FROM AESTHETIC TO PATHOLOGY: READING LITERARY CASE STUDIES OF MELANCHOLY, 1775-1830

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Noelle B. Rettig, M.A.

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Noelle B. Rettig, M.A.

Thesis Advisor: Mary Helen Dupree, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation contributes to the ongoing discussion of the narrative representation of mental illness in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, at a time when the nascent discipline of psychology began to come into its own, and the discourses of mind and body were renegotiated under advances in the medical sciences; I attempt, in other words, to examine how mental illness was conceptualized long before diagnoses such as depression, bipolarity, or schizophrenia made their way into mainstream scientific discourse. Even though “melancholy” continued to function during this time period as a blanket term for any number of mental, physical, and spiritual illnesses, thereby connoting a pathological state, it also began to take on a specifically “poetic” meaning, involving the subjective and transitory mood of the modern individual. As a focal point for this inquiry, I have chosen four primary texts: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (1774), Friedrich Schiller’s *Die Räuber* (1781), Karl Philipp Moritz’s *Anton Reiser* (1785-1790), and Georg Büchner’s *Lenz* (1836) – works which all represent melancholy at the interstices of science and subjectivity, reason and passion. My major arguments are as follows: 1) with the publication of Goethe’s *Werther* in 1774, there was a shift toward pathological representations of melancholy in literature; 2) there are distinct parallels between the *Melancholie* of the eighteenth century and psychiatric diagnoses of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; 3) the popularity of my primary sources helped to establish a language for mental anguish in the late eighteenth century, even as this discourse functions at times via inarticulability; 4) the move toward pathology occurs as the literary subject becomes more psychologically developed and treated as a form of case study. In its entirety, the study investigates how multivalent images of melancholy are deployed in order to individuate characters and their respective psychologies, emotions, and affects.
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Love and gratitude,

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INTRODUCTION
“A MOST HUMOROUS SADNESS”

In Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*, the character of melancholy Jacques offers the infamous description of his malaise: “I have neither the scholar’s melancholy, which is emulation; nor the musician’s, which is fantastical, nor the courtier’s, which is proud…”¹ Nor does Jacques suffer the same melancholy as the soldier, the lawyer, the lady, or the lover. Instead, “it is a melancholy of mine own, compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects, and indeed the sundry contemplation of my travels, in which my often rumination wraps me in a most humorous sadness.”² Jacques’ continues to be one of the most quoted musings on melancholy, perhaps because Shakespeare manages, with these few lines, to capture its puzzling, multifaceted, and indeed contradictory nature, speaking to the popular fascination with a term that, for centuries leading up to and including much of the eighteenth century, encompassed a multitude of symptoms, symbolisms, and explanations.

This dissertation contributes to the ongoing discussion of the narrative representation of mental illness by providing a historicized interrogation of literary depictions of melancholy. In other words, this project seeks to examine how mental illness was conceptualized long before diagnoses such as depression, anxiety, bipolarity, or schizophrenia made their way into mainstream medical discourse, at a time when “melancholy” and “hypochondria” functioned as blanket terms, or open signifiers, to refer to any number of physical, spiritual, mental, or affective illnesses. As a

² Ibid.
focal point for this inquiry, I have chosen four primary texts that thematize melancholy from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (1774), Friedrich Schiller’s *Die Räuber* (1781), Karl Philipp Moritz’s *Anton Reiser* (1785-1790), and Georg Büchner’s *Lenz* (1836). I approach these texts through a number of different methodological frameworks: chief amongst these is medical history, but this is complemented by insights from affect theory, the history of emotions, discourse analysis, Luhmanian systems theory, and Foucauldian deconstructionism. Although it is not a new phenomenon in eighteenth-century literary studies, melancholy has most often been interpreted using sociocultural or sociopolitical theory as a monolithic and/or collective trend, e.g., as an expression of tender feelings in the novel of Sensibility, or as a byword for bourgeois anomie in *Sturm und Drang* drama. This study instead aims to investigate how multivalent images of melancholy are deployed in order to individuate literary characters and their respective psychologies, emotions, and affects.

Much early-eighteenth-century poetry and literature offers aesthetically pleasing, poeticized renderings of melancholy, exploring the theme as a mode of heightened subjectivity and sensibility, “the joy in grief,” or “the sad luxury of woe.” By contrast, I propose that in the late 1700s, there is a shift toward a darker, pathologized form of melancholy. This occurs simultaneously with the publication of Goethe’s *Werther* in 1774 and the advent of early psychology or *Seelenkunde* as a discipline. Although “melancholia” has in fact been a medical term from its original conception in Greek antiquity (see below, “Defining melancholy”), my contention is that literature itself begins to reflect a pathological view of melancholy as the literary figure becomes more psychologically developed and treated as a form of case study, a movement

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that coincides with the development of new genres such as the ‘psychological novel’ and the novella. This idea is partially grounded in Michaela Ralser’s notion of “Krankheitsgeschichte” in her 2006 article “Der Fall und seine Geschichte: Die klinisch-psychiatrische Fallgeschichte als Narration an der Schwelle.” Here, Ralser argues, the case study invariably uses a narrative structure which transforms “Krankheitsbild zur -geschichte,” bringing the static image of illness to life by elucidating its genesis, development, and course, eventually integrating both its outer signs and symptoms as well as the story of the patient.

Additionally, I draw on Nicolas Pethes’ 2014 argument that late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century German texts borrowed from medical genres in order to foreground a sense of empiricism and realism in their work. In “Telling Cases: Writing Against Genre in Medicine and Literature,” Pethes describes a shift toward particularity and objectivity in German literature between 1750 and 1850, a change driven in large part by “a number of strategic links between literary and medical communication.” The structure of the medical case study, with its focus on the individual, the actual person and event, was carried over to literature; literature turned to the case study as a guide for the Enlightenment’s new postulates of truth. These changes are in turn evident in the emergence of the ambivalent, oftentimes ill (whether physically or psychologically), modern subject in narrative genres that flourished during the turn of the century, such as the (sentimental) epistolary novel, the Sturm und Drang drama, the autobiography (or “psychological novel” and “semi-autobiography,” as in the case of Anton Reiser), and the case history or pathogenesis. In turn, these genres are interconnected through their deployment of and desire for

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5 Ibid., 117.
7 Pethes, 27.
novel, alternative structures of truth, including empirical evidence and particular observations, as well as the preference for pathological deviation over normality. In short, the literary case study is representative of the meeting place between science and subjectivity; it is the building of biography from pathology.

The deployment of melancholy in the construction of individual biographies stands in contrast to much of the secondary literature on melancholy in the Enlightenment. Major studies in this area, such as Gert Mattenklott’s *Melancholie in der Dramatik des Sturm und Drang* (1968), Wolf Lepenies’ *Melancholie und Gesellschaft* (1969), and Hans-Jürgen Schings’ *Aufklärung und Melancholie* (1977), have investigated melancholy using the sociocultural framework (*Kultursoziologie*) of Norbert Elias, as well as the *Sozialgeschichte* approach to German literature that gained prominence in the 1960s and 1970s, in order to argue that melancholy functions collectively as a form of societal and political critique. As the Germanist Matthew Bell writes, “18th-century melancholy was a natural symbol for political disenfranchisement. It stands for and acts as a continual reminder of social injustice and political exclusion.” Indeed, the period from 1775 to 1850 may be understood as a phase of crisis and concurrent productivity in German literature: the burgeoning and blooming of the Enlightenment within the absolutist state, the growing class of the *Bürgertum* set in contradistinction to the nobility and ruling classes. Without a German state – in fact, with no central metropolis for the intelligentsia to gather – German

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13 London and Paris would be the most prominent counter-examples here.
culture had to blaze its own unique path. This is a trajectory defined in large part by education (Bildung) and morality (Moral, Tugend),\(^\text{14}\) developing into a public sphere determined not by physical space but by writing.\(^\text{15}\) While the German middle classes understood themselves as morally obligated to their respective states, melancholy emerges in these analyses as an expression of frustration at the bourgeois’ own political impotence and the subsequent retreat from public forms of expression inward toward the self. In Lepenies’ view, this “flight into introversion,”\(^\text{16}\) into a nearly solipsistic private world of writing and literature, is “a political disease without a cure.”\(^\text{17}\) Such analyses of melancholy as a Gesellschaftskrankheit, Zeitdiagnose, or Zeitterscheinung – as a generalized set of symptoms that occur during a certain time period – miss the mark when carried over to textual interpretations in which protagonists are characterized according to broad definitions of melancholy, rather than close readings of the figures themselves. Missing, in these studies, are accounts of the unique, individualized depictions of literary characters in the grips of their melancholy.

Melancholy as an “experience” of the literary character perhaps deserves a note of qualification, since literary figures, as fictional constructs, obviously do not experience feelings in the way that human beings do, nor may they be “diagnosed” as real patients. Nevertheless, the experiences, emotions, and illnesses that are described in these texts do have their roots in authentic, real-life experiences, e.g., those of the authors and their friends and acquaintances. The way that I engage with “experience” in these works, whether bodily, phenomenological, or otherwise, involves a mode of stepping into the fictional world at hand, largely via a practice of


\(^\text{15}\) See Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (Darmstadt: Hermann Luchterhand, 1962).

\(^\text{16}\) Lepenies, 59.

close reading, and in a sense identifying, or feeling with, the protagonists that are the objects of my analysis. In this way, I see this project as making a strong implicit case for more attentiveness to, and perhaps empathy with, these subjective and individual perspectives from the eighteenth century – that is, the perspectives of the literary characters as mediated by the authors.

The aforementioned sociocultural configuration is representative of one of the major understandings of melancholy during the Enlightenment. However, this is a framework imposed upon the time period by retrospective analyses – which is perhaps inevitable. My own approach to the issue of historicism involves looking at my primary texts predominantly through the lens of eighteenth-century (along with antique) melancholy discourse. I take careful consideration, for example, to avoid using anachronistic terminology or diagnoses, aside from when contemplating the resonances between melancholy and mental illnesses of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This also provides a preliminary answer to the question of why I continue to use the term “melancholy” throughout the dissertation, even when it might seem somewhat at odds with the experiences being described. Before proceeding with an outline of the methodological interventions this dissertation hopes to make, then, it is important to acknowledge several other paradigms of melancholy that held sway during the long eighteenth century itself.

Defining Melancholy

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as the nascent discipline of psychology (and, to some extent, psychiatry) began to come into its own, branching out from its anthropological and philosophical roots, and as the discourse regarding mind and body was revised under medical advancements, it is possible to trace the emergence of several different, major trends in writing on melancholy. While the somatic treatment of the ancient Greeks that originally gave the illness its
name – that is, black bile, μέλαινα χολή, or melaina cholé – continued to dominate understandings of melancholy, and the moralistic interpretation popular during the Middle Ages\textsuperscript{18} also factor into these patterns, one may also observe the categorization of melancholy as a mental or emotional disorder. The following definitions are not meant to be read as a comprehensive history – and Chapters 1 and 3 especially delve more deeply into some of the issues under discussion – but I offer these descriptions as a rough guide for the reader to refer back to.

\textit{Medical/humoral.} The first tradition of melancholy locates the affection within the Hippocratic theory of the four humors, which, beginning in antiquity, became “the central explanatory scheme for dealing with diseases” for approximately two millennia.\textsuperscript{19} As such, the basic tenets of humoralism continued to guide medical practices well into the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{20} Within the framework of humoral medicine, the body is made up of four principle substances (or humors): blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm. An optimal mixture of these substances was associated with health, and a disturbance in equilibrium (i.e., imbalance in the form of an excess, a deficit, or an inadequate mixture of one or more humors) signaled disease.\textsuperscript{21} In this paradigm, then, melancholy is an organic ailment, more specifically caused by an overabundance of black bile. While all bodies, as noted, were composed of a mixture of substances, the humor most present in a person was thought to determine his or her “temperament,” complexion, or character. Despite humoral medicine’s adherence to physiology, melancholy was distinguished by neuro-psychiatric

\textsuperscript{18} During the Middle Ages, melancholia was alternately known as the sin of acedia, which connoted sloth, neglect or non-caring, apathetic listlessness, and depression without joy. See Noel L. Bran, “Is Acedia Melancholy?”, \textit{Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences} 34, no. 2 (April 1979): 180-199, https://doi.org/10.1093/jhmas/XXXIV.2.180.


\textsuperscript{20} Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl note that humoral medicine “was destined to dominate the whole trend of physiology and psychology until almost present day” (3).

\textsuperscript{21} Jackson writes, “Diseases were rooted in the general nature of man and were conceived of as deviations from the normal balance of his bodily humors that was associated with health” (13-14).
symptoms, i.e., “symptoms of mental change, ranging from fear, misanthropy and depression, to madness in its most frightful forms.”

The temperaments, too, were implicated in the emotions toward which a person was inclined, and medical writings of the period attest to what we would today term a kind of psychosomatism, with emotions inducing bodily change and, vice-versa, physiology playing a role in one’s emotional life. In the Hippocratic writings, melancholia is associated with “aversion to food, despondency, sleeplessness, irritability, restlessness,” as well as prolonged fear and sadness. Finally, the qualities associated with black bile – coldness and dryness – became part of the image or portrayal of the melancholic. Melancholy is demarcated in part by the languishing of internal bodily movement; circulation, flow of liquids and solids stalls, tracing out “a certain profile of sadness, of blackness, of slowness, of immobility” in the melancholic. In other words, the blackness of the humor is appropriately metaphorically connected to the blackness of the disposition.

Mental/affective. This model posits that melancholy is caused by a disturbance in the mind or soul, rather than strictly in the body; it might be the result of emotional, spiritual, intellectual, or psychosomatic factors, including those traceable to the sub- or unconscious. In medicine, there was a gradual shift away from humoral conceptions of the body as a hydraulic machine, in which a physiology of solids and fluids dominates, to a nervous and neurological model by the mid- to late eighteenth century. This latter model is associated with the rise of nervous medicine and, with it, the concepts of sensibility, sympathy, and sensualism. Neurological discourses of sensibility

22 Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl, 14. The authors note that “emotional disturbances were described as an indication of ‘mental melancholy,’ and finally – a constantly repeated diagnosis – the symptoms were summarised in the phrase: ‘Constant anxiety and depression are signs of melancholy’” (15). This last quote is taken from Hippocrates’ Aphorismata.
23 See Jackson, 30.
24 Ibid.
26 At its most basic, sensibility denotes the body’s capability to respond to stimuli. Author Anne C. Vila elucidates, “sensibility was also central to European physiological terminology beginning in the 1740s, when it edged out
reconceptualized the human body as a decentralized mixture of fibers that link nerve endings to
the “commune sensorium,” i.e., the brain as the site of the soul’s location. Sensation and feeling,
sensory impressions and commands of will, and even knowledge gained by the senses, then, are
the result of nervous transmission through the body, via the nerves, to the brain. Moreover, nervous
medicine shifts the interior differentiation of the body: each organ has its own unique function, its
own specific tasks, while the nervous system itself acts as the “steering authority” for physiological
communication. As such, the nervous system took on an almost mythological connotation as the
mediator between body and mind. As Jean Starobinski writes in his history of the treatment of
melancholia, “Das Nervensystem, so fand man, sei jenes ausgedehnte, empfindliche Netz, durch
das der Mensch sich selbst wahrnimmt, die Welt erkennt und auf einströmende Eindrücke
antwortet. Nerven und Hirn diktieren dem Individuum geistiges und körperliches Verhalten.”
The sensibility of the nerves and the sympathy of the nervous system also led to a reorientation of
bodily aberrancies: gone are the disturbances of balance between corporeal entry and exit; rather,
nervous medicine gave rise to “the subtler option of nervous malady.” As Hans-Jürgen Schings
concludes, “Folge des überfeinen Nervensystems ist die übergroße Empfindlichkeit. […] Reizbar,
sensibel, labil, ist [der Empfindsame] allen Einflüssen, so schwach sie auch sein mögen, schutzlos
preisgegeben. Sein Sensorium registriert alles. So kommt es zum raschen Wechsel der Körper-

irritability as the word most commonly used to describe the innate capacity to react to stimuli, which was held to
underlie all the phenomena of life in the human body.” In Enlightenment and Pathology: Sensibility in the Literature
27 See Vila, 28-29.
28 Albrecht Koschorke, “Physiological Self-Regulation: The Eighteenth-Century Modernization of the Human Body,”
29 Jean Starobinski, Geschichte der Melancholiebehandlung von den Anfängen bis 1900 (Berlin: August Verlag, 2011),
11.
30 Ibid. See also Albrecht Koschorke, Körperströme und Schriftverkehr: Mediologie des 18. Jahrhunderts (Munich:
Wilhelm Fink, 2003): “In einem allgemeinen Umwandlungsprozeß besetzten sympathetische Ströme – Sympathie im
modernen Gebrauch des Wortes verstanden – die Schlüsselfunktionen, die früher die Ausgießung der Physi
innehatten. Die Wissenschaft von den seelischen Regungen lost sich allmählich von der Humoralpathologie ab. Die
Affekte sind nun nicht mehr schwarzgallige oder dickblütige Säfte. Sie nehmen einen diffusen, flüchtigere
Aggregatzustand an” (101).
Within the nervous framework, melancholy is “eine Erkrankung des sinnlich reizbaren Seins.” An example that comes up in several of the texts under analysis here is hypochondria, which alludes to a version of mental affliction (i.e., as opposed to an organic disease) that hampers the objective perception of reality, making room for nervous delusions.

The notion of melancholy as Geisteskrankheit also has its origins in the rise of early psychology or Seelenkunde in the late eighteenth century. Representative for this school of thought is the work of Karl Philipp Moritz, author of Anton Reiser (in which a pathology of the imagination is of central importance; see Chapter 3) and editor of the Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde als ein Lesebuch für Gelehrte und Ungelehrte (1783-1793), one of the first popular psychological journals in Germany. Moritz defines Seelenkranckheit or mental illness as “Mangel der verhältnismäßigen Übereinstimmungen aller Seelenfähigkeiten […] Die tätigen Kräfte müssen mit den vorstellenden Kräften in einem gewissen Verhältnis stehen; sind sie gegen dieselben zu stark, und bekommen das Übergewicht, so ist dieses Krankheit der Seele.” Such a definition speaks to a paradigm of health and sickness with roots in Greek and humoral traditions of medicine, in which the mind is a mixture of qualities, and a healthy mind is one that maintains a balance between elements. At the same time, however, the implication of qualities of mind (i.e., instead of the body, such as bile, blood, or any specific organ) implies a mental and emotional etiology of Seelenkranckheit, rather than a strictly somatic one.

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31 Schings, Aufklärung und Melancholie, 49. See also Koschorke, Körperströme: “Nervosität, Sensibilität und soziales Empfinden [greifen nun] funktionell ineinander” (123).
32 Starobinski, 111.
“Poetic” or sentimental. Diverted from its Greek roots, and, consequently, from its position in the system of temperaments, along with its location in the body (the spleen or, more generally, the abdominal region), melancholy becomes something other than physiological disorder, pathology, or permanent disease. In poetic or sentimental melancholy, “there are echoes of another world…where soft notes, sweet perfumes, dreams and landscapes mingle with darkness.”34 This description, provided by Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl’s foundational text Saturn and Melancholy, refers to a thread of etymological development in which melancholy “has become a synonym for ‘sadness without cause,’” “a temporary state of mind, a feeling of depression independent of any pathological or physiological circumstances.”35 A history established by the belles-lettres, parallel to but independently from scientific and medical literature, it is “the specifically ‘poetic’ melancholy mood of the modern,”36 wherein melancholy becomes linked with subjectivity, “heightened sensibility,”37 and “enhanced self-awareness.”38 It is potentially even “superior to the jovial enjoyment of life.”39 As “the joy in grief,” poetic melancholy is by nature a synthesis of antithetical qualities. Yet the result is always aestheticization, because even when melancholy does imply suffering, it is a noble kind of sorrow: poetic melancholy, as melancholy aestheticized, is an exquisite gloom. However, the dividing line between poetic sorrow and pathology is incredibly tenuous, for pathology reappears precisely at the moment when the “feeling of enhanced self” is carried through to its logical conclusion, i.e., in cases of solipsism.

34 Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl, 230.
36 Ibid., 231.
37 Ibid., 230.
38 Ibid., 231.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 of this dissertation, entitled “Feeling on the Edge: The Representative Transformation of Melancholy in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s Die Leiden des jungen Werther,” offers a reading of the novel that includes both humoral considerations of melancholy as well as its poetic variant, along with a form of re-pathologization. Indeed, I argue that Werther offers a panoramic range of “melancholies” – from emotion, to aesthetic metaphor, to the affective dimensions of lovesickness, to psychophysiological syndrome with devastating consequences. Further, each of these representations bears its own unique language, so that the novel employs several different, at times competing, discourses of melancholy. The lyrical, subjective, and emotional tone of sentimental melancholy is interwoven with what I term “pathological melancholy,” which is marked by a crippling sense of inertia, degradation, and insignificance, eventually resulting in anaesthesia, i.e., “Unempfindlichkeit und Gefühllosigkeit.”41 In this formation, melancholy bears every resemblance to what we would today term depression. While the third-person commentaries within the novel discuss this form of pathological melancholy via structures of medico-empiricism, these analyses discount the voice of the sufferer. Here, Werther calls to mind Foucault’s notion of “unreason” in the eighteenth century, which precipitates the desire to cease communication with the insane, and the subsequent incommensurability of the language of reason with the language of madness. As Foucault argues, “The language of psychiatry . . . is a monologue of reason about madness…”42 From Werther’s pen, on the other hand, melancholy is expressed as an acute anxiety toward articulation in general, as continual self-doubt, hesitation, and rare breakthroughs. In this way, Werther establishes a language for mental anguish. The fact that this language often works

41 Katja Baatenfeld et. al, eds., Gefühllose Aufklärung: Anaesthesia oder die Unempfindlichkeit im Zeitalter der Aufklärung (Bielefeld: Aesthesis Verlag, 2012), 14.  
42 Foucault, Madness and Civilization, xii.
via a poetics of inarticulability is, I believe, significant evidence of the novel’s ongoing contemporary relevance.⁴³

Chapter 2, “Extraordinary Affects: Titanic Melancholy in Friedrich Schiller’s Die Räuber,” delves into the quandaries of inexpressibility by pairing more recent insights from the fields of emotion and affect studies alongside emergent eighteenth-century notions of sympathy in both medicine and the philosophy of moral sentiments. The dramaturgy of Sturm und Drang picks up, in a sense, where Werther leaves off – that is, with the question of how to express inarticulability. On the one hand, melancholy is communicated via intense, exuberant language, in structures of repetition, exclamation, and parataxis. At the same time, however, such linguistic features point directly back to the dilemma of conveying pain through language. Therefore, it becomes necessary to tune into the affective mode of drama: movement, gestures, facial expressions, responses to and behavior toward other characters, and involuntary actions, such as trembling and fainting, all hint at the unspoken physicality of melancholy. We feel with the brothers Moor as they experience the consequences of their carefully devised physiognomies, psychological profiles, and respective crises of faith as a continual restlessness, whereby melancholy is equivalent to pure reactivity, megalomania, and manic depression, going so far as to possess or “infect” other characters as well. The result, as illustrated by Karl von Moor’s army of doubles, is the creation of ever greater, aggregate states of affect that would, were they able, “den ganzen Bau der sittlichen Welt zugrund richten.”⁴⁴ Indeed, the melancholy suffered by Karl and Franz, based on both its active nature and

⁴³ Addressing melancholy in her 1989 monograph, Julia Kristeva writes, “I am trying to address an abyss of sorrow, a noncommunicable grief that at times…lays claims upon us to the extent of having us lose all interest in words, actions, and even life itself” In Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 3.
the incessant pacing of the play throughout which it unfolds, is an almost entirely externalized version of the private and subjective illness suffered by Werther.

In Chapter 3, “Approaching the Psyche: De-somatizing Melancholy in Karl Philipp Moritz’s Anton Reiser: Ein psychologischer Roman,” I attend to the question of how disease has been conceptualized historically and what it means in the present day. In both Anton Reiser and in his larger project of Erfahrungsseelenkunde, Moritz largely departs from the traditional medico-physiological discourse of his time – that is, the structures of humoral medicine that still dominate eighteenth-century medical approaches. Instead, Anton’s melancholy is presented almost explicitly as a nervous and neurological, mental and affective disorder; and, equally, it is the product of his social environment, with sources of pathology deeply embedded in the protagonist’s traumatic upbringing. With the implication of both a mental and a social framework of mental illness, Moritz blurs the lines between source, sign or symptom, and disorder or disease, thereby undoing the central explanatory structure of humoral medicine (in which black bile leads to melancholy in all cases). In this way, Moritz complicates and problematizes the issue of melancholy, looking forward to unclear causality as a criterion of modern mental illnesses. The splintering of causality, in turn, results in another spectral presentation of melancholy outbreaks. These run the gamut from the “joy of grief” to hypochondria, from the Leiden der Einbildungskraft to absolutely devastating instances of Seelenlähmung, a state in which utter self-hatred is combined with intense apathy, resulting in an inability to act in any way – which again finds echoes in contemporary accounts of depression.

45 With the implication of environmental and social factors in Anton’s pathology, Moritz acts as a predecessor to psychoanalytical theories of mental illness, especially in the sense that, before Freud, “the body was not defined by the social and psychic, but rather, vice-versa” (Vila, 4). As Jean Starobinski writes, “…in marking a radical difference between psychological explanation and physiological explanation, in ‘dephysiologizing’ psychology, Freud was ‘desomatizing’ the causal system commonly accepted by his predecessors.” In “A short history of bodily sensation,” Psychological Medicine 20, no. 1 (February 1990): 29, doi: 10.1017/S0033291700013209.
Each of these chapters, while pursuing their own specific questions, centers around a kind of “diagnostic” literary analysis, an interpretation that is informed by both close reading and by the application of the history of medicine. In the first instance, I offer a comparative analysis of descriptions, symptoms, and explanations of individual melancholy in the primary text at hand. Subsequently, I place these literary descriptions into dialogue with non-literary texts, such as eighteenth-century reference literature (lexica and dictionaries, namely Zedler’s Lexikon and Diderot and D’alembert’s Encyclopédie) and medical and pseudo-medical treatises, including Karl Philipp Moritz’s work on Seelenkunde. A perspective informed by medical history allows me to explore how, and to what extent, the symptoms experienced by these protagonists fit into established and burgeoning models of science and psychopathology of the period – the passions, the medicalization of the imagination, the order of nervous diseases – as well as the ways in which the re-pathologization of melancholy departs from these frameworks. Further, as Matthew Bell, whose own work on melancholy in German literature and anthropology spans three decades,46 has noted, “there are undeniable diachronic continuities between eighteenth-century melancholy and current conceptions of depression that stem from the nature of the object itself.”47 This is a gap in scholarship that I have addressed by incorporating contemporary works on mental illness, such as Andrew Solomon’s The Noonday Demon (2001) and Julia Kristeva’s Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia (1989), into my literary analyses.

In Chapter 4, “To Walk on His Head: Writing Madness and the Experience of Melancholy in Georg Büchner’s Lenz,” I take a different approach than that of the previous chapters. The


concern is still with inarticulability (Lenz scarcely speaks in the text, and he is largely divorced from his previous identity as a *Sturm und Drang* writer), but in *Lenz*, incommunicability branches out into an even greater question about the feasibility of representing melancholy altogether. The protagonist Lenz experiences his illness on an almost entirely private level. He is so completely cut off from other characters, so trapped inside of himself and his own deteriorating mind, that space functions differently – that is, on a subjective, individualized level – for him. Concurrently, this illustration of space in the text tells us something significant about how Lenz experiences his surroundings through his illness: *Wahn* warps everything around it, like a star reconfigures space-time. At the same time, the novella is more interested in exploring the melancholic *world* than it is in describing or diagnosing (or, for that matter, chastising) the melancholic subject. *Lenz* is written from the vantage point of an almost completely subjective gaze of its protagonist. This steadfast adherence to subjectivity, as well as elements of the text’s narrative style, such as free indirect discourse, run on sentences and sentence fragments, and narrative suddenness, communicate the impossibility of ever really defining, elucidating, or representing melancholy for the non-melancholic. In *Lenz*, the only possible account of melancholy is a portrayal of what it is like for the melancholic to experience the world. Therefore, the text is the best example of one of the major premises of this dissertation: that pain, both physical and psychological, is ineffable, un-pin-point-able, only to be approached vaguely by metaphors, similes, and “als ob”s. Finally, while *Lenz* jumps ahead some thirty years in time from the other texts at the center of this project, I would argue that the work still belongs to the long eighteenth century, especially since the protagonist Lenz is based on the historical *Sturm und Drang* author and contemporary of Goethe, Schiller, and Moritz.
Despite the enormity of advances in science and medicine in the treatment of mental illness, these fields come up short in their ability to apprehend and to convey the contours of a malady that functions by eroding language and selfhood. The subjective element is central to melancholy’s description, as conveyed by the satire inherent in Jacques’ plaint. Shakespeare has Jacques deny that his melancholy is the same kind as the generic melancholies he disavows, but there is no feasibility to the claim that any particular soldier or lawyer’s “own” melancholy would neatly fit into the category of “the soldier’s melancholy” or “the lawyer’s melancholy.” Whereas early modern approaches to melancholy might very well accept a collective or Ständegesellschaft form of diagnosis, the texts that I work with in this dissertation, as products of the late eighteenth century, push back against this kind of approach, instead eliciting something much more unique and individual. Moreover, unlike, for example, pneumonia or lung cancer, modern melancholy cannot be traced back to a single biochemical signature. This is, then, where art steps in: to proffer insight into and solidarity with melancholy’s uniquely subjective truths, and to express that which is otherwise ineffable.
CHAPTER 1
FEELING ON THE EDGE: THE REPRESENTATIVE TRANSFORMATION OF MELANCHOLY IN JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE’S DIE LEIDEN DES JUNGEN WERTHER (1774)

If there is a figurative center around which Goethe’s Die Leiden des jungen Werther (1774) orbits, it is invariably the heart – and all that which is bound up in its signification. In the introduction to their 1993 edited volume Literature and Medicine During the Eighteenth Century, Marie Mulvey Roberts and Roy Porter define the parameters of the heart in a particularly succinct fashion:

The heart is an immeasurably rich resource. The heartbeat is the most audible sign of life, its cessation a palpable mark of death: no wonder it dominates figurative reality, being, tautologically, the heart of the matter. For poets, if not for clinicians, hearts ache and break. The heart has its reasons of which the reason knows nothing; and so hearts are the “wisdom” of feeling, unlike heartless logic.48

While the texts of Sensibility employ the heart and its metonymic equivalents (die Seele, die Brust) in order to signify pathos, “refined, tender feelings,” and “morality and emotion,”49 Roberts and Porter imply something beyond poetic usage. Their discussion of the heart begins with an introduction to De Motu Cordis, William Harvey’s 1628 landmark publication that established the circulation of blood, a text that is in many ways an apotheosis of seventeenth-century empiricism.50

If Sensibility places the heart into an expressive order beyond the scope of the body, wresting it

50 Despite its logical structure and application of proof, Harvey’s treatise is itself rife with similes and metaphors, referring, for example, to the heart as blood’s “sovereign” and “the inmost home of the body.” On the Motion of the Heart and Blood in Animals (New York: Harvard Classics, 2001). https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/h/harvey/william/motion/complete.html.
from the arteries, veins, and blood vessels, then early modern medicine, by contrast, could easily
remind us of its physical place, its objective functions.

In *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*, the eponymous protagonist poses the tremendous
rhetorical questions in his introductory letter, “Bester Freund, was ist das Herz des Menschen! [...] O was ist der Mensch, daß er über sich klagen darf!”
Like Hamlet’s famous exclamation, “What a piece of work is man!”, Werther’s are lines that open up an enormous dialogue about emotions, physiology, the nascent field of psychology, about the contested relationship between the body and mind, and about the subject – that is, about the fabric of the human being, at a time when she or he was undergoing a crisis of self-definition in the wake of a gradual bifurcation from the external institutions that had created meaning for her for centuries past, such as religion, church, class, and family. In this chapter, I argue that *Werther* uses multivalent representations of melancholy as a way of working through these lacunae in the wake of secularization and individualization and renegotiating the ambiguities of science and subjectivity, passion and reason. While there has been much secondary literature on the aspect of melancholy in *Werther*, it is most often approached as a monolithic phenomenon. In contrast to these authors, I contend that forms of melancholy range vastly throughout the novel: from emotion to aesthetic metaphor to psychophysiological reality with devastating consequences. Moreover, each representation generates its own unique language (or, as the case may be, languages), so that the text engages several different, at times competing, discourses of melancholy, including the notion of inarticulability. In other words, the novel uses an array of both images and discourses of

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51 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*, in *Goethes Werke*, Weimarer Ausgabe (Weimar: Böhlau, 1887-1919 [1899]), 19: 3-192. Henceforth all citations from the novel will be included in parenthesis within the main text.
melancholy to reflect the ongoing social and cultural tensions in terms of subjectivity, science, and individuality evidenced above.

*Werther*, the novel, as well as Werther, the literary character and de facto first-person narrator, initially present the reader with an account of aestheticized, poetic, or *empfindsame* melancholy. Eighteenth-century German encyclopedias, lexica, and dictionaries usually term this phenomenon *Schwermuth, Melancholie/Melancholei*, or “The Joy of Grief.” It is characterized in these texts as a temporary state of mind, or mood, marked primarily by the cultivation of enhanced sensibility and self-awareness, as well as by a synthesis or concurrence of antithetical qualities, namely joy and sadness. Its language is the ornate, effusive, emotional intensity and immediacy of Sensibility: lyrical to the extreme, with feeling as its bedrock. In this paradigm, even when melancholy does imply suffering, it is a noble kind of sorrow, the grief experienced by the philosopher-artist-genius, or the sadness effected by the magnificence of a dark and somber setting, as in the letter of September 10, 1771, when moonlight ensconces Werther, Lotte, and Albert in a web of darkness and intimacy, and Werther besets Lotte’s hand “mit tausend Tränen” (84). Poetic melancholy, as melancholy aestheticized, is an exquisite gloom. Its discourse, therefore, is always connected to those of beauty and aesthetics.

Over the course of Goethe’s novel, however, Werther’s language shifts from indulgence in representations of subjective and aestheticized melancholy, tapping instead into a pathologized form which involves a vastly different set of aesthetic concerns. Whereas poetic melancholy implies beauty and creativity, pathological melancholy entails an inverse aesthetic; it is marked by

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a kind of crippling stagnation, degradation, and insignificance,\textsuperscript{55} as well as by violence and the threat of self-harm. It is, further, a syndrome with psychological and physiological symptoms. If it does involve a sense of subjectivity, then this is subjectivity without agency: carried through to its logical endpoint, subjectivity becomes pathological solipsism, which results in a distorted view of the world.\textsuperscript{56} Moreover, pathological melancholy as it is depicted in \textit{Werther} entails a distinct passivity, a shutting down of the expressive faculties, inhibiting both the ability to create (art, thought, meaning, etc.) and to participate actively in the world, as well as the sensory organs, dampening the capacity to experience emotion. In the end, it is akin to numbness, “anaisthesis,” i.e., “\textit{Unempfindlichkeit und Gefühllosigkeit,}”\textsuperscript{57} as when Werther likens himself to ghost: “Kein Wink der vorigen Welt, kein Pulsschlag meines damaligen Gefühls” (115). It is a depression in terms of physical energy and in mood, affecting the life force not totally or suddenly, but in a slow and nebulous way. Nevertheless, pathological melancholy still follows a teleological arc, in which a gradual mounting of symptoms leads ultimately to a breakdown.

In some instances, then, pathological melancholy as it is described here appears to be similar to the ancient Greek conception of melancholy as derived from humoral medicine, which is by no means inactive in the eighteenth century, as expounded, for example, in Johann Kaspar Lavater’s \textit{physiognomische Fragmenten} (1775). Overall, however, it is an entirely different

\textsuperscript{55} See Andrew Solomon, \textit{The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression} (New York: Scribner, 2001). I am to some extent influenced by Solomon’s opening description of depression: “Depression is the flaw in love. To be creatures who love, we must be creatures who can despair at what we lose, and depression is the mechanism of that despair. When it comes, it degrades one’s self and ultimately eclipses the capacity to give or receive affection. It is the aloneness within us made manifest, and it destroys not only connection to others but also the ability to be peacefully alone with oneself. [...] The only feeling left in this loveless state is insignificance” (15).

\textsuperscript{56} Michel Foucault in fact refers to madness as “the moment of pure subjectivity” (although, according to Foucault, the madman’s discourse with himself is one of perfect rationality). \textit{Madness and Civilization}, 176. Roland Barthes makes a similar argument with regard to the amorous subject: that “what the world takes for ‘objective,’ I [the lover] regard as fictitious; and what the world regards as madness, illusion, error, I take for truth.” In \textit{A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments}, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 229-230.

\textsuperscript{57} Baattenfeld et. al., eds., \textit{Gefühllose Aufklärung}, 14.
representation, whereby the patient’s whole biography is inextricably linked to his illness, and the patient becomes, in turn, “the subject of his disease.” In this latter sense, Werther may be read as a Krankheitsgeschichte (a story of illness, a medical history of illness). In fact, there is a long line of criticism that interprets the novel in this way. Returning to Michaela Ralser’s formulation, the case study invariably uses a narrative structure which transforms “Krankheitsbild zur -geschichte,” bringing the static image of illness to life. The Krankheitsgeschichte traces the illness’s genesis, development, and course, and in its later conception under Freud, it comes to incorporate both the “äußere Zeichen und Symptome[]” as well as the “Erzählung der PatientInnen.” In other words, it is the story of illness interwoven with the patient’s biography.

The story-within-a-story of the case study in a larger literary text presents an example par excellence of the coming together of science and subjectivity. As Nicolas Pethes comments in his 2014 article “Telling Cases,” late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century German texts borrowed heavily both from structures and techniques of medical genres, prioritizing empirical evidence and particular observation, in order to express realism and individualism. Pethes writes, “sentimental histories [i.e.] in Sturm und Drang literature are based upon biographical narratives bearing a strong resemblance to the amnestic, diagnostic, and therapeutic elements of medical case

58 Michel Foucault, The Birth of the Clinic, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 59. Here, Foucault compares eighteenth-century hospital practice with its focus on the individual patient especially to clinical medicine, in which the disease forms the main locus of concern, while the patient (i.e., the body in which the disease is found) is incidental.
59 The most obvious historical basis for this type of reading goes back to a letter written by Johann Kaspar Lavater on June 10, 1777, in which he ostensibly sums up Goethe’s response to contemporary moral outrage exhibited at Werther’s suicide: “Historiam morbi zuschreiben, ohne unten angeschriebene Lehren, a, b, c, d. – sagte mir einst Göthe, da ihm einige Bedenkliehkeiten über seinen Werther an’s Herzen legte... Geschichtlich oder Dichterisch dargestellt; ‘Siehe das Ende dieser Krankheit ist der Tod! Solcher Schwärmereyen Ziel ist Selbstmord!’” Johann Caspar Lavater, Vermischte Schriften, vol. 2 (Winthurhus: Steiner, 1781), reprinted in Georg Jäger, Die Leiden des alten und neuen Werther (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1984), 107.
60 Ralser, “Der Fall und seine Geschichte,” 117.
61 Ibid., 120-121.
62 Ibid., 118.
63 Pethes, “Telling Cases,” 27.
Authors, especially those as well connected to academic and medical circles as Goethe and Schiller, used real cases for their fictional writing. Based on Goethe’s letters and his reflections on Werther in Dichtung und Wahrheit, it is common knowledge that the plot of the novel was heavily influenced by the real suicide, in 1772, of Karl Wilhelm Jerusalem. Many of the details in August Kestner’s letter to Goethe describing the circumstances of Jerusalem’s death are recounted almost word-for-word in Werther, from the position in which Jerusalem shot himself, to the single glass of wine, to the “blauen Rock mit gelber Weßte” (48) donned by both, and Emilia Galotti lying open on the desk. In this sense, Werther as a case study reflects eighteenth-century trends in literary representation, even as it breaks conventions in narrative form and in its multivalent presentation of melancholy.

A kind of Krankheitsgeschichte in nuce, the most pronounced example of pathological melancholy in the novel is found in Werther’s description of a “Krankheit zum Tode” (48). Nevertheless, the phenomenon actually enters into the novel from its opening pages – albeit without a name. From an extratextual perspective, the closest approximation would be to term it “depression” in the modern sense of the word – especially in Susan Sontag’s formulation, “Depression is melancholy minus its charms.” Yet remaining within the late eighteenth century, one would be left with ambiguous designations such as Seelenkrankheit, Gemüthskrankheit, or Hypochondrie, which might imply any number of illnesses. Its language is made up of several competing, fragmentary discourses. While it bears some structures of medico-empiricism (e.g., as

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64 Ibid., 33.
stated, in its resemblances to humoral medicine, but mostly via third-person commentaries within the narrative, such as the voice of the editor, the rare advice given by Wilhelm and by Werther’s mother, and the dismissals made by Albert), these aspects of discourse do not speak the illness’s full “truth,” since they discount (and, in some cases, are wholly incommensurate with) the voice of the sufferer. From Werther’s pen, however, this subjective truth is expressed in simile and metaphor, as well as via an acute anxiety toward articulation in general. His struggle with language conveys something significant about pathologized melancholy, which is portrayed as continual self-doubt, hesitation, and rare breakthroughs. Because of these symptoms, e.g., Werther’s self-doubt and confusion, the discourse of pathological melancholy remains elusive, and Werther’s illness or Leid remains unnamed and largely unspoken. Nevertheless, in deploying a poetics of inarticulability to describe melancholy, the text actually ends up generating a language to do just that – i.e., to define melancholy, and to provide a linguistic blueprint for future eighteenth-and nineteenth-century literary representations of mental illness (geistige or seelische illness).

In this chapter, I will proceed with a close reading and analysis of passages in the text that describe instances of aesthetic melancholy and its pathological counterpart, respectively. As pathology is the main concern of this chapter, I will look especially to the question of whether these passages fit into established categories of eighteenth-century medical history and

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68 This also takes into account Foucault’s notions of “unreason,” which places psychological illnesses at the fringes of society and includes the impulse to cease communication with the insane (see Foucault 1988), as well as the medical “gaze,” which precludes the sufferer from partaking in the language of their illness or treatment (see Foucault 1994).
69 There are some exceptions to this. In the penultimate letter of December 4, 1772, Werther recounts that Lotte has said to him, “Werther, Sie sind sehr krank...” (139). Werther also mention sickness several times in reference to himself, most notably in the letter of June 1, 1771: “Was Lotte einem Kranken sein muss, fühlt ich an meinem eigenen armen armen Herzen...” (42), and August 28, 1771: “Es ist wahr, wenn meine Krankheit zu heilen wäre, so würden diese Menschen es tun” (78). Nevertheless, even though the entire novel may be read, as I have argued, as a Krankheitsgeschichte, it is the story of an illness that is never named. The only obvious counterexample to unnamability is in the letter of August 12, 1772, when Werther discusses his notion of a “Krankheit zum Tode.” This episode is highly significant, precisely because of the issue of language and naming, and therefore it will be discussed in detail further on in this chapter.
psychopathology, such as the imagination, the passions, and the order of nervous diseases – or whether, as I have posited, pathological melancholy represents something quite new, especially in the sense of Unempfindlichkeit or anaesthesia, and in the synthesis of biography with illness. Further, in order to elaborate my argument about discourse and inarticulability, I will take into account a Foucauldian perspective, particularly the notion of an “incentive to discourse,” i.e., the idea that an issue or phenomenon may be discussed ad infinitum without ever speaking its “truth” or providing its name. This notion of illness and inarticulability mirrors the way that love discourse works in Niklas Luhmann’s systems theory as well as in Roland Barthes’ A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments, both of which will also be taken into consideration. The inclusion of these latter texts is particularly important because of the way in which Werther’s melancholy expresses itself through love and attachment.

A Physicalized Psychology: Aesthetized and Greek Melancholy

While Karl Philipp Moritz does not explicitly address Werther in his “Beiträge zur Philosophie des Lebens” (Contributions to the Philosophy of Life, 1780), nor in his “Vorschlag zu einem Magazin einer Erfahrungsseelenkunde” (Proposal for a Magazine of Empirical Psychology, 1782), his ideas in these texts, which reveal him to be a forerunner of modern psychology, provide a psychological framework and a working definition of mental illness – as described in the introduction to the dissertation – that line up with Goethe’s depiction of Werther, even though the novel predates Moritz’s works. Therefore, it makes sense to outline and review some of these principles before delving into a literary analysis. The “Beiträge” present a view of melancholy in which the greatest challenges to a healthy mind are “‘inertia’ and ‘inactivity’ (Trägheit, 70 See Foucault, History of Sexuality, 17-35.
In other words, it is essential that we “keep our minds active.” As Matthew Bell summarizes,

The mind is powered by a single source of activity or “fundamental force” (Grundkraft). [...] For Moritz, the Grundkraft manifests itself in our mental life’s constant ebb and flow between opposed emotions, such as pain and pleasure, hope and fear. This must be kept in regular motion [...] Somewhat disappointingly this insight leads to a conventional eighteenth-century rationalist psychology, according to which cognition is always at risk from the emotions. By contrast, in his later . . . Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde . . . Moritz treats the relation between emotion and cognition more organically. Emotion and cognition are implicated in one another: the emotions influence cognition, as Descartes and the Enlightenment had taught, but also distorted cognitions give rise to maladaptive emotions.

In the Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde, Moritz promotes a framework of mental health and illness that is essentially rooted in balance – balance between mental torpor and overstimulation, as well as between emotions and reason.

Indeed, whether one is dealing with a science of (humoral) substances, materials and fluids, fibers, vapors, or Kräfte, something common to all of these models is the element of motion. Spirits rise and sink, fibers vibrate or become rigid, liquids circulate or are stopped up, humors flow or accumulate, Kräfte remain active or begin to decay. Therefore, pathological melancholy as both a mental and somatic syndrome finds distinct correlations in motion, often giving way to a physicalized psychology. To some extent this is self-evident: racing thoughts might result in a

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71 Bell, German Tradition, 91.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
rapid pulse, as in the symptoms one experiences during a state of anxiety. Yet Werther’s psychophysiological mirroring evidences an evolving understanding of the symbiosis between body and mind. Moreover, although manic depression, I would argue, cannot function as an informed diagnosis (because it is anachronistic), its central metaphorical tenets of alternating quickness and slowness are nevertheless traits that comes to bear on the overall narrative tempo of the text. While an ebb and flow between qualities of movement is maintained throughout the novel, just as Werther shifts back and forth between different languages of melancholy, I would posit that the overall tendency or “course” of symptoms (i.e., the Krankheitsverlauf) is one of deceleration. In this analogy, Werther begins in a state of what is at least apparent health, stability, productivity, and activity, full of curiosity for the environment around him, and ends up empty and inert, like an object, “wie ein versiegter Brunnen, wie ein verlechter Eimer” (128).

At first blush, Werther’s opening letters (May 4, May 10, and May 12, 1771) seem entirely evocative of poetic melancholy. To be sure, they contain some of the most highly referenced tropes of Sentimentalism: the proclamations of friendship, the manifold references to the heart and soul, the excurses on the emotions. The dominant motif in these letters is nature. Shot through with richness (“wärmt mit aller Fülle” (6); “jede Hecke ist ein Strauß von Blüten, und man möchte...in dem Meer von Wohlgerüchen herumschweben und alle seine Nahrung darin finden” (7); “Sie allein ist unendlich reich” (17)), nature acts medicinally as a locus amoenus and a panacea, a restorative agent: “Eine wunderbare Heiterkeit hat meine ganze Seele eingenommen,” writes Werther, “gleich den süßen Frühlingsmorgen, die ich mit ganzem Herzen genieße” (7). Lying down in the grass, he feels himself entirely connected to nature, describing its vividness as if

\[\text{\textsuperscript{74}}\text{In this chapter, and throughout much of the dissertation, I use “Sentimentalism,” and, alternately, “Sensibility,” as the English translation of Empfindsamkeit. “Sensibility,” however, denotes a broader usage, especially as it is deployed in medical terminology.}\]
through a microscope. Everything appears precious, from the “tausend mannigfaltige Gräschen” and “das Wimmeln der kleinen Welt zwischen Halmen” to “die unzähligen unergründlichen Gestalten der Würmchen, der Mückchen” (8), a depiction which further reveals the “heightened sensibility,” "enhanced self-awareness," and amplified perception of poetic melancholy.

In addition to intensified perception and self-awareness, nature also provides a medium for the experience of empfindsam, poetic melancholy as emotion, especially in the iteration of letter writing, which is an act of contemplation, memory, and imagination. If the feeling of fulfillment in nature provides Werther with the enhanced sensibility of poetic melancholy, then contemplation creates the narrative through which Werther experiences melancholy as a spectrum of emotions. Melancholy is not only a heightened awareness of the self and its surroundings, but also the capacity for reflection and evaluation of these circumstances; it is the self-incurred act of prolonging this reflection, often in order to cultivate a certain emotion or memory, generally resulting in a feeling of low-level pain that is experienced as pleasurable. As Raymond Klibansky, Erin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl write in their foundational text Saturn and Melancholy (1979), “the soul enjoys its own loneliness, but by this very pleasure becomes again more conscious of its solitude.” Again, this “becoming” might be a process of pleasure or pain (or an ambivalent synthesis of the two), resulting in an agreeable state of being or in a negative experience of the self. If it is pleasurable, as depicted in these nature letters, then it easily takes on “an addictive quality.” Despite the amount of joy that the act of self-reflection might bring the melancholic,

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75 Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl, 230.
76 Ibid., 231.
77 Ibid.
78 Bell, German Tradition, 71.
however, there is an implicitly “dangerous brinkmanship of the emotions,” since melancholy implies such an intimate relationship between pleasure and pain.

The psychophysiological qualities of fullness and fulfillment that Werther experiences in the early letters are reflected in his prose style, most prominently in the letter of May 10, which conveys a sense of heightened speed, a quality that becomes evident simply by examining the letter’s basic linguistic features. In particular, the penultimate sentence occupies nearly two-thirds of the letter’s thirty lines. In it, some twenty different subordinate clauses collapse into “a paratactical stream.”

Wenn das liebe Tal um mich dampft, und die hohe Sonne an der Oberfläche der undurchdringlichen Finsternis meines Waldes ruht, und nur einzelne Strahlen sich in das innere Heiligtum stehlen, ich dann im hohen Grase am fallenden Bache liege, und näher an der Erde tausend mannigfaltige Gräschen mir merkwürdig werde; wenn ich das Wimmeln der kleinen Welt zwischen Halmen, die unzähligen unergründlichen Gestalten der Würmchen, der Mückchen näher an meinem Herzen fühle, und fühle die Gegenwart des Allmächtigen . . . mein Freund! wenn’s dann um meine Augen dämmert, und die Welt um mich her und der Himmel ganz in meiner Seele ruhn wie die Gestalt einer Geliebten . . .

The exclamatory, rushed, and filled-to-the-brim quality of language forms a crescendo-like buildup with indeterminate speed, lacking in closure. The sensation of a “wunderbare Heiterkeit” manifests itself as a state of being akin to intoxication, in which sensory impressions are fused and confused. It is not just Werther’s mind and body that are connected in this instance; further,
“vision, hearing, and touch” all form a “dazzling synaesthesia,” as Matthew Bell suggests. He continues, “[Werther’s] mind is bombarded by diverse impulses which he cannot separate or analyse. The world loses its contours and merges into an impressive but impressionistic mess of colours, shapes, sounds, and feelings.” The amplification and conflation of senses, combined with an intense litany of feeling, result in the “rush” of an all-consuming experience—a something for which Werther spends the rest of the novel searching. For David Wellbery, the “all-consuming experiences” of “love, literature, and nature” function by absorbing Werther “into an imaginary world in which the constraints of social obligation seem completely erased.” In other words, and particularly relevant to my argument, the citation from Wellbery points to the way in which the experience of wild nature involves a separating-out of the subject from the social world, thus facilitating the shaping of his or her identity as an individual.

Despite its apparent Sentimentalism, several signs of evidence for pathological melancholy do emerge from this letter. First and foremost, there is the issue of Werther’s perception: namely, his mind appears unable to process distinct information, impressions, and impulses, his thoughts working instead in an associative and additive fashion. As Moritz notes in his “Grundlinien,” some ideas, “welche täglich und Augenblicklich in der Seele strömen,” must quickly be dampened, so that others can remain clear, the “Denkkraft in einem gesunden Zustande bleiben.” If, on the other hand, one tries to retain all the manifold thoughts floating around in one’s head at any given
time, “so entsteht ein Übertrieb von Ideen, welcher Unordnung und Verwirrung verursacht, und
die Reinigkeit und Klarheit im Denken hemmet...”  

As in Werther’s case, “Der Mangel des
gehörigen Zusammenhangs zwischen den Ideen scheinet die Ursach vieler Krankheiten zu seyn.”

A second argument for the interpretation of Werther’s melancholy as pathological is
connected to the first. Not only are Werther’s ideas ambiguous, self-propagating, and arbitrarily
connected; moreover, they are extravagant (“überspannt”), grandiose, “erhitzt.” Werther
himself acknowledges that the kind of ecstatic, contour-shattering experience he has just described
borders on transgression, i.e., it is a desire for an essentially pathological, destructive experience,
as he concludes his letter with a confessional undertone and an element of prescience: “Aber ich
gehe darüber zugrunde, ich erliege unter der Gewalt der Herrlichkeit dieser Erscheinungen” (8).

Above, I have described his experience as a “rush” akin to intoxication. Indeed, in late eighteenth-
century medico-philosophical discourses of Sensibility, Werther might be described as a
Schwärmer or enthusiast. In the fifth volume of Moritz’s Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde, the
editor C. F. Pockels describes the Schwärmer as someone, “dessen Ideen durch einen Rausch, oder
andere Art von Betäubung der Seele über einander geworfen und in Taumel gesetzt werden...”

While Schwärmerei is often religiously connoted, it need not be so; much depends on the object
or circumstance towards which the enthusiasm or fanaticism is directed. In his 1784 work Über
das menschliche Herz, Göttinger Hainbund member Schack Hermann Ewald writes, “Es giebt

88 Ibid.
89 Ibid., 35-36.
Despite the lack of a single, unified “psychologisch Durchgedachtes” theory of “Schwärmerei” (Sauder instead notes
that there are “gute Bermerkungen und Fakten” to be found amongst the writings of Shaftesbury, Kant, Leonhard
Meister, Johann Christian Lossius, Zimmerman, and Justus Christian Hennings), Sauder does conclude that, “[i]n
allen Schriften über Schwärmerei wird ihr Überspanntheit vorgeworfen.”
91 Carl Friedrich Pockels, “Über die Schwärmerey und ihre Quellen in unsern Zeiten,” Magazin zur
Erfahrungsseelenkunde 5, vol. 3; 29.
92 Pockels, “Über die Schwärmerey,” 27.
noch mehrere Gegenstände, in Absicht auf welche Schwärmerey statt finden kann, z.B. Dankbarkeit, vorzügliche große Talente, Andacht, Mitleid, Großmuth u.s.w. aber eine Ausführung dieser Fälle würde mich zu weit führen.”

Ewald is satisfied to divide Schwärmerie into two main categories: religiously or politically motivated enthusiasm and poetic enthusiasm (“dichterische Schwärmerie”\textsuperscript{94}). In other words, in the eighteenth century, Schwärmerie is used to describe both religious enthusiasm and a more compulsive form of Empfindsamkeit or interiority.

Finally, the elements of fullness and free-flowing association are then translated into Werther’s writing, which lacks the clarity of expression he wishes for – the ability to “dem Papiere das einhauchen, was so voll, so warm in [ihm] lebt, dass es würde der Spiegel [der] Seele...” (8). Of course, Werther has just articulated himself – indeed, in one of the most famous nature scenes to ever appear in literature. Nevertheless, he is still full of anxiety vis-à-vis language: “ach könntest du das wieder ausdrücken...” (8). The letter reveals that the ability to articulate himself clearly in writing is, for Werther, tantamount to the potential to fully connect with another person, as he does in this instance with nature.

Essentially, then, we see in hindsight that the text does not begin with Werther in a state of complete mental health. If it is to be read as a Krankheitsgeschichte, then it is a Krankheitsgeschichte in medias res. That this is the case is in fact already exemplified by the manifold references to Greek melancholy in the very first letter of May 4, 1771. Werther reassures Wilhelm, “ich will mich bessern, will nicht mehr ein bisschen Übel, das uns das Schicksal vorlegt, wiederkäuen, wie ich’s immer getan habe; ich will das Gegenwärtige genießen, und das Vergangene soll mir vergangen sein” (5-6). In other words, Werther promises his friend that he

\textsuperscript{93} Schack Hermann Ewald, \textit{Über das menschliche Herz: ein Beytrag zur Charakteristik der Menschheit} (University of Lausanne, 1789).
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid.
will “get better” or “improve” – ostensibly from a past event or misfortune (here, his relationship to Leonore): this suggests a melancholic tendency to remain fixated on the past. In the next instance, Werther refers to what is presumably a piece of advice given to him by Wilhelm: “Gewiss, du hast Recht, Bester, der Schmerzen wären minder unter den Menschen, wenn sie nicht...mit so viel Emsigkeit der Einbildungskraft sich beschäftigten, die Erinnerungen des vergangenen Übels zurückzurufen...” (6). This statement again alludes to the inability to recover from the past, but it furthermore reveals the process by which this fixation may occur, i.e., via an overactive imagination. Finally, Werther writes that he is in fact recovering: “Die Einsamkeit ist meinem Herzen köstlicher Balsam...und diese Jahrszeit der Jugend wärmt...mein oft schauderndes Herz” (6). Here Werther in fact reveals the melancholic’s affinity for isolation. While some of these allusions, particularly the latter example of nature worship and the enjoyment of solitude, are typical of eighteenth-century melancholy discourse, the reference to distorted imagination is particularly troubling, given what has just been concluded in terms of Werther’s synesthesia, his lack of clear perception, and his desire for pathological fulfillment.

The imagination is again thematized in the letter of May 13. In this instance, it appears as a corollary of reading. Werther balks at Wilhelm’s offer to send Werther his books, attesting, “ich bitte dich um Gottes willen, lass mir sie vom Halse! Ich will nicht mehr geleitet, ermuntert, angefeuert sein...” (10). Werther’s tendency to overempathize and overidentify with the literature he reads indeed forms a leitmotiv throughout the novel. Literature becomes a mode of escapism, propelling Werther beyond the insufficiencies of the here and now, into “worlds more congenial

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than the ‘real’ world in which he is forced to reside.”96 Like nature in Wellbery’s analysis, literature provides Werther with an all-consuming experience, “absorb[ing] him into an imaginary world in which the constraints of social obligation seem completely erased.”97 In this way, narrative – instead of the social reality Werther eschews – provides even more material for the reflective process of melancholic contemplation, working to create a feedback loop which “enforc[es] his truth values and judgmental imperatives.”98

Most decisively, intertextuality is wholly definitive of the novel’s three dominant modes. Homer guides the pleasant nature reveries of Book One. The famous “Klopstock!” moment represents Werther’s falling in love with Lotte. Finally, “die düstere, gestaltlose, schwermütige Ossianische Welt”99 provides the backdrop of Werther’s psychological descent in Book Two. As such, Werther is represented as a character who responds to an aestheticized melancholy because it speaks to his own pathology. While it may be argued that it is indeed possible to engage in a less identificatory reading practice of sources of poetic or sentimental melancholy, the genre itself encourages such overidentification. Moreover, as a labile character, Werther is implicated in this latter type of reading. The depiction of him as a melancholic consumer of the literature of melancholy implicates the reader of Werther, itself a piece of sentimental literature, in turn. In other words, the same phenomenon happens on a microlevel within the text as that which occurs on the outer level of the reader vis-à-vis the text.100 Just as Werther reads and projects literature into his own life, so too does the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century reader of Werther, starting from the prologue’s promise that the novel should become the reader’s friend, inviting him or her

98 Ibid.
100 See Bell, Goethe’s Naturalistic Anthropology, 96.
to “schöpfe Trost aus [Werthers] Leiden” (3), and ending in an entire mythology of Wertherfieber and copycat suicides.

To return to the text, an internal and external state of entropy and restlessness is gently conveyed throughout the May letters, reflecting a physicalized psychology in which the dominant motion, mode, or feeling reverberates quite literally throughout Werther’s mind and body. Werther refers to his heart as “oft schaudernd[]” (6), “so ungleich, unstet,” it “braust . . . genug aus sich selbst” (10). His blood is “empört”; his temperament fluctuates easily “vom Kummer zur Ausschweifung und von süßer Melancholie zur verderblichen Leidenschaft” (10). His senses totter in a “Tumult” (20). He perceives his writing as an undifferentiated mass of “Verzückung, Gleichnisse und Deklamation” (19). The state of Werther’s writing is, indeed, often closely connected to his physical symptoms of melancholy. As in the letter of May 10, fervency and fullness extend from his body to his sentence structure, while later on in the novel, his physical emptiness and affectlessness manifest themselves in what Foucault attributes to melancholics’ speech as “slackened, scattered, checked sequences,”\(^\text{101}\) and “stammered, imperfect words without fixed syntax.”\(^\text{102}\) It should be noted, however, that Werther’s judgment of his own writing does not always correspond to its reality. Even when he articulates incredibly well, he never deems it so – as, for example, in the May 10 letter.

If the letter of May 10 shows Werther at his idealistic high, then those of May 22 and June 21, 1771 reveal his capacity for a deep plunge in mood. Both of these letters, although separated by the event of meeting Lotte, are marked by themes of insignificance, transience, aimlessness, and futility. On May 22, Werther begins,

\(^{101}\) Kristeva, \textit{Black Sun}, 52.

\(^{102}\) Foucault, \textit{Madness and Civilization}, x.
Wenn ich die Einschränkung ansehe, in welcher die tätigen und forschenden Kräfte des Menschen eingesperrt sind; wenn ich sehe, wie alle Wirksamkeit dahinaus läuft, sich die Befriedigungen von Bedürfnissen zu verschaffen, die wieder keinen Zweck haben, als unsere arme Existenz zu verlängern, und dann dass alle die Beruhigung über gewisse Punkte des Nachforschens nur eine träumende Resignation ist, da man sich die Wände, zwischen denen man gefangen sitzt, mit bunten Gestalten und lichten Aussichten bemalt – Das alles, Wilhelm, macht mich stumm. (14)

A similarly existential perspective is displayed on June 21. Werther writes,

Ich eilte hin, und kehrte zurück, und hatte nicht gefunden, was ich hoffte. O es ist mit der Ferne wie mit der Zukunft! ein großes dämmmerndes Ganze ruht vor unser Auge . . . wenn wir hinzueilen, wenn das Dort nun Hier wird, ist alles vor wie nach, und wir stehen in unserer Armut, in unserer Eingeschränktheit, und unsere Seele lechzt nach entschlüpftem Labsale. (39)

What is important in these instances is not that Werther collapses into sadness or despondency. Rather, the significance lies in the exposure of the convictions that define the depressive reverse side of his nature, as well as in the way Werther seeks solace inside his own mind. In the May 22 letter, Werther’s response to his negative train of thought is to retreat inside himself. Instead of engaging realistically with the existing world around him, Werther prefers to build a world “aus sich selbst” (16) and to “dreamingly” imagine the world as he desires it to be: “Ich kehre in mich selbst zurück, und finde eine Welt! […] Und da schwimmt alles vor meinen Sinnen und ich lächle dann so träumend weiter in die Welt” (14). Similarly, in the June 21 letter, he creates a blissful image of homecoming and quaint domesticity. As Caroline Wellbery writes in her 1984 article “From Mirrors to Images,” such “images” are “narrative instances which describe a highly charged
emotional experience whereby the faculty of imagination prevails over the real, objective experience.” Whether it is nature, novels, writing, or the simple act of people-watching, in his mind Werther is continually loading these events with personal meaning. Werther’s is a constant pursuit of a kind of Auflösung between himself and the world, wherein they mesh or merge as one – wherein they melt together, like passionate hearts. At the same time, however, this desire is not fulfillable; it can only occur in the mind, as a prophylactic to reality. As such, it requires a distance from existent social obligation, thereby necessitating a kind of self-isolation, as the early quotation by David Wellbery indicates.

The tendency to build worlds and images of his own creation, to think in terms of narratives he reads and those of his own fabrication, is further revelatory of Werther’s pathological imagination; the retreat inside his mind additionally evidences a kind of dangerous solipsism. Taken together with his extreme vacillation between moods, it may be suggested that Werther suffers from an emotional disorder, namely from excessive passion. In the parlance of Empfindsamkeit, these traits speak to extreme sensations and/or affects (“passions”), both “positive” (those associated with speed or intensity, such as Enthusiasmus, Schwärmerei, and Raserei), and “negative” (correlated to stagnation, e.g., Schwermuth, Gleichgültigkeit). In this scenario, Werther’s heart becomes his guiding organ, but the problem is that it is too “weak” to function or to process sensations in a healthy way: it must be soothed with “Wiegengesang” and treated “wie ein krankes Kind” (10). Werther adheres precisely to the Popularphilosoph Johann Daniel Salzmann’s 1776 description of a sensitive heart: “Je empfindsamer das Herz, desto stärker

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104 In Latin, “Passio” translates to suffering or Leid. “Excessive passion” is a term that would have been used during the eighteenth century, perhaps in the form of Schwarmerei; it also hangs together with Moritz’s notion of imbalance.
105 See Sauder, Empfindsamkeit, 129.
sind die Leidenschaften; es muß nothwendig also seyn. Denn Eindrücke müssen um so tiefer seyn, als das Herz weich ist; und tiefe Eindrücke sind Leidenschaften.”

Here, Leidenschaft refers to “ein Begehren, welches so stark ist, dass es die Vernunft beherrschen kann.” In other words, as we have seen, Werther lacks the attendant rationality necessary to dampen the force of his sensations. Caught up in solipsism, he has no frame of reference with which to judge his own emotions; rather, everything becomes self-referential.

Love as Fixation: Lotte

If we assess Werther’s character to be not just that of an idealistic, teary, and sensitive hero, but one of pathology tending toward both classical melancholy as well as newer understandings of the passions and processes of the mind, then we may view the novel not just as a determinate or arbitrary process of Krankheitsgeschichte, but also as a kind of (ultimately hopeless) quest for healing, as I would argue, in the form of “comblement” or “fulfillment” that Roland Barthes describes in A Lover’s Discourse. This is no ordinary gratification, but an excess of it; it is fulfillment as “a precipitation”:

something is condensed, streams over me, strikes me like a lightning bolt. What is it which fills me in this fashion? A totality? No. Something that, starting from totality, actually exceeds it: a totality without remainder, a summa without exception, a site with nothing adjacent (“my soul is not only filled, but runs over”).

106 Johann Daniel Salzmann, Kurze Abhandlungen über einige wichtige Gegenstände aus der Religions- und Sittenlehre. Facsimile of the 1776 addition, reprinted in Sauder, Empfindsamkeit, 133. The motif of “impressions,” as if the heart were a kind of molten wax to be stamped, is reminiscent of Locke’s tabula rasa, discussed in Chapter 3, as well as Freud’s mystic writing pad or Wunderblock.

107 Ibid.

As we have seen, Werther is continually searching for an all-consuming experience of emotion. In his words, “wir sehnen uns, ach! unser ganzes Wesen hinzugeben, uns mit aller Wonne eines einzigen, großen, herrlichen Gefühls ausfüllen zu lassen” (39). Similar to the description from Barthes, Werther’s is not the pursuit of an ordinary emotion. Rather, to continue with Barthes, it is an “engulfment” of feeling: “Either woe or well-being, sometimes I have a craving to be engulfed [...] misery or joy engulfs me . . . I am dissolved, not dismembered; I fall, I flow, I melt.”

Nevertheless, the object to which the feeling refers, the need it expresses, remains unclear. In this sense, it is a kind of Sehnsucht, a longing or aspiration for an unnamed or unconscious desire, just as Freudian melancholy is understood as an insurmountable grief toward an unknown loss.

Further, as the text itself suggests, this form of fulfillment is unachievable, except through pathological or transgressive means. The May 10 experience in nature comes close, yet as Werther admits to himself, “du suchst, was hieneiden nicht zu finden ist” (12) and again, “alles [ist] vor wie nach [...] und unsere Seele lechzt nach entschlüpftem Labsale” (39).

Unable to locate this kind of overwhelming fulfillment in himself or on his own, yet still believing it can be found on earth, Werther seizes upon Lotte. Adoration and dedication are common themes in the discourse of Empfindsamkeit, but the language with which Werther describes Lotte alternates between inexpressibility and a more pathological Schwärmerei. What is indeed striking in the letter of June 16 is how Werther struggles with words. Unlike his earlier claims of inarticulability, a sense of speechlessness really does emanate from this letter, evident in

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109 Ibid., 10.
110 The best expression of such an experience might be that which Werther describes as having felt with the deceased friend of his youth: “ich habe das Herz gefühlt, die große Seele, in deren Gegenwart ich mir schien mehr zu sein, als ich war, weil ich alles wahr, was ich sein konnte. [...] blieb da eine einzige Kraft meiner Seele ungenutzt? Konnt ich nicht vor ihr das ganze wund bare Gefühl entwickeln, mit dem mein Herz die Natur umfasst?” (12).
111 In other words, the grief cannot be overcome because the patient does not know whom or what has been lost. See Sigmund Freud, “Trauer und Melancholie,” in Gesammelte Werke. Vol. 10, Werke aus den Jahren 1913-1917, 428-447 (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1946), 428-447.
its series of false starts: “Ich habe – ich weiß nicht. [...] Einen Engel! – Pfui! [...] Das ist alles garstiges Gewäsch, was ich da von ihr sage... Ein andermal – nein, nicht ein andermal...” (24). In fact, Werther does break off the letter (in order to visit Lotte, at that) before coming back to finish it.

This letter reveals something about questions of articulation and speechlessness vis-à-vis romantic love. *Werther* would seem to articulate the shift in the experience of love in the eighteenth century as articulated by Niklas Luhmann: it “no longer borrows its values from other functional spheres”\(^{112}\); it is not based on economic gain or family alliances. Rather, “what one loves in the beloved is the particularity of that person.”\(^{113}\) In “Romantic Love and the Enlightenment” (2004), Edgar Landgraf discusses the theme of incommunicability in *Werther* vis-à-vis Luhmann’s theory of structural differentiation in modern society. Landgraf argues that the thematization of inarticulability in *Werther* stems from “the inability of language [to] adequately express inwardness, authenticity, and immediacy”\(^{114}\) in an increasingly stratified, individualized, and idiosyncratic world – that incommunicability in fact represents the emergent aesthetic of romantic love, its special “threshold problem.”\(^{115}\) At the same time, the articulation of love invariably means borrowing a language composed of conventional “codes,” largely from literature. As Barthes writes, in what is tantamount to a reiteration of Luhmann’s thesis and a more poetic-sounding version of it, “To try to write love is to confront the *muck* of language: that region of hysteria where language is both *too much* and *too little*, excessive (by the limitless expansion of the *ego*, by emotive submersion) and impoverished (by the codes on which love diminishes and levels

\(^{112}\) Wellbery, “Afterward,” 284.

\(^{113}\) Ibid.


The only way to escape that “muck,” to actually communicate the incommunicability of love, is the act of suicide. Landgraf’s argument ends on this note: suicide represents “the logical consequence of [the search for] self-validation in love and the expression of love according to the newly found ideals of authenticity and immediacy.” Furthermore, Werther stages his suicide, thus turning it into a form of artistic act. As such, his death performs the enigmatic speech act that is called for by the new ideal of romantic love. Werther’s suicide is the concluding expression of incommunicability and thus, paradoxically, “the ultimate authentication of his love and validation of himself.”

If Werther is a character who is prone to ecstatic oscillations of mood, who suffers from symptoms of classical melancholy, and whose imagination is highly vulnerable to influence, then Lotte is quickly established as his positive foil. As Werther describes her, “So viel Einfalt bei so viel Verstand, so viel Güte bei so viel Festigkeit, und die Ruhe der Seele bei dem wahren Leben und der Tätigkeit” (24). Her depiction in the novel provides a framework for emotional health, which is tellingly offered up in terms of balance, harmony, and stability. In this sense, Lotte in fact reflects an eighteenth-century model of wellbeing, both in terms of Empfindsamkeit and Erfahrungsseelenkunde. Whereas Werther is representative of “Überspannung” and the “‘Seelenseuche’ der Empfindelei,” Lotte embodies a gentle “Gemüthsruhe,” i.e., “‘Zufriedenheit’ als Gleichgewicht der Seelenkräfte.” She personifies the “sanfte[]

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116 Barthes, 99.
117 See Landgraf, 40.
118 Ibid.
119 Ibid.
120 The description of Lotte is reminiscent of Sophie from Rousseau’s Émile – the perfect helpmeet for the male protagonist. Yet Werther’s relationship with Lotte fails to produce the desired outcome of sentimental education, thereby producing a further critique of sensibility.
122 Sauder, Empfindsamkeit, 128.
Empfindungen . . und die Grade angenehmer Empfindungen,” 123 such as Zärtlichkeit (tenderness), Fröhlichkeit (mirth or conviviality), Entzücken (enchantment, ravishment), Wohlwollen (benevolence, good will), Mitleid (compassion, sympathy), and Dankbarkeit (thankfulness, gratitude), which together form the “Grundsäulen tugendhafter Gesinnung und die Quelle tugendhafter Motive,” 124 but without compromising reason or Verstand. In other words, Lotte fulfills the tenets of aufgeklärte Empfindsamkeit that speak to virtue, as well as the balance or harmony called for by Seelenkunde. 125 These qualities shine through in Werther’s observations of her: “Siehst du, sie ist so mit ganzem Herzen und mit ganzer Seele dabei, ihr ganzer Körper eine Harmonie, so sorglos, so unbefangen [...]” (31). In other words, Lotte is, as Ellis Dye has argued, “a genuine ‘other’ to Werther,” and it is precisely this “otherness, both as a different personality and as the ideal complement to his being, [that] is part of her attractiveness to him.” 126

In the ensuing pages, Lotte presents as a new all-consuming experience, one in which Werther can ostensibly lose himself: “sie hat allen meinen Sinn gefangen genommen” (24), he rhapsodizes, “meine ganze Seele ruhte auf der Gestalt, dem Tone, dem Betragen” (27). He continues to wax poetic:

Wie ich mich unter dem Gespräche in den schwarzen Augen weidete! wie die lebendigen Lippen und die frischen muntern Wangen meine ganze Seele angezogen! wie ich, in den herrlichen Sinn ihrer Rede ganz versunken, oft gar die Worte nicht hörte, mit denen sie sich ausdrückte! [...] Kurz, ich stieg aus dem Wagen wie ein Träumender . . . und war so in Träumen rings in der dämmernden Welt verloren, dass ich kaum auf die Musik achtete…

(30-31)

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123 Ibid.
124 Ibid., 130.
125 See *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde* 1, no. 1, 33-34.
126 Dye, 87.
Finally, Werther writes, “Ich war kein Mensch mehr” (32). In fact, these citations reveal just how little attention Werther pays to Lotte. He is so mesmerized by her physical presence, so enchanted by her entire figure, that he completely fails to listen to what she actually has to say. This is, in Barthes’ words, “To Love Love,” or the phenomenon of “annulment”: “Explosion of language during which the subject manages to annul the loved object under the volume of love itself: by a specifically amorous perversion, it is love the subject loves, not the object.” Indeed, this is the sensation of “engulfment” of which Barthes speaks: through the experience of (what Werther believes to be) falling in love, Werther falls, floats, and melts; it is the same synesthetetic conflation of senses, thoughts, and feelings as in the May 10 nature letter. As with literature, it is a mode of escapism from the systematic negativism and fear underlying Werther’s worldview. In this reading, Werther is not necessarily in love with Lotte. Rather, he is in love with the pathological, albeit temporary, rush of intoxication of being outside of oneself, and he is enamored of the “Validierung der Selbstdarstellung,” the temporary ego boost stemming from union with another person, that he believes to have found in Lotte.

Instead of escaping his solipsism, Werther succumbs to its flip side, i.e., loss in the other, an adulation of the unavailable object. In terms of classical melancholy, Lotte becomes part of a mental alienist conception – that is, as opposed to understandings of melancholy as an inherently somatic disorder – of obsession, of idée fixe. Although the notion existed well before him, the name most commonly associated with fixation is Sigmund Freud. In his 1914 watershed essay Trauer und Melancholie, Freud posits that both mourning and melancholia are the result of “den Verlust einer geliebten Person oder einer an ihre Stelle gerückten Abstraktion...” When the loved

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127 Barthes, 31.
128 Luhmann, 165.
person or object ceases to exist, an opposition arises in the sufferer to this loss. While the work of mourning demands time to overcome this opposition, the mourner eventually “gets over” the lost object and is able to go on living as before. The melancholic, however, is not able to overcome the loss. Freud attributes this inability to the fact that there is something unconscious about the melancholic’s loss: the melancholic may not clearly recognize the loss he or she has suffered; or, if he or she does, then it may be a recognition of whom, but not what, has been lost. The lost object, instead of being let go, is sublimated into the psyche of the melancholic, whereby it becomes an obsession of the ego, “eine Identifizierung des Ichs mit dem aufgegebenen Objekt...” The self-reproaches and self-harm – the “unzweifelhaft genußreiche Selbstquälerei” – exhibited by the melancholic are, per Freud, misdirected reproaches toward the lost object. From the point of view of mood or affect, melancholy is

seelisch ausgezeichnet durch eine tief schmerzliche Verstimmung, eine Aufhebung des Interesses für die Außenwelt, durch den Verlust der Liebesfähigkeit, durch die Hemmung jeder Leistung und die Herabsetzung des Selbstgefühls, die sich in Selbstvorwürfen und Selbstbeschimpfungen äußert und bis zur wahnhaften Erwartung von Strafe steigert. Indeed, according to Freud, the most dangerous aspect of melancholy is the “Überwindung des Triebes, der alles Lebende am Leben festzuhalten zwingt,” the “Selbstmordneigung” of the melancholic.

In the letter of July 16, Werther describes the physiological sensations that occur when he is in Lotte’s presence. What Werther experiences here goes far beyond the scale of healthy affects

130 Ibid., see 431.
131 Ibid., 433.
132 Ibid., 435.
133 While Aufhebung has an ambivalent meaning – to remove, but also to preserve – in this instance, it connotes the former.
134 Freud, 435.
135 Ibid., 440.
that betray the body in love. In an overwhelming cascade of lyrical and emphatic language, Werther describes how


Werther’s account includes polymorphous effects at each level of his organism. Physically, he experiences hypersensitivity: the visceral palpitation of the blood coursing through his veins, the need to pull back as if from a flame, the kaleidoscopic sensation of his own soul “throbbing” in his nerves. Then comes psychomotor inhibition and coenesthetic slowing down: he becomes dizzy, feeling like he is about to faint. He is cognitively dazed, not even knowing “what he’s about” when he is near her. And he suffers morally, debating nervously with himself about the purity of his intentions.

The aforementioned descriptions from medical literature (namely, Freud) of obsessive preoccupation resulting in the desire for self-harm all find nearly one-to-one correlations in Werther. His fixation with Lotte commences almost immediately. On June 19, Werther continues his narration of his first encounter with Lotte. He concludes by writing, “seit der Zeit können Sonne, Mond und Sterne geruhig ihre Wirtschaft treiben, ich weiß weder dass Tag noch dass Nacht ist, und die ganze Welt verliert sich um mich her” (27-28). On July 19, within a month of meeting her, Lotte has truly become his raison d’être: “Ich werde sie sehen! ruf ich morgens aus... Und da
habe ich für den ganzen Tag keinen Wunsch weiter. Alles, alles verschlingt sich in dieser Aussicht” (56). His passion quickly becomes self-destructive. On July 16, he recounts the desire “mir eine Kugel vor dem Kopf [zu] schießen” (55). On August 30, he again conveys the urge to self-harm: “so muss ich fort, muss hinaus! und schweife dann weit im Feld umher; einen jähen Berg zu klettern ist dann meine Freude, durch einen unwegsamen Wald einen Pfad durchzuziehen, durch die Hecken, die mich verletzen, durch die Dornen, die mich zerreißen!” (79-80). In its disenchantment, the experience of love becomes one of self-erasure and self-effacement.

*Reasonless Passion, Passionless Reason*

Such representations contribute to a definition of melancholy that has little to do with romantic scenes of moonlight and nature worship. In other words, the aesthetic of melancholy in the text is undergoing a pronounced shift, turning much more dramatically toward the pathological. This occurs most profoundly in the series of letters from August 12 to September 3, 1771, but it is precipitated by Albert’s return on June 30. It has been established that Lotte presents as Werther’s counterpart in terms of temperance, moderation of feeling, and natural virtue, and her fiancé Albert retains many of these same qualities of “aufgeklärte Empfindsamkeit,” a “durch Vernunft geklärtes und gemäßigtes Gefühl.” As Werther writes on June 30, “Seine gelassene Außenseite sticht gegen die Unruhe meines Characters sehr lebhaft ab... Er hat viel Gefühl, und [...] Er scheint wenig üble Laune zu haben” (59). Beyond this description of his character, Albert represents the counterpoint of reason to Werther’s overheated emotion.

The letter of August 12, 1771 portrays the infamous “Selbstmordgespräch” between Werther and Albert, in which Werther presents his notion of a “Krankheit zum Tode.” This episode is of utmost significance for a number of reasons, the most crucial of which is that it establishes a

basis for an eighteenth-century understanding of mental illness. In his 1976 article “Eine Krankheit zum Tode,” Klaus Oettinger discusses the issue of morality and suicide in the time period leading up to and including the eighteenth century. Apart from religious and social doctrines, Oettinger proposes that the denunciatory attitude toward suicide also prevailed because there was no understanding of mental illness during this time: 137

Das Defizit einer adäquaten Theorie der Krankheit hat wissenschaftshistorische Gründe . . . dass das psychische Leiden noch im 18. Jahrhundert weitgehend sprachlos war, dass dem psychischen Leiden offenbar noch kein Instrumentarium der Artikulation zur Verfügung stand, so dass es von den Außenstehenden hätte dechiffriert werden können. 138

Werther may very well be its first refined, popular depiction: “Es gab noch keine Selbstdarstellung des psychischen Leidens,” Oettinger writes, “Goethe brachte nun in seiner fiktiven Brief-Dokumentation dieses Leiden zum ersten Mal, soweit ich sehe, authentisch zur Sprache.” 139

Oettinger therefore underscores two major parameters of my own argument: 1) that pathological melancholy may be understood as a kind of mental illness akin to depression, and 2) that its discourse is incomplete or fragmentary, because at the time, there were no familiar words for it. The work of Karl Philipp Moritz and the other Seelenkundler would not become well known for at least another five or six years, if not longer; Moritz’s Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde began circulation in 1783. Yet Werther, as is well known, became a sensation nearly overnight.

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137 In The Birth of the Clinic, Michel Foucault asserts, “Modern medicine has fixed its own date of birth as being in the last years of the eighteenth century” (xii), and he notes in Madness and Civilization “the constitution of madness as a mental illness . . . at the end of the eighteenth century” (8).
139 Ibid.
What, then, does this newfound language for describing melancholy consist of? What does a proto-definition of mental illness look like? Let us begin with the latter question and work our way outward. Werther’s full description of “eine Krankheit zum Tode” is as follows:

Die menschliche Natur . . . hat ihre Grenzen: sie kann Freude, Leid, Schmerzen bis auf einen gewissen Grad ertragen, und geht zugrunde, sobald der überstiegen ist. Hier ist also nicht die Frage, ob einer schwach oder stark ist? sondern *ob er das Maß seines Leidens ausdauern kann?* es mag nun *moralisch oder körperlich* sein: und ich finde es ebenso wunderbar zu sagen, der Mensch ist feige, der sich das Leben nimmt, als es ungehörig wäre, den einen Feigen zu nennen, der an einem bösertigen Fieber stirbt.

[...] Du gibst mir zu, wir nennen das *eine Krankheit zum Tode*, wodurch die Natur so angegriffen wird, dass teils ihre Kräfte verzehrt, teils so außer Wirkung gesetzt werden, dass sie sich nicht wieder aufzuhelfen, durch keine glückliche Revolution den gewöhnlichen Umlauf des Lebens wiederherzustellen fähig ist.

Nun, mein Lieber, *lass uns das auf das Geist anwenden.* Sieh den Menschen an in seiner Eingeschränktheit, wie Eindrücke auf ihn wirken, Ideen sich bei ihm festsetzen, bis endlich *eine wachsende Leidenschaft ihn aller ruhigen Sinneskraft beraubt, und ihn zugrunde richtet.*

In order to illustrate this idea further, Werther presents the specific example of a young girl who, deserted by her lover, drowns herself in the river:

...sie schwebt in einem dumpfen Bewusstsein, in einem Vorgefühl aller Freuden, sie ist bis auf den höchsten Grad gespannt . . . und ihr Geliebter verlässt sie. – Erstarrt, ohne Sinne steht sie vor einem Abgründe, alles ist Finsternis um sie her, keine Aussicht, kein Trost,

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keine Ahnung! . . . sie fühlt sich allein, verlassen von aller Welt, – und blind, in die Enge gepresst von der entsetzlichen Not ihres Herzens, stürzt sie sich hinunter, um in einem rings umfangenden Tode alle ihre Qualen zu ersticken [...] ist das nicht der Fall der Krankheit? Die Natur findet keinen Ausweg aus dem Labyrinth der verworrenen und widersprechenden Kräfte, und der Mensch muss sterben. (70-71)

In both iterations, Werther illustrates a course of illness (i.e., a Krankheitsgeschichte) whereby a central idea, impression, or passion takes hold of a person’s mind (reminiscent of the melancholic’s monomania or idée fixe), eventually robbing him or her of their senses. Further, there is the notion of Grenzen or limits of human emotion: feelings may be experienced up to a certain point, but once the threshold of pain or suffering has been crossed, then the person is driven to destruction in order to ease their suffering. The necessary outcome of such an illness, according to Werther, is death. These points coincide with what has already been established about the way Goethe develops the voice and character of Werther to reflect a certain mentality of dealing (or not dealing) with the world, especially vis-à-vis the notions of unhealthy passions and of Moritz’ “Grundlinien.”

In terms of language, there is a kind of proto-Hegelian dialectic taking place, though it is incomplete: Werther’s voice represents a thesis; Albert’s is antithesis, but there is no eventual synthesis. Before Werther describes the “Krankheit zum Tode,” he and Albert quarrel about the nature of reason versus passion. Werther takes issue with the moral judgment of actions; he challenges Albert’s stance that certain acts, no matter their motive, must be deemed wrongful (“lasterhaft”). Albert, as the obvious representative of reason, retorts that exceptions may take place when these acts are committed by those who are considered to be intoxicated or insane (“als
ein Trunkener, als ein Wahnsinniger“). Here, Werther takes up the pseudo-Aristotelian problemata with regard to melancholy – that is, that most men of genius and greatness are melancholic:141

...ich habe in meinem Maße begreifen lernen, wie man alle außerordentlichen Menschen, die etwas Großes, etwas Unmöglichscheinendes wirkten, von jeder für Trunkene und Wahnsinnige ausschreien musste. [...] Schämt euch, ihr Nüchternen! Schämt euch, ihr Weisen! (67)

Albert responds by reproaching Werther for comparing suicide with great deeds, arguing that it is easier for a person to end their life than to continue to live in hardship. This is the point at which Werther describes the “illness to death,” noting that reason is useless in such a case, and, furthermore, that it has nothing at all to do with weakness: “Vergebens, dass der gelassene vernünftige Mensch den Zustand des Unglücklichen übersieht, vergebens, dass er ihm zuredet! (69) [...] Das ist eben, als wenn einer sagte: der Tor, stirbt am Fieber!” (71). With this statement, Werther articulates what is still part of the twenty-first-century discourse on mental illness: because it often does not manifest itself visibly, mental illness is easily overlooked, misunderstood, and dismissed as a flaw of character. This is perhaps the most salient point of the argument presented by Werther: the rejection of the moralistic critique of suicide and mental disorders.

Werther’s assessment of melancholy as a terminal illness reflects two key aspects of the crisis of articulability. The first of these is that, lacking a language with which to discuss mental illness, Werther must continually provide references to physical illness. The second, perhaps more important point, is that Werther shows how the discourse of reason works via an exclusionary

141 The problem reads specifically: “Why is it that all those who have become eminent in philosophy or politics or poetry or the arts are clearly of an atrabilious temperament, and some of them have to such an extent as to be affected by diseases caused by black bile, as is said to have happened to Heracles among the heroes?” In Jonathan Barnes, ed., The Complete Works of Aristotle, vol. 2, trans. E.S. Forster (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), Problemata XXX.1 953a, 10-14.
principle which sidesteps the sufferer. Here, Werther calls to mind Foucault’s notion of “unreason” in the eighteenth century, which precipitates the desire to cease communication with the insane, and the subsequent incommensurability of the language of reason and the language of madness:

As for a common language, there is no such thing . . . the constitution of madness as a mental illness, at the end of the eighteenth century, affords the evidence of a broken dialogue [...] The language of psychiatry, which is a monologue of reason about madness, has been established only on the basis of such a silence [on the part of the sufferer].

Further, the concept of unreason is linked to that of the medical “gaze”: “In order to know the truth of the pathological fact, the doctor must abstract the patient. [...] Paradoxically, in relation to that which he is suffering from, the patient is only an external fact; the medical reading must take him into account only to place him in parenthesis.” In Werther, even though Goethe maintains the protagonist’s voice to tell the majority of the story, third-person commentaries in the matter-of-fact tone of the fictional editor begin and end the novel, leaving Werther, in between, quite literally in parenthesis.

Nevertheless, the value of Werther as a Krankheitsgeschichte lies in the fact that the story is told almost entirely through the patient’s (i.e., Werther’s) voice. Eric A. Blackall poetically terms the structure of the novel a “soliloquy in the epistolary mode.” There is hardly any reference to Wilhelm’s responses – or, for that matter, any other very meaningful contradictory utterances, thereby demonstrating that the function of the writing is “not to communicate something to someone,” nor is it about dialogism or mutual exchange. In Ralser’s formulation,
the text configures the synthesis of Werther’s biography with his illness. In other words, in an individualizing moment, the patient is entered back into the equation, placed, in fact, center-stage, “rediscovered [as] the portrait of the disease; he is the disease itself, with shadow and relief, modulations, nuances, depth...” 147 Further, as Oettinger writes, _Werther_ succeeds at making the concept of mental illness intelligible, because the reader is invited to take him seriously. He is no “Tollhäusler, [der] kurzerhand aus der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft exiliert werden könnte.” 148 Rather, he remains “normal” enough to be relatable. In this sense, the innovation of the novel is that it grants complete “significance and independent legitimacy” 149 to Werther’s “purely subjective” 150 voice. However, while the productivity of _Werther_ and its discourse of pathological melancholy lie in the validity they grant to the subject and his introspection, even when this works by means of nonarticulation, and while it is Werther’s language that forms the basis of the text, Werther himself, much like Foucault’s madman or the patient under the medical gaze, is placed in a communicative vacuum. As Werther comments at the end of his and Albert’s exchange, “Und wir gingen auseinander, ohne einander verstanden zu haben. Wie denn auf dieser Welt keiner leicht den andern versteht” (72).

The discursive productivity, or hypertrophy of discourse, evident in _Werther_, reflects a growing concern with and bafflement at the uniqueness of individual experience and the loss of a definitive mode of truth, as well as an attendant quandary of language to suffice in expressing an increasing level of differentiation. While _Empfindsamkeit_ would posit truth and fulfillment through a turning inward and the cultivation of feeling, the sciences – although not divorced in the same way as in modernity from humanistic practices – sought truth in environmental observations and

147 Foucault, _The Birth of the Clinic_, 15.
148 Oettinger, 66.
150 Ibid.
systems of classification. These issues are in turn evident in the emergence of the ambivalent, “sich seiner Abgründigkeit zunehmend bewusst werdende,”\textsuperscript{151} oftentimes ill,\textsuperscript{152} modern subject in narrative genres that flourished during the eighteenth century, such as the novel, the drama, the autobiography and biography, and the case history.

To put it differently, these genres are interconnected through their deployment of new forms of “truth,” i.e., that which acts both in the sense of external reality, “the way we perceive of the world ‘out there’ as constituted by particular observations rather than by general concepts”\textsuperscript{153} (science), as well as in terms of “individual readers’ encounter with something in the text that seems to mirror a part of themselves”\textsuperscript{154} (feeling, subjectivity, identification, or \textit{Mitleid}). \textit{Werther} operates between these two planes: truth is both subjective, \textit{empfindsam}, and emotional – it is found in the elation of being in love and in the pain of unrequited love – and it is empirical: the heart is a vital organ, and if it actually “breaks,” then death is signaled. Thus the text employs both the aforementioned subjective approach, which (supposedly) inspired a generation of Wertherfieber, as well as a distinct empiricism through the psychological verisimilitude of the portrayal of the stages of Werther’s breakdown, that which informs the material of Book II.

\textsuperscript{151} Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf, \textit{Autobiographie} (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2005), 10.
\textsuperscript{153} Pethes, 28.
\textsuperscript{154} Bruce Duncan, \textit{Goethe’s Werther and the Critics} (New York: Camden House, 2005), 7.
“I have of late...”

In his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Robert Burton includes a subsection on the “Progress of Melancholy.” Here, Burton depicts a course of illness that corresponds exceedingly well to the crisis and aesthetic shift in the novel leading up to and including Book II:

Generally thus much we may conclude of melancholy: that it is most pleasant at first, I say . . . a most pleasing delusion...to be alone, dwell alone, walk alone . . . dreaming awake as it were, and frame a thousand phantastical imaginations unto themselves. [...] but at last...the scene alters upon a sudden, fear and sorrow supplant those pleasing thoughts, suspicion, discontent, and perpetual anxiety succeed in their places [...] it was not so delicious at first, as now it is bitter and harsh [...] [Melancholics] cannot endure company, light, or life itself...

On August 18, the scene indeed “alters upon a sudden”: “Es hat sich vor meiner Seele wie ein Vorhang weggezogen” (75), Werther writes, describing a precipitous “perceptual shift that turns joy into terror,”157 “und der Schauplatz des unendlichen Lebens verwandelt sich vor mir in den Abgrund des ewig offnen Grabs” (75). Once again Werther sees himself enmeshed in nature’s porousness; once again he flirts with a literary discourse of melancholy, but this time it is Ossian instead of Homer or Klopstock, and the images have become swiftly dark and violent. Using vertical metaphors, Werther delineates “[u]ngeheure Berge,” “Abgründe,” “Wetterbäche stürz[en] herunter, die Flüsse strö[m]en” (74); “in den Storm fortgerissen, untergetaucht und an Felsen zerschmettert...” (75). Nature, literature, and emotion become entangled in Werther’s mind, reinforcing each other like a hall of mirrors. The new dominant feeling that emerges is fear, but,

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155 Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 181. The change in Werther’s perception of nature mirrors that of Hamlet: “…it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the Earth, seems to me a sterile promontory…” (ibid).
157 Bell, *German Tradition*, 71.
as in the letters from May 22 and June 21, 1771, it is intermingled with insignificance, hopelessness, and lost honor and dignity.

These emotions surface again on August 22, but in this letter, anxiety and fear, “the living at the brink of dying, the not-quite-over-the-geographical-edge condition,” becomes sublimated into something duller, albeit no less constant or articulable: “eine innere unbehagliche Unbeduld, die mich überallhin verfolgt” (77). Physically, Werther undergoes a dampening of sensation. On August 30, he describes how “nun nach und nach alle meine Sinne aufgespannt werden, mir es düster vor den Augen wird, ich kaum noch höre, und es mich an die Gurgel fasst wie ein Meuchelmörder...” (79). Anhedonia sets in, and Werther is unable to experience pleasure from those things he believes to value the most: “Ich habe keine Vorstellungskraft, kein Gefühl an der Natur und die Bücher ekeln mich an” (79). Finally, Werther’s melancholy begins to unfold as an emptying-out of feeling and a dismantling of self: “Wenn wir uns selbst fehlen, fehlt uns doch alles” (79). The question then becomes: if Werther has lost himself, what more does he have to lose? Like Hamlet, in a sense, the rest of the novel is just a meditation on when and how Werther will die, as well as on religion and the theme of death itself.

As Julia Kristeva writes in her 1987 monograph Black Sun, “It has been medically attested that the succession of emotions, gestures, or words considered normal because prevalent becomes hampered during depression. The rhythm of overall behavior is shattered, there is neither time nor place for acts or sequences to be carried out.”

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158 Solomon, 28.
159 Addressing depression in his 2001 monograph, Andrew Solomon describes a very similar course of illness: “The first thing that goes is happiness. You cannot gain pleasure from anything. [...] But soon other emotions follow happiness into oblivion: sadness as you had known it, the sadness that seemed to have led you here [...] Your mind is leached until you seem dim-witted even to yourself. [...] Eventually, you are simply absent from yourself” (19).
161 Kristeva, 34.
points that can be applied to Werther’s pathological melancholy, all of which surface in the letter of January 20, 1772, and all of which parallel the course of deceleration defined at the outset of this chapter. First, Kristeva’s use of the word “hampered” relates to the notion of Einschränkung as physicalized depression; it is a term Werther not only uses explicitly in this letter, but refers to continually throughout the novel. He composes the letter to Lotte “jetzt in dieser Hütte, in der Einsamkeit, in dieser Einschränkung, da Schnee und Schloßchen wider mein Fenster wüten...” (98). While in this instance the sensation of Einschränkung presents as something almost comforting or cozy, akin to being back inside the womb, Werther concludes his letter on a darker, sarcastic and self-depricating note, writing, “der Sturm ist hinübergezogen, und ich – muss mich wieder in meinem Käfig sperren” (98) – which again speaks to the notion of Einschränkung.

Further, the “shattering” of rhythm in the citation from Kristeva points to the disruption of routines. This is paralleled by Werther’s statement, “Des Abends nehme ich mir vor, den Sonnenaufgang zu genießen, und komme nicht aus dem Bette; am Tage hoffe ich, mich des Mond scheins zu erfreuen, und bleibe in meiner Stube” (97). The distortion of rhythm, in turn, implies a breakdown in logical processing. Kristeva writes, “depressive persons [...] riveted to their pain, no longer concatenate...”162 In other words, depressives lose the ability to link ideas and events sequentially and therefore meaningfully. Werther’s sensation of being embedded in an infinite chain of divine creation was eclipsed earlier on in the text; at this point, he is increasingly unable to make sense of the world around him: “Ich stehe wie vor einem Raritätenkasten . . . und frage mich oft, ob es nicht optischer Betrug ist” (96). It is not just confusion or delirium that Werther expresses with this statement; it is, more importantly, a sense of alienation and withdrawal from the world – not into solipsism, that much is clear, since Werther has lost “die heilige

162 Ibid, 34.
belebende Kraft, mit der ich Welten um mich schuf" (96) – but rather into anaesthesia, into complete numbness and passivity (“Ich spiele mit, vielmehr, ich werde gespielt wie eine Marionette...” (97))

163 This line especially alludes to the fact that Werther is losing that which makes him human and free, especially in an eighteenth-century context.
164 Kristeva, 33.
166 Kristeva, 15.
167 Ibid., 33.
169 Ibid., 94.
170 Kristeva, 42.

...into “the blankness and asymbolia or the excess of unorderable chaos.”

For the character of Werther as for Kristeva, this emptying-out of affect is intimately connected to the loss of language – or, rather, to the “delirious discourse” of the melancholic which precedes silence, which is bound to an image, to the image, to the lost object, the fixation, or to “the Thing,” as Kristeva terms it: “For those who are depressed, the Thing like the self is a downfall that carries them along into the invisible and unnameable. *Cadere*. Waste and cadavers all.”

For Werther, this “Thing” is, of course, Lotte – but Lotte has now become synonymous with death. Werther’s crisis of articulability reaches its apotheosis in “sentences that are interrupted, exhausted, come to a standstill,” in “recurring, obsessive litanies,” in “all those stammered, imperfect words without fixed syntax” that are centered “[i]nside the image, confiscated by it, and incapable of escaping from it”: “und was mich verdrießt, ist, dass Albert nicht so beglückt zu sein scheinet, als er – hoffte – als ich – zu sein glaubte – wenn – Ich mache nicht gern Gedankenstriche, aber hier kann ich mich nicht anders ausdrücken – ...” (123). Lotte, death, anaesthesia, nothingness, “nichts! nichts!” (97): “if I am no longer capable of translating or metaphorizing, I become silent and I die.”
Is Werther’s death tragic? In Kristeva’s analysis, the invariable, most logical outcome of this kind of pathological condition – depression, as she terms it; pathological melancholy, as I have; or, in Werther’s formulation, “eine Krankheit zum Tode” – is death, and, as in Werther’s “Krankheit zum Tode,” it is a death that has absolutely nothing to do with morality, tragedy, or shame: “Within depression, if my existence is on the verge of collapsing, its lack of meaning is not tragic – it appears obvious to me, glaring and inescapable.”¹⁷¹ In the letter of November 3, 1772, Werther writes, “Und dies Herz ist jetzt tot, aus ihm fließen keine Entzückungen mehr, meine Augen sind trocken, und meine Sinne, die nicht mehr von erquickenden Tränen gelabt werden, ziehen ängstlich meine Stirn zusammen. [...] o! . . . und der ganze Kerl vor Gottes Angesicht steht wie ein versiegter Brunnen, wie ein verlechter Eimer” (128). Everything that was once full and animated in Werther’s character, all that was formerly alert and alive, ceaselessly enmeshed in and enamored of the world – everything that was wrapped up in that powerful statement, “mein Herz habe ich allein” (111) – is brought to an end with this letter. The subjective glory of man sensing, feeling, blinking, beating, in joy and pain, is dashed by the clinical image of inert objects; he has become nothing more than a quintessence of dust. But – at the same time – the pathological melancholy that has led us here is also described in highly poetic language – which I myself take recourse to with the various quotes from Hamlet. It is perhaps as much of a literary and poetic discourse as poetic or sentimental melancholy itself.

The portrayal of melancholy in Werther lies at opposing ends of the spectrum. While the early letters are still steeped in the poetic, empfindsame melancholy of nature worship and emotive richness, written in a tone of overwhelming enthusiasm and shot through with feeling, they are eventually eclipsed by a psychological emptying-out, displayed in lines full of ellipses that bespeak

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 3.
both a profound and manifold loss: of language, of emotion, and of the self. With regard to my initial question about melancholy being a way to work through questions about the self in the absence of traditional ways of defining identity, melancholy in the pathological sense represents the limits of modern individuality – the point at which the self is threatened and, eventually, eclipsed.

In the end, Goethe stages an intervention into existing representations of melancholy via his approach to the split between medical and literary discourses on the subject. With the novel’s depiction of pathological melancholy, as exemplified in the concept of a “Krankheit zum Tode,” Goethe establishes a tradition of illustrations of the “modern” melancholy subject as a necessary complement to medical discourse, since the latter cannot fully account for the melancholic’s perspective for the reasons I have described above. Yet he also merges the two approaches, medical and literary, by staging processes of verisimilitude in the protagonist’s breakdown, and by turning a real-life suicide into the very stuff of his famous, fictional novel. In each of these ways, Goethe ultimately expands the spectrum of literary approaches to melancholy. He does this, too, by elucidating the titular “transformation” as one from creation to destruction, from heartfelt curiosity to a flatlined apathy, from honor and dignity to degradation and insignificance, from articulation to muteness, from exploration to fixation, and from aesthetic to pathology.
CHAPTER 2

EXTRAORDINARY AFFECTS: TITANIC MELANCHOLY IN FRIEDRICH SCHILLER’S

DIE RÄUBER (1781)

In a prominent 1975 essay, the philosopher Colin Radford poses an apparently simple question: why do stories affect us emotionally? Otherwise known as the “paradox of fiction,” Radford suggests that emotional responses to fiction – in particular, to the state of affairs of a fictional character – are as illogical as they are familiar and powerful. Despite the ongoing instances of dramatic irony, Radford argues, referring to Romeo and Juliet, “We shed real tears for Mercutio. They are not crocodile tears, they are dragged from us... We are appalled when we realise what may happen, and horrified when it does.” Although we understand, rationally, that there is no such person as Mercutio, “we wince and gasp and catch our breath” as we suffer alongside his fate. During the 1772 Mannheim premiere of Friedrich Schiller’s Die Räuber, the audience displayed a similarly intense emotional and physical response. As the notorious report of the evening reads, “Das Theater glich einem Irrenhaus, rollende Augen, geballte Fäuste, heisere Aufschreie im Zuschauerraum. Fremde Menschen fielen einander schluchzend in die Arme, Frauen wankten, einer Ohnmacht nahe, zur Türe.” The passionate uproar which reverberated throughout the theater that night evinces a gallery taken emotionally captive, their tears, as in Radford’s example, “dragged” from them.

173 Ibid., 70.
174 Ibid., 76.
Such seemingly involuntary participation by the public is akin to that which Kathleen Stewart eloquently describes in her 2007 monograph *Ordinary Affects*, as she narrates the aftermath of a motorcycle accident: “All eyes and ears tune into the sentience of the crash still resonating in the bikers’ bodies. [...] A ‘we’ of sorts opens into the room, charging the social with lines of potential.”\(^{176}\) In other words, a collective moment arises through shared, non-verbal communication of emotion across bodies. Stewart’s publication comes as part of a recent interdisciplinary surge of interest in studies of emotion and affect. In particular, the “affective turn” – a development of the much longer-standing history and anthropology of emotions – has encouraged a reconsideration of the bodily dimensions of emotions and a renegotiation of what role, if any, emotions play vis-à-vis the mind’s cognitive capacities. The most influential definition of affect for contemporary critical theory is provided by Brian Massumi in his translation of Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*:

AFFECT/AFFECTION. Neither word denotes a personal feeling (sentiment in Deleuze and Guattari). L’affect (Spinoza’s affectus) is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body’s capacity to act. L’affection (Spinoza’s affectio) is each such state considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting, body (with body taken in its broadest possible sense to include “mental” or ideal bodies).\(^{177}\)

In other words, “affect” denotes, roughly, the physical or sensual, unmediated dimension of emotions (the “biological”), while “affection” implies an attentiveness to the social or dialogical

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dimensions which impact the former, i.e., the transmission of affect. “Emotion” then points to the cognitive, personal, intentional, object-oriented processes of feeling (the “biographical”). Further, in this line of scholarship, “emotion” is associated with language and the articulation or naming of an emotion, while “affect” occurs before linguistic realization.

Contemporary affect studies is interested in dismantling the mind-body dualism that has crystallized Western notions of the self, seeking to rehabilitate the body in this equation. Even as affects approach the purely physiological, involuntary, and unconscious, they are not discounted. Rather, they are mined alongside the body, or bodily experience, for the ways in which they contribute to action and to the production of meaning/knowledge, i.e., practices that fall outside the traditional realms of semiotic and linguistic representation. In this sense, affect studies provides a twenty-first-century theoretical point of departure for probing melancholy’s inexpressibility and unspoken physicality as it appears within Die Räuber. If melancholy is tantamount to a loss of language, if it is, ultimately, the inarticulable, as argued in Chapter 1, then it becomes crucial that we pay close attention – especially given the genre of drama – to the affective thrust of stage directions, as well as to the ways in which characters respond or react to other characters – or, indeed, call attention to the behavior of others.

In Act II, scene 2, one finds just some of the frenetic psychosomatic gestures that are typical of the entire play: “Grässlich schreiend, sich die Haare ausraufend”\textsuperscript{178}; “schreiend, sein Gesicht zerfleischend“ (64); “auf den Boden stampfend“ (65); “schlägt mit geballter Faust wider Brust und Stirn“ (65); “Voll Verzweiflung hin und her geworfen im Sessel“ (65). At the same time, the tumultuousness of such actions discloses a form (or forms) of melancholy, or mental disorder, that is radically different from its presentation in Werther. The illness suffered by both Karl and Franz

\textsuperscript{178} Friedrich Schiller, Die Räuber, Fiesko, Kabale und Liebe, ed. Gerhard Kluge (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2009), 63. Henceforth all citations from the drama will be included in parenthesis within the main text.
von Moor manifests most noticeably as mania, manic-depression, narcissism, and delusions of grandeur; it is exhibited in the brothers’ actions and reactions, their hypertrophied images of themselves, and, as the Germanist Peter Michelsen writes in his influential study of the play, their obstinacy or “Beharrenwollen auf der eigenen Verlorenheit.” Indeed, despite the gulf-like separation between their characters and the crucial, if strange plot construction that the brothers never once meet during the course of the drama, they are mirror images of each other in the melancholy they share. The result, based on both the nature of the illness and the urgent pace of the play throughout which it unfolds, is an almost entirely externalized version of the private, subjective, inward-oriented melancholy of Werther: all that which is centripetalized in Werther, processed and reprocessed again through the self in the act of letter-writing, becomes unleashed in a quick, centrifugal orgy of destruction in Die Räuber, going so far as to possess other characters as well, and bringing the audience or reader along the way. As the theater scholar Hans-Thiess Lehmann notes, “Schiller’s figures are more like allegorical schemata – mirrors referring back to each other (Karl-Franz-Spiegelberg) – than characters; they are not closed subjects so much as elements in a ‘gang.’” To be sure, as bodies incur other bodies, most noticeably in the Karl-Handlung, they are swept up in the storm, creating ever greater, aggregate states of affect that would, were they able, “den ganzen Bau der sittlichen Welt zugrund [zu] richten” (159-160).

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To refer to an affective “turn” belies a considerable, oftentimes unacknowledged debt to nuanced historical philosophies of the emotions, because most current affect theory rests on the false premise that emotions and reason have always existed in staunch dichotomy with one another, according to which the emotions have been denigrated due to their association with the bodily, the feminine, the subjective, and the irrational. While this bias is undoubtedly well and alive in certain disciplines, scholars have showed that, from antiquity until the late nineteenth century, the emotions were understood in much more multifaceted ways. In “Defining Emotions: Concepts and Debates over Three Centuries,” the historian of emotions Ute Frevert asserts that the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in particular, were marked by the existence of an impressive array of differing, parallel philosophies of emotions. The Aristotelian tradition of the “pathos”/“pathe,” by no means inactive in the eighteenth century, conceived of the emotions in a holistic way, as mind-body processes, implying a connection between thinking, feeling, willing, and acting. Aristotelian notions of “pathos” inform much eighteenth-century theater theory – in Germany, especially with Gottsched – but the rules put forth in Aristotle’s Rhetoric were subsequently being revised by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, whose Mitleidspostulat aimed at a new, aestheticized form of emotional experience via identification with true-to-life fictional characters.

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181 As I approach this section from the theoretical standpoint of a history of ideas – not a Begriffsgeschichte or history of terminology – I cannot do justice to all of the different concepts of individual words that relate to “emotion” or “emotions,” and therefore I confine myself to using “emotion(s)” and “feeling(s)” in the way we understand these words today – except for those instances in which specific terminology is essential. For more on the history of conceptual terms related to “emotion(s),” see Ute Frevert et. al., Emotional Lexicons: Continuity and Change in the Vocabulary of Feeling 1700-2000 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). These include (but are not limited to): affect, appetite, emotion, sensation, feeling, temper, passion, fervour, sensibility, and drive, in their parallel English, German, and French versions” (10). It should be noted that the significance of these terms and their “(unstable) meanings” is not to be underestimated, for they grant us access into “what contemporaries in a given time and place thought about emotions, what they knew about them, and how this knowledge helped them to order, distinguish, and evaluate feelings” (ibid.).

Meanwhile, the literary movement of Sensibility found ennoblement in feeling and subjectivity, especially in the wake of individualization, as the inner world became a framework for new existential questions.

The concept of sensibility extended well beyond literature. In moral and social discourses, sensibility bore a close relationship to sympathy, virtue, pity, and benevolence. Of special significance for the eighteenth-century revolution in social and political notions of the emotions, then, were the arguments promoted by the English and Scottish moral-sense philosophers. This line of thinkers, including Anthony Ashley Cooper (perhaps better known as the third earl of Shaftesbury), Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, and Adam Smith, among others, ascribed a remarkably positive role to the emotions vis-à-vis collective and social wellbeing as well as human subjectivity. Moral sense philosophy maintains that certain emotions – those which in fact inform human nature – may be harnessed for the good of society: compassion, virtue, and benevolence are among the moral sentiments which transform emotion into “the very current of sociability,” whereby the “current” is made possible by the principle of sympathy. In Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), sympathy is presented as less of a feeling; it is, rather, a technical term or a mechanism, the process by which we “receive by communication [the] inclinations and sentiments” of another. In Hume’s account, feelings in one person beget not just the *ideas* of those feelings in another, but rather the sensations themselves: “As in strings equally wound up, the motion of one communicates itself to the rest; so all the affections readily pass from one person to another, and beget correspondent movements in every human creature.” By contrast, Smith

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186 Ibid, 294.
advocates a “projective” and “simulative” account of sympathy. Here, sympathy is not automatic transference; instead, it involves a more complex process of identification through an effort of cognition and the imagination: we must place ourselves in the situation of another and work out “what to feel, as though we were they.”

As the feeling that binds people together, the moral sentiment finds reverberation in “earlier, magnetic and mechanistic explanations of sympathy,” e.g., the notion of attraction between similar particles, or the force of gravitation. With its origins in sensibility, sympathy is also rife in prominent medical literature. Beginning in the 1740s, based on the work of Albrecht von Haller, sensibility was commonly used “to describe the innate capacity [of the body] to react to stimuli, which was held to underlie all the phenomena of life in the human body.” Just as sensibility functioned as a link between the physical and the psychological, intellectual, and ethical facilities, sympathy also served a unifying role, providing a model of body-mind integration. In this sense, sympathy was a topic of significance for Schiller as a young philosophischer Arzt, tasked with “die Forderung, dass ‘die Känntniß des körperlichen Menschen […] von der Känntniß des Menschen, wiefern er Geist ist, nicht getrennt werden’ sollte.” Sympathy is a key term in Schiller’s third dissertation, the “Versuch über den Zusammenhang der tierischen Natur des Menschen mit seiner geistigen.” Here, Schiller posits that the Tierische, the instinctual part of

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189 Csengei, 37.
190 Zedler’s Lexicon contains three entries for sympathy, the first of which denotes this hermetic usage: “Sympathie ist […] 1. in der Naturlehre eine verborgene Übereinstimmung zweier Körper und Neigung des einen zu dem andern und wird der Antipathie entgegen gesetzt. Von solcher Sympathie geben die Naturkündigern unzählbare Exemplen in der grossen Welt, und finden sie zwischen den Planeten und gewissen Gewächsen, Metallen, Steinen, u.d.g. zwischen den Gewächsen, Tieren oder auch leblosen Dingen” (746).
191 Vila, 2.
human nature, is a prerequisite for the development of die geistige Natur, or the intellect. But Schiller’s centerpiece is a “Theorie des ganzen Menschen,” in which “die thierische Natur mit der geistigen sich durchaus vermischet” – and this with the conviction, “dass diese Vermischung Vollkommenheit ist.” Sympathy plays a fundamental role in the process of unification that results in human integrity: “Diß ist die wunderbare und merkwürdige Sympathie,” Schiller writes in the “Versuch,” “die die heterogenen Principien des Menschen gleichsam zu Einem Wesen macht, der Mensch ist nicht Seele und Körper, der Mensch ist die innigste Vermischung dieser beiden Substanzen.”

To be sure, the eighteenth-century frameworks for understanding the emotions drew heavily from the great philosophical systems of the seventeenth century, especially those of Descartes, Leibniz, and Spinoza, extending the “truths” of these structures in order to “make them more elastic, concrete, and vital.” The “turn” taken up by contemporary affect theory is most directly aimed against the Cartesian paradigm of disengaged, disembodied reason and its supremacy over the passions. Descartes locates the passions in perception and ascribes them to the soul; they are “caused, maintained and strengthened by some movement of the spirits.” As they pass through the body, the “spirits” cause an accompanying bodily change upon the perception of an object. The passions contain a propositional or suggestive content that is

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194 Ibid., 45.


evaluative in nature: the main effect of the passions is to “move and dispose the soul to want the things for which they prepare the body,”198 or, in other words, to strengthen the response required by the well-being of an organism in a given situation.199 Although the passions are, in this way, essentially functional, they are at the same time marginalized by this system. In Cartesianism, the hegemony of reason is maintained by an antagonistic principle: in order to disentangle ourselves from the misconception that mind intermingles with matter, we must develop “an understanding of the latter which facilitates its control”200 – in which reason subordinates, controls, and “instrumentalizes” the passions to benefit the mind. Because the passions conflict with “our rationally considered evaluations” of objects, they are in need of remedy: training, taming, and, through practice, eventually mastery.201

In his seminal Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity (1989), Charles Taylor proposes that Cartesian metaphysics abandons any attunement to a teleological order of knowledge in favor of skeptical rationalism, an epistemology in which new orders must be constructed as ascribed by the demands of knowledge, understanding, and certainty – which, for Descartes, means that which can be proven true beyond any doubt. Cartesian rationalism dictates that the material world, including the body, exists solely as an extension of the mind. The “self-mastery” of reason implies the shaping of our lives through indisputable, disinterested “evidence,” which leaves no place for the senses or sensations.

198 Descartes, 343.
199 In order to illustrate this concept, Charles Taylor provides the classic example of the dangerous animal: “It may trigger off a reflex of flight. This is the only consequence which occurs in animals, which must be understood as complex machines. With man it will also bring about the rational recognition that he ought to make himself scarce. The man is rationally motivated to do what his animal reactions have perhaps already started. But then passion will strengthen the response, because the animal spirits connected with the perception of the animal and the flight reflex also incite fear in the soul. This serves to beef up the already existing rational movement towards flight.” In Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 150.
200 Taylor, 149.
In this way, Cartesian epistemology does implicit violence to the body of the rational subject. W.G. Sebald, in his *Rings of Saturn*, writes that Descartes’ philosophical inquiries “form one of the principle chapters of the history of subjection…”

Not only does Descartes encourage us to disregard the body, to minimize and tether those sensations that attune it to the world around us; but such rationalism reduces the individual to a state of isolation and doubt, characteristics often ascribed to the melancholic him- or herself. Bodily forms of knowing that would involve the use of all senses – “communication and dialogue, action and movement, touch, sight, sound, and smell” – are curtailed to thinking at a distance and in an inanimate way; purely mental forms of cognitive apprehension take precedence over the sensual. As the self is expressed in discourse – solitary, still, silent, and thoughtful – the body becomes excluded as an expressive being; it is an object, rather than the subject, of exchange.

Considering the frequency with which *cogito ergo sum*, in its various formulations, appears alongside issues of alienation in both literature and philosophy, there is a highly compelling connection to be drawn between the melancholic’s sense of irretrievable loss and the manifold implications of dualism.

While ancient theories also aimed at controlling – or at least cooling – the passions in favor of reason, the “reason” of antiquity consisted of an insight into the cosmic order of the universe – of the Good. For Descartes, however, “there is no such order.”

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202 W.G. Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*, trans. Michael Hulse (London: The Harvill Press, 1998), 13. The note on Descartes is part of a longer meditation on Rembrandt’s *The Anatomy Lesson*. Sebald’s observations in this passage form what is more or less a reduced sketch of Foucault’s notion of the medical gaze, itself an example of the kind of disinterested rationalism that leads to a mechanical view of the body: “If we stand today before the large canvas…we are standing precisely where those who were present at the dissection in the Waagebouw stood, and we believe that we saw what they saw then: in the foreground, the greenish, prone body of Aris Kindt, his neck broken and his chest risen in terrible rigor mortis. […] It is somehow odd that Dr Tulp’s colleagues are not looking at Kindt’s body, that their gaze is directed just past it to focus on the open anatomical atlas in which the appalling physical facts are reduced to a diagram, a schematic plan of the human being…” (ibid).


204 See Burkitt, 52.

205 Taylor, 146.
the insight . . . is into something which entails the emptiness of all ancient conceptions of such order: the utter separation of mind from a mechanistic universe of matter which is most emphatically not a medium of thought or meaning, which is expressively dead. Insight is essential to the move we can call . . . “disenchancing” the world. We could also call it neutralizing the cosmos, because the cosmos is no longer seen as the embodiment of meaningful order which can define the good for us.206

In other words, this kind of order (or lack thereof), with its deadening of the world, definitively breaches what is inherent in eighteenth-century notions of sympathy.

The disembodiment accompanying the modern rational subject, or the body’s closure to the world of outer sensations, is one phase in the overall diachronic shift in medical and sociocultural understandings of the human body in the West from the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries; before this, and well into the eighteenth century, the body was dominantly conceived of as a hydraulic system. In this model, substances (fluids, humors, or spirits) are free to move throughout the body, and, the body’s inner permeability is matched by an outer porousness, whereby a “constant exchange [takes] place between the inside and the outside, ‘a relation of osmotic exchanges with the elements.’”207 Here, “the individual body [is] not only tied to other bodies but to the entire cosmos”208 – i.e., the opposite of Cartesianism. Thus, for example, are derived the astrological explanations linking melancholy to the planet Saturn, with cosmic movements playing an etiological role in the development and symptoms of the humor.209

206 Ibid., 148-149.
As contemporary affect theory disavows Descartes, it turns to Spinoza’s *Ethics* as a point of departure, positing the notion of the bodily capacity to affect, or to act upon, and to be affected, or acted upon, as the way in which the knowing subject progresses. Most significantly, Spinoza rejects Cartesian dualism, arguing that mind and body exist together, are “one and the same thing,” for in Spinoza’s metaphysics all attributes flow forth from one substance, i.e., *Deus sive natura*, “God or Nature.” The mind cannot command the body, according to Spinoza, especially since “no one has yet determined what the body can do.” In Spinoza’s metaphysics, the mind is constituted through the body: while they operate in tandem, the first principle of the striving mind—the function of the “conatus”—is to affirm the existence of the body; and, further, the mind strives to imagine that which increases the body’s power of acting. As Spinoza’s affects work via the imagination, they take up a kind of associationist psychology that does not necessarily answer to rational norms: “Any thing can be the accidental cause of joy, sadness, or desire.” The role of associationism adds a deeply social component to the affects.

It is exactly this emphasis on what is beyond our rational control, or the notion of indeterminacy, especially as mediated through social interaction, that affect theory latches onto, transforming it into possibility and potentiality. For Massumi, whose project is to reinstate a sense of “movement, sensation, and qualities of experience” into the current “gridlock” of cultural

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211 Ibid. Italics mine. This point is often stressed in affect theory.
212 Ibid., 78. For associationism, see P16: “From the mere fact that we imagine a thing to have some likeness to an object which usually affects the mind with joy or sadness, we love it or hate it, even though that in which the thing is like the object is not the efficient cause of these affects” (79). For the imagination, see, for example, P19: “He who imagines that what he loves is destroyed will be saddened; but he who imagines it to be preserved, will rejoice” (81).
213 Indeed, Spinoza forms several propositions which approach notions of sympathy and empathy. P21 states, “He who imagines what he loves to be affected with joy or sadness will also be affected with joy or sadness…” (83). P22 follows: “If we imagine someone to affect with joy a thing we love, we shall be affected with love toward him. If, on the other hand, we imagine him to affect the same thing with sadness, we shall also be affected with hate toward him” (82). Pity, benevolence, and compassion are all explicitly defined. See 84-86.
215 Ibid., 3.
theory, the self is best understood as always becoming, “an incipient subjectivity.”

This is derived from Massumi’s starting point – a body not in stasis and not defined, but in motion and development: “as directly as [the body] conducts itself it beckons a feeling, and feelings have a way of folding into each other, resonating together, interfering with each other, mutually intensifying, all in unquantifiable ways apt to unfold again in action, often unpredictably.”

Such a point of departure is applicable to Die Räuber because it is a play that refuses to pause for reflection, or to allow its viewer or reader to do so; instead, with its breakneck pace, and the sense of intrigue, anxiety, and restlessness that infiltrates the drama at once and does not ever quite fully cease throughout the play’s duration, everything appears to be a matter of life and death at absolutely every single point.

A Note on Method

It is at this juncture that much of the secondary literature on the play balks: with its larger-than-life characters who completely overstep the boundaries of the Mitleidspostulat and elements of plot that are almost entirely unbelievable, the drama may be reduced to melodrama, Trivialliteratur, or mere spectacle. Michelsen, for example, traces how the influence of opera and ballet on Schiller’s early dramatic work lends Die Räuber an “ungezügelte Vehemenz der Affekte.” He goes so far as to argue that the characters are not only types rather than individuals, but that they function merely for the carrying-out of passion (“die Austragung der Leidenschaften”) as iterated in their words, gestures, and physiognomies. Affect theory,

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216 Ibid., 14.
217 Ibid., 1.
218 Michelsen writes of this phenomenon that the characters are “in ihren Aktionen und Deklamation einer merklichen Erhitzung anheimgefallen; ein Einhalten auf ihrem Wege erscheint fast undenkbar: unaufhaltsam ergießt sich ihr rhetorisich-hyperbolisches Feuer über das Theater” (72).
219 Michelsen, 31.
220 See Michelsen, 39-42.
therefore, offers a means for uncovering productivity in the apparent chaos, disorientation – or what is simply referred to as the *Größe* – that is part and parcel of the drama.\(^{221}\)

Without reading too much into the author’s intentions, it may be argued that Schiller’s project is aiming at something essentially different from that of Lessing’s dramas. This distinction is two-fold and is articulated largely in Schiller’s prologue to the first edition of the play, where he begins by expressing skepticism of the stage’s capacity to depict human motivation: “Man nehme dieses Schauspiel für nicht anders als eine dramatische Geschichte, die die Vorteile der dramatischen Methode, die Seele gleichsam bei ihren geheimsten Operationen zu ertappen, benutzt, ohne sich übrigens in die Schranken eines Theaterstücks einzuzäunen” (15). Schiller’s interest, therefore, is not necessarily in being a “Theaterdichter,” but rather a “Geisterkenner” and “Menschenmaler” (15) – or, as Hans-Jürgen Schings writes, “Analytiker des Außerordentlichen – und dies mit allen Mitteln einer emphatischen Aufklärung, der ihm das Studium der Medizin, der Anthropologie und der Metaphysik verfügbar machte.”\(^{222}\) Schiller achieves this role by complicating human psychology, by intentionally confusing and intertwining good and evil. As readers or viewers of the play, we are not supposed to identify with and honor an archetypal hero; rather, we “verabscheuen und lieben, bewundern und bedauern” (17) a figure such as Karl von Moor. Psychological complexity is further accomplished by the mirror-image set-up of Karl and Franz, whose identities and actions are not only defined by one another, but converge in their striving toward greatness at all costs. The *Größe* referred to above then informs one of the implicit questions posed by the drama: what is the link between *Größe*, greatness, and *Größenwahn* (megalomania, hubris), or, for that matter, “Groß-Mann-Sucht” (160)?

\(^{221}\) For Michelsen, the *Größe* is a product of this extraordinary implementation of affect, as well as the natural consequence of the conflict between Karl and Franz; it is the binding element between good and evil. See 101-102.

There is, finally, an experimental quality inherent in the piece. With such language as, “Ich habe versucht . . . ein treffendes lebendiges Konterfei hinzuwerfen […] Ich denke, ich habe die Natur getroffen” (16), Schiller becomes something akin to a Dr. Frankenstein-like creator of the figures of his studies as a philosophischer Arzt. If the brothers are not fully-formed, well-rounded characters, this is because the “‘identity’ they possess is essentially derivative,”223 rooted both in each other and in the philosophical system each represents, with Franz taking on the bodily rejection, or dualism, of Descartes and Karl the role of Spinozan hero, reconfirming the power of the body. The experiment also takes place vis-à-vis the testing or questioning of the moral sentiment. This is obvious in Franz’s case, but it occurs, too, on a more nuanced level with Karl, whose faith in humanity is suddenly shattered within the second scene of the drama, when he is supposedly disowned by his father. Thus another question is posed: what happens, psychologically, when the most sacred of bonds – here, the father-son constellation – is instantly destroyed, without warning, in such an unnatural way?

This is essentially the question raised by Hans-Jürgen Schings in his series of articles on Die Räuber, “Philosophie der Liebe und Tragödie des Universalhasses” (1980) and “Schillers ‘Räuber’: Ein Experiment des Universalhasses” (1982). In both pieces, Schings refers to the sympathetic creation of a “chain of love,” “das System der Vollkommenheit und der Liebe,”224 which places Schiller’s Jugendphilosophie into conversation with Alexander Pope’s “An Essay on Man.” Schings also understands Die Räuber as an experiment, or a test, which sets the characters against this background of a functioning, loving home and family, but throws them, so to say, out into the wide world. According to the cosmos of sympathy, or the “Sympathiegesetz,” once one step of the “chain” is broken, the entire ladder falls apart. “Universal hatred” is then the

223 Lehmann, 329.
224 Schings, “Philosophie der Liebe,” 94.
disproportionate outgrowth of a “Privaterbitterung gegen den unzärtlichen Vater,” which in turn perverts the private bond into “ein großangelegtes Fern-Duell der Weltzerstörung,” into anarchy and chaos.

While I refer especially to some of Schings’ premises in the course of my analysis, I would contend that this chapter sets itself apart from much of the existing Schiller scholarship, in that I am not so much interested in the deep exploration of an abstract philosophical concept, such as love, freedom, or autonomy. Nor am I approaching the play from the angle of theater studies. Rather, I seek to understand how affect, both in its modern-day sense and in its historical valences, is deployed throughout the drama, especially in terms of how the brothers Moor harness or dismantle affect, and to what end(s). The emotions embodied by the drama are indeed larger than life, but I propose that working with the aforementioned concepts of affect, sympathy, contagion, and melancholy as analogous with the contemporary concept of manic depression might tell us something about how, and why, these emotions function as they do, as well as why they had (or have) such an impact on the audience.

**Affective Melting: Karl von Moor**

If the body is a knowing, sentient being and is one with the mind, an active participant in a particular space and time engaged with its surroundings, then it must remain open to external influences, as befits the older, hydraulic-porous understanding of the body’s physiology. The language that Franz uses to describe his brother in Act I, scene 1, continually posits such an

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226 Ibid.
227 Ibid., see 12.
openness: Karl possesses “Der feurige Geist . . . der ihn für jeden Reiz von Größe und Schönheit so empfindlich macht; diese Offenheit, die seine Seele auf dem Augen spiegelt, diese Weichheit des Gefühls, die ihn bei jedem Leiden in weinende Sympathie dahinschmelzt…” (23). Such description is drawn straight from the pages of *Empfindsamkeit*, and – in keeping with Sensibility’s most venerable organ – Karl rules (or, perhaps, melts) hearts, which places him at the center of a network of sympathetic, universal love.\(^\text{228}\) In this instance, it is the home, where “jenes Weltgesetz der Anziehung, das sich in der Blutliebe, in der Familie, in der Vater-Sohn-Beziehung am unmittelbarsten verkörpert [wird]”\(^\text{229}\): Karl is his father’s “Augapfel” (25), his “Busenkind” (25), his “Schoßkind” (28). Because of the gravitational pull that Karl exerts over his loved ones – Amalia, Daniel, but most importantly, his father – he has no doubt that, despite his excesses, he will be forgiven and permitted to return home, to take his place in the patriarchal, familial order.

In Act I, scene 2, the reader is introduced to Karl in a “Schenke an den Grenzen von Sachsen” (30). That which will become the band of robbers hovers waywardly around him like so many live circuits – just as he is the topic of heated conversation even while absent from the family home, here Karl once again forms the center of “a tangle of potential connections.”\(^\text{230}\) With everyone on edge, something is immanent in this scene: it is within the next moments that Karl’s fate will be decided. For all the grandiose talk and boisterous behavior amongst the men, Karl’s damning of the “Tintenklecksenden Säkulum” (30), “das schlappe Kastraten-Jahrhundert” (31), the emasculation of great heroes, the physical sense of strangulation brought on by the law – “Ich soll meinen Leib pressen in eine Schnürbrust und meinen Willen schnüren in Gesetze” (32) – the talk is at first just that, and Karl’s own actions are half-measures. While the most tangible threat

\(^{228}\) See this argument as articulated in Schings’ two articles, described above.

\(^{229}\) Schings, “Experiment des Universalhasses,” 11.

\(^{230}\) Stewart, 4.
of bravado, “Stelle mich vor ein Heer Kerls wie ich, und aus Deutschland soll eine Republik werden…” (32), is followed by a small, violent outburst, as Karl throws his dagger against the table and stands, in the next instance, he is laughing out loud at Spiegelberg’s antics. Yet it is clear, from this first encounter, that Karl forms the starting point of affect, the center of emotion, around which all others become attuned, a sentiment which is perhaps most obviously indicated by Roller’s line, “Ohne den Moor sind wir Leib ohne Seele” (43).

The stage direction “zerstreut” (36) sums up Karl’s constitution in the tavern, as he flickers between moments of taking up Spiegelberg’s childish rebellion and dreaming of his own return to the patriarchal order, that is, everything he has just railed profusely against. In other words, the sense of “either/or” is rife in this scene, echoing that which Schiller writes of Karl in the prologue: “Ein merkwürdiger, wichtiger Mensch, ausgestattet mit aller Kraft, nach der Richtung, die diese bekömmt, notwendig entweder ein Brutus oder ein Catilina zu werden” (16). But return, comfort – “Im Schatten meiner väterlichen Haine, in den Armen meiner Amalia” (37) – rests on the external condition of his father’s forgiveness, which, unbeknownst to Karl, is part of a cause and effect chain that has already been snapped, unnaturally, by his brother Franz.

Just as Karl forms the gravitational center around which all other affects are checked, measured, and maintained, or alternately dispersed of, so the nucleus of Karl’s universe is made up of other people, of love. In other words, people may become his pawns, but they are also his crux, for this is the order of sympathy in which he trusts. That the falsified letter from Franz evinces such an explosive reaction “ist nur verständlich,” writes Schings, “wenn man die Voraussetzungen der Sympathielehre mitvollzieht. Dieser Brief sprengt den Kosmos der Sympathie.”231 Karl’s hysteria or fury (“Rasen,” as Grimm terms it) is an expression of the fact that his world has literally

broken apart, his faith in the universal, harmonic law of moral sentiments dashed: “…aber wenn Blutliebe zur Verräterin, wenn Vaterliebe zur Megäre wird… […] Ist das Liebe für Liebe? […] Ich hab ihn so unaussprechlich geliebt! So liebte kein Sohn, ich hätte tausend Leben für ihn” (44-45). Although the deepest betrayal is (supposedly) that of Old Moor, with this most sacred bond broken, the object of Karl’s first plaint is immediately extended to all of mankind: “Menschen – Menschen! Falsche, heuchlerische Krokodilbrut!” (43). The same objection is repeated toward the end of the scene: “Menschen haben Menschheit vor mir vorborgen, da ich an die Menschheit appellierte…” (45).

Karl’s mood swings rapidly, from expectation to disappointment, disbelief, despair, and rage, accompanied by a series of escalating physical gestures that match his hyperbolic speech and animal epithets. Again, the trend is one of extension and grandiosity, each threat surpassing the next: “tritt herein in wilder Bewegung und läuft heftig im Zimmer auf und nieder, mit sich selber”; “Ich möchte ein Bär sein, und die Bären des Nordlands wider dies mörderische Geschlecht anhetzen… Oh ich möchte den Ozean vergiften” (44); “Schäumend auf die Erde stampfend” (45). As violence in language mirrors violence in deed, the psychological dynamic of Karl’s character begins to reveal itself: an alternation of extreme states, of euphoria and dysphoria, “Icherweiterung und Ichverkleinerung.”

The reception of the letter, then, is the point at which emotion replaces measured discourse or reason, the point at which actions begin to evince the

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232 As will be shown, mood swings – “extraordinary and confusing fluctuations in mood” – are a classic symptom of manic depression. In Kay Redfield Jamison, Touched with Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 25.


235 Lehmann works with the notion of enthusiasm, noting that it appears “as a bearing that makes rational discourse, which is supposed to control it, faltur” (312). The parallel to both Kristeva’s concept of melancholy and Foucault’s madman’s discourse of “unreason,” as elucidated in Chapter 1, is significant.
full expression of Karl’s emotions, the point at which illness – delusion, psychosis, or “unreason” – overcomes sanity.

Immediacy, extension, associationism, and hyperbole – these are the hallmarks of Karl’s speech and gestures in this scene, and they are qualities that figure prominently both in contemporary accounts of manic depression as well as eighteenth-century reports of enthusiasm, madness, and Schwärmerei. In his 1708 Letter Concerning Enthusiasm, Shaftesbury describes enthusiasm as “wonderfully powerful and extensive.” The fifth edition of Diderot and D’Alembert’s Encyclopédie, published in 1755, defines enthusiasm as “une espece de fureur qui s’empare de l’esprit & qui la maîtrise, qui enflamme l’imagination, l’éléve, & la rend féconde. C’est un transport, dit-on, qui fair dire ou faire des choses extraordinaires & suprenantes…” “Manie” is delineated as a delirium “furieux, avec audace, colore…” Robert Burton, in his Anatomy of Melancholy, offers a portrayal of “madness” adjacent to melancholy: it is “a vehement dotage, full of anger and clamour, horrible looks, actions, gestures, troubling the patients with far greater vehemency both of body and mind…” Expansiveness of mood, the “dendridic, branching-out quality” of mania, along with “ideas of greatness,” and “certainty of

236 One exception occurs before Karl receives the letter. As the bandits roll into the tavern, Roller asks Karl, “Du zitterst?”, to which Karl responds, “warum soll’ ich zittern?” (37). Shaking or trembling forms a physical leitmotiv throughout the play, exposing an emotion before it is given words. It overtakes Franz before his breakdown in in IV, 2 (“Plötzlich zusammenfahrend,” 108) and betrays Karl during his “to be or not to be” monologue in IV, 5: “ich werde nicht zittern. Heftig zitternd” (130).
240 Burton, 140.
241 See, for example, Jamison, 13-14, 28; Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” 253-4; Emil Kraepelin, Manic-Depressive Insanity and Paranoia (New York: Arno Press, 1976), 22.
242 Jamison, 29.
243 Kraepelin, 21
conviction,” “unüberwindbarer Entschlossenheit,” “inflated self-esteem,” and “[e]xalted self-consciousness,” are some of the illness’s most cited, enduring symptoms.

These accounts reveal both a distinct physical and mental component to the illness, whether it be that which we would today term manic depression, or that which the eighteenth century would call mania, melancholy, or Schwärmerei. At their most extreme, the illustrations of physical symptoms represent the sufferer as an animal-like creature, with brute strength, wild behavior, and the ability to withstand exceptionally harsh conditions, some of which will come to bear in the course of the play, especially the trend toward self-harm and the consequently apparent numbness. Burton’s description ends with the note that patients display “such impetuous force that sometimes three or four men cannot hold them.” The Encyclopédie entry for mania reports prolonged durations of sleeplessness, strengthening of temperament, and insensitivity to cold, heat, hunger, thirst, and pain. The maniac’s “body becomes hardened, becomes robust”; “they bite, tear, beat all that surrounds them.”

Leopold Auenbrugger’s 1783 Von der stillen Wuth, a treatise on “eine Gattung Krankheit aus dem Geschlecht des Wahnwitzes,” which presents very much like mania, similarly describes the senses as becoming “ganz stumpf und gefühllos, und letztlich [brechen sie] in eine zerstörende Thathandlung aus[en],” a “Zerstörungsbegierde.” Of the physical symptoms, Auenbrugger mentions foaming at the mouth. The same tinge of violence appears in Freud’s

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244 Jamison, 13.
245 Sauder, 142.
246 Jamison, 13.
247 Kraepelin, 58.
248 Burton, 140.
249 de Chambaud, “Manie [Médecine].” The original French reads, “leur corps s’endurcit, devient robuste; leur tempérament se fortifie…”
250 Ibid. The French reads: “ils mordent, déchirent, frappent tout ce qui les environnement…”
252 Ibid., 7-8.
253 Ibid., 20.
254 Ibid., see 16: “Der Mund und die Zunge . . . zitternd und vielmals mit schaumenden Seifer bekleistert.”
1917 description of mania, which occurs when “a man finds himself in a position to throw off at a single blow some oppressive convulsion.” It is a state “characterized by high spirits” and “increased readiness for all kinds of action.”

To some extent, the interpretation of the mental symptomology must be the same as in the early analysis of *Werther*: distorted perception arises vis-à-vis excessive emotion and grandiose ideas, resulting in the restriction or even elimination of the verification of reality. However, as noted, the flow of Werther’s discontent is always inward, his world gradually becoming smaller and smaller, whereas Karl (as well as Franz) “ziehen . . . sich [keineswegs] aus der bedrängenden oder ihnen mißliebigen Außenwelt in die Privatheit… Nicht Reduktion: Expansion ist ihre Devise; ihr Wirkungskrise ist die Öffentlichkeit, ist die Gesellschaft…” In “Melancholy in Schiller’s Dramas,” Matthew Bell characterizes Wallenstein as “an active melancholic in the grand style of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Problemata,*” and the same qualification could easily be applied to Karl von Moor. In other words, “mania” might be thought of as the *active variant* of melancholy. Further, the rapidity – or “vehemence” – associated with mania, enthusiasm, and madness – in train and quantity of thought, frenzied activity level, and “extraordinary and confusing fluctuations in mood” – is highly distinct from the more slowly unravelling, passive melancholy suffered by Werther. Indeed, whereas the overall tempo of *Werther* is one of deceleration, mirroring the emptying-out of Werther’s capacity to articulate and to act, so too does *Die Räuber* reflect its protagonists’ illnesses with its incessant pacing.

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256 Ibid.
257 See Lehmann, 313.
258 Michelsen, 104.
260 Jamison, 25.
Both the expansive and quick-paced, mercurial nature of the illness help to explain an issue of plausibility: Karl reads the letter written in his brother’s hand, and without even a moment of hesitation, believes in the truth of its contents. At no point does he stop to reflect – as Werther naturally would – on what is happening to him, both around and inside of himself; rather, he immediately begins to rage against the machine. Grimm’s appeal, “Höre doch, höre! vor Rasen hörst du ja nicht” (44) – reveals the dimness of the sensory-perceptive organs representative of knowledge and reason. Instead, Karl’s state of compound emotions is given free range. Without pause, he dismisses the family seat as a “Keficht” (45) and articulates a desperate need to act: “Mein Geist dürstet nach Taten, mein Atem nach Freiheit,” (45). Karl’s subsequent acceptance of the role of captain of the band is not born of deliberation, but rather of a momentary impulse. Significantly, his motivation for forming the band elucidates something further about the nature of Karl’s illness as a kind of megalomania; it is “founded in a dangerous mixture of Messianism, patriotism, self-aggrandizement, and criminality…” Karl’s goal, therefore, is not to enact justice or create any kind of humanistic revolution; it is, rather, merely “eine fürchterliche Zerstreuung” that he seeks: “und Blut und Tod soll mich vergessen lehren, dass mir jemals etwas teuer war!” (45).

As Karl swings, so too does the group, pendulum-like, beginning with “Moor lässt den Brief fallen und rennt hinaus. Alle fahren auf.” The elements of extension and expansion, then, occur not just in Karl’s mania, but rather, via the circulation of affect, throughout the whole band. Karl’s eruption into energetic behavior may easily be compared to the onset of a fever; if this is the case, then Karl is patient zero, and, in a figurative sense, the fever spreads. Of Spiegelberg, the most obvious of Karl’s doubles, who mirrors Karl’s actions to come by acting out the role of a

262 Ibid., 29.
mountebank. Schufterle remarks, “Sein Verstand geht im Ring herum” (37), while Razmann adds, “Die Bestie hört nicht” (37). However, it is Grimm’s reference to “sankt-Veits-Tanz” (37) that is especially interesting.

St. Vitus’, the sixteenth-century dancing plague that swept through Strasbourg in 1518, saw the inhabitants of the town dance “for hours or even days in succession,” “[s]carcely pausing to rest or eat.” Often discussed in terms of mass hysteria, St. Vitus’ and other dancing epidemics are examples of emotional contagion, i.e., “the tendency to automatically mimic and synchronize expressions, vocalizations, postures, and movements with those of another person’s and, consequently, to converge emotionally.” The concept of emotional contagion has obvious echoes with the Sympathielehre of the eighteenth century, particularly as espoused in the philosophies of the moral sentiment. In Hume’s Treatise, where sympathy maintains that “any sufficiently vivid idea of another’s passion is almost automatically converted into . . . that passion,” sympathy is also a measure of “emotional contagion” or “emotional infection.” Smith’s Theory of Moral Sentiments additionally offers a mimetic account of sympathy: “By the imagination we place ourselves in [our brother’s] situation. We conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him.”

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263 The stage directions for Spiegelberg read, “der sich die ganze Zeit über mit den Pantomimen eines Projektmachers im Stubeneck abgearbeitet hat, springt wild auf: L a  B o u r s e o u l a v i e! und packt Schweizern an der Gurgel, der ihm gelassen an die Wanf wirft…” (38).
266 Frazer, 97.
267 Ibid., 98.
268 Ibid., 99. See also Adela Pinch’s description of Hume’s account of sympathy as the “mechanism by which people can catch the feeling of others” (24). Pinch quotes Hume in her introduction, writing that “Hume, among many others, declares that ‘the passions are so contagious, that they pass with the greatest facility from one person to another, and produce correspondent movements in all human breasts’” (1). See also footnote 7, p. 214. In Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).
Smith’s sympathy expresses itself physically: “The mob, when they are gazing at the dancer on the slack rope, naturally write and twist and balance their own bodies, as they see him do, and as they feel that they themselves must do if in his situation.”

In the Letter Concerning Enthusiasm, Shaftesbury describes the phenomenon as panic: “We may with good reason call every Passion Pannick which is rais’d in a Multitude, and convey’d by Aspect, or as it were by Contact, or Sympathy. [...] so much stronger any Affection is for being social and communicative.”

In modern accounts, emotional contagion may be compared with a number of different phenomena. Deleuze and Guattari’s definition of affect reads it as “the effectuation of a power of the pack that throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel,” and their notion of “becoming an animal” is similar: “A becoming-animal always involves a pack, a band, a population, a peopling, in short, a multiplicity. [...] modes of expansion, propagation, occupation, contagion, peopling. I am legion.”

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s concept of “swarm intelligence,” i.e., “multi-agent-distributed systems of intelligence” is another example. We may also look to mirror neurons. Finally, Kay Jamison’s description of mood as “compelling, contagious, and profoundly interpersonal” offers a hint of emotions as contagious. Emotional contagion, therefore, offers one further variation or offshoot of both affect and sympathy.

In terms of a theory of affect, the scene in its entirety shows that in Karl there is hardly any dissonance between object or suggestion, speech, emotion, and action, because they all appear in quick succession. The foaming, stamping, swearing Karl – who likens himself to a tiger, to a bear.
– who, performing a veritable speech act, declares the law trampled beneath his feet276 – bypasses rational, conscious thought processes in favor of immediate action. Emotions present like impulses or reactions that arise in the body, in action and gesture, and are echoed, reiterated, or amplified in exuberant speech. Finally, the scene portrays embodied emotion as a social force; however, it is a force that is immanent within Karl, whose illness is expansive enough to beset an entire group – or, indeed, to start a revolution.

*Smoke and flame*

The scene that best portrays the unmediated primacy and sponteneity of sentiment – in this case, of revenge and rebellion – is Act II, scene 3, in which Karl commands his men to set the town on fire as retribution for Roller’s supposed death. Both Schweitzer and Roller’s reports of the event provide an image that melds the self-conscious revisionism and energy of the literary movement of *Sturm und Drang* with the megalomania, expansiveness, and urge toward destruction inherent in Karl’s melancholy:

SCHWEITZER. […] Wir indes Gasse auf, Gasse nieder, wie Furien – Feuerjo! Feuerjo! durch die ganze Stadt – Geheul, – Geschrei – Gepolter – fangen an die Brandglocken zu brummen, knaltet der Pulvertum in die Luft, als wär die Erde mitten entzweigeborsten, und der Himmel zerplatzt und die Hölle zehntausend Klafter tiefer versunken.

ROLLER. …da lag die Stadt wie Gomorrha und Sodom, der ganze Horizont war Feuer, Schwefel und Rauch, vierzig Gebürge brüllen den infernalischen Schwank in die Rund herum nach, ein panischer Schreck schmeißt alle zu Boden… (79)

276 See Schiller, 45: “Mörder, Räuber! – mit diesem Wort war das Gesetz unter meine Füße gerollt…”
Once again, Karl’s reaction to the event is shown in a garish progression of shifts in mood. His first response is one of enthusiasm and exultation, both in speech and action, as he springs from his horse and hurls himself on the ground, exclaiming, “Freiheit! Freiheit! […] Das hat gegolten!” (77). Yet this is quickly followed by sober regret in tone and language: “(sehr ernst). Roller, du bist teuer bezahlt” (81). Next, Karl expresses rage, cursing Shufterle for his show of glee in recounting the extreme violence of his actions. Rage is accompanied by grandiosity – *Grossmannsucht*, or *Größenwahn* – as Karl shouts at the entire band: “Murr! – Überlegt ihr? – Wer überlegt, wann Ich befehle?” (82).

Finally, left alone, “heftig auf und ab gehend” (82), Karl delivers a fleeting soliloquy, in which he evinces desperation, shame, and regret:


What Karl says in this speech is, in other words: I wanted to be God (or Prometheus), but failed – and so now I am nothing. The same sentiment is more poetically expressed by Karl Philipp Moritz in “Die Unschuldswelt”: “Da wir nicht Schöpfer werden konnen, um Gott gleich zu seyn, wurden wir Zernichter; wir schufen *rückwärts*, da wir nicht *vorwärts* schaffen konnten.”277 This statement

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is, furthermore, fully reflective of the jarring oscillation between extremes that is definitive of Karl’s melancholy.

Indeed, Karl’s brief soliloquy marks a turning point for his character. His illness, though marked from the beginning by unsteadiness, begins to unravel in new dimensions. Realizing that he has been mistaken in everything he has done up to this point, Karl displays a ready willingness to die. The death wish might be best illustrated in eighteenth-century medical literature by Auenbrugger’s Von der stillen Wuth, an affliction defined as “ein geheimes, innerliches und unsinniges Bestreben, mittels welchem der Mensch sich selbst zu ermorden sucht.” Of the passions or Leidenschaften that are most commonly associated with the illness, Auenbrugger enumerates “[e]ine vorhergesehene unvermeidliche Verdemüthigung des überstolzen Eigensinns – Eine verächtliche Erniedrigung des unersättlichen Ehrgeizes […] Die verzweifelnde Vorstellungen einer bevorstehenden peinlichen Not, Armuth, Unglück, Schande – Die ununterbrochenen Vorwürfe eines bösen gewissens…” All of these find pronounced echoes in what has already been established vis-à-vis Karl’s character: his hubris, obstinacy, and pride; the indication of deep shame, as cited in the speech above; and that which is now the inevitable outcome of the symptoms elucidated here: his own death.

Karl’s willingness to die is further illustrated by a number of examples in the rest of this scene. He allows the troops of the Bohemian cavalry to encircle the band completely, declaring, “(Laut.) Kinder! nun gilt’s! Wir sind verloren, oder wir müssen fechten wie angeschossene Eber” (84), and asserts that he, along with Roller and Schweitzer, will fight on the front lines, in the thick of it. He practically begs the band to hand him over to the priest, an action that would result in

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278 Here I do not mean to imply the Todestrieb or any of its psychoanalytic variants.
279 Auenbrugger, 5.
280 Ibid., 8. Auenbrugger’s is also a particularly good description of what happens to Franz at the end of the play.
certain torture and death. Karl’s behavior and last lines in this scene, “(sich losreiβend, freudig). Itzt sind wir frei – Kameraden! Ich fühle eine Armee in meiner Faust – Tod oder Freiheit!” (91), are as brilliant in their evocation of personal liberty, raw emotion, and energy as they are chilling in their delusional, even psychotic motivation.

“Traure mit mir, Natur”

The following scene of the Karl Handlung, Act III, scene 2, is set on the banks of the Danube – that is, in nature – where the band lies camped on the ground beneath the trees, and horses graze nearby. This is the sole instance of an aesthetic or empfindsame representation of melancholy in the drama; yet it is so heavily wrought with sentiment and draws so strongly from the preexisting literature of Sensibility that it bears a quotational character. Nevertheless, it is here that the reader encounters an entirely different image of Karl’s manic depression. For once, the tempo of the drama slows down – which is, tellingly, synonymous with Karl slowing down – and, with it, that of the entire band: “Hier muss ich liegen bleiben wirft sich auf die Erde. Meine Glieder wie abgeschlagen. […] ihr seid alle matt bis in den Tod” (96). The aestheticism of the setting blends into Karl’s musings that are fraught with existential angst, mourning, nostalgia, and regret. His search for solace in nature is deeply reminiscent of Werther, perhaps most explicitly emphasized by the line, “Traure mit mir Natur” (99). The Wertheresque tangent continues, as Karl admires “wie schön das Getreide steht! – Die Bäume brechen fast unter ihrem Segen” (96), “diese Welt ist so schön. […] Diese Erde so herrlich” (98). He philosophizes on the meaningless lottery that is life, and then moves to express the melancholic desire for solitude, as he pulls his hat down over his eyes – in and of itself a significant gesture – and remarks, “Es war eine Zeit – Laßt mich allein, Kameraden” (97). The act of covering the eyes is mirrored in the following stage direction,
“zurückgesunken,” whereby Karl simultaneously expresses a deep sense of self-loathing: “Und ich so häßlich auf dieser schönen Welt – und ich ein Ungeheuer auf dieser herrlichen Erde. […] Dass ich wiederkehren dürfte in meiner Mutterleib!” (98). It is, in other words, the feeling not only of being the last person on earth – since in this instance Karl seeks to separate himself from the band – but, moreover, the notion that he does not even deserve the space he occupies, for everything he touches will be sullied and destroyed.²⁸¹

Finally, in an extremely gluttonous, self-indulgent display of sentimentalism, Karl mourns his lost childhood: “O all ihr Elysium Szenen meiner Kindheit! – Werdet ihr nimmer zurückkehren…” (99). Karl’s dreaminess in this scene is in fact so exaggerated – at one point, he even lays his head on Grimm’s chest – that the band has no idea what to make of his behavior, and they work themselves into a tizzy. Grimm remarks, “du scheinst tief gerührt” (97), while Schwarz draws attention to “wie er seine Farbe verändert! […] Ich hab ihn nie so gesehen” (97–98). Grimm adds, “was hat er? wird ihm übel? […] Bist du wahnsinnig?” (97). Unable to interpret Karl’s behavior, the band, lost in its bafflement, creates a moment of comic relief, adding to the quotational character of the representation of empfindsame melancholy, with the gang members themselves becoming a type of Shakespearean clowns.

Karl’s “to be or not to be” monologue in Act IV, scene 5 is the logical outcome of both his soliloquy in II, 3 and his philosophical ruminations in III, 2. Significantly, it follows several extremely Werther-esque lines: “Sie weiß mich in Wüsten irren…” (123); “die Blätter fallen von den Bäumen – und mein Herbst ist kommen… […] Ich habe mich selbst verloren…” (128). As in Werther, Karl’s universe appears to be collapsing in on itself, becoming ever smaller. However, unlike Werther – and Hamlet, for that matter – who are both introspective figures in a world full

²⁸¹ This is, in its own way, an egotistical sentiment.
of self-doubt and self-reflection, this moment presents Karl in a different light, finally at a distance from the band, contemplating fate on his own terms. The emotional trajectory of the speech hovers between a deliberate embrace of melancholy – as in the preceding sentimental scenes – and what appears to be triumph over it. On the brink of self-destruction, Karl decides to pull himself up out of it; here, with the delayed decision of making his inevitable death mean something, he deems it nobler to suffer the slings and arrows of an outrageous fortune – at least for one final act.

_**Affective Combustion: Franz von Moor**_

Alternating with the _Franz Handlung_, we see _Die Räuber_ open with a lie meant to deepen a biblical rift in the family. Franz von Moor has decided to falsify a letter regarding his older brother Karl in order to drive a lasting wedge between Old Moor and his “Augapfel” (25) – and, ultimately, to depose his father as master of the house. Specifically, Franz begins by inquiring after his father’s health, since the purported news of Karl is not meant for “einen zerbrechlichen Körper” (20). This, and the following plays within the play that Franz stages, are fully calculated: affective and emotional strategems designed to meticulously dismantle the psyche, and with it the physiology, of his father. As Franz weaves a narrative of Karl’s shame, disgrace, wretchedness, depravity, and hypocrisy, he simultaneously claims for himself all of the antithetical, virtuous sentiments, declaring his own pity, obedience, loyalty, and forgiveness: “Lasst mich vorerst auf die Seite gehn und eine Träne des Mitleids vergießen um meinen verlornen Bruder – ich sollte schweigen auf ewig – denn er ist Euer Sohn; ich sollte seine Schande verhüllen auf ewig – denn er ist mein Bruder. – Aber Euch gehorchen, ist meine erste, traurige Pflicht – darum vergebt mir” (20). In a manner strikingly similar to what Elwood Wiggins has termed Marwood’s “pity play” in _Miß Sara_

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282 I.e., Jacob and Joseph – as echoed in Old Moor’s later wish for Amalia to read this story aloud to him.
Franz knows all too well how to tackle the game of feigning authenticity in the vein of *Empfindsamkeit* and moral sentiments: his deception is overtly dramatic in language, gesture (at one point, he throws his arms around his father’s neck in an attempt to “console” him as he cries), and sheer audacity. And, significantly, it works: the sliver of doubt is planted in Old Moor, whose words and movements henceforth evince a weakened man with a broken heart.

In the same conversation with his father, as he draws up falsified comparisons between Karl and himself, Franz reveals one genuine distinction: after describing Karl as open, *empfindlich*, sympathetic, and “feurig” (“Der feurige Geist” [23]; “dieses feurige Genie” [23]), he refers to himself as “der trockne Alltagsmensch, der kalte, hölzerne Franz,” and again as “der kalte, trockne, hölzerne Franz” (24). While the line is another “play,” intended to elicit sympathy from his father, it also draws attention to the contrast between Karl’s warm, open body and Franz’s cold, closed-off anatomy. This latter model, as described in the introduction, entraps the human being inside of himself, placing him at a hermetic distance from both the company and connection to other people and to sensory-perceptive forms of knowledge. Franz, with his “Skorpionistisch[en]” wit (24), is therefore immediately framed as a Cartesian subject who discredits his body as he privileges his mind, and who, moreover, in stark contrast to Karl, acts entirely on his own throughout the drama.

The psychological framework of Franz’s character becomes much clearer in his first monologue at the end of this scene, in which he begins by rueing his outer appearance in a display of self-loathing:

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284 Nor does Franz stop at hyperbolic discreditations of Karl. In an additional move, through the evocation of sorrow and grief, Franz unleashes a veiled threat against his father: “Ihr habt Kummer, solange Ihr diesen Sohn habt. […] Dieser Kummer wird Euer Leben untergraben” (25).

The bodily disavowal that Franz espouses here – which, to some extent, he must espouse, if he is indeed so disfigured by the standards of eighteenth-century body aesthetics – is tantamount to the disavowal of the moral sentiment. As outlined above, moral sentiments work through the body: per Smith, when a spectator sees another person in pain, the spectator himself comes to feel a similar pain and is therefore moved to help the sufferer. Again, this is what Smith calls sympathy, or fellow-feeling, and what we would today term empathy; and it is this sensation that connects mankind to one another and allows one to recognize morality. Smith, as well as Hume, argue in response to Descartes that morally right actions are not revealed through rational inquiry, but rather through sentiment, i.e., sympathy. Therefore, if one rejects the sentiment or emotion as the source of knowledge, then one rejects morality. 

Franz’s dismissal of the moral sentiment is further elucidated in the course of this speech, wherein he invokes the principle of tabula rasa twice: in the first instance, he damns nature for violating the law of equality by going about her creation in a manner “so parteilich” (28). Quickly thereafter, however, Franz retracts his admonition, declaring that “Jeder hat gleiches Recht zum

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285 Schiller, 28. As most commentaries note, Franz’s monologue bears strong resemblances to the opening monologue of the title figure in Shakespeare’s Richard III: “I, that am curtail’d of this fair proportion, / Cheated of feature by dissembling nature, / Deform’d, unfinish’d, sent before my time / Into this breathing world, scarce half made up, / And that so lamely and unfashionable / That dogs bark at me as I halt by them…” In William Shakespeare, Richard III, ed. Thomas Cartelli (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2009), 4-5. Additionally, Franz’s monologue is inspired by that of Edmund the Bastard in Act 1, scene 2 of King Lear. Edmund addresses the injustices with which he is treated in a comparison to his brother, Edgar (lamenting, in particular, as Franz does, the right of the first-born). See William Shakespeare, King Lear, ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), esp. 29.
Größten und Kleinsten. […] Das Recht wohnt beim Überwältiger, und die Schranken unserer Kraft sind unsere Gesetze” (28). This “right,” especially as Franz expounds upon it in the monologue, consists of an unrestricted license to use the one ability that nature has granted to all men: “Erfindungs-Geist” – the gift of ingenuity (28). The gift – the Geist – may be used without hesitation toward either good or evil,286 since, as the second thread of Franz’s argument goes, and as his staunch atheism dictates, there is no inborn morality; conscience is, rather, nothing more than “ein tüchtiger Lumpenmann […] [ein] “sehr lobenswürdige[r] Anstalt[, die Narren im Respekt und den Pöbel unter dem Pantoffel zu halten, damit die Gescheiten es desto bequemer haben.”287

Thus, in direct opposition to the law of natural or moral sentiments, Franz alludes to a Hobbesian state of nature, in which “a dissolute condition of masterlesse men” produces “continuall feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.”288 Additionally, Franz invokes Hobbes’ “right of nature”: that is, each person is granted the liberty of self-preservation, by which one uses whatever means possible to survive.289 In other words, Franz is, in a sense, undoing Enlightenment thought, by going back to a more primitive form of political philosophy which is devoid of any connection to virtue.

In the course of his monologue, Franz embraces a hard-edged rationalism – in part because of his ugliness – and he resolves to prey on the weaknesses of the flesh, against which he purports to be immune, due to the alleged purity of his intellect. Rejecting the body and turning to

286 This line of argumentation invariably evokes the Enlightenment problem of theodicy, whereby theology rejects the dogma of original sin, allowing man to disregard that which (God, nature) has given him as gift or grace; rather, the unjust order of terrestrial things proves merely an annoyance to the man insistent upon his own autonomy (“wozu ich mich machen will, das ist nun meine Sache” [Schiller, 28]). See Cassirer, *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, 159. See also Michelsen, 76.
287 Schiller, 19.
289 See Lloyd and Sreehar, “Hobbes’s Moral and Political Philosophy.”
knowledge as a sole means of control once again positions Franz as a Cartesian subject. This is the method whereby he will assert his own power over the “poor bunnies” or simpletons and, by extension, the power of his intellect over the body, i.e., his own and that of Old Moor.

Franz’s language, it should be noted, is fraught with physicality – but it is the barbed physicality of death, disease, and decay, base corporeality and animal instinct, from the description of his physical appearance, to the “viehischer Prozeß” (30) through which he was conceived, to the portrayal of Karl (which is, of course, falsified) that he delivers to Amalia in Act I, scene 3:


to his own “blattrichten Lippen” (49) The use of such language is essentially a form of “disenchating the world,” of positing it in purely material terms. It is also a way of enlisting Amalia’s (as well as the audience’s) disgust. Further, it becomes clear that, although Franz does not act in the same straightforward, physical, and violent manner in which Karl does, his reflections on death, violence, and destruction through physicality, as well as his ability to manipulate the material world by influencing the mind or soul, prove just as deadly as Karl’s more immediate, brute force.

290 Schiller, Die Räuber, 48–49. The last clause especially bears an obvious reference to the fluids of disease.
291 Taylor, 146. See above.
Franz’s rejection of moral sentiments and his subsequent embrace of a purely rational approach toward the world bring us to his second monologue in Act II, scene 1, in which he meditates at length on how to bring about his father’s death. The key here is, again, that Franz does not want to take an active role in killing his father – he does not want his father “getötet, aber abgelebt” (53) – put down, like an animal in pain. It is in this monologue that Schiller has Franz reproduce the psychosomatic principle of “influxus physicus” of the philosophische Ärzte – that is, the inviolable link between psyche and soma. However, it is not a vitalistic physiology that Franz espouses here, but rather psychosomatism as filtered through the materialism of a Descartes or La Mettrie:

"Philosophen und Mediziner lehren mich, wie treffend die Stimmungen des Geists mit den Bewegungen der Maschine zusammenlaufen. Gichtrische Empfindungen werden jederzeit von einer Dissonanz der mechanischen Schwindungen begleitet – Leidenschaften misshandeln die Lebenskraft – der überladene Geist drückt sein Gehäuse zu Boden… (53)"

The explicit referral to contemporary medical and philosophical thought, and particularly the sole footnote added by Schiller, which alludes to “the spectacular case of the Marquise de Brinvilliers,” a notorious Paris woman who concocted poisons, forms a distinct instance of verisimilitude in the drama, not unlike Goethe’s use of Kestner’s letters to recreate Jerusalem’s suicide in fiction. It contributes to, in Alexander Košenina’s terminology, the creation of “a realistic, sensational theatre of crime and atrocity,” a tradition dating back to the early seventeenth century. As a form of true crime or detective story, Schiller anticipates nineteenth-century narratives such as those by E.T.A. Hoffmann.

293 Ibid., 202.
As Franz sets about planning the murder of his father, he goes through a veritable inventory of affects; and he does so in a manner that is distant, dispassionate, and purely utilitarian. It is a meditation on how best to weaponize an affect – that is, not to aid the body’s physiology, but rather, “wie der gescheide Arzt, (nur umgekehrt)” (53) – to destroy it entirely. Further, since Franz does not seem to “feel” or to experience emotions and/or sensations in the same way as a “normal” person would, it appears easy for him to dissect them in a wholly rational way. He considers anger, “Sorge” (worry or apprehension), sorrow, and fear, before settling on terror: “Schreck! – Was kann der Schreck nicht? – Was kann Vernunft, Religion wider dieses Giganten eiskalte Umarmung?” (54).

The choice is of an affect that works from the mind through the body in a nearly instantaneous way, as supported by eighteenth-century understandings of terror. Zedler’s *Lexikon* defines “Schrecken” as “eine geschwinde Bewegung der Sinnen und des Leibes, über eine unvermuthete Begebenheit.” The description provided by Zedler is extremely similar to the definition found in Adelung’s *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch*: “Die heftige Erschütterung, und in weiterer Bedeutung die heftige unangenehme Empfindung bey dem plötzlichen Anblicke einer unerwarteten Sache, besonders bey dem plötzlichen Anblicke eines unvermutheten Übels.” Zedler’s entry continues, citing Wolff’s definition of “eine plötzliche Traurigkeit im hohen Grade über einem unvermutheten Unglück.” A differentiation is drawn between “Furcht” and “Schreck”: “Furcht ist ein Affect, der durch eine Vorstellung erregt wird, und also von Gedancken berrühret . . . das Schrecken hingegen betrifft nicht das Gemüth, sondern den Leib.” In other words, while fear touches upon the mind, terror functions in a way that bypasses it entirely, going

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297 Ibid.
directly, so to speak, to and through the body, like an electric shock. Especially significant are the descriptors of the physical effects of terror: “es verursacht das Schrecken an menschliche Leibe grosse Veränderung. Denn der Mensch wird im Gesichte blaß, in den Händen kalt, der Puls fängt an schwach zu schlagen… Das Herz fängt an starck zu klopfen. Einige . . . fallen auch zur Erde nieder, lassen die Hände sinken.”

In pregnant women, it often leads to miscarriage. In keeping with the eighteenth-century understanding of terror, then, it would appear as if Franz has made the perfect choice of an affect to quickly dismantle an already weak body.

The instrumentalization of “Schrecken” is, furthermore, an overt revelation of a technique that is used several times in the play (with roots in Aristotelean drama), one that keeps the audience in throes: shock and surprise are functionalized as peripeteia. Seen in this light, those sudden pieces of bad news deployed throughout the play are not just cheap plot tricks; rather, they time and again elucidate the characters’ affective reactions to a reversal of fate. When communicated to Karl, he falls, Oedipus-like, deeper into his own blindness, but not before reacting physically. In the case of Old Moor and, later, Franz, the suddenness and unpredictability that factor in when various twists of fortune reveal themselves produce shocks that ultimately prove fatal.

But how exactly does the affect play out in this scene? Relying on yet another fictitious report, and acting the part of loyal son and brother, Franz has Hermann disguise himself and deliver the news to Old Moor and Amalia that Karl has been killed in battle – and, moreover, that it was Old Moor’s “curse” that drove Karl to destruction. Here, too – if the invented scenario were true – it would be at least in part the elements of immediacy and surprise that contributed to Karl’s death, just as they will play a role in Old Moor’s and Franz’s. In what is certainly one of the most disturbing scenes of the drama, we witness Old Moor in the throes of madness, “Grässlich

298 Ibid., 1111-1112.
299 Ibid., 1112.
schreiend, sich die Haare ausraufend” (63); “schreiend, sein Gesicht zerfleischend” (64); “lallend” (64); “schlägt mit geballter Faust wider Brust und Stirn […] wütet wider sich selber” (65). The only words he is able to speak initially are repetitions of an object- and thought-cathexis: “Mein Fluch ihn gejagt in den Tod! […] Wehe, wehe! mein Fluch ihn gejagt in den Tod! […] Mein Fluch ihn gejagt, in den Tod…” (64). Next, he vents his desperation against Franz: Old Moor “[flährt aus dem Sessel, will Franzen an der Gurgel fassen” and curses Franz for having stolen his son (65). Finally, he asks Amalia to read to him the biblical story of Jacob and Joseph. It is this move toward intertextual empathy that finally appears to deliver Old Moor of his pain.

Franz’s reaction to his father’s supposed death – skipping for joy – is just one additional piece of evidence that his psychopathy goes beyond megalomania and grandiosity and into the realm of narcissism and antisocial personality disorder, the latter otherwise known as sociopathy. While such diagnoses are largely a product of the twentieth century, it may nonetheless be argued that Schiller, especially with the character of Franz, is dipping his feet into the burgeoning field of criminal psychology. Schiller’s description of Franz in the prologue provides a credible argument for this case: “Das Laster wird hier mit samt seinem ganzen innern Räderwerk entfaltet. […] Ich habe versucht, von einem Mißmenschen . . . ein treffendes lebendiges Konterfei hinzuzuerfen, die vollständige Mechanik seines Lastersystems auseinanderzugliedern – und ihre Kraft an der Wahrheit zu prüfen” (16). In other words, Schiller’s aim with Franz is to psychologize vice, to explain its causality from the inside out; and, indeed, this is already accomplished, to a large extent, with his first two monologues. Franz’s disfigurement and self-loathing are part of his melancholic composition as a misanthrope; and his story unfolds in a manner similar to Richard III: “…since I cannot prove a lover, […] I am determined to prove a villain / And hate the idle pleasures of these
These lines speak to two further strands of psychological motivation inherent in Franz: that is, his desire for Amalia, and the concurrent fact that she is deeply in love with Karl – and, ergo, the jealousy Franz harbors toward his older brother. The play offers a justification for Franz’s envy: Karl is, after all, constantly referred to as overwhelmingly handsome, and it is obvious that he has been the favorite of the two, loved far more deeply by both his father and Daniel, along with Amalia, since childhood. Moreover, it could be argued that Franz’s alleged ugliness makes him more aware of the limits of moral sentiments: he is placed outside of the limits of human sympathy (hated by his father, rejected by the ersatz-father Daniel, and dismissed by Amalia), at least in part because of his looks, which even Franz describes in “othering” language, as if the compiled mess of bodily parts and attributes were foreign to him, not his own. Therefore, despite the immense evil inherent in Franz’s character, it is nonetheless possible to sympathize with him, for the penchant towards destruction does not arise out of thin air.

Another determining psychological factor is Franz’s Herrschaftssucht, his unbridled obsession with power, control, and authority, which is expressed time and again throughout the drama. In the opening monologue, Franz remarks, “Ich will alles um mich her ausrotten, was mich einschränkt, dass ich nicht Herr bin. Herr muss ich sein, dass ich das mit Gewalt ertrotze, wozu mir die Liebenswürdigkeit gebracht” (30). After Old Moor’s death, by Franz’s own admission, he removes the “lastigen Larve von Sanftmut und Tugend,” bellowing to the household, in a quite literal expression of Größenwahn, “Meine Aug-Braunen sollen über euch herhängen wie

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300 Shakespeare, Richard III. 4-5.
301 This choice of main theme in the drama, i.e., the rivalry between brothers, is, moreover, one that runs deeply throughout biblical and mythological, as well as Sturm und Drang, literature. Because of its commonality and familiarity – its timelessness, in a sense – the theme makes it possible to effectively communicate emotions to a readership and/or an audience without having to name them.
Gewitterwolken, mein herrischer Name schweben wie ein drohender Komet über diesen Gebirgen, meine Stirne soll euer Wetterglas sein!” (68). In Act III, scene 1, Franz directs his rage toward Amalia: “an den Haaren will ich dich in die Kapelle schleifen, den Degen in der Hand, dir den ehlichen Schur aus der Seele pressen, dein jungfräuliches Bette mit Sturm ersteigen, und deine stolze Scham mit noch größerem Stolz besiegen” (94). Again in this scene, in a more disturbing twist, Franz attempts to drag Amalia into his room. As she resists, there is a further allusion to rape – “mich ergötzt der Grimm eines Weibes, macht dich nur schöner, begehrenswerter” (94) – a crime that is deeply associated with the (usually masculine) desire for dominance.

An Affective Hangover: Melancholy as Mood of the Play

As established above, Franz’s desire for power extends to his own body, over which he purports to exercise complete control. Yet his actions become more and more involuntary, echoing the overall arc of affect revealed by the drama as it unfolds: that is, emotion becomes ever more frenetic and unintentional, threatening to spiral out of control. The most emphatic examples of this schema, and perhaps the most violent gestures of the entire piece, are found in the final act of the play.

In Act V, scene 1, Franz’s breakdown is staged as a forced encounter with that which he cannot control by means of the intellect. Franz is well aware that Karl, having realized Franz’s betrayal and returned home, and/or Karl’s men, are coming for him, and yet this manifests not, for example, in the logical action of running away from the scene, but rather in a philosophical crisis and paranoia. In a twist of fate, Franz, having dreamed of his own Judgment Day, is stunned into sequestration by the same affect he sought to weaponize against his father: he is terrified. Once again, surprise and suddenness factor into the drama as elements of peripeteia. And the effects of terror (along with the sudden materialization of a conscience) play out in much the same way they
did with Old Moor. Franz commands his body not to tremble, and yet, as Daniel remarks, “Ihr seid todenbleich, eure Stimme ist bang und lallet” (140). As Franz begs Daniel not to leave his side – the first time he has sought help from another person in the play – Daniel notes, tellingly, “Oh Ihr seid ernstlich krank” (141). Franz prattles on a near-senseless tangent, and he finally faints. Upon recovering, he recounts his dream to Daniel, preempting his own physical reactions to follow: “…und mein innerstes Mark gefror in mir, und meine Zähne klapperten laut” (143).

In his last desperate attempt to shake off what has overcome him, Franz requests the presence of Paster Moser. Before the latter enters, Franz debates with himself about the status of God: “—wenns doch aber was mehr wäre? Nein, nein, es ist nicht! Ich befehle, es ist nicht!” (144). Even in the midst of delirium, Franz is seemingly aware of the ridiculousness of his words: he cannot command God, nor can he alter by force God’s judgment of him and what will happen to him after death. This awareness is given away, once more, by involuntary physicality: “warum schaudert mir so durch die Knochen? – Sterben! warum packt mich das Wort so?” (144). With Moser’s entry, Franz debates with him further on God’s existence, returning momentarily to the materialist ghost-in-the-machine: “Ich habs immer gelesen, dass unser Wesen nichts ist als Sprung des Geblüts, und mit dem letzten Blutstropfen zerrinnt auch Geist und Gedanke” (145). Moser then reframes the test in physical terms: if Franz “im Tode annoch feste steht…so sollt Ihr gewonnen haben; wenn euch im Tode nur der mindeste Schauder anwandelt, weh euch dann!” (146). In the end, Franz cannot stand firm; and, in a distinct harkening back to Old Moor’s death pangs, Franz pales, collapses into a chair, leaps back up, and writhes in convulsions. Stifled in his attempt to pray, with the brouhaha growing ever louder outside, Franz beats his own breast and forehead, before finally strangling himself to death.
Franz’s madness is mirrored by Karl’s actions in the following scene: indeed, this is the closest the two brothers ever come in physical proximity, and it is in these last two scenes that they merge most decisively in their destructive mania. In Act V, scene 2, Karl is reunited with both his father and Amalia. Yet the knowledge that there is no true return – no more “Schatten meiner väterlichen Haine, in den Armen meiner Amalia” (37) – for Karl has already stepped “aus dem Kreise der Menschheit” (103) – and this in total, blind error, as a “blöder, blöder, blöder Tor” (119) – drives Karl to the brink of insanity. He, too, is momentarily lost in the repetitious discourse of unreason: “Tötet sie! Tötet ihn! mich! euch! alles! Die ganze Welt geh zugrunde!” (155). He continues to swoon, as he draws his sword against the band and commands his father to “Stirb durch mich zum dritten Mal!” (155). Revealing his true identity as the captain of the band of “Räuber und Mörder” (155), Karl draws a page from Franz’s playbook (whether intentionally or not) and succeeds in bringing about his father’s death: this time, the shock, fraught with truthfulness, indeed proves fatal. While the whole band pauses in silent horror, like a chorus with nothing more to say, Karl breaks into a furious mania, running against an oak tree. Although he is forgiven by Amalia, the band steps in to prevent a reunion with her, reminding Karl of the oath he has sworn to them. What follows is yet another episode of mass hysteria, as the robbers tear open their clothing to reveal their terrible scars, and they chant their battle cry, “Opfer um Opfer! Amalia für die Bande!” (157). With no way out, and even Amalia begging him to do so, Karl finally kills her.

While autonomy is hinted at in Karl’s decision to turn himself over to the authorities and to give the money on his head to a day laborer, i.e., the last moral action available to him, this is still tantamount to suicide. However, even though the choice represents a grotesque parody of an ethical solution, it can be argued that Karl does not lose himself in the end in the same way that
Franz does – that Karl’s melancholy does not run so deeply as his brother’s. The agency that is leveraged in this move is a follow-up to Karl’s “to be or not to be” speech in Act VI, scene 5; in this way, suicide becomes – if perversely – an expression of autonomy. Nevertheless, based on what the drama has related to us about the nature of justice and the law, Karl’s action does not bring about closure. Instead, we are left “an emotional and moral void” and “melancholy reflection on the nature of the world depicted.”

These events do well to bring us back to the audience’s involuntary physical reactions on the night of the premiere: just as Franz mirrors his father’s actions, and Karl his brother’s, so too are the audience’s reactions a mirror of what takes place as the drama ends in total chaos and destruction. Seen in this light, melancholy becomes more than an emotion, affect, or illness affecting the characters in the play. Rather, it is explosive, expressed in a series of shocks, both within the play and between its performance and audience; and it is ambient, atmospheric, like a third major character in the play, pervading the drama from its opening through close and reaching across the stage, in the manner of an extraordinary affect, to touch all those present at the scene.

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303 Ibid., 311.
At the tender age of eight years old, the eponymous protagonist of Karl Philipp Moritz’s semi-autobiographical, self-styled “psychological” novel *Anton Reiser* falls victim to “eine Art von auszehrender Krankheit.” His aunt – seemingly more fond of Anton than his own parents – brings him to a doctor, who, with a few months’ treatment, restores Anton to health. After several weeks, however, Anton’s foot begins to ache. It quickly becomes swollen and inflamed – so much, in fact, that amputation seems the only recourse. The application of an ointment somewhat miraculously saves Anton from this fate, but he remains unable to walk for any long period of time: his foot heals for a while, then gets worse. Anton is thus confined to his home, where he often whimpers and cries the entire night long, for he suffers “die abscheulichsten Schmerzen fast alle Tage beim Verbinden” (96).

The doctor, a course of treatment, a medicine, physical pain in a definable location, recurring symptoms – all of these elements point to a working model of illness and disease, one that reaches back over time and that most people can agree upon today: it is a suffering caused by something gone awry in the body, an organic deviation that can be isolated and somehow quantified. Yet Moritz, in both *Anton Reiser* and in his larger project of *Erfahrungsseelenkunde*,

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304 Karl Philipp Moritz, *Dichtungen und Schriften zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde*, ed. Heide Hollmer and Albert Meier (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1999), 95. All further citations from the novel will be given in parentheses within the main text.

305 In a 2013 article, author Gary Greenberg eloquently describes this phenomenon: “Cancer, diabetes, tuberculosis – we label these diseases not simply because they inflict pain upon us, or impair the quality of our lives, but because doctors can specify their biochemistry – the neoplasms, the lack of insulin, the bacilli that can confirm the presence of the disease, that can be spotted and measured and, sometimes, eradicated.” In “The Creation of Disease,” *The New Yorker*, April 30, 2013, https://www.newyorker.com/t...
primarily departs from the traditional medico-physiological discourse of his day. Instead, as Moritz proposes in his 1782 “Vorschlag zu einem Magazin einer Erfahrungsseelenkunde,”

Unter allen Dingen hat der Mensch sich selber seiner eignen Aufmerksamkeit vielleicht noch am allerwenigsten wert gehalten. Bloß weil das dringendste Bedürfnis der Krankheit ihn dazu nötigte, fing er an, seinen Körper genauer kennenzulernen. Weil er dieses Bedürfnis bei den Krankheiten der Seele nicht so lebhaft empfand, so vernachlässigte er auch die Kenntnis dieses edelsten Teiles seiner selbst. […] Wie weit mannigfaltiger, verderblicher, und um sich greifender als alle körperliche Übel, sind die Krankheiten der Seele! Wie weit unentbehrlicher, als alle Arzneikunde für den Körper, wäre dem menschlichen Geschlechte eine Seelenkrankheitslehre, die es noch nicht hat.306

While the question of how disease has been conceptualized historically and what it means in the present day looms, at least tangentially, throughout this dissertation, this chapter will pay special attention to the shifting emphasis on the sick soul or mind versus the sick body, as well as how the two inform each other reciprocally: in Anton Reiser, as well as in the case studies that form the bulk of Moritz’s Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde, the protagonists’ melancholy is presented most explicitly as a mental and affective disorder; and, equally significantly, as the product of the individual’s social environment.

Even though the melancholy suffered by Anton bears many similarities to its manifestations in Werther, Karl, and Franz (e.g., from something akin to modern-day depression or bipolarity, to symptoms such as the emptying-out of the self and the obfuscation of objective appraisals of the world), the narrative approach toward melancholy in Anton Reiser, as well as its

etiology as elucidated by Moritz, are radically different from its rendering in both *Werther* and *Die Räuber*. In terms of the narrative, Anton’s melancholy is the subject of the narrator-cum-Moritz-cum philosophical doctor’s observations and scrutiny. Melancholy is presented as a phenomenon to be analyzed, and it is examined and commented upon continually throughout the novel via a third-person perspective. As Nicholas Pethes notes, “Moritz’s writing in the novel is as factual, clinical, and objective as any empirical documentation of a medical case can be.”(307) Furthermore, the sources of Anton’s pathology are largely unique: while a hypertrophied imagination, text-dependency (or *Lesewut*), and unsystematized thinking are also elements of Werther’s melancholy, and while religion plays a role in Franz von Moor’s dissolution, Anton further suffers due to material and social deprivation, class status, shame, and physical pain; in this latter configuration, melancholy is the most immediate repercussion of Anton’s upbringing and social environment. *Anton Reiser* therefore offers a medicalized conception of melancholy at the interstices of sociology and psychology.(308)

This chapter will begin by tracing some of the developments in medicine that fostered a shift from somatic understandings of melancholy to a model that focuses more specifically on mental causation, using a history of medicine approach. Next, I will move to an analysis of Moritz’s depiction of Anton’s childhood experiences, especially the influence of religion, in order to elucidate how such an implication of a mental framework is introduced in the novel, as well as how “nurture” plays a role in the formation of Anton’s pathology. After cognition, Moritz lays heavy emphasis on the social and interpersonal aspects of mental illness. Within the social rubric,

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the phenomenon of shame is explicitly foregrounded as an all-consuming experience that leaves no room for the thinking and feeling processes of the self. Using insights from affect theory, as well as Elaine Scarry’s approach to trauma in her monograph *The Body in Pain*, I will examine shame as a social affect that pushes language to its very limits. Finally, I will turn to the issue of the narrative: innovation in content, in the novel’s accounts of the causes and manifestations of melancholy, leads to innovation in form, insofar as the text is more episodic at times than it is linear, moving back and forth between outbreaks of melancholy and explanations of pathology that are provided by the narrator.

*Melancholy Between Body and Mind – Mind Between Soul and Cerebrum*

Since antiquity, there have been two central notions of disease. These are “(i) disease as a distinct entity; when a healthy man A falls ill he becomes A plus B, where B is ‘a disease.’ […] And (ii) disease as a deviation from the normal; a healthy man A, through the influence of any number of factors (x₁, x₂, x₃…xₙ) – physical or mental – is changed and suffers; he is dis-eased.” Various names have been used to cover these two concepts, e.g., “ontological” – “indicating the independent self-sufficiency of diseases running a regular course and with a natural history of their own,” and “biographical” or “physiological,” which take the history of the patient into account. While both theories posit illness as an event in which something happens to the body, the issue becomes whether the *disease* is understood as the bacterium, demonic spirit, virus, or other foreign entity injected into the healthy system, or else as the body itself undergoing the process of reacting to a pathogen. In other words, ontological theories point to the disease entity in and of itself,

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310 Ibid., 156.
whereas biographical or physiological theories focus on the body of the sufferer, as it presumably undergoes a reaction or deviation in response to a pathogenic agent. While the referent of a “norm” renders the quantification of illness both relative and value-laden, the measurement of physiological variables is common medical practice (temperature, heart rate, and blood pressure are some mundane examples). The explicit challenge posed by psychology, then – or Seelenkunde before it, as described by Moritz above – as a branch of medicine is due to the fact that it deals with something that can neither be seen nor measured: the mind. Emotions and experiences, thoughts and moods – these are the intangible ups and downs of the discipline.

In his encyclopedic monograph *Melancholia and Depression: From Hippocratic Times to Modern Times* (1986), Stanley W. Jackson examines physiological concepts of disease vis-à-vis their origins in antiquity, in the humoral theory of the Hippocratic writers and Galen, “continuing down through the years with the generations of humoralists that followed in Galen’s footsteps.”311 Within the framework of humoral medicine, as discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, man was understood to be composed of a balance of bodily humors: such balance was associated with health, and a deviation from this equilibrium signalled disease.312 The humoral theory of medicine itself became the dominant explanatory principle for handling diseases for approximately two millennia.313 As Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl note, “[humoral medicine] was destined to dominate the whole trend of physiology and psychology until almost present day.”314 Humoral medicine also included, apart from the humors, the doctrine of the six “non-naturals,” i.e., non-innate bodily elements or “a group of acquired environmental factors . . . the careful management

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312 Ibid. See also Cohen, 165.
313 See Jackson, 7, and Cohen, 163.
314 Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl, 3.
of which was thought to be crucial to health in the sense later referred to as *hygiene.*"315 The “non-naturals” include “air, exercise and rest, sleep and wakefulness, food and drink, excretion and retention of superfluities, and the passions or perturbations of the soul.”316 While the incorporation of the passions within this schema gives an implicit suggestion that mind interacts with body, and notwithstanding the fact that melancholy was “mainly characterized by symptoms of mental change, ranging from fear, misanthropy and depression, to madness in its most frightful forms,”317 humoral theory is nevertheless rooted in physiological explanations of disease. In his history of the treatment of melancholy, Jean Starobinski notes “die große Klarheit, mit welcher die *Hippokratischen Schriften* die neuro-psychiatrischen Symptome . . . auf einen körperlichen und humoralen Ursprung zurückführen […] Alle Ursachen sind körperlicher Natur.”318 The somatic causes center around the notion of bodily fluids. In humoral medicine, these include black bile (the crucial etiologic factor in melancholy), yellow or red bile, blood, and phlegm. Two thousand years later, doctors such as “the English Hippocrates” Thomas Sydenham (1624-1689), the Halle-based “reasonable physician” Friedrich Hoffmann (1660-1745),319 and even the famed Dutch chemist Herman Boerhaave (1668-1738), were, in their theoretical advancements, often merely substituting one fluid for another: in most cases, the pathogenic factor switched to blood, which in the melancholic was considered to be too thick, slow-moving, and sluggish.320

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315 Jackson, 11.
316 Ibid.
317 Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl, 14. The authors note that “emotional disturbances were described as an indication of ‘mental melancholy,’ and finally – a constantly repeated diagnosis – the symptoms were summarised in the phrase: ‘Constant anxiety and depression are signs of melancholy’” (15). This last quote is taken from Hippocrates’ *Aphorismata.*
318 Starobinski, *Geschichte der Melancholiebehandlung,* 44.
320 On Sydenham see Stephen Gaukroger, *The Collapse of Mechanism and the Rise of Sensibility: Science and the Shaping of Modernity,* 1680-1760 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 162; on Hoffmann and Boerhaave see Jackson, 118-119. Of Boerhaave, Jackson notes, “As with others before him, Boerhaave had abandoned the traditional humoral theory, but he used to term *humor* to refer to the various bodily fluids and secretions. Black bile was no longer
The longevity that characterizes the doctrine of humoral medicine – adhered to, for the most part, by those aforementioned seventeenth- and eighteenth-century doctors who departed from several of its tenets, yet still believed in some kind of disturbed mixture of fluids – must be understood on a conceptual basis in terms of how medicinal and scientific progress have proceeded historically. Even as new discoveries were made, existing theory was not simply abandoned; instead, physicians and scientists sought ways to reconcile innovations in thought with that which they already knew. Most thinkers worked within paradigms, not to break out of them. As Starobinski argues, for hundreds of years, “originality” meant not doubting traditional knowledge, but rather adding to it and supplementing it with additional material. In other words, it was only gradually – and sometimes this meant centuries – that the significance of new observations and experiments caused thinkers to change the existing theory altogether. Indeed, this is how most scientific revolutions happen.

When exactly was the revolution, then? Starobinski situates it in the eighteenth-century French physician Anne-Charles Lorry’s text *De melancholia et morbis melancholicus* (1765), in which Lorry identifies two forms of melancholy: a humoral variant and a nervous variant. Starobinski understands Lorry’s book as marking a bridge between two moments in psychiatric thinking, whereby “nervous” and “humoral” melancholy build a symmetrical pair. This symmetry, however, does not last; nor is Lorry’s innovation without its predecessors. A hundred

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321 See Starobinski, 35.
322 Ibid., see 66.
323 The term “scientific revolution” can hardly be used without citing Thomas Kuhn’s exemplary text, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).
324 See Starobinski, 107.
325 Ibid., see 109.
years before Lorry, there was a larger revolution occurring in physiology and science, and this sea change would see its effects play out for another hundred years after him. This “revolution in sensibility,” nothing less than a paradigm shift in European accounts of mind, is outlined by the cultural historian and founding contributor to medical epistemologies of literature G. S. Rousseau in his seminal 1975 article “Nerves, Spirits and Fibres: Toward the Origins of Sensibility.” Here, Rousseau argues that the eighteenth-century philosophical and literary ideas of sentiment (roughly speaking, the “cult of sensibility”) are in fact underpinned by physiological, neurological, and scientific inquiries of the previous century, set in motion, specifically, by the exemplary works on the brain published by the British physiologist Thomas Willis (1621-1675) in the 1660s and 1670s.

Willis was the first scientist to posit that the soul – i.e., sentience – is located in the cerebrum, cerebellum, and the network of nerves surrounding this area; in other words, Willis declared the brain to be the seat of the soul. The implications of this assertion are manifold: if the soul is located strictly in the brain – if the brain is, in fact, “co-equal with mind and soul” – and the brain depends on the nerves for all of its functions, then the nerves alone may be held responsible for sensory impressions, and, consequently – if we follow through with Willis’ student, John Locke – for the impartation of knowledge. Willis’ accomplishments, then, made room for a radically new assumption concerning the human being’s physiology – namely, that man is neither

328 Ibid., see 167. Rousseau qualifies this claim with regard to Willis: “Every competent anatomist of the late seventeenth century knew that nerves…carry out the tasks set by the brain. But not every physiologist or anatomist knew, or if he did know would have agreed, that the soul is located in the brain” (166). Elsewhere, in a concise summary of Willis’ achievements, Rousseau states affirmatively, “Thomas Willis . . . invented the concept of a ‘nervous system,’ insisted that mind was ‘resident in the body,’ and demonstrated that mental function arises anatomically from the collection of organs – hence the whole organic body – rather than any single organ.” In “‘Brainomania’: Brain, Mind and Soul in the Long Eighteenth Century,” British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies 30 (2007), 171. See also Magdalena Zolkos, “Porous Skins and Tactile Bodies: Juxtaposition of the Affective and Sentimental Ideas of the Subject,” Humanities 5 (2016): 7, doi: 10.3390/h5030077.
329 Rousseau, “‘Brainomania,’” 171.
a hydraulic contraption nor a machine; there are no valves, vessels, pumps, or pulleys – rather, we are all essentially nervous creatures.\footnote{Ibid., see 169.}

Although Willis may have started the revolution, the name that is perhaps most commonly associated with European medical accounts of sensibility is the Swiss anatomist-physiologist Albrecht von Haller (1709-1777). In fact, it is under Haller that much of the work of the previous generation of “neurologists”\footnote{These include – along with Willis – the Anglo-Irish chemist Robert Boyle (1627-1691); Hermann Boerhaave (1668-1738); and George Cheyne (1671-1753), author of The English Malady: or, a treatise of nervous diseases of all kinds (1733). See G. S. Rousseau, “Science and the Discovery of the Imagination in Enlightened England (1969),” in Nervous Acts, 84.} coalesces. Haller reconceptualized the human body by substituting the now millennia-old accepted hierarchy of solids and fluids with “a decentralized typology of sensible fibers and irritable fibers and organs.”\footnote{Vila, 20.} In so doing, Haller popularized that which Willis had conceived of a hundred years earlier: the notion of fibers linking nerve endings to the “sensorium commune” or the brain; or, as Anne C. Vila describes it, the brain as a “semophysical, semimetaphysical site”\footnote{Ibid., 28.} where all nerves originate and sensations of mind are represented. In this way, Haller delineated the body – and therefore the sentient subject – as that which possesses sensory receptivity.\footnote{See Zolkos, 9.} At the same time, however, sensation, or feeling, becomes demystified; it is nothing more than nervous transmission through the body to the brain.

Albrecht Koschorke argues, therefore, for the shift from “a humoral to a neurological corporeal model,” whereby “the limitless potential for replacing one fluid with another…disappeared from empirical medicine.”\footnote{Koschorke, “Physiological Self-Regulation,” 483. See also Koschorke, Körperströme und Schriftverkehr: Mediologie des 18. Jahrhunderts (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1999): “Nervosität, Sensibilität und soziales Empfinden [greifen nun] funktionell ineinander” (123).} According to the laws of sympathy, as predicated upon the workings of the nervous system, the human being emerges as an organism...
within which individual organs are given their own specific tasks (“guided” by the nervous system); moreover, physiological communication between organs – again, mediated by the nervous system – is made possible. Commensurate with the shift from humoralism to an incipient neurology is a reorientation of bodily aberrancies: gone are the disturbances of balance between somatic entry and exit; rather, nervous medicine gives rise to the “subtler option of nervous malady. Thus emerge[] the psychosomatic symptomologies stamping the modern corporeal image.” The reference to a set of symptomologies in the plural, in turn, indicates a complication of causality in the disease model.

If Willis may be credited with setting the scene for a new, neural-nervous anatomy of man – and Haller, later, with its popularization – then it is John Locke (1632-1704) who brings these developments full circle, integrating ethics and physiology, empiricist philosophy, and a theory of sensory perception and learning in order to create the second wave of this seventeenth-century revolution in sensibility: the science of the human being. The consequence of Lockean epistemology is the introduction of the now sensitive, sensing body to the puzzle of knowledge – that is, the creation of a “sensationist epistemology.” “In its simplest form,” the philosopher Alexander Cook writes, the concept of “sensibility” denotes “the capacity of a physical organism to register impressions from the external world via the medium of the senses.” The body notes the basic qualities of objects, such as hot, cold, large, or small, as well as physical responses to the objects, like pleasure or pain. These reactions are subsequently transferred to the brain through the

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337 See Koschorke, “Physiological Self-Regulation,” 483.
338 Ibid.
means of the nerves. In the brain, knowledge and sensations are then “combined, processed, and reflected upon [in order] to produce our ideas about the world.”\textsuperscript{342} In his monumental \textit{Essay Concerning Human Understanding} (1689), Locke famously argues that the mind is a blank slate, or “tabula rasa,” at birth, with all knowledge derived from experience.\textsuperscript{343} Experience itself falls under two categories: sensation, which tells us about the things and processes in the external world; and reflection, which gives us information about the internal operations of our own minds.\textsuperscript{344}

Moritz’s refusal to rely on a priori knowledge – to instead forge the discipline of \textit{Erfahrungsseelenkunde} as a project of empiricism\textsuperscript{345} – demarcates a link with Locke’s approach to knowledge. Moritz, like Locke, expresses a profound interest in impressions: sights, sounds, single words, and gestures are all potentially relevant material for the sick soul, depending on how they play out in the subject’s processes of cognition. The subject itself is thus fashioned through its layers of such individual impressions, perceptions, relationships, and environments. More so than this, Moritz’s notions of the “tätige” and “vorstellende” Kräfte are comparable to Locke’s understanding of external and internal experiences (sensation and reflection, respectively): a healthy mind is one in which the two achieve an active and ongoing balance. Finally, Locke’s \textit{Essay}’s sections on simple and complex ideas form a theory of associationism, i.e., of the ways in

\textsuperscript{342} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{345} On the difference between rational and empirical psychology, Bennholdt-Thomsen and Guzzoni write in their afterword to the \textit{Magazin}, “Gegen die . . . rationale Psychologie Leibniz-Wolffscher Prägung, die sich mit den Fragen der Einfachheit, der Substantialität und der Unsterblichkeit der Seele befasste, richtet sich das Interesse der – ebenfalls auf Wolff zurückgehenden – empirischen Psychologie auf Wirkungen, Erscheinungen und Veränderungen der Seele, um von ihnen Rückschlüsse auf deren Eigenart zu ziehen. […] einmal ein analytisch-beobachtendes Vorgehen, das konkrete Phänomene zergliedert und zur Erklärung auf andere seelische Äußerungen zurückgreift, also ein Fortgehen an Hand von Erscheinungen, das von Begriffen so wenig Gebrauch wie möglich macht; zum anderen ein begrifflich-spekulatives und in diesem Sinne denn doch rationales Verfahren, das sich von der Erfahrung nur den rohen Stoff vorgeben läßt, im übrigen die Seele aufbaut und die Analyse nicht . . . auf konkrete Phänomene anwendet, sondern auf Begriffe, die – und darin zeigt sich das naturwissenschaftlich orientierte Kausalitätsdenken in Verbindung mit Systematisierungstendenzen – auf letzte Prinzipien zurückgeführt werden sollen” (3-4).
which thoughts and ideas are connected, and, coupled with this, of the imagination – the faculty that is perennially at stake in Anton Reiser.

The Imagination Medicalized

Moritz’s own understanding of Seelenkrankheit and its counterpart, -gesundheit, focuses largely on the idea of (im)balance amongst Seelenfähigkeiten or -kräften, i.e., capabilities, forces, or faculties of the mind as it acts in relation to the world. At the outset of his Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde, Moritz proposes eight “Grundlinien zu einem ohngefähren Entwurf in Rücksicht auf die Seelenkrankheitskunde.” The first of these delivers the most decisive definition of mental illness in the essay: “Mangel der verhältnismäßigen Übereinstimmung aller Seelenfähigkeiten ist Seelenkrankheit.” This is qualified by the third postulate: “Die tätigen Kräfte müssen mit den vorstellenden Kräften in einem gewissen Verhältnis stehen; sind sie gegen dieselben zu stark, und bekommen das Übergewicht, so ist dieses Krankheit der Seele.” Moritz is, in other words, speaking to a paradigm of health and sickness that has its roots in the Greek and humoral traditions of medicine outlined above: the mind is a mixture (krasis) of qualities, and a healthy mind is one that maintains harmony between its elements, particularly the “active” (tätige) versus the “imaginative” (vorstellende) ones. At the same time, however, there is a shift...

346 See Matthew Bell, German Tradition, 96.
348 Ibid., 813. Moritz’s definition continues, “Es kommt daher nicht sowohl auf die Stärke oder Schwäche einer einzelnen Seelenfähigkeit, an und für sich betrachtet, an, als vielmehr, in wie ferne dieselbe, in Absicht aller übrigen Seelenfähigkeiten, entweder zu stark oder zu schwach ist” (ibid).
349 Ibid., 814.
350 See Bell, German Tradition, 96. Hollmer and Meier point to the influence of the philosophes (the French Enzyklopädisten) as well as English moral sense philosophy, specifically Shaftesbury’s definition of mental health in An Inquiry Concerning Virtue, or Merit (1711). See 1300-1301. Lothar Müller posits that Moritz borrows these concepts from the philosophischen Arzt Marcus Herz. See Die kranke Seele und das Licht der Erkenntnis: Karl Philipp Moritz’ Anton Reiser (Frankfurt: Athenäum, 1987), 69, 81.
towards modernity in these descriptions: by implicating qualities of the mind – i.e., instead of the body, such as bile, blood, phlegm, or any specific organ, for that matter – Moritz implies a mental and affective etiology of *Seelenkrankheit* or mental illness, rather than a somatic paradigm.\(^{351}\) The result is that, rather than a one-to-one, standard and linear measure of cause and effect (e.g., black bile causes a melancholic temperament in all cases), the issue of causality is problematized and complicated, as is the resulting image of mental health or sickness.

An etiology of mind is still more clearly suggested via Moritz’s interest in the processes of thinking and in the association of ideas, which appears in postulates four and five, respectively:

> Von den Ideen, welche täglich und Augenblicklich in die Seele strömen, müssen notwendig immer eine gewisse Anzahl bald wieder verdunkelt werden, wenn die Denkkraft in einem gesunden Zustande bleiben soll. […] Der Mangel des gehörigen Zusammenhangs zwischen den Ideen scheinet die Ursach vieler Krankheiten der Seele zu sein.\(^{352}\)

In the first place, Moritz notes, some of the numerous ideas present in one’s mind at any given time must be eclipsed, in order for others to remain intelligible. Subsequently, false connections between ideas may result in outbreaks of mental illness. Both hypotheses read much like a commentary on Locke’s second book of the *Essay* (“Of Ideas”), perhaps especially Locke’s proposition that “mad Men put wrong Ideas together, and so make wrong Propositions, but argue and reason right from them.”\(^{353}\) In *Anton Reiser*, the quality of incorrectly – or, perhaps arbitrarily – linking ideas (and/or linking signs and referents together) is shown repeatedly to take a toll on

\(^{351}\) As Andreas Gailus notes, “If the notion of health as internal balance goes back to the Greeks, Moritz’s application of this conception to the mind marks the starting point for a decidedly modern rewriting of the soul.” In “A Case of Individuality: Karl Philipp Moritz and the Magazine for Empirical Psychology,” *New German Critique* 79 (2000), 93.

\(^{352}\) Moritz, “Grundlinien,” 814.

Anton’s moods, often serving to (falsely) confirm his perennially negative beliefs about himself and the world around him.

G. S. Rousseau approaches the theme of madness in its indissoluble connection to the imagination in his 1969 article, “Science and the Discovery of the Imagination in Enlightened England.” Taking both Willis and Locke into account, Rousseau argues that the imagination as a concrete, neurological entity was “discovered” in the second half of the seventeenth century – “a real imagination: substantive, existential, working physiologically through the mechanical motions of the blood, nerves, and animal spirits.”\textsuperscript{354} While the century of the Enlightenment would not solve the precise physiology of the imagination (nor indeed would the twentieth, or the twenty-first century, as of present), the larger issue at stake is that if the imagination is “a real essence, as material in substance as any other part of the body,” then – returning to the notion of disease described at the outset of this chapter – it might therefore be medicalized.\textsuperscript{355} Rousseau cites Dr. Robert James’ \textit{Medicinal Dictionary} (1743-1745) for one of many comprehensive summaries of the physiology of the imagination. The entry for “Einbildungs-Krafft” in Zedler’s \textit{Lexikon}, while excluding any mention of the nerves, does place the imagination into direct correlation with the soul: it is generally understood to be “die Krafft der Seelen, die Bilder derer äußerlichen und in die Sinne fallenden Sachen anzunehmen, selbige zusammen zu setzen, und von einander abzusondern.”\textsuperscript{356} Further, both reference works contain descriptions of the potentially detrimental impact of the imagination on the body: Zedler notes, “Auf Seiten des Leibes führet man an, wie die Imagination allerhand Krankheiten verursuche.”\textsuperscript{357} Finally, Zedler also delineates the effects of the imagination on our appraisals of or feelings toward objects, as well as on the senses. In the

\textsuperscript{354} Rousseau, “Science and the Discovery of the Imagination,” 87. See also 86.
\textsuperscript{355} Ibid., 86. See also 89.
\textsuperscript{356} Zedler, 533
\textsuperscript{357} Ibid., 536.
latter case, the imagination often takes on “die Herrschaft über die äußerlichen Sinne…dass, wenn ein Mensch mit gewissen Einbildungen eingenommen, er zuweilen weder recht sehe, noch schmecke, noch höre, u.s.w. […] dass sie so wohl zur Gesundheit als Kranckheit dienen können.” Here, Zedler approaches the topic that informs the second half of Rousseau’s article: the implication of both a healthy and sick, a normal and diseased imagination, and the subsequent fact that Enlightenment physicians focused their attention on the diseased imagination, rather than on a healthy one. In fact, in Rousseau’s approximation, “The history of the medical concept ‘imagination’ in this epoch is…also the history of madness.”

For Moritz, however, it is not necessarily the imagination, but rather the soul itself that is made material – in this instance, by demystifying it, by turning it into language and writing, and by treating it as something akin to the psyche of psychoanalysis. To be sure, Moritz is following a tradition set in place by the philosophische Ärzte and, with them, the project of late Enlightenment anthropology as the study of der ganze Mensch (especially via the notion of “influxus physicus” or the reciprocal relationship between the body and the soul), which anticipates a Verwissenschaftlichung or scientization of the human being. Anthropological texts like Ernst Platner’s Anthropologie für Ärzte und Weltweise (1772) as well as medical treatises like Markus Herz’s Grundriß aller medizinischen Wissenschaften (1782) focus on the living being as the question to be broached by knowledge and redefine the rational soul as a type of “invisible organ that, thanks to its intimate connection to and effects on the body, could become the object

358 Ibid.
360 Ibid., 92.
361 Ibid., 96. Arguing along Foucauldian lines, Rousseau writes, “Society, in discovering the ‘diseased imagination’ within the imagination at large, thereby created the notion of a psychological condition” (93).
362 By “the psyche of psychoanalysis,” I mean the psyche as the inner forces which shape an individual’s personality, thought, and behaviors.
Yet Moritz, with his “psychological novel,” as well as with the case studies that form the bulk of material in his Magazin, also plays a significant role in this Verwissenschaftlichung of the soul: his innovation lies in assigning the soul both an individuality and a temporality; it is shaped by, and the product of, a specific life history. Although this history becomes fictionalized in the final series of novels bearing the title of Anton Reiser, it retains – intentionally so – a striking resemblance to Moritz’s own biography and, as such, the novel is, like Werther, another example of Pethes’ “telling cases” or “narrating pathology.” As Andreas Gailus articulately expresses it,

To write the soul now means to retrace the particular and contingent experiences that formed it, to tell its history, the story of how it became the way it is. In other words, it means to conceive the soul as a historical state of affairs, and to represent it in case histories which, while seeking to produce general knowledge about the workings of the soul, also promise to reveal the life of the individual in its singularity and distinctiveness.

Anton Reiser functions as a case study in the way that Gailus (as well as Pethes) outlines: while it tells “die innere Geschichte” of one specific character, this story should serve as an impetus, “vorzüglich in pädagogischer Rücksicht . . . die Aufmerksamkeit des Menschen mehr auf den Menschen selbst zu heften” (86), thus indicating a movement from the individual to the general or typical.

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364 Pethes, “Telling Cases.” See 32. Of Anton Reiser, Pethes writes specifically: “[M]odern German prose fiction takes individual pathologies – sometimes physical, mostly mental – as its point of departure…The most significant example for this medical context of late Enlightenment literature is Carl Philipp Moritz’s autobiographical novel Anton Reiser… […] Some of Anton’s sufferings are generalized as if they could account for the human condition, but most of the time it is precisely his focus on individuality that creates the medical character of this biography” (35).

365 Gailus, “A Case of Individuality,” 93.
The modernness of *Anton Reiser* lies in its constant pacing between explanatory modes of disease. Anton’s “wasting illness,” his injured foot, present as mere parentheticals to a life history spent under the banner of suffering – for, as Moritz writes, “von [Anton] kann man mit Wahrheit sagen, dass er von der Wiege an unterdrückt ward” (91). Equally important in the equation of Anton’s illness are neural-nervous factors, most explicitly centered upon the imagination, as well as the familial and societal structures into which he is born. Keeping with the childhood illness and Anton’s wounded foot, Moritz sets this one specific example against a bricolage\(^{366}\) of etiologies and symptomologies: upon falling ill, Anton’s parents almost immediately relinquish hope in his recovery; instead of providing him with love, encouragement, and support, Anton hears “beständig von sich, wie von einem, der schon wie ein Toter beobachtet wird, reden” (95). While Anton’s meditations on death prove to be their own source of melancholic speculation,\(^{367}\) both the lack of attention from his parents and the confinement he is subject to when he cannot leave the house while ill drive Anton further into the world of books, reading, and fantasy, “denn das Buch musste ihm Freund, und Tröster, und alles sein” (96). This triad of disorders which shapes his childhood – physical infirmity, perverted social relationships, and an inflamed imagination – reappears time and again as multipartite explanations for the protagonist’s behavior in different formations throughout the novel, so that it is difficult to separate where exactly cause overlaps with or leads to symptom. Yet it is also this opaqueness, as imprinted upon Anton in a thorough childhood trauma, that demarcates the novel’s modernity in its depiction of mental illness. As Hans-Jürgen Schings authoritatively summarizes, Moritz utilizes not “die geringste Anleihe bei der alten

\(^{366}\) By “bricolage,” I am largely speaking to the construction or creation of something out of a multiplicity of diverse sources. The choice of word is also impacted by Claude Levi-Strauss’s understanding of meaning as something that is not eternal and immutable, but rather provisional, always in flux. See *The Savage Mind* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1962).

Humoralpathologie und ihren Konstruktion.”

Instead, the author “macht . . . ernst mit dem Aufspüren der ‘entfernten Ursachen’ der Melancholie…”

By “opaqueness,” I mean to indicate a fundamental ambiguity between etiology, sign or symptom, and disorder or disease, which Moritz maintains over the course of the novel. Such ambiguity, in turn, undoes the central explanatory structure of humoral medicine, complicating and problematizing the issue of melancholy. I couple this term with “modernity,” because no present-day sufferer of a mental or mood disorder could walk into a psychologist’s or psychiatrist’s office and have their condition be linked to a specific cause. In fact, the modern clinical definition of mental disorder, as stated in the DSM-IV (2000), reads in part: “Whatever its original cause, it must currently be considered a manifestation of behavioral, psychological, or biological dysfunction in the individual.”

This explanation pairs well with Moritz’s statement from 1783 which speaks to the notion of unclear causality: “Da die Krankheiten der Seele aus verschiedenen Ursachen entstehen, so gibt es auch gewiß kein Universalmittel.”

In other words, Moritz presents us with Koschorke’s “subtler” option of nervous malady.

In keeping with the genre of the novel, Anton’s illness unfolds in time, primarily as a diachronic phenomenon: there is never a comprehensive definition given, nor is melancholy wholly defined as ontological or physiological. Instead, Moritz undermines this dichotomy by...

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368 Schings, Aufklärung und Melancholie, 229.
presenting the disease as a dynamic process with myriad causes. The textual descriptions of illness are contextually-based and relative, resulting in a taxonomy of mental illnesses, in which melancholy is part of a spectrum of symptoms or distinct disorders which range from violence to madness to the fantastical. At the same time, the blurring of cause, sign, symptom, and disorder have a bearing on the narrative structure, in that Anton Reiser is, for its time, comparatively non-linear. Moritz’s withholding or delay of causality as a criterion of modern melancholy therefore also becomes a narrative principle. Just as there is no clear-cut causality (or therapy, for that matter) for melancholy, so Anton’s life is not composed of clearly delineated major events – certainly not of triumphs, but also not of lowlights. Instead, Moritz focuses on the minute pathology of day-to-day events and the microscopic details and repercussions of single words, gestures, and interactions.

A Childhood Trauma

The narrative world of Anton Reiser opens as a gloss on marital discord and child neglect, to which both Anton and the reader are granted access in grim measure. As if in conversation with his own dictum, “dass ich Fakta, und kein moralisches Geschwätz, keinen Roman, und keine Komödie, liefere,” Moritz introduces the reader to his protagonist, without mercy or extra detail, in a candid recounting of dismal facts that encapsulate Anton Reiser’s earliest childhood experiences:

Die ersten Töne, die sein Ohr vernahm, und sein aufdämmernder Verstand begriff, waren wechselseitige Flüche und Verwünschungen des unauflöslich geknüpften Ehebandes. […]

In seiner frühesten Jugend hat er nie die Liebkosungen zärtlicher Eltern geschmeckt, nie nach einer kleinen Mühe ihr belohnendes Lächeln.

Wenn er in das Haus seiner Eltern trat, so trat er in ein Haus der Unzufriedenheit, des Zorns, der Tränen und der Klagen.

Diese ersten Eindrücke sind nie in seinem Leben aus seiner Seele verwischt worden, und haben sie oft zu einem Sammelplatz schwarzer Gedanken gemacht, die er durch keine Philosophie verdrängen konnte. (91)

These lines present an examination of Anton’s senses, sensations, and impressions as they are impacted by the bleak circumstances of his home environment. Initially, there is the bombardment on Anton’s intellect issued by his parents’ constant arguments with each other. Neither mother nor father provide him with touch or encouragement; the household is deprived of emotional engagement, and Anton receives no physical or verbal tokens of affection. The mood of the home is therefore described in terms of unhappiness, anger, and tears. While any of these conditions might easily be detrimental to a child’s sense of self, the combined effect of such childhood “impressions” is cumulative, Moritz notes, in an exceedingly pessimistic prognosis, remaining with Anton for the rest of his life and turning his soul into a cluster of “black” (i.e., melancholic) thoughts.373

The citation above serves, moreover, as groundwork for the novel’s multiple readings of Anton’s budding pathology, establishing interpersonal, affective, and cognitive points of entry. In terms of “interpersonal,” I am referring to line two of the citation above: that is, what are the relationships between people within the household, and how are they expressed? “Affective” points roughly back to line three, delineating the emotional circumstances that hold sway in the

373 See Schings, Aufklärung und Melancholie, 228.
home. The “cognitive” dimension, in lines one and four, speaks to the processes of soul or mind. None of these pathological attributes, however, are shown to exist in a vacuum. Rather, as per the thesis at the outset of this chapter, they each bleed into and affect one another: as the last sentence indicates, Anton’s psychological damage is not necessarily the result of the existing conditions of the home, but rather of these conditions as mediated by his mind, soul, or psyche.

The uniqueness of Anton Reiser’s unhappy family is situated firstly in the convoluted tenets of the Quietist movement – more specifically, in the labyrinthine religious writings of the “bekannte[n] Schwärmerin” Jeanne Marie Bouvier de la Mothe-Guyon (87). Quietism, a mystical sect and cross-current of Pietism, is demarcated by a spiritual doctrine that rejects the institutional Church and encourages unmediated communication by its followers with God. According to Madame Guyon, however, such communion is achieved only through a constant effort, “alle Leidenschaften zu ertöten, und alle Eigenheit auszurotten” (87) – in other words, by cutting off sensuality in its entirety with the aim of self-annihilation. In this peculiar form, religion becomes its own causal complex vis-à-vis Anton’s melancholy: it sets the mood of the home environment, impacts interpersonal relationships, wrecks havoc on the state of Anton’s soul, both emotionally and cognitively, and eventually becomes a permanent part of his pathology.

With its main task rooted in the killing off of all sensuality and affect, Quietism is bound to issue reverberations onto the fraught relationships within the household, just as much as it is complimented by such relationships. Indeed, religion in this form is immediately established as the origin of the ongoing strife between Anton’s parents, “der erste Keim zu aller nachherigen ehelichen Zwietracht” (90). While Anton’s father makes only marginal appearances throughout

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374 As Schings notes, “An der Spitze der Ursachenkette, von der sich Antons Elend herleitet, stehen Person und Schriften der Madame Guyon...” In Aufklärung und Melancholie, 227.
the novel, his adherence to the teachings of Madame Guyon, combined with a hard, insensitive, and domineering personality, determine the mood of the home, and thereby the oppressive trajectory of Anton’s formative years. With the birth of a younger brother, to whom his parents transfer what little love they have, Anton finds himself “nun ganz vernachlässigt” and, finally, spoken of only with contempt (92).

Religion therefore directly affects Anton’s parents in all aspects, including their relationship with each other, his father’s personality, and his mother’s servility and sense of victimhood. All of these conditions, in turn, infiltrate the atmosphere of the home and leave a deep impact on Anton. Anton’s relationship to his parents, however, is characterized not only by abuse and neglect. There is also a cognitive component that entails a distinct sense of ambivalence and confusion: “Antons Herz zerfloß in Wehmut, wenn er einem von seinen Eltern Unrecht geben sollte, und doch schien es ihm sehr oft, als wenn sein Vater, den er bloß fürchtete, mehr Recht habe, als seine Mutter, die er liebte” (92). This doubt and uncertainty create an affective feedback loop onto Anton’s soul, which fluctuates “beständig zwischen Haß und Liebe, zwischen Furcht und Zutrauen, zu seinen Eltern hin und her” (92). Lacking any sense of love, then – without even the faintest understanding of this emotion, as Moritz writes – bereft of stability and permanence, and not knowing what he should feel for his parents, Anton’s sense of self-esteem is left completely threadbare, and even as a child, he displays misanthropic tendencies.

376 Anton’s father is described as having a “harte[ ] und unempfindliche[ ] Seele,” which is in perfect agreement (“übereinstimmt[ ]”) with “die Lehre…von der gänzlichen Ertötung und Vernichtung aller, auch der sanften und zärtlichen Leidenschaften” (90). Anton’s mother, moreover, ascribes “vieles von der Kälte und dem lieblosen Wesen ihres Mannes” to the teachings of Mme. Guyon (91).

377 “Woher mochte wohl dies sehnsliche Verlangen nach einer liebreichen Behandlung bei ihm entstehen, da er doch derselben nie gewohnt gewesen war, und also kaum einige Begriffe davon haben konnte? Am Ende freilich ward dies Gefühl ziemlich bei ihm abgestumpft; es war ihm beinahe, als müsse er beständig gescholten sein, und ein freundlicher Blick, den er einmal erhielt, war ihm ganz etwas sonderbares, das nicht recht zu seinen übrigen Vorstellungen passen wollte.” (92)
The parental relationship – the first and by far most significant interpersonal connection that any human being experiences – determines the hesitancy that distinguishes all of Anton’s present and future approaches toward social ties, inaugurating a series of distorted flows of affects between people throughout the novel, as well as failures of empathy on the part of those who come into contact with him, since there is an almost immediate transference between his parents’ attitudes towards him and Anton’s own feelings and beliefs about himself. Battered as his sense of self-esteem is by his relationship to his parents, deprived as he is of love, Anton finds it extremely difficult to forge connections with other human beings. As a child, Anton experiences an ardent longing for a friendship with someone like himself, “und oft, wenn er einen Knaben von seinem Alter sahe, hing seine ganze Seele an ihm, und er hätte alles drum gegeben, sein Freund zu werden” (83). Yet the sense of being despised by his parents, “das niederschlagende Gefühl der Verachtung, die er von seinen Eltern erlitten,” holds him back (93). The significance of the line lies in Moritz’s attribution of Anton’s pathology directly to the way in which he is treated by his parents; it is the product of his internalization of their feelings towards him.

The phenomenon of shame is presented as a singular, distinct social affect. It flows, once more, from Anton’s parents back onto Anton himself, whereby it creates ripples in Anton’s sense of self-esteem and his ability to forge interpersonal connections. Tied as it is to outward appearances, shame both arises in response to and underscores the material deficits inherent in the home environment. The family’s ruinous economy forms another point of contention between Anton’s parents – thereby impacting interpersonal relations – and already in childhood, Anton experiences what it means to go without food. In a particularly alarming scene, his parents have left him alone in order to attend a party. As evening comes, he begins to feel hungry, “und nicht einmal ein Stückchen Brot hatten ihm seine Eltern hintergelassen” (99). Left on his own, in a state
of forsakenness, Anton feels “eine Art von bitterer Verachtung gegen sich selbst” (99). This is compounded by the aforementioned sense of shame: Anton is not allowed to attend the party in the first place, “weil seine Eltern sich seines schlechten Aufzuges schämten” (99). He must instead watch from the window as the children of neighbors come to the party “schoen geputzt” (99). In this case, then, the environmental condition of poverty collides with Anton’s cognitive appraisals of his self-worth. His own embarrassment at his shabby clothing gives him pause in the attempt to meet other children in the neighborhood, who are, for the most part, “ordentlicher, reinlicher, und besser, wie er, gekleidet” (93).

Paradoxically, however, there is a marked tension between Anton’s bruised self-esteem and a specific sense of pride. Anton does not want to befriend the “other” group of boys in the neighborhood because of their depraved manners, “und auch vielleicht aus einem gewissen Stolz” (93). Although Anton searches desperately for recognition, this is undercut by a distinct vanity, as well as by the opposing sentiment of not wanting to be seen. In a sense, it is the tension between Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s “amour propre,” i.e., needing to have one’s identity be approved by others, and “amour de soi,” or the basic instinctual drive toward self-preservation. In Anton’s case, it is necessary for him to maintain whatever sense of self-worth he may have, even if that is derived from fantasy – and to protect it against being assimilated into the beliefs and opinions of others. The tension may also be explained by the fact that Anton must attempt to compensate for and to understand his life, replete with its pain and ostracization, in a way that makes his situation livable. In order to do so, he is forced to elevate himself in a particular way, as per these mixed feelings; there is a certain pride in not being accepted, in distinction and difference. This is the ambiguous
nature of the untouchable, the freak, the homo sacer, the other: these are the figures that society rejects, but in that rejection they are a source of amazement.

Below the surface of the visible and material, Quietism additionally offers multiple contexts for the extremities of Anton’s imagination to bloom. The most significant of these frames of reference is reading material. The act of reading – even those initial, unquestionably dry religious tracts and spelling treatises given to him by his father – provides Anton with a sense of accomplishment, nourishment, and fulfillment he does not otherwise receive in an environment fraught with deprivation, stunted affect, and stilted human relationships. In other words, books act first and foremost as compensation for an otherwise nonexistent childhood spent in the shadows. As Moritz writes,

Durch das Lesen war ihm nun auf einmal eine neue Welt eröffnet, in deren Genuß er sich für alle das Unangenehme in seiner wirklichen Welt einigermaßen entschädigen konnte. Wenn nun rund um ihn her nichts als Lärmen und Schelten und häusliche Zwietracht herrschte, oder er sich vergeblich nach einem Gespielen umsah, so eilte er hin zu seinem Buche. (94-95)

In his well-known study of the novel, “Die Erziehung der Gefühle im 18. Jahrhundert” (1996), author Lothar Müller argues that the first pole of Anton’s reading is “Selbstvergessenheit,” in which Lesesucht functions “im wesentlichen psychologischen Theorie des Eskapismus und der Kompensation.” Reading is presented as a drug that numbs Anton’s senses to that which goes on around him, an opportunity to escape from the dismal commotion of the home. In this instance,

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380 Ibid.
it is a dampening of the “Lärmen und Schelten und häusliche Zwietracht” that constantly threaten to overwhelm him and hem him in (94-95).

Here as elsewhere, Moritz expresses a kind of ambivalence with regard to Anton’s imaginative modes of escape. While the act of reading provides Anton with a sense of nourishment and fulfillment he does not otherwise receive in an environment defined by deprivation; while books grant Anton access to the emotions and emotional connections that are absent during his childhood; while fantasy delivers Anton from his mundane and harrowing existence, all of these practices serve, at the same time, to alienate him from existent circumstances even further: “So ward er schon früh aus der natürlichen Kinderwelt in eine unnatürliche idealische Welt verdrängt, wo sein Geist für tausend Freuden des Lebens verstimmt wurde, die andre mit voller Seele genießen können” (95). The end effect, then, is an amplification of Anton’s social and interpersonal deficits. There is a critique inherent in this kind of education or upbringing, in line with Rousseauian notions of pedagogy. Moritz’s negative conclusions about Lesewut seem to imply that the child should be out in the world, in nature (or simply with other children), doing things and exploring the world firsthand, not only via reading and books: “No book but the world,” Rousseau writes in Emile, “no teaching but that of fact. The child who reads ceases to think, he only reads. […] Let him not be taught science, let him discover it.”

381 As Müller notes, it is the same ambivalence with which the Enlightenment perceives the reading child: “Einerseits wird es als zukünftiges Mitglied der gebildeten Gesellschaft und womöglich der Gelehrtenrepublik begrüßt, andererseits als wehrloses Opfer einer unkontrollierten Kombination von Lektüre und Einbildungskraft zur Lasten der Vernunft beargwöhnt” (ibid., 13).

382 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emil, transl. Barbara Foxley (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1921; New York: E.P. Dutton, 1921), https://www.gutenberg.org/files/5427/5427-h/5427-h.htm. On giving the child the freedom to be outside in the world (and the opposing dangers of the imagination), Rousseau writes, “Instead of keeping him mewed up in a stuffy room, take him out into a meadow every day; let him run about, let him struggle and fall again and again… […] The world of reality has its bounds, the world of imagination is boundless; as we cannot enlarge the one, let us restrict the other; for all the sufferings which really make us miserable arise from the difference between the real and the imaginary.”
kind of unfiltered experience, the confusion between reality and fantasy becomes starkly thematized.

The influence of reading material on the imagination further offers impulses for imitation. While some imaginative escapades appear quite harmless, as when Anton devises a game in which he carts around the infant Jesus in a wheelbarrow, other examples are much more disconcerting. At age nine, Anton displays a tendency toward self-harm: “Auch fing er wirklich zuweilen an, sich mit Nadeln zu pricken, und sonst zu peinigen, um dadurch den heiligen Altvätern einigermaßen ähnlich zu werden, da es ihm doch ohnedem an Schmerzen nicht fehlte” (97). To be sure, Anton is mimicking the lives of the saints, as described in a book he reads, the Leben der Altväter (96). However, the last part of the citation speaks well beyond the late seventeenth century to a behavior common amongst depressives – that is, self-injury as the iteration of mental and emotional pain in its physical counterpart, in order to offset the former. Conversely, Anton is able to forget the physical pain he suffers as a result of his injured foot while reading (104). Finally, the act of imitation is in itself a point of critique, since it calls attention to Anton’s inability to give meaning and shape to his own life, or, indeed, to live his life without romanticizing it.

In the language, feelings, and emotions communicated in what he reads, “Anton sucht und findet…die Sprache seiner Selbst und Weltdeutung. Er vergewissert sich seiner Gefühle und Empfindungen, indem er sie mit Hilfe der Bücher kulturell kodiert.” In other words, Anton finds himself in the characters he comes across in literature – and through Einfühlung, in the access to their emotions and emotional connections absent during his own childhood, Anton can feel less alone and simultaneously find reassurance for the modes of viewing the world that he cultivates. This is, of course, a tautological argument, as Anton garners these views from literature in the first

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383 The same practice is seen in Werther and Lenz.
place and then finds his perspectives reaffirmed by what he reads. Nevertheless, books mean everything to him: they are “Freund, und Tröster, und alles” (96).

Anton’s childhood is fraught with examples of reading as emotional connection. Shifting from print to the acoustic, Madame Guyon’s hymns, despite their stilted translation into German, mirror Anton’s feelings of abandonment and self-contempt, and as such he attempts to lose himself in them or to offset his negative emotions into the hymns. The content of the hymns themselves, exceptional in its tenderness, elicits the feeling of the joy of grief: “Wirklich hatten diese Gesänge…so viel Seelenschmelzendes, eine so unannahmliche Zärtlichkeit im Ausdrucke, solch ein sanftes Helldunkel in der Darstellung, und so viel unwiderstehlich Anziehendes für eine weiche Seele” (98). Just as the music is described as containing a gentle chiaroscuro, so the sensation in Anton’s soul is one of a “schwermutsvolle tränenreiche Freude” (99) – an experience he is drawn to time and again.

At nine years old, Anton reads all the historical parts of the Bible, and he is so heavily affected by the deaths of Moses, Samuel, and David, “so konnte er sich Tage lang darüber betrüben, und es war ihm dabei zu Mute, als sei ihm ein Freund abgestorben” (96). The empathy Anton feels for fictional (or, perhaps, historical) characters is so great that it affects his mood. Similarly, Anton feels a strong sense of identification with the fallen heroes of mythology, which he reads about, once more, with “einer Art von wehmütiger Freude” (104), often picturing himself “mit einer sonderbaren wehmütigen und doch angenehmen Empfindung” amongst the slain (104). At age eleven, with the introduction to “forbidden” reading – the Arabian Nights and the Insel Felsenburg, secular novels slipped to him by his aunt, while his mother looks the other way – Anton experiences “einige der süßesten Stunden in seinem Leben” (109).
A final consequence of reading has to do with the content of Anton’s cognition as he becomes ever more absorbed into the imaginative worlds of fiction intertwined with his own creation, content that is pieced together by elements of novels, philosophical works, and the mysticism of Madame Guyon, “die Bibel mit dem Telemach, das Leben der Altväter mit der Acerra philologika, und die heidnische Welt mit der christlichen” (103). The result is another form of bricolage; as Moritz describes it, “die sonderbarste Ideenkombination, die wohl in einem menschlichen Gehirn mag existiert haben” (104). Once more, the problematics of language appear – of reading, writing, retracing in thought and in imagination – and with them, the confusion of reality with fantasy. In the figure of Anton, this is part of his pathology: as a “weiche Seele” (98), as a labile character, he is pulled by fiction out of real existence, and the cognitive content created by fantasy then gives rise to repercussions vis-à-vis his mood. As Moritz notes, again with ambivalence, “So machte seine Einbildungskraft die meisten Leiden und Freuden seiner Kindheit” (109).

Religion as filtered through the lens of the imagination provides the groundwork for a whole host of metaphysical speculations which meander through the familiar labyrinthine and aporetic territory of melancholy. Here, Moritz moves backwards in time in the story in order to show how the smaller, seemingly unimportant details and circumstances connect, as stated in the prologue to Book I: for Moritz (as for Locke), we are the sum total of such impressions and experiences. Early on in childhood, Anton develops darkly tainted notions of broad concepts such as God, space, existence, and the world – concepts, in Anton’s mind, that are marked by enclosure,

385 “Da ich einmal in meiner Geschichte zurückgegangen bin, um Antons erste Empfindungen und Vorstellungen von der Welt nachzuholen...” (112).
386 “Wer den Lauf der menschlichen Dinge kennt, und weiß, wie dasjenige oft im Fortgange des Lebens sehr wichtig werden kann, was anfänglich klein und unbedeutend schien, der wird sich an die anscheinende Geringfügigkeit mancher Umstände, die hier erzählt werden, nicht stoßen” (86). Elsewhere, in the “Vorschlag,” Moritz notes, “Aufmerksamkeit aufs Kleinscheinende ist überhaupt ein wichtiges Erfordernis des Menschenbeobachters...” In Hollmer and Meier, 801.
insufficiency, insularity, and constraint: “Wenn oft der Himmel umwölkt, und der Horizont kleiner war, fühlte er eine Art von Bangigkeit, dass die ganze Welt wiederum mit eben so einer Decke umschlossen sei, und wenn er dann mit seinen Gedanken über diese gewölbte Decke hinausging, so kam ihm diese Welt viel zu klein vor” (113). As the sky appears to become smaller during a rainstorm, Anton extends this notion of narrowness to the “ceiling” which encases the world, then on to the world in its entirety, which, in its tightness, becomes stifling and inadequate. This process of thought is further marked by repetition: “und es deuchte ihm, als müsse sie wiederum in einer andern eingeschlossen sein, und das immer so fort” (113). With allusions to the ever limitless and divisible, a fixation on the unceasingly infinite, Anton’s ideas take on a quality of inexpressibility and begin to elude language. This phenomenon is illustrated more poignantly when Anton’s mother raises the question about her dead daughter, “Wo wohl jetzt Julchen sein mag?” – which invokes in Anton a sensation of “wunderbare Einschränkung,” in which “Nähe und Ferne, Enge und Weite, Gegenwart und Zukunft blitzte durch seine Seele” (111). Such awkwardness in language conveys the sense of coming up against the boundaries of human existence and the terrifying, unspeakable perceptions that lie wayside of it, as, again, when Anton imagines the death of the miner: “bei dieser Kopfzerschmetterung dachte er sich auf einmal ein gänzliches Aufhören von Denken und Empfinden, und eine Art von Vernichtung und Ermangelung seiner selbst” (113). Anton’s style of thinking, in these instances, is loose and unsystematized; it is overthinking, and the associations between his ideas seem arbitrary and limitless, leading to woes that have no immediate bearing on reality. Such cognitive disorientation echoes Moritz’s concern with perception: here, there are simply too many thoughts in Anton’s mind, and they appear to connect and to multiply without end. The implication of this form of associationism is a kind of

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387 See Robertson, “introduction,” xvii.
constant reflection and absorption, bordering on solipsism or “Egoismus, der [Anton] beinahe hätte verrückt machen können” (114).

Religion finally offers an impetus for considering the contrasts that characterize Anton’s illness. Cognitively, religion takes shape in Anton’s mind in dialectical form, reflecting the tension between his desire to engage in childish activities and his resolution, “ein frommer Mensch zu werden” (97). Since piety, as per Quietism, is tantamount to the “gänzlichen Ertötung aller Begierden u.s.w.” (89), religion engenders a dialectic between mental and emotional overload, on the one hand (e.g., in the instances of imaginative hyperactivity) and torpor, on the other. These extremes, in turn, speak to Anton’s experiences of melancholy as the poetic, sentimental “joy of grief” and as an emptying out of affect, or the religiously connoted term kenosis, respectively. In other words, religion sets the tone for the constant imbalance in Anton’s psyche. These opposing states are illustrated by two parallel examples. As an attempt at devotion, Anton sits “halbe Stunden lang mit verschloßnen Augen, um sich von der Sinnlichkeit abzuziehen” (100) – an exercise that is more or less a practice run in the emptying out of affect. Yet he enthusiastically takes up this activity in the first place in order to experience “so etwas Wunderbares, als die Stimme Gottes, in sich zu hören” (100). Once he believes he has removed himself far enough from his senses to be on familiar terms with God, Anton begins to chat with him incessantly: “Den ganzen Tag über, bei seinen einsamen Spaziergängen, bei seinen Arbeiten, und sogar bei seinem Spiele sprach er mit Gott” (100). Despite its humor, the line is reflective of the fact that Anton exists more in the world of his imagination than he does in the real world. It is, moreover, a consequence of Anton’s alarming loneliness, as he actually has no one else to talk to.

Lastly, in terms of childhood etiologies, Moritz approaches the notion of Erbkrankheit or genetically inherited disease. This idea appears in the “Grundlinien”: Moritz writes, “Die
Krankheiten der Seele können vielleicht, eben so wie die körperlichen, von den Eltern auf die Kinder fortgepflanzt, oder in ganzen Familien erblich sein.” The same concept – namely, “die Frage nach der Erblichkeit des Charakters bzw. des Temperaments” – emerges in the *Magazin.* 389

Anton’s mother suffers what would today be termed a “victim complex” – as Moritz describes it, an unfortunate habit, “sich oft für beleidigt, und *gern* für beleidigt zu halten, auch wo sie es wirklich nicht war, um nur Ursach zu haben, sich zu kränken und betrüben, und ein gewisses Mitleid mit sich selber zu empfinden, worin sie eine Art von Vernügen fand” (108). Unfortunately, as Moritz continues, “scheint sie diese Krankheit auf ihren Sohn fortgeerbt zu haben” (108). Indeed, as a child, Anton takes pleasure in feeling “die Süßigkeit des Unrechtleidens” (108); he goes so far as to “actively seek out punishment in order to confirm [this] self-image.”391 While it remains impossible to know whether or not Moritz’s assertion of *forterben* is meant to be taken literally, a genuine contention of mental illness as an inherited disease places Moritz amongst the forerunners of research into mental illness today.

In a somewhat unusual line, Moritz writes of Madame Guyon, “Als man nach ihrem Tode ihren Kopf öffnete, fand man ihr Gehirn fast wie ausgetrocknet” (89). The description is a nod to humoralism, unquestionably in line with the physiology of melancholy; medical writings of the time period attest to this, as outlined in the historiography of this chapter. Nevertheless, on the whole, Reiser’s illness has extremely little to do with somatic notions of “soul sickness” or mental

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389 Anke Bennholdt-Thomsen and Alfredo Guzzoni, afterword to *ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΑΥΤΟΝ Gnōthi sautón oder Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde als ein Lesebuch für Gelehrte und Ungelehrte* 10 (1793), ed. Carl Philipp Moritz (Lindau: Antiqua-Verlag, 1979), 22.
390 See *ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΑΥΤΟΝ Gnōthi sautón oder Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde als ein Lesebuch für Gelehrte und Ungelehrte* IV, no. 3: 16. Here it follows the question as to whether the unpleasant impressions in childhood create the melancholic temperament, or whether the melancholic temperament, already there since birth, brings forth such unpleasant impressions: “…nur bleibt es ihm noch immer zweifelhaft, ob dieβ Uebergewicht [der unangenehen Eindrücke] durch die große Menge der unangenehen Eindrücke, oder durch eine besondere melancholische Stimmung des Gemüths, bewirkt wurde, die vielleicht schon von seiner Geburt an, in sein Daseyn verwebt war.”
391 Bell, *German Tradition,* 99.
illness. The presentation of Anton’s melancholy also goes beyond established notions of \textit{Schwärmerei}\textsuperscript{392} due to the added framework of interpersonal relationships and social environment.

\textit{Shame and Self-negation}

As Anton enters young adulthood, the relationship between privation and affect emerges as a pivotal factor in his ever-worsening melancholy, which presents by turns as hypochondria or nervous illness, as bordering on madness, as a complete loss of self, and again as the more innocuous “joy of grief.” Here, once more, Moritz depicts the phenomenon of melancholy itself, as well as the etiologies lying being it, as having little or nothing to do with physicality or humoralism; rather, melancholy stems from wider institutions of privation and restriction, as well as failures of empathy or interpersonal understanding within these social structures. As an outsider to such systems, impoverished and stuck at the bottom of a seemingly immutable hierarchical order,\textsuperscript{393} Anton faces a society which refuses to let him in – that is, after leaving a family who never showed him love or attention. In response, Anton seeks to compensate for his lack of fulfillment, acceptance, and integration by various modes of the imagination; yet this leads him to become still further removed from both others and himself, effectually springing the ties, already tenuous, that keep him bound to reality.

Even as the same patterns of childhood repeat themselves in different formulations and situations, a new etiological factor comes to the fore: namely, the childhood experience of self-annihilation under the banner of religion recurs time and again in episodes of intense shame. In

\textsuperscript{392} \textit{Schwärmerei} is addressed in some detail in in Chapter 1.

\textsuperscript{393} As Ritchie Robertson notes in his introduction, “The keynote of Moritz’s Germany was authority. […] [The family and servants] lived and worked in confined spaces, as Moritz’s repeated motif of confinement reminds us. […] Society was understood as divided not into classes but ranks or orders (Stände). Mobility between ranks was rare and difficult. […] Until the shock-waves of the French Revolution reached Germany, this traditional order seemed immutable” (viii(ix).
this sense, shame may be read as a psychic state analogous to melancholy: both instances point to an experience of loss and negation, and in their extreme, they become sources of self-erosion. Comparable, in this way, to Elaine Scarry’s notion of physical pain as “world-destroying,” both shame and melancholy lead to an emptying out of the affective, cognitive, and linguistic processes of the self, resulting in the same kind of full-blown “anaesthesia” that manifests itself in Werther’s late letters.

After suffering the poverty and neglect of the family system, Anton embarks on an apprenticeship with the hatter Lobenstein, where the same bricolage of childhood etiologies coalesces under the sway of a tyrannical head of the household. A misanthropic, zealous believer in Quietism, Lobenstein effectively takes the entire household captive with his hours-long tirades against the human race, and Anton, who zigzags in and out of favor with his benefactor, is made to suffer the whims of “ein äußerst hypochondrischer Schwärmer” (134). The monotony of the worker’s life, presented in no uncertain terms by Moritz, leads Anton to romanticize his situation by means of the imagination; yet Anton’s grip on reality buckles as he becomes prey to Lobenstein’s fitful moods, his “Ahndungen und…Visionen” (134), and his otherwise authoritarian demonstrations of religious enthusiasm. Soon, Anton too becomes infected with paranoia, believing in his own imminent death: “Wenn sogar ein Huhn wie ein Hahn krähete, so war das ein untrügliches Zeichen, dass bald jemand im Hause sterben würde” (157). By age thirteen, Anton has become “ein völliger Hypochondrist…von dem man im eigentlichen Verstande sagen konnte, dass er in jedem Augenblick lebend starb” (158). In this instance, then, Anton suffers from a named illness: “hypochondria” points to a specifically cognitive variant of melancholy that hampers the objective perception of reality, making room for nervous delusions. In the medical

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literature of the time, hypochondria is highly connected to the imagination. The Seelenkundler Pockels, for example, addresses the issue in a 1788 essay entitled *Ueber die Verschiedenheit und Mischung der Charactere*, writing that “Hypochondrie oft eine Tochter einer geistigen Empfindelei [ist], die in der Einbildungskraft ihren Sitz hat.”\(^{395}\) Similarly, in his 1795 treatise *Von der Macht des Gemüths durch den bloßen Vorsatz seiner krankhaften Gefühle Meister zu sein*, Kant attributes hypochondria not to the body; for him, it is purely “Grillenkrankheit.”\(^{396}\) Moritz, too, sees a connection between hypochondria and the imagination. The quotation above continues, Anton’s “Leiden konnte man…die Leiden der Einbildungskraft nennen – sie waren für ihn doch wirkliche Leiden, sie raubten ihm die Freuden seiner Jugend” (157). Just as in early childhood, Anton’s imagination provides sources of compensation for the bleakness of his everyday lot, and yet these same sources become elements in his pathology.

Aside from religious fervor, the environment in Lobenstein’s home is one of pure exploitation. Physically, Anton is made to perform labor, “die seine Jahre und Kräfte weit überstiegen” (142): “L… schien zu glauben, da nun mit Antons Seele doch weiter nichts anzufangen sei, so müsse man wenigstens von seinem Körper allen möglichen Gebrauch machen. Er schien ihn jetzt wie ein Werkzeug zu betrachten, das man weg wirft, wenn man es gebraucht hat” (142).\(^{397}\) Detailed examples of such labor, which bespeak an atmosphere of indentured servitude, include the task of pulling hats from a boiling hot dye-vat and plunking them straightaway into the freezing river, a chore which leaves the skin on Anton’s hands bruised and

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\(^{397}\) Schings aptly terms the atmosphere at Lobenstein’s “Perversion der pietistischen Berufsethik.” In *Aufklärung und Melancholie*, 231.
cracked, so that “das Blut ihm heraussprützte” (142). Further, Anton must card wool the entire day long in a freezing cold room. In order to remain warm, Anton is forced to work as quickly as he possibly can (143). Perhaps the most poignant expression of this kind of dehumanizing service occurs when Anton and his fellow apprentice August are confined to a drying room, a space so dark and so physically tight that it is referred to as a “Loch” (142), or, as Mark Boulby calls it, “a cramped oubliette graced by a smoking cauldron and with an entrance so low they have to crawl through it on hands and knees.”

The hole is merely the most literal manifestation of Anton’s entire “enge[] drückende[] Lage” (169), the state of oppression that characterizes his melancholy.

Such environmental conditions lead, too, to the “unnatürliche Überspannung [Antons] Seelenkräfte…er wird gefährlich krank” (154). Just as in childhood, with his injured foot, Anton becomes isolated in his sickness: “[e]r phantasierte im Fieber, und lag oft ganze Tage allein, ohne dass sich jemand um ihn bekümmerte” (154). Eventually he recovers from this specific illness, but “[e]ine gewisse Trägheit und Niedergeschlagenheit blieb…demohngeachtet von dieser Krankheit zurück” (155). Thus the same chain of etiologies is repeated, with the environmental and interpersonal conditions (i.e., Anton’s falling out with Lobenstein) affecting Anton physically, which then affects his mental state.

All of these factors are repeated in nuce toward the end of Anton’s apprenticeship with Lobenstein, where they come up against the new pathological attribute of shame. Once again, Moritz emphasizes Anton’s life history of suffering: “Bei seinen Schmerzen nun, die er am Fuße erduldete; bei aller Bedrückung von seinen Eltern, worunter er seufzte; was war sein Trost?” (165). The build-up of menial tasks assigned to Anton reaches its nadir when he must carry a load of hats

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on his back, walking behind Lobenstein on a public street. Worse than Lobenstein’s scolding and
blows, then, is the humiliation Anton feels while performing this task:

Nur dass er itzt gebückt gehen, seinen Nacken unter das Joch beugen musste, wie ein
Lasttier…das beugte zugleich seinen ganzen Mut darnieder, und erschwerte ihm die Last
tausendmal. Er glaubte sowohl vor Müdigkeit als vor Scham in die Erde sinken zu müssen
[…]. Wenn ihm so etwas begegnet war, so suchte er sich vor allen Menschen zu verbergen;
jeder Laut der Freude war ihm zuwider […] so deuchte es ihm, als treibe die Welt ihr
Hohngelächter über ihn, so verachtet, so vernichtet glaubte er sich… (168)

While the citation highlights the fact that Anton sometimes takes a kind of pleasure in his own
humiliation and oppression, and the feeling of sinking into the earth is compacted with the notion
that this option would in fact present a better possibility than the cramped oppression of current
reality, this is itself tantamount to self-obliteration. It comes as no surprise that the episode ends
in an ambivalent suicide attempt, for Anton feels that he has lost any measure of control over his
own fate.

*Privation and (Dis)affection*

Books II and III focus on the day-to-day pathological interactions Anton faces at school, whereby
school becomes yet another social institution of privation and occasion for episodes of intense
shame. Here, privation is expressed most candidly in terms of disadvantage. It is the footing or the
security that Anton lacks that would place him on a status equivalent to that of his schoolmates:
“Anständig genährt und gekleidet zu sein, gehört schlechterdings dazu, wenn ein junger Mensch
zum Fleiß im Studieren Mut behalten soll. Beides war bei Reisern der Fall nicht” (197-198).
Initially, deprivations are physical: bound to a series of misunderstanding benefactors for
charitable meals, Anton scarcely receives enough food. The issue of clothing, moreover, presents a tangible, visible example of Anton’s lowly status. The wrong coat or an ill-fitting pair of trousers is often enough to bring him to despair, for it means being seen by others as a creature from another class. Without such material leverage, and lacking the self-esteem necessary to defend himself, Anton becomes vulnerable to an unending series of distorted flows of affect (or, perhaps more plainly stated, acts of cruelty), mostly as the target of his schoolfellows’ taunts, but, as Moritz reminds the reader, also on the part of teachers and guardians. The abuse quickly takes a psychological toll on Anton, whose response moves back and forth between near-madness and complete self-neglect, between felt presence and sheer absence: 

Dieser Zustand [des Hohns] wurde ihm eine Hölle – er heulte, tobte, und geriet in eine Art von Raserei darüber, und auch dies wurde lächerlich gemacht. – Zuletzt trat denn zuweilen eine Art von Dumpfheit der Empfindung an die Stelle seines bis zur Wut und Raserei beleidigten Stolzes – er hörte und sahe nicht mehr, was um ihn her vorging, und ließ alles mit sich machen, was man wollte, so dass er in dem Zustande ein würdiger Gegenstand des Spottes und der Verachtung zu sein schien. (249)

In the first instance, the howling, raving, rage, and falling into frenzy are all sensations of a “grotesque overload”; Anton’s body “is its pains, a shrill sentience that hurts and is hugely alarmed by its hurt.” Then there is a “cessation of sentience”: Anton’s impressions are dampened, his senses shut down, and his body becomes “its scars, thick and forgetful, unmindful of its hurt,

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399 „Möchte dies alle Lehrer und Pädagogen aufmerksam, und in ihren Urteilen über die Entwicklung der Charaktere junger Leute behutsamer machen, dass die Einwirkung unzähliger zufälliger Umstände mit in Anschlag brächten, und von diesen erst die genaueste Erkundung einzuziehen suchten, ehe sie es wagten, durch ihr Urteil über das Schicksal eines Menschen zu entscheiden, bei dem es vielleicht nur eines aufmunternden Blicks bedurfte, um ihn plötzlich umzuschaffen...” (257).
400 See Scarry, 31.
401 Ibid.
unmindful of anything, mute and insensate.” In the midst of this degradation, which is itself an intense form of negation, there appear “the purest expressions of the anti-human, of annihilation, of total averseness…” In the end, Anton becomes an object to be acted upon, rather than a subject capable of the agency of self-defense. The scene of total abjection and victimhood leads to the erasure of Anton’s subjectivity.

Shame as self-annihilation goes hand in hand with intense isolation; indeed, it is not merely a lack of respect which Anton is made to suffer as an outsider in the suffocating order of German society, but rather an utter absence of human attention, affection, and interest. This circumstance is itself an instance of dehumanization, and in one of the more pitiable lines of the novel, Moritz writes, “[Anton] hatte Gefühle für Freundschaft, für Dankbarkeit, für Großmut, und edle Entschlossenheit, welche alle ungenutzt in ihm schlummerten; denn durch seine äußere Lage schrumpfte sein Herz zusammen” (238). In an analytical sidenote, Moritz (as the narrator) delivers a a psychological explanation of derision coupled with isolation:

Das stärkere Selbstgefühl verschlingt das schwächere unaufhaltsam in sich – durch den Spott, durch die Verachtung, durch die Brandmarkung des Gegenstands zum Lächerlichen.
– Das Lächerlichwerden is eine Art von Vernichtung, und das Lächerlichmachen eine Art von Mord des Selbstgefühls, die nicht ihres Gleiches hat. […] keinen Freund, und nicht einmal einen Feind zu haben – das ist die wahre Hölle, die alle Qualen der fühlbaren Vernichtung eines denkenden Wesens in sich faßt. (402-403)

What is described in this citation is of a form of living death, an experience in which “the contents of consciousness are destroyed” by emotional pain. As Scarry writes, “in the most literal way

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402 Ibid.
403 Ibid.
404 Ibid.
possible, the created world of thought and feeling, all the psychological and mental content that constitutes both one’s self and one’s world, and that gives rise to and is in turn made possible by language, ceases to exist.”

Further, Moritz elucidates the processes that occur in the soul or mind during such an episode: “Und so scheint nun einmal das Verhältnis der Geisteskräfte gegeneinander zu sein; wo eine Kraft keine entgegengesetzte Kraft vor sich findet, da reißt sie ein und zerstört, wie der Fluß, wenn der Damm vor ihm weicht” (402). In the mutual relationship of mental forces, when one power does not find another opposing it – in Anton’s case, low self-esteem is not countered by confidence or self-assurance – then the former influence is given free rein, and Anton abandons himself to the mockery that besieges him.

In time, figurative privation gives way to literal poverty, as Moritz shows his protagonist voluntarily subsisting without such basic human needs as warmth and food. Significantly, however, in keeping with the themes of distorted affect and a lack of human care, Anton loses these ties to his own existence via the letting go of others’ interest in him. Addressing the always tenuous threads which link Anton’s fate to the sympathy of others, Moritz writes,

Hätte Reiser irgend jemanden gehabt, der an seinem Schicksal wahren Anteil genommen hätte, so würden ihm dergleichen Begegnungen vielleicht nicht so kränkend gewesen sein. Aber so war sein Schicksal an die eigentliche Teilnehmung anderer Menschen nur mit so schwachen Fäden geknüpft, dass die anscheinende Ablösung irgend eines solchen Fadens, ihn plötzlich das Zerreißen aller übrigen befürchten ließ, und er sich dann in einem Zustand sahe, wo er keines Menschen Aufmerksamkeit auf sich mehr erregte, sondern sich für ein Wesen hielt, auf das weiter gar keine Rücksicht genommen wurde. (228)

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405 Ibid., 30.
Anton’s parents, the hatter Lobenstein, his schoolfellows, teachers, guardians, benefactors, and even his friends, Philipp Reiser and August Wilhelm Iffland, are always demarcated as inconsistent, negligent, often absent even despite their presence.

A particular example of such absence in presence and letting-go of human interest occurs when, toward the end of Book II, the rector with whom Anton lodges, and who was once so invested in his pupil’s future, has effectively forgotten his tenant: “Es wurde Winter, und man dachte nicht daran, Reisers Stube zu heizen – er stand erst die bitterste Kälte aus, und glaubte, man würde doch endlich auch an ihn denken” (254). The instance – and others like it, such as the rector’s subsequent treatment of Anton as little more than a domestic servant, Anton’s exclusion from the dramas put on by the students, the hatred and awkwardness he faces when dining with his benefactors, the exploitation he is subject to under Lobenstein – all serve to confirm Anton’s belief in his own insignificance, to substantiate his feelings of alienation, “[d]iese Unbedeutsamkeit, dies Verlieren unter der Menge” (309), as well as “die Scheidewand…welche die Erinnerungen und Gedanken dieses fremden Menschen von den seinigen trennte” (307). Both of these convictions often make Anton’s existence into an unbearable burden.\(^{406}\)

It is at this point that the combination of poverty, isolation, and self-neglect culminates in a three-month period of starvation and total self-abnegation, during which time Anton “sich gleichsam selber in Rücksicht der menschlichen Geschlecht auf[gi]bt” (254). During this interval, melancholy takes on multiple forms, appearing most prominently as Lesewut and theatromania,\(^{407}\) but also as near-madness and self-harm, paralysis of the soul, criminality, and, finally, a return to the destructive games of Anton’s childhood. Abandoning those who have likewise abandoned him,

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\(^{406}\) “Diese Unbedeutsamkeit, dies Verlieren unter der Menge, war es vorzüglich, was ihm oft sein Dasein lästig machte” (309).

and seeking nourishment for his starved body, Anton turns once more to fictional worlds with as much gusto and necessity “wie es den Morgenländern das Opium sein mag” (255): “Er ging zu einem Antiquarius und holte sich einen Roman, eine Komodie nach der andern, und fing an nun mit einer Art von Wut an, zu lesen... Wenn es ihm an einem Buche fehlte, so hätte er seinen Rock gegen den Kittel eines Bettlers vertauscht, um nur eines zu bekommen” (254-255). In order to feed his addiction, Anton sells his schoolbooks and neglects to pay his laundress and tailor, so that he appears, for all intents and purposes, “für einen lüderlichen aus der Art geschlagtnen jungen Menschen” (255).

Whatever Anton reads, however, the idea of the theater remains dominant: “die Idee vom Theater [war und blieb] immer bei ihm die herrschende – in der dramatischen Welt lebte und webte er...” (256). As Košenina notes, theatromania delivers Anton fully from any connection to reality. In this sense, the theater becomes an idée fixe “im Sinne der neuen Psychiatrie um 1800”. Anton “dachte von nun an keinen andern Gedanken mehr, als das Theater, und schien nun für alle seine Aussichten und Hoffnungen im gänzlich Leben verloren zu sein” (256). As with reading, and after it, declamation, theater becomes a monomaniac preoccupation, again, leading him to spend what little money he is able to scrounge up on play-going, for he is unable to stay away from the theater “nun keinen Abend mehr...[auch] wenn er es sich am Munde abdarben sollte” (270). For the sake of the theater, Anton often eats nothing the entire day long, subsisting only on a little bread and salt.

Once more, there is a strong paradox, ambiguity, or ambivalence set up between the positive aspects of language – of reading, writing, declaiming, theater-going, and singing – in that

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they allow Anton a sedative against an otherwise painful reality.\textsuperscript{409} Moreover, these modes present him with the chance to learn and to experience the feelings that he has never had an opportunity to exercise in real life – an occasion to “fill up” on knowledge of the emotional world in an existence otherwise fraught with so much deprivation:

Und dann konnte er auf dem Theater alles sein, wozu er in der wirklichen Welt nie Gelegenheit hatte – und was er doch so oft zu sein wünschte – großmütig, wohltätig, edel, standhaft, über alles Demütigende und Erniedrigende erhaben […] Er fand sich hier gleichsam mit allen seinen Empfindungen und Gesinnungen wieder, welche in die wirkliche Welt nicht paßten – Das Theater deuchte ihm eine natürlichere und angemeßnere Welt, als die wirkliche Welt, die ihn umgab. (250-251)

And yet the flight into fiction and fantasy, as noted, also estranges Anton from the real world, alienating him from his body, obviating the need to form real human connections, blurring the line between reality and fantasy, and wreaking havoc on his already ruinous economy. While these activities are a repetition of that which Anton knows well from childhood, there is simply more at stake now that he is older.

Such preoccupations are, furthermore, a return to the childhood act of imitation and self-stylization. Never once does Anton live his own life; here as elsewhere, affectation “robs speech of its sincerity and unequivocalness,”\textsuperscript{410} in which every word becomes degraded into a citation, “every action into an act, and every person into a persona or mask.”\textsuperscript{411} As Volker C. Dörr puts it, perhaps less damningly, literature as self-stylization “versieht die Wirklichkeit mit den Weihen

\textsuperscript{409} “Und alles was er tat…war im Grunde eine bloße Betäubung seines innern Schmerzes, und keine Heilung desselben…” (270).
\textsuperscript{410} Wild, “Theorizing Theater Antitheatrically,” 511.
\textsuperscript{411} Ibid., 513.
Thus, for example, Anton overlooks his starvation because he sees himself in the hunger scenes of Heinrich Wilhelm von Gerstenberg’s *Ugolino*. Half deliriously, he imagines beginning a new life for himself as a peasant.

Just as in childhood, however, when Anton tries to stave off his hunger by reading the hymns of Madame Guyon, these exercises do not work: “Endlich aber nachdem er zum erstenmale drei Tage, ohne zu essen zugebracht…drang der Hunger mit Ungestüm auf ihn ein, und das ganze schöne Gebäude seiner Phantasie stürzte fürcherlich zusammen” (274-275). In a scene reminiscent of Karl von Moor’s driving himself into an oak tree, Anton too displays an awful gesture of self-harm: running “mit dem Kopf gegen die Wand, [er] wütete und tobte, und war der Verzweiflung nahe…” (275). In a further commentary on Anton’s near-madness, Moritz describes how Anton sits down to draw squiggles on paper with his pen or to scratch on the table with his knife: “das waren die schrecklichsten Momente, wo sein Dasein wie ein unerträgliche Last auf ihn lag, wo es ihm nicht Schmerz und Traurigkeit, sondern Verdruss verursachte – wo er es oft mit einem fürchterlichen Schauder, der ihn antrat, von sich abzuschütteln suchte” (278). As in *Werther*, there are no words, on Anton’s part, to express the state of absolute desperation and anhedonia that has overcome him. Once more, we are left with an ambivalent suicide attempt at the very end of Book II: “…oft stand er bei diesen Spaziergängen am Ufer der Leinem lehnte sich in die reißende Flut hinüber, indes die wunderbare Begier zu atmen mit der Verzweiflung kämpfte, und mit schrecklicher Gewalt seinen überhängenden Körper wieder zurückbog” (238). Trauma finds itself, fully and finally, in repetition.

The worst expression of mental debilitation, the kind that is described in the paragraph above, is found in Moritz’s notion of *Seelenlähmung*. In the “Grundlinien,” this is expressed in the

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second postulate, alongside Moritz’s descriptions of the activities of the soul: “Mangel an Tätigkeit, überspannte Tätigkeit, zwecklose Tätigkeit, u.s.w. sind Symptomen [der] Seelenkrankheiten, oder zerstörten Verhältnisse.”\textsuperscript{413} \textit{Seelenlähmung} would imply the first and third attributes, i.e., a lack of activity and/or aimless activity.\textsuperscript{414} The concept is perhaps still more clearly expressed under the rubric of \textit{Trägheit} in Moritz’s “Beiträge zur Philosophie des Lebens,” in which he writes,

Wie traurig ist der Zustand, Stunden und Augenblicke in quälenden Müßiggange hinzubringen; keine feste Begierde, keinen bestimmten Wunsch zu haben… Wenn jeder Augenblick seinen Vorgänger schelten und seinen Nachfolger verabscheuen muß, wenn alles Bestreben sich loßzureissen vergeblich ist, und dem Unglücklichen alle Minuten die Kräfte schwinden, aus dem Schlamme, der ihn unaufhaltsam hinab zieht, sich hinaus zu arbeiten.\textsuperscript{415}

In his \textit{kranke Seele und das Licht der Erkenntnis}, Lothar Müller describes \textit{Seelenlähmung} as an “Extremform des Verlusts von Handlungsfähigkeit,” locating it in the motive of acedia from the medieval melancholy tradition.\textsuperscript{416} Müller continues, “Die Seelenlähmung vernichtet [Antons] natürliche Energien, verhindert die Selbstheilung und bewirkt das Erstarren des Ich in regungsloser Stummheit und Scham.”\textsuperscript{417} The notion of \textit{Seelenlähmung} also creates an interesting parallel to Anton’s childhood disability associated with his foot: while he is then unable to move physically,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{413} Moritz, “Grundlinien,” 813.
\item \textsuperscript{414} Another line directly addressing \textit{Seelenlähmung} is, albeit somewhat ambiguous, found within the third \textit{Grundlinie}: “…die herrlichsten Entschließungen, die vortrefflichsten Entwürfe, werden nicht ausgeführt, schwinden sie ganz oder zum Teil, so ist dieses gleichsam eine \textit{Seelenlähmung}, ein Zustand, worin sich so mancher Unglückliche befindet, der die ausgezeichnetsten Talente durch Überspannung unbrauchbar machte” (Ibid., 814).
\item \textsuperscript{415} Karl Philipp Moritz, \textit{Beiträge zur Philosophie des Lebens} (Berlin: Arnold Wever, 1781), 45-46.
\item \textsuperscript{416} Müller, \textit{kranke Seele}, 275.
\item \textsuperscript{417} Ibid., 276.
\end{itemize}
Seelenlähmung demarcates a paralysis of the soul. There arises, then, a psychological analogue to the physically lame: that is, the “Seelenkrüppel.”

To the sufferer of depression, then as now, such “states of excruciating near-paralysis” are par for the course. Thus there is an eerily similar ring to Moritz’s plaint, written in the 1770s, and contemporary memoirs of mental illness. In his Darkness Visible, the poet William Styron describes his own struggle with the disease, highlighting, along the way, “the psyche’s perishability, its exquisite fragility.”

Seelenlähmung rings through Styron’s description of an afternoon in Paris, when, returning to his hotel after accepting an enormously prestigious prize for his writing, he writes, “I fell onto the bed and lay gazing at the ceiling, nearly immobilized and in a trance of supreme discomfort. Rational thought was usually absent from my mind at such times, hence trance. I can think of no more apposite word for this state of being, a condition of helpless stupor in which cognition was replaced by that…anguish.”

Anhedonia, catatonia, a depressive trance – these are the words, some clinical, others not, that we have available to us today in order to describe the phenomenon that is actually occurring during such a state. In 1775, however, Seelenlähmung is the closest Moritz can come to describing a phenomenon for which there was otherwise no language in the eighteenth century.

‘Bricolaged’ Sadness

The narrative structure provided by Moritz does not center around a single climactic event of fortune, misfortune, or peripeteia of any kind. Instead, each book presents a series of day-to-day

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420 Ibid., 35.
421 Ibid., 15.
pathologies which tend to culminate – after much foreshadowing – with the protagonist experiencing some kind of heavily devastating blow, an all-encompassing, overwhelming experience of psychic pain and overload. Under Lobenstein, and during his time at school, that blow and psychological state are bound up with shame, which leads to a complete loss of affect on Anton’s part. In Books II and III, the same narrative structure is reflected in the social relationships that break apart one by one, fragmentarily. Finally, the novel as a whole represents a diffusion of sad moments; these are the melancholies of the narrative structure, modern in their many ways of presentation – they are not one image, one cause, one solution, but always numerous.

The illness is never static, but follows, rather, a course of daily pathologies, quotidian mishaps: one clumsily turned page in a book of Cicero; the school inspector’s “‘dummer Knabe!’” (176) when Anton fails to spell a word correctly; the mistaken invitation to share a table and the merchant’s rebuke “ich meine Ihn ja nicht!” (227); the forgotten assignment for the rector which “sei ja eine wahre Dummheit” (264). Each of these instances, despite their apparent triviality, rip Anton to absolute pieces. Moreover, they become enmeshed and intertwined in his mind as inseparable, if not inevitable, each event reverberating onto and building upon the next, so that in the end they become one unabating, impenetrable weight upon his soul, and he falls into the kind of Seelenlähmung outlined above. Anton’s soul, mind, or cognition is, as Locke would also argue, the cumulative effect of such sensory impressions and repetitions of shame and abasement.

Moritz’s narrative is, moreover, a kind of bricolage in and of itself: there are those moments that connect to other, earlier moments; the narrator’s jumping back in time to elucidate why exactly one seemingly average moment creates such an impact on Anton; and, finally, the relationship between the narrator and his protagonist – the two are, for the most part, demarcated as separate figures, with Moritz (or the narrator) playing the part of the “moral doctor,” and Anton, of his
There is, on the one hand, the narrative of Anton’s day-to-day life, but this is often replete with moments of the narrator stepping in to explain what exactly is going on in terms of pathology. Thus, for example, when Anton keeps a diary, the narrator comments, “Reiser lebte im Grunde immer ein doppeltes, ganz von einander verschiedenes inneres und äußeres Leben… – Den Einfluss der äußeren – wirklichen Vorfälle auf den inneren Zustand seines Gemüts zu beobachten, verstand Reiser damals noch nicht; seine Aufmerksamkeit auf sich selbst hatte noch nicht die gehörige Richtung erhalten” (294). Moritz’s insistence in such cases on walking the reader through Anton’s experience of melancholy shows us the difference between the two figures, doctor and patient; and it demonstrates, moreover, that Anton, just as any other patient suffering from “soul sickness” or mental illness, is treatable with the right kind of intervention.422

The relationship between narrator and protagonist is also a call to empathy, and it relates back to Moritz’s concepts of mental health and illness as outlined in the “Grundlinien” and in his other theoretical works on Seelenkunde. Moritz’s literarization of the sick soul is to be differentiated from the tendency to separate out and to gawk at the ill subject, the Wahnhitziger, the urge to create an incommensurable gap between “us,” the healthy, the “normal,” and the gruesome and monstrous freak. As Müller writes, “Rücken in der Perspektive genussvoller literarischer Angstlust die Extremform des Wahnsinns in den Blick und der faszinierte Leser der Fallgeschichte zum Gegenstand seines Interesses in die schützende Distanz der Inkommensurabilität, so begreift Moritz den Kranken stets als die Möglichkeitsform des Gesunden.”423 In other words, it is the exact opposite phenomenon of that which Foucault

422 As Lothar Müller comments, “Die Figur des moralischen Arztes . . . definiert Moritz zunächst und primär als Instanz praktischer Hilfe und Rettung für die kranke Seele.” In Die kranke Seele, 83.
423 Müller, kranke Seele, 83. The citation continues, “Gerade nicht der leicht dämonisierbare und ausgrenzbare unheilbar Kranke steht in Zentrum [Moritzi] Überlegungen, sondern der Typus des heilbaren Kranken. Sein
elucidates in *Madness and Civilization* and *The Birth of the Clinic*, in which the patient, once deemed ill – especially in a psychiatric sense – is immediately cut off from societal integration.

Just as the narrative does not stand still around a certain moment of lucidity or darkness, just as the illness is never fixed, and just as narrator and subject become, at times, integrated despite their separation, so Anton too engages in a kind of melancholy assemblage, filling himself, time and again, with different modes connected to the “joy of grief.” Because of this, and because of the contemporaneousness inherent in *Anton Reiser* (i.e., the book as a *Zeitroman*), the novel itself can be read as a bricolage of other texts, a “Lektürebiographie”\(^{424}\) *in nuce* of German *Empfindsamkeit, Sturm und Drang*, and the building of a national theater.\(^{425}\) Anton’s own attempts at compensation for his *leeres ich* are often characterized, after the imagination, via language and a kind of performativity. Throughout the novel, the problematics of self-annihilation, low self-esteem, and emotional withdrawal are raised time and again. When Anton turns to media in an attempt to counteract these issues (as he regularly does), this move is often represented as a threat to Anton’s individuality and subjectivity, a blockade to authenticity, as in the readings by Christopher Wild and Lothar Müller. And yet without language, without reading, declamation, his attempts at poetry, and theater, Anton is left threadbare as a character fraught solely with privation, an empty subject or *leeres Ich* marked only by illness and suffering – and given the notion of empathy between narrator and subject, between reader and protagonist outlined above, this does not seem to be what Moritz is aiming for. Therefore, while the typical eighteenth-century critique

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\(^{425}\) As Müller amusingly comments, Anton’s “Taschen-Homer ist ein Buch im Buch, das ein Buch um Buch zitiert.” In “Erziehung der Gefühle,” 25.
of rhetoric and affectation is reflected at certain points in the text, and it is certainly a large part of the scholarship on the novel, there is a positive side to theatricality as well – for it is only in theatricality that Anton is able to attempt to build a unified self, to explore and to piece together his own subjectivity, even when such an undertaking involves the “gelebte[s] Leben” becoming “dem gelesenen Leben tributpflichtig.”

While the text does not focus on the emancipatory potential of reading – because it is so intertwined with Anton’s hypertrophic imagination – and while performance does not explicitly appear as a liberating phenomenon, both of these avenues do present routes for Anton to escape the social script he is destined for – that is, as craftsman, or perpetually impoverished student, or, at best, preacher, or teacher at a Gymnasium. Moreover, there are moments in the text when singing, reading, writing, and declamation appear as genuine palliatives. Perhaps the most poignant example of this is when Anton rushes home after hearing a sermon from Pastor Paulmann in order to write it down: “Das Aufschreiben dieser Predigt hatte gleichsam eine neue Entwicklung seiner Verstandeskräfte bewirkt. – Denn von der Zeit fingen seine Ideen an sich allmählich untereinander zu ordnen – er lernte selbst für sich über einen Gegenstand nachdenken – er suchte die Reihe seiner Gedanken wieder außer sich darzustellen…” (166). This sort of systematic thinking is described elsewhere in the novel as the “Wonne des Denkens”: studying Gottsched’s Philosophie, Anton learns, while copying out parts of the main content, to structure his thoughts, “bei dem Einzelnen nie das Ganze aus den Augen [zu verlieren]” (299). As a counter-weight to the overwhelming pain Anton experiences for the vast majority of the novel, the

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426 This idea is to some extent inspired by Wendy Arons’ argument about eighteenth-century writer-actresses using theater and performance to investigate their own subjectivity and to intervene in the dominant discourse about ideal femininity. See Performance and Femininity in Eighteenth-Century German Women’s Writing: The Impossible Act (New York: Palgrave Macmillon, 2006).
significance of such a moment cannot be overlooked. Anton’s flight into reading and other forms of media may act in the first instance as an escape, albeit a temporary one, from the trauma of his upbringing. More importantly, however, Anton’s uses of media allow him to develop the sense of self and independence of mind necessary for cognitive development. As in the example given here, the use of reason ultimately offers true liberation from the problem of an empty self.

In the practice of Erfahrungsseelenkunde, writing is, of course, the solution; after self-observation, it is the minute cataloguing of the self in order to discover its most basic impulses and motivations, its childhood shadows, its imbalances to be corrected – if need be, with help of the moral doctor. Unfortunately, for Anton, that help can only come in the form of his adult, nonfictionalized self: Moritz, distanced as he is now from the past, is ostensibly able to look back on the earlier parts of his existence and frame them into a whole. Nevertheless, he leaves Anton in a place much more fragmentary than this: the conclusion to the novel sees Anton arrive in Leipzig, only to find that the acting troupe he is in search of has disbanded. He is still hungry, still in debt, still lonely, and entirely unsettled. The withholding and complication of melancholy’s causality results, then, in the unending delay of Anton’s fate, which appears scattered throughout Germany – from the money he still owes in Gotha, to the interrupted university life in Erfurt, to his unresolved desire to become Goethe’s servant in Weimar.

Anton Reiser offers a depiction of melancholy that is almost entirely set apart from traditional associations with aesthetic beauty and creative genius. If anything, the failure of Anton’s attempts to write an ode on melancholy, to declaim Werther while sitting in the grass as ants crawl up his pantlegs, points to the absurdity of such portrayals. Instead, Moritz’s conception of melancholy is both medicalized and modern: medicalized, in the sense that it is the result of a disturbance in the mind’s forces and the object of the moral doctor’s observations and
commentary; and *modern*, in that childhood experiences, social deprivation, and shame play as large a role in this melancholy’s narrative as black bile had before them. At the same time, the novel presents a truly individualized account of melancholy, one that catalogues the specific and earnest repercussions of a childhood spent in the shadows, the impact of religion, the trivial mistakes that shatter Anton’s self-esteem, the people and places that ostracize and alienate the protagonist, and the condition of a mind that has perennially been deprived of positive reinforcement, love, and affection.
TO WALK ON HIS HEAD: WRITING MADNESS AND THE EXPERIENCE OF
MELANCHOLY IN GEORG BÜCHNER’S LERN (1836)

Den 20. ging Lenz durch’s Gebirg. Die Gipfel und hohen Bergflächen im Schnee, die Täler
hinunter graues Gestein, grüne Flächen, Felsen und Tannen. […] Am Himmel zogen graue
Wolken, aber alles so dicht, und dann dampfte der Nebel herauf und strich schwer und
feucht durch das Gesträuch, so träg, so plump. Er ging gleichgültig weiter, es lag ihm nichts
am Weg, bald auf- bald abwärts.428

In the opening sentences of Büchner’s fragmentary novella, the fictionalized Jakob Michael
Reinhold Lenz is introduced to the reader as traveling across the mountains – yet with no narrative
disclosure as to where he is coming from or going to, without the slightest hint of exposition. Gray
clouds travel in the sky, and the mist rises like steam; the two elements are of the same form, but
they move at different angles, and it doesn’t matter to them – just like it doesn’t matter to Lenz –
whether up or down. The introductory passage then proceeds to the much-interpreted line, “nur
war es ihm manchmal unangenehm, dass er nicht auf dem Kopf gehen konnte” (137).429 It is, in
other words, odd that Lenz does not care which direction he’s going, and yet he does care that he
cannot be upside down; motion matters only insofar as Lenz cannot move in an impossible way.
The strangeness of such a wish is not commented upon further, but the themes of movement and
disorientation continue throughout the initial nature scene: it appears that Lenz is unsure whether

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text will be noted in parenthesis within the body of the chapter.
429 Perhaps the most radical reading of this line is from Arnold Zweig, who writes, “Mit diesem Satz beginnt die
moderne europäische Prosa; kein Franzose und kein Russe legt moderner einer seelischen Sachverhalt offen hin.” In:
Arnold Zweig: Ausgewählte Werke in Einzelausgaben. Vol. 15, Essays. No. 1, Literatur und Theater (Berlin/Weimar:
he is walking through the forest or, rather, the forest is moving through him – whether Lenz himself is the main engine of movement, or whether the universe is pulling him through it. Recognizing the sublimity of the natural world, Lenz would like to domesticate it and make it his own – “er hätte die Erde hinter den Ofen setzen mögen” (137) – but then the world rises “violently” again, as when the storm thrusts clouds into the valley, and the clouds in turn gallop towards him “wie wilde wiehernde Rosse” (137). What opens as an ambiguous, at times turbulent, war between Lenz and the world subsequently ends in nothing, “nur Augenblicke” (138), and Lenz wanders on, “lonely as a cloud,” until he passes through the village and sees, finally, the faces of people radiating light. There is a kind of Genesis, or creation story, occurring in these first pages, but it is a Genesis that only Lenz bears witness to: that is, the text is written from the vantage point of the almost completely subjective gaze of its protagonist.

There were a number of important advances in the science and medicine of melancholy and mental illness in the intervening years between the publication dates of Karl Philipp Moritz’s *Anton Reiser* and Georg Büchner’s *Lenz* (i.e., between roughly 1775 and 1830). While *Lenz* implicitly conveys an array of these developments in psychiatry itself, and while it also includes updates in terms of the etiology, symptomology, and course of the protagonist’s illness, even as it also looks back to older traditions and representations of melancholy, such as religious variants and the *idée fixe*, along with *Sturm und Drang* narratives of the tortured *Kraftmensch*, the text seems largely motivated not by the goal of naming or defining the illness from which the protagonist suffers, but rather by that of elucidating the experiential dimension of melancholy. Travelling without direction, moving without going anywhere, is just one example of its symptoms. In *Lenz*, the only possible account of melancholy entails a description of what it is like

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for the melancholic subject to experience the world. As such, the novella is the best example of one of the major premises of this dissertation: that pain, both physical and psychological, is unspeakable, un-pin-point-able, only to be approached vaguely by metaphors, similes, and “als ob”s (i.e., literary language). This point is similar to Elaine Scarry’s thesis with regard to physical pain. Scarry writes, “Because the existing vocabulary for pain contains only a handful of adjectives, one passes through direct descriptions very quickly and…almost immediately encounters an ‘as if’ structure: it feels as if…; it is as though…”431 In this way, Lenz offers the most tangible theory of melancholy as compared to the other texts considered in this project. While it attempts, on the one hand, to capture Lenz’s psychic constitution and his individual sensations with linguistic imagery and metaphors that recapitulate his mental state as precisely as possible,432 its steadfast adherence to subjectivity, which in turn dictates elements of its narrative style, simultaneously communicates the impossibility of ever really defining, elucidating, or representing melancholy for the non-melancholic. There is an impenetrability, even for the narrator, into Lenz’s consciousness: we can only get so close, and then the perspective becomes blurry, fragmented into a kind of subjective – and with it, linguistic – chaos. As in the “auf dem Kopf gehen” line, there is a barrier between melancholic subjectivity and “normality” that precludes the reader from truly understanding what is going on in the mind of Lenz.433

431 Scarry, 15.
433 The question may be raised as to whether this problem applies only to the melancholic or, rather, describes the impossibility of knowing or describing the interiority of another human being more generally. For the purposes of this chapter, however, I am applying the dilemma solely to the melancholic.
A Phenomenology of Melancholy

While previous chapters have touched on the notion of incommunicability – and while Chapter 1, focused on Werther, certainly argues for a strong sense of solipsism, the text and its protagonist are nevertheless heavily connected to other nameable forms of melancholy: there is the highly poetic melancholy of the opening entries, the love melancholy of Werther’s relationship to Lotte, the “Krankheit zum Tode” elucidated by Werther in his Selbstmordgespräch with Albert, and, lastly, that which I have termed “pathological melancholy,” i.e., a darker form of melancholy as psychophysiological illness, bearing strong resemblances to that which we would today term depression. Werther is, further, framed by third-person commentaries on the state of the protagonist’s pathology, an external diagnostics of sort that place the patient at a distance from his own suffering. In Die Räuber, as I showed in Chapter 2, melancholy is an almost entirely different phenomenon – a centripetal, affective force moving quickly between characters and over mountains of bodies, threatening to infect all those involved in the drama. In Karl, it manifests as something akin to manic depression; in Franz, it is a narcissistic mania stemming from a crisis of belief. Finally, as I argued in Chapter 3, melancholy in Anton Reiser is the product of childhood trauma, a twisted – and later, perhaps unconscious – sense of adherence to a religion centered on privation, and intense episodes of shame, all of which create a massively distorted self-image in the protagonist and lead to devastating instances of Seelenlähmung, or utter self-hatred combined with intense apathy, an inability to act in any way – which again finds echoes in contemporary accounts of depression. Anton’s melancholy is, moreover, the focus of the narrator, who is also “Anton’s” adult self and a self-styled philosophischer Arzt, whose running commentary bears witness to each stage of the illness from which Anton suffers, labelling it, by turn, as Schwermuth, the “Joy of Grief,” Hypochondrie, and Leiden der Einbildungskraft, among other terminologies.
In other words, each of these texts pairs a distinctive narrative strategy with an individualized account of melancholy.

Each of my previous chapters, then, has centered around a kind of “diagnostic” literary analysis: by examining the representation of “symptoms” as well as the course of the illness and placing these into conversation with established models of melancholy and medicine, both past and present, I arrived at a “diagnosis” of each of the main characters. This is a model that could easily be replicated in an analysis of Lenz, since Lenz’s illness undeniably bears affinities with the mental illnesses of the previous chapters, to those that were finally being established in the nineteenth century, as well as to diseases we refer to today. Nevertheless, it is my contention that the novella is more interested in exploring the melancholic world of the protagonist than it is in describing or diagnosing the melancholic subject. If Büchner had wanted his text to read as a diagnostic manual, “als eine bloße Pathographie, ein Krankenbericht,” then he, as “Arzt und Ärztekind,” certainly had all the means at his disposal to do so. At the same time, previous chapters have undoubtedly pointed to the ways in which melancholy is experienced by the subject or character in question: it has, at times, been something beautiful, something threatening, something that breaks the subject open and has him spiral out of control, or something that hems him in, that obscures an objective appraisal of the world. As such, it makes sense now, in this final chapter, to zero in on the centrality of experience, to turn experience into the focus of analysis, because it speaks most directly and, in a sense, most simply, to the question of melancholy’s (non-)representability.

434 And has been, extensively, in the secondary literature. See below.
436 Kubik, 2.
437 Arguably, this is also the major difference between Büchner’s source material of Oberlin’s report, which is structured as a pathography, and the text of Lenz.
I will elucidate “experience” in the writing of Büchner through the lens of phenomenology, both because phenomenology is a major framework for analyzing subjective experience, and because I see the text itself as staging a phenomenological approach avant la lettre. As a disciplinary field in philosophy, phenomenology is “the study of human experience and of the way things present themselves to us in and through such experience.”\(^{438}\) It is, literally speaking, the study of “phenomena”: the appearances of things, “or things as they appear in our experience, or the way we experience things, and thus the meanings that things have in our experience.”\(^{439}\) Historically, the nineteenth-century philosopher Franz Brentano (1838-1917) was the first to describe phenomenology as a methodology and to insist on the “priority of a purely descriptive form of psychological inquiry,” the aim of which is “nothing other than to provide us with a general conception of the entire realm of human consciousness.”\(^{440}\) But the movement really begins with the work of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), whose *Logical Investigations* (1900) is usually thought to constitute the birth of phenomenology.\(^{441}\) After Brentano and Husserl, other philosophers created their own frameworks to apply to phenomenology: Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) focused on the notion of being; Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) added the concept of freedom, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), the point of the embodied consciousness of being. So, for example, whereas Heidegger prioritizes the subject as existing in a temporal state or universe, and Sartre focuses on what it is to be a rational agent and, in terms of freedom, what it is to be able to do things of one’s own volition, Merleau-Ponty stresses the body: the way that the body reaches out

\(^{441}\) See Smith, 6-7.
into the world is part of how we experience it. Merleau-Ponty’s work in this area has been particularly significant for thinking about the body in various scholarly contexts in the humanities.

The core doctrine in all theories of phenomenology is “intentionality,” which states that “every act of consciousness we perform, every experience that we have, is intentional: it is essentially ‘consciousness of’ or an ‘experience of’ something or other.”442 In other words, conscious states are always directed toward something: a perception is always a perception of something; a thought is always a thought about something; it is this “about-ness” that is meant by intentionality. The intentional structure of consciousness involves further forms of experience – things like temporal awareness, spatial awareness, awareness of one’s own experience (self-consciousness), self-awareness (awareness of one’s self), “the self in different roles (as thinking, acting, etc.), embodied action (including kinesthetic awareness of one’s own movement) . . . awareness of other persons (in empathy, intersubjectivity, collectivity), linguistic activity (involving meaning, communication, understanding others),” and social interaction.443 To give an example – one that is highly relevant with regard to Lenz – we can look at spatial awareness and movement. Whereas a non-phenomenologist might want to give an account of space in terms of objects and their relations to one another, the distance between a tree and a far away rock, a phenomenologist would give the same account starting from spatial awareness – that is, how space presents itself to one and one’s consciousness. This gives us a way to describe how Büchner conveys Lenz’s perception of space – his conscious experience of it – as singular and unique, largely at odds with the way a “normal” person might experience the same area of the Alsatian mountain village. Experience, in this sense, amounts to “a stream of private events, known only to their possessor. […] experiences have contents [intentionality, about-ness]: it is the world itself

442 Sokolowski, 8.
443 Woodruff Smith, “Phenomenology.”
that they represent to us [or to Lenz] as being one way or another, and how we take the world to be is publicly manifested by our words and our behaviour.”

Thus, if Lenz’s experience of space involves its continually alternating expansion and contraction, this is manifested in the text in Lenz’s disorientation, his inability to search for a path.

Similarly, a phenomenological approach to studying mental disorders will involve close scrutiny of sufferers’ experiences. Other trends in psychiatry and psychology might stress an identification of the disorder based on external symptoms, definite changes in the sufferer’s behavior that can be witnessed by an observer, such as disordered speech patterns or poor social interactions. Yet phenomenologists would urge us to consider, for instance, as Jeremy Smith writes, the viscous, burdening nature of depression that makes even the smallest task a great effort and is felt almost as a physical weight on the body; or the icy distancing from the world a schizophrenic (or, rather, someone suffering from depersonalization or derealization disorder) might experience, along with the loss of the capacity to be fluidly, happily immersed in activity; or the agonized, repetitious thought of the compulsive, which revolves incessantly around one central anxiety that can never be forgotten, never mitigated. In other words, a phenomenologist aims to express sufferers’ experience from their own particular point of view (“from the inside,” so to speak), and the way this point of view is different from others. Phenomenology’s earnest attempt to understand the state of mind of the sufferer can, moreover, help facilitate a measure of empathy for them.

This exposition of experience is very different from, for example, the one presented by Moritz in Anton Reiser or in his writings on Erfahrungsseelenkunde. With Moritz, experience is

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tantamount to description of day-to-day occurrences, a straightforward recounting of life events: interpersonal encounters, movement between cities and institutional settings, other kinds of mundane engagements with the external world. In the form of *gnothi seauton*, it is a call for self-observation and the gathering of facts in line with Enlightenment empiricism. The narrated self is intentionally placed at a distance from the narrator, who takes a dispassionate stance and acts as a factual chronicler of behavior and the thoughts and feelings accompanying it. Büchner, instead, stages experience as experiment – by probing its interiority, by forging a starting point where radical subjectivity becomes the organizing principle of a text whose protagonist struggles to discern the difference between waking life and dream, and whose reality comes to increasingly include that which is not objectively real, or is real only to a sick mind (i.e., as epitomized by Lenz’s visual and auditory hallucinations), and by merging narrator and narrated to such an extent that once the narrative stops, so does Lenz.

Such an account of experience as experiment is facilitated by particular narrative techniques employed by Büchner in the novella, which at the same time are also typically associated with modernity. These include the application of narrative suddenness and non-mediation; an sudden alternation between expansive, blooming sentences and sharp, short, often syntactically incomplete phrases; the breakdown of normative lexical and conceptual signifiers (i.e., as exemplified by Lenz’s reference to an “entsetzliche Stimme…die man gewöhnlich die Stille heißt” [157]); and strategies of lexical inversion and binary opposition, whereby *Traum* may refer to the dream of harmonious fusion or domestic paradise, but also denotes Lenz’s loss of grip

\[446\] Of course, there are some moments where narrator and narrated self re-intersect, as in, for example, instances of the italicized commentary in *Anton Reiser*. 
on reality and, along with it, his diminishing sense of selfhood. In a sense, Büchner absorbs and reworks the pathology of what we would today term schizophrenia, such that its central symptoms are transformed into the major poetic properties of the text. As Erika Swales writes, “Lenz’s speech, with its fractured syntax and abrupt changes, turns into the very art of parataxis and ellipsis, the mastery of construction without connective particles . . . and his illogical associations are transmuted into passages of lyrical intensity. [...] by his very condition he becomes the poetic voice, the subject of the narrative.” Just as schizophrenia is symbolic of the breakdown and fracturing of the mind, so too is this fragmentation inherent in Büchner’s writing style. Some of this fragmentariness may be accidental, given the novella’s unusual provenance as a posthumously reconstructed “fragment.” While I am not so interested in a diagnosis of schizophrenia, largely because it is anachronistic, I believe that the same lexical strategies are part of what constitutes the novella’s modernness, as well as its intensely subjective perspective.

Perhaps primary amongst these narrative techniques, however, is Büchner’s use of free indirect discourse, that is, “a type of discourse representing a character’s utterances or thoughts.” While free indirect discourse “has the grammatical traits of ‘normal’ indirect discourse, [] it does not involve a tag clause (‘he said that,’ ‘she thought that’) introducing and qualifying the represented utterances and thoughts.” It is usually understood to contain “markers of two discourse events (a narrator’s and a character’s), two styles, two languages, two voices, two semantic and axiological systems,” but some theorists have argued that it should instead “be taken

448 Ibid., 318-319.
450 Gerald Prince, A Dictionary of Narratology (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 34.
451 Ibid.
to be a speakerless (narratorless) representation of one subjectivity or self,”
thereby maintaining “internal focalization,” i.e., a type of emphasis whereby information is communicated solely in terms of a character’s perspective.

Another useful definition of free indirect discourse that is extremely relevant with regard to *Lenz* is provided by James Wood’s *How Fiction Works*. Here, Wood writes,

So-called omniscience is almost impossible. As soon as someone tells a story about a character, narrative seems to want to bend itself around that character, wants to merge with that character, to take on his or her way of thinking and speaking. A novelist’s omniscience soon enough becomes a kind of secret sharing; this is called free indirect style… […] Note the gain in flexibility. The narrative seems to float away from the novelist and take on the properties of the character who now seems to ‘own’ the words. The writer is free to inflect the reported thought, to bend it round the character’s own words… We are close to stream of consciousness, and that is the direction free indirect style takes in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. […] Thanks to free indirect style, we see things through the character’s eyes and language but also through the author’s eyes and language, too. We inhabit omniscience and partiality at the same time.

Applying Woods’ definition to Büchner’s novella, we may observe that, while *Lenz* includes a third-person narrator who records communicable actions and uses temporal markers (“den andern Tag,” “gegen Abend”) to establish chronology, “overall, the narrator does not figure as a guiding,

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452 Ibid.

453 Ibid., 45.

454 James Wood, *How Fiction Works* (London: Vintage Books, 2009), 8-11. The definition continues: “A gap opens between author and character, and the bridge – which is free indirect style itself – between them simultaneously closes that gap and draws attention to its distance. This is merely another definition of dramatic irony: to see through a character’s eyes while being encouraged to see more than the character can see (an unreliability identical to the unreliable first-person narrator’s)” (11).
interpretive voice.” Instead, the narrator largely disappears in such free indirect speech, i.e., into the perspective of the protagonist. Although narratorial distance is established in such recurrent phrases as “er meinte” or “es war ihm als ob,” the overall momentum and feeling of the narrative is, for the most part, so strongly embedded in Lenz’s perspective that it overrides the narrator’s voice, unlike the other texts under discussion.

A focus on experience, finally, allows for an analysis that is less entrenched in what the secondary literature already has to say about Lenz. A major portion of the existing scholarship is in fact concerned with diagnosis, i.e., with reading Lenz’s symptoms vis-à-vis a psychiatric history in flux and arriving at an assessment of the protagonist’s malady. Amongst Büchner philologists of the older generation, for example, it is common consensus that Lenz is “generally viewed as a brilliant literary anticipation of the condition of schizophrenia” – despite the fact that this is a category defined only by modern psychiatry. Emblematic for this kind of reading is Gerhard Irle’s 1965 article, “Büchners ‘Lenz’: Eine frühe Schizophreniestudie,” which is itself based on several earlier studies bearing the same conclusion. These, in turn, all have their origin in a 1921 biography-cum-pathography of the historical Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz written by R. Weichbrodt, which diagnoses the poet as suffering from schizophrenia, specifically the variant catatonia, without mention of the novella by Büchner. The issue, then, is not necessarily the retrospective medical framework of these analyses – which I am also engaging in by applying categories of phenomenology, and have done in previous chapters to some extent – but rather the problem of conflation between the real-life J. M. R. Lenz and his appearance as a fictional character in Büchner’s text, as well as the closed character of these interpretations. Irle’s analysis

455 Swales, 317.
456 See ibid.
argues that Büchner succeeds in transforming his source material (i.e., the Oberlin report) into a “Dokument einer geschlossenen Schizophreniedarstellung,” which “ebensogut heute wie vor 125 Jahren aufgezeichnet sein [könnte].” Analyses like Irle’s, in other words, work backwards from the point of conclusion: all evidence becomes symptomatic of one reading, one diagnosis, without including the possibility of other interpretations.

Newer studies, while still focusing on diagnosis, try to situate the text within the medical and psychiatric history of its time. Georg Reuchlein summarizes this desideratum: “Vereinnahmt man Büchner vorschnell für die Moderne, verliert man den Blick für das historische Umfeld, in das sein Schaffen trotz allem eingebettet ist und vor dem es sich erst in seiner Eigenart abheben läßt.” Similarly, Carolin Seling-Dietz argues that Lenz (as well as Woyzeck) “eingebettet sind in zu Büchners Zeit hochaktuelle psychiatrische Debatten.” To this end, Seling-Dietz performs a thorough historiography of psychiatry in the early nineteenth century, turning toward a focus on the advanced (fortschrittliche) medical orientation of French psychiatry at the time, with its major representatives Philippe Pinel and Jean Étienne Dominique Esquirol, as it, in turn, came to influence the direction of German psychiatry. Through a reading of Esquirol’s lengthy articles on “Melancholie” and “Selbstmord” in the Dictionnaire de sciences médicales, a publication that would be representative for the most common understandings of melancholy at this time, Seling-Dietz convincingly shows that everything Büchner added to the source material by Oberlin in terms of Lenz’s symptoms can be found in these references. Seling-Dietz further zeroes in on the contemporary debate between the Psychikern and the Somatikern, two opposing camps in

459 Ibid., 82.
460 Reuchlein, 60.
psychiatry at this time, a dispute that is at least implicitly referred to in Büchner’s text. Similarly, Burghard Dedner’s commentary in the Suhrkamp edition of Lenz highlights those passages in the text which speak to Büchner’s knowledge of and indebtedness to contemporary movements in psychiatry, especially as espoused in the works of Esquirol, Johann Christian Reil, and Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland. While these interpretations are also mediated through pathology, they allow for more openness than those of the previous generation; they are not driven to diagnose Lenz as schizophrenic, or melancholic, but simply point to the symptoms as they may or may not be representative of a number of diagnoses.

Moreover, the issues presented in these more recent analyses are pertinent for situating Büchner’s text in the context of advances in psychiatry between his and Moritz’s time. The major development in psychiatry during this period was the (re)turn to a physically-oriented perspective and the refutation of moral causes and thus moral fault; this is, again, represented by the debate between the Psychiker and the Somatiker. Germany develops this kind of physiologically-focused psychiatry in the 1830s, in response to developments in France, namely those championed by Philippe Pinel and Jean-Étienne Dominique Esquirol. “Schulemachend,” of course, was still Boerhaave’s definition of melancholy as a partial delirium, in the center of which stands a fixed idea. Another dominant notion in psychiatry of this time was that of different mental illnesses that can mix or transform into one another, of a gradation or scale, with Wahn being considered a heightened form of melancholy. Finally, there was a shifting focus from the static image of the

462 See Seling-Dietz, 228-231.
464 Jean-Étienne Dominique Esquirol insisted, contra the accepted thesis of a unified mental illness, on the nosological separation of forms of dementia in a five-fold schema: in addition to melancholy (which Esquirol termed “lypomania), he also counted monomania, actual mania, “die Vehemenz – ‘demenz’ – und der Blödsinn des Kretinismus” (Schmidt, “Schizophrenie oder Melancholie,” 526). But he also emphasized the passage of a mental illness through all of these forms. See Jean Etienne Dominique Esquirol, Die Geisteskrankheiten in Beziehung zur Medizin und Staatsarzneykunde, trans. W. Bernhard (Berlin, 1839), 259. Based on this information, Harald Schmidt writes of an
illness to the Krankheitsverlauf, or the dynamic of the illness, i.e., “nicht mehr als bloßer Zustand…sondern als Prozess mit einem charakteristischen Verlauf sich abwechselnder und ablösender Symptome.” Büchner, similarly, declines an explanation for Lenz’s condition, instead concentrating on “die innere Dynamik des Leidens.”

In the following sections, I will proceed with a close reading of the text, focusing first on the way that Lenz’s atypical experiences of space and place reveal the text’s radical subjectivism through phenomenological and linguistic means. A subsequent analysis of the breakdown in Lenz’s language takes us back to the issue of a semiotic crisis as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2.

For Lenz, a complete semiotic breakdown becomes the point of no return in his illness; the loss of the ability to effectively communicate leaves him inherently cut off from the outside world, trapped inside his own deteriorating mind. Lastly, and concurrent with his loss of language, Lenz experiences another fatal blow – that is, his loss of faith in God. Set completely adrift, with no system left to anchor him to the “real” world, and no social ties to steer his perspective back to it, unable to tell the difference between waking reality and dream, Lenz experiences a radical negation of both the world and himself, until he shifts into a state that fills the void with that which does not exist: Lenz hallucinates and hears voices. In the end, then, the novella communicates the experience of a subjectivity for whom that which is invisible or imperceptible no longer exists – a confusion and disorientation, on Lenz’s part, that lead to a process of doubting anything outside of his perception, until that perception itself becomes the subject of doubt.


465 Reuchlein, 81.
466 Ibid., 84.
467 In spatial theory, “place” designates a stable environment, one’s actual, physical surroundings, whereas “space” denotes something more dynamic, a social practice that is influenced by interaction, memories, and meaning. See Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life (California: University of California Press, 1984). While these distinctions are not the focus of this chapter, I do follow this differentiation to some extent.
Büchner’s Lenz and the Melancholic Experience of Spatiality

In the opening lines of *Lenz* quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Büchner sets the tone of his novella. The text is demarcated by a complete inversion of normality – not just as a sensation the reader gets, but in point of fact in the world of the text – and this is due, again, to its orientation towards subjectivity through its immersion in the mind of the protagonist. The reversal of the regular order of things is perhaps best illustrated vis-à-vis Lenz’s experiences of space – predominantly outdoors and in nature – when he is on his own. Linguistically and stylistically, it is accomplished by the use of run-on sentences or sentence fragments, rushed pacing, free indirect discourse, the ever-present subjunctive or conjunctive mode, similes, metaphors, and the personification of madness, or *sprachliche Bilder*.

In general, the spaces of the novella can be divided in two. In the first instance, there is the physical setting in which the events of the text take place: this is the Alsatian mountain village of Waldbach, a place which might best be described as a kind of refuge, delineated as it is by vast expanses of land, valleys, cliffs, mountains, and woods. As yet untouched by the encroaching processes of industrialization, the village is an idyll, a *locus amoenus*, a last safe haven in the midst of the changes brought about by modernization – a place in which one can still lead a simple life on the land. This peace and simplicity are embodied by the figure of Oberlin, the humanist, Protestant pastor and “‘Vater’ der Steintäler,”468 “[v]ielseitig und unermüdlich tätiger Seelsorger”469 – as well as the effect that Oberlin has on the townspeople: “überall zutrauensvolle Blicke, Gebet” (140). As a harmonious Urwelt, the village is really the only place in which Lenz

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468 In Pörnbacher, Schaub, Simm, and Ziegler, 536.
469 Ibid.
might possibly hope to create a calm existence for himself, a space in which to heal. This is exemplified by Lenz’s vehement refusals to return home to his father in order to mold himself to the confines of a typical – productive, moral – *bürgerlich* lifestyle: “Du weißt, ich kann es nirgends aushalten, als da herum, in der Gegend wenn ich nicht manchmal auf einen Berg könnte, und die Gegend sehen könnte . . . Ich würde toll! toll!” (146). In large part, the desire to remain in Waldbach is about Lenz’s need to be in a wide, open space, which relates to the typical melancholic feeling of claustrophobia or being hemmed in, though it can also be read as the wish to escape from the expectations of his father, i.e., his desire that Lenz should choose a constructive and normative path in life and remain bound to it.

On the other hand, and despite the refuge-like qualities of Waldbach, there is the completely subjective, inner terrain of Lenz’s thoughts and sensations, which is more often than not presented as existing in tension with with the external environment, as the former takes over the latter and, in an inversion of the pathetic fallacy, warps its tranquil geography. In a similar way, the psychological – i.e., that same inner world of thoughts and sensations – determines the body’s haptic responses to the spatial dimension; this is its phenomenological placement. As the text opens *in medias res*, we join Lenz mid-walk in a moment of narrative suddenness, and the reader is at once confronted with the clash between the two worlds: the skewed urges of the protagonist, the oft-cited “Drängen in ihm” (137) is juxtaposed against images of the natural surroundings as he moves through them and, vice-versa, as the world bends, breaks, and twists through Lenz in almost agonizing fashion. The theme of walking presents as particularly unique in *Lenz* when compared to *Anton Reiser*, in which it is a healing practice, as well as *Werther*, in which it is an entirely

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470 This sentiment is reiterated in one of Büchner’s letters to his fiancée Wilhemine Jaeglé in March of 1834. Speaking of Gießen, he writes, “Hier ist kein Berg, wo die Aussicht frei sei. […] ich kann mich nicht an diese Natur gewöhnen, und die Stadt ist abscheulich.” In Pörnbacher, Schaub, Simm, and Ziegler, 288.
aestheticized experience. In Lenz, nature rips through the fabric of the protagonist’s psyche; it breaks open the body’s barrier and reaches all the way inside of him, so that Lenz is left exposed: the pain tears through his chest, leaving him breathless, panting, “den Leib vorwärts gebogen, Augen und Mund weit offen,” even as Lenz feels as though “er müsse den Sturm in sich ziehen, Alles in sich fassen” (137). Like the opening scene, this is another moment of disorientation, a loss of perspective vis-à-vis the self and the environment.

There are, however, multiple sensations layered over each other within this kaleidoscopic scene. In the first instance, there is Lenz’s indifference, which is mirrored by an external atmosphere that is cold, damp, heavy, moist, dense, steaming, oppressive, sluggish, and shapeless. These attributes, in turn, point to the familiar melancholic sensation of an external pressure, a feeling of a physical weight that pushes down on the body. In the next moment, there is a sharp shift from clinical dispassion to radical embodiment. Lenz experiences a profound diminution of the earth: he stands above it all, as “der graue Wald [schüttelt] sich unter ihm” (137). Here, the world appears to Lenz “so klein, so nahe,” that he does not understand why it requires so much time to climb down a slope or to reach a distant point – instead, he feels as though “er müsse Alles mit ein Paar Schritten ausmessen können” (137). In this example, disorientation is manifested at the level of scale: Lenz cannot grasp the distance between objects, the time it takes to move from one point to another. This is, moreover, the difference between a phenomenological, experiential understanding of space “from the inside” – with the repetition of “so” serving as an example of distinct subjectivity – and one which takes as its parameters any kind of external, experiential understanding of space “from the inside” – with the repetition of “so” serving as an example of distinct subjectivity – and one which takes as its parameters any kind of external,

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471 “Es war naßkalt . . . Die Äste der Tannen hingen schwer herab in die feuchte Luft. Am Himmel zogen graue Wolken, aber Alles so dicht, und dann dampfte der Nebel herauf und strich schwer und feucht durch das Gesträuch, so träg, so plump” (137; italics mine). In his commentary on the novella, Burghard Dedner notes that “Gefühle von Schwere, von Enge und Gleichgültigkeit gegen äußere Dinge galten als Kennzeichen melancholischer Erkrankung” (127). The attributes listed above are also associated with melancholy in the classic, humoral sense.
outside, or normative measurement. The nearness of the earth results in a tactile feeling, as if touching Lenz’s skin, which feels “so nass” (137), and the forms of the cosmos and the landscape exist in a dynamic, almost ecstatic relation with his mind and body. Lying down in the grass, Lenz “wühlt[s] sich in das All hinein,” ambiguously described as a pleasure that causes him pain (137). The sensation of nearness even results in the amplification of noise in Lenz’s mind: “er wollte mit sich sprechen, aber er konnte, er wagte kaum zu atmen, das Biegen seines Fußes tönte wie Donner unter ihm” (138). Subsequently, however, the world towers over Lenz. As he reaches the top of the mountain ridge and sits down, Lenz finds himself in the midst of an unceasingly large macrocosmos of nature, in which neither space nor time are certain, and he begins to feel “entsetzlich einsam, er war allein, ganz allein . . . es faßte ihn eine namenlose Angst in diesem Nichts, er war im Leeren . . .” (138). Suddenly gripped by the sensation that he is being haunted, chased – “als ginge ihm was nach” (138) – he jumps up and races down the mountain slope, until he finally reaches the village of Waldbach and Oberlin’s parsonage.

Lenz’s disoriented, distorted experience of space – here, free nature – when on his own stands in stark contrast to those episodes that take place when he is in the company of Oberlin. This is due both to the second-order narratorial perspective given by Oberlin – which provides the text-internal criterion for “normal” space and time – and, in turn, the fact that Lenz is to some extent able to view the world through the point of view of another. The radical subjectivity of the narrative and of Lenz’ perspective is tuned down in these instances: Oberlin provides a necessary

472 Some of these moments find correlates in Werther. This line especially is reminiscent of Werther’s lying down in the grass in an ecstatic, almost sensual moment. Additionally, both protagonists seek catharsis in physical pain. On August 30, 1771, Werther writes, “so muss ich fort, muss hinaus! und schweife dann weit im Feld umher; einen jähren Berg zu klettern ist dann meine Freunde…durch die Hecken, die mich verletzen, durch die Dornen, die mich zerreißten!” (Goethe, 79-80). While there is a clear intentionality inherent in Werther’s actions, however, the almost comical nature of Lenz’s repeated attempts to harm himself seem to be categorized, additionally, by a wild desperation and haphazardness. Aside from Werther’s suicide, Lenz also goes much further in his attempts at self-harm, as, for example, when he hurls himself from an upstairs window.
point of orientation in an otherwise empty external environment, acting much like a figure in a landscape painting. Nature is therefore imbued with positive aspects, both externally as well as internally, as it resounds in Lenz’s mind, for example, during Lenz’s initial excursion with Oberlin. An omniscient narrator takes over, describing a setting in which sunlight takes precedence over the clouds: “Gewaltige Lichtmassen, die manchmal aus den Tälern, wie ein goldner Strom schwollen, dann wieder Gewölk, das an dem höchsten Gipfel lag, und dann langsam den Wald herab in das Tal klomm, oder in den Sonnenblitzen sich wie ein fliegendes silbernes Gespenst herabsenkte und hob” (139-140). The light inherent in this portrayal is then reflected in Lenz’s psychological state: “Es wirkte alles wohltätig und beruhigend auf ihn, er musste Oberlin oft in die Augen sehen, und die mächtige Ruhe, die uns über der ruhenden Natur, im tiefen Wald, in mondhellern schnelzenden Sommernächten überfällt, schien ihm noch näher, in diesem ruhigen Auge, diesem ehrwürdigen Gesicht” (140). The passage points to a kind of network of interconnectivity, a linking up of affects – albeit mediated through the gaze of another. Yet this is, for Lenz, the crucial function of the social: it saves him from the real danger of losing himself, the sense of utter crisis that befalls him once he steps outside of such a social context.

Again, the devastation of a solitary experience in nature befalls Lenz when Oberlin leaves Waldbach in order to accompany Kaufmann (another historic personality, an old friend of J. M. R. Lenz) to Switzerland. As Lenz travels with Oberlin as far as the mountains, the weather is described as mild. Yet as the two part – as Lenz “allein zurück[geht],” the landscape becomes eerie and haunting, “nichts als gewaltige Linien und weiter hinaus die weite rauchende Ebne, in der Luft ein gewaltiges Wehen, nirgends eine Spur von Menschen” (147) – a scene that is preternaturally reminiscent of the wild nature in Caspar David Friedrich’s Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer (1818), a painting that is often considered a masterpiece of Romanticism. Combined with the
sensations it evokes in Lenz, as “es verschmolz ihm Alles in eine Linie...es war ihm als läge er an
einem unendlichen Meer, das leise auf- und abwogte” (147), these images – the ocean as limitless,
forever undulating, the melting-down of all of nature into an indeterminate line, evocative of both
terror and awe, like the earlier description of “violent masses of light” – evoke tropes of the
Romantic sublime, an experience that is beyond measurement or comprehension. As in the opening
nature scene, nature is free to become as gigantic or as minute as Lenz’s mind deems it. He wonders
on, as if transfixed or melancholically passive, without following a path. Though not demarcated
by the same kind of disorientation in time and space as in the beginning, Lenz still seems far away
from himself, completely apathetic as to where he goes and what happens to him.

Lenz’s experiences not only of space but of his whole psychic condition are defined by an
intense sense of isolation and a concurrent fear of that isolation. Lenz is often described as being
Kindergesicht” (140)). This quality is frequently exemplified by an intense fear of the dark; it is
also echoed in the sensation of a “heimliches Weihnachtsgefühl” and the visions of his mother
(141). After the initial consolation provided by entering the rectory, meeting Oberlin, his wife, and
his children – that is, the comfort found in domesticity in a social setting – Lenz is led to spend the
night in a room in the school adjacent the rectory. On his own, Lenz sees “eine weite Stube, leer”
(139) – once again, a misleading description of the space because the room is not empty; rather,
there is a bed, a table, and the lamp that Lenz has brought with him. The vision of the empty room
is thus a phenomenological one, and it is a projection of that which Lenz feels about himself: “es
wurde ihm leer, wieder wie auf dem Berg” (139).

473 It is, further, symptomatic of Lenz’s unique
condition: in the darkness, once the light is turned off, “die Finsternis [verschlingt] alles,” and

473 As Dedner notes in his commentary on the novella, “Eine häufig genannte Erfahrung bei melancholischer
Erkrankung ist eine mit ‘Gleichgültigkeit’ verbundene und zum Selbstmord führende ‘schreckliche Leere’” (129).
Lenz is seized by “eine unnennbare Angst” (139) – that is, the room becomes empty (and Lenz afraid) because Lenz is only able to deem that real, or existent, which he can see. As an iteration of Lenz’ “namenlose Angst” on the cliff during his trip to the village, there is also a breakdown in the distinction between outdoors and indoors (138). And this time Lenz is unable to fill the void with anything, even as he jumps up and runs through the room, down the stairs, to the front of the house. Without light, without visible objects or external criteria of any kind to provide a relation to normality, or to prove real themselves, without the perspective of another person to guide him, Lenz appears to himself as a dream, and he searches for something to grasp onto, a comprehensible, certain thought to keep him grounded to reality. Ideas flit by; he feels the urge to repeat a prayer: “es war ihm als müsse er immer ‘Vater unser’ sagen” (139)⁴⁷⁴ – yet all is in vain; he cannot find himself, and the episode ends in an inconclusive suicide attempt, in which Lenz plunges himself into the fountain.

Linguistically, this episode is narrated in one incredibly long, run-on sentence, in which Büchner combines at least twenty different possible stand-alone sentences without the use of conjunctions in a collapse of syntactical distinctions; it is an example of extreme parataxis:

Er ging hinauf, es war kalt oben, eine weite Stube, leer, ein hohes Bett im Hintergrund, er stellte das Licht auf den Tisch, und ging auf und ab, er besann sich wieder auf den Tag, wie er hergekommen, wo er war, das Zimmer im Pfarrhaus mit seinen Lichtern und lieben Gesichtern, es war ihm wie ein Schatten, ein Traum, und es wurde ihm leer, wieder wie auf dem Berg, aber er konnte es mit nichts mehr ausfüllen, das Licht war erloschen, die Finsternis verschlang alles; eine unnennbare Angst erfasste ihn, er sprang auf, er lief durchs

Zimmer, die Treppe hinunter, vor’s Haus: aber umsonst, Alles finster, nichts, er war sich selbst ein Traum, einzelne Gedanken huschten auf, er hielt sie fest, es war ihm als müsse er immer ‘Vater unser’ sagen; er konnte sich nicht mehr finden, ein dunkler Instinkt trieb ihn, sich zu retten, er stieß an die Steine, er riss sich mit den Nägeln, der Schmerz fing an, ihm das Bewusstsein wiederzugeben, er stürzte sich in den Brunnstein, aber das Wasser war nicht tief, er patschte darin. (139)

The result is a passage that bears a breathlessness of pace similar to the uncontrollable beating of heart flooded with fear. It is an extreme example of narrative acceleration or suddenness; the force of the poetic offers no pause for meditation, instead taking on a destabilizing intensity. The effect on the reader is one of dizziness: we are sucked into the maelstrom of the narrative, the vortex of Lenz’s perception, and the objectively distinct blurs into an opaque continuum. An extreme focus on the subjective dimension is also created via the use of simile (“es wurde ihm leer . . . wie auf dem Berg”) and metaphor (“er war sich selbst ein Traum”). The repetition of the words “nichts” and “alles” serve further to pull the reader into Lenz’s dichotomized style of thinking. Lenz’s actions (er ging, er besann sich, er sprang auf, er lief, etc.) are seemlessly listed alongside those of other, non-human actors (das Licht war…, die Finsternis verschlang…, eine Angst erfasste…, ein dunkler Instinkt trieb…). Finally, the familiar “als” plus subjunctive formula is used (“es war ihm als müsse er immer ‘Vater unser’ sagen”). In this case, the lack of a comma before “als” serves the dual purpose of rushed pacing or narrative suddenness and free indirect speech; as per Woods’ definition, the narrative “floats away” from Büchner – or an omniscient narrator, for that matter – and “bends around” Lenz.475 Indeed, to cite Woods once more, this episode brings us very “close

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475 See above.
to stream of consciousness.” This point is particularly significant, as it contains a major argument for Lenz’s modernism.

The fear that Lenz experiences is indescribable, unnamable, because it is one that “Menschen nicht ertragen können” (138) – that is, that Lenz is losing his mind (or, even more crucially, losing himself). A chief element of that incipient madness is the inability to tell the difference between dream and reality, as underscored by the line “er war sich selbst ein Traum” (139). This is, perhaps, the most terrifying feeling possible that the text alludes to. We might begin to approach it by placing ourselves in sleep: we dream, and sometimes we are cognizant of the fact that we are dreaming; other times we are not. Often, when we experience a nightmare, one that is unbearable, there comes a point when some shadowy part of our brain reminds us that we are allowed to wake up whenever we choose. If we die in a dream, we do not die in reality, and thus the prospect of death within a dream is never as frightening as an actual life-or-death scenario. What Lenz experiences, however, goes beyond even the aspect of dreaming: while he does not know what is real (or whether it is a dream), he does not even know whether he exists in this moment. It is, quite literally, a fear that most humans would not be able to endure – or one that a normal brain would instinctively shut down out of self-preservation. Namelesness is, moreover, one way in which the text discusses mental illness, confronts it head-on, yet without, of course, labelling it. The near-constant panic and dread that Lenz feels is always “namenlos[]” (138), “unnennbar[]” (139), unspeakable, both because it is beyond the realm of ordinary fears (i.e., knowing whether one exists or not), and because it is not something that someone who has not experienced the illness would ever be able to conceive of. There is, furthermore, literally no name

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476 Woods, 10.
477 This is comparable to the instances of Seelenlähmung in Anton Reiser, although these occur not due to fear, but rather to shame.
for “schizophrenia,” nor for the aspects of dissociative disorder (depersonalization, derealization) displayed by Lenz at the time when Büchner is writing the novella (not to mention the fact that the novella takes place several decades before the time in which it was written) – nor is the fictionalized Lenz in any position to articulate them. The knowledge of mental illness that most people might possess would include a crass, simplistic understanding of “madness” or what it means to be “mad”478 – which does nothing to elicit sympathy for the sufferer (again, in part because it is something that humans cannot or do not want to endure). Thus come Oberlin’s later, misguided attempts at therapy in his capacity as a Christian Seelensorger; thus his household’s horror at Lenz’s actions; and thus, all we have is, as Büchner gives us, a description of what it is like for Lenz.

The war between Lenz and the world is always reiterated by a war within Lenz himself – psyche fighting psyche, “als sei er doppelt und der eine Teil sucht[ ] den andern zu retten” (156). Although the text never states this point outright, Lenz appears, until the final breakdown, to be mostly aware of the agonizing fact that his mind is being split apart (indeed, Lenz’s inability to make himself un-aware of what is happening factors as a major source in his trauma): “sehn Sie,” he remarks to Oberlin, “wenn ich nur unterscheiden könnte, ob ich träume oder wache” (153). Repeatedly, Lenz tries to force an awareness of this differentiation by means of self-harm. In the episode that takes place in the school room, what is described as a “dark instinct” drives him to save himself: “er stieß an die Steine, er riß sich mit den Nägeln, der Schmerz fing an, ihm das Bewusstsein wiederzugeben…” (139). In other words, it is only through physical pain that Lenz is able to prove his own waking consciousness – to assure himself that this moment is not a dream.

478 Additionally, the psychopathologies of the Sturm und Drang era – such as Hypochondrie and Schwärmerei – are fraught with negative connotations.
is in fact real. Like the earlier instance in which the landscape effectually “tears him apart,” physical pain serves at least in part as a moment of catharsis.

Similar to Lenz’s experience alone in the dark room, Lenz is comfortable in nature with Oberlin “nur so lange das Licht im Tale [liegt]” (140). As the sun sets, things again appear abhorrent, threatening, deceptive, and dream-like, and Lenz is once more plagued by a childlike fear of the dark. The fear of darkness can also be explained by the fact that visibility – or perception and stimulus more generally, that which makes the blood flow – in a sense constitutes reality for Lenz. Time and again, and especially in the previously cited episode as well as the one cited below, it seems as if he cannot believe in the reality of that which he cannot see:

…er hätte der Sonne nachlaufen mögen; wie die Gegenstände nach und nach schattiger wurden, kam ihm alles so traumartig, so zuwider vor, es kam ihm die Angst an wie Kinder, die im Dunkeln schlafen; es war ihm als sei er blind; jetzt wuchs sie, der Alp des Wahnsinns setzte sich zu seinen Füßen, der rettungslose Gedanke, als sei alles nur Traum, öffnete sich vor ihm, er klammerte sich an alle Gegenstände, Gestalten zogen rasch an ihm vorbei, er drängte sich an sie, es waren Schatten, das Leben wich ihm aus und seine Glieder waren ganz starr. Er sprach, er sang, er rezitierte Stellen aus Shakespeare, er griff nach Allem, was sein Blut hatte sonst rascher fließen machen, er versucht Alles, aber kalt, kalt. (140)

Similar to the episode in the dark room, the absence of visual information causes a panic which Lenz tries to stave off, to restore himself to sanity, by focusing on acoustic or tactile stimuli (such as prayers or other vocal recitation, music, objects he can touch, cold water, etc.). Since these measures do not work, though, they feel like diversionary tactics, and the visual seems to remain the ultimate measure of “reality,” thereby reinforcing eighteenth-century hierarchies of perception.
Once more, too, Büchner uses a number of linguistic and narrative elements to create an impression of subjectivity and to place the reader in the mind of Lenz. The subjunctive mode is employed repeatedly in this passage, with “es war ihm als sei er blind” reinforcing the sense that what is real is only that which Lenz can perceive. Again, narrative suddenness and non-mediation run through this scene: the entire episode takes place in two sentences, with the myriad clauses separated, for the most part, only by the use of commas. This suddenness again results in the creation of a poetic force that pulls the reader into Lenz’s mindset. Subjectivity is also created via the repetition of “so” and the poetic use of madness personified, along with metaphor and simile. Finally, there are odd notes of subjectivity: there is the wish to chase after the sun, somewhat akin to Lenz’s initial desire to walk on his head; and the passage ends on a strange note of tactility and a signifier of death: “aber kalt, kalt.” Furthermore, Büchner has given a thorough portrayal of the inner processes motivating such external behavior. The episode ends, like the previous one, with Lenz throwing himself into the fountain, but we now understand why: “die grüle Wirkung des Wassers machte ihm besser” (140). In other words, Lenz once again reaches for a physical sensation of adrenaline or stimulation to divert his attention with a different sensory stimulus in order to dampen his incipient madness, and to prove to himself that he is alive.

*The Melancholic’s Life and Death of Speech*

Although not alluded to in the novella, the text’s *Vorgeschichte* begins with a crisis, namely that the historical J. M. R. Lenz has been kicked out of Weimar and set adrift; moreover, he has stopped writing. In fact, Lenz does not even want to be associated with his literary work. As he meets Oberlin for the first time, the pastor asks if he hasn’t seen Lenz’s name in print: “Habe ich nicht einige Dramen gelesen, die einem Herrn dieses Names zugeschrieben werden?” – to which Lenz
responds, “Ja, aber belieben Sie mich nicht darnach zu beurteilen” (138). Indeed, aside from this episode and the Kunstgespräch, the text makes no mention of Lenz’s former occupation as a writer. In this way, however, Büchner “clarifies that madness, because it is alienated from reality, involves an alienation from the preconditions of artistic activity.”

The exceptions (i.e., the two allusions to Lenz as a writer) then point to a state of mind that is now foreign to Lenz; they serve to underscore his estrangement from literary endeavors and lack of creativity. The elements of depression inherent in Lenz’s illness would also highlight a state of anhedonia and listlessness; the depressive is in no condition to create art because the world has ceased to hold meaning or to generate emotion for him or her.

While the text largely highlights Lenz’s lack of speech and language – for the vast majority of the narrative, he utters only a few sentences at a time, and these come not infrequently in the form of only partially coherent utterances delivered in a state of semi-delirium – there are three distinct instances which serve as counterexamples to this rule. The first of these occurs at the beginning of the novella, when Lenz is welcomed into Oberlin’s home and meets his wife and children. While Lenz initially “sucht[] nach Wortern und erzählt[] rasch, aber auf Folter” (138), gradually he becomes calm, and here, in the company of others, in a setting replete with the comfort of domesticity, Lenz begins to feel “gleich zu Haus” (139), and his “lebendiges Erzählen” comes to life (139). He regales his audience with stories of his native country: “er zeichnete allerhand Trachten, man drängte sich teilnehmend um ihn…” (139). Yet the episode is fleeting; Lenz again becomes “ruhig,” thinking of old figures and forgotten faces of the past: “er war weg, weit weg” (139).

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480 See Holub, 103.
Similarly, the scene in which Lenz expresses a desire to preach presents another fleeting, idyllic moment in which language, nature, and Lenz’s inner state of being all line up. After telling Oberlin of his wish, and being encouraged by him, Lenz returns contentedly to his room, where he contemplates a Bible passage to work with, and he finally experiences a sequence of nights that are calm. As the appointed Sunday morning arrives, the landscape is ceremoniously greeted with “Tauwetter” (141): “Ein Sonnenblick lag manchmal über dem Tal, die laue Luft regte sich langsam, die Landschaft schwamm im Duft, fernes Geläute, es war als löste sich alles in eine harmonische Welle auf” (142). Language functions in this instance not only because it takes place in a social atmosphere, but because Lenz is able to put together a coherent narrative – one that represents a long wished-for unity with God, which acts, at least in part, and as embodied by Oberlin, as Lenz’s anchor to the “real” world. The “süße[,] Gefühl unendlichen Wohls” is, however, a completely chimeric snapshot in time, which quickly disappears, and Lenz once again immediately feels “[d]as Drängen in ihm” (142), another odd note of subjectivity that may or may not find a correlation in Lenz’s “unbeschreibliche Gefühl des Missbehagens” (164).

The last example, then – that of the Kunstgespräch – represents the one real instance of sustained speech by Lenz that is not dampened by a quick return to silence; it is “an island of sanity in a sea of madness.”\textsuperscript{481} Placed roughly at the center of the story, an oasis of clarity opens up: Lenz is described as being “in guter Stimmung” and “auf seinem Gebiete” (144). Thematically, it is the only time that Lenz takes up matters pertaining to his former metier, the only time in which he takes the artistic part of his identity back into his possession, even going so far as to refer to his own dramas – \textit{Der Hofmeister} and \textit{Die Soldaten} – as examples of the aesthetic philosophy he is

trying to expound. It is a description of Lenz at his best, that which he once was (writer/creator) and could, potentially, become once again.

In the ensuing debate on aesthetics and literature between Lenz, Oberlin, and Kaufmann, Lenz professes his views on the relationship between art and nature, declaring a decidedly anti-idealistic point of view: the *Kunstgespräch* “has customarily been read as one of the earliest and strongest programs for realism in art and literature.”\(^{482}\) Virtually all tenets of realism are called for: “the plea for authenticity in art, the call for more careful attention to detail, and the suggestion that formerly excluded social groups should become artistically preferred subjects…”\(^{483}\) In other words, Lenz professes a desire to turn everyday life into an artistic expression. Articulating his philosophy of literature with coherence and cohesiveness, Lenz dominates the conversation:

Er sagte: Der liebe Gott hat die Welt wohl gemacht wie sie sein soll, und wir können nicht was Besseres klecksen, unser einziges Bestreben soll sein, ihm ein wenig nachzuschaffen. Ich verlange in allem Leben, Möglichkeit des Daseins, und dann ist’s gut; wir haben dann nicht zu fragen, ob es schön, ob es häßlich ist, das Gefühl, das Was geschaffen sei, Leben habe, stehe über diesen Beiden, und sei das einzige Kriterium in Kunstsachen. (144)

This citation above represents only a small part of Lenz’s discourse, which actually continues on for another two pages. The discussion scene ends with the line “Er hatte sich ganz vergessen” (146), but this seems to speak *not* to the fact that everything Lenz has just said is, like the other two examples, something of a chimera, but rather that he has managed to place himself into another time, a past life, when Lenz was, for lack of a better word, “saner,” when he was able to use language to express himself with clarity and meaning. Indeed, the ultimate tragedy of the *Gespräch* lies in the fact that it is completely undermined by the frame story of *Lenz*, as he is unable to

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\(^{482}\) Holub, 103.
\(^{483}\) Ibid., 104.
synthesize the real world into his experience. In other words, Lenz’s subsequent loss of reality is all the more distressing given his love of realist aesthetics.

Stop Making Sense: Fall to Apostasy

As Lenz’s psychic condition worsens, his speech begins to break down, initiating a semantic and semiotic crisis that goes much deeper than any of the previous texts under discussion. While the novella’s depiction of Lenz’s Krankheitsverlauf has the general trajectory of a downward spiral, there are earlier moments in the narrative, as discussed above, in which the illness seems to dampen, Lenz appearing livelier and healthier. The latter half of the text, however, reveals a steady decline in his condition. The collapse of Lenz’s ability to communicate occurs in tandem with several other events. The precipitating circumstance is Oberlin’s departure to Switzerland; as recounted above, Lenz accompanies him as far as the mountains, and then returns alone. Even though Oberlin returns – in fact, breaks off his trip early in order to come back to Waldbach – the simple line “Er [Lenz] ging allein zurück” (147) is significant because it bespeaks the fact that from this point on, Lenz is, in fact, more or less entirely on his own. Oberlin’s further attempts to restore him to sanity are for naught, because they are misdirected. Whereas the earlier “therapies” encouraged by Oberlin are more akin to moral management, to a Tätigkeitkur (e.g., going riding in nature, Lenz’s production of visual artwork, the preaching episode, and the accompaniment of Oberlin during his visits to the sick and ailing residents of Steintal),484 and even to talk therapy, the pastor now straightforwardly admonishes Lenz to turn to God and “sich in den Wunsch seines

Vaters zu fügen, seinem Berufe gemäß zu leben, heimzukehren. Er sagte ihm: Ehre Vater und Mutter u. dgl. m.” (151). This is, moreover, the text’s implicit representation of the contemporary debate between the two opposing camps in psychiatry at this time, the Psychiker and the Somatiker. The position of the Psychiker, embodied here by Oberlin, held the conservative point of view that mental illness was expressly caused by immoral behavior and a lack of faith in God and religion. Even though the Oberlin of Lenz does not seem particularly concerned with immorality – or is at least ready and willing to forgive it, as in the scene where he refuses Lenz’s request to beat him with sticks – the Oberlin of Büchner’s source material still cites Lenz’s illness as “die Folge der Prinzipien die so manche heutige Modebücher einflößen, die Folgen seines Ungehorsams gegen seinen Vater, seiner herumschweifenden Lebensart, seiner unzweckmäßigen Beschäftigungen, [und] seines häufigen Umgangs mit Frauenzimmern…”485 Nor is Oberlin – in the story and in the source material – in any way representative of the opposing position of the Somatiker, who believed that mental illness was purely the result of physiological abberancies.486

The reproach by Oberlin leaves Lenz visibly affected: “[er] geriet in heftige Unruhe; er stieß tiefe Seufzer aus, Tränen drangen ihm aus den Augen, er spach abgebrochen” (151). The novella is constructed in a way that highlights the failure of the Psychiker approach, as Lenz does make an earnest attempt to atone for his sins and find peace in religion, but these endeavors fail to remedy him – much to Lenz’s anguish. Further, the narrative strategies employed by Büchner that place the reader in the mind of Lenz work to elicit sympathy for the protagonist, elucidating the notion that this is not a story about moral blame. As the scholar Michael Hamburger writes in the

485 In Pörnbacher, Schaub, Simm, and Ziegler, 528.
486 See Kubik, 123; and Seling-Dietz, 230-234.
introduction to his English translation of *Lenz*, “Büchner was a brilliant scientist; but his interest in Lenz was not so much scientific as sympathetic.”

At this stage in the narrative, Lenz is on the verge of falling into atheism. On his way back to Waldbach, while, once more, not following any specific direction, Lenz ends up at an inhabited hut on a slope toward Steintal. The scene he meets here is nothing if not dreamlike, and it will determine the course of events that bring about Lenz’s final mental dissolution: the pale face of a sick girl, later fixed in convulsions; an old woman sitting in the dark, singing ceaselessly from a hymnal; and, finally, the appearance of a man said to be a saint and healer, who could see water under the earth and conjure ghosts. No one knew from where he came, but “man wallfahre zu ihm” (148). Although Lenz returns to the parsonage, the night spent in the hut leaves a powerful, sinister impression on him, and he cannot calm himself down: “Die Welt war ihm helle gewesen, und an sich ein Regen und Wimmeln nach einem Abgrund, zu dem ihn eine unerbitterliche Gewalt hineinriß. [… ] Er aß wenig; halbe Nächte im Gebet und fieberhaften Träumen” (149). Speaking to Madame Oberlin, he expresses the familiar melancholic physical sensations of tightness and confinement: “Jetzt ist es mir so eng, so eng, sehn Sie, es ist mir manchmal, als stieß’ ich mit den Händen an den Himmel; o ich ersticke!” (150). The rest of his conversations with her are uttered in “meist nur abgebrochenen Sätzen” (150). When he hears of the child’s death in Fouday, “er fasst[ ] es auf, wie eine fixe Idee” (150) – this being, of course, the central motif of all descriptions of mental illness at this point in time. It is not, however, just the child that becomes an obsession: she melds together in Lenz’s mind with his ex-lover, Friederike, and with his mother, all of whom Lenz believes he has murdered at this point in the story. Praying to God to give him a sign with which to revive the

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child, he returns to Fouday and commands her to rise and walk – before he collapses, “halb wahnsinnig nieder” (151).

The following scene depicts Lenz’s apostasy in the mountains. The war is no longer with the world, or with himself, but an all-out battle with God:

In seiner Brust war ein Triumph-Gesang der Hölle. Der Wind klang wie ein Titanenlied, es war ihm, als könne er eine ungeheure Faust hinauf in den Himmel ballen und Gott herbei reißen und zwischen seinen Wolken schleifen; als könnte er die Welt mit den Zähnen zermalmen und sie dem Schöpfer in’s Gesicht speien; er schwur, er lästerte. So kam er auf die Höhe des Gebirgs…und der Himmel war ein dummes blaues Aug, und der Mond stand ganz lächerlich drin, einfältig, Lenz mußte laut lachen, und mit dem Lachen griff der Atheismus in ihn und faßte ihn ganz sicher und ruhig und fest. (151)

Throughout the novella, Lenz has been trying to find where to locate God and religion in his experience. For the most part, that has been in Oberlin but also, at times, in prayer, in reading the Bible, in preaching, and in the ceremony itself. Before his attempt to restore the child to life, Lenz fasts, paints his face with ashes, and dons an old sack; the whole episode is nothing if not reminiscent of old cases of religious madness and melancholy, in which the patient purports to be God, Christ, or John the Baptist. Now, then, Lenz too would claim to be God, or at least to inhabit him for a moment to correct what he sees as this most terrible mistake (i.e., the child’s death). It is somewhat similar to the earlier, opening nature scene, when Lenz creates the world through his own movement in it. Yet then as now, the attempt is in vain. Lenz cannot create the world; he can only remain, trapped, in his mind’s experience of it, as that experience leaves things more and more painfully at odds with the way things “ought” to be.

488 Especially as Lenz utters in his conversation with Oberlin even after this event: “Nur in Ihnen ist der Weg zu Gott” (151).
The renunciation of faith leaves Lenz more alone, more desperate, and more unhinged than ever before. Concurrently with his fall into atheism, things stop making sense. Lenz develops a kind of *Schuldwahn*, and with it, a *Strafwahn*: awash in feelings of guilt for both the enormity of his sin against the Holy Ghost and his belief that he has murdered those he loves, Lenz refers to himself as “abgefallen, verdammt in Ewigkeit, ich bin der ewige Jude” (152). He requests that Oberlin beat him with rods. Eventually, he begins to lose the power of speech and language altogether. Oberlin awakes in the night to find him shouting the name “Friederike” in the yard, and Lenz once more throws himself into the fountain. Afterwards, with the pastor, Lenz falls into a state of complete ennui: “Ja Herr Pfarrer, sehen Sie, die Langeweile! Die Langeweile! o! so langweilig, ich weiß gar nicht mehr, was ich sagen soll… die Meisten beten aus Langeweile; die Andern verlieben sich aus Langeweile . . und ich gar nichts, gar nichts, ich mag mich nicht einmal umbringen: es ist zu langweilig” (153). The next afternoon Oberlin finds that Lenz has thrown himself from the window but told no one. Finally, in a conversation that makes little sense, Lenz tells Oberlin that the lady he had previously referred to (presumably Friederike, but possibly someone else) is dead, to which Oberlin asks him how he knows this. In a total semiotic breakdown, Lenz responds, “Hieroglyphen, Hieroglyphen . . ja gestorben – Hieroglyphen. Es war dann nichts weiter aus ihm zu bringen” (154). The loss of language, in other words, is tantamount to a loss of meaning, a loss of feeling, that is compounded by Lenz’s loss of faith in God. He continues to experience “Augenblicken der fürchterlichsten Angst,” but these are accompanied by those of “der dumpfen an’s Nichtsein” (156): “er hatte keinen Haß, keine Liebe, keine Hoffnung . . . Er hatte Nichts” (155). Lenz sees little reason for his life to continue on, and yet, as cited above,

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489 In a further commentary on Lenz’s lack of speech, Büchner writes, “Im Gespräch stockte er oft, eine unbeschreibliche Angst befiel ihn, er hatte das Ende seines Satzes verloren; dann meinte er, er müsse das zuletzt gesprochene Wort behalten und immer sprechen, nur mit großer Anstrengung unterdrückte er diese Gelüste” (155).
he finds the idea of killing himself “too boring.” Furthermore, Lenz discerns in death no consolation (“für ihn war ja keine Ruhe und Hoffnung im Tod” (155)) – for he is already in a state akin to a living death. The loss of language and the ability to experience emotion, though unspeakably painful for anyone, is perhaps the worst fate imaginable for a *Sturm und Drang* writer.490

**The Nihilistic Un-world**

It is not just language and the connection to God that Lenz loses; it is, rather, any sense of connection to the existing world. In his 1882 *Études sur les maladies cérébrales et mentales*, the French psychiatrist Jules Cotard develops the idea of a melancholic *Verneinungswahn*, a radical form of nihilism that goes hand-in-hand with the atheism and subsequent pathological guilt that Lenz experiences toward the end of the novella.491 In severe depressive states that transgress into the psychotic, the melancholic may experience strangely idiosyncratic negations directed toward the external world and/or the self. Melancholics perceive in this “verneinenden Grundhaltung”492 parts of the environment, certain people, or in the most extreme cases of all-encompassing nihilism, all reality and themselves as nonexistent: “Wenn sich der Wahn auf die Außenwelt erstreckt, wähnen die Patienten, sie hätten keinen Familie, keine Heimat mehr, Paris sei zerstört, die Welt existiere nicht mehr […] Bei einigen ist die Verneinung allumfassend, nichts existiert

490 Further, it may be a symptom of eighteenth-century empiricism/sensualism gone wrong. In the sense of Lockean epistemology, one can experience the world purely through the senses; only that which is perceivable is permissible. Lenz’s problem takes this issue to the extreme: he questions not only a priori knowledge, but everything that is not preceptory/sensory knowledge altogether (which is tantamount to a kind of hyper-rationalism). This is part of how and why Büchner frames Lenz as coming from another time period – that is, the late Enlightenment – as there is a strong connection here to late-eighteenth-century discourses of perception, cognition, and psychology.


492 Ibid., 73.
mehr für sie.” This would seem to echo that which Lenz feels toward the end of the novella, when Büchner writes, “die Welt, die [Lenz] hätte nutzen wollen, hatte einen ungeheuren Riß…Er hatte Nichts” (155). Apart from denying the reality of the environment, the delusion can take two forms: that the melancholic is unable to die, condemned to an eternal life of suffering; or that she has already died and is damned to live forever in this undead form, a “Scheinexistenz als lebendiger Toter, als seelenloser Automat.” Aside from being highly reminiscent of the marionette line in Werther, this description clearly mirrors that which Büchner expresses in his letter of March 9-12, 1834, when he describes himself as “ein Automat; die Seele ist mir genommen.” While these similarities would, on the one hand, imply that this sensation is something of a universal feeling, in cases of nihilism it highlights aspects of depersonalization – those that Lenz has been experiencing more and more throughout the novella.

The notion of being unable to die and condemned to an eternal life of suffering is often connected to the kind of delusions of guilt that Lenz also undergoes toward the end of the text. The Angstmelancholiker under Jules Cotard identify themselves with Adam, with the Antichrist, and with the eternal Jew; they believe that God has cursed them forever, and they are already suffering due to their profligate lives, a neverending consequence of “Lügen, Heuchelei und Missetaten.” Lenz, too, aside from referring to himself as “der ewige Jude” (152), believes himself to be “das ewig Verdammte, der Satan” (156). However, these sins the patients ascribe to

[Cotard in Starobinski, 63.]
[Cotard in Starobinski, 64-65.]
[In Pörnbacher, Schaub, Simm, and Ziegler, 289.]

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themselves are either grotesquely incongruent with minor infractions, or they are wholly a product of fantasy. In Lenz, they are configured somewhere between the two, since he has disobeyed his parents and, in renouncing God, committed a sin. But the later, more extravagant self-recriminations of having killed his mother, his ex-lover Friederike, and Oberlin’s pregnant wife have absolutely no basis in reality.

In an earlier section, I discussed the issue of Lenz’s inability to tell the difference between dreaming and waking reality. This is a feature of his illness that continues to plague him throughout the entire text, but it becomes the most pronounced toward the end, when it takes on two connected attributes: in the first case, perfectly in line with Cotard’s Verneinungswahn, Lenz doubts the existence of the world around him. Then, the ensuing Leere – whether because or in spite of the fact that Lenz cannot stand it – is filled with the unreal. In the worst stages of the illness, in which Lenz experiences “[a]uch bei Tage diese Zufälle, sie waren dann noch schrecklicher; denn sonst hatte ihn die Helle davor bewahrt” (155), the entire world becomes a product of pure mental creation and fantasy, which Lenz must painfully come to terms with on his own, in total isolation: “Es war ihm dann, als existiere er allein, als bestünde die Welt nur in seiner Einbildung, als sei nichts, als er” (156). It is an end state of radical subjectivity (once again deploying the familiar “als + subjunctive” grammatic formula), admitting of only a solipsistic, phenomenal ontology. In other words, all that exists are Lenz’s sensations of (non-)existence. Moreover, this loss of reality is what the entire subjectivist structure of the novella has been setting us up for, as we are pulled into Lenz’s world and experience it with him, in a sense. In this way, the irruption of modernity into the text is much more personalized and individualized.

The Leere that Lenz feels in the absence of a concrete world is the same sensation that he has felt during the majority of his previous episodes, that has been the root cause of the fear he
experiences during them, while continually and desperately trying to fill it with something.\textsuperscript{498} That emptiness now becomes permeated with the nonreal, the nonexistent. Two examples near the end of the text point to the fact that Lenz experiences auditory (if not also visual) hallucinations. Lenz has already reached a point at which he finds it “unheimlich, jetzt allein im Hause zu bleiben” (147), and he is expressly afraid of himself when he is alone.\textsuperscript{499} Now, when on his own, it is “ihm so entsetzlich einsam, dass er beständig laut mit sich redet[, [ruft], und dann erschrak er wieder und es war ihm, als hätte eine fremde Stimme mit ihm gesprochen” (155). While the notion of “hearing voices” is certainly part of contemporary diagnoses of schizophrenia, the more important aspect here, in keeping with my original thesis, is that this is what the end state of the illness is like for Lenz; this is his own, subjective experience of it. Similarly, the question he raises to Oberlin during their last conversation reads: “Hören Sie denn nichts, hören Sie denn nicht die entsetzliche Stimme, die um den ganzen Horizont schreit, und die man gewöhnlich die Stille heißt, seit ich in dem stillen Tal bin, hör’ ich’s immer, es läßt mich nicht schlafen” (157). Although the citation is somewhat evocative of tropes of the clarity inherent in madness – the blind man who can “see” the truth – for Lenz, the phenomenal sensation of a screaming, screeching silence is incredibly uncomfortable and fraught with pain. These hallucinations, the ones that Lenz has been fighting since the text’s opening, have finally breached “die Kluft unrettbaren Wahnsinns, eines Wahnsinns durch die Ewigkeit” (156) – one that is seemingly limitless because there is no sense of reality anymore. This is the point of no return; it is, ultimately, where Lenz’s madness goes beyond that

\textsuperscript{498} The aforementioned line, “die Welt, die [Lenz] hätte nutzen wollen, hatte einen ungeheuern Riß,” continues: “er hatte keinen Hass, keine Liebe, keine Hoffnung, eine schreckliche Leere und doch eine folternde Unruhe, sie auszufüllen” (155), indicating a dynamic movement between emptiness and the need to fill it; in other words, it shows Lenz’s illness as characterized by constant restlessness.

\textsuperscript{499} “Auch fürchtete er sich vor sich selbst in der Einsamkeit” (148).
of the other “melancholy boys” examined in this dissertation, even those who murder, those who commit suicide.

The concluding statement of Lenz’s confusion and disorientation, then, is neither spatial, nor linguistic, nor religious; rather, the central dilemma illustrated by the novella’s dénouement is a phenomenological and an ontological one, inherently bound to the nihilism outlined above. In assigning a something-ness to nothingness, while simultaneously denying the something-ness of everything, the end manifestation of Lenz’s madness is in taking himself not to exist, while believing that non-existent things have an existence. In other words, just as silence becomes a sound, a something, so too is the world negated, becoming a nothing: nothing exists, while all that exists is nothingness. This is the unsettling terrain of the nihilistic un-world, there where Lenz ends up, a surreal no man’s land distressingly illustrated by the final lines of the text, in which Lenz appears as if he has been replaced by an automaton: “Er schien ganz vernünftig, sprach mit den Leuten; er tat Alles wie es die Andern taten, es war aber eine entsetzliche Leere in ihm, er fühlte keine Angst mehr, kein Verlangen; sein Dasein war ihm eine notwendige Last. – So lebte er hin” (158). Like a mirror image of himself, Lenz is physically present, but there is absolutely no content left in him.

In the end, Lenz is well poised to pose the question of whether post-Werther narratives succeed at depicting individual melancholy, or whether they merely point to the impossibility of such an illustration. The fragmentary nature of the novella – that is, as a posthumously reconstructed fragment – as well as Büchner’s stylistic and structural choices, such as the continual use of the subjunctive mode and the entirely private level on which Lenz experiences his illness, all point to the unrepresentability of melancholy, as well as to the limits of the communicability of mental anguish. At the same time, the use of narrative strategies that support a phenomenological
approach to mental illness, which shows us, starting from the inside, how Lenz feels, sees, and senses reality or unreality around him, renders his character less of a puzzle or an enigma and more of a sympathetic figure. It is also this kind of intense phenomenological idiosyncrasy written into the novella, in both content and form, beginning from Lenz’s wish to walk on his head, that effectively articulates the uniqueness of what the experience of melancholy is like for one individual character. In this way, Büchner paves the way for modernist conceptions of personal expressions of grief, trauma, and mental illness.
CONCLUSION
MENTAL ILLNESS AND SUICIDE IN 2019

Lars von Trier’s 2011 film *Melancholia* presents the highly personal narratives of two sisters in the midst of an apocalyptic scenario, whereby the titular rogue planet is on a collision course with earth.\(^{500}\) While Claire, the ostensibly levelheaded sister, reacts to the existential threat with a number of absurd last-ditch efforts to save herself and her family, her melancholic counterpart Justine, despite her erratic behavior throughout the earlier segments of the movie, is the bearer of equanimity in the face of the oncoming storm. The movie juxtaposes its presentations of Justine between beautifully aestheticized depictions of her naked body luminescent under the larger-than-life nighttime sky, and scenes which render her ashen, immovable, too tired to get out of bed or bathe herself. This fractured representation is evocative of the same shift implied by the title of my project: melancholy is both an aesthetic phenomenon and a pathology, an illness; it is both creative and destructive, beautiful and terrible. In its entirety, the film is a reminder of just how little we still know about mental health and illness, as well as a nod to our ongoing curiosity vis-à-vis characterizations of the mentally ill. The final erasure of the planet earth is, moreover, a literal staging of the nihilistic “loss of world” that occurs in Büchner’s *Lenz*.

This dissertation has sought to participate in this ongoing analysis of mental illness as represented in narratives. Even though the texts under consideration in this project take place over two centuries before the film highlighted here, they contain many of the same themes and images: as noted, a dichotomized portrayal of melancholy is evident in most of my primary sources. The split between beauty and pathology, most clearly initiated in *Werther*, is also found in the

\(^{500}\) *Melancholia*, directed by Lars von Trier (2011; Denmark: Zentropia Entertainments). Netflix.
protagonist Anton Reiser’s experiences of melancholy as the “joy of grief” and as the devastating phenomenon of *Seelenlähmung*, respectively. Combined with my readings of contemporary sources and personal memoirs of mental illness, the diachronic continuities based on the nature of the illness (be it melancholia, depression, bipolarity, etc.) are easily observable. Adding the framework of the literary case study, melancholy emerges from the synthesis of biography with pathology, an approach that produces uniquely individual portrayals of melancholy, ranging once more from the “joy of grief” to psychic trauma, the bodily devastation of murder and suicide, and the quandaries of inexpressibility.

Chapter Conclusions

In Chapter 1, I examined the many depictions of melancholy in *Werther*: the humoral melancholy thematized in the opening letter, with references to the love of solitude and the inability to recover from past mistakes; the poetic melancholy of the early letters, steeped in nature worship and written in the lyrical tone of *Empfindsamkeit*; the lovesickness that is part and parcel of Werther’s relationship with Lotte, reflected in writing that emanates speechlessness; the “Krankheit zum Tode” that may be read as a prototype of modern mental illness, expounded by Werther in the *Selbstmordgespräch*; and, finally, the “pathological melancholy” of the late letters, which is marked most significantly by an emptying-out of the self. I have read Werther as a character who is indulgent of all moods and whims, and whose unwavering allegiance to his own emotions, especially as they dictate a desire for a transgressional fulfillment, ultimately proves fatal. And I have located the discursive significance of *Werther* in its creation of a language for the bleakness of psychic suffering.
In Chapter 2, an exploration of extreme affects in Die Räuber, I picked up from the previous chapter’s problematics of inexpressibility to argue that melancholy is articulated non-verbally in the play. In terms of genre, the drama allows for such non-verbal communication through the affective impact of stage directions: actions, gestures, facial expressions, and responses to and behavior toward other characters, as well as involuntary activity, such as trembling and fainting, all point to melancholy’s unspoken physicality. As a philosophischer Arzt, trained in the reciprocal relationship between body and mind (that is, the principle of “influxus physicus,” as promoted in eighteenth-century medical notions of sympathy), Schiller stages the consequences of the brothers Moor’s melancholy as the result of both their carefully devised physiognomies and psychologies. In terms of affect theory, Karl’s emotions are presented like impulses or reactions that play out initially through the body, in brash and unmediated action, and are then echoed and intensified in adrenalized speech. His embodied emotion acts as a social force, a form of emotional contagion that infects and affects all those around him. As a Sturm und Drang Kraftsmensch, his outward-directed melancholy stands in direct contrast to the internal, private melancholy of Werther. Franz, however, is in a rough approximation more like Werther: as a solitary figure who reflects, churns, cogitates, and calculates before taking action, his emotions occur first in the mind and are only subsequently carried out by the body. Melancholy in Die Räuber is therefore character-driven, by protagonists who are devised as such, inscribed both physically and psychologically with a specific set of melancholic, apocalyptic attributes; and it is embedded at the level of plot, in a play that has acutely dramatic events take place on stage and evinces an atmosphere of restlessness, discomfort, and frustration at every turn.

In Chapter 3, I read the de-somatized melancholy in Anton Reiser as a further departure from the humoral structures still infiltrating eighteenth-century approaches to melancholy, as
Moritz implicates new etiologies in the form of mental imbalance and environmental harm, approaching the damaged psyche as the result of these forces. This is the task of the genre in this case – that is, a “psychological novel,” as opposed to the epistolary novel (Werther) and the drama (Die Räuber). Here, affect theory helps uncover insights with regard to Anton’s melancholy as a social illness. Beginning with Anton’s earliest childhood experiences, Moritz charts the course of individual impressions, perceptions, memories, relationships, and social structures that each contribute to the changing modes of Anton’s melancholy, another multivalent presentation of hypochondria, paranoia, indulgence in victimhood, Seelenlähmung, the joy of grief, and the woes of the imagination. The specific triad of disorders that inform Anton’s childhood – physical illness, scant and perverted social relationships, and a hypertrophied imagination – are reconfigured continually throughout the novel as multipartite explanations for the protagonist’s behavior, resulting in the blurring of cause, sign, and symptom. At the same time, I argued, this opaqueness, as it leads to the withholding and delay of causality, signifies the novel’s modernity in its characterization of mental illness. So, too, does the individual framework that Moritz applies to his protagonist’s melancholy. While major commentaries on the novel read Anton’s text-dependency and theatromania as an ultimately failed move to counteract his leeres ich, I have argued for the positive possibilities and potentialities of media in counteracting issues of self-annihilation, low self-esteem, and emotional withdrawal.

Finally, in Chapter 4, I examined Georg Büchner’s Lenz as it pushes the notion of melancholy’s inarticulability to its very limits in both content and form. In the absence of any strict definition, diagnosis, or description, the novella instead stages the impact of the protagonist’s deteriorating mind as it subjectively configures the world around it. This “melancholic world,” as I have termed it, is a phenomenological account of what it is like, from the inside, for the sufferer
of mental illness. As a subjective configuration, this includes insights that the medical case cannot account for. For Lenz, this world is demarcated by unstable geography, by the presiding emotion of fear, by the blending of waking life and dream, by experiences of radical negation, and, ultimately, by the intrusion of the unreal in the form of auditory, if not also visual, hallucinations. In a way, this loss of reality is what the entire subjectivist structure of the novella is setting us up for: we are pulled into Lenz’s world and experience it with him, in a sense. Narrator and narrated are merged to such an extent that once the narrative stops, so does Lenz. However, even as the narrative techniques employed by Büchner act to position the reader into the mind of the protagonist, they simultaneously place us at a distance: there is an untouchable strangeness inherent in Lenz’s desire to walk on his head, to chase after the sun, to capture it and place it “behind an oven.” In other words, there is an inability to penetrate into Lenz’s consciousness, even on the part of the narrator: as we move closer, the perspective becomes blurry and fragmented, transformed into a kind of subjective and linguistic chaos. This chaos, most explicitly reflected in narrative techniques that approach stream of consciousness, without a doubt contributes to the novella’s striking “modernity.”

Suggestions for future research

As it stands, I have approached this project on the assumption that we may draw firmer conclusions by analyzing protagonists who conform to roughly the same criteria: the objects of study are all young men, even as they stand on opposite lines of a socioeconomic divide. The issue of class and melancholy, especially in Anton Reiser, is a subject that certainly warrants further investigation. While melancholy and its variants – hypochondria, spleen, the vapors, nervous maladies – are often associated solely with the upper classes, Anton Reiser, as well as Moritz’s work in the
Magazin, make a firm case that eighteenth-century mental illness knows no such restrictions. In fact, it could be argued that Anton’s experiences with melancholy are objectively far worse than those suffered by the other protagonists. At the same time, however, the similarity of experience elucidates those elements of the illness that are unshifting over time.

A further subject for exploration is, of course, the topic of women. During the time period under consideration, the label of “melancholic” was almost exclusively restricted to men; its feminine counterpart was mostly known as hysteria. But there is no shortage of literature on the topic, and the history of medicine, as well as emotion and affect studies, also provide rich resources for its investigation. In The Mask and the Quill, Mary Helen Dupree discusses the issue of female melancholy at length in a chapter on the eighteenth-century writer-actress Sophie Albrecht.601 Indeed, this project could have an exclusively female parallel, to be undertaken starting from many of the same hypotheses, especially regarding the central notion of the shift from aesthetic to pathology. Sophie von la Roche’s Fräulein von Sternheim is a text that thematizes empfindsame melancholy; Lessing’s Miß Sara Sampson (with female protagonists written by a male author, needless to say) offers instances of both poetic melancholy and female rage in the form of Raserei, while Marianna Ehrmann’s epistolary novel Amalie: Eine wahre Geschichte in Briefen includes a veritable catalogue of melancholic tropes, including references to humoral melancholy, Schwermuth, nervous illness, suicide, and the passions or Leidenschaften, as well as a clear depiction of bipolar disorder and mania. An approach centered on female characters would also provide avenues for exploring how their marginalization might contribute to their experiences of mental illness.

Another topic for further consideration are the ramifications of a tradition of individual melancholy and case studies vis-à-vis a larger tableau of characters. Both Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795-1796) and *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (1809) pose questions about identity and the intertwining of fates, perhaps even calling into question the model of individual psychology advanced by Karl Philipp Moritz and returning to a collective scheme, whereby melancholy is a kind of “sickness” that threatens to infect all those involved. Moreover, these novels serve as a site for the intersection of melancholy with mourning, as per Freud’s distinction between the two, for considerations about melancholy in and amongst families, as well as for the exploration of therapy. While the majority of melancholic characters in *Wilhelm Meister* (Aurelie, Mignon, the harpist) all die, the title figure is eventually healed of his melancholic disposition and goes on to become a productive member of society. In *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, all of the characters’ destinies overlap to affect one another. While various healing attempts are made, neither Eduard’s relationship with Charlotte, nor Eduard or Ottilie themselves, can be saved. Therefore, while *Wilhelm Meister* promotes a reading of an individual’s biography against the background of a panoply of melancholy characters, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* questions such an interpretation, as well as the validity of any kind of “cure” for melancholy.

Finally, the discussion might be moved to other eras. In the nineteenth century, the literary movement of Romanticism, especially the works of E.T.A. Hoffmann and Heinrich von Kleist (though not a Romantic per se), express a fascination with different forms of psychopathology. Kleist’s works issue a profound hesitation vis-à-vis the status of science, truth, authenticity, and speech, reflecting key concerns in this dissertation. As Kleist wrote, “Selbst das einzige, das wir besitzen, die Sprache taugt nicht dazu, sie kann die Seele nicht malen, und was sie uns gibt sind
nur zerrissene Brüchstucke." All of these doubts find expression in many of the author’s plays and novellas, as Kleist places his characters into transitional states: fainting, dreaming, sleepwalking, fever, rage and/or frenzy, the moments just before sleeping, waking, and dying. And many of Kleist’s works draw on the case studies in Moritz’s Magazin, of which Kleist was a reader. In Penthesilea (1808), the titular character represents a case of split personality disorder, according to the psychological discourses of the time. Her inner conflict is marked by an insistence on feelings, displayed in her reliance on impulses, all of which shatter her faculty of reason. These issues find correlations in the psychiatric literature of the time, most prominently in Johann Christian Reil’s Rhapsodien über die Anwendung der psychischen Curmethoden auf Geisteszerrüttungen (1803). Similarly, the drama Prinz Friedrich von Homburg (1809-1810) represents a dilemma between reason and feeling. The prince is an absent-minded character and a melancholic dreamer, prone to catalepsy. Significantly, he suffers from somnambulism, a state associated not just with sleepwalking, but, moreover, with the inability to differentiate between dream and reality (which calls to mind Büchner’s Lenz). Again, this is paralleled in contemporary psychiatric literature, with the figure of the Nachtwandler in Reil’s Rhapsodien.

Concluding Remarks

Since beginning this dissertation some three years ago, there has been a spike in public discourse on the subject of mental illness. This might be, of course, a misleading perception, a natural repercussion of the fact that I have now confronted the topic more or less every day for the past three years: any time a friend encounters an article with “melancholy” or “melancholia” written

503 See Bell, German Tradition, 181.
into the headline, they send it to me. But I don’t think this is a case of purely cognitive or frequency bias. Rather, it seems to be that in recent years, there has been an opening of the floodgate that has for so long blocked, hushed, and stigmatized conversation on the subject, much like the MeToo movement has burst holes into the silence once surrounding issues of female sexual abuse. The tremendous outpouring of public sentiment after the twin suicides of the celebrities Kate Spade, a prominent fashion designer (on June 5, 2018), and the well-known chef, author, and TV personality Anthony Bourdain (on June 8, 2018), is one example of the move to engender a discourse on the subject that is framed by a push for awareness and prevention, and not entrenched in issues of blame or morality. And this is a good thing. Some thirty years ago, the poet William Styron, whose memoir of depression, quoted in Chapter 3, had an important impact on the public conversation about depression, still had to intervene after disbelief and outrage colored the suicide of Primo Levi. In an article in the New York Times, Styron wrote, “In the popular mind, suicide is usually the work of a coward or sometimes, paradoxically, a deed of great courage, but it is neither; the torment that precipitates the act makes it often one of blind necessity.”

Inherent in Styron’s description are distinct echoes of Werther’s “Krankheit zum Tode,” in which death is the necessary consequence – the consequence of “blind necessity” – of the “almost unimaginable pain” and the “gray drizzle of unrelenting horror” that characterize severe depression.

The Netflix TV series “13 Reasons Why,” which began airing in March 2017 (again, part of the recent tide in media dealing with mental illness), sets its plot in motion when a teenage girl named Hannah Baker kills herself after recording thirteen tapes expounding the tragedies of her life. In the first episode of the season, a graphic scene depicts Hannah’s suicide, as she cuts her

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505 Ibid.
wrists in a bathtub. Whether seen as an honest portrayal of adolescent distress or an unnecessarily graphic depiction of the act of suicide, the premiere episode alarmed health and suicide prevention experts, many of whom believed that it glamorized the topic of suicide for young viewers. Indeed, a recent study by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry in April of this year found that suicide rates spiked in the month after the first season’s release, with April 2017 having the highest overall suicide rate for boys aged 10-17. Due to these findings, Netflix decided to delete the suicide scene from future airings of the episode. In its entirety, the event is not unlike a modern-day version of Wertherfieber.

A New Yorker article from earlier this year contains still more similarities to Werther. Author Donald Antrim gives a personal history of his “journey through suicide,” in which he elucidates suicide as an illness and a process: “I believe that suicide is a natural history, a disease process, not an act or a choice, a decision or a wish. I do not think of suicide as the act, the death, the fall from a height or the trigger pulled. I see it as a long illness, an illness with origins in trauma and isolation, in deprivation of touch, in violence and neglect…” In the evaluations of both Werther and Antrim, suicide becomes the name of an illness that tears the psyche apart over time; it is not a finite act. And in the interpretation of all three, the element of “choice” is effectively irrelevant.

It seems, then, that the pendulum has now swung in the opposite direction: it is no longer uncommon to talk of depression as mental illness, and suicide as a symptom. This is evidenced in the proliferation of charity initiatives related to suicide prevention and mental health awareness.

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In the United Kingdom, the royal family has been particularly outspoken on this front. In recent years, princes William and Harry have been especially candid about the agonies they faced in the wake of their mother’s untimely death, as well as the years of therapy they underwent with the aim of healing these wounds, hoping to help stem the stigma and start a national conversation about mental health. This has resulted in The Royal Foundation’s largest mental health initiative, the Heads Together campaign, coordinated by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, which includes a series of programs to fundraise and tackle mental health issues, such as workplace wellbeing, mentally healthy schools, and military mental health. Most English-speaking countries now include a mental health awareness week or month, as well as other initiatives such as suicide prevention hotlines, entering some extent of “choice” back into the equation.

The media and initiatives highlighted here illustrate the ways in which the analyses of melancholy presented in this dissertation are borne out in contemporary discourse. The question becomes, then: how, precisely, can eighteenth-century narratives help us to understand (and/or historicize) these phenomena better? My analyses of the primary texts show the extent to which eighteenth-century modes of thinking shaped the ways that mental illness was dealt with (or not dealt with) during this period. Now, then, in a time when the stigma has lessened, and melancholy is no longer just the reserve of male Enlightenment authors and thinkers, but, instead, the province of more and more people, both lay and professional, who are participating in the conversation on mental illness, it is remarkable that there are still so many similarities marking these discussions. This would seem to connote not just a degree of universality of the experience or the discourse

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surrounding it (though, of course, that is part of it), but it also signifies that those earlier conceptions of mental illness have helped to mold our current discourse on the subject. While it would be difficult to draw a straight historical line between those Western beginnings of melancholy as a mental illness and the contemporary examples I have given here, the degree to which they converge is nevertheless striking. There is, further, a kind of individualism at play in both eighteenth-century and modern-day conceptions of the illness. Then as now, mental illness is something that the individual, afflicted person lives with, goes through, and ultimately has to deal with on their own, which can be nicely contrasted with models in which melancholy is a societal problem meant to be dealt with in an institutional context.

Much like the eighteenth-century drama and fiction that have formed the objects of my study, these contemporary works – along with the memoirs I have cited throughout the project – offer a means of identification and empathy for the sufferer of mental illness, as well as a medium of understanding for those outside of it. This is accomplished, in all instances, by giving language and expression back to an illness that functions by eroding speech, articulation, emotion, and selfhood, and by proffering a voice to those who, in the grips of illness, may be robbed of their own.
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