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## **TRANSLATION AS SYMPTOM: THE »SICKNESS« OF THE ROMANTIC**

How now? Even so quickly may one catch the plague?  
Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night* (I.v. 294)

Writing in the case history of »Katerina«, Freud notes that he »had often compared the symptomatology of hysteria with a pictographic script which has become intelligible after the discovery of a few bilingual inscriptions« (II. 129).<sup>1</sup> In his case history of »Dora,« Freud equates »the production of a symptom« with »the translation of a purely psychical excitation into physical terms« (VII. 53). Freud derived his »methods of dream reading« from his recognition that dreams, like symptoms, serve as commentary upon hysterical phobias. In the *Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud posited that »the dream itself is to be treated like a symptom« (IV. 101). The symptom functions as a manifestation of an internal prompting towards psychic »health,« the close scrutiny of which may propel the analyst toward this goal, relieving »illness« of its exclusively negative connotations. The psychoanalyst must *translate* dreams and symptoms: »The productions of the dream-work [...] present no greater difficulties to their translators than do the ancient hieroglyphic scripts to those who seek them.« Freud represents dream analysis and translation as interchangeable terms, commenting that »symbolic« images will be immediately recognized by those having »some practice in the translation [*Übersetzung*] of dreams« (V. 397).

My methodology for recovering the significance of translation within the Romantic partakes of this type of symptomatology. By analyzing what may be the most (in)famous quotation on Romanticism - Goethe's »the Romantic is the sick« - I argue that a consideration of the subversive truth of Goethe's statement can aid in an appreciation of what the Romantic entailed for the Early German Romantic movement, spearheaded by Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis. This symptomatology engages with the signifier »Romantic«, highlighting the intimate connection translation and Romanticism share, and leading to the diagnosis that the process of translation typifies the Romantic. Novalis figures illness as a phenomenon akin to translation in that both prompt an »increased sensibility« and both represent an

externality exerting a transformative influence on the body. Such a system demands a Romance of the Other, the figuration of »love« that engenders a taking-in of the Other - the defining moment of translation, and, not coincidentally, of the Romantic.

## »SYMPTOM - ETYMOLOGIE«

A rather enigmatic fragment (n. 689) included in a notebook of Novalis, written sometime between December 1798 and March 1799 and published after his death as *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, contains but two words: »*Symptom - Etymologie*« (II. 639).<sup>2</sup> It is characteristic of Novalis, whether for publication or not, to present his ideas in such a cryptic fashion. Does the fragment hint at an equivalence between symptoms and etymologies? Perhaps the relation is analogous? Might Novalis be saying that the signifier of »symptom« necessarily leads to that of »etymology«? Or does »etymology« provide the foundation of what we call a »symptom«? And what are what to make of the dash (-) between the two words? The dash - in German, the *Gedankenstrich*, the »thought stroke,« or the »stroked-out thought« - indicates that the thought has been erased, that a thought is missing there - the erased thought of Novalis. How do we reconstruct Novalis' thinking, the connection between »symptom« and »etymology«?

That is to ask, what prompted Novalis to let these two words fall on a page of his notebook at the same time, on the same line? The etymology of *symptom*, from the Greek *sum-ptoma*, indicates a »falling together,« a coincidental occurrence - an etymological mimic of exactly that mystery confronting a reader of these two words. »Symptom« and »etymology« happen to fall together here - and that is the etymology of *symptom*. What is the symptom of etymology? To which signs does the pursuit of linguistic roots lead? When I ask, »Where does it come from?« and I look to the *etymon*, to the primary linguistic form, to answer that question, of what is this question symptomatic? When I trace the route back to the origin of the word, what is occurring at the same time? Examining the Greek root, and rediscovering that *symptom* is a coincidental occurrence, am I looking for a lost truth, an erased linguistic source to help me understand »symptom« now? Why do I look back to find truth, the *etymos* of Ancient Greek?

Perhaps, though, it is not thought from Novalis, the thought not found between the two words. Elsewhere, he writes that »*Gedankenstriche [...] gehören in das Gebiet des Lesers,*« »Dashes [...] belong to the realm of the reader« (II. 399). Since Novalis gives us propriety over this realm, the space of the missing thought, is it not incumbent upon us to construct the connection between »symptom« and »etymology«? The

dash then becomes a line, the figure of a bridge between the two terms, built by a reader from the outside, allowing a transfer between symptom and etymology. But how does a reader begin this transference? Novalis picks up his thought on »the realm of the reader« in the following way: »The reader arbitrarily sets the *accent* - he actually makes of the book, what he will. Is not each reader a philologist?« (II. 399). Novalis calls on the reader to be a philologist, a »lover of words,« etymologically speaking - that the transference inherent in the space of the crossed-out thought, the *Gedankenstrich* where the author *was*, is a function of linguistic romance, the *What You Will* of reading.

## The Etymology of the »Romantic«

Reflecting on the term »Romantic« as it has come to refer to a type of literary production at some point in the late 1700s or early 1800s leads to a recognition that the connection between Romanticism and translation is anything but arbitrary. The entry on »Romanticism« in Jonathan Cudden's *Dictionary of Literary Terms* begins with the word's etymology, noting the word is rooted in the linguistic practice of rendering or translating works in the vernacular of medieval French, and later, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian (*enromancier*, *romancar*, *romanzare*). Although theorists of Romanticism have often referred to chivalric Romances and their flights of imagination, their extravagant and picturesque narration of heroic knights and courtly ladies, there has been little mention of the generic heritage of Romance as that of works *translated* into the vernacular. I contend that the etymology of the word »Romantic« *symptomizes* the movement as a whole, and that a clinical analysis of »translation« will serve to enhance an understanding of the term.

Dominican monks practice an order of business wherein it is necessary, before beginning any discussion, that terms be defined to the agreement of the participants. To undertake such a task with reference to the term »Romanticism« approaches the impossible. Since the mid-1800s, »Romanticism« has come to denote less a certain type of writing as a certain period of artistic production. Of course, such a catachresis of the term did not completely disavow interest in describing the phenomenon of the »romantic«, and *Romanticism* tended to become shorthand for »the spirit of the age at some point not long after the French Revolution«. In England, general consensus is that the Romantic Period proper began with the publication of Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, although many identify a Pre-Romantic period encompassing much of the latter 1700s. German literary historians locate Romanticism's emergence in a small circle of thinkers -

notably the Schlegel brothers, Dorothea Veit, Wackenroder, Tieck, and Novalis - in Jena during the 1790s. The French academy tends to see Romanticism as a later arrival, spurred on by Germaine de Staël's influential *De l'Allemagne* in 1810, and crystallizing under Victor Hugo's aegis in the 1820s. American Romanticism is considered to have coalesced around Emerson in the 1830s with the founding of the »Transcendentalist Club« in 1836, specifically.

Other European nations pinpoint the advent of their Romantic movements in the 1820s or 1830s. John Clairborne Isbell remarks that »Romanticism outside Germany dates its conscious existence from *De l'Allemagne*« (221), the translation of which had profound influence on the English and Slavic nations and southern Europe. In Poland, for example, the translation of Staël's tome »awakened an active interest in German literature and the Romantic contained therein« (Lettenbauer 484). A translated article of Germaine de Staël, »De l'Esprit des Traductions«, sparked the Italian Romantic movement when it was published in the 1816 issue of *Biblioteca Italiana* (McClanahan 1990: 171, Radcliff-Umstead 1970: 131, Avitabile 1959: 13, Spera 1989: 11). Staël's *De l'Allemagne* is regarded not so much as a solitary springboard for Spanish Romanticism as one of a series of influential texts translated from foreign writers - A. W. Schlegel and Chateaubriand among them.<sup>3</sup> The Czech Romantic movement seems to be a more complicated phenomenon, connected to the neologistic translations of Chateaubriand and Milton by Josef Jungmann in the early 1800s, and the »discovery« of forged medieval texts, translated by Václav Hanka, the *Králové Dvur* (1817) and *Zeléna Hora* (1819) manuscripts, »for which Macpherson's *Ossian* was the obvious model« (Souèková 1958: 18; also Procházka/Hrbata 1993: 87). Emerson's »Transcendentalist Club« also had a translational element: »Emerson always referred to 'Hedge's Club,' because it was likely to meet when Hedge - the only member who read Kant in the original - came down from Bangor« (Roelker Curtis 1971: 29). Significantly, each of these »movements« is coupled with a translated text or a series of translated texts.

These relatively arbitrary periodizations have been subject to questioning, resulting in variations of start and end dates of the »Romantic Age.« Many, including some of the Jena Circle, regard Goethe as the progenitor of German Romanticism, just as many consider the Gothic writers (Walpole, Reeves, Radcliffe) as the first practitioners of Romanticism on the English scene. Arguments about Romanticism's origin and conclusion (if any) are of course dependent upon what one considers the phenomenon to entail. And there's the rub. That the term has come under intense scrutiny and has generated significant skepticism regarding its use-value is not merely a recent phenomenon. In the English-speaking academia, for example, »Romanticism« has been defined or circumscribed in a myriad of ways throughout the twentieth century, prompting many critics to call for dispensing with the term

altogether. Already in 1934, A. O. Lovejoy noted that the word »romantic« had generated so many various and contradictory meanings that, on its own, it meant nothing whatsoever, a reference that has become commonplace in introductions to anthologies of this period of English literature.

There is, however, general consensus that the origin of the application of the term »romantic« to a certain type of literary work during the period in question belongs to Friedrich Schlegel. Typically, works on »English Romanticism« note Schlegel's establishment of the term with the caveat that, on the English scene, »romantic« was not used to refer to a movement in literature until the latter 1800s.<sup>4</sup> French Romanticism, as the term is used, is somewhat less problematic, in that the movement is generally deemed to have sprung indirectly from its »origin« in Germany through the intermediary of Germaine de Staël and her popularization of the term *romantique* in French literary contexts. The French Romantic, therefore, generates itself out of the literary importation of foreign goods, paralleling many other European national literatures, as articulated above.

## The Jena »Romantic«

This overview of some of the national Romantic movements of Europe demonstrates that translation played an influential - if not formative - role in all of them. The exception, of course, is Germany, Romanticism's purported point of origin. Returning to the source, then, it would seem crucial to understand Schlegel's ideas of the Romantic. I employ such a strategy not to demonstrate how later wieldings of the term »romantic« pervert the original usage, but rather to show that Schlegel was quite lucid in the fact that the »romantic« could never be pinned down to a simple definition. Friedrich's use of words such as *romantisch* and *Romantizismus* are closely connected to his constant references to other German words of the same radical: *Roman* (»novel«), *romantizieren* (»to romanticize«), and *Romanz* (»romance«, referring to medieval works of love and adventure, written in the vernacular). Even this cursory overview of the term's positioning within a complex of related lexemes suffices to show that Friedrich was intent on rooting his ideas of the »romantic« in a literary tradition predating his »novel« use of the term.

One of the primary tenets of Romanticism as it sprang forth in the Jena Circle of the 1790s (and extended itself outward) was the questioning of the very possibility of literature's power to transform the public sphere. Enlightenment thought, against which the Jena Circle positioned their writings, was founded on the belief that literature should be in the service of creating a homogenous reading public. Klaus

L. Berghahn has enumerated the various stratagems - scholarly journals, moral weeklies, and the early book market - used by Enlightenment thinkers to propagate a bourgeois ethos. All the while, »the leaders of the Enlightenment held firm to the notion of a homogenous public that could be shaped by criticism and expanded without limit« (1988: 23). Many Romantic writers were skeptical of participating in the public sphere, preferring to operate on the peripheries of the public gaze. The Romantic »retreat from society« functioned as their critique of »society's superficial business orientation« and their disdain of »literature produced in accordance with the fashionable dictates of the marketplace« (Schulte-Sasse 1988: 99, 109).

In order to break out of the ossified and repressive conditions of a homogenous social field, the Romantics needed to clear a way for an intrusion into the social matrix through their critique of totality. If totality itself could be questioned, if something outside the boundaries of the social »whole« were sanctioned, then intervention could be theorized. Schlegel delineates the *romantisch* in the following citation from the *Athenäum Fragments* (1798):

»The romantic genre is, however, still in the process of becoming; indeed, this is its essence; to be eternally in the process of becoming and never be completed. No theory can exhaust romantic poesy.«

Such an aesthetic situates itself at absolute odds with »previous poesies,« and carries with it the difficulty - the impossibility, actually - of providing a static reproduction of »romantic poesy«. Friedrich's concept of the *romantisch* rests on two axes: its rhetoricity and its status as an »external« force. First, the romantic is aware of itself as poesy. It is the »poesy of poesy,« thoroughly imbued with the rhetorical. Second, the romantic is always centered elsewhere: it comes to Friedrich from the outside.

The first aspect can be gleaned through Friedrich's fragmentary writings. In *Fragmente zur Litteratur and Poesie* (V. 583), he notes the following: »Every Romantic artwork = poesy of poesy (p<sup>2</sup>)«. By taking poesy to the second power, Friedrich implies poesy's awareness of itself as poesy, a self-reflection of the artwork as artwork in the process of its becoming-artwork. When Friedrich writes that »the romantic artist must also be, what the classical never may, rhetorical« (V. 42), he refers to this self-awareness. Novalis articulates this romantic-classical antinomy in terms of »organic« and »dynamic« poesies. »Dynamic« artists, paralleling what Friedrich here calls the »classical,« exhibit »a lack of consciousness about what they were doing.« Since the romantic must be a rhetorical, and therefore reflexive poesy, it follows that all previous genres must be constitutive of the romantic. When Friedrich, no doubt rhetorically, asks, »Is mimetic prose still yet different from the idyllic and the satirical?« he immediately claims for the romantic a synthetic status: »Romantic

is the mixture of all three genres« (V. 20). As a historical phenomenon post-dating the emergence and predominance of these other three, the romantic must take everything that has come before into account in its self-awareness as an art form. Because of this status, Friedrich writes that »in true romantic prose all constitutive parts must be melted to the point of *Wechselsättigung* [symbiotic fulfillment]« (V. 589). Moreover, Friedrich's ambitious claims for the romantic - »all prose should be romantic« (V. 606) - stem from its historical standpoint, looking back and accounting for everything while pushing forward a »progressive,« future awareness: »Shouldn't romantic writing...dominate in all writing in the progressive world?« (V. 23). This is why, in his famous »Dialogue on Poesy,« Friedrich notes that »Romantic poesy...is entirely grounded in history, far more than one knows or believes« (quoted from Schulte-Sasse 1997: 187).

The second aspect is tied to the first in an indirect and complicated way: Friedrich is explicit in his insistence that the romantic »comes from away«. That is, not unlike the critics cited earlier who locate the genesis of varying European romantic movements in texts translated *into* the national linguistic space, Friedrich claims that the impetus for the German Romantic originates in sources outside German. Friedrich posits two specific foci to which the Romantic must affix its gaze in order to supercede Classical art: Shakespeare and the Far East. Both sources serve to invigorate German literature, to push the boundaries of the expressible through an influx of representation not possible within contemporaneous German. In his »Dialogue on Poesy,« Friedrich writes:

»What new source of poesy could flow to us from India if a few German artists with universality and depth of mind, with their genius of translation, were given the opportunity [...]? It is in the Orient that we must seek what is most romantic.« (187)

Friedrich could not be clearer about the essential role played by the translator in the Romantic thought and his association of translation with »genius« demonstrates that conceptions of genius could be and were applied to the craft of translation in the period.

Likewise, the role of Shakespeare in the German Romantic movement cannot be underestimated. Friedrich was privy to the intense labor exerted by his brother, August Wilhelm on his translations of the Shakespearean canon. In his fragmentary writings, Friedrich claims that »Shakespeare's essence is romantic« (V. 717). Even more explicitly, he demands of his interlocutor in the »Dialogue on Poesy« that he »recall Shakespeare, in whom I would like to situate the actual centre, the core of romantic fantasy« (192).<sup>5</sup> In order to clarify the profound influence of the translations of Shakespeare on the German Romantics, I turn to Novalis, whose letter to August

Wilhelm Schlegel of November 30, 1797 articulates the relationship between Shakespeare's »core« Romanticism and the work of translation. Antoine Berman, in his sustained meditation on translation in Romantic Germany entitled *The Experience of the Foreign*, provides an intense scrutiny of Novalis' letter, noting that it »express[es] most daringly the romantic view of translation« (104).

Novalis sent his letter upon the occasion of having read a review of August Wilhelm's earliest publication of his translated Shakespeare. Novalis praises the translation and comments on its significance:

»Your Shakespeare [...] is among translations what *W[ilhelm] Meister* is among novels. Is there yet anything similar to it? Though we Germans have been translating for a long time, and however national this inclination toward translation may be - to the extent that there has been almost no German writer of note who did not also translate, truly being as imaginative here as for an original work - yet about nothing does one seem to be as uninformed as about translation. With us it can become a science and an art. Your Shakespeare is an excellent canon for the scientific observer. Apart from the Romans, we are the only nation to have felt the drive to translate so irresistibly and to owe to it so infinitely in educational development. Hence the many similarities between our culture and the late Roman literary culture. This drive is an indication of the very elevated and originary character of the German people. Germanness is a cosmopolitanism mixed with the most vigorous individualism. Only for us have translations become expansions. It requires poetic morality and the sacrifice of one's personal proclivities to undertake a true translation. One translates out of a true love for the beautiful and for the literature of one's home country. To translate is as much to poeticize as to bring to fruition one's own works - and more difficult, more rare.

In the final analysis, all poetry is translation. I am convinced that the German Shakespeare is now better than the English. I look forward to [A. W.'s forthcoming translation of] *Hamlet*, like a child.« (I. 648)

As Berman (1992) points out, the comparison between August Wilhelm's Shakespeare and Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* rests on their status as models for Novalis, a status dependent on the reflexivity inherent in both texts.<sup>6</sup> August Wilhelm's work meets the criteria for a model translation in that, by foregrounding its own generic condition - »in it, translation becomes visible as translation« (1992: 106) - it generates the possibility for the creative exercise of subjective meditation on the text *qua* text.<sup>7</sup> Novalis' long contemplation on the role of translation in German literary and cultural history embodies the reflex to reflection triggered by August Wilhelm's translation.

Novel in Novalis' letter, according to Berman, is the point to which this »drive« to translate leads him: »I am convinced that the German Shakespeare is now better than the English.« Berman argues that such a judgment is reliant neither on a comparative evaluation of literary »worth,« nor on a recourse to »nationalist« ideas.

In the first case, Novalis »lacked sufficient linguistic and cultural knowledge« to make such a claim. In the second, the idea of »Germanness« expounded in the letter »is above all conceived by the capacity of translating« (ibid.), marked as it is by »cosmopolitanism,« echoing the German »genius of translation« extolled by Friedrich in his appeal to »artists of universality« to embrace the literature of India, as noted above. Novalis' judgment bases itself, as Berman succinctly puts it, on the fact that »the German Shakespeare is 'better' *precisely because it is a translation*« (ibid.). Translations of Shakespeare into German previous to August Wilhelm's »do not confront the poeticity of the Shakespearean text the way A. W. Schlegel had undertaken to do so,« and are therefore inferior to the English Shakespeare. At the letter's conclusion, Novalis admits to having read Shakespeare only »in poor translations,« indicating that, in Berman's words, these works »are not translations that are conscious of themselves, just as novels before the *Meister* had not fully attained the novelistic essence« (ibid.).

Novalis' judgment provides us an equation for translation which directly parallels Friedrich's assertion that »every Romantic artwork = poesy of poesy ( $p^2$ ).« That is to formulate, if Shakespeare =  $p$ , then A. W. =  $p^2$ , since his translation attempts to »mimic« the poesy of the Shakespearean original. Translation, in such a system, becomes the model by which any »creative« act occurs. Novalis can then write, without irony, that »in the final analysis, all poetry is translation.«

### »The Romantic is the sick«

Goethe's famous equation, his alliance of Classicism to »health« and Romanticism to »illness,« is rooted in the propagation of the Schlegel brothers' Classic-Romantic antinomy. Goethe's statement - »*Das Klassische nenne ich das Gesunde und das Romantische das Kranke,*« »The Classical I call the healthy and the Romantic the sick« (2 April 1829) - as transcribed by Eckermann in the *Conversations*, has often been used as proof of an anti-Romantic bent in his thinking. From our historical vantage point, living in a post-Freudian world, we may be able to diagnose Goethe's statement, that Romanticism is »the sick,« toward the aim of elucidating just what, exactly, Romanticism is. We are all sick to greater and lesser degrees, Freud told us, and that each human - indeed, all human endeavor - is driven by libidinal forces beyond conscious control. We are all subjected to the pathological. In this sense, the »sickness« of Romanticism can be viewed as the recognition of this state of affairs, as an impetus to locate, interrogate, and alleviate the symptoms of pathological agents at work in the individual subject in relation to

her or his social and physical environments - the »world,« if you will.

Such a diagnosis need not return from the future to perform an autopsy on the body of Romantic writing, as though the work of a time-traveling coroner. Novalis, for instance, was quite explicit in such conceptions of the role of the »Romanticist« and had already prescribed the antidote for civilizational discontents with his formulation of »*Poesie*« in 1798:

»Poesy is the great art of the construction of transcendental health. The poet is therefore the transcendental physician. Poesy acts and reacts [*schaltet und waltet*] with pain and irritation, with desire and lust [*Lust und Unlust*], error and truth, health and illness. It mixes everything toward its great purpose of purposes: the sublimation [*Erhebung*] of the human being beyond itself [*über sich selbst*].«

This definition of Romantic writing serves as a surprisingly concise starting point for an analysis of what Romanticism meant for the Jena Circle.

Novalis' succinct equivalence of the »poet« to the »transcendental physician« anticipates - and deflates - Goethe's later comment on the sickness of Romanticism. In the same sense as previously articulated, Classicism can be seen through the retrospective lens of time as the repudiation of sickness. Such a reading of Classicism necessitates claiming for Romanticism recognition of something new, the creation of a novel *Weltanschauung* in Classicism's wake by virtue of a newly discovered blind spot. Novalis continues on to stipulate the terms for such a transformational process by use of an antinomy familiar to students of English Romanticism:

»Previous poesies [*bisherige Poesieen*], for the most part, functioned dynamically; the future one, transcendental poesy, one might name »organic« poesy. Once it has been discovered, one will recognize that all true poets, without their knowledge, were writing »organically« - but that this lack of consciousness about what they were doing had a profound influence on the totality of their works, such that they were, for the most part, truly poetic only in details; [they] were customarily merely unpoetic in totality, however.«

Novalis locates the primary differentiation between dynamic and organic poesy in organic poesy's self-awareness, its consciousness of itself. Clearly, Novalis' use of the term »dynamic« points towards the mechanistic or atomistic concept of the universe dominant in the eighteenth century, a concept the Romantics deemed reductive, if not inhumane and in the service of state-sponsored repression. That the Newtonian cosmos had been set in motion like a gigantic clockwork mechanism was less likely the work of a Supreme Intelligence as the ideological apparatus of a totalizing state of affairs, to which this citation from the »Program« testifies:

»There is no idea of the *state*, because the state is something *mechanical*, just as there is no idea of the *machine*. Only that which is a matter of freedom can be called an idea. Thus we must transcend the state as well! For every state necessarily manipulates free people like machinery [*mechanische Räderwerk*].«<sup>8</sup>

The term »organic« follows through on Novalis' definition of the poet as the »transcendental physician,« and the »organic« work of the physician entails the bringing-to-awareness of what has come before - the »*bisherige Poesieen*« associated with »Classicism«. In other words, what the mechanical body of Classicism lacked was a consciousness of itself *as* a body. It *thought* it was a machine because it did not realize, or lacked consciousness of, itself as an *organon*.

Moreover, Novalis' treatise demonstrates that, if poesy is organic and the poet is a physician, the primary role of the artist is the clinical diagnosis of the ills of the body in question. Novalis focuses on the bringing-into-awareness of that which had operated on the subject at an unconscious level. The symptomatology Novalis espouses demands a retroactive translation of symptoms in a similar way to the translations Freud discusses when analyzing dreams and symptoms. Let us further examine Classicism's repudiation of the pathological by returning to Goethe's definition of the Romantic as »the sick.«

Elsewhere in the *Conversations* (21 March 1830), Goethe notes that Schiller had proven to him that he was indeed a romantic in the terms expounded by the Schlegels. Goethe's concession evolved from a conversation with Eckermann in which Goethe harkens back to his Italian travels, remarking that »one must protect oneself from returning home with thoughts that later do not suit our conditions [*unsere Zustände*].« He then acknowledges that, upon his own return from Italy, he »ruined« his home by installing »a beautiful stairway« like those he had admired in his travels. With no obvious transition, Eckermann states that, as the conversation unfolds, they begin to talk »about sickly, physical conditions [*krankhafte körperliche Zustände*] and about the symbiosis between body and mind.« If the connection were not already apparent, the repetition of *Zustände* (»conditions«) serves to accentuate the parallel between the importation of foreign »thoughts« onto the social body (»*unsere Zustände*«) and the onslaught of foreign pathogens onto the physical body of the individual (»*krankhafte körperliche Zustände*«). The house (*oikos*), symbolic of the national economy [»our conditions«], can be ruined by the inappropriate introduction of external »capital,« altering its structural integrity. Regarding his own »architecture,« Goethe notes his own »symbiosis« of body and mind:

»It is incredible how much the mind facilitates the preservation of the body. I often suffer from the complaints of the abdomen; only mental will and strength of the upper parts [i.e., the head] keep me going [in gear]. The mind must not give in to the body!«<sup>9</sup>

In the »symbiosis« of body and mind, only the power of the mind [*der geistige Wille*] can protect the body from invasion. In this conflict, sickness becomes a function of letting one's guard down. The repudiation of bodily »complaints«, through an exercise of the will, keeps the body *im Gange*, »in gear.« Only by repressing the pathological can the body be turned into a machine, a denial of the physical strongly reminiscent of Novalis' »dynamic« status of »previous poesies«.

Lest one believe that Goethe deems himself an intellectual titan capable of complete physical purity through mental exertion, he soon provides Eckermann with a counterexample:

»He [Schiller] proved to me that I myself, against my will, am romantic, and my *Iphigenie* is, through the prominence of sentience, in no way so classical and in antic style as one might like to believe. The Schlegels seized onto the ideas, and incited them onward such that they have now extended themselves over the entire world, and everyone now speaks of Classicism and Romanticism, of which no one thought fifty years ago.«<sup>10</sup>

Following the logic of Goethe's conversation, we are led to the conclusion that he believes himself capable of, or susceptible to the *romantisch* only at moments conceived *wider Willen*, against his will. Goethe - at least in his *Iphigenie*, although there is no reason to assume that this should be the only case - let his guard down and sentience in. The Romantic pathogen had been released, and, in true pandemic fashion, proliferated like an illness »over the entire world«. Goethe's diction foregrounds the parallels between external infection and the spread of Romantic thought, with the Schlegels as the willing carriers, seized by the sickness. And in this passage, Goethe places himself at the *origin* of the pandemic, at a point of eruption predating the Schlegelian concept of the Classico-Romantic antinomy:

»The concept of Classical and Romantic poesy now advancing over the whole world and causing so much conflict and division...originated with me and Schiller.«<sup>11</sup>

Goethe's rendering of the spread of Romanticism reads as follows: Goethe, at a moment of weakness, during which *Empfindung*, sentience,<sup>12</sup> infected him, became *romantisch*. Schiller noticed this condition and passed on the contagion in his »On Naïve and Sentimental Poesies«. The Schlegels, infected in turn, became carriers of Romanticism, spreading the pathogen out into the larger world, wrecking havoc - »conflict and division« - amongst its victims.

Remarkably, this passage from Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe* accurately foreshadows Goethe's future literary reception. Is Goethe »romantic«? He claims not to be, or at least he claims that »the Romantic is the sick,« but at the same time, despite his will, critics have not been able to avoid noting elements of

Romanticism in his corpus. He may not have *wanted* to be romantic, but, in the end, he *was*, against his will - unconsciously. And, at the beginning, he really was the *first* Romantic, even though he did not recognize it. Ironically, before his death, Goethe recognized that he had not recognized it.

Such a reading is absolutely in keeping with Novalis' delineation of »dynamic« poesy's »lack of consciousness about what it was doing«. Although Goethe formulates his »lack of consciousness« as something »against the will«, the diagnosis is the same: *The Classical was the unconsciously Romantic*. In his *Teplitzer Fragmente* (n. 68, 100), Novalis wrote that »Hypochondria builds a path towards bodily self-knowledge - self-determination - self-living« (II. 397) and that »hypochondria must become an *art* - or become education«. What was unconscious must become conscious. One must be cognizant of one's status as a sick individual in order to set forth on a process of ever-greater reflection and self-awareness. Obviously, such a concept partakes of the romance of »education,« the »path towards self-knowledge« traced by the Bildungsroman. In the following analysis of the significance of illness in Novalis' thought, it is necessary to bear in mind the metaphoric constellation prominent in Goethe's conversation with Eckermann. With the equation of Romanticism and illness, Goethe's metaphor ferries along the tendency of the Romantic to embrace the foreign, and likewise, to spread infectiously.

Novalis, eschewing a rigorous antithesis of health-versus-illness, theorizes sickness as a *signifier*, and, indeed, as a signifier unique to each individual human subject: »Each human has his/her own illnesses - own courses [*Gänge*] of illnesses, appearances, and complications of illnesses« (II. 500). As such, illness defines the human subject to a greater extent than does health. Health became for Novalis a »transcendental« construct, a telos of sickness, in that the course of subjective progress posits health as an impossible goal towards which the individual strives: »The ideal of complete/perfect [*vollständig*] health is merely scientifically interesting. Illness belongs to *individuation*« (II. 835). Novalis extended the significance of sickness to an unexpected degree: »Life is an illness of the spirit/mind - an act of suffering, a passionate doing [*leidenschaftliches Tun*]« (II. 820).

As signifiers, illnesses call out for analysis. Subjects must henceforth observe their own signifiers of sickness to advance toward »the construction of transcendental health,« Novalis' definition of »poesy.« The »art« of living involves becoming an object of art unto oneself:

»Illnesses are certainly a most-interesting object [*Gegenstand*] of humanity, since they are so innumerable, and each person has to fight with them so much. We still know very imperfectly the art [*Kunst*] of using them. They are likely the most interesting stimulus and material of our contemplation and of our action.« (II. 828)

In other words, an individual must become »poesy«, an art object for self-examination. More specifically, this artwork resembles a Bildungsroman, to which the following fragment attests:

»Illnesses, particularly long-lasting ones, belong to the apprenticeship [*Lehrjahre*] of the art of living [*Lebenskunst*] and of the formation of mind/soul [*Gemütsbildung*]. One must attempt to make use of them through daily observations.« (II. 841)

Novalis cites the role of illness in the formation, *Bildung*, of the subject, and its belonging to individual apprenticeship, *Lehrjahre*.<sup>13</sup> In the structure of Novalis' thought, then, illness becomes an essential moment(um) of *Bildung*, of development, of formation - a physical manifestation of mind/spirit's movement (or desired movement): »Illnesses must in part be looked upon as corporeal insanity, and, indeed, as fixed ideas« (II. 783). Although »fixed« - that is, as ideas made material - they direct the subject to greater self-awareness, to a point of »sublimation [*Erhabung*] of the human being beyond itself,« as the fragment on the »transcendental physician« indicated earlier. Illnesses are media through which the organism transcends itself: »Our illnesses are phenomena of increased sensibility, which want to cross over into higher powers« (II. 824).

To explicate his complex systematization, Novalis uses the signifier of »God« for the (impossible) telos of human endeavor, the idea of the absolute, perfection, totality. Humans sin, in the progress towards becoming-God, in order to reach toward that highest level of being. »Sin,« in this system, is a determinate (i.e., finite) link along an infinite chain of reflections, leading toward the unreachable, God the absolute. Illnesses become crucial as representations, or manifestations, of sin, phenomena that subjects may observe, reflect on, and act upon, in order to sublimate beyond their current forms. The entire passage figures illnesses as »phenomena of increased sensibility,« contributing to Novalis' reflections on his »system of morals« - a system seeking a continuum of supercession, not restricted to the merely human:

»The system of morals must become a system of nature. All illnesses resemble [*gleichen*] sin, within. That they are transcendences. Our illnesses are all phenomena of increased sensibility, which want to cross over into higher powers. As the human desires to become God, he sins.

Illnesses of plants are animalizations. Illnesses of fauna rationalizations. Illnesses of rocks - vegetations. [...] Plants are dead rocks. Animals - dead plants, etc.« (II. 824)

The conclusion of this fragment demonstrates how, for Novalis, illness symptomatizes a drive towards a higher state of being. Illnesses in animals, for instance, signify a push in the direction of becoming-human - »rationalizations,« as he calls them. At »death,« the apotheosis of illness, the entity crosses over into the higher realm of

existence.<sup>14</sup> Clearly, the systematicity here formulated is proto-Hegelian. Moments of illness provide beings with a stage for *Aufhebung*, for supercession into a higher state. Novalis articulates the Hegelian structure of the thesis-antithesis pairing synthesized in a moment of *Aufhebung* with respect to illness: »All illnesses emerge [*entsteht*] out of contradictory coincidental sentience [*widersprechende gleichzeitige Empfindung*]« (II. 844). Following the same trajectory as above, Novalis writes that »Truth is completed [*vollständig*] error, as health a completed [*vollständig*] illness« (II. 449).

The question arises, whence this contradictory and coincidental sentience? What impels a being to become ill? We know to what *purpose* illness infects the individual, but where does illness come from? Novalis explicitly answers this question in a fragment introduced by contemplating on the relation of »external appearances« to internal ones as analogous to the relationship of »perspectival changes to the basic form [*Grundgestalt*]« (II. 627). Novalis calls this »change« (*Veränderung*) a »translation«, a shape-shifting entailing the movement of external »signs« (*Zeichen*) into interior ones, and back again.<sup>15</sup> The »translation« noted by Novalis here - »the translation of the movement into form and back again [*Übersetzung der Bewegung in die Gestalt und umgekehrt*]« - is a »transportation«, a »carrying across« of external into interior signs in an act requiring an alteration in form, a semiotic shape-shifting. Novalis cites the propensity of fairy tales to include instances of miraculous transformations at the exact moment when the external phenomenon - the unpleasant, the evil, the ugly - becomes accepted (i.e., loved), using the fairy-tale example of the bear, transformed into a prince at the moment the bear is loved. This characteristic of fairy tales, Novalis writes, may be indicative of a metamorphic possibility in human beings: »Perhaps a similar transformation would occur, if humanity would love [*liebgewänne*] *evil* in the world« (II. 628).

Novalis' concept of »loving« implies the acceptance of an externality *into* the individual: a »translation of the movement into form« in which »signs« metamorphose as they traverse the border between outer and inner. What has been merely implied up till this point, however, becomes categorical as Novalis' thoughts unfold:

»In that moment, as a person would begin to love illness or pain, the most attractive voluptuousness in his arms - the highest positive desire flows through him. Could *illness* not be a medium of higher synthesis - the more frightening the pain, the higher the desire hidden within. Each illness is perhaps the necessary beginning of love.« (II. 628)

It undoubtedly sounds odd that »illness« should be aligned with »the necessary beginning of love,« but it is precisely to this Romance of the Other that Novalisian illness leads. Illness implies an invasion of the subject by an Other, an externality

exerting a transformative influence on the body. Illness propels the subject towards an interiorization of the Other as a condition prompting the subject's faculty for romancing something, or someone, outside itself - a coincidental transference and transformation of external to internal signs. In other words, illness implies the readiness, or the need, for *translation*.

## Symptomatic Translations

The passage concludes as follows: »Does not the best everywhere begin with illness? Half illness is evil [*übel*]. Complete illness is desire - and, indeed, that much higher one« (II. 628). To recapitulate: the passage begins with a discussion of the relation of inner to external signs and ends by claiming for illness the capacity to facilitate the transfer and transformation of inner and outer signs through »desire«. Although Novalis concentrates on the individual subject, the implications of his systematization at the socio-linguistic level are transparent. His inclusion of the term »translation« to describe the moment of transformation of »foreign« to »domestic« signs indicates Novalis' desire to highlight *the parallels between the subject's body in relation to its environment and the corpus of the linguistic community in relation to surrounding foreign languages*. Novalis allegorically prescribes an internalization of these foreign »signs« in order to transform the linguistic community - i.e., Germans - through the medium of »love,« a romancing of the Other resulting in mutual metamorphosis. As the external sign »transforms« itself through internalization, so too will »Germanness« supercede itself, and reach a higher »state« of being.<sup>16</sup>

Illness, like translation, is a »medium of higher synthesis,« something requiring an invasive presence propelling the individual/culture forward, a »modernizing« impulse. Novalis therefore recommends that, through »daily observations,« illness be put into sharp focus as an object of scrutiny in much the same way that Freud, a century later, would espouse the creation of an analytical environment conducive to »self-observation with collected attentiveness« allowing for the translation of symptoms. The psychic health of the individual, of the nation, is a transcendental construct thinkable (as an impossible goal) solely through the medium of translation. Only by romancing the Other, only by internalizing foreign signs through translation, can the body revitalize and transform itself. So viewed, »the Romantic« recites a tale thoroughly sick with love for the Other. If the Romantic is indeed the sick, as Goethe claimed, the clearest symptom of this disease is the Romantic's propensity for translation, whether in the theoretical engagement demonstrated by the German Romantics or in the reproductions of translated texts flooding book markets

throughout Europe during the period.

»Love is utter sickness« (II. 829), Novalis wrote.<sup>17</sup> The pathological desire to look beyond borders and to risk accepting the outsider entails not simply the domestication of the foreign, but the alienation of the native. When we think about translation, we tend to concentrate on the former. The problems of this internalization - how translation transforms (and deforms) the foreign language in bringing it to us and what gets lost in the process - are well-known. The Romantic, however, also forefronts the latter. When we translate, we can increase our expressive possibilities - the »expansions« of Novalisian translation - and transform ourselves through the transcendent potential facilitated by othering ourselves. In Romantic thought, this sickness represents the body's way of communicating a longing for transformation, a need to adapt through a »medium of higher synthesis« to a more complex environment, a desire for translation.

## NOTES

- 1 Freud citations are taken from the *Standard Edition*, though some translations are altered.
- 2 Citations from Novalis are taken from the complete works. All translations are mine, followed by volume and page reference.
- 3 The movement was not to coalesce until 1827 in the »Romantic Coterie« under the auspices of José Gonaz de la Cortina, translator of Bouterwek's history of Spanish literature (Tully 16; McClanahan 170; Krömer 281-2).
- 4 This usage is generally ascribed to the literary historian Hippolyte Taine in 1863, who argued that French and, especially, German writers applied idealist philosophies to the European political field in the wake of the French Revolution. English Romanticism was in part a response to these writers who were closer to the action, as it were, and in part an understandable manifestation of the *Zeitgeist*. In any case, English Romanticism, as it was first so named, existed as a doubled importation of the foreign. That is, not only did the movement receive considerable influence from the outside, but also its status as a cohesive movement at all is one arriving as a foreign organizational principle from the literary-historical future. English Romanticism, from this standpoint, is both a temporal and spatial invasion of the Other.
- 5 There is ample supplementary evidence to indicate the central location of Shakespeare within German romantic thought. The following citations from Friedrich's fragmentary works serve to underline Shakespeare's role: »Shakespeare has, in love, in fantasy, and sentimentality, arrived at the point of irony; therefore, all his work [is] thoroughly romantic« (V. 503); »In Shakespeare is everything combined [...]; he has no determinate tendency whatsoever« (V. 507); »All types of the Romantic are found in Shakespeare« (V. 563); »Shakespeare's combination of romantic p [poesy] and romantic prose indicates R/f [the absolute Romantic]«; »Shakespeare [is] a romantic js [philosopher] perhaps even as much as a romantic poet. - He is completely *universal*« (V. 722); »Shakespeare's spirit/mind [*Geist*] [is] thoroughly *romantic*« (V. 1227); »The characteristic in Shakespeare [is] thoroughly romantic« (IX. 753).
- 6 *Wilhelm Meister* became the exemplary novel for the Jena Romantics because they deemed it to be »the first modern reflexive work, the first work tending towards a symbolical-allegorical dimension by means of the ironization of its content« (Berman 1992: 105-6).
- 7 The final sentence of the passage, »*Auf den Hamlet freue ich mich, wie ein Kind,*« displays through its syntactic structure the ambiguous point of creation of the poetical work. The »child« in Novalis'

- sentence can refer either to Hamlet or to Novalis, just as the locus of poetical creation exists in the nether region between receptive subject (i.e., Novalis) and written text (i.e. *Hamlet*). On the Romantic tendency to collapse subject-object relations in the creation of »poesy,« see Dorothea Veit-Schlegel's »Dedication to the Publisher« in her novel *Florentin* of 1800.
- 8 Taken from the »Earlier Program for a System of German Idealism« (1796); quoted from Schulte-Sasse 1997: 72. Although the authorship is unclear, I cite from this text for its clear condemnation of the mechanized system of the Enlightenment.
  - 9 Es ist unglaublich...wie viel der Geist zur Erhaltung des Körpers vermag. Ich leide oft an Beschwerden des Unterleibes, allein der geistige Wille und die Kräfte des oberen Teiles halten mich im Gange. Der Geist muß nur den Körper nicht nachgeben!
  - 10 Er [Schiller] bewies mir, daß ich selber, wider Willen, romantisch sei und meine *Iphigenie*, durch das Vorwalten der Empfindung, keineswegs so klassisch und im antiken Stil sei, als man vielleicht glauben möchte. Die Schlegeln ergriffen die Ideen und trieben sie weiter, so daß sie sich denn jetzt über die ganze Welt ausgedehnt hat und nun jedermann von Klassizismus und Romantizismus redet, woran vor fünfzig Jahren niemand dachte.
  - 11 Der Begriff von klassischer und romantischer Poesie, der jetzt über die ganze Welt geht und so viel Streit und Spaltung verursacht...ist ursprünglich von mir und Schiller ausgegangen.
  - 12 I use the term »sentience,« rather than »sentiment« to emphasize the »sensual experience of the self as self.« See Schulte-Sasse (1997: 15ff) for this citation and a longer discussion of *Empfindung*.
  - 13 In the 1820s would Goethe begin work on the sequel to *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, the Bildungsroman Novalis clearly evokes in this fragment, concluding the *Wanderjahre* with Wilhelm's taking up of the occupation of surgeon, a calling which not only enhances the connection between artist and »transcendental physician« expounded by Novalis, but one which also »heals« Wilhelm's individual illness.
  - 14 Elsewhere, Novalis claims that »Death is the centrum of sickness« (II. 497).
  - 15 Novalis also links »perspectival changes« and »translation« elsewhere: »Perspective is at the same time the study of translation - or surface composition - of bodies« (II. 606).
  - 16 One might inquire whether such a reading of Novalis' commentary on subjective phenomena - i.e., commentary directed toward the analysis of the individual - can be expanded to include ideas of the nation, or, rather, ideas of a linguistically bounded community. The extension from the solitary individual to the larger socio-linguistic group, however, is consistent with the general structure of Novalis' thought. For example, Novalis explains his formulation of »genius« by referring to the example of Greek culture. The individual genius, Novalis argues, is not an individual *per se*, but rather a site of pluralism marked by permeable boundaries: »An educated Greek was his own work only very mediately [*mittelbar*] and to a very small degree. The great and pure individuality of Greek art and science can be hereby explained, though not to be denied, that on several borders, Egyptian and Oriental mysticism invaded and modernized them« (II. 418). Novalis goes to note the »influence of the warm Asiatic sky« on Ionia, and the traces of Egyptian »prudence and severity« on Doric ritual. Genius, for Novalis, is a state of multipersonality, a culture of cosmopolitanism, marked by accessible borders. The »person« and the »culture« operate according to the same principles. Such references to the parallel development of »culture« and individual consciousness are replete in Novalis. Childhood in Novalis, for instance, represents a primitive, Edenic state: »Where children are, there is a Golden Age« (II. 272). Freud's conception of this parallel - »the individual's mental development repeats the course of human development in an abbreviated form« (IX. 97) - restages Novalis' system for analytic purposes.
  - 17 »*Liebe ist durchaus Kranckheit.*« Friedrich Schlegel, for his part, noted the conflation of illness and love in his »core of Romantic fantasy,« Shakespeare: »Shakespeare's love [is] often presented as illness and fever [*Shakespeares Liebe [ist] oft als Krankheit dargestellt und Fieber*]« (V. 1214).

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## PREVOD KOT SIMPTOM: O ROMANTIČNI »BOLNOSTI« (Povzetek)

V članku so obravnavane simptomatične vzporednice med romantično retoriko bolezní in sočasnimi pojmovanji prevoda. Številna evropska romantična gibanja so prevode različnih tujih besedil uporabljala kot sredstva za pospeševanje in spreminjanje svojih nacionalnih književnosti, romantični pisci pa so razvijali koncepte, s pomočjo katerih so razmišljali o dojemljivosti za patogeno Drugo oz. o imunosti zanj. Avtor proučuje dela Friedricha Schlegla in Novalisa in njuno retoriko bolezní interpretira kot komentar na romantično pojmovanje prevoda, pri čemer željo po prevodih razume kot analogno željo po dovajanju tujega hranila v telo nacionalnega. Slednje je s takšnim vpijanem tujega, podobno kot pri cepljenju s tujim, najprej sicer lahko ogroženo, toda na koncu se na ta način preobrazi in okrepi. Takšen pogled omogoča novo razumevanje Gothejeve trditve: »Romantično je bolno.« Bolnost implicira pripravljenost na *prevod* ali potrebo po *prevodu*. Članek se zaključi z razmišljanjem o povezanosti med pojmi ljubezen, bolezen in prevod v spisih jenskih romantikov; samo z ljubeznijo – z »romantiziranjem« – Drugega, samo s sprejemanjem tujega vase prek prevodov se namreč posamezniki in celotne kulture lahko pomlajujejo in prenavljajo.