



PROJECT MUSE®

Narratives of Emergence: Jean Paul on the Inner Life

William N. Coker

Eighteenth Century Fiction, Volume 21, Number 3, Spring 2009, pp. 385-411
(Article)

Published by University of Toronto Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/ecf.0.0068>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/261283>

Narratives of Emergence: Jean Paul on the Inner Life

William N. Coker

Poetry is the only peace-goddess of the earth and of the angels, who leads us, and if only for a matter of hours, out of prisons and onto stars.—Jean Paul, *Pre-School of Aesthetics* [*Vorschule der Ästhetik*] (1804)¹

IN HIS treatise on poetics and aesthetics, Jean Paul personifies poetry as an angel that frees “us” readers—and writers—from confinement. As definitive as the theme of interiority is for the Romantic period as a whole, in Jean Paul’s fictions the transition between inner and outer spaces is of pervasive significance both thematically and formally. Attention to these transitions offers a clue to a riddle otherwise posed by Jean Paul’s texts: the thematic emphasis on the inner life can seem strangely at odds with the externality of their form, a predominantly authorial discourse relying mainly on a nexus of metaphors rather than the modulation of the narrative voice. Doubtless this tension relates to the situation of writing in a period in which the idea of an indispensable inner core to the human individual no longer enjoys unchallenged metaphysical support. Wolfgang Pross locates Jean Paul’s writing at the crossroads between “metaphysical

¹ Jean Paul, *Vorschule der Ästhetik* (1804), in *Werke*, ed. Norbert Miller, 6 vols. (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1960-63), 5:35. References to Jean Paul’s writings are to this edition; translations are my own. [Die Poesie] ist die einzige Friedengöttin der Erde und der Engel, der uns, und wär es nur auf Stunden, aus Kerkern auf Sterne führt.

need and historical awareness."² The following analysis aims to pinpoint more closely the source of this tension as well as one of Jean Paul's strategies for working through it, by focusing on a recurrent motif that binds together themes central to the discourse of Romanticism—interiority, transcendence, education, and confession—namely the motif of emergence.

Jean Paul's scenes of emergence reflect the problematic status of an interiority that has come to be seen as a product of historical development rather than as metaphysically given. Accordingly, Jean Paul's first narrative of education, in his early novel *The Invisible Lodge* [*Die Unsichtbare Loge*] (1792), considers the paradoxical case of inwardness cultivated from the outside. His definition of poetic genius in the *Pre-School of Aesthetics* concedes the ambivalence of the inner life as a harbinger of either transcendence or death, and consequently as something that both beautifies life and potentially deceives as to life's true nature.³ His philosophical anticipation of immortality in the late work *Selina* (1823–25) is inseparable from both his reliance on analogy as a guide to thought and his understanding of the soul as a process of continual emergence. Both the notion of thought as a structure of comparison and the motif of the inner life unfolding as from a cocoon are latent in Jean Paul's most significant precursor, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, with the later writer even borrowing part of Rousseau's first name to use in his pseudonym.

In Rousseau's description of the emergent "facultés virtuelles" of the mind in *Émile* (1762), a paradigm is set for a tension present throughout his writing.⁴ Rousseau defines the inner life as a widening gap between imagination and fulfillment, linking imagination ineluctably with desire, and immediately sets about attempting to contain this gap. The plot of education in *Émile*, in which the tutor and narrator guides his pupil's development

² Wolfgang Pross, *Jean Pauls geschichtliche Stellung* (Frankfurt: Niemeyer Verlag, 1975), 72. The tension here described as inherent in the intellectual climate of the late eighteenth century is one between "historischem Bewusstsein und metaphysischem Bedürfnis."

³ The title *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, while emphasizing the preliminary nature of its own endeavour, does not have quite the diminutive connotations of this English translation.

⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, ou de l'éducation* (1762), in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, 4 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 4:304. References to Rousseau's writings are to this edition.

by awakening and restraining his imagination, displaces onto the interaction between tutor and pupil the basic problem of the inner life as the narrator has earlier defined it. Jean Paul effectively reframes the relationship between tutor and pupil as one between writer and reader across the rhetorical and narrative surface of the text.

In doing so, Jean Paul replicates, in the metaphorical structure of his own text, the temporal structure foreseen by Rousseau in his discussion of emergent “imagination,” and revises the notion of “happiness” that Rousseau’s account had placed off limits. Happiness, which by Rousseau’s definition becomes inaccessible upon the emergence of a significant interiority, is redefined programmatically in Jean Paul to comprise the exchange of perspectives and shifts in and out that also comprise the narrative and rhetorical style of his texts. When seen against the background of Rousseau’s philosophical fiction, episodes in Jean Paul’s novels that emphasize the performative nature of revelations of interiority can be seen as part of an ambivalent defence of this mode of performance against Rousseau’s critique. This defence, not carried out theoretically so much as in and through the fictional texts themselves, recognizes the theoretical validity of Rousseau’s insights, and thus limits itself to the notion that the poetic imagination and its constructions of interiority can make one “not happy, but happier,” conceding that on occasion the enterprise can also backfire.

In the opening of *The Invisible Lodge*, the narrator engages his characters and reader in a complex game commenting on the nature of education, transcendence and interiority. The novel’s protagonist Gustav spends his first eight conscious years in an underground cellar with his tutor. Following a cue from the narrator describing Gustav’s “Platons-Höhle,” this scheme designed by Gustav’s parents has been read in various ways as a revision of the cave allegory in Plato’s *Republic*.⁵ The young Gustav’s future grandmother, a pietist, will allow her daughter to marry Gustav’s future father on the condition that the new couple’s first-born

⁵ See Herbert Kaiser, *Jean Paul lesen: Versuch über seine poetische Anthropologie des Ich* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1995); Paul Fleming, *The Pleasures of Abandonment: Jean Paul and the Life of Humour* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2005), 39–40; and my subsequent remarks on these two readings.

child be raised according to a curious experiment. The child is to live until the age of eight with a tutor selected from the nearby Barby pietist community in an underground chamber, which is all that remains of a monastic ruin on the family estate of his father, who, the narrator tells us, has long regretted not having it sealed up (1:54). The suggestion is that Gustav's cave represents a submerged origin.

Gustav's tutor tells him that the underground cellar is the earth and that the surface of earth is heaven; he will ascend to the surface once he has proven himself virtuous, and his emergence will be a resurrection. The narrator hints that the childhood equation of "death" with the delightful experience of emergence will remain in Gustav's memory, the way a toy with which a child's virtue is rewarded sweetens good deeds even once it is no longer offered, and that this memory will even sweeten the expectation of actual death: "He tricked out the semblance of death, to the advantage of real death, with every charm, and one day Gustav will die much more enchanted than one of us" (1:60).⁶ Gustav's training conditions him to love both life and death; he learns to walk upright on the basis of a deceptive plot.

Gustav's awaited emergence from the cave occasions in the narrator general anxieties about human destiny. The narrator forgoes the omniscient, outside status we might expect of him were he not writing in the register of sensibility. Gustav appears as a paradigm of human entry into a perilous world, one that reflects onto the existences of the narrator and his readers: "But since he then came to see nature face to face, so it is not his fate alone, but mine and that of others, that weighs on me, since I consider, through how much mud our teachers must drag our inner man, like a criminal, before he can stand upright" (1:61).⁷ The narrator interprets Gustav's underground education as a paradigmatic preparation of an "inner man" to face an outer world, only by another method than that applied by more terrestrial schemes

⁶ Er schmückte den scheinbaren Tod zum Vorteile des wahren mit allen Reizen aus, und Gustav stirbt einmal entzückter als einer von uns.

⁷ Aber da er alsdann auch der großen Natur ins Angesicht schauen darf: so ists doch nicht sein Schicksal allein, was mich beklommen macht, sondern meines und fremdes, weil ich bedenke, durch wieviel Kot unsere Lehrer unsern innern Menschen wie einen Missetäter schleifen, eh' er sich aufrichten darf!

of education.⁸ Despite or rather because of its subterranean peculiarity, Gustav's training and emergence becomes a type for the notion of "education" in general.

What is most curious about this passage, though, is what passes almost unnoticed: the narrator's agreement with Gustav's parents on the "inwardness" of his education. The narrator even opens the episode with this symbolic translation of the spatial order of Gustav's upbringing in the underground enclosure: "Since education changes much less on the inner man and much more on the outer one than courtiers imagine, one will wonder at how with Gustav the opposite was the case, for his whole life sounded after the keynote of his celestial, that is, his subterranean education" (1:53).⁹ The narrator links the humorously paradoxical unity of the "celestial" and "subterranean" to the "interior," as opposed to a merely external world in between. Jean Paul's "theatre of human suffering and action" as he later calls the world above ground,¹⁰ differs from the German baroque theatre to which it has sometimes been compared (1:60).¹¹ Whereas the baroque theatre represented heaven above and hell immediately below the stage, in Jean Paul's fictional theatre the dubious ancient opening in the family ground is metaphorically a doorway both to the underworld and to heaven. The narrator affectionately calls Gustav a "nursling of the grave" (1:57). With the double meanings inherent to metaphor Jean Paul concedes that the door inward leads both up and down.¹² Earthly life is less a stage poised between opposing

⁸ Gerd Ueding notes that the choice to educate Gustav's "inner" rather than "outer man" reflects a "pietistic radicalization of a motif from Rousseau," aiming to oppose Gustav to the prevailing values of society rather than train him in the same. Ueding, "Episches Atemholen—über Jean Pauls widerspenstiges Erzählen," *Jean Paul-Jahrbuch 1994* (Verlag: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, Weimar, 1994), 67.

⁹ Da Erziehung weit weniger am innern Menschen (und weit mehr am äußern) ändern kann, als Hofmeister sich einbilden: so wird man sich wundern, daß bei Gustav gerade das Gegenteil eintrat; denn sein ganzes Leben klang nach dem Chorton seiner überirdischen, d.h. unterirdischen Erziehung.

¹⁰ Theater des menschlichen Leidens und Tuns.

¹¹ Most famously by Walter Benjamin, for whom Jean Paul is "the greatest allegorist among the German poets (*Poeten*)." Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1978), 166.

¹² Gustav's first gaze upward further bears out this doubleness: "als sein wieder aufwärts geworfenes Auge in dem tiefen Himmel, der Öffnung der

metaphysical forces than a house with an inner chamber, whose threshold beckons to origins or to ends. It is the status of this inner life itself that is in question in these narratives.

Gustav's tutor arranges for a French horn to play from outside the cellar just as he is preparing to let Gustav out into the world. The horn's sound brings to musical life the threnody whose lyrics the tutor had taught Gustav to read on the page. Participation in the song is the final step along Gustav's initiation before he can ascend to earth and join the family of men he has heard described as angels. Just as Gustav begins to believe that his heart "was dying of the notes," the narrator inserts an encomium to music: "Music! Echo of a distant and more harmonious world! Sigh of the angel in us! When words are speechless, and eyes, even when weeping, and our mute hearts are alone behind the bars of the breast, so it is you through whom they call to each other in their prisons and unite their sighs in the desert!" (1:60).¹³ Not only is music a form of immediacy capable of bridging the gap between the enclosed inner worlds of different people, which even the natural signs of the body cannot bridge—but also this immediacy echoes another world where inside and outside are not in conflict as they are here. Music reaches us from a world outside our own where the block of eyes, bodies and hearts no longer hinders our speech. In the realm of the angels the harmonic relationships expressed in music are all in all, as the irreducibly contingent facts of bodies, hearts and eyes vanish. Ironically, the narrator's transcendent claims on behalf of music echo those of the tutor in this final step of his education of Gustav. The communion of feeling evoked by Jean Paul's "sensible" narration is itself a performative echo of that metaphysical harmony allegedly native to the distant world of the angels.

What the novel is to us, Gustav's cave is to the novel: a world of play, in which we suspend our disbelief in order to reap the aesthetic benefit of its substitutions. The narrator mobilizes the

Unendlichkeit, versank" (1:63). While Gustav's underground education was celestial, heaven is conversely described as a cave.

¹³ O Musik! Nachklang aus einer entlegnen harmonischen Welt! Seufzer des Engels in uns! Wenn das Wort sprachlos ist, und die Umarmung, und das Auge, und das weinende, und wenn unsre stummen Herzen hinter dem Brust-Gitter einsam liegen: o so bist nur du es, durch welche sie sich einander zurufen in ihren Kerkern und ihre entfernten Seufzer vereinigen in ihrer Wüste!

reader's desire for transcendence—and for music, in a rhythmical prose that imitates it—just as the tutor mobilizes this desire in Gustav. This redoubling of the content of the narrative onto the narratorial voice itself is ironic, insofar as we know that the tutor's scheme for Gustav's "resurrection" is a game—that it is fictitious. What is more, this fiction of transcendence frames not only the scene in the cave, but the novel as a whole. When Gustav's tutor exits the cave and the novel, he leaves behind half of a musical harmony which is cited at the end of the novel, and whose other half neither Gustav, the reader nor the narrator knows.

The fantasy of completion suggested by the unfinished song echoes the prologue to the novel in the 1825 edition of the *Complete Works*, the last *Complete Works* edition published in Jean Paul's lifetime (the 1960 *Werke* edition includes the 1825 prologue). In this prologue, the author provides a retrospective look at his first novel, calling it a "born ruin" (1:13).¹⁴ This novel occasions a defence of the fragment as that form most reflective of the unfinished form of any human life: "And what life in the world do we not see interrupted? ... so let us console ourselves by saying that man sees only knots in the present surroundings, and only after the grave will we find their *denouements*" (1:13).¹⁵ Just like Gustav, we readers are left only with a dissonant music at the end of *Die Unsichtbare Loge*, and would need a sequel for its resolution. The narrator carefully orchestrates the scene and the novel to put the reader in the place of Gustav. What the tutor promises Gustav outside the cave, the narrator promises the reader outside the confines of the novel. Reading and writing is a way of playing at transcendence.¹⁶ The emergence

¹⁴ Ungeachtet meiner Aussichten und Versprechungen bleibt sie doch eine geborne Ruine [in spite of my plans and promises, (the *Loge*) shall remain a born ruin].

¹⁵ Welches Leben in der Welt sehen wir denn nicht unterbrochen? ... so tröste man sich damit, daß der Mensch rund herum in seiner Gegenwart nichts sieht als Knoten,—und erst hinter seinem Grabe liegen die Auflösungen.

¹⁶ The opposing ways in which recent critics understand Gustav's emergence from the cave provide a case study in how disputes in the analysis of Romanticism sometimes boil down to the choice of one or another term in a polarity. Interpretations of Gustav's emergence from the cave that emphasize the delight he experiences in the substitution of earth for heaven, as does Paul Fleming's, seem to me to capture with perfect clarity half of the double movement of Jean Paul's text (Fleming, 39–40). Herbert Kaiser, on the other hand, sees the parallel between the tutor or *Genius* as

into the transcendent that the student Friedrich Richter may have sought in theology or Leibniz is for the novelist Jean Paul embodied wholly in the practice of fiction. As we have seen in Gustav's tutor's play at resurrection, this emergence has its obverse face of deception.

The closing reflection on "genius" in the *Vorschule der Ästhetik* echoes the double nature of the Genius's education of Gustav, teaching him to love both life and death. By using the word *Genius* in this passage rather than *Genie*, Jean Paul signals a proximity to the sense of "genius" as a *daimon* or attendant personal spirit that also underlies the title given by the narrator of *The Invisible Lodge* to Gustav's tutor: "But when genius leads us over the battlefields of life, then we look with such freedom beyond them, as if fame or the love of country went out before us with flags fluttering back; and in its company need (*die Not*) gains an Arcadian form, as before a pair of lovers" (5:67).¹⁷ Jean Paul leaves open the question of whether genius merely beautifies a destitute reality or rather reveals some transcendent sense within it. His prose moves suggestively from one metaphor to another: "Everywhere genius makes life free and death beautiful; on a sphere we see, as on the sea, the sail that carries the ship earlier than the heavy ship itself" (5:67).¹⁸ Genius works through a kind of synecdoche, revealing the guiding sail of life before the ship of death that is its base appears, thereby enhancing both life and death. The ensuing passage associates "life" and "death" with "helpless life" and "ethereal sense," the latter in accord with the edifying power of death in the Christian tradition: "In this way it reconciles, even betroths—as do love and youth—helpless life with the ethereal sense, just as on the shore of a still water the outer tree and the reflected

the narrator calls him, and a larger *Genius* governing the world of the novel as a whole. Kaiser takes this equation as a direct theological statement, missing the possibility of an ironic design in the parallel between cave and cosmos (Kaiser, 24–35). Both critics see in Gustav's cave a structural emblem of the "life of humour" without considering the medium of the narrative voice as constitutive of meaning.

¹⁷ Wenn hingegen der Genius uns über die Schlachtfelder des Lebens führt: so sehen wir so frei hinüber, als wenn der Ruhm oder die Vaterlandsliebe vorausginge mit den zurückflatternden Fahnen; und neben ihm gewinnt die Dürftigkeit wie vor einem Paar Liebenden eine arkadische Gestalt.

¹⁸ Überall macht er das Leben frei und den Tod schön; auf seiner Kugel sehen wir, wie auf dem Meer, die tragenden Segel früher als das schwere Schiff.

one seem to extend from *one* root to two heavens" (5:67).¹⁹ The genius enhances both life and death for mortal consciousness, as if they were a tree and its reflection on the water's surface, striving from one root towards opposite heavens.

Thus the narrator of the *Vorschule der Ästhetik* compares the relationship of "life" and "death" presented by genius to a relationship of reflection whereby one of the two terms—and it is not entirely clear which—is the scientifically "real" one while the other takes the place of its reflection. Notice also that the tree above the water-line is the "outer" tree. If we line up this "outer tree" with "helpless life," then the "ethereal sense" or death becomes our inner reality. Rooted *in* us is an ethereal sense which is one metaphorical step away from the death we also carry in us. Genial poetry makes this inner reflection appear just as real as the indisputable outer reality, and for this act of mirroring Jean Paul praises it. While Jean Paul accepts the possibility that the inner sense we carry in us is nothing other than death, he does not allow this possibility to overshadow the equally plausible one that it is transcendent. A notion of interiority characteristic of pietism on the one hand, and on the other hand one that will come into its own in Rilke and Heidegger, duel for mastery in Jean Paul's poetic worldview.

In his late work *Selina* (1825), Jean Paul presents two alternate possibilities for the fate of the soul after death in the form of an interpretation of the metaphor behind the word "psyche," in which the ancient Greeks compared the inner life force to a butterfly: "In the ancient comparison of the development of a butterfly with that of the *psyche* are more truths than we realize, for in the larva instinct finds already the blueprint for the future that it will have to work out, as sacred instinct does in the human" (6:1211).²⁰ Thus Jean Paul begins by comparing the presence of "instinct" in the larva to that of "sacred instinct" or potentiality in the human frame, as both work out a "blueprint of the future"

¹⁹ Auf diese Weise versöhnet, ja vermählt er—wie die Liebe und die Jugend— das unbehülfliche Leben mit dem ätherischen Sinn, so wie am Ufer eines stillen Wassers der äußere und der abgespiegelte Baum aus *einer* Wurzel nach zwei Himmeln zu wachsen scheinen.

²⁰ In der uralten Vergleichung der Entwicklungen des Schmetterlings und der Psyche wohnen mehr Wahrheiten als man darin sucht; denn in der Raupe findet der Instinkt schon den Bauriß der Zukunft, den es auszuarbeiten haben [wird] wie im Menschen der heilige.

that will lead to development.²¹ Following this basic analogy is a physical description of the larva that leaves implicit the analogy to the parallel structure of an inner life growing within the body: “in the larva is already, according to Swammerdam, the cocoon prepared, and this encloses the butterfly in turn, with its folded wings and antennae” (6:1211).²² This account of a physical structure certified by scientific authority strengthens the parallel to the emergence of the soul by leaving the other side of the analogy implicit. By visualizing the natural development of the butterfly in such concrete detail, the text works subtly to persuade the reader of a parallel process at work in the inner life, more than it literally makes that process visible.

This rhetorical strategy borrows credit from the original metaphorical perception underlying the word “psyche,” whereby the ancient Greeks perceived a similarity between the butterfly and that inner life force which is within the human without being identical to his body. That this strategy *is* rhetorical, and not merely heuristic, comes to the surface at the close of the passage, when Jean Paul finds himself compelled to ask the reader to choose between competing interpretations of the butterfly metaphor. The question first arises once the moment of death appears as the final horizon for the comparison of butterfly and psyche: “how these similarities speak to the wishes of our psyche! Just like the butterfly in the cocoon, how it wants to shed its drop of blood to escape and spread its wings” (6:1211).²³ Even within the space

- ²¹ The notion of a god-ward pull in the human individual as analogous to animal “instinct” goes back to J.G. Herder. In his essay “Vom Erkennen und Empfinden der menschlichen Seele,” Herder identifies a mode of experience that anticipates its objects: “it is a new divinatory drive that promises us pleasure in an obscure intimation, leaps over space and time and gives us a foretaste of the future. Perhaps it is so with the instinct of animals” [es ist ein neuer weissagender Trieb, der uns Genuß zusagt, dunkel ihn ahnden läßt, Raum und Zeit überspringet und uns Vorgeschmack gibt in die Zukunft. Vielleicht ist also mit dem Instinkt der Tiere]. Herder, *Werke*, ed. Wolfgang Pross, vol. 1 (München: Hanser, 1984), 345. See also *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, where Jean Paul identifies “man’s instinct or drive” as the “sense for the future” and calls it “this transcendent angel of the inner life” [diesen überirdischen Engel des innern Lebens] (5:60–61).
- ²² Schon in der Raupe liegt nach Swammerdam die Puppe vorbereitet und diese schließt wieder den Schmetterling mit seinen zusammengelegten Flügeln und Fühlhörnern ein.
- ²³ Wie sprechen diese Ähnlichkeiten die Wünsche unserer Psyche an—wie er unter seiner Entpuppung will sie gern ihren Tropfen Blut vergießen, um

of credibility allowed by analogical thinking, Jean Paul cannot get around the existence of a disturbing alternative outcome, which is no less probable than that of the soul's emergence into a transcendent afterlife. This alternative he attempts to ward off through encasing it in a rhetorical question: "[wouldn't it be] too hard and contradictory, if after all the shedding of coils, the shrinking under the brittle mantel of old age, nothing emerged from, or remained within, the barely living cocoon but a rotten butterfly in its pendant tomb?" (6:1211).²⁴ Since analogy alone cannot decide the question, Jean Paul calls on "the wishes of our psyche" to adjudicate between eternal life and death (6:1211).

Significant in Jean Paul's depiction of the psyche or soul as butterfly is the emphasis he places on emergent structures concealed within the immature larva. The soul would seem to have to develop after death because its namesake in nature, the psyche or butterfly, is a structure concealing smaller structures about to emerge. The immortality of the soul is a logical conclusion—that is, one in accordance with the analogical suggestions of language—not because of the soul's immutability but rather because of its structure as becoming. Once limits are set to the soul's continual process of emergence, implicitly its very existence is called into question.

By positing infinite perfectibility as the content of the inner life, Jean Paul has not moved far from Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The paradoxes latent in Rousseau's writing came to define the ethical discourse on interiority in his period just as strongly as Kant's logical construction of the "inner sense" in the *Critique of Pure Reason* sets the terms for the ontological discussion. Though in his autobiographical writings Rousseau often describes his inner space as a place of retreat from the external world, most famously in the *Rêveries* where in a moment of complete self-enclosure, in a boat on the lake, his consciousness is reduced to "le seul sentiment de l'existence" (1:1047), it is a consequence of Rousseau's anthropological thought that the inner sense is not an irreducible essence so much as an artifact

entpuppt zu werden und auf einmal die schlaffen Flügel weit und straff auszuspannen.

²⁴ [Wär' es nicht] gar zu hart und widersprechend, wenn nun nach allem schmerzhaften Hautabsprengen, engen Einwindeln, und Greisen-Erstarren in eine kaum rege Puppe zuletzt nichts herauskäme oder eigentlich nichts darin bliebe als ein verfallter Schmetterling im hangenden Puppensarg?

of history. The moment when interiority enters the world runs like a fault line through Rousseau's work, appearing in various forms in different contexts. One of its manifestations concerns the emergence of what Rousseau calls "les facultés virtuelles," the chief among them "l'imagination" (4:304).

The rhetoric of interiority in Rousseau tends to obscure that, for Rousseau, the inner symbolic space of consciousness is not original but rather emerges over time. Though he does not say so explicitly, the humanity he depicts in the state of nature barely has any recognizable interiority at all. Though he counsels: "O homme, resserre ton existence au dedans de toi, et tu ne seras plus miserable" (4:308), it is not clear what is inside man besides those virtual faculties, placed "en réserve au fond de son âme" (4:304). With the emergence of this inner sense man first gains knowledge of both temporal succession and death, of which children and animals are not aware.²⁵ It is difficult to imagine an inner life in which we are not already exiled from ourselves, as we are when we consider the future, as Rousseau writes in an apostrophe to foresight: "La prévoyance! La prévoyance qui nous porte sans cesse au delà de nous et souvent nous place ou nous n'arriverons point" (4:307). In his later *Rêveries*, Rousseau repeats that foresight and imagination are at the root of unhappiness (1:1080).

Rousseau's definition of happiness is a ratio of balance: "Un être sensible dont les facultés égaleroit les désirs seroit un être absolument heureux" (4:307). While this equilibrium is in man's nature, that nature conceals within itself a force waiting to emerge and disrupt it:

Elle ne lui donne immédiatement que les désirs nécessaires à sa conservation, et les facultés suffisantes pour les satisfaire. Elle a mis toutes les autres comme en réserve au fond de son âme pour s'y développer a besoin. Ce n'est que dans cet état primitif que l'équilibre du pouvoir et du désir se rencontre et que l'homme n'est pas malheureux. Sitôt que ses facultés virtuelles se mettent en action l'imagination, la plus active de toutes, s'éveille et les devance. C'est l'imagination qui étend pour nous la mesure des possibles soit en

²⁵ In the *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité*, Rousseau writes: "jamais l'animal ne saura ce que c'est que mourir, et la connaissance de la mort, et de ses terreurs, est une des premières acquisitions que l'homme ait faites, en s'éloignant de la condition animale." On the next page, he describes natural man: "Son âme, que rien n'agite, se livre au seul sentiment de son existence actuelle, sans aucune idée de l'avenir" (3:143–44).

bien soit en mal, et qui par conséquent excite et nourrit les désirs par l'espoir de les satisfaire. Mais l'objet qui paroissoit d'abord sous la main fuit plus vite qu'on ne peut le poursuivre; quand on croit l'atteindre il se transforme et se montre loin devant nous. Ne voyant plus le pays déjà parcouru nous le comptons pour rien; celui qui reste à parcourir s'aggrandit, s'étend sans cesse; ainsi l'on s'épuise sans arriver au terme et plus nous gagnons sur la jouissance, plus le bonheur s'éloigne de nous. (4:304)

The imagination is a structure of comparison through which desire can realize its infinite nature, always transcending finite givens.²⁶ The same governor of *Émile* who, as Rousseau's narrator, delivers this narrative of the emergence from happiness into the unhappiness of comparison and desire returns to the theme in his assertion to his young pupil that one must be happy.²⁷ His view of happiness is one of self-enclosure, as he instructs *Émile*: "Sois homme; retire ton cœur dans les bornes de ta condition," continuing, "Étudie et connois ces bornes; quelque étroites qu'elles soient, on n'est point malheureux tant qu'on s'y renferme; on ne l'est que quand on veut les passer ... On l'est quand on oublie son état d'homme pour s'en forger d'imaginaires desquels on retombe toujours dans le sien" (4:819). The nature of *Émile*'s unhappiness is less remarkable, given Rousseau's stoic penchant, than its immediate cause: he has fallen in love with Sophie, a young woman the two have encountered during an overnight stay at a farmhouse, and whose appeal for the young man is in no small part due to his teacher.

Earlier in the plot, the governor, having kept his charge in relative solitude for much of his life, considers a suitable way to introduce *Émile* to society. Rather than allowing *Émile* to experience the world on his own, the governor chooses a focused approach that originates in his own imagination. The tutor

²⁶ In pointing out paradoxical implications of the emergence of imagination from nature, my reading is structurally in agreement with Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1967), 264ff.

²⁷ A corollary to Rousseau's emphasis on the happy state as a bounded one is the necessity of the bounds of mortality: "Si nous étions immortels nous serions des êtres très misérables. Il est dur de mourir, sans doute; mais il est doux d'espérer qu'on ne vivra pas toujours, et qu'une meilleure vie finira les peines de celle-ci" (4:305). Rousseau's wish for immortality contrasts with Jean Paul's in that Rousseau emphasizes the promise of something different from this life, while Jean Paul wishes the continuation of the process of emergence that defines the present inner life.

invites his pupil to join him in imagining the traits and charms of his future mate, in order to prepare Émile to fall in love with the right woman when the time comes. Since the tutor cannot avoid this moment in his pupil's life, he chooses to anticipate it, to modulate it in advance to fit his pedagogical aims.

In reflecting on his chosen method of conjuring a charming and lovable partner for Émile as a first introduction to broader human society, the governor alludes to his earlier reflection on comparisons springing from desire and imagination as the seductive source of societal ill: "Il n'importe que l'objet que je lui peindrai soit imaginaire; ... il suffit qu'il trouve par tout des comparaisons qui lui fassent préférer sa chimère aux objets réels qui le frapperont, et qu'est-ce que le véritable amour lui-même, si ce n'est chimère, mensonge, illusion?" (4:656). The tutor aims to "rend[re] [Émile] d'avance passionné sans savoir de qui," giving him an imaginary object that will sour him to any alternatives he may later encounter in the course of his experience (4:656). By furnishing the imaginary object himself, the tutor-narrator plans to set the terms of the inevitable comparisons that arise in Émile's mind between real and desired objects; as "maître des comparaisons," he promises to contain the process of imagination that for paradigmatic "man," on his exit from "nature," proved uncontrollable (4:656).

In the scene of its emergence in book 2, the imagination gives rise to comparisons between desired objects and those already possessed; now the comparisons are between real and unreal objects. The inability of the imagining mind to be satisfied with what is at hand gives rise to the structure of comparison and to the making of illusions. One of these illusions is true love, through which the tutor plans to trap his pupil for his own good.

The governor's plan employs both imagination and anticipation. His strategy aims at making Émile divine an original behind the image: "Je ne veux pas non plus qu'on lui mente en affirmant fausement que l'objet qu'on lui peint existe; mais s'il se complait à l'image, il lui souhaitera bientôt un original" (4:656). While the tutor maintains a nice distinction between the imaginary and the real, he nevertheless uses seductive devices to close the gap between the two, culminating in the talisman of the name. In the interest of giving "à cet objet imaginaire un plus grand air de vérité," the governor names her in an ostensibly off-hand way: "je dirois en riant: appelons Sophie votre future maîtresse:

Sophie est un nom de bon augure.” The tutor reasons that, since even if the woman his pupil chooses does not bear this name, “elle sera digne au moins de le porter; nous pouvons lui en faire l’honneur d’avance” (4:657).

The tutor’s plans work well, once Émile meets a Sophie later in the book and promptly falls in love, murmuring her name in astonishment. Fiction anticipates reality in Émile’s life and has a hand in bringing it into being. The inevitability of imagination and its comparisons necessitates fiction in the plot of education. Rousseau extends this logic when, in the preface to *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, he apologizes: “il faut des spectacles dans les grandes villes, et des romans aux peuples corrompus” (2:6). While the imagination is a necessary component of the moral life, as it oversees the distribution of sympathy, the deleterious effects of its emergence into the world are not to be forgotten. The denigration of the novel was a common theme in the Enlightenment, and yet Rousseau lived its paradox with a special intensity.

That fictional plotting is necessary to an educational scheme has already become apparent in a first glance at *The Invisible Lodge*. Jean Paul extends the self-reflective fictionality of his novel of education, however, beyond the scope of education, implying that fictionality is an unavoidable dimension of the inner life. Not only promised transcendence, but other realms of innermost experience turn out not to be far enough away from fiction in their own structure to be able to foreswear it honestly. In Jean Paul’s early novels of education, play and masking take on their most elaborate forms where one might most expect to find an instance of shared interiority, in love.

At a window of the palace Gustav and Beata stand together. Looking out the window they become aware of the need not to be too openly attached: “Need forced them both to bring an external object between their souls as they began to flow into each other,” so they fasten on a boy and girl playing in the courtyard (1:266–67).²⁸ Soon these children turn out to be playing Gustav and Beata and exchanging love vows, promising each other the gardens, palace and everything around them.

²⁸ Die Not zwang beide, jetzt einen äußern Gegenstand ... zwischen ihren zusammenfließenden Seelen zu bringen.

“That was too much for the front-loge above” (1:267),²⁹ the narrator comments, introducing another moment of sensibility. The play the lovers are watching from the loge puts them on stage. Could the same be said of the reader, watching the actions on this novelistic stage from the comfort of his invisible loge? The children sought and found by Gustav and Beata are the third desired by the lovers to deflect and preserve their love. While this third should be an object of the lovers’ gaze capable of dividing it and thus saving them from the social dangers of union, it becomes instead a subject that gazes through them at the ultimate gazer, the reader. Not only is the mimicry of the external social world already implicated in the lovers’ merger of souls, but the reader’s experience of the fictional play of the text is as well, since what we see in Gustav and Beata, they in turn see in the children. In the attempt to protect their innermost selves from the world’s gaze, Gustav and Beata expose themselves to the reflection that their inwardness is a form of fictional play.

Love is put on stage in a climactic sequence of *Titan* (1800–3), leading to the death of one of the elliptical novel’s two focal protagonists. *Titan* is an ellipse with Albano and Roquairol at its focal points. Albano’s name, with its associations of whiteness, hints that he is the Candide of the novel, an innocent whose moral development is hardly sufficient for the energies that go into making the novel of education. Roquairol’s dandyish mis-education is foregrounded in the outlandish rhetorical style of his letters and stage performances, in which he alone among the major characters seems to be trying to outdo the narrator in his use of metaphor to evoke pathos. When Roquairol shoots himself on stage as a tribute to his unrequited love for a woman playing the role of his beloved in his play, entitled *The Tragedian*,³⁰ he would seem to be a parody of Werther were it not for the hint at the theatrical aspect of Werther’s own clumsy suicide. As an avatar of inwardness, Roquairol could not have chosen a better precursor than Werther, who writes to Wilhelm early in the novel *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (1774), “I go into myself and find a world.”³¹

²⁹ Das war zu viel für die Frontloge oben.

³⁰ Or perhaps more accurately *The Mourning-Player* (*Der Trauerspieler*).

³¹ Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (1774), in *Werke* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1979), Am 22 Mai [Ich kehre in mich selbst zurück

The narrator ambivalently traces Roquairol's perversity to his unrequited early love and to a penchant for anticipating experience in fictional performances. Though the narrator will soon relate that "the unhappy love for Linda de Romeiro, which later might have steeled him, opened so early all the veins of his heart and bathed it warm in its own blood," first he describes Roquairol's mode of "anticipating sensations" in a way that fixes this characteristic as something constant: "all motions into which love, friendship and nature lift the heart ... he traversed in poems earlier than in life, as an actor and playwright before experiencing them as a man ... thus when they finally appeared live in his breast, he could sensibly grasp, govern, kill and stuff them for the ice-chest of future memory" (3:263).³² After this description of the programmatic primacy of art to life in Roquairol's character, the narrator's report of his early love for Linda sounds like an afterthought. All the reader sees of this earlier love is a comically failed Werther-impersonation at a masked ball (3:97). Nevertheless, after the last shot on stage Roquairol actually dies, just as the narrator has assured us that, in his youth, he truly loved. The narrator leaves us hanging between the conviction that Roquairol's performance is play and the knowledge that it is earnest: there is no vantage point from which we resolve the question.

By exchanging experience for fiction, Roquairol develops a strategy to master the reflexive structure of time that for Rousseau defeated self-possession. Roquairol's focus on the future perfect of pre-packaged memories is a desperate attempt to control the openness of time through fictional play—in this sense akin to the fiction-making of *Émile's* governor and of

und finde eine Welt!]. For more on Roquairol within the context of the nineteenth-century reception of *Werther*, see Georg Jäger, *Die Leiden des alten und jungen Werther* (Munich: Hanser 1984), 175–76.

³² Armer Karl!—Du tatest noch mehr! Nicht bloß die Wahrheiten, auch die Empfindungen antizipierte er. Alle herrliche Zustände der Menschheit, alle Bewegungen, in welche die Liebe und die Freundschaft und die Natur das Herz erheben, alle diese durchging er früher in Gedichten als im Leben, früher als Schauspieler und Theaterdichter denn als Mensch ... daher, als sie endlich lebendig in seiner Brust erschienen, konnt' er besonnen sie ergreifen, regieren, ertöten und gut ausstopfen für die Eisgrube der künftigen Erinnerung. Die unglückliche Liebe für Linda de Romeiro, die ihn später vielleicht gestählt hätte, öffnete so früh alle Adern seines Herzens und badete es warm im eignen Blute.

Rousseau himself in writing. Not long after his apostrophe to Roquairol, the narrator adds that his character looks towards death in his imagination, “always looking back towards his patron saint, death” (3:264).³³ In taking death as his patron saint, Roquairol embraces the consequences of an emergence into the manifold of time as depicted by Rousseau in the wake of the emergence of imagination.

The narrator describes Roquairol as an artist whose theatrical representations of experience, anticipating experience itself, drain him: “every representation hollowed him out even more, as when hollows remain in the sun once it has discharged worlds” (3:263).³⁴ The performative anticipation of death is thus not the only motif linking Albano’s wild friend to Gustav’s gentle tutor. Gustav’s resurrection climaxes when he sees the sun for the first time and exclaims, “God is standing there!” (1:61), literalizing a metaphor familiar to anyone raised within the western philosophical and religious tradition.³⁵ The Platonic motif of the sun whose appearance thus serves as a climax to Gustav’s education in inwardness makes a strange return in the culminating image of Roquairol’s inwardness. Roquairol’s theatrical representations of interiority empty him out so that he is as hollow as the sun might appear after the discovery of sun spots.³⁶

While interiority still defines the interpretive horizon of the metaphor, the connotations of this interiority have shifted radically. From Plato’s philosophy to twentieth-century physics, the sun organizes the life-world from without, imposing a limit

³³ Und immer nach seinem Schutzheiligen umblickend, nach dem Tode.

³⁴ Jede Darstellung höhnte ihn tiefer aus, wie der Sonne von ausgeworfenen Welten die Gruben blieben.

³⁵ Gott steht dort!

³⁶ Though this is not the current scientific interpretation of the phenomenon of sun spots first widely publicized by Galileo and Christoph Scheiner in 1612, it registers the surprise that European culture felt on first hearing of the changeability of the sun, whose presumed permanence had ensconced it in its traditional symbolic position. See “Scheiner, Christoph,” *Encyclopedia of the Scientific Revolution*, ed. W. Applebaum (New York: Garland, 2000), 588. See also Rivka Feldhay, “Religion,” in *The Cambridge History of Science*, ed. K. Park and L. Daston, vol. 3 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 727–55. Feldhay finds in Galileo’s first publication on sun spots “a philosophical broadside against the possibility of knowing ‘essences’ of things, thus destroying the traditional bridges between the senses and the intellect, between God and nature, and between natural knowledge and religion” (744).

to change and relation in both the physical and intelligible realms of experience. The sun defines the internal system of life as a life-giving outside.³⁷ Here, however, the sun does not appear as the necessary obverse of an “inner life” and guarantor of its transcendent status, but rather as an image of hollowness. Not only does the sun with its spots enter the phenomenal world, but it also becomes subject to the endless mutability of literary metaphor.

The repetition of metaphors has multiple dimensions, and it suggests multiple ways of reading. While the suggestion that one of these dimensions is musical is worth lingering over,³⁸ since indeed repetition in different contexts stretches semantics enough to make room for musical pattern, we must remember that in the end metaphor cannot entirely escape semantics. Though metaphorical language can approximate music just as much as it can evoke the visible, language’s inability to become entirely either image or music leaves open a hermeneutic reading. Reading of the sun in the context of Roquairol, the reader swivels back to the scene of Gustav’s emergence and sees the sun there in a different light. Repetition is revision. Reading is as open-ended a process as is life in time.

For this open-endedness, Jean Paul has a more precise name: he calls it “elliptical.” After a suspiciously blissful scene in *Titan*, the narrator addresses readerly anxiety over the ability of literary representations to supplant lived realities. The reader presumably finds it unreasonable of the narrator to portray such blissful scenes as that of Albano’s first acquaintance with Liane, which has just been narrated. After all, since nothing in the reader’s present experience can correspond to such scenes, to experience them in reading is only to nourish impossible dreams:

³⁷ The sun as an external ordering instance enabling the system of life to remain coherent has survived into twentieth-century physics: “Thus the ‘unnatural’ evolutionary process demands, for the sake of ever ‘higher-ordered’ and more differentiated life-forms, the continual ‘ordering hand’ of the sun (which emanates syntropy or negative entropy)” [So verlangt etwa der “unnatürliche” Evolutionsprozeß auf unserer Erde zu immer “höher geordneten,” höher differenzierten Lebewesen die stetige “ordnende Hand” der (Syntropie oder negative Entropie einstrahlenden) Sonne]. Hans Peter Dürr, *Naturwissenschaft und Poesie*, in *Scheidewege* (1992/3): 103.

³⁸ See Julia Clout, *Geheime Texte: Jean Paul und die Musik* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), 227–30.

But, you good people ... you who have your beloved *in* your heart but not *on* your breast, am I not painting all these images of bliss, like the Greeks, as if on the marble sarcophagi of your discarded dormant past? ... and you, younger or poorer one, whom time rather than the past first gave a future, won't you tell me, I should have hid from you certain blessed images like relics, out of fear that you would venerate them, and won't you add that without these phoenix-images you would have nourished easier wishes and achieved some of them?—And how I have pained you all!—but myself as well, for how could it be any better with me than with you?

Thus you would conclude that, since you could never experience such beautiful days as those that glow afterward in *memory* or beforehand in *hope*: so you would demand to have your day without either, and as it is only on both poles of the elliptical cupola of time that one can make out music's soft tones of the spheres, while in the middle of the present one hears nothing, so you would rather remain and listen in the middle; and as for past and future—which no man can experience, for they are only two different poetic modes of the heart, an *Iliad* and *Odyssee*, a lost and found Milton's paradise—these you don't want to hear at all, nestling deaf and blind into an *animal* present. (3:220–21)³⁹

The excursus provides an explication of human consciousness in three distinct and yet linked conditions: inwardness, temporality and fictionality. The narrator anticipates the despair of the reader who bears the desired love-object “*in* his heart but not *on* his

³⁹ Aber, ihr guten Menschen ... die ihr die geliebten Wesen nur *in* und nicht *an* dem Herzen habt, bild' ich nicht alle diese Gemälde der Wonne, wie die Griechen, gleichsam an den Marmorsärgen eurer umgelegten schlafenden Vorzeit ab? ... Und du, jüngerer oder ärmerer Mensch, dem die Zeit statt der Vergangenheit erst eine Zukunft gab, wirst du mir nicht einmal sagen, ich hätte dir manche selige Gestalten wie heilige Leiber verbergen sollen aus Furcht, du würdest sie anbeten, und wirst du nicht dazusetzen, du hättest ohne diese Phönix-Bildnisse leichtere Wünsche genährt und manche erreicht?—Und wie wehe habe ich euch allen getan!—Aber mir auch; denn wie könnt' es mir besser ergehen als euch allen?—Euer Schluß wäre demnach dieser: Da ihr schöne Tage nie so schön erleben könnt, als sie nachher in der *Erinnerung* glänzen oder vorher in der *Hoffnung*: so verlangtet ihr lieber den Tag ohne beide; und da man nur an den beiden Polen des elliptischen Gewölbes der Zeit die leisen Sphärenlaute der Musik vernimmt, und in der Mitte der Gegenwart nichts: so wollt ihr lieber in der Mitte verharren und aufhorchen, Vergangenheit und Zukunft aber—die beide kein Mensch erleben kann, weil sie nur zwei verschiedene Dichtungsarten unseres Herzen sind, eine *Ilias* und *Odyssee*, ein verlorne und wiedergefundene Miltons-Paradies—wollt ihr gar nicht anhören und heranlassen, um nur taubblind in einer *tierischen* Gegenwart zu nisten.

breast" (3:221).⁴⁰ To the objection that the narrator's literary grave-monuments suggest a promise of rebirth that can only be deceptive, the narrator initially replies with the assurance, unsurprising for the age of sensibility, that he shares the reader's emotional predicament. This argument may be unpersuasive, but it leads into the metaphorical equation of the temporal, affective life with literature itself, which closes the excursus.

The following, more persuasive response concerns the nature of human time, captured here in the metaphor of the whispering galleries. Present experience is empty, consciousness being comprised of the poles past and future, memory and hope—which are themselves already poetic creations. While the present itself is deaf and blind, and other points under the ellipse are capable only of perceiving the myriad impressions of temporal consciousness as unorganized noise, through a focused reflection between the two poles of past and future, human life can seem as ineffably self-complete as music. The ellipse is significant not for breaking the circle but for generating it—continually anew. The narrative closure needed for human life not to collapse into a chaos of possibilities is nevertheless always preliminary. Like the search for origins, the search for closure is intrinsic to the project of consciousness—yet poetry enables us to see this project as not only preliminary but performative. Not only is final closure illusory, but the process of its construction always contains an element of fiction-making or performance, whether in art or in life.

The ellipse is thus a privileged figure in Jean Paul's thought for the paradoxical reason that it alone is capable of delivering spherical closure, if only for a moment. The elliptical time of reading Jean Paul becomes sensible in the repetition of metaphors. Confronted with Roquairol as a bursting sun, one is forced to reconsider the sun in its earlier contexts, for instance in Gustav's exit from the cave. Memory and anticipation are after all focal dimensions, not only of life experience, but also of the reading of a text.⁴¹ Conversely, the oscillation between

⁴⁰ *Nur in, nicht an dem Herzen.*

⁴¹ The hermeneutic character of both life and reading that Jean Paul foregrounds in his texts is thus more in line with the hermeneutics of Gadamer than with that of his contemporary Schleiermacher, for it is not until Gadamer that the import of anticipation in the reading of a text gains its full theoretical expression.

past and future in the plotting of experience makes the project of living in some sense fictional, a reliance on “poetic modes of the heart” (3:221). The literary text presents itself as a mirror for the temporal reflexivity of the reader, whose gaze is necessarily focused, not on the real present, but on the focal points of past and future that are themselves as fictional as an epic poem. Once readers emerge from the deaf present into “the elliptical cupola of time,” they need the organized reflection of narrative fiction to guide them.

The equation of temporal consciousness with the process of reading and writing fictions opens a window onto Jean Paul’s filiations with the complex notion of “romantic irony.” While recent criticism has emphasized Jean Paul’s critical distance from the Jena romantics and his establishment of the alternative figure of “humour,” one would be mistaken to deny that an ironic design informs Jean Paul’s novelistic reflection on the relation of fiction to something outside of it.⁴² In his Berlin *Lectures on Fine Art and Literature* (*Vorlesungen über die schöne Literatur und Kunst*) of 1801–4, August W. Schlegel reflects on poetry as “always a poetry of poetry” since language itself, which is the ground of poetry, is at the same time already a poetic mode. Schlegel puts “poetry” and “language” in the same relation in which temporal consciousness and fictional play stand in Jean Paul’s excursus to *Titan*.⁴³ Soon after the *Titan* passage quoted above, Jean Paul warns his reader not to try to realize the fictional scenes he has just presented in their lived experience, “for whosoever tries to

⁴² For a representative summary of this trend, see the conclusion of *Pleasures of Abandonment* (151–56), in which Fleming juxtaposes mirror-images in the writings of Goethe, the Jena romantics and Jean Paul in order to argue that self-reflexivity in Jean Paul’s writing is a parodic gesture. That self-reflective writing—in the sense of writing that reflects on writing—has more of a central role to play in Jean Paul’s fiction than can be covered by the notion of parody, is one of the arguments of this essay.

⁴³ “Indeed one can say without a trace of exaggeration or paradox that all poetry is really poetry of poetry, for it assumes language as a prerequisite, whose invention is already due to the poetic faculty” [Ja kann man ohne Übertreibung und Paradoxie sagen, daß eigentlich alle Poesie, Poesie der Poesie sey; denn sie setzt schon die Sprache voraus, deren Erfindung doch der poetischen Anlage angehört]. A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über schöne Litteratur und Kunst* (Heilbronn: Verlag von [den] Gebr[ü]dern, Henninger, 1884), 262. See also the French translation and critical commentary in P. Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *L’Absolu littéraire* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978), 349.

carry poetic dreams over into waking life is even madder than the North American, who realizes his nightly dreams" (3:221).⁴⁴ This qualification is in tension with the foregoing defence of fiction, grounded as it was in the characterization of experience's main temporal dimensions—past and future—as “poetic modes of the heart” (3:221).

Though reality bears traces of its fictional construction, fiction and reality are still not the same—even for Roquairol, who insistently stages their union. Moreover, Roquairol's temporal reflexivity, rhetorical emphasis on inwardness, and pleasure in verbal surfaces resemble the game in which the narrator and reader engage.⁴⁵ When Roquairol explodes “like the sun giving out worlds” (3:277), his explosion joins the series of emergences linking him to Gustav in leaving his cave of instruction and even to the reader in his emergence from the blind nest of the present into the more open, elliptical space of a life in time. Though these emergences promise the possibility of transcending the enclosure of the moment without sacrificing interiority to any mere externalization, their promise comes marked with the indelible stamp of the fictional plots and rhetorical play in which it is embedded. Far from merely depicting fictionally the emergence of interiority into a material and historical world, Jean Paul suggests that this process can only be seen through the eye of fiction.

In the “billet to my friends” preceding the prologue to his novel *The Life of Quintus Fixlein* (*Das Leben des Quintus Fixlein*), written 1795–1800, Jean Paul presents another opposition between nesting and emergence into the open. Rather than opposing the enclosure of the present to the openness of temporal life, the narrator here presents a choice that pertains at once to two ways of relating to the world in action and also to two ways of contemplating the world as a totality:

I could never report more than three ways to become, not happy, but happier. The first, which leads upward, is: to drive so far out over

⁴⁴ Denn wer die *poetischen* Träume ins Wachen tragen will, ist toller als der Nordamerikaner, der die *nächtlichen* realisiert. “North American” here means “shamanic Native American.”

⁴⁵ For a discussion of Roquairol as a personification of the playfully deformativ powers of metaphorical “wit,” see Helmut Pfotenbauer, “Roquairol: semiotische Verwerfungen einer Figur,” in *Jean Paul-Jahrbuch 1998*, (Mühlscher: Universitätsverlag Bayreuth, 1998), 9–32.

the cloud of life that the whole world with its wolfs' dens, ossuaries and lightning rods seems to lie far beneath one's feet, shrunken like a little kindergarten.—The second is, to fall directly down into the garden and make yourself so at home in a furrow there, that, when you look out of your warm lark's nest, you also don't see any wolf's dens, ossuaries and rods, but just ears of corn, of which each is a tree for the nesting bird and an umbrella and parasol.—The third and last—which I consider the hardest and cleverest—is to alternate between the first two. (4:10).⁴⁶

The first two ways to approach happiness are two perspectives on the world, one synthetic and totalizing and the other embedded, seeing only the most immediate surroundings. Though the two vantage points are distinctly placed along a vertical axis, they can also be seen accurately in terms of an opposition between enclosure and openness. A person who nests sees the world closing in protectively, ignoring utterly the dangers lurking nearby, while for the person who soars these dangers appear minuscule and harmless.⁴⁷

Thus, neither perspective gives a full picture of the world, in spite of the encyclopaedic ambitions of the one and the claim to immediacy of the other. Hence the smartest and hardest way

⁴⁶ Ich konnte nie mehr als drei Wege, glücklicher (nicht glücklich) zu werden, auskundschaften. Der erste, der in die Höhe geht, ist: so weit über das Gewölke des Lebens hinauszudringen, daß man die ganze äußere Welt mit ihren Wolfsgruben, Beinhäusern und Gewitterableitungen von weitem unter seinen Füßen nur wie ein eingeschrumpftes Kindergärtchen liegen sieht.—Der zweite ist: gerade herabzufallen ins Gärtchen und da sich so einheimisch in eine Furche einzunisten, daß, wenn man aus seinem warmen Lerchennest herausieht, man ebenfalls keine Wolfsgruben, Beinhäuser und Stangen, sondern nur Ähren erblickt, deren jede für den Nestvogel ein Baum und ein Sonnen—und Regenschirm ist.—Der dritte endlich—den ich für den schwersten und klügsten halte—ist der, mit den beiden andern zu wechseln.

⁴⁷ Hendrik Birus has anticipated this analysis insofar as he too reads this passage in parallel with different narrative perspectives in Jean Paul's narratives. Birus sees in the exchange of soaring and nesting perspectives an analogy to the oscillation between first- and third-person narrative stances characteristic of the novels preceding *Titan*. Birus uses this passage as a hinge in his argument comparing the "peripheral first-person" narrative style of the early novels and the narrative stance dominant in the preceding satires, marked by "panoramic" views of society and the invisibility of the narrator within the fictional world. See Birus, "Systematische Verschiebungen der Erzählperspektive in Jean Pauls früher Prosa," in *Frühe Formen mehrperspektivischen Erzählens von der Edda bis Flaubert: ein Problemaufriß*, ed. A.P. Frank and Ulrich Molk (Erich Schmidt Verlag: Berlin 1991), 82–96, esp. 88.

is to oscillate between the two.⁴⁸ It is admittedly a difficult path not suited to all, and within two pages Jean Paul concludes a paragraph amplifying his description of the second way with the dictum, “The most necessary sermon that one could give to our century is that it should stay at home” (4:12).⁴⁹ Yet a sermon for the turbulent close of the eighteenth century need not be the author’s last word to posterity. The “smartest” or “cleverest way” is that belonging to Jean Paul’s narrators, alternately soaring and nesting, opening and closing the world for the reader through the play of narrative and rhetorical perspectives. In the absence of a guardian like *Émile*’s governor to serve as “master of comparisons,” regulating his desires through the near-illusion of fiction, the reader turns instead to the fiction presented as such by the novelist. “Plus nous gagnons sur la jouissance, plus le bonheur s’éloigne de nous” (3:142): while from Rousseau’s point of view Jean Paul’s oeuvre resembles the triumph of poetic *jouissance* over experiential *bonheur*, Jean Paul implies that in the oscillations of enclosure and emergence is the only happiness to be had, either in experience or in poetry. The aesthetic of the incommensurable evident in Jean Paul is among other things a response to Rousseau’s measured ideal of nature.

Let us return to the *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, where Jean Paul describes the work of poetry in spatial terms: “Unlike reality, which disposes of its prosaic justice and spreads out its flowers in unending spaces and times, poetry must please in closed ones; poetry is the only peace-goddess of the earth and of the angels, who leads us, and if only for a matter of hours, out of prisons and onto stars; like Achilles’ lance, poetry must heal every wound that it stabs” (5:35).⁵⁰ This description of poetry proceeds through

⁴⁸ This passage has often been seen in conjunction with the opposition in Jean Paul’s fictions between sublime *Himmelsstürmer* like the “Luftschiffer Giannozo” in the story of the same name, which consists of a diary left behind by the protagonist after his crash in a hot-air-balloon, and the schoolmaster Wutz, who stays at home and writes his own books because his poverty keeps him from entry into the public reading culture—an opposition in which the scales are tipped towards the latter type. For an example of this type of reading, see the summary of an otherwise illuminating analysis of the life of Wutz in Fleming, 64.

⁴⁹ Die nötigste Predigt, die man unserm Jahrhundert halten kann, ist die, zu Hause zu bleiben.

⁵⁰ Ungleich der Wirklichkeit, die ihre prosaische Gerechtigkeit und ihre Blumen in unendlichen Räumen und Zeiten austeielt, muß eben die Poesie in geschlossenen beglücken; sie ist die einzige Friedengöttin der Erde und

two metaphorical passages in opposite directions. Though to pass from reality to poetry is to enter an enclosed space in which poetry can work its pleasurable transformation, poetry also leads us *out* of a prison to the stars.

To be sure, in terms of the argument that soon develops, the two metaphors belong to different contexts. As Jean Paul will soon explain, the enclosure refers to the composition of a literary artwork, the way that it compresses the dispersed reality of different times and places into the limited space of a book, while the second metaphor relates the liberating effect that literary art can have on its recipient. Nevertheless, this logical reconstruction does not reflect the reading process, which immediately registers these two passages as opposed. Metaphors possess a suasive power which in many cases outlives the discursive context in which they are embedded. In this case, we understand that poetry frees by enclosing. This paradox is striking in a synoptic reading—or at least the approximation of one—of Jean Paul's oeuvre, largely because it appears throughout, both in the content of the narratives and in the narration itself. In a sense felt almost immediately upon beginning a reading of the novels, enclosure and emergence define Jean Paul's narrative practice. The impression of polarity in this characterization of poetry is only deepened by the metaphor of Achilles's lance, with which it concludes. Poetry heals wounds only after the manner of a mythical lance that has also inflicted them. Rather than being a recursive strategy to undo the wounds of consciousness, fiction uncovers the fictional aspects of ordinary consciousness and celebrates them.

The mobility of the metaphors of enclosure in this section of the *Vorschule der Ästhetik* becomes apparent in the next paragraph, when the metaphor of the prison comes to refer to authorial subjectivity, in which the poet is enjoined not to trap his reader: "After all," he asks, "could there be anything more dangerous than a poet, if he encloses our reality entirely within his own, thus trapping us in a prison within a prison?" (3:35).⁵¹ Literature is an

der Engel, der uns, und wär' es nur auf Stunden, aus Kerkern auf Sterne führt; wie Achilles' Lanze muß sie jede Wunde heilen, die sie sticht.

⁵¹ Gäbe es denn sonst etwas Gefährlicheres als einen Poeten, wenn dieser *unsere* Wirklichkeit noch vollends mit *seiner* und uns also mit einem eingekerkerten Kerker umschlösse?

act of communication between two consciousnesses, and thereby a confrontation between two enclosures. Bringing these two enclosures into relation has one of two results: it either concludes in breaking apart both or it locks one within the other. The poet can free his reader from his subjective enclosure, through a comparison with his own; but this comparison can also succeed in trapping the reader even further. What might be a jail-break can just as easily become a *mise-en-abîme*. To achieve the former and avoid the latter is a matter of infinite delicacy, for which the *Vorschule der Ästhetik* does not provide a conceptual primer.

If Jean Paul's characters seem intent on proving Percy Bysshe Shelley's suspicion, voiced in the conclusion of his poem *The Sensitive Plant*, that "death itself must be / Like all the rest, a mockery,"⁵² then their emergence into the questionable light of fiction may also be read as anticipating another insistence of Shelley's, this time in the 1819 essay *On Life*: "our whole life is ... an education of error."⁵³ Poetry partakes of this error, furthers it, and reveals it.

Bilkent University

⁵² Percy B. Shelley, *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald Reiman and N. Freistat (New York: Norton, 2002), 295, conclusion, lines 128–29.

⁵³ Shelley, 507.