Der leere Blütenkranz
A critical reading of Dorothea Schlegel’s Florentin

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Schöne Welt, wo bist du? – Kehre wieder,
Holdes Blütenalter der Natur!
Ach! nur in dem Feenland der Lieder
Lebt noch deine goldne Spur.
Ausgestorben trauert das Gefilde,
Keine Gottheit zeigt sich meinem Blick,
Ach! von jenem lebenwarmen Bilde
Blieb nur das Gerippe mir zurück.

Friedrich Schiller, Die Götter Griechenlands (1788). Image: Georges de la Tour, The Penitent Magdalen (1640)
Contents

Introduction ...................................................................................... 1
Theoretical Background ................................................................. 3
Hegel on German Romanticism ....................................................... 10
Previous Reception and Research .................................................... 23
Desire and Romantic Subjectivity .................................................... 27
On Form and Spirit ........................................................................... 47
Conclusion ......................................................................................... 75
Appendix .......................................................................................... 79
Bibliography ...................................................................................... 82
Introduction

[57] Wenn manche mystische Kunstliebhaber, welche jede Kritik für Zergliederung, und jede Zergliederung für Zerstörung des Genusses halten, konsequent dächten: so wäre Potztausend das beste Kunsturteil über das würdigste Werk. Auch gibt es Kritiken, die nichts mehr sagen, nur viel weitläufiger.2

What’s Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba?3

What is Dorothea Schlegel’s Florentin (1801)4 to me, or me to Florentin? Anyone who begins to attempt an overview of Early German Romantic literature will no doubt come across Florentin, just as they will no doubt come across Tieck and Jean Paul as they move away from the apparent centre formed by Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel. But does one have any reason to pause over Dorothea Schlegel’s Florentin? Historical reception seems to tell us that we do not. Certainly, the novel appears to lack the level of self-reflection and poetic imagination that we find in Novalis’ Heinrich von Ofterdingen (1800) or Friedrich Schlegel’s Lucinde (1799), and on the surface it might appear to share many of the traits of Trivialliteratur5 where the intention is rather to entertain the senses than stimulate the intellect. Is one justified then, in attempting to offer a critical reading of Florentin? Can critique bring out the immanent contradictions and tensions that are to be found within the work, or must one apply a transcendent standard to it? My intention with this study is to show that a critical reading is indeed a rewarding way of looking at Florentin, and that we are justified in dwelling over the pages of Florentin and reflecting upon their meaning.

Yet, as I attempted to bring out the themes within the text I found that something was working against my attempts to engage with it, a certain expressionless quality to the work that

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1 N. B. For those unfamiliar with Florentin and the background to Dorothea Schlegel’s life I include a brief biography and a summary of the plot as an appendix to this study. All direct quotes from texts will be from the original German in the main text with translations into English in the footnotes. If a text is only referred to, or the quotation is very short, then only the English translation will be referred to unless the difference between the original and the translation justifies the citation of both languages.

2 From the Kritische Fragmente (1797) in Friedrich Schlegel, Athenäums-Fragmente: und andere Schriften, Berlin: Holzinger, 2013, p. 10. Translation: “(57) If some mystical art lovers who think of every criticism as a dissection and every dissection as a destruction of pleasure were to think logically, then “wow” would be the best criticism of the greatest work of art. To be sure, there are critiques which say nothing more, but only take longer to say it.” Friedrich Schlegel, Lucinde and the fragments, Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 1971, p. 149-150.


seemed to resist all reading of it. Where I went looking for antagonisms and conflicts within the text, I found indeterminacy, this very unreadability became the focus of my study rather than a close reading of the text itself. My intention then became to find out if this indeterminacy could be traced to a certain aspect of the text itself rather than dismissing the work out of hand and seeing this difficulty of reading as nothing more than a subjective incompatibility with the work. It may seem strange to the reader that I had to go so far outside of the text to find something which I believe is immanent to it. To this I can only answer that there is an aspect of unreadability that is not explicitly mentioned in this study, and that is the destruction of readings through time, this is something that I have tried to overcome by trying to get closer to the context in which Florentin was written. If I have tried to grasp the Geist of the period, I have also tried to be true to the Buchstabe of the novel and allow it to question and differentiate itself from my attempts to contextualise it. To a certain extent, this study could be called a critical reflection on my reading of Florentin, my reading of its unreadability and its resistance to being read.

In order to do this I will select two passages from Florentin that contain important aspects of the novel. From these two passages I will seek to find connections with the rest of the work. The two sections that I will concentrate upon are Florentin’s failed seduction of a woman on her balcony and Florentin’s entrance into Juliane’s bridal chamber. My reflections on the work will build upon the context of Early German Romantic criticism and later critical thinking about the German Romantic period. If I have allowed this criticism to lead me towards certain themes and to see them with an increased importance, I have also attempted to avoid simply labelling the work with already existing standards. It has not been my intention to simply say that Hegel was right about German Romanticism or that Florentin is the same as works by Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis. If I have, on the one hand, tried to keep myself as close to the work as possible in terms of the antagonisms and problems that it presents, I also keep with me the awareness that all of this must occur through the subjectivity of the critic, the critic of whom it can perhaps be said is simultaneously both within the work and thoroughly external to it. Although it is impossible for me to give an account of this particular element that I am, I have attempted to reflect as critically upon my own reflections as those that I have taken from others.

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7 Ibid., p. 146-147.
Theoretical Background

Im Finstern orientiere ich mich in einem mir bekannten Zimmer, wenn ich nur einen einzigen Gegenstand, dessen Stelle ich im Gedächtnis habe, anfassen kann. Aber hier hilft mir offenbar nichts als das Bestimmungsvermögen der Lagen nach einem subjektiven Unterscheidungsgrunde.8

6. Age ergo somniemus, nec particularia ista vera sint, nos oculos aperire, caput movere, manus extendere, nec forte etiam nos habere tales manus, nec tale totum corpus.9

If reflection entails a certain separation from the immediate, a turning from the apparent image towards the darkness where I relate that impression with my own understanding, what does it mean to reflect critically about Dorothea Schlegel’s Florentin (1801)? My intention here is not to follow the more well-known critical discourses such as Feminist or Marxist critique, but to build upon the very notion of critique that we find expressed in the historical context from which Florentin originates. This will be done partly through an engagement with the principle ideas of Early German Romantic critique itself and partly through an engagement with the critique of the Romantic project (if we can call it that) itself. This will entail an engagement with the writings of Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis, Hegel and later critical thinkers such as Walter Benjamin and Peter Szondi.

Although it is no doubt beyond the scope of this study to offer a complete summation of the exact aims that Early German Romantic critique10 is striving for, I will attempt to offer a few key features here that can be regarded as central to the notion of critique in Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis’ writings. There are of course, great difficulties when it comes to dealing with the material left to us by the Early German Romantics, apart from the fragmentary and unfinished nature of much of what remains, we also have to deal with the ironical style and allegorical nature of many of their statements. Certainly, we can agree with Philippe Lacoue-

8 Immanuel Kant, “Was heißt: sich im Denken orientieren?” In Immanuel Kant: Werke in zwölf Bänden. Band 5, Frankfurt am Main 1977, s. 270. First published in: Berlinische Monatsschrift, Oktober 1786, S. 304-330. Translation: “In the darkness, I can orientate myself in a familiar room so long as I can touch any one object whose position I remember. But it is obvious that the only thing which assists me here is an ability to define the position of the objects by means of a subjective disposition.” Immanuel Kant, What is Orientation in Thinking? In Political Writings, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 239.
9 Rene Descartes, Meditationes de Prima Philosophia, Paris 1641. Accessed at http://www.wright.edu/~charles.taylor/descartes/medl.html (31/01/16). Translation: “Suppose then that I am dreaming, and that these particulars – that my eyes are open, that I am moving my head and stretching out my hands – are not true. Perhaps, indeed, I do not even have such hands or such a body at all.” Rene Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 13.
10 And we must no doubt reflect upon the accuracy of a term which seems to suggest that Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis are striving for exactly the same aim.
Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy in *The Literary Absolute*\(^ {11}\) that Early German Romantic critique is focused on the production of forms from within the work under critique in the hope that they can offer us the essential “characteristics” of the work itself. Peter Szondi’s “Friedrich Schlegel und die romantische Ironie: Mit einer Beilage Über Tiecks Komödie”\(^ {12}\) gives a strongly Hegelian interpretation of Schlegelian critique. Szondi states that for Friedrich Schlegel “Am Ursprung der Moderne steht die Emanzipation des Verstandes. Dessen Tätigkeit ist Scheiden und Mischen, deshalb nennt Schlegel das Zeitalter ein chemisches. Alle Bezüge sind zerstört oder wurden fragwürdig und Gegenstand der Reflexion.”\(^ {13}\) Szondi describes Friedrich Schlegel as being resigned to the negativity of our age as the antithesis to the positivity of the Classical age, the synthesis is something that will come in the future and is expressed in the strivings of the Romantic age.\(^ {14}\) Reflection is both the expression of the essentially split modern subjectivity, but also the means of raising above that split,\(^ {15}\) an activity that must progress infinitely as each elevation engenders a new split. For Szondi it is irony that describes the tactic that makes this infinite splitting bearable, the ironist identifies with the infinite striving itself\(^ {16}\) and not the limited state from which it elevates itself. Szondi appears critical of such a tactic, stating that “alles, was ihr [die Ironie] aus ihrer Gegenwart begegnet, wird mit dem Maßstab der Unendlichkeit gemessen und so zerstört”,\(^ {17}\) something that Szondi sees as ending in tragedy.

Novalis describes the moment of criticism’s annunciation, its rendering into a form, as a pause in the eternal striving of the speculative spirit, but that this rendering into form is infinitely repeated: “Der Kriticism zeigt eben die Nothwendigkeit der Begrenzung – Determination, Innehaltung – weißt auf einen bestimmten Zweck hin – und verwandelt die Speculation in ein nützliches und selbst poëtisches Instrument. Diese endlose Fortsetzung einer


\(^{13}\) Szondi, 1996, p. 12-13. Translation: “The emancipation of the understanding lies at the origin of modern times. Its activity consists in separating and mixing, and that is why Schlegel labels his age a chemical one. All relationships have been destroyed or at least have become questionable and subject to reflection.” Peter Szondi, *On Textual Understanding and Other Essays*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986, p. 58.

\(^{14}\) Friedrich Schlegel states in his *Athenaeum Fragments* (1798-1800) “116. The romantic kind of poetry is still in the state of becoming; that, in fact, is its real essence: that it should forever be becoming and never be perfected. It can be exhausted by no theory and only a divinatory criticism would dare try to characterize its ideal.” Friedrich Schlegel, *Lucinde and the Fragments*, Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 1971, p. 175.

\(^{15}\) Novalis states in his *Miscellaneous Remarks* (1797) that “26. Self-alienation is the source of all abasement, as well as being on the contrary the ground of all true elevation.” See *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics*, J. M. Bernstein (Ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 207.

\(^{16}\) In the *Ideas*, Friedrich Schlegel states that “Only in relation to the infinite is there meaning and purpose; whatever lacks such a relation is absolutely meaningless and pointless”. Schlegel, 1971, p. 241.

Thätigkeit ist Caracter der Seelen, oder Geistesinerz.”¹⁸ A need for form that would become ever more pressing as Romanticism progressed towards an increasingly theological discourse after 1800. Novalis also describes how “Wer keine Gedichte machen kann, wird sie auch nur negativ beurteilen. Zur echten Kritik gehört die Fähigkeit, das zu kritisierende Produkt selbst hervorzubringen. Der Geschmack allein beurteilt nur negativ.”¹⁹ For Novalis critique requires just as much invention from the critic as is in the object under critique. The critic has to be able to produce the art work within themselves. This gives us another example of how Romantic critique attempts to differentiate itself from the classical values of good taste and identify itself with the creative process of the production of forms.

Friedrich Schlegel states that “[37] Um über einen Gegenstand gut schreiben zu können, muß man sich nicht mehr für ihn interessieren; der Gedanke, den man mit Besonnenheit ausdrücken soll, muß schon gänzlich vorbei sein, einen nicht mehr eigentlich beschäftigen.”²⁰ Which is a statement that seems to echo the need to turn one’s attention away from the sensuous qualities of experience in order to submit it to reflection. Friedrich Schlegel returns to this in his Über Goethes Meister (1799-1800), stating how “Wir müssen uns über unsre eigne Liebe erheben, und was wir anbeten, in Gedanken vernichten können: sonst fehlt uns, was wir auch für andre Fähigkeiten haben, der Sinn für das Weltall.”²¹ Über Goethes Meister has become something of a standard text when attempting to evaluate Schlegel’s literary criticism as we find many different aspects of his critical method gathered in a small space there. If limitation is a necessary part of critique, so is the ability to allow “den Künstler mit uns machen zu lassen,

¹⁸ Fragment 906 from Novalis’ notes for Das Allgemeine Brouillon (1798) Accessed at https://www.hs-augsburg.de/~harsch/germanica/Chronologie/19Jh/Novalis/nov_sbr3.html (11/14/2016). Translation: “Criticism clearly demonstrates the need for a limitation- for a determination, for a pause- it indicates a definite goal- and transforms speculation into a useful, and even into a poetic instrument. This never-ending continuation of activity is a character of souls, or of spiritual inertia.” Novalis, Notes for a Romantic Encyclopedia, New York: SUNY Press, 2007, p. 162.


²⁰ Friedrich Schlegel, 2013, p. 7. Translation: “37. In order to write well about something, one shouldn’t be interested in it any longer. To express an idea with due circumspection, one must have relegated it wholly to one’s past; one must no longer be preoccupied with it.” Friedrich Schlegel, 1971, p. 147.

was er will”;

Schlegel underlines the importance of focusing the attention on both the whole and the parts, the general impression and how that general impression is produced. A word that he repeats often in this text is “system”, how parts come together and affect each other. Friedrich Schlegel appears to start thematically, looking at dominant topics and forms of relationship. By judging the main themes in *Wilhelm Meister* to be “spectacle, drama, representation, art and poetry”, Friedrich Schlegel comes to see the novel as an attempted “theory of art”. How the themes come together to form a theory of art then becomes the main focus of his critique. What is remarkable about *Wilhelm Meister* is that it manages to maintain itself both as a work of art and a critical system of reflection on art itself. Friedrich Schlegel rejects what he calls “the social level”, where the ultimate end and aim of the novel is the characters and their actions, that what happens in the end to Wilhelm Meister should not be the main point of interest in our reading. Friedrich Schlegel also rejects any judgement of the novel according to genre:

> Denn dieses schlechthin neue und einzige Buch, welches man nur aus sich selbst verstehen lernen kann, nach einem aus Gewohnheit und Glauben, aus zufälligen Erfahrungen und willkürlichen Forderungen zusammengesetzten und entstandenenGattungsbegriff beurteilen; das ist, als wenn ein Kind Mond und Gestirne mit der Hand greifen und in sein Schächtelchen packen will. 25

Friedrich Schlegel goes on to say “Vielleicht soll man es also zugleich beurteilen und nicht beurteilen.” 26 In many respects this is exactly what immanent critique tries to do, by not setting a transcendent value on the work which is foreign to it and instead searching for inner antagonisms or complexes of meaning from within the work itself. In a way, rather than the critic passing their judgement on the work, this is supposed to allow the work to pass judgement upon itself, as Friedrich Schlegel says of *Wilhelm Meister*, it “beurteilt sich nicht nur selbst, es stellt sich auch selbst dar”. 27 The focus of Friedrich Schlegel’s critique then becomes Goethe’s

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23 Ibid., p. 274.
24 Ibid., p. 275.
25 Friedrich Schlegel, 2014, p. 145. Translation: “For this book is absolutely new and unique. We can learn to understand it only on its own terms. To judge it according to an idea of genre drawn from custom and belief, accidental experiences and arbitrary demands, is as if a child tried to clutch the stars and the moon in his hand and pack them in his satchel.” Bernstein (Ed.), 2003, p. 275.
26 Friedrich Schlegel, 2014, p. 142. Translation: “Perhaps then we should judge it, and at the same time refrain from judging it.” Bernstein (Ed.), 2003, p. 275.
27 Friedrich Schlegel, 2014, p. 142. Translation: “not only does it judge itself, it also describes itself”. This translation misses some of the nuances of *darstellen* that we find in the original German. Bernstein (Ed.), 2003, p. 275.
division of the work into separate books, the books become fragments which Friedrich Schlegel pieces together in various different ways, arranging them into systems. Towards the end of his essay Friedrich Schlegel differentiates between criticism and poetic criticism. If traditional critique is happy simply to put labels on works detailing their contents and classifying them after traditional values, poetic critique entails a certain amount of addition or creativity, there is the potential for something new to come out of the new constellations formed out of the work’s elements. The final part of Friedrich Schlegel’s essay concentrates on a certain “allegorization” of the characters, something that Friedrich Schlegel sees as arising in the transparent nature of the characters. Friedrich Schlegel arranges the figures of the Uncle, the Abbé and Lothario in an allegorical system, the Uncle is the heart, the Abbé is the intellect and Lothario is an ideal man. How the heart and the intellect combine and conflict in order to push man forward in his development is seen as the general movement of the novel.

Two other features of this essay are perhaps worthy of note, the first is the necessity of an ironic style to help the reader to look beyond the initial impression of the work, the other feature is that Friedrich Schlegel does not question his application of the label of “genius” upon Goethe, and in a certain sense his critique seems to build upon the notion of the work as the product of a great mind, which seems to undermine some of the immanent characteristics of his analysis. Self-limitation is regarded as being an expression of freedom for Friedrich Schlegel and criticism expresses a form of self-limitation where one breaks with the sensuous enjoyment of the object under critique, the critic being the one who has the ability to “auch das Liebste noch streng würdigen mag”. In the experience of art we are in a way limited by the object that holds our interest, in reflection we take that interest and limit it subjectively in critical reflection. Friedrich Schlegel also states that “[44] Man sollte sich nie auf den Geist des Altertums berufen, wie auf eine Autorität”, underlining the way that Early German Romantic critique attempted to move away from classical standards of beauty, Friedrich Schlegel also

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29 Ibid., p. 285.
30 Of course, we may be said to have a heightened sensitivity to this appellation of genius to Goethe, coming as we do, after the age of the “cult of Goethe”, something that Walter Benjamin touches on in his essay on Goethe’s *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (1809), see Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, Vol. 1, Harvard: Belknap Press, 2004, p. 297-360.
32 From *Kritische Fragmente* (1797) in Friedrich Schlegel, 2013, p. 9. Translation: “you should never appeal to the spirit of the ancients as if to an authority”. Schlegel, 1971, p. 148. See also Schlegel’s Fragment from the *Ideas* (1800), “155. I have expressed a few ideas pointing toward the heart of things, and have greeted the dawn in my own way, from my point of view. Let anyone who knows the road do likewise in his own way, from his own point of view”. Bernstein (Ed.), 2003, p. 268.
states that “Die Kritik soll die Werke nicht nach einem allgemeinen Ideal beurteilen, sondern das individuelle Ideal jedes Werkes aufsuchen.” Friedrich Schlegel also makes clear his lack of interest in “educating the public” saying that it leads the author to hate and despise his audience. This disdain for creating standards of judgement for the moral and aesthetic education of the public is a frequent feature of Romantic critique. Friedrich Schlegel also states how “[86] Der Zweck der Kritik, sagt man, sei, Leser zu bilden! – Wer gebildet sein will, mag sich doch selbst bilden. Dies ist unhöflich: es steht aber nicht zu ändern.” Friedrich Schlegel, much like Kierkegaard, emphasises the importance of the active role of the reader, that the reader should not be “calm and dead” but “alive and critical”. Perhaps one of the most famous of Friedrich Schlegel’s Critical Fragments is the following fragment:


Although most interpretations underline the creative potential expressed at the start of this fragment, I believe that the last part of this fragment is perhaps more revealing when considering the aims of Romantic critique. The representation of a necessary impression in the state of becoming, is no doubt the attempt to give a form to that which is characteristic in a work of art, something immanent to the work that explains its development and relations. That this representation should be in a state of becoming is the striving for this form’s perfection as something beautiful, a form which can nonetheless never offer us the final word on a work of art resulting in an open form to critique that allows for its development.

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33 Schlegel, 1957, p. 175. Translation: “Critique should not judge the work after a general ideal, but search for the individual ideal of each work.” (own translation).
34 Schlegel, 1971, p. 151.
36 From Kritische Fragmente (1797) in Friedrich Schlegel, 2013, p. 14. Translation: “The function of criticism, people say, is to educate one’s readers! Whoever wants to be educated, let him educate himself. This is rude: but it can’t be helped.” Schlegel, 1971, p. 153.
37 Ibid., p. 156.
38 From Kritische Fragmente (1797) in Friedrich Schlegel, 2013, p. 18. Translation: “117. Poetry can only be criticized by poetry. A critical judgement of an artistic production has no rights in the realm of art if it isn’t itself a work of art, either in its substance, as a representation of a necessary impression in the state of becoming, or in the beauty of its form and open tone, like that of the old Roman satires.” Schlegel, 1971, p. 157. Perhaps equally worthy of note is his critical fragment “27. The critic is the reader who ruminates. Therefore he ought to have more than one stomach.” Bernstein (Ed.), 2003, p. 240.
There is of course a danger with this, one that was astutely observed by Walter Benjamin in his *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik in der deutschen Romantik* (1920), although the Early German Romantics succeeded in freeing themselves from many of the shackles of classicist criteria for the judging of works of art, this left a certain imbalance in their criticism in regards to the judgement of content. In Benjamin’s afterword he makes a contrast between a classicist approach that judges a work in terms of its content in relationship to artistic ideals and the Romantic approach that criticises a work in terms of whether its form allows it to be related to ideas. For Benjamin both of these approaches are seen as being insufficient in terms of doing justice to the work of art under critique. I think that it is fair to say that the problem of form and content, of *Geist und Buchstabe*, Hermeneutics and philology, of transcendent and immanent critique, is the problem that continues to haunt critique itself, and at the same time forms the very possibility of its operation and continuation.

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40 One can no doubt make a connection here between the domination of form over content in Early German Romantic critique and the allegorical nature of the Romantic novels, something that Schelling sees as typical of modern prose. Whereas the Greeks could give us symbols, a direct relation to the absolute, the modern (and by this he means Christian) author can only give us indirect access to an absent absolute through the allegory, if we can agree with Benjamin’s description of the Romantics as Messianic thinkers, then it is perhaps by way of the allegorical style of their novels that we can agree with him.
41 We must leave unanswered for the moment the question as to the relationship between Early German Romantic critique and hermeneutics, although fragments such as Novalis’ “I cannot show that I have understood a writer until I am able to act in his spirit, until, without diminishing his individuality, I am able to translate, vary and change him”, certainly make the connection between the discourse of the Early German Romantics and the hermeneutical discourse of Schleiermacher. Bernstein (Ed.), 2003, p. 208.
42 Although I have focused upon the interpretation of Early German Romantic critique in a literary context here, my understanding of Early German Romantic critique is also based upon those who have analysed the philosophical foundations of Early German Romanticism. This is something that I cannot fully account for within the boundaries of this study, but perhaps it might suffice to say that the following works have been indispensable for my understanding of Romanticism: Frederick Beiser, *German Idealism, The Struggle Against, Subjectivism*, Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2002. Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Friedrich Schlegel and the Emergence of Romantic Philosophy, New York: SUNY Press, 2007. Manfred Frank, The Philosophical Foundations of German Romanticism, New York: SUNY Press, 2004. Dalia Nassar, The Romantic Absolute, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.
Hegel on German Romanticism

In order to further situate the reader in the context of the major themes of Early German Romanticism I turn now to Hegel’s slightly later perspective on the nature of the writings of Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel and on the period in general. Although this perspective is “presented” rather than criticised and discussed here, these themes, much like musical themes, will return throughout my analysis of Florentin. While Heinrich Heine and Jean-Paul Richter would both go on to attempt to evaluate German Romanticism in a critical manner, it is perhaps Hegel who went furthest in his attempts to understand the consequences of what he saw as the German Romantic position. If Hegel’s critique is referred to, it is most commonly to his critique of Romantic Irony and Friedrich Schlegel’s attitude towards marriage in Lucinde which is to be found in Hegel’s Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik (1835) and in his Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts (1820). In fact, as I will attempt to demonstrate in this essay, German Romanticism held a much more important position in Hegel’s thinking than these two examples might suggest. Amongst the many veiled and not so veiled criticisms of Friedrich Schlegel to be found in Hegel’s Aesthetics a general picture emerges of Hegel’s problem with Friedrich Schlegel and Romantic art in general. For Hegel, marriage is not just a tradition or a duty, but forms a crucial part in the development of Geist from its limited state as a subjective particularity towards absolute knowing. Marriage is one of the objective forms of reason that are essential to Geist’s development. Friedrich Schlegel’s attitude towards marriage is seen as being symptomatic of the Romantic subject’s overly dominant subjective spirit, something that Hegel sees as a consequence of the Fichteian principle of the ego as the absolute principle of all knowing. For such a subject, that which it

44 See Jean-Paul Richter, Vorschule der Ästhetik (1813), Hanser, 1986.
45 When referring to Hegel’s Aesthetics in German the references will be to Hegel’s Ästhetik, Vol. 1 and 2, Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1965. References to his Philosophy of Right will be to Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts, Stuttgart: Reclam, 1981. When referring to Hegel’s Aesthetics in English the references will be to Hegel’s Aesthetics, Lectures on the Fine Arts, Vol. 1 and 2, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. References to his Philosophy of Right will be to Outlines of the Philosophy of Right, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
47 In his Aesthetics Hegel describes how Friedrich Schlegel’s Lucinde attempted to make depravity into something sacred of the highest excellence, see Hegel, 1998, p. 508. He also takes up Lucinde in paragraph 164 of his Outlines of the Philosophy of Right, see Hegel, 2008, p. 168.
creates it can equally destroy as its own product while the absolute ego remains abstract and formal.\textsuperscript{49}

Although the novel gets little separate treatment in Hegel’s aesthetics,\textsuperscript{50} we can follow the path of Hegel’s lectures to see how Geist reaches the limit of its objective representation in classical sculpture and the limit of its subjective representation in Romantic music. Romantic poetry (which covers epic, lyric, tragedy and comedy in Hegel’s system, reaching its final point in the Romantic drama) is supposed to be the place of Aufhebung of the two forms of representation where spiritual forms become the material of poetry. Hegel states that the proper external object of Romantic poetry is “das innere Vorstellen und Anschauen selbst. Die geistigen Formen sind es, die sich an die Stelle des Sinnlichen setzen und das zu gestaltende Material, wie früher Marmor, Erz, Farbe und die musikalischen Töne, abgeben.”\textsuperscript{51} For Hegel, poetry is reason individualized\textsuperscript{52} and:

\begin{quote}
Die Kraft des dichterischen Bildens besteht deshalb darin, dass die Poesie sich einen Inhalt innerlich, ohne zu wirklichen Außengestalten und Melodiegängen herauszugehen, gestaltet und damit die äußere Objektivität der übrigen Künste zu einer inneren macht, die der Geist, wie sie im Geiste ist und bleiben soll, für das Vorstellen selber äußert.\textsuperscript{53}
\end{quote}

Romantic poetry then, marks the highest pinnacle of spiritual art before it makes the progression to philosophy in Hegel’s system, Hegel states that:

\textsuperscript{49} Hegel, 1998, p. 64.

\textsuperscript{50} “Romantic Fiction” gets just over a page in Hegel’s \textit{Aesthetics}, where he describes it as a development of knightly and pastoral romances with a more domestic and prosaic tone. It comes at the moment of dissolution of Romantic art, suggesting that art has ceased to fulfil its previous function at this point. See Hegel, 1998, p. 592-593. This is not so much the death of art, but rather the ascension to philosophy, art no longer counts as the highest mode in which truth fashions an existence for itself (see Hegel, 1998, p. 103). Art continues however to fulfil an import function for Hegel in getting spirit to the point where it no longer needs art as a form for its actualisation. Hegel also describes an increasingly prosaic and Bourgeois content in Romantic art elsewhere and how art deals increasingly with domestic situations (see Hegel, 1998, p. 1109, p. 1168 and p. 1204), he also speaks of the dangers of art being increasingly nothing but the product of the particular caprices of the artist (see Hegel, 1998, p. 1175). Hegel in fact seems more interested in Opera than the novel. In my analysis of Florentin I apply Hegel’s general characterisation of Romantic art and modernity. We find in fact a very similar depiction of the novel in relationship to the rest of art in Schelling’s \textit{Philosophy of Art}, Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 1989. See in particular p. 234-235, where the novel is depicted as the art form that expresses the lack of identity between ideal and real that is typical of modernity.

\textsuperscript{51} Hegel, 1965, Vol. 2, p. 331. Translation: “the inner imagination and intuition itself. It is spiritual forms which take the place of perceptibility and provide the material to be given shape, just as marble, bronze, colour and musical notes were the material earlier on.” Hegel, 1998, p. 964.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., p. 977.

\textsuperscript{53} Hegel, 1965, Vol. 2, p. 366. Translation: “The power of poetry’s way of putting things consists therefore in the fact that poetry gives shape to a subject-matter within, without proceeding to express it in actual visible shapes or in series of melodies; and thereby it makes the external object produced by the other arts into an internal one which the spirit itself externalizes for the imagination in the form that this internal object has and is to keep within the spirit.” Hegel, 1998, p. 1001.
Nach dieser Seite wird es die Hauptauffgabe der Poesie, die Mächte des geistigen Lebens, und was überhaupt in der menschlichen Leidenschaft und Empfindung auf und nieder wogt oder vor der Betrachtung ruhig vorüberzieht, das alles umfassende Reich menschlicher Vorstellung, Taten, Handlungen, Schicksale, das Getriebe dieser Welt und die göttliche Weltregierung zum Bewußtsein zu bringen.54

This is not to say that poetry is completely left behind and surpassed by philosophy in Hegel’s system, in fact poetry forms an essential part in speculative thinking.55 The crucial position given to poetry and the poetic imagination in Hegel’s aesthetics is no doubt partly responsible for the animosity he felt towards Friedrich Schlegel, the “poetry of poetry”56 that Friedrich Schlegel seeks would appear to cause the trajectory of Geist to falter, rather like in a game of snakes and ladders it could make Geist sink right back down to the murky depths of its beginnings as described in Hegel’s *Die Philosophie des Geistes* (1830), trapped within a mise-en-abyme or arabesque of self-reflection. For Hegel, the entire trajectory of art was the cancellation of Geist’s restriction to the particular57 while Friedrich Schlegel threatens Geist with imprisonment within subjective particularity.

So if Romantic art is explained philosophically in Hegel as coming in the wake of Kant and Fichte, it is also explained in terms of its position in the wake of the dissolution of classical forms. Hegel states that at this point:

Das Innere steht für sich auf der einen, das davon abgeschiedene äußere Dasein auf der anderen Seite, und die in sich zurückgezogene Subjektivität, da sie in den bisherigen Gestalten ihre angemessene Wirklichkeit nicht mehr zu finden weiß, hat sich mit dem Inhalt einer neuen geistigen Welt absoluter Freiheit und Unendlichkeit zu erfüllen und nach neuen Ausdrucksformen für diesen vertiefteren Gehalt umzusehen.58

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54 Hegel, 1965, Vol. 2, p. 339. Translation: “The chief task of poetry is to being before our minds the powers governing spiritual life, and, in short, all that surges to and fro in human passion and feeling or passes quietly through our meditations – the all-encompassing realm of human ideas, deeds, actions and fates, the bustle of life in this world, and the divine rule of the universe.” Hegel, 1998, p. 972.
55 Ibid., p. 976.
56 Hegel had the following to say about Friedrich Schlegel’s “poetry of poetry”, ”This gives us an opportunity after all to allude once more to the irony that likes to pass itself off as the highest originality, especially when it treats nothing seriously and carries on the business of joking merely for the sake of joke. In another aspect it brings together in its representations a mass of external details, the inmost meaning of which the poet keeps to himself. Then the cunning and loftiness of this procedure is supposed to consist in enlarging the imagination on the ground that precisely in these collocations and external details there lie concealed the ‘poetry of poetry’ and everything most profound and excellent, which, purely and simply because of its depth, cannot be expressed. So e.g., in F. von Schlegel’s poems at the time when he imagined himself a poet, what is unsaid is given out as the best thing of all; yet this ‘poetry of poetry’ proved itself to be precisely the flattest prose.” Hegel, 1998, p. 296.
57 Ibid., p. 968.
58 Hegel, 1965, Vol. 1, p. 427-428. Translation: “The inner then stands by itself on one side, the external existent separated therefrom on the other, and subjectivity, withdrawn into itself because in the previous shapes it can no
Despite the force of Hegel’s negativity when speaking of the writers of his age, it is crucial that one grasps the dual nature of Hegel’s attitude towards Romantic art. The Romantic age represents the necessary overcoming of the limitations of the “objectivity” of Classical art, the realisation that the ideals lie not within particular objective forms such as the human body in sculpture but are in fact spiritual ideals, the products of *Geist*. However, the shift to Romantic art represents a pendulum swing in the opposite direction, a false split between subjective and objective that must be overcome. Chivalrous tales represent the deepening of this subjective tendency and the Romantic novel its culmination, subjectivity reaches such heights that the form of the novel itself can only be experienced as a limitation, the author breaks the form of their own work in the name of their subjective strivings. This is the point at which Hegel sees the necessity of leaving behind this mode of expression and making the move to philosophy, where the sublation of subjective spirit and its split with objective reality can be achieved. For Hegel, the elements of realism in Goethe and Schiller fail to overcome the split by giving expression to what Hegel calls “prosaic reality”, this is merely a swing back in the opposite direction once its moment has already passed. If Hegel is violently critical of the Romantic authors, it is precisely because they fail to make the shift at what he sees as the moment of necessary sublation. Hegel describes Friedrich Schlegel as having “dürftigen philosophischen Ingredienzien” and that, as his nature was critical rather than philosophical, he “bald zuviel, bald zuwenig taten”. The consequence of Schlegel’s subjective idealism is that:

Gradurch ist alles Anundfürsichseiende nur ein Schein, nicht seiner selbst wegen und durch sich selbst wahrhaft und wirklich, sondern ein bloßes Scheinen durch das Ich, in dessen Gewalt und Willkür es zu freiem Schalten bleibt. Das Geltenlassen und Aufheben steht rein im Belieben des in sich selbst als Ich schon absoluten Ich.

On the empirical level this has the consequence that:

longer find its adequate reality, has to be filled with the content of a new spiritual world of absolute freedom and infinity and look around for new forms of expression for this deeper content.” Hegel, 1998, p. 442.

61 Hegel, 1965, Vol.1, p. 73. Translation: “Everything genuinely and independently real becomes only a show, not true and genuine on its own account or through itself, but a mere appearance due to the ego in whose power and caprice and at whose free disposal it remains. To admit or cancel it depends wholly on the pleasure of the ego, already absolute in itself simply as ego.” Hegel, 1998, p. 65.
Als Künstler aber, diesem Prinzip gemäß, lebe ich, wenn all mein Handeln und Äußern überhaupt, insoweit es irgendeinen Inhalt betrifft, nur ein Schein für mich bleibt und eine Gestalt annimmt, die ganz in meiner Macht steht. Dann ist es mir weder mit diesem Inhalt noch seiner Äußerung und Verwirklichung überhaupt wahrhafter Ernst. Denn wahrhafter Ernst kommt nur durch ein substantielles Interesse, eine in sich selbst gehaltvolle Sache, Wahrheit, Sittlichkeit usf. herein, durch einen Inhalt, der mir als solcher schon als wesentlich gilt, so daß ich mir für mich selber nur wesentlich werde, insofern ich in solchen Gehalt mich versenkt habe und ihm in meinem ganzen Wissen und Handeln gemäß geworden bin. Auf dem Standpunkte, auf welchem das alles aus sich setzende und auflösende Ich der Künstler ist, dem kein Inhalt das Bewußtsein als absolut und an und für sich, sondern als selbstgemachter zernichtbarer Schein erscheint, kann solcher Ernst keine Stätte finden, da nur dem Formalismus des Ich Gültigkeit zugeschrieben ist. 62

As we shall see later, this aesthetic experience of life coupled with an empty interiority will be of the utmost importance for the understanding of Florentin’s character. Hegel goes on to describe how this concentration of the ego into itself leads to a breaking of bonds with exteriority and a subjectivity that can only love in the bliss of its own self-enjoyment. At its most developed point, the ironic subject tips into nihilism or melancholia,63 Hegel describes how:

62 Hegel, 1965, Vol.1, p. 73. Translation: “I live as an artist when all my action and my expression in general, in connection with any content whatever, remains for me a mere show and assumes a shape which is wholly in my power. In that case I am not really in earnest either with this content or, generally, with its expression and actualization. For genuine earnestness enters only by means of substantial interest, something of intrinsic worth like truth, ethical life, etc., - by means of a content which counts for me as essential, so that I only become essential myself in my own eyes in so far as I have immersed myself in such a content and have brought myself into conformity with it in all my knowing and acting. When the ego that sets up and dissolves everything out of its own caprice is the artist, to whom not content of consciousness appears as absolute and independently real but only as a self-made and destructible show, such earnestness can find no place, since validity is ascribed only to the formalism of the ego.” Hegel, 1998, p. 65. Hegel also states “moreover this virtuosity of an ironical artistic life apprehends itself as a divine creative genius for which anything and everything is only an unsubstantial creature, to which the creator, knowing himself to be disengaged and free from everything, is not bound, because he is just as able to destroy it as to create it”. Hegel, 1998, p. 66.
63 Characters of this type can be found in Tieck, Jean-Paul and in The Nightwatches of Bonaventura.

If irony is made the main characteristic of a work of art “Denn teils kommen platte Figuren herein, teils gehalt- und haltungslose, indem das Substantielle sich in ihnen als das Nichte erweist, teils treten endlich noch jene Sehnsüchtigkeiten und unaufgelösten Widersprüche des Gemüts hinzu. Solche Darstellungen können kein wahrhaftes Interesse erwecken.” Hegel goes on to describe such characters as “zum Teil Läppische, zum Teil Charakterlose”. Elsewhere, Hegel describes how this principle of irony in the formation of characters introduces a variety of elements which do not come together in a unity, the result being that each character destroys itself as a character. With the idea that it should become an object for reflection, Hegel describes how:

Tritt ein Individuum zunächst auch in einer Bestimmtheit auf, so soll dieselbe gerade in ihr Gegenteil überschlagen und der Charakter dadurch nichts als die Nichtigkeit des Bestimmten und seiner selbst darstellen. Dies ist von der Ironie als die eigentliche Höhe der Kunst angenommen worden, indem der

64 Hegel, 1965, Vol. 1, p. 74. Translation: “The next form of this negativity of irony is, on the one hand, the vanities of everything factual, moral, and of intrinsic worth, the nullity of everything objective and absolutely valid. If the ego remains at this standpoint, everything appears to it as null and vain, except its own subjectivity which becomes hollow and empty and itself mere vanity. But on the other hand, the ego may, contrariwise, fail to find satisfaction in this self-enjoyment and instead become inadequate to itself, so that it now feels a craving for the solid and the substantial, for specific and essential interests. Out of this comes misfortune, and the contradiction that, on the one hand, the subject does want to penetrate into truth and longs for objectivity, but, on the other hand, cannot renounce his isolation and withdrawal into himself or tear himself free from this unsatisfied abstract inwardness. Now he is attacked by the yearning which also we have seen proceeding from Fichtean philosophy. The dissatisfaction of this quiescence and impotence – which may not do or touch anything for fear of losing its inner harmony and which, even if pure in itself, is still unreal and empty despite its desire for reality and what is absolute – is the source of yearning and a morbid beautiful soul. For a truly beautiful soul acts and is actual. That longing, however, is only the empty vain subject’s sense of nullity, and he lacks the strength to escape from this vanity and fill himself with a content of substance.” Hegel, 1998, p. 66-67. Hegel sees Novalis as a typical example of the damaging effects of ironic subjectivity: “Novalis for example, one of the nobler spirits who took up this position, was driven into a void with not specific interests, into this dread of reality, and was worn down as it were into a spiritual decline.” Hegel, 1998, p. 159. Hegel also gives Jacobi’s Woldemar (1779) as a fictional example of this kind of personality, Hegel, 1998, p. 241.

65 Hegel, 1965, Vol. 1, p. 75-76. Translation: “The result is to produce, in part, commonplace figures, in part, figures worthless and without bearing, since the substance of their being proves in them to be a nullity; in part, finally, there appear attached to them those yearnings and unresolved contradictions of the heart. Such representations can awaken no interest.” Hegel, 1998, p. 68.

Hegel’s reduction of Friedrich Schlegel, Tieck, Novalis and Jean-Paul to his model of ironic subjectivity is persistent and at times overwhelming and it would seem that Hegel’s view of the German Romantics remains a persistent presence in the studies that offer an introduction to their thinking and fictional works. Hegel’s understanding, though much more than a generalising character assassination, still lacks a full understanding of their work. Although I follow Hegel in terms of Romantic subjectivity often lacking an objective content, and that this is a consequence of the objective content taking on a transcendent or ideal aspect (in Florentin’s case, this can be seen as his ideal notion of freedom that forms the core of his identity, a core which can only be abstract and formal as it is ideal), I do not follow Hegel in terms of his notion of a self-satisfied and self-enjoying subject that holds itself in reserve and ironically indulges in its subjective caprices while believing itself to be superior to everything is a major feature of Romantic subjectivity (Hegel is no doubt thinking of the “beautiful soul” here).

As it stands, Hegel’s interpretation of Fichte appears at best to be quite bizarre and at the worst wholly inaccurate, but it is perhaps not quite as unusual as it first appears. When Hegel states that for a Fichtean subjectivity everything can be freely destroyed or created depending upon itself, I take it to mean that in the highest instance an ideal can only have an empty and formal content. Nobody can show me or tell me anything about the absolute ego as this would mean that I would passively receive an already determined form which could not possibly be absolute in the sense of being free from concrete determinations, I can only refer to myself for its content, this means that my idea of it is dependent upon me, and I could just as well create it as not create it. My understanding is that Hegel means that it lacks objective content. In the case of freedom, if one wants to experience freedom one can only experience it as the freedom to do this or that, for example one is given a free choice, but the choice is

67 Hegel, 1965, Vol. 1, p. 259. Translation: “If an individual comes forward at first in a determinate way, this determinacy is at once to pass over into its opposite, and this character is therefore to display nothing but the nullity of its determinacy and itself. By irony this is regarded as the real height of art, on the assumption that the spectator must not be gripped by an inherently affirmative interest, but has to stand above it, as irony itself is away above everything.” Hegel, 1998, p. 243.
68 This is a much a product of Kantian thinking as Fichtean thinking. The result of Kantian critique is that certain things remain outside of our ability to know them, for the Early German Romantics, if one wanted to remain critical, then one must posit certain things as being transcendent to human knowledge, they could be felt or imagined but not known. This entailed a certain anxiety about the split between subjective and objective reality most clearly expressed in the works of Kleist.
nonetheless between a limited number of options. Absolute freedom on the other hand, is something that can only be (vaguely) imagined as a feeling. If we want to know actual freedom then we have to go through the forms through which it can be mediated, by which we will come to know limited aspects of freedom in different shapes and forms. One could of course offer an interpretation of Florentin by which one infers that Florentin feels superior to others in his proximity to ideal freedom and that he refuses to give it up because he enjoys the fantasy that he can project upon it, however, as we shall see, this would be to offer Florentin a subjective interiority that is in fact absent from the novel.⁶⁹

Beyond Hegel’s characterisation of ironic subjectivity, Romantic Art also receives a thematic treatment in Hegel’s *Aesthetics* that seems to stretch from the end of the Classical period around the ascension of the Roman Empire to Hegel’s modernity. I will attempt to give a brief sketch of it here as it offers several important characteristics of the period that are significant for my analysis of *Florentin*. Hegel sees the period as being one of increased inwardness, and in many respects his split between the Classical and Romantic period echoes Schiller’s split between naïve and sentimental poetry.⁷⁰ Hegel states that:

> Denn auf der Stufe der romantischen Kunst weiß der Geist, daß seine Wahrheit nicht darin besteht, sich in die Leiblichkeit zu versenken; im Gegenteil, er wird sich seiner Wahrheit nur dadurch gewiß, daß er sich aus dem Äußeren in seine Innigkeit mit sich zurückführt und die äußere Realität als ein ihm nicht adäquates Dasein setzt.⁷¹

He goes on to say that “Der wahre Inhalt des Romantischen ist die absolute Innerlichkeit, die entsprechende Form die geistige Subjektivität, als Erfassen ihrer Selbständigkeit und Freiheit.”⁷² As in Schiller’s idea of sentimental poetry, art has become about the artist’s reflection and relationship with their material: “Der ganze Inhalt konzentriert sich dadurch auf die Innerlichkeit des Geistes, auf die Empfindung, die Vorstellung, das Gemüt, welches nach

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⁶⁹ We are, of course, introducing philosophical ideas of immense depth here that would take far more space than is possible to examine them fully here.


⁷¹ Hegel, 1965, Vol. 1, p. 499. Translation: “At the stage of romantic art the spirit knows that its truth does not consist in its immersion in corporeality; on the contrary, it only becomes sure of its truth by withdrawing from the external into its own intimacy with itself and positing external reality as an existence inadequate to itself.” Hegel, 1998, p. 518.

One of the consequences of this for Hegel is that nature is no longer seen as divine, but becomes a vehicle for the expression of subjective feeling. This can be seen in Florentin in both Florentin’s own poetry and in the episode where Florentin, Eduard and Juliane are caught in a rain shower. Hegel continues by saying:

> Damit ist das Äußere als ein gleichgültiges Element angesehen, zu dem der Geist kein letztes Zutrauen und in welchem er kein Bleiben hat. Je weniger er die Gestalt der äußeren Wirklichkeit seiner für würdig hält, desto weniger vermag er in ihr seine Befriedigung zu suchen und sich durch die Vereinigung mit ihr als mit sich selber versöhnt zu finden.

Hegel also describes how:

> Die romantische Kunst hat die freie Lebendigkeit des Daseins in seiner unendlichen Stille und Versenkung der Seele ins Leibliche, sie hat dies Leben als solches in seinem eigensten Begriff nicht mehr zu ihrem Ziel, sondern wendet diesem Gipfel der Schönheit den Rücken; sie verwebt ihr Inneres auch mit der Zufälligkeit der äußeren Bildung und gönnt den markierten Zügen des Unschönen einen ungeschmälerten Spielraum.

The development of romantic love is also connected by Hegel to this increased inwardness, Hegel characterises chivalrous love as the compulsion to have one’s knowledge of oneself through the consciousness of the other, as with knightly honour, the key to this is in how one

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74 There lies a strange antagonism in Florentin’s poetic expression, nature is no longer separated from subjectivity as something completely foreign (for example thunder as the chariots of the Gods or a flood as God’s vengeance), instead, a certain pantheistic union between man and nature is posited. We see however, that what this union often amounts to is man extending subjective human attributes to the whole of nature, rather than recognising what is different between man and nature. Hegel would no doubt comment that it is yet another example of the dangers of subjective spirit by which one allows oneself to be steered by caprices and whims, that in this state one’s mood changes with the weather without recognising the subjective element in those moods, that depression does not belong to grey clouds, is nothing intrinsic to them, but is a human interpretation of nature. One fails to recognise oneself in this false and one-sided union between man and nature.

75 Hegel, 1965, Vol. 1, p. 507. Translation: “Therewith externality is regarded as an indifferent element in which spirit has no final trust or persistence. The less the spirit regards the shape of external reality as worthy of it, the less can it seek its satisfaction therein and attain reconciliation with itself through union with it.” Hegel, 1998, p. 526.

76 Hegel, 1965, Vol. 1, p. 507. Translation: “Romantic art no longer has as its aim [the representation of] the free vitality of existence with its infinite tranquillity and the immersion of the soul in the corporeal, or this life as such in its very own essential nature; on the contrary, it turns its back on this summit of beauty; it intertwines its inner being with the contingency of the external world and gives unfettered play to the bold lines of the ugly.” Hegel, 1998, p. 526-527.
appears to oneself through others. The knightly personality is seen by Hegel as a prototype for the subjective idealist described above, the day to day actuality of the knight is of little interest, it does not matter that he is a murderer or extremely violent or that he transgresses several ethical laws on his path to glory and recognition because he sees himself, and we should see him as nothing but the physical embodiment of an abstract ideal such as honour or bravery. Hegel explains the attraction of these ideals as laying in their infinity, *Geist* longs to be infinite and:

> Dies Verlorensein seines Bewußtseins in dem anderen, dieser Schein von Uneigennützigkeit und Selbstlosigkeit, durch welchen sich das Subjekt erst wiederfindet und zum Selbst wird, diese Vergessenheit seiner, so daß der Liebende nicht für sich existiert, nicht für sich lebt und besorgt ist, sondern die Wurzeln seines Daseins in einem anderen findet und doch in diesem anderen gerade ganz sich selbst genießt, macht die Unendlichkeit der Liebe aus.

Hegel of course, sees the beauty of this emotion in the way in which *Geist* flows into a form, sublates it and returns to oneself, rather than in the idealisation of women and the enjoyment of sensuality. Echoes of knightly love are clear to see in the notion of reciprocal love in German Romanticism, particularly in *Lucinde* and the relationship between the count and his wife in *Florentin*, however, what is implied by these relationships is that it is the man who finds his missing part in the woman, what the woman gains, apart from being loved, seems somewhat less important in these depictions. Certainly, we can see echoes of tales of chivalry in *Florentin*, it seems to matter little to Florentin what unfreedom he imposes upon others or that he temporarily passes through as long as he clings to his ideal notion of freedom. By the 1800s of course, in a world that comes after Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* (1615), this form of character cannot be understood without a certain element of irony.

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77 It is through tales of chivalry that the depiction of human individuality becomes the central feature of art rather than the Gods of the ancients or the God of Christianity, art makes “*Humanus* its new holy of holies”, see Hegel, 1998, p. 607.

78 Hegel, 1965, Vol. 1, p. 540. Translation: “What constitutes the infinity of love is this losing, in the other, one’s consciousness of self, this splendour of disinterestedness and selflessness through which alone the person finds himself and becomes a self, this self-forgetfulness in which the lover does not exist, live, and care for himself, but finds the roots of his being in another, and yet in this other does entirely enjoy precisely himself.” Hegel, 1998, p. 563.

As Hegel develops his characterisation of Romantic Art a problematic aspect appears that stems from the increased inwardness of art and artists. On Romantic Painting Hegel says that “doch was in solchen Kunstwerken den Kern ihres Inhaltes ausmacht, sind nicht diese Gegenstände selbst, sondern die Lebendigkeit und Seele der subjektiven Auffassung und Ausführung, das Gemüt des Künstlers, das sich in seinem Werke abspiegelt und nicht nur ein bloßes Abbild äußerer Objekte, sondern zugleich sich selbst und sein Inneres liefert.”

80 How does one depict something that belongs to the subjective interior rather than to exterior actuality? If the ideal can only be given an allegorical form rather than a physical manifestation as in Greek sculpture, how does one unite the form with the content? Hegel describes how many of the modern paintings that he sees “seien ohne Phantasie für Situationen, Motive und Ausdruck gefaßt” and lack spiritual vitality. Interiority is a serious problem for modern art and threatens to sink into uncommunicativeness. Both allegory and the problem of the expression of inwardness will be taken up later in this essay.

Despite what would appear to be insurmountable differences between Hegel and Schlegel, there are in fact several areas where their thinking is remarkably similar. Although Schlegel was far from offering such a negative opinion of Jean-Paul and Tieck as we find in Hegel’s *Aesthetics*, he was not without an awareness of their failings. In the *Gespräch Über die Poesie* (1799-1800) Friedrich Schlegel describes Jean-Paul’s “buntes Allerlei von kränklichem Witz”. However, for Friedrich Schlegel such wit is a necessary product of the

80 Hegel, 1965, Vol. 2, p. 181. Translation: “the heart of these pictures is not the subjects themselves but the liveliness and soul of the subjective treatment and execution, the mind of the artist which is mirrored in his work and provides not only a mere copy of these external things but at the same time himself and his inner soul. Precisely for this reason the subjects painted, even so regarded, are indifferent to us because the manifestation of the individual artist in them begins to become prominent as the chief thing.” Hegel, 1998, p. 804. Hegel repeats this problematic situation in his discussion on Romantic Poetry at Hegel, 1998, p. 1114-1115, and again when he discusses the Romantic Drama in relationship to the difference between subjective and objective pathos at Hegel, 1998, p. 1173.


82 Hegel states that “since Tieck’s time this contempt for the public has become the fashion, especially in Germany. The German author insists on expressing himself according to his own personality and not making his works agreeable to hearers or spectators. On the contrary, German self-will requires that everyone shall be something different from everyone else in order to display his originality. For example Tieck and the brothers Schlegel with their premeditated irony could not master the mind and spirit of their nation and time”. Hegel, 1998, p. 1175, but he dedicates much more space to criticizing Jean-Paul and how his “humour often surprises us by its depth of wit and beauty of feeling, but equally often, and in an opposite way, by its grotesquely combining things which have no real connection with one another, and the relations into which his humour brings them together are almost indecipherable”. Ibid., p. 295, Hegel also mentions his “florid style”, ibid., p. 408 and his tendency towards “sentimentality and tastelessness”, ibid., p. 584.


modern age “was in so kränklichen Verhältnissen aufgewachsen ist, kann selbst natürlicherweise nicht anders als kränklich sein”.85 Friedrich Schlegel comes much closer to Hegel’s thinking in his early work Über das Studium der griechischen Poesie (1797),86 where he describes how modern poetry is characterised by a “lack of character”, that it has a confused, skeptical and lawless nature, and is overly influenced by trends in taste and the desire for “interesting individuality”.87 Friedrich Schlegel also describes how “die Objektivität der Kunst, wenn sich bei dem Geschäft allgemeingültiger Darstellung, die Eigentümlichkeit ins Spiel mischt, sich leise einschleicht, oder offenbar empört; durch Subjektivität.”88 He also offers his own account of the struggle between the subjective and objective in art:

Die Bildungsgeschichte der modernen Poesie stellt nichts andres dar, als den steten Streit der subjektiven Anlage, und der objektiven Tendenz des ästhetischen Vermögens und das allmähliche Übergewicht des letztern. Mit jeder wesentlichen Veränderung des Verhältnisses des Objektiven und des Subjektiven beginnt eine neue Bildungsstufe.89

Rather than an end of art or an increasingly subjective art, Friedrich Schlegel spies a return to the “objective” tendencies of the Greeks. This however, is an age yet to come, the age of modernity is thoroughly subjective and he describes how it is the character of Hamlet that typifies tragedy for the modern subject,90 with “ein so gränzenloses mißverhältnis der denkenden und der tätigen Kraft”.91 Friedrich Schlegel describes the development of modern poetry in the following manner: “aus diesem Mangel der Allgemeingültigkeit, aus dieser Herrschaft des Manirierten, Charakteristischen und Individuellen, erklärt sich von selbst die durchgängige Richtung der Poesie, ja der ganzen ästhetischen Bildung der Modernen aufs

87 Friedrich Schlegel, 2001, p. 20.
88 Friedrich Schlegel, 2014, p. 69. Translation: “The objectivity of art is contravened when, in the course of a universally valid representation, peculiarity gets involved, or quietly sneaks in, or flagrantly outrages. It is contravened by subjectivity.” Friedrich Schlegel, 2001, p. 70.
89 Friedrich Schlegel, 2014, p. 89. Translation: “The history of the development of modern poetry presents nothing less than the constant struggle between the subjective disposition and the objective tendency of the aesthetic faculty – and the gradual predominance of the latter. With every essential change of the relations between the objective and the subjective a new stage of culture begins.” Friedrich Schlegel, 2001, p. 88.
90 Goethe’s Faust is also seen as a potential sign of an adequate expression for modernity.
If the modern age is overly subjective for Friedrich Schlegel, it is also overly sentimental. He wants to escape the sentimental “was auf eine platte Weise rührend und tränenreich ist, und voll von jenen familiären Edelmutsgefühlen, in deren Bewußtsein Menschen ohne Charakter sich so unaussprechlich glücklich und groß fühlen.” For Friedrich Schlegel this would entail a return to works in the style of Petrarch and Torquato Tasso. It should be remembered also, that Schlegel and Novalis were hardly uncritical followers of Fichte, as Novalis’ *Fichte Studies* (1795-1796) illustrate, Schlegel has also voiced his concerns about the notion of the absolute ego in Fichte, seeing it as little more than the image of Fichte himself. My intention in relating this proximity of the thought of Hegel and Schlegel here is to demonstrate that there is something like a shared paradigm between them, a shared concern for the relationship between modern subjectivity and aesthetics and the problem of expression, a theme that also comes to expression in the figure of Florentin.

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92 Friedrich Schlegel, 2014, p. 31. Translation: “a lack of universality, this rule of the mannered, characteristic, and individual. Every original individual that contains a greater quantity of intellectual content or aesthetic energy is interesting.” Friedrich Schlegel, 2001, p. 35.


Previous Reception and Research

Von Madame Veit ist ein Roman herausgekommen, den ich Ihnen mitteilen will, der Kuriositaet wegen sehen Sie ihn an. Sie werden darin auch die Gespenster alter bekannten Spuken sehen. Indessen hat mir dieser Roman, der eine seltsame Fratze ist, doch eine bessere Vorstellung von der Verfasserin gegeben, und er ist ein neuer Beweis, wie weit die Dilettanterei wenigstens in dem Mechanischen und in der hohlen Form kommen kann.96

The reception of Dorothea Schlegel’s Florentin was far from positive, as can be seen from the letter from Schiller to Goethe seen above. One can only imagine how disappointed she must have been that the response from her close friend Friedrich Schleiermacher was not much more explicit than that she had written a “sehr niedliches Buch”.97 From what we know of the responses of Novalis and Tieck, it seems that they read the novel with disinterest apart from the opening sonnet by Friedrich Schlegel.98 Schiller’s wife Lotte described it as a: “Ragout vom Meister, meres rivales, Lucinde, Ardinghello, Agnes, Sternbald”99 and the Neue allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek remarked that “Vieles ist hoechst langweilig.”100 Dorothea Schlegel was also highly criticised by Caroline Schelling for having apparently based the character of Florentin on her former lover Eduard d’Alton. For Caroline this was both an ethical

96 Letter from Schiller to Goethe in Hans Graef und Albert Leitzmann, Eds., Der Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe, Vol. II, 1955. p. 361. Translation: “Madame Veit has published a novel that I wish to inform you about. Look at it for the sake of curiosity. In it you will also see the haunting ghosts of old acquaintances. All the same, this novel, which is a strange caricature, gave me a better idea about the authoress, and it is a new proof of how far dilettantism can go at least in mechanics and in the hollow form.” Dorothea Schlegel, 1988, p. lxxi.
98 Schlegel, 1988, p. lxxi.
99 Wilhelm Fielitz, ed., Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Lotte 1788-1805, Vol. III, Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta'schen, 1896, p. 150. Translation: “A mixture of Meister, Meres Rivales, Ardinghello, Agnes, Sternbald,” (own translation). I take “Meres Rivales” to refer to the novel by Madame de Genlis, although it could also have been a play on words, that these novels are “rival mothers” of Florentin).
outrage, as she believed that Dorothea had used actual letters from d’Alton in Florentin, and further proof that Dorothea lacked the imagination to write novels.\textsuperscript{101} It was perhaps only Friedrich Schlegel’s close friend Friedrich Ast who wrote a positive review of Florentin,\textsuperscript{102} although Jean Paul also mentions the novel favourably in his The Horn of Oberon (1804).\textsuperscript{103} 

More recent studies have approached the novel thematically, covering themes as varied as cross-dressing\textsuperscript{104} to garden design,\textsuperscript{105} others have attempted to put the novel into a historical context, such as Karin Stuebben Thornton’s “Enlightenment and Romanticism in the Work of Dorothea Schlegel”,\textsuperscript{106} while Elena Pnevmonidou has looked at it in relationship to Friedrich Schlegel’s Lucinde (1799).\textsuperscript{107} Laurie Johnson examines Florentin in relationship to Romantic notions of alterity, particularly in relationship to Fichte’s theory of subjectivity and works by Novalis.\textsuperscript{108} Although I find all of these perspectives to be of use in situating Florentin in a wider context, they are too limited to their respective themes to be of further help in evaluating my own thoughts about Florentin. In some respects Martha B. Helfer’s article\textsuperscript{109} is an attempt to move away from earlier studies of Florentin and develop a more critical perspective. Helfer criticises the poor reception given to Florentin and the perspective that sees it as nothing more than an inferior imitation of Friedrich Schlegel’s Lucinde. She goes on to characterise the earlier response to Florentin as falling into the following four categories:

(1) textual analytic attempts to trace the literary influence of works like Goethe's Wilhelm Meister, Tieck's Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen, and Jacobi's Woldemar on the "female" novel Florentin; (2) biographical interpretations that find in the novel's title figure a fictional prototype of Eduard d'Alton, a dashing young nobleman with whom Veit-Schlegel was infatuated for a time; (3) feminist analyses of the title figure, as

\textsuperscript{101} See Richardson's "Introduction to Florentin" in Schlegel, 1988, p. xc-xcvii.
\textsuperscript{102} Gothische gelehrte Zeitungen auf das neunzehnte Jahrhundert 45, (6 Juni 1801), p. 366-368.
\textsuperscript{103} For those interested in Dorothea Schlegel seen from the context of other female writers of this time, I recommend the anthology Bitter Healing: German Women Writers, 1700-1830, Jeannine Blackwell and Susanne Zantorp (Eds.), Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1990.
well as the novel’s female characters, as somehow representative of Veit-Schlegel herself; and (4) comparative studies of the novel as a feminine response to Schlegel’s Lucinde.\(^{110}\)

Helfer then proceeds to give a feminist analysis of Florentin where she describes how she sees Florentin as a serious contribution to the aesthetic theories of Early German Romanticism. The central hypothesis of her article is that Florentin is a parody of the masculine discourse that we find in Lucinde, in particular the active male ideal of an artist’s aesthetic approach toward their existence as being the one who gives life to his creations by using women as a force of ideal inspiration for his work. Helfer calls Florentin an anti-bildungsroman.\(^{111}\) For Helfer, Florentin is an expression of the impossibility of feminine expression in the male-dominated discourse of the time. She goes on to say that for Dorothea Schlegel the Romantic novel was a closed genre which did not allow for a feminine presence. Unable to find a space for well-developed female characters or a direct criticism of male values, Dorothea Schlegel could only express her critique in the form of an absence or a failure.

Where Helfer and my own approach converge is in the problematisation of the expressionless qualities of Dorothea Schlegel’s Florentin and in the attempt to find a structural explanation for it rather than see it as nothing more than a demonstration of the inability of its author. Helfer describes the difficulty of getting past her initial reception of the novel as being “dry reading because Veit-Schlegel did not have enough to say” and it having an “unengaging manner”. She does this by looking at the effects of the expressionless figure of Florentin, something that she sees as arising from the difficulty of knowing what to take seriously and what to take as a joke.\(^{112}\) She focuses on Florentin as a disruptive force, that as a character he is self-disruptive and that he also disrupts the environments in which he finds himself. However, there are several aspects of Helfer’s essay which I believe can be criticised. Even though she attempts to move away from a strictly biographical context of the novel, she still finds herself very much bound to an idea of authorial intention, basing much of her approach upon statements made by Dorothea Schlegel in other contexts. In this way, the tensions and contradictions immanently present in the novel are reduced to being the author’s intentional structures, in this case as “intentional irony”. While I see some validity in this approach, I also see it as limiting. Even if Helfer is trying to get away from the idea of Florentin as being a pale

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\(^{110}\) Helfer, 1996, p. 146.

\(^{111}\) This is something I find a little difficult to accept, given that a critique of Bildung is a common feature of many of those novels typically referred to as belonging to that genre.

\(^{112}\) Something that Friedrich Schlegel described as one of the best effects of ironical expression. See On Incomprehensibility (1800) in Friedrich Schlegel, 1971, p. 265.
imitation of Friedrich Schlegel’s Lucinde, she is still seeing it in orbit around it, focused upon it and finding its motivation from it. Although I will also speak of Florentin in relationship to the novels of reflection by Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel, I hope to avoid allowing them to dominate my understanding of Florentin and allow the differences between these works to come forward. While there is no doubt much to be said for a feminist approach to Florentin, my engagement with the novel has led me towards other contexts and structures of significance.
In many respects the Kantian and Fichtean subject that makes its desire the truth or ground of its being paves the way for the psychoanalytical subject of desire that is familiar to us today. This movement towards desire as the truth of the subject is also the path traced by Foucault in his later seminars. For this reason we begin the analysis of Florentin by attempting to understand a tale told by Florentin about the awakening and subsequent falling away of his desire.

113 Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 106. Translation: “I insisted on not going and I was permitted to remain. But I had to go out on the balcony again to wait until she would call me again and would call her ladies away. The lights were extinguished. I had to stand outside a long time. It began to rain; I became miserable. Boredom was always unbearable for me under any circumstance. Finally a figure came and took me by the hand. It was not the familiar one but that of a trusted old chamber maid. She led me through several dark rooms. Each circumstance struck me as unpleasant. Finally she opened a door and left. The mistress approached me; she was in casual night clothes, very beautiful. The room was extremely splendid. The light of the lamp illuminated it only dimly. Everything was heavenly, incomparable, but it was not that room, that illumination, those mirrors, that beautiful carpet. The sweet scent of flowers did not surround me; it was not the same elegance that floated about. I longed for the shimmer, the air of that small temple which had first greeted me so amiable and captured my fantasy. The entire attractive picture was withdrawn from me; my desires became foreign to me. I sat down next to the beautiful, kind lady and spoke a bit to her. The phrases were probably extremely indifferent and insipid and disconcerted the lady greatly; they were answered equally indifferently. There was a moment of the strangest, most awkward silence. I sensed the unseemliness and wanted to get back into my previous mood. The effort was not successful. I became completely morose, and…finally fell asleep.” Dorothea Schlegel, Florentin, 1988, p. 74.
erotic desire. Once one has read this tale the introduction that forms its frame becomes all the more remarkable. Florentin introduces it by saying:

jene Aussicht habe ich aus einem besondern Grund zum Abzeichnen ersehen. Man sieht von dort ein Haus, das mich durch seine Bauart und eine Ähnlichkeit in der Lage an eine lustige Geschichte erinnert, die ich euch noch erzählen will. Ihr mögt euch meiner dabei erinnern, wenn ich fern bin, und ihr die Zeichnung beschaut in friedlichen Tagen.\textsuperscript{114}

The prominence of a frame around a tale is a way of drawing the reader into a reflective reading of the novel, a way of breaking with the immediacy of that which is being told which, at the same time, somewhat like the ornate gilded frame of a painting, prevents the gaze from overflowing the experience of the aesthetic. \textit{Man schwebt}. Florentin wants us to see the two images together in a montage, a house seen from a mountain top, and the story of his “Beschämung” and “albernes Benehmen”. For Florentin this story is “eine lustige Geschichte” and an “Abenteuer”, but for Juliane this tale belongs to Florentin’s “Konfessionen”. Certainly, there appears to be a certain contradiction here, that a story could simultaneously tell of a person’s shame and foolishness but none the less be an amusing tale of adventure for them. Just as one would find a contradiction, or lack of relation, between a beautiful landscape painting and a tale of impotence.

In many respects we see the underside of ideal striving here. As long as one identifies with an ideal, the actual circumstances lose their importance, Florentin is striving for ideal sensuality and freedom and as a result his own identity becomes ideal rather than actual, or perhaps aesthetic rather than objective. Where he is, where he locates his being, is always in relation to his ideal, either in the dream of union or in the infinite striving for an object, which as ideal, is not an object in the sense of something that can be grasped. The ideal cannot be determined in terms of a concept or a representation, that would make it real, fallible, incomplete, mediated by things not ideal in themselves. If we see the influence of Kantian / Fichtean philosophy here in terms of regulative ideas and the absolute,\textsuperscript{115} we should also see the theological dimension of something so perfect that it can only manifest itself as something else. If the absolute or the ideal cannot be grasped as a thing, it can be grasped as a feeling or

\textsuperscript{114} Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 102. Translation: “I selected that view for sketching for a very special reason. From there one sees a house which because of its architecture and a similarity in location, reminds me of a funny story that I still want to tell you. You might think of me when I’m gone and you look at the drawing in peaceful days.” Dorothea Schlegel, 1988, p. 72.

\textsuperscript{115} One should remember of course that the German word for something that is Absolute is \textit{Unbedingt}, it is “unbethinged” as well as unlimited and unbounded.
an intuition, it can be grasped through Geist. In many respects, if Novalis wants us to see the importance of the spirit rather than the letter in his Heinrich von Ofterdingen (1800), Dorothea Schlegel’s Florentin attempts to give a voice to the suffering of the letter as it is made to serve the aims of striving spirit without being given its due recognition. Something that the suffering of Juliane as she is forced into an early marriage, or the suffering of Florentin as he undergoes a strict religious education, gives us a clear expression of.

We can certainly agree with Juliane that this tale belongs to his confessions, a confession that is perhaps worth comparing with those of Rousseau. What we find in Rousseau’s Confessions (1781) is the repeated confession of the preference of the appearance over the thing, the fantasy over the thing. Florentin’s desire reaches its zenith at the moment that it becomes multiplied in the hall of mirrors, he finds his desire refracted amongst the many objects there that seem to become symbols for the imagined pleasures to come. While he remains within that room his imagination can operate unbedingt just as Heinrich von Ofterdingen’s could when faced with the Provençal book. When Florentin is left alone on the balcony, all that separates him from the object that inspired his desire is a matter of time, but the distance between himself and his ideal object seems infinite because the distance between ideal and real has now revealed itself, actuality has penetrated his aesthetic sphere of imagination. Such conditions, if one were able to extend them indefinitely, would have no doubt favoured the desire of Rousseau: if one could remain upon the balcony forever it would be the ideal distance of being maximally close to the object while still separated far enough from it for the imagination to render it ideal. In his Confessions Rousseau in fact seemed to

The reader should of course keep in mind the difficulties of this word, meaning both mind and spirit.

For Alice Kuzniar (see Alice A. Kuzniar, Delayed Endings, Nonclosure in Novalis and Hölderlin, Athens: Georgia University Press, 1987), Novalis’ Heinrich von Ofterdingen (1800) is primarily about Darstellung itself. Novalis’ framing of tales within tales communicates the insufficiency of the letter to present the spirit, the necessity of the passage from a dogmatic understanding of the written word to the interpretation of the letter through the power of the imagination or fantasy. A necessity which can be traced both to the reaction against Lutheran Christianity that we see in Novalis’ Christendom or Europe (1799) when he says that “Luther treated Christianity altogether as he pleased, mistook its spirit and introduced another letter another religion, namely the holy universal validity of the Bible, whereby unfortunately another extremely alien aspect of secular learning was introduced into the matter of religion- philology- whose all-consuming influence becomes unmistakeable from that moment onward.” See Novalis, 1997, p. 141. It is also a continuation of the ideas presented by Fichte in his Ueber den Unterschied des Geistes und des Buchstabens in der Philosophie (1794) when he states that “Anyone who surveys the realm of the human mind scientifically, anyone who really penetrates to the innermost and most secret depths of the human spirit and does not, as it were, continue to hang on to the empty, dead letters: such a person possesses spirit, and, as we shall see at the proper time, he elevates the spirit.” See J.G. Fichte, Early Philosophical Writings, New York: Cornell University, 1988, p. 195.

In Heinrich von Ofterdingen the protagonist finds a book that appears to tell the story of his life, yet it is written in a language that he cannot read. He sees that it has a relation to his own life, that it is addressed to him, but he cannot define the relationship between the words and their meaning, between the book and his life, it is in this space of non-identity that the potentiality of fantasy takes place.
fear that the pleasures offered to him by his imagination would replace reality altogether in the absence of his desired object.  

Perhaps this premature death of Florentin’s desire can be connected to the inability to become a self-creating and self-sufficient artist of one’s own existence as described by Helfer above, where one imagines that Florentin should have the potency to clothe his object in his fantasy and go much further than he does, we see instead how fragile Florentin’s ideal is, and how limited to his subjective imagination it is. What this scene reveals is that even if Florentin’s desire is limited to his subjective imagination, he is nonetheless dependent on objects in order to inspire that imagination. He has to keep a kind of allegorical balance of correct distance, the object must be there, but only as the portal to the ideal, if the object is too real, or too close, the portal becomes closed, the object obscures the ideal with its actuality; if the object is too far away, or absent, then the ideal becomes too indeterminate for his fantasy, in its absence other objects fill his imagination; the rain, the dark, he becomes passive.

Rousseau’s Julie perhaps gives us the structure of this situation:

Woe to him who has nothing left to desire! He loses, as it were, all he possesses. One enjoys less what one obtains than what one hopes for, and one is happy only before happiness is achieved. Indeed man, greedy and circumscribed, destined to crave everything and obtain little, has received from Heaven a consoling strength that brings everything he desires closer, submits it to his imagination, makes it seem present and palpable, delivers it to him, so to speak, and in order to make this imaginary property more delightful to him, modifies it as his passion dictates. But this whole spell disappears in the face of the object itself; nothing any longer embellishes this object in the eyes of its possessor; one does not fantasize what one beholds; imagination no longer embellishes anything one possesses, illusion ends where enjoyment begins. The land of illusions is on this earth the only one worth living in, and such is the void of things human that, with the exception of the being who exists in himself, the only beauty to be found is in things that are not.  

119 Rousseau states that: “The impossibility of attaining the real persons precipitated me into the land of chimeras; and seeing nothing that existed worthy of my exalted feelings, I fostered them in an ideal world which my imagination soon peopled with beings after my own heart. Never was this resource more opportune and never did it prove more fertile. In my continual ecstasies I intoxicated myself with draughts of the most exquisite sentiments that have ever entered the heart of man. Altogether ignoring the human race, I created for myself societies of perfect creatures celestial in their virtue and in their beauty, and of reliable, tender, and faithful friends such as I never found here below. I took such pleasure in thus soaring into the empyrean in the midst of all the charms that surrounded me, that I spent countless hours and days at it, losing all memory of anything else.” Rousseau, 1953, p. 398.

The editor of these letters then goes on to comment that the absolute sovereign must then be
the most bored person in the whole world. In many ways Florentin’s boredom seems to be
casted by his position of sovereignty in relationship to the physical object of his desire. With
the power of possession comes the determination of the object, what was ideally imagined
becomes presently real. Perhaps it could be said that there could be nothing more shameful
than suddenly finding the object of one’s desire before one, what was perfect in its
unlimitedness suddenly becomes embarrassingly real, it holds a mirror up to fantasy itself,
contorted by actuality’s limitations. One would then find that the actions of bringing forth the
object of one’s desire would indeed seem “albern”. The painting of an idyllic house seen at a
distance, and the trajectory of Florentin’s desire would then perhaps not seem quite so
contradictory after all.121

Of course, Rousseau is not alone in the idealising of woman in particular as a
perpetually lost object, the death of Petrarch’s Laura allows her to pass from actual to ideal in
his sonnets, in that unlimited form she can be infinitely read and interpreted, each instant of the
actual can be allegorized to refer to an aspect of her being. Petrarch describes Laura as a:

Soul full of bliss who often comes to see me
to soothe my nights of sorrow with your eyes
which Death has not extinguished but has made
more beautiful than any living thing.122

We can equally speak of the position of Beatrice in Dante’s Vita Nuova (1294), where we find
it expressed that: “ladies, the end and aim of my love formerly lay in the greeting of this lady
to whom you are perhaps referring, and in this greeting dwelt my bliss which was the end of
all my desires. But since it pleased her to deny it to me, my Lord, Love, through his grace, has
placed all my bliss in something that cannot fail me.”123 It is the dream of Beatrice’s death that
forms the centre of the new life, the deification of Beatrice as a reflection of the brilliance of
God and the source of inspiration for Dante’s poetry. The logic of allegory demands that the

121 One could of course, think here of Petrarch’s ascent of Mount Ventoux, who, after finally reaching the
summit of the mountain, gazes upon his copy of Augustine’s Confessions and reads “And men go about to
wonder at the heights of the mountains, and the mighty waves of the sea, and the wide sweep of rivers, and the
circuit of the ocean, and the revolution of the stars, but themselves they consider not”, and feels ashamed.
122 Petrarch, Canzoniere, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999, p. 403. One should note, of course, that
by the final Canzone Laura is connected to Medusa, as if Petrarch felt a need to confess his difficulty in passing
from the allegorical figure to the allegorized content, the passage from Laura’s earthly beauty to Mary’s spiritual
divinity.
123 Dante, Vita Nuova, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 34.
materiality of the sign must be reduced in order for it to function as the allegory of the most high. Although Walter Benjamin has become the standard critical resource when it comes to thinking about allegory, Hegel in fact dedicates a large proportion to the problematic nature of allegorical expression. For Hegel, allegory is something bleak, cold and frosty and is a consequence of the idea that for the artist what is most supreme and excellent is the inexpressible. For Hegel, the truth is the exact opposite: “seine Werke sind das Beste des Künstlers und das Wahre; was er ist, das ist er, was aber nur im Innern bleibt, das ist er nicht.”

Hegel rejects the German Romantic notion that all works of art can be understood allegorically and connects it to the Understanding’s tendency to analyse and apply its logic to things. The Understanding separates picture and meaning and consequently destroys the work of art, individual things perish under the gaze of the Understanding as it looks beyond the thing and seeks its idea or meaning. Hegel aligns allegory with riddles, metaphors and similes. Here the meaning is the first thing in the artist’s mind: “und die konkrete Verbildlichung derselben nur Danebenstehende und Beiherspielende, das für sich gar keine Selbständigkeit hat, sondern als der Bedeutung ganz unterworfen erscheint.” Hegel goes on to describe how the externality of the allegory “deren sie sich bedient, für die Bedeutung, welche in ihr erscheinen soll, von der größtmöglichen Durchsichtigkeit sein muß”. Hegel describes how it:

124 Jeremy Tambling offers us a useful summary of the propositions on allegory in Benjamin’s The Origin of German Tragic Drama (1928) that I will repeat here due to lack of space: “1. That allegory corresponds to a perception of the world in ruins, and is therefore the art of the fragment, and the opposite of the symbol, which presupposes the value of “nature” preserving unchanging, complete, identities and values. 2. That melancholy is the medium through which allegory is discovered and becomes significant and readable. 3. That allegory does not work with the sense of an organic, natural relationship between things; but that it questions such a possibility.” Jeremy Tambling, Allegory, London: Routledge, 2010, p. 110.
126 Hegel, 1965, Vol. 1, p. 284. Translation: “his works are the best part and truth of the artist; what he is in his works, that he is; but what remains buried in his heart, that is he not”. Hegel, 1998, p. 291.
128 Hegel, 1965, Vol. 1, p. 370. Translation: “its concrete illustration in an image is only something accessory and an accompaniment to it which in itself has no independence at all but appears as entirely subordinate to the meaning”, Hegel, 1998, p. 381. One does not have to look far in order to find statements in agreement with this notion of allegory in this period, Karl Philipp Moritz describes how “Wo die Allegorie statt findet, muß sie immer untergeordnet, sie muß nie Hauptsache seyn- sie ist nur Zierrath- und bloß allegorische Kunstwerke sollten eigentlich gar nicht statt finden, oder doch nie vorzüglich um die Allegorie für wahre Kunstwerke gelten.” Karl Philipp Moritz, Schriften, Tübingen: Max Niemayer Verlag, 1962, p. 113. Translation: “Where allegory takes place it must always be subordinate, it can never be the main subject, it is only a vignette, and purely allegorical artworks should not really exist, or rather not ideally if the allegory is to be valid as a true work of art.” (own translation).
The allegory creates a separation between subject and predicate and universal and particular. It seems apparent that this is the mode by which Florentin experiences ideal freedom, actuality can only be of use to him to the extent that it can be an allegory for his ideal. On another level we can see that the subjective emptiness of Florentin as a character in terms of how he is described, that his own thoughts are not developed and his interiority does not come to full expression in the novel, shows him to be an allegorical figure for Romantic striving itself. Hegel describes how Dante’s Beatrice works better as a figure because she hovers between allegory and a transfiguration of “his youthful beloved”. It is precisely this hovering between mimetic representation and allegorical figure which constitutes her beauty for Hegel, an image which both captures the gaze and causes it to look beyond it. Hegel applies the same problem of allegorical expression when looking at Romantic Drama and he states there that:

die Lebendigkeit der Charaktere, die keine bloß personifizierten Interessen sein dürfen, wie es z. B. bei unseren jetzigen dramatischen Dichtern nur allzuhäufig der Fall ist. Solche Abstraktionen bestimmter Leidenschaften und Zwecke bleiben schlechthin wirkungslos; auch eine bloß oberflächliche Individualisierung genügt in keiner Weise, indem dann nach Art allegorischer Figuren Inhalt und Form auseinanderfallen. Tiefe Gefühle und Gedanken, große Gesinnungen und Worte können für diesen Mangel keinen Ersatz bieten. Das dramatische Individuum muß im Gegenteil an ihm selber durch und durch lebendig, eine fertige Totalität sein, deren Gesinnung und Charakter mit ihrem Zweck und Handeln übereinstimmt.

130 Hegel, 1965, Vol. 1, 1965, p. 386-387. Translation: “it remains the abstraction of a universal idea which acquires only the empty form of subjectivity and is to be called a subject only, as it were, in a grammatical sense…the allegorical being must make subjectivity so hollow that all specific individuality vanishes from it. It is therefore rightly said of allegory that it is frosty and cold and that, owing to the intellectual abstractness of its meanings, it is even in its invention rather an affair of the intellect than of concrete intuition and the heartfelt depth of imagination.” Hegel, 1998, p. 399.
132 Hegel, 1965, Vol. 2, p. 531-532. Translation: “the vitality of the characters who should not be merely interests personified as, for example, is all too often the case with our present day dramatists. These abstract presentations of specific passions and aims are always entirely inefficacious; even a purely superficial individualisation is wholly unsatisfactory because content and form fall apart as they do in allegorical figures. For this defect no profound feelings and thoughts, no great dispositions or fine language can provide a remedy. On the contrary, an individual in a drama must be alive through and through in himself, whole and entire, his disposition and character being in harmony with his aim and action.” Hegel, 1998, p. 1177.
In many respects it feels that Hegel could well be talking about Florentin when he makes these comments. Florentin’s lack of interiority, the usage of familiar themes and settings throughout Florentin the novel, all serve to break the impression of organic unity and lead the reader into seeing it as a construction, as if one would find oneself in the unfortunate position of a theatre seat from which one could see the stage machinery and the actors as they wait to take the stage. However, it is not my intention to dogmatically apply Hegel’s criteria for works of art to Florentin, that would hardly agree with my intention to write a critical analysis of the novel. My intention here is to highlight an inner antagonism in the novel that can be brought out using Hegel’s critique of allegory. On the one hand, as is commonly said of the novels of reflection by Novalis and Schlegel, the intention is to draw the reader out of their identification with the character and to reflect critically on the content of the novel, on the other hand, such a critical distance risks annihilating all semblance of reality in the work itself.

There is a point at which the allegorical figure becomes so empty that the content of the allegory seems to rely entirely upon our subjective feelings, that we could just as well identify it with one content as with another, at which point one can only fall silent in the face of such a hermetic fragment. In many respects one could say that the main theme of Florentin is the ability to fantasise, that Florentin appears to give us a figure of anarchic, potent fantasy, a natural force of physis that seems able to create from within itself in the figure of Florentin. At the same time this seems to display a certain false consciousness that ignores the relationship between stimulation and fantasy, as can be seen by the fact that his songs have the appearance of flowing directly from his environment without the presence of self-reflection. The human fantasy is a physis that needs to be propped up by techne in order to create something beautiful, Florentin appears to himself as another force of nature, he does not recognise his own subjective involvement in the production of his art, the presence of his techne is obscured by an ideal notion of being in possession of a potent physis. Florentin rushes through life disseminating forms; poems, paintings and songs, yet none of them seem destined to become great works of art. They are merely vehicles for Florentin’s striving, when they fail to reach the heights that he strives for, he discards them. Within this blur of activity dwells an impotent passivity, the pathology of what Hegel calls “subjective spirit”.

The gaze of Petrarch and Dante, could certainly go by the name of “the gaze of Orpheus” as described by Maurice Blanchot. Orpheus, as artist, has the work of bringing things into the light, yet this can only be done by keeping the object (or material letter) of his desire in the dark, as Blanchot states:

Orpheus does not want Eurydice in her daytime truth and her everyday appeal, but wants her in her nocturnal obscurity, in her distance, with her closed body and sealed face- wants to see her not when she is visible, but when she is invisible, and not as the intimacy of a familiar life, but as the foreignness of what excludes all intimacy, and wants, not to make her live, but to have living in her the plenitude of her death.134

As Blanchot describes, while the day might see Orpheus’ gaze as a failure, as one who becomes overpowered by subjective chimeras or lacking faith, his actions can in fact only be understood as the work of the night, the desire for the undetermined and ideal inspiration. Walter Benjamin quite correctly picks the death’s head as the supreme emblem of allegorical representation. Yet, this is perhaps where the element of parody or irony described by Helfer comes in: where Dante and Petrarch succeed in creating a new present out of their past, by transforming a loss into a gain on the level of imagination and artistry, Florentin is pushed unaufhaltsam vorwärts. He does not come to rest in the relation between ideal and real played out in the work of art, but wants the real world to conform to his ideal.

Friedrich Schlegel describes a failed sexual encounter in his *Lucinde* that appears to take on a very different appearance to the one that we find in Florentin:

Sie setzte den kühnsten Liebkosungen nur noch schwachen Widerstand entgegen. Bald hörte auch dieser auf, sie ließ plötzlich ihre Arme sinken, und alles war ihm hingegangen, der zarte jungfräuliche Leib und die Früchte des jungen Busens. Aber in demselben Augenblick brach ein Strom von Tränen aus ihren Augen, und die bitterste Verzweiflung entstellte ihr Gesicht. Julius erschrak heftig; nicht sowohl über die Tränen, aber er kam nun mit einem Male zur vollen Besinnung. Er dachte an alles was vorhergegangen war, und was nun folgen würde; an das Opfer vor ihm und an das arme Schicksal der Menschen. Da überlief ihn ein kalter Schauder, ein leiser Seufzer stahl sich aus tiefer Brust über seine Lippen. Er verschmähte sich selbst von der Höhe seines eignen Gefühls, und vergaß die Gegenwart und seine Absicht in Gedanken von allgemeiner Sympathie.135

135 Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe. Erste Abteilung: Kritische Neuausgabe, Band 5, München, Paderborn, Wien, Zürich 1962, p. 37. Translation: “Soon she resisted only weakly his boldest caresses. Soon even this resistance ceased, she suddenly let her arms fall, and everything was surrendered to him, the tender virginal body and the fruits of her young breasts. But in the same moment a stream of tears broke from her eyes and the most bitter despair disfigured her face. Julius was violently startled, not so much because of the tears, but because with a jolt he had returned to full awareness. He thought of all that had gone before and would follow;
It is “nicht sowohl über die Tränen” that Julius reacts, but the withdrawal of his desire that returns him to himself, from “der Höhe seines eignen Gefühls”, he sees all that has passed and all that will follow. Unlike the endless repetition of love which we see in Heinrich von Ofterdingen, the endless repetition of seduction in Lucinde demonstrates only the failure of sensual enjoyment to fulfil Julius’ demands for love. It is precisely by the negation of the present that Julius raises himself up towards the ideal and the search for new forms, following exactly the structure of the Christian allegory as we see it in Walter Benjamin. This scene perhaps also demonstrates one of the main differences between Lucinde’s Julius and Florentin, at the moment when Florentin could, like Julius, begin to reflect over his situation he “schlief endlich ein”. Where Julius stares deeply into his own reflection and finds a conflict between himself and his desires:

Eine Träne entfiel ihm über sich selbst, da er einst im Spiegel sah, wie trübe und stechend das Feuer der unterdrückten Liebe aus seinem dunkeln Auge brannte und wie sich unter wilden schwarzen Locke leise Furchen in die kämpfende Stirn gruben, und wie die Wange so bleich war. Er seufzte über seine ungenutzte Jugend; sein Geist empörte sich und wählte unter den schönen Frauen seiner Bekanntschaft die, welche am freisten lebte und am meisten in der guten Gesellschaft glänzte.  

It is the room itself that is mirrored for Florentin, expanding the space to infinity and multiplying the attractive objects that surround him. Julius longs to see self-identity, the union of ideal and real. For Florentin his desire is centerless and without an active subject, the proximity of the apparent source of his desire repels Florentin into his hall of mirrors. A hall within which the position of the subject is obscured.

Another interesting parallel between Lucinde and Florentin is the character of Lisette and Florentin’s first wife. In these two characters we find an unfaithful woman with a strong

he thought of the victim before him and of the wretched destiny of man. Then a cold shudder ran down his spine, and a subdued sigh rose from the depths of his breast and escaped his lips. He despised himself from the height of his own feeling and forgot the present and his intentions in thoughts of universal sympathy.” Friedrich Schlegel, 1971, p. 80.

136 Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe. Erste Abteilung: Kritische Neuauaustgabe, Band 5, München, Paderborn, Wien, Zürich 1962, S. 39. Translation: “He shed a tear of sorrow over himself when once he looked into a mirror and saw how pale he was, how gloomily and piercingly the fire of his suppressed love burned in his dark eyes and how beneath the wild black locks of his hair faint furrows were being dug up into his brow. He sighed over his misspent youth. His spirit rebelled, and he chose among the beautiful women of his acquaintance the one who lived most freely and who distinguished herself most in good society.” Friedrich Schlegel, 1971, p. 82.

137 Lisette of course, also reminds us of Meister Wilhelm’s first love in Goethe’s Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre (1796), the actress Mariane.
sensuality, in both cases we find the female character strongly linked to illusory appearance and a potent effect on the artistry of both Julius and Florentin. It is stated by the narrator that:

Für Musik hatte sie gar kein Gefühl, für die bildenden Künste aber so viel daß Julius oft mit ihr über seine Arbeiten und Ideen sprach, und die Skizzen für die besten hielt, die er unter ihren Augen und bei ihrem Gespräch entworfen hatte. Doch schätzte sie an Statuen und an Zeichnungen nur die lebendige Kraft, und an Gemälden nur den Zauber der Farben, die Wahrheit des Fleisches und allenfalls die Täuschung des Lichtes.138

If Lisette’s sensuous appearance is expressed in the ornateness of her surroundings, in Florentin it is the appearance of his wife that becomes an aesthetic object:


If one believes Florentin to be a feminist answer to Lucinde, one might expect some criticism here of the representation of women being essentially vain by nature. Instead, we find the type repeated with only a slight adjustment, in Florentin the vanity is encouraged by the actions of Florentin. Lisette appears in Lucinde as an abnormality, if she does not comply with masculine notions of femininity, she also fails to appreciate art in a “normal” masculine manner, she appreciates only the sensual aspect. If Florentin’s wife refuses the role of being a mother, she does so only to become someone else’s mistress, she escapes one role defined by a man only to take up another one. It is through the sensuality of both characters that they prove to be unfaithful in love, a quality that is otherwise praised in both novels appears also as an excess, both women prove to be too passionate in their natures. It is perhaps significant here that both relationships end in an abortion. In Florentin, this is brought about by the female character

138 Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe. Erste Abteilung: Kritische Neuausgabe, Band 5, München, Paderborn, Wien, Zürich 1962, S. 41. Translation: “She had no feeling whatsoever for music, but so much for the plastic arts that Julius would consider those sketches best that he had made while with her and talking to her. Still she valued only the living force in sculpture and drawing, and in painting only the magic of colour, the reality of the flesh, and perhaps, too, the illusion of light.” Friedrich Schlegel, 1971, p. 85.
139 Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 90. Translation: “My greatest pleasure was to bejewel her and to dress her most richly every day for our circle in a new costume and unexpected changes. On these I spent not a little of my income. I painted her in every form and in all imaginable themes, as a goddess, a saint, a priestess, a nymph. I should have succeeded well with these pictures.” Dorothea Schlegel, 1988, p. 64.
because “sie fürchtete für ihre Schönheit”, after which Florentin attempts to murder her. In the case of Lisette, it is Julius’ refusal to take responsibility for the child which leads to Lisette taking her own life in a fit of passion. Lisette’s death is described in the following way: “Wahrscheinlich mit dem Gedanken, sich dadurch dem Tode und dem Verderben als Opfer zu weihen. Denn nach der Aussage des Knaben sprach sie dabei mit lauter Stimme die Worte: »Lisette soll zu Grunde gehen, zu Grunde jetzt gleich: so will es das Schicksal, das eiserne.”

There seems to be a non-relation here between the notion of artistic potency and natural potency. While both Julius and Florentin succeed to a certain extent in creating artistic forms, such as poems and paintings, they both fail when it comes to sexual reproduction. While one could perhaps see this as nothing more than an allegory for their failed individual attempts to become “true artists”, it seems that it could also be saying something much more general about the status of art in relationship to nature. *Lucinde* in fact describes Pygmalion as the model of all artistic endeavours, shortly before a section that describes Julius’ joy at becoming a father. If the desire of every artist is to create something living, then each work of art must necessarily end in its own abortion (i.e. it never comes into being), however close it becomes to being a living thing, it cannot make that final step into being alive. One must of course, question the universality of such an artistic ideal, an ideal that seems to repeat a Platonic notion of mimesis. It also seems to repeat a notion that we find in Schelling, that art is the realm where nature becomes self-conscious. The Orphic model presented to us by Blanchot seems to suggest an entirely different end of art, where the aim is not total presence, something that would replace absence by offering us a complete copy, but rather a radically different mode of experience that can only take place within the failure of presence. The failure of coming into being is the ground of creation; where presence is lacking fantasy fills the void. For such a mode of expression, for the artwork to become a living thing, for it to be alive, present in itself, would be its abortion. In *Florentin*, the choice that his wife makes is between beauty and birth, between an aesthetic creation and a natural one, in some ways echoing the choice of Orpheus. Yet the focus here seems to be upon Florentin’s understanding of the situation as another case of how the world refused to give his life a form, how society does nothing but make a fool of

141 Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe. Erste Abteilung: Kritische Neuauagabe, Band 5, München, Paderborn, Wien, Zürich 1962, S. 43. Translation: “She had probably done so with the thought of yielding herself up as a sacrifice to death and destruction. For, according to the boy, while doing so she had spoken out loud with the following words: “Lisette must perish, perish now: that is the will of an iron fate.” Friedrich Schlegel, 1971, p. 87.
142 Friedrich Schlegel, 1971, p. 106.
his naivety. At the same time we can see this as another instance of how Florentin neglects his own role in the failures that he encounters.

While Julius is led towards the company of men and male friendship from this experience, Florentin is inspired to seek freedom fighting with the republican army in America. Certainly in both cases it seems like unbounded female passion is bound by fate to lead towards destruction. Yet, just as Lisette has no interest in music, music is seen as a place where passions can be expressed freely in Florentin. Florentin describes how “Ich liebe die Musik als die größte Wohltäterin meines Lebens, erwiderte er; wie oft hat die Himmlische die bösen Geister zur Ruhe eingesungen, die mich drohend umgaben!”143 It is through music that he becomes attached to his first wife:

Sie sang uns nun ein Lied, dessen Inhalt ungefähr war: wenn sie einen Mann hätte, der sie liebte, und für sie sorgen wollte, so möchte sie einzig für ihn und seine Wünsche leben, das würde dann ihr größtes Glück sein. Sie sang das Lied mit einer solchen süßen Unschuld, so schüchterner Innigkeit, und sah dabei so entzückend schön aus, daß ich, da sie während des Gesanges ihre Blicke am meisten auf mich geheftet hatte, ihren Wunsch erfüllen mußte. Sie blieb gleich bei mir.144

The significance of the position of music in Florentin is in fact perhaps one of the main differences between it and Friedrich Schlegel’s Lucinde, in many respects the experience of listening to music highlights the passive characteristics of Florentin, which one can compare to the self-reflections upon the subject of artistic creation that we find in Lucinde. The lack of appreciation of music that Lisette shows comes in a discussion of her lack of self-presence, that she refers to herself in the third person and would like to write her autobiography as someone other than herself.145 Lisette can only appreciate art in terms of physical presence, it is not with her imagination that she appreciates art, but with her immediate senses. One can see how the two go together, the lack of self-presence and the inability of apperception. Music and poetry require the imagination of the subject in order to construct their meaning. It appears that Florentin certainly does possess this ability to enjoy music and poetry while at the same time

143 Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 23. Translation: “I love music as the greatest benefactress of my life,” he replied, “how often has the celestial one sung to rest the evil spirits that threateningly surrounded me!” Dorothea Schlegel, 1988, p. 10.
144 Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 90. Translation: “She sang a song whose content was approximately the following. If she had a husband who loved her and wanted to provide for her, she would like to live just for him and his wishes. That would be her greatest happiness. She sang the song with such a sweet innocence, such shy inwardness, and looked so captivatingly beautiful while singing it that I had to fulfill her wishes since she had fastened her eyes on me mostly during the song.” Dorothea Schlegel, 1988, p. 63.
he does not recognise his own interpretative role in his enjoyment. If his wife appreciates music, we see that she does not do so for her own enjoyment but for the seduction of Florentin, much as how she takes upon herself the many costumes and disguises that he gives her, art here is utilised for the illusion of truth rather than self-expression. However, this is only one of the many representations of music that we find in Dorothea Schlegel’s *Florentin*, Juliane and Clementine are also musical, and Clementine’s musicality will be discussed in the final part of this study.

Friedrich Schlegel’s *Lucinde* operates mostly by defining that which cannot live up to love’s ideal form, yet we do find positive statements relating to the multiple forms that love can take and that express different aspects of its ideal nature. Julius states that:

> nur ein Weib recht unglücklich sein kann und recht glücklich, und daß die Frauen allein, die mitten im Schoß der menschlichen Gesellschaft Naturmenschen geblieben sind, den kindlichen Sinn haben, mit dem man die Gunst und Gabe der Götter annehmen muß. Er lernte das schöne Glück ehren, was er gefunden hatte, und wenn er es mit dem häßlichen unechten Glück verglich, was er ehemdem vom Eigensinn des Zufalls künstlich erzwingen wollte, so erschien es ihm wie eine natürliche Rose am lebendigen Stamm gegen eine nachgemachte.146

Which seems to return us to Schiller’s notion that women are essentially naïve. One could certainly be tempted to see Juliane as naïve from the descriptions of her in *Florentin*, yet the relationship between Juliane and the natural world is not a straightforward one. Florentin describes Juliane in the following manner: “Auffallend war es ihm, wie ihr Bau und ihre Reize bei der beinahe noch kindlichen Jugend doch schon so vollkommen aufgeblüht prangten; dieses Wunder glich einem Werk der Liebe, an deren Hauch sich diese junge Knospe eben zu entfalten schien.”147 If the comparison is made here between Juliane and a bud about to bloom, there is also a definite split between Juliane and nature, a split much greater than that between Eduard and Florentin and nature. While they stroll freely through the wild nature around the castle,

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146 *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe. Erste Abteilung: Kritische Neuausgabe, Band 5, München, Paderborn, Wien, Zürich 1962, S. 54.* Translation: “only a woman could be truly unhappy and truly happy, and that, having remained the creatures of nature in the midst of human society, women alone possessed that childlike consciousness with which one has to accept the favours and gifts of the gods. He learned to value the beautiful happiness he had found, and when he compared it with that ugly, false happiness that he had earlier tried to extort artfully from stubborn chance, then his happiness that he had earlier tried to extort artfully from stubborn chance, then his happiness seemed to him like a natural rose on a living branch compared to an artificial one.” Friedrich Schlegel, 1971, p. 99.

147 *Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 20.* Translation: “It was striking the way her build and charm, having so perfectly flowered, already shone forth in the young girl who was still almost a child. This miracle resembled a work of love, in whose bloom this young bud seemed to unfold.” Dorothea Schlegel, 1988, p. 8.
that environment appears fatal to Juliane when she ventures out with them in order to explore the forest, she describes how it seemed:

»Als spräche des Waldes und des Wassers Geist drohend zu mir herüber«, sagte sie noch schaudernd, »so war mir; jeden Augenblick fürchtete ich, ich würden mir in sichtbaren Gestalten erscheinen; alle alten Romanzen und Balladen, die ich jemals gelesen habe, sind mir zu meinem Unglück grausend dabei eingefallen. Sie hätten es nur hören sollen, Florentin!« — »O ich habe auch die Geister zusammen sprechen hören, aber mich nicht vor ihnen gefürchtet, mir klang es freundlich und vertraulich; es sind mir freilich keine Balladen und Romanzen dabei eingefallen.«

The narrator goes on to describe how, at the end of their expedition into the forest “Juliane hatte die Erfahrung ihrer Abhängigkeit gemacht, und mußte es sich gestehen, daß sie es nicht so unbedingt wagen dürfte, außer ihren Grenzen, und ohne ihre Bande und ihre erkünstelten Bequemlichkeiten fertig zu werden.” If Florentin’s gaze sees her natural physical aspects, Juliane experiences herself as the product of a cultural environment. This serves as a further example of the way in which Florentin experiences others, rather than being sympathetic to their feelings and character, Florentin picks out details which enable them to carry a certain ideal form, in Juliane’s case it is naïve simplicity and a close association with nature. Florentin seems to have some awareness of the dangers connected to this idealization of Juliane, an idealization that seems to be drawing him towards a romantic involvement with her, one which he feels certain can only end in disaster and emotional pain. This fear is one of the main factors behind him leaving the castle where Juliane lives. The novel does not bring this to the level of self-reflection, but rather describes Florentin being in a state of confusion and having the urge to flee, seeing himself as a curse upon those he encounters. This demonstrates the way in which Florentin is led by feelings rather than self-reflection.

But to what extent can we align the structure of Florentin with the Early German Romantic novels of reflection? Certainly, we can observe alongside Walter Benjamin the way in which the allegorical mode casts aside the materiality of the sign in favour of the spiritual content. Leaving us to wonder if Romanticism still remains within the theological thinking of

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148 Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 118-119. Translation: “It seemed to me,” she said, still shivering, “as if the spirit of the forest and the water were speaking threateningly to me. I feared in each moment that they would appear to me in visible forms; to my misfortune I thought of all the ghastly old romances and ballads that I had ever read. You should have heard it, Florentin.” “Oh, I heard the spirits talking together, but I wasn’t afraid of them. To me it sounded friendly and familiar. To be sure, I didn’t think of any romances and ballads.” Dorothea Schlegel, 1988, p. 86.

149 Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 131. Translation: “Juliane had experienced her dependence and had to admit to herself that she could not so unconditionally venture to manage outside her borders and without her company and her artificial comforts.” Dorothea Schlegel, 1988, p. 96.
Christian allegory, despite all its critical self-awareness, are we just left with a negative theology of the kind described by the Kantian bilderverbot? Does the limit of Darstellung only appear in order to be bridged by a negative presentation, so that the economy of presentation can keep working only with a line running straight through each word, a line which undermines its sufficiency yet still allows it to function as the presentation of something which is absent? In the end, perhaps we can only rely on our subjective judgement to ask ourselves if it does make us think and if these works are living or dead for us. Certainly, it was easy enough for Schleiermacher to incorporate Lucinde into his already existing theological worldview without awakening any great self-reflections, at the same time, there appears to be enough uncertainty and Unverständlichkeit in Lucinde that we continue to reflect over the representations of passivity, nature and sensuality that we find there. With Novalis we find a strange antagonism between the potency of his fantasy and the belief that unity is found in death, about which Novalis seems dangerously close to Schwärmerei.

Perhaps we can see significance in the very fact that it is the figure of woman herself that is seen as a viable medium for this veiled signification, and that we in fact find a phallogocentric structure woven between the two discourses of love and philosophy, philosophy is, after all, the love of Sophia.

But what of Florentin in this context? As we have noted, Florentin is not a reflective character in the style of Julius, nor is he on a quest for interpretation like Heinrich von

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150 Margaret Helfer explains Kant’s negative Darstellung in the following way: “Negative Darstellung forces the subject to think the supersensible -the idea- without actually producing an objective presentation of this idea. Thus it presents nothing except the process –the striving or the effort (die Bestrebung)- of Darstellung itself. It is self-presentation or Selbstdarstellung in the Romantic sense of the word, and it is no coincidence that the notion of “negativity” becomes constitutive for Idealism and Romanticism. Indeed, Kant himself indicates the applicability of his theory of the sublime to artistic production: “Even the presentation of the sublime, so far as it belongs to beautiful art, may combine with beauty in a tragedy in verse, a didactic poem, or even in an oratorio; and in these combinations beautiful art is even more artistic”. See Martha B. Helfer, The Retreat of Representation, The Concept of Darstellung in German Critical Discourse, New York: SUNY Press, 1996, p. 45 and Immanuel Kant, Critique of the Power of Judgement, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 151.


153 That Walter Benjamin should turn to Hölderlin in the context of the problematic nature of Schlegel and Novalis’ relationship towards the absolute, and that Benjamin should promote a notion of sobriety and care and radical caesura, points towards a necessary supplement to Romantic critique that can only be hinted at within these pages.

154 How is it that it is so easily said that she belongs to nature, and that self-reflection belongs to man rather than woman, that any trace of the sentimental can be ignored and that only naivety is visible?
Ofterdingen. In many respects there seems to be little separating Florentin’s quest for American freedom from Odysseus’ quest for Ithaca, both strive naively towards their unreflected goal. At the same time, there is much that is common to all three Romantic novels, the sudden ending and beginning which points towards the literary nature of the work and breaks with its appearance of self-sufficiency and the fragmentary style that consists of letters, poems and tales within tales. If Florentin is to be viewed as an adventure, the enjoyment of Florentin’s overcoming of obstacles on the way to his final goal, familiar to us from the journey of Odysseus and a common feature of courtly love, then we find our enjoyment strangely blocked by the difficulties of identifying with Florentin himself, that strangely absent centre of the novel. If anything, our sympathies are drawn towards the very characters that seem to pose as obstacles for Florentin’s ideal striving. In Florentin, the letter cries out in pain as the spirit overcomes it. It is this very difficulty of Florentin fulfilling his role as the centre of the novel that alienates the reader from their reading and offers up an opportunity for self-reflection. Florentin thwarts our desire in the same way that objects thwart Florentin’s desire for the ideal. Florentin refuses forms as a limitation on his freedom and Florentin refuses to offer us a form for our striving for form where we can experience the freedom from our own form. By refusing form, Florentin becomes trapped within the form of striving itself, by refusing us form, Florentin offers us the freedom to create a new one, perhaps in the form of a critical reflection. A critical reflection under which our demand that the letter complies with the demand of our spirit might receive an ethical reappraisal. Such an ethical reappraisal might express the wish that Florentin should recognise his own determination, his reliance upon alterity for his own being, but also reflect upon the demand of the reader that a character fulfil a particular function for them and conform to a certain form. If we demand that Florentin become a harmonious individual, and fulfil an ideal of beauty, it should also be understood that such a harmony is impossible, and that total harmony ends in petrification.

When the object of Florentin’s desire finally appears after leading Florentin through a series of darkened rooms, she appears to him unveiled, in “nachlässigen Nachtgewande”. Not unveiled in the sense that she has undressed, but that she has ceased to be the object of his desire, or rather, the object through which his ideal striving occurred is made actual. But what is it that woman reveals when she is unveiled, and why must woman take the veil in the first place? This is something that Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe has traced the outline of in his essay

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155 A striving that one might say was caused by his development as a child in unfreedom, the very striving for freedom in his case could be said to have its origin in unfreedom.
on Lucinde, “The Unpresentable”.156 Beginning with Hegel’s statement that Greek sculpture does not aim purely at the sensuous, and that it is therefore reasonable that men are depicted naked and women are depicted clothed (or veiled),157 Lacoue-Labarthe takes this to mean that, for Hegel, women unveiled express the sensuous, but not beauty and that:

Femininity is only beautiful, ideally, when veiled, clothed, partially withdrawn from the eye. Thus, woman expresses the spiritual only provided she does not show herself, provided she conceals in herself the sensuous (her body). Hence, the female nude does not quite (re)present the reciprocal belonging or “appropriation” of body and spirit [...] which it seems only the male body (re)presents.158

By sensuous, Lacoue-Labarthe understands animality, taking inspiration from Hegel’s statement that man clothes himself to hide his shame, hiding the parts of his body that are most animal like in their form or function. Man is only what he is by way of his overcoming of that which is animal in himself, and in finding beauty in the male form, he overcame the animality of man by clothing him in the form of a beautiful form. There appears however, to be something in the body of woman that cannot be sublated and taken up in the Hegelian concept of the beautiful, she must remain veiled. It is through shame that woman should take the veil, because everything must be overcome in Hegel’s system to keep it moving forward. This is precisely why Lucinde appeared to be shameful to Hegel, as it refused to efface itself and be sublated in the name of the Hegelian system, which is also the only path of progress. Or as Lacoue-Labarthe puts it “the woman who refuses herself- to appropriation- is always accused of shamelessness”.159 Lacoue-Labarthe goes on to say that

Woman is at stake because she represents, not as Hegel through Schiller would have liked; the sensuous itself in its opposition to the spiritual, or – which amounts to the same once it has been rigged with a veil – “the inner fusion of the sensuous and the spiritual,” but the sensuous in its “truth”, which is the “truth” of figure and the fictional. Because, in other words, she represents or signifies that there is a “truth of the sensuous” which is not beyond the sensuous, which is not verified in trans-figuration and is not (re)presented in absolute (re)presentation. But, rather, in fiction, in (re)presentation as fiction.160

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157 The bulk of Hegel’s comments are to be found in the section of his *Aesthetics* entitled “draping (or clothing)”, Hegel, 1998, p. 742-750. In Herder, the veil of Greek sculpture is characterised as being decent due to its very opacity, one still “sees” the body beneath the veil, in painting, the body can be totally obscured by the veil, by way of being left totally to the imagination, the body becomes voluptuous and indecent. See Herder, *Sculpture*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002, p. 47-53.
158 Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, 1992, p. 139.
159 Lacoue-Labarthe, 1992, p. 156.
The fear in Hegel is that anything might become an end in itself, that the system might get stuck or become “cut-off” from the spiritual. Women can only appear as desirable to Florentin while they can act as ideal objects for his striving, the striving that has only its own continuation as its main concern, a woman can only appear as veil for him, in order for his desire to uncover only veil after veil as a mise-en-abyme of allegories, in other words, she cannot “appear” at all. Male friendship however, seems to be a completely different matter, as does fatherhood, and the ideal of male love familiar to us from Friedrich Schlegel and Friedrich Schleiermacher. Male friendship, much like the male body, seems to have overcome all sensuous aspects, while relationships with women can only lead to love and sensuality. In Florentin women “take the veil” in several different ways,\(^{161}\) Florentin’s sister must become a nun, Juliane must become a wife, just as the Marquise retreats into madness when faced with being childless. All of these women find themselves forced to take forms upon themselves that seem to do violence to them, even in the apparently equal relationship between the count and countess there is a strict division of gender between them. The freedom of men is built upon the formation of woman, the unveiled woman is the shame of the man who forces her to wear a veil, and it awakens Florentin’s own fear of being veiled, of being determined by a form, the unconscious negative form of freedom that functions as the ground for all his strivings to be free.\(^{162}\)

\(^{161}\) Dorothea Schlegel’s Florentin itself only appeared under the veil of anonymous authorship and Friedrich Schlegel’s patronage, as if, in order to take it seriously, one had to believe that there might be a man behind it all.

\(^{162}\) In his Aesthetics Hegel links the notion of impotence to what he calls the “Fichtean philosophy”, a philosophy that he thinks perversely enjoys its fantasy of the veiled absolute, but at the same time ”cannot do, or touch anything for fear of losing its inner harmony”. It can offer nothing but the subjective feeling of freedom, not its actuality. Such a subject would enjoy the woman’s body through her veil, the fantasy of one’s own potency as it possessed her image, but it would be limited only to this very sensation. This sensation, intuition, feeling, is seen as impotent by Hegel as it cannot grasp its object, because to grasp the object is to lose the sensation of unobstructed desire, it inflames the fantasy, but is incapable of action. Rousseau seemed to hover between the Hegelian position and Schlegel’s “enjoyment of enjoyment”, on the one hand he recognised that his enjoyment lay in the object in its veil, that there was nothing to be found beyond it, on the other hand there is the nightmare of St. Preux, of grasping at veils within veils within veils, where appearance has replaced all traces of being and one finds oneself trapped within a fantasy.
Giuseppe Crespi, *Amore e Psiche*, 1709.
On Form and Spirit

Laughter? Florentin says nothing, but it is not nothing. If we are to see Florentin as a whole as the struggle for ideal freedom against constricting forms then we find this theme repeated in miniature within this particular scene. Like Psyche in Apuleius’ The Golden Ass (150-180) Florentin has allowed himself to be led by his curiosity. It is the burning desire of Psyche that longs to possess Cupid that leads her to burn him, curiosity in Apuleius’ tale is destructive, it takes a perverse interest in things, it wants to know everything and it intrudes in every corner. At the same time it is ultimately impersonal and is experienced passively, we submit to curiosity’s demand that we see or touch things, it leads us beyond our limits in a strange daze. Where we would perhaps expect a written judgement upon this scene, we observe nothing but a gesture, the laughter of Florentin. It is the gaze of Florentin that speaks for him here, the room happens to him as he is simply looking on. Yet Florentin retreats from us where we might perhaps expect a reflection from a Julius or a Heinrich. He gives us a wink and leaves. Where Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel create reflection by the proliferation of alternative reflections, of other possible meanings that undermines the certitude of any one reflection being able to

163 Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 146. The somewhat unsatisfactory English translation has it as: “His eyes were immediately attracted above the fireplace to a bas-relief with life-size figures. It was a Psyche who, with the lamp in her hand, gazed at the slumbering god of love with astonishing rapture. It was done in a noble style; the execution was perfect. Florentin looked at it with inner pleasure and thought he recognized the hand of the master in it. He was happy to have seen it so unexpectedly. The entire room was furnished with gleaming splendour. Just as he was about to leave it and was looking around one more time, the big state bed that stood opposite the excellent work of art attracted his attention. The coats of arms, likewise of the hovering, almost disembodied Psyche, were spread out overwhelmingly and with great dignity on the upper part of the bed as well as between the proud plumes which glittered on the heavy silk curtains, richly decorated with gold tassels. We dare not decide what kind of remarks may have occurred to Florentin, but he laughed out loud.” Dorothea Schlegel, 1988, p. 108.
establish itself as the truth, Dorothea Schlegel speaks to us through silence. What remains expressionless in the gesture is the ground of all critique: clarity of meaning obscures the potential for reflection, there is no distance between the work and ourselves. It is within the caesura of what Walter Benjamin calls das Ausdruckslose \(^{164}\) that the critic inserts himself. Yet where Benjamin focuses on the critical power that opens up the work, one could equally point to aspects of the work where the work in fact breaks open upon itself and becomes expressionless. This can often be seen in moments of silence or the making of gestures, the point where the author retreats from the work in order that it might live. The un-working of the work that enables it to be a work-to-come.

It is of course significant that Benjamin’s discussion of the expressionless comes within his essay on Goethe’s *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (1809), a novel which contains one of the best examples of the expressionless in the figure of Ottilie. Ottilie lives within the world of gesture, she touches the side of her head, she bows down with her arms crossed across her chest, and she blushes on one cheek and goes pale on the other. Goethe makes clear that Ottilie is a thoroughly mimetic being, adjusting herself to those around her, she copies handwriting perfectly and adapts her musical playing perfectly to those she plays with. While Ottilie seems to possess a captivating force of attraction, she is also characterised by an inner deadness and coldness. Her mimetic ability offers a captivating mirror to the narcissistic lover, yet her lack of individuality, the lack of separation between her and the world around her seems to put her in possession of strange mythical powers. Even when the book appears to offer Ottilie a degree of interiority it is withdrawn at the same time, as what appears as her “diary” also appears to have been copied from elsewhere, she takes another hand as her own. \(^{165}\) In Juliane’s letter to Clementine she describes how Florentin:

> Mit dem sonderbarsten, oft zurückstoßenden Wesen weiß er es doch jedem recht zu machen, und zieht jedes Herz an sich, ohne sich viel darum zu bekümmern. Es hilft nichts, wenn man auch seinen ganzen Stolz dagegen setzt, man wird auf irgendeine Weise doch sein eigen. Oft ist es recht ärgerlich, daß man nicht widerstehen kann, da er selber nicht festzuhalten ist. Einmal scheint es, als verbände er mit den Worten noch einen andern Sinn, als den sie haben sollen; ein andermal macht er zu den schmeichelhaftesten Dingen, die ihm gesagt werden, ein gleichgültiges Gesicht, als müßte es eben nicht anders sein; dann freut

\(^{164}\) Walter Benjamin, 2004, p. 340. Although much has been said by Adorno and Benjamin in relationship to the caesura as a radical break which enables antagonisms and breakages to come forth in a work and offer themselves up for reflection, Hegel also noted its importance for breaking up cold monotony and introducing new connections, differences and liveliness, see Hegel, 1998, p. 1019.

\(^{165}\) One could, of course, equally speak of Goethe’s Mignon in this context.
She then goes on to describe how:

Was ihn auszeichnet, ist ein gewisses, beinahe verachtendes Lächeln, das ihm um den Mund schwebt; aber der Mund ist doch hübsch, sowie auch sein Auge, das gewöhnlich fast ganz ohne Bedeutung, still und farblos, vor sich hinschaut, das aber helle Funken sprüht bei einem Gespräch, das ihn interessiert, es wird dann sichtbar größer und dunkler.

Like Ottillie, Florentin’s expressionless nature gives him a strange attractive force and causes those around him to fill his physical gestures with a depth of meaning. Yet, if Ottillie’s being is strictly mimetic, Florentin desires impressions that flow freely and form a variety of new connections. In Florentin this has the appearance of something impersonal, something like a Spinozian force of affects, a “natural” flow of the object through his being. However, without being put into an objective communicative form, these flows appear upon the surface as untranslatable gestures.

Florentin seems equally to dwell within this realm that Hegel called “Subjective Spirit” in his *Die Philosophie des Geistes* (1830). The subjective spirit is the one that lacks individuality, Hegel gives the example of an unborn child’s dependence upon its mother in the womb. Hegel presents subjective spirit as a strange twilight realm of the indeterminate, where substances seem to mix as one as in pantheism, Hegel connects this realm to magnetism,
madness, feelings, sleep and hypnosis. It is not quite the world of animals and plants, but it appears always as a danger to the human mind, that it could lose all appearance of its individuality. Subjective spirit is the realm of intuition and feeling that must not be allowed to dominate if we are to become reflective and self-conscious individuals. At the same time, Hegel sees subjective spirit as an ever present and necessary part of human existence, it is from subjective spirit that we get our predisposition, temperament and character, the “naturally determined” aspects of our personality. To allow subjective spirit to dominate is to withdraw from objectivity into individuality and particularity, for Hegel this is a form of false or deranged consciousness that does not recognise what is one’s own as one’s own or one’s dependence upon others, one becomes self-satisfied.

In his *Aesthetics* Hegel gives an example of self-satisfaction as being satisfied with a “moral action” because it was “moral”. Hegel describes how this abstracts the self and its actions and posits a direct union between the concrete individual and *Geist*, in other words, one ignores the necessary mediation of *Geist* through concrete forms. Self-satisfaction is a blindness to actuality, much like the beautiful soul’s belief that it can merely step into the absolute by extracting itself from everyday life, they ignore the fact that there is always mediation, there is always lack and negation that must be worked through. For Hegel, form will always fail, but the failure is necessary for the movement to the next step. Hegel goes on to say that:

Das Subjektive als solches verfällt bei dieser Überhebung über das Substantielle in die abstrakte Besonderheit der Neigung, in die Willkür und Zufälligkeit der Empfindungen und Triebe, wodurch es bei der Beweglichkeit in bestimmten Taten und Handlungen der Abhängigkeit von bestimmten Umständen und deren Wechsel anheimfällt und sich überhaupt der Beziehbarkeit auf anderes nicht zu entschlagen vermag. Das Subjekt steht damit als die bloße endliche Subjektivität der wahrhaften Geistigkeit gegenüber. Hält es nun in diesem Gegensatze mit dem Bewußtsein desselben in seinem Wollen und Wissen dennoch

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171 Subjective spirit no doubt has to go through a stage of something like symbolic representation in Hegel’s *Aesthetics* (Hegel describes how the symbolic is the level of imperfection in each art before they find a level of adequate representations see Hegel, 1998, p. 721). Hegel describes how “The first form of art is therefore rather a mere search for portrayal than a capacity for true presentation; the Idea has not found the form even in itself and therefore remains struggling and striving after it. We may call this form, in general terms, the symbolic form of art.” Hegel, 1998, p. 76, and describes how in the symbolic “the Idea exaggerates natural shapes and the phenomena of reality itself into indefiniteness and extravagance; it staggers round in them, it bubbles and ferments in them, does violence to them, distorts and stretches them unnaturally, and tries to elevate their phenomenal appearance to the Idea by the diffuseness, immensity, and splendour of the formations employed”. Ibid. *Sittlichkeit*, will no doubt throw out wild shapes and monstrosities as it attempts to develop an idea such as freedom or democracy. However, failure to engage with form at all would return *Geist* to the fermenting and bubbling realm of subjective spirit.
Hegel describes gesture as being one of the first steps towards freeing oneself from being naturally determined, instead of allowing sensation to directly influence behaviour the free will converts urges into freely composed gestures, instead of laughing, one smiles, instead of crying out in pain, one weeps. Gestures are language in their most basic form. Equally it can be said that the movement from language to gesture is the movement towards subjective spirit, away from individuality and towards nature. Florentin laughs, and according to Hegel one laughs at what is “an immediately obvious contradiction”, the laughable is something that destroys itself without affecting us, if we were affected by its destruction it would instead be a tragedy. Florentin does not weep for Psyche, nor does he give us the composure of a knowing smile that might express his own experience of love and marriage. Perhaps it is laughable, this conflict between the ideal love of Psyche and the symbols of wealth and nobility, the union of two great houses that seems to pay little attention to the apparent unsuitability of those about to marry. This unsuitability seems not to rest in any great difference of personality or lack of affection, but rather in the stage of the development of their love for each other: while Eduard feels passionate physical attraction for Juliane, she seems to feel for him more as a sibling than a lover. The marriage seems to come as an intrusion for the natural development of their relationship, which could equally stop at friendship as develop into a physical relationship.

When they are out walking in the forest we see a clear sign of this disparity between Juliane and Eduard:

Florentin pflegte durch den Wein lebhafter und noch heiterer zu werden als gewöhnlich, Eduard aber fühlte seine Lebensgeister leicht durch ihn erhitzen, reizbarer und zugleich schwerer; Juliane ward von ihnen mit

172 Hegel, 1965, Vol. 2, p. 96. Translation: “If what is substantive is thus disdained, a person, as subject, succumbs to the world of inclination where everything is abstract and separate, to the caprice and fortuitousness of feeling and impulse; the result is that, involved in the perpetual movement from one specific action or deed to another, he is a victim of dependence on specific circumstances and their changes and, in short, cannot avoid being tied to other persons and things. It follows that the person in these circumstances is purely finite and contrasted with the true spirit. Now if nevertheless he persists in this opposition, and the consciousness of it in his knowing and willing, and so clings to this subjective life alone, then, apart from the emptiness of his fancies and his image of himself, he falls into the ugliness of passions and idiosyncrasy, into viciousness and sin, into malice, ill-will, cruelty, spite, envy, pride, arrogance, and all the other perversities of human nature and its empty finitude.” Hegel, 1998, p. 711.
In many respects it seems as if Florentin acts as a catalyst that spurs on Eduard’s development towards manhood, if this development moves him towards Florentin, it seems to move him away from Juliane. What she finds attractive in Florentin appears to repel her when it comes to Eduard. Although the novel does not go into detail on this point, this seems to suggest other forms of relationships are possible between men and women than romantic involvement, another point on which Florentin appears to differ from Lucinde. We get a clearer expression of the unsuitability between Juliane and Eduard in the Countesses (Eleonore) letter to Clementine, where she recounts Clementine’s doubts about the marriage:

Ja Du Teure! Du würdest, wenn Du sie so vor Dir sähest, leuchtend und glühend im vollen Ausdruck ihres Glücks, Du würdest nicht länger unzufrieden sein, daß ihr Vater eilt, sie mit dem Geliebten zu vereinigen, daß sie trotz aller Deiner Gründe so früh vermählt wird. – Juliane ist beinah noch ein Kind, sagst Du, vieles liegt unentwickelt und tief verborgen in ihr, das nicht geahndet wird, am wenigsten von ihr selbst, sie fängt kaum an, sich selbst zu erkennen, sie wird aus einem Kinde zur Gattin, und wird gewiß einst auf die übersprungene Stufe ihres Lebens mit Wehmut zurücksehen.176

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175 Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 48. Translation: “Florentin generally became more lively and even merrier than usual with wine; Eduard, however, soon felt his vital spirits excited by it, more sensitive and at the same time stronger. They assailed Juliane with pleas to drink her wine this time without adding water, but she could not be persuaded to do so. The exuberant spirits and the increasing playfulness of the two men began to frighten her. She now found her adventure reckless and enormously bold. In her fear the two men seemed completely strange to her, she was frightened to be left so totally to them. For a moment she could not remember at all the relationship she had with them. She shivered and became pale. Eduard noticed her fear. “Of what are you afraid, lovely angel? You are with me, you are mine.” He embraced her somewhat impetuously. “Leave me alone, Eduard” she called, twisting herself out of his arms. “Not this language. Don’t speak at all to me now. Your words increase my fear…I am so frightened…I don’t know why.” She hid her face in her hands.” Dorothea Schlegel, 1988, p. 32.

176 Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 149-150. Translation: “Yes, you dear one! If you saw her standing thus before you, shining and glowing in the full expression of her happiness, you would no longer be dissatisfied that her father hurries to unite her with her beloved, that, despite all your reasons, she is marrying so early. Juliane is almost still a child, you say, much is undeveloped and deeply concealed within her that is not suspected, least of all by her; she is scarcely beginning to know herself; from a child she is becoming a wife and someday she will definitely look back with sorrow at the skipped step.” Dorothea Schlegel, 1988, p. 111.
The battle for forms between Psyche and the family crests is fought out over the *pudenda origo* (lowly origins) of the marriage bed. Florentin has in fact already sung of these things earlier in the novel:

![German text](image)

The conflict of forms conceals the thing that can’t be thought, the foundation of marriage upon the sexual act. Hegel of course, had much to say about marriage, and his critique of Schlegel’s attitude towards marriage in *Lucinde* forms the clearest expression of all that Hegel sees as being wrong with Romanticism. In Hegel’s *Philosophie des Geistes*, marriage is one of the routes out of subjective spirit into objective spirit. *Sittlichkeit* is the way by which the individual leaves the confines of their abstract universality as subjective spirit. By submitting oneself to the reason of the state by obeying its laws, reason becomes objective, one becomes conscious of oneself through one’s interactions with the forms of reason. In the example of marriage love passes from “mere” subjective feeling to its rational purpose, the establishment of the family. In this way, by being given a form, love becomes objective. For Hegel, *Sittlichkeit* is “freedom in action” and it issues

![German text](image)

Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 28. Translation: “Sternly these walls surround you, serious laws and serious customs; vows, priests, witnesses, society of the coat of arms. Countless things, forever foreign to jest, forever foreign to you, precede love, and put the free one in stern bonds.” Dorothea Schlegel, 1988, p. 15.

54
Im wahrhaft vernünftig gegliederten Staat sind alle Gesetze und Einrichtungen nichts als eine Realisation der Freiheit nach deren wesentlichen Bestimmungen. Ist dies der Fall, so findet die einzelne Vernunft in diesen Institutionen nur die Wirklichkeit ihres eigenen Wesens und geht, wenn sie diesen Gesetzen gehorcht, nicht mit dem ihr Fremden, sondern nur mit ihrem Eigenen zusammen. Willkür heißt man zwar oft gleichfalls Freiheit; doch Willkür ist nur die unvernünftige Freiheit, das Wählen und Selbstbestimmen nicht aus der Vernunft des Willens, sondern aus zufälligen Trieben und deren Abhängigkeit von Sinnlichem und Äußerem.178

We can see now, that Hegel’s disagreement with Schlegel is not built purely on some ultra-conservative notion of respectability, but the fear of the return to the realm of subjective spirit and the spurning of the absolute. Hegel states that:

die Leibe, welche Empfindung ist, läßt die Zufälligkeit in jeder Rücksicht zu, eine Gestalt, welche das Sittliche nicht haben darf. Die Ehe ist daher näher so zu bestimmen, daß sie die rechtlich sittliche Liebe ist, wodurch das Vergängliche, Launenhafte und bloß Subjektive derselben aus ihr verschwindet.179

For Hegel, marriage is a self-restriction that leads to liberation, as it is in marriage one attains “substantial self-consciousness”. In other words, love takes on a form for reflection. In marriage “das Bewußtsein sich aus seiner Naturlichkeit und Subjektivität zum Gedanken des Substantiellen sammelt, und statt sich das Zufällige und die Willkür der sinnlichen Neigung immer noch vorzubehalten”.180 This of course might seem irrelevant to our thinking on love today, there are few who would consider marriage as a necessity for the development of love. At the same time we can see the necessity of some kind of form for the continuation of a loving relationship; that we live together, are faithful to each other, show appreciation for each other and so on. If we remove the forms completely we are free to love in terms of feeling attraction for others, but we also become isolated in precisely that feeling. Without forms it cannot

178 Hegel, 1965, Vol. 1, p. 105-106. Translation: “from the fact that the rationality of the will wins actualization. This rationality the will actualizes in the life of the state. In a state which is really articulated rationally all the laws and organizations are nothing but a realization of freedom in its essential characteristics. When this is the case, the individual’s reason finds in these institutions only the actuality of his own essence, and if he obeys these laws, he coincides, not with something alien to himself, but simply with what is his own. Caprice, of course, is often equally called “freedom”; but caprice is only non-rational freedom, choice and self-determination issuing not from the rationality of the will but from fortuitous impulses and their dependence on sense and the external world.” Hegel, 1998, p. 98.
179 Hegel, 1981, p. 305. Translation: “love is only a feeling and so is exposed in every respect to contingency, a shape which ethical life may not assume. Marriage, therefore, is to be more precisely characterised as rightfully ethical love, and this eliminates from marriage the transient, fickle, and purely subjective aspects of love.” Hegel, 2008, p. 164.
become objective, if it cannot become objective it cannot be represented, communicated or shared.\textsuperscript{181}

However, it seems hard to envision marriage as any kind of answer to the problems faced by the characters in Florentin, if anything it demonstrates both the necessity of subjective feeling and objective forms. For Florentin the ethical bonds of marriage seemed irrelevant for his wife as she did not love him, at the same time, his passion for the woman on her balcony seemed to get stuck at the subjective level and ultimately deserted him. Problems with marriage are repeated between Juliane and Eduard, while Eduard seems passionate about Juliane, it appears that Juliane is far from ready to reciprocate his feelings. Between Betty and Walter we find an ethical commitment on Betty’s part that is being exploited by Walter, demonstrating the necessity of reciprocal feeling for the foundation of the ethical act of marriage.\textsuperscript{182} Without feeling it is nothing but an empty form that serves no objective purpose. Florentin describes how he seeks “Einen Gegenstand der Liebe aber, die bis jetzt mir nur unbelohnt, aber tief im Herzen lebt, wo würde ich den wohl finden? Er existiert irgendwo, das weiß ich, von dieser frohen Ahndung werde ich im Leben festgehalten; aber wo er existiert? wo ich ihn finde?” which would entail:

\begin{quote}
Nichts als ein liebenswürdiges Weib, die mich liebt, liebt wie ich sie, die an mich glaubt, die ohne alle Absicht, bloß um der Liebe willen, die meinige sei, die meinem Glück und meinen Wünschen kein Vorurteil und keine böse Gewohnheit entgegensezt, die mich trägt wie ich bin, und nicht erliegt unter der Last; die mutig mit mir durch das Leben, und, wenn es sein müßte, mit mir in den Tod schreiten könnte.\textsuperscript{183}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{181} To give a further example of this that might give a clearer illustration one might think of the difference between saying to a child that they must visit their Grandmother because it is something one must do, an objective sign of appreciation and saying that they are free to choose whether they want to visit her or not on the basis of their feelings. On the surface it seems like the child is being given its freedom, but in fact they are asked to consult Hegel’s twilight realm of the subjective spirit, the child must ask itself, “Do I feel love for my Grandmother?” and “Do I feel touched by the idea of her disappointment?”, one is being asked to consult one’s feelings, which in Hegel’s eyes is no freedom at all as feelings on their own obey no logical laws. In fact, one exposes the child to something far more unpleasant, as Slavoj Zizek has noted, the disapproval of the parents at the child’s lack of feeling if they do not want to visit their grandmother. See \url{http://www.lrb.co.uk/v21/n06/slavoj-zizek/you-may.html}

\textsuperscript{182} This fact was of course understood by Hegel himself in the addition to paragraph 176 in his \textit{Outlines of the Philosophy of Right}, where he states that “it is because marriage rests only on subjective, contingent feeling that it may be dissolved”, see Hegel, 2008, p. 175.

\textsuperscript{183} Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 46-47. Translation: “An object of love, however, which till now lives for me unrecompensed but deep in my heart, where would I find it: I know it exists somewhere; this happy suspicion keeps me going; but where does it exist? Where do I find it?” and “Nothing but a lovable woman who loves me as I love her, who believes in me, who is mine simply for the sake of love and without any other purpose, who opposes no prejudice and no wicked habit to my happiness and wishes, who tolerates me as I am and does not succumb under the burden, who would bravely go through life with me, and if it must be, go to the death with me.” Dorothea Schlegel, 1988, p. 30-31.
Florentin’s first encounter with *Sittlichkeit* comes during his childhood in the form of his education. In his *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (1820) Hegel takes up the importance of discipline and obedience in the raising of children:

Ein Hauptmoment der Erziehung ist die Zucht, welche den Sinn hat, den Eigenwillen des Kindes zu brechen, damit des bloß Sinnliche und Natürliche ausgereutet werde. Hier muß man nicht meinen, bloß mit Güte auszukommen; denn gerade der unmittelbare Wille handelt nach unmittelbaren Einfällen und Gelüsten, nicht nach Gründen und Vorstellungen.184

At the same time Hegel states that “Als Kind muß der Mensch im Kreise der Liebe und des Zutrauens bei den Eltern gewesen sein, und das Vernünftige muß als seine eigenste Subjektivität in ihm erscheinen.”185 Yet, as we also see in Karl Philipp Moritz’s *Anton Reiser* (1790), an undermining of the subjectivity of children186 can have a disastrous effect on their psychological state, as Florentin demonstrates when he describes his strategy for surviving his education:


184 Hegel, 1981, p. 319. Translation: “One of the chief factors in education is discipline, the purpose of which is to break the child’s self-will and thereby eradicate what is merely sensuous and natural. We must not expect to achieve this by mere goodness, for the immediate will is precisely one that acts on immediate fancies and caprices, rather than on reasons and ideas”. Hegel, 2008, p. 173.

185 Hegel, 1981, p. 320. Translation: “As a child a human being must have lived with his parents encircled by their love and trust, rationality must appear in him as his very own subjectivity.” Hegel, 2008, p. 174.

186 An undermining which, as the translator of *Anton Reiser* notes, was based upon the pietism of mystics such as Madame Guyon. He quotes her as saying “True ravishment and perfect ecstasy are operated by total annihilation, where the soul, losing all self-hood, passes into God without effort and without violence, as into the place which is proper and natural to her. For God is the centre of the soul, and when once the soul is disengaged from the self-hood which arrested her in herself or in other creatures, she infallibly passes into God, where she dwells hidden with Jesus Christ. But this ecstasy is operated only by simple faith, death to all things created, even to the gifts of God, which, being creatures, hinder the soul from falling into the one uncreated.” See Ritchie Robertson’s introduction to *Anton Reiser*, London: Penguin Books, 1997, p. xiii.

187 Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 59. Translation: “Because they were stronger and applied their strength on me, I believed I had to use my understanding as the sole weapon through which I was superior to them. I tried to preserve my inner independence in every way the more I had to order my actions and external life according to their will. In every opinion I deliberately deviated from theirs. If they firmly believed something, that was
In such an environment, the only kind of freedom which is experienced is that which Hegel refers to as “negative freedom” the freedom from coercion. As Hegel notes, this freedom is essential in the forming of subjectivity, one must be able to abstract from what is naturally given to one in order not to simply be the natural product of one’s age, sex or nationality. At the same time this negative freedom demands its positive counterpart, to freely choose things. For Hegel, to make a choice is to make a choice mine, it gives the will an objective form as the maker of the choice.

As we noted in the story of the woman on her balcony, Florentin seems unable to make his actions and feelings his own. Florentin’s understanding of freedom is to strive for what he desires, but as Hegel notes, what is given to the will is given by nature, it is a manner of being determined by sensation and that kind of freedom is limited to unobstructed striving for the object of desire. Such a notion of freedom is abstract. We are explicitly unfree in terms of what we desire; if we are thirsty we desire a drink, if we are hungry we desire food, what we enjoy is already determined for us by the manner of our organism, habits, influences and so on. Where freedom comes in for Hegel is at a higher level, where one is given a desire and then chooses whether or not one acts upon it. It is Sittlichkeit that plays an important role in helping us to make those choices as in its perfect state it is the rational system of the will’s determinations. The Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts shows how, from the concept of a free will, we can develop ideas about the free will of others, their rights, notions of property and all is developed towards an ideal state in which we find ourselves freely limited and at home. Hegel gives a similar account in his Aesthetics:

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188 Hegel describes negative freedom as: “the freedom of the void which rises to a passion and takes shape in the world; while still remaining theoretical, it takes shape in religion as the Hindu fanaticism of pure contemplation, but when it turns to actual practice, it takes shape in religion and politics alike as the fanaticism of destruction (of the whole subsisting social order), as the elimination of individuals who are objects of suspicion to a given social order, and as the annihilation of any organization which tries to rise anew from the ruins. Only in destroying something does this negative will possess the feeling of itself as existent.” Hegel, 2008, p. 29.

189 Ibid.

190 As noted by Kierkegaard, Socratic irony plays a crucial part in abstracting oneself from one’s surroundings in order to reflect philosophically. See Kierkegaard, The Concept of Irony, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1992.


192 Hegel, 2008, p. 35.

193 Ibid., p. 51-52.
This does not entail the removal of the limitation but the recognition of what is one’s own in it. This however, is not the path that Florentin takes, certainly one can see that he abstracts from his situation, that he rejects his situation within the confines of the monastery and chooses the freedom of the world outside of it. Yet at this point it seems that he gives himself up to the caprices of his passions, which one might say are not truly “his” own, as he often appears merely as the passive recipient of momentary desires that engage his sensual appetites. The novel describes how first Florentin sacrifices his army career in order to launch a rescue operation for his sister, who does not really seem to want to be rescued, he then flees to Venice, where he quickly grows tired of a debauched existence, he then begins a passionate relationship, only to be cruelly disappointed. After a period of travelling, he then decides to leave for America to fight for freedom.

Rather than become what Hegel refers to as an “ironic subjectivity”, where one sees oneself as both the creator and destroyer of one’s values, Florentin appears to fill the void created by a lack of objective content with an ideal notion of freedom, yet such an ideal can only ever have an abstract, imagined content, it cannot be appropriated or “en-owned” in the same way that something concrete like marriage, education or property could be. To find oneself in something ideal as one’s own would be to determine something that by its very nature must remain indeterminate. Ideal freedom can only be gained negatively, it is something to be strived for but cannot be possessed. If one strives for something ideal, one appears to give existence an ideal content, but at the same time existence becomes profoundly allegorical, any real freedom experienced can only seem as possessing aspects of the ideal. So if one gains the belief in the ideal, the idea of it in the imagination and a passion for striving in order to come closer to it, one also denies oneself any concrete form.\(^{195}\) In the ultimate instance one can only

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\(^{194}\) Hegel, 1965, Vol. 1, p. 104. Translation: “the highest content which the subject can comprise in himself is what we can point-blank call freedom. Freedom is the highest destiny of the spirit. In the first place, on its purely formal side, it consists in this, that in what confronts the subject there is nothing alien and it is not a limitation or a barrier; on the contrary, the subject finds itself in it.” Hegel, 1998, p. 97.

\(^{195}\) Hegel says that “A will which resolves on nothing is no actual will; a characterless human being never reaches a decision. The reason for indecision may also lie in a tenderness of feeling which knows that, in willing something determinate, it is engaging with finitude, imposing a restriction on itself and sacrificing the infinite; yet it will not renounce the totality after which it hankers. However “beautiful” such a disposition may be, it is nevertheless dead. As Goethe says: “whoever wills something great must be able to restrict himself.” Only by resolving can a human being step into actuality, however bitter this may be to him. Inertia lacks the will to
rely upon one’s own concept of freedom for an authority about its essence, which is profoundly subjective. Such an enthusiasm for something outside of existence that can only be felt or intuited, would no doubt be regarded by Hegel as a return to subjective spirit where one becomes dominated by feelings and sentiments rather than by reason. There is also the danger of coming to see the ideal of freedom as something self-posed, leading one towards ironic subjectivity, something that Hegel severely criticised Friedrich Schlegel for his development of Fichtean philosophy:

Hegel would perhaps criticise Florentin for having given himself up to an empty formalism, Florentin lives according to his striving for the ideal, but at the same time his ideal must remain indeterminate. Although Florentin appears to feel the oppression of his striving and the way in which life never lives up to his ideal, he never comes to the reflection that his striving might go against reason, this is simply his “fate”. He says that “Mich treibt etwas Unnennbares vorwärts, was ich mein Schicksal nennen muß. Es lebt etwas in mir, das mir zuruft, nicht zu verzagen, und nicht bloß zu leben, um zu leben, ich muß meinen Endzweck, ich muß das Glück,

abandon the inward brooding which allows it to retain everything as a possibility. But possibility is not yet actuality. The will which is sure of itself does not eo ipso lose itself in its determinate volition.” Hegel, 2008, p. 37. This is the labour of the concept in Hegel, one has to go through the determinate yet insufficient forms of freedom in order to arrive at its true concept, one cannot leap straight into the absolute.

Hegel, 1981, p. 282. Translation: “Of Fichte himself it cannot properly be said that he made subjective caprice a guiding principle in the sphere of the practical, but, later on, this principle of the mere particular, in the sense of “particular selfhood”, was deified by Friedrich von Schlegel with reference to the good and the beautiful. As a result he made objective goodness only an image produced by my conviction, receiving support from my efforts alone, and dependent for its appearance and disappearance upon me as its lord and master. If I relate myself to something objective, it vanishes at the same moment before my eyes, and so I hover over an immense space, summoning shapes from the depths and annihilating them. This supreme standpoint of subjectivity can emerge only in a period of advanced culture when faith has lost its seriousness, and its essence is simply “all is vanity.” Hegel, 2008, p. 151.

This is also Hegel’s critique of Kant, that the ideal ethical forms that Kant gives, such as “do your duty”, remain without a true content.
das ich ahnde, wirklich finden." It is here that we come to a crucial point, for Hegel, man is a being that naturally strives towards reason, if he gets stuck, it is because of faulty reasoning that should be corrected. Florentin is a clear example of how human existence gets stuck, where he should have, according to Hegel, a rational individuality, he has instead a sensation of intense feeling.

Florentin is a being of force, intensity and affect rather than reflection, his striving is not a philosophical consequence of his thinking, but manifests itself rather as a symptom or pathology, something that acts in him or through him rather than because of him, his striving comes to him in the same manner as his poems and songs, as immediate inspiration that speaks through him. As far as Florentin is concerned he is dominated by objects or things exterior to himself, the feelings created in him by Juliane, by the woman on the balcony and the image of Clementine in the painting. When the object turns out not to be what he thought it was, when its objective being begins to dominate his subjective understanding of it, he retreats away from it with the feeling that the object misrepresented itself, his own subjective element in the object, how he reacted to it, what he put into the object, is estranged from him. This is no doubt part of the core of the problem of compulsion, how does one give up something that does not appear to have its origin in the self? Hegel would perhaps say that the subject cannot be the highest power of itself, but must submit itself to a higher, objective form of reason, yet if the very forms of Sittlichkeit that are supposed to represent objective reason are corrupt it seems likely that one will remain entrapped within subjective spirit. Certainly, Florentin’s tales of debauched living, Juliane’s tale of supernatural powers and the unrestrained cruelty of Walter all seem to suggest something dangerous and undefined beneath the appearance of order in the castle and Clementine’s garden. But it is perhaps in Florentin’s songs that we see the clearest signs of something related to Hegel’s notion of subjective spirit. Florentin sings of an indeterminate erotic merging of souls:

Du blickst dein Verlangen

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198 Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 101. Translation: “Something unnameable that I must call my fate drives me forward; something lives in me that calls to me not to renounce and not just to live in order to live. I must find my goal; I must really find the happiness that I suspect.” Dorothea Schlegel, 1988, p. 71.

199 Hegel states that “When reflection is brought to bear on impulses, they are imaged, estimated, compared with one another, with their means of satisfaction and their consequences, and so on, and with a sum of satisfaction (i.e. with happiness). In this way reflection invests this material with formal universality and in this external manner purifies it of its crudity and barbarity. This growth of the universality of thought is the absolute value in education.” Hegel, 2008, p. 41.

200 In the Philosophy of Mind Hegel states that “If a man on any topic appeals not to the nature and concept of the subject-matter, or at least to reasons, to intellectual universality, but to his feeling, the only things to do is to let him alone, because he thereby spurns the community of rationality, withdraws into his isolated subjectivity, into particularity.” Hegel, 2012, p. 178.
Later on, Florentin sings of letting nature be a model for existence, equating nature with sublime and sacred love, an echo of Friedrich Schlegel’s entwining of love and nature as a principle of development in *Lucinde*. The obvious connection to make here is Rousseau with his belief that contemporary society had ruined and perverted man’s natural tendency to love himself and others. However, this is only one side of Rousseau, perhaps more visible in his later works; the other side that can be found within the pages of *Émile* (1762), is rather more Hegelian. There Rousseau speaks of the necessity of transforming the natural urge into a conscious decision, one must go through society in order to return to the natural urge in a higher, more rational form.  

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Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 27. Translation: “You see your glance of longing, deep in her heart, she has understood you, and shares the glowing fire. Nothing resists your kisses on lips and cheeks; lilies and roses, flowers and buds, all is yours.” Dorothea Schlegel, 1988, p. 14.

For Florentin, the ideal of love is made present by his *Ahndung*, the presentiment or premonition of “holy love”. An *Ahndung* is not an idea or a representation, but something more like an expectation, or a premonition or divination. Such a feeling cannot be actively created, but only received passively. Certainly we can see echoes of chivalric romance here in this sense of being true to one’s faith in love. The notion of *Ahndung* had an important presence in German Romantic thinking, in particular in the writings of Novalis. Novalis states that:


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203 Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 129. The English translation has it as: “Thus many a one has found what he didn’t know how to seek, what he will try to achieve effortfully, but vainly. Failure threatens the most faithful beginning. Many are heard cursing their fate, complaining: “Fortune! Oh did you have to vanish?” Why do you futilely trust in fortune’s favour? Let nature be your model, let living be an art! Who lifts the artist’s courage and suffering save the distant suspicion of sublime sacred love? What teaches him to avoid shrill folly save the fortune of his own sweet tender love? Where is a harbour for scorn and wicked envy save in the arms of pious true love? And will not the hero’s brow shine more beautifully than laurel in the myrtle wreaths of posterity?”

204 Examples of this abound in tales of courtly romance, but this example from Chrétien de Troyes’ *The Knight of the Cart* (Lancelot) (1170) displays the manner in which the premonition of holy love was raised up into a value above all others “The Knight of the Cart was lost in thought, a man with no strength or defence against love, which torments him. His thoughts were so deep that he forgot who he was; he was uncertain whether or not he truly existed; he was unable to recall his own name; he did not know if he were armed or not, nor where he was going nor whence he came. He remembered nothing at all save one creature, for whom he forgot all the others; he was so intent upon her alone that he did not hear, see, or pay attention to anything.” Chrétien de Troyes, *Arthurian Romances*, London: Penguin Books, 1991.

205 From the *Blüthenstaub* (1798) in *Athenaeum, Eine Zeitschrift*, Vol. 1, Darmstedt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983, p. 104-105. This fragment is in fact a mixture of two fragments by Novalis in his *Miscellaneous Observations* (1797-1798): “123. Nothing is more poetic than memory and premonition, or the conception of the future. The everyday present joins both of these together through limitation. Contiguity comes into being through atrophy- crystallization. But there is a spiritual present- which fuses them together through dissolving them- and the mixture is the element, the atmosphere of the poet. What is not spirit is matter. 124. The conceptions of times past draw us toward dying- toward disintegration. The conceptions of the future- drive is toward living forms- to incorporation, the action of assimilation. Hence all memory is melancholy- all premonition joyful. The former moderates excessive liveliness- the latter is uplifting for life that is too weak.” Novalis, 1997, p. 45.
For Novalis, the poet is the one who overcomes the limitation of the present moment through the spiritual atmosphere of memory and premonition. In her Zueignung an den Herausgeber, a dedication to the editor of Florentin that was never published during her lifetime, Dorothea Schlegel will state that “Meine Wirklichkeit und meine Befriedigung liegt in der Sehnsucht und in der Ahndung.” There is an obvious theological element here whereby one lives not in the material present, but in the fullness of feeling provided by the memory of what was (the resurrection) and the presentiment of what is to come (salvation). Yet, if this feeling can be a source of satisfaction, inspiration or comfort, it is also a potential source of Schwärmerei, as Kant notes in paragraph 35 of his Anthropologie in Pragmatischer Hinsicht (1798) where he states “Man sieht leicht, daß alle Ahndung ein Hirngespenst sei; denn wie kann man empfinden, was noch nicht ist?” If Ahndung has all the reality of something objective, it also poses the risk of becoming trapped in one’s own subjective fantasy. This strange sensation that seems to overstep the boundary between faith and knowledge will be something that Schelling and Hegel attempt to incorporate into their systems in the form of intellectual intuition.

After leaving Juliane’s bridal chamber, Florentin makes his way outside to enjoy the celebrations on the morning of the wedding:


207 Akademieausgabe von Immanuel Kants Gesammelten Werken, Bd. VII, p. 187. Translation: “One can easily see that all premonition is a chimera; for how can one sense what does not exist?” Kant, Anthropic From A Pragmatic Point of View, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 80.
208 Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 147. Translation: “Between the bushes, blossoming orange trees exhaled a balmy fragrance. Wherever one looked, one saw Julian’s and Eduard’s names made out of garlands. The trees were also joined by wreaths of flowers. The whole scene formed a complete, meaningful flower wreath. From different sides and at a small distance oboes and French horns could be heard, now alternatingly, now in harmony. And when they were silent, the happy music of the peasantry resounded from a distance. Each sound was distant; everyone sat silently and listened; everyone seemed occupied in absorbing the joys with all their senses. Silently Florentin compared the impression of this small temple with that of the magnificent bedroom he
Es ist leicht zu erraten, but it is impossible to know. Yet who could fail to desire this Arcadian idyll?209 Although, it seems apparent that all this enjoyment may be for nothing, the marriage between Juliane and Eduard does not appear to be destined for success. Florentin remains “im stillen”, distant, observing the scene, or rather the two scenes, one present, one remembered as they occur to him at this moment, the small temple and the ornate one. In many respects the scene repeats the depiction of the aesthetic experience that we find elsewhere in Florentin when he becomes gripped by an impression from his surroundings:

Er hörte auf die Wogen des Bachs, der sich reißend fortwälzte, und sprudelnd und schäumend über die Räder der Mühle hinstürzte; auf das Brausen des Windes im Walde, und das friedliche Klappern innerhalb der Mühle. Es klang ihm wie vernehmliche Töne. Wie ein Wettgesang des tätigen zufriedenen Landmanns und des mutigen, ehrüchtig drohenden Kriegers tönten Mühle und Waldsturm; der Bach rauschte in immer gleichen Gesängen ununterbrochen dazwischen, wie die ewige Zeit, allem Vergänglichen, allem Irdischen trotzend, und seine Bemühungen verhöhnd.210

A passive reception that fills the senses, an echo perhaps of the thinking about receptivity or fantasy and creativity and activity that one finds in Humboldt,211 Karl Philipp Moritz212 and

209 Judging from his comments in the Aesthetics, Hegel would not be impressed by the man-made beauty of the park, nor does he see the natural idyll as a worthy artistic subject, see Hegel, 1998, p. 191, p. 259, p. 699 and p. 1091.

210 Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 111. Translation: “He listened to the rushing stream as it rapidly rolled and bubbled away to plunge foaming away to plunge foaming over the wheels of the mill, to the raging of the wind in the forest, and to the peaceful clapping from within the mill. To him it sounded like articulate tones. The sounds of the mill and the forest storm sounded like a competitive song between the active, satisfied countryman and the brave, ambitiously threatening warrior; uninterruptedly the stream always rushed with the same songs between them, like eternal time defying every transitory, everything earthly, and scornings its efforts.” Dorothea Schlegel, 1988, p. 79.


212 Karl Philipp Moritz speaks of Bildungskraft (formative power) and Empfindungsvermögen (capacity of feeling) in Über die bildende Nachahmung des Schönen in Karl Philipp Moritz, Schriften zur Ästhetik und Poetik, Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1962, p. 63-93. Moritz also goes on to say “Je vollkommener das Empfindungsvermögen für eine gewisse Gattung des Schönen ist, um desto mehr ist es in Gefahr sich zu täuschen, sich selbst für Bildungskraft zu nehmen, und auf die Weise durch tausend misslungene Versuche, seinen Frieden mit sich selbst zu stören”, Ibid., p. 79. Translation: “The more complete the Empfindungsvermögen for a certain genre of the beautiful is, it is all the more in danger of deceiving itself, of taking itself to be Bildungskraft, and in this manner, through a thousand unsuccessful attempts, destroying its peace with itself.” in the critical introduction to Mary Hurst Schubert’s translation of Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder’s Confessions and Fantasies, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 1971, p. 47.
Wackenroder and Tieck’s *Strange Musical Life of the Musical Artist Joseph Berglinger.*

Indeed, one could almost wonder if Berglinger had wandered into the same celebration as Florentin when he describes how:

– die Oboen- und Hörnertöne schienen mir wie glänzende Strahlen um alle Gesichter zu spielen, und es dünkte mich, als säh' ich alle Leute bekränzt oder in einer Glorie gehen. – Mein Geist, verklärt durch die Musik, drang durch alle die verschiedenen Physiognomien bis in jedes Herz hinein, und die wimmelnde Welt um mich her kam mir wie ein Schauspiel vor, das ich selber gemacht, oder wie ein Kupferstich, den ich selber gezeichnet: so gut glaubte ich zu sehen, was jede Figur ausdrücke und bedeute, und wie jede das sei, was sie sein sollte.

This image does not last long for Berglinger, day soon turns to night, this image is withdrawn from his sight and he turns to thoughts of mortality and ruin. Berglinger sees art as the hand that reaches out from heaven that leads away from earthly existence. Like Florentin, Berglinger does not recognise the subjective dimension of his experience, everything comes from without, Berglinger states that “so wird meine Seele wohl lebenslang der schwebenden Äolsharfe gleichen, in deren Saiten ein fremder, unbekannter Hauch weht, und wechselnde Lüfte nach Gefallen herumwühlen.” Florentin’s ecstasy does not last long either, Juliane’s parents soon

213 The narrator says of Berglinger “Ach! daß eben seine hohe Phantasie es sein mußte, die ihn aufrieb? Soll ich sagen, daß er vielleicht mehr dazu geschaffen war, Kunst zu genießen als auszuüben? – Sind diejenigen vielleicht glücklicher gebildet, in denen die Kunst still und heimlich wie ein verhüllter Genius arbeitet und sie in ihrem Handeln auf Erden nicht stört? Und muß der Immerbegeisterte seine hohen Phantasien doch auch vielleicht als einen festen Einschlag kühn und stark in dieses irdische Leben einweben, wenn er ein echter Künstler sein will? – ja, ist diese unbegreifliche Schöpfungskraft nicht etwa überhaupt ganz etwas anderes, und – wie mir jetzt erscheint etwas noch Wundervolleres, noch Göttlicheres, als die Kraft der Phantasie?” in Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders (1794) accessed at http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/-1916/20 (03/04/2016) “Alas! That it had to be precisely his lofty fantasy that destroyed him! – Shall I say that he was perhaps created more to enjoy art than to practice it? – Are those perhaps fashioned more fortunately, in whom art works more silently and secretly like a veiled spirit and does not disturb them in their activities upon earth? And must the constantly enthused one perhaps also boldly and strongly interweave his lofty fantasies into this earthly life as a firm woof, if he wants to be a true artist? – Yes, is not this incomprehensible power of creativity perhaps something totally different and – as it now seems to me – something still more wondrous, still more divine than the power of fantasy.” Wackenroder, 1971, p. 159. Hegel differentiates between *Phantasie* as active creativity and *Einbildungskraft* as passive imagination in his *Aesthetics*, see Hegel, 1998, p. 281.

214 Wilhelm Wackenroder: Werke und Briefe. Berlin und München 1984, S. 319-322. Accessed at http://www.zeno.org/Literatur/M/Wackenroder,+Wilhelm+Heinrich/Schriften+und+Dichtungen/Phantasien+%C3%BCber+die+Kunst+f%C3%BCr+Freunde+der+Kunst/Zweiter+Abschnitt/4.+Fragment+aus+einem+Brief+Joseph+Berglingers (03/04/2016). Translation: “The sounds of the oboes and horns seemed to play around all the faces like bright beams and it seemed to me as if I were seeing everyone crowned with a Garland or walking with a halo. – My spirit, transfigured by the music, penetrated through all of the varied physiognomies into every heart, and the teaming world all around me seemed to me like a drama which I myself had created or a copper-plate which I myself had engraved: so well did I believe that I was seeing each figure expressed and signed and how each was what it was supposed to be.” Wackenroder, 1984, p. 187.

arrive upon the scene and tell her that it is time to change her simple dress into something more ornate, the count states that “hier darf nicht die Rede von der Schönheit der Kleidung sein, sondern von der Schicklichkeit. In dieser kann sie nicht öffentlich getraut werden, heute müssen wir notwendig in Gala sein.”

When Florentin returns to the park he finds the joyful scene removed from sight, replaced by the arrival of strange and overly ornate members of the aristocracy. In Berglinger’s case it appears as if, almost in direct proportion, the more he becomes filled by the ecstasy of art, the emptier he and the world seems to be, in the end, even art itself begins to become hateful to him, the failure of art to live up to its promise is experienced as a punishment, perhaps as the punishment by God for the incursion upon his realm, or the worship of false idols and arrogant self-elevation. Berglinger states:

Die Kunst ist eine verführerische, verbotene Frucht; wer einmal ihren innersten, süßesten Saft geschmeckt hat, der ist unwiederbringlich verloren für die tätige, lebendige Welt. Immer enger kriecht er in seinen selbsteignen Genuß hinein, und seine Hand verliert ganz die Kraft, sich einem Nebenmenschen wirkend entgegenzustrecken. – Die Kunst ist ein täuschender, trüglicher Aberglaube; wir meinen in ihr die letzte, innerste Menschheit selbst vor uns zu haben, und doch schiebt sie uns immer nur ein schönes Werk des Menschen unter, worin alle die eigensüchtigen, sich selber genügenden Gedanken und Empfindungen abgesetzt sind, die in der tätigen Welt unfruchtbar und unwirksam bleiben. Und ich Blöder achte dies Werk höher, als den Menschen selber, den Gott gemacht hat.

Florentin has no doubt not come this far, yet examples of his melancholy and frustration abound in Florentin. He describes how:

§ (03/04/2016). Translation: “as long as I live, my soul will resemble the floating Aeolian harp, in the strings of which a strange, unfamiliar breath blows and changing winds flutter about as they please” Wackenroder, 1971, p. 197. Berglinger seems to have much in common with Hegel’s understanding of the Brahmic personality he describes in his Aesthetics whereby one empties and annihilates one’s personality in order to unite with the indeterminate absolute, one exists unbedingt. This is perhaps the highest reaches of the method of abstraction by which ironic subjectivity proceeds, that once it has abstracted from all that is concrete it must finally abstract from itself, see Hegel, 1998, p. 335 and p. 340.

Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 148. Translation: “here we must not talk about the beauty of clothes, but rather of appropriateness. She cannot be publicly married in this; today we have to be in gala dress.” Dorothea Schlegel, 1988, p. 110.

A feeling that we find clearly expressed in the works of Hölderlin.


§ (03/04/2014). Translation: “Art is a seductive, forbidden fruit; whoever has tasted its innermost, sweetest juice is irretrievably lost to the active, living world. He creeps further and further into his own self-gratification and his hand totally losses the capacity to extend itself effectively to a fellow creature. – Art is a misleading, deceptive superstition; in it we think that we have before us the last, innermost essence of humanity itself; and yet, it merely foists upon us a beautiful product of man, in which are set down all of the egotistical, self-satisfying thoughts and emotions which remain sterile and ineffective in the world of action. And I, imbecile, esteem this product more highly than the human being himself, whom God has created.” Wackenroder, 1971, p. 195.
Doch konnte er lange keinen fröhlichen Gedanken fassen. Er war schwermütig, es war ihm traurig, daß er allein hier ein Fremdling sei, wo es ein Gesetz schien, einander anzugehören, daß er allein stehe, daß in der weiten Welt kein Wesen mit ihm verwandt, keines Menschen Existenz an die seine geknüpft sei. Seine Traurigkeit führte ihn auf jede unangenehme Situation seines Lebens zurück, der Gesang einer Nachtigall, der aus der Ferne zu ihm herüberklang, löste vollends seine Seele in Wehmut auf, er gab sich ihr hin und bald fühlte er seine Tränen fließen.219

He frequently describes how he is cursed, that “Beinah' möcht' ich glauben, daß ich eigentlich für das beschränkte häusliche Leben bestimmt bin, weil alles dafür in mir anspricht, nur daß ein feindseliges Geschick wie ein böser Dämon mich immer weit vom Ziele wegschleudert!”220
He also describes how he is the victim of absurdity, that his entire life is:

eine, bis zur Ermüdung wiederholte Erfahrung: daß ich eigens dazu erkoren zu sein scheine, mich in jeder Lächerlichkeit bis über die Ohren zu tauchen, immer nur von einem Schaden zum andern etwas klüger zu werden, mich immer weniger in das Leben zu schicken, je länger ich lebe, und zuletzt der Narr aller der Menschen zu sein, die schlechter sind als ich.221

Much like in Goethe’s Wahlverwandtschaften, Florentin seems to make a break with the restrictive forms of his life such as his schooling and his marriage only to find himself exposed to something like a mythical power. In Goethe’s novel a couple breaks away from their traditional marriage in order to give a free form to love, at the same time they seem to become victims of a greater power that brings about a series of tragic events. Florentin regards the force that carries him away from his goal as being “fate”. A fate that causes the same experience to be wearily repeated. If Florentin has succeeded in breaking from old forms, he now finds himself trapped within a new one. What he does not recognise however, is that it is his own very striving for something that is imaginary that leads to his experiences being repeated.

219 Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 25. Translation: “But for a long time he could not grasp any happy thought. He was melancholy. He was sad that here, where it seemed to be a law to belong to each other, he alone was a stranger, that he was standing alone, that in the entire world no being was related to him, no human existence was joined to his. His sadness took him back to each unpleasant situation in his life. The song of a nightingale reached him from the distance and totally dissolved his soul in sadness. He yielded to it, and soon he felt his tears flowing.” Dorothea Schlegel, 1988, p. 17.
220 Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 114-115. Translation: “I could almost believe that I am actually destined for the confined, domestic life because everything in me speaks for it; but like an evil demon, an inimical fate always flings me far from the goal.” Dorothea Schlegel, 1988, p. 82.
221 Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 70. Translation: “one experience wearily repeated: I seem to be particularly selected to plunge myself up to my ears in every farce, always to become somewhat more clever from one wrong to the next, to conform less and less to life the longer I live, and finally to be the fool of all the people who are worse than I am.” Dorothea Schlegel, 1988, p. 48.
Florentin also seems to be far from recognizing the wills of those who oppose him as being equal to his own, something that would no doubt be essential for the shift towards Sittlichkeit.

For Wackenroder’s Berglinger it seems that floating above a desolate abyss in a position between heaven and earth eventually becomes unbearable and the only option is to submit oneself to God’s mercy. It seems quite possible that Florentin’s quest for ideal freedom could reach a similar end, if it does not end in tragedy and the admission of failure, it will no doubt end in a Quixotic farce if he continues his quest indefinitely. It is significant of course, that Berglinger is a musical artist, music seems to operate as the most spiritual art form in the context of German Romanticism and often seems to bring with it a sensation of mystical union. In Florentin we find Clementine’s music described in the following way:

Der schwebende Nachhall des Chorals erstarb in einen leisen Hauch; da erscholl die Posaune durch Herz und Gebein rufend, und nun begannen die Chöre bald abwechselnd sich einander antwortend, bald vereinigt vom Aufruf einer einzelnen Stimme geweckt, zur mächtigen, alles mit sich fortreißenden Fuge anzuwachsen, bis Himmel und Erde in den ewigen, immer lauter werdenden Wirbel mit einzustimmen schienen, und alles wankte und bebe und zusammenzustürzen drohte. 222

Certainly, we can see elements of Florentin’s character in such a music, the hovering and striving singularity that risks finding itself compelled to lose itself in the masses. More importantly, in this music and its setting we’re reminded of the theological context from which this life of striving no doubt finds its sustenance, the worthlessness of earthly existence when weighed against the Ahndung of something divine. Clementine is described as being:

wie in Entzückung gehoben; ihre Augen ruhten entweder auf der Rolle, die sie rasch umblätterte, oder sie wendete sie glänzend freudig in die Gegend, wo die Stimmen der Sänger herabkamen; dann ruhte sie wieder wie verloren in sich selbst; sanfte Tränen gleiteten langsam über das heilige Gesicht herab, die sie weder zu hemmen noch zu verbergen bedacht war. 223

222 Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 183. Translation: “The hovering echo of the chorale died in a gentle breath. Then the trumpet resounded, calling through the heart and body, and then the choruses began, now answering each other alternating, now unitedly roused by the summons of a single voice to grow to the powerful fugue that swept over everything along with it until heaven and earth seemed to join in the eternal whirl that became louder and louder and everything wavered and quivered and threatened to plunge together.” Dorothea Schlegel, 1988, p. 141.

223 Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 183. Translation: “Clementina seemed rapturously uplifted. Her eyes rested on the scroll, through which she quickly paged, or she turned them, brilliantly happy, to the area from which the voices of the singers came. Then she rested as if lost in herself; gentle tears slid slowly down her holy face; she tried neither to check them nor to conceal them.” Dorothea Schlegel, 1988, p. 141.
Clementine is gripped by the rapture of the mystic. The pleasure that knows no object but the *Ahdung* of something unknowable and divine. Such ecstasy seems to drive sensation beyond its own capabilities, the pleasure that Clementine enjoys seems almost to go over into pain.\(^{224}\) The novel describes her as being *wie verloren in sich selbst*, she is lost within herself, a state of sensation that seems to negate all external reality. What one might interpret as the *Ahdung* of the world to come could also be seen as force that threatens to negate the existing world. There is a tipping point at which subjectivity becomes so subjective that loses all objective being, that is, it loses the status of being a subject, for it must be understood that there is no subjectivity without its unity with the objective, otherwise one would edge towards the abyss described earlier by Hegel. However, *Florentin* leaves us in some doubt as to the nature of Clementine, if on the one hand she appears as something of a *schöne Seele*, detached from the sufferings of the world, unwilling to get involved in the sufferings of Juliane and Betty, on the other hand she appears as something of a philanthropist who is actively helping the poor. Although Clementine repeats the figure of the female mystic she also breaks with figures such as Friedrich Schlegel’s Lisette, if Clementine passionately loses herself in music, it should also be remembered that she herself has composed it. This puts her in the somewhat remarkable position of being touched by her own work. Florentin himself also frequently breaks into song:

> Mit diesen Worten nahm er eine Gitarre, stimmte sie, machte einige Gänge, und sang Verse, die er aus dem Stegereif dazu erfand. Er besang den Strom, der dicht unter den Fenstern des Gartensaals vorbeifloss, das Tal, den Wald, das hohe, entfernte Gebirge, von dem die Gipfel noch von den Strahlen der untergehenden Sonne beleuchtet waren, da sie selbst schon lange aufgehört hatte, sichtbar zu sein. Dann sang er von seiner Sehnsucht, die ihn in die Ferne zog, von dem Unmut, der ihn rastlos umhertrieb, und endigte sein Lied mit dem Lobe der Schönheit, unter deren Schutz ihm die Morgenröte des Glücks schimmere, und bei deren Anblick jedes Leiden in seiner Brust in die Nacht der Vergessenheit zurücksinke.\(^{225}\)

Florentin’s music is improvised and directly inspired by his environment, a music that seems to flow from the natural world rather than the spiritual one. Yet, like Clementine, it is *Ahdung*

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\(^{224}\) Perhaps one cannot help but think of Bernini’s statue of Teresa in this context.

\(^{225}\) Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 23. Translation: “With these words he took a guitar, tuned it, played several bars and sang verses which he improvised. He sang about the river which flowed close by under the windows of the garden room, about the valley, the forest, the tall distant mountain whose apex was still illuminated by the rays of the setting sun which had long ceased to be visible. Then he sang about his yearning that drew him far away, and about the indignation that restlessly drove him about. He ended his song by praising beauty under whose protection the dawn of happiness shimmers for him and at the sight of which every pain in his breast sinks back into the night of oblivion.” Dorothea Schlegel, 2004, p. 11.
that comes into focus here, Florentin sings about the shimmering of the dawn of happiness that keeps away his pain and makes him able to endure his constant striving. This promise of happiness to come seems to be closely bound the feeling of the beautiful in Florentin’s song. That it is perhaps only through his experience of the beautiful that Florentin comes close to his Ahndung of happiness. Hegel also had much to say about music as a profoundly spiritual art form:

Dies Tilgen nicht nur der einen Raumdimension, sondern der totalen Räumlichkeit überhaupt, dies völlige Zurückziehen in die Subjektivität nach selten des Inneren wie der Äußerung, vollbringt die zweite romantische Kunst - die Musik. Sie bildet in dieser Beziehung den eigentlichen Mittelpunkt derjenigen Darstellung, die sich das Subjektive als solches sowohl zum Inhalte als auch zur Form nimmt, indem sie als Kunst zwar das Innere zur Mitteilung bringt, doch in ihrer Objektivität selber subjektiv bleibt.²²⁶

He also states that:

Für den Musikausdruck eignet sich deshalb auch nur das ganz objektlose Innere, die abstrakte Subjektivität als solche. Diese ist unser ganz leeres Ich, das Selbst ohne weiteren Inhalt. Die Hauptaufgabe der Musik wird deshalb darin bestehen, nicht die Gegenständlichkeit selbst, sondern im Gegenteil die Art und Weise widerklingen zu lassen, in welcher das innerste Selbst seiner Subjektivität und ideellen Seele nach in sich bewegt ist.²²⁷

For Hegel, music is the “free tarrying with itself” of inner life,²²⁸ it should be noted though, that Hegel’s understanding of music seems to base itself entirely on the apperception of music, the experiences of the listener, rather than music as it is constructed on paper in notation and based upon pre-existing forms and scales. The content of music is feeling and is expressed in feeling. In many respects it is the ideal art form for ironic or empty subjectivity, and in fact perhaps becomes the only form in which it can assure itself of its own self presence. Yet there is a danger present in the enjoyment of one’s own emotions according to Hegel:

²²⁶ Hegel, 1965, Vol. 2, p. 260. Translation: “this obliteration not of one dimension only (as in painting) but of the whole of space, purely and simply, this complete withdrawal of both the inner life and its expression, into subjectivity, brings completely into being the second Romantic Art – Music. Thus viewed, it forms the real centre of that presentation which takes the subjective as such for both form and content, because as art it communicates the inner life and yet even in its objectivity remains subjective.” Hegel, 1998, p. 889.

²²⁷ Hegel, 1965, Vol. 2, p. 261. Translation: “what alone is fitted for expression in music is the object-free inner life, abstract subjectivity as such. This is our entirely empty self, the self without any further content. Consequently the chief task of music consists in making resound, not the objective world itself, but, on the contrary, the manner in which the inmost self is moved to the depths of its personality and conscious soul.” Hegel, 1998, p. 891, see also Hegel, 1998, p. 902.

Als schöne Kunst nun aber erhält sie von selten des Geistes her sogleich die Aufforderung, wie die Affekte selbst so auch deren Ausdruck zu zügeln, um nicht zum bacchantischen Toben und wirbelnden Tumult der Leidenschaften fortgerissen zu werden oder im Zwiespalt der Verzweiflung stehenzubleiben, sondern im Jubel der Lust wie im höchsten Schmerz noch frei und in ihrem Ergüsse selig zu sein.229

It seems that music is the art form where the danger that Moritz described of the *Empfindungsvermögen* taking itself to be *Bildungskraft* is greatest, as music only truly comes to be in apperception; it is easy to succumb to the illusion that as the listener one is the sole creator of the experience.230 It is a confusion that Hegel would perhaps aim at the Early German Romantics, that they believe that they have given a free reign to the potency and activity of their *Bildungskraft*, but in actual fact they merely turn themselves over to the passivity and impotency of their *Empfindungsvermögen* and become “beautiful souls”.

Yet, if it is possible to say that Berglinger has become a melancholic personality, Florentin’s suffering never seems to cloud his personality for very long, if something threatens his state of mind then he leaves. Berglinger’s emotions seem to come from within, they appear to be his own, while Florentin’s emotions always seem to have a direct exterior cause. If Florentin’s suffering appears inconsequential, his hopes unrealistic and his path inconsistent, is there reason to find him to be a comic character? Hegel states that:

> im Komischen haben die Individuen das Recht, sich, wie sie wollen und mögen, aufzuspreizen; sie dürfen sich in ihrem Wollen und Meinen und in ihrer Vorstellung von sich selber eine Selbständigkeit anmaßen, die ihnen unmittelbar durch sie selber und ihre innere und äußere Abhängigkeit wieder vernichtet wird.231

This would entail some kind of contradiction between what they are and what they want to become. Certainly, Florentin seems happy enough to spend his time amongst the aristocracy

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229 Hegel, 1965, Vol. 2, p. 308. Translation: “as a fine art it once acquires, from the spirit’s point of view, a summons to bridle the emotions themselves as well as their expression, so that there is no being carried away into a bacchanalian rage or whirling tumult of passions, or a resting in the distraction of despair, but on the contrary an abiding peace and freedom in the outpouring of emotion whether in jubilant delight or the deepest grief”. Hegel, 1998, p. 939.

230 This difficulty of separation is easy enough to witness empirically, everyone has seen somebody automatically waving an imaginary baton as if they were leading an orchestra or humming along as if they were one of the soloists.

231 Hegel, 1965, Vol. 1, p. 191-192. Translation: “in comedy, individuals have the right to spread themselves however they wish and can. In their willing and fancying and in their idea of themselves, they may claim an independence which is immediately annihilated by themselves and by their inner and outer dependence”. Hegel, 1998, p. 192. He also states “what is comical, as we saw, is a personality or subject who makes his own actions contradictory and so brings them to nothing, while remaining tranquil and self-assured in the process”. Hegel, 1998, p. 1220.
despite his great desire for freedom and his momentary desires seem to lead him from one
unfreedom to another. Certainly we can see signs of “harmless play” and
 collisions/contradictions that rather than becoming a struggle, seem to be self-dissolving,
 which are other typical traits of comedy according to Hegel.⁴³² We can also agree with the
distinction that describes comedy as being that “in welcher die Subjektivität als solche in
Wollen und Handeln sowie die äußere Zufälligkeit sich zum Meister aller Verhältnisse und
Zwecke macht”.⁴³³ Florentin seems to be led just as much by circumstances as his own will,
English freedom only comes to take the position as ideal freedom due to a chance encounter
with a manufacturer, and American freedom becomes his ideal only as a result of his unpleasant
experiences in London.⁴³⁴

If tragedy entails the destruction of character, comedy assures us of its survival, despite
whatever problems they encounter. Hegel goes on to make a definition between the comic and
the laughable. Laughter takes on the character of low comedy in Hegel’s Aesthetics, if
something contradicts our own opinion or way of doing things then we might find it laughable.
For Hegel laughable things are things that are senseless, silly, vulgar, crude, or tasteless that
exist in contradiction to how they should be. Hegel says that “Das Lachen ist dann nur eine
Äußerung der wohlgefälligen Klugheit, ein Zeichen, daß sie auch so weise seien, solch einen
Kontrast zu erkennen und sich darüber zu wissen. Ebenso gibt es ein Gelächter des Spottes,
des Hohns, der Verzweiflung usf.”⁴³⁵ The comical on the other hand is felt as a certain light-
heartedness, and is expressed in a character who can raise themselves above their own inner
contradiction and does not become bitter and miserable in it. Hegel gives the example of
Molière’s Harpagon as an example of a laughable character: “Auch die häßliche Abstraktion
so fester Charaktere, wie z. B. Moliéres Geiziger, deren absolute, ernsthafte Befangenheit in
ihrer bornierten Leidenschaft sie zu keiner Befreiung des Gemüts von dieser Schranke
gelangen läßt, hat nichts eigentlich Komisches.”⁴³⁶ For Hegel the comic character would be
like some of those we find in Shakespeare’s comedies, there is nothing pathological or
deranged about their personalities, they are only mistaken about things because the things

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⁴³³ See Hegel, 1965, Vol. 2, p. 547. Translation: “in which the mastery of all relations and ends is given as much
to the individual and action, as to external contingency”, Hegel, 1998, p. 1194.
⁴³⁵ Hegel, 1965, Vol. 2, p. 552. Translation: “In such a case their laughter is only an expression of a self-
complacent wit, a sign that they are clever enough to recognise such a contrast and are aware of that fact. There
is also the laughter of derision, scorn, despair, etc.” Hegel, 1998, p. 1200.
⁴³⁶ Hegel, 1965, Vol. 2, p. 584. Translation: “There is nothing really comical either about the odious ideé fixe of
such rigid characters as Moliere’s miser whose absolutely serious involvement in his narrow passion inhibits
any liberation of his mind from this restriction.” Hegel, 1998, p. 1234.
themselves are disguised, once the veil is removed from their eyes they see things right again, we laugh at their situation rather than their personalities.

On the one hand we find evidence of Florentin’s bitterness that suggests that he will become miserable and remain within his contradictory state, but on the other hand we find that his lack of interiority leaves all possibilities open for the development of his character. Yet as the story stands we are offered no resolutions of this kind that we might expect in a traditional comedy. In fact the ending that Dorothea Schlegel offers us seems an attempt to break entirely with this kind of identification with the character or to see the meaning as being dependent upon the character’s personal development. Such an ending draws attention to the literary nature of the tale, breaking the effect of its reality it pushes us towards seeing it as the work of an author. It also draws attention to our own expectations upon it as a work, in a way creating an effect that extends beyond the narrative’s own end. Such an effect is familiar to us from Laurence Sterne and Ludwig Tieck, normally seen as an attempt at parody, pastiche, or satire. Hegel would no doubt view this humour aimed at art itself a sure sign of art’s own dissolution and the necessity of the movement to philosophy. Yet that would be to ignore the critical function that such “anti-literary” devices, like the fragment and parabasis, entail. The dissolution of the work is its becoming infinite, where it falls silent it allows reflection and fantasy to take place, but such a strategy is not without its risks of course, silences can also be deathly.

237 In a way, one could call the end of Florentin a form of parabasis, even if the author only makes herself appear to offer us merely a wink rather than a full address.
Johannes Vermeer (Dutch, 1632–1675)
*Allegory of the Faith*, ca. 1670
Conclusion

Florentin war Nirgends zu finden. 238

My study did not begin with any clear question in mind about the novel in terms of its themes, but rather with the question as to whether anything of value could come out of reflecting critically about a novel that has generally been harshly criticised in terms of its worth or totally ignored. Because this critical reflection took inspiration from Early German Romantic critique itself, I did not attempt to apply what might be called the more traditional criteria of the contemporary schools of critique that we find ourselves surrounded by today. That is not to say that there would be no value in such approaches, but as I have discussed in my introduction, many of those approaches have already been used in connection with this work. In order to bring a second level of critical reflection to this work I looked to Hegel’s critique of German Romanticism, this enabled me to develop my initial impressions from reading Florentin. It has not been my intention to state whether Florentin is the ideal German Romantic novel or to try and emulate Schlegel or Hegel’s critical style, but rather to allow them to lead me towards potential themes which I have tested against the work itself. Many themes that turned out to be unrewarding were rejected due to the overly transcendent perspective that they seemed to achieve. I have earlier attempted to look at the novel through themes such as “wit and judgement” and “naïve and sentimental”, but after finding that they could only be applied by ignoring certain aspects of the work that seemed to question their applicability, those themes were abandoned. In many respects Hegel’s Aesthetics seemed to resolve many of the problems that the split between the ancients and moderns designated by the terms “naïve” and “sentimental” seemed to present and added a deeper perspective to the supposedly increasingly subjective and self-reflective nature of Romantic art.

It is often said of the German Romantics that they wanted to open up works of art to the infinite, and to a certain extent I would say that my study has opened up aspects of Florentin to questions about subjectivity, desire, self-reflection and society, questions which demonstrate ways in which further reflections could extend, if not infinitely, then for quite some time to come. If I have sought clarity in my reflections I have not sought to offer a final judgement on

238 Dorothea Schlegel 2004, p. 191.
the work but rather to give a certain amount of emphasis to that which is uncertain and unknowable in its very uncertainty and unknowability. In some respects this has been thematised in the expressionless qualities of Florentin as a character and as a novel and in the Romantic tendency towards allegorical expression.

In some ways I find it regrettable that Hegel’s *Aesthetics* has come to dominate these analyses somewhat, this is, however, partly unavoidable given the length of this essay and the complexity of Hegel’s ideas. It is my hope that this essay suggests a certain negative dialectic that sustains the antagonism between the expressionless as a lack of expression or refusal of expression and the expressionless as possibility, the expressionless as the space where expression has the potential to occur. To attempt to discuss the expressionless entails an added layer of difficulty to an analysis, how does one describe it without adding a transcendent interpretation of it? If it says nothing, how does one prevent oneself from making it say something? Perhaps one has already gone too far if one says that it says nothing in the first place. In my analysis I have attempted to focus upon the reasons behind the expressionless rather than give possible interpretations of what one might interpret those expressionless moments as trying to say. In all probability I have overstepped this boundary at times, that at certain points I have said something when I should have said nothing, and perhaps vice versa.

While I share Helfer’s view that the expressionless in *Florentin* offers the reader a certain critical potential, I do not agree that the expressionless should be limited to being some kind of deliberate authorial strategy. By turning to the notion of allegory and the absolute as something *unbedingt*, this study has attempted to show that the expressionless is also a consequence of a philosophical and aesthetic context. If the expressionless should be seen as a source of potential, it should also be seen as a sign of inability and incapability or a limit. A silence can only be interpreted. On a subjective level this study has shown in the character of Florentin a turning away from objective forms of expression towards the freedom of subjective feeling, a turning which appears to pose as many dangers as it does possibilities. The clearest expression of this is perhaps in the Hegelian concept of caprice or *Willkür*. Certainly I feel that it would be beneficial to extend this essay in order to look at *Florentin* alongside the works of Jean-Paul and Tieck and other novels of this period in order to develop this theme.

Quite rightly there is perhaps nothing more questionable today than the notion of teleological development, at the same time I do not believe that the notion of development itself is without value for looking at the context of works of art. It seems evident that there are indeed shared interests and shared developments in art that can be located at certain moments in time and in geographical space, otherwise all usage of terms such as Romantic, Modernist or Realist
would be of no use at all to us. The problem lies of course in the danger of the eradication of
difference in the usage of these terms, that in our attempts to grasp the Geist of a certain work
by referring to its context we ignore the potential tension between that context and the
Buchstabe of the work itself. This is no doubt a constant danger when one attempts to approach
a work through its context, or in fact, any hermeneutical approach that attempts to grasp the
spirit of a work.

Having introduced Hegel’s narrative of the dissolution of art in subjective inwardness
without having truly criticised it I feel some need to pass comment on it here in this
conclusion. At the historical moment of the supposed dissolution of art, do we not find that
Hegel has written something representing a philosophical novel in the form of Phänomenologie
des Geistes (1807)? A mythological narrative with mythological figures such as “the master
and slave”, “the beautiful soul” and “the unhappy consciousness”. Is it not the case that
rather than art becoming philosophical, philosophy becomes once again literary in Hegel? That
in order for Hegel to say the truth, to speak of what he thinks he knows, he has to go
through a fiction and create a myth. If Hegel wants to keep the poetic imagination for
speculative thinking, he also seems to want it to shed all the “overly subjective” aspects that it
seems to possess and which hinder the progress of knowing; feelings, pathologies, dreams and
everything that might fall under the category of the term “caprice”. Hegel appears to believe
that the time has come to unveil knowledge, to relieve art of its limitations and all that
constitutes its fundamental weakness in being a medium for the communication of
knowledge. At which point it seems perhaps apt to quote the inscription above the temple of
Isis “I am all that is, that was, and that will be, and my veil no mortal has removed”, not
even Hegel.

What does this all mean for Florentin? For a start we can see that it entails a more
dialectical relationship towards form than the two extremes of classical formalism and
subjective relativism might suggest. There is a necessity for forms in order to make things

239 Such a critique would no doubt have led me far beyond the bounds of this study.
240 And perhaps even Geist itself becomes all too veiled within an aesthetic form.
241 In the document known as “the oldest programme for a system of German Idealism” (1796) found in Hegel’s
handwriting but of unknown authorship, the programme expresses the need for a new mythology and the need to
make ideas aesthetic. See Bernstein (Ed.), 2003, p. 185-187.
242 We have already referred above to Hegel’s comment in his Aesthetics that the poetic imagination is a
necessity for speculative thinking, this relation is unfortunately never described in detail by Hegel.
243 And if we are free of the hierarchy between literature and philosophy, we are no doubt still within the realm
of their false separation.
244 Taken from Kant, Critique of the Power of Judgement, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, p.
194.
present, but forms also form the way in which things appear.²⁴⁵ For all his claims to objectivity and the absolute, Hegel cannot shake off the consequences of the subjective element in these forms, any more than Florentin can avoid finding himself faced with objective forms of actual existing relations every time he attempts to grasp at his ideal. On the path of increased subjectivity it certainly seems feasible that there is a point of dialectical reversal when in trying to be ever more what one is, one finds that one has become more determined by what one is not than ever before, a reversal that is well traversed by Marx in his writings on Max Stirner. One could also very well say that both Hegel and Florentin are striving for something absolute that they imagine to have objective existence, whether absolute freedom or absolute mind, and that both fail to find the necessity of the subjective element in their strivings. Such a recognition would no doubt lead us through Schopenhauer’s Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung (1818) and Balzac’s “age of disenchantment” and “lost illusions”, suggesting that fantasy is more of a necessary skin than an ornamental covering.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ Heidegger has said as much in his notion of Gestell.

²⁴⁶ In opposition to all attempts to create a place where the relationship between subjective and objective might be sublated, stabilized and rendered logical it could perhaps be said that art expresses the impossibility of such a relation that would bring stability or order, or in fact any movement that might go “beyond” the space of their antagonism or indeterminability. This could very well be equally true of both classical and modern art.
Appendix

i). A Summary of the Plot of Florentin

Due to the somewhat obscure nature of Dorothea Schlegel’s *Florentin* (1801), I will begin my study with a brief summary of the general plot. The story begins with Florentin saving the life of Count Schwarzenberg who then invites him to stay with him at his castle. At the castle Florentin becomes acquainted with the Countess and their four children. The oldest daughter Juliane is engaged to the boy who asked Florentin to help the count, Eduard. During his stay at the castle Florentin becomes friends with both Juliane and Eduard. On an ill-fated trip into the countryside disguised as hunters Florentin relates the mysterious source of his origins in Italy to Juliane and Edward. Florentin describes his miserable life alongside his sister in a Benedictine monastery from which Florentin escapes while his sister is forced to remain. Florentin later learns that those said to be his mother and sister are in fact perhaps not related to him. Florentin then spends some time in a military academy before fleeing to Venice. It is in Venice that Florentin lives a superficial existence based around women and gambling. Florentin moves on shortly afterwards to Rome where he attempts to live the life of a painter. When his lover aborts his child in secret Florentin throws a knife at her and must leave the city shortly afterwards.

Florentin then lives an itinerant existence wandering across Europe, making his living from music and painting; his intention is then to leave Europe for America where he will fight for freedom; on route to America through Germany he meets the Count in the woods, bringing his tale to the present day. It is through their encounter with Florentin that Eduard and Juliane begin to question their suitability for each other; despite their uncertainty, the Count insists that the wedding must go ahead. Florentin leaves the castle shortly before the wedding takes place, believing that he is an unhappy influence upon those around him. Florentin has been given a message for Clementine, Juliane’s aunt, by the Countess, yet when they meet for the first time Clementine faints, confirming the hints contained earlier in the story that Florentin has some kind of previous relationship with the Schwarzenberg family. Florentin makes acquaintance with a doctor with whom he becomes friends. Florentin then becomes involved in a dispute between Walter (a character he encounters at the home of Clementine) and his lover Betty leading to a violent encounter, but when Eduard and Juliane arrive at Clementine’s house, Florentin has disappeared.
ii). **A Short biography of Dorothea Schlegel**

Born in 1764, Dorothea Schlegel (at that time called Brendel Mendelssohn) was the daughter of the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn who is perhaps best known for his work alongside Lessing and Friedrich Nicolai on the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*. It was at the salons of Mendelssohn that Brendel became exposed to many of the well-known intellectual figures of that time. Rather than sending his children to the Jewish school he had them tutored at home and held lectures for them in philosophy and religion which he later published, the result of this being that Brendel was educated at a much higher level than the majority of her peers. At the age of fourteen in 1778 Brendel was promised to be the wife of the banker and trader Simon Veit. They were married five years later in 1783; it was a marriage that would turn out be an unhappy one for Brendel, reflected by descriptions of her from letters of that period. By 1790 Brendel Veit had joined a salon in Berlin held by Henriette Herz and Rachel Levin where individuals such as Wilhelm von Humboldt attended. Brendel Veit also gave birth to her first son Jonas that year, followed by her second son Philipp in 1793. In 1797 Brendel Veit met Friedrich Schlegel for the first time at one of the Berlin salons. At that time Friedrich Schlegel was sharing an apartment with Friedrich Schleiermacher in Berlin. Shortly after meeting Brendel, she and Friedrich Schlegel became lovers and it is thought that it was around this time that Friedrich gave Brendel the nickname Dorothea, the name by which she was generally known.\(^{247}\)

In 1799 Dorothea applied for and received a divorce from Simon Veit. She then moved to Jena with Friedrich where she became acquainted with August and Caroline Schlegel,\(^{248}\) and it is through Friedrich that she met Ludwig Tieck and Novalis. In May of that year Friedrich Schlegel published *Lucinde* which supposedly depicts aspects of his intimate life with Dorothea and caused a scandal among its general public. Friedrich also published an essay dedicated to Dorothea *Ueber die Philosophie. An Dorothea* that year. In 1801 Friedrich Schlegel published Dorothea’s novel *Florentin* anonymously. The novel was widely read by the Romantics, but was generally dismissed as being superficial. *Florentin* was never followed by its promised second part, only fragments of another novel remain, now known as *Camilla*. *Florentin* would be the last work of her own that Dorothea published, but she also went on to do a series of translations and adaptions from French including the medieval tales *Geschichte der Jungfrau*

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\(^{247}\) Ruth Richardson believes that Brendel in fact began to call herself Dorothea as early as 1794, referring to a letter which she signs D. Veit, see her “Introduction to Florentin” Richardson, 1988: p, xii.

\(^{248}\) Caroline would later marry the philosopher F.W.J Schelling.
von Orléans and Geschichte des Zauberers Merlin\textsuperscript{249} and the well-known work, Madame de Staël’s Corinne ou l’Italie in 1807 which was published under Friedrich’s name.

In 1804 Dorothea Veit married Friedrich Schlegel in the Protestant Church in Paris. In 1808 both Friedrich and Dorothea joined the Catholic Church. Dorothea is said to have been devout and went on to convert several of her family members to the Catholic faith, including her two sons Philipp and Johannes. Despite her ill health, Dorothea followed her husband across Germany, France and Austria as he took various employments. In 1818, faced by yet another dismissal, Friedrich and Dorothea decided to live separately. Dorothea then went to live with her two sons in Rome who were becoming successful painters. In 1820 Dorothea returned first to Austria before finally settling in Frankfurt in 1830 where she remained until her death in 1838, Friedrich Schlegel died in 1829 in Dresden. It is only more recently that the extent of Dorothea’s authorship has become known revealing the fact that Dorothea is the author of many essays and poems alongside her novel and translations. After her death her letters and diaries have been published along with a reconstruction of Camilla from the remaining fragments.\textsuperscript{250}

\textsuperscript{249} This is in fact not a straight translation, but a reworking of the story is explored by Lorely French in “The Magic of Translation: Dorothea Schlegel’s ‘Geschichte des Zauberers Merlin’” in Pacific Coast Quarterly, vol. 40, no. 1, 2005, p. 36-56.

\textsuperscript{250} For more information on the life of Dorothea Schlegel, see Carola Stern, Ich möchte mir Flügel wünschen, Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 1990.
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