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Senses of Smell: The Differentiation of Air in Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and Ponge

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Abstract

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This dissertation studies the sense most neglected in literary studies, philosophy, and the history of the senses: olfaction. It argues that modernity has been marked by a tendency towards deodorization that attempts to establish a monosensorial and odorless civilization shaped by ocularcentrism. Against this tendency, the authors studied here (Friedrich Hölderlin, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Francis Ponge) show that we have, in fact, never been deodorized and that the unique logic of olfactory sense-making harbors significant philosophical, aesthetic, and cultural potential.

Responding to recent ecocritical discourses that propose the term “being-in-the-air” as key to understanding our existence in the atmosphere, the two main sections of this dissertation are centered on terms that show that the air of this “being-in-the-air” is not a unified term but rather is always stratified and differentiated—and that the olfactory modulation of air is a key mode of just such stratification and differentiation, which, to a degree, is opposed to deodorization as an erasure of difference. The first section titled “Smell and the Dis-Articulation of Unity” argues that Friedrich Hölderlin discovers in his poetry that “Luft” (air) and “Duft” (fragrance) present themselves as terms that are, comparatively speaking, better suited to articulate the unity of everything living, thus potentially replacing the ocularcentric intellectual *Anschauung* (intuition) of his philosophical peers. However, as Hölderlin’s poetry progresses into “lateness,” this unifying tendency becomes *dis-articulated*: the inevitable stratification, the

falling apart of the unity of air, asserts itself in his “geopoetics of smell,” and it is this very disarticulation that serves as a defining feature of what lateness means in Hölderlin. From this disarticulation of unity found in the ever increasing differentiating and opening character of smells, Hölderlin’s “latest” poetry moves towards deodorization, slowly erasing olfactory tropes and thus producing a negative version of the unity of air via the absence of explicit olfactory differentiation.

The second section, titled “Smell and the Problem of Distance,” shows that for Friedrich Nietzsche smell similarly poses an urgent question of differentiation: his “olfactory genius” (itself inscribed into the *agon* of vision, hearing, and olfaction that makes up Nietzsche’s sensory constitution) is supposed to set him apart from those surrounding him in his (aerial) element—but a close analysis of smell’s relationship to distance, perspective, and chaos shows that smell is *compromising*; it undoes the stratification of a pathos of distance and instead tends towards chaos. In smell, according to the argument developed in this section, the world’s constant tendency towards chaos becomes perceptible. Nietzsche’s “new smells,” then, proposed most insistently in *Also sprach Zarathustra* as the “smell of the earth” and the “smell of eternity,” seek to reconfigure olfaction’s relationship to differentiation.

The dissertation concludes with an epilogue on Francis Ponge’s book *Soap*: shifting the emphasis away from the questions of unity and distance, the everyday, vulgar smell of soap reconceptualizes what deodorization means in and for modernity, and leads to a different understanding of cleanliness, purity, and literature.

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In a text of considerable importance to this dissertation, sometimes edited under the title *Fragment philosophischer Briefe*, Friedrich Hölderlin writes the following about gratitude: “ich kann dir nur so viel darauf antworten, daß der Mensch auch in so fern sich über die Noth erhebt [...] als er für sein Leben *dankbar* seyn kann“ (FHA 14, 46). With the poet’s advice in mind, I would like to thank a number of people without whom this dissertation would have never come into being. My professors at Northwestern have been unfailing in their support, equal parts encouraging, critical, and inspiring: Harris Feinsod, Susannah Young-Ah Gottlieb, Alessia Ricciardi, Nasrin Qader, Erica Weitzman, Tristram Wolff. My mentors during my undergraduate years at Yale taught me how one might attempt to read, write, and think: Karsten Harries, Michael Della Rocca, Caleb Smith, and, above all, Carol Jacobs, who first showed me the great joy of studying literature. Among my peers, I would like to name four friends who over so many years have served as invaluable interlocutors, each conversation a promise of more to come: Kyle Baasch, Clay Cogswell, Priyanka Deshmukh, and Tobias Kühne. One of the greatest opportunities of my time in graduate school has been the chance to work with the Northwestern Prison Education Program. I am deeply grateful for and proud of my fellow GSAC members, our Director Jennifer Lackey, and, most importantly, all of our students at Stateville Correctional Center.

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Introduction

Smell and the Differentiation of Air

1. The Stinking Poet in a World Deodorized

What does paradise smell like? Much like hell—or not at all.

This is the twofold answer proposed by the poems Bertolt Brecht wrote when he was in exile in Los Angeles from 1941-47, the city in which his fellow exile Thomas Mann found himself “enchanted by the light, by the special fragrance of the air” in these “paradisical scenes.”¹ In contrast to Mann, the irascible Brecht found the paradisaical city of “angels” suffocating, dull, hostile to his literary aspirations, and incompatible with his form of life—and it is the topic of odors that serves as one of the tropes through which Brecht negotiates this sense of dislocation and being out of step with an alleged paradise. For Brecht, and in nuanced ways for all authors studied in this dissertation, a lack of smell, on the one hand, and hellish-paradisal scents, on the other, simultaneously articulate an *olfactory sense of place* and mark the subject’s being out of place, cast out and casting itself out even further.

The possibility that heaven and hell might coincide is delineated in the first poem of one of Brecht’s most incisive literary productions from his years in US-American exile, his *Hollywood-Elegien*, a cycle of poems written at the suggestion of Brecht’s friend and collaborator Hanns Eisler. Four out of these six elegies directly mention smell. While written in free verse and without rhymes, bordering on prose, the first of these poems displays a strict

¹ Quoted in Nash, *The American West Transformed*, 188. A fair amount of scholarship on German intellectuals in Californian exile exists, see, for an overview, Bahr, *Weimar on the Pacific* and Jenemann, *Adorno in America*.

formal structure of three sentences, the first speaking of heaven, the third of hell, and the middle sentence mentioning both in a claim of their coincidence:

Das Dorf Hollywood ist entworfen nach den Vorstellungen
Die man hierorts vom Himmel hat. Hierorts
Hat man ausgerechnet, daß Gott
Himmel und Hölle benütigend, nicht zwei
Etablissements zu entwerfen brauchte, sondern
Nur ein einziges, nämlich den Himmel. Dieser
Dient für die Unbemittelten, Erfolglosen
Als Hölle.²

In the “village” Hollywood, an economizing imperative reigns, and one has “calculated” that only heaven is needed—because heaven is hell for those without means. The letter *H* thus strings together the series *hierorts*, *Hollywood*, *Himmel*, *Hölle* that designates the split object of mourning: these elegies do not sing, at least not directly, the loss of the home country that has been taken over by fascism and war, but they mourn that even heaven, in this “village,” is really hell.

Brecht’s poems articulate the fate of this heaven-hell through, among other tropes, the role of fruit and its smell, one of the archetypal associations of paradise. In “Nachdenkend über die Hölle,” a poem written around the same time as *Hollywood-Elegien* and belonging to that cycle topically, Brecht evokes “mein Bruder Shelley” who had compared hell to London in “Peter Bell the Third.” Brecht, half playfully, half seriously, advances the counterclaim that hell “muß/Noch mehr Los Angeles gleichen.”³ The central lines of the poem then read:

² Brecht, *Gesammelte Werke* 10, 849.

³ Brecht, *Gesammelte Werke* 10, 830. Brecht had worked on translating Shelley, including parts of “Peter Bell the Third,” with Margarete Steffin in 1938, seeking to demonstrate the realist possibilities of lyric form and enlisting him in a type of Left German Shelleyanism. (Cf. Plass, “Die Entfremdung umfunktionieren” and the work of Robert Kaufman cited by Plass.) The third section of “Peter Bell,” titled “Hell,” is, in fact, framed by two considerations of *air conditioning* and the aerial quality of hellish London. The section opens with the verses “Hell is a city much like London –/A populous and a smoky city” (vv. 147-8) and closes with a stanza that begins: “All are damned – they breathe an air/Thick,

[...] Und Obstmärkte
 Mit ganzen Haufen von Früchten, die allerdings
 Weder riechen noch schmecken.

The bounty (“ganzen Haufen”) of this heaven-hell is the bounty of a market, a commercial accumulation, that lacks everything besides quantity: neither taste nor smell can be ascribed to these fruits. In other words, one of the markers of the hellishness of heaven is *deodorization*: things might *look* pretty and appealing but their olfactory qualities are lost, overwhelmed by the quantity of its commercial availability. Discerning hell underneath a heavenly looking surface requires a sense other than vision: olfaction offers itself most readily to diagnose the characteristics of the peculiar sensory constitution of the “hierorts.”

The fifth of the *Hollywood-Elegien* takes up this motif of the fruit market and its lack of odor—but shows that *behind* such commercial deodorization can be found a different smell:

Die Engel von Los Angeles
 Sind müde vom Lächeln. Am Abend
 Kaufen sie hinter den Obstmärkten
 Verzweifelt kleine Fläschchen
 Mit Geschlechtsgeruch.⁴

While the deodorization of fruit might be tolerable, the lack of a different smell leads to despair (“verzweifelt”): the smell of “Geschlecht,” a word oscillating among genitals, sex, and generation. The placid, angelic smile of the inhabitants of Los Angeles, meant to signal their happy and harmonious existence in paradise, lasts only through the day. In the evening, this smooth surface is disrupted by a desperate desire for the smell of sex, a desire that can, in turn,

infected, joy-dispelling” (vv. 256-7). Brecht’s poetry derives much of its power from its peculiar relationship to tradition that cannot, as Hannah Arendt has pointed out, be reduced to mere parody, pastiche, or rupture: Brecht’s relationship to Shelley—or to Hölderlin in his adaption of Hölderlin’s Sophocles translations, for that matter—would be a privileged locus for investigating the structure of this relationship.

⁴ Brecht, *Gesammelte Werke 10*, 850.

only be fulfilled by a commercial transaction. Indicating, in the word “ver-zweifelt,” a scission not only of the smiling yet desperate hellish-paradisaal existence but also of (twofold) sexual difference, the fifth elegy shows that the *Haufen* of fragrance-free fruit covers up the *Kaufen* of little bottles that reasserts the power of fragrance. Poetry, in other words, shows that behind the tendency of deodorization lies something else: a desperate attempt to recover smell after all.⁵

Brecht’s opposition to a world deodorized finds expression not only in his poetry but also, in perhaps intensified form, in the olfactory appearance of his own person. “He stank,” Brecht biographer Stephen Parker writes, describing the adolescent Brecht:

he did not change his clothes, rarely washed and did not brush his teeth. After a childhood spent withdrawn because of shame at his fragile condition, this boy with the impeccable manners was going on the offensive, displaying a neglect of personal hygiene, which, as many people attest, remained a life-long habit.⁶

This habit of refusing hygienic norms became one of Brecht’s weapons in his opposition to the “normal” behavioral standards of so-called civilized society. Refusing to clean his body and clothes, the poet marks his difference from those surrounding him through a repulsive olfactory appearance: anyone attempting to approach him, to be *close* to him, must overcome a strong sense of repulsion. This stench serves to set apart. It is even a means of distinction, as a recent novel by Michael Lentz that gives a (partly) fictionalized account of Brecht’s US-American exile emphasizes: “Die sollen mich schon auf hundert Meter wittern. Eindeutig Brecht.”⁷ Stench: unequivocally Brecht. It is this formula that constitutes the poet’s response to his dislocation: not

⁵ The other predominant smell in the elegies is the smell of petroleum (and, linked to it, of the movies). When recent ecocriticism discovers “petrocultures” as crucial to understanding human civilization in the twentieth century, then Brecht’s poetry can be said to have articulated the power of petroleum to shape a wide range of our existence—including the *atmospheric* structure of a city such as Los Angeles—decades before the emergence of this discourse.

⁶ Parker, *Bertolt Brecht*.

⁷ Lentz, *Pazifik Exil*, 245-6.

only to the exilic dislocation that seeks to escape the grasp of fascism but also to his non-harmonious existence within the world (a heaven-hell) more broadly. If America is precisely the place where no olfactory determination seems possible, then Brecht's body counteracts the deodorized loss of place by producing an olfactory sense of place:

Morgens wache ich auf, um mich herum geruchlose Luft [...] Hätte man mich mit verbundenen Augen hierher verbracht und mitten in den Raum gestellt mit der Aufforderung, so, nun rieche mal, hol mal tief Luft, und sag uns, wo wir uns befinden. Ich wäre völlig ratlos gewesen. Es riecht hier, als wäre es überall, nur ohne Geruch. Oder, als würde man hier etwas anderes atmen als Luft.⁸

When Lentz imagines Brecht wandering down the “geruchslose Unendlichkeit der Straßenfluchten,”⁹ he delineates the figure of a poet walking through a deodorized world devoid of determinate olfactory places, leaving in his wake a pungent whiff of difference.^{10, 11} The movement of the poet, much like the movement of his poetry, *re-odorizes* the world—and it is precisely this poetic movement of re-odorization that is the object of study of this dissertation.

⁸ Lentz, *Pazifik Exil*, 244.

⁹ Lentz, *Pazifik Exil*, 253.

¹⁰ Echoing or rather perhaps prefiguring Brecht, a single line in Kafka's diaries from 1910 reads: “Schriftsteller reden Gestank” (Kafka, *Tagebücher*, 11). The entry immediately preceding this line might be read in conjunction with this stench spoken by writers, illuminating both Brecht's olfactory strategies and the stench of culture found in Adorno that will be read below: “Ich schreibe das ganz bestimmt aus Verzweiflung über meinen Körper und über die Zukunft mit diesem Körper” (Kafka, 10). Kafka's olfactory tropes would merit a study in its own right: from the smell of the Veronese salami in *Der Verschollene/Amerika* to the various smells of women and (judicial) spaces in *Der Proceß*, from stinking wounds that trigger disgust to the “Gestank[] der Wahrheit” (Kafka, *Nachgelassene Schriften II*, 241) mentioned in his notebooks, Kafka repeatedly refers to odors at key moments of his work. For some preliminary reflections on these questions see Menninghaus, *Ekel*, and Martel, “The Law is not a Thing.”

¹¹ The counterfigure to this fictionalized Brecht in contemporary German novel writing would be, in certain ways, Jean-Baptiste Grenouille from Patrick Süskind's *Das Parfum*: a figure *without* any body odor whatsoever but with a supernaturally refined sense of smell, that is, a figure that does not itself appear in the olfactory realm but can nevertheless determine the gradations of that very realm with extraordinary fineness. With Grenouille, Süskind develops the olfactory counterpart to the pervasive fantasy of *seeing without being seen* that is prevalent in the human imagination in forms varying from voyeurism through panopticism to an all-seeing but invisible god.

2. *Wendezeiten*: The Historicity of the Human Sensorium

Walter Benjamin must have been intimately familiar with the offensive, unequivocally Brechtian stink. Benjamin first met Brecht through their mutual friend Asja Lacis in 1924; during the 1930s the two men frequently lived and worked in close proximity, producing what Hannah Arendt would call an encounter of “der größte lebende deutsche Dichter mit dem bedeutendsten Kritiker der Zeit.”¹² Beyond Benjamin’s familiarity with Brecht’s strategies—personal and poetic—of re-odorizing a world that tends towards a hygienic effacing of smells, Benjamin’s own work provides a framework for a critical analysis of the role of olfaction in poetics, aesthetics, and modernity more broadly. In his canonical “Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit,”¹³ Benjamin develops the claim that the constitution of the human sensorium is “nicht nur natürlich, sondern auch geschichtlich bedingt” (GS I, 478). Proposing an interpretation and extension of Benjamin’s claim of the historicity of the human senses, this dissertation develops a two-fold thesis: on the one hand, it argues that the sense of

¹² In: Lindner, *Handbuch*, 77. Nikolaus Müller-Schöll summarizes the importance of the friendship with Brecht as follows: “eine große, für Benjamin wie Brecht prägende intellektuelle Freundschaft, im Leben Benjamins nur vergleichbar denjenigen mit Gershom Scholem und Theodor W. Adorno” (*Handbuch*, 77).

¹³ Citations from Benjamin’s work will be given parenthetically in-text as “GS,” with volume and page number. The editorial history of the artwork essay has been rather convoluted and has affected its reception in a number of ways: the *Gesammelte Schriften* contain three versions, of which Benjamin generally seems to have considered the second most true to his intentions, while the third (widely read before the second version was discovered) bears the traces of certain compromises Benjamin made for publication; a French translation, produced by Benjamin with Pierre Klossowski, was the first version to be published in 1936. Only in the last few years has a volume of the new *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* appeared that enables a more detailed tracing of Benjamin’s revisions. With respect to the voluminous scholarship regarding this essay, Eva Geulen writes of the “entrenched positions” that have come to define much of the discourse around the artwork essay’s reception: “On the one hand, the essay has become a key text for all those in search of a theoretical counterposition to Adorno’s strict verdict on the ‘culture industry.’ On the other, Benjamin’s attempt to think in Marxist terms is a hopeless failure, and his theory of film is untenable” (Geulen, “Under Construction,” 121). Geulen rightly points out that the artwork essay is written in a form and style that are unusual in Benjamin’s oeuvre; instead of dismissing these differences or using them to denigrate the essay, however, Geulen shows in great detail how this form is inextricably bound up with its “object.”

smell undergoes historical alterations, in other words, that the olfactory sensorium is not only determined by nature but also by history. On the other hand, and more incisively, it suggests that the very structure of historicity itself can be thought with and through olfaction. More precisely, smell is shown to be implicated in the structure of the “geschichtliche Wendezeiten” that Benjamin evokes in his discussion of the historicity of the human sensorium: olfactory sense-making in the authors analyzed here articulates what a *Wende of Zeit* would, could, will be like. The unique logic of olfactory sense-making supplies an opportunity to show how time turns and how the turning—the *versing*—of poetry relates to the notion of a *Wende-Zeit*.

Concerning the first of these two claims, regarding the historicity of the senses, a number of scholars have pointed out that Benjamin’s approach to the work of art in this essay must be thought through the meaning of aesthetics as *aisthesis*:¹⁴ while of Greek origin, the word was introduced into philosophical discourse by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten in 1735, just over two hundred years before the publication of the French version of Benjamin’s artwork essay in the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, to refer to the sensate cognition enabled by the artwork (in Baumgarten’s case, the poem occupies a privileged position in this respect). For the tradition that thinks aesthetics through this meaning of *aisthesis*, any theory of the work of art is intimately intertwined with a theory of sense perception, and vice versa.¹⁵

¹⁴ Cf., for instance: “it is possible to identify certain affinities between Baumgarten’s and Benjamin’s inquiries into the ‘human perceptual apparatus’ that each conducts under the rubric of ‘aesthetics’” (Fenves, “Is there,” 63). See also Buck-Morss, “Aesthetics and Anesthetics” for a related claim.

¹⁵ In Benjamin’s case, a third component is decisive: technology. See, for instance, Miriam Hansen’s claim regarding the artwork essay that “the political crisis demands an understanding of the aesthetic that takes into account the social reception of *technology*, the effects of sensory alienation on the conditions of experience and agency” (Hansen, “Benjamin and Cinema,” 46; emphasis in the original). Technology in a narrow sense (of, say, the film camera, or the gramophone) is largely absent from this dissertation, for a double reason: the authors studied rarely conceive of olfaction through technological mediation, partly because olfaction has been thus far much less subject to technological alterations. (The reflections on “air

With respect to the senses, then, Benjamin advances the following straightforward but consequential claim:

Innerhalb großer geschichtlicher Zeiträume verändert sich mit der gesamten Daseinsweise der menschlichen Kollektiva auch die Art und Weise ihrer Sinneswahrnehmung. Die Art und Weise, in der die menschliche Sinneswahrnehmung sich organisiert – das Medium, in dem sie erfolgt – ist nicht nur natürlich sondern auch geschichtlich bedingt (GS I, 478; emphasis in the original).¹⁶

Three points merit attention here: first, human modes of sense perception are mutable and subject to history. Second, these changes play out first and foremost on the level of “Kollektiva:” the historicity of the human sensorium is implicated in the question of social organization since its alterations are driven by “gesellschaftliche Umwälzungen” (GS I, 479). The structure of an individual human sense apparatus depends on the historical collective that produces, modifies, and surrounds it. Third, Benjamin inserts, in dashes, the term “medium” into his claim about sense perception: he indicates here already that thinking the senses—thinking *sense-making*—necessitates a thinking of the medial space, that is, of the *middle*, of the interplay of farness and nearness, of their repelling and turning into each other.

Benjamin’s claim of the historicity of the senses echoes, to the point of approaching quotation, similar claims made by the young Karl Marx.¹⁷ In what has come to be known as the

conditioning” proposed below, however, qualify this claim.) In a wider sense, however, *Technik* is present everywhere in a thinking of olfaction.

¹⁶ This passage can be found in almost identical form in the second version of the essay, the only difference being that Benjamin adds “Sinnes” to “Wahrnehmung” in both sentences, thus strengthening the implication that it is here a question of *Sinn*, of the senses and of sense.

¹⁷ As always with Benjamin, matters are more complicated than this. Beyond Marx, one needs to, at the very least, acknowledge the importance of Paul Valéry as an important interlocutor on these questions; Benjamin thus notes: “Valéry’s Text ein Versuch, die Kunst in Kategorien darzustellen, die – geschichtlich indifferent – allein in der menschlichen Sinneserfahrung verankert sind” (Benjamin, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* 16, 301). The conception of the mutability of the constitution of the human sensorium found in Friedrich Nietzsche’s work, certainly also in the background of Benjamin’s thinking, will be addressed below. Scholarly debates on Benjamin’s relationship to Marx and Marxism are seemingly endless; the emphasis here is on tracing a narrowly circumscribed set of quotations regarding the senses

Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, to which Benjamin had partial access in the form of an edition of Marx's "Frühschriften" published by Siegfried Landshut und Jakob Peter Mayer in 1932, Marx writes: "Die *Bildung* der 5 Sinne ist eine Arbeit der ganzen bisherigen Weltgeschichte."¹⁸ History works on the senses, and the formation of the senses is the product of this work—a thought that suggests that one could read, at least partially, the unfolding of world history in the state of the senses. To understand the constitution of the human sensorium, both Marx and Benjamin claim, one has to understand its formation in and by history.

This historical *Bildung* of the senses, Benjamin argues in a transformation of a further Marxian thought, stands in relation to the *tasks* that the sensorium faces:¹⁹

Die Aufgaben, welche in geschichtlichen Wendezeiten dem menschlichen Wahrnehmungsapparat gestellt werden, sind auf dem Wege der bloßen Optik, also der Kontemplation, gar nicht zu lösen. Sie werden allmählich nach Anleitung der taktilen Rezeption, durch Gewöhnung, bewältigt (GS I, 505; GS VII, 381; emphasis in the original).

Benjamin articulates here one of the guiding principles of the investigation of olfaction proposed in this dissertation: certain tasks posed to the human sensorium might be solvable via one sense but not via another. The sense that fails and no longer is adequate to the new tasks is vision; while recourse to sight might have previously been adequate, a reconfiguration of the sensorium

that Benjamin gathered from his reading of Marx, in particular the young Marx. Burkhardt Lindner's analysis, by contrast, mostly places an emphasis on Benjamin's relationship to *Das Kapital*: "Mit dem wahrnehmungstheoretischen Ansatz wird ein kritischer Bezug auf Marx hergestellt. Die Kritik der politischen Ökonomie fasse die Umwälzungen des kulturellen Überbaus im Zuge des Kapitalismus nicht ins Auge. *Das Kapital* kennt, außer als ideologische Verhexung, nicht das Thema ‚sinnliche Wahrnehmung‘. Das ist aber gerade Benjamins Ausgangspunkt" (Lindner, *Handbuch*, 234). See also T. J. Clark "Should Benjamin Have Read Marx?"

¹⁸ Marx/Engels, *Gesamtausgabe Band 3: Werke, Artikel, Entwürfe März 1843 bis August 1844*, 270; emphasis in the original.

¹⁹ The notion of these tasks posed to humanity and their corresponding solvability derives from Marx's famous passage in the preface to the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, where Marx claims that "Humanity poses for itself only such tasks as it is able to solve." This can be further traced to Kant; see Fenves, "Is there an Answer."

is needed. Benjamin further elaborates this thought as the end of the *primacy of the optical* and ties this change to the outgoing of the nineteenth century. He most directly produces this claim in a text that stands in an intimate but complex relationship to the artwork essay, namely the so-called *Passagen-Werk*.²⁰ “Übrigens hat neuerdings mit der Abkehr vom Naturalismus der Primat des Optischen aufgehört, der das vorige Jahrhundert beherrscht” (GS V, 274). While the flaneur is optical, so the continuation of the passage argues, the collector constitutes his tactile counterfigure.²¹ In other words, a historical change has elevated one sense and decreased the importance of another, while this change corresponds to the tasks posed to the sensorium.

This historical change is named by Benjamin with a highly significant term:

“Wendezeiten.” Within the Benjaminian corpus, this word cannot but evoke the early text “Zwei Gedichte von Friedrich Hölderlin” that seeks to develop a “reine Ästhetik” (GS II, 105) in response to Hölderlin’s revision of the poem “Dichtermut” into the poem “Blödigkeit.” The latter names, in the singular, a “Wende der Zeit.” In some of the most enigmatic sentences of “Zwei Gedichte,” Benjamin asserts that in “dieser Zeile das Beharrende, die Dauer in der Gestalt der

²⁰ In a letter written on Ibiza in November 1933, the importance of which has been pointed out by Tiedemann, Lindner and others, Benjamin describes the artwork essay as a *counterweight* to the *Passagen-Werk*. The insights into the present conditions of artistic production constitute “einige wenige schwere Gewichte” that balance out the accumulation of historical facts found in the *Passagen-Werk*. The full passage reads: “Denn jede geschichtliche Erkenntnis läßt sich im Bilde einer Wa[a]ge vergegenwärtigen, die einsteht, und deren eine Schale mit dem Gewesnen, deren andere mit der Erkenntnis der Gegenwart belastet ist. Während auf der ersten die Tatsachen nicht unscheinbar und nicht zahlreich genug versammelt sein können, dürfen auf der zweiten nur einige wenige schwere Gewichte liegen. Diese sind es, die ich mir in den letzten zwei Monaten durch Überlegungen über die Lebensbedingungen der Kunst [in?] der Gegenwart verschafft habe” (GS VI, 814).

²¹ “Besitz und Haben sind dem Taktischen zugeordnet und stehen in einem gewissen Gegensatz zum Optischen. Sammler sind Menschen mit taktischem Instinkt. Übrigens hat neuerdings mit der Abkehr vom Naturalismus der Primat des Optischen aufgehört, der das vorige Jahrhundert beherrscht [...] Flaneur optisch, Sammler taktisch” (GS V, 274). A more extensive investigation of Benjamin’s treatment of the visual would have to account for his insistent use of terms such as “Denkbild.” If “for Benjamin, all literary and historical acts of reading are fundamentally predicated on an engagement with the image” (Richter, *Benjamin’s Ghosts*, 8), then how does the end of the “Primat des Optischen” reconfigure our notion of an image?

Zeit und der Menschen entwickelt worden [ist]. Die ‘Wende der Zeit’ erfaßt offenbar noch den Augenblick der Beharrung, gerade das Moment innerer Plastik in der Zeit” (GS II, 119-20). A confrontation with the concept of *Plastik* in the context of Hölderlin’s late poetry must be postponed to the corresponding section below where Hölderlin’s olfactory lateness will be developed with and against Benjamin’s essay. However, it can already be indicated that Benjamin thinks the “Wende der Zeit” as grasping (“erfaßt”) the *shape of time* in its lasting, durational character:²² the *Wende* of time has little to do with an *Ende* of time, as an eschatological reading of this line might be quick to assert, but rather combines a moment of turning—that is, of a disruption that breaks up continuity—with a certain thickness that allows for time to have a shape and a lasting, *beharrend* character.²³

²² Benjamin’s essay draws on two distinct theoretical discourses, without “synthesizing” them, as Peter Fenves has argued: the Neokantian Marburg School and Bergson. “The idea of temporal plastics derives from a similarly nonsynthetic combination of antithetical concepts. From the perspective of epistemocritique, temporal plastics represents a thoroughgoing permeation of space and time, which leaves no room for ‘independent data of consciousness.’ From the perspective of Bergson’s *Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, temporal plastics represents time freed from the mistaken image of its measurable flow” (Fenves, *Messianic Reduction*, 32). Fenves’s argument, in the end, is directed towards showing that history is “constitutively at odds with the course of time” (Fenves, 241), thus vastly complicating the juxtaposition of the syntagm “geschichtliche Wendezeiten.”

²³ Another name for *Wendezeit*, in the strict, emphatic sense, might be *revolution*, although Benjamin conspicuously avoids this connection in “Zwei Gedichte.” The artwork essay, however, in its second version (this passage is deleted in the revised third version) develops a concept of revolution through the concept of “innervation” in an often-cited footnote: “Revolutionen sind Innervationen des Kollektivs: genauer Innervationsversuche des neuen, geschichtlich erstmaligen Kollektivs, das in der zweiten Technik seine Organe hat” (GS VII, 360). It could be shown that this thought responds to both Marx and Freud. Regarding the latter, Hansen has argued that “Benjamin, unlike Freud, understood innervation as a two-way process, that is, not only a conversion of mental, affective energy into somatic, motoric form but also the possibility of reconverting, and recovering, split-off psychic energy through motoric stimulation” (Hansen, “Benjamin and Cinema,” 50). She has further shown that a second, non-Freudian strand shaped Benjamin’s concept of innervation: “contemporary perceptual psychology, reception aesthetics, and acting theory, in particular the Soviet avant-garde discourse of biomechanics that must have reached Benjamin through Lacis” (Hansen, 50). Regarding Marx, one finds the following note in the *Passagen-Werk*, linking the thought of revolution as innervation precisely to a change in the human sensorium: “Zur Lehre von den Revolutionen als Innervationen des Kollektivs: ‚Die Aufhebung des Privateigentums ist ... die vollständige Emanzipation aller menschlichen Sinne ...; aber sie ist diese Emanzipation ... dadurch, daß ... die Sinne und der Geist der anderen Menschen meine *eigene* Aneignung geworden. Außer diesen unmittelbaren Organen bilden sich daher *gesellschaftliche* Organe. . . . also z. B. die Tätigkeit in

The artwork essay, then, many years after “Zwei Gedichte,” pluralizes the term “Wendezeit” and establishes a link between its claims regarding the historicity of the human sensorium and the shape of time: the tasks posed to the human sensorium in “geschichtlichen Wendezeiten” cannot be solved via “mere optics” and the corresponding state of contemplation but rather only via *tactile* reception—where the plasticity of time in “Blödigkeit” is precisely a question of *hands* and what those hands can grasp (that is, of a certain “taktile Rezeption”) in order to bring: “Doch selber/Bringen schickliche Hände wir” read the lines Benjamin quotes. In other words, an adequate response to the turning of time requires that the right constitution of the “Wahrnehmungsapparat” is found: sensory conditioning depends on *Gewöhnung*, which, for Benjamin, occurs via the tactile sense.

While Benjamin’s artwork essay thus primarily develops a concept of tactility as the counterpart to optics, one can ask whether a different sense might also be amenable to a reception via *Gewöhnung*. A brief moment of *breath* early on in the essay hints at precisely such a possibility. Right after having asserted the historicity of the senses in the passage quoted above, Benjamin writes: aura “definieren wir als einmalige Erscheinung einer Ferne, so nah sie sein mag” (GS I, 479). Benjamin continues, playing perhaps on the etymological connotations of “aura:” “An einem Sommernachmittag ruhend einem Gebirgszug am Horizont oder einem Zweig

unmittelbarer Gesellschaft mit anderen ... ist ein Organ einer *Lebensäußerung* geworden und eine Weise der Aneignung des *menschlichen* Lebens. Es versteht sich, daß das *menschliche* Auge anders gefaßt, als das rohe, unmenschliche Auge, das menschliche *Ohr* anders als das rohe Ohr etc.’ Karl Marx: Der historische Materialismus Die Frühschriften Lpz I p 300/301 (Nationalökonomie und Philosophie)” (GS V, 801; [X 1a, 2]). Following these passages, Susan Buck-Morss has argued that Benjamin “is demanding of art a task far more difficult—that is, to undo the alienation of the corporeal sensorium, to restore the instinctual power of the human bodily senses for the sake of humanity’s self-preservation” (Buck-Morss, “Aesthetics and Anaesthetics,” 5). While it should be questioned whether Benjamin had any interest in restoring the “instinctual” power of the senses, his interest in an *emancipation* of the senses—and that such an emancipation would be part and parcel of a revolution—should be taken as a provocation to be pursued further.

folgen, der seinen Schatten auf den Ruhenden wirft – das heißt die Aura dieser Berge, dieses Zweiges *atmen*” (GS I, 479; emphasis added). Breathing, perhaps the most habitual relation of a subject to its surroundings, appears in the realm of *aisthesis*, as will be developed below, through olfaction. It might be, then, as will be suggested here, that the habituation needed to solve the tasks posed to the human sensorium could not only be approached via tactility but also, in a different manner, via olfaction.

3. Erecting Civilization: Deodorization and Ocularcentrism

Benjamin’s arguably most direct confrontation with the question of smell, and its historicity, occurs in another text deeply related to the constellation of the artwork essay and the *Passagen-Werk*: his studies on Baudelaire.²⁴ In a remarkable passage commenting on a verse from Baudelaire’s “Le goût du néant” — “Le printemps adorable a perdu son odeur” —, Benjamin describes the poet’s verse proclaiming a loss of smell as an *extreme* point:

In dieser Zeile sagt Baudelaire ein Äußerstes mit der äußersten Diskretion; das macht sie unverwechselbar zu der seinigen. Das Insichzusammengesunkenheit der Erfahrung, an der er früher einmal teilgehabt hat, ist in dem Worte perdu einbekannt. Der Geruch ist das unzugängliche Refugium der memoire involontaire. Schwerlich assoziiert er sich einer Gesichtsvorstellung; unter den Sinneseindrücken wird er sich nur dem gleichen Geruch gesellen (GS I, 641).

²⁴ Two other major olfactory moments in Benjamin’s work must be mentioned: his early sonnets and his writings on Proust. In the latter, smell is tied to involuntary memory, as in the passage on Baudelaire cited here. A glance at the famous madeleine passage from *A la recherche du temps perdu*, however, indicates how Proust’s treatment of smell differs from the odors analyzed in this dissertation, in particular in Hölderlin: the last sentence of the madeleine section states that the memory arose out of the smell-taste in “forme et solidité.” By contrast, the smells of Hölderlin and Nietzsche as well as Ponge precisely question smell’s ability to give rise to anything solid, even to anything formed. Benjamin’s sonnets relate to the texts studied here in a number of ways: the connection to Baudelaire is evident everywhere; the motto for the first cycle of fifty poems (an arrangement usually found in Baroque poetry) quotes a stanza from Hölderlin’s “Patmos” that will be analyzed below. Explicitly olfactory tropes can be found in sonnets 4, 19, 25, 26, 30, 41, and 71. For a detailed and rich reading of Benjamin’s relationship to smell in the context of (his) Jewishness, see Geller, “Walter Benjamin Reproducing the Scent of the Messianic.”

“[E]in Äußerstes mit der äußersten Diskretion:” Baudelaire has reached here an extreme, most outward point of his poetry and speaking such an extremity requires extreme discretion—the loss of smell and its consequences can easily go unnoticed precisely because they constitute such a limit case of which one speaks only discreetly. More precisely, confronting smell means confronting a limit case of *experience* that is opposed to a “früher:” in previous times, smell was the refuge of involuntary memory that gave access to a deep layer of experience that could never be reached through impressions of sight. This experience, however, and with it experience tout court is now lost, *perdu*: it itself has become “unzugänglich” after the change from this “früher”—a change whose name, as will be developed further below, is “modernity.”²⁵

Just a few years before Benjamin wrote his texts on Baudelaire, the artwork, and the arcades of Paris, Sigmund Freud published his seminal *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (1930).²⁶ The latter proposes a thesis, differing from that of Benjamin but vastly influential on the thinking of olfaction in the twentieth century, concerning the loss of smell and its relationship to historical “Wendezeiten” and, indeed, to *thresholds*. In a long footnote to the fourth section—thus situating this hypothesis at the margins of the main body of the text, as Leo Bersani has pointed out—, in

²⁵ Much more would need to be said about this passage to do it justice: Benjamin points here to the danger of *anesthesia* that will recur with respect to smell (“weil diese das Bewußtsein des Zeitverlaufs tief *betäubt*”), in particular in the reading of “Patmos” developed below, and further links such a narcotic stopping of time to the question of consolation: “Das macht diesen Vers von Baudelaire zu einem unergründlich trostlosen. Für den, der keine Erfahrung mehr machen kann, gibt es keinen Trost.” Without smell, no experience; without experience, no consolation—it is this short, hard enchainment that Benjamin discerns in Baudelaire and that will continuously raise the specter of either an attempt to regain smell or to make do in an inconsolable time, perhaps by reconfiguring what experience might mean.

²⁶ While by no means identical, the terms “civilization” and “culture” will be used largely interchangeably here, partly due to the standard translation of the title of Freud’s work, which renders “Kultur” as “civilization” in response to Freud’s disdain for upholding such a distinction. For an analysis of the differences between the *German* terms “Zivilisation” and “Kultur” and how this difference cannot be found in the same way in the French tradition, see the first chapter of Elias, *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation*.

this footnote, Freud proposes what he labels “eine theoretische Spekulation.”²⁷ The first claim of his speculation is this: prior to the “Schwelle der menschlichen Kultur,” we find an “Entwertung der Geruchsreize.” Smell is devalued even before the threshold of human civilization and culture proper is reached. The civilizing process and with it the negotiation of the nature/culture divide as such presupposes an attenuation of olfaction.²⁸ In other words, one of the conditions of possibility for the emergence of culture lies precisely in this constitutive exclusion of smell. Conversely, Freud indicates that the danger of smell lies in its ability to lead back to a state prior to civilization. Attending to smells in their full force takes one out of the cultivating, socializing process—the danger of smell is the threat of a return of and to the pre-historical, the threat of a retreat beyond and before the threshold of the process of anthropogenesis.

The crossing of the olfactory threshold of civilization is tied, for Freud, to two types of smells in particular. On the one hand, civilizatory deodorization derives from a *turn away from the earth and towards the vertical*: “Das Zurücktreten der Geruchsreize scheint aber selbst Folge der Abwendung des Menschen von der Erde, des Entschlusses zum aufrechten Gang.”²⁹ It will be precisely this *Wende* away from the earth and its replacement by an imperative to maintain an upright posture that the authors read in this dissertation will question: both Hölderlin and Nietzsche turn back towards the earth, at points explicitly to the smell of the earth, and, in this turn, disrupt the fiction of an upright *Gang*. On the other hand, Freud argues that the assumption of an erect posture implies a change in sexual stimulation, more precisely, in the temporal

²⁷ Freud, *Unbehagen*, 65.

²⁸ For a recent (sociological) investigation of smell’s relationship to civilization, see Raab, *Soziologie des Geruchs: Die soziale Konstruktion olfaktorischer Wahrnehmung*. Raab argues that the history of smell is marked by a “spezifische[] Zivilisationskurve: Sie ist vor allem gekennzeichnet durch eine zunehmende *Distanzierung, Disziplinierung* und *Rationalisierung* im Umgang und in der Haltung gegenüber dem Geruch” (Raab, 272; emphasis in the original).

²⁹ Freud, *Unbehagen*, 65n1.

structure of such stimuli: “Zurücktreten der Geruchsreize, durch welche der Menstruationsvorgang auf die männliche Psyche einwirkte. Deren Rolle wurde von Gesichtserregungen übernommen, die im Gegensatz zu den intermittierenden Geruchsreizen eine permanente Wirkung unterhalten konnten.”³⁰ Freud points here to a feature of smell that will regularly emerge in analyses of olfactory sense-making: whereas vision produces, at least potentially, a *permanent* stimulus, smells fluctuate, be it according to the rhythm of the menses or the biphasic structure of breathing that interrupts olfactory stimulation with each exhalation. In other words, the threshold to civilization is crossed precisely with the reaching of such permanence: civilization *is* permanence, and as such must exclude the intermittent temporality of smell. Conversely, once more, any turn to a more intermittent aesthetic regime destabilizes the permanence of civilization and its ability to continue to stand erected.

The heirs of the Freudian notion of a tension between culture and smell are many, not only in the discourse of psychoanalysis.³¹ In passing remarks in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, a book certainly indebted to *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*,³² and, more insistently, in *Negative Dialektik*, Theodor W. Adorno intensifies this tension to the point of turning civilization’s rejection of stench into the very site of civilization’s aporetic failure. The crucial passage emerges from a reference to a poet and playwright—a producer of cultural goods, to be sure—

³⁰ Freud, *Unbehagen*, 64n1.

³¹ Psychoanalysis, however, has been much more attentive to the powers of smell than most other discourses. The tension between smell and civilization as well as a focus on smell’s relationship to coprophilia and anal eroticism can be found in Sandor Ferenczi, Karl Abraham, and Iwan Bloch, among others. The beginning of Freud’s interest in smell seems to be linked to his interactions with Wilhelm Fliess who was deeply worried about his own nose and blamed it for a whole litany of ailments, occasionally even planning on having it surgically altered (a plan Freud dissuaded him from). Cf. Le Guérer for an overview of the psychoanalytic literature on smell.

³² Cf., for instance: “Riechen, als den immer mehr unterdrückten und verdrängten Sinn, der wie dem Geschlecht so dem Eingedenken der Vorzeit am nächsten liegt” (Adorno/Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 79).

whose own body, as was shown above, is deeply implicated in culture's relationship to smell, namely Bertolt Brecht. Referring to Brecht's *Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe*, Adorno writes that culture "perhorresziert den Gestank, weil sie stinkt; weil ihr Palast, wie es an einer großartigen Stelle von Brecht heißt, gebaut ist aus Hundsscheiße."³³ Erecting the palace of culture, so Adorno argues further, cannot but disavow "de[n] Gestank der Kadaver" that this very erecting seeks to cover up, where the very word "Kadaver" points to its *fallen* nature. Culture fails in the face of suffering, in the face of the "somatische, sinnferne Schicht des Lebendigen" that is the "Schauplatz des Leidens."³⁴ A fundamental supposition of Adorno's becomes legible at this point: "die Trennung des Geistes von körperlicher Arbeit"³⁵ is at the root of the "Unwahrheit" of culture. Culture's very attempt to protect itself from the stench of the corporeal, *sinnferne* life is what produces culture's own peculiar stench, one that it cannot but disavow.³⁶

Faced with this return of the (olfactory) repressed and the radical "Mißlingen der Kultur" that it stands for, the critic of culture must confront the resulting inevitable aporia: "Wer für Erhaltung der radikal schuldigen und schäbigen Kultur plädiert, macht sich zum Helfershelfer, während, wer der Kultur sich verweigert, unmittelbar die Barbarei befördert, als welche die Kultur sich enthüllte. Nicht einmal Schweigen kommt aus dem Zirkel heraus."³⁷ The inability to choose between rejecting and embracing culture expresses itself even in Adorno's dissonant language: on the one hand, the word "perhorresziert," an extremely rare, Latinate word that embodies in its sophistication the very turning away from the common, vulgar life that it names

³³ Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, 359.

³⁴ Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, 358.

³⁵ Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, 359-60.

³⁶ Cf. Alexander Garcia Düttmann's detailed commentary on this passage in *Was weiß Kunst?* (25ff.), where he writes concisely: "Denn der Gestank der Kultur kommt durch die Abdichtung gegen den Gestank zustande" (Düttmann, *Was weiß Kunst*, 31).

³⁷ Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, 360.

and risks being incomprehensible to anyone but the very *Bildungsbürger* it attacks. On the other, the word “Hundsscheiße,” which, as Düttmann has pointed out, does not even rise to the level of the common colloquial word “Hundescheiße” but follows Brecht in the more aggressively crude spelling of “Hundsscheiße.” No return to a state prior to culture or an overcoming of culture is possible (by, say, simply speaking like the Average Joe in the streets), nor can one take recourse in the sophisticated tools of culture, even if it is to turn those tools against culture itself. One will always end up stinking: be it from the shit of life itself or from the *unwahr* attempt to disavow such stench.

And yet. Beyond the polemical argument proposed by Adorno in a section directed against all those who, according to him, do not dare to even think stench and the materiality it so insistently conjures up, one can ask whether it is possible to think smell otherwise and, with it, to reconfigure the structure of the double bind of culture and its opposite, which Adorno labels “barbarism.” The authors read in this dissertation (and perhaps a certain Adorno, too)³⁸ articulate in their treatment of smell, according to the argument developed throughout, “die Notwendigkeit einer Gegen-Kultur, die nicht Kultur gegen Kultur setzt, sondern die uneins ist mit sich und in sich, die dieses Uneinsein anerkennt, und die von dem Gegen, das sie sich nicht aneignen kann,

³⁸ In a lecture that predates *Negative Dialektik* and is a sort of trial run for the thoughts developed in this section of *Negative Dialektik*, Adorno speaks of the “Aroma des Materialismus” that is characteristic of the materialism he wants to advance: his work, then, would attempt to find a path of thinking that does justice precisely to smell. In the pertinent passage from the lecture, Adorno adds a second component that mostly disappears in the emphasis on death, decay, and shit found in *Negative Dialektik*: “Das Aroma des Materialismus, von dem ich Ihnen gesprochen habe, ist genau an der Stelle zu suchen, wo dieses Moment der Organlust auf der einen Seite und auf der anderen des Todes wie es auch in der Erfahrung eines jeden Menschen sich findet, in ihm zum Ausdruck kommt” (Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie*, 179). It should be noted that Adorno’s concern here is precisely the possibility of *Erfahrung*: as always in his work, one can hear echoes of Benjamin. I thank Kyle Baasch for drawing my attention to these passages.

das keine kulturelle Leistung mehr ist, durchquert und aufgebrochen wird.”³⁹ They do not attempt to retrieve a notion of smell as an outside of culture that can be occupied in a return to the animalistic, sexual, or “barbaric” roots of humankind nor do they believe that all cultural products fail equally: instead, the smells of Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and Ponge discover modes of olfactory *sense-making* that account for the very *Sinnferne* Adorno diagnoses in smell. More precisely, smell harbors the potential to open whatever civilization might be today to something other: it does not supply a culture free of “barbarism,” to keep Adorno’s term for a moment, or a “barbarism” unbothered by its lack of culture but rather articulates a tension that points beyond this opposition. In smell, an opening beyond the aporias of culture can be sensed.

One thing, however, is certain: while a different notion of culture and of culture’s relationship with olfaction might be possible, the history of civilization has not confronted this possibility but has instead, as both Freud and Adorno describe, turned away from smell. The obverse of the deodorizing tendency of civilization, as the second suggestion of Freud’s “speculation” proposed in *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* claims, is found in the strengthening of one other sense in particular: vision. The assumption of an erect posture that leads to a devaluation of smell results in an “Übergewicht der Gesichtsstreize.” The civilizing process begins once seeing triumphs over smelling. Culture depends, so Freud argues, on the institution of sight as the dominant sense.

This dominance of vision, what Benjamin had called the “Primat des Optischen” (GS V, 274), has in recent years come under increased scholarly scrutiny under the names of “ocularcentrism” or the “hegemony of vision.” Philosophers such as Hans Blumenberg and

³⁹ Düttmann, *Was weiß Kunst*, 34-5. Düttmann arrives at this formulation via recourse to an earlier text of Adorno’s, “Die auferstandene Kultur.”

scholars such as Martin Jay, Jonathan Crary, and Caroline A. Jones have drawn attention to the fact that the dominance of sight among the senses is far from accidental or innocuous: our vocabulary of truth is constituted of terms such as *in-sight*, illumination, enlightenment, reflection, idea (as it derives from *eidos*),⁴⁰ *lumen rationis*, and “clarity” as it underpins rationalist philosophy and aesthetics; even the existentialist *gaze* falls into this discourse of vision. In short, we say “I see,” when we mean “I understand”—and we build on this proclaimed homology between sight and insight a theory of the observer’s position vis-à-vis truth as modeled on the paradigm of the sense of vision. Writing about the ocularcentrism of modernist art, Caroline A. Jones puts it succinctly:

To produce the I/Eye, to become modern, the narcissistic subject must subordinate nonocular senses and attend rapturously to that emergent self-reflective ego. As Lacan claimed, our cognitive awareness of ourselves as individuals is framed and produced most persuasively through the vision in the mirror; other senses become Other.⁴¹

While one can certainly always discover countercurrents that undo any single significance or structure of the sense of vision, the overall tendency in the (Western) tradition of thinking the senses points to the institution of sight as the hegemonic sense that relegates the other senses to

⁴⁰ Regarding Plato, Blumenberg writes in “Licht als Metapher der Wahrheit:” “Wahrheit ist Licht am Sein selbst, Sein als Licht, das bedeutet: Sein ist *Selbstdarbietung* des Seienden. Deshalb entspringt Erkenntnis in ihrer höchsten Form aus der tatlos ruhenden Schau, der *theōria*” (Blumenberg, “Licht,” 142). One should ask here whether these remarks are limited to Plato (and even just a certain Plato) and should not be taken as paradigmatic for Greek thought or culture in a broader sense: the notion of a pervasive Greek ocularcentrism might at least partially be an illusory projection; it is used here only as a heuristic device, awaiting further analysis, in order to delineate the tendency of deodorization in a sharper light.

⁴¹ Jones, *Eyesight Alone*, 397. Jones further inscribes the relegation of smell to the margins of humanity into what she calls the “bureaucratization” of the senses, the attempt to categorize and control any and all sensory experiences: “All of the techniques (body and mind) used to attain modernism’s *image* would have conspired against premodern *stench*. There was no need for an explicit denunciation of smell; it was only a random casualty of the modern process of differentiation that placed the odor world somewhere into the ‘unthought.’” (Jones, 393; emphasis in the original). And: “smell was identified as something distinct (from taste, from breathing) in order to provide the basis for its own administration” (Jones, 395).

the realm of alterity.⁴² To give just one example: as Blumenberg has argued, “Das Auge schweift umher, wählt aus, geht auf die Dinge zu, dringt ihnen nach, während das Ohr seinerseits von Schall und Wort betroffen und angegangen wird. Das Auge kann *suchen*, das Ohr nur *warten*.”⁴³

The eye, according to the imagination attached to sight, is the active sense organ, the one that provides a sense of mastery. As such, the human being qua seeing being can constitute itself as whole and active. The greatest contrast to sight is thus found, as Adorno and Horkheimer point out in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, in smell: “Im Sehen bleibt man, wer man ist, im Riechen geht man auf.”⁴⁴ Smell threatens with dissolution; it blurs the line of demarcation between subject and other, taking the other *inside* of the subject in the continuously repeated process of breathing. It is against this threat that civilization erects the apotropaic dominance of the (allegedly) stabilizing sense of sight.

One of the consequences of the pervasiveness of ocularcentrism lies in the inescapability of an ocular vocabulary, even when the question is one of the other senses and the sense of

⁴² See also *Dialektik der Aufklärung*: “In den vieldeutigen Neigungen der Riechlust lebt die alte Sehnsucht nach dem Unteren fort, nach der unmittelbaren Vereinigung mit umgebender Natur, mit Erde und Schlamm. Von allen Sinnen zeugt der Akt des Riechens, das angezogen wird, ohne zu vergegenständlichen, am sinnlichsten von dem Drang, *ans andere sich zu verlieren* und gleich zu werden” (Adorno/Horkheimer, *Dialektik*, 193; emphasis added).

⁴³ Blumenberg, “Licht,” 163; emphasis in the original. The opposition between eye and ear has frequently been mapped onto an alleged opposition between Ancient Greek thought and the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: “War für das griechische Denken das ‘Hören’ die wahrheitsindifferente und primär unverbindliche Vermittlung von *doxa* als einer im Sehen immer erst noch zu bestätigenden Aussage, so ist in der alttestamentlichen Literatur und dem von ihr bezeugten Wirklichkeitsbewußtsein das Sehen immer schon durch das Hören vorbestimmt, in Frage gestellt oder überboten” (Blumenberg, 161). Jay has argued that the auditory dominance of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament became transformed, in Christianity, in the broader context of Christian Hellenization: “As early as the Hellenization of Christian doctrine begun by the Jew Philo of Alexandria in the first century, biblical references to hearing were systematically transformed into ones referring to sight” (Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, 36). It should be kept in mind, however, that the first differentiation introduced in Genesis is the difference of light and darkness: in other words, origin is narrated through light and the unfolding of creation proceeds from this original distinction.

⁴⁴ Adorno/Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 193.

alterity.⁴⁵ Freud's footnote quoted above is a case in point: when Freud puts forth his "theoretical speculation" on the devaluation of smell, he employs not one but two vision-based words to speak about the erasure of smell; one of Greek origin (*theōria*) and the other coming from Latin (*speculere*). Questioning the primacy of the ocular cannot but work with and out of a vocabulary that is always at least latently implicated in the very dominance of vision it seeks to question.

When recent scholarship has focused on the structures and ramifications of ocularcentrism, it has largely turned to hearing, with some attention paid to touch and taste,⁴⁶ as the main alternative model. Supposedly "otocentric" thinkers such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida or Nancy⁴⁷ are read as undermining the hegemony of vision and producing new avenues for thinking the (sensory) constitution of the subject. Relatedly, the burgeoning field of "sound studies" has brought together insights from musicology, the study of noise, and the discourses of aesthetics more broadly to produce alternative accounts of the sensory field. Without disputing the validity, importance, and, in some cases, even necessity of these works, the task of this dissertation is to show how smell produces its own unique logic of sense-making that is

⁴⁵ Jay embraces this implication explicitly in his introduction: "I remain unrepentantly beholden to the ideal of illumination that suggests an Enlightenment faith in clarifying indistinct ideas. To make matters worse, I will employ a method that unapologetically embraces one of the antiocularcentric discourse's other major targets, a synoptic survey of an intellectual field at some remove from it" (Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, 17). By contrast, the method employed in the interpretations proposed below—as will be more explicitly developed in the prologue to the Hölderlin section—asks how our method of reading can and, to a degree, must change when faced with the task of reading smells.

⁴⁶ A fair amount of the interest in tactility derives from the passages in Benjamin quoted above and, in film studies, from analyses found in Deleuze's work on cinema. A somewhat distinct strand stems from the work of Jean-Luc Nancy who, in his work as well as in personal communication with the author regarding the current project, emphasizes that all sense perception in the end leads to some mode of *contact*. An extensive discussion of the role of touch in Nancy can be found in Derrida, *Le toucher—Jean-Luc Nancy*. The sense of taste has the advantage, in the European tradition, of, at least nominally, also designating *Geschmack* and taste in the sense of a certain discernment of aesthetic differences. It is also implicated, however, in a gustatory discourse of *incorporation*; for a striking work along these lines, see Hamacher, *pleroma*.

⁴⁷ See for one instance of such an argument: Janus, "Listening: Jean-Luc Nancy and the 'Anti-Ocular' Turn in Continental Philosophy and Critical Theory."

irreducible to that of any of the other senses. Consequently, the tasks that smell can potentially address and the solutions it might offer, according to the claim proposed here, diverge from those discovered in recent work on the anti-ocularcentric turn. What has recently been called, with a grandiloquence not quite in line with the inquiry proposed here, the “*sensual revolution* in the humanities, social sciences and the arts,”⁴⁸ can only benefit from also paying attention to smell as the most neglected sense.⁴⁹ The goal here, of course, cannot be to advocate for an “odorcentrism,” as if such a thing were even possible, but rather to stress the irreducible plurality of the senses, indeed, the impossibility of reducing our (sensory) existence to a single sense or perspective. Each sense operates according to its own logic of sense-making, while also being ineluctably intertwined with all other senses—in the always at least latently present synesthesia of the senses. Un-forgetting smell, in short, disassembles the dream, or the nightmare, if you will, of a single sense governing the entirety of our existence; it replaces such an allegedly mono-sensorial state with an always changing, conflictual sensory constitution that is marked by irreducible plurality.

⁴⁸ As stated in the founding issue of the journal *The Senses and Society*. Inevitably, other scholars have used the term “sensory turn,” which will equally be avoided here, not only because of the questionable value of such ever proliferating “turns” but, more importantly, because the analyses proposed below will seek to articulate more precise notions of *turn* and, to a lesser degree, *revolution*. Cf. also Bodo Mrozek, “Sinneskolumne: Die achtzehn Sinne” for an overview of the most recent developments in sense studies.

⁴⁹ The only monograph-length study of literature and smell is Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books*. More work can be found in other fields of the humanities and social sciences and will occasionally be referenced throughout this dissertation, see: Classen et al, *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell*; Drobnick, *The Smell Culture Reader*; Le Guérier, *Les pouvoirs de l’odeur*; Reinartz, *Past Scents*; Diaconu, *Tasten, Riechen, Schmecken*.

4. Modernity, or: We Have Never Been Deodorized

Adorno's diatribes against the stench of the palaces of culture, not just of a *Kulturpalast* but really of any structure erected by civilization on the ground of *sinnfernes* life, bring out a crucial feature of the olfactory realm: we have never, in fact, been deodorized.⁵⁰ Smell has always, in one way or another, been present in human life, in particular when the very "humanness" of such life was in question by bordering on the animalistic or the divine. Contra Freud, the threshold of devaluing smell can thus not be seen as marking the beginning of human civilization *tout court*, as the centrality of fragrances for many pre-modern civilizations demonstrates. Exemplary in this regard is the phenomenon of the spice trade: for millennia, the trade of frankincense, myrrh, and other fragrant gums drove large parts of the history of trade and the collaboration or competition between cultures.⁵¹ Centered in Southern Arabia, at the time known as Arabia Felix, the spice routes extended as far east as the so-called "Spice Islands" (the East Indies) and China. After the 1st century CE, Arab traders faced stiff competition from Roman traders, mostly based in Alexandria; from the 10th century onwards, much of this trade centered in Venice and Genoa. In short, the circulation of fragrances constituted for centuries a crucial mode of cultural interaction for civilizations on the European, Asian, and African continents, and some of these cultures' most prized cultural techniques revolved around smell—one only has to think of the many times frankincense is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, the

⁵⁰ This formulation draws on Bruno Latour's *We Have Never Been Modern* in order to draw attention to the tight, albeit complex, link between modernity and deodorization, and the fact that the employment of both of these terms faces similar problems.

⁵¹ See Nabhan, *Cumin, Camels, and Caravans: A Spice Odyssey*. This olfactory interlocking of cultures also brings up the question of whether non-Western cultures are equally structured by ocularcentrism and a denigration of smell: while the question is beyond the scope of the present investigation, useful articles on a number of non-Western civilizations can be found in *The Senses and Society* as well as in some of the edited volumes indicated above in footnote 49.

crucial role of incense burning and spices to Ancient Greek culture, or the very gifts given at the birth of the Christ.

While a devaluation of smell should consequently not be identified with the threshold of civilization *tout court*, a different threshold can nevertheless be designated: the threshold of modernity. Benjamin's comments on the loss of smell in Baudelaire already indicated as much: "Das In sich zusammengesunkensein der Erfahrung, *an der er früher einmal teilgehabt hat*, ist in dem Worte perdu einbekannt" (GS I, 641; emphasis added). Baudelaire is presented as a being that straddles a certain threshold of experience: on the one side of the threshold, a *Teil-habe* in experience and presumably a state prior to the loss of odor; on the other side, deodorization, loss of experience, and—standing in a yet to be determined relation to these other two terms—poetry. Baudelaire is one of *the* defining poets of modernity precisely because his poetry speaks from this side of loss while also guarding within itself some kernel, discretely, of a prior state.

In recent decades, historians have confirmed the thesis that the onset of modernity marks an incision in the history of smell, indeed, an olfactory *Wendezeit*.⁵² In *The Foul and the*

⁵² In literary studies, Fredric Jameson has recently hinted at the possibility of reading a similar olfactory break in literary history: opposing Balzac to Flaubert and Baudelaire, Jameson writes: "in Balzac everything that looks like a physical sensation—a musty smell, a rancid taste, a greasy fabric—always means something, it is a sign or allegory of the moral or social status of a given character" (Jameson, *Antinomies*, 33); by contrast, Flaubert and Baudelaire display "the irreconcilable divorce between lived experience and the intelligible which characterizes modernity, between the existential and the meaningful. Experience—and sensory experience in particular—is in modern times contingent: if such experience seems to have a meaning, we are at once suspicious of its authenticity" (Jameson, 33-4). In contrast to the analysis pursued here, Jameson then ties this different mode of writing odors beyond allegorical-moral meanings to *affect*: "Odor [...] seems everywhere, from Baudelaire to Proust, to be a privileged vehicle for isolating affect and identifying it for a variety of dynamics" (Jameson, 35). The connection between "affect" and smell was first argued for within the field of affect studies by Teresa Brennan in *The Transmission of Affect*. Pursuing a line of reasoning that partly derives from studies of chemical entrainment, Brennan, in fact, argues for the centrality of smell to transmitting affect: "I suggest smell (in this case unconscious olfaction) is critical in how we 'feel the atmosphere' or how we pick up on or react to another's depression [...] Smell emerges as critical in communicating responses ranging from the aggressive to the soothing; it is also a vehicle for effecting changes in another's hormonal (hence affective) composition" (Brennan, 9-10). While the overall theoretical orientation of the investigation

Fragrant, Alain Corbin, the French historian of the Annales School, argues that a “new sensibility” with respect to odors marks modernity that resulted from a veritable “perceptual revolution.”⁵³ “From about the middle of the eighteenth century, odors simply began to be more keenly smelled. It was as if thresholds of tolerance had been abruptly lowered; and that happened well before industrial pollution accumulated in urban space.”⁵⁴ Subsequent work by historians has sought to clarify that this lowering of olfactory tolerance should not be confused with a generalized deodorization, as phenomena such as the rise of modern perfume making emphasize: “All too often, historians’ talk of deodorization unhelpfully confuses the removal of *particular* scents, notably fecal odors and the smells of human sweat, with the removal of *all* smells.”⁵⁵ Additionally, phenomena such as the Great Stink of 1858 in London⁵⁶ caution against identifying modernity with deodorization as such. Instead, modernity should be understood as the

pursued here has little in common with affect studies, some of Brennan’s insights resonate with the claims advanced here, such as her thesis that smell, as opposed to vision, is more likely to violate the purported boundaries of a person: “If entrainment is effected by sight, then on the face of it, our boundaries stay intact. We become like someone else by imitating that person, not by literally becoming or in some way merging with him or her. [...] Smell and various forms of neuronal communication are not such respecters of persons” (Brennan, 10). The possibility of rethinking ethics through smell has also recently been hinted at in work by anthropologists such as Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing who in *The Mushroom at the End of the World* asks: “Might smell, in its confusing mix of elusiveness and certainty, be a useful guide to the indeterminacy of encounter?” (Tsing, *Mushroom*, 46). I thank Jan Cao for pointing me to this last passage.

⁵³ Corbin mostly studies the case of France, with some attention paid to England. Jürgen Raab has argued for a delay in the olfactory development of Germany in comparison to France and England, largely because Germany did not have a city comparable to Paris or London around 1800 (Raab, *Soziologie*, 85-6).

⁵⁴ Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant*, 56.

⁵⁵ Jenner, “Smell, Smelling, and Their Histories,” 341; emphasis in the original.

⁵⁶ Phenomena such as these cast doubt on the assertion by Peter Sloterdijk that “If, in their history to date, humans could step out at will under any given stretch of sky, in- or out-of-doors, and take for granted the unquestioned idea of the possibility of breathing in the surrounding atmosphere, then, as we see in retrospect, they enjoyed a privilege of naivety which was withdrawn with the caesura of the 20th century” (Sloterdijk, *Terror from the Air*, 50). For more on Sloterdijk, whose concept of “air conditioning” has become a key point of reference for ecocritical scholarship on anything air and atmosphere-related, see section six below.

intensification of a *tendency of deodorization* and a *redistribution of the olfactory field*: certain smells are erased, while others arise whose existence is precisely owed to the tendency of deodorization (the smell of soap, for instance); these “deodorized smells” are part and parcel of the tendency of deodorization since they continue the distancing from the smells that mark the “Schicht des Lebendigen.” The smells of Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and Ponge are inscribed in the context of precisely these tendencies: they counteract the tendency of deodorization and contribute specific articulations of certain smells—smells that are not “deodorized smells”—to the redistribution of the olfactory field.⁵⁷

5. The Exclusion of Smell from Aesthetics (Kant, Hegel)

This structure of a tendency of deodorization that seeks to exclude smell but indicates, through the very fact that such exclusion must be performed, smell’s persistence can also be found in the two master discourses that govern much of the discipline of aesthetics in the (German, European) tradition: Kant and Hegel. While an analysis of the status of the different senses and sense perception more generally in the work of these two philosophers far exceeds the scope of this dissertation, a brief analysis of the reasons that Kant and Hegel adduce for justifying the exclusion of smell from the field of aesthetics illuminates the status of olfaction in modernity more broadly since these comments speak to the perceived threat latent in odors.

⁵⁷ Ponge will be of interest in this dissertation—as its “endpoint,” its *rinçage*—because he recognizes the existence of “deodorized smells” and makes one of them the central object of a book of poetry, *Soap*.

Kant's most extensive comments on the sense of smell can be found in his *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, a text whose position within the Kantian oeuvre is not easy to determine.⁵⁸ In a first step, Kant divides the five "Organsinne" into two types:

Drei derselben aber sind mehr objektiv als subjektiv, d. i. sie tragen, als empirische *Anschauung*, mehr zur *Erkenntnis* des äußeren Gegenstandes bei, als sie das Bewußtsein des affizierten Organs rege machen; — *zwei* aber sind mehr subjektiv als objektiv, d. i. die Vorstellung durch dieselbe ist mehr die des *Genusses*, als der Erkenntnis des äußeren Gegenstandes.⁵⁹

Smell falls into the group of senses that are *more* subjective than objective: the comparative form employed by Kant indicates that any claims derived from this division are not absolute but rather a matter of degrees. The continuation of this passage indicates the crucial point that will exclude smell from Kantian aesthetics:

daher über die erstere man sich mit anderen leicht einverständigen kann, in Ansehung der letzteren aber, bei einerlei äußerer empirischer Anschauung und Benennung des Gegenstandes, die Art, *wie* das Subjekt sich von ihm affiziert fühlt, ganz verschieden sein kann.⁶⁰

The more subjective nature of smell (and taste) precludes an *Einverständigen*, that is, the reaching of being of one (*ein*) understanding (*Verstand*). Yet the possibility of such a convergence is precisely one of the key conditions of possibility for the "Geschmacksurteil" of aesthetics as the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* had developed it: "Das Geschmacksurteil bestimmt seinen Gegenstand in Ansehung des Wohlgefallens (als Schönheit) mit einem Anspruch auf *jedermanns* Beistimmung, als ob es objektiv wäre" (KdU, 210; emphasis in the original).⁶¹

⁵⁸ The editorial history of the *Anthropologie* is complicated and does not allow for an easy inscription of this text into the Kantian oeuvre: while it is often referred to as a "late" work or Kant's last completed work, it is actually based on lectures Kant gave throughout his life, as he indicates in a footnote closing out the *Vorrede* that calls the completed book a "Handbuch," and Kant never seems to have "completed" the text in any rigorous sense.

⁵⁹ Kant, *Anthropologie*, 446; emphasis in the original.

⁶⁰ Kant, *Anthropologie*, 446-7; emphasis in the original.

⁶¹ Citations to Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft* will be given as "KdU" throughout this dissertation.

Having introduced this definition in paragraph 32 of the third Critique, Kant goes on to point to smell in particular as an example of something that does not allow for this “jedermanns” character: “Sagen: diese Blume ist schön, heißt eben so viel, als ihren eigenen Anspruch auf jedermanns Wohlgefallen ihr nur nachsagen. Durch die Annehmlichkeit ihres Geruchs hat sie gar keine Ansprüche. Den einen ergötzt dieser Geruch, dem andern benimmt er den Kopf” (KdU, 210-1).⁶² In short, smell undermines the sociability needed to overcome the subjective aspects of a sensory perception so that one can rise to the level of the “als ob es objektiv wäre.”

One might be tempted to hold against Kant, in a vaguely Schillerian vein, that one could *train* the sense of smell and civilize, educate it in order to raise it to the level of objective discernment. The *Anthropologie* holds against any such thought that the cultivation of the sense of smell is pointless, indeed, counterproductive:

Welcher Organsinn ist der undankbarste und scheint auch der entbehrlichste zu sein? Der des *Geruchs*. Es belohnt nicht, ihn zu kultivieren, oder wohl gar zu verfeinern, um zu genießen; denn es gibt mehr Gegenstände des Ekels (vornehmlich in volkreichern Örtern), als der Annehmlichkeit, die er verschaffen kann, und der Genuß durch diesen Sinn kann immer auch nur flüchtig und vorübergehend sein, wenn er vergnügen soll.⁶³

The prologue to the *Anthropologie* emphasizes that an anthropology from a “pragmatic” point of view is concerned with the possibilities of what the human being “als freihandelndes Wesen, aus sich selber macht, oder machen kann und soll.”⁶⁴ The constitution of the sense of smell, according to Kant, marks a limit of the possibilities of such free, active self-transformation.

⁶² Cf. also paragraph 39: “So kann dem, welchem der Sinn des Geruchs fehlt, diese Art der Empfindung nicht mitgeteilt werden; und, selbst wenn er ihm nicht mangelt, kann man doch nicht sicher sein, ob er gerade die nämliche Empfindung von einer Blume habe, die wir davon haben” (KdU, 222-3). In the *Anthropologie*, Kant goes further and labels smell as being “contrary to freedom:” “*Geruch* ist gleichsam ein Geschmack in der Ferne, und andere werden gezwungen, mit zu genießen, sie mögen wollen oder nicht, und darum ist er, als der Freiheit zuwider, weniger gesellig als der Geschmack” (Kant, *Anthropologie*, 452).

⁶³ Kant, *Anthropologie*, 453; emphasis in the original.

⁶⁴ Kant, *Anthropologie*, 399.

G. W. F. Hegel, in turn, takes up the last point of the passage just quoted: it is the ephemerality and instability of smell that is central to his criticism directed against olfaction. In his *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, Hegel emphasizes that in the realm of art, the sensory objects “sich in ihrer realen Selbständigkeit erhalten sollen und kein nur sinnliches Verhältnis zulassen.”⁶⁵ Smells, by contrast, dissolve in the process of being perceived, according to Hegel, and thus cannot attain the permanence and stability needed for an artwork but instead produce a merely sensuous relation.

While the exclusion of smell from aesthetics can only account for the non-existence of *olfactory arts* and not for deodorization more broadly, it nevertheless indicates some of the features that underlie the general suspicion directed against olfaction: smell resists a certain type of sociability (a thought developed prominently by Nietzsche); it undermines permanence (a notion found both in the Freud passage analyzed above and at length in Hölderlin); and it stands in a crucial relationship to disgust (key to Nietzsche’s olfactory thought, but also to Ponge). Pace Kant and Hegel, Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and Ponge not so much attempt to demonstrate the viability of, say, perfumery as an art but rather develop the aesthetic potential of thinking through those threatening and unsettling features of smell that led the two philosophers to ban olfaction from their aesthetics.

⁶⁵ Hegel, *Vorlesungen 1*, 61. Cf. also Hegel’s remarks on the nose, mostly in the context of the praised Greek profile, in volume 2 of the *Vorlesungen* (Hegel, *Vorlesungen 2*, 255; 384-7). Derrida takes up the ephemerality of smell in Hegel in *Glas*; cf. below.

6. Scenting Ecocriticism

The forgetting of smell in aesthetics has largely continued unimpeded in theoretical and scholarly discourses since Kant and Hegel. The last two decades or so, however, have seen the rise of a discourse that lays the groundwork for a rediscovering of the potential of olfactory sense-making: the discourses flourishing under the names of environmental humanities and ecocriticism have drawn attention to the importance, if not always of smell, then at the very least of air and atmosphere in increasingly insistent terms. Part of this discourse draws explicitly on the authors discussed above: one of the most influential and often-cited theories of the concept of “atmosphere,” for instance, namely the work of Gernot Böhme, refers back to Benjamin’s concept of aura, albeit in a somewhat loose manner. In *Atmosphäre: Essays zur neuen Ästhetik*, which develops his “ökologische Naturästhetik,”⁶⁶ Böhme thus writes: “*Aura* bezeichnet gewissermaßen Atmosphäre überhaupt, die leere charakterlose Hülle seiner Anwesenheit [...] Und zwar ist die Aura offenbar etwas räumlich Ergossenes, fast so etwas wie ein Hauch oder ein Dunst – eben eine Atmosphäre. Benjamin sagt, daß man die Aura ‘atmet.’”⁶⁷ The concept of atmosphere has thus been deployed to rethink notions of the subject’s relation to its *Umwelt*, and the relation between subject and object more broadly.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Böhme, *Atmosphäre*, 15. Böhme briefly recapitulates the history of the term of “atmosphere” and its emergence in the outgoing eighteenth century’s developing discourse on meteorology and climate. The scientific discourses around this term will be left aside here; see Böhme and Horn for indications regarding some of the pertinent sources in this respect.

⁶⁷ Böhme, *Atmosphäre*, 26-7; emphasis in the original.

⁶⁸ A more intense version of this thought would have to be developed from Benjamin’s own reflections on “Sphäre,” not only in the first pages of “Zwei Gedichte” but also, directly in relationship with the terms subject and object, in “Über das Programm der kommenden Philosophie:” “Es ist die Aufgabe der kommenden Erkenntnistheorie für die Erkenntnis die Sphäre totaler Neutralität in Bezug auf die Begriffe Objekt und Subjekt zu finden” (GS II, 163). Another *Aufgabe*, another possibility for smell to offer its services.

A competing, and perhaps even more frequently cited, theoretical framework can be found in Peter Sloterdijk's popularization of the paradigm of "air conditioning" as central to the twentieth century.⁶⁹ In *Luftbeben* and more broadly in the trilogy *Sphären*,⁷⁰ Sloterdijk argues that "cultures are collective conditions of immersion in air and sign systems"⁷¹ and that these conditions should constitute an object of study in its own right: "With the transition from the 20th century to the 21st, the subject of the cultural sciences thus becomes: *making the air conditions explicit*."⁷² The rise of "air-design," which Sloterdijk ties to the use of chlorine gas by the German army at the battle of Ypres in April 1915, "is the technological response to the phenomenological insight that human being-in-the-world is always and without exception present as a modification of 'being-in the-air.'"⁷³ Above all, Sloterdijk sees a focus on the

⁶⁹ Despite or perhaps partly because of his far-reaching reception, Sloterdijk has been subject to a vast amount of criticism, often focused on the sexist, quasi-authoritarian, reactionary or pseudo-aristocratic tendencies said to be found in his work. For some helpful reflections on Sloterdijk's method, see Bohrer, "Mythologie, nicht Philosophie: Das Phänomen Sloterdijk," and North, "Absolute Teacher, Sloterdijk." North argues convincingly that Sloterdijk's "technique" is marked by a "bathos of distance, hyperschematization" (North, "Absolute Teacher," 1-2): "the more you schematize European cultural history, the more that history becomes intelligible; and yet the heights to which you have to climb in order to schematize the most phenomena bring you so far from the phenomena themselves that you lose sight of them and their context" (North, 3). North's suggestion is consequently to regard Sloterdijk as a teacher who supplies the "missing educational program" that the history of Critique "from Hegel to Derrida" lacks. As such, Sloterdijk's didactic remarks can alert to, prepare to think about, and lead towards phenomena—air-conditioning, for instance—that can then receive a more genuinely critical, "close" treatment.

⁷⁰ The lectures originally published in *Luftbeben* are part of the third installment of *Sphären*.

⁷¹ Sloterdijk, *Terror*, 84.

⁷² Sloterdijk, *Terror*, 84.

⁷³ Sloterdijk, *Terror*, 93. Sloterdijk here refers to *L'oubli de l'air* by Luce Irigaray, which will be analyzed in the Nietzsche section below. His criticism of Irigaray ("but she does not ever meditate on the fact that the newer aero-technical practice of this supposedly unthought-of factor has long been used as a field of application for highly explicit procedures" (Sloterdijk, *Terror*, 93) seems accurate but perhaps misses the point of Irigaray's investigations, which constitute a rather unique mode of thinking and writing. Sloterdijk also conceives of his theorization of air conditioning as, to a certain degree, a transformation of Benjamin's thinking: "Let us not forget that today's so-called consumer society was invented in a greenhouse—in the very glass-canopied, nineteenth-century arcades in which the first generation of 'experience customers' learned to breathe the intoxicating scent of an enclosed, interior-world full of commodities. These arcades represented an early level of urban atmosphere explication" (Sloterdijk, 96).

explication of the conditions of being-in-the-air as necessary to the development of a politics and an ethics responsive to the condition of the twenty-first century. Here, he draws on Elias Canetti's stunning claim that "above all, [...] the multiplicity in our world consists to a large extent in the multiplicity of our breathing-spaces."⁷⁴ Canetti further writes: "Air is the last common property. It belongs to all people collectively. It is not doled out in advance, even the poorest may partake of it [...] And this last thing, which has belonged to all of us collectively, shall poison all of us collectively."⁷⁵ The conditioning and modulation of air raises insistently the question of the *common* and the very possibility of the common to turn into a "property" as Canetti writes: if all of humanity exists in air, its general tendency could be described as democratic—only to be constantly counteracted by a certain type of stratification.

Sloterdijk's work has influenced contemporary scholars such as Dora Zhang's investigation of "the growing ubiquity of atmospheric conditioning"⁷⁶ in late capitalism or Eva Horn's inquiries into "Air as Medium." Horn takes up the idea of a "being in the air" that enables us to think our existence as *medial*: "To treat air as a medium is above all to take a methodological approach that facilitates a broader understanding and appreciation of the role air plays in conditioning and articulating forms of life."⁷⁷ In contrast to Horn and most other scholars in this field of aerial theory who ignore the role of smell, Hsuan L. Hsu, in "Smelling

⁷⁴ Canetti, *The Conscience of Words*, 10; here: *Terror*, 98. In certain time periods of human history, the very *separability* of breathing-spaces can become a precondition for survival: during a pandemic that mainly spreads via respiratory infection, for instance, only a successful compartmentalization of breathing spaces guarantees the survival of the individual and the species. The implementation of such a dividing of the air raises a whole host of questions about the (biopolitical) power of states, the uneven distribution of respiratory risk along racial or economic lines, and the psychological machinations of responding to risk signals of a rare magnitude.

⁷⁵ Canetti, *The Conscience of Words*, 13; here: *Terror*, 100.

⁷⁶ Zhang, "Notes on Atmosphere," 123.

⁷⁷ Horn, "Air as Medium," 9.

Setting,” has explicitly introduced the question of the role of smell into this thinking of atmospheres and air conditioning: “Yet the environmental humanities has largely overlooked the role of olfaction as a means of perceiving, internalizing, and representing differentiated atmospheres.”⁷⁸ Hsu turns to two literary genres in particular to think how literature can “make atmospheres—along with the processes through which they are engineered and distributed—perceptible matters of concern:” detective fiction and naturalism. These two relate to odors in opposing ways: “If detective fiction identifies noxious odors in order to purge them, naturalism diagnoses the social processes that produce stratified atmospheres.”⁷⁹ Analyzing literature’s relationship to smell produces insights into how the stratification of air, that is, how the differentiation of our being-in-the-air functions.

7. The Course of the Argument

This dissertation takes up these suggestions from ecocriticism and proposes that they can already be found, in intensified form, in two major thinkers predating the explicit emergence of ecocritical scholarship: Friedrich Hölderlin and Friedrich Nietzsche.⁸⁰ The core of the argument as it emerges from the detailed analyses of Hölderlin and Nietzsche proposed below can be

⁷⁸ Hsuan L. Hsu, “Smelling Setting.”

⁷⁹ Hsu points to Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Murders in the Rogue Morgue” as the origin of the literary link between tracking crime and tracking scent. He writes further: “The detective story and the naturalist novel present air conditioning, respectively, as a strategy for policing criminality and as a systemic technique of structural violence. In these texts, olfaction functions either to intensify deodorization by tracking down suspicious odors, or to expose the processes of differential deodorization that organize capitalism’s unevenly developed geographies.” Hsu’s monograph project developing this literary account of “differential deodorization,” preliminarily titled *The Smell of Risk: Atmospheric Disparities and the Olfactory Arts*, was not yet published at the time of the writing of this dissertation.

⁸⁰ Thinking with these authors thus enriches contemporary ecocritical discourses while also shedding new light on some of the most-studied canonical works. In other words, this investigation of smell is meant to contribute to a field of “ecocriticism before ecocriticism,” linking a number of otherwise distinct types of scholarship.

stated as follows: *any “being-in-the-air” is always stratified, differentiated*. The air has never been one. Smell is one mode in which this ineluctable differentiation of the aerial medium of human existence takes place, with deodorization being (at least to a degree) a term of homogenization that opposes stratification. The sections on Hölderlin and Nietzsche are consequently organized around two terms that directly speak to this question of stratification: unity and distance, respectively. Hölderlin discovers, according to the argument developed below, that air, especially in its olfactory modulation, displays a tendency towards unity—“Luft” and “Duft” present themselves as terms that are, comparatively speaking, better suited to articulate the unity of everything living. However, as Hölderlin’s poetry progresses into “lateness,” this unifying tendency becomes *dis-articulated*: the inevitable stratification, the falling apart of the unity of air, asserts itself. From this dis-articulation of unity found in the ever increasing differentiating and opening character of smells, Hölderlin’s “latest” poetry moves towards deodorization, slowly erasing olfactory tropes and thus producing a negative version of the unity of air via the absence of explicit olfactory differentiation.

Nietzsche’s “problem of distance,” as it will be called here, with respect to smell and air is similarly a question of stratification and differentiation: his “olfactory genius” (itself inscribed into the *agon* of vision, hearing, and olfaction that makes up Nietzsche’s sensory constitution) is supposed to set him apart from those surrounding him in his (aerial) element—but a close analysis of smell’s relationship to distance, perspective, and chaos shows that smell is *compromising*; it undoes the stratification of a pathos of distance and instead tends towards chaos. In smell, according to the argument developed here, the world’s constant tendency towards chaos becomes perceptible. Nietzsche’s “new smells,” then, proposed most insistently in

Also sprach Zarathustra, seek to recover or rather reconfigure olfaction's relationship to differentiation.

Through this thought of a differentiation of the air via smell, this dissertation seeks to do justice to and account for the fact that “we have never been deodorized” and that smell is nevertheless conspicuously absent from reflections on the senses in literature and from arguments about literature more broadly. If deodorization is a homogenizing term that seeks to deny the (olfactory) stratification of air, then undoing deodorization and asserting differentiation always go hand in hand. Consequently, the authors studied here—Hölderlin and Nietzsche, primarily, but also an incisive book by Francis Ponge studied as a coda—show how to *re-odorize* thought, literature, and aesthetics while simultaneously developing complex accounts of differentiation: their work experiments with a variety of modes of olfactory sense-making, exploring the philosophical and poetological potential of paying attention to scent.

While the re-odorization projects of Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and Ponge are all, albeit in rather different ways, positioned in the context of and, to varying degrees, against modernity's fiction of deodorization, they must not be understood as an attempt to return to a prior, fragrant state that could atone for our deodorizing vices. Such an explicitly reactionary turn has been recently proposed by contemporary philosopher Byung-Chul Han. In his book *Duft der Zeit: Ein philosophischer Essay zur Kunst des Verweilens*, Han diagnoses our time as one of information as opposed to history, where “Die Informationen *duften nicht*. Darin unterscheiden sie sich von der Geschichte.”⁸¹ It is this loss of history and fragrance that is indicative of our loss of *Erzählung* and the resulting “Entnarrativisierung” that produces “eine ungerichtete, richtungslose

⁸¹ Han, *Duft der Zeit*, 23; emphasis added.

Bewegung, ein Schwirren.”⁸² Referencing Proust, the late Heidegger, and the *hsiang yin* (an ancient Chinese incense burning clock), Han advocates for a “*Rückkehr-zu-sich*”⁸³ that can be found in a contemplative lingering with, for instance, the smell of incense or the “Geruch des Eichenholz.”⁸⁴ *Pace* Han, the authors studied here show precisely that any “Rückkehr zu sich” in the realm of olfaction or otherwise is impossible. Brecht’s stinking exile and his attempts to create an olfactory sense of place stand as signposts for the geopoetics of smell as a poetics of *dislocation* and *opening towards alterity* that this dissertation develops. The stratification and differentiation of air modulated through fragrance does not allow for the notion of a lingering in a home staked out by the “Duft des Langen und Langsamen.”⁸⁵

A preliminary word on the central axis of this text—the two Friedrichs, Hölderlin and Nietzsche—is in order: Nietzsche knew and cherished, up to a certain point, Hölderlin’s work. Already as a teenager he was familiar with some of Hölderlin’s poems as well as with *Hyperion* and a version of *Empedokles*. In letters, he called him his “Liebling[] aus der Gymnasialzeit.”⁸⁶ In the early writings, in particular the *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*, Hölderlin appears as the critic of the Germans of his time, as an outcast whose genius stands as a testament to the

⁸² Han, 39.

⁸³ Han, 50. Despite the obvious echoes of Benjamin’s analysis of a loss of fragrance entailing a loss of a “depth” of experience (24) as well as Benjamin’s Proust interpretation, Han does not reference Benjamin at all. While the late Heidegger certainly dominates Han’s thinking, his emphasis on “Schweben” as the goal for humanity’s transformation out of this epoch of “Schwirren” indicates his debt to (a certain understanding of) Romanticism. For a brief but incisive argument of how Hölderlin’s poetry in the end is incompatible with Romantic ideas of “Schweben,” see the last section of Menninghaus, *Hälfte des Lebens*.

⁸⁴ Han, *Duft der Zeit*, 78.

⁸⁵ Han, 78.

⁸⁶ Nietzsche, BVN 1869,28.

crudeness of his contemporaries.⁸⁷ The later Nietzsche seems to have regarded Hölderlin's fall into "madness" as a sign of weakness that he, Nietzsche himself, would know how to avoid—a claim that today, of course, is overshadowed by a certain convergence of the eventual fates both of these men experienced.

The main aspect of the Hölderlin-Nietzsche relation, however, might not be the direct "influence" the former might have had on the latter but, as Gunter Martens has argued, the shift Nietzsche's epochal work produced in the history of ideas, enabling a new Hölderlin reception:

wenn Hölderlin heute allgemein als einer der bedeutendsten Autoren deutscher Sprache gelten kann, so hat Friedrich Nietzsche zu dieser Veränderung der öffentlichen Meinung wesentlich beigetragen, ja, man kann sagen, erst durch das Auftreten Nietzsches war es möglich geworden, zur Größe des Hölderlinschen Werkes einen angemessenen Zugang zu finden.⁸⁸

Martens traces how Nietzsche's work shaped the milestones of the early Hölderlin reception in Dilthey, Hellingrath and the George circle, but also in Heidegger⁸⁹ and more recent French reception. With respect to smell, too, it could be argued that Nietzsche's explicit claims that his genius resides in his nostrils or his emphasis on the importance of climatic and atmospheric factors as well as the corporeal and sensory constitution for the structure of a given being's thought paved the way for a re-consideration of Hölderlin's work in the light of these questions.

In the end, however, it will emerge as decisive that both Hölderlin and Nietzsche articulate olfaction in the context of the deodorizing tendency of modernity and an insistence on the differentiation of air. It is in this double articulation that they both discover the potential and

⁸⁷ For an analysis of how the crucial figure of Dionysus is transformed in the interplay between Hölderlin and his friend Wilhelm Heinse as well as in the Nietzschean reception, see Helmut Pfotenhauer, "Dionysos: Heinse – Hölderlin – Nietzsche."

⁸⁸ Martens, "Hölderlin-Rezeption," 54-5.

⁸⁹ "Dieser groß angelegte Versuch, das 'Wesen' der Hölderlinschen Dichtung als Begründung des Seins in der dichterischen Sprache zu deuten, steht ohne Zweifel ebenfalls im Zeichen Nietzsches" (Martens, "Hölderlin-Rezeption," 72n77).

the danger of re-odorization, laying out the lines of inquiry one must follow when asking about smell.

Section I:

Smell and the Dis-Articulation of Unity (Hölderlin)

PROLOGUE

“Hölderlin,” *oder wie zu lesen sei*

For the literary critic, all self-reflexive questioning concerning method—*how* does one read, interpret, comment, cite, elucidate or situate a text?—is haunted by a more unsettling question of possibility: *can* one read, interpret, comment, cite, elucidate or situate a text? Can one do it properly, with justice done to the textual object, and can one do it at all? This question of possibility asserts itself most urgently whenever it arises from an oeuvre that indicates undeniably that it might, in one way or another, render these operations impossible from within itself. Faced with the possibility of its own impossibility, literary studies must then transform its task and fold into its work a confrontation with the haunting question of the conditions of possibility that structure its *Aufgabe*. This question, in turn, can never be decided—if it can be decided at all—a priori: the legibility of a text emerges only from the actuality of reading; its interpretability only from interpretation; its citability only from citation. But for such a decision concerning literary studies’ possibility to be possible, a suspension of all certainty concerning the outcome of the decision must occur prior to the attempt of reading: only if reading exposes itself to the possibility of its impossibility can it hope for the emergence of its actuality; a foreclosure of this possibility of impossibility simultaneously forecloses genuine proof of its possibility.

Few poets in the German and, indeed, European tradition of poetry have elicited an engagement with these questions as intense, variegated, and ongoing as Friedrich Hölderlin.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Scholarly engagement with these questions has taken a number of forms, be it through the still ongoing discussions concerning the method of Martin Heidegger’s *Erläuterungen* or Peter Szondi’s reflections on “philologische Erkenntnis” in his *Hölderlin-Studien*. The threat of an impossibility of scholarly approaches to Hölderlin’s work becomes most acute and, in a sense, reaches an extreme point in the latest work of the “mad” poet after 1806: the various scholarly approaches to this question will be referenced in the last section below. Emphasizing a different type of *literaturwissenschaftliches* limit, Ulrich Gaier, in

Not only the complexity of his “mature” work but, even more incisively, the unique eruption of an unheard of poetic voice in his so-called “late” work—a key concern of this chapter—have raised the question of how and whether a critic can read and interpret these texts.⁹¹ Apart from Hölderlin, other poets who might be seen to generate similarly intense responses often stand in a lineage of directly inheriting Hölderlin’s work (one might think of Paul Celan and Georg Trakl, of Stefan George, Osip Mandelstam, and a certain Rainer Maria Rilke; or of René Char and André du Bouchet in the French tradition)⁹² or have been inscribed by commentators into

“Über die Möglichkeit, Hölderlin zu verstehen,” argues that Hölderlin’s poetry aims at human transformation and what he terms “Selbstfindung:” “Diese Aufgabe, der Bildung oder Veränderung des Bewußtseins, die man in jedem Gedicht Hölderlins genau genommen gestellt sehen kann, ist unendlich; ihre Lösung ist die Selbstfindung, zu der einen der *Vollzug* des Gedichts nur anleiten kann” (Gaier, “Möglichkeit,” 108; emphasis in the original). It is this “personal” dimension of Hölderlin’s poetry that, according to Gaier, partly puts it beyond the grasp of *Wissenschaft*: “So, als Texte zum Gebrauch und zur Erfahrung waren Hölderlins Gedichte auch gemeint; die verstehende Analyse trifft einen Aspekt, aber nicht das Ganze und ist höchstens dienendes Mittel im Bereich des Erfahrens und Handelns” (Gaier, 113). In other words, *experience* and, in the end, *life* would be the limiting terms of the scope of scholarly understanding and literary criticism. *Pace* Gaier, the scholarship attempted here seeks to question the notion of a “Selbstfindung” in Hölderlin, in particular the late Hölderlin, and, conversely, implicitly strengthens the role of scholarly analysis as a mode of *Erfahrung* that, precisely because it is not primarily “personal,” can, in fact, attempt to rise to the challenge of the transformation these texts propose.

⁹¹ A certain number of “external” factors further complicate any attempt to understand Hölderlin. For instance, the editorial condition of his texts was, for a poet of his stature, extraordinarily poor for a considerably long time: more than a century passed between the end of the “late” Hölderlin’s writing and the first major philological but severely limited edition by Hellingrath; more decades passed before Friedrich Beißner’s *Stuttgarter Ausgabe* provided access to most of Hölderlin’s extant writings and before Sattler’s *Frankfurter Hölderlin-Ausgabe* supplied facsimiles of the most difficult to decipher texts. This lack in reliable editions is partly responsible for the late emergence of Hölderlin scholarship. Gaier, for example, can write even in 1971 that “die Hölderlin-Forschung ihren Erwartungshorizont noch nicht ausgefüllt und noch nicht stabilisiert hat, wie man das vielleicht von der Goethe-Forschung behaupten könnte” (Gaier, “Möglichkeit,” 103) (this in reference to the significant uproar Pierre Bertaux’s studies on Hölderlin and the French Revolution caused within Hölderlin scholarship). The intervening half century has certainly led to some saturation of the “Erwartungshorizont” in scholarship, to use the Gadamerian terminology employed by Gaier. However, it is one of the goals of the present study to show that the more general statement “Wir wissen deshalb noch nicht so richtig, was wir bei Hölderlin erwarten können und was nicht” (Gaier, 104) is not primarily a function of the editorial, scholarly, or reception history of Hölderlin but, by contrast, a feature of the very thought of expectation and anticipation that the late Hölderlin articulates.

⁹² Karlheinz Stierle articulates a significant scholarly consensus in Hölderlin studies when he writes: “Wer Ursprung und Voraussetzungen der modernen lyrischen Dichtung zu erfassen sucht, wie sie sich in Frankreich in der 2. Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts ausgebildet hat, wird unausweichlich zu Hölderlin

indirectly competing with Hölderlin for the power to define the parameters and tasks of modern and in particular romantic poetry (Baudelaire and Mallarmé, Wordsworth and Keats).⁹³ The double question of how to read Hölderlin and whether he can be read at all consequently assumes paradigmatic status with respect to the determination of literary studies' possibility: it is this poetic corpus that poses the greatest threat and therefore also the greatest chance for the literary critic to test methods of interpretation.

If the urgency of these questions primarily arises from out of an oeuvre itself, then in the case of Hölderlin much of the complexity of the double question—can he be read and, if so, how?—derives from the peculiar shape of his poetic trajectory: On the one hand, this trajectory is marked by a breath-taking rapidity: within the span of a mere fifteen years, from the early 1790s to 1805/06, his work undergoes a transformation from largely epigonal early “hymns” that

geführt” (Stierle, “Dichtung und Auftrag,” 47). Cf. also Bernhard Böschstein, “Hölderlin in der deutschen und französischen Dichtung des 20. Jahrhunderts” and “Hölderlin und Celan.” For a larger view on the German reception of Hölderlin beyond George, Trakl, and Celan, cf. Maria Behre, “Hölderlin in der Lyrik des 20. Jahrhunderts,” who also addresses the reception found in Benn, Bobrowski, Huchel, and Biermann, among others.

⁹³ One could consider exemplary with respect to the demonstration of such a thesis the (early) work of Paul de Man: referencing Hölderlin's “Brod und Wein,” the first of the essays in his *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* begins by developing the predicament of poetic language: “There can be flowers that ‘are’ and poetic words that ‘originate,’ but no poetic words that ‘originate’ as if they ‘were’” (De Man, *Rhetoric*, 7) and then immediately claims: “Nineteenth-century poetry reexperiences and represents the adventure of this failure in an infinite variety of forms and versions” (De Man, 7). For both Hölderlin and Romanticism, the defining relationship is found, according to de Man, in the relationship to Rousseau. After indicating in the retrospective “preface” to *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* that he considers these essays on romanticism to stand under the sign of “failure” with respect to the problem of producing a coherent account of romanticism, de Man in fact states that “the poetry of Hölderlin [is] the obvious stumbling block of my own enterprise” (De Man, ix). In other words, it is Hölderlin's poetry that blocks coherent insight into the workings of the poetry that follows him, and, conversely, gaining greater insight into Hölderlin holds the promise of illuminating much of what came after him. (It should be noted that de Man already indicates in passing the crucial role of *air*: “The transparency of air represents the perfect fluidity of a mode of being that has moved beyond the power of earthly things and now dwells, like the God in Hölderlin's ‘Heimkunft,’ higher even than light (‘über dem Lichte’)” (De Man, 14). While air will not be seen as above “earthly things” here, it will nevertheless similarly be analyzed as harboring the potential of being an image of “repose,” as de Man emphasizes, and will further be regarded as similarly key to the question of mediation.)

echo Klopstock and Schiller, through a moderately successful (in terms of readership) epistolary novel, then a wide range of philosophical and poetological writings accompanied by the attempt of a *Trauerspiel* and a number of polished odes, to finally reach his unprecedented style of the *Gesänge* of the early years after the turn of the century. On the other hand, after those few years, in 1805/06, Hölderlin goes—so the claim—“mad.” Having reached the half-way point of his life—the point of the “Hälfte des Lebens”—the poet turns away from the world, turns away from Germany and from his poetic practice as it had hitherto shaped his existence, and is labelled mad. It is partly this madness that attracts, as Hölderlin’s first major editor, Norbert von Hellingrath, emphasizes in a speech given while he was on leave from his deployment in World War I: “Und wenn ich von Hölderlins Leben Ihnen reden will, dann ist der Wahnsinn nicht nur das Ziel, worein das Leben mündet, der Wahnsinn ist das Geheimnis, das als rätselhaft anlockt und als unverständlich wegstößt, das lockende Geheimnis, wonach die Neugier fragt.”⁹⁴ The *incomprehensibility* of the last part of Hölderlin’s life, of the second half of his life and work, attracts and repulses the reader; whether the “mad” Hölderlin can be read at all seems more doubtful than even the comprehensibility of the most complex phases of his hymnic production.

Reading “Hölderlin,” the name of this enigmatic life and work, the word around which a corpus of texts assembles, thus leads to the first articulation of the guiding thread of the investigation undertaken here: the question of unity. Is there “one” Hölderlin? Do the two halves of his life, and work, join into a unity or are they split by an unbridgeable diremption?⁹⁵ How can

⁹⁴ Hellingrath, *Zwei Vorträge*, 52.

⁹⁵ D. E. Sattler names Hölderlin consequently a “zweiteilige[s] Zeichen” and endows this split with supra-individual, “objective” significance: “Singulär, weil dieses zu einem anderen corpus mysticum verschmolzene Lebenswerk in zwei ungleich gewichtete Hälften zerfällt, die eine hoch, die andre geringschätzt, obwohl beide notwendig und gleichwertig zusammengehören. Singulär aber auch, weil jenes zweiteilige Zeichen nicht nur als subjektives Schicksal, sondern zugleich auch als objektiv Konzipiertes erscheint, so, als wäre das Rätsel individueller und allgemeiner Geschichte in der Figur

a movement of unifying and dissolving be described with respect to “Hölderlin?” The answer, or rather response, to this question will take shape in the context of the “dis-articulation of unity” developed by this chapter: it is a dynamized, hyperbolic unity that is simultaneously excessive and deficient; a unity that in the end only asserts itself by giving way to its disappearance⁹⁶—it is this unity that marks “Hölderlin.”

Before this notion of a dis-articulation of unity comes into view through a lengthy and patient analysis of the role of smell and *Sinnlichkeit* in Hölderlin’s work, however, a more narrowly circumscribed response to the challenges of reading Hölderlin and “Hölderlin” can be developed as a propaedeutic device. Hölderlin himself offers a number of reflections on the possibility of reading and interpretation, two of which will be presented here as measuring out the span of the readings of his work attempted in this chapter. Registering the question of the unity of “Hölderlin,” each one is linked to a name other than “Hölderlin,” more precisely, to anagrammatic rearrangements of “Hölderlin:” Hyperion and Scardanelli.⁹⁷ This act of dissolving and rearranging names, preserving and guarding their memory in a different—hardly legible—form, in other words, of transposing a (seemingly, allegedly, hopefully, dreadfully) *proper* name into an improper, rearranged afterlife, continuously occupies a decisive place in Hölderlin’s

dieses Lebens aufgehellt” (Sattler, “al rovescio,” 19). In certain respects, Sattler’s position vis-a-vis the latest Hölderlin constitutes an extreme point; his position will be addressed in the very last section below.

⁹⁶ One version of this claim is articulated by Werner Hamacher in *Version der Bedeutung*, which will be confronted in the last section on “Patmos” below. In her introduction to the English translation Julia Ng summarizes part of Hamacher’s claims regarding unity, in the crucial context of “lateness” that will also be developed below, as follows: “the ‘late lyric poetry’ is in fact ‘based on the subversion of logic,’ such that the only way in which it might nevertheless express any sort of synthetic unity is by abdicating its very claim to synthetic unity” (Hamacher, *Two Studies*, 11).

⁹⁷ For a detailed analysis of these anagrams, cf. in particular Roman Jakobson and Grete Lübbe-Grothues, “Ein Blick auf *Die Aussicht* von Hölderlin” (Jakobson, 31ff).

work. Be it the transcription of his own name, of his Diotima,⁹⁸ or, even more complexly, of the gods,⁹⁹ Hölderlin's poetry again and again opens the question of what it means to *read* a name that has become dispersed right up to the point of falling into illegibility.¹⁰⁰

Linked to the question of reading names through a shared concern with gathering and dispersal, Hölderlin-Hyperion and Hölderlin-Scardanelli offer two radically divergent versions of what can be termed *anthological* activity: the gathering up—into a *unity*—of disparate elements. Hölderlin-Hyperion develops, in the prologue to Hölderlin's epistolary novel *Hyperion, oder der Eremit in Griechenland*, a highly complex, self-referential instruction on how to read: by comparing reading to the smelling and plucking of a flower, he circumscribes the parameters of the engagement between the (reading) subject and the (read) object. The “mad” Hölderlin, and this question of alleged and real madness will be addressed at the very end of this chapter, the Hölderlin who gives himself the enigmatic name Scardanelli (among others), this Hölderlin-Scardanelli destroys, not in his work, but in his life this sophisticated anthological activity of “poets like bees:” he is reported by a number of sources to have spent much of his time reading *Hyperion*, on the one hand, and, on the other, going for walks where he would gather up flowers only to destroy them or throw them into the Neckar, the nearby river. It is as if—and an “as if” must be used here before the question of madness has been broached—it is as if, upon reading

⁹⁸ Cf. the analysis of the Alcaic ode “Diotima” in: Jakobson/Lübbe-Grothues, 91. Michael Franz has widened the analysis of Jakobson and Lübbe-Grothues by showing that the alliterative “hiding” of “Diotima” through the repeated “d”-sounds leads to a “S [...] G” climax in the two stanzas of the ode, revealing, finally, the “real” Diotima, Susette Gontard. See, Franz, “Die Anwesenheit Diotimas,” 15ff.

⁹⁹ On the fate of the names of the gods, see the section on “Patmos” below, including the references to secondary literature on the logic, if it is one, of names in *Hyperion* and the late poetry.

¹⁰⁰ This transcribing of names can sometimes prove contagious, as in the case of Walter Benjamin's important early text on Hölderlin (addressed below). Written shortly after the death of his friend Fritz Heinle, “Zwei Gedichte von Friedrich Hölderlin” could be read to hint at the poets' shared initials, F. H. In Ferdinand de Saussure's work one can find reflections on the unsettling ability to see anagrams (or “hypograms” as he sometimes them) everywhere and thus nowhere.

about the delicate, complex instruction for anthological activity found in his own novel, Hölderlin-Scardanelli goes out to enact this anthology in a manner that vacillates between gently mocking parody, violent rejection, and “mad,” meaningless repetition.

But first, Hölderlin-Hyperion. The prologue to *Hyperion* begins with a wish and a fear concerning the book’s reception: “Ich verspräche gerne diesem Buche die Liebe der Deutschen. Aber ich fürchte, die einen werden es lesen, wie ein Compendium, und um das *fabula docet* sich zu sehr bekümmern, indes die andern gar zu leicht es nehmen, und beede Teile verstehen es nicht” (KA 2, 13).¹⁰¹ The author wishes he could promise this book—his book—the love of the Germans but fears that they will not know how to read it properly. For the book to receive the love of its readers, the latter must know how to read and understand it: love requires understanding; understanding requires readerly skill. The pro-logue, the before of the *logos*, exhorts those standing before the novel to not enter the text without the right methodology of reading: the possibility of a proper reception depends on the reader correctly calibrating his or her taking care (“bekümmern”) of the text; the propaedeutic Hölderlin assigns to his readers lies in a reflection on reading itself.

A loving reading, the prologue continues, aims at an “Auflösung der Dissonanzen.” *Hyperion* is characterized by several such dissonances, the central one of which is already indicated by the first sentence of the first letter Hyperion writes to his main interlocutor Bellarmin: “Der liebe Vaterlandsboden gibt mir wieder Freude und Leid” (KA 2, 14). The point

¹⁰¹ This chapter quotes from three main Hölderlin editions: Friedrich Beißner’s *Große Stuttgarter Ausgabe*, D. E. Sattler’s *Frankfurter Hölderlin Ausgabe*, and Jochen Schmidt’s *Deutsche Klassiker-Ausgabe*; citations will be given parenthetically, using the *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch*’s abbreviations StA, FHA, and KA. Sattler’s edition will be used most frequently for the poems, due to the superior comprehensiveness of its editorial material; differing editorial choices on the part of the author of this chapter will be justified throughout, often with reference to Beißner’s or Schmidt’s editions.

of departure for the retrospective narration that Hyperion's letters produce is his current, paradoxical state of simultaneous joy and suffering. To this fundamental dissonance, the novel will add a variety of different versions: man/woman, German/Greek, nature/art, evolution/revolution. Much of the novel consists in unfolding in ever greater complexity the dissonances that make up Hyperion's world.

If these dissonances are to be dissolved, two modes of reading must be avoided. Both, so the prologue argues by way of an organic metaphor, lead to ignorance and thus fall short of the readerly skill and understanding that enable love: "Wer bloß an meiner Pflanze riecht, der kennt sie nicht, und wer sie pflückt, bloß, um daran zu lernen, kennt sie auch nicht. Die Auflösung der Dissonanzen in einem gewissen Charakter ist weder für das bloße Nachdenken, noch für die leere Lust" (KA 2, 13). On the one hand, the picking or plucking of the plant: a metaphor for a reading that deracinates. The reader takes the text from the original context in which it grew organically, and violently inserts it into a new context: here, into a context of learning that sees the novel as a "compendium" from which a *fabula docet* can be extracted. Cut off from its root, the text is subjected to the whims of a power that appropriates mere parts of it for its own purposes—purposes alien to the text itself. Consequently, like a plant, it begins to wilt. Separated from its life source, it can no longer live; it withers away, dries up, and starts to decompose. A text that is extracted from its own *Lebenszusammenhang* and subjected to alien intentions loses its liveliness and its ability to unfold according to its own logic: it enters an after-life¹⁰² that

¹⁰² This account of a "plucking" reading relates directly to theories of quotation and citation: what is quotation, including the quotations here, if not the picking of a passage and transplanting it into a different context? Theories of citing, for instance Walter Benjamin's, precisely relate such a practice to the "after-life" of a text. The late Hölderlin, too, modifies the organic metaphor of a living plant significantly and shifts it towards a *posthumous* conception; see section 6.3 "Archipelago: Posthumous Smells and a Truce with the Past" below.

seemingly still instructs but in fact has already lost that which is proper to it and was supposed to provide instruction. Extracting from a text only what the reader believes he or she can grasp and keep (a story told, for instance) mistakes the text for something it is not; attempting to understand something living by seizing it and regarding it as a mere resource, kills it.

Appropriating a text in this way produces an emptiness, a gap: the alliteration of *Pflanze* and *pf-lücken* in Hölderlin's text draws attention to their difference: the *Lücke* left after the plant has been plucked. This emptied out place indicates that the fatal flaw of plucking-reading lies in a misunderstanding of the proper kind of *Auflösen*: instead of resolving the dissonance between plant and man, between text and reader, between object and subject, the second term in this constellation completely dissolves the first into its own sphere, and leaves a *Lücke* where the object sought out for understanding used to be. This is the problem of mere reflection, of "bloßes Nachdenken," as the passage suggests.¹⁰³ Mere thinking discovers only its own activity since for it the object qua independent object does not exist.¹⁰⁴ Any learning that follows would thus constitute a *non-sequitur*: whatever happens to a deracinated text can never follow according to the text's own logic but is produced by the act of deracination. This learning would only discover its own foundational act: the instituting into the context of learning that resulted from the tearing out of the original context.

The counterpart to the reflective emptiness of the *Lücke* lies in the emptiness of the "leere Lust" that marks the other mode of reading, here figured as smelling the plant. In

¹⁰³ The syntax of the passage leaves it ambiguous whether "bloßes Nachdenken" is supposed to modify the smelling or the plucking of the flowers, or indeed whether it is supposed to be related to either of these terms at all. Any interest of the interpretation that follows must thus derive from its inherent force to illuminate the question of reading in *Hyperion* as well as more generally.

¹⁰⁴ Here already, a criticism of the philosophers of his time, most notably Fichte, can be detected; the full force of Hölderlin's objection to Fichtean philosophy—and with it, philosophy per se as it differs from poetry—will come into view in the rest of this chapter.

contradistinction to the gesture of plucking that takes into possession, smelling leaves the plant *intact*: it does not touch the plant itself but only engages with one of its emanations, its odor. The object is not dissolved into the subject by an act of seizing possession, of grasping (*be-greifen*) but is left whole, and wholly in its place, creating no gap or hole. Instead, something that the object gives off organically (its scent) fills the space between subject and object. The text is left alive—but the engagement with its life does not touch it directly, instead turning to a lifeless (since it cannot be said that the smell of a plant itself lives) product of that life. Smelling-reading thus also misses the object in its life, albeit for reasons that constitute the converse of those leading to plucking-reading's failure: attempting to let the object be alive, it is left with a mere supplementary by-product.

While the result of plucking-reading was a failed learning, smelling-reading produces a pleasure (*Lust*) that similarly turns out to be other than expected. It is empty (*leer*): since it leaves the object intact, it takes nothing from it; having taken nothing, it is void of any content. In other words, *merely* (“bloß”) smelling also does not dissolve the dissonances that constitute the animating tension of the novel: in contrast to the learning that regards the text as a com-pendium, literally something that is *weighed* together, mere smelling is “gar zu leicht.” It is too light and too easy, since it simply denies the dissonances: if the object is left whole and wholly unaffected, it cannot become the object *of* a “kennen.” He who only smells, leaves the plant in its own sphere, nature, thus avoiding any dissonance between his own sphere and that of the plant and consequently failing to establish a proper relation that could be called “love.” The “Auflösung der Dissonanzen” must be read emphatically as an *Auflösung* “in *einem* gewissen Charakter,” necessitating an approaching of plant and man, text and reader. The distance of empty pleasure

fails to affect the subject transformatively, thus falling short of a true relation. He who thinks reading is merely pleasant, knows nothing of reading and always falls short of love.

Truly loving reading would therefore also dissolve the dissonance between plucking and smelling. The repeated “bloß” structure of Hölderlin’s sentence indicates, contrary to what might be expected, that plucking-reading and smelling-reading should not be abandoned but rather that their individual shortcomings must be overcome in a dissolving of the conflict between the two: “Wer *bloß* an meiner Pflanze riecht, der kennt sie nicht, und wer sie pflückt, *bloß*, um daran zu lernen, kennt sie auch nicht. Die Auflösung der Dissonanzen in einem gewissen Charakter ist weder für das *bloße* Nachdenken, noch für die *leere* Lust” (KA 2, 13; emphasis added). The figure implicit in Hölderlin’s plant metaphor is the harmonious combination of these two into “one determinate character” (*in einem gewissen Charakter*): one should not only smell and not only pluck but rather one should smell and pluck in conjunction, that is, perhaps, assemble a bouquet of plants—not to extract something from them that could be kept, weighed, and stored but to smell what is grasped and to grasp what is smelled. *Hyperion*’s prologue thus proposes an *anthological* reading in the etymological sense: a gathering (λέγω) of flowers (ἄνθος);¹⁰⁵ a collection of the choicest blossoms that would dissolve the dissonances between pleasure and understanding. In such loving reading, the subject would not merely affect itself: the autoaffection of the paradoxical structure of the violent I that appropriates the text but only seizes its own gesture of seizing does not suffice. It would rather affect itself *through the other* and turn autoaffection into autoheteroaffection. Similarly, the object, *as* that which is loved and

¹⁰⁵ More broadly, the act of reading (*Lesen*) has often been related to the act of gathering or collecting (*die Lese*; *sich sammeln*). Cf., for instance, Martin Heidegger: “Lesen aber, was ist es anderes als sammeln: sich versammeln in der Sammlung auf das Ungesprochene im Gesprochenen” (Heidegger, *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens*, 108).

understood, must be affected by that love and understanding, otherwise it would not be the subject-matter of this love and this understanding. It cannot simply be left intact and whole since intactness precludes understanding; it must be exposed to the force of the understanding subject.¹⁰⁶ But this affecting of the object must not be a taking into possession that would eradicate the object's objecthood: the difference between object and subject must remain irreducible even—especially—when its *Auflösung* is sought; dissolving dissonance does not mean reducing difference in the sense of eliminating difference. Rather, an affecting of the other takes place that enables a relation between object and subject while guarding the distance between the two. The object *sur-vives* as something other than before (a bouquet, perhaps) but nevertheless still lives; the subject exerts its power but lets itself be affected by something more than its own power (a smell, perhaps).

This injunction to the reader derived from Hölderlin's pro-logue goes to the heart of the interpretive task of literary studies or *Literaturwissenschaft*: faced with the object that is the text, literary scholars as reading subjects must let their own reading be affected by it and affect it in turn. Instead of producing a merely mimetic relation to Hölderlin's proposal of "wie zu lesen sei,"¹⁰⁷ a relation that would simply submit to the method outlined in the "pro-logue," the response to this readerly imperative put before the text must be marked by the very relation of autoheteroaffection that hovers between a leaving intact and a violent deracination—the

¹⁰⁶ For a related gesture, see Hamacher: "Die Sache, auf die sich das Verstehen bezieht, mag auch ohne es existieren, doch als Sache des Verstehens ist sie schon die vom Verstehen affizierte" (Hamacher, *Entferntes Verstehen*, 7).

¹⁰⁷ This turn of phrase is taken from Theodor Adorno's third study on Hegel titled "Skoteinos, oder Wie zu lesen sei" to mark the confrontation between Hegel and Hölderlin as well as with Adorno's reflections on the late Hölderlin that will be developed below.

relationship between method and object is neither one of imitation nor one of complete dis-identification but rather one of a transformative tension between the two.

Most methods employed by readers of Hölderlin and found in the secondary literature can be likened to one of the three poles of Hölderlin-Hyperion's prologue on anthological activity: a violent deracination that plugs lines from this corpus and uses them for more or less non-sequitur purposes, be it a grand philosophical scheme or the *Bildungsbürger*-like taking into possession of "great" cultural goods; an all-too distant letting-be of the grand master, either expressed in the uncritical taking over of Hölderlin's vocabulary or the consumption for mere pleasure; lastly, and hopefully the method employed here, the attempt to establish a transformative tension—not without pleasure—between text and reader that lets reading occur in the in-between space of autoheteroaffection.

The sophistication and complexity of even the most successful method of reading notwithstanding, Hölderlin's trajectory, however, points—through the very act of an anthological plugging of flowers—to the limits of readability; the phenomenon of "Hölderlin" raises in all urgency the question of the possibility of reading that was shown to haunt all questions of method. This haunting challenge, in a manner appropriate to such haunting, can be found only in the contested margins of Hölderlin's oeuvre: it cannot be found in Hölderlin's "own" poetic works but instead only in the reports about his life, in the third-party accounts of who Hölderlin became in the second "Hälfte des Lebens," accounts whose veracity is always at least latently under threat. Those accounts confirm that Hölderlin's love for flowers endured into even the latest years of his period of "madness" as, for instance, the writer Emma Niendorf attests: "Wie er nicht unempfänglich für kleine Freuden, die man ihm zu machen suchte, wenn er das erst Ergriffene auch nachher wieder kindisch wegstellte. So schickte ihm Uhland in den letzten

Wochen noch eine Vase mit Blumen. Hölderlin hob sie freudig und bewundernd hoch auf, betrachtete sie und rief: „Das sind prachasiatische Blumen!“ (FHA 9, 424).¹⁰⁸ Similarly, it is precisely *Hyperion* that endures as the only work of his that Hölderlin continuously accepts and that, in fact, brings him great pleasure: “Womit er sich Tagelang beschäftigen kann, das ist sein *Hyperion*” (FHA 9, 308).

However, this love for flowers combined with the repeated confrontation with *Hyperion* leads to a disturbing perversion of the anthological activity found in the prologue to the epistolary novel. Wilhelm Waiblinger, who spent a significant amount of time with the “mad” poet in the 1820s and wrote the novel *Phaëton* modelled on *Hyperion* but with Hölderlin as the only lightly encoded protagonist, describes in *Friedrich Hölderlins Lebens, Dichtung und Wahnsinn*, the following, frequently recurring scene from Hölderlin’s time at the household of the carpenter Zimmer, where Hölderlin was housed after being released from the Autenrieth clinic: “Er unterhielt sich alsdann mit Blumenpflücken, und wenn er einen tüchtigen Strauß beysammen hatte, so zerriß er ihn und steckte ihn in die Tasche” (FHA 9, 307).¹⁰⁹ Concerning Hölderlin’s life more than a decade later, Alfred Diefenbach, who studied in Tübingen 1837-40 and visited Hölderlin during those years, repeats these details (he avows partly paraphrasing Waiblinger in a different context) in similar form: “Sein liebster Aufenthalt ist die freie Natur, doch ist diese ihm auf ein kleines Gärtchen am Neckar beschränkt. Hier weilt er oft Tage und Nächte lange und – rupft Gras aus oder pflückt Blumen und schleudert sie in den Neckar” (FHA

¹⁰⁸ Sattler speculates that this might be a misreporting of “prachatig” (as in “prächtig”), which is attested in Gustav Schlesier’s *Unterredung mit Schwab*, (FHA 9, 438). “Asia” and its “Pracht,” however, recur throughout Hölderlin’s work, in particular the later *Gesänge*, thus the possibility of Hölderlin associating his gift with the splendor of Asia should not be dismissed too easily. The smell of Asia and its flowers will, in fact, be crucial in the section “Geopoetics of Smell” below.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. also: “Gerne unterhält er sich damit, daß er sein Schnupftuch in die Hand nimmt, und auf die Zaunpfähle damit zuschlägt, oder das Gras ausrauft” (FHA 9, 308).

9, 329). Throughout the years of his madness, Hölderlin-Scardanelli seems to do two things: reading—but how does the “mad” poet read?—Hölderlin-Hyperion and performing the very modus of reading in a literalized and violently perverted form. It is as if the arc of “Hölderlin” joins to the method of reading articulated in the first half of this phenomenon a mocking repetition that poses the question—but is it even a serious, genuine question?—of how and whether this anthological activity can still be read. Is there meaning to be found in Hölderlin-Scardanelli gathering up a bouquet of flowers and throwing it into the Neckar? Or is it the eruption of non-sense, of a reality or a madness that eludes the framework of meaning? Might a different reading, beyond meaning, be possible that lies in establishing a relation to whatever the phenomenon of the flower-throwing Hölderlin might be?

Facing these questions, it is between the two relationships to flowers modelled by Hölderlin-Hyperion and Hölderlin-Scardanelli, alongside their attendant articulations of a unity of multiplicity, its dis-articulation or destruction, and the (im)possibility of reading just these structures that the following investigations into “Hölderlin” take place. Following the trail of smell from the earliest to the latest Hölderlin, these readings will assemble around the figure of a “dis-articulation of unity” that finds a doubled end point in the “breathing of the future” of “Patmos,” on the one hand—far removed from both Hölderlin-Hyperion and Hölderlin-Scardanelli—and the generic, almost completely deodorized *Vollkommenheit* of the latest poems, on the other.

PART I (EARLY AND MIDDLE HÖLDERLIN)

1. The Onto-Poetological Task: Hölderlin in Context

The task of an “Auflösung der Dissonanzen” posed by the prologue to *Hyperion* finds further elaboration and specification in contemporaneous letters and theoretical fragments that stand in dialogue with the philosophical systems of Hölderlin’s time. In a decisive letter to Immanuel Niethammer (February 24th, 1796), whom Hölderlin at the time called his philosophical “mentor,”¹¹⁰ the young poet outlines his current philosophico-poetological project, which, according to his letter, he was developing through an extensive engagement with Kant and Reinhold. This project, so Hölderlin argues, would culminate in “philosophical letters” that would:

das Prinzip finden, das mir die Trennungen, in denen wir denken und existieren, erklärt, das aber auch vermögend ist, den Widerstreit verschwinden zu machen, den Widerstreit zwischen dem Subject und dem Object, zwischen unserem Selbst und der Welt, ja auch zwischen Vernunft und Offenbarung, — theoretisch, in *intellektueller Anschauung*, ohne daß unsere praktische Vernunft zu Hilfe kommen müßte. Wir bedürfen dafür ästhetischen Sinn, und ich werde meine philosophischen Briefe “Neue Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen” nennen. Auch werde ich darin von der Philosophie auf Poesie und Religion kommen (FHA 19, 249; emphasis added).

Explicating this dense description of Hölderlin’s ambitions, the key in many ways to his poetry and poetics of his “mature” phase in the 1790s, can take two forms; both will be crucial for an understanding of the function of smell in his poetry as it responds to this “onto-poetological task.”¹¹¹ On the one hand, the reference to “new letters” on aesthetic education—clearly

¹¹⁰ For a sketch of the relationship between Hölderlin and Niethammer, see Dieter Henrich, “Hölderlin’s Philosophical Beginnings: On the Occasion of the Publication of a Page by Hölderlin in Niethammer’s *Stammbuch*,” esp. 69-70 for initial reflections on the relationship between philosophy and poetry in this context.

¹¹¹ There are certainly a number of other traditions that inform Hölderlin’s conception of poetry and his intellectual outlook more broadly; to name the most powerful ones: Plato and the Ancient Greeks,

proposing a rewriting of Schiller's major work *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*—can be traced to a text that Beißner, Schmidt and others have edited as “Über Religion:” as the editor of the *Frankfurter Hölderlin-Ausgabe*, D. E. Sattler, has argued in contrast to the other editors, this text can be regarded as a fragment of these very letters promised to Niethammer and can thus be read as a development of the “principle” that would not only “explain” but also let “den Widerstreit verschwinden” that exists between subject and object, self and world.¹¹² This suggestion will be explicated below: it will show how Hölderlin's poetics responds to the Schillerian transformation of the Kantian aesthetic legacy.

On the other hand, Hölderlin's reference to the centrality of “intellektuale Anschauung” provides a key to understanding his program and how it fits into the philosophical context not so much of the Schillerian transformation of Kant but of the strand of philosophy developed in part by his friends and peers that would come to be called German Idealism:¹¹³ it is “intellectual

Rousseau, Herder, and the Christian tradition. The focus here is on the two more direct interlocutors as they shape the “onto-poetological task” into which the use of olfactory tropes is inscribed in Hölderlin's work.

¹¹² Sattler consequently titles the text *Fragment philosophischer Briefe* and dates it to winter 1796/97, just a few months before the publication of the first volume of *Hyperion* by Cotta on Easter 1797.

¹¹³ The relationship between Hölderlin and German Idealism is exceedingly complex and has received a large amount of scholarly attention. The dispute concerning Hölderlin's role in the drafting of the *Ältestes Systemfragment*, written by him, Schelling, and Hegel, is only the most tangible form of the intellectual (and personal) conflicts that shaped the trajectory of German philosophy. Concerning these questions, cf. in particular, Dieter Henrich's by now classic “Konstellationsforschungen,” especially *Der Grund im Bewusstsein*, that argue for attributing to Hölderlin a crucial position in the early development of German idealism, which other accounts of the work of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel often tend to erase (as does Eckart Förster's major work, *25 Jahre der Philosophie* that will be used below). Cf. also Violetta L. Waibel, “Kant, Fichte, Schelling;” Otto Pöggeler, “Philosophie im Schatten Hölderlins” In: *Der Idealismus und seine Gegenwart*; and Wolfgang Binder, “Hölderlins Dichtung im Zeitalter des Idealismus.” Binder sees, not all too dissimilar from Werner Hamacher's position quoted below, the late lyric poetry as the decisive breaking point between Hölderlin and Idealism. The path to this break leads, according to Binder, through *Hyperion* and then *Empedocles*: while *Hyperion* is “ein poetischer Analogon der werdenden idealistischen Philosophie des Geistes [...] das einzige, welches die deutsche Literatur hervorgebracht hat” (Binder, “Hölderlins Dichtung,” 63), *Empedocles* addresses the missing questions of *Hyperion* (according to Binder, “[die Fragen] nach dem Zeitgott und nach der Seinsweise der Götter” (Binder, 65)) and becomes both the epitome and the crisis of idealism: “Es scheint, Hölderlin habe in

intuition” that is supposed to explain and make disappear the divisions that mark our thinking; a response to the “Widerstreit” that is supposed to be “theoretical” without referring to practical reason. It is this very term of an intellectual intuition that provides the locus for some of the most crucial developments of German Idealism, which maintained a complex and at times uneasy personal and intellectual relationship with Hölderlin. Understanding the uniqueness of Hölderlin’s poetry, if it can be called that, thus necessitates a prior understanding of his relationship to the philosophy of his time, both in the Schillerian and the German Idealism version: it is with and against those strands of philosophy that he develops his most forceful and incisive poetic innovations, and it is in this context, too, that the decisive role of olfactory tropes in his poetry articulates itself.

In a first step, intellectual intuition, then, must be understood with respect to the two philosophers Hölderlin mentions in his letter: Kant and Reinhold. Kant had introduced the term into philosophical discourse but only as a negative, limiting term: intellectual intuition would refer to an intuition (*Anschauung*) that is non-sensible, that is, an intuition that is not *receptive* but rather *spontaneous*, in other words, productive out of itself. Kant hence names it an “intuitus

seinem Drama den Höhepunkt, die Krisis und die Überwindung des Idealismus gleichnishaft dargestellt” (Binder, 68). In this schema, the “late” lyric poetry then becomes “Hölderlins rückblickende Deutung seiner idealistischen Vergangenheit” (Binder, 70). It is this claim that the section on lateness in Hölderlin below will address, through a rather different approach (that of *Sinnlichkeit*) but with an end point that approaches at least partly Binder’s conclusion. Regarding Fichte and Hölderlin, Violetta L. Waibel offers a detailed tracing of the *Auseinandersetzung* between the two in a number of respects in her book *Hölderlin und Fichte 1794-1800*. On Schelling and Hölderlin, see the remarks on Hölderlin’s letter to Niethammer from February 1796, as well as: Johann Kreuzer, “Hölderlin im Gespräch mit Hegel und Schelling,” who argues for a much greater affinity between Hölderlin and Hegel than between Hölderlin and Schelling (the question of the relationship between Hölderlin and Hegel returns below); cf. also Michael Franz, “Schelling und Hölderlin – ihre schwierige Freundschaft und der Unterschied ihrer philosophischen Positionen um 1796.” Franz concurs with Kreuzer in arguing for a closer relationship between Hölderlin and Hegel, seeking to show that the Schelling-Hölderlin relationship was shaped by personal and philosophical friction: “Die Beziehungen zwischen Schelling und Hölderlin waren schon sehr früh verstimmt. Das läßt sich schon beim Weggang Hölderlins und Hegels von Tübingen zeigen” (Franz, “Schelling und Hölderlin,” 78); more on Franz’s position below.

originarius,” or an “ursprüngliche Anschauung” that would be available to “allein dem Urwesen, niemals aber einem [...] abhängigen Wesen.”¹¹⁴ In such an intuition “possibility (thinking) and actuality (being) [would] coincide:”¹¹⁵ anything intellectually intuited must *be* by virtue of that very intuition.¹¹⁶ Intellectual intuition consequently goes against the very bedrock of what Kant had established as the basic structure of the *human* faculties. According to the critical enterprise, anything we, as human beings, intuit must come from the outside and be given to us: there cannot be such a thing as a productive intuition. Intellectual intuition, therefore, is impossible for a human being and ascribed only to a divine mind; for transcendental idealism, this term merely fulfills the function of designating the limits of the *human* faculties and is consequently relegated to the realm of mere ideas of reason.

At the beginning of the 1790s, almost a decade after the publication of the A-edition of the first *Critique*, criticisms and further developments of the Kantian project began to proliferate and seized precisely on this term to articulate some of the key objections to Kant. While the roots of a positive usage of intellectual intuition can be traced to Karl Leonard Reinhold’s *Elementarphilosophie*, the term came into its own in 1794, just two years before Hölderlin’s

¹¹⁴ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B72.

¹¹⁵ Förster, *25 Years*, 145.

¹¹⁶ Eckart Förster has shown that intellectual intuition in Kant needs to be carefully distinguished from an “*intuitive understanding* which goes from the intuition of the whole to its parts and thus perceives no contingency in the way the parts are assembled into a whole” (Förster, 145). While intellectual intuition crosses the receptivity/spontaneity boundary established by critical philosophy, intuitive understanding undoes the discursivity/intuition distinction as made by Kant. Out of the latter, so Förster argues, develops Goethe’s largely Spinozistic *scientia intuitiva*, mostly found in his morphological and botanical writings, while out of the former grows the strand of German Idealism that is of interest here. Further below, the contrast between Goethe and Hölderlin will be explicated through a very different route: one could, in addition, follow Förster’s lead and contrast Goethe’s Spinozistic development with Hölderlin’s transformation of intellectual intuition (which, of course, also entertains a relationship with the reception of Spinoza that forcefully shaped parts of the tradition of German Idealism). The presentation of the development of intellectual intuition here largely follows Förster’s account but see also Henrich, *Der Grund im Bewusstsein* and, in particular with respect to Hölderlin, Manfred Frank, “On the Search for the Unconditioned,” esp. 77-79, 88-90.

letter to Niethammer, in the work of Johann Gottlieb Fichte.¹¹⁷ In 1794, Fichte produced his so-called *Aenesidemus* review that attempted to respond to Gottlob Ernst Schulze, a Skeptic who had rigorously attacked Reinhold's *Elementarphilosophie* and with it the legacy of Kantian critical philosophy. The review developed what has been called "Fichte's original insight" (Henrich), namely that "the absolute subject, the I, is not given by empirical intuition; it is, instead, posited by intellectual intuition."¹¹⁸ While the intuition of objects always depends on something being given from the outside to the one who intuits, the same does not hold for the I itself, according to Fichte: the thought "I am" cannot be caused in me from the outside but rather depends on the I's own activity. Hence when I intuit that I am, this intuition must be non-sensible and non-receptive. Instead, it is productive, spontaneous, and, therefore, in the terminology established by Kant, intellectual. Similarly, in the intellectual intuition Fichte claims to have discovered, thinking and being, possibility and actuality coincide in a way Kant had allowed only for a divine mind: "The I is not *only* something that is thought, it is actual at the same time. [...] it is actual *only* when it thinks itself."¹¹⁹ This "Thathandlung" thus becomes the "first principle" upon which Fichte constructs his *Wissenschaftslehre*.¹²⁰

Fichte's attempt to refound philosophy on an act of intellectual intuition had an enormous effect on his contemporaries, among them Hölderlin's classmate and (at the time) close friend,

¹¹⁷ For a general account of Hölderlin's critique of Fichte, cf. Waibel, *Hölderlin und Fichte*, esp. 72-74 for the notion of intellectual intuition, and 91ff for Fichte's *Aenesidemus* review and Hölderlin's possible reception of this text or, alternatively, his direct personal communication with Fichte himself.

¹¹⁸ In: Förster, *25 Years*, 162.

¹¹⁹ Förster, 162; emphasis in the original.

¹²⁰ The affirmation of intellectual intuition produces an evidentiary or epistemological challenge for Fichte's philosophical system, one that he himself explicitly acknowledges: "That we possess such a power of intellectual intuition is not something that can be demonstrated by means of concepts, nor can an understanding of what intellectual intuition is be produced from concepts. This is something everyone has to discover immediately within himself; otherwise he will never become acquainted with it at all" (Fichte, *Gesamtausgabe*, I,4, 217).

Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling. In 1795, at the mere age of twenty, Schelling wrote a short, largely Fichtean treatise titled *Vom Ich als Princip der Philosophie oder über das Unbedingte im menschlichen Wissen*. The early Schelling, in contrast to his own writings just a few years later, affirms here the inseparable link between the I and intellectual intuition:¹²¹ having established that the I cannot be grasped by concepts, since concepts can only apply to finite (“bedingten”) objects and the I must be unconditioned, he goes on to claim that:

Mithin kann das Ich nur in einer Anschauung bestimmt seyn. Aber das Ich ist nur dadurch Ich, daß es niemals Object werden kann, mithin kann es in keiner sinnlichen Anschauung, also nur in einer solchen, die gar kein Object, gar nicht sinnlich ist, d. h. in einer intellectualen Anschauung bestimmbar seyn. – Wo Object ist, da ist sinnliche Anschauung, und umgekehrt.¹²²

¹²¹ Schelling also appears to be the first to introduce a minor spelling change from “intellectuelle” to “intellectuale Anschauung,” a spelling Hölderlin follows for the most part. For the early Schelling’s concept of intellectual intuition, with particular attention paid to the influence of Spinoza, cf. Dalia Nassar, “Spinoza in Schelling’s early conception of intellectual intuition” in: *Spinoza and German Idealism*. Recent scholarship has tried to determine which parts of Fichte’s work Schelling had actually studied when he wrote *Vom Ich*; Xavier Tilliette, for instance, argues that Schelling was only thoroughly familiar with Fichte’s slightly earlier *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre* and not the *Grundlage*. More broadly, the degree to which Schelling ever really was a “Fichtean” has been the subject of vigorous debate, rendered more difficult by the rapidity with which Schelling’s work developed. Tracing the Hölderlin-Schelling *Auseinandersetzung* through the concept of intellectual intuition is, of course, only one way to approach this very difficult relationship; for differing formulations, cf. Kreuzer’s article quoted above, and Franz who argues that “beide den Versuch machen wollten, den Kantischen Ansatz zu einer kritischen Metaphysik mit Hilfe einer transformierten Platonischen Prinzipienlehre fundamentieren zu können” (Franz, “Schelling und Hölderlin,” 85). Franz, who reads Schelling’s work around 1796 through the influence of the emanation schema of Neoplatonism, sees Hölderlin’s conception of beauty as “das Eine in sich selber unterschiedne” proposed in *Hyperion* as Hölderlin’s decisive breaking with Schelling’s philosophy, where the latter does not reach a similar sophistication of a “Einheit von Einheit und Unterschiedenheit” (Franz, 96) but rather seeks a return to the lost unity. The crucial question of a “Heraustreten,” which Franz interprets through the Neoplatonic schema, is given a differing interpretation in the context of Hölderlin’s writings on intellectual intuition in the analysis proposed here. Kreuzer concurs with Franz in identifying the question of unity and difference as the crux of the matter between the two thinkers but, in contrast to Franz, explicitly refers to the question of intellectual intuition. He reaches the conclusion that “Der Unterschied zu Hölderlin gründet vielmehr darin, daß Schelling die Trias von ‚vorgängiger Einheit – empirischer Vielfalt – absoluter Einheit oder absoluter Thesis‘ als ein Theorem formuliert, in dem jede Differenz (und Individualität!) aufgelöst wird” (Kreuzer, “Hölderlin im Gespräch,” 60).

¹²² Schelling, *Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe*, I, 2, 106.

According to Schelling, an intuition that is sensible is always of an object and all intuitions of objects are sensible. If intuition is to rise above conditioned objects to the unconditioned it must become intellectual and rise above sensibility. With respect to the unconditioned, Schelling, following Fichte, insists on relating intellectual intuition to the I—but here a terminological oddity, of course already present in Fichte, comes into view: what kind of *An-schauen*, literally a *looking at*, can an *intellectuale Anschauung* be if it is stripped of any object whatsoever? Does not the prefix “an” at the very least but even more forcefully the vision based model of a “Schauen” more generally let this term border on catachresis? Even if this term’s function is supposed to lie precisely in the transfer out of the empirical realm, understanding how this removal functions and what remnants of a looking-at model might remain is key.

Hölderlin’s first usage of the term “intellectuale Anschauung,” following Schelling’s not Fichte’s and Kant’s spelling, appears in a text written shortly after *Vom Ich*, quite possibly as a direct response to his younger friend’s newly published book, of which two copies were found in Hölderlin’s personal library.¹²³ Perhaps picking up on the oddity of a “looking at” that is attributed to an I but looks at no object whatsoever, Hölderlin’s text, edited under the title “Urteil und Sein” by Beißner but titled “Seyn Urtheil Möglichkeit”¹²⁴ by Sattler, radically severs intellectual intuition from the I. The section on “Seyn” thus states:

Wo Subject und Object schlechthin, nicht nur zum Teil vereinigt ist, mithin so vereinigt, daß gar keine Teilung vorgenommen werden kann, ohne das Wesen desjenigen, was getrennt werden soll, zu verletzen, da und sonst nirgends kann von einem *Seyn schlechthin* die Rede sein, wie es bei der intellectualen Anschauung der Fall ist (FHA 17, 156).

¹²³ Cf. Franz, “Hölderlins Logik,” 110-1.

¹²⁴ Both the imputed title and the order of paragraphs are strongly contested among Hölderlin scholars and editors since the text is written on the two sides of a single sheet without any conclusive indications as to which side should be read first; these disputes can be neglected here.

Intellectual intuition, so the short text affirms a second time in the section on “Urtheil,” concerns the state in which object and subject are joined “innigst;” this “innig” relation being thus that it cannot be disjoined lest it is subjected to a violent act of “verlezen.” The name Hölderlin gives to this *Vereinigung* is “Seyn schlechthin,” without any reference to an I—in fact, “Seyn Urtheil Möglichkeit” explicitly rejects the notion that any Fichtean conception of the I could correlate with an intellectual intuition. The passage quoted above continues:

Aber dieses Sein muß nicht mit der Identität verwechselt werden. Wenn ich sage: Ich bin Ich, so ist das Subjekt (Ich) und das Objekt (Ich) nicht so vereinigt, daß gar keine Trennung vorgenommen werden kann, ohne, das Wesen desjenigen, was getrennt werden soll, zu verlezen; im Gegenteil das Ich ist nur durch diese Trennung des Ichs vom Ich möglich (FHA 17, 156).

The I, according to Hölderlin, is only possible through an opposition (*Entgegensetzen*) in self-consciousness; but such an opposition, like all acts of consciousness, requires the constitution of an object, as that which is *ent-gegen-gesetzt*. Intellectual intuition, in line with Hölderlin’s anti-Fichtean impetus,¹²⁵ cannot be the intuition of an I and is not a matter of “identity” but rather—and this will be decisive for olfaction’s relationship with intellectual intuition—is the intuition of

¹²⁵ In a letter from January 26th, 1795, addressed to his school friend Hegel, Hölderlin summarizes his objection to Fichte’s philosophy: “[Fichte’s] absolutes Ich (= Spinozas Substanz) enthält alle Realität; es ist alles, u. außer ihm ist nichts; es giebt also für dieses abs. Ich kein Object, denn sonst wäre nicht alle Realität in ihm; ein Bewußtsein ohne Object ist aber nicht denkbar, und wenn ich selbst dieses Object bin, so bin ich als solches notwendig beschränkt, sollte es auch nur in der Zeit sein, also nicht absolut; also ist in dem absoluten Ich kein Bewußtsein denkbar, als absolutes Ich hab ich kein Bewußtsein, und insofern ich kein Bewußtsein habe, insofern bin ich (für mich) nichts, also das absolute Ich ist (für mich) Nichts” (FHA 19, 212). Whether this charge is something Fichte himself would have disagreed with depends on the stage of his writing and is open to debate: as scholars have emphasized, Fichte’s *Thathandlung* should not be mistaken for an empirical act or even one that can appear to empirical consciousness. For a discussion of this letter, and regarding Hölderlin’s relationship with Fichte more broadly, the complexity of which is often underestimated, see Manfred Frank, “On Hölderlin’s Critique of Fichte” in *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*. Frank rightly emphasizes the importance to Hölderlin of Fichte’s concept of a “Wechselbeziehung” between I and non-I (Frank, 117f.).

an *inner, inward*, indeed, *intimate intertwinement of subject and object*, whose separation, even in an “ana-lytic” operation, would be violent.

As Schelling moves beyond his Fichtean phase towards his more genuinely original *Naturphilosophie* in the late 1790s, he, too, severs intellectual intuition’s exclusive link to the I. This gesture can be found most explicitly in his writings from 1801 (even though the *Naturphilosophie* writings from the preceding years can already be shown to be based on similar assumptions). In a response to A. K. A. Eschenmayer’s critical review of Schelling’s project, the latter responds with a text “betreffend den wahren Begriff der Naturphilosophie und die richtige Art ihre Probleme aufzulösen,” published in the *Zeitschrift für spekulative Physik* (edited by Schelling himself). Here the *Naturphilosoph* states:

Ich fordere zum Behuf der Naturphilosophie die intellectuelle Anschauung, wie sie in der Wissenschaftslehre gefordert wird; ich fordere aber außerdem noch die Abstraction von dem *Anschauenden* in dieser Anschauung, eine Abstraction welche mir das rein Objective dieses Acts zurückläßt, welches an sich bloß Subject-Object, keineswegs aber = Ich ist.¹²⁶

Schelling introduces here a radical break from his Fichtean origins: what enabled the author of the *Wissenschaftslehre* to rehabilitate intellectual intuition against the Kantian interdiction was the *Thathandlung* character of the intellectual intuition being bound to the I. In other words, in the realm of transcendental idealism and the question of the I, “one always remains both the intuited (that which is doing the producing) and the one who is intuiting”;¹²⁷ this, of course, is not

¹²⁶ Schelling, *Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe*, I,10, 92.

¹²⁷ Schelling, *Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe*, I,9, 41. Cf.: “In the case of intellectual intuition, being and thought are inseparable in the product since in contrast to sensuous intuition it is a productive intuition. If we are now to abstract from the producing subject, then there would have to be a unity of being and thought which could exist without appearing as the product of a subject” (Förster, *25 Years*, 248-9). Förster goes on to turn to “intuitive understanding” instead of intellectual intuition, thus substituting, to a degree, a reflection on Goethe for German Idealism, or rather attempting to show that the Idealism of Fichte and in particular Schelling runs up against insoluble problems, whereas Goethe overcomes these aporias and clears the way for the transition from Kant to Hegel: “For if we abstract from the subject, the

the case with nature, at least not in any straightforward sense: nature is not produced in intuition, the way the I might be said to be produced in it. Nevertheless, Schelling insists on the possibility and indeed actuality of just such an intellectual intuition.¹²⁸

Around the same time as Schelling develops his *Naturphilosophie*, “intellectual intuition” occurs for the last time in Hölderlin’s extant writings,¹²⁹ in a text that begins “Das lyrische dem Schein nach idealische Gedicht,” dated to 1798/99 by Schmidt and Beißner, to summer 1800 by Sattler.¹³⁰ Left fragmentary, the text again addresses the question raised in the Niethammer letter of the “Widerstreit zwischen dem Subject und dem Object, zwischen unserem Selbst und der Welt” and the role intellectual intuition plays with respect to it. In keeping with “Seyn Urtheil Möglichkeit,” intellectual intuition is said to be of “des Ursprünglich einigen” and an “Einigkeit mit allem, was lebt” (FHA 14, 370). Yet in contrast to the text from 1795, this unity or more precisely “unicity,” as the German “Einigkeit” is usually translated, is *dynamized* and through this dynamic conception comes to include the very “Trennung” that “Seyn Urtheil Möglichkeit” designated as a violent injury of unity: the unicity of intellectual intuition “speaks itself the easiest” when one says that both “die wirkliche Trennung [...] so auch die Verbindung [...] seien nur ein Zustand des Ursprünglich einigen, in dem es sich befinde, weil es aus sich herausgehen

subject cannot ‘create’ the object. If being and thought are nevertheless to remain inseparable in the object, then it must be the case “that my intuiting is itself a thinking, and my thinking an intuiting,” as Goethe once put it” (Förster, 249).

¹²⁸ Schelling does in fact claim that (his) philosophy *produces* nature, while also acknowledging nature’s “autonomy” and “autarchy.” An analysis of the complex interplay of these two claims would require a fuller development of the stages and function of the “construction” of *Naturphilosophie*, which is beyond the scope of this chapter. At this point, Förster and others have claimed that Schelling’s transformation of the concept of intellectual intuition has distorted the original Fichtean insight to the point of incomprehensibility, necessitating a different (Spinozistic) approach.

¹²⁹ The only other time Hölderlin uses the term after his Niethammer letter seems to be “Wenn der Dichter einmal des Geistes mächtig ...” but the term does not appear to be given much weight in the development of the argument there.

¹³⁰ Beißner gives this fragmentary text the title “Über den Unterschied der Dichtarten.”

müsse” (FHA 14, 370; emphasis added). The unicity of intellectual intuition, far from resisting all division, instead requires a stepping out of unity into temporary states of division and (re-)joining. The reason for this lies in the impossibility of “Stillstand” for unicity: “des Stillstands wegen, der darum in ihm nicht stattfinden könne, weil die Art der Vereinigung in ihm nicht immer dieselbe bleiben dürfe” (FHA 14, 370). There is no manner of unification that could become static: any standing still (*Stillstand*) in unification calls for a stepping out of it and re-entering into new unicity, a process induced by the fact that unicity is always *too much* or *too little*: the “Trennung der Teile” takes place “weil sie sich zu einig fühlen [...] oder weil sie sich nicht einig genug fühlen” (FHA 14, 371). No longer does intellectual intuition oppose just the “identity” of the Fichteian *Wissenschaftslehre*, the “innigst” unity of Hölderlin’s own 1795 text has become recognized as too unified and not unified enough: if unicity excludes all division it is marked by lack since “Einheit einen Mangel an Teilung impliziert, der ihrer Einheit Grenzen setzt, über die sich ihr Trieb, Einheit zu sein, hinwegsetzen muß. Da Einigkeit Mangel – Mangel an Getrenntheit, Mangel an Beziehung zu Äußerlichem und Mangel an Kontingenz – ist, muß sie immediate Über-Einigkeit, sie muß unmittelbar Mittelbarkeit und Übergang zu sich als jeweils Anderem sein.”¹³¹

This “aus sich herausgehen” process therefore reintroduces *sensibility* into the description of intellectual intuition that not only Schelling had excluded from it so vigorously in *Vom Ich* but that was precisely excluded from it from the very beginning: intellectual intuition was supposed to be spontaneous and productive, instead of exposed to the sensible outside. Yet any unity intuited intellectually, per Hölderlin’s insight in the late 1790s, must, in order to be truly a unity,

¹³¹ Hamacher, “Parusie,” 106. A fuller and more exacting account of “Das lyrische...” would take into account the *modal* qualifications Hölderlin operates with in his text; the text quoted here by Hamacher provides such an account.

step out into that which is other than itself, namely, sensibility; it must intuit the unity of “everything that lives” in a constant process of othering the intellect and returning to it.

At this point, after this fragmentary text which should perhaps be seen as a clarificatory exercise on Hölderlin’s part, the term “intellectual intuition” is abandoned in his writing. Hölderlin shifts fully to poetry, in an attempt to solve the “Widerstreit,” diagnosed as the onto-poetological task, beyond the rigid terminology handed to him by the philosophy of his time.

Yet before turning to Hölderlin’s poetry and its attempt to outdo philosophical or theoretical intellectual intuition (the ode “Heidelberg” will attempt this in paradigmatic fashion through a poetic deployment of a fragrance), it is worth returning to Sattler’s suggestion that the text “Über Religion” or *Fragment philosophischer Briefe* might respond to the task outlined in the letter to Niethammer. In this text, Hölderlin attempts to develop, still in “theoretical” terms, a philosophical language that would be able to address the question of the “Trennungen” and their *Widerstreit* but does so not through the language of German Idealism, of which “intellectual intuition” was analyzed above as one of its most potent termini, but through terms that certainly entertain a dialogue with the philosophy of his time, most importantly Kant’s *Kritik der Urteilskraft* and Schiller’s transformation of this work in his *Briefe*, but nevertheless attain some independence vis-à-vis philosophical discourse.

The conflict between subject and object, so the *Fragment* argues, cannot be resolved merely from the position of the subject nor from the objects alone. Instead, it is in the relation between the subject and that which surrounds it, that the “Widerstreit” can be made to disappear and give rise to a different experience, namely the experience of a spirit or god: “Weder aus sich selbst allein, noch einzig aus den Gegenständen, die ihn umgeben, kann der Mensch erfahren, daß mehr als Maschinengang, daß ein Geist, ein Gott, ist in der Welt, aber wohl in einer

lebendigeren, über die Nothdurft erhabnen Beziehung, in der er stehet mit dem was ihn umgiebt” (FHA 14, 45). The relation through which an experience beyond the “Widerstreit” takes place is livelier, more vivid than either of its relata. Such an intensification of life goes hand in hand with, in fact appears equivalent to, a rising above need or necessity (“Nothdurft”). The detachment from need echoes the opening paragraphs and indeed the foundation of Kant’s *Kritik der Urteilkraft*: the realm of the beautiful excludes all “interest,” as the second section already argues, defining interest as “das Wohlgefallen [...], das wir mit der Vorstellung der Existenz eines Gegenstandes verbinden” (KdU, B5). If the putative existence or non-existence of an object is excluded from aesthetic considerations, then the realm of necessity or need is simultaneously excluded: *Nothdurft* always depends on whether an object does or does not exist—need is always interested. By envisioning a relation to objects that rises above such necessity, Hölderlin thinks a relation that rises above interest and thus resembles the Kantian realm of aesthetics.

Hölderlin adduces three ways to rise above mere need, all three of which—a first contrast to Kant who does not narrow his third *Critique* to one aesthetic mode alone—require poetry: to remember one’s destiny (“sich seines Geschicks *erinnern*,” FHA 14, 46), to be thankful (“dankbar”), and to feel one’s relation with one’s element “durchgängiger.” This last term becomes crucial for the task of “dissolving the dissonances:” it contains *in nuce* the determination of a need-free relation between a subject and its surrounding objects that overcomes their “Trennungen.” By the end of the 18th century, “durchgängig” had primarily come to designate, according to *Grimm’s Wörterbuch*, something that is generally or universally the case (Grimm explicates it as being able to mean “allgemein, in jeder hinsicht, durchaus,

durchweg, ohne unterschied, von anfang bis zu ende, überall”¹³²). The older meaning indicated by Grimm’s Latin equivalents of *pervius*, *penetrabilis*, however, can still be heard in Hölderlin’s use of the word when he defines this relation as a “mannigfaltigern und innigeren Beziehung” (FHA 14, 46): “durchgängig” refers not to a thorough, all-covering relation of a fixed center point to a surrounding manifold but rather to a relation in which the element goes through (*Durch-gang*) the subject into its “innermost” being. A conception of “innigeren” that differs from the “innigst” of “Seyn Urtheil Möglichkeit” and comes closer to the stepping out of the “innigsten Gefühl” diagnosed in “Das lyrische...,” the “durch” of this relation affects the relata by thoroughly penetrating them and preventing their closure as mere poles of the relation. It designates a relation that is *dynamic* as well as *transformative* and whose intimate character derives from a movement (*Gang*) not between but into and out of the relata. This *Durch* character constitutes an intensification of the “entgegensetzen” and “einschränken” that Fichte used in the second and third principles of his *Wissenschaftslehre*: Fichte there thinks the relation of I and non-I as the I being prodded by an “Anstoß” to posit the non-I, thus necessitating its own divisibility and limitation. In the *Fragment*, both divisibility and limitation are radicalized: instead of a thetic opposition, a thorough penetration—limiting and dividing—of the relata affected by the going-through of the relation.¹³³

The comparative form of the syntagms “durchgängigere Beziehung” and “mannigfaltigern und innigeren Beziehung” mirrors this *Durchgang*: Hölderlin’s text does not

¹³² Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, s.v. “durchgängig.”

¹³³ In his well-known text titled “Parataxis: zur späten Lyrik Hölderlins”, Theodor W. Adorno develops a similar thought: “Daß, wie in Hegels Logik, Identität nur als eine des Nichtidentischen, als ‘Durchdringung’ vorzustellen sei” (Adorno, “Parataxis,” 201). The necessity to think non-identity will emerge towards the end of this chapter and will not be immediately derived from the *Durchdringung* character of relation. (“Durchdringung” is a also key term in Walter Benjamin’s reflections on the late Hölderlin, which will be interpreted below.)

aim for a fixed and stabilized pole (as either a superlative or a positive adjective would constitute) but rather aims for a “more,” not as static or quantitative increase, but rather as a dynamic *intensification* that is nothing but the very movement away from and through any position. The comparative form—so crucial, too, in much of Hölderlin’s poetry—is thus the grammatical expression of this movement that lets the human being experience “daß ein Geist, ein Gott, ist in der Welt:” it constitutes a “com-” mode in which the subject is always irreducibly “with” something other. The “too much” and “too little” of unicity, its simultaneously “hyperbolic” and insufficient character, that precludes any “Stillstand” is expressed here in the comparative as the adjectival form that is both irreducibly relational¹³⁴ and motive in the sense of abolishing still-standing, closed positions.¹³⁵

The expressive copiousness of its grammatical forms notwithstanding, the *Fragment*, as a philosophical text, faces a peculiar sort of shortcoming that arises from its own status vis-à-vis that which it speaks of. As a text, it stands in a relation with its object and would thus have to accord with the demands for a relation that it itself lays out.¹³⁶ As the *Fragment* describes it, the relation that rises above necessity, however, constitutes the “Sphäre” of relation as an *individuated* and *determined* sphere. Any attempt to speak of relation in general terms must thus face the problem that it itself does not have a determined sphere: general reflections produced by means of abstract, philosophical terms are incapable of entering into a relation with their object that would rise to the standard of a “durchgängigere Beziehung” since the general nature of its

¹³⁴ Hölderlin’s poetry, especially his “late” works, knows a number of “absolute comparatives,” thus relativizing the relational quality of the comparative form and, perhaps, leaving only the dynamic aspect.

¹³⁵ That the *Fragment* also uses the comparative form “lebendigeren” provides a hint at Hölderlin’s exceedingly complex notion of life—and perhaps brings him close to Nietzsche’s conception of life as overcoming, as increase and intensification (“über”) that comes into view in the chapter on Nietzsche.

¹³⁶ A problem similar, but not identical to, the question of a (dis-)identification of method and object that was analyzed above with respect to *Hyperion*’s “prologue” and the demand it places on its readers.

terms precludes the individuation and determination required of this sphere. The *Fragment* thus turns its own insight against itself: our “eiserne[] Begriffe[],” it goes on to argue, are inadequate to “solche Verhältnisse [...], die man nicht so wohl an und für sich [betrachten kann]” (FHA 14, 48). Consequently “kann dieser höhere Zusammenhang nicht bloß in Gedanken wiederholt werden” (FHA 14, 47) and this *Fragment philosophischer Briefe* can only point to a “Verfahrungsart” that is “unzertrennlicher verbunden” (FHA 14, 48) with its element than these philosophical letters: poetry. Herein lies perhaps the reason for Hölderlin’s abandonment of the project of writing his “philosophical letters,” an abandonment quite similar to the leaving behind of the philosophical term “intellectual intuition:” only poetry can produce a sphere in a way that inextricably links its own method of production, its *hodos* or *Gang*, with the element of its procedure, thus instituting a “durchgängigere Beziehung” between itself and its object.¹³⁷

The next two sections of this chapter will therefore show how Hölderlin’s poetry not only instantiates certain aspects of the solution to the *Widerstreit* that intellectual intuition, on the one hand, and a “durchgängigere Beziehung,” on the other, provide but also how it moves beyond these theoretical reflections and addresses the “Trennungen” and their “Einigkeit” according to a *poetic* logic beyond our “iron concepts.” This double movement will be traced with respect to

¹³⁷ Of course, a number of philosophers have attempted to link the mode of (linguistic) production of their thought more tightly to the thought itself: one prominent example from Hölderlin’s milieu would be Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and its celebrated (and denigrated) peculiar writing style (see, for instance, Adorno’s *Drei Studien zu Hegel* for an argument of this sort). Hölderlin’s poetry, however, would stand for the argument that the degree to which a philosopher achieves such a relation is precisely the degree in which philosophy becomes poetic and any further intensification requires poetry “itself.” Kreuzer summarizes this difference succinctly with respect to the question of memory that carries far-reaching implications: “Was Erinnern ist, erschöpft sich nicht in reflexions-logischer (Re-)Konstruktion, sondern verlangt nach einem Akt der Sprachfindung. Der Akt solcher Sprachfindung ist Dichtung. Das wird Hölderlin von Hegel unterscheiden [...] Die Differenz ist die zwischen der poetischen Reflexion der Sprache durch Hölderlin und ihrer logischen bei Hegel. Das methodische Zentrum dieser logischen Reflexion bildet die Konzeption des ‚spekulativen Satzes‘“ (Kreuzer, “Hölderlin im Gespräch,” 56-7).

Hölderlin's treatment of smell, in relationship to plants and the odor they give off, thus harkening back to the analysis of smelling-plucking and anthological reading that arose from *Hyperion's* prologue. To determine the place of smell in Hölderlin's work, however, it is necessary to first analyze its function as one of three modulations of *air*.

2. The Three Modulations of the Aerial Medium

In Hölderlin's poetry, one of the major manifestations of the "sphere" structure of the onto-poetological problem as the *Fragment* had developed it can be found in air. What Hölderlin terms "sphere" could also be designated as *medium*: it is that which constitutes the middle, the in-between, that which englobes and opens the space of relation. In medial terms, the human subject always finds itself "in the element" of air, is surrounded by it, and relates to its world through it.¹³⁸ A relation determined by "Nothdurft" in this sphere can be easily designated: breathing. The base term of the comparative term "lebendiger" that marks Hölderlin's *durchgängigere Beziehung* is the "lebendig" of the merely physical need to breathe in order to maintain life. Breathing, in this sense, is a merely necessity-based relation to one's sphere; a "höherer Zusammenhang" (FHA 14, 46) will have to modify the relation to air beyond the necessity of breathing.

Any such *Zusammenhang*, however, must be felt or sensed. When Hölderlin introduces the notion of "durchgängiger," he emphasizes a crucial term: "daß er seinen durchgängigern Zusammenhang mit dem Elemente, in dem er sich regt, auch durchgängiger *empfindet*" (FHA 14, 46; emphasis added). A modification of air that aims at producing a transcending of necessity must be able to be felt or perceived so that the subject can "empfinden" it.¹³⁹ The aerial sphere

¹³⁸ The relationship between the terms air and "ether" is exceedingly complex: while they cannot be identified with each other, they do stand in an important relationship; cf. Jürgen Link, "Aether und Erde: Naturgeschichtliche Voraussetzungen von Hölderlins Geo-logie." Link argues for the "modernity" of Hölderlin's use of these terms: "Insbesondere waren nach seiner Überzeugung seine neuen Konzepte von Aether und Erde [...] modern-naturwissenschaftlich konstituiert" (Link, 124). In this context, Hölderlin's reception of the work of the leading European anatomist, Samuel Sömmerring, is crucial; the tracing of this complicated relationship is beyond the scope of this investigation, although some of Sömmerring's insights are referred to below.

¹³⁹ Just a few lines earlier, Hölderlin uses the term "fühlen" instead of "empfinden:" "wenn auch wirklich dieser höhere Zusammenhang ihnen ihr heiligstes sei, weil sie in ihm sich selbst und ihre Welt, und alles,

qua *Nothdurft*, however, is hardly perceptible. In fact, it altogether escapes perception when breathing as the relation between the subject and its sphere constitutes the only relation to air; as the baseline of the subject's continued existence, its extreme habitual character prevents it from entering perception. The medium in its pure form, then, is not perceptible; only a modification that disturbs its purity can make air perceptible.

One such disturbing modification of air can be found in smell. "The act of smelling," as is already argued by Aristotle in the last sentence of book two of *De Anima*, "is an act of perception, whereas the air, being only temporarily affected [παθών], merely becomes perceptible [αἰσθητός]." ¹⁴⁰ A *Störung*, in this case smell, enables the medium of air to enter *aisthesis*, from which, in its pure, unmodified form, it would otherwise be subtracted. The olfactory modification of the aerial sphere allows it to enter aesthetics in the strict sense.

In Hölderlin's work, smell is one of *three* main modifications of air, which in the context of his poetry are more accurately termed "modulations" of air—a tripartite division that first becomes legible in Hölderlin's early poetry. While the latter is largely characterized by a striking

was sie haben und seien, vereiniget *fühlen*" (FHA 14, 46; emphasis added). In this limited context, feeling and sensing/perceiving thus appear to be largely undifferentiated.

¹⁴⁰ Aristotle, *De Anima*, 424b18. The role of Aristotle in Hölderlin's thought has generally received much less attention than Plato's role, arguably because at many points of his work Hölderlin engages in a much more direct confrontation with the Platonic corpus. However, Aristotle would have been part and parcel of Hölderlin's education and intellectual milieu: for instance, the book used for the instruction of Ancient Greek in Hölderlin's *Klosterschule* was J. M. Gesners *Chrestomathia Graeca*, which, among other authors, contained lengthy passages by Aristotle (cf. *Hölderlin-Handbuch*, 63). Michael Franz further remarks that Hölderlin already in his Tübingen years acquired Aristotle's *Organon* (Franz, "Hölderlins Logik," 95-6). Franz has further argued that "Es ist übrigens bemerkenswert, daß sich bei Hölderlin um 1800 eine Art Aristoteles-Renaissance anzubahnen scheint" where Aristotle becomes a "heimliche[r] Gesprächspartner" (Franz, "Pindarfragmente," 265). Such a confrontation with the Aristotelian corpus can be seen most clearly in Hölderlin's reflections on tragedy, in particular in the "Anmerkungen" to this Sophocles translations. (For some remarks on Hölderlin's caesura as his "reformulation of the Aristotelian reversal," see Samuel Weber, "Scene and Screen" in: *Theatricality as Medium*, here 107). Yet even before these late texts, an Aristotelian framework can serve to elucidate certain aspects of Hölderlin's work.

conventionality, bordering on being epigonal (especially with respect to Schiller and Klopstock), it nevertheless provides a reliable overview of the major constituents of his poetic imaginary of the element of air: these three modulations will be a constant of Hölderlin's aerial-olfactory vocabulary, even if their differentiation and functionalization changes and intensifies continuously, especially in the "late" Hölderlin, to the point of eventually being superseded.

Exemplarily for the early poems in this regard stand the following verses from the 1792 hymn titled "Hymne an die Liebe:"

Liebe bringt zu jungen Rosen
Morgenthau von hoher Luft,
Lehrt die warmen Lüfte kosen
In der Maienblume Duft (FHA 2, 40, vv. 17-20)

The modulations are threefold: air can be warm ("warmen"), that is, receive a thermal modification; it can move, often as wind, here as a tender caressing ("kosen"); it can be scented ("Duft").¹⁴¹ These three modulations produce different spheres and correspondingly different relations between a subject and its surrounding element; all three, however, respond to the demand of a "dissolution of the dissonances." Such a resolution of the "Widerstreit" between subject and object is named "love" by this early hymn: "*Liebe* bringt."

¹⁴¹ A fourth one, air's combination with water in the form of condensation, "Morgenthau," will be left aside for the moment. As generally in his early poetry, Hölderlin here closely models himself on his early master, Friedrich Klopstock, while sometimes transforming Klopstock's approach in significant ways. Klopstock's ode "An Cidli" from 1752, directed at Margaretha "Meta" Klopstock who would become his wife in 1754, constitutes an important precursor to "Hymne an die Liebe," including almost all elements of the lines quote from "Hymne an die Liebe:"

Lüfte, wie die, welche die Himmlischen
Sanft umathmen, umathmen dich!
Rosen knospen dir auf, daß sie mit süßen Duft
Dich umströmen! dort schlummerst du!
Wach, ich werde sie dir leis' in die Locken hin,
Wach vom Thau der Rosen auf. (Klopstock, *Werke 1: Oden*, 130)

Love's effect is then described as the production of feeling: "zwo bessere Seelen nun/Ganz, das erstmal ganz, fühlen, wie sehr sie sind."

With respect to poetry, each aerial modulation—warmth, movement, smell—constitutes a sphere whose relationship to poetry differs, with smell emerging as the privileged modulation since it figures the “proper feeling” needed to produce poetry. In the third maxim of a text edited under the titles of “Sieben Maximen” or “Reflexionen,” presumably from 1799, Hölderlin develops *in nuce* a theory of poetic enthusiasm, “Begeisterung,” a key poetological term of his time.¹⁴² For Hölderlin, the poet’s enthusiasm, his being in a state of *Geist* (*Be-geisterung*), depends on his soberness or sobriety (*Nüchternheit*). The limit of enthusiasm is marked by the loss of soberness. The “best” soberness lies in *feeling* (“Gefühl”). Feeling, in turn, consists of two aspects. On the one hand, warmth as that which spurs on spirit and produces its agility: “Durch Wärme treibt es den Geist weiter” (FHA 14, 69). On the other, “durch Zartheit und Richtigkeit und Klarheit schreibt es ihm die Gränze vor und hält ihn, daß er sich nicht verliert.” Tenderness limits spirit. Proper feeling thus joins will and understanding (“Verstand”). It can err in both directions: if it is too tender and soft, then the limit is felt too acutely. This over-limitation, a *Fessel* of sorts, leads to overheating (“wird zu warm”); limiting warmth too much leads to it building up to an unprecedented degree as a counter response and the resulting excessive warmth pushes spirit into the limitless (“ins Gränzenlose”), producing restlessness and a lack of understanding. If, by contrast, a lack of limitation marks feeling then it fears to lose itself. Without limits, the warmth dissipates and feeling becomes “frostig und dumpf.”¹⁴³

¹⁴² “Begeisterung” had been reintroduced from the Ancient poets by Friedrich Klopstock in an attempt to develop a poetics that differed from the poetry of the Enlightenment. A fuller account of Hölderlin’s “Sieben Maximen” as well as his treatment of smell, would trace in more detail the lines running from Klopstock’s poetics to Hölderlin’s own project.

¹⁴³ Hölderlin’s well-known letter to his friend Casimir Ulrich Böhlendorff from December 4th, 1801 takes up this double condition for the poet’s activity as “Präzision” and “Wärme” (FHA 19, 492).

The lines from “Hymne an die Liebe” offer an image of what proper feeling would be like: “die warmen Lüfte kosen/In der Maienblume Duft.” In the scent of the flower, both warmth (“warmen”) and tenderness (“kosen”) are present and joined. Air moves, is spurred on, but within tender limits: “jene zarter und unendlichern Verhältnisse” (FHA 14, 48), of which the *Fragment* speaks, combine both the infinite tendency to transgress all limitations and the tenderness of limitation. Two previous versions of this poem, then titled “Lied der Liebe,” omit smell and instead read: “Liebe lehrt das Lüftchen kosen/mit den Blumen auf der Au” (FHA 2, 37, vv. 17-8). Here air is simply said to do the caressing of flowers. The introduction of both “warmen” and “In der Maienblume Duft” in the third and final version produces a more complex version of love’s teaching: neither warmth (strength, will) nor tenderness (limitation, understanding) alone produce the right kind of bond but only the combination of both—which, as a modulation of air, is found in smell. Odors move warmly and tenderly, thus transgressing and simultaneously limiting themselves just the right amount to be loving.¹⁴⁴

As the right combination of warmth and tenderness, of movement and limitation, smell thus figures the state appropriate for the production of poetry: *Duft*, as the olfactory modulation of *Luft* marked in the minute change of a single letter, bears the characteristics of proper feeling; proper feeling, according to the third maxim, is the “best soberness;” soberness is the sine qua non of the poet’s existence. *Begeisterung* and *Besinnung* join in smell: *Duft* modulates the sphere

¹⁴⁴ The trope of love seeking out pleasant smells can already be found in the perhaps most famous text on love in the history of ideas, Plato’s *Symposium*. In his speech on Eros as the youngest, most beautiful one among men and gods, Agathon claims that “Love will not settle on body or soul or aught else that is flowerless or whose flower has faded away; while he has only to light on a plot of sweet blossoms [εὐανθής] and scents [εὐώδης] to settle there and stay” (Plato, *Symposium*, 196a9-b4). Good or sweet scents (Luther will render εὐώδης as “Wohlgeruch” in his New Testament translation, a word Hölderlin uses in his later poetry) are, so Agathon suggests, a precondition for love: wilted blossoms, an absence of fragrance will drive love away.

of air in such a way that the subject is enthused and sober, finds both *Geist* and *Sinn*, without losing its senses. While both warmth and tenderness on their own always threaten to undermine the poetic state, smell wards off those threats—not by abandoning either or both but by combining them in this third modulation.

Smell, carrying the characteristics of proper feeling, is thus a privileged modulation of air in the Hölderlinian poetic vocabulary, for a reason that can be specified further by going back to the text of the *Fragment*. Air's warmth as well as its tender movement are felt by the "Schwestern, Brüder" (v. 9) of the poem when the air comes into *contact* with them; in other words, with respect to these modulations, the subject's relation to air is *superficial*, subtracting the dimension of "Innigkeit" from the relation. Both thermal and tactile engagement with air leave the relata whole; air surrounds the subject but leaves it as a closed pole of the relation. By contrast, smell is "empfunden" only when scented air *enters* the subject via breathing;¹⁴⁵ it penetrates the subject rather than merely making contact with it. In this sense, only smell makes the medium of air as a thoroughly penetrative, that is, "innig" medium perceptible.¹⁴⁶ In smell, the aerial medium enables an *inward* and *intimate* relation. In the scent of the mayflower a "durchgängigere Beziehung" can be felt that could not yet be felt in the "Lüftchen" of the two earlier versions of the poem, and cannot be felt in warmth or in the *kosend* movement of air alone.

¹⁴⁵ All smelling presupposes and indeed depends on breathing, as Aristotle already points out in *De Anima*: "man only smells during inhalation" (421b15).

¹⁴⁶ Kant, too, emphasizes the "innig" character of smelling, albeit in a negative vein: the so-called "mechanical" senses are "Sinne der *Wahrnehmung* (oberflächlich)" while the chemical senses are senses "des *Genusses* (innigste Einnehmung)" (Kant, *Anthropologie*, 451). In fact, smell is "noch inniglicher" than taste and thus also less social and more susceptible to induce disgust (Kant, 452).

A “durchgängigere” relation, in turn, indicates an intensification of life: olfactory disturbances transform the “lebendig” nature of air (seen from the *Nothdurft* standpoint of breathing) into a “lebendiger” relation. This vivification results from the power of love, which “Hymne an die Liebe” in its last stanza goes on to specify as the enabling of a liberation from shackles: “Mächtig durch die Liebe, winden/Von der Fessel wir uns los” (vv. 41-2; emphasis added). Yet the resulting freedom is not a completely unbound state but rather marked by a different type of bond, namely “Schwur und Kuß” (v. 45). Love, instead of producing a *Fessel*, links “Vestgeschlungen Hand in Hand” (v. 12). This *vestgeschlungen* love is, to use an expression from the third of the “Sieben Maximen,” “Zügel und Sporn” (FHA 14, 69): it transgresses beyond a false limitation (the “Fessel”) and joins at the same time in firmness—an encapsulation of the joining that occurs in *Durch-gang*, which transgresses the limitation of superficial bonds and thereby relates more thoroughly. Smell figures the state of being bound without being shackled, of joining in feeling without being forced: the *Widerstreit* of the “Trennungen” disappears without the erasure of division tout court.

3. From Philosophy to Poetry: Olfactory Unity beyond Intellectual *Anschauung*

The ode “Heidelberg,” written in asclepiadic meter, presents in its final image a poetic usage of smell that goes beyond what the analysis of smell as a modulation of air has thus far uncovered.¹⁴⁷ In contrast to the earlier “Hymne an die Liebe,” “Duft” here appears in isolation from the other two modulations of air, namely warmth and movement: smell gains an independent specificity and is no longer understood as the coming together of tender movement and warmth.¹⁴⁸ Instead, it is more accurately understood as a metaphor for “intellectual intuition,” in all the complexity that accrues to this term in Hölderlin’s engagement with German Idealism. It becomes a metaphor, to be more precise, through transposing (*über-tragen*) intellectual intuition into the poetic sphere, thus simultaneously instantiating certain characteristics of Hölderlin’s “theoretical” development of the term and modifying the philosophical terminus according to the logic inherent in the poem itself. Written in 1800, shortly after “Das lyrische...,” that is, shortly after Hölderlin’s last reference to intellectual intuition, the poem “Heidelberg” leaves behind the “iron concepts” of philosophy and inaugurates a different,

¹⁴⁷ “Heidelberg” is chosen here partly because of its central status in Hölderlin scholarship, in Henrich and many others, which it owes to being one of the turning points of his poetic progression: consequently, it enables a demonstration of olfactory poetics as a thus far neglected but decisive facet of Hölderlin’s work. Other poems from the same period could be analyzed to show similar poetic structures with respect to smell, for instance “Der Gang aufs Land,” which was written, exactly like “Heidelberg,” in early 1800. Here, the final image is also one of “Duft:” “[...] und all die grünenden Bäume/Zahllos, blühend weiß, wallen in wiegender Luft/Aber mit Wölkchen bedeckt an Bergen herunter der Weinstock/Dämmert und wächst und erwärmt unter dem sonnig Duft” (KA 1, 277). The return of a rhyme (“Luft/Duft”) is unusual for Hölderlin’s poetry of this time and emphasizes the tight link between those two terms.

¹⁴⁸ In a dedication to his mother, Hölderlin called the constellation of poems in which “Hymne an die Liebe” was included “Jünglingsversuche” (FHA 2, 33). The term “Jüngling,” of course, takes on significance in Hölderlin’s poetic vocabulary and could be linked to the heroic tone in particular; regarding the three modulations of the aerial medium and the tones of Hölderlin’s poetry, see the end of this section.

poetic engagement with the question of the *Widerstreit* that intellectual intuition was supposed to address in a “theoretisch” manner.

The decisive olfactory image occurs in the last of the eight stanzas of “Heidelberg,” a stanza that reads:

Sträucher blühten herab, bis wo im heitern Tal,
An den Hügel gelehnt, oder dem Ufer hold,
Deine fröhlichen Gassen
Unter duftenden Gärten ruhn. (FHA 5, 468)

The progression of the poem as it leads to these fragrant gardens can be schematized as follows:¹⁴⁹ Heidelberg is named the “Ländlichschönste” that deserves a “kunstlos Lied” (stanza one); its bridge over the always flowing river, standing for firm stability and interconnectedness, combines the unmoving and the moving (stanza two); this constellation of both movement and stillness in its quasi-divinity first seems to transfix the poetic I onto the bridge but then leads to a beckoning call into the farness of the mountains and the dissolution of the river into its delta (stanzas three, four, and five); contrasted with the lasting transience of the *natural* river stands the ruin of Heidelberg’s *historic* castle that has been destroyed by the elements (stanza six); the “eternal sun” rejuvenates the historical decline by letting nature return and take over the ruined symbol of history and civilization (stanza seven). The eighth and final stanza just quoted, then, reintroduces human agency and ability to construct lastingly in the image of the alleyways and gardens. The bridge as an image of a reconciliation of passing time and fixity, of transience and stability had been overwhelmed by the seduction of the moving river and the elements’ power to destroy the castle, both standing for nature’s triumph over human construction. The alleyways

¹⁴⁹ For a similar exposition of “Heidelberg,” with particular attention paid to the function of the bridge, cf. Dieter Henrich, *The Course of Remembrance*, 50-5. With respect to the final image of the fragrant gardens, Henrich appears only interested in the function of the gardens without explicating the role of their fragrance.

and gardens, superseding both bridge and castle, seem to be able to resist a similar fate and lead to the final word of the poem, “ruhn,” rest or calm. The alleys’ “rest” can be attributed to the singular reconciliatory force of the gardens, Heidelberg’s gardens in particular: not only does a longstanding literary tradition identify gardens as the reconciliation of nature and civilization¹⁵⁰ but in Heidelberg, as Dieter Henrich has pointed out,¹⁵¹ the gardens of Hölderlin’s time were built on the ruins of the old, destroyed city (whence the fact that they—unusual for cities of the time—lie above, not below, the alleys of the city). To the constellation of bridge above/river below correspond the gardens above and the alleys below: the flowing movement below is now the human activity in the alleys, the fragrant gardens above replace the bridge. While the ruined castle—a symbol of decayed human might—is “rejuvenated” by the “eternal sun” alone and covered over by nature, Heidelberg’s gardens also cover the ruins of time with nature but with nature worked through by human activity.

The crucial difference between the fragrant gardens and the bridge can be further explicated with the conceptual tools of the *Fragment*: whether a human being lives a “menschlich höheres Leben” depends on the question of *Nothdurft*. Does he rise above physical and moral necessity in the relation to his element when he exerts “seine Kräfte und seine

¹⁵⁰ In an article in the *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch* on “Der Landschaftsgarten des 18. Jahrhunderts als literarisches Phänomen,” Hans von Trotha writes: “Die Begrenzung, die Trennung von der freien Natur ist das bestimmende Merkmal aller Gärten” (von Trotha, “Landschaftsgarten,” 14). He further claims that “[i]m Kern treffen sich hier Sprache und Garten als Medien der Formulierung und Ausmessung utopischer Orte” (v. Trotha, 13). With respect to the opening stanza’s reference to a “kunstlos Lied,” the following line from Horace Walpole’s widely read work on gardening, translated into German by August Schlegel, is of interest: “Der neuere Gärtner zeigt seine Talente, indem er seine Kunst verbirgt” (quoted in: v. Trotha, 19).

¹⁵¹ Henrich, *The Course of Remembrance*, 154. Henrich’s reconstruction is mostly concerned with “the accuracy of Hölderlin’s apprehension of an actual place” (Henrich, 153) since he seeks to demonstrate “the unity of imagery and circumstance” (Henrich, 155) in the larger context of his interpretation of “Andenken.” The question of the relationship between life and poetry is secondary here but presents a different version of the “onto-poetological task” than the one developed above.

Geschiklichkeit” (FHA 14, 46)? As the second stanza of “Heidelberg” indicates, this is not the case for the bridge: it “resounds” from the “wagons” passing over it, an activity tied to remedying a lack or want. Building a bridge is a human activity that relates to the world as determined by necessity: the flowing river restricts man. Consequently, his interaction with the river by building a bridge does not rise above the demand to remedy this restrictive lack (man’s incapacity to cross a river easily without a bridge). No such *Nothdurft* lies at the origin of the garden: built not out of necessity (it corresponds neither to a determinate need nor a physical obstacle or hindrance), the satisfaction that it provides differs accordingly: “daß er, indem er sich in seiner Wirksamkeit und den damit verbundenen Erfahrungen über die Noth erhebt, auch eine unendlichere, durchgängigere Befriedigung erfährt, als die Befriedigung der Nothdurft ist” (FHA 14, 46). In the efficacy (*Wirksamkeit*) with which the human being interacts with the world and the experiences that result from that interaction, a more infinite satisfaction ensues. As the comparative terms indicate, *Befriedigung* here does not, as the English translation of “satisfaction” would suggest, signify a doing (*facere*) enough (*satis*). The *Befriedigung* of the higher relation does not derive from an enough but rather from a *more* that lifts beyond what was merely needed. Nevertheless, this “more” consists in a peaceful calm: the alleys “ruhn,” they are *be-fried-igt*. In the fragrant gardens, the excessive quality of the rising above necessity comes together with a satisfying calm—*Durft* becomes transformed, through the minute change of a single letter, into *Duft*.

The severing of satisfaction from need not only accrues to gardens but more specifically to smells, as becomes legible in “Heidelberg” upon closer inspection. In Plato’s *Philebus*, a text that in all likelihood would have been known to Hölderlin given his extensive knowledge of Ancient Greek texts in general and of Plato in particular, Socrates and his interlocutor Protarchus

discuss whether the good life is one of pleasure or intelligence (which could here perhaps be rendered as understanding, thus harkening back to the opposition posited in *Hyperion's* prologue). In the course of the discussion that seeks to determine the right mixture of pleasure and intelligence, Socrates introduces a distinction between “pure” and “impure” pleasures.¹⁵² The impurity of pleasures such as eating when hungry or scratching an itch derives from the pleasure being inextricably mixed with pain, namely the very hunger or itchiness they come to replace. By contrast, there are pleasures that are “felt by the senses, pleasant, and unmixed with pain” and “the want [ἐνδεία] of which is unfelt [ἀναισθήτους] and painless” (*Philebus*, 51b). In this category, Socrates names three: “those arising from what are called beautiful colours, or from forms, most of those that arise from odours and sounds” (51b).¹⁵³ With respect to smell, Socrates claims: “The pleasures of smell are a less divine class [than colors and sounds]; but they have no necessary pains mixed with them” (51e). Smells, so the argument goes, lack “absolute” beauty and hence are a “less divine class” but they are nevertheless grouped with shapes and pure notes because of the absence of pain mixed in their pleasure: no previously felt pain or lack, no *Nothdurft*, determines olfactory pleasure. The lack of olfactory satisfaction is ἀναισθήτους, unfelt and imperceptible and thus does not enter *aisthesis*, hence enabling the olfactory satisfaction itself to enter *aisthesis* pure and unaffected by pain or want. The *Befriedigung* of the *fragrant* gardens, then, is “unendlicher” for this reason: no pain is mixed into it, and its reach is thus not bound by a limiting lack. Smells enable an *aesthetic experience* that “erhebt” itself over

¹⁵² Here again Hölderlin can be seen to engage the reordering of the Platonic heritage in aesthetics that occurs in Kant’s third *Critique*.

¹⁵³ In a passage referred to by many modern artists and architects such as Mondrian or Le Corbusier, Socrates then goes on to clarify his argument by saying it refers to “the straight line and the circle and the plane and solid figures [...] For I assert that the beauty of these is not relative, like that of other things; but they are always absolutely beautiful by nature” (51c-d). Similarly, “a single pure note” is absolutely beautiful.

lack: the lack-independent character of the gardens is raised to a higher power in the gardens' fragrance since within the already lack-independent space of the garden, smells provide a sensible experience of that very lack-independence.¹⁵⁴

The *Fragment* had developed this rising above necessity as the correlative of a "durchgängigere Beziehung" that responds to the onto-poetological task of solving the *Widerstreit* between the subject and object, between self and world. Yet, as was analyzed above, Hölderlin developed in his theoretical writings a second route through which to approach this *Widerstreit*: through intellectual intuition. The final image of "Heidelberg," the fragrance of the gardens, rather exactly figures such an intuition in all its complexity. In the garden, the human being qua (cultivating) subject and nature qua (cultivated) object are intimately "vereinigt." Neither one can be separated from the other and both appear as mere moments of the intertwined "Ursprünglich Einigen;" a separation of the two would "verlezen" the phenomenon of the garden. Furthermore, the existence of the subject as an "I," as most explicitly demanded by Schelling's description of intellectual intuition in his *Naturphilosophie*, has been completely attenuated or even effaced: nowhere does the final stanza mention the "ich" that appeared in the first stanza or any subject whatsoever. In the garden, in short, "Seyn schlechthin" can be intuited.

The formulation found in "Das lyrische dem Schein nach idealische Gedicht," which was written just around the same time as "Heidelberg" according to Sattler, of intellectual intuition "als jene Einigkeit mit allem, was *lebt*" similarly reverberates in the fragrance of Heidelberg's garden: as compared with the non-living bridge, the fact that everything that is *alive* is connected with everything else finds superior expression in smell since the fragrance can only be thought as

¹⁵⁴ One could ask whether the pleasure of reading, too, is a rising above *Nothdurft*. Is there a previous lack that is felt and then satisfied? Does the reading of a novel, *Hyperion*, for example, lead to a calming "Befriedigung?"

an expression of the life of the plants.¹⁵⁵ The vivification inherent in olfactory pleasure, its “livelier” character that stems from its rising beyond necessity, further intensifies this intuition of the unicity of all as the unicity of everything living.

But in accordance with the *hyperbolic* account of unicity developed above, the final image of a vivid unification figured in the gardens’ fragrance cannot be one of self-containment or sufficiency. “Duftend” figures this with precision: the smell *emanates* from the gardens; while the last word “ruhn” describing the “fröhlichen Gassen” might at first suggest finality and closure, the last image evoked is rather one of rising up and dissipating outwards. The peace of the fragrant gardens, the intellectual intuition that they figure more successfully than the bridge or the castle reclaimed by nature, is *dynamic*: the poem closes with an image of opening; its final line is one of movement. The final image of the garden—hyperbolically, in the technical sense Hölderlin gave this term—transcends itself in the scent it lets go, lets out: the parts of a poetic “Vortrag” will, so the *Fragment* claims, “indem jeder Theil etwas weiter gehet, als nötig ist, eben dadurch jene Unzertrennlichkeit erhalten, die sonst nur den Theilen eines physischen mechanischen Verhältnisses eigen ist” (FHA 14, 49).¹⁵⁶ A double “going further:” on the one hand, the garden goes out of itself, goes beyond its self-contained closure. On the other, the poem, by adding “duftend,” goes further than merely replacing the bridge/river constellation by an analogous gardens/alleys constellation: the scent, penetrating and filling the space between gardens and alleys, transcends the original constellation. With its last image, “Heidelberg”

¹⁵⁵ Section 6.3 below analyzes *posthumous* smells for which this statement does not hold true; their discovery, however, must be located in the context of the movement of *lateness* in Hölderlin’s work.

¹⁵⁶ The third of the “Sieben Maximen” quoted above develops a similar thought: “Überhaupt muß er [the poet] sich gewöhnen, nicht in den einzelnen Momenten das Ganze, das er vorhat, erreichen zu wollen, und das augenblicklich unvollständige zu ertragen; seine Lust muß seyn, daß er sich von einem Augenblicke zum andern *selber übertrifft*” (FHA 14, 70). The term “hyperbolic,” of course, is central to the longer text “Über die Verfahrungsweise des poetischen Geistes.”

produces the “heraustreten” characteristic of Hölderlin’s last word on intellectual intuition. The “versinnlichen” of unicity occurs here as a stepping out in smell—the poem transcends itself.¹⁵⁷

The explication of intellectual intuition in “Das lyrische dem Schein nach idealische Gedicht” occurs in the context of a larger development of a tripartite division of poetic tones, Hölderlin’s famed “Wechsel der Töne,” thus rigorously locating these reflections in the realm of poetry. Aside from the intricacies of this poetology,¹⁵⁸ Hölderlin’s claim that each tone is a “metaphor” helps elucidate the three aerial modulations developed above: the “naïve” tone corresponds to “ein[] Gefühl;” the “heroic” tone to “große[n] Bestrebungen; the “ideal” tone to an “intellektuelle[] Anschauung” (FHA 14, 369). “Heidelberg” ends, as would be expected, in the ideal tone; intellectual intuition and the ideality of poetic tone correspond to each other. Similarly, the naïve and heroic tones can be linked to the other two modulations of air developed above: warmth and movement. The thermal modulation constitutes a metaphor of “a feeling,” deriving from the near equivalence of warmth and feeling developed in “Sieben Maximen.” Warm air figures the naïve tone. Air modulated as movement or wind, in turn, corresponds to the heroic tone: while warm air harmoniously surrounds the subject, moving air *opposes* itself to the

¹⁵⁷ Here, too, a direct line to Klopstock’s poetry can be designated: the closing lines of the poem “Die Sprache,” the first version of which was written in 1782, read: “Wie Düften entschwebt, was er sagt/Mit dem Reize der Erwartung.” (Klopstock, *Werke 1*, 407). Transcending is the *schweben*—an important term in 18th century poetics and philosophy—mode of odors. The expectation (“Erwartung”) character of this movement is central to the reading of “Patmos” below.

¹⁵⁸ Hölderlin’s tonal conception of poetics is intricate and rather difficult to unfold beyond its basic structure; for helpful secondary literature, see Holger Schmid, “Wechsel der Töne;” Ulrich Gaier, *Der gesetzliche Kalkül. Hölderlins Dichtungslehre*; Lawrence Ryan, *Hölderlin’s Wechsel der Töne*. One could find a distant but related precedent to linking the three tones to elemental concerns in Hölderlin in Gaier who writes: “Zudem sind hier die Elemente deutlich in das Verhältnis der drei Töne gesetzt: beim Himmelsaether ist idealische Unendlichkeit, das Sonnenlicht ist heldenmütig, die Erde ist das Lebende und Liebende. [...] Das Idealische wirkt über das Heroische (Sonne, Gewitter) auf das Naive, aber auch direkt durch Tau und milden Regen” (Gaier, *Kalkül*, 290). The ether cannot be identified with air, even though the two overlap in significant ways; cf. footnote 138 above. Nevertheless the association of ether with the ideal tone strengthens the privileged position smell occupies with respect to ideality.

subject by exerting force on it and forming a resistance to the subject. It is thus the metaphor of a “Bestrebung,” an oppositional striving. The three modulations of the aerial medium thus correspond to the tonal modulations of the poetic medium—with smell, as the metaphor of intellectual intuition, taking the privileged position of the ideal tone.

Finally, at this deeply poetological point where the divergence of philosophy and poetry emerges, the fragrance of the garden responds to the suspicion that arose in the “theoretical” analysis of the term *intellectuale Anschauung* presented above: the suspicion that *An-schauung* is, in fact, a misnomer for the intuition operative in the beholding of the complex movement of unicity stepping out of itself and returning to a higher unicity. Looking at, vision, always implies a distance and thus a “Trennung” between the one looking and what is looked at; it implies a *Gegen-stand*. The *theōria* of the “theoretical” terms Hölderlin referred to in his letter to Niethammer is similarly caught in this model: the movement towards poetry—more precisely, towards the *Gang* and the movement of poetry—is propelled by the abandoning of the static *Gegen-stand* model of *An-schauung* and theory.

Olfaction, on the contrary, provides a much better sensible model: its literally *durchgängig* character, with smell emanating from the object, entering the subject, and being returned out of the subject into its surroundings, dilutes the “Gegen” character of intuition so far that it approaches more closely the movement of intellectual intuition described by Hölderlin. Olfaction’s *dynamic* character—a constantly interrupted and repeated process, structured by the biphasic nature of breathing—supersedes vision’s (*Anschauung*’s) largely *static* model that consists of a stable, uninterrupted relation between two poles. The “Seyn schlechthin” intuited is not locatable as a conditioned, determinate *Gegenstand* but rather, like a smell, is always simultaneously “innigst” and elsewhere in its “heraustreten,” at the same time intimately going

through and transcending towards an elsewhere. This elusive character of smell, its tendency to be simultaneously everywhere and always elsewhere within a given sphere, will become even more intensified in the “late” Hölderlin to which the remainder of this chapter turns now, in particular, in the “Geopoetics of Smell” that adds to the city of “Heidelberg” a number of other fragrant places that significantly reconfigure the function of olfaction.

PART II (LATE HÖLDERLIN)

4. “Sinnlicher:” The Double Tendency of Lateness

As emphasized in the prologue above, Hölderlin’s poetic trajectory is marked by a stunning rapidity and density. Crucial poetological developments can occur over the span of mere months and most of his major works were written in less than a decade (from roughly the mid 1790s to 1805). Periodizing his work, difficult enough for any poet’s oeuvre, is therefore a daunting task, complicated by the fact that most poems from the later years exist only as undated, fragmentary drafts that have been revised repeatedly in an almost impossible to determine order. The establishment of the category of a “late” Hölderlin, even if not as part of a thorough and complete periodization, is nevertheless indispensable to the task of interpreting his work: in a certain number of his poems, Hölderlin writes and thinks in a manner unprecedented in both his own work and the history of German language poetry, necessitating the development of a category accounting for this unique character. This category, according to the argument here, can be developed through Hölderlin’s reconfiguration of the role of olfaction within his corpus: after “Heidelberg” and its poetic transformation of the “iron concepts” of philosophy, the late poetry progresses even further in developing smell’s relationship to unicity, and it is precisely this transformed relation between olfactory *Sinnlichkeit* and unicity that contributes to a definition of Hölderlin’s lateness.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ “Lateness” has become an established category of literary studies, even if its use, definition, and scope remain contested. As Sam Stiles and Gordon McMullan point out in their introduction to a recent scholarly volume on lateness in the arts titled *Late Style and its Discontents*, lateness is generally “characterized in one of two modes: either as serene, synthetic, and consummatory, or as irascible, discordant, and recalcitrant (and sometimes in a curious, contradictory combination of the two). In either guise the late work is likely to be considered innovative, difficult, and very possibly anticipatory of radical developments later in the historical record” (Stiles/McMullan, 3-4). While being far from an exact

Instead of giving a fixed date for when such lateness “begins,” however, it is more appropriate to speak of a “tendency of lateness:” what marks poems as late is not their being produced at a certain date in the poet’s life or poetological development that is or could be given (*data, datum*).¹⁶⁰ Rather a poem’s lateness is found in its *tendency*, that is, in its tension and its

match, these two modes can be roughly linked to the “latest” Hölderlin (the subject of the epilogue below) and the “late” Hölderlin, respectively. Both the late and the latest Hölderlin can indeed be seen as “anticipatory of radical developments,” say, in Mallarmé, for the late Hölderlin, and Trakl, for the latest Hölderlin. Stiles and McMullan show that the idea of important work being produced by an artist who is “late” in whichever sense is relatively novel and can be traced to Beethoven and Goethe. Much of the scholarship on lateness outside of Hölderlin studies goes back to Adorno’s essay “Late Style in Beethoven” and Edward Said’s *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain*. Both Adorno and Said draw attention to the uneasy relationship lateness as a temporal category maintains with chronology and, more broadly, the temporality of a human life: on the one hand, lateness must mean more than simply “late in an artist’s life;” on the other, few scholars would dare to apply the category of lateness to work produced early on in an artist’s career. This problem can partly be discerned in the conflation that the English “late style” produces of the two distinct German terms of “Altersstil” and “Spätstil.” The approach taken here seeks to sidestep this question by designating a work-immanent criterion (the “double tendency” discernible in Hölderlin’s treatment of *Sinnlichkeit*) that serves to determine what counts as a “late” poem. Consequently, the poems that were written in the chronologically “late” part of Hölderlin’s life (his so-called “Turm-Gedichte”) do not fall under this category. Despite this chronological scrambling, the temporal term “late” is kept for an essential reason: it indicates a movement beyond a “mature” phase, where a supposedly full, firm, strong, and shapely life loses these qualities or, more precisely, enters into a novel relationship to them. The focus on lateness could inscribe Hölderlin into larger reflections on modern and modernity poetry: for an analysis of the relationship between modernism and lateness, in particular the question of how modernism’s often celebrated focus on the new is disrupted by an awareness of being imitative, repetitive, senescent, decadent, or, indeed, late, see: Ben Hutchinson, *Lateness and Modern European Literature*. Hutchinson summarizes his argument as follows: this book “seeks to reinterpret literary modernity not as that which is ‘new,’ but as that which is late, exploring the implications of coming after a past perceived as more meaningful, as well as the sense that it is this very lateness that constitutes the particularity of the ‘modern’” (Hutchinson, 1). Hölderlin does not figure into Hutchinson’s account, perhaps for good reason: as will be developed below, Hölderlin’s sense of “coming after a past perceived as more meaningful” is complex and can hardly be contained within the framework of accounting for modernity. One of the major points of reference for Hutchinson is the work of Friedrich Nietzsche whose notion of anachronism or untimeliness serves as the point of departure for the chapter on Nietzsche below: for both Hölderlin and Nietzsche, a thought of smell eventually takes one out of one’s time, opening onto a future that disturbs the temporality of the present.¹⁶⁰ For the purposes of (scholarly) orientation two dates can nevertheless be indicated: the tendency spoken of here starts to become legible after the turn of the century, in late 1800 to early 1801 (when, among other things, the aftershocks of the failure of the Empedocles project in late 1799, which constitutes an important turning point in Hölderlin’s trajectory, are starting to be felt in his lyric poetry) but should be considered to emerge most forcefully after Hölderlin’s return from France, that is, from June 1802 onwards.

movement, one that is also always a movement, not a given point, of and in time. The lateness of Hölderlin's late poems is thus found in what they tend towards and away from or, perhaps, in their tendency toward the suspending of all tending.

In Hölderlin scholarship, most accounts of both the starting point of lateness and the reason for this marked shift seek recourse to one of two options: Eros or politics.¹⁶¹ The first option refers to Hölderlin's spurned love, his failed relationship to the already married Susette Gontard, who for Hölderlin was his "Diotima" and "ein Wesen auf der Welt, woran mein Geist Jahrtausende verweilen kann und wird."¹⁶² The second option detects a growing disillusionment with the aftermath of the French Revolution and with the Republican aspirations in the German states in the years after the turn of the century, and attributes to them a radicalizing and intensifying effect on Hölderlin's poetic praxis.¹⁶³ Both of these options, to varying degrees,

¹⁶¹ A third line of inquiry reads the even later "madness" back into the years before the decisive break and aims to find traces of "Umnachtung" already in the years 1800-1806 in order to determine the starting point of the late Hölderlin through the supposed onset of early sings of his "madness." A position vis-à-vis this discourse will be developed below.

¹⁶² In a letter to Neuffer, Hölderlin describes Gontard's influence as one of permanent, even eternal, orientation: "Mein Schönheitssinn ist nun vor Störung sicher. Er orientirt sich ewig an diesem Madonnenkopfe" (Letter to Neuffer, February 16th, 1797).

¹⁶³ At the forefront of these explicitly "political" interpretations of Hölderlin's trajectory stands the work of Pierre Bertaux who, to use terminology from Hölderlin's own work, emphasizes a certain (contested) convergence of *vox populi* and *vox dei* that can be read to produce a type of Jacobin sympathy. More broadly, Bertaux points out that Hölderlin's period of poetic activity (not counting the "latest" poems) is rather exactly co-extensive with the main political events in France: "vor Hölderlin das *ancien régime*, nach ihm das Reich Napoleons, die Restauration, Metternich und alles, was damit zusammenhängt. Hölderlins aktive Lebensphase deckt sich demnach genau mit den großen Ereignissen in Frankreich, die dem mittelalterlich Heiligen Römischen Reich ein Ende setzten und die moderne Welt gründeten" (Bertaux, *Hölderlin*, 11). Bertaux's work, which had partly aimed at bringing together various scattered testimonies that had been documented in part by Werner Kirchner before him, elicited a flurry of responses. Cf., among others, Günther Mieth, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Dichter der bürgerlich-demokratischen Revolution*; Jürgen Link, *Hölderlin-Rousseau: Inventive Rückkehr* (which should be read in conjunction with de Man's comments on Rousseau and Hölderlin), as well as the various (brief) writings on revolution and politics in Hölderlin by D. E. Sattler. For a rather different, but not unrelated, approach to the question of revolution in Hölderlin, see Fenves, "Afterword: Towards a 'Non-Metaphysical 'Concept' of Revolution.'" The effect of Bertaux's thesis can also be traced in some literary works of the 20th century, most prominently Peter Weiss's *Hölderlin*.

appeal to the world external to, if that can be said at all, Hölderlin's poetry. The shape of the trajectory of his poetic production is prodded and rerouted by external shocks. Without questioning the validity and, in certain cases, even the necessity of these approaches, lateness will here be read without reference to any "external" factors and merely appeal to the development legible *within* Hölderlin's work.¹⁶⁴

More specifically, Hölderlin's *Auseinandersetzung* with both the question of poetry's relationship to philosophy—its ability to address an onto-poetological task that philosophy fails to live up to¹⁶⁵—and the structure, function, and *Sinn* of *Sinnlichkeit* is altered in a way that leads to his late poetry. Reconfiguring both the "theoretical" reflections developed above and the function of smell as one of three aerial modulations, the subsequent sections accordingly develop the following thesis: the late Hölderlin is marked by a tendency towards a "sinnlicher" response to the onto-poetological problem of unicity; his lateness can be found in a rethinking of the

¹⁶⁴ Sandro Zanetti, in his recent *Avantgardismus der Greise? Spätwerke und ihre Poetik*, argues for a similar approach that resists the common line of thought that defines lateness either through the progression of a single life's course or a particular epoch (such as a "decadent" period, as analyzed by Hutchinson). Zanetti's book provides a detailed and lengthy overview of secondary literature on lateness from early work by Ernst Lewy, Georg Simmel, and A. E. Brinckmann, through Adorno to more recent work by Deleuze, Agamben, and Blumenberg. Zanetti also produces a typology of late styles that opposes, in a contrast familiar since at least Hellingrath, a lateness of "accumulation" in Goethe (what Hellingrath calls the "richness" or "wealth" of Goethe) and a lateness of "reduction" in Hölderlin.

¹⁶⁵ Hölderlin scholarship has addressed this question most prominently via the difficult relationship between the late Hölderlin and the early/middle Hegel (or sometimes more broadly, as shown above, to German Idealism). Some scholars (most insistently, Werner Hamacher) emphasize Hölderlin's divergence from Hegel to the point of making this divergence the very defining feature of Hölderlin's lateness. Others (such as Paul de Man, in his quest to wrest Hölderlin from what he claims is Heideggerian abuse, where Hegel must be located on the side of Western metaphysics while Hölderlin is already beyond such metaphysics) see a certain convergence between the late Hölderlin and Hegel. Peter Fenves has pointed out that Hamacher's *pleroma* (his doctoral thesis that follows on the Hölderlin master's thesis) stands in a "never quite thematized tension" (Fenves, "Afterword," 173) to the earlier work and that de Man's failure to produce a history of Romanticism after Rousseau might at least be partly attributable to de Man's weakened confidence in his thesis concerning the place of Hölderlin: "It is as though, around 1975, de Man and Hamacher had destroyed each other's future Hölderlin projects" (Fenves, 200n17). This split in the scholarship is addressed further in footnote 174 below.

function of the senses.^{166, 167} This *sinnlicher* tendency occurs in privileged form in smell's *dis-articulation of unity*: if smell both figures and transforms the unity of intellectual intuition in the middle period of Hölderlin's work, then its function with respect to unity in the late Hölderlin is intensified as the suspension or falling apart of this very unity. In other words, since smell was particularly well-suited—or rather, comparatively *better* suited—to provide a solution to the onto-poetological task of the *Widerstreit* of the divisions between subject and object, between self and world, the late olfactory “dis-articulation” of such a unicity that would be a solution to the *Widerstreit* is similarly privileged. The task or, perhaps more exactly, the *Aufgabe* of poetry is no longer to articulate the hyperbolic-dynamic unicity of “allem, was lebt.” Rather, poetry must now dis-articulate this very unity: it traces the lines of fissures, of breakage, and of opening that come to disrupt the calm, polished, and ordered unicity that “Heidelberg” displayed in paradigmatic fashion.

This tendency of lateness must be named with the comparative form “sinnlicher,” as this grammatical form, more than the “positive” or “superlative” forms, refers to a *dynamic* conception, appropriate not only to a tendency as such but also to the tendency of lateness in particular. The word “sinnlicher” is quoted from the *Homburger Folioheft*, more precisely, from a marginal note to a draft of a hymn that begins “Vom Abgrund nemlich:” “in Zweifel und

¹⁶⁶ This thesis is not meant to be exclusive to the effect that this is the only, or even just the defining, moment of lateness in Hölderlin. Nevertheless, as the rest of the chapter shows, it is a crucial and indeed privileged (wherein this privilege lies will be developed below) aspect of lateness.

¹⁶⁷ Renate Böschstein-Schäfer, for instance, emphasizes the intensified *Sinnlichkeit* in the late Hölderlin that some scholars have commented on: “An der Sprache der hymnischen Fragmente, die Hölderlin etwa in den Jahren 1803 bis 1806 verfaßt hat, tritt neben der Auflösung der logisch gegründeten Syntax besonders eine Qualität hervor: eine dem Dichter bis dahin völlig fremde Sinnlichkeit, vor allem ein Vorliebe für das Heiße, Feurige, Brennende [...] Die Gewalt dieses Feurig-Konkreten unterscheidet die späte hymnische Dichtung sehr scharf von der Produktion des ‚klassischen,‘ des ‚reifen‘ Hölderlin” (Böschstein-Schäfer, “Die Sprache des Zeichens,” 267). While the claim regarding the unprecedentedness of such *Sinnlichkeit* should be relativized, the overall point seems accurate.

aergerniß/Denn sinnlicher sind Menschen.” In the late Hölderlin, the calm (“ruhn”) and peace (“Be-friedigung”) of the final image of “Heidelberg” are abandoned—they will return, transformed as a “generic” calm or peace, in the “latest” Hölderlin to which the epilogue of this chapter turns—, they are abandoned in the face of “doubt” and “irritation.” No longer is the problem addressed in *Sinnlichkeit* posed in a context where the finality of calming could be reached, even if it is a finality of “heraustreten.” Instead, human beings (*Menschen*) have become doubtful of such a calm and are cast into an *Aergerniß* that as a “scandalum, anstosz”¹⁶⁸ is marked by intensified sensuousness.

Increased attention to the senses and the sensory has been diagnosed in the late Hölderlin by a number of scholars, in addition to the prevalence of “concrete” sensuousness most often in the form of synesthesia.¹⁶⁹ Synesthesia’s significance here lies in its relationship to the question of unity: it expresses an *Einigkeit* of the senses; the “with” character of syn-esthesia produces an *aisthesis* that joins the disparateness of the individual senses into a single mode of sense-making. The “with” of this joining is endowed with apotropaic significance in a double sense. On the one hand, it is supposed to protect against the threat that the closing lines of “Der Rhein” name most insistently: “Bei Nacht, wenn alles gemischt/Ist ordnungslos und wiederkehrt/Uralte Verwirrung” (vv. 219-221). Primordially (“uralt”), the senses are *mixed* and *without order*: a state that leads to confusion or, the German word is stronger here, right up to the border of madness (*wirr*). By contrast, synesthesia, while joining the senses, does not do so in a “gemischt” fashion that lacks order but rather provides an ordered articulation among the senses

¹⁶⁸ Grimm, s.v. “Ärgernis.”

¹⁶⁹ Contemporary philosophers such as Giorgio Agamben and Jean-Luc Nancy have taken up the question of synesthesia, in particular with respect to the question of politics and community. See on these two thinkers’ treatment of synesthesia: Susan Bernstein, “The Other Synesthesia” in: *Points of Departure: Samuel Weber between Spectrality and Reading*.

that guards against the return of the primordial condition. On the other hand, synesthesia is supposed to be a mode of sensibility that guards against a *dispersal* that similarly threatens with madness: an absolute separation of the different senses would disperse the in-dividual, would divide it beyond recognition. With respect to synesthesia, one can thus discern a double movement among the senses in the late Hölderlin: towards increasing unification, on the one hand, and towards increasing separation, on the other, which protects against a “gemischt” and “ordnunglos” confusion.

With respect to the single sense of smell,¹⁷⁰ the tendency of the *sinnlicher* late Hölderlin is similarly double: the tendency of olfactory lateness is, more precisely, a struggle of two tendencies—a peculiar struggle, however, since the second tendency is one of separation, evasion, passivity, in short, a tendency towards not struggling. These two tendencies, as the various parts of this section will argue, can be summarized as follows: on the one hand, the late poems intensify the development of air and smell as the element most conducive to *Einigkeit*. On the other, they tend in their *sinnlicher* character towards subtracting themselves from this quest for unity; they refuse to provide a solution to the onto-poetological task of “explaining” and “making disappear” the various *Trennungen* found in them. This tendency of late smell lies in an ever increasing *differentiation* of the senses, where the sense of smell stands alone, disjoined, out of place. This double tendency might find expression in the hyphenated spelling “dis-articulation of unity:” the late poems neither only disarticulate unity in the sense of taking it apart and disjoining it nor do they merely articulate, that is, pronounce and unfold it—instead their peculiar character lies in the tension between these two tendencies, a tension that is similarly a

¹⁷⁰ An account of the relationship between synesthesia and smell in late Hölderlin would show how the former renders dubitable smell’s status as “one” sense, while smell’s own tendency already undoes certain unifying attempts of the apotropaic gestures of synesthesia.

dis-articulation of their duality, never reaching a “Stillstand” but always joining each other too much and too little.

With respect to the first tendency of intensifying unification, smell takes on the function of mediating between the gods and the mortals; in fragrance, the divine-human relationship is articulated as a relation in and through aerial and olfactory separation. The late poems thus become “*sinnlicher*” by increasing the sphere of smell’s function: no longer just responsible for a mediation between nature and culture, subject and object, self and world, smell also comes to relate the world and its beyond, mortals and immortals, the graspable, comprehensible realm of *Menschen* and the ungraspable, transcendent realm of the gods.

Section five below develops this first aspect of the tendency of lateness under the title “Binding Signs: The Human-Divine Equilibrium of Olfaction.” In the human-divine relation, so the argument will show, each pole is assigned that which is proper to it: it is human to breathe and smell; it is divine to be “*otemlos*,” without breath, and hence without aerial-olfactory modulations. The two relata stand in a substitutive “for” structure to each other: the human being breathes *for*, instead of and in the place of (*anstelle von*), the gods, whose higher power reigns supreme, even if this power bears the necessary mark of a lack that produced such a “for” structure in the first place. In the medium—the middle space of the relation—, in the medium of scented air, human beings are thus bound to the gods and vice versa in a “*Bündnis*,” an alliance that comes close to the *re-ligäre* of religion. This alliance does not consist in any shared qualities but rather exists only in and as the medium in which the relation—as distinction and separation—occurs.

The centrality of air as the medium of a *Bündnis* approaches what Walter Benjamin, in his reflections on the late Hölderlin, calls the “*Alleinherrschaft der Beziehung*” (Benjamin, GS

II, 124). Benjamin argues that, in the late poem he interprets (“Blödigkeit”), “alle Einheiten im Gedicht schon in einer *intensiven Durchdringung* erscheinen, niemals die Elemente rein erfassbar sind, vielmehr nur das Gefüge der Beziehungen, in dem die Identität des einzelnen Wesens Funktion einer unendlichen Kette von Reihen ist, in denen das Gedichtete sich entfaltet” (GS II, 112; emphasis added). Benjamin names this “intensive” spatio-temporal penetration or permeation characteristic of the late Hölderlin the “Plastik der Gestalt” or the “Plastik des Daseins” (GS II, 119).¹⁷¹ Yet this “Durchdringung,” according to the argument of the section below, finds even more intense—it is still a question of comparatives here—expression in the “Durchgang” of smell, replacing the visual-tactile connotations of “plasticity.” In other words, what Benjamin discovered in the late Hölderlin is further sharpened when what he calls the “*anschaulichen Elemente*” (GS II, 108; emphasis added) is removed from the sphere of vision and touch, and placed in the aerial-olfactory sphere that is more conducive to the articulation of Benjamin’s key insight: air as medium is, in fact, the “Mitte aller Beziehungen” (GS II, 124). The “anschaulich” of Benjamin’s analysis might be read as the remainder of a terminology that resists the very establishment of the supreme reign of relationality that Benjamin discovers as key to Hölderlin’s lateness: olfaction, the *sinnlicher* olfaction of the late Hölderlin, allows for the “Alleinherrschaft der Beziehung” to emerge.

The other tendency of *sinnlicher* lateness is most accurately described as the *disarticulation* of the unifying tendency. This taking apart of unity, however, must not be

¹⁷¹ Doing justice to Benjamin’s highly complex essay would require a much longer and patient reading than can be provided here. For some scholarship on Benjamin’s essay, cf. Peter Fenves, “Substance Poem versus Function Poem: ‘Two Poems of Friedrich Hölderlin’” in: *The Messianic Reduction*, as well as the earlier: “An Idea in Combat with Itself: Benjamin, Hölderlin, and Temporal Plasticity;” both texts relate Benjamin’s reflections on plasticity to the question of intellectual intuition discussed above, meaning that the thesis proposed here can be conceived of as a provocation added to these commentaries.

understood as an oppositional impetus: such opposition would only resurrect, in negative form, the unity sought. Rather, it constitutes a suspension of the quest for unity, an evasion or side-stepping of it that leaves behind mere remnants, traces or fissures. Such disarticulating smell appears in a variety of modes, of which section six titled “Geopoetics of Smell”¹⁷² will develop four: first, an in-between poetic movement that does not occur between two poles but rather must be thought of as moving “anderswoher auf anderes.” Second, a smell whose *Sinnlichkeit* is so intensified that it resists inclusion in poetry and produces an eccentric and ecstatic effect on the poetry; the phenomenal marker of this resisting scission being pain. Third, a *posthumous* smell that constitutes a semblance of unity only after life, not in a “lebendigere” relation but in a transitory and decaying mode that seeks to establish a truce with the past. Fourth, an air (“Morgenluft”) that in its diminution opens onto and announces the future of a tomorrow in a complex relationship to what will be called the aerial-olfactory economy of the messianic name.

By subtracting themselves from the quest for unicity, each of these modes constitutes a “revolt against synthesis,” as Theodor Adorno formulated it in his well-known essay on parataxis in the late style of Hölderlin. Adorno, however, limits the extent of this revolt by referring to what he sees as the inherently synthetic nature of all language: “The paratactic revolt against synthesis attains its limit in the synthetic function of language as such. What is envisioned is a synthesis of a different kind, language’s critical self-reflection, while language retains synthesis.”¹⁷³ The four modes of *sinnlicher* dis-articulation do not recognize such a “synthesis of

¹⁷² Despite the titles of these two sections, the duplicity diagnosed cannot be transposed onto the gods and the earth more generally: the poems interpreted to show the first tendency are also concerned with the earth; while the poems interpreted to show the second tendency are also concerned with the gods.

¹⁷³ Adorno, “Parataxis,” 186.

a different kind.”¹⁷⁴ They do not aim to produce a self-reflection in language but instead undo both “self” and “reflection.”¹⁷⁵ Yet this undoing bears within itself the prospect that the *sinnlicher* tendency of the late Hölderlin’s poems might also bring forth or let emerge a more of *Sinn*: paradoxically, it might be precisely in the undoing of synthesis and unity that “more sense” articulates itself.

¹⁷⁴ In the question of synthesis, Hölderlin’s relationship to Hegel is at stake, as a different manner of addressing the interplay between Hölderlin and German Idealism. Paul de Man has taken a position in tension with the one advocated for in *Version der Bedeutung* by Werner Hamacher, cited above; de Man writes: “If there ever was a philosophy of necessary separation, it is Hegel’s; to assimilate the notion of Absolute Spirit with idealist reconciliation is to simplify all the way into misprision. Hegel’s and Hölderlin’s thoughts are remarkably parallel on this point.” (De Man, *Blindness*, 265). The major difference between (Hölderlin’s) poetry and (Hegel’s) philosophy, however, which is not simply a question of disciplines or the right “genre” of writing but is rather the question of the status of language vis-à-vis reconciliation and separation, is not addressed by de Man in this text. Discussions in Hölderlin scholarship about the distance between Hölderlin and Hegel might, at least sometimes, be not so much a question of a disagreement with respect to Hölderlin but rather with respect to Hegel.

¹⁷⁵ For a similar critique, see Hamacher, *Version*: “Daß Adorno auf der Synthesis, wenn auch nicht auf begrifflicher, insistiert und von begrifflicher sie allein durch reflektorisches Moment unterschieden sieht, macht ihm unmöglich, die Rolle des Entzugs und des Aufschubs, der Doppeldeutigkeit und der Umkehr bei Hölderlin philosophisch zu artikulieren” (Hamacher, *Version*, IIn27).

5. Binding Signs: The Human-Divine Equilibrium of Olfaction

In “Heidelberg,” the unity of intellectual *Anschauung* as it has been transformed into a non-visual, olfactory intuiting in poetry appears to have a scope limited to the realm of nature and culture: it concerns the unity of the human being with and in nature, and of nature with and in its cultivated form, such as a garden. However, any “Einigkeit mit allem, was lebt” (FHA 14, 370), as “Das lyrische dem Schein nach idealische Gedicht” calls it, must include a further dimension: the dimension of the gods. A unicity with “*everything* that lives” must extend, if it is to be truly of the “Zustand des Ursprünglich einigen,” to the heavenly ones.¹⁷⁶ Such an extension, as this section will show, constitutes an intensified version of both the “impossibility of absolute separation,” to which “Duft” as a metaphor of intellectual intuition corresponds, and the movement of a transcending and stepping out, an olfactory transcending: if “die wirkliche Trennung [...] so auch die Verbindung [...] seien nur ein Zustand des Ursprünglich einigen, in dem es sich befinde, weil es aus sich herausgehen müsse” (FHA 14, 370; emphasis added), then this dynamic character of unicity can also be traced in the “Verbindung” and “Trennung” of the humans and the gods: in olfaction, a stepping out of human *Sinnlichkeit* into the realm of the gods and back occurs.

The crucial term for this dynamic, olfactory unicity that binds and separates, more precisely, that binds in separation and separates in binding, is *equilibrium* (“Ausgleich”). The

¹⁷⁶ The development of Hölderlin’s terminology around the words *Himmliche*, god, gods, etc., especially as it concerns the question of the multiplicity of the gods and their (mythic) names, is an extremely complex one that must be left aside here; the section on “Patmos,” however, will take up this question with respect to the messianic name of Christ and the transformation in the status of the mythological names. Due to the awkwardness of any translation of *Himmliche*, the term “gods” will be mostly used in this section.

thirteenth stanza of the *Gesang* “Der Rhein” develops what such an equilibrium *would* be—the subjunctive is all-decisive here—in concise form:

Dann feiern das Brautfest Menschen und Götter,
 Es feiern die Lebenden all,
 Und ausgeglichen
 Ist eine Weile das Schicksal (vv. 180-183)

All “Lebenden” join in celebration and, for a while (this term will become crucial below), the relation between “Menschen und Götter” becomes “ausgeglichen:” not equality as a sameness of humans and gods but as a calming of the scales and a quieting of the constant disjunction, always prone to fall into strife, between them. At such a moment of equilibrium, the law of love balances earth and heavens, humans and heavenly ones: “[...] und nur der Liebe Gesetz./Das schönausgleichende gilt von hier an bis zum Himmel” (“Friedensfeier,” vv. 89-90).

Two poems from the late Hölderlin, extant in rather different forms, develop an account of how Hölderlin’s aerial-olfactory vocabulary figures such a human-divine *Ausgleich*. The completed *Gesang* “Friedensfeier” elaborates Hölderlin’s concept of a *binding sign* that joins “andere Mächte” through the medium of air as it articulates earth and plants in smell. This Hölderlinian “olfactory semiotics” unfolds in the context of his understanding of what a proper mode of relating to the gods would be for humans: this mode is developed explicitly in a late fragmentary *Gesang* that begins with the words “Wenn aber die Himmlischen.” This poem constitutes the most direct elaboration in the Hölderlinian corpus of the thesis that the state of the relationship between humans and the gods can be read off from the characteristics of a given smell. As a smell (signifier) signifies the human-divine relationship (signified), the first half of “Wenn aber die Himmlischen” develops two versions of such an olfactory signifier and the

human-divine relationship it signifies, one of a failed, askew relationship and the other of a proper tending upwards.

The second half of the poem—treated here after “Friedensfeier” develops in greater detail the notion of a “binding sign”—turns to the question of the relationship between signifier and signified within the economy of the olfactory sign: the infrastructure of the sign is not indifferent to that which it signifies. Rather, the structure of the human-divine relationship and the structure of the sign that signifies it are reciprocally determinative.¹⁷⁷ It is through this reciprocal determination that the poetry of olfactory signs attempts to produce “den immerforttönenden allesausgleichenden” (FHA 14, 304) process aimed at a unicity that attains an *Augleich* between the humans and the gods.

5.1. Countering Gravity Lightly

Two olfactory moments in the first half of the fragment “Wenn aber die Himmlischen,” then, create the opposing poles that generate much of the olfactory dynamic animating the poem and span open the range of olfactory signs of human-divine relations in Hölderlin’s work. First, the poem begins with a reference to the thunderous activity of Zeus, “Des Gottes bebender Stral”

¹⁷⁷ Much in Hölderlin, especially the late Hölderlin, depends on the proper conception of the sign, the *Zeichen*. The intention here is not to develop a comprehensive, general account of Hölderlin’s notion of the sign but rather to show the specific structure of *olfactory signs*. A larger theory of *Zeichen* in Hölderlin would in particular turn to “Wenn der Dichter einmal des Geistes mächtig...” (especially the relationship of language, “Zeichen,” “Stoff,” and memory), “Das untergehende Vaterland,” and “Bedeutung der Tragödien” in terms of his poetological writings; “Mnemosyne” (with the well-known lines “Ein Zeichen sind wir, deutungslos”) and “Der Ister” for the late *Gesänge*. For some of the most pertinent scholarship on this topic, see Johann Kreuzer, “Zeit, Sprache, Erinnerung (Dichtung als Zeitlogik);” Böschstein-Schäfer, “Die Sprache des Zeichens in Hölderlins hymnischen Fragmenten;” Beißner, “Hölderlins letzte Hymne” (HJb 3); Schmidt, *Hölderlins letzte Hymnen: “Andenken” und “Mnemosyne;”* Janke, “Hölderlins Zeichen.”

that hit the earth.¹⁷⁸ Once the thundering activity has ceased, “wohl duftet gelöscht/Von oben der Aufruhr” (vv. 9-10).¹⁷⁹ The pleasant smell follows a double agitation: on the one hand, an *Aufuhr*, a rebellion constituted by an upward (*auf*) movement that agitates or stirs (*rühren*) in a way that just so misses a calm state (*ruh-r*); on the other, the overzealous activity of the “Donnerer” that reacts to this rebellious agitation. This doubly misguided movement constitutes a relationship gone awry between above and below, between the heavenly and the mortals. After the thunderer’s “anger,” this askew movement is replaced by a different tending upwards, the rising up of blossoming: “Jetzt aber blüht es/Am armen Ort” (vv. 18-19). The *Aufuhr* has been quenched from above, “von oben.”¹⁸⁰ The sign of this calmed rebellion is a pleasant smell (“wohl duftet”); a smell, so the progression of the first stanza suggests, that derives precisely from this blossoming of unspecified plants at this “poor place,” that is, from a different tending upwards: the doubly unruly and unmeasured agitation is replaced by an organic, proper growth that links the earth and the medium of air in an *eu*-smell. Upwards movement is no longer a rebellious agitation but rather an *auf* that tends upwards organically and opens itself in blossoming: an *Ausgleich* between these two spheres has been reached.

¹⁷⁸ Gerlinde Wellmann-Bretzigheimer has argued convincingly, against Beißner, Schmidt, Lüders and others, that the lines “da den Donnerer hielt/Unzärtlich die gerade Tochter” do not refer to a ἰερόδς γάμος between Zeus and Gaia but rather that the “gerade Tochter” refers to Dike: “Das Halten ist nach dieser Auffassung ein bändigendes Festhalten. Die Verdeutlichung ‘unzärtlich’ läßt die Gewalt spüren, die Dike aufwenden muß, um den Vater von einem Übermaß des ‘Zorns’, der Energieentfaltung abzuhalten. Neben ihr und mit ihr zusammen wirkt als zweite dämmende Macht ‚das Weise’” (Wellmann-Bretzigheimer, “Zum Traditionsbezug,” 124). Her interpretation strengthens the emphasis on the need for divine limitation proposed below.

¹⁷⁹ Hölderlin reworked the initial version of these lines by substituting “der Aufruhr” for “das Feuer” thus endowing “Aufruhr” with added significance.

¹⁸⁰ This turn of phrase recalls the lines “Wohl sind die Würze des Lebens/Von oben bereitet” that open the penultimate stanza of “Friedensfeier” (vv. 130-1). Sattler, whose reconstruction of the form of the fragment in this case seems somewhat strenuous, even sees a “formale Übereinstimmung mit dem gesang ‘Friedensfeier’” (FHA 8, 747).

The counterpoint to this smell—an unbalanced version of it that misses the equilibrium—is found in a different kind of growth whose sign is a phenomenon related, but not quite identical to fragrance:

viel üppig neidiges
 Unkraut, das blendet, schneller schießet
 Es auf, das ungelenke, denn es scherzet
 Der Schöpferische, sie aber
 Verstehen es nicht. Zu zornig greift
 Es und wächst. Und dem Brande gleich,
 Der Häußer verzehret, schlägt
 Empor, achtlos, und schonet
 Den Raum nicht, und die Pfade bedeket,
 Weitgährend, ein dampfend Gewölk
 Die unbeholfene Wildniß. (vv. 31-41)

Instead of a blossoming of the poor place, “neidiges Unkraut” here grows in the wilderness: due to its envy, it grows “faster,” throwing the *dynamics* of the relation between up and down off kilter; here the “anger” of the *Donnerer* returns (“zu zornig”) and produces a being that is defined by the negativity of *un-*: the *Un*-kraut is “ungelenk,” which one could—perhaps boldly—translate as *out of joint*; it is “unbeholfen,” awkward, clumsy but also unhelpful. Instead of an organic growth that leads to a blossoming, a process of fermentation (“weitgährend”) produces an unguided and unmeasured transformation of matter.¹⁸¹ The sign of this out-of-jointness is found in a smell-adjacent phenomenon that results from this fermentation, namely “ein dampfend Gewölk.” “Dampf” and “Duft” are etymologically close: “Duft” initially meant a vapor or damp overcast before taking on a primarily olfactory meaning by the 18th century; “Dampf,” relatedly, is defined by Grimm’s dictionary as “feuchter rauch oder dunst, schwerer als duft,”¹⁸² the

¹⁸¹ One could introduce here Hölderlin’s neologism of the *aorgic*, which he first introduces in “Grund zum Empedokles” as the oppositional term to “organic;” it designates a tendency towards formlessness, inherent not only in nature but also in man.

¹⁸² Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, s.v. “Dampf.”

preceding adjective “weitgährend” here further suggesting an olfactory component. The vapor rising up from the “Unkraut” is a modulation of air that functions as a sign of a tending upwards that is out of joint.

The reference to weight (“schwerer als duft”) in Grimm’s definition draws attention to *Duft’s counter-gravitational* nature: under the general law of gravity that governs all human activity, fragrance’s uprising breaks with the depression of gravity.¹⁸³ From this derives its ability to exactly figure the humans’ relationship to the gods: tending upwards breaks with the human condition as confined to its own sphere, which is governed by a generalized tending downwards. This tending upwards must be careful and measured: an all too rapid rising up (“schneller schießt/es auf”) is destructive since it is careless (“achtlos”) in its aggression towards the space that enables it in the first place (“schonet/Den Raum nicht”). This implicit exhortation to take care not to shoot upwards and rebel in unmeasured fashion against gravity transforms a key insight from an earlier (probably from around 1799, according to the editors) poetological writing, namely the third of the “Reflexionen”/“Sieben Maximen” that was analyzed above for its account of warmth and feeling as “Zügel und Sporn.” Concerning the relationship between “Begeisterung,” “Besinnung,” and “Nüchternheit,” Hölderlin writes:

Da wo die Nüchternheit dich verläßt, da ist die Grenze deiner Begeisterung. Der große Dichter ist niemals von sich selbst verlassen, er mag sich so weit über sich selbst erheben als er will. Man kann auch in die Höhe *fallen*, so wie in die Tiefe. Das letztere verhindert der elastische Geist, das erstere die Schwerkraft, die in nüchternen Besinnen liegt (KA 2, 519).

“Wenn aber die Himmlischen” generalizes this insight from the poet to the human being: tending upwards of both poet and human being must be kept in check by the “Schwerkraft” that lies in

¹⁸³ This feature of smell is crucial to Nietzsche’s olfactory geopoetics developed below: the “smell of the earth” rises upwards in loyalty to the earth.

“nüchternen Besinnen.” Soberly, one needs to keep one’s senses—the threat of a “sinnlos” condition looms large here, as the continuation of “Wenn aber die Himmlischen” develops—and only in this keeping of one’s senses can one guard against *falling* upwards and instead strive upwards properly and non-destructively. It is this “nüchtern Besinnen” that enables an *Ausgleich* between humans and gods.

An “anger” towards gravity that would lose its senses misunderstands the gravity of the situation: “denn es scherzet/Der Schöpferische, sie aber/Verstehen es nicht.” Taking gravity too gravely, raging against it in an aggressive and careless bid to transcend it ends in helplessness and a dull, damp attempt at transformation (fermenting) that fails to rise up. Only by submitting to gravity can one become truly counter-gravitational; only by being human can one truly tend enter into an upwards relation with the gods. Proper growth—as the generalized tending upwards of life activity—is indicated by the aerial rising up that it gives off, and this defines the mortals’ proper relationship to the gods: *Duft* indicates a taking lightly of gravity that establishes an equilibrium between the upper and the lower spheres of “allem, was lebt.”

5.2 Air, Earth, Plants: Other Powers, *Friedensfeier*

Interpreting olfactory signs, according to their counter-gravitational or depressing-resentful character, thus interprets the human-divine relationship. Yet such an interpretation must attend to the exact nature of the relationship between signifier (smell) and signified (human-divine relations): if smell’s movement enables it to figure the human movement that succeeds or fails to establish an *Ausgleich*, then this moment of correspondence or adequacy between the olfactory sign and the human-divine relation demands clarification and, if possible, justification. Are olfactory signs particularly adept at signifying the human-divine relationship, and if so,

why? Developing a conception of signs that elucidates the nature of these olfactory signs found in Hölderlin's poetry not only clarifies the nature of smells but also contributes to an understanding of why such signs are used in the first place. The description of the relation between mortals and the gods fails to be direct or explicit and instead takes a detour through signs. Smells, then, will not only be signs in which an articulation of this detour relation takes place but will also, by the very fact of their existence, be signs indicating the necessity of signs: the indelible self-referentiality of signs points to their status as sign and hence the failure of an unmediated, non-sign relation.

The exact nature of the relationship between a signifier and its signified was a major concern not only of 18th semiotics and aesthetics but also of Enlightenment thought more broadly.¹⁸⁴ From Leibniz onwards through Wolff, Baumgarten, and Meier all the way to Mendelsohn and Lessing, the signifier was seen as both chance and threat: on the one hand, to a finite mind, thought is only possible through "symbols." Ideas must have symbols that stand in for them and make cognitive processing faster, easier, and indeed possible to begin with. Leibniz, for instance, develops these arguments in *Meditations on Knowledge, Truth, and Ideas* (1684) and its precursor *De Mente, de Deo, de Universo* (1674). Only God can think composite, complex things, Leibniz argues in the earlier text: "il n'appartient qu'à Dieu d'avoir les idées des choses composées. Cependant nous connaissons l'essence du cercle en pensant ses réquisits par parties."¹⁸⁵ Consequently, "Au défaut d'idée en nous supplée une certaine image sensible, ou une définition, c'est-à-dire un agrégat de caractères dans lequel il n'est besoin d'aucune similitude. A

¹⁸⁴ These questions have been the object of a vast amount of scholarship; an extension and revision of this section will take into account both this scholarship and the complicated nature of the Hölderlinian *Zeichen* beyond the texts quoted here.

¹⁸⁵ Leibniz, *Recherches générales*, 16-7.

la place de l'idée supplée toujours un phantasme qui est senti tout entire conjointement."¹⁸⁶ This absence of "similitude" can lead the mind astray: not only does the symbols' materiality constitute a major source of error but the *arbitrary* relationship between symbol and idea introduces a diremption that threatens the validity of all thinking that relies on symbols, that is, of all finite and thus human thinking tout court.

Various solutions to the arbitrariness of the sign and its attendant threats are proposed throughout the 18th century. Leibniz and rationalist philosophy more broadly insist on the demand for *transparent* signs, signs that (almost) completely efface themselves in the process of signification and thus, so the hope, enable ideas and thought to escape uncontaminated from under the demand for symbolic thought. This demand for transparency eventually culminates in the dream of a perfect *lingua philosophica* or "universal characteristic" that would overcome the divergence of signs and the ideas they stand in for. Leibniz himself more or less gave up on the development of such a "universal characteristic" containing "real characters" after the early part of his career¹⁸⁷ and instead turned to the development of a *spécieuse générale* or general science of forms that would indemnify inference and logical deduction from error.

Nevertheless, the dream of non-arbitrary signs persisted well after Leibniz's death and the tail end of rationalist philosophy of the Leibnizian-Wolffian type. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's seminal *Laocoon* (1766), for instance, sought to develop a conception of poetry as a

¹⁸⁶ Leibniz, *Recherches générales*, 17.

¹⁸⁷ The main reason for this abandonment lies in the problem of a "true philosophy," that is, the complete analysis of all concepts, which would be a necessary precondition for the development of a universal characteristic, as Descartes had already argued: "For without that [true] philosophy it is impossible to number and order all the thoughts of men or even to separate them out into clear and simple thoughts" (Quoted in: Rutherford, "Philosophy and Language," 232). Leibniz's response to this oscillated between acknowledging its full force and postulating that the universal characteristic and the true philosophy could be developed in tandem. Either case, however, led to the eventual demise of this project.

“natural sign” that would release language from its status as arbitrary and merely symbolic. A natural sign, for Lessing, enables immediate, intuitive, and complete cognition of the signified, while the merely arbitrary linguistic sign pushes the signified into the background and forces the mind to linger with the signifier itself. Poetry, according to *Laocoon*, can achieve its status as natural sign through various means, for instance, through onomatopoeic words, the use of tropes introducing a relationship of similarity or its restriction to temporal succession.¹⁸⁸ All of these measures seek to expel arbitrariness and instead institute various forms of bonds between sign and signified that are supposed to safeguard their true and lasting relation.

Within this context of 18th century semiotics, Hölderlin’s *Gesang* “Friedensfeier,” discovered in its final form only in 1954, offers hints for an understanding not only of Hölderlin’s conception of the sign and the threat of its arbitrariness but also triangulates the question of the sign with the problem of the proper human-divine relationship—the possibility of an *Ausgleich*—and the nature of smells. Reading this pivotal and much commented upon poem through this triple optics will thus elucidate the questions raised at the end of the preliminary reading of “Wenn aber die Himmlischen.”

The conception of the sign in “Friedensfeier” turns out to be double. The eighth stanza describes the first type of “Zeichen” via a simile:

Und das Zeitbild, das der große Geist entfaltet,
 Ein Zeichen liegts vor uns, daß zwischen ihm und andern
 Ein Bündnis zwischen ihm und andern Mächten ist.
 Nicht er allein, die Unerzeugten, Ew’gen
 Sind kennbar alle daran, gleichwie auch an den Pflanzen

¹⁸⁸ See David Wellbery’s study on Lessing’s *Laocoon*: “The elevation of arbitrary signs to natural signs is accomplished [...] through the use of tropes [...] The metaphorical substitution of one term for another introduces a relationship of similarity – and therefore a natural sign” (Wellbery, *Lessing’s Laocoon*, 195). And: “the restriction of poetry to successive contents insures the naturalness of poetic signification. While the individual signs of language may be arbitrary, the poet deploys these signs in such a way that their arrangement yields a global iconic sign – a natural sign” (Wellbery, 198).

Die Mutter Erde sich und Licht und Luft sich kennen. (vv. 94-9)

In the sign, the *großer Geist* is “kennbar;” it can be cognized in the sign. Lying before us, the first type of sign indicates that there is an alliance or a bond (*Bündnis*) between the “great spirit” and “other powers.” Spirit does not stand alone but rather is bound to otherness.¹⁸⁹ The striking *apo koinou* construction¹⁹⁰ “zwischen ihm und andern/Ein Bündnis zwischen ihm und andern Mächten” where two almost identical phrases (“zwischen ihm und andern” and “zwischen ihm und andern Mächten”) are blended together by the centrally positioned word (“ein Bündnis”) draws attention to the fact that otherness is located only in the one word that differs between these two phrases: *Mächten*, powers. The difference between the two parts entering into a *Bündnis*—that which both necessitates and is held in check by the *Bündnis*—is a difference of *power*. Total identification is precluded by this power differential; its substitute is an alliance. The nature of the alliance is rendered sensible by the spatial construction of the *apo koinou* figure: the alliance is that which is common to (*koinou*) and shared by the two sides; it does not supervene or arise out of shared qualities that each side possesses independently but rather is simply that which stands in the middle—in the space of the *medium*. The *Bündnis* is precisely the opening of the medium that enables any binding. In the peculiar *apo koinou* figure, these verses bend the strictures of syntax—of the ordering-with function of grammar that enables the synthetic operation of language founding its common communicability—and thus run up against an asyntactical, uncommon limit: precisely at the moment of a binding of powers, that which is

¹⁸⁹ “Bündnis” could thus be taken to translate “religion,” if one follows not the Ciceronian etymology of that word, which traces it to re-reading, but the later, especially Christian one of “religate,” to bind (again), to constrain. In this sense, the entirety of the following commentary on Hölderlin’s notion of the *Bündnis* constitutes preliminary remarks for an understanding of his concept of religion.

¹⁹⁰ Schmidt draws attention to this construction without offering an interpretation of it (KA I, 925).

common—the alliance—breaks with the common ordering structures of syntax. The *Bündnis* of these verses is common beyond the common understanding of commonality.

The sign of this *Bündnis*, the “Zeitbild,” is structured just like the *Bündnis* itself.¹⁹¹ The structure of an alliance that binds in the middle, medial space of sharing is common to—is shared by—both the sign and the alliance it signifies. As Jochen Schmidt has argued with respect to the “Zeitbild:” “Für Platon, an den Hölderlin hier wiederum anknüpft, ist Zeit nicht der Gegensatz zur Ewigkeit; vielmehr öffnet sich die Ewigkeit in die Zeit und teilt ihr von ihrem Wesen mit, so daß diese zu ihrem ‘Bild’ werden kann” (KA I, 924). The “moving image of eternity,” “εἰκὼ [...] κινητὸν τινα αἰῶνος” (*Timaeus*, 37d5), thus is a *Bündnis*, a binding together of temporal succession and unmoving eternity. Beholding the *Zeitbild* does not mean seeing time alone but rather seeing time *as the othering of eternity*—and their commonality transcends an understanding of commonality that would derive from similarity. Instead of being based on shared qualities, the common bond of time and eternity, of sign and signified is based on otherness, more precisely the *movement of othering* that leads one into the other.

The exact nature of the cognition enabled by the sign qua *Zeitbild*, however, is left ambiguous by the adjectival form “kennbar:” the mere potentiality to be known neither allows for concluding the actuality of such cognition nor does it indicate the subject of such knowledge. The second part of the simile introduced by “gleichwie,” by contrast, offers a specification of this cognition by supplying a subject of knowledge and stipulating the actuality of the cognition: “gleichwie auch an den Pflanzen/Die Mutter Erde sich und Licht und Luft sich kennen” (vv. 98-

¹⁹¹ As is the case for a significant number of key words in this chapter, “Zeitbild” is a hapax legomenon in Hölderlin’s work thus precluding an elucidation proceeding from the comparison of parallel passages; for a discussion of some of the difficulties that would in any case be involved in such a method, cf. Szondi, “Über philologische Erkenntnis,” in *Schriften*, esp. 273ff.

9). Cognition here is actual: earth, light, and air each know themselves “an den Pflanzen.” The relationships between plants, on the one hand, and each one of these three terms, on the other, certainly differ and this difference is guarded by the singular form of the verb, along with the repetition of “sich:” the syntactical structure here mirrors the first part of the simile where “der große Geist” is introduced first and then two further terms are jointly added, namely “die Unerzeugten, Ew’gen;” in both cases, the structural similarity of each of three terms’ relations with the sign is highlighted while their distinction is preserved. The relations plants entertain with the earth, light, and air can nevertheless be specified as follows: plants are *anders*, are *andere Mächte* with respect to earth, light, and air. They are individuated organisms attaining a certain degree of independent power—but they are brought forth by the powers of earth, light, and air in a process of self-othering. Earth knows its powers through making something spring from itself that will eventually—through decay—return to it; light, here perhaps synecdochally standing for the sun, knows its powers by enabling the growth and life of something other than itself; air circulates through the plants, contributes to their growth, and returns to itself in othered form. Earth, air, and light know themselves in something which is other to them and yet intimately *bound* to it: a sign, likewise, would be that which is different from whatever seeks to know itself while maintaining a relation of intimate binding, thus producing not only the potentiality of knowledge (“kennbar”) but its actualization (“sich kennen”). Signs, the simile suggests, enable a *Macht* to know itself since they are different from but bound to this *Macht* as its othered form.

The opening stanza of “Friedensfeier” furnishes an image of an interaction between plants and air that can be read according to this sign logic: “um grüne Teppiche duftet/Die Freudenwolk” (vv. 4-5), where “green carpets” can be read as a metaphor for the plants covering

the earth.¹⁹² In the smell emanating from plants, air others itself: *Duft* is the aerial medium othered through its binding to plants. This modulated, othered air constitutes “a cloud of joy:” a calm and peaceful joining of differing powers. In the plants’ fragrance, cognition of the joyful modification of the medium takes place. The fragrance of green carpets is thus a *Zeichen* in the sense developed by the eighth stanza: *Duft* is common to and shared by both plants and air, and is nothing but the joining of the two. The plants’ fragrance is other than but intimately bound to air and thus enables the latter’s cognizing of its joyful state. In the shared, medial term “Duft,” a *Bündnis* is established between two powers whose relationship is one of “Macht” and “andere Mächte:” plants and air are bound to each other; fragrance is the sign of their joyful joining. This *koinou* structure of the sign has an apotropaic function with respect to the threat of arbitrariness, so central to the reflections on signs both before and after Hölderlin. The signifier (fragrance) and the signified (the joyful joining of air and plants) have the same structure because they are the same; more precisely, the signified *Bündnis* of air and plants and the *Bündnis* of sign and signified are the same *Bündnis*.¹⁹³ Neither one exists without the other.

“Friedensfeier,” however, knows a second type of sign, one which seems to supersede the first type modeled on plants and the *Zeitbild*. It suggests that a different type of sign might be possible, one which would leave behind the double limitation of the first type: the plant-*Zeitbild*

¹⁹² “Teppiche” occurs twice more in Hölderlin’s corpus, including in some of his most difficult verses, namely the opening stanza of “Blödigkeit.” Here, “kennen” is also linked to carpets:

Sind denn dir nicht bekannt viele Lebendigen?
Geht auf Wahrem dein Fuß nicht, wie auf Teppichen?
Drum, mein Genius! tritt nur
Baar ins Leben, und Sorge nicht! (FHA 5, 699).

The fragrant carpets of the opening lines of “Friedensfeier” combine in one image the knowing of “Lebendiges” with the possibility to strut out on the true like an *ausgelegt* carpet.

¹⁹³ Note that, at this point, the question addressed is not one of the *linguistic* sign, that is, of how the word “smell” relates to smell. Rather the concern is to develop Hölderlin’s general theory of *Zeichen*, which “Friedensfeier” explicates through these reflections on the modulations of air and the role of plants.

sign is structured not only by irreducible otherness but also as a mere *dyad*. The sign binds two, and only two, terms to each other. The joining into unity of a larger multiplicity is foreclosed, as the syntactical structure of the lines “gleichwie auch an den Pflanzen/Die Mutter Erde sich und Licht und Luft sich kennen” indicated through the singular form of the verb. In the second type of sign, by contrast, the last traces of “anders” disappear and this dyadic structure is supplanted:

Zuletzt ist aber doch, ihr heiligen Mächte, für euch
Das Liebeszeichen, das Zeugnis
Daß ihrs noch seiet, der Festtag,

Der Allversammelnde, wo Himmlische nicht
Im Wunder offenbar, noch ungesehn im Wetter,
Wo aber bei Gesang gastfreundlich untereinander
In Chören gegenwärtig, eine heilige Zahl
Die Seligen in jeglicher Weise
Beisammen sind (vv. 100-11).

Three lexical indications are given that “Festtag” as sign would supersede the sign as understood on the model of plants or the *Zeitbild*: “zuletzt” suggests a temporal or (teleo-)logical succession; “aber” indicates a contrast between this sign and the preceding one; “Liebeszeichen” intensifies the binding of the “Zeichen:” no longer just the sign of a *Bündnis*, this sign is a sign of love or a loving sign, where love, of course, is itself a mode of binding. The intensification of love erased all otherness: instead of being the bond between the great spirit and “andern Mächten,” the holiday is *all*-gathering.¹⁹⁴ Far from producing an undistinguished multitude, however, this gathering lets “die Seligen” be “in jeglicher Weise:” they join but each according to their own

¹⁹⁴ The all-gathering, non-dyadic sign of love includes an intra-divine reconciliation. This reconciliation produces a different type of presence. As Peter Szondi has argued, the holiday of “Friedensfeier” would be

[e]ine Gegenwart, die weder wie die Christi, im Wunder, noch wie die Jupiters im Wetter, sich vollzieht; ein Erscheinen nicht so sehr der einzelnen Götter als ihrer Gesamtheit, ihres Chores, dessen Gesang die Versöhnung verkündet: Versöhnung zwischen den griechischen Göttern, zwischen ihnen und Christus, zwischen Göttern und Menschen (Szondi, *Schriften*, 324).

manner. The various manners add up to song, *Gesang* (since the holiday gathering occurs “bei Gesang,” *Gesang* can be taken as an indication that a holiday takes place), which stands in opposition to a dyadic, dialogic mode of engagement. As the preceding stanza indicates, *Gesang* stands in opposition to *Gespräch*: “Viel hat von Morgen an,/Seit ein Gespräch wir sind und hören voneinander./Erfahren der Mensch; bald sind wir aber Gesang” (vv. 91-3). “Der immer widerstreitende Dialog,” to quote Hölderlin’s commentary on his Oedipus translation, would cease once—a “soon” occurring event—song structured by choruses gathering “in jeglicher Weise” resounds: the *jegliche Weise* replaces the back and forth of the *dia*-logue. The need for a binding sign has disappeared in the unified multiplicity of the loving sign.

This holiday of song, however, does not take place: while the quoted first clause of the sentence concerning the “Liebeszeichen” is in the present tense indicative, the following two clauses suggest the outstanding, futural nature of the holiday. The presence of the sign of love is absent. The poetic I “called” (“rief”) the last guest, namely Christ as the “Unvergeßlicher,” and the waiting for his arrival is still ongoing: “und eher legt sich...” The *zu-letzt* is not yet arrived at; the last is yet to come: the holiday as sign is lacking.¹⁹⁵ Consequently, and many commentaries on “Friedensfeier” almost completely elide this, the hymn continues with a fourth triad that decisively marks a *return* to the *first type of sign*. Stanza ten opens with a reintroduction of the element of air so crucial to the definition of the *kennen* of signs in stanza eight: “Leichtathmende Lüfte/Verkünden euch schon.” No holiday but instead a modulation of air that announces “already” the *Seligen*, emphasizing both that they are missing and that the sign

¹⁹⁵ Szondi locates the reason for the poet’s insistence on the futurity of the holiday in the relative weakness of his *powers*: “Dieses Geschehen soll ein Versprechen bleiben, denn zu viel liegt dem Dichter an dessen Erfüllung, als daß er sich die Macht anmaßen wollte, es als erfüllt hinzustellen” (Szondi, *Schriften*, 317).

of their presence, the holiday, has been replaced by a different type of sign. Air, then, produces a *Kenn-barkeit* of the futural holiday: still only potential but nevertheless annunciatory.

The return of air and the first type of sign thus insists that signs preserve two key features. On the one hand, they must preserve an irreducible dyadic difference. In the absence of the presence of the holiday of song, the *Bündnis* of the sign is, notwithstanding its structure of commonality, incapable of effacing otherness and producing an *all*-gathering unity. On the other hand, signs must nevertheless be non-arbitrary through their structure of co-implication developed above. It is the combination of these two aspects that will enable them to announce, albeit never to celebrate in actuality, a futural Parousia: the gap of non-arbitrary difference announces final reconciliation.

5.3. Stand-in: Human Senses, Divine Senselessness

In “Wenn aber die Himmlischen,” the relationship between sign (smell, be it as *Wohlgeruch* or *Dampf*) and that which it stands for (the human-divine relationship) is structured in accordance with the concept of the first type of Hölderlinian sign as “Friedensfeier” develops it. It is, on the one hand, far from arbitrary or merely conventional and, on the other, preserves a dyadic difference that upholds within the *Bündnis* a gap that will eventually announce a futural holiday. After constructing the opposition between two differing modes of tending upwards, that is, of human striving towards an *Ausgleich*—the light, non-grave countering of gravity versus the resentful, all-too-grave raging against gravity—, “Wenn aber die Himmlischen” goes on to attend to the particularity of the olfactory sign and show its implication in that which it stands for. It is precisely the *Sinnlichkeit* of the olfactory sign that is directly *implicated*, in a precise

sense, in the relationship between the human being and the gods, without collapsing their difference or constituting an actualized pleroma: one (olfaction) is *folded into* the other (the *Ausgleich* between humans and gods). More precisely, the infrastructure of the equilibrium relation at stake here can be described as follows: the human being acts as the representative—in the sense of a *Stellvertreter*—of the gods in the realm of olfaction. The gods themselves do not smell as their divine perfection subtracts them from the region of olfactory *Sinnlichkeit*. Consequently, this divine senselessness must be supplemented by the stand-in of the human senses: the entire possibility of a human-divine *Ausgleich* depends on the proper functioning of this sensing-in-the-place-of constellation.

In a first step towards developing both the implication of the signifier in the signified and the stand-in function of the human senses, the poem claims that the gods occasionally show a need, and that this need stirs up man:

Wo nemlich
 Die Himmlischen eines Zaunes oder Merkmals,
 Das ihren Weg
 Anzeige, oder eines Bades
 Bedürfen, reget es wie Feuer
 In der Brust der Männer sich. (vv. 51-6)

Hölderlin had already explicated the thought of divine need—and the accompanying demand placed on humans to respond to and remedy this need—in previous poems, most notably in the central stanza of “Der Rhein.” According to the latter, the gods are unable to “fühlen von selbst” (v. 110) and hence they depend on man as “ein Andrer” to “teilnehmend fühlen” in their name. While “Der Rhein” emphasized that the gods cannot feel on their own, “Wenn aber die Himmlischen” explicates their lack differently, albeit relatedly. Here, the gods are said to need two things: a fence or a mark that indicates their path as well as a bath. First, regarding the latter,

a bath is needed, according to Beißner's explanation of the mythological allusion, "in den Übergängen der Gezeiten zur Erneuerung" (StA 2.2, 858).¹⁹⁶ In other words, human activity supplies a *cleansing needed for rejuvenation*. Renewal—the change of times or epochs—cannot take place through their powers alone. Such a renewal or beginning of a different epoch was described in the opening verses of the poem: "Wenn aber die Himmlischen haben/Gebaut, still ist es/Auf Erden" and a bit further on: "Jetzt aber blüht es/Am armen Ort." This new calm was the result of two operations: the limiting of the thunderer's anger and the calming of the agitation; the sign of the success of these operations was the "wohl duftet."

Second, the gods lack the limits of finitude that could orient and protect them, as the word "Zaun" emphasizes. Grimm's *Deutsches Wörterbuch* states: "der zweck eines zaunes ist abgrenzung und schutz."¹⁹⁷ Humans are called upon to delimit and thus protect the gods. This othering protects the gods from disorienting self-sameness—whither could they be oriented if nothing fenced them in?¹⁹⁸ Towards the end of the fragment, one of the limitations of the gods is named in the form of a lack: they are termed—defined, finitized—"die othemlosen."¹⁹⁹ Humans, by contrast, are the ones who breathe, constituting that which is other to the gods: human breath

¹⁹⁶ A similar image is used in "Am Quell der Donau," (vv. 90-1).

¹⁹⁷ Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, s.v. "zaun."

¹⁹⁸ Werner Hamacher develops a similar thought with respect to Hölderlin's gods, albeit in a slightly different context, when he speaks of the "Darstellung des Gottes, der, entspräche er der höchsten Bestimmung der Göttlichkeit: bedürfnisloser Selbstidentität, sein Selbst verzehren müßte, weil er an sich selbst nichts hat, das ihn gegen die ihm eigene verzehrende Kraft des Feuers schützen könnte" (Hamacher, *Version der Bedeutung*, 90).

¹⁹⁹ The explicit definition of the human being, often in contradistinction to the god(s), as the breathing one can be found in a number of late poems; cf., for instance, "Das Nächste Beste:" "Wahrheit schenkt aber dazu/Den Athmenden/Der ewige Vater" (vv. 69-72). Jürgen Link, in his investigations of Hölderlin's reception of the *Naturgeschichte* of his time, has further argued that breathing is the interaction of earth and ether par excellence: "Das für Hölderlin wohl wichtigste naturgeschichtliche Modell der quasi-chemischen Reaktion von Aether und Erde in einem Gefäß stellt der Prozess der Atmung (als eine komplexe Spielart des 'Trinkens') dar. Das Atmen ist der Prozeß der Animation, der Konvergenz von fluidem Element und Organ, der Verwandlung von äußerem in inneren Aether, par excellence" (Link, "Aether," 146).

constitutes a limit of divinity and institutes a dyadic difference between the human and the divine pole.

The verses of the fragment immediately preceding the epithet “die othemlosen” specify this relation further by referring to another divine loss:

Denn ruhen mögen sie. Wenn aber
 Sie reizet unnüz Treiben
 Der Erd' und es nehmen
 Den Himmlischen
 die Sinne, brennend kommen
 Sie dann,

The heavenly have their “senses” taken away if there is “unnüz Treiben” on earth: the latter exactly referring back to the activity of “gähren” that produces the fragrance-akin but out of joint “Dampf.” If human activity does not attain to proper smell, then the gods lack this sense. This is the thesis of the fragment: with the diminution of smell into vapor, with resentful, out of joint human activity derailing fragrance, the gods lose their sense of smell *because due to their breathlessness, they rely on humans to breathe and smell for them*. Divine lack of breath entails divine lack of one of the senses: smell. No breathing, no smelling;²⁰⁰ hence the breathless gods need the breathing humans to breathe and smell *for them* lest their *othemlos* character threatens to deepen into a *sinnlos* condition. The most minute inversion, producing a *Treiben* instead of a blossoming *Trieb*, threatens the calm (“ruhen”) of the gods, their protected and fenced in, *eingefriedet* existence. Resentful raging against the gravity of the human condition leads humans away from fragrance and thus subtracts the sense of smell from the human-divine relationship, rendering any *Ausgleich* impossible.

²⁰⁰ Beyond the necessary implication of breath and olfaction that was briefly developed above, the section on “Patmos” below further argues for the thesis that the respiratory and the olfactory realms of Hölderlin’s poetic vocabulary are indissociable.

In other words, humans serve the gods by constituting something that is other to them—olfactory *Sinnlichkeit*. Sensibility, as that which is proper to the human being and the gods' own "jenseits," serves as the other for the divine. *Wohlgeruch* is thus a sign in the terms of "Friedensfeier:" in the sign of the fragrance, the gods know their power (non-temporal, non-breathing existence) in an "andere Macht" (breathing, smelling) to which they are bound through the bond of their need. The olfactory sign therefore resists threats of arbitrariness: it does not stand for the human-divine relationship by the force of sheer convention or rhetorical flourish but it is implicated, as a sensuous sign, in the very relationship between humans and gods that it stands for.

Such a stand-in function of human olfaction, supplementing divine senselessness with human senses, can be traced to two major traditions that are always at work in Hölderlin's poetry. On the one hand, the mythology and cult of the Ancient Greek gods: Hölderlin saw here an elaborate culture of sacrificial incense burning and fragrant libations that attests to the fact that the Ancient Greeks took great care to *smell for* their gods and establish in their olfactory rituals an *Ausgleich* relation with the gods. The exact logic of these phenomena, in particular with respect to the logic of olfactory sense-making, will be developed as part of the analysis of "Der Archipelagus" that constitutes a highpoint of Hölderlin's "geopoetics of smell" developed below.

On the other hand, a similar but not altogether identical thought can be found in the pietist version of Christianity that shaped the milieu of Hölderlin's upbringing and education. In this tradition, the human being constitutes, in fact, the god's sensorium. The need for such a

sensorium dei, often prominently associated with Newton,²⁰¹ had found its way into the Pietist version of Christianity as it was for instance expressed by the influential Baden-Württemberg theologian Friedrich Christoph Oetinger. In his *Biblisches und Emblematisches Wörterbuch*, Oetinger explicitly links the *sensorium dei* to smell. The lemma “Geruch, osme” of his dictionary reads:²⁰²

*Wir sind GOtt ein guter Geruch. Diß Wort beziehet sich auf die Opfer, welche verbrannt worden, und diese waren, weil sie Christi Leiden abgebildet, GOtt ein guter Geruch, nicht verblümt, sondern eigentlich (2. Kor. 2, 14). GOtt an sich riecht zwar nicht, aber er gibt sich um Christi willen die Eigenschaft, daß er wirklich riecht. GOtt nimmt wirklich ein Sensorium, ein Fühlungs-Werkzeug an, wie NEUTON statuirt, daß spatium ein sensorium Dei seye, worinnen er empfindet, hört, riecht; denn *der das Ohr gepflanzt hat, solte der nicht hören. GOtt schämt sich nicht zu heissen* unser GOtt, weil er nach menschlicher Art den Seinen *eine Stadt zubereitet*, und aus diesem Grund gehen alle Sinnlichkeiten der *heiligen Schrift*.*

For a pietist Christian, God “really smells:” he partakes in the “menschlicher Art,” through and for the sake of Christ, (Christ, the *anointed* son, whose olfactory status will be interpreted below). References in scripture to smells are not merely “flowery,” figurative speech but rather supposed to be understood in an “eigentlich” sense: whenever god’s sensibility is mentioned in scripture, it serves to signal his actual belonging to the humans (“*unser* GOtt”) and their mode of being.

Hölderlin’s transformation in “Wenn aber die Himmlischen” of this pietistic heritage, then, is twofold: on the one hand, the *Fühlungs-Werkzeug* of the divine is not merely space but

²⁰¹ Newton used the word “sensorium” in a number of ways, applying it to both humans and god; the use of the expression “sensorium dei” in relationship to space referenced by Oetinger below gained prominence in the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence. For an extensive overview of Newton on the sensorium, cf. Jamie C. Kassler, *Newton’s Sensorium: Anatomy of a Concept*.

²⁰² Oetinger, *Wörterbuch*, s.v. “Geruch, osme,” emphasis in the original. The relationship between Christianity’s olfactory rituals and those of the world of Antiquity (both Greek and Roman) is rather complicated and to a significant degree influenced by the balance of powers in the first three centuries of Christianity’s development. A detailed account of the developments of such a Christian “aromatics” can be found in Harvey, *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination*.

more precisely the sensory activity of humanity, its *Sinnlichkeit*. On the other, god cannot simply take on such a tool but rather depends on the *Andere* to fulfill his task; a fulfillment that is always precarious and fragile, being susceptible to changes as minute as the mere inversion of two letters. The question of an equilibrium between humans and gods, for Hölderlin, is thus one of the appropriate olfactory “Besinnung” of the human: human beings must be *sinnlich* such that their *Sinnlichkeit* relates them to the non-*sinnlich* divine so that they can act as the stand-in for the divine in the olfactory, sensory realm—only then can an *Ausgleich* emerge.

6. Geopoetics of Smell

While the determination of the position of the human being with respect to the divine ones along with the possibility for an *Ausgleich* articulates a crucial part of the determination of the place of the human and the role of olfaction in Hölderlin's work, both are only insufficiently delineated without a second approach: an *Erörterung*²⁰³ of the place of the human *on earth* and *in time*. The second major function of smell in the late Hölderlin is exactly this: articulating place and time via fragrance. In other words, a "geopoetics of smell" moves Hölderlin's treatment of olfaction from the vertical dimension structured by the relation of the human to the "other powers" of the non-breathing heavens to the horizontal dimension structured by the distribution or rather the dispersal into a "da und dort"—"da und dort/Unendlich hin zerstreut das Lebende Gott" ("Patmos," v. 121-2). Smell, as this section will show, is always "da und dort:" when present, it opens a place (*da*) but as this opening it is not "here" but only elsewhere (*dort*); it can neither be grasped (it is "schwer zu fassen") nor definitively localized and is therefore everywhere and nowhere. The places of Hölderlin's olfactory geopoetics do not crystalize into determinate points on a stable grid but must rather be thought through the terms olfaction itself supplies and that the "da und dort" already indicates: atmospheric dispersal, a buzzing "anderwoher auf anderes," ephemerality, access to a deep historical past or eccentricity, to anticipate the analysis to be pursued here. It is through these terms, according to the argument developed here, that the "dis-articulation of unity" in Hölderlin's geopoetics of smell, in a literal sense, *takes place*.

²⁰³ While the usefulness of Heidegger's term "Erläuterung" with respect to Hölderlin's work is questionable, his use of "Erörterung" articulates rather succinctly the stakes of the geopoetical inquiry proposed here: "Erörtern meint hier zunächst: in den Ort weisen. Es heißt dann: den Ort beachten [...] Die Erörterung endet, wie es einem Denkweg entspricht, in eine Frage. Sie fragt nach der Ortschaft des Ortes" (Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, 37).

Much scholarship on Hölderlin's concept of the earth, his geographical knowledge, and his spatial imagination exists, without those analyses ever addressing the determinative role fragrance occupies with respect to producing these structures.²⁰⁴ In particular, scholars have shown his familiarity with some of the major travel reports of his time such as Georg Forster's account of James Cook's travels or Richard Chandler's travels through "Klein Asien:" in a sense to be further determined below, Hölderlin's poems read in this section constitute a "poetic travel report," an account of the journey of poetic spirit. This journey produces poetic *Er-fahrung* in the strict sense: poetry is the "fahren" through poetic space; the undergoing of a transformative movement that takes, in the case developed here, from one fragrant place to another. Luigi Reitani has argued that the principle underlying Hölderlin's geopoetics is "ein Prinzip der *topographischen Differenz*:"²⁰⁵ the *topoi* analyzed below fall rather exactly under this principle. Each topos's distinctive characteristics emerge from it being other than the places, structures,

²⁰⁴ A number of useful articles on the question of geopoetics, some of them quoted below, can be found in issue 35 of the *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch* dedicated to the theme "Hölderlins Himmel und Erde," in particular Luigi Reitani, "Orts erkundungen, Raumverwandlungen. Zur poetischen Topographie Hölderlins;" Jürgen Link, "Aether und Erde. Naturgeschichtliche Voraussetzungen von Hölderlins Geo-logie;" Erika Schellenberger-Diederich, "„todte papierne Geographie“? Reisebeschreibungen, Erdwissenschaft und Poesie um 1800;" and Jean-Pierre Lefebvre, "Abschied von 'Andenken'. Erörtern heißt hier verorten." Cf. similarly issue 38 dedicated to the theme "Hölderlins Räume". Other scholars have preferred the term "kulturgeographisch;" cf. Alexander Honold in "„Der scheint aber fast / Rückwärts zu gehen'. Zur kulturgeographischen Bedeutung der 'Ister'-Hymne." These two terms must be regarded as intimately intertwined; the term "geopoetics" is preferred here to emphasize Hölderlin's *poetic* transformation of geography and philosophy of culture and history, on the one hand, and to shift the emphasis to the earth, partly in preparation for the inquiry into Nietzsche's thought proposed below, on the other. As Jürgen Osterhammel has shown, part of the history of "Realia" that constitutes the context for Hölderlin's thinking of geography can be found in the newly invigorated discipline of cartography of his time: "Friedrich Hölderlin lebte in einer Zeit kartographischer Umwälzungen. Erstmals wurde nun in Europa ein inkohärentes Mosaik uneinheitlicher lokaler und regionaler Karten durch eine großflächige Darstellung ersetzt, die auf einem regelmäßigen Grundriss beruhte" (Osterhammel, "Stratosphärische Phantasie," 20). In his study *The Significance of Locality in the Poetry of Friedrich Hölderlin*, David Constantine has shown that the late Hölderlin accurately researched the place names employed in his poetry: "there are almost no inaccuracies or confusions in Hölderlin's mature work" (in: Osterhammel, 21n35).

²⁰⁵ Reitani, "Orts erkundungen," 24; emphasis in the original.

and spatial movement it stands in relation to and is contrasted with; no element of Hölderlin's geopoetics of smell attains its defining features apart from the larger economy of which it is but one part.

The horizontal dispersal on earth articulated by this geopoetics cannot be thought apart from its intertwinement with *human time*. Two such temporalized places span open the olfactory reach of Hölderlin's olfactory geopoetics: on the one hand, origin; on the other, a journey into the far East of his own time. Both are located, significantly, in Asia, and while a fuller, contextualized reading of these moments must be postponed, they nevertheless indicate the frame in which the four more closely read olfactory moments analyzed below find their differential localization. First, origin. An incomplete *Gesang* titled "Der Adler" traces the east-west movement of civilization from the Asian²⁰⁶ origins through Greece and Italy to Germany.²⁰⁷ The eagle's element, as figuration of this *translatio*, is air: like all birds, his medium is the air of flight; he connects places and moves around the earth in the intermediate position between sky/heaven and earth.²⁰⁸ In terms of sensory constitution, classicists and anthropologists have

²⁰⁶ While some English language scholars use the term "Asiatic," "Asian" will be employed here since the German "Asia" and "Asiatisch" are simply the standard terms to refer to Asia, without the distinction present in English between "Asian" and the more tendentious or even derogatory "Asiatic."

²⁰⁷ A confrontation with the "datedness" of such a philosophy of history and, perhaps more urgently, its always at least latently present associations with colonialism is beyond the scope of this chapter. The hope, however, is that a valuable insight about a differential thought of the earth, cultures, and human time can be gained from the intellectually intensified elements of Hölderlin's at points rather conventional imaginary of a geopoetics. More on this below in the section on "Der Archipelagus."

²⁰⁸ The eagle, like the other birds in Hölderlin's poetry, stands in a direct relationship to the questions of a *point of view* and of *gravity*. Cf., for instance, Reitani who emphasizes in this context that "Hölderlins Lyrik ist zum Teil und nicht zuletzt in ihren formalen Eigenschaften eine Lyrik der Schwerelosigkeit, die die Luft als ihr eigenes Element beschwört" (Reitani, "Orts erkundungen," 12). And further: "Die Möglichkeit einer totalen Wahrnehmung, wie sie von einem erhobenen Standpunkt geboten wird, ist bei [Hölderlin] ein Grundsatz der modernen Ästhetik" (Reitani, 13). The question of smell's relationship to perspective—and the possibility of a "total" perception—will be front and center in the chapter on Nietzsche below. Some scholars have further emphasized that the eagle is "im frühen Christentum auch Symbol Christi, ist ebenso Symbol für den Dichter (Pindar)" (Braungart, "Und was du hast, ist / Athem zu hohlen." Hölderlins hymnisches Fragment 'Der Adler,'" 250). The question of the triangulated

shown that the eagle is first and foremost associated with sight (as in the proverbial “Adleraugen”), partly due to his association with the sun. However, as Marcel Detienne has shown, it also maintains, in Ancient Greek culture, a strong association with spices and fragrance: the eagle, in contrast to the vulture that is attracted by putrefaction, is rejuvenated and strengthened by spices and perfumed oils.²⁰⁹ Hölderlin’s “Der Adler” traces the origin of the eagle’s flight precisely to a strong fragrance that begins the westwards movement’s trajectory: “Anfänglich aber sind/Aus Wäldern des Indus/Starkduftenden/Die Eltern gekommen” (StA 2, 229, vv. 9-12). The philosophy of history dominating Hölderlin’s time, in particular, Herder’s work, both located the origin of civilization in India, around the Indus, and associated that origin with fragrance.²¹⁰ In Herder’s *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784-91), for instance, Asia stands for the origin of human civilization, which then moved westwards in a process of both *translatio aeterni* and *translatio imperii*. Already in Herder’s imagery, the Asian origin was suffused with odors: “Der Indier,” writes Herder, has the most refined sense of smell among all peoples and he “atmet Wohllust: er schwimmt in einem Meer süßer Träume und erquickender Gerüche.”²¹¹ Hölderlin, who was intimately familiar with a fair amount of Herder’s

constellation of Christ, poet, and an East-West movement will come into focus in the section on “Patmos” below.

²⁰⁹ Detienne, *Garden of Adonis*, 24ff.

²¹⁰ In “Der Adler,” the strong but inevitably pleasant fragrant of the origin finds its olfactory counterpoint in the “Höhlen in Lemnos” (KA 1, 399): these caves were known in mythology to have been the dwelling place of the exiled Philoctetes whose banishment derived in part from his insufferable smell. (Cf. also the chapter on Nietzsche below for the philosopher’s brief but potent identification with the figure of Philoctetes.) Wolfgang Braungart similarly establishes this connection (Braungart, “Der Adler,” 249) without explicitly developing the contrast with the fragrance of the Asian origin. Braungart rightly focuses on the verses “Und was du hast, ist/Athem zu hohlen” as the key to this fragment beyond its (rather conventional, for its time and place) establishing of a transfer of culture. The link between breath and smell will be all-decisive in the section on “Patmos” below but also harkens back to “Wenn aber die Himmlischen.”

²¹¹ Herder, *Werke* 6, 290.

work,²¹² takes up and transforms this context of the Indus as fragrant origin. All further olfactory locales of Hölderlin's geopoetics consequently constitute themselves only after the emergence out of this "starkduftenden" place: the designation of a "strong" fragrance does not return in any of the olfactory tropes that refer to something other than the Asian origin. Geopoetic movement is predicated on this prior emergence out of a strongly-fragrant origin, where this movement of emergence precisely draws its force and impetus from the strength of the fragrance.

The other pole of the late Hölderlin's olfactory geopoetics is equally found in Asia, but as a contemporary movement towards, not out of, the fragrant Asia—all other moments analyzed in detail below play out in the realm of Greece/Asia Minor/Germany, that is, in the time after the emergence out of the Asian origin but prior to any returning to it. This contemporary journey back towards fragrant Asia is found in the fragmentary *Gesang* "Die Titanen," which is located in the *Homburger Folioheft* right next to "Patmos," the poem that will conclude this section since it is of the highest importance to the investigation pursued here. The pertinent verses from "Die Titanen" read:

Ich aber bin allein.

Und in den Ocean schiffend
Die duftenden Inseln fragen
Wohin sie sind (FHA 8, 675).

The poetic I is "alone" since "Viele sind gestorben" and the remaining men have sailed off towards fragrant islands, that is, towards the "spice islands," as the East Indies were known.²¹³

These verses echo a well-known line from the finished song "Andenken": "Nun aber sind zu

²¹² Ulrich Gaier even claims that Herder is "vielleicht der bedeutendste Anreger für Hölderlin als Philosoph und als Dichter" (*Hölderlin Handbuch*, 82). With respect to the *Ideen*, Gaier speculates that Hölderlin might have studied Herder's *magnus opum* as early as 1793.

²¹³ On the spice islands and the type of both cultural exchange and "culinary imperialism" they stood for, see Gary Nabhan, *Cumin, Camels, and Caravans*.

Indiern/Die Männer gegangen” (v. 49-50).²¹⁴ The “duftenden Inseln,” as the spice islands, have attracted the sea-faring adventures, whom another fragmentary poem (titled “Kolomb”) from the same time period designates as “heroes:” “Wünscht ich der Helden einer zu sein/Und dürfte frei es bekennen/So wär ich ein Seeheld” (KA 1, 408). The poetic I of “Die Titanen,” however, is neither sea-faring nor (or at least not primarily, thoroughly) heroic: the fragrant islands are the purview of the exploratory men of action, whose very action—setting out into the sea—leaves the poet “alone.” In contrast to the movement of emergence that the eagle described, the movement of the seafaring heroes is not unidirectional, at least it is not intended as such: they set sail in order to retrieve fragrance and bring it back to their home; this is a commercial movement, where commerce designates an exchange that always returns, that must return in order for it to be a *commercium*. While the *translatio* of “Der Adler,” spurred on by the strong fragrance of the origin, was a singular, albeit complex, movement of transfer, the spice trade constitutes a continuous, reciprocal cultural exchange that binds together foreign cultures, through the possibility of a commercial, sea-faring “hinüberzugehen und wiederzukehren.” The relation it would constitute, if it were to succeed, would be a two-way movement; it is the possibility of a going towards the foreign origin and then returning from it that is at stake in this poetic articulation of the spice trade.

Yet, it is precisely this return that “Die Titanen” describes as having faltered: the sea-faring heroes are missing; their main function in the poem is to throw up the question “wohin sie sind.” Perhaps the question should be ascribed to the fragrant island as the questioning subject: in

²¹⁴ The “Indier” of “Andenken” are more ambiguous than the “duftenden Inseln” in “Die Titanen:” while “Indier” could refer to the West Indies (what today is called the Caribbean) or the East Indies (India, Sri Lanka), only the East Indies is associated with fragrance through the rather common designation of the “fragrant islands.”

this case, they might be thought to have begun their return journey from the islands, loaded with fragrance. In any case, the men cannot be located with precision: they have set off into the ocean and whether they will bring the fragrance of Asia back to the poetic I's home land remains undetermined. Fragrance is caught in the in-between stage where the utter failure of a return that would complete the two-way movement is possible but not confirmed; where the establishment of a new, unheard-of relation to the East, to the origin of culture, can still succeed but all that the poetic I is left with, for now, is—a question. “Nicht ist es aber/Die Zeit. Noch sind sie/Unangebunden” read the opening lines of “Die Titanen:” no binding has occurred just yet, and it is not yet time for a novel type of binding relation.

Taking these two olfactory instances—the emergence out of a strongly fragrant origin and the question posed by the attempt of a reciprocal, two-way exchange relation—as measuring out the span of the late Hölderlin's geopoetics of smell, this section will proceed in four steps.²¹⁵ First, late fragments and a Pindar translation transform the Platonic-Homeric inheritance of thinking poetic movement through apian tropes: poetic loco-motion is “like bees” in that it is guided by smell and produces an *anthological* moment in the “late” Hölderlin that was already analyzed above in *Hyperion* and Hölderlin-Scardanelli. Second, this movement will be shown to be ecstatic, that is, setting in motion all stabilized and fortifying attempts, and eccentric, that is, leading out of the center: an important fragmentary poem that begins “Vom Abgrund nemlich” moves from the “navel” of the world, Frankfurt, to the eccentric *Ausland*, namely Frank-reich,

²¹⁵ The four olfactory moments here have been selected because they coalesce into one argument concerning the geopoetics of the late Hölderlin—many others could be added, where each one would reconfigure the argument made here. To name just a few: the caves of Lemnos; the “Duft” of the “heiligen Flammen des Herdes” (KA 1, 380) in “Deutscher Gesang;” “die heiligen Wälder und die Flamme, blühendduftend/Des Wachstums” (KA 1, 406) in “Das Nächste Beste;” and another island, “Tinian” where the following peculiar encounter is described: “Und an Palmstauden/Wohlduftend/Mit Sommervögeln /Zusammenkommen die Bienen” (KA 1, 407).

and then from the fortified city into the painfully fragrant outside of *Stadt*. The second half of this geopoetics of smell assembles around two types of islands, neither being a spice island: the third part reads the sacrificial, posthumous smell of “Der Archipelagus” as an attempt to establish a “truce” with the disappeared part, whereas the fourth part turns to the “poor” island of Patmos that articulates the opening unto an undetermined future of *Morgenluft*, one of the two end points (the other one emerging in the latest Hölderlin) of thinking Hölderlin’s aerial-olfactory poetics. All four moments gain their contours away from the two extreme, Asian positions—strongly-fragrant origin and contemporary spice trade—and must therefore be thought of as intermediary, preliminary positions: and it is this temporality of a *vor-läufig* that the final analysis of “Morgenluft” will equally seek to articulate.

6.1. *Anderswoher auf anderes*: Poets like Bees

The first approach to Hölderlin’s geopoetics of smell goes through a determination of the shape of poetic movement that derives from one of the oldest sources of theories of poetic inspiration, found in Plato’s *Ion*. This dialogue between Socrates and his eponymous interlocutor, who is identified as the “best” rhapsode of Homeric poetry, proposes Socrates’ theory of poets being “out of their mind,” indeed divinely inspired, when they produce poetry. In developing this theory, Socrates finds a long *apian* tradition that compares the poet to a bee, a tradition Hölderlin takes up at key moments of this work. In the *Ion*, Socrates argues that those who claim like Ion to speak about poetry (say, commentators or critics) do not do so based on a knowledge or mastery of the subject matter but rather because the poet’s divine inspiration attracted them and “also puts power” in them (*Ion*, 533e). This “chain of other enthusiasts” is likened to the mechanism of a “magnetic stone” that attracts iron rings, turning them into

magnetized objects that then attract additional iron rings. Socrates' magnetic-enthusiastic theory of poetry and literary criticism, however, is interrupted by a simile that showcases a different sort of enchaining:

poets tell us that they gather songs at honey-flowing springs, from glades and gardens of the Muses, and that they bear songs to us as bees carry honey, flying like bees. And what they say is true. For a poet is an airy thing, winged and holy (*Ion*, 534b).

Both the movement of poets (their “flying”) and their production (“carry honey”) is likened to the apian insects. The shift from a mineral to a floral-entomological trope entails an alteration in the conception of the attractive force guiding poetic movement and production: the poet functions not according to magnetism but rather is guided like bees, attracted by springs, glades, and gardens; poetic movement is determined through the “airy” nature of a “winged” creature.

Hölderlin, in the middle period of his work, takes up the legacy of the *Ion* in a twofold way. On the one hand stands the transformation of Socrates' “Ionic” theory of poetic enthusiasm or inspiration through the concept of *Nüchternheit*, which was developed above in the interpretation of the third of his *Sieben Maximen*.²¹⁶ On the other, Hölderlin also takes up and transforms the apian aspect of this theory of poetry, a first important instance of which occurs in the epistolary novel *Hyperion*, a novel some commentators have linked explicitly to the *Ion*.²¹⁷

²¹⁶ For a development of Hölderlin's theory of enthusiasm in the context of the *Ion*, and with reference to Kant and Schelling, see chapter three of Fenves, *Arresting Language*, especially 98-102, 123-8. Fenves ends his discussion of ionic *Begeisterung* and its Hölderlinian transformation with a reference to the discussion of generals (*strategos*) (Fenves, 128). Bees, too, have frequently been compared to military constellations, often as swarms (*Schwärme*) to armies, for instance in the *Iliad* (book 2, 102-5) or in multiple instances in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible. A related but distinct field of metaphoric associations is that of the bee as ruler, thus more akin to a *strategos*. This metaphor was thrown into disarray by the discovery, in the 18th century, that the ruling bee was, in fact, a *queen* bee and not a king, as previously assumed.

²¹⁷ Writing about this passage, John Hamilton has suggested a rather direct link between *Hyperion* and the apian, melic tradition of poetry as it stems from the *Ion*: he writes of “that tradition most famously initiated by Plato's *Ion*, based on the *figura etymologica* linking ‘honey’ (μέλι) with ‘song’ (μέλος). By opening his epistolary novel with the simile of the bee, Hölderlin too could be seen as participating in this

Right after the prologue concerned with the question of (loving) reading, the first sentences of the first letter to Bellarmin introduce the movement of a bee among flowers:

Der liebe Vaterlandsboden gibt mir wieder Freude und Leid.
 Ich bin jetzt alle Morgen auf den Höhn des Korinthischen Isthmus, und, wie die Biene
 unter Blumen, fliegt meine Seele oft hin und her zwischen den Meeren, die zur Rechten
 und zur Linken meinen glühenden Bergen die Füße kühlen (KA 2, 14).²¹⁸

The bee is *zwischen*: it is properly medial and exists as a being that moves back and forth, from left to right—each day begins (“alle Morgen”) with this oscillating activity. Through its merely in-between character, the poet-bee relates the disparate elements among which it moves.²¹⁹ This is a first crucial aspect of Hölderlin’s apian metaphors:²²⁰ bees’ productive activity takes place in-between and only through the moving from one flower to the next—an *anthological* activity in

melic tradition. Indeed, one could say that he is writing on the *Ion*, about *Ion, über Ion*—as the title certainly suggests” (Hamilton, *Soliciting Darkness*, 284-5). It should be kept in mind that the titles of the dialogues do not stem from Plato himself but rather from his commentators or bibliographers (cf., in particular on the question of the “second titles,” which in the case of the *Ion* is “on the *Iliad*,” Hoerber, “Thrasylus’ Platonic Canon and the Double Titles”). It is of course nevertheless true that the name *Ion* is assigned to one of the main protagonists of the dialogues and that Hyperion could thus be said to reference him.

²¹⁸ Luigi Reitani points out the resonance this passage has with one of the more famous passages from Goethe’s *Werther*: “Der Flug der ‘Biene unter Blumen’, mit der das sehende Subjekt sich vergleicht, läßt u.a. an die berühmte Passage denken, in der Goethes Werther zu einem Maienkäfer werden möchte, ,um in dem Meer von Wohlgerüchen herumschweben und alle seine Nahrung darin finden zu können“ (Reitani, “Ortserkundungen,” 22). Reitani also describes the position of being high up and surveying the landscape as inscribed in a long literary tradition: “Zweifellos stehen solche Textpassagen in einer literarischen Tradition, die – wie oft bemerkt wurde – von Cicero und Vergil über Petrarca bis zu Rousseau gelangt. ,Der totalisierende Überblick von hoher Warte‘ – schreibt Ulrich Port – ‘ist ein geradezu topisch verfestigtes Motiv“ (Reitani, 15). The bee’s movement, according to the emphasis here, should not be misunderstood as part of such a “totalizing” scopic tendency but rather as its counterpart.

²¹⁹ In “Stuttgart,” this in-between character of bees stands for the gathering together of *men* into a chorus of song:

Dies bedeutet der Tisch, der geehrte, wenn, wie die Bienen,
 Rund um den Eichbaum, wir sitzen und singen um ihn,
 Dies der Pokale Klang, und darum zwinget die wilden
 Seelen der streitenden Männer zusammen der Chor. (vv. 33-36)

²²⁰ Later passages in *Hyperion* use traditional bee imagery in the context of their ability to build “innocently,” (KA 2, 46) foreshadowing Hölderlin’s later reference to poetry as the most innocent of businesses, as “Diss unschuldigste aller Geschäfte” (FHA 19, 350). The first fragmentary version of *Hyperion* in fact names the female character “Melite” instead of “Diotima.” (One could certainly consider whether this change is implicated in a shift of emphasis from the *Ion* to the *Symposium*.)

the literal sense of a “Blütenlese” or *florilegium*; an activity, moreover, that begins a new day and is linked to the *morning*.

Hyperion’s prologue had already juxtaposed in a complex relationship two modes of relating to a plant, smelling and plucking (*pflücken*). The bee’s gathering activity transforms the latter since it collects without having to pluck: the poet qua bee leaves the things from which he gathers his material in place. While plucking a flower amounts to a gap-producing destruction of the object that produces merely an “empty pleasure,” bees suggest that one can collect flowers differently: merely gathering the pollen neither destroys nor diminishes their life but rather guarantees their continued existence and multiplication. Similarly, as the apian metaphor suggests, the poet gathers his material from the objects he flits among without destroying or diminishing them but rather producing their *Überleben*—a living-on in the poem.

In the late Hölderlin, apian tropes continue to contribute to the articulation of poetic movement and production. In these texts, however, the primary reference seems to be not so much Plato but rather faint echoes of Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie* and, most importantly, a direct confrontation with Pindar. The first text to specify further the “hin und her” movement of the poet-bee is a late hymnic fragment (found in the *Homburger Folioheft*), beginning “Wenn nemlich der Rebe Saft.” This fragment explicates what the second moment of the prologue’s exposition of reading already hinted at: that the poet-bee is guided by smell. While the bee’s smelling is only latent in the passage from *Hyperion*’s first letter, “Wenn nemlich der Rebe Saft” explicitly supplies smell as the guiding reason for the poet-bee’s movement. The fragment reads, in the version established by Beißner, as follows:²²¹

²²¹ Sattler puts the verse “Wohl aber duftend den Jungfrau” after “Und Bienen” since the manuscript shows that it was a later, marginal addition that was written to the left of the text and starts slightly below “Und Bienen.” Beißner’s editorial choice to nevertheless place the verse above “Und Bienen” seems

Wenn nemlich der Rebe Saft
 Das milde Gewächs sucht Schatten
 die Traube wächset
 Unter dem kühlen
 Gewölbe der Blätter,
 Den Männern eine Stärke,
 Wohl aber duftend den Jungfraun
 Und Bienen,
 Wenn die, vom Wohlgeruche
 Des Frühlings trunken, der Geist
 Der Sonne rühret, irren ihr nach
 Die Getriebenen
 Wenn aber
 Ein Stral brennt, kehren sie
 Mit Gesum, vielahnend (StA 2, 207)

The first main insight concerning the poet-bee being guided by smell is this: bees become intoxicated not from wine or the smell of wine—a product of the autumnal harvest—but from the *Wohlgeruch*, the eu-smell, of spring: a smell of renewal and beginning, an early (Früh-*ling*), *matinal* smell. Hyperion’s “alle Morgen” reverberates in these bees’ movement; the intoxicating smell of newness produces the bees’ “irren.” They wander, moving from grape to grape. The bees are in-between (*zwischen*) beings, as Hyperion’s first letter brought out; their movement does not seek to eventually establish or settle in a fixed location but rather is essentially an in-between, medial wandering.²²² As “Getriebene[],” they are stirred up by the “spirit of the sun,”

reasonable in light of how minimal the distance appears in the crowded handwriting, reproduced in Sattler’s facsimile volume, and given that the syntax and structure produced by Sattler’s version not only becomes significantly more difficult to understand—something to be counted on in Hölderlin’s late revisions—but outright syntactically confused: while the insertion between “Männer” and “Jungfraun,” both in a dative plural, of “Und Bienen” could still be read as parataxis, it forces to relate the following “Und die” and consequently the “kehren sie/mit Gesum” to “Jungfraun.”

²²² A longer interpretation of this passage would tie this in-between status to the question of the ether: as Jochen Schmidt points out, “Die Bienen, die hier als Geschöpfe von idealer Sensibilität dargestellt sind, gelten in der Überlieferung als Wesen, die mit dem göttlichen Ätherbereich am innigsten verbunden sind” (KA 1, 1061). This becomes particularly clear in Virgil’s *Georgics*, the fourth book of which is essentially a poetic bee-keeping manual that states, among many other things: “bees own a share of the divine soul and drink the ether” (Virgil, *Georgics*, 67). The first part of this phrase is quoted, in the original Latin, by Schelling in the text read below, namely *Erster Entwurf eines Systems der*

the great source of life and light. Their pollinating and gathering activity, contributing to the eventual production of wine, produces *Gesum*: a song-like sound, named onomatopoeically in German and hinting, through alliteration, at *Gesang*. The poet-bee's song qua matinal is *vielahnend*. Filled with pollen, the bees have not yet produced their honey but are already buzzing; the accomplished and sweet poem is outstanding, just like the day lies ahead of the early morning. If the English *bee* as well as the German *Biene*, both ultimately going back to the PIE root **bi-*, always veer, through their status as near homographs and homophones of *to be* and *bin*,²²³ into ontological considerations, then the ontological state of apian poetry must be strictly understood through the intimation of the future: poetry's being is *vielahnend*, not (yet) here but already announced and begun.

The annunciation or intimation of the future is inscribed into the question of (re)production, of sexual reproduction and poetic production. Wine, so the fragment argues, invigorates men and smells good to virginal women. In other words, the fragment's first half is structured around sexual difference: where the reference to virginity, among other things, points to the capacity for reproduction. Bees, then, are introduced in the second half of the fragment as a third term of sorts: they might appear initially to be aligned with the "Jungfrau" through the shared reference to smell, yet the differing terms ("duftend" versus "Wohlgeruche") caution

Naturphilosophie, more precisely in a footnote to the "Third Division: Deduction of Organic Functions from the Concept of Excitability:" "Esse apibus partem divinae mentis haustus/Aetherios dixere" (Schelling, *Erster Entwurf*, 138n). Virgil further interweaves these reflections on bee-keeping with the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, one of the most eminent mythical accounts of the perils and powers of poetry; on a possible interpretation of the relationship between these two parts of Virgil's book, see Schestag, "Stimmen Immen," 108ff.

²²³ In German, this is particularly evident in forms such as the Middle High German *bin*, before the lengthening of the vowel occurred. The English "bee" derives from the Germanic word that later gives "Biene." For a consideration of bees in the work of Freud, Heidegger, and Derrida, among others, see Virgil W. Brower, "Beeing and Time."

against an all too direct alignment. Bees here—and with them the poet-bee of the apian tradition—rather appear to be somewhat similar to virginal women, without squarely falling onto either side of sexual difference.

A text published just a few years before Hölderlin wrote “Wenn nemlich der Rebe Saft” and in all likelihood known to the poet,²²⁴ works on a similar constellation of bees, sexual difference, and the question of (re)production: Schelling’s *Erster Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie*, published in 1799. While a fuller analysis of Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie* and its relationship to Hölderlin’s thought cannot be performed here, the position of the relevant passage from Schelling’s work can be indicated as follows: it is found in the fourth section of the first division, concerned with the “Aufgabe anzugeben, wie die Natur ihr Product auf einzelnen Entwicklungsstufen hemmen könne, ohne daß sie selbst aufhöre, thätig zu seyn.”²²⁵ Responding to this task, Schelling intends to show that the individual is only a “mislungener Versuch” of nature, which pursues the goal “das Absolute darzustellen.” The crucial step lies in showing that there is “Entzweiung” in nature, and that this diremption is what inhibits nature.

This *Entzweiung* is precisely found in sexual difference. The diremption of sexual difference pervades all of nature: “Absolute Geschlechtslosigkeit ist nirgends in der ganzen Natur demonstrabel, und ein regulatives Princip a priori fordert, überall in der organischen Natur auf Geschlechtsverschiedenheit auszugehen” (43). It is at this point that the consideration of bees enters Schelling’s argumentation:

Eben so wenig ist Geschlechtslosigkeit im Thierreich demonstrirt [...] Wo wirklich Geschlechtslosigkeit ist, ist doch eine andre, individuelle Richtung des Bildungstrieb. Bei den meisten Insekten, ehe sie ihre Metamorphosen durchgegangen sind, tritt als

²²⁴ Hölderlin could have had direct knowledge of these passages or of similar ones in related writings by Schelling; their personal conversations especially in the years 1795-6 might have included related reflections.

²²⁵ Schelling, *Erster Entwurf*, 41.

Aequivalent des Geschlechtstrieb der Kunsttrieb ein. Die geschlechtslosen Bienen sind allein auch die produktiven, und ohne Zweifel doch nur die Mittelglieder, durch welche die Bildung der Einen weiblichen Biene (in welcher der Bildungstrieb aller übrigen concentrirt scheint) erreicht wird.²²⁶

Bees appear here as a third term beyond sexual difference: they are marked by “wirklich Geschlechtslosigkeit.” Nevertheless, they do not threaten the a priori principle of all-covering *Entzweiung*: the sexual drive finds its replacement in the *Kunsttrieb*.²²⁷ Individuals produce, even if they do not sexually reproduce; sexual difference can find its equivalent in technical or artistic production. The third division of *Erster Entwurf* specifies this *Kunsttrieb* by emphasizing that “es ist eine bloße Modification des *allgemeinen* Bildungstrieb, und zuletzt freilich, wie dieser selbst eine Modification der *allgemeinen* Ursache alles Organismus, der Sensibilität.”²²⁸ This general tendency to form, as a modification of sensibility, expresses itself in the bringing forth of artworks, those “bei aller Regelmäßigkeit doch unorganische Producte.”²²⁹

In this context, Hölderlin’s poet-bee attains new meaning: not marked by sexual difference but ineluctably inscribed into the individuating function that Schelling ascribes to “Geschlechtsverschiedenheit,” it produces regular, in fact, “vollkommen” inorganic works that are a modification of its *Bildungstrieb*. Transforming Schelling’s bees, the hymnic fragment

²²⁶ Schelling, *Erster Entwurf*, 43-4; emphasis in the original.

²²⁷ The English translation renders “Kunsttrieb” as “technical drive,” presumably drawing on the link between “Kunst” and “technē.” To avoid confusion, the German term will be kept here.

²²⁸ Schelling, *Erster Entwurf*, 198.

²²⁹ Schelling, *Erster Entwurf*, 197. Schelling responds here, among others, to Kant: the third *Critique* mentions bees only once, in §43 titled “Von der Kunst überhaupt,” to argue that the bees’ work—even though it is “regelmäßig”—cannot be called a work of art since they “found” their work on “keine eigene Vernunftüberlegung.” (Passages from *Kritik der Urteilskraft* will be quoted from the *Werkausgabe* and cited parenthetically with the abbreviation “KdU.”) Kant, in one of his famous passages on “free beauty” in *Kritik der Urteilskraft* that will come into focus below, sets aside the sexual, procreative function of the flower: “Was eine Blume für ein Ding sein soll, weiß, außer dem Botaniker, schwerlich sonst jemand; und selbst dieser, der daran das Befruchtungsorgan der Pflanze erkennt, nimmt, wenn er darüber durch Geschmack urteilt, auf diesen Naturzweck keine Rücksicht” (KdU, 146).

“Wenn nemlich der Rebe Saft” inscribes this productive activity of the poet-bee into an announcement of something new: out of the diremption of nature, the “vielahnend” humming of bees, stirred up by the *früh* of spring, emerges, hinting at a new relation to *Entzweiung* and, perhaps, even an overcoming of it. In short, the poet-bee marks the possibility of a new relation to (sexual) difference and a reconfiguration of (sexual) (re)production: yet it is only an intimation (*Ahnung*) or a *Morgen* of such a new relation that the poet-bee’s products provide.

A final intensification of Hölderlin’s inheriting of the apian tradition can be found in his late Pindar translations, Pindar being one of the major sources of apian metaphors for poetic activity. The confrontation with Pindar, both with the form and tropes of his encomiums and with the task of translating him, is often seen as crucial for understanding the “lateness” of Hölderlin’s late poetry.²³⁰ One instance of this confrontation can be found in Hölderlin’s translation of Pindar’s ode *Pythian X*, which read as follows in the original Greek and Hölderlin’s German translation:

ἐγκωμίων γὰρ ἄωτος ὕμνων
ἐπ’ ἄλλοτ’ ἄλλον ὅτε μέλισσα θύνει λόγον.

Der enkomischen nemlich die Blüthe der Hymnen
Anderswoher auf anderes, wie die Biene
Flattert sie auf das Wort (FHA 17, 108, vv. 82-4)

Hölderlin’s literal translation of ἐπ’ ἄλλοτ’ ἄλλον as “anderswoher auf anderes,” which refuses to refer this construction to “λόγον” and supply a noun such as “theme” as do more conventional translations (Svarlien translates, for instance, as “The choicest hymn of praise flits from theme to theme, like a bee”), foregrounds that the poet’s in-between movement occurs, for Hölderlin, as a

²³⁰ Cf. for instance in the most recent issue of the *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch*: Martin Vöhler, “Hölderlins Pindar. Zum Öffentlichkeitsbezug von Hölderlins ‘Spätwerk.’”

movement of otherness, never arriving at a sameness but coming from elsewhere and going elsewhere. As Eva Geulen puts it succinctly in her reading of a different, slightly earlier Hölderlin poem: “Sagen kommt aus dem Anderen und nimmt eine andere Bahn.”²³¹ Flitting from word to word, guided by the smell of a *vielahnend* matinal smell, the poet and the poem are never themselves, always coming out of otherness and moving into otherness. Here again a stable duality, such as the duality of sexual difference, breaks down in the face of a third term: in Hölderlin’s translation, the poet-bee does not move from one theme to another theme, but simply “anderswoher auf anderes.”²³² Poetic movement on and around the earth is not one between set themes or posited positions but is rather merely motional and differential: out of alterity into alterity.

6.2 Frankfurt/Frankreich: Olfactory Pains, Eccentric and Ecstatic

Poetry moves *anderswoher auf anderes*—this formulation receives a variety of articulations in Hölderlin’s late work, always depending on the specific geopoetic constellation any given poem is concerned with. A late fragmentary *Gesang* that begins “Vom Abgrund nemlich” unfolds this poetic movement as departing from an abyss—an “anderswoher” par excellence—and moving towards the elsewhere (*anderes*) of the *Ausland* of France. This movement, as this section will show, is both *eccentric*²³³ and *ecstatic*: it moves through and out of the center (in this case the city of Frankfurt), out of any central point that would hold together,

²³¹ Geulen, *Das Ende der Kunst*, 187.

²³² “The etymology of the bees themselves, the etymology of this entomology, reveals the breakdown and breakup of the proper: from the Indo-European root **bi-*, **bini-*, the bees name that quivering between at least two (*bis*)” (Hamilton, *Soliciting Darkness*, 288).

²³³ Hölderlin himself uses this term prominently, albeit with a slight different meaning, in *Hyperion*, for example in the prologue to what Schmidt calls the “vorletzte Fassung:” “Wir durchlaufen alle eine exzentrische Bahn, und es ist kein anderer Weg möglich von der Kindheit zur Vollendung” (KA 2, 256).

and it spurs out of any standing, out of all *stasis*. Both of these *ek-* qualifications are linked, in “Vom Abgrund nemlich,” to smell: smell introduces a diremption, in the form of *olfactory pains*, into any standing, and this painful smell is found elsewhere, outside of the center, precluding the gathering into one central point. Olfactory experience is the undergoing, the going through this *ek-* movement—and it is this experience that the late Hölderlin’s poetry articulates.

The fragment in question is found on a well-known page from the *Homburger Folioheft*, numbered 75 in the *Frankfurter Hölderlin-Ausgabe*, at the top of which stand the words “Die apriorität des Individuellen über das Ganze.” The sketch of the poem, edited differently by each editor, begins with the following lines:

Vom Abgrund nemlich haben
Wir angefangen und gegangen
Dem Leuen gleich,
Der luget
In dem Brand
Der Wüste,
Lichttrunken (FHA 8, 851)

The poem begins by simultaneously designating “our” mode of beginning and, since these are its first words, its own mode of beginning: “vom Abgrund.”²³⁴ In the perfect tense, it presents the paradox concerning the ground of the beginning of the poem’s *Gang*: an *Ab-grund* is precisely that which does not enable a beginning “from”, *vom*. The poem’s ground from which it pushes off is an un-ground.²³⁵ There is no starting point that grounds the poem’s movement; there is only

²³⁴ In these verses, the “lion” has received most scholarly attention, with Sattler designating it as the “Reuchlinschen Löwen” and Wolfram Groddeck relating it to Homer’s Achilles-lion simile, one of the paradigmatic instances of Aristotle’s theory of metaphor (Cf. Groddeck, “Über die ‘neu zu entdeckende Spätdichtung’ Hölderlins. Oder: ‚Bevestigter Gesang‘ in ruinöser Edition,” 312). Cf. also Hornbacher, “Wie ein Hund.”

²³⁵ The abyss, as Luigi Reitani has pointed out in a different context (Reitani, “Ortserkundungen,” 14), also reinscribes the *vertical dimension* of Hölderlin’s poetry, so often and prominently tied to the *Himmel* and the *Himmlichen*, into a rather different context: linking the two is the question of endangerment and,

a doubled setting in motion through prepositions that designate a movement away, without indicating from what: *vom ab-*. A locomotion without an originating locus—hence the perfect tense, only ever designating that the beginning of the motion must have taken place since now, in the time of the poem, it moves. *Anderswoher auf anderes*, as the formula of terrestrial, apian movement indicated: the movement of poetry sets off from an indeterminate because indeterminable place, an abyss or un-ground, that can consequently only be designated as other.

Moving, the poem names, and names first and foremost its ungrounded beginning: “Vom Abgrund *nemlich*,” “*Namely*, from the un-ground.”²³⁶ The first operation of naming in this poem, so the *nemlich* highlights, names the unground from which the poem sets off. Names are here not a mis-en-abyme, a setting into an abyssal relation of self-referential or non-referential play, but more precisely a setting *off* from such an abyss. The poem includes “its” *Abgrund* by naming it as that which precedes it and is excluded from it. If in the beginning was the word (“Vom Abgrund *nemlich* haben/Wir angefangen”), then this word only names what is excluded from naming. The words “Vom Abgrund *nemlich*” break the word’s status as *archē*, as origin and governing principle, and substitute for it the ungrounded, unfounded beginning of a *vom ab-* movement.

Having set off, the movement of the poem finds itself in the desert. From the unground emerges a desolate and inhospitable, uncultivated and wild place: the movement departing from the unground is “dem Leuen gleich,” is like a lion’s movement. Desert, lion, fire, and drunkenness on light all point to a simultaneously pared down and intensified sensuousness:

with “Vom Abgrund *nemlich*” specifically, the movement of turning away from the vertical dimension (an *Untreue* of sorts).

²³⁶ Michael Hamburger translates as “For from the abyss,” thus opting for the meaning of “*nemlich*” as “for” or “indeed” but obscuring the legible and decisive roots of “Grund” and “Name” (Hölderlin, *Poems and Fragments*, 679).

“denn sinnlicher sind Menschen” reads an addition in the margins of the text.²³⁷ Having set off from their own unground, these human beings are more sensuous but also, perhaps, of more sense: more sense than could be found in the unground from which, through naming, they departed. This state of heightened sensuousness, however, does not tame the dangers posed by the *Abgrund* but rather leaves man intoxicated and exposed: a “Brand” threatens to burn him up.²³⁸

The continuation of the poem therefore announces an apotropaic replacement of the lion-like movement by a different movement, also likened to an animal:

Bald aber wird, wie ein Hund, umgehn
In der Hitze meine Stimme auf den Gassen der Garten

Soon, the lion’s wildness will be domesticated, brought into the civilized sphere. While the heat of the desert persists, its desolateness will be transformed into gardens. Recalling “Heidelberg,” these gardens are structured by passageways (“Gassen”) that guide the *Gang* through them, thus precluding a completely unguided movement. This half-domesticated, half-structured place is where “Stimme” is introduced. Voice stands in an intermediary position between wilderness and civilization: still likened to an animal, but a domesticated, obedient household animal; still hot, but tamed in the blossoming of gardens.²³⁹ Its movement is channeled through “Gassen” but

²³⁷ Sattler does not integrate this addition into his reconstruction of the fragment; Beißner and Schmidt do. Inspection of the facsimile of the manuscript seems to suggest that even if an integration into the “main” text might not have been intended (a question impossible to settle, and of limited import), the spatial and conceptual proximity of this line to the rest of the fragment not only justifies but even demands its consideration in this context.

²³⁸ The late Hölderlin associates “Brand” with a confusion of tongues, see the fragmentary “Der Vatikan:” “Oft aber wie ein Brand/Entstehet Sprachverwirrung” (KA 1, 418).

²³⁹ Most commentators of this fragment read the dog-like voice in this context; some even go on to link it to the “Hundstern” Sirius that acts as a guide, see, for instance: Hornbacher, “Wie ein Hund,” 235f. The interpretative suggestion that follows appears to be absent from the secondary literature. (Perhaps not coincidentally, many ancient sources link Sirius to the harvest of aromatic spices; the linking term here

nevertheless has the character of a wandering, erring movement, as the prefix *um-* in *umgehn* indicates.²⁴⁰ Folded into the image of the dog-like voice lies a hint that explicates the guiding force behind this erring movement: dogs have been known since Antiquity, as Pliny among many others attests, for their extraordinary sense of smell, and it might be their sniffing that guides and characterizes their “umgehn.” Beyond the authors of antiquity, the role of smell is also prominently found in *Über das Organ der Seele* by Samuel Thomas Sömmerring, a text published in 1796 that Hölderlin was enthused by: “Lehrt aber nicht die Naturgeschichte, daß einige Thiere weit mehr als der Mensch, durch den Sinn des Geruchs geleitet werden?”²⁴¹ A dog will move through a pathway, an alley or a street zigzagging from one odorous point to the next. In this simile, olfactory sensuousness guides (“geleitet werden”) the movement of voice: the “sinnlicher” of the desert is half-domesticated, brought into the human sphere of civilization but still contains the traces of its intensified previous state. Voice like dogs, not far from poets like bees but no longer like a lion, follows scent.²⁴²

The poem locates this new movement of voice and dog in a specific geographical context; more precisely, it inscribes it into the difference between two place names that both begin with the word “Frank:”

Bald aber wird, wie ein Hund, umgehn
 In der Hitze meine Stimme auf den Gassen der Garten
 In den wohnen Menschen

would be heat. Detienne develops the role of heat in the context of spices; see Detienne, *Les jardins*, 9, passim.)

²⁴⁰ Hornbacher points out, against interpretations such as Wolfgang Binder’s, which attempt to read the simile through the “Wächterfunktion” of both dog and poet, that the tertium of the simile should be located in the verb of the verse (“umgehn”): at stake is the “Vergleich hinsichtlich der Bewegungsform dieses besonderen Hundes und der Stimme des Dichters” (Hornbacher, “Wie ein Hund,” 229).

²⁴¹ Sömmerring, *Über das Organ*, 23, quoted in: Link, “Aether und Erde,” 125. Hölderlin’s friend and mentor Wilhelm Heinse was a close follower of Sömmerring.

²⁴² For a direct link between “Stimme” and bees (via “Immen”), see Thomas Schestag’s article quoted above.

In Frankreich
 Frankfurt aber, nach der Gestalt, die
 Abdruck ist der Natur
 Des Menschen nemlich, ist der Nabel
 Dieser Erde. (FHA 7, 350)

The “umgehen” of poetic voice and dog, the garden and alleyways as well as the heat are all ascribed to the “human beings” who “dwell” in France. This latter, as *Frank-reich*, is contrasted (“aber”) with *Frank-furt*, a contrast the poem articulates along two dimensions that must be understood as relating two different versions of civilization:²⁴³ first, the German city, in which Hölderlin lived for a time alongside his philosopher friend Hegel,²⁴⁴ is associated with “Gestalt;” this is civilization, qua the civic, as formed and figured. Instead of the wandering, turning movement associated with the dog found in France, Frankfurt combines in this “Gestalt” a single “Abdruck” of nature and humanity: “nach der Gestalt die/Abdruck ist der Natur/Des Menschen nemlich.” Given the complexity of the relationship between nature and human being in Hölderlin’s work elsewhere, the smooth transition from “der Natur” to “Des Menschen nemlich” is striking: Frankfurt stands for the accomplished and calm attainment of a *Gestalt* that captures, on the model of an imprint, the joining of human being and nature.²⁴⁵

²⁴³ For a shorthand summary of the Frankfurt/Frankreich opposition in a slightly different terminology, see Hornbacher: “sie bezeichnen den feurigen Wirkungsbereich Apollons, in dem die dichterische ‘Stimme’ als befremdliches Phänomen laut wird, und dessen gegenwärtigen Kultort, den ‘Nabel dieser Erde’, der das ungeheure Element des Südens gleichsam in gemäßigter ‘hesperischer’ Form bewahrt” (Hornbacher, “Wie ein Hund,” 240). Hannah Eldridge has drawn attention to the fact that the poem establishes a type of *literal*, in the sense of letter-based, connectivity between the two places: “The connective work performed earlier [in “Das Nächste Beste,” which Eldridge reads as belonging to “Vom Abgrund nemlich”] by an avian figure suspended between terrestrial and ethereal moves inside the text of the poem itself. The connection between the two locations is created only by way of what Hölderlin calls solid letters that both bind the two places together and differentiate them” (Eldridge, *Lyric Orientations*, 104). The interest of this interpretation notwithstanding, the following interpretation suggests that the “only” is misguided.

²⁴⁴ Frankfurt was also home to Hölderlin’s “Diotima,” Susette (or Suzette) Gontard, who died in June 1802, giving the reference an additional dimension that must be left aside here.

²⁴⁵ Perhaps one should see here the figure of Schelling and his double philosophical project of a transcendental idealism of the I and a *Naturphilosophie* or the supreme beauty of Gontard, whom

Secondly, this *Gestalt* makes Frankfurt (“*nach* der *Gestalt*” in the sense of “according to”) into the “navel” of “this earth.” The navel indicates several features of Frankfurt’s geopoetical position: first and foremost, it designates it as *center* and *origin*. In the poem “Ganymed,” the final revision of which also falls into the “late” period of Hölderlin’s work, the navel marks the point of a renewed activity of *Geist*, a recommencement that becomes associated with a rejuvenation and, indeed, a blossoming: “und schauernd regt im/Nabel der Erde der Geist sich wieder. // Der Frühling kömmt. Und jedes, in seiner Art/Blüht” (FHA 5, 838). The navel, in Hölderlin’s poetry always qualified as the navel of “the earth” or “this earth,” constitutes the central point from which a spiritual reawakening (“regt [...] sich wieder”) begins.²⁴⁶

Qua center, Frankfurt—the unifying *Gestalt*—stands firm: “Denn fest ist der Erde/Nabel,” (KA 1, 421) reads the third and last occurrence, also in the *Homburger Folioheft*, of the word “Nabel” in Hölderlin’s poetry. The German word “Nabel” originally—and it is here precisely a question of origins—derives from the word “Nabe,” for “das hohle mittelstück des rades, wodurch die achse geht und in dessen mittleren erhabenen theil [...] die speichen eingelassen sind.”²⁴⁷ In the *Nabe*, the axis—of this earth, perhaps—is centered and this “firm” conjunction enables the turning of the wheel: only because of the central Frankfurt is a peripheral movement around this stable center point possible.

The question of the stability of a center and its relationship to a turning movement is already indicated in the component “Frank” shared by both Frankfurt and *Frankreich*. Referring

Hölderlin regarded as this guide in all questions relating to beauty (cf. the quotes regarding Gontard above).

²⁴⁶ The Ancient Greeks frequently applied the word “navel” (*omphalos*) to the oracle at Delphi: Hölderlin could be seen here to establish Frankfurt as the new place of an oracle, after the “Hesperian” movement of spirit. Cf. KA 1, 1082.

²⁴⁷ Grimm, s.v. “Nabe.”

to the tribe of the “Franken,” their name designates them as “*die selbständigen, unabhängigen*”²⁴⁸ who are free, *liber*. In the opposition between the more Southern country of France and the central German city of Frankfurt, it is precisely this *Selbst-stand*, the ability to stand and move on one’s own that is at stake. If the poem began by departing from an *Abgrund*, the name of Frank-furt relates to an abyss in a similar but different manner: a “Furt” designates the shallow part of a river that can be crossed by human beings;²⁴⁹ in other words, what would normally be an “Abgrund,” a separating lack of ground that cannot be crossed, becomes here, locally circumscribed, amenable to be crossed. Only in the center of a *Gestalt* that harmoniously joins humanity and nature can such a crossing movement—going over what would otherwise be an abyss—occur.

Yet the poem does not dwell in Frankfurt but rather moves back to France; it moves towards the “Provence” and “die Gasgognische Lande.”²⁵⁰ The remainder of the poem further unfolds the movement of poetic voice that moved from the lion to the dog, henceforth always contrasting this movement with the features of the central point of Frankfurt through which the poem only briefly crossed. In short, “Vom Abgrund nemlich” develops the movement out of *Gestalt* and further articulates what kind of poetic *Gang* emerges when the center and its formative power is abandoned and the poem’s movement enters (its) “Ausland.”²⁵¹

²⁴⁸ Grimm, s.v. “Franken.”

²⁴⁹ Hölderlin’s concern with the “crossability” of bodies of water was already evident in the bridge of the ode “Heidelberg” and will be central to the readings of “Der Archipelagus” and the first stanza of “Patmos” below.

²⁵⁰ The myriad connotations of the “-reich” ending, especially its political connotations that should also be linked to Frankfurt’s relation to the German *Kaiser*, must be left aside here.

²⁵¹ Walter Benjamin, in the reflections on the late Hölderlin cited above, names the counter-principle to “Gestalt” the *oriental* principle at work in Hölderlin: “Das ist das orientalische, mystische, die Grenzen überwindende Prinzip, das in diesem Gedicht so offenbar immer wieder das griechische gestaltende Prinzip aufhebt” (Benjamin, GS II, 124). The oriental elements in the poem are those that “gegen die in sich ruhende geformt begrenzte Erscheinung sich als unbegrenzte erheben” (GS II, 126). Benjamin

If an olfactory dimension was already latent in the simile of poetic voice and dog and their movement through the gardens of France, then scent equally shapes the next transformation of the voice, one that completes the domestication of movement in the fortification of a city, a city that echoes Frankfurt but cannot be identified with it since the center has been left behind:

[...] nun aber zu gestehen, bevestigter Gesang
von Blumen als neue Bildung aus der Stadt²⁵²

From the naming of the abyssal unground through the semi-domesticated dog-like voice, the poem arrives now (“nun”) at fortified song as a “new formation from the city.” All wildness is domesticated and civilized: it is formed (*Bildung*) and as a formation it can stand—“gestehen” meaning a “strengthened,” that is, fortified standing, thus recalling the name “Frank.”²⁵³ The firmness and stability of song results from the erecting of a stand that brings to a standstill the *gegangen* and the *umgehn* of the previous verses: the city, *Stadt* also deriving from standing, simultaneously marks the opposite pole of the excluded *Abgrund* from which the poem initially set off and the point of standstill of the movement way from the un-ground. Yet this fortification contains within itself the traces of the movement that brought the poem to this point: the garden through which the canine voice wandered returns in the form of flowers.²⁵⁴ From this paradoxical linkage of the fragile flowers and their fortification emerges a harmonious dissolution of the dissonances of firmness and fragility. To return to the terminology developed from *Hyperion*'s

himself acknowledges that he does not justify the use of the term “oriental;” while the heat of Southern France entertains certain similarities with it, the term will not be used here. Instead of an “unbegrenzt” oppositional principle, the rest of this section will develop a different movement of an undoing of *Gestalt*.

²⁵² With respect to the constitution of these lines in particular, editors disagree heavily. For a meticulous reconstruction of the manuscript and the editorial decisions by Beißner, Sattler, and others, see Burdorf, *Hölderlins späte Gedichtsfragmente*, especially chapter II.

²⁵³ See Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, s.v. “gestehen.”

²⁵⁴ Much has been said in the Hölderlin literature about the famous line “Nun, nun müssen dafür Worte, wie Blumen, entstehn” from the elegy “Brod und Wein.” This chapter attempts a different approach to the question of flowers and words.

prologue: fortified song of flowers enables a poetic smelling and plucking of flowers, that is, controlling them (hence the securing of fortification) without completely subsuming or appropriating them (it is the song *of* flowers). This *anthological* song is supposed to reconcile the opposing poles that animated already the movement of “Heidelberg:” producing an olfactory metaphor of the reconciliation of nature and civilization, of the originary unity of all living things. Poetry seems to narrate the process reaching this particular state of reconciled civilization.

Yet song, *this* song goes on into a new line that threatens to subvert all fortification and every firm stand:

nun aber zu gestehen, bevestigter Gesang
 von Blumen als neue Bildung aus der Stadt, wo
 Bis zu Schmerzen aber der Nase steigt
 Citronengeruch auf, aus der Provence

At the very moment when the novel formation of fortified song is reached, a sharp dissonance splits apart this standing: from the “Provence,” another movement (*pro-*) indicating name, the “sinnlicher” moment of the desert returns in a smell so sensuous that it produces pain. The city, which had still partly resembled Frankfurt’s unifying *Gestalt* function, is now disrupted by a pain that repels: the latter’s principal effect is a reaction of flight, avoidance, setting off. The standing of the fortified city²⁵⁵ is once again set in motion. Civilization qua the civic is disrupted and a split within *Sinnlichkeit* is introduced: while the implicit smell of flowers not only existed in harmony with fortified song but indeed constituted the latter’s content, the smell of lemons—set

²⁵⁵ One obvious potential reference for this “Stadt” would be Avignon, given the “fortified” character of its Palais de Papes. Hölderlin, however, while using the names of Frankfurt, Frankreich, and Provence, leaves this “Stadt” without a name, thus raising it to the general status of standing for the civic qua city and *Stand*. I thank Maité Marciano for pressing this point.

off from and indeed in opposition to the preceding phrase by yet another “aber”—pushes away from song.

The ecstatic character of this other smell, this other sensuousness, its “sinnlicher” character and the pain it produces thus opposes the very *firmness* of “bevestigter Gesang.” The late Hölderlin’s poetry repeatedly raises the demand for firmness as a key imperative, most insistently in the closing verses of the first, completed version of “Patmos” that will be analyzed in detail below:

[...] der Vater aber liebt,
 Der über allen waltet,
 Am meisten, daß gepfleget werde
 Der feste Buchstab, und bestehendes gut
 Gedeutet. Dem folgt deutscher Gesang. (vv. 222-6)

If taking care (*pflegen*, one version of culture) of the firmness of the letter is what is loved above all by the god, then the threat posed by smell is grave: the painful, ecstatic quality of the “sinnlicher” disruption is not some minor inconvenience but rather goes to the heart of the task of *Gesang*. The unsettling of “bevestigter Gesang” by olfactory pains registers a major disturbance in the functioning of poetry: faced with intensified *Sinnlichkeit*, song falters and loses its firming and forming, civilizing and cultivating function.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁶ In her recent book, Hannah Eldridge diagnoses in these lines the “failure” of a drive towards continuity, the demand for which she derives from Hölderlin’s poetological texts: “At the end of the draft, then, the vivid sensory particularity of the images—themselves in keeping with Hölderlin’s demand for the ‘apriority of the individual’—precludes the production of a poetic whole. The poem’s images are juxtaposed against one another without mediation; the poem’s form does not hold together the disparate moments or images to create an aesthetic whole—indeed, as the image shows, the poem’s form is overrun by single images on unconnected lines” (Eldridge, *Lyric Orientations*, 105). The analysis pursued here, by contrast, emphasizes that the poetic practice of the late Hölderlin does not so much fail to live up to the poetology of the earlier “theoretical” texts but rather abandons some of the aspirations articulated by this “theory” in a move towards a different type of poetry and a different type of language.

The curious designation of *Citronengeruch*—a hapax legomenon²⁵⁷ in Hölderlin’s work—illuminates the transformation of *Sinnlichkeit* affected by the late Hölderlin that underlies this vexing tension between song and smell. The best-known literary occurrence of lemons in Hölderlin’s time, and arguably still today in German letters, can be found in Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, published in 1795-6, less than a decade before Hölderlin wrote “Vom Abgrund nemlich.” The first line of the poem known as “Mignon’s Lied,” which opens the third book, reads: “Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühn.”²⁵⁸ Lemons here are associated, through their blossoming, with Italy and, more importantly, are endowed with an *attractive* force: the words “Dahin! Dahin!” close out each of the three stanzas. Goethe’s lemons are part of the alluring and beckoning path of the *Bildungsroman*; the foreign country that they are associated with harbors no threat or disruption, merely attraction.

In “Vom Abgrund nemlich,” then, Hölderlin seems to remember and address Goethe’s criticism that his poetry was too abstract and that he knows nature “nur durch Überlieferung” (Goethe to Schiller, June 28th 1797). It is as if Hölderlin, in response and just a few years later, deliberately took up one of Goethe’s most accomplished moments of concrete sensuousness—but only to show the literary giant and his readers that such a moment does not lend itself to calm contemplation as part of the Southbound journey of a *Bildungsroman*.²⁵⁹ Indeed, it is precisely

²⁵⁷ A hapax legomenon poses a number of methodological problems that derive from the commentator’s inability to establish a context of usage for the term and thus glean insights into the meaning of the word. The many pitfalls of such a “Parallelstellenmethode” have been analyzed incisively in the often-read essay “Über philologische Erkenntnis” in Peter Szondi’s *Hölderlin-Studien*. The significance of the hapax legomenon status of “Citronengeruch” will be explicated below with reference to the dictum “apriorität des Individuellen über das Ganze.”

²⁵⁸ Goethe, *Hamburger Ausgabe Band 7*, 145. The poem is already included in Goethe’s *Theatralische Sendung*, on which he worked 1782-3. Lemons are commonly associated with Italy by Goethe, for instance also in *Tasso*; cf. Band 7, 734.

²⁵⁹ Regarding the contrast between Goethe and Hölderlin, Binder writes incisively: “als eine Schnittstelle metaphysischer Prozesse ist Hölderlins Mensch konzipiert, nicht als naturhaft-personale Einheit, wie

Bildung that Hölderlin's lemons disrupt: undoing the Goethean reduction of the lemon to a blossoming, Hölderlin foregrounds their painful smell and opposes the latter to the "Bildung" of fortified song.²⁶⁰

Yet this smell of lemon should not be confused with a "purely natural" phenomenon that opposes itself to civilization as some purportedly mere nature: the lemons of the Provence are part of a large agricultural production; that is, their smell derives from cultivation, at least to a certain degree. The tension that the smell of lemons articulates is consequently the tension between two conceptions of civilization and cultivation: the firm, static *Gesang* of *Bildung* and *Gestalt*, on the one hand, against the ecstatic, *pro-* moving that disarticulates form, stasis, and stand. This song sings, in smell, the "anderswoher auf anderes" that resists centralization into a single point just as much as the possibility to erect a dyadic structure that would enable a locomotion from one determinate point to another—something the plural word *Schmerzen* will now indicate.

In a first step, the crucial plural form of *Schmerzen* and the effect of olfactory pains unfolds, through its repulsive impetus, as a differentiating process: pain produces difference or,

Goethe sie kennt" (Binder, "Hölderlins Dichtung," 59). The opposition between Hölderlin and Goethe is first articulated in all its (polemical) force by Hellingrath who begins his "Hölderlin und die Deutschen" by opposing "das Volk Goethes" to "[das] Volke Hölderlins" (Hellingrath, *Zwei Vorträge*, 16). One of the key aspects of this opposition is articulated through the question of richness and poverty, which will become crucial in the section on "Patmos" below: "Wir sehen ihn an Innigkeit und Wucht, an grenzenloser innerer Erfüllung seines umgrenzten Erbes und Amtes so herrlich den Reichtum der Armut entfalten, daß wir von ihm aus vielleicht die Armut des Reichsten bei Goethe beklagen" (Hellingrath, 17). The Hölderlin of the period of the *Umnachtung* repeatedly claimed, as multiple astonished visitors relate, never to have known someone of the name of Goethe, whereas he did, in fact, respond, albeit in often hardly decipherable form, to the naming of other persons from his past.

²⁶⁰ The references to lemons in Hölderlin's earlier work appear to be much more in line with the Goethean imagery; *Hyperion*, for instance, also uses a calm and non-olfactory but visual reference to lemons: "wo die goldne Frucht des Zitronenbaums aus dunklem Laube blinkt" (KA 2, 98). The move from passages such as these to "Vom Abgrund nemlich" should thus be seen as part and parcel of Hölderlin's increasingly singular poetic path that distances him more and more from his contemporaries.

more exactly perhaps, is the attendant phenomenon of an underlying process of differentiation. In his lectures on Hölderlin's "Der Ister," delivered in Freiburg during the summer semester of 1942, Martin Heidegger advances such an interpretation of pain: "Der Schmerz aber ist das eigentliche Wissen des Unterschiedenseins."²⁶¹ On this reading, the pain accompanying the smell of lemons would be the indication of the difference between the fragrant object and the smelling subject: the two never converge completely but an ineluctable difference between them remains. For Heidegger, however, this separation of pain merely appears as the precondition for the ultimate belonging together of that which is separated, as he goes on to argue in the passage just quoted, here with respect to the painful difference between humans and the gods:

Der Schmerz aber ist das eigentliche Wissen des Unterschiedenseins in dem das einander Zugehören der Menschen und Götter erst die Geschiedenheit der Ferne und damit der Möglichkeit der Nähe und so das Glück des Erscheinens hat. Der Schmerz gehört zum Zeigen-können, er gehört zum Dichten als das Wissen von seinem eigenen Wesen.²⁶²

Aside from the question of whether pain can indeed become "knowledge" and might not instead always resist knowing,²⁶³ several aspects of the Hölderlinian lines indicate the inadequacy of Heidegger's approach to pain for the question of the painful nature of the smell of lemons. Instead of belonging to the poet as the "knowledge of his own essence," pain is set off from song by an "aber:" it disturbs the fortified song reached just then and sets the stand of fortification

²⁶¹ Heidegger, *Hölderlins Hymne "Der Ister,"* 190. Heidegger had already explicated the centrality of pain as "Unterschiedensein" for his reading of Hölderlin in his earlier (1934/35) lectures on "Germanien," where he writes: "Der Schmerz und das Leiden *ist* überhaupt nur kraft des Aushaltens des Widerstreites" (Heidegger, *Hölderlins Hymnen*, 82; emphasis in the original). Pain, for Heidegger, entails the bearing—the standing in the middle—of the conflict of that which is differentiated. Whether such a bearing *stand* can be envisioned in the face of pain is precisely thrown into doubt by the Hölderlinian verses read here. The two most influential investigations of Heidegger's relationship to Hölderlin are: Beda Allemann, *Hölderlin und Heidegger*; Paul de Man, "Heidegger's Exegeses of Hölderlin" in: *Blindness and Insight*.

²⁶² Heidegger, *Hölderlins Hymne "Der Ister,"* 190.

²⁶³ Hamacher suggests as much in his reading of Sophocles' *Philoctetes*: "Pain, in short, is not an ontologically verifiable state of affairs, since, as an excessive—*megethē*—harm to *physis*, it is the extreme phenomenon of the withdrawal of all phenomenality" (Hamacher, "Other Pains," 969).

back into motion through its rising up (“steigt [...] auf”). Similarly, the pain does not accompany the poet’s *ability* to show (“Zeigen-können”) but rather happens to an indirect object (“der Nase” is dative): the nose is *exposed* to this pain; this exposure does not turn into an ability but is instead given, a mere *datum* that arrives *anderswoher*. Heidegger seeks to re-domesticate the “schmerzlicher Riß,” the rip of pain, as Hölderlin terms it in one of his Pindar translations, by inscribing it into an “einander Zugehören:” the verses quoted, by contrast, give no indication that the smell of lemons belongs to anyone or anything, neither to nose nor city; its movement is rather one of exposition. Relatedly, the plural of the form “Schmerzen” contrasts with Heidegger’s “der Schmerz:” that which produces the scission within song is not itself a unified phenomenon that could be named by a singular, definite article. Pain’s splitting is not a sundering into a duality that could be reassembled into a synthetic unity but rather produces a multiplied *splintering* whose multiplicity cannot be precisely counted or determined.

These olfactory pains, then, indicate something rather different from what Heidegger sees in Hölderlin’s pain: they designate a double *dis-articulation of unity*. First, they produce an unworking of the unity of the sensory subject: not only does the nose appear here in isolation from a more fully formed human being, the dative case “der Nase” further indicates that the sensory subject is a subject in the sense that it is *subjected* to this experience; its sensory experience is nothing but subjection to smell. This fragmentation, which leaves nothing but a single nose, undoes any alleged unity of the subject and instead leads into a concentrated moment of splitting.

Secondly, this disarticulation repeats itself on the level of song: a gap between song and *Sinnlichkeit* is introduced just when their final convergence appears to have been reached in the fortified song about flowers. The smell of lemons pushes away, back from song, as the

opposition between city and smell of lemons contained in the “aber” indicates. This smell thus also pushes back from the very song that names and sings *it*; it pushes back from this very poem analyzed here. It is in this sense that the dictum of the apriority of the particular over the whole found at the top of the page can be related to the poem: the particular smell of lemons, a hapax legomenon in Hölderlin’s work, cannot be subsumed under song in general; it resists any domestication into a general notion of poetry’s relationship to sensibility.

This preliminary analysis can be made more exacting with reference to the aesthetic and anthropological writings of Immanuel Kant. In fact, Hölderlin’s painful smell of lemons can be seen to be inscribed in an adaptation and reordering of the terms of Kantian aesthetics. The first step of an analysis of this reordering lies in Kant’s theory of pain in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* that illuminates the pain of “Vom Abgrund nemlich.”²⁶⁴ §57 begins with the following definitions: “*Vergnügen* ist eine Lust durch den Sinn, und was diesen belustigt, heißt *angenehm*. *Schmerz* ist die Unlust durch den Sinn, und was jenen hervorbringt, ist *unangenehm*.”²⁶⁵ In a specification of what was above called pain’s repellent quality, Kant goes on to argue that pain is that which “unmittelbar (durch den Sinn) mich antreibt, meinen Zustand zu *verlassen* (aus ihm herauszugehen): ist mir *unangenehm* – es schmerzt mich.”²⁶⁶ Its opposite is found in the effort to maintain (“erhalten”) and to stay (“bleiben”). Pain, then, effects a movement of going out of a *Zu*-stand, a veritable “Ausgang” out of a standing still. Pain disrupts any *verweilen*: it is in this sense that the pain of the smell of lemons produces a stepping out of

²⁶⁴ The importance of Kant for Hölderlin’s work is widely acknowledged. For just one attempt to ascertain the relationship between the two, see Nägele, *Hölderlins Kritik der poetischen Vernunft*. Hölderlin himself called Kant the “Moses unserer Nation” (FHA 19, 348).

²⁶⁵ Kant, *Anthropologie*, 550; emphasis in the original.

²⁶⁶ Kant, *Anthropologie*, 550; emphasis in the original.

song qua “bevestigter Gesang” that would be a fortified, closed *Zu*-stand of domestication. Song cannot stand: it must move.

This analysis of *Schmerzen* can be deepened by referring to a more central Kantian text, one that Hölderlin knew well. In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, “Schmerz” is relegated to the realm of empirical psychology. The focus lies instead on “Unlust” as a feeling that admits, in contrast to pain, of an *a priori* determination of its principle; only the latter can turn the subjectivity that marks both *Schmerz* and *Unlust* into a rule-governed feeling that can claim both universality and necessity. Yet if pain is “die Unlust durch den Sinn,” as the *Anthropology* defines it, and hence a subspecies of *Unlust*, then some of the structural determinations of *Lust* and *Unlust* found in the third *Critique* illuminate the structure of pain as well, the latter’s exclusion from the realm of aesthetic judgments notwithstanding. Kant’s determination of pleasure, then, begins by linking it to intention: “Die Erreichung jeder Absicht ist mit dem Gefühle der Lust verbunden” (KdU, 97). A privileged instance of this is found in the “Vereinbarkeit zweier oder mehrerer empirischen heterogenen Naturgesetze unter einem sie beiden befassenden Prinzip” (KdU, 97). By contrast, displeasure would be produced if an irreducible “heterogeneity” (KdU, 98) were to be discovered in nature. In beauty, the aesthetically judging subject not only experiences the harmony of its own faculties but, because this feeling of pleasure is triggered by an object, also the fact that nature suits us; there is an “Angemessenheit” (KdU, 100) between subject and object. Beauty thus produces a calm state of contemplation in which the subject intends to maintain itself:

Sie hat aber doch Kausalität in sich, nämlich den Zustand der Vorstellung selbst und die Beschäftigung der Erkenntniskräfte ohne weitere Absicht zu *erhalten*. Wir *weilen* bei der Betrachtung des Schönen, weil diese Betrachtung sich selbst stärkt und reproduziert (KdU, 138).

The claim advanced in *Anthropologie* concerning pain's opposition to maintaining and staying is here enriched by the term "Weile:" lingering, for a while, derives its staying power from the "self-strengthening" of the beholding of beauty.

One example of beauty recurs almost obsessively throughout the third *Critique*, embedding Hölderlin's poem further in a Kantian context: flowers. As Kant's perhaps most fragile example of beauty, that is, the example of beauty most *exposed* to a disruption of pleasurable lingering, flowers elicit an intensified attempt to maintain the state of beholding them: they call for fortification and the standing in one place, firm and formed—they call for "Bevestigter Gesang/von Blumen als neue Bildung aus der Stadt." Flowers, more than other pleasure-inducing objects, must be distanced from pain. The latter is not, as Kant indicates in his *Anthropologie*, a mere privation or lack ("Mangel (+ und 0)") of pleasure but rather its loss ("Verlust (+ und -"); not only "Gegenteil" (*contradictorie*, *s. logice oppositum*) but indeed its veritable "Widerspiel" (*contrarie s. realiter oppositum*). The smell of lemons is *positive* in its negativity: it opposes its change-inducing force to any attempt to maintain and linger and not only subtracts the possibility of *Weilen* in the beholding of flowers but instead turns it into its opposite: movement, a stepping out of the standing formation.

As the *Widerspiel* of beauty, the "Schmerzen" accompanying the smell of lemons can be seen to result from an *inadequacy* to their phenomenality: any "intention" trying to reach it flounders on an *irreducible heterogeneity* that cannot be brought into harmony. Within the realm of *Sinnlichkeit*, certain smells exist that, in contrast to the smell of flowers, foreclose harmony.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁷ In the tradition of Antiquity, the smell of lemons is associated with the fact that some people enjoy it, others detest it, as Theophrastus and Pliny the Elder attest, without their being a determinable reason for this discrepancy. This, of course, is a major challenge to a Kantian aesthetics that would found itself on universal communicability.

They cannot enter a state in which a subject would seek to maintain itself; indeed, affected by the rising up of this smell, the constitution of a harmonious subject fails and leaves only a fragment, the single sense organ of the nose. Consequently, the smell of lemons is also the *Widerspiel* of song: it not only indicates a privation of poetic capacity to bring it into harmony but rather is counter-poetic. All qualities of song (its fortification; the pleasantness of the smell of flowers; the harmonious dissolution of the dissonances of fragility and firmness) are undone by pain.

In this sense, the smell of lemons constitutes a remnant of song, where a remnant results, to put it in mereological terms, from “the impossibility for the part and the all to coincide with themselves or with each other.”²⁶⁸ Intra-*Sinnlichkeit*, two types of smell (flowers, lemons) are radically opposed: olfactory sensibility does not coincide with itself but instead contains two parts that oppose each other. This structure of non-coincidence or rather of the *disarticulation of the unity of olfactory Sinnlichkeit*²⁶⁹ repeats itself on the level of song: a gap between song and *Sinnlichkeit* is introduced just when their final convergence appears to have been reached; the parts (song, smell) do not cohere into a whole but repel, dis-articulate each other.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, 55.

²⁶⁹ Theodor W. Adorno develops a similar thought in a different context when he explicates the centrality of “Dissoziation” in his interpretation of Hölderlin’s rebellion against the synthetic function of language: “Aber die Sprache ist, vermöge ihres signifikativen Elements, des Gegenpols zum mimetisch-ausdruckhaften, an die Form von Urteil und Satz und damit an die synthetische Funktion des Begriffs gekettet. Anders als in Musik, kehrt in der Dichtung die begriffslose Synthesis sich wider das Medium: sie wird zur konstitutiven Dissoziation” (Adorno, “Parataxis,” 184-5). Regarding the limits of Adorno’s interpretation, see the remarks above in the section on lateness.

²⁷⁰ In an article on “Patmos,” Rainer Nägele refers to the smell of lemons in a similar way: “Angedeutet ist darin der in der Aufhebung des Zeichens nicht aufgehobene Rest von Sinnlichkeit, die im Sinn nicht aufgeht und in einem späteren Textfragment als ‘Citronengeruch’ ‘Bis zum Schmerz aber der Nase’ aufsteigt” (Nägele, “Fragmentation,” 562). Nägele’s interpretation, however, turns this remnant into the production of a superior *binding*: “Die Kraft der Sinnlichkeit eines Duftes, eines Geschmacks, Tons, eines Bildes schmilzt die Erfahrung mit der Kette des Signifikanten zusammen und schmiedet sie zur unzerreißbaren Kette” (Nägele, 571). What follows here and in the section on “Patmos” seeks to follow the logic of Nägele’s initial insight while opposing this later turn.

Faced with this remnant, the poetic faculty appears overwhelmed: despite its complex movement towards a state of fortification in which it could linger, its efforts come undone. In the context of Kantian aesthetics, this overwhelmed exhaustion alongside the centrality of inadequacy locates painful smell in the vicinity of the sublime. The latter produces an *Unlust* mixed into pleasure, a “negative pleasure” (KdU, 165), that might at first appear close to the pains of the smell of lemons. The inadequacy between our faculties of cognition and the object that—through subreption—is labelled sublime derives from the object’s “Größe,” its sheer magnitude: the imagination is overwhelmed; even in its greatest “Anstrengung,” it cannot make its representation correspond to the object. This overwhelming inadequacy leads to the discovery of the *supersensible substrate* of nature and subject: “so muß diejenige Größe eines Naturobjekts, an welcher die Einbildungskraft ihr ganzes Vermögen der Zusammenfassung fruchtlos verwendet, den Begriff der Natur auf ein übersinnliches Substrat (welches ihr und zugleich unserm Vermögen zu denken zum Grunde liegt) führen” (KdU, 178). The *erheben* character, the counter-gravitational force lifting up the subject constitutes the *motive* character of sublimity that contrasts with the calming, restful property of beauty: “Das Gemüt fühlt sich in der Vorstellung des Erhabenen in der Natur *bewegt*: da es in dem ästhetischen Urteile über das Schöne derselben in *ruhiger* Kontemplation ist” (KdU, 181). Both sublimity and painful smell move, set in motion and thus disrupt a calm; both are marked by an upwards tendency (*erheben*, “steigt [...] auf”). Kant, in describing the hyperbolic and eccentric state of the imagination when faced with sublimity, even likens it to an *Abgrund*: “Das Überschwengliche für die Einbildungskraft (bis zu welchem sie in der Auffassung der Anschauung getrieben wird) ist gleichsam ein Abgrund, worin sie sich selbst zu verlieren fürchtet” (KdU, 181).

Yet a major difference between the sublime and painful smell emerges. The former is marked, as Kant insists, by the safety of the beholder that eventually renders the threat of the abyss ineffectual; an overwhelming mountain or a tumultuous sea can only appear sublime if they do not pose a threat to the beholder. The sublime thus marks “eine Überlegenheit über die Natur” (KdU, 186) that accompanies the discovery of the supersensible substrate. Yet this safety is precisely what the disruption of fortification and stability subtracts from the possibility of beholding the smell of lemons. Pain, for the late Hölderlin, marks *experience as exposure*: without the possibility to be genuinely overwhelmed by *Sinnlichkeit*, no experience of it is possible.²⁷¹ In the sensuousness of the smell of lemons, then, lies not an *übersinnliches* but rather an *allzusinnliches* element.²⁷² While the displeasure of the sublime is occasioned by the sheer magnitude of the object, the pain of smell derives not from magnitude but from intensity: not its size excludes it from the coinciding that would mark the disappearance of the remnant and the constitution of unity, but its *Sinnlichkeit* itself.

To this all-too-sensible element Hölderlin attaches a singular name, indeed a hapax legomenon in his work: “Citronengeruch.” While “Blumen” names a genus, the smell of lemons introduces individuality. Indeed, at the top of the page that contains the fragmentary lines of “Vom Abgrund nemlich,” hovers an apodictic pronouncement, familiar seeming in its terminology but nevertheless strange in its meaning: “Die apriorität des Individuellen über das

²⁷¹ Burdorf similarly diagnoses a “Wehrlosigkeit gegenüber den bedrängenden sinnlichen Reizen” (Burdorf, *Gedichtsfragmente*, 444), without, however, explicating the crucial contrast to the fortification of the city. It appears furthermore doubtful whether a “gesteigertes Geruchsvermögen” (Burdorf, 444), that is, a *subjective* condition, is responsible for the pain caused.

²⁷² When Adorno states that Hölderlin’s “gesamtes reifes Werk fragt stumm, wie es der Dichtung, die des Trugs von Nähe sich entschlagen hat, gleichwohl möglich sei, konkret zu werden” (Adorno, “Parataxis,” 187), then this fragment answers: at the price of pain.

Ganze.”²⁷³ The whole is subordinated to the individual: instead of a Kantian *über-sinnliche Über-legenheit* over and above an individual sensible element, here the individual part is marked by an *über*. The fragment underneath Hölderlin’s dictum develops this claim by unfolding the disruption of fortified song, which would envelop all being, at the hands of a concretized element of *Sinnlichkeit*.²⁷⁴ Indeed, one can read the opening line “Vom Abgrund nemlich” as a consequence of this dictum: it is because of the subordination of the whole under the individual that the condition of “our” beginning is one that has to set off from an un-ground. Without an a priori whole, in other words, all beginning is the beginning of any individual whatsoever and therefore ungrounded.

If this un-grounded and un-grounding, as it were, smell resists song because it stands outside of it and disarticulates it, then its occurrence in the poem is paradoxical: by naming “Citronengeruch,” the poem does sing that which resists naming. This naming repeats the naming with which the poem begins: “Vom Abgrund nemlich.” The unground of the poem,

²⁷³ Sattler traces the unusual noun form “apriorität” to Hegel: “Der Begriff Apriorität, in dieser substantivischen Form, findet sich am Beginn der Hegelschen Differenzschrift von 1801” (Sattler, *144 fliegende Briefe*, 296); he then situates it in the context of “Das untergehende Vaterland” (Sattler, 297). Since it would go far beyond the scope of this chapter, no independent interpretation of this famous line is attempted here; the key is merely to acknowledge the co-implication of this dictum and the fragment. One could further develop this line of inquiry in the context of remarks concerning parts and wholes found in “Das lyrische dem Schein nach idealische Gedicht” (esp. FHA 14, 371).

²⁷⁴ In a largely Heideggerian vein, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe further develops this line of thought in his writings on “poetry as experience,” mostly concerned with Paul Celan and to a lesser degree Hölderlin. Also concerned with the singularization effected by pain, Lacoue-Labarthe places the emphasis on pain’s opening towards an *Other*, towards the possibility of dialogue: “La douleur, non exactement la souffrance, est ce qui atteint et touche le ‘cœur’, le plus intime de l’homme, cet intérieur extrême où, dans sa singularité presque absolue (dans son ab-soluité), l’homme – et pas un instant le sujet – est pure attente d’un autre, espoir d’un dialogue, d’une issue à la solitude” (Lacoue-Labarthe, *La poésie comme expérience*, 48). Especially in Hölderlin’s earlier work, pain seems to be associated with intersubjective separation, for instance in this passage from the “Fragment von Hyperion:” “Ach! einst sucht' ich sie in *Verbrüderung mit Menschen*. Es war mir, als sollte die Armut unsers Wesens Reichtum werden, wenn nur ein Paar solcher Armen Ein Herz, Ein unzertrennbares Leben würden, als bestände der ganze Schmerz unsers Daseins nur in der Trennung von dem, was zusammengehörte” (KA 2, 178). In the later poems, the function of pain becomes more complex, as this passage itself already indicates.

while merely that from which the poem sets off from, is included qua excluded: *Abgrund*, *Citronengeruch*. The poem gained its movement in the setting off from what it could not include and navigated towards a closed, grounded state, protected from any and all abysses and un-grounds; almost arriving there, it encounters and is exposed to a structurally similar moment of un-grounding. And the poem's response again lies in naming this very moment of its endangerment: poetry must name what it cannot name, must sing the unsingable in its unsingability: this is its pain, the pains that it names.

In a final moment, pain stands in relation to life and therefore transforms the thought of a "lebendigere Beziehung" found in the earlier *Fragment philosophischer Briefe*. Pain, so Kant's *Anthropologie* suggests at first in accordance with pain's abyssal character, is detrimental to life: "Vergnügen ist das Gefühl der Beförderung, Schmerz das einer Hindernis des Lebens."²⁷⁵ Pain is the feeling that accompanies a hindering of life; the emergence out of a *Zustand*, the destruction of a dwelling in any particular moment diminishes life. Yet Kant's text immediately performs a curious reversal of this structure: due to the unidirectional, rectilinear nature of time and due to our inextricably being bound up with continuous changes of state, pleasure, it turns out, is in fact not so much the pleasure of the "positive" increase of a "Zustandes der Lust" as the *leaving* of a painful state: "daß wir zuerst genögt werden, aus dem Gegenwärtigen herauszugehen, unbestimmt in *welchen* anderen wir treten werden, nur so daß er doch ein anderer ist, das kann allein die Ursache des angenehmen Gefühls sein."²⁷⁶ Two far-reaching consequences follow. First, the primacy of pain: "*Also muß vor jedem Vergnügen der Schmerz vorhergehen; der Schmerz ist immer das erste.*"²⁷⁷ The *Abgrund* of pain is always there "first" for the simple

²⁷⁵ Kant, *Anthropologie*, 551.

²⁷⁶ Kant, *Anthropologie*, 551.

²⁷⁷ Kant, *Anthropologie*, 551.

reason that *pain is that which sets in motion*. For the poem, pain’s “first,” pseudo-original character—eventually replacing the originality of any and all “navels”—lies in the fact that it is that which produces the poem’s movement of setting off, by repelling it from the unground—only to see the ungrounding return precisely when it has worked itself to the point of a standing fortification.

Secondly, only in pain do we feel life: “Der Schmerz ist der Stachel der Tätigkeit und in dieser fühlen wir allererst unser Leben; ohne diesen würde Leblosigkeit eintreten.”²⁷⁸ In the absence of pain, no life could exist. Life finds its condition of possibility in pain—that is, in the diminishment of life. Only the hindering of life lets live.²⁷⁹ Hence the necessity of the emergence of “Schmerzen” at the very moment life has fortified and protected itself: it must be spurred on, paradoxically, by its diminishment. The smell of lemons is, to reformulate Kant, *der Stachel des Gesangs*. That which resists song spurs on song: it prevents song from closing and fortifying itself and therefore ensures its moment of continued production; it disrupts the “self-strengthening” of beauty by a painful diminishment of song, thus enabling its survival.

6.3. Archipelago: Posthumous Smells and a Truce with the Past

²⁷⁸ Kant, *Anthropologie*, 551.

²⁷⁹ For a short but incisive gloss of these passages that moves in a similar, albeit not quite identical, direction, see Hamacher’s “Other Pains:” “Life is consequently indebted to pain as the feeling of the incapacity to live, of living no longer or not yet as a whole, of not having found any ordering or form of life and of not being able, either epistemically or practically, at any time of life—even if it be ‘in the final moment’—to find oneself alive” (Hamacher, “Other Pains,” 977).

A poem from the earlier years of the brief period of Hölderlin's lateness,²⁸⁰ "Der Archipelagus," negotiates the interplay of the main figures developed in the two preceding sections. On the one hand, it responds to the question of a "anderswoher auf anderes" movement of poetic spirit, in particular the nexus between this movement of poetic spirit and the question of translating Pindar, that is, of moving poetry from the time of Ancient Greece into the present. On the other hand, "Der Archipelagus" asks in different form about the unity of multiplicity that can be found in the eccentric dispersal that is set off and sets off from an *Abgrund*, rendering impossible a firm stand. It is the conjunction of these two questions that the crucial olfactory moment of this hexameter poem—Hölderlin's only long, extant poem in this form²⁸¹—articulates: a libation poured out from a flower adorned vessel, poured to appease the dead.

The question of the unity of multiplicity or rather the dis-articulation of unity hovers over the poem in the form of its title. The word "archipelago," today referring to any group of islands,

²⁸⁰ Beißner writes: "wohl im Frühjahr 1800 entstanden" (StA 2.2, 632); Schmidt: "nicht sicher datierbar. Vermutlich ist er im Frühjahr 1800, noch in Homburg, begonnen worden, vielleicht gehört er aber auch erst in den Frühling 1801" (KA 1, 680). Within Hölderlin's corpus, "Der Archipelagus" has received less scholarly attention than his hymns and odes of the same period. Some exceptions will be cited below; one of the first well-known scholarly texts was the inaugural lecture by Friedrich Gundolf, a figure associated with the George circle, who elevates "Der Archipelagus" to be "das symbolische Denkmal seiner hellenischen Anschauung und Sehnsucht, weil hier im Ton, in Form und Bewegung seine hellenischen Kräfte am dichtesten und reinsten strömen" (Gundolf, *Hölderlins Archipelagus*, 7). Gundolf's "Hölderlins Archipelagus," delivered in 1911, is strongly colored, even if mostly implicitly, by his concern to secure Stefan George's place as the "prince" of German poetry and delineate the line of tradition leading up to George. Gundolf's insistence that one can find in Hölderlin "die Sehnsucht der Fülle, nicht die der Armut" (Gundolf, 21) can be contrasted with another George circle affiliated figure, Norbert von Hellingrath, who opposes Goethe's fullness to Hölderlin's "Armut" in a passage quoted above.

²⁸¹ Traditionally, the hexameter is tied to the epic; it has also been called the "heroische Versmaß" (Walser, *Hölderlins Archipelagus*, 16). Concerning this association, Friedrich Schlegel in "Geschichte der Poesie der Griechen und der Römer" argues that "Der Hexameter allein schien den Alten der unbestimmten Dauer des Epos angemessen; dies habe, sagt Aristoteles, die Natur selbst gelehrt und die Erfahrung bewährt. Das heroische Maß habe die größte Beharrlichkeit, die vollkommenste Gleichmäßigkeit und den stärksten Schwung" (in: Walser, 16). Just a few years before the writing of "Der Archipelagus," Goethe had written the arguably best-known hexameter poem of the German language, "Hermann und Dorothea" (written 1796-97, published in October 1797). For an analysis of the relationship of these two poems, cf. Walser.

originally referred to the Aegean Sea, hence the etymological components of *archē* and *pelagos*, the sea. The title and head of the poem thus refer to a structure of dispersed land (islands) that finds its *archē*, its origin and governing principle, in that which is unlike land, the sea. This sea, not enabling a firm stand, resembles the ecstatic condition that governed “Vom Abgrund nemlich:” if the sea stands in the position of the *archē* of this poem, then its principle must be one of the in-between movement that carries human beings from one island—a dispersed and derivative outpost of the realm of firm human life—to another, never to be calmed in a single stand or center.²⁸² The human condition is archipelago-like: the human being floats among islands of stability that are not its *archē* but only temporary interruptions of the in-between movement that disallows any notion of standing and grounding.

To this question of maritime origin and governing principle, the opening lines of “Der Archipelagus” join the question “ists die Zeit?” (v. 5), rigorously asking about the temporal condition of this spatial constellation. Is it the time of ships seeking to return to the shorelines and of cranes turning back towards the islands:

Kehren die Kraniche wieder zu dir, und suchen zu deinen
Ufern wieder die Schiffe den Lauf? Umathmen erwünschte
Lüfte dir die beruhigte Fluth, und sonnet der Delphin,
Aus der Tiefe gelokt, am neuen Lichte den Rücken? (vv. 1-4)

²⁸² Wolfgang Binder sees a relationship between water and *Abgrund* in the opening stanza of “Patmos” that will be decisive as the “last” locus of this geopoetics of smell: “Daher, und noch immer im Bild der getrennten Berggipfel, die Bitte um ‘Fittige’ und ‘unschuldig Wasser’, welches die Abgründe ausfüllte, so daß man zu Schiff hinüber gelangt, wie denn auch Patmos nur übers Wasser erreicht wird” (Binder, “Hölderlins Patmos-Hymne,” 101). Binder even links this abyss-filling quality of water to its status as the most *original* element, that is, in the language of “Der Archipelagus,” of water as closest to the *archē*: “Unschuldig heißt es, weil Hölderlin das ‘reineste’ der Element in ihm sieht, das ursprungnächste” (Binder, 101).

In addition to the Pindarian figure of the dolphin,²⁸³ these lines directly allude to Pindar's second Olympian Hymn, which, in Hölderlin's own later translation, includes the verses: "wo der Seeligen/Insel okeaniden,/Lüfte umathmen" (StA 5, 49, vv. 128-30).²⁸⁴ From the beginning, then, "Der Archipelagus" faces the task of rewriting—in particular through the question of a modulation of air—the poetry of Pindar and Antiquity. This act of rewriting—like Hölderlin's acts of translations—is inscribed into the larger context of the movement of poetic spirit: what in Hölderlin's time was known as the *translatio artium*, the westwards movement of poetic spirit from the East through the Greeks to the Hesperians (in Hölderlin's terminology), must relate to this "Summum der Dichtkunst" (KA 2, 488), as Hölderlin called Pindar. Yet, this relationship to the past of poetry must account for the disappearance of the historical condition that was Pindar's world; this world, and with it the *summum* of all poetic art, has disappeared, leaving the question: what kind of poetry can be written after this disappearance? And how does the writing of this poetry relate to that which came before it? How does the modern poet articulate his movement "anderswoher auf anderes"?

In "Der Archipelagus," one of Hölderlin's longest poems, a fragrant libation figures this task of the modern poet. More precisely, the task of the poem is likened to a libation that constitutes a "sacrifice" to the dead of the past and, qua sacrifice, is marked by a scent that derives from it being "blüthenumduftet[]," that is, from being adorned with a wreath of flowers.²⁸⁵

²⁸³ Cf. Michael Franz and Michael Knaupp, "Zum Delphin. Eine hermenautische Expedition."

²⁸⁴ "Lüfte umathmen" translates ἀύραι περιπνέοισιν, thus firmly establishing a link between aerial and auratic considerations.

²⁸⁵ Gundolf correctly recognizes that this stanza constitutes the core of "Der Archipelagus;" he claims that "Im Zentrum des Gedichts steht das zeitlose Göttliche, der hellenische Dämon, der ihm die Zunge löst, der durchdringt die weiteren Kreise: er heisst ihn die griechische Vergangenheit wachhalten, die

Will ich, mit Thränen gemischt, aus blüthenumdufteter Schaale
 Dort, auf keimendes Grün, das Wasser gießen, damit doch,
 O ihr Schlafenden all! ein Todtenopfer euch werde. (vv. 212-4)

This libation, and hence the task of the modern poet, is inscribed into two decisive contexts: on the one hand, the Ancient Greek traditions of sacrifice in general and of libations in particular; on the other, a long chain of substitutions and transformations of a variety of wreaths developed in the earlier stanzas of this poem that articulate not only the flowers wound around the “Schaale” but that throughout the poem delineate the task of the human being and of poetry. Folded into each other, the relationship to the past of poetry and of sacrifice and the development of “Der Archipelagus” jointly develop an account of the modern poet’s condition through the decisive role of smell.

Olfactory attempts to link the gods to the humans derive from a tradition much older than the Christian sources of, for instance, Oetinger’s pietist *Wörterbuch* quoted above; they can be found especially in Ancient Greece.²⁸⁶ Among Ancient Greek sacrificial rituals meant to establish a relation between the gods and the humans through fragrance, two distinct logics with respect to the production of smell can be discerned. On the one hand stands the burning of incense or of an animal: in a *holocaust* (a burning of all, etymologically, a *brûle-tout*), the offering is completely destroyed and the fiery destruction leaves two remnants, ash and the pleasing odor that rises upwards.²⁸⁷ The latter’s upward movement allows it to reach the gods and

unsterblichen Toten suchen” (Gundolf, *Hölderlins Archipelagus*, 32). On the role of the demonic in Gundolf, cf. Kirk Wetters, *Demonic History: From Goethe to the Present*, especially chapter 3.

²⁸⁶ For a helpful overview of the roots of Christian notions of smell in the Ancient Mediterranean world, see Harvey, *Scenting Salvation*, especially chapters one and six. A number of scholars working on the Greek side of this “aromatics” will be quoted below.

²⁸⁷ Reflections on ash as the remnant of fire often neglect the smell produced by the burning. A beginning of such a reflection can be found in Jacques Derrida, *Feu La Cendre*, esp. 41, 45 where Derrida reads “incense” (*encens*) through its etymology of burning, incinerating, while also relating it to the spice-associated Phoenix. (For the Phoenix as “spice bird,” see Detienne.)

its pleasing character renders them well-disposed to those who burned the sacrificial offering.

The human-divine relation established through olfactory mediation functions as a fiery, hot, all-consuming destruction, and only in the sacrificial act itself is the smell produced.

On the other hand, the ritual of pouring out libations follows a different logic: instead of a holocaustic burning, a liquid is poured into a *phiale* (a shallow bowl)²⁸⁸ and from there onto an altar or onto the earth, as in the libation described by Sophocles in *Oedipus at Colonnos* (466-491; another libation occurs at lines 1598ff).²⁸⁹ Libations, as scholars of antiquity have shown, were “seit prähistorischen Zeiten und insbesondere in den Hochkulturen der Bronzezeit eine der geläufigsten Sakralhandlungen.”²⁹⁰ However, the Greek term for libation, *sponde*,²⁹¹ not only refers to this outpouring of liquid but joins to it a juridico-political meaning, as Benveniste develops: “le grec *spéndō* associe les deux significations que le hittite et le latin donnent séparément, d’une part ‘faire une oblation liquide’, d’autre part ‘conclure une convention.’”²⁹²

The outpouring of a libation thus stands “in einer gewissen Polarität zum blutigen Opfer, das ihr

²⁸⁸ For a marvelous investigation of the role of spices in Greek mythology, including the role of heat and dryness, see Detienne, *Les jardins d’Adonis*. Jean-Pierre Vernant in his introduction points out that “these perfumed essences have the power to bring together earth and heaven, and men and gods, to the extent that they represent in the botanical and zoological codes a form of life which is self-renewing” (Detienne, xxv).

²⁸⁹ On wine-less libations, cf.: “these libations were poured onto the earth or a burial mound with a view to establishing a bond between the quick and the dead. Since they very often excluded wine, they were known as ‘wineless’ (*aoinoi*, *nēphalioi*) libations. A famous example is the pure water poured by Elektra onto the tomb of her father Agamemnon at the start of Aeschylus’ *Libation-Bearers*” (Zaidman, 41).

²⁹⁰ Burkert, *Griechische Religion*, 113.

²⁹¹ There is a second term in Greek for libation that derives from a different tradition: “zwei Termini, in denen sich offenbar anatolische und indogermanische Tradition treffen, *spendein*, *sponde* auf der einen, *cheein*, *choe* auf der anderen Seite” (Burkert, 114).

²⁹² Benveniste, *Vocabulaire II*, 210. Cf. also: “Indeed, the plural of the word for ‘libation’ (*spondai*) was used by synecdoche to mean ‘truce’ or ‘treaty’” (Zaidman, 40). Benveniste shows that the political valence gains prominence in the semantics of this term to the point that it effaces the meaning of libation and enters, in Latin, the semantic fields of “spouse” and “response:” “Chez les orateurs attiques et dans l’histoire ultérieure du verbe, le verbe n’énonce plus seulement un acte religieux, mais prend une valeur politique [...] Pratiquement cela revient à : se prendre mutuellement pour garants, d’où : s’engager vis-à-vis l’un de l’autre” (Benveniste, *Vocabulaire II*, 213).

vorausgeht. Wie die *spdghia* den Kampf eröffnen, so beenden *spondai* die Feindseligkeiten.²⁹³

While the destructive sacrifice of slaughter or burning signals the beginning of conflict and violence, the *spondai* conclude such scission and join into a peaceful bond. They mark the entrance into mutual promise and contract that enable a new form of living-with.

The scent of such a libation, in turn, can arise from one or both of two factors: either arising from the liquid itself, if it is fragrant, as in the instance of wine or honey (in some rituals, water was poured) or from the adornment of the vessel used to pour out the liquid. In neither case does the fragrance derive from the destruction that constitutes the core of the sacrifice: in the case of an odorous liquid the smell preexists the sacrificial act; in the case of adornment, the smell derives from a supplementary aspect of the sacrifice and does not inhere in the sacrificial offering itself. A sacrificial wreath, then, replaces the destructive logic of the burnt offering with a logic of plucked but still fragrant flowers: this is the logic of the libation of “Der Archipelagus,” which inscribes this sacrificial logic into the poetics of anthology that Hölderlin develops throughout his work. Olfactory libations, in their valuation of flowers, come to substitute for destruction and are thus a fitting type of sacrifice to mark a new-found peace and mutual, contractual promise:²⁹⁴ the exact nature of the truce that this “Todtenopfer” flowing from a “blüthenumdufteter Schaale” marks must now be determined as arising from the internal development of “Der Archipelagus” that leads to this *spondē* through a long series of transformations.

²⁹³ Burkert, *Griechische Religion*, 115.

²⁹⁴ In *Glas*, Derrida traces a substitution of a love of flowers for the burnt-offering in the Hegelian conception of the development of religion: “au lieu de tout brûler on commence à aimer les fleurs” (Derrida, *Glas*, 268). Derrida further develops the move away from burnt-offering and the attendant change in the structure of sacrifice as “l’holocauste de l’holocauste” (Derrida, 270).

The wreath of the libation, then, introduced in the eleventh and penultimate stanza, arrives as the substitution and transformation of a variety of other wreaths developed in the earlier stanzas, thus positioning the fragrant libation of the poet in this line of replacement. The opening stanzas of the poem introduce the first such version of a “Kranz.”²⁹⁵ The third stanza affirms that the sun, “die Wunderthätige,” acts just “wie vormals” and indeed adorns the water that connects the archipelago with “das Liebeszeichen, der Kranz, den immer, wie vormals,/Deiner gedenk, doch sie um die graue Locke dir windet” (vv. 41-2). In its only occurrence in Hölderlin’s oeuvre apart from “Friedensfeier,” the word “Liebeszeichen” here refers to the golden shine surrounding the water: the latter not only connecting the islands of the archipelago but also standing in harmonious relation with both light and air. The first wreath is a natural, all-gathering sign of love, produced by the all-giving sun.

And yet, in a hard, fourfold alliteration, the following stanza opens: “Dennoch einsam dünkest du dir” (v. 54). Something is missing and, again, disturbs the potential completeness and finality of the *Liebeszeichen*. Just like in “Friedensfeier,” the *Liebeszeichen* is absent from the present of the poem and thus necessitates a different sign, indeed a different kind of wreath—one that also is lacking:

Denn es leben mit dir die edlen Lieblinge nimmer,
Die dich geehrt, die einst mit den schönen Tempeln und Städten
Deine Gestade bekränzt und immer suchen und missen,
Immer bedürfen ja, wie Heroën den Kranz, die geweihten
Elemente zum Ruhme das Herz der fühlenden Menschen (vv. 57-61)

Human activity, in “beautiful temples and cities,” formerly “bekränzt” the shores of the water.

This adorning activity is rooted in the “heart of the feeling humans:” their feeling, expressed in

²⁹⁵ The first noun of the poem—referring to a sign that announces—namely “Kraniche” seems in its alliteration to announce already the *Kranz*.

their worshipping and the beauty of their temples, adds “glory” to the elements, which by themselves had everything but this. The preceding stanza had already introduced the feeling humans in terms that shed light on the “bedürfen” articulated here: “Auch die Himmlischen, sie, die Kräfte der Höhe, die stillen./Die den heiteren Tag und süßen Schlummer und Ahnung/Fernher bringen über das Haupt der fühlenden Menschen/Aus der Fülle der Macht” (vv. 25-28). The power of the heavenly is full (*Fülle*) and yet they lack something: feeling (*fühlen*), a difference as minute as a single letter. In the wreath of feeling, humans produce a supplement to (divine) fullness. Their activity constitutes a coronation, as the etymology of *Kranz* indicates, that displays divine power as what it is: fullness cannot be its own index; it remains incomplete without a supplementary index of its status as fullness.

The central stanza group (stanzas six through ten) develops the destruction of this wreath, of the feeling humans, via a reference to the historical destruction of Athens at the hands of the Persians led by King Xerxes in 480 BCE. This opposition of two national or ethnic groups must be contextualized in the philosophy of history of Hölderlin’s time and work: what can be gained from reading it in detail today is not a set of statements about the nature of the Persians or the Greeks but rather, through the manner in which “Der Archipelagus” describes this conflict, an insight into Hölderlin’s understanding of politics, conflict, and rebirth after violent defeat that transcends the historical context through which this understanding is articulated.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁶ This approach does not preclude but instead should be regarded as complementary to a reading of Hölderlin that uses the tools of post-colonial studies to rethink his relationship to nationality, alterity, and orientalism. As a preliminary wager it can be said that Hölderlin would emerge from such an analysis as falling neither squarely on the side of a colonial or nationalist project nor as consistently undermining it. These questions have been raised and addressed in Hölderlin scholarship in particular with respect to his notion of “das Vaterländische,” foregrounded in partly unjustified ways by Beißner in his editorial choices of the *Stuttgarter Ausgabe*, as well as with respect to Hölderlin’s letters to Böhlendorff (cf. on this question in particular, Szondi, “Überwindung des Klassizismus: Der Brief an Böhlendorff vom 4. Dezember 1801” and the various responses this text has elicited, such as Lawrence Ryan, “Vaterländisch

The destruction brought on by the Persians' invasion, then, is formulated through the opposition of blossoming and fermenting (*gären*), as developed above with respect to "Wenn aber die Himmlischen," thus linking for the first time in this poem, albeit only implicitly, wreath and scent:

Leicht aus spricht er das Wort und schnell, wie der flammende Bergquell,
 Wenn er furchtbar umher vom gährenden Aetna gegossen,
 Städte begräbt in der purpurnen Fluth und blühende Gärten,
 Bis der brennende Strom im heiligen Meere sich kühlet
 So mit dem Könige nun, versengend, städteverwüstend,
 Stürzt von Ekbatana daher sein prächtig Getümmel;
 Weh! und Athene, die herrliche, fällt (vv. 91-7)

Destruction, likened to the fire of the "gährenden" Etna, buries the blossoming gardens: "die Wolke des Brandes" replaces the fragrant smell of the garden; the feeling humans who weave a wreath around divine fullness are destroyed by overwhelming fire. Yet out of this destruction, a new Athens arises:

Denn wie aus rauchendem Blut das Wild der Wüste noch einmal
 Sich zuletzt verwandelt erhebt, der edleren Kraft gleich,
 Und den Jäger erschrockt (vv. 117-9).

At the battle of Salamis, the Greeks eventually triumph over the invading East. Athens is rebuilt, and flowers blossom out of destruction; the smoke of blood is replaced by the sprouting of flowers:

Schon auch sprossen und blühn die Blumen mälig, die goldnen,
 Auf zertretenem Feld, von frommen Händen gewartet,
 Grünert der Ölbaum auf (vv. 175-7).

und natürlich, eigentlich originell': Hölderlins Briefe an Böhlendorff."). A related cluster of scholarship has formed around the question of the role and meaning of the "colony" in Hölderlin's poetry, in particular with reference to a late revision of "Brod und Wein" that Heidegger picks up prominently (this passage is, in fact, the only time the word "Kolonie" is used in Hölderlin's extant poetry); Adorno has strongly criticized Heidegger's reading in his "Parataxis" essay. For an overview of the various positions taken in this debate, see Hans Joachim Kreutzer, "Kolonie und Vaterland in Hölderlins später Lyrik." On Hölderlin and "orientalism," cf. Dieter Burdorf, "Hölderlins Orientkonzepte und der deutsche Orientalismus um 1800."

The title of the poem indicates the moment that eventually enables this triumph: *Der Archipelagus*; the differing political structures account for the Greek ability to return triumphantly. On the one hand, the Greek “Männer des Volks” whose unity in multiplicity is indicated by the definite article of the group of islands: they constitute a unified multiplicity, where neither unity nor multiplicity dominates the other. The Persians, by contrast, are ruled by a single ruler who “zählt” and founds his power on “Menge” (v. 87). In a letter to Isaak von Sinclair, written on Christmas 1798, Hölderlin writes: “Es ist auch gut, und sogar die erste Bedingung alles Lebens und aller Organisation, daß keine Kraft monarchisch ist im Himmel und auf Erden” (FHA 19, 343). The unbalanced, tyrannical politics of the Persians is conditioned by their peculiar manner of *speech*: “Leicht aus spricht er das Wort und schnell, wie der flammende Bergquell./Wenn er furchtbar umher vom gärenden Ätna gegossen” (vv. 91-2). The destructive word is the one that is overheated, overly enthused, and too facile—and it eventually precludes martial and political triumph. If, by contrast, the feeling Greek humans can eventually triumph once more, it is because their “word” replicates the unified multiplicity structure of “the archipelago.” It overcomes the threats of fermentation and devastating fire in measurement and structure; being able to feel in a way that supplements the gods’ fullness depends on the right manner of speech.

In Hölderlin’s times, of course, this rebuilt Athens has disappeared, too.²⁹⁷ Today’s humankind is unfeeling; it is a “reißende Zeit” that prevents a blossoming of humanity. Along with Athens, however, the Persians, too, have disappeared and with them the dialectic of

²⁹⁷ Some scholarship exists on the question of what Hölderlin knew of the contemporary political situation in Greece; see, for instance, Osterhammel, “Stratosphärische Phantasie” on Hölderlin’s reception of the “Orlov” revolt in Greece in 1770 that predates by half a century the Greek nationalist movements of the 1820s that captured the imagination of intellectuals all around Europe.

blossoming and *gären* that could give rise to new flowers even out of the most devastating destruction of the “smoking blood.” The opposition of unified multiplicity and despotic monarchy has disappeared. Today’s humanity, by contrast, is bound to itself alone, no binding to another power, to another *tout court* can occur: “ans eigene Treiben/Sind sie geschmiedet allein, und sich in der tosenden Werkstatt/Höret jeglicher nur” (vv. 242-4). While the praise for the “unified multiplicity” of the Greeks still seems to harken back to the mature, middle period of Hölderlin’s thought, the present time’s divergence from such a state moves “Der Archipelagus” into the period of lateness and the “dis-articulation of unity” that has been deemed characteristic of such lateness here—and it is in the time after the disappearance of such unity that the crucial olfactory moment of the poem occurs, seeking to produce a different notion of both *binding* and *unifying*.

Feeling activity, then, is replaced by a different type of wreathing that accompanies a libation sacrifice, trying to salvage some aspects of the feeling Greeks:

Will ich, mit Thränen gemischt, aus blüthenumdufteter Schaale
Dort, auf keimendes Grün, das Wasser gießen, damit doch,
O ihr Schlafenden all! ein Todtenopfer euch werde.²⁹⁸

If the *phiale* (*Schaale*) is surrounded by the fragrance of blossoms, then it must be wreathed with flowers: individual flowers are woven together to adorn the sacrificial vessel. In its fragrance, the flower wreath recuperates some aspects of the Greek archipelago structure: *one* smell arises out the assembled flowers woven together; the wreath is constituted as a multiple, articulated unity.

²⁹⁸ Contemporaneous with his own writing of odes, that is, just two or three years before he began writing “Der Archipelagus,” Hölderlin translated some of Horace’s odes, among them the sixth ode from book two, which contains two lines that certainly influenced the passage read here: “Dort wirst du deines Dichters warme Asche/Mit der Thräne, die er fordert, bestreun” (FHA 17, 587).

Similarly, the function of (deathly) destruction reverberates in the flower garland: Athens rose once more “aus rauchendem Blut.”

However, far from being a return to a full life that could be seen as a resurrection of the beauty of Greek life, these flowers, having been plucked and cut off from their life source, enter a state of *afterlife* when woven into a garland: their scent is strictly postmortem. The sweet fragrance of the *Todtenopfer* is a smell of living-on. In the absence of the gods, in the absence of the Greek-Persian dialectic, any sacrifice that aims to establish a relationship between mortals and the gods must adhere to this postmortem, living-on structure. The supplemental status of the coronating wreath is radicalized: the fullness of divine power has disappeared and only the supplement meant to display and mark this fullness is left. By the eleventh stanza, the historical condition of the poetic I disallows the constitution of purely alive “Liebeszeichen,” of vivid adornments “die einst mit den schönen Tempeln und Städten/Deine Gestade bekränzt” (vv. 59-60); the blossoming-fermenting dialectic that enabled renewal has disappeared. In the absence of the “summum der Dichtkunst,” all that is left is the tearful libation sacrifice to honor the dead by surrounding them with a post-mortem fragrance of living-on; only in this living-on can a semblance of the prior “unity in multiplicity” be preserved and, indeed, be preserved through its disarticulation.

This is, in fact, the condition of song, of modern poetry,²⁹⁹ as the stanza goes on to argue. In ancient Greece, certain sacrificial offerings, namely the pouring out of liquids, similar to the

²⁹⁹ Explicating the relationship between Hölderlin’s work and “modernity” is a difficult task. Hölderlin himself uses the term rarely but occasionally to describe his historical condition just as analysed here; in a letter to his brother from January 1st, 1799, for instance, he writes: “O Griechenland, mit deiner Genialität und deiner Frömmigkeit, wo bist du hingekommen? Auch ich mit allem guten Willen, tappe mit meinem Thun und Denken diesen einzigen Menschen in der Welt nur nach, und bin in dem, was ich treibe und sage, oft nur um so ungeschickter und ungereimter, weil ich, wie die Gänse mit platten Füßen im modernen Wasser stehe, und unmächtig zum griechischen Himmel emporflüge” (FHA 19, 348). Ulrich

“Todtenopfer” described here, were called σπονδή, *spondē*. Through the adjective σπονδαίος for the piece of music accompanying the libation and the specific meter that characterized it (which gives us the English “spondee”), this term moved into the realm of poetics. The libation pouring of the previous verses is thus transformed into an outpouring of song:

[...] und wenn ihr zürnend erscheint,
 Weil der Pflug die Gräber entweicht, mit der Stimme des Herzens
 Will ich, mit frommen Gesang euch sühnen, heilige Schatten!
 Bis zu leben mit euch, sich ganz die Seele gewöhnet. (vv. 217-20)

The re-fertilization of the earth, that is, the preparation for the seeding and eventual growing of new plants, requires a plowing of furrows: analogous to the demand of a supplementary wreath that adorns in glory the fullness of the gods (where their “Fülle” demanded “fühlen” as analyzed above), the fullness of the earth must be enriched by lack; *Lücken* must supplement fullness.³⁰⁰

The supplement is called upon to insert lack into fullness. Yet this preparation for something new violates the peace of the dead and subsequently requires expiation. This is the task of “pious” song as spondee in the historical condition of modernity: it presents a sacrifice to the absent gods in order to *sühnen* the violation of preparing for a new arrival of the gods. The meaning of the outpouring of *spondai* as the conclusion of a truce or peace contract achieves here its poetic signification: the outpouring of song by the modern poet is meant to establish, through its living-on structure of posthumous smells, a *truce with the past*—where the present time was said to be constituted by the structure of “ans eigene Treiben/Sind sie geschmiedet allein,” such a truce would produce a new *bond*, a novel binding, between the “eigene” and its other. Poetry marks

Gaier has advanced the thesis that while much in Hölderlin’s work is “modern,” one can further observe a “Zusammenfall[] einer Proklamation des Endes der Moderne, des Untergangs des Abendlandes mit dem Beginn der tiefgreifenden und breiten Wirksamkeit des Hölderlinschen Werkes” (Gaier, “Hölderlin, die Moderne und die Gegenwart,” 29).

³⁰⁰ Cf. “Der Ister,” vv. 68-9: “Es brauchet aber Stiche der Fels/Und Furchen die Erd.”

the promise of such a new form of living-with, of living with the past that has disappeared and of living after the conclusion of violent scission.

Yet this conclusion of a peace treaty that the smell of modern song seeks to produce has only an interim function, as the “bis” in the line just quoted suggests. The smell of song’s postmortem, living-on status marks it as the smell of a state of transition; in the yet to be reached final state, this kind of poetry—this kind of libation and poetic sacrifice, in a word, this *spondai*—would disappear. Like “Friedensfeier” moved toward annunciation after stating the yet-to-come status of the “Liebenszeichen” (“Leichtathmende Lüfte/verkünden euch schon”), “Der Archipelagus” marks the smell of song as only transitional: instead of a new coronation, the merely supplemental *Kranz* of a preparatory out-pouring that constitutes the only relation to the divine possible in the historical condition of modernity. But it is the temporary establishment of a peaceful bond with the past and the departed gods through a living-on that alone enables the preparation of a new form of “leben mit euch.”

6.4. Patmos: Breathing the Future, the Messianic Name

Hölderlin's geopoetics of smell culminates in the *Gesang* "Patmos." Hölderlin began writing "Patmos" in 1802, in the context of an intra-Christian polemic concerning the status of Scripture: the pietistic Landgraf von Homburg, a minor nobleman in the ever shifting landscape of German states, had asked Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock for a poem countering the Enlightenment-inspired, historical-critical approach to interpreting the bible that was gaining prominence at the turn of the century.³⁰¹ Klopstock declined due to his deteriorating health and because he thought he had nothing more to add to his already numerous publications on religion, including the *Messiade*, a poem of considerable import to Hölderlin.³⁰² The latter, having heard of the Landgraf's wishes through his friend Isaac von Sinclair, produced a poem in lieu of Klopstock, and dedicated the completed version to the Landgraf. In a certain sense, "Patmos" is thus an instance of *occasional poetry*, prompted by the wishes of a wealthy benefactor.³⁰³ Yet, as

³⁰¹ For an overview of the life and work of the Landgraf, including interesting biographical details such as the nobleman's stutter that made him love all "Schrift," as well as Hölderlin's relationship to the Landgraf and the Princess Auguste, see: Ursula Brauer, "Landgraf Friedrich V. Ludwig von Hessen-Homburg (1766-1820): Einiges zu den politischen Ansichten und zur Person."

³⁰² In general, Hölderlin's relationship to Klopstock can be characterized as being crucial for the very early Hölderlin, then of continuously decreasing importance in the following decade, and then regaining some importance in the last few years before 1806. An enigmatic note concerning Klopstock can be found on a sheet from the *Homburger Folioheft*: "Es hat aber Klopstock gestorben am Jahrtausend. Also heißt um die Alten die Trauer" (FHA 7, 141). Since Klopstock died, of course, at the turn of the *century*, this note could be seen to endow his death with *millenarian* significance. Jochen Schmidt has emphasized the role of the *Messiade* for "Patmos" (cf. KA 1, 969ff.) as well as the importance of the *Apocalypse*, mostly due to the role of John of Patmos but also deriving from considerations concerning the possibility of revelation and completion. For a trenchant analysis concerning the almost abyssal distance between the gospels and the Apocalypse, between John the disciple and John of Patmos, see Deleuze, "Nietzsche und Paulus, Lawrence und Johannes von Patmos."

³⁰³ Karlheinz Stierle stresses this occasional character and the "Auftrags" aspect of Hölderlin's poetry: "„Patmos“ ist darin in einem besonderen Sinne Auftrags-, ja Gelegenheitsdichtung, daß sein Sinn über das Gedicht selbst hinausführt in die konkrete Situation, der es sich verdankt. Die Situation des Gedichts ist aber nicht zu verstehen ohne Bezug auf Hölderlins Selbsterfahrung als Dichter, die bestimmt ist durch das Bewußtsein, ein Dichter ohne Auftrag zu sein und doch sich dem Auftrag der Dichtung selbst radikal überantwortet zu haben" (Stierle, "Dichtung und Auftrag," 62).

will be crucial to the argument here, the poem's polished version that responded to the occasion of fulfilling an *Auftrag* from a nobleman in the place of a famous poet, does not abide: Hölderlin continuously reworks and unworks his text, and it is in those revisions that the decisive progression of the poem is located.

As the culmination of Hölderlin's geopoetics of smell, "Patmos," one of his best-known and most complex *Gesänge*, leads together the various strands of the argument developed above. It simultaneously moves beyond and is predicated on the undoing of the sensory and poetic subject found in "Vom Abgrund nemlich" as well as poetry's task of preparing a new "living-with" that atones for past transgressions and sings poetry's relationship to the past. Both the annunciatory function of poetry and the weakening or disarticulation of the unity of the subject and of poetry come to a head in "Patmos" and turn, according to the argument here, into a thought of futurity. This futurity emerges out of what Bernhard Böschstein has called the "Verzeitlichung des Raumhaften" that occurs in "Patmos:" geopoetics turns into a poetics of time. In other words, the distinction of this particular island's place on the earth lies in its bringing forth a novel conception of the future.

"Patmos" opens with a stanza that joins and transforms the two key versions of poetic movement found in the sections above—namely, the setting off from an *Abgrund*, on the one hand, and a movement across water, more precisely, an insular movement between separated, "getrenntesten," positions, on the other. While "Vom Abgrund nemlich" sought a poetic movement that departs from the un-ground and gains its motion through a pre-positional structure, "Patmos," in its first stanza, seeks a different relation to the un-ground: "und furchtlos gehn/die Söhne der Alpen über den Abgrund weg/Auf leichtgebaueten Brüken" (vv. 6-8). It is here a question of going across the *Abgrund*, or, more precisely, as the prepositions "über [...]"

weg” indicate, of turning the abyss into a *Weg*, a path: in the center of the stanza stand bridges, and these bridges thus not only cross over the un-ground but also bridge the two halves of the stanza itself. In the second half of the stanza, the possibility of a movement across the unground becomes the object of an invocatory poetic prayer of sorts that closes the first stanza: “So gieb unschuldig Wasser./ O Fittige gieb uns, treuesten Sinns / Hinüberzugehn und wiederzukehren” (vv. 14-5). In contrast to the bridges of the “Söhne der Alpen,” whose identity must be left suspended here, the first person subject of this stanza asks for a different mode of crossing an abyss: recalling the *archē* of water of “Der Archipelagus,” the prayer for water indicates that one possibility for a movement across an *Ab-grund*, a movement between “getrenntesten Bergen” is to turn these “Gipfel” into islands in a sea of water: while such a sea-faring movement would be volatile, insecure, and *ungrounded* in a precise sense, it would nevertheless enable a crossing-over that creates a path (*Weg*). “Patmos,” then, opens with the poetic subject asking for the possibility of a movement that acknowledges the impossibility of a firm and secure movement but can still guarantee safe passage and return: not only a going over to that which is most separated, “auf getrenntesten Bergen,” but also a turning back, a *trope* that enables the turning of the path (ὁδός, *Gang*) of the poem to cross the “Abgrund” and to return (to itself). Remarkable for not being reworked in any version of this heavily worked over poem, the last line of the first stanza—“Hinüberzugehn und wiederzukehren”—explicates thus both the thematic desire of the poetic I and the formal task of the poem itself as a tropic, turning endeavor.

The following three stanzas delineate a tripartite geopoetic movement: first, the second stanza describes the “abduction” of the poetic I away from its “Heimath” (v. 24); this abduction leads to “Asia” (v. 31) in the third stanza; and finally, in stanza four, from Asia a westwards return that pauses half-way on the titular island. As a number of commentators have pointed out,

the sensory vocabularies describing Asia, on the one hand, and Patmos, on the other, are marked by a stark, albeit by no means entirely consistent, contrast.³⁰⁴ The aesthetic regime governing Asia is predominantly visual: “in frischem Glanze” (v. 25), “geblendet” (v. 31), “goldgeschmückte” (v. 35), “im Lichte” (v. 38), to name just the most striking ones. Patmos, by contrast, is both introduced through hearing (“Und da ich hörte/Der nahegelegenen eine/Sei Patmos” vv. 51-3) and marked in its most powerful descriptions as auditory: “klagend/Um die Heimath” (vv. 64-4), “hört sie es gern” (v. 68), “ihre Kinder/Die Stimmen” (vv. 68-9), “die Laute/Sie hören ihn und liebend tönt/Es wieder” (vv. 71-2). As the remainder of this section will show, this visual/auditory dichotomy, however, is subtended by an urgent concern with an altogether different, third aesthetic regime: an aesthetics of air and smell. While already present in the first, “completed” version of “Patmos,” the presence of aerial-olfactory concerns increases considerably as Hölderlin revises the poem again and again: the emphasis on sight and hearing dissolves, to a degree, and is replaced by a subdued but insistent thought of air and olfaction—a replacement, according to the argument here, that is symptomatic of and contributes to the “unfinished,” open structure of the later rewritings of this *Gesang*.

The concern with the different senses and the question of the aesthetic regime governing Patmos is already legible in the closing lines of the first stanza: “treuesten *Sinns*/Hinüberzugehn und wiederzukehren” (vv. 14-5; emphasis added). The ambiguous, multivalent word “Sinn” raises the question of which sense is “most loyal:” in which realm of *aisthesis* is a crossing of the

³⁰⁴ Bart Philipsen thus writes: “Die überwiegend visuelle Darstellung der kleinasiatischen Landschaft weicht einer ausgesprochen auditiven Beschwörung der sonst öden, ‚ärmeren‘ Insel” (Philipsen, “Gesänge,” 372). Binder attempts an interpretation of this contrast: “Jetzt verstehen wir auch, warum diese äußerste Armut nur zum Ohr spricht, während im paradiesischen Garten Asias alles fürs Auge war. Der Seher braucht den Ort, wo es nichts zu sehen gibt, damit er seine inneren Gesichte empfangen” (Binder, “Patmos-Hymne,” 105).

un-ground and a subsequent returning possible? Which sense guards the originating point of a movement such that it enables a turning back? Loyalty can be read here as an abiding orientation, a firmness of directionality guiding all *Gang*: the orientation a sense (*sens, senso*) provides in both space and (in a more difficult to determine manner) time is consequently an integral part of the passage “Patmos” seeks out.

In terms of this aerial-olfactory aesthetic, the first pertinent moment of “Patmos” occurs in a formal position that could hardly be endowed with more significance: the triadic structure of the stanza divisions of this poem³⁰⁵ situates “wiederzukehren” in relation to two other terms, the words closing out the following two stanzas: “duftend” and “Palläste.” The geopoetic move towards Asia goes through a number of visual images to culminate in an olfactory peak, an olfactory *Gipfel*, as it were:

Doch bald, in frischen Glanze,
Geheimnisvoll
Im goldenen Rauche, blühte
Schnellaufgewachsen,
Mit Schritten der Sonne,
Mit tausend Gipfeln duftend,

Mir Asia auf, [...] (vv. 25-31)

³⁰⁵ The secondary literature has repeatedly emphasized the high regularity of the poem’s structure; Stierle, for example, writes: “In der erfüllten Form von ‚Patmos‘ erweist sich der Wille zur poetischen Ordnung, zum poetischen Gesetz als das a priori des Gedichts” (Stierle, “Dichtung und Auftrag,” 49). The triadic division of the fifteen stanzas produces a central set of three stanzas as well as a central stanza, which mirrors the fifteen lines structure of (almost) all stanzas; each stanza turns around a central verse like the poem itself turns around a central stanza. Troubling, to say the least, is the occurrence of an additional line in stanza ten, the first stanza of the two triads that tilt towards the poem’s closure: some commentators have argued that Hölderlin simply miscounted here, thus accidentally disturbing the firmness of the entire symmetry. The excessive line itself, perhaps echoing the paradigmatic question of philosophy *ti estin* —“Auf grüner Erde, was ist diß?” (v. 151)—casts doubt on such an explanation: it is precisely the lack of certainty, expressed in the form of a question, that comes to disrupt the rigid (*vest*) form of the hymn.

Standing in the structural position of “wiederzukehren,” “duftend” modifies the second occurrence of the “Gipfel” of mountains in “Patmos,” suggesting that these fragrant mountaintops maintain a decisive relationship with the “getrenntesten Bergen” from which the poetic I seeks safe return. Asia, as was shown above with respect to “Der Adler” and Hölderlin’s transformation of Herder’s philosophy of history, is said to be the origin of civilization, and it is this origin of civilization towards which the poetic I of “Patmos” is “abducted” or “led away” (“entführte”) and from which it seeks to return as the poem progresses. This move towards the fragrant origin consequently takes away from “Hauß” and “Heimath.” The ensuing sense of disorientation quickly intensifies into the pathos of being confronted with a *secret* (“geheimnisvoll,” v. 26). In other words, the movement towards the fragrant origin transforms the *Heim* into a *Geheimnis*: origin offers no home, but—*secretus*—is that which is set apart and separated.³⁰⁶ The fragrance surrounding the origin indicates this ambiguous inaccessibility: the “Gipfel” of Asia remain “getrenntest” but nevertheless allow the poetic I to enter into an (aesthetic) relation with them precisely via their smell. Origin provides no place in which one could dwell but instead exerts a force that produces a movement towards and away from it.

The third stanza, adding the word “Palläste” to the series “wiederzukehren,” “duftend,” intensifies this inaccessibility: the *Duft* emanates from “Zeug unsterblichen Lebens/An unzugangbaren Wänden/Uralt der Epheu wächst” (vv. 40-1). *Unzugangbar*: the fragrant origin to which the poetic I has been abducted after its invocatory plea for safe passage and return turns out to be inaccessible and secret, and thus turns—*tropically*—into a veritable point of stoppage blocking the poem’s *Gang*. These inaccessible walls, containing *in nuce* the outlines of “another

³⁰⁶ On the relationship between home and secret, cf. Derrida, *Donner la mort*: “Là se tiendrait peut-être le secret du secret, à savoir qu’il n’y a pas de savoir de son sujet et qu’il n’est là pour personne. Un secret n’appartient pas, il n’est jamais accordé à un ‘chez soi’” (Derrida, *Donner la mort*, 127).

teichology,”³⁰⁷ belong to an architectonic construction that in Kant’s third *Critique* appeared as one of his first examples of beauty: palaces. Standing at the opposite pole of the spectrum of fragile beauty, palaces mark a counterpoint to the beauty of flowers. Set on yet another mountaintop,³⁰⁸ these palaces, just like flowers, bear olfactory traces: the “feierlichen./Die göttlichgebauten Palläste” are “getragen” “von lebenden Säulen, Cedern und Lorbeern.” The cedar has been known since antiquity primarily for two qualities: on the one hand, its wood is lauded for its incomparable resilience stemming from its hardness, its *Festigkeit*; on the other, it is said to have unsurpassable olfactory qualities. Etymologically, “cedar” might lead back to the smell of lemons, the paradigmatic instance of inaccessible *Sinnlichkeit* that splits into pains and resists song: the Greek word κέδρος gives both the word “Ceder” and “Citrone.”³⁰⁹ The smell of lemons and the inaccessible cedar palaces “stand” both in the (non-)position of inaccessibility that nevertheless relates to song.

Yet while the smell of lemons had emerged as ecstatic and destabilizing, the cedar palaces mark the hope for a *synthesis of firmness and fragrance*: the smell of cedars is not opposed to fortification but conversely emanates precisely from such firm resilience and durability. “Patmos” immediately puts such a remarkable synthesis—which would have the power to dissolve and calm the entire motional power of olfactory lateness—beyond human grasp: these cedar palaces are “göttlichgebaut[.]” (v. 45). Producing a synthesis of firmness and fragrance is the prerogative of the divine: capturing “Duft” and stabilizing its ecstatic as well as

³⁰⁷ Cf. Fenves, “Toward Another Teichology.”

³⁰⁸ “Palace” derives from *palatium*, the hilltop in Rome where the emperor’s house was located; in terms of the structure of “Patmos” it is not so much the Roman emperor as King David to whom these “Palläste” should be attributed, as will be developed below.

³⁰⁹ For an extensive discussion of the convoluted etymology of “Citrone,” see *Der neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike*, band III, 2, s.v. “citrone.” The biblical significance of the cedar will be discussed below.

its eccentric character (one could read a palace as marking the center) is impossible for human beings; the *Feier* of these “feierlichen” palaces, the celebration of a calming of the conflict of fragrance, is not within the purview of the poetic I.

While the first triad of stanzas, apart from the two opening lines, seems far removed from the concern of the rest of the poem that begins with the appearance of Patmos in stanza four, namely Christ and the status of Scripture, these cedar palaces constitute the transition from the description of Asia to the realm of biblical literature. As scholars of religion have shown, the cedar tree is the tree mentioned most often in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, despite never having grown within the confines of Israel.³¹⁰ These massive trees native to Lebanon, “likely the largest living things that generations of people saw during their lifetimes,”³¹¹ are mentioned more than 70 times in the psalms, the books of Isaiah, Kings, and Ezekiel, and a handful of other passages. They symbolize power, strength, majesty, and wealth.³¹² Through these associations, they become associated with the Davidic dynasty: “In biblical literature, Lebanon’s cedars symbolized (royal) majesty [...] Jerusalem was on a mountain, and one of the royal buildings was ‘The house of the forest of Lebanon’ (I Kings 7:2; named after the cedar used in its construction).”³¹³ The hinge between the first and the second triad of stanzas of “Patmos” lies in

³¹⁰ “Cedar of Lebanon is mentioned about 70 times in the Bible, only in the Old Testament and more than any other forest tree, which is intriguing, considering it never grew within the traditional boundaries of Israel” (Musselman, *A Dictionary of Bible Plants*, 37).

³¹¹ Musselman, 37.

³¹² “These forest giants project an image of the mighty ruler, as in Ezekiel 31:3, in which the king of Assyria is likened to a cedar: ‘Behold, Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon, with beautiful branches and forest shade, and of towering height, its top among the clouds’ (ESV). Their strength was unequalled, so a measure of divine strength would be the breaking of the cedars, as in Psalms 29:5: ‘The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon’ (KJV).” (Musselman, 37). For an extensive overview of the various passages mentioning cedar trees, with special attention paid to the difficulties of translating the Hebrew text, cf. Naudé/Miller-Naudé who employ an approach they term “Biblical Plant Hermeneutics.”

³¹³ Greenberg, *The Anchor Bible Ezekiel 1-20*, 310.

the inaccessible palaces of the dynasty of David. The latter's royal splendor, set on a mountaintop, forces the poetic I to redirect its path away from the rich and royal, firm and secure palaces to the islands between Asia and its "Heimath," as the beginning of the fourth stanza elaborates: "Es rauschen aber um Asias Thore/Hinziehend da und dort/In ungewisser Meeresebene/Der schattenlosen Straßen genug,/Doch kennt die Inseln der Schiffer" (vv. 46-50). The "unzugangbar" cedars, their Davidic royalty and their forbidden synthesis of firmness and fragrance, are replaced in the *Gang* of the poem by an "uncertain" seafaring movement towards the poor island of Patmos.

One reason for this replacement lies in the fact that, for non-divine beings, such inaccessibility and such an attempt to reconcile firmness and fragrance are exhausting and weakening. They diminish the powers of those who face it,³¹⁴ as a change in the third stanza effected in the first revision of "Patmos" indicates: the verse "Und voll von Blumen der Garten" is altered to "Und schläfrig fast von Blumen der Garten." The fullness of the flowery and fragrant garden had stood, in "Heidelberg" and elsewhere, for the fullness of being—a calming transcending that figures the hyperbolic, originary as well as completing unity of intellectual intuition. With the revision of "Patmos" (the "schläfrig" character is kept in all subsequent

³¹⁴ This is already indicated in the first stanza: "die Liebsten/Nah wohnen, ermattend auf/Getrenntesten Bergen" (vv. 10-2). Hamburger translates "ermattend" as "growing faint," reading the verb intransitively. The more probable reading of these verses would take "ermattend" transitively: that the "most loved ones" dwell on "getrenntesten Bergen" is tiring, exhausting. In a long footnote to section III of the introduction of *Critique of the Power of Judgment* that seeks to justify his fundamental, tripartite division of the "Seelenvermögen," Kant speaks of the *ermattend* character of intending something impossible that leads to a repeated tensing: "dadurch, daß sie das Herz ausdehnen und welk machen und so die Kräfte erschöpfen, daß die Kräfte durch Vorstellungen wiederholentlich angespannt werden, aber das Gemüt bei der Rücksicht auf die Unmöglichkeit unaufhörlich wiederum in Ermattung zurück sinken lassen" (KdU, 86). The *wilting* of the heart, its growing faint stands in exact opposition to the "belebend" character of the beholding of beauty. I have attempted to trace some of the implications of the vivifying or exhausting character of aesthetics in a rather different context; see: Rosenbrück, "Towards an Aesthetics of Obscurity."

versions), a worry with respect to the effect resulting from the power of the olfactory is introduced: fullness is replaced by sleepiness.³¹⁵ While the pains of the smell of lemons could function as the “Stachel des Gesangs” that spurs on poetry, the differing constellation of “Patmos” attributes to fragrance a potentially dulling and lulling quality.

A description of this danger had already been latent in the discussion of “Befriedigung” and “Nothdurft” in the *Fragment philosophischer Briefe*. In the readings developed above, smell transcends necessity and can thus be designated as a higher calming that contributes to the onto-poetological task of establishing a “durchgängigere” relation that intensifies life. In contrast to this “classical” phase of Hölderlin’s work, the late poems cast doubt on this enlivening, vivifying function. The excessive, painful character of *Sinnlichkeit* is complemented by a threat of a negative standstill:

So wie nun jede Befriedigung ein momentaner Stillstand des *wirklichen Lebens* ist, so ist es auch eine solche unendlichere Befriedigung, nur mit diesem großen Unterschiede, daß auf die Befriedigung der Nothdurft eine *Negative* erfolgt, wie z. B. die Thiere gewöhnlich schlafen, wenn sie satt sind (FHA 14, 46-7).

Sleep, so the *Fragment* argues, indicates a negative satisfaction (here, the Latinate “satisfaction” is appropriate as Hölderlin’s use of “satt” indicates) of a prior need; the lulling character of flowery, fragrant gardens satisfies in such a way that “wirkliches Leben,” real but also acting, effecting life (*wirken*) comes to a standstill. Faced with inaccessibility, a threat to life emerges: an-esthesia.³¹⁶ In sleep, *aisthesis* comes to a halt. Confronting the fragrant origin or divinely built

³¹⁵ “Andenken” similarly speaks of “einwiegende Lüfte” (KA 1, 361, v. 24).

³¹⁶ The anesthetic character of certain smells has been recognized by other authors as well; Walter Benjamin, for instance, writes of the “Zweideutigkeit” of the lily as the symbol of Otilie’s innocence in his *Wahlverwandtschaften* essay: “Die strengen Linien des Gewächses, das Weiß des Blütenkelches verbinden sich mit den *betäubend* süßen, kaum mehr vegetabilen Düften” (Benjamin, GS I, 175, emphasis added). Form and color are opposed by fragrances so sweet they are almost no longer plant-like: they point beyond their origin, beyond their vegetative state.

fragrant palaces, the poem struggles to avoid an anesthetic slumber that would rob it of its ability to articulate *aisthesis*.

Yet this threat is only an “almost” (“*fast schläfrig*”) threat. The danger of anesthetic diminishment turns, in accordance with the logic of the *Stachel des Gesangs* developed above, into that which spurs on the poem; the lulling or dulling character of smell is precisely what leads to the continued transformation of the poem. If one can still follow the *Fragment* here—and the reflections further below will cast doubt on this—one should seek the averting of the sleepy threat in a *different type of repetition*: “auf eine unendlichere Befriedigung aber zwar auch ein Stillstand des *wirklichen Lebens*, aber daß dieses eine Leben im Geiste erfolgt, und daß die Kraft des Menschen das wirkliche Leben, das ihm die Befriedigung gab, im Geiste wiederholt” (FHA 14, 46-7). In *spirit*, a repetition of life takes place by virtue of the force of the human being, averting the anesthetic threat. After the first triad, “Patmos” attempts to find the means to produce just such a spiritual repetition; the constant reworking and revising of the later stanzas, leaving the first triad mostly unchanged, attests to the difficulty to find such a continuation of the poem, leaving open the possibility of its own impossibility.

To find the possibility of such a spiritual repetition and having run up against *Unzugangbarkeit*, “Patmos” goes elsewhere. It leaves Asia and, at the beginning of the second triad of stanzas, turns to islands. Among those *Inseln*, whose metathetic link to “sind” and hence to the question of being Werner Hamacher has pointed out, one island in particular attracts forcefully, named here in the central verse of the first stanza of the second triad with a peculiar turn of phrase: “Sei Patmos.” The subjunctive, here employed to render indirect speech, already indicates the ontological diminution of this island. The next stanza speaks of an “ärmeren Haus:” Patmos is characterized by poverty, a lack of light (“dunklen Grotte”) that contrasts it with the

blinding light of Asia, and an almost desert-like lack of “Quellen” that indicates its distance from the (Asian, fragrant) origin.³¹⁷ On such an island, no “tausend Gipfel duftend” can exist; palaces built from fragrant and firm trees give way to an “ärmere[s] Hauß[];” the desert-like character of Patmos stands in an inverse relationship to the riches of gardens. This reduced, subdued *Sinnlichkeit* accords with the island’s *exilic* character:

Und wenn vom Schiffbruch oder klagend
Um die Heimath oder
Den abgeschiedenen Freund
Ihr nahet einer
Der Fremden, hört sie es gern [...] (vv. 64-8)

Patmos belongs to the foreigners, those who do not belong there or rather who belong there because they do not belong anywhere. Since both “Heimath” and the *Geheimnis* of origin are closed off in their *Unzugangbarkeit*, all that is left is an exilic, foreign, insular, poor, and ontologically diminished place. In particular, Patmos welcomes and is hospitable (“gastfreundlich”) to all those whose plea for safe passage (“wiederzukehren”) was confounded in lamentation and shipwreck, in a moment of strong and direct echoing of the fragmentary poem “Die Titanen” analyzed above: some sea-faring heroes do suffer defeat and fail to return and cross over the abyss of the un-ground—instead of being broken completely (*Schiff-bruch*), however, they find an echo of their lamentation in the splitting open of the poor soil of this island: “und sich spaltet/Des Feldes Fläche, die Laute/Sie hören ihn und liebend tönt/Es wieder von den Klagen des Manns” (vv. 70-3). Patmos cor-reponds to the condition of being “abgeschieden” (v. 66) by echoing this very condition in its own structure.

³¹⁷ On the centrality of the desert to the late Hölderlin, see Hamacher, *Version*. Cf. also Derrida’s formulation of a “messianisme désertique (sans contenu et sans messie identifiable)” (Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*, 56) that partly guides the considerations proposed here.

The central triad of “Patmos” articulates this condition of *Abgeschiedenheit*, with all the multivalences this word harbors, as the world-historical condition after the event that constitutes the core of this poem: the disappearance of Christ.³¹⁸ Among the many complex aspects of these stanzas, the key event for the questions posed here is the *apostolic dispersal* after the death of Christ and the various ways in which his memory may be guarded in such dispersal. One such attempt would be to forge an image, as the eleventh stanza indicates:

Zwar Eisen träget der Schacht,
 Und glühende Harze der Aetna,
 So hätt' ich Reichtum,
 Ein Bild zu bilden, und ähnlich
 Zu schau'n, wie er gewesen, den Christ. (vv. 162-6)

The *figura etymologica* “Ein Bild zu bilden” draws attention to the fact that this would be a *visual* memorialization of the vanished Christ.³¹⁹ The very material needed for such an image (iron) indicates that this image would be marked by firmness and durability: it also points to its incompatibility with the locus of the poem, Patmos. The island was introduced as the “ärmere[] Hauß[]” (v. 62): a visual image of the Christ would require a “Reichtum” unavailable to the insular subject.³²⁰

³¹⁸ To use the words of “Patmos” itself, which recur in a number of the late *Gesänge*: “Vieles wäre / Zu sagen davon” (Martin Vöhler points out that “Die Formel findet sich wörtlich auch bei Platon in dessen Mythos von Theuth und der Erfindung der Schrift, Phaidros 274e3” (Vöhler, “Hölderlins Pindar,” 51n61)). A close reading of these dense stanzas would far exceed the purposes of the interpretation attempted here. For useful scholarship on these stanzas, cf. the articles on “Patmos” by Böschstein, Stierle, and Binder cited above.

³¹⁹ This is the first time “Patmos” uses the title “Christ;” that this very word resists visuality and turns into the olfactory realm will be argued below.

³²⁰ The rejection of remembrance as image within “Patmos” is exceedingly complex as the following stanza, stanza twelve, juxtaposes a number of figures and tropes; for the purposes of the analysis here, the opposition between the riches of visuality and the poverty of Patmos suffices. For a further-reaching claim, cf. Binder: “Das Bild des wiederkehrenden Christus zu entwerfen, zu stiften also und zu verewigen, wäre äußerste Anmaßung, die der Wirklichkeit vorgriffe und Gott gleichsam vorschriebe, was zu geschehen hat” (Binder, “Patmos-Hymne,” 116).

The closing lines of “Patmos” suggest that the remembrance of Christ must occur not through an iron-clad image but in and through language, more precisely in the “care” and “interpretation” of the “firm letter:”

[...] der Vater aber liebt,
 Der über allen waltet,
 Am meisten, daß gepfleget werde
 Der veste Buchstab, und bestehendes gut
 Gedeutet. Dem folgt deutscher Gesang. (vv. 222-6)

The firmness of the cedar palaces (inaccessible and set apart from the human being due to their “göttlichgebaut” origin) and of the iron-made image of Christ (it, too, rejected) returns one last time in transformed fashion: it is the letter of Scripture alone that can receive the attribute “vest[.]” and still remain in the human realm. The task of poetry is to care for the firmness of the “Buch-stab:” the second part of this word originally meaning “der Stützende, steif Machende,” often referring to a wooden stick. The remembrance of Christ in the dark night of his absence is made firm in the letter that stands, *Be-stehen-des*. In the first, completed version, the visual-auditory dichotomy between Asia and Patmos is dissolved into the firm letter of language that must be thought of as both visual (as an inscription) and auditory (as at least potentially spoken).³²¹ German, that is, Hesperian poetry follows in the wake of the guarding of this specific type of firmness.

³²¹ Much has been written about this “firm letter” and the way in which it can be said to respond, even overcome, the danger of the opening verses of “Patmos.” Some of the most pertinent positions: “Das Rettende ist eine Form der Mittelbarkeit, die die gefährliche Nähe durch Brückenschläge überwindet” (Böschstein, “Patmos” 141). “In der vermittelten Gegenwart der Schrift sind Nähe und Ferne aufgehoben für die Erfahrung des ‚stillen Blicks‘, in dem sich immer neu jene Erinnerung ereignen kann” (Stierle, “Dichtung und Auftrag,” 58). “Was der Landgraf von Klopstock erhoffte: eine pietistische Apologie der Heiligen Schrift wider die historisch-kritische Exegese kann und will ‚Patmos‘ nicht bieten, wohl aber Einsicht in die Notwendigkeit der Verschriftung, der Verdichtung des Heiligen. Denn die findet dort statt” (Timm, “Dichter am dürftigen Ort,” 217).

Some scholars have suggested that such hardness and condensation are, in fact, the defining feature of Hölderlin's understanding of poetry: "Superlativisch gehärtet müssen sie sein, dicht, dichter, am dichtesten, daß darüber hinaus Dichteres nicht gedacht werden kann. Und das war es, was Hölderlin unter Poesie verstand: Sprachgefüge mit größter Versammlungsdichte auf kleinstem Raum."³²² Yet the fate of "Patmos" itself, like the fate of the "bevestigter Gesang" that becomes disrupted by the smell of lemons, undermines any such claim: all "vestigkeit" is undone by a difficult to determine succession of repeated alterations, deletions, and rewritings; in this poem, the stand of the *Bestehendes* of the letter is continuously destabilized and fails to achieve any new mode of enduring.³²³ Not only do these revised versions remain fragmentary, they also become shorter, more gnomic, and less coherent.³²⁴

³²² Timm, "Dichter," 213. Despite the allure of the faux etymological affinity between "dicht" (dense) and "dichten" (poetizing), one should distinguish, pace Timm, between density and hardness: the wide expanse of certain Hölderlinian images appears compatible with firmness.

³²³ Rainer Nägele similarly identifies the differing treatments of hardness in the various versions of "Patmos" as crucial to the understanding of Hölderlin's development of this poem. In contrast to the analysis developed here, which will aim at a thought of transience and futurity, Nägele, however, develops this differing account of firmness in the direction of a thought of "fragmentation:" "Hier schließen die felsenharten Paläste stumm sich ab. Eine eigentümliche Beziehung entsteht zwischen ihnen und dem 'veste(n) Buchstab,' dessen Pflege und Deutung dem Gesang obliegt. Ob die Festigkeit des Buchstaben den Widerstand bildet, an dem die gute Deutung sich bahnt, indem sie das subjektive Begehren des Deutenden am Buchstaben krümmt und ausrichtet, oder ob er die verschlossen Felsenhärte ist, an der die Deutung scheitert, das dürfte wohl den Unterschied zwischen der früheren und den späteren 'Patmos'-Versionen bestimmen" (Nägele, "Fragmentation," 563-4).

³²⁴ Stierle, who had stressed the symmetry and accomplished form of "Patmos" as being central the poem, acknowledges that "Hölderlin selbst hat das Patmos-Gedicht in diese Freiheit und Offenheit zurückgenommen. Denn die ‚vollendete‘ Fassung des Gedichts, wie Hölderlin sie dem Landgrafen überreichte, ist im folgenden von Hölderlin in immer neuen Ansätzen der Überarbeitung und Fortdichtung gleichsam in sein Eigentum zurückgeholt worden" (Stierle, "Dichtung und Auftrag," 66). He correctly states that "Es bedürfte wohl eigener Formen des Lesens, um dem poetischen Sinn dieser Bruchstücke immer unkenntlicherer Zusammenhänge ganz gerecht werden zu können" (Stierle, 66).

In the last consequence, these revisions propose an altogether different poetry than the one envisioned in the closing lines of the version gifted to the Landgraf. This other poetry would be “richer” and “more wondrous” or “more miraculous” than before:

Johannes. Christus. Diesen möcht'
 Ich singen, gleich dem Herkules, oder
 Der Insel, welche vestgehalten und gerettet,
 [...] Das geht aber
 Nicht. Anders ists ein Schiksaal. Wundervoller.
 Reicher, zu singen. (vv. 151-7)

Again, the poem faces an inability to go somewhere: “Das geht aber nicht.” A singing of Christ (and John, perhaps)³²⁵ that would be like a singing of a “vestgehalten und gerettet” island, is impossible. No singing of Christ can hold firmly or steadily; it is never in a state of salvation where the saving has already occurred. The fate of song is different: more wondrous and miraculous, since to speak of something one cannot grasp and hold steady goes beyond *com-prehension*, is strictly incomprehensible. It is this incomprehensibility that marks the turning of the poverty of Patmos into a greater wealth: singing Christ must achieve the incomprehensible by making more out of less, by turning diminution into riches.

This “anders” poetry has a precondition, and this precondition, in fact, must be grasped and comprehended:

[...] Begreifen müssen
 Diß wir zuvor. Wie Morgenluft sind nemlich die Nahmen
 Seit Christus. (vv. 162-4)

The three modulations of air—warmth, wind, smell—are replaced by an altogether different modulation, one that also alters the notion of a medial modulation: *Morgen-*. The medium of the

³²⁵ “Diesen” is either a plural dative, referring to John and Christ and expressing the notion of a singing *for* them, or an accusative singular, referring only to Christ and thus singing of or about Christ, or a simple “singing Christ.”

late poems is no longer one worked over according to a tripartite *Wechsel* that would move through the naïve, heroic, and ideal tones to fulfill its onto-poetological task of establishing a more thorough, *durchgängigere* unity. Faced with *Unzugangbarkeit*, the goal of *Durchgängigkeit* of the modulated medium is abandoned, and the *Gang* of the poem changes.

This “Morgenluft,” however, is marked by an irreducible ambiguity. On the one hand, “Morgenluft” is the air of the morning and the dawn, of the beginning of something new that has already begun; echoes of the “matinal” smell of spring developed above reverberate in these verses. But on the other hand, it is also the air of *morgen*, of the indexical tomorrow—and as such, always still to-come. The word “Morgenluft” merely marks and announces an altogether different air, whose only determination is that its determinations are still outstanding.³²⁶ All prior modulations of the medium, along with their ontological or poetological functions, are superseded by this modulation that remains to-come.³²⁷

The lines just quoted develop a specific claim with respect to this to-come: in this different and “wundervoller” poetry, all *names* open unto a radically undetermined future. It is names that are like “Morgenluft,” that is, their determinations remain to-come.³²⁸ All names only

³²⁶ A similar but by no means identical moment can be found in “Friedensfeier,” at the beginning of the tenth stanza: “Leichtathmende Lüfte/verkünden euch schon.” Cf. the analysis proposed above.

³²⁷ “Morgenluft” might also be read to stand in relation to “Morgenland,” to the East and the orient. The air of Patmos, as an intermediary island, transforms Asia: this new morning stands in-between the *Morgenland* and the *Abendland*. It is from this in-between position that futurity can emerge. This would oppose, in certain respects, Heidegger’s insistence on the possibility of renewal grounded in the *Abendland* (with all the latent and not so latent nationalistic and racializing overtones that Derrida and others have shown) that he sees in the poetry, heavily influenced by Hölderlin, of Georg Trakl; see Heidegger, “Die Sprache im Gedicht,” especially his closing claims.

³²⁸ A more extensive interpretation of these lines would take into account the difficult development of Hölderlin’s thought concerning the nature of names from the important passage dedicated to this question in *Hyperion* onwards. Wolfgang Binder has written extensively on this question, in particular in “Hölderlin’s Namenssymbolik” where he distinguishes a “good” naming from a “bad” naming in relationship to the question of positivity and determinacy: “Ein überlieferter, konventionell nachgesprochener Name, sei es eines Dings, eines Menschen oder eines Gottes, gehört in die Sphäre des ‚Gesetzten‘, des ‚Positiven‘ und bloß ‚Angenommenen‘, das, ehe es Gesetz wurde, lebendig und wahr

announce the coming of something new, something not yet determined—they name only that their naming is still to come. The tropological structure of these verses, however, complicates this correspondence between “Morgenluft” and names: “*Wie Morgenluft sind nemlich die Nahmen.*” Recalling the “gleichwie” of the simile in “Friedensfeier,” the *wie*-structure of this simile produces a bifurcation: the medium of air and the medium of language are alike—but only in the medium of language, which alone can produce this simile. The *figura etymologica* repeating the etymon of “nemlich” and “Nahmen,” which comes to replace the previously used figure of this type, “ein Bild zu bilden,” highlights that the simile concerning the character of names is constituted by an operation of naming—but this very naming remains to-come and undetermined. To the demand of a song that would hold steady and grasp (*vesthalten*), that would determine names through its poetic means, “Patmos” responds: “Das geht aber/Nicht.” What must be grasped first and foremost, a priori (“Begreifen müssen/Diß wir zuvor”) is precisely the withdrawal of names from all grasping. Any poetic determination of names, even a determination of the very word *Morgenluft*, must show the to-come character of just this determination—hence the irreducible ambiguity in the meaning of “Morgenluft” as morning and to-morrow. In short, poetry names that its own naming, too, remains to-come.

Morgenluft thus rigorously marks the *opening* unto a future of all determination. This opening function is also indicated by the only other use of this word in the extant writings of the

gewesen sein mag, die Nachgeborenen aber mit starrer Regel drückt und den Lebensgeist ihrer Epoche zu ersticken droht” (Binder, “Namenssymbolik,” 105). And: “Dieses gute Nennen kann nun folgerecht nur ein negatives, d. h. ein namenloses Nennen sein. Aber die formale Negativität ist in Wahrheit äußerste Sinnfülle: es ist ein Nennen aus Natur; natura, nicht positione, wird hier genannt” (Binder, 107). Binder’s analysis of the passage from “Patmos” will be quoted and analyzed below.

late Hölderlin;³²⁹ the thrust of this earlier passage from “Germanien,” however, strongly contrasts with the revised “Patmos:”

O trinke Morgenlüfte,
 Bis daß du offen bist
 Und nenne, was vor Augen dir ist,
 Nicht länger darf Geheimnis mehr
 Das Ungesprochene bleiben
 Nachdem es lange verhüllt ist; (Germanien, KA 1, 336-7)

In these verses of “Germanien” (the rest of the stanza seems to weaken and even take back the demand voiced here),³³⁰ the opening of *Morgenlüfte* appears to be preparatory for the exhortation to name the “secret” that is no longer allowed to remain “[u]ngesprochen[.]” By contrast, the “Morgenluft” (in the singular) of “Patmos” does not indicate that any unspoken secret would finally be spoken; it is not an opening onto a final naming of truth or Parousia. Rather, it opens precisely onto that which is *not* “vor Augen dir ist:” as will be developed in greater detail below, it opens onto that which cannot be seen and cannot be, at least in a visual sense, appear or be presented.

The enjambed addition “Seit Christus” unfolds the fate of names on Patmos in greater precision: “Wie Morgenluft sind nemlich die Nahmen/Seit Christus.” As Wolfgang Binder has argued with respect to this passage:

seit Christus erzählt die Geschichte nicht mehr geschlossene Geschichten, wofür die Mythen des Herakles und Peleus als Beispiele dienen, sondern unabsehlich offene Ereignisse, die ‚reicher, zu singen‘ sind. Im Horizont der Heilsgeschichte, die alles Zeitliche ins Licht der ewigen Zukunft rückt, werden historische Gestalten, Taten und Namen zu Symbolen einer Zukünftigkeit, die wie Morgenluft in ihnen weht.³³¹

³²⁹ The early Hölderlin uses the term in a sense that seems to be non-emphatic, for instance in “An die Stille” and “Kanton Schweiz.”

³³⁰ Instead of naming the “Ungesprochene,” the following verses demand: “Dreifach umschreibe du es” (KA 1, 337).

³³¹ Binder, “Namenssymbolik,” 121.

Binder combines in this passages two ramifications of the appearance and disappearance of Christ in world history.³³² On the one hand, all events and deeds *after* Christ obtain only preliminary validity. They do not establish fixed (*vest*) historical markers or signposts but merely point to the return of Christ and the final but still outstanding Parousia.³³³ On the other hand, all events and deeds *before* Christ change status: while these had constituted the steady and continuously existing narrative that enabled the intelligibility of the world and of life (this, to be sure, is one of the main functions of myth),³³⁴ their ability to stand firm is *evaporated* by the appearance of Christ. Previously, the structure of time and space, human relations and relations between the mortals and the divine were governed in strict and firm accordance with these myths, even if they, internally, might have been dynamic. Christ, by contrast, stands for the supersession of any and all mythic fixities and their opening unto an “ungewisse” future.

This impetus to replace mythological names by a phenomenon such as “Morgenluft” is part of a larger strategy in the late Hölderlin that a number of scholars have commented on. Brigitte Duvillard, for instance, remarks apropos “Die Titanen,” which was briefly analyzed above and appears in the *Homburger Folioheft* alongside “Patmos:”

die Mythologie wird auf die Erscheinungen in der Natur hin transparent gemacht. Der Verzicht auf mythologische Personifizierungen führt dazu, daß die Götter konsequent

³³² Binder further ties his reading to the names named immediately before these verses: “Wer im Namen Christi handelt, sich z. B. nach ‚Jerusalem‘ oder ‚Canossa‘ aufmacht, dessen Name ist und macht offen, weil er mehr als die Faktizität einer historischen Person bezeichnet; er versinnbildlicht eschatologische Hoffnungen” (Binder, “Namenssymbolik,” 121).

³³³ Most commentators stress that this question of Parousia is central not just to “Patmos” but also to the other two “Christushymnen” (“Friedensfeier” and “Der Einzige”); cf., for instance: “Die Hauptproblematik dieses Korpus bildet die poetische Darstellung göttlicher Präsenz (und Absenz) als eines epiphanischen Ereignisses *in* der Geschichte, deren Zeitlichkeit, anstatt transzendent und aufgehoben zu werden, zum Herzen einer innerweltlichen Parousie werden soll” (Philipsen, “Gesänge,” 363).

³³⁴ A closer analysis of the highly complex question of myth, mythology, and demythologizing is beyond the scope of this chapter. A useful starting point for such an investigation could be found in the *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch* 1990-91, which is dedicated to the theme “Hölderlin und der Mythos.”

nach dem Himmel bezeichnet werden, was ihre atmosphärische Gestalt- und Grenzenlosigkeit unterstreicht. Die geradezu meteorologische Komponente des bewölkten oder heiteren Himmels substituiert im Titanenfragment die mythologische und die Metaphysik bedarf der Geophysik, um wahrgenommen zu werden.³³⁵

The late Hölderlin, in keeping with the intensified *Sinnlichkeit* developed above as one of the criteria of lateness, turns to meteorological and atmospheric phenomena to articulate what in myth receives determinate names: it is this “Gestalt- und Grenzenlosigkeit,” as Duvillard calls it, that nevertheless follows an exacting logic, as is being developed here, that allows the late Hölderlin to effect his reconfiguration of the shape and determination (a *Grenz-ziehung* in a precise sense) of the gods.³³⁶

Consequently, the verses “Wie Morgenluft sind nemlich die Nahmen/Seit Christus” do not limit their scope to only mythological (Greek) names or historical names or even both; they concern all names, even and especially, the name—if it is one—of “Christ.”³³⁷ The determination of this name, too, stands under the doubled “Morgen” of a morning and a to-come. Consequently, “Christ” cannot be subsumed under the demand of a “care” for a “veste Buchstab” and the interpretation of the “Bestehendes” that the complete, first version of “Patmos” delineated. Instead, Christic firmness is replaced by a lingering and transient *Weile*, as a late

³³⁵ Duvillard, “Das hymnische Fragment ‚Die Titanen‘ — von der Mythologie zur Meteorologie,” 150.

³³⁶ Peter Szondi has identified a similar tendency in the late Hölderlin: “Daß der späte Hölderlin die Eigennamen der Götter meidet, hat zum Grund, daß er sie aus den Religionssysteme in die Konkretheit ihrer Existenz in der Natur heimzuholen, in ihrem gleichen Ursprung aus der Natur zu erweisen trachtet” (Szondi, *Schriften*, 331). Ulrich Gaier, in his writings on the role of “climate” in Hölderlin, also points to a related phenomenon: “In der Bildung des Mythos [...] werden individuelle Elemente aus den ‘physischen mechanischen historischen Verhältnissen’ der bestimmten Sphäre verwendet, jedoch ins Persönlich-Menschliche gewendet [...] es werden Elemente aus den ‚intellektualen moralischen rechtlichen Verhältnissen’ der Sphäre verwendet, jedoch ins Physische gezogen” (Gaier, “Klimaerscheinungen,” 195).

³³⁷ “Christ” could be considered a *title* instead of a *name*, where presumably the logic of a title differs from that of a (proper) name. Within the context of “Patmos,” it seems justified, however, to consider “Christ” as a name. The most important biblical link between names and scent is found in the opening lines of the Song of Songs, which read in Luther’s translation: “Es riechen deine Salben köstlich; dein Name ist eine ausgeschüttete Salbe, darum lieben dich die Jungfrauen” (Song of Songs, 1:3).

revision of Patmos suggests: “Eine Weile bleib ich, sprach er” (StA 2.1, 181, v. 139). Christ stays and lingers for a bit—he *said*.³³⁸ Christ speaks himself as a while. And while he lingers, language takes on that same character: “und das Haupt/Des Täuffers gepflückt, war unverwelklicher Schrift gleich/Sichtbar auf *weilender* Schüssel.” Writing seems to resist wasting away while Christ lingers:³³⁹ that which has been plucked does not wilt in the presence of Christ—Christ slows the passing of time, for a while.³⁴⁰ Whereas in Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, the maintaining and conserving character of *weilen* was foregrounded, the *Weile* of Christ, by contrast, is introduced only so that it can pass.³⁴¹ This is one of the most provocative of the many provocations found in the revised “Patmos:” the lingering of Christ seems to replace the lingering of beauty. Or, perhaps, all lingering is inscribed into the Christic, that is, messianic context.

As a sign of eventual disappearance, the name of Christ thus differs doubly from other types of Christic signs found in Hölderlin’s poetry. On the one hand, earlier poems knew Christic signs that exist independently of the Christic name such as bread and wine, as the elegy of that

³³⁸ This is the limitation of Wolfgang Binder’s “Patmos” interpretation when he writes: “In ‚Patmos‘ tritt das Wort Christi, die gesprochene Offenbarung, gänzlich hinter seiner *geschichtlichen Erscheinung*, d. h. hinter dem Faktum zurück, daß er da war und wiederkommen wird” (Binder, *Hölderlin-Aufsätze*, 365). The word of Christ and the word “Christ” are central precisely to the question of his (dis)appearance.

³³⁹ The account of the beheading of John, given in the gospel of Mark, illuminates why John’s head would resist the passage of time in the presence of Christ. When Herod Antipas hears of Jesus’ miraculous works and his sending forth of his apostles to perform the casting out of spirits and the preaching of repentance, he believes Jesus is John resurrected: “But when Herod heard of it he said, ‘John, whom I beheaded, has been raised’” (Mark 6:16).

³⁴⁰ The centrality of hindering and slowing in Hölderlin’s late poetry is most clearly articulated in *Friedensfeier*. For a discussion of deferment in the context of (Jewish) messianism, see Gershom Scholem who writes in conclusion to his “Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism:” “Thus in Judaism the Messianic idea has compelled a *life lived in deferment*, in which nothing can be done definitely, nothing can be irrevocably accomplished. One may say, perhaps, the Messianic idea is the real anti-existentialist idea” (Scholem, “Messianic Idea,” 35).

³⁴¹ As transitory and transient, this *Weile* even borders on *Eile*: the lingering quality is almost entirely subsumed by the passing out of existence quality.

title emphasizes: “Ließ zum Zeichen, daß einst er da gewesen und wieder / Käme, der himmlische Chor einige Gaben zurück” (KA 1, 290, vv. 131-2). While wine also has an olfactory dimension, which was developed above as part of Hölderlin’s participation in the apian tradition, wine and bread function primarily according to a logic of consumption, metabolism, and transubstantiation.³⁴² The transience of the Christic name removes the Christic sign from this context of gifts that have been left behind and instead locates it in the context of *Weile*, ephemerality, and aerial modulations. On the other hand, the messianic name also does not allow for the *Bündnis* demanded of the “Zeichen” in “Friedensfeier.” No *binding* can be achieved: existing only qua disappearance, “Christ” cannot bind stably but only ever as the diminution and passing out of existence of such a binding. The name “Christ” preserves (itself) only as transient: “Christus ist also das Wort, das vergeht, und die Spur eines Wortes, in der das vergehende festgehalten ist.”³⁴³

The continuation of the verses quoted unfolds this paradox further: “Wie Morgenluft sind nemlich die Nahmen/Seit Christus. *Werden Träume.*” From the “sind” of the simile, the verses move to “werden.” On Patmos, in “Patmos,” names are not; they become. They become dreams.³⁴⁴ The sleepiness of the Asian gardens returns, spiritually repeated: not as a “negative standstill” or a dulling anesthesia but as the becoming of a virtuality. The “ermattend” character of inaccessibility, the diminishing weakness of powers gives rise to a different order of space: *T-räume* as unreal *Räume* replace the inaccessible space of the secret.³⁴⁵ Since the name of

³⁴² Cf. Hamacher, *Pleroma*, passim.

³⁴³ Hamacher, *Version*, 64.

³⁴⁴ “Der Schatten Traum, sind Menschen” reads one of Pindar’s most famous lines in Hölderlin’s translation of the eighth *Pythian Ode* (KA 2, 750, v. 136). Shadows, too, appear in “Patmos.”

³⁴⁵ For a development of the complicated relationship between literature and the secret, see Derrida, “La littérature au secret.”

Christ, Patmos's topical character is one of unreality: the awakening to reality is still to come, without unreality—in the meantime, *mean-while*—falling into anesthesia or voiding itself of becoming of “werden.”

The unreality of the dream-space demands an altered notion of phenomenality and the regime of *aisthesis* that governs it. The future of *Morgenluft*, as the description of the “more wondrous” poetry insists, is unforeseeable in a strict sense: “Unabsehlich/Seit jenem die Fabel.” Since the transient Christ whose own name introduces transience into names and breaks them open, saying is not only subtracted from prediction but the unforeseeable, air-like names replace the regime of visibility. The withdrawal from images and a weakening of visuality that was already present in the first version of “Patmos,” replacing the “ein Bild zu bilden” of Christic remembrance with the “veste Buchstab,” intensifies even more in the revised versions. The aerial regime of *Morgenluft* requires a different relation with Christ, superseding both vision and the auditory character of Patmos. This different relation has already been inscribed at the heart of both the title and the *topos* of this poem: *P-atm-os*, *Atem*, *atmen*. Instead of the presumed stability of the *Bildung* of a *Bild*, breathing replaces seeing. Only in the “atmen Othem/Der Gesänge,” to quote from “Das Nächste Beste,” does futurity become perceptible.

The aesthetic regime tied to breathing is olfaction: as developed above, air becomes perceptible in its olfactory modulation, and all olfaction depends on air. “Morgenluft,” in the oscillation of its meaning between morning and to-come, maintains a correspondingly ambiguous relationship to smell: the air of a fresh morning, to be sure, is characterized by a particular fragrance. The to-come of futurity, however, cannot be said to have a scent of its own, at least not in the literal sense of the word “scent.” Nevertheless, a faint trace of just such a scent of futurity can be found in “Patmos:” it is the name “Christ” itself that bears an olfactory trace.

The Greek *christos*, like the Hebrew *messiah* (from *mashiach*), means “the anointed one.”³⁴⁶

From the viewpoint of *Sinnlichkeit*, the operation of anointing is primarily an olfactory one, as the Hebrew Bible insists.³⁴⁷ Christ’s humanity becomes evident, indeed perceptible in the fact that he admits of olfactory modifications: the son of god who smells enables the participation of the divinity in *Sinnlichkeit*—a participation that was shown to be dependent, in “Wenn aber die Himmlischen,” precisely on humanity.

The smell of *Morgenluft* qua messianicity, that is, the smell of futurity qua messianicity, then, does not permeate Patmos materially but is rather found in the etymological trace marking the name “Christ.” This trace “repeats spiritually,” as the *Fragment* demanded, the olfactory moment that preceded it: the “Duft” of the (Asian) origin and the scent of the firm but fragrant cedar palace had to be replaced by the poor Patmos in the course of the poem yet their smells are nevertheless guarded in the spirit of the name “Christ” that appears on Patmos. Christ as a distant descendant of the Davidic dynasty (cf. the very first line of the New Testament, Matthew 1:1, and 6) thus in fact recuperates the inaccessible, “göttlichgebaute” smell of cedars: *not* the firmness of the trees but only the trace of a messianic smell, that is, of the smell of anointing.

Christus and *Morgenluft* thus stand in exact correspondence to each other. The transience of the name “Christ,” its (self-)preservation as a mere vanishing trace, finds in “Morgenluft” its

³⁴⁶ Biblical scholars generally distinguish two types of anointing in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: on the one hand, the anointing of priests, kings, and prophets (most crucially of King David who is said to have been anointed twice) that functions as a marker of the special relationship the anointed person entertains with God. On the other hand, the messiah whose arrival is still outstanding and who is endowed with the full force of Jewish messianism is also referred to as the anointed one. In the New Testament, Christ is usually thought to have been anointed twice: at incarnation and at the baptism through the Holy Spirit; neither involves a material anointing oil and he is thus considered to be *anointed in spirit*. See, De la Potterie, “L’onction du Christ,” and the sources mentioned there.

³⁴⁷ For a discussion of some of the key biblical passages supporting this claim, see Houtman, “Holy Incense and Sacred Anointing Oil.”

properly messianic articulation: only as “vergehend”, as non-*vest*, as a *Weile* passing into *morgen* can it be open to the future.³⁴⁸ In order to be *the messiah*, the messiah must not *be* (himself)—but disappear, into a tomorrow. The aerial paradigm of transient, messianic names thus seeks to answer the question “was Sprache sei, nachdem in Christus die Flüchtigkeit des Logos und die Hinfälligkeit der Gestalt offenbar wurde” (Hamacher, *Version*, 74-5). In other words, “Christus hat nicht etwas in der Zeit gestiftet, sondern er hat die Zeit geöffnet” (Binder, “Patmos-Hymne,” 95). And it is this opening of time that can be read in the olfactory trace of the name “Christ;” a name that preserves this trace not as a “veste[r] Buchstabe” but does so precisely only as disappearing and transient.

The very last turn of the late Hölderlin’s geopoetics of smell lies in the inscription of the term *Citronengeruch* into the constellation of *Morgenluft* and *Christus*: the former’s status as that which resists song but is nevertheless included in it enables the opening of messianicity in the poem. It is the ecstatic and eccentric dis-articulation of unity, which had introduced a painful fissure into both the subject and the poem, that through this very fissuring opens subject and poem onto the futurity of *Morgenluft* and *Christus*. Only through this fissuring can an opening occur; only through the dis-articulation of unity can an indeterminate, not-yet-determined future arise. The unreal space (*T-räume*) between *Citronengeruch* and *Morgenluft*, between olfactory pains and the breathing of the future, out of which an aerial-olfactory notion of the ungraspable

³⁴⁸ The necessary correlation of opening and the possibility of futurity has also been emphasized by Binder in his “Patmos” interpretation: “Grund dieser Deutung oder Umdeutung [effected in “Patmos“] ist ein heilsgeschichtlicher Entwurf, der einzig aus dem Kommen der Zukunft gedacht ist und in Christus daher nicht den Stifter eines Bundes, sondern den Öffner des Menschensinnes erblickt. Denn nur dem Offenen widerfährt Zukunft, alles Gestiftete ist ein Gesetztes und birgt die Gefahr, daß man sich darauf berufe und dabei beruhige, sich also in die Vergangenheit verschließe” (Binder, “Patmos-Hymne,” 94).

to-come emerges is the late—but not the latest—Hölderlin's last word on the unsettling power of smell.

EPILOGUE (LATEST HÖLDERLIN)

After Lateness, *Ferne*: Tending Towards Deodorization

With the *Morgenluft* of the reworked “Patmos,” Hölderlin’s geopoetics of smell and his poetic trajectory more broadly have reached an extreme point. This extremity appears to many readers of Hölderlin as an *end* point beyond which no real poetic movement is possible. Norbert von Hellingrath already proposed such an interpretation in his lecture “Hölderlins Wahnsinn” delivered in 1916. In this lecture, Hellingrath labels the phase of the revisions of “Patmos,” from which he quotes the “Morgenluft” passage, *baroque*:

auf das Barock, trifft ebenso wie auf diese Stufe Hölderlins eines zu: es ist ein Äußerstes, Letztes, es gibt kein Weiter, ja, es ist fast nicht mehr ein Letztes, schon ein ‚Darüberhinaus‘; es ist dem besonderen Duften abgeschnittener Blumen vergleichbar.³⁴⁹

In a remarkable image, Hellingrath links the “es gibt kein Weiter” of the revised “Patmos” to the fragrance of cut flowers: the late Hölderlin’s poetry, so the comparison suggests, emerges from a *Schnitt* that severs off the life source but it is precisely through this being “beyond” (*darüberhinaus*) that its peculiar characteristics can emerge. Posthumous smells, emerging once more from anthological activity, mark the poetics of *Morgenluft* as the point beyond which nothing is possible—except for, of course, the decay of these flowers; the turning of the “Duften” into the sweetly stink of putrefaction and, eventually, the complete disintegration of the bouquet and its return to the earth.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁹ Hellingrath, *Zwei Vorträge*, 69.

³⁵⁰ Echoing certain thoughts that Walter Benjamin would come to develop in *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* (which he claimed to have “entworfen” at exactly the same time, in 1916), Hellingrath points to the inevitable link between the Baroque (and hence by implication the late Hölderlin) and death: “Barock ist ein Ende, es gibt kein Weiter aus dem Barock, es gibt nur gänzlichen Umschwung, und dieser

When Hellingrath claims repeatedly “Aber ein Weiter gibt es nicht,” then the argument developed here will show that there is, in fact, an “onwards” of Hölderlin’s poetry, even if it reconfigures radically what poetry and, in particular, poetic movement and poetic treatment of “Duften” come to mean. In the century since Hellingrath’s lecture on “Hölderlins Wahnsinn,” most scholarship on the so-called “latest” Hölderlin and the question of a possibility of a “weiter” *after lateness* can be roughly assigned to one of two major methodological optics. On the one hand, the question of “madness” is foregrounded and, indeed, made the deciding criterion for how Hölderlin’s poetry can or cannot be read, and should or should not be included in his corpus. A tripartite division governs this approach: first, the latest Hölderlin’s poetry is ignored or degraded in its importance precisely because it was written by a “mad” poet; here, madness and poetry are assumed to be, often a priori, incompatible. Consequently and since Hölderlin’s madness is taken as a given, his latest poetry is dismissed.³⁵¹ Secondly, and conversely, Hölderlin’s madness is considered proof for his prophetic mission or quasi-divine status. According to this interpretation, especially popular with the George circle and certain Romantics, Hölderlin’s madness is accounted for in one of two ways: Either it is said to derive from his having been overwhelmed by the gods due to his superior closeness to them. Or, alternatively, what appears as madness to his fellow human beings is more accurately described as Hölderlin having taken leave from the world to dwell with the gods.³⁵² Despite holding

Umschwung ist meistens Tod oder Wahnsinn” (Hellingrath, *Zwei Vorträge*, 69). “Umschwung,” of course, will be one of the key words of the final pages of Benjamin’s study.

³⁵¹ Böschstein points out that the development of modern poetry undermined any conviction in such an opposition between poetry and madness: “Unser Versuch geht aber von der an Beispielen moderner Dichter gewonnen Einsicht aus, daß Geisteskrankheit und gültige Poesie einander keineswegs auszuschließen brauchen” (Böschstein, “Hölderlins späteste Gedichte,” 36).

³⁵² Much of the Romantic reception along these lines can be found in the circle around Bettina von Arnim, Achim von Arnim, and Clemens Brentano. Bettine, in particular, played a crucial role in this respect, as the passages collected in FHA 9, especially from *Die Günderröde*, show: Hölderlin is here presented as

Hölderlin's madness in a certain high regard, adherents of this interpretation tend to—somewhat paradoxically, to be sure—ignore the latest poems and instead focus on the shining through of the divine closeness in the late poems. The third interpretative option undercuts both of these positions by questioning whether Hölderlin was really mad at all. This thesis of an “edler Simulant,” first prominently proposed by Pierre Bertaux, does not always seek to deny any validity to a clinical diagnosis of mental illness but often is directed rather against establishing “normal,” that is, in this context, average-bourgeois consciousness as the measure of “health” and “sickness.”^{353, 354}

The second major methodological approach proposes to set the (clinical, pathographic) question of Hölderlin's madness aside and instead turn to the texts produced after 1806 and evaluate them without (or with only passing) reference to the poet's alleged or real mental state.³⁵⁵ Such text-based approaches either denigrate the literary quality of the latest poems, such

“der Priester des Gottes im Wahnsinn.” For a thorough overview of the romantic reception, see Kudszus, *Sprachverlust und Sinnwandel: zur späten und spätesten Lyrik Hölderlins* who also shows the various lines of convergence and divergence between the Arnim/Brentano group and the George circle. A variant of the thought that madness is an index of truth can be found in Sattler, who would surely object strenuously to being associated with the authors just named, but nevertheless maintains a certain affinity with them on this point when he writes: “Die Deszendenz seines Lebens bezeugt und beweist damit die Wahrheit des Gedankens” (Sattler, “al rovescio,” 22).

³⁵³ Cf. for a related thought Sattler: “es ist unerträglich, wenn gesagt wird, dieser Mann sei genauso vernünftig wie wir gewesen; denn das bedeutet, daß Hölderlins Dasein nicht der Gegenentwurf sein kann zu einem Wahnsinn, der – wie Michael Hamburger gesagt hat – die Erde tötet” (“Protokoll der Diskussion,” 65).

³⁵⁴ The French tradition in particular knows a further, rather complex engagement with Hölderlin's “madness” through the tradition of psychoanalysis. A milestone in this regard was Jean Laplanche's study *Hölderlin and the Question of the Father*. Laplanche closes his book with the following provocative suggestion: “A poet because he opens schizophrenia as a question, [Hölderlin] opens this question because he is a poet” (Laplanche, 118). The debate that resulted from Laplanche's work, not only in the direct engagement by Foucault and Blanchot but also, more indirectly in Derrida's writing on Artaud from roughly the same time, must be left aside here.

³⁵⁵ Sattler offers a unique but to a certain degree rather convincing justification that one can adduce for this approach: he proposes a modified version of Pascal's Wager and argues that “Bei Hölderlin lautet dieselbe Frage so: war das Wahnsinn oder ist es Wahr-Sinn? Sage ich, es war Wahnsinn, dann sperrt sich in mir etwas bei jeder Dunkelheit des Textes; dann lohnt es sich ja nicht weiterzudenken. Sage ich aber,

as in Jochen Schmidt's claims that these poems are "eigentlich spannungslos" and a mere "Baukastenspiel" (KA 1, 512), or they ascribe a valuable, perhaps even crucial position within the Hölderlinian corpus to them. The most productive and provocative version of this latter position can be found in D. E. Sattler's writings about the latest Hölderlin.³⁵⁶ In a text titled "al rovescio," Sattler argues that the two halves of Hölderlin's work "notwendig und gleichwertig zusammengehören."³⁵⁷ Their mode of belonging together—of being *bound* to each other—lies in the second half *taking back* what the first half developed: "Wie das entmündigte Leben austilgt, was an dem so dezidiert mündigen hybrid war, durchläuft sein jetziges Dichten die Phasen des früheren (gleichfalls rückwärts, wie sich zeigt) und ergänzt, was diesem an Tönen und Stimmungen fehlte."³⁵⁸ In fact, this complementary reversal must be understood, according to Sattler who here echoes in some ways Hellingrath's claim regarding an "Umschwung," as the enacting of the *thought of reversal* that can be found so prominently in the late Hölderlin before

es ist Wahr-Sinn – ob das nun wahr ist oder nicht –, dann eröffnen sich mir in dem Text unendliche und schöne Landschaften" ("Protokoll der Diskussion," 64-5).

³⁵⁶ It is Sattler's position, along with Bertaux's, that has drawn the most scorn by other scholars, which perhaps indicates their potency when compared to the more measured (but certainly extremely useful) scholarship by Böschstein, Lübke-Grothues or Philipsen. For such scorn, see, for example, David Constantine: "There are two critical attitudes which, I think, need combatting. One is Bertaux's: that Hölderlin, perhaps like Rimbaud, fell silent of his own accord and isolated himself in silence. The other is Sattler's: that in the Tübingen poems Hölderlin worked through, in reverse, all the forms and phases of the first half of his creative life, to finish, Sattler says, 'im schimmernden *Wohllaut* der letzten Gedichte, in wiedererlangter Kindheit [in the shimmering euphony of the last poems, in a childhood reattained].' Neither of these theories seems to me to make any sense whatsoever, and both, I think, do Hölderlin serious injustice. To say that a writer who (as is well known) fought with all his resources against mental collapse fell silent deliberately, seems to me merely insulting, and a hypothesis deriving from the falsest romanticism. And likewise to pretend that the rhyming quatrains signed by Scardanelli are in any sense, moral or aesthetic, a culmination" (David Constantine, *Friedrich Hölderlin*, 306; quoted in: Eldridge, 85). Both sets of criticism seem based on misunderstandings of the positions of Bertaux and Sattler; it is one of the goals of the analysis proposed here, which situates the latest poems precisely in the context of Hölderlin's corpus as such, to demonstrate the inadequacy of simply dismissing the Scardanelli poems: they do, in fact, mark a rather important moment in the development of Hölderlin's work.

³⁵⁷ Sattler, "al rovescio," 19.

³⁵⁸ Sattler, "al rovescio," 25.

1806: “In Wahrheit brach hier die Realgestalt dessen herein, was vorher nur idealer Gedanke gewesen war: ‚gänzliche Umkehr‘ als kategorisch andere Veränderung [...] Wie im Leben ist diese kathartische Bewegung, ihrer Tendenz nach, antititanisch: Umwendung zur Bescheidenheit, zu reiner Rezeptivität.”³⁵⁹ A turning—no longer intentional because it is precisely the ability to intend that is being undermined here—towards receptivity and passivity.

Partly confirming Sattler’s thesis and in keeping with the definition of “lateness” developed above, Hölderlin’s “latest-ness” will here be defined through the role of *Sinnlichkeit* in these latest poems. The thesis can consequently be indicated as follows: after 1806, Hölderlin’s poetry *tends towards deodorization*. In the pre-Scardanelli phase, merely two instances of an olfactory trope can be found in his extant poems; after 1838, however, the extant poems do not contain a single instance of olfaction. The aerial medium itself does not disappear from the poems but in fact is named frequently: that its olfactory modulation disappears, then, is even more significant.³⁶⁰ In this deodorized *Sinnlichkeit*, vision is instituted as the all-dominant sense. And under the sign of vision’s reinstated hegemony, the “double tendency” of olfactory lateness is *taken back*. Both the intensified *Durchdringung* that came to replace the unifying function of *Anschaung*, on the one hand, and the dis-articulation of unity, on the other, are attenuated and weakened to the very point of being effaced. The “unantastbare Einheitlichkeit und Ganzheit” that Jakobson diagnoses in the latest poems lies in a unity conceived of as

³⁵⁹ Sattler, “al rovescio,” 25-6.

³⁶⁰ The vocabulary of air persists while often being tied to visual descriptions such as “hellere Lüfte” (FHA 9, 72). In the Scardanelli phase, air frequently articulates the splendor of the opening vista of an “Aussicht:” “Und herrlich ist die Luft in offnen Räumen” (FHA 9, 150). On the connection between air and splendor, Böschstein writes: “Der Himmel ist der Spender von Glanz und Luft, durch welche der umfassendere Geist sich äußert. In ihm wird die Trennung von Natur und Mensch, die die Gedichte durchzieht, jeweils aufgehoben. Gleich ursprünglich leiten sich beide vom Geist der Höhe her” (Böschstein, “Hölderlins späteste Gedichte,” 40). Cf. below for an interpretation of the changed “opening” function in the latest poems.

Ein-falt: a simplicity that cannot tolerate the complex folding of lines of tension, fissure, and opening articulated by smell but instead seeks refuge in vision.

The trajectory of Hölderlin's poetry thus points to an *olfactory degree zero*. This degree zero takes the double form of a *temporal* and a *sensory* (ocular) version that Hölderlin's very last extant poem, "Die Aussicht," presents in exemplary form. The opening line of "Die Aussicht" reads: "Wenn in die Ferne geht der Menschen wohnend Leben" (FHA 9, 226). The opening words of this verse reference the opening line of an earlier poem from the latest period, in fact, a poem that is one of the only two poems that contain an olfactory trope:³⁶¹ "Wenn aus der Ferne, da wir geschieden sind" (FHA 9, 62), which Sattler edits as parts of the "Hyperion-Fragmente" and consequently dates to the first years Hölderlin spends at the Zimmer household.³⁶² In those years, Hölderlin still harbored plans to write a third part of *Hyperion*, as Sinclair reported (cf. FHA 9, 37). The deodorized end point of Hölderlin's poetic practice, his very last poem, thus stands in a tight constellation with the olfactory poetics developed here: first, it reworks what is conceivably the last olfactory moment in the Hölderlinian corpus. This moment, in turn, is inscribed in the last version of an attempt to continue *Hyperion*, which provided the very opening

³⁶¹ The other poem is "Wenn aus dem Himmel..." (FHA 9, 67), similarly written in the early years of Hölderlin's "Umnachtung." The crucial line reads: "Und Duft an wilden Heken weilet" (v. 23). This line, too, is deeply inscribed in the olfactory poetics developed above: on the one hand, the wildness of the "Heken" positions it in opposition to the image of the fragrant garden as unification of nature and culture presented by "Heidelberg;" on the other, the modification of "weilet" points to the analysis of the transience of smells found in "Patmos," which constituted, at least partly, a reconfiguration of the Kantian notion of the "lingering" of beauty.

³⁶² Jakobson similarly points out the tight connection between these two poems: "der semantische und phraseologische Bestand des der Diotima zugesprochenen Gedichts wird in den letzten, dem fiktiven Scardanelli zugeschriebenen Entwürfen weiter entwickelt und verdichtet, wie es besonders *Die Aussicht* zeigt" (Jakobson, 51). He further draws attention to the clusters of "ü" vowel, in particular in the sixth stanza that includes the word of interest here, namely "Gerüche:" "Es sei bemerkt, daß in Hölderlins späten Gedichten *Blüthe* weitere Vokale derselben Klasse anzieht [...] Vgl. besonders im Diotima-Gedicht *Wenn aus der Ferne* die sechste vierzeilige Strophe" (Jakobson, 56-7).

moment of Hölderlin's olfactory poetics through its reflections on anthology, while also pointing already to the perversion, destruction, or repetition of such anthological gestures in the life of the "mad" poet who gathers flowers and throws them into the Neckar.

The structure of "Wenn aus der Ferne," a poem written in the voice of Diotima epitomizes in many respects what Jean Laplanche in *Hölderlin and the Question of the Father* identifies as the main dialectic animating Hölderlin's poetry: "a dialectic of distance, of the nearby (*Nähe*) and the far away (*Ferne*)."³⁶³ This "Abstandsdiagnostik," according to Laplanche, becomes more and more central to Hölderlin's work and in fact comes to dominate, according to the argument proposed here, the latest poems: "This notion of distance, the inescapable peril that reappears as much in the proximity of the other as in his infinite distancing, becomes more and more one of the central concepts of Hölderlin's work, perhaps even the key to the entirety of his thought."³⁶⁴ In line with this analysis, the poem at hand opens with the evocation of a long gone past that is now distant, but out of that very distance might still harbor the potential for remembrance:

Wenn aus der Ferne, da wir geschieden sind,
 Ich dir noch kennbar bin, die Vergangenheit
 O du Theilhaber meiner Leiden!
 Einiges Gute bezeichnen dir kann (FHA 9, 62; vv. 1-4)

The opening "Wenn," so characteristic of the latest Hölderlin,³⁶⁵ introduces a farness marked by difference and separation, by the *Scheiden* of *Unterschied* and *geschieden*. By contrast, it is

³⁶³ Laplanche, *Hölderlin*, 46.

³⁶⁴ Laplanche, *Hölderlin*, 46-7.

³⁶⁵ In Böschstein's analysis of a different poem: "Es beginnt, wie ein Drittel der spätesten Gedichte, mit der Konjunktion ‚wenn‘, deren temporale oder konditionale Richtung neutralisiert wurde, derart, daß die Beschreibung eines Sachverhalts und sein verallgemeinernde Auslegung sich in der Mitte treffen [...] [ein] Zeichen einer allgemeinen, zyklisch erfahrenen Gesetzlichkeit, die durch das gegebene Bild hindurch angeschaut wird" (Böschstein, "Hölderlins späteste Gedichte," 38).

precisely as a negation of such “Ferne” that the olfactory moment in the poem is articulated. The sixth stanza, the first to shift into the mode of remembering directly, thus reads:

Wars Frühling? war es Sommer? die Nachtigall
 Mit süßem Liede lebte mit Vögeln, die
 Nicht ferne waren im Gebüsch
 Und mit Gerüchen umgaben Bäum‘ uns. (vv. 21-4)

The memory of “Einiges Gute” that the first stanza had hoped for emerges as and through the suppression of farness: “Nicht ferne.” The verb describing the smells of this closeness of the remembered *Zweisamkeit* further articulates this absence of farness: “umgaben” indicates not only that the two lovers were immersed in a fragrant, harmonious atmosphere but this being surrounded appears as a *Gabe*, a gift received from elsewhere—but from a close, nearby elsewhere that can be named (“Bäum”).³⁶⁶

In this fragrant surrounding, determinacy and distinction become attenuated and seem to approach disappearance: the *Schied* of the opening stanza and of one of the best-known lines of the late Hölderlin—“Unterschiedenes ist gut”—is dissolved into an indeterminate “Wars Frühling? war es Sommer?” In great contrast to the late Hölderlin where a word such as “Früh-ling” could be endowed with the full weight of a thought of futurity and renewal, in this latest poem the rigorous determination of time has been suspended. Whether it is spring or summer, “Abends, Morgens,” (v. 31) as a line from stanza eight reads, matters little. Similarly, art seems to dwell in (almost) unarticulated closeness with nature: “die Nachtigall/Mit süßen

³⁶⁶ Echoes, if one could say that, of smell functioning as a sweet, harmonious, and indiscriminate figure of unity as *Einfalt* can be found in Waiblinger’s epistolary novel *Phaëton*, modelled on *Hyperion*. See, for example: “Ach, und wenns dann still wird umher und immer stiller, und durch die dunkle Eiche der letzte Strahl der warmen heiligen Sonne meine glühenden Wangen küßt wie der Mund eines Mädchens [...] und wenn dann allmählich im blassen Duft auch die fernen Berge zusammenschwimmen mit dem Himmel wie eine Seele mit der andern [...] ach, da wein‘ ich wie ein Kind und drücke den lieben Homer an meine Brust und benetz‘ ihn mit meinen Tränen, und die Natur, die ewige, die liebende, lächelt mich an wie eine Mutter” (Waiblinger, *Phaëton*, 17-8).

Liede lebte mit Vögeln” (v. 22). The nightingale, not only in the tradition but also in Hölderlin’s own poem associated with poetry, the bird whose song stands for a natural outpouring of a “sweet song,” lives indiscriminately with the other birds who do not sing. Song and non-song are “with” each other, in sweetness.

The word that functions as the transition out of this sweet, olfactory memory will become the titular word of the very last poem: “Aussicht.” Reflecting on her beloved, Diotima introduces a scission into “alles Schöne” that he had held onto:

Und alles Schöne hatt’ er behalten, das
 An seeligen Gestaden, auch mir sehr werth
 Im heimatlichen Lande blühet,
 Oder verborgen, aus hoher Aussicht,

Allwo das Meer auch einer beschauen kann,
 Doch keiner seyn will. (vv. 37-42)

The sweet and harmonious dwelling of the “umgaben” of the past smell finds here its counterterm in the “hoher Aussicht” where “Doch keiner seyn will.” Once the spell of the past is broken by the introduction of a high up point from which one can behold beauty but where one does not want to dwell, the poem ineluctably moves out of memory into mourning: “Es waren schöne Tage. Aber/Traurige Dämmerung folgte nachher” (vv. 47-8).

In the second half of the latest poems, in those signed with the name “Scardanelli,” such *Trauer* disappears, at least on the surface. Instead, the word “Vollkommenheit” asserts itself more and more insistently, in one significant turn of phrase that has become a sort of watchword for scholarship on the latest Hölderlin, as a “Vollkommenheit ohne Klage.” With the disappearance of a “traurige Dämmerung” into the assertion of *Vollkommenheit*, olfaction, too, disappears. Instead, vision and with it the “Aussicht,” which was still resisted in “Wenn aus der Ferne,” gain the upper hand. Reworking the first verse of “Wenn aus der Ferne,” the opening

lines of the last extant poem of Hölderlin, titled “Die Aussicht” and in all likelihood written only days before his death, thus read:

Wenn in die Ferne geht der Menschen wohnend Leben,
 Wo in die Ferne sich erglänzt die Zeit der Reben (FHA 9, 226; vv. 1-2)

The direction of the opening line has been reversed: no longer a hope for a memory to emerge *out of farness* but life now goes “*in die Ferne.*” Phonetically, “Ferne geht” inscribes both the poet’s position at the very end of his life and the changed notion of temporality in these poems:

Fer...geht, vergeht. Time passes, in an ever same rhythm of the seasons:

Daß die Natur ergänzt das Bild der Zeiten,
 Daß die verweilt, sie schnell vorübergleiten,
 Ist aus Vollkommenheit, des Himmels Höhe glänzet
 Den Menschen dann, wie Bäume Blüth umkränzet. (vv. 5-8)

This “vorübergleiten,” the smooth and quick passing out of existence of the times while nature “verweilt,” derives from perfection and fullness (*Vollkommenheit*). All intimation of a temporality that might announce something new—all *Morgenluft*—has been lost:³⁶⁷ the loss of smell goes hand in hand with the institution of a “*leer*” (v. 3) and *vollkommen* temporality, where emptiness and perfection are but two sides of the same phenomenon.³⁶⁸ As has been remarked in the secondary literature, the Scardanelli poems know only the present tense, to a degree that all

³⁶⁷ It is instructive to compare these “simple” poems dedicated to the seasons from the mid-nineteenth century to the poetry of Eduard Mörike, who knew Hölderlin, obtained some of his papers, and wrote simple seeming poetry, some of it dedicated to the seasons, around the same time. One of his best-known poems, “Er ist’s,” in fact, also speaks of the seasons but, in stark contrast to the latest Hölderlin, maintains the link between fragrance, spring, and intimation of some new and to-come: “Süße, wohlbekannte Düfte/Streifen ahnungsvoll das Land.”

³⁶⁸ Cf. also Böschstein’s analysis: “Der Blick des Dichters haftet nie an einem Zustand. Er schaut durch jede Jahreszeit hindurch das Ganze des Zeitumlaufs, so daß alles, was sich ihm zeigt, auch sein eigenes Nochnicht- oder Nichtmehrdasein verrät” (Böschstein, “Hölderlins späteste Gedichte,” 44). As well as Pöggeler: “Diese Vollkommenheit ist eine bleibende, aber unpersönlich gewordene Gegenwart” (Pöggeler, “Vollkommenheit ohne Klage? – Der Nachklang von Hölderlins Hymnen und Elegien,” 290).

tensing seems to disappear and a sort of eternal present asserts itself—futuraity vanishes into the present.

The changed temporality finds its *sinnlich* counterpart in the triumph of vision in “Die Aussicht.” In the final word of the poem, the much belabored question of the *Kranz* returns, as do the trees of “Wenn aus der Ferne,” marking through their presence that the fragrance that was attributed to these terms previously has now been effaced: “wie Bäume Blüth’ umkränzet” (v. 8). But the “umkränzet” stands merely as a rhyme echoing the visual “glänzet” of the previous verse, suppressing any olfactory modulation of the blossom; the blossoms, too, are no longer ascribed any fragrance. This deodorized *Vollkommenheit* reflects the positionality of the poem, no longer so much a geopoetic locality but rather a mere stance or position freed from all “topographical differentiation.” It is the “Position am Fenster” that Hölderlin so often occupies that marks the “einrahmendes Zeigen,” as Bart Philipsen has termed it, of “Die Aussicht.” The subject is present only in this framing, and perspective, as a purely visual construct, asserts itself: “Das Subjekt hat sich aus dem Blickfeld entfernt [...] Die Perspektive ist rein optisch, der Horizont jene Grenze, wo die Linien der Landschaft sich einander nähern.”³⁶⁹ From this position, no closeness is admitted: smell would disrupt the carefully constructed ocular distance that allows for the claim of *Vollkommenheit* to emerge; only via this reduction to vision can the effacement of the double tendency of lateness occur and make room for a different *Sinnlichkeit* that calms the intensification and the danger of the late *Gesänge*.

Hölderlin’s last word on a poetics of smell is thus the erasure of the double threat of olfactory *Schmerzen* and *Morgenluft*; this deodorization functions through the institution of

³⁶⁹ Reitani, “Orts erkundungen,” 29.

vision as the governing paradigm of his latest poetry, epitomized in the elevation of distance and perspective—and it is precisely this question of smell’s relationship to distance and perspective that constitutes the crux of the encounter between Friedrich Nietzsche, himself a passionate reader of Hölderlin, and olfaction, as the next section will show.

Section II:

Smell and the Problem of Distance (Nietzsche)

Part I:

Nietzsche, Out of His Element

1.1. Why I Have Such Flair (and Socrates Does Not)

Ecce Homo: Behold the man. Behold the man and, above all, do not mistake him for someone he is not. This is the urgent plea with which Friedrich Nietzsche opens the prologue to his autobiographical book, if it can be called that, written in the last year of his existence as a writer: “*ich bin der und der. Verwechselt mich vor Allem nicht*” (KSA 6, 257).³⁷⁰ The urgency of this demand derives from the fact that “*man mich weder gehört, noch auch nur gesehn hat. Ich lebe auf meinen eignen Credit hin, es ist vielleicht bloss ein Vorurtheil, daß ich lebe?...*” (KSA 6, 257). In 1888, Nietzsche looks back upon the forty-four years of his life and, in the context of the slow beginning of the recognition of his work by philosophers such as Georg Brandes at the University of Copenhagen and his own increasing self-understanding as a world-historical persona, he pleads for proper recognition—without which he would have to live on his own credit, or worse, he might not be said to live at all beyond a pre-judicial judgment.

This plea for proper recognition of who he unmistakably is, however, presents itself as part of a vertiginous proliferation of personas: there is Zarathustra, of course, but also Dionysus, the “Crucified,” Nietzsche’s proclaimed death as his father and his survival as his mother (paired with the claim “*Man ist am wenigsten mit seinen Eltern verwandt*” (KSA 6, 268)),

³⁷⁰ All quotations from Nietzsche’s work are taken from the *Kritische Studien-Ausgabe* edited by Colli and Montinari; citations will be given parenthetically as “KSA” followed by the volume and page numbers, except for citations from his unpublished fragments and his letters, which will follow the citation method of the digital version of the critical edition by citing as “NF” and “BVN,” respectively. Since the vast majority of passages cited in this chapter include typographical emphasis in the original, only emphases added by the author of this chapter will be indicated.

“Schopenhauer und Wager *oder*, mit Einem Wort, Nietzsche...” (KSA 6, 317), the man who writes that “als summa summarum war ich gesund, als Winkel, als Specialität war ich *décadent*” (KSA 6, 266)—and, complicating all these claims, “Das Eine bin ich, das Andre sind meine Schriften” (KSA 6, 298). How, then, can one avoid mistaking Nietzsche for someone he is not if his masks and roles proliferate seemingly without ever coming to a halt? Where can his “der und der” quality be found? What kind of man emerges from reading Nietzsche and from Nietzsche reading himself? Trying to find Nietzsche as “der und der” must continuously reckon with this multiplication that is already present in this syntagm of his odd self-description: repeating the definite article, performing the act of deictic pointing (“ich bin der”) not once but twice, the syntagm “der und der” not so much shores up a protective definition of identity against the threat of mistake, substitution, or change (*ver-wechseln*; also always a question of exchange and value) but rather performs these very things itself.³⁷¹ Even when Nietzsche might be seen to be engaged in a defining and delimiting activity, any determination that appears at first is undercut by an inherent multiplicity that relieves such termini of their bounding quality.

One way to enter this labyrinth—a labyrinth that is as much one of the threats of mistaken identity as of the threat of identity—is to enter it anywhere whatsoever. Entering

³⁷¹ Alenka Zupančič has made the phrase “Um Mittag war’s, da wurde Eins zu Zwei” from a “Nachgesang” in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* the center piece of Nietzsche’s “philosophy of the two” as the subtitle to her book *The Shortest Shadow* states. She writes: “the moment when ‘one becomes what one is’ is not a moment of unification but, on the contrary, the moment of a pure split” (Zupančič, 25). Zupančič identifies this pure split as follows: “the ‘conceptual names’ for this split in Nietzsche are Crucified and Dionysus. However—and this is a crucial point—the difference between the two is that Dionysus is himself this very split (between the Crucified and Dionysus) [...] Dionysus is the beginning as *midday*, the moment when ‘one turns to two,’ namely, the moment of the very split or ‘becoming two’ as *that which is new*” (Zupančič, 25). The analysis proposed here asks somewhat similar questions as Zupančič but, instead of focusing on twoness, which appears as too unstable a term in Nietzsche’s work, it focuses on the question of distance, which, of course, is nevertheless heavily implicated in the possibility of twoness (and vice versa).

anywhere and following a single self-description in all its twists and turns might show, to quote the subtitle of *Ecce Homo*, “Wie man wird, was man ist.” Another way to enter the labyrinth is by the thread of a self-description that more directly concerns these questions of recognition, disclosure, and identity. Following a self-description that includes claims about the nature of both “self” and “description” enables simultaneously an explication of the twist and turns of Nietzschean development and provides insight into the status of any claim of identity or recognition.³⁷²

One self-description that fulfills such criteria and constitutes at the same time one of the most idiosyncratic—and hence perhaps most potentially revelatory—characteristics Nietzsche ascribes to himself in *Ecce Homo* can be found in the opening paragraph of “Warum ich ein Schicksal bin” that also contains his famous sentence: “Ich bin kein Mensch, ich bin Dynamit”

³⁷² The secondary literature on Nietzsche’s masks, personas, and disguises is seemingly endless. A small sampling, with respect to *Ecce Homo* and *Also sprach Zarathustra* in particular: Gianni Vattimo argues that “Nietzsche’s thought places metaphysical subjectivity in crisis and thereby opens up a new perspective, in which the relations between Being, truth and interpretation combine to produce a creative conception of man: liberated, the Dionysian consciously opts for a multiplicity of masks” (Vattimo, *Introduction*, 196). Leaving aside the difficult question of the relationship between the Dionysian and consciousness, the analysis proposed here differs from Vattimo’s at its core by precisely investigating a case of a dissolution of the possibility of such a “perspective” that would render man creative and in a position to “opt” consciously. Nicholas D. More, *Nietzsche’s Last Laugh: Ecce Homo as Satire*, claims that “Nietzsche wrote *Ecce Homo* to recast his entire corpus as a species of what I call philosophical satire: the comic attack by hyperbole on philosophy itself” (More, 3). The possibility of satire will come into question at the very end of this chapter; More also provides a detailed overview of the reception of *Ecce Homo*, see 8-18. Despite quoting some of the key passages analyzed here, More does not develop the importance of smell but merely states that Nietzsche’s appeal to smell and cleanliness functions by “evoking one of the oldest civilizing distinctions in human society” (More, 84). Cf. also Stanley Rosen, *The Mask of Enlightenment: Nietzsche’s Zarathustra*; Rosen’s book correctly recognizes that Nietzsche repeatedly encounter problems with the “rank ordering”—“It is a guiding thesis of this study that most of the incoherences in Nietzsche’s doctrines stem from his unsuccessful attempt to combine a poetic version of Kantian world constitution with a Platonic conception of the philosopher as prophet and lawgiver” (Rosen, ix)—that is so dear to him. In contrast to Rosen’s study, the analysis attempted here does not take this as evidence for Nietzsche’s failure (his “unsuccessful” attempt) but rather treats these challenges as one of the most fruitful aspects of Nietzsche’s work that deserves analysis and can, indeed, recast what “successful” thinking might be like.

(KSA 6, 365). Here, explaining his explosive, non-human, “der und der” quality, Nietzsche states: “Ich erst habe die Wahrheit *entdeckt*, dadurch dass ich zuerst die Lüge als Lüge empfand—*roch*... Mein Genie ist in meinen Nüstern...” (KSA 6, 366). This is one thread Nietzsche has laid out for us: in order not to mistake him, we need to recognize the true locus of his genius: his nostrils.^{373, 374} The discovery of truth that Nietzsche effected functions through smell. Recognizing, identifying something—disclosing its “der und der” quality—is an olfactory affair, and following this particular thread in all its labyrinthine windings will discover something about truth, lies, and the nature of discovery itself.

In other words, in one of his self-readings, Nietzsche proposes that the history of philosophy can be reconfigured and indeed exploded—“ich bin Dynamit”—by a nostril-centric genius: the discovery of truth and lie, the explosion of previous misunderstandings of the nature of truth occurs for the first time once a philosopher, if Nietzsche is one, smells. Philosophy—in

³⁷³ While some scholars have noticed the prevalence of olfactory moments in Nietzsche’s work, almost none have attempted to develop an account of it. A notable exception can be found in Eric Blondel’s work, for instance, *Nietzsche le corps et la culture*. Blondel here develops the notion of a “otorhinological” genealogy in Nietzsche that entertains some affinities with the account proposed in this chapter but differs on multiple decisive points, such as Blondel’s joining of hearing and smelling, the question of depth, and, most importantly, the treatment of the “compromising” nature of smell and the corresponding development of new smells. Cf. Blondel, *Nietzsche*, 166-189. Gaston Bachelard has proposed a reading of Nietzsche on air and smell that the third section of this chapter seeks to oppose and develop a counter-reading.

³⁷⁴ It is no accident that Nietzsche portrays his olfactory genius through recourse to an animalistic vocabulary (“Nüstern” is commonly used to refer only to an animal’s nose): when smelling, the human being lowers the barriers erected between humanity and animality; something Nietzsche was acutely aware of. One of the few thinkers who similarly recognized this is Jacques Derrida, who, in his book *L’animal que donc je suis*, states: “one would have to ask oneself *first of all* what there is about scent [*flair*] and smell in man’s relation to the *animot*—and why this zone of sensibility is so neglected or reduced to a secondary position in philosophy and in the arts” (Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I am*, 55). In a chapter titled “Derrida’s Flair (For the Animals to Follow...)” Michael Naas traces the importance of “flair” in Derrida’s work, especially in the inversion of the traditional animal-human scene, where it is now Derrida who is *seen* by his cat and must now use his sense of “flair” to find his way into the philosophical problem of the constitutive nature of the rigid exclusion of the animal from everything human. Furthermore, the relationship between “flair” and “style” is far from accidental and would constitute a central aspect of an inquiry into the relationship between Derrida and Nietzsche.

one of the many, often parodic, variants of the Nietzschean retelling of its history—becomes an olfactory affair, and understanding *Ecce Homo*'s description of a nostril genius requires an understanding of how such a transformation could have taken place.

Not only truth as discovered by Nietzsche's lie-detecting nose but also wisdom itself, the σοφία of philosophy, stands in relation to Nietzsche's nose. In *Götzen-Dämmerung*, written the same year as *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche diagnoses "Das Problem des Sokrates" as the question of the worth or *value* of life. The Socratic doubting of this value—crystalized in the pithy exclamation "Selbst Sokrates hatte es satt" (KSA 6, 67)—appears as a sickness that manifests itself in the stench of putrefaction: "Waren sie [the wise men] vielleicht allesammt auf den Beinen nicht mehr fest? spät? wackelig? décadents? Erschiene die Weisheit vielleicht auf Erden als Rabe, den ein kleiner Geruch von Aas begeistert? ..." (KSA 6, 67).³⁷⁵ Inspected "aus der Nähe," according to the claim of this passage, Socratic wisdom seems to have appeared on earth—the very site of Nietzsche's polemical contestation—by being inspired by a "little smell."³⁷⁶

³⁷⁵ These "wackelige" legs, indicating a lost ability to stand firmly on the ground, foreshadow the central concern of the question of the *orienting* quality of the earth, which the section on the "smell of the earth" will develop.

³⁷⁶ Much scholarship exists concerning the relationship between Nietzsche and Socrates. One example would be Alexander Nehamas's influential *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, where Socrates is central to Nehamas's understanding of Nietzsche who labels him Nietzsche's "real antipode," primarily because "Nietzsche disagrees with Socrates, issue for issue, on every question about the content and the method of philosophy, yet he is engaged in exactly the same effort of affecting people's lives: the two are constantly and directly competing with one another" (Nehamas, 26-7). Yet this opposition is far from secure: "What is necessarily ambivalent is his reaction to the gnawing question whether the protruding eyes that stare back at him when he squints at Socrates' portrait may not be his own, whether in looking at Socrates he may not after all be looking into a mirror" (Nehamas, 30). While this competitive or agonal relationship seems beyond doubt, the question of the centrality of "affecting people's lives" (beyond a more trivial reading on which perhaps everyone is engaged in such an endeavor) is much more difficult: Nietzsche's professions to be born posthumously and awaiting his "übermorgen;" his writerly activity that lacks any dialogic quality as it marks Socrates who in turn never wrote; the vastly different political, cultural, and medial contexts between the two thinkers; all of these are just some of the salient differences between the two. The analysis of the relationship between Socrates and Nietzsche proposed in this chapter, by contrast, traces the strategic moves Nietzsche employs in this *agon*, in particular with respect to the two very different images of Socrates that emerge from Plato and Aristophanes.

Nietzsche's nostrils thus stand in direct competition with Socrates's famous snub nose, which Socrates himself, in Xenophon's *Symposium*, proclaimed to be particularly adept at picking up scents: "For your nostrils look down toward the ground, but mine are wide open and turned outward so that I can catch scents from all about."³⁷⁷ While his nose might not be considered as beautiful as Critobulus's straight nose, Socrates's is more functional: not merely turned downwards but into multiple dimensions, exposed to his surroundings in a manner that allows him to pick up on something the merely beautiful (Critobulus) cannot smell. When Nietzsche claims to be an olfactory genius he performs a double gesture: on the one hand, he positions himself in the very arena that Xenophon's Socrates claimed for himself, the realm of being particularly discerning when it comes to olfaction; on the other, he claims to outdo Socrates and smell something Socrates did not detect—and this is precisely the smell of Socrates himself and the putrefaction inherent in Socratism.

In addition to this competition with the Xenophonic Socrates,³⁷⁸ a number of commentators have pointed out that while Nietzsche attacks Socrates as he appears in one of the other two main sources of the tradition—Plato—, his position vis-à-vis the third source, Aristophanes, is considerably more laudatory: Aristophanes saw something about Socrates that escaped others, and it is this insight that Nietzsche's own image of Socrates draws on.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁷ Xenophon, *Symposium*, 5.6.

³⁷⁸ Xenophon was well-liked by Nietzsche who read his *Memorabilia* with great delight. Beyond the remark on Socrates's snub nose quoted above, the further extent of Nietzsche's relationship to Xenophon can be left aside here.

³⁷⁹ A number of commentators have pointed to the importance of Aristophanes. For a general overview of Nietzsche's writings and notes on the comedian, see Luciano Canfora "Nietzsches Aristophanes," which mostly focuses on the innovations Nietzsche can be said to have contributed to the scholarship on Aristophanes. Curiously, Canfora does not mention the importance of Socrates in this context and ignores *The Clouds* and instead focuses on (the admittedly important) comedy *The Frogs*. Leo Strauss, by contrast, focusing on *The Clouds*, explicitly ties the question of Nietzsche's relationship to Aristophanes to the problem of Socrates: "Aristophanes' political posture seems to foreshadow Nietzsche's political

Throughout the early 1870s, Nietzsche takes and reworks notes on Aristophanes's Socrates that issue into two main claims. First, "Es wird Aristophanes Recht gegeben: Socrates gehörte zu den *Sophisten*." (NF-1869,1[44]).³⁸⁰ Second, Socrates belongs to a tripartite constellation of *decadence* that includes the decline of tragedy³⁸¹ and music: "Der sicher zugreifende Instinct des Aristophanes hat gewiss das Rechte erfasst, wenn er Sokrates selbst, die Tragödie des Euripides und die Musik der neueren Dithyrambiker in dem gleichen Gefühle des Hasses zusammenfasste und in allen drei Phänomenen die Merkmale einer degenerirten Cultur witterte" (KSA 1, 112). Both of these claims constitute a significant part of the image of Socrates as Nietzsche himself presents it—with the second claim being articulated in olfactory terms: Aristophanes "witterte" the characteristics of degenerating culture in Socrates.³⁸² In other words, he sniffed out the true

posture. Yet, whereas Aristophanes presents the young Socrates, Nietzsche's attack is directed against the Platonic Socrates: Nietzsche [...] uses Aristophanes' critique of the young Socrates as if it had been meant as a critique of the Platonic Socrates" (Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, 8). Underscoring the importance of Aristophanes for the late Nietzsche's work, and indirectly of Aristophanes's relevance to Nietzsche's claims to an olfactory genius, Matthew Meyer, in "The Comic Nature of *Ecce Homo*," has argued that "Nietzsche's 1888 writings should be understood as a Dionysian comedy that parallels important formal structures of Aristophanes' early plays" (Meyer, 32). Meyer, however, considers neither *The Clouds* nor the role of Socrates in this context. For an analysis of Nietzsche's relationship to the other central figure of the nineteenth century who highly esteemed the insights contained in Aristophanes's treatment of Socrates, Søren Kierkegaard, see Michael Stern, "Clouds: The Tyranny of Irony over Philosophy." With respect to Nietzsche, Stern, however, privileges Xenophon and investigates the importance of *The Clouds* only for Kierkegaard. Lastly, for an argument concerning the influence Aristophanes—via Schlegel—might have had on Nietzsche's image of Euripides (who, as will be emphasized below, is linked very closely to Socrates for Nietzsche), see: Albert Henrichs, "The Last of the Detractors: Friedrich Nietzsche's Condemnation of Euripides."

³⁸⁰ Cf. also the claim in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* "dass Sokrates als der erste und oberste *Sophist*, als der Spiegel und Inbegriff aller sophistischen Bestrebungen bei Aristophanes erscheine" (KSA 1, 88).

³⁸¹ Aristophanes, as a writer of comedies, attains an elevated status in Nietzsche's reflections on the end of tragedy, which a longer investigation of their relationship would have to develop: "Die aristophanische *Komödie* ist die Vernichtung der alten dramatischen Poesie. Mit ihr schließt die alte Kunst ab" (NF, 1870,5[101]).

³⁸² This is the only occurrence of "wittern" in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and in fact one of only very few smell-related terms in that text.

decadent core of the philosopher, thus providing Nietzsche with a model for his own nostril-centric genius that detects Socratic putrefaction.

Nietzsche's high estimation for the comedian continues into his late work, emphasizing the value of the Aristophanic approach to the "Socratic problem." In *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, Aristophanes indeed appears as the antidote to Plato, as that which enabled even Plato himself to live: savoring an anecdote that Aristophanes was found "unter dem Kopfkissen seines Sterbelagers," Nietzsche writes about Plato: "Wie hätte auch ein Plato das Leben ausgehalten — ein griechisches Leben, zu dem er Nein sagte, — ohne einen Aristophanes! —" (KSA 5, 47). If the problem of Socrates is the problem of naysaying and doubting the value of life, then Aristophanes—with his *Witterung* and his comedies—provides a remarkable antidote that Nietzsche adds to his arsenal of weapons in his own fight with Socratism.

Since Aristophanes wrote about Socrates mainly in one comedy, *The Clouds*, his claims about Socrates's decadence and sophistry, and the Aristophanic approach to the central problem of Socrates and the value of life, more generally, must be seen in the context of the way in which Socrates is presented in that comedy. *The Clouds*, in fact, advances a claim of great significance in this context: Socrates, according to Aristophanes, is an *aerial being*. When Socrates first appears on stage, "airborne" (l. 217) like a god, he proclaims "I am walking upon air and attacking [*periphronō*] the mystery of the sun" (l. 225).³⁸³ His denials of the old divinities of Zeus and the other Olympian gods in favor of "our divinities, the Clouds" (l. 253) issue into his tripartite evocation of "Respiration and Chaos and Air and all that's holy [*μὰ τὴν Ἀναπνοὴν μὰ τὸ Χάος μὰ τὸν Ἄέρα*]" (l. 628). At various points the play drags, often through Socrates's

³⁸³ The translation quoted here is from Aristophanes, *Lysistrata and Other Plays*, transl. by Alan H. Sommerstein.

main interlocutor, Strepsiades, these aerial proclamations into the corporeal and obscene realm, thus simultaneously extending the reach of the import of air and establishing analogies between meteorological and bodily phenomena, for instance when Socrates and Strepsiades liken “celestial vortexes” and the thunder they produce to farts (l. 385-95). Without further developing the metaphorology of *The Clouds* here, it is clear that Aristophanes thought of Socrates —and thus bequeathed this part of his *Sokratesbild* to Nietzsche—as integrally located in the element of air: Socrates hovers above the earth (the question of the distance to the earth is crucial to the “smell of the earth” investigated below); he uses incense burning to elicit the appearance of aerial, divine formations that are constantly threatened to fall into belches; his sophistry and decadence are tied to his appeals to “respiration and chaos and air” as replacing the old mythologies of the Olympian gods (not dissimilar to the move from mythological phenomena to meteorological, aerial phenomena in the late Hölderlin, above all the aerial Christus of “Patmos”). This is the Aristophanic insight—the Aristophanic *Witterung*—passed on to Nietzsche: any solution to the “Problem des Sokrates” must take up this *agon* with the philosopher in the sphere of air, breathing, chaos [Χάος], and smell.

To return to Nietzsche’s own nose, then, it can be said that it smells the putrefaction in the “little smell” that Socrates’s nose, when bringing wisdom to earth, picked up on. The carrion-smelling raven of wisdom, flying at the beginning of a book concerned with a *Dämmerung*, constitutes the ornithological counterimage to the owl of Minerva, as it has long been associated with the wisdom and perspicuity of philosophy.³⁸⁴ The contrasting force of the carrion-smelling raven to the serene and wise owl gains clearer contours when seen in comparison to Hegel’s

³⁸⁴ This point is also made in the *Nietzsche-Kommentar to Götzen-Dämmerung*: “Metaphorologisch relevant ist, dass der Rabe die Eule, damit ein Aasvogel einen nachtaktiven Raubvogel, als Emblem der Philosophie ersetzt” (*Nietzsche-Kommentar*, 265).

deployment of the owl in his famous preface to his *Philosophy of Right*.³⁸⁵ “Als der *Gedanke* der Welt erscheint sie [die Philosophie] erst in der Zeit, nachdem die Wirklichkeit ihren Bildungsprozeß vollendet und sich fertig gemacht hat [...] die Eule der Minerva beginnt erst mit der einbrechenden Dämmerung ihren Flug.”³⁸⁶ Philosophy, according to Hegel, only appears as the thought of the world once the world has been formed: the *Erscheinung* of wisdom in the world derives from (a stage of) the world having completed itself and having been fully actualized; it appears “spät.” The Socratic raven, like the owl, appears at dusk — but not because the world has actualized a certain stage but because it is *decaying*. Socrates and Plato, *Götzen-Dämmerung* insists, are “Verfalls-Symptome” (KSA 6, 68). Philosophy feasts on putrefaction and is lured into appearing on earth by the smell of carrion. And its inspiration, its spirit (*begeistert*) derives precisely from the stench of this decadence.

1.2. Smelling, *aussergewöhnlich*

Anagrammatically inscribed into this raven, one of only two references to this animal in Nietzsche’s writings,³⁸⁷ is his opposition to the understanding of philosophy as the august and

³⁸⁵ A number of commentators have argued for the opposition Hegel-Nietzsche to be important to Nietzsche interpretations. Cf. for instance, Gary Shapiro’s *Nietzsche’s Earth: Great Events, Great Politics*, which seeks to show how Nietzsche’s emphasis on the earth contrasts with Hegel’s concept of “world;” Robert Gooding-Williams’s claim in *Zarathustra’s Dionysian Modernism*, regarding the “philosophy of the future” found in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, that “the plot of *Zarathustra* is structured as if to show the kind of text the *Phenomenology* would be [...] were it written as a preface not to logic, but to Nietzsche’s modernist philosophy of the future. *Zarathustra* can be interpreted as a recreation of the *Phenomenology* that expresses a modernist rejection of traditional philosophy” (Gooding-Williams, 27). Not expressly taking a stance on these questions, the claim regarding the raven/owl opposition here seeks to draw attention to the differing understanding of the importance of the “spät”, the *Dämmerung* aspect of any philosophy of the future one might find in Nietzsche.

³⁸⁶ Hegel, *Werke* 7, 28.

³⁸⁷ The other is found in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*: “Störungen des Denkers. — Auf Alles, was den Denker in seinen Gedanken unterbricht (stört, wie man sagt), muss er friedfertig hinschauen, wie auf ein neues Modell, das zur Thür hereintritt, um sich dem Künstler anzubieten. Die Unterbrechungen sind die Raben, welche dem Einsamen Speise bringen” (KSA 2, 700).

serene appearance of wisdom: *Rabe, aber*. Like the raven and like Socrates, Nietzsche will smell: *but* his smelling will detect putrefaction at the core of proclaimed wisdom. The *Ecce Homo* passage proclaiming Nietzsche's olfactory genius in fact juxtaposes smelling with contradicting: "Ich erst habe die Wahrheit *entdeckt*, dadurch dass ich zuerst die Lüge als Lüge empfand—*roch*... Mein Genie ist in meinen Nüstern... Ich widerspreche, wie nie widersprochen worden ist und bin trotzdem der Gegensatz eines neinsagenden Geistes" (KSA 6, 366).

Nietzsche's smelling and sniffing genius enables him to contradict in an unprecedented manner without becoming a no-saying spirit: as olfactory genius, Nietzsche is the opposite, the *Gegen-satz* that counters all naysayers; he thus stands, once again, in the tradition of the Aristophanic *Witterung* that could counteract even Plato's naysaying—and the logic of this unusual *Widerspruch* might be said to be predicated on his activity of smelling.

Nietzsche's yes-saying *Widerspruch* is most incisively and perhaps in a sense always directed against his contemporaries. It instantiates and produces his *untimeliness*, his being out-of-joint with his time on the mode of a not-yet. Recognizing this untimeliness is part and parcel of not mistaking Nietzsche, is constitutive, in fact, of Nietzsche not mistaking himself and expecting something that would not correspond to who he is: "Aber es wäre ein vollkommener Widerspruch zu mir, wenn ich heute bereits Ohren *und Hände* für *meine* Wahrheiten erwartete: dass man heute nicht hört, dass man heute nicht von mir zu nehmen weiss, ist nicht nur begreiflich, es scheint mir selbst das Rechte. Ich will nicht verwechselt werden, — dazu gehört, dass ich mich selber nicht verwechsele" (KSA 6, 298). This untimeliness scrambles the order of birth and death: "Ich selber bin noch nicht an der Zeit, Einige werden posthum geboren" (KSA 6, 298). Nietzsche's coming lies in a time after his disappearance: his untimeliness positions him—as the one he is qua his "der und der" quality—outside of his element, where "element" would be

understood, in a first step, as the environment, surrounding or milieu in which he is located and rooted, to which he *belongs*.³⁸⁸

This mode of Nietzsche not belonging to “his” time finds a sensory equivalent in his claims about olfaction. His olfactory genius, so *Ecce Homo* claims, lies in the fact that he made the discovery of the truth about lies “*zuerst*,” no one else before him, none of his contemporaries could smell what he smelled. The sensory logic of olfaction explains such pervasive non-perception, such rampant ignorance of a smell by appealing to *habit*:³⁸⁹ we do not smell (anymore) what we are used to. Something as familiar to me as, for instance, my own body odor cannot appear to me in olfactory perception; my habituation precludes my sensory access to the most familiar. The sensory equivalent to Nietzsche’s untimeliness, then, lies in his being out of step with the *sensory habits* of his time. In other words, when smelling, Nietzsche is out of “his” element, where it is precisely not *his* element. Nietzsche’s access to *air* is

³⁸⁸ This untimeliness produces extraordinary challenges for Nietzsche’s readers; his olfactory genius might not yet be legible: “Ich selber bin noch nicht an der Zeit, Einige werden posthum geboren” (KSA 6, 298). (Similarly in the prologue to the contemporaneous *Der Antichrist*: “Dies Buch gehört den Wenigsten. Vielleicht lebt selbst noch Keiner von ihnen. Es mögen die sein, welche meinen Zarathustra verstehn: wie *dürfte* ich mich mit denen verwechseln, für welche heute schon Ohren wachsen? — Erst das Übermorgen gehört mir. Einige werden posthu<m> geboren” (KSA 6, 167). Nietzsche links the time of his reading to the all-decisive prefix *-über*: not “morgen” but “über-morgen” will he find readers.) And it might very well be appropriate that no one can read yet: Nietzsche’s books must be untimely and out-of-joint if they seek to oppose his time. Nevertheless, Nietzsche envisions “das Bild eines vollkommnen Lesers:” “ein Unthier von Muth und Neugierde [...] etwas Biegsames, Listiges, Vorsichtiges, ein geborner Abenteurer und Entdecker” (KSA 6, 303). This *Unthier*, this adventuring and discovering spirit would try to pick up, following the animal that Nietzsche is, the scent of Nietzsche’s writing. An early missive from *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* states: “Geruch der Worte. — Jedes Wort hat seinen Geruch” (KSA 2, 604). Sometimes, then, reading is like smelling and making good on the promise of readability depends on having the right kind of flair.

³⁸⁹ To a certain degree, this is true of other senses, too: I might not see or hear something I am used to, such as the subway’s noise outside my apartment. The difference, however, lies in the fact that I can overcome this failure of perception by redirecting my attention, if someone points it out to me, for example. This is not true of a habitual smell.

“ausser-gewöhnlich;”³⁹⁰ while he must be part of the aerial element in which smelling takes place, he is nevertheless outside of it. Whatever else might be implied in his reference to being a sensory “genius,” it is precisely a question of a being that is “aussergewöhnlich” as *unusual*, rare and exceptional.

Both modes of Nietzsche being out of his element—temporal untimeliness and sensory “Aussergewöhnlichkeit”—constitute a *distance* between him and his contemporaries. In his self-reading of the *Untimely Meditations* in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche claims that this untimely writing precisely “drückt das *Distanz-Gefühl* aus” (KSA 6, 321). Similarly, being unhabituated puts distance between the unhabituated being and those who are habituated. More profoundly, habits are distance-reducing devices: through my habits, my present I is close to and resembles my past and future I; in my habits shared with others, I am close to them, and we approach a certain homogeneity.

Yet, the distance involved in temporal untimeliness and sensory “Aussergewöhnlichkeit” functions in slightly diverging ways. The former depends on a complex understanding of time or, more precisely, the *future*: Nietzsche’s time is *yet to come*. Whether this to-come is understood as, say, the promise of actual futural readers or is rather an indeterminate openness to the future, perhaps a form of futurity as such, the structure of untimeliness or anachronism functions through the double mode of survival and “living on one’s own credit” through which the *transport* out of the temporal milieu occurs. Unhabitual smelling, by contrast, while also

³⁹⁰ Nietzsche uses this word repeatedly in the late 1870s, mostly in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*. See for instance: “*Das einzige Menschenrecht. — Wer vom Herkömmlichen abweicht, ist das Opfer des Aussergewöhnlichen; wer im Herkömmlichen bleibt, ist der Slave desselben. Zu Grunde gerichtet wird man auf jeden Fall*” (KSA 2, 330). The *Aussergewöhnliche* is that which diverges from the *Herkommen*, the *Herkunft*: the exceptional or unusual obtains this quality by emerging from its background. That Nietzsche links the *Aussergewöhnliche* to the double meaning of “zu grunde”, as destruction and going to the ground, will resonate with a number of the analyses proposed below.

involving a temporal aspect (habits are a matter of time), cannot at bottom be constituted by a distance deriving from an extension into the future: there is no obvious way in which someone could exist—as a *sensory being*—in the future; an escape out of the aerial element cannot be based on a temporal operation if the *sensory* constitution of such a being is at stake. Neither can Nietzsche’s sensory distance be spatial as a taking leave from and abandoning of his contemporaries: as will be developed in detail in the central section of this chapter, smell presupposes *proximity*; one has to be near something or someone to smell. The “ausser-” of Nietzsche’s *aussergewöhnlich* olfactory genius must not be construed as a being outside that would be a “Ferne,” a type of far-awayness.

Instead, the distance of *aussergewöhnlich* smelling must derive from a liquidation, a dissolution or at least a rendering mobile and “shortening” of habits, analogous to what in physics would be called a *phase change* (and what Nietzsche will call the “explosion” of smell): Nietzsche can smell unusually because he mobilizes what has become calcified; because he destroys what has become stifling in its familiarity. An aphorism titled “*Kurze Gewohnheiten*” in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* states:

Ich liebe die kurzen Gewohnheiten [...] Dagegen hasse ich die *dauernden* Gewohnheiten und meine, dass ein Tyrann in meine Nähe kommt und dass meine Lebensluft sich *verdickt*, wo die Ereignisse sich so gestalten, dass dauernde Gewohnheiten daraus mit Nothwendigkeit zu wachsen scheinen (KSA 3, 536).

Long-lasting habits “thicken” (“*verdickt*”) the vital element of air; this thickness precludes nimbleness as well as non-tyrannical plurality and instead substitutes necessity. In other words, a habit produces continuity and sameness, functioning as a bulwark against newness and change. In my habits, there is no distance between me and myself, there is only “der,” no “der und der.” Newness, by contrast, puts distance between the present and the past; it doubles me, repeats me

with a difference. The distance of olfactory genius as *aussergewöhnliches* smelling is thus the distance of change or becoming; its unhabitual character precludes the thickening of “Lebensluft.”

It is in this sense that Nietzsche explains the guiding principles of his “polemical” dueling, his aggressive attacks in his writing. The first principle of his “Kriegs-Praxis” (KSA 6, 274) reads: “ich greife nur Sachen an, die siegreich sind” (KSA 6, 274).³⁹¹ Only what had “success” in the realm of thought, culture, or *Bildung*, that is, only that which has come to dominate a time and shape its habits of thinking, living, perceiving, is worthy of being attacked. Perpetual aggression as a continuous overcoming of what has established itself—and this emphatically includes Nietzsche “himself,” most splendidly perhaps in a text such as his “Versuch einer Selbstkritik,” an experimenting, testing attempt to overcome himself but also in the continued extension of a book such as *Also sprach Zarathustra*—is at the heart of Nietzsche’s ability to be *aussergewöhnlich*. His olfactory genius derives from this agonistic relationship to anything that might produce long-lasting habits.

1.3. Nietzsche contra Theory

One of the habits that Nietzsche opposes, indeed one of the most formidable opponents any philosopher could have chosen to attack, is the habit of privileging vision over all other

³⁹¹ Nietzsche’s repeated, explicit, and forceful insistence on his polemical and “aggressive” style—alongside the enactment of such an approach in most, perhaps even all his writings—should caution strongly against any reading of Nietzsche that claims to discover an “ecumenical” Nietzsche, as some recent investigations into the use of Nietzsche for ecological thought have attempted. (See del Caro: “Nietzsche’s ecumenical perspective, which in the simplest terms is the perspective that speaks for the entire human species and the entire earth” (Del Caro, *Grounding the Nietzsche Rhetoric of Earth*, 255)). While the importance of the earth, even the shared earth, is undoubtedly key for Nietzsche (and will be analyzed below), an emphasis on conservation or reconciliation as a (definitive) overcoming of strife seems incompatible with the centrality of *polemics* and overcoming in Nietzsche.

senses. Tied up in Nietzsche's analysis in particular with the Socratic type, the "siegreich" history of the eye—with its attendant vocabulary of seeing or beholding in clarity the truth, of a visual *eidos*, and phenomenality understood through luminosity and visibility—might indeed be considered of a rare continuity and dominance in the history of philosophy. Nietzsche's grand claim of an olfactory genius must be understood as a strategy in his duel with ocularcentrism, as a decisive charge that is supposed to express his "ganze Kraft, Geschmeidigkeit und Waffen-Meisterschaft" (KSA 6, 274). As such, it is part of an analysis of the interplay between philosophy and a philosopher's sensory constitution that Nietzsche develops, expands, and refines throughout his writing career, from the very beginnings in the 1870s onwards. The statement in *Ecce Homo* concerning Nietzsche's "der und der" quality of being an olfactory genius merely constitutes the culmination of a long reflection on the intertwined nature of thinking and the constitution of the sensory apparatus of the thinker—Nietzsche's very being, in short, could be understood as the locus of an *agon* between vision, hearing, and smell, the balance of powers in this triangulation constantly changing.

One of the first sustained iterations of this reflection can be found in Nietzsche's earliest published book, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, with repeated considerations of Socrates, as the first figure of philosophy, and his sensory apparatus. Disputing Socrates's own claims that he is particularly attune to odors, Nietzsche argues that Socrates in fact marks the emergence of a type of human being who is governed by one sense alone: vision. It is against the backdrop of this dominance of vision—at first primarily thought to lie in a triumph of vision over hearing, and thus of visual form over music, but later as a triumph of vision over all other senses and the body more broadly—that the late Nietzsche will assert the importance of his olfactory genius. In the context of Aristophanes's depiction of Socrates as an aerial being, Nietzsche's reduction of

Socrates to a seeing being amounts to an attempt to put distance between himself and the philosopher; seeking to claim olfactory genius for himself alone, Nietzsche relegates Socrates into the ocularcentric realm of a misguided history of philosophy—by this very attempt also marking the uneasiness of a potential closeness, that is, absence of distance, between himself and Socrates as depicted by Aristophanes.³⁹² Put differently, Nietzsche attacks the Socrates of Plato and Xenophon by painting him as an ocularcentric, new type of degeneracy, while simultaneously passing over the aerial Socrates of Aristophanes in silence; it is this Aristophanic Socrates that Nietzsche will then attempt to outdo.

As *Die Geburt der Tragödie* stresses, the perceptual apparatus of the new type of human being that emerges at the beginning of philosophy is governed by “das eine grosse Cyclopenauge des Sokrates” (KSA 1, 92).³⁹³ Nietzsche’s other name for the type of human being governed by vision alone is the “Typus des *theoretischen Menschen*” (KSA 1, 98), the human being of *theory*. Socrates is “Urbild und Stammvater” (KSA 1, 116) of the new human being who is theoretical in the etymological sense of *theōria*: a human being of spectating vision, oriented towards a gaining of knowledge conceived of on the model of beholding an idea or a form.

Socrates’s, that is, the theoretical human’s decadence, pointed out above, and his visual fixation are two sides of the same coin: that he is a phenomenon of decay lies in the atrophy of his other senses in service of the eye alone. Within the economy of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, the

³⁹² On this point, cf. in particular footnotes 376, 379 above.

³⁹³ In a letter to Malwida von Meysenbug from the time of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (namely, December 20th 1872), Nietzsche uses the image of the one-eyed cyclops to describe photography: “während dieser Zeit will ich meine Schwester dazu bringen, sich photographisch hinrichten zu lassen: wenigstens bezeichnet dieser Ausdruck meine Empfindung, wenn der einäugige Cyclop als *deus ex machina* vor mir steht” (BVN-1872,282). Nietzsche produces here a remarkably condensed media studies critique: the quasi-physiognomic resemblance between the lens and the “round-eyed” cyclops; the link of Hesiod’s (but not Homer’s) cyclops to Zeus’ thunderbolt linking them to the flash (*Blitz*) of the camera; the sense of an execution (“hinrichten”) taking place in the mortification of the frozen image.

process of decadence and decay is articulated as the end of tragedy at the hands of the theoretical human being. The decay begins with Euripides who is linked to Socrates by “eine enge Beziehung der Tendenz” (KSA 1, 88). In Euripides, the co-existence of the Apollinian (the realm of light, visibility, and figure) and the Dionysian (the realm of the unordered Ur-pain and of music) begins to unravel. The “Tendenz des Euripides” is to purify tragedy of the Dionysian: “Jenes ursprüngliche und allmächtige dionysische Element aus der Tragödie auszuschneiden und sie rein und neu auf undionysischer Kunst, Sitte und Weltbetrachtung aufzubauen” (KSA 1, 82). This purification attempt amounts to a strengthening of the dominance of *form* and *figure*, producing an ocular hegemony. But this Euripidean tendency was only the “mask” of a different tendency, the tendency of “ein ganz neugeborner Dämon” (KSA 1, 83): Socrates. The latter continues the tendency towards form and figure by instituting the primacy of consciousness over instinct. Socrates embodies and brings into the Greek world an “optimism” that constitutes the boundless, limitless triumph of the Apollinian in a new form of life: “Der theoretische Mensch [...] Neue Daseinsform. Grenzenloser Apollinismus” (NF 1870,6[13]). Under this ocular hegemony, the Greek tragic age ends: “An dem ἄνθρωπος θεωρητικὸς geht die antike Welt zu Grunde. Das apollinische Element scheidet sich wieder von dem dionysischen und jetzt entarten beide” (NF 1870,7[7]). The theoretical human being is indeed decadent as a “zu Grunde gehen” in a double sense: on the one hand, the state in which the tendency towards vision and form were being counterbalanced by the Dionysian undoing of just these two ends. But on the other, the Apollinian reign of form, too, decays (“jetzt entarten *beide*”): as the very state of form, that is, of figuration and delimitation, its “grenzenloser” reign is paradoxical and undoes itself without its own “Grenze.” With the triumph of *theōria*, a whole world, a whole mode of world-making, deteriorates and decays.

This usurpation on part of the eye, while a sign of degeneracy and decadence, must also be understood as Socrates and the theoretical type revaluing the function of the eye: the eye was in no sense *originally* made for contemplative seeing. While, so the well-known twelfth section of the second essay of *Zur Genealogie der Moral* argues, we conceive of “das Auge als gemacht zum Sehen” (KSA 5, 314), this “als gemacht zum” structure is an illusory effect of ascribing a later effect to a purported origin, projecting it backwards.

The other side of the emergence of *theōria* and its reigning ocularcentrism is thus the diminution or even abandonment of the other senses over which the single cyclops’ eye triumphs. This casting aside of the other senses must be understood, in the framework of Nietzsche’s thinking, as an act of *active forgetting* that serves an organism’s *increasing of power*. In *Zur Genealogie*, Nietzsche thus writes:

Selbst innerhalb jedes einzelnen Organismus steht es nicht anders: mit jedem wesentlichen Wachstum des Ganzen verschiebt sich auch der “Sinn” der einzelnen Organe, — unter Umständen kann deren theilweises Zu-Grunde-Gehn, deren Zahl-Verminderung (zum Beispiel durch Vernichtung der Mittelglieder) ein Zeichen wachsender Kraft und Vollkommenheit sein. Ich wollte sagen: auch das theilweise Unnützlichwerden, das Verkümmern und Entarten, das Verlustiggehn von Sinn und Zweckmässigkeit, kurz der Tod gehört zu den Bedingungen des wirklichen progressus: als welcher immer in Gestalt eines Willens und Wegs zu grösserer Macht erscheint und immer auf Unkosten zahlreicher kleinerer Mächte durchgesetzt wird (KSA 5, 315).

The triumph of one sense organ, the eye, and the loss of purpose, the “Unnützlichwerden” of the other senses go hand in hand. The ocularcentric constitution of the perceptual apparatus of theoretical man is thus far from a necessary structure: by contrast, it is contingent and perpetually open to reconfiguration. If a different type of being emerged for which an atrophy of sight and a strengthening of the other senses—of smell perhaps—would mean an increase in strength and power, then such a restructuring would occur. Nietzsche’s emphasis on his ability to smell indicates that this is a being engaged in just such a restructuring—in other words, in his olfactory

genius, old habits are shed and rendered mobile, variegated and overcome. Through it, Nietzsche pursues a very specific goal: to distance himself from Socrates and the whole “Problem des Sokrates” for the question of the value of life.

1.4. Excursus: Forgetting of Air (Irigaray)

Some of the far-reaching implications of the hegemony of vision, the habit-forming triumph of the eye, are analyzed by Luce Irigaray, in a book titled *L'oubli de l'air*,³⁹⁴ a text that is continuously close to Nietzsche—in particular his claims about active forgetting—without ever explicitly addressing his work. Nietzsche’s suggestions concerning the relationship between philosophy as theoretical and the ocularcentrism of such theory are articulated more explicitly by Irigaray: while Nietzsche saw in theoretical man the triumph of vision, Irigaray amends this claim by arguing that philosophy’s turn to visuality engenders a constitutive *forgetting of air*: existing merely in vision, theoretical man subtracts himself from air. This claim, only latent in Nietzsche’s early writings, sets the stage for Nietzsche’s later insistence on smell and air; it also emphasizes once again that the Socrates Nietzsche attacks is the Socrates of Plato and Xenophon, and of the tradition of philosophy that follows them, and not the Socrates of Aristophanes who certainly never forgets about air.

Irigaray’s reflections begin with the claim that air is the primary and necessary medium of existence for human beings. No human being can exist without or outside of air—and this air

³⁹⁴ Irigaray’s book is part of a trilogy investigating post-Hegelian philosophy through the elements, published in the early eighties after her groundbreaking books *Speculum of the Other Woman* and *The Sex which is Not One*. Curiously, *L'oubli de l'air* does not mention Nietzsche’s crucial relationship to air; neither does her book dedicated to Nietzsche (*Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*), which focuses on his relationship to the element of water and the relationship to femininity that Irigaray finds articulated in and through it. The next part of this section will explicitly develop Nietzsche’s relationship to *elemental thinking*.

is always already given to him or her. In the philosophical tradition Irigaray investigates (in this book mainly Heidegger), the being of man, however, defines himself via a forgetting of the very medium in which he exists:³⁹⁵ “L’être de l’homme va se constituer à partir de l’oubli: du don de ce dont en quoi il est.”³⁹⁶

This constitutive forgetting, in a gesture closely resembling Nietzsche’s “active forgetting,” is aided by visibility: “Ce qui va l’assister, au present, à l’oublier, c’est la lumière. Le soleil fait l’oubli.”³⁹⁷ The light of the sun (in mythological terms, the sun god Apollo) produces individuated things that obscure the medial character marking air: “là où est maintenant le soleil, chaque ‘chose’ advient comme distincte, séparée, à sa place, dans sa presence.”³⁹⁸ *Theōria* is thus built on the substitution of a source for an always already surrounding medium: “Ce qui se donne partout et tout le temps, sans mesure, cela ne se pense pas comme une source. Pour qu’il y ait une source, il faut, d’abord, du deuil. La source, c’est ce qui cache un deuil: l’absence d’un commencement où le tout serait partout et tout le temps.”³⁹⁹ Air, as that which is always everywhere where there is breathing and hence human existence, cannot be a source, which would be localized and delimited. In an ocularcentric, theoretical world, the sun as origin of all phenomenality covers over a work of mourning that mourns the loss of air, that is, the loss of a state in which there is precisely no origin or beginning but only an always already being immersed in the all.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁵ As always in Irigaray’s writings, this is also a question of sexual difference: *man* forgets air. While this question is equally virulent, if often much more hidden, in Nietzsche’s work, it must be left aside here.

³⁹⁶ Irigaray, *L’oubli de l’air*, 32.

³⁹⁷ Irigaray, *L’oubli de l’air*, 43.

³⁹⁸ Irigaray, *L’oubli de l’air*, 43.

³⁹⁹ Irigaray, 43-4. For the relationship between mourning and the “solar scene” in Nietzsche’s work, see also Pautrat, “Nietzsche medusiert,” in: *Nietzsche aus Frankreich*.

⁴⁰⁰ For an earlier analysis of the role of the solar scene with respect to phenomenality, see Jacques Derrida, “White Mythology.”

This forgetting of air and the ensuing replacement by the sun have two interrelated consequences: the abandonment of the body and a forgetting of life. On the one hand, “Privilegiant le voir, l’homme a déjà effectué une sortie hors des bords du corps. Le sujet est déjà extatique au lieu qui lui donne lieu. Il habite déjà hors de soi, hors du corps qui lui donne la vue.”⁴⁰¹ Irigaray continuously emphasizes that the body exists both in air and is penetrated by air: the place in which the body exists is both provided in/by air and is thoroughly permeated by it.⁴⁰² No bodily existence *apart* from air. By contrast, under the regime of the sun—and this will be crucial to the central section of this chapter—*distance* reigns: both the source of all light and the things with which light enables a relation are distant, far-away. In this distance, a decentering of existence occurs by casting the human being out of the body.

Located outside of his body qua seeing being, theoretical man forgets life. Only by thinking the body and its central—or rather, middle, that is, medial—position in air, would he be able to think life: “L’air n’est-il pas le tout de notre habiter en tant que mortels ? Y a-t-il un demeurer plus vaste, plus spacieux, et même plus généralement paisible que celui de l’air? L’homme peut-il vivre ailleurs que dans l’air?”⁴⁰³ Forgetting of air, for Irigaray, is thus the forgetting of air as the medium of *breath*: “Oubli de l’air respiré, oubli de l’air occupé, oubli du lieu

⁴⁰¹ Irigaray, *L’oubli de l’air*, 92.

⁴⁰² Irigaray articulates this most explicitly, in terms reminiscent of some of the analyses proposed in the Hölderlin chapter: “Libre, dans l’air libre, il est – d’abord – dans la plus grande dérélition. Et ce dehors entre en lui, sans limites. Dehors, entré dans le dehors, il est pénétré jusqu’au plus dedans de lui par ce dehors” (Irigaray, 43).

⁴⁰³ Irigaray, *L’oubli de l’air*, 15.

vivable.”⁴⁰⁴ The ecstasy of theory casts man out of life.⁴⁰⁵ Recovering life will necessitate a modification of this ecstatic position of theoretical man.

1.5. Nietzsche’s Elemental Thinking

Irigaray’s reflections are explicitly framed as investigations of the *elements*. While Nietzsche’s reflections on air as well as earth, fire, and water are not as explicitly presented in such a way, they nevertheless must be located as part of a similarly *elemental thinking*. In this context, Nietzsche’s writings on the pre-Socratic philosophers provide crucial clues.⁴⁰⁶ Nietzsche positions the pre-Socratics on the side of tragedy—as already indicated by the title of his most extensive text on this topic, *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*; they are thus pre-Socratic in the important sense that they precede the destruction of tragedy at the hands of Socrates (and Euripides). Reflections on the possibility of a recuperation or rejuvenation of tragedy—more broadly, reflections on a solution to the “Problem des Sokrates” and the attendant doubt concerning the value of life—will consequently find an important reference point in these earliest of philosophical thinkers.

⁴⁰⁴ Irigaray, *L’oubli de l’air*, 145. This also implies that considerations of air as, for instance, an ether that transmits the rays of light that enable vision do not figure into this version of elemental thinking.

⁴⁰⁵ Sarah Kofman, in her book *Explosion I: De l’Ecce Homo de Nietzsche*, argues that air is also the medial precondition of a *vital* encounter between reader and author: “L’air, c’est l’élément vital, la première condition d’existence qu’il faut qu’auteur et lecteur puissent partager” (Kofman, *Explosion I*, 108).

⁴⁰⁶ Most scholarship concerning the Pre-Socratics has focused on Nietzsche’s relation to Heraclitus, whom he singles out both in early and later writings as particularly important to him. The only monograph concerned with Nietzsche’s relationship to the Pre-Socratics appears to be Richard Oehler’s rather useless, because by stated design largely paraphrastic and laudatory, *Friedrich Nietzsche und die Vorsokratiker*, (leaving aside for a moment Oehler’s insidious role in the efforts to use Nietzsche for the National-Socialist cause). For some useful remarks regarding Empedocles, who was perhaps even more important to Nietzsche than Heraclitus, see Krell, *Postponements*, 40-50, who relates the young Nietzsche’s intense interest in Empedocles to his enthusiasm for Hölderlin’s work, in particular the latter’s *The Death of Empedocles*.

Nietzsche's reflections on the pre-Socratics, then, are partly a reactivation of a thinking of fire, earth, air, and water—as it will later play out even more prominently in *Also sprach Zarathustra*⁴⁰⁷—and as such constitute part of Nietzsche's interest in finding a way out of “das Problem des Sokrates.” In contrast to the mono-sensory constitution of theoretical man, the experience of the elements varies widely and cannot be reduced to a singular mode of vision or beholding; elemental thinking is thus atheoretical in this sense. The single eye of Socrates is replaced by a plurality of sensory modes when the philosophers before Socrates are considered.

The most important components of Nietzsche's engagement with the pre-Socratics and their philosophy of the elements can be found in *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*. In this text, Nietzsche's claim for why one should take the elemental thinking of the pre-Socratics seriously, for why “es wirklich nöthig [ist], hierbei stille zu stehen und ernst zu werden” (KSA 1, 813), is this: they contain a “metaphysical” thought that transcends individual natural sciences while being simultaneously “unmythisch und unallegorisch gemeint” (KSA 1, 815). It is only in this sense that these “Systeme[], die widerlegt sind” still interest. For instance, Thales, the first Greek philosopher, when postulating that “everything is water” does not propose a “wissenschaftliche Hypothese” but rather “jumps” to a “metaphysischer Glaubenssatz [...] der Satz ‘Alles ist Eins.’” (KSA 1, 813). The “Größe” of this beginning of philosophy lies in such a jumping upwards: “Wenn Thales sagt ‘Alles ist Wasser’, so zuckt der Mensch empor aus dem wurmartigen Betasten und Herumkriechen der einzelnen Wissenschaften, er ahnt die letzte Lösung der Dinge” (KSA 1, 817). Elemental thinking, for Nietzsche, is thus the “mitteilen” of

⁴⁰⁷ David Farrell Krell has pointed out that *Also sprach Zarathustra* can in a way be seen to replace Nietzsche's abandoned plans to write a drama on Empedocles; Krell thus writes of “Nietzsche's unpublished sketches for a Zarathustran drama, sketches that are highly reminiscent of the abortive *Empedocles*” (Krell, *Postponements*, 53).

“tiefe philosophische Intuitionen:” “So schaute Thales die Einheit des Seienden: und wie er sich mittheilen wollte, redete er vom Wasser!” (KSA 1, 817).

Within the economy of *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter*, Anaximander adds a crucial second dimension to Nietzsche’s understanding of elemental thinking: not only does he articulate metaphysical insights but he also grasps in his thinking of the elements an *ethical* problem.⁴⁰⁸ Those who argue about the finer points of the elemental composition of the “Urstoff” or the relationship between the different elements miss that Anaximander, through these elements, articulates an ethical thought:

Wer sich freilich mit anderen darüber herumstreiten kann, was das nun eigentlich für ein Urstoff gewesen sei, ob er etwa ein Mittelding zwischen Luft und Wasser oder vielleicht zwischen Luft und Feuer sei, hat unsern Philosophen gar nicht verstanden: was ebenfalls von jenen zu sagen ist, die sich ernsthaft fragen, ob Anaximander sich seinen Urstoff als Mischung aller vorhandenen Stoffe gedacht habe. Vielmehr dorthin müssen wir den Blick richten, wo wir lernen können, daß Anaximander die Frage nach der Herkunft dieser Welt bereits nicht mehr rein physikalisch behandelte, hin nach jenem zuerst angeführten lapidarischen Satz. Wenn er vielmehr in der Vielheit der entstandenen Dinge eine Summe von abzubüßenden Ungerechtigkeiten schaute, so hat er das Knäuel des tiefstinnigsten ethischen Problems mit kühnem Griffe, als der erste Grieche, erhascht. Wie kann etwas vergehen, was ein Recht hat zu sein! (KSA 1, 819-20).

Thinking through the elements, Anaximander in fact discovers what Nietzsche will later treat as the “Problem des Sokrates” and Socrates’s great flaw: “Aus dieser Welt des Unrechtes, des frechen Abfalls von der Ureinheit der Dinge flüchtet Anaximander in eine metaphysische Burg, aus der hinausgelehnt er jetzt den Blick weit umher rollen läßt, um endlich, nach nachdenklichem Schweigen, an alle Wesen die Frage zu richten: Was ist euer Dasein werth? Und wenn es nichts werth ist, wozu seid ihr da?” (KSA 1, 820). The value of elemental thinking is

⁴⁰⁸ For an analysis of the relationship between Nietzsche and Anaximander more broadly, see Chris Kassam and Robbie Duschinsky, “Nietzsche and Anaximander on Being and Becoming.” Kassam and Duschinsky similarly draw attention to the ethical dimension of Nietzsche’s *Anaximander-Lektüre* and point to Schopenhauer’s and Eduard Zeller’s influence in this respect (Kassam/Duschinsky, 104).

found when it functions “nicht mehr rein physikalisch” but rather, through the claims concerning, say, air, articulates what is perhaps the ethical question par excellence for Nietzsche.⁴⁰⁹

A third aspect of Nietzsche’s treatment of the pre-Socratics adds an important dimension to his own treatment of elemental concerns: these investigations are supposed to showcase the “großen Menschen” (KSA 1, 801). *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen* begins with a methodological explanation:

Ich erzähle die Geschichte jener Philosophen vereinfacht: ich will nur den Punkt aus jedem System herausheben, der ein Stück *Persönlichkeit* ist und zu jenem Unwiderleglichen Undiskutirbaren gehört, das die Geschichte aufzubewahren hat: es ist ein Anfang, um jene Naturen durch Vergleichung wieder zu gewinnen und nachzuschaffen und die Polyphonie der griechischen Natur endlich einmal wieder erklingen zu lassen: die Aufgabe ist das an’s Licht zu bringen, was wir *immer lieben* und *verehren* müssen und was uns durch keine spätere Erkenntniß geraubt werden kann: der große Mensch. (KSA 1, 801-2).

For Nietzsche, the task of analyzing elemental thinking is to show the *greatness* of the thinker’s *person*: the latter’s “system” grows like a “plant” out of the person and from it one can consequently deduce what the thinker was like: these systems “haben doch einen Punkt an sich,

⁴⁰⁹ Similar analytical movements—showing, first, that thinking the elements is metaphysical and, second, ethico-political—can be traced in Nietzsche’s treatment of all the pre-Socratic philosophers, including the two he valued most highly, Heraclitus and Empedocles. The latter only occurs in passing in the completed version of *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*, which ends before Empedocles, but a number of notes indicating how Nietzsche would have expanded this text nevertheless provide a picture of his position vis-à-vis the thinker he refers to as “der *tragische* Philosoph, der Zeitgenosse des Äschylus” (*Nietzsche’s Werke*, Band X, 96). Empedocles is thus identified as the thinker of Aphrodite as “kosmisches Princip” (97), where love and hate account for all movement and all being, more precisely, the unity of *everything living* as opposed to the unity of all beings: “Das ganze *Pathos* des Empedokles ruht in diesem Punkte, dass *alles Lebende eins sei*; Götter, Menschen und Thiere sind darin eins. Die ‚Einheit des Lebens‘ ist der ungleich productiver gestaltete Gedanke des Parmenides von der Einheit des Seienden” (95). Empedocles is also named as the one who identified exactly four elements and bequeathed these four to a long tradition: “Während aber Anaxagoras *alle* Qualitäten als real und demnach als ewig annahm, findet Empedokles nur *vier* wahre Realitäten, also auch Qualitäten und deren Mischungen: nämlich Erde, Feuer, Wasser, Luft. Diese vier Grundstoffe fassen allen Stoff in sich, derselbe kann sich weder vermehren noch vermindern. Sie sind der Physik durch 2000 Jahre verblieben” (100).

der ganz unwiderleglich ist, eine persönliche Stimmung, Farbe, man kann sie benutzen, um das Bild des Philosophen zu gewinnen: wie man vom Gewächs an einem Orte auf den Boden schliessen kann” (KSA 1, 801). By extension, it can be claimed that how someone, say, Zarathustra as he will be analyzed below, configures the elements reveals something about his person—and in particular about his relationship to greatness.

While Nietzsche’s work on the pre-Socratic philosophers does not spell out how exactly elemental thinking and philosophical personality relate to each other, a tentative hypothesis can be advanced at this point: the greatness of a personality consists in the ability to articulate a *differentiated plurality*. Elemental thinking holds firm to the presupposition that there is a multiplicity of distinct elements—just as irreducible to *one* element or one sensory mode as to Being as such—that ceaselessly combine, repel each other, and change places. Instead of performing reductive operations, the elemental thinker seeks out greater and greater differentiation, in an attempt to bring out both the unique logic of each element and of their interplay. It is in this context that Nietzsche’s investigations of air must be understood: not as an attempt to establish air’s dominance over the other elements but as an investigation into the *specificity* of a component of being. Nietzsche finds himself constantly pulled among the different elements, among the different modes of perception—and his personality is found in the articulation of this irreducible plurality.

One example of Nietzsche explicitly engaging in this type of elemental thinking in his own writings—an example of how Nietzsche can be seen to be engaged in an elemental thinking that produces both metaphysical and ethical insights as he diagnosed it in the Pre-Socratics and combines these insights with a concern for the personal—can be found in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, in an aphorism titled “Unsere Luft.” Commenting on the “strictness” that governs

his gay science, Nietzsche claims that whoever is used to such surroundings “mag gar nicht anderswo leben, als in dieser hellen, durchsichtigen, kräftigen, stark elektrischen Luft” (KSA 3, 534).⁴¹⁰ While *Die Geburt der Tragödie* lamented that “wir athmen bereits die Luft einer theoretischen Welt” (KSA 1, 113), *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* imagines a different and better air, one that precisely changes habits: “Wer aber an sie gewöhnt ist.” In this medium, even flight becomes possible, such an intensification of strength does it enable: “In *diesem* strengen und klaren Elemente aber hat er seine Kraft ganz: hier kann er fliegen” (KSA 3, 534). This new air produces stronger, *greater* beings that jump upwards, as his description of Anaximander has it; such air invigorates.

Linked to this invigoration and unprecedented strength, Nietzsche’s description of “our air” articulates one instance of his opposition that is not no-saying. In particular, “our air” opposes the ocularcentrism of theoretical man without this new aerial paradigm saying “no” to vision. In “*this* strong and clear element,” a new, intertwined relation between air and sun can be developed:

was können wir dafür, dass wir für die Luft, die reine Luft geboren sind, wir Nebenbuhler des Lichtstrahls, und dass wir am liebsten auf Aetherstäubchen, gleich ihm, reiten würden und nicht von der Sonne weg, sondern *zu der Sonne hin!* Das aber können wir nicht: -- so wollen wir denn thun, was wir einzig können: der Erde Licht bringen, das ‚Licht der Erde‘ sein! Und dazu haben wir unsere Flügel und unsere Schnelligkeit und Strenge (KSA 3, 534).

We are aerial beings, “für die Luft, die reine Luft geboren,” since no existence outside of air is possible for us. However, this aerial existence stands in competition (“Nebenbuhler;” an instance of polemics) to visuality: the aerial being wishes to move towards the sun, even outdoing the ray

⁴¹⁰ The passage continues: “in dieser *männlichen* Luft,” thus again raising questions of the gendered nature of the elements and of air in particular that Irigaray, too, analyzes throughout her book. Nietzsche’s relationship to femininity is exceedingly complex and has been commented on by a variety of scholars, cf. Irigaray’s own book on Nietzsche; Derrida, *Spurs*; Krell, *Postponements*.

of light by moving *towards* the source of visual phenomenality. Yet, this movement towards the origin is, for us aerial beings, impossible: the orientation towards the sun is thus replaced by an orientation towards the earth, “der Erde Licht bringen, das ‘Licht der Erde sein.’” Our proper place of existence is the in-between of sun and earth, that is, air. (Such a mediating in-between will be explicated more fully below as the “smell of the earth” that similarly stands or rather rises up between the elements of earth and air.) In Nietzsche’s appropriation of the saying from the Sermon on the Mount,⁴¹¹ the aerial beings exist in the middle of the medium to, on the one hand, oppose the ocularcentrism of theoretical man: the orientation towards the sun as source and origin is broken. But, on the other, as those who mediate between sun and earth, in air, the aerial beings as Nietzsche thinks them do not “say no” to light and visibility altogether, a move that would merely create a negative dependency. Rather, their lightness of flight emulates light, even brings it to the earth, but shifts the entirety of this activity into the element of air and orients it towards the earth.

1.6. Finer than a Spectroscope

Elemental thinking as a mode of thinking of air is tightly linked to thinking olfaction: smell is a crucial mode of access to the aerial element, enabling a judgment as to its “air quality,” its deterioration or improvement. One exceptional—*aussergewöhnlich*—feature of the detection of air that smelling produces lies in its acuity. *Götzen-Dämmerung*, in a section titled “Die ‘Vernunft’ in der Philosophie,” following right after “Das Problem des Sokrates,” in fact singles

⁴¹¹ Nietzsche combines, bastardizes in a way, the two syntagms “Salz der Erde” and “Licht der Welt” into “Licht der Erde.” Cf. Matthew 5: 13-14.

out the nose as the *finest* tool of observation and opposes it to the myriad errors committed by philosophy:

Und was für feine Werkzeuge der Beobachtung haben wir an unsren Sinnen!
Diese Nase zum Beispiel, von der noch kein Philosoph mit Verehrung und Dankbarkeit gesprochen hat, ist sogar einstweilen das delikateste Instrument, das uns zu Gebote steht: es vermag noch Minimaldifferenzen der Bewegung zu constatiren, die selbst das Spektroskop nicht constatirt. Wir besitzen heute genau so weit Wissenschaft, als wir uns entschlossen haben, das Zeugniß der Sinne *anzunehmen*, — als wir sie noch schärfen, bewaffnen, zu Ende denken lernten (KSA 6, 75).

The nose can pick up on “Minimaldifferenzen der Bewegung” that escape even “scientific” tools: it thus provides testimony of the minute movements, that is, of the *changes of state and form* making up the world, of the *phase changes* that we observe—and only in this lies true science. Our task is to further improve and sharpen this mode of detecting difference: olfaction is amenable to improvement and our scientific endeavors depend on just such improvement.⁴¹²

The nose and its attention to minimal differences of movement, so the passage in *Götzen-Dämmerung* continues, oppose the falsification brought into philosophy by so-called “reason.” What we call “reason,” according to Nietzsche, is the establishment of “die Lüge der Einheit, die Lüge der Dinglichkeit, der Substanz, der Dauer” (KSA 6, 75). Any notion of substance or matter as a substratum that persists independently of the unceasing movements from one form into another is an illusion. Granted, this illusion, like all illusions, is important for certain life forms

⁴¹² Nietzsche’s call for an improvement of the sense of smell clashes, to a certain degree, with Kant’s claims in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* concerning smell. In paragraph 20, Kant states: “Welcher Organsinn ist der undankbarste und scheint auch der entbehrlichste zu sein? Der des *Geruchs*. Es belohnt nicht, ihn zu kultivieren, oder wohl gar zu verfeinern, um zu genießen; denn es gibt mehr Gegenstände des Ekels (vornehmlich in volkreichern Örtern), als der Annehmlichkeit, die er verschaffen kann, und der Genuß durch diesen Sinn kann immer auch nur flüchtig und vorübergehend sein, wenn er vergnügen soll” (Kant, *Anthropologie*, 453). Kant’s broadside against the cultivation of smell can be found in other writers as well, such as Georg Simmel. Nietzsche would not contest that with a more fine-grained sense of smell comes an increase in disgust—in fact, as will be shown below, one of smell’s primary functions is to induce a repellent disgust—but this disgust is necessary to prepare a healthy cleansing that enables the emergence of new smells.

whose survival depends on the identification and construction of constancy⁴¹³—but their utility does not change their status as lie established over and against the observation of the senses. The main merit of the senses, far from giving us a “true world,” can consequently be found in their ability to avoid these lies and instead provide “Zeugniss” of becoming, more precisely of the most minute and fine-grained movements, the constantly occurring phase changes: “Sofern die Sinne das Werden, das Vergehn, den Wechsel zeigen, lügen sie nicht...” (KSA 6, 75).

The specific terms in which the nose is lauded for its ability to oppose such errors, that is, the comparison between nose and *spectroscope*, however, is more than a little odd.⁴¹⁴ As the *Nietzsche-Kommentar* of *Götzen-Dämmerung* points out: “Eine Spektralanalyse, für die Spektroskope verwendet wurden, hat nach damaligem Lexikonwissen freilich nichts mit den Sinneswahrnehmungen zu tun, für die die Nase zuständig ist” (*Nietzsche-Kommentar*, 293). Instead, spectroscopes serve to determine the components of a substance via the analysis of the *light* they emit. In particular, spectral analysis was (and is) used to analyze the composition of stars, the sun chief among them. Why then would Nietzsche use this comparison at such an eminent moment in his development of the advantages of sense perception, in particular his olfactory genius?

⁴¹³ Nietzsche, at least at certain points, thinks that such illusions are confined to the organic world: “In der unorganischen Welt fehlt das Mißverständnis, die Mittheilung scheint vollkommen. In der organischen Welt beginnt der Irrthum. “Dinge” “Substanzen” Eigenschaften, Thätig-keiten” — das alles soll man nicht in die unorganische Welt hineinragen! Es sind die spezifischen Irrthümer, vermöge deren die Organismen leben” (NF 1885,1[28]).

⁴¹⁴ The only other reference to a spectroscope occur in a fragment from 1888, clearly a preparatory note for the passage cited above: — unsere Nase, von der, soviel ich weiß, noch nie ein Philosoph mit Ehrerbietung gesprochen hat, ist einstweilen das delikateste physikalische Instrument, das es giebt: es vermag noch Schwingungen zu constatiren, wo selbst das Spektroskop ohnmächtig ist.” (NF 1888,14[134]). The main difference lies in the substitution of “Minimaldifferenzen der Bewegung” for “Schwingungen.”

One major indication for Nietzsche's usage of this comparison can be found in Johann Karl Friedrich Zöllner's *Über die Natur der Cometen*, a book Nietzsche read repeatedly and spoke of in the highest terms.⁴¹⁵ In his prologue, Zöllner offers a lengthy discussion of the history of the invention of spectral analysis and points out its great fineness:

Das Prisma wurde ein Instrument zur qualitativen, chemischen Analyse in den Händen von Fot Talbot und Herschel, der zuerst zeigte, wie durch dasselbe die alte Löthrohrprobe, oder allgemein die Erkennung von Substanzen aus den Farben, welche sie den Flammen ertheilen, mit einer *Genauigkeit und Feinheit* verfolgt werden kann, wie man sie nicht erhält, wenn die Farbe mit dem *unbewaffneten* Auge beurtheilt wird⁴¹⁶

The spectroscope is an *instrument* that increases the “Genauigkeit und Feinheit” of perception to a degree that the “unarmed” eye cannot attain: Nietzsche similarly describes the nose as an “instrument” that we need to “bewaffnen.” This armament, however, does not lie in the invention of something other than the senses but rather in a “zu Ende denken” of the senses.

Zöllner provides a further indications that might account for Nietzsche's transposition of the fineness of light-based spectral analysis into the realm of olfaction. Throughout his discussion, Zöllner locates spectral analysis in the context of *Dämpfe*,⁴¹⁷ which might have suggested to Nietzsche a closeness to the evaporation of olfaction. More specifically, in a section titled “Die Verdampfung als eine allgemeine Eigenschaft der Materie unabhängig vom Aggregatzustande,” Zöllner writes:

⁴¹⁵ Alwin Mittasch, in *Friedrich Nietzsche als Naturphilosoph*, records that Nietzsche read Zöllner's main work repeatedly in the years 1870-74 (Mittasch, 35). While Nietzsche's engagement with Zöllner thus mostly falls into the earlier phase of his career, another book that Nietzsche read around 1881 also mentions spectral analysis: Otto Liebman's *Zur Analysis der Wirklichkeit*, which Nietzsche read in 1881 according to Mittasch, also mentions spectral analysis's role in the development of modern science, in particular by referring to Zöllner (Liebman, 379).

⁴¹⁶ Zöllner, *Über die Natur*, p. xxx; emphasis added.

⁴¹⁷ Concerning the “Dämpfe” that form the “Schweif der Cometen”: “Das Spectroskop wird uns bei späteren Cometenerscheinungen über alle diese stofflichen Verschiedenheiten der Cometenkerne und ihrer Dämpfe Aufschluss geben können” (Zöllner, 146), and: “Ist andererseits durch das Spectroskop die Qualität dieser Dämpfe, also auch die des flüssigen Kernes ermittelt” (Zöllner, 152).

Ohne hier ausführlicher auf die Erscheinungen einzugehen, welche als Stützen für die Verdunstung von festen Körpern mit sehr hohen Schmelzpunkten auch bei *gewöhnlicher* Temperatur angeführt werden könnten, mag doch an den eigenthümlichen Geruch der Metalle und einiger Mineralien erinnert werden. Jedenfalls wird die spectralanalytische Untersuchung das empfindlichste Mittel sein, um die Existenz derartiger Dämpfe nachzuweisen, namentlich im Weltraume.⁴¹⁸

Nietzsche envisions the nose to be for the human, earthly scale what the spectroscope does for the *Weltraume*, that is, finding out composite parts and, importantly, determining existence at all: since the smells Nietzsche is concerned with are imperceptible due to their extreme habitual character, the nose's major contribution will consist in the claim that such smells do, in fact, exist. At the very least (and the exact significance of the spectroscope here remains somewhat enigmatic), the analogy to spectral analysis would imply, then, the nose's ability to determine what above was called a differentiated plurality: the articulation of elements—their composition and their phase changes—within something that appears as one. In short, the nose's fineness lies in its ability to detect differentiation and to track the always occurring shifting and altering of difference.

⁴¹⁸ Zöllner, 88; emphasis in the original.

Part II:

Compromising Smell: from the Pathos of Distance to Chaos and Back

Nietzsche's self-articulation as untimely and *aussergewöhnlich* implies at bottom a *distance* between him and his contemporaries. His urgent demand not to be mistaken constitutes a plea to recognize that there is distance between Nietzsche as "der und der" and any types or characters that Nietzsche might be mistaken for: as a note from the time of *Ecce Homo* indicates, "sich nicht mit ihnen verwechseln, die Distanz fühlen," (NF 1888,15[98]) are two sides of the same coin.⁴¹⁹ The writings after *Also sprach Zarathustra* develop distance in considerable detail under the well-known phrase "pathos of distance." *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, the first book written after the completion of the last part of *Zarathustra*, makes this pathos the cornerstone of Nietzsche's theory of "nobility;" *Zur Genealogie der Moral* ties it to the creation of values and to the so-called "slave revolt."⁴²⁰ The concept of a pathos of distance in fact undergirds the possibility of an aristocratic hierarchy composed of different "Stufen," not only on the

⁴¹⁹ And again: "Ein *Distanz*-Gefühl das zuletzt physiologisch sein möchte bin ich aus der allernächsten Nähe [—] nie los geworden: ich empfinde die *Distanz*, verschieden zu sein in jedem Verstande, gleichsam unvermischbar und obenauf im Vergleich zu jedem trüben Elemente" (NF 1888,22[29]).

⁴²⁰ The "pathos of distance" constitutes one of the numerous aspects of Nietzsche's thought that—justly—continues to trouble his readers. The perceived danger can be so great as to tempt commentators into explicitly seeking to domesticate Nietzsche: Arthur C. Danto in his influential study *Nietzsche as Philosopher* thus sets out with the goal of "disarming one of the most dangerous moral voices of modern times" (Danto, xv), which, via reference to a rather obscure incident of a band of murdering teenagers' passing appeal to Nietzsche, he claims can "actually help save lives" (Danto, xviii). Both the philosophical misdirection and the futility of such an approach (not to mention the striking illusion concerning the effects of scholarship) are pointed out succinctly by Karsten Harries, in "The Philosopher at Sea:" "The difficulty is bound up rather with the very attempt to domesticate Nietzsche's monstrous texts by translating them into a philosophical idiom with which we are more at home and therefore more comfortable" (Harries, 23). One does well to heed Harries' warning that "In the end, what lures [Nietzsche] is not so much the promise of a new land as the depth of the sea, the whirlpool that means shipwreck. Like his Zarathustra, Nietzsche want to go *zu Grunde*, to perish" (Harries, 42).

intersubjective level between human beings but also within a single being, where a strict subordination of some instincts in the service of others is required.⁴²¹ More generally, distance constitutes a condition of possibility for any *ordering*: there must be distance between two (distinct) instincts, beings or states for one to rise above—to be more noble than—the other or even just to be separated and set apart from it.

2.1. Smell's Proximity

Discussion in the secondary literature concerning this pathos of distance focuses exclusively on these moral and political implications, forgoing an analysis of the term “distance” with respect to other key Nietzschean concepts such as, most notably, perspective, and the related concepts of order and differentiation.⁴²² Consequently, the underpinnings of this crucial

⁴²¹ “Internalization” plays an important role in Nietzsche’s description of the mechanism of the pathos of distance; he calls it “jenes andre geheimnissvollere Pathos [...], jenes Verlangen nach immer neuer Distanz-Erweiterung innerhalb der Seele selbst, die Herausbildung immer höherer, seltnerer, fernerer, weitgespannterer, umfänglicherer Zustände, kurz eben die Erhöhung des Typus ‚Mensch‘, die fortgesetzte ‚Selbst-Überwindung des Menschen“ (KSA 5, 205). For an account of the relationship between the pathos of distance and internalization, see, for instance: William M. Beals, “Internalization and Its Consequences.” For Beals, similar to the scholarship on this topic more broadly, questions of perspective do not figure into his analysis at all.

⁴²² To name just two recent studies on this topic published in *Nietzsche-Studien* that (in Piazzesi’s case) at points even briefly gestures towards Nietzsche’s “perspectivism” but do not analyze its import for the concept of distance: Paul S. Loeb, “The Priestly Slave Revolt in Morality;” Chiara Piazzesi, “*Pathos der Distanz* et transformation de l’expérience de soi chez le dernier Nietzsche.” An exception to this ethico-political focus is Matthew Rampley who sees in the pathos of distance a potential expression of Nietzsche’s style: “Nietzsche’s thinking is often characterised as an ironic discourse: not in the sense of a willful playing with forms, though this may be what he aims to accomplish in many cases, but rather in the sense of maintaining a pathos of distance. Distance towards one’s own values and those of one’s culture” (Rampley, 6-7). Aside from the question of whether irony truly admits of such a pathos of distance, the suggestion that the pathos of distance concerns also a distance towards oneself needs to be kept in mind during the development of the impossibilities of such a pathos proposed here. Jean-Michel Rabaté, in his book *The Pathos of Distance: Affects of the Moderns*, has pointed to the afterlife of this concept in Aby Warburg who spoke of the “Ferngefühl-Zerstörer” (Benjamin Franklin, the Wright Brothers) (Rabaté, 9-11) as well as in Roland Barthes’s reading of the pathos of distance in his 1977 lectures “How to Live Together,” and the “moderns” more broadly. Rabaté does not seem to offer a

term remain unclarified and its mechanism vague. Any distance, in particular any pathos or feeling of distance, according to the claim of this section, is irreducibly perspectival: it consequently favors a sense that can provide a point of view, a line of sight, and a delimitation of the field it encompasses; in other words, the concept of distance is most easily developed and maintained, according to the claim to be developed here, when recourse to vision's features, most crucially a *horizon*, is possible. If smell is supposed to set apart Nietzsche as a genius and, among other things, mark the distance from Socrates and everyone else his detection of decadence finds out, then this distance's conditions of possibility inevitably hinge on smell's relationship with perspective, order, and differentiation; conversely, given the central significance of the pathos of distance to Nietzsche's later writings that also feature olfaction prominently, this centrality can only be understood if its interplay with—its potential illumination but also threat by—smell is analyzed.

The first major step of this analysis is deceptively simple: in order to smell, one has to be *near* the odorous object. In contradistinction to vision (and to a certain degree, hearing), the “insight” of smell is always one of closeness but not contact (as in touch).⁴²³ In this vein, Zöllner's *Über die Natur der Cometen* (1872), whose influence on Nietzsche was pointed out above, for instance, positions smell rather exactly as the middle term of the five senses if one orders them according to the spatial (and temporal) scales on which they operate: “so lässt sich von der allgemeinen Hautempfindung durch Geschmack-, Geruch-, Gehör- und

substantial interpretation of the formula at the heart of his book but rather produces a constellation of thinkers in the early twentieth century who, loosely, responded to Nietzsche.

⁴²³ As Jean-Luc Nancy has emphasized in many of his writings, all sense perception, in a certain sense, leads to some type of contact: light hitting the retina, odorous particles touching the olfactory receptors in the nose, etc. Nevertheless, the lived experience and the imagination attached to each sense, what above was called the unique logic of sense-making, differ for each sense.

Gesichtsempfindungen ein stufenweises Erweitern des räumlichen und zeitlichen Gebietes nicht verkennen.”⁴²⁴ If ordered according to their spatial and temporal reach, according to Zöllner, smell is located precisely in the middle, making it the sense of a *medium reach*.

In Nietzsche’s own work, the link between proximity and smell is stated most clearly in *Also sprach Zarathustra*. In the section titled “Von der unbefleckten Erkenntnis,” elaborating precisely on the impossibility of an “unbefleckte Erkenntnis,” Zarathustra states how this nearness needed for smelling undoes any notion of “pure” insight:

Eines Gottes Seele wähte ich einst spielen zu sehn in euren Spielen, ihr Rein-Erkennenden! Keine bessere Kunst wähte ich einst als eure Künste! Schlangen-Unflath und schlimmen Geruch verhehlte mir die Ferne: und dass einer Eidechse List lüstern hier herumschlich. Aber ich kam euch *nah* (KSA 4, 158).

Nietzsche underlines “nah:” only by giving up “Ferne” can one detect the “schlimmen Geruch” that indicates the absence of a “god’s soul” and reveals the deception underlying the notion of pure cognition or insight. Zarathustra’s “Aber” is directed against this concealing, whitewashing, and camouflaging effect of distance; it dissolves the “einst” of distance into the new insight of a “hier” and a “nah.” Without this distance, the appearance of both godliness (“Eines Gottes Seele”) and of the best art (“Keine bessere Kunst”) disappears: instead, foreshadowing an important smell moment analyzed below, animality surfaces (“Schlangen-Unflath,” “einer Eidechse List”). In the proximity of smell, the pretense of godliness that characterizes a *distant mode of “Erkennen”* is replaced by the smell of animality.

The destruction of the illusion of purity, however, is just as much directed against Zarathustra himself, as the one who discovers this illusion, as it is against those who seek to uphold it. The consequences of the nearness of smelling are *compromising*: the smelling subject

⁴²⁴ Zöllner, *Über die Natur*, 343.

needs to forgo distance and approach its object, thus entering into the same sphere and exposing itself to contagion.⁴²⁵ Being distant, not only the “Rein-Erkennenden” could guard their *Reinheit* but anyone seeking to know them could as well. Zarathustra’s coming close in order to smell them compromises his purity just as much as theirs since his *Erkennen* of the “Rein-Erkennenden” is not a *Rein-Erkennen* itself; he, too, must give up any pretense to a godly soul and find himself (in the narration of the book often literally) surrounded by animals. Zarathustra’s own “purity” is compromised in his getting up close.

This compromising quality of smell amounts to a severe weakening of any pathos of distance to the point that the nature of this pathos changes. The proximity of smell closes the gulf that is supposed to separate. The reciprocity of exposure—I enter into your olfactory realm to detect your flaws, leaving me exposed to contagion and detection in turn⁴²⁶—undoes any nobility and even threatens differentiation as such. “Die Gefahr war in der Nähe” (KSA 6, 157): the danger of proximity lies in its rendering possible all kinds of mixing, confusing, and mistaking. Precisely against this danger, Nietzsche evokes his “feeling of distance:” “Ein Distanz-Gefühl das zuletzt physiologisch sein möchte bin ich aus der allernächsten Nähe nie los geworden: ich empfinde die Distanz, verschieden zu sein in jedem Verstande, gleichsam unvermischbar und obenauf im Vergleich zu jedem trüben Elemente” (NF 1888,22[29]). Conversely, according to the implication of Nietzsche’s claim, an “allernächste[] Nähe” threatens the ability “verschieden

⁴²⁵ In this nearness, olfaction also opposes the reign of distance under the paradigm of visibility as Irigaray develops it: for theoretical man, both objects and the original source of phenomenality (sun) are distant. In olfaction, by contrast, the object is close and the element that enables olfactory phenomenality (air) is not only close but even enters into the perceiving “subject,” into “das Innerlichste” analyzed below.

⁴²⁶ The link between nearness and the possibility of contagion is evident in many passages from Nietzsche’s work; consider, for instance, this passage from “Von den Lehrstühlen der Tugend,” from the first part of *Also sprach Zarathustra*: “Glücklich schon, wer in der Nähe dieses Weisen wohnt! Solch ein Schlaf steckt an” (KSA 4, 34).

zu sein;” the *scheiden* of difference and separation is attenuated and endangered, if one comes close, as Zarathustra, for instance, does. In short, distance acts as the guardian of difference—a guardian easily overwhelmed by smell’s proximity.

2.2. Distance, Perspective, Chaos

Yet the *reduction* of distance found in smell constitutes only half the story, the easier half no less. In a passage concerned with “einen letzten Zug meiner Natur,” from the last section of “Warum ich so weise bin” in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche performs a transition away from nearness: “Mir eignet eine vollkommen unheimliche Reizbarkeit des Reinlichkeits-Instinkts, so dass ich die Nähe oder—was sage ich?—das Innerlichste, die ‘Eingeweide’ jeder Seele physiologisch wahrnehme—*rieche...*” (KSA 6, 275). Corresponding exactly to the invasive character of olfactory perception, the term “Nähe” is undone in the inwardness, in the “innards” of Nietzsche’s smelling.⁴²⁷ While proximity could still be seen to be an oppositional term to distance and consequently stand in a relation to it, albeit a privative one, smell, in its radicality, undoes the near-far opposition when it becomes “innermost:” another being’s inside becomes perceptible; what one would conventionally call the perceiving “subject” is thus not only “nah,” not even in contact but beyond such designations at the extreme point of the inside turning out and the outside turning inwards, unsettling even this very foundation of oppositionality.⁴²⁸ Such

⁴²⁷ Nietzsche uses the term “Eingeweide” rather frequently: one can detect here, besides the connotation of the “innermost” that interests in this context, his concern with digestion but also the use of innards in the prophetic activity of Ancient Greek oracles. It is from the “Eingeweide” that the most important “in-sights” are drawn.

⁴²⁸ As Jacques Derrida has argued, the opposition of inside and outside is in fact a condition of possibility for oppositionality as such: “In order for these contrary value (good/evil, true/false, essence/appearance, inside/outside, etc.) to be in opposition, each of the terms must be simply *external* to the other, which means that one of these oppositions (the opposition between inside and outside) must already be accredited as the matrix of all possible opposition” (Derrida, “Plato’s Pharmacy,” 106). One could more

an intensification of smelling's relation to distance is daring and dangerous, as the passage just quoted indicates: Nietzsche hesitates with an incredulous "was sage ich?" right before moving from "Nähe" to "das Innerlichste." This feature of his "nature," presented as a "*letzten Zug*," is not only uncanny but "vollkommen unheimlich;" the diminished hold of the distance/proximity schema on the ordering of perception is an extreme point of uncanniness, in particular because Nietzsche presents it as something that is his own and proper to him, "mir eignet." As the thinker of distance par excellence, Nietzsche is expelled from his home (*un-heimlich*), as it were, when he smells—and yet this expulsion is very much part of his nature and, in fact, concludes his entire discussion of his "wisdom." The "last" point of this wisdom is reached precisely in uncanniness, when the "Innerlichste" nature of smelling threatens both that which is his own and the notion of distance as such.

Nietzsche's strength, so the passage continues, lies in his being able to endure such an expulsion—but only to a degree. Even he needs to return to himself: "Aber ich habe *Einsamkeit* nöthig, will sagen, Genesung, Rückkehr zu mir, den Athem einer freien leichten spielenden Luft" (KSA 6, 276). Smelling, sniffing out the innards of one's contemporaries is a "beständige Selbstüberwindung" that sickens the one who smells in this fashion: convalescence, restitution of the self and of the home is needed after a while. Breathing needs to be freed ("freien") from the intrusion of smell; a return to "irgend einem vollkommen durchsichtigen und glänzenden Elemente" (KSA 6, 276) is required.

But without such a retreat from the uncannily compromising and invasive properties of olfaction, the weakening not only of the pathos of distance but also of the farness/proximity

broadly link, as Judith Butler has done in a recent preface to a new translation of *Of Grammatology*, these Nietzschean considerations of opposites and the inside/outside to Derrida's thinking of difference.

schema as such reigns freely. Nietzsche's move from "Nähe" to "das Innerlichste" indicates the extreme point of the incompatibility of the pathos of distance (and hence nobility, aristocracy, rank ordering, etc.) and smell. Yet the reference to "das Innerlichste" points to a deeper and perhaps even more consequential problem inherent in smell: without the notion of distance, there cannot be a robust conception of perspective. In short, *smell dissolves perspective*, more precisely, it dissolves the "spect" part of perspective while reconfiguring the "per" as the invasion of "das Innerlichste:" olfaction concerning "the innermost" of the perceived object means that it occurs at a point of indistinction and mingling where the inside is the outside, and the outside the inside. The one turns into the other, leaving any kind of orienting delimitation or determination out of reach. Bereft of both the inner/outer and the far/proximate distinction, a smelling subject fails to construct anything resembling a stable and determinate perspective.⁴²⁹

The argument for this far-reaching conclusion runs as follows. Perspective is a visual or optical term.⁴³⁰ Both the term itself and any number of passages from Nietzsche's work could

⁴²⁹ Most considerations in the secondary literature on Nietzsche's so-called perspectivism are concerned with two questions: first, is perspectivism itself "just" a perspective, and, if so, what follows from such alleged self-referentiality. Danto concludes his chapter on "perspectivism" in this way: "How are we to understand a theory when the structure of our understanding is itself called into question by the theory we are asked to understand? Would it not follow from the fact that we had understood it at all that we had misunderstood it?" (Danto, 79). Second and relatedly, does perspectivism amount to relativism? Some paradigmatic claims in this respect: Nietzsche's "Perspectivism, as we are in the process of construing it, is not equivalent to relativism" (Nehamas, *Nietzsche*, 49); Babette Babich introduces a difference between perspectivism and "perspectivalism" (Babich, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Science*, 46) to arrive at a similar conclusion. Neither question is of much interest here: instead, the question is not one of the consequences of the reach of the concept of perspective but rather of the aporias and shortcomings one can detect in Nietzsche's treatment of perspective "itself," as it were, in the larger context of his work. In this sense, Nietzsche points to something "beyond" perspectivism—but not as a universal point of view that would sublate perspectivism but rather as the *dissolution* of perspectives.

⁴³⁰ For a thorough compilation of the visual and ocular vocabulary employed by Nietzsche in his description of perspectives, see Claudia Ibbeken, *Konkurrenzkampf der Perspektiven*, esp. 20-28. Ibbeken points out that Nietzsche sometimes uses non-visual "metaphors" to describe perspectives, such as *climatic* ones (Ibbeken, 23-4); she does not, however, investigate the implications for the very concept of perspective such a shift entails. Regarding the origins of Nietzsche's thinking on perspective, Helmholtz and Lange are generally credited with influencing especially Nietzsche's earlier thinking on this topic.

demonstrate this fact; the famous passage concerning “perspectival seeing” from the third essay of *Zur Genealogie der Moral* illustrates it perhaps most succinctly. Again opposing any notions of a “pure” cognition, Nietzsche writes: “hier wird immer ein Auge zu denken verlangt, das gar nicht gedacht werden kann, ein Auge, das durchaus keine Richtung haben soll [...] Es giebt *nur* ein perspektivisches Sehen, *nur* ein perspektivisches ‘Erkennen’” (KSA 5, 365). Cognition—albeit set in scare quotes—appears equivalent to seeing; the eye, or its (perhaps uncanny) multiplication as “*je mehr Augen*” dominates this theory of insight. It is out of this perspectival seeing that one cannot escape.⁴³¹ It is crucial that Nietzsche insists on the eye having a *direction*. Perspectival seeing is always directed, that is, oriented in a particular way. This is the first feature of perspective significantly weakened in smell: while some tracking and tracing of odors is possible, in particular for beings such as dogs, olfaction does not have a “Richtung” in the manner of a line of sight; odors wafts about and their diffuse nature makes determinately directed perception faltering and dubious. Instead, olfactory perception is atmospheric: no one orientation guides it; it is instead immersive and without determinate “Richtung.”

Robin Small has made the case for the decisive influence of Gustav Teichmüller, especially his work *Die wirkliche und die scheinbare Welt* (1882), which Nietzsche read in 1883-1885: “There can be no doubt that the idea of perspective is the clearest and most frequent debt of Nietzsche’s thinking to Teichmüller” (Small, 47). Teichmüller in particular developed a “theory of time as a perspectival construction” (Small, 45). For the question of how such perspectivism relates to the transcendental idealism of Kant, see, among many others, Danto’s *Nietzsche as Philosopher*: “he felt, and not so differently from either Kant or Spinoza, that there was a world which remained over, tossing blackly like the sea, chaotic relative to our distinctions and perhaps to all distinctions, but there nevertheless [...] Because he wanted to say that all our beliefs are false, he was constrained to introduce a world for them to be *false about*; and this *had* to be a world without distinctions, a blind, empty, structureless thereness” (Danto, 78). The goal of this section here is to produce a more nuanced account of Nietzsche’s understanding of perspective by looking at a case of its potential dissolution—an extreme point that then retroactively illuminates the underpinnings of any commitment to perspectives.

⁴³¹ This is generally taken to be the core of Nietzsche’s thinking on perspectives, a belief that this chapter seeks to problematize. Cf. Abel: “Es ist nicht möglich, ‘um seine eigene Ecke’, hinter die Perspektive zu schauen, die man nicht erst wählt, sondern selbst immer schon *ist*” (Abel, *Nietzsche*, 151). Of course, “one” is also always multiple perspectives at once as the introductory reading of *Ecce Homo* above pointed out, which already complicates claims such as Abel’s.

While sometimes treated as equivalent to a point of view,⁴³² the meaning of perspective as a “seeing through” draws attention to the line of vision and the reach of vision constituting a perspective. One crucial feature of this line is that it allows for the determination of *depth*, that is, distance. Any perspective is essentially structured by a degree ordering in terms of proximity and farness. The possibility of precise depth perception depends on *binocular* vision. (This also attributes a new connotation to Nietzsche’s description of Socrates’s cyclops eye in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*: that Socrates only has a *single* eye already indicates that the world-historical development he initiates is one of equalization and vulgarization, which derive from a misjudging of distance.) Binocular vision produces so-called “binocular disparity” or “parallax” that enables stereopsis, that is, properly three-dimensional depth perception.⁴³³ Only the difference between the perception of each of the two eyes constitutes a perception of how far away—how distant—any given object within a perspective is. (A similar phenomenon obtains in hearing, where distance is discerned via echolocation, which is based on the difference between the two ears.) Nothing equivalent, however, occurs in olfaction: the twoness of the nostrils appears to be no more than nature’s practical joke since they do not in any way produce anything

⁴³² Nehamas argues that “Nietzsche seems to have reached his view [of perspectives] by radicalizing a metaphor first introduced into modern epistemology from the domain of painting by Leibniz. Leibniz had argued that just as a city appears different to different observers situated at different points of view, so the universe as a whole appears different to each monad” (Nehamas, *Nietzsche*, 242n.5). Pointing to the argument developed here, Gilles Deleuze, in *Difference and Repetition*, directly contradicts this appeal to Leibniz’s influence: “Each series tells a story: not different points of view on the same story, like the different points of view on the town we find in Leibniz, but completely distinct stories which unfold simultaneously. The basic series are divergent: not relatively, in the sense that one could retrace one’s path and find a point of convergence, but absolutely divergent in the sense that the point or horizon of convergence lies in a chaos or is constantly displaced within that chaos” (Deleuze, 123).

⁴³³ Cf. “stereoscopic vision.” In *Cambridge Dictionary of Human Biology and Evolution*. For a more detailed description of depth perception, especially the difference between “absolute” and “relative” distance derived from “binocular depth cues,” as well as certain “monocular depth cues” that do provide a limited amount of depth perception, see Braunstein, Myron L. “Depth Perception.” In *Encyclopedia of Cognitive Science*, by L. Nadel. Wiley, 2005.

equivalent to a depth perception and do not in any way contribute to the detection of the distance of an odorous object. Determining such distance requires that the perceiving subject move, that is, one must alter one's position in space and only from the difference in perception in the two positions can such a thing as "olfactory location" arise. Without such movement that substitutes for the distance-discerning duality inherent in vision and hearing, olfactory perception is merely atmospheric and fails to produce proper depth perception. It follows that such atmospheric perception cannot be considered to be perspectival in Nietzsche's sense: it neither allows for a determinate "Richtung" of perception nor a definitive degree ordering into far and near, background and figure. All of these crucial features of perspective, according to the great provocation of Nietzsche's notion of smell, become severely weakened in olfaction.

In his Nietzsche lectures, Martin Heidegger emphasizes that perspective is crucially linked to a *horizon* and that the pair horizon/perspective is of central importance for analyzing Nietzsche's thought. For Heidegger, "Das Eingrenzende heißt griechisch τὸ ὀρίζον. [...] *Horizontbildung gehört zum inneren Wesen des Lebendigen selbst.*"⁴³⁴ To live means to delimit oneself; such imposing of limits is modelled on the limit of a "horizon," which the Greek meaning gives as "separating circle," from the verb for "to divide or separate from, as a boundary," "to mark out by boundaries, mark out."⁴³⁵ This delimiting, "eingrenzende" aspect of the horizon is supplemented by the seeing-through of perspective: "der Horizont ist *durchscheinend*, er weist als solcher hinaus auf das Nicht-Festgemachte, werdende und werdenkönnende, auf das Mögliche [...] Die Praxis als Lebensvollzug hält sich in solchen Durchblicken: 'Perspektiven'. Der Horizont steht immer innerhalb einer Perspektive, eines

⁴³⁴ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 516; emphasis in the original.

⁴³⁵ Cf. "ὀρίζω" in *Middle Liddell*.

Durchblicks in Mögliches.“⁴³⁶ According to Heidegger’s influential analysis, perspectival thinking is thus marked by this double character: while the horizon delimits, the perspective draws the line through and beyond such delimitation. This interplay of the “durch” character of perspective and its delimitation by a horizon, however, is absent from olfaction: While sight’s limits can be seen, smell, by contrast, has no horizon, that is, nothing delimits it from within that would be detectable via smell. Smell’s reach is either determined by the diminishing of its ability to perceive (it continuously decreases until it approaches zero) or by an externally imposed limit, such as a container. (One such container would be a cave, a decisive locale in *Also sprach Zarathustra* that will be analyzed below.) This, too, is one of the far-reaching implications of olfaction’s comparative weakness to tell distance: without proper depth perception, no reaching of the limits of the sphere of perception could be construed.

The counter-term to perspective and horizon, as Heidegger points out, is *chaos*—and olfaction’s troubled relation to both perspective and horizon consequently suggests that smell might stand, conversely, in a significant relationship to chaos. Chaos occupies a crucial place in Nietzsche’s thought, from texts produced in the early 1880s to his last writings. *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* puts it succinctly in aphorism 109: “Der Gesamt-Charakter der Welt ist dagegen in alle Ewigkeit Chaos, nicht im Sinne der fehlenden Nothwendigkeit, sondern der fehlenden Ordnung, Gliederung, Form” (KSA 3, 468).⁴³⁷ In other words, there are no hierarchies and hence no “pathos of distance” in the world, when considered “in alle Ewigkeit:” even more strongly,

⁴³⁶ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 517.

⁴³⁷ This thought continues into the late Nietzsche’s work, for instance in this fragment from 1887: “daß die Welt durchaus kein Organism ist, sondern das *Chaos*: daß die Entwicklung der “Geistigkeit” ein Mittel zur relativen Dauer der Organisation ist...” (NF-1887,11[74]). His published or “finished” writings from 1888 tend to use “chaos” in the pejorative sense: referring to the absence of a long perspective needed to build something great or to impose a forceful rhythm and structure.

even the very existence of *form* is doubtful from the non-perspective of eternity (eternity will be the focus of the last part of this chapter).⁴³⁸

Following Heidegger's analysis, two core meanings of chaos can be distinguished: on the one hand, "χάος meint anfänglich das Aufgähnende und weist in die Richtung des unabmeßbaren, stütze- und grundlosen, aufklaffenden Offenen."⁴³⁹ In the context of Nietzsche's work, this meaning, going back to Hesiod's usage of the term in his *Theogony* but also very prominently in the pre-Socratic philosophers, should not be understood as a state of the world that preceded our current state and out of which the world has (definitively) emerged.⁴⁴⁰ Instead,

⁴³⁸ Some commentators have thought to diminish the force of this passage by delimiting its scope. Günter Abel, for instance, introduces a distinction between organization and order to save the former from chaos: "Entsprechend darf man den Chaoscharakter der Welt bzw. die *Ordnungslosigkeit* der Welt, die darin besteht, daß es hinter dem Geschehen keine ordnende Hand, keinen Geist, keinen Gott, kein Gesamtbewußtsein und kein Vernunftprinzip gibt, nicht mit *Unorganisiertheit* verwechseln. Die Welt kann als vollständig *ordnungslos* und zugleich als hochgradig *organisiert* gedacht werden" (Abel, *Nietzsche*, 441; emphasis in the original). Nietzsche's explicit reference not just to "Ordnung" but also to "Gliederung, Form" makes such distinctions dubious: presumably any organization depends on just those two. Claus Zittel elevates such "organized chaos" explicitly to the rank of "Gestaltungsprinzip" of *Also sprach Zarathustra*: "*das (organisierte) Chaos' ist die neue Form* und die Auflösung von Einheitsfiktion das Gestaltungsprinzip. Darin trägt Nietzsche nicht nur seiner Begriffskritik Rechnung, der *Zarathustra* erhält dadurch einen ungemein modern Charakter" (Zittel, *Das ästhetische Kalkül*, 163). For a critique of Zittel's approach, see footnote 481 below.

⁴³⁹ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 506.

⁴⁴⁰ Abel stresses this point in his analysis of the connection between chaos and the eternal recurrence of the same: "Es ist also zu unterscheiden zwischen (1) dem Chaos im Sinne eines bestimmten Zustandes der Welt der Kräfte, dem andere Zustände vorausliegen bzw. folgen, und (2) dem Chaos als Kennzeichnung des *Gesamtcharakters* der Welt. Was die erste dieser beiden Bestimmungen angeht, so ist, da das Dasein keinen endlichen Anfang in der Zeit hat, die Bedeutung auszuschließen, die der Begriff des Chaos bei den vorsokratischen Griechen und noch bei Aristoteles hat, daß das Chaos nämlich der am Anfang der Welt stehen gähnende Raum bzw. Abgrund ist" (443). The last part of this chapter will offer a diverging account of the relationship between eternity and chaos. In contrast to Abel, Babich argues that Nietzsche's conception of chaos can only be understood in the context of "the Greeks" without further specifying which aspect of Greek thought she draws on: "Nietzsche's reading of chaos (or, as he says, nature) brings us not to modern physics [...] but precisely, incisively back to the Greeks" (152). She then seeks to show how Nietzsche's emphasis on chaos can (partly) recover the notion of cosmos: "By denying the cosmos its archaic originative and ruling as well as its telic or guiding and ending principles, that is, by understanding reality as multiple realities, Nietzsche recovers the principle significance of the primordial Greek term *kosmos* just insofar as it may be thought as a (purely) aesthetic concept" (155). For a different account of the relationship between chaos and cosmos see Deleuze, who draws on the Joycean neologism of a "chaosmos:" "The eternal return is not the effect of the Identical upon a world become similar, it is

chaos rather names the ungrounded opening of becoming that is “unabmeßbar[], stütze[los].” On the other hand, Heidegger argues that a different understanding of chaos emerges in modernity: “Das Chaotische heißt uns das Durcheinander, das Wirre, das Sichübereinanderstürzende.”⁴⁴¹ Both of these meanings can be detected in the analysis of olfaction’s dissolution of perspective and horizon developed above: the absence of a “delimiting” horizon makes it “unabmeßbar[], stütze[los],” a middle of opening (which will be further developed below), on the one hand, and the impossibility of establishing a rank ordering leads to it being “durcheinander” and potentially “sichübereinanderstürzend,” on the other.

Smell, in other words, is chaotic because it constitutes a *disintegration*: odorous things, as will be developed more below, continuously cast out particles; the smell of a thing results from the phase change that leads particles out of the organized, solid or liquid thing into a gaseous state, where the particle has more degrees of freedom, a higher capacity of moving around—hence tending towards a disordered, disintegrated, that is, more chaotic state. If something smells, it is involved in a process of disintegration, becoming more chaotic as it continues to emit scent.

The link between “chaos” and “gas,” in fact, has a scientific history: in the seventeenth century, the Dutch (al)chemist Jan Baptista van Helmont introduced in his treatise *Ortus medicinae* the term “gas” into scientific discourse, deriving it from the Greek word χάος,

not an external order imposed upon the chaos of the world; on the contrary, the eternal return is the internal identity of the world and of chaos, the Chaosmos” (299).

⁴⁴¹ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 506. It is this meaning that Nietzsche hints at when he notes with respect to Pascal: “ohne den christlichen Glauben, meinte Pascal, werdet ihr euch selbst, ebenso wie die Natur und die Geschichte, un monstre et un chaos“. Diese Prophezeiung haben wir *erfüllt*” (1887,9[182]). In the modern, gregarious age, we—and the status of this “we” as well as its relationship to Christianity here is highly doubtful—have become a monster and a chaos.

probably through the Dutch pronunciation of the initial “χ” as “g.”⁴⁴² Helmont further described gas with the Latin term “halitus,” with synonyms indicating “spiritus (breath, spirit, ghost), ventus (wind), anima (soul), vapor (vapour), afflatus (afflatus).”⁴⁴³ The reference point for Helmont and those who followed him is Paracelsus’s claims regarding χάος as “Ur-Stoff” of all elements.

This chaotic nature of air, detected in a-perspectival smell, is in the last analysis responsible for the *compromising* nature of smell. Threatening the possibility of a definitive pathos of distance but the possibility of any (rank) ordering, smell also threatens the possibility of *valuation* tout court. The “pathos of distance” is precisely tied to the possibility to create values, as multiple commentators have pointed out,⁴⁴⁴ but it is further the weakening of perspective that equally weakens the possibility of valuation: all values are perspectival. Values are always relative to a horizon, to a context, in which they weigh and matter.⁴⁴⁵ The very condition of possibility for values lies in the existence of a “direction” (*Richtung*), of lines of limitation and possibility, and of the guardian of difference constituted by distance—all countered by the non-visual structures of smell.

⁴⁴² Cf., for instance, the entry for Helmont in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Scientists*.

⁴⁴³ Cf. F. Lachmann, “Van Helmont’s Gas” (Lachman, 12). Lachmann proceeds from these Latin synonyms to the further claim that Helmont’s explicit claim regarding the Greek derivation was merely meant as cover for his actual derivation from the Dutch “geest,” ghost: “It was only after having pronounced Gas (guttural g) that he saw its similarity with the Greek χάος” (Lachman, 12). The whole discussion surrounding the origins of “gas” is a remarkable case study of the influence of such contingent factors as pronunciation and assonance on scientific discourse.

⁴⁴⁴ Cf., for instance, the article by Paul S. Loeb cited above, which develops the contrast between “Creating values out of the pathos of distance or out of resentment” (Loeb, “The Priestly Slave Revolt,” 109) in an effort to dispute recent scholarship that has claimed that the “slave revolt” was actually instigated by the nobles.

⁴⁴⁵ This will be front and center in the investigation of the “smell of the earth” and the spirit of gravity developed below.

To indicate just one radical consequence for Nietzsche's ethico-political thought produced by this extreme point of compromise to which smell leads: smell threatens greatness. In air—be it “bad” or not—, *greatness* (Größe) does not exist. Greatness would be an perspectival phenomenon that finds no equivalent in the olfactory realm. No optics, no greatness. Consequently, smell is associated in many of Nietzsche's writings with the *herd*.⁴⁴⁶ The herd is marked by unformed mediocrity, interchangeable proximity. The herd does not allow for anything to stand out; it is marked by what Nietzsche in a different context calls “*compromittirende Mittelmäßigkeit*” (NF-1887,10[67]), a tendency to *Gleichgültigkeit*—the absence of ordering and subordinating judgments—that eliminates any individuality.⁴⁴⁷ Living in the herd means to compromise: this is at bottom the reason for gregarious smell.

When Nietzsche, in *Ecce Homo*, describes his “proprium” as possessing a unique “olfactory genius,” then this claim is indeed “vollkommen unheimlich:” if his work is primarily directed towards a “transvaluation of all values,” if he is to be the philosopher of a non-decadent future, then his claims as articulated through olfaction constantly threaten to undermine—compromise—him. The bewilderment produced by this situation of smell can be described with

⁴⁴⁶ A different, non-social or even anti-social type of stench can be found in some of Nietzsche's more passing remarks, for instance, in his identification with Philoctetes. Philoctetes was exiled (an early note by Nietzsche emphasizes the centrality of exile to Philoctetes' story: “Der *Philoktet* des Sophocles — als Lied vom Exil zu verstehen.” The title of this note is: “Leiden des agonalen Individuums” (NF-1871,16[3])); he was exiled because of his unbearable screams and the equally unbearable *stench* of his wound. His smell leads to exile, to the expulsion from the herd. On October 29th 1881, Nietzsche signs a postcard to his mother and sister, after he has found a new place to stay in Genova: “In Lieber Euer Philoktet” (BVN 1881,164). Olfactory exile from civilization is generally articulated in Nietzsche's work through a purification, such as Zarathustra's quest for better air analyzed below; here we find a rare malodorous olfactory exile that could also be linked to the thought of a “Heilung” analyzed below.

⁴⁴⁷ It thus produces in full force the problem of “Verwechselln” that Nietzsche addresses in *Ecce Homo*: in gregariousness, everyone “looks the same.”

the words of an unpublished note, which appears to have been preparatory for the famous paragraph 125 of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*:

Was war das für ein Schwamm, mit dem wir den ganzen Horizont um uns auslöschten? Wie brachten wir dies zu Stande, diese ewige feste Linie wegzuwischen, auf die bisher alle Linien und Maaße sich zurückbezogen, nach der bisher alle Baumeister des Lebens bauten, ohne die es überhaupt keine Perspektive, keine Ordnung, keine Baukunst zu geben schien? (NF-1881,14[25])⁴⁴⁸

Horizons, “firm lines” have been wiped out; perspective has dissolved. When one gets up close, “nahe” to Nietzsche’s self-ascription of an olfactory genius, it appears much less as a laudatory, ennobling designation than the name of a deeply troubling and confounding problem.

2.3. Interlude: “Saint” Augustine’s *Zudringlichkeit*

One potent instance of smell’s destructive effect on the pathos of distance, an instance with far-reaching implications for much of Nietzsche’s thought can be traced in his olfactory remarks concerning Saint Augustine. Against the background of the compromising nature of smell, Nietzsche can here be seen to struggle to find a response to his olfactory dilemma: how could he possibly launch attacks in olfactory terms, as he does frequently, if the logic of olfaction itself seems to undercut the distance one would presume necessary for a struggle, for critique, for an overcoming renewal?

In *Der Antichrist*, Nietzsche refers to smell as a mode of discerning the uncleanness of Augustine who stands for “Alles Erbärmliche, An-sich-Leidende, Von-schlechten-Gefühlen-

⁴⁴⁸ The fragment ties this wiping out of perspective to the question of God, as it opens with the words: “Wohin ist Gott? Was haben wir gemacht?”. The revised version of this passage as it appears in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* explicitly references olfaction, as will be analyzed in the next part of this section. Jörg Kreienbrock’s “Was heißt: Sich im Weltall orientieren? Kosmophilosophien 1950-1970” opens with the continuation of this fragment as an epigraph; see footnote 517 below. At this point it can already be suggested that olfaction’s threat and potential is to produce certain features of outer space existence on earth; cf. also the *Weltraum*/earth distinction with respect to the nose and the spectroscope above.

Heimgesuchte” (KSA 6, 248): “Man lese nur irgend einen christlichen Agitator, den heiligen Augustin zum Beispiel, um zu begreifen, um zu *riechen*, was für unsaubere Gesellen damit obenauf gekommen sind” (KSA 6, 248). What could such a reference to the smell of a person, long dead, possibly mean?

Nietzsche’s reference to *Saint* Augustine, to his sanctity, provides a first indication: sanctity for Nietzsche is characterized by a pathos of distance, by an instinct to separate. Yet Augustine, so the argument goes, fails precisely in this regard. In the ninth section titled “was ist vornehm?” in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, Nietzsche writes:

Was am tiefsten zwei Menschen trennt, das ist ein verschiedener Sinn und Grad der Reinlichkeit. Was hilft alle Bravheit und gegenseitige Nützlichkeit, was hilft aller guter Wille für einander: zuletzt bleibt es dabei — sie “können sich nicht riechen!” Der höchste Instinkt der Reinlichkeit stellt den mit ihm Behafteten in die wunderlichste und gefährlichste Vereinsamung, als einen Heiligen: denn eben das ist Heiligkeit — die höchste Vergeistigung des genannten Instinktes (KSA 5, 226).

Not being able to smell someone, as Nietzsche professes with respect to Augustine, means that one seeks to separate oneself from this person. Similarly, Augustine, if he were really “Saint” Augustine, would be marked by just such an impetus to set himself apart, to seek out and establish distance. Yet, as Nietzsche emphasizes at various points of his published and unpublished writings, Augustine is to the contrary marked by *Zudringlichkeit*—the very opposite of a separating instinct.⁴⁴⁹ In a note from 1885, when reading the *Confessions*,⁴⁵⁰ for instance,

⁴⁴⁹ Nietzsche consistently objects to *Zudringlichkeit* and often ties it to smell, for reasons outlined above, even if the matter is not Christianity. See a letter from 1887 to Malwida von Meysenbug: “Das, was mich noch leben heißt, eine ungewöhnliche und schwere *Aufgabe*, heißt mich auch den Menschen aus dem Wege zu gehn und mich an Niemanden mehr anzubinden. Es mag die extreme Lauterkeit sein, in die mich eben jene Aufgabe gestellt hat, daß ich nachgerade “die Menschen” nicht mehr *riechen* kann, am wenigsten die “jungen Leute“, von denen ich gar nicht selten heimgesucht werde (— oh, sie sind zudringlich-täppisch, ganz wie junge Hunde!)” (BVN, 1887,845).

⁴⁵⁰ It appears that Nietzsche knew only the *Confessions* by Augustine. The latter contains only very few direct mentions of smell. The two most consequential one can be found in Book X. The first instance does not differentiate between the five sense. Augustine speaks of his love for god, disavowing any love

Nietzsche remarks: “die Mischung demüthiger Servilität mit einer hoffärtig-pöbelhaften Zudringlichkeit, mit der sich z.B. der heilige Augustin in seinen confessiones vor Gott wälzt” (NF-1885,34[141]). And again: “— wie unbescheiden nimmt sich der Mensch mit seinen Religionen aus, auch wenn er sich noch vor Gott wälzt, gleich dem heiligen Augustin! Welche *Zudringlichkeit!*” (NF-1885,1[70]). *Zudringlichkeit* leaves no separation and destabilizes any differentiating in-between; it is the main characteristic of the not very saintly “Saint” Augustine.

More radically, *Zudringlichkeit* is the hallmark of the invention of Christianity as such at the hands of Paul:

Damit ist der Rausch des Paulus auf seinem Gipfel, und ebenfalls die *Zudringlichkeit* seiner Seele, — mit dem Gedanken des Einswerdens ist jede Scham, jede Unterordnung, jede Schranke von ihr genommen, [...] — Diess ist der *erste Christ*, der Erfinder der Christlichkeit! (KSA 3, 68)

The anti-nobility and anti-aristocracy impetus of Christianity disrupts all separation. All subordination and shame are overwhelmed by Christian *Zudringlichkeit*. In the end, even the Christian god himself emerges as the “Über-Zudringliche,” as the ugliest man designates him in *Also sprach Zarathustra*: “Sein Mitleiden kannte keine Scham: er kroch in meine schmutzigsten

modelled on corporeal or sensory relations: “But what do I love, when I love Thee? not beauty of bodies, nor the fair harmony of time, nor the brightness of the light, so gladsome to our eyes, nor sweet melodies of varied songs, nor the fragrant smell of flowers, and ointments, and spices.” Instead it is a love by the “inner man:” “yet I love a kind of light, and melody, and fragrance, and meat, and embracement when I love my God, the light, melody, fragrance, meat, embracement of my *inner man*: where there shineth unto my soul what space cannot contain, and there soundeth what time beareth not away, and there smelleth what breathing disperseth not, and there tasteth what eating diminisheth not, and there clingeth what satiety divorceth not” (Augustine, *Confessions*, 175 ; emphasis added). The second one does single out smell but in a negative mode: “With the allurements of smells, I am not much concerned. When absent, I do not miss them; when present, I do not refuse them; yet ever ready to be without them. So I seem to myself; perchance I am deceived” (Augustine, 200). For a general overview of the relationship between Nietzsche and Augustine, see Matthew Rose, “Nietzsche on Augustine on Happiness.”

Winkel. Dieser Neugierigste, Über-Zudringliche” (KSA 4, 331).⁴⁵¹ Even the most holy, holiness itself has no shame and is close, all too close: “jedwedes Distanz-Verhältniss zwischen Gott und Mensch ist abgeschafft, — eben das ist die ‚frohe Botschaft‘“ (KSA 6, 205). This weakening of “jede Schranke” reorders space as a space of equality, of mixing, mingling, and confusion. Christianity, in short, is the religion of compromising proximity, where everyone can—in a “Rausch”-like state that indicates a pseudo-mystic unification—approach anyone else.

This, of course, generates a dangerous constellation for Nietzsche: he cannot, as his own analysis of the mechanisms of resentment and the pathos of distance show, simply reinstate noble scales of distance and separation as a *reaction*. Any reactionary “action” is by definition ignoble. Fleeing proximity—attempting to put some distance between oneself and the problem of proximity, or between oneself and a *zudringlich*, un-saintly saint—would be reactionary and consequently remain beholden to it. Put differently, diagnosing the malaise of Christianity in the absence of “pure,” distance-keeping insight requires getting up close to it and hence exposing oneself to all the dangers found in such nearness. Finding a non-reactionary response to Christianity’s *Zudringlichkeit*, its undermining of nobility and the attendant triumph of the scale of nearness, necessitates engaging, in a first step at least, this very scale and then reconfigure nearness from within.

Consequently, the appropriate mode of discovering—and eventually critiquing—such *Zudringlichkeit* is not vision or hearing but smell. Many of Nietzsche’s most caustic diatribes against Christianity are articulated in olfactory terms because one of Christianity’s main inventions lies precisely in *the triumph of the scale of smell*, that is, *the triumph of proximity*. It

⁴⁵¹ The relationship between *Mitleid* and an abolition of distance is at the core of part four of *Also sprach Zarathustra* and will be central to the analysis proposed below.

replaces more noble scales of vision or hearing that are based on a separation between seer and seen or hearer and heard. A non-reactionary response to Christianity's equalizing that undoes all separations in shamelessness, or, to put it in the terms of *Ecce Homo*, a "Widerspruch" that is not naysaying will engage precisely this phenomenon of Christianity and reconfigure it.

Nietzsche's maneuver from within the sensory redistribution established by Christianity can be developed as follows: the main olfactory quality ascribed to a "Saint" in Christian aromatics, in fact one of the main olfactory aspects of Christianity as a whole, is the so-called "odor of sanctity."⁴⁵² Often a crucial element of the case for canonization, the odor of sanctity refers to a pleasant fragrance allegedly emanating from the corpse of a saint that indicates that his "holy" remains are exempted from the normal human or rather biological processes of decay and putrefaction; a saint is supposed to be "incorrupt" and indeed uncorruptible. By ascribing a stench to figures such as Saint Augustine, Nietzsche thus directly denies their ability to withstand the biological power of decay: he denies their claim to an extramundane, extra-life existence and re-inscribes them into their human, all too human existence. A well-known instance of such an olfactory denial of sainthood can be found in book seven of Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*: the corpse of Zosima begins to decay and stink almost immediately after his death, causing great confusion and dismay among those who previously admired him as saintly.⁴⁵³ Corruption reigns, according to the implication of Nietzsche's ascription of stink to Saint

⁴⁵² That Nietzsche was familiar with this concept can be assumed not only because it has been a prominent part of the Christian imagination in the 19th century but also because he directly uses this syntagm in *Menschliches Allzumenschliches II*: "Es ist die einzige heilige Lüge, die berühmt geworden ist; während der Geruch der Heiligkeit sonst nur an Irrthümern haften blieb" (KSA 2, 587).

⁴⁵³ According to various testimonies by Nietzsche himself, he discovered Dostoyevsky by chance in a bookstore in 1887 (namely the book *Notes from Underground*), and calls him the only psychologist ever capable of teaching him something ("des einzigen Psychologen, anbei gesagt, von dem ich Etwas zu lernen hatte," (KSA 6, 147)). A reference to Dostoyevsky's last work in a letter to Overbeck (BVN 1887,847) indicates that Nietzsche was familiar with *The Brothers Karamazov* in particular.

Augustine, over all earthly creatures. An extension of this strategy can be observed in the famous aphorism 125 from *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, concerning the death of god himself: “Riechen wir noch Nichts von der göttlichen Verwesung? — auch Götter verwesen! Gott ist todt! Gott bleibt todt!” (KSA 3, 481). The crucial “auch” in this passage indicates that the main intervention of Nietzsche’s attack on Christianity lies in his reinscription of the allegedly otherworldly into our world where “we” can smell the process of decomposition that eventually reaches everything in this world.⁴⁵⁴

2.4. Surfaces, Explosions, Ideals

One crucial consequence of olfaction’s threat to perspective and distance and its affinity with chaos is the disruption of the surface/depth schema. A schema essential to the ordering of sensory experience and the functioning of life more broadly, the opposition between surface and depth or, closely related, background and figure is supposed to organize chaos into closer and farther away, into proximate and far according to a determinate perspective. Olfaction knows no such concept of surface, as Nietzsche’s description of “das Innerlichste” that becomes outer already indicated. A number of remarks and notes from the 1880s, before the decisive remarks in *Ecce Homo*, position this olfactory threat to the concept of surface in the larger context of Nietzsche’s reflections on superficiality and depth, while also introducing the notion of smell’s “explosion” as an alternative.

⁴⁵⁴ In a manner not all too unlike the writings on Christianity of some of his contemporaries, Nietzsche often exempts Jesus from his criticism of Christianity and lets Christianity as such begin with Paul: “Das Wort schon ‘Christenthum’ ist ein Missverständniss — , im Grunde gab es nur Einen Christen, und der starb am Kreuz” (KSA 6, 211). This is true in olfactory terms also where Jesus is referred to in Nietzsche’s notes repeatedly with the syntagm: “Jesus – wie ein süßer Geruch” (NF 1883,10[6]).

A long tradition from Lucretius onwards has thought smells as disrupting our notion of the surface of things. But while this tradition then locates smell in the *depths* of things,⁴⁵⁵ Nietzsche's notion of odors reconfigures the surface/depth scheme altogether and in doing so produces a critique of superficiality more generally. Once the testimony of the senses is accepted and even sharpened, as *Götzen-Dämmerung* demanded, the primacy of "oberflächliches Denken," to use a term from *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, that constitutes philosophy must be abandoned. Superficial thinking, however, is the main characteristic of consciousness, as aphorism 354 of *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* develops: "der Mensch, wie jedes lebende Geschöpf, denkt immerfort, aber weiss es nicht; das bewusst werdende Denken ist nur der kleinste Theil davon, sagen wir: der oberflächlichste, der schlechteste Theil" (KSA 3, 592). Consciousness produces an "Oberflächen[-]Welt" which is nothing but a "vergemeinerte Welt" (KSA 3, 593) based on the "Hautlichkeit" (KSA 3, 517) of things.⁴⁵⁶ Its access to the world is shaped according to the *average* demands of the *species*, thus lacking any constitutive relationship to "truth." Smell, as the "most delicate instrument" of observation, thus seeks to provide a mode of thinking other than the mediocre mode of consciousness that is always tied to surfaces yet it also does not pretend to have a subcutaneous access to some previously hidden

⁴⁵⁵ For Lucretius, see, most importantly, book IV of *De rerum natura*: "it [smell] is emitted with difficulty from the depths of each thing; for since all things seem to smell stronger when broken, when ground up, when disintegrated in fire, this means that odour comes flowing released out of the depths of things" (Lucretius, 687-702) Cf. also book one: "But for a keen-scented mind [*sagaci*], these little tracks are enough to enable you to recognize the others for yourself. For as hounds very often find by their scent the leaf-hidden resting-place of the mountain-ranging quarry, when once they have hit upon certain traces of its path, so will you be able for yourself to see one thing after another in such matters as these, and to penetrate all unseen hiding-places, and draw forth the truth from them" (I, 400-410). Cf. also Kant's remarks on the "innig" character of smell cited in footnote 146 above.

⁴⁵⁶ The question of surface reemerges in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, for instance, as the question of skins. Zarathustra talks to his disciples: "Die Erde, sagte er, hat eine *Haut*; und diese *Haut* hat Krankheiten. Eine dieser Krankheiten heisst zum Beispiel "Mensch"" (KSA 4, 168).

depth.⁴⁵⁷ Any attempt to establish *distance* between the mediocrity of the species and an *aussergewöhnlich* genius thus finds a privileged, albeit highly problematic, locus of articulation in smell.

The clearest articulation of the disturbance of surface thinking that occurs in smell can be found in Nietzsche's linking of smell to *explosion*, his term for what above was designated as phase changes: odorous bodies are continuously exploding. To correctly explicate this unexpected claim, the structure of the odorous object that is perceived by the nose has to be developed first. This structure lies in the relationship between the movements the "most delicate instrument" picks up on and what these movements are signs of. A fragment from 1885 thus states: "alle Bewegungen sind Zeichen eines inneren Geschehens; und jedes innere Geschehen drückt sich aus in solchen Veränderungen der Formen" (NF 1885,1[28]). When a sense organ perceives movement or, more precisely, a change in form, then this is the sign of an inner occurrence. This occurrence must be understood as the result of an exertion of *force*: "alle Bewegungen sind als Gebärden aufzufassen, als eine Art Sprache, wodurch sich die Kräfte verstehn" (NF 1885,1[28]). Sense perception is "eine Zeichensprache für den Machtausgleich von Affekten." Any smell must be seen as the sign that a rearrangement of the equilibrium of forces has taken place.

⁴⁵⁷ Michel Foucault has put it concisely in his reflections on Nietzsche's method: "There is in Nietzsche a critique of ideal depth, of depth of conscience, which he denounces as an invention of philosophers; this depth would be the pure and interior search for truth [...] the interpreter must [...] descend along the vertical line and show that this depth of interiority is in reality something other than what it says" The upshot of this type of interpretation is that "depth is now restored as an absolutely superficial secret" (Foucault, "Nietzsche, Freud, Marx," 273).

In an earlier fragment, Nietzsche describes the production of odorous particles with a term that becomes particularly potent in his late work and frames the relationship between smell and force slightly differently: explosion. He writes:

Es wären Nasen denkbar, deren Geruchsnerve erst von den Auswürfen eines Vulkans gekitzelt würden. Thatsächlich scheinen sich die Oberflächen aller Dinge, welche riechen, im Zustande beständiger Explosion zu befinden; die Kraft, mit der die kleinen Massen ausgesandt werden, muß ungeheuer sein (NF 1881,11[277]).

Odors are cast out from the surfaces of all fragrant things:⁴⁵⁸ more precisely, what might to the eye appear as a smooth and flat surface (*Oberfläche*) is in fact in a constant state of explosion. At this point, the distinction between scientific instruments and the observation they produce, on the one hand, and the “Zeugniss” of the senses on the other that *Götzen-Dämmerung* developed is crucial. Scientific instruments—one can think of the prominent critique of the insufficiency of the spectroscope, an advanced scientific tool of Nietzsche’s time—are inferior to a sense organ such as the nose since “in ihnen kommt die Wirklichkeit gar nicht vor, nicht einmal als Problem” (KSA 6, 76).

To the *Zeugniss* of the senses as distinct from science, however, vision’s attention to surface cannot detect the movement that becomes perceptible in smell. Seeing is subject to “die Lüge der Einheit, die Lüge der Dinglichkeit, der Substanz, der Dauer” (KSA 6, 75): the testimony of the eye is that in seeing, the seen object persists as unified, substantial and enduring. Through the invasion of perceptible odorous particles in smelling, by contrast, through its emergence out of “das Innerlichste” and its entering into this most inner, an odorous thing qua

⁴⁵⁸ This passage echoes Roger Joseph Boscovich’s *A Theory of Natural Philosophy*, which Nietzsche read repeatedly in the years 1870 to 1874 (cf. Mittasch, *Friedrich Nietzsche als Naturphilosoph*, 35) and valued highly for his rejection of atoms in favor of “Kraftpunkte.” Thus Article 462 of Boscovich’s *Theory* states: “When the interval, which encloses the mass between limits of approach & recession, is somewhat large, & the sum of the later repulsive areas does not greatly exceed that of the attraction, then a slow evaporation will take place” (Boscovich, 327).

odorous appears to the senses as far from being a self-contained, unified, persisting substance but should rather be understood as a process: “things present themselves to smell only to the degree in which they are constituted themselves by a process, in which they dissolve into the air with practical effects.”⁴⁵⁹ Insofar as a thing is fragrant, it is dissolving and thus is becoming other than what it is. This explosive character of smells is where Nietzsche’s claim of a nostril-centric genius meets his self-description, in the same section of *Ecce Homo*, as dynamite: attention to olfaction functions like dynamite in that it explodes the “lies” upon which a philosophy of substance and unity is built.

In this sense, smell is anti-idealistic; it explodes all ideals. The incompatibility of distance and perspective, on the one hand, and smell, on the other, results in the incompatibility of smell and *ideals*: ideals, by necessity, are set up at a distance. They are seen far in the distance; they provide “Richtung” and have meaning only within a certain perspective, delimited by a horizon. It is in this context that Nietzsche’s olfactory diatribes against ideals become legible: the fourteenth section of the first essay of *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, for instance, states: “Aber genug! genug! Ich halte es nicht mehr aus. Schlechte Luft! Schlechte Luft! Diese Werkstätte, wo man *Ideale fabrizirt* — mich dünkt, sie *stinkt* vor lauter Lügen” (KSA 5, 282).⁴⁶⁰ Underneath the

⁴⁵⁹ Derrida, *Marges*, 109. Kant distinguishes between “mechanical” senses (the three “higher” senses of vision, hearing, and touch) and “chemical” senses (the two “lower” senses of taste and smell). His distinction explicitly references the importance of *surface* to the higher, mechanical senses, which the chemical senses disrupt: the mechanical senses are “Sinne der *Wahrnehmung* (oberflächlich)” while the chemical senses are senses “des *Genusses* (innigste Einnehmung)” (Kant, *Anthropologie*, 451). In fact, smell is “noch inniglicher” than taste and thus also less social and more susceptible to induce disgust (Kant, 452).

⁴⁶⁰ As this passage from the first essay of *Zur Genealogie der Moral* describing the stench of the fabrication of ideals develops, Nietzsche must close his nose; he can no longer bear the smell: “Ich verstehe, ich mache nochmals die Ohren auf (ach! ach! ach! und die Nase *zu*). Jetzt höre ich erst, was sie so oft schon sagten.” Nietzsche’s nose is *overpowered* and the forces of the subject are not adequate to the forces emanating in the form of stench. This is one of the rare passages where Nietzsche introduces an explicit difference between smelling and his other preferred sense, hearing. The difference enters

well-known genealogy of specific ideals that *Zur Genealogie* develops a more generalized critique of ideals as such operates that functions through the ideal-stench opposition. Ideals, according to the core of this critique, are set up against that which is perceived as “das Inconstante, Täuschende, Wechselnde, ‘Stinkende’ usw.” (NF 1884,26[203], emphasis added). The *eidos*, the unchanging form, the seen shape is supposed to protect against such change and inconstancy; in short, against chaos.

Yet this making of ideals through an abstraction that strips away the “Inconstante, Täuschende, Wechselnde, ‘Stinkende’” ends up stinking itself. These philosophers deny the human, all too human origin of their ideals, the physiological nature of all “Geist:”

Wahn der Idealisten. — Alle Idealisten bilden sich ein, die Sachen, welchen sie dienen, seien wesentlich besser, als die anderen Sachen in der Welt, und wollen nicht glauben, dass wenn ihre Sache überhaupt gedeihen soll, sie genau des selben übel riechenden Düngers bedarf, welchen alle anderen menschlichen Unternehmungen nöthig haben. (KSA 2, 318).⁴⁶¹

All human endeavors smell: this is the nature of life. Trying to erasure this odorous character results only in a return of the repressed: the “fabrication” of all ideals, far from succeeding at banning odors, in fact stinks itself.

precisely because the nose is overwhelmed by the stench of the ideals and in an apotropaic gesture, olfactory method must be replaced with an audio-centric analysis: in other words, the nose is *too fine*, too sensitive a tool for the overpowering putrefaction found here.

⁴⁶¹ Cf. also the following fragment: “Diesen *deutschen Idealisten* habe ich oft zugesehn, sie aber nicht mir! — sie wissen und riechen nichts davon, was ich weiß, sie gehen ihren sanften Schlendergang, sie haben das Herz voll anderer Begierden als ich: sie suchen andere Luft, andere Nahrung, anderes Behagen. Sie sehen hinauf, — ich sehe hinaus, — wir sehen nie das Gleiche. — Mit ihnen umzugehen ist mir verdrießlich. Sie mögen an ihrem Leibe schon die Reinlichkeit lieben: aber ihr Geist ist ungewaschen, ihr “folgich” riecht mir faul” (NF 1884,34[135]).

2.5. *Reinlichkeit*: Salvaging Separation

As already briefly indicated above with respect to Augustine, the olfaction-related term perhaps closest to the problem of distance is *Reinlichkeit*. In a certain way, it functions as the substitute in the olfactory realm for the pathos of distance: in the absence of ennobling distance-seeking, the rhetoric of cleanliness is supposed to salvage from the weakening of distance what always constituted its core: the movement of separation and differentiation.

One potent example of a rhetoric of *Reinlichkeit* can be found in the notes for *Ecce Homo* where Nietzsche emphasizes the tight connection between his nostrils—the genius that is proper to him—and cleanliness:

Ich wage noch ein proprium meiner Natur anzudeuten, zumal es beinahe *das* proprium ist. Ich habe Etwas, das ich meine inneren Nüstern nenne. Bei jeder Berührung mit Menschen ist das Erste, was mir sich verräth, der Grad von innerer Sauberkeit [— — —] — ich rieche gerade die “schönen Seelen” als besonders unreinlich (NF 1888, 21,[8]).⁴⁶²

Nietzsche’s *proprium*, that which is proper to him, is that he desires the proper. This predilection for properness, purity, and cleanliness produces a separating impetus, as the reworked form of this note as it appears in *Ecce Homo* expresses: “Mir eignet eine vollkommen unheimliche Reizbarkeit des Reinlichkeits-Instinkts [...] Mein ganzer Zarathustra ist ein Dithyrambus auf die Einsamkeit, oder, wenn man mich verstanden hat, auf die *Reinheit*...” (KSA 6, 275-6).

Loneliness—the separation from others—is here understood as a type of purity; conversely, all “Reinlichkeits-Instinkt” must propel into loneliness, producing separation.⁴⁶³ A similar passage in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* makes explicit that such a separation is concerned with precisely

⁴⁶² These notes appear in altered form in the last version of *Ecce Homo*: “Mir eignet eine vollkommen unheimliche Reizbarkeit des Reinlichkeits-Instinkts [...] Mein ganzer Zarathustra ist ein Dithyrambus auf die Einsamkeit, oder, wenn man mich verstanden hat, auf die *Reinheit*...” (KSA 6, 275-6).

⁴⁶³ In this respect, the concept of disgust as an epistemological tool in the service of life is crucial; for an extensive analysis of disgust in Nietzsche, see the chapter on this topic in Winfried Menninghaus, *Ekel*.

the *nobility* of the pathos of distance: “—: eben so sehr als ein solcher Hang *auszeichnet* — es ist ein vornehmer Hang —, *trennt* er auch” (KSA 5, 226).

Similarly, the third part of *Also sprach Zarathustra* presents Zarathustra as being guided by a “Reinlichkeits-Instinkt” that functions through olfaction and issues into a (return to) loneliness. The section titled “Die Heimkehr” describes Zarathustra’s state of “Verlassenheit” when he dwelled among humans and contrasts it with the “Einsamkeit” of his “Heimat” (KSA 4, 231-2). Speaking of his time spent “da unten” and opposing it to his regained height, Zarathustra speaks:

Wer Alles bei den Menschen begreifen wollte, der müsste Alles angreifen. Aber dazu habe ich zu reinliche Hände. Ich mag schon ihren Athem nicht einathmen; ach, dass ich so lange unter ihrem Lärm und üblem Athem lebte! Oh selige Stille um mich! Oh reine Gerüche um mich! Oh wie aus tiefer Brust diese Stille reinen Athem holt! (KSA 4, 233)

The limit of Zarathustra’s ability to grasp (“begreifen”) the human is the limit of his ability to attack; in the terms from *Ecce Homo*: the limit of one’s cognition and recognition is the limit of one’s “Kriegs-Praxis.” The second “principle” of this “Kriegs-Praxis” provides the crucial clue to understand the importance of “reinliche Hände” in this context: “Ich habe nie einen Schritt öffentlich gethan, der nicht compromittirte: das ist *mein* Kriterium des rechten Handelns” (KSA 6, 274). Polemics, “Alles angreifen,” by necessity *compromises*: one has to meet one’s opponent in the middle of a shared, even (to a degree) public space.

Hence Zarathustra, like Nietzsche, needs a “Heimkehr,” a return to “reine Gerüche” and “reinen Athem” (KSA 4, 233). The narration of “Die Heimkehr” consequently ends with the clearing of old, human stench: “Erlöst ist endlich meine Nase vom Geruch alles Menschenwesens! Von scharfen Lüften gekitzelt, wie von schäumenden Weinen, niest meine Seele, — niest und jubelt sich zu: Gesundheit!” (KSA 4, 234). Redemption comes from

sneezing, the clearing away of stench.⁴⁶⁴ By sneezing, Zarathustra expels what does not belong in his home and such expulsion is the step towards convalescence: the joke contained in this passage—“Gesundheit!” as exclamation—emphasizes that the *value* of smell for Nietzsche is not the gaining of insights for their own sake, not a knowledge born from an immaculate conception that is shielded from anything other than this very knowledge. Smelling, instead, serves life.

Yet the euphoric and witty tone of “Die Heimkehr” cannot cover over the fact that Zarathustra’s strategy in this section is oppositional and, barely hidden, a celebration of a pathos of distance—the very possibility of which the logic of olfaction undermines. Zarathustra, however, is far from ignorant of this undermining. He responds by developing two different versions of the inscription of differentiation into olfaction that seek to renegotiate smell’s relationship with separation, without relying on the ersatz construction of *Reinlichkeit*. In quite different ways, these different smells—the “smell of the earth” and the “smell and fragrance of eternity”—oppose without saying no, as it were; they articulate division without relying on a pathos of distance and in doing so rearticulate what it could mean to distinguish (oneself). If smell is radically compromising, then Zarathustra’s “new smells” rethink what it means to be compromised and to have responded to being compromised with an attempted *Heimkehr* supposed to reduce *Unheimlichkeit*; they reconfigure the relation between chaos and order, distance and proximity.

⁴⁶⁴ Reflections on sneezing have a perhaps surprisingly long pedigree. Aristotle, for instance, in his *Problems* XXXIII, describes sneezing as both healthy—Zarathustra, too, sneezes in the service of convalescence—and the nasal phenomenon closest to the divine. He furthermore claimed that sneezing could be triggered by looking at the sun.

Part III:

Zarathustra's New Smells

One of the 1882 preparatory notes for *Also sprach Zarathustra* states: “Habe ich nicht einen neuen Geruch [...] erfunden? — Also sprach Zarathustra” (NF 1882, 4[186]). The book richest in olfactory metaphors within Nietzsche's corpus, *Also sprach Zarathustra* must be inscribed in this context of *novelty*: Zarathustra's smells come to replace old smells, for instance the old smells of Augustinian *Zudringlichkeit* or modern gregariousness. Part of the unusual, *aussergewöhnlich* character of this protagonist and this work lies in an olfactory renewal—a renewal that pitches itself against the putrefying decadence Nietzsche's nostrils have detected and is thus part and parcel of the “physiologische Voraussetzung” of the type Zarathustra: his “grosse Gesundheit” (KSA 6, 337). This section shows how these new smells invented by Zarathustra respond to the compromising nature of smell developed above: both are integrally part of Zarathustra's efforts to reconfigure in ever changing ways the role of distance, separation, and differentiation; they attempt to compensate for the loss of horizon and perspective (by substituting the earth or the cave for a horizon) without falling into the trap of an illusory, reactionarily reinstated pathos of distance.

3.1 The Status of *Also sprach Zarathustra* and Its Four Parts

Yet reading these new smells and developing their relationship with novelty and health alongside the problem of distance faces an immediate challenge: even in an oeuvre that is notoriously difficult to classify, contextualize, and interpret, *Also sprach Zarathustra* is

unparalleled in the number of challenges it presents. The urgency of addressing such challenges is underscored by Nietzsche's repeated claims that "—Innerhalb meiner Schriften steht für sich mein *Zarathustra*" (KSA 6, 259). Yet, as one commentator points out, there exists "nothing close to a standard reading of the work's intention, form, development, resolution, or lack of resolution. (In fact, there are not even standard disagreements.)"⁴⁶⁵ Even the genre of writing and the tradition in which it stands is unclear: in addition to its citational or even imitative character,⁴⁶⁶ scholars have pointed out some obvious resonances with the Gospels (supported by Nietzsche's own claim that he has written "ein fünftes 'Evangelium'" (BVN 1883,375),⁴⁶⁷ but also an affinity or illuminating relationship with the modern novel,⁴⁶⁸ symphonies,⁴⁶⁹ the carnivals or comic spectacles of Medieval popular culture as they were central to Bakhtin's analyses,⁴⁷⁰ or Apuleius's *Golden Ass*.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁵ Pippin, "Irony," 45.

⁴⁶⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, for instance, calls *Also sprach Zarathustra* "a half-poetic book that belongs to the species of mimesis, of imitation" (Gadamer, "The Drama of Zarathustra," 220).

⁴⁶⁷ The letter continues, with much greater accuracy, perhaps: "oder irgend Etwas, für das es noch keinen Namen giebt."

⁴⁶⁸ Robert Gooding-Williams in *Zarathustra's Dionysian Modernism* thus claims that the theories of the novel proposed by Edward Said and Peter Brooks "attribute to the novel structural oppositions similar to the antithesis of intention and repetition that is evident in *Zarathustra*" (Gooding-Williams, 25) but insists that *Zarathustra* is, as the title of his book indicates, "modernist," while the novels considered by Said and Brooks are "antimodernist." Gooding-Williams's emphasis on the "plot" of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, that is, of the development the character undergoes on his wandering has some limited resonances with the methodological approach pursued here.

⁴⁶⁹ Nietzsche himself repeatedly refers to *Also sprach Zarathustra* as a symphony; for instance in a letter to Paul Heinrich Widemann from July 31st, 1885, when referring to the fourth part of his book: "das nicht herausgegebene und geheim zu haltende verwegene ‚Finale‘ meiner Symphonie" (BVN-1885,616). Graham Parkes, in "The Symphonic Structure of *Zarathustra*," has developed an outline of a comparison between musical symphonies and *Also sprach Zarathustra*, focusing on the first three parts of the book and their resemblance to "the early classical symphony in three movements," with particular attention to possible models in Mozart and Haydn.

⁴⁷⁰ This is a central claim of Gary Shapiro's *Nietzschean Narratives*, cf. especially the chapter "Festival, Carnival, and Parody." Some remarks on the (im)possibilities of parody can be found at the end of this chapter.

⁴⁷¹ Kathleen Higgins claims in this regard that part four of *Also sprach Zarathustra* "was modeled on" *The Golden Ass* as a "self-ironical satire after the fashion of a particular antique genre" (Higgins, *Nietzsche's*

The status of the four different parts and their relationships to each other is particularly contested, in part due to a variety of at times conflicting statements concerning the overall constitution of *Also sprach Zarathustra* by Nietzsche himself. While some commentators have claimed to discern an intentionality behind the construction of the four parts as a whole,⁴⁷² the editorial history of the book casts severe doubts on such assertions (which, of course, does not *prima facie* exclude the possibility that Nietzsche or some other reader might retroactively establish a unity or coherence). The four parts were written and released individually between 1883 and 1885, while the plans for the book as a whole varied frequently: Nietzsche's "intentions changed repeatedly: at one point, the first book was to be considered the completed work, while at other times, Nietzsche envisioned a total of six books, taking Zarathustra up to his death. By March of 1885 he had conclusively decided to end the series with the fourth book."⁴⁷³ This fourth part proves particularly problematic: partly due to the fact that the first three parts sold rather poorly, partly due to his publisher's financial woes and time-consuming dedication to anti-Semitic causes,⁴⁷⁴ partly, perhaps, due to reasons inherent to the nature of the fourth part

Zarathustra, p. xx). To show one way in which Higgins's reliance on the term "parody" produces analyses that starkly diverge from the ones proposed here: she correctly points to the connection between Plato's myth of the cave and Zarathustra's cave but calls the latter a "parody of the Platonic Myth" (Higgins, 48) without naming any parodic features of Zarathustra's cave dwelling; in contrast, the analysis below will delineate a distinct difference between the two caves (the difference between the principles governing emergence from the cave) and develop its logic. For a more generalized criticism of Higgins's book, see Peter Fenves, "Nietzsche's Zarathustra (review)."

⁴⁷² Anke Bennholdt-Thomsen, for instance, writes: "Daß die vier Teile des *Zarathustra* in ihrer Abfolge und in ihrem Zusammenhang von Nietzsche genau erwogen wurden, daran dürfte nach den hier zusammengestellten Zeugnissen kein Zweifel mehr bestehen" (Bennholdt-Thomsen, *Nietzsches Also sprach Zarathustra*, 15); she concedes, however, that even this intentional construction can at most produce a "widersprüchliche Einheit" (Bennholdt-Thomsen, 15). Other commentators have claimed completion or even a type of perfection, at least for parts of the book. With respect to the prologue and the first part, for example, Annemarie Pieper claims: "[sie] weisen eine innere Geschlossenheit und Vollendetheit auf" (Pieper, *Philosophische Erläuterungen*, 11).

⁴⁷³ Schaberg, *The Nietzsche Canon*, 87-8.

⁴⁷⁴ In a letter to Peter Gast/Heinrich Köselitz from March 14th, 1885, Nietzsche writes: "Genug, *ich fand keinen Verleger* und drucke nun mein Finale auf meine Kosten. Dafür nur in wenigen Exemplaren und

itself, Nietzsche struggled to have the fourth part published and decided to have it only privately printed (either forty or forty-five copies) and distributed only some of these copies to friends.⁴⁷⁵ Nietzsche then further increased this private character of the fourth part by demanding that the printer destroy or return to him all test prints, copies, etc.⁴⁷⁶ In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche similarly acknowledges only the first three parts as existing and passes over the fourth part in silence. Only in 1892, more than three years after Nietzsche's collapse did Peter Gast (Heinrich Köselitz) produce the first edition of *Also sprach Zarathustra* that included all four parts and thus made them available to a larger reading public. Whether and how this different editorial history of the fourth part should influence the interpretation of the book as it is constituted today remains an open question.⁴⁷⁷ In fact, how one can and should read the four parts of *Also sprach Zarathustra* in relationship to each constitutes one of the more difficult problems of the scholarship.

nicht für die ‚Öffentlichkeit‘ Bitte, schreiben und sprechen auch Sie nicht davon, daß es einen IV. Zarathustra giebt““ (BVN 1885,580). Besides these pragmatic reasons, Nietzsche in later letters repeatedly stresses that he sees his book to be incompatible with “Öffentlichkeit;” see, for instance: “das Wort “Öffentlichkeit” und “Publikum” klingt mir, in Bezug auf meinen ganzen Zarathustra, ungefähr so wie “Hurenhaus” und “öffentliches Mädchen““ (BVN, 1885,572).

⁴⁷⁵ William H. Schaberg traces the evidence for the numbers of copies printed and distributed in great detail, in particular discussing who received copies when (and when Nietzsche tried to have those copies returned); See Schaberg, *The Nietzsche Canon*, in particular 101-9. Schaberg furthermore adduces much evidence to show how invested Nietzsche was in the physical properties of the printing, from the colors of the title page to the thickness of the paper used.

⁴⁷⁶ The secrecy surrounding *Also sprach Zarathustra*, if it can be called that, increased even more a few years later: “As a strange but interesting footnote, Nietzsche burned the manuscripts for all three *Zarathustra*'s in Venice while visiting Peter Gast in the fall of 1887. Neither Nietzsche nor Gast ever offered any explanation for this” (Schaberg, 101).

⁴⁷⁷ Dismissing the fourth part is a main stay of a certain strand in the secondary literature, perhaps beginning most prominently with Eugen Fink who claims in his book *Nietzsches Philosophie* that the whole of *Also sprach Zarathustra* is “eine von einer schwachen Fabel zusammengehaltene Kette von Gleichnisreden” and then dismisses the fourth part with an often-quoted passage: “der vierte Teil bedeutet einen starken Abfall, das Überhandnehmen einer Allegorik und einer legendenhaften Darstellungsweise, die mitunter peinlich berührt” (Fink, 64). The embarrassment felt by Fink should be taken as a potential guide: the fourth part is very much concerned with a type of “embarrassment” (or, in the term of the analysis developed here, “compromising” situation) that Zarathustra finds himself in; the interpretative task, then, becomes to read this embarrassment, its sources and proposed remedies. Cf. also below for a more extensive overview and analysis of the various approaches taken in the secondary literature. Against

While no definitive resolution of these challenges can be offered here, or would even be desirable, the specific interpretations proposed below nevertheless follow a more general methodological approach that responds to some of these challenges. The interpretations propose the claim that each successive part of *Also sprach Zarathustra* should be considered as a *re-reading* of the preceding part(s), both on the diegetic level (Zarathustra rethinks and reconfigures his earlier speeches and actions) and on the level of the author (Nietzsche frequently comments on rereading himself and even on reading himself *as if for the first time*; for instance, with respect to Zarathustra: “Jetzt, wo ich es kennen lerne — denn bei seiner Entstehn fehlte mir dazu die Zeit, und inzwischen war ich krank — erschüttert es mich durch und durch und ich bin nach jeder Seite in Thränen” (BVN, 1883,420)). While later works, for instance the third essay of *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, present themselves explicitly as commentary, analysis or explication of certain parts of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, such a *turning to and on itself* is already a pronounced and distinctive feature of the book “itself.”⁴⁷⁸ To a certain degree, such “self”-referentiality functions in analogy to the way *Ecce Homo* re-reads an earlier work, with all the multiplicity of reading strategies found there: at times sharpening the core of the argument and taking back

the overwhelming tendency in the secondary literature to think of the first three parts in conjunction and then determine their relationship to the fourth part, Pippin has argued for a decisive division splitting the book in two halves, between parts two and three: *Also sprach Zarathustra* is structured “as much in two major parts as four: the first two, where Zarathustra still attempts to speak publicly (and looks like a teacher), and the latter two, where he does not. These two divisions are separated by one of the most important sections, ‘The Stillest Hour,’ which occurs in the exact middle of the book” (Pippin, “Introduction,” 51). While this is an important suggestion, the decision to make the structure hinge on Zarathustra’s speaking publicly—even though this is undoubtedly an important aspect of his “development”—appears slightly arbitrary given the proliferation of other, equally or perhaps even more important aspects of Zarathustra’s wanderings.

⁴⁷⁸ Pippin proposes one possible version of such an approach: “Zarathustra begins to undertake a ‘genealogy,’ in similar fashion, of his own pronouncements, one that is as initially destructive and enervating as Nietzsche’s straightforward genealogies can be” (Pippin, “Irony,” 58). Diverging from Pippin, the analysis proposed, here, however, takes “details,” such as a smell, as one of the primary objects of Zarathustra’s rereading and reconfiguration, not just the better known, large-scale “doctrines.”

other parts; developing and explicating it further; contextualizing and contrasting it, dismissing or critiquing parts of it, parodying it or parodying those who (mis-)read it. The remarks in *Ecce Homo* neither complete nor supersede the earlier work and can be neither subordinated nor put above it; they are instead a “Versuch einer Selbst-Kritik.” Nietzsche, but also Zarathustra, explicitly submits himself and finds himself thrown into a *Versuch* in the myriad senses of that word: an attempt, a temptation, an experiment.⁴⁷⁹ Indeed, the establishing of a *Versuch*-like relation, a relationship of self to self on the mode of experimentation and temptation is key not only to the fourth part (where Zarathustra faces his last and “greatest” temptation, pity) but throughout all parts of the book, where Zarathustra continuously subjects himself to different audiences or retreats into solitude, tries out various modes of speech and silence—in short, *Also sprach Zarathustra* is a literary experimentation that perpetuates and alters itself in response to its (partial) successes and failures, continuously undoing and redoing what came before.

The pervasive affect of such self-experimentation is gratitude: “*Wie sollte ich nicht meinem ganzen Leben dankbar sein?*” (KSA 6, 263). While the at times aggressive, acerbic, and corrosive quality of the reconfigurations can mislead, and has indeed misled a few *Zarathustra* commentators, such gratitude constitutes the base note of the “halcyon” tone of the book. “Das Halkyonische, die leichten Füße” are what moves one part into the other; and it is this very “lightness” that will be front and center in the interpretation of smells proposed below.

⁴⁷⁹ One source of the centrality of experimentation for Nietzsche can be found in Ralph Waldo Emerson, the philosopher Nietzsche read most consistently throughout his life and cherished (almost) without reservations. Emerson’s essay “Circles” from the first series, heavily annotated in Nietzsche’s copy, thus states: “I am only an experimenter. Do not set the least value on what I do, or the least discredit on what I do not, as if I pretended to settle any thing as true or false. I unsettle all things. No facts are to me sacred; none are profane; I simply experiment, an endless seeker with no Past at my back” (Emerson, 260). For an extensive account of the centrality of testing and experimenting in Nietzsche, see Ronell, *The Test Drive*.

This interpretative approach avoids at least three main lines of argumentation that are prominent in the scholarship on *Also sprach Zarathustra*. First, it does not claim that the part that happens to be last is a culmination of any kind, be it as an affirming, celebratory highpoint⁴⁸⁰ or a destructive finale that undoes definitively everything that came before it.⁴⁸¹ It similarly rejects an interpretation of *Also sprach Zarathustra* as some type of educational program, a self-help book that invites the reader to follow the precepts outlined to become a “better,” more well-rounded

⁴⁸⁰ Exemplary in this respect is Anke Bennholdt-Thomsen who goes so far as to claim that “Im ganzen liegt in der Begegnung mit den höheren Menschen, in den Gesprächen mit ihnen eine Selbstbestätigung Zarathustras” (Bennholdt-Thomsen, 133). The evidence for this claim is supposed to lie in the fact “daß die höheren Menschen, die von Zarathustra gehört haben, zu ihm kommen, um von ihm Hilfe zu erbitten, von ihm die Selbstüberwindung zu lernen, die Tatsache also, daß Zarathustra Hörer über den engeren Kreis der Jünger hinaus findet, ist ein Lehrerfolg” (Bennholdt-Thomsen, 133). These claims can only be accepted on the basis of a rather extreme disregard for the actual dynamics of these “Gespräche:” it is far from clear that Zarathustra successfully acts as teacher (here or really anywhere); similarly, the motivations of the higher humans cannot be summarized as “um von ihm Hilfe zu erbitten:” some come to tempt and seduce Zarathustra; others are his “shadow” or a leech in his side; yet others profess to worship him or ridicule him.

⁴⁸¹ The two most insistent interpretations of *Also sprach Zarathustra* in this vein can be found in Claus Zittel’s *Das ästhetische Kalkül von Friedrich Nietzsches ‘Also sprach Zarathustra’* and Francesca Cauchi’s *Zarathustra contra Zarathustra*. Zittel argues convincingly against those interpreters who ignore the literary, textual qualities of *Also sprach Zarathustra*; his own approach, however, is marked by the oddity that he seeks to show a *convergence* between form and content (centered on repetition as stylistic device and instantiation of the eternal return) while at the same time claiming that the content level of the book issues in a “radikale Variante der Selbstersetzung” (Zittel, 136), thus raising the urgent question of whether such dissolution should not also affect the form of the text and, further, the relation between form and content. (For some reflections on these questions, see the opening pages of the first and second parts of the Hölderlin chapter above.) In all radicality, such “Selbstersetzung” would also have to affect the very concept of repetition and the eternal recurrence of the same that Zittel operates with. (Klossowski and Deleuze have provided some reflections in this respect.) Cauchi, displaying an almost Nietzschean level of aggressiveness, derives from her focus on the last part the claim that the “Ass Festival” proves that “Zarathustra’s last confession is ultimately a confession of bad faith that affectively explodes the Zarathustran myth” (Cauchi, 10). From this she derives the conclusion that “Self-overcoming is the impossible precept at the heart of Nietzsche’s romantic ethics of perfectionism [...] Part IV of his epic poem *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, by revealing the rank disorder that obtains within his soul, proclaims the vanity of self-overcoming” (Cauchi, 169) and finally: “the single unequivocal cause of his failure is psychological determinism. The fundamental structure of the human psyche is *not* susceptible to change” (Cauchi, 169). Leaving aside the questionable claim to find a kind of “determinism” in Nietzsche, Cauchi’s interpretation falters not only because it unwittingly reads the entirety of *Also sprach Zarathustra* as a teleological structure directed to a final *denouement* but also because it misunderstands the extent and nature of the destruction effected by the parodic character of the last part; for an alternative interpretation of this aspect, see the last part of this chapter.

being, if only the evolution of the protagonist is followed.⁴⁸² Second, it avoids having to dismiss the fourth part entirely in order to “save” the first three or some completion or coherence said to govern those three:⁴⁸³ once a teleological conception in which the last part is necessarily a culmination or triumph over the earlier parts (or even just claims that the book “concludes” instead of merely ends or stops or is abandoned)⁴⁸⁴ is given up, the danger that the fourth part might constitute need not be taken to be absolute.⁴⁸⁵ Third and relatedly, it foregoes any claim to being able to produce a *single* account of the entire trajectory of the book as a number of

⁴⁸² One prominent example of the strand of Zarathustra commentary seeking to develop an individualist ethics is Annemarie Pieper, who explicates here overall commitments with respect to the subtitle of the book: “Soll der Untertitel einen Sinn ergeben, so muß der Bedeutungsumfang der Wörter ‚alle‘ und ‚keiner‘ eingeschränkt werden, damit sie miteinander verträglich werden. [...] Gemeint sind [...] alle die, die imstande sind, Zarathustras Reden als Appell zu verstehen, aus eigener Kraft ihr eigenes Leben zu leben, sich selbst in jeweiliger individueller Besonderheit zu verwirklichen. Nicht gemeint dagegen sind alle die, die nicht fähig sind, sich Zarathustras Ausführungen existentiell anzueignen” (Pieper, 12-3). Very little in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, or in Nietzsche’s work as a whole for that matter, would suggest that one should read him with the goal of making “verträglich” any tensions or contradictions one encounters; similarly, the very possibility of “aneignen,” of making own or proper is one of the chief problems contested by Nietzsche’s work.

⁴⁸³ In addition to the dismissal by Fink, the most prominent and detailed dismissal on such grounds can be found in Laurence Lampert’s *Nietzsche’s Teaching*, which relegates the fourth part to an “appendix” on the grounds that part three “is the end of the book. Part IV, added later as an afterthought, is an ‘interlude’” (Lampert, 7). Lampert’s motivation for such an interpretation lies in his concern that “the existence of a fourth part violates the ending of part III” (Lampert, 287); Lampert instead points to Nietzsche’s some-time plans to publish six parts and consider part four an “interlude” leading into the later parts; that such a proposal might very well mostly have been a ploy by Nietzsche to obtain a new publisher is suggested by Schaberg. In any case, reading the text of *Also sprach Zarathustra* should, according to the claim here, precisely face this “violation” and interpret it as part of the text itself. Attention to such final “violation” will also show that the preceding parts are far less conclusively tied together as might at first appear.

⁴⁸⁴ Ansell-Pearson rightly argues against those critics who find a definitive revelation of Zarathustra’s nature at the conclusion of the book, be that the third or fourth part: “The ‘evolution’ of Zarathustra in the book can be understood in terms of this excessive economy of repetition, in which Zarathustra evolves or becomes in terms of a passage through masks and disguises. It proves impossible for Zarathustra to reveal at any point, least of all at the end, who he truly is, for he ‘is’ *not*, he only becomes” (Ansell-Pearson, *Viroid Life*, 79).

⁴⁸⁵ In a negative fashion, this is also part of the approach of those commentators, like Cauchi and Zittel, who affirmatively seek to mobilize the fourth part in order to undo the earlier parts. Cf. Zittel: “daß just mit der exakten Bestimmung des Parodiebegriffs die Deutung des vierten Teils und damit des *gesamten Zarathustra*-Textes steht und fällt” (Zittel, 136; emphasis added).

approaches in the scholarship have attempted to produce. Such approaches are often curiously at odds with their own claims concerning Nietzsche as a champion of irreducible multiplicity which such an interpretation then reduces to a singular claim, trajectory or developmental narrative.⁴⁸⁶ Instead, this interpretative approach insists on the plurality of readings that Nietzsche not only explicitly demands but himself performs: far from constituting a blanket surrender to an alleged general undecidability or radical relativism of all possible interpretations, this type of reading seeks to *locally* develop interpretations of certain developments, reversals, intensifications, structurings and destructurings that mark this book. As continuously exposed to experimentation, *Also sprach Zarathustra* might very well offer opportunities for larger scale interpretations of overarching themes or trajectories; but it forecloses the possibility of assigning a definitive status to them—something that holds, of course, also for the interpretative device of “experimentation.”

⁴⁸⁶ One influential example of this can be found in Paul Loeb’s *The Death of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra*. Loeb indeed sets out with the goal of “solving the riddles” (Loeb, 1) of *Zarathustra* and claims to do this by providing an account of the status of the fourth part—illuminated by a somewhat surprising reference to *Star Wars*—vis-à-vis the other parts: “I argue that Nietzsche designed Part IV as a satyr play that narrates dramatic and philosophical developments which chronologically *precede* the ending of the tragic trilogy in Parts I-III. The story of *Zarathustra* therefore concludes twice: chronologically with the climactic conclusion of Part III, and structurally with the analeptic satyr play of Part IV” (Loeb, 7). Loeb’s goal is clear: he wants to argue that parts one through three can “be read as a self-contained book” (Loeb, 90), so that Zarathustra’s trajectory can be seen to achieve “conclusion.” For a criticism of some flaws in this “novel” interpretation, cf. Gooding-Williams’s review. Loeb’s claim that the fourth part was essentially written to clarify and supplement what had been misunderstood in the first three parts can also be found in Ackerman: “These additional materials seem to have been added after the first version had seemed incomprehensible to readers, in the hopes of facilitating communication, at least to Nietzsche’s close friends” (Ackerman, *Nietzsche: A Frenzied Look*, 57-8). In the camp of attempting a single narrative interpretation, one needs to also count Gary Shapiro’s attempt to show that the four parts of *Also sprach Zarathustra* correspond to “four master tropes”—metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, irony, in that order—as identified by Kenneth Burke and Hayden White, which are then in turn said to correspond to the four types of “error” that *Götzen-Dämmerung* analyzes. Aside from doubts whether an interpretation of each of the four parts bears out such an interpretation, one aspect of the more general problem becomes clear from the position of the last part: if this part is supposed to embody “irony” and the corresponding philosophical idea of “pluralization,” such ironic pluralization is already inherent in the fact that the parts diverge from each other to begin with, thus rendering any delimitation or containment of irony to the fourth part or the explanatory value of a claim to its preponderance in that part dubitable.

To explicate such a method of reading further and sharpen its philosophical implications: *Also sprach Zarathustra* is a repeated, recurring attempt at (self-)overcoming—which by necessity includes the attempt to overcome overcoming and the repeated realization that such overcoming has failed and will continue to fail.

This section will analyze closely two instances of such “Versuche” of re-reading, both of which develop smells that respond to the problem of distance developed above: first, the end of part one refers to a “smell of the earth” that marks a specific type of futural promise of convalescence premised on the earth as “Heilstätte.” While part one of *Also sprach Zarathustra* does not provide a detailed account of how the earth and smell relate to each other, and relate to convalescence, such an account is provided in part two: the section “Von den Erhabenen” shows how a sublime hunter of truth could recover from the strains his “heroic” attitude puts on him by turning to the earth; it simultaneously develops the workings of *cultivation* that produce in such a turn to the earth the smell of the earth. Second, the emergence from a cave, briefly hinted at above in the section “Die Heimkehr” from part three of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, is taken up twice in part four: once in “Das Lied der Schwermut,” which might suggest a similar account of the possibility of *emergence*; a second time in “Das Nachtwandler-Lied,” which questions this possibility and turns from emergence to eternity.

3.2 Cultivation, Loyalty: Smell of the Earth

While smell thus far has been almost exclusively linked to one of the four (Empedoclean) elements—air—, one of the most decisive moments in Nietzsche’s olfactory reflections occurs

when smell is said to be of another element: the earth.⁴⁸⁷ At the very end of book one of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, in a section titled “Von der schenkenden Tugend,” Zarathustra refers to a “new smell,” a smell that is developed as a smell of convalescence: “Wahrlich, eine Stätte der Genesung soll noch die Erde werden! Und schon liegt ein neuer Geruch um sie, ein Heil bringender, — und eine neue Hoffnung!” (KSA 4, 101). The earth shall become a place of

⁴⁸⁷ For an analysis of how Nietzsche’s thinking of the earth fits into contemporary concerns in ecology, see Graham Parkes, “Staying Loyal to the Earth: Nietzsche as an Ecological Thinker” who argues that Nietzsche should be considered “one of the most powerful ecological thinkers of the modern period” as well as Adrian Del Caro, *Grounding the Nietzsche Rhetoric of Earth*. The problem with much of the scholarship that tries to enlist Nietzsche in environmentalist causes is double: first, the egalitarian impetus of many of these causes is hard to square with Nietzsche’s praise for rank ordering and hierarchies; cf. for instance Ralph R. Acampora, “Using and Abusing Nietzsche for Environmental Ethics” who disputes claims made by Max Hallman and others that Nietzsche is a “biospheric egalitarian.” Note, however, that the analysis of smell and the smell of the earth proposed here precisely complicates the assumption of Acampora’s rebuttal, which he bases on Nietzsche’s alleged “endors[ing] [of] exploitation in the quest of nobility.” The second problematic aspect is the emphasis on *conservation* in environmentalism, where “loyalty,” for instance, is understood as preserving the status quo; see Del Caro’s claim: “I submit that the most serious use to which Nietzsche can be put, and the one that least violates his own preference to remain free of causes, is the reclamation and preservation of the earth” (Del Caro, 49). That this “use” of Nietzsche is “the most serious” one in a way already gives away how un-Nietzschean such approaches often are. This section will develop below an interpretation of Nietzsche’s “loyalty” that shows how close his loyalty is to disloyalty or, more precisely, to transformative—non-preserving—alteration. These concerns could be tied together in the question of whether Nietzsche’s thought is useful in the context of the admittedly *grave* environmental concerns of our time: the tentative answer implied here is that while Nietzsche does not “ground” environmentalism (to take up a gesture from Del Caro), his critique of a misguided pathos of distance that positions itself in a “contempt” that rises above both the earth and animality can indeed be a part if not of advocating for a preservation of the environment then of arguing *against* a haughty disregard for it that underpins the environmental destruction seen today. For an analysis of Nietzsche’s concept of earth, especially in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, as it could be seen to oppose “earth” to “world,” see Gary Shapiro, *Nietzsche’s Earth: Great Events, Great Politics*, which argues that “above and beyond what we might call its phenomenological sense as our immanent lifeworld (the limit of most scholarly readings), the earth in N’s writings has political sense as the counter-concept to what Hegel and Hegelianizing philosophers call the world” (Shapiro, 4). For Shapiro, this involves a rejection of any political theology, world history, “world process” (a term popularized by E. von Hartmann during Nietzsche’s time) or, indeed, any “metanarrative.” While not arguing for or against the existence of a “metanarrative” in Nietzsche, the analysis proposed here seeks to complicate Shapiro’s claims that the “garden”—*Zarathustra* “envisions its [the earth’s] transformation into a garden” (Shapiro, 9)—is the central term for thinking the earth, instead substituting cultivation through the cutting plough as the key term. The analysis of cultivation proposed below similarly casts doubts on Shapiro’s claim that the earth should be considered the “resource of all resources” (Shapiro, 8).

healing and convalescence,⁴⁸⁸ and a “new smell” that surrounds it already brings salvation (“ein Heil bringender”)—a salvation that lies in a “new hope.” Healing, among other things, from Christianity, from the smell of Augustinian *Zudringlichkeit*, the earth and humankind find the hope of recovery in a new smell—the invention of which Zarathustra claimed for himself in the note quoted above—that surrounds the earth as *Stätte*.^{489, 490}

This smell, however, is at its core the smell of a futural promise or rather a pronouncement that oscillates between promise, announcement, and wish. Smell’s futural dimension runs through the first three books of *Also sprach Zarathustra*—with the fourth book introducing a significant alteration, as will be shown in the next section of this chapter—, culminating in the section titled “Von der grossen Sehnsucht,” towards the end of book three, where Zarathustra addresses his soul thus: “schon duftet dein Athem nach zukünftigen Gesängen” (KSA 4, 280). Zarathustra’s linking of song and breath, of course, has a long and distinguished history in the tradition of poetry. And while Zarathustra mostly “speaks,” he

⁴⁸⁸ Convalescence as a key term in Nietzsche’s vocabulary, perhaps more important than either sickness or health, has received much scholarly attention. For the question of modernity as marked by an obsession with convalescence, cf. for instance, de Man: “The human figures that epitomize modernity are defined by experiences such as childhood or convalescence, a freshness of perception that results from a slate wiped clear, from the absence of a past that has not yet had time to tarnish the immediacy of perception” (De Man, *Blindness*, 157). One of the key passages for this question, referred to by de Man in conjunction with Nietzsche’s “Of the Use and Misuse of History for Life”, is Baudelaire’s *Le peintre de la vie moderne*. On this connection between Baudelaire and Nietzsche, especially with respect to the role of woman or the becoming-woman and the subsequent rejection of femininity in convalescence, see Barbara Spackmann, “The Scene of Convalescence.”

⁴⁸⁹ Hölderlin, too, knows an earth that soothes, an earth inscribed into a messianic context: “Wohl tut/Die Erde” (StA 2.1, 164, “Der Einzige“).

⁴⁹⁰ A precursor to this can be found in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, aphorism 337, which already develops the link between futurity, more precisely, the future of humanity, and a new smell surrounding the earth: “Die zukünftige ‘Menschlichkeit.’ — Wenn ich mit den Augen eines fernen Zeitalters nach diesem hinsehe, so weiss ich an dem gegenwärtigen Menschen nichts Merkwürdigeres zu finden, als seine eigenthümliche Tugend und Krankheit, genannt ‘der historische Sinn’. Es ist ein Ansatz zu etwas ganz Neuem und Fremdem in der Geschichte: gebe man diesem Keime einige Jahrhunderte und mehr, so könnte daraus am Ende ein wundervolles Gewächs mit einem eben so wundervollen Geruche werden, um dessentwillen unsere alte Erde angenehmer zu bewohnen wäre, als bisher” (KSA 3, 564).

himself is sometimes said to be singing.⁴⁹¹ The olfactory description, however, adds a new dimension as a modification or modulation of breath that announces a song to come. Breath, as a bodily function, is modified in a way (“duftet”) that announces something more than this mere bodily function: song, more precisely, a song of and from the future, that is, a song that opens the bodily breath to futural alterity.⁴⁹² What is intimated, what becomes perceptible in Zarathustra’s new smells is the futural dimension of existence that manifests itself “schon” in smell: and the future it announces concerns the transformation of the earth into a “Stätte der Genesung.”

Yet the logic of this smell of the earth—its origins, structure, and precise function—remain unclear in “Von der schenkenden Tugend” at the end of book one. It is as if Zarathustra placed these words at the end point of one of his speeches—as a gift that has not yet fully arrived—in order to mark that this pronouncement itself still awaits a future in which it is developed more fully and its promise to bring “Heil” can be understood. Such a further development—a moment of *Also sprach Zarathustra* rereading itself—occurs indeed in the next part, in a section titled “Von den Erhabenen,” which speaks of a smell of the earth once more and links it to a pale, sickly man who needs a “letzte Selbst-Überwältigung” to heal from his predicament.

The crucial image in “Von den Erhabenen” is one of a bull pulling a plough through the earth, producing through this act of cultivation a “smell of the earth.” Nietzsche reworked the exact wording of this passage multiple times; two prior versions of it can be found in his

⁴⁹¹ See, for instance, the *Vorrede*: “Den Einsiedlern werde ich mein Lied singen und den Zweisiedlern” (KSA 4, 27). One could, however, attempt to distinguish between the word “Lied,” which occurs often as a descriptor of Zarathustra’s speech, and “Gesang.”

⁴⁹² The decisiveness of a thought of the future for Nietzsche’s work as a whole has been emphasized by a variety of commentators, for instance by George Bataille in “Nietzsche and the Fascists:” “The future, the marvelous unknown of the future, is the only object of the Nietzschean celebration” (Bataille, *Visions*, 193).

preparatory notes: “Ein weißer Stier will ich sein und die Pflugschaar ziehn: wo ich liege, soll Ruhe sein und die Erde nach Erde riechen” (NF 1883,9,[6]). At first, this smell is a smell of a calm after cultivation: opened up by the plough, the earth smells earthly. That the earth is supposed (“soll“) to smell *of itself* suggests that the novelty or invention of this smell lies in the fact that prior to it, the earth did, in fact, not smell of itself, that is, the earth was not earthly or its earthly character was imperceptible and concealed. The act of cultivation, then, brings out what the earth is supposed to be; in other words, without cultivation, that is, without work intervening, shaping, and forming it, the earth would not be what it is supposed to be.

A second version in the notes shifts the emphasis from this self-relation of the earth—mediated and produced by the cultivating intervention—to the relationship this smell has with the cultivating agent that is the bull:⁴⁹³ “Ein weißer Stier will ich sein und schnaubend und brüllend der Pflugschaar vorangehn: und wie meine Ruhe sich in die Sonne legt, soll mein Glück nach Erde riechen” (NF 1883 13,[1]).⁴⁹⁴ It is the “Glück”—a term oscillating among the meanings of happiness, luck, and good fortune—of the bull that smells of the earth; put differently, his *Glück* lies in this smell. It is this version of the smell of the earth that becomes incorporated into the finished version of *Also sprach Zarathustra* in the section “Von den Erhabenen,” albeit with one further transformation: “Dem Stiere gleich sollte er thun; und sein

⁴⁹³ Nietzsche sometimes distinguishes between a “Stier” and an “Ochse,” privileging the former due to its masculine fertility over the castrated latter; once again questions concerning the role of sexual difference and a certain masculinist conception of strength arise. A fragment from 1886 even links an “Ochsen” to a stuffed up, blocked creature whose nose—and hence whose spirit—does not function properly: “Geister ohne Nase oder mit Stockschnupfen, die ganze Spezies Geist, die ich Thierochs nenne” (NF 1886 6[20]).

⁴⁹⁴ These passages appear in the same set of notes in which the syntagm “Jesus – wie ein süßer Geruch” can be found. Shapiro develops in some detail how Nietzsche’s earth opposes Christian motives, often by parody such as in Zarathustra’s references to the earth as a garden, where Shapiro detects a “parodic relation to the Biblical story of Adam awaking in the garden (paradise)” (Shapiro, *Nietzsche’s Earth*, 138). As pointed out above, Shapiro’s insistence on the garden is problematic, not least because some of the main passages he adduces as evidence are in fact spoken by Zarathustra’s animals.

Glück sollte nach Erde riechen und nicht nach Verachtung der Erde” (KSA 4, 151). The *Glück* that shall smell of the earth is now set in pronounced contradistinction to a contempt for the earth.

The role of this smell, this *Glück*, and their relationship to the cultivating activity of the bull unfolds, in “Von den Erhabenen,” in the larger context of what is in nuce an *earthly aesthetics*; an aesthetics that, in accordance with the analysis of the compromising nature of smell developed above, is structured as an elaboration of a failed “pathos of distance” and its replacement by a different type of separation that reconfigures conflict or “Streit.”

Zarathustra begins the section by referencing the stillness of “der Grund meines Meeres” (KSA 4, 151). This stillness of the “depth” of his ground, however, harbors “joking monsters” and “laughter.” This laughter had been triggered, so Zarathustra narrates, by the “ugliness” of a man he saw: “Einen Erhabenen sah ich heute, einen Feierlichen, einen Büsser des Geistes: oh wie lachte meine Seele ob seiner Hässlichkeit!” (KSA 4, 150).⁴⁹⁵ This description of the sublime one as ugly prepares the organizing opposition of this section, which many commentators have pointed out: sublimity contra beauty, a reworking of the Kantian and Schillerian aesthetic schema.⁴⁹⁶

The key characteristic of the sublime one is his will, more precisely, his heroic will (“Helden-Willen”) that marks him as having emerged from a fight or struggle: “Finster kam

⁴⁹⁵ The underlying affect of this section could thus be said of be one of a pathos of distance that Zarathustra feels vis-à-vis the sublime one. Lampert has made a claim to this effect: “Himself a combination of serenity and storm, Zarathustra *differentiates* himself from the ‘sublime ones,’ heroic seekers of knowledge” (Lampert, *Nietzsche’s Teaching*, 121; emphasis added). This “differentiation,” however, occurs on the mode of laughter; a mode whose mechanisms stand in an exceedingly complex relationship to the pathos of distance, which must be left aside here.

⁴⁹⁶ Cf. Gooding-Williams 176-8; Lampert 121ff (who claims that this sublime one directly figures “the heroic labors of these highest men of science, Kant and Hegel” (Lampert, 121)).

dieser Jäger zurück aus dem Walde der Erkenntnis. Vom Kampfe kehrte er heim mit wilden Thieren.” The hard-won “Erkenntnis” of the sublime one, in the aesthetic tradition stemming from Kant, is that the human being is *supersensible*: in the encounter with the overwhelming sublime object such as a mountain or the sea, against which any kind of physical resistance would be futile, the beholding subject discovers that he or she exists, to a degree, apart from sensibility.⁴⁹⁷ Robert Gooding-Williams, following this line of inquiry, has thus read “Von den Erhabenen” as “Zarathustra’s rejection of Kant’s and Schiller’s belief that the sublime is a *disclosive* mode of experience. For Kant and Schiller, the sublime heralds human transcendence by *revealing* the fact that human beings are supersensible subjects existing apart from nature and appearances. For Zarathustra, the sublime reveals no such fact, but rather prompts human being *mistakenly* to believe that they are supersensible subjects.”⁴⁹⁸ In Zarathustra’s speech, the sensibility against which sublimity sets itself up receives a double specification, which Gooding-Williams does not analyze.⁴⁹⁹ On the one hand, the sublime one encountered by Zarathustra believes himself to be *above* the earth; he is marked by a “Verachtung der Erde” (KSA 4, 151). In other words, the sublime one believes his sublimity to lie in a certain pathos of distance that sets him apart and above, through his fighting struggle, from the earth. His heroic will is supposed to lift him up (*erheben*) above the earth. On the other, the sublime one seems to gain

⁴⁹⁷ In the Kantian typology of the sublime, this would correspond to the “dynamical sublime;” one might wonder whether its counterpart, the mathematical sublime, could also be found in *Also sprach Zarathustra* or elsewhere in Nietzsche’s writings.

⁴⁹⁸ Gooding-Williams, *Zarathustra’s Dionysian Modernism*, 176.

⁴⁹⁹ Gooding-Williams instead sees in this passage a more generic “will to truth,” emphasizing the sublime one’s return from the “Walde der Erkenntnis” and the fact that he is “behängt mit hässlichen Wahrheiten.” While the “Helden-Willen” of the sublime one certainly entertains a relationship with the will to truth, it is crucial for the development of the logic of this section that his “Erkenntnisse” are supposed to set him above the earth and animality specifically; much of the impetus of Zarathustra’s critique is contained in this concretion.

his *Erkenntnisse* not, as the sublimity in Kant or Schiller, from a confrontation with inanimate nature but with animality. The object of Zarathustra's laughter is a man who believes he gains elevated insights by hunting down animality, by asserting dominance over animals. Yet such a fight with "wild animals" does not in the least detach or separate him from them but, quite the contrary, inscribes the hunter into a kind of mimetic relationship to his prey, where he becomes what he attempts to prey upon: "Vom Kampfe kehrte er heim mit wilden Thieren: aber aus seinem Ernste blickt auch noch ein wildes Thier—ein unüberwundenes!" In the preceding section, Zarathustra had claimed that life told him this secret: "ich bin das, *was sich immer selbst überwinden muss*" (KSA 4, 148). Here, the sublime one struggles with wild animality, with his own wild animality, but such struggle is futile and does not lead to overcoming it.⁵⁰⁰

Both animality and the earth come together in the counter-image to the earth-despising hunter that Zarathustra presents: a bull ploughing the earth. The ploughing bull engages both terms from which the sublime sought to distance himself—earth, animality—and thus undoes the possibility of such "verachten[des]" distancing. "Dem Stiere gleich sollte er thun; und sein Glück sollte nach Erde riechen und nicht nach Verachtung der Erde. Als weissen Stier möchte ich ihn sehn, wie er schnaubend und brüllend der Pflugschar vorangeht: und sein Gebrüll sollte noch alles Irdische preisen!" (KSA 4, 151). In a first step and in a rather conventional way referencing the development of civilization, agriculture replaces hunting. The wildness of animals is

⁵⁰⁰ This description of the failure of the sublime one differs from Gooding-Williams's in that it does not refer to "self-estrangement" (Gooding-Williams, 179) as the crucial term. Leaving aside all considerations of strangers and strangeness in Nietzsche, it is not so much the "self" that the sublime one is "estranged" from but the earth and any claims to a "human self's" nature having essential ties to the earth, which would imply that an "earth-estrangement" is a type of "self-estrangement," seem to dilute the notion of self-overcoming, of "Selbst-Überwältigung" that "Von den Erhabenen" explicitly refers to.

domesticated and tamed in a bull that submits to the weight of a human-made tool.⁵⁰¹ The “*Verachtung der Erde*,” a contempt that does not heed, respect or take care of (*achten*) the earth, is replaced by a taking care of the earth that tills, that is, cultivates it. Within the bestiary of *Also sprach Zarathustra*,⁵⁰² this white, agricultural bull is opposed to an angry and destructive bull, which appears in part three: “Der Thauwind, ein Stier, der kein pflügender Stier ist,—ein wüthender Stier, ein Zerstörer, der mit zornigen Hörnern Eis bricht! Eis aber -- -- bricht Stege! Oh meine Brüder, ist jetzt nicht Alles im Flusse” (KSA 4, 252). This bull is characterized by an aggression and destruction that mobilizes and unfreezes (“Alles im Flusse”): it thus echoes the “*strömende Leidenschaft*” (KSA 4, 151) of the sublime that is opposed to any and all *calm*: “noch ist seine strömende Leidenschaft nicht stille geworden” (KSA 4, 151). The bull opposed to the sublime one in “Von den Erhabenen,” by contrast, is civilizing and productive instead of destructive and violent. While the sublime one qua hunter was presented as sterile and infertile (“auch viele Dornen hiengen an ihm—aber noch sah ich keine Rose” (KSA 4, 150)),⁵⁰³ the bull,

⁵⁰¹ The consistent designation of the bull as being white could be read in relationship to the paleness of the sublime one but more importantly points to the mythological background of this entire section: when Zeus abducted Europa, he disguised himself as a white bull (and, in some of the tradition’s accounts at least, carried her over the sea, which might find resonances in the reference to the sea in the opening sentence of “Von den Erhabenen.”) The white bull, then, turns out to be a god in disguise—which could also be said of the “Über-Held” at the very end of “Von den Erhabenen” that refers, in disguise, to Dionysus and Ariadne. For the latter claim, including a reading of a preparatory note by Nietzsche that explicitly mentions Ariadne and Dionysus but then adds “Dionysos ganz zu verschweigen,” see Gooding-Williams, 180-182.

⁵⁰² This bestiary, of course, also contains quite prominently the female counterpart to these bulls, namely cows—a longer analysis of the bull would work out the exact relationship between these two poles, especially with respect to the features of *gregariousness* and *regurgitation* that make the cows such prominent animals in *Also sprach Zarathustra*.

⁵⁰³ This is emphasized by Burnham and Jesinghausen: “The sublime one, like the spirit-lion, is battle-hardened, serious and sombre – however, he cannot create beyond the negative struggle [...] he is *sterile*. The image of the bull ploughing the field is an image of fertility (agriculturally, literally; sexually, metaphorically; and mythologically through the image of Zeus’s abduction of Europa to Crete)” (Burnham/Jesinghausen, 100).

both via the contrast to a castrated oxen and by the tilling work, stands for fertility, that is, the ability to bring forth something new.

The agonistic, violent relationship between the sublime one, on the one hand, and animality and the earth, on the other, shall be replaced, according to Zarathustra, by a transformational, *cultivating* relationship. The image of the bull pulling a plough articulates precisely that such a cultivating relationship transforms the separating desire underlying any pathos of distance. Sidestepping images that might suggest a subservient submission, allegedly immediate union or unarticulated unity with the earth, the plough splits the earth open and thus inscribes⁵⁰⁴ difference into the earth. If Zarathustra states that “sein Glück sollte nach Erde riechen,” then this smell of the earth arises from the earth having been opened up: cultivated and made newly fertile, no growth arises yet but instead a smell is set free from what was previously the inside of the earth.^{505, 506} Olfaction, again, presents itself as an opening of surfaces, an explosion of sorts:⁵⁰⁷ what in vision might appear as the flat and closed *Oberfläche* of the earth is for olfaction the rising up from and out of such a surface, thus denying the earth the status of

⁵⁰⁴ The plough and the activity of tilling have a long and distinguished history of being associated with writing, as is still legible in the term “verse,” coming from *versus*, the turn of the plough on the field. Cf. Aleida Assmann, “Pflug, Schwert, Feder. Kulturwerkzeuge als Herrschaftszeichen.” Stefan Braun explicitly links the white bull of this section to the question of writing: “Entscheidend für die Etablierung der Schrift ist *zunächst* vor allem die Einschreibung. Der Furchen ziehende weiße Stier repräsentiert dem entsprechend einen Kultur-Schaffenden, der einschneidende Umwälzungen hervorruft” (Stefan Braun, in: “Nietzsche—Philosoph der Kultur(en)?“, 174).

⁵⁰⁵ A similar relationship between smells and a light uprising can be found in Hölderlin, see section 6.1 of chapter one of this dissertation. The notion of a cultivation of the earth, in particular by introducing furrows, that is, a lack or gap into it, is equally a crucial trope for Hölderlin.

⁵⁰⁶ Grimm suggests that there might be an etymological relationship between “Glück” and “Lücke,” in the sense of opening or “ein- und aufschliessen.”

⁵⁰⁷ In the context of the description of odorous particles as resulting from an *explosion* that was developed above, the smell of the earth could be understood as a series of constant explosions. In fact, the fragment quoted above, in addition to referring to volcanoes (a rather literal explosion of the earth), goes on: “So ist die Erde immer von dicken Wolken feinsten Materien umhüllt: ohne dies würde der *Wasserdampf* sich nicht zu Wolken ballen können” (NF 1881,11[277]). The earth is here imagined in a state of constant explosions that *cloud* its atmosphere and surround it with accumulations that constitute a *Hülle*.

having a closed and smooth surface. The *erhaben* distance of height above the earthly that the sublime one imagined to possess is replaced by a separation that is an internal articulation, an incision into wholeness that introduces lack. Culture, in other words, consists in opening that which first appears as self-sufficient and whole (earth) to something more (fertility) by introducing an articulating lack (furrows);⁵⁰⁸ an operation that presupposes a *getting close* to the earth. Cultivation can only take place in the proximity of that which it seeks to cultivate.

Yet this division is also an instance of joining: this incisive cultivating brings together earth and air; it is, in fact, the conjunction of these two elements. As such, the division cultivation produces is predicated on the prior division of earth and air—but a division it then mediates in the “new” phenomenon, the smell that joins them. The mingling of earth and air found in the smell of the earth thus also reduces any *distance* that might be thought to separate them: they are joined, to use Nietzsche’s term from *Ecce Homo*, in an “Innerlichste” way.

The temporality of the smell of the freshly tilled earth illuminates further the conception of *Glück* with which Zarathustra operates: the smell arises shortly after the toil of tilling and lingers for just a while. As such, it occurs during the *calm* after the bull’s work has been completed. This calm, however, as the first line of the section already indicated (“Still ist der Grund meines Meeres: wer erriethe wohl [...]”), is other than a completed and final calm. As an agricultural phenomenon, it is inscribed into the cyclical rhythm of all biological life processes:

⁵⁰⁸ The pulling of a plough also has a long history of being a political gesture of demarcating the space (the equivalent of a political horizon) of a given political body. In addition to the article by Aleida Assmann referenced above, see also the work of Cornelia Vismann on *Kulturtechnik* that analyses the interplay between the tool and the political subject it is said to produce: “To start with an elementary and archaic cultural technique, a plough drawing a line in the ground: the agricultural tool determines the political act; and the operation itself produces the subject, who will then claim mastery over both the tool and the action associated with it. Thus, the *Imperium Romanum* is the result of drawing a line – a gesture which, not accidentally, was held sacred in Roman law” (in: Winthrop-Young, “Cultural Techniques”).

the earth is never tilled once and for all but only ever once and then again, and then again. *Glück*, so the implication, is not a “Jagdbeute,” is not something one can hunt down and makes one’s own through a triumphant struggle. The sublime one is too possessive to be happy: “Mit erhobener Brust und Denen gleich, welche den Athem an sich ziehn” (KSA 4, 150).⁵⁰⁹ By contrast, *Glück* is a fleeting moment of calm that arises—ephemerally—after the momentary cessation of work.

This temporary calm, after cultivating work, embodied in the happiness of the uprising smell consequently articulates Zarathustra’s demand of the sublime one that he “unlearn” (*verlernen*) his “Helden-Willen.”⁵¹⁰ This unlearning would constitute the convalescence of the suffering, pained sublime one; it would make the earth a “Stätte der Genesung” and become “Heil bringend[.]” (KSA 4, 101) for him. Only through this unlearning can his sublimity become beauty: the heroic will of the hunter must be unlearned and replaced by the transformational, cultivating separation of tilling the earth—only the latter is preparatory of beauty and happiness: “Aber gerade dem Helden ist das *Schöne* aller Dinge Schwerstes. Unerringbar ist das Schöne allem heftigen Willen. [...] Mit lässigen Muskeln stehn und mit abgeschirrtem Willen: das ist das Schwerste euch Allen, ihr Erhabenen” (KSA 4, 152). The will has to be “abgeschirrt:” unharnessed, unyoked, no longer in service, “ausser Dienst.” The smell of the freshly tilled earth corresponds to this state: both are a state of suspension, temporary lightness after division. And

⁵⁰⁹ These “erhabenen” men thus prevent the circulation of air and the regular process of breathing. This pulling in of breath expresses a possessive nature that seeks to resist the interpenetrative exchange with the environment.

⁵¹⁰ In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche writes: “ich bin der Gegensatz einer heroischen Natur” (KSA 6, 294). This “Gegensatz” should be understood as corresponding to the “Gegensatz” that does not say no—in fact, a hero is precisely someone who opposes by saying no.

this state is the state of beauty for Zarathustra.⁵¹¹ It is crucial, however, that such *Abschirren* of the will does not replace the pathos of distance of heroic willing by a fatalistic, acquiescent passivity. Rather, the cultivating will of the bull indicates that it is not a matter of disavowing division, differentiation, and conflict but instead a matter of reconfiguring it.

Such beauty is the “heaviest” thing for all those who like the sublime one hunt knowledge and heroically will themselves above earth and animality: they are pulled back down. But this downwards pull, in turn, is not to be seen as an enemy to be hunted down or fought; to the contrary, not resisting gravity is beautiful. One articulation of this is the descent from sublime, supersensible heights into visibility: “Wenn die Macht gnädig wird und herabkommt in’s Sichtbare: Schönheit heisse ich solches Herabkommen” (KSA 4, 152). The descent of spirit, of the “Büsser des Geistes,” as the sublime one was called, remedies the heroic error of sublimity. Such a “descent,” however, could be easily misunderstood as a triumph of the “spirit of gravity” against which much, maybe even most of Zarathustra’s efforts are directed. The smell of the earth, by contrast, constitutes a not nay-saying *Widerspruch* to the spirit of gravity: the descent to the earth—if understood as a dividing cultivation leading to a subsequent happy calm—produces a counter-movement in the uprising of smell; gravity is not denied (no naysaying) but nevertheless does not triumph (hence a *Widerspruch*). With respect to the animality that the heroic hunter fought in vain, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* termed such a transformed air “eine gute Luft [...] bei der alles animalische Sein geistiger wird und Flügel

⁵¹¹ At this point it should be sufficiently clear that the beauty of “Von den Erhabenen” has very little to do with the “schönen Seelen” consistently denigrated by Nietzsche. Such *Schöngeisterei* differs decisively from the cultivating work at stake here.

bekommt” (KSA 5, 352).⁵¹² The smell of the earth, in other words, resists the double temptation of the spirit of gravity (only descent, decadence, fall) and sublimity (a misguided ascent).

The giving up of the heroic will, as Zarathustra demands it in this passage, thus does not amount to succumbing to the spirit of gravity. The core problem of the heroic will is that it believes it can lift *itself* up.⁵¹³ “Auch seinen Helden-Willen muss er noch verlernen: ein *Gehobener* soll er mir sein und nicht nur ein Erhabener: -- der Aether selber sollte ihn heben, den Willenlosen!” (KSA 4, 151; emphasis added). True lifting up cannot be an active *erheben* of oneself as the sublime one claims it for himself but must be a being lifted up, a passive letting oneself being lifted. Resisting the spirit of gravity means doing the preparatory work of culture—and then unharnessing one’s will, letting oneself be lifted by the ensuing calm. The word “Aether” is exceedingly and perhaps surprisingly rare in Nietzsche: here, it recalls the aphorism “Unsere Luft” from *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* that speaks of the fact “dass wir am liebsten auf Aetherstäubchen, gleich ihm, reiten würden” (KSA 3, 534).⁵¹⁴ The ether provides this lift, the ability of being carried by it:⁵¹⁵ the transformation of the aerial element that both Zarathustra and the aphorism are interested in is one in which *the element uplifts*; in other words, in which one

⁵¹² More on the possibility of flight below.

⁵¹³ A classic image of lifting oneself up is, of course, Münchhausen, a figure Nietzsche refers to in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*: “Das Verlangen nach ‚Freiheit des Willens‘, in jenem metaphysischen Superlativ-Verstande, wie er leider noch immer in den Köpfen der Halb-Unterrichteten herrscht, das Verlangen, die ganze und letzte Verantwortlichkeit für seine Handlungen selbst zu tragen und Gott, Welt, Vorfahren, Zufall, Gesellschaft davon zu entlasten, ist nämlich nichts Geringeres, als eben jene *causa sui* zu sein und, mit einer mehr als Münchhausen’schen Verwegenheit, sich selbst aus dem Sumpf des Nichts an den Haaren in’s Dasein zu ziehn” (KSA 5, 35).

⁵¹⁴ As pointed out above, this aphorism produces a complex relationship between the element of air and the sun (the sentence just quoted continues: “dass wir am liebsten auf Aetherstäubchen [...] reiten würden und nicht von der Sonne weg, sondern *zu der Sonne hin*”). “Von den Erhabenen” equally develops a complex relationship to the sun (for instance, “aber seine Ruhe hat sich noch nicht in die Sonne gelegt”) that must be left a side for a different type of analysis of this section.

⁵¹⁵ The interpretation of the aphorism proposed here is thus opposed to commentators such as Del Caro who see it as being “reminiscent of the classical values of imparting style to one’s character rather than letting oneself go, unbridled, heedless, into the ‘infinite’” (Del Caro, 237).

finds oneself in an element that does not require one to be “out of one’s element”—a position that necessitates, as was developed in detail above, a polemical, aggressive “Kriegs-Praxis” that would be structured by a heroic will—but rather enables a relation to it that is “willenlos[]” (KSA 4, 151). The “willenlos” state is linked to a state of being *tired*, of being *depressed*. There is in fact, so “Von den Erhabenen” claims, a right way to be tired: a bit of depression is necessary to free oneself from the *Helden-Will*: “Wenn er seiner Erhabenheit müde würde, dieser Erhabene: dann erst würde seine Schönheit anheben” (KSA 4, 151). This tiredness is the counterterm of the “Erd-Müdigkeit” (KSA 4, 259) that Zarathustra diagnoses as part of the “contempt” for the earth: if being tired means letting oneself be pulled down to the earth, then this depression will in fact be uplifting. The image of Nietzsche’s work as an unending struggle receives here a crucial modification: the “smell of the earth” constitutes a key moment of a cessation of heroic fighting, recalling his claim in *Ecce Homo* “ich bin der Gegensatz einer heroischen Natur” (KSA 6, 294).

Crucially, this downwards pull is an instance of the question of *weight*, which Zarathustra positions at the heart of aesthetics as developed in “Von den Erhabenen.”⁵¹⁶ Responding to the common pronouncement *De gustibus non est disputandum*, Zarathustra states: “Aber alles Leben ist Streit um Geschmack und Schmecken!” (KSA 4, 150). Taste, then, is a question of weight: “Geschmack: das ist Gewicht zugleich und Wagschale und Wägender; und wehe allem Lebendigen, das ohne Streit um Gewicht und Wagschale und Wägende leben wollte!” (KSA 4, 150). Taste, or the question of aesthetic judgment, is a question of how weight establishes

⁵¹⁶ Jean-Luc Nancy has developed compelling reflections on the “weight of thought,” beginning with the link between *peser* and *penser*. A more sustained investigation of the place of heaviness in Nietzsche’s work would analyze these reflections in the context of, precisely, Nietzsche’s “heaviest thought,” which is the thought of an eternal return of the same.

valuation: something valued matters; it weighs. With the absence of a horizon and perspective, olfaction, however, threatened the possibility of any such valuation: no context for such a valuation, no reference point seemed to be available. It is in this respect that the smell of the *earth* attains its centrality in Nietzsche's olfactory reflections: in the logic of olfaction, the earth produces a substitute for the horizon of vision. It *delimits* the sphere of olfaction—which is unbounded in the upwards direction—and in fact establishes the possibility of “Richtung,” namely, the possibility of being pulled down and rising up. Zarathustra's earthly aesthetics in “Von den Erhabenen” centers on the demand that aesthetics be returned from reflections on the supersensible to the one reference point that is the *conditio sine qua non* for all orientation: the earth.⁵¹⁷ Yet the return effected here, as a return that simultaneously rises upwards in the smell of the earth, precludes that aesthetics then becomes depressive, governed by the spirit of gravity. In other words, the “smell of the earth” figures the possibility of a transvaluation of the value of sublimity into a new value (beauty) that is not oppressive or enslaving—in other words, it expresses Nietzsche's admittedly fragile attempt to react to the threats to valuation inherent in smell by the institution of a new smell that would draw on the very features of smell that threaten value and turn them into the characteristics of a new type of valuation.

⁵¹⁷ Shapiro makes a similar claim, “The earth is the ultimate focus of all orientation” (Shapiro, *Nietzsche's Earth*, 8) where the usage of “focus,” however, as an optical term should be questioned. For an analysis of the relationship between orientation on earth and the deeply confounding implications of outer space for the possibility of orientation, see Jörg Kreienbrock's “Was heißt: Sich im Weltall orientieren? Kosmophilosophien 1950-1970” who speaks of “Nietzsches kopernikanischen Sturz.” The epigraph for Kreienbrock's text would constitute the link to the inquiry proposed here, and in fact is the continuation of the fragment quoted above about the “Schwamm” that has erased all perspective and horizon: “Stehen wir denn selber noch auf unseren Füßen? *Stürzen* wir nicht fortwährend? Und gleichsam abwärts, rückwärts, seitwärts, nach allen Seiten? Haben wir nicht den unendlichen Raum wie einen Mantel eisiger Luft um uns gelegt? Und alle Schwerkraft verloren, weil es für uns kein Oben, kein Unten mehr giebt?” (NF-1881,14[25]).

Put differently, the smell of the earth discerns the earth as the orientating center of the chaos of becoming: it discerns “Erde” in all “w-erde-n.” At the center of *werden* is the *Erde*: the relationship between becoming and earth is one of radical co-implication—they are folded into each other at the root. Nietzsche’s emphasis on the earth derives its force from the earth being the only possibility to orient valuations in the chaos of becoming.

The uplifting smell that arises from the double movement of descending back towards the earth and then rising up from it fulfills Zarathustra’s main demand with respect to the earth: loyalty. Zarathustra tells his disciples: “Ich beschwöre euch, meine Brüder, *bleibt der Erde treu* und glaubt Denen nicht, welche euch von überirdischen Hoffnungen reden” (KSA 4, 15).⁵¹⁸ When it becomes a smell, the heavy earth rises up, *overcoming its heaviness without losing its earthly character*: this is Nietzsche’s loyalty, a taking-leave without abandoning. The only “über-irdisch,” the only “above the earth” that is acceptable to Zarathustra is this rising upwards of a smell. Consequently, the smell of the earth constitutes a kind of terrestrial transubstantiation: earth is transformed into something more-than-earth or perhaps less-than-earth; it is infused with lightness, which is not a divinity or the spirituality of the divine but rather an earthly transformation that does not abandon but stays loyal to what it transforms.⁵¹⁹ In this sense, the smell of the earth is Zarathustra’s response to the age-old philosophical question, “how can something arise from its opposite?” How can something light arise from something heavy? The answer is discovered when the (active) forgetting of smell by theoretical, contemptuous man is

⁵¹⁸ And again, towards the end of part one of *Also sprach Zarathustra*: “Bleibt mir der Erde treu, meine Brüder [...] Lasst sie nicht davon fliegen vom Irdischen und mit den Flügeln gegen ewige Wände schlagen” (KSA 4, 99).

⁵¹⁹ In a different discourse, yet always in conversation with Nietzsche, Maurice Blanchot has employed the formula “*matière au-delà de la matière*,” matter beyond matter.

replaced by a loyal, opening cultivation that attends to olfaction: scented air (something light) arises from earth (something heavy).

Just as the smell of the earth joins two disjoined elements—earth, air—, the loyalty expressed in the lightness of the smell of the earth joins what might at first glance be seen as its antithesis: freedom. In the smell of the earth, loyalty and freedom, far from being opposed to each other, each articulate themselves through the other. The import of this conclusion—and hence the centrality of the smell of the earth to both Nietzsche’s earthly aesthetics and his reflections on odors—becomes clear when it is contrasted with a major misunderstanding found in what is perhaps the only substantial investigation of Nietzsche’s relationship to air and smell by a major twentieth century thinker: Gaston Bachelard’s book *L’air et les songes*, an investigation of the “material imagination” attached to air and its various modulations, which includes a whole chapter dedicated to Nietzsche’s work. Bachelard’s central claim consists precisely in the claim that air, the element of olfaction, is the element of freedom par excellence for Nietzsche: “En effet, pour Nietzsche, l’air est la substance même de notre liberté, la substance de la joie surhumaine. L’air est une sorte de matière surmontée comme la joie nietzschéenne est une joie humaine surmontée.”⁵²⁰ In air, matter⁵²¹ is overcome, transformed into lightness and this transformation frees from all strictures, thus constituting the medium of freedom. Without the strictures of materiality, total becoming—the overcoming of all notions of substantiality—is possible, according to Bachelard:

L’aire nietzschéenne est alors une étrange substance: c’est la substance sans qualités substantielles. Elle peut donc caractériser l’être comme adéquat à une philosophie du total devenir. [...] Il nous libère de notre attachement aux matières: il est donc la matière

⁵²⁰ Bachelard, *L’air et les songes*, 175.

⁵²¹ Bachelard uses materiality/matter and earth seemingly interchangeably in his chapter; following the structure of this chapter as an investigation of Nietzsche’s “elemental thinking,” as proposed, the response to Bachelard will temporarily keep his vocabulary but then focus on the earth.

de notre liberté. À Nietzsche, l'air n'apporte *rien*. Il ne donne *rien*. Il est l'immense gloire d'un Rien. Mais ne *rien donner* n'est-il pas le plus grand des dons?⁵²²

According to Bachelard, it is a certain nothingness that functions as the indispensable precondition of freedom for Nietzsche: only when freed from all attachment and thus given nothing can one rise into freedom. At bottom, this conception of aerial freedom is based on a notion of *purity*: mere air, untainted by anything other than itself and guarded against a contagious mixing, is required for us to be free.

Consequently, according to Bachelard, smells are detrimental to Nietzsche's conception of freedom: "D'habitude, pour les imaginations matérielles, quelles sont les qualités les plus fortement *substantielles* de l'air ? Ce sont les *odeurs*."⁵²³ Bachelard goes on to argue that the nose, then, is not supposed to give "testimony" of the "Minimaldifferenzen" of movement, as developed above from the passage in *Götzen-Dämmerung*, but rather is merely there to "give testimony" of the absence of all odors:

Pour un vrai nietzschéen, le nez doit donner l'heureuse *certitude* d'un air sans parfum, le nez doit témoigner de l'immense bonheur, de la bienheureuse conscience de ne rien éprouver. Il est le garant du néant des odeurs. Le *flair*, dont Nietzsche s'est si souvent enorgueilli n'est pas vertu d'*attrait*. Il est donné au surhomme pour qu'il s'*écarte* au moindre indice d'une impureté.⁵²⁴

For Bachelard, in short, freedom is equivalent to *deodorization*. This deodorization is supposed to guard against "impurity" and Nietzsche's olfactory method would merely function as a warning system that produces a repellent reaction in case such an impurity is detected. Bachelard concludes, leaning on the notion that the earth is a paradigmatic case of material attachments, with the radical claim that: "Nietzsche n'est pas un poète de la *terre*."⁵²⁵

⁵²² Bachelard, *L'air et les songes*, 175; emphasis in the original.

⁵²³ Bachelard, 176.

⁵²⁴ Bachelard, 176.

⁵²⁵ Bachelard, 164.

While it is certainly true, as was developed above, that Nietzsche's nose at times appears to be tasked with sniffing out "Unreinlichkeit" and induce separation, the logic of both olfaction in general and the smell of the earth in particular as they appear in the context of Nietzsche's work contradict the very core of the claims advanced by Bachelard; the latter can indeed be seen to stand very much in the position of the sublime one who insists on a pathos of distance separating him from the earth and consequently falls into the trap of "contempt."

In a section titled "Von den Gelehrten," which is found two sections after "Von den Erhabenen" and displays a number of similarities between these scholars and the sublime one, Zarathustra states: "Freiheit liebe ich und die Luft über frischer Erde" (KSA 4, 160).⁵²⁶ For Zarathustra, the smell of the earth and freedom are far from incompatible; they, in fact, stand next to each other in his love. In the smell of the earth, the heavy element becomes light; the earth frees itself from itself or, put differently, opposes itself to itself in the sense of rising up from it but without saying no to itself: it stays loyal and does not abandon. It is not deodorization that makes freedom possible but the peculiar free loyalty of the smell of the earth. This olfactory moment, one of Zarathustra's new smells, articulates that *freedom is only possible in the binding of loyalty*. This freedom in loyalty, loyalty in freedom thus distills into one figure two strands that constitute the fundamental and productive tension of much of *Also sprach Zarathustra* and

⁵²⁶ The passage quoted above already indicated that Nietzsche does not advocate for a pure air, purged of all materiality: "Erlöst ist endlich meine Nase vom Geruch alles Menschenwesens! Von scharfen Lüften gekitzelt, wie von schäumenden Weinen, niest meine Seele" (KSA 4, 234). The "scharfe Lüfte," which bring about the redemption of the nose, are further determined with reference to the very material "schäumenden Weinen." *Which type* of materiality air exhibits matters to Nietzsche, not that it disengage completely from all material remnants. In other passages, Zarathustra explicitly links freedom to the earth, foreclosing any possibility that freedom could mean being freed from the earth: "Einen neuen Stolz lehrte mich mein Ich, den lehre ich die Menschen: nicht mehr den Kopf in den Sand der himmlischen Dinge zu stecken, sondern *frei* ihn zu tragen, einen Erden-Kopf, der der Erde Sinn schafft!" (KSA 4, 36-7).

indeed of Nietzsche's work more broadly: on the hand, lightness, freedom, and the overcoming of strictures; on the other, an insistence on the indispensability of the earth and animality that demands a transformative loyalty to those alleged strictures.

As the syntagm "die Luft über frischer Erde" indicates, such binding freedom or free loyal is *refreshing*. While the section "Von den Gelehrten" does not speak of agriculture and indeed does not give any further indications as to how earth could be understood to be fresh, the closeness to "Von den Erhabenen" suggests that it is precisely the agricultural activity of opening up the earth that makes it fresh: in other words, it is the division of the earth—which was seen to be predicated on the prior division of earth and air, but mediating it into smell—that is refreshing. It is this type of "Streit," in contrast to Bachelard's appeals to purity but also to the heroic hunter's will, that refreshes and, according to the extension of this thought, invigorates.

This freedom of loyal lightness maintains a peculiar relationship with the question of limits and boundaries. The aphorism titled "Unsere Luft" from *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* had linked "this strong and clear element" to the possibility of flight: "hier kann er fliegen!" (KSA 3, 534). A transformation of air that renders it strong and invigorating produces the possibility of flight. Zarathustra takes up this idea and links it to the earth and the question of delimitation: "Wer die Menschen einst fliegen lehrt, der hat alle Grenzsteine verrückt; alle Grenzsteine selber werden ihm in die Luft fliegen, die Erde wird er neu taufen — als ‚die Leichte‘" (KSA 4, 242). *Grenzsteine* are a product of the spirit of gravity; they echo and push to an extreme the possessive nature already diagnosed in the sublime one. But the boundary stones' horizontal delimitation—the crucial impediment to freedom—is overcome by lightness, in the triumph of vertical lightness-loyalty over any horizontal limitation. The heaviness of a boundary *stone* is contrasted implicitly with the heaviness of the earth itself—where only the latter is capable of

being rebaptized in the name of lightness. The futural promise (“einst”) of an abolition of these stones promises that no point in space is defined with respect to a delimiting border.

Consequently, all and any points can be understood to be found in the middle;⁵²⁷ with the shift to air and olfaction, boundaries are devastated.

Yet this flight never abandons the earth but is always oriented towards it, as Zarathustra’s demand for a loyalty to the earth makes clear: “Führt, gleich mir, die *verflogene* Tugend zur Erde zurück—ja, zurück zu Leib und Leben: dass sie der Erde ihren Sinn gebe” (KSA 4, 100; emphasis added). Olfactory freedom and loyalty give the earth its “Sinn,” in the double sense of that term: olfaction is a privileged mode of *sense-making* as it simultaneously orients existence on earth, that is, gives it meaning, and attends to, indeed, remakes the human (perceptual) senses, partly by orienting them towards the earth and redeeming them from contempt.⁵²⁸

3.3. Cave, Emergence: Smell of Eternity

While the importance of the earth can hardly be overstated for *Also sprach Zarathustra*, the significant locales of the book as a whole are highly varied: not only the earth but islands, a desert, mountains, a village, a marketplace, a swamp, and forests feature prominently. Of particular relevance here as a place is Zarathustra’s cave: his descent and ascent, his wandering

⁵²⁷ The role of the middle, *Mitte*, takes center stage in the next and last part of this chapter, where in addition to the liberating aspects of such abolition of boundary stones the threatening aspect of their absence becomes clear—here perhaps already hinted at in the word “verrückt,” pointing to disoriented madness.

⁵²⁸ The reference to the “Sinn der Erde” also links the loyalty to the earth to the *Übermensch*: In the famous prologue, Zarathustra links exactly these three notions—loyalty to the earth, *Sinn der Erde*, and *Übermensch*—when he demands: “Der Übermensch ist der Sinn der Erde. Euer Wille sagt: der Übermensch *sei* der Sinn der Erde! Ich beschwöre euch, meine Brüder, *bleibt der Erde treu*” (KSA 4, 14-5). The overcoming of the *Über-* is ineluctably bound by loyalty; futurity (“*sei*”) and sense-making mutually condition each other.

about, his engagement with his animals and the so-called “höhere Menschen” all take place in, outside of, or in orientation towards this cave. Furthermore, as this section will show, the logic that governs the movement with respect to this cave concerns to a significant extent the element of air and its modification as odors; a logic that stands in relation to but differs from the logic of cultivation, loyalty, and calm that marked the “smell of the earth.”

Zarathustra’s cave, like much of the book as a whole, responds to the tradition of philosophy, in particular the most famous philosophical cave: the cave of Plato’s *Republic*. If the cave might even be considered the most Platonic of locales then Zarathustra’s cave will continue in intensified form the *Auseinandersetzung* with Platonism so prominent in many of Nietzsche’s other writings.

In a first step, it can be said that Zarathustra’s cave differs from Plato’s cave on the question of visibility—the ocularcentrism of the theoretical human being—as contrasted with the reactivation of the element of air and the attendant logic of smell. This difference finds a double articulation. First, the logic that governs the *exits and entries* from the cave—the logic that governs *emergence* out of the cave⁵²⁹—is a logic of air and smell. While Plato’s cave allegory in the *Republic*, as has been developed again and again in the scholarship, is governed by a powerful heliotropism, Zarathustra does not exit the cave to escape from shadows and to turn towards the light but rather because the cave’s air has become stuffy, malodorous, and suffocating:

⁵²⁹ The term “emergence” should be heard in this context with the full weight the philosophical tradition gives to the question of *Ausgang*, out of caves, out of *Unmündigkeit*, out of forgetting, etc. For an article clearing a path into these difficult questions, see Peter Fenves, “The Courage of the Critic: Avital Ronell and the Idea of Emergence.” The question of stupidity, of course, is never far from Nietzsche’s mind (if one can say this), and the note of “digging” and laughter with which Fenves’s article ends finds certain resonances with the question of Zarathustra’s cave.

Was Zarathustras Höhle von der platonischen der Schatten unterscheidet, ist die Erfäßbarkeit ihres Zustandes mit dem Geruchssinn statt mit dem Auge. Zarathustra erträgt die Luft nicht, die von der Zweifelhafteit seiner Gäste kommt. Er muß die Höhle verlassen, nicht um in die wirkliche Wirklichkeit hinauszutreten, sondern um eine andere Luft zu atmen.⁵³⁰

Nietzsche's final, late addition to the work he cherished most occurs not only through a rewriting of the solar and luminous vocabulary of philosophy but also in a radical shift of terrain: instead of attempting to "see" the "true" world, Zarathustra needs to be able to *breathe good air*.

Philosophy's forgetfulness, with Plato as the high point of the "theoretical man" developed above, supplants the vital activity of breathing with a vision based model of seeing appearances and truth. This ocular- and solarcentric model is organized around a single source and origin, ignoring the always already present medium that engulfs and penetrates the human being — without fixed location but giving place to both the body and life. Zarathustra's more than reversal of Platonism operates as a stepping out of, an *Ausgang* from this vision-based model but not as a simple inversion of Platonism. The latter, if understood as, say, an uncovering of a "deeper," hidden truth of metaphysics that has been "unveiled," would operate within the parameters of shadows and heliotropism: air, however, dissolves this logic.⁵³¹ In the fourth book of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Nietzsche, by contrast, operates with an *aerotropism* instead of a heliotropism: instead of turning towards the sun, a turning within air.⁵³²

⁵³⁰ Blumenberg, *Höhlenausgänge*, 620.

⁵³¹ *Also sprach Zarathustra* thus explicitly confronts the question of the relationship between light and air that was raised at the end of section two above, with reference to the aphorism "Unsere Luft" from *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*. Another instance of such a confrontation can be found in *Der Fall Wagner*, where Nietzsche writes: "Ich habe Lust, ein wenig die Fenster aufzumachen. Luft! Mehr Luft!" (KSA 6, 21). The direct transformation of Goethe's alleged, famous last words "Licht! Mehr Licht!" substitutes air for light and, by extension, smells for colors, as Goethe's interest in light took as one of its primary forms his lengthy development of a theory of colors. In fact, if for Goethe colors are the "Taten und Leiden" of light, it could be said that smells are for Nietzsche the "Taten und Leiden" of air.

⁵³² For a detailed analysis of Nietzsche's heliotropism and the importance of solar metaphors, especially in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, see Pautrat's *Versions du soleil*: "la référence sans doute la plus obsédante du

Secondly, the replacement of the Platonic heliotropism as the governing principle of *exits out of and entries into* the cave is supplemented by an additional logic that governs the *interior of the cave*, structuring it as a *container*. As developed above, an essential feature of vision in Nietzsche's work is its being structured by *perspective* and *horizon*. Olfaction, by contrast, is marked by a lack, or at the very least attenuation, of both of these features. Of particular interest here is the lack of horizon in smell: the *limits* of olfactory perception cannot be perceived in that perception itself, whereas the limits of the line of sight are visually perceptible. Not only are these limits not perceptible, whether they exist at all seems doubtful: the reach of olfaction merely decreases indefinitely. Herein lies part of the importance of the cave for the olfactory poetics of *Also sprach Zarathustra*: the cave functions as a *container*, that is, it *limits* the aerial elements in a way that substitutes for a horizon. While admittedly not making these limits perceptible to smell, the cave qua container nevertheless restores to smell part of the well-formed delimitation that it lacked so radically in comparison to vision.

If the radical threat emanating from the compromising nature of smell lies in its undermining the possibility of valuation—since all values are perspectival and derive from the limitation of a particular horizon—then the import of the delimiting function of the cave becomes apparent: qua container, *the cave establishes a valuation-enabling context*. This might be the reason for its centrality as point of orientation for the wandering of Zarathustra; it might also be the reason for Zarathustra bringing the higher human beings to his cave: it is here that he can evaluate them, gauge their weight, establish their value. (The interpretation proposed below

texte, sa scène majeure [...] *la scène solaire*" (Pautrat, 17). Pautrat's main starting point is Derrida's essay "White Mythology."

of the attempt to exit definitively from the cave shows precisely that from such emergence ensues the loss of the possibility of ascribing values.)

Yet the cave, if it is to be an actual cave, cannot be completely closed—it is not a sealed-off container. Rather, it permits one to enter and exit, which to a significant degree destroys its functioning as a *delimiting* container with respect to the element of air. In fact, the entirety of the fourth part is organized around various exits from and entries into Zarathustra’s cave; Zarathustra sends the so-called “higher human beings”⁵³³ (two kings, a leech, a magician, a soothsayer, a pope “out of service,” the ugliest man, and a voluntary beggar) to his cave and himself exits and enters alone or with them a number of times—everything leading up to his final, solitary exit from the cave.

Both the question of the emergence from the cave and the question of the status of the higher human beings must be thought through the problem of distance developed above. To begin with the “höhere Menschen:” they are, in a first and rather obvious sense, supposed to be endowed with some sort of pathos of distance. They are “higher” than the “last human being” and higher than the inhabitants of the village called the “motley cow;” their comparative highness enables them or is expressed in their ability to move up into the realms of the mountains in which Zarathustra generally dwells alone (only accompanied by his animals). In his speech titled “Vom höheren Menschen,” Zarathustra contrasts them with the plebs: “Der Pöbel aber blinzelt ‘wir sind Alle gleich’” (KSA 4, 357). This *blinzeln*, a squinting or blinking of the

⁵³³ Nietzsche uses the term “höhere *Menschen*” but only includes men in this group; indeed, the question of women (for instance Ariadne) and femininity as a counterpoint to these men—but also to Zarathustra—is a complicated and important one. (Cf. Krell, *Postponements*, for some useful indications). The translation “higher human beings,” instead of the often used “higher men,” is thus used reluctantly here: while it might be more accurate in some literal sense of translating, it also obscures the gendered aspect of the conception of the “higher human beings.”

eye, constitutes a distortion of the perspective in which there would be differences of height or greatness: if you squint enough, so the suggestion, you distort your line of sight just enough to make all differences disappear and let “equality” emerge. The comparative “higher” of these *höhere Menschen*, according to Zarathustra, then lies in their denial and indeed “verachte[n]” (KSA 4, 357) of such a distortion;⁵³⁴ in contrast to the last human beings, they know of distance and differentiation.

Yet within the economy of the fourth part of the book, it appears that the much more urgent question of distance concerns the relationship of these higher human beings to Zarathustra; the plebs are mentioned only rarely, while Zarathustra’s relationship to them is front and center from the beginning to the end of the fourth part. How far or close are they to Zarathustra? That Zarathustra’s encounters with these higher human beings in some sense constitute encounters with beings that reflect, parody or distort who he is has been remarked often in the secondary literature.⁵³⁵

⁵³⁴ Reading the higher human beings through the pathos of distance provides a more precise and contextualized interpretation than the more general claim that “it could be said that the basic dilemma in the book is ‘political,’ one that calls to mind again the classic Platonic political dilemma—how to establish a relation between the philosopher and the city, how to reconcile the wise and not wise” (Pippin, 51). For the link between the pathos of distance and Nietzschean politics, see in particular the beginning of section two above.

⁵³⁵ Cf., for instance, Shapiro: “In his long episodic series of meetings with the higher men Zarathustra sees nothing but parodies, misunderstandings, and fragments of himself” (Shapiro, *Nietzschean Narratives*, 102). Similarly, Bennholdt-Thomsen argues that all of the higher human beings appear in the earlier parts of the book already: “Die höheren Menschen sind als die Feinde, die Zarathustra bekämpft hat [...] deutlich auszumachen. Insofern es sich um die im zweiten Teil, also auf den glückseligen Inseln, Apostrophierten handelt, ist ihr konkretes Auftreten innerhalb des Werkes motiviert und folgerichtig” (Bennholdt-Thomsen, 133). Lampert, not surprisingly, strongly disagrees with such claims: “even they [the higher men] finally come under Zarathustra’s sway and yield to a height that they can recognize if not scale. It is a shame that nobody got this proud joke—just as it is a shame so many have misunderstood the superior men of part IV as parodied fragments of Nietzsche himself, as if this hard joke on the best of his contemporaries were a joke on himself” (Lampert, 289). (Curiously, Lampert himself seems to undermine the presupposition of his claim, namely that these higher men are the “best” of Nietzsche’s contemporaries; 291). Lampert’s confident claims to Zarathustra’s success in differentiating and distinguishing himself are undermined at every point of part four, rendering claims such as these little

A more precise (and unsettling) interpretation, however, derives from the text's own claim that these higher humans are Zarathustra's "temptation" ("verführen", but also "versuchen" (KSA 4, 408)), a temptation to commit his "last sin." This last sin would precisely be the abolition of all distance: the temptation is pity or compassion, which is constituted by making the pain and suffering of someone else one's own, thereby abandoning all distance and, in the end, abandoning all differentiation between oneself and the suffering other. "*Mitleiden!* [...] oh Zarathustra, ich komme, dass ich dich zu deiner letzten Sünde verführe!" (KSA 4, 301). These words are spoken at the beginning of the fourth part by the "Wahrsager" who announces to Zarathustra that the higher human beings are his temptation and are calling out for him with a "Nothschrei." This soothsayer is introduced as the proclaimer of a "truth" that echoes rather exactly the claims of equality uttered by the blinking plebs: "der Verkündiger der grossen Müdigkeit, welcher lehrte: 'Alles ist gleich'" (KSA 4, 300).⁵³⁶ The soothsayer himself, however, belongs among the "higher human beings," which suggests at the very least a strong affinity between those who were expressly said to distinguish themselves from the plebs and that very plebs.

The set-up of the fourth part is thus even more dangerous for Zarathustra than might at first be anticipated: the higher human beings turn out to be rather like the plebs, and the great *Versuch* of this fourth part lies in Zarathustra being tempted to associate himself with those higher human beings and, by extension, the very last human beings from which he has sought to distance himself so strenuously. In this context, sending the higher human beings to his cave is

more than wishful projection. Against all of these approaches, following the text's description of a "temptation," as attempted here, appears both sounder and more unsettling.

⁵³⁶ Much more could, and should, be said about this soothsayer and Zarathustra's relationship to him; for some indications, see Gooding-Williams, *Dionysian*, 197-204, passim who presents much of Zarathustra's development as a response to the soothsayer's prophecy.

not only a highly significant gesture of hospitality and friendship but also one of *bringing close* and even of letting them share in what is Zarathustra's own, as the protagonist himself emphasizes in his encounter with the soothsayer: "was mein ist in meiner Höhle, gehört auch dir, meinem Gastfreunde" (KSA 4, 303). It might appear that no *blinzeln* is needed to mistake—the questions of *Verwechseln*, of identity and mistaken identity are at the core of this part⁵³⁷—Zarathustra for someone he was most definitely not supposed to be.

Much thus hinges on Zarathustra's possibility to (re-)establish distance between him and his guests. This, then, is the meaning of the recurring play of entering into and emerging from the cave, leading up to the final emergence in "Das Zeichen:" they are all so many attempts to create distance between those who remain in the cave and the one who emerges from it.

These attempts at emergence are governed by an olfactory logic that structures the aerotropism remarked on above. Zarathustra smells the air in the pseudo-container of the cave to see whether he needs to exit, that is, to turn out of the cave, and step into "das Freie." This olfactory logic of the fourth part of *Also sprach Zarathustra* reconfigures significantly Zarathustra's pronouncements in part three—"Oh reine Gerüche um mich! Oh wie aus tiefer Brust diese Stille reinen Athem holt! (KSA 4, 233)—analyzed above. In the section titled "Die Heimkehr," Zarathustra had proclaimed himself "erlöst vom Geruch alles Menschenwesens" (KSA 4, 234). In part four, by contrast, such redemption will prove elusive or at the very least much more complex: his "Heimat," his solitary cave in the mountains is now shared with the

⁵³⁷ The case of the higher human beings could be interpreted consistently as a case of mistaken identity, a case of "Verwechslung:" they posture and tempt Zarathustra into accepting their *comparatively* higher nature, replacing the non-comparative *Über* that Zarathustra has been preaching. Similarly, their comparative highness itself might be a mistake: they might be nothing more than part of the plebs after all. And lastly, Nietzsche's writing of this fourth part, as has been suggested by numerous commentators (see above), can be seen as an attempt to clarify the first three parts—so that Zarathustra (and Nietzsche) may not be mistaken for someone he is not.

höheren Menschen who bring with them, their comparative highness notwithstanding, some of the “Geruch alles Menschenwesens.”

The olfactory logic of emergence from the shared cave oscillates between the register of purity—and thus a break and difference in kind that resembles the smells of “Die Heimkehr”—and a comparative logic that corresponds directly to the comparative of the “higher.” A key passage from “Das Lied der Schwermut” from part four thus reads:

Als Zarathustra diese Reden sprach, stand er nahe dem Eingange seiner Höhle; mit den letzten Worten aber entschlüpfte er seinen Gästen und floh für eine kurze Weile ins Freie. “Oh *reine* Gerüche um mich, rief er aus, oh selige Stille um mich! Aber wo sind meine Thiere? Heran, heran, mein Adler und meine Schlange! Sagt mir doch, meine Thiere: diese höheren Menschen insgesamt — riechen sie vielleicht nicht gut? Oh *reine* Gerüche um mich!” [...] Solchergestalt waren sie zu drei still beisammen und schnüffelten und schlürften mit einander die *gute* Luft. Denn die Luft war hier draussen *besser* als bei den höheren Menschen (KSA 4, 369; emphasis added).

Zarathustra himself, in his direct speech, claims that his stepping out of the cave, away from the higher men, has led him to *pure* smells, just like he claimed in “Die Heimkehr.” Qua *pure*, these smells disavow any continuity with the stink of the cave: when Zarathustra has stepped “ins Freie,” a difference in kind marks the change in air. The narration of this scene, however, recasts this repeated language of purity in terms of a comparative: the air outside was *better*. At first, the difference of kind seems to be maintained (“die gute Luft”) but the goodness of the air is immediately and directly relativized: the qualification of the air outside has an ineluctable reference to the air inside, and only as a comparative modification of the latter is the former’s difference understandable at all; Zarathustra’s *Ausgang* cannot be understood as a radical break.

Emergence as meant to reestablish distance thus cannot be said to succeed. Zarathustra’s *Ausgang* does not, in fact, step “in’s Freie” (KSA 4, 369). Far from being free from his foul-smelling guests, Zarathustra is tied to them by his very own comparative. The olfactory-aerial

logic of the cave articulates this fact with precision: by virtue of having an exit, an *Ausgang*, the air outside remains ineluctably connected to the air inside;⁵³⁸ mingling and mixing are inevitable. In a manner resembling to a degree the loyalty of the “smell of the earth” but in a much more troubling setting—for would Zarathustra really want to be loyal to the higher human beings if they are his last temptation and sin?—, in a manner resembling the binding freedom developed above, the air of emergence is bound to the air of the cave. The continuation of the text articulates this fact: after Zarathustra has left the cave, the “old sorcerer” (KSA 4, 370) sings “Das Lied der Schwermuth,” which gives the title to this section. While temporarily away from such *Schwermuth*, away from such a spirit of gravity, the response of the higher human beings quickly dissolves such distance: “Luft! Lasst gute Luft herein! Lass Zarathustra herein!” (KSA 4, 375) shouts “der Gewissenhafte des Geistes,” and Zarathustra obliges.

After “Das Lied der Schwermuth,” the tension between Zarathustra’s claim of pure smells and the narration’s comparative description or, in other words, Zarathustra’s continuously diminished distance from the higher human beings is intensified in “Das Nachtwandler-Lied.” Reconsidering his earlier remarks, Zarathustra here develops in great detail the implications of what emergence from the cave—emergence from a contained context into the uncontained realm of olfaction—entails in all its radicality, without the referring back to the difference between inside and outside of the cave.⁵³⁹ The set-up of “Das Nachtwandler-Lied” is this: it begins after

⁵³⁸ It is only at the end of the next section (“Von der Wissenschaft”) that the text describes in greater but simultaneously odder detail the exit of the cave: “die Thür seiner Höhle” (KSA 4, 378). That a cave has a door seems unusual and indicates the complicated nature of the exits and entries from this cave as well as the question of its (un)contained character; in older usage, of course, going back to $\theta\acute{\upsilon}\rho\alpha$, “Thür” simply means an opening and does not necessarily refer to a door in the contemporary sense.

⁵³⁹ Robert Gooding-Williams also points out that “Das Nachtwandler-Lied” must be understood as Zarathustra reprising his earlier positions as he “transforms a lyric he initially sang to his soul (see “The Other Dancing Song”) into a sleepwalker’s song (see ‘The Sleepwalker Song’), his performance of which is a *degenerate rendition of the second act of recurrence*, a farcical satire of the sublime celebration of

the section titled “Das Eselsfest,” where the higher human beings, and eventually Zarathustra, too, perform a carnivalesque worshipping of the I-A, that is, of a yes-saying *Esel*.⁵⁴⁰ Zarathustra instructs his guests to “cool off” (KSA 4, 393) outside of the cave; they obey him and they all step “in’s Freie” (KSA 4, 395).

When midnight strikes, Zarathustra proclaims: “Ihr höheren Menschen, riecht ihr’s nicht? Es quillt heimlich ein Geruch heraus, ein Duft und Geruch der Ewigkeit, ein rosenselig brauner Gold-Wein-Geruch von altem Glücke” (KSA 4, 400). Outside of the cave, now for the first time as an outside that *both* Zarathustra and the higher human beings occupy, no pure or comparatively better smells are to be found but instead the smell of eternity. This smell announces a desire to die, as the lines right before the description just quoted indicate: “die Welt selber ward reif, die Traube bräunt, -- nun will sie sterben, vor Glück sterben.” In this smell, the world announces its end, to be superseded by eternity.

In this fragrance of eternity, opposites collapse into each other and all possibility of valuation dissolves. Zarathustra’s song repeats the formula “Duft und Geruch der Ewigkeit” (KSA 4, 400) once more in slightly altered form as his “Nachtwandler-Lied” continues: “Ein Dunst und Duft der Ewigkeit? [...] Riecht ihr’s nicht? Eben ward meine Welt vollkommen, Mitternacht ist auch Mittag,— Schmerz ist auch eine Lust, Fluch ist auch ein Segen” (KSA 4, 402). Pain and pleasure, curse and blessing are equivalent; in the perfection or completion

eternity that, in the closing sections of Part 3, brought his tragedy to an end [...] Parodying himself, Zarathustra completes the task of vindicating himself, by establishing conclusively that he has triumphed over the spirit of resignation” (Gooding-Williams, 280). “Das andere Tanzlied” does not employ olfactory terms; it appears that the introduction of these terms enables Zarathustra to reconfigure the (on Gooding-Williams’s reading) seemingly unambiguous celebration of eternity—whether and how such reprising can be seen as parody that “vindicating” will be analyzed below.

⁵⁴⁰ Since so much has been said about the donkey’s I-A *sounding* like yes-saying, and the (im)possibilities to read such yes-saying, it might be worth pointing out that the German name “Esel” spells, as a palindrome, the imperative *read*, “lese.”

(“vollkommen”) of the smell of eternity, no differentiation—no opposition enabling distance—is possible. Instead, the shared ground appears: “*Mitternacht*” and “*Mittag*,” midnight and midday share that they are the *middle* of night and day, respectively. Smell is the marker of the eternally recurring *medium*, freed from all “Grenzsteine:” valences, qualities, and properties continually change but the medium in which they change—actively forgotten by theoretical man—is eternal. The position of this smell is the “position” in which and from which specific valorizations such as pain or pleasure, disappear. In other words, all valuation-enabling perspectives are dissolved into pure positionality; instead of points of view, lines of sight or horizons, mere mediality emerges.⁵⁴¹ From the non-perspective of eternity—as radically different from the perspective of life and death—, and only from this non-perspective, air is “equivalente dans toutes ses directions, dont aucun endroit n’est privilégié. Dépourvu de sens pour l’homme.”⁵⁴² Once the human being is seen as positioned in the middle of a medium where all absolute positions collapse, any directionality such as the upwards directionality that marked the smell of the earth disappears—air is “dépourvu de sens,” where “sens” must be read as both sense and direction, and it is deprived of sense *for man*. The earth as the central weight orienting chaotic becoming—*wERDEn*—has disappeared; all that is left is the smell of eternity.

In Zarathustra’s speech, this loss of hierarchized, privileged locales explicitly affects the depth/surface schema that Nietzsche’s characterization of smell had already destabilized. His first invocation of “ein Duft und Geruch der Ewigkeit” continues: “die Welt ist tief *und tiefer als der Tag gedacht*” (KSA 4, 400). The complex thought folded in this short sentence can be

⁵⁴¹ To put it in the context and terminology of Irigaray’s book: this resembles the *Da* of which Heidegger forgets that it is always in air, in an atmosphere. If *Stimmung* und *Verstehen* make up, “gleichursprünglich,” the “existenziale Konstitution des Da” (Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 134), then we need to add such an aerial-olfactory “Befindlichkeit.”

⁵⁴² Irigaray, *L’oubli de l’air*, 145.

explicated as follows. The day stands for visual phenomenality, finding its source and origin in the sun and operating according to the depth/surface schema: phenomena appear out of a depth onto a visible surface. Diurnal phenomenality is structured as the appearance out of an obscure depth (night) onto a clear surface (day) and, potentially, the re-descending into the night.⁵⁴³ In the thought of the fragrance and smell of eternity, by contrast, depth is further deepened. Eternity is deeper than day, deeper than that which gives rise to depth and surface: it encompasses the day, all days, and thus abolishes diurnal phenomenality as the governing paradigm. The last words of this section read: “*tiefe, tiefe Ewigkeit*” (KSA 4, 404). If Nietzsche’s notion of smell arising from minuscule explosions put an end to the “lie” of a flat, smooth, and unified surface, then this doubling repetition of “deep,” pronounced as the modifier of eternity, dissolves the concept of depth as the oppositional term of surface and substitutes for it a depth that only ever doubles itself.⁵⁴⁴

Another name for the supersession of the surface/depth schema is *chaos*. Without diurnal phenomenality, no perspectival ordering into foreground and background, or into higher and lower is possible. The smell of eternity draws out the implications of the analysis of the interplay between chaos, on the one hand, and perspective and horizon, on the other, as developed above with respect to Heidegger’s Nietzsche lectures. Emergence leads out of the cave and thus leaves behind the ersatz horizon that was the pseudo-container of the cave. The *wandeln* of this song is the turning about in the gaping openness of an element in which no ordering or hierarchization

⁵⁴³ Among other “influences” one can name here the Wagnerian music drama dearest to Nietzsche, “Tristan and Isolde,” where the interplay of day and night is key and frequently combined with of eternity (the night beckoning with dissolution into eternal oneness and obscurity) and the seduction lying in eternity’s promise.

⁵⁴⁴ Cf. the passage from Foucault quoted above: “depth is now restored as an absolutely superficial secret” (Foucault, “Nietzsche,” 273).

can be established. As opening, the pure mediality of the smell of eternity—its chaotic nature—constitutes the extreme endpoint of the discovery of the *compromising* quality of smell. Not only is any distance or value establishing perspective abolished, the compromise is extreme in that, to rephrase the *Nachtwandler-Lied*, “bad air is also good air, good air is also bad air.” When Nietzsche speaks of a “*compromittirende Mittelmäßigkeit*” (NF-1887,10[67]), he designates with exactitude the link between a thinking of the *Mitte* and the compromising quality it entails: two terms come together and give up their respective claims to defend what is their own.⁵⁴⁵ The attempt of a radical *Ausgang* from the cave, that is, the abandoning of the cave as either pseudo-container or relative point of orientation (going inside, exiting as relational operations), produces a paradoxically absolute compromise, an absolute inability to distinguish between Zarathustra, the higher human beings, and anyone else. Some commentators have claimed that Zarathustra’s “parodic” reprisal of his earlier celebration of eternity should be seen on the oppositional model of Zarathustra’s “privately lived” experience that cannot be “express[ed]” to others and hence falls into a parody:⁵⁴⁶ yet precisely any such differentiation between Zarathustra’s own, “private” experience and his distinction from the “higher” men is what “Das Nachtwandler-Lied” renders impossible.

The smell and fragrance of eternity is instead the marker of a “Ewigkeit für Jegliches,” as Nietzsche terms it in a fragment from 1887, and hence an eternity for all beings alike, beyond

⁵⁴⁵ Compare the older meaning of “compromise” as “a joint promise or agreement made by contending parties to abide by the decision of an arbiter or referee” (OED).

⁵⁴⁶ This is a key aspect of Gooding-Williams’s interpretation: “In essence, Zarathustra suggests that in performing ‘Once More’ for the higher men he makes it into a ‘lyre’ or ‘hurdy-gurdy’ song that, reminiscent of the *Leier-Lied* his animals sang in ‘The Convalescent,’ cannot express his privately lived and sublime experience of self-redemption. [...] it stages a parody of that life, a hurdy-gurdy distortion of Zarathustra’s vision of eternity that re-presents it as the drunken, asinine musing of a dim-eyed, stumbling somnambulist” (Gooding-Williams, 289).

any possibility of a pathos of distance.⁵⁴⁷ Eternity's qualifier would be *quodlibet*,⁵⁴⁸ and air as the element that continually effaces localized forms just as much as equilibria is thus particularly suited to express such an eternity. From the "perspective" of eternity, which is precisely not a perspective, there is only chaos—no loyalty, no valuation, no weighing. This is the price of emergence: without context and perspective, there is no downwards or upwards, no orientation but only a chaotic middle.

But the text of *Also sprach Zarathustra* does not let such an interpretation stand as definitive or conclusive. Whether the pure mediality of the "Duft und Geruch der Ewigkeit" can actually emerge in the text and whether the extreme endpoint of its compromising nature is indeed an "endpoint" becomes more or less immediately doubtful as the text continues. In other words, the text retreats and moves out of the extreme point of absolute compromise. Such a retreat might be seen as a consequence of the impossibility to remain at such an extremity or, more cautiously, to produce a text that speaks from such a "position." Or, *Also sprach Zarathustra* might be seen to be in retreat in the much discussed and sometimes ridiculed following and last section "Das Zeichen," in which Zarathustra appears in front of his cave, seemingly freed from the dilemmas of his previous song, without the reader having been told how the return, a "Heimkehr" to be sure, to the cave has taken place. One could interpret this leaving this cave on his own in "Das Zeichen" as the recognition that any engagement with the

⁵⁴⁷ Nietzsche explicitly seeks out this eternity as a response to the ephemerality of things, pointing to smell's particular suitability to articulate this thought: "Jener Kaiser hielt sich beständig die Vergänglichkeit aller Dinge vor, um sie nicht *zu wichtig* zu nehmen und zwischen ihnen ruhig zu bleiben. Mir scheint umgekehrt Alles viel zu viel werth zu sein, als daß es so flüchtig sein dürfte: ich suche nach einer Ewigkeit für Jegliches: dürfte man die kostbarsten Salben und Weine ins Meer gießen? — und mein Trost ist, daß Alles was war ewig ist: — das Meer spült es wieder heraus" (NF-1887,11[94]). The sea returns it: at this point, a different element is understood as the element of eternity.

⁵⁴⁸ This term is used prominently in Giorgio Agamben's *The Coming Community*, describing "whatever being."

higher human beings, be it in the cave or outside of it, is bound to fail at producing a distance that resists the last, and greatest, temptation—pity—that Zarathustra faces. Yet how Zarathustra could be said to accomplish this last, solitary exit without falling into the traps of resentment, an illusory pathos of distance, etc. that he himself had just developed so forcefully remains unclear in “Das Zeichen.” Significantly, this section completely abandons all vocabulary of air and smell, thus suggesting that there simply might not be a “solution” to the *Versuch-ung* of a lack of distance; in other words, suggesting that there might not be a way to withstand this temptation within the compromising situation of olfaction and that only a return to the sun can (attempt to) guarantee Zarathustra’s emergence, differentiation, and distinction. This would, in the last instance, mean that *existing in air is incompatible with the avoidance of being compromised*.

Yet even before “Das Zeichen,” something resembling a retreat from the extreme point of compromise—or rather a compromising shift effecting this point itself—can already be read in the text of “Das Nachtwandler-Lied,” more precisely in the shift from the first formulation of the smell of eternity (“Duft und Geruch der Ewigkeit”) to its second, repeated but altered version (“Dunst und Duft der Ewigkeit”). Throughout Nietzsche’s work and in keeping with conventional usage, “Dunst” carries a pejorative connotation that is opposed to the more neutral “Geruch” and the decidedly positive “Duft.” Whatever thought the “Duft und Geruch der Ewigkeit” articulates becomes corrupted and compromised in its second, repeated version as a “Dunst.” Such corruption, however, cannot be read as either an evaluating judgment nor as parody: both of these possibilities have been lost with the movement outside of the cave towards the *Mitte*. Parody is always perspectival, presupposing a distance between the parody and the

parodied model.⁵⁴⁹ The impossibility of parody, however, also means that “serious,” grave claims are equally impossible; only the possibility of being made fun of guarantees that something can be serious. Alongside the other oppositions that collapse in olfaction, the dichotomy grave/lighthearted, parody/seriousness is compromised. In an uncontrollable proliferation of paradoxes, “Das Nachtwandler-Lied” cannot work itself out of this final, non-final position: outside the cave, at the extreme middle-point of olfaction stands only absolute compromise—but this compromise itself is compromised in smell. Out of this element, no emergence is possible, and the only thing left to do, perhaps, is laugh.⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁴⁹ Zittel speaks of “*Parodie als Selbstverhältnis*” (Zittel, 133; emphasis in the original) while also tracing a “radikale Variante der Selbstersetzung” in the fourth part of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, thus bringing out the, in his book mostly unexplored, implication that such a “Selbst-verhältnis” turns on itself and thus on the possibility of parody as such.

⁵⁵⁰ In his preface to the *Doctrine of Right*, Immanuel Kant, having faced ridicule of his claims regarding the nature of marriage, “welcomes ridicule as a test of truth” (Fenves, “Marital, Martial, Maritime Law,” 101) and writes: “If, however, as Shaftsbury asserts, the capacity of a doctrine (especially a practical one) to withstand *ridicule* is not a contemptible touchstone of its truth, then, with time, the critical philosopher must take his turn and laugh *last*” (in: Fenves, “Marital, Martial, Maritime Law,” 101-2; see the rest of that article for a development of these provocative passages).

Epilogue:

A Rinçage for “German [Noses]” (Ponge)**1. Sending Poetry into the Stratosphere**

The final or rather the extreme point of Nietzsche’s aerial-olfactory poetics is found in Zarathustra’s inability to avoid being compromised as long as he exists in the aerial medium shared between him and the “higher men.” Existence in air, as differentiated as it might be, resists the maintenance of a definitive pathos of distance and forecloses an emergence out of the cave, which approximates an olfactory container, into an air that would be radically separate. Instead, a play of differentials and a tendency towards chaos govern this inescapable element.

Yet what about an emergence not out of a cave but out of air altogether? What about *emergence out of air*? It is this strange proposition that frames an equally strange book, a book that puts the question of *Reinlichkeit* so central to Nietzsche into a new historical and poetic context and transforms Zarathustrian laughter into “objoie”—Francis Ponge’s *Le Savon*, a book, if it is one, entirely devoted to soap and its cleaning qualities.⁵⁵¹ While the olfactory vocabularies of both Hölderlin and Nietzsche were inscribed into the question of deodorization in a somewhat discreet and indirect way, pointing to an “olfactory degree zero” or counteracting a denial of

⁵⁵¹ Ponge read and engaged Nietzsche’s work at various points in his life, in particular *Die Geburt der Tragödie* was important to him and supplied him with categories for his critical writings on visual art, for instance in his “Notes sur *Les Otages*” dedicated to Fautrier. Cf. Cuillé, who emphasizes that Ponge’s engagement with Nietzsche was always shaped by the historical context of Franco-German relations, in particular due to the National-Socialist appropriation of Nietzsche. Cf. also Gavronsky’s contribution to the colloquium “Ponge: Inventeur et classique” at Cerisy in 1975, where he emphasizes, “un redoublement de joie et de louange, émotions caractéristiques du texte de Nietzsche comme de celui de Ponge” (Gavronsky, “Nietzsche ou l’arrière-texte pongien,” 310). All quotations from Ponge, *Le Savon*, will be cited in-text by page number.

olfaction, Ponge takes this question and turns it from the vanishing point of olfactory poetics into its “theme.” With the removal of dirt and the attendant smell front and center, the process of deodorizing turns out to be odorous in its own way: removing smells smells.⁵⁵²

Ponge frames this theme of deodorization by an attempt to escape earthbound air: leaving the earthly atmosphere, in which both breathing and smelling are possible, would be, perhaps, the ultimate movement of deodorization. *Le Savon* is thus framed by the image of a lift-off into the “orbit,” away from the atmosphere towards the stratosphere, in both its very first section titled “début du livre” and the very last one, “fin du livre.” The function of the “orbit” in the opening paragraphs develops out of the peculiar status of the text: Ponge wrote the various parts of *Le Savon*, dating the entries and noting the place of writing for most of them, over a period stretching more than two decades, from 1943 to 1965.⁵⁵³ Most of the texts were written in the forties, before and after the end of World War II, but Ponge reprises his “dossier” in the sixties when he is asked to give a radio lecture in Stuttgart: the book is thus inscribed in an address to a *German listener*. This is the occasional reason—but far from the only reason as will be argued below—that the “début du livre” asks the *reader* who faces a *French* text to lend himself

⁵⁵² While Ponge’s poetic vocabulary is, more generally speaking, often visual or auditory, his work nevertheless evidences a sustained and nuanced interest in olfaction beyond *Le Savon*. Those smells, for instance in “L’Orange,” will be left aside here for the sake of a more sustained development of the logic of soap and its response or correspondence to the themes developed throughout this dissertation.

⁵⁵³ *Le Savon* thus occupies a pivotal position in the trajectory of Ponge’s work: “*Le Savon* appeared at precisely the moment Ponge’s writing shifted focus away from the objectal poetry of the early years toward the metapoetic concerns that preoccupied him from *Pour un Malherbe* onward” (Rachlin, “Occupation,” 85). The “dossier” form of the text, which assembles a number of texts without constituting one definitive version of the poem, is crucial to an understanding of *Le Savon*: its relationship to repetition, variation, theme will be analyzed below. Rachlin has further argued that “In guiding readers toward an exclusively metapoetic interpretation of the book, the version Ponge ultimately settled upon in 1965 further allows us to see how this remarkable poem works to erase and forget the historical mooring not only of this particular work, but of all of his subsequent literary production as well” (Rachlin, 86). This gets it exactly backwards: by *not* erasing the earlier versions written in the 40s and juxtaposing them with the versions written in the 60s, Ponge precisely does not erase history but instead links the concerns of his later work explicitly to the concerns of his writings during the Occupation.

“German ears:” “Le lecteur, d’emblée, soit prié (il comprendra très vite pourquoi)— nous voulons dire: pour le décollage— de se noter, par l’imagination, d’*oreilles allemandes*” (7). For take-off, the reader, who in contrast to the radio listener sees but does not hear, must give himself German ears: the reading of the text, here as in many other of Ponge’s texts, is likened to a mode of traveling and this particular journey leads from France to Germany, or rather shuttles between a mode of literary production destined for the French eye and a mode produced for the German ear—the reader finds himself not only “sur une piste de Babel” (7) but also on the path of history: a Frenchman reading a text written partly during the height of German destruction as well as French resistance and collaboration, where the radio (and clandestine listening) played a central role in social and political life.

Yet the “début du livre,” the first casting out towards the “but,” the goal of the book, does not finish with this exhortation but rather indicates the limit of this demand: “Dès que notre SAVON aura été placé sur orbite, toute sujétion de cet ordre cessera” (7). Once the runway of Babel is left and the book has reached the circular path of orbiting around the earth, all need for Babylonian adjustment ceases: *Le Savon* is beyond such an “ordre.” Orbiting supersedes the need to toggle between sight and hearing, between German and French.⁵⁵⁴ Ponge clarifies, to a degree, this image of the orbit and its relationship to both listening and writing in comments on *Le Savon* he made during an interview with Serge Gavronsky:⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵⁴ Given Ponge’s penchant for etymological puns and an increasing of semantic density, it should be remembered that the Littré (Ponge’s favorite dictionary) lists “eye socket” as the (only) other meaning of “orbit.” Attaining the orbit intensifies a “bird’s eye view.”

⁵⁵⁵ For an interpretation of this passage in the broader context of space travel and cosmo-philosophies, see Kreienbrock, *Sich im Weltall orientieren*, 13-5. Thomas Schestag offers an interpretation of these passages in the context of Ponge’s *La Fabrique du Pré* and explicitly links the question of the atmosphere to those of respiration, oxidation, the breathing of plants, etc. On the question of writing and the atmosphere, Schestag writes: “ein gegenwendiges Überkreuz [...]: die Notwendigkeit, den in der Stratosphäre (des Gesprächs) angeschnitten schwerelosen Raum, die ‚monde muet‘ des Beweggrunds –

one arrives at a kind of orbital flight, leaving the atmosphere, the atmosphere being the place of breath, and of the *logos*, the oral expression, and that one can go in the direction of the stratosphere and that one finds oneself in orbit at the moment of writing.⁵⁵⁶

Oral expression is tied to breath, and breath to the atmosphere. Writing, by contrast, leaves behind the atmosphere and hence the possibility of breathing: it is *epi-logic* in the strict sense.

Writing, according to Ponge, extracts itself from the atmosphere via the “intention of writing,” that is, via the directedness of writing beyond the sphere of breath and speech:

And in a way, the desire that makes me write, the intention of writing, these are like the successive chapters that lead to the orbiting. They are comparable to the stages of a rocket that allow successive stages to orbit, but once the thing is in orbit, in its written form, at that moment, it no longer depends on the atmosphere.⁵⁵⁷

Ponge’s claim that “it no longer depends on the atmosphere,” however, must be modified by the implications of his own image: the orbit is precisely the path of circulation that by going around the atmosphere of breath and speech always remains oriented towards it. The written text, launched off the “piste de Babel,” orbits around the sphere of breathing in a higher, “upper” layer that Ponge names the stratosphere.⁵⁵⁸

When exactly, however, does *Le Savon* reach this stratospheric orbit? The word “orbit” returns only once more, at the very end of the book in appendix five, thus positing these aeronautic reflections as the frame of *Le Savon* in the precise sense of that which surrounds and contains the text but also constitutes its *parergon*:

Voilà donc ce livre bouclé; notre toupie lancée; notre SAVON en orbite.

Namens –, in die Atmosphäre – schreibend – einzuführen, aber so, daß die Sphäre des Atems und *logos*, der lancierten glimmenden Zeichen und Wörter, zum Beweggrund, der sie – unausrichtbar – unterhält, perforiert und *en orbite*: wohin der untere Saum von ‚Le Savon‘ SAVON aussetzt“ (Schestag, *Para-*, 477-8).

⁵⁵⁶ Gavronsky, “From an Interview,” 687.

⁵⁵⁷ Gavronsky, “From an Interview,” 687.

⁵⁵⁸ (Note that Ponge’s use of these terms does not quite line up with contemporary scientific usage.) These reflections on the atmosphere/stratosphere distinction harken back to the preliminary indications regarding the stratification and differentiation of air found in the introduction to this dissertation.

(Et tous les *étages* ou chapitres successifs mis à feu pour la lancée peuvent bien, déjà, être retombés dans l'*atmosphère*, lieu commun de l'oubli, comme il fut celui du projet.)
[...]

FIN DU LIVRE
(128; emphasis in the original)

The key to understanding this passage's claim about the orbit lies in the preceding pages: the appendix begins with an analysis of the movement of "frotter les mains," which expresses "la satisfaction, voire jubilation, intérieure" (126) but is also "une sorte de 'bouclage,'" that is, a turning on oneself as a closure that marks "l'identité corporelle" and can lead to an orgasmic jubilation. Soap, then, is the something that is put between the hands and consequently a means to facilitate the short-circuiting of the closure unto oneself: "Revenons maintenant au Savon, c'est-à-dire à nous frotter les mains *avec* quelque chose, et, pour ainsi dire, au moyen d'un moyen" (127; emphasis in the original). Paying attention to this "means of a means," according to Ponge, is the nature of "poetry." The *with* of the book, its existence with something else that enables the "bouclage" leading to jubilation, is found in reading: "Qu'est-ce que cela pouvait être, sinon, lecteur, *ta lecture* (comme elle mord sa queue en ces dernières lignes)" (128).

The closing ("bouclé") of the book, its attaining of the closed orbit, occurs when the means runs out: when the soap is used up, when the reading ends—then and only then does the buckle, the loop link up and close. In other words, poetry reaches the orbiting stage and leaves the atmosphere of breath and logos *only after* the reading ends: the "étages ou chapitres successifs mis à feu pour la lancée" have fallen back into the atmosphere, the different stages of launching the book into orbit—that is, *the text itself that composes the book*—do not reach the stratospheric orbit before the final jubilation. They remain in the atmosphere, in the "lieu commun," which the English translator renders as "platitude" but which designates also, and here more forcefully, the common place in which the buckle is not yet closed upon itself, where

the hands are not yet fully linked up. The *lieu common* is the third element in which a mingling and mixing is possible.⁵⁵⁹

After take-off and before orbiting, the text thus ineluctably exists not in the upper stratosphere—even though it might be directed towards attaining those heights—but in the sphere of breath and common speech. The atmospherics of the writing hands consequently allows for a variety of aerial-olfactory modulations. Ponge thus writes of soap:

on le sente toujours en mains, c'est-à-dire que son parfum, par exemple, plus ou moins vulgaire, persiste à chaque instant et jusqu'au bout du discours, et ne quitte donc pas ces mains tandis qu'elles écrivent, de façon qu'il parvienne incessamment jusqu'à toi, cher Lecteur (88).

As long as the writing occurs (“jusqu'au bout du discours”), as long as the hands write (“tandis qu'elles écrivent”), the scent of soap/*Soap* “incessantly” moves from writer to reader. An olfactory encounter thus takes place in the *lieu commun* relating writer and reader; the atmospheric space of *logos* and breath, according to Ponge, is modulated by the smell of soap and through this modulation establishes a social relation in and around *Soap*.

2. From Pebble to Soap: the Character of Resistance

These perfumed hands indicate a central insight of *Le Savon*, of crucial significance for a thought of deodorization and olfaction: the cleaning process that subtracts malodorous improprieties is itself scented. Cleaning, washing with soap, produces a *smell of deodorization*—an “olfactory degree zero” is never, in contrast to the latest Hölderlin’s poetry, reached when it comes to Ponge’s olfactory poetics. As with all modifications and modulations of smell, the

⁵⁵⁹ For some reflections on how this medial space and the element of air are linked to forgetting, the “l’oubli” of the “lieu commun” that Ponge mentions, see “Excursus: Forgetting of Air (Irigaray)” in the Nietzsche section above.

scent of soap, too, corresponds to a specific notion of the subject that addresses the questions of separation, distance, differentiation, and demarcation investigated above. The specificity of this fragrant, “soapy subject” emerges out of both the specific historical context in which *Le Savon* is first written and its position in Ponge’s oeuvre.

First, then, soap presents itself for the reader’s inspection as a transformation of a related but in the end rather different thing: the pebble. Still one of the best-known poems of Ponge’s work, *Le Galet* constitutes a paradigmatic instance of the Pongian thing—and Ponge’s poetics insistently emphasizes that a poetry of things must emerge out of the delineation of the *differences* marking one thing in contradistinction to others.⁵⁶⁰ In particular Jean-Paul Sartre’s 1944 lengthy review “L’Homme et les choses” that launched Ponge’s literary career⁵⁶¹ sees in the

⁵⁶⁰ This is perhaps the most often repeated insight in Ponge scholarship and thus will not receive much further elaboration here. An insistent early articulation of his principle of Ponge’s poetics can be found in “My Creative Method,” one of Ponge’s first lectures on his work: “*la variété des choses est en réalité ce qui me construit ... si je n’en considère qu’une, je disparaiss : elle m’annihile. Et, si elle n’est que mon prétexte, ma raison d’être, s’il faut donc que j’existe, à partir d’elle, ce ne sera, ce ne pourra être que par une certaine création de ma part à son propos. Quelle création ? Le texte*” (quoted in Higgins, *Ponge*, 13 ; emphasis in the original).

⁵⁶¹ Since Sartre’s review (and Camus’ active support for a few years), Ponge’s work has received scholarly attention in a variety of discourses: besides existentialism, he now occupies a canonical position in the French tradition of poetry and poetics, as well as in reflections on (the tail end of) modernism (cf. for instance the work of Freed-Thall quoted below) and was of great interest to figures associated with the Tel Quel group. Scholars associated with deconstruction have taken up Ponge’s challenge (Derrida, Barbara Johnson, Thomas Schestag, Elissa Marder, and others) as well as, more recently, those interested in thing theory or object-oriented ontologies. Regarding the latter, see, for instance, Bruns: “in Ponge’s metaphysics poems and things share the same ontology. Their relation is outside the alternatives of subject and object, or of representational/nonrepresentational art. One could call it (after Emmanuel Levinas) an ethical relation of proximity that reverses subjectivity away from cognition and toward contact with things themselves” (Bruns, “Francis Ponge,” 199). Bruns’ conclusion, however, seems doubtful, given Ponge’s insistent interest in differentiation and avowed interest in (a certain type of) humanism: “In Ponge’s metaphysics there is no order of things, only a ceaseless flow of traffic in which the poet—one random floating particle among others—accompanies with his rich colorful language the ongoing large and small career of things” (Bruns, 203). Ponge’s rather unique understanding of the relationship between thing and word has also recently attracted the interest of scholars working to revive formalist methodologies in literary studies; see for instance, Tom Eyers’ *Speculative Formalism*: “One encounters in Ponge, by contrast, a model of *formalization*, of the dynamic attempt to give poetic form to an object-world, that succeeds through a certain kind of failure, through the necessity of an impurity (figured by that glistening pearl) that uses alienation to its own advantage. At stake is a noncorrelational

pebble *the* central instance of the *Parti pris des choses*, the side taken of things: Ponge, according to Sartre, “a la passion, le vice de la *chose* inanimée, matérielle. Du solide. Tout est solide chez lui: depuis sa phrase jusqu’aux assises profondes de son univers. S’il prête aux minéraux des conduites humaines, c’est afin de minéraliser les hommes.”⁵⁶² This passion for petrification issues into the “great dream” of rendering everything solid *through writing*: “Peut-être derrière son entreprise révolutionnaire est-il permis d’entrevoir un grand rêve nécrologique : celui d’ensevelir tout ce qui vit, l’homme surtout, dans le suaire de la matière [...] C’est cette inoffensive et radicale catastrophe que ses écrits visent à préparer.”⁵⁶³ For Sartre, unsurprisingly, the danger of petrification—its catastrophe—lies in the fascination with total rest as the abdication of the “task” of being a subject: “Ce qui le fascine dans la chose, c’est son mode d’existence, sa totale adhésion à soi, son repos [...] Cet effort pour se voir par les yeux d’une espèce étrangère, pour se reposer enfin du devoir douloureux d’être sujet.”⁵⁶⁴ In short, at stake in the nature of the Pongian thing are the possibilities of subjectivity and, indeed, the very necessity of subjecthood.

Sartre opposes to Ponge’s (alleged) mineralization and petrification his existentialist thought of the “viscous.” Ponge himself, by contrast, takes a different, perhaps more sophisticated and more difficult path: In *Le Savon*, it is soap that is explicitly presented in contradistinction to the pebble, anticipating (for the entries written in 1943) or responding to (for

spark that becomes possible when both poetic language and the material world are imagined as necessarily shot through with impurities, such impurities preventing the swallowing of one by the other while permitting, nonetheless, their ruptural connection“ (Eyers, *Speculative Formalism*, 62).

⁵⁶² Sartre, “L’Homme et les choses,” 264.

⁵⁶³ Sartre, 265.

⁵⁶⁴ Sartre, 265-6.

those written after 1944) Sartre's narrowing of the Pongian thing to the mineral.⁵⁶⁵ In an entry dated June 3rd 1943, Ponge thus writes: "Voilà une sorte de médiocre galet au repos platement dans la soucoupe [...] le savon a sa dignité particulière. C'est une pierre, mais qui n'admet pas d'être roulée unilatéralement par les forces de la nature. Elle leur glisse entre les doigts" (26). And again: "Aucune pierre n'est plus modeste, ni, à la fois, plus magnifique" (27). In fact, soap leads a *double life*, wet or dry, where its dry existence resembles that of the pebble: "D'abord une réserve, une tenue, une patience sur sa soucoupe aussi parfaites que celles du galet." Yet even in its dry, pebble-like state, soap differs from the pebble, with one of the differences being found in its scent: "Mais en même temps, moins de rugosité, moins de sécheresse. Quelque chose certes de tenace, compact et qui se tient les rênes courtes, mais d'amène aussi, d'avenant, poli, doux, agréable en mains. Et parfumé (quoique non sui generis)" (53). While keeping the link to the pebble in its form—the *dry* side of its "double life"—, it also enters into a relation with both the liquid element (water) and the gaseous element (air):⁵⁶⁶ soap's doubleness does not oppose

⁵⁶⁵ It should not be taken for granted that Sartre's reading of *Le Galet* is definitive or that the mineral and its attendant dreams of petrification can lead only to the conclusions delineated by Sartre. Ponge's explicit development of soap in contradistinction to the pebble indicates, however, that Ponge became interested in developing a "thing" deeply related to and simultaneously radically different from the pebble. In his interview with Gavronsky, Ponge speaks of being associated with phenomenology, first through his friend Groethuysen and then via Sartre: "Sartre, for example, wrote that I was the magus of phenomenology! I was delighted" (Gavronsky, "Interview," 680). This delight, while certainly genuine, partly glosses over Ponge's sustained and complex engagement with characterizations of his work as a "return to the things."

⁵⁶⁶ Scholars have shown that Ponge's work continuously fights a "threat of the elemental:" the elements in their pure, amorphous, unbound form almost never enter into a Pongian poem but only ever as, for instance, the "Bords de mer" or the delimitation of water in a glass. Similarly, *Le Savon* is also "about" the qualities of water—but only in relationship to something non-elemental, namely, soap. Cf., for instance, Higgins: "Very few of Ponge's poems have as their nominal subject simply one of the ancient elements of air, earth, fire and water. The very rarity is an indication of how difficult it is to apprehend the undifferentiated, amorphous element [...] The importance is that the threat of annihilation is felt in contemplation of any large, amorphous, monotonous or elemental mass [...] The condition for awareness and thought is 'appearance,' that is, differences, contrasts, edges, contours, meeting-points of all kinds between phenomena" (Higgins, *Ponge*, 14). Higgins correctly points out that air occupies an even more complicated place among the elements: "Air is the least palpable of the elements, and the least directly dealt with by Ponge. [...] The very impalpability of the air, then, even more than with the other elements,

the pebble but rather adds the possibility of transformation to the pebble's qualities. As with the "bouclage" of the hands (and the book), soap's peculiarity is found in its capacity to link up disparate elements and bring about their transformation.

It is out of this constellation of soap's triple relation with the petrified, the liquid, and the gaseous, its partial resemblance to the pebble and its decisive divergence from it, that its singular ability to figure a novel type of subjectivity arises. The "soapy subject" as it emerges from *Le Savon*, the "character" ("caractère," 53) of soap, must be seen in the context of Ponge's activities as part of the French *Résistance* against the German occupation and the collaborationist Vichy regime. While Ponge's work, *Le Savon* included, is often read apolitically, some scholars have drawn attention to both the easily legible and the more hidden traces⁵⁶⁷ the Occupation has left on the text.⁵⁶⁸ As was pointed out above, the "German ears" glued to the radio recall the condition of the final war years and explicitly inscribe *Le Savon* into the Franco-German relation that marks

brings out the need for an intersection between it and contrasting things if the mind is to cope with it" (Higgins, *Ponge*, 18). Whence the importance of a modulation of air such as smell and its differentiating intersection with a thing like soap or a different element such as water.

⁵⁶⁷ One particularly provocative and disturbing reference has been developed by Nathalie Rachlin, with respect to the repeated uses of a "pump" in *Le Savon*: "But the pump might also be an oblique reference to the rue de la Pompe, which, during the Occupation, was the location of the headquarters of the French Gestapo, the collaborationist organization to which the Germans had entrusted, among other missions, the task of dismantling Resistance networks. One of the instruments favored by the Gestapo in its efforts to 'loosen the dry tongue' of anyone suspected of subversive activities was the infamous torture known as 'la baignoire.' This terror tactic consisted of submerging the prisoner's head in a tub of ice water" (Rachlin, "Occupation," 93).

⁵⁶⁸ Ponge's writing should thus be regarded as being political without being "engagé" in the vein of Sartre and Ponge's (sometime) close friend Albert Camus. Of much greater import than explicit calls to action is, for Ponge, the work on language that transforms both language and object, both speaker and reader. In fact, his break with the Communist Party to which he belonged throughout his work for the *Résistance*, came about to a significant degree with respect to the question of language. Hence Ponge calls for an engagement with the linguistic form of his notions of political resistance and action. One of the political contexts of soap that *Le Savon* effectively disregards consists in the hygienic projects that have historically constituted (and still constitute) certain colonial and imperialist politics; traces of this can be found in *Le Savon*'s occasional reference to the ability to *whiten*. Some incisive analyzes of these questions can be found in Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*.

the Babel-like condition below the stratosphere. Similarly, Ponge's opening remark introducing the first entry from 1942 emphasizes the scarcity of soap during the war: "Nous étions donc, alors, en pleine guerre, c'est-à-dire en pleines *restrictions*, de tous genres, et le savon, le vrai savon, en particulier, nous manquait. Nous n'avions que de mauvais *ersatz*e—qui ne *moussaient* pas du tout" (15). The bad *ersatz*e—the German word once more drawing attention to the Franco-German relation, replacing (*ersetzen*) what could have been a French word—do not foam at all; that is, they do not produce the cleaning and the jubilatory mingling of water, air, and thing that attracts to soap in the first place.

This poor substitution of soap attains increased urgency once the *double life* of soap emerges as a figure of Ponge's own double life during the Occupation.⁵⁶⁹ As part of the communist resistance, Ponge was asked to maintain his ordinary day-to-day life as an insurance agent and journalist to maintain a cover that would allow him to host meetings of high-ranking members of the resistance at his apartment and, later, function as a messenger. This is where the contrast to the pebble achieves greatest clarity: "C'est une pierre, mais qui n'admet pas d'être roulée unilatéralement par les forces de la nature. Elle leur glisse entre les doigts" (26). Soap's ability to transform upon contact with the overwhelming force of water—it should be remembered that the name of the collaborationist regime of Vichy refers, among other things, to the Spa town known for its waters—enables it to slip away and to avoid becoming a passive object of unilateral action. In other words, instead of obstinately insisting on its unchangeable form, soap puts up a fight through asymmetrical warfare: sliding into the opposing element, it gives a little, dissolves a little, thus changing the enemy in enormous ways. The soap-water

⁵⁶⁹ Cf. Rachlin, one of the few scholars to emphasize the political context of *Le Savon*: "Thus, if Ponge held soap in such high regard, it is because soap knows how to reconcile the two facets of its double life" (Rachlin, 91).

struggle is not a gigantomachy but rather a struggle where one side, soap, uses its ability to give in as its prime and, in fact, only weapon. Soap, Ponge writes,

Finalement préfère se dissoudre, rendre l'âme et rendre le corps plutôt que de se laisser tripoter, rouler unilatéralement par les eaux. Disons-nous qu'il y mène une existence dissolue? Sans doute... Mais cela peut être compris, aussi bien, comme une sorte de dignité particulière. Les eaux en sont, d'ailleurs, fort impressionnées, troublées, très sérieusement punies. Elles ne se débarrassent pas facilement des traces de leur crime. [...] A ce moment, sortons le savon de l'eau et considérons chacun des deux adversaires. Lui, fort diminué, aminci, mais non dans sa qualité. Elle, un énorme volume troublé, ayant perdu la face. Quel est le vainqueur? (54-5)

Soap redefines what it means to show “character:” no longer a firm, petrified imprint that persists by being unchangeable but the ability to become “diminished” in its quantity and its spatial outline without giving up its quality. Water, by contrast, does not retain its character and “loses face:” all its quantity cannot make up for its qualitatively changed appearance (with the limit case of overwhelming “reinforcements” being able to overcome this obstacle after all). In short, soap manages to perform a delicate movement of *maintaining its character in and through dissolution*.

Despite the necessity to think soap with and through the realities of the Resistance and vice versa, Ponge’s description of soap and the soapy subject does not exhaust itself in this context. Indeed, a direct identification of the resisting subject with soap, on the one hand, and of water with the Vichy regime would fly in the face of Pongian poetics: the “épaisseur sémantique”⁵⁷⁰ he continually lauds and makes into a central aspect of his poetic creation

⁵⁷⁰ One aspect of Ponge’s concept of the *thickness* of language derives from his complicated fascination with etymology. In an interview with Philippe Sollers, for instance, he describes his oeuvre as dedicated to working on language through a return to origins: “redonner à la langue française cette densité, cette matérialité, cette épaisseur (mystérieuse, bien sûr) qui lui vient de ses origines les plus anciennes” (quoted in: Higgins, *Ponge*, 56). While such a reference to “origins” might appear naïve (at best) or dangerous, some scholars have shown that Ponge’s relationship to etymology and philology is considerably more complex; cf. in particular, Schestag, *para-*, and Derrida, *Signéponge*.

underlines the multivalences of each thing and the impossibility of direct identification, especially between human being and thing.⁵⁷¹ This enables and necessitates a further development of what soap can teach about the various possibilities of “façons d’être,” as one early version of the title of the collection eventually published as *Le parti pris des choses* reads. The semantic thickness and density of Ponge’s poems produces a multitude of modes of being—and this very multitude already being one decisive aspect of how such modes of being must be thought.

The passage cited above that introduces the vulgar and sociable scent of soap continues:

“Point d’écorce, ni seulement d’épiderme: parce qu’aucune prétention à l’être autonome” (54).⁵⁷²

The diffusion of soap’s perfume into its surrounding element,⁵⁷³ alongside soap’s dissolution into water, constitutes a mode of being without protective shell: “la loi de la chose” that Derrida sees

⁵⁷¹ The reproach of anthropomorphism has followed Ponge’s work from its earliest publications. The weakness of this conceptual reproach has been pointed out forcefully by Derrida in *Signéponge*: the notion of anthropomorphism relies on the presupposition that there are distinct vocabularies that literally or primarily belong to either the realm of things or the human being, with all intersection, overlap, indeterminacy or resemblance conceived of as secondary and amenable to being eliminated. In other words, the reproach of anthropomorphism assumes that there is such a thing as the “proper” of the human that can then be projected onto the “proper” of the thing—it is this very assumption that Ponge’s work incessantly works to undo and replace. Cf. also, Johnson: “To eliminate anthropomorphism would in essence be to eliminate language itself: what other species uses it?” (Johnson, *Person and Things*, 32). And: “Taking the side of things is really a way of playing with words” (Johnson, 33).

⁵⁷² One could link this absence of a protective bark that closes soap in on itself as an instance of a certain *frankness*. As Derrida has shown in great detail, both Francis Ponge’s first and his family name can be read in and through his poetry. (One could thus add the name Francis to the series Frankfurt-Frankreich developed in the Hölderlin section above.) Cf. also: “although it has one and is quite aware of it, it does not have to protect in itself the delicate mechanism of an existence or an autonomous principle” (*Soap*, 65).

⁵⁷³ Scent as it diffuses from the thing—*per-fume* in the etymological sense—thus echoes Ponge’s recurring reflections on *excretions*, in particular on language as the paradigmatic excretion (aerial, to be sure, when it is spoken) of the human being. Cf. in particular Marder, “Snail Conversions: Derrida’s Turns with Ponge,” which reads the snail’s trail in the context of “Ponge’s aneconomic poematics:” “When snails leave a ‘sillage argenté’ as they move throughout the world, there is no discernible difference between their secretions, their expressions, their affections, and their excretions [...] the sillage argenté makes it impossible to discern any palpable difference between speaking, writing, emoting, and defecating” (Marder, 190). This confusion might recall Kafka’s (or Kierkegaard’s) reflections on spitting.

at the center of Ponge's poetics is in this case precisely that soap does not pretend to be *auto-nomous*. The obverse of soap's slippery escape from the fingers that grasp it lies in its lack of a pretense to be self-governing: soap's mode of being is located in the interstices of a closed, indivisible and autonomous "individual," on the one hand, and a fatalistic surrender to an all-dominating and sovereign grasp that comes from elsewhere, on the other.⁵⁷⁴

This slippery movement of giving up any pretense of autonomy while also eluding a firm grasp leads to one of the main principles of soap and of *Soap* being an "épuisement du sujet," an "exhaustion of the subject" (13), as Ponge calls it already in the very first entry of his book. *Soap* writes a subject that is subject only in its being exhausted: its only ability to resist water being its dissolution as well as its lack of autonomy and protective outer layers make soap into a subject that is continuously being exhausted, that is, worn away, worn out, *er-schöpft* as the German translation would have it in great fidelity to the etymological roots of "épuiser." The form of the dossier-poem with its repetitions and "variations" on a "theme" repeats this structure: *Soap* writes about its subject again and again till it (and the reader) become exhausted. Exhausting and exhaustive, soap's existence lies only in and for its *use*: "il n'a qu'à rester adéquat à son utilité, -- et certes, il y a là une leçon" (90). Soap's remaining adequate to its utility is its only law: a law dictated to it from elsewhere, from the point of its use, and that it fulfills until it is completely exhausted (or forgotten about).

⁵⁷⁴ Ponge's explicit references to hands grasping the soap and losing the grip on it underline, especially in a context of "German ears," that this is a question of *Be-griff* and *be-greifen*. The conceptual grasp of soap is faced with this double movement: soap does not put up any protective barks against being seized but by virtue of its slipperiness it can, at times, elude a firm grasp even more effectively.

3. Vulgar Scent: Of Pilate and Profanation

The use of soap and of *Soap* lies in its functioning as a product of a “toilette intellectuelle” (32). In particular, *Soap* has an intra-hygienic function, so to speak, where it replaces one type of cleansing with another: the Christian notion of baptism as well as of Christ as the “Exalted one” are replaced by the cleaning with soap and water and the exalting exuberance of soap’s upwards, airy foaming, respectively. In this sense, Ponge imagines, in one of the appendixes to *Le Savon*, the writing of “une nouvelle *Écriture*.” “Et voilà le pourquoi des choses (et par exemple du savon) dans mon livre, ma bible (dans *mon bible*, ai-je envie d’écrire)” (118, emphasis in the original). In a sense, the suggested replacement of the feminine definite article (correct in French when referring to the Bible) by the masculine definite article, that is, in this case, by a perverted, turned-around nomination embodies the core of Ponge’s operation with respect to Christianity: it profanes “the Book” and turns it into a book; it turns writing away from sacred Scripture—always set apart and removed from ordinary life—towards a writing of the quotidian.⁵⁷⁵

In this book, there is nothing extraordinary or extramundane: no special water, for instance, instead only the “most simple:” “Oui! A rien ne sert [...] de séjourner dans l’eau du Jourdain. (Il vaut bien mieux la plus simple cuvette...)” (32-33). *Le Savon* displaces the notion of

⁵⁷⁵ Hannah Freed-Thall has recently read Ponge’s work through the optics of profanation, drawing on Giorgio Agamben: “To profane, as Agamben puts it, is to ‘open the possibility of a special kind of negligence’ that ignores the separation between spheres or registers. Ponge cultivates such playful negligence, such disregard for hierarchies and lines of demarcation” (94). And: “How such enigmatically profane ‘difference. is felt and made perceptible but not sacralized and set apart: this is the difficulty at the heart of Ponge’s work” (Freed-Thall, *Spoiled Distinctions*, 95). Through this focus on profanation Freed-Thall inscribes Ponge’s work into the context of modernism’s interest in the ordinary more generally: “throughout his oeuvre, Ponge explores conjunctions of the singular and the common, inventing a new literary language in order to convey the formal variation and variability of the modernist ordinary” (Freed-Thall, 93).

cleansing from its set-apart position in the realm of the sacred—from the sphere of entering into a relation with that which transcends this world⁵⁷⁶—to a simple, everyday process of the care of the living. The profanation of *Le Savon* is thus a question of a repeated, ongoing process of washing off the pretense of the sacred, not a historical one-time event as theorists of the beginning of a “secular age” might have it. The perspective of this profaning washing underlines that any *Reinlichkeit*, to refer back to Nietzsche’s term, must be located in the realm of mundane and quotidian care-taking—and only there.

In this sense, soap belongs to the people. It is vulgar and gregarious: “Et parfumé (quoique non sui generis). Plus vulgaire peut-être, mais en compensation plus sociable” (53). Its scent resists an ascription of a “sui generis” status, a being that is one-of-kind and that would be incomparable to all others. The paradigmatic instance of such a one-of-kind smell, set apart from all others, would be, in the distribution of the sensible of Ponge’s work, the smell of the Anointed One, of Christ. It is precisely against—although this “against” should not be misunderstood as an oppositional gesture—Christ that Ponge affirms his descentance from Pontius Pilate:

Non, il ne s’agit que du savon et de se laver les mains, à l’instar de mon ancêtre Ponce Pilate—dont je suis si fier qu’après avoir dit : ‘Qu’est-ce que la vérité’—il se soit lavé les mains de la mort du Juste (ou de l’exalté) et soit ainsi le seul personnage du conte à être entré dans l’histoire les mains pures, ayant fait son devoir sans grands gestes, grands symboles, vagissements et fatuité (106)

⁵⁷⁶ A lengthier and more patient development of Ponge’s relationship to Christianity would have to unfold in detail what he takes Christianity to be and stand for: of course, a tradition spanning two millennia and numerous cultural, political, and literary contexts displays a rich variety of concepts, dogmas, beliefs, and practices that cannot and should not be reduced to shorthand slogans.

Faced with a decision concerning the status of the Exalted one, Ponge's ancestor⁵⁷⁷ Pontius Pilate—to whom Ponge is certainly partly linked through the resemblance of their names (“Ponce Pilate” in French)—refused to make a decision either way and washed his hands. Ponge here only briefly hints at an extremely complex constellation (involving questions of Jewishness, the law, etc.)⁵⁷⁸ that cannot be unfolded here. However, the crucial point in Ponge's affiliation with Pilate emerges clearly: he positions *Soap* and soap *to the side of the question of the truth of the Exalted One*. He positions his poetic work as disengaging or deactivating the question of the truth of Christ and the aromatic apparatus that accompanies Christian practices.

More precisely, to the exaltation of Christ, *Le Savon* opposes the launching upwards—recall the lift-off towards the orbit—of soap's interaction with air: “Saturée de savon, l'eau mousse au moindre geste. Veut se lier à l'air, grimpe à l'assaut du ciel. [...] Manifeste même une espèce de prétention aérostatique. Manifeste une sorte d'exaltation” (103). These soapy bubbles, again a figure of “boucler la sphère” (105) as this passage calls it, rise up, open up the vertical dimension—but only as an everyday, playful, vulgar climbing towards the sky.⁵⁷⁹

If Hölderlin's Christus on and in “Patmos” turns out to be airy, *wie Morgenluft*, then the provocation of Ponge's poetics is to turn away from Christ and towards the quotidian by severing

⁵⁷⁷ The genealogical language points to the paternal-filial set-up of *Le Savon* more broadly. Ponge recalls that his love for soap is to a significant degree his “J'aimais (tant) voir mon père se laver les mains [...] c'est l'un des souvenirs les plus précis que je retrouve incessamment de lui (dans ma mémoire). J'observais avec admiration (et amour) cette façon à lui de savonner et de rincer ses mains” (in: Schestag, 294). Here, once more, the Father is replaced by the father.

⁵⁷⁸ A starting point for larger reflections on these questions can be found in Agamben, *Pilate and Jesus*, which analyzes Pilate's actions as a response to the “non liquet” faced by the attempt to judge.

⁵⁷⁹ This soapy exuberant, playful exaltation that comes to replace transcendence as the outside of this world resonates with Jean-Luc Nancy's remarks on “adoration” in the second volume of his “Déconstruction du christianisme:” “L'adoration consiste à se tenir au rien — ni raison, ni origine — de l'ouverture. Elle est cette tenue même” (Nancy, *L'Adoration*, 25). And further: “L'adoration est rapport à l'excès sur les fins et sur les raisons [...] la tension sans intention” (Nancy, 27).

air from anything that might suggest a transcending of the realm of the ordinary and everyday.

Ponge attempts to position himself to the side of the appearance and disappearance of Christ, still of (world-)historical significance to Hölderlin (and Nietzsche, to be sure), by performing an act of “toilette intellectuelle” that would wash off the significance of those events.

4. Purity Otherwise

The notion of being “propre,” of being both clean and proper, as a repetitive process of mundane cleaning paves the way for a reconceptualization of the concept of *purity*. The latter is inscribed into the text of *Le Savon* not only through the historical context of “German ears” listening to a text written during the National-Socialist occupation that centered on a political project of racial purity but also through an explicit positioning of soap as the object best-suited to displaying a (different kind of) purity:

(Notion de la toilette intellectuelle)

Si je voulais montrer que la pureté ne s’obtient pas par le silence, mais par n’importe quel exercice de la parole (dans certaines conditions, un certain petit objet dérisoire tenu en mains), suivi d’une catastrophe subite d’eau pure,
Quel objet conviendrait-il mieux que le savon? (29)

Instead of abandoning or disavowing the term purity altogether, Ponge reconfigures its meaning: purity is not found in abstaining from speech (silence, “inner emigration”) or in racial cleansings but in the double life of resistance modelled by soap, in its “volubility” and repetitive process of mundane cleaning.

The further development of this thought issues into a central and productive paradox: purity must be understood as thoroughly heterogenous, that is, *impure*. In the third appendix to *Le Savon*, Ponge approaches this paradox by drawing attention to the material transformations underlying the cleaning process of soap: “cette sorte de composition de matières grasses (par

conséquent non soluble dans l'eau) et de sels alcalins caustiques (καυστικός, de καίειν, brûler) qui possède des vertus détergentes et dont on se sert pour nettoyer" (120). Fatty matter and caustic alkaline salts would, in isolation, appear to be the very opposite of what soap seeks to achieve: they are dirty and abrasive. Yet, this very heterogeneity underlies the metamorphosis of cleaning and constitutes its profane transubstantiation: only through the combination of such disparate elements can cleaning occur, and, conversely, all cleaning indelibly displays the mark of difference.

Similarly, a different concept of deodorization presents itself from this perspective: not as a homogenizing purification but as a heterogeneous, never final process that consists in a back-and-forth movement of difference. The statement "we have never been deodorized" can thus be supplemented by the statement "we have always been deodorizing," where this continuous process marks the differential movement of subtracting and producing smells.

The third appendix continues by tracing the transformation of a fatty and caustic matter to its extreme point, namely the airy bubbles that emerge from soap's triangulation with water and air. These bubbles have a double character: "Cela favorise beaucoup l'opération de nettoyage et blanchiment à laquelle on la fait servir. Cela rend aussi, en quelque façon, cette opération joyeuse" (121). Soapy bubbles not only contribute to the cleaning process but also, "in some way," make the cleaning process *joyful*. Airy exaltation produces what Ponge on the very last page of *Le Savon* calls "objoie" (128). At the take-off of this dissertation, Brecht's *Hollywood-Elegien* posed the question: What does paradise smell like? Brecht's answer ("much like hell, or not at all") is now supplemented, at the close of the dissertation, by Ponge's reference to the "paradis" (128) of reading and the scent of *objoy* that emerges from *Soap*. The "bouclage" of the text approaching, the object of reading becomes suffused with joy: with the final "exhaustion" of

the subject arrives a certain kind of jubilation that releases the written text from the hands of the writer to the hands of you, “dear Reader.”

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