Night-sides of existence: Madness, dream, etc.

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1. Post-rationalistic explorations of the world's »night-side«

> »The night hour struck; I wrapped myself in my quixotic disguise, took in hand the pike and horn, went out into the gloom and called out the hour, after I had protected myself against the evil spirits with a sign of the cross« (Klingemann 1972, 29).[1]

The word »Nachtseite« (night-side) originally has an astronomical meaning: it refers to those parts of a planet's surface which are turned away from the sun. Gotthilf Heinrich Schubert's treatise *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft* (Aspects of the Night-side of Science, 1808), a formative influence on several Romantics, knows well enough about this original meaning (Schubert 1997, 125, note 11), but uses the expression in a metaphorical sense to stand for topics and problems which have not before been inquired into, because they were regarded as hallucinatory products of superstition (ibid., 2). Schubert wants to compensate for this deficiency by his investigations into human nature. His *Geschichte der Seele* (History of the Soul, 1830) celebrates the night as omnipotent mother of all things, as the very source of spiritual existence, and as the dark realm from which all thoughts and notions as well as all sentiments and imaginings arise. Madness, dream, somnambulism and all kinds of visionary experiences are located on the night-side of human nature. Schubert's *Geschichte der Seele* is dedicated to the significance of dream life, as in this passage cited by Wellek:

> The series of events in our lives seem to be joined approximately according to a similar association of ideas of fate, as the pictures in the dream, in other words, the series of events that have occurred and are occurring inside and outside of us, the inner theoretical principle of which we remain unaware, speaks the same language as our soul in a dream. Therefore, as soon as our mind speaks in dream language, it is able to make combinations that would not occur to us when awake […]. Dreams are a way of reckoning and combining that you and I do not understand; a higher kind of algebra, briefer and easier than ours, which only the hidden poet knows how to manipulate in his mind (Wellek 1969, 13).

There is something paradoxical about the project of illuminating the night-sides of nature and of the human mind, for, on the one hand, it implies the acceptance of irrational forces and unconscious motivations as real and powerful, while on the other hand it is linked to the project to extinguish all mysteries and to close all abysses. Casting the light of reason upon the night-sides of nature necessarily means overcoming darkness, translating something incomprehensible into human terms and destroying its original quality. A large number of Romantic texts are dedicated to the question whether this is possible at all and to what degree. And one should be aware of another implication connected with the astronomical metaphor of »day- and night-

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1. »Die Nachtstunde schlug; ich hüllte mich in meine abenteuerliche Vermummung, nahm die Pike und das Horn zur Hand, ging in die Finsternis hinaus und rief die Stunde ab, nachdem ich mich durch ein Kreuz gegen die bösen Geister geschützt hatte« (Klingemann 1974, 5).

side«: As soon as the sunlight reaches the former night-side of a planet, the former dayside falls into darkness.

We may regard this process as an ironic metaphor for the development of science in post-Enlightenment times: The dark realms of nature and the human mind are explored, but in the course of these explorations human reason itself turns opaque and becomes incomprehensible to itself. It would be an illegitimate simplification to define Romanticism simply as anti-rationalism. It can rather be regarded as meta-rationalistic, as far as the belief in a general (and rational) natural order of things and their intelligibility for the human mind is concerned. Philosophy, psychology and physics are involved in the discussion about mental and natural order and about the reasons and consequences of deviation from the ordinary.

In the late eighteenth century insanity, which often had been criminalized and punished analogously to crime, was re-interpreted as mental »disease«. In spite of the humanisation of the treatment of the mentally disabled — they were systematically submitted to medical care — this still implied exclusion from the »normal« and the definition of madness as the opposite of »reason«. The asylum was no less oppressive than other kinds of places where the »abnormal« had been locked up. In the Romantic period, empirical psychology establishes its position as a modern discipline, and there is a notable change in medical practices concerned with cases of madness. Obviously, the exclusion of the »other« is of constitutive importance for the definition of normality, and the exclusion of the unreasonable is a necessary condition to *define* the reasonable (in the literal sense of demarcation and exclusion). Madness, as the most extreme expression of the unreasonable, is more than a deficient mental condition, more than a lack of sense which could be judged reasonably, and more than a deviation from natural normality which could be corrected by the choice of the right way of thinking: It is the powerful counterpart of reason, calls the reasonableness of reason as such into question. Literary fiction profits extensively by the psychological, medical, physical, and philosophical discourses about madness, and Romantic authors like Hoffmann receive much inspiration from the works of physicians and psychologists (as, for example, Schubert, Reil, Pinel). Often their narrations resemble modified versions of case studies of mental sickness, often they actually are inspired by real cases reported in the physicians' treatises, and often enough they in turn have been quoted by psychologists and psychiatrists as illustrations of the latter's models and concepts. Complementary to the profit which literary fiction found in the physical and medical sciences, literary imagination in Romanticism stimulated the scientific and philosophical discussion about mental diseases and madness. The permanent background of the interdisciplinary interest in these topics is formed by the interest in post-rational concepts of »order«, the search for a universal law of nature. Step by step the idea of occurrences and experiences which are definitely beyond any »order« emerges. Experience is interspersed by the modern notion of contingency. It is Romantic literature which paves the way for this development.

2. The dark forces of imagination

> »We nightwatchmen and poets care little indeed about the doings of men in the day; for by this time it belongs among the settled truths that when they *act*, men are very much creatures of

> daytime, and one may gain some interest in them at the most when they *dream*« (Klingemann 1972, 45).[2]

In eighteenth-century literature madness and insanity were generally represented from an outside point of view. Certainly, different authors tried to describe those cases in a sensitive, often even an empathetic way, but the eye of reason was supervising the process of description. *Idées fixes* and obsessions thus appeared to be real only for the insane mind, not objectively. As one consequence of this view from the outside, until the end of the Enlightenment era, madness and hallucinations could be treated in a humoristic and satirical way, for instance, when poetic imagination was satirized as a hallucinatory disease. Jonathan Swift's *Tale of a Tub* (1704) encloses a »Digression concerning the Original, the Use and Improvement of *Madness* in a Commonwealth«. Here Swift refers to the pseudo-Aristotelian concept of melancholy as characteristic of great spirits, and ironically turns it into the thesis of intellectual greatness as the product of disturbed minds. And he proposes to appoint the inhabitants of Bedlam to political functions in order to profit from their »wonderful talents«. Correspondingly, Lichtenberg — indirectly satirizing the *Sturm und Drang* ideas about poetical genius — proposes to promote madmen to poets, in order to provide for ingenious poetry. In his explanations of William Hogarth's representations of a *A Rake's Progress*, Lichtenberg especially interprets the Bedlam scene, which shows a group of lunatics, with obvious irony, as the visual equivalent to solipsism and the radical consequence of idealistic philosophy: Everybody here, he asserts, is closed up in his own world, as the »world« is created by the human mind, so that there is one world for each individual.

> Each is a world to himself and none provides light for the others, and none eclipses the other; each has its own light. If there is anyone who does not yet know that it is the head which makes the world and not the world which makes the head, he should look here (Lichtenberg 1966, 267).[3]

It is exactly this idea which will be extremely stimulating for Romantic fictional prose.

From the ordinary and »reasonable« point of view, the forces of imagination were a subject of profound suspicion. Their contribution to *cognitive processes* appeared to be restricted, if not even generally doubtful. However, complementary to a tendency of *excluding imagination from cognition*, its *significance for aesthetic production* was stressed. In 1764 Kant, who tried to define the fields of different mental activities clearly, characterized madness in a »Versuch über die Krankheiten des Kopfes« (Essay on Mental Diseases). In his opinion, madness interrupts and disturbs the regular functioning of sensory perception. As a consequence, imagination and reality are confounded, and those who suffer from this kind of confusion should be sent to a hospital. This concept of madness will be of formative influence on Romantic ideas, though there

2. »Wir Nachtwächter und Poeten kümmern uns um das Treiben der Menschen am Tage in der Tat wenig; denn es gehört zur Zeit zu den ausgemachten Wahrheiten: Die Menschen sind wenn sie handeln höchst alltäglich und man mag ihnen höchstens wenn sie träumen einiges Interesse abgewinnen« (ibid., 15).

3. »Jeder ist eine Welt für sich, wovon keine der andern leuchtet und keine die andere verfinstert: jede hat ihr eignes Licht. Wer noch nicht weiß, daß der Kopf die Welt macht, und nicht die Welt den Kopf, der sehe hierher« (Lichtenberg 1972, 905 f.).

it is interpreted just the other way round: Since the confusion of the real and the imaginary is the prerogative of poetical minds, it is not by chance that hospitals and lunatic asylums are the places where *poets* can be found.

Aesthetic reflection becomes closely connected to medical discourse in Romanticism. The beautiful and the arts are regarded as objects of anthropological science, and especially the topic of genius is reflected upon from an anthropological and medical point of view. Though Plato's concept of *enthusiasmos* is still remembered well, madness, on the one hand, may be viewed as a pathological syndrome. On the other hand, a certain degree of oddness seems to be almost indispensable for artistic creativity. Aesthetic production can be interpreted as a symptom of insanity, but also as a kind of self-therapy or substitutional therapy. As Odo Marquard has pointed out (1975, 351), there is a turn of philosophy towards medicine, and vice versa in the early nineteenth century. Remarkable documents of the Romantic spirit were written by physicians such as Kielmeyer, Eschenmayer, Windischmann, Ritter, Treviranus, Oken, Troxler, Schubert, Baader, and Carus. And a number of philosophies of disease were developed, which interpret disease either as the expression of disharmony, of regression, or even of sin, as testimony to the Fall of Man. The forces of imagination are a main topic in any case.

The discovery of the complexity of man's self required subtler concepts of identity and prepared the ground for the idea that there are non-domesticated regions and forces within everybody's self — sectors that cannot be perfectly controlled by reason. The pre-Romantics already regarded irrational behaviour as a more authentic expression of the vitally feeling human creature than rationalistic theories would ever have admitted. Even fiercer outbursts of insanity could be interpreted as manifestations of emotional forces beyond the control of reason, of man's violently suppressed *nature*. Friedrich Schelling's and Arthur Schopenhauer's theories of »genius« are closely linked to their ideas about madness. Different kinds of discourses are concerned with the question of what insanity is and how to distinguish it from sanity: anthropological theories about the nature of man as well as psychological discussions on the self and its internal constitution, gnoseological theories as well as ethical precepts. Even physicists are involved from the moment when certain groups and schools popularise the idea that specific forms and utterances of madness reveal the hidden relation between the soul and the universe. The interest which Romantic literature takes in madmen, mad dreamers and visionaries supports the suggestion that the modern age begins with Romanticism, if modernity is conceived as the Occidental subject's loss of orientation and self-confidence, for modernity is characterized by the distrust of all certainties concerning the nature of man as well as the nature of things, as the increasing notion of contingency, as the expression of an unhappy conscience, as the experience of an irreversible alienation between individuals and the orders of the world with which they have to accommodate themselves.

3. Literary reflections about madness

The reasons for the interest that literary authors take in the subject of madness are at least as numerous as the different types and forms of appearance of madmen. One of the dominant thematic interests is in the dark and shadowy aspects of the self detected in its often mysterious

relations towards nature. But the forces of the unconscious are perceived as deeply ambiguous. Often enough their effects seem more authentic and are more closely related to the individual than the actions of the conscious self, and often enough the force of intuition seems more powerful and reliable than any kind of reasoning. This, however, does not lead to a confident and trustful reliance on intuition, because the knowledge of being dependent on something unconscious and uncontrollable undermines the notion of identity and destabilizes the self deeply. For instance, Heinrich von Kleist's protagonists — such as the title figures of *Die Marquise von O…* (The Marchioness of O…, 1808) and *Käthchen von Heilbronn* (Cathy of Heilbronn, 1810) — show as instructive examples the ambiguous consequences of intuition: On the one hand, intuitions are true, and intuitive behaviour allows the self to communicate more intensely and efficiently with the nature of things than reasoning and self-control ever could. On the other hand, the characters who submit their actions to intuition nevertheless feel alienated from themselves, and they even lose the notion of personal identity, as they become aware of the insoluble difference between the reflecting self and the acting self.

Some works of fictional prose do not even suggest any attempt to illuminate the enigmatic world by the means of description as a form of objectification, but stress and deepen the shadows covering man and nature. This implies the abandonment of a concept of objective writing. A permanent process of contamination linking the subject's sphere to other realms beyond the control of reason is reflected in the structure of certain literary texts. For example, E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Der Sandmann* (The Sandman, 1817) strikingly exhibits the confusion which can be produced by multi-perspective narration. And Hoffmann's narrators in general are conceived in a way that makes them doubtful witnesses, be it the narrator of *Ritter Gluck* (Chevalier Gluck, 1809) who obviously has an abundantly imaginative mind, be it »Tomcat Murr« who interprets things in his subjective manner. Romantic fictional writing can be described as a great laboratory in which different kinds of experiments are carried out. Different modes of writing are experienced not just for reasons of curiosity, but as the very serious reaction to the idea that conventional literary and rhetorical means are not sufficient to reflect the modern self and its world. By means of narration, conventional objects and experiences are subjected to alienation, established notions and convictions are questioned, the self-confidence of the mind is shattered. Persons and things reveal their double faces, and often it is impossible to identify a »subject« responsible for what happens to somebody or a »subject« responsible for the data and interpretations which form the text. The difference between truth and lying and even the difference between good and evil comes into question. Romantics are fascinated by magic and supernatural appearances, by demons, ghosts, revenants, and doubles of the self, by Gothic thrills and abnormalities of various kinds; their thematic interests concentrate on dreams and utterances of madness, psychological deviations and mental adventures. It is especially fantastic literature (in the sense which Tzvetan Todorov has given to this term) which serves as a vehicle for the Romantic interest in the ambiguity and enigmaticity of reality. Consequently, in works of fantastic literature pictures of the obscure are predominant, and the topics of insanity, lunacy, dream and hallucination play a key role. And stories about visionaries, dreamers, madmen, hallucinating eccentrics and other types of characters transgressing the borderline of mental normality are always at least implicitly, if not explicitly, pieces of self-reflexive literature. We can distinguish typologically different

kinds of Romantic »madmen« in literature, and each of them serves as a mirror-image of the poet in a specific respect:

Firstly, there is, as the noblest of all lunatics, the inspired visionary as a mouthpiece of divine (in the sense of supernatural) forces, a contemporary descendant of the ancient *poeta vates*. This visionary is not only repeatedly created by Romantic imagination, he has also served as a model for critics to interpret real poets and artists who were supposed to be partially or temporarily insane, as, for instance, Hölderlin and William Blake.

Secondly, there is the withdrawn dreamer, the unworldly lunatic, living in the world of his fantastic imagination rather than in reality, and confusing realities and visions, as, for instance, in Hoffmann's *Ritter Gluck*.

Thirdly, there is the solipsist, who takes all realities to be the creations of his own imagination and is torn between the self-confident conviction of his own omnipotence on the one hand, and the feeling of desperate solitude on the other, as, for instance, Jean Paul's Leibgeber in the *Clavis Fichtiana* (The Fichtean Key, 1800).

There is, fourthly, the social outsider and eccentric who mainly by his strange behaviour gives the impression of being insane, though he sometimes appears as the descendant of the medieval fool telling the truth which nobody else dares to tell, revealing the superficiality and falsehood of social life and insisting on the right of the individual against conventions, regularities and orders. Nikolaus Marggraf in Jean Paul's novel *Der Komet* (The Comet, 1820–22) is a thoroughly sympathetic and moral character in spite of his madness.

Fifthly, there is the melancholic, representing the depressive state of mind characteristic of mankind, because it is alienated from its natural origins and condemned to live in an imperfect world. Examples of this type can already be found in the early Romantic narrations of Wackenroder and Tieck, as for instance the musician Josef Berglinger in the *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* (Outpourings of an Art-Loving Friar, 1796).

Sixthly, there is the raving madman, victim of a real obsession which can have very different causes. Often the narrations about obsessed lunatics are characterized by ambiguities in regard to the question whether the reasons for his fixed ideas are external or internal ones. Hoffmann's musician and composer Johannes Kreisler in *Kater Murr* (Tomcat Murr, 1819–21) and Nathanael in *Der Sandmann* thus fall victim to rage for ambiguous reasons.

Seventhly, there is the dissociated mind, the subject who suffers from a loss of identity and from internal antagonisms, culminating in outbursts of schizophrenia or in visions of a *doppelgänger*. In Tieck's narration *Der blonde Eckbert* (Eckbert the Fair, 1797) the protagonist finally loses his identity. Leibgeber/Schoppe in Jean Paul's novel *Titan* (1800–03) ends up as a literally doubled self, and there are others to follow him, as for instance the protagonist in Dostoevski's *Doppelgänger* novel *Dvoinik* (The Double, 1846).

There is an eighth group consisting of individuals who rebel against orders of any kind, who claim for themselves a certain knowledge or a deeper insight into hidden truths; they are not insane in a stricter sense but represent — under different aspects — an idea of deviation from normalcy which at least resembles the deviations of lunacy. Jean Paul's humoristic figures as, for instance, Schoppe (before his tragic death) and Peter Worble (*Der Komet*) behave strangely in order to reflect the world's strangeness.

We can, on the foundation of this typology, also distinguish between certain subjects and topics in Romantic fictional prose.

(1) The first subject, or rather the first group of subjects, can be characterized by the key words appearance and reality, experience and imagination, truth and fiction. The topic is closely related to the transcendental philosophical question of what experience actually consists of and in how far there is any distinction between experience and imagination at all. Important representatives of Romantic literature are inclined to ignore this difference. Jean Paul in his treatise *Über die natürliche Magie der Einbildungskraft* (On the Natural Magic of the Imagination, 1797) discusses the close relationship between imagination, memory and experience. He is convinced that imagination participates in all mental activities and subjects the objects of memory and even those of present sensory experience to its formative power. One important consequence of the emphasis which Romantic theorists of imagination put upon the imaginative character of the experienced world itself is that poetic representation is regarded as more than just imitation of a pre-existent reality.

> Memory is merely a more restricted kind of imagination. […] People whose heads are filled with poetic creatures will not find less poetic beings on the exterior. To the real poet all life is dramatic, all neighbors are dramatis personae, all pains from which the others suffer to him are sweet illusionary pains, everything appears to him as mobile, elevated, arcadian, elusive and joyful, and he never becomes aware of how bourgeois and restricted a poor archival secretary with six children feels — supposing that he himself was such a person. Because if he himself is discomforted in his everyday life, […] he feels as if playing a guest role in Gay's *Beggars Opera*. Fate is the playwright, and wife and children are the resident actors.[4]

(2) As another topic, the problematic relation between the artist and the society of so-called ordinary and normal people is reflected in accounts of insane outsiders. A consequence of the change in the social role and function of the artist in general is that the poet's existence has become uncertain and unstable in the course of the eighteenth century. While the eccentric genius is often highly esteemed for his incompatibility with anybody else, his social existence in the bourgeois age is questioned more than ever before. More than one poet in the context of Romantic fiction becomes insane as a consequence of his isolation and society's disrespect for his works.

The Romantics are deeply convinced of the creative forces of imagination. Madness, however, is often interpreted as the exaggerated state of imaginative productivity. Literature adapts stories about madmen to reflect upon itself, upon creativity and its dark sources. Karl Philipp Moritz, one of most important predecessors of Romanticism in Germany, in vol. 3 of his *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde* (Magazine of Empirical Psychology, 1785) reports a strange case

4. »Gedächtnis ist nur eine *eingeschränktere* Phantasie. […] Leute, deren Kopf voll poetischer Kreaturen ist, finden auch außerhalb desselben keine geringern. Dem echten Dichter ist das ganze Leben dramatisch, alle Nachbarn sind ihm Charaktere, alle fremde Schmerzen sind ihm süße der Illusion, alles erscheint ihm beweglich, erhoben, arkadisch, fliehend und froh, und er kommt nie dahinter, wie bürgerlich-eng einem armen Archivsekretär mit sechs Kindern — gesetzt er wäre das selber — zumute ist. Denn ist er selber bürgerlich unglücklich […]: so kommt es ihm vor, als mach' er eine Gastrolle in Gays *Bettleroper*; das Schicksal ist der Theaterdichter, und Frau und Kind sind die stehende Truppe« (Jean Paul 1962, IV: 195, 198).

of inspiration: about verses written by a sleeping author, who after having woken up, cannot even remember his work by night. Psychologists like Moritz and physicians like Schubert with their descriptions of strange mental experiences and aberrant states of mind provide Romantic literature with a rich fund of models, concepts, and exemplary cases, just when madness is becoming a literary subject of pre-eminent interest, because it is a suitable metaphor for the poet's own existence. So, for instance, August Wilhelm Schlegel defines poetry as a state of dream, as »a deliberate and conscious dreaming«.[5]

The generally ambiguous attitude of Romanticism towards poetry as the counterpart of ordinary life is mainly reflected by stories about insane characters. Especially those authors who are sensitive to the discrepancy between the idea of an autonomous Romantic poetry on the one hand, and Christian values on the other, as for instance Brentano and Eichendorff, usually stress the affinities between poetry and madness in a warning sense. In Brentano's novel *Godwi*, we meet a character called Werdo, who is the plaything of madness and poetry in their struggle to seize power over his mind: »It seems to me as if madness and poetry were struggling with each other for Werdo's spirit, one or the other grasping him victoriously. Madness to me is the unfortunate brother of poetry«.[6] Eichendorff's novella *Das Schloß Dürande* (Castle Dürande, 1837) closes with a warning addressed to the reader — the warning not to wake up the wild beast sleeping within one's own breast, because it might break out and tear one to pieces. The Romantic interest in madness is at least to some degree stimulated by the fact that a remarkable number of contemporary poets suffered from mental diseases and obsessions or became addicted to drugs or alcohol (Hoffmann, Nerval, Poe, De Quincey spring to mind among the most popular poets).

4. »Nachtwachen« and »Nachtstücke«

> »The character of the times is patched and pieced together like a fool's coat, and worst of all, the fool buttoned in it would like to appear serious…« (Klingemann 1972, 49).[7]

The narrator of Bonaventura's *Nachtwachen* is not a madman in a stricter sense of the word, but he sympathizes with several forms of melancholy and mental eccentricity, which finally culminate in real insanity. In his portrait of a dark and disordered world he depicts a lunatic asylum as the mirror image of society itself. Each lunatic in his separate cell is obsessed by another *idée fixe*, and the narrator himself is one of the asylum's inhabitants, as he does not represent any superior point of view in the novel. There is no reasonable point of view from which the world's madness could be criticized; there is no truth which could serve as a measure to judge dreams and illusions; there is no mental sanity correcting obsessions.

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5. »ein freiwilliges und waches Träumen« (A.W. Schlegel 1963, 283).

6. »Es ist mir, als stritten Wahnsinn und Poesie sich um Werdos Geist, und siegend faßte ihn diese oder jener. Der Wahnsinn ist mir wie der unglückliche Bruder der Poesie« (Brentano 1970, 126 f.).

7. »Der Zeitcharakter ist zusammengeflickt und gestoppelt wie eine Narrenjacke, und was das Ärgste dabei ist — der Narr, der darin steckt, möchte ernsthaft scheinen« (Klingemann 1974, 17).

> So it goes […] in the general lunatic asylum out of whose windows so many heads are looking, some partially, some totally insane; even in here there are yet smaller madhouses built in for particular fools. Into one of these smaller ones they now brought me out of the large one, presumably because they considered the latter to be too densely populated (ibid., 149).[8]

All the central subjects of Romantic fiction are integrated into Bonaventura's *Nachtwachen*. Mainly the inner dissociation of the self, which causes the loss of the subject's identity, and the lack of distinctiveness between reality and appearance can be regarded as leading topics. A series of pictures, similes and traditional concepts are functionalised to reflect on these topics: the world as an asylum and the world as a stage, man as an actor hidden behind more than one mask and, in the final analysis, identical with his masks, so that when they are all pulled away, there is nothing left behind them. The sixteen »watches« of Bonaventura's *Nachtwachen* are characterized by their radical attacks on every system of rules, especially the rules and orders of reason. Since the world itself and as a whole is regarded as unreasonable, insanity is the presumptive normal mental condition, and the narrator consequently adapts to the insanity of the other characters, though his insanity is only one mask among others. As there is, however, no real identity behind the masks, his madness is no disguise of a true face, but the ultimate truth to be gained.

Bonaventura's small novel is a programmatic text: Romantic literature in general may be characterised as a night-watch, leading from one dark episode to another, casting light only on different kinds of madness, pointing to the indifference between life and dream, provoking the question whether occurrences are caused by fate or by chance. The *Nachtwachen* reveals the human soul as the darkest area in the whole world. As its narrator is transgressing the borderline between the day- and the night-side of the world and of the human mind, he indirectly reflects the self-interpretation of early Romantic literature, following directly upon the Enlightenment but now turning to realms beyond the reach of clear notions as well as beyond unambiguous moral evaluation. His imagination is, in spite of his emotions and passions, still controlled by reason. Subsequent Romantic fictional characters will get closer to madness themselves, while their poetical self-reflections will continue to serve to underline the autonomy of art: Because it becomes impossible to tell plainly where experience ends and imagination begins, where reason ends and folly begins, so the poetical interpretation of the world, represented by the view of the »un-normal«, no longer can be criticised from the perspective of reason, morality, religion, and science.

While the outside viewpoint vanishes, the moment of reflection remains, reflexiveness being the main structural characteristic of Romantic literature which claims to be autonomous. E.T.A. Hoffmann called a collection of his stories *Nachtstücke* (Night-Pieces, Nocturnes). This term is derived from art criticism. The light in the darkness of a painted »Nachtstück« can spring from different sources: from lamps and candles in the hands of human characters, but from heaven as well. Representative examples were painted by Caravaggio and Rembrandt,

8. »Ebenso ist es mit dem allgemeinen Irrenhause, aus dessen Fenstern so viele Köpfe schauen, teils mit partiellem, teils mit totalem Wahnsinne; auch in dieses sind noch kleinere Tollhäuser für besondere Narren hineingebaut. In eins von diesen kleinern brachten sie mich jetzt aus dem großen, vermutlich weil sie dieses für zu stark besetzt hielten« (ibid., 77).

Georges de la Tour and Claude Lorrain. Hoffmann knew well and admired Correggio's famous »Night« painting, which was exhibited in the Dresdner Gemäldegalerie. Whereas the expression »Nachtstück«, in Germany, originally applied only to paintings, the English equivalent »night-piece« applied to other kinds of art works as well. The analogous term in music was the nocturne. Jean Paul and August Wilhelm Schlegel too use it as the name of a literary genre. The expression »Nachtstück« acquires a double sense: the night piece can be interpreted not only as a representation of a nightly scene or mood, but also as a »piece« of the night — as a piece of mystery which itself can not be lighted up entirely. Romantic fiction in general claims to be the one as well as the other: »night-watch« and »night-piece« at the same time.

5. National varieties of reports from the »night-side«

> »Everyday experience teaches that one tolerates fools in all places« (Klingemann 1972, 217).[9]

Authors from all over Europe and America — late heirs such as Edgar Allan Poe and Ambrose Bierce included — take part in the exploration of the night-side. Hence, different emphases in the literary reflection upon madness and related phenomena allow us to speak about particular »national« interests, though with a certain *reservatio mentalis*. The following sections deal with specific varieties of dream, madness and vision labelled as »national«, but this is not meant in an exclusive sense. There are examples of texts belonging to the »French« variety in German literature, there are others exhibiting affinities to the »Russian« variety, and so forth.

5.1 *Night-sides, madness, dream and vision, I: The French variety*

The »French variety« of Romanticism is characterized by continuous reflections about the limits of »reason« and about the order of things. Tzvetan Todorov in his *Introduction à la littérature fantastique* defines fantastical effects as contrasts to a background of the idea of a reasonable order of the world. Reason is challenged, and reason must respond: either by integrating the moments of disorder into its own map of the world, or by accepting its own limits. The concept as such may be called »French«, but only in regard to its discursive provenience: Roger Caillois and Tzvetan Todorov are the heirs of the French Enlightenment. Their traditional French confidence in reason is superseded in Romantic discourse by other general and integrative metaphysical concepts of the universe. This »French« interest in universal laws likewise forms the background for the nineteenth-century reception of Romantic medicine, nature philosophy, mesmerism, and psychology in France. Authors like Nerval, Gautier, Lamartine, and Balzac adapt the idea of magnetism to depict a world of universal correspondences, which include the realms of dream and hallucination and the experience of a night-side of the world by integrating it into a spiritual order of things. Mesmerism interprets the universe in a new way, and it claims to be an experimental and empiric science. Romantic physics in their general attempt to integrate the night-sides of the world into holistic concepts stick to the idea of »order«, even under radically transformed preconditions.

9. »die tägliche Erfahrung lehrt, daß man an allen Plätzen Narren duldet« (ibid., 124).

In his dreams, man discovers a second life which forms the counterpart of his everyday reality, and he becomes aware of his integration into universal correspondences. The forces of the unconscious are regarded as proofs of the mysterious coherence of all beings in the universe — of a mysterious, but powerful »order«. Nerval's narrative poem in prose *Aurélia* (1855) at its very beginning characterises dream as a gate to the dark side of the world.

> Our dreams are a second life. I have never been able to penetrate without a shudder those ivory or horned gates which separate us from the invisible world. The first moments of sleep are an image of death […]. Little by little a vague underground cavern grows lighter and the pale gravely immobile shapes that live in limbo detach themselves from the shadows and the night (Nerval 1957, 115).[10]

The protagonist in *Aurélia* becomes convinced that his visions of the other side of reality reveal to him profound truths about the universe, and he feels initiated into a spiritual order which links body and mind, man and nature. Even ordinary appearances must be regarded as manifestations of a universal spirit, and each creature can be a messenger of the mystery, even unconsciously.

> Many times the idea has occurred to me that in certain serious moments in life some Spirit of the outer world becomes suddenly embodied in the form of an ordinary person, and influences or tries to influence us without the individual in question having any knowledge of it or remembering anything about it (ibid., 120).[11]

From an enlightened, rationalistic point of view, ideas of this kind might be regarded as insane, as proofs of madness or rapture, or at least of an inclination to hallucinatory dreams, but Nerval does not denounce his protagonist as the victim of a mental disease. On the contrary, he uses him as his mouthpiece to proclaim Romantic ideas about the world's universal laws, including the reality of a night-side of nature and mind. In spite of the positive consciousness which may be supported by such ideas of man being integrated into nature without any rupture, there is, however, one aspect of this concept of universal coherence, which makes it a nightmare nevertheless: The forces of the spiritual world appear as more powerful than man's individual will. And so he must be suspicious that he might not be the real subject of his thoughts and actions, but an instrument of something beyond his own consciousness, a simple object, moved by the forces of nature.

> From the outlines of leaves, colours, sounds, and smells, emanated for me hitherto unknown harmonies. »How have I been able to live so long,« I asked myself, »outside Nature without identifying myself with it? Everything lives, moves, everything corresponds; the magnetic rays, emanating either from myself or from others, cross the limitless chain of created things

10. »Le Rêve est une seconde vie. Je n'ai pu percer sans frémir ces portes d'ivoire ou de corne qui nous séparent du monde invisible. Les premiers instants du sommeil sont l'image de la mort […]. C'est un souterrain vague qui s'éclaire peu à peu, et où se dégagent de l'ombre et de la nuit les pâles figures gravement immobiles qui habitent le séjour des limbes« (Nerval 1960, I: 357).

11. »Cette idée m'est revenue bien de fois, que, dans certains moments graves de la vie, tel Esprit du monde extérieur s'incarnait tout à coup en la forme d'une personne ordinaire, et agissait ou tentait d'agir sur nous, sans que cette personne en eût la *connaissance ou en gardât souvenir*« (ibid., 363).

> unimpeded; it is a transparent network which covers the world, and its slender threats communicate themselves by degrees to the planets and stars. Captive now upon earth, I commune with the chorus of the stars who share in my joys and sorrows.« Then I shuddered to think that even this mystery might be surprised. »If electricity,« I told myself, »which is the magnetism of physical bodies, can be forced in a direction imposed on it by laws, that is all the more reason why hostile and tyrannical spirits may be able to enslave the intelligences of others, and make use of their divided strength for their own purposes of domination (ibid., 167).[12]

Magnetic and mesmeristic experiments seem to prove this human inclination to transform oneself into an object of the »Other«, to lose one's state as a self-governed subject. And, again, dream, madness, rapture, and similar mental aberrations appear as the gates through which the »Other« enters into the subject's territory.

There is a remarkable number of examples of Romantic prose fiction about magnetic sleep, mesmeric dreams, and other forms and results of hypnotic practice. At least indirectly all these stories raise the question about the order of things, which can be formulated as an alternative: Either the visions of a night-side of the world are true; or they are illusionary and can be integrated into scientific concepts of mental aberration and disease — in this case the only night-side of nature is the human inclination to misinterpret and misunderstand the order of things and to fall victim to autosuggestion. What kind of laws govern the world?

Across the Rhine, we find a related probing. E.T.A. Hoffmanns story *The Sandman*, integrated into his *Nachtstücke* (Night-pieces), is arranged in a way which confronts different perspectives. The fate of Hoffmann's protagonist Nathanael is presented from the point of view of reason as well as from the point of view of somebody who believes in the reality of supernatural forces. To the representatives of reason, Nathanael, who takes on the second part, appears insane from the beginning and finally even behaves like a raving madman. The very beginning of his first letter, which forms the first part of the whole text, expresses Nathanael's fear of evil forces and of a loss of self-government, but also his awareness of a »reasonable« discourse which will object to his own viewpoint. He tries to adopt the reasonable interpretation of his experiences, but he can not conceal what is actually moving him: a feeling of horror. Nathanael's mind is troubled by dark images of mysterious threats, though he obviously tries to convince himself that his ideas are ridiculous. He even anticipates the reasonable admonitions of the others who regard him as a day-dreamer. Hoffmann in his composition of letters and framing narration simulates two different discourses which proclaim two different orders of the world: the rationalistic discourse, represented by Nathanael's fiancée Clara, who is convinced that Nathanael is mad and that the world can be made

12. »des découpures de feuilles, des couleurs, des odeurs et des sons, je voyais ressortir des harmonies jusqu' alors inconnues. ›Comment, me disais-je, ai-je pu exister si longtemps hors de la nature et sans m'identifier à elle? Tout vit, tout agit, tout se correspond; les rayons magnétiques émanés de moi-même ou des autres traversent sans obstacle la chaîne infinie de choses créées; c'est un réseau transparent qui couvre le monde, et dont les fils déliés se communiquent de proche en proche aux planètes et aux étoiles. Captif en ce moment sur la terre, je m'entretiens avec le chœur des astres, qui prend part à mes joies et à mes douleurs!‹ Aussitôt je frémis en songeant que ce mystère même pouvait être surpris. ›Si électricité, me dis-je, qui est le magnétisme des corps physiques, peut subir une direction qui lui impose des lois, à plus forte raison des esprits hostiles et tyranniques peuvent asservir les intelligences et se servir de leurs forces divisées dans un but de domination‹« (ibid., 403 f.).

transparent (»clear«) by human reason, and non-rationalistic discourse, represented by Nathanael, who insists on the opacity of world's laws, which are more powerful than the human mind and which are incorporated in the mysterious character of the »sandman«. Clara's view of the world appears at the same time to be sensible and superficial. Because she represents the discourse of enlightened psychology, her admonitions appear as ambiguous: They can, on the one hand, be read as encouraging and moral, or, on the other hand, as an intricate part of the big trap in which Nathanael is bound to be caught. The »sandman«, as the very centre of Nathanael's nightmare, does not really exist in Clara's opinion, and she regards Nathanael's idea that he is controlled and manipulated by the dark mysterious forces of an unknown fate as an *idée fixe*. According to Clara, infantile feelings of disgust towards a person, the impressiveness of a fairy-tale motif, and other psychological conditions have caused Nathanael's horror. To her, everything can be explained »naturally«, and to some degree, her psychological explanations appear convincing.

Hoffmann's narrative strategy is subtle enough to confuse the reader concerning what he should believe himself, and which order of things exactly is reflected by Nathanael's case. The text as a whole is characterized by irritation strategies: Nathanael's outbursts of violence and raving are depicted from the »reasonable« point of view, which means: from the »outside«; but the episodes in which his »madness« slowly invades normality are told from his own perspective, so that the perspective of the »other« subverts the idea of objectivity, and the borderline between experience and hallucination becomes questionable. At any rate — even if Clara's psychological explanation is true — man must be regarded as the object of dark and mysterious forces. She seems not to be aware of the desolate picture of the human mind implied in her own interpretation, which locates everything in the self. Maybe it is even more desolate than Nathanael's belief in the supernatural.

> If there is a dark power which treacherously attaches a thread to our heart to drag us along a perilous and ruinous path that we would not otherwise have trod; if there is such a power, it must form inside us, from part of us, must be identical with ourselves; only in this way can we believe in it and give it the opportunity it needs if it is to accomplish its secret work. If our mind is firm enough and adequately fortified by the joys of life to be able to recognize alien and hostile influences as such, and to proceed tranquilly along the path of our own choosing and propensities, then this mysterious power will perish in its futile attempt to assume a shape that is supposed to be a reflection of ourselves (Hoffmann 1969, I: 146).[13]

Not accidentally, Clara's admonitions to return to reason are formulated in the form of conditional sentences: If the individual's mind is clear and solidly self-confident, it can resist any dark forces, if man governs himself by reason, he escapes from the government of mysterious fate — but what if not?

13. **»Gibt es eine dunkle Macht, die so recht feindlich und verräterisch einen Faden in unser Inneres legt, wor**an sie uns dann festpackt und fortzieht auf einem gefahrvollen verderblichen Wege, den wir sonst nicht betreten haben würden — gibt es eine solche Macht, so muß sie in uns sich, wie wir selbst gestalten, ja unser Selbst werden; denn nur *so* glauben wir an sie und räumen ihr den Platz ein, dessen sie bedarf, um jenes geheime Werk zu vollbringen. Haben wir festen, durch das heitre Leben gestärkten, Sinn genug, um fremdes feindliches Einwirken als solches stets zu erkennen und den Weg, in den uns Neigung und Beruf geschoben, ruhigen Schrittes zu verfolgen, so geht wohl jene unheimliche Macht unter in dem vergeblichen Ringen nach der Gestaltung, die unser eignes Spiegelbild sein sollte« (Hoffmann 1985, III: 18 f.).

5.2 *Night-sides, madness, dream and vision II: The German variety*

While the quest for the »order« of things either *according to* or *in opposition to* rationalism may be regarded as characteristic of the »French« variety of »night-side literature« (a variety which is represented by a large number of texts from all over Europe), the idea of different and antagonistic individual and subjective perspectives on the world may be called typical for »German« literary reports from the night-side of existence. Madmen, dreamers, opium-eaters, alcoholics, and — most significantly — poets take over the part of those who interpret reality according to very personal opinions and theories. As a consequence of their subjective reading of reality, they are in a certain sense locked up into their own world like solipsists. The solipsist is just the twin or the mirror-image of the idealistic philosopher. German Romanticism's affinities to idealistic thought can be illustrated by the critical, yet fascinated reception of Fichte's radicalised version of subjective idealism by his contemporaries.

Ludwig Tieck, in his tale *Der Blonde Eckbert*, superficially imitates the folk-tale: His protagonist is a knight, there is a magic forest, an old woman resembling a witch, and sudden metamorphic transformations which appear as magic. The story of Eckbert's wife Bertha is conceived according to folk-tales about poor children who are fortunate and achieve a higher social position: As a formerly poor girl she gains possession of a treasure and later gets married to a knight. But upon a closer look, everything is different. The witch-like old woman is betrayed by Bertha, and the treasure is stolen from her by the ungrateful girl, who is, however, in a certain sense, the victim of subtle seduction. The couple's existence rests on the foundation of this guilt, and revenge is inevitable. This revenge of the old woman is incorporated by a man who seems to be a friend but is just a disguised personification of the »other«. Bertha becomes aware of the deep ambiguity of all things, and she dies under mysterious circumstances; and Eckbert himself suffers as well from analogous ambiguities: He no longer can tell good from evil, nor friends from enemies. Faces and characters lose their shapes, everything which seemed to be clear suddenly shows its dark and mysterious reverse. Eckbert gets self-suspicious; he is afraid of being mad and is unable to decide whether his hallucinations transform reality into a hieroglyphic maze of ambiguous apparitions, or if the world by itself is such a maze: »There were moments when he thought he was mad and that everything was merely the product of his imagination« (Tieck 1993, 32).[14] Identities dissolve, finally even the identity of Eckbert himself, and neither the protagonist nor the reader can distinguish dream from reality any more. Nothing is resistant to hallucinatory transformation. Even his former life with his deceased wife to Eckbert's suspicious and doubtful mind seems to have been only a dream.

> All his wits and senses now deserted him. He no longer knew whether he was living a dream or whether it was really a woman called Bertha who had been the dream; the supernatural became confused with the everyday, the world around him was bewitched and he was incapable of summoning up a thought or a memory (ibid., 32 f.).[15]

14. »Oft dachte er, daß er wahnsinnig sei und sich nur selber durch seine Einbildung alles erschaffe« (Tieck 1997, 22).

15. »Jetzt war es um das Bewußtsein, um die Sinne Eckberts geschehn; er konnte sich nicht aus dem Rätsel herausfinden, ob er jetzt träume oder ehemals von einem Weibe Bertha geträumt habe; das Wunderbarste

The final scene of Tieck's story shows us the protagonist lying on the ground, fallen into actual madness, and about to die from desperation: There is no solution to his doubts, no return to any solid reality: The knight is a solipsistic self locked up into his individual perceptions which never reveal to him any reliable truth about the mysterious world. The past is present, present is his guilt, and the indiscernible voices of nature torture the mind of the insane with incomprehensible messages. »Now totally out of his mind, Eckbert lay on the ground, dying, his head filled with the confused babble of the old woman talking, the dog barking and the bird singing its song over and over again« (ibid., 33).[16]

In spite of its fairy-tale motifs, Tieck's story is already very modern as is the portrait of insanity deriving from the alienation between the self and the other. And there are numerous successors to the hopelessly solipsistic knight Eckbert.

E.T.A. Hoffmann's stories are filled with madmen and melancholics, dissociated selves and lunatics, visionaries and eccentric dreamers. Each of them seems to be locked up in a realm of personal obsessions, and often enough there is no »Clara« to represent the order of reason. The narrators, at any rate, refuse to take over the part of a mouthpiece of rational discourse. Hoffmann's career as a writer started with the narration about »Ritter Gluck«, an eccentric who is either the ghost of the deceased composer Gluck returned to earth or a real lunatic, but in any case an insane character, an artist locked up in his imaginary world of sounds and synaesthetic visions. In addition to this, Gluck's interlocutor, the narrator himself, is suspicious of being at least an unworldly day-dreamer whom the reader should not believe too confidently. With *Ritter Gluck*, Hoffmann has already developed the fundamental strategy of ambiguous narration which is altogether characteristic of his entire work and which confronts the reader permanently with the unanswerable question of how to distinguish mad dreams from real experiences. There is no absolute truth, the reader has to learn, as everybody reads the illusionary world of appearances according to his own pattern. Romantic narrators themselves provide only subjective interpretations, and often they are suspicious of mental »abnormality«. But there is no »normality« to which the so-called »ab-normal« could be compared, and so reality dissociates into different realities. In the centre of each reality, there is the single subject.

The Serapiontic brotherhood is a group of young men who alternately tell stories forming Hoffmann's novella cycle named after their eponymous hero, a lunatic identifying with the legendary hermit Serapion who lived in the early Christian age and suffered martyrdom. This young man is characterized by many talents; he is intelligent and well-informed and, moreover, he is a poet. His poetic gifts and his *idée fixe* do not exclude each other. On the contrary, it seems as if there were a special affinity between the poet's force of imagination and outbursts of lunacy.

> This hermit had once been one of the most brilliant intellects, one of the most universally-accomplished men […]. In all that did not touch the idea that he was the hermit Serapion who

vermischte sich mit dem Gewöhnlichsten, die Welt um ihn her war verzaubert und er keines Gedankens, keiner Erinnerung mächtig« (ibid., 23).

16. »Eckbert lag wahnsinnig und verscheidend auf dem Boden; dumpf und verworren hörte er die Alte sprechen, den Hund bellen und den Vogel sein Lied wiederholen« (ibid., 24).

> fled into the Theban desert in the days of the Emperor Decius, and suffered martyrdom in Alexandria, his mind was completely unaffected« (Hoffmann 1886, 11 f.).[17]

Each attempt to subject this madman to a cure of reason is condemned to failure, as he has detected reality's dependence on the respective point of view and insists on his right to interpret the world according to his own ideas. A first venture to re-integrate him fails, and a sympathetic medical doctor — after experiencing the limits of his therapy — lets him escape again.

When a well-meaning visitor tries to convince him that he is not the Christian hermit but a contemporary member of society, and that he is not living in the Theban desert but in a forest near Bamberg, the lunatic reproaches his reasonable counterpart for being mad himself, because — as the hermit very reasonably explains — either reality really conforms to Serapion's ideas, which would mean that the reasonable visitor is wrong, or Serapion is actually mad — and in this case the attempt to convince him by the means of reason would be a thoroughly insane enterprise. This response is more than a slightly paradoxical joke about incurable madness: It points to the general problem of interpreting the world which arises from the very instance in which reality is regarded as produced and formed by subjective interpretation.

> It is insanity that is in question between us. But if one of us two is suffering from that sad malady, it is evident that you are so in a much greater degree than I. […]. Now, if I am really insane, none but a lunatic can think that he could argue me out of the Fixed Idea which insanity has engendered to me« (ibid., 16).[18]

Serapion, living happily in the world of his own imagining and within the society of imaginary people who visit him and talk to him, is a solipsist and a poetic visionary at the same time. The senses, according to his theory — which is inspired by subjective idealism — are only machines coordinated and supervised by the mind, and it is the mind which creates and forms the world according to its own structures and notions. As, therefore, the human spirit is the real organ of perception, then it is spirit as well which must judge the reality or unreality of things and events, and hence whatever mind declares to be real is real.

Hoffmann's artists are altogether dreamers as well as madmen. Like Ritter Gluck and Serapion, the composer and conductor Johannes Kreisler is an emblematic character, reflecting the incommensurability of the artist's consciousness to what ordinary people regard as true reality. Obsession is irrefutable in Hoffmann's world, especially artistic obsession. Although the artist's and the poet's points of view differ from the normal way of interpreting the world, the conventional ideas about reality do not represent the truth; they give proof of another kind of obsession, the obsession of reason believing in its own power.

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17. »Dieser Einsiedler war sonst einer der geistreichsten vielseitig ausgebildetsten Köpfe […]. Bis auf die Idee, daß er der Einsiedler Serapion sei, der unter dem Kaiser Dezius in die Thebaische Wüste floh und in Alexandrien den Märtyrertod litt, und was aus dieser folgte, schien sein Geist gar nicht zerrüttet« (Hoffmann 1985, IV: 19 f.).

18. »Es ist vom Wahnsinn die Rede, leidet einer von uns an dieser bösen Krankheit, so ist das offenbar bei Ihnen der Fall in viel höherem Grade als bei mir. […] Bin ich nun wirklich wahnsinnig, so kann nur ein Verrückter wähnen, daß er imstande sein werde mir die fixe Idee, die der Wahnsinn erzeugt hat, auszureden« (ibid., 19, 24).

Jean Paul is, like Hoffmann, very intensely concerned about the solipsistic tendencies of Romantic-idealistic spirit. As novelist and theorist, he reflects several times explicitly upon Fichte's idealistic philosophy, which proclaims the transcendental subject to be the origin of the world — of a world which is »set up« by the subject. Malignly and ironically, Jean Paul transforms Fichte's transcendental subject into an empirical subject and presents to the reader solipsists imprisoned in their inner worlds, convinced of their omnipotence, but tragically isolated. Leibgeber, the fictitious author of Jean Paul's »Clavis Fichtiana«, the appendix to the novel *Titan,* is the most impressive mouthpiece of radical solipsism. Leibgeber's dream is a vision of omnipotence — and at least metaphorically it points to the omnipotence of absolute poetical imagination which deliberately creates new worlds. The reverse of Leibgeber's self-confidence as a godlike creator is, however, a vision of destructiveness and solitude. Everyone, according to the radical solipsist, creates his own universe, and he may tear it down, destroy it and rebuild it as he likes; he will never get into contact with any other subject. In Bonaventura's *Night Watches* there is an analogous character pointing to solipsism as the very challenge to Romantic philosophical reflection: the »Insane World Creator« holding a »Monologue«, in which he describes the universe as »a queer thing here in my hand« (Klingemann 1972, 149), and, of course, he is the inhabitant of an insane asylum. With such a vision of a universe which is conceived according to idealistic notions, Jean Paul not only parodies Fichte's philosophy, he also crosses the borderline between strictly logical thought and imagination, and, moreover, he provides for an arrangement in which philosophy itself goes mad. One of the most problematic consequences of those solipsistic dreams for Jean Paul is the dissolution of morality: If there is no communication between the solipsistic selves, there can be no ethical dimension to life, as moral or immoral behaviour is necessarily a behaviour towards other subjects. Leibgeber, convinced of his identity as the world's creator, and in his own opinion caught up in his own universe, falls definitely into madness.

> I am not only […] my own redeemer, nay, I am also my own Devil, Scourge master, and Goodman Death […]. All around me a vast petrified mankind — no love, admiration or prayer, no hope and no purpose glows in the black uninhabited silence — Myself so alone, nowhere a heartbeat, no life, nothing around me, and apart from me nothing but nothing (Jean Paul 1992, 235).[19]

Both as a novelist as well as in his theoretical works, Jean Paul has continuously reflected on the tension between the world of the bourgeois and the eccentric ways of poetic minds, about the conflict between imaginative transformations of the world and everyday-judgement about so-called realities. In different respects the borderline between sanity and insanity is questioned, especially in cases where Jean Paul's eccentric heroes play the part of fools who confront the world with uncomfortable truths. »Humorism« (»Humor«), in the special meaning Jean Paul gave to this term, implies a paradoxical combination of despising the world and loving it for its insufficiency, of being continuously aware of the finite nature of all things and at the same time

19. »Ich bin nicht bloß […], mein eigner Erlöser, sondern auch mein eigner Teufel, Freund Hein und Knutenmeister […] Rund um mich eine weite versteinerte Menschheit — In der finstern unbewohnten Stille glüht keine Liebe, keine Bewunderung, kein Gebet, keine Hoffnung, kein Ziel — Ich so allein, nirgends ein Pulsschlag, kein Leben, nichts um mich und ohne mich nichts als nichts« (Jean Paul 1980, III: 1056).

feeling sympathetic towards their finiteness. Paradoxical attitudes produce paradoxical forms of behaviour which — as Jean Paul's humoristic characters show exemplarily — from an ordinary point of view can scarcely be distinguished from lunatic behaviour. The eccentricity of these humoristic figures often alienates them from society, and it is but a step into solipsistic isolation. Apart from the humorists' party in Jean Paul's world there are various kinds of characters which can in different respects be compared to them — sentimental poets and day-dreamers as well as the cynic Dr. Katzenberger — and who contribute to making the idea of reasonable »normality« questionable and, finally, untenable.

The protagonist of Jean Paul's last fragmentary novel *Der Komet*, Nikolaus Marggraf, is mainly characterized by traits of the poetical day-dreamer. He is raised as the son of the pharmacist Henoch Elias Marggraf, although his mother has on her deathbed declared him to be the illegitimate son of a prince. In his early years the boy already shows his inclination to play roles and to identify with them. Alternately he is a saint, a hero, a famous man — and a secret prince. When he grows up, he sticks to the secret prince's identity, first confirmed by his own stepfather, later by a fantastic stroke of luck: He succeeds in creating artificial diamonds from ordinary carbon, and so he is enabled to travel about the world in search of his noble father. His permanent conviction of his identity as a prince causes strange and often ridiculous misunderstandings and misinterpretations. As an allegorical representation of his specific concept of the world, he acquires an artificial small town consisting of portable pieces of scenery and gathers people around himself as his personal »royal household«. Each member of this household is eccentric in an individual and specific way, and among them there is the author Jean Paul himself in his youth, calling himself »Kandidat Richter«. In his portrait of the artist as a young man, Jean Paul stresses the unworldliness of the future poet Jean Paul. In more than one respect Jean Paul arranges his novel as a repetition of Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1805–15), as his hero again follows a fixed idea and interprets all the world according to it. The world itself is populated by characters all of which appear as insane or eccentric in different respects. No one of them represents a reasonable point of view, as there is no reliable reason at all, neither in nature and history nor in the human mind. Peter Worble, who is Nikolaus Marggraf's Sancho, regards things from a sober point of view, even arranging and manipulating them, but nevertheless refuses to take the part of reason, because he does not believe in it. Not by chance, he is a specialist in hypnotic practice and somnambulistic dreams. Apart from him there is another character complementary to Nikolaus Marggraf, Kain, the »leather man«, the most diabolic character ever invented by Jean Paul, but nevertheless another deplorable inhabitant of a world which is in profound disorder. In mad visions Kain falls victim to solipsism, hatred and the desire for destruction but, though only temporarily, there are other dreams which transform him into somebody who loves mankind and tries to be good. This means a secular and relative salvation — the only kind that remains possible in a world of dreams, contingencies and as-ifs.

In his last novel, Jean Paul not only reinstates the constellation of characters in *Don Quixote* but also creates literary doubles of the Saviour, Peter (Petrus) and the Devil (Kain), and tells a parable about truth and fiction, experience and imagination, in which the future author Friedrich Richter (Jean Paul's actual name) acts as one odd person among others. This novel, therefore, illustrates the two important consequences of the Romantic discourse about reason and madness: Reality becomes ambiguous and ultimately »multiple« because there is no

consensus about how to describe and to interpret it any more. The social world appears to be an asylum where everybody is governed by his own fixed idea about reality and about himself. Nobody represents a standard of normality. The fool can even represent the utopian forces of art and the idea of humanity, because he has escaped the government of reason, which may imply self-alienation and terror.

Apart from the multiplication of realities, which is drastically illustrated by group portraits of lunatics, each one of them living in his own cell, or by the subversive effects of narrative constructions in which the narrator himself is mad, and apart from the tendency to separate the reasoning about truth and fancy from the ethical reasoning about good and evil, there is another predominant interest of Romantic discourse reflected in the representation of madness, and, again, Jean Paul's last novel may serve in illustration: The identity of the self has become questionable, and instead of remaining the one and fixed point from which the world can be judged and governed, it too escapes self-judgment and self-government. In various forms and modifications Romantic fiction reflects on the dissociated, multiple and fragmentary self. In Jean Paul's novel the characters can superficially be identified in their respective specificity, but their identity nevertheless appears to be questionable for several reasons. First, the novel reflects the idea that the individual's mind is infiltrated by dreams and hypnotic practices; Second, the process of representation is explicitly reflected as a process of dissociation (as the protagonist, who is portrayed by a number of painters, is thus transformed into a corresponding number of persons); Third, the close relationship between the different characters suggests that they might be understood as different manifestations of one complex personality (an idea which is also suggested by Jean Paul's novel *Flegeljahre* [The Awkward Years, 1804/05] or by *Siebenkäs*, 1796/97); and, finally, there obviously is no originally individual character in the novel in the first place: All protagonists are copies of former literary characters. It is Nikolaus Marggraf's specific obsession to believe in his identity and distinctness, though this is no more than the foolish dream of somebody who has been dreamt of by other fools before.

Two important discursive movements can be detected with extreme clearness in the »German« variety of Romantic fictions about madmen, insane characters and dreamers:

(1) The modern mind being aware of the world's contingency in accordance with the idea that there is no absolute order of things and notions, but an infinite multiplicity of models and concepts of the world, none of which is absolutely true. The further development of subjective idealism is ambiguous in itself, as it leads to constructivistic concepts on the one hand, to radical scepticism on the other. In the aftermath of Romantic discourse, experience has been characterized by the idea of an »as if«: Things can be experienced and described as if they were true, and communication between different individuals can be established as if there were a common foundation called reality.

(2) The progressive distinction between discourses about realities, about good and evil, and about art. The madman who falls victim to obsessions and mental deviations is not necessarily bad, and he may even be of eminent poetic talent. As a kind of newly discovered idol, Don Quixote makes his way from Romanticism through to early modernism. An obsessed fool on the one hand, he is exemplarily good on the other — and he is a leading model of all heroes of imagination.

5.3 *Romantic inheritance in America: E. A. Poe's »Tales of Mystery and Imagination«*

Edgar Allan Poe's tales can be regarded as the continuation of what started with Hoffmann and even earlier with Bonaventura: The distinction between madness and normality, insanity and sanity has become impossible in a world of enigmatic shadows, of characters who keep crossing the borderline between being awake and dreaming.

There is, however, an intensification in respect to the literary evocation of madness, as Poe's narrators themselves very often represent the discourse of insanity, whereas Hoffmann's narrators in most cases, at least ironically, simulate normality. In Hoffmann's polyperspectival »Sandman«, one of the narrators is actually the insane person himself, Nathanael, whose interpretation of reality contrasts with the reasonable, psychological interpretation of his female counterpart, and in Bonaventura's novel the first-person narrator himself, Kreuzgang, has different faces, a reasonable and an eccentric one. In Poe's works, finally, we often have good reason to doubt the reliability of what we are told on the literal level of narration, as the narrators' minds often appear to reflect the disordered state of the world and the defeat of reason.

Poe's perhaps most important contribution to modern literature is the creation of a refined version of the unreliable narrator. His unreliability appears the more scandalous as he usually gives testimony in a kind of trial concerning a horrible event which is performed for the reading audience who are supposed to act as judges. However, where mental insanity determines the point of view, objective judgement about »facts« is impossible — and as a consequence of this, ethical judgement as well. Thus, Poe provides for arrangements which undermine, first, the idea of objective knowledge about facts and the distinction between truth and lie, and Second, the possibility of moral judgement. Typically of Poe's stories, »The Black Cat« (1843), for instance, begins with a self-reflexive remark indicating plainly that the difference between truth and lie (not just the possibility to identify them, but the possibility to distinguish between them in principle) will be subverted in the course of this narration. We only see the world from a point of view within the ambiguous and mysterious events which are about to be reported; there is no outside, as the narrator, the only one whom we are able to listen to, is a solipsistic self imprisoned in his fears and imaginings. His assertion he is not mad makes clear indirectly that the safe viewpoints of »normality« and reason, the preconditions under which it had hitherto been possible to regard somebody as »mad«, have been dissolved: He is located on the borderline to darkness. In respect to the question whether he is dreaming or not, the narrator does not even dare to decide plainly. He expresses his hope that some one among his readers might be able to interpret the events from a superior perspective.

> For the most wild yet most homely narrative which I am about to pen, I neither expect nor solicit belief. Mad indeed would I be to expect it, in a case where my very senses reject their own evidence. Yet, mad am I not — and very surely do I not dream. But to-morrow I die, and to-day I would unburden my soul. My immediate purpose is to place before the world, plainly, succinctly, and without comment, a series of mere household events. In their consequences, these events have terrified — have tortured — have destroyed me. Yet I will not attempt to expound them. To me, they have presented little but horror — to many they will seem less terrible than baroque. Hereafter, perhaps, some intellect may be found which will reduce my phantasm to the commonplace — some intellect more calm, more logical, and far less excitable than my

> own, which will perceive, in the circumstance I detail with awe, nothing more than an ordinary succession of very natural causes and effects (Poe 1975, 223).

Poe takes over the double heritage of the »French« variety of Romantic fiction, which is characterized by the arrangement of conflicts between the »reasonable« and the »irrational« view of the world (the »reasonable« view, however, has faded to a minimum of persuasiveness here), and the »German« variety, which implicitly always points to the solipsistic subjectivity of any experience.

Another predecessor of Poe's narrators and protagonists, and another heritage the author profits from, deserves mention here: Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821–22) had confronted the perplexed public with a work of literature which went far beyond the limits of ordinary moral discourse. De Quincey, who himself had been severely addicted to opium, describes precisely his mental and physical experiences with the hallucinatory drug, and although he also gives advice how to cure an opium addiction, his autobiographical work can be read as a testimony of the creative and liberating forces of imagination which are stimulated by opium consumption. In spite of the severe damage to his health suffered as a consequence of his addiction, De Quincey propagates the richness of visions he has experienced. According to him, stimulating drugs appeal to the divine part of man. And he is convinced of the superior truth of dreams as compared to everyday reality.

This reflection process is continued in Poe's works. The more Poe's narrators declare themselves not to be mad, the more we become confused about the question how to distinguish madness from normality — especially when those narrators reveal themselves as victims of most excessive and murderous obsessions. For instance, the protagonist of »The Tell-Tale Heart« (1843), though he reveals himself to be a mad murderer, begins his report with an evocation of »truth«. But what kind of truth can we expect? Is there any borderline between acute sensual perceptions and hallucinations? And can we regard hallucinatory perceptions as »unreal«, if they stimulate murder, as we learn later?

> True! — nervous — very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and I am; but what will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses — not destroyed — not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? Hearken! and observe how healthily — how calmly I can tell you the whole story (Poe 1975, 303).

Though these stories about lunatics deal with vicious crime, the protagonists' deeds are in a certain sense beyond moral evaluation, because their will is not free. They are obsessed with the »other« of fixed ideas and hallucinatory perceptions, although the origin of these manifestations of the »other« may lie within their own souls. But they do not govern and control them; they are, on the contrary, themselves governed by them. »It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night« (ibid.).

Only later will the reader understand that »the idea« is the fixed idea of a senseless and useless murder. In »The Cask of Amontillado« (1846), just to mention another very well-known story of Poe's, the narrator and protagonist again is a murderer, who obviously is obsessed with a fixed idea, the idea of inevitable »revenge«. In the tale »William Wilson« (1839) the ambiguous *doppelgänger* of the protagonist may be regarded as the projection surface of his

own conscience which has acquired a different quality of »realness« for himself than it has for others. The narrator in »The Fall of the House of Usher« (1839) only superficially represents the discourse of normality compared to Roderick Usher's more obvious madness. We learn, however, in the course of his narration, that the narrator too is experienced in consuming drugs, we learn that he has assisted Roderick in his sinister funeral of Lady Madeline, and, as Madeline's illness and decease are more than ambiguous events, we may even become suspicious about the narrator's integrity itself: Is he actually more deeply involved in the events than he wants to tell? The reader himself never reaches a fixed vantage point in Poe's world. And he is rather inclined to accept the interpretation of reality which is proposed by the narrators, who have fallen victim to addiction and madness, rather than to search for any »reasonable« interpretation which would have to declare the chain of events as accidental.

Poe's tales are explorations in this subversive tendency. Not only does the reader learn by hints and suggestions that the narrator whom he depends on is an alcoholic, an opium eater, or somebody who has become guilty and now suffers from obsessions, so that all pieces of information are to a high degree peculiar and suspicious, but he must even be aware of the possibility that the narrator lies and deceives — if he is not already beyond truth and lie, because he is incurably insane. And there is no fixed point from which insanity could be judged reasonably, no corrective to all the obsessions by which an identical truth might be constructed from the fragments of distorted experience.

The trials of reason become a farce in the course of Romantic writing, and the reader, who for the sake of the forces of his reason had been promoted to the role of judge by Enlightenment literature, becomes part of the parodic imitation and simulation of inquiry games and judgements. The intrusion of madness into the narrator's discourse is also characteristic of the late Romantic Théophile Gautier's narrative strategy. In his novel *Jettatura* (1856) he presents the tragic case of a group of persons who believe in the power of the evil eye. For some time the reader may expect the narrator to comment on this superstition from the distance of reflection, all the more considering that the narrator is not personally involved in the events, and, as an auctorial narrator capable of looking into his characters' souls, he should be able to identify obsessive ideas for what they are. More and more, however, the suspicion arises and hardens that the narrator participates in the insanity of his characters. At a culminating point of the dramatic occurrences he admits in a way which only superficially seems »casual« that one might go insane as a consequence of such experience. The probably most distorting idea which is suggested by the strange case of the »Jettatore« is that as soon as an obsession is shared by a collective, the object of this obsession cannot be distinguished from truth anymore. The power of the evil eye is believed to be a true fact by all characters; hence it becomes real.

5.4 *Night-sides, madness, dream and vision, III: The »Russian« variety*

Russian Romantic tales often present characters similar to those which occur in Western European literature. Especially as madmen and visionaries are concerned, the relations are obvious. In Odoevskii's *Russkie nochi* (Russian Nights, 1844) there is a story that recalls Hoffmann's *Ritter Gluck*, titled »Opere del Cavaliere G. Piranesi« (Works of the Chevalier G. Piranesi). An insane artist similar to Hoffmann's Gluck figure restlessly strolls around the world like the

Wandering Jew and cannot die, because he is unable to realize his architectural visions. Only when he succeeds in realizing his plans, which means transforming his excessive visions into a structure and giving an order to overwhelming imagination, will he be allowed to die. In Russia, experiences of the supernatural, visions, hallucinations, and cases of madness normally indicate deeper truths — especially moral truths. While Western European Romantic fiction largely profits from such themes as crime and seduction, dark immorality and monstrous, sinful deeds, Russian authors are for the most part convinced that literature should reject those subjects — except for such reasons as can claim to be moral. Nikolai Karamzin in 1793 asserts that a poet should only be allowed to write if he was living a moral life. While in Western European fiction the motifs of madness, dream, hallucination and other experiences from the night-side of existence took over the function of reflecting on the autonomy of the poetical view of the world, there is no function like this in Russian fiction. On the contrary, Russian stories assert the close relationship between poetical imagination and ethical values. Romantic stories about madness, dreams and hallucinations in most cases can be subsumed under the genre of fantastic literature. I will concentrate here upon a selection of Russian ghost stories, which deal with cases of mental aberration, either with cases of obsession by a fixed idea or by hallucinatory experiences. In spite of their different forms and contents, all these stories have at least two things in common: the apparently central signification of the ghost motif, and their ethical and at least indirectly didactic accentuation.

There is a rich variety of representatives of fantastic literature in Russia; among the most important authors one might list Aleksandr S. Pushkin, Vladimir F. Odoevskii, and Nikolai V. Gogol. Influences of Western European Romantic fiction are additionally to be seen in the works of Mikhail Lermontov, Ivan Turgenev, Nikolai Leskov, and Anton Chekhov. The introduction to Pushkin's famous narration *Pikovaia Dama* (The Queen of Spades; or in French, Pique Dame, 1834) is arranged according to the model of Hoffmann's *Serapionsbrüder*: On the occasion of an evening meeting, somebody tells a mysterious story about a successful gambling adventure. One of the young men listening to the narration is involved afterwards in an intrigue which finally gives him the chance to repeat the successful gambling experience, but which also causes the death of an old lady who was supposed to know the secret formula for gambling success. The new gambling experiment executed by the protagonist is at least suspect of depending on supernatural forces. After his success he wants to continue gambling, but he loses, most probably as the consequence of the old lady's revenge; she appears to him as a ghost in the figure of Queen of the Spades. Hermann, the protagonist, goes mad. The reason for this fate is not just the intrusion of supernatural forces into his reality, but also his guilt. Pushkin's story, in spite of some ironical accents, is a moral story about guilt and punishment. Pushkin, in his comment on Lobanov's opinions about the spirit of international and national literature (1836), explicitly comments on the close relation between morality and taste. He calls for certain liberties for the poet in respect to moral taboos, but in general he insists on the didactic functions of literature and the congruence of art and morality.

Vladimir Odoevskii's story *Salamandra* (The Salamander, 1842) follows the pattern of pre-Romantic and Romantic tales about elemental spirits as we know it from Cazotte, Tieck and Hoffmann. Again, there is a narrator in the frame scene, who narrates the story about supernatural forces and spirits, and, similar to Hoffmann's frame constructions, there is a discussion

between the narrator and his listener about the credibility of these stories. But in length and content this dialogue is of minor importance compared to the supernatural story itself, and a final comment by the sceptical listener ironically appears inadequate. Within the main story, there are doubtlessly supernatural occurrences, and, again, there is a moral message, an arrangement pointing to the correspondence between human guilt and heavenly or hellish punishment. The protagonist and his mentor, who are occupied with alchemical experiments, appear in some respect insane, but their obsessions are related to realities, to a world divided into a day and a night side. Gogol's narration *Zakoldovannoe mesto* (The Enchanted Place, 1831/32), is subtitled, »A true story, narrated by the verger of *** church«, and the narrator obviously believes in the reality of demonic craft. In spite of some ironical accents, the story itself does not raise the question whether the devil is real. The protagonist of this story, the narrator's grandfather, appeals to his family not to believe the devil but Jesus Christ, but for him as well as for his grandson there is obviously no doubt that one should believe in the devil. Gogol, by the way, regards morality as the most important quality of an author of fiction. Ethical deficiency should only be admitted as a starting point for moral improvement — in respect to authors as well as to their characters. Mikhail Lermontov's *Shtoss* (Unfinished Novella) indeed does not tell explicitly what finally happens to the protagonist, Lugin, but there is actually no doubt about his ending: Persecuted by a dead spirit and alienated from society and everyday realities, he is driven to a state of mind in which he is — as the text says — forced to make a decision. This decision will be to commit suicide. The forces of evil are present in the contemporary world; this is what the text tells us, in analogy to Pushkin's, Odoevskii's and Gogol's stories which are likewise inspired by a Manichaean concept of the world. Though in their quality as literary texts they stimulate us to reflect on the fact the authors operate on the basis of folklore motifs and superstitious ideas, what is not really questioned is the distinction between good and evil. The obsessions of people and the enchantment of places which cause madness may be hallucinatory, but the moral message that man should stick to the good and avoid seduction is beyond all doubt and ambiguity.

This diagnosis is confirmed by Ivan Turgenev's »Strannaia istoriia« (Strange Story, 1870). The narrator, here, reports on his own experiences with a mentally handicapped man who is said to possess divine forces, as for instance the force to make dead persons appear. As the story's real protagonist we see the madman, scarcely able to utter articulated words, but obviously deeply impressive to all people who meet him. According to popular customs he is worshipped like a prophet, and in spite of his obvious insanity he is respected as the representative of the good in a world which, again, is interpreted in Manichaean terms as divided into good and evil. The reality of his visions may be more than doubtful, and those who follow him — in this story especially a young girl — behave unreasonably; but beyond all scepticism there are moral truths which cannot be refuted, as they prove themselves through the medium of man's moral conscience. In Anton Chekhov's tale »Chernii monakh« (The Black Monk, 1894), the protagonist — a writer — is repeatedly pursued by the hallucinatory appearance of a black monk who asserts that he is a genius chosen by God. As long as the protagonist believes in the monk's message he is fortunate and makes other people happy; when he begins to doubt, he becomes desolate and cruel to his family. The monk can be interpreted as the product of his insane mind, but in spite of this he reveals a truth: An artist must believe in his own mission to be a good artist (in the double sense of aesthetic and ethical value). Chekhov's story resembles Hoffmann's Serapion

tale, as the hallucinating protagonist himself reasons about the hallucinatory character of his vision. The monk, his imaginary counterpart, even admits that he is phantasmagoric, but this is not of major importance.

In all these Russian stories about borderline phenomena the difference between the real and the imaginary is questioned in a way which is comparable to the German and French stories about eccentrics, madmen and dreamers; the idea of morality, however, is unquestioned. Moral categories such as guilt and punishment, good and evil can be used to interpret the stories' meaning, whereas, on the contrary, Hoffmann's narrations often are very indifferent in this respect. Here, Christian motifs like the devil and the saints are elements in an aesthetic pattern.

6. Doubled selves: Romantic tales about the dark — Man's ordinary existence reversed

Probably there is no motif more characteristic of the imaginary world of Romanticism than the *doppelgänger*; and more than any other image, the image of the doubled self reflects the notion of a night-side to the human subject's existence. The figuration of the »other«, incorporated in the shape of one's own self, reminds this self of his connection to a dimension of the world which is beyond reason and control, and often points to an inner dissociation, which tears up the self in the final analysis.

The protagonist of Hoffmann's novel *Die Elixiere des Teufels* (The Devil's Elixirs, 1815/16), Medardus the monk, has at least one *doppelgänger*, but it is impossible to decide just how many there actually are, because the idea of identity as such is subverted by the novel, and there no longer are truly differentiated characters which might be enumerated. Medardus has got a twin brother, but in a mysterious way, this twin — with whom he temporarily exchanges roles in a complex intrigue — can as well be regarded as the dark side of his own self. Medardus's case is an example for inner dissociation, and the mysterious devilish elixir on the surface of the novel's plot serves as a device to cause this dissociation. After having consumed it, his character is divided more and more into an animal and a reflexive »identity«. One half of his self uncontrollably becomes addicted to evil, the other half reflects on his vices and tries to regain control. But the origins of this dissociation lie deep in the family history of Medardus, and so it is not his individual self's guilt which causes the catastrophic loss of identity, but the »other« is from the beginning present in the self's world. The experience of losing identity and self-control are almost necessarily connected to outbursts of madness and raving. Medardus's nightly encounters with his dark double are located on the borderline of real experience and imagination. It is impossible to decide whether he has fallen victim to hallucination, or if the ghost of the »other« is actually present, but at any rate the encounter as such consequently leads to madness. In one key scene of the novel, the horrible mirror-image of Medardus, who is locked up in a prison cell, rises from the ground of his cell, calls Medardus his brother, and invites him to escape with him. On the one hand, the appearance can be interpreted as Medardus's »real« brother who has become mad; on the other hand, he is the incorporation of the monk's dark desires, his »sinful« soul. Medardus calls him a madman, and he is then not only addressing his *doppelgänger*, but also himself, who in more than one sense is confronted with his mirror-image by the raving,

murmuring and howling ghost. Medardus's encounter with the other Medardus may have been a nightmare instead of a supernatural apparition. But at any rate, Medardus's identity is broken up, and he appears as dissociated into two halves, of which one is a creature of the night. Either the dissociation and doubling is real on a physical level of reality — in this case, the evil is incorporated in the man who can not be distinguished from the monk himself; or the monk is a lunatic, and the rupture goes through his very mind.

Edgar Allan Poe's story about »William Wilson« takes up the *doppelgänger* motif as a Romantic heritage. The second William Wilson is an ambiguous character again: On the one hand, this almost voiceless »other« can be interpreted as a real figure on the same reality level as the first Wilson, who tells his life to the reader. On the other hand, the second William Wilson is maybe only a hallucinatory appearance, produced by the imaginative force of the narrator. At any rate, the first Wilson is mad — either because he projects all his hate and aggression onto a real character in a way which must be called obsessive and completely unreasonable, or because he suffers from hallucinations which to his insane mind have the quality of »realities«. Again, Poe creates a narrator-protagonist who leads the reader himself into ambiguities which can not be solved. Madness has invaded the text — either the madness of somebody who pretends to interpret reality in a way that convinces us and makes us share his opinions, or the madness of somebody who can not distinguish between experience and dream any more. With impressive clearness the narrator proves that inner dissociation and the loss of identity are already inevitable at the very moment in which the self begins to reflect upon itself and to question itself. The ambiguity of the narrator's relation to the »other« is never resolved, even when the narrator tries to depict the other Wilson from the outside perspective. If we compare the case of Medardus to the case of William Wilson, they prove to be very similar, especially in the two quoted scenes, as they both deal with imitations of personal habits by the respective other. There is only one small, but important difference: In Hoffmann's novel, the mysterious »other« represents the darker half of the dissociated self, while the ostensible narrator Medardus represents the conscious and reflexive part of the self which is at least able to feel guilty. In Poe's story, the part of the evil is taken over by the narrator, and the alter ego is the personification of his bad conscience.

Differently from Hoffmann and Poe, Robert Louis Stevenson in »The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde« (1886) finally resolves the mystery of the evil appearance of the »other«: Mr Hyde is doubtlessly real, and far from being only a hallucinatory projection of Jekyll's imagination, he appears regularly as the result of a scientific experiment that has remarkable consequences for different persons. Jekyll is not confronted with this dark side of his own self in the way Medardus and William Wilson were, because the presence of one of them excludes the presence of the respective other. But the dissociation of the self, again, is connected with madness. Jekyll and Hyde, the creature of the night, incorporating the »hidden« reverse of a moral character, suffer from different forms of madness: Jekyll finally falls mad as a consequence of his bad conscience; the loss of identity from which he is suffering can be characterized as the discrepancy between the moral and the intellectual self. The criminal Hyde, on the contrary, is beyond the control of reason from the very moment he appears. In his nightmare-like apparition the abysses in the soul of any moral subject are incorporated: vice and aggression as original and atavistic forces, which may temporarily be domesticated but never exterminated.

Folly and madness serve as leitmotifs in Stevenson's story. Jekyll's friends regard him as mad for some time, but Hyde as well seems to be mad, and when finally the mystery is revealed to them, on the one hand it becomes clear that Jekyll was not suffering from hallucinations; but on the other hand, there is no return to a healthy and normal state of mind for anybody. The nature of man reveals itself to be mad in its underpinnings, and each of the reasonable gentlemen in Stevenson's story feels to a certain degree attacked by insanity as soon as he detects the truth.

7. Conclusion

As the scholar Wolfgang Lange has pointed out in his contribution to a volume about myth and modernity, modernity, on the one hand, was unable to produce new gods and heroes, but the inclination to produce myths, on the other hand, was and still is alive. Important inspirations for creating myths were fascinating and enigmatic artists and poets like Van Gogh, Nietzsche, Rimbaud and others. The *arcanum* of madness seems to be one of the last refuges of mytho-poetic energy in a demythologized world. Romantic prose fiction has contributed significantly to the development of modern consciousness, by indicating the dependency of realities on the model of description which is used, and by positing the inexistence of any superior level of reasoning from which one could distinguish between truth and lies, hence the impossibility to distinguish definitively between sanity and insanity. A particular phase of literature arises from specific discursive constellations, reflects them from a distance, and finally will subvert them. Although — or rather: because — Romanticism had its roots in the age of reason, the point of view of reason was truly subjected to radical criticism by Romantic literature.

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