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The output of Poets in the discourse network of 1800 constituted a distribution of discourses. It provided discourse with a maximum number of addressees. Schlegel's Fragment on a Characteristic of the German Classic noted in praise of the classical writer Georg Forster that "convivial communication" was "one of the ideas he was most fond of, one that presented itself to his spirit frequently and in the most varied forms." In this the writer was not far from the merchant. Just as the latter "principally provides for the exchange of material goods," the writer makes possible the "interchange of intellectual goods and creations." Thus an end was set to the limited economy of circulating texts in the Republic of Scholars and to the "annoying" prejudice by which "the sciences are there only for certain classes, and are not to be seen as a store for all mankind." Forster and Schlegel saw in the "interweaving and connecting of the most varied insights" and in their "more widespread distribution ... the most characteristic advantage of our century." Writing was granted literally universalizing and literally textualizing functions: it wove a discourse that encompassed or generated mankind as a whole. "The fine arts are the bond that holds men together."

The Im-possibility of Translations

A simple precondition had to be met before authors could become "spiritual economists": there had to be a general equivalent for the texts they would spin out. Otherwise the business transaction could not take place. Reformed alphabetization provided this general equivalent. It was the signified, the element that first had been subtracted from letters or signifiers and then had taken a superordinate position. "Just as the exchange of goods is regulated by money as a general equivalent, the exchange of knowledge is regulated by concepts." To base a discourse on signifieds, however, means to make it translatable. "Translations" are the discursive "market, to which the most distant merchants come with their wares." The poet who led his Bible-translating tragic hero to the threshold of the new poetry had to guarantee fully the possibility of translation. Goethe saw the translatability of all discourses, even of the most sacred and formal, as ensured by the primacy of content (Gehalt) over the effects of the signifier.

I value both rhythm and rhyme, whereby poetry first becomes poetry; but what is really, deeply, and fundamentally effective, what is really permanent, is what remains of the poet when he is translated into prose. Then the pure, perfect substance remains. . . . I will only, in support of my position, mention Luther's translation of the Bible, for the fact that this excellent man handed down a work composed in the most different styles and gave us its poetical, historical, commanding didactic tone in our mother tongue, as if all were cast in one mold, has done more to advance religion than if he had attempted to imitate, in detail, the peculiarities of the original. The existence of untranslatable elements in the signifiers of any language was not denied, but it was discounted. The general equivalent came out as the precipitate of a "remainder": the "pure, perfect substance," or signified. Its effects were necessarily somewhat flattening: as in Wilhelm Meister's Mignon translation, "disconnected" material was "joined together." Exemplary translations like Luther's Bible molded the most varied discourses (poetical, historical, pedagogical), according to Goethe's assessment of the Book of (many) Books, into a single and coherent style.

In the discourse network of 1800, the general equivalent was a basal construct that allowed for modifications. Herder's theory of national poetry allowed for the existence of untranslatable idioms (like the Johannine кóйос); in practice, however, Herder germanized folk songs from the most distant languages and cultures. Hegel, in his capacity as principal of a new humanistic secondary school—for transparent reasons, in other words—stressed the untranslatability of the Greek; his aesthetics, however, the first such work based on contents or signifieds, made do largely without citations from the Greek and asserted that a poetic work could be translated "into other languages without essential detriment to its value." Only the new linguistics in the discourse network of 1800 had the option of dealing with the untranslatable. August Ferdinand Bernhardt declared that poetry was untranslatable, "because the identity"—namely, the identity of signifieds—"must be represented by rhyme."
however, "grammatical composition has regularities which are not transparent to the signification of the discourse. Moreover, since signification cannot be transformed, practically unpaired, from one language to another, these regularities allow us to characterize the individuality of a particular language." Linguistics in 1800 stood at one extreme of a logic of the signified: at the other extreme was Poetry. In its striving to be truly educative and ennobling, Poetry embraced the general equivalent and with it inherent meaning, which is always religious, whether in Luther or Faust. "In the end all Poetry is translation."9

Of course, the new writing still embraced the myth of Babel whenever it declared its intention of "reunifying all essentially interrelated sciences, despite their current divided and fragmentary state."10 A discursive original unity could not have existed before the invention of the general equivalent. Printing alone did not guarantee "an integrating and interrelating that is anything but innocent."11 German poetry was not a reunification: instead, it was an unprecedented introduction of discursive unities. The "one mold" or style unified syntactically; the primacy of the signified unified semantically; and this was accomplished pragmatically by the receiver to which all translations from 1800 on were sent: humanity, the reader, and "general world trade."12

In 1798 Novalis began his Allgemeines Brouillon. The adjective in the title signaled unification and universalization, whereas the substantive indicated how one would go about making a single discourse out of the most varied scientific discourses—by mixing and shaking. The Brouillon's method was to translate particular data from the sciences (ranging from poetics to physics) out of one vocabulary into another via systematic analogies. Of course, as a poet Novalis was even better equipped for a trouble-free poietization of the sciences.13 In the novel Heinrich von Ofterdingen, general translatability is not achieved by any technical procedure; it simply comes into being via the ear of the Poet. True to Novalis's statement that "to translate is to write poetry as much as creating one's own works,"14 the hero sets off on a journey in pursuit of Bildung during which practically nothing happens except that nearly all forms of knowledge and practice are present themselves in speech. Pure listening to economic, historical, archeological, religious, poetic, and mythological discourses is necessary and sufficient to form the archetypical Poet, who at the conclusion of the novel will be able to set everything he has heard into his own words and works. Ofterdingen made systematic truth of the proposition that poetic translation in 1800 had acceded to the status of art.15

Only one discourse remained untranslatable—for the simple reason that it did not occur. Businessmen, poets, monks, knights, miners—all explain the signifieds of their activity to the novel's hero, with the one exception of the girl who loves him. Instead, the girl's father speaks of this subject: "Just consider love. Nowhere else is the necessity of poetry for the continuation of mankind so clear. Love is mute; only poetry can give it voice. Or love is the highest form of natural poesy."16 The constitutive exception to universal translatability is erotic discourse. Of course, love guarantees its basic translatability by being Nature's most sublime Poetry; but as the most sublime Poetry of Nature, it is inaccessible to the articulated word. In order to be, then, love needs intercessors, or mouthpieces, or translators. Because Mathilda, who is the novel's allegory of speechless Love, cannot even express her speechlessness, her father speaks up for her. And because Love makes men speak, Heinrich, the novel's allegory of Poetry, translates Mathilda's speechless love and so becomes a poet. This relationship between Love and Poetry, which determines the novel, reproduces exactly a relationship defined by Herder: "Nature, the whole world of passion and action that lay within the poet, and which he attempts to externalize through language—this nature is expressive. Language is only a channel, the true poet only a translator, or, more characteristically, he is the one who brings Nature into the heart and soul of his brothers."17

Nature, Love, Woman—the terms were synonymous in the discourse network of 1800. They produced an originary discourse that Poets tore from speechlessness and translated. It is technically exact to say that language in such a function can only be a channel. If language had its own density and materiality, its own dead spots and transmission lapses, there would be no question of an all-encompassing translatability. Though Herder's proposition would sound scandalous in the realm of poésie pure, it was very much at home in the discourse network of 1800, which was not at all "defined in terms of language as language," but which leads through language on to something else.18 The very fact that discourses have no intrinsic worth ennobles the soul/love/woman/nature, which, when it speaks, is already no longer the one speaking. The authority of discourse production traversed translations and the circulation of discourse in a manner that historically and technically divided the scholarly republican from the poetic means of distribution. Without the invention of a speechless and withdrawn origin, universal translation would have been confined to the surface of representation. Only when the untranslatable also became the task of the poetic translator could circulation without authors and consumers cease. Ofterdingen does not simply prolong talking about the sciences and professions; he couples them to an origin and aim of discourse: Love and Poetry. Poetry in 1800 was a doubled, simultaneous movement: first, it translated heterogeneous dis-
languages that were still stored within Faust's “beloved German” or Luther's “mother tongue”; second, it translated the originary discourse that never transpires—in other words, it translated out of the mother tongue.

When the prepositional phrase is read as a subjective genitive, “the love of the mother tongue” constitutes the object; when the phrase is read as an objective genitive, it constitutes the subject of poetical translation.

Translating into the mother tongue is something that can be taught, something that can be transmitted in new-style humanistic preparatory schools to every future civil servant. Translating out of the mother tongue was and remains a paradox, whose overcoming distinguished those who were Poets from those who were not. The discourse network that introduced the rule that no one could be taught to be a Poet simultaneously envisioned an exceptional rite of individual initiation for the rising generation of poets. The test question was whether the initiate could become, in the course of his alphabetization, “the transmitter of Nature to the heart and soul of his brothers.” The Bildungsräume were the proving ground for this test.

For seven years the child Anton Reiser was “always sad and alone.” Finally, in the eighth year his father took pity on his son— instructing mothers had not yet been invented—and bought him two books: one was Instruction in Spelling and the other, a Treatise Against Spelling. Reiser chose the first book; in the second he might have encountered a forerunner of the phonetic method. Having made his choice, he was stuck with the tiresome spelling of yard-long Biblical names (“Nebuchadnezzar, Abednego, etc.”), until he made a discovery: “However, as soon as he noticed that it was indeed possible to express reasonable ideas through the combination of letters, his desire to learn to read grew stronger by the day. Even now he recalled fondly the joy he experienced when, with effort and a great deal of spelling, he managed to make sense of the first few lines that contained something he could think about.” Reiser's discovery led to signifieds or ideas, the general equivalent of words. Compared with the alphabetical hodgepodge of the Biblical names, which are pure signifiers without translation, ideas were as enticing as Basedow’s rain-sins or straw-berries. This had several consequences. First, signifieds sweetened the pain and violence of alphabetization to such a degree that the hero Reiser, the artistic creation of a man who also wrote Memories from the Earliest Years of Childhood, unlike Rousseau has no difficulty remembering how he learned to read. Second, the signifieds awaken such an intense desire to read that Reiser soon spends days living on nothing but air and signifieds, without taking a bite to eat—reading, as “an opiate,” outdoes his hunger. Third, signifieds secure the translatability of writing and orality.

But he could not understand how it was possible that other people could read as quickly as they spoke; at that time he despaired of ever making this much progress. His amazement and joy were so much greater when, after a few weeks, he had progressed that far.

Apparently this also earned him some respect from his parents, and even more from his relatives.

When the new reader, still wet behind the ears, manages to dodge the time lag inherent in the language channel of writing, reading becomes equivalent to speaking. At a time when it was common to mumble half out loud while deciphering letters on the page, people took note. Reiser—and this translation into the mother tongue is the first precondition for the Poet—can consume written texts as if he were speaking them; in later years he was to practice this extensively with theological, dramatic, and narrative texts. But the true test of the poetic profession is still to come. Under the title “The Sorrows of Poetry,” one reads:

When the fascination of poetry suddenly seized him, there first arose a painful sensation in his soul, and he had a thought of something in which he lost himself, against which everything that he had ever heard, read, or thought was also lost, and whose existence, could he but portray it in some way, would produce a pleasure surpassing anything he had ever felt or known. In such moments of blissful premonition, it was all his tongue could do to stammer out a few sounds: it was somewhat like certain odes by Klopstock, in which a gap between words was filled in with a series of periods.

These isolated sounds, however, always designated a general feeling of what was splendid, noble, of tears of bliss and what not. It would last until the feeling collapsed back into itself, without, however, having given birth to even a few reasonable lines as a beginning of something definite.

This is the stillbirth of poetry out of the spirit of reading. The pleasant-painful feeling that refuses to become lines of poetry results from the leveling of all signifiers; the feeling traverses the reader and, because he has attained the fluency of speech, can only leave vague generality in its wake. Thinking and thought are the effects of a disembodiment of language. If it were otherwise, whatever had been thought would not be capable of surpassing all the oral and written discourses that have ever transpired. It surpasses them, however, in the joy of its positive namelessness. Reiser's antipathy for words, the return of his disdain for letters in his childhood, reaches the point where he calls words “a wooden wall” in front of, or “an impenetrable covering” over, pure thought; he “at times tortured himself for hours in the attempt to see if it were possible to think without words.”
Such experimental conditions for an attempt to write poetry allow only stammered, isolated syllables to appear, but no words. Writing poetry tests the possibility of voicing a thought consisting in pure signifieds. Therefore it begins, like the phonetic method, with minimal signifieds-interjections and sighs, which since Klopstock could be written with punctuation marks that had acquired an “expressive” function rather than “an exclusively discriminative function.”

But the pure reader’s soul, which desires to write, remains as empty as Olympia’s “ah!” All particularity is lost in the quid pro quo of the most individual and most general, and so Reiser must conclude: “It was certainly a sure sign that one had no calling to be a poet when a mere vague feeling was all that moved one to write, and when the particular scene one wanted to write did not precede that feeling or at least did not occur with it simultaneously.” The translation of the untranslatable fails because it would have required the ability to write down pure feeling. By the end of the *Bildungsroman*, the hero, who in the meantime has moved to a university, stands amid the ruins of his theatrical and poetic plans. A double displacement takes the place of the poetry Anton Reiser failed to write: the educational bureaucracy and the authorship of Karl Philipp Moritz. Instead of becoming a poet by translating from the Mother’s Mouth, Moritz worked in central control stations—a military orphanage, secondary schools in Berlin and Neukölln—for the reform of higher education in Prussia. His program of reforms included the interpretation of German poets rather than instruction in rhetorical eloquence, and the thorough investigation of student psychology rather than the violence of catechizing; as the prefaces to *Anton Reiser* make clear, the novel recapitulated, documented, and announced this program to a whole world of readers. Thus the official educator, as the metamorphosis of the failed poet, in turn metamorphoses the practice of reading poets.

Of course the novel does not tell us any of this. Because “the end of such apprenticeship consists in this, that the subject sows his wild oats” and enters into the “rationality” of reality or of the state,” the *Bildungsroman* can only lead as far as the threshold of that bureaucracy. Such novels say nothing of the institutions that have made possible writing as a reasoned (say, psychological) analysis of youthful errors. The hero renounces his poetic or theatrical dream; the novelist as civil servant (whether his name be Moritz or Goethe or finally Gottfried Keller) followed him only as far as his complete accommodation to the “rational order.” What came later, public service as a dance around the new idol represented by the alma mater, remains a “blind spot.”

Here, however, the institution of Motherhood that was established in 1800 created another possibility. The romantic *Bildungsromane* did not necessarily let their artist-heroes fail. Anton Reiser had to discover on his own that poetry could only be written as translation from the Mother’s Mouth, for his mother, who very early had resigned herself to marriage, did not love him and did not alphabetize him. Her only passive intervention in his reading instruction was to let Anton read the novels that his father had forbidden rather than the Pietist tracts his father propagated, for Anton’s mother (like Rousseau’s mother) had “once found intense pleasure” in reading them.

But the new mothers were different: they dreamed of poetic careers for their sons.

I heard Johann Kriesler tell a story of how the madness of a mother led to the most devout education of her son as poet.—The woman believed herself to be the Virgin Mary and her son the unrecognized Christ, and whereas he walked on earth, drank coffee, and played billiards, the time would soon come when he would gather the community of the faithful and lead them straight to heaven. His lively imagination found an indication of his higher calling in his mother’s madness.

Although this is a spoof of Zacharias Werner, it is also the autobiography of E. T. A. Hoffmann, who grew up without a father and whose mother was nearly psychotic. Monomaniacal mother love made possible a double life divided between poetry and prose, the earth and ascension, Dresden and Atlantis. Thus the judicial civil servant Hoffmann found a poetic discourse capable of measuring the entire field, from Mother’s Mouth to educational bureaucracy, from untranslatable origin to the universal circulation of discourses. Where the failed artists of the *Bildungsromane* fell silent, “a modern fairy tale,” as Hoffmann’s “The Golden Pot” is subtitled, still has something to say. With that the impossible poetic career became reality and the translation of the unspeakable was realized.

“The Golden Pot”

The hero of this modern fairy tale is a student by the name of Anselmus, though what he is studying remains unspecified. However, Anselmus’s “schoolmasterish air,” as well as his friends—a registrar, a dean and philologist of ancient languages, and soon a privy archivist—indicate that he is planning a career in the educational or administrative bureaucracy. He also “has a splendid classical education, which is the basis for everything.” In spite of or because of this, all his dreams center on a poetic career. His ability “to write very neatly” is useful in both professions: the poetic career and the “writing service” projected for him by Dean Paulmann.
On Ascension Day, which “had invariably been a family celebration for him,” Anselmus is initiated under the blossoming elder tree—in one of the places, that is, where mother goddesses dwelt before Christian colonization.

Then a whispering and a lisping began, and it seemed as if the sound of little crystal bells were coming from the blossoms. Anselmus listened and listened. Then—himself knew not why—the whispering and the lisping and the tinkling turned into half-heard words: “Betwixt, between, betwixt the branches, between the blossoms, shooting, twisting, twirling we come! Sister, sister, swing in the shimmer—quickly, quickly, in and out. Rays of sunset, whispering wind of evening, sounds of dew, singing blossoms—we sing with the branches and the blossoms; stars soon to sparkle—we must descend; betwixt, twisting, turning, twirling, sisters we!”

Nature poetry begins with lisping, whispering, and tinkling. Such sounds of feeling came to Anton Reiser in his poetic dreaming, although he, and consequently the narrator of his story, were unable to write them down. Here, however, they ring clearly for the hero, narrator, and reader. Even the punctuation to which Reiser wanted to commit the unsayable between the isolated and unconnected sounds has been written. Anselmus’s initiation is an auditory hallucination of the Mother’s Mouth.

What the nameless sisters are singing—Wagner, in his admiration of Hoffmann, would later compose it as the sound of the Beginning—sounds like one of the alphabetizing exercises of Stephani or Tillich. Three women move their tongues under the elder tree; the result is an exercise in the consonantal combinations schl, sch, and zw [in German, the sisters sing: “Zwischen durch—zwischen ein—zwischen Zweigen, zwischen schwellender Bluten, schwingen, schlängeln, schlingen wir uns—Schwesterlein—Schwesterlein, schwinge dich im Schimmer—schnell, schnell herauf—herab—”], or, for Wagner’s three Rhine maidens, an exercise in w. “Tillich conjured the following sequence with the end syllable gen:”

klin gen sprin gen rin gen drin gen schwin gen schlin gen

Hoffmann simply reverses the beginnings and endings of a similar verb series. In this way meanings come into being on the border between sound and word through the augmentation of minimal signifieds. The rhymes and assonances of the little round dance miraculously produce the identity of the signified, in conformity with the romantic conception of language. The instructional goal of all primers is realized. In spite of or because of this, the event remains an enigma for the alphabetized listener. Anselmus has no idea how meaningful words could come out of sounds, nor does he have a clue as to the referent of their meanings. Nature poetry no longer reveals who is designated by the “we” and the “sisters.”

Only when Anselmus hears “a chord of pure crystal bells” over his head—Wagner would expand and intensify this chord through the 137 measures of the prelude of the Rheingold, thus transposing the hallucinatory effects of romantic poesie into the technologically real—only then, “in the twinkling of an eye,” do intuition and reference become possible: Anselmus glanced up and saw three little snakes, glistening green and gold, which had twisted around the branches. The consonantal combination schl is an autonym for singing snakes [Schlangen], as ma is for speech-eliciting mamas. Just as the primers of the Reformation had conjured up the image of a snake as a creaturely example to accompany the letters s and sch, whereas the new phonetic method left all complications of pronunciation to a purified Mother’s Mouth, so the little snakes begin by oscillating between being sounds of nature and daughters of a matri-lineal family. Anselmus hesitates, unsure whether “the evening wind” is suddenly “whispering distinct words,” or whether the longed-for girls at a family celebration are speaking to him.

The first clarification comes when the ringing chord makes the sisters visible, or when the auditory hallucination yields vision. At the chord a single sister emerges from the nameless, undifferentiated dance of the sisters. From women in the plural comes—as had been preprogrammed by the epoch-making dream of the blue flower in Novalis’s Heinrich von Ofterdingen—the Woman. Two “marvelous blue eyes looked down at him with unspeakable desire, so that an unknown feeling of both supreme bliss and deepest sorrow seemed to tear his heart apart.”

By the time this gaze has been met by a hallucinatory gaze, the enigma under the elder tree has clearly become a reprise of Schlegel’s letter On Philosophy. Once more things “can be so meaningful that they seem to gaze at one out of clear eyes, and as expressive as the unembellished accents from the inmost soul.” Voice and gaze—an expression and window of the soul—are revealed. Wherever possible, the voices of the snakes remain “half-heard words” in order not to prostitute such souls with speech, given that they can store only the silent marks of writing rather than any talent for reading aloud.

Voice and gaze, acoustical and optical presence—the figure of the ideal beloved arises out of the originary play between sounds and speech. Anton Reiser poetically despaired because what was “vague” in emotion was never accompanied or anticipated by a vision of “the particular scene...
he wanted to write." But Anselmus, in his ecstasy beneath the elder tree, is given a vision by two dark blue eyes that entirely determines his future career. He can become the beloved of that gaze and therefore a Poet.

For one who has learned to read from yard-long biblical names, there is no bridge between signs and feelings. But one who has been from the beginning alphabetized with meaningful words is always in a scene that encompasses him and the Mother. He still needs to learn how the voice that was originally Nature can be made into a book, without having the vision collapse into letters. Anselmus, who is all eyes and ears under the elder tree, has a poetic path before him that will finally enable him to read and write the visionary moment of his own initiation. The agent of this sliding, pedagogical transition is a father. Anselmus hears from several of his bureaucratic friends that a mysterious privy archivist named Lindhorst wants to employ him as a scribe. Before beginning his secretarial duties, Anselmus learns from Lindhorst that "the three gold-green snakes" are Lindhorst's daughters and that his own love has been drawn to "the blue eyes of the youngest, named Serpentina." A father's word, then, finally transforms the undifferentiated hallucination of nameless voices, which already had become one figure, into a name and therefore a love object. "On n'est jamais amoureux que d'un nom," as Lacan said.

The discourse of the father is interpretation: interpretation, but not enlightenment. Far from reducing the voices under the elder tree to the whispering wind, as earlier the father's words translated the Elfking's daughters into the mere rustling of leaves, Lindhorst augments the minimal signifieds supplied by the voices into a positive and genealogical discourse. After the event it is revealed that the half-heard words, bright gaze, and tangled bodies of the snakes all embody the name Serpentina. So out of the "very unchristian name"10 (as is immediately apparent to the fine ear of the citizens of Dresden) come the minimal signifieds under the elder tree. The new humanists say Serpentina; the eyes say Schlan­glein; and the ears say only schl. Such is translation into the mother tongue or Mother's Mouth. In order to complete the poetic translation cycle, Anselmus will only have to translate out of the mother tongue as well. And if in 1800 letters were consistently thought to be unnatural, becoming a Poet was a matter of perceiving what was written as a Voice.

Initially the father's word translates the elder-tree voices into writing. Lindhorst is not an archivist for nothing. Genealogies exist only as texts because the chain of signifiers known as filiation presupposes the death of the persons signified. Lindhorst can, of course, orally name his daughters "daughters," but the encompassing web of filiation, in which the archivist is also archived, necessarily is written. In Lindhorst's library is a roll of parchment that contains the mythic genealogy of his family back to the beginning of the world. Secretary Anselmus is supposed to copy it.

A written initiation by the father follows upon the spoken initiation by the daughters. Before taking up his position, Anselmus must first produce samples of his calligraphy. But even "writing in the finest English style," that is, "English cursive script," fails to impress Lindhorst.12 Like a good educator-bureaucrat, he forces Anselmus to judge and condemn his own writing.

When Anselmus saw his handwriting, he felt as if a thunderbolt had struck him. The script was unspeakably wretched. The curves were not rounded, the hair-stroke failed to appear where it should have been; capital and small letters could not be distinguished; in truth, the messy scratchings of a schoolboy intruded, frequently ruining the best drawn lines. "Also," Archivarius Lindhorst continued, "your ink is not permanent." Dipping his finger into a glass of water, he ran his finger over the lines and they disappeared, leaving not a trace behind.

This annihilating criticism, transmitted from the archivist to his secretary, finally purges the future poet or "child" of the old alphabetical method.13 The criticism thus stands in the spot where other romantic fairy tales typically indict the dark figure of a scribe. In the tale of Klingsohr contained in Heinrich von Ofterdingen, a magic water dissolves the manuscripts of "the Scribe," who as a representative of writing and reason must yield to the singing child (of Poetry).14 In the same way another child, a stranger who appears in the title of one of Hoffmann's fairy tales, teaches earthly children by means of poetry to escape the alphabetical method of their writing master. But "The Golden Pot," the explicitly modern fairy tale, combines the magical annihilation with exact technical criticism. In this it contributed to the reform of writing instruction that Stephani, building on the earlier work of Heinrich Müller and Johann Paul Pöhlmann, was able to complete.15 Such was the solidarity of poetry and the schools in 1800.

A year after the publication of Hoffmann's fairy tale, Stephani published the Complete Description of the Genetic Writing Method for Public Elementary Schools. The book attempted to abolish (as did his pho­netic reading method) an old cultural technique of imitation in order to transform it into psychologically motivated, self-initiated activity.

As in most subjects, writing teachers were accustomed to using only the most mechanical teaching techniques and did not have the slightest inkling that writing instruction should be employed as material for the autonomous development of intelligence and imagination. ... Up to now the usual procedure consisted in constraining students to copy and recopy examples until they developed a me-
Handwriting rather than writing that "often breaks off." The point was to be repeated hundreds of times between the children (c) and the teacher (T) until the last and dullest had been individualized:

T: (who has accurately and in proper style written the word centner on the board) Which word have I just written on the board?
C: Centner.
T: Is the first e separated from the preceding C or not?
C: It is not separated.
T: So the two letters belong together. Which letter of this word is separated from the others?
C: No letter is separate.
T: What can one then say about all the letters of this word?
C: That they all go together.
T: There is no error in the way this word is written. Now, if you were to write this word and left every letter separate from every other, would that be the right way to write it?
C: No.
T: How do you know that?
C: Because if it were right, you would have written it that way.
T: To be sure."

The common goal, then, after Rossberg's Systematic Instruction in Fine Penmanship (1796–1811) did away with the old, disconnected Fraktur handwriting, was a new aesthetic of "fine and accurate" connection. Whoever wrote in block letters would not be an individual. (This indivisible being therefore did not survive the typewritten typescripts and aleatory writings of 1900.) The great metaphysical unities invented in the age of Goethe—the developmental process of Bildung, autobiography, world history—could be seen as the flow of the continuous and the organic simply because they were supported by flowing, cursive handwriting—as Gerhard Rühm's concrete poem ironically indicates. The continuous connection of writing and/or the individual was of such importance in 1800 that Stephani found it necessary to include in his lessons, which were designed to promote "the simple and pleasing connection of every letter with every other," exercises for connecting capital and small letters, given that the former could hinder the ideal flow of writing just as consonantal combinations could break the flow of the voice.

Finally, as a fourth step following the progression through the augmentative continuum between the elements and connections of writing, there were exercises aimed at achieving an aesthetic balance of bold and
thin lines, of shading and light, and of degrees of pressure by the pen. They underscored once more that writing is something that flows and connects: pressure is applied to the elements of letters; it is diminished on the connecting curves. Individual and independent handwriting was born in the interplay between “drawing” (i.e., connecting exercises) and “painting” (i.e., pen or calligraphic exercises). Individuality was not a product of any particularities that would allow graphologist character-experts or police handwriting-experts to make identifications; rather, the organic continuity of the writing materialized the biographical-organic continuity of the educated individual in a literal, that is, letter-by-letter manner. “Thus, then, if at first the specific nature and innate peculiarity of the individual along with what these become as the result of cultivation and development are regarded as the inner reality, as the essence of action and of fate, this inner being finds its appearance in external fashion to begin with in his mouth, hand, voice, handwriting.”

To develop handwriting formed as out of one mold means to produce individuals. The norm-setting writings of Pöhlmann or Stephani were foundational script systems for the discourse network of 1800. Before Anselmus can join the system in his glory as Poet, he must first submit to writing instruction that will bring his handwriting up to the ideal norm. Stephani’s letter elements correct the lack of “roundness” that Lindhorst faulted in his secretary, because “the angular form” would “insult the eye.” The “messy scratchings,” which “frequently ruin the best lines,” interrupt the fluid continuum of writing. Anselmus has also not mastered the relation between “capital and small letters” or proper pressure and its diminution; in other words, he has perfected neither “drawing” nor “painting.” It follows that his handwriting is not a self-sufficient expression of his individuality, but rather the botched effort of a schoolboy. So much for “a splendid classical education” when judged by the reform pedagogue.

The new goal is presented directly after this annihilating criticism. Rather than imitating deceptive models, Anselmus must learn to bring forth letters as only the genetic writing method can. The ideal father Lindhorst directs this “learning to learn” and so appears in the guise of the reformer of writing instruction. In contrast to the new reading and reading instruction. “One must learn speaking from women, writing from men.” Therefore in literature after Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship the father of writing stood next to the mother of speech.”

Lindhorst is an incarnation of this ideal father. When old-European teachers taught writing, they wrote; by so doing, however, they had their students copy their own imperfect copies. By contrast, Lindhorst does not write; he makes someone else write—just as the Mother makes others speak. The development of a continuously flowing handwriting is left to the initiate. The decisive test occurs after Anselmus has successfully completed an exercise in Arabic script. Lindhorst gives his secretary the task of copying a roll of parchment, but the signs it contains are unlike all traditional types of letters. They represent the mythic origin of writing itself. With extraordinary abruptness, then, the student finds himself faced with the question of whether he can produce letters “genetically” from their origin. “Anselmus was more than a little struck by these singular intertwined characters, and as he studied the numerous points, strokes, dashes, and twirls in the manuscript, which sometimes represented plants or mosses or animals, he almost despaired of ever copying them accurately.”

The originary text, the mythic beginning of all writing, can be identified because it is not (yet) written. No one could write or read this text, this “writing without alphabet, in which signs, signifiers, and signifieds are identical.” Nature is convolution. And yet Lindhorst has said that the plant- and animal-hieroglyphics that he placed before his despairing secretary are the work of the “Bhagavad Gita’s masters” and so constitute a text in Sanskrit. His parchment consequently has the same status as the handwritten text of Nostradamus in Faust, which is a foreign-language text and a revelation of Nature. In fact, all poetically described texts in 1800 are characterized by an oscillation between a foreign culture and a foreign Nature. Novalis calls the “great cipher-text” of nature “real Sanskrit.” Von Loeben has “flower petals” become “leaves of parchment full of writing and painting,” which a woman then “binds together into a book.” The rhetorician’s metonymy, “leaf/leaf,” was taken literally in the writing system of 1800.

Because it oscillates between Nature and culture, the originary text is very difficult to reproduce (as Anselmus complains); at the same time, the text can be reproduced (as Stephani insists). This text eliminates the compulsion that would otherwise force one to receive the form of the European alphabet as something positive and real; the signs in the original text might be of the utmost complexity, but they are nonetheless related to familiar forms of Nature. In this the poetically described text realized something that would be “much more advantageous” in the school curriculum. The reformer Friedrich Gedike demanded “that instruction and
practice in drawing precede exercises in calligraphy. Drawing is infinitely more pleasant for a child than writing. Drawing the delicate outline of any object familiar to the child—for example, that of a flower—incontestably gives the child more pleasure than drawing the very uninteresting form of a letter."

The genetic writing-method is fulfilled by viewing the original text as the genesis of writing from Nature. The impossible, namely the presence of letters in Nature, is then realized. The originary text thus occupies the same position in the field of writing that the Mother’s Voice, as the natural origin, occupies in the field of speaking and reading. But because the voice is the material reality of language, linked to the body through the oral and respiratory cavities, the discourse network of 1800 has a much easier time with orality. The construct of the originary text, which has no basis in the real, can be possible only through a parasitic relation to the Mother’s Mouth. A fine illustration of this is provided by a parallel text to the plants and mosses in “The Golden Pot”: “I stole out to my favorite stone, upon which mosses and lichens formed the strangest images and which I never tired of contemplating. I often believed that I could understand these signs, and it seemed to me that I could see in them the most wondrous stories, such as those that my mother had told me.” This passage from “Johann Kreisler’s Certificate of Apprenticeship” provides technical instructions for the construction of the original text. In order for the signs to be comprehensible rather than simply readable, they must first be endowed with the figural quality of images drawn from nature, then these images must be animated by the hallucinated Mother’s Voice. As in the phonetic method, optical signs are surrounded with the echo of maternal orality. The result is that instead of signifiers one has signifieds that can be “seen,” as if the text were a film.

The copyist Anselmus has the same parasitic relation to the imaginary being of The Woman. The beloved Serpentina appears constantly between or behind the lines presented by Lindhorst. His first exercises with Arabic are accomplished as follows:

In truth, he could not understand the speed and the ease with which he was able to transcribe the convoluted strokes of these foreign characters. It was as if, deep within him, he could hear a whispering voice: “Ah! could you really work so well if you were not thinking of her, if you did not believe in her and in her love?” Then, throughout the room, whispers floated, as in low undulating crystal tones: “I am near, near, near! I am helping you. Be brave. Be steadfast, dear Anselmus! I am working with you so that you may be mine!” And as soon as Anselmus heard these sounds with inner rapture, the unfamiliar characters grew ever clearer to him, and he hardly needed to look at the original script at all; in fact, it seemed as if the characters were already outlined on the parchment in pale ink and there was nothing more for him to do but fill them in with black. Thus he worked on, surrounded by those precious, inspiring sounds, that soft, sweet breath.

The pure signifiers—convoluted, foreign, incomprehensible—become readable and comprehensible through the agency of an obsessively cultivated her: The Woman. She comes in response to a voice from the depth of feeling, which in turn emits the “Ah!” of the beloved’s passion, here and everywhere else in the fairy tale a reprise of what was heard under the elder tree. The imaginary presence of The Woman can then also arise as a voice. As if to confirm Herder’s ascription of the origin of all discourse to the breathing spirit, Serpentina is speech before any articulation, whispering, singing, breathing, blowing; an inspiration in the etymological sense thus surpasses the mechanics of copying. Indeed, the inspiration explains its own power. For it is not Anselmus, but a voice from his inmost soul that tells him how the spoken word can make written work possible and delightful.

Splitregarb’s New Child’s ABC promised to introduce children “without difficulty, with pleasure into our world of books,” just as parents show them the pictorial beauty of nature. In “The Golden Pot” the Woman’s Voice both makes and fulfills this promise, because both promises come from the same place. A pedagogical reformer wrote the primers that speaks to children in its own right and transforms books into nature. And a father and bureaucrat instituted the beloved voice that helps Anselmus in his copying. All the encouragement that Anselmus feels rising from his inmost soul actually comes from the complete opposite: that Serpentina exists and is called Serpentina, that she will appear to him as long as he “continues to work industriously,” indeed that it all happens because she “loves” him—the student would know nothing of this if Serpentina’s father had not spoken about it.” Over and above the imaginary presence of the Voice stands the discourse of the Other, which has no legitimation beyond its very occurrence. As always, the inmost soul simply repeats this discourse.

Lindhorst thus directs the whole scene of writing and Serpentina is the appointed representative of the state or state bureaucrat, who after 1800 remains at a modest distance. That is why Lindhorst has substituted self-initiated activity for copying and extended the promise of erotic satisfaction to make sure that Anselmus “could not understand the speed and the ease” of his hand as it guided the pen—attributes that read like direct quotes from Olivier’s promise to catechize reading and writing instruction “With wondrous speed and ease compared to all our previous experience, and what is of greater and inestimable importance in the matter, with the strongest pleasure, indeed with near incomprehensible desire.” If it seems to Anselmus that the characters are already outlined on the parchment in pale ink and need only to be blackened in,” that is because Lindhorst has magically accomplished a recommendation of Basedow’s
Elementary Exercises: “whole words can be written in pencil, which the student will go over in ink.”

Such smooth transition confirms Baudelaire's title and makes writing an elementary exercise. First, the lightly prepared words blur the binary opposition of white and black, paper background and letter, which always carries the impact or shock of an event. Circa 1800 it was fashionable to print books “with gray rather than black ink (because it is softer and stands out more pleasantly on white paper).”

Second, the unbroken transition makes it unnecessary “to look at the original.” Anselmus copies, as he is paid to do, and yet he does not copy. There is no immutable model to guide his writing, and this is in keeping with Lindhorst's or Stephan's "higher purpose" of letting students "teach themselves good handwriting." Such freedom opens up an area of play in which the discourse of the teacher and the voice of the inmost soul become interchangeable. The unconscious of which Hoffmann is the reputed storyteller is a secondary effect of pedagogy. When fathers and teachers abandon their “positions as lords of creation,” their place is filled by the state-instituted Mother, who rises to it from an abyss of inwardness. The voice of the soul glides without transition into the voice that breathed onto Anselmus under the elder tree. There in the middle of Lindhorst's library, as Anselmus is copying Arabic script, “whispers floated, as in low undulating crystal tones.” A mother goddess emerges from the cultic merging of teachers and students, the manifest secret of the bureaucratic system.

The third vigil of “The Golden Pot” begins with a mythical genealogy. As in other modern fairy tales circa 1800, the narrative breaks a basic rule of specified reference and speaks even at first mention of “the spirit” and “the mother,” rather than of a spirit or mother. It thus begins like an absolute quote, which only later can be identified as the first-person reference, the family story and history of the bureaucrat Lindhorst have a secondary effect of pedagogy. When fathers and teachers abandon their “positions as lords of creation,” their place is filled by the state-instituted Mother, who rises to it from an abyss of inwardness. The voice of the soul glides without transition into the voice that breathed onto Anselmus under the elder tree. There in the middle of Lindhorst's library, as Anselmus is copying Arabic script, “whispers floated, as in low undulating crystal tones.” A mother goddess emerges from the cultic merging of teachers and students, the manifest secret of the bureaucratic system.

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It is a genealogy in the precise, double sense of the word, as the story of a family and as history—just as Nietzsche's genealogy of the scholar would be. Because the kinship terms are employed without singularized reference, the family story and history of the bureaucrat Lindhorst have a simple structure. In each generation of the cosmogony a male fire spirit mates with a female earth spirit; the latter perishes in the mating, like Semele, but not without giving birth to a virgin who again becomes the mother. Lindhorst belongs to the fiery race of spirit princes, and his own marriage “with the green snake” produced “three daughters, which appear to men in the shape of their mother.” The romantic myth of the bureaucrat's genealogy could hardly be told less romantically. With proper administrative method women are determined as the endless reproduction of a single Mother, whereas men are determined as the endless (re-) discovery of the Mother. So Anselmus, when Serpentina appears to him, becomes the representative of the third-mentioned generation of men to meet with the “great-great-great-grandmother.”

As a rebirth of “the green snake,” Serpentina is a snake in the diminutive. It is all-important to maintain this miniaturization. Anselmus and a bureaucrat's daughter by the name of Veronica, who is in love with the boy, know all too well what can happen when a little snake suddenly becomes a snake in earnest, for in addition to Lindhorst, the good spirit prince and wise man, there is also an old and wise woman whom Veronica recognizes as her childhood nanny. The old woman now appears to be an adherent of black magic, however, and on the day that Anselmus is to begin his secretarial duties she appears to him in the form of a demonic snake, which had been a simple bell rope.

Horror possessed Anselmus and thrilled through his limbs. The bell rope reached downward and changed into a white, diaphanous, enormous serpent, which encircled and crushed him, its coils squeezing him more and more tightly until his fragile and paralyzed limbs cradled into pieces and his blood gushed from his veins into the transparent body of the serpent, dyeing it red. “Kill me! Kill me!” he tried to scream in his terrible agony, but the scream was only a muffled groan. The serpent lifted its head and placed its long, pointed tongue of glistening brass on Anselmus's chest; then a cutting pain pierced the artery of life, and he lost consciousness.

Clearly, Serpentina is the diminutive of an enormous serpent, one that is insane or causes insanity. As the virgin rebirth of the Mother, she stands as an apotropaic figure before the nightmarish vision of an enormous woman who is not the, but a mother, or not a mother at all, but one of the midwives of old Europe. As in “The Sandman,” where her frightening stories unleash phantasms of dismembered bodies, the nanny overwhelms the coherent individual until he can only wish to die.

The entire genealogy of the race of salamanders, or bureaucrats, narrated immediately after Anselmus regains consciousness, functions to bury that woman in the Orcus of prehistory. To call this female figure phallic would be euphemistic. Women as they exist in plurality, more real and threatening, appear in the form of nannies and break into a discourse that legitimizes only a single Mother. The European reform of child raising began by systematically repressing midwives, wet nurses, and nannies, and replacing them with civil servants and middle-class, educated mothers. Lindhorst's myth, which repositions the green snake as the primal mother of spirit princes and spirit bureaucrats, is this repression.
Only the nanny remembers that Lindhorst, the bureaucrat, and she, the
hag, are a dark, unspeakable pair. "It seems that he is the wise man, but
I am the wise woman."

Old Mrs. Rauerin is excommunicated because her troublesome spirit
impedes the progress of alphabetization. She is Lindhorst's enemy
because she takes pleasure, in her last encounter with Anselmus, in tearing
the pages out of folios. When the dean's daughter Veronica, already in
love with Anselmus, goes to meet with her for the first time, Veronica has
heard that the old woman has the power to make reading and writing
unnecessary. The information came from a friend of Veronica's, who had
heard nothing from her fiancé (a soldier away on a campaign) in months;
Mrs. Rauerin was able to read in a magic mirror that the fiancé was "pre­
vented from writing by a deep but by no means serious wound in his right
arm, inflicted upon him by the sword of a French Hussar." Such divina­
tion is not difficult; one only has to take signifiers as signifiers (the officer
in question is named Victor). But such practice was inopportune in a
writing system whose technicians were engaged in setting up the first opti­
cal telegraphic connections between major cities and correlated battle
fields, and whose educational bureaucrats esteemed the one signified
above all signifiers. When women's knowledge can replace wounded offi­
cers' arms that are no longer able to write and can lame the arms of edu­
cational bureaucrats just as they are about to assume their duties, the
whole alphabetical improvement of central Europe threatens to go down
the tubes. In the modern fairy tale, therefore, the wise man and his
mother/daughter must triumph over the wise woman. Serpentina, Lind­
horst's messenger to Anselmus, is the slim, diminutive snake that makes
writing possible and necessary where the enormous serpent intends to
make it unnecessary.

After Anselmus has successfully completed the test of Arabic script, he
advances (as is customary in Bildungsromane) to his apprentice work:
copying the Bhagavad Gita, or originary text. Faced with this task, with
the "singular intertwined characters," alone in Lindhorst's library, An­
selmus at first experiences something like an officer's wound. But he sum­
mmons courage and begins to study the exotic characters contained on
the roll of parchment, in however unacademic a manner.

He heard strange music coming from the garden, and he was surrounded by sweet
and lovely fragrances. At times it also seemed to him that the emerald leaves
of the palm trees were rustling and that the clear crystal tones he had heard under
the elder tree that eventful Ascension Day were dancing and flitting through the
room. Marvelously strengthened by this sparkling and tinkling, Anselmus ever
more intensely focused his eyes and thoughts on the writings on the roll of parch­
ment, and before long, almost as in a vision, he realized that the characters
therein could represent only these words: "About the marriage of the salamander
and the green snake." Then the air reverberated with a strong chord of clear crys­
tal bells; the words "Anselmus, dear Anselmus!" floated down to him from the
leaves; and—wonder of wonders—the green snake glided down the palm-tree
trunk. "Serpentina, lovely Serpentina!" Anselmus cried in a madness of absolute
bliss.

Critics have overlooked the fact that Hoffmann's admirably plain text
constitutes a contract for a new type of the fantastic in literature. Fou­
cault called this a "fantasia of the library":

Possibly, Flaubert was responding to an experience of the fantastic which was sin­
gularly modern and relatively unknown before his time, to the discovery of a new
imaginative space in the nineteenth century. This domain of phantasm is no
longer the night, the sleep of reason, or the uncertain void that stands before de­
sire, but, on the contrary, wakefulness, uniting attention, zealous erudition,
and constant vigilance. Henceforth, the visionary experience arises from the black
and white surface of printed signs, from the closed and dusty volume that opens
with a flight of forgotten words; fantasies are carefully deployed in the hushed
library, with its columns of books, with its titles aligned on shelves to form a tight
enclosure, but within confines that also liberate impossible worlds. The imagi­
nary now resides between the book and the lamp.

The new fantastic is, first, an endless oscillating from Nature to books
back to Nature. Before the enchantment of the solitary reader begins,
Lindhorst takes hold of one of the palm leaves in his library "and An­
selmus perceived that the leaf was, in fact, a roll of parchment, which the
Archivarius unfolded and spread out on the table before the student." As
in Loeben's Guido, the wordplay leaf/leaf first moves from Nature to
culture, from palms to libraries. As one of the first histories of German
literature puts it, "Over and against the lush vegetation of the south, the
north brings forth an immeasurable world of books. There nature flour­
ishes, here the spirit, in an ever-changing play of the most wondrous cre­
tations." But to assure that bookworms and literary historians will not
abandon their northern haunts to wander under palm trees, the story
then moves in the reverse direction: sufficient absorption in the written
page leads back to the palm and its hamadryad. The emerald-green leaves
turn into Serpentina, "the green snake." The law that says daughters of
the Great Mother will appear to men as their mother is strictly enforced.
Second, the new fantastic is identical with a technology. Whoever lim­
lits his field of vision to the space between book and lamp does not follow
Nature. The literary criticism that constantly stresses the two realities in
Hoffmann (the bourgeois and the Serapion brothers, the empirical and
the fantastical) has overlooked this, probably because it still obeys the
same technology. The image of a woman as beautiful as Serpentina would
never have appeared in the leaves and lines of a text if the student con­
cerned had not chosen the new university curriculum. But with the found­
ing of seminars on philology, which around 1800 began to drive out the lecture, or Vorlesung (literally, the “reading before” an audience),” academic freedom moved into reading as well.

For Friedrich August Wolf, who as a student took the freedom of enrolling, in 1777, in the unheard-of discipline of philology, and then as a professor was permitted to found the first department of philology,

The most important thing is that students get a sense of the whole instead of merely reading words. An introduction and perhaps also a synopsis of the content are useful in this regard. If it is impossible to complete a whole text in the original, students should be given a translation. . . . Wolf did not think much of studying grammar. When Klöden, a geographer, wanted to take up Greek and asked Wolf about the best book on Greek grammar, he replied that “he didn’t know, that he didn’t bother with grammar much and that Klöden would also be better off not worrying about it . . . of course, one did have to learn to decline and conjugate, but that wasn’t difficult and could be learned by someone who hadn’t studied any Greek, because one could use German words instead. For example, Wolf took the word machen [“to make, do”] and put it in the form machen; from that the forms machen, machen, machen, machen, followed pretty much naturally, and all the other forms could be derived from them.”

This fine autonym, in which the word to make is used to make up one’s own pidgin Greek, invited imitation. It is an amusing illustration of the general translatability of languages circa 1800. When professors are free with their translations, Anselmus has no need to study the primordial mother tongue, Sanskrit. He can go to work unarméd—without grammars, dictionaries, or inventories of written characters—as long as he grasps the essence of individual reading and so concentrates his attention on the obscure roll of parchment in front of him. He is thus a heightened Faust, though Faust could still read Greek. The honest concern for accuracy that thoroughly informed the standard of scholarly knowledge became in the established discourse network a “feeling as of the inmost soul”: a feeling of glorious autarchy and ignorance.

The page on which the student has concentrated his attention soon sends back his echo: the meaning and thoughts of the text. Academic freedom finds what it had read into the material. Anselmus, may God help him, stands in the mighty fortress of his inwardness before a free translation inspired by feelings that have floated through him as in a dream. The meaning and thoughts of the text are his translation into a pure signifies: a book title in German. Whereas old Mrs. Rauerin still found signifiers in a magic mirror, the student of Lindhorst finds “meanings” as meanings.

Anselmus is indeed Lindhorst’s student. When the privy archivist and salamander tells his bureaucratic colleagues gathered in a cafe the story of the genealogy of bureaucracy, everyone bursts out laughing except the future bureaucrat Anselmus, who could not listen “without shuddering internally in a way he himself could not comprehend.” Only he has heard the truth in its structure as fiction. Lindhorst’s genealogical tale breaks off in that laughter before it can make good the promise of designating the place in the kinship system of the one who, after the father and mother, is referred to by ethnologists as “ego.” But the text “About the marriage of the salamander and the green snake” is the seamless continuation of the genealogy, and the salamander is Lindhorst himself. Anselmus again reproduces with his inmost soul the discourse of the Other, Lindhorst’s unspoken continuation of the genealogy. And no wonder: if the new freedom of academic bureaucrats allows them to say more or less whatever they like, there will necessarily be favorite students who, by free translation of any text, will have overheard exactly what their teachers wanted to say. No doubt the teacher would appear as the hero and son of an alma mater in such texts.

Marriages with green snakes tend to bring more green snakes into the world. The translator Anselmus rediscovers this third generation as well. This time, however, it does not occur in, but between, the lines of the text. The Sanskrit text has just been translated into the mother tongue when the fruit of the sacred marriage it announced appears: Serpentina in person. “Strangely convoluted” and, according to the story, unreadable characters release their incarnation. The scene under the elder tree has already constructed the augmentative word bridge from schli to schlewing to Schlange. Consequently, when she slithers her way down the trunk of the palm tree, Serpentina is and designates simply the winding curves of the well-rounded ideal handwriting of 1800. She spirits through the lines like the erotic, that is, speech-producing phantom of the library. So any student of Stephani would have been able to say what she was up to with Lindhorst’s student.

She sat down on the same chair with Anselmus, clasped him in her arms, and pressed him to her so that he could feel the breath coming from her lips and the electric warmth of her body as it touched his. “Dear Anselmus,” Serpentina began, “now you will be completely mine” . . . . Anselmus felt as if he were so completely in the grasp of the gentle and lovely form that he could neither move nor live without her, and as if her beating pulse throbbed within him. He listened to every word she uttered until it resounded in his heart and then, like a burning ray, kindled divine bliss within him. He had put his arms around her very dainty waist, but the strange, ever-changing cloth of her robe was so smooth and slippery that it seemed as though she might writhe out of his arms at any moment and, like a snake, glide away. The thought made him tremble. “Oh, do not leave me, lovely Serpentina!” he cried involuntarily. “You alone are my life!” “Not now,” said Serpentina, “not until I have told you all that you, because of your love for me, will be able to understand: dearest one, know then that my father is of the marvelous race of salamanders . . . .”
And so on and so forth for several pages, until Lindhorst’s genealogical tale reaches the narrative present, that is, until the slippery little genealogist mentions herself. Of course nothing is as consistently slippery as self-referential erotic speech.

Chodowiecki’s engraving in Basedow’s *Elementary Exercises* shows a mother and child snuggled together over reading lessons at a table. One can see the same thing in an engraving in Stephani’s *Primus*, but with commentary as well. Serpentina is just as close to Anselmus when she tells him about Serpentina and Anselmus. Self-referential coupling assures that the eroticism will become ever more erotic. Anselmus must also see the same thing in a work that is about to become a genealogical tree that warns of the dangers posed to the race of salamanders by evil spirits and wise women: consequently it ends with the plea “Stay true! Stay true to me!” Anselmus can only answer by pledging his eternal love.

This eternal love is known as hermeneutics. Anselmus is among the marvelous beings who can interpret the uninterpretable and read what has never been written. They came into the world at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In Hoffmann, for example, a library contains an unreadable parchment, which in turn contains script of serpentine characters; before the parchment sits a solitary student, who is charged with copying it into serpentine handwriting. But the student does not copy; he understands. Similarly, in Nietzsche’s cynical appraisal, hermeneutical reading consists in effacing the specificity of particular wordings. Instead of looking at the text, Anselmus is all ears, all attention for a mouth that will make him palatable for other purposes. He was only able, in a rather strange way, to make sense of the title, “About the marriage of the salamander and the green snake”; Serpentina’s voice substitutes for, or reproduces, the text that follows. First she gives the student a spoken introduction, as Wolf recommends, and probably she includes an overview of the content of the parchment. Then she allows for the comprehension of the whole, again in accordance with Wolf, by providing a seamless continuation of the genealogy that her father left as a fragment. In short, Serpentina teaches reading in the sense of that word in the discourse network of 1800. She is the Mother’s Mouth.

The mothers who put into effect Stephani’s method presented their children with sounds in an auditory field rather than with visual graphemes. A mother’s voice substituted for and reproduced letters just as Nature was to substitute for and reproduce the artificial. Her phonetic method created a methodically purified high-idiom tone in place of the animal pictures in the Reformation primers; with Serpentina, a spoken love story replaced characters “which sometimes represented plants or mosses or animals.” Hermeneutic reading makes this displacement of media possible. Instead of solving a puzzle of letters, Anselmus listens to meaning between the lines; instead of seeing signs, Anselmus sees a beloved appear to him in the shape of The Mother.

The coupling of alphabetization and erotic orality was not without consequences. Georg Lichtenberg notes: “Our young people certainly read much too much, and one should write against reading, as one would against self-abuse.” In fact, a practice of solitary reading that is above the law of the letter (as draconian as it is arbitrary) and a sexuality that is no longer constrained by the laws of kinship and the incest taboo come to the same thing. The great children’s crusade against onanism, begun in 1760 with the publication of Simon Tissot’s *Onanism*; or, A Treatise on the Illnesses Produced by Masturbation, held that among the principal causes of the vice was the all too early social and literary education of children. Johann Friedrich Oest and Joachim Campe, in their large *Revised Pedagogy*, had the following recommendation: “One should select with the greatest care the few books to be given to children, and reject not only those that contain suggestive or seductive passages, but also those that excite the imagination of children. . . . All books of poetry and prose whose subject is love, which can powerfully arouse children’s imagination, should be forever banned from children’s homes and classrooms.”

Even if Serpentina were to speak of less fiery lovers’ embraces than those habitually practiced by salamanders, Anselmus would still not be protected from the solitary vice. Serpentina herself remains as ever changing and slippery as the cloth of her robe. A fantastic spirit of the library, who arises out of convoluted lines in order to incarnate all readers’ fantasies, who sits on the copyist’s bench to whisper about salamander eroticism—such a being never stops seducing. Whatever the content of what is read, reading instruction from the Mother’s Mouth is erotic from the beginning.

The pedagogical therapies for children’s vice suffered from their own logic. A discourse network that subordinated discourses to the signified made its own pragmatics easily forgettable. Not love as a subject matter in the sense that Oest and Campe banned it from children’s books, but love as the situation of instruction led to the early, all too early literary education of children in 1800. The coupling of reading oneself and satisfying oneself became unbreakable: because the children’s crusade against both wandered into a “labyrinth of paradox,” arming itself with weapons that in turn had to be read, and, more generally, because a culture that sweetened acculturation with culinary or motherly orality provoked the very transgressions against which it invented so many words. Historians of sexuality currently tend to assume that the ritual claim, often heard around 1800, of an unheard-of increase of masturbation is a self-serving
lie covering increased repression. But perhaps it reflects a certain reality: namely, the effect on children of an environment insulated against nannies, domestic girls, and neighbors, and locked into mother love and education.

In Lindhorst's story of his mythic prehistory, the eroticism of the salamanders is simply genital. Fiery couplings give birth to new generations. The eroticism between Anselmus and Serpentina consists of his hearing her words, feeling her breath, melting at the beating of her heart, and in the end praising her in a language that is simultaneously "glance," "word," and "song." Thus the situation of reading instruction is intensified by mutual stimulation, plus oral and kinesthetic pleasures: sensing and praising of the One who makes men speak.

According to Jean Paul Richter, Fixlein's "advantage" is being able to tell his story to a living mother. "Joy flows into another heart and rushes out again with twice the strength. . . . There is a greater intimacy of hearts, as of sound, than that of the echo: the greatest intimacy joins sound and echo together in a resonance." **

Resonating systems cut off their relation to others. Between mother and child arises an eroticism of the "greatest intimacy," which is no longer fed by previous generations or directed toward future ones. Instead of creating children as his spiritual father did, Anselmus remains a child. Pleasures other than the oral or kinesthetic would deprive the function of motherliness only of its educative effects. In order to invent language, man in Herder's essay must never be allowed to mount Mother Nature.

Childhood sexuality thus became functionalized. The very educators who complained about too early and too frequent reading did more to propagate the practice than anyone else; moreover, they did so by creating a systematic double bind rather than, say, by advancing two different and contradictory levels of theory. The path that led through hermeneutic reading was the most elegant method of recruiting poetical writers. The appearance of a dream lover—the first act of a masturbatory fantasy—leads immediately (and this is the second act) to a new dexterity.

A kiss was burning on his lips. He awoke as if from a deep dream. Serpentina had vanished. The hour of six was striking, and he felt oppressed because he had not copied a single letter. Deeply troubled, fearful of the reproaches of Archivarius Lindhorst, he looked at the sheet before him—Oh wonder!—the copy of the mysterious manuscript was perfectly complete, and when he examined the letters more closely, they spelled out the story Serpentina had told about her father, who was the favorite of Phosphorus, the Prince of the Spirits of Atlantis, the Kingdom of Marvels. Archivarius Lindhorst entered the room now . . . he looked at the parchment on which Anselmus had been working, allowed himself a hearty pinch of snuff, and with a smile said, "Exactly as I thought! Well, Herr Anselmus, here is your silver taler." **

The fingers have been busily writing, then, and the head has simply not noticed. By giving Anselmus the taler, Lindhorst confirms that the copy flows as beautifully as Serpentina's nature and official instructions dictate. The entire erotically charged scene is at once bureaucratic entry examination, performance of duty, and source of income—with the decided advantage of not appearing to resemble such activities. Such wonders are made possible by the new childhood sexuality, which is smilingly observed by the teachers/fathers concerned. Reading and writing have been slipped into or hidden in listening to an eroticizing voice, via the magical transformation of the most complicated of the three, namely writing, "with its materials, muscular gymnastics, and manual technique," into the easier reading, and reading in turn into pure listening. A continuum has been established between Serpentina's preverbal breathing and her actual writing, and with that the goal of the augmentation technique and the new anthroplogy of language has been reached.

Once again Hoffmann's fairy tale has put a simple school program into practice. The instructional practices of his time aimed to link listening, reading, and writing in what was then called the writing-reading method. Olivier's project, to be accomplished by pure pronunciation, is announced in the title of his book, The Art of Learning to Read and Write Reduced to the One True, Simplest, Surest Principle. Its bold definition of letters as "the simple signs for sounds," ** or alternatively as "notes for the mouth instrument," ** already encoded letters as aspects of spoken language. But a psychologically effective primary instruction explicitly coupled different modes or media of discourse. In order "to combine as many purposes as possible in one lesson," Niemeyer gave children "nothing to read or write that they cannot understand." ** Ernst Christian Trapp intended "to combine learning to write with learning to read from the very beginning." ** Johann Baptist Graser's Reading Instruction Methods, published in 1819, though not "the first book based on the unity of reading and writing," ** was the first to advance the grandiose theoretical argument that the forms of letters are primitive images of corresponding positions of the mouth.

If writing proceeds from reading and reading proceeds from listening, then all writing is translation. And if Anselmus unconsciously writes down what he consciously encounters as original sound, then he accomplishes a translation from the Mother's Mouth. The impossible task by which Poets prove themselves and Anton Reiser fails is solved via the writing-reading method. Through continued hermeneutic absorption, in which Anselmus reads his own copy rather than the original text, Serpen-
selmus is allowed, unlike his poet, to give up the official departments for the sake of a higher writing destiny. Bureaucrats and poets are thus two constructions in all public schools merely to deliver one or two good copyists called his “improved,” and, in Bavaria’s teaching program, “adopted writing” (“masses”) that instruction in copying would also provide one “with the ability properly to express one’s thoughts in writing, which belongs to the higher art of writing alone.” Anselmus is therefore the living reply to the textual issue of the Mother’s Mouth in the discourse network of 1800 as called Poetry—both the substance of Poetry and Poetry as an act of writing. The concluding sentences of the fairy tale explicitly equate Anselmus’s written description of life in the marvelous land of Atlantis with a life in Poetry. But he has already proven his identity as Poet by writing down the story, not as a mere copy of a text in a foreign language, but in German as a story identical to Hoffmann’s text. To be inspired by the heavy breathing of love in the library, to write with unconscious dexterity what attention and thought have divined—such feats are possible only for Poets. “To understand completely a work of art means, in a certain sense, to create it.”

The creation of texts translated into and out of the Mother’s Mouth is also the self-creation of an author. Anselmus rides the crest of his hermetic-utopia and has forever left the backwater of the copyist’s office. Stephani called his “improved,” and, in Bavaria’s teaching program, “adopted writing method” a victory over the “delusion” (current among the “unskilled masses”) that instruction in copying would also provide one “with the ability properly to express one’s thoughts in writing, which belongs to the higher art of writing alone.” Anselmus is therefore the living reply to Stephani’s rhetorical question, “Are we diligently instituting writing instruction in all public schools merely to deliver one or two good copyists to our official departments?”

Lindhorst’s pedagogy saved from such secretarial humiliation a student with a “schoolmasterish air” for whom his friend the dean could project at best a career in the bureaucratic “writing service,” although “there is a great deal in him . . . a privy secretary or even a court councilor.” After the initiation that Anselmus passed, like his poet-creator, “with the most distinguished skill” and “exemplary performance,” Anselmus is allowed, unlike his poet, to give up the official departments for the sake of a higher writing destiny. Bureaucrats and poets are thus two complementary sides of a single coin. They are divided only by a small but decisive difference.

Every once in a while Anselmus has certain fits, and not only in front of the Bhagavad Gita or Serpentina, which make others fear for his sanity. Because his bureaucratic friends consider Anselmus “mentally ill,” they recommend him, “in an attempt to divert his thoughts,” for the copying job with Lindhorst. They plan a psychiatric cure true to the method of Thomas Willis, Johann Christoph Hoffbauer, and Johann Christian Reil for psychiatry in 1800 sought its so-called psychic cures primarily by distraction. The lowly bureaucrats could have no idea that Anselmus and Lindhorst would sacrifice the simple “copying of manuscripts”—healing insanity by mechanical work—to a higher art of writing. Instead, it is for them that the mechanics of the alphabet is fate. Heerbrand, already promoted to registrar, defends Anselmus from the charge of insanity and folly with foolish words:

And, dearest mademoiselle, worthy dean! . . . is it not possible for one to sink sometimes into a kind of dreamy state even while awake? I have myself had such an experience: one afternoon, while at coffee, in the kind of mood produced by that special time of salutary physical and spiritual digestion, I suddenly remembered, as if by inspiration, where a misplaced manuscript lay—and only last night a magnificent, large Latin paper came dancing before my open eyes in the very same way.

This apology for fits of poetic inspiration demonstrates that the bureaucrat is the parody of the Poet. Heerbrand attributes what he calls inspiration to coffee rather than to Serpentina; thus it is rationality rather than inspiration. Whether he restores order to the archives and honors his position as registrar or hallucinates letters with typographic precision, Heerbrand deals only with the dead letter that no voice animates. That type of delirium may have been a matter of course in the Republic of Scholars, but in a discourse network whose centers were Poetry, it became the very madness it was intended to dispute. A certain Klockenbring, a high official in the police department of Hanover, entered the Georgenthal sanitarium in 1793 with symptoms of mania and the baffling ability to combine bits and pieces of poetry that he had learned by heart into poems—as if Klockenbring, although he possessed not a single book in the sanitarium, could see writing before his eyes like Heerbrand.

Foucault described the fantasia of the library—that invention of the nineteenth century—with reference to Flaubert’s Temptation of Saint Anthony, as the dance of black letters on white paper. But it could not attain such a technical definition until the turn of the century. The limiting and defining shadow that would fall across Poetry, the shadow of the technological media, had not been cast in 1800. Within the medium of writing there was only the opposition between Heerbrand’s “angular and pointed” Fraktur and the “fine, graceful curves” of Anselmus’s roman script. Bureaucrats had to continue writing the empty phrase By God’s Grace, if only, as Goethe put it, “as practice in Fraktur and in official writing for the officials.” But men and poets were forbidden anything that might lead to the dance of black letters on white paper: from baroque
typographical poetry to what one learned by heart in elementary school. “To learn words without thinking is like a destructive opiate for the soul, one that first might provide a pleasant dream, a dance of syllables and images, but later, as with ordinary opium, one begins to sense the bad consequences of these word dreams.” Whereas the caffeine-drunk bureaucrat Heerbrand beheld dancing Fraktur letters and the insane Klockenbrink hallucinated the syllables and images of absent books, the Poet Anselmus hears only a single Voice whose flow makes his roman letters rounded, individualized, and—the distinguishing feature—unconscious. Poetry in 1800 did not, like literature in 1900, place “the never-articulated sentence I am writing” at the basis of all writing. Poetry wrote around that sentence, attributing a spoken quality to it, one taken from the earliest memories of learning to write. “Maternal dictation fixates—orally—in the scene of writing and in the written sign, what constitutes the psychological structure of childhood, the mode of existence of what is remembered in the individual.” From this imaginary but insistently conjured spoken quality comes not the textual, but rather the “virtually textual nature of the bourgeois” and his poetry.

Not that poetry would vanish again into the Mother’s Mouth. Unlike pedagogical discourse, poetry possessed a barrier preventing such a shortcircuit: the description of writing itself. But writing was not pressed to its senseless and material extreme, where it becomes mere scribbling. It simply flows quickly, lightly, and dexterously from the hand. Thanks to his higher art of writing, the Poet Anselmus can write down effortlessly, completely, and unconsciously whatever a Mother’s Mouth dictates—in contrast to other educated people, friends of Hoffbauer, who have not been won for the world of books and who “can read letters or books without moving a lip, but when they want to write something, even just a few lines, have to dictate it to themselves.”

Only the caricature of the working or dreaming bureaucrat—its very existence is an indication of a constantly threatening, buffoonish proximity—is overrun with typefaces; poetic justice pursues the bureaucrat whose written sentences pursue and harass people. By contrast the ideal of the Poet reaches the same people through the same channel, without molesting them with typefaces. The Poet addresses their souls with the pure, vocal signified, before which all signifiers are reduced to translations, just as the imaginary lover addressed the poet. Poetry in the discourse network of 1800 had the fundamental function of establishing connecting circuits between the system and the population.

The separation of poetic from bureaucratic writing in Hoffmann’s text explicitly secured this phatic function. A counter test for inspired writing shows that when Poets act like bureaucrats in their offices, the soul-to-
soul connections are immediately broken. After completing the unconscious transcription from the Mother’s Mouth, Anselmus is invited by his bureaucratic friends to a social evening with punch; by the end of the evening, when all are thoroughly drunk, the student, dean, and registrar yell out the mythic secrets of the salamander while Veronica is listening. Anselmus participates even though, or because, “it seemed obvious to him that he had always thought of no one but Veronica; indeed the shape that had appeared before him yesterday in the blue room had been none other than Veronica, and that wild story of the marriage between the salamander and the green snake had simply been copied by him from the manuscript and was not at all related to what he had heard.” The scene thus becomes negative proof of Schlegel’s philosophy. Anselmus momentarily forgets that writing is supposed to reproduce unembellished accents from the depths of the soul as clearly as they exist in their original state. Instead he reduces The Woman to a woman, Serpentina to Veronica, with the result that even his writing is reduced to mere writing. Such canceling of the constitutive spoken quality of poetry tempts Anselmus to say out loud, indeed to yell, what Serpentina had whispered as a story. The highest punishment follows upon such noisiness. Although he has a severe hangover the next morning, Anselmus nonetheless tries to continue copying the original text.

But he saw so many strange, crabbed strokes and twists all twisted together in inexplicable confusion, perplexing the eye, that it seemed to him to be almost impossible to transcribe this exactly; indeed, looking it over one might have thought that the parchment was a piece of thickly veined marble, or a stone sprinkled with mosses. He nevertheless resolved to do his very best and boldly dipped his pen in the ink; but regardless of what he tried, the ink would not flow. He impatiently flicked the point of his pen and—O heavens!—a huge blot fell on the outspread parchment. The golden trunks of the palm trees changed into gigantic snakes, which knocked their frightful heads together with a piercing metallic clang and wound their bodies around the distracted student. “Madman! Now you must suffer the punishment for that which you have done in your bold irreverence!”

Any copyist who does not hear a voice and consequently can neither read hermeneutically nor write with a fine, serpentine script must encounter the enormous serpent rather than the little snake. She punishes a madness and blasphemy that amount to nothing more than an honest attempt at copying and demonstrate the undeniable materiality of the signs. (One has to be very well brought up to regard handwriting as anything other than blobs of ink.) A bureaucracy that forgets the secret orality leads directly to the spot of ink that destroys the beautiful, voice-supported flow of handwriting inspired by Serpentina.

In 1787 Lichtenberg came up with a plan for a “family archive” that would store every child’s earliest attempts at writing as so many “signa-
tures that the progress of the mind has left behind." Thanks to such parental love, there would come to be a writing system for the most material effects of writing. "If I had a son, he would never be given any paper except bound paper, and if he tore it or made a mess of it, I would write next to it with paternal pride: my son made this mess on the X day of year X." This curiosity, archived in Lichtenberg's *Scribble Book*, obviously occupies Father Lindhorst, who from the beginning (as if to provoke the transgression) warned of the terrible consequences that would follow if the copyist allowed any spot of ink to fall on the original. A spot of ink is the necessary outpouring of any reading that materializes ideal women, and it literally links what Lichtenberg had linked in a merely analogous way: reading and "self-pollution." Anselmus's reduction of Serpentina to Veronica goes back to a dream that had evoked Veronica in an erotically charged fashion. His spot of ink is as obscene as the noise of lips betraying the secrets of the soul or Serpentina, which can only be written.

The spot of ink opposes the ideal of the finely rounded, continuous, and thus individual handwriting with a metaphor of pollution. It designates the trace of a desire that, instead of wandering through the many channels, connections, and detours of the world of language and books, shoots through them like an arcing current. When Charlotte, in the *Elective Affinities*, adds an approving note to her husband's invitation to the captain, "she wrote with an easy flow of the pen, expressing herself affably and politely"; however, "she finally smudged the paper with a blot of ink, to her great annoyance; and the blot only became larger when she tried to dry it up." From this growing spot will later come, on his maternal side, little Otto.

The captain is a bureaucrat and Veronica, one of Hoffmann's cunning daughters of bureaucrats, who singlemindedly intends that Anselmus should become Herr Court Councilor and she Frau Court Councilor. Eroticism and the materiality of writing were intertwined in 1800. According to the rule that whatever is foreclosed from symbolization appear in the real and therefore the impossible, they are present only in delirium or hallucination. A spot of ink, we recall, means nothing less than madness. And the party that gathered to drink alcoholic punch concludes with the paradoxical shout of Dean Paulmann: "But I must be in a lunatic asylum. Have I gone crazy myself? What kind of gibberish am I uttering? Yes, I am mad, I am also insane!" The thread of madness in his speech is apparent in that he affirms himself with every word he speaks, and yet every word he speaks cancels out his own words. The delirious speech of the drunken bureaucrat parodies the poetical speech of Serpentina, just as the delirious writing of a drunken bureaucrat parodies the self-forgetful writing of Poet Anselmus. The two elementary, never written sentences "I am writing" and "I am delirious," which will support literature in 1900, are the impossible real and the shadow of Poetry in the discourse network of 1800. The sentence "I am writing" appears, but only in Heerbrand's daydream; the sentence "I am delirious" appears, but only in Paulmann's drunkenness. Both appear, then, in order to restore to poetic writing its own nature, which would assure that such writing passes from voice to voice, and prohibit it from becoming literal and taking the form of bureaucratic madness.

The modern fairy tale is consistent enough to develop the difficult relationship between Poetry and a bureaucratic position in the figure of its lord and master himself. Lindhorst, at once the privy archivist and poet prince of Atlantis, indicates that these functions can and can't be unified. The lowly bureaucrats may represent nonunity for the student-poet, but the highest and most pedagogical bureaucrat in the text knows better. He leads a double life. A double life in itself causes no difficulty, but to publish it is another matter. The fact that a poet's life and a bureaucrat's position cannot be unified comes to our awareness only when poets break a gag rule and talk about the unity of both. This is the subject of the correspondence between the writer and the master of the modern fairy tale.

Hoffmann appears under his own name in the last vigil and explains that his bureaucratic duties and bureaucrat's prose have kept him from finishing "The Golden Pot." He is rescued from this dilemma by a note, written in the finest German bureaucratese, from Lindhorst.

Respected Sir: I am familiar with the fact that you have, in eleven vigils, written about the extraordinary fate of my good son-in-law, Anselmus, eras reliable student, now poet, and that you are at present most sorely tormenting yourself so that in the twelfth and final vigil you may write something about his happy life in Atlantis, where he now lives with my daughter on a pleasant estate which I own in that country. Now, notwithstanding my great regret that my own singular nature is hereby revealed to the reading public (seeing that this may expose me to a thousand inconveniences in my office as privy archivist; indeed, it may, even in the collegium, provoke the question of how far a salamander may justly bind himself through an oath, as a state servant) . . . notwithstanding all of this, I say, it is my intention to help you complete your work.!!!

With this offer of assistance to a poet-bureaucrat, the poet-bureaucrat Lindhorst betrays his trade secrets. These are summed up in the title of a then-current work, *The State Civil Servant as Writer or the Writer as State Civil Servant: A Documentary Account*. Max Friedrich Grävell's tract posed the very questions that preoccupy Lindhorst and his colleagues: "To what extent are the privileges of the writer limited by the duties of a servant of the state? To what extent can both roles be unified?
Who decides when one does something as a writer or servant of the state?" \textsuperscript{126}

There is no doubt about Lindhorst's reply. His letter provides documentary evidence, in such phrases as "erstwhile student, now poet," for the unity of both roles. Bureaucrats can be poets and poets bureaucrats. The matter becomes delicate only when the double life is not merely confided to official yet confidential letters, but seizes an entire world of poetic readers, which includes bureaucratic colleagues. Lindhorst is not worried about the characteristically nonprivate title of privy archivist, but he is concerned about the essentially public title of Poet. States demand a commitment from their servants that forbids poetizing and fictionalizing. Once more the Faustian free speech called Poetry encounters a pact that makes discourses the basis of the state and itself becomes a discursive event in the bureaucratic oath. To keep secret the "deliberations of the collegium" and all other affairs of state requires—in the words of Hoffmann's appointment as a state judge—"his oath of duty in his new capacity." \textsuperscript{121} This is the reason the lowly bureaucrat Heerbrand sees letters as letters, and this is the reason the lowly bureaucrat Paulmann is horrified to hear his own insane words about his own insanity.

And yet the oath of office and the life of poetry remain disunited in only one of the two discourse formations: Lindhorst's collegium. In the other, the opposite holds. "Whatever a state civil servant does as a writer is not done in his capacity as civil servant, but is sanctioned by universal freedom and specific civil rights." \textsuperscript{122} Hoffmann and Friedrich von Hardenberg, Goethe and Schiller—all knew the possibility and the secret of a double life. And when isolated poets, such as Hölderlin or Kleist, fail at the transition from tutor to educational bureaucrat or from solitary crusader to adjutant to the king because they know nothing of a double life, the end comes in a tower in Tübingen or on the shore of the Wannsee.

Poetry and bureaucracy can be depicted in Poetry as united because the description of this unity recruits more poet-bureaucrats. This is the reason Lindhorst pardons the writer of the fairy tale for exposing Lindhorst's double life. "It is my intention to help you complete the work, since much good of me and my dear married daughter (if only the other two were also off my hands!) has been said therein." \textsuperscript{123} This "somewhat abrupt" but deeply felt sigh longs for the return of the Golden Age. "Not before" he has found husbands for all three of his daughters will the Poet in Lindhorst be permitted to throw off "his earthly burden" of bureaucracy and resume his leadership of Atlantis. But the advertisement for

more sons-in-law with "childlike poetic natures" \textsuperscript{124} can only go out as poetry. Hoffmann reads this between the lines in Lindhorst's letter.

He was here offering me a helping hand to complete my work. And I might, from this, fairly conclude that he was at heart not opposed to having his wondrous existence in the world of spirits revealed through the printed word. It may be, I thought, that through this means he perhaps expects to get his two other daughters married sooner. Who knows but that a spark may fall in the heart of this or that young man and therein kindle a desire for another green snake—whom he will immediately seek out and discover on Ascension Day, under the elder tree. \textsuperscript{125}

The function of initiation that Lindhorst supervised for the fairy tale's hero is thus transferred for all future readers to the writer of the fairy tale. His writing is publicity, and in a technical sense of the word he is a multiplier who transmits the wishes of his lord and master Lindhorst. "The Golden Pot" and the Golden Age become possible because Lindhorst's letter gives poetry, until then the despairing expression of an inwardness, a function in the nexus of discourses. It becomes an advertisement for advertisers. It must therefore fall into the externality of publication. As Lindhorst is at once a poet prince and sworn archivist of the state, so his ambassador Hoffmann is at once a dreamer and media technician. One formulates his wish in the finest bureaucratic form, and the other is charged with translating it into poetic gems and passing it along. That is why poetry wrote around its written character rather than obliterating it, as pedagogy did. If poetry were not published, it would not be possible to recruit the sons-in-law necessary for the poetic project of redemption. If the stories of the salamanders were to appear as sheer texts, they would be as inaccessible to readers as Registrar Heerbrand's lost documents. But because Lindhorst leads Hoffmann to substitute a poetical archive for Lindhorst's bureaucratic one, the whole technology of storage is transformed into psychology. Readers can then take the circumscribed, written quality of poetry to heart and translate it back into speech or into the childhood sexuality of a phantom lover.

The poetic texts of 1800 were devised with such backward-moving translation in mind. The story of the poet princes and poets that we have from the pens of the fairy tale's hero and writer need not refer to the two other sisters of Serpentina as single, individual figures. Because the sisters all appear to men in the shape of their mother, it is enough to elevate Serpentina as the one signified. Readers can provide the referent for the signified; indeed, readers' longing for the green snake or mother guarantees a successful reception. "One starts out by seeking the girl in one's favorite novels—and in the end no one fails to find what he was looking for." \textsuperscript{126}

It is a particular pleasure to introduce the empirical proof for the pre-

* Hölderlin spent his last, insane years in a Tübingen tower; Kleist committed suicide on the banks of the Wannsee near Berlin. [Trans.]
ceeding argument. Hoffmann's readers will inevitably find the two other daughters of Lindhorst because both resemble Serpentina, who in turn resembles The Mother or snake. The snake, again like Serpentina, was an element of contemporary ideal handwriting, and therefore was capable of being copied. "When snakes crawl they never move in a straight line. Instead they move in a series of curves, so that, if one were to crawl across fine sand, it would leave behind a line like this (Fig. 19 [in orig.; see the reproduction, below]). Therefore we call a line that curves up and down a snake line. Anyone who wants to learn to write well will have to master the drawing of such a line." We can now for the first time publish a picture of Serpentina. Behold in Pohlmann's Figure 19 the ideal form in which Hoffmann's readers can easily recognize Lindhorst's daughters:

![Figure 19](image)

The poetic effect of multiplication thus proceeds quite elegantly through the logic of the signified. In poetry the word does not need to have any reference, it only needs meaning. It need not carry any responsibility, like an oath of office or a pact with the devil; it need only have a textuality that can be translated back, while one reads or writes, into the image and the whispering of the green snake.

The Fairy Tales of the Modern Age are word-for-word realizations of Herder's definition of poetry. The poet brings Nature or the Mother into the hearts and souls of his brothers. His addressees are men who read, and they are rightfully called brothers because all their love is devoted to the alma mater. Writing and speech are merely channels that flow from childhood sexuality to childhood sexuality. In front of or behind the channeling network stands a secret bureaucrat who hopes that it will allow his release.

What a state civil servant does as a writer is not done as a bureaucrat, but is sanctioned by universal freedom. At the end of the fairy tale, Lindhorst makes his double life into a division of labor between himself and Hoffmann. Of course, he must return to the collegium and sit through the discussion of his fitness for the oath of office, but no one can forbid his appointing another private secretary to take the place of Anselmus. Lindhorst's letter invites Hoffmann into the poetical office in which he initiates his spiritual sons into poetry. The story that Anselmus was writing until he was interrupted by the fatal spot of ink, the story that the narrator was writing until the pressure of his everyday life became too great—this single and yet doubled story is finally completed. The inner knowledge called poetry receives its bureaucratic baptism (as Marx would later call the state examination) in Lindhorst's archive. Only this baptism gives it discursive reality.

Hoffmann writes and writes because Lindhorst has set the central symbol of the fairy tale, a gold pot full of arrack, on the writing table. As Hoffmann drinks he falls into a hallucination in which everything that is unimaginable under the conditions of prose is given sensual certainty. As it confronted with a magic lantern that could project images to all five senses, he sees Anselmus and Serpentina, finally united at the fairy tale's end in the land of Poetry. The hallucination begins with tactile and olfactory stimuli, which barely cross the writer's perceptual threshold, and culminates in optical and auditory manifestations of love, which could be taken either as "glances" or as "song."

The alcoholic intoxication of the fairy tale's writer achieves the same end as the romantic intoxication of the fairy tale's hero: both make possible a writing so hallucinatory that it never reaches consciousness. Finally Hoffmann discovers the secret of Lindhorst's double life. In retrospect he is able to figure out that it was all just another fantasy of the library. "For the vision in which I now beheld Anselmus bodily in his freehold of Atlantis I stand indebted to the arts of the salamander, and it was fortunate that when everything had dissolved in air, I found a paper lying on the violet table with the foregoing account written beautifully and distinctly by my own hand." Such are some of the pleasures of the double life: in the shortcircuiting of hallucination and writing, intoxication and duty, the writer of the fairy tale becomes the return of his semblable, the hero of the fairy tale. He is also the counterpart of the lowly bureaucrats, who under the influence of alcohol merely hallucinate that they are hallucinating, or in daydreams see the dance of Fraktur letters. By contrast, poetic daydreams are a hallucinatory, multimedia love scene; and poetic inebriation, instead of forfeiting the word, is the neat but unconscious inscription of such scenes.

It is a joy of writing that only the lowly bureaucrats seem to ignore. The reform-minded pedagogues praised it and, indeed, held themselves up as examples. One has, for instance, Peter Villaume's Method for Aiding Young People to Acquire the Skill of Expressing Their Thoughts in Writing: "I do not know if it happens to other writers, but whenever I write the image of my subject is always present, and even in the most abstract matters I see a kind of phantom, my subject, whatever it may be. And I simply write, without thinking of words or rules. The words take care of themselves; I am hardly aware of them. When this occurs the writer puts down what is fitting and nothing more." In just this way Hoffmann acquires the ability to write down the phantom Serpentina.
His automatic writing has no rules or consciousness of words and is thus
in need of historical legitimation. Lindhorst appears once more because
the writer of the fairy tale does not immediately understand that poetry is
the doubling of happy intoxication and bureaucratic duty, vision and a
written text. Hoffmann's sigh of regret at having sojourned only briefly in
the fantasy of the library and not at all in Atlantis has no basis, and the
highest official has the last word. "Be quiet, be quiet, my revered friend.
Do not lament so! Were you not yourself just now in Atlantis, and do you
not at least have there a lovely little farmstead as a poetic possession
of your inner mind? Is the bliss of Anselmus anything else but life in Poetry,
Poetry, where the sacred harmony of all things is revealed as the most
profound secret of nature?"

Thoroughly consoled, the narrator can write, with Lindhorst's blessing, "The End of the Fairy Tale." His text has
become an work and he has become an author.

Authors, Readers, Authors

Historians differentiate between two types of culture with regard to
writing: a culture of the scribe, in which the ability to write is a privilege
and thus a function of the ruling class; and a culture of the learned, in
which reading and writing are coupled together and thus can be universal-
ized. In the European Middle Ages, for example, scribes, being purely
抄写员 or calligraphers, had no need of being able to read what they
were manually multiplying: the discourse of the Lord. Moreover, medi-
val readers had to dictate to a scribe their own commentaries or con-
tinuations of texts. The discourse network of 1800 was the opposite: a
culture in which reading and writing were coupled and automatized. The
purpose of this coupling was a universal education, and its prerequisite
was an alphabetization that connected reading and writing by linking
both back to a singular kind of listening.

This system of education did not simply continue the process begun by
the printing trade and the Reformation. Instead, the realization that "Eu-
rope would surely sink into error or even into madness because of its pub-
lic instruction," as long as it had its eyes "on the idolized new knowl-
dge, which is limited to letters and books," created a caesura in the alpha-
betizing process. Reading and writing became common property in 1800
only under the condition of simulating a pure, nonalienated listening. As
if to stage a confrontation between the two types of cultures, Anselmus
finds himself in the predicament of having to copy unreadable characters
that seem completely to exclude listening and understanding. But when
Serpentina's voice reaches him, not only is this anachronistic situation
avoided, but the reader is also promoted to Poet. And because Poetry, un-
like wisdom or insight, regulations or the teachings of the gods, cannot
exist without readers, the reader-poet Anselmus generates more and
more reader-poets, beginning with his writer Hoffmann and moving on
through him as relay station to many other poetic youths. In this way
reading and writing became universal.

The continuous transition from authors to readers to authors was a
kind of mobilization. Not only technical innovations, such as the in-
vention of uncut rolls of paper, and not only social changes, such as the
much-touted rise of the middle class, but rather mutations in the prac-
tice of discourse itself led to the proliferation of the book industry in 1800.
The fact that belles-lettres led the statistics in publishing would be an ac-
cident if technological or social causes were brought in to account for the
expansion. But belleuristic texts themselves wrote the history of this sin-
gular occurrence. German poetry is so constituted that—beyond any par-
cularities of content or philosophical differences of opinion—it pro-
garms its readers for the proliferation of Poetry.

There is thus no reason to peel away the endless layers of idealist sys-
tems of aesthetics in an attempt to arrive at the intentionality of words
like poetry, author, or work. Simple narratives determine such words
more elegantly. The end of the fairy tale "The Golden Pot" says it clearly.
Poetry as a "possession of the inner mind" arises in erotic and alcoholic
intoxication; authorship arises in rereading what had been unconsciously
written in the delirium; poetic works, finally, are media for the halluci-
natory substitution of realms of the senses. These three key concepts in
the discourse network of 1800 are as many promises of happiness.

On its inner side—that turned toward the world of readers—the me-
don of writing constituted a psychology. It was to the latter that writing,
a cold, age-old technology, owed its sudden universalization. What techni-
cally would be signifieds without referents became psychologically endog-
enous voices or images that created pleasure and authors. In Anselmus's
romantic intoxication, as well as in his author's arrack intoxication, Ser-
pentina shines—whereas Lindhorst's letter names her very referentially
as "my dear married daughter"—as an audiovisual hallucination. She
exists only as the inner possession of senses that are dead to the world.
The precondition of marriage with and according to Serpentina is psy-
chological: the "childlike poetic nature." No one who is adult and sober,
then, believes that a beloved voice dwells among the pages of a book. In-
toxication or mania is a necessary condition for the production of the
transcendental signified in its empirical nonbeing.

The rule of the Serpion brotherhood, the group in which Hoffmann's
stories were told, was to do ample justice to a bowl of punch and at the
same time mimic the pseudo-Serapion, who could "quite clearly" see the
towers of Alexandria while looking at the towers of Bamberg and who in the stories of his madness could even bring the best psychologically schooled listeners "with magical power as if in a dream" to hallucinate his words. In the Biographies of the Insane, a love-sick reform economist needs only to see a vision of his dead mother to halt "the ever-turning wheel of the imagination, which like a magic lantern throws out images of the past and future across the soul." The vision of his mother became an "image that refused to move, that constantly occupied the mind and drove it to madness." In Tieck's Rünenberg a woman emerges from ruins and the night to present the hero, Christian, a tablet, "as an eternal remembrance," which is covered with wondrous, incomprehensible script, and with that she fixes once and for all his insane longing.

In such examples poetry was at the cutting edge of its age. The new human sciences, with their medico-psychological investigations of insanity, discovered around 1800 among the countless manifestations of unreason a distinguished form that revealed the very nature of unreason. This was the idée fixe. "Since it is the nature of madness to fasten onto any given idea or concept, often to the exclusion of almost all others," the fixed idea moved into the center of nosological categories, etiological explanations, and psychic cures, which were directed above all toward distraction. But most importantly the fixed idea became the sole form of unreason to be accorded the rank of poetic dignity. "That fixed idea that at least periodically dominates every genius and enthusiast nobly separates men from the table and bed of the earth." Thus Jean Paul's insignificant educational bureaucrat, a writer who cultivates the idée fixe in miniature, can only be called Fixlein.

Whereas the century of Wilhelm Lange-Eichbaum would discover a thousand crossings between genius and madness, the writing system of 1800 knew only one, special connection. It was not Tasso's mania or paranoia, but his erotic fixation on the image of the Woman that made him a possible subject for one of Goethe's tragedies. It was not sheer stupidity or flight of ideas, but the "fixed idea" of taking on the role of the martyr Serapion while in full possession of logic and transcendental philosophy that made the hermit of Bamberg the ἱρος ἐπόνιμος of the poetry club. For only fixed ideas can realize empirically, in a psychology, what the magic mirror achieves in the modern fairy tale: it "throws everything back into its true form, destroys all illusion, and eternally holds the primeval image." Offices of the registrar such as Heerbrand's or archives such as Lindhorst's become historically unnecessary when souls are capable of directly storing ideas. The eternally held primeval image in Christian Heinrich Spiess, Tieck, Hoffmann, Jean Paul, and Novalis was, of course, the Mother.

Hector Berlioz provided or suffered (with the time lag typical of France) the biographical evidence. The Symphonie fantastique, which carries the programmatic subtitle "Episode in the life of an artist," first smuggled into symphonic music a paradoxical motif that was removed from all thematic-motivic development. Its function was to fixate an idea that would be the programmatic-musical representation of the artist's lover as she appeared in an opium dream. Hardly had Berlioz married that lover several years later, than she became, in all the fullness of the body, the matron...

Once a hallucination has produced a fixed idea in the first act of poetic production, the second act begins as the pen does its fixating. For if a fixed idea is related to poetical and, as in the case of Anselmus, prelingual breathing, then all mechanical distraction therapies, such as those planned by Heerbrand and Paulmann, come to nothing. Only the touch of the spear that opened it can heal the wound of such madness. After sobering up, the hero and the writer of "The Golden Pot" find their fixed ideas written down by their own poet-hands.

Tiedemann's Investigations into Man reported the case of a "young man who had dedicated himself to poetry and could spend a whole day without writing one line," until somnambulism came to his aid. He "got up in the middle of the night, wrote, then read over what he had written and applauded himself by laughing loudly." The Life of Fibel (or Primer) reports the opposite youthful exercises, in which Fibel "wrote for a long time without looking at the paper, not in order to show off any skill, but in order to have one in case he ever had to work in the dark." Such a case does occur during one night when a dream hen gives Fibel the letter b as the first letter of his primer. The famous nocturnal outpourings of the youth Goethe had in fact little originality. Poetic writing in 1800 always meant letting oneself go; for "the time for rewriting, deleting, and polishing what needs to be polished can always be found." Only upon returning from intoxication or dream and in rereading the unconscious handiwork does an ego appear, together with its narcissism. The young man applauds; Fibel reaches the goal he dreamed of; Hoffmann admires his beautifully and distinctly written text of "The Golden Pot"; and Goethe had "a particular reverence" for poems that were "unpremeditated effusions" and had to be "fixed down at once" by "writing in the dark." Thus the narcissistic pleasure of rereading one's unconscious poetic liberties gave birth to the "authorial function." Authorship in the discourse network of 1800 is not a function simultaneous with the act of writing, but a deferred effect of rereading.

Empirical evidence for this also can be gained simply by turning the motion-picture camera—as an early literary screenplay recommended in
1913—onto the poets. Immediately we see someone “moving around nervously in a room. He writes a line on a piece of paper that has been folded in odd ways. He stands in front of the mirror and reads the line and admires himself. He lies down with evident satisfaction on a couch.”

Self-forgetful writing, mirror stage, authorship—these are the three technological steps to the poetic career. But in order to record them a medium beyond books is necessary, a medium that was lacking in the writing system of 1800. What the motion-picture camera would debase a century later, to the laughter of both sexes, shone in 1800 as the highest technological achievement in the medium. Central Europe entered—not in the statistical sense that concerns social historians, but in a programmatic sense that made the future—the condition of general alphabetization. Writing no longer required the virtues of vigilance and attention, the ascesis of a learned class. It could become a skill of the fingers, which would write on through dreams, drunkenness, or darkness. Without disturbance or channel interference, without delay or transmission losses, the medium of writing transported pure signifieds or—fixed ideas. Alphabetization in the flesh made possible an automatic writing that was not automatic writing. For only from 1896 on, when rereading was prohibited, would unconscious writing yield pure signifiers. In 1800, however, an act of writing as punctual as it was unambiguous stood between two universal poles that neutralized the act: before it was the signified that had to be translated, behind it was an authorship that could enjoy the work of independent fingers as its own possession.

Poetry established its technical standard as the rule in the discourse network of 1800. Jean Paul, for example, with his passion for facts, traced all the writing of his time, including the most renowned, back to a primal author, Fibel, whom “no one in the German nation knows by name,” but whom everyone had read because Fibel’s original primer “not only found millions of readers, but before that had made them into readers.” “The aesthetic disquisitions of the philosophers also exemplified the process, in reverse. When defining Poetry they forgot, fundamentally, that the poetry in front of them had been written and printed. Fibel’s forgotten and thus constantly imitated work made poetic writing so easy that philosophers could call it speaking.” The philosophers also forgot that speaking is a technique of the body. The Mother’s Mouth had made speaking so easy that it could be called the representation of a representation, or the hallucination of a fixed idea.

August Wilhelm Schlegel, in his Lectures on Literature and the Fine Arts, addresses the question “What is poetry?” as follows:

The other arts possess, according to their limited modes of representation, a definite domain that is more or less susceptible to delimitation. The medium of poetry, however, happens to be identical with that through which the human spirit first attains consciousness, and through which its ideas obtain the power of voluntary connection and expression: language. Therefore poetry is not bound to any objects but rather creates its own; it is the most comprehensive of all arts and at the same time the universal spirit present in them all. That which in the portrayal of other arts lifts us above commonplace reality into an imaginary world, is what we call the poetic element in them.

Hegel’s Aesthetics, on the theme of poetry, agrees:

That is to say, it works neither for contemplation by the senses, as the visual arts do, nor for purely ideal feeling, as music does, but on the contrary tries to present to spiritual imagination and contemplation the spiritual meanings which it has shaped within its own soul. For this reason the material through which it manifests itself retains for it only the value of a means (even if an artistically treated means) for the expression of spirit to spirit, and it has not the value of being a sensuous existent in which the spiritual content can find a corresponding reality. Amongst the means hitherto considered, the means here can only be sound as the sensuous material still relatively the most adequate to spirit.

Poetry enjoyed a privileged place in the systems of aesthetics. The other arts were defined by their respective media (stone, color, building material, sound); the medium of poetry, however—language or tone, language as tone, but certainly never language as letters—disappears beneath its content so that, as with Nostradamus/Faust, the spirit can appear directly to the spirit. The concluding line of Stefan George’s poem “The Word”—“Without the word no thing can be”—would have been impossible or sacrilegious in the writing system of 1800. First, all real languages can be translated into one another; second, language itself is merely a channel. So poetry can establish a direct connection between “the meanings of the spirit” (signifieds) and the world (the set of all reference), a connection that establishes and guarantees the general equivalent and the universal translatability of all sensuous media. “As for poetry’s mode of configuration, poetry in this matter appears as the total art because, what is only relatively the case in painting and music, it repeats in its own field the modes of presentation characteristic of the other arts.”

Of course, poetry cannot accomplish this materially, but that is not the point. It is precisely the translation of other arts into a nonmaterial and universal medium that constitutes poetry. This medium is variously labeled fantasy or imagination. Imagination generically defines all the arts, but it specifically defines one highest art. Only poetry can claim the “imagination itself, that universal foundation of all the particular artforms and the individual arts” as its proper material.
doubling guaranteed that poetry could not be derived from words or letters or written signs. Poetry can manage magically to transform the rush of events and the beauties of the world into products of culture only by being the art of the nonmaterial imagination. “The imagination is that marvelous sense that can replace all of our senses.”

Some have thought it strange that Goethe’s periodical Propyläen called upon its readers to submit themes from poetry that they held to be appropriate for painting. But this simply represented a reversal of his practice of translating images back into the general equivalent. In Wilhelm Meister’s Years of Wandering, not only has Saint Joseph the Second mastered this practice, but the entire art curriculum of the Pedagogical Province teaches its use. One of the masters stands before a statue and calls upon his students “to awaken the imagination with fitting words in the presence of this stationary work, so that everything that appears fixed regains its fluidity without losing its character.” Again, poetic words are to liquidate material media. It was not enough that in their own domain the flow of sound rather than letters should dominate; poetic words would liquidate, that is, liquefy, stones and colors, sounds and building materials, all kinds of materialities and techniques of the body, until the Imagination could replace all senses.

In Lessing’s Laocoon the poet is instructed: “In this moment of illusion we should cease to be conscious of the means that the poet uses for this purpose, that is, his words.” As part of a formulation of basic differences among the arts, such a phrase presupposed a readership for which words had not yet become simply fluid. Only a completed alphabetization would make Lessing’s poetic effect into a pedagogically guaranteed automatism. Jean Paul once had to remind his readers (in the middle of an address to the reader) that what they were reading, without noticing it, was in printed type. One of the fantastic episodes in “The Golden Pot” is presented as the optical vision of the apostrophized reader. And in “The Sandman” the inner image, as brought forth in hallucinations by that remarkable species of author,” is to be presented to the public in the full intensity of “its vivid colors, the light and the shade.” All such programs of poetic effects presupposed an ability to read pure signifieds. The philosophical imagination that in 1800 attained the status of the nonmediate medium of poetry is archeologically a simple effect of primers.

There is textual and empirical evidence for this assertion. Textual evidence is provided by the patron saint of Hoffmann’s poets’ club. Hundreds of pages after Serapion relates his fantastic fixed idea, his simple secret is told. He has—as a model for all future poets—“spun stories out of his inner self as he saw it all with his own eyes and not as he had read it.” The transformation of Bamberg into Alexandria has thus been a fantasy of the library, and the madness of fixed ideas an effect of reading.

Empirical evidence is provided by the reading experiences of Karl Friedrich von Klöden, who did not have to await Wolf’s instruction to bridge the gap between two discourse networks. In 1793, at the age of seven, Klöden entered a school for the poor. He later reported being endlessly bored by the “a, b, ab, a, ba” and complained that the rote learning of passages from the Bible produced “no understanding,” which he significantly qualified as “no representation, no picture.” Not until Klöden’s mother, who enjoyed reading, proceeded to “explain the meaning” rather than the letters did Klöden gradually come to understand what he was reading. Like Anselmus, however, Klöden did not learn the perfect reading technique—which reveals the poetic in poetry, namely, the substitute for all the pleasures of the senses—until he fell into a delirium. While febrile, Klöden received a copy of Campe’s bowdlerized Robinson Crusoe from his mother, and this led to reading with “real craving,” which “represented every scene plastically” and “painted every scene down to the smallest detail.”

Understanding, representation, hallucination—the phantasmagorical modality of hermeneutics could not be more solidly displayed. After alphabetization became (with Pestalozzi) instruction in seeing and (with Stephani) conversation with the Mother’s Mouth, it supplemented all other media. Self-proclaimed drug experts acknowledged this by using a metaphor that turned up with near-epidemic frequency on the eve of the French Revolution and that called the no less epidemic reading of poetry an opiate. Reading became a “need” that, in the view of one contemporary primer, presupposed and heightened itself. This, however, is a clinical definition of addiction. Thus Anton Reiser describes his reading as a “need, such as opium perhaps is for the people of the Orient, who use it to produce a pleasant numbing of the senses.”

“Sublimation” and “internalization,” two of today’s current explanations for the new addiction, do not go far enough. Lachrymose pity for a middle class supposedly alienated from its so-called drives remains psychology and thus obfuscates positive technical effects. Everything but sublimation had occurred. In the discourse network of 1800, the Book of Poetry became the first medium in the modern sense. Following McLuhan’s law, according to which the content of a medium is always another medium, poetry supplemented the data of the senses in a way that was reproducible and multiplicatory. Atlantis, the secret of “The Golden Pot,” is simply a written desire of the eyes and ears. But such writing must take place. There were no techniques in 1800 to record the singularity and seriality of a progression of sounds or images. Musical scores al-
owed for the serial storage of data, but not in its singularity. (The nineteenth century would therefore invent the orchestral director as a surrogate for the then-impossible reproduction of sound.) In painting and the plastic arts, the output of singular data always occurs in a parallel way. Mechanical apparatuses for recording sound, such as the vocal automatons of Wolfgang von Kempelen or Lazzaro Spallanzani, remained curiosities or ephemera; so did mechanical apparatuses for recording serial images: one had only the illusions of a movable camera obscura or those children's picture books that, when their pages are rapidly fanned, suggest a series of movements.33

Aside from mechanical automatons and toys, there was nothing. The discourse network of 1800 functioned without phonographs, gramophones, or cinematographs. Only books could provide serial storage of serial data. They had been reproducible since Gutenberg, but they became material for understanding and fantasy only when alphabetization had become ingrained. Books had previously been reproducible masses of letters; now they reproduced themselves. The scholarly republican heap of books in Faust's study became a psychedelic drug for everyone. As long as the book remained without competition, people believed its impossible promise. But Wagner's monomaniacal anticipation of the gramophone and the movies, his Artwork of the Future, would be at once capable of and constrained to settle accounts with "the solitary art of poetry," which "suggested, without satisfying its own suggestions; urged to life, without itself attaining life; gave the catalog of a picture gallery, but not the paintings."34

Automatized reading is the art of leaping over the gulf that separates the catalog from the pictures. At the sight of a tablet full of the crystalline signs of an originary text, Tieck's "Runenberg" visitor Christian begins deciphering like a director, and the signs become a hallucinatory production, as if "the magic lantern of our imagination," which had been sequestered from madness in the fixed idea, had suddenly begun to turn again, the signs open up within Christian an "abyss of figures and melodies, of desire and voluptuousness,"35 in other words, a multimedia show. The fixed idea and poetry are thus connected technologically (and not theoretically),36 like parallel input and serial output.

The new status of letters and books in 1800 produced books of more than the new poetry. Its retroactive power could alter texts that previously had belonged to the Gutenberg galaxy and the Republic of Scholars. The club members of The Brothers of Serapion go beyond phantastic texts like the Bhagavad Gita and establish, according to the critic Peter von Matt, a "veritable ars legendi,"37 which organizes the historical changes of real books. One of the brothers digs up Johann Christoph Wagenseil's Nuremberg Chronicle of 1697, but not in order to produce "an antiquarian, critical study."38 A book that had been a classic among Gutenberg texts, that had reproduced pre-Gutenberg, that is, handwritten sagas of the Wartburg singers' contest, is hermeneutically reworked until it can reproduce its own sensuousness. The solitary reader Cyprian, "captured by the magic and mystery of the past," closes the book and begins to ponder what he has read. Empirical sights and sounds blur, and "an inner voice" begins to speak. The reader falls into a daydream in which the minnesingers named in the Chronicle appear in a charming landscape that does everything but call out the minnesingers' names, until Wagenseil himself appears and identifies the figures in his book. Indeed, "Wagenseil looked just as he did in the ornate baroque engraving at the front of the book."39 Alphabetization could hardly accomplish a more elegant translation of Gutenbergiana into phantasmagoria. The writer of an old book becomes an inner voice; the frontispiece becomes an inner image; the list of characters becomes a scene; and the chronicle's cold medium becomes a time-series of sounds and sights—it is sound film avant la lettre.

Such sensuousness (and sensuality) stored in Poetry is characteristic of an age in which the medium of the book is first universal—for all realms of the senses and people—and second without competition from other sound and image media. Not until the emergence of a technical storage capacity, such as that which shaped the discourse network of, would hallucinatory sensuousness be abandoned to the entertainment industry and serious literature renew its commitment to the ascetic that knows only black letters on white paper. Film historians alone have recognized that the high texts of 1800 were at an opposite extreme, wallowing in audiovisual sensuality.40 But the pleasure that made the unheard-of boom in belle lettres possible would remain obscure for interpreters who continued to indulge in it themselves. For hallucinatory staging, which put voices and visions in between the lines of texts, was the transmission technique that made new authors out of readers. Poetic texts were on the technological cutting edge because more than any others they could speak to and exploit alphabetized bodies.41 They operated on the threshold of response itself, where discursive powers paraded as the innocence of bodies and Nature. For this reason, there were more and more writers. "There are so many writers because these days"—1801—"reading and writing differ only by degrees."42 First, "if one reads correctly"—that is, if one was taught to read correctly—"a real, visible world unfolds within us in the wake of the words."43 Second, if inner worlds constitute the ground of possibility for authorship, it is sufficient to run through texts
like films in order make readers into writers. As evidence for this stands out one of the canonical *Künstleromane* (“artist novels”) of 1800.

On his educational journey to Augsburg, the future poet Heinrich von Ofterdingen happens into the cave of a hermit who, like Lindhorst, archives books. The hermit notices that Heinrich enjoys leafing through books and so detains him in the library while his fellow travelers wander off to look at other parts of the cave. Immediately the boy, who has been cunningly separated from the others, sinks into a vision “that can never have its fill of seeing. . . . They were old histories and poems. Heinrich leafed through the large, beautifully written pages; the short lines of verse, the headings, particular passages, and the sharply drawn pictures, which appeared here and there like embodied words in order to lend support to the reader’s imagination, powerfully aroused his curiosity.” Here the historical remake reaches further back than with Cyprian, extending to pre-Gutenberg handwritten texts. But the medieval verses are set off typographically, as was normal only with the new editions of the eighteenth century; the old miniatures take on hallucinatory effects: they “open a fresh, endless area of play for the imagination, without which no one should read.”

Heinrich is thus not reading in the time of his troubadour’s contest, but in the discourse network of 1800. His adventure continues in that vein.

At length he came across a volume written in a foreign language that seemed to him to have some similarity to Latin and Italian. He wished most fervently to know the language, for the book pleased him exceedingly without his understanding a syllable of it. It had no title, but as he looked through it, he found several pictures. They seemed wonderfully familiar to him, and as he looked more sharply, he discovered a rather clear picture of himself among the figures. He was startled and thought he was dreaming, but after looking at it repeatedly, he could no longer doubt the complete similarity. He hardly trusted his senses when soon after he discovered in another picture the cave, the hermit, and the miner at his side. Gradually he found in other pictures Zulima, his parents, the landgrave and landgravine of Thuringia, his friend the court chaplain, and several other acquaintances of his; yet their clothes were altered and appeared to be those of another age. He could not name a great many figures, but they seemed to be familiar to him. He saw his own likeness in various situations. Towards the end he seemed larger and more noble. A guitar was resting on his arms, and the landgrave was handing him a wreath. He saw himself at the imperial court, on shipboard, in the confiding embrace of a slender, lovely girl, in battle with wild-looking men, and in friendly conversation with Saracens and Moors. A man of serious mien often appeared in his company. He felt a deep respect for this great figure and was happy to see himself arm in arm with him.

The last pictures in the book were dark and unintelligible; still, several figures of his dream struck him with deepest ecstasy; the end of the book seemed to be missing. Heinrich was greatly distressed and wished for nothing more fervently than to be able to read the book and to possess it altogether. He looked at the pictures over and over and was dismayed when he heard the company returning. A curious embarrassment seized him. As he did not dare to let them notice his discovery, he closed the book and gently asked the hermit casually about the title and language of the book and learned it was written in Provençal.

“It is a long time since I read it,” the hermit said. “I can’t exactly remember the contents anymore. As far as I know, it is a novel about the wondrous adventures of a poet, in which poetry is presented and praised in its manifold relations. The finale is missing in this manuscript, which I brought with me from Jerusalem.”

The text, once more handwritten, in a foreign language, and unreadable, strikes the imagination like a silent film. A long optical hallucination is played out according to the rule of continuous augmentation (it grows toward the end); the hallucinatory character of the whole is manifest when it coincides with a dream that Heinrich has already had. The imagination is simply the wonderful sense that can replace all our senses. In "The Golden Pot," dream and speech, vision and book, become one. The one difference from Atlantis is that there are no acoustic data; even conversations are in some magical way seen rather than heard. The sequence remains a silent film because it is only a hermit who, as spiritual father, directs commerce with books; at the end of the novel a "mother's story" was to have gone over Heinrich's path to poetry and duplicated it in audio.

Heinrich has good reason not to believe his senses. What he sees intersects everything visible, like the invisible seeing eye. The book's signified (given several displacements of the signifiers of "clothing") is the one who contemplates it. Heinrich's own past in Thuringia is unmistakably represented; the future yet to come is blurred; the present moment of leafing through the book can hardly be believed. A life is played out as in time-lapse photography, as a sequence of minimal signifieds in minimal intervals. The images can be called minimal signifieds because they have no redundancy. They represent Heinrich's own figure reasonably well, but that is the limit of their accuracy. They are certainly not portraits, which would encompass an excess of meaningless detail and would pass beyond the signifieds stored in one's own body image. Heinrich does not encounter any personal file or mug shots. The similarity between the picture and the one who contemplates it must remain within limits if the imagination is to have a fresh, endless area of play.

The manifest secret of a discourse network that places ultimate value in the individual is never to inscribe the individual. "There are no individuals. All individuals are also genera," declared Goethe. Thus all the *Bildungsromane* and *Künstlerromane* of 1800 only sketch the physical image of their heroes in general terms. No one knows what Wilhelm Meister or Heinrich Ofterdingen looks like. Yet, despite or because of this,
doubles constantly appear, as in the count's castle in Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship and the hermit's book in Ofterdingen. In the end the hero and the double share only a "single trait" which for Goethe was a silk bathrobe and which for Freud was a sufficient and necessary condition of psychic identification.

The tactic of the single trait is obvious. The engravings in Stephani's Primer accomplish the same thing as the miniatures in Novalis's text. When browsing, Heinrich "discovers a picture of the cave with the hermit and old man next to him"; on the frontispiece of the primer the mother and child learning to read will see a mother and child learning to read. In each case the book doubles the present moment of commerce with itself and reflects information back. In each case identification is anything but an accident. The ideal image, in spite or because of the fact that it cannot and must not have any of a portrait's individualized features, is supposed to engage a remote-control fantasy. The fact that a child learning to read experienced the honor of being included in and sustained by a discourse network has seduced many other child readers to take their places in the system.

Situations rather than particular marks or signs (as with Odysseus's scar, or, from 1800 on, with anthropometric data) make identification a possible, narcissistic happiness. More than any other, the visually doubled reading situation is suited to stimulate the growth of new writers. Thus there was a theory of literary effect in the poetics of 1800, but it minimized the response threshold. In technical terms, the output impedance of a work, already reduced by the sensuous embodiment of the words, is brought near zero by using surrogates that double for the senses.

With minimal output impedance the connection back into the system can and must provide a maximum retroactive effect. In the hermit's cave the feedback between the book and its consumer transforms the book's identity and makes the consumer into a producer. At first the handwritten manuscript had no ending nor (as was common in the medieval period) title, or author's name. It receives a title only when Heinrich asks about the book; it receives an author when Heinrich discovers his likeness. The two modifications go together because, located on the book's margin, the title and name of the author have the same function. First, the title of the novel, Of the Wondrous Adventures of a Poet, does not designate just any hero, but a poet or author. Second, the title and name of the author function strictly to unify stacks of paper in the discourse network of 1800.

There is evidence for both points in a fragmentary novel that continues and completes Heinrich von Ofterdingen. After having told the poet and hero of von Loeben's Guido a fairy tale about a poet hero, a wise old man says:

Fairy tales are deceptive, and one can often read them ten times before one realizes it. But then suddenly it's clear, and now you know that you've really been taken in, that we have had to imagine ourselves a figure among the strange, confused appearances. In the end all such stories are connected like the individual chapters of a book from which the title is still missing.

The title thus includes (as with the Bhagavad Gita and Ofterdingen) the reader as part of the book. Only the title can guarantee that all the stored discourses constitute a unity—indeed, a trinity, of hero, receiver, and poet. It amounts to a nice denial of the apparent fact that Guido, in listening to the fairy tale, has been led around by his nose.

Authorship is no different. Throughout the novel the poet-hero is in search of a mysterious original manuscript, which, as usual, is written on plant leaves and which is simultaneously promised and withheld by his spiritual fathers. At the glowing conclusion of the novel, Guido receives the manuscript and the realization of what remained a premonition for the aspiring poet Ofterdingen in the unfinished novel Ofterdingen. This realization is, quite simply, that any primer has always been written by someone named Primer.

They occupied themselves in searching out an endless number of passages and pictures in the book; the son [Guido] could no longer imagine that he had once believed that the book didn't stem from him. He was the poet of this immeasurable work; his deeds, his love were the content of the great poem; and in the pictures he found nothing but objects that had been effortlessly woven into his life. Possessing this poem made him supremely happy.

A veritable paroxysm of authorship occurs here: the reader promoted to author forgets that there were days when he had forgotten his authorship. In the fresh forgetting of this forgetfulness, the book closes like a trap and the anthropology of language that derives words from man has another adept. As if to confirm the etymology of the word text, the words and illustrations "weave" people into the medium of poetry.

The greatest cunning of the anthropology of language is to place this conclusion at the very end of the novel and defer it as long as the title and author of the manuscript are missing. Otherwise, the thoroughly familiar and traditional relationship known as prefiguration would link the text with the biography of the reader—just as the Bible presents an anticipation and model of something to be accomplished through a lifetime of imitation. In the discourse network of 1800, by contrast, the opposite tendency leads to filling the margins and empty spaces of the text with whatever has not been represented in it. Such is the meaning of Ofter-
Habent sua fata libelli. “There was a time when those texts which we now call ‘literary’ (stories, folk tales, epics, and tragedies) were accepted, circulated, and valorized without any question about the identity of their author. Their anonymity was ignored because their real or supposed age was a sufficient guarantee of their authenticity.”  

In the beginning, the novel lies in medieval simplicity, without title or author’s name, in the hermit’s cave. But an incipient poet arrives, opens the book, and the handwritten text suddenly finds itself in the discourse network of 1800. Between the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, laws were established to regulate the rights of authors, the relationship between authors and publishers, the rights of republication, and so forth. This new judicial phase, like that of media technology, had retroactive power. Not only contemporary books with a claim to poetic worth had to have a title page with an author’s name; earlier books were retrospectively altered. The rediscovered Jena Song Manuscript “preoccupied [Johann Christoph] Gottsched particularly with the question of who had written the book. But most of his efforts to find out failed.” And when Bodmer published the Nibelungenlied, “he concentrated all of his efforts on discovering who the author of the book was. He clung above all to the name Chuonrat in the Lament. Bodmer believed until the end of his life that the Song of the Niebelungen had a single author.”  

The transformation of books into poetry through the attribution of a single, named author is an obvious intrusion. Critics like Gottsched and Bodmer, contemplators of books like Otterdingen and Guido, dream readers like Cyprian and Anselmus: under the appearance of simply transmitting a text they all generate further poetic producers. Whenever possible in fiction, in its superiority over the empirical fact of literary history, this producer becomes identical with the reader. Cyprian, the spellbound reader of Wagenseil, betrays to his dearly beloved reader that the daydreamer whose fantasy of the library he is describing is “the one who is leading you even now among the masters”—Cyprian himself as the author of that Serapion story. Friedrich Schlegel’s progressive universal poetry thus constituted a real definition for poetry in 1800. Semantically it translated heterogeneous discourses into the single Mother’s Mouth; pragmatically it set its readers among the masters or authors.  

By altogether bypassing reading, which disappears into a hallucinatory modality, universal poetry celebrated its final victory. The authorial function, that phantom of universal alphabetization, is epitomized and confirmed in a truly spectral art. When a phantom whose library contains the complete works of a well-known composer can sight-read these works at the piano, even though, to the indescribable astonishment of the witness and listener, the book contains only empty pages, then and only then is that reader the author. Hoffmann, the narrator, has it from the specter’s mouth: the dead Gluck “said in a hollow voice, while hastily turning more empty pages of the book, ‘I wrote all this, my good sir, when I came from the kingdom of dreams.’”