gefahr eines ungeregelten gewalttätigen Ausbruchs."[64] The third act of *Iphigenie auf Tauris* stages just such a violent eruption. It begins with the unbinding of Orest:

> IPHIGENIE Unglücklicher, ich löse deine Bande
> Zum Zeichen eines schmerzlichern Geschicks

[62] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 91.
[63] Juliane Vogel, "Verstrickungskünste. Lösungskünste. Zur Geschichte des dramtischen Knotens" *Poetica* 40, no. 3/4 (2008) 269-288; 270.
[64] Ibid., 271.

Die Freiheit, die das Heiligtum gewährt,
Ist wie der letzte, lichte Lebensblick
Des schwer Erkrankten, Todesbote.[65]

Here *λύσις*, the dissolution of the tragic knot, proves premature. The unbinding of Orest, in Iphigenie's own understanding, is merely the sign of his still more painful bondage – his bondage to fate. As in the opening scene of the play, the sacred grove affords a temporary stay against the violence of fate, delineating an apotropaic space whose ambivalence is evoked by "der letzte, lichte, Lebensblick" that glimpses the light only against the background of impending darkness. Orest's unbinding unleashes the elementary forces of this background. In contrast to the French neo-classical *denouement*, with its controlled unraveling of a tightly wound dramatic *noued*, the *λύσις* here consists in an eruptive *Ungebundenheit*, an undboundedness that confronts Orest with his mythic past and threatens the metrical and ethical preconditions of the grove.

Orest's A-metricality

I want to describe this unboundedness at the prosodic level with the term "a-metricality." I designate those lines of verse as "a-metrical" that are not analyzable in terms of any pre-established metrical schema. Such lines are to be distinguished from the drama's lyric passages, of which the most famous is the "Parzenlied." The "Parzenlied" is a tightly wound lyric composition whose base metrical unit is the choriamb (— ∪ ∪ —), the building block of ancient aoelic verse. Such lyric passages form in Goethe's drama a modern counterpart to the choral passages of Greek tragedy. A-metrical lines, by contrast, do not conform to identifiable lyric meters any more than they conform to blank verse. Nor can they be described in terms of prose. While Shakespeare's dramas often intersperse prose passages within their blank verse

[65] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/5:582.

framework, in *Iphigenie auf Tauris* this is not the case. A-metrical lines are not direct negations of verse through prose but rather subversive interruptions within the order of metricality itself. They puncture the drama's "area of rhythm" and unbind its rigorously controlled blank verse. To draw on Tischbein's metaphor: moments of a-metricality remove the gentle pressure of the air that mutes the immediacy of emotion and tends the controlled striving of the flame upward, allowing the flame to spread outward in a violent conflagration.

With the exception of Thoas' final line, which I will turn to later, a-metricality is the prerogative of just one character: Orest. Orest's entrance onto the stage introduces a new rhythmic dynamic into the drama. Iphigenie's stately, self-possessed monologues find their counterpoint in Orest's jagged, agitated speech. At times, Iphigenie herself comes under the sway of Orest's beat, forced to fill in lines of verse that her brother's terse statements leave incomplete. But in several critical moments, his lines are left to stand in their incompletion, a-metrical tears in the fabric of the verse. Orest's a-metricality, his prosodic unboundedness, demands to be understood in relation to his characterization in the drama. Orest possesses a post-epic consciousness. He is haunted by a sense of epic epigonality, a sense that the age of heroes recounted in the Homeric epics has passed away and that he is living in the aftermath. Orest's first dramatic entrance accompanies a reflection on that aftermath. His opening line, "Es ist der Weg des Todes, den wir treten"[66] expresses more than that he and Pylades are in danger. It articulates the horizonless perspective of post-epic consciousness. For Orest, heroism in the aftermath of the Trojan War has become impossible. He renounces the hope for a "siegbekröntes Ende"[67] and gives himself over to the fantasy of self-sacrifice, the fantasy that in offering himself up as a sacrificial victim, his death could have the power to bring to an end the cycle of violence.

[66] Ibid., 1.5:571.
[67] Ibid., 1.5:571.

Orest has interiorized his own moment within mythic time. Iphigenie, by contrast, is out of sync with her time. Hers is a pre-epic consciousness. Her famous line "Das Land der Griechen mit der Seele suchend"[68] articulates the wish for the Greece of her childhood, before her (near) sacrifice at the hands of her father, the Greece before the Trojan war and all of its consequences, of which she yet knows nothing. It is only because Iphigenie harbors this pre-epic ideal in her soul that she can for so many years obediently serve Diana in exile in the hopes of one day returning home. Orest knows that Iphigenie's ideal is an illusion. He knows that the harmony of their youth is irreparably lost, knows the tragic consequences of their father Agamemnon's return home, tragic consequences in which he, Orest, has played a vital role. While Iphigenie stands within the protective sphere of the sacred, Orest stands outside of it and threatens it with his speech. Far from a mere mimesis of madness or melancholy – an imitation at the prosodic level of his agitated psychological state – Orest's a-metricality intervenes on the drama's semantic structure, furnishing a counter principle to Iphigenie's enclosure within the sacred.

The effects of Iphigenie's unbinding of Orest become evident with his first a-metrical outburst. Rather than isolate the lines in question, it is worth considering them within the broader context of the dramatic exchange in order to bring out the semantic stakes of the metrical break. The cited passage follows upon Orest's narration of Clytemnestra's murder.

> IPHIGENIE Unsterbliche, die ihr den reinen Tag
> Auf immer neuen Wolken selig lebet,
> Habt ihr nur darum mich so manches Jahr
> Von Menschen abgesondert, mich so nah
> Bei euch gehalten, mir die kindliche
> Beschäftigung, des heil'gen Feuers Glut
> Zu nähren, aufgetragen, meine Seele
> Der Flamme gleich in ew'ger, frommer Klarheit
> Zu euern Wohnungen hinaufgezogen,
> Daß ich nur meines Hauses Greuel später
> Und tiefer fühlen sollte? – Sage mir

[68] Ibid., 1.5.555.

Vom Unglücksel'gen! Sprich mir von Orest! –
OREST O könnte man von seinem Tode sprechen!
Wie gärend stieg aus der Erschlagnen Blut
Der Mutter Geist
Und ruft der Nacht uralten Töchtern zu:
»Laßt nicht den Muttermörder entfliehn!
Verfolgt den Verbrecher! Euch ist er geweiht!«
Sie horchen auf, es schaut ihr hohler Blick
Mit der Begier des Adlers um sich her.
Sie rühren sich in ihren schwarzen Höhlen,
Und aus den Winkeln schleichen ihre Gefährten,
Der Zweifel und die Reue, leis herbei.
Vor ihnen steigt ein Dampf vom Acheron;
In seinen Wolkenkreisen wälzet sich
Die ewige Betrachtung des Geschehnen
Verwirrend um des Schuld'gen Haupt umher.
Und sie, berechtigt zum Verderben, treten
Der gottbesäten Erde schönen Boden,
Von dem ein alter Fluch sie längst verbannte.
Den Flüchtigen verfolgt ihr schneller Fuß;
Sie geben nur, um neu zu schrecken, Rast.[69]

In response to the news of the death of her mother at the hands of her brother, Iphigenie directs an apostrophe to the gods. She turns towards the heavens in contemplation of the seemingly serene indifference of the divinities to the plight of her family. In an image reminiscent of Tischbein's metaphor for the stylistic effect of the drama, Iphigenie compares her soul to the sacrificial flame striving upwards to the heavens. Orest's speech counters the *klassische Dämpfung* of Iphigenie's lines. His vision likewise tracks an upward movement, yet it is not a striving towards the heavens but the surging to the surface of long-latent chthonic forces. The evocation of the murdered Clytemnestra leads to a break in the verse:

Wie gärend stieg aus der Erschlagnen Blut
Der Mutter Geist
Und ruft der Nacht uralten Töchtern zu: [….].

This radically truncated line does more than simply underscore the fact that Orest is plagued by guilt for his mother's death. It aligns metrical breaks with the elemental and the archaic, with

[69] Ibid., 1/5:585-86.

familial blood and the wrath of the furies. This is further illustrated by the direct speech uttered by the spirit of Clytemnestra:

⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ —
»Laßt nicht den Muttermörder entfliehn!
⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ —
Verfolgt den Verbrecher! Euch ist er geweiht!«

The mother's curse exceeds the civilizing force of blank verse and threatens Iphigenie's ideal of pious purity in the service of the divine. The Furies' direct speech constitutes a brief but intense departure from the drama's *klassische Dämpfung*, with its preference for distancing, third-person historical narrations and generalizing statements. The Furies' injunctions cannot be assimilated into the aesthetic paradigm of blank verse. In a perversion of Iphigenie's image of the blissful gods inhabiting the rarefied atmosphere of the clouds, Orest evokes the cloudy murk of the underworld and the steam of Acheron, intimating submergence in an undifferentiated realm of pre-history. This intimation will become explicit in Orest's mad scene, which I will consider further on.

The most dramatic moment of a-metricality follows shortly after Orest's evocation of his mother's spirit. In the first in a series of recognition scenes, Orest confesses his true identity to Iphigenie:

OREST Ich kann nicht leiden, daß du große Seele
Mit einem falschen Wort betrogen werdest.
Ein lügenhaft Gewebe knüpf ein Fremder
Dem Fremden, sinnreich und der List gewohnt,
Zur Falle vor die Füße; zwischen uns
Sei Wahrheit!
Ich bin Orest! und dieses schuld'ge Haupt
Senkt nach der Grube sich und sucht den Tod;
In jeglicher Gestalt sei er willkommen![70]

[70] Ibid., 1/5:586.

Dramatic λύσις and prosodic λύσις here intersect. Orest frames his truth telling as a rejection of the "lügenhaft Gewebe," a figure that recalls the net with which Clytemnestra ensnared Agamemnon in the first tragic installment of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. With his appeal to truth Orest' cuts through the knot of lies that until this moment has bound his family in a web of reciprocal violence. Yet the dramatic metrical break here does more than merely underscore the centrality of truth telling in the drama. Rather, it plays an active role in shaping that very conception of truth telling. Truth, in Orest's a-metrical phrasing, occupies the in-between. It serves as the pivot point between his rejection of lies and the revelation of his identity. This positioning of the phrase "sei Wahrheit" brings into view an *inter*-personal understanding of truth. Truth in Goethe's *Iphigenie auf Tauris* is more than a matter of stating some fact about the world. To tell the truth is to acknowledge the other's common humanity. To tell the truth is to interpellate the other as an ethical equal. Orest remarks that lies bind strangers together in a kind of tragic *δέσις*. They are strangers to each other not by coincidence but because lying makes them so. Lying posits the other as a stranger by refusing to allow the other into a shared space of knowing. Truth is interpersonally binding. Iphigenie demonstrates this in the Fifth Act when she refuses to lie to Thoas. By telling him the truth, she demands of him the highest humanity. For the truth she tells is not just any truth but a truth for which she is willing to live and die. This is truth *in extremis*, truth that reaches the limits of the ethical – in informing Thoas of their escape plot, Iphigenie jeopardizes not only her own life but the lives of Orest and Pylades as well. In telling the truth, she puts everything on the line.[71] And it is only such an act, such an "unerhörte[] Tat,"[72] that can make Orest's optative evocation of truth a reality. For it opens up the recognizant space in which

[71]As Arthur Henkel writes in regard to Iphigenie's famous "Stimme der Wahrheit und der Menschlichkeit": "Sie ist ein Wagnis, kein Besitz, nicht verfügbar." "Die 'verteufelt humane' Iphigenie" in *Goethe-Erfahrungen: Studien und Vorträge* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1982) 85-101; 99. Truth in Goethe's play is not a state of knowing, a possession; it is an act.
[72] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/5:610.

Thoas can meet Iphigenie's humanity with his own. Truth is the *zwischen* that makes *Zwischenmenschlichkeit* possible. Orest's "zwischen uns | sei Wahrheit" metrically marks the place of this in-between.

Yet Orest's a-metricality also challenges the universal medium that the drama establishes for this truth telling: blank verse. In Orest's phrasing, the very word "truth" falls outside the communicative paradigm of blank verse. Orest's syncopated speech constitutes a counterforce that threatens to displace the "area of rhythm" established by Iphigenie's opening monologue. This is evident from the second recognition scene, in which a-metricality marks the a-sychronicity of recognition. With Orest's "zwischen uns | Sei Wahrheit" he reveals his identity to Iphigenie, yet the recognition remains one-sided. Iphigenie now knows that the stranger is her brother, but Orest does not yet know that the Tauritian priestess is his sister. When Iphigenie in turn reveals her identity to Orest, the result is a deferral of recognition.

> IPHIGENIE Es zeigt sich dir im tiefsten Herzen an:
> Orest, ich bin's! sieh Iphigenien!
> Ich lebe!
> OREST Du!
> IPHIGENIE Mein Bruder!
> OREST Laß! Hinweg!
> Ich rate dir, berühre nicht die Locken!
> Wie von Kreusa's Brautkleid zündet sich
> Ein unauslöschlich Feuer von mir fort.
> Laß mich! Wie Herkules will ich Unwürd'ger
> Den Tod voll Schmach, in mich verschlossen, sterben.[73]

The rhetorical principle of *stichomythia* gives way to *antilabe*. The line "Ich lebe! | Du | Mein Bruder! | Laß! Hinweg!" still scans as blank verse, yet the series of exclamations, broken up into "minimal antiphonal units,"[74] to borrow a phrase from T.S. Eliot, hardly allows the sense of a verse line to come through. The line stands outside the metrical order of the drama. Like Orest's

[73] Ibid., 1/5:589.
[74] T. S. Eliot, "Seneca in Elizabethean Translation" in *Selected Essays 1917-1932* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc, 1960) 73.

other a-metrical moments, this episode evokes forces that break the bonds of blank verse. The break here corresponds to a resurgence of Orest's post-epic consciousness. He places himself in the position of Hercules, the antique hero *par excellence*, yet the myth he evokes is a tragic one: the hero's ignominious death by the Tunic of Nessus, the poisoned shirt that, once donned by Hercules, binds to him and burns through his skin. The poisoned bridal dress of Creusa, Jason's lover, likewise evokes the motif of binding. Medea, scorned by Jason, sends Creusa a bridal dress that when worn catches fire and immolates her. Orest succumbs to the fantasy of a second λύσις, a re-binding that would be so tight as to destroy him and in doing so would make him the sacrificial victim who would put an end to his family's suffering. Orest's post-epic consciousness cannot bear the weight of recognition, but must defer it in a moment of metrical imbalance. At this moment in the drama, Iphigenie's revelation of her identity constitutes for Orest the threat that he will implicate his sister in his tragic fate. To this threat he can only respond with *noli me tangere*. Only after his *katabasis*, his imaginary descent into the underworld, will Orest achieve an equilibrium of recognition.

The Rhythm of Homecoming: Orest's Mad-Scene

In his seminal 1967 essay "Zum Klassizismus von Goethes Iphigenie," Adorno proves particularly sensitive to moments of stylistic rupture like those that I have been tracing out here. Adorno draws attention to passages in which the distancing, aristocratic style of the drama slides into a conversational, bourgeois tone. For Adorno, such slippages are what distinguish Goethe's classicism from mere antique drapery. Adorno maintains that the *principium stilisationis* of *Iphigenie* consists in the objectivizing distance of its language, yet this is not to be confused with a statuesque smoothness removed from the ravages of time. In Adorno's reading, the language of

Iphigenie bares the wounds inflicted upon it in the process of its own stylization, wounds that refuse to be smoothed over: "in seiner Brüchigkeit bewährt sich der Goethesche Klassizismus als richtiges Bewußtsein, als Chiffre des Unschlichtbaren, das zu schlichten seine Idee ist."[75] If, as the conventional reading goes, *Humanität* is the *Inhalt* of Goethe's drama, then its *Gehalt* is the antinomy between humanity and barbarism, for Adorno sees in Goethe's drama a civilization at odds with itself, a civilization that must suppress with violence the violence at its mythic core. This reading positions itself again the *idée reçue* of Goethe's classicism as summed up in his recourse to ancient poetics: "Will man von Goethes Klassizismus mehr verstehen, als daß er die Aristotelischen Einheiten restaurierte und der Jamben – welcher ungeheuren Jamben! – sich bediente, so wird man davon auszugehen haben, daß die Zivilisation, aus der Dichtung nicht ausbrechen kann und die sie doch durchbrechen will, in der Dichtung thematisch wird."[76] The preceding analysis has shown that Goethe's *Zivilizationsdrama* has, in fact, much to do with its "ungeheure[] Jamben." Orest's entrance under the sign of a metrical undboundendness threatens Iphigenie's enclosure within the sacred and calls into question her reverent obedience to the gods. His a-metrical eruptions point to the far side of the sacred grove, the beyond of entanglement in mythic violence. Adorno is thus correct to understand Orest as embodying an anti-mythological stance, a stance that grasps the gods not as independently existing entities but as projections of neuroses.[77] Yet Orest's post-epic consciousness, his sense of his own lateness, results not in a new entrepreneurial spirit of calculating intelligence and deceit. This is the position of Ulysses, to whom Orest compares Pylades. Orest, rather, faces up to myth, faces up to the knot of guilt that entangles his family. It is this direct confrontation with myth that also

[75] Theodor W. Adorno, "Zum Klassizismus von Goethes Iphigenie" in *Noten Zur Literatur* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974) 502.
[76] Ibid., 499.
[77] See Ibid., 511.

makes him the most susceptible to myth, as when he identifies himself with the dying Hercules and imagines that his death would be the sacrifice to end the cycle of violence. In Adorno's words, Orest's 'Verhältnis zum Mythos ist nicht das zugehörige antiker Heroen, sondern das einer erzwungenen Rückkunft, die dann in der Wahnsinnsszene Sprache wird."[78] Adorno singles out Orest's mad-scene as the "avancierteste[e] Stelle"[79] of the play. Orest's imagined descent into the underworld constitutes for Adorno the point at which the interplay of civilization and barbarism, of the supposedly civilized Greeks and their entrapment in the cyclical violence of myth, gives way to a fleeting vision of radical reconciliation on the far side of the dialectic of Enlightenment. Adorno intimates the importance of meter – or rather its abandonment – in this scene: "Hier wahrhaft läßt Goethe den Klassizismus so tief unter sich wie das Metron die Jamben, Reprise der freien Verse seiner Frühzeit."[80] The monolog constitutes the culmination of Orest's a-metricality. It begins, however, in blank verse:

> OREST *aus seiner Betäubung erwachend und sich aufrichtend:*
> Noch einen' reiche mir aus Lethes Fluten
> Den letzten kühlen Becher der Erquickung!
> Bald ist der Krampf des Lebens aus dem Busen
> Hinweggespült; bald fließet still mein Geist,
> Der Quelle des Vergessens hingegeben,
> Zu euch, ihr Schatten, in die ew'gen Nebel.
> Gefällig laßt in eurer Ruhe sich
> Den umgetriebnen Sohn der Erde laben! –
> Welch ein Gelispel hör ich in den Zweigen,
> Welch ein Geräusch aus jener Dämmrung säuseln? –
> Sie kommen schon, den neuen Gast zu sehn![81]

There is a poetological dimension to Orest's imagined descent. The shadows and fog evoke a realm of indeterminate forms, recalling the fogginess with which Goethe's associated the prose version of *Tasso*. If Iphigenie's entrance onto the stage enacts the emergence from an indefinite

[78] Ibid., 511-512.
[79] Ibid., 510.
[80] Ibid., 510.
[81] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/5:591.

ground into a clearly defined "area" of blank verse, Orest's descent seeks to return to this indefinite ground. The "Gelispel" in the branches evoke the "rege Wipfel" of the opening scene. Orest's descent conjures up the very conditions from which Iphigenie emerged. Here the focus lies on sonic phenomena: a "Geräusch," a "säuseln" announces the approach of the ancestors. Like "das sonderbare Rauschen und Rollen" that Goethe heard in Sophocles' iambic trimeter, Orest's descent portends an elemental experience of poetic rhythm. At the moment when Orest addresses his ancestors, he diverges from blank verse, his speech clustering into four-beat iambic phrases that cannot be assimilated into any identifiable lyric meter:

> Willkommen, Väter! euch grüßt Orest,
> Von euerm Stamme der letzte Mann;
> Was ihr gesät, hat er geerntet:
> Mit Fluch beladen stieg er herab.
> Doch leichter träget sich hier jede Bürde:
> Nehmt ihn, o nehmt ihn in euern Kreis! –
> Dich, Atreus, ehr ich, auch dich, Thyesten:
> Wir sind hier alle der Feindschaft los. –[82] (III. 1281-1288)

If, as I have argued, *Iphigenie auf Tauris* is an exit-drama, a drama of the departure from the sacred grove and the overcoming of the conditions that hold the titular protagonist in it, then this scene is the determinate negation of its dramatic frame, a scene not of departure but of arrival, Orest's *nostos* on the far side of blank verse. The gesture of greeting takes on a salvific dimension – greeting serves here as the *salut* of reconciliation, the interpellation of the other into a shared space of non-violent familial belonging. Orest's greeting overturns its earthly significance for the House of Tantulus:

> Auf Erden war in unserm Hause
> Der Gruß des Mordes gewisse Losung,
> Und das Geschlecht des alten Tantalus
> Hat seine Freuden jenseits der Nacht.

[82] Ibid., 1/5:591

Agamemnon's own *νόστος* spelled out his death: Clytemnestra greeted him with a dagger. Murder was the λύσις, the solution that only tied tighter the knot of the intergenerational curse, the curse that the ancestors carry with them into the underworld. For they are unable to be reconciled even in death. They turn away from Orest's salvific greeting:

> Ihr scheint zu zaudern, euch wegzuwenden?
> Was ist es? Leidet der Göttergleiche?
> Weh mir! es haben die Übermächt'gen
> Der Heldenbrust grausame Qualen
> Mit ehrnen Ketten fest aufgeschmiedet.[83]

Salvation is ultimately not to be found "jenseits der Nacht" in a realm of subterreanean transcendence. Yet even after the ancestor's rejection, even after the realization that Tantulus still suffers beyond the grave, Orest persists:

> DRITTER AUFTRITT
> *Orest. Iphigenie. Pylades.*
> OREST Seid ihr auch schon herabgekommen?
> Wohl Schwester dir! Noch fehlt Elektra:
> Ein güt'ger Gott send' uns die Eine
> Mit sanften Pfeilen auch schnell herab.
> Dich, armer Freund, muß ich bedauern!
> Komm mit! Komm mit! Zu Pluto's Thron,
> Als neue Gäste den Wirt zu grüßen.[84]

Orest's a-metricality continues beyond the structural caesura of the dramatic entrance. At this point his vision becomes delusion, no longer the inspired image of redemption but the fantasy of his family joining him in death. The alignment of a-metricality with a position outside of the closed sphere of the sacred, a position counter to myth, here regresses into myth. It is only after the reinstating of blank verse by Iphigenie and Pylades that Orest's speech conforms once more to the drama's communicative paradigm.

[83] Ibid., 1/5:592-593.
[84] Ibid., 1/5:593.

The Rupture of Departure

Far from being the unperturbed medium for the transmission of Enlightenment ideals, the verse of *Iphigenie auf Tauris* takes part in the tension between myth and civilization, between the sacred and human freedom, between tragedy and it's overcoming. This goes against Hans Robert Jauß's influential reading of the play in the wake of Adorno's path-breaking essay. Jauß insists on Goethe's "harmonisierende[r] Klassizismus"[85] in contradistinction to Racine's classical style: "Der Unterschied vom klassizistischen Stil Racines zu dem Goethes tritt erst vor allem dort hervor, wo Racines 'Iphigénie' die geläuterte Form der Sprache und die 'élégance de l'expression' in einer Spannung zur barocken Gewalt des Inhalts stehen, während bei Goethe der vollendet harmonischen Form auch eine harmonische Klassizität des seelischen Inhalts entspricht."[86] For Jauß, the language of Goethe's Iphigenie functions "wie ein idealisierender Filter"[87] that cleanses the drama of its latent violence. Jauß's conception of the drama's forced harmony rests on his understanding of the role of myth in the play. While Adorno reads *Iphigenie auf Tauris* as the drama of a civilization struggling with its own repressed mythic violence, Jauß argues that the drama ultimately effaces that violence through the production of another myth, namely the myth "des reinen, erlösenden Weiblichen."[88] In Jauß's account, Goethe's solution to the problem of tragic entanglement in myth lies in Iphigenie's deification as a figure of feminine purity, a feminine purity that alone has the power to cure Orest. This replacement of one myth with another is, Jauß conjectures, the source of much of the play's reception as a timeless classic of Enlightenment-humanistic values, and it is the task of a *Rezeptionsgeschichte* to expose the drama's original fault lines smoothed over in the course of its

[85] Hans Robert Jauß, "Racines und Goethes Iphigenie," in *Rezeptionsästhetik: Theorie und Praxis*, ed. Rainer Warning (München: W.Fink, 1975) 353-400; 379.
[86] Ibid., 378.
[87] Ibid., 379.
[88] Ibid., 374.

interpretation. "Soll Goethes 'Iphigenie' nicht weiter zum 'Spiel der Vergangenheit' (Walser) absinken, so müßte die harmonische Klassizität preisgegeben und in das Drama hereingeholt, mithin die geschlossene Form der Klassik aufgesprengt werden, um den Ausgang wieder offen und das zeitlose Thema weiterspielbar zu machen"[89] And further: "Wenn Goethes 'Iphigenie' nicht nur von unserer vergangenen Sache, sondern auch wieder zu uns sprechen soll, muß der Schein ihrer klassischen Vollendung aufgebrochen und sichtbar gemacht werden […]."[90] The brutality of Jauß's language here – "aufgesprengt," "aufgebrochen" – suggests that a retroactive violence must be inflicted on a text that has for too long concealed its own violence. The artwork's claims to aesthetic autonomy must be exploded in order to reactualize the pressing societal questions that its patina of timelessness has effaced. But such compensatory violence is not necessary. My analysis has shown that the presumed harmony of Goethe's classical style need not be broken open because it is already open to its own dissonances.

Dissonances that endure through the drama's end. Dissonances that can be heard even in its last lines. The final scene serves as a pendant to Orest's mad scene: not an arrival but a departure, not a greeting but a leave-taking, not the fantasy of otherworldly recognition but the reality of this-worldly negotiation. Adorno sensed in this scene the perpetuation of an injustice: Thoas, the "barbarian" king, abandoned at the hands of the supposedly civilized Greeks. "Das Gefühl einer Ungerechtigkeit, die darum dem Schauspiel zum Schaden gereicht, weil es objektiv, der Idee nach beansprucht, mit Humanität realisiere sich Gerechtigkeit, rührt daher, daß Thoas, der Barbar, mehr gibt als die Griechen, die ihm, mit Einverständnis der Dichtung, human

[89] Ibid., 377.
[90] Ibid., 379.

überlegen sich dünken."[91] Yet Goethe figures the relation between Thoas and the Greeks not in terms of exchange, of net loss and gain, but in terms of recognition:

> IPHIGENIE Denk an dein Wort, und laß durch diese Rede
> Aus einem graden, treuen Munde dich
> Bewegen! Sieh' uns an! Du hast nicht oft
> Zu solcher edeln Tat Gelegenheit.
> Versagen kannst du's nicht; gewähr' es bald![92]

Iphigenie reminds Thoas of the promise he made earlier in the play: "Wenn du nach Hause Rückkehr hoffen kannst, | So sprech' ich dich von aller Fordrung los."[93] Yet keeping this promise is not a matter of a mere legalistic bond. Iphigenie insists on the pragmatics of the promise. With her imperative "Sieh' uns an!" she appeals not to a debt owed but to recognition reciprocated. To keep his promise to Iphigenie is to respond to Iphigenie's noble deed, her truth telling, with a noble deed of his own. Were Iphigenie alone capable of such a deed, recognition would remain one-sided, Thoas would remain excluded from the sphere of civilization, unable to live up to the claim made upon his own humanity. Yet it is not merely a matter of Iphigenie, the civilized Greek, benevolently bestowing upon Thoas, the Barbarian, the opportunity to partake in her own privileged existential status. Thoas, in keeping his promise, refuses to treat Iphigenie as an object, acknowledging her humanity in turn. Like Iphigenie's confession, Thoas' fulfillment of his promise is an act of honesty *in extremis*. He renounces his wish to marry Iphigenie, a wish born not out of personal desire alone but also out of a concern for the fate of his kingdom, out of the need for a progenitor of his lineage. Thus neither Iphigenie nor Thoas occupy positions of superiority. Rather, they put everything into each other's hands, relying not on an a-symmetrical relation of mastery and servitude but on their recognition of the other as equal and their being recognized by the other as equal in turn. "Civilization" in *Iphigenie auf Tauris* is not an *a priori*

[91] Adorno, "Zum Klassizismus von Goethes Iphigenie", 508-509.
[92] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/5:618.
[93] Ibid., 1/5:563.

status inherent to one or the other parties but rather an achievement of this structure of second order recognition: recognizing oneself being recognized by the other.

The last passages of the play, however, dispute the extent to which reconciliation has been achieved. Thoas seems to grant permission for the Greeks' departure less out of the spirit of mutual recognition then out of the spirit of begrudging concession:

> THOAS; So geht!
> IPHIGENIE Nicht so, mein König! Ohne Segen,
> In Widerwillen scheid ich nicht von dir.
> Verbann uns nicht! Ein freundlich Gastrecht walte
> Von dir zu uns: so sind wir nicht auf ewig
> Getrennt und abgeschieden. Wert und teuer,
> Wie mir mein Vater war, so bist du's mir,
> Und dieser Eindruck bleibt in meiner Seele.[94]

The conditions for the Greeks' departure have been secured. Orest, with his hermeneutic *coup*, his re-interpretation of the oracle as demanding the return of Iphigenie rather than the cult-statue, has relinquished all claims on the Tauritians' sacred possessions. Thoas, with his terse "So geht!" has relinquished all claims on the Greeks. Yet there is still the matter of leave taking. How to say goodbye? Goethe recognized the difficulty of departure, the threat of a psychic scission in the act of separation. Reflecting on his own imminent departure from Rome, he wrote, "In jeder großen Trennung liegt ein Keim von Wahnsinn, man muß sich hüten, ihn nachdenklich auszubrüten und zu pflegen."[95] How, then, to avoid the brooding melancholy of departure? How not to replicate the madness that Orest has just surmounted? Iphigenie's answer lies in a speech act: the blessing. Thoas' blessing, a human blessing, borne out of the spirit of mutual recognition, would replace the gods' curse on the family of Tantulus. The final lines focus on such a blessing:

> [IPHIGENIE] Leb wohl! O wende dich zu uns und gib
> Ein holdes Wort des Abschieds mir zurück!
> Dann schwellt der Wind die Segel sanfter an,

[94] Ibid., 1/5:618-619.
[95] Ibid., 1/15.1:596.

Und Tränen fließen lindernder vom Auge
Des Scheidenden. Leb wohl! und reiche mir
Zum Pfand der alten Freundschaft deine Rechte.
THOAS Lebt wohl![96]

Iphigenie insists again on recognition, on the face-to-face encounter, on Thoas' turning toward them. Such is the pragmatic condition for a "holdes Wort des Abschieds," a word that would have a therapeutic influence, making the wind blow more gently and tears flow more soothingly, thereby counteracting the deleterious effects of departure against which Goethe warned when reflecting on his own departure from Rome. Is this the word that Thoas gives? Much depends on the staging here: Does Thoas turn to face them? Does he meet Iphigenie's hand with his own? Does he voice his "Lebt wohl!" with bitterness and resignation or with whole-hearted approval? Yet beyond these dramaturgical decisions there lies the prosodic incompletion of the last line. Instead of a line-clinching maxim, of which there are so many in this drama, a lapidary "Lebt wohl!" The prosodic isolation of the phrase places a semantic weight on it out of proportion with its small stature. Far from a conventional gesture of leave-taking, "Lebt wohl" resonates with an affirmation of existence, a farewell that is not, as in tragedy, a farewell to life but a reassertion of life. Yet there still remains the matter of parting. In a drama so concerned with departure, with leaving the sacred grove, the site of Iphigenie's shadow existence, there is no exit. Put in Aristotelian terms, there is no mimesis of the action of exiting. For ultimately the exit is not to be found on the level of mimesis but on the level of prosody. Thoas' last line leaves blank verse behind. It steps outside the "area of rhythm" established by Iphigenie's opening monologue. With no blank verse to follow it, it cannot be reintegrating into any prosodic order. It is Thoas himself who opens up the rhythmically bounded sphere of the sacred and departs

[96] Ibid., 1/5:619.

Chapter 3: Meter as Metempsychosis: On the Afterlife of the Ode

Just so an ancient Crispin was dissolved.
The valet in the tempest was annulled.
Bordeaux to Yucatan, Havana next,
And then to Carolina. Simple jaunt.
Crispin, merest minuscule in the gales,
Dejected his manner to the turbulence.
The salt hung on his spirit like a frost,
The dead brine melted in him like a dew
Of winter, until nothing of himself
Remained, except some starker, barer self.
- Wallace Stevens, *The Comedian as the Letter C*

Lyric Theory and the Ode

In a 1795 essay Herder calls lyric poetry the "Kunst unsangbare Gesänge"[1] (*HW*, 8,117), thereby characterizing the genre in terms of its own loss, its silence that figures forth the absence of song. Herder's characterization encapsulates a long-standing view of lyric poetry. In the entry on "Lyric" from the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Virginia Jackson notes that the term emerged in the Alexandrian period when philologists collected and grouped together Greek songs once sung in performance. Thus "lyric", etymologically related to the Greek *lyre*, "was from its inception a term used to describe a music that could no longer be heard, an idea of poetry characterized by a lost collective experience."[2] Even before the Alexandrian period, lyric seemed to suffer from a philosophical neglect; Aristotle's *Poetics* does not treat the genre. The theoretical indeterminacy of lyric in antiquity has made the very idea of lyric an object of contestation up to today. Recent scholarship in Anglo-American poetry and poetics has argued that "lyric" is a critical construct that emerged in nineteenth century poetry and was codified in

[1] Herder, "Die Lyra. Von der Natur und Wirkung der lyrischen Dichtkunst," *Werke*, 8:117.
[2] Virginia Jackson, "Lyric" in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, 826.

twentieth century literary theory. This position is most prominently represented by the "lyricization" hypothesis put forward by Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins. The hypothesis states that the literary theory of the twentieth century, drawing on the nineteenth century idealization of poetry as the sounding forth of the subjectivity of the solitary individual, gradually collapsed the immense diversity and richness of poetic genres – "riddles, papyrae, epigrams, songs, sonnets, *blasons*, *Lieder*, elegies, dialogues, conceits, ballads, hymns and odes […][3] – and their myriad mediums of transmission – "scrolls, manuscript books, song cycles, miscellanies, broadsides, hornbooks, libretti, quartos, chapbooks, recitation manuals, annuals, gift books, newspapers, anthologies […]"[4] – into one ahistorical, abstract, and immaterial super-genre: the lyric. "Lyricization" affects not only the way we categorize poems but also the way we read them. Lyric reading approaches poems as contextless, self-sufficient wholes, timeless addresses of a lyric "I" to no one in particular. In opposition to the overarching category of lyric, Jackson and Prins argue for a "historical poetics" that attends to the "repeated readings that compose the poem's reception, each an act of recognition"[5] and seeks to uncover historical reading practices, conceptions of prosody, and modes of transmission that undergird such acts of reception as recognition. As the editors of a special volume of the *Modern Language Quarterly* on "Historical Poetics" write, conceived in more ambitious terms, this approach constitutes a "prolegomenon to a metapoetics capable of interpreting culture outside the damage wrought by lyric reading."[6] Rather than taking lyric as a timeless given, an organic essence, a fundamental mode of human expression, or an elementary structure of thought, historical poetics reflects on the aesthetic

[3] Jackson, *Dickinson's Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 2005) 7.
[4] Ibid., 8.
[5] Prins, "'What Is Historical Poetics?'" *Modern Language Quarterly* 77, no. 1 (March 2016): 13-40;15.
[6] Joshua V. Adams, Joel Calahan, and Michael Hansen, "Reading Historical Poetics," *Modern Language Quarterly* 77, no.1 (March 2016): 1-11; 6.

ideologies behind such claims for the naturalness of the category "lyric" in order to dissolve the poem's patina of lyric timelessness and position it within the history of its own contested readings and re-readings.[7]

This historicist approach raises questions about the individual poem's place within broader categories and traditions. Is the history of non-epic and -dramatic poetry nothing more than the history of a miscellany of individual poems, each with its own reception, its own embeddedness within an interpretive community, its own set of presumptions about poetry, about prosody, about reading, writing, and singing, all of which cannot be placed within a broader, trans-historical category without effacing the poem's historical specificity and projecting on to it an alien critical construct? If there are such things as subgenres or minor forms – the epistle, aubade, epithalamion, villanelle, hymn, etc. – what are they subgenres of? What "major" form encompasses these "minor" forms? Jonathan Culler has emerged as the most prominent proponent of the lyric as an enduring genre. "If literature is more than a succession of individual works," Culler writes, "it is at the level of genre that it has a history: the modifications of genres, the rise of new genres, and the eclipse of the old."[8] For Culler, positing lyric as a trans-historical category does not efface historical difference but rather provides the background against which its individuality becomes intelligible. As Culler points out, poets construct for themselves lyric traditions that reach far outside their own historical moment. But the fashioning of a lyric tradition is not merely a question of the individual poet's self-stylization. It depends on the persistence of poetic forms and their bi-directional mobility. As Culler writes, "a striking feature of the history of literary forms is that, unlike social and political history, it is reversible. We

[7] For a judicious assessment of "The New Lyric Theory" pioneered by Jackson and Prins, see Stephen Burt's review of their critical anthology *The Lyric Theory Reader* in "What is This Thing Called Lyric?" *Modern Philology* 113, no. 3 (February 2016): 422-440.
[8] Jonathan Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017) 89.

cannot return to earlier sociopolitical configurations, but poets can revive old forms, exploiting possibilities that have lain dormant for a while."[9] Culler's claim about the reversibility of the history of literary forms should be qualified. The German poets around 1800 felt all too acutely the impossibility of "going back" to an earlier moment in poetry, of reversing the history of poetry even within literary form – the difference between German and Greco-Roman prosody prevented the seamless fit between the German language and ancient verse forms. Yet Culler's point is that the persistence of possibilities in poetic forms – a persistence that manifests itself not as an unbroken chain of tradition but as the periodic eruption of latent expressive forces due to the historical pressures of a specific time and place – demands a more capacious and comparative conception of the lyric. If "Historical Poetics" constitutes a "prolegomenon to a metapoetics capable of interpreting culture outside the damage wrought by lyric reading," then Culler's theory of the lyric constitutes a metapoetics capable of interpreting culture outside the narrow confines of its historical moment.

The eighteenth century ode offers a case study in lyric theory. From the Greek *ἀείδειν*, "to sing," "to chant," the term "ode" carries with it connotations of orality, ritual, and the universality of song. At the same time, poets writing in the German language cultivated highly individualized, historically indexed ode strophes oriented towards ancient Greek and Roman models, in particular the odes of Pindar and Horace. Thus the ode in its theory and practice brought forth a tension between its universality and its particularity, between its trans-historical continuity and its historical specificity. To cite but one example: Johann George Sulzer's entry on the ode in his *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*, a standard reference work in the late 18th century. In the first paragraph he writes in reference to the ode, "Von der Eiche bis zum

[9] Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, 4.

Rosenstrauch sind kaum so viel Gattungen von Bäumen, als Arten dieses Gedichts […]."[10] The ode, then, is marked by plurality. It proliferates into various subspecies that would require a veritable aesthetic taxonomy to categorize.[11] In the following paragraph, however, Sulzer claims that a remarkable consensus reigns in regard to the ode: "Nur darin kommen alle Kunstrichter mit einander überein, daß die Oden die höchste Dichtungsart ausmachen; daß sie das Eingenthümliche des Gedichts in einem höhern Grad zeigen und mehr Gedicht sind, als irgend eine andere Gattung."[12] The ode, then, represents the very condensation of the poetic. It has "mehr poetisches an sich"[13] than any other genre. The ode may come in many different shapes and sizes, but for Sulzer – and here he is line with much of eighteenth-century thinking on the ode – its universal characteristic is its expressivity. The ode distinguishes itself through the intensity of its expression. The order of the ode is not the order of understanding; the ode follows the "Gesezen der Einbildungskraft und der Empfindung."[14] The subject matter of the ode is for Sulzer secondary. The odic poet transfigures his subject matter, whatever it may be, through the excitation of his phantasy. Sulzer's treatment of the ode concentrates the tension in eighteenth-century thinking on the genre that makes it a prime case study in lyric theory: on the one hand, the almost unmanageably vast variety of odes with their singular historical preconditions, their

[10] Sulzer, "Ode" *in Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1771-1774) 2:830.
[11] Sulzer divides the ode into three subcategories: the ode can be either "betrachtend," "phantasiereich," or "empfindugsvoll." See Sulzer, "Ode", *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*, 2:834. In another influential reference work, Johann Joachim Eschenburg's 1783 *Entwurf einer Theorie und Literatur und schönen Wissenschaft*, the author likewise divides the ode into three categories: "Hymnen," "heroische Oden," and "philosophische oder Lehr=Oden." See Eschenburg *Entwurf einer Theorie und Literatur und schönen Wissenschaft* (Berlin; Stettin: Nicolai, 1783) 106-119. This tendency to approach the ode in terms of an aesthetic taxonomy continues into the twentieth century. In his 1923 *Geschichte der deutschen Ode*, Karl Viëtor makes this into the organizational principle of his book. See Viëtor, *Geschichte der deutschen Ode*, (München: Drei Masken Verlag, 1923) 5.
[12] Sulzer, "Ode" in *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*, 2:830.
[13] Ibid., 2:830.
[14] Ibid., 2:831.

individual prosodic demands and modes of transmission. On the other hand, the persistence of the expressive potential of the genre, the sense of continuity, the poet's own claims to be part of a tradition extending back millennia.

This tension between the historicity and the universality of the ode reaches a new stage in German thought with Herder's writing on the subject. Herder's work testifies to an intensive engagement with the genre that spans his entire intellectual career, from his early fragments for a treatise on the ode dating from 1764-1765, to his late *Briefe über das Lesen des Horaz, an einen jungen Freund* from 1803. Herder's preoccupation with the ode intersects with his interest in metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls, an idea that experienced a brief renaissance in Weimar intellectual life around 1800.[15] I will argue that for Herder, the doctrine of metempsychosis served as a model for thinking through the continuity of the ode based not on imitation but on the expressive potential of the ode strophe itself. Following Lessing's evocation of metempsychosis at the end of his *Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts*, Herder appeals to metempsychosis as a means for overcoming the rigid gap between the persistence of the ode across cultures and its historical differences, differences that are so vast as to call into questions adequacy of the category "ode" to encompass all of them. For Herder, the doctrine of

[15] Apart from specialized studies on Herder and Lessing, the role of the doctrine of metempsychosis in the intellectual currents animating the German-speaking lands at the turn of the nineteenth century has until recently been relatively neglected. Helmut Zandler's authoritative study *Geschichte der Seelenwanderung in Europa: alternative religiöse Traditionen von der Antike bis Heute* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1999) gives a comprehensive overview of the doctrine in its European context that helps situate individual thinkers on this topic within a larger intellectual framework. For a useful overview on positions towards reincarnation among thinkers of the *Goethezeit*, see Ernst Benz, "Die Reinkarnationslehre in Dichtung und Philosophie der deutschen Klassik und Romantik" *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 9, no 2 (1957): 150-175. The role of metempsychosis in literature and the arts is the subject of a recent volume edited by Martin Hense and Jutta Müller-Tamm, *Poetik der Seelenwanderung*, (Freiburg i. Br.: Rombach Verlag, 2014). Further scholarship on the topic will be cited in reference to individual authors.

metempsychosis articulates the persistence of human expressivity in ever-new manifestations. This expressivity is located not at the level of the individual ego but at the level of cultural forms, in the case of the ode, at the level of the strophe. In this chapter, I want to tease out the link between poetics and the strange fascination with metempsychosis in the work of Lessing, Herder, and Schiller. Against the backdrop of this theoretical debate, I will then turn to the greatest practioners of the ode in the German language, Friedrich Hölderlin, whose engagement with the doctrine of metempsychosis has been largely overlooked. Through a reading of his single completed Sapphic ode, "Unter den Alpen gesungen," I will consider how Hölderlin's handling of the unique expressivity of the Sapphic strophe engages questions concerning the historicity and continuity of poetic genres that lie at the heart of debates about the "lyric" today.

Metempsychosis across Cultures

At the outset of the first of Herder's 1785 dialogues entitled *Über die Seelenwanderung*, Theages finds his friend Charikles in a kind of laboratory of ideas full of books devoted to a peculiar "Hypothese." Charikles says, "Sie kommen mir recht erwünscht, Theages und werden sich wundern, daß sie mich in einer so gelehrten Werkstäte antreffen." Theages replies, "Welche Bücher! Griechisch, Latein, Englisch, gar Ebräisch; und wovon handeln sie alle? … Von der Seelenwanderung. Darüber läßt sich nun freylich viel sprechen und schreiben."[16] This opening exchange gestures towards the profound diversity and vast accumulation of thought on the topic of metempsychosis. Herder's dialogues bear this out. The conversation ranges from Pythagoras to Wieland, from Hindu religion to the *Kabbalah*. One can hardly speak, then, of *the*

[16] Johann Gottfried Herder, "Über die Seelenwanderung" in *Zerstreute Blätter. Erste Sammlung* (Gotha: Ettinger, 1785) 217. This opening is strangely missing from the Deutscher Klassiker Verlag edition of Herder's work.

"hypothesis" or *the* "doctrine" of metempsychosis, but rather of multiple strands of thought, some intersecting, some conflicting, and some running parallel to each other. From this web of ideas I will draw out one strand that leads to the intense interest in ideas of reincarnation that occupied the circle of Weimar intellectuals around 1800. This strand takes shape around Lessing, whose appeal to the possibility of reincarnation in his speculative masterpiece dating from 1780, *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts*, not only stimulated debates on the nature of the afterlife, but also had a profound impact on the particular shape that the doctrine of metempsychosis would take in the minds of the pioneering poets and poetry critics at the turn of the nineteenth century. Before turning to Lessing, however, several terminological clarifications are in order. The diverse traditions of thought on reincarnation bring with them a diverse vocabulary for describing the phenomenon. The two major terms in circulation are "metempsychosis" and "palingenesis." Metempsychosis refers to the immortal soul's transmigration after death and incarnation in a new body. Palingenesis refers to a spiritual regeneration or renewal.[17] More technically, palingenesis denotes the rebirth of a body-soul unity. However, in the German-speaking discourse around 1800, these terms are not strictly differentiated. The German *Seelenwanderung* can be used as a translation for either term. In the following, I will generally stick to the term used in the text under consideration.

[17] Cf. Matt. 19:28: "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration [ἐν τῇ παλινγενεσίᾳ] when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Lessing's Thought Experiment

"Ist nicht die ganze Ewigkeit mein?"[18] Lessing concludes his elusive philosophical treatise *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* with the provocative possibility, formulated as a question, of the personal possession of eternity in the form of a *Seelenwanderung*, the immortal soul's reincarnation in a new body. The appeal to metempsychosis at the end of *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* should not be equated with Lessing's personal *Weltanschauung*. Earlier scholarship on *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* focused largely on the possible sources for Lessing's notion of reincarnation and the extent to which Lessing himself believed in such a phenomenon.[19] More recent studies of Lessing's late text have shifted the focus of inquiry to the linguistic craft of the text, a craft that calls into question the possibility of getting to the bottom of Lessing's sources and his personal approval or disapproval of them. This attention to the poetic dimension of the texts opens up a path to understanding the reception of the doctrine of metempsychosis in German-language poetry and poetics after Lessing. As has often been noted, Lessing's presentation of the idea of reincarnation towards the end of the one hundred numbered paragraphs that make up *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* comes with a dramatic shift from the sober, indicative tone that characterizes the bulk of the treatise to the ecstatically interrogative tone of the final paragraphs. Indeed, the "Hypothese"[20] of reincarnation occurs exlusively in interrogative form. The first intimation of the hypothesis occurs in §90:

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[18] Lessing, *Werke* und Briefe, 10:90.

[19] Dilthey was one of the first scholars to recognize the importance of the doctrine of metempsychosis for Lessing's thought. See Wilhelm Dilthey, *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung: Lessing, Goethe, Novalis, Hölderlin*, 8th ed. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1922) 165-172. For an informative consideration of some of Lessing's possible sources, see Alexander Altman, "Lessings Glaube an die Seelenwanderung" *Lessing Yearbook* 8 (1976): 7-41. Altman emphasizes the influence of Leibniz and the theodicy problem on Lessing's hypothesis of a process of human moral perfection across multiple lives as an alternative to eternal punishment for the moral failures of a single, contingent human life.

[20] Lessing, *Werke und Briefe*, 10:98.

> Der Schwärmer tut oft sehr richtige Blicke in die Zukunft: aber er kann diese Zukunft nur nicht erwarten. Er wünscht diese Zukunft beschleunigt; und wünscht, daß sie durch ihn beschleuniget werde. Wozu sich die Natur Jahrtausende Zeit nimmt, soll in dem Augenblicke seines Daseins reifen. Denn was hat er davon, wenn das, was er für das Bessere erkennt, nicht noch bei seinen Lebzeiten das Bessere wird? Kömmt er wieder? Glaubt er wieder zu kommen? – Sonderbar, daß diese Schwärmerei allein unter den Schwärmern nicht mehr Mode werden will![21]

Lessing suggests that the problem of the "Schwärmer" is her *lack* of a metempsychotic perspective. *Schwärmerei* – that favorite word among Enlightenment thinkers for free-floating speculation beyond the limits of human reason – consists not in espousing fanciful ideals but in vainly wishing to will into existence that which requires the *longue durée* development of human reason to transpire. Thus, in a turn of the screw, Lessing suggests that the "Schwärmer," in the impatience of his inspiration, has not gone far enough, has not thought her speculations through to their logical conclusion. Instead of dwelling in her unhappy consciousness, forever preoccupied with the wish of rendering immediately present a state of human moral perfection that by its very nature exceeds the length of a human life, the "Schwärmer," Lessing suggests, should consider the possibility, far more plausible in the face of the enormity of the task, that such perfection is only to be achieved in the course of multiple lives. Lessing's introduction – or, more appropriately, *intimation* – of the possibility of reincarnation in §90 makes manifest the difficulty of determining whether or not he is arguing for the reality of metempsychosis. Alongside the interrogative mood of the final paragraphs, scholars attentive to the literary craft and pragmatic functioning of the text have focused on the Augustinian motto to the *Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* – "Haec omnia inde esse in quibusdam vera, unde in quibusdam falsa sunt" 'All of these things are in one sense true, in another sense false' – and the "Vorbericht des Herausgebers" in which the publisher (Lessing) imagines the author (Lessing) standing on a hill at sunset, gazing out into the distance, from whence he brings a "Fingerzeig" of things half-

[21] Ibid., 10:97.

seen.[22] The accumulation of citations, questions, exclamations, and paratextual addenda results in the bracketing of the question of the metaphysical actuality of metempsychosis. That is to say, the rhetorical density of the text suspends the incredulity the reader might feel towards the idea of reincarnation. The distance Lessing places between his auctorial voice and the hypothesis of metempsychosis renders the question of the author's espousal of the doctrine unanswerable and underscores the innately speculative, subjunctive quality of any metaphysical claim. Yet the layers of poetic mediation serve not as a disavowal of the heterodox belief in reincarnation in the face of orthodox religious authority, nor in dissolution of that belief into the hermeneutic undecidability of linguistic free-play. Rather, the anti-dogmatic, self-reflexive language of the text allows the doctrine of metempsychosis to be taken seriously by relieving the reader of the pressure to confirm or deny the veracity of metempsychosis and thereby freeing him to ask what the doctrine allows to be thought that would otherwise remain unthinkable. The presentation of the doctrine of metempsychosis thus takes the form of a thought experiment,[23] and to ask whether the thought corresponds to a real phenomenon would be to miss the experimental character of that thought. For Lessing, the idea of reincarnation allowed him to think an alternative to static eternity. More specifically, his thought experiment concerned the doctrine of eternal punishment, a doctrine scandalous in the eyes of many Enlightenment thinkers. How could eternal damnation be compatible with the idea of a just, compassionate, merciful god?

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[22] Ibid., 10:75. See Ingrid Strohschneider-Kohrs *Vernunft als Weisheit: Studien zum späten Lessing* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1991) 218-237 for a reading of the introduction attentive to its subtle rhetoric. In their commentary to the *Erziehung des Meschengeschlechts* Arno Schilson and Axel Schmitt likewise stress the importance of the "Vorbericht" as a hermeneutic key to the text. See Lessing, *Werke und Briefe* 10:851-864.

[23] For further considerations of *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* as "thought experiment" see Manfred Beetz, "Lessings vernünftigen Palingenesie" in *Aufklärung und Esoterik. Rezeption – Integration – Konfrontation*, ed. Monika Neugebauer-Wölk (Tübingen: Max Niemayer Verlag, 2008) 131-148 and H. B. Nisbet, "The Hybrid Discourse of Lessing's *Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts*" *Publications of the English Goethe Society* 80 no. 2-3 (2011): 69-77.

Lessing counters this question with the question of metempsychosis: what if our moral betterment does not come to an end with one life? What if we had multiple lives over which to develop the use of our reason? The doctrine of metempsychosis would give a new direction to human reason. Rather than drawing motivation for moral action from the fear of eternal damnation, it would reorient reason towards the intergenerational project of the moral betterment of humankind, a project reflected in and dependent upon each and every individual's striving for moral perfection. A metempsychotic perspective thus lends humankind deeper, nobler "Bewegungsgründe"[24] than the extra-moral calculations of eternal rewards or punishments, thereby opening up a vision of the future as progressive rather than static. Thus Lessing's thought experiment aims at nothing less than the possibility of an intrinsically moral grounding to human behavior, of doing the good for the sake of the good.

Lessing's specific intellectual itinerary need not occupy us further here. There are two points concerning Lessing's conceptualization of metempsychosis in his "thought experiment" that should be noted. First, Lessing conceives of metempsychosis not as circular but as progressive, not as the eternal reoccurrence of the same but as the gradual refinement of the past. Thus metempsychosis exhibits a future-oriented temporal structure that nonetheless builds on, rather than breaks with, past-stages of human moral development. Second, Lessing introduces the idea of reincarnation not in the name of a metaphysical beyond but in the name of moral betterment in this world. For Lessing, metempsychosis articulates the immanent unfolding of reason through the course of human history. These two aspects of metempsychosis – its progressivity and its immanence – lay the foundation for Herder's treatment of the topic.

Herder: "*Paligenisiert euch selbst"*

[24] Lessing, *Werke und Briefe*, 10:96.

In 1797 Herder responded critically to Lessing's metempsychosis hypothesis in his own series of numbered paragraphs under the title "Palingenesie. Vom Widerkommen menschlicher Seelen." The point of departure for Herder's critique is §95 of *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts*, in which Lessing asks in regard to metempsychosis, "Ist diese Hypothese darum so lächerlich, weil sie die älteste ist? weil der menschliche Verstand, ehe ihn die Sophisterei der Schule zertreut und geschwächt hatte, sogleich darauf verfiel?"[25] For Herder, the doctrine's antiquity does not constitute proof of its sanity; far from being healthy speculation unburdened by millennia of dogma, the idea of reincarnation is, in his reckoning, a "*Wahn sinnlicher Menschen*."[26] Herder grounds Lessing's thought experiment in the anthropological exigencies of early societies. A particular people's account of the afterlife is not, in the first instance, a theological system of unprejudiced philosophical speculation, but rather the projection of existing cultural conditions into the beyond. Herder reasons that it is only natural that, for instance, a society dependent on hunting would come to feel a deep sympathy with animals and therefore be led to envision their own souls taking animal form in the afterlife. In this short text Herder carries out a miniature genealogy of metempsychosis. He traces the cultural values embedded in various beliefs in the afterlife back to the extra-moral demands of factical existence. His genealogical approach calls into question the progressivity that Lessing finds in the doctrine of metempsychosis. Herder characterizes the transmigration of souls as a "*Büßungshypothese*"[27] that irrationally condemns one to an animal existence on account of transgressions committed in a past life and offers no hope of moral improvement. This seems to be a willful misunderstanding of Lessing's use of the hypothesis, which, as we have seen, was directed *against* the doctrine of eternal punishment. Yet Herder's larger point is that even

[25] Ibid., 10:98.
[26] Herder, *Werke* 8:259 italics in original.
[27] Ibid., 8:265 italics in original.

Lessing's more sophisticated hypothesis overestimates the progress made in the moral education of humankind. It may be the case, Herder concedes, that we have made great advancements in the sciences and arts, but has humankind's "*Charakter*", its "innere Kraft, Würde und Glückseligkeit"[28] really improved? In every age there are men and women who do good for the sake of the good, while most need the "*Furcht und Hoffnung*"[29] of otherworldly recompense to motivate their moral behavior. Unlike Lessing's vision of a coming age of moral perfection, Herder insists that the fear and hope of an afterlife will never entirely give way to behavior guided by the intrinsic moral worth of actions. Thus Herder counters Lessing's utopian projection with the imperfect present. We cannot rely on the inevitability of the trans-generational progress of reason to guide humankind to moral perfection. The best we can do is to seek to better ourselves in the here and now: "In *diesem* Leben ist also den Menschen Palingenesie, Metempsychose unentbehrlich; oder sie ist überhaupt mißlich."[30] Herder insists on an even more radically immanent version of metempsychosis according to which one is reincarnated *within* this life. Reincarnation becomes a moral imperative, an act of the will: "*Palingenesiert euch selbst*."[31]

It may appear that Herder has so thoroughly denuded the doctrine of metempsychosis from any metaphysical claims that it now serves as little more than a self-help slogan promoting spiritual transformation, but this would be to misrecognize its broader function within Herder's *oeuvre*. Despite his skepticism towards Lessing's narrative of human progress, Herder grasped the importance of the doctrine for thinking through the impasses of human history. This is evident from an earlier text, "Über die menschliche Untsterblichkeit," which Herder initially

[28] Ibid., 8:272 italics in original.
[29] Ibid., 8:271 italics in original.
[30] Ibid., 8:268 italics in original.
[31] Ibid., 8:267 italics in original.

presented as lecture to a small circle of Weimar friends and patrons on 4 November 1791. Herder's guiding question in this speech is that of immortality: in which way(s) are we immortal? At the outset, he sets aside one model of immortality, namely the immortality of the soul. Such a model is "eine Blüte der Hoffnung, ein Same der Ahndung […]."[32] We have no experiential access to this kind of immortality; it cannot be an object of knowledge but only of anticipatory projection. The immediate bracketing of the question of the immortality of the soul testifies to the insistance with which Herder sought to think beyond Christian orthodoxy and grasp human history as the product of human labor and striving, not as a metaphysical drama guided by an otherworldly *telos*. This brings us to the second, and emphatically mundane, model of immortality that Herder considers, namely, "die *historische* und *dichterische*, oder die *Kunst-Unsterblichkeit*,"[33] in other words, fame. Herder's dissatisfaction with this model leads to the heart of the historical problematic for which metempsychosis serves as an answer. Fame has immortalized many poets and politicians of antiquity, but, Herder asks,

> Wie aber, wenn dies der einzige Weg zur Unsterblichkeit, oder die einzige Art einer ewigen Fortdauer wäre, wie wäre es mit uns bestellt? mit uns, die sodann ein paar Jahrtausende zu spät gekommen wären, um mit der Jugend der Welt ihre frischen Morgenkränze zu teilen. […] Die Tafel der Muse ist beschrieben, fast mehr beschrieben, als das Gedächtnis der Menschen davon fassen kann; was am Rande hinzugetan wird, können nur kleine Buchstaben sein, oft schwer zu lesen und von zweifelhafter Bedeutung. Der Mund der Fama hat seinen Kredit verloren; das Lob der Kunst, Dichtkunst, ja selbst der Geschichte hie und da nicht minder. Die Sprachen der Völker sind zerteilt, und wer kann sich eine Stimme geben, die von den Säulen Herkules bis zum Indus reiche? Das Feld der Geschichte, auch der Verdienste und Kenntnisse selbst, ist zu groß geworden; dagegen die Aufmerksamkeit der Menge in ihrem Innern geschwächt, die Teilnahme derselben an einem einzelnen Gegenstande, Geschäft oder Lande, dergestalt verwittert, daß es dem fremden Leser schon Mühe kostet, seinen engen Horizont nur zu erweitern, sich in eine fremde Not, in ein fremdes Verdienst, in einen fremden Charakter nur einzulassen und zu finden."[34]

[32] Ibid., 8:203.
[33] Ibid., 8:203 italics in original.
[34] Ibid., 8:206.

This passage testifies to the growing awareness of occupying a uniquely modern position, a position characterized by a medial excess and oversaturation that threatens to block transcultural and transgenerational communication and continuity.[35] In Herder's account, the historical impasse of the present lies in the inassimilability of an increasingly rapid and dispersed cultural production that overwhelms cultural memory and renders obsolete the model of immortality as posthumous fame. Herder's response to this situation is to propose an alternative model of immortality:

> *Unsterblich* nämlich *und allein unsterblich ist, was in der Natur und Bestimmung des Menschengeschlechts, in seiner fortgehenden Tätigkeit, im unverrückten Gange desselben zu seinem Ziel, der möglichstbesten Ausarbeitung seiner Form wesentlich liegt*; was also seiner Natur nach fortdauern, auch unterdrückt immer wiederkommen, und durch die forgesetzte, vermehrte Tätigkeit der Menschen immer mehr Umfang, Haltung und Würksamkeit erlangen muß: das *rein-Wahre, Gute und Schöne*.[36]

Herder's rethinking of immortality here is greatly indebted to Lessing's move to a metempsychotic perspective at the end of *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts*. Like Lessing, Herder envisions immortality not as a static state of personal salvation or damnation but as a communal, trans-generational development of that which is most noble in the human race, "das *rein-Wahre, Gute und Schöne*." The critical point of division between Lessing and Herder lies in what they each take to be the end of this development. While Lessing's chiliastic vision prophecies a coming era of moral perfection, Herder, who despite his grandiloquent rhetoric is much more skeptical about the prospect of definitive moral improvement, places the *telos* of humankind's "*fortgehende[] Tätigkeit*" in nothing other than the "*möglichstbeste[] Ausarbeitung*

[35] Martin Hense understands Herder's theory of metempsychosis as a "Kommunikationstechnik" that responds to the Babelian fragementation of an increasingly pluralized world. See Hense, "Seelenwanderungsvorstellung und Kommunikation um 1800" in *Poetik der Seelenwanderung*, 99-126; 100.
[36] Ibid., 8:207 italics in original.

seiner Form." What is immortal is not, first and foremost, a particular truth or set of values or cultural artifacts, but rather the eminently human activities of truth seeking, valuing, and making. Here language receives the pride of place as the "Form, in welcher wir denken, handeln und sind […]."[37] But it is not only language that undergoes metempsychosis: "Wir gewöhnen uns an des anderen Wort, Miene, Blick, Ausdruck so, daß wir solche unvermerkt an uns nehmen und auf andere fortpflanzen. Dies ist das unsichtbare, magische Band, das sogar Gebärden der Menschen verknüpft; eine ewige Mitteilung der Eigenschaften, eine Palingenesie und Metempsychose ehemals eigner, jetzt fremder, ehemals fremder, jetzt eigner Gedanken, Gemütsneigungen und Triebe."[38] Metempsychosis offers an alternative to immortality as the sheer accumulation of names in the archive of cultural memory. Herder appeals to the receptivity of the human spirit in its continuous exchange between the foreign and the familiar. This metempsychotic process is interpersonal by virtue of being impersonal, demanding "eine *Ablegung unseres Ich*, d. i. eine Entäußerung sein selbst und der Vorurteile, die an diesem Selbst haften."[39] Humankind's inheritance consists not in individual eccentricities but rather in universal laws of thinking, acting, and making. If Lessing's treatment of the doctrine of the transmigration of souls can be described in terms of *progressivity* and *immanence*, Herder's intervention into Lessing's treatment can be described in terms of *formality* and *impersonality*. Herder's anthropological perspective excludes a definitive end point to development of humankind and instead posits metempsychosis as an ideal, an infinitely approximable norm guiding cultural development. This norm conceives immortality not as personal fame but as the impersonal persistence of that which is most universal in humankind. The imperative "*Palingenesiert euch selbst*" could be rephrased as "Make yourselves universal!"

[37] Ibid., 8:207 italics in original.
[38] Ibid., 8:209.
[39] Ibid., 8:211 italics in original.

Poetry and the Spirits

Herder's conception of metempsychosis hovers between the rational and the occult. As a critical reader of Lessing, Herder radicalizes the progressivity and immanence of Lessing's model: metempsychosis becomes an infinite operation, not an eschatological one, and it takes place not over the course of multiple lives, but here and now, in *this* life, in a process of purification, a process of making oneself universal. At the same time, Herder's thought is driven by the conviction that the ground of our existence lies in our pre-rational, sensory experience of being, and this conviction guides his approach to metempsychosis as well. The occult aspect predominates in Herder's thinking on the relation of the transmigration of souls to language and to poetry in particular. For poetry, as Heinz Schlaffer claims, belongs to the realm of spirits.[40] Poetry speaks to the gods, to the ancestors, to the trees, to the absent beloved. Poetry speaks the language of spirits – incantatory, elusive, oracular. Poetry speaks in the patterns of the long departed, in the hexameters of Homer, in the rhyme schemes of early church hymns. Yet poetry is not some vague abracadabra. Poems, in their very spirituality, demand to be understood as, in Schlaffer's words, "zweckgerichtete Handlungen."[41] As addresses to spirits, as spirited address, poetry fulfills a plethora of functions. It praises, blesses, dedicates, welcomes – to name only a few of the functions that Schlaffer attributes to poetic invocation. "Den Anruf", Schlaffer writes, "trägt die Zuversicht, lyrisches Sprechen sei instrumentelles Handeln, vergleichbar dem Pflügen, Kämpfen, Heilen, verschieden nur in den Instrumenten."[42] Yet what modern poets believes in the instrumental action of a poem? What modern poet would claim that a poem will bring a good

[40] Seee Schlaffer, *Geistersprache*. *Zweck und Mittel der Lyrik* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2015).
[41] Ibid., 9.
[42] Ibid., 16-17.

harvest, or the protection of Aphrodite, or strength in battle? Modern poetry, it would seem, is far from such cultic, communal practices. Modern poetry, it would seem, is free, free from functionality, free to resound for its own sake, free to think philosophical thoughts, free to sound out the emotions of the lone poet. Yet poets still evoke absent or inanimate entities as though they were alive, ensouled, standing before them. Poets still use the language of oracles and prophets – dense, figurative, rhythmic, repetitious. Poets still used the rhyme schemes and metrical patterns that preceded them by a thousand years or more. "Das moderne Gedicht pocht darauf, autonomes Kunstwerk zu sein, und zehrt dennoch vom Erbe archaischer Funktionen."[43] The cultic context of poetry is gone, but its poetic resources remain. Schlaffer's conviction is that the resources of poetry cannot be understood without reckoning with their archaic function. It is a conviction that he shares with Herder, whose work on the ode probes at the origin of lyric poetry. In the ode, poetics and metempsychosis intersect.

The Sensation of the Ode

Among Herder's 1764-1765 sketches for a treatise on the ode is a fragment under the heading "Über die Metempsychosis der Ode in Ansehung der Empfindungen."[44] Herder's thinking remains underdeveloped in this fragment, but the consideration of the role that metempsychosis plays in Herder's later writing can shed light on what he may mean by a metempsychosis of the ode. Consider the first paragraph of the fragment:

> Wenn irgend eine Gedichtgattung ein Proteus unter den Nationen geworden ist: so hat die Ode nach der Empfindung, dem Gegenstande, und der Sprache, ihren Geist und Inhalt und Miene und Gang so verändert, daß vielleicht bloß der Zauberspiegel des Aesthetikers dasselbe Lebendige unter so verschiedenem Gestalten erkennet. Indessen gibts doch ein

[43] Ibid., 11.
[44] Herder, *Werke*, 1:79.

> gewisses allgemeines Eins der Empfindung, des Ausdrucks und der Harmonie, das eine Parallele zwischen ihnen allen möglich macht. –[45]

The reference to Proteus is suggestive. When, in Book IV of the *Odyssee*, Menaleus attempts to subdue Proteus, the "old man of the sea" undergoes a series of metamorphoses before returning to his original anthropomorphic state, the state in which Manaleus can finally seize and interrogate him. Proteus is thus not a figure of boundless, ungraspable self-transformation but rather of continuity amidst change. Throughout his metamorphoses he remains a god. Thus Proteus serves in Herder's fragment as the mythological instantiation of metempsychosis. He embodies "dasselbe Lebendige," the trans-historical substrate underlying and making possible historical transformation. The ode distinguishes itself through its affirmation of sensuous existence, its link to our pre-cognitive origins. In Herder's anthropological account, the ode is the earliest form of poetry. The ode, in its verbal leaps and digressions, its flights of fantasy, retains something of the immediacy of feeling that first led us to express ourselves, initially in the form of cries and gesticulations, then with speech. Herder conceives of the ode here in the broadest possible terms – the notes for his unwritten treatise indicate that he had in mind not only ancient Greek and Roman odes but also Hebrew, Arabic, and Celtic poetry, among other literary traditions. For Herder, the term *Empfindung* provides the guiding thread through this labyrinth of poetry. *Empfindung* must be understood here not in terms of the sensations or inner emotional life of the individual poet, but rather as the common emotional core of humanity. Just as in his essay on immortality Herder insists on the universalizing function of metempsychosis, so too in his early fragments on the ode metempsychosis reaches beyond the individual to articulate in a series of protean variations our experience of sensuous existence. Herder is well aware of the problem with positing *Empfindung* as the defining feature, the metempsychotic substrate, as it

[45] Ibid., 1:79.

were, of the ode. Insofar as the ode is a linguistic creation, it is already elongated from, even opposed to, the emotion that first provided the impulse for expression. "Empfindung und Worte sind sich so gar entgegen: der wahrhafte Affekt ist stumm, durchbraust unsre ganze Brust inwendig eingeschlossen. Sein erstes Wort, ist ein Begriff; er schwächt sich, wälzt zu klaren Begriffen, zum Selbstgefühl, zum Bewußtsein, zur Vernunft herunter; und die wird jetzt wortreich, sie sagt, was sie nicht mehr empfindet."[46] Yet Herder's insistence on conceiving of the ode in terms of *Empfindung* lies in his conviction that aesthetic experience comprises the spontaneous excitation of our senses, the stimulation of the irrational grounds of our being. "Irrational" does not imply here "senseless" but rather "sensual," "sensitive," "sensuous." For Herder, it is the *rational* that is literally *without sense*. For this reason Herder speaks out emphatically against imitation in his fragments on the ode. Imitation substitutes rules for experience. It disavows the authenticity of the artist's own national idiom for the artifice of a putatively universal canon that codifies artistic creation into wrote reproduction. This is the state in which Herder finds the German art of his time, with its orientation towards French neo-classicism and Baumgarten's rationalist aesthetics: "endlich haben wir Regeln, statt poetischer Empfindungen; wir borgen Reste aus den Alten und die Dichtkunst ist tot![47]

Herder's insistence on poetry's emotional core, its rootedness in the immediacy of human experience, suggests that questions of prosody would have little place in his poetics. His reputation as the advocate for a new generation of poets eager to cast off the shackles of foreign cultural influence in a turn towards their native German culture unsullied by over-civilized abstractions reinforces the impression that prosody, with its conventions and constraints, could only be a hindrance to Herder's aesthetic agenda. Yet his work testifies to a deep and enduring

[46] Ibid., 1:66.
[47] Ibid., 1:85.

engagement with the formal demands of verse. His writing on lyric poetry in particular undertakes an anthropological re-thinking of prosody that does not juxtapose meter and emotion but rather grasps the former as an expression of the later. In a 1795 essay on lyric poetry, "Die Lyra. Von der Natur und Wirkung der lyrischen Dichtkunst," Herder continues to pursue his thinking on the origin of language, considering in broad strokes the origin of linguistic accent and rhythm.

> Wie einst Interjektionen zu Worten wurden; so formen sich die Worte nach dem Akzent, dem Rhythmus, dem Intervall der Empfindung. Dieses Wort steigt, jenes sinkt. Dies tritt in mehreren starken Sylben einher; jenes verändert die Töne. Allem aber drücket der Charakter der Nation, ihr Klima, die Gegend, aus welcher sie kam, die Lebensart, zu der sie sich gewöhnte, die Stufe der Kultur, auf welcher sie steht, endlich das mächtige Gesetz des Gebrauchs und der Mode sein herrschendes Siegel auf.[48]

The *Empfindung* that Herder champions in his early fragments gives birth to rhythm, accent, the rise and fall of stressed syllables. For Herder, the particular spirit of a people resides in the para-semantic elements of poetry. The sensuous quality of the word, rather than its meaning, constitutes the primordial core of language. In the *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache*, the sonority of the word results in a veritable *Geistersprache*. In reference to the sounds, words, and stories we hear in childhood Herder writes, "Das Wort tönet, und wie eine Schar von Geistern stehen sie alle mit einmal in ihrer dunkeln Majestät aus dem Grabe der Seele auf: sie verdunkeln den reinen, hellen Begriff des Worts, der nur ohne sie gefaßt werden konnte – Das Wort ist weg und der Ton der Empfindung tönet."[49] The physiological effect of language consists in a kind of resurrection, an incantatory invocation of the impressions and sensations of childhood. The psychosomatic force of the word obscures its meaning. The sonority of language

[48] Ibid., 8:122.
[49] Herder, *Werke,* 1:707.

invites an occult experience of our own animal ancestry, the emotional charge of rhythm and accent recalling the primitive cries of suffering and joy.

Herder's inquiry into the origin of language offers an account of poetry's prehistory, but what can this account tell us about the ode as a verse form? What relation does the ode more narrowly conceived have with the origins of poetry as Herder understands it? Can the history of the ode as a poetic genre be anything other than a history of decline, an inexorable elongation from its sensuous source? What (after)life does the ode have outside its archaic origins? To address these questions it is worth turning to another 1795 essay by Herder, "Alcäus und Sappho. Von zwei Hauptgattungen der lyrischen Dichtunst," in which he deals with two highly individualized and prosodically complex forms of the ancient Greek ode. Herder is not interested in the Lesbian poets Alcaeus and Sappho as individuals –little is known about them outside of spurious anecdotes – but rather in the Alcaic and Sapphic ode strophes as two basal forms of lyric expressivity: "*Alcäus* und *Sappho*, der Lesbier und Lesbierin, können uns also für Urbilder der Ode in *ihren beiden Hauptgattungen*, der *kühnen* und *zarten* Ode gelten […]."[50] The Alcaic and Sapphic odes derive their unique modes of feeling from their strophic structure. The strophe, rather than the individual poet's personal experience, is the source of the ode's expressivity. Herder's enthusiastic description of the ode strophe brings this out:

> Aber die *lesbischen Gesänge Alcäus*, und *Sappho*, und ihrer Genossen bequemten sich ihrer, bequemen sich unserer Sprache. Jedes dieser Sylbenmaße ist mit einem *eigenen Charakter* bezeichnet; alle aber beeifern sich dahin, daß sie Stärke und Milde, Schwung und Senkung, Auf- und Abspannung der Töne angenehm mischen und damit der lyrischen Strophe gleichsam einen Kranz flechten. Daß z. B. keine Strophe der andern gleich ist, daß in jeder die Kadenz, der Abschnitt und Periodenbau wechselt, daß Strophe in Strophe angenehm hinüberläuft, und sich damit die einzelnen lyrischen Kränze selbt in einander winden, daß jede Gattung der Gegenstände und des Affekts ihr Metrum bis auf die Wahl und Stellung der Worte, im Maße der Bilder und Sylben, in Abschnitten und Ruhepunkten mit

[50] Ibid., 8:138 italics in original.

> einem eigenen Geiste belebet; diese und andre Schönheiten des Ausdrucks wird sich das feiner gebildete Ohr, bei diesen Sylbenmaßen selbst sagen.[51]

The ode strophe is no mere abstraction; it is music without words. *Empfindung* manifests itself in the very structure of the strophe, its intricate entwinements evoked by the winding *Periodus* of Herder's syntax. The odic strophes of Sappho and Alcaeus embody not the eccentricities of the individual poet but rather *Gedanken und Empfindungsweisen*[52] that bring to expression the *habitus* of a culture. This recalls Herder's formalist conception of metempsychosis: not the individual, but rather that which is most universal in him, most expressive of humankind, is the subject of metempsychosis. In his writings on lyric poetry from the 1790s Herder does not abandon his intuition about meter as a form of metempsychosis. Rather, in these writings meter comes to play the role of the metempsychotic medium. Far from an artificial constraint, meter manifests the rootedness of poetry in sensation and reflects its historically and culturally differentiated expressions.

The Untimeliness of the Poet

Herder's essays on the ode and *Empfindung* reaffirm lyric poetry as the primordial expression of embodied being in the world. This line of thought is taken up and transformed in what is perhaps the most important German-language text on poetics at the turn of the century, Schiller's 1795-1796 treatise *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*. Schiller likewise conceives of poetry in terms *of Empfindung* and *Empfindungsweisen*. However, it has not been noted that Schiller's conceptual approach proceeds from a line of questioning that is indebted to the idea of metempsychosis. Schiller's initial motivation for composing the essay – his attempt to

[51] Ibid., 8:141 italics in original.
[52] Ibid., 8:151.

grasp his own possibilities and proclivities as a poet in relation to Goethe – makes this conceptual debt explicit. Schiller had already encapsulated his understanding of Goethe's poetic genius in the often-cited letter of 24 August 1794, written on the occasion of poet's birthday. It is worth taking another look at this letter, for Schiller's description of Goethe takes us once more into the thematics of metempsychosis.

> Wären Sie als ein Grieche, ja nur als ein Italiener gebohren worden, und hätte schon von der Wiege an eine auserlesene Natur und eine idealisierende Kunst Sie umgeben, so wäre Ihr Weg unendliche verkürzt, vielleicht ganz überflüßig gemacht worden. Schon in die erste Anschauung der Dinge hätten Sie dann die Form des Nothwendigen aufgenommen, und mit Ihren ersten Erfahrungen hätte sich der große Styl in Ihnen entwickelt. Nun da Sie ein Deutscher gebohren sind, da Ihr griechischer Geist in diese nordische Schöpfung geworfen wurde, so blieb Ihnen keine andere Wahl, als entweder selbst zum nordischen Künstler zu werden, oder Ihrer Imagination das, was ihr die Wirklichkeit vorenthielt, durch Nachhülfe der Denkkraft zu ersetzten, und so gleichsam von innen heraus und auf einem rationale Wege ein Griechenland zu gebähren.[53]

Goethe, in Schiller's epistolary portrait, is an untimely figure, a Greek spirit reincarnated within a northern climate.[54] The untimeliness of Goethe's existence, the non-coincidence of his historical moment with his creative spirit, poses for Schiller a philosophical problem. How does one adapt the inner necessity of one's being to the contingencies of one's birth? Goethe can either become a northern artist, ceding to the coincidence of being *geworfen*, thrown into a northern climate as though it were his fate, or he can strive to overcome this coincidence by giving birth to Greece within himself. Such an act of labor means creating the conditions necessary for the reconciliation of self and society; it means overcoming the rift between reality and the Ideal, the acute awareness of which defines the sentimental poet. *Über naive und*

[53] Cited Schiller, *Werke und Briefe* 8:1442.

[54] Goethe, in turn, found in Winckelmann the same Greek spirit overcoming the coincidence of an untimely birth in an environment inimical to artistic flourishing that Schiller attributed to him, Goethe, in the birthday letter of 1794. See Goethe's 1805 Winckelmann essay: "Eine solche antike Natur war, insofern man es nur von einem unser Zeitgenossen beahupten kann, in Winckelmann wieder erschienen […]." Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/19:180.

sentimentalische Dichtung asks how such an overcoming is possible. Put differently, it asks how metempsychosis is possible, how a Greek spirit is possible under modern conditions.

The answer to this question lies in Schiller's reconceptualization of poetry in terms of the Naive and the Sentimental. Schiller ascribes to these categories a plethora of functions. They are "Empfindungsweise[n]"[55] and "Stimmung[en]"[56] as well as "Dichtungsweisen"[57] and "Dichtungsformen." As adjectives the Naive and the Sentimental are attributes of "der Dichter"[58] and "der Dichtergeist."[59]Schiller also writes of the sentimental "Dichtungstrieb."[60] Schiller uses them as historical categories, but he also relates them to the Kantian categories.[61] This synopsis suggests that with the Naive and the Sentimental, Schiller aims not at isolating a particular aspect of human existence but at articulating the over-arching phenomenon of mindedly being in the world. Indeed, when Schiller, like Herder, characterizes poetry in terms of *Empfindungsweisen*, *Empfindung* should be understood here not as brute, inarticulate affect but rather as a holistic state of consciousness. The final installment of the treatise, in which Schiller abstracts from the categories of the Naive and the Sentimental in order to derive from them two psychological types, the Realist and the Idealist, makes it clear that the term *Empfindungweise* aims at articulating more than just feeling or sensation in a narrow sense. At stake are two fundamental possibilities for intellectually comporting oneself in and to the world. Yet Schiller emphasizes that the Naive and the Sentimental will not find their reconciliation *as* psychological types. This reconciliation is to be sought in the realm of aesthetics, "denn die poetische Stimmung ist ein

[55] Schiller, *Werke und Briefe* 8:728.
[56] Ibid., 8:777.
[57] Ibid., 8:736.
[58] Ibid., 8:738.
[59] Ibid., 8:760.
[60] Ibid., 8:775.
[61] Ibid., 8:777.

selbständiges Ganze, in welchem alle Unterschiede und alle Mängel verschwinden."[62] Poetry can transcend the either/or dichotomy of the realist/idealist typology because the poet does not psychologically react to the givens of the empirical world but rather fashions a world of his own beyond the limits of the empirical, giving birth to Greece *von innen heraus*, to recall Schiller's birthday letter to Goethe. By recasting poetry in terms of two basal states of consciousness, Schiller is able to move beyond Greece as an external model of imitation without succumbing to the negativity of the present. For as *Empfindungsweisen*, the Naive and the Sentimental transcend their historicity, their ascription to the static categories of the antique and the modern respectively. Homer is a naive poet, but so is Shakespeare. Naive consciousness is not bound to a historically irrecoverable past. The naive poet reappears in the modern and thereby points the way towards an overcoming of the sentimental split between reality and the Ideal. The naive poet points the way *forward*. For as Schiller makes clear in his critique of Rousseau, culture is the irreversible precondition of a poetry that can heal the wounds that culture itself has inflicted on humanity. In a state of culture, the harmonious unity of humankind, which is the very "Idee der Menschheit,"[63] exists not as immediate reality but rather as the Ideal. The Ideal *qua* Ideal is never fully attainable, only approachable in the forward-movement of infinite striving. Poetry is for Schiller this infinite striving for the Ideal. The temporalization of moral education that Lessing carried out in *Über die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* finds its complement in the progressivity of poetry, a poetry whose generic categories are not atemporal but rather conditioned by historical consciousness. Schiller arrives at this dynamic conception of the interpenetration of history and genre through the "thought experiment" of metempsychosis.

[62] Ibid., 8:797.
[63] Ibid., 8:734.

Hölderlin's Palingenesis of the Past

In a brief article dating from 1944, Friedrich Beissner, the editor of a major edition of Hölderlin's work, reported the discovery of the poet's personal copy of Gotthold Stäudlin's *Musenalmanach fürs Jahr 1792*, in which Hölderlin published several of his early poems. In two pages of the almanac, penciled in around the first 30 lines of his "Hymne an die Freiheit," we find in Hölderlin's hand a prose draft for a new poem. The draft, which bears the title "Palingenesie," merits consideration in the context of our discussion of metempsychosis and poetics.

Palingenesie

Mit der Sonne sehn' ich mich oft vom Aufgang bis zum Niedergang den
weiten Bogen schnell hineilend zu wandeln, oft, mit Gesang zu folgen
dem großen dem Vollendungsgange der alten Natur,
Und, wie der Feldherr auf dem Helme den Adler trägt in Kampf und
Triumph, so möcht ich daß sie mich trüge
Mächtig das Sehnen der Sterblichen.
Aber es wohnet auch ein Gott in dem Menschen daß er Vergangenes und
Zukünftiges sieht und wie vom Strom ins Gebirg hinauf an die Quelle
lustwandelt er durch Zeiten
Aus ihrer Thaten stillem Buch ist Vergangenem bekannt er durch
– – die goldenes beut[64]

[64] Cited in Friedrich Beissner, *Hölderlin: Reden und Aufsätze* (Weimar: Hermann: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1961) 52. According to Beissner, the prose fragment takes as its point of departure the first stanza of "Hymne an die Freiheit:"

Wie den Aar im grauen Felsenhange
Wildes Sehnen zu der Sterne Bahn,
Flammt zu majestätischem Gesange
Meiner Freuden Ungestüm mich an;
Ha! das neue niegenoss'ne Leben
Schaffet neuen glühenden Entschluß!
Über Wahn und Stolz emporzuschweben,
Süßer unaussprechlicher Genuß!

The "Wildes Sehnen" corresponds to "das Sehnen der Sterblichen" in the prose fragment to reach beyond the present, while "das neue niegenoss'ne Leben" corresponds to the idea of palingenesis. Poem cited in Friedrich Hölderlin *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, ed., Jochen Schmidt, 3 vols., (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2005) 1:118.

Following Beissner's reading, the line "Mächtig das Sehnen der Sterblichen," located in the exact center of the prose draft, constitutes its conceptual mid-point. The preceding lines articulate the nature of the longing as the desire to project oneself into the future – "den weiten Bogen schnell hineilend zu wandeln" – in order to arrive at the end of the path of perfection, the "Vollendungsgange." As Beissner points out, this is precisely the misdirected desire of the Schwärmer at the end of Lessing's *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts*. The "Aber" following the draft's axial line marks a turn away from this longing. Man's consciousness of time – his *stream* of consciousness consisting not of the pure present but rather containing within it past and future as memory and anticipation – enables a palingenesis through time. What is remarkable about Hölderlin's conception of palingenesis here is that it is primarily oriented towards the past. Man "lustwandelt" – here the wistful "wandeln" from the beginning of the draft is positively reevaluated – up to the beginning of the river in the mountains, not to its end in the ocean. The preposition "Aus" in the phrase "Aus ihrer Taten stillem Buch" suggests a relation between the source of the stream and literature. One thinks here of the poetry recounting the deeds of the ancient heroes with whom Hölderlin was so fascinated. The longing of mortals to experience the fullness, indeed the *fulfillment*, of time, a desire represented by the wish to follow the sun from its rising to its setting, finds its assuagement in the source, in the mental palingenesis into the past preserved by literature.

This unusual document testifies to Hölderlin's familiarity with the debates on metempsychosis that animated the Weimar intellectual circle to which he so desperately hoped to gain access while working as a tutor in Waltershausen and Jena between 1794 and 1795. In a letter to his friend Christian Ludwig Neuffer from July 1794, Hölderlin cites Herder's essay "Thiton und Aurora," an essay that belongs to the series of reflections on metempsychosis that

occupied Herder in the last years of the eighteenth century. "Thiton and Aurora" serves as a kind of counterpart to the lecture "Über die Unsterblichkeit." While this latter piece asks in which ways we are immortal, "Thiton und Aurora" asks in which ways we *outlive* ourselves. Written under the shadow of the French Revolution's descent into violence, Herder's essay considers not only certain psychic constitutions that can lead to a premature exhaustion of the individual, a kind of death-in-life, but also how this phenomenon manifests itself at the level of political institutions. Arguing against the nascent conception of revolution as a radical break from out-lived institutions, Herder appeals to a conception of historical life and death in terms of "'Palingenesie!' Nicht Revolution, aber eine glückliche *Evolution der in uns schlummernden, uns neuverjüngenden Kräfte*."[65] In his letter, Hölderlin cites the lines immediately following Herder's evocation of palingenesis. This passage gives further insight into the influence of the idea of metempsychosis on the formation of Hölderlin's thought.

> "Was wir Überleben unsrer selbst nennen, ist bei bessern Seelen nur Schlummer zu neuem Erwachen, eine Abspannung des Bogens zu neuem Gebrauche. So ruhet der Acker, damit er desto reicher trage: so erstirbt der Baum im Winter, damit er im Frühlinge neu sprosse und treibe. Den Guten verlässet das Schicksal nicht, so lange er sich nicht selbst verläßt, und unrühmlich an sich verzweifelt. Der Genius, der von ihm gewichen schien, kehrt zu rechter Zeit zurück, und mit ihm neue Tätigkeit, Glück und Freude. *Oft ist ein Freund ein solcher Genius!*"[66]

Writing from the isolation of his tutorship in Waltershausen, Hölderlin underscores an intimate note in Herder's essay, the function of friendship in rousing latent forces of creativity. Yet the passage reflects a larger historical vision of cultural latency. A past historical era is not irrevocably lost but rather lies dormant awaiting its *καιρός*, its awakening "zu rechter Zeit." Hölderlin's mature poetry constitutes an unremitting reflection on the conditions of possibility for this *καιρός*.

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[65] Herder, *Werke*, 8:234.
[66] Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, 3:144 italics in original.

Herder's organic conception of cultural evolution entails the interdependence of birth and death, growth and decay. While Hölderlin departs from Herder's organic metaphors, he maintains a dynamic model of history in which presence and absence are necessarily intertwined, thereby disavowing the naive hypostatization of Greek antiquity into a timeless present. In the hymn "Germanien" he writes "Entflohene Götter! auch ihr, ihr gegenwärtigen, damals | Wahrhaftiger, ihr hattet eure Zeiten! Nichts leugnen will ich hier und nichts erbitten."[67] Yet Hölderlin's hard-won insight into the historicity of ancient Greece does not imply a turn away from it, as earlier lines in the poem would seem to suggest: "Und rückwärts soll die Seele mir nicht fliehn | Zu euch, Vergangene! die zu lieb mir sind."[68] Rather, death is the pre-condition for cultural renewal. Alluding to the ancient Greek practice of the cremation of the dead, Hölderlin writes in the same poem: "Nur als von Grabesflammen, ziehet dann | Ein goldner Rauch, die Sage drob hinüber […]."[69] The image illustrates how closely the death of a culture is intertwined with its persistence for Hölderlin. The very smoke of the funeral pyre transmits the *Sage* beyond the confines of the culture in which it emerged. Disappearance entails dispersion; death entails afterlife. This dynamic provides a path between two self-destructive relations to the past that Hölderlin's poetry constantly negotiates: on the one hand, the melancholic fixation on loss; on the other, the revolutionary rejection of the past as outlived. Hölderlin's metempsychotic perspective, I want to suggest, plays a central role in what Peter Szondi calls the poet's "overcoming of Classicism."[70] For metempsychosis, as we have seen the doctrine develop through Lessing and Herder, acknowledges the historical specificity and singularity of cultural phenomena while at the same time incorporating this view into a vision of progress or cultural

[67] Ibid., 1:335.
[68] Ibid., 1:334.
[69] Ibid., 1:335.
[70] See Szondi, "Überwindung des Klassizismus" in *Schriften*, ed. Jean Bollack et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978) 1:345-366.

evolution in which past stages are not irrevocably lost but are rather reactivated under new historical conditions. This perspective freed Hölderlin from the Winckelmannian demand to imitate the Greeks as a timeless Ideal, without abandoning the art of the Greeks as the source of a productive dialectical tension with his own historical moment.

Yet for Hölderlin, metempsychosis is more than a personal *Weltanschauung*; it operates at the level of his poetics. We have seen how Herder, in the course of his writings on lyric poetry, locates the expressive core of the ode in its strophic structure. Herder's early attempt to understand the simultaneous diversity and universality of the ode across cultures develops into an understanding of the ode strophe as the medium of metempsychosis, exemplified by the Sapphic and Alcaic odes as "Urbilder der Ode *in ihren beiden Hauptgattungen*."[71] In his odic production, Hölderlin likewise gravitates towards two odic strophes, the "Alcaic" and the "Asclepiadean," as representative of the genre. Both strophes derive from the Aeolian tradition represented by the two Lesbian poets Alcaeus and Sappho. This tradition is considered to be the most metrically conservative among the different strands of archaic Greek poetry. Aeolian verse has a fixed number of syllables and allows for neither metrical resolution, i.e. the substitution of ⏑⏑ for – nor metrical contraction, i.e. the substitution of – for ⏑⏑.[72] The mostly one or two strophe odes written between 1796 and 1768, odes that Max Kommerell calls "Hölderlin's eigentliche Klassik,"[73] constitute an apprenticeship in metrical verse composition and an exercise in self-limitation. Indeed, Hölderlin doubled-down on the demands of Aeolic verse by restricting himself to just one version of the Alcaic and one version of the Asclepiadean ode strophes out of

[71] Herder, *Werke*, 8:138 italics in original.
[72] For a detailed account of the meters of Aeolic poetry see Martin West, *Greek Metre* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press, 1982) 29-35.
[73] Max Kommerell, "Die kürzesten Oden Hölderlins," in *Dichterische Welterfahrung: Essays* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1952) 194-205; 194.

the many different versions that Horace codified in his epochal transmission of the Aeolic tradition into Latin with his four books of odes. In an essay from 1952, Wolfgang Binder argues that Hölderlin's cultivation of these two forms of the antique ode operates according to a principle of "Gegensätlichkeit"[74] observable at the metrical level. The metrical makeup of the Alcaic ode, in Binder's reading, produces a "Wellenbewegung", a rhythmic rising and falling from line to line, while the Asclepiadian ode tends towards "eine Form der Diskontinuität und der Antithetik, die dem logisch gliedernden Gedanken eignet."[75] Binder's analysis articulates the poetic logic in Hölderlin's nearly exclusive use of just two of the antique ode forms throughout his entire odic production. For Binder, meter already contains a minimum of meaning. The metrical schema intimates a rhythmic *Gestalt* that structures the movement of thought through the poem. The combination of "longs" and "shorts" "ist nur die mathematische Außenseite eines metrischen Innenraums in dem Grundfiguren und dynamische Urformen zu Hause sind."[76] Binder's account of the functioning of the Alcaic and Asclepiadean ode strophes in Hölderlin's poetic output recalls Herder's characterization of the Alcaic and Sapphic strophes as "Urbilder der Ode." Binder represents the trans-historical camp of lyric theory at its most essentializing, yet his reading is instructive in that it brings out the interpretive potential of Hölderlin's ode strophes. What Binder calls his "physiognomische Interpretation"[77] of meter shares with Herder the conviction that there is a hermeneutics of the ode strophe, that the prescribed arrangement of syllables possesses an expressive valence that the poet and critic are tasked with bringing out.

The Sapphic ode stands outside the strict economy of Hölderlin's Aeolic verse forms. Hölderlin's oeuvre contains only one completed Sapphic ode, "Unter den Alpen gesungen"

[74] Wolfgang Binder, "Hölderlins Odenstrophe," in *Hölderlin Aufsätze* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1970) 47-75; 51.
[75] Ibid., 56.
[76] Ibid., 50.
[77] Ibid., 54.

dating from 1801. Yet as Winfried Menninghaus has shown in his brilliant study of Hölderlin's poem "Hälfte des Lebens," Sappho left a profound mark on Hölderlin's body of work, indeed a metrical mark or inscription in the form of the so-called "Adonic" (–UU–U).[78] The Adonic derives its name from the ritual lament *ô ton Adônin* (woe Adonis) found among Sappho's fragments. Menninghaus demonstrates how this metrical mark opens up a rich semantic subtext on gender, mourning, and the transience of beauty in "Hälfte des Lebens." Alongside Menninghaus' study, the question of the place of Sappho in Hölderlin's poetry and poetics can be approached comparatively through parallels with the reception of Sappho in late nineteenth-century Britain. In her book *Victorian Sappho*, Yopie Prins brings out the difficulty of figuring Sappho as a name, a voice, a woman, a lesbian. Prins, who frames her book as a study of Sappho's "*Nachleben*,"[79] argues that the poet's fragmentary corpus serves as the source of her afterlife in Victorian culture: "Sappho survives as an exemplary lyric figure precisely because of that legacy of fragmentation; the more the fragments are dispersed, the more we recollect Sappho as their point of origin."[80] Fragments produce a longing for the whole, inspiring attempts to reconfigure the absent origin, to personify Sappho, to voice the poet as a univocal lyric subject, attempts which, Prins shows, Sappho's own extant poetry resists. Prins maintains that "Sappho" as the authoritative and authorizing signature of the lyric poet does not exist prior to the "lyric reading" that seeks Sappho as the pure feminine source of lyric song. Prins argues that there is a double movement at work in the Victorian reception of the poet by which the attempt to reconstitute Sappho as an organic whole leads to a further dismemberment of the Sapphic corpus and the attempt to give Sappho a voice memorializes her into a voiceless monument. "Sappho

[78] See Winfried Menninghaus, *Hälfte des Lebens. Versuch über Hölderlins Poetik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005).
[79] Prins, *Victorian Sappho* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999) 13.
[80] Ibid., 8.

gives birth to a tradition of lyric reading that kills the very thing it would bring to life."[81] Prins account of the Victorian Sappho gives cause to reflect on Hölderlin's Sappho. Many of the same issues are at play: the afterlife, the fragmentary remainders of antiquity, the longing for the unmediated presence of an oral past that is nonetheless always mediated by text. Hölderlin, it would seem, does not fall into the fiction of lyric reading, the fiction of the overheard, univocal voice sounding its own subjectivity and grounding a category called "lyric." Hölderlin never personifies Sappho, never speaks as her or in her name. For Hölderlin, the Sapphic corpus is first and foremost a metrical corpus. His reception of Sappho occurs at the level of his engagement with the Sapphic strophe. Sappho is, for the German poet, a signature, but not the signature of the author as the origin of an organic corpus. As Menninghaus has shown, Sappho is a metrical signature localized in the Adonic. With this in mind, I want now to turn to a consideration of Hölderlin's ode "Unter den Alpen gesungen."

Vocation and Invocation in Hölderlin's Sapphic Ode

"Unter den Alpen gesungen" represents a double anomaly in Hölderlin's work. It is the only poem composed during his stay as tutor in Hauptwil, Switzerland in 1801 and it is his only completed Sapphic ode. Biographically, it is located between Hölderlin's relatively happy period in Stuttgart in 1800, a period that saw the composition of his great elegies "Menons Klage um Diotima," "Brot und Wein," and Stutgard," and the period between his return from Switzerland and his departure for Bordeaux in the winter of 1802, an interval during which the poet's experience of the Alpine landscape came to powerful expression in the elegy "Heimkunft" and the hymn "Der Rhein." Formally, the poem occupies an intermediary position between the

[81] Ibid., 40.

metrical fidelity of the Frankfurt odes and the loosening of metrical bonds that lead to the *freie Rhythmen* of the late hymns. The intermediate position that "Unter den Alpen gesungen" occupies within Hölderlin's trajectory as a poet offers an explanation for the relatively little attention paid to this poem in Hölderlin scholarship. The few studies of this poem suggest that it is not an altogether successful production, mostly for formal reasons.[82] An assessment of Hölderlin's handling of the Sapphic strophe demands a closer look at the metrical structure of the strophe. This structure is itself inseparable from the history of its use. It represents not an unchanging norm but a dynamic composition repeatedly received and renegotiated under new aesthetic conditions. I have selected three "moments" in the history of the form that I consider decisive for the shaping of Hölderlin's Sapphics. I would offer these moments as, in the words of Rosanna Warren in reference to her translation of Catullus' translation of Sappho's ode

[82] Ester Schelling writes that the poem "muß formal als nicht besonders geglückt gelten" without further explanation. Schelling, "Hölderlins Ode "Unter den Alpen gesungen.' Eine Kurzinterpretation" *Hölderlin Jahrbuch* 19/20 (1975-1977): 258-266; 260. Walter Silz writes that "The Greek-Roman rhythms are here not wedded to the German with the felicity of Hölderlin's most successful Alcaic and Asclepiadean poems" and indicates stresses that fall in "unnatural places." Silz, "Hölderlin: Unter den Alpen gesungen," *The German Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (1970): 24-34; 25. By contrast, in an elaborate structural study of the poem, Emery E. George and Robert Austerlitz hone in on five instances in which a word calls for a "strong" accent while the meter calls for a "weak" accent. The five words in this context are ""gleich", "spricht", "eilt", "nimmt", and "gern". Commenting on the spatial arrangement of these five words, which appear alternatingly in the first half of the line and the second half of the line, they maintain that to say such a configuration "is intended by the poet would be an understatement. It looks like a conspiracy perpetrated in the interest of awakening us." George and Austerlitz, "Hölderlin's Ode 'Unter den Alpen gesungen': Characteristic Form and Late Poetics," *Language and Style: An International Journal* 24, no. 3 (1991): 289-314; 301. I have no idea what Hölderlin is supposed to be awakening us to here, nor do I see any particular significance in the isolation of these words and their spatial configuration on the page. The authors are unable to make much of the semantic import of the "conspiracy" that they claim to have uncovered. This is an instance of the critics rage for order producing the opposite effect; the poem dissolves into an incoherent jumble of pieces in the name of a chimerical whole.

"phainetai moi," "a small instance of lyric lineage, a type or model for poetry's perpetual re-engendering of itself."[83]

GREEK SAPPHIC STROPHE
– U – x – U U – U – –
– U – x – U U – U – –
– U – x – U U – U – x – U U – –

HORATIAN SAPPHIC STROPHE
– U – – – U U – U – x
– U – – – U U – U – x
– U – – – U U – U – x
– U U – x

KLOPSTOCK'S SAPPHIC STROPHE
– U U – U – U – U – U
– U – U U – U – U – U
– U – U – U U – U – U
– U U – U

HÖLDERLIN'S SAPPHIC STROPHE
– U U – U – U – U – U
– U – U U – U – U – U
– U – U – U – U U – U
– U U – U[84]

What immediately strikes the eye is that the Greek Sapphic strophe consists of three rather than four lines. The division of the Sapphic strophe into four lines resulted from the spatial constraints of the written page as well as from the number of lines in Horace's odes, which, the German philologist August Meineke discovered, are divisible by four. The first two lines of the Greek Sapphic strophe are understood to consist of two cola,[85] a syncopated iambic metron (– U –)[86]

[83] Rosanna Warren, "Sappho: Translation as Elegy," in *The Art of Translation: Voices from the Field*, ed. Rosanna Warren (Boston: Northeastern NP, 1989) 199-216; 200.
[84] The 'x' indicates a syllable that can either be long or short.
[85] A cola is an individual metrical phrase that consists of no more than twelve syllables.
[86] Metrical syncopation is the combining of – U or U – into a single position in a trisyllabic colon i.e. the iambic metron U – U – becomes – U –.

and a "hagesichorean" (x – ∪ ∪ – ∪ – –). Contemporary metricists tend to avoid viewing the adonic as a unique metrical colon in the Sapphic strophe, as "this obscures the essential point that it is a distended form of the first and second [cola S. F.]."[87] This metrical vocabulary may seem arcane, but its usage here is not meant to add a further layer of abstraction to metrical schemata that may already appear to the untrained eye as a series of hieroglyphs. Rather, it is meant to bring out the fact that the ode strophe consists of basic metrical building blocks that are expanded and contracted, shifted and rearranged in order to create intricate verse lines with distinct rhythmic contours. Klopstock's Sapphic strophe furthers this manipulation of discrete metrical units. His most striking intervention into the structure of the Sapphic ode is his introduction of the "wandering" dactyl, so-called because the dactyl drifts forward each line, appearing as the first foot in line one, the second foot in line two, and the third foot in line three, before returning to the first position in the adonic of line four. The wandering dactyl introduces a principle of difference into the cola and creates a forward-flowing movement. Hölderlin adopted the wandering dactyl while modifying Klopstock's strophe subtly but significantly by making the dactyl the fourth, rather than the third, foot in the third line. The result is an adonic at line-end that doubles the adonic of the fourth line. Taken together with the adonic that opens the strophe this colon becomes the unmistakable pulse of Hölderlin's Sapphic strophe. It is this pursuit of metrical palpability that Hölderlin inherited from Klopstock. For the Sapphic strophe to be more than an abstraction, it needed to be grounded in sensation, in the tangibility of discrete metrical units. The afterlife of the ancient ode depended on it.

Before turning to Hölderlin's "Unter den Alpen gesungen," it is worth briefly considering a Sapphic ode by Klopstock in order to bring out at a more concrete level the characteristics of

[87] West, *Greek Metre*, 34.

the verse form that Hölderlin inherited. Klopstock's ode "Furcht der Geliebten," dating from 1752, is enlightening not only for its verse technique but also for its thematic linkages to Hölderlin's Sapphic ode.

> Furcht der Geliebten
>
> **Cidli, du** weinest, und ich schlumre sicher,
> Wo im **Sande der** Weg verzogen fortschleicht;
> Auch wenn stille **Nacht ihn um**schattend decket,
> **Schlumr' ich ihn** sicher.
>
> **Wo er sich** endet, wo ein Strom das Meer wird,
> Gleit' ich **über den** Strom, der sanfter aufschwillt;
> Denn, der mich be**gleitet, der** Gott gebots ihm!
> **Weine nicht**, Cidli.[88]

The opening address "Cidli, du weinest" illustrates what Klopstock terms a *Wortfuß*. In his writings on poetics, Klopstock insisted that alongside the metrical foot there exists another unit of versification: the *Wortfuß*. This is a word or a group of words in a verse line that semantically belong together and thereby form a metrical unit that is often different from the traditional metrical feet into which they are inscribed. Klopstock gives the example of the hexameter line "Schrecklich erscholl der geflügelte Donnergesang in der Heerschaar." We do not hear, in Klopstock's reckoning, the dactyl "Schrecklich er" (–UU) as an independent prosodic unit. Rather, we hear the choriamb "Schrecklich erscholl" (–UU–).[89] With his insistance on the *Wortfuß*, Klopstock sought to ground his poetics in an audible metrical reality. In "Furcht der Geliebten," the syntactic phrase "Cidli, du weinest" constitutes a clearly circumscribed adonic that foregrounds the strophe as a metrical structure. We will see that this orientation towards the *Wortfuß* exerted a strong influence on Hölderlin's handling of the Sapphic strophe.

[88] Klopstock, *Oden* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1966) 48.
[89] For Klopstock's treatment of the *Wortfuß* see "Vom deutschen Hexameter" in *Gedanken über die Natur der Poesie*, 130-131.

The emphatic adonic lends the poem an incantatory quality. Rather than transmitting new information to the addressee – presumably Cidli is aware that she is crying – the address initiates an action that can be placed under the generic title of "assuagement." The "I" is separated from the beloved, on the far side of consciousness, in the beyond of sleep. Instead of trying, as so many love poems do, to overcome this separation through language, Klopstock musters the power of poetry to provide comfort in the face of the reality of separation. Indeed, everything in this poem suggests the movement of departure and distance from the beloved. The path creeps away into darkness, the river flows into the sea, the speaker glides over the river. With this last image, one might think of the rivers of Hades, boundary crossings between life and death. Klopstock found in the Sapphic strophe a form more fluid and porous than the Alcaic and Asclepiadean ode. Here, he uses it to fashion a poem dominated by images of liquidity, with the weeping in the first strophe giving way to the sea and swelling stream in the second strophe. The image of the river that finds its end in the sea imbues the poem with a profound sense of purposiveness. Guided by a companion sent from God, the speaker is taken up in this inexorable flow. I have highlighted the "wandering dactyl" in each line in order to bring out the ode's rhythmic flow. In this poem, *Schlafwandeln* is *Sprachwandeln*. The somnambulant "I" is borne aloft by the shifting accentuation of syllables. Herder characterizes the Sapphic ode as "zart" and this predicate could well apply to "Furcht der Geliebten." Tenderness is the poem's dominant *Empfindungsweise*, its rhythm a gentle incantation rounded off with another Adonic *Wortfuß*: "Weine nicht, Cidli." The sense of security that the poem cultivates makes possible the shift from the indicative mood of the opening address to the imperative mood of the closing address. The ode is less a message to Cidli or an argument against fear than it is the gift of tender consolation, of gentle assuagement in the form of poetry itself.

In contrast to the poignant intimacy of Klopstock's "Furcht der Geliebten," Hölderlin's "Unter den Alpen gesungen" speaks in a broader, more public voice that calls not on the beloved but on a principle of the highest cosmic order. Nonetheless, Klopstock's laconic ode contains *in nuce* many of the central preoccupations of Hölderlin's ode: the position of the speaker and his relation to the addressee; the unique rhythmic flow of the Sapphic strophe and its effect on the subjectivity of the speaker; and poetry as a ritualistic act that draws its power from age-old metrical formulae.

Unter den Alpen gesungen

Heilige Unschuld, du der Menschen und der
Götter liebste vertrauteste! du magst im
Hause oder draußen ihnen zu Füßen
Sitzen, den Alten,

Immerzufriedner Weisheit voll; denn manches
Gute kennet der Mann, doch staunet er, dem
Wild gleich, oft zum Himmel, aber wie rein ist,
Reine, dir alles!

Siehe! das rauhe Tier des Feldes, gerne
Dient und trauet es dir, der stumme Wald spricht
Wie vor alters, seine Sprüche zu dir, es
Lehren die Berge

Heilge Gesetze dich, und was noch jetzt uns
Vielerfahrenen offenbar der große
Vater werden heißt, du darfst es allein uns
Helle verkünden.

So mit den Himmlischen allein zu sein, und
Geht vorüber das Licht, und Strom und Wind, und
Zeit eilt hin zum Ort, vor ihnen ein stetes
Auge zu haben,

Seliger weiß und wünsch ich nichts, so lange
Nicht auch mich, wie die Weide, fort die Flut nimmt,
Daß wohl aufgehoben, schlafend dahin ich
Muß in den Wogen;

Aber es bleibt daheim gern, wer in treuem
Busen Göttliches hält, und frei will ich, so
Lang ich darf, euch all, ihr Sprachen des Himmels!
Deuten und singen.[90]

The referent of the apostrophized "Heilige Unschuld" has long preoccupied readers of this poem. Lothar Kempter suggests that the address refers both to Albrecht von Haller, the "Entdecker der Alpen für das dichterische Wort," and to one of the girls in the Gonzenbach household where Hölderlin was working as a tutor at the time that this ode was composed.[91] More philosophically minded readers have understood "Heilige Unschuld" as "ein ursprüngliches Sein,"[92] an "Urzusammenhang"[93] and "the holy innocence of all creative beginnings."[94] Friedrich Beissner gives a more judicious, and, I believe, more accurate account. Rather than defining holy innocence outright, he describes the process of the poem as the "Gestaltwerdung eines Wertes."[95] "Heilige Unschuld," on this account, conjures a power whose character and influence in different domains of life the poem will unfold. To read holy innocence as picking out one particular person or thing, or to collect various *Parallelstellen* from Hölderlin's work in order to explicate the meaning of the address, would misrecognize the very process of the poem. The address is not a veiled illusion to something else, nor does it come with a prefabricated meaning identifiable on the basis of Hölderlin's broader usage in his work of the word "Unschuld" and related terms. The term produces its own referential context that brings to expression a power whose omnipresence is greater than any one thing.

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[90] Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, 1:305-306.
[91] Lothar Kempter, *Hölderlin in Hauptwil* (St. Gallen: Tschudy-Verlag, 1946) 64.
[92] Schelling, "Hölderlins Ode 'Unter den Alpen gesungen,'" 261.
[93] Ibid., 262.
[94] George and Austerlitz, "Hölderlin's Ode 'Unter den Alpen gesungen': Characteristic Form and Late Poetics," 297.
[95] Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, 2.2, 475.

Alongside its semantics, the poetics of "Heilige Unschuld" demand consideration. Hölderlin's poem is not a philosophical treatise on innocence but an address *to* innocence, an apostrophe. In a seminal article on this rhetorical trope, Jonathan Culler argues that in apostrophe, "invocation is a figure of vocation."[96] By summoning an absent or inanimate entity, the poet seeks not only to presence that entity but also, in the very act of invocation, in the very performance of the power of presencing, to ground the position of the poet. In apostrophe, subject and object, addressor and addressee, are co-constitutive. Drawing on this earlier article in his *Theory of the Lyric*, Culler writes, "As a figure endemic to poetry that finds little place in other discourses, apostrophe works as a mark of poetic vocation. Asking winds to blow or seasons to stay their coming or mountains to hear one's cries is a ritual action, whereby voice calls in order to be calling, and seeks to manifest its calling, to establish its identity as poetical voice."[97] With its ritualistic, incantatory quality, the vocative of address can go so far as to become *vatic*, establishing the poet as a visionary seer. This conception of apostrophe will prove productive for understanding Hölderlin's "Unter den Alpen gesungen," with two important specifications. First, in his ode, Hölderlin questions the extent to which apostrophic address can constitute the poet, the extent to which the "Gestaltwerden eines Wertes" can also be the "Gestaltwerden eines Selbsts." The poem is not a proud assertion of poetic power but rather a probing meditation on the possibility of a relation between self and holy innocence, the conditions of which the poem unfolds. Second, Culler sees apostrophe as a figure of/for the voice. Not, to be sure, the voice as a textually unmediated sounding-forth from the source, but voice as written invocation that tropes "on the circuit of communication itself"[98] in the iterable

[96] Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs. Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1981) 142.
[97] Ibid., 216.
[98] Ibid., 213.

event of its reading. The opening address of Hölderlin's poem figures not only voice but also meter. Hölderlin foregrounds the Adonic, which already echoes the title ("*Un*ter den *Al*pen gesungen"), through the coincidence of metrical phrase and syntactic phrase. The overlapping of apostrophized object and *Wortfuß* fashions the vocative "Heilige Unschuld" into a metrical apostrophe. The call tropes not only on the circuit of communication, but also on the medium of communication: metered, measured language.

The opening strophe posits a "you" without placing it into a direct relationship with an "I." Instead, the poet begins by personifying holy innocence as a child, present at home or sitting at the feet of the elders. Apostrophe implies at least a minimum degree personification. In the very act of addressing, the poet is positing that the addressee is in some way capable of receiving and reacting to the address. Thus the apostrophe "Heilige Unschuld" already contributes to the "Gestaltwerdung eines Wertes" and the apposition "du der Menschen und der | Götter liebste vertrauteste" encapsulates the poem's dual function as invocation and description, as dialogical event and as discursive unfolding of a concept. The second strophe likewise reflects the fusion of address and description, switching now from second-person address to third-person characterization: "denn manches | Gute kennet der Mann, doch staunet er, dem | Wild gleich, oft zum Himmel," before returning to second person address: "aber wie rein ist | Reine, dir alles!" This strophe draws a distinction between the fractured cognitive comportments of man and the holistic state of sacred innocence. Man is split between knowledge and ignorance. He knows much, yet his knowledge stops short in the face of the heavens; here he can only wonder. Innocence, by contrast, constitutes an all-transfiguring, pre-cognitive relation to the world. It is a state of purity that consists not in the blameless observation of moral precepts but in a childlike openness to nature. In the third strophe, the imperative "Siehe!" directs attention to three realms

of nature that exemplify a state of attunement with holy innocence: the animal, the forest, and the mountains. The twice-repeated dative pronoun "dir" captures nature's relation to the ode's addressee as one of trusting surrender and communicative devotion. Linguistic communication comes to the fore: the forest speaks its "Sprüche." The paradoxical description of the forest as "stumm" yet speaking points to a kind of speech that is not audible to everyone, a speech of a higher order. The fourth stanza continues this consideration of the sapiential dimension of nature with the "Heil'ge Gesetze" taught by the mountains. The "Sprüche" and "Heil'ge Gestze" imply the need for an interpreter, someone capable of mediating the language of nature to others. The reference to "uns | Vielerfahrenen" takes up once more the question of man's relation to innocence, this time from the third-person plural perspective. The status of "much-experienced" implies a priveledged, indeed a priestly position, while at the same time contrasting this position with the revelation of the Father, a revelation that is beyond human experience, only accessible through the proclamation of holy innocence, which, with the Christian resonances of the strophe, recalls Christ, the innocent victim, as mediator of the Father. Rather than posit an I-Thou relationship between the singer and his apostrophized addressee, in the first four strophes Hölderlin proceeds by indirection, developing a web of relations between holy innocence and nature, knowledge, and religious life as he unfolds the meaning of the ode's addressee. Yet how does the "I," whose vocation as singer is already implied by the title of the poem, fit into this web? What is the singer's relation to holy innocence? The vatic invocation that initiates the poem implies a singer with the power to presence the Highest, yet this poem is, as it were, in search of its singer. The singer does not precede the poem, is not simply *there*, fully formed, but emerges in tandem with the subject of his song. The *Gestaltwerdung eines Wertes* is also the *Gestaltwerdung eines Ichs*.

The fifth strophe constitutes the critical juncture of the poem. The "so" with which this strophe opens reframes the ode. While the retrospective comparison introduced by the "so" refers most directly to the immediately proceeding lines – "Just as you alone are able to proclaim the father, I would also like to be in immediate contact with the heavenly ones" – the "so" encompasses the four preceding strophes more broadly. The singer's wish is to be in such a state of unalienated attunement with innocence as the first four strophes describe. With this comparison, the singer comes to consider his position vis-à-vis holy innocence. Commentators have pointed to the repetition of "und" at line-end as an example of Hölderlin's hesitant handling of the Sapphic ode form. Yet the twice-enjambed "und" signals not clumsiness but a stylistic shift. Both "und's" at line-end mark an anacoluthon, first with the sudden turn from the comparison to the contemplation of the passage of time embodied in the light, river, and wind; then with the abrupt shift from the syntax of the list to the gnomic assertion, "Zeit eilt hin zum Ort." The paratactic style of the fifth strophe creates a sense of unboundedness as the singer gives himself over to the fantasy of being alone with the gods in a state of ek-statis, of standing outside the flux of time and watching it go by until it reaches its "Ort," which, Jochen Schmidt notes, means "end" in the Swabian dialect. [99] The fifth strophe thereby opens up an eschatological dimension to this ode. The singer contemplates the proper comportment *in time* to the *end* of time, understood both in terms of the end of one's own life and in terms of the apocalyptic *eschaton* of time itself. The sixth strophe, in which the "ich" of the singer finally appears in the nominative position, continues the wish for a temporary reprieve from time until "schlafend dahin ich | Muß in den Wogen." The sixth strophe is consumed with the thought of death. Death appears here as an enticing acquiescence to time, a ceding to the security of self-annihilation, of being "wohl aufgehoben" and "schalfend." Here the relationship between "Unter

[99] See Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, 1:767.

den Alpen gesungen" and Klopstock's "Furcht der Geliebten" comes into focus, for "schlafend" and "wohl aufgehoben" describe with precision the speaker's situation in the latter poem. In Hölderlin's ode, submission to the Sapphic flow is all the more tempting. Verse cascades down the page in a poem dominated by enjambment. The verse line constantly strives beyond the metrical design of the poem. Yet the vocation of the singer demands a resistance to the flow that Klopstock's poem, taken up with intimate reassurances to the beloved, does not know.[100] In the final strophe, the singer leaves behind the wish to speak from the position of Klopstock's poem, a position of post-mortem quiescence in the beyond, in favor of a this-wordly position expressed in a generalizing relative clause: "Aber es bleibt daheim gern, wer in treuem | Busen Göttliches hält […]." The anonymity of this statement, whose grammatical subjects are "es" and "wer," implies not the singer's lack of identification with it but rather his acknowledgment of the necessity of accepting a position within a normatively binding way of life that abandons the hubristic wish to live among the gods. The position that the seventh strophe articulates is one of being "daheim," which picks up the "im | Hause" of the first strophe. Yet "daheim" is not synonymous with the domestic sphere of the household that "im | Hause" implies. Daheim reflects the boundedness of earthly dwelling, the situatedness of the singer "unter den Alpen," at the feet of the mountains that lead the eye up to the heavens whose languages form the object of the poet's new desire: "und frei will ich, so | Lang ich darf, euch all, ihre Sprachen des Himmels! | Deuten und Singen." The singer ends his song not with an address to holy innocence but to the languages of the heavens. The indirection of the opening invocation, the avoidance of an I-thou relation, is maintained throughout the poem and exemplifies the singer's vocation as it finally

[100] Cf .Boris Previsic *Hölderlins Rhythmus. Ein Handbuch* (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld, 2008) 119: "Nicht in der bedingungslosen Annahme des Fließenden, nicht in der fatalistischen Hingabe an ein Werden, wie es die Anspielung auf den Todesfluß Acheron will, sondern in der stetigen Reflexion, Durchleuchtung und Abgrenzung von demselben ist Deutung möglich […]."

comes to expression in the last strophe. He belongs not to the innocent but to the much experienced. His role resides in interpreting and singing a world pervaded by this innocence. Within this circumscribed sphere of activity the possibility of freedom beckons: "frei will ich […] deuten und singen." In its adverbial usage, freedom becomes a way of interpreting and singing, a modality of poetry.[101] In the context of the poem's position within Hölderlin's work, to sing freely would entail a departure from the ancient ode strophe and a turn towards the *freie Rhythmen* of the late hymns.

I have read "Unter den Alpen gesungen" as an invocation that calls a vocation into being. The meaning of the apostrophized "Heilige Unschuld" and the role of the apostrophizing singer evolve in tandem until the singer finds his proper place in relation to his addressee in the final strophe. Holy innocence, which figures forth the possibility of a state of attunement with the world we inhabit, demands from the poet a position of moderation and composure that enables him to grasp and convey the harmony with nature that innocence enjoys. I have argued that this dual development of addressor and addressee, this dynamic between invocation and vocation, is intimately bound up with Hölderlin's handling of the Sapphic strophe itself. Invocation is not only a matter of voice but also of verse. Hölderlin inscribes the adonic colon into the opening address, quickening the Sapphic strophe through the foregrounding of its form. The expressivity of the ode strophe that Herder theorized finds its full realization in Hölderlin's ode, and the

[101] In an essay on the Hölderlin's (mostly fragmentary) poetic production from his 1801 stay in Hauptwil, Boris Previsic argues that this brief period saw Hölderlin's turn towards *freie Rhythmen*, and interprets the final lines of "Unter den Alpen gesungen" as articulating "die poetologische Voraussetzung zum freihythmischen Gesang" : Hier formuliert Hölderlin deutlich, wie an keinem anderen Ort, seine Absichtserklärung, im zukünftigen eigenrhythmischen Gesang nicht nur eine Sprache, sondern viele Sprachen zu 'Deuten' und zu 'Singen'." Boris Presvisic, "Zwischen 'Scham' und Selbstvergessenheit. Hölderlins Wende zum freien Rhythmus in der Hauptwiler Zeit," in *Hölderlin und die 'künftige Schweiz*,' eds. Ulrich Gaier and Valérie Lawitschka (Tübingen: Hölderlin-Gesellschaft, 2013) 440-457; 456.

debates on metempsychosis at the end of the eighteenth century played a role in this achievement. I have argued that the influence of the doctrine on Hölderlin's thought helped him establish a relation to his antique predecessors that was neither one of slavish imitation nor outright rejection. Metempsychosis provided a model of cultural evolution reflected in Hölderlin's handling of the ancient ode strophes as basal comportments of thought and feeling that are nonetheless open to transformation under new historical conditions. In this sense, the doctrine of metempsychosis as I have traced it out in the work of Lessing, Herder, Schiller, and Hölderlin opens a path between the all too polarized positions in the study of lyric poetry today. Metempsychosis offers a model of poetics that is historicist and trans-historical at the same time.

Chapter 4: A Festival of Verse: Goethe's *Pandora*

> *[L]es principaux personnages d'un poème, ce sont toujours la douceur et la vigueur des vers.*
> - Paul Valéry, *Au sujet d'*Adonis

After Beauty

In one of the most lyrical passages of the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Hegel considers what has become of the artworks of pagan antiquity in the age of monotheism: "Sie sind nun das, was sie für uns sind, - vom Baume gebrochene schöne Früchte, ein freundliches Schicksal reichte sie uns dar, wie ein Mädchen jene Früchte präsentiert […]."[1] The muses have become museums. Good fortune – "a friendly fate" – has preserved for us some of these precious fruits, these ancient artworks saved from destruction. Yet, broken off from the tree of life, these fruits are dead, these statues, these temples, these hymns are no longer animated by their life-giving source in the religious practices, the ethical life, the collective self-understanding of a people: "So gibt das Schicksal uns mit den Werken jener Kunst nicht ihre Welt, nicht den Frühling und Sommer des sittlichen Lebens, worin sie blühten und reiften, sondern allein die eingehüllte Erinnerung dieser Wirklichkeit.[2]" The loss of the artwork's context of creation constitutes the loss of a world, the loss of that nexus of meaning that enlivens the products of the human spirit. Our relation to these products, Hegel continues, is no longer one of worship but of antiquarian cultivation, "das äußerliche Tun, das von diesen Früchten etwa Regentropfen oder Stäubchen abwischt […]."[3] We preserve them, study them, characterize and catalogue them. They exist for us not as a reality that we can inhabit but as the memory of a formerly inhabited reality: "die

[1] Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Felix Meiner Verlag: Hamburg, 1988) 490.
[2] Ibid., 491.
[3] Ibid., 491.

eingehüllte Erinnerung dieser Wirklichkeit." Mnemosyne, the mother of the muses, now stands in for the absence of her children. The beauty embodied in the artworks of ancient Greece has become historical, not a living ideal but an object of memory.

I frame this chapter on Goethe's 1808 "Festspiel" *Pandora* with Hegel's reflections on the pastness of beauty because I think that the drama is working through a problematic similar to the one that occupied Hegel in the section on religion in the 1807 *Phänomenologie* and that received its most elaborate treatment in the lectures on aesthetics delivered multiple times between 1818 and 1829. In the lectures, Hegel advances the (in)famous claim that art is "nach der Seite ihrer höchsten Bestimmung für uns ein Vergangenes"[4] Art's highest purpose is to make sensuously manifest the freedom of the human spirit. Art imprints the subjectivity of self-consciousness on the world; the human being stamps upon external reality the "Siegel seines Innern"[5] and thereby renders this reality no longer purely external, a foreign object, a "Naturnotwendigkeit"[6] over an against a subjective "inside." In this reconciliation between inner and outer, subject and object, self-conscious life grasps itself in its non-alienated form. Spirit, the collective self-understanding of a particular people at a particular point in history, does not remain pent-up in itself, inchoate and inarticulate, but rather shines forth in the formed material of the artwork. It is this sensuous manifestation of spirit in finite form – "das Künstschöne oder das Ideal"[7]– that Hegel maintains is a thing of the past. I want to suggest that in *Pandora*, Goethe is likewise working through the loss of the very Ideal of beauty as embodied in the drama's titular figure.

[4] Hegel, *Werke*, 13:25.
[5] Ibid., 13:51.
[6] Ibid., 13:134.
[7] Ibid., 13:202.

Commentators have long noted the profound philosophical ambitions of the drama, in particular as they pertain to the mythological figure of Pandora. Goethe's Pandora has been variously described as the "Idee,"[8] "das Reich der 'Form,'"[9] "das Idealschöne,"[10] "ein Höchstes, ein Metaphysikum […]; die *Idee der Schönheit* selbst."[11] I will consider the significance of Pandora in detail below; for now it is merely worth noting the high philosophical stakes of the figure and the fact that she never appears on stage. Goethe's *Pandora* depicts a post-Pandoric world. Its *dramatis personae* are marked by an event that has happened before the commencement of the drama, an event to which much of the drama is dedicated to remembering obsessively: Pandora's *parousia*. The outlines of this event are clear: Pandora appears first to Prometheus, who rejects her, before turning to his brother Epimetheus, who receives her in a state of ecstasy. She opens a vessel, releasing not, as in the Hesiodic version, evils, but rather "Luftgeburten," while Epimetheus holds fast to the "Wonnebild," Pandora herself.[12] Yet he cannot retain her; she absconds, only to appear once more, this time bearing two children in her arms, the fruit of her fleeting union with Epimetheus: Elpore (Hope) and Epimeleia (Care). She offers Epimetheus the option of keeping one of the children by him. Elpore hides her from him, Epimeleia reaches out to him; he chooses Epimeleia. She disappears once more, leaving behind Epimetheus, Epimeleia, Prometheus and his son Phileros – whose origin Goethe neglects to recount – to live in a world marked by her absence. To live in the post-Pandoric world is to live

[8] Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, "Goethes Pandora," in *Reden und Vorträge*, 3rd ed. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1913) 391-413.; 411.
[9] Ernst Cassirer, "Goethes Pandora," in *Idee und Gestalt* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1994) 7-31; 18.
[10] Osterkamp, *Gewalt und Gestalt: die Antike im Spätwerk Goethes* (Basel: Schwabe, 2007) 23.
[11] Wellbery, *Goethes Pandora*. *Dramatisierung einer Urgeschichte der Moderne* (München: C.H. Beck, 2017) 20.
[12] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/6:667.

in a world after beauty, a world withdrawn from the Ideal and subject to the violent forces of history.[13]

The fate of this world finds its reflection in the drama's sustained meditation on *form*. This concept has long occupied center-stage in studies of the play, from the path-breaking essays of Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff and Ernst Cassirer to the recent volume of essays collected under the title *Epiphanie der Form. Goethes* Pandora *im Licht seiner Form- und Kulturkonzepte*. The complexity of the drama's reflection on the concept of form is matched only by the complexity of the drama's *verse* forms, a complexity that studies on *Pandora*, while dutifully noting, have yet to account for in detail. A glance at the compositional history of the drama reveals the scrupulous attention that Goethe devoted to its versification. When in the spring of 1808 Goethe arrived in Karlsbad, where he undertook the major revisions to *Pandora*, he came equipped with the leading prosodic treatises of the day: Johann Heinrich Voß' *Zeitmessung der deutschen Sprache*, Karl Phillip Moritz's *Versuch einer deutschen Prosodie*, and Gottfried Hermann's *Handbuch der Metrik*. Journal entries from the period of the play's composition testify to Goethe's labor on the minutiae of versification in consultation with his colleague, the philologist Friedrich Wilhelm Riemer: "Abends zu Hause. Die Choriamben und den *Jonicus a minori* [mit Riemer] besprochen"; "Die neuen Szenen in der Pandora durchgegangen im Metrischen."; "Abschluß des 1. Teils von Pandorens Wiederkunft.

[13] One could cite numerous examples of what this loss represented in Goethe's personal life: his departure from Rome, the end of a personal era about which he said in his conversations with Eckermann, "Zu dieser Höhe, zu diesem Glück der Empfindung bin ich später nie wieder gekommen; ich bin, mit meinem Zustande in Rom verglichen, eigentlich nachher nie wieder froh geworden" Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 2/12:282. the death of Schiller and the concomitant collapse of their classical *Bildungsprogramm*; the experience of the destruction wrought by the Napoleonic Wars.

Verschiedenes Rhythmisches [mit Riemer] besprochen."[14] It is evident from these notes that the versification of *Pandora* was not a matter of intuitive mastery, undertaken to display mere metrical virtuosity. What, then, are the aesthetic stakes of Goethe's versification? What do such metrical details have to do with drama's philosophical mediations on form? What relation do "Choriamben" and the "*Jonicus a minori*" have to Pandora as the figure of ideal beauty vanished from this world?

I want to argue that Goethe's versification in *Pandora* takes its inspiration from what Hegel describes as the modern antiquarian impulse vis-à-vis ancient works of art. This is not to say that Goethe merely dusts of some old verse forms; the poet makes this antiquarianism into a principle of poetic production. Goethe grasps the canonical verse forms of the European tradition as, in Hegel's phrase, *ein Vergangenes,* and this historical distance affords a freedom to collect, combine, and curate verse to create a drama that breaks radically with the mimetic relation to antiquity while at the same time drawing its energy from a network of references to antiquity that are matched in their density and complexity only by *Faust II*. Ernst Osterkamp has called *Faust II*, with its eclectic and extensive evocations of the culture of ancient Greece in Act Two and Act Three, "das poetische Hauptwerk des ästhetischen Historismus,"[15] and *Pandora* is a key text in understanding the development and meaning of this aesthetic. If Goethe's *Faust* project, with its nearly exhaustive use of the European form canon, can be called an encyclopedia, then his *Pandora* can be called an anthology, bringing together ten unique verse forms in a little over one thousand lines. This collection is carefully calibrated for dramatic effect. Its organization constitutes a veritable dramaturgy of verse. Verse itself takes center stage in this drama. The drama's prosody forces itself into the foreground. Dieter Borchmeyer writes in regard to the

[14] Journal entries dating from 5.17.1808; 5.25.1808; and 5.27.1808 respectively. Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/6:1229.
[15] Osterkamp, *Gewalt und Gestalt*, 18.

metrical variety of the play: "Es entsteht bisweilen der Eindruck, als charakterisierten sich die Personen weniger durch den Inhalt ihrer Rede als durch deren Form."[16] I want to take this claim further by suggesting that the verse forms of *Pandora* not only characterize the *dramatis personae* but function like *dramatis personae* themselves. More than a medium of communication, more than an expressive reinforcement of dramatic character, verse is an active participant in the conceptual labor of the drama. The historical verse forms that Goethe draws on are, to recall Hegel's phrase, enshrouded in the memory of reality, that is to say, the memory of past poetic practice that resonates in their rhythms. The historicity of verse– verse grasped not as a timeless norm, an unbroken tradition in which the poet can seamlessly assume his place, but rather as belonging to a unique historical moment whose conditions are not one's own – this historicity is the source of verse's conceptual power in *Pandora*.

The Pan-Motif

Goethe's Pandora is a *figura etymologica*: Παν-δώρα, "all-gifted," "all-giving." Prometheus refers to her in just these terms: she is the "Allbegabte[]," [17] she is "[a]llschönst" and "allbegabtest."[18] As the etymological activation of her name, Goethe distances his Pandora from the Hesiodic figure of the first woman sent to humankind to punish Prometheus for the theft of fire. Pandora comes not as a punishment, but as a gift, and what she gives is herself, the very apparition of her beauty in its myriad manifestations. If Goethe's Pandora retains something of her Hesiodic nature – in the *Theogony* he famously calls a καλὸν κακὸν, a "beautiful evil" – it is because her beauty is so great as to be wounding. As *all*-gifted and *all*-giving, Goethe invests

[16] Cited in Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/6:1239.
[17] Ibid., 1/6:684.
[18] Ibid., 1/6:666.

this beauty with a metaphysical significance that resonates throughout the play. This is what I would like to call the "pan-motif." Goethe's *dramatis personae* are in pursuit of the All. Pandora haunts the drama as this promise of plentitude. Epimetheus describes his union with Pandora in the following terms:

> Der Seligkeit Fülle die hab' ich empfunden!
> Die Schönheit besaß ich, sie hat mich gebunden;
> Im Frühlingsgefolge trat herrlich sie an.
> Sie erkannt' ich, sie ergriff ich, da war es getan!
> Wie Nebel zerstiebte trübsinniger Wahn,
> Sie zog mich zur Erd' ab, zum Himmel hinan.[19]

"Der Seligkeit Fülle" is a bliss beyond all earthly delights, a moment of metaphysical elevation. Epimetheus bears Pandora in his memory as an impress of the image of bliss upon his psyche. She appears to him as though stepping out of Botticelli's *Primavera*. Indeed, Epimetheus's apprehends Pandora primarily as an image. In another passage describing her apparition, he calls her a "Wonnebild."[20] Yet how does one possess a "Wonnebild"? Epimetheus's own description of Pandora suggests that he has substituted an image for the real thing, that his possession of Pandora is a fantasy. Epimetheus repeatedly insists that he held Pandora, that this beauty, this bliss, was his, while at the same time dramatizing her sheer evasiveness. This is evident in the second stanza of his hymn:

> Du suchest nach Worten sie würdig zu loben,
> Du willst sie erhöhen; sie wandelt schon oben.
> Vergleich' ihr das Beste; du hälst es für schlecht.
> Sie spricht, du besinnst dich; doch hat sie schon recht.
> Du stemmst dich entgegen; sie gewinnt das Gefecht.
> Du schwankst ihr zu dienen, und bist schon ihr Knecht.[21]

The grammatical caesurae in all but the first line marks the reversal of every possible comportment to beauty by beauty herself. Epimetheus's own praise of Pandora – the Ideal – casts

[19]Ibid., 1/6:684.
[20]Ibid., 1/6:667.
[21]Ibid., 1/6:684-685.

doubts on his own assertion of having possessed her. At the level of Goethe's thinking on beauty, this represents a considerable difference from Hegel's account in the *Phänomenologie* and later in the lectures on aesthetics. For Hegel, "das Künstschöne" was unequivocally *there*, fully realized in the art of ancient Greece. Goethe's drama reflects a more radical sense of pastness. In *Pandora*, the Ideal is confined to a time outside of the time of the drama itself. Epimetheus's recollections of this time outside of time, this ecstasy of time, belie its elusiveness. The primal scene of beauty remains a moment fraught with fantasy. To be sure, Pandora is no mere mental image, no mere fabrication of the Epimethean imagination. The existence of the Ideal as such is not called into question. Rather, it is the relation to the Ideal that remains uncertain, unstable. As we will see, Pandora's elusive phenomenological status, the fugitive mode and manner of beauty's appearance, is intertwined with the drama's versification.

While Epimetheus offers the most explicit reflections on Pandoric fullness, all of the drama's main characters are infused with this sense of transcendence. When Prometheus's son Phileros first bursts onto the stage, he exclaims:

> Alle blinken die Sterne mit zitterndem Schein,
> Alle laden zu Freuden der Liebe mich ein,
> Zu suchen, zu wandeln den duftigen Gang,
> Wo gestern die Liebste mir wandelt' und sang,
> Wo sie stand, wo sie saß, wo mit blühenden Bogen
> Beblümete Himmel sich über uns zogen,
> Und um uns, und an uns so drängend und voll,
> Die Erde von nickenden Blumen erquoll.
> O dort nur, o dort!
> Ist zum Ruhen der Ort![22]

The position of the quantifier "Alle" at the beginning of the first two lines both establishes the anapestic rhythm that is the unique characteristic of Phileros's speech and foregrounds his experience of love as a cosmic invitation. With the vision of the "Beblümete Himmel," Phileros

[22] Ibid. 1/6:665.

links the heavenly realm with Epimeleia's blooming garden. Stars and flowers intermingle in these lines, suggestion a *hieros gamos*, a sacred marriage between heaven and earth. Union with the beloved would thus constitute a union with the universe. Yet this "mächt'ger Hymnus,"[23] as Epimetheus calls it, captures Phileros in an intermediate state. His present is not a grounded *hic et nunc* but an ecstatic hovering between the recollected joys of "gestern" and the anticipation of recapturing those joys "dort," in a place that will prove to be other than Epimetheus's garden, for when he arrives there he finds his position occupied by a shepherd who has snuck in through the garden gate left open for Phileros. When Phileros falsely accuses Epimeleia of having another lover, she too sounds the pan-motif, this time in a minor key, transforming Phileros's song:

> Einig, unverrückt, zusammenwandernd
> Leuchten ewig sie herab die Sterne,
> Mondlicht überglänzet alle Höhen,
> Und im Laube rauschet Windesfächeln,
> Und im Fächeln atmet Philomele,
> Atmet froh mit ihr der junge Busen
> Aufgeweckt vom holden Frühlingstraume.
> Ach! warum, ihr Götter, ist unendlich
> Alles alles, endlich unser Glück nur![24]

Epimelia's song paints an atmospheric idyll of immutability that only sharpens her sense of disequilibrium. Happiness alone falls out of the economy of eternity. Happiness is the painful exception to the constancy of all things. To partake in the All would be to partake in this enveloping environment of permanence. *Pandora* is the very drama of impermanence. Its *dramatis personae* are historical beings, marked by time, suffering from time, from their exile into transience, transience encapsulated by the mutability of the moments of joy that the encounter with beauty brings. Pandora embodies the ideal of an all-encompassing bliss, the supreme fulfillment of happiness. The post-Pandoric predicament consists in the experience of

[23] Ibid., 1/6:665.
[24] Ibid., 1/6:679.

this ideal as past, leaving in its wake fleeting, fragmentary moments of beauty that intensify the sense of loss while at the same time offering a tantalizing promise of happiness. I want now to begin to consider how this predicament is reflected in the drama's poetics.

Sacred Measures

While the philosophical import of Epimetheus's songs has long been recognized, their poetological dimension remains under-appreciated. Consider what is perhaps the most frequently cited passage in the drama, the culminating stanza from Epimetheus's hymn to Pandora:

> Sie steiget hernieder in tausend Gebilden,
> Sie schwebet auf Wassern, sie schreitet auf Gefilden,
> Nach heiligen Maßen erglänzt sie und schallt,
> Und einzig veredelt die Form den Gehalt,
> Verleiht ihm, verleiht sich die höchste Gewalt.
> Mir erschien sie in Jugend-, in Frauen-Gestalt.[25]

In his seminal essay on *Pandora*, Ernst Cassirer situates this passage within the studies of Neo-Platonism that Goethe undertook concurrent with the composition of drama. Alongside a letter to Karl Friedrich Zelter dated 5 September, 1805, Goethe included an excerpt from the opening of Book 5, Section 8 of Plotinus's *Enneads*, in which the philosopher expounds his doctrine of intellectual beauty. The book begins with Plotinus meditating on two masses of rock, one left in its natural state and one formed by art into a statue. Surely, Plotinus reasons, the latter rock appears beautiful not by virtue of its being stone, but by virtue of the form, the *εἶδος* that art impresses upon it. Yet, Plotinus continues, the source of the formed stone's beauty must be a more perfect and pure beauty, for, following Goethe's excerpt, "indem die Form, in die Materie hervorschreitend, schon ausgedehnt wird, so wird sie schwächer als jene, welche im Einen

[25] Ibid., 1/6:685.

verharrt."[26] Cassirer shows that Goethe departs from Neo-Platonic doctrine with the contestation of this point: that beauty is degraded insofar as it leaves the realm accessible only to the intellect, *νοῦς,* and enters the sensible world. In a concise commentary on the Plotinus passage that would find its way into "Makaries Archiv" in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, Goethe defends the integrity of the phenomenal world and asserts the possible superiority of the created to the creator:

> Wir Menschen sind auf Ausdehnung und Bewegung angewiesen; diese beiden allgemeinen Formen sind es, in welchen sich alle übrigen Formen, besonders die sinnlichen, offenbaren. Eine geistige Form wird aber keineswegs verkürzt, wenn sie in der Erscheinung hervortritt, vorausgesetzt, daß ihr Hervortreten eine wahre Zeugung, eine wahre Fortpflanzung sei. Das Gezeugte ist nicht geringer als das Zeugende, ja es ist der Vorteil lebendiger Zeugung, daß das Gezeugte vortrefflicher sein kann als das Zeugende.[27]

Goethe's modification of Neo-Platonic doctrine is evident in Epimetheus's portrayal of Pandora. While the central movement in Plotinus' *Enneads* is one of ascension to the divine Idea through the ritualistic purification of the intellect from sense perception, Pandora descends into the realm of appearances in the act of (self-) giving that defines her. Indeed, in the iconographic tradition the scene of Pandora descending to earth in the arms of Mercury and appearing to Epimetheus proved nearly as popular as the box-opening scene. In Epimetheus's stanza this descent is balanced by a movement upwards that results from Pandora's divine dispensation. Form "ennobles" content and lends it the "highest" power. Rather than a purification of the senses in the process of a uni-directional ascent toward beauty apprehended by the intellect alone, Epimetheus's experience of beauty in the figure of Pandora mingles high and low, heaven and earth in a deeply phenomenal – and for this reason deeply elusive – state of transit. To this principle passage of reflection on the very nature of beauty, the line "Nach heiligen Maßen

[26] Ibid., 1/10:749.
[27] Ibid., 1/10:750.

erglänzt sie und schallt […]" adds a poetological element. While it would be mistaken to reduce the meaning of these "sacred measures" to poetic meter exclusively – Pandora "erglänzt" und schallt" according to them, implying both the visual and the auditory sphere – the high philosophical and aesthetic self-reflexivity of this passage solicits a poetological reading. Pandora appeared to Epimetheus in but one figure "in Jugend-, in Frauengestalt." Yet, as this stanza asserts, her manifestations are manifold. With its unprecedented array of verse forms, the drama embodies the phenomenon that the stanza describes. This is not to say that drama's poetics mirror its philosophical content. Rather, if we are to take this stanza seriously, the verse forms first give power to philosophical content; they lend a sensuous presence to concepts.

Yet this reading of the "sacred measures" within the philosophical framework opened up by Cassirer has not yet accounted for the way in which mythological and historical time are inscribed into Epimetheus's thought. In order to deepen our understanding of the poetological claims made in the poem, it is worth turning to another important critical response to the stanza in question. Ernst Osterkamp underscores the aesthetic doctrine that is condensed "auf eine gedanklich durchaus konventionelle Weise"[28] into the rhyme-constellation "Gehalt" – "Gewalt" – "Gestalt." In this deeply Schillerian line of thought, poetic form lends its laws to the artwork's material, raising it out of the sphere of pure contingency – one can think here of Plotinus' unmolded lump of stone – and imbues the beautiful "Gestalt" with the force, "the Gewalt," that allows its "Gehalt," its conceptual contours, to achieve their full unfolding.

> Das liest sich wie ein klassizistisches Glaubensbekenntnis und ist dies auch: ein ästhetisches Credo freilich, das dadurch in ein merkwürdiges Licht gerät, daß es im Drama von einem Manne formuliert wird, der kontemplativ der Idee der verlorenen Schönheit nachtrauert, ohne sich selbst dem Gesetz des geschichtlichen Handelns zu stellen, um das Ideal in die Wirklichkeit zurückholen zu können.[29]

[28] Osterkamp, *Gewalt und Gestalt*, 20.
[29] Ibid., 21.

Epimetheus's Pandora-hymn is formulated from a position of melancholy retrospectivity. His praise is directed not toward a perfected present but toward a memorialized past. Indeed, Epimetheus's next lyric outburst conceives of the present – and the *presence* of the beloved – as a moment fraught with departure:

> Wer von der Schönen zu scheiden verdammt ist,
> Fliehe mit abegewendetem Blick!
> Wie er, sie schauend, im Tiefesten entflammt ist,
> Zieht sie, ach! reißt sie ihn ewig zurück.[30]

Epimetheus experiences the present in the temporal mode of the *futur antérieur*, thereby transforming the presence of the beloved into an anticipation of loss, a *will have been* that voids the moment of its fullness. Epimetheus exhorts the lover to avert his gaze, for to dwell on beauty is to be beholden to its loss, to remain fixed in a posture of posthumous regard. The beloved, glimpsed under the aspect of her impending absence, pulls the lover into this absence where, in a state of ontological deprivation, he is doomed to contemplate the loss in perpetuity.

Thus Epimetheus's Ideal, embodied in Pandora, belongs to this realm of pastness. His "klassizistisches Glaubensbekenntnis" has receded, becoming historical. This has important implications for an understanding of the poetological dimension of his Pandora hymn. The Schillerian doctrine that form ennobles content, raising a given object out of the sphere of contingency by molding it according to principles internal to art, is threated by contingency itself. This is crux of Osterkamp's argument concerning the late Goethe's understanding of antiquity: the idealizing *Gewalt* of beauty that Goethe found realized in Greek art faces the de-idealizing *Gewalt* of historical reality; *vis* becomes *violentia*. I want to argue that the consequence of this condition for verse is the de-sacralization of the "heilige Maßen." Verse stands no longer as a reflection of the holy but of history. Goethe's poetics in *Pandora* draws its

[30] Ibid., 1/6:688.

inspiration from the very pastness of the verse forms it employs. Verse grasped in its historicity opens possibilities for creating new poetic constellations.

Pandora as Verse Anthology

Epimetheus sees his own youthful self reflected in Phileros's amorous effusions at the outset of the play: "So war auch mir! so freudig hüpfte mir das Herz, | Als mir Pandora nieder vom Olympos kam" (85-86). Epimetheus goes on to recapitulate his encounter with Pandora before lapsing into a lyric reverie. It is worth following the conceptual movement of this reverie in full.

> Jener Kranz, Pandorens Locken
> Eingedrückt von Götterhänden,
> Wie er ihre Stirn umschattet,
> Ihrer Augen Glut gedämpfet,
> Schwebet mir noch vor Seel' und Sinnen,
> Schwebt, da sie sich längst entzogen,
> Wie ein Sternbild über mir.
>
> Doch er hält nicht mehr zusammen;
> Er zerfließt, zerfällt und streuet
> Über alle frische Fluren
> Reichlich seine Gaben aus.
> Schlummernd.
> O wie gerne bänd' ich wieder
> Diesen Kranz! Wie gern verknüpft' ich,
> Wär's zum Kranze, wär's zum Strauße,
> Flora-Cypris deine Gaben!
>
> Doch mir bleiben Kranz und Sträuße
> Nicht beisammen. Alles löst sich.
> Einzeln schafft sich Blum' und Blume
> Durch das Grüne Raum und Platz.
> Pflückend geh' ich und verliere
> Das Gepflückte. Schnell entschwindet's.
> Rose, brech' ich deine Schöne,
> Lilie du bist schon dahin!

Er entschläft.[31]

In Dora and Erwin Panofsky's study of the iconographic tradition of Pandora, they note that the meaning of her name as "all-gifted" achieved a particular importance during the period of the Northern Renaissance.[32] This is reflected in numerous paintings and drawings depicting Pandora in Olympus receiving gifts from the gods, a scene that maintained its popularity during Goethe's lifetime.[33] While Goethe never takes us into the Olympian realm, he gives us a glimpse of this scene of divine endowment as imagined by Epimetheus contemplating the divine imprint of Pandora's wreath. This object, a testament to Pandora's celestial origin, hovers indistinctly in a zone of transcendence, out of reach and eternal like a constellation of stars. Once more the heavenly bodies are set into relation with earthly flowers, yet here the relation is one of painful contrast between eternity and transience as the garland dissolves in Epimetheus's hands. Yet what is remarkable about this dissolution is that Epimetheus describes it – as though in spite of himself – in ameliorative terms. The garland scatters "Über alle frische Fluren | Reichlich seine Gaben aus." Only insofar as the garland falls apart can it disperse its gifts throughout the earth. Transience is the precondition for divine distribution. Epimetheus, sinking into slumber mid-poem, can only dream of reuniting the scattered parts, a reunion encapsulated in the compound "Flora-Cypris" that joins together the Roman goddess of flowers with a name for Aphrodite. Yet against the centripetal force of love that seeks to seize the beloved as an undivided totality, the

[31] Ibid., 1/6:668.
[32] "At the same time, however, [as Pandora was being portrayed as a symbol of evil S.F.], the French – and soon after, the English and Netherlandish – poets and humanists remembered with redoubled interest what even the Middle Ages had not forgotten: that Pandora is the 'all-gifted' or the 'gift of all,' the *munus omnium generale*. In contrast to her interpretation as the *beau mal*, there came to the surface the unequivocally positive idea of that 'perfect blend and fusion of all things', which Tertullian had not hesitated to employ as a simile of Christ." Dora and Erwin Panofsky, *Pandora's Box*: *The Changing Aspects of a Mythical Symbol* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1956) 68.
[33] Cf. Ibid., 85-113.

centrifugal force of time dissolves everything: "Alles löst sich." The unity of the garland and bouquet gives way to a *florilegium*. Epimetheus plucks (*legere*) the isolated, individual flowers (*flora*) in an effort to restore their original context, yet his elegiac consciousness can only experience the individual flower under the aspect of its mortality. For Epimetheus, to belong to the world, to time, is already to be gone: "Lilie du bist schon dahin!" Yet this passage discloses more than Epimetheus's psychic disposition alone. Through the age-old figure of the *Blumenlese*, the passage reflects on the anthology as a poetic principle. As in the hymn to beauty, we find here the tension between the scattering of Pandora's gifts as they come into contact with the all-dissolving medium of time and the conservative drive of memory that seeks to re-collect these gifts and bind them into a unity that would recreate the original fullness of Pandora's *parousia*. The drama takes up this tension in its own poetics, presenting an anthology of verse forms, an anthology that, in Goethe's *Faust* project, would become an encyclopedia. In this anthology, verse forms function less as media of communication between characters than as historically-indexed instances of poetic speech. As Sigrid Burckhardt notes, there is very little genuine dialogue in *Pandora*.[34] Epimetheus dozes off halfway through his own song! Even the extended stichomythic exchange between Prometheus and Epimetheus on the subject of Pandora's beauty functions less as a dialogue than as a contrapuntal exposition that carves out two opposing positions on the drama's titular figure. Rather than through direct address, communication occurs through the altercation and imbrication of verse. The anthological arrangement of verse forms emphasizes their status as historical artifacts while at the same time creating innovative connections between them. As verse anthology, the drama does not attempt to reconstitute the Panodoric plentitude that Epimetheus so desperately desires. Instead, it

[34]Cf. Sigurd Burckhardt, "Language as Form in Goethe's *Prometheus* and *Pandora*" in *The Drama of Language. Essays on Goethe and Kleist* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970) 16-32; 22.

embraces as a poetic principle the antiquarianism that Hegel identified as the modern relation to antiquity.

Portrait of the Post-Romantic Artist as Dramatist

In the course of his lectures on aesthetics, Hegel comes to consider the position of the contemporary artist, the artist who stands at the end of the age of Romantic art, an age that for Hegel is coextensive with the Christian era. In Romantic art, the Ideal has retreated from the radiant shining forth of the divine exemplified in Greek statuary into an invisible interiority. When we consider a painting of the Crucifixion, we see but a corpse, yet this unbeautiful, mortal body concentrates within itself something higher than beauty: eternal life, life that has gone through death and grasped it as the "Negation des Negativen,"[35] as a dying away of the finite self that reveals spirit's deeper freedom from this finitude. In the post-Romantic era, art has been decoupled from the Ideal, from the sensual manifestation of the divine. This grants the artist a certain freedom: "Das Gebundensein an einen besonderen Gehalt und eine nur für diesen Stoff passende Art der Darstellung ist für den heutigen Künstler etwas Vergangenes und die Kunst dadurch ein freies Instrument geworden […].[36]"The post-Romantic artist is no longer submerged in an all-encompassing *Weltanschauung* that dictates the substance of the artwork. Rather, "Der Künstler steht […] über den bestimmten konsekrierten Formen und Gestaltungen und bewegt sich frei für sich, unabhängig von dem Gehalt und der Anschauungsweise, in welcher sonst dem Bewußtstein das Heilige und Ewige vor Augen war.[37]" The situation of the post-Romantic artist is one of liberation from the immediate identification with the previously binding norms of an

[35] Hegel, *Werke*, 14:135.
[36] Ibid., 14:235.
[37] Ibid., 14:235.

artistic tradition. There are no more "consecrated" forms because art is no longer a matter of rendering the divine, that which is highest, sensible. The retreat of the Ideal affords the artist with a unique vantage point from which to survey the whole history of art without immediately identifying with it. Remarkably, Hegel relates this position to that of the dramatist: "der Künstler [verhält sich] zu seinem Inhalt im ganzen gleichsam als Dramatiker, der andere, fremde Personen aufstellt und exponiert."[38] Hegel mixes his metaphors here. The verbs he uses to describe the activity of the dramatist – "aufstellen" and "exponieren" would be more at home in the realm of the museum than in that of the theater. The post-Romantic artist is like the dramatist *qua* gallerist. His *dramatis personae* resemble so many pictures at an exhibition, foreign faces, portraits of pastness amplified by curatorial juxtaposition. The artistic practice of the Hegelian dramatist consists in a museal dramaturgy, the exposition of dramatic sequences of states and stages of consciousness condensed into characters drawn from the artist's "Vorrat von Bildern, Gestalungsweisen, früheren Kunstformen […]."[39]In his versification of *Pandora*, Goethe resembles this Hegelian dramatist. Verse itself becomes the object of exposition. The drama moves through a series of verse forms, each with its own historical signature, each containing a distinct conceptual complex. In order to get an overview of this exhibition, I want to consider the macro-structure of the drama's versification:

1-35: Iambic Trimeter. (Epimetheus)
36-55: Dactylic-Anapestic. Rhyming Couplets. (Phileros)
56-70: Iambic Trimeter. Stichomythia. (Epimetheus / Phileros)
71-80: Dactylic-Anapestic. Rhyming Couplets (Phileros)
81-131: Iambic Trimeter. (Epimetheus)
132-154: Unrhymed trochaic tetrameter. "Spanish Trochees" (Epimetheus)
155-167: Iambic Trimeter. (Prometheus)
168-217: Choriambic. Variable Rhyme Scheme. (Schmiede)
218-239: Iambic Trimeter. (Prometheus)
240-291: Choriambic. Variable Rhyme Scheme. (Hirten)

[38] Ibid., 14:235.
[39] Ibid., 14:235.

292-316: Iambic Trimeter. (Prometheus)
317-320: Choriambic. (Schmiede)
321-347: Iambic Pentameter. (Epimetheus / Elpore)
348-402: Unrhymed trochaic tetrameter. "Spanish Trochees" (Elpore)
403-448: Iambic Trimeter (Epimetheus / Epimeleia / Phileros / Prometheus)
449-488: Dactylic-Anapestic. Rhyming Couplets. (Phileros)
489-490: Iambic Trimeter. (Prometheus / Epimetheus)
491-568: Trochaic Pentameter. (Epimeleia)
569-654: Iambic Trimeter. Stichomythia (Prometheus / Epimetheus)
655-678: Dactylic Tetrameter with initial and final catalexis. Six-line strophes with rhyming couplets. (Epimetheus)
679-760: Iambic Trimeter. (Prometheus / Epimetheus)
761-780: Dactylic Tetrameter with final catalexis. Four-line strophes with alternating rhyme (Epimetheus).
781-788: Iambic Trimeter. (Prometheus / Epimetheus)
789-812: Doubled Choriambs. Four-line strophes. (Epimetheus).
813-832: Iambic Trimeter. (Prometheus / Epimetheus)
833-899: Ionicus a minore. (Epimeleia / Epimetheus / Prometheus)
900-947: Diambic. Eight-line strophes with alternating rhyme. (Krieger / Prometheus)
948-958: Iambic Trimeter. (Prometheus)
959-975: Unrhymed trochaic tetrameter. "Spanish Trochees" (Eos)
976-979: Iambic Trimeter. (Prometheus)
988-995: Unrhymed trochaic tetrameter. "Spanish Trochees" (Eos)
996: Iambic Trimeter. (Prometheus)
997-1042: Unrhymed trochaic tetrameter. "Spanish Trochees" (Eos)
1043-1045: Iambic Trimeter. (Prometheus)
1046-1086: Trochaic Pentameter. (Eos / Prometheus)

A glance at this schematic overview reveals the rigorously sequential employment of verse forms. Iambic trimeter constitutes the fixed point of return among numerous metrical excursions. Recent scholarship has approached *Pandora* under the aspect of a "radikal verzeitlichtes Formkonzept"[40] that reflects Goethe's thinking on morphology and culture more broadly. We have already seen this concept of form at work in Goethe's modification of Neo-Platonic doctrine. The form-giving capacities of the artist does not purify the object from its material contingencies and raise it up into a realm outside the changes wrought by time but rather unfolds

[40] Sabine Schneider and Juliane Vogel, *"*Epiphanie der Form in Goethes Festpiel 'Pandora' (1807/1808" in *Epiphanie der Form. Goethes 'Pandora' im Licht seiner Form- und Kulturkonzepte*, eds. Sabine Schneider and Juliane Vogel (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag: 2018) 7-16; 8.

in time in a generative process of departure from and return to a work-immanent norm.[41] It is this temporalized form concept that Epimetheus can only experience as the loss of the quintessence of beauty but which the festival play takes as the principle of its structure observable at the level of its versification. Here the iambic trimeter, the meter of the spoken sections of ancient tragedy, returns with a lawfulness that orders what might otherwise appear as a metrical bricolage. This dynamic has important implications for understanding the generic constraints of the play. The reoccurrence of the iambic trimeter charges the genre of the festival play with a tragic force even as the work strives beyond tragedy. Iambic trimeter is the metrical signature of Epimtheus and Prometheus, in whom the collision of the two sides of post-Pandoric consciousness play out. It is in their children, and in the verse forms that mark them, that the possibility of overcoming this rift in consciousness opens up. For the lyric passages resemble less the choral interludes of tragedy than the vocal showcases of opera. Noting this inclination toward opera in Goethe's late work, Ernst Osterkamp has argued that the opera offered an "antimimetische Kunstform"[42] that freed the poet from an all too mimetic relation to antiquity, a relation that threatened "eine[] Erstickung der poetischen Imagination unter dem Druck des historischen Wissens […]."[43] Opera offered liberation from the laws of tragedy and thus the possibility of a finale accomplished through reconciliation and not through death. Goethe's curation of his verse anthology gives rise to existential conditions that could not have been countenanced within the ancient genres maintained in their individuality. Thus the antiquarian relation to antiquity paradoxically affords the artist a creative independence in his handling of inherited art forms.

For Hegel, the retreat of the Ideal enables the artist to enjoy a new-found subjective freedom – not the spiritual freedom in which the self brings forth itself in art, making itself at

[41] Cf. Wellbery, "Form und Idee. Skizze eines Begriffsfeldes um 1800."
[42] Osterkamp, *Gewalt und Gestalt,* 46.
[43] Ibid., 46.

home in the world, but rather the freedom to maintain a sovereign distance from the world, a freedom to manipulate its material without identifying with it, to hover above one's own creation in a posture of ironic non-commitment. Hegel's links irony with the late stages of Romantic art. The aesthetic eclecticism of Goethe's late style as it emerges in *Pandora* and finds its highest expression in *Faust II* has prompted readings of these texts in terms of irony and parody. Max Kommerell, one of the most sensitive readers of Goethe, writes in regard to the diversity of forms in the *Helena-Akt* of *Faust II*: "So ist der Akt ein Mischgebilde entlegener, weise bezogener Stile, wohl das Widerantikste, das es gibt, gerade weil es durch eine ironisch gebrauchte antike Form zusammenhält […]."[44] The act begins with Helen's stately and severe monologue in iambic trimeter, transitions into rhyming baroque love poetry between Faust and Helen, and concludes with Helen's chorus of maidens, now transformed into nymphs, singing a paean to nature. "Was als euripideischer Prolog begann, wird Libretto oder Zauberoper."[45] Helen appears on stage with the plasticity and poise of a Greek statue, conceives a child with Faust, and then, embracing Faust, vanishes, leaving her dress and veil in his arms before these objects too dissolve into clouds. Thus the spirit of negation, of which Mephistopheles is the very essence, seems to preside over the act. Indeed, after the curtain falls, Mephistopheles enacts a pantomime in the proscenium, as though to ironize all that came before, as though to say that this was all a jest, that he, Mephistopheles, is the true dramatist of this play, free to put foreign *personae* on display and free to abolish them as well. The parallel between Faust's encounter with Helen and Epimetheus's encounter with Pandora is clear. Epimetheus, too, experiences an ecstatic moment of union with the Ideal that vanishes as quickly as it came, leaving behind a state of universal dissolution. And as in the Helen-Act, the sheer variety of genres, meters, and styles reflects the

[44] Kommerell, "Faust zweiter Teil. Zum Verständnis der Form," in *Geist und Buchstabe der Dichtung*. (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1956) 9-111; 63.
[45] Ibid., 62.

fraught phenomenological status of the Ideal, the renunciation of the possibility of its appearance in one stable form. Sigurd Burckhardt writes that "*Pandora* parodies the classical – that is, that which the Goethe of the middle years had regarded as the essence of 'the 'natural.'"[46]The Graecizing stylistics of the drama accentuates its own artifice: "The irony lies in the fact that by their Greek demeanor the figures who speak in this way, and the language itself, draw our attention forcefully to their subordination to the realm of art."[47] In their complexity, in their conspicuousness, in their opacity, the verse forms of *Pandora* point out their pastness, their status as artifacts of the Ideal. Yet Goethe's dramaturgy of verse neither remains fixed in the attitude of melancholic retrospectivity nor in the posture of ironic detachment. Rather, it finds its source of vitality in its own historicism. In order to bear these claims out, I want to turn to a closer consideration of two metrical patterns in *Pandora*, the choriamb and the *ionicus a minore*, both of which Goethe mentions specifically in his journal entries recording his labor on the drama's versification.

The Hämmerchortanz *and the Choriambic Matrix*

The blacksmiths' chorus, characterized by Prometheus as a "Hämmerchortanz"(166), is one of the great rhythmic set pieces of the drama. Its theme is the superiority of fire over the other elements, but much of the conceptual labor of this piece takes place at the metrical level. Goethe uses the choriamb (— ⏑ ⏑ —) as its base metrical unit. With the choriamb, Goethe chose a verse-foot rich in significance. The metricists whose work Goethe consulted for the versification of *Pandora* regarded the choriamb as a particularly mellifluous metrical unit.

[46] Burckhardt, "Language as Form in Goethe's *Prometheus* and *Pandora*," 24.
[47] Ibid., 24.

Moritz writes that "wegen seines leicht zu berechnenden Verhältnisses", the choriamb is "einer der wohlklingendsten metrischen Füße"[48] while Voß refers to the "[l]eichten Fall und Aufsprung" of "der tanzende Choriamb."[49] Voß's description of the choriamb as "dancing" resonates with Goethe's characterization of the blacksmith's chorus as a "dance," yet Goethe distances the choriamb from its associations with lyric *melos* by isolating it from a larger metrical colon and adding mono-rhymes to the lines, creating a rhythmic pounding effect. Consider the first strophe:

– ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ –
Zündet das Feuer an!
– ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ –
Feuer ist oben an.
– ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ –
Höchstes er hat's getan,
– ⏑ ⏑ –
Der es geraubt.
– ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑⏑
Wer es entzündete,
– ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑⏑
Sich es verbündete,
– ⏑⏑ – ⏑⏑
Schmiedete, ründete
– ⏑ ⏑ –
Kronen dem Haupt.[50]

I want to suggest that in the *Hammerchortanz*, as well as in *Pandora* more broadly, the choriamb functions as a *metrical hypogram*. In his early work on Latin "Saturnine" verse, whose principles of versification remained obscure to philologists, Ferdinand de Saussure thought that he had found a compositional convention that he came to call the "hypogram." from the Greek ὑπογράφειν, literally, to "write under." Saussure eventually posited the hypogram as a governing

[48] Moritz, *Versuch einer deutschen Prosodie*, 59. Moritz goes on to write that because the choriamb contains the two "Hauptfüße", the iamb and the trochee, his entire metrical theory can be developed from it.
[49] Voß, *Zeitmessung der deutschen Sprache,* 106.
[50] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/6:669.

principle not only of Saturnine verse, but of *all* Latin poetry, even modern, neo-Latin verse. In around one hundred notebooks, Saussure attempted to track the traces of hypograms from which the composition of the text proceeded.[51] According to his theory, the poet would select in advance the name of a god or hero as the compositional nucleus of the poem and then embed the name's phonetic material into the poem according to strict compositional principles. Saussure ultimately abandoned his project due to his inability to assure himself that the phenomenon under question was not illusory, was not the caprice of a linguist who, faced with a mass of phonemic material, could find nearly any word he desired. Yet with its suggestion that text production proceeds not from the author's intention to imitate an extra-verbal reality but rather from the manipulation of the signifier's phonemic material to organize a linguistic structure, Saussure's abandoned project came to interest the following generations of French literary theorists already deeply influenced by his *Course in General Linguistics*. It is this linkage of textual production not to an intentional source supplying the poem with sense but rather to a displaced repetition of a verbal given that captured the attention of the literary theorist Michael Riffaterre:

> Saussure's stroke of genius […] was to understand that the text's true center is outside the text and not behind it, hidden away, as victims of the intentional fallacy are fond of thinking. The text's true significance lies in its consistent formal reference to and repetition of what it is about, despite continuous variations in the way it goes about saying it. Saussure understood that the truth or depth or real function of the text lies in this system of reference and repetition, and not in the content of what is repeated.[52]

With his characterization of Saussure's discovery as "the text's true center is outside the text," Riffaterre does not mean that the text has its true center in an extra-verbal reality, a mimetic correspondence to the world. Rather, he means that the text circles around an absent verbal

[51] For an illuminating overview of Saussure's project, see Starobinski, *Words upon Words: The Anagrams of Ferdinand de Saussure*, trans. Olivia Emmet (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).
[52] Michael Riffaterre, *Text Production*, trans. Terese Lyons (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983) 76.

nucleus. In Riffaterre's revision of Saussure's project, the theme-word need not be present in the text. Instead, the text consists of "lexical transformations of a semantic given"[53], "variants of an invariant."[54] The Riffaterrian hypogram can be a cliché, an idiom, a cluster of conventional associations, a quotation, a literary "code." For Riffaterre, the production of the literary text consists in the incessant repetition of an absent hypogram through metaphor and metonymy, condensation and expansion. "The text functions like a repression, and anomalies in the mimesis and disruptions of apparent referentiality are its symptoms."[55] Riffaterre names these anomalies and disruptions "ungrammaticalities." In Jonathan Culler's paraphrase of Riffaterre: "The text displays prominent patterns of a metrical, phonological, or rhetorical sort which cannot be interpreted referentially; these patterns impose themselves on the reader's attention as signs that should be interpreted, but they can only be dealt with at another level."[56] Signs that resist a straightforward referential reading effect a shift from mimesis to semiosis, from the recourse to reality as the text's referent to the recourse to other signs as the generative matrix of the text. What presents itself at the level of mimesis as an often disparate series of representations finds its unity at the semiotic level in the hypogram that structures the series.

We are now in the position to explain what is meant by the claim that the choriamb functions as a metrical hypogram in Goethe's *Pandora*. It functions as a hypogram in the Saussurian sense in that it constitutes the compositional nucleus from which the text is generated. Rather than working with a pre-fabricated verse form, Goethe manipulates a basic metrical unit through slight expansions and contractions, variations on a metrical theme. As a Hegelian

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[53] Ibid., 76.
[54] Ibid., 76. As Paul de Man puts it, "What Riffaterre has done is to re-lexicalize Saussure […]." De Man, "Hypogram and Inscription" in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1986) 27-53; 39.
[55] Riffaterre, *Text Production*, 77.
[56] Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs,* 89.

dramatist, Goethe reaches into the metrical resources of antiquity, selecting from it a verse foot that, freed from the traditional constraints imposed upon versification by the demand to imitate the Greeks, he employs in ways without precedent in antiquity. At the same time as the choriamb functions as a metrical kernel, it functions as a semantic kernel as well. It is a sign among others, and commands our attention as such. We have already discussed how the meters of *Pandora* refuse to recede into the background in favor of a linguistically transparent message. In their density and insistent repetition, they dramatize themselves. The meters impose themselves upon the reader or listener, and, in their unconventionality, function as "ungrammaticalities" in Riffaterre's sense. As we will see, these metrical anomalies *can* be read mimetically in part, but their full range of significance is comprehended only when they are understood not in terms of imitative effects, but in terms of inter- and intra-textual literary codes.

Insofar as commentaries have noted the *Hämmerchortanz*, they have taken it to be a piece of tone painting evoking the rhythmic hammer blows as blacksmiths mold a piece of glowing iron on an anvil.[57] The ascription of an imitative function to the meter here is doubtlessly correct, yet it does not fully account for its role in the drama. The fact that Goethe uses the same choriambic rhythm for the shepherds' song following the *Hämmerchortanz* indicates that it must play a role beyond the imitation of the blacksmiths' craft. With the choriamb we stumble upon an "ungrammaticality" in Riffaterre's sense: the meter cannot be fully explained in terms of mimesis, the representation of an extra-verbal reality. I want to show that Goethe's use of meter here is best understood when we shift to the level of semiosis, that is, when we approach the choriamb as the metrical variant of a semantic matrix. For the *Hämmerchortanz* is not only the

[57] Some commentators have assigned precise musical time signatures to the poem in an effort to illustrate the exactness of its imitation of metalworking. Dieter Borchmeyer hears the *Hammerchortanz* in 3/8 time, (See, Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke* 6:1263) while Marion Robert hears the chorus in 3/4 time. See Goethe, *Werke: Hamburger Ausgabe,* ed. Erich Trunz, 14 vols. (München: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1994) 5:682-983.

imitation of the rhythms of metalwork; it is a citation of a whole poetic tradition of imitating the blacksmiths' craft. The central intertext here is Book VIII of the *Aeneid*.[58] Book VIII is *the* Rome book of Virgil's epic; it depicts Aeneas's first visit to the site of Rome, where the Greek king Evander gives the Trojan hero a tour of the city's famous topography. It is here that Aeneas takes over the task of waging war on behalf of Evander, a task for which Venus, firing Vulkan with the passion of love, persuades the god to forge her son a shield. The parallels between the crafting of the shield in the *Aeneid* and the *Hämmerchortanz* in *Pandora* extend to their framing of the scene. Virgil introduces the episode with an epic simile comparing Vulcan's rising before dawn to work at his forge with the housewife's nocturnal labors, cited here in a prose translation:

> Then, when repose had banished sleep, in the mid career of now waning night, at the time when a housewife, whose task it is to eke out life with her distaff and Minerva's humble toil, awakes the embers and slumbering fire, adding night to her day's work, and keeps her handmaids toiling by lamplight at the long task, so that she can keep her husband's bed chaste and rear her little sons: just so, and not more slothful at that hour, the Lord of Fire rises from his soft couch to the work of his smithy.[59]

Out of a seemingly insignificant action in the chain of events – Vulcan wakes up early – Virgil unfolds an elaborate image of *pietas*: tending the hearth through the night, keeping the marital bed chaste, and educating her children into virtuous Roman citizens, the Roman matron carries on the civilizational process inaugurated by Vulcan's harnessing of fire and Aeneas' founding of Rome with the aid of Vulcan's weapons. Goethe likewise frames his forging scene with an act of

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[58]David Wellbery establishes the central importance of Book VIII of the *Aeneid* for the conceptual complex of *Pandora*: "Die herausragende Bedeutung des VIII. Buches besteht […] darin, dass es den *Initialmoment in der Geschichte Roms als imperialer Macht* feiert." Wellbery, *Goethes* Pandora, 11 italics in original. Wellbery goes on to argue that Goethe reinterprets this mythic foundation scene as the establishment of a militarized society whose *raison d'être* and ultimate downfall lay in its endless imperial expansion, a phenomenon that Goethe found reflected in the Napoleonic Wars.

[59] Virgil, *Aeneid: Books 7-12. Appendix Vergiliana*, trans., H. Rushton Fairclough; revised by G. P. Goold (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1918) 89.

early rising, this time by Prometheus, whose reputation as harnesser of fire and master craftsman forms an evident parallel to Vulcan:

> Der Fickle Flame morgendlich dem Stern loran
> In Vater Händen aufgeschwungen kündest du
> Tag vor dem Tage! Göttlich werde du verehrt.
> Denn aller Fleiß, der männlich schätzenswerteste,
> Ist morgendlich; nur er gewährt dem ganzen Tag
> Nahrung, Behagen, müder Stunden Vollgenuß.
> Deswegen ich der Abendasche heil'gen Schatz
> Entblößend früh zu neuem Glutttrieb aufgefacht,
> Vorleuchtend meinem wackeren arbeitstreuen Volk,
> So ruf' ich laut euch Erzgewält'ger nun hervor.[60]

It is hard to believe that Goethe did not have Virgil's simile of the housewife in mind when composing this passage; he reflects it down to the details of the rekindling of the remains of yesterday's hearth. Yet at the same time he transforms it from a scene of emblematic piety into one of hubristic encroachment on the day. With his command of fire, Prometheus arrogates to himself and his "Volk" a day that does not abide by the limits of sunlight. He decouples the commencement of day from the dawn. In the final scene of the play it will be the task of Eos – Dawn – to reconcile the man-made rhythms of civilizational labor with the diurnal rhythm of the solar cycle.

Edmund Burke writes in his treatise on the sublime that "there is not perhaps in the whole *Aeneid* a more grand and labored passage than the description of Vulcan's cavern in Etna, and the works that are there carried on."[61] This labor is eminently metrical. In two lines from Book VIII that have long occupied metricists, Virgil uses rhythmic onomatopoeia to evoke the work of the Cyclops forging Aeneas' shield:

> īll(ī) īntēr sēsē mūltā vī brācchĭă tōllunt

[60] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/6:668.
[61] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful* (London; New York: Routledge Classics, 2008) 169.

īn nŭmĕrūm vērsāntquĕ tĕnācī fōrcĭpĕ māssam.[62]

with great force among themselves they lift their arms
in rhythm, and turn the lump with a gripping pincer.[63]

The first verse is a heavily spondaic line, while the second line regularizes the beat: "It is as if the giant hammers, after an initial effort, have found a steady rhythm."[64] Virgil's use of the phrase "in numerum" is highly charged; in the context of poetry *numerus* can mean "measure," "rhythm," "verse." Prometheus' address to the blacksmiths in *Pandora* resonates powerfully with Virgil's lines and their metapoetic connotations:

Erhebt die starken Arme leicht, daß taktbewegt
Ein kräftiger Hämmerchortanz laut erschallend, rasch
Uns das Geschmolz'ne vielfach strecke zum Gebrauch.[65]

Indeed, the neologistic adverb "taktbewegt" could be taken as a translation for the adverbial phrase "in numerum."[66] The *Hämmerchortanz*, in which the rhythm of the verse takes center stage, underscores the analogue between crafting and poetic making. Rather than faithfully imitating Greek verse, this choriambic passage reflects on the labor of versification in a scene of self-conscious *poesis*. In using the choriamb to mimic the pounding of the hammers on the blacksmith's anvil, Goethe is imitating Virgil using the spondaic line of the hexameter to achieve the same effect. That the German choriamb and the Latin hexameter produce two drastically different rhythms points to the fact that meter functions here not as an accurate representation of non-verbal labor but rather as a citation of a literary complex that links the blacksmith's craft

[62] Virgil, *Aeneid: Books 7-12. Appendix Vergiliana*, 92.
[63] My translation.
[64] K. W.Gransden, ed., *Aeneid, Book VIII* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976) 143.
[65] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/6:668.
[66] Scholars in turn take Virgil's *in numerum* to be a Latin approximation of Callimachus' rare adverb ἀμβολάδις ("rhythmically"?) from the forging scene in Callimachus' Hymn to Artemis. Of course, all of these forging scenes have their source in the episode of the forging of Achilles' shield in Book XVIII of the *Iliad.*

with the verbal art of poetry and concretizes this connection through versification. Goethe's choriambic citation is not a direct quote from Virgil but rather a metrical variant of this literary complex. We have already seen how Goethe modifies the scene of pre-dawn waking by placing it under the aspect of Promethean temporality, and the same holds true for the *Hämmerchortänz*. As David Wellbery points out, in the *Aeneid* Vulcan forges a shield of profound symbolic importance, depicting as it does the yet-to-come exploits of Augustus, whereas in *Pandora* the crafting is carried out in the name of a burgeoning military industrial complex.[67] Through the Virgilian intertext, activated not only on the thematic but also on the metrical level, Goethe's choriamb functions as metrical variant on the semantic nucleus of *Imperium*.

After Prometheus's exhortation to the blacksmiths, he turns to his army of shepherds. Goethe uses the same choriambic matrix for the shepherds' song, yet here it cannot be a question of the meter's imitative function. Rather, the *Imperium* hypogram structures this song as well. Consider the first shepherd's address to the blacksmiths:

– ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ –
Mächtige Brüder hier
– ⏑ ⏑ –
Stattet uns aus!
– ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ –
Reichet der Klingen mir
– ⏑ ⏑ –
Schärfste heraus.
– ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑
Syrinx muß leiden!
– ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑
Rohr einzuschneiden
– ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ –
Gebt mir die feinsten gleich!
– ⏑ ⏑ –
Zart sei der Ton.

[67] See Wellbery, *Goethes* Pandora, 11: "Die besondere Nuance der Vergilreferenz ist darin zu sehen, dass bei Virgil die handwerkliche Herstellung eines symbolträchtigen Artefakts anvisiert wird, während es sich bei Goethe um fabrikmäßige serielle Produktion handelt."

– ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ –
Preisend und lobend euch
– ⏑ ⏑ –
Ziehn wir davon.[68]

As in the *Hämmerchortanz* and its framing, the shepherds' song engages in a process of transforming civilizational foundation myths. In Book I of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid recounts how Pan pursues the nymph Syrinx to the marshy banks of a river. Just as Pan reaches out to seize her, she is transformed, and he is left grasping a cluster of reeds instead of the nymph. Letting out a sigh, he is captivated by the "arte nova" of the sound that his breath makes as it blows through the reeds. To console himself for the loss of the nymph, he fashions out of the reeds a pipe that he names after her, Syrinx. Although the shepherds' song in *Pandora* does not depict the invention of the syrinx, it depicts its production under entirely new conditions. Rather than emerging as a consolation for erotic loss – desire sublimated into sound – these "panpipes" are mass-produced, metallic instruments, wrought by the subjugation of nature: "Syrinx muß leiden!" Promethean production weaponizes the "new art" of the panpipes. The instrument becomes a tool to beat out the rhythms of war.

This repurposing of the Syrinx goes hand in hand with a transformation of genre. The syrinx belongs to the realm of pastoral poetry. Theocritus's *Idylls* open with a shepherd piping on his "σῦριγξ."[69] Perhaps most relevant in the context of *Pandora* is Theocritus' *Idyll 6*, in which two cowherds exchange instruments after a singing contest: a syrinx for a flute. This exchange reflects the assuagement of any rivalry between the two; the narrator declares: "Neither was victorious; each was undefeated."[70] Nothing could be further from this spirit of amicable exchange than the shepherds' song in *Pandora*. Imperialist striving replaces pastoral *otium*.

[68] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/6:671.
[69] Hopkinson, ed. and trans., *Theocritus, Moschus, Bion* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015) 18. Theocritus uses the verb συρίζω, "to play the syrinx".
[70] Ibid., 111.

Violent appropriation replaces peaceful reciprocity. Here it is worth noting the theme of the cowherds' song in *Idyll 6*: they sing of the frustrated love of the one-eyed giant Polyphemus for the nymph Galatea.[71] As a member of the race of Cyclops, Polyphemus is intimately associated with the blacksmith's craft. Indeed, Aeneas's shield is forged by Vulcan's team of Cyclops. Thus Polyphemus belongs to the civilizational forces that in the hands of Goethe's Prometheus become industrialized labor. Polyphemus also figures the pathological effects of desire. In keeping with the affable tone of the *Idyll 6*, Polyphemus responds with good humor to Galatea's mocking gestures, yet elsewhere in the *Idylls* we find a darker strain of his love. *Idyll 11*, for example, recounts the "outright madness"[72] of Polyphemus for Galatea, a *mania* that can only be cured by music making. As a frustrated lover, his Cyclopean control of fire becomes a burning passion for a fleeting figure of beauty. In *Pandora*, Phileros occupies this position of the (seemingly) spurned lover, yet passion does not remain with the placative bounds of Theocritean idyll. The comrades of the slain shepherd seek revenge by setting the village. The mistaken love-triangle comes to threaten civilized life with destruction. Only when Prometheus repurposes his army of blacksmiths and shepherds to put out the fire can the drama proceed with its triumphant finale. The shepherd's song evokes Theocritean idyll along with one if its central mythological figures, Polyphemus, yet it does so within the anti-bucolic framework established by the choriambic complex of the blacksmiths' song. More than an imitative device, the choriamb constitutes the metrical signature of a conceptual nexus of considerable density, encompassing literary history, poetic genre, and mythology.

[71] David Wellbery has identified as a possible model for the opening *tableau* of *Pandora* Nicolas Poussin's 1649 painting *Landscape with Polyphemus,* which draws on an episode from Book XIII of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: Polyphemus' failed attempt to woo Galatea away from her lover Acis. The significance of the painting according to Wellbery lies in its crystallization of the complex "*erotisches Begehren/ Gewalt/ Apotheose*" that constitutes one stratum of the drama's structure. Wellbery, *Goethes* Pandora, 14.
[72] Hopkinson, ed. and trans., *Theocritus, Moschus, Bion*, 169.

With this analysis of the choriambic matrix in the blacksmiths' and the shepherds' songs, I have sought to work out what it means to understand Goethe's versification in *Pandora* as the practice of a Hegelian dramatist responding to the post-Romantic predicament. This practice eschews imitation in favor of citation. It approaches verse as a collection of fragments from an antique form canon over which the poet disposes without being bound to their historical usage. Goethe employs the choriamb in a way unimaginable in antiquity, yet by exploiting the rhythmic palpability of the verse foot, he cites an ancient poetic tradition that finds in the blacksmith's labor a metaphor for poetic making that it reflects at the metrical level. Goethe's citational practice consists not in the insertion of an excerpt from another author into his text, but rather in variations of a semantic complex embedded in this tradition. The choriambic variations organize the Promethean paradigm of *poesis*: the formative force of labor is subjugated to the principle of imperialist enterprise and pastoral is negated by the violence inflicted upon nature in the name of war.

The Ionicus a minore *and the Pathos Figure*

In a conversation with Eckermann dated 29 January 1827, Goethe remarked in regard to the *Helena* Act of *Faust II*: "die Philologen werden daran zu tun finden."[73] With its wealth of verse forms culled from diverse sources both ancient and modern, the same could be said of *Pandora*. Indeed, I have been arguing that Goethe's festival play marks a decisive aesthetic shift in his versification that opens up the path to what Ernst Osterkamp has called "das poetische Hauptwerk des ästhetischen Historismus," *Faust II*. *Pandora* did, in fact, attract the attention of

[73] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 2/12:219.

philologists, most notably that of Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff.[74] In a lecture dating from 1898, Wilamowitz-Moellendorff praises the philosophical depth of Goethe's drama, "die letzte und tiefste Dichtung seines streng klassizistischen Stiles,"[75] while criticizing its versification: "Wir dürfen uns bei aller Bewunderung der sprachgewaltigen Kunst eingestehen, daß die Versuche, schwierige aus dem metrischen Handbuche aufgelesene Versmaße der Griechen und die Kunstmittel des tragischen Stiles der Athener unserer Sprache aufzuzwingen, die Mühe nicht lohnten."[76] For the premier philologist of his generation, Goethe's metrical experiments could only appear as clumsy, misguided attempts to imitate Greek verse. Put in Riffaterre's terms, they presented "ungrammaticalities," anomalies in the mimesis of Athenian tragedy. Yet as we have seen with the choriamb, the meter's significance opens up when we shift from its imitational function (be it the imitation of Athenian tragedy or of an extra-verbal reality like that of the hammers' blows) to its semiotic function, its function as a sign within a system of signs. This is likewise the case for Goethe's use of the *ionicus a minore* (⏑ ⏑ — —), a metrical unit to which the poet devoted particular attention, as his journal entries testify. The *ionicus a minore* provides the metrical basis for the play's penultimate scene, Epimeleia's dramatic report of the fire ignited by the slain shepherd's revenge-seeking comrades. Consider the first stanza:

⏑ ⏑ — —
Meinen Angstruf,
⏑ ⏑ — —
Um mich selbst nicht:
⏑ ⏑ — —

[74] One of the earliest critical receptions of the play stems from the philologist and archeologist Friedrich Gottlieb Welcker. In an 1810 review he writes that "Wenige von Göthe's Werken eignen sich so sehr, als die Pandora, zum tiefen und lehrreichen Studium […]" and he makes particular note of the drama's metrical variety. Welcker, "Pandora von Göthe" *Heidelbergische Jahrbücher der Literatur für Philologie, Historie, schöne Literatur und Kunst* 2, no. 13 (1810): 209-223; 215.
[75] Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, "Goethes Pandora," 391.
[76] Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, "Goethes Pandora," 392-393.

Ich bedarf's nicht;
⏑ ⏑ ¯ ¯
Aber hört ihn!
⏑ ⏑ ¯ ¯
Jenen dort helft,
⏑ ⏑ ¯ ¯
Die zu Grund gehn:
⏑ ⏑ ¯ ¯
Denn zu Grund ging
⏑ ⏑ ¯ ¯
Ich vorlängst schon.[77]

Goethe's use of the *ionicus a minore* constitutes a conversion of the choriambic matrix. In a kind of metrical anagram, the prosodic weight of the syllables is redistributed from (— ⏑ ⏑ —) to (⏑ ⏑ — —) and later, in the song of Prometheus' "Krieger", to (⏑ — ⏑ —). This technique is indicative of Goethe's versecraft as a Hegelian dramatist. The manipulation of micro-units of verse represents a newfound freedom in relation to the inheritance of Greek and Latin meters. It conceives of that inheritance in terms of fragments from a form canon gathered together into an eclectic verse anthology that creates unique poetic constellations unknown to antiquity. Tetrasyllabic verse is one of the main metrical constellations that bring together the *dramatis personae* in a rich rhythmic and semantic complex. Epimetheus and Prometheus are drawn into the orbit of Epimeleia's pounding ionics and thereby into the crisis she announces. These jagged, choppy lines contribute to the sense of breathless panic in this scene. Yet if Goethe's use of meter is to be understood as more than the mimesis of a mental state, we must consider its function within a literary sign system. With typical philological precision Wilamowitz-Moellendorff points to a choral passage in Aeschylus' play *The Suppliants*, reprinted in Gottfried Hermann's *Handbuch der Metrik*, from which Goethe could have gleaned the schema for the *ionicus a minore*. Yet it is difficult to see what about this obscure choral passage, whose

[77] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 690.

colometry is disputed, would have appealed to Goethe for the composition of his drama's penultimate scene. I believe that a more likely model, also cited by Hermann, is the Twelfth Ode from the Third Book of Horace's *Carmina*. This is the sole Latin poem composed in pure ionics. I cite the first strophe in Latin with scansion and then the entire poem in a prose translation.

⏑ ⏑ – – ⏑ ⏑ – – ⏑⏑ – – ⏑ ⏑ – –
Miserarum (e)st nequ(e) amori dare ludum neque dulci
⏑ ⏑ – – ⏑⏑ – – ⏑ ⏑ – – ⏑⏑ – –
mala vino laver(e), aut exanimari metuentis
⏑ ⏑ – – ⏑ ⏑ – –
patruae verbera linguae.[78]

> Pity the girls who cannot give full play to their love or wash away their woes with sweet wine without being faint with the fear of a lashing from their uncle's tongue. The Cytherean's winged brat steals your wool basket; your web and your interest in the crafts of Minerva, Neobule, are stolen by the brilliant beauty of Hebrus from Lipara, as soon as he bathes his oiled shoulders in the waters of the Tiber – a better horseman than Bellerophon himself, and unbeatable for the speed of his boxing and sprinting; he is also clever at hitting stags with a javelin as they run across open ground in a stampeding herd; he is quick too, at receiving the charge of a boar that has been lurking in a dense thicket.[79]

The correspondence between Horace's ode and Epimeleia's "Angstruf" are not as tight as those between Virgil's forging scene and the *Hämmerchortanz*. I cannot say with certainty that Ode 3.12 furnishes the direct model for the passage from *Pandora*, but it is worth noting several striking parallels. The ode commences with a gesture of pathos, declaring that those who are not allowed to give free reign to their love are to be pitied. After this generalizing statement, Horace concentrates on the misfortune of one pitiable woman, Neobule, whose maidenly labor has been upset by the child of Venus, Cupid. The woman's state of amorous distraction from her domestic

[78] Horace*, Odes and Epodes*, ed. Niall Rudd (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014) 176.
[79] Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, 177;179.

tasks forms a literary motif that reaches as far back as Sappho and Alcaeus.[80] Goethe himself had already offered his own take on the motif decades earlier with Gretchen's song on the spinning wheel. Spinning and weaving – the "crafts of Minerva" – are, of course, long-standing metaphors for poetic making. Here the *poesis* becomes a kind of un-making. The scene that Epimeleia evokes goes far beyond an isolated, domestic disturbance, as the civilizing force of fire turns destructive. Epimeleia deflects any pity from herself onto the unfolding catastrophe. Yet in the course of her "Angstruf", she begins to project her own sense of guilt into the fire:

> An das Dach greift's,
> Das entflammt schon.
> Das Gesparr kracht!
> Ach! es bricht mir
> Übers Haupt ein!
> Es erschlägt mich
> In der Fern' auch!
> Jene Schuld ragt!
> Auge droht mir,
> Braue winkt mir
> Ins Gericht hin![81]

She experiences the collapsing buildings in the background as a mental breakdown indicting her for her role in causing this catastrophe and drawing her into a death by fire. With Horace's ode in our ears, it is hard not to hear in each line of Epimeleia's cry a refrain of *miserarumst* echoing off the meter. Horace's pathos figure is displaced to the sub lexical level of the poetic line. A syllabic pressure breaks through the words, insisting on the *miseria* that it seeks to contain. The impact of the ionics comes into relief when we consider the fact that the first line of Horace's ode cites as a thematic and a metrical motto a fragment from Alcaeus preserved in a handbook by the ancient metricist Hephaestion, who used it as an example *ionicus a minore*:

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[80] Cf. Sappho, fragment 102: "Truly, sweet mother, I cannot weave my web, for I am overcome with desire for a boy because of slender Aphrodite." Campbell, ed. and trans., *Greek Lyric I. Sappho and Alcaeus* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard UP, 1982) 127. For the Alcaeus reference, see below.

[81] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/6:690.

⏑ ⏑ – – ⏑ ⏑ – – ⏑ ⏑ – – ⏑ ⏑ – –

ἔμε δείλαν, ἔμε παίσαν κακοτάτων πεδέχοισαν
Me, wretched woman, me sharing in all misery[82]

This line has been passed down to us thanks to Hephaestion's use of it as an example of the *ionicus a minore*. That Horace took it up in his ode testifies to the power of a line to dislodge itself from the poem of which it is a part and lodge itself in the ear: Horace's ear, Goethe's ear, our ear. Simon Jarvis describes poetry as "a life machine which wishes to insert lines and phrases into our brains and to have them reproduce there in the long-term life of the species."[83] At stake in the poetics of *Pandora* is the long-term life of the species, poetry's ability to reproduce itself under historical conditions inimical to its flourishing. The metrical motto serves as a means for reproduction not through imitation but through condensation, the concentrated rhythmic power of the verse line.

When Goethe said of the Helen-Act of *Faust II* that "die Philologen werden daran zu tun finden," he added the following qualification "Aber doch […] ist alles sinnlich, und wird, auf dem Theater gedacht, jedem gut in die Augen fallen. Und mehr habe ich nicht gewollt. Wenn es nur so ist, daß die Menge der Zuschauer Freude an der *Erscheinung* hat; dem Eingeweihten wird zugleich der höhrere Sinn nicht entgehen […][84]" The scholarly density of the act is not mere fodder for the philologist. Its content is calculated for theatrical effect. I want to reiterate this point for my analysis of the verse forms in *Pandora*. Against Wilamowitz's impression that Goethe is trafficking in metrical abstractions, excerpting from metrical handbooks complicated Greek verse-feet that can only be imprecisely replicated in German, I am arguing that meter in *Pandora* possesses a profound theatricality. When we are led to explore the rich web of allusion that can be contained in a single verse foot, it is *because*, to use Goethe's phrase, "Alles [ist]

[82] Campbell, ed. and trans., *Greek Lyric I. Sappho and Alcaeus*, 244.
[83] Jarvis, "Superversive Poetics: Browning's *Fifine at the Fair*" *Modern Language Quarterly* 77, no. 1. (March 2016): 121-141; 122.
[84] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 2/12:219 italics in original.

sinnlich," it is *because* the verse catches the eye or, perhaps more appropriate in this context, the ear. It commands the reader's or listener's attention as an enigmatic signifier in need of interpretation. This interpretation consists not in a positivistic philological approach that leads the verse back to a historical given and exhausts its scope of research at that point. The significance of the verse lies in the whole interpretive process of encountering stylistic anomalies in the text, shifting from the level of mimesis to the level of semiosis, tracing out the allusions or "codes" contained in a stylistic feature and recognizing how these are transformed in the text under question. For Riffaterre, this is a faithful phenomenological description of the dynamic between reader and text. While this point is open to debate,[85] I have found Riffaterre's theory productive as a methodology for reading meter in *Pandora* because the meter imposes itself so emphatically on the reader or listener of this play. Rather than providing a stable medium for communication between *dramatis personae*, the meter takes on both an opacity and an expressivity akin to that of the *dramatis personae* themselves, and therefore demands to be integrated into a reading of the play. I have argued, in turn, that meter's function in *Pandora* reflects major aesthetic and philosophical preoccupations of the play, preoccupations that I have framed through Hegel's meditations on the pastness of art. The mythological figure of Pandora marks a metaphysical absence that haunts the *dramatis personae* and gives rise to their philosophical reflections on form. I have read several of these reflections in poetological terms, arguing that they elaborate a conception of *poetic* form that is realized in the drama's verse structure. The drama exhibits an antiquarian tendency that grasps the myriad verse forms of

[85] This is Jonathan Culler's main critique of Riffaterre's theory: he purports to be offering a description of the reading practice of poetry, yet his frequent criticism of previous interpretations and production of new interpretations of poems contradicts his claim that this is how poems *are* read; he is instead offering a prescription about how poems *should* be read according to particular interpretive conventions. Cf. Culler, "Riffaterre and the Semiotics of Poetry" in *The Pursuit of Signs. Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*.

European poetry as historical artifacts to be curated in a verse anthology. This museal aesthetic endows the verse with its vibrancy by activating the multiple layers of a verse form's history while at the same time maintaining a freedom from the norms of its usage, a freedom that enables new verse constellations to emerge. I have related this freedom to that of the post-Romantic artist, whose paradigmatic representative is for Hegel the dramatist who maintains a distance to his creation, portraying a variety of foreign *personae* without immediately identifying with any one of them. By way of conclusion, I want now to consider how the finale of *Pandora* provides a radical alternative to Hegel's account of the pastness of the Ideal.

The Festival within the Festival-Play

When Hegel evokes the maiden holding forth the fruits of antiquity, his tone is less elegiac than it may at first appear. Rather than mourning the loss of an idealized past, Hegel turns his attention to the maiden herself. Her animated existence, tinged with a lightly erotic touch, suggests a life beyond the lifeless fruits that she proffers. Hegel writes that she collects the external conditions that caused these fruits to grow into "den Strahl des selbstbewußten Auges und der darreichenden Gebärde […].[86]" The maiden manifests a spiritual freedom. The gleam of her self-conscious eye reflects the interiorization, the "E r - I n n e r u n g"[87] of what was external, finite. Unlike Epimetheus, she is not fixed in a posture of mourning the loss of world that sustained such beauty, for she knows herself as spirit, as un-alienated self-consciousness that grasps the divine not as an external object but as a human being. This is for Hegel the philosophical achievement of Christianity, to which the rest of the chapter on religion is devoted. In the lectures on aesthetics, Hegel likewise sees the shift to the Christian-romantic era and its

[86] Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 491.
[87] Ibid., 491 emphasis in original.

attendant aesthetic regime exemplified in the light of the eyes. "Der Gott der romantischen Kunst […] erscheint sehend, sich wissend, innerlich subjektiv und sein Inneres dem Inneren aufschließend."[88] To take once more the image of the crucifixion: the whole pantheon of the Greek gods, the myriad manifestations of the divine, is here condensed "zu dem *einen* Lichtpunkte des Absoluten,"[89] to this one suffering, human-divine body. This single, inward-pointing light signifies the retreat of the "das Kunstschöne" that Hegel diagnoses now, in his age, as definitively past. This does not mean that artists will cease to make beautiful objects, that there will be no more paintings, symphonies or dramas. Rather, it means that art in its highest capacity as manifestation of "das *Göttliche*"[90] is a thing of the past: "Die eigenthümliche Art der Kunstproduktion und ihrer Werke füllt unser höchstes Bedürfnis nicht mehr aus; wir sind darüber hinaus, Werke der Kunst göttlich verehren und sie anbeten zu können […]."[91] As for the Hegel of the *Phänomenologie*, so too for the Hegel of the lectures on aesthetics the becoming historical of the Ideal is not an occasion for melancholy and sentimental attempts to recuperate what was lost. Rather, it paves the way for philosophy – Hegel's philosophy – as the adequate expression of truth.

When we turn to the end of *Pandora*, it is clear that Goethe's response to the loss of the Ideal is of an entirely different order. In a kind of cosmic teichoscopy, Eos, the dawn, narrates Phileros's suicidal plunge into the sea. In response to Prometheus's exhortation to save his son, she proclaims,

> Diesmal bringt der Götter Wille,
> Bringt des Lebens eignes, reines,
> Unverwüstliches Bestreben

[88] Hegel, *Werke*, 14:132.
[89] Ibid., 14:137.
[90] Ibid., 13:21 italics in original.
[91] Ibid., 13:24.

Neugeboren ihn zurück.[92]

Phileros emerges from the sea resembling a Bacchic god, wearing a panther fur and clutching a staff. Riding on the back of a dolphin, he is reunited with Epimeleia in an ecstatic embrace. A passage from the chapter on religion in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* can at once give us a hint as to how to interpret the final scene of *Pandora* and bring out the differences between Hegel's response to the post-Romantic predicament and Goethe's response to the post-Pandoric predicament. In the section on Greek *Kunstreligion*, so-called because Hegel claims that poets – Homer and Hesiod – gave the Greeks their gods, the philosopher comes to reflect on the cultic festival. In his story of the dialectical development of religion, Hegel understands the cultic festival as the mediation of two poles of religious expression: the statue, in which divinity is still grasped as something external, an inanimate object over and against the subject, and the drunken Dionysian revelry, in which the human being has merged with divinity, but in an immediate, unconscious manner. The festival overcomes this division by combining an animated and internalized relation to the divine with the peaceful and articulated form of the statue:

> Der Mensch stellt also an die Stelle der Bildsäule sich selbst, als zur vollkommen freien B e w e g u n g erzogene und ausgearbeitete Gestalt, wie jene die vollkommen freie R u h e ist. Wenn jeder einzelne wenigstens als Fackelträger sich darzustellen weiß, so hebt sich Einer aus ihnen hervor, der die gestaltete Bewegung, die glatte Ausarbeitung und flüssige Kraft aller Glieder ist; – ein beseeltes lebendiges Kunstwerk, das mit seiner Schönheit die Stärke paart und dem Schmuck, womit die Bildsäule geehrt wurde, als Preis seiner Kraft, und die Ehre unter seinem Volke, statt des steinernen Gottes, die höchste liebliche Darstellung ihres Wesens zu sein, zu Teil wird.[93]

In the festival, divinity begins to take on human form. Each member of the cult actively partakes of the divine; each member is a "Fackelträger," an animated participant in a liturgical enactment. Out of this collectivity emerges the individual, beautiful body. Hegel may have in mind here the

[92] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/6:694.
[93] Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 473 emphasis in original.

athlete of the Greek sporting games, which had their roots religious festivals. In the athlete's rigorous cultivation of his beautiful body, his "Entäußerung zur völligen Körperlichkeit,"[94] Hegel sees an overcoming of the contingencies of national particularities and the achievement of an "Allgemeinheit."[95] In the beautiful body, the festival has become Pan-Hellenic, or, more appropriately, pan-human.

At the end of her speech narrating Phileros's emergence from the sea as a Bacchus-like figure, Eos declares, "Ja des Tages hohe Feier, / Allgemeines Fest beginnt" (1041-1042). The pan-motif is sounded for the last time, now evoking not a fantasy of fullness but the universality of festival. And what emerges from this festival is the beautiful body of the reborn youth. It is hard to imagine a more faithful embodiment of Hegel's "beseeltes, lebendiges Kunstwerk." The combination of fluidity and solidity in the athletic body of Phileros evokes the plasticity of Greek sculpture. Man places himself in the position of the statue. What I am suggesting by bringing out the parallel between Hegel's description of the festival and the final scene of *Pandora* is that Goethe imagines a distinctly aesthetic response to the post-Pandoric predicament, a response that appeals to a cultic origin of art. While Hegel conceives of this origin as irrevocably past, as but a moment in the dialectical progression of religion, Goethe imagines this moment as breaking through into the present. While Hegel figures the gradual retreat of light, the sensuous shining forth of beauty, into an invisible interiority, Goethe depicts the transfiguration of the world through the all-encompassing light of dawn. While Hegel grasps the history of art as the story of humankind's coming to know itself as spirit, as subject and substance of the divine, in the cultic festival, humankind grasps itself as created, as *creatura*, and therefore as taken up in the all-encompassing context of creation. As Prometheus himself declares, his race ist "Bestimmt Erleuchtetes zu sehen,

[94] Ibid., 474.
[95] Ibid., 474.

nicht das Licht!" (958). It is at this moment that Eos rises from the sea, providing the possibility of seeing creation in its manifold illumination.[96] The Goethean festival constitutes the celebration and affirmation of creation. In the final scene of Act II of *Faust II*, Homunculus, drawn by desire, smashes himself against the seashell bearing Galatea, who is another Pandoric embodiment of beauty. In this orgasmic explosion of Eros, the *Klassische Walpurgisnacht* celebrates the very emergence of organic life out of the ocean. Arising from the erotic spontaneity of creation, the Goethean festival cannot be planned, prepared for, prescribed. It is always experienced as a gift: "Gleich vom Himmel | Senket Wort und Tat sich segnend nieder, | Gabe senkt sich, ungeahndet vormals" (158-160). Plato writes that the gods ordained the feasts of thanksgiving to men "as periods of respite from their troubles [ἀναπαύλας τῶν πόνων]."[97] The festival intervenes on the man-made rhythms of labor, conferring a rest to which even Prometheus must acquiesce.

Yet I have been insisting that Goethe's poetics refuse a nostalgic longing for an imagined Ideal. Would not this appeal to the cultic festival constitute just such an acquiescence to a fantasy

[96] In a fascinating article on *Pandora*, Juliane Vogel reads the dynamic of light and darkness in the drama in terms of the tradition of the courtly festival play, in particular as it developed in the court of Louis XIV. While the festival play under Louis XIV was structured to culminate in a blinding explosion of light representing the Sun King himself, Vogel argues that Goethe's festival play exhibits an anti-absolutist tendency in its turn away from the light: "Aufgabe der Eos ist daher nicht das *annoncement* solarer Brillanz, sondern die Ablenkung vom Licht auf das Beleuchtete, die Verwandlung des höfischen Heliotropismus in eine Abwendung, die nun die diesseitige Festszene eröffnet." Juliane Vogel, "Pandoras Erscheinungsraum. Prozesse der Figuration in Goethes Festspiel" in *Epiphanie der Form*, eds. Schneider Sabine and Juliane Vogel (Göttingen: Wallenstein Verlag, 2018) 59-71; 69. While I agree with Vogel's reading of the symbolic valence of the sun, I disagree with her assessment of the *Diesseitigkeit*, or this-worldliness, of the festival scene. I believe it is essential to the cultic festival depicted in *Pandora* that it is a gift from the gods.

Rather than a festival under secularized conditions such as those narrated by Hegel in his lectures on art, the finale of *Pandora* breaks through the narrative of secularization. The final lines of the play, which are also the final lines of the *Ausgabe letzter Hand*, affirm the transcendent orientation of human striving: "Was zu wünschen ist, ihr unter fühlt es; | Was zu geben sei, die wissen's droben. | Groß beginnet ihr Titanen; aber leiten | Zu dem ewig Guten, ewig Schönen, | Ist der Götter Werk; die läßt gewähren." (1082-1086).

[97] Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds., *The Collected Dialogues of Plato, Including the Letters* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1961) 1250.

of origins, of a flight from human history, of a return to a time before a split ran through humankind? I want to approach this issue by considering one stanza from Eos' narration of Phileros's emergence from the sea. I take this stanza to be emblematic of a certain ontological ambivalence in the festival scene.

> Alle Winzer, aus den Keltern,
> Felsenkellern tretend, reichen
> Schal' um Schale, Krug um Krüge
> Den beseelten Wellen zu.
> Nun entsteigt der Göttergleiche,
> Von dem ringsumschäumten Rücken
> Freundlicher Meerwunder schreitend,
> Reich umblüht von meinen Rosen,
> Er ein Anadyomen,
> Auf zum Felsen. – Die geschmückte
> Schönste Schale reicht ein Alter
> Bärtig, lächelnd, wohlbehaglich,
> Ihm dem Bacchusähnlichen.[98]

These lines are composed in unrhymed trochaic tetrameter: "Spanish trochees," so-called because they were popularized by A. W. Schlegel's verse translations of the seventeenth-century Spanish playwright Pedro Calderón, whose theater Schlegel took to be "der letzte Gipfel der romantischen Poesie."[99] In 1808 Goethe took with him to Karlsbad the first volume of Schlegel's Calderón translations to consult while working on *Pandora*. This volume contains the play *El mayor encanto, amor*, translated by Schlegel as "*Über allen Zauber Liebe*," which recounts Odysseus' sojourn on the island of Circe and culminates in the triumphal procession of Galatea. With his use of "Spanish Trochees," Goethe presents a pagan festival mediated through a distinctly modern verse form. The heavy use of assonance, a notable feature of Calderón's verse in Schlegel's translation, underscores the fusion between ancient and modern. Like rhyme, assonance draws sound out beyond the individual line, creating broad arcs of sense. In this regard the linkage

[98] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/6:695.
[99] A. W. Schlegel, *Spanisches Theater*, ed. Eduard Böcking, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1845) 1:xxiii.

between "Anadyom*en*" and "Bacchusähnlich*en*" is especially striking, as it brings together a Greek epithet with a German neologism in a gesture that is at once Graecizing and learned, even mannered. In this sense the assonantal association between the two words captures in miniature an ontological ambivalence in the festival-finale. For in the union of Phileros and Epimeleia, the festival figures the reconciliation of the riven consciousness, of the split between Epimethean contemplation and Promethean activity in the post-Pandoric world. Yet it does so by means of a poetics that is so prosodically complex and historically dense as to suggest that if such a reconciliation is to be achieved, then only within the realm of art. A festival within a festival-play: this is Goethe's response to the post-Pandoric predicament. The festival does not depict a world external to itself; it is its own world that lives only within the festival play. This world is the product of a poetics that, because it grasps verse in its historicity, is free to shape it anew. It is in this sense that Goethe's late versification approaches the Symbolist spirit of Paul Valéry when he writes, reflecting on the alexandrines of La Fontaine, "Pures aujourd'hui de toute force obligatoire et de toute fausse nécessité, ces rigueurs des anciennes lois n'ont plus d'autre vertu que de définir très simplement un monde absolu de l'expression."[100]

[100] Paul Valéry, "Au sujet d'*Adonis*" in *Oeuvres*, ed., Michel Jarrety, 3 vols. (Paris: Librairie générale française, 2016) :727-753; 1:736.

Conclusion

"Bewundert viel und viel gescholten Helena." At a personal level, this dissertation has been an attempt to understand why lines such as this one have had such an impact on me, why they have become part of me, why I have learnt them by heart. What does it mean to learn a poem by heart? The heart, of course, connotes the locus of interiority, the inmost chamber of our authenticity, of who we are and how we feel beyond all ratiocination. But learning a poem by heart requires rote memorization, repetitious recitation until we unthinkingly know it. As Derrida suggests, the heart in question here is neither the cardiological heart nor the heart of Pascal, the heart that has its own reasons, the reasons of faith.[1] The heart designated by the idiom, it would seem, is more like an automaton primed by prosody to recite poetry. For prosody is, after all, a mnemotechnic segmenting language into predictable units of sound so as to make them stick in the ear. Even when we *know* a poem by heart without ever having intentionally *learned* it by heart, its longevity within us results from those elements of poetry like meter and rhyme scheme that are the most impersonal, prescribed in advance, conventional, the product not of a spontaneous interiority but of centuries of inherited practice. There is thus a strange externality to the intimacy of knowing by heart. The German equivalent of the English idiom, *auswendig lernen*, stresses this aspect of externality, anticipating the result of memorization: to know something *auswendig* is to be able to recite it *aus dem Gedächtnis*. The Brothers Grimm Dictionary tells us that the ancient Greek idiom is ἀπὸ στόματος, "from the mouth," while the Latin version is *ex corde*, "from the heart." From Greek to Latin, the poem learned by rote wanders from the surface of the body to its depths. And back out again: the Latin *ex* preserves

[1] See Jacques Derrida, "Che cos'è la poesia?" in *The Lyric Theory Reader. A Critical Anthology*, eds. Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014) 287-291; 288.

something of the outwardness of this mnemonic phenomenon, the link between internalizing a poem by means of the impersonal mechanisms of prosody and speaking *from* the heart, intimately, authentically. Pondering the sense of the idiom "to learn (a poem) by heart" leads to a circulatory movement between inner and outer, between the personal and the impersonal, between speaking truthfully and speaking vatically. As Simon Jarvis warns us, we should be careful not to bifurcate this idiomatic heart, splitting it between mnemotechnics and cognition.[2] To think prosody, to think how prosody thinks, is to think the two together. The devices that make a poem memorable are not separate from or subsidiary to the conceptual claims a poem makes; they are one and the same. Thinking *in* verse is thinking *as* verse. If, as Moritz understood it, versification is the subordination of sense to sound, then versification is another way of *making sense*, a sense inseparable from, because produced by and residing in, sound. In a kind of echolocation, the sounded syllable reverberates across historical time, bouncing off the borders of past poems, orienting itself in its cultural environment. A well-trained ear hears the reverberations produced by prosody, discerns in the sound the sense (here I am tempted to use the French *sens* in its dual meaning of "significance" and "direction"), and charts out the course of its communication. Prosodically, the poem communicates not only with its contemporaries but also with its ancestors. I have argued that prosody provided the poets in and around Weimar with the means to posit a poetic heritage in ancient Greece without condemning themselves to a perpetual epigonality vis-à-vis their projected ancestors. Prosody provided the *medium* – in the occult sense of this term – with which to contact these ancestors. The occult is a far cry from marmoreal Classicism, but so is the conception of verse around 1800: Humboldt felt in the hexameter the primordial rhythms of creation; Goethe figured Orest's psychic descent into the underworld as a falling off from the communicative paradigm of blank verse; Herder saw in the

[2] See Jarvis, "By heart," *Dalhousie French Studies* 82 (2008): 59-68; 65.

shape of the ode strophe the transmigration of souls; Hölderlin posited (metrical) invocation as the poet's vocation; Goethe envisioned the apotheosis of beauty as a Bacchic revelry in a festival of verse forms. In a prosody handbook entitled *The Poem's Heartbeat*, Alfred Corn writes,

> What may or may not be obvious is that poetry has never fully disengaged itself from its associations with shamanism; the poet, like the shaman, has mastered certain techniques – rhythmic, performative, imagistic, metaphoric – that summon the unconscious part of the mind, so that, in this dreamlike state between waking and sleeping, we may discover more about our thoughts and feelings than we would otherwise be able to do.[3]

We may discover not only more about our thoughts and feelings, but also about those of our ancestors. Is this not what it means to know a poem by heart? – To posses it intimately but also to be possessed by it, to be traversed by voices, by forces that precede us and exceed us. In this dissertation, I have tried to take the pulse of prosody in German language poetry and poetics around 1800, feeling with my analytic finger for the heartbeat of major poems of this period to register their rhythmic fluctuations, their bursts of energy, their fits and starts as they plumb and channel the distances of historical time. But is the "pulse of prosody" only a metaphor? Poems don't have heartbeats, we do. Yet is the poem so separable from us? Are we so separable from it? The poem has its life within us, in our reading or speaking it, in our remembering it, knowing it by heart. Rocked by our rhythms, imbued with our emotion, it lives. And we have our lives within it. The poem speaks *us*, bends our voice to its inflections, binds our bodily movements to its beat. In the poem known by heart there is the co-presence of two pulses, the pulse of the human heart and the pulse of prosody.

[3] Alfred Corn, *The Poem's Heartbeat. A Manual of Prosody* (Port Townsend, Wash.: Copper Canyon Press, 2008) 6.

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