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DANTE AND PETRARCH IN THE WORKS OF
STEFAN GEORGE

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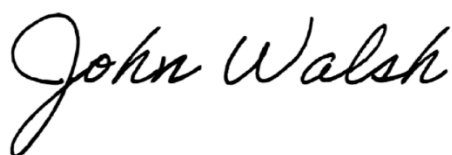
Declaration

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Walsh". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Walsh

Summary

This thesis examines the works of Stefan George (1868-1933) from a predominantly intertextual angle, looking at the poet's use of intertextual references within the contexts of his oeuvre and his posing as master within the so-called George Circle. The two key points of reference, as read by this dissertation, are the Italian Trecento poets Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) and Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374). Dante and Petrarch represent, for George, two contrasting approaches to reality, one that is 'infected' by a European tradition of literary love poetry (Petrarchism), another that is tempered by the legacy of German Romanticism. The dissertation builds upon existing George scholarship on his reception of both poets and presents its central argument that George's literary self-understanding must be viewed with both Dante's and Petrarch's contrasting poetics and reception histories in mind. In its reading of George's strategies of literary self-representation, it traces a poetic development that comes most fruitfully to light when considered under a specifically intertextual lens, for George stages what this study reads as a literary conversion from a Petrarchan poetics of alienated longing to a Dantean poetics of willpower and transcendence. It takes George's apparent rhetoric of transcendence seriously and probes it against a background of scholarship that is, on the whole, more insistent upon the poet's ideology of immanence, thereby raising the issue of transcendence in itself, and what it means in George's modernity.

Despite his intimations of a Dantean prophetic vigour, the dissertation argues that the spirit of Petrarchan and Petrarchistic tradition continues to rear its head, even within the most Dantean of George's works. The issue of conversion arises here, and following established Petrarch and Dante scholarship, the thesis

argues that Petrarchism and its lingering influence in George by design aims to inhibit successful conversion.

The ground upon which this study moves is George's poetic language, and as such it is fundamentally philological in nature and concerned with words, tracing the development of George's Petrarchan and Dantean *modi operandi* across time. While the thesis is committed to its philological pursuits, the work of Slavoj Žižek provides one significant theoretical anchor for the close readings and analyses of George's writing worth mentioning here. Žižek's thought offers a uniquely applicable blend of Lacanian psychoanalytic insight alongside a critical theory of ideology as well as the philosophy of Friedrich Schelling. This theoretical mix is drawn upon, next to recent scholarship on George, in order to situate George within the specific context of German Dante reception, in which Schelling plays a central role. The thesis concludes with reference to recent scholarly work from both George studies and Dante studies in an attempt to bring both fields together and to consider the broader literary-theoretical implications of George's Dantism.

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I am also grateful to Corinna Salvadori Lonergan. Tracking as it does one poet's obsession with the figure of Dante Alighieri, the thesis testifies simultaneously to this student's own fascination with the 'crown jewel' of Italian literature, a fascination first sparked in those brilliant undergraduate classes on *Inferno* and *Paradiso* taught by Professor Lonergan. It has been a privilege both

to have been her student and to collaborate with her in recent years in the Dante Reading Group at the Trinity Centre for Literary and Cultural Translation, where I must also express my gratitude to Eithne Bowen and James Hadley for hosting us with such great enthusiasm and friendliness.

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‘Geleitverse’*

‘Jeder, auch der noch übrigens in der Endlichkeit befangene, ist von Natur getrieben, ein Absolutes zu suchen, aber indem er es für die Reflexion fixieren will, verschwindet es ihm’¹

Friedrich Schelling

*‘Dentro a l’ampiezza di questo reame
casual punto non puote aver sito,
se non come tristizia o sete o fame,
ché per etterna legge è stabilito
quantunque vedi, sì che giustamente
ci si risponde da l’anello al dito’²*

Dante

‘Caeterum, amice, status meus, si a stando dicitur, nullus est; sed lapsus potius ac ruina: non mea magis quam omnium, qui nascimur aequa sors atque invicta necessitas’³

Petrarch

‘Transcendance, maladie proprement européenne’⁴

Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari

* The reference is both to George’s ‘Geleitverse’ (SW, I: 9) and to what Ernst Robert Curtius has as ‘Leitsätze’ opening his *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*, 11th edn (Francke, 1993)

¹ Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *Philosophie und Religion*, ed. by Alfred Denker und Holger Zaborowski (Karl Alber, 2008), p. 16. Citations from Schelling, if not from particular critical editions, will be to the *Sämtliche Werke* edition of his works: Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by Elke Hahn (Total, 1997) and hereafter cited as SW, division, volume, page (as per Hahn’s introduction). Thus the quote above is from SW, I, 6, 19.

² *Paradiso* xxxii: 52-57, cited from *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: Volume 3. Paradiso*, ed. and trans. by Robert M. Durling with introduction and notes by Ronald L. Martinez and Robert M. Durling (Oxford University Press, 2011): ‘Within this ample kingdom no effect of | chance can have a place, no more than | sadness or thirst or hunger, | for eternal law establishes whatever you see, | so that here there is an exact fit between ring | and finger’.

³ Francesco Petrarch, *Fam.* IX, 8 in *Epistolae de Rebus Familiaribus et Variarum*, vol. 2, ed. by Joseph Fracassetti (Le Monnier, 1859), p. 32 (‘Doch, Freund, was meinen Zustand betrifft, so gibt es, wenn das Wort von “Stehen” kommt, keinen, sondern eher ein Gleiten und ein Fallen. Freilich nicht ein bedeutenderes als bei allen anderen, die geboren werden. Das Schicksal ist ja für alle gleich, und unüberwindbar ist die Notwendigkeit’, *Familiaria: Bücher der Vertraulichkeiten*, vol. 1, Books 1-12, ed. by Berthe Widmer (de Gruyter, 2009), p. 485).

⁴ Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *Capitalisme et Schizophrénie: Mille Plateaux* (Les Éditions de Minuit, 1980), p. 28 (‘Transcendence: a specifically European disease’, Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. by Brian Massumi (University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. 18).

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1. Introduction · A European Disease?

Das Dritte

Du wachst über uns
in deiner unnahbaren glorie:
Schon wurdest du eins
mit dem Wort das von oben uns sprach.
Wir fragen bei all
unsren schritten des tags deine milde.
So macht ihre diener
das lächeln der könige reich.
Doch senkt sich der abend in
der dir geweihten memorie:
Dann zittert die sehnsucht
dann greifen die arme dir nach ·
Dann drängen die lippen
zu deinem noch menschlichen bilde
Als wärst du noch unter uns ·
wärst uns noch – Herrlicher! gleich.⁵

⁵ George will be cited from Stefan George, *Sämtliche Werke in 18 Bänden*, ed. by Georg Peter Landmann and Ute Oelmann (Klett-Cotta, 1981-2013), here volume VI/VII: *Der Siebente Ring*, 2nd edn, 1993, p. 101). In keeping with scholarly convention, all of Stefan George's works from this critical edition will henceforth be cited as (SW,) 'volume number: page number,' thus here: VI/VII: 101. The entire 'Gesamtausgabe' of George's works is readily available on Zeno.org: <http://www.zeno.org/nid/20004807944>. This *Gesamt-Ausgabe der Werke* (GAW) is based on the edition overseen by George himself, beginning in 1927, upon which the new critical edition is based, albeit with different pagination. References to GAW will generally be avoided, but the poems there are easily accessed. Petrarch's main vernacular work is referred to throughout as the *Canzoniere* or the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (Rvf). Individual poems will be cited as Rvf poem number: lines. A.S. Kline's complete translation of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* is available at <https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Italian/Petrarchhome.php>; all translations from

This dissertation is an extended rumination on the presence of one particular rhyme in the above poem by Stefan George (1868-1933): that of 'glorie' with 'memorie'. The poem is found in *Der Siebente Ring* (1907), George's seventh volume of poetry. It sits at the centre, the third of six poems in a sub-cycle entitled 'Auf das Leben und den Tod Maximins', itself belonging to a larger cycle of twenty-one poems ('Maximin'), in turn the fourth and central cycle of seven in a volume released seven years after the previous (*Der Teppich des Lebens und die Lieder von Traum und Tod mit einem 'Vorspiel'*, 1899/1900), and seven years before the next (*Der Stern des Bundes*, 1914).⁶ Numbers are evidently important, but for now we are focused on words.

The sub-cycle is concerned with celebrating the birth and death of a god (the titular Maximin: a deified, transfigured character with historical precedent in the form of a teenager called Maximilian Kronberger whom George befriended and mentored). The poet is now a prophet, and Maximin the divine revealed in and through poetry.

George was not one to use rhymes lightly, nor rhymes that incorporated words inherited from outside the Germanic lingo-sphere. In the literary journal he founded in the 1890s an early statement reads: 'REIM ist ein teuer erkaufte spiel. hat ein künstler einmal zwei worte miteinander gereimt so ist eigentlich das spiel

Petrarch's *Canzoniere* throughout this dissertation will be, unless otherwise noted, from Mark Musa, *Petrarch: The Canzoniere, or, Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, trans. and ed. by Mark Musa (Indiana University Press, 1999). Dante is available in two English translations alongside the original Italian at Columbia University's *Digital Dante* website: <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/> (by Teodolinda Barolini). The website also provides a *Vita nova* and *Convivio* in English translation. All translations from the *Commedia*, unless otherwise noted, will be from Robert Durling: *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri. 3 vols*, ed. and trans. by Robert M. Durling with introduction and notes by Ronald L. Martinez and Robert M. Durling (Oxford University Press, 1996-2011). Translations from Italian language scholarship, supplied for non-Italianist thesis examiners, were provided by DeepL Translator (www.deepl.com/en/translator) (accessed 2025-2026) unless otherwise stated.

⁶ Cf. Ute Oelmann, in the 'Anhang' to VI/VII: 192.

für ihn verbraucht und er soll es nie oder selten wiederholen'.⁷ One must work hard for one's rhyme, and use it with utmost discretion. Every rhyme has its privileged place and moment to unleash its full bewitching potential.

Just above that maxim, in the same issue of the *Blätter*, is an equally relevant one: 'Wenn wir alle FREMDWÖRTER auch die eingewurzelten – alle schlagworte gehören hierzu – wegliessen so bliebe vieles leere ungesagt. wenn ein satz der eines solchen wortes nicht entbehren kann fortfällt so wird weder sprache noch gesellschaft dadurch einen verlust erfahren'.⁸ The plan is the linguistic renewal of poetic language through expurgation of foreign influences, to revive and renew German from within, where the new god, the new life, and the new poetry are all mixing in the same well.⁹ Maik Bozza refers to this apparent disavowal of linguistic foreignness as George's 'quasi Opitzianischen Strategie [...], alle fremdsprachlichen Einflüsse aus seinem Deutsch zu tilgen'.¹⁰ Like Opitz' project of linguistic renewal, George's will be the next great renewal of poetic language, and as in Opitz, as will be discussed in chapter three, foreign influences play a deciding role. If European Petrarchism enabled Opitz to assess the state of things in German poetry, that Italian poet will also have a role to play in George's renewal.

With this Opitzian pureness in mind, and the rarity of such stylised Latinisms across George's oeuvre, this rhyme foregrounds itself and its foreignness, breaking

⁷ *Blätter für die Kunst* II, vol. 2, cited from Stefan George, 'Von Kultur und Göttern reden': *Aus dem Nachlass*, ed. by Ute Oelmann (Klett Cotta, 2018), p. 398.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Cf. Kai Kauffmann, 'Das Leben Stefan Georges. Biographische Skizze', in *Stefan George und sein Kreis. Ein Handbuch*, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer, Wolfgang Braungart, Stefan Breuer and Ute Oelmann, 2nd edn (de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 7-94, on how in later years it 'dürfte StG aufgegangen sein, dass sein ursprüngliches Projekt der schöpferischen Erneuerung der deutschen Dichtung zu einem Programm der Erneuerung des deutschen Geistes ausgeweitet werden könnte, ja müsste' (p. 47).

¹⁰ Maik Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs: Stefan Georges poetologischer Selbstentwurf um 1890* (Wallstein, 2016), p. 42, n52.

the poem's spell and opening up its self-enclosed Germanic circle to foreign influence.¹¹ The rhyme of 'glorie' and 'memorie', used only once across his works, is a unique crux in which several of George's key literary predecessors and foreign-language influences coexist simultaneously.¹² Renate Birkenhauer cites 'glorie' and 'memorie' as an example of the 'gleitenden Reimschluß' that is rare in George's works despite an abundance of possibilities in German. That George tends to avoid them, 'manifestiert sich offenbar sein Stilwille, der eben nach dem hartgefügtten Versschluß strebt'.¹³ In a section on archaisms, foreign words, and proper names, Birkenhauer continues:

Zu den Konnotationen, die im poetischen Sprachgebrauch häufig aktiviert werden, gehören die Herkunft und die sprachliche oder literarische Tradition eines Wortes, also genau genommen metasprachliche Kategorien (da sie die Aufmerksamkeit auf die sprachliche Verwendung lenken). [...] die 'Sageweise' des Gedichts wird selbst thematisiert.¹⁴

This point is of utmost importance for this dissertation, seeking out the tension in George between his own 'Stilwille' or 'Wille zur Form' as Armin Schäfer calls it (total dominance and control over his poetic creations) versus language's innate

¹¹ 'glorie' is found three times in *Der Siebente Ring* (VI/VII: 70, 101, 118), three times in George's translation of Dante's *Paradiso* (X/XI: 107, 133, 139, never in *Inferno* or *Purgatorio*), once in the Shakespeare translations (XII: 31), twice (in a single poem) in his translation of Albert Verwey (XV: 69), and emphatically announcing the resurrection of Maximin in the prose text 'Vorrede zu Maximin' (XVII: 66). It appears elsewhere in composite words ('glorienschein', I: 13; 'glorienschar', v: 52).

¹² I borrow the term *crux* from David Greenham, *Close Reading: The Basics* (Routledge, 2019), where a crux is 'a place in the language of the work where the semantic and the thematic contexts overlap yielding a particularly rich potential for meaning. [...] those places where more than one contexts is productive' (p. 69). Further uses of the term follow Greenham.

¹³ Renate Birkenhauer, *Reimpoetik am Beispiel Stefan Georges. Phonologischer Algorithmus und Reimwörterbuch* (Max Niemeyer, 1983), p. 133.

¹⁴ Birkenhauer, *Reimpoetik*, p. 150.

tendencies to be more slippery, to harbour meanings and histories that undercut the solidity of the posited word as a building block.¹⁵ In 'Das Dritte', already, we get a sense of this tension: there is the absoluteness of the capitalised (another rarity in George) poetic 'Wort' in complete unity with the god, taking its cue from the Gospel of John (John 1).¹⁶ There is no inconsistency to this transcendent word: God is the Word. The Word is a master signifier, in Lacanian terminology, or a 'single-voiced discourse' in Bakhtin's sense.¹⁷ In this poem, however, these two words (from the master language Latin) conceal a multitude of meanings and voices, sometimes competing for semantic dominance. The 'teuer erkaufte spiel' of this rhyme, with its many voices echoing from the depths of literary history, introduces a gap; the poet has used the words of others, and otherness has thereby been signed into the text, at odds with the authoritative identity of the new god who is 'eins | Mit dem Wort'. With the god's single-voiced discourse, then, contends a double-voiced discourse, potentially undermining the reliability of the authority of the singular word: the point is, as Graham Allen writes, 'that language is never our own [...] The word becomes one's own through an act of "appropriation", which

¹⁵ Armin Schäfer, *Die Intensität der Form: Stefan Georges Lyrik* (Böhlau, 2005), p. 243. On language's slipperiness (a premise of both deconstruction and Lacanian psychoanalysis), cf. Giuseppe Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch* (Duke University Press, 1993), p. 12.

¹⁶ 'Secondly, capital letters in George's poetry are exceptionally rare and used mostly for emphasis'. Marita Keilson-Lauritz, 'Stefan George's Concept of Love and the Gay Emancipation Movement', in *A Companion to the Works of Stefan George*, ed. by Jens Rieckmann (Camden House, 2005), pp. 207-29 (p. 210).

¹⁷ On Bakhtin's theory of single-voiced discourse see Judith Baxter, *Double-voicing at Work. Power, Gender and Linguistic Expertise* (Palgrave Pivot, 2014), p. 27: 'Bakhtin argued that the effect of SvD [sic] upon interlocutors is that it conveys a sense of the truth and objectivity of a proposition, unaffected or contested by competing voices and viewpoints. SvD has the effect of appearing unambiguous and beyond dispute, often conferring upon the speaker a sense of confidence, self-certainty, expertise and authority'. For Ludwig Lehen (*Mallarmé et George. Politiques de la poésie à l'époque du Symbolisme*, (Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2010)), George's 'von oben' is no 'transcendence absolue' but a space of 'spécularité idéale' (p. 283). Lehen is one of many critics for whom George is a poet of immanence, and not of transcendence. Nevertheless, even if his 'von oben' refers merely to the reflective ceiling of this specular poetic world constituted only through immanence, the poet is nevertheless toying with the language of transcendence. This signposting on George's part underlies much of the present study's concern.

means that it is never wholly one's own, is always already permeated with traces of other words, other uses'.¹⁸

George is not the only poet speaking through this rhyme, and so the present study takes seriously Harold Bloom's sibylline injunction that 'the meaning of a poem can only be another poem' and that '[c]riticism is the art of knowing the hidden roads that go from poem to poem'.¹⁹ These 'hidden roads' assume a variety of forms that lead the reader from George's poetic world back to fourteenth-century Italy (the Trecento), and back again. They take the form of shared motifs, clichés, imagery, linguistic reminiscences, thematic developments, and methods of poetic self-representation. This dissertation moves between speculation and philological grounding, with some preference for the latter. The 'hidden roads' of literary influence are not state motorways with clear connections between places. They are often more like rural boreens hacked out of the land over time, often potholed and overgrown. This study is on the lookout for Dante and Petrarch, gauging how they permeate George's work and 'resplend | in one part more and elsewhere less' (*Par.* I: 3, translation mine).

It is significant that George taught himself Italian as a schoolboy in no small part by studying its early literature, including Petrarch.²⁰ Petrarch, Dante, and Baudelaire all use this same rhyme of 'glorie' with 'memorie' (in Italian 'gloria'/'memoria'; in French 'gloire'/'mémoire') in their different poetic projects, and

¹⁸ Graham Allen, *Intertextuality*, 2nd edn (Routledge, 2011), pp. 27-28. Cf. Baxter, *Double-voicing at Work*, pp. 29-30.

¹⁹ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence. A Theory of Poetry*, 2nd edn (Oxford University Press, 1997), cited text pp. 95 & 96. Unlike Bloom's 'antithetical criticism', however, I do not follow his claim that '[s]ource study is wholly irrelevant here; we are dealing with primal words, but antithetical meanings' (*Ibid.*, p. 70). Primal words they certainly are, but all the more relevant because so easily sourced.

²⁰ See, with primary sources citing George himself, Ernst Wiegand Jünker, 'Das autodidaktische Studium des Italienischen durch den Schüler Stefan George', *Binger Annalen: Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur am Mittelrhein*, 7 (1975), pp. 29-31.

the three of them are enmeshed in a literary conversation into which George inserts himself as the fourth, so that like Ovid he too might claim that 'quartus ab his serie temporis ipse fui'.²¹ Baudelaire, writing a Petrarchistic sonnet, is concerned with the preservation of the memory of his beloved after death. Petrarch is likewise lamenting the death of his beloved Laura (the dedicatee of all his passions and poems in the *Canzoniere*) while simultaneously celebrating her triumph over it in the glory of heaven.²² Dante, finally, after programmatically associating his beloved Beatrice with the term 'gloria' throughout the *Vita nova*, unleashes the word's full power in the *Commedia* to bring Beatrice, his love for her, and God's universal glory all together, while foregrounding the finiteness of human memory and power in undertaking such a task. These intertexts will be examined in chapter seven.

This thesis views George as uniquely split between the two latter Italian poets. 'Auf das Leben und den Tod Maximins', which houses 'Das Dritte', has long been identified by scholars as modelled on the old split in editions of Petrarch (including the one George owned) that divide the work 'in vita' and 'in morte di Madonna Laura'.²³ In this sub-cycle, there are only six poems in a volume otherwise dominated by seven, just as there are six poems in Petrarch's attempted Dantean poem *I Trionfi*, 'ein Werk, mit dem der Dichter sich schon in seiner

²¹ ['Tibullus was thy successor, Gallus, and Propertius his;] after them came I, fourth in order of time', Ovid, *Tristia* IV. x. 53-54. Cited from *Ovid in Six Volumes*, vol. VI, *Tristia. Ex Ponto*, trans. by Arthur Leslie Wheeler, 2nd edn, rev. by G. Goold (St. Edmundsbury Press, 1996). Baudelaire's inclusion here is not arbitrary. The French poet was pivotal in George's poetic formation, and the latter's translations from *Les Fleurs du Mal* make up volume XIII/XIV of his *Sämtliche Werke*.

²² The edition of Petrarch owned by George contains an older, outdated ordering. Thus *Rvf* 35 is there labelled 'Sonetto XXII', see: *Rime di Francesco Petrarca* ed. by Eugenio Camerini, 4th edn (Edoardo Sonzogno, 1882), p. 58 (George owned a later reprint (*Rime di Francesco Petrarca*, ed. by Eugenio Camerini, 6th edn (Edoardo Sonzogno, 1888), contained in the Stefan George Archive in the Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart as StGA 10/367). The editions primarily used in the present study are Francesco Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, ed. by Sabrine Stroppa (Einaudi, 2016) and Francesco Petrarca, *Canzoniere. Rerum vulgariarum fragmenta*, 2 vols, ed. by Rosanna Bettarini (Giulio Einaudi, 2005).

²³ See e.g. Ute Oelmann's comment in the 'Anhang' to *SW*, VI/VII: 216.

Schulzeit beschäftigt hatte', as Ernst Morwitz relates.²⁴ The sub-cycle itself is not without a variety of Petrarchistic motifs and themes (as Maurizio Pirro comments in passing),²⁵ and yet this Petrarchan and Petrarchistic shadow is inside a volume of poetry in which Dante is by far the privileged poetic forebear, with Petrarch having long been relegated to the poet's past, as chapter four will demonstrate.²⁶ So there is a competition between poets for the privileged position of primary referent in this intertextual crux: how can we disentangle this knot of influences in which Baudelaire (less insistent), Petrarch (oddly insistent) and Dante, the true master, are tied up? This is the central tension preoccupying this dissertation: what does it mean for a modern poet to choose Dante over Petrarch (or Baudelaire)? Indeed, what does it mean for a poet to stage the development of his oeuvre as a conversion from one poetics to another, while simultaneously denying that any change has taken place? What do 'Dante' and 'Petrarch' mean in modernity, poetically, metaphysically, ontologically, epistemologically? And why does a figure like Stefan George employ these poets so diligently and systematically? These are not questions that can be answered in this introduction. Nor will this dissertation move systematically through them. It does however move systematically through George's own systematically ordered oeuvre (and not without considering the ideological implications of this numbering and the building of an authorial *Gesamt-Ausgabe*, of this system) and moves from the earliest poems, dominated by

²⁴ Ernst Morwitz, *Kommentar zu dem Werk Stefan Georges* (Helmut Küpper Vormalis Georg Bondi, 1969), p. 277.

²⁵ Maurizio Pirro, *Come corda troppo tesa: Stile e ideologia in Stefan George* (Quodlibet s.r.l., 2011), p. 178.

²⁶ There are however six cantos dedicated to the Garden of Eden in the *Purgatorio*, where Beatrice arrives in a dramatically apocalyptic manner. A case could be made for 'Auf das Leben und den Tod Maximins' being George's own purgatorial revelation. The *Purgatorio* is the most represented cantica in George's translation (see Francesco Rossi, 'Dante-Übertragungen', in *Stefan George – Werkkommentar. Studien und Interpretationen zu sämtlichen Dichtungen und Übertragungen*, ed. by Jürgen Egyptien (de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 675-691 (p. 677)).

Petrarchist and Petrarchan tendencies, to the later ones, which attempt to establish themselves in a more Dantean solidity.

Solidity versus instability: in sum we have here one of George's favourite problems: how to purge all transience and contingency from the work of art, to make necessity the ground upon which art moves, and to control the boundaries within which it can move.²⁷ This accounts for two of the 'Geleitverse' (the term borrowed from George – *SW*, I: 9) acting as epigraphs to this dissertation. Dante's *Paradiso* showcases a realm beyond contingency, ordered by divine necessity and justice. This is a poet who puts things where they need to be, who gets where he needs to go, and whose divine poem's own formal perfection mirrors that of the divine.²⁸

Opposite this Dantean faith in the cosmic plan stands (or slides, as he puns) Petrarch, only a generation later, for whom there is no reliable stasis, seems to chronically suffer 'pitiless misfortune' (*Rvf* 127: 15) in his tempestuous life on earth, blown around by the winds of change. If necessity appears for Petrarch, it often appears as an enemy, as something unbeatable and which wears him down to a mood of wearied resignation. If Dante's journey to God ends with his will and desire rotating in perfect harmony with the Divine, with 'the Love that moves the sun and the other stars' (*Par.* 33:145, trans. by Durling), Petrarch is able to recognise God's imprint in the world, but: there is always a 'but' preventing him from being raptured

²⁷ For George's battle against contingency, see Maurizio Pirro, *Come corda troppo tesa*, ch. 1, esp. p. 47. Cf. Chong Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie: Poetologische Konzeptionen des Vorübergehens bei Stefan George und Hugo von Hofmannsthal* (Königshausen & Neumann, 2021), p. 135, summarily: '[George] ist nie bereit, sich dem Zufall hinzugeben'. This idea is not without challenge, see e.g. Ray C. Ockenden, 'Voyaging with a Concordance: The Sea in Stefan George's Poetry', *Publications of the English Goethe Society*, 79.1 (2010), pp. 50-62 (p. 61) and more recently Peter Morgan, *Stefan George: The Homosexual Imaginary* (Legenda, 2024), esp. chapter 4, 'The Healing of Narcissus'.

²⁸ George foregrounds precisely the formal elements in the preface to his own Dante translation: 'das dichterische · ton bewegung gestalt' (*x/xi*: 5).

up and back to the origins of things. 'Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas': a captivating line in its sententious manner so typical of Vergilian utterance, and capturing also the self-satisfied project of Dantean epic, for the poet whose mind explodes in the brief vision of the knot ('nodo', *Par.* 33:91) holding the universe together, the journey to the First Cause of things.²⁹ Petrarch has no such privilege, despite his best efforts. A representative expression of the aforementioned Petrarchan 'but' will suffice for now, from the seventieth poem in the *Canzoniere*: 'Oh what to do with all that hope of mine'. Already the exclamatory woe opening the poem expresses the weariness and fatigue typical of the Petrarchan subject, but it is the final stanza of this canzone that best illustrates that subject's alienation from God:

All things adorning our world with their beauty
came forth in goodness from the Master's hand,
but I, who cannot see so deep in her,
am dazzled by the beauty on the outside;
should I ever again see the true light,
my eyes will not resist,
so weak have they become
by their own fault and not by that day's fault
when I turned them to her angelic beauty
"In the sweet season of my early age."

(*Rvf* 70: 41-50, trans. Musa)

²⁹ 'Happy the man who was able to know the causes of things' (trans. mine). Vergil, *Georgics*, II: 490 (cited from *Virgil. Georgics*, ed. by Richard F. Thomas, 2 vols (Cambridge University Press), vol. I

Here is the typical Petrarchan dilemma: he recognises the good, *but*. He knows the master of the universe has adorned all things with beauty, but he singles himself out as cut off and distracted from full integration with the divine. His mind is restless, his eyes easily dazzled, he suffers with a spiritual sickness of vision ('infermo', l. 47) while Dante's mind 'gazed fixedly | immobile and intent' as it self-immolates in the glory of the Divine vision (*Par.* 33: 98). Petrarch's mind is left wandering over beauty's surface. If Dante's entire poetic oeuvre, from the *Vita nova* (ca. 1294) to the *Commedia* (1321), stages a successful conversion from sin to salvation, Petrarch's *Canzoniere* (completed 1374) follows a similar scheme, *but* ensures that that conversion is not successful, or at least is highly suspect. This aspect will be examined more fully in chapter four.³⁰

To bring together and develop some of the methodological theoretical presuppositions of this study, the following passage by Friedrich Gundolf, one of George's most prized acolytes, will open up consideration of the remaining epigraphs. The passage opens chapter two, 'Ursprünge':

Die geschichtlich nachweisbaren Ursprünge eines Menschen sind nicht die Ursachen seines Werdens, sondern die Grundstoffe seines Seins und wenn

³⁰ The primary sources for my thinking about the topic of conversion as it applies to Dante and Petrarch are (but not limited to) John Freccero's *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*, ed. and with an introduction by Rachel Jacoff (Harvard University Press, 1986), as well as the volume by John Freccero *In Dante's Wake: Reading from the Medieval to the Modern in the Augustinian Tradition*, ed. by Danielle Callegari and Melissa Swain (Fordham University Press, 2015); Christian Moevs, 'Subjectivity and Conversion in Dante and Petrarch', in *Petrarch & Dante: Anti-Dantism, Metaphysics, Tradition*, ed. by Zygmunt G. Barański and Theodore J. Chachey, Jr. (University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), pp. 226-262; and Teodolinda Barolini, 'The Self in the Labyrinth of Time (*Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*)', in: *Petrarch: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, ed. by Victoria Kirkham and Armando Maggi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 33-62. For the confluence of Christian conversion and retrospective autobiography narratives see Freccero, *The Poetics of Conversion*, pp. 264-65.

wir nach seinem Haus, Stamm und Volk fragen, so suchen wir was in ihm gestaltet ist, nicht was ihn gemacht hat. Nur was wir als Wesen und Werk wiederfinden, geht uns als Umgebung und Einfluß an, und es ist müßig Ahnenreihen und Ortsüberlieferungen aufzustöbern, um zu erfahren woher etwas kommt, wenn wir in vollendeter Gegenwart aus ihm selbst entnehmen was es ist. Nur zur Verdeutlichung, nicht zur Erklärung dienen die Fremdschaften die sich in den Eigenschaften eines Charakters wiederholen. Über Dante und Shakespeare wissen wir nicht weniger, weil uns ihre Herkunft dunkel ist, und wenn seit Herder, und erst recht seit Goethes Dichtung und Wahrheit, das Augenmerk auf das Werden gerichtet ist, so hat man auch hier den Sinn Beider mißverstanden, indem man die Zeitform des einheitlichen Wesens zur Kausalitätskette von Ursachen und Wirkungen auseinander legte. Seinen Umkreis gab Goethe, weil er sich als "Welt" zeigen wollte, nicht um hinter dem Ur-phänomen "Goethe" die Lehre seiner Entstehung greifbar zu machen. Sein Milieu gehört zur Dichtung, nicht zur Wahrheit seines Lebens.

Georges Leben ist seit einem Jahrhundert des Werdens das erste das im Sein sich er-füllt und das seine Entwicklung als gegenwärtige Gestalt, nicht als Ablauf darstellt.³¹

Firstly, George is emerging out of 'einem Jahrhundert des Werdens'. This is the world of nineteenth century positivism, of science, Darwin, evolution, geological discoveries that unsettled entire theological and religious edifices, and the general loss of faith that so immensely defines this era: in sum, it is the 'nineteenth-century

³¹ Friedrich Gundolf, *George* (Georg Bondi, 1930), p. 32.

paradigm of scientific historicism that insisted upon the rigorous contextualization of empirical facts in a verifiable chronological sequence'.³² In aesthetics, too, this century 'des Werdens' comes to expression in the movements of literary realism and naturalism, and genres like the *Bildungsroman* stress the consciousness of development in and by time.³³ In his *Philosophie der Kunst*, Schelling characterises modern art as defined by the individual, subject to time and thus change and development ('*Fortschritt im Wechsel*').³⁴ Our modern world, he goes on, is caught in a tension between the ideal and the real, a 'Kampf [...], der unsere aus der Identität herausgetretene Welt bezeichnet'.³⁵ When Gundolf signals this split between 'Werden' and 'Sein', he is distancing George from the changeable world of modernity.

The nineteenth century's preoccupation with its loss of faith, growing out of the Enlightenment and the Age of Reason in the eighteenth century, as well as and increasing industrialisation, has an ancestor in the same cultural rupture that separates Dante and Petrarch despite their historical proximity. The fourteenth century saw the rise of philosophical nominalism, which in turn signalled a loss of faith in universals, and had seismic repercussions for the fate of the individual in the world.³⁶ William Franke identifies nominalism as a starting point for modernity's

³² Russell West-Pavlov, *Temporalities* (Routledge, 2013), p. 58.

³³ Chapter two ('The Melancholy, Long, Withdrawing Roar') in particular of Theodore Ziolkowski's study (*Modes of Faith: Secular Surrogates for Lost Religious Belief* (University of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 9-26) gives a broad but vividly detailed, cross-cultural overview of how religious faith came to be challenged and usurped on various fronts across the nineteenth century, with an emphasis on scientific, philosophical and literary upheavals (page 16 discusses the German *Bildungsroman* in this context). I am following Ziolkowski here.

³⁴ Italics original. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *Texte zur Philosophie der Kunst*, ed. by Werner Beierwaltes (Reclam, 1982), p. 246 (Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke* I, 5, 456).

³⁵ Schelling, *SW*, I, 5, 681.

³⁶ An excellent overview of the development is given by Franz Schupp, *Geschichte der Philosophie im Überblick, Band II: Christliche Antike und Mittelalter* (Felix Meiner Verlag, 2003), pp. 442-46. Schupp argues that nominalism was the philosophical correlate to the rise of the individual in bourgeois medieval society, coupled with the fall of old institutions (pp. 445-56).

loss of 'the theological grounding of the real'.³⁷ Michael Allen Gillespie, situating Petrarch at the forefront of this new understanding of the human self in a world in which many traditional institutions and the old scholastic vision of the universe were fragmenting or losing their authority, summarises that poet's predicament with a question equally applicable to the human subject in the nineteenth century: 'How would it be possible to find a ground for identity in a world in which God, man, and nature were all in motion, all incomprehensible, and all at war with one another?'³⁸ In the 'chaos of radically individual beings'³⁹ adrift in a sea of change and becoming, Petrarch embodies this new individuality, and his chosen vernacular form reflects this newfound, non-self-identical individual. Benjamin Boysen, building directly on Gillespie's work, writes: 'This Realist ontology [i.e. scholasticism – JW] dictated that reason and nature mirrored each other and that God as Creator was reflected in the structure of the world, His Creation'. The guarantor of harmony was then lost, and what remains is contingent flux and becoming; a loss of certainty on the one hand, but a gaining of new freedom on the other.⁴⁰

Gundolf is keen to avoid any positivist points of interest ('Haus', 'Stamm', 'Volk', 'geschichtlich nachweisbare Ursprünge' etc.) related to 'Werden'. These

³⁷ William Franke, *Dante's Paradiso and the Theological Origins of Modern Thought. Toward a Speculative Philosophy of Self-Reflection*, (Routledge, 2021), p. 141.

³⁸ 'The transition to the modern world begins with the rejection of this political, cosmological, and theological vision of human identity. In part this is rooted in the nominalist rejection of the orderly cosmos and the orderly God portrayed by scholasticism. As we have seen, according to the nominalists there is no divine logos or reason that can serve as the foundation for a political, cosmopolitan, or theological identity. Moreover, the idea of an orderly political and theological world in which Dante and his predecessors grew up was falling to pieces. [...] How would it be possible to find a ground for identity in a world in which God, man, and nature were all in motion, all incomprehensible, and all at war with one another?' Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 45. On the scholastic belief in universals and a divinely ordered universe *ibid.*, pp. 14, 20, 24 & 27.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁴⁰ Benjamin Boysen, *Nothingness, Negativity, and Nominalism in Shakespeare and Petrarch* (de Gruyter, 2021), p. 1.

things, he claims, do not make the man. Gundolf wants to get to the essence of things, to their Being, their eternal 'Wesen', 'the core that remains when all contingencies have been stripped away', as Andreas Höfele describes it, examining Gundolf's style as programmatically anti-positivistic.⁴¹ The ontological superiority of Being over Becoming as clung to here by Gundolf is closely related to the George Circle's idea of 'Gestalt', an elusive term that signifies a super-historical force which finds expression in particular creative men.⁴² Fiorenza Ratti captures the concept well: 'Der schöpferische Mensch verkörpert zudem die Gestalt, die der 'zerspaltenen' Menschenmasse als Gottesgabe den Einblick in die heilig gesprochene Einheit gewährt – und "Sein" überhaupt sein lässt'.⁴³ Evidently, there is much at stake. The poet is a conduit of forces bigger than himself, while retaining a privileged position vis-à-vis the crowd of modernity. 'Gestalt' represents stasis, permanence, and durability, a 'gegenwärtige' transcendence escaping the 'Ablauf' (as in the Gundolf passage above) of history.⁴⁴ It transcends modernity even when it manifests in a figure within modernity; it is opposed to modern man,

⁴¹ 'It is one of the fundamental tenets of George and his circle that the truly great men owe nothing to their time, at least nothing of importance, nothing that defines their greatness', Andreas Höfele, *No Hamlets: German Shakespeare from Nietzsche to Carl Schmitt* (Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 86.

⁴² The Circle's male chauvinism will be a recurring theme.

⁴³ Fiorenza Ratti, 'Der Begriff der Gestalt in Friedrich Gundolfs wissenschaftlichen Darstellungen', *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur Neueren Germanistik*, 74.1 (2010), pp. 245-260 (p. 247).

⁴⁴ 'Alle seine [Gundolf's – JW] wissenschaftlichen Arbeiten bis in die 20er Jahre waren von George geprägt. Sie folgten dem Gestalt-Konzept, das Gundolf in direkter Auseinandersetzung mit Vorstellungen Georges entwickelt hat und das von einer natürlichen Einheit von Autor und Werk ausgeht. Diese gewachsene Einheit formt schließlich die historische Gestalt eines Dichters, wobei darin Werk und Biographie untrennbar ineinander verwoben sind', Wolfgang Braungart, Christian Oestersandfort, Franziska Walter, Jan Andres, 'Platonisierende Eroskonzeption und Homoerotik in Briefen und Gedichten des George-Kreises (Maximilian Kronberger, Friedrich Gundolf, Max Kommerell, Ernst Glöckner)', in *Der Liebesbrief: Schriftkultur und Medienwechsel vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. by Renate Stauf, Annette Simonis and Jörg Paulus (de Gruyter, 2008), pp. 223-72 (p. 249).

and throughout his monograph Gundolf has a vested interest in portraying George as not modern, but ‘antik’.⁴⁵

Historical ‘Gestalten’ act like typological prefigurations, confirming one’s greatness by connecting temporally distant figures through the link to a mystical, absolute moment.⁴⁶ Dante is one of these privileged ‘Gestalt’ predecessors, which accounts for his inclusion in Gundolf’s passage, next to Shakespeare. In contrast to the German Romantics, who thought of Dante as inaugurating modern poetry, George and his Circle were careful to downplay the role of the modern in their inheritance of the Florentine poet, as Jutta Schloon has explored.⁴⁷ For them, Dante is anti-modern, but not to be understood *ex negativo*, by way of modernity: ‘Die Bindung, die bei Dante ist, ist etwas grundsätzlich antimodernes. Um dies zu verstehen, muss man entsprechend sein. [...] Aus der Moderne als dem Gegenbild

⁴⁵ ‘Er hat nicht ein klassizistisches Streben, sondern er ist eine antike Natur’, and further on: ‘wir müßten glauben daß jene antike Einheit verloren sei für immer, als eine glücklicherweise überwundene Stufe oder als ein leider versunkener Traum, wenn sie nicht in Stefan George leibhaftig wieder erneuert wäre’, Gundolf, *George*, p. 25. A great redeemer indeed. A concise but detailed and deeply-sourced discussion of this ‘Gestalt’ dynamic so central to Georgology can be found in Gabriela Wacker, *Poetik des Prophetischen: Zum visionären Kunstverständnis in der Klassischen Moderne* (de Gruyter, 2013), pp. 97-105. Wacker in those pages is concerned with the concept of ‘Vorbilder’ in the Circle, which is intimately related to that of ‘Gestalt’. For all of this in relation to transcendence cf. Stefan Breuer, *Ästhetischer Fundamentalismus: Stefan George und der deutsche Antimodernismus* (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995), p. 223 (cited in Wacker, *Poetik des Prophetischen*, p. 108): ‘nicht “von unten”, aus den Aktivitäten politischer und gesellschaftlicher Kräfte, konnte nach George die Rettung erwachsen, sondern allein “von oben” her, durch die Inkarnation des Heils in einem “Heilbringer”, durch die “Zusammenballung kosmischer Kräfte” in einem Genius, der einer neuen Not das neue Heil bringen würde’. Finally for the ‘hagiographisch gefärbte Monographien’ in the context of the Circle’s hero- and ‘Gestalt’/‘Vorbild’ worship see Wacker, *Poetik des Prophetischen*, p. 156.

⁴⁶ Wacker, *Poetik des Prophetischen*, pp. 103-104: ‘Das Charisma, das den negativen Leitfiguren abgesprochen wird, eignet sich der Dichter-Seher oftmals durch ihre typologische “Vollendung” an, so wie gemäß einem typologischen Geschichtsverständnis gegenwärtige und zukünftige Ereignisse als gesteigerte Erfüllung biblischer Präfigurationen wie vorgängiger Propheten zu werten sind’. Cf. further Wacker, *ibid.*, pp. 108-09. Ratti, ‘Der Begriff der Gestalt in Friedrich Gundolfs wissenschaftlichen Darstellungen’, p. 247 n. 12 provides a list of useful related concepts used by Gundolf throughout: ‘In der Gundolfschen Terminologie auch Einheit, Ursubstanz, göttliche Kraft, ein Ewiges, ein Immergültiges, eine Mitte, ein Zentrum, ein Absolutes, ein Beständiges, ein Göttliches, Ursein, Seinsgrund oder auch Urphänomen’.

⁴⁷ ‘Aus dieser vorausgesetzten gemeinsamen ‘Seinshöhe’ mit Dante heraus betonte George an ihm stärker die Bezüge zur Antike als den mittelalterlichen Hintergrund, stellte Dante mithin eher auf die Seite der Renaissance’. Jutta Saima Schloon, *Modernes Mittelalter. Mediävalismus im Werk Stefan Georges*, (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2019), p. 222. Schloon cites a number of Georgian sources that attest to this.

ist Dante nicht zu begreifen', he was quoted as saying.⁴⁸ Dante is not medieval, nor is he modern, even if he is the driving force of the Renaissance (Petrarch, the original renaissance man, receiving no credit!): 'Was bedeuten sie [heaven and hell – JW] neben der einen Tatsache, dass Dante den Repräsentanten der Antike, Vergil, als seinen Führer an den Anfang seiner dichtung stellt. Welch andern Sinn hat die ganze Renaissance als diesen'.⁴⁹ Like George himself (so Gundolf), Dante has an antiquity to him.⁵⁰ This aversion to associating Dante with modernity directly counters the German Romantics' praise of Dante as their first modern predecessor. Schelling's famous Dante essay, which George knew of and very likely read, opens with the following triumphant claim:

Im Allerheiligsten

Wo Religion und Poesie verbündet,

steht Dante als Hohepriester und weihet die ganze moderne Kunst für ihre Bestimmung ein.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Edith Landmann, *Gespräche mit Stefan George* (Helmut Küpper Vormals Georg Bondi, 1963), pp. 41-42.

⁴⁹ George in conversation quoted in Landmann, *Gespräche mit Stefan George*, p. 42.

⁵⁰ Cf. George reported by Landmann, *Gespräche mit Stefan George*, p. 46: 'Nur in Florenz sei Dante möglich gewesen, in Florenz war man soziabel im antiken Sinne'.

⁵¹ Schelling, 'Über Dante in philosophischer Beziehung', in *Die Philosophie der Kunst*, SW, I, 5, 152. A hitherto unpublished letter from Gundolf to George from the third of August, 1902, reveals that Gundolf had been perusing Schelling's works and had stumbled upon the Dante essay: 'Teuerster Meister: Wie geht es MeiMei? [...] In Schellings Werken habe ich einen langen recht interessanten Aufsatz über Dante und Bruchstücke von Übersetzungen aus Hölle und Paradies gefunden. Der Aufsatz ist ein Hymnus von prophetischer Begeisterung auf den Inbegriff aller Kunst Poesie und Religion als den er die Divina Commedia feiert...

Empfehl mich den Deinen
Dich küsst Dein

allerteuerster Dolf', (Stefan George Archiv, Werttembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart, shelfmark StGA/George III, 04853). I am grateful to Archive Director Dr. Maik Bozza for alerting me to this letter and granting me permission for its reproduction here.

The modern world, Schelling writes, is the world 'der Individuen' and in this world of 'Wechsel und Wandel' the artist, in producing a work of art, must proceed from the individual, through their own absolute particularity, in order to regain the universal: 'Eben durch das schlechthin Individuelle, nichts anderem Vergleichbare seines Gedichts ist Dante der Schöpfer der modernen Kunst. [...] Dante ist in dieser Rücksicht urbildlich, da er ausgesprochen hat, was der moderne Dichter zu thun hat'.⁵² In his own preface, George rejects this while retaining Dante at the origins of originality, writing that 'Dante für jedes in betracht kommende volk (mithin auch für uns) am anfang aller Neuen Dichtung steht' (X/XI: 5). The new is a creative mode, not a temporal or historical one. George disagrees with Schelling and the other Romantics regarding Dante as a modern, but another aspect of Schelling's philosophy of art proves agreeable to George's program: 'Jedes wahrhaft schöpferische Individuum hat sich selbst seine Mythologie zu schaffen'.⁵³ Schelling bases this argument 'am Beispiel des größten Individuums der modernen Welt' (i.e. Dante, with Shakespeare following) and refers to that individual's 'eigne Mythologie und mit dieser sein göttliches Gedicht'.⁵⁴ George's own 'göttliches

⁵² Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, I,5,154-156.

⁵³ Schelling, *Texte zur Philosophie der Kunst*, p. 236 (SW, I, 5, 446).

⁵⁴ Schelling, *Texte zur Philosophie der Kunst*, p. 235 (SW, I, 5, 445). The full quotation is worth repeating for how it combines a theory of progressive, divided modernity with the redemptive, unifying power of art in Romantic philosophy, bound up with the Romantic cult of Dante (with Shakespeare following) that would be so obviously attractive to the George Circle (despite their aversion to the Romantics' interpretation of Dante as modern): 'Wir können, dieß vorausgesetzt, behaupten, daß bis zu dem in noch unbestimmbarer Ferne liegenden Punkt, wo der Weltgeist das große Gedicht, auf das er sinnt, selbst vollendet haben, und das Nacheinander der modernen Welt sich in ein **Zumal** verwandelt haben wird, jeder große Dichter berufen sey, von dieser noch im Werden begriffenen (mythologischen) Welt, von der ihm seine Zeit nur einen Theil offenbaren kann, von dieser Welt, sage ich, diesen ihm offenbaren Theil zu einem Ganzen zu bilden und aus dem Stoff derselben sich *seine* Mythologie zu schaffen. So, um dieß an dem Beispiel des größten Individuums der modernen Welt deutlich zu machen, schuf sich *Dante* aus der Barbarei und der noch barbarischeren Gelehrsamkeit seiner Zeit, aus den Gräueln der Geschichte, die er selbst erlebt hatte, wie aus dem Stoff der bestehenden Hierarchie, eine eigne Mythologie und mit dieser sein göttliches Gedicht. Die historischen Personen, welche Dante aufgenommen hat, werden in aller Zeit für mythologische gelten, wie Ugolino. Könnte das Andenken der hierarchischen Verfassung je zu Grunde gehen, man würde es aus dem Bild, das sein Gedicht davon entwirft,

Gedicht' will be examined in chapter seven, but for now, let it suffice that George went even further in his 'poetic misprision' and denied Dante's Christianity altogether, in order to preserve him as a poet.⁵⁵ While perhaps a case of Bloomian misprision, the misreading that every 'strong' poet falls into when dealing with the overbearing influence of his predecessors, in the solemn, gnomic utterances recorded by George's various apostles, however, it is hard to detect any trace of influence *anxiety*, unless the certainty with which the misreading is carried out is itself viewed as symptomatic.⁵⁶

The absence of Petrarch in Gundolf's passage, contrasting with Dante's, Shakespeare's, and Goethe's presence, is an absence that motivates the present study. The underrepresentation of Petrarch in George's works, in the George Circle, and in George scholarship, so this thesis argues, illuminates *ex negativo* the significance of Dante's – 'der erste europäische Dichter' – overwhelming presence.⁵⁷ Although Thorston Fitton, one of the few scholars to examine George's reception of Petrarch, is right in that George stylises that reception to make it seem as though Petrarch only played 'eine propädeutische Funktion' in his

wieder herstellen. Auch *Shakespeare* hat sich seinen eignen mythologischen Kreis geschaffen, nicht allein aus dem historischen Stoff seiner Nationalgeschichte, sondern auch aus den Sitten seiner Zeit und seines Volkes. Es ist in Shakespeare, der großen Mannichfaltigkeit seiner Werke unerachtet, dennoch Eine Welt' (SW, I, 5, 445-46).

⁵⁵ On 'misprision' as the first of Bloom's 'six revisionary ratios' see *The Anxiety of Influence*, p. 14: 'A poet swerves away from his precursor', which is a 'corrective movement' as if to supplement the precursor's failure in the same moment as one acknowledges it. On George's Dante hot takes see Landmann, *Gespräche mit Stefan George*, p. 42: "Das Mittelalter hat keinen Dichter. Es konnte keinen Dichter haben – warum? Weil es keinen christlichen Dichter gibt. Man kann nicht christlich dichten. Wenn man dichtet, ist man kein Christ. Dichten ist eine unchristliche Aktion. Dabei bleibts". On these quotations in regards to George's medievalism cf. Schloon, *Modernes Mittelalter*, pp. 222f.

⁵⁶ Bloom does contend, however, that a swerve can reside within the 'denial that any swerve is necessary', see his example of Thomas Mann, *The Anxiety of Influence*, p. 54.

⁵⁷ George in conversation cited by Berthold Vallentin, *Gespräche mit Stefan George 1902-1931* (Castrum Peregrini Press, 1967), p. 56. Vallentin reports that next to Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe and Baudelaire are the first truly original poets of their respective countries. All prior poets (troubadours, *Minnesänger*, France's renaissance poets etc.) were not originary. On this cf. Schloon, *Modernes Mittelalter*, p. 223.

earliest poetic output as collected in *Die Fibel* (SW, I), followed by a 'schroffe Abkehr vom Jugendvorbild', this study argues that getting rid of Petrarch(ism) was not that easy.⁵⁸ Chapter four examines and builds on Fitzon's argument in detail. Petrarchism (defined below) continues to leave its traces in George's works. Throughout the chapters below this study will aim to disentangle what is a very plural tradition as it appears throughout George's oeuvre.

Maik Bozza identifies the originary motor of George's poetic impulses within his typically modern *Ich*: 'Die Motivation zum Werk ist von Beginn an und bis zu seinem Ende das Ringen mit einem, nein, dem spezifisch modernen Nukleus: dem grundlos selbstbewußten Ich'.⁵⁹ Now, Gundolf would not approve of this, and earlier in his monograph he had taken a specific step to counter such philosophically-informed scholarship, saving George from all the 'deutschen Lieblingseigenschaften'.⁶⁰ Among these 'German' properties are 'das "Gemüt"' and 'die "Phantasie"', George has no 'wühlenden Selbstanklagen, denn er ist da, das in ihm beschlossene Gesetz zu erfüllen, nicht zu glossieren [...] sein gegebenes Menschtum im zugemessenen Raum auszuwirken durch Tat und Schau [...] Es fehlt ihm jede Seelenschnüffelei'.⁶¹ Instead of modern 'Zerrissenheit' he has three 'Grundeigenschaften in antiker Reinheit': 'Würdegefühl', 'Schicksalsgefühl' and 'Liebe'.⁶² The entire defence of George's immutable, destiny-laden personality

⁵⁸ Thorsten Fitzon, 'Petrarca um 1900: Aneignung – Anverwandlung – Abkehr', in *Francesco Petrarca in Deutschland: Seine Wirkung in Literatur, Kunst und Musik*, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer (Max Niemeyer, 2006), pp. 539-62 (p. 651).

⁵⁹ Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 9.

⁶⁰ 'Sein Werk ist völlig frei von den Zerrissenheiten, Skrupeln, Zweifeln, Zerknirschungen ohne die man sich in Deutschland seit Jahrhunderten tieferes Leben nicht mehr denken konnte [...] Seinem stetig tiefen Herzen, weiten Geist und mächtigen Willen [...] mangeln alle die deutschen Lieblingseigenschaften, die eben jener Zwiespalt erst zeitigt', Gundolf, *George*, p. 25

⁶¹ Gundolf, *George*, p. 25.

⁶² Gundolf, *George*, p. 26.

reads as a proleptic against what Bozza neatly summarises as an *Ich* without a ground, reflecting endlessly on itself.

To supplement Bozza's perspective, this study suggests that Petrarchism is one distinct literary mode operative throughout George's works in which this kind of a homeless *Ich* finds itself at home.⁶³ The terms debunked by Gundolf chime with terms that the Romantics used in their writings to characterise Petrarch (among others). August Wilhelm Schlegel, for instance, approaches Petrarch as a soul with a particular 'Hang zur beschaulichen Vertiefung in sich selbst, in die Abgründe des eignen Gemüths', one that exhausts all the possibilities of poetic combinations in circling around the 'unsrer doppelten Natur entspringenden Widersprüche' in an endless reflection.⁶⁴ Peter Morgan has recently called this aspect of George's works the 'lyric-reflexive' mode, as opposed to the more 'heroic-charismatic' register (both of which, in Morgan's analysis, are found in *Der Siebente Ring*).⁶⁵ This thesis aims to expand our understanding of these 'modalities'⁶⁶ by further contextualising them under a specifically intertextual lense, allowing the degree to which George's literary dealings with precursor poets inform the emergence of a speaking *Ich* to come more clearly into view. Literary history is

⁶³ 'Homelessness' has been associated with both George and Petrarch. See Rainer Kolk, *Literarische Gruppenbildung: Am Beispiel des George Kreises 1890-1945* (Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1998), p. 278. See pp. 23-42 for George's early works considered as a 'melancholischen Zeichenraum' (p. 35). Cf. to this Mariann Sanders Regan, *Love Words: The Self and the Text in Medieval and Renaissance Poetry* (Cornell University Press, 1982), p. 185 for Petrarch as 'deracinated' and 'homeless'. More on this below.

⁶⁴ August Wilhelm Schlegel: *Kritische Ausgabe der Vorlesungen*, ed. by Georg Braungart, 6 vols (Brill | Schöningh, 1989-2027), II/1, 1803-1827, ed. by Ernst Behler (2019), p. 173 (henceforth cited as *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik* II/1).

⁶⁵ Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, p. 131.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

vital to understanding George as the charismatic cultural phenomenon that he was.⁶⁷

Gundolf admits influences only insofar as they exist within the poet's 'Wesen und Werk', closely associated with a surprising intimacy, the 'vollendeter Gegenwart' of the Work's presence and present tense-ness. The rhetoric of fulfilment and perfection work to extract the poet from temporality, regaining a fullness of time and escaping the trappings of being explained away by narrative biographies in the great chain of causes and effects. Facts are useless at grasping it: the 'Wahrheit seines Lebens' is somewhere else, in the 'Wesen und Werk', a turn of phrase that is suggestively avoidant of the particular biographical trends of nineteenth century life writing, as Höfele also points out.⁶⁸ Influence can come only from what is already in the 'Grundstoffe seines Seins'; life's contingencies and influences are subordinated to 'Dichtung'; art is in control.

Despite this, George's oeuvre presents itself as narrative of conversion: at the midway point, a great revelation occurs, which fundamentally re-orientates the *Ich*. Gundolf would counter that the revelation inhered in shadowy prefigurations (a Dantean image, *Par.* xxx: 78) throughout the early poetry, and indeed it does. And indeed, too, does this protective gesture invite a reading of the oeuvre as what Morgan has called a 'lyric vita'.⁶⁹ With two great poets of conversion informing it,

⁶⁷ The literature on George and the phenomenon of 'charisma' is complex. It is well-covered by Wacker (*Poetik des Prophetischen*, pp. 80ff) and by Cornelia Blasberg, 'Charisma in der Moderne. Stefan Georges Medienpolitik', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 74 (01 March 2000), pp. 111-45.

⁶⁸ 'The conventional duo would be *Leben und Werk*', Höfele, *No Hamlets*, p. 86, discussing Gundolf's the title of his Shakespeare monograph (*Shakespeare. Sein Wesen und Werk*). Cf. Gabriele Rippl, 'Life and Work', in *Handbook of Autobiography/Autofiction*, ed. by Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf (de Gruyter, 2019), pp. 327-35: "Life and work" is an umbrella term to describe extrinsic positivist approaches in literary studies which gained major influence in the later nineteenth century' (p. 327).

⁶⁹ Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, pp. 40-41, on Lukacs' prior reading of George's works as 'an autobiographical novel in all but form'.

George unsurprisingly adopts aspects of their narratives. Conversion narratives and (auto-)biographies are traditionally closely-associated genres, so that the poet's aversion to the latter genre required its transformation into a uniquely poetic/aesthetic realisation modelled upon his Trecento forebears. Maximin enables the oeuvre to become a kind of conversion narrative, he is the point at which the poet's dream was made flesh ('Mein traum ward fleisch', VIII: 26).⁷⁰ Such a conversion narrative is viewed by the Circle with suspicion, for narrative risks temporalising and thus illuminating the many contingencies of life. On the other hand, and this is precisely its strength and advantage for George, conversion narratives, as Patrick Riley writes, are 'able to confer structure and intelligibility upon the narrative of a life' when that life has undergone a dramatic change.⁷¹ It thereby makes one an authority over one's life and work (or one's 'essence and work', to follow Gundolf's phrasing),⁷² allowing one to retrospectively confirm the necessity of everything that has happened. It places the author, Riley goes on, in a longstanding religious and literary tradition with its own 'language and an epistemological framework for the elaboration of a fundamental project'.⁷³ Yet the

⁷⁰ Cf. Friedrich Wolters, *Stefan George und die Blätter für die Kunst: Deutsches Geistesgeschichte seit 1890* (Georg Bondi, 1930), p. 335 for Maximin retrospectively illuminating the earlier works and what Patrick Riley (*Character and Conversion in Autobiography: Augustine, Montaigne, Descartes, Rousseau, and Sartre* (University of Virginia Press, 2004)), would call the disruptive 'fulcrum' (p. 6) or the 'defining moment' of conversion that splits the life narrative into a before and after (p. 15). On George's aversion to biographies see Robert E. Norton, *Secret Germany: Stefan George and His Circle* (Cornell University Press, 2001), here p. XIII: 'In many ways, George did not make it easy for his biographers. For one thing, he often loudly disdained the practice of biography itself. [...] If a letter he thought was too revealing could not be avoided, he often instructed the receiver to destroy it or return it. This demand frequently placed his friends, many of whom regarded everything attached to him as sacred, in a terrible dilemma. Edgar Salin described one such instance. After receiving a letter from George and reading it, he discovered on the back the single word in Latin: "délendum." Salin said he anguished for twenty-four hours but then, reluctantly, obeyed the command and consigned the cherished artifact to the flames. George knew that these actions would frustrate later literary detectives and scholars, and he seemed to take pleasure in that fact. One of his associates revealed that "he always enjoyed the notion of misleading any later "George-philologists"'.⁷¹

⁷¹ Riley, *Character and Conversion in Autobiography*, p. 2.

⁷² Cf. Höfele, *No Hamlets*, p. 40.

⁷³ Riley, *Character and Conversion*, p. 3.

rebirth as conceived in traditional conversion narratives is challenged by George, who by his own words remains ever the same (VI/VII:7) while simultaneously staging his work as one great revelatory conversion to a new god. This paradox inheres, Riley notes, in conversion itself: how can the pre- and post-conversion selves coincide if a true rebirth has been achieved? And yet they must, if the authorial command of one's narrative (and not of someone else's, the prior self's) is to remain consistent.⁷⁴ So in a conversion narrative, the author both pins down his or her self while simultaneously keeping it mobile. This paradox, Riley continues, is not easily resolved, and George's rhetoric of unchangingness seems at odds with the 'self's dissolution into alterity' as required by conversion narratives: 'If conversion legitimates narrative retrospection by offering a unitary, even teleological, framework in which to cast the subject's history, it also threatens to expel the self from its textual edifice'.⁷⁵

This dissertation follows Peter Morgan in considering George's poetic *Ich* as having both a touch of his own autobiographical *Ich* but one transformed via strategies of depersonalisation (Versari) into an *Ich* that can remain open, unfixed, and inhabitable by inductees into the Circle, the new social Order constructed by George.⁷⁶ The Master becomes 'eins | Mit dem Wort', hard to pin down.

Yet one must deal with influence. If George is a self-made man (following Gundolf), then the focus must shift towards examining the process of this self-

⁷⁴ Riley, *Character and Conversion*, p. 3.

⁷⁵ Riley, *Character and Conversion*, p. 9.

⁷⁶ See Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, p.100 for George's work as an 'autobiography divested of individuality but suffused with experience'. Given that those inductees are reformed in *imagine Maximini*, and thus in a way in *imagine Georgi*, the degree of alterity reached by such conversion remains problematic. On the social aspect of conversion, cf. Gerald Peters, *The Mutilating God: Authorship and Authority in the Narrative of Conversion* (The University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), pp. 2-3. On George's strategies of depersonalisation see Margherita Versari, *La poesia di Stefan George: Strategie del discorso amoroso* (Carocci editore, 2004), esp. chapter 1 ('La retorica della spersonalizzazione'), pp.17-52.

making.⁷⁷ A cornerstone motif in George's later, Dantean works is the paradox of his own self-begetting. 'All quest-romances of the post-Enlightenment, meaning all Romanticisms whatsoever,' writes Bloom, 'are quests to re-beget one's own self, to become one's own Great Original'.⁷⁸ This act of self-begetting has to do with 'priority, for the commodity in which poets deal, their authority, their property, turns upon priority'.⁷⁹ George devotes quite some poetic space to the fact of his being 'geschöpf nun eignen sohnes' (VI/VII:109), the miracle of becoming his own son ('Wie er mein kind ich meines kindes kind', VIII: 14), which amounts to the miracle of becoming his own ground, of supplying a ground for his modern, 'grundlos selbstbewußten Ich',⁸⁰ and of establishing his own priority in relation to himself. As a point of comparison, this study employs the middle philosophy of Schelling, his *Freedom Essay* (1809) and the unfinished Dantean *Weltalter* drafts that explore the self-birthing of God, and how the latter establishes a ground for himself as a personality from out the *Ungrund* of his own eternal freedom.⁸¹ The tension in George's works between concealment and revelation is the same dynamic tension that Bloom (invoking William Blake) identifies as poetic creation: 'Poetry is thus both contraction and expansion: for all the ratios of revision are contracting movements, yet making is an expansive one. Good poetry is a dialectic of

⁷⁷ Cf. Riley, *Character and Conversion*, p.10 ('the convert is a self made and remade and then potentially remade yet again through its description: autobiography changes what it promises only to represent; writing itself may turn into a figure of conversion').

⁷⁸ Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, p. 64

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 9.

⁸¹ *Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit und die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände* (2nd ed., ed. by Thomas Buchheim (Felix Meiner, 2011), henceforth cited as Schelling, *Freiheitsschrift*). For the *Weltalter* as Schelling's attempt at a Dantean philosophical project see Wolfram Högbe, 'Schelling und Dante', *Deutsches Dante Jahrbuch*, 62, 1 (1987), pp. 7-31: 'Meine These ist nun, kurz gesagt, zunächst die, daß diese Trichotomie der *Divina Commedia*, auch in der Qualität der drei Reiche, für die drei konzipierten Teile der *Weltalter* strukturell urbildlich geblieben ist: die Vergangenheit entspricht so dem *Inferno*, die Gegenwart dem *Purgatorio* und die Zukunft dem *Paradiso*', here pp. 23-24).

revisionary movement (contraction) and freshening outward-going-ness'.⁸² Schelling depicts God's primal movements in precisely these terms, adopted from the German mystical writer Jakob Böhme (who likewise influenced Blake).⁸³ The imagery of contraction and expansion, tied up with the problem of self-begetting, provides one frame in this thesis to approach George's own painful contractions and blissful expansions as occasioned by the birth of this new god, who is his living son (and in turn his own father).

The son in turn displaces the father by authorising him as father, upsetting causal relationality, as in doing so he is created by his own son, in a way giving up his priority in terms of authority. This circular structure encapsulates what Matt Ffytche, discussing Schelling's middle philosophy, calls 'the very pressure to have *already been there*, to be the founder of one's own existence'.⁸⁴ Or, the modern injunction to be one's own authorial authority. This process of self-begetting relocates the divine from a transcendent beyond to the realm of immanence, and the the human subject becomes its creator. Much of George's oeuvre is concerned with the experience of epiphany, the breaking in of an absolute, a moment of otherness, and the subsequent attempt to capture that moment in poetry.⁸⁵ Hence the first 'Geleitvers' from Schelling, which captures one problem concerning this study: the poet's attempt to figure immanence in such a way as to yield an otherness that points beyond, a transcendent moment. When it comes to the divine encounter, the staging of this birth within the immanence of the poetic word is at

⁸² Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, p. 95.

⁸³ On contraction and expansion in Blake cf. Bryan Aubrey, *The Influence of Jacob Boehme on the Work of William Blake*, Durham Theses, 1981. Available at Durham E-Theses Online: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/7518/> (accessed 31/08/2025). Here p. 117.

⁸⁴ Matt Ffytche, *The foundation of the Unconscious: Schelling, Freud and the Birth of the Modern Psyche* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 130.

⁸⁵ A systematic study of this process in George has recently been done by Chong Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, from which the present study draws on throughout.

odds with those poetic words' frequent adoption of a rhetoric of transcendence, especially when those words are sometimes those of his Trecento forebears, for whom the Divine was utterly transcendent.

This partially accounts for Schelling's presence in this dissertation. This is not a dissertation on Schelling, but rather it turns to the 'Protean' philosopher⁸⁶ at times where something from the enormous diversity of his thought illuminates something going in George. Schelling is a philosopher of art, of the Absolute, of God's own self-birthing, of the problem of the ground and its relation to the non-ground or 'Ungrund' and, as Žižek writes, 'first and foremost a philosopher of freedom [...] of *thinking freedom within the framework of a philosophical system*' (italics original).⁸⁷ Finally, he was a central thinker in the Romantic revival of Dante in Germany, kickstarting a lineage in which George occupies an equally important space.⁸⁸ Significantly, if George approaches immanence with a rhetoric of transcendence, one aspect of Schelling's middle philosophy is the move towards the material, a rhetoric of immanence that seeks God and the divinity of the human within the finite world.⁸⁹ Schelling and George have rarely been brought to bear on one another, and thus Schelling's presence here represents but a slight step toward future endeavours. This study follows others who have brought George into contact with the German Romantics and their vision of a 'New Mythology', and

⁸⁶ 'a philosophical Proteus' writes Andrew Bowie, 'Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling', in Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2024 Edition), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2024/entries/schelling/> (Introduction paragraph).

⁸⁷ Slavoj Žižek's *The Indivisible Remainder: On Schelling and related Matters* (Verso, 2007), p. 15.

⁸⁸ The classic study on the topic is Erich Auerbach's 1929 essay 'Entdeckung Dantes in der Romantik' contained in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur romanischen Philologie*, 2nd ed. Ed. by Matthias Bormuth and Martin Vialon (Narr Francke Attempto, 2021), pp. 172-179. Auerbach identifies Schelling's essay as 'weitaus das Bedeutendste, was in der eigentlichen Romantik über Dante und die Komödie geschrieben wurde' (p. 177).

⁸⁹ Cf. Žižek's argument (in *The Indivisible Remainder*, pp. 7f) for Schelling as a materialist.

those who have positioned him within the tradition of German Romantic Dante reception.⁹⁰

In his study of George and Stéphane Mallarmé, Ludwig Lehnen singles out the sub-cycle 'Auf das Leben und den Tod Maximins' to raise the issue of transcendence and immanence while simultaneously registering the presence of Dante and Petrarch(ism) in George's imagination, noting how unlike Dante's beloved Beatrice, Maximin's command is not to report what the poet has seen in the Heavens above, 'mais de célébrer "le miracle" de ces jours d'ici-bas'. Even so, Lehnen continues, the 'désertification' plaguing the world after Maximin's death is figured in resonances of the Petrarchistic tradition: they are poems 'de deuil purement terrestre, sans la moindre consolation religieuse'.⁹¹ This oscillation between the immanent and the transcendent is symptomatic. There is an otherness itching at the immanent that is not so easily ignored, and the rhetoric of transcendence that keeps returning seemingly upsets the fantasy of fullness in the privileged moment of the here and now. For Deleuze and Guattari, transcendence is closely associated with hierarchies, order, and pre-capitalist modes of state-organisation. It is a disease, they say, historically infecting philosophy, theology and politics throughout European history.⁹²

⁹⁰ On the latter, see most recently Daniel DiMassa, *Dante in Deutschland: An Itinerary of Romantic Myth* (Bucknell University Press, 2022), and on George and the Romantic new mythology cf. Manfred Frank, *Gott im Exil: Vorlesungen über die Neue Mythologie*, vol. II, 4th edn (Suhrkamp Verlag, 2015), esp. p. 275; and also Wolfgang Braungart ('Romantische Mythopoesie, Georges Mythopoesie. Oder: Kann man Mythen machen? Zur Einführung', in *Stefan George und die Religion*, ed. by Wolfgang Braungart (de Gruyter, 2015), pp. 1-26.

⁹¹ Ludwig Lehnen, *Mallarmé et George: Politiques de la poésie à l'époque du Symbolisme* (Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2010), all quoted text p. 347.

⁹² Cf. Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 2 for the state in relation to transcendence. Furthermore, for them, the tree (and all of its associations in human family trees and genealogies) is a symbol of transcendence, so that by comparison George's state (his 'Geheimes Deutschland', SW, IX: 45-49) and much of the Maximin mythology involved in that state would acquire an unscratchable transcendent itch. For the capitalist state as dethroning the prior, transcendent head of state Cf. Eugene W. Holland, *Deleuze and Guattari's A Thousand Plateaus* (Bloomsbury, 2013),

It has also infected literary history, and is comorbid with another ‘disease’ called Petrarchism.⁹³ As demonstrated in chapter four, George’s poetic ‘birth’ is staged as a working through of Petrarchistic tendencies. As such, Petrarchism is a congenital disease, presenting at his poetic beginnings. It is not easily cured, going into remission for unspecified periods before relapsing, indeed proving to be a ‘chronic’ disease,⁹⁴ not only in that it persists over time, manifesting in typical Petrarchistic repetitions,⁹⁵ but in that it is a disease *about* time and its phenomenology, and the anxiety engendered in the experience of time as finitude and fragmentation, loss and contingency (this leads us further into the infectious territory of the melancholic, suffering from that other great disease of the mind).⁹⁶

George is a unique case in the history of Petrarchism, inheriting both the widespread tradition as well as having schooled himself in Italian by reading authors like Petrarch. For this reason the present study breaks down three types of Petrarchism, as opposed to Forster’s two distinctions:⁹⁷ the first (Type-1) refers

p. 122. Before capitalist immanence (subjection of all to capital), the prior main variations of a head of state were the ‘magician-king and the jurist priest, the violent and fearsome Despot and the calm and regulated legislator’ (Holland, *ibid*). George the master-magician is fitting.

⁹³ See Leonard Forster, *The Icy Fire: Five Studies in European Petrarchism* (Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 61: ‘All writers on petrarchism whom I have read complain that Petrarch’s imitators and followers only paid attention to what was most transitory and uninteresting about Petrarch, and that imitation of Petrarch ‘the occasional mannerist’ (Praz) became not only a ‘malattia cronica della letteratura italiana’ (Arturo Graf) but an ‘international disease’ (Pyritz, who even uses the word ‘psychosis’). All of my disease talk here is, it must be clear, tongue-in-cheek.

⁹⁴ Cf. Arturo Graf above, cited by Forster, *The Icy Fire*, p. 61 (a ‘chronic disease of Italian literature’, translation mine).

⁹⁵ Perhaps the most brilliantly punchy summary of Petrarchism this student has ever encountered is Heather Dubrow’s point that ‘Loving Laura is a sestina of apparent shifts that are really just repetitions’. See Heather Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire. English Petrarchism and its Counterdiscourses* (Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 33.

⁹⁶ In this respect a cornerstone of this thesis is Barolini’s argument in her article ‘The Self in the Labyrinth of Time’, drawn upon throughout the following chapters. For the many metamorphoses of melancholy as a discourse, including as a ‘disease’ of the mind, see the wide-ranging cultural-historical introduction in Mary Cosgrove, *Born under Auschwitz: Melancholy Traditions in Postwar German Literature* (Camden House, 2014), esp. pp.14-17. For ‘Melancholie als Krankheit’ further cf. Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn und Melancholie: Studien zur Geschichte der Naturphilosophie und Medizin, der Religion und der Kunst*, trans. by Christa Buschendorf (Suhrkamp, 1992), pp. 136ff.

⁹⁷ Forster, *The Icy Fire*, p. viii, distinguishes between *Petrarchan* – ‘appertaining to Petrarch himself’ – and lower-case *petrarchism* (adjectivally *petrarchist*) when relating to the tradition.

to the literary 'disease' that spread throughout Europe in the centuries after Petrarch's death, the tradition traditionally known as Petrarchism. The third (Type-3) will refer to George's own idiosyncratic engagement with Petrarch, his immanent reception of the poet, his detailed knowledge of Petrarch's texts, and how he incorporates Petrarch as a figure into his own 'Werkpolitik'.⁹⁸ In Type-3 Petrarchism, the study will seek contra Gundolf to identify where possible precise points of contact between George's texts and Petrarch's. The second type (Type-2) of Petrarchism refers to Petrarch as a lyric subject, and to modern subjectivity in its Petrarchan state of unrest. This second type relates, philosophically, to what is 'at stake' for a subject with a Petrarchan consciousness, and rests less upon finding definitive intertextual references than it does on identifying expressions of the alienated Petrarchan subject and its restless desire for transcendence and fulfillment. These three distinctions are not absolute, and they sometimes co-occur. Type-1 and Type-2 are often interlinked (Type-2 might be said to be the patient zero), and Type-3 is not possible without elements of the other two, but this breakdown will keep George's development in view as he attempts to escape Type-3 while types one and two continue to flare up. There is no definitive untangling of the three. The dialectic of entanglements and disentanglements George faces with regard to this particular literary phenomenon is what is revealing about his work. The basic premise of this study takes up Leonard Forster's insight that 'works which at first sight seem to owe nothing to Petrarch can be illuminated by reference to the pervasive petrarchistic tradition'.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ The term 'Werkpolitik' is borrowed throughout the thesis from Steffen Martus (*Werkpolitik: Zur Literaturgeschichte kritischer Kommunikation vom 17. bis ins 20. Jahrhundert mit Studien zu Klopstock, Tieck, Goethe und George* (de Gruyter, 2007), and is discussed below. Where in German the adjective 'werkpolitisch' might be used (as Martus does), here in English I have generally opted to render it with some variation of 'reception strategy'.

⁹⁹ Forster, *The Icy Fire*, p. 58.

With all this pathologising of the Petrarchan subject in mind,¹⁰⁰ we turn finally to the last theoretical cornerstone, the work of Slavoj Žižek, who offers a fusion of a Marxist-informed ideology critique grafted onto a Lacanian psychoanalytic reading of Friedrich Schelling. Alongside Schelling, Žižek and Lacan return consistently when particular concepts such as Žižek's 'sublime object' or Lacan's 'master signifier' shed light on something George is doing. With Žižek in its corner, the study aims to build on prior ideology-critical work done on George's charismatic cult, such as that of Maurizio Pirro.¹⁰¹

Lacanian psychoanalysis is uniquely suitable to literary studies, and also to Stefan George.¹⁰² Lacan's understanding of the subject as a function of language unites the linguistic and the social and provides a framework within which one can examine the psychodynamics of the poetic subject within the Symbolic Order into which it socialised, including its fundamental split (as caused by language), its relation to the imaginary other, one's specular 'semblable', *i(o)*, and the Big Other, Lacan's *I(O)*,¹⁰³ and the ongoing metonymy of desire that propels the subject on in its lack.¹⁰⁴ Lacan's basic distinction between the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic Order provides a handy framework to get at the representations of desire and enjoyment in George's works, to find what 'tickles' him as a subject, to borrow

¹⁰⁰ I follow Forster, *The Icy Fire*, p. viii in that 'Petrarchan' here refers to my Type-2 Petrarchism, the psychological aspect.

¹⁰¹ Pirro, *Come corda troppo tesa*, op cit.

¹⁰² Lacanian readings of George are surprisingly rare. Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, draws occasionally on Lacanian concepts (significantly for Maximin as George's 'narcissistic self-identification' (p. 123).

¹⁰³ See Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 1996), p. 8, where *i(a)* is the both 'specular image' and the 'ideal ego', and *I(A)* is the 'ego-ideal', cf. ibid pp. 29-30 (entry: 'Counterpart') and p. 128 for the *i(a)* (Evans uses 'a' for 'autre', English o for 'other').

¹⁰⁴ See e.g. Ehsan Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature: Desire, Jouissance and the Sinthome in Shakespeare, Donne, Joyce, and Ashberry* (Continuum, 2008), p. 16.

Žižek's image,¹⁰⁵ and to understand the recourse to the endless poetic 'chain of naming and renaming' that is symptomatic of the subject's jouissance in circling the 'void' at the centre of subjectivity.¹⁰⁶ This void constitutes for Lacan the modern Cartesian subject's 'radical eccentricity with respect to itself', its lack of a centre and its alterity with respect to the Other, induced into an alienating Symbolic Realm of language not of its own making.¹⁰⁷ This is the task of a Lacanian-informed theoretical approach, as Serge Leclaire writes: 'to unmask the real [...] to shine light into the crack in which ecstasy hides'.¹⁰⁸ This ecstasy resides in the poetic texts made by George that reveal the lack in Being but find ways to rejoice in that lack.¹⁰⁹

Lacan and Žižek appear throughout this study's focus on conversion as an experiential and narrativised framework that can only be brought out retrospectively. Narrativising one's experience is itself one fundament of psychoanalytic therapy.¹¹⁰ Lacan writes that

in psychoanalytical anamnesis, what is at stake is not reality, but truth, because the effect of full speech is to reorder past contingencies by conferring

¹⁰⁵ Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (Verso, 2000). Cf. Natasha Distiller, *Gender and Desire in the Sonnet Tradition* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 15: 'what psychoanalysis offers us is a theoretical model and a vocabulary which at the least seeks to describe the relation between the constitution of the subject and the gendering practices of this Western history'.

¹⁰⁶ Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, pp. 152, 154.

¹⁰⁷ Hence for Lacan the punning title of the section this cited text is from: 'La lettre, l'être, l'autre' – language, being, and the other are all implicated together. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits. The first Complete Edition in English*, trans. by Bruce Fink in Collaboration with Héroïse Fink and Russell Grigg (W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), here pp. 435/524 (page references to *Écrits* correspond to the English text and Lacan's original pagination, as given in Fink's edition).

¹⁰⁸ Leclaire, cited in Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, p. 158.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, p. 61.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Dori Laub, 'Bearing Witness, or the Vicissitudes of Listening', in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, ed. by Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, M.D. (Routledge, 1992), pp. 57-74.

on them the sense of necessities to come, such as they are constituted by the scant freedom through which the subject makes them present.¹¹¹

In full speech, truth arrives from the Other, as Hook writes, ‘we have a speech-moment – as in the case of the typical Freudian slip – in which the subject speaks *beyond himself or herself* (beyond their ego)’.¹¹² In the subject’s ‘full speech’, truth emerges without necessarily being grounded in empirical reality.¹¹³ Full speech speaks from the unconscious, from a ‘shifting Otherness’, and brings the subject’s truth into being in the performative act of speech itself, as Hook recounts.¹¹⁴ For this, truth requires a pre-existing Symbolic Order or system into which the subject is initiated, and acts as a guarantor when the subject diverges from official truth in his full speech.¹¹⁵ As Regina Schwartz writes, ‘[t]ranscendence is a delirious rupture in immanence [...] a gap in the Real, a question put to subjectivity’.¹¹⁶ The question is the unconscious Other pre-existing, but pervading, the subject, its own inner ‘shifting Otherness’ (Hook). Lacanian concepts help to trace the emergence

¹¹¹ Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 213/257.

¹¹² Derek Hook, ‘Empty and Full Speech’, in *The Social Psychology of Communication*, ed. by Derek Hook, Bradley Franks & Martin W. Bauer (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 187-208 (p. 201). Cf. Likewise Derek Hook, ‘On the Role of Speech in Psychoanalysis: Revisiting Lacan’s “Function and Field”’, *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 71:5 (2023), pp. 855-881, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00030651231210517>

¹¹³ On this cf. Slavoj Žižek, ‘The Seven Veils of Fantasy’, in *Key Concepts of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, ed. by Dany Nobus, (Other Press, 1999), pp. 190-218 (p. 212): ‘The aim of the psychoanalytic treatment is thus to (re)focus attention away from the factual accuracy and onto the hysterical lies that unknowingly articulate the truth’.

¹¹⁴ Hook, ‘On the Role of Speech in Psychoanalysis: Revisiting Lacan’s “Function and Field”’, p. 866 (on the ‘shifting Otherness [...] that exceeds their ego’s sense of self’) and p. 873 (for the reflective effect on the subject of its performative speech acts in analysis).

¹¹⁵ Lacan, *Écrits*, pp. 436/524f (‘In other words, this other is the Other that even my lie invokes as a guarantor of the truth in which my lie subsists. Here we see that the dimension of truth emerges with the appearance of language’.). Schelling has a similar notion, cf. the first *Weltalter* draft: ‘jeder Satz sey außer dem System falsch, nur im System, im organischen Zusammenhang des lebendigen Ganzen gebe es eine Wahrheit’. Cited in Jochem Hennigfeld, *F.W.J. Schellings ›Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit‹* (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001), p. 34.

¹¹⁶ Regina Schwartz, ‘Introduction: Transcendence: Beyond...’, in *Transcendence. Philosophy, Literature, and Theology Approach the Beyond*, ed. by Regina Schwartz (Routledge, 2004), pp. vii-xii (p. xi).

and dynamics of a poetic *Ich*, and its search for its own truth, across George's oeuvre. For in both Lacanian psychoanalysis and in George we have only a textual, linguistically textured subject:

The subject is thus an effect of the signifier and exists only in language as the symbolic function of desire. Since the Other is the locus of speech and language, the subject fades away and begins to exist somewhere within as well as beneath the signifying chain of discourse.¹¹⁷

Within and beneath, self and Other, conscious and unconscious, immanent and transcendent, freedom and necessity (or system): all of these binaries recur to different degrees throughout this thesis and are rooted, fundamentally, in the relationship between a self and its language. Jürgen Brokoff makes a similar point about George's poems, 'daß es sich beim Sprecher, der das (eigene) Ich thematisiert, nicht um ein Ich, sondern um ein Artefakt, eine rein sprachlich konstituierte Instanz geht'.¹¹⁸ George's early poems 'bewußt inszenieren' and 'poetologisch reflektieren' the 'Künstlichkeit der Sprechinstanz, die grundsätzlich jeden lyrischen Sprechakt kennzeichnet'.¹¹⁹ Lacan brings both of these points together: not only lyrical speech acts, but all speech acts produce the subject. The lyrical 'Artefakt' and the 'Ich' behind it, for Lacan, are not so easily divided (precisely because the subject is already divided).

¹¹⁷ Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, p.16.

¹¹⁸ Jürgen Brokoff, 'Macht im Innenraum der Dichtung. Die frühen Gedichte Stefan George', in *Die Souveränität der Literatur: Zum Totalitären der klassischen Moderne 1900-1933*, ed. by Uwe Hebekus and Ingo Stöckmann (Wilhelm Fink, 2008), pp. 415-32 (p. 426).

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

The title of this thesis evokes both George and Lacan. George is the singular 'Meister' of his world, and his social 'imaginary' as Peter Morgan calls it, is an attempt to deploy this mastery within his Circle, through the creation of what Lacan calls the discourse of the master: authoritative, imperative, and delineating the boundaries of what is discursively, aesthetically, and epistemologically possible. The master's discourse knows itself, is in complete control, not subject to the alienating effects the Other's discourse: 'The master's grammatical tone is that of the imperative. In his own eyes he is the perfect individual, an autonomous, whole subject one might liken to God'.¹²⁰ It has an air of the traditional 'transcendence of logos or authority', the Master gazing down upon the world over which he reigns.¹²¹ Petrarch and Dante are other Masters with their own master discourses for George, and his project involves taking those discourses and bending them to his creative will, so that Petrarch is consigned to his more feeble youth poetry, while Dante is tamed and made to stand alongside the new Master's own works, a fellow pillar in the temple of the *Gesamt-Ausgabe* alongside Shakespeare and Baudelaire, other Masters whom this dissertation must, alas, neglect.¹²² The Master is concerned, fittingly, with what Lacan calls master signifiers, 'identification with ideals,'¹²³ what

¹²⁰ Ellie Ragland, 'The Discourse of the Master', in *Lacan, Politics, Aesthetics*, ed. by Willy Apollon & Richard Feldstein (SUNY Press, 1996), pp. 127-47 (p. 134).

¹²¹ Schwartz, 'Introduction: Transcendence: Beyond...', p. vii. Schwarz is not discussing Lacan, but rather positioning the volume's task as re-assessing transcendence as an 'epistemological, ethical, aesthetic, and political' concept in philosophy, particularly after it has come to be associated with a general 'ground of oppression' (p. vii).

¹²² The most outrageous lack in this pantheon of Masters is that of Mallarmé, who perhaps more than any of those other poets could claim to be George's first and true, living master, which is the brunt of much of Lehnen's argument in *Mallarmé et George*, and in Ludwig Lehnen, 'Gäas neue Söhne oder die Macht der "finsternen bräuche". Zur Bedeutung Mallarmés in den späteren Werken Georges', in *Stefan George. Dichtung – Ethos – Staat: Denkbilder für ein geheimes europäisches Deutschland*, ed. by Bruno Pieger and Bertram Schefold (Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 2010), pp. 164-88.

¹²³ Ragland, 'The Discourse of the Master', p. 133.

this study will treat as key lexical items that occur and reoccur throughout George's oeuvre, subject to change only at his masterly discretion.

Master signifiers play a role in any subject's – master or not – anamnesis, in the 'tracing the master signifiers of his life',¹²⁴ nodal points or cruxes where 'subjective truth reverberates'.¹²⁵ They are similar in function to Lacan's idea of the 'quilting point', the 'rigid designator', or the 'points de capiton': 'the anchoring points in a signifying chain that allow for the production of some sort of meaning retroactively', as Azari explains.¹²⁶ This study adopts the intratextual hermeneutic strategies of Dantisti Teodolinda Barolini, for whom the *Commedia* is a work that interprets itself through intratextual allusion, and Robert Hollander, whose idea of 'verbal figuralism' I adapt to the narrative structures of revelation and conversion that characterise George's oeuvre, while Steffen Martus' examination of the poet's intratextuality as his distinct 'Werkpolitik' offers an analogous Georgological hermeneutic strategy.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, p. 165.

¹²⁵ Žižek, 'The Seven Veils of Fantasy', p. 212.

¹²⁶ Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, p. 16. Cf. Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (Verso, 2008), p. 95: 'The "quilting" performs the totalization by means of which this free floating of ideological elements is halted, fixed – that is to say, by means of which they become parts of the structured network of meaning'. The 'rigid designator' (in Lacan the 'point-de-capiton') is the master signifier that holds an ideology together, the point being that as much as it seems to be a 'supreme density of Meaning' actually is the mere covering over of a lack, and its signified is itself, it is nothing beyond its own utterance, a 'self-referential, tautological, performative operation' which however in its very utterance appears to 'totalize[] the field of (ideological) meaning', Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, pp. 109-10.

¹²⁷ Teodolinda Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante* (Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 17, for Barolini's narratological approach of 'detheologising': 'detheologizing is a way of reading that attempts to break out of the hermeneutic guidelines that Dante has structured into his poem, hermeneutic guidelines that result in theologized readings whose outcomes have been overdetermined by the author'. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 94-95: 'How does Alberigo—the creature in the fiction—persuade the pilgrim to believe him? By appealing to "reality," namely the fiction to which he belongs. His reply is one of the most remarkable intratextual moments within the *Commedia*, as the text buttresses the text, the fiction supports the credibility of the fiction'. On 'verbal figuralism' see Robert Hollander, *Allegory in Dante's Commedia* (Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 105. On Martus' *Werkpolitik* see below.

2. Indirect Influence · Literary-Historical Considerations

i. Petrarch (and Dante) in Germany

Given their exceptional canonical status, an author taking on Dante and Petrarch is implicitly taking on the burden of literary history itself. Petrarch's reception in Germany provides clues towards understanding why George attributes so much canonical value to Dante and so little to poor Petrarch, whom George both acknowledges as an influence while simultaneously limiting that influence and repressing it to his youth poetry (*Die Fibel*, SW, I),¹²⁸ with one more sole acknowledgement in the 'Vorspiel' to *Der Teppich des Lebens* (SW, v: 27). This is his type-3 Petrarchism. However, there are echoes conscious and unconscious of the 'cultural language',¹²⁹ the literary master discourse, of European Petrarchism, across his works, a tradition which in fact was a building block of vernacular German poetry.¹³⁰ Petrarch plays a role in both 'renewals' of German literary language, firstly by Martin Opitz' direct engagement, and in a less obvious, more repressed way in George's own self-described Opitzian undertaking in the 1890s.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Cf. Thorston Fitton, 'Trost und Beispiel – Stefan Georges Petrarca-Rezeption', in *Francesco Petrarca 1304-1374: Zur Wiederkehr des Geburtstages*, ed. by Gianfranco Granello (Walter Verlag, 2011), pp. 216-29 (p. 225).

¹²⁹ The term is Barthes'. Roland Barthes, *Image – Music – Text*, ed. and trans. by Stephen Heath (FontanaPress, 1977), here p. 160.

¹³⁰ Although in the following a general sketch of what is at stake in European Petrarchism will be made, the relative non-specificity of the term as a 'Hilfsbegriff', as Bianchi writes, quoting Hoffmeister, will be concretised via specific textual elements. See: Danilo Bianchi, 'Heine – Ein Petrarkist?', in *Francesco Petrarca in Deutschland: Seine Wirkung in Literatur, Kunst und Musik*, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer (Max Niemeyer, 2006), pp. 487-503 (pp. 487-488).

¹³¹ Regarding his *Hymnen* (1890), George is said to have claimed: 'Das ist von ebensolcher Bedeutung für die deutsche Literaturgeschichte wie das Büchlein von der deutschen Poeterei'. Cited in Landmann, *Gespräche mit Stefan George*, here pp. 153-54.

The thesis brings brings together insights formed by Fitzon and Bornmann to what Martus calls George's 'Werkpolitik': a type of prolepsis that delimits the possibilities of a reader's reception in advance and establishes control over one's work,¹³² so that, contra Socrates' and his critique of writing in the *Phaedrus*, the work does *not* need 'its father to help it; for it is incapable of defending or helping itself'.¹³³ The 'Werkpolitik' ensures against future misunderstandings, it fathers itself ad infinitum. This dissertation, accordingly, examines George's strategies of authorship and his own 'fatherly' authority as he 'increases' (*auctor* from *augere*) his aristocratic state and his socio-poetic techniques of filiation through the act of literary reception and influence, in which the two Italian poets stand opposed to each other in terms of their authority and influence, the one becoming the answer to the other in terms of priority, not of chronology.¹³⁴

¹³² Steffen Martus, *Werkpolitik. Zur Literaturgeschichte kritischer Kommunikation vom 17. bis ins 20. Jahrhundert mit Studien zu Klopstock, Tieck, Goethe und George* (de Gruyter, 2007); Thorston Fitzon, 'Trost und Beispiel – Stefan Georges Petrarca-Rezeption', op cit. and Thorsten Fitzon, 'Petrarca um 1900: Aneignung – Anverwandlung – Abkehr', in *Francesco Petrarca in Deutschland: Seine Wirkung in Literatur, Kunst und Musik*, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer (Max Niemeyer, 2006), pp. 539-562; Bianca Maria Bornmann, 'Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile: 'Die Fibel' di Stefan George', in *Annali. Sezione germanica. Studi tedeschi. Quaderni*. Istituto Orientale Napoli N.S. 1/1991, 1/2, pp.127-165. The general idea of Martus' *Werkpolitik* is sketched in the first chapter of his study, the main thesis being that the emergence of literary criticism in the 18th century created new conditions of writing – writers suddenly found themselves in a position of uncertainty ('Unsicherheit', p. 6) vis-à-vis their perception by critics, and consequently began to encode hermeneutic guidelines into their works to direct their critics' responses, thus becoming 'Teil einer kritischen Kultur' (p. 9). Readers then find themselves confronted by the text, steering their readerly behaviour: 'Werkpolitik' also behandelt das Problem, wie Beobachter so positioniert werden, daß sie den Eindruck haben, den Appell eines Textes zu hören', (p. 8). This is political insofar as it presupposes 'die „Kapazität“ zur Bindung des Leserkollektivs' (p. 8) and anticipates that reader's collective obedience ('Gehorsam', p. 9) to the authorial text's reclamation of power (p. 8), re-configuring that binding relationship in terms of the subject's own self-commitment to its own 'Befreiung'. It is essentially a straining against the contingency of one's future reception, making 'Sicherheit' out of an 'Unsicherheit' (p. 10). In writing under conditions of critique there emerges 'der Eindruck einer krisenhaften und in diesem Sinn ‚kritischen‘ Situation' (p. 6). Authorial 'crisis' follows from the culture of 'critique' (both from ancient Greek κρίνω) – the response to this crisis is to regain control. Readers are advised here to consult Martus' chapter for the many finer details of the *Werkpolitik* concept.

¹³³ Plato, *Phaedrus*, ed. and trans. by C.J.Rowe (Aris & Phillips, 2013), here p. 125 (Ph.275e5).

¹³⁴ Adorno was an early critic to refer to George as self-styled: 'Although the rough-and-ready indignation about George's posing is philistine, it registers the pretentiousness of a dignity bestowed upon oneself like a fantasy uniform. English has the unsurpassable and untranslatable expression "self-styled" for it', Theodor W. Adorno, *Notes to Literature*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann and trans. by

Like their other varied divergences, Dante and Petrarch have a varied reception history, particularly in Germany, where Petrarch originally found a more favourable reception.¹³⁵ The stakes, as Forster argues, were high: 'The impact of Petrarch's Italian poetry on the literatures of Western Europe coincides with attempts in these various literatures to find a new poetic diction'.¹³⁶ It is nothing less than the development of vernacular literary languages across Europe in the sixteenth century: Petrarch's reception came to be a part of the 'emancipation from the dominion of Latin' and as such part of a broader 'literary renewal'.¹³⁷

In sixteenth-century Italy, Pietro Bembo codifies the grammatical features of Petrarch's vernacular work into a new linguistic and poetic standard.¹³⁸ Petrarch and Boccaccio are preferred to Dante as the basis of the new standard, given that

Shierry Weber Nichol森 (Columbia University Press, 2019), p. 440. For Stephen Greenblatt's idea of self-fashioning applied to modernism and Stefan George's paradoxical poetics specifically see Friedhelm Marx, "Heilige Autorschaft? *Self-Fashioning*-Strategien in der Literatur der Moderne", in *Autorschaft: Positionen und Revisionen*, ed. by Heinrich Detering, pp. 107-20, (J.B. Metzler, 2002). Insofar as I read George with a view towards establishing his techniques of grounding his own authority, I am partially indebted to Albert Russell Ascoli's illuminating study *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author* (Cambridge University Press, 2008) which carries out a similar analysis of Dante's own masterful self-making through techniques of authorial control. For etymology of *auctor* in relation to Dante see here page p. 79.

¹³⁵ Fundamental for Dante's *Nachleben* is Werner Friederich, *Dante's Fame Abroad 1350-1850, The Influence of Dante Alighieri on the Poets and Scholars of Spain, France, England, Germany, Switzerland and the United States* (*Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura*, 1950), and for Dante in Germany specifically Eva Hölter, "*Der Dichter der Hölle und des Exils*": *Historische und Systematische Profile der deutschsprachigen Dante-Rezeption* (Königshausen & Neumann, 2002). Most recently is DiMassa, *Dante in Deutschland*, op cit.

¹³⁶ Forster, *The Icy Fire*, p. 61.

¹³⁷ Forster, *The Icy Fire*, pp. 67-8. With this link to formative moments in European national identities, it is noteworthy that the poetic *weltanschauung* of the prototypical Renaissance man Petrarch coincides with the first programmatic dismantlings of Latin as the privileged literary language, and thus with the gradual secularization that was to follow in the centuries afterwards. The revival of interest in antiquity did not mean, against Petrarch's own strivings as a classicist, that Latin would continue to dominate. Anderson for example notes that with the discovery and study of non-European languages resulting from European colonialism and imperialism, and the subsequent birth of philology as a school of study, 'the old sacred languages – Latin, Greek, and Hebrew – were forced to mingle on equal ontological footing with a motley plebeian crowd of vernacular rivals, in a movement which complemented their earlier demotion in the market-place by print-capitalism', Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, 2016), p. 70. For more on this see William J. Kennedy, *The Site of Petrarchism. Early Modern National Sentiment in Italy, France, and England* (The John Hopkins University Press, 2003), pp. 1ff.

¹³⁸ Forster, *The Icy Fire*, p. 30.

the latter's chaotic vernacular range is to be avoided in favour of the refined and concentrated poetic consistency of the *Canzoniere*.¹³⁹ Contrasting to Dante's often 'harsh and disagreeable' poetic voice, Bembo imagines Petrarch labouring over his words to achieve maximum polish, that 'if there was any small word, that could be better said, he would change it and change it again until it could not be said better in any way'.¹⁴⁰ Petrarch's words are pleasant, clean, clear, beautiful, pure.¹⁴¹ Thus as a poet he becomes more domesticated, approachable, reflective of emergent bourgeois values of decent taste and sensibility. Stefano Jossa argues furthermore that within this linguistic binary of Petrarch versus Dante lie the deeper ideological dimensions of the preference for Petrarch as a 'Vorherrschaft der Kunst über die Philosophie, d.h. der poetischen Technik über die Kenntnis der Wirklichkeit. Das bedeutet den Triumph der Worte über die Dinge'.¹⁴² The movement out of Dante's all-encompassing language (but which is therefore susceptible to contamination), and into the 'angemessenen, transparenten und klaren Sprache' of Petrarch also reflects a changing political situation in the

¹³⁹ Bruno Migliorini, *Storia della lingua italiana*, 9th ed. (Bompiani, 2001), p. 311.

¹⁴⁰ 'dura e spiacevole'. In Book II, v of Bembo's dialogue *Prose della volgar lingua* for example, Dante's choice of verb 'biscazza' in *Inferno* XI: 44 is criticised as a 'voce del tutto dura e spiacevole' (a 'totally rough and disagreeable word', trans. mine), an example of one of his 'rozze e disonorate' ('coarse and disgraced', trans. mine) word choices. Then by comparison he continues: 'Petrarch did not do so. Let us leave aside the fact that he did not refrain from saying what could not be said appropriately, but among the things he said well, if there was any small detail that could be better expressed, he changed it and changed it again, until it could not be said better in any way'. ('Non fece così il Petrarca, il quale, lasciamo stare che non togliesse a dire di ciò che dire non si potesse acconciamente, ma, tra le cose dette bene, se alcuna minuta voce era, che potesse meglio dirsi, egli la mutava e rimutava, infino attanto che dire meglio non si potesse a modo alcuno', in Pietro Bembo, *Prose e rime di Pietro Bembo*, edited by Carlo Dionisotti (UTET, 1966), here p. 42. Cf. Migliorini, *Storia della lingua italiana*, p. 311, who also cites Bembo's critique of the 'rozze e disonorate' words of Dante as opposed to Petrarch's polished words.

¹⁴¹ Migliorini, *Storia della lingua italiana*, p. 311 citing Bembo: 'Bisogna scegliere "le più pure, le più monde, le più chiare... le più belle e grate voci"' ('One must choose "the purest, the most refined, clearest... the most lovely and pleasant words"').

¹⁴² Stefano Jossa, 'Petarkismus oder Drei Kronen? Die Ursprünge eines Konfliktes', trans. by Chiara Bianchi, in *Der Petrarkismus: Ein europäischer Gründungsmythos*, ed. by Michael Bernsen and Bernhard Huss (V&R unipress, 2011), pp. 31-49 (p. 41). This aligns with George's own turn towards a poetry more engaged with social and political events post-1900 (his Dantism: coarser, open to plurality, to social reality and its critique), away from the seeming aestheticism (Petrarchan, closed, bejeweled, polished, self-content, refined and aesthetically contained) of his early works.

sixteenth century, ‘bei welcher die alten kommunalen Höfe nach und nach durch einen neuen zentralisierten Hof ersetzt werden, der die universellen und die nationalen Mächte, den Papst, den Kaiser und den König umgibt’.¹⁴³ Canon building is revealed as inextricably bound up with the political and ideological persuasions of its builder. A plural, rhizomatic network, finding aesthetic expression in the polyphony of Dante’s linguistic heteroglossia – the many styles, registers and even languages (Italian, Provençal, Latin, nonsense) incorporated into the *Commedia* and its characters of varying social strata – is replaced by the monological Petrarchan vocabulary of the petit bourgeois subject that gives form to a singular, centralised structure unifying diverse seats of power.¹⁴⁴

Jossa’s argument regarding the triumph of words over things, of style over substance, indirectly covers a common feature of Petrarchism: a set of poetic rules and formulations that can quickly become clichéd containers of generic poetic meaning. Not until the Romantics is the substance of Petrarch’s achievements emphasised, which allows the poet to catch up to the more ‘substantial’ Dante, the poet who reaches the ‘farblosen reinen Substanz der Gottheit’.¹⁴⁵

In the *Accademia della Crusca*’s dictionary of the Italian language in the following century,¹⁴⁶ Petrarch becomes a writerly authority and a poetic language

¹⁴³ Jossa, ‘Petrarkismus oder Drei Kronen?’, p. 42.

¹⁴⁴ While resonant with Contini’s much cited comparison of Dante’s ‘plurilinguismo’ to Petrarch’s ‘monolinguismo’ (Gianfranco Contini, ‘Preliminari sulla Lingua del Petrarca’, in *Varianti e altra linguistica. Una Raccolta di Saggi (1938-1968)* (Einaudi, 1970), (pp. 171-172.), this is one of Bakhtin’s own theories regarding the heteroglottic and the monological, the latter being a centripetal force ‘accomplishing the task of cultural, national and political centralization of the verbal-ideological world in the higher official socio-ideological levels’. Bakhtin (*The Dialogic Imagination*) cited in Dino Franco Felluga, *Critical Theory. The Key Concepts* (Routledge, 2015), p. 78. For the rhizome as an ‘acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system’ see Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 21.

¹⁴⁵ Schelling: ‘der Dichter erhebt sich stufenweise zur Anschauung der farblosen reinen Substanz der Gottheit selbst’. Schelling, ‘Ueber Dante in philosophischer Beziehung’, (SW, I, 5, 163). I borrow the pun from Michael Bernsen, ‘Dantes *Vita nova*, poetische oder theologische Wissenschaft von der Liebe?’, in *Deutsches Dante-Jahrbuch*, 89.1 (2014), pp. 40-54 (p. 50).

¹⁴⁶ Migliorini, *Storia*, 408.

to be learned, a distinct set of poetic signs and symbols, 'an arsenal of commonplaces, images or *topoi*'¹⁴⁷ in Forster's words, or what Jonathan Culler calls 'a grammar for the European love lyric: a set of tropes, images, oppositions (fire and ice), and typical scenarios that permitted generations of poets throughout Europe to exercise their ingenuity in the construction of love sonnets'.¹⁴⁸ Petrarchism had arrived.

In Germany, Forster relates, before Enlightenment thinkers such as Lessing undermined what by then had become a European Petrarchism as unfit for literary tastes, there was a wider gap between Latinate culture and the vernacular literature in the fifteenth century,¹⁴⁹ 'and the creation of a refined poetic diction presented more serious problems than elsewhere'.¹⁵⁰ This was remedied by Martin Opitz (1597-1639), who incorporated Petrarchism in his renewal of vernacular literary language.¹⁵¹ Via his own translations and poetic and theoretical work, particularly on the sonnet, Opitz laid the foundation for an integration of Petrarch's work as the 'Leitbild der deutschen Liebeslyrik' from which developed a 'verbindlicher Formen- und Formelkanon sowie ein fester Motivkreis'.¹⁵² This development however was

¹⁴⁷ Forster, *The Icy Fire*, p. 68.

¹⁴⁸ Jonathan Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (Harvard University Press, 2015), p. 69.

¹⁴⁹ Forster, *The Icy Fire*, p. 58.

¹⁵⁰ Forster, *The Icy Fire*, p. 70.

¹⁵¹ Forster, *The Icy Fire*, p. 49.

¹⁵² Katrin Korch, *Der zweite Petrarkismus. Francesco Petrarca in der deutschen Dichtung des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts* (Mainz, 2000), p. 10. A brief glance at two anthologised pieces — the poems *ACH Liebste laß vns eilen* and *IST Liebe lauter nichts* (pp. 161 and 162 respectively of *Deutsche Dichtung in Epochen. Ein literaturgeschichtliches Lesebuch*, ed. by Walter Kißling et al. (J.B. Metzler, 1993)) — are representative of Opitz' Petrarchism. In the former, there is although Baroque also the typical Petrarchan awareness of temporality, of one's hours being numbered, an insistent consciousness of transience and change, and the dynamic of the lover and beloved, the lover's search for enjoyment, and so on. The second poem is a translation of *Rvf*: 132 ('S'amor non è, che dunque è quel ch'io sento?'), 'a *locus classicus* of Petrarchism' in its insistent use of antithesis and paradox to articulate the lover's bewilderment in the face of Amor's power and the multiple effects it has on him, see Marian R. Sperberg-McQueen, *The German Poetry of Paul Fleming: Studies in Genre and History* (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), p. 108.

bound to an idea of reception as imitation, and not until Romanticism does Petrarch emerge as any meaningful poetic personality or genius.¹⁵³

The absorption of Petrarchan materials via translation and adaptation was part of forging a new vernacular literary language, in 'expand[ing] the possibilities of the language' as Watanabe-O'Kelly writes, and which is repeated later in George's own Opitzian plans.¹⁵⁴ In Opitz' *Buch von der deutschen Poeterey* (1624) not much is said about Petrarch specifically, only that, in a move that seemingly erases Dante's achievements, gives priority to Petrarch, who stands authoritatively as the first of the Italians to have written poetry in his mother tongue.¹⁵⁵

The work of Johann Christoph Gottsched (1700-1766) finds in Petrarch a strong image of authority. Petrarch is 'nach 400 Jahren noch das Muster aller guten Dichter in Wälschland'.¹⁵⁶ With an eye towards developing classicism in Enlightenment Germany,¹⁵⁷ he writes that the language of a people is determined by 'die guten Schriftsteller'. In this respect, Petrarch's standard is comparable to that of Cicero, who remained the paragon of style for centuries.¹⁵⁸ In his *Versuch einer critischen Dichtkunst* (1730), Petrarch had received a place in the German canon, established through a poetic genealogy that connects Germany to antiquity.

¹⁵³ Korch, *Der zweite Petrarkismus*, p. 11.

¹⁵⁴ Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, p.42 fn52. For Opitz Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, 'The early modern period (1450-1720)', in *The Cambridge History of German Literature*, ed. by Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly (Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 92-146 (quoted text p. 119). Although not mentioning his Petrarchism with respect to his translations, she notes the influence of 'the Italian poets', among others, who 'lifted German poetry to a level it had not reached before and laid the ground for the subsequent poetic achievements of the century'. (p. 120).

¹⁵⁵ 'Wiewol auch bey den Italienern erst Petrarcha die Poeterey in seiner Muttersprache getrieben hat', Martin Opitz, *Aristarchus sive de Contemptu Linguae Teutonicae und Buch von der deutschen Poeterey*, ed. by Georg Witkowski (de Gruyter, 2021), p. 147.

¹⁵⁶ Johann Christoph Gottsched, 'Grundlegung der deutschen Sprachkunst', in *Ausgewählte Werke*, vol. 8: Part 1, *Deutsche Sprachkunst*, ed. by P.M. Mitchell and Herbert Penzl (de Gruyter, 1978), p. 56.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres, 'The German Enlightenment (1720-1790)', in *The Cambridge History of German Literature*, ed. by Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly (Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 147-201 (p. 153).

¹⁵⁸ Gottsched, *Deutsche Sprachkunst, Grundlegung*, p. 56.

With Opitz' integration of Petrarchism into German literature, Gottsched contends, Petrarch becomes the mediator between German civilization and antiquity: 'Petrarcha ist bey dem guten Geschmacke der alten Römer und Griechen geblieben; und ihn hat sich Opitz unter andern zum Muster genommen'.¹⁵⁹ Petrarch's style is held as the gold standard that imitators have subsequently reduced to senseless pompousness: their 'ungereimte und unverständliche Vermischung widereinanderlaufender verblümter Redensarten' leads to nonsense, displeases the classically-oriented and Enlightenment desire for sense, reason and understanding ('Verstand').¹⁶⁰ Petrarch is distinguished from the more modern Italians such as Ariosto and Marino (both influential in Germany), who 'von der guten Art ganz und gar abgewichen [sind]'.¹⁶¹ Recent German poetry, exemplified by Hofmannswaldau and Lohenstein, seeking to imitate more recent Italian and Spanish Petrarchism, was likewise marked by a diminishing of good taste, replacing Petrarch's own refined classicism (his 'guter Geschmack') with 'einer schwülstigen Art des Ausdrucks'.¹⁶² For Gottsched this loss of classicism amounts to a loss of Enlightenment, given the aim of the *Versuch* over all is the renewal and reorientation of German language and literature 'an der Formenreinheit der Antike'.¹⁶³ Order is the word of the enlightened day,¹⁶⁴ and in part two's discussion of the sonnet Gottsched attributes to Petrarch precisely the authority of knowing how to provide the order so desired by Enlightenment classicism. The old

¹⁵⁹ Johann Christoph Gottsched, *Ausgewählte Werke*, vol. 6: Part 1, *Versuch einer critischen Dichtkunst*, ed. by Joachim Birke and Brigitte Birke (de Gruyter, 1973), p. 345.

¹⁶⁰ Gottsched, *Versuch einer critischen Dichtkunst*, p. 344.

¹⁶¹ Gottsched, *Versuch einer critischen Dichtkunst*, p. 345.

¹⁶² Gottsched, *Versuch einer critischen Dichtkunst*, p. 343.

¹⁶³ Martina Schönenborn, 'Gottsched, Johann Christoph (1700-1766)', in *Poetiken: Autoren – Texte – Begriffe*, ed. by Monika Schmitz-Emans, Uwe Lindemann, Manfred Schmeling et al. (de Gruyter, 2009), p. 158.

¹⁶⁴ 'Ordnung und Regelmäßigkeit', Schönenborn, 'Gottsched, Johann Christoph (1700-1766)', p. 158.

Provençal poets, the oldest Italian poets, including Dante, Gottsched claims, did not pursue the sonnet form with regulative poetic strictures.¹⁶⁵ Petrarch's authorial standing in the history of poetic form is solidified in Gottsched's discussion of him as the authoritative lawgiver, the dispenser of proper order and paragon of the sonnet form, the proper origin of the new aesthetic ideal, to be distinguished from his imitators over the centuries that reduce his poetics to nonsense. All of this prefigures the Romantic cult of genius whereby the creative original is separated from the uninspired imitators, what in the George Circle would later become the distinction between *Meister*, or 'Urgeist', and the merely 'abgeleiteten Wesen' as thoroughly traced by Eschenbach.¹⁶⁶

After the Baroque period Petrarch generally fell, as Korch relates, 'in Vergessenheit', and direct knowledge of his works waned. It is not until the mid-eighteenth century that he is rediscovered and re-canonised.¹⁶⁷ This rediscovery falls in line with the 'Umbruch der Imitationsprinzip zur Genielehre des 18. Jahrhunderts, die den Weg zu verschütteten Originaldichtern wies'.¹⁶⁸ Here philosophy and literary history intertwine, and the previous conception of the author as a model for imitation, for which reading Gottsched may be said to be representative, becomes a mode of being in the world in the figure of the (Romantic) poetic genius. Korch focuses her analysis on Meinhard's biographical study of Petrarch, who sees in his poetry the unity of life and work, 'das "Ebenbild

¹⁶⁵ 'Weder die Zahl noch Länge der Zeilen, noch die Abwechselung der Reime war dazumal recht bestimmt, bis Petrarch durch seine verliebten Lieder auf die Laura, die fast lauter Sonnetten waren, *dem Dinge seine rechte Ordnung gab*. Vermuthlich hat er ein paar beliebte Melodien auf die ersten seiner Sonnetten gehabt; denen zu Gefallen er hernach alle übrige gemacht. Ihm aber sind hernach alle übrige Dichter mehrentheils gefolget'. Johann Christoph Gottsched, *Ausgewählte Werke*, vol. 6: Part 2, *Versuch einer critischen Dichtkunst: Anderer besonderer Theil*, ed. by Joachim Birke and Brigitte Birke (de Gruyter, 1973), p. 532.

¹⁶⁶ Gunilla Eschenbach, *Imitatio im George Kreis* (de Gruyter, 2011), pp. 29-50.

¹⁶⁷ Korch, *Der zweite Petrarkismus*, p. 11.

¹⁶⁸ Gerhart Hoffmeister, *Petrarca* (J. B. Metzler, 1997), p. 135. Cf. Korch, *Der zweite Petrarkismus*, p. 11, also citing Hoffmeister.

des Dichters”, a unity that would lie at the basis of Petrarch’s reception in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹⁶⁹ Here, Martus’ notion of ‘Werkpolitik’ might serve to illuminate Petrarch’s own laborious safeguarding of the work against future misreadings by rooting it ‘inseparably’ in the untouchably lived but poeticised and aesthetically transfigured experience of the poet – a point of contact between George’s and Petrarch’s strategies. Kauffmann, for example, notes the increasingly close connection between biography and poetic development in George’s works, an increasing ‘Verdichtung der Biographie’.¹⁷⁰ As will be argued in the following chapters, not only the late works, but the early ones too, despite ‘ihrer geringeren Verknüpfung mit dem Leben’,¹⁷¹ are incorporated into the ‘Werkpolitik’ of his poetic autobiography retrospectively.

Petrarchism in Germany has highlights in canonical authors like Klopstock (1724–1803) and Schiller (1759–1805), the former an important pre-Romantic reader moving beyond Baroque formalism towards individualised sensibility prefiguring the Romantics’ interpretation. ‘[D]as petrarkische Ethos’, as Fechner writes, was based more upon Petrarch’s personality and poetic genius (his ‘Ichhaftigkeit’) and his ‘Verehrung der Geliebten als eines Symbols des Göttlichen’ than on the formal toolbox of paradoxes and metaphors previously excavated from the *Canzoniere*.¹⁷² This turn is known as ‘der zweite Petrarkismus’¹⁷³ and this

¹⁶⁹ Korch, *Der zweite Petrarkismus*, pp. 26-7. This ‘Identifikation von Leben und Poesie’ is a facet of Petrarch’s work that he himself built into the poetry to condition its reading; it serves, as Mazzotta explains, to ‘encourage[] the biographical fallacy, the notion that life and works constitute an inseparable, overlapping unity’ (Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch*, p. 6.). The ‘Identifikation von Leben und Poesie’ as conditioned by Petrarch himself is also pointed out by Korch, *Der zweite Petrarkismus*, p. 27.

¹⁷⁰ Kauffmann, ‘Das Leben Stefan Georges. Biographische Skizze’, p.8.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Jörg-Ulrich Fechner, ‘Klopstocks Petrarch und Laura (und die Nachfolger – und die Folgen?)’, in *Francesco Petrarca in Deutschland: Seine Wirkung in Literatur, Kunst und Musik*, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer (Max Niemeyer, 2006), pp. 313-47 (p. 331).

¹⁷³ Aurnhammer, cited in Fechner, ‘Klopstocks Petrarch und Laura (und die Nachfolger – und die Folgen?)’, p. 315.

poetic sensibility would eventually be a running point of comparison to Dante's during his re-emergence in Romanticism.¹⁷⁴

Edoardo Zuccato observes that the relationship between the two figures is often a gendered one, with Petrarch typically characterised as feminine and opposed to the more dominating personality and 'muscular figure' of Dante.¹⁷⁵ The feminising of Petrarch also occurred in Germany. So, for instance, does Otto von Leixner, in his *Illustrierte Geschichte der fremden Literaturen* (1882), note 'etwas Weibisches' in Petrarch's character as opposed to the 'sittliche Klarheit' characteristic of Dante.¹⁷⁶ Wilhelm Heinse (1746-1803) similarly berates Petrarch, in Hölter's words, 'als lebensuntauglichen, unmännlichen Ästhet', whose influence almost ran German poetry into the ground.¹⁷⁷

The *Frühromantiker* and idealists, for whom such sensibility and inwardness of feeling became of utmost significance, also compared the two in this light, albeit perhaps without the explicit chauvinism. Hegel, somewhat echoing Gottsched in characterising Ariosto's representations of love as a deterioration of Dante's and

¹⁷⁴ The most recent account of Dante's centrality to German *Frühromantik* is DiMassa, *Dante in Deutschland*, op cit., which explores the centrality of Dante as an already realized model of *Neue Mythologie* and the perfect exemplar of Romantic art in works by the Schlegel brothers, Schelling, Novalis, Goethe et al. DiMassa's chapter on George will be a point of comparison later in the present study. DiMassa takes seriously F. Schlegel's claim that Dante's *Commedia* is 'das einzige System der transzendentalen Poesie' (Athenäum Fragment 247, cited by DiMassa, p. 41) and traces the impact of Dante on those thinkers of the New Mythology. His conclusion is that Neo-Romantics (among whom George) appropriated the thinking of the early Romantics but for different aims: 'they sought to absolutize poetry [...] their projects of Dantean myth promised authority – of language, of poetry, and of the poet' (p. 179). George's establishment of his own authority via his intertextual manipulations is the subject of the present study and is thus building on and exploring DiMassa's key argument here.

¹⁷⁵ Edoardo Zuccato, *Petrarch in Romantic England* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. x.

¹⁷⁶ Otto von Leixner, (*Illustrierte Geschichte der fremden Literaturen*), cited in Günter Hess, 'Petrarcas Landschaften und die Bilder des 19. Jahrhunderts', in *Francesco Petrarca in Deutschland: Seine Wirkung in Literatur, Kunst und Musik*, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer (Max Niemeyer, 2006), pp. 521-38 (p. 537).

¹⁷⁷ 'mit seinem Geächz und Gejammer schier unsre ganze Poesie zugrunde gerichtet', Heinse, cited by Achim Hölter, "'Warum nur immer Petrarca?': Bemerkungen über einige Dichtergedichte des frühen 19. Jahrhunderts samt einer kurzen Skizze zur objektiven Rezeptionsforschung', in *Francesco Petrarca in Deutschland: Seine Wirkung in Literatur, Kunst und Musik*, edited by Achim Aurnhammer (Max Niemeyer, 2006), pp. 506-20 (p. 512).

Petrarch's forms, emphasises the divinity of the former's love ('göttliche[] Liebe') versus the softness of the latter: Petrarch is associated with a 'phantastischen Zärtlichkeit' typical of Romantic sensibility.¹⁷⁸ Hegel rounds off his discussion of Romantic poetry, characterised as that is by the diremption felt by the spirit in relation to the objective world, with a reflection on Petrarch.¹⁷⁹ In Petrarch, as opposed to the moral reflections and strained passions of his imitator Klopstock (so Hegel), one finds a truly Romantic freedom of feeling, which expresses and contents itself in his many variations on one theme, 'in ihren [the 'phantasievolle[] Beschäftigung' of the imagination–JW] hundert wechselnden Wendungen und Einfällen'. The practicality of desire becomes irrelevant. It is the depths of the imagination ('Phantasie') to which that desire plunges and its subsequent artistic expression that is central to Romantic poetry, expressive of the modern, subjective depth of feeling.¹⁸⁰ The aim is to transcend reality, to allow imagination and fantasy free emergence and free reign to transfigure the subject through love, lifting the soul 'hoch über alle peinliche Verflechtung in die Beschränkung der Wirklichkeit'.¹⁸¹ Laura, implies Hegel, is not tied to the earthly Laura, but becomes the conduit for the poet's creative and visionary faculties. The point of poetry is to enliven and expand the matters of real life – to become full speech in the Lacanian sense. A poem 'about' Laura (or a tree, or the spring, etc.) is of no use to Hegel. What counts is the transfiguration of that matter into beauty through art, 'daß sich das Gemüt

¹⁷⁸ G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke*, ed. by Eva Moldenhauer und Karl Markus Michel, 20 vols (Suhrkamp, 1986), XIV, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik II*, 2nd edn, 1990, p. 217 (cited henceforth as *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik II*).

¹⁷⁹ 'die tiefere Entzweiung der sich in sich befriedigenden Innerlichkeit, welche, da dem in sich seienden Geiste überhaupt das Objektive nicht vollkommen entspricht, gebrochen oder gleichgültig gegen dasselbe blieb', Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik II*, p. 239.

¹⁸⁰ 'die subjektive heutige Innigkeit', Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik II*, p. 241. Cf. Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, p. 101, on Hegel's discussion of Petrarch. Hegel, Culler writes, finds in Petrarch 'a self-reflexive tendency of the lyric, as it becomes poetry about its own poetic exploration'.

¹⁸¹ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik II*, p. 242.

mit seiner Innigkeit, daß sich ein tiefer Geist und reiches Bewußtsein in die Zustände, Situation usf. ganz hineinlebe, darin verweile und aus dem Gegenstande dadurch etwas Neues, Schönes, in sich selbst Wertvolles mache'.¹⁸² This playful 'movement of the heart'¹⁸³ is what constitutes lyric poetry as opposed to epic's exhaustive accounting for facts and historical details. Petrarch is again summoned as exemplary case study in that we learn very little about Laura or Vauclose from his poems, and this opacity accounts for their emotive range as poetic signifiers.¹⁸⁴ Korch's examination of the second Petrarchism is affirmed already in Hegel's emphasis on the subjective nature of the Petrarchan lyric form itself, his interpretation of Petrarch as exemplary Romantic subject.

Exemplary too is Friedrich Schlegel's dense summary of Dante's life-work in the *Gespräch über die Poesie* (1800), which in turn is followed by a summary of Petrarch's.¹⁸⁵ Schlegel's language itself is instructive: the twice repeated verb 'zusammendrängen' becomes the main marker of Dantean intellectual muscle, the

¹⁸² Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* II, p. 241.

¹⁸³ 'Bewegung des Gemüts', translation by T.M. Knox in Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, vol. I, translated by T.M. Knox (Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 276.

¹⁸⁴ Hegel, *Werke*, ed. by Eva Moldenhauer und Karl Markus Michel, 20 vols (Suhrkamp, 1986), XIII *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* I, 2nd edn, 1989, p. 357. Hegel's point about Laura's name ('Von der Laura selbst z.B. erhalten wir durch Petrarca's Sonette in dieser Beziehung nur eine sehr geringe Kunde, fast nur den Namen, der ebensosehr auch könnte ein anderer sein'), however, is irresolute – a Laura by any other name would not have been so sweet: it would lack the paronomastic richness that Petrarch extracts from the name itself (*l'aura*, *lauro*, *l'ora*, *l'oro*, etc.). Furthermore, to deny the importance of the historical for Petrarch is to perhaps undermine the figural quality of Laura for the theological dimension of the work (see for example Aldo S. Bernardo, *Petrarch, Laura, and the Triumphs* (State University of New York Press, 1974) pp. 165-66 for Laura as a 'nova figura'). At any rate, Hegel is on to something in the sense that Laura's historical reality is, to a certain extent, made to disappear into the poetic signifier *Laura* which itself resists any final pinning down onto one particular signified. Petrarch's verse 'in rete accolgo l'aura' (*Rvf*: 239: 37) is the exquisite exemplar of this dynamic; striving to capture Laura in his poetic nets, he can only capture *l'aura*, the breeze, that is, the absence of Laura – 'a love story about the evanescent and the transient', as Barolini calls it, pointing out that in Petrarch's handwriting the apostrophic mark was not used and thus *laura* was always, in a sense, *lauro* (Barolini, 'The Self in the Labyrinth of Time' (*Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*), p. 38).

¹⁸⁵ Friedrich Schlegel, *Gespräch über die Poesie* (J.B. Metzler, 1968), pp. 297-98.

force of which is mighty.¹⁸⁶ Dante is strong-armed and singular ('Einem'), a magnetic force drawing antithetical and complementary qualities together. Unlike in Italy where his language was associated with pluralism, in the Romantic turn Dante conjures the centre lost to modernity.¹⁸⁷ Schlegel's language is hyperbolic, employing superlatives, a polyptoton, as well as substantivized adjectives combining concreteness and abstractness to capture the breath of Dante's anabolic achievements: 'das Heiligste und das Süßeste', 'des Edelsten und des Schändlichsten [...] des Größten und des Seltsamsten', 'die offenherzigste Darstellung seiner selbst', 'die herrlichste Verherrlichung der Geliebten' and so on.¹⁸⁸ The scale of the description, matching the scale of Dante's work, is epic.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ 'Mächtig faßte er ihn [the 'Gedanken eines großen Kunstwerkes'], in Einen Mittelpunkt drängte sich die Kraft seines erfindsamen Geistes zusammen, in Einem ungeheuren Gedicht umfaßte er mit starken Armen seine Nation und sein Zeitalter, die Kirche und das Kaisertum, die Weisheit und die Offenbarung, die Natur und das Reich Gottes'. Schlegel, *Gespräch über die Poesie*, p. 297.

¹⁸⁷ We will see later on the centrality of the idea of the 'centre' to George's project, validating what almost a century before Schelling had diagnosed as modernity's 'Sehnsucht nach dem Centrum', as Krell explicates, our need for a 'centripetal force, suffering as we do from dispersion'. See David Farrell Krell, *The Tragic Absolute. German Idealism and the Languishing of God* (Indiana University Press, 2005), p. 194.

¹⁸⁸ Schlegel, *Gespräch über die Poesie*, p. 297.

¹⁸⁹ In a letter to Dora Jellinek from 9 June 1910 – a letter often cited in George scholarship attentive to the influence of the George circle on his sociology – Max Weber writes about George's 'Vorspiel' to *Teppich des Lebens* with a similar rhetoric of Dantean strength, comparing George's earlier mission (compared to the later developments post *Der siebente Ring*) to Dante's: 'Man muß doch immerhin wohl bis auf Hölderlin zurückgehen, um diese Gewalt des künstlerischen „Ich lasse dich nicht..“ wiederzufinden, wie sie sich hier und gelegentlich auch sonst, manifestiert. Daß George bei diesen Schöpfungen von einer Empfindung, nie Gesagtes zu sagen, in ähnlicher Art wie Dante in seiner Vita Nuova es gethan, erfaßt wurde und nun im Stil überhaupt in die Ebene dantesken Pathos glitt, darf man, auch wenn man die Prätension, als übertrieben, bestimmt ablehnt, immerhin verstehen: ein kleiner Funke jenes gewaltigen Feuers lebt auch in ihm, das scheint mir kein Zweifel, - die ungeheure, keuchende Arbeit der Zusammenpressung auf den kürzesten, oft unverständlich gedrängten Ausdruck gehört auch dahin, - und einige Grundbedenken gegen seine Kunst, so wie sie sich jetzt entwickelt, scheinen mir mehr aus dem Sinn, den er seiner „Mission“ beilegt, zu folgen, als aus eigentlich künstlerischem Unvermögen, -' (italics mine). This letter is quoted by Stefan Breuer regarding Weber's development of a theory of charisma in relation to the George Circle (Stefan Breuer, 'Soziologie', in *Stefan George und sein Kreis. Ein Handbuch*, vol. 3, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer, Wolfgang Braungart, Stefan Breuer and Ute Oelmann, 2nd edn (de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 1158-168 (p. 1160). Weber, discussing *Der Siebente Ring*, continues with a critical take on George's Dantean pose as ultimately unfulfilling, leading 'nie zu einem mystischen Erlebnis (derartiges kennt R[ainer] M[aria] Rilke, mag man sonst über ihn urteilen wie immer, ganz zweifellos in voller Reinheit), sondern stets nur zum orgiastischen „Dröhnen“ einer „Stimme“, die dann als „ewige Stimme“ erscheint, nie m.a.W. zu Inhalten, sondern nur zu einem wilden Harfengetön', Max Weber, *Gesamtausgabe*, ed. by Horst Baier et al., 47 vols (J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1984-2020), section II, vol. 6, 1994: *Briefe 1909-1910*, ed. by M. Rainer Lepsius and Wolfgang J. Mommsen, quotations from pp. 560 and 561.

Petrarch, on the other hand, is associated not with the forceful pressing together of the experienced world by any bicep of the intellect, but with purity, ‘Vollendung und Schönheit’.¹⁹⁰ The ethereal force of the Romantic ‘Hauch’ pervades his work, enlivening it and linking its disparate elements albeit in a gentler way than Dante’s ‘zusammendrängen’. This ‘Hauch’, made singular (but unspecified) by the strange capitalisation of its indefinite article (‘und Ein Hauch beseelt’), covertly alludes to Laura in the form of ‘l’aura’ – the breeze, the spirit or breath of love that permeates and fuses the *fragmenta* into a single collection. Freedom and ‘geistige Einheit’¹⁹¹ repose in the heart, and his finely attenuated ‘Gefühl’ essentially invents the language of love.¹⁹² There is nothing ‘ungeheuer’ about Petrarch.

Friedrich’s brother, August Wilhelm, finds in Petrarch a middle ground between Dante’s idealism and Boccaccio’s realism. With a mild style unlike the poetic powerhouse that is Dantean epic, ‘[steht] Petrarca in der Mitte, er sucht die Verschmelzung’.¹⁹³ The tender, but ultimately Romantic, quality of Petrarch’s imagination is featured by August Wilhelm, who aligns Petrarch with modern softness and thus reflects the peculiar, gendered reception history of the poet.¹⁹⁴ Where Petrarch sought to imitate Dantean form in his *Trionfi*, he failed on account of an insufficient sense of plasticity, ‘Gestalt’ and vision. It is in his diverging from

¹⁹⁰ Schlegel, *Gespräch über die Poesie*, p. 297.

¹⁹¹ Later the variation ‘geistige Schönheit’ appears, Schlegel, *Gespräch über die Poesie*, p. 359.

¹⁹² All quotations Schlegel, *Gespräch über die Poesie*, p. 297.

¹⁹³ A. W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 176.

¹⁹⁴ ‘der modernen Weichlichkeit’, A. W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 176. This modern ‘softness’ however already manifests in the works of the Italian poets’ inclusion of women as characters in their works. As Korch points out, Schlegel seeks to normalise ‘eine besondere Vorliebe des weiblichen Geschlechts’ in Romantic poetry (Korch, *Der zweite Petrarkismus*, p. 213), based on the model of the Italian poets. This inclusionary gesture might already be enough to form a hypothesis about George’s hesitancy in acknowledging Petrarch as a canonical figure to aspire to.

Dante where Petrarch most brightly shone.¹⁹⁵ Nevertheless, with Petrarch being the highly influential master of his chosen forms, the sonnet and canzone, Schlegel instantiates him as authority for subsequent Romantic poetry, hoping, as Korch relates, 'die Rezeption der petrarkischen Gedichtformen in Deutschland zu fördern' and to revive the sonnet form in particular, which had fallen into disrepute in Enlightenment aesthetics.¹⁹⁶

In comparison to his brother, however, August Wilhelm does actually find 'eine ungeheure Spannung'¹⁹⁷ in the very form of the Petrarchan sonnet's volta, in

¹⁹⁵ 'Nachahmer des Dante. Zuerst Petrarca. *Trionfi*. Das nicht Danteske grade das vortreffliche. Viele Namen ohne rechte Gestalt und Charakteristik. Kein rechter Fortschritt in den Visionen', A. W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 156.

¹⁹⁶ Korch, *Der zweite Petrarkismus*, p. 214. Korch cites scholarship and Enlightenment voices in explaining the sonnet-form's disrepute in that period. Summarily, the Enlightenment theorists did not think that the sonnet provided enough space for a poem to expand fully into a more powerful form, see Korch, *Der zweite Petrarkismus*, pp. 214 fn25 and p. 215. Korch references Heinrich Welter's *Geschichte des Sonettes in der deutschen Dichtung* for this point. In that study, he outlines that 'für sie [the enlightenment] war ja der Begriff „schöne Form“ gleichbedeutend geworden mit „conventioneller Beschränkung“'. On page 141, cited by Korch Korch, *Der zweite Petrarkismus*, p. 214 fn26, Welter explains that the sonnet, 'zu maßvoll und ruhig' for the '„deutschen“, gotischen Stiles', was unilaterally deprecated. Its small form was diminished as 'Spielerei and Künstlichkeit' (p. 142) and unequipped to deal with the grandiose themes of Enlightenment discourse, nature, truth and so on: 'Und jener Künstlichkeit galt ja vornehmlich der Haß der neuen, nach Wahrheit und Natürlichkeit strebenden Dichterschaar'. Heinrich Welter, *Geschichte des Sonettes in der deutschen Dichtung* (Verlag von Veit & Comp, 1884). As a point of comparison, William Wordsworth (in *Selected Poems*, (Penguin, 1996)) composed two metapoetic sonnets dealing precisely with this issue – *The Sonnet's Scanty Plot* (p. 150) and *The Sonnet* (p. 155). In the former he argues that the sonnet's restrictive form, analogous to the 'convent's narrow room' (l.1) for nuns or the hermit's small cell, among other comparisons, provides respite for those '[w]ho have felt the weight of too much liberty' (l. 13), or what in Žižekian terms is the 'unbearable burden' experienced as too much freedom when we are missing 'a firmly established set of 'dogmatic' conceptual constraints: our intellectual creativity can be 'set free' only within the confines of some imposed notional framework' (*The Indivisible Remainder*, p. 25). Wordsworth recognises the sonnet's worth with regards to this paradox: 'In truth the prison, unto which we doom / Ourselves, no prison is' (ll. 8-9). The second sonnet is devoted to the critics of this poetic form and reminds them that the best of the best in literary history took solace and found fame by writing sonnets: he names Shakespeare first (l. 3), then Petrarch (l. 4), Tasso (l. 5), Camoens (l. 6), two and a half lines are given to Dante (ll. 7-9) and then to Spenser (ll. 9-11) and finally the remaining three and a half lines are devoted to Milton. On these sonnets, especially 'for the Romantic-period revival of the form', see Daniel Robinson, 'The River Duddon and Wordsworth, Sonneteers', in *The Oxford Handbook of William Wordsworth*, ed. by Richard Gravil and Daniel Robinson (Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 289-308 (esp. pp. 290-294; here quoted text p. 292). The idea that 'die strengen Formvorschriften die Dichter zu inhaltlichen Kompromissen [zwängen]' was one of various anti-sonnet arguments being challenged around the turn of the century (Wordsworth's first sonnet mentioned dates from 1807, the latter from 1827 – cf. Robinson, 'The River Duddon and Wordsworth, Sonneteers', p. 292), see Kristin Felsner, Holger Helbig & Therese Manz (eds.), *Arbeitsbuch Lyrik*, 2nd ed. (Akademie Verlag, 2012), cited text here p. 141.

¹⁹⁷ A. W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 166 (italics added).

its destabilizing the quiet, self-contained rhyme scheme of the two quatrains with the intrusion of a new rhyme and concomitant uncertainty, but this tension is nevertheless attenuated by the poet's unsurpassable mastery of his form, keeping everything 'in harmonischer Vollendung' with an adequate resolution.¹⁹⁸ The 'Ungeheuer' is tamed by formal perfection and harmony of disposition.

Schlegel develops Petrarch's Romantic sensibility etymologically. His is a '[w]ahrer Römersinn' differentiating him from the troubadours.¹⁹⁹ By commemorating him as a child of Roman antiquity, Schlegel's project of continuity and revival of tradition comes once more into view. Petrarch is the first Renaissance philologist, the first modern to re-visit the ancients and draw on them. Schlegel then discusses the unity of Petrarch's dispersed poetic fragments and speaks of the *Canzoniere* as of 'einer wahrhaft romantischen Komposition, eines rhapsodisch lyrischen Romans'.²⁰⁰ His poetry as a 'lyrischer Roman' blurs generic categories and grafts the lyric onto the novel ('Roman') as representative Romantic form.²⁰¹ The adjective 'romantisch' comes to designate both the content of his work as well as its form:²⁰² it is written in a romance language and aims towards the idealised Romantic genre of the *Roman* in its biographical structure.²⁰³ These generic considerations filter into what makes the Romantic Romantic, and

¹⁹⁸ A. W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 144.

¹⁹⁹ A. W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 158.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ A. W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 157, previously defined it as follows: 'Es braucht keine zusammenhängende Erzählung, Lücken in der Zeit dürften sein, wenn nur das *eine* vollständig da ist. Wesen des Romans, das Poetische im Leben überhaupt aufzufassen, also auch einer speziellen Biographie'. On the following page, the reference to Petrarch's collection as being a 'Sammlung [...] aus einem Ganzen' binds the particular (the essential that is collected, *gesammelt*) to the whole ('Ganzen') (p. 158), a thoroughly Romantic twist of reconciling the particular and the absolute.

²⁰² Love poems about Laura, 'Bemerkung über *amore* und Liebe' notes Schlegel, or poems with a sense of Romantic wonder, a 'Fantasieren des Fantasierens' replete with 'liebevolle Mysterien', A. W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 176.

²⁰³ For the etymology of 'Romantik' and its variations here see Detlef Kremer and Andreas B. Kilcher, *Romantik*, 4th edn (Springer, 2015), pp. 40-41 and 269-70.

characterised Petrarch as a poet dealing with the tensions between fragmentation and unity. Michael Bernsen characterises it as Petrarch's assumption of authority.²⁰⁴ Authority emerges out of this wrestling with the piecemeal disarray of the world and of the self, in the 'bougeois critical commonplace that art 'organizes the chaos of reality''.²⁰⁵ All of this self-reflection is possible only by a splitting of the self into the subject of (subjective and objective genitive) the gaze, and Petrarch's characteristic 'Selbstdistanzierung und Betrachtung des Ichs aus wechselnden Perspektiven' becomes the constitutive feature of the European lyric subject.²⁰⁶

The rhapsodic nature of the poetry, its stops and starts in episodic, enthusiastic bursts, is rooted in the poet's experience of love: 'Die Liebe bildet das Leben rhapsodisch. Die unausgefüllten Zwischenräume von einem Seelenzustande zum anderen geben *échappées de vue* ins Unendliche'.²⁰⁷ Here Petrarch becomes Romantic in the philosophical sense: Schlegel transforms him into a visionary of the absolute, with each glimpse into the infinite staging and reproducing desire and longing, spurring movement from one state to the next. This activity is no doubt proximate to what he goes on to name 'die

²⁰⁴ 'Petrarca gelingt es, trotz seiner multiplen Persönlichkeit und der Vielfalt der Rollen, die er besetzt, die Vorstellung einer einheitlichen Persönlichkeit zu entwerfen. Allen Krankheitssymptomen und aller Rollenvielfalt zum Trotz sieht es so aus, als könne er seine Biographie einigermaßen beherrschen. Petrarca stilisiert sich als eine Autorität, die die Fragmentarik des Daseins und die Brüchigkeit des Subjekts in Form einer Biographie zu fassen vermag. An Petrarca kann man lernen, wie man es im Kampf der Selbsterhaltung schafft, zu einer Autorität zu werden', Michael Bernsen, 'Der Petrarkismus, eine lingua franca der europäischen Zivilisation', in *Der Petrarkismus: Ein europäischer Gründungsmythos*, ed. by Michael Bernsen and Bernhard Huss (V&R unipress, 2011), pp. 15-30 (p. 18).

²⁰⁵ Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (Routledge, 2002), p. 22. Eagleton goes on to ask: 'What is the ideological significance of seeing reality as chaotic?' (ibid). Lacan would answer Eagleton here that the significance of this view is that it is 'an "insane" enterprise' pursued by someone suffering from madness and seeking to use the 'law of his heart' to order to chaos of the world, a fundamental misrecognition of the world's chaos as external, where 'the subject does not recognize in this havoc the very manifestation of his actual being'. Lacan, *Écrits*, pp. 140/172.

²⁰⁶ Bernsen, 'Der Petrarkismus, eine lingua franca der europäischen Zivilisation', p. 27.

²⁰⁷ August Wilhelm Schlegel, *Kritische Schriften und Briefe IV. Geschichte der romantischen Literatur*, ed. by Edgar Lohner (W. Kohlhammer, 1965), p. 182. Behler's edition of the text (*Vorlesungen über Ästhetik*, II/1) gives 'ins unendliche' [sic] (p. 157).

Selbstanschauung des Geistes' that, elevated by philosophy, demands its expression only 'in der höchsten lyrischen Gattung' and not in any mediocre lyrical forms.²⁰⁸ Petrarch is now nearing Friedrich Schlegel's ideal of a 'Transzendentalpoesie' that would reflect on the conditions of its own possibility.²⁰⁹ The lyric poem qua genre is shown to be a self-reflexive form forever engaged with the very concept of itself as eternal, aesthetic becoming (a 'Werden'), mediated by the subjectivity of the artist.²¹⁰ Philosophy is dethroned, poetry is the privileged vehicle of the absolute and, for A.W. Schlegel, a foundation for Romantic poetry is found in Petrarch's sensibility for form and content.²¹¹ His creative mind dissolves the boundary between reality and imaginative spirit, finite and infinite, 'so daß die zartesten Mysterien der Fantasie ihm wirklicher als alle äußere Wirklichkeit wurden'.²¹² As Hegel similarly reflected, the relevance of outer historical reality is in its transfiguration by the Romantic genius, through whom it is merged with imagination, fantasy, and made more real than reality. The inner mysteries of the heart, reflected on in the moment of 'Selbstanschauung', are joined to universal, cosmic mysteries as the poetic word, via metaphor and symbolism, links 'the most distant relationships' in a harmonious balance, overriding the impass of everyday

²⁰⁸ A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 159.

²⁰⁹ À la Kant's transcendental idealism. Kremer and Kilcher, *Romantik*, p. 90.

²¹⁰ See e.g. Friedrich Schlegel's 116th Athenäums-Fragment: 'Die romantische Dichtart ist noch im Werden; ja das ist ihr eigentliches Wesen, daß sie ewig nur werden, nie vollendet sein kann. Sie kann durch keine Theorie erschöpft werden, und nur eine divinatorische Kritik dürfte es wagen, ihr Ideal charakterisieren zu wollen. Sie allein ist unendlich, wie sie allein frei ist, und das als ihr erstes Gesetz anerkennt, daß die Willkür des Dichters kein Gesetz über sich leide', *Kritische Friedrich Schlegel Ausgabe*, vol II/1: *Charakteristiken und Kritiken I (1796-1801)*), ed. by Ernst Behler, Jean Jacques Anstett, Hans Eichner (Schöningh, 1967), p. 182. On this aspect of F. Schlegel's poetics cf. Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative. The Concept of Early German Romanticism* (Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 17, 130.

²¹¹ 'Weil aber doch Petrarca ein so studirtes Vorbild gewesen, und mehr als irgendeiner die romantische Lyrik bis auf die modernsten Ab- und Ausartungen bestimmt hat, so scheint es am bequemsten, von seinem Beyspiel den Begriff der Formen derselben zu abstrahiren', A. W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 159.

²¹² Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 177. Here we meet the Romantic cousin of Lacan's 'full speech'.

reality.²¹³ Through poetry, the subject reveals itself as intimately entwined with the cosmos.²¹⁴

This emerging picture of Petrarch in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is captured by A.W. Schlegel's own poem 'Petrarca' from his sonnet cycle 'Die italiänischen Dichter':

Ein wechselnd Glühn, ein unauflöslich Sehnen,
In Labyrinthen ein bezaubert Irren,
Wo Seligkeit und Pein sich süß verwirren,
Ein waches Träumen, ein wahrhaftes Wähnen,

Läßt dein Gesang, Petrarca, bald im Thränen-
Bethauten Hain die zarten Wünsche girren;
Aus Einsamkeit, wo Nachtgevögel schwirren,
Sich bald die tiefen Klagelaute dehnen.

In Frühlingslüften, die vorüber ziehen,
Fühlst du, im Lorbeerbaum erblickst du Lauren;
Sie nennt dein Mund, wie schüchtern er auch schweige.

Und deine heil'ge Daphne liebt im Fliehen:

²¹³ René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750 – 1950. Volume 2. The Romantic Age*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1955), p. 41. A. W. Schlegel speaks of 'Rätsel' and the 'Reiz des Geheimnisses' in relation to Petrarch's poems (*Vorlesungen über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 157).

²¹⁴ Cf. DiMassa's description of Novalis' programmatic statement ('Poësie is wahrhafter Idealismus – Betrachtung der Welt, wie Betrachtung eines großen Gemüths – Selbstbewußtseyn des Universums') as 'a mode of observation that acknowledges the reality of the universe while comprehending it as mind or spirit'. DiMassa, *Dante in Deutschland*, op cit., p. 70.

Ach, schon verwandelt, beut mit sanftem Trauren

Sie dir zum Kranz die ewig grünen Zweige.²¹⁵

A sonnet in typical Petrarchan form and rhyme scheme of *abba abba cde cde*, the poem apostrophises Petrarch, glorifying him, as Korch perceives, as a poet who has secured lasting fame and, by celebrating him in a sonnet, acknowledges him as privileged 'Formkünstler' and authoritative sonneteer.²¹⁶

The two octets take up a number of generic features from Petrarch's *Canzoniere* (affective, desirous heat, endless longing and wandering), while adding a subtle Romanticised twist. Petrarch's 'Sehnen' (desire being a term with copious analogous terms in the *Canzoniere*) receives a Romantic complement: 'unauflöslich'.²¹⁷ This idea of indissolubility is often linked in Schlegel's writing to conceptions of nature's mysteries, counter-acting an Enlightenment cult of clarity: what he polemically terms 'Unphilosophie'.²¹⁸ Schlegel emphasises rather the originary darkness and irrationalism of being, but also its magical charm:

Was schon in den alten Kosmogonien gelehrt ward, daß die Nacht die Mutter aller Dinge sey, dies erneuert sich in dem Leben eines jeden Menschen: aus dem ursprünglichen Chaos gestaltet sich ihm durch Liebe und Haß, durch Sympathie und Antipathie die Welt. Eben auf dem Dunkel, worein sich die Wurzel unsers Daseyns verliert, auf dem unauflöslichen

²¹⁵ August Wilhelm von Schlegel: *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. I, ed. by Eduard Böcking (Weidmann, 1846), p. 316, available online at <http://www.zeno.org/Literatur/M/Schlegel,+August+Wilhelm/Gedichte/Sonette/Die+itali%C3%A4nischen+Dichter/2.+Petrarca> (accessed 04/04/2026).

²¹⁶ Korch, *Der zweite Petrarkismus*, p. 244.

²¹⁷ For Petrarchan longing and yearning, or desiring, some analogous terms are the verbs *agognare* (*Rvf*: 264: 20), *bramare* (*Rvf*: 85: 14; *Rvf*: 134: 10; *Rvf*: 188: 8), *volere* (*Rvf*: 78: 14; *Rvf*: 82: 5) and related adjectives *bramoso* (*Rvf*: 320: 4; *Rvf*: 165: 8), *vago/a* (*Rvf*: 144: 14) etc.

²¹⁸ A. W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 233.

Geheimniß beruht der Zauber des Lebens, dies ist die Seele aller Poesie. Die Aufklärung nun, welche gar keine Ehrerbietung vor dem Dunkel hat, ist folglich die entschiedenste Gegnerin jener, und thut ihr allen möglichen Abbruch.²¹⁹

Noteworthy here is the forming of the world through a dialectic, or what might be read as Petrarchan antithesis: love and hate, sympathy and antipathy, contrary forces that stimulate unrest. Romantic movement is constituted by the ever changing stages of a process, or as the 'Petrarca' sonnet says, 'ein wechselnd Glühn', or the confusion of alternating states of bliss and pain (l. 3).²²⁰ The unfathomable, cosmic depth, the indissoluble mystery at the root of being is the soul of all poetry.²²¹ Poetry, Schlegel goes on to explain, recalls the child's first playful, errant explorations of sound and language. Children learn to speak not by studying grammatical rules, but rather by speaking, by jumping in with headstrong

²¹⁹ A. W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 234.

²²⁰ Schlegel here anticipates contemporary Petrarch criticism (or is that criticism still caught in modern Romanticism's net of thought?) that similarly stresses the 'unauflöslich' aspect of Petrarch's thought. Thus Marco Ariani, 'Lis', in *Lessico Critico Petrarcesco*, ed. by Luca Marozzi and Romana Brovia (Carocci editore, 2016), pp. 170-181, characterises the *Canzoniere* as dominated by 'insolubili coincidentiae oppositorum' (p. 170) and the poetry's movement as structured by such irresolvable paradoxes, and an enjoyment ('godimento') in the ambivalences of language and signification: 'sono l'irrisoluzione, il dilemma, la fluttuazione il vero filo rosso su cui si snoda l'apparente movimento della poesia, un moto immoto mosso dall'impossibilità di finire [...] uno "stato" di godimento ambivalente [...] che corrisponde all'inesauribile piacere della scrittura e delle sue infinite-finite possibilità di divaricarsi e riaggregarsi *in opposita*' etc. (p. 180). ('Indecision, dilemma, fluctuation: these are the true common thread running through the apparent movement of the poetry, a motionless motion driven by the impossibility of ending [...] a "state" of ambivalent enjoyment [...] that corresponds to the inexhaustible pleasure of writing and its infinite-finite possibilities of diverging and re-grouping *in opposita*').

²²¹ Elsewhere Schlegel locates this mystery precisely in human spirit's 'verschmolzen' state of being both finite and infinite, particular and absolute: 'die unauflöselichen Widersprüche unsers Daseyns, des Endlichen und Unendlichen in uns'. Schlegel, *Vorlesung über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 83. Later on, Dante is made a paragon of intellectual intuition, whereby this indissoluble mystery is, as represented in the *Commedia*, 'die Verbindung des individuellsten und universellsten' (p. 156). Again the topic is the finite and infinite, the dual aspects of human nature – thus in discussing romance court poetry and its idealisation of the lady's beauty, Schlegel names 'die Widersprüche der menschlichen Natur' as 'ihres geistigen und körperlichen Theils' (p. 135). Whatever the binary is named, its basic form is the Romantic notion of the infinite and the finite, and their intertwinement in human nature and subsequently their expression within the aesthetic.

confidence and simply making noise.²²² They meet with phrases that they cannot analyse or break down into logically constituent parts, but which nevertheless have an enchanting, magical effect on them.²²³ This openness to chaos ('alles fragmentarisch und chaotisch'), this 'sich ins Unverständliche hinein begeben'²²⁴ and the playful enjoyment of sound, is what makes the poet analogous to the child in relation both to language and to life.²²⁵ Robbed of understanding before an infinite universe, Schlegel contends, we are all like children: 'die Natur spricht ihnen [die erwachsenen Menschen] als Mutter und Amme ihre ewigen Gesetze in der Bildlichkeit der Erscheinungen vor, die sie dann unvollkommen nachlallen, mit verworrenem Verständniß, aber entschiedenem Gefühl'.²²⁶ This originary mystery is *felt*, not understood, and the poets who explore this dark, impenetrable riddle are akin to the children whose experience is unmediated by the conceptual processes of understanding that impose distance and control on the objects of inquiry. A Romantic theory of poetry is slowly emerging from the dark: proximity to the unknowable, a *jouissance* in the bodily, musical immanence of *sound* over conceptual meaning, of feeling over overthinking. Indeed, the adjective 'unauflöslich' wears its anti-Enlightenment ethos of opposing rational analysis on its etymological sleeve: that what cannot be dissolved, disentangled or broken

²²² In Schlegel's phrasing – 'Redensarten, welche sie unmöglich in ihre Bestandtheile auflösen können' (*Vorlesung über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 235) – we note again the verb 'auflösen' in its relation to what might be called an Enlightenment impulse – analysing and demystifying phenomena, but also in relation to the indissoluble mystery of things discussed prior.

²²³ 'Man kann aber bemerken, daß die Worte ganz magisch auf sie wirken, wie Formeln, mit denen man etwas herbei und wegbannen kann', Schlegel, *Vorlesung über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 235.

²²⁴ Schlegel, *Vorlesung über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 234.

²²⁵ 'Die kindliche Ansicht der Sprache, die sich so ganz an den Laut hängt, ist der poetischen am nächsten, wie schon der Gebrauch des Sylbenmaßes in der Poesie beweist', Schlegel, *Vorlesung über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 235.

²²⁶ Ibid.

down, what cannot be 'analysed'.²²⁷ The absolute is unanalysable by the rationalistic prose of modernity.²²⁸

The Enlightenment's language pedagogy, Schlegel argues, reduces language to an 'äußerliches Werkzeug' that disenchants its utilitarian user from that 'Seele aller Poesie'. On language, he stresses '[d]aß sie uns etwas wahrhaft Innerliches ist, wodurch wir unser Gemüth offenbaren und auch in andern gleiche Wirkungen hervorzurufen hoffen'.²²⁹ Human intersubjectivity is maintained by a use of language beyond the merely instrumental; the poetic is what brings souls together, and it is rooted in the open disposition to the intangible, originary darkness, or what Friedrich Schelling later terms 'der nie aufgehende Rest'.²³⁰

The poet, like the child, is faced with inscrutable but enchanting language, the darkness of the other. This reverberates in Schlegel's poem when he describes the nature of Petrarch's errant wanderings: 'In Labyrinthen ein bezaubert Irren'.

²²⁷ Analysis is etymologically a breaking down of the whole into its parts for study, from Greek *λύω* (*lúō*), I loosen. There is no conceptual 're-solution' (Latin *re-solutus*), no loosening, separating, dissolving.

²²⁸ Paul de Man discusses in depth the perception of poetry among Romantics and other 18-19th century thinkers as being the more primitive and spontaneous engagement with language, with it having a closer proximity to the origins of language itself. As such it has priority over prose, which is more suited to the cold, disenchanted world of modernity: 'In eighteenth-century speculations about the origins of language, the assertion that the archaic language is that of poetry, the contemporary or modern language that of prose is a commonplace. Vico, Rousseau, and Herder, to mention only the most famous names, all assert the priority of poetry over prose, often with a value emphasis that seems to interpret the loss of spontaneity as a decline [...] the definition of poetry as the first language gives it an archaic, ancient quality that is the opposite of modern, whereas the deliberate, cold, and rational character of discursive prose, which can only imitate or represent the original impulse if it does not ignore it altogether, would be the true language of modernity', Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight. Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, 2nd ed., with Introduction by Wlad Godzich (Routledge, 1983), p. 168. See also Bowie's discussion in Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity. From Kant to Nietzsche*, 2nd ed. (Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 176: 'For Hegel the novel "in the modern sense presupposes a reality which has been sorted out into prose" (II 452). In a typical reversal, the novel becomes concerned with how the 'poetry' of life – usually in the form of an idealistic hero – attempts to reassert its rights against the prose of daily existence'.

²²⁹ Schlegel, *Vorlesung über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 235.

²³⁰ Schelling *SW*, 1, 6, 360 (*Freiheitsschrift*, p. 32): 'der nie aufgehende Rest, das, was sich mit der größten Anstrengung nicht in Verstand auflösen läßt, sondern ewig im Grunde bleibt. [...] Ohne dies vorausgehende Dunkel gibt es keine Realität der Kreatur; Finsternis ist ihr notwendiges Erbteil'.

Next to the allusions to Petrarch's own self-mythologisation, the labyrinth is the image of darkness and impossibility par excellence that matches Schlegel's conception of mythic darkness in his theoretical writings.²³¹ Labyrinthine imagery also comes to describe the euphonic qualities of Petrarch's poetic textures: sound constitutes a 'Labyrinth des Wohllauts' in which the listener's ear 'wird [...] verstrickt werden müssen'. This euphonic labyrinthine texture is directly correlated to his 'tiefbewegte[n] Gemüt', 'dem labyrinthischen Gewebe seiner Empfindungen' of which it is the expression in poetic form.²³² Poetry, the Petrarchan lyric, and Romantic anti-Enlightenment thought are all present in the nexus of Schlegel's labyrinth metaphor.

The Enlightenment, striving to illuminate all such darkness, fundamentally misrecognises the human faculty of fantasy.²³³ As an example of this urge to 'cure' humans of all irrational (and therefore pathologised) imaginings, Schlegel discusses the mysteriousness of dreams, returning us to Petrarch's paradoxical 'waches Träumen' and 'wahrhaftes Wähnen',²³⁴ two of four substantivised verbs in the first quatrain emphasising a non-specified duration. Enlightenment thought would explain dreams with recourse to various biological, physiological and psychological phenomena, what Schlegel calls 'die prosaische Ansicht der

²³¹ For the labyrinth in Petrarch see most emblematically e.g. *Rvf*: 211:

'In thirteen twenty-seven, and precisely
at the first hour of the sixth of April
I entered the labyrinth, and I see no way out'.
(ll. 12-14), or *Rvf*: 224: 4 ('long wandering in a blind labyrinth').

²³² A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesung über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 169.

²³³ 'Sie verkannten durchaus die Rechte der Phantasie, und hätten, wo möglich, die Menschen gern ganz von ihr geheilt', *Vorlesung über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 236.

²³⁴ For dreams and visions, and their merging cf. e.g. *Rvf*: 250-251, 282, 343: 5. Once dead, Laura often appears to the poet in dreams – dreams in medieval culture are where what St. Augustine calls a *visio imaginativa* can take place. See Francis X. Newman, 'St. Augustine's Three Visions and the Structure of the Commedia', *MLN*, 82.1 (1967), pp. 56-78 (p. 59). Sonnets 250 and 251 are a diptych that correlate well with Schlegel's formulation of the poet's 'wahres Träumen' and 'wahrhaftes Wähnen': the nighttime vision and subsequent anxious imaginings. For the vision as enabling this 'sequence of gloomy omens' (trans. mine) see the explication of both poems in Bettarini's commentary, *Canzoniere*, vol. II, p. 1130.

Träume',²³⁵ which fails to fully account for the chaos of dreams arising out of the 'höchst wunderbaren bizarren Freithätigkeit der Phantasie'.²³⁶ Poetry, consequently, loves a dream, given the latter's immanent link to the dark depths of our being, irreducible to the demands of enlightened understanding. Night, writes Schlegel, 'ist die Zeit der Träume'.²³⁷ In the solitude of night, accompanied only by the flutter of nightbirds (l. 7), the sonnet's speaker lets 'die tiefen Klagelaute' (l. 8) rise up from the depths of the self.

The sonnet picks up on what in his Petrarch lecture Schlegel identifies as the 'Wechsel zwischen herbem Schmerz und sanfter Melancholie. Verklärte Erinnerungen. Immer mehr eine demütige Sehnsucht nach dem Ewigen'.²³⁸ The poem opens with the theme of incessant change that plagues the *Canzoniere*, change that is tempered by his unchanging desire and longing and ultimately by his enduring fame and lasting poetic fortune ('die ewig grünen Zweige', l. 14). This longing for the inscrutable becomes endless, and the cause of motion ('Irren', l. 2). Endless movement towards the object of desire, it captures the portrayal of nature and poetry (as in Athenäums-Fragment 116) as an eternal becoming caught 'in einer unaufhörlichen Schöpfung'.²³⁹ Art and nature, subject and object, infinite and finite are levelled in a self-contained unity, and where the two verbs of the sonnet's first quatrain kickstart the poem's own movement, its final, verbless line details how Daphne, metamorphosed into the evergreen laurel tree, extends a branch in a symbolic offering of the unchangeable, closing off the sonnet form in stasis, so that the artwork 'vollendet in sich selbst zurückkehr[t]'.²⁴⁰ Eternity (the 'ewig' laurel

²³⁵ Schlegel, *Vorlesung über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 236.

²³⁶ Schlegel, *Vorlesung über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 237.

²³⁷ Schlegel, *Vorlesung über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 234.

²³⁸ Schlegel, *Vorlesung über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 158.

²³⁹ Schlegel, *Vorlesung über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 262.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

branch, poetry) responds to the call of the original gesture of melancholic yearning, and the poem's formal ending is matched with its thematic approach towards motionlessness (post-metamorphosis Daphne). The affect of Romantic longing (l. 1) opens the poem, the figural embodiment of eternity in the laurel branch of poetry closes it. Form thereby contains the movement of the human spirit 'aus dem Innersten des Gemüthes'.²⁴¹

George, who incidentally excludes the Petrarchist poems of Klopstock, Schiller, Heine and Meyer from his 1902 anthology *Das Jahrhundert Goethes* (published almost in the same breath as the turning point combination of *Der Teppich des Lebens* and *Die Fibel*), is somewhere in between the first and second Petrarchisms (my Types-1 and -2).²⁴² He extracts from the Italian a number of formal, stylistic and thematic aspects, sometimes tangled up with a broader Petrarchan sensibility concerned with the effects of time, fragmentation and uncertainty. The articulation of time arises out of the lyric sequence as such, where the space between two poems separates the end of one from the beginning of another. If managed correctly, August Wilhelm suggests, one can build a closed off unity, an organic 'Einheit', needing no more nor less than the sum of its parts to capture the totality of the poet's experience.²⁴³ Such a unity composed of *fragmenta* is ultimately to act, as Barolini writes, 'as a defensive bulwark against the forces of narrativity, time, death'.²⁴⁴ This broader Petrarchan (Type-2)

²⁴¹ Schlegel, *Vorlesung über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 6.

²⁴² See for example the list of Schiller's poems alluding to Petrarch and Laura in Korch, *Der zweite Petrarkismus*, p. 156 (note 186), which are not present in *Das Jahrhundert Goethes*.

²⁴³ Schlegel, *Geschichte*, p. 182-83. For the sonnet itself as 'eine in sich zurückgekehrte, vollständige und organisch artikulierte Form', see p. 193.

²⁴⁴ Teodolinda Barolini, *Dante and the Origins of Italian Literary Culture* (Fordham University Press, 2006), p. 214.

sensibility is what the present study identifies as a key poetological impetus for George's striving against contingency.

Roland Greene identifies the quintessence of the Petrarchan cycle in an 'obsession with temporality': 'the conceit of temporal process, of a continuum that binds the entire sequence of "scattered rhymes" and activates what might be called the phenomenology of fiction'.²⁴⁵ The sequence not only represents time in its formal patterning and on the deictic level of the individual poems, for example in 'words and phrases for temporal reportage'²⁴⁶ but – and here Greene and Culler are theoretically close – in the very performative 'event' itself of lyric utterance, likened to the ritual mode of liturgical texts, something in reality *happens*, the text manifests itself as 'a real-life element of the empirical world' in a particular time and place.²⁴⁷

Time is of the essence: Barolini identifies time, in Petrarch's understanding, as 'a medium that literally cuts the ground out from under us, destabilizing and deracinating us', forcing upon us a 'radical ontological instability, the instability of being itself', foregrounded by various rhetorical devices in the *Canzoniere*.²⁴⁸ Petrarch's temporal lyric cycle becomes the standard expressive mode for what Meidl discusses as the new subjective experience of time in the Renaissance, looking at how sound patterns can vary speed and rhythm, and thus 'controlling'

²⁴⁵ Roland Greene, *Post-Petrarchism. Origins and Innovations of the Western Lyric Sequence* (Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 22. By 'phenomenology of fiction' Greene refers to this sequencing of lyric poems that, with a consistent use of deixis grounding the reports in the subjective lyric self, develops a narrative continuity within the poetic cycle, a fictional narrative – 'the sum of the several deictic settings on which a poem or a collocation of poems is founded—temporal, personal, spatial, social—and therefore a kind of measure of the lyric's implied distance between intelligence and object', p. 19. Cf. Schlegel's understanding of the *Canzoniere* as a lyrical novel, mentioned above.

²⁴⁶ Greene, *Post-Petrarchism*, p. 22.

²⁴⁷ Greene, *Post-Petrarchism*, p. 11.

²⁴⁸ Images of multiplicity, deictic markers of time, anniversary poems etc. Barolini, 'The Self in the Labyrinth of Time', pp. 37-38.

time.²⁴⁹ This new obsession with time corresponds to the increasing 'Verräumlichung von Zeit' in the early modern period that is expressed in journeying metaphors of the *Canzoniere*, which intertwine time and space.²⁵⁰ The preoccupation with time and the imagery of paths, ways and places in which one gets lost, spiritually alone and desolate, are fundamental conceits of George's poetry, and they coincide as much with his Dantism (being lost in the dark wood) as they do with his Petrarchism. Indeed, Fechner's summary of Klopstock's lyric self fits George's early works just as well: the lyric self is stuck in a 'von Petrarca geprägten sublunaren Einsamkeit als Spannung zwischen Ruhebedürfnis und Ruhelosigkeit'.²⁵¹ The unstable metamorphoses of 'sublunar ephemerality' in Moevs' terms, will thus be what George seeks to gain control over in the heavily Dantean revelation of *Der Teppich des Leben's* angel and then in the Maximin event.²⁵²

²⁴⁹ Martina Meidl, "'Benedetto sia 'l giorno, e 'l mese, et l'anno': Zum Zeitdiskurs des frühen Petrarkismus", in *Der Petrarkismus: Ein europäischer Gründungsmythos*, ed. by Michael Bernsen and Bernhard Huss (V&R unipress, 2011), pp. 85-100 (p. 87). This is not far off of Culler's theory of lyric utterance as an event that institutes itself in a grounding, presencing moment. See Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, p. 36.

²⁵⁰ Meidl, "'Benedetto sia 'l giorno, e 'l mese, et l'anno'", pp. 91-92. Barolini, by contrast, follows the Aristotelian conception familiar to Dante and Petrarch, and given by Dante in the *Convivio*: 'Time, according to Aristotle in the fourth book of the *Physics*, is a "number of motion, in respect of 'before' and 'after'"' (*Conv.* IV. II. 6) (cf. Barolini, 'The Self in the Labyrinth of Time', p. 33). References to the *Convivio* are from *Dante. Convivio. A Dual-Language Critical Edition*, ed. and trans. by Andrew Frisardi (Cambridge University Press, 2021), p. 221.

²⁵¹ Jörg-Ulrich Fechner, Klopstocks Petrarch und Laura (und die Nachfolger – und die Folgen?) in Francesco Petrarca in Deutschland (Ed. Aurnhammer), op cit., pp. 313-347. Here p. 318.

²⁵² Christian Moevs, *The Metaphysics of Dante's Commedia*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 117.

3. Literature Review · George's Trecento

i. George and Petrarch

It has been pointed out in recent years that where Dante's influence on George has long been recognised, the influence of Petrarch has only begun to be explored by critics.²⁵³ This and the next sub-chapter review key moments of scholarship on the twin influences of Petrarch and Dante on George, while more detailed and text-immanent insights of these scholars will be drawn on in the following chapters.

A cursory overview of scholarship will confirm the introductory claim if one begins with Mario Pensa's work from the mid twentieth century, who recurrently considers George as a reader of both Dante and Petrarch.²⁵⁴ Pensa links the artistic program of George's *Die Blätter für die Kunst* to both Italian *Stilnovism* and French Symbolism, while simultaneously distancing it from German Romanticism.²⁵⁵ Pensa argues that George's 'neue[] fühlweise'²⁵⁶ is precisely not Romantic sentimentality, but rather a successor to the 'Dantean "inner" life' as expressed in the sonnet 'Tutti li miei pensier parlan d'Amore' from the *Vita Nova*, in which the soul's interiority is presented as a totality of multiple experiences in the face of *Amore*, with *Amore* itself becoming a sort of 'rigid designator' for a variety of subjective, phenomenological experiences that are internalized by the

²⁵³ Ute Oelmann, 'Die Fibel (SW I)' in *Stefan George und sein Kreis. Ein Handbuch*, vol. 1, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer, Wolfgang Braungart, Stefan Breuer and Ute Oelmann, 2nd edn (de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 95-106 (p. 101). Cf. *SW*, I: 102. A similar point is made by Thorston Fitzton, 'Trost und Beispiel', p. 216.

²⁵⁴ Mario Pensa, *Stefan George: Saggio Critico*, 2nd edn (Zanichelli, 1961).

²⁵⁵ Pensa, *Stefan George*, pp. 55-58. For an overview of *Stilnovism*, a somewhat contentious term, see: Zygmunt G. Barański, 'Dolce Stil Novo', in *The Dante Encyclopedia*, ed. by Richard Lansing (Routledge, 2010), pp. 308-311. Barański gives a prospective outline: 'As a result, the "sweet new style" is normally described as a kind of lyric verse which is formally elegant, linguistically refined, and aurally attractive, and which presents a view of love as intellectually and spiritually ennobling'.

²⁵⁶ *BfdK* quoted in Pensa, *Stefan George*, p. 55.

lyric self.²⁵⁷ While Dante provides a model of the inner mode through the totalising force of *Amore*,²⁵⁸ he does not provide the formal factor, which is given by the 'vision intérieure' of French Symbolism: the interiorization, or spiritualisation, of the external world as achieved in the formal construction of the poem.²⁵⁹ This, Pensa argues, is what separates George and Dante, and by extension Petrarch and the Stilnovists, as well as the Symbolists, from Romantic art, which aims instead for 'bewilderment in the uncertainty of the infinite',²⁶⁰ leading to the breaking of form in the abundance of the absolute and wanting to be 'feeling without form, as the human drama of the Romantics who want to be spirits without bodies'.²⁶¹ Essentially, Pensa characterises the covenant of George-Dante-Petrarch as concerned with Italian emotive content wedded to French Symbolism's forms.

Pensa further distances 'das Geistige' in the George Circle from Romanticism and aligns it with Symbolist poetics, where form's exigency makes the exterior world into a symbol of the subject.²⁶² Pensa argues that Petrarch and French Symbolism differ insofar as Petrarch provides a universal mode of feeling that

²⁵⁷ 'il "dentro" dantesco' Pensa, *Stefan George*, p. 57 (trans. mine). 'All my thoughts speak of Love', Dante, *Vita nova* cited from William Franke, *Dante's Vita nuova and the New Testament. Hermeneutics and the Poetics of Revelation*. With the original Italian Text and a new English Translation of the *Vita nuova* by William Franke (Cambridge University Press, 2021). Translations from the *Vita nova* will be from Franke, cited as chapter (roman numerals): paragraph. Poem quoted in Pensa, *Stefan George*, p. 56. *Amore*, here, the guarantor of sense and meaningful experience, brings together and organises a chaos of phenomenological experiences that the subject is faced with. Cf. Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, pp. 109-10.

²⁵⁸ Pensa, *Stefan George*, 57. Pensa not unproblematically groups them together as Dantean-Stilnovist-Petrarchan. See *ibid.*

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁰ ('smarrimento nell'indeterminatezza dell'infinito'), Pensa, *Stefan George*, p. 56.

²⁶¹ ('sentimento senza forma, come il dramma umano dei Romantici è di voler essere spirito senza corpo'), Pensa, *Stefan George*, p. 102 (English translation adapted from DeepL Translator).

²⁶² Pensa, *Stefan George*, p. 56. For a good overview of the 'viciously narcissistic self-reflexivity' latent in Symbolism's turning of nature into the artificial mirror of language, see: William Franke, 'The Linguistic Turning of the Symbol. Baudelaire and his French Symbolist Heirs', in *Baudelaire and the Poetics of Modernity*, ed. by Patricia A. Ward (Vanderbilt University Press, 2001), pp. 15-28 (p. 26). Franke's treatment of Symbolism against various discursive (Neoplatonic, biblical, Romantic, medieval) backgrounds is particularly illuminating.

George transforms into the experience of an individual subject.²⁶³ The Symbolists provide a model with which to turn that experiential feeling into form, 'to spiritualise the external world by transfiguring it into a symbol of inner life'.²⁶⁴ Yet what is Petrarch's universal subjectivity compared to George's individualist subjectivity? Petrarch as George would have known him (via the lyric poems) is expressly individual and concerned with the specificities of his own soul and biographical story, the phenomenological fiction of the *Canzoniere*, as Greene calls it.²⁶⁵ Or is this 'universal' subjectivity the Romantic notion of a soul in tune with the cosmos, a model of Romantic longing and striving as discussed above (yet George and Petrarch are *not* Romantic according to Pensa)? Furthermore, the question of individuality itself in relation to Georgean poetics is complex: at once practising the Symbolist strategy of 'Entpersönlichung'²⁶⁶ the writings of the George Circle often stressed the universalist character of George's *Ich* precisely in its overcoming the contingencies of the mere individual and becoming a conduit for the 'superpersonal'.²⁶⁷

²⁶³ i.e. in writing the poem Petrarch represents the object experienced from the point of view of a universal subjectivity, Pensa, *Stefan George*, p. 99.

²⁶⁴ 'che mostra di spiritualizzare il mondo esteriore trasfigurandolo a simbolo della vita interiore'.), Pensa, *Stefan George*, p. 58. One is reminded of Hegel's formula, explored above, of Romantic poetry's transfiguration of reality.

²⁶⁵ Greene, *Post-Petrarchism*, p. 19.

²⁶⁶ Precisely via abstract symbols, as Zanucchi analyses, such as the landscape as 'Reflektor für das lyrische Ich' in order to problematise the always literary-artificial nature of that *Ich*, see Mario Zanucchi, *Transfer und Modifikation: Die französischen Symbolisten in der deutschsprachigen Lyrik der Moderne (1890-1923)* (de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 220-221.

²⁶⁷ For George's absolute exemplariness for all mankind, a character from which 'das Zufällige der Individualität' has been purged, see Edith Landmann, *Georgika* (Weiß'sche Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1920), p. 74. See Gundolf, *George*, for George as a conduit of the superpersonal, be that superpersonal being (p. 58), power(s) (p. 107, p. 109), law(s) (p. 131), or event(s) (p. 184) etc. Indeed, Gundolf (p. 61) writes that a decisive event in George's poetic development is a move from the personal mode of the *Fibel's Legenden* (and thus still somewhat Petrarchan poems as I read them) to the superpersonal tone of *Hymnen*. Furthermore, individualism is a particularly modern pathology according to the George Circle's thinking, so that in relation to Dante George once mused: "Die Individualität muss den Leuten im Mittelalter verdammt gleichgültig gewesen sein." See Landmann, *Gespräche mit Stefan George*, p. 17. Paradoxically however, individuality and individualism are not equally gauged, so that Dante can also simultaneously be theorised as the origin of individualism, citing Landmann, *Gespräche* (p. 65), once more: 'Dichterisches sei erst,

Pensa's reading of Romanticism here remains somewhat uncritically within the Hegelian tradition regarding Romantic aesthetics, or what György Lukács called its 'Kultus der Nacht'.²⁶⁸ However, as seen already with A.W. Schlegel, the German Romantics emphasised form and its dialectic with poetic consciousness: as the 'Darstellung des Absoluten im Besonderen', poetry and art naturally require limitation and constraint, a formal container.²⁶⁹ A poetic work, says Schelling, sectioned off from the totality of language and culture, remains 'vollkommen in sich selbst beschlossen'.²⁷⁰ This self-resolved, concluded, decided²⁷¹ and ultimately limited aspect of art is paradoxically what evokes the absolute. Indeed, Schelling argues that to see in Petrarch a soul or subjective sensibility dissolving in love is

wo Individualität sei, aber eben diese gebe es vielleicht zur Zeit Karls des Grossen, dann aber erst wieder im fünfzehnten Jahrhundert, beziehungsweise von Dante an'. What matters, it seems, is the removal of, as she writes in *Georgika*, the contingent ('das Zufällige') aspects of the individual, thus allowing some essential core of personality to shine through – the 'Gestalt'. In the ideology of the Circle, the personal is ideally the vessel for the super-personal, to speak with Gunfolf ('Georges Dichtung ist der persönliche Durchbruch übergesellschaftlicher Geschichtskräfte', *George*, p. 110). Although George did not consider Dante a medieval poet, the 'Gestalt' quality of his individualism likely overshadows the Circle's perception of individualism as pathologically modern.

²⁶⁸ 'Novalis treibt mit dem Kultus der Nacht einen Kult des dunklen Untergrundes, des Unbewußten, des nur Instinktiven und Spontanen [...] Der romantische Kult des Unmittelbaren und Unbewußten führt notwendig zu einem Kult von Nacht und Tod, von Krankheit und Verwesung'. György Lukács, *Fortschritt und Reaktion in der deutschen Literatur* (Aufbau-Verlag, 1950), p. 62. See e.g. Nicholas Saul's discussion of Hegel: 'the Romantic aesthetic subject stops half-way, cannot go beyond negativity to full mediation with the real, and remains trapped in the prison of the self whilst yearning helplessly to transcend it [...] In true art, by contrast, there should be nothing dark, true characters should always be at rest in themselves, and such literature is the vapid, frivolous and empty product of a sickness of mind. But the ironic character, constantly turning into its opposite, is the Romantic ideal'. Nicholas Saul, 'The pursuit of the subject: literature as critic and perfecter of philosophy 1790 – 1830', in *Philosophy and German Literature, 1700-1990*, ed. by Nicholas Saul (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 57-101 (p. 95). Cf. also, under Hegel's influence, Terry Eagleton's reading of Romanticism: 'In the modern world, however, and most typically in Romanticism, the spiritual absorbs the sensual, content overwhelms form', *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (Routledge, 2002), p. 21. Likewise Eagleton's treatment of Hegel and the aesthetic in relation to religion and philosophy in *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Blackwell, 1990), where the aesthetic is 'troublingly resistant to the translucent power of reason' (p. 144) and thus unfit to be the ultimate representative of the Absolute in Hegel's system: it necessarily cedes to religion and philosophy in the end, remaining an 'inferior incarnation' (ibid).

²⁶⁹ Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst*, in *SW*, I, 5, 641. I quote Schelling here taking him in some ways as proximate to the early Romantics with regards to art. For the similarities between them see Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy, Volume 7: 18th and 19th Century German Philosophy* (Bloomsbury, 2003), pp. 16-17.

²⁷⁰ Schelling, *SW*, I, 5, 637.

²⁷¹ On the etymological sense of the cision, the 'Scheidung' in 'entscheiden', see Jason M. Wirth's note in *The Ages of the World*, translated, with an introduction, by Jason M. Wirth (State University of New York Press, 2000), p. 135n31.

to seriously misread the poet, thereby countering *avant la lettre* Pensa's notion of a generic Romantic consciousness that 'breaks the shell of every form and spills over into the indeterminate'.²⁷² Pensa would agree here about Petrarch's formalism, but the Romantics established him as a *formal* model for their own modern poetics, seeking not to burst the boundaries of form in the dithyrambic dizziness of subjectivity, but to practice and contain themselves in the clarity of poetic form, finding freedom in the bounds of formal necessity,²⁷³ and glimpsing the indifference of subject and object (subject and nature) within the aesthetic.²⁷⁴ Or, in George's own words: 'Strengstes maass ist zugleich höchste freiheit' (SW, xvii: 69).

Pensa elsewhere reads George's Dante as rooted in but differing from the German Romantics, naming Petrarch as a model not for George's poetry but for his Dante translations, given that his translation is a non-complete collection of episodes, obtaining more of a lyrical, impressionistic and thus modern rather than a medieval epic character,²⁷⁵ and differentiating George from his Romantic

²⁷² 'rompe il guscio di ogni forma e trabocca nell'indeterminato', Pensa, *Stefan George*, p. 56. Schelling denies precisely this generic (Hegelian?) picture of the Romantic subject in his reading of Petrarch, emphasising that the poet's formal rigour is a key component of his poetic consciousness (although he does take recourse to imagery characterising Petrarch as 'soft' in relation to strong-man Dante, even if he is just as strict formally, but in his own way): 'Das ganze Leben des Petrarca war jener geistigen Liebe geweiht, die sich in der Anbetung genügt. Dieser harmonischen, von der Blüthe der Bildung und der edelsten Tugenden seiner Zeit erfüllten Seele bedurfte es, um in ihr die italienische Poesie zu dem höchsten Grad lyrischer Schönheit, Reinheit und Vortrefflichkeit auszubilden. Man würde sich sehr irren, in Petrarca einen in Liebe zerfließenden und zerschmelzenden Dichter zu suchen, da seine Formen eben so streng, präcis, bestimmt sind als die des Dante in ihrer Art' (emphasis mine). Schelling, SW, I, 5, 644.

²⁷³ Cf. Žižek's (*The Indivisible Remainder*, pp. 25-26) Schellingian take on the necessity of rules which only when mastered allows one freedom: 'the free expansion of thinking has its Ground in the 'contraction' of grammatical and other rules [...] we 'think freely' only when we follow the rules of language without being aware of them'. (p. 26).

²⁷⁴ For this aspect of Schelling's philosophy of art see Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, pp. 133-36. It is not so far from 'Gestalt' ideology as formulated by Gundolf whereby in George's *Dasein* and consequently his poetry 'der uralte Zwiespalt von Freiheit und Notwendigkeit [...] aufgehoben [ist]'. Gundolf, *George*, p. 87.

²⁷⁵ Mario Pensa, 'Stefan George e Dante. Contributo alla storia della critica tedesca ed all'estetica dell'impressionismo in Germania', in *Annali del Corso di lingue e letterature straniere*, 1 (1950), pp. 2-39 (p. 15).

precursors who tended to emphasise the epic, universal totality of the *Commedia*.²⁷⁶ Pensa's article continues in a detailed investigation of George's Dantean inheritance, but leaves the reference to Petrarch almost as an aside, albeit a significant one.

A later article by Pensa documents instances in George's poetry where Italy and the Mediterranean south play a role as the fated site of aesthetic experience.²⁷⁷ Italy emerges as ideologically loaded and linked to divine renewal in Germany that will take place when 'Roman' and German blood are mixed.²⁷⁸ The twin influences of Petrarch and Dante are then elaborated. In *Die Fibel*'s opening sonnet (SW, I:13) Pensa encounters 'a surprising anticipation of the poet's whole life: dissatisfaction with the world, the search for divine guidance, the revelation and loss of that guidance, the impulse to action and the ensuing heavenly inspiration'.²⁷⁹ Jan Aler likewise bases his examination of George's *juvenilia* on this premise, explaining how in the *Fibel* one finds 'die Präfigurationen von Problemen und Motiven' elaborated in later works.²⁸⁰ This 'surprising anticipation' is however a function of George's own making. *Die Fibel* is arranged retrospectively, from the standpoint of knowledge about where his poetry has already gone. Thus contrary to Aler the present study argues for this self-conscious self-styling, and that the

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Mario Pensa, 'Stefan George e l'Italia', in *Il Veltro: Rivista della Civiltà Italiana*, 6 (1962), pp. 227-242 (p. 229).

²⁷⁸ Pensa, 'Stefan George e l'Italia', p. 232. For Maximin as 'ein, deutscher' Gott for whom the poet must turn away from the Mediterranean south, see: Georg Dörr, 'Stefan Georges neopagane Maximin-Religion. Bricolage und intramundane Eschatologie', in *Stefan George und die Religion*, ed. by Wolfgang Braungart (de Gruyter, 2015), pp. 52-79 (p. 60).

²⁷⁹ 'una sorprendente anticipazione di tutta la vita del poeta: insoddisfazione del mondo, ricerca di una guida divina, rivelazione e perdita di tale guida, impulso all'azione ed incielamento da essa scaturiti', Pensa, 'Stefan George e l'Italia', p. 237. *Incielamento* itself is a Dantism, neologised in the third canto of the *Paradiso*, line 97, in the verb *inciellare*, as Hollander explains: 'inheavens, "set[s] in a higher sphere"', cited from the commentary to *Paradiso* III: 97-97 by Robert Hollander, *Paradiso* (New Doubleday/Anchor, 2007), as found on Dante Lab, <http://dantelab.dartmouth.edu> (accessed 17/03/2022).

²⁸⁰ Jan Aler, *Symbol und Verkündung: Studium um Stefan George* (Helmut Küpper, 1976), p. 29.

choice of publishing *Die Fibel* was not *merely* 'die eigene Entwicklung im Rückblick als geschichtliches Phänomen zu würdigen'.²⁸¹

The sonnet, for Pensa, recalls Petrarch's 'Alone and deep in thought I measure out' (*Rvf* 35, trans. Musa) as well as Dante's *Vita Nova*.²⁸² Regarding the question of whether George at that young age was conscious ('aveva egli coscienza') of laying out the spiritual-ideological grounding of his entire *oeuvre*, Pensa's answer is definite: 'Certamente no'.²⁸³ However his suggestion otherwise, that it was George's youthful, prophetic instinct ('istinto') to have identified with the Italian *Trecento* at an early stage,²⁸⁴ overlooks that the answer affirmed is virtually identical to the one just negated, for what does it mean to have an 'instinctively prophetic youth' ('giovinezza profetica per istinto') if not to be able to map out in advance the contours of one's own future road? Perhaps prophetic instinct and *being conscious of* are not identical, but the result is the same, and advantageous to the author of a 'Werkpolitik'. The answer lies in looking at the retrospective manipulation at the heart of George's publication of *Die Fibel* in the first place: by strategically organising his work and setting up a hall of mirroring themes and motifs across segments of that work, he creates the illusion of a grounding prophetic instinct.

Recent scholarship on George's early poetry has emphasised this *Trecento* connection,²⁸⁵ but Pensa ultimately overstates George's identification with Petrarch: the 1899 photo of George with the 1511 edition of the *Canzoniere* in hand

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Pensa, 'Stefan George e l'Italia', p. 237.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Thus Chong Shen, also highlighting the retrospective dimensions of *Die Fibel*, makes a running point of comparison to Petrarch (and Dante) in his study of the passerby-motif, which will be drawn on in the following chapters. Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, op cit.

is a testament to George's own self-monumentalising, not to any sense of kinship he felt with the poet.²⁸⁶

Petrarch is mentioned again only after much exploration of George's incarnational poetics of revelation in light of Dante in the remainder of the article,²⁸⁷ but the point is crucial:

The Maximin episode was the culmination of the poet's life: the prophecy formulated in Petrarchan style in a sonnet at the beginning of his poetic career was now being fulfilled in Dantean fashion. It was the goal towards which his whole life had been striving, and therefore it is the fulcrum on which both his earlier and later works rest.²⁸⁸

A Dantean destination is found for the errant wanderings of Petrarchan longing. Pensa here is identifying the literary equivalent of a conversion, what this dissertation identifies in George's publication of the Petrarchan *Fibel* and its retrospective recounting of past errors almost alongside the Dantean *Teppich*, leading on to *Der Siebente Ring*.²⁸⁹ George's performative Dante reception²⁹⁰

²⁸⁶ Pensa, 'Stefan George e l'Italia', p. 238. The photo in reference is discussed in Chapter Three, below. Cf. Joachim Jacob, 'Hymnen Pilgerfahrten Algabal (SW II)', in *Stefan George und sein Kreis. Ein Handbuch*, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer, Wolfgang Braungart, Stefan Breuer and Ute Oelmann, 2nd edn (de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 107-121 for Georgean 'Selbst-Monumentalisierung' (p. 108).

²⁸⁷ Pensa, 'Stefan George e l'Italia', pp. 238-41.

²⁸⁸ 'L'episodio di Maximin fu il culmine della vita del poeta: la profezia formulata nella cornice petrarchesca di un sonetto all'inizio della sua carriera poetica si compiva ora dantescamente. Si trattava della meta a cui tutta la sua vita aveva teso, perciò è il fulcro su cui poggia la sua opera sia anteriore che posteriore'. Pensa, 'Stefan George e l'Italia', p. 240.

²⁸⁹ Cf. Freccero, *In Dante's Wake*, p. 26: 'In a conversion narrative, the distinction [in perspectives—J.W.] creates the temporal illusion of an experience retrospectively recounted'.

²⁹⁰ One thinks of his appearance as Dante at the *Faschingsfest* on the 14 February 1904 (see *Münchner Stadtmuseum's* online page 'Maskenfest in der Wohnung Henry von Heislers, Ungererstraße 11', https://sammlungonline.muenchner-stadtmuseum.de/objekt?tx_so_displayso%5Baction%5D=show&tx_so_displayso%5Bobjekt%5D=2883&tx_so_displayso%5BoriginUId%5D=7807&cHash=0baf2683cc91f370453f8c5972974ad

provokes questions about the nature of conversion: how an inner change can be registered externally, and do external representations of doubts contradict the inner consistency that conversion requires?²⁹¹ Where do the Petrarchesque and the Dantesque meet and diverge with respect to conversion, thematically, stylistically, philosophically? Furthermore, what does conversion imply for us secularised moderns and our relation to the past? George, once a self-described atheist, and his aesthetic, non-religious use of ritual has been well studied, so the issue is his drawing on religiously-oriented ritualistic performativity while positioned between a literary-poetic activity in the secularized world of modernity on the one hand, and religious conversion, or a medieval concept of a divinely ordained universe with a concomitant poetics of revelation on the other, between Petrarch and Dante.²⁹² Two differing poetics, and two different models of imitable poetic personality, as Zuccato writes: ‘Dante was a major model of the prophet-poet; Petrarch was a

(accessed 12/09/25, George on the far left with Maximilian Kronberger second from the left). Although the term performative is used loosely here, its use in critical theory and gender studies could be employed in assessing how George’s Dantean pose manifests precisely, to quote Butler, in ‘the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts [...] that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being’. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge, 2007), p. 45. That is, to produce the appearance of substance retrospectively, by allowing each succeeding work to re-determine the significance of the previous; each Dantean work retroactively works to organise the previous works into its own narrative history, gaining the appearance of coherence and cohesion. This is central to the analysis of authority for it is in precisely the manipulations and control of what Lacan calls the ‘indefinite sliding of signification’ that the poet can deploy the definitive *point-de-capiton* of meaning – positing the final word, as it were, closing the open-ended, desire-engendering metonymy of a syntactical structure. Who or what authority establishes the final say, who pins the meaning down with the ‘button tie’? See Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 681/805. On the retroactive working of the point-de-capiton see Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder*, p. 29. On metonymy and desire in Lacan see Bruce Fink, *Lacan to the Letter: Reading Écrits Closely* (University of Minnesota Press, 2004), p. 100.

²⁹¹ Barolini points out that, in the Augustinian tradition, ‘true conversion, once achieved, is by definition a condition from which there is no relapsing’. Barolini, ‘The Self in the Labyrinth of Time’, p. 36.

²⁹² On ritual see Wolfgang Braungart, *Ästhetischer Katholizismus: Stefan Georges Rituale der Literatur* (Max Niemeyer, 1997). For George as self-described atheist see his letter to August Stahl (06/01/1889) cited by Kauffmann, ‘Das Leben Stefan Georges. Biographische Skizze’, p.16 (listed in the Stefan George Archive, Württembergische Landesbibliothek Stuttgart, StGA George II,05851).

model of the scholar-poet and melancholy lover,' Dante the picture of a resolute, 'indomitable fighter for justice', while Petrarch an 'erudite weakling'.²⁹³

Emmy Rosenfeld similarly reads George's Dante as competing with his Petrarch: 'der Einfluß von *valclusas siedler* blieb lange *trost und beispiel* für ihn, bis er später durch das große Dante-Erlebnis in den Hintergrund gedrängt wurde'.²⁹⁴ Our muscular Dante-verb 'drängen' returns again, now to banish Petrarch from the future and keep him in the past. Rosenfeld calls Petrarch 'das große literarische Erlebnis' of George's formative years,²⁹⁵ inspiring both literary *content* such as the melancholic, solitary, wanderer poet and his search for curing inner conflict, as well as literary *form* in the sonnet.²⁹⁶

The chapter on George and Petrarch in Rosenfeld's book-length study fleshes out many of the ideas presented *en passant* above.²⁹⁷ Petrarch emerges in

²⁹³ Edoardo Zuccato, *Petrarch in Romantic England*, pp. ix-x.

²⁹⁴ Emmy Rosenfeld, 'Erste Begegnungen Stefan Georges mit Italien', in *Unterscheidung und Bewahrung: Festschrift für Hermann Kunisch zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. by Klaus Lazarowicz et al. (Berlin: 1961), pp. 294-303 (p. 295). Rosenfeld is referring to poem 18 from the 'Vorspiel' to *Der Teppich des Lebens* (v: 27), which is examined in chapter three.

²⁹⁵ Rosenfeld, 'Erste Begegnungen Stefan Georges mit Italien', pp. 296-97.

²⁹⁶ Rosenfeld, 'Erste Begegnungen Stefan Georges mit Italien', p. 297. To what extent the sonnet remained a favourite form of George's ('Das Sonett blieb eine von George geliebte Form', p. 298) is factually questionable. For a reader like George, 'geschult[]' (p. 297) in poetry by Petrarch and later a translator of sonneteers like Shakespeare and Baudelaire, sonnets by George himself are curiously rare. This is however only curious if we do not immerse ourselves in the George Circle's poetics, which demands that new forms be adapted for the 'Geist' of the age, and that already by the time of the Romantics the sonnet had become a mere 'Kunstspiel [...] ohne dichterisch seelischen Wert' (Gundolf, *Goethe*, p. 578). The form does not appear in George's own poetic work after *Pilgerfahrten* (1892), with its Petrarchistic poem *Neuer Ausfahrtsegen* marking the end of the form's appearance. After this poem the sonnet is essentially replaced by George's newer forms. Anna Maria Arrighetti, 'Dante · Die Göttliche Komödie. Übertragungen (SW X/XI)', in *Stefan George und sein Kreis. Ein Handbuch*, vol. 1, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer, Wolfgang Braungart, Stefan Breuer and Ute Oelmann, 2nd edn (de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 218-238 (p. 218), cites Gundolf here for the 'hohes Ansehen' the sonnet form had in the George Circle, but this must be qualified with the fact that Gundolf (representative of Georgian ideology) differentiates between 'das alte Sonnet Dantes und Petrarcas' and the sonnets of the Romantics and Goethe in his praise of the form. Fechner makes a similar point, referring to 'nur wenige Beispiele für das Sonett' in George's mature years. Jörg-Ulrich Fechner, 'Stefan George. "Sonett nach Petrarka"', in *Castrum Peregrini* (Castrum Peregrini Presse, 1971), pp. 1-20 (p. 17). A further consideration for the relative disinterest for the sonnet on George's part might include the anti-individualist ethos of his works, straining as they do to capture the world while remaining impersonal (this is the crux of Pirro's reading of the early works, see Pirro, *Come corda troppo tesa*, p. 35). For the sonnet's participation in the building of a bourgeois ideology of individualism, see Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, p. 316.

²⁹⁷ Emmy Rosenfeld, *L'Italia nella poesia di Stefan George* (Malfasi Editore, 1948).

Rosenfeld's reading with 'the masterful command of technique, the harmonious purity of form', among other things, and as a kind of aesthete-Symbolist *avant la lettre*, filtering the world through the *Ich*, of which he is the 'first singer'.²⁹⁸ She suggests his conception of beauty is not 'empty formalism, but a religion of art', a kind of ancestral *Kunstreligion* for George's.²⁹⁹ While the argument of Petrarch's 'religione artistica' and George's attraction to it is somewhat speculative, Rosenfeld identifies a clear relation between the religious and the artistic, and so the Petrarchan model provides a religious aura of reverence to the poetry.³⁰⁰ The need for expression in poetic form is connected to the poet's broader spiritual condition, and the Petrarch reception is tied to this need to find a spiritual sense of things, emblematised for Rosenfeld by the angel of George's 'Vorspiel', which in turn evolves into the Maximin experience as divine incarnation.³⁰¹

What follows in Rosenfeld's analysis is a stimulating comparison between George's Maximin, Dante's Beatrice and Petrarch's Laura.³⁰² Laura is singled off by virtue of her inherent mundanity as opposed to Beatrice and Maximin's roles as '[i]ncarnazione divina'.³⁰³ While the complex overview given by Rosenfeld does justice to all three figures, George's Maximin remains complicated. He is presented

²⁹⁸ Rosenfeld, *L'Italia nella poesia di Stefan George* ('la magistrale padronanza della tecnica, l'armonica purezza della forma', p.137, 'il primo cantore dell'io', p. 135).

²⁹⁹ Not 'vano formalismo, ma religione artistica', Rosenfeld, *L'Italia nella poesia di Stefan George*, p. 138. On George's 'Kunstreligion' cf. Braungart, *Ästhetischer Katholizismus*, p. 237.

³⁰⁰ A site of contention in Petrarch's oeuvre, the ever-present drama between earthly literary glory versus spiritual salvation and renunciation of that very earthly transience. Petrarch tends to opt for the former, as at the end of his dialogue *Secretum*, when his representative character Franciscus admits to Augustinus (St. Augustine): 'Sane nunc, dum loquimur, multa me magnaue, quamvis adhuc mortalia, negotia expectant'. ('Doch jetzt, während wir sprechen, warten auf mich viele große — obwohl noch immer irdische — Aufgaben'.) Francesco Petrarca, *Secretum meum: Lateinisch-Deutsch*, ed. and trans. by Bernhard Huss und Gerhard Regn, 2nd edn (Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2013), pp. 398-99.

³⁰¹ Rosenfeld, *L'Italia nella poesia di Stefan George*, p. 133.

³⁰² Rosenfeld, *L'Italia nella poesia di Stefan George*, pp. 136-37.

³⁰³ Rosenfeld, *L'Italia nella poesia di Stefan George*, p. 136.

as an obviously Beatrice-like figure.³⁰⁴ The rhetoric celebrating his divine body, however, is one of immanence, as critics often remark, and not transcendence.³⁰⁵ This mundanity therefore brings him closer to Laura, especially as he appears in sub-cycle 'Auf das Leben und den Tod Maximins'.³⁰⁶ Still, there are certain 'Parallele zur christlichen Heilsgeschichte' that evoke his transcendence, à la Beatrice, who herself has variously been described as a *figura Christi*.³⁰⁷ Maximin is thus caught between a tradition that emphasises transcendence (Beatrice) on

³⁰⁴ See: Melissa S. Lane, 'The Platonic Politics of the George Circle', in *A Poet's Reich: Politics and Culture in the George Circle*, ed. by Melissa S. Lane and Martin A. Ruehl (Camden House, 2011), pp. 133-163 (p. 138), for just one scholarly example of this apparent obviousness. Maximin, in the 'Vorrede', is clearly modelled largely on the *Vita Nova*'s account of Beatrice, but more on this in chapter six.

³⁰⁵ Melissa S. Lane, 'The Platonic Politics of the George Circle', p. 142 (citing Weigand). For the Circle's belabouring of the 'bindendes, verbindendes Hier und Jetzt', see Gundolf, *George*, 49. Pirro, *Come corda troppo tesa*, pp. 37-38 argues that transcendence always remains foreign ('estraneo') to George. For Maximin as 'reine Immanenz' cf. Armin Schäfer, 'Interpretationen von Goethes letzte nacht in Italien, Hyperion, An die Kinder des Meeres, Der Krieg, 'Der Dichter in Zeiten der Wirren' und Einem jungen Führer im Ersten Weltkrieg (SW IX, 7-33)', in *Stefan George – Werkkommentar: Studien und Interpretationen zu sämtlichen Dichtungen und Übertragungen*, ed. by Jürgen Egyptien (de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 569-587 (pp. 569 & 578). Braungart, *Ästhetischer Katholizismus*, p. 78 insists on Maximin as immanent, and cf. further on: 'Maximin erscheint nicht als Erlöser im christlichen Sinne, sondern als kultisches Zentrum der ästhetischen Rituale, deren Spielraum er kontrollieren soll. Er ist ein mythopoetischer Gott: Maximin, nicht Maximilian Kronberger. Es gibt ihn nur im poetischen Text, und an ihn ist er gebunden. In ihm radikalisiert sich, was die Gestalt- und Gebildeästhetik Georges zum Gedicht selbst sagt: daß es unhintergebar sei. So ist die mythische Figur Maximin in der Tat eine ästhetische Mythologie, die nur so erscheint, wie sie ist, und die nicht wirklich (allegorisch, religiös) übersetzt werden kann [...]'. Ludwig Lehnen, first conceding that the Vorspiel's angel is 'kein Bote einer absoluten Transzendenz wie im Christentum' (p. 264), later meets both polarities half way in describing it an 'immanente[] Transzendenz' (Ludwig Lehnen, 'Vorspiel', in *Stefan George – Werkkommentar: Studien und Interpretationen zu sämtlichen Dichtungen und Übertragungen*, ed. by Jürgen Egyptien (de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 257-279 (p. 266). Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, p. 126 argues that the Maximin myth is 'not spiritual transcendence', and Claude David, *Stefan George. Sein dichterisches Werk*, trans. by Alexa Remmen and Karl Thiemer, (Hanser, 1967), p. 308 specifies that Maximin is a 'Gott des "Staates"'. Wenn alle Transzendenz abgeschafft und jede Verbindung mit einem Himmel der Ideen abgebrochen ist, kann die Hilfe nur noch aus der Gesellschaft kommen'. Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 159 categorically states: 'Es geht bei George trotz der vielen religiösen Bezüge immer um Immanenz, niemals um Transzendenz. In seinem Werk ist nirgends eine Jenseitssvision zu finden'. See Shen's footnote no. 544 on page 159 for more sources regarding the 'Weltlichkeit Georges'.

³⁰⁶ Even if both Petrarch and Dante insist on the glory resurrected body, a potential point of comparison for the Hellenic cult of Maximin.

³⁰⁷ German quotation from H. Stefan Schultz, *Studien zur Dichtung Stefan Georges* (Lothar Stiehm, 1967), p. 162. A useful overview and discussion of the Christ-like aspects of Beatrice's character and behaviour is given by Joan M. Ferrante, 'Beatrice' in *The Dante Encyclopedia*, ed. by Richard Lansing (Routledge, 2010), pp. 89-95 (p. 90 in particular).

the one hand, and immanence (Laura) on the other.³⁰⁸ The relevance of such metaphysical categories to the aesthetic itself will be an ongoing concern of this thesis. Immanence is a feature not only of the content of the *Maximin* myth but of the forms that myth takes – the Circle’s rituality, its lyric poetry as a performative event that presences its speakers, listeners and its subject matter, while transcendence hovers in the background like Schelling’s ‘nie aufgehende[r] Rest’.³⁰⁹

More recently, George’s Petrarch reception has been taken up by Bianca Maria Bornmann and Thorston Fitzon.³¹⁰ Bornmann, a guiding light for the Petrarchistic excavations in chapter three, fundamentally reads *Die Fibel* as a ‘canzoniere amorosa’,³¹¹ first establishing George’s intense study of Petrarch as a teenager, before delineating his ‘precise reading and remarkable absorption of motifs,

³⁰⁸ For Beatrice as the ‘transcendent elevation of the woman to the status of an agent of God, a *beatrice*’, see Thomas E. Peterson, *Petrarch’s Fragmenta: The Narrative and Theological Unity of Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta* (University of Toronto Press, 2016), p. 27. I am painting in potentially reductive broad strokes here. The case for Laura’s transcendence in the afterlife is certainly tenable, as Peterson argues (*Petrarch’s Fragmenta*, p. 147), who criticises those who do resort to such categorical reductions (*Petrarch’s Fragmenta*, p. 217) while emphasising just how important immanence was for Dante (*Petrarch’s Fragmenta*, p. 223). This latter point accords with *Dantisti* such as Erich Auerbach who had similarly emphasised the centrality of the here and now of earthly affairs to Dante’s poetic project, a ‘Gestalt’ conception no less, brought by Auerbach into dialogue with Gundolf’s writings on Dante in relation to Caesar – an influential strain of Dante criticism bound up with the George Circle’s own ideology of literary history: ‘aber auch hier ist [Dante], wie Gundolf es für seinen Gegenstand Caesar erwiesen und vollkommen deutlich gemacht hat, Schöpfer der Gestalt’. Erich Auerbach, *Dante als Dichter der irdischen Welt*, 2nd ed., ed. with an afterword by Kurt Flasch (de Gruyter, 2001), p. 185. Auerbach, *ibid.*, cites Friedrich Gundolf, *Caesar: Geschichte seines Ruhms* (Georg Bondi, 1924), pp. 99-100. Auerbach’s influential treatment of Dante in *Mimesis* similarly emphasises the idea of a ‘Gestalt’ that captures and heightens the essence of the person: ‘eine sehr gesteigerte, für die Ewigkeit in ungeheuren Maßen festgelegte Gestalt des jeweils eigenen Wesens wird sichtbar’, see: Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur*, 10th ed. (Francke, 2001), p. 184.

³⁰⁹ Lyric poetry as a performative event is one of the main hypotheses of Culler’s *Theory of the Lyric*, see especially chapter 1, ‘An Inductive Approach.’ See, in relation to George, Braungart, *Ästhetischer Katholizismus*, pp. 154ff. The poem as an event is not only a contemporary approach, the George Circle already had a similar conception. See the extract from Robert Boehringer’s ‘Das Leben von Gedichten’ in *Der George-Kreis: Eine Auswahl aus seinen Schriften*, ed. by Georg Peter Landmann, 2nd edn (Klett-Cotta, 1980), pp. 101-11. The central idea is that the poem is an ‘Erlebnis’, and that, ‘da es aus dem Leben stammt, lebt, indem es erlebt wird’.

³¹⁰ Bornmann, ‘Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile’; Fitzon, ‘Petrarca um 1900: Aneignung – Anverwandlung – Abkehr’, and Fitzon, ‘Trost und Beispiel – Stefan Georges Petrarca-Rezeption’, *op cit.*

³¹¹ Bornmann ‘Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile’, p. 150.

images and sometimes even stylistic elements' present in virtually all the poems.³¹² These claims are then grounded in concrete examples supplied by George's and Petrarch's poems. The junction of the two poets harbours the usual themes of literary Petrarchism: love, pain, shame, regret, and the accompanying awareness of mortality and death.³¹³

Fitzon more recently characterised George's Petrarch-reception as a three stage process of 'Aneignung', 'Verehrung' and 'Abkehr'.³¹⁴ *Die Fibel's* opening sonnet is read as containing a blueprint of the characteristically Petrarchist 'amoröse Thematik' that runs through the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*.³¹⁵ Fitzon also considers the broader picture of the poet's self-positing as a reader of Petrarch, as he notes: 'Die jugendliche Rezeption Petrarca's erscheint meist von der Stilisierung des Dreißigjährigen überformt'.³¹⁶ It is George's interest in his own 'ästhetische Genealogie' that prompts this retrospective focus on Petrarch, particularly at the turning point of his career upon the release of *Der Teppich des Lebens*.³¹⁷ This is the key insight that saves us from Pensa's speculations of youthful, prophetic instinct. Fitzon then interprets poem XVIII from the revelatory 'Vorspiel' (to *Der Teppich des Lebens*) as an instance of George's personal canon-building, the poem in which Petrarch stands 'gleichgewichtet neben Dante' (a claim

³¹² 'una lettura precisa e un notevole assorbimento di motivi, immagini e talvolta anche stilemi', *ibid.*

³¹³ Bornmann, 'Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile', p. 136.

³¹⁴ Fitzon, 'Trost und Beispiel', p. 216.

³¹⁵ Fitzon, 'Trost und Beispiel', pp. 218-19.

³¹⁶ Fitzon, 'Trost und Beispiel', p. 221.

³¹⁷ Fitzon, 'Trost und Beispiel', pp. 221-22. Shen also neatly summarises *Die Fibel's* unique publication situation: 'Georges retrospektive Geringschätzung der *Fibel* dient dazu, seine späteren Werke vor dem Hintergrund der Jugendliteratur hervorzuheben. Das eigentliche Werk Georges beginnt erst mit den *Hymnen* 1890, die oft als Durchbruch gefeiert werden. Außerdem wurde 1900 (*recte* 1899) der *Teppich* veröffentlicht, der eine Wende im Gesamtwerk einleitet. Das eine entstand ein Jahr nach *Die Fibel*, das andere erschien ein Jahr vor ihr. Damit sind sowohl das Jahr der Entstehung als auch das der Veröffentlichung von *Fibel* von werkpolitischer Bedeutung. Die zeitliche Nähe lädt den Leser dazu ein, *Die Fibel* mit *Hymnen* und *Der Teppich* zu vergleichen, damit der Durchbruch um 1890 und die Wende um 1900 noch deutlicher ans Licht treten', Chong Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoese*, p. 88.

which I take issue with in the following chapter).³¹⁸ Fitzon contextualises the receding importance of Petrarch in George's canon-development post-1900, which this dissertation reads as an attempted conversion from Petrarchan poetics to a kind of Dantism.³¹⁹ Conversion is a ritual act that connects George's poetics and his Circle's cult to the broader cultural context of his day – Jürgen Söring has written about the centrality of the period's fixation on apocalypse and rebirth, and its relevance to George.³²⁰ In the George Circle, conversion manifests both in the narratives of those encounters with the *Meister* and in the deployment of expressly religious vocabulary with regards to art.³²¹ It is this study's hypothesis that it is

³¹⁸ Fitzon, 'Trost und Beispiel', p. 223.

³¹⁹ Fitzon, 'Trost und Beispiel', p. 224. Fitzon suggests that next to the newer canon of German authors George's translations of Dante post-1900 'mögen dazu beigetragen haben, Petrarca auf eine propädeutische Funktion zu beschränken' ('Trost und Beispiel', p. 225), a parallel that George establishes between himself and Goethe through his inclusion of Goethe's Petrarchan sonnet 'Epoche' in the second volume of *Deutsche Dichtung* ('Trost und Beispiel', p. 224). He also points out that Gundolf mentions Dante some forty times in his book on George, as a point of continual comparison, whereas Petrarch receives no such grace ('Trost und Beispiel', p. 226, note 2).

³²⁰ Jürgen Söring, 'Die Figur der Wende als poetologisches Prinzip. Zum lyrischen Verfahren Stefan Georges', in *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, 2 (1983), pp. 200-21: 'Untergangsstimmung und Heilserwartung bestimmen das Klima um 1900 ähnlich wie schon 900 Jahre zuvor. Das Wende-Schema von Wiedergeburt und Verfall bildet den temporalen Horizont für eine Dichtung, die im Aushalten dieser Grund-Spannung nach einer Möglichkeit des poetischen Sprechens sucht, nachdem Status und Funktion des lyrischen Ich zum Problem geworden sind' (p. 206). On conversion, not specifically in the George Circle, but speaking of Rilke Fitzon writes: 'Vor allem der Begriff der *conversio* hat Rilkes Interesse an Petrarca's Schilderung [of the Mount Ventoux episode—JW] erweckt [...] dass er sich zur Umkehr zu sich Selbst aufgefordert fühlt'. Fitzon, 'Petrarca um 1900', pp. 547-48.

³²¹ As Ute Oelmann writes: 'Terms such as "faith," "rebirth," and "conversion," which were frequently employed in the *Blätter*, suggest that George's concept of "heilige Kunst" was religious in a broader sense'. Ute Oelmann, 'The George Circle: From *Künstlergesellschaft* to *Lebensgemeinschaft*', trans. by Julie Deering, Ute Oelmann, and Martin Ruehl, in *A Poet's Reich: Politics and Culture in the George Circle*, ed. by Melissa S. Lane and Martin A. Ruehl (Camden House, 2011), pp. 25-36 (p. 27). On conversion narratives by the Circle's disciples, see the examples given by Jürgen Egyptien, *Stefan George. Dichter und Prophet* (Theiss, 2018), pp. 8-12. Exemplarily, Friedrich Wolters interpreted his relationship with George with an emphatically religious rhetoric: describing the personal effect that George had on him as radical change – conversion – to a new life, he modelled himself as the St. Paul of the Circle. See the account by Michael Philipp, 'Wandel und Glaube. Friedrich Wolters – Der Paulus des George Kreises', in *Stefan George: Werk und Wirkung seit dem 'Siebenten Ring'*, ed. by Wolfgang Braungart, Ute Oelmann and Bernhard Böschenstein (Max Niemeyer, 2001), pp. 283-299 (p. 285). One of the more disturbing portraits of the traumatically life-altering "miracle" of an encounter with the poet is given by Ernst Glöckner, writing to Ernst Bertram, in Ernst Glöckner, *Begegnung mit Stefan George. Aus Briefen und Tagebüchern 1913-1934*, ed. by Friedrich Adam (Lothar Stiehm, 1972), pp. 23-30 (an equally lively account of it is given by Norton, *Secret Germany*, pp. 504-511). Norton calls it 'a classic example of a Georgian seduction: the elected one – or the victim – overwhelmed by this onslaught, rendered confused,

precisely the idea of *conversio* prompts George to abandon the self-involved, secularised and fragmented self as learned from the model of Petrarch and ‘convert’ to Dante, where poetry and salvation coincide and the divine is revealed in the contingent and historical word.³²² Following the work of Karlheinz Stierle on Dante, William Franke names contingency and ‘fear of groundlessness’ as emblematic of what makes Dante modern.³²³ Anxiety caused by the abyss is answered by Dante in a poeticised radical acceptance.³²⁴ Where a preoccupation with ‘Grund’ and ‘Abgrund’ (Franke’s ‘groundlessness’) emerges in George’s work, the following chapters will observe them against the background of Schelling’s cosmogony of God’s self-birth in the *Weltalter* to help theorise the centrality of modernity’s ‘Grund’-problems (manifested as a loss of a grounding centre).³²⁵

anxious, and yet strangely flattered by the unasked for attentions of this commanding personality, had no chance to assert his own prerogatives and had to accept the terms as George set them – or take flight’. (Norton, *Secret Germany*, p. 509). For the theme of ‘conversio’ as it relates specifically to interpersonal relationships of the George-Circle, see furthermore Wolfgang Braungart, ‘Metánoia, Georges Poetik der Entschiedenheit’, in *Frauen um Stefan George*, ed. by Ute Oelmann and Ulrich Raulff (Wallstein, 2010), pp. 59-83 (p. 63). Braungart links George’s poetological thinking from the early 1890s to the idea of conversion, describing it precisely in Dante’s own terms: ‘Vieldeutig, gerade wenn man an die weitere Entwicklung Georges und seines Kreises denkt, schließt diese erste Vorrede: “In der Kunst glauben wir an eine glänzende wiedergeburt”: also an die radikale “Verwandlung”, an das “Incipit vita nova”. [...] Die neue Poesie Georges beansprucht nichts anderes, als eine einzige radikale Konversion zu sein; und sie verlangt diese Konversionsbereitschaft von jedem, der Zugang zu ihr haben will’ (p. 73).

³²² For George’s battle against contingency, cf. Pirro, *Come corda troppo tesa*, p. 47. Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 135 summarily: ‘[George] ist nie bereit, sich dem Zufall hinzugeben’. This argument is challenged by Ockenden, ‘Voyaging with a Concordance’, pp. 61-62 and more recently Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary* (especially chapter 4, ‘The Healing of Narcissus’). The theological and philosophical problems of contingency in relation to Dante’s work have recently been explored by William Franke, *The Divine Vision of Dante’s Paradiso: The Metaphysics of Representation* (Cambridge University Press, 2021), especially chapter three, ‘The Parts of Speech: Mediation and Contingency’, pp. 87-107.

³²³ Franke, *The Divine Vision of Dante’s Paradiso*, pp. 104-05.

³²⁴ ‘Dante masters chance artistically not by excluding or depotentiating it, but rather by embracing it in its full force, without constraint or limit. Random chance is inscribed into the revelation of Scripture in Dante’s vision as the signature of a providential purpose and power’, Franke, *The Divine Vision of Dante’s Paradiso*, p. 106.

³²⁵ In this respect I am following Cairtíona Leahy (‘*Der wahre Historiker*’: Ingeborg Bachmann and the Problem of Witnessing History (Königshausen und Neumann, 2007) on the journey into the ground, but with Schelling as a guide, rather than Heidegger. On Heidegger’s ‘Der Satz vom Grunde’ see Leahy, ‘*Der wahre Historiker*’, pp. 218-19. For the richness of the ‘Grund’ theme as being at the core of modernist self-reflections I am indebted both to Leahy’s book on the subject, cited above, as well as to the years in her seminars as an undergraduate student.

George's melancholy self-fashionings are fundamentally rooted in the phenomenon that Kristian Donko describes as a 'spezifisch modernes Empfinden existenzieller Verunsicherung [...] Kontingenz, also die stets präsente Möglichkeit des Andersseins sowohl der äußeren als auch der inneren Welt des Subjekts'.³²⁶ For Schelling, the human experience of contingency accounts for the melancholy of life: 'Der Mensch bekommt die Bedingung [i.e. the external condition of our existence, JW] nie in seine Gewalt [...] Daher der Schleier der Schwermut, der über die ganze Natur ausgebreitet ist, die tiefe unzerstörliche Melancholie alles Lebens'.³²⁷ This has its correlative in Petrarch, in what Mariann Sanders Regan calls the poet's homelessness, a lack of 'intrapsychic representation of self-as-Source' at the root of his self-alienated melancholy: 'Source becomes entirely contingent, a central ground that may always be pulled away [...] and any Source that might be intuited from these pages seems to be always already departing'.³²⁸ Fitzon contextualises the late nineteenth century's Petrarch in relation to contingency, as formulated in Baudelaire's poetics, where historical contingency is escaped through the experience of the 'Überzeitlichkeit des Schönen als Einheit'.³²⁹ George's Petrarch reception seeks 'eine Rückbindung an die Tradition, um die Modernisierungsbrüche zu überwölben'.³³⁰ Petrarch as an intertextual destination for establishing continuity and security across epochs has a smack of its own Petrarchistic irony: despite his own Renaissance strivings to re-establish the cultural origins of antiquity, he is the poet of subjective uncertainty and

³²⁶ Kristian Donko, 'Produktive Negativität: Traurigkeit als Möglichkeitssinn um 1800', in *Edinburgh German Yearbook 6: Sadness and Melancholy in German-Language Literature and Culture*, edited by Mary Cosgrove and Anna Richards (Camden House, 2012), pp. 53-70 (p. 53).

³²⁷ Schelling *SW*, I, 6, 399. (*Freiheitsschrift*, p. 71).

³²⁸ Mariann Sanders Regan, *Love Words: The Self and the Text in Medieval and Renaissance Poetry* (Cornell University Press, 1982), p.185 and p. 186.

³²⁹ Fitzon, 'Petrarca um 1900', p. 539.

³³⁰ Fitzon, 'Petrarca um 1900', p. 542.

contingency *par excellence*, walking ‘secure and fearless’ (*Rvf* 3:7) one day and in a life-changing twist of fate the next, ‘Love found me all disarmed’ (*Rvf* 3:9), to then languish in ‘ontological instability’ (Barolini) for the rest of the collection of his ‘sparsa anime fragmenta’.³³¹ This is one hypothetical reason for George’s disavowal of Petrarch. As a poet of contingency he is at odds with George’s poetics of the will.³³² Contingency, however, predisposes the poet to a reflective, brooding attitude and propels him to wander in search of some solid ground of fulfillment. George evidently makes much use of melancholy discourse in his works. Like Petrarch and others, melancholy here works as a ‘fashionable marker of artistic creativity’.³³³ This bucket of ideas about loss, absence, grounding, and melancholy as a productive creative drive will emptied over the following chapters.

Bornmann, Fitzon and Rosenfeld, in summary, focus mainly on *Die Fibel*. The next chapters explore the consequences of Rosenfeld’s observation that George perhaps first learned ‘the cyclical form of rhythmic poetry’ from his early encounters with Petrarch – a form he never then gave up.³³⁴ In summary, if George looked up to Dante as the ‘Inbegriff des Dichtertums’, why was he not an epic poet?³³⁵ Why did the flight from melancholy ‘Lieder’ always land back at those lyric songs?³³⁶

³³¹ ‘Die zerstreuten Bruchstücke meiner Seele’. Petrarca, *Secretum meum*, pp. 398-399. Barolini, *The Self in the Labyrinth of Time*, p. 33.

³³² See Claude David’s discussion of the subjective and objective volumes of George’s poetry, quoted in Söring, ‘Die Figur der Wende’, p. 206. For George’s will, see e.g. Gundolf, *George*, pp. 69-70: ‘Die Scheu vor Ausbruch, vor Gefühlserguß, vor subjektiven Klagen und “Eröffnungen”, die Strenge, Ferne, Kargheit und Keuschheit, das ist das erste Zeichen für den Willen zum Gesetz’.

³³³ Cosgrove, *Born under Auschwitz*, p. 14. A recent, insightful account of melancholy in Dante and Petrarch, bringing twentieth-century theory into dialogue with those Trecento poets is Jennifer Rushworth, *Discourses of Mourning in Dante, Petrarch, and Proust* (Oxford University Press), 2016. For melancholy in George as ‘ein Mittel der Selbstcharismatisierung vor dem Kreis’, see Braungart, *Ästhetischer Katholizismus*, p. 289.

³³⁴ ‘la forma ciclica della lirica ritmica’, Rosenfeld, *L’Italia nella poesia di Stefan George*, p. 138.

³³⁵ Gundolf, *George*, p. 52. Of course, if we follow Gundolf’s heroising discourse, George turns out to be just as epic as Dante in *Der Teppich des Lebens* (‘epischer Kündler einer sichtbaren Geistwelt’. Gundolf, *George*, p. 184). Of course, George was *not* an epic poet in the standard sense of the term.

³³⁶ For melancholy in George’s *Lieder*, see Braungart, *Ästhetischer Katholizismus*, pp. 288-306.

Thematically Dantesque, formally George chooses the Petrarchistic model of the fragmented lyric cycle in search of unity.

With all this in mind, chapter three explores the implications of George's decision to include Petrarch in his own literary history just as his dealings with Dante were intensifying, and the implications this turn to Dante has in his poetics and self-mastery coinciding as it does with the broader turn in his poetics around 1900.³³⁷

ii. Dante and Stefan George: Continuation of a Problem³³⁸

'Kein anderer Dichter der Weltliteratur ist jemals so vertrauensvoll nach Dantes Vorbild seinen Weg gegangen wie George'.³³⁹ Thus writes Kurt Wais in his overview of Dante's literary reception at the turn of the century, but spending only just over a page cursorily mentioning his role in George's 'Sendungsbewußtsein' from the personal (the Maximin experience) to the subsequent social (the prophetic, declamatory, didactic) aspects.³⁴⁰

George's emphasis on newness, with regards to Dante, is Anna Maria Arrighetti's focus, succinctly capturing what is at stake for the Rhineland poet:

³³⁷ For *Teppich* 'als inhaltliche wie formale Zäsur im Werk Georges', Fitton ('Trost und Beispiel', p. 288, note 25) cites Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler who marks the change in poetics whereby *Teppich* distances itself from *Jahr der Seele* and *Algabal* via a focus on the newly developed formal rigidity: 'Wichtig ist die Architektur des Ganzen in ihrer gewollten Starrheit', Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler, 'Stefan George. Der Teppich des Lebens', in *Literatur um 1900: Texte der Jahrhundertwende neu gelesen*, ed. by Cornelia Niedermeier und Karl Wagner (Böhlau, 2001), pp. 161-170, (p. 162). This newly found focus on the form of the whole is what Lorenzo Bianchi had previously referred to as 'die Aufnahme dantescher Baulehre' (*Dante und Stefan George: Einführung in ein Problem* (Ralph A. Höger, 1936), p. 7). Adorno had also explicitly marked *Teppich* as the caesura in George's works after which the poet turns to 'aristocratic nationalism' (*Notes to Literature*, p. 445).

³³⁸ In allusion to Lorenzo Bianchi's *Dante und Stefan George: Einführung in ein Problem* (op cit.).

³³⁹ Kurt Wais, 'Die *Divina Commedia* als dichterisches Vorbild im XIX. Und XX. Jahrhundert', *Arcadia: Zeitschrift für vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft*, 3 (1968), pp. 27-47 (p. 47).

³⁴⁰ Wais, 'Die *Divina Commedia* als dichterisches Vorbild im XIX. Und XX. Jahrhundert', p. 46.

Dantes Dichtung ist nacheifernswertes Wunschbild, seine "Gestalt" ist das sublime Gleichnis des poetischen Menschen überhaupt, der Verkünder einer neuen geistesgeschichtlichen Epoche und die vielleicht bedeutendste kanonische Größe, die nicht zuletzt – zumindest in der Sicht vieler Kreisangehöriger – Georges Erneuerungsfunktion zu legitimieren vermag.³⁴¹

The newness associated with Dante is a key motif for this dissertation, as it reads the Dantism implicit in George's Maximin myth as an apocalyptic revelation of, and conversion towards, the new.³⁴² Yet where Dante is anti-modern for George, the newness associated with him could be said to be indicative of modernism's very obsession with the new, Algabal's 'erhabene neuheit' (SW, II: 60), the newness that 'is at the very core of the modern'.³⁴³

Francesco Rossi, like Wais, emphatically singles out Dante's *Commedia* as the privileged literary predecessor.³⁴⁴ Rossi links the treatment of Dante to George's own 'poetischen Idiosynkrasien' so that a dialectical process emerges: George's own development is tied to his Dante-reception.³⁴⁵ The early George tends towards the 'symbolisch aufgeladenen Visualität' of *Purgatorio*, while the older George adopts Dante's more prophetic or admonitory mode.³⁴⁶ Meta-poetic and self-

³⁴¹ Anna Maria Arrighetti, 'Vorbote des Neuen oder eigenwillige Konstruktion? Stefan Georges Dante-Bild im Spiegel seiner Übertragungen', in *Dante Alighieri und sein Werk in Literatur, Musik und Kunst bis zur Postmoderne*, ed. by Klaus Ley (Francke, 2010), pp. 123-140 (pp.123-24).

³⁴² A clear precedent of this is the Old and the New in Christianity, with concomitant appearances in Dante (the *Vita Nova*, etc.). For newness and apocalypse, see for example the discussion by Jürgen Brokoff & Joachim Jacob, "Einleitung", in *Apokalypse und Erinnerung in der deutschen-jüdischen Kultur des frühen 20. Jahrhunderts*, edited by Jürgen Brokoff and Joachim Jacob, 9-19, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 11. Cf. Arrighetti, 'Vorbote des Neuen', p. 23: 'In den Zeugnissen der eingehenden, über zwei Jahrzehnte währenden Auseinandersetzung Stefan Georges mit Dantes Werk begegnet mit nachdrücklichem Ton das Epitheton "neu"'.
³⁴³ Leahy, 'Der wahre Historiker', p. 115, and similarly pp. 51, 64.

³⁴⁴ Rossi, 'Dante-Übertragungen', p. 675.

³⁴⁵ Rossi, 'Dante-Übertragungen', p.676.

³⁴⁶ Rossi, 'Dante-Übertragungen', p. 677.

reflective passages in Dante, alongside those detailing ritualised behaviours, initiations, allegorical passages with rich Symbolism, and so on, all attract George's attention.³⁴⁷

Arrighetti makes another foundational claim for this study:

Die intensive Arbeit an der *Commedia* prägte in den Jahren nach 1900 auch StGs eigene Gedichte. Sowohl die Wahl der Versform und die zunehmende Bedeutung der Zahlenverhältnisse für die Komposition der Zyklen und Bücher als auch Motive und Metaphorik zeigen deutliche Parallelen zu den ersten übertragenen Teilen der *Commedia*.³⁴⁸

The following chapters aim to adapt these insights into a holistic reading of George's poetry *sub specie Dantis*. The primacy of the insight that Maximin is partly modelled on Beatrice, that George is hinting us to read him analogously to Dante, is one fundament of this current study.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Anna Maria Arrighetti, 'Dante · Die Göttliche Komödie. Übertragungen (SW X/XI)', in *Stefan George und sein Kreis. Ein Handbuch*, vol. 1, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer, Wolfgang Braungart, Stefan Breuer and Ute Oelmann, 2nd edn (de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 218-38, (p. 221). Arrighetti cites various studies to support this argument (mainly Klusmann, Pensa, Schefold, as below). Francesco Rossi is likewise attentive to the various conceits and motifs plucked from Dante by George, such as the 'bedeutsamen Augen-Metaphorik in Georges Lyrik', Rossi, 'Dante-Übertragungen', p. 687.

³⁴⁹ For Maximin the 'neue Mitte' as George's version of Beatrice as the 'vita nova' cf. Pensa, 'Stefan George e Dante', p. 16 and Lane, 'The Platonic Politics of the George Circle', p. 138. Similarly Bertram Schefold, 'Stefan George als Übersetzer Dantes', *Deutsches Dante-Jahrbuch*, 83.1 (2008), pp. 231-62 (p. 235). Ernst Osterkamp (*Poesie der leeren Mitte. Stefan Georges Neues Reich* (Karl Hanser, 2010), pp. 137-180), makes a convincing case for Maximin being modelled primarily upon Hölderlin's Diotima, drawing a number of connections, comparisons and contrasts: 'Maximin ist eine kunstreligiöse Übermalung Diotimas, in der die politischen Freiheitskonzepte des deutschen Idealismus ausgelöscht sind durch ein männerbündisches Herrschaftsbegehren' (here p.150). Even if Diotima is accepted as the primary precursor that Maximin is positioned as superceding in the German tradition, the Trecento ancestors do not at all gain in irrelevance, for their presence stands in high relief even alongside the titanic Hölderlin. If anything, the relation of Maximin to Diotima, in Osterkamp's reading, as one of corrective alterations and surpassing, results in Hölderlin's authority as a *poeta-vates* being touched by our poet, altered according to his needs. Beatrice (and to some perhaps lesser extent Laura) remains immutable, unalterable, a fixed point

Three central points must be made. Firstly, George's Dante reception is grounded in the peacemeal, decades-long translation of the *Commedia* that gets housed as volume X/XI of his *Gesamtausgabe*, immediately following his own final volume (*Das neue Reich*, SW, IX). Dante is followed by translations of Shakespeare (SW, XII) and Baudelaire (XIII/XIV). Petrarch receives no such volume.³⁵⁰ Secondly, there is the impact that Dante and the translations themselves have on the poetry, to which the present study is devoted. Finally, there is the reception of Dante in the broader George Circle, exemplified for example in the running comparisons to Dante made in Friedrich Gundolf's hagiographic commentary on his Master's works, or the insistence on physiognomic aspects and the poet's own self-portrayal as Dante, or even the use of Dante as a pedagogical text within the circle.³⁵¹ These three aspects intertwine, as George's dealings with

of unchanging legitimating reference in George's literary imagination. Osterkamp extrapolates from the Diotima-Maximin relation the extra-textual self-positing of George as the fulfilment of a 'pontifikale Traditionslinie' (p. 153) in Germany with Hölderlin as his primary poeta-vates precursor. This, as Osterkamp points out, is mainly in George's late works (in accordance with the George Circle's scholarship – that of Norbert von Hellingrath – discovering and editing Hölderlin's late hymns and Pindar translations). Again, Osterkamp's reading is largely convincing. For the present study, however, it does not diminish the presence of Dante in the later works, as this study will show. If anything, it raises new questions about the persistence and co-existence of multiple points of influence.

³⁵⁰ The dominant trend of George scholarship in relation to his Dante reception is philologically focused on the translations themselves. Fundamental here is Gerd Michels' *Die Dante-Übertragungen Stefan Georges: Studien zur Übersetzungstechnik Stefan Georges* (Wilhelm Fink, 1967). A critique of Michels' insistence on form over content is carried out by Jeffrey Dean Todd in *Stefan George's Dante Translations: Past Perspectives and Future Itineraries* (Doctoral thesis, University of Cincinnati, 1997). Perceptive overviews of George's general reception of Dante and in particular his translations are provided, with additional bibliography, in the *George Handbuch* vol. 1 by Anna Maria Arrighetti, pp. 218-238, and by Francesco Rossi in the *Werkkommentar*, pp. 676-691, op cit.

³⁵¹ Gundolf, *George*, op cit. Cf. Jan Andres 'Soziale Prozesse, Pädagogik, Gegnerschaften', in *Stefan George und sein Kreis. Ein Handbuch*, vol. 2, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer, Wolfgang Braungart, Stefan Breuer and Ute Oelmann, 2nd edn (de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 713-50 (p. 734). On physiognomy see Hölter, *Der Dichter der Hölle und des Exils*, pp. 135-42. On the Circle's Dante-education, cf. Paul Gerhard Klusmann, 'Dante und Stefan George. Über die Wirkung der Divina Commedia in Georges Dichtung', in *Stefan George Kolloquium*, ed. by Von Eckhard Heftrich, Paul Gerhard Klusmann and Hans Joachim Schrimpf (Wienand Verlag, 1971), pp. 138-150 (p. 147) [with discussion pp. 151-159]; DiMassa, *Dante in Deutschland*, p. 145 and the 'Index. Zur Bibliothek eines jungen Menschen' used in the Circle discussed and presented in Carola Groppe, *Die Macht der Bildung: Das deutsche Bürgertum und der George-Kreis 1890-1933*, 2nd edn (Böhlau, 2001), pp. 480ff (also cited by DiMassa, *Dante in Deutschland*, p. 200 note 35). Dante is among the

Dante intensify at different points and in reaction to different events (be they literary, historical or personal, etc.).

The starting point for the topic is Lorenzo Bianchi's *Dante und Stefan George. Einführung in ein Problem*. Bianchi's primary interest is in the translations, but he briefly weeds a number of Dantean reminiscences out of George's own poetry while examining his more general influence.³⁵² He dedicates several pages comparing and contrasting George and Dante under the parameters 'Persönlichkeit', 'Schicksal', 'Erlebnis', 'Glaube', 'Gestaltung' and 'Sprache'.³⁵³ What emerges from the comparison is at once the similarity in each poet's image of themselves,³⁵⁴ but with George consistently coming up short, stuck in modernity and unable to achieve Dante's vision.³⁵⁵ In terms of 'Erlebnis', the modern diremption ('Zweiheit') of George's *Ich*, distanced and isolated, is lacking in comparison to Dante's 'ganzes Dasein', flooded through with the unitary vision of the universe. The divine vision of God is an 'Erlebnis', the deification of Maximin is not.³⁵⁶ The tendency is to relate George to the metaphysically divided world of modernity and to locate Dante in a position that sees transcendence and unity with a faith that 'im göttlichen Urgehalt [wurzelt]'; Dante is 'ewigkeitsgerichtet', George is the 'Exponent reiner Diesseitigkeit'.³⁵⁷ Dante is 'gottgebunden', George suffers from 'Ichstarre'.³⁵⁸ In terms of 'Sprache', finally, and now predictably, George's efforts to refine the German language fall short of Dante's *volgare*. Dante strives

'Unbedingten' along with Homer, Plato, Shakespeare, Goethe, George and a select few others (p. 482). Petrarch only appears by contrast in 'Die Nützlichen', a much larger section (Groppe, *Die Macht der Bildung*, p. 488). As a sidenote, Schelling's *Von der Weltseele* appears among useful philosophy (p. 495).

³⁵² Bianchi, *Dante und Stefan George*, pp. 7-11.

³⁵³ Bianchi, *Dante und Stefan George*, pp. 21, 22, 24, 25, 27, 29, respectively.

³⁵⁴ 'der Glaube an die eigene Sendung', Bianchi, *Dante und Stefan George*, p. 21.

³⁵⁵ Bianchi, *Dante und Stefan George*, p. 22.

³⁵⁶ Bianchi, *Dante und Stefan George*, p. 24-5.

³⁵⁷ Bianchi, *Dante und Stefan George*, p. 26.

³⁵⁸ Bianchi, *Dante und Stefan George*, p. 22.

for transparency, George meanwhile ‘verdünnt [das Sein] symbolhaft, sodass das Wort seine Bezüge nicht mehr mit sich führt’.³⁵⁹ In Dante’s universe, signs have their proper interpretable referents as written by God, while in George’s universe God is dead and meaning has vanished. Dante wants transparency, George wants ‘den opaken Schein in der Fläche’ of his language.³⁶⁰ The present study treats these differences as features, rather than defects, of the poetry.³⁶¹

Returning to Mario Pensa’s 1935 study *Stefan George: Saggio Critico*, continuous reference is made to Dante as he traces those those moments in George’s works that exhibit something of the ‘idealismo amoroso’ typical of Italian *Trecento* poetry.³⁶² George’s *Pilgerfahrten* for example is tentatively compared to Dante the pilgrim, with the difference being located in the poets’ views on art: for George, art is paradise, and life is hell; for Dante, art is the means of expression, and life the journey to God.³⁶³ Reading Pensa’s quasi-idealist interpretation of the poets is sometimes akin to reading a Hegelian treatise on art.³⁶⁴ Art becomes a kind of idealist project, the work becomes a portal to liberation. To this Pensa states that Dante’s art is an aesthetic paradise in that it liberates, via artistic form, the soul from the prison of earthly life.³⁶⁵ This differs from George’s ‘religiosity’, which according to Pensa constitutes a circular structure: the self, via a love that is then codified into religion, returns to itself, becoming a form of narcissism: ‘Georgean

³⁵⁹ Bianchi, *Dante und Stefan George*, p. 30.

³⁶⁰ Bianchi, *Dante und Stefan George*, p. 31.

³⁶¹ Bianchi’s treatment of George here is rhetorically furnished by a language of lack, restrictive qualifications and diminishment, perhaps in an underhand, if not unjust, defence of the *sommo poeta* against George, some examples being: ‘George ist *nie* in der Weise Dantes einsam gewesen’ (p. 22); ‘George nimmt *nur* einen sehr geringen Teil...’ (p. 23); ‘[George] *glaubt* es im Maximin-Erlebnis zu finden’ (p. 23); ‘Ein gleiches Erlebnis *fehlt* George’ (p.24); ‘George konnte [...] *nichts weiter*, als einer vorhandenen unendlich reichen Weltsprache eine *kleine* neue Provinz angliedern’ (p. 29) etc. (Italics mine).

³⁶² Pensa, *Stefan George*, pp. 85, 154.

³⁶³ Pensa, *Stefan George*, p. 104.

³⁶⁴ Pensa, *Stefan George*, p. 154.

³⁶⁵ Pensa, *Stefan George*, pp. 153-54.

love can be defined as: *religious exaltation of the self*.³⁶⁶ A question of this dissertation is whether that modern narcissism has any hope of transcending itself and reaching out to the Other, as in theological traditions like that employed by Dante that emphasise the journey to God as a journey into the self, as Moevs points out, citing Augustine: 'O God, always one and the same, grant that I may know myself, grant that I may know You'?³⁶⁷

Pensa's later analysis of the topic was among the first to place George and his Circle in contact specifically with the German Romantic tradition of Dantism.³⁶⁸ The *Blätter* publications' poetic program is read as the spiritual descendent of the Romantics' cult of 'Geist' and transcendental poetry achieved most fully by Dante.³⁶⁹

Pensa continues to follow Friedrich Gundolf's own Romantic inclinations before contrasting the various schools of nineteenth century poetics with George's Symbolism.³⁷⁰ The Impressionists, writes Pensa, including George as their descendent, bring Dante back to earth as the poet of the 'primordial forces of nature'.³⁷¹ While the second half of Pensa's article discusses George's Dante

³⁶⁶ 'l'amore georgiano si può definire: *esaltazione religiosa dell'io*', Pensa, *Stefan George*, p. 184 (emphasis original).

³⁶⁷ Augustine cited in Moevs, *The Metaphysics of Dante's Comedy*, p. 75. See also William Franke, *Dante's Paradiso and the Theological Origins of Modern Thought. Toward a Speculative Philosophy of Self-Reflection* (Routledge, 2021), esp. 'Narcissus and his Redemption by Dante', pp. 96-103. Franke also remarks on the narcissism typically associated with Romantic poets and the courtly love tradition (and Petrarch), but stresses too the concomitant possibility of self-transcendence via self-reflection, see pp. 50, and p. 51: 'Although at risk of collapsing into a circumscribed and deadly form of self-enclosure, the circuit of love and lyric can also embody a powerful dynamic propelling the self beyond itself toward the absolutely other and even toward divinity [...] narcissism can be a means of spiritual advancement through self-reflection. It results eventually in the death of the ego for the sake of release into God'.

³⁶⁸ Mario Pensa, 'Stefan George e Dante', p. 5.

³⁶⁹ Pensa, 'Stefan George e Dante', p. 6. Pensa ('Stefan George e Dante', p. 7, note 9) cites F. Schlegel: 'Dante's prophetisches Gedicht ist das einzige System der transcendentalen Poesie'. Gundolf, writing on Goethe (cited in Pensa 'Stefan George e Dante', p.6) remarks about Dante as having first perfected this type of poetry.

³⁷⁰ Pensa, 'Stefan George e Dante', p. 19.

³⁷¹ 'forze primigenie della natura', *ibid*.

translations and looking at Dantean reminiscences in the poetry (building on the work of Lorenzo Bianchi), the first half of Pensa's article elucidates a complex web of problems centred around George's dealings with Dante and the tensions between Romanticism and Impressionism, and the latter's (perhaps via French Symbolism) foundations in the former.³⁷² Aside from the resemblance of George to Dante in his own prophetic 'Kulturkritik', the main Dantean thread in George's works, as figured by Pensa, is the analogy of Maximin-Beatrice, with a key difference: 'For Dante Beatrice is a reflection of God and leads to God; for George, however, Maximin is himself God' (trans. mine).³⁷³

The most recent treatment of George's Dante-reception is a chapter by Daniel DiMassa in his book devoted to the monumental impact that Dante had in German Romanticism. DiMassa situates the poet in a time of cultural crisis in which there was a general trend towards the Early-Romantic quest for a new mythology: 'The echoes of the new mythology are unmistakeable: a mythic impulse in literary forms was tasked with generating social cohesion'.³⁷⁴ DiMassa's treatment of Rudolf Borchardt, himself a translator of Dante, illuminates the national stakes involved in George's Dantism as a 'repatriation of Romanticism'.³⁷⁵ The oft-debated question of George's 'Neo-Romanticism'³⁷⁶ is implicated in this tradition and re-opened by DiMassa's work, as he argues, there cannot be a discussion of Neo-

³⁷² See for example Zanucchi, *Transfer und Modifikation*, p. 272 for the Circle's disputing of its French inspirations, emphasising instead Nietzsche's role in its forming of their 'geistige Kunst'.

³⁷³ Pensa, 'Stefan George e Dante', cited text p. 27, 'Kulturkritik' p. 28.

³⁷⁴ DiMassa, *Dante in Deutschland*, p. 111.

³⁷⁵ DiMassa, *Dante in Deutschland*, p. 134.

³⁷⁶ Re: Romanticism see e.g.: Arbogast, *Die Erneuerung*, p. 129; Pensa, *Stefan George*, p. 56; more recently Robert Vilain, 'Stefan George's Early Works 1890–1895', in *A Companion to the Works of Stefan George*, ed. by Jens Rieckmann (Camden House, 2005), pp. 51–77 (p. 59). For Neo-Romanticism see Braungart, *Ästhetischer Katholizismus*, pp. 182–83, and Jürgen Egyptien, 'Teppich des Lebens', in *Stefan George – Werkkommentar: Studien und Interpretationen zu sämtlichen Dichtungen und Übertragungen*, ed. by Jürgen Egyptien (de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 280–306 (p. 288).

Romanticism that does not account for the Dantism bound up in it. By the time of modernist Neo-Romanticism, DiMassa argues, the old Romanticism and Dante had come to exist in a 'symbiosis'.³⁷⁷ DiMassa continues to explore the 'apocrypha' on George from members of the Circle that sought to identify him — poetically, physiognomically, personally — with Dante.³⁷⁸ DiMassa argues that the new, poetic language formed by George created the distance required to judge the unholy masses of modernity.³⁷⁹

DiMassa's central focus is *Der Siebente Ring*'s self-consciously Dantean habitus. The 'Zeitgedichte' are George's Dantean battering rams in the contemporary cultural 'Geisterkrieg',³⁸⁰ and Dante's textual presence ('Dante und das Zeitgedicht', VI/VII: 8f) as George's self-confirmation as the 'judge of his age'.³⁸¹ The advent of Maximin is George's Neoromantic new mythology, and its thematic and formal circularities are representative of 'the inbreaking of mythic time' opposing the linear time of modernity.³⁸² Examining both key moments of George's poetry as well as the writings of the Circle and various contemporaries of George, he concludes: 'George forged his mythology in the fires of Dante'.³⁸³ Dante is revealed as the basic point of reference for George's entire enterprise post-1900.

DiMassa summarily treats the various numerological issues at play in the volume.³⁸⁴ George's reliance on Dante for number symbolism is a significant step

³⁷⁷ DiMassa, *Dante in Deutschland*, p. 138.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 144.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 145.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 147.

³⁸¹ Ibid., p. 148.

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ DiMassa, *Dante in Deutschland*, p. 158.

³⁸⁴ DiMassa, *Dante in Deutschland* p. 153, rightfully points out that numbers, interpreted symbolically, and George's many sevens in particular is that: 'Careful readers have responded to the numbers with a dose of skepticism: the number functions as a red herring that can symbolize nearly anything', *Dante in Deutschland*, p. 153. While the limits of generic number symbolism are very broad indeed, this simply means that rather than discarding numerology we must ascertain

in approaching the work as a whole.³⁸⁵ DiMassa's reading of *Inferno* XV as a key intertext for *Der Siebente Ring* is convincing, and will be further enriched by taking the other two seventh rings (of *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*) into consideration also.³⁸⁶ Although he agrees that *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* ought to be considered for numerological significance in George's oeuvre, their importance for *Der Siebente Ring* is restrained. Chapter five of the present study will expand on DiMassa by reading *Der Siebente Ring* as intimately coupled with George's work on the *Paradiso* and the hermeneutic possibilities that *Der Siebente Ring*'s numerology has for George's own 'Reich'.³⁸⁷

It is convincing, as DiMassa argues, that the Brunetto Latini episode would have resonated with George, although the possibility that George was reading Dante 'vertically', that is, by reading the *Commedia* as a whole in terms of its

precisely what George new of it. Landmann, in the 'Anhang' to *SW*, X/XI, comments: 'Dantes Zahlensymbolik war ihm bedeutsam' (p.145). Thus DiMassa is correct, but in George's and Dante's cases number symbolism has a very specific significance. Seven is Maximin's number, and it seems to me, with it also proposed by Jan Andres in an article, that the historical symbolism of the number seven as being the union of the divine number three and the human number four maps rather fittingly onto the cult of Maximin who is a figure at once human and godly. See Jan Andres, 'Gegenbilder – Stefan Georges poetische Kulturkritik in den "Zeitgedichten" des "Siebenten Rings"', *George Jahrbuch*, 6 (2006), pp. 31-54 (p. 43). For the symbolism itself see, summarily, Moevs, 'Subjectivity and Conversion in Dante and Petrarch', p. 236: 'Dante is playing on the juncture of the inner and the outer, linked on the one hand (*s'interna*) to the Trinity and its Augustinian interior reflection as will, memory, and intellect, and on the other (*si squaderna*) to the four elements of the exterior world and the senses. This linking of three and four conjures seven, a number that in the medieval tradition evokes the Neoplatonic world soul, which is the nexus between the One and the Many, between the transcendent and the finite, between spirit and matter; in particular, seven is the number of man, as the nexus between the self-subsistent and the contingent, between intellect (a three) and matter (a four)'.

³⁸⁵ DiMassa, *Dante in Deutschland*, p. 230.

³⁸⁶ Building on his previous reading of the episode in his article 'Stefan George, Thomas Mann, and the Politics of Homoeroticism', *The German Quarterly*, 86.3 (2013), pp. 311-33. Bianchi and David, whom DiMassa cites, suggest that the seventh ring is an allusion to the seventh *cornice* of *Purgatorio* (the terrace of lust) – a hypothesis worthy of further investigation given the space that terrace allocates to the intertwining of male-male desire and poetry. See Bianchi, *Stefan George und Dante*, p. 9 and David, *Stefan George*, p. 202, suggesting the seventh circle of *Paradiso*. Both cited in DiMassa, *Dante in Deutschland*, p. 153, who concedes that '[t]here is good reason to take seriously this thesis'. DiMassa however privileges the *Inferno* as the key cantica of reference for George's interest in literary father figures as a 'form of reproductive surrogacy' in the dynamics of the Circle (DiMassa, *Dante in Deutschland*, p. 154).

³⁸⁷ Indeed, Oelmann in the 'Anhang' to *Der Siebente Ring* points to the *Paradiso* as a possible 'Vorbild oder Bestätigung' for George's volume (*SW*, VI/VII: 193).

seventh circles, looking for narrative continuity at parallel points across *cantiche*, rather than only linearly across a single *cantica*, and thus catching intertextual fish from various ponds at once.³⁸⁸ Opening the work up to these broader allusions could build on and enrich the reading that focuses on mainly one of them.³⁸⁹

Paul Gerhard Klussmann's examination of Dante's impact on George's poetry and persona is a cornerstone of the present study.³⁹⁰ He recognises the stakes of theme of spiritual-creative nobility (the foundation of George's 'innere Verwandschaft' with Dante),³⁹¹ as it pertains to the epigraph from *Inferno* II of George's metapoetic manifesto *Rat für Schaffende* (xvii: 68). He identifies a

³⁸⁸ As contemporary criticism has termed it: a mode of reading Dante that allows the critic 'to keep the three canticles continually in dialogue with each other'. See the introduction by Corbett and Webb, *Vertical Readings in Dante's Comedy*, vol. 1, ed. by George Corbett and Heather Webb (Open Book Publishers, 2015), pp. 1-11 (p. 2). Pensa, 'Stefan George e Dante', p. 15 suggests that *Der Siebente Ring* was in fact referring to *Purgatorio*'s terrace of lust: 'Not for nothing the book of love for Maximin carries the title of the final terrace of the mountain of Purgatory, where the symbol of poetry intertwines with that of eroticism', trans mine ('Non per nulla il libro dell'amore di Maximin porta il titolo dell'ultima cornice del Purgatorio, ove il simbolo della poesia si intreccia con quello erotico'). *Purgatorio*, furthermore, was George's preferred *cantica* and the one he translated the most from (Rossi, 'Dante-Übertragungen', p. 677), and the one which forms the basic intertextual point of reference for much of the imagery of the 'Vorspiel's revelation. And what of *Paradiso*'s seventh sphere? The heaven of Saturn where the contemplatives sit, the final heaven before the ascent to the fixed stars (*Der Stern des Bundes*, volume eight) and the *visio Dei*, the heaven where Peter Damiani scornfully denounces modern religious corruption (a medieval *Kulturkritik*?), where Benedict of Nursia describes the perfection of heavenly desire to the pilgrim, where Beatrice's beauty and power develop such that were she to smile, the pilgrim would incinerate (*Par.* xxi: 4-6)

³⁸⁹ Interestingly, Rosenfeld, in a chapter on Dante and George, theorised that the *Ring* referred to in the collection's title had probably little to do with any of the circles in the afterlife, given that these would better be rendered with the German word *Kreis*, and was more likely an insistence on the thematic and structural circularity of the work (*L'Italia nella poesia di Stefan George*, p. 156). In this Rosenfeld has a certain point: George regularly uses the word *Kreis* in his translations (compare, e.g., *Inf.* ii: 78, *Inf.* iii: 32, *Inf.* iv: 71-2; *Purg.* xxvii: 128, among endless other occurrences), compared to the word 'ring' which, so far as I have perused, is used not nearly as often. Nevertheless, George does specifically use the term 'ring' to describe the celestial heavens of *Paradiso* in his 'Namenverzeichnis' ('HIMMEL · der dritte teil der Commedia. Sitz der seligen geister · in 9 kreisenden ringen über denen das Empyreum · der thron Gottes · unbeweglich ruht' (Stefan George, *Gesamtausgabe. Endgültige Fassung in 18. Bänden von Georg Bondi in einem Buch* (Hofenberg, 2014), p.397.), as well as quite programmatically in his translation of *Paradiso* 1: / 'Die glorie des bewegers aller dinge / Dringt durch das weltall und sie ist entglommen / Mehr in dem einen als im andern ringe' (*Par.* i: 1-3; SW, x/xi: 107). At such an important, exordic moment, the choice of word is certainly telling. Not to mention the fact that, as discussed in the introduction, this peculiar Latinism 'glorie', rare in George's Germanic diction, appears in a poem in the central 'ring' of the work: Maximin (SW, vi/vii: 101), and in a rhyme learned from Dante and/or Petrarch. One ought to then bear this connection between Dante's rings and George's in mind.

³⁹⁰ Paul Gerhard Klussmann, 'Dante und Stefan George', op cit.

³⁹¹ Klussmann, 'Dante und Stefan George', p. 140.

plausible intertext in the *Vita Nova*,³⁹² but does not consider the considerable amount of discursive muscle Dante flexes on the topic in the *Convivio*, a text owned by George.³⁹³ Dante's role in the genealogy of George's conception of what he termed 'geistigen adel' is here broached by Klussmann, but requires further study.³⁹⁴

Klussmann's reading method (which includes numerological and genre considerations³⁹⁵) highlights predominantly *Der Teppich des Lebens* parallel to the Dante translations themselves.³⁹⁶ Discussing the angel of the first 'Vorspiel' poem and the various points of contact to Dante's poetics, Klussmann states: 'Indessen ist das erste Gedicht ein überzeugendes Dokument der Dante-Wirkung'.³⁹⁷ George's angel has the role of Dante's Virgil leading him to the terrestrial paradise, as Klussmann argues: 'Der Engel ist Sinnbild für das schöpferische Zentrum des Ich und für das künstlerische Bekenntnis zum säkularisierten irdischen Paradiese'.³⁹⁸ The entire 'Vorspiel' becomes George's secularised take on the

³⁹² 'Amor, che al cor gentil ratto s'apprende / (Liebe, die edlen Herzen rasch sich künde)' cited in Klussmann, 'Dante und Stefan George', p. 141.

³⁹³ *La vita nuova: Il convito. Il canzoniere*, ed. by Francesco Costèro, 3rd edn (Sonzogno, 1888) (Stefan George Archive, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart, shelfmark 10/77).

³⁹⁴ *Briefwechsel zwischen George und Hofmannsthal*, ed. by Robert Boehringer, 2nd ed. (München/Düsseldorf, 1953), p. 87 (Letter to Hofmannsthal, 21 March 1896). The concept's interwovenness with the Circle's interest in Emperor Frederick II of Sicily further suggests Dante's treatise on nobility in *Convivio*'s fourth book, given it is a repudiation of Frederick's ideas and a potential source for the Circle (Dante, 'Le dolci rime d'amor', lines 21 and on. See Frisardi's (*Convivio*, op cit.) note 21 (p. 515), and his introduction pp. liii-lxv for context and discussion). As Martin A. Ruehl ('"Imperium transcendat hominem": Reich and Rulership in Ernst Kantorowicz's Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite', in *A Poet's Reich: Politics and Culture in the George Circle*, ed. by Melissa S. Lane and Martin A. Ruehl (Camden House, 2011), pp. 204-247 (p. 115) has demonstrated, the Circle's interpretation of Frederick II was, in part, coloured by Dante's own interpretation of him in *De Monarchia*, also owned by George (his *Nachlass* contains Wolfram von den Steinen's translation, *Dante. Die Monarchie* (Ferdinand Hirt, 1926)). So it can be said, in a cursory way, that the theme of nobility links both George's personal and *Kreis*-immanent poetics to the Circle's broader historical scholarship that seeks to find historical embodiments ('Gestalten') of ideals and 'Urbilder', glorifying them for the Circle's own politics.

³⁹⁵ Klussmann, 'Dante und Stefan George', p. 141.

³⁹⁶ Rosenfeld had similarly pointed out this key aspect of parallel development: George's chosen passages for translation 'sono sempre quelli che corrispondono al suo particolare interesse in un dato momento o periodo', Rosenfeld, *L'Italia nella poesia di Stefan George*, p. 149.

³⁹⁷ Klussmann, 'Dante und Stefan George', p. 142.

³⁹⁸ Klussmann, 'Dante und Stefan George', pp. 143-44.

Edenic purgation and renewal of Dante's *Purgatorio*, and Klusmann corroborates this by comparing both poets' use of floral imagery.³⁹⁹ Behind George's triumphant angel is his shadowy opposite – the the angel as a self-reflexive figure for brooding, melancholic artists, exemplified most famously in Albrecht Dürer's *Melancholia I*.⁴⁰⁰ This melancholic shadow-self threatens to disrupt George's angel in his splendid fullness of being, for he is standing at the precipice of a faultline running through modernity, the crack in the ground leading back into the melancholy abyss.⁴⁰¹ Thus while working towards Dantean, 'epische Strukturelemente' that Klusmann notes characterise the later works, the *Teppich*'s conversion to Dante is shadowed by the Petrarchan melancholic subjectivity in the very symbol that stands up to overcome that melancholy, that impossibility to convert.⁴⁰²

Konrad Huber traces George's translation activity and determines with reference to fraught passages that George used Camerini's edition of the text.⁴⁰³ Following Klusmann, Huber also notes the 'inhaltlicher Zusammenhang' between

³⁹⁹ Klusmann, 'Dante und Stefan George', p. 144.

⁴⁰⁰ Cf. Klibansky, Panovsky and Saxl, *Saturn und Melancholie*, 406ff and Cosgrove, *Born under Auschwitz*, p. 164. My thanks to Prof. Cosgrove for directing my attention to the figure of the angel in the melancholy tradition in conversation.

⁴⁰¹ The gendering of the angel as male will be justified in chapter five.

⁴⁰² See for example Moevs, 'Subjectivity and Conversion in Dante and Petrarch', p. 233, and p. 246: 'The Petrarchan self is caught in a paradoxical circle: despair, accidia, throws it toward a longing for conversion; but the accidia itself derives from an understanding of self that implicitly precludes conversion'. See also Igor Candido, 'Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio on Religious Conversion', in *Petrarch and Boccaccio. The Unity of Knowledge in the Pre-modern World*, ed. by Igor Candido (de Gruyter, 2018), pp. 153-175, esp. p. 167: 'Petrarch, as poet and intellectual, lays no claim to an exemplary (Augustinian / Dantean) conversion allowed to him alone through an angelic lady and by divine grace: the exemplarity of his experience lies instead in the choice of providing the first subjective account of a secular life that is common and unique at the same time'.

⁴⁰³ Konrad Huber, 'Philologische Bemerkungen zur Dante-Übertragung Stefan Georges', in *Recht, Geist und Kunst. Liber amicorum für Rüdiger Volhard*, ed. by Klaus Reichert and Manfred Schiedermann (Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1996), pp. 293-317 (p. 297). The edition is *La divina commedia di Dante Alighieri / Con note tratte dai migliori commenti*, ed. by Eugenio Camerini, 7th edn (Sonzogno, 1878), archived in George's estate as shelfmark StGA 10/76 (Stefan George Archive, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart). For reasons of availability, the edition referenced throughout this dissertation is the fifth printing (*La Divina Commedia di Dante Alighieri*, ed. by Eugenio Camerini, 5th edn (Sonzogno, 1876).

George's translation work on the *Purgatorio* and his own 'Vorspiel'.⁴⁰⁴ He also stresses George's adoption of the Italian hendecasyllable's rhythm and movement in his own poetry, as well as the "danteschen Doppelzäsur".⁴⁰⁵ So, in a way, George's poetry has Dante written into its stylistic DNA.

The George chapter of Karl Pestalozzi's book on the history of the lyric self (drawing a line from Dante to George) culminates in an analysis of 'Georges reinstes Aufschwunggedicht' — *Entrückung*, from *Der Siebente Ring* (VI/VII:111).⁴⁰⁶ He finds within it a mini-*Commedia*, replete with parallels to each cantica of the *Commedia*.⁴⁰⁷

Pestalozzi traces the elevation-topos across literary history as a striving for the Absolute, and finds in George's early poem 'Ikarus' (I: 41) the foundational gesture for all other problems explored in his poetry.⁴⁰⁸ The oeuvre becomes a continual

⁴⁰⁴ Huber, 'Philologische Bermerkungen', p. 302 note 40.

⁴⁰⁵ Huber, 'Philologische Bermerkungen', p. 307, following Rudolf Borchardt ('Dante und deutscher Dante') is cited in Huber 'Philologische Bermerkungen', p. 307, giving an example of such a line in George: 'er hat den griffel // der sich sträubt / zu führen'. Arbogast (*Erneuerung*, p. 127), however, had previously challenged Borchardt's view that this was an Italian influence by pointing out that George was using this form in his Baudelaire translations. And yet his interest in the Italian authors, especially Petrarch, technically predates his formal dealings with Baudelaire (not to mention his work on Baudelaire corresponds, somewhat chronologically, to his growing interest in Dante). We are here in a swamp of influence.

⁴⁰⁶ Karl Pestalozzi, *Die Entstehung des lyrischen Ich. Studien zum Motiv der Erhebung in der Lyrik* (de Gruyter, 1970) p. 319.

⁴⁰⁷ Pestalozzi, *Die Entstehung des lyrischen Ich*, pp. 336-37. Had he devoted further pages to George, he may well have also considered the three 'Landschaft' poems of the following cycle ('Traumdunkel') from *Der Siebente Ring*, following 'Entrückung', as equally Dantesque and extending the interpretation from the one to the many, from a point to a line. Gert Mattenklott, *Bilderdienst. Ästhetische Opposition bei Beardsley und George* (Rogner & Bernhard, 1970), p. 273 cursorily mentions these poems' refiguring of — the 'Wiederkunft des "pilgermanns" [...] im Stil der Danteschen Lebenswanderung am Beginn der Divina Commedia'. Pensa had curiously suggested comparing this triptych of poems to Petrarch's landscape poetry, despite 'Landschaft I's clearly Dantean opening with its reference to the erring in a forest, and the link to Maximin via the rare Latinism 'glorie': 'Des jahres wilde *glorie* durchläuft | Der trübe sinn der *mittags sich verlor* | in einem *walde ...*' (SW, VI/VII: 118, emphasis mine), cf. SW, VI/VII: 101. Pensa: 'it would be worthwhile to compare [these poems] with some examples of Petrarchan poetry (by the Petrarch that George initially wanted to imitate!) about nature' ('varrebbe la pena di confrontare [these poems] con qualche esempio petrarchesco (di quel Petrarca che George dapprima voleva imitare!) di poesia della natura', *Stefan George*, p. 188.

⁴⁰⁸ 'Die Situation des gestürzten Ikarus prägt als Muster Georges Gedichte bis und mit dem "Jahr der Seele". Sie umspielen in unendlicher Variation das Thema der verlorenen Erfüllung und der daraus entspringenden Geisteslagen der Trauer, der Empörung, des Trotzes, der Sehnsucht und

wrangling with these struggles and the attempt to transcend them via a higher absolute. Chapter three will supplement Pestalozzi's argument with recourse to the Petrarchism inherent in *Die Fibel*, in which the Ikarus poem discussed by Pestalozzi is implicated.

Bertram Schefold's links George's search for an 'Erneuerung der deutschen Lyrik' to his quests through the literatures of other countries (France, Italy) and antiquity,⁴⁰⁹ before in the later years the ideal of a Classical Greek poetics fused with German took centre stage in his thought.⁴¹⁰ For Schefold, George's is a personalised Dante translation: 'Liebe, politische Leidenschaft und die Religion der Schönheit sind seine Themen'.⁴¹¹ Schefold's focus on Dante's political impact as a cultural critic and as a 'Gestalt' is important: as a 'Gestalt', Dante provides a 'Gegenwelt' mirror to modernity to provoke change, tied indissolubly to Ernst Kantorowicz' work on Frederick II.⁴¹² Discussing Edgar Salin's ideas about Dante's *De Monarchia*, Schefold writes: 'Dante erscheint bei Salin als führender Theoretiker eines gottesgewollten Kaisers, der eine europäische Ordnung zu schaffen bestimmt ist'.⁴¹³ Likewise, the world of imperial duty and the concomitant values of respect, nobility and honour, bound up in interpersonal gestures and rituals of respect are the subject of Robert Boehringer's interpretation of Dante, who cites the *Convivio* in his interpretation of George's legacy.⁴¹⁴ This idea of

des ermattenden Neubeginns'. Pestalozzi, *Die Entstehung des lyrischen Ich*, p. 313. Regarding the elevation-topos, Baudelaire, entangling matters of Italian-French literary influence once again, is also cited as a reader of Dante (Pestalozzi, *Die Entstehung des lyrischen Ich*, p. 4). Baudelaire himself receives his own chapter named after his poem 'Elévation' and is also cited in the chapter on George (p. 311).

⁴⁰⁹ Schefold, 'Stefan George als Übersetzer Dantes', p. 232.

⁴¹⁰ Schefold, 'Stefan George als Übersetzer Dantes', p. 233.

⁴¹¹ Schefold, 'Stefan George als Übersetzer Dantes', p. 234.

⁴¹² 'Unsere Dante- und Georgelektüre wird bereichert, wenn wir bei Kantorowicz etwa von der Dichterfreudigkeit der staufischen Kaiser von Friedrich II. bis Konradin erfahren'. Schefold, 'Stefan George als Übersetzer Dantes', p. 254.

⁴¹³ Schefold, 'Stefan George als Übersetzer Dantes', p. 257.

⁴¹⁴ Cited in Schefold, Schefold, 'Stefan George als Übersetzer Dantes', p. 259.

nobility ties the ritualised semantics of the George Circle to its poetics and to George's works specifically, especially as they begin to become a liturgy of George's private mythology.⁴¹⁵

Bernhard Böschenstein emphasises George's search for *authority* in his early works, intimately connected to his fondness of Italy and his deployment of a generic Petrarchism, whereby George's 'herrin', 'die höhere Instanz', in the *Hymnen* (II: 10) is equated to the role of Laura. Authority for George consists in the consecration of art via the aesthetic of religion.⁴¹⁶ Thus the inaugural and authoritative blessing of the 'herrin' sets young George on his way to self-authorisation, conditioning his readers to associate the path to greatness precisely in this self-submission to a perceived higher other.⁴¹⁷ Italy becomes a utopian promise of a proximate future return of Ancient Hellenic sensuality and immanence to which the 'geburt des gottes' (SW, VIII: 9) bears witness,⁴¹⁸ and Dante's role in this utopian promise is determined by the prophetic powers of his *Paradiso*.⁴¹⁹ Böschenstein's reading of 'Goethes Letzte Nacht in Italien' (IX: 7-10) as a critique of Goethe to the benefit of Dante is a perceptive insight into George's canonisation

⁴¹⁵ As in *Der Stern des Bundes* or 1901's *Die Aufnahme in den Orden. Ein 'Weihe'spiel* (XVIII: 51ff). For literature as aesthetic ritual pertaining to George see Braungart, *Ästhetischer Katholizismus*. For George's preference for 'rituelle Handlungen' in his choice of Dante passages for translation see Rossi, 'Dante-Übertragungen', p. 679.

⁴¹⁶ 'Noch einmal wird religiöse Tradition hier vom großen Künstler neu angeeignet, in der Form neuer Autorität vorgelebt und gestaltet, gegen die "lauten horden" und das "kalte gift" der eigenen und der jetzigen Gegenwart gesetzt'. Bernhard Böschenstein, 'Stefan George und Italien', in *Jahrbuch des Freien Deutschen Hochstifts*, 1986: pp. 317-333 (p. 319).

⁴¹⁷ Böschenstein, 'Stefan George und Italien', p. 318. Böschenstein extrapolates from this enactment of submission to the 'herrin', which is a basic structure underlying Petrarch's *Canzoniere*, the structure of the George-Circle and of George's poetics itself, as the 'Unterwerfung unter eine Autorität'.

⁴¹⁸ Böschenstein, 'Stefan George und Italien', p. 328. Böschenstein points out that Italy in George's works is increasingly characterised by its links to Ancient Greece so that it ultimately appears 'in seiner Hellenischen Gestalt' (pp. 330, 331).

⁴¹⁹ Böschenstein, 'Stefan George und Italien', p. 328.

procedure.⁴²⁰ George himself becomes a literary authority through his ability to deploy Dante to re-interpret and limit Goethe's achievements.⁴²¹ In Bloomian terms, by identifying with the foreign, temporally more distant poet Dante and harnessing his own interpretation of the *Commedia*, George deals a blow to and gains an upper hand over Goethe in the literary agon, dethroning the precursor poet and reserving a space for himself on the throne of German literature.⁴²²

Maurizio Pirro takes up the issue of the Circle's 'Gestalt'-ideology and in the conception of Dante as a historical figure and embodiment of transhistorical forces. The 'militant' function⁴²³ of 'Gestalt' ideology is to reclaim the forces of History from the positivism of nineteenth century historiography and utilise them in the

⁴²⁰ The 'scheit' of fire that Prometheus steals (represented both in Goethe's 'Prometheus' poem and George's Goethe poem) is linked by Böschenstein to the 'scheit' of Dante in George's 'Dante und das Zeitgedicht' who uses it first to create *Inferno* and who then goes on to make use 'des vollen feuers' (SW, VI/VII: 9) to compose *Paradiso*. Goethe, who in George's poem is no seer ('Ein Seher [...] / Solch einer ward euch nicht und ich bin es nicht', SW, IX: 8-9) is depotentiated in comparison to those poet-prophets who like Dante 'noch ein sohn war und nicht ein enkel der Gää' (SW, IX: 8). What separates Homer, Vergil, and Dante from Goethe, Böschenstein argues, is the emphasis on the 'für ihr Volk gründenden Charakter' of the poets: they had historical, text-external impact (Böschenstein, 'Stefan George und Italien', p. 331).

⁴²¹ Coincidentally, this is precisely Petrarch's strategy for dealing with Dante's influence. Barański, whose analysis of Petrarch's struggle with his precursors has influenced the way I look at George's own struggle, writes: 'having unmasked his predecessor's unsustainable pretensions, Petrarch was that much freer to recreate him in terms that could both serve his own purposes of self-authorization and appear to evaluate Dante in a balanced manner'. See: Zygmunt G. Barański, 'Petrarch, Dante, Cavalcanti', in *Petrarch & Dante: Anti-Dantism, Metaphysics, Tradition*, ed. by Zygmunt G. Barański and Theodore J. Chachey, Jr. (University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), pp. 50-113 (p. 69). Another perceptive analysis of Petrarch's 'destructive' borrowings from Dante in his *Triumph*, in which he similarly prioritises the older, more foreign authors of antiquity, is done by Barański, see: Zygmunt G. Barański, 'The *Triumph*', in *The Cambridge Companion to Petrarch*, ed. by Albert Russell Ascoli and Unn Falkeid (Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 74-86 (p. 76): 'The poet's borrowing from the *Commedia*, in stark contrast to that from the classics, is largely "destructive," intent upon showing up Dante's supposed artistic and intellectual deficiencies'. Pirro makes the same point regarding the temporal distance of Dante for *Der Siebente Ring*: 'The distance in time makes identifying with Dante much easier than in the case of Nietzsche or even Goethe, to whom a text in the same collection (Zum Goethe-Tag) is dedicated, which is extremely explicit about the ignorance that George attributes to the whole of German society during the Wilhelmine period', ('La lontananza temporale rende l'identificazione con Dante molto più semplice che nel caso di Nietzsche o anche di Goethe, al quale nella medesima raccolta è dedicato un testo (Zum Goethe-Tag) oltremodo esplicito sull'incultura che George attribuisce a tutta la società tedesca del periodo guglielmino'.) See: Maurizio Pirro, 'Per una lettura "begriffsgeschichtlich" della categoria di Gestalt. Le traduzioni di Stefan George dalla "Divina Commedia"', in *Studia theodisca*, XIX (2012), pp. 93-111 (p. 103).

⁴²² Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, p. xxiv.

⁴²³ Pirro, 'Per una lettura "begriffsgeschichtlich"', p. 94 (its 'pragmatica e militante' aim).

present.⁴²⁴ The term ‘Gestalt’, Pirro points out, is relatively rare in George’s works but its presence increases in his Dante translations.⁴²⁵ ‘Gestalt’ taps into a transhistorical force, obtaining the power of manipulating chronological history, bending the present back to the past and enabling the ‘people today to revive its [the past’s – JW] essential meaning, liberating it from transient elements’.⁴²⁶ In Pirro’s explication of the concept, the spiritual breaks the linear line of history and emphasises circularity, return, and the idea of the spiral, a progressive movement constituted by returns to the starting point, albeit marked by difference, as John Freccero has outlined.⁴²⁷ The spirit of a ‘Gestalt’ is expressed differently at different points in time: that is, difference, otherness and contingency are rooted (‘radicamento’⁴²⁸) in something permanent that grants ontological stability in the face of historical change.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁴ See Pirro, ‘Per una lettura “begriffsgeschichtlich”’, pp. 106 & 99, note 15 for George as ‘interessato non al recupero puro e semplice del passato, ma alla riattivazione della sua sostanza in un contesto rinnovato’. (‘interested not in the simple recovery of the past, but in the reactivation of its substance in a renewed context’. trans mine).

⁴²⁵ Pirro, ‘Per una lettura “begriffsgeschichtlich”’, p. 106.

⁴²⁶ Pirro, ‘Per una lettura “begriffsgeschichtlich”’, p. 103 (‘L’innesto dei bisogni spirituali del presente sulla carica formativa del passato destruttura ogni possibile considerazione cronologica della storia e lascia emergere una linea spiraliforme di continuità spirituale che rende l’attività dei predecessori non soltanto pienamente disponibile, bensì soprattutto integrata e potenziata in modo costante dalla capacità degli uomini del presente di farne rivivere il significato sostanziale, liberandola dagli elementi perituri’).

⁴²⁷ Ibid., (‘Gestalt’-ideology ‘deconstructs any possible chronological consideration of history and allows a spiral-shaped line of spiritual continuity to emerge’. Italian text cited in the prior footnote). For a shrewd and imaginative study on the spiral theme in Dante, between thematic content and poetic form, see John Freccero in his essay on *terza rima* rhyme scheme: ‘Perhaps the most astonishing parallel between the theme and the formal pattern is established by the dramatic action of the poem, the pilgrim’s path. The geometric representation of forward motion which is at the same time recapitulatory is the spiral. [...] The geometric complexities of the spiral theme are spatial analogues of the temporal paradox of *terza rima* forward motion which recapitulates the beginning in the end’, *The Poetics of Conversion*, p. 263).

⁴²⁸ Pirro, ‘Per una lettura “begriffsgeschichtlich”’, p. 103

⁴²⁹ Elsewhere Pirro makes a similar point regarding the ‘Maximin’ cycle of *Der Siebente Ring*, where the ‘spiral model’ of time, with its reoccurrence of the same resisting the ‘centrifugal tendency’ of the progressive movement of history forward into otherness, is privileged over pure linearity. The point, Pirro makes, is: the ‘Gestalt’ concept as a spiral allows history to both progress forward and return back to a reliable source, see Pirro, *Come corda troppo tesa*, p. 182.

Despite the central significance of the Circle's notion of 'Gestalt', Pirro suggests contra Klussmann and his reliance on memoirs as sources ('fonti memorialistiche') that George's choice of Dante as his favourite fighter ought not to be pushed into finding in the latter 'a secret and persistent source of all George's poetry'.⁴³⁰ This dissertation nevertheless follows George through the many doors opened up by his reliance on Dante, without claiming that this reliance was anything of a 'secret': the openness and obviousness of George's Dantism underlies the weight attributed to it here. It takes George and his cult at their 'full speech', so to speak.

Little is known about George's Dante reception before the 1890s,⁴³¹ but his Camerini edition of Petrarch contains numerous references to Dante in the notes, so he was no doubt familiar with Dante as a potent literary influence.⁴³² Additionally, a roughly twenty-five year period of translation (1900-1925) is a long time to be translating one text. Thus I am sceptical of Pirro's own scepticism regarding the issue. At any rate, Pirro's article is key in understanding Dante as a 'Gestalt' reaching beyond the confines of the poetry itself to the broader historiography of the Circle, illuminating how the Circle understood itself as a particular social group acting transformatively in history.⁴³³

⁴³⁰ 'una fonte segreta e persistente di tutta la poesia di George', Pirro, 'Per una lettura "begriffsgeschichtlich"', 104 n. 22.

⁴³¹ See: Erich Berger, 'Eine Vermutung, Stefan Georges Übertragungen aus der "Göttlichen Komödie" betreffend', in *Monatshefte*, 48.7 (1956), pp. 345-59 (p. 347).

⁴³² *Rime di Francesco Petrarca*. Con l'interpretazione di Giacomo Leopardi e con note inedite di Eugenio Camerini, 6. ed. Stereotipa (Edoardo Sonzogno Editore, 1888). In the Stefan George Archiv under StGA 10/367.

⁴³³ Considering the motif of conversion, again, it is worth noting, as Ryan Szpiech does, that the broader social context became a significant part of conversion narratives from the Middle Ages on, modelled as they were on the Acts of the Apostles: 'In such formulations, conversion's sudden epistrophē, or inner turning of mind—Plato's "conversion of the soul," Plotinus's "return" of the soul to its one source—becomes at the same time a repentance and a sudden change in outer social identity. The old self disappears and gives way to the converted self, just as the former religion cedes to and is replaced by a new faith. Conversion came to signify a simultaneous turning of mind

Finally, Jutta Schloon's analysis of George's medievalism finds *Der Teppich des Lebens* a point of transition from an aesthetic medievalism to a culturally-oriented, politically motivated and engaged medievalism (with Dante here as point of reference) in the later works,⁴³⁴ and to what she terms the 'esoterisch-prophetischer Mediävalismus', constituted by various 'neomystische Texturen' in the later works.⁴³⁵ and these become the primary contrasting rhetorical modes of George's poetry: lyrical on the one hand, and prophetic on the other.⁴³⁶ Schloon reveals the complex, polysemous discourse of medievalism that offers the poet multiple creative repertoires of ideas and vocabularies (such as that of mysticism⁴³⁷) from a world counter to modernity with a 'sinn- und identitätsstiftende Aufgabe' for both the poet and his Circle.⁴³⁸ This is exemplified with regards to *Dante und das Zeitgedicht* (VI/VII:8f). A close reading over several pages works out the telling, structural parallels to the first *Zeitgedicht*, and elucidates Dante's figural significance, which 'die poetischen Rollen [präludiert], die George selbst in den

and turning of identity only when it came to be structured as a narrative in which the individual's transformation reflected the transformation of society'. Ryan Szpiech, *Conversion and Narrative: Reading and Religious Authority in Medieval Polemic* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), p. 31. Athanasios Despotis similarly underlines the significance of the social aspect of specifically Pauline conversion: the incorporation into the body of the group of believers: 'This text [1 Cor 12: 12-13 – JW] most palpably reveals the social aspect of the Pauline understanding of conversion. In Paul's view, experiencing an ongoing spiritual transformation presupposes the undergoing of socialization, i.e., a process of incorporation'. See: Athanasios Despotis, 'Religious and Philosophical Conversion in Paul and John', in *Religious and Philosophical Conversion in the Ancient Mediterranean Traditions*, ed. by Athanasios Despotis and Hermut Löhr (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2022), pp. 315-341, (p. 327).

⁴³⁴ Schloon, *Modernes Mittelalter*, pp. 179-80.

⁴³⁵ Schloon, *Modernes Mittelalter*, pp. 257, 281f.

⁴³⁶ In her discussion of the *Buch der Sagen und Sänge* Schloon identifies the emergence of these contrasting modes: 'Im kontrastiven Aufbau der *Sagen und Sänge* zeigt sich ein struktureller Grundzug, der sich später mit noch größerer Deutlichkeit in Georges Werk manifestieren wird: Der Kontrast zwischen prophetisch-deklamatorischen, "harten" Gedichten und lyrisch-melancholischen, "weichen" Liedern'. *Modernes Mittelalter*, p. 115. Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, p. 131 (building on Gert Mattenklott's argument), provides a useful overview of the 'two modalities' of George's poetry in *Der Siebente Ring*, the 'heroic-charismatic, visionary mode' and the 'passive, inwardly oriented, subject-related ('subjekt-bezogen'), lyric-reflexive and realistic mode'. The former I map onto the Dantean mode in George's works, the latter onto the Petrarchan.

⁴³⁷ Schloon, *Modernes Mittelalter*, p. 337.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

einzelnen Zyklen des *Siebenten Rings* einnehmen wird'.⁴³⁹ Dante is a mirror in which George finds an 'identifikatorische Selbstbespiegelung'.⁴⁴⁰

iii. Concluding Remarks

In sum, the present study reads Stefan George as caught between two worlds: that of Petrarchan melancholy on the one hand, and that of a Dantean, incarnational poetics of revelation, on the other.⁴⁴¹ Maximin is the son that George begets in order to fuse poetry and his world into an indissoluble bind, refilling language with spirit, and reading Dante in the tradition of what William Franke calls 'secular scriptures', aiming 'to make language itself the locus of revelation'.⁴⁴²

It was claimed, contra Pirro, that George's works could indeed be read *sub specie Dantis*. In this I follow the suggestion of Jeffrey Dean Todd who, in the conclusion to his thesis (a critique of Gerd Michels' work on George's Dante translations) outlines a number of useful connections.⁴⁴³ His directions for future research includes 'the relation between the passages translated and contemporaneous works of George', noting not only what he did translate, but also what passages he did not, and to what extent the selection process reflects the image of Dante George had, and this image's relation in turn to the dominant trends

⁴³⁹ Schloon, *Modernes Mittelalter*, p. 216.

⁴⁴⁰ Schloon, *Modernes Mittelalter*, p. 214.

⁴⁴¹ Excluded in this literature review is the pioneering study by Gerd Michels, *Die Dante-Übertragungen Stefan Georges*, op cit. Reference will be made to that as required.

⁴⁴² William Franke, *Secular Scriptures. Modern theological poetics in the Wake of Dante*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2016), p. 5. Franke is not referring to George, but to Emily Dickinson as an example of one 'of the more spiritualizing forms of Modernism' (p. 2). Not to be forgotten is that a key term George used in reference to Dante was that of 'Bindung' which linguistically is not so far from the significant word 'Bund' (Landmann, *Gespräche mit Stefan George*, p. 41, also cited in Schloon, *Modernes Mittelalter*, p. 222.).

⁴⁴³ George's profound identification with Dante, the fact that Dante was required reading for the Circle, the Maximin event in its entirety, as well as deeper connections such 'the word as ground of reality' (p. 185) being a key theme in both poets, both poets' development of a new literary language out of a vernacular, the *Vita Nova*'s impact for the *Teppich* and for George's dictum of 'poetry is praise' (p. 186), etc. Todd, *Stefan George's Dante Translations*, pp. 185-86.

of Dante reception in Germany at the time.⁴⁴⁴ Todd's directive, in sum, is that '[t]he task of a comprehensive work on the George/Dante relation would be to develop all these individual connections, and to understand their ramifications for George's view of poetry and of the poet'.⁴⁴⁵ In this respect the present work is an attempt to address some of Todd's directions.

Most recently, while not engaging with Dante as a significant intertext or 'Gestalt', Peter Morgan has read George's self-presentation as a 'narrative *life*' or 'lyric vita' in which the poet 'charted the recognition of his homosexuality as the defining and determining force of his life'.⁴⁴⁶ In his reading, which attempts to redeliver to the poems the 'aesthetic autonomy' (ibid) he sees missing in much George scholarship, rooted as it is in an inability to separate the *Ich* of the poems from the life of the poet, Morgan is following the path of a literary persona that is rooted in but *distinguishable* from the poet, much as Dante-criticism has had to do with the pilgrim and narrator figures in the *Commedia*.⁴⁴⁷ Like Morgan's George, Dante in the *Commedia* presents himself as the culmination of a 'lyric vita' that reaches back to the youth work and includes it retrospectively within the narrative unfolding of the *Commedia*'s revelatory poetics. Both poets, if we follow Morgan's reading, chart the development of their experience of love.

⁴⁴⁴ Todd, *Stefan George's Dante Translations*, pp. 187-88.

⁴⁴⁵ Todd, *Stefan George's Dante Translations*, p. 186.

⁴⁴⁶ Morgan, *Stefan George*, p.40. Morgan's book appeared 3 years into the writing of the present PhD thesis, already at a hundred-thousand words at the time of its appearance. Where Morgan's argument shares similarities to my own I have cited him in the relevant passages retrospectively, and where at times, as indicated, I have adapted his insights.

⁴⁴⁷ Cf. Freccero, *The Poetics of Conversion*, p. 265.

With these sources covered for the time being, it is time to go searching for the wandering Petrarch, whose desirously errant voice must be recovered from the early works of George.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁸ Summarily, to quote Giuseppe Mazzotta: 'Wandering, let me say, is a favourite metaphor with Petrarch, for it brings to one focus the movement of the Augustinian unquiet heart and pure drifting. Many of his texts crystallize such ambivalent motion'. *The Worlds of Petrarch*, p. 19.

4. Magister Petrarca · Petrarch in *Die Fibel*

i. Background and Context

As the first volume of his self-assembled *Gesamtausgabe*, *Die Fibel* (SW, I, 1901) unsettles the critic reading for linear poetic development. This volume of the poet's 'ungestalten puppen aus denen später die falter leuchtender gesänge fliegen' (SW, I: 7) was assembled for release in 1901, over a decade into the poet's career, and presented as the poet's mythic beginnings that predate the inaugural 'beginning' and breakthrough represented by 1890's *Hymnen* (SW, II).⁴⁴⁹ It is the mythical ground of the later beginning and a negation of everything that the successful beginning, *Hymnen*, is not.⁴⁵⁰ With his two beginnings, George permits himself the freedom to reveal his chaotic, primordial beginning from the safety of the successful later one.⁴⁵¹ The beginning represented by *Die Fibel*, however, is itself tempered by the moment of its composition: part of a wider series of publications in which the poet presents himself as the charismatic leader of a new poetic movement proclaimed by the revelatory *Der Teppich des Lebens* (1899/1900), and a cultural leader who, together with Karl Wolfskehl, was planning the publication of the three volumes of *Deutsche Dichtung*. The former role was

⁴⁴⁹ For *Hymnen* as George's 'Durchbruch' see Ute Oelmann, 'Die Fibel (SW I)', in *Stefan George und sein Kreis. Ein Handbuch*, vol. 1, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer, Wolfgang Braungart, Stefan Breuer and Ute Oelmann, 2nd edn (de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 95-106 (p. 95). This was canon in the George hagiographies, see e.g. Friedrich Wolters, *Stefan George und die Blätter für die Kunst: Deutsches Geistesgeschichte seit 1890* (Georg Bondi, 1930), p. 31, and Gundolf, *George*, pp. 61, 78, etc.

⁴⁵⁰ For any beginning as a negation cf. Schelling, *Die Weltalter* 1915 draft (SW, I, 8, 224-25). On this cf. Judith Norman, 'The Logic of Longing: Schelling's Philosophy of Will', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 10.1 (2002): pp. 89-107 (p. 96), doi:10.1080/09608780110099886.

⁴⁵¹ Schelling, SW, I, 8, 306 on the relationship between freedom and the ability to reveal oneself: 'Nun ist ein Freies eben darum frei, daß es sich nicht offenbaren muß. Sich offenbaren ist Wirken, wie alles Wirken ein sich-Offenbaren. Dem Freien aber muß frei seyn, innerhalb des bloßen Könnens stehen zu bleiben, oder zur That überzugehen. Ginge es nothwendig über, so würde es nicht als das wirklich, das es ist, nämlich als das Freie'.

conditioned by his engagement with Dante and marked as a turning point and another new beginning ('Ein bräutliches beginnliches entschleiern', v: 20). This was complementary to the latter role, in which he sought to take control of literary tradition and German poetic origins and adapt them to his specific ideological-educational purposes, to create a 'Kanon[] für das neue Jahrhundert', as Kaiser calls it.⁴⁵² The task, according to the *Gesamt-Vorrede zu Deutsche Dichtung*, was to present a new selection of canonical authors that would correspond to George's new aesthetics.

Thus a new beginning in poetics (*Der Teppich des Lebens*), a new beginning in German culture (*Deutsche Dichtung*) and an older, personal beginning presented now for the first time (*Die Fibel*), and complemented by the appearance of *Hymnen, Pilgerfahrten und Algabal* (the breakthrough beginning, published as a triptych in 1898). One beginning is to be read and considered in the context of another, as Martus writes, foregrounding George's strategy of 'Sichtbarkeit von Werkkontinuität':

Er entwickelt ein spezifisches Interesse an der Vorläuferschaft für das eigene Werk im eigenen Werk: Die mehrfach verschobenen "Anfänge" des Werks deuten auf das Problem des Anfangs hin; sie regen eine temporalisierte Beobachtung an und rufen dazu auf, Bezüge des aktuell Wahrgenommenen zu Präfigurationen, Variationen und Abwandlungen zu entdecken.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵² Gerhard R. Kaiser, 'Traditionsverhalten', *Stefan George und sein Kreis. Ein Handbuch*, vol. 2, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer, Wolfgang Braungart, Stefan Breuer and Ute Oelmann, 2nd edn (de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 607-626 (p. 607).

⁴⁵³ Martus, 'Werkpolitik', p. 607.

This allows George to constitute the universe of his work as its own 'Resonanzraum' or the 'privilegierten Kontext seiner selbst',⁴⁵⁴ so that the reader is trapped within the Work, and a hermeneutics from the outside is foreclosed, inapplicable to the fantasy of the work. Martus' 'Werkpolitik' aligns in character with what Robert Hollander once identified as Dante's "'verbal figuralism", the technique of repeating a word used earlier in the poem in such a way as to "fulfill" its meaning', and what Barolini argues is Dante's strategy of 'intratextual' allusion, when his 'text buttresses the text'.⁴⁵⁵ What all three analyses have in common, between Dante and George, is a self-authorisation, keeping the reader bound within the 'hermeneutic guidelines' developed by the poet himself.⁴⁵⁶

As Martus further on discusses, the publication of *Deutsche Dichtung* was part of a movement away from the influence of French symbolism, a turn from Romance to Germanic culture.⁴⁵⁷ It was also time, one gleans from the preface to *Deutsche Dichtung*, that the Circle's very own *Meister* felt the need to position himself in a meaningful relationship to his preceding 'meister-dichter',⁴⁵⁸ as the 'Erfüllung einer deutschen Literaturtradition'.⁴⁵⁹ The concern for newness and mastery at this time is evident: a new canon and a new poetic beginning marked by George himself as a 'wendepunkt' looking both forwards to a poetically

⁴⁵⁴ Martus, *Werkpolitik*, p. 607.

⁴⁵⁵ Hollander, *Allegory in Dante's Commedia*, p. 105; Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy*, p. 95.

⁴⁵⁶ For the complete picture of the 'drama of self-authorization', see Ascoli, *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author*, here 97 (for Dante's 'hermeneutic guidelines' cf. Harrison, cited p. 276). For an example of such intratextual hermeneutics Morwitz offers a reading of *Schmerzbrüder* from *Der Teppich des Lebens* as gaining significance in relation forwards to *Der Siebente Ring* and backwards to *Das Jahr der Seele*, see Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 185.

⁴⁵⁷ Martus, *Werkpolitik*, p. 620.

⁴⁵⁸ 'Einem kreise von künftlern aber und schönheitsliebenden sei nicht verwehrt seine anforderungen zu betonen und seine verehrten meister-dichter in einer ausstattung zu lesen die dem gehobenen geschmack entspricht. Eine solche gibt es bisher nicht'. *Deutsche Dichtung*, ed. and introduced by Stefan George and Karl Wolfskehl, cited from Landmann, *Der George-Kreis*, p. 59.

⁴⁵⁹ Martus, 'Werkpolitik', 620.

educated, 'redemptive *comitatus*' (represented in *Der Teppich des Lebens*), as well as retrospectively to the poet's subjectively Petrarchan origins in *Die Fibel*.⁴⁶⁰ Both works echo each other and evince their reception-strategies in their opening lines, except where *Die Fibel*'s poem 'Ich wandelte' announces its inheritance of a wandering Petrarchan solitude, the 'Vorspiel' to *Teppich* announces rather the revelation of a Dantean angel that puts a stop to the wandering subject.⁴⁶¹ *Die Fibel* goes on to get lost in its wanderings, its epiphanic moment incapable of being retained, whereas the 'Vorspiel' stays solidly fixated on its angel and his tidings.

The *Teppich*'s revelatory poetics, the preface to *Die Fibel* warns us, is not to be expected here: it is precisely not 'eine schöne offenbarung' that is at stake for the readers *Die Fibel*, but rather a deliberately nostalgic recollection of the 'zeit unsrer reinsten begeisterung und unsrer vollen blühwilligkeit' (SW, I: 7). In revealing the absence of revelation, the author is nevertheless positioning the earlier work within a new, revelatory context, and positing himself as the guardian of revelatory speech, deciding what is and is not revelation. In doing so, his current writing self emerges as free, opposed to the former feeble self who could not bring

⁴⁶⁰ Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, p. 25. See Martus, *Werkpolitik*, p. 609 for George's 'wendepunkt', writing to Ida Coblenz.

⁴⁶¹ 'Ich wandelte auf öden düstren bahnen
Und planlos floss dahin mein leben.
In meinem herzen war kein hohes streben
Es schien mich nichts an schönheit zu gemahnen'.
SW, I: 13. Cf.
'Ich forschte bleichen eifers nach dem horte
Nach strofen drinnen tiefsten kummerniss
Und dinge rollten dumpf und ungewiss –
Da trat ein nackter engel durch die pforte.'
SW, v:10.

The similarities have been studied by scholars. See e.g. Jürgen Egyptien & Elke Kasper, 'Die Fibel', in *Stefan George – Werkkommentar. Studien und Interpretationen zu sämtlichen Dichtungen und Übertragungen*, ed. by Jürgen Egyptien (de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 4-22 (p. 8), Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, pp. 119-20 and Marita Keilson-Lauritz, *Von der Liebe die Freundschaft heißt. Zur Homoerotik im Werk Stefan Georges* (Rosa Winkel, 1987), p. 40.

forth 'eine schöne offenbarung'.⁴⁶² This is the presentation of one's origins mediated from the vantage point of an already established career, a view to one's own personal Petrarchan margins from the established Dantean centre, a view towards one's own dark ground of necessity from the Dantean freedom of elevation. The dark ground, the eternal 'no' and contingencies of those feeble beginnings are now answered with the eternal 'yes' of one's well-secured poetic 'Grund', incorporating them retrospectively and stabilising their insecurity into the tightly-bounded ring-structure of an oeuvre in which all contingencies are accounted for.⁴⁶³

The importance of George's retrospective view is established in the preface through his specific demarcation between his ilk and the like of other readers (even 'freunde und verehrer') who may expect something else: 'Wir die dichter aber erkennen uns in diesen zarten erstlingen wieder' (I: 7). Precisely in these tender firstlings one finds 'das für die zukunft bedeutsame' (ibid), and so there is a revelation after all, one coming from the future *Meister*. This searching in the past for the seeds of one's already well-developed talents, the search 'to write the

⁴⁶² For as Schelling writes, the ability to reveal and equally not to reveal constitutes a moment of freedom. Schelling, *Weltalter* 1815 draft, in *SW*, I, 8, 305f.

⁴⁶³ On the eternal 'yes' and 'no' in relation to freedom and revelation Schelling, *Weltalter* 1815, I, 8, 305. Leahy, 'Der wahre Historiker', p. 17 notes the presence of contingency as one of the impactful elements facing anybody who must begin, and the anxiety it can produce in the narrative/narrator. For the narrative of Bachmann's *Malina*, the preface, similarly to George's preface and his proem as discussed below, works to 'articulate[] and then "contain" the contingency of the text (its *Gewährlosigkeit*), a contingency that must be suspended in order for the text to proceed at all' (p. 17). The obsession with beginnings, aside from being a marker of the modern, is also bound up with questions of identity: 'the modern – the attempt to inhabit one's own *Mündigkeit* by inventing an authoritative self' (p. 28), which is implicitly linked to the analysis of beginnings: 'in the beginning is the imperative to invent oneself' (p. 22). Unlike for the narrator of *Malina* in Leahy's analysis, for George, while split in the sense that his beginnings are a site of difference, the issue of beginning is tamed and presented as having never been much of an issue at all. George foregrounds his self-presence as competent narrator, whereas in *Malina* the 'stark moment of self-reflexivity' is also the moment when the anxieties regarding the contingency of any beginning are revealed, and the narrator is revealed as having lost an un-compromised 'self-presence', which we are given to understand is the condition of possibility for the illusion of narrative truth (pp. 17-18). The following analysis of George's beginnings is partly inspired by Leahy's analysis of *Malina*'s beginning(s), and to Teodolinda Barolini's analysis of the 'problem of beginnings' in *The Undivine Comedy*, pp. 21ff.

beginning' in Leahy's words, is a method of consolidating identity, of finding, through the act of collecting and positioning literary fragments into a unified whole, the confirmation of that which one has always been – the 'Wahrheit seines Lebens' as Gundolf had it – figured as a clear teleology from undeveloped poet-ephebe to mature poetic *Meister*.⁴⁶⁴ The epistemologically elitist gesture in that 'Wir die dichter aber erkennen' suggests too that this act of self-fashioning is part and parcel of poetic meaning making. To reflect on and sequence one's origins is the poet's program, even if we non-poets cannot see the value in it at first. It is an impulse that is decidedly modern in the etymological sense of *modo*: of being in

⁴⁶⁴ Leahy, 'Der wahre Historiker', p. 23. Gundolf, *George*, p. 32. Cf. Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder*, p. 27: 'In rediscovering one's ethnic roots or religious tradition (all of which, of course, are faked retroactive projections), a social group as it were chooses its eternal nature - that is, freely decides what it always-already was...'. Cf. Leahy, 'Der wahre Historiker', pp. 23-24 for teleology as a central mechanism in 'establish[ing] for the subject an authoritative beginning out of which it can emerge and develop' (p. 24). George, in contrast to Bachmann's narrator, presents himself as a better 'acrobat[]' of self-legitimation, to borrow Leahy's image (p. 24), partly because, it could be argued, he goes to extra lengths in constructing himself qua *authoritative* author, and part of this involves the shaping of the reception of his texts in and through the George-Circle. Such an 'external reading authority' (p. 24) is what *Malina*'s narrator lacks, and George's construction of and positing of such a readerly circle (even if he remains the sole authority qua its founder) is symptomatic of this modern anxiety about beginning. The George-Circle, as George's own creation, closes the circular movement initiated by himself: his control of others is used to create a grounding, positive feedback loop for himself and his texts, in turn legitimising and authorising the Circle's ideology, a literal 'hermeneutic circle' (a similar point is made by Cornelia Blasberg, 'Charisma in der Moderne', pp. 127-127: 'der "Kreis" autorisiert George zum charismatischen Medium der Sprache, wie umgekehrt dem Charismatiker George die Aufgabe zukommt, seine Schüler zu Interpreten zu begnaden'). This reliance on and 'Hoffnung, verstanden zu werden', as Bozza explains (*Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 270), differentiates him from French Symbolism, in which the symbol is self-explanatory and not reliant on such external perceptions. The circular self-referentiality of George's self-authorisation is emblematic of what Terry Eagleton, in *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, p. 140 discusses as the difference between modernism and idealism. In the modernist text (as also demonstrated in Leahy's analysis of *Malina*), Eagleton writes: '[s]elf grounding here is just another name for unmasking the arbitrariness of all foundations, demystifying the presumption of some natural starting-point somehow cued by the very structure of the given'. (p. 140). By contrast, idealism, in Eagleton's reading of Hegel, grounds itself in order to mimic the apparent self-grounding of reality itself: 'To say that such idealist philosophy has no determinable foundations is paradoxically to grant it the deepest possible guarantee, since its foundation is then identical with the undeterminable first principle of reality itself' (p. 140). While symptomatic of the former, George poses as the latter: self-evident, self-positing, self-grounding and self-grounded in absolute necessity, just like the universe. As he himself once claimed in conversation with Ernst Glöckner on the 6 March, 1916 regarding the derived nature of the arts from the originary verbal word: "Im Anfang steht das Wort. Aller Anfang geschieht durch den Dichter." (Cited from M. Keilson, R.C. Ockenden and H-J Seekamp, *Stefan George. Leben und Werk: Eine Zeittafel* (Castrum Peregrini Press, 1972), p. 264).

and relating to the *now* of the present moment in relation to the past.⁴⁶⁵ The experience of the contingency of any random moment creates an impulse to seek retrospectively for prior grounding. This is delineated clearly by Schelling in the *System des transzendentalen Idealismus* (1800), when he writes that the experience of the present moment is vexed: the *Ich* necessarily posits a prior moment to which it might return, but access to which is impossible: 'Das Gefühl dieses Zurückgetriebenwerdens auf einen Moment, in den es nicht realiter zurückkehren kann, ist das Gefühl der *Gegenwart*'.⁴⁶⁶ The first moment of consciousness of the *Ich* necessarily posits a prior moment of inaccessible unconsciousness. Or as he elsewhere writes: 'Es gibt kein Bewußtwerden (wie eben darum auch kein Bewußtseyn) ohne ein Vergangenes zu setzen'.⁴⁶⁷

So what is the value of *Die Fibel*? It has a lot to do with his authorial self-stylings, his presentation of himself to and in the world. *Die Fibel* represents both the young and the mature George's efforts – the former the poems themselves, the latter the arrangement and publication strategy – and engagement with literary history, constituting a determined overcoming of the hackneyed epigon poetry of the nineteenth century.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁵ Cf. Ascoli, *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author*, p. ix, & Peter Childs, *Modernism* (Routledge, 2000), p. 12, and p. 16 referencing Foucault for modernity 'as an attitude rather than an epoch (Foucault 1986)'. This attitude, Foucault himself argues, is constituted by 'a feeling of novelty' (p. 39), a 'will to "heroize" the present' (p. 40), to find the remaining pieces of 'poetry within history' (p. 41), by the 'task of producing [oneself]' (p. 42) and by a method of critique in which one finds oneself 'always in the position of beginning again' (p. 47). Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*, ed. by Paul Rabinow (Penguin Books, 1991 [1984]).

⁴⁶⁶ Schelling, *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*, SW, I,3,465.

⁴⁶⁷ Schelling, *Weltalter* 1815, SW, I,8,262. In his commentary, Wirth points out that *bewußt* is the past participle of the archaic verb *bewissen*. See Wirth, *Ages of the World*, ed. by Wirth, p. 140 note 51.

⁴⁶⁸ The 'weisen dürftig und gewohn' and 'viele fremde töne' of the 'Geleitverse', examined below, lay the ground for Arbogast's interpretation, *Erneuerung* 34f, of *Die Fibel* as 'die Ausdruck gewordene Anstrengung, den alten [Stil] zu überwinden' (44).

To return to Leahy's analysis of *Malina* for a moment, it is now clear where George differs from that narrator. His preface does not so much work to 'articulate' and 'suspend' contingency as it does to banish it outright from the realm of possibility, to retrospectively neutralise it, presenting himself and his oeuvre, even the most unstable originary poems, as self-evident and born of total necessity, that is, the necessity of being overcome.⁴⁶⁹ In this *retro*-perspective, all contingencies appear anew under the sign of necessity: it had to be so. Contingency and uncertainty are located firmly in the poet's past, and grounded in the necessity of being overcome in order to develop teleologically into what he is, what he already was.

George's canon-building activities around 1900 reverberate in his own poetry, in how certain poems reflect upon and refract literary history. Central here is the eighteenth poem from the 'Vorspiel' to *Der Teppich des Lebens*, which illuminates his Type-3 Petrarchism:

Einst werden sie in deinen schluchten spüren

Was noch darin von deiner stimme dröhne.

›Ist dies der ort von klagen tränen schwüren!

O kleine tiefe« und der eine höhne:

›Sind dies die so gelobten hügelspitzen

⁴⁶⁹ Leahy, 'Der wahre Historiker', p. 17. Schelling, *Weltalter* 1815, SW, I,8,305 ('denn ohne Ueberwindung ist kein Anfang'). Cf. Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, pp. 138-39. There, false consciousness, what here are George's errant youthful contingencies, is presented as the necessary precondition of philosophy or self-consciousness in both Hegel and Freud: 'If it is true that theory is only necessary because of false consciousness, it is equally true that false consciousness is itself necessary, so that philosophy is instantly redeemed from any merely contingent status'. (p. 139).

Mit ihrem freudenblick in fabellande?
 Sind dies die wellen die verderblich spritzen?
 Wir reichen mit dem finger bis zum sande

 Und jener wende sich von dir verdrossen:
 'Er gab uns nur zu staunen und zu scheuen ·
 Wie fernab diese menschentage sprossen!
 Wie könnten wir uns ihrer früchte freuen'

 So sind dir trost und beispiel höchste meister
 Die attischen die reinsten gottesdiener
 Der Nebel-inseln finstrer fürst der geister
 Valclusas siedler und der Florentiner.

(SW, v: 27).

The poet is speaking to himself in the second person singular and ruminating on his own literary afterlife, that is, how he will be read and received by future critics.⁴⁷⁰ His aching (Type-1) Petrarchism ('klagen tränen schwüren') and his utopian visions of 'fabellande' may be condemned as irrelevant to common life by future readers. The poem acts as a proleptic bulwark against such criticism by absorbing it into itself, foreseeing it and thereby neutralising it. The answer, of course, is provided by literary history: the 'höchste meister' have withstood the test of time despite their

⁴⁷⁰ Lehnen, 'Vorspiel', p. 262.

obscurity.⁴⁷¹ It is not just literary history, however, but also his very own personal literary history. The poem implicates George in a canon of authors responsible for creating him as a poet. Chronologically speaking, Petrarch ought to stand at the very beginning, a fact alluded to by George himself in conversation with Ernst Glöckner years later.⁴⁷² This poem is the last time Petrarch finds mention in George's oeuvre, compared to Dante who will return consistently from here on.⁴⁷³

If *Die Fibel's* preface secures contingency by locating it in a temporally distant past and reworking it into the necessity of the poet's fate, this poem secures future contingencies via recourse to the necessity of the past: literary history and canon. The private canon here is ordered neither strictly chronologically nor in terms of priority, although Dante's antonomastic mention at the very end suggests a stronger emphasis: the canonical list builds up and climaxes with him, the 'Florentiner'. The use of epithets is typical of George, increasing the hermeneutic difficulty of his texts by requiring the reader to have certain knowledge and the ability to decode them, as Schloon has perceptively argued.⁴⁷⁴ The particular

⁴⁷¹ 'Der Nebel-inseln finstler fürst der geister' refers to Shakespeare. Elsewhere, George justifies creative obscurity with reference to various figures from literary history in order to bypass common understanding and reception by the masses. Among these exclusive wielders of 'klangvolle dunkelheiten' is Dante: 'Jeden wahren künstler hat einmal die sehnsucht befallen in einer sprache sich auszudrücken deren die unheilige menge sich nie bedienen würde oder seine worte so zu stellen dass nur der eingeweihte ihre hehre bestimmung er kenne .. klangvolle dunkelheiten sind bei Pindar Dante und manche bei dem klaren Goethe'. *SW*, xvii: 47. This text in question is in defence of Mallarmé's Symbolist difficulty and obscurity.

⁴⁷² 'Um 1/2 9 bei George bis 1/2 11. Er sprach viel über die "Notwendigkeit" in seinem Leben. [...] Paris, wo er wirkliche Dichter gefunden hätte. Das hätte es in *der* Zeit nicht in Deutschland gegeben. Seine ersten Gedichte seien gewiß zierlich und übertrieben, aber als Protest gegen die Sing-Sang Mode des damaligen literarischen Deutschland notwendig gewesen. Petrarca hätte in dieser Zeit starken Eindruck auf ihn gemacht. Goethe, Hölderlin, Jean Paul seien ihm erst später aus der Erkenntnis heraus aufgegangen'. Ernst Glöckner, *Begegnung mit Stefan George*, p. 81 (6 March 1916). This is another example of George's repositioning of his Petrarchan beginnings under the sign of necessity.

⁴⁷³ Cf. Fitton, 'Petrarca um 1900', p. 226 note 2. Dante finds mention in *Dante und das Zeitgedicht*, 'Der Krieg', the translations, as well as all the intertextual allusions that this study traces further on.

⁴⁷⁴ Schloon, *Modernes Mittelalter*, pp. 252-53, who illuminates this hermeneutic elitism in her discussion of George's *Tafeln* from *Der Siebente Ring*: 'Im Falle antonomastischer Namensumschreibungen etwa machen sich diese Bezugnahmen ein verrätselndes Potential zunutze, um den gebildeten Leser in ein Spiel des Chiffrierens und Dechiffrierens einzuladen'. (p. 252).

epithet 'der Florentiner' is possibly adopted from Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who in the preface to his *Dante and His Circle*, which George was reading in 1898 while still composing poems for *Der Teppich*, refers to Dante as 'the great Florentine'.⁴⁷⁵ Dante and Petrarch sharing a line leads Fitzon to claim that Petrarch, 'den er wenig später in der *Fibel* als Vorbild explizit machen wird, steht hier gleichgewichtet neben Dante'.⁴⁷⁶ One must question this apparent equality. With George, things are not always as they seem: a line honouring two former poets may nevertheless be privileging one over the other, especially when considered within the context of the work (and his oeuvre), oriented towards a Dantean poetics of revelation and opposed to the self-involved melancholy poetics of previous, Petrarch-shadowed volumes. Dante's position at the culmination of the list, I would argue, works all the more to offset the value of 'Valclusas siedler'. The Greek tragedians ('die attischen') and Shakespeare each receive the luxury of an entire poetic line to themselves, replete with epithets that further characterise them in personal relation to the poet. Dante and Petrarch are forced to share a line, each antonomasia occupying equal metrical space (five syllables for 'Valclusas siedler', five for 'der Florentiner') and even almost internally rhyming through assonance (the /i:/ and /e/ sounds of 'siedler' and 'Florentiner'), thus suggesting equal priority, as Fitzon claims. Dante, however, is in the rhyme position, his epithet capitalised, a fact that makes his presence in the poem weightier in its apt rhyme with 'gottesdiener' – 'Dante klangvoll am Ende' indeed, as Landmann comments.⁴⁷⁷ Given the Dantean poetic program of *Der Teppich des Lebens*, at odds with the rampant Type-1

⁴⁷⁵ Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Dante and His Circle, with the Italian Poets Preceding Him (1100-1200-1300)* (Ellis and Elvey, 1892), p. xv. George, it is reported, read this during a visit to Albert Verwey in Nordwijk. See Jürgen Egyptien, *Stefan George*, p. 150. Egyptien however does not engage in parallels between George's and Rossetti's relation to *the Florentine*.

⁴⁷⁶ Fitzon, 'Trost und Beispiel', p. 223

⁴⁷⁷ Landmann, in the 'Anhang' to X/XI: 146.

Petrarchism of *Die Fibel*, the final verse seems to settle a thematic tension rather than suggesting equal weight. In a way, Petrarch is the past, the precursor, the beginning of the poet's (metrical, but also) genealogical line; Dante the fulfilment, the future and end of that line in terms of typological parallel and the poet's rhyming with the 'gottesdiener' of the past.⁴⁷⁸ 'siedler' identifies Petrarch in his solitude and lonely hermitage (in the sense of 'Einsiedler'), cut off from society.⁴⁷⁹ An enormous limitation for poor Petrarch indeed, locked in his hermit cell when he is otherwise known as a poet of constant movement and travel.⁴⁸⁰ To reduce him to the stasis and solitude of his hermetic cell is perhaps the strongest qualification on George's part of this Petrarchan inheritance, denying it of its fundamental metaphoric inventory (movement, flight, travel, pilgrimage).

To name is to wield control. By using antonomasia, George is submitting these precursors to the power of his masterly discourse. Dante is not Dante, he is 'der Florentiner', he has been baptised anew in the waters of George's poetic language, continuing a process of meaning-making that, he elsewhere tells us, was an impulse from childhood: 'ernst und einsam | Erfand er für die dinge eigne namen

⁴⁷⁸ For Dante typology in relation to Dante see Eschenbach's analysis of the *Zeitgedichte* in *Der Siebente Ring*. Gunilla Eschenbach, 'Geschichte und Geschichtlichkeit in Stefan Georges Lyrik', in *Geschichtsllyrik*, vol. II, ed. by Heinrich Detering and Peer Trilcke (Wallstein Verlag, 2013), pp. 859-884 (p. 866).

⁴⁷⁹ Cf. The Grimm dictionary's entry for *siedler*: "von einem einzelnen gesagt, geht es oft in die bedeutung 'einsiedler' über: siedler, hoggi einsiedler, m. eremita, romita, anacoreta, solitario." „SIEDLER, m.“, Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm, digitalisierte Fassung im Wörterbuchnetz des Trier Center for Digital Humanities, Version 01/23, <<https://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB?lemid=S27872>>, abgerufen am 19.12.2023. Part of George's poetic language program was this doing away with prefixes and suffixes, the 'Rückbildungen der Wörter auf Stamm und Flexionsendung' as Arbogast analyses, *Erneuerung*, p. 102.

⁴⁸⁰ Not unlike George himself. Christine Haug and Wulf D. v. Lucius write of 'die nur schwere Erreichbarkeit StGs', who was 'häufig auf Reisen und ohne festen Wohnsitz', see Christine Haug and Wulf D. v. Lucius, 'Verlagsbeziehungen und Publikationssteuerung', in *Stefan George und sein Kreis. Ein Handbuch*, vol. 2, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer, Wolfgang Braungart, Stefan Breuer and Ute Oelmann, 2nd edn (de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 408-491 (p. 411).

–' (*Das Jahr der Seele*, IV:51). These are *his* epithets for the poets, *he* is naming them anew, they receive their new identities out of *his* poetic 'I'.⁴⁸¹

It was remarked above, citing Böschenstein, that George's reading of Petrarch was likely his first experience of the *Trecento* and troubadour gesture of submission before the higher authority of the beloved Lady.⁴⁸² By the time of *Die Fibel's* publication, George has established himself as the authority to which one must submit if one is to partake in the 'schöne[n] leben' granted by *Der Teppich des Lebens's* angel (v: 10). An important aspect of this self-authorisation lay in George's instrumentalisation of the relatively new technologies of photography. Photographs, particularly of his face and profile, became a powerful instrument in presencing his charismatic aura and exerting his judicial, disciplinary gaze upon any space and person where those photos were present.⁴⁸³ In 1899, George had

⁴⁸¹ Cf. Hegel's understanding of language as 'name-giving power': 'Through the name the object as individual entity is born out of the I'. Slavoj Žižek, *The Abyss of Freedom / Ages of the World: An Essay by Slavoj Žižek with the text of Schelling's Die Weltalter* (second draft 1813), trans. by Judith Norman (Michigan University Press, 1997), p. 9. Žižek (p. 90 note 8) cites Donald Phillip Verene, *Hegel's Recollection* (SUNY Press, 1985), p. 8 for the Hegel quote). The full quote in question, cited by Verene, relates this name-giving power back to Adam: 'Durch den Namen ist also der Gegenstand als s e i e n d aus dem Ich herausgeboren. Dies ist die erste S c h ö p f e r - kraft, die der Geist ausübt. Adam gab allen Dingen einen Namen. Dies ist das Majestätsrecht und erste Besitzergreifung der ganzen Natur oder das Schaffen derselben aus dem Geiste', cited from *Jenaer Realphilosophie: Vorlesungsmanuskripte zur Philosophie der Natur und des Geistes von 1805-06*, ed. by Johannes Hoffmeister (Akademie-Verlag, 1969), p. 183. Derrida likewise references Hegel while building on this idea in *Writing and Difference*: 'Sacrifice of existence to the word, as Hegel said, but also the consecration of existence by the word', Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. with an introduction and additional notes by Alan Bass (Routledge, 2001), p. 86. It is perhaps not coincidental that in this essay, Derrida makes a rare reference to Schelling in his discussion of God's self-splitting, into speech and self-reflection, so that 'this negativity in God is our freedom' (p. 82).

⁴⁸² Böschenstein, 'Stefan George und Italien', p. 318.

⁴⁸³ Cf. Braungart, *Ästhetischer Katholizismus*, p. 119: 'Das George-Bild sakralisiert den Raum und zentriert ihr [Braungart is referring to Else Leuch's – JW] Leben. Georges Herrschaft gründet sich auch auf seine körperliche Erscheinung und seine physiognomische Präsenz selbst in seiner Abwesenheit'. And p. 122: 'Sie [photographs of George – JW] sorgten für die Anwesenheit des Meisters im Kreis "in effigie" noch weit über den Tod hinaus'. See the overviews of photography's importance in Braungart, *Ästhetischer Katholizismus*, pp. 118ff and Michael Thimann, 'Bildende Kunst', in *Stefan George und sein Kreis. Ein Handbuch*, vol. 2, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer, Wolfgang Braungart, Stefan Breuer und Ute Oelmann, 2nd edn (de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 551-584 (pp. 568-89: 'Ziel war, das Charisma des Meisters, Sehers und Führers in effigie, und damit auch in körperlicher Abwesenheit, erfahrbar werden zu lassen, dem Gesicht eine sakrale Aura zu verleihen, die mit der quasi-religiösen Erfahrung des Bilderdienstes im George-Kreis

himself photographed holding a 1511 edition of the *Canzoniere* that was restored by Melchior Lechter and gifted to him two years prior for his birthday by Karl Wolfskehl.⁴⁸⁴ ‘Ein repräsentativ streng gekleideter George’ dominates each of the three photos, which convey a sequential narrative.⁴⁸⁵ The first displays the poet in the library room of his family house in Bingen, in front of well-stocked bookshelves, leaning his left arm on what appears to be the back of a seat, holding open and gazing at the Petrarch volume at chest level. The poet appears in side view, standing fully erect, his posture upright and statuesque. In the second photo, the poet’s pose is the same, although now he is gazing left towards at the camera, as if he has caught the viewer interrupting his reading. The third photo ends the sequence with the poet having closed the book, and is now leaning more relaxedly onto the back of the seat, his gaze less markedly unimpressed looking than in the previous two photos:

korrespondierte. StGs Bildpolitik war auch Demonstration und Ausübung von Macht über die persönliche Anwesenheit hinaus’). See further Blasberg, ‘Charisma in der Moderne’, p. 134: ‘Allein in Georges Privatbesitz befanden sich nach dem Tod des Dichters mehr als hundert autorisierte Lichtbilder, und man weiß, daß Abzüge davon wie Ikonen im Freundeskreis gehandelt wurden’. See p. 136 and on for Blasberg’s analysis and theoretical comments on several photos of George under the rubric of charisma and prophetic legitimation.

⁴⁸⁴ Cf. Fitzon, ‘Trost und Beispiel’, pp. 223-34. For a background and analysis of the edition and the photograph see Maik Bozza, ‘Von der “glänzenden wiedergeburt” eines “gemarterten” Petrarca oder: Karl Wolfskehl, Melchior Lechter und ein Geburtstagsgeschenk auf das Jahr 1897’, *Münchener Beiträge zur jüdischen Geschichte und Kultur* 13.2 (2019), pp. 47-57. The years 1897 and 1899 saw the first, private and second, public editions of *Das Jahr der Seele* released (George’s own *Canzoniere*, as Chapter Five here reads it). The photos are reproduced in Bozza, ‘Von der “glänzenden wiedergeburt” eines “gemarterten” Petrarca’, and the main photo in question is available on page six of the Stefan George Archive’s ‘Digitale Dauer-Ausstellung’ *Rosen und Disteln. Geburtstagsbriefe an Stefan George*, at <https://ausstellungen.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/geburtstagsbriefe-an-george/#s6/5> (accessed 13/09/25; reprinted here with kind permission). Curated by Dr. Maik Bozza and Dr. Birgit Wägenbaur for the Stefan George Archiv in der Württembergischen Landesbibliothek.

⁴⁸⁵ Bozza, ‘Von der “glänzenden wiedergeburt” eines “gemarterten” Petrarca’, p. 55.

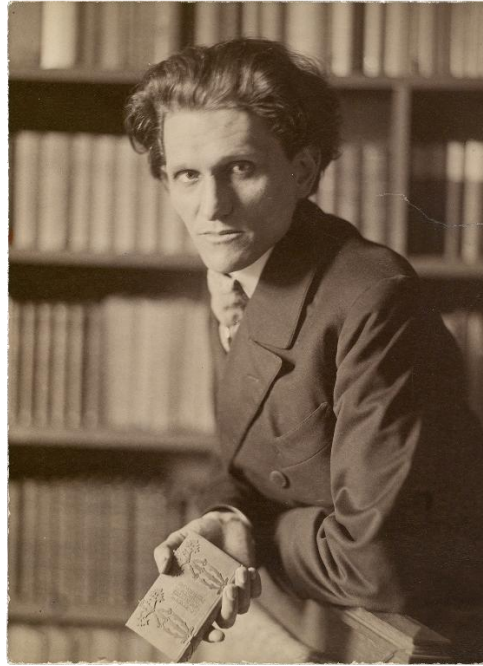


Fig. 1: 'Mit dem Petrarca Bingen um 1899'⁴⁸⁶

He is still in side view, however. The basic impression one gets from this self-posturing is how unapproachable the poet is, underscored by our view of him from the sidelines. We are never in front of him, never the direct object of his attention, and for him to see us involves distracting him from the point of interest properly deserving of his focus. Read within Martus' 'Werkpolitik' context of the turn of the century renewal, George closing the book on Petrarch in the final picture is suggestive.

The Petrarch volume featured in the photo came with an inscription composed by Wolfskehl in Latin, adding an air of timeless monumentality. The inscription reads:

⁴⁸⁶ Robert Boehringer, *Mein Bild von Stefan George. Tafeln* (Helmut Kupper, 1951), p. 75. My thanks to Dr. Maik Bozza for the permission to reprint the photo here (Stefan George Archiv, Werttembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart, StGA/Foto-0347).

hunc librum immortalis francisci poetae tam laureati saeculorum impetu
paene cruciatum melchior pitore libenter adiuvante restauravi atque divo
Stefano nostro omnium huius aetatis poetarum principi diem eius natalem ut
solemniter concelebrarem amicus amico discipulus magistro pie donavi
Carolus quem ulaiticum nominant poetam ADMDCCLXXXVII.⁴⁸⁷

Fitzon sees here the 'Inszenierung einer Dichter-Filiation' already at play in 1897, a concern with establishing parallels across the centuries between George and other immortalised, laurel-crowned poets.⁴⁸⁸ Ravaged by the passage of time, the book and the poet remain. In this establishment of literary genealogies, where George is honoured as the contemporary Petrarch, it is in the context of an increasingly hierarchised relation to his friends. Wolfskehl honours him firstly as a friend to a friend, secondly as a student to a teacher. If the friendly sentiment of 'amicus amico' comes first, it is nevertheless constrained and qualified by the more important reality of the relationship, which is as 'discipulus magistro', the disciple to the Master.

ii. Texts and Paratexts

⁴⁸⁷ 'Dieses Buch des unsterblichen, mit Lorbeer gekrönten Dichters Francesco, vom Lauf der Jahrhunderte kaum angegriffen, habe ich mit dem gern helfenden Maler Melchior wieder hergestellt und unserem göttlichen Stefan, dem Fürsten aller Dichter dieses Jahrhunderts, zur festlichen Feier seines Geburtstags, als Freund dem Freunde und als Schüler dem Lehrer herzlich überreicht – Karl, den sie den Ulais-Dichter nennen, im Jahre des Herrn 1879]', trans. from *Petrarca in Deutschland: Ausstellung zum 700. Geburtstag (20. Juli 2004) im Goethe-Museum Düsseldorf*, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer (Manutius, 2004), p. 110. Also cited by Fitzon, 'Trost und Beispiel', p. 228 note 30. See the digitalised presentation including the book at: <https://ausstellungen.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/geburtstagsbriefe-an-george/#s6/4> (09/07/2023).

⁴⁸⁸ Fitzon, 'Trost und Beispiel', p. 224.

Die Fibel, as discussed above, is a volume of poems that George presents to his readers in a very careful manner. Another ‘authorial paratext’ (Genette) that ought to alert the reader to one of the collection’s central intertexts is the ‘Anhang’ provided to the original *Gesamtausgabe*, consisting of a number of facsimiles of George’s handwriting, including two Petrarchan sonnets completed circa age fourteen:⁴⁸⁹

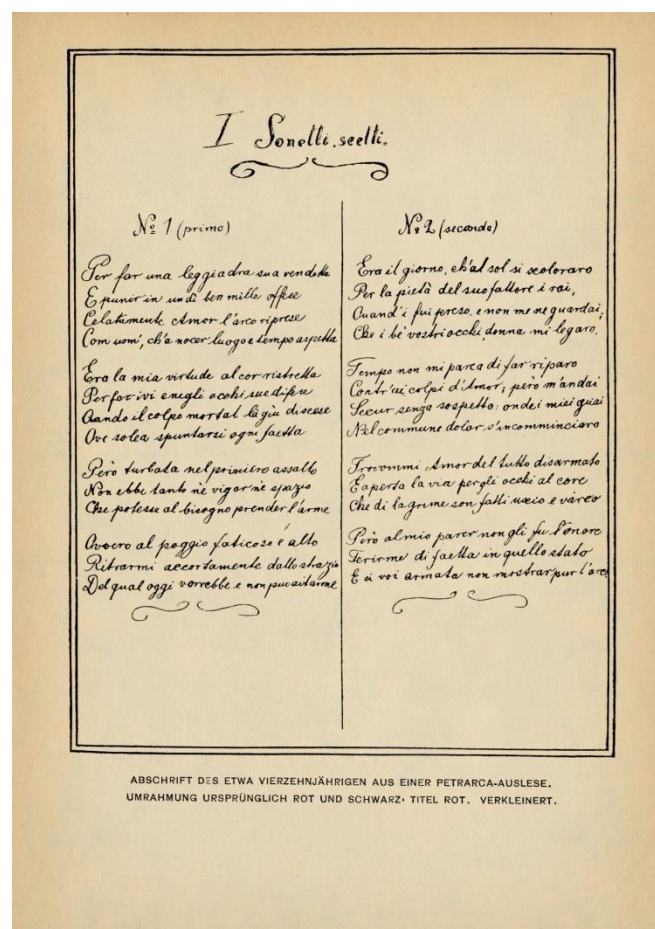


Fig. 2: ‘Abschrift des etwa Vierzehnjährigen aus einer Petrarca-Auslese’⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁹ Oelmann, ‘Anhang’ to *SW*, I: 110. My use of the terminology follows Gérard Genette, *Paratexts. Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin with Forward by Richard Macksey (Cambridge University Press, 1997). See p. 9 for ‘authorial paratext’ and for peritexts, a type of paratext (‘such elements as the title or the preface’) pp. 4-5. *I Sonetti scelti* (‘chosen sonnets’, trans. mine) constitute six transcriptions George did from the *Canzoniere*. They are in the George Archive under StGA I, 3052.

⁴⁹⁰ Photo copied from ‘Handschriftproben aus der Fibelzeit’, George, *GAW* I: 43, available online at <http://www.zeno.org/Literatur/I/st010132> (accessed 10/03/2026)

This facsimile attachment contributes to the overall heterogeneity of the volume: *Die Fibel* consists fragmentarily of collected poems, translations and transcriptions that vary in time over about a decade, predominantly dating between 1886 and 1890. Indeed, George's own labelling of the individual sub-cycles with dates is unique to *Die Fibel*.⁴⁹¹ Time and its fragmenting effects is thereby foregrounded, as is the immanent autobiographical referentiality of the poems.⁴⁹² As an epitext modifying how we engage with the text itself, *I Sonetti scelti* represent the earliest documents of George's poetic activity in the collection, and so he presents his earliest undertakings precisely as a copying of pre-existing poems.⁴⁹³ This is representative of what *Die Fibel* essentially is, a primer in which to work with and through pre-existing poetic formulas.⁴⁹⁴ Unlike the other paratexts provided by George (the preface, various titles, sub-headings, dates etc.), *I Sonetti scelti* have no obvious pragmatic function for our understanding of *Die Fibel*, they are not as

⁴⁹¹ Cf. Ute Oelmann, 'Die Fibel (SW I)', p. 100.

⁴⁹² The transcriptions of Petrarch are from the early 1880s. See Oelmann in 'Anhang' to SW, I:94, for transcriptions of Petrarch see p. 110. Sonja Klimek, in her theoretical study of poetry and autobiography, elaborates on how place and time peritexts around poems can contribute to their 'Autorfaktualität' (p. 178): 'Eine dritte Möglichkeit, eine Referenz von gedichtinternem "Ich" auf den realen Autor anzubieten, besteht in der Kombination des Gedichttextes mit konkreten Orts- und Datumsangaben in den Peritexten, die [...] nachprüfbar Stationen auf dem Lebensweg des empirischen Autors benennen', Sonja Klimek, 'Lyrik und Autobiographik. Zur Funktion von Orts- und Zeitangaben in den Peritexten von Gedichten', in *Grundfragen der Lyrikologie 1. Lyrisches Ich, Textsubjekt, Sprecher?*, ed. by Claudia Hillebrandt, Sonja Klimek, Ralph Müller and Rüdiger Zymner (de Gruyter, 2019), pp. 177-206 (p. 179). For time as contributing to the subjective experience of fragmentation I am following Barolini in her analysis of the Canzoniere, "Time and the Labyrinth", *op cit.* Finally, cf. Leahy, 'Der wahre Historiker', p. 157, whose analysis treats of the fundamentally split subject of writing who wields an apparent autobiographical self-referentiality in order 'to 'ground' [the text's—JW] fictionality in the truth of its author's real life' as a way of legitimizing the authorial position and relativising the contingency of any writerly instance.

⁴⁹³ For epitexts see Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 5: 'distanced elements [...] that, at least originally, are located outside the book'.

⁴⁹⁴ See e.g. Egyptien & Kasper, 'Die Fibel', p.10: 'Der Charakter der Fibel als eines Übungsbuchs dokumentiert sich darin, dass George sich hier in der Aneignung gängiger lyrischer Formen erprobt'.

obviously 'subordinate' as those functional paratexts.⁴⁹⁵ They act suggestively as material, handwritten artefacts standing witness to the poet's past, presencing by synecdoche the poet's hand and testifying to the young student's measured patience in carefully copying out and arranging each poem. What for the young George may have been a simple school-like task of scribal repetition, it is the mature George's arrangement of these paratexts that mediates our image of the younger poet and thereby implicitly suggests the authorial hand of the mature poet ordering anew.⁴⁹⁶

The hand of the beloved is one of Petrarchism's privileged eroticised objects, and it is also, as Greene recounts, 'typically an emblem of power', where the Petrarchan self's hands are typically weak and ineffectual, while those of the beloved dangerous and powerful.⁴⁹⁷ In our context, it is *only* George's hand that is suggested. The image of the poet's handwriting emphasises, in a literal way, the autographic significance of this paratext, and the material quality of his penmanship.⁴⁹⁸ Their foreignness, both in terms of both their language and their material appearance as facsimiles, attests to the young poet's explorations in difference and the unfamiliar. Furthermore, *Die Fibel's* paratexts constitute a 'threshold', as Genette writes, 'between the inside and the outside', a threshold through which we leave the work, having to pass through before closing the book

⁴⁹⁵ Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 12 claims that 'the paratextual element is always subordinate to "its" text, and this functionality determines the essence of its appeal and its existence'. For Genette, a peritext forms part of the paratext, being additional texts 'within the same volume', the other half being the epitext which exists outside the volume itself in the form of, e.g. authorial interviews, which can then later be incorporated. Genette gives the formula: '*paratext* = *peritext* + *epitext*', (pp. 4-5).

⁴⁹⁶ My thanks to Professor Mary Cosgrove, in conversation, for this point. Furthermore, Klussmann, 'Dante und Stefan George', p.138 points out just how important such scribal tasks were for George: 'das Anfertigen von Abschriften [diente] nicht nur der Herstellung einer persönlichen Auswahl, sondern gleichzeitig der Aneignung und dem genaueren Verständnis' as well as allowing the work to achieve an 'aktuelle Realität' for the poet.

⁴⁹⁷ Greene, *Post-Petrarchism*, p. 237. Greene cites *Rvf* 199 as exemplary for this point (p. 238).

⁴⁹⁸ For the distinction in Genette between autographic ('by the author') and allographic (by someone other than the author') see Allen, *Intertextuality*, p. 106.

and thus colouring our perception of *Die Fibel* retroactively.⁴⁹⁹ *Die Fibel* thus ends with the reader having to cross over and say goodbye to Petrarch. The chronologically *prior* (the manuscripts) are positioned subsequently in the sequence of texts, so that again, the origins are revealed only retrospectively.

These two selected sonnets work as interpretative, epitextual intertexts for *Die Fibel*. The sonnets in question are *Determined to take up graceful revenge* (*Rvf* 2) and *It was the day the sun's ray had turned pale* (*Rvf* 3). What is not included here are the other sonnets transcribed by George, which are *Rvf* 9, 19, 35, and 36.⁵⁰⁰ The two sonnets chosen for inclusion are telling. The overarching theme foregrounded in the first five sonnets is, as Barolini has written, that of 'beginningness'.⁵⁰¹ Proceeding from the proem (*Rvf* 1), they initiate the story ('*initium narrationis*') of the Petrarchan subject in two modalities: *Rvf* 2 gives the cause, *Rvf* 3 gives the time.⁵⁰² Stroppa further points out that *Rvf* 2 and 3 constitute two histories of the same story in relation to Petrarch's lyrical self-presentation, the one cyclical and mythological, and the other linear and Christian.⁵⁰³ Each poem is a variation on the lyric subject's first subjugation to love.

⁴⁹⁹ Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 2. Braungart, *Ästhetischer Katholizismus*, 275, similarly following Genette, identifies paratexts as a salient device used consistently by George outside of *Der Siebente Ring*. As Allen summarises, paratexts 'lie on the threshold of the text and [...] help to direct and control the reception of a text by its readers' (*Intertextuality*, p. 103). Paratexts are thus important devices for George's master discourse and authorial control.

⁵⁰⁰ StG Archiv I, 3052. Available online at: https://digital.wlb-stuttgart.de/index.php?id=6&tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=18448&tx_dlf%5Bpage%5D=1 (accessed 10/03/2026)

⁵⁰¹ Teodolinda Barolini, 'Petrarch as the Metaphysical poet who is not Dante', in *Petrarch & Dante: Anti-Dantism, Metaphysics, Tradition*, ed. by Zygmunt G. Barański and Theodore J. Chachey, Jr. (University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), pp. 195-221 (p. 196).

⁵⁰² Stroppa, *Canzoniere*, p. 6.

⁵⁰³ 'The same event is thus narrated from two different temporal perspectives: that of cyclical time, typical of myth, and that of linear time, typical of Christian tradition. Throughout the book, these two perspectives continue to coexist, intertwining in the anniversary poems' ('Il medesimo evento è dunque narrato in due prospettive temporali diverse, quella del tempo ciclico proprio al mito, e quella del tempo lineare proprio alla tradizione cristiana, che per tutto il libro continueranno a coesistere, intrecciandosi nei componimenti d'anniversario') Stroppa, *Canzoniere*, p. 6.

In *Rvf* 2 the depiction of this 'first assault' (l. 9) is modelled on a mythological, Ovidian, precedent, that of Apollo and Daphne (*Met.* 1: 452-567). It thereby conditions the interpretation of the subject's predicament in specifically literary dimensions, for Apollo's infatuation with Daphne becomes in turn his association with the laurel tree and thus with poetry. From the outset, a mythological hypertext sets the stage for a certain metaliterary significance to the *Canzoniere*: Petrarch, like Apollo, will chase after the unattainable, and in doing so will become a poet.⁵⁰⁴ In *Rvf* 3 Petrarch specifically puts himself in the role of Apollo, and Laura in the role of Daphne, even within the historically dated Christian time-line that the poem sets out to establish (the 'universal woe' of Good Friday, l. 8).⁵⁰⁵ The mythic, indeterminate time of *Rvf* 2 lays the ground for the actual historically recorded time of *Rvf* 3, the specific point in linear time that will determine the Petrarchan subject's condition, and irreversibly so:

If the event narrated in sonnet 2 belonged to the eternal world of myth, its declination in time in sonnet 3 makes it a unique event, which orients history

⁵⁰⁴ Stroppa, *Canzoniere*, pp. 6-7.

⁵⁰⁵ Amor hits Petrarch 'all disarmed' (l. 9), meanwhile he does not aim at all at Laura ('it did him little honor / [...] / to you, armed, not show his bow at all' (ll. 12, 14). The story in Ovid is similar. To punish (cf. *Rvf* 2: 2's 'and punish in one day a thousand wrongs') Apollo's haughtiness and aggressive boasting about his recent victory over the Pythian serpent, Cupid shoots him with a golden arrow to engender love, and shoots the nymph Daphne with a leaden arrow to guarantee that Apollo's love will remain unrequited:

'quod facit [amorem – JW] auratus est et cuspidē fulget acuta;
quod fugat [amorem] obtusum est et habet sub harundine plumbum.
hoc deus in nympha Peneide fixit, at illo
laesit Apollineas traiecit per ossa medullas.
protinus alter amat, fugit altera nomen amantis'.

Met. 1: 470-474. Quoted from Ovid, *Metamorphoses: Books I-IV*, ed. with an introduction, translation & commentary by D.E. Hill (Aris and Phillips Classical Texts) (Oxbow Books, 1985), p. 33

(Golden is the one that brings love and gleams at its sharp tip;
blunt is the one that routs love and has, under its reed stem, lead.

This one the god fixed in the Peneid nymph, but with the other
he drove through Apollo's bones, wounding him to the marrow', trans. by D.E. Hill).

starting from a point, generating ‘the acute sense of the irreversibility of time’⁵⁰⁶

In *Rvf* 3 Petrarch recounts the specificities of his enamourment with Laura, idealised in the analogy he establishes between her and Christ: the birth of his love for her, his being captured by her eyes (l. 4), takes place on the anniversary of Christ’s death. This establishes her, however, as antithetical to Christ. Thus from Petrarch George gleans the deployment of an idealised feminine figure whose appearance is experienced as a single stroke of fate (‘in one day’, l. 2) and who harbours a dual spiritual significance: she is at once the poet’s salvation and his damnation, that which elevates him to wondrous heights (e.g. *Rvf* 302) but which also leads him astray from the path to God.⁵⁰⁷ *Rvf* 2, detailing the fateful ‘mortal blow’ (l. 7) of Love, ends with a typical feature of Petrarchan lyric: the continuation into the *today* of writing. He laments that after that first assault his strength (‘virtute’, l. 5) was completely compromised, giving him no opportunity to take up arms for defence or to find refuge on ‘high, hard mountain saving me from slaughter’ (l. 14).⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰⁶ ‘Se l’evento narrato nel son. 2 apparteneva al mondo perenne del mito, la sua declinazione *nel tempo*, nel son. 3, ne fa un evento unico, che orienta la storia a partire da un punto, generando “il senso acuto della irreversibilità del tempo”’. Stroppa, *Canzoniere*, p. 8, citing Noferi.

⁵⁰⁷ This is the crux of his infatuation with Laura, and he reprimands himself for this throughout his confessional text *Secretum*. See, exemplarily, Augustinus’ lecture to him about the ‘multa et varia’ objects of desire that are in reality worthless when one has truly risen to the ‘concupiscentiam summe felicitatis’. Petrarch, *Secretum meum*, p. 59. For the fateful, almost apocalyptic undertone of *Rvf* 2’s ‘and punish in one day a thousand wrongs’ see Bettarini, *Canzoniere*, vol. I, p. 9 who points out the contrast between the ‘temporal unicity’ (‘unicità temporale’) of that one day and his many wrongs.

⁵⁰⁸ The commentators glean this ‘poggio’ (hill, mountain) as the *arx rationis* Petrarch references in the *Secretum*. See e.g. Bettarini, *Canzoniere*, vol. I, 11; Stroppa, *Canzoniere*, 7. Camerini, *Rime*, 34 likewise explicates it as the ‘rocca della virtù o della ragione o cosa simile’ and connects it to the battle imagery of the poem in that those who live ‘nel piano’, lacking defensive resources, ‘rifuggono al monte’ for better defences against oncoming enemies. For George of *Die Fibel* by contrast, ‘heute’ is only ever employed to signify change and a separation or transcending of what has been. So e.g. *SW*, I: 58; 64; 78; 88, 89. ‘Das Bild’*s* (*SW*, I: 73) use of ‘heute’ is not Petrarchan as the

iii. Petrarch's Proem⁵⁰⁹

Critics have pointed out that the collection's (Type-1) Petrarchism is apparent right from the first sonnet of the subcycle 'Die Fibel 1886-87': 'Ich wandelte auf öden düstren bahnen' (I: 13).⁵¹⁰ What has been overlooked is the poem that appears before that sub-cycle begins and which was written for the publication in December 1900.⁵¹¹ The 'Geleitverse' (SW 1:9) constitute a proem precisely akin to Petrarch's own (*Rvf* 1), the point of which is not only, as Greene says, to 'enact a moral distance from the succeeding poems' passion, segmenting the fiction emotionally and spiritually', but also to introduce the collection and thereby delimit the narrative.⁵¹² A temporal distance between the *then* and the *now* is established, which insures the poet against the possibility of still being proximate to the (shameful) experiences recounted.⁵¹³ Like the preface and *I Sonetti scelti*, it is a text that exists both inside and outside *Die Fibel*, belonging to its publication

poem is not concerned with the (literary, auto-) biographical structure of then and now, but depicts rather an experience entirely in the present tense.

⁵⁰⁹ 'A proem (prooemium),' as Isidore of Seville defines it in one traditional definition, 'is the beginning of a discourse, for proems are the first parts of books, which are joined on before the presentation of the main matter in order to prepare the ears of the audience'. Also known as a 'preface' [...], as if it were a pre-speaking (*praelocutio*), *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. with an Introduction and Notes by Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach, and Oliver Berghof (Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 140. In the case of Petrarch and George, the first poems, which are preface-poems, will be referred to as proems.

⁵¹⁰ Fitzon, 'Trost und Beispiel', 227 fn 16, links its thematics of the wandering poet to *Rvf* 23, 25 and 129; Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoese* 118f considers its work-political aspect and compares it to the *Sonett nach Petrarka*; Rosenfeld, 'Georges erste Begegnung mit Italien', p. 298 comments on its 'petrarkeske Stimmung' and relates it also to the 'Sonett nach Petrarka'; Pensa, 'Stefan George e l'Italia', p. 237 emphasises its key themes as essentially Petrarchan, linking it both to *Rvf* 35 and Dante's *Vita nova*; Oelmann, 'Anhang' to SW, I: 110 contextualises it within George's early readings of Petrarch and also within his translations and transcriptions of the *sonetti scelti*; Aler, *Symbol und Verkündigung*, p. 28 cites Falkenhausen's translation of a *Vita nova* sonnet and A.W. Schlegel's Petrarch translations as sources for George's poem.

⁵¹¹ Fitzon, 'Trost und Beispiel' pp. 217-18 discusses the 'Geleitverse' but rather in terms of its 'Thema der Dichtergenese'. He relates (p. 218) George's line 'Mit des Verwünschten zählen' to *Rvf* 23: 167-69. Cf. Oelmann's notes in the 'Anhang' (SW, I: 109).

⁵¹² Greene, *Post-Petrarchism*, pp. 154-55.

⁵¹³ Greene, *Post-Petrarchism*, pp. 154-55. Bornmann, 'Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile', p. 127 likewise points out that the 'Geleitverse' are a 'proemtikón' to *Die Fibel*, albeit without comparing this to Petrarch's own proem. For narrative control in Dante and Petrarch, which involves the 'narrative burden of ordering', cf. Barolini, 'The Making of a Lyric Sequence', pp. 194-95.

but not to its original contents.⁵¹⁴ It is a marginal text that nevertheless conditions how we approach the volume's central texts. George had already begun this safeguarding of his current standpoint in *Die Fibel's* preface with his 'captatio benevolentiae', but the *Geleitverse's* function resides in the name itself.⁵¹⁵ As a proem it escorts the reader safely into the work and through the many poems that detail all those shameful, error-laden Petrarchan moments dispersed across *Die Fibel's* sub-cycles and which the poet, we are given to understand, has long since overcome.⁵¹⁶ The proem's job is the 'framing, commenting and equalizing' of what will follow.⁵¹⁷ It keeps the content under the steady gaze of the mature poet who now has his chaotic youthful errors safely quarantined and in his control.⁵¹⁸

The proemic structure of both George's and Petrarch's introductory poems follows the basic deixis of *then* and *now*, 'where time most radically enters language', as Greene writes, and which constitutes the key element of Petrarchan subjectivity.⁵¹⁹

O you who hear within these scattered verses
the sound of sighs with which I fed my heart
in my first errant youthful days when I

⁵¹⁴ Of course, *Die Fibel* itself is a retroactive construction, and its original contents are whatever the poet puts into it in the composition of the volume itself, which includes the 'Geleitverse'. Without being too pedantic, what is here meant by original is *originary*, the hint towards the origins as embodied in the poems written in the 1880s.

⁵¹⁵ Jürgen Egyptien and Else Kasper, 'Die Fibel', p. 5

⁵¹⁶ On shame in *Die Fibel*, see e.g. SW, I: 32, for the coupling of Petrarchan melancholy and the shame of sexual maturity in 'Die Rose' ('Muss ich tief von scham befangen | Meines blühens frucht verhüllen').

⁵¹⁷ Greene, *Post-Petrarchism*, p. 155.

⁵¹⁸ Cf. Greene, *Post-Petrarchism*, p. 37: 'The lyrics are independent, seemingly random episodes of the lover's experience. Any idea of temporal coalition that attaches to them follows largely from the proem's single effort to set the rough boundaries of the collection, to sound the limits of its recoverable history'.

⁵¹⁹ Greene, *Post-Petrarchism*, p. 22.

in part was not the man I am today;
 for all the ways in which I weep and speak
 between vain hopes, between vain suffering,
 in anyone who knows love through its trials,
 in them, may I find pity and forgiveness.
 But now I see how I've become the talk
 so long a time of people all around
 (it often makes me feel so full of shame),
 and from my vanities there comes shame's fruit,
 and my repentance, and the clear awareness
 that worldly joy is just a fleeting dream.
 (Rvf 1)

This proem, likewise a 'guiding sonnet placed at the beginning and written *après coup*', is a plea for pity and pardon (l. 8) amongst his listeners, conditioned by a fundamentally Augustinian understanding of the point of retrospective narrative: conversion.⁵²⁰ The divide between then and now is marked primarily via temporal deixis in the verb tenses: 'when I | in part was not the man I am today' (l. 4), a past ('was') and a present ('am') that theoretically ought to be divided by the clear-cut spiritual death and rebirth of conversion. Critics have, however, detected the subtle but basic tension in this line. Conversion 'in part' is not possible, it is either total, or not at all, and Petrarch's 'in part' signals that something of the old self still lingers

⁵²⁰ 'sonetto-guida posto *in limine* e scritto *après coup*', Bettarini, commentary to *Rvf* 1, in *Canzoniere*, vol. I, p. 5. Bettarini cites Augustine, *Confessiones* to source both Petrarch's 'giovanile errore' (*Conf.* VI, IV, 5) and his need for listeners (*Conf.* X, IV, 6). For the forward-moving narrative retrospective of conversion cf. Freccero, *The Poetics of Conversion*, p. 261. Cf. Egyptian and Kasper, 'Die Fibel', p. 5, on 'Geleitverse's paratextual function.

at the present of enunciation. That the *Canzoniere* ends with a turning away from Laura and to the Virgin Mary (*Rvf* 366) in search for a final conversion that would put an end to the otherwise endless poetic wanderings and meanderings of desire, the addition of 'O you who hear within these scattered verses' as the disruptive introductory proem undermines the finality of that conversion. Therein lies the basic tension and an often foregrounded theme of the collection: the failure of the subject to convert and escape the labyrinth of desire and its entwinement with poetic language.⁵²¹ The proem is the 'gloss on an anterior text' but which here precludes that anterior text's status as a conversion narrative by implying a continuity, rather than a break.⁵²² The speaker is in a bit of a spiritual pickle, and resorts to melancholic lamentations to convey the unholy shame he feels, which will become characteristic of the Type-2 Petrarchan subject. With the loss of God as an attainable endpoint for the Petrarchan subject, it collapses back into itself.⁵²³ This finds expression in the wonderfully obsessive self-referencing of lines 10-11: 'onde sovente | di me medesimo meco mi vergogno', which in Musa's prosaic-parenthetical treatment 'it often makes me feel so full of shame' foresakes the 'onde', the 'whence' that links it causally to the previous lines, and which loses the pronounced egoism of the original, of all the *ms* of 'di me medesimo meco mi', the

⁵²¹ This discussion of *Rvf* 1 is based on and follows Moevs' reading, 'Subjectivity and Conversion', p. 233. Cf. Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch*, p. 58 and Barolini, 'The Self in the Labyrinth of Time', p. 36 for the finality of Augustinian conversion. For the entwinement of language and time see further Barolini, 'Petrarch as the Metaphysical Poet who is not Dante', p. 195.

⁵²² John Freccero, 'The Fig Tree and The Laurel Tree: Petrarch's Poetics', *Diacritics* 5.1 (1975), pp. 34-40 ('In the text of the Confessions, conversion is always a literary event, a gloss on an anterior text', p. 36). Here I am modifying Freccero's point by reading Petrarch's anterior text as the poems of the *Canzoniere* themselves in relation to the proem, positioned first, but subsequent to the composition of the rest. Furthermore, Freccero (ibid) claims that both continuity and a break are necessitated by conversion narratives. That Petrarch however implies that the continuity outweighs any moral-spiritual transformation is supported by the antecedent position of *Rvf* 1, which offends the logic of linear conversion narratives, as Barolini, 'The Self in the Labyrinth', p. 42, points out.

⁵²³ Cf. Freccero, 'The Fig Tree and The Laurel Tree', p. 35 for the 'insatiable' earthly desire that has lost God.

ms of the self, of me me me. This shame is based on the poet's delayed awareness in the now of the lyric present: 'But now I see' (l. 9), a belated clarity and ironic echo of the blind man healed by Jesus ('I was blind, but now I see!', John 9.25). The adversative 'Ma' ('but'), marking the sonnet's volta at the outset of the tercet, works to distinguish the turn in the poet's life and consciousness: the present tense ('I see) of clarity regarding youthful errors (l. 3), the revelation that the subject used to be in a state of sin and ignorance. As discussed, however, the distinction is not absolute, the old errors are, psychologically speaking, close enough to cause distress in the present, bending and splitting the subject from himself in shame, expressed in the triple self-allusion ('di me', 'medesimo', 'meco'), each its own inflection of the subject pronoun, the subject split three ways at once, culminating in the self-reflective, quasi auto-affective verb of shame, 'mi vergogno' in which the subject is both the cause and effect of the action.⁵²⁴ The subject has become the talk of the town (ll. 9-10), subject to their gossip, losing control of his narrative, laid bare and exposed to the gaze of others.⁵²⁵ This is supposedly at the root of his shame, which, so the lyric present tells us, is a feeling still experienced often. With this present tense the lyric poem becomes endlessly iterable, detached, as Culler describes, from any determining context.⁵²⁶ This experience of shame aligns with Agamben's analysis that explicates shame as an interplay between the subject and

⁵²⁴ On the 'complex movement of auto-affection' as a 'double movement' of activity and passivity with regards to shame, see Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Zone Books, 2018 (1999)), p. 112. Agamben's study may come as a surprise in the present context, but his philosophically informed account of shame (building on the work of Levinas) is enlightening, regardless.

⁵²⁵ For shame as involved with 'a gaze imagined by me in the field of the Other', see Jacques Lacan discussing Sartre in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller and trans. by Alan Sheridan (Routledge, 2018), p. 84. See also Gunnar Karlsson and Lennart Gustav Sjöberg, 'The Experiences of Guilt and Shame: A Phenomenological–Psychological Study', *Human Studies* 32.3 (September 2009), pp. 335-55 (p. 346: 'It is in the presence of the other that one's being is objectified').

⁵²⁶ For the lyric present as 'iterable utterance' cf. Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, 290, who also discusses Petrarch 285f.

their experience of desubjectification, an intense experience of subjectivity's being threatened with its own annihilation.⁵²⁷ The emotion of shame lives on, repeatedly performed by the poet in his masterful inflections of the pronoun of the self, inflections that bear witness grammatically to shame's desubjectification of the self, to the

extreme and irreducible presence of the "I" to itself. [...] summoned by an irrefutable order to be present at its own defacement, at the expropriation of what is most its own [...] becomes witness to its own disorder, its own oblivion as a subject.⁵²⁸

Shame is ontologised, thoroughly latched onto the self in the form of the subject pronoun so as to become one with the poet's identity, impossible to break free from, presenting itself as the poet's fate.⁵²⁹ This fate, with its concomitant loss of direction, carries into the present of lyric utterance: 'and from my vanities there comes shame's fruit' (l. 12). 'Vaneggiar' as present infinitive suggests continuity of error, signifying the poet's past ravings but also its potentially indefinite continuation, of which shame ('vergogna', the alliterative v-sound connecting it to 'vaneggiar') is forever the fruit.

His endless, roving fantasies ('vaneggiar', with its etymological link to *vanitas*) do not only produce shame, however, they have also produced the

⁵²⁷ Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, pp. 105-06.

⁵²⁸ Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, p. 106.

⁵²⁹ Shame has been described as an emotion that appears as fateful, as necessarily present and impossible to free oneself from. See e.g. Karlsson and Sjöberg, 'The Experiences of Guilt and Shame', p. 352; and Agamben, in *Remnants of Auschwitz*: 'shame is grounded in our being's incapacity to move away and break from itself [...] in shame we are consigned to something from which we cannot in any way distance ourselves', here pp. 104-05.

‘scattered verses’ (l. 1). The scattered rhymes before us belong to the present alongside all the shame and ‘repentance, and the clear awareness’ (l. 13), but they are the link to the past, given that they contain ‘the sound of sighs with which I fed my heart’ (ll. 1-2). Their nourishing value amounts to a certain enjoyment in the transient, time-bound pleasures of poetic language, undermining what ought to be a strictly penitential frame of mind (his new ‘repentance’). Barolini points out that to repent before the act contradicts the logic of conversion, that one cannot repent and ‘renounce the “breve sogno” before engaging in it, before succumbing to it, before representing it’.⁵³⁰ Petrarch’s engagement with the ‘fleeting dream’ is precisely the reflecting of it in his poetic language, the *jouissance* that the ‘veil’ of poetic language engenders in representing and – failing each time to provide fulfillment – reproducing his desire, poem after poem in the collection, perpetuating itself onwards towards the unobtainable Otherness in the form of Laura.⁵³¹ Shame, as Agamben describes, can indeed transform from agony into pleasure when the subject totally renounces any ability to assume its own passivity and finally ‘abdicates his condition as a subject by fully subjecting himself to another subject, the sadist’,⁵³² or perhaps in the traditions of the troubadour and Trecento Italian poets, the Lady who does not, by design, return the love. Petrarch’s anguish-

⁵³⁰ Barolini, ‘The Self in the Labyrinth’, p. 42: ‘A recantation — “I pentérsi,” repentance (*Rvf* 1.13) — at the outset makes no more sense than a sinner’s attempt to repent before sinning, a logical contradiction treated by Dante in the Guido da Montefeltro episode of the *Inferno* [...] As shown by Augustine in the *Confessions* and by Dante in the *Commedia*, and as Petrarch well knows, the logic of conversion follows the arrow of time: it is not logical to renounce the “breve sogno” before engaging in it, before succumbing to it, before representing it’.

⁵³¹ Cf. Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch*, p. 78: ‘At the same time, in the universe of desire, totality is never possible: desire knows only shreds and fragments, even if plenitude is its ever elusive mirage. The Canzoniere is, to be sure, the attempt to restore the pieces, to give an illusory unity to the fragments’. For language as a veil cf. further: ‘For Petrarch, language is the allegory of desire, a veil, not because it hides a moral meaning but because it always says something else [...] for Petrarch [allegory – JW] is constitutive of language and marks the distance between desire and its signs’ (p. 76).

⁵³² Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 108.

pleasure, his self-subjection to the gaze and talk of the others, his jouissance in his 'scattered' verses doing the rounds, in his poetic language that does not bring him peace of mind, has a masochistic quality to it.⁵³³

Shortly after exposing his previous errors and denouncing his 'vain hopes' (l. 6), the lyric present quickly announces: 'spero trovar pietà' ('I hope to find pity', translation mine, l. 8). How are we not to wonder whether this hope likewise belongs to those other vain hopes? As a penitential poet, Petrarch delights in continuously problematising the penitential gesture. His 'vanities' grow the fruit of shame, a metaphor that recalls another piece of fruit at the origin of human sin and, concomitantly, human shame (Gen. 2.25; 3.21). Yet the metaphor also suggests that, as fruit, it has an allure, an attractive, juicy abundance. The metaphor's multi-accentuality brings the basic ambivalence of Petrarchan desire to the fore, caught between knowledge for the good, but stuck in the habits of the bad, or as he puts it elsewhere: 'I seek [...] | and see the best, but still cling to the worst' (*Rvf* 264: 135-6).⁵³⁴

In Petrarch then one finds a confused relationship between the past and the present. The past is to be represented as a recollection of scattered fragments that capture the sounds of the poet's prior sighs. Residing in sound, however, means that those prior sighs remain in the temporality of language, always moving towards silence at the end of any utterance. The ultimate 'insubstantiality' of his poetic language is in turn captured by the sigh, a non-linguistic signifier of his melancholy

⁵³³ Cf. Distiller, *Gender and Desire in the Sonnet Tradition*, pp. 35-36, for the gendered dimension of the lover poet's apparent self-humbling before the elevated Lady, which in truth is a narcissistically-motivated reversal of historical roles and social positions, in which women are denied a voice in the patriarchal Symbolic Order. Distiller's argument throughout that chapter illustrates the historical intertwining of Petrarchan and Lacanian subjectivity in modernity.

⁵³⁴ Cf. Pensa, *Saggio critico*, p. 84 for George's poem 'Vernunft! Du legtest deine kalten hände' (l: 17) as an echo of this Petrarchan sentiment.

wistfulness and a metaphor of the poems themselves, with which the poet *continues* to nourish his heart.⁵³⁵ This gathering of scattered fragments is the poet's attempt to reintegrate what time has sundered into an integral whole, a 'leitmotif of collecting and reunifying' that has a significant theological precedent in the gospels.⁵³⁶ His attempts at containing his past sin in the sound of sighs, however, fail, and the sin continues into the present of his poetic composition. Summarily, Petrarch's penance is problematic.

iv. George's Proem

The task of the artwork to organise time's fragmented disorder into a harmonious unity sealed within the aesthetic is pursued by George most emblematically in *Das Jahr der Seele*.⁵³⁷ Already in 1888, however, he is thinking along these lines.

⁵³⁵ Cf. Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch*, p. 79 for sound as 'the domain where the poet's selfhood takes shelter' but which 'is ironic both because it obscures the moral meaning of the palinode [i.e. *Rvf* 1 – JW] and, more fundamentally, because the sound is hollow, an empty sign which points to its own insubstantiality'. The linkage between poetic speech or song and temporality goes back at least to Augustine, who in book eleven of the *Confessions* considers the passing of time in relation to the recitation of verse (*Conf.* XI, xxvii, 36-38). On this see Freccero, *The Poetics of Conversion*, pp. 270-71. Cf. Gur Zak, *Petrarch's Humanism and the Care of the Self* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 27, who points out that 'sospiri' is a common metaphor for writing itself, basing his argument on *Rvf* 145: 12-14 in which the poet marks his anniversary poem as a 'sospir trilustre' (l. 14). Leahy, *'Der wahre Historiker'*, p. 18 comments upon the 'familiar line of thought' regarding the transience of language in the discussion of *Malina*. The metaphysical problem, which relates intimately to notions of identity, for *Malina*'s narrator is one perhaps shared by Petrarch, as his conundrum similarly involves the self's persistence through a language constituted by linguistic utterances in time and that are always about to evanesce. As Leahy asks: 'That impetus to endure beyond the momentary linguistic sign of one's existence, drives the frenzied attempt to be self-present that opens the novel, and sets up a central question: how might a subject of language and in language live longer than this constantly recurring *heute*? How might that which is 'carried' in and by language *remain* and build upon itself after the sentence has stopped?' Petrarch's dilemma, the incessant reformulations and endless lyric variations upon what amounts to basically the same theme certainly seems to present the poet as one of those kindred instances of which, as Leahy mentions (p. 19), Bachmann is one exemplar.

⁵³⁶ Peterson, *Petrarch's Fragmenta*, p. 228, and p. 22 for the biblical background to the gathering up of scattered fragments in John 6.12-13.

⁵³⁷ The lyric voice commands the reader to enter a park and, from the multitude of sensory, aesthetic perceptions, to weave a garland suggestive of poetic permanence (one thinks of the laurel crown): 'Erlese küsse sie und flicht den kranz · [...] | Und auch was übrig blieb von grünem leben Verwinde leicht im herbstlichen gesicht'. (SW, v: 12).

Regarding the first composite manuscript of *Die Fibel*, he writes from London to his friend Arthur Stahl, thanking him for the encouragement,

*meine zerstreut herumliegenden dichterischen erstlingsfrüchte zu einem ganzen zu vereinigen; [...] es hat sich aus jenen versen die geschichte mein[es] ganzen verflossenen lebens zusammengestellt, und ist beim niederschreiben jahr für jahr an meinen augen vorübergezogen.*⁵³⁸

George here is hyperbolic (of his 'ganzen verflossenen lebens' only twenty years had passed) but nevertheless the re-collection of past poetic fruits becomes part of establishing who he is in the present, and of weaving those lyrics into an ordered sequence. The act of collecting, arranging and binding dispersed fragmented lyric texts into a whole is the *sine qua non* of Type-2 Petrarchism. As Barolini writes, the 'fundamental characteristic of the Petrarchan lyric sequence [...] is its self-conscious, metapoetic, and metaphysically driven exploitation of the principle of order, a textual analogue of time itself'.⁵³⁹ Time and disorder underlie many of the contingencies that George and Petrarch were both keen to grapple with.

Unlike Petrarch, George's present self, from the perspective of 1901's publication of *Die Fibel*, is not plagued by the errors of the past. He can, as the preface claims, consider those errors as 'die zeit unsrer reinsten begeisterung und unsrer vollen blühwilligkeit' (SW, I: 7). The poet's present foundation enables him

⁵³⁸ Emphasis mine. Quoted from the 'Anhang' SW, I: 98-99.

⁵³⁹ Barolini, 'The Self in the Labyrinth of Time', p. 44.

to neutralise any former poetic misgivings. This is accomplished by *Die Fibel's* proem 'Geleitverse' through an insistent use of deictic distancing:⁵⁴⁰

GELEITVERSE

Das sind die langen stunden
Wo jede fast ein jahr begreift
Von efeulaub umwunden
Von reinem demanttau bereift.

Das ist des kindes lallen
Das seine flöte prüft im rohr ·
Dem dumpf entgegenschallen
Gebüsch und strom und wind im chor.

Das ist das erste klagen
Weil hellster traum als wort nur trägt
Und weites stolzes jagen
So wirr und schwach wird wenn gefügt.

Das ist das frühe gähren
Und dunkler sehnsucht harte frohn
Mit des Verwünschten zähren
In weisen dürftig und gewohn.

⁵⁴⁰ Cf. Braungart, *Ästhetischer Katholizismus*, p. 274 who notes that the poem foregrounds deixis and self-referentiality simultaneously: 'Zugleich sind diese Verse deiktisch und selbstbezüglich: Sie verweisen auf das poetische Werk selbst'.

Das ist noch die Kamöne
Die blass und zagend sich empört
Durch viele fremde töne
Bang vor sich selbst die eignen hört ...

Wie in die herbe traube
Erst mählich duft und farbe dringt ·
Wie aus dem nächtigen laube
Die lerche scheu ins frühlicht schwingt.
(SW I: 9)

In many ways this is a poem about time and growing up, and the poem moves briskly in its four short lines of alternating iambic tri- and tetrametre, suggestive of alternating timespans of long and short. The representation of time in the first stanza is one known to Petrarch. For George, the time of childhood seems long: a single hour is felt by the child as a year (and the broad vowel of 'jahr' slows the pace accordingly) while the adult, it is suggested, no longer has the luxury of 'langen stunden'. The phrasing emphasises the flip in temporal experience as a result of aging and change (due to time).

For Petrarch, however, time is perpetually a problem, precisely in his inability to change, stuck forever in anticipation: 'Each day to me is like a thousand years' (*Rvf* 357: 1). One notes already the distance between the two poets: the emphasis in Petrarch's line is on the speaker's own psychology, his subjective

experience of time, whereas George avoids all reference to himself to create distance, the illusion of objectivity, and his characteristic air of impersonality.⁵⁴¹

Whereas Petrarch uses deixis to mark out the past from the present, ironically resulting in the confusion of a clear-cut distinction (for the purpose of conversion), George uses no verbal past tense.⁵⁴² His strategy is rather to apply a repetitive indexical gesture to guide the reader's eye 'over there' to the past, temporally and spatially separate (subtly emphasised with the relative pronoun 'wo' for temporal distance). George conducts the reader's attention to the various phenomena and suggests their separation from the lyric present through his distal phrases ('Das sind' and 'Das ist'), exerting control over the phenomena's appearance and maintaining distance, thereby implying a clear distinction between *Die Fibel*'s poetics and the present lyric utterance of 1901's 'Geleitverse'.⁵⁴³ Deictic phrasing summons the phenomena into view, while maintaining appropriate, safe distance.⁵⁴⁴ The repetitive distal phrasing also works to gather up the varied phenomena of the past into the bound structure of the poem. Time is thereby securely objectified in space, posited in the museal collection that the poem curates.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴¹ On George's impersonality in the context of his break with *Erlebnislyrik* ('Entpersönlichung') cf. Zanucchi, *Transfer und Modifikation*, pp. 220-21. Cf. Maurizio Pirro, 'Per una lettura "begriffsgeschichtlich" della categoria di Gestalt', p. 107. On this fundamental aspect of his poetics see also Margherita Versari, *La poesia di Stefan George. Strategie del discorso amoroso* (Carocci editore, 2004), chapter 1 ('La retorica della spersonalizzazione', pp. 17-52). For Petrarch's biblical source in Psalm 89, 4, his citations of this Psalm elsewhere, and the other examples of this consciousness of time in the *Rvf* see Bettarini, *Canzoniere*, vol. II, p. 1557.

⁵⁴² The verbs of *Rvf* 1 alternate between present and past in the octet and first tercet before the final remains in the present.

⁵⁴³ For the terms proximal and distal deictics, cf. Barbara Dancygier, 'Proximal and distal deictics and the construal of narrative time', *Cognitive Linguistics* 30.2 (2019), pp. 399-415 (p. 2).

⁵⁴⁴ Dancygier, 'Proximal and distal deictics and the construal of narrative time', p. 10, in her analysis of Ali Smith's *The Accidental*, similarly notes how 'distal/proximal contrast is used to maintain two narrative spaces and their viewpoints simultaneously, past and present'. George likewise employs these deictics to allow the past into view while maintaining the security of the present.

⁵⁴⁵ Blasberg, 'Charisma in der Moderne', p. 134 is concerned with the 'musealisierender Medialität' of George's self-representations throughout. The museal effect is also a feature of his poetic texts.

By conducting the reader's gaze through this imaginative museum, the narrator keeps us in his grasp, our eyes under his control as much as the phenomena themselves are, a facet of the poem manifested graphically in the indentations of its lines: the reader's eye sways back-and-forth at different starting points as we follow the poet's directions.⁵⁴⁶ The infinitive verb forms in the first lines of stanzas two, three and four are substantivised and thereby objectified,⁵⁴⁷ while a present tense other than the Medusan 'Das ist' is allowed to appear only in the second and fourth lines of the stanzas and always in a relative clause dependent upon the phenomenon previously petrified.⁵⁴⁸ The poet's museum here limits contingency and spontaneity, those verbs of the past will not burst into the present moment of poetic utterance and undermine the master's authority.⁵⁴⁹ This is a decidedly anti-Petrarchan manoeuvre, for it precludes any possibility that the present is still infected by the uncontrollable affects of the past. Dancygier notes that 'narratives rely on a hierarchy of spaces, each marked with viewpoint'⁵⁵⁰ –

⁵⁴⁶ Pirro, *Come corda troppo tesa*, p. 26 discusses this painterly aspect of George's poetry (albeit not in reference to this poem). He notes how 'the reader's eye is prompted to wander along the axes defined by the rigid syntactic lines of the text' ('l'occhio del lettore è sollecitato a un movimento di erranza lungo gli assi definiti dalle rigide linee sintattiche del testo'). Pirro likewise, following Martus' 'Werkpolitik' concept, is attentive to George's authorial manipulations in his effort to keep control over the work (p. 57). Cf. likewise Braungart, *Ästhetischer Kaholizismus*, p. 121 for George's controlling gaze as taking part in the work's control over its readers: 'Über Georges strengen Texten steht so intensive, so einprägsam sein Bild wie kaum bei einem anderen Autor der Moderne sonst. Kein Autor der Moderne hat so sehr auch die "Randzonen" seines Werkes besetzt und kontrolliert [...] Georges Bilder sind ein Kommentar zu den Texten geworden'.

⁵⁴⁷ The use of the gaze to objectify and thereby control reality is a fundamental conceit of George's poetics, particularly in the early years, as demonstrated by Pirro, *Come corda troppo tesa*, esp. chapter one ('Pedagogia dello sguardo nelle *Hymnen*', pp. 23-56). For the gaze in relation to George's nominal style see p. 55.

⁵⁴⁸ Cf. Bernhard Böschstein, *Studien zur Dichtung des Absoluten* (Atlantis Verlag, 1968), p. 136: 'Wieder gibt es in diesen sechs Strophen kein eigentliches Verb in einem Hauptsatz. Die zahlreichen Verben erscheinen nur in Nebensätzen, abhängig von Substantiven oder substantivierten Infinitiven, deren bloße Nennung and die Stelle eines Vorgangs tritt'.

⁵⁴⁹ Cf. Pirro, *Come corda troppo tesa*, p. 25.

⁵⁵⁰ Dancygier, 'Proximal and distal deictics', p. 15.

George's hierarchy is that of the present, the *here* of his deictic centre, over the *there* of his past.⁵⁵¹

Bornmann has pointed out that two motifs from both the 'Geleitverse' that opens up *Die Fibel* and the poem 'Ikarus' that closes it (*SW*, I: 41) can be sourced to *Rvf* 23, Petrarch's canzone of metamorphoses: those are the motifs of the brilliance of diamond (ll. 24-5) and the flight of Phaethon (ll. 51f), of hubris returning one catastrophically to earth.⁵⁵² In *Rvf* 23, the speaker recounts how Amor finally struck his icy adamantine heart with an arrow by the help of 'a mighty lady' (l. 35), putting a definitive end to the period of innocence and freedom, the mythical 'sweet season of my early years' and awakening the speaker to desire ('fierce passion', l. 3). The mythical time of freedom is seen as definitively past ('I'll sing of how I lived in liberty', l. 4), an aspect underlined by line 30's 'What was I?', with both verbs ('lived', 'was') in the historic past tense. This mythical past ('etade') is rhymed with his freedom ('libertade'), to which he yearns to regain.

The first metamorphosis recounted is the poet's transformation into the laurel by Amor and Laura, revealed at the end of the second stanza as one that is both past and still present:

both of them changed me into what I am,
from living man they turned me to green laurel
that does not lose its leaves in the cold season
(ll. 38-40).

⁵⁵¹ For 'deictic centre' see Alan Cruse, *A Glossary of Semantics and Pragmatics* (Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 44.

⁵⁵² Bornmann, 'Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile', p. 162. In this discussion I have overlooked the many other literary influences being wrestled with in *Die Fibel*. Bornmann reads his Petrarchism alongside his reception of Heine (see e.g. pp. 141-42, 160).

Two degrees of pastness are revealed: one that is completely past (stressed by the historic past tense 'vissi'), and one whose ramifications extend into the present, the time of the laurel tree as poetic 'constancy', as Zak writes, even when all other identity changes.⁵⁵³ The leaves of poetry endure in time, but they *are* in time.

The two motifs of *Geleitverse's* first stanza (the evergreen ivy and the diamond-like, crystalline dew) are both features of Petrarch's own retrospective. In George these are used to emphasise the aestheticised control of the the past, the 'langen stunden' of childhood now rimy with timelessness.⁵⁵⁴ The vine, furthermore, works as an old symbol of autumnal maturity, the harvesting of the past, and its presence alongside the 'herbe traube' further underscores the temporal distance between past and present.⁵⁵⁵ Thus, two Petrarchan motifs open up *Die Fibel*, and thereby the oeuvre, but the difference between the poets is felt from the outset.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵³ Zak, *Petrarch's Humanism and the Care of the Self*, p. 35: 'In a clear inversion of the Ovidian myth of Apollo and Daphne, it is the poet himself who is transformed in these lines into the laurel, thus receiving his identity and being: from a living man, one subject to change, he becomes the emblem of constancy – *che per fredda stagion foglia non perde*. Transformed into the laurel, it is possible that Petrarch actually becomes his writings – as the adamant aspect of his existence and those through which he attains changeless and eternal poetic glory'. Cf. Barolini, 'The Self in the Labyrinth of Time', p. 50.

⁵⁵⁴ I owe this point to Professor Mary Cosgrove in conversation. Similarly, Laurent Mattiussi, *Figuration Du Divin, Figuration De Soi: Mythe Et Liturgie Chez Mallarmé, George et Yeats* (University of Tours PhD Dissertation 1996), p. 371 reads the 'demanntau' as the crystalline result of poetic activity, of the necessary self-annihilation ('anéantissement de soi') and subsequent creative transposing of everyday experience into the aesthetic, thereby neutralising the gaping void of human subjectivity by sublimating it into meaningful art ('le vide de l'ennui se retourne en la pure splendeur rayonnante du diamant. Le rien central de l'intériorité humaine et de l'existence se trouve transposé dans le poème en une pureté qui à la fois conserve l'âme et la vie ordinaire mais aussi les métamorphose, les volatilise et les sacre, ainsi que le suggère ici le motif de la couronne de lierre').

⁵⁵⁵ See James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*, with an introduction by Kenneth Clark (John Murray, 2000), p. 322 for the vine as an 'attribute of the personifications of autumn' and p. 142 for 'Scenes of harvesting the grape'.

⁵⁵⁶ See Martus, *Werkpolitik*, pp. 515-16 for the politics of this aspect of George's strategy. The motifs of ice/stone/diamond etc. as well as the laurel can be found all over the *Canzoniere*. Bettarini's (*Canzoniere*, vol. I) commentary *ad loca* for *Rvf* 23 cross-references to other examples in the work.

Bornmann cites various *loci* in the *Canzoniere* for the notion of the 'harte frohn' of the 'Geleitverse' (l. 14), the traditional notion of love as a yoke on the subject.⁵⁵⁷ The yoke, fundamentally, establishes the lover as passive and subject to the control of another force. Bornmann cites 'That old and sweet yet cruel master of mine' (*Rvf* 360: 36-38) for comparison, a treasure trove of Petrarchistic motifs,⁵⁵⁸ in which the poet imagines himself on trial at court, presided over by an anthropomorphised Reason acting as judge. What Bornmann leaves uncommented is the proximity of this metaphors of servitude and the yoke to desire. Petrarch's 'young desire' (l. 36) has been relentlessly sharpened on Love's whetstone, from which he hopes to find rest.⁵⁵⁹ He finds, however, that no matter how much he changes, his 'obstinate will' cannot (ll. 41-42). George's submission is likewise to desire, albeit characterised as a tenebrous (perhaps Romantic) longing ('dunkler sehnsucht'). Both poets experience this as a kind of fate. George's 'frühe[s] gähren' is rhymed with 'des Verwünschten zähren', the rare capitalised noun foregrounding the significance of the curse.⁵⁶⁰ Tearful Petrarch often makes reference to his status as forlorn by fate (*Rvf* 124: 5; *Rvf* 139: 3), intertwined as this destiny is with his experience of Amor and his fundamental desire-fomenting lack resulting in the perpetual state of spiritual destitution.⁵⁶¹ Before this first experience of desire and love, Petrarch relates, there were no tears

⁵⁵⁷ Bornmann, 'Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile', pp. 162-63.

⁵⁵⁸ The subject's destitution in desolate landscapes, for example (ll. 46-7).

⁵⁵⁹ A throwback no doubt to those 'vain hopes' of *Rvf* 1.

⁵⁶⁰ Fitton, 'Petrarca um 1900', p. 555 attributes this talk of cursedness to George's early 'Modus petrarkistischen Dichtens', linking it to the canzone of metamorphoses, *Rvf* 23. His reasons for doing so, however, do not seem more convincing than Ernst Morwitz', cited in Fitton, *ibid*, for attributing this cursed existence to a Baudelairean precedent. If anything, it is the association with the tears of the cursed one ('des Verwünschten') that strikes me as most obviously Petrarchesque.

⁵⁶¹ Cf. Vinicio Pacca, 'Fortuna', in *Lessico Critico Petrarcesco*, ed. by Luca Marcozzi and Romana Brovia (Carocci editore, 2016) pp. 140-151 (pp. 148-49: 'Insomma, la fortuna ha soprattutto la colpa di aver condannato Petrarca a un amore infelice e poi di avergli sottratto la vista dell'oggetto amato, come egli non manca di lamentare (19, 12-13: "con gli occhi lagrimosi e 'nfermi | mio destino a vederla mi conduce" etc.)

(360: 27). That George associates tears with the hard yoke of servitude to desire, and thereby to poetry, suggests again his unique adoption of Petrarchism.⁵⁶²

The yoke returns in the sub-cycle *Von einer Reise* in the poem *Die Schmiede* (I: 58), which recalls a memory from the poet's youth in Darmstadt in which a forge's noise used to disturb his mornings and torment him spiritually (compare Amor's whetstone in *Rvf* 360: 36-7). He imagines the blacksmith scorning him and hammering nails into his soul:

Er höhnte dass unterm joch ich noch blieb

In zürnen bald bald in zittern.

[...]

Jetzt hat einen neuen nagel man

In das zwangskleid der seele genietet!

(I: 58)

Although time and place have changed now, on his travels he hears a similar hammering that triggers the tormented memory of the other forge, and he wonders whether it will be his wretched fate (l. 13) to be dogged forever by past memories. The young poet is setting out into the world on his first solo voyage, and this comes with the inner conflict of leaving one's origins, and facing the alienating strangeness that travel brings. When familiarity ('derselbe ton', l. 15) and newness ('Doch zeit und ort sind verändert', l. 16) coincide, it forces the subject to decide: do I linger

⁵⁶² Boysen, *Nothingness, Negativity and Nominalism*, p. 73 points out that tears for Petrarch are systematically linked to meta-reflections on poetic creation: 'Crying and poetical creation are equated throughout the whole Canzoniere to such a degree that suffering is partly something which the poet laments, partly something which gives birth to his poetical production'. Like Petrarch in *Rvf* 23, George will retrospectively trace the eruption and first experience of desire in his 'Legenden' (SW, I: 83-93).

here, paralysed by an uncanny resemblance that traps me psychologically in my past, or do I choose to change the significance of what this hammering means? The poet chooses to re-interpret reality, re-evaluating the sound as a sign of future liberation: 'Er mahnt mich nicht mehr an die finstere zeit | Er schiedet zum heil zur befreiung' (ll. 19-20). The future holds liberation from the 'joch' (l. 7).

The sombre desire ('dunkler sehnsucht') of 'Geleitverse', coupled with its overall aetiology of the poetic subject, recalls the earlier discussion by A.W. Schlegel on the child's – and the poet's – experience of language as driven by an enthrallment with sound.⁵⁶³ 'Geleitverse' picks up on this with the babbling of the child in stanza two, which presents a complex thought: 'Dem dumpf entgegenschallen | Gebüsch und strom und wind im chor'. The polysyndeton of natural phenomena suggests diversity and fragmentation, while the climax of the phrase 'im chor' suggests unity, ringing out hollow but overpowering the child, who does not yet know how to make nature respond to him, as Morgan suggests.⁵⁶⁴ In the present form of the poem, these natural elements have been bound by the poet's language, while to the child's perception of them as a brute unity, they remain vague, muffled and uninterpretable, a chorus of which the particular parts cannot yet be individuated as they are by the mature poet.

⁵⁶³ What George elsewhere calls 'das dichterische: ton bewegung gestalt' (SW, X/XII: 5). This Symbolist principle is also clearly formulated in George's and the *Blätter's* own poetological writings, see e.g. George's short prose text 'Über Dichtung' in SW, xvii: 69: 'Den wert der dichtung entscheidet nicht der sinn (sonst wäre sie etwa weisheit gelahrtheit) sondern die form d.h. durchaus nichts äusserliches sondern jenes tief erregende in maass und klang wodurch zu allen zeiten die Ursprünglichen die Meister sich von den nachfahren den künftlern zweiter ordnung unterschieden haben'. And likewise, in *Blätter für die Kunst* Folge II, vol. 2 (1894): 'Das GEDICHT ist der höchste der endgültige ausdruck eines geschehens: nicht wiedergabe eines gedankens sondern einer stimmung. was in der malerei wirkt ist verteilung linie und farbe, in der dichtung: auswahl maass und klang'. Cited in Landmann, *Der George-Kreis*, p. 17.

⁵⁶⁴ Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, p. 52. Braungart, *Ästhetischer Katholizismus*, p. 274 reads the image of the choir as figuring George's 'Literaturkonzept' of a 'Meister des Rituals' whose congregation reply as one "“dumpfen” kollektiven Einheit".

In the following stanza ('Das ist das erste klagen') we arrive at the Lacanian moment whereby upon entering the Symbolic Order one is immediately alienated (*deceived* in George's language), bringing with it a Petrarchan lament.⁵⁶⁵ There is much at stake ideologically in this stanza, but first and foremost one notices the constraint and distance that the deixis holds over that verb of affective lamentation 'klagen'. Various poems throughout *Die Fibel* demonstrate how arriving at this point of distance from the 'erste klagen' was a significant preoccupation for the poet.⁵⁶⁶ In 'Die Rose' (SW, I: 32), for example, the speaker ties his fate to the changing seasons and laments the brevity of spring and summer. He tells himself he ought to rejoice (stanza two), concluding: 'dir ist nicht grund zu klagen'. However, in the third, final stanza he gives in, destitute, to his melancholy and draws the stanza out to ten lines from four. Twice in this poem does a Petrarchan expression of distress and grief interject to emphasise the poet's melancholic resignation.⁵⁶⁷ In the ripe maturity of autumn he feels the need to veil ('verhüllen') his very own 'blühens frucht' out of a sense of shame ('tief von scham befangen'). His only consolation, now sinking further into his melancholic state ('Und in weh muss ich versinken') are the sweet bygone dreams of yesteryear, the typically Petrarchan 'dolcezza' of

⁵⁶⁵ A working definition of the Lacanian symbolic order can be taken from *Écrits*, p. 7: 'the major determination the subject receives from the itinerary of a signifier', and p. 171: 'Indeed, what Freud's discovery brings us back to is the enormity of the order into which we have entered—into which we are, as it were, born a second time, in leaving behind the state which is rightly known as the *infans* state, for it is without speech—namely, the symbolic order constituted by language, and the moment of the concrete universal discourse and of all the furrows opened up by it at this time, in which we had to find lodging'. How the symbolic passes through, works upon, bars and divides the subject from themselves results in that subject's alienation, the sense of passivity, of having received a load of signification nevertheless harbouring absence: see 'Absence', and 'Symbolic' for the Symbolic Order as the 'realm of death, absence and lack' in Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, p. 1 and p. 204 respectively (quoted text p. 204).

⁵⁶⁶ What Bozza calls the 'Kampf gegen das "Ach—I!"' (Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, pp. 7, 10), the poet's struggle to overcome the ailments of modernity that in turn manifest as various uncertainties within his early works. As Bozza writes: 'George will dabei freilich nicht den Zweifel und die Einsamkeit *annehmen*, George will sie *überwinden*'. (p. 10)

⁵⁶⁷ George's 'ach'. Cf. Petrarch's 'lasso' ('alas'), e.g., *Rvf* 19: 8, transcribed by George in *I Sonetti scelti*.

some mythical, innocent youth (the story of *Rvf* 23), of the hazy time before sexual and poetic maturity, linked as both are in George and Petrarch's self-mythologisation: 'Nur vergangne süsse träume | Dürfen mir von ferne winken'.⁵⁶⁸ Here maturation brings together shame and a retroactive impression of the past as innocent and comforting. The result of this binding of shame and retrospection results in melancholy, and this knot of affect is experienced as fate, his 'lose'. All thoroughly Petrarchan (Types 1, 2 and 3 are represented here).

'Geleitverse's use of the word 'gefügt' has an important metapoetic sense, relating to the Circle's poetical theories of 'harte' and 'glatte Fügung'.⁵⁶⁹ The Circle's conception of a poem as a tightly-bound 'Gefüge' was typical, emphasising structural solidity and formal rigor.⁵⁷⁰ In 'Geleitverse', word, now 'gefügt', enters the scene and upsets what before was the brightest dream; word and dream are thus in tension here, for if words deceive ('trügt'), our relationship to reality is upset. The entry into language of a pre-verbal dream, the poem suggests, compromises the purity of that original vision. This however is at odds with George's poetics, which seek to magically collapse the gap between signifier and signified, to make thing and word identical.⁵⁷¹ The word in 'Geleitverse', however, is the word of the ephebe

⁵⁶⁸ Another poem from *Die Fibel* is more explicit about the link between creative and sexual maturation. The figure of the muse in the poem 'Du standest in der wolken wehen' (1: 27) is the occasion for the poet's elevation, his rising. Here too the echoes of that Petrarchan 'lasso' can be heard: 'Und ach ich fühle es mit beben | Mir grünt es spät des ruhmes reis'. As Oelmann in the critical apparatus to *SW*, 1: 113 points out, the 'reis' of fame is a *pars pro toto* for the laurel crown of poetry. What I am here emphasising is the link to the poet's maturation, traced as this is throughout the narrative of *Die Fibel*.

⁵⁶⁹ Used by Norbert von Hellingrath in describing Hölderlin's Pindar translations. See Norbert von Hellingrath, 'Kunstcharakter der Hölderlinischen Übertragungen', in *Der George-Kreis: Eine Auswahl aus seinen Schriften*, ed. by Georg Peter Landmann, 2nd edn (Klett-Cotta, 1980), pp. 113-16 (p. 113).

⁵⁷⁰ As a 'geistige haltung ja eine lebensführung' did they characterise their cult of form: 'Diese äusserste sorge bei der feilung der gefüge · dieses ringen nach der höchsten formalen vollendung im werke · diese liebe für das Runde · das in sich vollkommene · das nach allen seiten hin richtige · [...]', *Blätter für die Kunst* IX. Folge (1910), quoted from Landmann, *Der George-Kreis*, p. 87.

⁵⁷¹ Cf. *SW*, IX: 107: 'So lernt ich traurig den verzicht: | Kein ding sei wo das wort gebricht'. Thus Gundolf can claim in his study of George, in contrast to Novalis' necromantic 'Traumkunst':

exploring poetic language, and poetic failure, for the first time, and decidedly not the capital-W 'Wort' ('Das Dritte') of the mature poet.⁵⁷² The relation of dreams and poetic creation is re-evaluated in light of the Maximin event, through which all poetry receives its supposedly unshakeable centre of meaning:

Dass aus schein und dunklem schaume

Dass aus freudenruf und zähre

Unzertrennbar sich gebäre

Bild aus dir und mir im traume.

(SW, VI/VII: 109)

In this final stanza from *Der Siebente Ring*'s (1907) poem 'Einverleibung' the poetic word ('bild' in the sense of the Symbolist 'Sinnbild') and dream are linked in a harmonious equilibrium mirrored in the final line's own chiasmic balance: 'bild' and

'Georges Zaubersprüche, die "nicht nach Willen" sind, sondern nur in der Schicksalsstunde ertönen können, enthalten die Welt die sie rufen, schaffen sie erst durch sich: der Ruf und das Gerufene sind eines .. Name und Genanntes ist dieselbe Wirklichkeit'. (Gundolf, *George*, p. 142). On this see Paul Gerhard Klussmann, *Stefan George. Zum Selbstverständnis der Kunst und des Dichters in der Moderne* (H. Bouvier u. Co., 1961), p. 24: 'Das Wort verdichtet ein Fernes, Unfaßliches, traumhaft Flüchtliges zum Ding, macht es greifbar, blühend und glänzend'. This may be the case, but the temporality inherent to language necessarily makes it a Sisyphean task, like poor Edgar Allan Poe attempting to pick up sand on the beach in the poem 'A Dream within a Dream' (*The Collected Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe* (Wordsworth, 2009), p. 950). For the collapsing of the distance between signifier and signified in the Symbolist context, where language operates 'by identifying itself concretely with what it represents and erasing the difference between representation and reality, the inner world and outer', see Franke, 'The Linguistic Turning of the Symbol', p. 20.

⁵⁷² The poems of *Die Fibel*, as critics have pointed out, thematise their own failures. For failure as a 'Grundmotiv der *Auswahl erster Verse*' See Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 88, who situates this thematisation of failure in the context of George's work-reception strategies, namely, as I have also been arguing, to separate the youth poetry from the mature works. Cf. Jürgen Egyptien und Elke Kasper, 'Die Fibel', p. 7 who read the *Fibel* poem 'Ikarus' as a reflection of the 'Scheitern des Dichters'. Failure itself is a Petrarchan commonplace, see e.g. Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire*, p. 23: 'Although Petrarch's *Rime sparse* embodies a struggle between assertions of success and admissions of failure, the balance tilts towards the latter'.

‘traume’, ‘aus’ and ‘im’, ‘dir’ and ‘mir’.⁵⁷³ These opposites all mirror each other across the hinge of the central, additive conjunction ‘und’ that ties things together in the unity of poetic metre. ‘Bild’, the real, and ‘traume’, the ideal, are the two poles that, welded together within poetic speech contain the unity of the poetic subject and his divine Other (the addressed ‘Du’), both inflected in the same grammatical form and internally rhyming, but not self-identical; they are split but held together by that very ‘und’.⁵⁷⁴

That poetic word ‘zähre’ is no longer that of the accursed one, as in *Geleitverse*, rhyming with the premature ‘gähren’.⁵⁷⁵ It rhymes now, rather, with

⁵⁷³ See e.g. *Blätter für die Kunst* II. Folge 2. Band for the first definition of symbol given: ‘Das *Sinnbild* (symbol) ist so alt wie sprache und dichtung selbst. es gibt sinnbild der einzelnen worte der einzelnen teile und des gesamt-inhalts einer kunst-schöpfung. das letzte nennt man auch die tiefere meinung die jedem bedeutenden werk innewohnt. Sinnbildliches sehen ist die natürliche folge geistiger reife und tiefe’. Cited from Landmann, *Der George-Kreis*, p. 17. Furthermore, for the centrality of the ‘bild’ to the Circle’s ideology, see Cornelia Blasberg’s illustration in an article on George’s *Das Jahr der Seele*. In the context of the antimodern, ‘zivilisationskritisch’ ethos of the circle, ‘bild’ came to be instrumentalised by the Circle’s writers as representing a synthetic unity of the artist: ‘Man kann angesichts dieses im intellektuellen Zirkel betriebenen und deshalb von vornherein zivilisationskritisch aufgeladenen Bildkultes leicht nachvollziehen, warum sich die ersten und bis heute zitierten George-Interpretationen aus dem “Kreis” um einen synthetischen “Bild”-Begriff bemühten, der alle Unterschiede zwischen Georges Foto, seinen Gedichten und seiner körperlichen Erscheinung nivellieren sollte’. Cornelia Blasberg, ‘Stefan Georges “Jahr der Seele”. Poetik zwischen Schrift und Bild’, in *Hofmannsthal. Jahrbuch zur europäischen Moderne* 5/1997, ed. by Gerhard Neumann, Ursula Renner, Günter Schnitzler & Gotthart Wunberg (Rombach Verlag, 1997), pp. 217-249 (p. 220-221).

⁵⁷⁴ Cf. Manfred Durzak, *Der junge Stefan George: Kunsttheorie und Dichtung* (Wilhelm Fink, 1968), p. 135 for George’s expressed aversion to unrealistic images and similes: ‘Wie George [...] betont, darf das in der Dichtung absolutgesetzte Bild seinem Ursprungsgrund in der geschichtlichen Wirklichkeit nicht widersprechen’. Every poetic *Bild* ought to have a grounding in empirical reality (p. 138).

⁵⁷⁵ A metaphor rooted presumably in George’s own rural Rhineland vintner background. His father Stephan was a wine merchant and publican. Furthermore, George’s supposed affinity to rural life and natural ties to the land was an aspect of his charisma cult. Thus Ernst Morwitz writes regarding *Teppich des Lebens*’ poem ‘Der Freund der Fluren’: ‘Er trug den Landmann nicht nur äusserlich in seinem Familiennamen, sondern auch innerlich in seinem Blut und Charakter,’ Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 179. Gundolf, *George*, pp. 33-32 likewise emphasises George’s connection not only to the city but also to the land, and to ‘den Stoffen, Gesinnungen, Gebärden des Volks [...] das selbstverständliche Wissen um die ersten Lebensbedingungen’ etc. None of this is learned on George’s part, it is all ‘mythisches Bild eignen Gehalts’, George’s own private mythology, the simple life of rural Rhineland, the fetish for a simpler, premodern time marked by the direct involvement of the ‘Volk’ in the land, becomes part of his very own character, as Morwitz suggests above (*Kommentar*, p. 179) in linking his name, *George*, to the land, that is, its etymology in the ancient Greek *geōrgós*, farmer. This poetic ideology can be summed up with recurrence to Dante’s citation (and extension ‘into a theory of ontological revelation through language’ in Franke’s words, *Dante’s Vita Nuova and the New Testament*, p. 125) of a platitude in the *Vita nova* XIII: 4: “*Nomina sunt consequentia rerum*: Names are consequences of things” (p. 178).

procreation, self-genesis in the mystical paradox of a birth that does not result in separation ('Unzertrennbar'), and tears are redeemed now by a 'freudenruf'.

The Word in *Der Siebente Ring* has incarnated the visionary dream, there is no more gap, no more deception as in *Geleitverse*.⁵⁷⁶ This trajectory differs in a very fundamental way from Petrarch's relationship to language. As Philippe Guérin writes, one result of the fragmentary, discontinuous nature of the 'scattered verses' (*Rvf* 1: 1) is the indefinite perpetuation of desire, the *Canzoniere*'s central 'aporia'.⁵⁷⁷ Petrarch can never find the right word, always catching only the air in his net (*Rvf* 239:37). A similar lament regarding his language's inability to articulate desire returns us to the image of the frustrated child encountered in 'Geleitverse':

to describe her on my own
I cannot do, so I become untuned;
alas, and so has fled
that sweet comfort of mine.
Just as a child that hardly
can get his tongue untied,
who cannot speak but hates not speaking more,

⁵⁷⁶ Francesco Rossi devotes a substantial amount of his analysis to a key distinction in the writings of the George-Circle concerning the word 'wort'. There is the fullness of the poetic word and there is a 'bloßes wort' belonging to academics and non-poetic discourse, which has a merely referential function as opposed to the evocative, inexhaustible richness of the poetic symbol, which always points beyond itself to a fullness not determinable by the strictures of positivist or logical discourse. See Francesco Rossi, *Gesamterkennen: Zur Wissenschaftskritik und Gestalttheorie im George-Kreis*, (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2011), here 68-76. For experience as a central concern of the rituals of reading poetry in the George Circle, see the extracts from Robert Boehringer, 'Das Leben von Gedichten', pp. 101-11. Rossi likewise comments on the same poem from *Der Siebente Ring* ('Einverleibung') but focuses rather on how it thematises the 'Reziprozität des Gestaltungsprozesses', p. 195.

⁵⁷⁷ Philippe Guérin, 'Poesia', in 'Poesia', in *Lessico Critico Petrarcesco*, ed. by Luca Marcozzi and Romana Brovia, (Carocci editore, 2016), pp. 244-259 (pp. 257-58).

so my desire leads me
to speak, and I want her,
my own sweet foe, to hear me before I die.

(*Rvf* 125: 40-45)

Desire here is ineffable, always at odds with language and yet at the same time constituted by it: desire moves the poet to speak (desire slips euphonically rather smoothly into speech ('così 'l *desir* mi mena | a *dire*'), yet his speech in turn engenders further desire, the veil of language forever motivating the search for a deeper reality.⁵⁷⁸

In comparison to Petrarch's infinitely present shame occasioned by his poetic ravings, there is no talk of shame, regret, or embarrassment in the 'Geleitverse'. This is in contrast to the poems of *Die Fibel* itself, where shame and destiny appear intertwined in poems like 'Mir ist es wie Titanien ergangen' (l: 15).⁵⁷⁹ Bornmann notes the central Petrarchan motif of shame despite the Shakespearian allusion in the title (*A Midsummer Night's Dream's* Titania), and links it to the later reoccurrence of the motif in the poem 'Sei stolzer als die prunkenden pfauen' (l: 29).⁵⁸⁰ Not only the motif, but the root of the poet's shame and grief (the rhyme 'grämen'-'schämen' is repeated in both poems) has a Petrarchan sensibility. In relation to a shame-inducing 'zerrbild', George echoes *Rvf* 1's shame-filled,

⁵⁷⁸ Guérin, 'Poesia', p. 253. Cf. Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch*, p. 72, for the quest for Laura in the poem as simultaneously 'the poet's quest for poetic language, for the signs that might be adequate to the poet's inner thoughts and that may awaken Laura's love from its slumber (ll. 3-5)'.

⁵⁷⁹ Recalling that *Die Fibel* and *Der Teppich des Lebens* were both published at the turning point of the turn of the century, Morgan's point, in *The Homosexual Imaginary*, that in the 'Vorspiel's gradual revelation of a homoerotic community George specifically removes shame and its associated affects and themes from the *Ich*: 'The hellenic love that these men share is not merely homoerotic; it is also free of guilt', p. 97 (citing 'Du sprichst mir nie von sünde oder sitte'. In which the new Georgian *Ich* 'Nicht weisst von scham von reue oder fluch', v: 17).

⁵⁸⁰ Bornmann, 'Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile', p. 153. Egyptien and Kasper, 'Die Fibel', pp. 10-11 consider the influence of Goethe's 'Das Göttliche'.

lamenting m-sounds in his own line of shame, accompanied by forceful, negational sounds: 'Nein ich will nur mich meiner torheit schämen' (l: 15, emphases mine).⁵⁸¹ The triple insistence of the '-ei' sound underscores the subjective dimension of shame: '-ei' is the sound of 'mein' (as well as of *eigen* and *Sein*, and George's 'eitler wahn'), as well as the poet's 'torheit'.⁵⁸² Plagued with the raving fantasies occasioned by the 'zerrbild' ('eitler wahn' and 'falscher spuk', ll. 3-4), he then ponders: 'Klag ich in nichtigem zorn das schicksal an?' (l: 15). For now the answer is no – he opts rather to shame himself for being deceived, yet this obsession with destiny returns across *Die Fibel*, suggesting that if not outright blaming it, he still sees it factoring into his predicament. The link between the intimate, affective experience of shame, with the temporality of its retrospective regret of past 'torheit', and the grandiose existentialism of the question of fate, is not coincidental: shame exposes our lack of control over ourselves, and we thereby become vulnerable to vicissitudes beyond our control, as Sharon Green has written.⁵⁸³ The poet has loved what he now realises was a 'zerrbild', a false image with a co-sufferer in Petrarch, likewise lamenting his subjection to a 'false flame' (*Rvf* 264: 45), or to

⁵⁸¹ In his commentary to *Rvf*1, which George owned, Camerini points out that 'this line, expressing shameful repentance and consequently lamentation, is woven from syllables that are highly appropriate for weeping: me, me, mo, me, mi' (trans. DeepL), ('[q]uesto verso [*Rvf* 1:11 – JW] contenente pentimento vergognoso, e per conseguente piangevole, è tessuto di sillabe convenevolissime significative del pianto: *Me, Me, Mo, Me, Mi*'), Camerini (Ed.), *Rime di Francesco Petrarca*, p. 3. Cf. also the melancholy m-sounds that round off the poem *Juli-Schwermut* in *Der Teppich des Lebens*: 'Aus mattem munde murmelt es: wie bin ich | Der blumen müd · der schönen blumen müd!' (v: 67).

⁵⁸² Cf. the humorous, if unsubstantiated interlingual occultism relating to the 'l' sounds of English and the '-ei' sound of German (including the cosmic egg, the *Ei*, and the *ego* or 'egg-O' of Latin) summarised by John Michell in 'Euphonics: A Poet's Dictionary of Enchantments', in *Trivium: The Classical Liberal Arts of Grammar, Logic & Rhetoric* (Bloomsbury, 2016), pp. 7-51 (p. 28).

⁵⁸³ 'With every failed attempt, unintended consequence, or bungled action, our lack of mastery and control is revealed to both ourselves and to others. When our defences fail, the veil that covers over our vulnerability and our finitude is stripped away. We feel mortified by the shame of our incompleteness, our ontological lack, making shame the constant companion of temporality'. Sharon Green, 'Lacan. *Nachträglichkeit*, shame and the ethical time', in *Temporality and Shame. Perspectives from Psychoanalysis and Philosophy*, ed. by Ladson Hinton and Hessel Willemsen (Routledge, 2018), pp. 74-100 (p. 74).

false hope (*Rvf* 99: 2), or the deception of his fallacious ‘chattering’ (*Rvf* 359: 41). George’s ‘zerrbild’ is equally metapoetic: ‘bild’ is, in George’s diction, always related to poetry (cf. ‘sinnbild’). *Rvf* 49 (which rhymes *shame* (‘vergogna’) with the words *lie* (‘menzogna’) and *dreams* (‘sogna’)) is an apostrophe to the poet’s own tongue/language (‘lingua’), and how it never returns the honour he gives it, bringing him only anger, shame and broken speech instead (ll. 3-4; 8), or leaving him alone with his ‘tears full of grief’ (l. 9).⁵⁸⁴

Die Fibel are explorations in style and content, a quest for the right kind of word amidst ‘viele fremde töne’ (*SW*, 1: 9).⁵⁸⁵ A ‘Fibel’ is originally an ‘abecebuch’ for learning to read and write, and George’s is his personal Petrarchistic workbook, finding his way through the received language of nineteenth century German epigonism.⁵⁸⁶ As Arbogast argues, *Die Fibel* is the poet’s expression of his will to overcome the old forms of poetry.⁵⁸⁷ This is figured retroactively, in the poet’s threading the poems together into the narrative of the lyric cycle, figuring his origins as the uneasy struggle against by then outmoded forms and content. Language, the need for poetic self-expression, grief in one’s inability to find the right words,

⁵⁸⁴ On broken speech and melancholy see Rushworth, *Discourses of Mourning*, p. 25 and on Petrarch specifically p. 54.

⁵⁸⁵ Another rare Latinate word, and thus appearing as one of the very ‘fremde töne’ that it rhymes with, a ‘Kamöne’, Morwitz tells us (*Kommentar zu den Prosa- Drama- und Jugend-Dichtungen Stefan Georges*), was ‘eine weissagende Sängerin oder Quellnymphe’ in Roman religion, who eventually became equated by Vergil, Horace and Ovid with Greek Muses (p. 79). For a richer history of the camenae’s place in Roman culture, particularly the association between them and *carmen*, or song, and water, see Alex Hardie, ‘The Camenae in Cult, History, and Song’, *Classical Antiquity* 35.1 (2016), pp. 45-85.

⁵⁸⁶ „FIBEL, f.“, Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm, digitalisierte Fassung im Wörterbuchnetz des Trier Center for Digital Humanities, Version 01/23, <<https://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB?lemid=F04016>>, abgerufen am 28.05.2023. Cf. Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, 89, and Egyptien & Kasper, *Werkkommentar*, 6 who likewise point this out.

⁵⁸⁷ ‘Der Gewinn der “Fibel” ist daher nicht ein neuer Stil, sonder die Ausdruck gewordene Anstrengung, den alten zu überwinden’, Arbogast, *Erneuerung*, p. 44. Arbogast (p. 41) includes discussion of the Romance influences on George, noting: ‘Georges Jugendgedichte legen einen Weg zurück, der von den glatt und unpersönlich gehandhabten Epigonenmöglichkeiten über ein zunehmendes Schwanken im Gefüge der Strophe bis zum Auftreten der madrigalischen Form führt’.

the fear of loss of self-control that being deceived, and the resulting knot of shame that these phenomena tie together connect both Petrarch and the glimpse of the young George we are given through the mature George's authorial manipulations.

'Sei stolzer als die prunkenden pfauen' (l: 29) marks a development of the poet's response to the 'zerrbild'. The refrain signals a disillusionment: 'Nichts edel sei an dir und nichts gut' (l: 29). A poem full of the Petrarchistic commonplaces ('luoghi comuni', Bornmann picks up on 'die glühende liebe' as well as the antitheses 'freuden und schmerzen' and 'versüsst und verbittert'), it introduces the discourse of nobility ('edel') and presents the speaker's dawning sense that he cannot progress in his development by pursuing this specifically feminine companion-idol who had thereto guided ('gelenkt', l. 12) him.⁵⁸⁸ The poet's problematisation of feminine companionship will continue up until *Der Teppich des Lebens*, but it begins in *Die Fibel* with 'Ich wandelte auf öden düstren bahnen' (l: 13), and the trajectory of his relation to the image of the feminine guide is developed throughout these poems.⁵⁸⁹ At this point, in 'Sei stolzer', 'die alte glut' (l. 16) is alive enough to reignite his desires and consequently cause him shame.⁵⁹⁰ In the preceding poem 'Die Sirene' (l: 28), poem chocked full of Petrarchisms as sourced by Bornmann,⁵⁹¹ the Petrarchan trope of dangerous desire ('ein heisses verderbliches sehnen', l. 6) is employed in the epic simile comparing the poet's

⁵⁸⁸ Bornmann, 'Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile', p. 159.

⁵⁸⁹ Jutta Riese Elgart, 'Symbolisme et figures mythiques et légendaires : une vision européenne (Stéphane Mallarmé, William Butler Yeats et Stefan George)', (PhD Dissertation: Université Toulouse le Mirail – ToulouseII, 2014), here p. 323 reads the figure of Beatrice into *Die Fibel*, on account of 'Ich wandelte auf öden düstren bahnen's' Dantean imagery. I take that imagery as more suggestive of his Petrarchism, but its latent Dantism is not so untenable a thought. It is a good example of the hermeneutic knot tied by Dantism and Petrarchism as inherited literary phenomena, themselves diverging with respect to inherited literary traditions (medieval courtly love, etc.).

⁵⁹⁰ The formulation 'die alte glut' itself rings Petrarchan. Cf. *Rvf*28:62; 81:1; 270:1 etc.

⁵⁹¹ Bornmann, 'Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile', pp. 157-58.

experience of his lady to the sailors' destruction by the sirens of Greek mythology.⁵⁹² Desire here is like poison,⁵⁹³ is implicated in the poet's fate:

Zogest du mich heran mit zaubereien
Bandest mich fest mit unlöslichem knoten
Um mich dem grausamen Schicksal zu weihen
(ll. 10-12).

The knot of voice and desire is a recurring conceit, as Bornmann observes, a sonnet in which Laura appears singing as heaven's siren (l. 14) and as one of the Fates 'wind[ing] and unwind[ing] | the spool of life' (ll. 12-13), her song a potential occasion for the speaker's death, or so he fantasises: "Now here comes the final plunder, | if Heaven destines me to die so well' (ll. 7-8).⁵⁹⁴

In 'Die Sirene', a link between poetic and sexual maturation is developed that runs throughout *Die Fibel*. The 'Du' that begins as his poetic muse (l. 13) morphs into one that engenders a primordial desire with calamitous, alienating consequences for the subject (comparable to Petrarch's own division from himself, *Rvf* 292: 3).⁵⁹⁵ The desire of the Other is also the subject's first experience of his own lack, and this turns that Other into an ambivalent object of both desire and hate, at once heavenly muse and treacherous siren.⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁹² Bornmann, 'Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile', p. 158.

⁵⁹³ Another Petrarchism, cf. Bornmann, 'Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile', p. 185 citing *Rvf* 207: 81-4.

⁵⁹⁴ Bornmann, 'Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile', p. 158.

⁵⁹⁵ His heart split and twisted in 'zwist und empörung' (l. 3) is compared by Bornmann, 'Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile', p. 158 to *Rvf* 164: 7.

⁵⁹⁶ Cf. here Distiller, *Desire and Gender in the Sonnet Tradition*, p. 76 for a similar point in reference to Shakespeare's sonnets ('The self entering this language, then, is not only male, but the nature of his desire includes an awareness of its inadequacy, which, since it is desire for the woman, ensures its misogyny').

‘Geleitverse’ ends confidently with the similes of the grape and the lark, the gently alternating tri- and tetrametres creating a reassuring lullaby rhythm. The two similes constitute a pair of inverse movements – the first inward (‘Wie in die herbe traube’), the second outward (‘Wie aus dem nächtigen laube’), suggesting a process of circularity underlying maturation. The simile of the grape, however, offers a point of comparison from which to understand the process of poetic growth as described in the first five stanzas, while the lark simile remains seemingly untied to any other specific image in the poem; it is suspended, like the bird in the air, offering signification in any given present utterance. It thus functions as a simile for ‘Geleitverse’ as a whole, the proem to the collection that itself is not tied to the temporality and process represented by the rest of the poems, hovering above and looking beyond the night-time of his shame-filled, confused youth. Night, ‘the mother of all things’, as the Romantics called it, is that from which the poet is emerging as figured in the expansive movement of his lark.⁵⁹⁷ This movement outwards ‘aus dem nächtigen laube’ is his own Kantian ‘Ausgang’ and into his own poetic ‘Mündigkeit’, a negation of the dark night and into the light of poetic autonomy.⁵⁹⁸ Like the forces of contraction and expansion in Schelling’s metaphysical cosmology, the movement of George’s poem is one of inward contraction and pressure (‘in die herbe traube | [...] dringt’) and outward expansion

⁵⁹⁷ A. W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 234. Cf. Schelling, *Ages of the World*, ed. Wirth, p. 83 and as negation p. 213. Schelling, *SW*, I, 6, 256-57: ‘die geheimnißvolle Nacht, das Fatum aller Dinge, oder auch, weil in ihr die Dinge als in ihrem Grunde sind, in dem sie empfangen, und aus dem sie geboren werden, das mütterliche Princip der Dinge’. *Grund* and the darkness of night are often so wedded in Schelling’s thought.

⁵⁹⁸ Cf. Leahy, ‘*Der wahre Historiker*’, pp. 25-6 for Foucault’s reception (‘What is Enlightenment’) of Kant’s canonical text *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?* Leahy emphasises the repeatability of ‘each enlightened [...] moment’ (p. 26) as the moment in which the modern person, so to speak, finds a mouth (*Mund*) to invent themselves: ‘The move across the threshold between “Unmündigkeit” and “Mündigkeit”, out of having no mouth, into having a mouth, is the mark, says Foucault, of a *modern moment*. Modernity, he suggests, lives on this threshold to a beginning, and marks itself spatially and temporally in terms of difference’. (p. 25).

and release, of 'Einwicklung' and subsequent 'Entwicklung'.⁵⁹⁹ The one simile emphasises a process in time while the other aims beyond the past and the present by ending with a momentous present tense inchoate action, the open-ended action of the lark as it swings out into the future. This is underscored by the simile-marking word 'Wie' that creates an anticipation which is then left open, unresolved by the typical structure of a simile (the reader may expect a 'so' or 'thus' to close the comparison).

The lark is traditionally a songbird of daybreak, and thus at heart, a symbol of the poet.⁶⁰⁰ William Franke has recently traced the lark as an 'outstanding emblem' for lyric poetry that 'figur[es] a celestial ascent of song – followed by descent into silence' and which 'transport[s] the singer beyond the confines of consciously calculated art by the spontaneous rapture of poetic ecstasy'.⁶⁰¹ As a symbol of elevation and progression George would certainly have known it from Goethe's *Faust I* (ll. 1092-95),⁶⁰² but the simile is also reminiscent of the one that opens canto 23 of Dante's *Paradiso* with a picture of the mother bird patiently waiting for daybreak. There, Beatrice is compared to a bird emerging from its night-time 'geliebten laube' (SW, x/xi: 125), facing the early hours of the morning to go out and find food for its fledglings. In Dante's poem, the bird is waiting to leave,

⁵⁹⁹ 'Alle Entwicklung setzt Einwicklung voraus; in der Anziehung ist der Anfang und die contrahirende Kraft die eigentliche Original- und Wurzelkraft alles Lebens. Jedes Leben fängt von Zusammenziehung an; denn warum schreitet alles vom Kleinen ins Große, vom Engen ins Weite fort, da es auch umgekehrt seyn könnte, wenn es um das bloße Fortschreiten zu thun wäre'. Schelling, SW, I, 8, 311. Contraction and expansion are the two fundamental forces in Schelling's middle period works (the *Freiheitsschrift* and *Weltalter* fragments). For a summary of the two forces, see the editors' introduction to F.W.J Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. with an introduction and notes by Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (State University of New York Press, 2006), here p. xx: 'ground as a principle of inwardness or contraction and existence as a principle of expansion—ground tending to retreat into darkness, existence tending toward light as an essentially creative unfolding'.

⁶⁰⁰ See the entry for 'Lark' in Michael Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 107-08. Cf. also Franke, *Dante's Paradiso*, p. 70 for the bird and lark motifs as traditionally metapoetic.

⁶⁰¹ Franke, *Dante's Paradiso*, quotes from pp. 60 and 61.

⁶⁰² Cited in Ferber, *Dictionary*, p. 108.

while in 'Geleitverse' the lark takes off, swinging into the morning light. In Dante, the little bird sits and 'with burning affect awaits the sun | gazing fixedly for the first birth of dawn' (*Par.* 23: 9-10). In George morning has already arrived, the time of will and rapturous flight has come. Akin to the 'ungestalten puppen' from which fly ('fliegen', to note the continuation of arial imagery) the exalted 'falter leuchtender gesänge' of later years (*SW*, I:7), here we have an image of the poet taking off towards his own mature, Dantean cantos ('gesänge') of the post-1900 period. Franke interprets the night imagery in Dante's simile metapoetically: that poetry, the work of the lark, has its roots in the darkness of night.⁶⁰³

The use of deixis in 'Geleitverse' to achieve distance from the past simultaneously aims at a distance from temporal process itself: the open-endedness of the final stanza, launching into the future from the point of a present, is not deictically dictated to by any 'Das sind' or 'Das ist' like in the other stanzas, but achieves a lack of temporal specification through the two similes that do not characterise any of the preceding images in particular, but specify instead the general thematics of maturation, before departing into the future with the lark, anticipating a launch that is reiterated with each reading of the poem.⁶⁰⁴ Like Dante's simile, as read by Franke, the bird is a symbol of poetic language's self-reflexivity and openness, its significance rooted in anticipation: meaning will come from the future. In George, the immanent launch of the lark, its inchoate, open-

⁶⁰³ When the bird flies off its task is represented by the verb 'trovar', in which Franke sees an echo of the troubadour verb 'trobar', that is, the making of poetry. Franke, *Dante's Paradiso*, 71-72.

⁶⁰⁴ Cf. Franke, *Dante's Paradiso*, who extrapolates from the lark's 'suspended' position an image of language's desire to escape time and return to its origin (p. 73), so that 'threshold before the dawn of day' in which the lark waits, is the prelude to 'an eternal day beyond all temporal measure' (p. 74).

ended movement, similarly keeps the poem novel and, in its aetiology of the poetic subject, thoroughly modern.⁶⁰⁵

And yet, the subject is nowhere to be found. Everything is external to the poem's voice, any linkage between e.g., the 'frühe[n] gären' and the speaking self remains tenuous, merely suggested, rather than declared, as if the speaker was hovering outside, transcending, the world of temporality. This is the voice of the Master, wielding deixis to take control of what time would otherwise render unstable, externalising all sources of instability, naming and ordering them. If Petrarch's 'overarching theme is the self subjected to multiplicity',⁶⁰⁶ George's theme here is the self's overcoming of that multiplicity by way of speaking from an impersonal, self-distanced vantage point that can limit the bounds of temporal change and process via his controlling, authorial gaze that then binds that change into the parametres of his carefully metered-out poetic Word.

Dante does not specify the species of the bird, as Durling and Martinez point out, but in *Paradiso* 20 (a select passage of which George places immediately prior to his full translation of canto 23), he compares the heavenly eagle (a symbol of the will of God formed out of the unified, joyful souls in the heaven of Jupiter) to a lark delighted and satisfied in its own rapturous song and flight.⁶⁰⁷ George translated this passage in February 1918 (*SW*, x/xi: 124-5) and begins his selection at precisely this lark simile, foregrounding the metapoetic elements of the canto at the expense of other elements.⁶⁰⁸ In George's translation, a slightly modified

⁶⁰⁵ 'The dynamism of self-reflexive form alone produces such sense as ever novel – because ever open – meaning'. Franke, *Dante's Paradiso*, p. 73. Cf. Leahy's moment of repeated enlightenment, '*Der wahre Historiker*', p. 23.

⁶⁰⁶ Barolini, 'The Self in the Labyrinth of Time', p. 38. Barolini explicitly links this multiplicity to the experience of time.

⁶⁰⁷ Durling und Martinez, note to *Par.* 23: 1-1 (p. 466).

⁶⁰⁸ Michels, *Die Dante-Übertragungen Stefan Georges*, p. 66 counts the rest of canto 20 not translated by George as an example of the 'Ausschaltung der politischen, lehrhaft-didaktischen und moralisch-theologischen Spekulation'. (*Par.* 20 listed *ibid*, p. 67)

variant of the same verb describes the lark's flight ('aufschwingt', *SW* x/xi:124), and the words 'farbe' and '[durch]dringe' which occur slightly on recall those of *Geleitverse*'s simile of the grape on the vine ('erst mählich duft und farbe dringe'), albeit deployed differently.

Frank examines the insistence in this heaven on poetic self-reflexivity, most forcefully expressed in the lark's verb 'si spazia' ('soars in the air', *Par.* xx: 73): lyric language that rejoices in its own linguistic excesses finds an analogue in the bird's ecstatic song and flight.⁶⁰⁹ This is to underscore the properly self-referential function of divine representation, to which Dante's poem seeks to approach by way of autopoetic lyricism.⁶¹⁰ The emphasis is on agency and self-willed movement, but also on circular self-reflexivity. The simile in Dante is used to underscore the joy the eagle feels in its (for Dante the pilgrim) unfathomable explanation of divine justice and its carrying out of God's will, 'by whose desire | each thing becomes what it is' (*Par.* xx: 77-8).⁶¹¹ The lark imagery thus serves in highlighting the natural, divine teleology of all created things, becoming what they already are, a cause for heavenly rejoicing. The tautological aspect is theologically informed: God provides a substance to each thing that directs its development in its desire for God.⁶¹² Joy in submission to the will of a higher, divine Other feature in George's later poetry, but for now one sees how an image borrowed from Dante is used to establish as

⁶⁰⁹ Franke, *Dante's Paradiso*, p. 59. Franke's main theorising about lyric language as 'what is in excess of its representational, discursive content' (p. 26) can be found summarised primarily on pages 42-43.

⁶¹⁰ 'God's infinity reflexively measures itself only with itself ('non ha fine e sé con sé misura', 19: 51), since there can be only one absolute infinity, and it is infinitely in excess of everything else'. Franke, *Dante's Paradiso*, p. 62.

⁶¹¹ 'So deuchte mir das abbild vom gefüge
Des Ewigen Beliebens dessen waltung
So wie sie ist sich jede sache füge'.
SW, x/xi: 124.

⁶¹² Durling and Martinez point out the 'Aristotelian teleology' of this thinking, 'which describes how substances have an innate tendency (entelechy) that drives them to fulfil their intrinsic essence over time'. Note to *Paradiso* XX: 78 (p. 414).

natural the poet's development, to become what he already is in substance – a lark, a poet – and the poem's final stanza is the poet's rising with the lark, the morning of his career, and its flight the final justification for what in *Die Fibel* is a complex of both thematic and formal Petrarchan errors.⁶¹³ Dante has been deployed in a subtle manner to correct, already from the outset, the messiness 'des Kindes lallen', of the poet's first lyrical experimentations.

Finally, the lark image establishes what Pestalozzi identifies as the central motif of all of George's (and Dante's) poetry: the 'Aufschwung' George is not stuck in temporal process.⁶¹⁴ Unlike Petrarch, for whom each day seemed a thousand years, George's willpower has driven him to face out 'ins frühlicht'. Thus, as Fitton has pointed out, the reception of Petrarch here is ideologically overdetermined by the mature poet's concern with his own genealogy, as a supplement to which we emphasise here George's growing identification with Dante.⁶¹⁵

v. Treating Petrarchism

George's poetic subject has thus far been examined as working through a complex of desire, shame and retrospective self-investigation and self-interpretation, taking advantage of the structure of the Petrarchan lyric cycle to establish distance between himself and that tradition. This section concerns itself with the model of the poet-speaker's relationship with his beloved muse, and the impact of this model on the narrative of *Die Fibel*. It is here we find more obvious allusions to the *Canzoniere* (a crossover of Types -1 and -3 Petrarchism). *Die*

⁶¹³ Peter Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, draws attention to the 'work's forward-looking aspect' (p. 51), citing Egyptien and Kasper, 'Die Fibel', p. 5.

⁶¹⁴ Pestalozzi, *Die Entstehung des lyrischen Ich*, p. 3 (for Dante), p. 316 (for George).

⁶¹⁵ Fitton, 'Petrarca um 1900', p. 542.

Fibel's first poem, 'Ich wandelte auf öden düstren bahnen', has been highlighted by several critics as an obviously Petrarchan sonnet:

Ich wandelte auf öden düstren bahnen
Und planlos floss dahin mein leben.
In meinem herzen war kein hohes streben
Es schien mich nichts an schönheit zu gemahnen.

Da plötzlich sah ich – o wer sollt es ahnen –
Ein himmelsbild an mir vorüberschweben ..
In meinem innern fühlte ich ein beben
Und Liebe pflanzte ihre siegesfahnen.

Ist mir auch täuschung nur und schmerz geblieben
Und kann ich Dich von glorienschein umwoben
Anbetend und begeistert still nur lieben:

So muss ich doch das gütige schicksal loben
Das mich durch Deine hand zur tat getrieben
Und zu den sternern mich emporgehoben.

(*SW*, I: 13)

Aler calls this poem 'eine Verehrung des italienischen Trecento', Rosenfeld links it to *Rvf* 264's famous opening lines, Bornmann cites a number of Petrarchan *loci* in which the motif of 'wandering in deserted places' occurs, Osthoff and Pieger link it

in both form and content to Petrarch, while Fitzon, linking it like Bornmann to the 'Motiv des einsamen Wanderers', summarises: 'In nuce enthält das deutlich zweigeteilte Sonett das Programm des Laura-Zyklus'.⁶¹⁶ Chong Shen has recently called attention to the reception strategy of George's decision to open his collected works with this sonnet. Although this overlooks the importance of 'Geleitverse' in restraining the significance of *Die Fibel*, the choice of such a Petrarchan opening is indeed revealing, especially given the Dantean telos of the oeuvre.

Shen argues that the Petrarchan aspect is underscored precisely by the sonnet's obvious status as an *imitatio* of the Petrarchan sonnet 'My thought lifted me up to where she was' (*Rvf* 302) that George translated and, denying to Ernst Morwitz that it was a translation but merely a poem inspired by Petrarch, included it not in the sub-cycle of *Die Fibel* entitled and dedicated to 'Übertragungen', but rather in the following cycle of 'Erlebnisgedichten' as Shen calls them, entitled 'Von einer Reise', and called it 'Sonett nach Petrarka' (*SW*, I:63).⁶¹⁷ It thus masquerades as one of George's own, despite being a clearly faithful translation.⁶¹⁸ As Shen has elucidated, the title 'Sonett nach Petrarka' can mean either a sonnet in the style of Petrarch, or one that translates a previously existing Petrarchan poem.⁶¹⁹ With 'Ich

⁶¹⁶ Aler, *Symbol und Verkündung*, p. 27; Rosenfeld, 'Erste Begegnungen Stefan Georges mit Italien', p. 298; Bornmann, 'Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile', p. 151 ('vagare in luoghi deserti'); Wolfgang Osthoff and Bruno Pieger, 'Eros und Ethos. Gegen Thomas Karlaufs George-Bild', in *Stefan George. Dichtung – Ethos – Staat: Denkbilder für ein geheimes europäisches Deutschland*, ed. by Bruno Pieger and Bertram Schefold (Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 2010), pp. 457-495 (p. 469); Fitzon, 'Petrarca um 1900', p. 556.

⁶¹⁷ On *Sonett nach Petrarka* see Chong Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, pp. 114-15, and on 'Ich wandelte's' reception strategy dimension pp. 118-19. Shen furthermore points out, in this context, that for the reader opening George's *Fibel* volume for the first time, 'soll ihm sofort ein Gedicht mit vielen Reminiszenzen ins Auge fallen' (p. 118). Shen is correct, although it is not clear whether he means reminiscences from literary history (Petrarch's poetry, as he goes on to discuss), or from George's own oeuvre. Perhaps he means both, as the poem portrays 'die eigentliche Botschaft Georges', that is, the call to serve something higher. On the translation as not a translation see Ernst Morwitz, *Kommentar zu den Prosa- Drama- und Jugend-Dichtungen Stefan Georges* (Helmut Küpper Vormalis Georg Bondi, 1962), p. 94.

⁶¹⁸ See e.g. Fitzon, 'Stefan Georges Petrarca-Rezeption', p. 220, who calls it 'eine wort- und formgetreue Übersetzung'.

⁶¹⁹ Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 115.

wandelte', we have the former, and with 'Sonett nach Petrarka' the latter. The ambiguous divide between poetic imitation and originality is blurred however; it is unclear whose poetic voice (George's or Petrarch's) gains priority in the 'Sonett': who are we really reading?

The 'Sonett nach Petrarka' is used to create a tie between his earliest poems and his first experiments in Petrarchism. Part of a series of retro- and introspective poems considering the loss of Laura and the poet's destitute state, 'My thought lifted me up to where she was' (*Rvf* 302) stages an essentially hopeful encounter with his missing source of guidance, the vision of Laura in heaven. Considering the thematics of *Die Fibel* as a whole, as well as the sub-cycle 'Von einer Reise', it is easy to see how the experience recounted in the poem could be significant to George in his own search for a guiding figure.

As Shen discusses, George's translation is more or less faithful, except for a serious breach in the final line. For Petrarch's 'poco mancò ch'io non rimasi in cielo' (l. 14), George gives '[w]ar mir als ob ich in dem himmel bliebe'. ('it seemed to me as if I remained in heaven').⁶²⁰ The meaning is contrary. In Petrarch the line signals the end of his rapturous vision and his return to earth, whereas George extends the vision on indefinitely in a subjunctive fantasy at odds with Petrarch's own emphatic use of the indicative ('rimasi') over the subjunctive (which would be 'rimanessi').⁶²¹ Shen explicates: 'Der himmlische Schein hat sich am Ende nicht so

⁶²⁰ Cf. Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 117. For Petrarch's line Musa, *Canzoniere*, p. 423 translates it as 'I came quite close to never leaving heaven!', while A.S. Kline gives 'little was needed for me to remain in heaven'. A. S. Kline, *The Complete Canzoniere*, available online at https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Italian/PetrarchCanzoniere245-305.php#anchor_Toc11496146 (accessed 31/10/23).

⁶²¹ Bettarini, *Canzoniere*, vol. II, p. 1332. Cf. Contini, cited by Bettarini *ibid*: 'Note the indicative mood of affirmation, almost a hypothetical protasis' ("Si noti l'indicativo di asseverazione, quasi una protasi ipotetica"). By 'hypothetical protasis' Contini is referring to the second clause of the line: 'io non rimasi in cielo' and 'if I did not remain in heaven', it is because 'little was missing'. 'Something was *missing* to complete the fantasy of death, and therefore I returned to earth, alive'.

endgültig aufgelöst wie bei Petrarca'.⁶²² George, by this point in *Die Fibel*, has already fallen from heaven in the form of Icarus at the end of the sub-cycle 'Die Fibel' (l. 41), his poetics having failed and returned him to earth.⁶²³ In *Von einer Reise*, the recourse to Petrarch, appearing unacknowledged as a translation and thereby almost in disguise as George's own poem, is used to keep the possibility of transcendence open, to keep faith in the power of the poetic word to elevate himself to a new beyond.

Although Fechner advises against speculating as to why George chose this sonnet in particular over the any other for inclusion, one answer that seems to automatically suggest itself is that the sonnet re-thematizes a central concern not only of *Die Fibel*, but of George's entire oeuvre: the elevation of the self.⁶²⁴ Not only the key visionary thematics, but other motifs of the sonnet speak to George's interests as well, such as the triumph over death in new resplendence (l. 4), the exclusive relationship between visionary and vision (l. 5), the sonnet's immensely metaliterary quality (alluding as it does to the 'terzo cerchio' (l. 3) of Dante's platonic-paradisiacal cosmology and thus to Dante himself,⁶²⁵ the poetological and theological qualities of the veil-motif (l. 10), the promised bliss of fulfilled desire (l.

⁶²² Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 117.

⁶²³ This is similar to how Petrarch employs the myth of Icarus for metapoetic considerations in *Rvf* 307.

⁶²⁴ 'Sicherlich ist es eine unlösbare Aufgabe, sich die Frage vorzulegen, warum Stefan George gerade dieses Sonett des *Canzoniere* auswählte, übertrug und an eben seinem Platz der *Fibel* einreichte'. Fechner, 'Sonett nach Petrarka', p. 8. For elevation as motif cf. Pestalozzi on George, *Die Entstehung des lyrischen Ich*. Pestalozzi begins his discussion with 'Ikarus' (p. 310).

⁶²⁵ Camerini, *Rime*, p. 279 cites the sonnet *Sennuccio mio* (*Rvf* 287, Camerini, *Rime*, p. 268) as an important intertext, which would have alerted the young George to Dante's presence in the *Canzoniere*. That the 'terzo cerchio' of heaven, the planet of Venus, contains both poets (Dante resides there, and Petrarch is destined there) and their beloveds was surely attractive to George, given his program of celestially immortalising his friends in poems of praise. On this aspect of his poetics see Jeffrey D. Todd, "Poetry is praise": Beobachtungen zu Stefan Georges Dichtung', *Castrum Peregrini* 52 (2003), pp. 45-66.

6), and the power of words to effect spiritual-emotional elevation (l. 13). All of these concepts permeate George's oeuvre from beginning to end.

'Ich wandelte auf öden düstren bahnen' (l. 13) pays tribute to Petrarch and sets the course for George's own oeuvre. A Petrarchan sonnet with a typical rhyme scheme of *abba abba cdc dcd*, it depicts the speaker's own sort of 'visione estatica' that he encountered in reading Petrarch's *Rvf* 302.⁶²⁶ The moment of visionary excitement is not where one might expect it, however (in the sonnet's volta), but rather at the beginning of the second quatrain: 'Da plötzlich sah ich – o wer sollt es ahnen –' (l. 5). The effect of this is to avoid the predictability of the sonnet's traditional volta being the locus of a sudden turn in experience. At the outset of the second quatrain, a point that traditionally would develop what had begun in the first, the mystical, epiphanic aspect of the event hits harder.

Bornmann cites a number of *loci* in the *Canzoniere* for the poem's arsenal of Petrarchism.⁶²⁷ Of interest here are the seeds planted by the poem in the form of Petrarchistic conceits that blossom in later poems in the oeuvre, such as the wandering, the passage of time, and the affective dimension of mystical vision and the problem of fate. Fate here is not yet associated with shame but rather with his mission as a visionary poet to be raised 'zu den sternern' (l. 14), an elevation reflected in *Rvf* 302 and of course in the *Commedia*. He returns to earth all poetically inspired, recognising his task now to write a devotional poetry of praise and love (ll. 10-12). Like Petrarch, however, he feels the pain of returning to earth, of the vision's necessary cessation, a fact that puts the ingredients of shame (his

⁶²⁶ 'Visione estatica' is Leopardi's summary of *Rvf* 302, contained in Camerini, *Rime*, p. 279.

⁶²⁷ The prosopopoeia of *Amor* as 'Liebe' with George's rare capitalisation, *Amor*'s banner ('siegesfahnen'), the interjection and questioning of credibility ('o wer sollt es ahnen –'), the halo surrounding his vision ('glorienschein'), and more. See Bornmann, 'Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile', p. 152.

‘täuschung’ and ‘schmerz’) into the pot to stew.⁶²⁸ The vision’s eventual revelation as a ‘zerrbild’ (I: 15) upsets the fantasy and produces some of the Petrarchan affects that will be analysed below. In this context, then, the change to the final line of ‘My thought lifted me up to where she was’ in George’s translation attests to the poet’s hope for an indefinitely extended vision of bliss. His correction of Petrarch thereby functions as a corrective gesture towards his own oeuvre’s ill-begotten, Petrarchan start.

The further significance of the ‘Sonett nach Petrarka’ can be squeezed out of its context in the sub-cycle of ‘Von einer Reise’. The preceding poem ‘Stimmung’ (I: 62) relates an autobiographical moment of alienation in the overcrowded Piazza del Duomo of Milan.⁶²⁹ The sky is starless, the crowd of people dark and inscrutable, and the individual obscured in the modern city. The speaker resorts to a Petrarchistic expression of dejected frustration and melancholy:

Ich seufze und weiss nicht warum.

Für mich ist nicht gut hier bleiben ..

Hier ist es zu laut und zu stumm.

(SW I:62).

The confession of ignorance as to the origin of his sighs is immediately answered with a hypothesis rooted in empirical observation: the city is too suffocatingly loud to distinguish any sense (like the ‘dumpf entgegenschallen’ of ‘Geleitverse’). Morwitz reads this as the typically modern experience of the city whereby the

⁶²⁸ ‘Täuschung’ itself is comparable to the ‘inganno’ often mentioned by Petrarch (e.g. *Rvf* 221: 1 where it is also proximate to ‘destino’).

⁶²⁹ Both ‘Stimmung’ and ‘Sonett’ were composed during his travel to Milan between March and April, 1889. See biographical information in the ‘Anhang’ to *SW*, I: 123-24.

individual is confronted with an alienating amount of objectivity and a lack of inner life with which one could subjectively identify.⁶³⁰ The speaker, in his melancholy, seeks solitude and escape from the noise of urban life.⁶³¹

‘Stimmung’ reveals the poetic subject’s essential difference from what in the urban setting is an experience of overbearing sameness, an indistinct mass of empirical phenomena that he cannot make sense of. ‘Für mich ist nicht gut hier bleiben’ reads like the direct transcription of an intrusive thought, posing as a calmly collected judgement, a thought that signals the subject’s awareness of his being an outsider and the open-ended result: he must get away. Here the Type-1 Petrarchism of his sighs morphs into Type-2, his existential Petrarchism. For Petrarch similarly finds the sign-posted paths of urban civilisation contrary (‘contrario’) to a tranquil life (*Rvf* 129: 2-3), seeking instead the ‘high mountains and harsh woods’ (l. 13), in which he can follow his wandering mind, ‘[f]rom thought to thought’ (l. 1). George calls the experience ‘fremd’ (l: 62) rather than contrary or adverse (Musa opts for the less oppositional ‘unsuited’), and while the poets’ self-stagings are rhetorically similar, their perceptions differ. Petrarch’s ‘contrario’ implies a more strongly felt personal opposition, the idea that something is out to get him, as he states in the following stanza: ‘every habitable place | is for my eyes a mortal enemy’ (ll. 15-16). George’s ‘fremd’ is symptomatic of the more estranged, apathetic feeling of alienation in the modern city, an inability to relate meaningfully

⁶³⁰ ‘und wird gewahr, dass es nicht gut, das heißt zu ihm nicht passend ist, dort zu bleiben, wo alles äusserlich zu laut und innerlich zu stumm ist’. Morwitz, *Kommentar zu den Prosa- Drama- und Jugend-Dichtungen*, p. 94.

⁶³¹ Melancholy pervades the sub-cycle. In ‘November-Rose’ (*SW*, I: 57) for example, he lingers around a dead boy’s grave, considering his own mortality (‘Eh ich verwelke eh ich vergehe’), with time’s lever pressing on the changing of the season (‘Schon senkt sich der herbst am zeitenhebel’) and effecting a typically Petrarchan interjection (‘Ach mahne mich nicht dass ich mich beeile’). This ‘ach’ that Bozza identifies with the poet’s need to overcome the sicknesses of modernity manifests here in the speaker’s internal division and conflict (Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 10. Bozza cites George’s letter to Stahl in which the poet calls modern man ‘angekränkt’, cited p. 9).

to what he is experiencing. It is not that he is victimised like Petrarch by Amor, or bad fortune, or the gaze of others, but that he feels fundamentally different, out of place.

This problem returns later on in 'In der Galerie' (l: 79), a poem from the sub-cycle entitled 'Zeichnungen in Grau' in which the speaker voices his 'Sehnsucht nach der Sicherheit einer exklusiven Gemeinschaft' with a passerby lady about whom he fantasises being just as disdainful of the inscrutable mass as he is (l. 9).⁶³² Having sought the world of art as refuge from everyday banality (ll. 1-2), the imaginary other of his fantasy is still lost.⁶³³ but here, in a crossover of Petrarchism Types -1 and -3, something of Petrarch's wistful question from the 'Sonett' ('Ach warum schwieg sie und entzog sie ihre hand?' *Rvf* 302: 12; l: 63) also rings through in George's own '[a]ch warum gehst du?' (l. 12), in the moment of loss.

The poem's language of revelation (ll. 3-4) allows Shen to emphasise the almost divine quality of the vision: 'Die Offenbarung verweist auf eine Epiphanie eines gottähnlichen Wesens'.⁶³⁴ The visions often fail for both poets, however: Petrarch is returned to earth (*Rvf* 302), George's imaginary relationship disintegrates, and like the former poet he finds himself wandering and estranged from his imaginary other: 'ich streife umher [...] | Find ich dein antlitz nicht'. One hears an echo of Petrarch's predicament just as much as Baudelaire's:

So short is every life,

so heavy and so frail

⁶³² Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 98.

⁶³³ Bozza reads this loss as a 'trübsinnig eingefärbte Variation' of Baudelaire's 'À une passante', and Shen likewise stresses George's reworking of the Baudelairean scene. Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 97; Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 87.

⁶³⁴ Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, pp. 87-88.

mankind's mortal body,
that when I find myself from that sweet face
so greatly separated,
without power to fly with my desire,
little is left me of my usual comfort,
nor do I know how long I'll live like this.
(*Rvf* 37: 25-32)

With the vanishing of his own lady's 'antlitz' George is left unable to enjoy ('unfähig zu genießen') and the artificial paradise represented by the gallery loses its charm, with him left roving about in Petrarchan fashion.⁶³⁵ Finally, Shen points out that the passerby not only leaves, but implicitly returns to the 'staub des alltags' (l. 2).⁶³⁶ The ominous aspect of George's choice of word to characterise everyday reality – 'staub' – does not need much emphasis. Dust is perhaps *the* quintessential image of mortality, finitude, and contingency, of the change from existence into non-existence, from life into death. It is a part of the curse upon humanity in *Genesis* ('you are dust, | and to dust you shall return', Gen. 3:19), and all life's inevitable homecoming: 'Golden lads and girls all must, | As chimney-sweepers, come to dust'.⁶³⁷ Thus the desired other in George's poem is compromised by her return to the mouldering decay of historicity.

⁶³⁵ Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 99 and Morwitz, *Kommentar zu den Prosa- Drama- und Jugend-Dichtungen*, p. 98 both read the idealised other as feminine in this poem, although it belongs to the class of poem that Keilson-Lauritz termed a 'geschlechtsneutrale[s] DU-Gedicht', see Keilson-Lauritz, *Von der Liebe die Freundschaft heißt*, p. 75.

⁶³⁶ Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 86.

⁶³⁷ 'Fear no more the heat o' the sun', quoted from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, available online at <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/50428/song-fear-no-more-the-heat-o-the-sun-> (accessed 28/10/2023). For God's epic punishment of human transgression see *Genesis* 3.19, cited from *The Harper Collins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Edition*, ed. by Wayne A. Meeks et al. (HarperCollins, 1993), p. 10.

‘Stimmung’ and ‘In der Galerie’ both thematise the city of modernity, the indistinct crowd that makes relationality difficult, unlike for Petrarch, who has a clearly established villainous other around which he can orient his retrospective narrative sequence.⁶³⁸ For the speaker in ‘Stimmung’, this is unbearable, and so he goes in search of a meeting with the muse, and this is one context from which the Sonett nach Petrarka can be approached.

vi. ‘O the mind, mind has mountains’* – The Petrarchan Landscape

‘From thought to thought, mountain to mountain top’ (*Rvf* 129) is exemplary for how the Petrarchan subject revels in the solitude of his imagination and the impossibility of an encounter. The deceptive power of his fantasy to imagine Laura throughout the natural world (*Rvf* 129: 25-52) brings him as much pleasure as pain:

I feel Love so close by
my soul is satisfied by its own error;
in many places I see her, so lovely
that all I ask is that my error last
(ll. 36-39)

His mind transfixed upon her image in stupefied wonder (‘et mirar lei’), he can forget himself (‘et obliar me stesso’ l. 35), temporarily transcending his alienation

⁶³⁸ Petrarch elsewhere (*Rvf* 292) does, however, refer to himself both as estranged from himself (l.3) and from society (l.4) as an effect of his admiration of Laura. Indeed, it is rather her parts, in their own singularity and division from the person in her totality, that seem to divide him in turn, for it is not *Laura* that causes this, but rather the lover’s focused fetishism (ll.1-2;5-6), etc.

* Gerard Manley Hopkins, ‘No worst, there is none’ in *The Major Works*, ed. with an Introduction and Notes by Catherine Phillips (Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 167.

among the high mountains and savage woods. Indeed, the more savage the terrain, the lovelier the image her in his mind (ll. 46-8). When the illusion vanishes, he feels dehumanized, 'cold as dead stone' (l. 51), but his entwined love for Laura and poetry ('where you can sense the aura ['l'aura', the air/breeze/aura, Laura – JW] | distilling from the fresh and fragrant laurel', ll. 69-70).

His wanderings ensure that the encounter will not take place. Mazzotta calls attention to the tradition of Bonaventure's *Itinerarium mentis in deum* (*The Journey of the Mind to God*, 1259) to contrast how Petrarch's internal and external journeying (the inner thoughts progressing alongside his outer progress, as the opening line suggests) do not align: 'the mind, in its random mobility, gets caught by its own phantasms,' and his true self (his 'heart') is 'beyond those Alps' with Laura, while amongst the mountains of the mind and the landscape is only his ghostly 'image' (ll. 70-76).⁶³⁹ His self-staging as the lover on a quest towards the beloved leads him into the inhospitable wilderness of nature, and into the mountains of the mind, away from himself 'beyond those Alps'. This impossibility, however, constitutes his *jouissance*. This is not George's program. His quest is towards an encounter with the other and a lasting union, but it will take some adventuring to get there.

'Ich wandelte' takes up this Petrarchan conceit of wandering alone through desolate landscapes, and the operative word marking conceit ('öd') reoccurs consistently up until its shift in application in *Der Teppich des Lebens*. Solitude and aimlessness are presented both as the negative condition of the poet, reminiscent of the traditional desert of *acedia*, and also as the necessary condition of possibility of the poet in which the vision then recounted can take place, although

⁶³⁹ Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch*, pp. 49-50.

in George's poem it is not necessarily the desert that is implied, but 'öden bahnen', the term 'bahn' potentially signifying urban roads and tracks – the beaten paths of poems already written?⁶⁴⁰

As has been argued, both George and Petrarch seek solitude away from the alienating effects of society, and Petrarch thematises this throughout the *Canzoniere* as well as elsewhere, often finding himself voluntarily trapped in

⁶⁴⁰ The Grimm dictionary defines *bahn* as 'via trita, le chemin battu, die von füszen und wagen getretne, breitgeschlagene strasze [...] Bahn also bezeichnet den durch ungangbare, unfahrbare gegend, über rauhe, schwierige stellen getretenen, gebrochenen, geebneten, geglätteten weg oder pfad'. „BAHN, f.“, Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm, digitalisierte Fassung im Wörterbuchnetz des Trier Center for Digital Humanities, Version 01/23, <<https://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB?lemid=B00276>>, abgerufen am 26.07.2023. Traditionally the desert is the place where one can become more receptive to hearing God. See Roslynn D. Haynes, *Desert. Nature and Culture* (Reaktion Books, 2013), esp. chapter 5 ('Desert Religions' p. 108). Thus, the Church Father John Chrysostom writes: 'In the world there are many things obscuring the view and disturbing taste and hearing. That is why it is necessary . . . to run away from all excitement and take refuge in the desert where tranquillity is total, serenity complete, noise does not exist, where eyes are fixed on God alone and ears attentive to hearing only the divine words'. Cited in Olivier Clément, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism. Text and Commentary*, trans. by Theodore Berkeley and Jeremy Hummerstone (New City Press, 1995), p. 199. The desert has a rich history both in Christianity and in classical sources. The location of the Desert Fathers, it is associated with asceticism and monasticism, and the search for a deeper connection with God. The desert in these cases is literal, a geographic space, but it is also metaphorised into a spiritual condition accessed through ascetic mindfulness. See for example Olivier Clément's comments in *The Roots of Christian Mysticism*, p. 160 ('A person uprooted from a settled life, heads for the desert, to become God's nomad. The real desert is within us. A vast city can be a strange kind of desert') and p. 188 ('Trials such as these are the crucible of humility, the exodus into the desert that is faith alone. Each of them is the introduction to a 'consolation' - that is, to a perceptible presence of the Consoler, of the Holy Spirit'). Death, as Clément outlines, is the condition of the desert: a re-enactment of Adam's exile; the exploration of death in life in order to be reborn: 'The monk is one who of his own choice descends to death, who explores it during this life', and one location for this is the desert, into which the monk goes to 'abandon himself without further delay to Christ who has conquered death: to see clearly in hell the dawn of baptism' (p. 106). In the Old Testament, for example, the desert is the path to the lord (Isaiah 40.3), and the hills and valleys will be levelled out when 'the glory of the Lord shall be revealed' (Isaiah 40.5). The topography of the mountains (for blessedness) and valleys (for sin, despair etc.) becomes standard over time, so that when Dante is lost in the dark wood and dark valley of *Inferno* 1, also echoed in George's 'Ich wandelte auf öden düstren bahnen' (as Shen points out, *Ennui*, p. 168), it was naturally understood as proximate to sin, that a valley, being deeper down, is thus closer to Hell (the centre of the earth in Dantean geology). On this see Hermann Gmelin's commentary to *Inf.* I: 14, citing (Jacopo della Lana) in *Dante Alighieri. Die Göttliche Komödie. Italienisch und Deutsch*, trans. with Commentary by Hermann Gmelin, 6 Vols (Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988). Here vol. IV, p. 29. Camerini, *Rime*, p. 58 and Bettarini, *Canzoniere*, vol. I, p. 190 cite classical sources for the desert Camerini gives the example of Bellerophon, 'in campis moerens' ('lamenting in the plains, trans. mine) from Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*). In George's context, Osterkamp, *Poesie der leeren Mitte*, identifies the 'Zentrophobie des Georgischen Frühwerks' as a result of 'seiner radikalen Antibürgerlichkeit' (p. 120).

desolate, dangerous wildernesses in his attempt to escape *Amor*.⁶⁴¹ George's 'öd' designates a desolate, uninhabited and forlorn place, with a root etymological meaning of emptiness.⁶⁴² The words 'öd' and 'düster' recur at the outset of the sub-cycle's 'Die Fibel's second part, in the madrigal 'Ihr lüfte die ihr frei vom himmel schwebet' (l: 25), whereby the advent of spring, the poet's own Dantean 'vita nova' (the 'neues dasein', l. 3) shakes off the leftover feelings of the 'öden winter' (l. 5).⁶⁴³ This epiphanic structure is a hallmark of George's, usually marked by the word 'da' as in 'Ich wandelte' (l. 5), the first of many throughout George's oeuvre.⁶⁴⁴ An indexical word that again captures one's attention and directs it somewhere, typical of George's instrumentalisation of vision and deixis to take control of reality. In the desert, the subject is faced with destitution, recognition of the void at the

⁶⁴¹ See e.g. *Rvf* 35 and *Rvf* 129. On the former see Peterson, *Petrarch's Fragmenta*, pp. 64 and 15 for St. Francis' importance to Petrarch's theorising about solitude. For references to the *Secretum* and *De vita solitaria* see Bettarini's commentary to *Rvf* 35 in *Canzoniere*, vol. I, p. 190.

⁶⁴² See, with examples from the German literary canon likely familiar to George, the entry for 'öd' in the Grimm Brothers' dictionary: 'Grundbedeutung "leer" [...] von gegenden und ländereien, die unbewohnt, verlassen und unbebaut, wüst und unfruchtbar oder verödet sind'. „ÖDE, adj.“, Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm, digitalisierte Fassung im Wörterbuchnetz des Trier Center for Digital Humanities, Version 01/23, <<https://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB?lemid=O00829>>, abgerufen am 31.05.2023.

⁶⁴³ The Trecento madrigal and terza are among the 'Varianz der Formen' explored by *Die Fibel* (Oelmann, 'Die Fibel', p. 102). Egyptien and Kasper, 'Die Fibel', p. 9 locate the 'Charakter der Fibel als eines Übungsbuchs' precisely in its exploration of received poetic forms. In George's edition of Petrarch's *Rime*, each poem is titled according to its form, thus *Rvf* 1 appears as 'Sonetto I', *Rvf* 23 as 'Canzone I' and so on. In the 'Indice alfabetico', the poems are grouped according to their form: 'Sonetti', 'Canzoni', 'Sestine', 'Ballate', 'Madrigali', 'Trionfi' (Camerini, *Rime*, pp. 447-48). It is clear that from the outset the young George would have had an understanding of Petrarch's chosen forms, and what these looked like. That George's first madrigal is written in *terza rima* (its rhyme scheme running *aba bcb dcd d*) strongly suggests Petrarch's influence. It is in the *Rime* that George would have first encountered this rhyme scheme, given that it is used by Petrarch for the *Trionfi*. *Rvf* 52, 'Diana never pleased her lover more', the first madrigal in the *Canzoniere*, is itself composed of two *terzine* and a couplet in the scheme of *aba bcb, cc*. Thematically, it is about forbidden desire and the gaze, and features the motifs of the veil and the trembling ('tremar') lover, two motifs that run throughout his oeuvre. On the madrigal form in Petrarch see Peterson, *Petrarch's Fragmenta*, p. 106 and Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch*, 205 n. 27.

⁶⁴⁴ For its use in *Teppich des Lebens* Jürgen Egyptien has called it '[d]as epiphanie "Da"'. Jürgen Egyptien, 'Der Teppich des Lebens', in *Stefan George – Werkkommentar. Studien und Interpretationen zu sämtlichen Dichtungen und Übertragungen*, ed. by Jürgen Egyptien (de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 280-98 (p. 281). Elsewhere Egyptien characterises George's 'da' adverbs as the marker of messianic 'Plötzlichkeit', comparing its insistent use in *Der Stern des Bundes* to Benjamin's idea of the 'Jetztzeit'. See Jürgen Egyptien, 'Wende, Frühe, Da', in *Krise und Gemeinschaft: Stefan Georges Der Stern des Bundes*, ed. by Christophe Fricker (Vittorio Klostermann, 2017), pp. 207-213 (p. 212).

centre of symbolic signification.⁶⁴⁵ 'Da' becomes George's magic word, a signature of his incantatory style, the word that summons and commands reality within poetic language, his magic tapestry ('Der Teppich', v: 36).⁶⁴⁶ That it is followed in 'Ich wandelte' by an apostrophic interjection is no coincidence of style. The apostrophe foregrounds the present of poetic lyric utterance, breaking the linearity of the poem's flow, disturbing the 'time of story' in order to make felt the 'time of discourse', and evoking what Culler calls the 'transcendental presence' of the poet, framing that presence in relation to an assumed addressee, the reader.⁶⁴⁷ It raises George as the bearer of exclusive, visionary experiences, addressing the reader who is to believe him, at this early stage, on the basis of faith (or retrospectively from 1900, with us having been already inducted into the cult of the 'Vorspiel's' revelation of the 'schöne[n] leben' (v: 10).⁶⁴⁸ Thus an innocuous Petrarchan interjection of uncertainty, his '(now who'll believe me?)' from 'From thought to thought' (*Rvf* 129: 40), becomes a marker of George's anti-Petrarchan ethos in the

⁶⁴⁵ 'Subjective destitution' in Lacanian psychoanalysis refers to the end goal of the subject's treatment – the recognition of his, quote, 'utter solitude' (Evans, *Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, p. 79 and further, p. 83: 'Thus the end of analysis is conceived of by Lacan as the destitution of the subject, a moment when the subject's identifications are placed under question in such a way that these identifications can no longer be maintained in the same way as before'.) Having peeled off the imaginary layers of identity, recognising the contingency of all symbolic structures and identifications etc., the subject is left facing 'the absolute master, death'. See Lacan, *Écrits*, pp. 289/349. Cf. Also Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder*, p. 145, who explains that this exposure to the contingency of the Symbolic Order signifies that, essentially, 'the big Other doesn't exist'.

⁶⁴⁶ His 'Zaubersprüche', as Gundolf calls his later work, cf. Gundolf, *George*, pp. 142, 182, etc. On George's 'Zaubersprüche' see Carsten Strathausen, *The Look of Things: Poetry and Vision around 1900* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), p. 240. One is reminded of Freud's tale of little Hans, who learns to attenuate the absence of his mother via his game of 'Fort-Da'. Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire*, p. 37 refers to Freud and Lacan on the *fort-da* dynamic in relation to Petrarch's 'urge towards reenactment [...] repeating an action to assert mastery' where here action refers, for example, to Petrarch's variations on the fall of Adam, as Dubrow discusses on the previous page (p. 36). Boysen likewise explores Petrarch's use of language in this regard: 'Poetry for Petrarch is, metaphorically speaking, the reel by which Freud's grandchild Ernst transformed painful absence into delightful presence by means of symbolization', Boysen, *Nothingness, Negativity and Nominalism*, p. 74.

⁶⁴⁷ On the 'time of discourse' overtaking the 'time of story' see Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, p. 226 and for the 'transcendental presence' of the speaker via apostrophe p. 228.

⁶⁴⁸ Announced with the same apocalyptic 'da': 'Da trat ein nackter engel durch die pforte' (l. 4).

long run – his will to poetic power (a ‘Wille zur Form’), to ground the poem in the transcendental authority of the Master’s speech.⁶⁴⁹

‘Ich wandelte’ ties its apostrophe, the ‘turning’ aside to another imagined listener, to affect, the ‘beben’ of line seven: ‘In meinem innern fühlte ich ein beben’.⁶⁵⁰ This quaking feeling will become a key marker of Georgean affectivity, announced here with plenty of Petrarchan and Dantean precedent, finding a corresponding term in the Italian verb ‘tremare’ (to tremble, shake).⁶⁵¹ ‘Beben’ is the affective expression of vitality, a bodily response difficult confirming the incantatory powers of poetic speech. We find it again further into *Die Fibel*:

Du standest in der wolken wehen

⁶⁴⁹ The Petrarchistic interjections are discussed by Bornmann, also citing *Rvf* 129 (‘Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile’, p. 151). Bornmann also points out that in the same canzone (*Rvf* 129: 40), Petrarch describes his vision of Laura as shrouded in cloud, similar to George’s ‘ein himmelsbild an mir vorüberschweben’ (p. 151). For the will to form see Schäfer, *Die Intensität der Form*, pp. 243-53. On the ‘Wille zum Gesetz’ Gundolf, *George*, pp. 69-70.

⁶⁵⁰ Culler (*Theory of the Lyric*, p. 214) describes apostrophe as an ‘intimate restructuring of affective space’ and, coincidentally, explicates this statement through a discussion of Petrarch’s *Clear, cool, sweet, running raters* (*Rvf* 126), which contains precisely the sort of interjection that Bornmann claimed links George’s ‘Ich wandelte’ to Petrarch’s poetry. Apostrophe interrupts the linear flow of the poem’s narrative: ‘lifting it out of ordinary communicational contexts, apostrophes give us a ritualistic, hortatory act, a special sort of linguistic event in a lyric present’. (Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, p. 213). It is a distinct, present expression of feeling (p. 208) and affect, temporarily negating the plot by turning to an imagined addressee or object, or to empty space (Culler refers to the generic ‘o!’ of apostrophe as ‘pure voicing’, p. 213), in order to communicate the intensity of emotion, or to impress as a rhetorical gesture (pp. 212-13).

⁶⁵¹ In Petrarch e.g. *Rvf* 23: 81-82; 52: 7-8 (‘she makes me / tremble all over’); 169: 6; 170: 11; 196: 11; 198: 6; 200: 12 (‘tremble in amazement’); 258: 13; 337: 11; 362: 5 etc. Even more strongly used in Dante e.g. *Vita nova* chapters II, XI, XIII, XIV, XVI, XXI, XXIV: 1 (‘I felt a tremor begin in my heart’), XXVI; in the *Commedia* e.g. *Purg.* xxx: 36 and 46-47. In Dante the quintessential moment of trembling is in chapter two of the *Vita nova*, where the young Dante first gazes upon Beatrice: ‘At that point I say truly that the vital spirit that dwells in the most secret chamber of the heart began to tremble so violently that I felt it terribly, even in the most minimal pulsations; and, trembling, it uttered these words: “*Ecce deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur michi*: Behold a god stronger than I, who in coming will dominate me.”’. Dante, *Vita nuova* II: 4 (trans. Franke, *Dante’s Vita nuova and the New Testament*, p. 160). Franke explicates the experience as ‘a “gut reaction” that is recognized for its power of revealing hidden truth about the deep secrets of the heart’ (p. 53). Petrarch’s ‘lasso’ (alas!) is one of the most recognisable expressions of Petrarch’s subjective ‘self-texturing,’ to borrow Regan’s phrase (*Love Words*, p. 184) and finds reverberations in George’s ‘lingua romana’ poem ‘Gift der Nacht’ (cited from Stefan George, “*Von Kultur und Göttern reden*.” *Aus dem Nachlass*, ed. by Ute Oelmann (Klett-Cotta, 2018), pp. 28-9).

Gehüllt in wunderbares licht
So schön und herrlich anzusehen
Und wie ein sterblich wesen nicht.

Ich armer stand im tiefen tale
Und betend blickte ich empor
Geblendet von dem hellen strahle
Betäubt vom zauberischen chor.

Nur eines kann hinauf mich heben
Zu deines thrones lichtem kreis ..
Und ach ich fühle es mit beben:
Mir grünt es spät des ruhmes reis.
(SW, I: 27)

The 'charakteristische Hierarchie der Liebeslyrik der hohen Dame' from medieval poetry up to Petrarch is succinctly emphasised by Shen, who summarises: 'Der junge George schließt sich dieser Tradition an'.⁶⁵² The poem's topography at once recalls the valleys of pain and sin familiar to both Dante and Petrarch (*Rvf* 301), while the vision, radiant 'wie ein sterblich wesen nicht', takes up the typical Petrarchist, troubadour trope of the lady as divine.⁶⁵³ Bornmann cites 'She'd let her

⁶⁵² Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemotechnik*, 117.

⁶⁵³ This in turn has a precedent in Dante, who, citing Homer, says as much of Beatrice in the *Vita Nova*: 'certainly one could say of her the words by the poet Homer: "She seemed to be the daughter not of mortal man, but of god."' (VN II: 8, trans. Franke, *Dante's Vita nuova*, p. 161). Petrarch's commentators however source the scene primarily to Vergil's *Aeneid*. See Bettarini, *Canzoniere*, vol. I, pp. 438-39, and Stroppa, *Canzoniere*, pp. 176-77. Bornmann, 'Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile', pp. 155-56 provides a list of the various 'diverse reminiscenze petrarchesche' ('various Petrarchan reminiscences', trans. mine) in this poem.

gold hair flow free in the breeze' (*Rvf* 90) for comparison: 'The way she walked was not the way of mortals | but of angelic forms' (ll. 9-10).⁶⁵⁴ Petrarch eventually attempts to renounce his love for what he now recognises as 'something which was mortal' (*Rvf* 365: 2) and therefore anathema to the proper object of desire, the '*res immortales*' of heaven.⁶⁵⁵

In George's poem two aspects must be considered here. Firstly, a mystical, visionary experience replete with Pauline imagery is recounted and described as a movement from a seemingly transcendent 'above' down to earth and into the valley of Petrarchan errors.⁶⁵⁶ Secondly, this vision causes a bodily, mystical response in the subject and occasions a metapoetic reflection on his poetic career ('Mir grünt es spät des ruhmes reis'), worried as he is about his belatedness, and announced with the affective, apostrophic expression 'ach' (Petrarch's 'lasso') and the verbal equivalent to the Trecento 'tremare'. Poetic glory is a requisite for future reconciliation. As Shen has pointed out, the linkage here between the heavenly 'Du' and the necessity 'des ruhmes reis' is suggestive of Petrarch's conception of Laura as inherently linked to the laurel.⁶⁵⁷ Furthermore, this Type-1 Petrarchism can be felt in the association of the idealised other with blinding light, recalling Laura's association with the sun, a symbolism featured in two of George's *Sonetti scelti* (*Rvf* 9: 10 and 19: 7-9).⁶⁵⁸ In *Rvf* 19, furthermore, the poet's passivity vis-à-vis his lady/the sun is linked to his subjectification to destiny (l. 13), a motif picked up in George's following poem, *Die Sirene*, where he is bound 'dem grausamen Schicksal' (l: 28).

⁶⁵⁴ Bornmann, 'Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile', p. 156.

⁶⁵⁵ Bettarini, *Canzoniere*, vol. II, p. 1608 (commentary to *Rvf* 365, l. 2).

⁶⁵⁶ The Georgean subject is blinded ('Geblendet') like Paul on the road to Damascus.

⁶⁵⁷ Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 118.

⁶⁵⁸ Bornmann, 'Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile', p. 156 also cites these poems, among others.

vii. In Vita and in Morte – Petrarch in ‘Die Fibel 1886-87’

‘Ich wandelte’'s ‘Dich’ is neither specified nor gendered, but the poem closely associates it with love (‘Liebe’, l. 8, ‘lieben’, l. 11) and the muse’s inspiration. ‘Liebe’ in German is feminine, as opposed to the masculine figure of *Amor* in Petrarch and the Latin tradition, and the metamorphoses of this feminine Love throughout *Die Fibel* is inextricably linked both to the sub-cycle’s narrative of the ephebe’s maturation and to the poet’s reception strategy of contrasting the various feminine figures with newer, revelatory and masculine ones.⁶⁵⁹

Thus, the title of the following poem ‘Die Najade’ (l: 14-15) already evinces the recourse to misogynistic myths of dangerous female seductresses. Indeed, in *RVF* 281, Petrarch envisions the deceased Laura appearing ‘[s]ometimes in form of nymph or other goddess’ (l. 9) and walking upon flowers, linking the floral imagery to the nymph in George’s poem. In George’s copy of the *Rime* a faded mark alongside the final lines of the poem potentially indicates his interest in this particular sonnet.⁶⁶⁰ Ovidian mythology (the *Sonetti scelti* contained the myth of Apollo and Daphne, *Rvf* 2) emerges in the mythical naiads and in George’s ‘jüngling’ (l. 3) who eventually drowns (recalling Narcissus, *Met.* III: 339-510). Bornmann points out that George could be following Petrarch’s employment of the nymphs in *Rvf* 23: 147-60, a hypothesis supported by Petrarch’s deployment of the Narcissus myth in the same poem.⁶⁶¹ In *Rvf* 23, Petrarch identifies not with Narcissus, but with Echo, having been ossified by Laura’s Medusan gaze, and

⁶⁵⁹ Cf. Oelmann in ‘Anhang’ to *SW*, I: 102, who points out that the ‘weiblich konnotierte Gestalt’, his feminine ideal as explored in *Die Fibel*, prefigures not only the ‘herrin’ and ‘Madonna’ of *Hymnen* and the *Sagen und Sänge* respectively, but also the angel of the ‘Vorspiel’ and Maximin in the post-1904 poetry. In terms of reception strategy, the focus on the feminine ideal in *Die Fibel*, and the way this ideal fails to anchor the ephebe poet’s desire, works ultimately to emphasise the new masculine ideal of *Der Teppich des Lebens*, published in close proximity to *Die Fibel*.

⁶⁶⁰ StGA 10/367, 265r.

⁶⁶¹ Bornmann, ‘Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile’, p. 152.

becoming pure voice, 'calling for Death and only her by name' (l. 140), 'reduced to a disembodied voice endlessly repeating itself'.⁶⁶² There is also a reversal in George's poem with respect to Ovid: the male youth now cries out for attention, '[d]och die nixe ohn erbarmen | Nicht auf seine stimme hört' (SW, I: 14, ll. 15-16). George's 'jüngling' assumes the role of both Echo and Narcissus, for once the nymph disappears for good, the pool eventually becomes his grave (l. 28).

What links both George and Petrarch here in their reception of Ovid is the emphasis on voice and its failure to solicit a response. Petrarch lives through this by taking refuge in the comfort of poetry, going on singing, 'since singing can unripen bitter pain' (*Rvf* 23: 4). George lets his 'jüngling' perish, distancing himself from that figure by abolishing all use of the first-person pronoun in the poem (a narrative third-person ballad). George's first-person self-figurings return in the following poems, when he reflects metapoetically upon his options (as in 'Ikarus', I: 15) or, like Petrarch, a 'mournful wandering spirit [...] | through unfamiliar and deserted caves' (*Rvf* 23: 141-42), continues to wander

Ziellos meine schritte lenkend
 Nur an die Geliebte denkend
 [...] auf einsam stillen pfaden'
 (I: 16)

This poetic self-referentiality, the speakers' continuing ruminations on their beloveds and the (im)possibilities of poetry, are for both poets a way of avoiding stasis, of becoming stagnant and drowning in the spring into which the nymph

⁶⁶² Musa, note *ad hoc*, *Canzoniere*, p. 535.

disappears.⁶⁶³ Ovidian material repurposed for one's mythological self-monumentalisation connects both Petrarch's and George's poetic projects.

In the figure of the naiad, a salient contrast to *Der Teppich des Lebens* is apparent. There, the Georgean angel appears carrying '[d]er reichsten blumen last' which he lets fall, here the naiad '[s]treuet blumen vor ihn hin' and then disappears. The angel of the 'Vorspiel', a mirror image of the poet, kneels with him to collect the dispersed flowers, signifying a new unity found in the masculinist principles that *Teppich* aims to codify, collecting and bounding the fragments of reality into a unified totality centred on a narcissistic specular image of the poet.⁶⁶⁴ The naiad, by contrast, is associated with the opposite principle of dispersal, as she herself quickly vanishes once the flowers are thrown before him. The angel's masculine order (evinced in the formal rigidity of *Der Teppich des Lebens* itself) is thereby contrasted with a traditionally misogynist instance of feminine disorder (formally reflected in the ballad style, a folk genre and thus considered a lower register of discourse), a principle that will return in *Das Jahr der Seele*.

The translation of 'My thought lifted me up to where she was' that George places after 'Stimmung' offers, like 'From thought to thought', an intellectual vision in thought ('pensier'), unlike 'Ich wandelte' where the Other actually appears to the subject ('ich sah', 1: 13).⁶⁶⁵ Significantly, while Petrarch's sonnet stages a successful vision, it is undercut by its position in the *Canzoniere*'s narrative, for it

⁶⁶³ Regan, *Love Words*, p. 192 writes that Laura must disappear and lead the poet on such a chase, for '[b]ecause she is not there, he can take charge almost entirely of her image, its appearance and disappearance: he "designs" her. And he nourishes himself with this kind of "error," keeps himself symbiotically alive through this absent presence he has worked through distancing to create'.

⁶⁶⁴ Cf. Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, p. 176 on John Ashbery's *Self-Portrait*: 'In "Self-Portrait", he makes a regression into a narcissistic play in the mirror phase in which the ego identifies with the angelic icon that Lacan calls the mirror image'. We might say that George is literalising this Lacanian moment of subject formation.

⁶⁶⁵ Cf. Stroppa's introductory discussion of *Rvf* 302, namely that it depicts a 'visione intellettuale [...] e non apparizione', *Canzoniere*, p. 470. Cf. on the centrality of thought, Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch*, pp. 32, 34 and 50.

is taken from the poems arranged after Laura has died (hence the traditional division into 'in Morte di Madonna Laura').⁶⁶⁶ This aligns with the central shift in the *Die Fibel* 1886-87 sub-cycle whereby what originally proved a source of transcendent hope (the 'himmelsbild' and 'Liebe') proves unsatisfactory.⁶⁶⁷

The poem that splits the sub-cycle in two, 'Warum schweigst du meine leier' (I: 23), mourns this loss and mirrors, as Bornmann points out, Petrarch's own creative changes after Laura's death.⁶⁶⁸ Unlike George's lyre, which now lacks any creative inspiration at all, Petrarch's lyre quickly adapts itself to the situation ('my lyre now has turned to playing tears', *Rvf* 292: 14). George's lyre, although it responds to him (the poem is a dialogue between the singer and his instrument), remains 'verstummt' because its joys, plans and luck have all succumbed to the contingency of failure (II. 6-7). The three verbs of the second stanza are emblematic of the poet's rhetoric of destiny and fateful failure: 'fliehen', 'misslingen' and '[von dannen] ziehen'. Chance robs us of things, makes them flee our grip.⁶⁶⁹ His faith in the higher Other wavers, and the muse no longer gives any life to his mute lyre: 'Doch sie lässt der klage lieder | Mir dem jüngling nicht gedeihen'. The emphatic double self-reference in 'Warum schweigst du meine leier' ('mir dem jüngling') strongly emphasises the stakes for the poet-speaker: this is a personal problem that the following poems in the sub-cycle (and throughout *Die Fibel*) variously deal with, and concerns psychological, bodily, and poetic maturation, the first poetic articulations of desire (in 'Ich wandelte' it is the anthropomorphised 'Liebe' that is capitalised, a descendent of Petrarch's and Dante's *Amor*, and in 'Warum

⁶⁶⁶ As in Camerini: 'Parte seconda. Sonetti e Canzoni in Morte di Madonna Laura' (*Canzoniere*, p. 246).

⁶⁶⁷ The 'täuschung' in 'Ich wandelte' points to this. Cf. Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, 120.

⁶⁶⁸ Bornmann, 'Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile', p. 155.

⁶⁶⁹ One hears echoes here of Petrarch's own rhetoric, e.g. *Rvf* 56: 3; 59: 14; 264: 28; 298: 12 etc.

schweigst du meine leier' it is 'die Muse' who receives the orthographic foregrounding).⁶⁷⁰

The sequence of three poems entitled 'Gräber' (I: 34-36) mark their narrative continuity with the rest of the sub-cycle by repeating certain key lexical items. The first poem opens with the familiar verb 'Ich wandelt in einem lieblichen garten', immediately recalling the opening situation of *Die Fibel*. The speaker is no longer 'auf öden düstren bahnen' (I: 13) but in the safety of a garden, and his half-open eyes indicate a sort of trance-like state, receptive to epiphany.⁶⁷¹ The adjective 'hold' in stanza two no longer belongs to the muse from 'Warum schweigst du meine leier' ('Hold nur schaut die Muse nieder') but to a group of nymphs who awaken his desire and seduce him to join their ranks (II. 6-7). Approached by one particular nymph, he quickly finds himself in death's vicinity, embracing 'eine steinerne leiche' and finding himself 'geküsst von verwesender duft' (II. 11-12) in what is revealed to be a graveyard, not a garden. Morgan's summary is apt: 'Conventional love is repeatedly associated with the garden of death'.⁶⁷² The cul-de-sac of heteronormative romance for the poet will be the focus of chapter five, below.

The second 'Gräber' poem does not include reference to the *lyrisches Ich* but depicts a mother mourning at her son's grave and wondering what guilt ('schuld', I. 7) or sin ('sünde', I. 11) was responsible for his early death. The

⁶⁷⁰ For the ephebe poet's development see Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, esp. chapter II/3 ('Auf zum einsamen Ort! Die Metamorphosen der Sexualitätsangst zwischen *Zeichnungen in Grau* und *Legenden*', pp. 101-29).

⁶⁷¹ His 'halboffenen augen' (I. 3), to readers who has followed George from the beginning of his career, will recall the 'halboffen' eyes of the 'herrin' in 'Weihe', the opening poem of 1890's *Hymnen* (II: 10).

⁶⁷² Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, p. 54.

absence of an *Ich*, which returns in the third 'Gräber' poem, sets the funereal scene apart from the other poems and creates the effect of impersonality in the scene.

The third poem, another madrigal, returns us to the *Ich* now confronting the death of a beloved, enclosed in a tomb. Bornmann has pointed out the correlation to the second part of the *Canzoniere* in which Petrarch variously ruminates on Laura's tomb.⁶⁷³ The loss of the speaker's 'liebe' (l. 2) and of '[e]iner ganzen jugend glück und pein' (l. 8, itself an antithesis of Petrarchan quality) echos the fleeting 'glück' of 'Warum schweigst du meine leier' (l. 8), linking the poems lexically and implying narrative continuity. His mortal love is dead ('liebe' is no longer capitalised), her grave exhibiting the serpentine coiling of evergreen ivy ('Efeu düster grün', l. 5), a plant similar to the laurel in its longevity but evocative of a gloomier, gothic aesthetic: the wrong evergreen.

When in the following poem, 'Es zuckt aus grauem wolkenzelt', an epiphanous recollection of his former love is occasioned by a flash of lightning (marked by 'Da', l. 13), the problem of naming takes centre stage:

Es zuckt aus grauem wolkenzelt
Auf einmal auf ein helles leuchten
Es streifet flüchtig übers feld
Das schnee und tauwind trostlos feuchten.

Dann schnell zerfließt das licht im all
Um neu den träumer aufzureissen ..

⁶⁷³ Bornmann, 'Alla ricerca delle fonti di un Canzoniere giovanile', p. 159. She cites *Rvf* poems 270: 45; 304: 9; 323: 10.

Es war ein licht .. vom sonnenball ..
Doch sonnen-schein kann ichs nicht heissen.

Längst ist der funke in mir tot
Der einst entflammt zu hellen gluten
Streng tilgte ihn vernunftgebot
Und liess in finsternis mich bluten.

Da plötzlich taucht mir auf ihr bild
Die jenen funken in mich streute ..
Es ward mir als ob langsam mild
Das alte glühen sich erneute.

Doch nur so lang ihr hauch mich streift
Kann ihre wirkung ich erkennen
Und das gefühl das mich ergreift –
Nein liebe darf ichs nicht mehr nennen.

(I: 37)

The language is impersonal ('Es zuckt'; 'Es streift'; 'Es war ein licht') on account of the poet's current inability to find an adequate name for things ('Doch sonnen-schein kann ichs nicht heissen'; 'Nein liebe darf ichs nicht mehr nennen'). The central of the poem's five stanzas is the turning point from the empirical phenomenon to a subjective reflection and suggests Petrarchistic influence.

Bornmann has sourced the fire imagery to a number of places in the *Canzoniere*.⁶⁷⁴ One of the poems she cites is especially convincing on account of the complementary contrast of light and winter imagery also present in George's poem (the 'feld | das schnee und tauwind trostlos feuchten'). The poem is *Rvf* 55, a ballad (like George's):

That fire which I thought had been extinguished
by the cold times and by an age less fresh
renews the flame and suffering of my soul.

Not all those sparks died out, as I can see,
but they were merely covered up a bit—
I fear my second error might be worse.
By means of tears I scatter by the thousands
the pain I feel must drip out of my heart
that holds within it both the sparks and tinder,
not as before, but I think it grows more.

What fire still could burn and not be killed
by floods that my sad eyes keep pouring forth?
Love, even though I realized it late,
between two opposites wants me to struggle,
and he puts out snares of such different types
that when I hope the most to free my heart,

⁶⁷⁴ Bornmann, 'Alla ricerca delle fonti di un Canzoniere giovanile', p. 160.

he captures me the more with her fair face.

George also borrows the fundamentally temporal character of Petrarch's self-analysis, his rhetoric of the old that persists in the new.⁶⁷⁵ What has changed for the Georgean subject is that his amorous inner fire has been put out at the behest of reason, leaving him in the dark, unlike in Enlightenment discourse where reason is aligned with light and ideality. The weight of this 'vernunftgebot' is underlined metrically in that it occupies literally half of the poetic line; reason, the Law, has put an end to his fantasies, an inner tension also thematised throughout the *Canzoniere*. It is featured in *My thought lifted me up to where she was*, where George translates Petrarch's 'tante guerre' (l. 7) with 'grosse kämpfe' (l. 63). 'Guerra' is one of Petrarch's preferred metaphors for the 'psychomachia' against Amor, and drives many of paradoxes, antitheses and unstable fluctuations deployed to render this experience intelligible.⁶⁷⁶ George adopts this metaphor throughout *Die Fibel*, as in 'Es heulet der dezemberwind' (l. 39) where the wintry landscape ('schnee und regen', l. 2; 'wetternacht', l. 4) provides mirror to the speaker's soul as he races through an unspecified city, '[m]it kämpfen ohne ende' (l. 6) plaguing 'die tief gequälte brust' (l. 5).⁶⁷⁷ This 'kampfgewimmel' (l. 12), unlike the seasonal weather, however, does not pass.

The storm imagery and the internal battle with Reason is introduced in the first part of the 'Die Fibel' sub-cycle, where a personification of Reason cautions the poet to put an end to the amorous feelings that rob him of his 'frieden'

⁶⁷⁵ C.f. *Rvf* 100: 9-11, or *Rvf* 118: 12.

⁶⁷⁶ 'an inseparable knot of Petrarchan poetics' ('un nodo inscindibile della poetica petrarchesca'), Ariani, 'Guerra/Lis', p. 179. I borrow the term 'psychomachia' from Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch*, 11, 39, 56.

⁶⁷⁷ For landscape as a mirror to the inner self in Petrarch see Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch*, pp. 50-51.

(‘Vernunft! Du legtest deine kalten hände’, I: 17).⁶⁷⁸ Oelmann notes that no precedent has been identified for the personification of Reason. Personifications of abstract qualities were common to Italian poetry of the Trecento, however, and Reason appears personified as the judge presiding over the court-case of the canzone ‘That old and sweet and cruel master of mine’ (*Rvf* 360), as

the queen
that holds the part divine
of our own nature sitting at its summit
(II. 3-4)⁶⁷⁹

Petrarch is ‘forever [...] exiled from my peace’ (*Rvf* 216: 8) and at war with himself.⁶⁸⁰ The loss of this Petrarchan ‘peace’ is further thematised in George’s poem *Friede* (I: 71), from the Baudelairean ‘Zeichnungen in Grau’ sub-cycle, relating the speaker’s inability to stop his warring thoughts from causing him anxiety.⁶⁸¹ Before translated by the poet into German, ‘Friede’ belonged to a number of poems composed ‘in einer eigenen dem spanisch angeähnelten lingua romana’, a private ‘literatur sprache’ invented by the poet in the late 1890s that would exist for purely aesthetic purposes.⁶⁸² A detail removed in the German

⁶⁷⁸ For a number of its Petrarchisms cf. Bornmann, ‘Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile’, pp. 154-55.

⁶⁷⁹ This itself is a ‘[m]otivo platonico-ciceroniano’ as Bettarini (*Canzoniere*, vol. I, p. 1579) elucidates, which is also pointed out by Camerini in George’s edition (*Rime*, p. 327, citing Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, (‘Plato triplicem finxit animam; cujus principatum, idest rationem, in capite, sicut in arce, posuit.)), making this tradition known to George.

⁶⁸⁰ A classic paradoxical formulation is *Rvf* 134, ‘I find no peace, and I am not at war’.

⁶⁸¹ Scholarship is unanimous in that the poems of ‘Zeichnungen in Grau’ (*SW*, I: 69-79) are entirely bound up in George’s engagement with Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du Mal*. Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, pp. 74-76 gives an overview of the scholarship and argues contra Ernst Morwitz who sought to downplay the role of influence in the ‘Zeichnungen’ (p. 77).

⁶⁸² Text quoted from a letter George wrote to his friend Arthur Stahl in 1890, cited in the ‘Anhang’ to *Die Fibel* (I: 125).

translation of the poem downplays the originally Petrarchan pose of the speaker, who having escaped the day's 'violento túrben' (l. 2) (xviii: 102, ll. 10-12), takes refuge alone in his room.⁶⁸³ The 'túrben' corresponds to the Latin (and Italian) 'turba', a crowd of people, equally avoided by Petrarch and associated with 'the masses bent on making money' (*Rvf* 7: 11). In the German, there is no mention of his 'cámara inturbato' (l. 11, his peaceful room), the line reads rather 'Ich bin für mich und ungestört' (l. 10). *Rvf* 234 sees the speaker similarly seeking the solitude of his room to escape the taxing tempests and despised masses of the city, but whose own presence to himself is too much, leading him to flee his own company:

O little room that once served as a port
 from my fierce storms that blow throughout the day,
 you have become the font of nightly tears
 which in the daytime I hide out of shame.

O little bed that once was rest and comfort
 for so much labor, with what grieving urns
 does Love bathe you with ivory hands of hers,

⁶⁸³ Another deletion in the companion poem 'El Imagen' (xviii: 103; 'Das Bild', I: 73) also works to downplay influence, removing the Petrarchistic conceit of the capture of the heart by the Lady (e.g. *Rvf* 110-12). George, modifying his Baudelairean intertext (Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 95), flavours it with Petrarchistic diction: 'Por el momento tan de profundo me mové | E de desiderio laxá *meo cor transfixato*' (emphasis mine, xviii: 103; 'Im augenblick hat es so tief mich bewegt | Von sehnen durchbohrt mich verlassen', I: 73), a line that recalls, at the end of Petrarch's triptych, the poet's recollection of Laura's eyes transfixing his heart: 'qui co' begli occhi mi trafisse il core' ('here with her lovely eyes she pierced my heart', *Rvf* 112: 11). The verb *trafiggere* is itself a hapax in the *Canzoniere*, but the meaning behind is often covered by other verbs such as *compungere*. One further example (*Rvf* 201: 7) matches Petrarch's syntactical structure to George's, his placing of the prepositional phrase ('de desiderio') mirrors that of Petrarch's 'd'ira et di dolor compunto' ('moved by anger and by grief', l. 7). The content of that sonnet, the lover's inability to remember his fateful day without being punctured by feelings of wrath and pain, echo George's speaker who is similarly in a position of remembering and reexperiencing an epiphanous, if negatively construed, moment. As well as Baudelaire's 'idiom', there are reverberations of George's engagement with Petrarch lingering in the 'Zeichnungen in Grau's 'lingua romana' versions.

so cruel only to me, and so unjustly!

Not only from my hiding place and rest

I flee, but more from my own self and thoughts

that used to take me with them high in flight;

I seek the crowd for me hateful, unfriendly

(who ever thought I would?) as place of refuge.

I'm so afraid to find myself alone.

(*Rvf* 243)

George's speaker is likewise exhausted by the autonomy of his thoughts, waging war on one another. In the German translation, 'meas ideas' (xviii: 102) are rendered into the more familiarly Petrarchan 'gedanken' (I: 71) underlying the Petrarchan subject's psychomachia, while the scene in the room is removed.⁶⁸⁴ What links the two poems is nevertheless the requirement of solitude and privacy in opposition to the noise and confusion of busy urban life. Neither poet, however, can truly find respite. George remains 'magnetisch gebannt' by modernity shining through the window, the indeterminate light of which serving only to emphasise all the more the 'dunklen spiegel der nacht' (I. 15), and thinks of resorting to prayer.⁶⁸⁵ Petrarch, feeling at odds with himself ('me stesso', I. 10 grammatically splitting the

⁶⁸⁴ See exemplarily *Rvf* 274 'Give me some peace, O cruel thoughts of mine!'

⁶⁸⁵ As Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 93 writes: 'Das Subjekt findet weiterhin keine positive, weil zur Reflexion befähigende Ruhe, sondern zeigt sich nun wie paralysiert vom elektrischen Licht einer Straßenlaterne, die das Dunkel der Nacht erhellt. An ihr wiederum die technische Moderne repräsentierendes Licht heften sich die Augen des Protagonisten wie automatisch, in diesem "magnetisch gebannt[en]" Blick repräsentiert sich die technischwidernatürliche Unruhe des Tages ein weiteres Mal'.

subject in two, as Bettarini comments), ends the poem on a similar note of suspension.⁶⁸⁶ One has here two exasperated responses to the experience of an urban life that overwhelms the subject.

By the poem 'Vernunft!', the old flame has died out, and its reappearance in 'Es zuckt aus grauem wolkenzelt' remains ambiguous, communicated through the hypothetical subjunctive ('Es ward mir als ob langsam mild | Das alte glühen sich erneute', l: 37). This is contrary to its Petrarchan intertext, which uses the subjunctive to capture the speaker's prior illusion about the fire being extinguished ('pensai che fosse spento', l. 1), but which can always be reignited.⁶⁸⁷

The poem that follows in George's volume ('Frühe Liebe', l: 38) buries the love for good. As Bornmann demonstrates, it is one of his more (Type-1) Petrarchistic pieces, and contains the third and final use of the rhyme of 'grämen' and 'schämen' (ll. 5-6) in *Die Fibel*.⁶⁸⁸ This rhyme will not be used again until his translation of *Purgatorio* 31 in 1922, where the pilgrim, now being roasted by Beatrice in the Garden of Eden for having abandoned his commitment to her after her death, compares himself to young boys forced to face their guilt and consequently shame-filled:

Wie kinder horchen und sich schweigend schämen ·

Den blick am boden · und was sie betöre

Erkennen und sich drob im innern grämen:

So stand ich [...]

⁶⁸⁶ Bettarini, *Canzoniere*, vol. II, p. 1075.

⁶⁸⁷ In 'Vernunft!' (l: 17), the sound of the beloved's name is enough to recreate 'den alten sturm'. There, the past and the present are still tied by this amorous affect (and the storm is itself Petrarchan – cf. 'the storm of love | which I endure' (73: 49-50).

⁶⁸⁸ Bornmann, 'Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile', p. 160. The other use of 'grämen' and 'schämen' is in 'Sei stolzer' (l: 29), discussed below.

(*Purg.* xxxi: 64-66; x/xi: 99)

As in Dante's retrospective penance in the Garden for the mistakes of his younger years, George there takes the opportunity to recall his own earliest boyhood poetry.

Where previously in *Die Fibel* this rhyme existed in present tense contexts (l: 15 and l: 29), in 'Frühe Liebe' it belongs to the past, marking a shift in the development of the poet's ability to distance himself from the *then* of shameful desires (underscored sonically by the hissing s-sounds of the past tense and the painful ä-sounds that connect his verbs of shame and pain to his tears: 'Wenn deinen süßen anblick ich versäumte [...] | So fasste mich ein schmerzlich wildes grämen | Ja ernster tränen musste ich mich schämen', ll. 5-6). The passage of time now works to alleviate his bitter tears (ll. 11-12, his Petrarchan 'bitter anguish', *Rvf* 12: 1), and the death of this young love is viewed more coldly from the present, freeing him now to set off once more in search of a new companion.

In the poem immediately following the 'Sonett nach Petrarka', there is a shift in focus from the various references to a feminine persona towards a masculine replacement. In 'Erster frühlingstag' (l: 64), the poet conveys spring's arrival with emphatically masculine pronouns:

Schon hab ich *seine* nähe gefühlt
Schon *seinen* zauber empfunden
Doch das war im süden drunten
Wo die sinne nichts andres ahnen
Als wärme schönheit und licht.
(ll. 1-5, emphasis mine).

The sunny south is linked to a number of Italian and Hellenic fantasies, associated with cultural renewal and rejuvenation. The north, by contrast, is the cold world of rational Protestant industrialism. The presence of this masculine presence was a source of comfort and warmth in the south; in the north, however, it is ambivalent, occasioning the

kampf [...]

Des jugendlich schönen gottes

Mit dem alten finsternen mann.

(ll. 8-10)

and its power breaks in on him almost violently (ll. 12-13). It is hard to overlook the continued presence of the 'kampf' from poem to poem, of Petrarch's 'grosse kämpfe' (*Rvf* 302: 7) and George's inner 'kampfgewimmel' as he previously called it (I: 39).

Petrarch laments his inability to meaningfully experience spring (*Rvf* 9, included in George's *Sonetti scelti*), while in 'Erster Frühlingstag' the comforting warmth of the south, with its suggestion of a vernal male bonding, is lost when the subject is 'entrückt' (l. 7) out of his dream vision (l. 6) back up to the cold north, paralleling the movement of the 'Sonett nach Petrarka': first a blissful rapture, then the fall.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸⁹ As Morgan points out: 'In the later poems of *Der Teppich des Lebens* and *Stern des Bundes* the warm sunlight of the male world of Hellas will supplant the cold light of northern Europe that suffuses these poems'. *The Homosexual Imaginary*, p. 56.

The old man of the north is highly ambivalent and intimidating in his obscurity: the meeting with him has a violence in it, and the eruption of spring is involved in this battle with him '[u]nter dem grünenden dache | Im weiten sonnigen park' (ll. 14-15). Desire is layered with ambivalence in this 'erste[n] lenzestag' that awakens the other 'kleinen lieben' in him (but not 'einer grossen'). The dream and its 'wärme schönheit und licht' is disrupted by the reality of the real encounter, the subject's first experience of spring, the power of Eros upon reaching sexual maturity. With the public setting of the park one is tempted to see an example of cruising here, as critics have elsewhere done in George.⁶⁹⁰ The old man in junction with the gender (albeit grammatical) of spring are the first clues of male attraction in George's oeuvre, and inserts itself as the replacement of the old, feminine-coded love, as the following poem, 'Die alte liebe noch?' (l: 65), announces.

While still full of 'torheit' and 'wildheit', two constituents of the subject's shame, the lyric *Ich* imagines himself as beyond the Petrarchan dilemma. Petrarch, in the anniversary poem *That window where at any time it likes* (Rvf 100), admits that the memory of Laura in 'the new season which from year to year | renews my ancient wounds on that same day' (ll. 10-11). George writes, similar to but nevertheless differing from Petrarch, '[s]ie ist noch - schlägt noch ihre alten wunden | Jedoch das heilige ist daraus entschwunden' (ll. 8-9). The phrasing ('antiche piaghe', 'alten wunden') captures that Petrarchan obsession with time and desire in the graphic image of the suffering body in which time manifests as a wound that won't fully heal. Both poets suffer their old wounds re-opening, but George's

⁶⁹⁰ See Mattenklott's claim about the poem 'Von einer Begegnung' (*Hymnen*, II: 15), but debunked by Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfang*, pp. 193-94, providing usage history of the term. At any rate, while the term itself may be ahistorical, the act is not. Cf. on this readerly sensibility ('Der für homoerotische Signale sensibilisierte Leser') Keilson-Lauritz, *Von der Liebe die Freundschaft heißt*, p. 117.

speaker believes something has shifted, and here the love for the feminine is 'detheologised', the pressure of finding God and 'das heilige' is no longer pressing him: what a relief for our young poet. Instead, he will seek it in the male form.⁶⁹¹

With the death of this early love, first personified as 'Liebe' in 'Ich wandelte', the poet, or rather his poetics, must likewise die. This development is picked up at the end of the sub-cycle 'Die Fibel' (I: 41) in the poem 'Ikarus', in which the poet reprimands himself for abusing the wings, 'die das geschick dir gab' (l. 2, the 'geschick' was inaugurated by 'Liebe' in 'Ich wandelte') and flying too close to the sun.⁶⁹² In *Die Fibel*, then, a metaphoric of love in the Petrarchan tradition is utilised as a metaphor for the poet's youthful search for glory. For now his early experiments in love and in poetic form have proven unsuccessful, culminating in the experience of a death, the beloved's and his own. This search for a semblable who would complete him in amorous poetic union, and the struggle to find that, will constitute a key, if not the central, recurring motif in George's oeuvre, his 'archaic loss' for which the poetry 'endlessly presents an imaginary threshold for the re-enactment'.⁶⁹³

viii. Closure

⁶⁹¹ I borrow the term from Barolini, *Dante and the Origins*. Although she uses it to describe her 'historicist reading' of various texts (mainly the *Commedia*, see 463 n. 2) and thus as a critical, hermeneutic term, I borrow it here simply to describe George's staged reversal of courtly poetry's traditional theologising, that is, making something divine out of the mortal addressee of the poems, the 'yoking of philosophy—indeed theology—to eros' in Barolini's words, (p. 30). Alternatively, cf. Manuele Gragnolati & Francesca Southerden, *Possibilities of Lyric. Reading Petrarch in Dialogue* (ICI Press, 2020), here summarily p. 88, discussing troubadour and Sicilian court poetry: 'its main characteristic is the theologization of the lady to the extent that the event of her appearing elevates her to quasi-divine status'.

⁶⁹² 'So muss ich doch das gütige schicksal loben | Das mich durch deine hand zur tat getrieben', 'Ich wandelte', I: 13. A metapoetic reading of 'Ikarus' is also provided by Egyptien and Kasper, 'Die Fibel', pp. 7-8.

⁶⁹³ Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, p. 62.

If the 'Geleitverse' were composed in 1901 for the occasion of *Die Fibel* and constitute the opening bracket, it is possible that the mysterious last poem of the volume, 'Der Schüler' (SW, I: 91-93), was also composed *pro hac vice*. The third of a series of poems titled 'Legenden', it is the only one that has not been dated, and which has no surviving manuscripts.⁶⁹⁴ If 'Geleitverse' is the opening bracket, 'Der Schüler' is its structural closing bracket (even if disguised as belonging temporally to 'Legenden'). All of George's *juvenilia* then is contained by two poems written in the future (with respect to the others), it is safely contained. The effect of this retrospective inclusion is, as Bozza outlines, to manipulate the reader's experience of the 'Legenden' into believing that the narrative issues of the first two culminate logically and satisfactorily in the third. The uncertainties contained in the first two poems regarding sexuality and poetic identity are neutralised, solved by the third poem's confession of, in Bozza's words, 'die Liebe zur Weisheit der männlichen "leiber | Der blumen und der wolken und der wellen"' even where this retrospective manipulation overlooks the entire sequence of poetic works from 1890 to 1900 in favour of George's representation of himself as 'immer bereits überwunden'.⁶⁹⁵

The poem is about the life of a young student in a cloister and his growing recognition that the received wisdom of his 'väter' does not disclose all the wisdom he at first believes it to. Certain lexical and thematic items work to maintain the overall coherence of *Die Fibel* by echoing others intratextually and suggesting a

⁶⁹⁴ Oelmann, 'Die Fibel', p. 99. Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 129, discusses this and reckons it was composed specifically for the publication of *Die Fibel*. It might be added that in his *George monograph*, Gundolf (p. 60) cites the *Legenden* as exemplifying George as already being '[a]uf der Geniestufe', and emphasises the third *Legende* as demonstrating this most clearly: 'Die letzte Legende, nicht mehr krampfhaft geballt, schon gelöst und vollströmend, ist auch formal ein Meisterstück'. This is perhaps evidence for its *ad hoc* composition. Written at the height of his poetic powers, its staged retro-chronological positioning into *Die Fibel* allows Gundolf to claim that George always had the X factor.

⁶⁹⁵ Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 129.

certain narrative continuity. 'Der Schüler' relates in a first-person retrospective a young pupil's emerging sexuality as a discovery of his own 'eigenen leibs geheimnis' (I: 91) as well as his disillusionment with the sheltered cloister life he has been socialised into. The former is staged in what the standard Freudian interpretation would see as the narcissistic basis of same-sex attraction, and 'jenes blonde kind' is presented ambiguously, referring either to a supposed other member of the cloister or continuing the reference to himself as object of reflection in the mirror.⁶⁹⁶ The latter disillusionment is occasioned by a journey out into the world that exposes the limited world of his cloister and allows him to experience the world in all its otherness (I: 92): 'welch ein wink der fügung!' Here this fateful revelation seems welcomed in its exclamatory, alliterative consonance, and which brings to a climax and acceptance the discourse of destiny scattered throughout *Die Fibel*.

The revelation proves both poetic and sexual, signified via recourse to the same Petrarchan affective, bodily state and to the generic motif of being corporeally penetrated by the vernal breath of (poetic) inspiration:

⁶⁹⁶ 'Was bringt nun diese wandlung? doch nicht einzig
 Mein schweifen in den unbetretenen erkern
 Wo ich bei manchem seltsamen gerät
 Den spiegel glänzenden metalls entdeckt
 Vor dem ich meines eigenen leibs geheimnis
 Und anderer zuerst bedenken lernte.
 Auch wäre frevel länger noch zu glauben
 Dass jenes blonde kind der jüngste schüler
 Das oft mich mit den grossen augen sucht
 So gänzlich meinen sinn erschüttern könne'
 (I: 91-92).

On Freud cf. Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 124. Oelmann, 'Die Fibel', p. 103, discussing the second of the 'Legenden', writes: 'Von Blumen bekränzt erscheint das eigene Bild, Narziss wird alludiert und damit der Eros-Kult und gleichgeschlechtliche Liebe' (also cited in Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, 124 n. 269). Cf. Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, 142-42 for a historically sensitive and – dare one say – redemptive reading of homosexual narcissism. Morgans' argument in essence is that, for a gay person at the turn of the twentieth century, living under Paragraph §175 of the *Strafgesetzbuch*, what other option was there than to turn inward, given that the sexual other was *de jure* foreclosed? As he argues, 'narcissism is not *constitutive*, it was *contingent* upon socio-historical circumstance' (Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, p. 142).

es drang in mich ein hauch

Und wuchs zu solchem brausen so gewaltig

Und schmerzlich dass ich selbst mich nicht mehr kannte

(I: 92).

As Oelmann summarises: ‘Eros überfällt, löst die Glieder, macht sie beben und schauern, Apollons “hauch” dringt ein. Berufung hat stattgefunden und damit endgültige “Wandlung”’.⁶⁹⁷ Returned home from his journey, he is estranged from and no longer identifies with monastic life (‘Nichts mehr ist hier mir wert – auch nicht dies kleid’, I: 93).

The change in character is signalled via a shift in tense. The majority of the poem (the fourth, fifth and first half of the sixth stanzas tense) is relayed in the past tense, evoking distance and a closed chapter of autobiography.⁶⁹⁸ Midway through the sixth and penultimate stanza we catch up temporally to the speaker and arrive at the present time of writing (‘Mein widerstand bleibt schwach und ohne hilfe’, I: 93). The final stanza shifts to a futural mode:

‘Morgen im frührot lass ich diese stätte.

[...]

es treibt mich auf

Der alten toten weisheit zu entraten

Bis ich die lebende erkannt: der leiber

⁶⁹⁷ Oelmann, ‘Die Fibel’, p. 103.

⁶⁹⁸ Even if that distance is qualified somewhat by the affected rhetoric (the exclamation of ‘welch ein wink der fügung’, e.g.).

Der blumen und der wolken und der wellen'

(I: 92)

His quest is for what 'der dichten schriften nachtgewölbe' (I: 91) could not offer – the immanence and evergreening newness of the natural world, and the secrets of bodies and sex ('meines eignen leibs geheimnis').

The feminine is now totally absent, and the whole atmosphere of the poem is masculine ('die väter', 'herr', 'bruderschaft', 91; 'der jüngste schüler', 'welt der lehrer', 92; 'den vätern', 93).⁶⁹⁹ The last we heard of a feminine figure was the previous 'Legende' ('Frühlingswende', I: 87-90), which dramatises another Narcissus figure's arrogant rejection of a girl's approach, and ends with his gaze lingering on 'sein eigenes bild' in a pool.⁷⁰⁰ While *Die Fibel* here represents that

⁶⁹⁹ One of the 'Zeichnungen in Grau' ('Priester') had already explored the theme of sexuality and male-male desire in the world of religious brotherhood, 'im Zwiespalt von Lust und moralischer Verworfenheit' (Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 102).

⁷⁰⁰ Cf. Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 124: 'Denn aller imaginativen Aufladung der Zurückhaltung vorm zweiten Geschlecht in *Frühlingswende* und den in *Erkenntnis* offenherzig ausgesprochenen Selbstvorwürfen, sein eigentliches Begehren im Sex mit einer Frau zu betrügen zum Trotz, sprechen die *Legenden* selbstredend nicht ausdrücklich oder, wie *Priester*, auch nur andeutungsweise vom Aliud einer gleichgeschlechtlichen Sexualität – und sind gleichzeitig doch wohl von nichts anderem angetrieben als vom Aufbegehren gegen den Zwang, sich der Kulturnorm zu beugen'. The first two 'Legenden' deal with the ephebe's sexuality. The first, 'Erkenntnis', deals with the unrequited desire from a feminine other, working Narcissus imagery into the ephebe's misogynist rebuttals of the girl who likes him (I: 84); on Narcissus and epic narrative in this poem see Bozza, (*Genealogie des Anfangs*, pp. 116-17) and the second 'Legende', 'Frühlingswende', like the third, is about maturation from childhood into the world of men. '[D]er Tag seiner Aufnahme in die Gemeinschaft der Männer', as Morwitz writes (*Kommentar zu den Prosa- Drama- und Jugend-Dichtungen Stefan Georges*, p. 101), is the background to 'Frühlingswende', which brims with references to a homosocial, mythically medievalised time ('die Hehre in männerrüstung'; 'guten samens'; 'Und fortan ziere dies schwert deine gurt!', I: 87; 'Der sohn'; 'Du bist ein mann nun und kühnen auges | Magst du entschleierte reize beschauen'; 'den starken'; 'der jüngling [...] | Wieder herr seiner wünsche und tritte', I: 88). Women hardly feature in the poem. A 'Sklavin' (I: 88) is mentioned in the elder's warning to the boy as a possible distraction from his piety for the 'Göttin'. A 'Sie' appears capitalised in the fourth stanza (I: 89), his old childhood friend who now desires him, appearing essentially as a nuisance to the boy, as Echo to Narcissus (I: 89-90). Solitude in the forest is his goal, and her presence is depicted as a hindrance. The imaginary society in this poem is a patriarchal fantasy, however much, it might be argued, it is undermined by the boy's own lack of enthusiasm – he rejoices, as Morwitz points out, not because of any real joy, but because he feels that he is expected to (*Kommentar zu den Prosa- Drama- und Jugend-Dichtungen*, p. 101), and ultimately prefers to retreat to the 'lieben orte wo er nur herr ist' (I: 90), a line that prefigures both Algabal's self-centred, solipsistic kingdom (with the language clearly echoing: 'Der schöpfung

tension as having been dealt with, this is the benefit of its delayed retroactive staging, as this tension runs indeed throughout *Hymnen* and up to *Das Jahr der Seele*.

The poem also resolves the anxiety about poetic language through its focus on writing and texts, and the student's need to break free from the influence of precursor texts and authority figures. His life in the cloister had seen him spending his nights '[a]uf manches dunklen Weisen blatt gebeugt', a line combining both text and teacher, before he decides to set out to discover 'die lebende ['weisheit'] [...]: der leiber | Der blumen und der wolken und der wellen' (I: 93), knowledge that the books of his elders cannot teach him. The poem thus closes off both narrative strands of *Die Fibel* (poetry and sexuality) simultaneously, as the awakening and acceptance of homoerotic desire goes hand in hand with his desire to go out into the world and become his own poetic authority: to discover new 'weisheit' means to write new wisdom sourced from life itself, rather than ancient (and dead) texts.

wo er nur geweckt und verwaltet', II: 60) and George's own self-depiction as the solitary seer in *Das Jahr der Seele*, '[i]n einem seltenen reiche ernst und einsam' (IV: 51). Here one sees how George identifies his mature self in a modified form as being prefigured by these mythical ephebe-figures, so that he is not strictly identifiable with the 'jüngling' of 'Frühlingswende', but nevertheless in the following volumes comes to depict himself as *like* that 'jüngling'. The 'jüngling' of 'Frühlingswende', like Narcissus, also turns ('Ihr weichend seine schritte er *wendet*', my emphasis) away from the women offered to him as prize for his initiation into manhood, but perhaps it is too optimistic to overlook the sexism of the world depicted by the text in favour of reading the boy's turn as rejection of the received social order. Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, pp. 123-26 consistently outlines the misogyny underpinning this poem's depiction of female sexuality (I: 89's description of the girl's desire as predatory, for example, see Bozza, p. 123) and the speaker's narcissistic self-interest, as well as how it is precisely feminine sexuality that stands in conjunction with the demands of society, that is, the rejection of one is the rejection of both. On the 'strukturelle[] Misogynie' of the George Circle as a whole, see Jan Andres, "'frauen fremder ordnung". Thesen zur strukturellen Misogynie des George-Kreises', in *Frauen um Stefan George*, ed. by Ute Oelmann and Ulrich Raulff (Wallstein, 2010), pp.37-57. The speaker's own image in the 'quell', ultimately, is what captivates his desire at the poem's end (I: 90). Bozza reads this *locus amoenus* as a poet's private creative space, and George's 'seltenen reiche' (op cit.) would agree with this reading. There is, furthermore, a tradition, known to Petrarch, of poets retreating to private groves in the woods. Bettarini cites Propertius' *Elegies* I, XVIII: 1 ('Haec certe deserta loca et taciturna querenti, et vacuum Zephyri possidet aura nemus' etc.) in her commentary to *Rvf* 35: 1 (*Canzoniere*, vol. I, p. 190). Cited from Propertius, *Elegies I-IV*, ed. with introduction and commentary by L. Richardson, Jr. (University of Oklahoma Press, 1977), pp. 50-51.

For now, however, it is clear that 'Der Schüler' closes *Die Fibel* as the 'Geleitverse' had already prefigured in the image of the lark that 'scheu ins frühlicht schwingt' (I: 9), with a sense of poetic emergence, open to the future. Finally, both 'Geleitverse' and 'Der Schüler', as the frames of the collection, and given their retrospective addition, bracket and contain the old poems from the standpoint of the present moment of publication. In 'Geleitverse' this was accomplished via insistent deictic distancing, in 'Der Schüler' it is accomplished via an autobiographical *legend*, a historical genre pertaining mainly to the lives of saints and contained in hagiographies.⁷⁰¹ As Morwitz writes, by transposing the autobiographical elements into the form of a historical genre, a certain distance and impersonality is achieved.⁷⁰² In this literary operation, shame has been isolated and surgically removed from the present. Both are temporally beyond *Die Fibel*, like the poet already beyond his youth poetry, having overcome its Petrarchistic dilemmas.⁷⁰³ George's three 'Legenden' are like formal variations on the

⁷⁰¹ See entry 'legend' in J.A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 5th edn (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), p. 391. Andres, 'Gegenbilder', p. 35 draws attention to George's programmatic use of historical genres and periods for temporal distancing effects: 'Insgesamt ist in den ersten Bänden die Sprechsituation im Gedicht von der historischen Situation um 1900, dem Kaiserreich mit seiner massiven Industrialisierung seit 1850, weit entfernt. So entstehen "Neuländische Liebesmahle", "Verjäherte Fahrten", ein ganzes, zyklisches *Unterreich* oder Tagelieder in mittelalterlicher Tradition. Das lyrische Subjekt ist dem Dichter raum-zeitlich weit entfernt' (p. 35). For the autobiographical elements of 'Der Schüler' see Oelmann, 'Die Fibel', pp. 103-04. Morwitz also calls the contents of the three 'Legenden', 'in einer leicht abstreifbaren Einkleidung das volle Bild von allem, was [George] selbst im dritten Lebensjahrsiebt gedacht und gefühlt hat' (*Kommentar zu den Prosa- Drama- und Jugend-Dichtungen*, pp. 103). In his letter to Arthur Stahl regarding his 'lingua romana', cited above (in the 'Anhang', SW, I: 125), George discusses his language crisis in terms that position him as a kind of suffering saint: 'Darin liegt der grund weshalb ich seit monden nichts mehr verfasse, weil [ich] ganz einfach nicht weiss in welcher sprache ich schreiben soll. ich ahne, diese idee wird entweder bei mir verschwinden oder mich zum märtyrer machen' (I: 125). The talk of martyrdom certainly raises the stakes and elevates the poet's biography and self-understanding to that of the saints' lives suggested by the title 'Legenden'.

⁷⁰² Allowing for the 'Präzisierung der Mitteilungen, ohne dass das in der Jugend besonders ausgeprägte und empfindliche Schamgefühl sich behindernd geltend macht. Durch diese Form der Entpersönlichung überwindet der Dichter auch die Schwierigkeit, die sich aus zeitlicher Nähe von Erlebnis und Dichtung ergibt', Morwitz, *Kommentar zu den Prosa- Drama- und Jugend-Dichtungen*, p. 104.

⁷⁰³ See Bozza's exposé, in *Genealogie des Anfangs*, pp. 128-89 of the retrospectively self-interpretive reception strategy of presenting the third 'Legende' as the fulfilment of the previous two, seeking to revise and even erase developments in his aestheticist phase between 1889 and 1900.

Petrarchan narrative *canzone* such as 'In the sweet season of my early age' (*Rvf* 23), positing a mythological past, but unlike Petrarch's past utopia, the Georgean subject narrates its emergence out of constriction and towards freedom.

The narrative arc of *Die Fibel* has spanned a maturation process that sees the young poetic ephebe searching for poetic form as he navigates the turbulence of youth on his way towards visionary poet-prophet. Given George's 'will to form' (Armin Schäfer), and his concerns with ensuring the bounded, total quality of his work, as well as his interest in cyclicity, it comes as no surprise that where *Die Fibel* (the *fibula* holding the Georgean oeuvre together) elaborates this process at one end of the oeuvre (namely as volume one), at the other end (volume eighteen, the *Schlussband*) the narrative reoccurs in a single poem called 'Prinz Indra' (*SW*, XVIII: 69-86), composed between 1883 and 1884 and thus technically belonging to the *Jugenddichtung* but separated it from in the order of volumes, and thereby closing the work as it had begun, 'in accordance with that principle of perfect circularity so dear to George', as Versari argues.⁷⁰⁴ In it the maturation and psychosexual development of a young prince is recounted in the typically Georgean register of mythology, in the form of a *Volkslied*, characteristic of German epigon poetry.⁷⁰⁵ The rhetoric of biblical history is adopted to inflate the experience of maturation into one of cosmic proportions, with the poem divided into monumental

⁷⁰⁴ 'il cerchio può chiudersi solo riagganciandosi al punto di partenza, secondo quel principio di perfetta circolarità così caro a George fino a improntarne la costruzione e la geometria dell'opera, e che determina anche la tenuta etica della sua esistenza'. Versari, *La poesia di Stefan George*, p. 17. Versari is also referring here to the juvenile works. Braungart, *Ästhetischer Katholizismus*, p. 117 likewise points out how the end of the *Gesamtausgabe* links back to the beginning in terms of its contents (with *Tage und Taten* referring to the poet's early life): 'Damit folgt die Ordnung des Gesamtwerkes in der Rückkehr zum Anfang selbst dem rhythmischen, zyklischen Prinzip, das für die einzelnen Bücher strukturbildend ist. George demonstriert in diesem Bekenntnis zur Einheit seines Werkes, wie sehr er der gleich und sich treu Gebliebene sein will'. Martus, *Werkpolitik*, p. 642 cites Braungart here in his discussion how *Der Siebente Ring* also adheres to this principle. Egyptien and Kasper, 'Die Fibel', p. 7 discuss how *Die Fibel* qua *fibula* (i.e. a 'Kleiderspange') 'hält [...] das georgische Werk zusammen'.

⁷⁰⁵ Arbogast, *Die Erneuerung*, pp. 28-9.

sub-headings such as ‘Der Fall’ (73), ‘Der Retter’ (79) and ‘Die Rettung’ (84). The young Indra, after encountering a seductive ‘wasserfee’ (74) named Apsara in the seclusion of a *locus amoenus*, wrestles with his conscience in a fit of amorous frenzy before succumbing to his desires and allowing himself to be charmed. Of interest to the present study is the proximity of ‘Prinz Indra’'s imagery and poetic motifs to those of the Petrarchan *Die Fibel*. Like Petrarch, Indra is beguiled by ‘der liebe feuerblicken’ (75), by the gesture of her pretty ‘weisse hand’ (another Petrarchism) and the nymph Apsara’s initial attempts at catching him recall the Ovidian myths used by Petrarch of Cupid, Apollo and Daphne: ‘Noch nicht drangen ihre pfeile | In des prinzen kindesherz’ (75).⁷⁰⁶ Eventually the young prince runs into his own doom (‘Toll rennt er in sein verderben’, 76) recalling certain Petrarchan formulations such as ‘But I, wretched and rash, | run always to my harm’ (*Rvf* 135: 40) or *Rvf* 96’s final tercet, where the subject’s choice to err is likewise represented as being of biblical proportions, a single sin (recalling Adam and Eve) determining the rest of his future.⁷⁰⁷ The consequences of Indra’s transgression are the typically Petrarchan conditions of spiritual and psychical confusion and distress, ‘from grief to grief, from one war to another’ (*Rvf* 36: 6).⁷⁰⁸ He is hounded by the ‘bewusstsein seiner schuld’ (76) and by ‘[s]eines herzens heftig streiten | Neuer fehler neuer leiden’ (77). His salvation, predictably, comes in the form of a lyre-playing ‘jüngling’

⁷⁰⁶ E.g. *Rvf* 38:12 (‘And I complain as well of a white hand’); see also 137: 116 for ‘her lovely hand’. Of note too is that it is the withdrawal of this ‘bella mano’ that causes his vision to end in poem 302 (‘Ach warum schwieg sie und entzog sie ihre hand’, l. 12).

⁷⁰⁷ ‘allor corse al suo mal libera e sciolta:
ora a posta d'altrui conven che vada
l'anima che peccò sol una volta'
(then it ran free and unbound to its harm,
now it is forced to do another's pleasure
that soul of mine that sinned but only once)
Rvf 96: 12-14.

For biblical undertones see Bettarini, *Canzoniere*, vol. I, p. 561 (commentary *ad loc*).

⁷⁰⁸ I am quoting this out of context. In the poem the line belongs to a hypothetical clause.

(79) and thus a male poet in development. Like the answer provided in the narrative triptych of the 'Legenden' in *Die Fibel*, Prinz Indra finds his 'Rettung' in male companionship and the expunging of desire for women, associated with impurity, danger, and the conventions of society.⁷⁰⁹ The focus on the rejection of the feminine in these poems is an anti-Petrarchan move, for it removes the male figure from his role as helpless, passive lover and returns him to a position of agency and autonomy in front of the perceived passivity-inducing experience of sexuality.⁷¹⁰ As in 'Legenden', George rejects that poet's passive submission to the destabilising forces of love and sexuality and the chaotic, circular movements of becoming that entail.⁷¹¹ Contrary to 'In the sweet season of my early age' the 'Legenden' detail an ultimately linear development of the ephebe into his own person, a becoming not a stone, nor a stag, nor a tree, but a character who comes to resemble very much the poet himself.

This furthermore is presented in Dantean terms. Indra's conversion is described as his 'neues leben' (84) and a return to the proper path (86). And for George's 'Werkpolitik' (Martus), the origins here once again prophetically foreshadow the task of his mature poetry, as Arbogast points out, in that the advice Indra receives is precisely to learn 'die Verbindung von Sinnlichkeit und Geistigkeit als den Lebensgrund erkennen, auf dem er sein Werk aufführen kann'.⁷¹² Arbogast

⁷⁰⁹ Oelmann, 'Die Fibel', p. 103. For the feminine as representative of society (in the 'Legenden'), see Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 125 and pp. 116-77 and 125-26 for the poet's association of the feminine with society and the 'Künstlerdiskurs' as part of his "Lösung" der Sexualitätsangst' (p. 126).

⁷¹⁰ Cf. Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 95 for the subject's 'Passivität und Ausgeliefertheit'.

⁷¹¹ See Durling, 'Introduction', in *Petrarch's Lyric Poems: The Rime Sparse and Other Lyrics*, ed. and trans. by Robert M. Durling (Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 27: 'The theme of the poem [Rvf 23 – JW] is the incomprehensible changeability of the self in love, which is so violent as to call its very identity into question. The myths succeed one another in a brilliant, surrealistic superimposition of images. There is a baffling coexistence of abrupt, radical instability and of permanence and cyclicity. It is obvious that the myths were not chosen at random, and Petrarch expects the reader to know Ovid and to be alert to subtle changes'.

⁷¹² Arbogast, *Die Erneuerung*, p. 29.

here is referring to Indra's lesson, but his reading is metapoetic, and Indra acts as a figure for the poet himself.

It was earlier asked of what value *Die Fibel* is in George's oeuvre. One answer lies in the reception strategies present in the principles of identity and circularity, of control and measure over one's self-presentation, of the end representing a return to the beginning and a stylistic deflation in comparison to the stylistic apex at the centre (from *Teppich* to the *Stern*). The emphasis on circularity promises an eternal return to those apices in form by linking back to the beginning. The *Schlussband* also undermines *Die Fibel*'s status as an absolute beginning, however, by highlighting its incompleteness and thereby its constructedness, composed of selected fragments. Pinpointing the beginning becomes a difficult task, then, but rather than thematising or incorporating the 'failure to represent an absolute ground',⁷¹³ the circular structure of the oeuvre and George's many beginnings that echo each other rather defer the beginning endlessly on as the wheel of the work turns forever in a sort of self-bounded, Hegelian infinite.⁷¹⁴

'Geleitverse', as it was read above, proposes a sort of aetiology of the Georgian subject, but there too no firm beginning was pinpointed. All beginning originates from the implicit 'egocentric' deixis of the poetic speaker, the 'deictic centre' of the poem in the present of poetic speech.⁷¹⁵ This egocentric Georgian deixis, however, requires us to posit a coherent lyric speaker which in reality is a fiction produced by the poem's own rhetoric (another principle of circularity).⁷¹⁶

⁷¹³ Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*, p. 95. Bowie here is discussing Novalis' poetics and his 'rejection of an absolute beginning to art'.

⁷¹⁴ For the 'true' and 'bad' infinite in Hegel, see Knox's 'Translator's Preface' in Hegel, *Aesthetics*, pp. xi-xii.

⁷¹⁵ For 'egocentric' deixis Cruse, *A Glossary of Semantics and Pragmatics*, p. 44. For the lyric as 'an act of poetic enunciation', see Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, p. 109.

⁷¹⁶ On the lyrical speaker as 'a fictional situation of utterance' built by deixis, cf. Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, linguistics and the study of literature* (Routledge, 2002 (1975), p. 194.

Even as the least egocentric of George's poems (since there is no reference to *Ich*), the power of poet's persona nevertheless looms over the poem, providing us with the guiding hand of the transcendent *Meister*.

5. Symptoms in the Early Works · *Hymnen*. *Pilgerfahrten*. *Algabal*.

George's 'lingua romana' was based primarily on Spanish, rather than on Italian or French. Come 1892, after the publications of *Hymnen*, *Pilgerfahrten* and *Algabal*, George and his colleagues were now concerned with downplaying the specifically French influence, deriving the essence of French Symbolism from an originally Germanic origin. Thus, in his essay *Über Stefan George. Eine neue Kunst* George's collaborator Carl August Klein claims that 'die urquellen der "Nouvelle Poésie"' are rooted firmly 'in Deutschland, in der deutschen Romantik', buttressing his claim with reference to Novalis.⁷¹⁷ He continues to nevertheless admit limited Italian influence in terms form, rather than content.⁷¹⁸ The admission of formal, rather than thematic, influence suggests that these volumes, unlike *Die Fibel*, will not be bathed in Petrarchism. The story, Klein tells us, is that this rummaging through Romance literary history was in order to purify his own, *German*, poetic language, to infuse German with 'die vollen klänge der südlichen sprachen', to achieve 'den grossen zusammenklang wobei wir durch die worte erregt werden wie durch rauschmittel'.⁷¹⁹ One has a foretaste of the cultish poetics of bodily immanence that will emerge years down the line: that poetry here is like a drug that causes corporeal jouissance. At any rate, the admission of Italian influence is qualified by Klein, and fully absorbed into the grander master narrative

⁷¹⁷ Carl August Klein, 'Über Stefan George. Eine neue Kunst', in *Blätter für die Kunst* 2 (December 1892), pp. 45-50 (p. 47). Cf. Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, pp. 131-32.

⁷¹⁸ 'Allerdings frühzeitig romanischen einflüssen besonders italienischen aber in rein linguistischer hinsicht zugänglich hatte Stefan George sogar eine spanne zeit mit anderen lauten als mit den mutterlauten operiert und nach einer reihe von merkwürdigen vorstudien und sprachexperimenten scheint er gestrebt zu haben die wunderbaren zarten wie vollen klänge der südlichen sprachen in der eignen aufzufinden und wiederzugeben'. Klein, 'Über Stefan George', p. 48. Cf. Durzak, *Der junge Stefan George*, p. 23.

⁷¹⁹ Klein, 'Über Stefan George', p. 48.

of Germany's new, quasi-divine poet; the newness of George's poetic breakthrough is presented in messianic terms:

Wir sehen dass in seinen gedichten mit neuen mitteln neuen wirkungen gerechnet wird. seitdem die alten götter tot sind, haben wir es zum erstenmal mit den offenbarungen eines ursprünglich dichterischen geistes zu thun der aus seinen gedanken eine welt für sich gebaut und nach einem ganz bestimmten ihm eigentümlichen plan ein stehendes abgerundetes werk geschaffen.⁷²⁰

What is noticeable here however is the solipsism of George's achievement: a 'welt für sich' will in the coming years not be enough, his 'welt' will eventually aim at housing the perceived cultural elite of Germany. The 'offenbarungen eines ursprünglich dichterischen geistes', however, certainly rings promising on both a national and international level. The solidity of his plan ('stehendes') furthermore attests to the antimodern mood of George's project, to build solid ground in the experience of fragmentation, a standing monument in an age of loosening cultural foundations.

Part of the problem of searching for Petrarchism in George's poetry after the poems of *Die Fibel* is indeed the lack of obvious allusions to the Italian poet, but the aim of the following chapter is nevertheless, as Forster writes, 'to show how works which at first sight seem to owe nothing to Petrarch can be illuminated by reference to the pervasive petrarchistic tradition'.⁷²¹

⁷²⁰ Ibid.

⁷²¹ Forster, *The Icy Fire*, p. 58.

i. *Hymnen* · A Poetic Event Horizon

George's *Hymnen* opens emphatically with the masterly imperative that weds demand and desire, before their invariable split: 'Hinaus zum strom!' ('Weihe', *SW* II: 10), a gesture that retroactively takes up where *Die Fibel*'s 'Geleitverse', composed roughly a decade later, left off, a swinging forward into the new.⁷²² The *Hymnen* retroactively become the prophetic fulfilment of a movement that is later presented as having had roots in George's mythical youth. Martus notes how *Hymnen* is eventually posited as the 'Ursprung des Werks' but which itself needs to posit a tradition from which to break in order to begin.⁷²³ Not only literary tradition, but George's own private tradition (*Die Fibel*) become the origin. That *Hymnen* represents the poetic breakthrough striven for in *Die Fibel* is suggested by its paratextual 'Aufschrift' (II: 8) that declares the beginning of his song shortly before the springtime, which has now arrived.⁷²⁴

Like *Die Fibel*, much of *Hymnen*'s content involves the problematic of 'Leidenschaft und Weihe', George's 'Grundspannung' as Gundolf wrote.⁷²⁵ In 'Weihe' however the focus is not on movement as in *Die Fibel*, but on a kind of

⁷²² For the master's 'grammatical tone' being that of the imperative see Ellie Ragland, 'The Discourse of the Master', in *Lacan, Politics, Aesthetics*, ed. by Willy Apollon und Richard Feldstein (SUNY Press, 1996), pp. 127-147 (p. 134). For the comparison of the *Hymnen*'s impact in the George Kreis to Opitz' poetry-defining *Buch der deutschen Poeterey*, see Landmann, *Gespräche mit Stefan George*, pp. 153-54. For the Lacanian distinction between need, demand and desire see Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, pp. 10-14 for a most cogent discussion. Essentially, desire is what remains after a demand has been fulfilled, it is the 'motor' (p. 12).

⁷²³ Martus, *Werkpolitik*, p. 547. For George's conception of 'Weihe' as 'das "Neue"' see p. 573.

⁷²⁴ Cf. Versari, *La poesia di Stefan George*, p. 21, for further links to *Die Fibel*.

⁷²⁵ Gundolf, *George*, p. 55. Similarly Arbogast, *Erneuerung*, p. 87. And Pensa, 'Stefan George e Dante', p. 24, who links the thematic struggle between 'flesh and spirit' (trans. mine, 'la carne e lo spirito') to Dante's *Vita nova*. For *Hymnen*'s imagery picking up the thematics of seduction and sensuality of *Die Fibel*, see Versari, *La poesia di Stefan George*, p. 21.

peaceful stasis, foregoing the plaguing distractions of thought: 'Im rasen rastend · ohne denkerstörung' (l. 6), at odds with the Petrarchan motif of the wandering lyric self, underlaid by the metaphor of the linear path that parallels the linear progression of time, as Meidl notes.⁷²⁶ He is to observe the poetic transformations of reality around him (stanza three) and ready himself for the revelation of the 'herrin',⁷²⁷ who kisses him and evokes that Trecento affect ('behte', l. 21) encountered in *Die Fibel* but now attributed to the muse's mouth.

Gundolf reads the suspension of time and space in this poem as the 'unmittelbare Schau des Seins jenseits der Kategorien', a privileged revelatory moment in which the poet peers into and experiences ultimate reality.⁷²⁸ The wilful stopping of time is, however, decidedly Petrarchan, attesting to the basic anxiety regarding time that permeates Type-2 Petrarchism. The fourth stanza exhibits this framing of reality into a stasis:

Schon scheinen durch der zweige zackenrahmen
Mit sternenstädten selige gefilde ·
Der zeiten flug verliert die alten namen
Und raum und dasein bleiben nur im bilde.
(II: 10)

Scholars have pointed out how nature ('der zweige') is bent to create an ecphrasis in a vision of celestial transcendence, forming a frame ('zackenrahmen') which in turn foregrounds self-reflexively the poem's own framing of reality, becoming a

⁷²⁶ Meidl, 'Zum Zeitdiskurs des frühen Petrarkismus', p. 91.

⁷²⁷ Cf. Robert Vilain, 'Stefan George's Early Works 1890–1895', p. 54.

⁷²⁸ Gundolf, *George*, p. 62.

portal, or window, in Schäfer's term, through which the 'herrin' will appear: 'Dieses imaginierte Bild leitet sich vom Modell des Fensters her, das sich aber nicht zur Wirklichkeit, sondern zur Transzendenz hin öffnet'.⁷²⁹ Transcendence recalls the 'Sonett nach Petrarka', in which the lyric self is raptured upwards towards union with his beloved in heaven. In 'Weihe' the effect is rather the invocation of the muse's immanent presence. The muse descends to him, rather than he ascending to her.⁷³⁰ Indeed, it is through the poet's consecration of nature that the muse may appear, he inspires her, rather than the other way around.⁷³¹

'Weihe' negates time, space, alien influences ('die fremden hauche') and even the lyric self, transformed into the addressee of the poem's discourse.⁷³² The flight of time is conceived as the destructive forgetting of the names of things, and stasis, permanence, continuity, indeed, existence or stable being-in-the-world itself is achieved only in the poetic image: 'Und raum und dasein bleiben nur im bilde' (l. 16). History, with its contingencies and traumatically unpredictable shifts, is expunged.⁷³³ The flight of time as an ever-present anxiety in the *Canzoniere* needs little review here, but reading 'Weihe' as an answer in the negative to Petrarch's concerns illuminates George's programme. In the anniversary poem 'Seventeen years the heavens have revolved' (*Rvf* 122), with the passing of the years on his mind, Petrarch ponders the following:

⁷²⁹ Schäfer, *Die Intensität der Form*, p. 177.

⁷³⁰ As Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 121 points out: 'Doch während der *poeta* in den petrarkischen bzw. petrarkistischen Gedichten zur Donna emporstrebt, schwebt die "herrin" in der Schluss- und Schlüsselszene zum Dichter nieder'.

⁷³¹ Cf. Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 127: 'Nicht von der Muse durch ihren Kuss, sondern von sich selbst durch die Autosuggestion ist der Dichter reif, rein und heilig geworden'.

⁷³² For 'Weihe' as negation of foreign influences see Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 179.

⁷³³ Gunilla Eschenbach remarks that George's early works (Hymnen through to Algabal) 'liegt keine geschichtliche Perspektive zugrunde' ('Geschichte und Geschichtlichkeit in Stefan Georges Lyrik', p. 862).

Ah grief! how long before I see the day
when, gazing at the flight my years have taken,
I step out of my grievous trial by fire?

Will that day ever come when the sweet air
about her lovely visage please these eyes
no more than I would wish, and than is fitting?
(*Rvf* 122: 9-14)

Bettarini calls attention to how these ‘impossibilia’ starkly counter the passage of time as is represented in the sonnet’s octets; that is, in response to time’s destructive passing, the Petrarchan subject introduces a fantasy time of reunion with.⁷³⁴ In this respect George’s poem realises such a fantasy as it stages reconciliation with the desired muse, clad as she is in ‘Mondfarbne gazeschleier’, an image in its own way evocative of the ‘sweet air’ of Petrarch’s fantasy.

The ‘herrin’, as Shen points out, is a Germanic equivalent to the Latin ‘domina’ (and thus Italian ‘donna’).⁷³⁵ ‘[H]errin’ has an air of medieval otherness about it, of court poetry and *Minnesang*, and lends the poem an anti-modern atmosphere. ‘Weihe’ thus concerns itself with some Petrarchan basics: a concern with time and contingency, and remedying these in art. Petrarch suffers fragmentation in time’s

⁷³⁴ Bettarini, *Canzoniere*, vol. I, p. 567.

⁷³⁵ Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 121. ‘herrin’ is also the word used by Goethe in his Petrarchan sonnet ‘Epoche’, which was included in George’s and Wolfskehl’s Goethe anthology *Deutsche Dichtung* in 1901 (pages 35-6: available online at: <https://archive.org/details/goethe01goet/page/34/mode/2up>, accessed 03/01/2025). ‘herrin’ thus has literary precedents in this Petrarchan tradition. Indeed, in 1911 George translates Dante’s ‘così la donna mia’ (*Par.* 23: 10) into ‘So meine Herrin’ (x/xI: 126) in reference to Beatrice.

flux, building his lyric cycle as a mirror of this internal rift.⁷³⁶ George likewise aims at a vision of non-fragmented fullness of 'dasein' within the poetic 'bilde'.

Regarding the time of the poem, Bozza points out that the muse's kiss is marked by a sudden shift from the predominant present into the past tense of the final stanza. Drawing on the work of Manfred Frank, Bozza interprets this as relocating the grounding instance, the guarantee of the poet's consecration and authority as poet, into 'ein älteres, vergangenes, damit faktisch unwiderlegbares Geschehen'.⁷³⁷ Thus the union with the muse, the kiss of the final stanza and the confirmation of the poet's status as 'rein und so geheiligt' (II: 10) is presented, with a change in temporality, as 'immer bereits vollzogen[]'.⁷³⁸ Schelling would say that all original grounding appears as a negation that creates a past tense.⁷³⁹ This is congruent with the structure of George's retrospective strategies of self-grounding as sketched so far. By positing the moment of consecration into the past, the

⁷³⁶ Cf. Guérin, 'Poesia' in *Lessico Critico Petrarcesco*, p. 258: 'La poesia risulta allora un errare (il che vuol anche dire errore) di traccia in vestigio in evocazioni (fugaci, come il benessere che procurano: *Rvf* 284, ma queste apparizioni finiscono con l'essere mere illusioni: 226), un pellegrinaggio profano sempre più disperato (*Rvf* 205-306 [...])' ('Poetry thus ends up as a wandering (which also implies error) from trace to trace in evocations (fleeting, like the comfort they provide: *Rvf* 284, yet these apparitions ultimately prove to be mere illusions: 226), an increasingly desperate secular pilgrimage (*Rvf* 205-306 [...])). And cf. Greene, *Post-Petrarchism*, p. 15 ('the lyric sequence has always, and necessarily, announced its internal fragmentation').

⁷³⁷ Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 159 n. 81. Bozza is also cited by Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 126, reviewing the scholarship on this problem.

⁷³⁸ Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 160: 'Und auch innerhalb des Verlaufs der immer bereits vollzogenen "segnung" setzt sich die Präsentation des umgekehrten Machtverhältnisses, die Darstellung der Souveränität des Ichs fort'.

⁷³⁹ Schelling, *Weltalter* 1815, SW, I, 8, 224, handling the problem of beginning, stresses that all beginning rests upon a negation: 'Der Anfangspunkt (terminus a quo) keiner Bewegung ist ein leerer, unthätiger Ausgangspunkt, sondern eine Verneinung derselben, die wirklich entstehende Bewegung eine Ueberwindung dieser Verneinung'. He concludes, after offering some examples (the point as the negation of extension, the number one as the negation of numeral multiplicity, etc.), 'und so ist Verneinung überall der erste Uebergang von Nichts in Etwas' (p. 225). The point is that any beginning is always conceived of as the negation of a prior state, thereby constituting a past tense. That is, any beginning requires the positing of a past tense which it can negate in order to exist. Cf. F.W.J. Schelling, *The Ages of the World (1811)*, trans. with an introduction by Joseph Lawrence (State University of New York Press, 2019), p. 135. On this aspect of Schelling's cosmomythography specifically see Norman, 'The Logic of Longing: Schelling's Philosophy of Will', esp. pp. 94-95: 'There is a universal structure of natural succession: if a beginning point is to ground a sequence, it must be characterized by a fundamental negativity' (p. 95).

present tense of lyric utterance is thereby grounded and legitimised with its own mythical prior justification, and the poet's beginning sustained by an eternal past, for all beginning, Schelling reminds us, is a middled beginning, for time 'nicht von der Vergangenheit, nicht von der Gränze, sondern vom Mittelpunkt anfängt und in jedem Augenblick der Ewigkeit gleich ist'.⁷⁴⁰

The logical causality in 'Weihe' is contorted by the poem's chronology. Cause and effect are inverted, the past tense of the muse's descent turning the effect of her summoning in stanzas one to five chronologically into the cause of those stanzas' aesthetic experiences, given that the muse's descent thereby becomes temporally antecedent to the present tense's aesthetic ruminations (e.g. l. 9). The effect of the muse's blessing, the aesthetically mature poet, in turn becomes the cause of that muse's descent.⁷⁴¹ Thus, the cause in the present is revealed as the effect of a prior cause, in turn presented in the poem's progression as the effect, and forever so, with present consecration wedded to eternally past causation. The structure is rather similar to Schelling's conception of God's self-positing. As Judith Norman writes:

God 'gives birth to himself' by positing the ground as the ground, which is to say making it his past and the cause of his coming to be. And, as

⁷⁴⁰ Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *Die Weltalter Fragmente: In den Urfassungen von 1811 und 1813*, ed. by Manfred Schröter (C.H. Beck'sche, 1966), pp. 80, 140. Cf. Krell on this *Weltalter* draft in *The Tragic Absolute*, p. 118: 'The beginning of the process depends upon the bipolarity expressed in the two principles: time opens up in the middle, as it were, between contraction and expansion, rather than at one end of the timeline. Always a future stretches out ahead, always a past streams away behind (75)'. For myth and one's 'teleologische Rechtfertigungen des Lebens' see Manfred Frank, *Der kommende Gott: Vorlesungen über die neue Mythologie*, 8th edn (Suhrkamp, 2015), pp. 110-11.

⁷⁴¹ Cf. Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 127: 'Der Musenkuss ist deswegen eine Folge, keine Ursache der Krönung zum Dichter'.

Schelling indicates, God is actually prior to his ground [...] The cause is responsible for its effect, but the effect makes the cause a *cause*.⁷⁴²

The switch to the past tense enables the poem to circle infinitely in this shifting of cause and effect, while suggesting that that pastness forever guarantees the legitimacy of the present. So George creates an eternally present grounding moment of pastness to stabilise the poetic beginnings represented by his *Hymnen*.⁷⁴³ Shen insightfully stresses that the ‘sprunghafte Erzählperspektive’ downplays narrative movement and emphasises ‘mehr Bildlichkeit als Beweglichkeit’, whereby the jump from present to past, as recounted by a future poet recollecting the time of his consecration, temporally distancing himself from both that past event and, implicitly, the present tense, isolates the scene and represents it within the poem’s own programme of containing aestheticised reality ‘nur im bilde’ (II: 10).⁷⁴⁴ If logic and chronology appear disrupted in this mythical moment of self-grounding, it is because the privileged moment did not occur in time, it is rather posited out of necessity in a retrospective, and thoroughly Schellingian, manoeuvre of negation:

For Schelling, the past does not ‘precede’ the present in the sense of linear temporality; rather, it grounds the present. Past and present are not separated by a chronological difference, but rather by ontological difference.

That is, the past does not precede the present within time: rather, time itself

⁷⁴² Norman, “The Logic of Longing: Schelling’s Philosophy of Will”, here 104.

⁷⁴³ Cf. Schelling, *Ages of the World* (1811), p. 141: ‘the priority of what we just happen to call a cause is in fact a being-posited-as-past by the effect’. Cf. on the matter of beginning as creation of an ‘eternal past’ in relation to Schelling, Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder*, 13.

⁷⁴⁴ Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, quotes from pp. 126, 127.

is produced when the past is made the ground of the present. And this grounding relation, Schelling has argued, is ultimately reducible to a sort of logical identity.⁷⁴⁵

Thus, logic is saved by this manoeuvre, in that the muse, which is not the lyric self, is nevertheless the lyric self in another mode, subordinated qua ground to that self qua consequent – that is, the relation is ontological, *not* temporal or chronological (because prior to temporality as such).⁷⁴⁶

George thereby manages to save his own private moment with the muse from the present lyric utterance of the poem's invocative powers. Its pastness makes it inaccessible to the otherwise 'hypnotic' motions of the poem's first four present tense stanzas.⁷⁴⁷ Indeed, the poem's final word ironically thematises this: 'nah' is actually what the scene is not. The readerly present and the moment in which poetic authority is grounded are separated by a leap, as Shen's wording suggested, too great for the reader to accomplish but the facticity of which must be taken in faith.⁷⁴⁸ Suggesting the sublime motion from the poet's protected union

⁷⁴⁵ Norman, 'The Logic of Longing: Schelling's Philosophy of Will', p. 105.

⁷⁴⁶ On this Norman, 'The Logic of Longing: Schelling's Philosophy of Will', pp. 96, 103.

⁷⁴⁷ Cf. Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 122 for the direct addresses (to the poet) as 'hypnotisch'. Zanutchi, *Transfer und Modifikation*, p. 319 similarly stresses the importance of trance and 'Berausung' in relation to George's 'Weihe' and symbolism generally. Cf. too Martus, *Werkpolitik*, p. 607 for the 'Zusammenhang von Herrschaftsarchitektur und klanglicher Verführung'. Zanutchi (*Transfer und Modifikation*, p. 327, and cited also in Shen, *Ennui*, p. 126) similarly maintains that the switch into the past tense has 'die Funktion, die Szene in die Ferne zu rücken und ihre erotische Unmittelbarkeit zu mildern, und bewirkt, dass der Leser als Nicht-Eingeweihter der Vereinigung nicht unmittelbar beiwohnen und diese nur aus der Retrospektive nachvollziehen darf'.

⁷⁴⁸ 'die sprunghafte Erzählperspektive', Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 126. Cf. the rhetoric of a leap as necessity in any truly free, originary ('Ursprung') and spontaneous act of will in Schelling's philosophy – see Jochem Hennigfeld, *F.W.J. Schellings 'Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit'* (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001), p. 28: 'Vor allem aber bietet der Begriff des Sprungs selbst einen Anhaltspunkt. Denn ein unvermittelter Anfang, ein Beginnen ohne äußere Einwirkung kennen wir durchaus, nämlich dann, wenn frei gehandelt wird. Freiheit bedeutet Spontaneität, d. h. etwas aus sich selbst beginnen können'. On this exemplarily see Schelling, *Philosophie und Religion*, p. 31 (SW, I, 6, 38): 'Mit Einem Wort, vom Absoluten zum

with the 'herrin' into the 'stream of life',⁷⁴⁹ into the stream of finite phenomena and changeability, it mimics the descent, now refigured as an ascent, of God out of the 'self-enclosed pulsating' of the 'Ungrund's dark, circular chaos and into the linear light of finite historical progression.⁷⁵⁰ George's meeting with the muse, with its deliberately syntactically blurred mechanics, is such a 'self-enclosed' gesture, and the Master's exhortation ('Hinaus zum strom!') breaks him out of this 'pre-symbolic antagonism' (the suffocatingly forced relationship) and releases him to stream of life of 'symbolic difference'.⁷⁵¹

Wirklichen gibt es keinen stetigen Uebergang, der Ursprung der Sinnenwelt ist nur als ein vollkommenes Abbrechen von der Absolutheit, durch einen Sprung, denkbar' (also cited by Hennigfeld, *Schellings 'Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit'*, p. 28). Cf. Leahy, *'Der wahre Historiker'*, p. 85, for a similar conceit in Bachmann's context. Where Leahy is concerned with what falls out of 'progressive, teleological time' (p. 141), George is here falling (under the cloak of a self-willed command – 'Hinaus!') into that 'progressive, teleological time', even if his agenda is to then attempt to freeze it 'im bilde' as an exertion of desire and artistic power. Significantly, Leahy identifies the movement of a '*Sprung*' (emphasis original) right at the heart of narrative and of beginning: 'In the beginning is the *Sprung* in which the subject paradoxically 'leaps' (as *Zufall*) into and is lost (as *Abfall*) to representation' (p. 85). George, contrary to Bachmann's careful examination of these metaphysical issues of modernism, is certainly not lost – and would certainly object to being compared to '*Abfall*!' – but rather quite fulfilled in his leaps. Having so carefully crafted and staged the appearance of necessity to his artistic being, one could reasonably imagine he is precisely the type of figure Bachmann sets out to question. George foregrounds not chance or contingency but, via his temporal manipulations, the apparent necessity of his consecration, the necessity, so thoroughly conveyed by that imperative 'Hinaus!' of beginning. In this way he is 'simultaneously dependent on and independent of [his] conditions', to borrow from Žižek's description of the motions of self-reflexivity in German idealism; George "'independently" posits his own dependence' on his higher other, his muse. See Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (Duke University Press, 1993), both quotes here p. 126 (not in reference to Stefan George, obviously).

⁷⁴⁹ William Petropulos, 'Stefan George and the Return to Political Reality', (January 23, 2017), available online at <https://voegelinview.com/stefan-george-return-political-reality-part/> (Accessed 01/11/23).

⁷⁵⁰ 'This, then, is how Schelling solves the problem of the 'Fall' of eternity into time: this 'Fall' is actually not a fall at all but a *Beginning* in the precise sense of relief from an unbearable tension, a *resolution* – that is, the act of resolving an acute, debilitating deadlock. By means of positing finite-temporal reality, God breaks out of the vicious cycle of drives, He accomplishes the passage from the drive's self-enclosed pulsating which can never stabilize itself into firm reality to the actual world of differentiated objects, from pre-symbolic antagonism to symbolic difference'. Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder*, p. 55. This is the basic contention of Schelling's philosophy, namely, that no beginning can be understood absolutely, it is always grounded in something itself unintelligible. Cf. Andrew Bowie's 'Translator's Introduction' in F.W.J. Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, trans. with introduction and notes by Andrew Bowie (Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 20.

⁷⁵¹ Cited text Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder*, p. 55.

Immediate presence is at any rate denied by the necessity of the gap; fantasy and desire are thereby protected in their non-fulfilment. Žižek explains that the function of fantasy is not an imaginative fulfilment of desire, but rather a primal learning how to desire, a scenario covering over the abyss of the Real and consequently framing and structuring reality.⁷⁵² George's scene circles this abyss, keeping the primordial scene of consecrated presence distanced, for to stage it in real time and potentially 'traverse' it would mean revealing its contingency and the nothingness that it harbours.⁷⁵³ Keeping the fantasy fulfilment at bay, transplanted into the past tense, keeps it alive; akin to Schelling's primordial 'decision' that grounds the present in a 'past which was never present' but always already past.⁷⁵⁴ Thus the poetic present tense of George's beginning allows him to maintain the fantasy of becoming what he already is, for it has been determined by an already completed past condition. As the scene of the poet's union with the muse, the consecration ('Weihe') signifies the kind of 'self-referential, tautological, performative operation' typical of the Lacanian *point-de-capiton*, the 'transcendent Guarantee' that supplies the poem its identity, for George here stages a self-impelled, self-referential self-crowning dependent upon a muse who only appears upon his self-authorised and authoritative, masterly command.⁷⁵⁵ This autoreferential function is outlined by Maik Bozza in his reading of the final stanza,

⁷⁵² Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 132.

⁷⁵³ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 141.

⁷⁵⁴ Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder*, p. 22.

⁷⁵⁵ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 109. On George's 'inclinazione autopedagogica' see Pirro, *Come corda troppo tesa*, 222. Cf. on the poet's 'Autosuggestion' here also Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, 127. Arbogast, *Erneuerung*, pp. 99-100 argues that the reason George named the poem 'Weihe' as opposed to the more Baudelairean *Segen* lies in the word *Segen*'s implicit need for a higher authority to do the blessing. Unlike Baudelaire's *Bénédiction*, Klopstock's *Die Stunden der 'Weihe'*, as Arbogast reads it, is the likelier intertext in understanding George's preference for the idea of consecration as 'eine innere Verfassung, ein état d'âme' and in both poets, 'Weihe' is the place, 'in dem das Gedicht entsteht', p. 100.

so that the poet's finger becomes the 'ausdrücklichen Zeichen des Zeigens auf sich selbst als Sinnbild eines totalen, absoluten Selbstbezugs'.⁷⁵⁶

The mechanics of 'Weihe's grammar suggest what Maurizio Pirro discusses as George's 'administration' ('amministrazione') of a discourse of secrecy ('il segreto') that locks down his authorial control over the Circle.⁷⁵⁷ The secret, as Pirro writes, is empty, much like the Lacanian structure of fantasy just discussed. Like in 'Weihe', what matters is that the secret is openly addressed but undisclosed, its content empty but the discourse surrounding it, its 'administration', is full.⁷⁵⁸ The fantasy of self-grounding in an ineffable guarantor of spiritual-artistic power allows George to maintain his elite self-staging as the singular *Meister* of his cultural moment.⁷⁵⁹ Likewise in 'Weihe', the 'secret' is here expertly administered, the

⁷⁵⁶ Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 164. Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, pp. 128-29 tempers the force of Bozza's reading by providing a philologically very sensible reconstruction of the final stanza's last two lines, doing away with the scholarship's emphasis on the self-referential, thoroughly melancholic artist's pose as intimated from the image of the poet resting his head, 'Dem finger stützend, deiner lippe nah' (II: 10) and emphasising instead the narrative, Shen's reformulation runs: 'Dass sie im Kuss deiner Lippe nah nicht strebte, dem stützenden Finger auszuweichen'. (Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 129, author's italics). Regardless of whether Bozza's absolute gesture totally fits, the poem's self-referentiality and the poet's performance of autonomy remain, as discussed above. As Shen (p. 128) writes: 'Trotz der problematischen Deutung der hermetischen Finger-Lippe-Haltung ist Bozzas Umdeutung der Melancholie in die Souveränität des Dichters wohl zutreffend in Bezug auf den Grundton des gesamten Gedichts'. Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, pp. 151-52, points out furthermore the literary-historical background of hymns as being involved with the 'Selbstbegründung des Subjekts' (p. 152).

⁷⁵⁷ Pirro, *Come corda troppo tesa*, p. 191.

⁷⁵⁸ There is ultimately no 'nucleo sapienziale occulto' ('hidden core of wisdom'), but rather what counts is the 'discorso intorno al segreto, proprio nel senso che deve necessariamente svolgersi alla periferia del segreto stesso e riguardare non il suo senso ultimo, che rimane soggetto alla discrezione interpretativa del *leader*, ma le condizioni concrete della sua amministrazione' ('discourse surrounding the secret, precisely in the sense that it must necessarily take place on the periphery of the secret itself and concern not its ultimate meaning, which remains subject to the leader's interpretive discretion, but the concrete conditions of its administration'), Pirro, *Come corda troppo tesa*, p. 193.

⁷⁵⁹ Of course, in 1892 the George-Circle was not yet a thing, but the seeds for this elitist pose of exceptional singularity ('his claim to radical singularity' Lucas-Jan Dörre calls it, 'The Role of Rhythm in the Works of Arno Holz, Stefan George, and Georg Trakl', PhD Dissertation (University of Oxford, 2024), p. vi), were being laid early on. Pirro treats the Georgian secret in a more recent article, again emphasising the functional role of legitimating the poet's singular authority: 'Questa reticenza corrisponde evidentemente a una strategia di esclusione destinata a consolidare la capacità carismatica del leader e a renderne visibile la superiorità spirituale [...]' ('This reticence clearly reflects a strategy of exclusion designed to reinforce the leader's charisma and highlight his spiritual

reader getting a highly mediated preview into the poet's past, becoming a quasi-mythological scene. The grammatical density, the final stanza's textual opacity, is a 'mark of jouissance',⁷⁶⁰ stumping us with its presence and sending us searching for unconscious meanings. To borrow a quip from Bernhard Siegert quoted by Leahy, '[e]s ist der Entzug, der gibt'.⁷⁶¹

In Schellingian terms, the poem stages a mysterious contraction inward (in its 'Eigenwille', or 'Grund' of self-involved reflexivity) which then appears to burst and expand outwards as poetic communication, the communication reaching out for a reader and their alterity ('Existenz') in the implicitly apostrophic (if explicitly self-reflective) call 'Hinaus zum strom!';⁷⁶² or, finally, in Gundolf's interpretation, the poem seeks 'den Gott aus sich herauszustellen, [...] das gepreßte Innen zu füllen in die entleerte Welt, kurz: dem Wort Fleisch zu schaffen'.⁷⁶³ What all this has in common is the retreat into a self-same, contracted secrecy that can nevertheless then expand outwards towards otherness.⁷⁶⁴ As Lehnen argues, the poet in 'Weihe'

authority') etc. See Maurizio Pirro, 'Strategie della reticenza in Stefan George', *Studi Germanici – Quaderni dell'AIG* 3 (2020), *Il non detto / Das Ungesagte*, ed. by Lorella Bosco and Marella Magris, pp. 79-90 (pp. 80-81). The focus on this article is rather, as I read 'Weihe' above, on what Pirro calls the 'non detto' (that which is not said, the un-said) of the poems' aesthetics so that interpretation within the context of the George Circle becomes impossible without 'intimità con il maestro e alla conoscenza diretta del suo insegnamento' ('intimacy with the master and direct knowledge of his teachings', p. 81).

⁷⁶⁰ Voruz cited in Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, p. 159.

⁷⁶¹ Siegert cited in Leahy, *Der wahre Historiker*, 221 n. 60. Leahy relates Heidegger's musings on the 'Satz vom Grund' to the problem of grounding in Bachmann's *Malina*. There, aesthetic representation similarly comes to stand in for a 'secret' that can only act as ground in its hiddenness. Like George's, it 'is only 'given' in being simultaneously withheld. *Grund is what is withheld in every representation*' (p. 221, italics original).

⁷⁶² For the relation of Schelling's 'Grund' and 'Existenz' to 'Eigenwille' and 'Universalwille' see Hennigfeld, *Schellings 'Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit'*, p. 73. For otherness as inherent to apostrophe see Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, p. 220.

⁷⁶³ Gundolf, *George*, p. 56.

⁷⁶⁴ Cf. Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder*, p. 24: 'a proper act of creation posits the being (the contracted reality) of an Otherness which possesses a minimal self-consistency and exists outside its Creator'. Franke, in *Dante's Paradiso*, develops a theory of redemptive narcissism that ultimately opens out to otherness, and remarks on page 233 that '[a]utonomous self-generation engenders relation to alterity and, in the case of Dante's theological poem, performs a repetition of divinity'. While not reading in a Schellingian framework as Žižek is above, there is a similarity in the necessity of otherness being posited in any act of self-grounding. This certainly makes sense from Schelling's

is from the outset already initiated ('sacrifié'), so that the poem is more of a 'confirmation' rather than an initiation – it is his 'auto-accomplissement',⁷⁶⁵ mythologising his own moment of creative grounding and using myth to evade what Manfred Frank calls the 'Verzweiflung bodenloser Selbstrechtfertigung' that myth shields from.⁷⁶⁶ 'Weihe', with its stylistic 'harte Fügung', is fundamentally an allegory of the mysterious mechanics of poetic self-grounding and creation.⁷⁶⁷

ii. The Singularity

George thus finds himself alone with himself, his muse stuck in the past. *Hymnen's* following poem, 'Im Park' (II: 11), thematises his status as singularly exceptional poet, alone from the crowd, and shifts the nature imagery of 'Weihe' to the cultivated nature of a park landscape.⁷⁶⁸ This cultivation is mirrored in poetic form, a consistent binding of language into a tightly regulated iambic pentameter attenuated by alternating strong and weak endings:

Rubinen perlen schmücken die fontänen ·

Zu boden streut sie fürstlich jed/er strahl ·

perspective, where any idea of beginning presupposes something being overcome ('for there is no beginning without overcoming', quoted from Schelling, *Ages of the World*, trans. by Wirth, p. 78).

⁷⁶⁵ Lehnen, *Mallarmé et George*, pp. 280-81.

⁷⁶⁶ Frank, *Der kommende Gott*, p. 111.

⁷⁶⁷ Cf. Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 176 for the 'Umcodierung poetologischer Mythologie in Georges Willen zur eigenen lyrischen Selbstbestimmung und damit verknüpft zur fundamentalen Neubegründung der Poesie'. Jürgen Brokoff, *Geschichte der reinen Poesie: Von der Weimarer Klassik bis zur historischen Avantgarde* (Wallstein, 2010), p. 498 contextualises 'Weihe' within the discourse of 'harte Fügung', outlining how the opening two stanzas of the poem formally signal a shift from a 'sanfte Sprachfluss' to a 'harte Fügung' and finally 'geht im abschließenden Bild von der 'herrin' (l. 17) und dem 'rein' (l. 21) gewordenen Dichter in einen ideologischen Zustand der Verhärtung über'. Brokoff concludes that George does not oppose the 'zwei[] Prinzipien' of smooth speech and 'harte Fügung' but unites them in opposition to the 'glatte Fügung' otherwise associated with nineteenth-century epigonism.

⁷⁶⁸ Cf. Heidi E. Faletti, *Die Jahreszeiten des Fin de siècle: Eine Studie über Stefan Georges Das Jahr der Seele* (Francke, 1983), p. 100: 'die kultivierte Beherrschung der Natur wohnt dem Park-Begriff inne'.

In eines teppichs seidengrünen strähnen

Verbirgt sich ihre unbegrenzte zahl.

[...]

(II: 11)

As Merklin remarks, the poem's terzinas attest to 'Georges Affinität zum romanischen Sprachraum'.⁷⁶⁹ These terzinas, more specifically, are of the Dantean kind, linked by Bozza to the poem's water imagery: as the water of the fountain flows endlessly on, so the interlocking chains of *terza rima* potentially flow on endlessly if not stopped.⁷⁷⁰ The park motif kicks off an interest in George's poetry for aestheticised landscapes that will find its culmination in the aesthetic gardens of *Algabal* (I: 63) and *Das Jahr der Seele* (SW, IV).⁷⁷¹ 'Im Park' leads us into the mixing grounds of nature and culture, into poetry itself.⁷⁷² The poem opens up a cycle that concludes with *Hymnen*'s final poem 'Die Gärten Schliessen'.⁷⁷³

⁷⁶⁹ Franziska Merklin, 'Hymnen', in *Stefan George – Werkkommentar. Studien und Interpretationen zu sämtlichen Dichtungen und Übertragungen*, ed. by Jürgen Egyptien (de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 23-42 (p. 28). See p. 31 for the relevance of other canonical authors to both *Hymnen* in general and 'Im Park'. For the *terzina* form as inherently Dantean and its presence in Germany (as discovered by the Romantics), especially in the later nineteenth century, see Hölter, "Der Dichter der Hölle und des Exils", p. 204 ('alle nachfolgenden Dichter, die sich dieser Form bedienen, wandeln zumindest formal auf Dantes Spuren').

⁷⁷⁰ Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 167. Cf. Armin Schäfer, 'Gärten in der Lyrik Stefan Georges', in *Sozialgeschichtliche Aspekte des Gartens: Gardens in social history*, ed. by Walter Gebhard (Peter Lang, 2002), pp. 151-165 (p. 164) and *Die Intensität der Form*, pp. 180-81. Cf. likewise A.W. Schlegel, who emphasises the form's 'darin liegende Hinweisung auf die Zukunft', *Geschichte der romantischen Literatur*, p. 176.

⁷⁷¹ For Algabal's gardens see William Waters, 'Stefan George's Poetics', in *A Companion to the Works of Stefan George*, ed. by Jens Rieckmann (Camden House, 2005), pp. 25-49 (pp. 31-32).

⁷⁷² For the literary-historical equation between poetry and gardens, of a poem as a garden, and vice versa, see Armin Schäfer, 'Gärten in der Lyrik Stefan Georges'. Also cited by Bozza in his discussion of 'Im Park', *Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 166.

⁷⁷³ On the 'genau kalkultierten kompositorischen Absicht' see Ralf Simon, 'Hymne und Erhabenheit im 19. Jahrhundert, ausgehend von Stefan Georges "Hymnen"', in *Lyrik im 19. Jahrhundert: Gattungspoetik als Reflexionsmedium der Kultur*, ed. by Steffen Martus, Stefan Scherer and Claudia Stockinger (Peter Lang, 2005), pp. 357-385 (p. 357).

What happens in the garden, or the park, or the poetry as the site of experimental temptations, results in the lyric self's banishment, his fall from Eden.⁷⁷⁴ With 'Weihe' in mind as the enactment of a foundational mythological moment of legitimisation,⁷⁷⁵ the recourse to the cosy safety of the park as a form of contained nature bears similarly mythopoetic strains. Manfred Frank, in his tentative definition of myth in the *Vorlesungen über die neue Mythologie*, points out the etymological root of *paradise* as *garden*, an enclosed space where mankind first lived free of sin.⁷⁷⁶ This garden was also, of course, the site of the fall, not totally impermeable to the slithering forces of seductive evil. George experiences this in his attempt to reconstitute a lost Edenic garden, in and as his poetry, a garden of aestheticism safe from the evils of the world.⁷⁷⁷

Within his park, however, he cannot completely avoid 'der töne lockung' (II: 11). As the liminal space between nature and civilisation, as Arbogast argues, the park is the locus where 'Weihe' and 'Begehrlichkeit' are played out against one another, and the aesthetic landscape of a park is, like the garden of Eden, not free from the forces of temptation, despite George perhaps seeking to find there a 'strain of earth's sweet being in the beginning | In Eden garden'.⁷⁷⁸ 'Der dichter', aside with himself, is not bothered by 'der töne lockung', but he nonetheless

⁷⁷⁴ Cf. Vilain, 'Stefan George's Early Works 1890-1895', p. 55 for the 'pain and temptation' featured in *Hymnen*'s thematics.

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⁷⁷⁶ Frank, *Der kommende Gott*, p. 111.

⁷⁷⁷ Cf. the summary given by Edwin H. Zeydel, 'Stefan George as a Prophet of the New Germany', *Books Abroad* 12.3 (1938), pp. 274-76 (p. 275): 'What, then, we repeat, are the principles which link George to this time and age in Germany? First of all, George despises naturalism and all the ugliness, the pragmatism, the positivism which were so rife during the late nineteenth century when he began writing. He would cure the social ills of *die Allzuvielen*, as he calls them, not by arousing social pity but by ennobling mankind'. For a scholarly more grounded overview, see Steffen Martus, 'Geschichte der Blätter für die Kunst', in *Stefan George und sein Kreis. Ein Handbuch*, vol. 1, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer, Wolfgang Braungart, Stefan Breuer and Ute Oelmann, 2nd edn (de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 301-64 (pp. 321-23).

⁷⁷⁸ Arbogast, *Erneuerung*, p. 98. Poetic text cited from Hopkins, 'Spring', in *The Major Works*, p. 131.

perhaps eavesdrops ('lauscht') on those seductive tones; he not totally cut off. While he does not yearn for erotic intimacy like the others ('Es schmachtet leib und leib sich zu umfahen'), he is not totally unaffected by his position, this glimpse of bodies slowing down his creative activity: 'Er hat den griffel der sich sträubt zu führen'.⁷⁷⁹ The task of beginning, of leading the pen, presents difficulties, and comes ironically at the close of the poem, so that the beginning of writing, in content, is the ending of the form, the already written text.⁷⁸⁰ The third person 'Dichter' and the invisible first-person gesture are not self-same. The poet, unlike the 'Dichter', has finished the poem, having mastered beginning and ending. The effect of splitting the poem's 'Er' from the poet's *Ich* is that George remains one step ahead of his self-representation as 'Dichter'.

Against Dante as read by Freccero, in which the forward movement inherent to *terza rima* serves to culminate in the joining of Dante the pilgrim and Dante the poet, here *terza rima* serves to propagate the gap between lyrical 'er' and poet George.⁷⁸¹ That poet's stylus is in hand, but it refuses to guide or be guided, a writerly conundrum similarly thematised in Petrarch's struggles to capture Laura's memory in writing.⁷⁸² The key difference, again, is that George's vision is

⁷⁷⁹ Bozza reads the sceptre of the poem 'Rückblick' as his 'Schreibgriffel', a 'Symbol des Herrschers über die dichterische Phantasewelt', Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 237. *Hymnen* have three such phallic signifiers: the 'griffel' (II: 11), the 'zepter' (II: 23) and, at its close, the pilgrim's 'stabe' (II: 28).

⁷⁸⁰ Cf. on *terza rima*'s particularities in its 'recapitulation' of itself Freccero, 'The Significance of Terza Rima', p. 261.

⁷⁸¹ Freccero, 'The Significance of Terza Rima', pp. 264-65.

⁷⁸² E.g. *Rvf* 20: 12-14:

'Now more than once I started writing verse
but then the pen, the hand, the intellect
were conquered at the opening of the battle'
In *Rvf* 73 he ends on the note of his tired pen:
'Song, I can feel my pen already tired
from talking long and sweetly by its means,
but not of all my thoughts that speak to me'
(II. 91-93).

See Bettarini's comments in *Canzoniere*, vol. I, p. 384 for comparisons to other *loci* in Petrarch and Dante

anticipatory.⁷⁸³ Like the lark, he is just setting out, whereas in *Rvf* 73 Petrarch refers to the exhaustion that sets in after writing. George is future oriented, Petrarch past. Petrarch's faculties are 'conquered' (*Rvf* 20: 14), George's poet, on the other hand, has a mission to get to.

The separation of an 'er' out of a lyrical *Ich* distances George's poet from Romantic poets, as Merklin argues, raptured by nature or their beloved, George stresses instead his poet's 'Arbeit am eigenen Werk'.⁷⁸⁴ The poem's Dantean *terza rima* (also used by Petrarch in the *Trionfi*) is employed to facilitate somewhat the movement of the stubborn stylus, as *terza rima*, once underway, creates a movement of indefinite self-propagating, a naturalness in the endless forward spiralling of its rhymes, as Freccero, and indeed A.W. Schlegel demonstrate.⁷⁸⁵ George is thus formally relying on his Trecento ancestors while thematising the struggle to write, answering Type-1 Petrarchan content with Dantean form.

iii. 'Von einer Begegnung' between Baudelairean Modernity and Petrarchan Trecento

The poems following involve a return to the *Fibel* theme of the encounter in the Baudelairean vein of 'À une passante' (*LFdM* 93), grafted onto George's personal search for a companion that could imparadise his existence.⁷⁸⁶ The

⁷⁸³ Cf. Durling and Martinez, *Paradiso*, p. 466 (commentary to *Par.* 23: 1-139).

⁷⁸⁴ Merklin, 'Hymnen', 26 n. 18. Cf. Pensa, *Saggio critico*, p. 96.

⁷⁸⁵ See A.W. Schlegel's *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* (part of the 'Index. Zur Bibliothek eines jungen Menschen', cited from Groppe, *Die Macht der Bildung*, p. 487) for his comments on Dante's *terza rima*: 'Der erste Reimvers ist gleichsam der Vater der 3ten ihm entsprechenden Zeile, und der 2te trennt und verknüpft sie beyde. Freylich erscheint diese erste in sich vollständige Zahl hier 30 unter den Schranken der Endlichkeit, indem jede Terzine, vermöge des vereinzelt Reimes in der Mitte eine folgende fordert, grade wie durch die Productivität der Natur immer in jeder Erzeugung ein Widerstreit der Kräfte ausgeglichen, zugleich aber der Keim eines neuen Widerstreits ausgestreut wird, und so ins unendliche fort' (p. 151). Cf. Freccero, 'The Significance of Terza Rima', p. 285.

⁷⁸⁶ Cf. Ulrich K. Goldsmith, *Stefan George: A Study of his early Works* (University of Colorado Press, 1959), pp. 57ff.

exemplar here is 'Von einer Begegnung' (l: 15), which recounts his fleeting encounter with an unspecified other and the subsequent attempt to recuperate the moment in memory. Walter Benjamin compared George's poem with its Baudelairean forebear, noting the differences that differentiate them: in George there is no moving crowd, nor is there a reciprocal exchange of glances, and as such George's poem remains a 'self-conscious elegy' as opposed to the epiphanic moment of 'love at last sight' in Baudelaire.⁷⁸⁷ There, the exchange of glances occasions the epiphanic enthusiasm and fantasy of rebirth.⁷⁸⁸ Wieland took the intertextual reading one step further back in his study, arguing that the scenery of George's poem evokes a pre-modern setting that ties the passer-by motif's recurrence to the trope of the Lady's greeting in Italian Trecento poetry, most notably in poems by Dante and Petrarch: George's is a variation on

die Ursituation stilnovistischer Lyrik: die erotisch-emotionale Betroffenheit des liebenden Sprechers angesichts des Vorüberschreitens der grüßenden Herrin, durch deren Blick der im Herzen des Dichters schlummernde Gott Amor geweckt wird.⁷⁸⁹

⁷⁸⁷ Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire. A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. by Harry Zohn (Verso, 2023), p. 45 (46 n. 22 for comparison to George cited). Cf. Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, p. 27 on Baudelaire, citing Benjamin.

⁷⁸⁸ Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. with notes by James McGowan (Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 188-189:

'One lightning flash . . . then night! Sweet fugitive,
Whose glance has made me suddenly reborn,
Will we not meet again this side of death?'

trans. McGowan). The number beside *LFdM* corresponds to McGowan's edition.

⁷⁸⁹ Klaus Wieland, 'Stefan George: Von einer Begegnung (1890). Ein intertextueller Dialog mit Dante, Petrarca und Baudelaire', *Recherches Germaniques* 14 (2019), pp. 105-125. <https://doi.org/10.4000/rg.1301> I am citing it here from <https://journals.openedition.org/rg/1301#bodyftn55> (Accessed 7/11/2023) and given that there are no page numbers indicated, I cite by paragraph number (§) instead. Text cited here from §9. The article is an updated version of the argument in Wieland, *Der Strukturwandel in der deutschsprachigen Lyrik vom Realismus zur frühen Moderne* (Romantischer Verlag, 1996), pp. 97ff. This intertextual literary aetiology from Baudelaire to Dante and Petrarch is also looked at by

Shen, despite being otherwise quite attuned to Dantean and Petrarchan subtexts, downplays Wieland's emphasis on the Trecento, 'denn es fehlt dem vorliegenden Gedicht [i.e. 'Von einer Begegnung' – JW] gerade der Gruß des lyrischen Gegenübers'.⁷⁹⁰ Indeed, George's lyrical self avoids eye contact and returns to himself in the late of day, attempting 'treu zug um zug dein bildnis zu beschwören' and ultimately failing.⁷⁹¹ What I emphasise here is that alongside the passer-by tradition, George remains in a fundamentally Petrarchan mode, grappling with an 'innamoramento' motif – 'the transfiguring initial sight of the beloved' in Culler's words⁷⁹² – as Wieland argues (citing *Vita nova* 21 and 26, and *Rvf* 108-111), which relegates the desired other to a fantasy realm and thereby allows the poetic speaker to retrospectively regain control over an experience of fragmentation.⁷⁹³

This is most obviously expressed in 'Von einer Begegnung's emphasis on the parts of the desired other (e.g. ll. 6; 16; 19).⁷⁹⁴ The Georgean subject's attempt to re-build the image retrospectively is linked by Schultz and Pensa to the *Vita nova*, with Pensa comparing it specifically to chapter XXXIV, wherein the young Dante is sketching the figure of an angel.⁷⁹⁵ George's latent Petrarchism subtends his lament about transience and the failure of memory, however, as does the

Culler and, building on Culler (*Theory of the Lyric*, pp. 26-27), and more recently by Julia Caterina Hartley, who explores in detail the shifting experience of temporality between the medieval poems of Dante and Guido Cavalcanti and that of Baudelaire in the modern city. See Julia Caterina Hartley, 'The Medieval and the Modern in Baudelaire's "À une passante"', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 48, 1&2 (2019-2020), pp. 98-113, here pp. 105-06.

⁷⁹⁰ Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, 91 n. 297.

⁷⁹¹ Allowing Shen to implicitly link the speaker's failure to remember to *Die Fibel's* poetics of failure Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 90. Cf. also p. 88.

⁷⁹² Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, 27.

⁷⁹³ Wieland, 'Stefan George: Von einer Begegnung', §9-10, §18 for fragmented memory, §21 for 'Innamoramento-Motiv'.

⁷⁹⁴ To take one example, Laura's marble-white skin, see e.g. *RVF* 37: 98; 38: 12; 165: 1; 185: 2; 208: 12 etc. For the poem's use of synecdoche in the context of George's love poetry see Versari, *La Poesia*, p. 24.

⁷⁹⁵ Schultz, *Studien*, p. 28. Pensa, 'Stefan George e Dante', p. 25.

parenthetical, apostrophic subjunctive (ll. 13-14), which as Versari notes is a level of subjective intensity unusual for George, combined with parenthesis as a typical Petrarchan ingredient.⁷⁹⁶ George's 'steter regen bittre lauge' (l. 17) recalls Petrarch's own 'bitter rain of tears' (*Rvf* 17: 1), and his painterly struggles (l. 18) evoke Petrarch's difficulty 'sketch[ing]' Laura's eyes out of memory (*Rvf* 308: 9-14). With the metonymy of Laura's eyes we are in the usual, fragmented realm of Petrarchan desire and the Lady's fragmented body.⁷⁹⁷ It is not necessarily the case that George is consciously imitating Petrarch (Type-1), but the structure of experience is similar (Type-2): an attempt is made to unite the fragments of memory into a coherent whole (George's 'bildnis').⁷⁹⁸

As Wieland argues, the poem's pre-modern aura (its scenery of 'säulen') contributes to its decisively anti-Baudelairean thrust.⁷⁹⁹ Wieland's chosen intertexts (*Vita Nova* 26 and *Canzoniere* 109-111) invite comparison to George's simulation of a pre-modern moment and his failure to inaugurate a poetics of praise à la Dante (*VN* 26: 4). George's eventual dictum ('poetry is praise') was read by Todd as inherited partially from the poet's engagement with Dante, finding its suitable object in Maximin. Todd remarks: 'Merkwürdig an Georges Hymnen ist gerade das Fehlen eines eindeutigen Lobesgegenstandes'.⁸⁰⁰ 'Von einer Begegnung', which Todd does not comment on, is symptomatic of this, the result of an attempt to develop a

⁷⁹⁶ Cf. Versari, *La Poesia*, for this 'ricorrenza di frasi esclamative (peraltro rare in George)', p. 24. Bornmann, 'Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile', 151 note 19: 'La parentesi è un modulo molto frequente nel Petrarca, cfr. CXXVI v. 5e 41, CXXVI v. 8, CLXXVI .v 5, CCVI .v 4 e altri luoghi ancora'. She complements this with comparisons to George's own poems.

⁷⁹⁷ As Bettarini notes, *Canzoniere*, vol. II, p. 1354, commentary to l. 11.

⁷⁹⁸ On 'bild'-ideology see Ludwig Lehn, 'Wort, Bild, Tat', in *Krise und Gemeinschaft: Stefan Georges* Der Stern des Bundes, ed. by Christophe Fricker (Vittorio Klostermann, 2017), pp. 214-218.

⁷⁹⁹ Wieland, 'Stefan George: Von einer Begegnung', §20: 'Der Ort der Begegnung ist somit kein moderner Großstadtboulevard wie bei Baudelaire, sondern ein vormoderner, der an die entsprechenden Settings in Dantes *Vita Nuova* und Petrarcas *Canzoniere* erinnert'.

⁸⁰⁰ Jeffrey D. Todd, "'Poetry is praise": Beobachtungen zu Stefan Georges Dichtung', p. 49. For Maximin as the right object of a properly hymnic poetry see p. 54.

poetics of praise without finding the right kind of sublime object, focused instead on a bad object, namely, the quintessentially modern and ephemeral passer-by. Maximin becomes 'Mitte' and 'Gipfel' simultaneously, an organising core and a peak worth striving for, as he argues.⁸⁰¹ 'Mitte', Todd argues, means that George is 'kein Dichter der Transzendenz'.⁸⁰² What is dissonant about 'Von einer Begegnung' is the way it explores the teething pains of a poetics of immanence over and against one of transcendence.

In the *Vita nova*, Dante recounts the miraculous nature of his beloved lady Beatrice and figures this exemplarily in 'So gentle and so pure' (VN XXVI: 5), in which Beatrice appears in an 'eternal present' conferring endless blessings upon whomever receives her greeting.⁸⁰³ Hartley, using Culler's theory, argues that the priority of present tense verbs works to emphasise the recurring present possibility of experiencing the sweetness ('dolcezza') that Beatrice offers in the 'now' of the poem's utterance.⁸⁰⁴ Contrary to the temporal sequence of Baudelaire's modern sonnet, in Dante 'the view of the beloved is not subject to the flow of time. [...] Dante has thus removed time as a consideration'.⁸⁰⁵ As critics have pointed out, the title of George's poem suggests retrospective distance ('Von einer' suggests a report about, not the encounter itself).⁸⁰⁶ The immediacy of Dante's poem as a site

⁸⁰¹ Todd, "Poetry is praise", p. 55. For Pindar "Poetry is praise", p. 56. Given the obvious resemblance of Maximin to Beatrice, however, one can agree with Todd that Dante retains priority here. See similarly Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 159: 'Es geht bei George trotz der vielen religiösen Bezüge immer um Immanenz, niemals um Transzendenz'. And similarly Braungart, *Ästhetischer Katholizismus*, p. 78, who makes the same point (also cited by Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 159).

⁸⁰² Todd, "Poetry is praise", p. 60.

⁸⁰³ Cf. Barolini, *Dante and the Origins*, p. 50 for Beatrice's 'eternal present'.

⁸⁰⁴ Hartley, 'The Medieval and the Modern', pp. 105-06. Similarly Franke, *Dante's Vita Nuova and the New Testament*, p. 35: 'The miracle of Beatrice lies in what her presence works within the hearts and minds of others, not in what is factually documentable about her'.

⁸⁰⁵ Hartley, 'The Medieval and the Modern', p. 101. See also p. 105.

⁸⁰⁶ Verena Neumann, *Erotik in der deutschsprachigen Lyrik der Moderne* (Königshausen & Neumann, 2008), points out that *von* implies '[e]in zeitlicher und emotionaler Abstand' between the time of narration and the event, p. 177.

of blessing brought by *she who blesses*, Beatrice, is lost in George who is, like Petrarch, thematising instead the recollection of the beloved passer-by.⁸⁰⁷ Unlike George, however, Petrarch rests assured that given the intensity of emotion experienced in the exchange of gazes (*Rvf* 108: 2-3), the memory of her 'sweet bearing' (108: 7) will remain in his mind and heart (l. 8) more unchangingly than 'a statue that was cut from solid diamond' (108: 6). This intensity of memory is recounted in one of the following poems (*Rvf* 110), in which he tells us of a moment that Laura passed and greeted him. The imagery foreshadows Baudelaire's:

I said inside my heart: "What do you fear?"
 No sooner had the thought come to my mind
 than were those rays that melt me present there:
 as lightning comes with thunder both at once,
 so I by lovely eyes that shone, was struck
 together with the sound of her sweet greeting.
 (*Rvf* 110: 9-14)

⁸⁰⁷ Cf. Rainer Warning, 'Imitatio und Intertextualität. Zur Geschichte lyrischer Dekonstruktion der Amorthologie: Dante, Petrarca, Baudelaire', in *Interpretation. Das Paradigma der europäischen Renaissance-Literatur. Festschrift für Alfred Noyer-Weidner zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. by Klaus W. Hempner and Gerhard Regn (Wiesbaden:1983), pp. 288-317, concluding that what Baudelaire does as opposed to Petrarch is to set 'das nicht mehr Mögliche vor den Hintergrund des einst Möglichen' (p. 316). The implication for the present study, thus, is that the George of 'Von einer Begegnung' is at a triple remove from Dante: already Dante's 'memoria', the 'Bindung an ein metaphysisches Sein' (p. 317) following Warning, is lost to Petrarch, who replaces it with the 'reflektierte Glückserfahrung des Jetzt' (p. 316) of his powers of remembrance, a 'verklärende Erinnerung' (p. 317) figured in a poem. Baudelaire, in turn, does not have even this, his 'À une passante's sestet ending on a note of pain, rather than harmonic satisfaction (p. 316). George cannot, refuses to, write this type of poem in sonnet form, so that the structural dynamic that exists between the form's octet and sestet does not come into play. The final two stanzas of 'Von einer Begegnung', which would somewhat correspond to the sonnet's sestet, do feature a good degree of cognitive frustration (his inability to remember) but also the intense affect of his 'bebendem finale'. Whether this constitutes a happy ending, in whatever way that might be interpreted (cf. Bozza, *Genealogie*, p. 200 for the interpretation of the poem's final line as a 'Masturbationsphantasie'), remains open.

governed instead by a whirlwind of transience and contingency.⁸¹⁰ When reality is soaked in theological splendour and meaning guaranteed with reference to a transcendent instance, there is no need for epiphanies. There is more and less intensity, as in the Lady's greeting, but the Lady's appearance, miraculous as she may appear, can only appear miraculous in God's world. The permanence of blessing in Dante's 'So gentle and so pure', as read by Hartley, is representative of the ever-present faith in a higher being that envelopes all contingency and re-involves it into the necessary plan of life. The lack of this is manifested in modernity's epiphanies as glimpses of what has been lost. Where in Dante and Petrarch these moments were weaved into the texture of life and backed up by Biblical tradition (where signs necessarily point to a divine referent), in modernity they can only ever be glimpsed in the artwork, itself a hybrid work of transience and permanence, contingency and necessity.⁸¹¹

Finally, the communal blessing brought by Beatrice, the effect she has on everybody, is at odds with what in Baudelaire and George are highly individual and subjective responses, symptomatic at once of modernity's isolation and alienation of the individual from the community in the faceless crowd, but symptomatic also of what I am suggesting is the 'objective' aspect of Dante's experience, as he recounts in the *Vita nova*.⁸¹² Beatrice's miraculous blessing reveals the world's grounding in God. Beatrice is able to awaken Amor even 'where he is not present

⁸¹⁰ The 'principle of intelligibility' as Freccero calls it, 'The Fig Tree and the Laurel Tree', p. 35. Franke, *Dante's Vita Nuova and the New Testament*, p. 50 puts it succinctly: 'we are in a universe governed by a central transcendental Signified ("signifié"), which turns everything else into signifiers of itself'. This, to return to the title of the present thesis, might be called a Lacanian master signifier.

⁸¹¹ See Franke's discussion of the analogy Beatrice-Christ, and of apocalyptic signs in *Dante's Vita nuova*, p. 92, and Freccero, 'The Significance of Terza Rima', p. 270 for history as 'God's poem'. As Baudelaire, in *Le Peintre de la vie moderne* (cited in Hartley, 'The Medieval and the Modern', p. 108) states: 'La modernité, c'est le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent, la moitié de l'art, dont l'autre moitié est l'éternel et l'immuable'.

⁸¹² Warning, 'Imitatio und Intertextualität', p. 312 refers to the subjective aspect of Petrarch's encounter.

potentially, she, by working miraculously, makes him come' (VN XXI: 1). She is quite literally a miracle worker: 'These and other marvelous things proceeded from her virtuous power' (VN XXVI: 4), appearing sent 'from heaven to earth to manifest' a miracle (XXVI: 6).⁸¹³ Her divinity resides in the force of her gaze through which she 'ist zu etwas in der Lage, was eigentlich Gott vorbehalten ist: Zur Erschaffung aus dem Nichts,' as Coseriu and Kunkel argue.⁸¹⁴

The fugitive, linear encounter of modernity lacks such a grounding centre-presence, it falls into the past, irretrievably.⁸¹⁵ As Hartley argues, the emphatic present tense and 'chorality' that Dante's *So sweet and so pure* evokes invites communal participation, opposed to the linear temporality of Baudelaire's (and George's) private experience.⁸¹⁶ Laura and Beatrice, however, differ. Although I argue that Laura belongs to a world in which the divine still hovers ethereally over earthly things, Petrarch does indeed make his encounters with Laura a private affair, as Warning argues.⁸¹⁷

Like Petrarch, the lyric *Ich* of George's 'Von einer Begegnung' is summoning and addressing an image of his beloved passer-by out of memory. Following Warning, the emphasis is not strictly on the ungraspable blessedness of that other,

⁸¹³ Cf. Franke's comment on this poem, *Dante's Vita nova*, pp. 36-37.

⁸¹⁴ Dante Alighieri, *Vita Nova: Das Neue Leben*, trans. with commentary by Anna Coseriu and Ulrike Kunkel (Deutscher Taschenbuch, 1988), p. 165.

⁸¹⁵ Rainer Warning points out how Dante, in building successfully on a precursor poem by Guido Cavalcanti ('Chi è questa che vèn, ch'ogn'om la mira') and thereby overcoming ('überbietet') him, makes Beatrice the subject of the first quartet's verbs, that is, puts her in the main position of agent, *centres* her (Warning, 'Imitatio und Intertextualität', p. 296, and p. 300 for the 'Entrückung der Herrin in göttliche Unnahbarkeit, das Zentrum stilnovistischer Amorthologie') and finally a concluding point: 'Das inszenierte Begehren behielt bei Dante sein unverrückbares Zentrum im göttlichen Amor [...] Petrarca ersetzt den göttlichen Amor durch die Subjektivität des lyrischen Ichs' (p. 312).

⁸¹⁶ The temporality and its relation to the 'singular, personal experience' discussed by Hartley, 'The Medieval and the Modern', pp. 105-06.

⁸¹⁷ Warning, 'Imitatio und Intertextualität', pp. 303-04: 'Beatrice ist Reaktionen der Betroffenheit enthoben und kann in ihrer überirdischen Entrücktheit nicht zur Angesprochenen des lyrischen Ichs werden. Bei Petrarca ist diese Überpersönlichkeit zurückgenommen, das typisierende Präsens dem *passato remoto* gewichen, die Szene ist isoliert zur persönlichen Begegnung, in die das erinnernde Ich die angesprochene Geliebte miteinbezieht'.

but on the *Ich* and its (in)ability to recall and re-signify that other to us in the present poem ('Es geht. . . wie war dein haar und wie dein auge?', I. 19). The focus is not the other's gaze, but rather his own. Come Maximin's advent, the Georgean *Ich* broadens into a community of *us*, providing a central point to reach towards but which, like Beatrice in the *Vita nova* ('questa gloriosa', VN XXXII: 1), is unreachable ('in deiner unnahbaren glorie', SW, VI/VII: 101).⁸¹⁸ Like Beatrice for Dante, Maximin will be summoned 'aus der idealen Jederzeitlichkeit der *memoria*' to instantiate a blessedness in the form of present poetic utterance, whereas before, as in 'Von einer Begegnung', George is stuck in Petrarchan temporality. To cite Warning once more, George here thematises 'die zeitliche Distanz zu dieser Erfahrung, die damit ebenfalls in der Dimension der Zeitlichkeit gehalten [...] wird'.⁸¹⁹ After the revelation of Maximin, memory is no longer the 'mnemotechnical' (to borrow Shen's terminology) exercise of recalling a fragmented picture ('treu zug um zug'), but rather the new-and-improved, Latinate and Dantean '*memoria*' is cause for the renewed affectivity of blessedness in the present.⁸²⁰

⁸¹⁸ Warning, 'Imitatio und Intertextualität', p. 312. Warning mentions how Petrarca makes of himself and his memory of Laura a centre, contrasting Dante's making of Beatrice a centre. 'Auf den Leben und den Tod Maximins' is surprisingly *ich*-less for George's poetry, where the 'Maximin' cycle of *Der siebene Ring* modulates between an '*ich*' and a '*wir*', the *ich* steps back for the first five poems of 'Auf das Leben und den Tod'. However, it resurges emphatically at the end of the sixth and final poem in which the poet defines his task:

'Nun dringt dein name durch die weiten
Zu läutern unser herz und hirn . .
Am dunklen grund der ewigkeiten
Entsteigt durch mich nun dein gestirn'
(SW, VI/VII: 105).

⁸¹⁹ Warning, 'Imitatio und Intertextualität', p. 304. That is, as Warning later specifies, the insistence on the 'Opposition von Einst und Jetzt' as a 'formale Konstant der ganzen Gruppe' of Petrarch's passerby poems (p. 311).

⁸²⁰ Bolter this reading is Warning's own argument that Petrarch pursues such a type of memory, ('Imitatio und Intertextualität', p. 305), where Petrarch's '*bassando il viso*' is no longer that of a regretful Dante, but rather one on the search for memory, 'der nach Spuren suchende, der die Abwesende erinnernde' etc., quite like our George here. For George's '*Mnemopoesie*' in programmatic detail see Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, and in relation to 'Von einer Begegnung', p. 95.

Warning highlights the distinction between ‘memoria’ and ‘rimembrare’, where the latter, adapted to the current reading, indicates quite literally the remembering, ‘zug um zug’, of the other, while ‘memoria’ signifies the ‘metaphysische Betroffenheit’ that Dante’s ‘libro de la memoria’ (VN I: 1) brings.⁸²¹ Again, to summarise: George moves from the alienated Petrarchan subjectivity of recollecting fragments to the metaphysical unity of Dantean thought that brings transcendence into the immanence of the text, the ‘book of my memory’.

The two sonnets that follow ‘Von einer Begegnung’, the ‘Neuländische Liebesmahle’ (II: 16-17), are written in Petrarchan, rather than Shakespearean form (composed of an octave and a sestet versus the latter’s three quatrains and a couplet). However, their rhyme schemes follow Baudelairean rather than Petrarchan patterns.⁸²² The two poems offer an orientalist fantasy of exoticism for the effect of suspending the bourgeois lyric fiction stretching from ‘Einladung’ to ‘Von einer Begegnung’.⁸²³ It does not last for long; by the end of the second ‘Liebesmahl’, we are returned to a lyric *Ich* separated from the fantasy and nostalgically reminiscing of an inaccessible, childhood past (‘Die frühe zeit wo ich noch könig war’, II: 17).

⁸²¹ Warning, ‘Imitatio und Intertextualität’, p. 305. In her discussion of *Hymnen* Merklin points out that part of George’s operation here is the re-substantialising (a “wieder substantiell und tiefgründig werden lassen”, citing Joachim Jacob) of Baudelairean ‘Flüchtigkeit und Plötzlichkeit der Schönheit’ through allusion to Dante’s *Vita nuova*. See Merklin, ‘Hymnen’, p. 37. Merklin (p. 37) cites Schultz, *Studien*, p. 28 for the reference to Dante.

⁸²² George after the *Fibel* never again uses a Petrarchan sonnet with that poet’s rhyme schemes. By my own count, following Stroppa’s introductions to each sonnet, Petrarch never puts both of his E-rhymes in the same tercet, as George does in these two sonnets (ABAB CDCD EEF GGF, I: 16 and ABAB CDCD EFE GFG, I: 17). Nor do F and G rhymes appear in Petrarch, whose sonnets do not count more than five rhymes within them (i.e., A to E). For ABAB CDCD as a Baudelairean rhyme see Roger Pearson, *The Beauty of Baudelaire: The Poet as Alternative Lawgiver* (Oxford University Press, 2021), p. 393. On Petrarch’s rhyme schemes cf. Joseph A. Barber, ‘Rhyme Scheme Patterns in Petrarch’s Canzoniere’, *MLN*, 92.1 (1977), pp. 139-146.

⁸²³ Cf. Levinas, *On Escape*, trans. by Bettina Bergo, with Introduction and Annotations by Jacques Rolland (Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 53: ‘Escaping is the quest for the marvelous, which is liable to break up the somnolence of our bourgeois existence’.

The first 'Liebesmahl' suggests itself as the answer to 'Von einer Begegnung's problems, expressing a hortatory desire to summon 'Die Wissensvolle' through the use of exotic scents and perfumery substances so that she will be made available to sensual (not necessarily carnal) knowledge. That the lyric *Ich* reappears at the end of the second poem, with its placid acknowledgement of some 'frühe zeit' where it was still 'könig' (one thinks of Petrarch's similarly fanciful 'sweet season of my early years, *Rvf* 23: 1), suggests that this magical language has not affected the desired outcome, and the return of the *Ich* heralds the second part of the cycle, which begins with the Ovidian 'Verwandlungen' (II: 18), chronicling the descent of the world from a golden through a silver and into the present age of steel (at some remove from the colourful splendour of the 'Liebesmahle', II: 17). This steel age brings us then to another passer-by narrative in the poetic triptych 'Ein Hingang', 'Nachthymne', and 'Strand' (II: 19, 20, 21). The *Ich*, missing from the mythical imagination of 'Verwandlungen', comes back to himself, represented externally in third person, in 'Ein Hingang', contending once more with the ephemeral passer-by experience. This triptych constitutes what Greene called a Petrarchan 'phenomenology of fiction'.⁸²⁴

In 'Ein Hingang', the solitude of the 'jungen dulder' occasions him to think about his beloved and how she will react to his death, her beloved eye staring fixedly 'in tränen' (l. 14). As 'Von einer Begegnung' revealed, he was unable to bring himself to meet the other's gaze. With a slight tinge of 'trennungswehmut' now (l. 15), it is only with distance and solitude that the eye of the beloved comes into focus. On the safety of the shore (l. 2), removed from her, he can look her in

⁸²⁴ Greene, *Post-Petrarchism*, p. 22: 'the conceit of temporal process, of a continuum that binds the entire sequence of "scattered rhymes" and activates what might be called the phenomenology of fiction'.

the eye, write her poetically once his new course of adventures is opened to him (ll. 7-8). Now there is no real risk of catching her gaze given the temporal, geographical distance. He accepts 'das göttliche geschenk' of death with an implicit excitement in his fantasy of the 'wunderlande' beyond the boundless blue sea: his separation from her is a metaphorical death with an implicit promise of liberation, sung in a 'neues lied'.⁸²⁵ It also suggests a reversal of the passer-by dynamic as recounted in Baudelaire and Petrarch: no longer is it the Lady who disappears, be it into the crowd or into the afterlife, it is rather he who escapes. He can make himself disappear, implicitly making her vanish too.

But escaping is not that easy. The following poem in the sequence, 'Nachthymne', finds the externally posited third person 'dulder' transformed once more into the poetic Ich and transfixed by the Lady's eye.⁸²⁶ Petrarchan self-questioning emerges in his lack of a comforting, guiding hand, in his doubts about the adequacy of his own poetic initiation ('Weihe' versus the threat here of being 'entweiht', l. 12) and, like Petrarch's 'sweet wish' (*Rvf* 323: 75), in the seductive morbidity of his 'süßes lüsten nach dem tode' (l. 12).⁸²⁷

⁸²⁵ For the 'Hingang' as death see Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 15 & Zanucchi, *Transfer und Modifikation*, p. 289: 'In *Ein Hingang* symbolisiert das "göttliche geschenk" den Tod, der den Dichter aus der Verstrickung seiner gescheiterten Existenz erlösen soll'. Bozza argues that this poem stages the poet fantasising about precisely the type of place depicted in the 'Neuländische Liebesmahle' prior, 'in intratextueller Analogie zum ersten Rauschschub des ersten *Liebesmahls*' and furthermore represents another of George's attempts to escape into a 'Reich ohne Frauen' (*Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 223).

⁸²⁶ Bozza, *Genealogie*, pp. 228-29 similarly reads 'Nachthymne' 'als innere Rede des "dulder[s]" aus *Ein Hingang* in "Erwartung" seines Sterbens' and simultaneously as expressing George's own autopoetic self-reflections.

⁸²⁷ While not equally enthralled by death as George's lyric *Ich* is here, Petrarch on occasion makes remarks such as *Rvf* 71's (one of the *canzoni* dedicated to Laura's eyes, no less): 'happy death! for I would in their presence | rather die happily than live without them' (ll. 29-30) or 86's 'death would be lovely while life goes so well' (l. 4). Dying in theory offers a reunion with Laura, as in the *congedo* to *RVF* 323:

'My song, you well may say:
"These six visions just given to my lord
have given him a sweet wish to know death"
(ll. 73-75).

The final stanza of 'Nachthymne' considers, in an extended sequence of insistent subjunctive hypothesising ('Geruhe du nur'), what would happen were he ever to receive even a glimpse of the light of the Lady's gaze, with an equally insistent use of sibilance to tie it together sonically, ending the poem on a note of quiet reflection:⁸²⁸

Geruhe du nur dass ein kurzer schimmer
Aus deiner wimper brechend mich versehre:
Des glückes hoffnung misst ich gern für immer ·
Nach deinem preise schlöss ich meinen psalter
Und spottete dem schatten einer ehre
Und stürbe wertlos wie ein abendfalter.
(II: 20)

With this entomological image we are thematically once more hovering, like moths to the light of canonical texts, around Trecento poetry. Hoffmeister identifies the image as part of the 'petrarkistische "Bildersprache": 'der Liebende flattert wie ein Schmetterling oder eine Motte um die Kerze (19, 141)'.⁸²⁹ I wish to propose here this hitherto overlooked intertext, focusing on poem 19 from Petrarch's *Canzoniere*:⁸³⁰

⁸²⁸ The idea of a close or ending is doubly evoked by the word 'abendfalter', at once suggesting the closing (folding) of the moth's wings ('falten') as well as the end (*Abend*) of day. Cf. The entry for *Falter* in the Grimm Dictionary: 'FALTER, *m. papilio, weil er ruhig sitzend die flügel faltet, wie man ein zelt (it. padiglione, spabellon, fr. pavillon) entfaltet, passenderer name als schmetterling*'. „FALTER, m.“, Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm, digitalisierte Fassung im Wörterbuchnetz des Trier Center for Digital Humanities, Version 01/23, <<https://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB?lemid=F00668>>, abgerufen am 02.12.2023.

⁸²⁹ Hoffmeister, *Petrarkistische Lyrik* (J.B. Metzler, 1973), p. 29.

⁸³⁰ I have not been able to identify critics elsewhere suggesting this intertext.

Animals exist on earth of such courageous
sight that they dare to face even the sun;
others, because they're harmed by such great light,
do not come out until the sun is setting;

and others in their mad desire hoping
for joy in fire, perhaps because it glows,
learn of its other power, that of burning.
Alas, my place is with this latter race!

I am not strong enough to face the light
of this lady; I cannot shield myself
in shadowed places or in evening hours;

and so with eyes of tears and weariness
my destiny directs me to behold her,
and well I know I follow what will burn me.

(*Rvf* 19)

The sonnet is included among the *Sonetti scelti* discussed prior.⁸³¹ The original Italian employs a good deal of sibilance, as George does in his, but here the poem is more important for thematic reasons. Petrarch does not specify whether he is comparing himself to butterflies ('farfalle') or to moths ('falene'), but either are possible, with moths perhaps providing a more obvious image of one of those

⁸³¹ Stefan George Archive, Landesbibliothek Stuttgart, StGA/George I, 3052.

animals that seek light in the night to their detriment.⁸³² Petrarch here reverses the Dantean entry into paradise, where gazing at the sun without injury becomes possible, he instead remains like the poor moth.⁸³³ Line eight highlights once again George's subtle reversal of his forebear. For if George fantasises about dying 'wertlos wie ein abendfalter', he speaks tactically with similes ('wie') and a subjunctive mode. He does not commit to looking into the blindingly bright 'auge' of his fantasy other. Petrarch, on the other hand, identifies completely with the tragic fate of the moths (l. 8). The tone is emphatically declarative, in an indicative mode, unlike George's fanciful subjunctives.⁸³⁴

Digging further into George's oeuvre, we find another instance where his Dantism comes to answer the personal failings of Petrarchan lyric subjectivity.⁸³⁵ In his address to Ludwig Derleth in poem twenty-eight of *Der Stern des Bundes* (1914, VIII: 45), George instrumentalises this crux of avian sight: 'Du hast den adlers blick der froh zur sonne | Sich wendet' (ll. 1-2). He then compares Derleth to Saint Francis and Bernhard of Clairvaux, two figures from canto eleven of the *Paradiso*.⁸³⁶ The 'adlers blick' further suggests Dante's praise of two important ancients in *Inferno* 4, where Homer (ll. 95-96) and Caesar (l. 123) are both characterised with eagle imagery. Birdseye vision belongs to poets and empire

⁸³² Stroppa, *Canzoniere*, p. 33 refers to the error of either 'farfalle o falene' in mistaking the fire for a source of light, and thus getting burnt. For George, the introductory note to the poem in his Camerini states: 'Rassomiglia sè alla farfalla, che cerca il lume che l'arde' (*Rime*, p. 42).

⁸³³ As pointed out by Stroppa, *Canzoniere*, p. 33.

⁸³⁴ This is not the first time that George has tinkered with Petrarchan subjectivity, as we saw in *Die Fibel*.

⁸³⁵ Even if it is employed in an underhanded critique of the *Kosmiker* Ludwig Derleth, see Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 363. See also Bruno Pieger, 'Erstes Buch', in *Stefan George – Werkkommentar* ed. by Jürgen Egyptian (de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 502-522 (pp. 521-22) for George's engagement with the Munich *Kosmiker* in these poems. Both cite Derleth's *Proklamationen* for the image of the 'adler'.

⁸³⁶ Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 363. Cf. The critical apparatus to the poem (SW, VIII: 137), linking George's use of the adjective 'seraphischem' in relation to Francis to Dante's 'serafico' in *Par.* 11: 37.

builders.⁸³⁷ Finally, in *Paradiso*, it is the heavenly eagle who sees into the will (the sun) of God, into which common human understanding, here metaphorically eyesight, cannot pierce.⁸³⁸

Dante provides George with this noble image of the eagle at a point in the *Der Stern des Bundes* following a sub-cycle addressed to the 'Nordgermanen',⁸³⁹ subjected to a critique using imagery evocative of Petrarchan wandering as a condition of modernity (VIII: 42). The modern condition of Petrarchan subjectivity is thereby transposed onto those whom George is now critiquing from an illuminated Dantean perspective. The Georgean Master of *Der Stern des Bundes*, it is clear, is confident pontificating at his moral lectern, but the George of the *Hymnen* has not yet come to rest, he has not met Dante yet.

The next poem, 'Strand' (II: 21), expresses a desire to move away from the stasis of 'Nachthymne' and 'aus dem fahlen norden' (l. 11), which in 'Hochsummer' (II: 22) is represented by an aesthetic world of excess.⁸⁴⁰ The poem ends with the final line's extravagant image ('Pompador'), a cretic foot pompously occupying its own line in a metrical form that as Zanucchi writes is designed to encapsulate 'die Trägheit der aristokratischen Gesellschaft'.⁸⁴¹ The poet wants out of this pompous world, but before he can break out of his Symbolist *Hymnen* and into the more

⁸³⁷ Julius Caesar is of course one of George's favourite historical 'Gestalten', a figure with whom he shared a birthday (July twelfth), cf. Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 145.

⁸³⁸ *Par.* 19: 52-63. This comparison is made explicit in the following canto, *Par.* 20: 31-32. Durling and Martinez, in their commentary *ad ll.* 31-36., explain: 'Eagles were supposedly able to gaze into the sun [...] in this case, the eagle's eyes, organ of its supreme faculty, gaze on deep mysteries of justice, which the unaided human intellect cannot see', *Paradiso*, p. 411.

⁸³⁹ Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 362.

⁸⁴⁰ Zanucchi, *Transfer und Modifikation*, p. 290 comments that 'der Hochsummer' represents 'ein ästhetisches Vollkommenheitsideal'. As Morwitz reminds us, the world here is not actually of the Romance or Hellenic south, but rather a mishmash of summery scenes from Berlin and Paris. Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 17.

⁸⁴¹ Zanucchi, *Transfer und Modifikation*, p. 283.

Romantic world of *Pilgerfahrten*,⁸⁴² the poet continues to oscillate between retreats into a somewhat aestheticized, symbolic world of ceremonial events and the world in which something happens, but only fleetingly and unsatisfactorily. Another mediating poem, 'Rückblick' (II: 23), brings us from the 'eskapistische Rokoko-Welt' of Hochsommer⁸⁴³ and over to 'Auf der Terrasse' (II: 24), another passer-by poem. 'Rückblick' has autobiographical elements,⁸⁴⁴ but as critics argue it is also poetological: it is a taking stock of his 'Berufung zum Dichter' in light of the fact that upon his glance backwards, things have changed and become 'entrückt und nicht fassbar'.⁸⁴⁵ Time has alienated him from a landscape he once ruled over with his regal 'zepter', a metonymic device figuring poetry.⁸⁴⁶ The tension therefore is time: time has passed, and things that once provided inspiration and consolation are no more, and the future is uncertain.⁸⁴⁷

Akin to Baudelaire's 'un éclair!',⁸⁴⁸ George's speaker in the following passer-by poem *Auf der Terrasse* experiences 'Ein blitz' (II: 24, l. 5) that has both him and his newfound other 'ergriffen durch erhöhte gnade' and to whom 'ein zug von

⁸⁴² Wolters, *Blättergeschichte*, p. 31. Claude David, by contrast, argues that *Pilgerfahrten*'s search does not content itself with the search itself, 'nach romantischem Muster' (Stefan George, p. 65). On Symbolist poetics in *Hymnen* see Zanucchi, *Transfer und Modifikation*, 292 nn. 367 and 375, citing 'Hochsommer' as representative of *Hymnen*'s 'Ellipse des Prädikats, und zwar nicht nur der Kopula, sondern auch des Hauptverbs' as well as for its 'Nominalisierung des Verbs'.

⁸⁴³ Zanucchi, *Transfer und Modifikation*, p. 303.

⁸⁴⁴ Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 18 & Bozza, *Genealogie*, p. 238. Chiefly, it is George's reminiscence of his trip to Denmark and thus thematically the poet is still in the north.

⁸⁴⁵ Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 18. Bozza likewise connects 'Rückblick's landscapes with those of 'Verwandlungen', 'Ein Hingang' and 'Strand' which in turn represented the poet's 'Auseinandersetzung mit der metaphysischen Begründungslosigkeit und Begründungssehnsucht', (*Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 238). Insofar as I am, in the present study, tracing some of George's metaphysical problems with modernity, I am indebted to Bozza's insistence on this aspect throughout his study.

⁸⁴⁶ Bozza reads this sceptre as his 'Schreibgriffel', a 'Symbol des Herrschers über die dichterische Phantasiewelt', Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 237.

⁸⁴⁷ As Seneca (V: 9) reminds us, 'nemo tantum praesentibus miser est' ('Niemand ist nur im Hier und Heute elend'). That is, time's alienating effect is what dominates a mind hanging ('pendentis animi') between recollection of the past and expectation of what is to come ('timoris enim tormentum memoria reducit, providentia anticipat', 'quälende Furcht bringt uns die Erinnerung wieder, und die Voraussicht nimmt sie vorweg', pp. 24, 25). Seneca, L. Annaeus, *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium: Briefe an Lucilius*, vol. I, ed. and trans. by Gerhard Fink (Artemis & Winkler, 2007).

⁸⁴⁸ Cf. Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoese*, p. 101.

wunderstaben' is revealed,⁸⁴⁹ but which then, predictably, proves transient and fleeting: 'Dann aber ach in stete nacht begraben . .' (l. 8). Here is the 'ach' that proved so tricky to overcome in *Die Fibel* – the affective Petrarchan gesture of an 'unquiet heart'.⁸⁵⁰ The shadow of a goddess ('Der göttin schatten', l. 10) intimates in him the titillating idea that the other he encounters could likewise be 'so gross und weise' (l. 11), an elevation to the level of divinity, precipitating then the old Petrarchan paradox of blissful suffering: 'Ich quäle mich in törichter ekstase' (l. 12). George's lyric self in this poem catches a glimpse of divine stasis: 'der göttin schatten rastet auf der vase', even if what he catches is not the transcendent goddess, but merely her shadow. The brevity of this intangible shadow and the aesthetic stasis it provides (the moment in which seemingly 'das Rad des Ixion [still] steht'⁸⁵¹) is broken by that fiery wheel of inconstancy that rolls by him and recaptures his desire, linking it elsewhere ('Entgegen eil ich einem heissen rade').

George's 'heissen rade' has been variously interpreted as standing for the sun itself.⁸⁵² His race towards the sun, like a moth to the flame, is a race to the

⁸⁴⁹ Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 102 reads the 'wunderstaben' in the context of his reading of the poem as an epiphany as a 'göttliche Botschaft, d.h. ein hohes Wissen oder eine tiefe Erkenntnis, die ihnen beiden während des blitzhaften Erlebnisses vom Blickwechsel eingefallen ist'.

⁸⁵⁰ Indeed, the critical apparatus supplied in *SW*, I: 106 shows that in an earlier version of the text (*H*³) this 'ach' was even more emphasised by an exclamation mark that was deleted in the final version. For the 'Augustinian unquiet heart' see Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch*, p. 19.

⁸⁵¹ Arthur Schopenhauer, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by Wolfgang Frhr. von Löhneysen, 5 vols (Cotta-Insel, 1977), vol. I: *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, p. 280.

⁸⁵² Shultz, *Studien zur Dichtung*, p. 23, also cited by Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 99. Schultz links the 'göttin' to *Faust*. There is a predecessor for this also in the *Canzoniere*, where the disappearance of the 'gold chariot' of the sun into the sea on the horizon signals the beginning of Petrarch's turbulent nights (*Rvf* 223: 1). Versari (*La Poesia*, p. 27) sees in the 'heissen rade' a subtle allusion to the myth of Phaeton, falling across the sky in the chariot of his father the Sun, a failure pre-ordained on account of his mortality and transgression (Ovid, *Met.* II: 56). Indeed, his desire is foolish (*Met.* II: 100). Ovid characterises much of the imagery of the episode in terms of fire, flame and bright light, but links specifically the chariot to Phaethon's blazing desire. George's speaker, by contrast, rushes towards a hot wheel, but the displacement of the adjective onto the wheel (be it synecdochally signifying the chariot or metaphorically the sun) does not diminish the image of the speaker's own blazing intent in following that wheel, as Phaethon himself does: 'flagratque cupidine currus' (*Met.* II: 104). Petrarch, in his canzone of Ovidian metamorphoses, refers to the Phaethon episode ('that evil fall', *Rvf* 23: 59) as an analogy for the loss of his own hope. Thus, the image of Phaethon's fall in the chariot of the Sun links the subjective experiences of both Petrarch and

Absolute, one doomed on account of mortal limitations. Whereas Petrarch's ecstasy has him running towards his fatal sun and consenting to death,⁸⁵³ For George's speaker, 'in törrichter ekstase' (l. 12), death does not threaten himself qua lover but the epiphanic moment itself, 'in stete nacht begraben . .' (l. 8). The lyric self can then find triumph ('Triumph!') in, to speak with Shen, his mnemopoetic endeavours of recollection.⁸⁵⁴ This temporality again leaves him unfulfilled, alluded to by the fact that it is precisely 'unsres bundes kleine dauer' (l. 16) that is made to rhyme with 'meine trauer' (l. 14). The speaker read ('las ich') his sorrow in the impossibility of permanence, of the 'Gunst des Augenblicks' necessarily being a mere moment, and not eternity.⁸⁵⁵ The following poem, 'Gespräch' (II: 27) delivers 'eine Klage infolge einer ontologischen Unmöglichkeit'.⁸⁵⁶ The 'klage' is precisely the *Ich*'s (here the muse herself is speaking) inability to descend and offer anything more than the ethereal 'schattenkuss' (l. 13) she currently offers.

As with prior disappointments regarding his encounters, the following poems oscillate back into ekphrastic realms of art. Metapoetically entitled 'Bilder', the poems describe two paintings George encountered during his travels.⁸⁵⁷ The second of the two, in sonnet form (albeit not with Petrarchan rhyming scheme), thematises the painterly artistic feats of Fra Angelico's *Coronation of the Virgin*

George in their struggles with finding meaningful fulfilment. George, however, does not find himself metamorphosed into a swan (*Rvf* 23: 60), but he does come away from the experience with a dual feeling: pride on the one hand for the successful union ('unsres bundes', l. 16), but laced with a melancholy for its evanescent nature ('meine trauer', l. 14). His 'Triumph!' is moderated by the melancholy awareness, 'that worldly joy is just a fleeting dream' (*Rvf* 1: 14). Such a 'triumph' of temporary pleasure failing is, as Levinas writes (*On Escape*, p. 63) a common cause of shame.

⁸⁵³ 'but so mellifluously Love dazzles me
that I mourn for her wrong, not my own pain,
and my soul, blind, consents to its own death'
(*Rvf* 141: 12-14).

⁸⁵⁴ Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 104.

⁸⁵⁵ Schultz draws attention to Schiller's *Die Gunst des Augenblicks*, included in George and Wolfskehl's lyric anthology of German poetry, for its emphasis on the impermanence of 'jede schöne gabe' that are eventually sealed up, buried, by the night of death. See Schultz, *Studien*, p. 24.

⁸⁵⁶ Bozza, *Genealogie*, p. 250.

⁸⁵⁷ See the critical apparatus to *SW*, II: 107-08 for details.

(1434-35). Fra Angelico is lauded, as Pirro points out, not for his successful portrayal of religious content, but rather for his 'glorreich grosse tat' (II: 27) – the successful erection of an enduring work of art.⁸⁵⁸ In the octet, the poem picks apart the details of the painting and itself paints a scene of artistic procedure, which in the sestet culminates in a primordial scene of grace: the Virgin 'empfängt aus seiner hand die erste krone' (I. 14). As Thomas Carlson reads Fra Angelico's paintings as indefinitely pointing beyond themselves,⁸⁵⁹ George's poem likewise shifts the reader's vision from the painting, to its parts, to the act that occasioned it by the Master's hand ('die glorreich grosse tat'), and suggests us to take one step further to see the other *Meister's* writing the scene.

For the present study, these two ekphrastic poems allow for a retreat of the lyric *Ich* into the background in order to escape its usual self-reflective dilemmas, but after it again completes its sojourn (in bygone artistic eras⁸⁶⁰), it once more returns at the close of Hymnen in the poem 'Die Gärten Schliessen', albeit apostrophised now as 'Du':

Frühe nacht verwirrt die ebenen bahnen ·

⁸⁵⁸ Pirro, *Come corda troppo tesa*, p. 55.

⁸⁵⁹ 'Fra Angelico paints according to the poetic logic of exegesis in such a way that figures do not simply depict identifiable things but rather form relations and connections that lead one onward—infinitely—according to a self-transcending movement of anagogic desire or eschatological expectation [...] The theological aesthetic operative in Fra Angelico can force the subject of vision to move ever beyond—to transcend the present and its presence', Thomas A. Carlson, 'Unlikely Shadows: Transcendence in Image and Immanence', in *Transcendence. Philosophy, Literature, and Theology approach the Beyond*, ed. by Regina Schwartz (Routledge, 2004), pp. 105-126 (p. 120). See pp. 119-20 for Carlson's discussion of Didi-Huberman's interpretation of Fra Angelico's paintings, his reading of a 'negative theology' in the painter's works.

⁸⁶⁰ Tracing the discourses of melancholy and loneliness in George's early works, Kolk stresses the pastness of the artistic epochs that these two poems represent, and the artists to whom 'die skrupulöse Selbstreflexion der Moderne unbekannt war', whom 'der Katholizismus ein geschlossenes Weltbild lieferte', are able to achieve 'die glorreich grosse tat' on account of this pre-modern naivety. Via recourse to this fantasy of past wholeness, Kolk concludes, modern art in the present can succeed for George: 'Kunst gelingt in diesen Gedichten durch Rekurs auf Kunst, als Gespräch zwischen den Epochen', Kolk, *Literarische Gruppenbildung*, p. 27.

Kalte traufe trübt die weiher ·

Glückliche Apolle und Dianen

Hüllen sich in nebelschleier.

Graue blätter wirbeln nach den grufte.

Dahlien levkojen rosen

In erzwungenem orchester duften ·

Wollen schlaf bei weichen moosen.

Heisse monde flohen aus der pforte.

Ward dein hoffen deine habe?

Baust du immer noch auf ihre worte

Pilger mit der hand am stabe?

(II: 28)

At the close of the volume, the closing of the gardens. The approaching night is obscuring the 'ebnen bahnen', the Dantean 'straight way' (*Inf.* I: 3), and the poem's atmosphere of secrecy ('hüllen sich in nebelschleier', l. 4) and the onsetting sleep of the world forces the poet to up and leave.

As Schäfer perceptively argues, the depictions of sense experience in this poem foreground a loss of clear vision.⁸⁶¹ The loss of vision is paramount, as it indicates a loss of distance and thus safety. The tone becomes defensive in the third stanza, questioning to what extent his muses ('Weihe's 'herrin' and

⁸⁶¹ Schäfer, 'Gärten in der Lyrik Stefan Georges', p. 158 (cited in Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, 266 n. 214).

Gespräch's 'göttin') are a reliable foundation for building his myth of self-legitimation.⁸⁶² At the end, the 'griffel' he had referenced in the first park poem ('Im Park', II: 11) has transformed here into his pilgrim's walking stick; poetry has occasioned a Petrarchan wandering. Indeed, by following up his question with the self-apostrophising address as pilgrim, he seems to answer his own question. He cannot continue building upon 'ihre worte' – he needs to start again and find another basis. And thus, from ascetic solitude and alienation he sets out in search of an Other, as the epigraph to the following cycle logically concludes (II: 30).⁸⁶³

iv. 'Durch wüsten weiterfliehn' · Petrarchism in the *Pilgerfahrten*

The loss of vision towards the end of *Hymnen*, as identified by Schäfer, is consonant with Gundolf's assessment.⁸⁶⁴ In *Hymnen* he had considered himself in the third person, Gundolf writes (and literally, as we saw in poems like 'Im Park'), now in *Pilgerfahrten* he goes in search of a 'Selbstschau des eigenen Daseins' in the figure of the pilgrim.⁸⁶⁵ Gundolf proceeds to read the drive towards pilgrimage out of the work's biblical epigraph (II: 30), but while he grounds the work within this

⁸⁶² Bozza, *Genealogie des Anfangs*, p. 253 for the identification of 'Gespräch's' speaker with the 'göttin' of 'Auf der Terrasse', and p. 254 for the interaction with her as figuring the poet's 'Sehnsucht nach metaphysischer Beglaubigung'. Cf. Friedrich Lach, 'Stefan Georges Gedichtzyklus "Pilgerfahrten" in Einzelanalysen' (doctoral thesis, Johann Wolfgang Goethe University Dissertation, 1974) similarly argues for 'ihre' referring to the 'herrin's of *Hymnen's* poem 'Weihe' (p. 19).

⁸⁶³ Pirro, *come corda troppo tesa*, p. 58 highlights this 'also' and how it works in 'generando nel lettore una persuasione di attendibilità a vantaggio dell'istanza autoriale' (thereby instilling in the reader a sense of credibility that serves the author's purpose'). Thus again, existential uncertainties on the level of plot are represented as being overcome and mastered by the authorial hand of the 'Werkpolitik'. Lach, 'Stefan Georges Gedichtzyklus "Pilgerfahrten" in Einzelanalysen', p. 19 argues that the 'also' of the epigraph refers immediately back to the question posed at the end of *Hymnen*, and that the poet is 'jetzt auf sich selbst gestellt' (ibid). This alienated wandering correlates to his restriction of Petrarch as analysed in Chapter Two.

⁸⁶⁴ 'Den Ton für seine Bewegung hatte er gefunden, die Sprache für seine Weihe, aber noch nicht die Schau für seine Fülle – die Ausfaltung seiner Intensitas, die Helle seiner Glut', Gundolf, *George*, p. 72.

⁸⁶⁵ Gundolf, *George*, pp. 73, 74.

as the ‘Ursprung dieser Erfahrung’, which is the self’s desire to escape towards another companion, he manoeuvres around its real autobiographical context and its connection (in its second, 1898, publication) to the dedication of the work to Hugo von Hofmannsthal, ‘im Gedenken an die Tage schöner Begeisterung’, on the following page (II: 31). As a paratext, the epigraph testifies to a real-life catastrophe but clothes George’s autobiography in biblical garb, printed in capitalised letters evoking the unchanging monumentality of an ancient Latin inscription, ‘metaphorising the traumatic event *a posteriori* in an effort to reaffirm identity’:⁸⁶⁶

AUFCHRIFT
 ALSO BRACH ICH AUF
 UND EIN FREMDLING WARD ICH
 UND ICH SUCHTE EINEN
 DER MIT MIR TRAUERTE
 UND KEINER WAR
 (II: 30)⁸⁶⁷

⁸⁶⁶ (‘metaforizzando *a posteriori* l’evento traumatico in uno sforzo di riaffermazione identitaria’), Mattia di Taranto *Il Maestro e L’Apostolo: Presenze del Simbolismo Francese nell’Opera Giovanile di Stefan George* (Pacini Editore, 2014), p. 88. Di Taranto’s opening to his chapter on *Pilgerfahrten* likewise discusses Gundolf’s interpretation and the ‘Aufschrift’. The similarity in procedure here is coincidental. The ‘catastrophe’ in question is George’s pursuit of Hofmannsthal. A lively account is given by Norton, *Secret Germany*, pp. 98-107.

⁸⁶⁷ The use of the verb *sein* in the existential clause is especially Latinate, which uses *esse* in this sense, as does the simple, biblically paratactic syntax. Lach makes the convincing point that this diction (as opposed to his hypothetical reformulation ‘Und ich konnte keinen finden’) works to emphasise the pessimistic, existential quality of George’s failure to find a companion: ‘und keiner war’ foregrounds the non-existence of and impossibility of finding such a friend. See Lachs, ‘Stefan Georges Gedichtzyklus “Pilgerfahrten”’, p. 22. Lach likewise provides a convincing metrical and syntactical analysis that illustrates how the few lines of verse create a volume-defining, ‘resignierende Ton’ (p. 22). George here is adapting and translating verses 9 (‘extraneus factus sum’) and 21 (‘et sustinui qui simul contristaretur et non fuit et qui consolaretur et non inveni’) from Psalm 68 (see ‘Anhang’ II: 110). Latin sourced from <https://www.biblestudytools.com/vul/psalms/68.html> (07/07/2023). ‘[E]xtraneus’, George’s ‘ein Fremdling’, is the emblematic word here, the key predicament.

The biblical epigraph and dedication to Hofmannsthal retrospectively fills the figures represented in the volume with a suggestion of historical reality, but their aestheticization prevents full identification. In putting together the epigraph George disavows the ‘sanctity’ of the original biblical text (Psalm 68 in the *Vulgate*, 69 in modern editions) by splicing two verses together (l. 9: ‘extraneus factus sum fratribus meis’ and l. 21: ‘sustinui qui simul contristaretur et non fuit’) and shapes it to his own purpose.⁸⁶⁸ George added this biblical quotation retrospectively, not in the first ordering of the poems into a lyric cycle, but in terms of years. The first publication of *Pilgerfahrten* in 1891 contained neither the epigraph nor the dedication to Hofmannsthal on the opposing page. Both were added only in the 1899 re-publication of *Hymnen, Pilgerfahrten, Algabal* (SW, II) as a triptych. This pilgrim-pose and biblical self-styling is thus, in a way, doubly retrospective, doubly organised.⁸⁶⁹ With the turn of the century and his career on the horizon, and with *Die Fibel*’s preparation underway, the Petrarchan undercurrents of that text continue in the story being told both in the *Pilgerfahrten* as a standalone volume (1891) and as a part of its triptychal re-organisation (1899).⁸⁷⁰ With the doubly retrospective re-release of *Pilgerfahrten*, however, in and around both the publication of *Das Jahr der Seele* and its remedy companion-volume, *Der Teppich des Lebens*, the biblical epigraph fits tellingly into the narrative of the gradual replacement of feminine muse figures by male ones.⁸⁷¹ George himself provides a

⁸⁶⁸ On this further cf. Lach, *Stefan Georges Gedichtzyklus “Pilgerfahrten”*, pp. 20-21.

⁸⁶⁹ Cf. Maurizio Pirro, ‘Pilgerfahrten’ in *Stefan George – Werkkommentar. Studien und Interpretationen zu sämtlichen Dichtungen und Übertragungen*, ed. by Jürgen Egyptien (de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 43-59 (p. 50).

⁸⁷⁰ As Keilson et al. chronicle (*Stefan George. Leben und Werk: Eine Zeittafel*), Karl Wolfskehl, upon hearing George recite one of his early poems from 1888 on November 16, 1897, suggested them to be collected into a single volume (p. 73) and by November 1898 *Die Fibel* was ‘ebenfalls in Vorbereitung’ (p. 81).

⁸⁷¹ A narrative sketched quite clearly by Peter Morgan in his book *Stefan George and the Homosexual Imaginary*, in which he reads *Das Jahr der Seele* and *Der Teppich des Lebens*

key to this self-interrogation with the 'Aufschrift's emphatically masculine pronouns ('einen', 'der', 'keiner'). The search, from George's 1898 point of view, was for a male partner and/or muse. The thrust of the first verse ('ein fremdling'), meanwhile, underlines much of the Petrarchan problematic of (self-)estrangement, wandering 'with a strange voice' (*Rvf* 23: 63).

The Petrarchan lyric subject, with its 'obsessive need for movement, a subtle rhetoric of escape', as Paolo Rigo writes, finds its purest expression in this volume, recounting both the poet's 'spiritual' exile as well as the wandering of poetry itself.⁸⁷² In George's case, the basic metaphor is that of 'Pilgerschaft als Metapher für das Wesen des Dichters'.⁸⁷³ But in the Petrarchan scheme, it is not only the 'Wesen des Dichters', but the essence of poetry itself as pilgrimage: as exploration and ongoing search for poetic form and substance.⁸⁷⁴ Pilgrimage, furthermore, is a spatial representation – in movement – of the poetic subject's ongoing obsession with time.⁸⁷⁵

precisely in terms of this contrast. Lach, 'Stefan Georges Gedichtzyklus "Pilgerfahrten"', p. 20 points out that George appropriated the term 'fremdling' from a previous poem that had been collected in *Das Jahr der Seele* and was originally dedicated to Hofmannsthal.

⁸⁷² 'an obsessive need for movement, a subtle yet utterly sincere and haunting rhetoric of flight [...] The imagery underlying the definition of "peregrinus ubique" is highly applicable to Petrarch's literary universe, depicted as a veritable poetic journey' (un'ossessiva necessità del movimento, una finissima retorica della fuga quanto mai sincera e assillante [...] L'immaginario sottostante la definizione di "peregrinus ubique" è ben applicabile all'universo letterario di Petrarca, rappresentato come un vero e proprio itinerario poetico'), Paolo Rigo, 'Peregrinatio', in *Lessico Critico Petrarcesco*, ed. by Luca Marcozzi e Romana Brovia (Carocci editore, 2016), pp. 231-243, (p. 238). Petrarch's 'exile' is at times 'più ideale che reale' ('more ideal than real', p. 231), writes Rigo, which can be contrasted to Dante's political exile from Florence.

⁸⁷³ Pirro, 'Pilgerfahrten', p. 45.

⁸⁷⁴ Cf. Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 105: 'Zum anderen begibt sich der Dichter wie ein Pilger auf die Suche nach einer Dichtung, die wie die Religion sacral und heilig sein soll'. Cf. Rigo, 'Peregrinatio', p. 238.

⁸⁷⁵ For this concept in Petrarch cf. Meidl, "'Benedetto sia 'l giorno, e 'l mese, et l'anno": Zum Zeitdiskurs des frühen Petrarkismus', p. 91: 'Ein anderer, im Petrarkismus sehr produktiver Bildbereich, spiegelt die Vorstellung von einer verräumlichten Zeit wider: die Wegmetapher, wobei die Richtungsgebung als *tertium comparationis* die Assoziation zur linearen Zeitvorstellung herstellt und als zentrales Motiv in den Vordergrund rückt'. Schloon, *Modernes Mittelalter*, p. 53 identifies 'Verräumlichte Zeit' as a central aspect of George's medievalism in the *Buch der Sagen und Sänge*, although there (the case study poem in Schloon's analysis is 'Sporenwache') space is used to evoke particular historical times and emotional/subjective states, a kind of historical stasis as

In *Teppich*, as was discussed, Petrarch is presented as a lonely hermit-figure ('Valclusas siedler') and cited among those authors who once brought 'trost und beispiel' (v: 27) to our poet.⁸⁷⁶ *Pilgerfahrten*'s opening poem is 'Siedlergang' (II: 32-33), where this Petrarchan anchorite is represented as heading out of his refuge once the harsh weather of winter begins to ease:

›Du klause manche stunden sei gemieden.

In deinen schachten lohnest du mich nimmer [...]

O wie mein sinn entschläft in ihrem frieden‹

(II. 5-8)⁸⁷⁷

Petrarch, to whom the crowds are 'hateful, unfriendly' (*Rvf* 234: 12), seeks them out to escape himself: he cannot bear his own presence (234: 9-10). Unlike Petrarch's anxious, shame-filled subject, George's hermit seems more modern, as Lach observes, as if he is suffering from boredom ('entschläft'), a deadening of his senses.⁸⁷⁸ Once out, he finds himself caught in the ambivalence of desire when he reaches civilisation:

Da stand er wieder in dem alten tale.

opposed to the wandering motif in the present context. That stasis is disrupted, as Schloon demonstrates (p. 54) by George's use of threshold imagery as 'ein räumliches Bild der Grenzüberschreitung' that signifies, with Schloon deploying Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope, simultaneously a 'transgressives Moment' out of temporal linearity (p. 54).

⁸⁷⁶ For loneliness and hermitage in relation to the 'Aufschrift's 'Fremdling' see Lachs, 'Stefan Georges Gedichtzyklus "Pilgerfahrten"', p. 25.

⁸⁷⁷ The hermit's apostrophic address to his 'klause' recalls Petrarch's in *Rvf* 234: 1-4:

'O little room that once served as a port
from my fierce storms that blow throughout the day,
you have become the font of nightly tears
which in the daytime I hide out of shame'.

⁸⁷⁸ For the 'sinnliche Reize' of the outside world as the main reason for his leavetaking here see Lach, 'Stefan Georges Gedichtzyklus "Pilgerfahrten"', p. 27.

›Da tanzen sie mit grellen purpurschleifen.
 Ein fuss im rain! und schwer ist nur das wählen ·
 Den kalten zunder brachten sie zum schwälen ·
 Ich hasse sie und brenne sie zu greifen.
 (II: 32)

The hermit suffers from a Petrarchan melancholy, he is sundered by a dualism that sees the spiritual and the sensual as mutually exclusive.⁸⁷⁹ This split manifests here with the hermit unable to commit to the world of sensual human vitality in the old 'tale', which for the hermit is actually 'des leides ort' (l. 29), a 'sorrowing valley' (*Par.* xvii: 138) ambivalently inciting desire and repulsion.⁸⁸⁰ Here his melancholy indecisiveness finds its most conventional expression: 'Ich hasse sie und brenne sie zu greifen'. A variation on Catullus' 'Odi et amo', this ancient trope is a staple of the Petrarchan subject, torn between the two extremes of hate and desire: 'I am so tired now of all this waiting | [...] that I hate hope and hate what I desire' (*Rvf* 96: 1-3). Like George's hermit, whose inner, 'alten zunder' (l. 15) has been ignited at the sight of the dancers, the Petrarchan subject typically experiences desire as a burning, but with paradoxical enjoyment, likewise speaking of himself as 'zunder'.⁸⁸¹ In the 'alten tale' the hermit-pilgrim has only one foot in the game, an

⁸⁷⁹ Cf. Pirro, 'Pilgerfahrten', p. 57 for the 'Gespaltenheit, die die seelische Verfassung des Einsiedlers prägt'. For the 'dualistisch ausgerichtete Vorstellung' of the hermit in Morwitz' interpretation cf. Pirro, 'Pilgerfahrten', 57 n. 2.

⁸⁸⁰ The women's dancing is an apt image for human life and movement, cf. Lach, 'Stefan Georges *Gedichtzyklus "Pilgerfahrten"*', pp. 28-29.

⁸⁸¹ 'I'm all sulphur and tinder, my heart a fire
 lit by her gentle words I always hear,
 burning within, enjoying that I burn—
 on this I live and care for little else'.

image that John Freccero illuminated in a discussion about the Dante-pilgrim's lagging foot at the beginning of *Inferno*, with the pilgrim starting out stuck in the 'fluctus concupiscentiae' of his earthly entanglements:⁸⁸²

After I had a little rested my weary body, I took
my way again along that deserted slope, so that my
halted foot was always the lower.
(*Inf.* I: 28-30)

Like Dante's pilgrim, too, George's Petrarchan hermit in *Pilgerfahrten* looks up to a mountain for hope (cf. *Inf.* I: 13-16) but manages only a hopeless cynicism:

Was aber schau ich nach des hügels kimme!
Der treppenbogen mit den lichtgestalten
Die edlen schrittes nicht im wege halten.
Vor ihrer keine dränge meine stimme.
(*Il.* 21-24)

(*Rvf* 175: 5-8) Cf. *Rvf* 267: 9; 220: 14; 207: 39. For Catullus cf. 'Odi et amo. quare id faciam fortasse requiris? | nescio sed fieri sentio et excrucior' ('I hate and love. Perhaps you're asking why I do that? | I don't know, but I feel it happening, and am racked', trans. Guy Lee, *Catullus*, pp. 130-31). Catullus' poems re-appeared in a single manuscript only in the 14th century, one that Petrarch possibly accessed and made a copy of. See Lee's introduction to *Catullus. The Complete Poems*, trans. with an introduction and notes by Guy Lee (Oxford University Press, 2008 (1990)), p. iv. Paul Allen Miller, indeed, credits Catullus as 'the founder, or at least the first exemplar, of lyric consciousness in western poetry' as well as attributing the works of 'Petrarch, Sidney and Shakespeare' to his influence, Paul Allen Miller, 'Catullus and Roman Love Elegy', in *A Companion to Catullus*, ed. by Marilyn B. Skinner (Blackwell, 2007), pp. 399-417 (pp. 404-45). Lach, 'Stefan Georges Gedichtzyklus "Pilgerfahrten"', p. 29 also cites Catullus *ad hoc*.

⁸⁸² Freccero, *The Poetics of Conversion*, p. 31.

The inability to reach those heavenly 'lichtgestalten' (figures at odds with the 'roten frauen' of the old valley) indicates a lack of faith in the poetic word as harbinger of transcendence in a world dominated by physical sensuality.⁸⁸³ Here he remains with a *vision*, only the mode of actualising that aesthetic vision is uncertain. As Freccero unearths, Dante's pilgrim with the lagging foot is working within a rich theological tradition in which the soul has two feet: the *intellectus* and the *affectus*, corresponding to the intellect and the will, and the right and left foot, respectively. George's hermit has the *intellectus*, but his will is caught, 'verschlungen in den tanz der roten frauen | [...] in lautem jubel' (ll. 31-32), or to quote Christian Moevs in another context, in the 'sublunar realm of ephemeral sensory experience'.⁸⁸⁴

Then: 'und schwer ist nur das wählen'. The incapacity to decide, to commit to one course of action, is a fundamentally Petrarchan moment, coming to expression at moments of spiritual crisis such as in the long canzone of roving and overthinking, 'I go on thinking, and I'm seized in thought' (*Rvf* 264), where his conscience demands him to turn toward the good once and for all and away from the deceptive delights of earthly *mortalia*.⁸⁸⁵ The conscience of the good

⁸⁸³ It is Claude David's thesis that in the *Pilgerfahrten* George's program is to re-spiritualise art into religion: 'Hier wird die Kunst zur Religion [...] aus der Kunst soll eine neue Liturgie werden'. See David, *Stefan George*, p. 67.

⁸⁸⁴ Moevs, *The Metaphysics of Dante's Comedy*, p. 29.

⁸⁸⁵ *Rvf* 264:

A thought speaks to the mind and it declares:
 "You're longing still? What help do you expect?
 You poor thing, don't you see
 with what dishonor time is passing by?
 Make up your mind now, wisely, and decide
 to pull out of your heart every last root
 of pleasure that can never
 bring happiness, nor will it let you breathe.
 Since you have long been tired and disgusted
 by that false sweetness of a fleeting good,
 a gift the treacherous world bestows on some,
 why do you still place hope in such a thing
 devoid of all peace and stability?
 While life is in your body

nevertheless cannot beat out the lack of willpower to commit to it, and knowing how much time he has wasted deliberating his choices, he cannot make the change, and continues in his ways (l. 136). 'Der Siedlergang' ends with a similarly indecisive questioning: to return to his books and parchments, to his world of aesthetic fantasy and 'lichtgestalten' (but lacking sensuality and thus sensually deadening), or to remain '[v]erschlungen' in vitality amidst 'dionysische Figurationen des formlosen, elementaren Lebens'?⁸⁸⁶ This indeterminacy characterises much of *Pilgerfahrten*'s dialectic. As Böschenstein writes: 'Die *Pilgerfahrten* sind ein Buch der Unentschiedenheit'.⁸⁸⁷ Indecision is the melancholic's condition (opposed to the (Dantean) hero's decisive acting), as Schäfer notes in his discussion of George's later poem 'Der Täter'.⁸⁸⁸

Petrarch has long been read as an exemplary melancholic,⁸⁸⁹ and *Pilgerfahrten*'s figures, with their incessant wanderings and melancholy poses, similarly suffer from such 'transzendente Obdachlosigkeit'.⁸⁹⁰

In 'Beträufelt an baum und zaun' (II: 53), which as Shen, building on David's work, points out was added for the 1899 re-publication and strongly evokes the experience with Hofmannsthal, the dialectic movement of *Pilgerfahrten* between

you have the rein of all thoughts in your hands.
 Hold tight now while you can,
 for, as you know, delay is dangerous,
 and now is not too early to begin'. (II. 20-36)
 and 'for with Death at my side
 I seek new rules by which to lead my life,
 and see the best, but still cling to the worst'
 (II. 134-36).

⁸⁸⁶ Pirro, 'Pilgerfahrten', p. 58. Lach, 'Stefan Georges Gedichtzyklus "Pilgerfahrten"', p. 32 concludes that the poem does not end in pessimism, that the series of questions leave open the hermit's salvation and return to his aesthetic world of dream and fantasy.

⁸⁸⁷ Böschenstein, *Studien zur Dichtung des Absoluten*, p. 152.

⁸⁸⁸ Schäfer, *Die Intensität der Form*, p. 247. Schäfer cites Panofsky, Saxl and Klibansky, *Saturn und Melancholie*, p. 247.

⁸⁸⁹ See Klibansky, Panofsky & Saxl, *Saturn und Melancholie*, pp. 359-60.

⁸⁹⁰ Kolk, *Literarische Gruppenbildung*, p. 28.

personal and impersonal poems finds a synthesis here.⁸⁹¹ The first stanza is an aestheticized description of fallish nature, 'an autumnal scene [...] this dusky setting, redolent of decay and ebbing life' in Norton's words.⁸⁹² The second stanza makes a third-person reference to the lonely, melancholic and nameless poet as he is approached by a child, and the third and final stanza morphs into a unified 'wir'-narrative (II: 53).⁸⁹³ Shen points out that the poem 'Soll nun der mund der von des eises bruch' from *Das Jahr der Seele* (IV: 70), containing the key 'fremdling' (from *Pilgerfahrten*'s epigraph), was first dedicated to Hofmannsthal, sent to him in a letter, and within which Hofmannsthal is referred to as '[d]em kinde'.⁸⁹⁴ 'Beträufelt an baum und zaun's second and third stanzas, containing a depiction of two fraternal figures wandering 'verzückt' through nature, further lend credence to the idea that the child is a coded reference to Hofmannsthal.⁸⁹⁵ Early in their correspondence, George sent Hofmannsthal what Norton calls 'a long, rambling, and wholly unprecedented baring of himself', precipitating the disastrous end of their relationship.⁸⁹⁶ Of relevance here is George's characterisation of his fantasy 'übermenschen' that would be his spiritual companion, a 'wesen' that would have 'etwas von einem nebelüberzug': 'Die grosse seelische krise drohte · Und endlich!

⁸⁹¹ Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, pp. 110-11 (cf. 110 n. 376 citing David, *Stefan George*, pp. 63-64).

⁸⁹² Norton, *Secret Germany*, p. 93.

⁸⁹³ 'Wer naht sich dem namenlosen
Der fern von der menge sich härmt?
In mattblauen kleidern ein kind '
(II: 53).

⁸⁹⁴ *George/Hofmannsthal Briefwechsel*, p. 10. Cited by Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, 110 n. 376.

⁸⁹⁵ Norton points out that the gender of the child is indeterminate. However, with George's preference for salvational male youths (Morwitz, *Kommentar*, pp. 41-42 reads the child specifically as male, as a 'Knabe') and the pattern in his works where the feminine is rejected or replaced by the masculine, as well as the biographical background in the Hofmannsthal affair and the traditionally gendered colour the child is clothed in ('mattblau'), it is reasonable to read it as a male youth. Indeed, Norton seems to implicitly do so when he titles the following chapter of his work, dealing with the Hofmannsthal affair, as 'A Child in Pale Blue Clothes' (*Secret Germany*, p. 95).

⁸⁹⁶ Norton, *Secret Germany*, pp. 100-01.

wie? ja? ein hoffen – ein ahnen – ein zucken – ein schwanken – o mein zwillingsbruder –'.⁸⁹⁷ Hofmannsthal as his twin, shrouded in a certain Romantic haziness reminiscent of the 'herrin's' 'gazeschleier' from *Hymnen* (II: 10) but also consistent with the hazy, fairytale atmosphere of 'Beträufelt an baum und zaun'. What in his letter to Hofmannsthal was pure affect (an uncontrollable 'zucken'), is now sublimated into their being '[v]erzückt' together, evoking a communal rapture in the fantasy of togetherness.

The biographical background that insinuates itself within George's retrospective addition of this poem changes the way the volume's final poem, 'Die Spange' (II: 54), is approached, for it no longer presents itself after the '[w]undersame pflanzenwelt' of the third 'Verjäherte Fahrten' poem (II: 52). Now, it appears after the fantasy union with a companion that nevertheless undercuts its success by mentioning that 'zagendem gang'. 'Die Spange', critics have long pointed out, 'clasps' the volumes together, it is the buckle that hangs *Pilgerfahrten* onto *Algabal*, the latter being the deathly petrified world of the imperious tyrant ruler that never sees a spring (II: 63).⁸⁹⁸ 'Die Spange' itself is imperious in its curt, 'formidabile affermazione di volontà'.⁸⁹⁹ It posits a sublime object as the 'starting point' ('Ich wollte sie aus kühlem eisen [...]') that empowers the poet with a prescriptive, regulatory willpower ('Nun aber soll sie also sein', II: 51).⁹⁰⁰ In

⁸⁹⁷ George/Hofmannsthal *Briefwechsel*, pp. 12-13.

⁸⁹⁸ E.g. Wolfgang Braungart, 'Poetik, Rhetorik, Hermeneutik', in *Stefan George und sein Kreis: Ein Handbuch*, vol. 2, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer, Wolfgang Braungart, Stefan Breuer and Ute Oelmann, 2nd edn (de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 496-550 (p. 509).

⁸⁹⁹ Pensa, *Stefan George: Saggio Critico*, p. 106 ('formidable affirmation of the will')

⁹⁰⁰ The clasp here is an aesthetic object infused with *objet petit a*. It is an emblem of immortality, 'a body which persists beyond the corruption of the body physical', Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 12. The 'starting point' (p. 191) of pure desire ('Ich wollte') is the abyss of the Real around which, as Žižek elaborates, the Symbolic comes to be constructed. George's buckle, like his diamond, later on, is a sublime object insofar as it embodies this surplus desire: the pure will of the artist. As Žižek warns, one cannot get too close to a sublime object: they exist only 'in an interspace' (p. 192) – perhaps such as the clasp that holds two volumes together and lives as a

Schellingian terms, the ideality of subjective poetic will impacts the physical material of reality and thereby produces the higher subject:

In einer neuen Steigerung also, wodurch ihm die in seinem Erkennen gesetzte Notwendigkeit selbst wieder objektiv wird, befreit sich das Subjekt von eben dieser Notwendigkeit und erscheint nun als frei, zwar nicht in Ansehung des Erkennens oder Wissens, wohl aber in Ansehung des Handelns. Aber der Gegensatz ist damit nicht aufgehoben, sondern eben erst gesetzt, der Gegensatz zwischen Freiheit und Notwendigkeit⁹⁰¹

What 'Die Spange' represents, following Schelling, is an objectification of inner necessity in the outer material world. This does not mean giving in to contingency (George would not approve of that), but rather actualising a subjective freedom that is grounded in necessity. The subject overcomes itself by positing its free act in the present object world and escapes the necessity of past limitations ('doch war im schacht' versus '*nun* aber soll...'). Schelling calls necessity that, 'dem er [the subject – JW] in seinem Erkennen unterworfen ist', comparable to George's recognition of lack that spurs him towards creation: 'Doch war im schacht auf allen gleisen | So kein metall [...]'. This newness is expressed as his 'Freiheit des Handelns', powered by his will – and thus correcting the lagging will of the pilgrim figure in 'Siedlergang'. George's poem exemplifies the emergence of subjective freedom out of necessity formally in the neat division of stanzas. The first stanza is centered on his knowledge of limitation that constrains the subject's willing ('Ich

poem of transition? If we really linger on this clasp we might end up encountering a gaudy buckle of nineteenth century materialist dandyism (cf. Durzak, *Der junge Stefan George*, 202 n. 21).

⁹⁰¹ Schelling, 'Die Naturphilosophie', in *Zur Geschichte der neueren Philosophie*, in *Sämmtliche Werke* I, 10, 115.

wollte [...] | Doch'), the second announces re-articulates the free creative act in its willfull subjection to an impersonal law ('Nun aber *soll*', emphasis mine), which *Algabal* comes to actualise in more depth. Just as Schelling points out that the 'Gegensatz von Notwendigkeit und Freiheit' is not yet 'aufgehoben, sondern eben erst gesetzt', so 'Die Spange' serves as the first positing of what in *Algabal* becomes a recurrent thematic opposition, or as the titular tyrant himself paradoxically proclaims, while picking up on the wandering motif itself wandering through George's oeuvre: 'O lass mich ungerühmt und ungehasst | Frei in den bedingten bahnen wandeln' (II: 68).

'Die Spange' follows 'Beträufelt an baum und zaun', where the fantasy of union at the end of the poem is problematised with the image of the 'zagendem gang' (II: 53). 'Zag' is the operative word here. It will characterise his relationship to the feminine other in *Das Jahr der Seele* ('So oft ich zagend mich zum vorhang kehre', IV: 29), and it also occurs earlier in *Pilgerfahrten* to signify the speaker's hesitancy towards physical affection with a feminine other: 'Lagert sich neben dein knie meine wange | Mit zagen geniesst sie dein zartes warm .' (II: 35). This is the first poem in *Pilgerfahrten* with a lyric *Ich*, and is replete with Petrarchan commonplaces such as the lover qua slave.⁹⁰² Formally it is made up of Italian *terzinas*, in which the rhyme scheme has a clear division between stanzas mirroring the emotional division of subjects in the poem's plot.⁹⁰³ A moment of

⁹⁰² 'Ich bin in dem himmel ein sklav dem harm', II: 35. Cf. Forster, *The Icy Fire*, p. 13: 'Allied to this ["military imagery"] is the freedom-servitude paradox—the service of the lady is the highest freedom—and cognate imagery of prisons, bondage, etc'. It is not immediately clear, in the reading I give below, whether this metaphorical slavery relates to his inability to relinquish her as object of desire, or to his actual imaginary realm in which it is the male companion 'im himmel' that he's dreaming about – a desire that promises freedom (the heavenly utopia) but an impossible desire given social roles. In the reading below, it could function as both.

⁹⁰³ The poem rhymes *AAB*, *CCB*, *DDE*, *FFE*, and thus stanzas one and two are interlocked by rhyme *B*, while stanzas three and four are interlocked by rhyme *E*. Cf. Lachs, 'Stefan Georges Gedichtzyklus "Pilgerfahrten"', p. 47: 'Der formalen Zweiteiligkeit entspricht eine inhaltliche: Am

intimacy is disrupted by the speaker's 'zagen', leading him to re-direct attention away from her and sublimate the scene: the poem ends with him comparing himself to the pious who 'schauen | Zu einer madonna von ebenholz' (II: 35). The reason for this sublimation is, as Brokoff argues, that her proximity, in all of her 'erhabenen stolz' (another Petrarchism), causes him an unwanted flushing in the face ('flammende röte', I. 4).⁹⁰⁴ By transforming her via the simile, Brokoff argues, the speaker regains his desired distance.⁹⁰⁵ The occasion for this scene of 'petrification' ('Verharr ich') is the Lady's lack of interest, her proud unreachability and the apparently dismissive way she pets his hair 'in mitleid'.⁹⁰⁶

Although the other is not defined, as Brokoff points out, whether male or female, the outcome is the same: 'Ihre kühne flammende röte | Fürderhin mir deine nähe verböte', or prohibition by his superego.⁹⁰⁷ Lach points out that this prohibition is given in the subjunctive form and remains a hypothetical prohibition and thereby

Beginn jedes Teils steht ein bestimmtes Verhalten der Frau, die in dem Gedicht angesprochen wird'.

⁹⁰⁴ E.g. *Rvf* 37: 100-104; 67: 3; 169: 10; 267: 2, etc. A final example, for George's sake, sonnet 302, translated in *Die Fibel* (I: 63): 'Schön war sie wie nie doch in minder stolzer weise' (I. 4).

⁹⁰⁵ 'Das unwillkürlich sich einstellende Erröten, das der Sprecher nicht zu kontrollieren vermag, symbolisiert auf der bildlich-konnotativen Ebene den tieferen Grund für die entgegen gesetzte Ästhetik des "Gefrierens". Im "gefrorenen" Zustand – "Verharr ich" (V.9) – gibt es im Unterschied zum Zustand der Wärme keinen unvorhersehbaren und unkontrollierbaren Wechsel von der Ordnung zur Unterordnung mehr, der den Sprecher des Gedichts destabilisieren könnte', Brokoff, *Geschichte der reinen Poesie*, p. 460.

⁹⁰⁶ Cf. here Lach, 'Stefan Georges Gedichtzyklus "Pilgerfahrten"', p. 53 for the Lady's 'Desinteresse'. 'in mitleid', as Lach points out (p. 53), is the speaker's desperate attempt to interpret her actions in good faith.

⁹⁰⁷ Brokoff, 'Macht im Innenraum der Dichtung', p. 425. Firstly, as Lach ('Stefan Georges Gedichtzyklus "Pilgerfahrten"', p. 48) argues, the colour scheme and imagery of the poem re-evoked what 'Siedlergang' had established as the 'Thema der Sinnlichkeit': a semantics of burning desire for 'die roten frauen' as temptresses for the hermit (p. 48). Then there is the comparison of the figure with the 'madonna' at the end of the poem, what Brokoff calls her 'Apotheosis' (Brokoff, *Geschichte der reinen Poesie*, p. 460), and which, following Brokoff, allows him to regain a distance from her and thereby re-assert control over himself and his body (this is the gist of Brokoff's reading, pp. 460-61). It is possible that homosexuality is latent in the scene and that it is a male figure: his 'nähe' (I. 6) would still be the source of a prohibition: the conditional 'verböte' demands he cease his intimacy immediately, which results in the Petrarchan lament: 'Ich bin in dem himmel ein sklav dem harm' (I. 6). A slave to a personified (grammatically masculine) master: grief. Petrarch presents himself as being a slave to his master *Amor* and, once his own flared up cheeks betray his inner desirous burning, the shame propels him into avoiding human gazes by taking off into 'the most deserted fields' (*Rvf* 35).

signals its irreality.⁹⁰⁸ Why is it that the ‘the flammende röte’ of his cheek would forbid him intimacy? If we follow Brokoff’s analysis, this reddening of his face is the flushing of shame, the reddening of embarrassment when one realises that one has lost control.⁹⁰⁹ Shame is an affect that ‘overwhelm[s]’ the subject and as Wurmser writes, is ‘strongly superego-charged’.⁹¹⁰ The speaker’s superego, manifested in his shame, *would* prohibit his enjoyment, were he to proceed. Hence, he emerges in this scene as split.⁹¹¹ His way out is to take recourse to the religious aesthetic and sublimation of desire.⁹¹² For George the poet, temporarily inhabiting the hermit-pilgrim-lover figure,⁹¹³ it also reroutes a poetics of impossible heteronormative desire to a desire for the aesthetic, reclaiming the gaze and the power to wield the gaze, albeit with the consequence that the object of the gaze now becomes powerless, fixed and frozen as an exotic, quasi-orientalist image of the ebony statue.⁹¹⁴

⁹⁰⁸ ‘Stefan Georges Gedichtzyklus “Pilgerfahrten”’, p. 51

⁹⁰⁹ Lach, ‘Stefan Georges Gedichtzyklus “Pilgerfahrten”’, p. 49 perceptively highlights the ‘innere Zwiespalt’ of the speaker by focusing on how his ‘wange’ seems to have a will of its own as subject of the verbs, which manifests an alienation from his own body, and he links this ‘Zwiespalt seines Wollens’ back to ‘Siedlergang’s hermit.

⁹¹⁰ Léon Wurmser, *The Mask of Shame* (John Hopkins University Press, 1981), p. 55.

⁹¹¹ For this reading also cf. Lach, ‘Stefan Georges Gedichtzyklus “Pilgerfahrten”’, p. 51.

⁹¹² On this see Brokoff, *Geschichte der reinen Poesie*, p. 460.

⁹¹³ Cf. Pirro’s reading of *Pilgerfahrten’s* ‘mascheramento come strategia di potenziamento spirituale’, *Come corda troppo tesa*, p. 63. Cf. on this also Pirro, ‘Pilgerfahrten’, p. 53.

⁹¹⁴ Wurmser, *The Mask of Shame*, pp. 120-27 discusses patient “Per’s” case in the context, and intertwinement, of the gaze, or ‘visual power’ and idealization (p. 123). The similarity between George as a modernist who commands the ‘look’ (cf. Strathausen’s *The Look of Things*, p. 28 for George as the ‘only eye in the world’ citing and translating Wolters’ account), whose essential ‘Ästhetik der Distanz und Berührungslosigkeit’ (Brokoff, *Geschichte der reinen Poesie*, p. 461) are foundational to both his early phase and his seer phases later, and Léon Wurmser’s case study patient Per’s need to reclaim his ‘Eye Power’ (*The Mask of Shame*, p. 120) manifests in both subjects’ experience of themselves as split, pulled between a perceived agency and helpless passivity: ‘His self-image, and his entire behaviour, was split up into a part that was under his control and had power—reason, thinking, looking, a temperate form of social exhibitionism—and an unruly, ever more menacing part – body, penis, “greed and lust,” love, commitment, closeness. The former increasingly became symbolized by “eye power”—creating, transforming, and destroying, but culminating in identifying through the eyes with a powerful, idealized male. The latter crystallized in the horror of being utterly weak and vulnerable—a kind of abysmal shame that pointed back to the terrors of symbiotic merger with the devouring woman. [...] *Seeing meant the ultimate defense against self-loss in merger*, shame anxiety pointed to the ultimate danger when such seeing was vanquished: disappearance’ (Italics original, Wurmser, *The Mask of Shame*, pp. 122-123).

v. Scenes of Pilgrimage

So the pilgrim sets off, and it isn't long before he gets stuck, ending up astray, as in 'Dass er auf fernem felsenpfade' (II: 48), where an enchanting lily draws him from the Dantean 'rechte strasse' (x/xI: 7, *Inf.* I: 3) and leads him towards the oneiric shadows of confusion in the third stanza:

Der wandrer wankt im guten wege ·

Im schilfe ward ein raunen rege ·

Den langen schattenzug der rüstern

Verfolgt er jeder heilung bar ·

Sein auge flackert irr im düstern ·

Die winde wirren ihm das haar.

(II: 48)

An intense use of alliteration, assonance and consonance in this stanza emphasises the intensity of the pilgrim's plight and reflects his confusion linguistically: the repetition and mixing of alliterative w-, f/v-, and r-sounds in particular link the pilgrim to the disorienting and alien environment: 'wandrer wankt', 'ward', 'raunen rege', 'rüstern', 'verfolgt', 'flackert irr', 'winde wirren'. The reeds ('schilf') are not yet associated with that purgatorial preparation ('Bekränzung mit dem Schilf', x/xI: 48) as in Dante. The first stanza is written in the subjunctive mood and wishes for escape from the turbulent inconstancy and uncertainty of pilgrimage:

Dass er auf fernem felsenpfade

Sich einsam in dem lichte bade ·
Dass er dem laub dem wasser lausche
Und dass der klage klang verlausche ·
Dass er in sturmes trieb sich stähle
Und heiter sich die heimat wähle!
(II: 48)

The quadruple optative anaphora (plus one without ‘dass’) expresses the pilgrim’s many wishes for a better relationship to the environment in which he wanders. The end of the poem, however, leaves him in the Dantean ‘dark wood’ (*Inf.* I: 2). He has lost control of his visual power, the analytic eye of the master who can judge his surroundings: an anti-Enlightenment moment, where nature pulls the detached observer back into itself. Yet there is again the hand of the director poet staging this, externalising any fear of such a scene by controlling it poetically. The poem’s immanent Romanticism is negated by the transcendent authority of the poet-Master, whose authorial hand is essentially filling in for the lack of a ‘principle of intelligibility’ in the world that he is narrating, himself becoming the ‘ultimate end of signification’.⁹¹⁵ This is akin to what Leahy calls the ‘redemptive glimpse of the view from beyond time – a view constructed by the imagination – and a position out of which narrative becomes possible’.⁹¹⁶

Another wandering poem thematises the spiritual desert and the lack of a transcendent moment within the world of the text: ‘Die märkten sind öder und saiten und singende schweigen’ (II: 42) contains the first mention of a ‘wüste’ in George’s

⁹¹⁵I borrow the terms from John Freccero, ‘The Fig Tree and the Laurel Tree’, p. 35.

⁹¹⁶Leahy, ‘*Der wahre Historiker*’, p. 120.

oeuvre, and while the drive to pilgrimage in the modernity of George's world has something to do with the 'zeitgenössischen gesamtgesellschaftlichen Zerfall des transzendenten Handlungsbezugs', in Schneider's words, on a more intimate level the subject is driven by conflicting (erotic) desires in the search for a male companion.⁹¹⁷ The incessant need of taking leave in pilgrimage hints at the structure of shame that drives one to 'escape' oneself, in Levinas' account: the inability to sit and face oneself, a motif recurring throughout the *Canzoniere* (*Rvf* 169: 3, 234: 9-14) and throughout this Georgean work too. Despite all attempts at self-leave-taking, Petrarch eventually always bumps into himself, and the errant movements of the *Canzoniere* do not bring him to the balanced Dantean movement that the end of the *Commedia* represents ('like a wheel being moved evenly', *Par.* xxxiii: 144) but represent movement without going anywhere, or what Greene calls 'process without progress, time's relentless passing without perceptible advancement in the fortunes or attitudes of the lover'.⁹¹⁸ George's many 'masks' (to borrow Pirro's term) the diffusion of the poet-George into various personae

⁹¹⁷ Albeit in reference to the aesthetic life revealed in *Der Teppich des Lebens*, Wolfgang C. Schneider, "Aus einer ewe pfeilgeradem willen, Führ ich zum reigen reiss ich in den ring". Zu Ethik und Philia bei Stefan George', in *Stefan George – Dichtung, Ethos, Staat: Denkbilder für ein geheimes Deutschland*, ed. by Bruno Pieger and Bertram Schefold (Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 2010), pp. 289-306 (p. 303).

⁹¹⁸ Greene, *Post-Petrarchism*, p. 55, discussing *Rvf* 118 and 205. *Rvf* 209 is another exemplar for this condition, in which the poet reflects, like George's hermit, on leaving his place of refuge and love, Vacluse, to get away from that which hunts him, *Amor*, but like a deer wounded by an arrow, he carries his pain with him, and his memory is so vivid that fleeing it, it manifests before him all the more powerfully:

'Those hills of sweetness where I left myself,
leaving the place which I can never leave,
are there before me, and behind me still
is that dear burden Love has given me.
And many times I am amazed to find
that though I move, I've still not moved away
from the fair yoke in vain I've often shaken—
the farther I go, the closer I become'.
(209: 1-8).

Barolini, 'The Self in the Labyrinth of Time', p. 52 discusses *Canzone* 23 among similar lines: '*Nel dolce tempo* brilliantly displays the change that is not change – the refusal to change because change brings death and endings – which is at the heart of part 1 of the *Fragmenta*'.

throughout *Pilgerfahrten*.⁹¹⁹ These masks allow him temporary sojourns in other identities, with the times of these sojourns then subordinated to their place in the museum of the overruling oeuvre, which offers, in Meyerhoff's words, 'a permanent possibility for such a disclosure ['of timelessness']'.⁹²⁰ These sojourns are short-lived, he remains 'riveted to oneself', stuck with 'the unalterably binding presence of the I to itself'.⁹²¹ This progress-less process, to adapt Greene's phrase, was suggested by Lukács in his 1911 essay on George:

Stationen sind sie [George's poems] auf einem großen, unendlichen Wanderwege, der ein sicheres Ziel hat und doch vielleicht nirgends hinführt [...] Dieser ganze Wanderweg führt von Einsamkeit zu Einsamkeit, an menschlichen Gemeinschaften vorbei, durch das Vergehen grosser Lieben hindurch zurück in seine Einsamkeit und dann nach neuem Weg den immer

⁹¹⁹ Pirro, 'Pilgerfahrten', p. 49. What Pirro calls *Pilgerfahrten*'s 'Textualisierung von Subjektivität', the exploration of different subjectivities in the volume that aims at exposing modern subjectivity as 'brüchig' if not sublimated 'zum ästhetischen Gebilde'. Pirro's thesis that the theme of pilgrimage, with its imagery of crossing thresholds, allows the poet to explore new identities in a transient way can be supplemented with the fact that it also allows exploration of aesthetic genres in a transient way (as David, *Stefan George*, p. 68, argues, *Pilgerfahrten* allows George to return to traditional Romantic forms such as the ballad). Pirro, 'Pilgerfahrten', p. 50: 'Lyrische Subjektivität wird im Akt des Austretens aus der Enge einer überholten oder unerwünschten Lebenssituation dargestellt, was das Ich allerdings auch als Austritt aus sich selbst und als Suche nach einer neuen Identität erlebt'. The metaphors of crossing thresholds and liminal spaces ('Übergang und Schwellenüberschreitung', p. 50) thematises this play with identities. As Higbee argues contra Travers, '[m]odernist personae are not the abolition from the lyrical subject but a multiplication of it' (Loren K. Higbee, 'The Poetics of Fragmentation: Shared Modernity in Petrarch, Eliot, and Pound' (doctoral thesis, University of Notre Dame, 2013), p. 189. As such, George's many masks suggest a contraction of the *Ich* into various intensified forms, only to then expand beyond such forms when those masks are taken off.

⁹²⁰ Hans Meyerhoff, *Time in Literature* (University of California Press, 1968), p. 57. Cf. Žižek, 'The Seven Veils of Fantasy', p. 193: 'fantasy creates a multitude of "subject-positions," among which the (observing, fantasizing) subject can freely float. The subject is free to shift his or her identification from one to another'.

⁹²¹ Levinas, *On Escape*, p. 64.

schmerzensreineren, immer höheren und immer endgültigeren Einsamkeiten
zu.⁹²²

This is the drive of George's pilgrim-figure in 'Die märkte sind öder' (II: 42), in which the search for female companion in the desolate city – urban centre of commercial life ('märkte') – is, as Morwitz introduces it, revealed as being in vain:

Wie hab ich heiss gespäht

In kirchen palästen bei festlichem spiel oder reigen

Und tränen ausgesät

Da sie mir stets entfloh!

(II: 42)

Morwitz characterises the pilgrim in the Petrarchan terms as have been just outlined: 'die Pilgerfahrt des Suchens, die zugleich eine Flucht vor sich selbst ist, muss fortgesetzt werden'.⁹²³ The constant escaping ('entfloh') of a feminine other blazingly desired by the subject ('heiss gespäht'), recalls Daphne's flight from Apollo (as in *Rvf* 23), only here Daphne does escape, and the pilgrim is not yet an Apollo. Instead, the lyric self sows his Petrarchan tears (a verb used by Petrarch himself) and declares his need to escape: 'ich *muss* aus der stätte [...] | Durch wüsten weiterfliehn ·', deserts in which the physical body suffers the harshness of

⁹²² György Lukács, *Die Seele und die Formen. Essays* (Egon Fleischel & Co. 1911), pp. 179-80. Cited from https://www.lyriktheorie.uni-wuppertal.de/texte/1911_lukacs.html (Accessed 11/06/2025).

⁹²³ Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 34. Werner Strodthoff, *Stefan George. Zivilisationskritik und Eskapismus* (Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1976), interprets the 'Fluchtmotiv' in George's oeuvre as contextually related to his 'arrogant-snobistischer' (p.92) take on modernity and city-life and to his poetics of distance.

the environment: 'Hinan und hinunter verletzen mich härene karden | Und schwellende blätter wie schlangen am boden ziehn'.⁹²⁴ There is a dissonance between these two lines. The factuality of the first – the body being harmed by thorns and barbs (a plight known to Petrarch on his 'hard course') – is countered by the facticity, the interpretative subjectivity, of the second, the simile comparing the 'schwellende blätter [...] am boden' to snakes (the creature quintessentially representative of exile in the role it plays in mankind's banishment from Eden).⁹²⁵ The imaginative poetic transformation of fallen leaves into threatening snakes illuminates the *Ich*'s drive to interpret reality (with the concomitant possibility of it backfiring via misinterpretation). The 'blätter' are unmistakably self-reflective signifiers, metonymically suggesting the tree from which they are fallen and thus signifiers of transience, fragmentation, and loss, and further symbolically suggesting the pages upon which the wanderer writes his poems, which may also 'fall' and fail, and ensnare him in the snakes' temptations.⁹²⁶

⁹²⁴ 'How many tears, alas, how many verses | I've scattered in my time' (*Rvf* 239:13-14). Cf. 42: 12-14:

'malignant planets flee from every side
dispersed by beauty of her loving face

for which so many tears have now been shed', and 366: 79: 'Virgin, how many tears I've shed already'. For the link of his 'lagrime sparse' to the idea of the *rime sparse* as a whole see Bettarini's commentary to *Rvf* 239, *Canzoniere*, vol. II, p. 1092.

⁹²⁵ On Heidegger's distinguishing between facticity and factuality see David Couzens Hoy, *The Time of our Lives. A Critical History of Temporality* (The MIT Press, 2009), p. 100. As Hoy explains, factuality for Heidegger regards 'facts that are true about things' as opposed to *facticity* that relates to 'facts that are true about people'. The latter 'involves an openness to *possibilities*. "Factual possibilities," even those in the past, can still be open, in contrast to factuality, which is fixed and determinate'. Facticity relates to the subjective experience of a person, which is open to change, as opposed to the brute facts of material objective reality (the latter constituting 'scientific realism' as Hoy relates). For Petrarch's 'hard course' see *Rvf* 214: 25-6: 'All full of snares and thorns is the hard course | I must complete'. Cf. Thomas M. Greene, *The Vulnerable Text: Essays on Renaissance Literature* (Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 21-22.

⁹²⁶ Albeit without the reading of the lines as self-reflective, David (*Stefan George*, p. 71) names this 'jähes krasses Bild' among the examples of *Pilgerfahrten*'s inner tensions: 'So wird die anmutige Dichtung ständig von grellen Tönen durchzogen. Die Kunst findet noch immer ihren Zweck in sich selbst. Aber zum erstenmal läßt sich die Angst ahnen, die in der Seele des Dichters wohnt'. Durzak (*Der junge Stefan George*, pp. 91-92), citing David and picking up this train of thought, extrapolates it to include *Algabal* as the end-point on the arch that begins in *Hymnen* ('absolutgesetzte Kunst als eigenen Inhalt', Durzak, p. 91), continues through *Pilgerfahrten*, which 'die Dissonanzen

The threat of misinterpretation builds one of the poem's central ironies. In the final stanza he comes upon 'eine grünende insel' with a 'thujabaum' that promises hope to him: he climbs this hill in good Dantean fashion and looks out back into the desert where he sees, 'wie aus der kindlichen meister pinsel' 'türme und brücken und städte und lande · | Wie manches neue ziel!' Night falls and 'weisses manna' descends, ending the poem on a happy note (the first positive ending to a poem in *Pilgerfahrten*, Lach points out).⁹²⁷ The sight of a new 'ziel' in the vista is significant. 'Ziel' is a word of significant ideological bearing in George's oeuvre, given it stands in for a number of phrases in his Dante translations and as the goal, wedded via allusion to his Dante translation, of the Secret Germany in *Das neue Reich*.⁹²⁸ There the poet seeks to safeguard culture and procure a new generation, 'ein jung geschlecht':

[...] · er holt aus büchern

Der ahnen die verheissung die nicht trügt

Dass die erkoren sind zum höchsten ziel

Zuerst durch tiefste öden ziehn dass einst

Des erdteils herz die welt erretten soll ..

(IX: 29-30)

ankündigen' (p. 91), and culminates in *Algabal* with the self-aware exhibition of the 'Fragwürdigkeit' (p. 92) of aestheticist poetics.

⁹²⁷ Lach, 'Stefan Georges Gedichtzyklus "Pilgerfahrten"', p. 99.

⁹²⁸ Perhaps most significantly as the goal of the pilgrim's quest, the vision of God, in X/XI: 107 where 'höchstem ziel' gives Dante's 'suo disire', *Par.* 1:7; or in X/XI: 138: 'Der heilige greis sprach: Damit ans erkannte | Ziel du gelangest bis zur höchsten spitze' for *Par.* 31: 94-5).

Here is an example George's 'verbal figuralism', his repurposing of rhetoric from earlier works ('durch tiefste öden ziehn') in his later ones from the point of view of the Master, with another Master, Dante, backing him up.⁹²⁹

The 'neue ziel' glimpsed at the end of the *Pilgerfahrten* poem, however, is undercut with a certain irony, for in the first stanza, of which the third is somewhat of a mirror in its length compared to the middle, second stanza, the lyric self recounts how the city from which he now flees had previously seduced him into visiting it, 'und so verheissungsfroh!'⁹³⁰ In the final stanza, he once more interprets a distant spectacle to be more promising than it probably is, for what guarantee is there that the 'städte und lande' he now has his sights on are any less 'öd' than the previous? The final three lines all end with an imperfect verb, and poem ends with the past overtaking the present tense. The switch from an insistent present in the first seven lines of the final stanza to an insistent past suggests a conversion moment, that the present of poetic enunciation differs substantially from the *then* of his time on the 'grünende insel'. However, the poem's internal irony, coupled with the emphatic present-tense verbs, leave an impression of the spiritual malaise that drives him on in the first place. The reader comes away with an aftertaste of verbs of loss and exclusion ('verfloss', 'sich schloss', 'fiel'), suggesting that the poem's present tenses of desperate flight are still needed now.⁹³¹

⁹²⁹ Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, p. 164 also cites from this passage of 'Der Dichter in Zeiten der Wirren' to illustrate how vocabulary present from *Der Stern des Bundes*, 'from the same aesthetic-mythic sphere as earlier' is no longer as prophetically potent; his thesis is that George is re-purposing the language no longer to provide an occult political program, but rather 'merely to retain the memory' of that program, which died out with *Der Stern des Bundes* and the disastrous effects of the war.

⁹³⁰ Somewhat, as they are not equal: the first stanza has eight, the third 10 lines, but both are visually more standout in comparison to the four lines of the central stanza which they sandwich.

⁹³¹ Greene, *Post-Petrarchism*, p. 141 mentions 'the inaccessibility of temporal dimensions' for 'a speaker who earnestly wishes to escape the present' as a defining trait of the Petrarchan subject.

If the Petrarchan pilgrimage can be conceptualised as a horizontal movement across time and space without any real arrival, and the Dantean pilgrimage in turn conceptualised as a vertical one down and then up to God,⁹³² then 'Die märkte sind öder' can be considered as an attempt at crossing from the horizontal Petrarchan mode 'durch wüsten' (Petrarch's 'most deserted fields', *Rvf* 35:1) and into the vertical Dantean mode where he arrives '[a]n dieser höhe saum' and gets a taste of 'weisses manna' that Lach reckons constitutes a link to the 'Bereich des Überirdischen, des Transzendentalen'.⁹³³ The white manna 'fiel' down the vertical axis into a present moment (albeit in this particular poem it is not unproblematically presented as already past). The intrusion into the Petrarchan horizontal mode by a Dantean transcendent one also becomes a method of resisting time, as Versari argues.⁹³⁴ As the intersection of the horizontal and the vertical within the poem's narrative, it signifies a shift not only in geography but also in ontology.⁹³⁵ The crossing over is further emphasised by the term 'saum', which combines the imagery of geographical limit or edge with textile imagery (the fringe or hemline of a garment), self-reflectively foregrounding the textual nature of the

⁹³² .

⁹³³ Lach, *Stefan Georges Gedichtzyklus "Pilgerfahrten"*, 99. Di Taranto, reading this poem intertextually with Nietzsche's *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, contends that, like Nietzsche's 'Bergsteiger', 'the Georgian self is likewise projected into a vertical dimension' ('l'io georgiano è altresì proiettato in una dimensione di verticalità') Di Taranto, *Il Maestro e l'Apostolo*, p. 108. That may be, although the verticality striven for is weighed down by the horizontal gaze of the *Ich*. Cf. Boysen, *Nothingness, Negativity, and Nominalism*, p. 26: 'In contrast to Dante's vertical poetry, Petrarch's poetry voices a restless horizontal consciousness, whose state is uncertain', and see also Gragnolati and Southerden, *Possibilities of Lyric*, p. 121, for Dante's verticality in comparison to Cavalcanti's horizontality.

⁹³⁴ The 'Augenblick' or *kairos* in George's oeuvre constitutes an 'epiphanic moment that vertically intersects the progressive extension of time' ('attimo epifanico che interseca verticalmente la distensione progressiva del tempo'), Margherita Versari, *Il tempo nella poesia di Stefan George: Percezione e figure* (CLUEB, 2008), p. 8.

⁹³⁵ In her discussion of space in narratology, Marie-Laure Ryan writes: 'Whereas horizontal partitions divide the geography of the narrative world, vertical partitions create ontological layers within the narrative universe', Marie-Laure Ryan, 'Space' in *Handbook of Narratology*, ed. by Peter Hühn, John Pier, Wolf Schmid and Jörg Schönert (de Gruyter, 2009), pp. 420-433 (p. 429).

world itself: it is a literal 'textualisation of space', to borrow Marie-Laure Ryan's term.⁹³⁶

The pilgrim's gaze remains horizontal, directed upon things on the worldly plane, and the blessing of manna must be taken literally to account for a transcendent moment. We know, however, that our speaker tends to sublimate reality via aesthetic transformations, and thus the biblical manna might just as easily, as Ernst Morwitz interprets it, stand as a metaphor for the 'Fallen des Abendtaus', and thus, for the narrative voice recounting the experience, be another example of his tendency to aestheticise, sublimate and interpret signs in the world to his advantage but which, as he himself recounts in stanza one, are not always correct interpretations.⁹³⁷

The following poem ('Mächtiger traum dem ich zugetraut', II: 43) continues this theme of interpretative questioning that embodies the 'process without progress' in the *Pilgerfahrten*: back and forth the poems swing between past and present, near and far, known and unknown, between text and intratext.⁹³⁸ The result is often the stasis of self-questioning: 'Kehr ich nun zu wahren auen heim?', a seemingly rhetorical question (since we can guess the answer) but which is answered nonetheless three poems later when the subject laments his inability to waken the 'alten bilder': 'Die wahren auen wurden mir verboten · | Nun kost ich an verderbnisvoller pracht' ('Ihr alten bilder schlummert mit den toten', II: 46). Like the Petrarchan subject, he suffers from stasis within a thematics of wandering, a stasis

⁹³⁶ Ryan, 'Space', p. 426.

⁹³⁷ Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 34. Lach, 'Stefan Georges Gedichtzyklus "Pilgerfahrten"', pp. 98-99 argues against Morwitz here for the manna being 'nicht nur der Tau [...] sondern es ist auch und gerade Zeichen einer Hilfe und einer Stärkung, die aus dem Bereich des Überirdischen, des Transzendentalen kommt' (p. 99).

⁹³⁸ As Lach, 'Stefan Georges Gedichtzyklus "Pilgerfahrten"', p. 101 indicates, the first stanza of 'Mächtiger traum dem ich zugetraut' recalls the motifs of desire and dreaming from 'Siedlergang'. Greene, *Post-Petrarchism*, p. 55 for 'process without progress'.

in which 'he moves without moving [...] represent[ing] an emotional state of depression and compulsive repetition'.⁹³⁹ Likewise *Pilgerfahrten*: repetitive variations on the same themes, 'process without progress'.

The last Petrarchan sonnet of his oeuvre, 'Neuer Ausfahrtsegen' (II: 47), can be read as a parallel commentary to *Die Fibel*'s 'Ich wandelte' (I: 13).⁹⁴⁰ Where the latter ends with the successful rapture 'zu den sternem', 'Neuer Ausfahrtsegen' ends with the same general sense of disorientation that characterises the volume. The subject knows he must simply up and go: 'Wo find ich wieder meinen pilgermantel? | Wo find ich wieder meinen pilgerhut?' What 'Ich wandelte' stages as a 'himmelsbild' is revealed once more as type of suffocating illusion:

In lichten schlafen ich die braut ersann ·

[...]

Da langsam heisse gier nach ihr erstickte ·

Ich in entsagung frieden fast gewann ·

(II: 47)

⁹³⁹ Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire*, p. 19 Dubrow builds on Roland Greene's ideas of the centrality of then and now to the Petrarchan lyric sequence, highlighting that in the speaker's stuck psyche, 'then and now collide and elide' (p. 19). By contrast George's speaker in *Die märkte sind öder* ends on a note of pastness: the final three lines are defined by imperfect verbs all thematising lack: 'verfloss', 'sich schloss', 'fiel', as if the revelation of the 'weisses manna' is lost irretrievably to the past. Dubrow's point may be adapted here by considering that the speaker's psyche is still 'colliding' with the past, confusing *then* and *now* since the "now" of poetic utterance is hanging onto the *then* of the plot.

⁹⁴⁰ On a formal poetic level, the naïve ephebe poetry of *Die Fibel*, amenable to the poetically ennobling features of the Petrarchan praise of the Lady and written in Petrarchan rhyme scheme (such as 'Ich wandelte's' *abba abba cdc dcd* form) yields now to an even more modern update of the form likely adapted from the sonnets of Charles Baudelaire, which employ the *ede* form in the sestets that George uses in 'Neuer Ausfahrtsegen' (*abba abba cdc ede*) but which are never used by Petrarch. E.g. 'Parfum exotique' (*abba abba ccd ede*) in *Les Fleurs du Mal* (poem 22 in McGowan's edition based on the 1861 text). In June of 1891, while dealing 'intensiv mit der Dichtung der Romantik' in the library of the university of Vienna, George was simultaneously working on the poems of *Pilgerfahrten* and corresponding with Klein, Saint-Paul et al. about his plans to translate Baudelaire. In March of the same year he was in Venice reading August von Platen's Venetian sonnets. Thus, the sonnet has a significant presence for him around this time. See Seekamp et al., *Stefan George. Leben und Werk: Eine Zeittafel*, pp. 18-19. Cf. Oelmann's notes to 'Neuer Ausfahrtsegen' (SW, II: 116), dating *Neuer Ausfahrtsegen* to June of 1891.

He admits that in renunciation he smothered his desirous longings for her (that is, his 'heisse gier' suffocated) and almost (the lyric speaker is stuck in a Petrarchan 'I find no peace', *Rvf* 134: 1) found peace.⁹⁴¹ The speaker's 'entsagung' did not suffice, and thereby problematises ascetic renunciation by exposing its abstinence as futile: the 'heisse gier' (suggestively rhyming internally with 'nach ihr') is ultimately overpowering. Without the spurs of desire, stasis would result, and poetry would stop. If the apparition of the Lady in 'Ich wandelte' announced a new poetic project interpreted as fate ('das gütige schicksal'), by *Pilgerfahrten* he is questioning whether this fate is at all kind or praiseworthy ('Sprich ob es gute führung heissen kann | Wenn nochmal mir dein auge nieder nickte ..'). George here 'swerves' from Petrarch, to borrow Bloom's term, in that the speaker is now sceptical of whether the salutation, via the Lady's gaze, can at all be favourable for him.⁹⁴²

In the previous poems he had lamented both his inability to reach 'die wahren auen' and the disappearance of a muse-figure who moves 'im ebenmass der klänge' of his rhymes (II: 46). Shen calls attention to the narrative linking of 'Neuer Ausfahrtsegen' to the preceding poem 'Ihr alten bilder schlummert mit den toten',⁹⁴³ where the muse-figure slips away, irretrievably, 'hinter blumigen lianen | zum nahen see' (II: 46). In 'Neuer Ausfahrtsegen' he questions whether this muse is worth following, whether retrieving her gaze would be good fate at all. Like the muse of 'Weihe', the salutary gaze of the Lady promised inspiration and set him on

⁹⁴¹ This is the interpretation taken by Marx and Morwitz in their translation of the poem: 'When I renounced, when peace was almost won, | When flames of greed for her had slowly died' (*The Works of Stefan George*, p. 23).

⁹⁴² Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, p. 14.

⁹⁴³ Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 107.

his journey into his pilgrim exile, but now that 'niedernicken' of her gaze is suspect.⁹⁴⁴ Where the veil over Laura's eyes prevents the Petrarchan subject from meeting her gaze in mutual recognition (his goal, as Musa comments), it is made all the more impossible by effect of '[t]hat downward glance' that 'smothers' all his joy (*Rvf* 38: 9-10).⁹⁴⁵ Her downward glance means that she is not looking upon him, but rather presumably the ground, and for this optics to work she must be walking on the same level as him. This is the real, living Laura of the *Canzoniere*'s first half. George's idealised muse-figure, by contrast, looks down on him and in doing so elects him to be her follower, and this election is precarious. The relation is hierarchical, with her position above him suggestive of some ontological difference that keeps them separated. With this realisation, mind you, he sets out again, and the following poem ('Dass er auf fernem felsenpfade', II: 48) sees him lost once more.

As Dubrow writes of Petrarch, reenactment is pursued to 'assert mastery [...] the attempt to arrest the seesaw between failure and success which is at the heart of Petrarchism, which helps to explain why repetition is itself at the heart of the sequence'.⁹⁴⁶ This characterisation of Petrarchism applies rather neatly to George here. Thus we find three short poems in *Pilgerfahrten* that demand the wanderer to give up and overcome his moaning. The first one (II: 36) expresses a demand to renounce his supposed desire for a woman and instead to take note of the budding flowerbeds (the usual Georgian manoeuvre from the feminine erotic to the aesthetic).⁹⁴⁷ The second poem (II: 44) similarly begins with a masterly

⁹⁴⁴ On the continuity of the muse figures from 'Weihe' to *Pilgerfahrten* see Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, pp. 106-07.

⁹⁴⁵ Musa, commentary to line 6, *Canzoniere*, p. 548.

⁹⁴⁶ Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire*, p. 37.

⁹⁴⁷ 'Lass deine tränen

imperative mood before evolving in stanza two into a third person perspective and finally reaching the *Ich* in stanzas three and four:

Schweige die klage!
Was auch der neid
Zu den gütern beschied.
Suche und trage
Und über das leid
Siege das lied!
(II: 44, stanza one)

The lexical manipulation occurring in this opening stanza is not subtle: the linguistic conversion of the nasal 'neid' into the liquid 'leid' (foregrounding poetically the thematic link between desire, via envy, and the pain of its refusal to be fulfilled) can be finally overcome only if the chemical reaction goes through to the end and the 'leid' is further converted via a vocalic inversion that allows the triumphant poetic end product to crystallise out as a trophy of an affect now overcome.⁹⁴⁸ This is the 'lehre' (stanza two) that he has attempted to pursue for yet another year ('Schon wieder ein jahr'), a Petrarchan awareness of time that marks chronological

Um ein weib ·
Falsch ist dein wännen ·
Ruh und bleib!

Merk ob am boden
Schnee schon taut ·
Wärmender odem
Beete baut!

(II: 36).

⁹⁴⁸ See Lach, 'Stefan Georges Gedichtzyklus "Pilgerfahrten"', p. 109 for the link of this artistic overcoming of affect to George's theoretical reflections on art as 'triumf' in the prose text 'Über Kraft' (xvii: 70). As Morwitz explains, 'neid' here is used in its older sense of 'Begehren', *Kommentar*, p. 35

progress but with 'psychological stasis' to borrow Dubrow's term for Petrarch's own dilemma.⁹⁴⁹ The poem, despite the imperative voice's demands, ends on a helpless note. He is tired of travelling the world, tired of 'täuscher' (an old Georgean conceit from *Die Fibel*), and pilgrimage: 'Da schuf er ein grab | Für mantel und stab' (a 'stab' reminiscent of that held by the pilgrim at the end of *Hymnen*'s 'Die Gärten Schließen'). 'Er' and 'ich' finally merge:

Sein auge ward feucht
Er stöhnte .. mir deucht
Ich soll auch am stamm
Meine leier zerschellen
(II: 44)

His victory over pain was thus not quite successful, as Brokoff argues.⁹⁵⁰ No journey home 'zu wahren auen', no magical 'thujabaum' to reinvigorate him. As Lach writes: 'Deren [the two prior poems'] optimistischen Erwartungen stellt [in this poem] das völlige Scheitern des pilgernden Dichters gegenüber'.⁹⁵¹ It is 'Die Spange', finally, that fulfils this poetic task and stands as a Schellingian 'Entscheidung' that cuts (*Ent-scheidet*) open the circular turmoil of compulsive repetitions and stands as the victorious 'lied' that overcomes the pain of unfulfilled desire by transforming lack into a new visionary power: 'Nun also soll sie also

⁹⁴⁹ Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire*, p. 19. In my usage above I am relying on Dubrow's characterisation of Petrarchan temporality (chronological, subjective, and futural) from pp. 18-19.

⁹⁵⁰ Brokoff, 'Macht im Innenraum der Dichtung', p. 423: 'Die Umwandlung des Leids in das Lied, die schwieriger ist, als es die Vertauschung zweier Buchstaben suggeriert, wird mehr programmatisch verkündet als künstlerisch vollzogen'.

⁹⁵¹ Lach, 'Stefan Georges Gedichtzyklus "Pilgerfahrten"', p. 112.

sein'.⁹⁵² Significantly, the pilgrim figure has been cut out of it, and the thematics of pilgrimage are missing. A poetic *Ich* that transcends the identity of the pilgrim steps in to assert control and break the endless cycle of wandering repetitions, a sort of *deus ex machina* – the Master arrives to pull the wandering *Ich* out of the Žižekian-Schellingian circular 'vortex of drives'.⁹⁵³ It is the cut of this poetic gem, the 'Entscheidung', that resolves *Pilgerfahrten* as a 'Buch der Unentschiedenheit'.⁹⁵⁴

⁹⁵² Pirro, 'Pilgerfahrten', p. 55 writes that 'Die Spange' represents 'die ideale Vorstellung von Dichtertum als der Bewältigung von Affekten'.

⁹⁵³ Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder*, p. 14.

⁹⁵⁴ Böschstein, *Studien zur Dichtung des Absoluten*, p. 152.

6. 'Colligite quae superaverunt fragmenta, ne pereant'* · Fragmentation and Recollection from the *Bücher* to *Teppich*

i. Prolegomena

At the end of *Pilgerfahrten*, the pilgrim has disappeared, and we find ourselves in the subterranean realms of *Algabal*. There, the landscape is known and controlled, the subject is no longer a pilgrim 'abroad in a world of impending revelation'.⁹⁵⁵ Algabal's is a world where time is subordinated to space, the emperor seeks to escape time by creating an alternate 'schöpfung wo er nur geweckt und verwaltet' (II: 60). The eradication of time is most strongly felt in the poems of the first sub-cycle that describe his underground, 'ästhetische Gegen-Welt'.⁹⁵⁶ The sun never sets in this timeless place (II: 61), and references to temporality are minimal. Algabal himself is not free of the divisions of temporality, however, as Zanucchi points out (II: 62).⁹⁵⁷

Algabal, in his solitude, calls out to his world in apostrophe ('Und perlen!', II: 62). One of the functions of apostrophe, Culler relates, is to 'to posit a potentially responsive or at least attentive universe, to which one has a relation [...] to establish with the object a relationship that helps to constitute the subject itself as poetic, even vatic'.⁹⁵⁸ The response Algabal receives, given that the entire aesthetic underworld is a projection of solipsistic aestheticism, comes from within

* John 6.12. Cf. Peterson, *Petrarch's Fragmenta*, p. 22.

⁹⁵⁵ David Whyte, *Consolations* (Canongate, 2019), p. 122.

⁹⁵⁶ Zanucchi, 'Algabal', in *Stefan George – Werkkommentar. Studien und Interpretationen zu sämtlichen Dichtungen und Übertragungen*, ed. by Jürgen Egyptien (de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 60-89 (p. 64).

⁹⁵⁷ Zanucchi, 'Algabal', p. 65.

⁹⁵⁸ Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, p. 216.

himself, from memory.⁹⁵⁹ Apostrophe, according to Culler, is an anti-narrative (and therefore anti-time) device: it presences its objects in the privileged eternal now of poetic utterance conceived of as resisting sequentiality and narrative linearity.⁹⁶⁰ It also conveys something of the suddenness of an epiphany, something arising from the depths of memory. Meyerhoff writes about literary recollection as a method of saving experience from time: the work of recollection becomes one of eternalising that which is recollected.⁹⁶¹ And yet, as he continues, this ‘timeless dimension’ rests on the function of memory, ‘which presumably is a temporal phenomenon’.⁹⁶² Algabal seeks for aesthetic timelessness from within a temporality constitutive of the Petrarchan subject: then and now, and the question of (dis-)continuity this entails for identity.⁹⁶³ As a character, he is plagued by the same fractured consciousness occasioned by the experience of love first chronicled by George in his youth poetry. He is, in this sense, a figure stuck in the past: in his own past (‘Fühl ich noch dies erste ungemach’, II: 83), in the poet’s past (as a more developed and sophisticated character than that of the *Fibel*), and in the historical past – an emperor from long ago.

ii. From Mask to Mask

⁹⁵⁹ Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, p. 225 similarly remarks about the apostrophe as also potentially being ‘an act of radical interiorization and solipsism’.

⁹⁶⁰ Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, p. 226.

⁹⁶¹ Hans Meyerhoff, *Time in Literature*, pp. 54-55: ‘It is a permanent or timeless possibility. The recollection may burst into consciousness at any time or place, which gives it the quality of being beyond time and place—though after it has happened we can fix the date within the sequence of physical time and say when it happened. Only the fact that it may happen at any time seems to put the recollection into a timeless dimension’.

⁹⁶² Meyerhoff, *Time in Literature*, p. 55.

⁹⁶³ Cf. Meyerhoff, *Time in Literature*, p. 59. The preterit tense defining the final stanza of ‘Daneben war der raum der blassen helle’ (II: 62) has the effect of confusing the *then* and the *now*. In the same moment that continuity with the past is affirmed, a melancholy diremption persists. Durzak, *Der junge Stefan George*, p. 222 writes: ‘Abgesehen von diesem kurzen Zeitraum, in dem sich Algabal mit seiner Kindheit erneut identifiziert, muß sein gegenwärtiger Zustand von dem seiner Kindheit unterschieden werden’.

The oppressive atmosphere of *Algabal* is negated by the fresh air of the following volume. *Die Bücher der Hirten- und Preisgedichte, der Sagen und Sänge und der hängenden Gärten* (1894).⁹⁶⁴ George made of *Algabal* a negative exemplar of what Meyerhoff discussing myths calls the ‘timeless prototypes of human existence’.⁹⁶⁵ Historical precedent is transfigured into artistic, timelessly present myth. The *Bücher*, by contrast, do away with historical precedent and provide glimpses into a subjectively imaginative engagement with, respectively, classicising, medievalising and orientalist images, genres and tropes.⁹⁶⁶ The unwieldy title of the work already betrays the fragmentation of historical experience and the gathering of those scattered pieces into the work (the rule of three neatly binding these disparate worlds together), quite akin to Petrarch’s theme.⁹⁶⁷

The diffusion of the George-poet into different masks reaches a high-point in *Das Buch der Hirten- und Preisgedichte*, given that ‘jedes Gedicht seine eigene Perspektive, ein eigenes Ich hat’.⁹⁶⁸ This dispersal of the self is a feature not only of Petrarch’s own poetics but also of modernist Petrarchism. As Higbee, identifying Petrarch’s use of ‘*personae*’ in the modernists he examines, writes: ‘the dislocation of the poetic self into masks is a major part of the more general issue of psychological fragmentation that plays a critical role in the poetics of fragmentation’.⁹⁶⁹ What Mazzotta calls the ‘fragmented heterogeneity of history’

⁹⁶⁴ Gundolf, *George*, p. 94 ‘frei von der Algabalbesessenheit kommen die freudigeren, gelinderen, geselligeren Kräfte des Dichters zu Worte’.

⁹⁶⁵ Meyerhoff, *Time in Literature*, p. 81.

⁹⁶⁶ The work’s preface itself tells us this – we are not to look in it for crumbs of historical reality: it is the ‘spiegelungen einer seele die vorübergehend in andere zeiten und örtlichkeiten geflohen ist und sich dort gewiegt hat’ (III: 9).

⁹⁶⁷ To quote Mazzotta, ‘Petrarch allows us to speak of unity as a unity of fragments, as a unity of adjacent parts’, Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch*, p. 4.

⁹⁶⁸ Wolfgang Christian Schneider, ‘Das Buch der Hirten- und Preisgedichte’, in *Stefan George – Werkkommentar. Studien und Interpretationen zu sämtlichen Dichtungen und Übertragungen*, ed. by Jürgen Egyptien (de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 97-123 (p. 97).

⁹⁶⁹ Higbee, ‘The Poetics of Fragmentation’, p. 190.

applies similarly to George's procedure here.⁹⁷⁰ Higbee's assessment of Petrarch's 'personae', which also draws on Mazzotta, applies neatly to George's *Ich*:

Another method that indicates the fragmented psychological state of the poet is his use of personae, or masks. By dividing himself into his constituent parts and then putting on the guise of one of those roles—or indeed in some cases taking on a completely separate identity—Petrarch is able to explore a specific area of his internal world, with the added benefit of a degree of objectivity conferred by the poetic mask. The use of personae springs from his “conviction that one reaches the ‘self’ deviously, that a detour through another’s consciousness is a way to one’s own desires” (Mazzotta 149).⁹⁷¹

Higbee traces Petrarch's *Ich* as coming through beneath whatever mask he chooses (that of the pilgrim, for example, Higbee cites *RVF* 331: 23).⁹⁷² The *Ich* subtends the discourse, it can project its survival beyond the temporary mask.⁹⁷³ George's *Ich*, while it likewise subtends every poetic cycle in which it appears, in this regard appears more 'labil und brüchig' than Petrarch's.⁹⁷⁴ There is a much greater heterogeneity of voices and speakers across George's oeuvre, varying in how representative they are of the standard Georgean *Ich* (if there is such a thing). George's masks do not suggest, as Petrarch's do, an underlying continuous substance that guarantees consistency across poems. Algabal is one of George's

⁹⁷⁰ Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch*, p. 98.

⁹⁷¹ Higbee, 'The Poetics of Fragmentation', p. 60, and citing Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch*, p. 149.

⁹⁷² Higbee, 'The Poetics of Fragmentation', p. 67.

⁹⁷³ See the example of the sailor in Higbee, 'The Poetics of Fragmentation', pp. 68-69.

⁹⁷⁴ Pirro, 'Pilgerfahrten', p. 49. Schäfer, *Die Intensität der Form*, pp. 201-06 takes issue with the idea of masks as a necessarily compensatory (p. 206) device for an unstable *Ich*, and that rather masks work just as much as a 'Steigerung der Subjektivität' (p. 201).

great masks, but the voice subtending that mask differs in substantial ways to the voice of the Maximin poems in *Der Siebente Ring*, or even to that of the imperious poet in 'Der Dichter in Zeiten der Wirren'. As in Azari's reading of John Ashbery as a case study of Lacanian, specular misidentification, George 'portrays himself as a literary subject who is lost in an identity that is outside himself and that takes a thousand and one shapes'.⁹⁷⁵

George's use of masks allows him to come to himself via a 'detour' thought the other, a word used by both Boysen, in his Hegelian and Lacanian reading, and Mazzotta. This detour causes a fundamental alienation.⁹⁷⁶ Summarily, what Mazzotta claims for Petrarch's poetics of mirroring (also cited by Boysen) fits George's masks (especially that of Algabal): 'the knowledge that the self, in the mirror of self-reflection – as he is the object of his own thoughts – can never coincide with his own specular images'.⁹⁷⁷ Algabal makes a literal 'detour' through the other as he explores the crowds in his feminine drag, forgetting himself ('mich vergessend', II:71, cf. *Rvf* 23:19;129:34), in order to come back to himself but changed ('beinah einer schwester angesicht', I. 15).⁹⁷⁸

George's *Ich* often takes this devious (to borrow Mazzotta's rhetoric) detour through the other.⁹⁷⁹ If the collection constitutes the 'spiegelungen einer seele die vorübergehend in andere zeiten und örtlichkeiten geflohen ist und sich dort gewiegt

⁹⁷⁵ Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, p. 165. See for example George's poem 'Der Spiegel' from *Der Siebente Ring* (VI/VII: 76) but which was composed in May, 1901 (i.e. pre-Maximin event – for dating see the 'Anhang', VI/VII: 211-14) and thematises a specular misidentification.

⁹⁷⁶ Boysen, *Negativity, Nothingness and Nominalism*, p. 60. Boysen's entire reading of Petrarch's self-diremption is based on this, following Lacan and Hegel. I cite page 60 for his summary remark: 'Self-consciousness never attains complete relief or satisfaction because it is obliged to make a detour by the other to be perceptible to itself and in general to express itself'.

⁹⁷⁷ Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch*, p. 60 (cited in Boysen, *Negativity, Nothingness and Nominalism*, p. 48).

⁹⁷⁸ As Zanucchi ('Algabal', p. 71) points out, however, this process of incorporation is 'defizitär' as hinted at by the subtle 'beinah' in line 15.

⁹⁷⁹ Boysen, *Negativity, Nothingness and Nominalism*, p. 60; Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch*, p. 149.

hat', as the preface tells us (III: 7), that single soul is reflected in a multitude of times and places: heterogeneity is built into the sense of self. This becomes an occasion for 'Übung und Spiel', as David stresses, highlighting the emphasis on play in the original preface to the volume.⁹⁸⁰ Thus in the *Buch der Sagen und Sänge* several Petrarchistic and medievalist tropes suffuse George's play with the *Minnesang* genre, as in the poem 'Im Unglücklichen Tone dessen von...' (III: 49).⁹⁸¹ Schloon detects an 'ironischer Unterton' in the poem, which in part is concordant with David's insistence on the collection as play.⁹⁸² The nameless lover's Petrarchistic and courtly devotion to his Lady is a mask cast off as soon as it is put on, it seems.

This Type-1 Petrarchism does not only make itself apparent in images and motifs, it finds expression structurally in the poems that frame *Sagen und Sänge*.

⁹⁸⁰ David, *Stefan George*, pp. 116, 120.

⁹⁸¹ The poem describes, through a mask, the misfortunes of a *Minnesänger* who goes on increasingly extreme quests to please his lady, suffering increasing bodily disintegration and destruction: first his hair is singed by a dragon he kills, then he loses an arm in battle at sea, he has ruined both his spirit and his body ('glück' and 'leib') in service to her and finally:

'Nun leid ich an einer tiefen wunde ·
Doch dringt euer lob bis zur letzten stunde ·
Schöne dame · aus meinem munde'
(II. 22-24, III: 49).

Rushworth (*Discourses of Mourning in Dante, Petrarch and Proust*, p. 58) draws attention to the history of the metaphor of the 'open wound' both in romance poetry – and Petrarch – and theoretical accounts of melancholy. George's speaker here is akin to Petrarch, his wound, to quote Rushworth, 'kept open and painful through the endless act of writing' (p. 72), where writing in George is understood metaphorically as the singer's ongoing service to the Lady. The imagery of the fatal wound of love remains in George's speaker who wins his Lady 'ruhm' (I. 20) by oral recitation 'aus meinem munde'. The 'deep and bitter wound' (*Rvf* 242: 4) of Petrarch's love is a spiritual literary precedent to that of George's *Minnesänger*. Rushworth (p. 59) cites *Rvf* 90: 14 for the wound. In comparison to George's lyric speaker, whose body is gradually deteriorating, falling apart and losing parts in service to his cruelly uncaring Lady, Petrarch's other mentions of his 'deep and loving wound' (*Rvf* 195: 8) similarly stress the deterioration and fragmentation of the body in service-unto-death of his Lady (*Rvf* 195: 9-14). In poem 296 the wound-imagery returns and is coupled, as in George's poem, with the effusion of painful groans for her (II. 12-14). The Petrarchan image of erotic frustrations, the 'nodo', or knot, is the image at the beginning of George's poem:

'Löset von diesem brief sanft den knoten ·
Empfanget ohne groll meinen boten ·
Denket er käme von einem toten!'

The 'knoten' refers to the knot literally holding the *Minnesänger*'s letter closed, but it metaphorically evokes the spiritual knot that the speaker has gotten himself into.

⁹⁸² Jutta Schloon, 'Das Buch der Sagen und Sänge', In *Stefan George – Werkkommentar. Studien und Interpretationen zu sämtlichen Dichtungen und Übertragungen*, ed. by Jürgen Egyptien (de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 124-138 (p. 130).

‘Sporenwache’ (III: 43-44) is the narrative of a young man the night before he is to be raised to knighthood, his pious sense of duty is disrupted by desirous thoughts: the ‘irdische gestalt’ of a young girl standing ‘im garten bei den rosmarinen’ (44). To cure these impious thoughts he turns to the Virgin:

Da sieht er auf der jungfrau schosse sitzen

Den Welt-erlöser offen seinen arm.

Ich werde diener sein in deinem heere

Es sei kein andres streben in mir wach ·

(III: 44).

Schloon emphasises the folk-etymology of ‘rosmarin’ and its traditional linkage to the Virgin Mary, to establish a parallel between the girl in the garden and the Virgin, the former, like Petrarch’s Laura, a misleading faux image of the latter.⁹⁸³ Although the *Ich* strewn across the *Buch der Sagen und Sänge* is discontinuous, representing various characters and voices (the ‘masks’), like Petrarch’s in ‘Virgin, so lovely, clothed in the sun’s light’ (*Rvf* 366) it closes the *Buch* with a turn to the Virgin Mary in *Lilie der Auen!*:

Lilie der auen! Herrin im rosenhag!

Gib dass ich mich freue ·

Dass ich mich erneue

⁹⁸³ Schloon, *Modernes Mittelalter*, p. 56. For the Petrarchistic conflation of the beloved with the Virgin, cf. Hoffmeister, *Petrarkistische Lyrik*, p. 12. Laura’s golden locks, her dress and her acting as a counterpoint to the Virgin are all moments of concern for Petrarch, who at the end of the *Canzoniere* turns to the actual Virgin (*Rvf* 366).

An deinem gnadenreichen krönungstag.

(III: 67)

This is the third appearance of 'herrin' in George's oeuvre, following its characterisation of the muse in 'Weihe' (II: 10) and its appearance in *Pilgerfahrten* (II: 49).⁹⁸⁴ In the latter poem, the 'herrin' has some trouble finding that she is no longer recognised by her garden flowers as their 'königin' (l. 8). The artist in her earthly garden has lost connection to her creation, it has become a kind of art pour art – flowers that blossom for the sake of blossoming, *not* for reflecting or propping up their artistic cultivator (ll. 11-12).⁹⁸⁵

Morwitz states in his discussion of *Lilie der Auen!* that 'ein Kirchenlied zu gestalten' represents a task 'deren Schwierigkeit gerade einen echten Dichter zu allen Zeiten anzieht'.⁹⁸⁶ It is difficult here to overlook Dante and Petrarch, who both end their work with an original prayer to the Virgin. George's lyric speaker apostrophises the Virgin in exclamatory invocations at the start of each of the short three stanzas (touching on her roles and attributes: 'Herrin', 'Mutter', 'frau' etc.) before entreating her for help. Petrarch's final canzone begins each stanza with a vocative plea ('Virgin, so lovely', 'Virgin so wise', 'Virgin so pure and perfect' etc., *Rvf* 366).

⁹⁸⁴ An earlier version of that *Pilgerfahrten* poem ('Die frühe sonne küsst noch ohne feuer', II:49) had similarly associated her with dangerously seductive lilies, rather than with the 'nelken astern und reseden' (l. 6) that the final poem has. See the Oelmann's note in the 'Anhang', II: 117, pointing out that in the previous poem, 'Dass er auf fernem felsenpfade' the lily 'im Konnotationfeld der Verführung steht'. Schloon, *Modernes Mittelalter*, 138 n. 273 points out the presence of this flower imagery in the Latin tradition of Marian worship.

⁹⁸⁵ It is in this vein that Ernst Morwitz (*Kommentar*, p. 39) returns us to the chauvinistic imagery of Algalban barrenness in his speculative commentary: 'sie fühlt plötzlich mit Verdruss, dass die Blumen nur zum Blühen und nicht zum Anerkennen menschlicher Schönheit geschaffen sind. Vielleicht soll hier unfruchtbare Schönheit eines verwöhnten Menschen der fruchttragenden Schönheit der Blumen gegenübergestellt werden'. The coldness and stoniness in this poem (ll. 1-4) take up the barrenness associated with *Algabal*.

⁹⁸⁶ Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 91.

Schloon emphasises how ‘Lilie der Auen!’ raises, to a spiritual high, ‘die Problematik des unerfüllten Liebeswunsches’ of the Petrarchistic cycle that it culminates, by intertwining it with the medievalising cult of Marian worship.⁹⁸⁷ She goes on to discuss how the lyric speaker in ‘Lilie der Auen!’ positions himself in a privileged vantage point despite the confessed humility before the ‘[m]ilde frau der frauen’: the final stanza proclaims him free of sin (the attribute solely of Mary herself), and thereby defeats the purpose of the prayer to her.⁹⁸⁸ Strangely, he offers her a deal:

⁹⁸⁷ Schloon, *Modernes Mittelalter*, p. 145. The sub-cycle ‘Sänge eines fahrenden Spielmanns’ (III: 57-61), for example, is a series of Petrarchan love lyrics underwritten by the speaker’s ‘sanfte plage’, (58). This sequence is replete with Petrarchan motifs and gestures: the lyric subject is plagued by uncertainty and self-questioning (‘Werd ich traurig weiterschweifen? | Werd ich’s wagen? werd ich sagen ..’ (p. 59). Cf. Higbee, ‘The Poetics of Fragmentation’, pp. 116, 122-23 for the doubt-riddled figure of T.S. Eliot’s ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’. Prufrock is ‘constantly self-questioning’ and, ‘[l]ike Petrarch [...] seems doomed to immobility and inaction’ (p. 207). There is a general anxiety regarding transience in George (‘Worte trügen · worte fliehen’, p. 58) much talk of tears (‘Und wenn meine tränen fließen?’, p. 58, cf. Meidl, ‘Zum Zeitdiskurs des frühen Petrarkismus, p. 89 highlighting ‘die Verbindung des hyperbolischen Tränenvergießens mit der Dauer der Sehnsucht und des Leidens’ as quintessential of Petrarchan subjectivity), and grief (‘Und minder wird mein gram’, p. 60). There is the Petrarchan discourse of sweetness (‘Macht dein ohr für süsse schwüre | Süsse bitten schneller wach’, p. 61), of self-humbling before the Lady (‘Nachdem ich lang gelitten | Vor dir knien mag?’, p. 59), as well as other Petrarchan signifiers in George’s oeuvre (‘Dass der letzte trost mir flieht’, p. 58; ‘stumm und zag’, p. 61). The cycle opens with a poem that incorporates Petrarchan imagery:

‘Höhne meine sanfte plage!
Einmal muss ich doch gestehen
Dass ich dich im traum gesehen
Und seit dem im busen trage’
(III: 58).

A Petrarchan affective antithesis (‘sanfte plage’) combines with imagery of the heavy heart of the melancholy lover (cf. *Rvf* 96: 4-5). Petrarch references his heart constantly throughout the *Canzoniere* (*Rvf* 1: 2; 2: 5; 3: 10; 5: 2; 10: 12; 11: 4, 6; 17: 13; 18: 5; 21: 3; 23: 24-25, 73, 95, 125, 169; 25: 6; etc.). The Petrarchan heart/breast is part of a discourse of the body that (dis-)figures the subject into an essentially passive role, as Paolo Rigo’s analysis shows (‘Corpo’ in *Lessico Critico Petrarcesco*, ed. by Luca Marcozzi and Romana Brovia (Carocci editore, 2016), pp. 114-125 (p. 124). Furthermore, the movement from vision to heart is thoroughly in line with medieval accounts of the body: Giorgio Agamben explores this physiology in detail, with specific references to the Italian authors relevant to the present study, in *Stanzas: Word and Representation in Western Culture*, trans. by Ronald L. Martinez (University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 70-71. Simon Prahl, ‘Das elegische Herz: Zur Bedeutung des Wortes “Herz” in der Sprache der *Duineser Elegien*’, unpublished paper delivered at the seventy-fifth ‘National Postgraduate Colloquium in German Studies’ (Cambridge University, 22 November 2024), drew felicitous comparisons regarding this vision-heart complex between Petrarch and Rainer Maria Rilke as a modern Petrarchist. I credit Prahl with reminding me of this important motif which George here touches upon!

⁹⁸⁸ Schloon, *Modernes Mittelalter*, p. 161 (and citing Braungart, *Ästhetischer Katholizismus*, p. 202).

Wenn ich ohne sünde
Deine macht verkünde
Schenkst du mir worum ich lange bat?

The '[w]enn' hints at a possibility, rather than a fact, and it leaves open the chance that he may one day be without sin but does not necessarily claim that he is at the moment of prayer. At any rate, 'bargaining' with the Virgin Mary is not very well-mannered, and somewhat presumptuous.⁹⁸⁹ Petrarch begs for pity (*Rvf* 366: 127-128), but does not presume that these will suffice, and as previously discussed, his final turn to the Virgin is not so final.

Both George's and Petrarch's prayers represent a kind of failed conversion acted out in poetic language, albeit from different angles: Petrarch knows he should convert but does not have it in his willpower to; George's speaker is less interested in conversion (despite the first stanza's rhetoric: 'Dass ich mich erneue') than in instrumentalising his poetic potency ('verkünde') in exchange for what he wants, and unlike Petrarch's *Ich*, George the masterly poet is at a remove from his characters. Thus, two variations on the same poetic theme, rounding off a cycle of poetry, and linking back into those cycles' first poems that also thematise conversion (George's knight-to-be of 'Sporenwache' and his recourse to the image of the Virgin), offer a salient case of modernist Type-1 Petrarchism, even where it does not at first appear obvious.⁹⁹⁰

⁹⁸⁹ Similarly Vilain, 'Stefan George's Early Works 1890-1895', p. 69: 'the all-too-human condition of one almost bargaining with the divine for human love'.

⁹⁹⁰ This is not to posit Petrarch as a source for the poem – George's sources for the image of the 'Herrin im rosenhag' have been sourced elsewhere, for example. See Oelmann's comments in the 'Anhang' (III: 139) – but rather to contrast the structural effects of a similar poetic principle that relies on a cyclical form thematising conversion, a key Petrarchan concern.

iii. Travelling to an Antique Land*

Das Buch der hängenden Gärten opens with a poem that foregoes Algabal's self-centredness by turning the 'poet-king' lyric speaker into a royal 'Wir' and by introducing a you ('Wir werden noch einmal zum lande fliegen', III: 71).⁹⁹¹ Much of this volume's discourse involves the romantic pursuit of a *Du*, and therein lies its assumption of a generic Type-1 Petrarchism. Our royal subject is split, reflected in the confusion of pronomial address across the poems (alternating between 'ich's and 'du's and 'wir's').⁹⁹² Much as the scission between past and present continues to be a source of internal discontinuity for the new speaker, he is spatially, geographically split from his homeland at the outset. This dual removal from one's origins is captured in the first poem's expression of traveling home, they shall 'zum lande fliegen | Das dir von früh auf eigen war' (III: 71), conflating time and space, like Shelley's 'traveller from an antique land', now travelling instead home to the past. The 'antique land' is not temporally antique, but antique as an orientalist trope throughout the *hängenden Gärten*. The *Bücher der Hirten- und Preisgedichte* and *der Sagen und Sänge* emphasise their temporal distance (antiquity and the middle ages) in their titles' reference to particular genres, while the third *Buch* emphasises a legendary place that existed in a legendary past. The *hängenden Gärten* is trickier to pin down temporally, and is often regarded as the 'modern' of the three despite the exoticising, ancient reference in its title.⁹⁹³ The following discussion is

* Title adapted from Percy Bysshe Shelly, 'Ozymandias', available at <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46565/ozymandias> (accessed 16/10/2024).

⁹⁹¹ For 'poet-king' and his links to Algabal cf. Vilain, 'Stefan George's Early Works 1890-1895', p. 69. Cf. Also Claude David, *Stefan George*, p. 117.

⁹⁹² Vilain, 'Stefan George's Early Works 1890-1895', p. 70 suggests the plural 'we' to 'almost suggest[]' an inclusive *we*, rather than a royal one.

⁹⁹³ See Pirro's discussion of the 'Motiv der Großstadt' (Maurizio Pirro, 'Die Bücher der Hirten- und Preisgedichte, der Sagen und Sänge und der Hängenden Gärten (SW, III)', in *Stefan George und sein Kreis. Ein Handbuch*, vol. 1, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer, Wolfgang Braungart, Stefan Breuer

an attempt to trace some Petrarchistic (Type-1) motifs that enable the ‘radically modern character’ (i.e. Type-2 Petrarchism) of this volume to emerge.⁹⁹⁴

In broad strokes the *hängenden Gärten* details the transition from a position of power and authority to one of servitude and enthrallment in the other, from a vertical plane of autonomy and hegemony to the horizontal plane of desire, movement, and slavery, as Pirro discusses.⁹⁹⁵ Or in this dissertation’s terms, a transition from the Master’s transcendent position to Petrarchan subjugation. As a preparatory setup to the problematics of *Das Jahr der Seele*, two aspects of the *hängenden Gärten* will be discussed here. Firstly, the Ida Coblentz-influenced ‘Semiramislieder’ of the cycle that chronicle the subjective experience of erotic enthrallment, with its plethora of type-1 Petrarchism.⁹⁹⁶ Secondly, the breakdown of experience in modernity as exemplified by the scant remains of a sonnet in the poem ‘Sprich nicht immer’, a poem that prefigures the poetics of recollection concerning *Das Jahr der Seele* (SW IV).

The first section of the volume concerns itself with what Vilain calls the poet-king and his violent conquests, before ending with the king relaxing in a state of ‘almost transcendental meditation’ in the onsetting quietude of post-war victory (III:

and Ute Oelmann, 2nd edn (de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 122-36 (p. 134). Central is the preface first published in the October edition of the *Blätter* in 1894 (‘die sinnliche luft unsrer angebeteten städte’, Stefan George, ‘Vorrede zu den Büchern der Hirten- und Preisgedichte · der Sagen und Sänge und der hängenden Gärten’, *Blätter für die Kunst* 2.4 (October 1894), p. 97). Cf. Christophe Fricker, ‘Das Buch der hängenden Gärten’, in *Stefan George – Werkkommentar: Studien und Interpretationen zu sämtlichen Dichtungen und Übertragungen*, ed. by Jürgen Egyptien (de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 149-169 (p. 157).

⁹⁹⁴ Vilain, ‘Stefan George’s Early Works 1890-1895’, p. 69.

⁹⁹⁵ Pirro, ‘Die Bücher der Hirten- und Preisgedichte, der Sagen und Sänge und der Hängenden Gärten (SW, III)’, p. 135, and also Pirro, *Come corda troppo tesa*, pp. 114-15.

⁹⁹⁶ Pirro, ‘Die Bücher der Hirten- und Preisgedichte, der Sagen und Sänge und der Hängenden Gärten (SW, III)’, p. 134, for the background with Coblentz, and Seekamp et al., *Zeittafel*, p. 43. Ida Coblentz was George’s close friend and companion in the early nineties and became a ‘Georgianerin, die erste, die es gab’ (Coblentz, cited in Egyptien, *Stefan George: Dichter und Prophet*, p. 99). The only woman, possibly, that George ever loved (as Höpker-Herberg summarises: ‘Einigkeit besteht darüber, dass George Ida-Coblentz geliebt habe’, Elisabeth Höpker-Herberg, ‘Ida Coblentz. Zeugnisse zu ihrem George-Erlebnis’, in *Frauen um Stefan George*, ed. by Ute Oelmann and Ulrich Raulff (Wallstein, 2010), pp. 85-102 (p. 85)).

77 and 78).⁹⁹⁷ The crossover to section three is then marked by the poem 'Friedensabend' (III: 81) in its ambivalent portrayal of a return of the repressed amid the peace and quiet of a slumbering world: 'Im dichten dunste dringt nur dumpf und selten | Ein ton herauf aus unterworfenen welten'.⁹⁹⁸ The effect of all of those (ex-)plosive /d/ sounds and the dark and hazy u-vowels mirrors rather obviously the 'heraufdringen' of the tone from what were previously subdued worlds, suppressed down under below the might of the Master. In the king's 'schlummern und verstummen', something bubbles up to unsettle his hegemony and control. The king's ability to keep his world in check is destabilised with the emergence of the shadowy underworld of the amorous affectivity of literary Petrarchism (the 'ton') that is about to dominate the third section of the work.⁹⁹⁹ It is hardly coincidental that of all things to arise out of the unconscious depths it is a 'ton' – a poetic song, or lyrical melody – that arises out of some repressed, literary-ontological ground. Among the wonders recounted in 'Unterm schutz von dichten blättergründen' (III: 83), we glimpse the first, paradoxically gentle stirrings of pain, the 'soavità' (gentleness, sweetness, suavity) of Petrarchan lament: 'Wo [...] | Sachte stimmen ihre leiden künden ·', and the ambivalence of the cycle begins to reveal itself, etched with suffering even amidst the 'schutz' of natural soundings and the sweet

⁹⁹⁷ Vilain, 'Stefan George's Early Works 1890-1895', pp. 69, 71. On the Book's divisions see summarily Christophe Fricker, 'Das Buch der hängenden Gärten', in Stefan George – Werkkommentar. Studien und Interpretationen zu sämtlichen Dichtungen und Übertragungen, ed. by Jürgen Egyptien (de Gruyter, 2017), 149-69 (p. 149): 'Das Buch der hängenden Gärten besteht aus fünf überschriftlosen, durch Leerseiten voneinander abgesetzten Teilen'.

⁹⁹⁸ I agree with Vilain's reading the 'unconscious' into the poem here insofar as the unconscious stands for what the autonomous ruler had to repress in order to retain power (Vilain, 'Stefan George's Early Works 1890-1895', p. 71: 'This mysterious tone from realms buried deep in the unconscious is allowed to resurface only when the mind is brought to a state of perfect rest by art').

⁹⁹⁹ Pirro identifies control as the underlying strategy of all three of the *Bücher*: 'L'opera è pervasa da una strategia di contenimento delle passioni che sul piano tematico si esercita nel senso di una prolungata tensione, mai di fatto riassorbita, fra distanza e vicinanza, estraniamento e riunione' ('The work is permeated by a strategy of restraining passions, which, thematically speaking, manifests itself as a prolonged tension, never truly resolved, between distance and closeness, estrangement and reunion'), *Come corda troppo tesa*, p. 86.

poetic leaves of literary precedent.¹⁰⁰⁰ What Morwitz calls the 'grundloser Wechsel' of the lyric speaker's affective states is read here as Type-1 Petrarchism.¹⁰⁰¹

¹⁰⁰⁰ Cf. Guérin, 'Poesia', p. 254 for Petrarch's 'soavità'.

¹⁰⁰¹ Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 99. Of course, Petrarchism does not feature in the George-Circle's admitted influences. Gundolf, writing on the *hängenden Gärten*, fully admits the attraction of orientalist discourse, authorising it with reference to the German tradition of Goethe ('Sehen wir ab von den Kreuzzugs-fluiden und von der Bibelreligion, so beginnt die sinnliche Gewalt des Ostens über deutsche Seelen mit dem Salomonischen Hohen Lied, einem Urklang von Liebesfeuer und wollüstigem Überschwang, sie wird genüßliche Schnörkel- und Farbenfreude bei Wieland, Patriarchenluft, satter Erdenglanz und morgenländische Reife in Goethes Divan, der dann bis auf unsere Tage die Vorstellung beherrscht hat, unter manchen Erweiterungen durch Romantik und Epigonen. Mehr als sonst ein Kulturbereich ist uns Morgenland das Andere, das Fremde und Ferne, die Erholung von Gewohnheit, Gesetz, Pflicht, die Durchbrechung des Alltags, Wunder und Märchen, Buntheit und Prunk gewesen, und deshalb vorzugsweise "romantisches Land" auch bei den Hütern der Gegenwart und der Heimat', Gundolf, *George*, pp. 115-16). Gundolf takes his 'Patriarchenluft' from Goethe's *West-östlicher Divan* (cited again by Gundolf in his *Goethe* book to describe the atmosphere of the East. It is also cited by Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Penguin Classics, 2003), p. 167). The admitted exotic otherness of the 'Orient', in its apparently monolithic representation ('ein Kulturbereich'), is positioned as a way for weary German souls to recover from the *taedium* of the industrialised bourgeois nineteenth century – nothing new here, then. As Said writes, orientalism 'has less to do with the Orient than it does with "our" world' (*Orientalism*, p. 12). With the opaque but open otherness of Gundolf's outline, we are reminded of what Said later on describes: 'the Orient is less a place than a *topos*, a set of references, a congeries of characteristics, that seem to have its origin in a quotation, or a fragment of a text, or a citation from someone's work on the Orient, or some bit of previous imagining, or an amalgam of all these' (*Orientalism*, p. 177). However, although Goethe ostensibly takes over Gundolf's passage with his presence at its centre, the nod to the Song of Songs (also known as the Song of Solomon) testifies to that text's influence on love poetry not only on 'deutsche Seelen' but throughout the Middle Ages and on Petrarch in particular (Cf. Elena Lombardi, *The Syntax of Desire. Language and Love in Augustine, The Modistae, Dante* (University of Toronto Press, 2007), p. 10 (with endnote). On the *Song of Songs* and Petrarch see Bettarini's many listings of its presence in the *Canzoniere* in her index to *Canzoniere*, vol 2, p. 1693). Avoiding the Petrarchistic and epigonal traditions, but nevertheless needing some textually-grounded literary background in which an 'outpouring of self' (Said, *Orientalism*, p. 170, discussing how the 'literary pilgrims' of the time 'exploit the Orient in their work so as in some urgent way to justify their existential vocations') can occur, Orientalism becomes the playground for the staging of affective excesses: 'das Andere, das Fremde und Ferne', in all its otherness and difference, stands under the comforting guarantee of a return to the *Patriarchs*, Goethe's 'Patriarchenluft'. What greater guarantee than the cult of literary forefathers? Discussing the poem 'Friedensabend' (III: 81), Gundolf once more falls back on George's literary canon to position him in a line of authors who tapped into the fairytale-like fullness of the 'Orient' as productive literary space, this time featuring Nietzsche, Jean Paul, Dante and Shakespeare: 'es ist in Georges Dasein eine Stunde der heißen und gelassenen Stille gewesen, da für ihn Erreichtes und Ersehntes ineinander schwammen zur Mär, da ihn sättigte und fast schon übersättigte die eigene Fülle der Gesichte und da er versucht war zum Augenblick zu sagen: "Verweile doch" oder vielmehr, da der schöne Augenblick ihm versank in dem zeitlosen Frieden vollkommenen Genügens. Dies war die Stunde die ihn reif machte für Morgenland. Er hat nichts süßer Schwüles, üppiger Buntos geschrieben wie die Verse dieser tropischen Maße [...] Wer hat den Sabbath des südlichen Meers, die halkyonische Seligkeit so gefeiert wie Nietzsche? Fausts Schlummer auf dem Elfenplan, die heiße Pansstunde in Jean Pauls Flegeljahren, Dantes Blumenwandeln im irdischen Paradies sind verschiedene Sinnbilder desselben Erlebnisses. Nur der Dichter des Romeo konnte die Johannisnacht so warm und golden träumen. Nur auf dem Grunde des dunkelsten Grauens gedeiht das üppige Märchen, in der Nachbarschaft des Todes und während das Schicksal verschnauft'. (Gundolf, *George*, pp. 119-20). Greene cites the *Song of Songs* as one of the originary sources 'of the motif of *spargimento*, the scattering of members or fragments' in Petrarch, which will be the focus of the second part in particular of the following analysis of 'Sprich nicht immer' (Greene, *Post-*

The poem that announces the lover's enthrallment contains a selection of Petrarchisms:

Als neuling trat ich ein in dein gehege
Kein staunen war vorher in meinen mienen ·
Kein wunsch in mir eh ich dich blickte rege.
Der jungen hände faltung sieh mit huld ·
Erwähle mich zu denen die dir dienen
Und schone mit erbarmender geduld
Den der noch strauchelt auf so fremdem stege.
(III: 84)

We are dealing here with the Petrarchan, retrospective narrative obsession with newness and beginnings, of tracing his various 'first things, first times and first [...] places'.¹⁰⁰² A time of prior innocence is alluded to: before gazing upon her he had experienced 'kein staunen' (a Petrarchan lover's speechless amazement? *Rvf* 200: 12) and 'kein wunsch', much as the Petrarchan subject 'lived in liberty' (*Rvf* 23: 5) prior to *Amor's* military strategies, attacking his 'heart down through the eyes' (*Rvf*

Petrarchism, p. 17). Cf. Hoffmeister, *Petrarkistische Lyrik*, p. 25: 'Seit der Antike ("Hoheslied", griech.-röm. Literatur) nimmt die Schönheitsbeschreibung in der europäischen Liebeslyrik typisierende Züge an, die in der Zusammenschau den Schönheitskatalog ergeben, in der poetischen Praxis die Gestalt allerdings in ihre einzelnen Bestandteile auflöst: das Resultat ist die "synthetische Dame" (Schutz) oder auch der entsprechend zusammengesetzte schöne Mann (Bemboschule)'. The Song of Songs is also a love song containing much of the affective splendour that constitute Petrarchan emotionality (the exuberance of love, hyperbolic praise of the beloved's features, etc.). Indeed, Petrarch himself cites it among Biblical authors in a letter to his brother justifying the co-presence of poetry in theology (Cited in Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch*, p. 156). Importantly for George, the Song of Songs is replete with the sensual splendours beloved to his symbolist aesthetic senses: gardens, rich scents, jewels and so on (Song of Songs 4. 9-16 is representative in this regard). This is not to posit the Biblical Song as the secret key to the *hängenden Gärten's* meaning, but it functions as an intertextual 'sociolect' common to both poets and adapted by each in their own 'idiolect' (Michael Riffaterre's term, see Allen, *Intertextuality*, p. 115).

¹⁰⁰² Teodolinda Barolini, 'Petrarch as the Metaphysical Poet who is not Dante', p. 197.

3:10) and awakening desire. Indeed, Petrarch emphasises his youth and fledgling status with the opening tact of a line describing how Laura first ‘drew me at early age to join her ranks’ (*Rvf* 119:4).¹⁰⁰³ George’s ‘gehege’ establishes that the love fair will be illicit, that it involves transgressing a boundary into an exclusive zone, and links the ‘conquest of love’ to the military imagery of the king’s conquests in the volume’s first section.¹⁰⁰⁴ A crossing of a boundary, to be sure, but also a kind of entrapment, for ‘gehege’ also refers to an enclosure in which animals are kept. The naïve ‘neuling’, perhaps, does not quite know what he is getting himself into, similar to Petrarch declaring his own naivety prior to his first vision of Laura, whence he is drawn into her military ‘ranks’ (*Rvf* 119: 4). The image is ambiguous: crossing into the realm of intimacy with the beloved signals simultaneously the threat of being trapped and possibly transformed (metamorphosed into a beast). The lover begs both to be taken up into service of the Lady (traditionally associated with slavery and/or painful labour), and for her to take pity on him.¹⁰⁰⁵ The poem ends on a note of alienation, the lover lost, stumbling ‘auf so fremdem stege’, the boardwalk that is usually constructed over watery or unstable ground: his footing here is precarious, his path quite ‘astray’ like the Petrarchan subject’s (*Rvf* 6: 1).

The speaker undergoes the usual Petrarchan modalities: stumbling along on the path with impacted mobility (III: 84), like Petrarch’s speaker, ‘staggering I try to find my treasure / the way a beast that shies and stumbles does’ (*Rvf* 227:7-8), he suffers the antithetical moods and affects defining the experience of erotic

¹⁰⁰³ Bettarini, *Canzoniere*, vol. I, p. 552, commentary to line 4, highlights his ‘tenera età’.

¹⁰⁰⁴ The Grimm Wörterbuch has for ‘gehege’: ‘im kriege, verhaue zum schutze des gebietes’ as well as ‘recht alterthümlich klingt auch gehege um einen heiligen berg, um ihn vor dem volke abzuhegen’. „gehege, n.“, Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm, digitalisierte Fassung im Wörterbuchnetz des Trier Center for Digital Humanities, Version 01/23, <<https://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB?lemid=G04819>>, abgerufen am 19.01.2025.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Compare Petrarch’s ‘with a strange voice, constantly begging mercy’, *Rvf* 23: 63. For both the lover’s ‘Sklavendasein’ as a servant and his requests for pity from the Lady see Hoffmeister, *Petrarkistische Lyrik*, p. 26, with examples from the *Canzoniere*.

desire, and the animal imagery in Petrarch's line reminds us of the lover's suggested transformation into a beast (enclosed in a 'gehege'). Upon first seeing her George's speaker is 'rege' (III: 84) but the following poem opens with Petrarchan burning (*Rvf* 79:4): 'Da meine lippen reglos sind und brennen' (ibid), an image paradoxically uniting lifelessness (the shift from 'rege' to 'reglos') with heated intentionality (burning in desire *for* something).¹⁰⁰⁶ In typical courtly fashion she is unavailable and separated from the speaker by 'hohe gitterstäbe' (III: 84), a scenario with plenty of classical literary precedent in which an illicit love is blocked by a physical barrier.¹⁰⁰⁷ Like Petrarch's speaker, who is made to endlessly 'fear and hope' by his Lady (*Rvf* 119: 45), George's is beset by a vortex of competing affects:

Angst und hoffen wechselnd mich beklemmen ·
 Meine worte sich in seufzer dehnen ·
 Mich bedrängt so ungestümes sehnen
 Dass ich mich an rast und schlaf nicht kehre
 Dass mein lager tränen schwemmen
 Dass ich jede freude von mir wehre
 Dass ich keines freundes trost begehre.
 (III: 86)

¹⁰⁰⁶ Cf. Rushworth, *Discourses of Mourning*, p. 70 for the 'immobility, suffering, and downward glance of the melancholic' in Petrarch's context.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Pyramus and Thisbe from Ovid, Romeo and Juliet, etc. See for comparison Janice Valls-Russell, 'Erotic Perspectives: When Pyramus and Thisbe Meet Hero and Leander in *Romeo and Juliet*', in *Shakespeare's Erotic Mythology and Ovidian Renaissance Culture*, ed. by Agnès Lafont (Routledge, 2013), pp. 77-90.

Anxiety and hope are both futural moods – he is being oppressed by possibilities, rendering his present ontologically uncertain.¹⁰⁰⁸ The melancholy awareness of this groundlessness is reflected in his speech, the drawing out of discrete words into amorphous sighs, obscuring what he means and slowing down his speech, rendering him isolated from human exchange.¹⁰⁰⁹ The speaker, like Petrarch, floods his bed with tears (*Rvf* 234) and lacks all consolation (that operative word ‘trost’).¹⁰¹⁰ The poem’s strange rhyme scheme (*abbcacc*) is evocative of his turbulent, back-and-forth state, of a self unable to find a rhyme with itself. The verb describing the stretching of his words into sighs (‘sich ... dehnen’) rhymes with his desire (‘sehnen’) and that long, defining /e:/ sound is itself stretched across the poem as it resounds in the /e:/ rhymes that bring together his defensiveness (‘wehre’), his melancholic inability for self-care (‘nicht kehre’), the refusal of any consolation (‘keines freundes trost begehre’), and it is the sound of his lamenting tears (‘tränen’). This assonantal pain stretches across into the next poem, where that /e:/ reverbs and culminates in a boiling point:

Wenn ich heut nicht deinen leib berühre

Wird der faden meiner seele reissen

Wie zu sehr gespannte sehne’

(III: 86)

¹⁰⁰⁸ Cf. Mark Currie, *About Time. Narrative, Fiction and the Philosophy of Time* (Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 44 for ‘fear and hope’ as ‘two modes of protension’.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Cf. Rushworth’s application of Kristeva’s theory of melancholic language to Petrarch in *Discourses of Mourning*, p. 60, where Petrarch’s ‘slow and broken’ (*Rvf* 49:13) sighs are cited as emblematic.

¹⁰¹⁰ Oelmann in the ‘Anhang’ cites Psalm 6. 7: “*Ich bin so müde von seufzen / Ich schwemme mein Bette die ganze Nacht / Und netze mit meinen Tränen mein Lager*” (Italics original). The same Psalm is cited by Bettarini in her commentary to *Canzoniere*, vol. II, p. 1074.

A similarly disjointed rhyme scheme (*abcddabc*) is in effect and the poem comes at the end to the *exclusus amator* motif of the final line: 'Der ich wankend draussen lehne'. This /e:/ sound (complemented by both poems' preponderance of long vowel sounds dominating the rhyme words and foregrounding the poems' emotionally plaintive tone: /e:/, /y:ʊ/, /ø:ʊ/) remains constant throughout his emotional turmoil. Indeed, the image of the soul as a thread ('sehne') is not unlike many of Petrarch's uses of the thread-motif to describe life. The conditional if-clause of George's poem, with its thread imagery, has an ancestor in *Rvf* 37.¹⁰¹¹ Common to both poets and both uses of the thread-imagery is its flimsiness and instability, the threat of its snapping under pressure. For George's speaker, that pressure is desire itself, his 'sehnen' echoing in the use of 'sehne'.

Significant about 'Angst und hoffen wechselnd mich beklemmen .' is its expression of the internal disjointedness of 'the self in love', to borrow Durling's phrase.¹⁰¹² Disjointedness is already apparent in the first line's grammar, which puts the verb at the end, creating a sub-clause structure and thus nudging the reader to grasp for a main clause that could orient and return it to grammatical wholeness, which of course is not on the cards, given that such 'broken speech' is constitutive of melancholy language.¹⁰¹³

The quadruple anaphora of 'Dass'-clauses outlining the results of his 'ungestümes sehnen' further suggest a consciousness that is overwhelmed by, but

¹⁰¹¹ 'So fragile is the thread on which there hangs
this heavy life of mine
that if help does not come
it will have soon run to its journey's end,' ll.1-4.

¹⁰¹² Durling, 'Introduction', p. 27: 'The theme of the poem [*Rvf* 23 – JW] is the incomprehensible changeability of the self in love, which is so violent as to call its very identity into question'.

¹⁰¹³ Vilain, 'Stefan George's Early Works 1890-1895', p. 72 indeed, points out this 'syntactic ambiguity' as well as the 'deliberately lopsided rhyme scheme' to 'convey the symptoms of a lover's distress'. Rushworth, *Discourses of Mourning*, p. 6 provides an inventory of such features of melancholy language in her discussion of Kristeva's theory: 'broken speech, linguistic slowness and repetition, threat of collapse into silence, disrupted syntax, and the state of being at a loss for words'.

also fixated upon, a single phenomenon, with each ‘Dass’ attempting to integrate the fragments of experience into a sensible whole, to draw a picture of the multiple ‘*perturbationes*’ of the mind in what Mazzotta calls (discussing Petrarch’s ‘From thought to thought’, *Rvf* 129), a ‘phenomenology of the mind in love’ through the ‘vertiginous spiral of lovesickness’ in which the self shifts between extremes.¹⁰¹⁴ George’s poem ends with such an example of antithetical thought. There is a certain grammatically inverse parallel in ‘Dass ich jede freude von mir wehre | Dass ich keines freundes trost begehre’. The positive complement of the verb in the first line (‘jede freude’) is negated by the verb itself in its positive indicative form, while the negated complement in the following line (‘keines freundes’) denies the verb its positive candour (‘begehre’). Negation and affirmation come, in a way, to be mixed up. The intensity of the self’s presence to itself in this comparatively short lyric poem is undercut by that self’s self-otherness in the service of the other.¹⁰¹⁵ This is reflected in the following poem’s grammatical self-alienation in the diremption from first- to third-person caused by a short subordinate clause: ‘Mir der leidet seit ich dir gehöre’ (III: 86).

He seeks to humble himself in this alienated state as a ‘[s]chemel unter ihrer sohle’ (III: 85), a self-humiliating act that engages with the Petrarchistic fragmentation of the beloved’s body by stressing the fetishised part-object rather than the whole (*Rvf* 119: 33). The fantasy of prostration under the Lady’s foot exemplifies what Pirro calls the ‘typically horizontal inclination’ of the speaker in his

¹⁰¹⁴ In full: ‘The poem draws what can be called the phenomenology of the mind in love. The mind, controlled by love, is restless; thoughts appear and are rapidly swept away. There is a clinical term for the uncontrolled shifts of the mind; they are known as *perturbationes*, and they describe the vertiginous spiral of lovesickness with its steady oscillations of laughter, tears, fear, and false security (1. 8)’, Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch*, p. 52.

¹⁰¹⁵ Two accusative personal pronouns, an accusative reflexive pronoun, two possessive pronouns, a dative pronoun and three nominative pronouns, all referring to the *Ich*, all inflections of the subject in different grammatical cases and circumstances.

loss of the vertical dimension that characterises the ‘representation of sovereignty’ prior to falling in love.¹⁰¹⁶ He struggles to dedicate himself to any political or artistic work and laments with a Petrarchan awareness of temporality ‘dass die bilder immer fliehen’ (III: 85) much as she, too, will eventually recede from his presence at the end of the cycle, leaving him alone in the inhospitable world around him:

Nun ist wahr dass sie für immer geht.

Hohe *blumen* *blassen* oder *brechen* ·

Es erblasst und *bricht* der weiher glas

Und ich trete fehl im morschen gras ·

Palmen mit den spitzen fingern stechen.

(III: 90, italics added)

Some poems prior (‘Als wir hinter der beblühten tore’, III: 88), their love was supposedly consummated.¹⁰¹⁷ There, as Vilain points out, the ‘obvious alliteration in “Beide stumm zu beben wir begangen” and the uncertain word-order underline the trembling ecstasy of their love-making’.¹⁰¹⁸ The plosive b-sounds culminate in that Georgian verb of *Trecento* affect, ‘beben,’ that since *Die Fibel* has been both

¹⁰¹⁶ Pirro, *Come corda troppo tesa*, p. 115 (‘inclinazione tipicamente orrizontale’), p. 114 (‘rappresentazione della sovranità’).

¹⁰¹⁷ Cf. Vilain, ‘Stefan George’s Early Works 1890-1895’, p. 72 (citing Morwitz). That their love is consummated is one key difference to Type-1 Petrarchism, in which the amorous passions are not to ever be realised and must remain a desired potentiality, and never a realised actuality (cf. Ann Rosalind Jones, ‘Female Petrarchists’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Petrarch*, ed. by Albert Russell Ascoli and Unn Falkeid (Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 201-209 (p. 201) for ‘the analysis of passion without its physical consummation’ as being a key part of the ‘decorum’ of the style.

¹⁰¹⁸ Vilain, ‘Stefan George’s Early Works 1890-1895’, p. 72. Cf. Ulrike Weinhold, ‘Refugium und Konfrontation. Zur Problematik der ästhetischen Naturmetaphorik in Stefan Georges “Das Buch der Hängenden Gärten”’, *Neophilologus* 69 (1985), pp. 260-275 reads the metaphors of the consummation poem as indicating an aestheticizing distancing rather than metaphorical representation of consummation (p. 271).

poetic (the arrival of muse figures in I:13 and II:10), erotic (as in II:15) and also emblematic of an ambivalent maturation process encompassing both.¹⁰¹⁹ The same poetic texturing, those alliterative plosive b-sounds, is now grafted onto a world in decay and change, emphasised by the shifting conjugations of the same or similar verbs ('brechen', 'bricht', the figura etymologica of 'blassen', 'erblasst'). His step is once more uneven, bogged down, and the thorny palm trees make movement difficult like that of the pilgrim though the 'härene karden' in *Pilgerfahrten* (II: 42).

The feminine other (the first gendered reference to her is in the passerby-motif of the third poem: 'Saget mir auf welchem pfade | Heute sie vorüberschreite –' III: 84) does not receive as much descriptive attention as the *Ich*, nor is she as fragmented as the Petrarchan Laura, multiplicitous and intangible: compared to Laura's 'lovely limbs' (trans. mine, *Rvf* 126: 2), she is in possession of a 'leib', III: 86.¹⁰²⁰ That is not to say, however, that she is an emblem of unity or wholeness, but she is not quite as 'hauntingly elusive' as Laura.¹⁰²¹ Certain parts from the Petrarchistic corporeal inventory box are put to use: her gaze (III: 84), her foot (85), her mouth and its sweet breath (87),¹⁰²² her head (89) and smile (90). Some parts are named only in communion with the lover, so that they are shared by the plural possessive pronoun in and after the moment of consummation (III: 88), a point that the Petrarchan lover and Laura never reach.

¹⁰¹⁹ Cf. I: 27; I: 29; I: 92.

¹⁰²⁰ The 'leib' becomes a central piece of Georgian ideology, 'eine metaphysische Wesenheit' according to Gundolf, that far surpasses the physicality of the mere body ('Körper'). See Gundolf, *George*, p. 39. That said, the ideology of the 'leib' will take on a specifically gendered dimension, revolving around the ideal of the male body.

¹⁰²¹ Rushworth, *Discourses of Mourning*, p. 64.

¹⁰²² 'Von einem odem ist ihr feuchter mund | Wie süsse frucht vom himmlischen gefild' (III: 87). The possessive pronoun 'ihr' in the poem refers to the bellflowers described in the preceding line (she is actually absent from this poem), but the anthropomorphised imagery of their 'mouth' is suggestive of the erotic relationship and, thereby, of her mouth.

iv. 'Thus in the wind, on the fluttering leaves, the Sibyl's meaning was lost'* · Gathering and Binding in 'Sprich nicht immer'

The affair, at any rate, is doomed to fail. The post-consummation poems foreground this in the lyric speaker's attempt to dissuade the beloved from thinking about the illicit nature of the affair and the deathly consequences it could entail. As Vilain discusses, this occurs in two poems in order to 'mark[] the shift in the cycle towards parting'.¹⁰²³ Not only the connection between the two lovers begins to come apart at the seam (dramatized in her autumnal refusal to join him in the boat, III:89), but the world in its fragmentariness gains increasing momentum in the lovers' consciousness:

Sprich nicht immer

Von dem laub ·

Windes raub ·

Vom zerschellen

Reifer quitten ·

Von den tritten

Der vernichter

Spät im jahr.

Von dem zittern

Der libellen

In gewittern

* Dante, *Par.* 33: 65-66.

¹⁰²³ Vilain, 'Stefan Georges Early Works 1890-95', p. 72.

Und der lichter

Deren flimmer

Wandelbar.

(III: 59)

Here George's Petrarchism shifts from the Type-1 generic kind to the existential Type-2 kind. The speaker's apophysis expresses the volume's concern with fragmentation, a Petrarchan discourse that the poet wishes to overcome. *Das Jahr der Seele* (SW IV) will thematise this in its opening proem 'Komm in den totgesagten park und schau,¹⁰²⁴ where an apostrophised *Du* is commanded to gather up and preserve whatever it can from the autumnal dispersal and decay of the world by weaving that ephemera into a work of art (a 'kranz', l. 8). In that volume, Weinhold argues, art and nature are reconciled with each other, but here, a cleft between the two remains.¹⁰²⁵

In the poem's fourteen lines, ten (a perfect number) are tetrametres, with four syllables. The remaining four lines lose a syllable, becoming trimeters. Numerologically speaking, then, the poem is formally governed by four, the number of the sublunar, temporal world, the number of the seasons and of the earth.¹⁰²⁶

¹⁰²⁴ Martus, *Werkpolitik*, 610 argues that *Komm in den totgesagten park* functions as an 'Einleitung' or proem, given the work's structure of ten poems to each cycle and *Nach der Lese*'s eleven.

¹⁰²⁵ Weinhold, 'Refugium und Konfrontation', p. 260.

¹⁰²⁶ Vincent Foster Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism: Its Sources, Meaning and Influence on Thought and Expression* (Columbia University Press, 1938), pp. 8-9 ('The "fourness" of earth became another almost universal commonplace as a result of this simple recognition of the cardinal points'), and esp. 83-84 ('the 4 winds, the 4 elements, the 4 seasons, and the 4 rivers [...] the fact that man is a tetrad is evidenced in the name, *Adam*, whose letters are the 4 winds' (p. 84). For the perfect ten as the 'image of unity' see page 85. To take this numerological analysis into a realm of further speculation, one might surmise that the deficiency of the number 14 (the number of the sonnet) provides a numerological reason for George's gradual erasure of the form from his oeuvre, and for his choice of fourteen lines for 'Sprich nicht immer'. See Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism*, p. 37 for deficient numbers (those numbers 'whose parts sum up to less than the number') and for 14 (which can be divided evenly only by 1, 2 and 7, which give in sum 10, i.e. less than the number itself) specifically as an example.

The number of phenomena catalogued by the poem is impressive given its brevity, it uses its short amount of time in rhythm and meter to gather up as much as possible, one of the traditional manoeuvrers of Petrarchan time-keeping identified by Martina Meidl.¹⁰²⁷

This poem, with its fourteen lines, is like a sonnet in decay: the very form itself of literary-Petrarchan tradition has been weathered by time, its short, ‘brittle two-stress’ lines evocative of melancholy’s broken speech.¹⁰²⁸ The eighth line, as traditional in the Petrarchan sonnet, has a *volta* in the form of a full stop, but lacks the narrative or thematic change usually marked by that *volta*: the speaker continues on his spiral of ephemerality, and thus the *volta* marks a change that is not really a change, in a poem forbidding speech about the changing of the seasons. The rhyme scheme, like the metrical form (trochaic dimeter), is equally jumbled, any hint of Petrarchan formalism (e.g. Petrarch’s typical *abba abba cdc cdc*) scrambled into the seemingly senseless *abbcddefgcgeaf*. Rhymes attempt to stick together (the couplets *bb* and *dd*) but are also torn apart (**A***bbcddefgcgeA***f**) or cleft by another intruding rhyme (**GcG**) itself having been sundered from its partner (*abb***C***ddefgCgeaf*). The broken rhyme scheme allows the lines to potentially spiral out of control, like a whirlwind picking things up in its destructive path.¹⁰²⁹ The poem’s emphasis on muteness, on not speaking, is reflected in its appearance on the page, almost appearing, to borrow Adorno’s phrase for another

¹⁰²⁷ The ‘Beschleunigung unter dem Druck der Vergänglichkeit’, Meidl, ‘Zum Zeitdiskurs des frühen Petrarkismus’, p. 85.

¹⁰²⁸ Vilain, ‘Stefan Georges Early Works 1890-1895’, p. 72. On melancholy speech Rushworth, *Discourses of Mourning*, p. 6.

¹⁰²⁹ Schmitt, discussing this poem in the context of Adorno’s George-reception, brings ‘die temposteigernde Interpunktion und das sich “auflösende” Reimschema’ together in his analysis, see Jonas Schmitt, ‘Theodor W. Adornos George-Rezeption: Darstellung einer Dekonstruktion’ (unpublished master’s thesis, University of Tübingen, 2018), p. 16.

of George's poems, 'compressed almost to the point of silence'.¹⁰³⁰ In the first edition of the *hängenden Gärten*, following the introductory 'Unterm schutz von dichten blättergründen' (III: 83), each page contains two single-stanza poems of more or less equal length, line-wise.¹⁰³¹ The pairing of poems suggests the pairing of the lovers throughout, and 'Sprich nicht immer', appearing by itself, breaks sharply with the thematic pairing and insists on a sense of isolation: a small, frail poem, partnerless and alone on the page with a speaker addressing a seemingly absent *Du*.¹⁰³² Despite, yet also due to the brevity of the lines, its stanza length is almost double most of the other poems in the sub-cycle, and its appearance breaks the sense of the stanza-length stalemate that the poems, climaxing in the lovers' consummation, plateaued upon: the number of lines in each poem is as follows: 8, 9, 7, 7, 7, 8, 7, 8, 7, 8, 8, 8, 8, 14 ('Sprich nicht immer'), 12. The intensive concentration that the erotic pursuit and consummation necessitated, it seems, is loosened by the creeping in again of the Petrarchan 'awareness | that worldly joy is just a fleeting dream' (*Rvf* I:13-14). Form and regularity yield to change and fragmentation, and the blocky solidity of the 7/8-line poems (with, for example, the steady pentameters of III: 84) shifts suddenly to this whispered form that appears to fall trickling down the page. The same tone of resignation in Petrarch is felt in the Georgean speaker's piecemeal listing of phenomena; the impression is of a wandering consciousness taking stock of things as the world, 'dismembering all

¹⁰³⁰ Adorno, *Notes to Literature*, p. 444. Adorno is discussing 'Ihr tratet zu dem herde' from *Das Jahr der Seele*. Cf. Pirro, *Come corda troppo tesa*, p. 109, discussing how the 'contraction of what is said' ('contrazione del dettato') in one of the songs from the 'Sänge eines fahrenden Spielmanns' from *Das Buch der Sagen und Sänge* leads the poem to the 'threshold of silence' ('soglia del silenzio').

¹⁰³¹ See online at:

https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN82858723X&PHYSID=PHYS_0100&DMDID= (Accessed 27/01/25).

¹⁰³² The idea that the speaker is actually addressing himself is probably more convincing.

now',¹⁰³³ falls apart. This single tone is partly what makes the poem's lyricism so strikingly effective in its finite and isolated but markedly particular character. Schelling comments that in a lyric poem, 'nur Ein Ton, Eine Grundempfindung [herrscht]'.¹⁰³⁴ The entire poem is dependent on the longanimous imperative of the first line, so that each subsequent 'von dem' gives the impression that the lyric *Ich* is tacking things on as it reflects upon the world in its own 'gebrochenem Rhythmus'.¹⁰³⁵ The implied other of the imperative ('Sprich nicht'), the beloved, is mere pretext for the self's own anxiety about the autumnal dispersal of things, essentially disparate and in need of organising; disjointed, multiple – all that 'mortal trash, | fall[ing] to the residuary worm' as Hopkins has it.¹⁰³⁶

Unlike the 'residuary worm', the poem's dragonfly represents a beautifully ornamental insect, ringing like a leftover from Algabal's preserved and petrified artificial nature (indeed, we might expect the infamous brooch to have a dragonfly symbol on it) but here there is not the deathly stasis of that world.¹⁰³⁷ Here, the dragonflies' incessant 'zittern' suggests the creature's swift, incessant movement and vitality, and contributes to the sense of an unstable reality (the link to the

¹⁰³³ Hopkins, 'Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves', in *The Major Works*, p. 175.

¹⁰³⁴ Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst*, SW, I, 5, 640.

¹⁰³⁵ Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 101. Morwitz, unlike Rushworth's (op cit.) detailed account of melancholic speech, does not expand on the emotional resonance of this form of speech.

¹⁰³⁶ From Gerard Manley Hopkins, 'That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection' in *The Major Works*, p. 181. Unlike Hopkins, however, George does not turn to Christ, that 'immortal diamond' (ibid) who elsewhere in his adamant splendour is also celebrated in conjunction with the earthly variety and multiplicity, most brilliantly in 'Pied Beauty' (*The Major Works*, p. 132). As argued in the following chapter, until the Maximin event, George's own 'immortal diamond' is the one that he himself produces in *Das Jahr der Seele*.

¹⁰³⁷ Robert K. Liu, discussing insect symbolism, refers to the popularity of dragonfly imagery in the Art Nouveau scene, with reference to René Lalique's *Dragonfly Woman*. See Robert K. Liu, 'The Symbolic Importance of Insects in Jewelry', *Transactions of the American Entomological Society* (1890-) 127.2 (June 2001), pp. 167-171 (p. 170). Cf. Stewart's reference to the 'dragonfly cult' of the Art Nouveau period, also discussing Lalique's *Dragonfly Woman*, 'inspired by the insect's iconic appearance in Japanese art', thereby linking the creature to the emergent orientalist discourses of the time, in Jack Stewart, 'Art Nouveau and Interarts in A.S. Byatt's *The Children's Book*', in *Symbolism: An International Annual of Critical Aesthetics* 19, ed. by Rüdiger Ahrens, Florian Klaefer and Klaus Stierstorfer (de Gruyter, 2019), pp. 265-294 (p. 281). The dragonfly is, in this view, a carefully chosen image on George's part for the orientalism of his *hängenden Gärten*.

‘gewittern’, a classic case of pathetic fallacy, further suggests this). As creatures, dragonflies embody change, undergoing ‘simple metamorphosis’ and exhibiting changing colours, partially depending the viewer’s perspective.¹⁰³⁸ The dragonfly embodies mutability: how it looks may change depending on the coincidence of its position and that of the viewer. Its ambivalent nature, as much as the rest of the poem’s imagery, is ‘[w]andelbar’, symbolic of an inconstant reality.¹⁰³⁹

The pull between unity and multiplicity at the heart of the poem, or of contraction and expansion in Schellingian terms, is felt in the strategic choice of ‘laub’, a collective noun in the singular that shelters multiplicity within.¹⁰⁴⁰ Its rhyme word is telling, ‘raub’ is another soft, short word ending with a quiet fortis consonant and defined by its central breathy diphthong. Thematically, the wind is shown as a thief depriving the world of presence, dragging things away from any grounding centre.¹⁰⁴¹ No verbs in the poem give a sense of agency or power: the ‘tritten | Der vernichter’ give us the verbal effects of an agent, but not in an active verbal form – there are agents (the ‘vernichter’), but the poetic consciousness is fixated on the

¹⁰³⁸ On simple as opposed to butterflies’ complete metamorphosis, see Liu, ‘The Symbolic Importance of Insects in Jewelry’, p. 170. For entomological colouring see C. M. Suárez-Tovar, R. Guillermo-Ferreira, I. A. Cooper, R. R. Cezário, A. Córdoba-Aguilar, ‘Dragon colors: the nature and function of Odonata (dragonfly and damselfly) coloration’, *Journal of Zoology* 317.1 (May 2022), pp. 1-9 (p. 3), (<https://doi.org/10.1111/jzo.12963>): ‘Structural coloration is generated by optically functional surfaces or surface layer architectures and nanostructures that selectively reflect part of the light spectrum [...] The color produced may vary depending on the viewing angle and the refraction of the light that hits these surfaces’.

¹⁰³⁹ This aspect of the creature appears in the Grimm Wörterbuch’s entry for ‘libelle’, citing Goethe’s poem ‘Die Freude’: ‘da flattert um die quelle / die wechselnde libelle / der wasserpapillon, / bald dunkel und bald helle, / wie ein cameleon’, see: „libelle, f.“, Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm, digitalisierte Fassung im Wörterbuchnetz des Trier Center for Digital Humanities, Version 01/23, <<https://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB?lemid=L05142>>, abgerufen am 06.02.2025.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Cf. Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy*, p. 128. Much of my thinking about George and his probing of fragmentation are, in some form, intellectually inspired by the sustained attention paid by Barolini to Dante’s metaphysical concerns of ‘the one and the many’ throughout the *Paradiso*, as well as Petrarch’s concerns for the same themes (‘The Self in the Labyrinth of Time’, p. 56)..

¹⁰⁴¹ As above the analysis here is indebted to Barolini’s article ‘The Self in the Labyrinth of Time’. To a certain extent the present analysis could be said to constitute an application of Barolini’s conceptual framework to George. However, that this framework seemingly fits George’s poetics so well, I contend, speaks towards the (Type-2) Petrarchism inherent in his modernism.

nominal results of their destructive marching, fixated on a multiplicity of things rather than actors in the world, and insofar as we can detect an actor within that 'vernichter', it is hard to see beyond the inherent sense of nothingness, of negation ('nicht') lying within, like the rotten core of a foul apple.

An instant of action, of actualisation, of activity rather than passive registration, would break out of the subject's lyrical enthrallment.¹⁰⁴² The domain of the lyric poem, Schelling writes, and true of the current one, is the process of reflection and subjectivity.¹⁰⁴³ Most nouns in the poem are pluralised, almost uncontrollable in their multiplicity, and two verbs are nominalised ('zerschellen', 'zittern'), belonging to the reified plethora of worldly things. The three adjectives ('reifer', 'spät', 'wandelbar') emphasise the transformative effects of time's passing, suggesting the obsessive temporal consciousness of the speaker. Maturation leads to lateness, and both are taken up and undergirded by the change that time brings, which has the final word. The pulsing repetitions of 'von', furthermore, work to convey the temporality of speech itself, speech being at the core of this lyric poem ('[s]prich nicht'). By extending the analysis of the world with each 'von', it is as if the lyric self is straining to buy more time before the end occurs.¹⁰⁴⁴ Forrester,

¹⁰⁴² Schelling defines lyric poetry by its 'lauter Differenzen' (SW, I, 5 640-41), and epic poetry by action, which cuts through temporal process and appears as timeless. Epic thus becomes a 'Bild dieser Zeitlosigkeit' (SW, I, 5, 648) and defined by indifference and identity: '*Diese Indifferenz gegen die Zeit ist der Grundcharakter des Epos*' (italics original, SW, I, 5, 650). Cf. David Simpson, 'Foreword', in *F. J. W. Schelling, The Philosophy of Art*, ed. and trans. by Douglas Stott (University of Minnesota Press, 1989), pp. ix-xxiv (p. xxii). Schelling deduces the unity of epic form with an etymological pun on the name Homer in his addendum to §61 ('Homerios (nach dem wörtlichen Sinn der Einigende, die Identität)', SW, I, 5, 457).

¹⁰⁴³ Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst*, SW, I, 5, 645.

¹⁰⁴⁴ In Lacan, meaning arises only at the end (the retroactive effect of the full stop, on this cf. Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, pp. 111-13), which has a predecessor in Augustine's analysis of time as a kind of syntax. On this see Franke, *The Divine Vision of Dante's Paradiso*, p. 208: 'History reaches its conclusion with the Christ event in the same way as the last word in a sentence makes everything coming before it finally fit into a definitive order of sense. (This is especially true in a Latin sentence)'.

in a Lacanian context of analysis, draws attention to how punctuation works to temporalise a given act of speech, by being the

“time between”: the pause for breath, the stopping and starting, hesitation and hastening, the precipitousness and dwelling upon – an entire phenomenology of time, of its vacillation and thickening, its pulsation and its quiescence, that has the utmost significance *within* the act of speaking.¹⁰⁴⁵

George’s little poem employs punctuation for a similar purpose. The interpunct used in the first sentence (ll. 1-8) slows speech down, measures it out more carefully, while its omission from the final six lines produces a more focused enjambment and causes the poem to speed up. One overarching feeling in this small lyric is that we do not have much time at all.

The insistence on time and ontological finitude is such that this poem does not even contain the verb ‘to be’, nor an *Ich* that would stand as an organising centre. The result is a disembodied voice floating in, to borrow Moevs’ formulation from another context, ‘the flux of ephemerality’.¹⁰⁴⁶ ‘Sein’ or its conjugated forms cannot even be uttered by this poetic consciousness so tempestuously tossed about by temporal flux. To once more recall Barolini’s point: time ‘cuts the ground out from under us, destabilizing and deracinating us’.¹⁰⁴⁷ That is, it ‘cuts the ground’ of being, as her analysis goes on to demonstrate apropos Petrarch. At a fundamental level, the verb ‘to be’ is the infinitive of the philosophical copula ‘is’, ‘das Band’, as Schelling calls it, the tie that holds the disparate elements of being

¹⁰⁴⁵ John Forrester, *The Seductions of Psychoanalysis: Freud, Lacan, Derrida* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 173.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Moevs, *The Metaphysics of Dante’s Commedia*, p. 183.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Barolini, “The Self in the Labyrinth of Time”, p. 39.

together in a logical relationship.¹⁰⁴⁸ There is very little 'Bindung' or ontological hold in the poetic self's experience here in the fragmented world of Petrarchan modernity.¹⁰⁴⁹ Here it is poetry that attempts to be the binding, the speech and rhythm of the poetic word, exemplified in the pulsing, centripetal anaphora of 'von' that binds us to the poem's first utterance: 'Sprich nicht immer'.¹⁰⁵⁰ This tension between cyclical repetitions and linear sequence is typical of the Petrarchan subject's attempt to get time under his control. As the shedload of ephemera is recounted, the preposition 'von' attempts to slow the fall, to tie them down to the ground of a beginning and stop them being blown away. His imperative 'do not' tells us as much about himself as about what his feminine other's prior discourse. The opening injunction not to speak is itself an act of speech, usurping the role of speaker and tying itself to a prior moment of speech, a prior ground of poetic consciousness, however butchered by the disjunctions and discontinuities of phenomena. And as we have learned from Schelling, all beginning is a negation; the poem begins with a negative injunction and posits an addressee.¹⁰⁵¹ There is no *Ich*, but there is a voice floating in the air, barely holding these phenomena together, providing a centre that might 'hold' in Yeats' terms.¹⁰⁵² 'Schelling', as

¹⁰⁴⁸ Lawrence's note 81 n. 60 in Schelling, *Ages of the World*.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Here it is apt to recall George's statement regarding the 'Bindung, die bei Dante ist' as 'etwas grundsätzlich Antimodernes. Um dies zu verstehen, muss man entsprechend sein'. Landmann, *Gespräche mit Stefan George*, p. 42.

¹⁰⁵⁰ This is programmatically Georgean: 'Freie rhythm en heisst soviel als weisse schwärze · wer sich nicht gut im rhythmus bewegen kann der schreite ungebunden. Strengstes maass ist zugleich höchste freiheit' (SW, xvii: 69). Cf. Krell, *The Tragic Absolute*, p. 193 on Schelling with regard to musical rhythm and the 'pulsating odes of antiquity' and page 423 discussing Schelling and Nietzsche: 'Pulse and pace, heart and footfall, are the two major sources, or "organs," of the beat'. The pulse, in his analysis, ties into Schelling's broader rhetoric of contraction and expansion, and how these two principles exist in musical rhythm. Metaphysically, it relates back to Schelling's cosmogony of the 'push and pull of primal rhythm and primal harmony' of God (p. 194).

¹⁰⁵¹ Cf. Norman, 'The Logic of Longing: Schelling's Philosophy of Will', pp. 94-96.

¹⁰⁵² 'Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold', From 'The Second Coming', Yeats, W.B., *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats* (Papermac, 1987), p. 211. This wonderfully apt line, summarising modernity in ten syllables, is also cited by Higbee in his discussion of fragmentation in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, ('The Poetics of Fragmentation', p. 135).

David Krell writes, ‘says that in our time we are generally in need of the centripetal force, suffering as we do from dispersion, so that we long to find the center—*Sehnsucht nach dem Centrum* is his phrase (5:504)’.¹⁰⁵³ The injunction is not to *always* speak of these things, the hint is that there may be a way to do so without spiralling into oblivion, without having ephemerality always plaguing the mind. The poem dramatizes this attempt to hold things together in its combination of enjambment (lines 2, 5, 7, 10-14) and lone-standing, end-stopped lines (lines 8 and 14) in tension with the repetitions of prepositional complements and run on thoughts (lines 2, 3, 4, 6, 9), embodying the tension between integration and dispersal, between containment and loss of control. The full stop that temporarily halts the progress of thought slips immediately back into the spiral of thought at the ‘volta’ (if we accept this fourteen-line poem as a kind of sonnet) of line eight, the traditional ‘turn’ in the sonnet that ought to shift its focus or the direction of its reflection, but here serves only to continue the spiral.¹⁰⁵⁴ The slippage of enjambment and the free-floating complementary thoughts that intrude (‘windes raub’) get the better of the speaker, and drags his speech onward in time, in the linear sequentiality of utterances until the final five lines almost have us forget about his originary injunction, spellbound as we are by the duplicitous simplicity of the poem’s final, weighty word: ‘Wandelbar’, the voice’s final resting place, echoing out

¹⁰⁵³ Krell, *The Tragic Absolute*, 194. George and his Circle were not unconsciously reproducing this rhetoric and idea of a centrifugal modernity – in the second *Jahrbuch für die geistige Bewegung* (1911) Gundolf is quite clear about the ‘zentrifugalisierung’ of modernity (“Wesen und Beziehung”, *Jahrbuch* II: 18), and the Circle’s fight, he goes on, is to counter this by rediscovering and recreating the lost centre, the ‘substanz’: ‘Wenn ja, so ist eine neubelebung, eine bindung der zerfahrenen kräfte möglich und jeder kampf dafür heilig und siegesgewiss’. (*JB* 2: 19). On this cf. Rossi, *Gesamterkennen*, 159f.

¹⁰⁵⁴ This reading of this poem in these pages, while it has predominantly Schellingian thought in the background, was perhaps unconsciously inspired by those close readings done on Dante’s *rime petrose* by Durling and Martinez in their erudite study *Time and the Crystal*, as they likewise track the representation of the movement of cosmic forces and the directionality of celestial and earthly influences. The present student feels indebted to their approach to poetry, even if not directly influenced here.

in the primal vocalic *a*-sound that fills the word.¹⁰⁵⁵ The expansive, scattering principle, the endless sequence of things in dispersal, seemingly wins out, defeating as it were the full stop that attempts to halt and contain the command in line eight.

As a lyric poem, in its charming simplicity and withheld, if ‘broken’ speech, it embodies what Schelling calls the ‘Charakter der Differenz, der Scheidung und Sonderung, welcher in der Lyrik an und für sich selbst liegt’.¹⁰⁵⁶ Its central concern is ‘das Endliche, die Differenz, die Besonderheit’ that defines the lyric poem as a genre.¹⁰⁵⁷ Mutability is the subjective conflict at the heart of the poem, its succession of ‘lauter Differenzen’, striving for a sense of ‘Stetigkeit’ in the regularity of poetic form and coming to rest on the very principle that has caused this reflection: endless change as the short lines and piecemeal thoughts are stacked up and collected. To speak once more with Schelling: ‘hier – in der modernen Welt – ist Wechsel und Wandel das herrschende Gesetz’.¹⁰⁵⁸

The world’s inconstancy is further suggested in the poem’s own lack of rhythmic constancy. Rhythm, Schelling claims, is ‘Beherrschung und Unterwerfung der Zeit’, producing a reliable constancy and predictable uniformity through its ‘Einbildung der Identität in die Differenz’.¹⁰⁵⁹ As such, it is a kind of defense against the mutability and inconstancy wrought by time. The poetic word allows some

¹⁰⁵⁵ Cf. The Grimm Wörterbuch’s account: ‘der edelste, ursprünglichste aller laute, aus brust und kehle voll erschallend, den das kind zuerst und am leichtesten hervor bringen lernt, den mit recht die alphabete der meisten sprachen an ihre spitze stellen’. „A“, Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm, digitalisierte Fassung im Wörterbuchnetz des Trier Center for Digital Humanities, Version 01/23, <<https://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB?lemid=A00001>>, abgerufen am 27.04.2025.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst* (SW, I, 5, 643).

¹⁰⁵⁷ Schelling, SW, I, 5, 640.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Schelling, SW, I, 5, 444.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Schelling, SW, I, 5, 636: ‘Diese Beherrschung und Unterwerfung der Zeit = Rhythmus’. Cf. Franke, *Dante’s Paradiso and the Theological Origins of Modern Thought*, p. 281, who invokes Schelling’s philosophy of art in his discussion of Heidegger and Dante, whose *Commedia* has its ‘own rhythmic lawfulness [...] that makes it an “autonomous whole” (“unabhängigen Ganzen”)’.

control to be temporarily exerted over the unreliable fluctuations of reality, and in this subjection to a greater law of control, a moment of freedom is found.¹⁰⁶⁰ George's little poem lacks total uniformity, as its falling trochaic tetrameter, already so brief, loses and gains its final syllable at irregular intervals throughout, and the poem shifting to a trochaic trimeter upon which it solemnly ends, with a recognition just about fitting into the brief moment allotted by the meter: 'This is the way the world ends', as Eliot's hollow men say, 'Not with a bang but a whimper'.¹⁰⁶¹

Our speaker's consciousness is still soaked in the language of war and conquer that characterised the first part of the *hängenden Gärten*.¹⁰⁶² The choice of 'raub' to describe the wind's relation to the leaves recalls lexically the earlier 'raube' of the conqueror (III: 75), and of the Pascha's troops later ('Sie schmücken mit geraubter pracht', III: 94). His lingering obsession for autumnal decay is infused and thereby negativized by his own relation to the world: one of violence and domination, turning things to rubble ('die betrübte trümmerstadt', III: 75). Schmitt, albeit without linking it to the previous poems in the volume, catches this in his analysis of the word choice ('zerschellen', 'vernichter' etc.) and comments: 'mehr sind es gar Bilder der Zerstörung als noch darin ephemere auftretende Naturbilder'.¹⁰⁶³ The despotic leader and lover finds that still inhering in his

¹⁰⁶⁰ Cf. Schmitt, 'Theodor W. Adornos George-Rezeption', p. 18, who argues, citing Böschenstein, that the self-containment of the end-word '[w]andelbar' indicates that the 'Flüssigkeit' of poetic speech wins out over the 'Brüchigkeit' of reality. For rhythm as 'a momentary feeling of freedom from any particular, finite construction of the world' see Amittai Aviram, *Telling Rhythm: Body and Meaning in Poetry* (University of Michigan Press, 1994), pp. 232-33, Aviram cited in Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, p. 167.

¹⁰⁶¹ From T.S. Eliot, *The Hollow Men*, cited from *The Poems of T.S. Eliot. Volume I*, p. 84.

¹⁰⁶³ Schmitt, 'Theodor W. Adornos George-Rezeption', p. 17. This is a view shared by Ray C. Ockenden, in his brief mention of this brief poem, when he writes that nature for George tends usually to be centred around some human consciousness, and scarcely thematised for its own sake. See Ray C. Ockenden, 'Mensch und Natur in der Dichtung Stefan Georges', in *Stefan George. Dichtung – Ethos – Staat: Denkbilder für ein geheimes europäisches Deutschland*, ed. by Bruno Pieger and Bertram Schefold (Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 2010), pp. 353-96 (p. 361).

weltanschauung is a tendency towards fragmentation, despite his attempts to exert control.

As the poems in the following sub-cycle convey, his erotic escapade has robbed him of his stately might, and his kingdom comes crumbling down around him as he self-humiliates in service to his Lady (III: 92).¹⁰⁶⁴ As his kingdom falls to his enemies (III: 93), he comes recognise that his only 'trost' is that of the songbird:

Ich muss mein schönes land gebeugt betrauern ·

Dieses sei allein mein trost:

Der sänger-vogel den zertretne fluren · mauern

Und dächer · züngelnd wie ein feuerrost ·

Nicht kümmern singt im frischen myrtenhage

Unablässig seine süsse klage.

The punctuated syntax (via George's signature interpunct) works to effect a sense of destruction, but the songbird is able to contain it all, standing removed from it, a fact mirrored syntactically in how the bird and its predicate 'singt' brackets the destruction of the king's former domain. What remains of sole consolation to him is the 'süsse klage' (the Petrarchistic antithesis is hard to ignore).¹⁰⁶⁵ This

¹⁰⁶⁴ As Vilain writes, this cycle chronicles the consequences of the love story for the king, 'Stefan George's Early Works 1890-1895', p. 73. For the motif of humiliation in love and the fetishising of the beloved's parts, especially as in III: 93's associations with ivory and milk, cf. *Rvf* 37: 18, 119: 34 etc.

¹⁰⁶⁵ See exemplarily *Rvf* 205, but also and especially poem 130, in which it is precisely his lament that is figured paradoxically as sweet:

'and I survive on tears—I, born to weep;
nor am I bothered, for in such a state
weeping is sweet, and more than one imagines'
(II.6-8).

Significantly, as the speaker in George's poem is about to do, Petrarch here has taken leave unto a 'despairing path' (l. 2) and away from the 'road to mercy' (l. 1). There is a significant overlap in the confessional tone of both poets' speakers here.

Petrarchistic 'süsse klage' underlies the operative word 'trost'. Given what we know this word's relation to George's dealings with literary history ('trost und beispiel', v: 27), it would seem that Petrarchism here, too, has played a secret role, hiding underneath the veils of orientalism, decadence and other *fin de siècle* malaise.

Resigned to his 'süsse klage', the poet-king abdicates, as Vilain relates, and in the following poem ends up a 'jubellieder'-singing slave to a powerful Pasha ('Ich warf das stirnband dem der glanz entflohn', III:94-95).¹⁰⁶⁶ The poem marks the former king's own loss of self and spiritual death, which for the volume means the removal of this Georgean 'mask'. The final appearance of 'Ich' in the volume occurs as the speaker takes leave from his Pasha: 'Ich schleiche blass und stumm hinaus'. The poem's narrative then switches to a third person perspective, a 'self-objectivisation' as Vilain writes, and relates how the slave resists the alluring call to return to poetry and fame in an anti-Petrarchan gesture.¹⁰⁶⁷ Instead, he breaks a bough off a sycamore tree '[u]nd flieht den ort wo seine seele brach'. The motif of the 'Pilger mit der hand am stabe' (II: 28) returns here, as does the motif of conversion. The choice of the fig-sycamore (*ficus sycomorus*) is equally suggestive of the Augustinian fig tree of conversion as of mulberry tree in the Ovidian myth of Pyramus and Thisbe (*Met.* IV: 55-166), two physically and socially barred lovers in

¹⁰⁶⁶ Vilain, 'Stefan George's Early Works 1890-1895', p. 73.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Vilain, 'Stefan George's Early Works 1890-1895', p. 73. Cf. *Rvf* 72: 8. Petrarch's concern with fame and his afterlife is the subject of the Augustinus character's hefty critique in Book III of the *Secretum*: 'Gloriam hominum et immortalitatem nominis plus debito cupis' ('Ruhm unter den Menschen und die Unsterblichkeit deines Namens begehrst du mehr, als sich gebührt' [trans. Huss and Regn]). Weinhold, 'Refugium und Konfrontation', p. 263 emphasises the 'Krise des Verhältnisses von Kunst und Leben oder Natur', for which 'ruhm' here may be said to stand, as a central problem of the *hängenden Gärten*. Meidl, 'Zum Zeitdiskurs des frühen Petrarkismus', p. 98 mentions the 'Konzept der Fama' as one of many facets of the Petrarchist poets 'Auseinandersetzung mit dem Faktum Zeit' (p. 97).

the ancient city of Babylon (i.e. the city of the hanging gardens), who both die under the shade of the mulberry.¹⁰⁶⁸ The slave breaks off the bough and heads out

[z]um strome wo die sterblichen versinken
Und gläubig aller qual erlösung trinken –
Er kann der woge jezt ins auge sehn.

Biblical tradition has it that the mulberry tree is representative of Christ's blood on the cross, and its uprooting and transferral 'into the sea of gentiles' an allegory of the reception of the gospel, as Moevs recounts.¹⁰⁶⁹ The slave's turn to a sort of religious asceticism is suggested by the vocabulary condensed into the penultimate line ('gläubig', 'aller qual erlösung') and his choice to foresake all earthly glory ('ruhme', III:95) seems to lead to a spiritual renewal ('Niemand kennt den frühern fürsten. Lächelnd dankt er · kein erbittern / Ist in ihm ·', 96). This is not to say that he converts to Christianity, but the imagery is suggestive of spiritual change.

As the preface to the *Bücher* makes clear, the aim of the volume was never historical realism, but 'fremde und vergangenheit nach eigener art gestalten ins reich des persönlichen und heutigen' (III: 7). Here indeed, it would seem that the plight of the former king is transformed 'ins reich des persönlichen' when in the

¹⁰⁶⁸ See Moevs, *The Metaphysics of Dante's Comedy*, p. 92 on Dante's use of this Ovidian myth in *Purgatorio*. On the tree itself cf p. 97: 'Mulberries and sycamores are inextricably conflated in the Middle Ages'.

¹⁰⁶⁹ See Moevs, *Metaphysics*, *ibid*, 96, citing Luke 17.6. Thus: 'To receive the mulberry is to be inflamed not by sensual desire but by the blood of self-sacrifice, by death to the self in Christ. It is to kill the serpent of concupiscentia with a leaf from the sacred tree/cross, and to reenter the garden of eternal life'. (Moevs *ibid*, 96-97)

penultimate poem of the volume he finds himself dejected and solipsistic upon a rock, contemplating his losses in a melancholic pose:

Er liess sich einsam hin auf hohem steine ·
Schon lag sein land mit gnaden und befehlen
Ihm sehr entfernt und schätze und juwelen
Erschienen wie in tief versenktem schreine
Als er das haupt in seine hände grub.

Er schwieg – ein seufzen sich um ihn erhub:

Die gräser die betrübt am rande kauern ·
Das zwiegespräch der zedern und der erlen ·
Die lauten tropfen die von felsen perlen
Ergriffen das den menschen fremde trauern
Des der ein königtum verlor.

Und aus dem strom ein rauschen ihn beschwor:

(III: 97)

The 'persönliche' is broached in the above poem by the image of the lonely stone. In a letter to Dr. Hugo von Hofmannsthal at the time of his crisis with the younger Hugo, George wrote that Hofmannsthal junior had been one of the few to ever understand him, 'und das zu einer zeit wo ich auf meinem einsamen felsen zu

zittern anfang'.¹⁰⁷⁰ The lonely stone thus has a certain concrete, biographical significance for George. The volume ends with the loss of the lyric speaker's voice among those of 'Stimmen im Strom' (III: 83). Water has been curiously absent in the imagery of the *hängenden Gärten*. In many ways, this *Buch* is one thoroughly dominated by images of land.¹⁰⁷¹ Where water imagery does appear, it generally signifies a threat or is otherwise negatively connoted.¹⁰⁷² The 'ufer' for example topographically marks the beginning of the end for *Ich* and his *Du*. Upon her rejection of joining him in his boat, his gaze wanders down to the 'blumen die verstreut im wasser fahren' (III: 89).¹⁰⁷³ Water thus becomes linked to rejection, separation, multiplicity, dispersal, and death – the 'strom' in which the volume closes marks the loss of self and a return to an originary 'strudel' that equalises all and resolves the

Fliessender freuden verdächtiger lauf

¹⁰⁷⁰ 'Mögen ihr hr. sohn und ich uns auch im ganzen leben nicht mehr kennen wollen, wendet er sich weg, wende ich mich weg, für mich bleibt er immer die erste person auf deutscher seite die ohne mir vorher näher gestanden zu haben mein schaffen verstanden und gewürdigt – und das zu einer zeit wo ich auf meinem einsamen felsen zu zittern anfang es ist schwer dem nicht-dichter zu erklären von wie grosser bedeutung das war'. George an Dr H v Hofmannsthal (16 January 1982), in *George/Hofmannsthal Briefwechsel*, p. 242.

¹⁰⁷¹ 'die freundliche nähe: | Stammes boden und mauern' (III: 72); 'säulen', 'Den grund auf dem allein | Die süsse saat hienieden grünt' (p. 73); 'In hohen palästen', 'In bauschenden zelten' (p. 74); 'die hehre stadt', 'Die breschen', 'die betrübte trümmerstaft', 'eines tempels schwelle' (p. 75); 'väterlichen garten', 'dichter büsche', 'sold und länderei', (p. 76). The list could go on, naming also the many references to architecture, nature, and other parts of this world.

¹⁰⁷² Cf. Ray C. Ockenden, 'Voyaging with a Concordance: The Sea in Stefan George's Poetry', *Publications of the English Goethe Society*, 79.1 (2010), pp. 50-62 (p. 51): 'much of the water imagery in George's poetry has to do with death rather than life'. Cf. Friedrich Thiel, "Zum strome wo die sterblichen versinken": Fluß und Meer als Todesort bei Stefan George', *Neue Beiträge zur George-Forschung 2* (Lothar Stiehm Verlag, 1977), pp. 10-20.

¹⁰⁷³ An echo of Petrarch's reminiscence of

'Falling from gracious boughs,
I sweetly call to mind,
were flowers in a rain upon her bosom,
[...]
some fell to rest on ground, some on the water,
and some in lovelike wandering,
were circling down and saying, "Here Love reigns."' (*Rvf* 126: 40-52)

Trifft euch ein kuss: und ihr löst euch in ringen

Gleitet als wogen hinab und hinauf

(III: 99)

Goldsmith links this suicidal submersion of the former king with the water imagery elsewhere in George's oeuvre, particularly in *Die Fibel* where in the first 'Legende' the speculative mirror of the pool proved to harbour fatal self-knowledge.¹⁰⁷⁴

v. The Varied Style and the The Petrarchan Roundabout of *Das Jahr der Seele*

Claude David claims that *Das Jahr der Seele* is dominated by a 'Melancholie oder Müdigkeit, die sich mühelos zu einer ganzen elegischen Tradition in Beziehung setzen ließe'.¹⁰⁷⁵ This section explores *Das Jahr der Seele* more specifically within a Petrarchan (Types-1 & -2) tradition, and to specify the qualities of its poetics that favour reading it within that particular tradition. The continued persistence of water imagery will illuminate George's most decisive shift from Petrarchism to Dantism.

Heidi Faletti argues that in *Das Jahr der Seele* (replete with imagery of fountains, rivers, streams and ponds), water as an image of time takes on increasing (ontological) significance. As she writes, the stream is a quintessential image of the dynamic of time as both change and continuity: 'etwas, was im Wechsel fortwährt und mit der Idee eines kontinuierlichen Ichs intim verbunden

¹⁰⁷⁴ Goldsmith, *Stefan George: A Study of his early Works*, p. 70.

¹⁰⁷⁵ David, *Stefan George*, p. 140.

ist'.¹⁰⁷⁶ Unlike the deathly stream of 'Stimmen im strom', the stream of time offers the possibility of identity amidst change.

The relationship between *Ich* and *Du* in *Das Jahr der Seele* is largely defined by their visits to bodies of water. As they circle those waters during their walks in the autumnal park, the volume itself circles around the problem of time. The *Jahr* is constructed as seasonal and cyclical, its first sub-cycle ('Nach der Lese') begins in autumn and commands the other to '[k]omm in den totgesagten park' and gather up the scattered remnants of summerly abundance into an enduring work of art. The last poem of the volume returns us to an autumnal decay:¹⁰⁷⁷

Willst du noch länger auf den kahlen böden
Nach frühern vollen farben spähn ·
Auf früchte warten in den fahlen öden
Und ähren von verdrängten sommern mähn?

Bescheide dich wenn nur im schattenschleier
Mild schimmernd du genossene fülle schaut
Und durch die müden lüfte ein befreier
Der wind der weiten zärtlich um uns braust.

Und sieh! die tage die wie wunden brannten
In unsrer vorgeschichte schwinden schnell ..

¹⁰⁷⁶ Faletti, *Die Jahreszeiten des Fin de siècle*, p. 53.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Cf. Karla Schultz, 'In Praise of Illusion: *Das Jahr der Seele* and *Der Teppich des Lebens*: Analysis and Historical Perspective' in *A Companion to the Works of Stefan George*, ed. by Jens Rieckmann (Camden House, 2005), pp. 79-98 (p. 80) who also points out how this final poem 'links almost verbatim to the first'.

Doch alle dinge die wir blumen nannten

Versammeln sich am toten quell.

(iv: 118)

Thus, the seasonal cyclicity is like a hell from which one cannot escape, always circling back towards the 'toten quell' that collects the remainders of all the 'mortal trash' (to once more borrow Hopkins' words). The movement of *Das Jahr der Seele* seen in such a way is like a spiral down the drain.

The park was 'totgesagt' by some non-present precedent speaker or authority in the volume's opening poem, and it would seem here at the end that the lyric *Ich* subtending *Das Jahr der Seele* was responsible for proclaiming death upon the world. As the analysis of George's beloved diamond will argue below, the circular nature of the lyric cycle as such involves the lyric speaker always speaking with knowledge as if from a past life, with a knowledge directed to the future and the past at once. The answer to the question of who declared the park dead is thus the poet himself, in a future that has already happened in the cycle, where all his efforts in gathering up the scattered things, the 'dinge die wir blumen nannten', are revealed to be in vain, as all ends up at the 'toten quell'. The speaker had already, in the future, proclaimed the park dead, a fact masquerading in 'Komm in den totgesagten park und schau' as emanating from some other past authority. But this was our Master all along, speaking to us from the future that he has since determined.

Petrarch's problems with time and temporality resonate here. In an analysis of the structure of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* and how it manipulates both circular and linear temporalities, Holmes emphasises the 'continual duration of love's passion'

throughout the various cycles of time. This linear duration throughout cyclical time manifests as repetitions, much as our own Georgean speaker is trapped within the circular, cyclical repetitions of his year of the soul: 'The repetitiveness of the lover's situation is not only lived as a recovery of the past, but also, paradoxically, as a loss of the future, as a static trap from which he cannot manage to escape'.¹⁰⁷⁸ This 'static trap' is akin to Greene's 'process without progress' and maps onto our Georgean *Ich* who is likewise trapped moving towards a future that returns him precisely to where he began.¹⁰⁷⁹

At the end, his awareness of the death of things and the desertification of his world is communicated in the triple compound rhyme in the first stanza: 'den kahlen böden' with 'den fahlen öden', a barrenness juxtaposing with the richness of the volume's beginning ('die bunten pfaden', for example, IV: 12) and reverting to that Petrarchan desert-motif operative since *Die Fibel* ('öden düstren bahnen', I: 13). The wind here is 'ein befreier' that 'zärtlich um uns braust' (a Petrarchan antithesis), an ambivalent gentleness, for as we saw in 'Sprich nicht immer', the wind was an agent of destruction.¹⁰⁸⁰ The same verb, 'brausen', links the wind in the poem above to the wind's scattering of fruit from the trees in 'Wir schreiten auf und ab im reichen flitter' in the 'Nach der Lese' cycle (IV: 15). The wind can be subtle and caressing, but it also plays a main role in the autumnal scattering of things. Towards the end of the cycle it is once more clothed in imagery evoking the conquerer's world of the *hängenden Gärten*: 'Sieh unterm baume draussen vor dem fenster | Die vielen leichen nach der winde schlacht!' (IV: 20). As a culmination

¹⁰⁷⁸ Olivia Holmes, *Assembling the Lyric Self: Authorship from Troubadour Song to Italian Poetry Book* (University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 173.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Greene, *Post-Petrarchism*, p. 55.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Faletti highlights the wind as its role shifts between providing comfort and as a 'Mittel der Zerstreuung' (*Die Jahreszeiten des Fin de siècle*, p. 93, discussing 'Wir schreiten auf und ab im reichen flitter', IV: 15).

of the wind imagery up to this point, writes Faletti, it 'hat sich in eine verheerende elementare Gewalt verwandelt'.¹⁰⁸¹ The ever-robbing wind winds up having a weathering effect on the structural aspect of the work itself, as temporal decay and erosion are mimicked ever so subtly by the fact that each sub-cycle of the 'Das Jahr der Seele' cycle (not *Das Jahr der Seele* as a volume) has, as Oelmann points out, one stanza less.¹⁰⁸²

If wind is the more martial agent of time, water is the more subtle agent of decay: the dampness sets in, and the walls begin to rot. Dampness is a recurring motif of instability throughout the volume. The word 'feucht', for example, links emotional instability of the characters to temporal and seasonal change. Like Petrarch's own 'eyes forever wet' (*Rvf* 269: 11), 'Dein feuchtes auge' (IV: 18) characterises the lyrical *Du* in the autumn cycle, a lexical pairing which is then repeated in the 'Traurige[n] Tänze[n]' but in reference to the *Ich* himself longing for a male heir to take up us his 'goldne harfe':

Mein feuchtes auge späht nur fern
 Nach diesem EINEN aus der gern
 Die harfe reich und wol gestimmt ·
 Der unsre goldne harfe nimmt.
 (IV: 102)

The lexical repetition, contained within the sub-cycle of the 'Traurige Tänze' that is itself a miniatur repetition of *Das Jahr der Seele*, as David writes, posits the

¹⁰⁸¹ Faletti, *Die Jahreszeiten des Fin de siècle*, p. 98.

¹⁰⁸² Oelmann, in 'Anhang', IV: 120.

male lyric speaker now in the position of the prior feminine *Du*, searching for his distant 'EINEN', now grammatically masculine, whereas at the *Jahr's* beginning this the 'Einen Fernen' was grammatically feminine.¹⁰⁸³ The volume's preface is an injunction not to read historical characters into the figures, that the metamorphic identity of *Ich* and *Du*, and their intertwining, suggests rather a single soul exploring different subject positions (IV: 7). That said, and as the rest of the chapter argues, the shift in the object of desire from a feminine to a masculine other is central to the entire poetic project and to putting an end to the *Jahr's* not-so-merry-go-round. The same adjective, 'feucht', links the teary eye of the lover's affect to the issue of time itself, its correlative in the slippery, time-governed world of the *Jahr*. In the Trecento *terzinas* of the 'Nachtwachen' at the centre of the work, with all their Petrarchan and Dantean reminiscences, the twice-repeated lexical pairing 'feucht und falb' (IV: 64) brings wetness and pallor together to suggest the fading away of the world.¹⁰⁸⁴

The programmatic reduction of stanzas and lines reflects the instability of the world inhabited by the *Ich*. Inasmuch as Petrarch operates a 'varied style'

¹⁰⁸³ 'eine Art verkürztes "Jahr der Seele"', David, *Stefan George*, p. 144.

¹⁰⁸⁴ The talk of 'jugendlichem leide', (IV: 63) recalls the fundamental Petrarchan 'errant youthful days' (*Rvf* 1: 3), his being 'full of the burning of my youthful passion' (119: 17), etc. The other's piecemeal appearance is likewise Petrarchistic – the 'stirne' and the 'Wölkchen von haaren (sie sind blond und seiden)' are comparable to Laura's 'forehead and her hair', her 'blonde hair' (*Rvf* 200: 13; 213: 3). The casual interjections in these *terzinas* of additional information, given in brackets – '(sie sind blond und seiden)', 'Deine lippen (sie sind stumm)' among others (there are at least one in each *terzina*) – could tentatively be traced back to what Bornmann, ('Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile', p. 151) discussed as Petrarch's penchant for introjections. The feminine other's 'lächeln', surprisingly signifying sadness ('Dein lächeln gleicht dem weinen sehr', IV: 63), suggests an antithetical Petrarchan status (cf. 'I weep for my past sins and also smile, *Rvf* 105: 76) but also the much-praised smile of Laura (*Rvf* 42: 1; 126: 58; 149: 2 etc.) and the comparison of her eyes to mirrors ('Erregender spiegel (dein auge) spiel damit nicht!') has a significant precedent in 'those murderous mirrors' of Laura (*Rvf* 46: 7). The third vigil's talk of 'der selber schmerzdurchbohrte' who '[a]n der dulderin sich rächte' (IV: 65) unites, as previously done in *Die Fibel*, Baudelairean (the self-torturer, 'Héautontimorouménos', *Les Fleurs du Mal*, p. 155) and Petrarchan precedents. We recall that in George's *lingua romana* version of 'Das Bild' (I: 73) he had spoken of his 'cor transfixato' (XVIII: 103), or the heart 'von sehnen durchbohrt' as his German final version has it (I: 73). 'Durchbohren' becomes the German verb to render Petrarch's 'she pierced my heart' (*Rvf* 112: 11). The talk, finally, of '[d]er seelen verurteilt in gottes gerichte' (IV: 63) is perhaps suggestive of George's first serious readings of Dante in the 1890s.

(trans. mine, *Rvf* 1: 5) in his *Canzoniere* to figure the ‘varied’ moments of the self – fragments of experience and memories that his piecemeal poetics sets out to recollect – George is similarly concerned with a variety that infects the stability of sameness, with an otherness threatening but always inhering within the notion of identity.¹⁰⁸⁵ The modernist and Petrarchan ‘clear awareness’ (*Rvf* 1: 13) of time, loss and decay, and the resulting search for what Faletti calls the self’s ‘Selbstreintegrierung’, is the ‘kernel of enjoyment’ of this art no longer providing endurance in the flux of time, and the gradual loss of stanzas the formal symptom of this enjoyment.¹⁰⁸⁶ Juxtaposed next to the Dantean monumentalism of *Der Teppich des Lebens* (three parts, each with twenty-four poems of four quatrains), *Das Jahr der Seele* suffers from a Petrarchan ‘varied style’ in both form (a continual alteration of poems made out of one, two, three, four, or five stanzas) and content (the recollection and reintegration of scattered ephemera, among which memories, experiences, thoughts, etc.).¹⁰⁸⁷ Like Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*, furthermore, the principle of variation is deployed in a kind of self-analysis, a ‘psychomachia’ ‘triggered [...] by the mobility of his mind’, on-going dialogues with himself occasioned by his perambulations through the volume’s topography.¹⁰⁸⁸ The circular time (the calendrical ‘Jahr’) of self-analysis is contained within the limited circular space of the park – the subject circles back and forth between gathering up the past in retrospective recollection and projection into an uncertain future. For

¹⁰⁸⁵ Boysen’s ‘detour through the other’, *Negativity, Nothingness and Nominalism*, p. 60.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Faletti, *Die Jahreszeiten des Fin de siècle*, p. 123, Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, pp. 140-41.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Even if the final sub-cycle, *Traurige Tänze* (iv: 85ff), appears uniform in its thirty-two poems of three, four-line stanzas, the subdivisions of this cycle identified by commentators and critics ensure that a principle of *variatio* still exists – a thematic subdivision into three parts of unequal, gradually shortening lengths, predominates. Faletti, *Die Jahreszeiten des Fin de siècle*, 158, building on and referencing David, *Stefan George*, 131-153 (cited in Faletti, 228n11). Indeed, Faletti, *ibid.*, 158-159 discusses how the poems still vary ‘rhythmisch und thematisch’, and that the first sub-group is ‘am variiertesten’.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch*, p. 35.

both George of *Das Jahr der Seele* and Petrarch of the *Canzoniere*, variation is the logical formal correlative to the instability of the self, as Stierle summarises.¹⁰⁸⁹ George's *Jahr der Seele* is, like Petrarch's, a 'poetic self-questioning',¹⁰⁹⁰ reflecting on itself ('Lieder wie ich gern sie sänge' IV: 49), on the search for the 'trost' (IV: 49) of the poetic word, of a poetic permanence that would offset the transience ('dies flüchtige gedrange') of worldly things, 'in diesen glanzerfüllten sterbewochen' (IV: 14)?

For Faletti, the contrasting temporalities structuring *Das Jahr der Seele* as a 'Werk der Selbstentdeckung' and as a response to the fragmented world of modernity concern the tension between transcendence and immanence.¹⁰⁹¹ This tension emerges between mythical models of time emphasising presence, return and constancy and positivist models that conceive of time as linear and progressive like a kind of Hegelian bad infinity: 'Die Konzentration auf ihre [cyclical models of time – JW] Kontinuität und Dauerhaftigkeit wirkt der fragmentarischen und pluralistischen Qualität der modernen mechanistischen Zeit entgegen'.¹⁰⁹²

¹⁰⁸⁹ Karlheinz Stierle, *La vita e i tempi di Petrarca: Alle origini della moderna coscienza europea*, trans. by Gabriella Pelloni (Marsilio, 2007), p. 513: 'La formula del "vario stile" rappresenta il principio della molteplicità, del cambiamento e della volubilità che governa l'autointerrogatorio poetico dei *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*' ('The formula of the "varied style" represents the principle of multiplicity, change and inconstancy that governs the poetic self-questioning of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*').

¹⁰⁹⁰ Stierle, *La vita e i tempi di Petrarca*, p. 513.

¹⁰⁹¹ Faletti, *Die Jahreszeiten des Fin de siècle*, p. 51. Faletti draws on the work of Mejerhoff, whom I have also cited above, albeit before I had consulted Faletti's work. It is thereby coincidental, and felicitous, that we both bring Mejerhoff's useful study to bear on George.

¹⁰⁹² Faletti, *Die Jahreszeiten des Fin de siècle*, p. 52. On Hegel's bad infinity, which I discuss further in the next chapter, see Donald Phillip Verene, 'The True and The Bad Infinity', in *Logos & Eros. Essays Honouring Stanley Rosen*, ed. by Nalin Ranasinghe (St. Augustine's Press, 2006), pp. 260-271 (p. 269): 'Bad infinity is undialectical "andness." that is, andness that cannot double-up, that cannot become ambiguity. Bad infinity is the thought of an endless series in which the last member of any given series can have a next member simply conjoined to it. There are the members of the series and then there is another and another and another, and so on. The infinite is not unlimited because its limit is the finite. The infinite in its bad form is the negative of the finite, its opposite. It evolves its endless series simply by conjunctions, not by any principle of determination. Andness is not a principle. It is repetitive addition in the sense that Hegel describes it in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in relation to the adding of properties to a thing. Adding property after property to a thing does not achieve a principle of the internal determination of its nature. The process of conjunction does

Time, Faletti argues, ultimately has to do with the ‘Problem der Kontinuität und Identität’, and as Barolini writes with regard to Petrarch: ‘Time, therefore, comports difference, change, instability, absence of identity, oneness, and being: Petrarch’s chosen themes’.¹⁰⁹³ Marcozzi similarly claims that time ‘costituisce la più ossessiva ricorrenza tematica e poetica nelle opere di Petrarca’.¹⁰⁹⁴ The *Canzoniere* has been called ‘calendrical’ given its 366 poems, one for each day of the year plus the proem. An obsession with temporality, it is a lyric cycle of the year, like George’s, and like George’s it runs back on itself in ‘an endless feedback loop’.¹⁰⁹⁵ Furthermore, a poem for every day of the year, as Roche deduces, links thematically to the narrative woven by Petrarch throughout, so that counting the days from his enamourment (6 April 1327) or of his reception of the laurel crown in Rome (Easter Sunday, 8 April 1341), one reaches Christmas day at poem 264, the beginning of part two of the collection. Christmas day, the birth of Christ, marks the death of Laura, while the death of Christ at Easter signals the birth of Petrarch’s love for Laura.¹⁰⁹⁶ Jones argues that the *Canzoniere*’s anniversary poems work to ‘change the calendar from one of a single year to a calendar of a lifetime’ – one is tempted to offer the Georgean formulation of a Petrarchan *year of the soul*.¹⁰⁹⁷

As a work of ‘Selbstanalyse’ (David), *Das Jahr der Seele* taps into the Petrarchistic tradition that deepens the psychological range of lyric poems as

not supply consciousness with the grasp of how the thing has these properties. The bad infinity can never produce a whole’.

¹⁰⁹³ Faletti, *Die Jahreszeiten des Fin de siècle*, p. 52. Barolini, ‘The Self in the Labyrinth of Time’, p. 33.

¹⁰⁹⁴ (‘constitutes the most obsessive thematic and poetic recurrence in Petrarch’s works’), Luca Marcozzi, ‘Tempo’, in *Lessico Critico Petrarcesco*, ed. by Luca Marcozzi e Romana Brovia (Carocci editore, 2016), pp. 321-332 (p. 321).

¹⁰⁹⁵ Gragnolati and Southerden, *Possibilities of Lyric*, p. 44.

¹⁰⁹⁶ See Thomas J. Roche Jr., ‘The Calendrical Structure of Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*’, *Studies in Philology* 71.2 (1974), pp. 152-72 (pp. 164-65).

¹⁰⁹⁷ F.J. Jones, ‘Arguments in Favour of a calendrical Structure for Petrarch’s “Canzoniere”’, *Modern Language Review* 79.3 (1984), pp. 579-88 (p. 587).

‘Dokumenten der Selbstanalyse’ (Hoffmeister).¹⁰⁹⁸ It sees a modern *Ich* trapped in a circular order providing respite neither from the relentless forward march of modernity’s linear mechanical time, nor from subjection to a normative Symbolic Order.¹⁰⁹⁹ The circular time of the volume is a kind of infernal merry-go-round admitting no singular epiphany (a vertical transcendence) that would resolve its (horizontal) wandering from the ‘toten quell’ back to the ‘totgesagten park’.¹¹⁰⁰

When George downplays historical referents concerning the *Ich* and *Du* in the volume, it is not merely a gesture of obfuscation (seeking to cover over, for example, Ida Coblenz’ impact in his life).¹¹⁰¹ It foregrounds the work itself as an analysis of the possibility of escaping itself, of breaking out of a fundamentally self-involved poetics. The volume’s *you* as a principle of otherness arises from within an internalised discourse, a Symbolic Order, and the fantasy of the volume is to found a new Symbolic grounded elsewhere. If ‘ich und du’ are ‘die selbe seele’, then that soul is from the outset split in two, and it goes searching for a third supplement to tie them together. This is figured in the ‘Sieg des Sommers’ cycle in the form of a male figure but does not quite resolve the *Ich* of his contradictions.

¹⁰⁹⁸ David, *Stefan George*, p. 160, Hoffmeister, *Petrarkistische Lyrik*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Similar to the point made earlier about the Georgian subject’s fantasy arising only within the confines of an already alienated, split consciousness (of language), Lacan further points out that the Other is always present: ‘In analysis, there is something that stands prior to everything we can elaborate or understand. I shall call this the presence of the Other, l’*Autre* with a capital A. There is no auto-analysis, even when one imagines there is. The Other is there’, Jacques Lacan, *Anxiety. The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book X*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller and trans. by A.R. Price (polity, 2022), p. 22.

¹¹⁰⁰ On ‘vertical transcendence’ cf. Schwartz, ‘Introduction’, p. x.

¹¹⁰¹ The original dedicatee of the volume, before he changed it to his sister (see the ‘Anhang’, IV: 133). Höpker-Herberg, ‘Ida Coblenz. Zeugnisse zu ihrem George-Erlebnis’, p. 93 recounts Coblenz’ dismay at her name not being found anywhere throughout the volume, ‘doch da jedes Wort für und an mich geschrieben ist [...] die Traurigen Tänze – jedes einzelne Wort ist ein Stück von meinem Leben’ (Coblenz cited in Höpker-Herberg, *ibid*). George’s preface erases historical reality: ‘möge man doch (wie ohne widerrede bei darstellenden werken) auch bei einer dichtung vermeiden sich unweise an das menschliche oder landschaftliche urbild zu kehren: es hat durch die kunst solche umformung erfahren dass es dem schöpfer selber unbedeutend wurde und ein wissen- darum für jeden andren eher verwirrt als löst. Namen gelten nur da wo sie als huldigung oder gabe verewigen sollen und selten sind sosehr wie in diesem buch ich und du die selbe seele’ (*SW*, IV: 7).

This male figure, to be sure, brings a warmth to the volume, but that too is temporary. *Ich* and *Du* remain at odds, companions but not united, and unable to reconcile their differing subject positions.¹¹⁰² The 'Sieg des Sommers' remains marked by an impending sense of loss and separation, hinted at in its first poem:

Der lüfte schaukeln wie von neuen dingen ·
Aus grauem himmel brechend milde feuer
Und rauschen heimatwärts gewandter schwingen
Entbietet mir ein neues abenteuer

Du all die jahre hin mir glanz und glaube
Bei dir · und wo die stummen zeugen waren
Von hoffen und von angst · bei diesem laube.
Denn wird das glück sich je uns offenbaren

Wenn jezt die nacht die lockende besternte
In grüner garten-au es nicht erspäht ·
Wenn es die bunte volle blumen-ernte
Wenn es der glutwind nicht verrät?

(IV: 36)

¹¹⁰² Morwitz highlights this uncertainty in his commentary, singling out George's choice of 'Bei dir' to express the companionship, rather than "mit", 'was in innerer Einigkeit mit dem Freunde bedeuten würde'. (*Kommentar*, p. 119). The *Du*, perhaps indicating his naivety vis-à-vis the more sobered and doubt-filled melancholy *Ich*, will indeed use 'mit' (albeit related to us by the narrative *Ich*) in relation to their companionship (IV: 41).

Two figures brought together in their shared lack of the 'glück' that might one day redeem their long-suffered melancholy. The emphasis on newness and adventure, Morwitz writes, is ambivalent, the word 'abenteuer' chosen precisely 'um die Ungewissheit des Ausganges anzudeuten'.¹¹⁰³ Nor is the companion appearing at the end of the winter cycle totally new (the scene is indeed qualified by a simile: 'wie von neuen dingen'): the poet, in times of 'hoffen und von angst' (a lexical recall to the despot's Petrarchan affectations in the *hängenden Gärten*, III: 86), has kept faith in his eventual arrival.¹¹⁰⁴ The self-questioning initiated in the middle stanza suggests that this companion, while important, is not the one. Their time together is marked by an abundance of splendour (the final stanza's inventory), but all this joyous variety does not add up to the sought-after 'glück'.¹¹⁰⁵

With the overdetermined temporal awareness that characterises the narrative logic of *Das Jahr der Seele*, it is no surprise that the male figure is already known to be a kind of false prophet. Although the poems of 'Sieg des Sommers' lean towards a present-tense rhetoric (the third poem is representative, IV: 38) suggestive of summer's immanent abundance, the past tense sneaks in at key points and undermines the fullness of the male counterpart's, revealing him as an already past occurrence.¹¹⁰⁶ The poem 'Gemahnt dich noch das schöne bildnis dessen' (IV: 40), for example, frames the friend's great feats in the past:¹¹⁰⁷

Gemahnt dich noch das schöne bildnis dessen

Der nach den schluchten-rosen kühn gehascht ·

¹¹⁰³ Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 119.

¹¹⁰⁴ Cf. *ibid.*

¹¹⁰⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

¹¹⁰⁶ Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 119: 'Inhaltlich deutet es an, dass dieses Erlebnis noch nicht volle Erfüllung ist, wohl aber Vorstufe dazu sein könnte'.

¹¹⁰⁷ Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 121 reads the poem as giving 'das äußere Bild des Freundes'.

Der über seiner jagd den tag vergessen ·
Der von der dolden vollem seim genascht ?

Der nach dem parke sich zur ruhe wandte ·
Trieb ihn ein flügelschillern allzuweit ·
Der sinnend sass an jenes weihers kante
Und lauschte in die tiefe heimlichkeit . .

Und von der insel moosgekrönter steine
Verliess der schwan das spiel des wasserfalls
Und legte in die kinderhand die feine
Die schmeichelnde den schlanken hals.

(iv: 40)

The poem before and after this one are predominantly characterised by a present-tense that continues to develop the narrative of present summerly friendship.¹¹⁰⁸ In 'Gemahnt dich noch', however, the speaker seems reflective, addressing himself and recollecting the grand moments that characterised his summerly male companion, which however implies his absence at the time of speaking ('noch'). The temporal awareness that soaks *Das Jahr der Seele* is felt here in the summery splendour that is already intimated as past before it is complete.

¹¹⁰⁸ The previous poem, 'Die silberbüschel die das gras verbrämen' (iv: 39) contains only present tense verbal forms, combined with active present participles, present imperatives and subjunctive phrases that however do not negatively impact the present atmosphere. The following poem, 'Wenn trübe mahnung noch einmal uns peinigt' (iv: 41), likewise hypothesizes about futural doubts, mostly in present tense verbs, although the final verb is in the preterite.

The word 'bildnis' is telling in this regard. In the Trecento-Baudelairean poem 'Von einer Begegnung', he had invoked Dante's process of memory work in the *Vita nova* to try and capture the image of the passerby who had since disappeared: 'Wie ward es mir gebot für lange nächte | Treu zug um zug dein bildnis zu beschwören!' (II: 15).¹¹⁰⁹ The 'bildnis' is late and piecemeal, a memory that the poet can only grasp in pieces, and the thing-in-itself remains elusive, requiring the speaker to veer off and elaborate the wonderful feats of his male companion.¹¹¹⁰ Blasberg likewise identifies the temporal scission in the first line as contributing to how the 'schöne bildnis' undermines the self-contained nature of the poem as sought for in Symbolist poetics.¹¹¹¹

vi. A Boy's Best Friend · George's Masterclass in Gemmology

The cure to all this damp and decay, the weakening of the walls by water, is to seek solidity, a rock in the storm. The *Ich*'s master discourse expresses itself in orders ('Komm', 'nimm', 'Vergiss', IV: 12; 'Nun säume nicht', 19; 'Doch tritt', 22), suggestions and wisdom, impenetrable to the analytical probing of the other (IV: 16; 22), but it will eventually falter at times, revealing itself not as the possessor of

¹¹⁰⁹ Cf. Schultz, *Studien*, p. 28.

¹¹¹⁰ In 'Von einer Begegnung', the loss of the object of desire is likewise marked by the teary eyes of Petrarchan affectivity, 'feucht vor sehnen' (II: 15).

¹¹¹¹ Cornelia Blasberg, "'Stefan Georges 'Jahr der Seele'. Poetik zwischen Schrift und Bild', p. 244: 'Einzig die Anfangszeile: "Gemahnt dich noch das schöne bildnis dessen" fügt sich nicht bruchlos in ein "absolutes" symbolistisches Gedicht, das ausschließlich seine Entstehung und Wirkung zum Gegenstand hat. Die erste Zeile beharrt auf der Existenz eines "bildnisses", das den Versen vorausliegt und in deren Sprachbildlichkeit nicht aufgeht. Gibt das Gedicht also Antwort auf die Mahnung zum "Angedenken", die das "bildnis", ohne selbst erinnerungsmächtig zu sein, aussendet? Angesichts der träumerischen Selbstvergessenheit, die das Gedicht als Vorstufe künstlerischer Inspiration und Tätigkeit ausweist, muß die Absage der ersten Zeile an die "memoire involontaire" befremden. Kommandieren läßt sich die gesuchte Erinnerung andererseits auch nicht, wenn sogar ihr materielles Korrelat, das "bildnis", allenfalls "noch" und also möglicherweise nicht mehr lange "mahnt". Betrachter und Angeschauter, die in einem optischen Verhältnis zueinander stehen, bevor der erotisch-poetische Inspirationsmoment diese Positionen auflöst, scheinen unwiderruflich durch die Zeit getrennt zu sein'. As a 'bildnis' it contrasts to George's Symbolist poetics of the 'Bild' (on this see Durzak, *Der junge Stefan George*, pp. 136-37).

a master signifier but like any utterance of language split, and its subject a melancholic in disguise. Tracing the motif of stone imagery across poets, Martina Lauster points out that in Petrarch's sonnet 'Had it come any closer to my eyes' (*Rvf* 51), the poet's fantasy of petrification into a precious stone ('a diamond or some lovely marble, white', l. 9) works as an 'exercise in self-abnegation', freeing the poet from the 'harsh, heavy yoke' (l. 12) of love.¹¹¹² Petrarch's drive to self-petrify is correlated by Lauster with his drive towards an impossible union with the beloved, so that his becoming-rock expresses an impossibility.¹¹¹³ Thus melancholic petrification is closely intertwined with poetic sublimation:

The transformation into a sculpted poetic self, a process of painful detachment from life and organic matter (laurel is replaced by stone, tree by rock) is a lonesome, "titanic" business linked to the temperamental condition of melancholy which requires stasis within flux, death within life [...] the melancholic condition that is the price to be paid for poetic perfection.¹¹¹⁴

Petrarch's unstable, metamorphosising lyric subject in *Rvf* 23 recounts how he chanced upon his Lady in an unrecognisable form, confessing to her what previously she had prohibited him from telling anybody, upon which, she punishes him by transforming him into '(oh, my grief) | a hardly living, baffled piece of stone' (*Rvf* 23: 79-80). The intertwining of grief and poetic impotence in the motif of stoniness has long been associated with both a loss of speech and the impediment

¹¹¹² Martina Lauster, 'Stone Imagery and the Sonnet Form: Petrarch, Michelangelo, Baudelaire, Rilke', *Comparative Literature* 45.2 (1993), pp. 146-174 (p. 149).

¹¹¹³ Lauster, 'Stone Imagery and the Sonnet Form', p. 149.

¹¹¹⁴ Lauster, 'Stone Imagery and the Sonnet Form', pp. 150, 151.

of progress.¹¹¹⁵ Here in George we see this play out in the subject's erotic refusal by way of turning himself into a stone that resists intersubjective communication while preserving his desire in crystalline form (IV: 28).¹¹¹⁶

When George's lyrical *Ich*s are tempted by unfulfilling others, as was the case in *Die Fibel* (I: 93) and *Pilgerfahrten* (II: 47), 'self-abnegation' (Lauster) in the form of sacrifice and renunciation, presented as a pre-modern, ritualised nobility, are often his desired course of action. In *Hymnen*, the *Ich* lamented his historical belatedness with respect to fantasies of sacrifice ('Bin ich so ferne schon von opferjahren?', 'Nachthymne', II: 20). He longs for times when the gods were less 'strenge' and one could become a promised sacrificial youth 'angeglüht von frommem feuer' (I: 20). A rosy image of the past that returns in the *Buch der Hirten- und Preisgedichte*, where sacrifice is once more linked to beauty and duty: the youthful lyrical *we* of a mythically archaic community are called '[z]um tempel zum dienst | Des Schönen: des Höchsten und Grössten' (III: 21).¹¹¹⁷ One of the symptoms of the failing relationship between the *Ich* and the femininized *Du* in *Das Jahr der Seele* is the latter's failure to appreciate the symbolic significance of a diamond that he 'sacrifices' to her:

¹¹¹⁵ See the 'Medusa' chapter in Freccero's *The Poetics of Conversion*, esp. p. 130.

¹¹¹⁶ The final poem of *Pilgerfahrten* had also staged the production of a precious stone ('Geformt aus feuerrotem golde | Und reichem blitzendem gestein' II: 54), in a Georgean drive toward self-objectification, standing as, if not quite a 'titanic' monument (as in Lauster, 'Stone Imagery and the Sonnet Form', p. 149), than as a miniature one, an emblem of stability opposed to the penultimate poem's 'zagendem gang' (II: 53) representing the uncertain world of pilgrimage.

¹¹¹⁷ Cf. Jürgen Egyptien, 'Weihe, Würde, Opfer', in *Krise und Gemeinschaft: Stefan Georges Der Stern des Bundes*, ed. by Christophe Fricker (Vittorio Klostermann, 2017), pp. 238-45 (pp. 243-44), who traces the same motif from 'Nachthymne' through 'Das Geheimopfer' (III: 21) to the late works, commenting: 'Die prominente Stellung des Opfers in Georges Dichten und Denken hängt natürlich aufs Engste mit seiner sozialen Funktion und seiner ästhetischen Durchformtheit zusammen' (p. 243). Egyptien likewise traces how the idea of the sacrifice is elevated to the apex of George's Maximin cult, so that it comes to define the 'Zugehörigkeit zu denjenigen, die im Zeichen dieses Gottes und in der Vernahme des dichterischen Prophetenwortes an der kulturellen Neugeburt mitwirken können' (p. 245).

Ich trat vor dich mit einem segenspruche
Am abend wo für dich die kerzen brannten
Und reichte dir auf einem sammtnen tuche
Die höchste meiner gaben : den demanten.

Du aber weisst nichts von dem opferbrauche ·
Von blanken leuchtern mit erhobnen ärmern ·
Von schalen die mit wolkenreinem rauche
Der strengen tempel finsternis erwärmen

Von engeln die sich in den nischen sammeln
Und sich bespiegeln am kristallnen lüster ·
Von glühender und banger bitte stammeln
Von halben seufzern hingehaucht im düster

Und nichts von wünschen die auf untern sprossen
Des festlichen altars vernehmlich wimmern . .
Du fassest fragend kalt und unentschlossen
Den edelstein aus glutten tränen schimmern.

(IV: 28)

Braungart situates this poem within George's 'katholisierend', antimodern aesthetics used to sacralise his poetry and that foregrounds 'den liturgischen Zauber des Sinnlich-Klangvollen und des Zeremoniehaften'.¹¹¹⁸ The idea of the

¹¹¹⁸ Braungart, *Ästhetischer Katholizismus*, p. 179.

sacrifice is part of this inventory of ritual imagery.¹¹¹⁹ Critics further identify foreboding leftovers of *Algabal's* aestheticist realm in the imagery, which portends a certain doom for the relationship.¹¹²⁰ The imagery of sacrifice here combines these archaic aesthetic offerings with the more generic literary motif of the noble lover's sacrifice. The aura of a pre-modern ritualised sincerity, insofar as it actually functions as a screen that the subject uses to mask the fact that his true desire is a homoerotic one, is linked to the 'lover's discourse', to borrow Barthes' term.¹¹²¹ Desire for the Lady must be articulated in order to meet the demand of the big Other, the heteronormative world of nineteenth century Germany and literary tradition, but by articulating it in the anti-modern garb of sacrifice and renunciation, presenting her only with a metonymic token of himself – his poetic 'demanten' – rather than his full romantic presence, he thereby sabotages the relationship, refusing castration and the Other's jouissance.¹¹²² Instead, he preserves the jouissance of his own otherness by offering up an inscrutable sign of his fantasy (his imaginary) – a rock, which as the poem stages is unable to be assumed into the Symbolic Order.¹¹²³ Thus, the sacrificial posturing the poem represents

¹¹¹⁹ Braungart, *Ästhetischer Katholizismus*, pp. 206, 208.

¹¹²⁰ Versari (*La poesia di Stefan George*, p. 70) stresses that the lavish decorations deployed in this 'preziosismo scenografico' ('scenographic pretentiousness') create an air of ritual that also recalls *Algabal's* realm, likewise replete with the solemn air of precious objects, thereby suggesting that the relationship must end in a 'mortuario irrigidimento' ('funereal stiffening'). Faletti, *Die Jahreszeiten des Fin de siècle*, p. 113 also notes: 'Auch geht die durchdringende Blässe auf *Algabals* sterilen "raum der blassen helle" zurück'. Zanucchi, reading the sub-cycle as a condensed recap of each of George's poetic works thus far, finds *Algabal* represented in this poem 'in katalogartiger Form' (Mario Zanucchi, 'Nach der Lese · Waller im Schnee · Sieg des Sommers', in *Stefan George – Werkkommentar. Studien und Interpretationen zu sämtlichen Dichtungen und Übertragungen*, ed. by Jürgen Egyptien (de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 173-98 (p. 187).

¹¹²¹ Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. by Richard Howard (Penguin, 1978), p. 172 offers sacrifice as one way out of the dark night of love.

¹¹²² Lacan, *Anxiety*, pp. 303-04 establishes the link between castration and the Other's jouissance. Castration is fundamentally the assumption of the position of a split speaking subject upon entrance into the Symbolic Order; it is to admit one's lack, what Lacan also terms the vanishing of the phallus.

¹¹²³ For Lacan, the Imaginary has all to do with the image one has of oneself and is based largely on the mirror stage, in which the child first sees its reflected image as embodying a wholeness that is missing in the child's own fragmented experience of his body.

conceals a deeper refusal to sacrifice what really constitutes the lyric speaker, the diamond becomes a symptom of that which 'gives consistency to the subject'.¹¹²⁴ This is the jouissance of his poetry, desire denied by the superego.¹¹²⁵ As Azari has it: 'The subject's desire is directed to this object [the *objet petit a* – JW] rather than the Other, which is an impossible object. In this context, object *a* is the surplus of jouissance'.¹¹²⁶ Or as Barthes has it: 'it is my desire I desire, and the loved being is no more than its tool'.¹¹²⁷

There is a seeming contradiction here, for desire, as Lacan writes, is always the 'désir de l'Autre' (desire of/for the Other), emerging only within the Symbolic once the subject is castrated and inscribed by language (the Lacanian barred subject).¹¹²⁸ The poem is undergirded by a fantasy of a non-barred subject prior to the castrating subjection to desire, completely in control of and at one with his world

¹¹²⁴ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 81. Insofar as this offering gives the lyric speaker 'consistency', it aligns with Žižek's analysis of the Lacanian symptom (and *sinthome*): 'Symptom as *sinthome* is a certain signifying formation penetrated with enjoyment: it is a signifier as a bearer of *jouis-sense*, enjoyment-in-sense. [...] In other words, symptom is the way we – the subjects – "avoid madness", the way we "choose something (the symptom-formation) instead of nothing (radical psychotic autism, the destruction of the symbolic universe)" through *the binding of our enjoyment to a certain signifying, symbolic formation which assures a minimum of consistency to our being-in-the-world*' (italics added). For Lacan the *sinthome* is a development in his thinking about the normal psychoanalytic symptom: as Luke Thurston explains ('*Sinthome*', in *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, ed. by Dylan Evans (Routledge, 1996), pp. 191-92), the *sinthome* is a symptom that no longer presents itself for analysis or deciphering, but rather posits the subject's enjoyment in a given signifier that is actually 'immune to the efficacy of the symbolic' (Thurston in Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, p. 191), what I read here as George's diamond. A way of 'organising jouissance', the *sinthome* is a supplementary term added by Lacan to his topology of the subject as a 'borromean knot' composed of real, imaginary and symbolic registers – this supplemental, unanalysable fourth term (the *sinthome*) is the knot that holds these registers together. Significant for Lacan here, as Thurston goes on to explain, was James Joyce, whose idiosyncratic manipulation of language was itself *sinthomic*: 'the invasion of the symbolic order by the subject's private *jouissance*' (p. 192). This is recorded in Joyce's intense epiphanies as represented in his fragmented literary language – comparable to George's 'da' epiphanies and the required re-structuration/re-stylisation of the German language (lacking an authoritative *Nom du Père* of literary language in nineteenth century German literature for him) allowed him, like Joyce, to 'invent a new way of using language to organise enjoyment' (p. 192). The result of this is once again the autonomous self-begetting of the artist: what Lacan puns as the *synth-homme*: the self-made, man-made man, the saintly man of letters (p. 192).

¹¹²⁵ The superego that 'prompts the subject of desire to enjoy what is prohibited by the symbolic law', Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, p. 17.

¹¹²⁶ Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, p. 19.

¹¹²⁷ Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*, p. 31.

¹¹²⁸ Lacan refers frequently to the desire of the Other, see e.g. *Anxiety*, p. 22.

of formalised rituality (in which he appears almost as an automaton). This fantasy comes belatedly, however, it is a linguistically retrospective fantasy, the diamond arriving only within language as a metaphor for poetic creation, created by the poem we are reading.¹¹²⁹ The Lady's inability to accept the diamond amounts to an inability to read the poem, to partake in the fantasy.¹¹³⁰ The fantasy of a pre-linguistic totality prior to desire is *a priori* powered by desire, by language: it is always retroactive.¹¹³¹ For this reason it works to sustain the Symbolic Order, even if it at first appears antithetical to it (as a desire for one's own fantasy).¹¹³² This is the moment when the symptom becomes the *sinthome*, the 'identification with the symptom' even after that symptom has been decoded and the fantasy traversed; the poem, rather than the symptomatic diamond, is the *sinthome*, the 'bearer of jouis-sense, enjoyment-in-sense', returning us to the interpretation delivered by Morwitz that the diamond is 'ein Symbol für die Kunst des Dichters'.¹¹³³ In its refined material obstinacy, its crystalline thingness, the diamond offers transparency and opacity simultaneously: the degree to which it refracts one's vision depends on its perfection.¹¹³⁴ As a mediating surface, with its play of light, it alters the image – the

¹¹²⁹ Furthermore the poem begins with the reference to his 'segenspruche', that is, the world of language, which is always the world of the Other: as Lacan puts it, the Other is the 'locus of speech and, potentially, the locus of truth', Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, p. 129.

¹¹³⁰ This adds another layer to the misogyny underlying George's poetics, for the woman biographically behind this Lady, Ida Coblenz, was by his own account one of the best readers of his poems (see Kauffmann, 'Das Leben Stefan Georges. Biographische Skizze', p. 28, and Egyptien, *Stefan George: Dichter und Prophet*, pp. 97-99). The *Jahr der Seele* continues to revise the biographical background for the purpose of poetic fantasy.

¹¹³¹ Indeed, the *objet petit a* emerges out of the split Other, and Lacan's formula of fantasy puts *a* in relation to the barred subject: $\$ \leftrightarrow a$. Azari interprets the Lacanian lozenge as 'desire of', *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, p. 19.

¹¹³² Cf. Azari, citing Nasio, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, p. 19.

¹¹³³ Žižek, *Sublime Object*, p. 81, Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 115.

¹¹³⁴ A diamond's surface can range from opaque (characteristic of the Lacanian *sinthome* cf. Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, 53) to totally transparent, allowing light to pass through and undergo dispersion into colours.

signified – on the other side of it, a poetic image of signification that itself is never a ‘one-to-one’ relation of equivalence.¹¹³⁵

Diamonds, hardest of structures on the Mohs’ scale, can only be scratched by other diamonds due to their hardness: by producing his ‘demanten’, he offers an emblem of invulnerability, or rather, risks vulnerability on the sole condition that the other be able to produce a gem of equal value, and thus be worthy of receiving his vulnerability and receiving admission into his imaginary order.¹¹³⁶ The classicising list of *sublimia* that she knows nothing of (an anaphoric repetition of six ‘von’ phrases occupying the central body of the poem) is bracketed by two expressions of the *Ich*: a verbal phrase (‘Ich trat’) and a metonymy (the ‘edelstein’ itself). The unworthy *Du* is thus contained by the *Ich*, who is, so to speak, the beginning and the end, bracketing the dramatisation of a lack that the poem seeks to transcend in its *jouissance*.¹¹³⁷ *Jouissance* is what prevents the subject from, in Žižek’s words, ‘renounc[ing] his symptom’.¹¹³⁸ Thus the preservation of the diamond over and

¹¹³⁵ Cf. Fink, *Lacan to the Letter*, p. 132, and Lacan, *Écrits*, pp. 415/498. Gemmology is outside my scholarly jurisdiction and I limit my understanding of diamonds to what is available on Wikipedia: Wikipedia contributors, ‘Diamond’, Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 13 September 2025, 04:09 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Diamond&oldid=1311057055> [accessed 24 September 2025]. On the ‘thing theory’ poetics of the diamond in Victorian literature see Stefanie Markovits, ‘Form Things: Looking at Genre through Victorian Diamonds’, *Victorian Studies* 52.4 (Summer 2010), pp. 591-619. Summarily: ‘diamonds frequently appear in literature of this period [...] at moments and as signs of extreme generic self-consciousness. When neoformalism and thing theory collide, they push diamonds to the surface’ (p. 595).

¹¹³⁶ Which *Das Jahr der Seele* presents as unrealisable. Cf. The following poem (IV: 29), where the *Ich* bemoans his inability to inspire any poetic flame in her: ‘Aus deiner blässe fack ich keinen funken ·’, associating her with the cold of winter (this poem is in the ‘Waller im Schnee’ subcycle). Of course, the one poet who could produce poetic gems like George’s own diamonds was the one poet who managed to deeply, deeply scratch him via his own renunciation during their disastrous encounter in 1891-92: Hugo von Hofmannsthal, whose presence haunts *Das Jahr der Seele*. Faletti, *Die Jahreszeiten des Fin de siècle*, p. 113 highlights the ‘unverletzbarer Diamant’ in her reading of the poem as focused solely on the poetic *Ich*’s inability to come up with a wintery poetics that could survive the cold: ‘Die Spaltung zwischen dem Streben des Dichters und seiner Unfähigkeit, Gegenstand seiner eigenen Dichtung zu bleiben, wird akzentuiert’ (p. 111). For Faletti, the *Ich* is split into two in this poem, and the gendered dimension of the cycle has no role to play, there is the poetic *Ich* and ‘das profane Ich’ (p. 111) that cannot be reconciled: ‘Aber die Neugestaltung des Ichs aus seiner eigenen Essenz erweist sich als vergeblich’ (p.113).

¹¹³⁷ Cf. Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, p. 61: ‘[desire] inscribes a persistent lack in the text; and second, it seeks textual *jouissance* in order to overcome the alienating obstruction of lack’.

¹¹³⁸ Žižek, *Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 80.

above a romantic relationship with the feminine other exposes the lyric speaker, like Harpagon in Molière's *The Miser*, as Azari writes, as a 'master fetishist keeping this object of fantasy in order to preserve his object cause of desire'.¹¹³⁹ We are, ultimately, not so far from the Lacanian interpretation of the heteronormative courtly love tradition, in which the unattainable Lady, as Distiller writes, 'is courtly love's encircling of the Thing, whose tantalisingly out-of-reach nature ensures the subject's existence by standing for the real that he can never reach but towards which his drives are geared'.¹¹⁴⁰ Although characterised as 'fragend' and thus potentially the bearer of some speech, the Lady of our Georgean scene is consistently depicted throughout the *Jahr* as epistemologically mute, unable to obtain the insights of the *Ich* and share his fantasy. In this respect she differs from courtly love's idealisation of the Lady (which is always a narcissistic reflection of the male speaker's praise), but the structural narcissism of the tradition persists, even in George's dismantling of that tradition as unfit for his purposes.¹¹⁴¹

Via the 'sacrifice of his virile prerogatives' like the knight in courtly tradition, the lyric speaker submits his diamond as a self-sacrifice in the mode of courtly love, but it functions covertly as a screen for the more serious inability to keep up the pretence of heteronormative romance, to *truly* sacrifice his desire.¹¹⁴² Thus, rather than attributing 'the value of representing the Thing' to his Lady, he attributes it to

¹¹³⁹ Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, p. 20.

¹¹⁴⁰ Distiller, *Gender and Desire in the Sonnet Tradition*, p. 35. Cf. Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder*, pp. 155-58.

¹¹⁴¹ Cf. Distiller, *Gender and Desire in the Sonnet Tradition*, pp. 35-36 on the gendered dimension and the 'fundamentally narcissistic' (p. 36) elements of the courtly love set-up, and p. 39: 'The movement towards renunciation becomes an artful display, never really meant, since the point of the performance becomes to express the desire and ability for, and thence to win, advancement. [...] Rather than the meanings he generates being referred outwards, they are mirrored back. The self speaking in this system is not speaking to another self; he is speaking to *himself*'.

¹¹⁴² Lacan, *Anxiety*, p. 110.

his self-produced diamond.¹¹⁴³ The icy, uncaring *donna petra*, ‘kalt und unentschlossen’, is an invention that guarantees the withstanding of his fantasy. By constructing the other here as unresponsive, the speaker is able to ‘abolish [her] as a subject’, shifting his desire from her qua normative object of desire (courtly tradition) and onto *his* diamond.¹¹⁴⁴ The sacrifice then becomes that of the feminine other as a representative of the Symbolic Order. With a single stroke the poem disavows both the Symbolic Order and the poetics of heteronormative romance, and attempts instead to instantiate the fantasy of a private Symbolic (catalogued in the poem’s enumerated rituals) where the lyric self alone is Master.¹¹⁴⁵

¹¹⁴³ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book VII. The Ethics of Psychoanalysis. 1959-1960*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller and trans. with notes by Dennis Porter (W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), p. 126

¹¹⁴⁴ Lacan, *Écrits*, pp. 248/300. We could say quoting Lacan (pp. 247/300) that her ‘reaction is not a response’ given that she does not assume the ‘subjective function’ needed to respond. This is what the narrative cycle of the volume chronicles: the feminised *Du* of autumn and winter is replaced by a romanticised masculine *Du*-other in the full brightness of summer. It should be recalled here that in his carefully proleptic ‘Vorrede der zweiten Ausgabe’ of *Das Jahr der Seele* George downplays any historical referent for the *ich* and *du* in the volume, given such a referent ‘hat durch die kunst solche umformung erfahren dass es dem schöpfer selber unbedeutend wurde und ein wissen-darum für jeden andren eher verwirrt als löst’ (IV: 7). What follows in the preface, however, is significant: ‘Namen gelten nur da wo sie als huldigung oder gabe verewigen sollen und selten sind sosehr wie in diesem buch ich und du die selbe seele’. That the historical reference that scholarship has identified as key (Ida Coblenz) remains unnamed, despite acting as the ‘urbild’ (IV: 7) to the *Du* in many of the poems, bolsters the point. The poems addressing and naming friends (via coded initials) in the ‘Überschriften und Widmungen’ cycle of *Jahr der Seele* constitute poetic gifts – the failure of the gift in the current poem means that with the rejection of the gift she loses her historical reality and name, or as Ernst Osterkamp summarises, discussing *Jahr der Seele*’s final ‘Auslöschung von Weiblichkeit’: ‘Keinem dieser Gedichte ist zu entnehmen, dass sie an eine Frau gerichtet sind; mag die Begegnung mit Ida Coblenz auch die Entstehung der Mehrzahl von ihnen ausgelöst haben, so ist doch Ida Coblenz in ihnen vollständig getilgt’, Ernst Osterkamp, ‘Frauen im Werk Stefan Georges’, in *Frauen um Stefan George*, ed. by Ute Oelmann and Ulrich Raulff (Wallstein Verlag, 2010), pp. 13-35 (p. 30). Osterkamp argues that the few apparitions of the feminine pronoun throughout the volume are in reference to the ‘seele’ of which the poet speaks in the preface, rather than an embodied female other: ‘so verweigern diese Gedichte dem “sie” doch alle Körperlichkeit, um so das Personalpronomen in seiner Unbestimmtheit die körperlose Seele repräsentieren zu lassen, die der Band im Titel trägt’ (pp. 30-31).

¹¹⁴⁵ Pirro, *Come corda troppo tesa*, p. 127 likewise reads ‘Ich trat vor dich’ as the exemplification of the increasing difficulty on the poet’s part to ‘costruire un ordine alternativo a quello pragmatico e comune’ (‘construct an alternative order to the pragmatic and common one’) and that for every enunciation of the lyric *Ich* the idealised totality of the ‘we’ (‘nel segno del noi’, ‘under the sign of the we’) striven for ‘introduce un elemento di rottura e dissonanza nel mondo chiuso e protetto della totalità’ (‘introduces an element of rupture and dissonance into the closed and protected world of totality’). The result is that the relationship between *Ich* and *Du* crumbles ‘nel segno della perdita e della reciproca alienazione’ (‘under the sign of loss and reciprocal alienation’). The ‘*deficit*’ (italics original, *ibid*) that marks the relation is one, argues Pirro, fundamentally loaded onto the side of the

The diamond takes on a symbolically, meta-linguistically phallic function: *'the phallus is the signifier that rigidly (turgidly?) designates the signification process itself; it designates the relationship or, better, the nonrelationship between the signifier and the signified'*.¹¹⁴⁶ Or, the nonrelationship between self and other. The poem figures a failure of speech in his 'segenspruche' that fails to cross the gap and 'evoke' the response demanded.¹¹⁴⁷ His poetic diamond-Word is symptomatic here, insofar as it is a 'language from which speech must be delivered' but cannot be for want of an adequate interlocutor, leading to the poem's Symbolic breakdown.¹¹⁴⁸ It is a symptom of neurotic inhibition, one of Lacan's 'hermetic elements' awaiting the analyst to 'deliver[] the imprisoned meaning'.¹¹⁴⁹ His inability to find himself in a satisfactory heterosexual relationship (be it socially or literary)

feminine other, whose questioning ('fragend') of the *Ich*'s inventory of sacred apparatuses betrays her lack of instinctive understanding of the ritual act, which is the ritual of poetry itself (cf. Pirro, *Come corda troppo tesa*, p. 119 for the 'celebrazione del rituale della poesia'): knowledge, 'il quale non può invece che essere afferrato tramite un'intuizione istantanea e non bisognosa di esplicazioni razionali' ('which can only be grasped through instant intuition and does not require rational explanations', p. 139). You either have it, or you don't. This structure of knowledge/non-knowledge accords with what Pirro later goes on to describe as the 'discourse on secrecy' ('discorso intorno al segreto') to which George alone has privileged access (p. 193).

¹¹⁴⁶ Fink, *Lacan to the Letter*, p. 135 (italics original).

¹¹⁴⁷ 'For the function of language in speech is not to inform but to evoke', *Écrits*, pp. 247/299. Lacan here is distinguishing speech from language, where the latter is centered on transmitting information and the former is the embodied use of language by a speaking subject. Intersubjective communication works where there is a successful mixing of both: 'the speech value of a language is gauged by the intersubjectivity of the "we" it takes on' (pp. 247/299). A language addressed to the other which is completely unintelligible and marred by the subjective dimension of the speaking subject results, on the extreme end, in psychotic speech, where 'it loses its function as language' (pp. 246/299).

¹¹⁴⁸ Lacan, *Écrits*, pp. 223/270. For 'speech as the gift of language' cf. here Sarah Jones Ferguson, 'The gift of speech: beyond ambivalence', in *Since Lacan: Papers of the Freudian School of Melbourne: Volume 25*, ed. by Linda Clifton (Routledge, 2016), pp. 113-25 (p. 116). Cf. Lacan, *Écrits*, pp. 248/301: 'Speech is in fact a gift of language, and language is not immaterial. It is a subtle body, but body it is'.

¹¹⁴⁹ Lacan, *Écrits*, pp. 232/281, providing a definition of symptom: 'A symptom here is the signifier of a signified that has been repressed from the subject's consciousness'. For the 'hermetic elements' see the suggestive passage: 'Hieroglyphics of hysteria, blazons of phobia, and labyrinths of *Zwangsneurose* [obsessive neurosis]; charms of impotence, enigmas of inhibition, and oracles of anxiety; talking arms of character, seals of self-punishment, and disguises of perversion: these are the hermetic elements that our exegesis resolves, the equivocations that our invocation dissolves, and the artifices that our dialectic absolves, by delivering the imprisoned meaning in ways that run the gamut from revealing the palimpsest to providing the solution [mot] of the mystery and to pardoning speech' (pp. 232/281).

is thus neutralised in the transvaluation of the symptom from a signifier of castration in the Symbolic Order (uselessness of the phallus, inability to love, loss of jouissance, the split subject of language in submission to the Law) into a surplus of jouissance, a transvaluation 'from a minus value to a plus that neutralizes the imagined loss' and allows him to keep the rock in his possession.¹¹⁵⁰

Meanwhile, it simultaneously functions as a fantasy, a 'magical object' that 'tries to cover up the void' of alienation.¹¹⁵¹ In the third poem of the volume, he had demonstrated his ability to respond appropriately to her language, her 'segen', by finding the right 'sanfte worte'.¹¹⁵² The proper response to a blessing that calms the *Trecentesco* affectivity, we are given to assume, is to find 'gentle words' (*Rvf* 273:5) with which to praise the equally gentle lady (as he had praised 'das gütige schicksal' in 'Ich wandelte', I:13).¹¹⁵³ She does not return the favour.

We have just barely scratched the surface of this diamond. His adamantine diamond is a 'psychosomatic' sinthome, formed 'aus gluten tränen schimmern'.¹¹⁵⁴

¹¹⁵⁰ Fink, *Lacan to the Letter*, p. 139. Here Fink is describing the normative 'overcoming of the castration complex [that] requires a shift from the imaginary [...] to the symbolic, from a minus value to a plus value that neutralizes the imagined loss'. George is headed in the opposite direction: from a Symbolic that to him is negative, the imaginary regains its positivity.

¹¹⁵¹ Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, p. 154, discussing *Finnegans Wake*.

¹¹⁵² 'Ja heil und dank dir die den segen brachte
Du schläferdest das immer laute pochen [...]
Ich werde sanfte worte für dich lernen [...]
Dich loben auf den sonnen-wanderungen'
(IV: 14).

¹¹⁵³ That Trecento affectivity verb 'pochen' which, like his 'beben' from *Die Fibel*, recalls the affects of love from Petrarch and Dante: 'my own harm, | which day and night I seek with trembling heart' (italics added, *Rvf* 212: 9-10). Coincidentally, Petrarch describes 'those gracious words' that Amor 'wrote in diamond deep inside my heart' (*Rvf* 155: 10-11). There are numerous references to Laura as 'soave' ('gentle', 'gracious' etc., e.g. *Rvf* 80: 7; 109: 9; 37: 34 etc.).

¹¹⁵⁴ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 82: 'In so far as the sinthome is a certain signifier which is not enchained in a network but immediately filled, penetrated with enjoyment, its status is by definition 'psychosomatic', that of a terrifying bodily mark which is merely a mute attestation bearing witness to a disgusting enjoyment, without representing anything or anyone'. If it seems that the current analysis has suggested that the diamond represents our speaker, it is moreso that it embodies an excess within him, it is a kind of 'mute attestation bearing witness to a disgusting enjoyment' (Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 82). Žižek discusses the wound in Kafka's 'Landarzt' as the exemplary sinthome, focused indeed on its horrendously abject quality. That George's diamond seems its opposite, an aesthetically pleasing object, does not impact the

Formed in the pressurised 'rotary motion' of his core, to speak with Žižek, which 'in seiner eignen Fülle nicht mehr enthalten oder zusammenziehen kann', it is then contracted 'außer sich', to speak with Schelling.¹¹⁵⁵ For Schelling this is 'das hohe Wunder der Bildung des Worts im Munde,' that is, when interiority is so full it needs a Word 'durch das es ausgesprochen, befreit, entfaltet werden könne', it is that which 'überall löst [...] die innere Zwietracht'.¹¹⁵⁶ If George's diamond fails (by design) to resolve the conflict between *Ich* and *Du* linguistically, it thereby solves another one, for without his symptom – as *sinthome* – the subject would be in 'even greater trouble'.¹¹⁵⁷

As a sacrificial gift, a metonymic token of the self, it is useless, for he knows that the 'instrument of might', his symbolic rock, will not impress the Lady.¹¹⁵⁸ This fact is reinforced poetically by the highly effective use of the contrastive, slightly accusatory apostrophe that opens stanza two: 'Du aber'. However, the sacrifice is not really for her. Not in the 'instrumental value', as Žižek clarifies, does the thrill of sacrifice lie, but rather 'it is this renunciation, this giving up of enjoyment itself, which produces a certain surplus-enjoyment. This surplus [...] is the Lacanian *objet*

reading, but nor does it suggest that George's diamond, and what it embodies, is 'disgusting'. An excess, perhaps, or disgusting in particular relation to a Symbolic Order's rule of law. Lacanian anamorphosis accounts for those sublime objects that, quite suddenly, via a change of perspective, can shift from beautiful to excremental. Reading the diamond as a sign of *Jahr der Seele's* misogyny, for instance, transvalues it rather quickly from beautiful to abject. This procedure is what Žižek terms '*ideological anamorphosis*' (italics original): 'the criticism of ideology must perform a somewhat homological operation: if we look at the element which holds together the ideological edifice, at this 'phallic', erected Guarantee of Meaning, from the right (or, more precisely – politically speaking – left) perspective, we are able to recognize in it the embodiment of a lack, of a chasm of non-sense gaping in the midst of ideological meaning', *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 110.

¹¹⁵⁵ Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder*, p. 13. F. J. W. Schelling, *Die Weltalter: Fragmente. In den Urfassungen von 1811 und 1813*, ed. by Manfred Schröter (C. H. Beck, 1966), p. 56.

¹¹⁵⁶ Schelling, *Die Weltalter. Fragmente* (1811), p. 57.

¹¹⁵⁷ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 85: 'This is the paradox of the psychoanalytic concept of the symptom: symptom is an element clinging on like a kind of parasite and 'spoiling the game', but if we annihilate it things get even worse: we lose all we had – even the rest which was threatened but not yet destroyed by the symptom. [...] This is the symptom: an element which causes a great deal of trouble, but its absence would mean even greater trouble: total catastrophe'.

¹¹⁵⁸ As Lacan points out in Seminar X (1962-63): 'Sacrifice consisted in carrying on as though they [the gods] desired in the same way as we do, and if they desire as we do, then the *a* possesses the same structure' (*Anxiety*, p. 278). For the phallus as an 'instrument of might' [*puissance*] see p. 269.

petit a, the embodiment of surplus-enjoyment'.¹¹⁵⁹ The diamond is what remains of, or precedes, the 'kernel of enjoyment immune to the efficacy of the symbolic', it fails to register on the Symbolic level of the Du.¹¹⁶⁰ The *Ich*'s diamond functions as a fantasy, which 'implies a crossed-out, blocked, barred, non-whole, inconsistent Other – that is to say, it is filling out a void in the Other'.¹¹⁶¹ As such, it transforms into a sublime object by indexing his surplus desire, drawing attention to itself as a 'hole, a gap, an opening in the middle of the symbolic order',¹¹⁶² a '*crystallization of fantasy*'¹¹⁶³ exposing the Big Other's inherent lack.¹¹⁶⁴ In the renunciation of his deeper homoerotic drives, the *Ich* of the *Jahr* performs a ritual of heteronormative romance (the courting of the Lady and his precious self-sacrifice), but in doing so confirms to himself that he is temporally and subjectively out of joint with the normative bourgeois world of nineteenth century romance, and thereby out of joint with the poetry of that world.¹¹⁶⁵ Schultz' summary is succinct: 'Whether it is with

¹¹⁵⁹ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 89.

¹¹⁶⁰ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 89

¹¹⁶¹ Thurson, 'sinthome', p. 191.

¹¹⁶² Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 191.

¹¹⁶³ Kristeva, cited by Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, p. 118.

¹¹⁶⁴ 'That is why the real object is a sublime object in a strict Lacanian sense - an object which is just an embodiment of the lack in the Other, in the symbolic order'. Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 192. Leahy, '*Der wahre Historiker*', p. 145, glossing Žižek's account of the Titanic as a sublime object (in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*), suggests that this Žižekian theory might help to explain 'Cultural Memory's preoccupation with traumatic events' insofar as it accounts for the 'pleasure in the 'defeat' of signification', constituting a 'narcissistic indulgence'. This may certainly be the case for Cultural Memory. For George, likewise, there is surely a tickle of narcissistic pleasure underlying the presentation of his sublime diamond that subverts the Symbolic world of nineteenth century romance. The sublime, in Kantian terms, is not merely its ability to overpower human reason, it is rather the pleasure the mind takes in its ability to self-humble and recognise reason's failure, a recognition that in turn elevates the mind above nature right when it seems that nature has reasserted its infinite enormity. Cf. Werner S. Pluhar, 'Translator's Introduction' in Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement: Including the First Introduction*, trans. with an introduction by Werner S. Pluhar (Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), p. lxx and Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, p. 167.

¹¹⁶⁵ For the *Ich*'s courting of the lady as being simultaneously a 'frustrated courting of poetic language at the time' see Schultz, 'In Praise of Illusion', p. 82. For the relationship recounted throughout the narrative of *Das Jahr der Seele* as being 'performative' see Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, p. 84, who argues that this performativity is best illustrated by the fact that *Ich* and *Du*'s romance takes place exclusively in public spaces 'as a public event'. This is partly true – the poem following '*Ich trat vor dich*' describes their relationship in a private, indoor space, where

an actual woman, with the Muses or with a split self, the relationship is lacking'.¹¹⁶⁶

In the subsequent renunciation of the relationship, he makes the gift a gift to himself: the homoeroticism that is renounced in the ritual is recuperated in the same object that announces its renunciation. Her reaction to the diamond shatters the prior illusion that she might have been a worthy companion, equally understanding of his adamantine secrets.¹¹⁶⁷ But the gift is actually predicated on her not being impressed by it: his identity as different – the ideal ego of the poet-Master – is thereby sustained.¹¹⁶⁸ By turning himself into a diamond ('aus gluten tränen schimmern'), recreating an imaginary phallus, he offsets his lack in the Symbolic Order, renouncing castration and foreclosing the Name of the Father,

Ich retreats to his 'beigemache' while she gazes indefinitely into nothingness: 'Dein auge hängt noch immer an der leere' (IV: 29). Goldsmith, *Stefan George: A Study in the Early Works*, p. 75, is certainly right to notice how the claustrophobic indoor setting in winter works to emphasise their emotional separation: 'How far apart the lovers' souls have drifted is stated very directly in a poem with an indoor setting. Thus enclosed, the desolation of their souls is all the more vivid'. We must counter, however, that we have no real idea of how "desolated" *her* soul actually is. Our point of view is restricted by the lyric *Ich* who focalises the narrative for us, and who obviously has much to regain after embarrassingly failing to impress her with his diamond. We might all react to such an offering with the awkward indifference that she supposedly does. Indeed, one of the markers of a sublime object is that, in their overwhelming excess, they can 'suddenly change into excrement', as Žižek highlights (*Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 106), also pointing out that a sublime object has a 'terrifying impact' by dint of being permeated with the Real (p. 77). The lyric speaker of the poem might be said to be taking a decidedly more pessimistic note than that of Wordsworth's speaker in 'It is a beauteous evening, calm and free', in which he claims to his younger female companion that 'If thou appear untouched by solemn thought, | Thy nature is not therefore less divine' (ll.10-11) in *Selected Poems*, p. 153 (available online at: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45524/it-is-a-beauteous-evening-calm-and-free> accessed 17/03/2025). The claustrophobic indoor space, and the *Ich*'s continual need to break out into pilgrimages across landscapes, is another linkage of deathly stasis to femininity. A paper given by Alida Vettorelli, 'Swamp Creatures, Amazons, or Mothers? Kafka's Women in the Light of Bachofen's Matriarchal Theory' at "The Pain of Private Parts": Kafka, Gender and Sexuality", International Conference, Trinity College Dublin, 12-13 December, 2024, highlighted the linkage of femininity to indoor spaces in Bachofen's *Mutterrecht*, a text George certainly encountered later on in his dealings with the Munich Cosmologists (see Kauffmann, 'Biographische Skizze', p. 32).

¹¹⁶⁶ Schultz, 'In Praise of Illusion', p. 82. It is also lacking in a more Lacanian sense, aligning with his understanding of the subject's entry into language – and self-reflection – as a splitting in two: 'Two speakers who do not speak the same language; two who do not hear each other speak, two who do not understand each other at all', (Lacan, cited in Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, p. 60).

¹¹⁶⁷ Cf. Goldsmith, *Stefan George: A Study of his early Works*, p. 74: 'he is gradually led to reject woman as inadequate for the needs of the creative genius'.

¹¹⁶⁸ Cf. As discussed previously in reference to 'Einverleibung', SW, xvii: 69: 'Das wesen der dichtung wie des traumes: dass Ich und Du · Hier und Dort · Einst und Jetzt nebeneinander bestehen und eins und dasselbe werden'. For the Lacanian ideal ego as 'the image to which we appear likeable to ourselves' see Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 116.

thereby 'reaching out' to his jouissance.¹¹⁶⁹ Alongside the (now renounced) heteronormative Symbolic Order, he sets up an alternative fantasy, a counter-imaginary world in which he occupies the position of Master.¹¹⁷⁰

The poem formally figures the phenomenology of gift-giving as an outgoing from the self and a return to that self, 'who, knowing itself to be such, recognizes itself in a circular, specular fashion, in a sort of auto-recognition, self-approval, and narcissistic gratitude'.¹¹⁷¹ This is not to resort to a clichéd, Freudian conception of homosexuality as a specular narcissism. What this means is rather that until he finds another diamond, he is alone with himself. The gift stands in for something that he cannot give, as something which cannot be adequately received: he has, to quote Lacan, turned 'his castration into what the Other lacks' to guarantee himself jouissance in this 'universe of significations' in which he feels simultaneously alien and at home.¹¹⁷² If the symptom relies on the Big Other's totalising ideological framework to interpret its meaning, a 'symptom' is presented here that actually blocks understanding and thus its dissolution (as here the *Du* fails to supply meaning to the diamond).¹¹⁷³

This is where Lacan reformulates the idea of a symptom into a *sinthome* that refuses to yield meaning to the Other. Fantasy – the poem's ritualised aesthetic –

¹¹⁶⁹ Cf. Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, p. 22, and p. 6 for the link between the *sinthome* and the foreclosure of the Name of the Father qua master signifier/phallus. For writing as 'a peculiar way of reaching out to one's unconsciousness enjoyment in the real', p. 38.

¹¹⁷⁰ My use of imaginary here differs from Morgan in his *The Homosexual Imaginary*, where on p. 8 he clarifies what the 'Imaginary' of his title refers to (namely the 'combination of beliefs, values, and symbols which enables a group of individuals to imagine themselves in their interconnectedness as a (potential) social whole'). While this undoubtedly feeds into George's imaginary identification (when extrapolated to the cult of Maximin and the State of Secret Germany, the 'Bund' etc.), I use the term imaginary here in the more individualist Lacanian sense, but which George then attempts to transform into the broader 'Symbolic' world of his Circle and the Secret Germany (Morgan's 'imaginary').

¹¹⁷¹ Jacques Derrida, quoted in Charles Champetier, 'Philosophy of the Gift: Jacques Derrida, Martin Heidegger', *Angelaki* 6.2 (2001), pp. 15-22 (p.5).

¹¹⁷² Lacan, *Anxiety*, p. 46.

¹¹⁷³ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 79.

mediates the Real and provides a protective screen for jouissance.¹¹⁷⁴ *Du* refuses the gift, and fantasy has the rug pulled out from under it, threatening the *Ich* with destitution. What remains is to identify with the 'sinthome', a 'certain signifying formation penetrated with enjoyment: it is a signifier as a bearer of *jouis-sense*, enjoyment-in-sense'.¹¹⁷⁵ The 'sinthome' saves him from destitution: the identification embodied in the diamond that, regardless of all else failing, 'assures a minimum of consistency to [his] being-in-the-world'.¹¹⁷⁶ This is the condition of the subject at the end of analysis, as Žižek goes on to explain: identification with the symptom, 'recogniz[ing], in the Real of his symptom, the only support of his being'.¹¹⁷⁷ Thus the diamond remains in the form of the poem itself as its sinthomic expression, organised jouissance, saving him when the Symbolic does not recognise him.

By conjuring this rock out of the core of his being, George thereby conjures all the other rocks in his oeuvre that at various points have stood for poetic, artistic or otherwise creative fantasies of power and authorship/authority.¹¹⁷⁸ In 'Kindliches Königtum', which Morwitz reads as a biography of George in poetic form,¹¹⁷⁹ the

¹¹⁷⁴ Cf. Evans, *Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, p. 61 for fantasy as 'a relatively stable way of defending oneself against castration, against the lack in the Other'. Evans also points out the 'fixed and immobile quality' of fantasy as a defence, which complements the pictorial and rigid quality of many of the scenes in George's poems.

¹¹⁷⁵ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 81.

¹¹⁷⁶ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 81. Cf. Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, p. 52 for the sinthome's relation to art and 'self-creation'. Cf., furthermore, Žižek, 'The Seven Veils of Fantasy', p. 194 for a succinct summary of George's tactic here: 'This concerns the *agalma*, the secret treasure that guarantees the minimum of fantasmatic consistency of the subject's being, that is to say the object *a* (*objet petit a*), as the object of fantasy, that 'something in me more than myself' on account of which I perceive myself as 'worthy of the Other's desire'.

¹¹⁷⁷ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 81.

¹¹⁷⁸ The diamond motif ('reinen demanttau', 'Geleitverse' I: 9), guaranteed the constancy of the poet's memory work, where memories appear rimed with a fine crystalline dew 'wegen der Reinheit frühen Erlebens' (Morwitz, *Kommentar zu den Prosa- Drama- und Jugend-Dichtungen*, p. 79). For the stone as willpower cf. exemplarily 'Die Spange' (II: 52).

¹¹⁷⁹ Pointed out by the editors in the 'Anhang', see *SW*, III: 141.

child is celebrated for his predilection for 'edlen steinen' (III: 76).¹¹⁸⁰ In *Der Teppich des Lebens*, the third poem of three addressed to Cyril Scott foregrounds the lyric *Ich*'s concerns in *Das Jahr der Seele* with gathering up the multiplicity of experience into an ornamental, aesthetic safekeep:

Ich stand im Sommer wartend – mit erbleichen
Seh ich nun schon das scharlach-banner wehen
Es winkt dem tanz der ernter mit dem grabe
Mit ungepflückter frucht zerzaust vom sturme.
Nun schwindet mir der sorgenlosen glaube
Nun eil ich in der kargen frist und pflücke
Von dem was blieb und binde laub und blumen
Halbwelke wunder meiner grames-hand.
Die hand mit widmender verehrung hebt
Beschämt empor dir die verstreuten gaben –
So wenig von erträumter pracht ein zeichen
Wenn auch von mancher seltenen träne leuchtend..
So wenig eine wahl von edelsteinen
Die ich dir vom geschick erobern wollte
Als je die mär von flammen-hass und -liebe
Kund wird durch diese brechend leise stimme.

(v: 66)

¹¹⁸⁰ Jürgen Brokoff comments on this poem as exemplary of George's 'Machtanspruch', noting that here already George links the poet's power of naming with the idea of a 'staat'. In the present context, it might be said that the authority of the state, in connection with wielding *le nom du père* in one's language (Brokoff links this poem to George's other experimental language games) supports the idea of George's fantasy of commanding his own master discourse, of being the Big Other in his own symbolic realm. See Jürgen Brokoff, 'Macht im Innenraum der Dichtung', p. 416.

The reverential offering of gems, ‘these tear-lit gifts’ (v: 121) in George’s original English-language composition, alongside the motifs of recollecting dispersed fragments of a transient reality (‘Von dem was blieb) and of the banner, signifying the summerly hope in finding a companion to receive those ‘verstreuten gaben’, as well as the ‘brechend leise stimme’ of his melancholy, ties the poem closely to *Das Jahr der Seele*’s poetics.¹¹⁸¹ What is significant about this poem and the two that precede it, however, is that it was originally composed in English for Scott, and in Petrarchan-sonnet form (albeit with a non-Petrarchan rhyming scheme). For their translation and inclusion in *Der Teppich des Lebens*, however, with its Dantean and anti-Petrarchan thrust, their form was changed (homogenised) to match that of the rest of the collection.¹¹⁸² In the sub-cycle ‘Gezeiten’ from *Der Siebente Ring*, a cycle of love poems that ‘gestalten Georges Erleben mit Friedrich Gundolf’, the ‘du’ is constructed as reaping the many gifts bestowed by the poet-speaker: the homoerotic poetics at play in this volume thus present the masculine other as capable of receiving the poet’s gifts.¹¹⁸³ Likewise in *Das Neue Reich* one of the

¹¹⁸¹ In the *Jahr*, the male companion appears at the end of the winter cycle: ‘Drüben an dem strand ein bruder | Winkt das frohe banner schwenkend’ (iv: 33).

¹¹⁸² See the Oelmann’s notes in the ‘Anhang’ (v: 120-121) for textual history and the English versions of the poems.

¹¹⁸³ ‘So holst du schon geraum mit armen reffen | Dir meine gaben und du schwelgst im vollen’, vi/vii: 76. The love depicted in this subcycle is far from unproblematic, however. See Winzen’s discussion of the *Ich*’s ‘Unwohlsein[]’ in the context of these poems, Tina Winzen, ‘Gezeiten’, in *Stefan George – Werkkommentar. Studien und Interpretationen zu sämtlichen Dichtungen und Übertragungen*, ed. by Jürgen Egyptien (de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 356-384 (pp. 395-96). In the same poem, the *Du* is similarly exposed as not being quite on *Ich*’s level: While it can revel in the gifts, the poet contends:

‘Von tausend namen die für dich erschollen
Von allen küssen die geheim dich treffen
Erfährst du nichts’.

The first twelve poems of the cycle are informed by George’s meeting with Gundolf, the remaining six poems by his friendship with Robert Boehringer, see Oelmann’s commentary in ‘Anhang’ to vi/vii: 211.

poems 'an die Lebenden' (IX: 73) addresses a man who, even if he does not yet fully understand the significance of the gift, finds enjoyment in it:

Freu dich an dem wert der gabe
Nie entfällt sie deinen händen ..
Doch nicht voll kannst du sie schätzen
Eh du weisst wie sie dir wurde
Wo du sie – mit welchen! teilest
Und wo du allein besitzest
(IX: 73)

Although the same masterly 'Doch' limits the other's man's full appreciation of the gift, it promises that other a fuller enjoyment in the future: the other is capable of learning. This poem is one in a series that intimates a future greatness of George's younger follower Adelbert Cohrs, and implicitly contains the neo-mystical paradox of self-sacrifice in order to fully become oneself.¹¹⁸⁴ The disciple ought to one day share the gift in turn and renounce absolute ownership, which paradoxically constitutes an utmost of possession. This particular dynamic is codified in *Der Stern des Bundes* where, for example, a disciple announces in one of the conversion poems: 'Ich war noch arm als ich noch wahrte und wehrte | Seitdem ich ganz mich gab hab ich mich ganz' (VIII: 65).¹¹⁸⁵ In the *Stern's* 'Eingang', likewise,

¹¹⁸⁴ Cf. Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 459.

¹¹⁸⁵ On the neo-mystic aspects of this poem in particular, contextualised in a broader discussion of George's medievalist tropes of 'Selbstaufgabe und Erfüllung', see Schloon, *Modernes Mittelalter*, pp. 289-90. Schloon interprets the trope against the well-suited background of medieval mystical thought and specifically Meister Eckhart's notion of 'Gelassenheit'. The syrupy letter cited by Schloon (289 n. 99) from Friedrich Gundolf to George imitating this mystical speech in deference to his *Meister* is particularly revealing. There are other poems in the *Stern* and the oeuvre that

Maximin's departure is figured as a gift: 'Schon ward ich was ich will. Euch bleibt beim scheiden | Die gabe die nur gibt wer ist wie ich' (VIII: 10). Indeed, as Klaus Schuhmacher argues, this ability to receive, and in turn give, gifts, is a mark of one's initiated status in the Circle: 'Der Kultraum ist der Ort des Gabentauschs, und Tausch und Austausch ist die Signatur des Kreises'.¹¹⁸⁶

Finally, much of the present poem's imagery is pre-figured in that of Algabal's lonely, artificial underworld.¹¹⁸⁷ Algabal's poetics are, as Durzak writes, in turn prefigured by Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal*. Durzak cites 'Avec ses vêtements' (LFdM 27) for the 'Darstellung der Schönheit einer Frau durch mineralische Metaphern' in order to trace similarly mineralised aesthetics in *Algabal's* underworld as increasingly recognised by the poet as untenable – unresponsive, cold and deathly: 'Die postulierte Vollkommenheit seiner

thematise such giving up of the self, and the language is also used in the Dante translation to characterise the pilgrim's dedication to his own *Meister*, Virgilio:

'Doch war Vergil in einer tiefern schwebe
Uns ferne schon · Vergil mein süsßer ahne ·
Vergil dem ich mich gab damit ich lebe'

(x/xi: 92). That Vergil receives the moniker 'ahne' at this point is significant – 'Ahn' and its related terms are George's chosen way of nodding to his own father figures and inspirations – see, for example, his grandfather as 'ahnen' in 'Franken', (vi/vii: 18); or the poet's praise of Maximin as radiating out of 'erlauchter ahnen werke' (VIII: 15). Finally, the poeta-vates receives his authority from such forebears:

'er holt aus büchern
Der ahnen die verheissung die nicht trägt
Dass die erkoren sind zum höchsten ziel
Zuerst durch tiefste öden ziehn [...]

(xi: 29-30).

¹¹⁸⁶ Klaus Schuhmacher, 'Der Dichter als Führer. Eine mythopoetische Hybride zwischen den Kriegen', in *Stefan George: Werk und Wirkung seit dem "Siebenten Ring"*, ed. by Wolfgang Braungart, Ute Oelmann and Bernhard Böschstein (Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2001), pp. 156-173 (p. 163).

¹¹⁸⁷ Zanucchi, 'Nach der Lese · Waller im Schnee · Sieg des Sommers', p. 187 for 'Ich trat vor dich' as a poem that 'die Algabal-Poetik in katalogartiger Form inszeniert'. See Zanucchi's listing of the various reminiscences *ibid.* Zanucchi continues on to read the following poem, 'Die blume die ich mir am fenster hege' (iv: 31) as George's 'Palinodie des vierten "Unterreich"-Gedichtes' (p. 187). Algabal was a famously androgynous figure (part of his appeal for fin-de-siècle aesthetes), incorporating both masculine and feminine aspects much as the 'ich und du' of *Das Jahr der Seele*, as preface tells us, are 'die selbe seele', a soul split from itself, alienated in its apparent need to suppress one half in favour of the other, and in kind of psychoanalytic dialogue with itself.

[=Algabal's] Welt schließt ihre Unfruchtbarkeit ein'.¹¹⁸⁸ As translated by George, the *donna petra* of Baudelaire's poem is characterised as unresponsive to the world, the essence of her cold beauty is diamond-like:

In diesem wesen · sinnbild seltner art ·

Wo reiner cherub mit der sfinx sich paart

Wo alles gold ist diamant und stahl

Liegt wie der eitle glanz der sternenscharen

Die kalte hoheit einer unfruchtbaren.

(XIII/X: 42)

In offering his 'demanten' to the unresponsive lady of *Das Jahr der Seele*, the unproductiveness of an erotic poetics based on aestheticist mythologies of material splendour is used to undermine an aesthetics of courtly love, just as *Algabal* had established on a macro-level that a general poetics of aestheticist extremism had to be overcome, as recent scholarship argues.¹¹⁸⁹ *Algabal* represents a self-reflective engagement with and critique of aestheticism, and the present poem in *Das Jahr der Seele* confirms that critique by incorporating that poetics into the semi-biographical romance of the present day, projecting Algabalian poetics onto the unresponsive *donna petra*, thereby expurgating it from the *Ich* and associating the feminine other with a springless infertility.¹¹⁹⁰ David states of *Das Jahr der*

¹¹⁸⁸ Durzak, *Der junge Stefan George*, both quotes p. 213. *The Flowers of Evil*, p. 54. In George's translation it is poem XXVIII ('In ihren kleidern die mit schillern flattern', *SW*, XIII/XIV: 42).

¹¹⁸⁹ See exemplarily Zanucchi, 'Algabal', p. 68.

¹¹⁹⁰ The artificial elements of Algabal's underground realm '[h]aben noch nie einen frühling geschaut' ('Mein garten bedarf nicht luft und nicht wärme', II: 63). Manfred Riedel (*Im Zwiegespräch mit Nietzsche und Goethe: Weimarische Klassik und klassische Moderne* (Mohr Siebeck, 2009), p. 155) points out that springtime is lacking in both *Algabal* and *Das Jahr der Seele*.

Seele: 'Wenn man aber von einer psychologischen Lyrik sprechen kann, so ist sicher das Jahr der Seele dafür beispielhaft in der deutschen Literatur'.¹¹⁹¹ The imagery of the precious stone is for George a symptom and the poetry ultimately a sinthome within the context of this self-analysis. As a symptom it recurs throughout his work as a nagging reminder of the *objet petit a* driving his poetic desire but at which he can never arrive. It is an element of fantasy associated with the fullness and mastery of his childhood 'reiche' where, like Adam, he gives names to things.¹¹⁹² Here the oeuvre manifests as his final diamond, his sinthome.

The ritual's romantic otherness is medievalised or made into a signifier of pastness (the aura of a bygone world of ceremonial fullness). The rock in *Das Jahr der Seele* is for another time and place, a bygone future where such rocks will have been successfully received. George is perhaps close here to Lacan's idea of 'anticipated certainty', when he declares in *Der Siebente Ring*: 'Ihr sehet wechsel · doch ich tat das gleiche' (VI/VII: 7).¹¹⁹³ With the diamond embodying the fantasy of what is 'in him more than him', it also embodies the complex temporality of his oeuvre.¹¹⁹⁴ The Georgean speaker is in the process of becoming the herald of the

¹¹⁹¹ David, *Stefan George*, p. 160.

¹¹⁹² 'In einem seltnen reiche ernst und einsam
 Erfand er für die dinge eigne namen –
 Die hier erdonnerten von ungeheuern
 Befehlen oder lispelten wie bitten ·
 Die wie Paktolen in rubinenfeuern
 Und bald wie linde frühlingssäbäcke glitten ·'

(IV: 51). For the reference to the speaker as a 'second Adam' Waters, 'Stefan George's Poetics', p. 37. On fantasy as supporting the 'imaginary fixation on the past' see Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, p. 23.

¹¹⁹³ Cf. Lacan's 'Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty' in *Écrits*, pp. 161-175/197-214.

¹¹⁹⁴ Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, chapter 20, "In You More Than You", pp. 263-76. For Lacan what is 'more than us' within ourselves is the *désir de l'Autre*, or *objet petit a*, the object cause of desire that 'fills the gap constituted by the inaugural division of the subject' (p. 270). The *a* is the irritant in the subject, the nothingness that spurs desire as a leftover of need which has been satisfied by demand (Evans, *Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, pp. 35-6; Žižek, *Sublime Object*, pp. 82-86; Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, p. 10). As Derek Hook explains: 'This realization of the subject—the grasping of a shifting Otherness to their

‘Vorspiel’'s angel and the Dantean prophet of Maximin.¹¹⁹⁵ The precious stones that punctuate his oeuvre are traces of an unfulfillable desire, leading in the end to the kind of ‘traurig’, melancholy poetics of ‘Das Wort’, where the poetic jewel slips through his fingers (ix: 107), resigning himself to the limits of language, where ‘kein ding sei wo das wort gebricht’.¹¹⁹⁶ George’s triple temporality here – the diamonds of his past, the diamond he has become for the unimpressed *Du*, and the ‘kleinod’ he will have lost by the end (ix: 107) – from the point of view of the *Gesamtausgabe*, illustrates what Lacan puts as follows:

What I seek in speech is a response from the other. What constitutes me as a subject is my question. In order to be recognized by the other, I proffer what was only in view of what will be. In order to find him, I call him by a name that he must assume or refuse in order to answer me. I identify myself in language, but only by losing myself in it as an object. What is realized in my history is neither the past definite as what was, since it is no more, nor even the perfect as what has been in what I am, but the future anterior as what I will have been, given what I am in the process of becoming.¹¹⁹⁷

subjectivity that exceeds their ego’s sense of itself—pertains to the different times of the subject. It pertains to the temporality of the subject as he or she is located in the past, in the present, and in the future’, Hook, ‘On the Role of Speech in Psychoanalysis: Revisiting Lacan’s “Function and Field”’, p. 866. For the *sinthome* as ‘the ultimate support of the subject’s consistency [...] the point marking the dimension of “what is in the subject more than himself”’ cf. Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (The MIT Press, 1991), p. 132.

¹¹⁹⁵ And in a time where ‘die wahren edelsteine’ (xvii: 62) are wantonly discarded by the masses of modernity. Dante’s metaphor for the moon as ‘l’eterna margarita’ is translated by George with his image of the ‘diamant, and of ‘des ewigen edelsteines’ (*Par.* II: 34; x/xi: 111). Indeed, that Dante’s lunar realm is translated as a ‘diamant’ casts a shadow on the poet’s ‘demanten’ from *Das Jahr der Seele*, for the moon, the lowest of the blessed heavens, governs the sublunary world of change and inconstancy, where the souls of the inconstant appear to the pilgrim.

¹¹⁹⁶ For this reading of ‘Das Wort’ as melancholy resignation see chapter 4 (‘The Healing of Narcissus’) of Morgan’s *The Homosexual Imaginary*, pp. 147ff.

¹¹⁹⁷ Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 247/300.

Donald E. Hall identifies here the ‘tautological’ aspect of subjectivity: ‘We create our groundings for action, which we need then to consider authentic’.¹¹⁹⁸ The ground, or authenticity, comes from the future anterior, but by dint of being futural, it is one of the three temporalities that Hook reads as caused by the subject’s inner ‘Otherness’, forcing the subject to ‘assume the contingencies’ (foregoing necessity) of each temporality.¹¹⁹⁹ What George-poet was, and has been (qua George-pilgrim) and *is*, is thereby positioned retroactively ‘in its relation to a future’¹²⁰⁰ which while driven by an awareness of temporality and its inherent otherness, is itself bounded in the ‘Werkpolitik’ of his authorial hand, already secured by *Der Teppich des Lebens* that resolves the deadlock of *Das Jahr der Seele* with its angelic apparition.¹²⁰¹

The speaker of the present poem is not yet out of this deadlock: beginning in a narrative past (‘Ich trat’), it extends into a present (‘Du aber weisst nights’) which then ends in a subjective standstill represented by the final verb’s lingering subjunctive form: ‘Du fassest fragend kalt und unentschlossen’. If taken as *Konjunktiv I*, it steers the poem into irreality and subjective ideality, for is it not in

¹¹⁹⁸ Donald E. Hall, *Subjectivity* (Routledge, 2004), p. 82.

¹¹⁹⁹ Hook, ‘On the Role of Speech in Psychoanalysis: Revisiting Lacan’s “Function and Field”’, p. 867. This temporal contortion is not unusual in Lacan, for the meaning of a symptom, as Žižek explains, also comes from the future. See Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 158 for the ‘attempt to “unfold” the symptom, to “redeem” - that is, realize in the Symbolic - these past failed attempts which “will have been” only through their repetition, at which point they become retroactively what they already were’. Žižek here cites Lacan, *Freud’s Papers on Technique* [Seminar I], p. 159: ‘what we see in the return of the repressed is the effaced signal of something which only takes on its value in the future, through its symbolic realization, its integration into the history of the subject’ (Žižek, p. 158). Compare, furthermore, Žižek’s discussion of ‘very founding gesture of consciousness’ in *The Indivisible Remainder*, which is an unconscious creation of one’s past, ‘the act of decision by means of which I “choose myself”’ (p. 33).

¹²⁰⁰ Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 249/302.

¹²⁰¹ I borrow the term deadlock from Žižek, who uses it to characterise both Schelling’s and God’s efforts. Cf. *The Indivisible Remainder*, p. 14, where God’s act of beginning is a resolving of his prior ‘deadlock, the vicious cycle, of empty and confused ruminations’, via the Word.

his interest qua gay poet that she fail to accept the gift?¹²⁰² More likely is that George was utilising an archaic verbal form for the purpose of meter and syllable count, but his preference for subjunctive forms should perhaps not be totally discounted here.¹²⁰³ At any rate, the time of the suspended present lingers indefinitely in this final phrasing.

The gift occasions a question ('fragend') which is presupposed by him: 'Du fassest', the subjunctive form (if we take that interpretation) already supplying his own subjective answer to the gift. After the failed gift, the lyric subject spends time ruminating and pondering about the sustainability of the relationship. '[S]chweigsam in das knie gesunken', he wonders whether she will ever wake up, and attempts to snap her 'aus ihrer Starrheit' ('Ob jemals du erwachen wirst? erwache!' IV:29).¹²⁰⁴ In his desperation he prays to the Virgin, 'dass – grosse mutter und betrübte! | In dieser seele wieder trost entspriesse' (IV: 26). The following poem has him accepting his fated, cold, winterly loneliness: 'Muss ich erkennen mit ergebnem bängen | Das herbe schicksal winterlichen fundes' (IV: 30). This winter solitude, finally, reaches his flowers, the death of which in the following poem causes more introspective self-questioning. The poem suggests a parallel between the wilting flower's hanging head ('Und hängt das haupt als ob sie langsam sterbe', IV: 31) and that of the feminine other in 'Ich lehre dich den sanften reiz des zimmers' ('Dein auge hängt noch immer an der leere · | Dein schatten kreuzt des teppichs selbe ranken', IV: 29). He asks himself: 'Was soll sie [the flower – JW] nur zur

¹²⁰² That like Hamlet's, in Azari's reading, his 'desire is best defined by Gertrude's refusal of his demand. The desire of the subject always, at the last minute, wants the Other to refuse his demand, for desire is always for something else', Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, p. 94.

¹²⁰³ 'fassest' is listed as an example of verbs with 'connecting vowel[s]' in C.H.G. Brandt's *A Grammar of the German Language for High Schools and Colleges*, 4th ed. (Allyn and Bacon, 1888), p. 36. Cf. Michels, *Die Dante-Übertragungen Stefan Georges*, p. 153 for the subjunctive as a salient aspect of George's Dante translations, and Arrighetti, 'Dante. Übertragungen', p. 228, for his use of 'verlegene Konjunktive'.

¹²⁰⁴ Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 116.

bitternis mir taugen?' (IV: 31) and in the penultimate poem of 'Waller im Schnee', decides that she must be left behind: 'Mir däucht es dass ich morgen knospen finde · | Ins frühjahr darf ich dich nicht mit mir nehmen' (IV: 32).

As Morgan reads it, *Das Jahr der Seele* sees the Georgean *Ich* discovering itself as homosexual.¹²⁰⁵ This self finds immediate idealisation and positive representation in the parallel volume *Der Teppich des Lebens*.¹²⁰⁶ The 'Vorspiel' to that volume is an idealisation insofar as it stages an encounter with a specular image of the self – its ideal ego – in the form of the angel:

Und seine stimme fast der meinen glich

[...]

Und als ich sie zu heben mich gebückt

Da kniet auch ER ·

(V: 10)

¹²⁰⁵ Cf. Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, p. 80. Cf. p. 91: '*Das Jahr der Seele* is central to George's persona, since it marks the threshold point in the dynamic process of self-formation of the homosexual poet, throughout which the conflict rages between the social and the individual self'.

¹²⁰⁶ As scholarship has ascertained, George was composing poems for both *Das Jahr der Seele* and *Der Teppich des Lebens* throughout the 1890s, see e.g. David, *Stefan George*, pp. 132, 142. From a reception strategy angle this is part of a master-strategy of totalising control. Cf. Martus, *Werkpolitik*, p. 620: 'Wie kalkuliert George den Jahrhundertwechsel und die Werkmitte inszeniert, sieht man bereits daran, daß das Jahr der Seele und der Teppich des Lebens gleichzeitig entstehen, George aber schon bei den Vorabpublikationen die Gedichte der Sammlungen auseinanderhält (GW 5, 91f.)'. In the 'Anhang' to *Das Jahr der Seele*, Oelmann dates 'Ich trat vor dich' to potentially early 1895 (IV: 135), and likewise points out (V: 104) that the first poem of the 'Vorspiel' to *Der Teppich des Lebens* (then titled 'Der Besuch') was originally published in the same issue of *Die Blätter für die Kunst* alongside the poems of 'Waller im Schnee' from *Das Jahr der Seele*, to which 'Ich trat vor dich' belongs. The thematic consistencies of self-reflective angels (in 'Ich trat vor dich's third stanza: 'Von engeln die sich in den nischen sammeln | Und sich bespiegeln am kristallinen lüster ·' IV: 28) and the angel as a reflection of the *Ich* in the 'Vorspiel' is noteworthy in this regard. As Ockenden ('Voyaging with a Concordance', p. 55) points out, George had early on theorised *Der Teppich des Lebens* as a potential redemptive answer to *Das Jahr der Seele*, as expressed in a letter to Hofmannsthal replying to the latter's praise of 'Der Besuch': 'das von Ihnen einst so schön belobte gedicht "der besuch" ist übrigens kein teil der sammlung sondern einer folgenden die sich aus der oft schmerzlichen beklemmung des seelenjahres bald erheben möge' (George/Hofmannsthal, *Briefwechsel*, p. 124, cited by Ockenden, *ibid.*).

that guarantees a 'narcissistic satisfaction' on the imaginary plane, in 'the exchange that takes place between the subject's image and the image of the other in so far as it is libidinalised, narcissised, in the imaginary situation'.¹²⁰⁷ The object of desire (the image of masculinity) is idealised and, rather than being sublimated whereby the erotic element would be diminished, is raised to a higher level in his angelic doppelgänger that not only receives his affection ('– Versprechen einer neuen morgenblut – | Um dich! mit meiner stirn an deiner brust ..') but implicitly demands it in a biblical allusion that sets him up in analogy to Christ, the original Master:

Und mit dem langen schwermutblick der jenen

Des Meisters an dem see der heimat glich

Als er die jünger fragte: liebt ihr mich?

(v: 13)¹²⁰⁸

¹²⁰⁷ For the difference between idealisation and sublimation, see Lacan, *Freud's Papers on Technique*, p. 134.

¹²⁰⁸ The reference, as the 'Anhang' in *SW*, v: 105 points out, is to John 21.15. For the difference between sublimation and idealisation see Sigmund Freud, 'Zur Einführung des Narzißmus' (1914): 'Die Sublimierung ist ein Prozeß an der Objektlibido und besteht darin, daß sich der Trieb auf ein anderes, von der sexuellen Befriedigung entferntes Ziel wirft; der Akzent ruht dabei auf der Ablenkung vom Sexuellen. Die Idealisierung ist ein Vorgang mit dem Objekt, durch welchen dieses ohne Änderung seiner Natur vergrößert und psychisch erhöht wird. Die Idealisierung ist sowohl auf dem Gebiete der Ichlibido wie auch der Objektlibido möglich', cited from *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 10, *Werke aus den Jahren 1913-1917* (Imago Publishing, 1949), p. 161. Freud's text and this passage are discussed in Lacan, *Seminar I. Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953-1954*, p. 134. David, *Stefan George*, p. 190 argues that the angel, indeed resembling the muse of 'Weihe', has no systematic erotic function in the 'Vorspiel', that there is no hint of the 'Erosmythologie' that will define *Der Stern des Bundes*. Martus, *Werkpolitik*, p. 621 argues that the relationship between *Ich* and his angel is eroticised precisely via this allusion to the scene of the muse at the oeuvre's grand opening: 'Sollten die Rosen bis zum Schluß des Gedichts "um" das "kinn" des Engels gruppiert sein, dann dürften wir hier einen gelungenen Musenkuß oder sogar eine symbiotische Verschmelzung vorfinden, auch wenn sich bereits im folgenden Gedicht das amouröse Verhältnis in ein agonales auflöst und zu einer Szene der gewaltsamen Ermächtigung wird'.

In the second poem of *Das Jahr der Seele*, the speaker recalls how in his youthful Petrarchan passivity he had submitted to the calls that demanded him to search for 'HER':

Ihr rufe junger jahre die befahlen
Nach IHR zu suchen unter diesen zweigen:
Ich muss vor euch die stirn verneinend neigen ·
Denn meine liebe schläft im land der strahlen.

Doch schickt ihr SIE mir wieder die im brennen
Des sommers und im flattern der Eroten
Sich als geleit mir schüchtern dargeboten
Ich will sie diesmal freudig anerkennen.

Die reifen trauben gären in den bütten ·
Doch will ich alles was an edlen trieben
Und schöner saat vom sommer mir geblieben
Aus vollen händen vor ihr niederschütten.

(IV: 13)

This 'befahlen', the *Befehl* of the Big Other of the heteronormative nineteenth century and of the authority of Petrarchistic literary history, causes a reflection in the subject in which, as Morgan reads it, 'George appears to be on the verge of

announcing his homosexual object orientation'.¹²⁰⁹ In the following stanza, the lyric *Ich* admits that should 'they' (his 'rufe') send 'SIE' back to him again, attenuated now by the 'brennen | Des sommers' and the 'flattern der Erogen' (a significant choice of capitalisation), he would now happily accept 'her' (l. 8) But who is 'SIE'?¹²¹⁰ In the poem's second line, where 'she' is inflected in 'nach IHR', one imagines that it is a feminine figure. This hypothetical feminine figure must be negated as the switch to present tense in line three tells us, but in the following stanza he comes to accept her? But what has changed? Lacan, in his discussion of Freud's paper *Die Verneinung*, points out that before negation can take place a 'primal *Bejahung*' occurs, the existence of which can then either be affirmed or denied.¹²¹¹ If denied, it is repressed, not admitted into the Symbolic (i.e. its symbolisation is rejected). In Freud's terms, what is repressed (one could reasonably think of George's *Prinz Indra* here as the repressed acknowledgement of male-male desire) in this primal *Bejahung* can return to consciousness only

¹²⁰⁹ Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, p. 83. Morgan, as I have done in this analysis, sees *Das Jahr der Seele* as 'beg[inning] with the combination of scepticism towards, and acceptance of, the received world' (p. 110). As in the current analysis and dramatised by the diamond poem, that acceptance of the 'received world' is not without its problems. Morgan also identifies 'George's suffering' as 'the result of prohibition of that which he desires, and the gloomy service which renders his life miserable is the pretence of heterosexuality' (p. 95).

¹²¹⁰ Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, perceptively highlights the 'use of small capitals in the typeface' as a 'stilted expression' of the 'poet's discomfort' (p. 83). Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 132, examines Kurt Hildebrandt's claim (*Das Werk Stefan Georges* (Dr Ernst Hauswedell & Co., 1960), p. 95) that the 'she' of the poem refers to the 'her' of *Die Fibel's* opening poem ('Ich wandelte', l: 13) and thus, Shen extrapolates, obliquely to Petrarch's Laura.

¹²¹¹ Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 322/386. Cf. Evans, *Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, p. 18. This might seem in tension with our Schellingian understanding of beginnings as always resting upon a negation. The contradiction might be resolved if we consider that elsewhere Schelling takes care to distinguish that even the primal negative is not pure nothing but is posited rather as nothing: 'Das Subjekt, inwiefern es noch in seiner reinen Substantialität gedacht wird, insofern ist es noch frei von allem Sein, und obgleich *nicht* nichts, doch *als* nichts. Nicht nichts, weil doch Subjekt, *als* nichts, weil nicht Objekt, weil nicht im gegenständlichen Sein seiend. Aber es kann in dieser Abstraktion nicht bleiben, es ist ihm gleichsam natürlich, sich selbst *als* Etwas und demnach als Objekt zu wollen' (Schelling, 'Die Naturphilosophie' from his lecture series *Zur Geschichte der neueren Philosophie: Münchner Vorlesungen*, SW, I, 10, 99).

through a negation (*Verneinung*) of that repression.¹²¹² George's poem undertakes a subtle transformation of the symbolically demanded heteronormative relationship ('nach IHR'), via negation, into a return of what was originally repressed: desire for man. The only way to admit this laborious, tortured reading is to acknowledge that the feminine pronouns occupying either side of the key term 'liebe' (l. 4) are modified, bidirectionally, by that very term and by the temporality of *Das Jahr der Seele* which has return inscribed in its cyclical, seasonal clock. Love was always for man, but this (*Bejahung*) had to be repressed and, in order to be re-admitted, could only occur via negation of that repression through the negation of heterosexual love. In a sort of Hegelian way, one returns to the original *Bejahung* via a negation of the negation, whereby a 'certain change of perspective', as Žižek explains, towards the original negativity reveals it to be a positive ground of identity, i.e. the very negativity 'menacing our identity, is simultaneously a positive condition of it'.¹²¹³ The heteronormative literary love was the antithesis of the originally homoerotic one, and by negating this the lyric speaker enables himself to return to affirming the other, to begin again upon a negation. The repressed (homoerotic) love 'schläft im land der strahlen' (l. 4), in the southern summer's sun of an unconscious future. In the 'Sieg des Sommers', male intimacy indeed is characterised by the language of heat, as its fourth poem demonstrates.¹²¹⁴ In

¹²¹² Sigmund Freud, 'Die Verneinung', in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 14 (Imago Publishing Co., Ltd., 1955), p. 12: 'Ein verdrängter Vorstellungs- oder Gedankeninhalt kann also zum Bewußtsein durchdringen, unter der Bedingung, daß er sich verneinen läßt. Die Verneinung ist eine Art, das Verdrängte zur Kenntnis zu nehmen, eigentlich schon eine Aufhebung der Verdrängung, aber freilich keine Annahme des Verdrängten'.

¹²¹³ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 199.

¹²¹⁴ And the language of conversion: 'Und alle frage sei der lippe eitel | Die *brennend* einer fremden *sich bekennt!*' (iv: 39, italics added). The poem ends on a hopeful note: 'Wenn eins des andren heisses leben trinkt'. Summer and sunshine constitute 'one of the tropes of utopian homosexual subjectivity in George's work', as Morgan writes about the 'reich der sonne' of a later poem in *Das Jahr der Seele* (*The Homosexual Imaginary*, p. 83). Cf. Keilson-Lauritz, *Von der Liebe die Freundschaft heißt*, pp. 103-05 for the topos of heat (not exclusively in the homoerotic context but

stanza two the *Ich* contends that he can now accept this female companion if transformed ‘im brennen | Des sommers und im flattern der Erogen’ (ll. 5-6). The Cupids, or *Erogen*, is a hapax in George’s own poetry.¹²¹⁵ It masculinises love insofar as the tradition presents the *Erogen* as males, and having gone through the summer’s ring of fire it alludes to the fact that in *Jahr der Seele* it is in the ‘Sieg des Sommers’ cycle in which male companionship (what the second poem refers to as ‘geleit’, l. 7) was found, or rather presented itself (‘sich als geleit [i.e. ‘im brennen | Des sommers] mir schüchtern dargeboten’). The *Ich*’s desire to shower the other with ‘alles was an edlen trieben | Und schöner saat vom sommer mir geblieben’ (ll. 10-11) is a gesture that clearly parallels the scene of the first ‘Vorspiel’ poem with the angel (v: 10). Furthermore, in ‘Waller im Schnee’ the feminine other’s appearance is not quite as a ‘geleit’, but rather a ‘begleite’ (‘So bebend wähltest du mich zum begleite’, iv: 25), while in the mini ‘Jahr der Seele’ within the ‘Träurige Tänze’, the male companion is precisely ‘mein geleit’ (iv: 102), albeit it not ‘the one’.

‘Ihr rufe junger jahre’ operates on two temporal levels given by the ambiguity of its pronouns, and as such points both to an immanent reading from the narrative’s point of view and a transcendent reading from the volume’s perspective. On the one level its feminine pronouns conjure and introduce the feminine other who plays a role in the first two sub-cycles, while if considered from the point of view of the completed work it overrides these pronouns with the knowledge that the love that sleeps in summer was found, hence the *Ich*’s willingness to embrace

cf., esp. 105 n. 312 for the Grimm dictionary’s ‘homoerotische Konnotationen zu *brennen*’). Keilson-Lauritz likewise considers the hot summer as intimated in ‘Ihr rufe junger jahre’’s second stanza as a homoerotic one (pp. 35-37).

¹²¹⁵ Cf. Bock, *Wort-Konkordanz*, p. 129. They also occur in his translation of Swinburne’s *Sapphics*, xv: 35-37.

'her' (which now is overridden in the new perspective as referring specifically to 'liebe'): 'Ich will sie diesmal freudig anerkennen' (l. 8).

Fundamentally, the speaker's 'geleit' is ungendered, since the pronoun 'sie' is used throughout the poem in reference to 'meine liebe'. '[S]ie', in line eight, is not capitalised, compared to the 'IHR' in line two and the other 'SIE' in line five. All three pronouns seemingly refer to the noun 'liebe' in line four, but it is not clear what causes the change from capitalisation to non-capitalisation. If 'meine liebe' is indeed the truly homoerotic one that reveals itself throughout the collection, the shift from line five to line eight marks an ontological shift in the meaning of the pronoun 'sie'.¹²¹⁶ 'SIE' (l. 5) refers to 'meine liebe', but the capitalisation makes it suggestive of the 'IHR' (the Petrarchan Lady) of line two. 'SIE' then proceeds through the 'brennen | Des sommers' in lines five to seven, just as the volume itself proceeds through that summer to find a male companion. By the end of the stanza the tone has become concessive: 'Ich will sie diesmal freudig anerkennen'. 'sie' in the line eight now stands for the temporary feminine companion, the conventional Lady, who has been ontologically 'decapitalised', dethroned. '[L]iebe' then will be/has already been/will have already been re-discovered in the form of the male companion, who once more returns the *Ich* to his joy ('freudig'), joy that had been tainted at the end of 'Waller im Schnee' when his relationship to the feminine other comes to a wintry, frozen close in symbolic death and departure:

¹²¹⁶ Furthermore, given that the "Waller im Schnee" sub-cycle evokes this line in its opening poem further complicates the identity of the 'sie'. Faletti, *Die Jahreszeiten des Fin de siècle*, p. 107 similarly points out that the two opening poems are linked by the image of a dormant something. In the poem under consideration, it is 'meine liebe', while in the 'Waller im Schnee' poem it is 'eine junge hoffnung' (IV: 24) – another feminine pronoun referred to by 'sie'. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that in the opening poem of 'Sieg des Sommers', the new companion is marked predominantly by masculine nouns in his relation to the speaker: 'Du all die jahre hin mir glanz und glaube' (IV: 36).

Türm ich für erinnerungen
Spröder freuden die zersprungen
Und für dich den scheiterhaufen'
(IV: 33)

The Georgian 'öde' lurks within these 'spröder freuden', and this funereal mourning is quickly counterbalanced: 'Drüben an dem strand ein bruder | Winkt das frohe banner schwenkend'.¹²¹⁷

The 'bruder', throughout the sub-cycle, is characterised in a traditionally more masculine way than the companions of '*Nach der Lese*' and "Waller im Schnee". Here Barthes' insight into movement becomes relevant: 'Historically, the discourse of absence is carried by the Woman: Woman is sedentary, Man hunts, journeys; Woman is faithful (she waits), man is fickle (he sails away, he cruises)'.¹²¹⁸ The male other of the summer cycle is figured as an active poet-wanderer, a hunter, such as in 'Gemahnt dich noch das schöne bildnis dessen' (IV: 40). We are told he has an ability to commune with nature and befriend animals (40) and unlike Orpheus, does not need his poetry and music to do so. The swan's attraction towards him contrasts with the feminine other in '*Nach der Lese*' who can only watch the swans' departure from afar (IV: 16, a 'zentrifugale' movement of dispersal, as Faletti notes¹²¹⁹), and with the feminine other of 'Waller im Schnee', who is likewise stuck in a pensively static mood juxtaposed to the masculine, moving *Ich* (IV: 29). The male other is active and bound towards an envisioned

¹²¹⁷ A further parallel to the 'Vorspiel', where the angel's 'banner' is a unifying force, see V: 32.

¹²¹⁸ Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*, pp. 13-14. Barthes extrapolates different conclusions out of this premise, such as the passivised male subject in turn becoming feminised in his amorous standstill (p. 14).

¹²¹⁹ Faletti, *Die Jahreszeiten der Fin de siècle*, p. 94.

utopia ('Du willst mit mir ein reich der sonne stiften' IV: 38), unlike the figure of 'Waller im Schnee', who only leads the *Ich* 'zu den verwunschnen talen' (IV: 26).

The speaker of the poems is now in control of his steps, no longer with a lagging foot behind, and reaches the other shore, now presented as a return home (a nostalgic trope in George's oeuvre relating to pilgrimage) and a crossing back over a liminal no-man's land (a river, or a lake) to what is both familiar ('ein bruder' suggests family/familiarity, solidarity and security) but also new ('ein neues abenteuer' (IV: 36).

It is with this male companion that he rediscovers his joy in 'Sieg des Sommers': 'Du willst mit mir ein reich der sonne stiften | Darinnen uns allein die freude ziere .' (IV: 38). The 'reich' is a loaded word for George. It is the 'reich' of childhood creativity ('In einem seltnen reiche ernst und einsam', IV: 51) as well as the eventual 'reich des Geistes: abglanz | Meines reiches' at the summit of his cult the *Stern* (VIII: 83). This companion, associated once more with the 'land der strahlen' ('reich der sonne') and 'milde feuer', is a singer poet, and he is linked in the first summer-poem to 'diesem laube' (IV: 36), suggestive of the laurel tree and contrasting with 'diesen zweigen' of literary history that the speaker found unconvincing in 'Ihr rufe junger jahre'.¹²²⁰ He sends all woes away with his song: 'Und wort und lied ersinnst du dass gefüge | Die klagen flattern in die höchsten äste'. The verb 'flattern', along with the sun imagery, re-evokes 'Ihr rufe junger jahre', where *this time* ('diesmal'), in round two, in new-game-plus, so to speak, the lyric *Ich* can accept with joy the companion offered, knowing that the eventual negation of one form of that 'geleit' leads to its re-emergence and incorporation in

¹²²⁰ One notes in passing that this reading would link the feminine with multiplicity ('diesen zweigen') and the masculine with unity and singularity (the collective noun 'laube'), a chauvinist trope in line with George's general views.

its more desired form later, at the price – the sacrifice (wherefore else the pyre?) – of the other.¹²²¹ We have here another time, a *once more*, or a *this time* ('diesmal') not subject to the ignorance of contingencies; a past is implied by dint of there being even the possibility of a *this* time. In Greene's language, one finds here the 'more comprehensive unity of a temporal continuum', that is, the narrative from 'Nach der Lese' to 'Sieg des Sommers' is overwritten by a cyclical reading that stresses a return to beginnings with knowledge from the future.¹²²²

The front cover of *Das Jahr der Seele*'s original edition, depicting an angel sitting at an organ and looking pensively downwards at the keys, not only links this volume to the thematics of *Der Teppich des Lebens*' own angel-aparition, but suggests that, from the outset, the events depicted are under the futural guarantee of this transcendent figure. *Das Jahr der Seele*'s temporal anxiety of the 'self in the labyrinth of time' to borrow Barolini's metaphor for Petrarch, is sublated by this extratextual element that preserves it while simultaneously negating it under the sign of the angel's future revelation, or of 'what will have been', in Lacan's formulation.¹²²³ Thus, the angel is the future figure that interprets retroactively the

¹²²¹ The talk here of 'new-game plus', and the idea of George's circular loop developed in the present reading, were perhaps unconsciously inspired (although developed by drawing predominantly on cited scholarship about Petrarch's calendar) by various fan theories surrounding the narrative of Bloober Team's *Silent Hill 2* remake (Konami, 2024 [Windows, Playstation, Xbox Series X/S]), a game that otherwise made a lasting impression on this student (an overview is given by George Foster, 'Silent Hill 2 Fan Finds Easter Egg That Supports Remake's Time Loop Theory', TheGamer (23 Nov, 2024), <https://www.thegamer.com/silent-hill-2-remake-fans-players-sleuths-find-morse-code-tv-set-time-loop-easter-egg-supported/> (accessed 21/04/2026)). The worlds of *Silent Hill 2* and George's *Jahr* have very little in common, although both protagonists, in very, very different ways, are working through the psychological labyrinths of their sexualities, with differing strains and degrees of misogyny driving both. The talk of rotting walls above is perhaps another echo of *Silent Hill*'s influence on the brain of this student, wandering in the fog of his readings.

¹²²² Greene, *Post-Petrarchism*, p. 125, discussing Edward Taylor's *Preparatory Meditations*, writes: 'While there are many lyric sequences that draw cyclical elements into the more comprehensive unity of a temporal continuum, including the *Canzoniere*, there are few that convey a sense of continual return as fully as the *Meditations*'.

¹²²³ Similarly, Martus, *Werkpolitik*, p. 606 on George's strategies behind this: 'Eben diese methodische Entscheidung, die Reflexion über den Stellenwert des Gedichts im Werk, wird von George in besonderer Weise provoziert. Selbst wenn die Bezüge also in die Irre führen, sind sie

symptoms of malaise plaguing the Georgian subject in its Petrarchan mode of longing and unrest. As the paratextual, static image that governs the opening of the book, the angel is an emblem of time's suspension.¹²²⁴ An image from the future that will have been, its pictorial stasis blocks the slippage of time, the angel's calmly focused countenance offers an anti-melancholic imagery, sitting amid blossoming foliage, the temporality of decay (autumn's losses from 'diesen glanzerfüllten sterbewochen', IV: 14) is overridden by the fullness of its image in the presence of the angel: 'Und raum und dasein bleiben nur im bilde' (II: 10), as 'Weihe' had it. It is the unifying, pictorial antithesis to the volume's Petrarchan concerns with time, fragmentation, and language.¹²²⁵ In the *Gesamtausgabe* the image is no longer provided – it is no longer needed in the volume's final resting place alongside its immediate successor *Der Teppich des Lebens*.

The speaker in 'Ich trat vor dich' looks to be occupying the haughty, condescending position of the Master whose discourse delimits and organises reality for other subjects, asserting where value is and where it ought to be found (in the associated rituals of old) and demanding the other to acknowledge his exquisite symbolic reality. As Ragland writes:

The master's grammatical tone is that of the imperative. In his own eyes he is the perfect individual, an autonomous, whole subject one might liken to God. What the master fails to see, however, is that one can only command

noch immer Teil einer Werkpolitik, die an einzelnen Werkstellen die Erinnerung an das aufruft, was an anderen Stellen im Werk bereits passiert ist, oder die das Interesse auf das hin spannt, was künftig im Werk zu lesen sein wird'. The angel is visible online at: https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN82638840X&PHYSID=PHYS_0009&DMDID=12/10/2024 (accessed 12/10/2024). Barolini, 'The Self in the Labyrinth of Time'.

¹²²⁴ An example of what Margherita Versari calls his 'emblem contro il tempo'. See Versari, *Il tempo nella poesia di Stefan George*, p. 29.

¹²²⁵ Exemplary here are two poems from the 'Traurige Tänze' subcycle: 'Da kaum noch sand im stundenglase läuft' (IV: 95) and 'Da vieles wankt und blasst und sinkt und splittert' (IV: 111).

another by putting that other to work to validate him (or her). The master's wish is to have himself validated as a SUBJECT OF NARCISSISM. [...] The master is his own slave. He puts the other to work in order to recuperate his own enjoyment as surplus value. [...] The master refuses the castration that is the inheritance of every human subject.¹²²⁶

As we have seen in his diamond, George refuses to castrate himself, and in *Der Teppich des Lebens*, the appearance of the angel enables the elevation of the ideal ego into a communal law.¹²²⁷ The *Ich* is thereby elevated to a universality; its law a categorical imperative.

With *Das Jahr der Seele's Ich* and *Du* as competing sides in the psychomachia of the same split subject, however, the perspective can shift. *Ich*, viewed from the macrostructural level, also occupies the hysteric's discourse, where 'the split subject occupies the dominant position and addresses S₁, calling it into question' by providing it with a sign that it cannot interpret.¹²²⁸ If *Du* is now seen as the Master, representative of the nineteenth century Symbolic Order, it is

¹²²⁶ Ragland, 'The Discourse of the Master', p. 134. Cf. all the imperatives of '[k]omm in den totesagten park und schau' (IV: 12). Indeed, Barthes writes of the gift of writing as 'an assertion of mastery, of power, of pleasure, of solitude' and as the gift as something that 'smothers the other'. *A Lover's Discourse*, pp. 78-79. In his various anaphoric repetitions regarding all those things about which the *Du* knows nothing, Kristeva's point that 'Negation in judgement, [...] puts the subject in a position of *mastery* over the statement as a structured whole', perhaps also rings through. See Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. by Margaret Waller with an Introduction by Leon S. Roudiez (Columbia University Press, 2024), p. 122.

¹²²⁷ Cf. Martus, *Werkpolitik*, p. 621: 'Mit den Direktiven des "schöne[n] leben[s]" unterstellt George sein Werk einer Berufung, die, so die *opinio communis* der Forschung, auf die Ausbildung des George-Kreises im engeren Sinn zielt – nicht zufällig findet sich genau in der Mitte des Gedichtbandes das Porträt des Jüngers (GW 5, 47)'. On the development of George's self-elevation to the *Meister* in the years leading up to 1900 cf. David, *Stefan George*, pp. 130-31 (the chapter sub-titled 'Weiterentwicklung der Lehre').

¹²²⁸ Bruce Fink, 'The Master Signifier and the Four Discourses', in *Key Concepts of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, ed. by Dany Nobus (Other Press, 1999), pp. 29-47 (p. 34). Here S₁ refers to Lacan's notion of the master's discourse, where S means (master) signifier, that is, a signifier that postures fantastically as containing an all-encompassing totality of meaning that simultaneously, as Žižek elaborates, causes the 'interpellation of individuals [...] into subjects (*The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 112) via an appellation with master signifiers such as 'Communism', 'God', 'Freedom', 'America' (Žižek's examples, *ibid.*) which simultaneously signify everything and nothing.

exposed by *Ich* as lacking knowledge (in Lacan's scheme S_2) and lacking with respect to 'der einen Fernen' (IV: 14) from whom it is presently 'abgesetzt' as Osthoff and Pieger comment.¹²²⁹ Alternatively, *Du* from another perspective takes on the hysteric's discourse. Your diamond, so what? Asks the hysteric other, causing the Algalabian master, 'obsessive subject' to unravel in his anaphoric repetitions.¹²³⁰

Given that, officially, the volume's *Ich* and *Du* are two sides of the 'selbe seele' (IV: 7), if we extract this appeal to the *Du* from the microstructure of the poem and take it as *in nuce* representative of the self-questioning of *Das Jahr der Seele*, the discourse shifts to that of the analyst.

$$\frac{a}{S_2} \longrightarrow \frac{\$}{S_1}$$

Driving poetic creativity in the analyst's – here the poet's – discourse is *a*, 'pure desirousness (pure desiring subject)', as Fink explains.¹²³¹ The analyst is fuelled by S_2 , the search for knowledge, and addresses the hysteric, barred subject $\$$ in order to produce a new master signifier that must be '[brought] into relation with other signifiers' in the analysand's subjective history. The task of analysis is to 'dialectize the master signifiers', in Fink's words.¹²³² George qua poet-analyst

¹²²⁹ Osthoff and Pieger, 'Gegen Thomas Karlaufs George-Bild', p. 470. On the four discourses and knowledge see Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary*, p. 46 and Lacan, *Encore*, pp. 16-17. Knowledge here refers to institutionalised forms of discourse (science, the authority of knowledge at the university, etc., cf. Fink, 'The Master Signifier and the Four Discourses', p. 33 and Ragland, 'The Discourse of the Master', pp. 135-36).

¹²³⁰ Fink, 'The Master Signifier and the Four Discourses', p. 38 uses the obsessive subject as an example: the analyst does not care about the accuracies or inaccuracies of the obsessive's chosen theme (in Fink's example, Dostoevsky's poetics), but rather on the insistence with which the obsessive asserts this topic, that is, the significance of a given obsession in the analysand's psychological world.

¹²³¹ Fink, 'The Master Signifier and the Four Discourses', p. 37.

¹²³² *Ibid.*

brings his speaker to “‘cough[] up’ a master signifier”,¹²³³ and by ‘dialectising’ that poetic diamond only into a relation with all the other diamonds in his oeuvre (and thus not with knowledge, or S_2 , conceived more generally), he maps it onto his emergence as the poet Master.¹²³⁴ His dialogue with himself as *Ich* and with himself as *Du* is not a living dialogue with another person; it is circuitous and in service to a reformulation of himself in the position of the Master. The narcissistic structure of such self-analysis potentially becomes a dead end, given that transference cannot occur and the symptom worked through.¹²³⁵

In this sense, *Das Jahr der Seele* presents a refusal to internalise the mastery of the Big Other’s discourse, exploring an emerging desire against the backdrop of long-established literary and socio-cultural roles. It marks a desire on the poet’s part to privilege the Imaginary over the Symbolic, the *i(o)* over the *I(O)*.¹²³⁶ Although this new shining mineralised phallus provokes only a cold, interrogative response from the other (as Big Other), her disavowal of it allows the speaker to keep it for himself, to continue as the ‘Pilger mit der hand am stabe’ (II: 28) in search of a potential future companion that would recognise its imaginary

¹²³³ Ibid.

¹²³⁴ This is key, for as Fink, ‘The Master Signifier and the Four Discourses’, p. 39 explains, ‘the analyst, by pointing to the fact that the analysand is not the master of his or her own discourse, instates the analysand as divided between conscious speaking subject and some other (subject) speaking at the same time through the same mouthpiece, as agent of a discourse wherein the S_1 s produced in the course of analysis are interrogated and made to yield their links with S_2 (as in the hysteric’s discourse)’. Thus, the point of analysis is to relate our master signifiers to other knowledge, not to enshrine them as universal terms of the world (like George’s poetic kingdom).

¹²³⁵ On this see Fink, ‘The Master Signifier and the Four Discourses’, pp. 41-42: ‘To work through [‘psychical conflicts’] means not that they are intellectually viewed and “processed,” but rather that the internal libidinal conflict which is holding a symptomatic relationship to someone in place must be allowed to repeat itself in the relationship with the analyst and play itself out. If verbalization (putting things into words) is the only technique allowed the analysand, a true separation from the analyst and from analysis never occurs. Projection must be allowed to go so far as to bring out all the essential aspects of a conflict-ridden relationship, all the relevant recollections and dynamics, and the full strength of the positive/negative affect. It should be recalled that one of the earliest lessons of Freud and Breuer’s *Studies on Hysteria* was that verbalizing traumatic events without reliving the accompanying affect left symptoms intact’.

¹²³⁶ *i(o)* is the subject’s identification with his mirror image (imaginary other, ideal ego), *I(O)* is his identification with some aspect of the Big Other/Symbolic Order, his ego ideal. Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, pp. 116, 119.

value, amounting to a recognition of the Georgean self's fantasy *imago* as Master and entertaining his search for the jouissance of poetic 'satisfaction'.¹²³⁷

By now it is apparent how George qua poet makes use of poetic and narrative techniques to allow a George-narrator to recount the emergence of a subject in the form of the George-pilgrim throughout his works. Where the George-pilgrim remains troubled in the move from the imaginary realm of his poetic self-idealizations (his world of '[b]ild aus dir und mir im traume' VI/VII: 109) to the Symbolic dominated by the Big Other, exhibiting these tensions that cause him to shift awkwardly back and forth from heterosexual romance, between the Symbolic Order of the social world and the Imaginary of the poet's ideal ego, the narrative organisation of the collection by George-poet signals retrospectively a successful move from the anxieties of the Imaginary to mastery in the realm of the Big Other. George-poet is far beyond his George-pilgrim in wielding the poetic Word; it no longer stands in for a symbolic lack but rather represents the totality of George's poetic world qua master discourse in itself, assuming the image of fullness in its final resting place within the final edition of the works.¹²³⁸

Consequently, the relationship of *Ich* and *Du* is mediated and limited by language: he will learn 'sanfte worte' for her and praise her (IV: 14), she echoes his 'klugen silben' during their walks around the 'stillen teich' (16) and he eventually

¹²³⁷ Fink, *Lacan to the Letter*, p. 137 (for the talk of 'satisfaction'). The phallic innuendo here is not unwarranted: Barthes, in rather brute phrasing in *A Lover's Discourse*, likewise connects the production and giving of an amorous gift with the production/possession of a phallic signifier: 'The amorous gift is a solemn one; swept away by the devouring metonymy which governs the life of the imagination, I transfer myself inside it altogether. By this object, I give you my All, I touch you with my phallus; it is for this reason that I am mad with excitement, that I rush from shop to shop, stubbornly tracking down the "right" fetish, the brilliant, successful fetish which will perfectly suit your desire' (p. 75). This is the kernel of George's rock – it is his 'all' insofar as it is absolute and therefore impenetrable, total and, in a way, meaningless.

¹²³⁸ I am here borrowing the terminology that has become standard in Dante scholarship to refer to the three aspects of his narrative ('Dante-pilgrim', 'Dante-author' etc.). See exemplarily Freccero, *The Poetics of Conversion*, p. 265.

writes her a letter declaring the end of their relationship (21). This autumnal muse, in Faletti's reading, fails to partake 'an seiner Suche nach Inspiration', thus the 'klugen silben' that she is presented as repeating are useless to him - there is no inspiring muse here, but rather an Echo-figure who has no original voice of her own. But if they are the same soul, and she is trying to get to the bottom of him ('ergründen', 16) in this aesthetic 'Selbstanalyse', it is construed as ineffective.¹²³⁹ *Ich* might find his own syllables clever, but his frame of reference is himself, the *Du*. Faletti links this poem to 'Ich trat vor dich' via the image of the 'stumme träne' which 'das Symbol des Diamanten vorweg[nimmt]'.¹²⁴⁰ Not only does the tear imagery link both poems, so too does the shift in the lyric speaker back into the inquisitive role and guardian of secrets, the poem's 'defensive texturing', to borrow Regan's term for Petrarch.¹²⁴¹ For Regan, Petrarch employs 'defensive texturing' in order to maintain a distance to the object of desire, protecting the 'Poet' from being overwhelmed by himself as 'Lover'.¹²⁴² Faletti, similarly, distinguishes two poles of the *Ich* in *Das Jahr der Seele* or,¹²⁴³ as she also formulates it in the context of 'Umkreisen wir den stillen teich' (iv: 16): 'Die "klugen silben" suggerieren eine schwindende Fähigkeit auf Seiten des impulsiven, herbstlichen Ichs, auf die Werke und Inspirationen des dichterischen Ichs tiefsinnig einzugehen'.¹²⁴⁴

Whether we follow George in combining *Ich* and *Du* into the same soul or hold them apart as actors in the theatrical park runs of the *Jahr*, the lyric speaker

¹²³⁹ David, *Stefan George*, p. 160.

¹²⁴⁰ Faletti, *Die Jahreszeiten der Fin de siècle*, p.94.

¹²⁴¹ Regan, *Love Words*, p. 191. Keilson-Lauritz, significantly, contextualises the discourse of the secret (what Pirro terms the 'discorso intorno al segreto', *Come corda troppo tesa*, p. 193) within George's homoerotic poetics (*Von der Liebe die Freundschaft heißt*, pp. 124-26).

¹²⁴² Regan, *Love Words*, p. 191: 'Safe from presencing or representing events, the Poet-Lover can reflect upon his elusive *l'aura*'.

¹²⁴³ In the 'Spannung zwischen Herrschaft und Impuls', Faletti, *Die Jahreszeiten der Fin de siècle*, p. 84.

¹²⁴⁴ Faletti, *Die Jahreszeiten der Fin de siècle*, p. 94.

consistently emerges in an ever inconstant mode of Petrarchan subjectivity, of confronting otherness arising within himself, from which he must retreat in order to preserve himself, to privilege ‘Poet’-*Ich* over ‘Lover’-*Ich*, to borrow Regan’s terms again. *Du* assumes a function of subverting the *Ich*’s constancy, present as an ‘unassimilable kernel’, the ‘ultimate guarantee of its identity’.¹²⁴⁵

This is a dramatisation of the need for a ‘detour through the other’ required of subjectivity.¹²⁴⁶ Schelling is helpful here. The subject, to posit itself as a knowable something, must objectify and estrange itself from itself: ‘Dies ist der Grund-Widerspruch, wir können sagen, das Unglück in allem Sein [...] es selbst empfindet dieses Sein als ein zugezogenes und demnach zufälliges’.¹²⁴⁷ Self-recognition requires the other as its constituent moment: ‘Das Subjekt, das erst reines, sich selbst nicht gegenwärtiges Subjekt ist – indem es sich haben will, sich selbst Objekt wird, ist es mit einer Zufälligkeit behaftet (Zufälligkeit ist Gegensatz des Wesens)’.¹²⁴⁸ We know by now that George and contingency (‘Zufälligkeit’) are not good scene-partners, and so his task becomes to raise the lyric speaker, in keeping with Schelling’s system, to a higher potency, a feat he attempts in *Der Teppich des Lebens*. In order to ascend to this higher potency, the deficient others explored in the *Jahr* are overcome.¹²⁴⁹ The goal towards higher potencies has its first hurdle in matter, what Faletti identifies as the autumnal *Du*’s ‘dumpfen Erdgebundenheit’.¹²⁵⁰ In the journey of progressive idealisation, this material

¹²⁴⁵ Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder*, p. 26.

¹²⁴⁶ Boysen, *Negativity, Nothingness and Nominalism*, p. 60.

¹²⁴⁷ Cited from Schelling, *SW*, I, 10, 101 (‘Die Naturphilosophie’, in *Zur Geschichte der neueren Philosophie. Münchener Vorlesungen*).

¹²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 10, 102.

¹²⁴⁹ For potency as a process of overcoming see Schelling, *SW*, I, 10, 100: ‘Der Anfang ist natürlich das erste sich zu etwas Machen, das erste objektiv-Werden; denn mit diesem war in Folge der Unendlichkeit des Subjekts, nach welcher jedem objektiv-Werden unmittelbar nur eine höhere Potenz der Subjektivität folgt aus diesem Grunde also war mit dem ersten objektiv-Werden der Grund aller folgenden Steigerung und damit der Bewegung selbst gelegt’.

¹²⁵⁰ Faletti, *Die Jahreszeiten des Fin de siècle*, p. 98.

quality is not simply discarded, but rather dialectically incorporated and superceded.¹²⁵¹ In the *Jahr*, *Du* has a role to play, it is absorbed into the *Ich*'s progressive development.

Schelling's discussion of the infinite subject's self-limitation and self-objectification in otherness has an analogous process in the task of naming. It is an overarching concern of George's lyric speaker to put names to things and preserve them via the poetic Word. Throughout the *Jahr* there are, so to speak, 'two subjects create[ing] a symbolic world' by transforming reality into language and 'raising the thing to another level, its thinginess is lost forever: it becomes a thing-in-relation-to-other-things – that is, part of the symbolic order'.¹²⁵² This entails absence as the condition of possibility for presence in the Symbolic, as Forrester continues (and as we know from Schelling, negativity is already at the beginning),¹²⁵³ arguing that negativity conditions the ego, 'in so far as I have an ego, an effect of an identification with a fundamentally always-already dead other'.¹²⁵⁴ The layered temporality of the *Jahr* once more comes into view: the various others (of autumn, winter and summer) are dead and overcome before they even arrive, as the work is, in George's 'Werkpolitik' and its sisterly relation to *Der Teppich des Lebens*, 'always already' past, dead, overcome, 'totgesagt' (IV: 12). Lacan talks about the symbol as the 'killing of the thing' and how 'this death results

¹²⁵¹ Schelling, *SW*, I, 10, 104: 'denn jene Materie, die nur das erste Etwasseyn überhaupt ist, wird, wie wir bald sehen werden, unmittelbar zum Gegenstand eines Processes, in welchem sie verwandelt und zur Grundlage eines höheren Seyns gemacht wird, und nur indem sie dazu wird, nimmt sie jene sinnlich erkennbaren Eigenschaften an. Diesem ersten Realen nun, diesem ersten Etwasseyn steht das Ideale entgegen, das insofern das Nichts (nämlich das nicht Etwas) ist, aber weil es das dem Etwas entgegengesetzte, das als solches gesetzte Nichts oder reine Wesen ist, insofern ist es doch eben selbst auch Etwas [...]'. Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, p. 92 characterises Hegel's theory of art likewise as a 'developmental logic of progressive idealization'.

¹²⁵² Forrester, *The Seductions of Psychoanalysis*, quoted text from pp. 175, 176.

¹²⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

¹²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

in the endless perpetuation of the subject's desire'.¹²⁵⁵ The *Jahr's* temporal self-analysis, with its opening commandment of symbolisation of that which has already been 'totgesagt', incurs the 'endless perpetuation of the subject's desire' in the wanderings chronicled by the volume.¹²⁵⁶

Time revolving through the seasons is figured as a journey through space, a Petrarchan 'Verräumlichung der Zeit'.¹²⁵⁷ This is offset by moments of stasis that pinpoint 'eine zeitweilige Überwindung der Vergänglichkeit bei Anwesenheit der Dame'.¹²⁵⁸ For Petrarch this is always a projected fantasy stasis of transcendence (he never does obtain the presence of Laura). When George's speaker reaches stasis, however, it is often an ambivalent one.¹²⁵⁹ The pictorial correlate of this stasis is the image of the pond, the stagnant (*stagnus*) body of water. Blasberg notes how the speculative imagery of 'Gemahnt dich noch' finds at precisely the centre of the poem that of the 'weiher[]' (IV: 40), making the poem self-reflective.¹²⁶⁰ The inscrutable depths of the pond mirror the self's own opacity and the inscrutable nature of his desire, irreducible to any one particular fulfilment.¹²⁶¹

¹²⁵⁵ Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 262/319.

¹²⁵⁶ The speaker and his various others are often on the go, either 'auf den sonnen-wanderungen' (IV: 14), 'im reichen flitter | Des buchenganges' (15), circling around 'den stillen teich' (16), sailing across the park's lake 'mit dem kahn' (19), in winter the *Ich* finds himself alone on 'die schwere wandrung' (25), with his new winter guide reflects how they have 'im späten | Mondabend oft denselben weg begonnen' (26) and how '[i]ns frühjahr darf ich dich nicht mit mir nehmen' (32) when in spring 'sich die pfade neu beblumen' (33) etc.

¹²⁵⁷ Meidl, 'Zum Zeitdiskurs des frühen Petrarkismus', p. 92.

¹²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

¹²⁵⁹ Such as in 'Ich schrieb es auf: nicht länger sei verhehlt' (IV: 21), which announces the end of their relationship; or the two claustrophobic indoor poems in 'Waller im Schnee' which chronicle the gift-giving episode discussed previously (IV: 28, 29).

¹²⁶⁰ Cornelia Blasberg, 'Stefan Georges "Jahr der Seele". Poetik zwischen Schrift und Bild', p. 243: 'Mit dieser Wasserfläche hat das Gedicht einen Spiegel in sein Zentrum gestellt, von dem aus der klanglich zusammengehaltene Metaphernrausch organisiert wird und in dem die Dichtung sich selbst erkennen kann'. Schultz, 'In Praise of Illusion', p. 83, similarly identifies a specular narcissism in this poem, but from a different angle: the discarding of the female other and her replacement by this new male figure means that '[p]sychoanalytically, these poems project a reintegration of the self, no longer divided by opposites but, longing for a mythical childhood, made whole in primary narcissistic union'.

¹²⁶¹ Cf. Lacan's metaphor for desire as being on the 'rails of metonymy', *Écrits*, p. 431/518. Cf. also p. 681/804.

The hidden depths of the pond at the park's centre embody what David calls the 'Gefühl des Nichts' that pervades the entire volume, its constitutive lack.¹²⁶² Nature, David writes, 'ist ein Schleier, der das Nichts bedeckt'.¹²⁶³ Lacan points out that '[f]or the question [of the 'beyond-the-veil' of nature – JW] to even arise [...], there must be language'.¹²⁶⁴ Nature and language are thus enmeshed, and the apparent 'beyond' is a byproduct of its immediate presence, which grants no direct access to the beyond that is posited as the dark ground (in Schellingian terms), the 'unconscious of the Other's discourse'.¹²⁶⁵

vii. The mind, restless for Spring

The search for a transcendent other consistently resulted in a lack for George's speakers, and now even in the soul's careful measuring out of the seasons, as the *Ich* circles around his own lack in his pensive broodings, the volume's seasonal calendar circles around the significant lack of springtime, and it does so twice, once in the 'Jahr' cycle, and once within *Traurige Tänze's* 'verkürztes "Jahr der Seele" [...], das von Winter zu Winter reicht' as David describes it.¹²⁶⁶ In this regard it is doubly self-reflective, and doubly lacking. Its *Ich* goes in search for a *Du* while the volume goes in search for its spring. Spring is never present, it is always future ('Ins frühjahr darf ich dich nicht mit mir nehmen', IV:32;), absent (the autumn cycle describes a wind as 'frühlings-weich', 16) or, where it does appear (in 'Traurige Tänze'), it is coloured by melancholy distance and a subjunctive irreality:

¹²⁶² David, *Stefan George*, p. 153.

¹²⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

¹²⁶⁴ Lacan, *Écrits*, 436/525.

¹²⁶⁵ *Ibid.* Cf. Schelling, *SW*, I, 7, 360.

¹²⁶⁶ David, *Stefan George*, p. 144. This mini 'Jahr der Seele' runs from 'Die stürme stieben über brache flächen' (IV: 103) to 'Da vieles wankt und blasst und sinkt und splitter' (IV: 111).

Dass nicht der süsse schauer

In neues leid euch hülle –

Es sei die stille trauer

Die diesen frühling fülle

(iv: 105)

As Manacorda makes plain in the introduction to his translation: ‘L’anno “dell’anima” è un anno senza primavera, la più “poetica” delle stagioni’.¹²⁶⁷ What a seeming contradiction for George’s most traditionally poetic work to be ‘costruito intorno a un buco’.¹²⁶⁸ Any approach towards *Das Jahr der Seele* must, consequently, take this lack into account, this absence of the most traditionally ‘poetic’ content that would evoke a ‘strain of the earth’s sweet being in the beginning | In Eden garden’.¹²⁶⁹

Petrarch laments his own vernal lack:

The time is when the planet that marks hours

returns once more to make its home with Taurus,

¹²⁶⁷ ‘The year of the “soul” is a year without spring, the most “poetic” of seasons’, Giorgio Manacorda, ‘Il canto è un sogno che ancora non c’è’, in *Stefan George: L’Anno dell’Anima*, trans. by Giorgio Manacorda (Elliot, 2018), p. 14.

¹²⁶⁸ ‘constructed around a hole’, Manacorda, ‘Il canto è un sogno che ancora non c’è’, p. 14. David writes that ‘Von allen Werken Georges hat das *Jahr der Seele* die weiteste Verbreitung gefunden. Es ist jedenfalls das Buch, das am wenigsten die Vorstellung verletzt, die man allgemein von der Dichtung hat’, David, *Stefan George*, p. 140. Cf. Goldsmith, *Stefan George: A Study of the Early Works*, p. 71 for the *Jahr* as containing ‘some of his finest and most appealing lyrical poetry’. Cf. Martus, *Werkpolitik*, p. 615: ‘Das *Jahr der Seele* kommt dem Publikumsgeschmack “um 1900” eher entgegen als alle andere Gedichtbände Georges: Keine Sammlung wurde häufiger verkauft’. Also cf. Schultz, ‘In Praise of Illusion’, pp. 80-81 (also citing David, *ibid*): ‘The plangent, intimate tone, together with a seemingly transparent story of loss, made it George’s most popular collection’ (p. 80).

¹²⁶⁹ Hopkins, ‘Spring’, in *The Major Works*, p. 131. available online at: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/51002/spring-56d22e75d65bd> (17/03/2025).

whose flaming horns now pour down with their power
and decorate the world with fresh-made color.

Not only that which stretches out before us,
the banks and hills, does he adorn with flowers,
but hidden things that never see the dawn
does he make pregnant with his earthly moisture,

that it may give us this fruit and the like.

So she, who is a sun among all ladies,
moving the rays of her fair eyes, in me

gives rise to thoughts and acts and words of love—
no matter, though, how she controls or turns them,
springtime for me will never come about.

(*Rvf* 9)

Bettarini reads this sonnet – included in George's *I Sonetti scelti* – as a springlessness in the depths of the self, opposed to the abundance of the springtime world around him, a 'disarmonia tra lo e natura'.¹²⁷⁰ Not quite the same situation as George's speaker in the *Jahr*, who has the (fading) richness of the world around him but no springtime. Another spring poem in part two of the

¹²⁷⁰ Bettarini, *Canzoniere*, vol. I, p. 40. The *Sonetti scelti* are available online at: https://dfg-viewer.de/show?tx_dlf%5Bdouble%5D=0&tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=http%3A%2F%2Fdigital.wlb-stuttgart.de%2Fmets%2Furn%3Anbn%3Ade%3Absz%3A24-digibib-bsz4929933357&tx_dlf%5Bpage%5D=2&cHash=f2335c422eddc2966ea3c1e5628d102b (Accessed 11/03/2025)

Canzoniere ('Zephyr comes back and with him fair weather', *Rvf* 310) packs its entire octave with the joyous bounties of the season, *but* – he laments at the *volta*, '[b]ut there comes back to me only the gravest | of sighs' (l. 9), and despite the flowering fulness of the season, he is lost again in subjective destitution: all the lovely things of spring represented in the sonnet 'for me are deserts now, wild savage beasts' (l. 14). The reason for this destitution is that Laura, who at this point in the *Canzoniere* is deceased (her death is announced in poem 267), took away with her the 'keys' to his heart – a common, 'immagine antica e dantesca' as Bettarini points out, and one that Petrarch insists upon throughout the poems.¹²⁷¹ Consequently, his heart is closed to spring. George is also missing a key, but more on this shortly.

Like Petrarch, the Georgean subject of the *Jahr* is trapped in seasonal temporality, '[t]urning and turning in the widening gyre', but is precluded from the 'poetic' season of spring.¹²⁷² In recognising spring's abundance, Petrarch uses the verb 'colga' (*cogliere*, *Rvf* 9: 9). *Cogliere* is a verb of reaping and gathering, elsewhere used to unite nature and poetry such as in *Rvf* 116 ('Here I'm alone, and [...] | collect now rhymes and verse, now herbs and flowers', l. 6).¹²⁷³ So the springless poet can indeed still produce the springless poetry of spring. Manacorda broaches this springlessness as an ontological lack in his discussion of the *Jahr*.¹²⁷⁴

¹²⁷¹ 'ancient and Dantesque image', Bettarini, *Canzoniere*, vol 2, p. 1361.

¹²⁷² Yeats, 'The Second Coming', in *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats* (Papermac, 1987), p. 210. available online at <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43290/the-second-coming> (accessed 11/3/25). George's gyre in the *Jahr* is however not widening, but rather narrowing.

¹²⁷³ As pointed out by Bettarini, *Canzoniere*, vol. I, p. 40.

¹²⁷⁴ Citing Leone Traverso, who had referred to George's '[i]stinto plastico' ('artistic instinct') as producing 'quasi forme cave in cerca di una sostanza umana che le colmi' ('almost hollow forms in search of a human substance to fill them'), Leone Traverso, 'Introduzione', in Stefan George, *Poesie*, translated by Leone Traverso (Le Lettere, 2015), p. 1. Traverso's point about the 'hollow forms' is singled out by Manacorda, 'Il canto è un sogno che ancora non c'è', p. 14.

In Manacorda's reading, his perceived 'hollowness' to George's forms manifests an ontological hollowness symbolised by the lack of spring.

The *Canzoniere* as an intertext provides a literary and philosophical basis for the combined motifs of springless lack, wandering, and intense self-reflexivity. Stierle highlights how it is specifically the unattainability of the Lady that spurs the Petrarchan subject to turn inwards, addressing himself, since with her absence he is left only with himself, and this 'situatione comunicativa' is at the basis of Petrarchan reflexivity.¹²⁷⁵ For Petrarch in the *Canzoniere*, there is an unattainable Lady and a divided *Ich* struggling against itself. For George, there is a divided *Ich* that is further divided into a multiplicity of other *Du*-figures with which it fails to achieve any sort of full union. Insofar as the *Ich* comes to recognise the sad truth that 'alle dinge die wir blumen nannten | Versammeln sich am toten quell' (IV: 118), the volume constitutes the kind of Petrarchan-Augustinian *cogitatio* (a kind of pensive, discursive recollecting) that Stierle discusses. Stierle cites Augustine's *Confessions* as a cornerstone of this thematic complex for Petrarch, where it implies a type of recollection allowing the subject to regain and reorder scattered memories, 'ut scire possint' ('to make them knowable', trans. Philip Burton).¹²⁷⁶ *Das Jahr der Seele* is likewise a poetry of collection and recollection ('Gedenkt vom schönsten pflückend was hier sprosset', IV: 43) in the search for self-understanding. The thought that plagues it is the thought of its absent (or empty,

¹²⁷⁵ 'communicative situation', Stierle, *La vita e i tempi di Petrarca*, p. 517: 'egli finisce per alienarsi e diventare il destinatario di una comunicazione che si compie nella sua interiorità' ('He tends up becoming estranged and the recipient of a communication that takes place within him').

¹²⁷⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, x. 11: 'ea, quae passim atque indisposite memoria continebat, cogitando quasi colligere atque animadvertendo curare, ut tamquam ad manum posita in ipsa memoria, ubi sparsa prius et neglecta latitabant, iam familiari intentioni facile occurrant', cited in Stierle, *La vita e i tempi di Petrarca*, p. 520 ['by means of thought and reflection to gather together and to arrange the things that are indeed contained within the memory, where they had previously lain hidden, scattered and neglected, so that they will come to me properly when I concentrate', Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. and ed. by Philip Burton (Everyman's Library, 2001), p. 226.

in Osterkamp's language) centre,¹²⁷⁷ which draws it to obsessively revolve around itself, much as how Petrarch's 'frammenti', Stierle writes, 'nascono da un *pensare*, che ruota continuamente attorno a se stesso'.¹²⁷⁸ George's speaker is similarly plagued by a thought that moves him (as the 'break up' poem in 'Nach der Lese' makes clear, connecting the motif of his 'gedanken' to the lack upsetting his sense of fulfilment: 'uns fehlt | Bis an das glück noch eine weite spanne', IV: 21), and the *Jahr* operates structurally in a similarly self-reflexive 'wheeling', to borrow Stierle's image, around the memory of a sense of a moment – 'das glück' – now missing.¹²⁷⁹

Concomitant with this self-reflexivity is its insistence upon itself as a poetry of multiplicity and variety, a patchwork of memories and moments organised temporally and ontologically into the seasonal turning of the year.¹²⁸⁰ While the diffusion of worldly phenomena often foregrounds multiplicity, it is sometimes countered by the speaker's focus on a singular entity, often darkened by a melancholy mood, most emblematically in the sole, dying flower of the winter cycle ('Die blume die ich mir am fenster hege', IV: 31). In that poem, the speaker's *cogitatio* leads to a gesture of anti-recollection, a desire to purge the memory of beauty so that it no longer painfully haunts him in the present:

Um ihrer frühern blühenden geschicke

Erinnerung aus meinem sinn zu merzen

¹²⁷⁷ Osterkamp, *Poesie der leeren Mitte*, op cit.

¹²⁷⁸ 'are born from a way of thinking that revolves continuously around itself', Stierle, *La vita e i tempi di Petrarca*, p. 522.

¹²⁷⁹ For absence as inherent in the laurel tree's poetic presence cf. Noferi cited by Peterson, *Petrarch's Fragmenta*, 255 n. 30.

¹²⁸⁰ E.g. the many characters and forms of *Du* that speak to a multiplicity within the self; the variety of sub-cycles within the volume, themselves thematising plurality ('Nach der Lese', 'Waller im Schnee', 'Sieg des Sommers' IV: 9, 'Erinnerungen an einige Abende innerer Geselligkeit', p. 57, 'Verstattet dies Spiel: Eure flüchtig geschnittene Schatten zum Schmuck für meiner Angedenken Saal', p. 69, 'Traurige Tänze', p. 85); as well as the volume's insistence upon plural noun forms, often of things poetically (re-) collected from the world.

Erwähl ich scharfe waffen und ich knicke
Die blasse blume mit dem kranken herzen.

Was soll sie nur zur bitternis mir taugen?
Ich wünschte dass vom fenster sie verschwände ..
(IV: 31)

The view to the wintry landscape outside is intensified by the presence of this dying flower, the window to the 'totgesagten park' haunted by a memento mori.¹²⁸¹ The choice of the verb 'merzen' is significant in this regard. Etymologically 'merzen' has to do with the word for March, 'März', with the 'im märz vorgenommenen aussonderung der schafe'.¹²⁸² There is a lick of irony in the choice of a verb used to cancel something from the speaker's mind while simultaneously invoking, harbouring etymologically, the name of the much-desired for season that the volume as a whole has cancelled and precluded from the 'narrowing gyre', to misquote Yeats, of the *Jahr*.

The Petrarchan *psychomachia*, the obsessional fixation on a bad object like a dying flower, spoils his striven-for masterly, eagle-eyed vision (in this regard it evokes Lacan's discussion of *The Ambassadors*). In another poem from the summer cycle he commands his pluralised *Du*-other:

¹²⁸¹ There is a recall here to Algalab's '[d]unkle grosse schwarze blume' (II: 63), as Zanucchi, 'Nach der Lese · Waller im Schnee · Sieg des Sommers', p. 187 writes, this poem is a 'Palinodie des vierten *Unterreich*-Gedichtes (SW, II, 63). Das Verwelken einer Zimmerpflanze im Winter indiziert das Scheitern von Algalabs Künstler-Traum, der in der Erschaffung einer artifiziellen Blume bestand, sowie die Unabwendbarkeit des Lebens- und Jahreszeitenzyklus'.

¹²⁸² „MERZEN, verb.“, Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm, digitalisierte Fassung im Wörterbuchnetz des Trier Center for Digital Humanities, Version 01/23, <<https://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB?lemid=M04253>>, abgerufen am 13.03.2025.

Den blauen raden und dem blutigen mohne
Entgeht dem lispelnden und lichten korn!
Durchwandert diese waldung sinnens ohne
Und jeden vielverschlungenen pfad von vorn ·

Verharrt nicht vor den zeichen in den birken ·
Geschwunden sei die hand die einst sie schnitt ·
Nun fühlt wie andre namen wunder wirken ·
Zu jungen frischen stämmen lenkt den schritt ·

Vergesst der schmerzen und des alten blutes
Gerissen am verfallnen dorngesträuch
Und blätter dürrer zeiten leichten mutes
Betretet sie und lasst sie hinter euch!

(IV: 37)

A victorious-sounding command to leave the multiplicity of past things behind, to focus now on the current miracles! Signs etched into the barks of the birch trees retain the past, but the hope is now to move on from them. The command to move through the forest 'sinnens ohne' betrays a wish to escape the Petrarchan *cogitatio* where '[w]ith every step I take comes a new thought' (*Rvf* 129: 17) and to return to the primal purity of original inspiration (the state 'ohne denkestörung' opening the *Hymnen*, II: 10). The authoritative master-discourse has returned, convincing itself that the past has passed, it need no longer cause pain, and magic of the present is to be embraced. All the things of the poem have been gathered up and bound

into verse, and the Vergilian injunction to ‘not speak of them, but look and pass on’ (*Inf.* III: 51) lends the poem a promising futurity befitting the utopian hopes of the summer cycle.¹²⁸³

Likewise does the finished, bounded volume of *Das Jahr der Seele* seek to contain the unruly multiplicity of things, people, memories, cycles, and sub-cycles. The volume’s insistence upon its inner multiplicity, much like the speaker’s division into his multiple *Du*-figures, works to always undermine its final/totalised nature, which in turn is bound into its final position in a deferred way, when it harmonises with *Der Teppich des Lebens* in the final edition of the oeuvre. The logical next question is: to what extent do all the volumes that contribute to the poet’s finalised monument likewise undermine that final monument’s claim to totality? As Stierle highlights regarding Petrarch: the fragments’ intimations of totality (to misquote Wordsworth) are ‘*a posteriori*’ and ‘never definitive’.¹²⁸⁴ If it is never definitive, and imaginary, then the strain towards totality seems doomed from the outset, as it never has an *a priori* ground that guarantees its solidity. The basis of Stierle’s claim is that each individual poem’s self-referentiality undermines its contribution to the sequence as a contained fantasy of unity: each single poem opens up new sets of continuities and discontinuities, so that the very building blocks of the work are not themselves reliable.¹²⁸⁵ Petrarch’s continued re-ordering, re-numbering and re-

¹²⁸³ Similarly *Inf.* XIV: 73-75. In the 1890s George is becoming increasingly familiar with the *Commedia*.

¹²⁸⁴ (‘il frammento acquista così la facoltà virtuale di trasgredire se stesso e di aprire uno spazio immaginario per una totalità a posteriori *mai definitiva*’ (‘the fragment thus acquires the virtual capacity to transcend itself and open up an imaginary space for a retrospective totality that is never definitive’), Stierle, *La vita e i tempi di Petrarca*, p. 503. My misquote is of Wordsworth’s poem ‘Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood’, *Selected Poems*, p. 245.

¹²⁸⁵ See further Stierle, *La vita e i tempi di Petrarca*, p. 525: ‘La singola poesia acquista così una molteplicità interna, in relazione sia al suo centro tematico, sia alla sua unità formale’ (‘The individual poem thus acquires an internal multiplicity, in relation both to its thematic centre and to its formal unity’). On this see also Barolini, ‘The Self in the Labyrinth of Time’, p. 39: ‘the individual poems, the microtexts—exist in two distinct dimensions, simultaneously one and many: in one

structuring of his *Canzoniere* lend credence to this idea of the ideal unity 'mai definitiva', contrasted with the fixity of Dante's final form of the *Commedia*.¹²⁸⁶

In the *Canzoniere*, Stierle argues, this relation between part and whole (and part and itself) marks a significant moment in the history of modern poetry. Literary form and modern subjectivity meet in a work driven by a central lack that spurs the subject on towards self-exploration.¹²⁸⁷ Stierle provides an answer (in the form of a literary genealogy) to Claude David's point about the *Jahr*'s melancholic tradition: Hölderlin, Goethe, Leopardi and Baudelaire are all literary descendents of the Petrarchan *cogitatio*.¹²⁸⁸ While this genealogy would no doubt please George (had he wanted consideration as a Petrarchan poet), Hölderlin is significant for another reason: he provides one key for the absence of spring in George.

viii. *The Sweet Time of George's Youth* · Excursus on Spring

...Or as Musa renders Petrarch's, 'the sweet season of my early years' (*Rvf* 23: 1). The immanent lack of the *Jahr*, as suggested above, is not merely chronological but also ontological. Regan's words on Petrarch are quite apt here:

dimension they are manifestly unstable and incomplete when taken out of the whole, a macrotext whose own shape and teleology confer significance on its parts, but in another they are fully complete, 366 individual entities each endowed with its own beginning, ending, and ability to signify (as witnessed by the anthologization to which many have been subject). The lyrics' simultaneous oneness and 366-ness enact time's simultaneous oneness and manyness, its nature as both continuum and innumerable discrete pieces of the continuum'.

¹²⁸⁶ Stierle, *La vita e i tempi di Petrarca*, p. 525.

¹²⁸⁷ We are not far from Schiller's notion of sentimental poetry as defined by reflection, cf. Schelling's discussion, *Texte zur Philosophie der Kunst*, p. 263 (SW, I, 5, 472).

¹²⁸⁸ Stierle, *La vita e i tempi di Petrarca*, p. 526: 'La poesia petrarchesca del *pensare* segna così l'origine della grande tradizione della lirica dell'alienazione, di cui fanno parte la poesia *Andenken* (*Ricordo*) di Hölderlin; il grande componimento di Goethe *Nähe des Geliebten* (*Vicinanza dell'amata*), nato dall'ispirazione di Petrarca; la poesia meditativa di Leopardi nonché il famoso esordio del "tableau parisien" di Baudelaire, *Le Cygne* (*Il cigno*): "Andromaque, je pense à vous" ('The Petrarchan poetry of reflection thus marks the origin of the great tradition of the lyric poetry of alienation, which includes Hölderlin's *Andenken*; Goethe's great poem *Nähe des Geliebten*, inspired by Petrarch; Lombardi's meditative poetry; and the famous opening lines of Baudelaire's "tableau parisien", *Le Cygne*: "Andromaque, je pense à vous").

‘These poems as a book are *fragmenta* in response to their uncertain ontological center [...] joined to each other by only the slightest of narrative threads’.¹²⁸⁹ As Joachim Jacob points out, the forerunner text to *Das Jahr der Seele* has a decidedly different focus. The final line of the ninth and final stanza of Hölderlin’s poem ‘Menons Klagen um Diotima’ reads: ‘Und von neuem ein Jahr unserer Seele beginnt’, marking a culmination of that stanza’s climactic invocations of various earthly and supernatural phenomena, ‘blühend in Gärten gesellt, | Wo die Gesänge wahr, und länger die Frühlinge schön sind’.¹²⁹⁰ Jacob discusses how George shifts the focus, getting rid of the harmonic unity intimated in Hölderlin’s ‘unserer’ and making the individual soul appear ‘einsam und zugleich objektiver’ in his formulation.¹²⁹¹ This objectification of the soul allows for the distance necessary for (self-) analysis. George contested the influence of Hölderlin, claiming he only came to know ‘Menons Klagen’ at a later time.¹²⁹² The contrast, however, between Menon’s bountiful exclamations of unity and fulness at the poem’s end versus George’s speaker who goes forever in search of such fulness but remains lacking, is somewhat too coincidental, as are the shared thematics of recollection and memory.¹²⁹³ As the Balmes’ commentary highlights, the name *Menon* is a creation

¹²⁸⁹ Regan, *Love Words*, p. 218.

¹²⁹⁰ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. by Hans Jürgen Balmes, 3rd edn (Fischer Klassik, 2018), p. 103. The poem is collected in George and Wolfskehl’s *Das Jahrhundert Goethes*. George/Wolfskehl, *Das Jahrhundert Goethes*, p. 35.

¹²⁹¹ Joachim Jacob, ‘Stefan Georges *Das Jahr der Seele*’, in *Grosse Werke der Literatur*, vol. 10, ed. by Hans Vilmar Geppert and Hubert Zapf (Francke, 2007), pp. 59-73 (p. 66): ‘Die Perspektive des Sprechenden erscheint dadurch einsam und zugleich objektiver, “das Jahr” ist keine historische Angabe mehr, wie bei Hölderlin, sondern vor allem eine Ordnung, in die der persönliche Schmerz des lyrischen Ichs eingeht’. The same objectification applies to George’s change of ‘our’ soul to ‘the’ soul.

¹²⁹² So reports Morwitz, to whom George claimed this in person. Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 107.

¹²⁹³ Other motifs from Hölderlin’s poem surface in George’s volume, too. One example is the Georgian speaker’s refusal to sink down to the *Du*’s level as she in her ‘wehmut’ will, he reasons, refuse his ‘trost’ (‘Ich darf nicht dankend an dir niedersinken’, IV: 27), compared to Menon who recounts precisely how he once sunk before Diotima, who as opposed to the set-up in George’s poem, comforts him: ‘Da ich versank vor dir, tröstend ein Schöneres wies’ (Hölderlin, *GW*: 102) etc. Other motifs include that the lover’s wandering on paths known to them but now lacking his Diotima

out of the Greek *menein*, which is translated as ‘der “Bleibende”’ and sourced in Plato’s dialogue of the same name (*Meno*), ‘in dem er seine Erkenntnistheorie, die Lehre von der Anamnesis [...] entwickelt’.¹²⁹⁴ To Menon’s Platonic anamnesis, which envisions a future where ‘länger die Frühlinge schön sind’ (GW: 103) we can juxtapose the Georgean speaker’s Petrarchan rumination (his *cogitatio*) and the lack of spring. Instead he only finds things that, in another poem, Hölderlin had seemingly anticipated:

Nicht ist es gut,
 Seellos von sterblichen
 Gedanken zu sein
 (‘Andenken’, GW: 207)

George was not always without spring, the ‘sweet season’ of youth. In his earlier works, however, we find a certain ambivalence surrounding it that potentially differentiates it from Petrarch’s mythical youthful age. In the *Buch der Sagen und Sänge*, the awakening of desire in spring is coterminous with the latter’s disappearance. The singing of a ‘fiedler’ robs a young speaker of her innocence, and ‘[k]ein frühling mehr mich freut ·’ (‘Ein edelkind sah vom balkon’, III: 63).¹²⁹⁵ Desire and poetry, work in tandem here, bringing subsequent despair.¹²⁹⁶ Spring is the golden age of innocence (‘den frühling gold und grün ·’), an Eden on

(GW: 102), and the swan imagery (GW: 101). Furthermore Menon’s exclamations to Diotima in other poems prefigure George’s at the outset of das *Jahr der Seele* (‘Komm und siehe die Freude um uns’, GW: 54; ‘Komm und besänftige mir, die du einst Elemente versöhntest, [...] Bis in der sterblichen Brust sich das Entzweite vereint’, 56 etc.).

¹²⁹⁴ Balmes’ note in Hölderlin, GW: 721.

¹²⁹⁵ Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 89, genders the ‘edelkind’ as feminine based on the other poems in the sequence.

¹²⁹⁶ Figured by the fiddler, the ‘trouvère’ or medieval troubadour as George calls him in his original French version of the poem, for which see the ‘Anhang’ to SW, III: 138.

borrowed time until desire appears. The song of the fiddler, '[d]er mich mit fesseln umfing!' (l. 12), is contrasted with that of the lark ('der lerchen ton'), which we met in 'Geleitverse' and which represents no threat, inhabiting the natural world and incapable of the kind of desirous deception that the fiddler's song represents ('trugvoller', l. 11).

A springtime poem in *Die Fibel* ponders whether the return of spring will also return any hope of renewal ('Wenn die gärten ganz verblassen', l: 31).¹²⁹⁷ He is caught up in his own *cogitatio*, thinking about thinking ('denk ich so gewiss dann auch [...]?') and worried about a potential lack of spring, which previously in *Die Fibel* represented a hope and dream of resurrection ('Der geist frohlockt in frühlingsaufersuchen', l: 25). His 'freudenreichen frühlingsträume' are quickly dispersed by the cold northern wind, however. When spring itself does arrive ('Erster Frühlingstag', l: 64), it is experienced as a violent force overpowering the subject, the consequence of the cosmic battle '[d]es jugendlich schönen gottes | Mit dem alten finsternen mann' (l: 64). Spring is powerfully felt, the sun being an expansive force causing growth and concomitant pains (ll. 14-15). He is receptive to its power, with his heart (rendered impersonal: 'ein herz', l. 17) absorbing its 'wonnen'.¹²⁹⁸ In the first 'Legende' it is associated with the process of homoerotic awakening and the pains of maturation: the first stanza alone is erotically suggestive and replete with a language of excess.¹²⁹⁹ The second 'Legende', 'Frühlingswende', takes this further and describes another boy's reluctance at

¹²⁹⁷ Bornmann cites Petrarch not only for the springtime imagery but also for the use of anaphora. For the former she cites poem nine, discussed above, highlighting the imagery of the 'grünes kleid' in George's verse and its distant relation in Petrarch's springtime sun that 'dresses the world in colour new' (l. 4). Bornmann, 'Alla ricerca delle fonti di un canzoniere giovanile', p. 163.

¹²⁹⁸ Cf. *Rvf* 9, in which Petrarch describes Laura's effect (she is likened to the sun) on him (likened to the earth).

¹²⁹⁹ 'Es quellen die bäume in sommerahnung'; the image of the 'strudelndem bad'; the 'Jüngfräuliche blumen' that 'schmachten'; the 'keimbegierde' etc. (l: 83).

progressing to the world of adult men, coming rather to gaze at himself reflectively in the waters of a river (I: 90). The third 'Legende', 'Der Schüler', continues these motifs in its account of another lad's bodily maturation ('Was bringt nun diese wandlung?' I: 91) and his endless roving about where, eventually, he discovers the

spiegel glänzenden metalls [...]

Vor dem ich meines eigenen leibs geheimnis

Und anderer zuerst bedenken lernte.

(I: 91)

The psychodynamics of the three 'Legenden' speak to an anxiety regarding spring as a time of becoming and uncertain threshold-crossings. It is thus noteworthy that in one of the poems introducing Algabal's infernally timeless underworld it is specified rather clearly that there has never been a spring (II: 63).¹³⁰⁰ How significant, then, that our *Jahr der Seele* lacks in spring.¹³⁰¹ Unlike Algabal's world, however, the world of the *Jahr* is full of change, one of its underlying principles. Thus, between *Algabal* and *Das Jahr der Seele* we are caught as between Scylla and Charybdis, between a world with no change on the one hand and a world with no stability on the other. Spring on the one hand is an Edenic time where desire and its concomitant 'spiritual motion'¹³⁰² is absent, on the other it is a time tending towards an uncomfortable change, for as the noble girl of 'Ein Edelkind' found out,

¹³⁰⁰ 'Mein garten bedarf nicht luft und nicht wärme · / Der garten den ich mir selber erbaut / Und seiner vögel leblose schwärme / Haben noch nie einen frühling geschaut'.

¹³⁰¹As mentioned above, there are intimations of spring scattered throughout the volume, but references are shrouded behind figures such as metaphor or simile, or remain couched in hazy, subjunctive language.

¹³⁰² Dante, *Purg.* XVIII: 31-32: 'desire, | which is a spiritual motion'.

Edenic, vernal stasis can be upset when one expects it least – the snake in the grass of Eden rears its head, the fiddler plays a tune.

In the 'Vorspiel', the angel's presence brings the first warm wind of spring ('In diesen einfachen gefilden lern | Den hauch der den zu kühlen frühling lindert', v: 14), with the advent of Maximin spring arrives in toto. In the 'Maximin' sub-cycle of *Der Siebente Ring*, indeed, there is an unusually high concentration of spring-imagery.¹³⁰³ In 'Gezeiten', which paves the way for the mystical eroticism of the 'Maximin' cycle, Edenic spring arrives as a 'kind vom eden' carrying a 'kleinod köstlicher als manches königreich (vi/vii: 68) – unlike the noble girl encountered above, this child has seemingly retained spring's innocence. Alongside this comes a significant reversal in which the *Du* of one of these love poems ('Umschau', vi/vii: 70) accomplishes what the *Ich* of *Das Jahr der Seele* could not (vis-à-vis his female counterpart). Where in the *Jahr* he reports: 'Ich darf nicht dankend an dir niedersinken ·' (iv: 27), here that humble gesture is recorded in the poem's erotic climax:

Du liessest nach im staunen willig niedersinkend

Erstöhnend vor dem jähen überfluss ·

Du standest auf in einer reinen glorie blinkend ·

Du warst betäubt vom atemlosen kuss'

(vi/vii: 70)¹³⁰⁴

¹³⁰³ Maximin's vernal qualities are also programmatic with respect to his motivic ties to Dionysus, as Manfred Frank argues (*Gott im Exil*, pp. 303-04). Maximilian Kronberger was born in spring and died in spring (April 15, 1888 – April 16, 1904), forming a fitting historical incarnation for George's subsequent deification of him.

¹³⁰⁴ Coincidentally, or not, *Dante und das Zeitgedicht* opens with the same verb, linking Dante's love for Beatrice to George's new male order: 'Als ich am torgang zitternd niedersank / Beim anblick der Holdseligsten' (vi/vii:8).

The Latinism 'glorie' foreshadows its appearance in 'Das Dritte' (vi/vii: 101), where its Trecento inheritance works to glorify the beloved towards unparalleled heights. Here it figures within the imagery of a sexual resurrection, a descent followed by an angelic, post-consummate ascent. Now in the sexual awakening of male eroticism, spring's first blossomings promise redemption from the annual wintry decay:

Wenn nach erloschnen gluten auch die farbe
Der erde wechselt sich mit staub belegend ·
Und trägt auch jedes in getrennte gegend
Seine schwermut und gesteht: ich darbe ..

Und wird der innre ruf zu dir auch leiser
Ich fühle stets: ich muss mich nach dir neigen ·
Dein ist mein tag zuerst · ich bin dir eigen
Und um uns stehn vom frühling her die reiser.

(vi/vii: 78)

Spring then makes its breakthrough arrival with a kind of orgasmic shriek emanating from a moment '[w]o eine stunde alles gab': 'Des vogelsangs unbändig schrillen | Durchbrach des frühlings erster schrei' (vi/vii: 80). In 'Umschau' (70), the 'stunde' was the post-coitus bliss: 'Und eine stunde kam: da ruhten die umstrickten | Noch glühend von der lippe wildem schwung ·', VI/VII:70). In 'Maximin', spring

comes to dominate the imagery, conceived as a returning rather than an arrival ex nihilo: the third 'Maximin' poem, 'Kunfttag III', states this plainly:

Nun wird es wieder lenz..

[...]

Die starre erde pocht

Neu durch ein heilig herz

(VI/VII: 92)

Here the earth pulses with life, full of the '[t]ellurische Mächte' that guard in secret service a 'kosmische Ordnung im Verborgenen auf der Erde'.¹³⁰⁵ Maximin's vernal arrival is immanent: born from within the earth but come to fill time with the 'ordnung der sterne' (VIII: 18). He is at once a 'gott der nähe' as well as a 'gott der frühe' (VIII: 71), as Egyptien points out.¹³⁰⁶ This is, as DiMassa argues in reference to this poem and the volume's circular metaphors, the 'inbreaking of mythic time' corresponding to the broader mythology that *Der Siebente Ring* is concerned with founding, 'the line of history has curved round to its origins'.¹³⁰⁷ The Trecento affect-marking verb 'pochen' also "curves" us back to *Die Fibel*, but no longer signifies an unstable Petrarchan subject. Instead, it has been transferred onto the earth itself as an apocalyptic sign of immanent revelation: spring is here to shake

¹³⁰⁵ Egyptien, 'Wende, Frühe, Da', p. 211. Ludwig Lehnen, 'Der *Stern des Bundes* und das Transzendenz-Problem der Moderne', in *Krise und Gemeinschaft: Stefan Georges Der Stern des Bundes*, ed. by Christophe Fricker (Vittorio Klostermann, 2017), pp. 181-203 (p. 186) similarly points to the *Stern's* telluric imagery as instantiating a transcendence 'nach unten' as well as 'nach oben': 'Dem Absoluten einer Transzendenz "nach oben", zum Unverwandelbaren "in der ordnung der sterne", wird so das Absolutum einer Transzendenz "nach unten", das schreckhaft "Andere" im Abgrund, polar beigestellt (VIII 103)'.

¹³⁰⁶ Egyptien, 'Wende, Frühe, Da', p. 211. The poems are cited *ibid.*

¹³⁰⁷ DiMassa, *Dante in Deutschland*, first quote p. 148, second p. 149.

up the world anew.¹³⁰⁸ Spring is intimated in the erotic union, '[w]o eine stunde alles gab' (VI/VII: 80), reconnecting the present with the lost Edenic past, and looking towards the immanent, utopian present-into future. It is the meeting point of the immanent and the transcendent, marked grammatically by the immediate postposition of the absolute ('alles') after the finite 'stunde'.

Furthermore, 'stunde' etymologically has, alongside its meaning of an hour, the idea of an instant or moment, George's Platonic 'Kairos', as well as the idea of the ground: it derives ultimately from the verb to stand: the eternal, standing moment recalls the Latin *nunc stans* (from 'now' and 'standing') traditionally used for eternity.¹³⁰⁹ Unity and difference, and the '*rapporto tra il tempo e l'Assoluto*' emerges in this 'stunde' that 'alles gab': the 'stunde' relates to temporality, and therefore disjunction, seriality and discrete progression (of hours, minutes, seconds etc.), the change within the world, antithetical to 'everything', which points towards the absolute, a unifying totality in which alterity is unassimilable.¹³¹⁰ This alterity that cannot be rendered in language is the starting point of Vincenzo Costa's

¹³⁰⁸ Incidentally George uses 'pochen' to translate the pilgrim's fright upon encountering the wolf in *Inferno* 1. For Dante's 'questa mi porse tanto di gravezza | con la paura' (ll. 52-3) George has: 'Den schreck mit dem ihr anblick machte pochen | Ward ich mit solcherlei beschwernis inne' (X/XI: 9). The Dantean pilgrim at the outset of *Inferno* is not far from the Petrarchan subject, but he has his eye on the prize, and gets there, transcending his shaking heart as he journeys to God.

¹³⁰⁹ 'germ. stundō wird meist zu standan stehen gestellt' see „stunde, f.“, Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm, digitalisierte Fassung im Wörterbuchnetz des Trier Center for Digital Humanities, Version 01/25, <<https://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB?lemid=S54695>>, abgerufen am 14.07.2025. For the Georgian 'Kairos' see Roland Kany, 'Theologie, Religionswissenschaft, Religionsphilosophie', in *Stefan George und sein Kreis. Ein Handbuch*, vol. 3, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer, Wolfgang Braungart, Stefan Breuer and Ute Oelmann, 2nd edn (de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 1110-1127 (p. 1124). For the *Kairos* as a 'Grundkonzept seiner Dichtung' see Susanne Kaul, 'Kairos bei George', *George-Jahrbuch* 7, ed. by Wolfgang Braungart and Ute Oelmann (Max Niemeyer, 2008/2009), pp. 1-19 (p. 1). Cf. also the sub-section on 'Kairologie' in Christian Oestersandfort, 'Antike-Rezeption' in *Stefan George und sein Kreis. Ein Handbuch*, vol. 2, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer, Wolfgang Braungart, Stefan Breuer and Ute Oelmann, 2nd edn (de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 647-71 (pp. 657-60). In relation to Dante Cf. Giuseppe Mazzotta, 'Cosmology and the Kiss of Creation (Paradiso 27-29)', *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 123 (2005), pp. 1-21 (pp. 13-14) for 'St. Thomas Aquinas' definition of eternity as an "eternal instant" (*nunc stans*) (S.T.1, art. 2, ad prim., resp.) as well as the definition of indivisible unity in Aristotle's *Physics*'.

¹³¹⁰ 'relation between time and the Absolute', Vincenzo Costa, 'L'Alterità nell'immanenza', *Teologia* 47 (2022), pp. 291-321 (p. 300). Here I am following Costa, 'L'Alterità nell'immanenza', pp. 292-94.

argument, and the thrust of William Franke's reading of Dante's *Paradiso*, that to even begin philosophising about alterity is to already make it non-other: 'Pertanto, un discorso sull'alterità si contraddice sin da principio'.¹³¹¹

On the other hand, the 'stunde' is the *nunc stans*, the unifying ground of 'alles', binding up the world's multitude in a singularity. The *nunc stans* as such is timeless. With even this starting course in metaphysics it is clear how the Maximin-event raises the issue of reconciling the transcendence of the world with its immanence, as well as the issue of the subject's own temporality.¹³¹² The *nunc stans* is one traditional way of thinking this, for eternity provides a source of time and is therefore not time.¹³¹³ This 'stunde' is a moment within discrete, chronological time that erupts and 'contaminates' temporal sequence with difference: 'Kairos' or the 'Einfall des Absoluten, Göttlichen in einen besonderen Moment der Zeit, in dem die Kontinuität aller bisherigen Geschichte gesprengt und durchbrochen wird'.¹³¹⁴

'Wo eine stunde alles gab' is preceded by three lines negating the variegated phenomena that are all contained and consumed by the kairos itself:

¹³¹¹ Costa, 'L'Alterità nell'immanenza', p. 291. Franke (in his *Dante's Paradiso*) is concerned throughout his study with Dante's preoccupation with the poetics of transcendent otherness and language, and argues that self-reflective lyric poetry is able to gesture effectively towards the radical Other, even if it cannot capture that Other with the 'ordinary referential function' of language (p. 67; see further p. 68). Franke is also close to Costa in his *Dante's Vita Nuova*, when he writes that '[t]he Other is inevitably betrayed by being said, since to say it is to appropriate otherness into one's own discourse and conceptual framework and thereby to annul or encroach on its absolute otherness' (p. 60).

¹³¹² For Costa, time is the 'stuff' that that subject is made out of ('si potrebbe anche dire che essa [la soggettività del soggetto] è fatta di tempo. La stoffa da cui è fatta ciò che chiamiamo soggettività è temporalità', Costa, 'L'Alterità nell'immanenza', p. 300).

¹³¹³ 'time flows from the *nunc stans*, the eternal now, which is a flowing present moment [...] Meister Eckhart understood the present not as a moment in time, but as that which contains all time within itself' ('il tempo sgorga dal *nunc stans*, dall'eterno ora, che è un presente fluente stante. [...] Meister Eckhart aveva inteso l'adesso non come un momento del tempo, ma come ciò che contiene in sé tutto il tempo'), Costa, 'L'Alterità nell'immanenza', pp. 304-05.

¹³¹⁴ Roland Kany, 'Theologie, Religionswissenschaft, Religionsphilosophie', p. 1124. On the production of difference see Costa, 'L'Alterità nell'immanenza', p. 305, and for the 'attimo' as the *Kairos* that 'contaminates' ('contamina') sequential temporality, pp. 310-13.

there were no things, no desire, no death, no piecemeal rubble of Hopkin's 'mortal trash' in the very instance of 'alles'. The poem moves from multiplicity to the bliss of unity, from the many things abloom to the singular source of all multivarious efflorescence: 'Von tausend blüten war ein quillen | Im purpurlicht der zauberei'.¹³¹⁵ This is the recurring temporal structure of the Maximin epiphanies as occasioned through the Georgian poetic Word, intimated here by the 'zauberei'.¹³¹⁶ The bewitching instant of the Master's Word unites the springtime divine with the erotic in the moment of the 'stunde'.¹³¹⁷

¹³¹⁵ 'Da waren trümmer nicht noch scherben
Da war kein abgrund war kein grab
Da war kein sehnen war kein werben:
Wo eine stunde alles gab.

Von tausend blüten war ein quillen
Im purpurlicht der zauberei.
Des vogelsangs unbändig schrillen
Durchbrach des frühlings erster schrei.

Das war ein stürzen ohne zäume
Ein rasen das kein arm beengt –
Ein öffnen neuer duftiger räume
Ein rausch der alle sinne mengt'
(vi/vii: 80)

¹³¹⁶ On this cf. Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 159: 'Die Zeit gibt sich im Eingedenken nicht als Chronos, den Ablauf, sondern als Kairos, den Augenblick, zu erkennen'. Shen, pp. 177-78 provides another useful overview of George's *kairos*-thinking.

¹³¹⁷ It was common in the George Circle to associate poetry, and the poet, with magic. See programmatically the entry 'Italien und Niederland' (Stoff-Kunst und Phantasie-Kunst)' in the *Blätter für die Kunst* 7 (1904): 'In den höchsten regionen der kunst aber verschwinden auch diese unterschiede · und es bedeutet etwa dasselbe wenn wir sagen: traumbilder die bezaubern wie wirklichkeiten oder wirklichkeiten die bezaubern wie traumbilder' (cited from Landmann, *Der George Kreis*, p. 68). Likewise does Robert Boehringer, in his contribution 'Das Leben von Gedichten', characterise the poet as a kind of sorcerer who magically transforms the dead word into the living poetic Word ('Nur die verhallende Erinnerung an Gehörtes wird ihnen bleiben, bis der Zauberer wiederkommt und ihnen das erstarrte Gedicht wieder belebt', cited from Landmann, *Der George Kreis*, p. 105). Gundolf ends his polemical 'Tat und Wort im Krieg' with reference to a poem from *Der Stern des Bundes* in which the poet claims 'Der Zauber der zerstückt stellt neu zusammen' (George's 'zauber' capitalised by Gundolf, viii: 37), and claims that France and England have no future – they did provide 'Zauber und Gewalt' once upon a time, but no longer, and that Germany alone still has the potential for spiritual and cultural growth (cited from Landmann, *Der George Kreis*, p. 243). *Zauber* is a cousin to other esoteric concepts in the circle such as 'rätsel' and 'geheimnis', and Gundolf deploys it throughout his *George* monograph (e.g. pp. 27, 37, 66-67, 76, 133, 137 etc.), most significantly in relation to the most cultic aspects of the Circle's ideology (*George*, p. 40) and the dependence of those cultic aspects on George's language: 'erst George hat die deutsche Sprache dieses katholischen Zaubers mächtig gemacht. Dante und Shakespeare haben ihn auch' (*George*, p. 46). Cf. Ray Ockenden, 'Zauber', in *Krise und Gemeinschaft: Stefan Georges Der Stern*

The first poem of 'Auf das Leben und den Tod Maximins' announces Maximin's vernal, Beatrice-like arrival:

In eurem schleppenden und kalten jahre
Brach nun ein frühling neuer wunder aus ·
Mit blumiger hand · mit schimmer um die haare
Erschien ein gott und trat zu euch ins haus.
(VI/VII: 99)

The flowery hand links Maximin as much to the angel of the 'Vorspiel' (as the fulfilment to the figure), as it does to Beatrice's arrival, 'im gewölk von blüten' (*Purg.* xxx: 28; *SW*, x: 92), in the vernal Edenic garden of Purgatory, where 'here there is always spring and every fruit' (*Purg.* xxviii: 143).¹³¹⁸ When, in *Der Stern des Bundes*, Maximin is apostrophied as he who

uns aus der qual der zweiheit löstest
Uns die verschmelzung fleischgeworden brachtest
Eines zugleich und Andres · Rausch und Helle'
(VIII: 9)

he is once more associated with spring ('Und warst zugleich der freund der frühlingswelle', VIII: 9), a memory the poet comes to reflect upon in *Das Neue*

des Bundes, ed. by Christophe Fricker (Vittorio Klostermann, 2017), pp. 271-81 for an overview of the term throughout George's works and in *Der Stern des Bundes* specifically. Claude David identifies precisely the 'Stil des Zauberspruchs, des Orakels' as the dominant mode of *Der Stern des Bundes* (Stefan George, p. 288).

¹³¹⁸ The flower imagery in Purgatorio xxx dominates the opening of the canto. George translated the passage in 1901 (see 'Anhang' in x/xi: 158 for dates).

Reich: 'Kam mir erinnerung jener frühlingsstrassen | Lichtfülle in erwartung deines blickes [...]' (IX: 38).

ix. Spring, Fire and Water

Accompanying the advent of Maximin's spring is the motif of the 'funken', which was once lost to the young Georgean speaker of *Die Fibel* (Längst ist der funke in mir tot | Die einst entflammt zu hellen gluten', I: 37), and which the speaker of the *Jahr* failed to ignite in his feminine partner ('Aus deiner blässe fach ich keinen funken ·', IV: 29). In the second of the poems 'in vita' e 'in morte' of Maximin, his vernal return dresses the world with colour and re-invigorates the deathly flowers:

Nur einst als frühling war fiel grau und silbern
Vom himmel tau und sprühte duftige funken
Und allen kindern haben blau und silbern
Die magren blumen lächelnd zugewunken.
(VI/VII: 100)

The transfiguration of the dew from 'grau und silbern' to the aesthetically counterpointed 'blau und silbern' of the flowers could only occur in the concentrated aesthetic energy of Maximin's spring, perceptible only to 'nicht abgestumpfte Kinder'.¹³¹⁹ As Dante has it, a 'tiny spark can result in a great flame' (*Par.* I: 34), and later, the spark has become the holy firestorm of the god's presence, and the poet in turn the spark

¹³¹⁹ Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 278. Childhood innocence and the 'blau und silbern' flowers suggest a nod to Romantic Germany's Novalis and his blue flower.

Ich fühle wie ich über letzter wolke

In einem meer kristallinen glanzes schwimme –

Ich bin ein funke nur vom heiligen feuer

Ich bin ein dröhnen nur der heiligen stimme

(VI/VII: 111)

The twice-repeated 'nur' is consistent with the poet's other self-humbling gesture in becoming a mere vassal of the divine: 'Nimm und weih mich zum gefässe! | Fülle mich: ich lieg und lausche!' (VI/VII: 128). The reduction of self in these two *terzina* poems has a distinctly Dantean and Pauline history.¹³²⁰ In *Inferno* 2 Dante the pilgrim worries that he is not up to the job:

¹³²⁰ Wacker, *Poetik des Prophetischen*, p. 90 discusses the merely apparent self-humbling of George in his role as prophet of Maximin, in the context of the 'zugrunde liegenden triadischen Kommunikationsmodells (Prophet – Gott – Gemeinde)' of prophecy: George 'zwingt den "mythischen Stoff" Maximin auch wieder ästhetisch in die Knie, indem er sich dem "Gott" Maximin zwar willig als dessen (scheinbar untertäniger) Prophet unterwirft, George in diesem Rollenspiel aber letztlich über die Hintertür – die typologische Umkehr erneut umkehrend – vom Knaben zum Meister, vom Geschöpf zum Schöpfer avanciert bzw. dieses ambivalente Verhältnis bewusst in der Schwebe lässt'. Wacker later identifies this process once again at play in George's critique and fulfilment of Nietzsche in the eponymous 'Zeitgedicht': 'George schafft einen Dichter-Seher ("Erlöser du!", Vers 12), stilisiert sich zum Knaben dieses Meisters, um seine eigene Meisterschaft zu fundieren, indem er die Erlöserfigur inklusive ihrer Vorgänger sich partiell einverleibt, modifiziert, dabei verabschiedet und gleichzeitig auf sich als Nachfolger und Vollender aufmerksam macht'. (*Poetik des Prophetischen*, p. 160). One could juxtapose this with Shen's reading of the 'Vorspiel', however, in which he teases out the 'Jussiv' mood of the speaker's hope that the youth, of which he is a 'Erzieher' and 'Priester', should eventually rise up above him (Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 152, discussing 'Vorspiel' XVII (v: 26)). This might be the case for the 'heiligen jugend' (v: 26), but Wacker's point about the poet, his god and his cultural forebears remains strong, and if the god Maximin is in turn the legitimising instance of the poet-prophet's relationship to the youth (and to himself qua visionary poet), one wonders if it is indeed possible for that youth to ever rise 'über seine stufen höher' (v: 26). Just as when Dante suggests his text may inspire others 'with better voices' (*Par.* 1:35), who might do a fuller job than he, one is fairly hard-pressed to find the successor (*Par.* 1:34-36). Ralph Simon examines this dynamic in George, examining the paradoxical conundrum the poet gets himself into: 'Mit diesem Zug der Machtzunahme aber verliert der Grund die Macht, legitimatorische Funktion für die anfängliche Entmachtung der Lyrik infolge ihres performativen Paradoxons zu gewinnen. Aus Machtgründen also braucht George jenes emphatisch *Andere* und aus Machtgründen darf er es nicht zulassen. So gesellt sich dem

Doch ich darf ich dort gehn – dass mans nicht wehre?

Der ich Aeneas nicht noch Paulus gleiche:

Ich nicht und keiner fand mich wert der ehre

(*Inf.* II: 31-33; x/xI: 11)

Paul was 'the chosen Vessel' ('Vas d'elezïone', *Inf.* II: 28; 'vas electionis', Acts 9.15), converted on the road to Damascus, which George translates, with his exclusive capitalisation, as 'das Auserkorene Gefäss' (x/xI: 11), quite in contrast to the Luther Bible's rendering of Paul as 'ein auserwähltes Rüstzeug'.¹³²¹ This is one of the examples of how George's translation work on Dante comes to bear on his own poetic creations, and vice versa. He did not translate these lines until 1911, some years after *Der Siebente Ring*. However, he had already begun the translation of *Inferno* 2 in 1901 (translating lines 58-93). That imagery from this canto features so emphatically in his Maximin cult is hardly coincidental, and the movements of influence are noteworthy. George translates some of canto 2, and

performativen Paradoxon der lyrischen Form und dem sakralen Paradoxon des inszenierten Gottes ein legitimatorisches Paradoxon des machtnotwendigen Machtentzugs', Ralph Simon, 'Das Wasser, das Wort. Lyrische Rede und deklamatorischer Anspruch beim späten Stefan George', in *Stefan George: Werk und Wirkung seit dem "Siebenten Ring"*, ed. by Wolfgang Braungart, Ute Oelmann and Bernhard Böschstein (Max Niemeyer, 2001), pp. 48-68 (p. 67). Wacker further highlights the paradoxes of this gesture in lyric form in an analysis of Hölderlin's poem *Bonaparte*, in which the immensity of the content leaves the Master poet (the vessel) like a child. However, as Wacker argues: 'Der textimmanent aufgezeigte Bescheidenheitstopos und die aufgezeigte Grenze der Sprache sind die Kehrseite des "meisterhaften" Gedichts und seines sich ebenfalls als Seher verstehenden Dichters', *Poetik des Prophetischen*, p. 96. All of this is not so paradoxical as it first seems: it is a commonplace in Petrarchistic discourse and, if we accept Distiller's (*Gender and Desire in the Sonnet Tradition*, pp. 39ff) Lacanian interpretation of the the (masculine) Petrarchan subject as constituted in and through the devotion to the (feminine) Other whom he annihilates by keeping her at bay, we see how the self-humbling gesture is a self-preserving and self-elevating one.

¹³²¹ Luther Bible cited from *Novum Testamentum Tetraglotton: Archetypum Graecum cum Versionibus Vulgata Latina, Germanica Lutheri et Anglica Authentica*, hrsg. C. G. G. Theile & R. Stier, (Zürich: Diogenes Verlag, 2010 (1989)). Pensa, "Stefan George e Dante", 24 also suggests this as one of the 'spunti danteschi' (23) but does not examine it further.

then stops. He then appropriates imagery from that canto, as yet untranslated, into his own poetry – another kind of translation activity – and then in turn grounds that new poetry in a Dantean predecessor years after the fact when he translates Dante into the language of *Der Siebente Ring*. Thus the line of influence warps somewhat. Dantean concepts are translated into Georgean poetic language, furnishing and thereby enriching those concepts with the pre-existing symbolic world of George's oeuvre. George's language, thus, becomes the 'gefässe' ready to receive Dantean content.¹³²²

The imagery of the holy fire and the crystalline sea of George's 'Entrückung' is Dantesque in its association of the divine with a great sea and an all-consuming fire.¹³²³ In the sixth 'Maximin' poem, fire imagery is writ in the Trecento metaphor of the arrow shot from the bow or crossbow into the heart.¹³²⁴ While this fire imagery constitutes an important aspect of the *Maximin* poetics, its opposite is just as important, and as Ockenden points out, water imagery comes to take over that of fire 'as an image of elemental force, and especially of love'.¹³²⁵ As he also points out, the *Stern* (VIII: 11) presents Maximin arising out of water, 'where the fire in the speaker's heart is quenched by the coming of the god'.¹³²⁶ Is this the Petrarchan subject's enflamed heart being quenched by the Dantean 'great sea of Being'?

¹³²² He translates Dante 'ins Georgesche' as Benno von Wiese characterised it. See 'Diskussion' to Paul Gerhard Klusmann, 'Dante und Stefan George', in *Stefan George Kolloquium*, p. 153. For the dating of George's translations here see the 'Anhang' to x/xi: 158-62. Here we have a case akin to Bloom's 'apophrades', the phenomenon whereby 'one can believe, for startled moments, that [strong poets] are being *imitated by their ancestors*. [...] The mighty dead return, but they return in our colours, and speaking in our voices' (italics original), Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, p. 141.

¹³²³ The 'great sea of being' (*Par.* I: 113), for example, or 'the blazing forth of Christ' (14: 108) or 'God's goodness, which spurns all envy, aflame within itself, flashes forth unfolding the eternal beauties', (7: 64-66).

¹³²⁴ Programmatically detailed by Petrarch in *Rvf* 2. Dante uses the image on a variety of occasions in the *Commedia* (*Par.* 1: 119; 5: 91 and 15: 43, where it is linked to the 'burning affect' of the speaker, Cacciaguida).

¹³²⁵ Ockenden, *Voyaging with a Concordance*, p. 57.

¹³²⁶ Ockenden, *Voyaging with a Concordance*, p. 57.

Within this same poem the wave of Maximin, washing over the speaker, likewise washes away his Petrarchan *cogitatio*:

Dein erdenleib dies enge heiligtum
Fängt alle sternenflüchtigen gedanken
Und bannt mich in den tag für den ich bin
(VIII: 11)

Maximin is now a grounding force, pulling the poet back to earth, preventing his thoughts from dispersing and scattering towards the stars (as the lonely wanderer in the *Jahr* had done: 'Zu sternen schau ich führerlos hinan' IV: 24). Lehen suggests this as returning the speaker from scattered thoughts of transcendence back to the day of immanence.¹³²⁷ The tension once more rears its head, however, for Maximin is the *also* the guiding star, and there is a certain understated desire, like the Dantean pilgrim 'pure and made ready to rise to the stars' (*Purg.* XXXIII: 145), to ascend towards him, 'wo ein ruhen sei im allgekreise' (IX: 40). While Ockenden stresses the increasing presence of water imagery, the 'funken' remains an important, recurring motif. Regardless whether fire or water, a poem from the *Stern* suggests that the name is immaterial in relation to the fact:

Nennt es den blitz der traf den wink der lenkte:
Das ding das in mich kam zu meiner stunde ..
Ungreifbar ists und wirklich wie der keim.
Nennt es den funken der dem nichts entfahen

¹³²⁷ Lehen, 'Zur Bedeutung Mallarmés in den späteren Werken Georges', p. 167.

Nennt es des kreisenden gedankens kehr:
 Nicht sprüche fassen es: als kraft und flamme
 Füllt es in bild in welt- und gottesreich!
 Ich komme nicht ein neues Einmal künden:
 Aus einer ewe pfeilgeradem willen
 Führt ich zum reigen reiss ich in den ring.
 (VIII: 25)

As Lehnen summarises, 'Das *dass* ist wichtiger als die Bestimmbarkeit des *was*'.¹³²⁸ One of the metaphors here, the 'funken', arises out of 'dem nichts', the dark abyss around which our year of the soul was circling and into which it sought to gaze, but like the ephebe of the *Legenden* ended up stuck on its own image in a self-reflective gesture.¹³²⁹ The deadlock in the *Jahr* was the Petrarchan scene of 'failed communication', the inability to break through to the other and consequently falling back onto itself, halting the poetry's reach toward the other and leading it to reflect back on itself metapoetically, in a perpetual cycle.¹³³⁰ The springtime of

¹³²⁸ Ludwig Lehnen, 'Nennt es den blitz der traf den wink der lenkte (VIII 25)', in *Krise und Gemeinschaft: Stefan Georges Der Stern des Bundes*, ed. by Christophe Fricker Vittorio Klostermann, 2017), pp. 349-54 (p. 351).

¹³²⁹ As in Blasberg's analysis of 'Gemahnt dich noch das schöne bildnis dessen': 'Mit dieser Wasserfläche hat das Gedicht einen Spiegel in sein Zentrum gestellt, von dem aus der klanglich zusammengehaltene Metaphernrausch organisiert wird und in dem die Dichtung sich selbst erkennen kann' (Blasberg, "'Stefan Georges 'Jahr der Seele'. Poetik zwischen Schrift und Bild', p. 243). Cf. Goldsmith, *A Study in the Early Works*, p. 73 arguing that '[f]or George there lurked behind the more pleasant natural phenomena a demonic, primordial force, the chaos, which might break through at any moment to destroy beauty and form. It is the "Other" ("das Andere") against which the creative spirit of God or man pits itself to wrest from it a cosmos'. Cf. David, *Stefan George*, pp. 152-4 for nature as a 'Schleier, der das Nichts bedeckt' (p. 152).

¹³³⁰ ('comunicazione fallita'), Stierle, *La vita e i tempi di Petrarca*, p. 517. Cf. further: 'Thinking concerns the self both as a thinking subject and as an object of reflection' ('*Pensare* riguarda l'io sia come soggetto pensante che come oggetto di riflessione', p. 518). On the single poem as becoming a reflection of this thought itself see pp. 523-24: 'la lirica petrarchesca è sempre riflessione su se stessa della poesia, in reazione ad una comunicazione divenuta impossibile' ('Petrarchan poetry is always a reflection on poetry itself, in response to communication that has become impossible', p. 523).

Maximin stages a successful summoning of the other. 'Mein kind kam heim' (from *Der Siebente Ring*, VI/VII: 143) emphasises the duality of sameness (or one's ownness) and otherness:

Mein arm umschliesst
Was unbewegt von mir zu andrer welt
Erbüht und wuchs –
Mein eigentum und mir unendlich fern

The speaker here is positioned as the unmoved Mover, relinquishing an otherness that has arisen within him, but acknowledging it still as his own. Otherness features predominantly in the 'Maximin' sub-cycle itself.¹³³¹ George figures that other, which becomes the addressee of many of the poems, with Maximin, a *Du* that was once embodied in the flesh and blood person of Kronberger, which for George signified an arrival of spring, but that subsequently was reborn, 'transhumanised' (to misappropriate Dante's term, *Par.* I: 70) by and out of the poet's own *Ich*. In literary-historical terms, we have finally arrived at the springtime poetics of Dantean revelation.

x. The Sea

¹³³¹ 'Nun wird wahr was du verhiessest:
Dass gelangt zur macht des Thrones
Andren bund du mit mir schliessest –
Ich geschöpf nun eignen sohnes'
(VI/VII: 109); 'Ich fühle luft von *anderem* planeten', VI/VII: 111 (italics added).

Before he can arrive at the 'meer kristallinen glanzes' (VI/VII: 111), the divine sea, in imagery likely learned from the 'gran mar de l'essere' of the opening canto of the *Paradiso*, there is another sea to contend with.¹³³²

Ralph Simon (discussing 'Wer schauen durfte bis hinab zum grund', VIII: 103) argues that the Other, which appears capitalised at the end of the named poem ('Das Andre grausam schreckhaft sich erhübe'), allows George to attempt to break the cycle of self-reflexivity and provide a dark ground to legitimate his poetic authority, but which must also be overcome through form.¹³³³ For Simon, the 'grund' of Maximin, this principle that frees the poetic speaker from his self-bound reflexivity, is 'das unter der nur narzißtisch spiegelnden Oberfläche Versteckte, aber Wesentliche', figured often 'im Bildfeld des Wassers, des Brunnens, des strömenden Baches oder Flusses'.¹³³⁴ He argues that George does not succeed in breaking through the mirror of water to the ground, that narcissism wins out.¹³³⁵ What I venture to add here to Simon's 'Epistemologie des Grundes'¹³³⁶ and indeed of water as a gateway to that George's legitimising pre-temporal ground, is the centrality of the sea in the spiritual metaphors of Dante, Petrarch and western

¹³³² On the 'sea of light' and Dante's subsequent 'pairing and implicit equivalence of light and water images' in the *Paradiso*, see Franke, *Dante's Paradiso and the theological Origins of Modernity*, pp. 325-26 (cited text from each page).

¹³³³ Ralph Simon, 'Das Wasser, das Wort. Lyrische Rede und deklamatorischer Anspruch beim späten Stefan George', in *Stefan George: Werk und Wirkung seit dem "Siebenten Ring"*, ed. by Wolfgang Braungart, Ute Oelmann and Bernhard Böschstein (Max Niemeyer, 2001), pp. 48-68 (esp. 55-57, p. 57: 'Das liedhafte Sprechen aus dem Grund öffnet die Lyrik einem prinzipiell Anderen. Zweitens aber legitimieren gerade die Lieder diejenige Form, die offensiv vor allem im deklamatorischen Kontext des Zeitgedichts und der sakralen Poesien in Anspruch genommen wird. Weil sich das lyrische Ich dem Archaisch-Schrecklichen ausliefert, soll Form als motivierter Bann über das Bannende begründet sein'). And furthermore, on the *attempt* at breaking the cycle of self-reflective narcissism: 'George versucht hier, unter die spiegelnde Wasseroberfläche zu gelangen, den Narzißmus zu durchbrechen. Er ist sein Problem und nicht seine Lust. Dennoch aber gelingt der Bezug zum Grund, so oft er auch versucht wird, nie. Der Narzißmus ist stärker als die zugleich auch spürbare Sehnsucht, ihn überwinden zu wollen'. Cf. Manfred Durzak, *Der junge Stefan George*, p. 136 on George's distrust of words of foreign-language origin, given they lack an 'Ursprungsbeziehung', that is, a kind of ground in the culture.

¹³³⁴ Simon, 'Das Wasser, das Wort', p. 57.

¹³³⁵ Simon, 'Das Wasser, das Wort', p. 57.

¹³³⁶ Simon, 'Das Wasser, das Wort', p. 55.

history more generally. For much of western history the sea has had a dual significance as both an 'image of temporality', as Kircher calls it, and an image of the divine (*Par.* I: 113).¹³³⁷ In modernity this 'redeeming potential of the sea' is rarer.¹³³⁸ These two approaches to water and the sea are important for George. According to G. Heath King, Nietzsche was partly responsible for the 'desymbolization' and 'despiritualization' of the sea's positive value.¹³³⁹ In this context, George's turn to the watery 'grund' in the *Stern* appears as a respiritualisation of the boundless Petrarchan deep (*Rvf* 212: 3), always portending shipwreck with its 'black and stormy waves' (151: 2), into the Dantean 'great sea of being' (*Par.* I: 113). Maximin purges the waters of temporality, the sea is no longer governed by lunar movement, but converted to a legitimising and stabilising *ground*.¹³⁴⁰

This respiritualisation can only occur after his angel has guided him to shore. If Maximin represents a principle of otherness arising from the unknown depths of the 'grund', down into which the lyric self must first plunge, the angel comes neither from below nor from above, acting as a mediating figure between the feminine muses of the early works and the masculine love-objects of the later ones, guiding

¹³³⁷ See Boysen, *Nothingness, Negativity and Nominalism in Petrarch and Shakespeare*, esp. pp. 22-32, and Timothy Kircher, *The Poet's Wisdom. The Humanists, The Church, and the Formation of Philosophy in the Early Renaissance* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2006), esp. chapter 5: 'The Sea as an Image of Temporality' for its importance to Petrarch. Kircher cites G. Heath King's *Existence, Thought, Style: Perspectives of a Primary Relation, portrayed through the work of Søren Kierkegaard*, ed. by Timothy Kircher (Marquette University Press, 1996) for King's concise but far-reaching literary-philosophical overview, which I cite anon.

¹³³⁸ Heath King, *Existence, Thought, Style*, p. 152 finds an appropriate passage in Meister Eckhart to illustrate this, and p. 153 for quoted text.

¹³³⁹ King, *Existence, Thought, Style*, p. 154.

¹³⁴⁰ This, as Lehnen points out, is a basic Symbolist commonplace: 'Diese Reise in den Untergrund evoziert keinen wilden irrationalistischen Tellurismus, sondern umschreibt das Schöpfen am Urgrund der Sprache'. Ludwig Lehnen, 'Zur Bedeutung Mallarmés in den späteren Werken Georges', p. 179. Lehnen's point may contradict my reading of the Georgean ground as a dark, Schellingian otherness (and a threatening irrationality) but is salvaged if that 'schöpferische und magische Dimension' (Lehnen *ibid*) sought for by the Symbolists is understood as the void out of which language emerges arbitrarily (and thus can be made 'schöpferisch').

the speaker across the 'troubled waters of temporality' that Petrarch also finds himself lost upon.¹³⁴¹ Inasmuch as he is modelled on Dante's Virgilio, as Klussmann argued, he does not in the same way take the poet on a 'journey to Maximin'.¹³⁴² The angel is a transitional figure more suggestive of Dante's Matilda 'am rechten ufferrande | Entpflückend mit den händen blüt an blüte' (x/xII: 84; *Purg.* xxvIII: 67-69).¹³⁴³ The angel's movement is decidedly *horizontal*: 'Da trat ein nackter engel durch die pforte' (v: 10), contrasting both with Maximin's vertical mobility (arising from the depths and taking off 'nach den sternem', VI/VII: 102) and with the 'herrin' of 'Weihe' who arrives from above ('nun schwebt die herrin nieder', II: 10). The angel is an idealised extension, an analogical fulfillment, of the male figure of the 'Sieg des Sommers' from the *Jahr* (both appear waving banners, IV: 33, IV: 33).¹³⁴⁴ It is significant that the angel appears in autumn ('Im herbstes-golde' v: 13), as it signifies a breaking from the circle of yearly rotation in the *Jahr*, where the autumn cycle revolves around a feminine other. It marks the angel likewise as related to, but different from Maximin, who appears in spring '[m]it blumiger hand · mit schimmer um die haare' (VI/VII: 99). George's angelology is suggested by the image of the flowery hand, and elsewhere in *Der Siebente Ring* the angelic choirs can be heard (VI/VII: 102).

¹³⁴¹ Boysen, *Nothingness, Negativity and Nominalism in Petrarch and Shakespeare*, 26. Boysen is discussing *Rvf* 189, which I turn to below.

¹³⁴² The inadvertent reference is to Charles Singleton's *Journey to Beatrice* (Harvard University Press, 1958). Cf. Klussmann, "Dante und Stefan George", 142-144.

¹³⁴³ Cf. Klussmann, "Dante und Stefan George", 143, pointing out how like George's angel, many of the figures in the earthly paradise (the cantos of the *Commedia* George sought out to translate first) are decorated with flowers: 'Schon jetzt können wir erkennen, daß der Engel des 'Vorspiel's herkommt aus dem Bezirk des Danteschen irdischen Paradieses'. (Ibid).

¹³⁴⁴ Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, p. 98 likewise links these two poems and further points to the imagery of the shore as consistent with the poems' homoerotic imagery (i.e. the German 'vom anderen Ufer sein', potentially coined by Hofmannsthal in a letter to Hermann Bahr regarding George, on this see Morgan 113 n. 80). On the relation between the figures cf. Lehnen, *Mallarmé et George*, p. 285.

The angel, fundamentally however, is a mediator between George's works – a corrective of the deficient figures of the early works and a prefiguration of Maximin. In this respect too it is significant, as David reminds us, that George, with a 'neuer Optimismus', was composing the poems of 'Sieg des Sommers' and those of the 'Vorspiel' simultaneously in 1896.¹³⁴⁵ The similarities between these figures is not coincidental, they are two modalities of a similar subjective orientation, organised by the poet into different works: the melancholic to *Das Jahr der Seele*, the optimistic to the 'Vorspiel'. In the poem cited above (v: 13), the lyric speaker refers to himself datively as 'mir schmerzlichem' whom the angel commands to give up his melancholy lovesickness (l. 9).¹³⁴⁶ George, writing to Hofmannsthal in July 1897, corroborates David's point and the point argued here: 'Mein buch ist fertig (...) Das von Ihnen einst so schön belobte gedicht "der besuch" ist übrigens kein teil der sammlung sondern einer folgenden die sich aus der oft schmerzlichen beklemmung des seelenjahres bald erheben möge'.¹³⁴⁷ *Der Teppich des Lebens* is a breaking out of the 'beklemmung' of seasonal, if spring-less, repetitions, an attempted elevation or transfiguration of the male human figure of the 'Sieg des Sommers' into a divine being who comes bearing flowers. This is further suggested by the fact that 'Der Besuch', which appeared in the *Blätter für die Kunst* in 1896 before being reorganised into the 'Vorspiel', signifies the male angel's arrival with all capital letters.¹³⁴⁸ Where in the original *Blätter* publication the pronoun referring

¹³⁴⁵ David, *Stefan George*, p. 142. Cf. Martus, *Werkpolitik*, p. 620: 'Wie kalkuliert George den Jahrhundertwechsel und die Werkmitte inszeniert, sieht man bereits daran, daß das *Jahr der Seele* und der *Teppich des Lebens* gleichzeitig entstehen, George aber schon bei den Vorabpublikationen die Gedichte der Sammlungen auseinanderhält (GW 5, 91f.). Bei aller Neukontextualisierung im Rahmen Dantes, Goethes und Jean Pauls dominiert der Kontext des eigenen Werks die Werkpolitik weiterhin'.

¹³⁴⁶ For the *du* and *er* in the poem see Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 161.

¹³⁴⁷ Cited from the editors' 'Anhang' to *Das Jahr der Seele* in *SW*, IV: 120.

¹³⁴⁸ Cf. Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 136. *Blätter* available online at: https://digital.wlb-stuttgart.de/sammlungen/sammlungsliste/werksansicht?tx_dlf%5Bdouble%5D=0&tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=1348

to the angel appears in regular typeface ('da kniet auch er'), in the 'Vorspiel' it receives the same capitalised emphasis that 'SIE' (/IHR') had in the *Jahr* (IV: 13): 'Da kniet auch ER .' (V: 10). The opening poems of the 'Vorspiel' consistently keep 'ER' in reference to the angel (V: 11-13), as if to underline his ontologically superior essence in comparison to the figures of the *Jahr* (the male companion in the *Jahr* receives no such capitalisations).¹³⁴⁹

To this breaking with the melancholic past works can be added how the *Teppich* proceeds to undermine those prior works' Petrarchan inheritance in the same instance as it borrows from that tradition. George is sailing the waters toward the angel's sunnier shore, where like the pilgrim of *Inferno* he will meet his guide and begin his journey to salvation. Petrarch, on the other hand, is a poet lost at sea, tossed about and with little control over his boat, despairing of port, as the programmatic poem 189 from the *Canzoniere* describes:

My ship full of forgetful cargo sails
 through rough seas at the midnight of a winter
 between Charybdis and the Scylla reef,
 my master, no, my foe, is at the helm;
 at each oar sits a quick and insane thought

[D=6073&tx_dlf%5Border%5D=title&tx_dlf%5Bpage%5D=12&cHash=46a555edabd9df681623ecd_c435a79d5](#) (accessed 29/3/2025). The enclosed rhymes of 'Der Besuch' receive line indentations, while those of the 'Vorspiel' I (V: 10) do not – the lines have been equalised, subsumed under the monumentalism of the 'Vorspiel's new poetics.

¹³⁴⁹ In his discussion of 'Weihe' across George's works *Egyptien* ('Weihe, Würde, Opfer', p. 239) points out that the angel is genderless (as angels traditionally are), bridging the gap between the feminine 'herrin' of 'Weihe' and the male god of *Der Stern des Bundes*. However, it seems reasonable to assume, given the mirroring relationship that the *Ich* has to his angel, as well as the insistent use of the personal pronoun *er* (grammatically necessary, but nonetheless evocative of the masculine gender), that the angel's gender has a role to play in conjuring the volume's homoerotic undertones (on this point cf. Keilson-Lauritz, *Von der Liebe die Freundschaft heißt*, p. 41).

that seems to scorn the storm and what it brings;
 the sail, by wet eternal winds of sighs,
 of hopes and of desires blowing, breaks;
 a rain of tears, a mist of my disdain
 washes and frees those all too weary ropes
 made up of wrong entwined with ignorance.
 Hidden are those two trusty signs of mine;
 dead in the waves is reason as is skill,
 and I despair of ever reaching port.
 (Rvf 189)

Christian Moevs reads this scene of tempestuous desperation as the self's battle with itself in the 'flux of space and time', and its attempt to save itself by aiming for some *terra firma*.¹³⁵⁰ The sea, over which the forgetfulness-laden boat passes, is a richly-laden setting, but the bark does not pass from one place to another, rather it intransitively passes 'through rough seas', it is stuck interminably in transit (Greene's 'process without progress'), with the sadistic figure of Love at the helm, driving him headlong into the passionate 'midnight' of a wintry storm.¹³⁵¹

The guiding lights of Laura's eyes are hiding (l. 12) so that the darkness of night is intensified all the more. The reference to midnight evokes its traditional, biblical connotations, associated with transformation and revelation, as Polyakov shows.¹³⁵² In the New Testament, it is speculated to be the moment of the Resurrection, as well as the Second Coming. The injunction therefore is to remain

¹³⁵⁰ Moevs, 'Subjectivity and Conversion in Dante and Petrarch', p. 249.

¹³⁵¹ Greene, *Post-Petrarchism*, p. 55.

¹³⁵² Emma O'Donnell Polyakov, 'At Midnight I rise: The Symbolism of Midnight in the Assertion of Jewish-Christian Difference', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 59.1 (Winter 2024), pp.1-26 (p. 14).

vigilant at night, to battle through the dark night of the soul in expectation of Christ.¹³⁵³ During Paul's journey to Rome from Asia Minor (Acts 27), midnight is the moment of revelation of land in the distance, after fourteen wintry nights at sea (Acts 27.27).¹³⁵⁴ Their journey takes place in winter (27.12), and the storms cause the sailors to lose hope ('spes').¹³⁵⁵ Within this tempest, Paul receives an angelic reassurance of the journey's safety (Acts 27. 23-24), with which he can revive his crew's hope. They may despair, but Paul does not, for to lose hope, theologically, is to lose God.¹³⁵⁶ Petrarch is also without celestial guides (the lights of Laura's eyes) but unlike Paul receives no angelic intervention.

Without any midnight moment of conversion or revelation, he begins to 'despair of ever reaching port' ('porto'). The loss of hope is inscribed etymologically in Petrarch's despair (*de- sperare*, to lose 'spes'), like the sailors accompanying Paul to Rome who lose their 'spes'. It is significant that Petrarch qualifies the statement with the idea that he is only *beginning* to lose hope ('incomincio a desperar'), for to lose hope completely would be a thoroughly anti-Petrarchan gesture, too final and not middled enough for the neither-nor-both-and-maybe-maybe-not of the Petrarchan subject, stuck in the middled-ness of ever beginning.¹³⁵⁷ Paul

¹³⁵³ Polyakov, 'The Symbolism of Midnight', p. 17 for the resurrection, and pp. 17-18 for the eschatological, revelatory aspect. In reference to Matthew (26. 40-41), Polyakov summarises: 'the passage reflects the repeated elements of trial, wakefulness, and eschatological reckoning that are present in the New Testament references to midnight' (18).

¹³⁵⁴ Cited in Polyakov, 'The Symbolism of Midnight', 18 n. 34.

¹³⁵⁵ 'When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest raged, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned' (NRVS). ('Neque autem sole, neque sideribus apparentibus per plures dies, et tempestate non exigua imminente, jam ablata erat spes omnis salutis nostræ', Latin cited from *Novum Testamentum Tetraglotton*).

¹³⁵⁶ Cf. Joseph Delany, 'Hope', in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 7. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910. Accessed online at: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07465b.htm> (Paragraph 2, accessed online 23/04/2025).

¹³⁵⁷ Cachey Jr., 'From Shipwreck to Port', p. 38 points out this important mere 'beginning'. Cf. Greene, *The Vulnerable Text*, p. 18: 'The distinctive character of the Petrarchan journey is its radical ambivalence. The traveler wants to arrive at his destination, but he also fears to arrive'. Cf. Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy*, pp. 21-22 for 'our middleness, our existence in time' (p. 22). Cf. Likewise Schelling, *Die Weltalter: Fragmente* (1811), p. 79 for all things emerging 'anfangs mit einem eignen Mittelpunkt der Zeit'.

elsewhere characterises hope as an ‘anchor of the soul’ that would, if we extend his metaphor, descend down into the watery depths and temporarily ground the turbulent ship moving through the waters of life.¹³⁵⁸ Likewise, one normally casts an anchor upon arrival at port, where the waters are less inscrutably deep. To hope, then, is already to possess the port.

The ship itself has also been an image of hope, functioning as a figure for the Church amidst the fluctuations of the sublunar world, as Tertullian writes.¹³⁵⁹ Thus Petrarch’s vessel functions as a metaphor for the self while also carrying within its metaphoricity the potential for a broader spiritual sense of the collective Christian community on its journey home – an image juxtaposed to the solitude of the Petrarchan self.¹³⁶⁰ The poem’s final word, ‘porto’ – and this will take us back to George – is the terminus both of the poem and the hoped-for terminus of the journey. The port’s metaphoricity likewise has a loaded theological and spiritual history. To reach the port, basically, is to reach Christ. Hugo Rahner gives a most detailed account, citing endless ancient, Patristic and medieval sources for the ship

¹³⁵⁸ Hebrews 6. 18-19: ‘ut per duas res immobiles, quibus impossibile est mentiri Deum, fortissimum solatium habeamus, qui confugimus ad tenendam propositam spem, (19) *quam sicut anchoram habemus animæ tutam ac firmam*’ (‘so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God would prove false, we who have taken refuge might be strongly encouraged to seize the hope set before us. We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul’, *NRSV*).

¹³⁵⁹ James Hall, *Hall’s Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art* (John Murray, 2000), p. 156 for Paul (also citing Hebrews 6.19) and 291 for the ship, referencing Tertullian, in whose account of Peter’s little ship in *De Baptismo Liber* writes: ‘ceterum navicula illa *figuram ecclesiae* praeferabat quod in mari, id est *in saeculo*, *fluctibus id est persecutionibus et temptationibus* inquietetur, domino per patientiam velut dormiente donec orationibus sanctorum in ultimis suscitatus compescat saeculum et tranquillitatem suis reddat’ (italics added, ‘Also that little ship presented a type of the Church, because on the sea, which means this present world, it is being tossed about by the waves, which means persecutions and temptations, while our Lord in his long-suffering is as it were asleep, until at the last times he is awakened by the prayers of the saints to calm the world and restore tranquillity to his own’, trans. By Canon Ernest Evans, cited from https://www.tertullian.org/articles/evans_bapt/evans_bapt_text_trans.htm (pages 28 and 29, accessed 23/04/2025). Hall (*Hall’s Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*, p. 281) points out that the *nave* of a Church is etymologically the Latin *navis*, or ship.

¹³⁶⁰ Michelangelo Picone touches on this spiritual aspect in his discussion of the poem, contrasting Laura’s eyes, the two lights or ‘segni’ that now do not appear to guide the Petrarchan speaker, to the traditional idea of the Virgin, to whom Petrarch turns in the final poem of the collection, and who was true ‘*stella maris*’. See Michelangelo Picone, ‘Il Sonetto CLXXXIX (Lectura Petrarce)’, *Atti e memorie dell’Accademia Patavina* 3.102 (1989/90), pp. 151-78 (p. 163).

of our life and the port of our final rest. He cites Cyprian as exemplary: '*Si enim Christianus a furore et contentione carnali tamquam de maris turbinibus excessit, tranquillus ac lenis in portu Christi esse iam coepit*'.¹³⁶¹ Petrarch is the Christian who begins ('incomincio') to despair of port, rather than beginning to find peace in Christ's port ('in portu Christi esse iam coepit', italics added). George has a different spiritual port.

One of the poems in George's Dantean prelude to *Der Teppich des Lebens* finds the *Ich* lost 'aufs hohe meer geneigt' (Petrarch's 'alto mar', *Rvf* 132:11) but unlike Petrarch, tossed about 'without a helm' ('governo', *ibid*), he is rescued by his new angelic master. The poem ends conspicuously and significantly with the Georgean Latinate rarity – 'port':

In meinem leben rannen schlimme tage
Und manche töne hallten rauh und schrill.
Nun hält ein guter geist die rechte wage
Nun tu ich alles was der engel will.

Wenn auch noch oft an freudelosem ufer
Die seele bis zum schluchzen sich vergisst
Sie hört sogleich am ankerplatz den rufer:
Zu schönem strand die segel aufgehisst!

¹³⁶¹ (Italics original) cited in Hugo Rahner, *Symbole der Kirche: Die Ekklesiologie der Väter* (Otto Müller, 1964), p. 553. Picone also cites Rahner as a background source, "Il sonetto CLXXXIX", 154fn8. ('For if the Christian have departed from rage and carnal contention as if from the hurricanes of the sea, and have already begun to be tranquil and meek in the harbour of Christ [...]') (trans. by Robert Ernest Wallis, available online at https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_V/Cyprian/The_Treatises_of_Cyprian/On_the_Advantage_of_Patience paragraph 16, accessed 04/03/2026).

Wenn mich aufs hohe meer geneigt ein neuer
Gewittersturm umtost vom wahn links
Vom tode rechts – so greift ER schnell das steuer
Der kräfte toben harrt des einen winks:

Gebietend schlichtet ER der wellen hader
Die wolken weichen reiner bläue dort ..
Bald zieht auf glatten wassern dein geschwader
Zur stillen insel zum gelobten port.

(v: 12)

Once again, as in 'Das Dritte', a Latinism is exploited for poetic effect, bringing the poem safely home to port at its climax. It is hardly coincidental that he ends the poem with this word, so emphatically evocative of his precursor poet's own emphatic ending. The Latinism again testifies to another voice, in another language, hovering under and stirring in the present poem.¹³⁶²

The poem opens with the Petrarchan note of time's passing movement. Petrarch's ship was 'full of forgetful cargo' (*Rvf* 189: 1, i.e. self-oblivion) and George's has likewise sometimes found itself in a similar state (l. 6). He finds himself on the raging seas between Scylla and Charybdis of his own, 'umtost vom

¹³⁶² Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, 138 n. 465 suggests that the poem immediately following 'In meinem leben rannen schlimme tage', entitled 'Zu lange dürst ich schon nach eurem glücke' (v: 13) takes as its literary precedent Milton's sonnet 'When I consider how my light is spent'. Shen's argument seems to be based on both poems' use of the imagery of the yoke of servitude ('des herren joch', v: 13; 'his mild yoke') and the kind of intervention that occurs in both poems ('patience' intervenes in Milton, the angel in George). It is not an unreasonable suggestion, and the progression of both poems complement one another.

wahne links | vom tode rechts'. Unlike the Petrarchan speaker, who is passive on his own ship with an enemy Lord at the helm (Amor), George's new Dantean angel-master, his Lord (his 'ferge' or ferryman, v: 16) seizes the helm and sails him safely 'zum gelobten port'. Both Amor and the angel are introduced in the fourth line of their respective poems, each poem's second stanza references its poet's boat by the metonymy of the sails (l. 7 in Petrarch, l. 8 in George), the third stanza of each draws attention to the stormy weather, and the fourth of each, aside from landing in the 'porto'/'port', brings up the skill ('arte', l. 13) required to navigate the waves (lacking in Petrarch's case, led by the angel in George's). Morwitz references the Homeric tradition (Odysseus' seafaring wanderings), which raises another problematic: the evaluation of Odysseys-Ulysses as a heroic or sinful figure.¹³⁶³ George evokes Odysseus when he has Dante describe his path as a 'trüber vielverschlagener lauf' (VI/VII: 8), which has an echo of the Homeric 'polytropon' from the first line of the *Odyssey*.¹³⁶⁴ To conflate Dante and Odysseus is to potentially accuse Dante of similarity with the figure whom he casts as a foil to and failed pagan equivalent of himself (*Inf.* xxvi) – precisely Petrarch's technique of authorial subterfuge.¹³⁶⁵

¹³⁶³ Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 161 suggests Scylla and Charybdis but as a 'homerische Vorstellung' rather than a Petrarchan one. Thiel, 'Fluß und Meer als Todesort', p. 14 suggests a locus from Goethe's *Egmont* to complement the Homeric and Biblical allusions, which I find less convincing than the Petrarchan one. On the Ulysses connection in Petrarch see Theodore Cachey Jr., 'From Shipwreck to Port: Rvf 189 and the Making of the "Canzoniere"', *MLN* 120.1 (2005), pp. 30-49 (pp. 37-38). Also cited by Moevs, 'Subjectivity and Conversion in Dante and Petrarch', p. 250. Likewise cf. Boysen, *Nothingness, Negativity, Nominalism*, pp. 26-28.

¹³⁶⁴ With which George was wholly familiar, having translated the first book of the *Odyssey* into his secret language, see Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 290. Schloon, *Modernes Mittelalter*, p. 218 likewise comments on Dante's Odyssean characterisation by George here.

¹³⁶⁵ The literature on the subject is vast. See chapter 3 of Barolini's *The Undivine Comedy* (summarily p. 52: 'Ulysses is the lightning rod Dante places in his poem to attract and defuse his own consciousness of the presumption involved in anointing oneself God's scribe. In other words, Ulysses documents Dante's self-awareness: Dante *knows* that, in constructing a system whose fiction is that it is not fictional, he has given himself a license to write the world, to play God unchecked'). On Petrarch's weaponising of Ulysses to undermine Dante while simultaneously praising him, cf. Moevs, 'Subjectivity and Conversion', p. 250 ('By making Dante the Ulysses whom

The journey of Dante's Ulysses ends in shipwreck: having just caught sight of Purgatory in the southern hemisphere, their ship is battered by violent waves, '[b]is über uns das meer zusammenschlug' (*Inf.* xxvi: 142; x/xi: 43). George had previously staged this kind of Ulyssean shipwreck in one of his early prose shorts ('Die Barke') belonging to the cycle 'Träume', previously having appeared in the *Blätter für die Kunst* under the rubric 'Night-Mare'.¹³⁶⁶ In 'Die Barke', the *Ich* finds itself 'mitten auf dem meer in nässendem sturm' (xvii: 26), and the short text, in five swift, expressionistic and doom-laden sentences, rolls inevitably towards the climax in the immanent, pathos-filled future tense of death: 'Da aber erschlaffte der frost meine finger mein wille lahmte sodass ich losliess. Und die barke sank und die wellen schlugen drüber und wir werden alle sterben' (xvii: 26). The image of the waves closing over is suggestive of Ulysses' shipwreck as recounted by Dante. George's poem thus has quite an ideologically- and poetologically-rich background. The difference to Dante's Ulysses is that George's own Ulyssean undertaking receives the angel's divine authorisation (l. 8, v: 12), which Ulysses in the *Commedia* never had. The journey is vouched for by a higher instance – the Georgean speaker has been subordinated to 'des herren joch' (v: 13) and initiated into 'das schöne leben' (v: 10) and is headed towards a community unlike Dante's

Dante condemned, Petrarch is in a sense stripping Dante of the powerful mythology he created around his own literary project: he is saying that Dante, in reality, did not and could not do more than what Petrarch or any writer can do, which is to establish and stabilize one's presence in the world, the consequence of which is literary glory'). Cf. also Picone, 'Il sonetto CLXXXIX', pp. 166-67 and Theodore Cachey Jr., 'From Shipwreck to Port', p. 38: 'Indeed, he only just "begins to despair of port": "Tal ch'incomincio a desperar del porto" (189, 14). From this perspective, Passa la nave mia can be said to represent Petrarch's most powerful and enduring rewriting of Dante's Ulysses "without shipwreck"; and this aspect of the poem is undoubtedly central to any account of its subsequent iterability and translatability in the tradition of world literature'. Cf. too Kircher, *The Poet's Wisdom*, pp. 186-87 and Boysen, *Nothingness, Negativity and Nominalism*, pp. 27-28 on the subject.

¹³⁶⁶ 'Die Barke' appeared in *Blätter für die Kunst* 1.3 (1893). See the editors note in the 'Anhang' to xvii: 111.

Ulysses, headed out for knowledge of '[d]er sonn-rückwärtigen unbewohnten festen' (X/XI: 42).¹³⁶⁷

If Petrarch suffers interminably under Amor's 'pityless yoke' (*Rvf* 62:10), the angel's yoke is for his own benefit, even if in a moment of temptation at an early stage of his aesthetic education, as the fourth 'Vorspiel' poem recounts, the *Ich* yearns to be rid of it: 'Dass mich des herren joch nicht mehr bedrücke!' (v: 13). There, the angel is presented as a 'fahnschwinger' like Petrarch's banner-bearing *Amor* (*Rvf* 140:4), but unlike Amor, who drives the Petrarchan subject mad with love, the angel pulls the straying *Ich*, who was yearning for intimacy with some mere mortal, 'zurück in seinen bann' with a swift gesticulation of his finger.¹³⁶⁸ That poem continues to invest the angel with Christological attributes, further distinguishing him from Petrarchan *Amor*.¹³⁶⁹ Unlike Petrarch's 'master, no, my foe' (*Rvf* 189: 4), the angel is a conceptually opposed, redemptive figure, and here begins in a truly systematic fashion George's Dantean overwriting of his Petrarchan inheritance.

xi. The Mountain in the South

Our Georgean-Ulyssean sailor ends up at the 'gelobten port' on a 'stillen insel' surrounded by a sky of 'reiner bläue'. Let us recall that the final thing Ulysses (in Dante's account) sees before his shipwreck is a glimpse of the island upon

¹³⁶⁷ DiMassa, in his chapter on Gerhart Hauptmann, emphasises the significance of the Ulysses episode in the German Dante reception and for the Neoromantics particularly given the centrality of 'matters of rhetoric', see DiMassa, *Dante in Deutschland*, p. 116.

¹³⁶⁸ Cf. Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 161.

¹³⁶⁹ A reference to John 21.15, in which Jesus asks Simon Peter repeatedly if he loves him, rounds off the fourth 'Vorspiel' poem (Cf. Oelmann, *SW*, v: 'Anhang', p. 105 and Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 161) and continues the biblical references that are interwoven into the 'Vorspiel's own angelology, as in the prior seafaring poem, where the angel calms the tempest with a wave of his hand (v: 12), which as Oelmann points out references the Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 8. 23-28, Mark 4. 35-41, Luke 8. 22-25). Cf. Oelmann, 'Anhang' to *SW*, v: 105 and David, *Stefan George*, p. 188. The angel of course is not Christ-like, theologically speaking, he is aesthetically Christ-like.

which Purgatory sits.¹³⁷⁰ When the pilgrim and Virgilio climb out of Hell and arrive at Purgatory, furthermore, the defining colour of the far-reaching skies is a pure blue akin to the vision in the 'Vorspiel':

Der sanfte glanz vom östlichen saphire
Sich durch die heitren lüfte hin verstreute
Rein bis hinauf zum obersten reviere
(X/XI: 48; *Purg.* I: 13)

In the seventh 'Vorspiel' poem the angel directs the Georgean speaker towards the mountain, so that he will be better able to look down and judge the state of things in the valley below (v: 16). Eventually, he comes down from his 'hohen haus' on the mountain and, although alienated amongst '[d]en vielen', manages to find his tribe (v: 23). Morwitz relates this to the 'Siedlergang' in *Pilgerfahrten*, and it would indeed seem as if George's *Ich* here is revealing retrospectively the truth of the figure in that volume: what at the time seemed a literary fable, a poetic 'mask', is now fulfilled in the life of the *Ich*.¹³⁷¹

¹³⁷⁰ 'Als ich dann einen durch entfernung fahlen
Bergzug von einer solchen höh entdeckte
Wie ich bis dahin schaute noch niemalsen'
(X/XI: 42; *Inf.* XXVI: 133-35)

Camerini identifies the mountain as Purgatory in his commentary, *La Divina Commedia*, 130.

¹³⁷¹ Although, as Pirro argues, the 'Multiplizierung Identität schaffender Referenzen des lyrischen Ich' and the 'Entsubjektivierung dieser konstruktivistischen Strategie' always had 'den Wahrheitsgehalt der dichterischen Existenz zum Gegenstand' (Pirro, 'Pilgerfahrten', p. 54), in *Pilgerfahrten* that poetic *Ich* was still somehow abstract (although Gundolf, *George*, p. 74 argues that the pilgrim is 'eine bestimmtere Gestalt' than those figures of *Hymnen*). In *Siedlergang* (II: 32), for example, George maintained the split between his own poetic *Ich* and that of the pilgrim a split in the narrative between third person report and the 'Ich' emerging only in quotation marks, a case study of George's processes of self- 'Erweiterung,' 'Distanzierung,' 'Versachlichung' and 'Steigerung'. (Gundolf, *George*, p. 74). By the time of *Der Teppich des Lebens*, George's *Ich* becomes more consistently the voice of a poet-prophet-master-to-be. Cf. Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, p. 98: 'The poet's self-stylization as master and prophet has come to define George in his biography and his aesthetics. It is problematic but deeply intertwined with the poet's coming to a sense of self and homosexual community'. Cf. Further Morgan's comments on this (p. 103).

The juxtaposition of the mountain and the sea is significant for two primary reasons. The first is that it has an immediate basis in George's Trecento forebears. The contrast of the hope-threatening, dangerous sea – temporal flux, 'ontological uncertainty',¹³⁷² a crisis of faith and physical battering – and the mountain clothed in the hope-inspiring rays of the sun – stable, massive, sublime, looking down 'mit ewig stummer Gleichgültigkeit [...] auf das bewegliche Leben zu ihren Füßen'¹³⁷³ – is, after the dark wood, the immediate geographical impression one receives from *Inferno* 1: the pilgrim is washed ashore and:

Nun angelangt an eines hügels grunde –
Er war die grenze eben jener klamme
Wo angst das herz mir traf mir einer wunde –
Sah ich hinauf und schaute auf dem kamme
Die strahlen schon sich breiten des planeten
Der uns zum ziele führt auf jedem damme . .
So dass die ängste etwas mir verwehten
Die auf dem see des herzens hingeflogen
Die nacht die ich verbrachte so betreten
Und wie ein mann der sich herausgezogen
Schwer-atmend an das ufer aus den riffen
Und umdreht nach den fährlich wüsten wogen:
So wandte sich mein geist im fliehn begriffen
Noch einmal rückwärts um die bahn zu schauen

¹³⁷² King, *Existence, Thought, Style*, p. 155 (borrowing the phrase from R.D Laing cited 155 n. 31).

¹³⁷³ The felicitous phrasing is Schelling's, *Die Weltalter. Fragmente* (1811), p. 24, not in reference to Dante.

Die nimmermehr lebendige durchschiffen.

(*SW*, x/xI: 7-8; *Inf.* I: 13-27)

The darkness of the contractive 'klamme' yields to the expansive daylight of salvation. The order of the angel in the 'Vorspiel' to take to the mountain reverberates in the later works as the image of the alpine hermitage of the *poeta vates*, observing and judging from above. It is evoked in *Der Siebente Ring* when the poet writes from the perspective of up high ('Blöd trabt die menge drunten · scheucht sie nicht!', VI/VII: 12), and in *Das Neue Reich*, where the reported speech of a desperate, scornful voice demands the poet to go

noch einmal zum berg zu deinen geistern
Und bring uns tröstlicheren spruch der löse
Aus dieser trübsal!
(IX: 29)

to which the poet, figured here in his mountainous hermitage as a mediator between heaven and earth, responds:

Was soll hier himmels stimme wo kein ohr ist
Für die des plansten witzes? was soll rede
Vom geiste wo kein allgemeiner trieb ist
Als der des trogs?
(IX: 29)

and on he continues in his own scornful list of modernity's disasters. In the volume's enigmatic, apocalyptic, Maximin-governed poem 'Die Winke' (IX: 36), his devotees are described as those blessed seven who 'spähten von dem berg ins land ..'

The blessed seven itself alludes back to another poem from *Der Siebente Ring*, the poem of the times entitled 'Die Tote Stadt' (VI/VII: 30). It is here that the civilisational divide between unholy modernity and the untainted, blessed few is figured in the juxtaposition of a holy 'mutterstadt [...] vergessen von der zeit' high up on a mountain, with the decadent port city by the sea, full of '[d]ndlosen strassen drin mit gleicher gier | Die menge tages feilscht und abends tollt', in what Jan Andres calls 'eine große Kulturallegorie'.¹³⁷⁴ In this poem, the sea, and by extension the port city, comes to embody the emerging globalised world of trade and travel, of 'ungebändigten Kapitalismus'.¹³⁷⁵ The port becomes the representative centre of modernity's extractive exploitation of nature and the ensuing excess of materialist consumption: 'Die weite bucht erfüllt der neue hafen | Der alles glück des landes saugt ·' (VI/VII: 30). The lexical choice of the Germanic 'hafen' contrasts with the redemptive Latinate 'port' in the 'Vorspiel'. 'Hafen' occurs with neutral or often negative valency in George's poetry, while 'port' occurs only twice, once positively-valued in the 'Vorspiel' poem above and once, with a more neutral value, in *Das Jahr der Seele* (IV: 70).¹³⁷⁶ The port in *Der Siebente Ring* is a portal to damnation, and its materialist wealth has no value to those blessed few upon the mountain. The dead city is governed by the moon, the emblem of cold,

¹³⁷⁴ Andres, 'Gegenbilder – Stefan Georges poetische Kulturkritik in den "Zeitgedichten" des "Siebenten Rings"', p. 50.

¹³⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁷⁶ There is talk of a 'verwunschnen hafen' in 'Vorspiel' poem xv (v: 24) and in *Der Siebente Ring* it is elsewhere associated with the noise of urbanity – 'des hafens lärm' (VI/VII: 142). In 'An die Kinder des Meeres' from *Das Neue Reich* there is however talk of an 'edlen hafen'. Perhaps it is unsurprising, given the New Kingdom's goal of redeeming and renewing Germanic culture. Cf. Bock, *Wort-Konkordanz*, p. 253 ('hafen') and p. 448 ('port').

anaemic, reflected light ('ein mond | Von glitzernden und rauhen häuserwänden ·',
ll. 2-3) while the ancient mother city, with visionary dreamers as its inhabitants,
strives for the direct warmth of suns:

Die stille veste lebt und träumt und sieht

Wie stark ihr turm in ewige sonnen ragt ·

[...]

Sie spürt kein leid · sie weiss der tag bricht an

(ll. 9-10, 14)¹³⁷⁷

Andres characterises this language as apocalyptic and prophetic, referencing the increasing importance of apocalyptic tradition for literature at the turn of the century, linking specifically the poem's talk of the 'ödes weh' to Old Testament prophecies about plagues.¹³⁷⁸ Of course, the port dwellers' lament "'Uns mäht ein ödes weh und wir verderben | Wenn ihr nicht helft – im überflusse siech' (ll. 17-18) is George's strategy of repositioning his enemies to be beset as he himself was

¹³⁷⁷ The traditional imagery that posits the moon as merely reflected, 'leftover' light is one very much operative in Dante. Christian Moevs (*The Metaphysics of Dante's Comedy*) brilliantly captures the spiritual stakes of this imagery in his discussion of the opening simile of *Paradiso* 29, in which the sun and the moon are described as being in perfectly balanced alignment for an unfathomable instant in time, worth quoting in full: 'The balance the simile describes is between the sun and the moon in opposition. As the invariant and unfailing source and sustainer of cosmic light and life, the sun, Dante says in the *Convivio* (3.12.7), is the most worthy exemplar of God; indeed the sun god, Apollo, is the god of light, understanding, pure intellect, revelation, prophecy, divine inspiration, and salvation, attributes that make him an image of Christ, as well as the presiding deity of the *Paradiso*, which opens by invoking him. The realm of the inconstant moon, of the contingent re-reflection of the light of the sun, is Diana's or Persephone's kingdom: finite being, memory, mind, nature, change, ephemerality, temporality, shadow, mortality. As we saw in the second section of chapter 4, the moon is thus marked (at least to sublunar vision) with the dark signs of difference and otherness, the obscuring of light that leads to the sin of Cain and to death. The balance between the moon and the sun, belted together (*cinto*) by the horizon, is the balance or nexus between the contingent world and the ground of its being; it is the yoking together of the mortal and the divine in the human being, a "yoking" perfectly revealed in Christ. This balance or nexus thus has a moral dimension: it is also, in every finite (created) intellect, the ambiguous or undecided balance between day and night, between the eternal and the temporal, between the self-subsistent and the contingent, between self-knowledge and the hypnosis of finite being' (p. 154).

¹³⁷⁸ Andres, 'Gegenbilder', pp. 51-52. Andres.

prior to poetic-revelation and mastery (as in *Die Fibel*, 'auf öden düstren bahnen', I: 13). In 'Kunfttag I' (VI/VII: 90), the first poem of the 'Maximin' cycle, he evokes the outset of *Inferno*:

Du kamst am letzten tag
Da ich von harren *siech*
Da ich des betens müd
Mich in die nacht verlor
(italics added)

Now post-angel and post-Maximin he is safe in the 'reinen odem' of the 'höhe' ('Die Tote Stadt', I. 19). The notion of an imminent daybreak is furthermore consistent with the anti-Petrarchan thrust of George's 'Vorspiel', his dark clouds ceding to 'reiner bläue dort' (v: 12).

George's angel thus leads him to a poetic purgatory (as the angels in Dante's *Purgatory* do, ferrying the souls to the shore of the island, see *Purg.* II), a place of spiritual redemption and renewal, in order to become 'pure and made ready to rise to the stars' (*Purg.* xxxiii: 145), or rather to beget a star of his own. And indeed, in the retrospective sixth and final poem of 'Auf das Leben und den Tod Maximins', this purgatorial sense of newness and conversion is linked definitively with the mountain: 'Ich sah vom berg aus ein erneuter' (VI/VII: 104).

In Dante the mountain of Purgatory is in the southern hemisphere, and it is likely that, correspondingly, George's island is ideologically southern. Let us recall momentarily George's interest in shores – in *Das Jahr der Seele* the lyric speakers

make reference to a 'boot' and a 'kahn' (IV: 33, 19)¹³⁷⁹ – and the voyaging metaphors have often directed him towards the liminality of shoreline, a point of crossing where ground meets water, the boundary between states.¹³⁸⁰ In the early poetry's many wanderings, the south is often a point of interest. 'Der Herr der Insel' (*Buch der Hirten- und Preisgedichte*, III: 18), with recourse to Baudelaire's albatross, describes a southern island whose mythic aura is destroyed upon the arrival of colonising seafarers.¹³⁸¹ In *Hymnen*'s 'Nachmittag' the scene is set with reference to the 'südenklare luft in mittagstille' (II: 14), while in *Pilgerfahrten* the pilgrim's peregrinations are full of doubt, potentially self-deceiving

Der ost wie der süd
 Ein täuscher ihm war
 Und nun ist er müd
 (II: 44)

The 'Überschriften und Widmungen' of *Das Jahr der Seele* contain a reference to the poet's soul venturing south:

Ich liess in stätten innig hoher sitten
 Und in den süden meine seele wandern

¹³⁷⁹ For the 'Schiffahrtmetaphorik' in epic and lyric poetry, with which George would have been more than familiar (via Homer, Horace, Dante et al.) cf. Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*, pp. 138-41. Cf. Heath King, *Existence, Thought, Style*, p. 136, also citing Curtius, for the 'departure from terra firma'.

¹³⁸⁰ On this see Ockenden, 'Voyaging with a Concordance', pp. 54ff. In the '*Legenden*' the 'ufer' marks this rather obviously (I: 83/90).

¹³⁸¹ Baudelaire, 'L'Albatros', *Les Fleurs du Mal* 2 (*Flowers*, p. 14). On Baudelaire's Albatross as an intertext cf. Wolfgang Christian Schneider, 'Das Buch der Hirten- und Preisgedichte', in *Stefan George – Werkkommentar. Studien und Interpretationen zu sämtlichen Dichtungen und Übertragungen*, ed. by Jürgen Egyptien (de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 97-123 (p. 106).

Wo sie gekrönt den martertod erlitten

(iv: 50)

Is this crowning of the poet's soul a vague allusion to Petrarch's own poetic coronation in Rome in 1341? As a form of martyrdom, it is nevertheless ambivalent, conjoining poetic success with a type of death. The south is the promise of some sunny cultural glory, be it in the past or the present: 'Von süden weht es' as a lyric from *Der Siebente Ring* perfectly captures it (vi/vii: 139). Italy, as discussed by Pensa, often figures as a 'land des rausches'.¹³⁸²

xii. The City in the South

Der Teppich des Lebens takes precautions against over-idealising the south, however. Three poems make explicit reference to Rome or its surroundings, and two more continue to evoke its associated scenery and atmosphere. The angel instructs the *Ich* in the fifth 'Vorspiel' poem to draw inspiration from the 'einfachen gefilden' of the poet's homeland, to find in them '[d]en hauch der den zu kühlen frühling lindert' (v: 14).¹³⁸³ The homeland landscape bears the secret, not a far-off

¹³⁸² Pensa, 'Stefan George e l'Italia', p. 231. The epic culmination of the final stanza of the ninth 'Zeitgedicht' from *Der Siebente Ring* links Germanic renewal to the south in the form of Friedrich II of Hohenstaufen

'Vor allen aber strahlte von der Stauffischen
Ahnmutter aus dem süden her zu gast
Gerufen an dem arm des schönen Enzio
Der Grösste Friedrich· wahren volkes sehnen ·',
(vi/vii: 23)

¹³⁸³ The angel also warns him against further precarious journeys on seas and up mountains:

'Du wirst nicht mehr die lauten fahrten preisen
Wo falsche flut gefährlich dich umstürmt
Und wo der abgrund schroffe felsen türmt
Um deren spitzen himmels adler kreisen'
(v: 14)

The cautioning away from further seafaring might perhaps explain why George had to renumber the poems, having originally placed 'Vorspiel' III (the Petrarchan seafaring poem) after poem V in the original publication of them in *Die Blätter für die Kunst* 4.1-2. In the *Blätter* however the poems

romanticised notion of ancient Italy: 'Du findest das geheimnis ewiger runen | In dieser halden strenger linienkunst' (v: 14). There is no doubt an autopoetological element at play here, for the 'Teppich des Lebens' sub-cycle opens precisely with a self-referential ekphrasis of its 'kahle linien' (v: 36) that bound the universe of the work and captures the irresolvable 'rätsel der verstrickten' (l. 7). The lyric *Ich*'s reply to the angel affirms the latter's teaching by renouncing any need for the mythically romantic lure of Venice and Rome, standing metonymically for Italy and the south:

›Schon lockt nicht mehr das Wunder der lagunen
Das allumworbene trümmergrosse Rom
Wie herber eichen duft und rebenblüten
Wie sie die Deines volkes hort behüten –
Wie Deine wogen – lebengrüner Strom!«
(v: 14)

The conversion to the Rhineland, with its own ancient mysteries ('hort') and sensual immanence (there's a hint of the Symbolist nose for olfactory abundance here), and away from the temporal and spatial distance of the south, is simultaneously a conversion to a new poetics.¹³⁸⁴ There will no longer be a Petrarchan wandering, for the figure of the angel now provides stability, a 'principle of intelligibility', through which the poet becomes, in Gundolf's words, an

appeared unnumbered and under the heading 'Seit der ankunft des engels'. Cf. Oelmann's note in the 'Anhang', v: 105.

¹³⁸⁴ Morwitz links the 'linienkunst' to the 'strengen linien der rheinischen Landschaft', *Kommentar*, p. 161. Cf. Thiel, 'Fluß und Meer als Todesort', p. 12.

‘Ausgeglichen[e]r’, an ideal formerly unrealised in George’s (Types-1 and -2) Petrarchisms, his figures chronically suffering from unbalanced dispositions.¹³⁸⁵

This turn in poetics occasions a turn to German figures in the ‘Teppich’ proper. The works of Jean Paul, for instance, despite himself being a great admirer of the south, bring ‘uns Stets-wandern’ (v: 53) home, that is, to Germany.¹³⁸⁶ A poem about wayfarers to Rome (‘Romfahrer’, v: 50) incidentally ends up as a counter-poem to Petrarch, who in a famous Rome sonnet (‘The old man takes his leave, white-haired and pale’, *Rvf* 16) compares himself to an old pilgrim journeying to Rome, ‘pursuing his desire’ (l. 9) to gaze upon the Veil of Veronica and contemplate Christ’s face. The Petrarchan speaker similarly goes searching to find an image of Laura’s form in another (ll. 12-14). The speaker in George’s poem, meanwhile, admonishes the pilgrim figures for praising Rome more than ‘die heimat’ (l. 4) and distances himself from them (Rome is deictically kept abroad via the spatial adverb ‘Dort’, ll. 5, 7). If Petrarch’s pilgrim has the face of Christ, miraculously imprinted onto the cloth of Veronica’s veil, as the object of his desire, George’s pilgrims are likewise transfixed by the image of a man, but one not quite as divine: ‘Und ewig fesselt eure trunknen seelen | Wenn auch verderbenvoll der schöne buhle . . .’ (ll. 8-9). Egyptien suggests this figure be linked to the young prostitute of the later ‘Porta Nigra’ poem, thus adding a high degree of irony to the present poem, which compared to Petrarch’s would banalise the sublime sacrality

¹³⁸⁵ Freccero’s phrase (‘principle of intelligibility’), ‘The Fig Tree and the Laurel Tree’, p. 35. For Petrarch as the master of the ‘art of imbalance’ see Gragnolati and Southerden, *Possibilities of Lyric* (ICI Press, 2020), p. 9. See the traditional idea of the ‘precariously balanced type of personality’ required for the artist in chapter V (‘Genius, Madness, and Melancholy’) in Rudolf and Margot Wittkower, *Born under Saturn: The Character and Conduct of Artists: A Documented History from Antiquity to the French Revolution* (W.W. Norton & Company, 1969), pp. 98ff. In relation to the Master-angel’s teaching Gundolf (*George*, pp. 174-75) writes of the lyric *Ich*: ‘Der Ausgeglichenere verlernt das Schweifen und Wandern, die “lauten Fahrten”, die friedlose Suche nach buntem Draußen: an des Engels Seite erkennt er den Sinn des zugemessenen Raumes, den Zauber der Heimat: das Geheimnis seines Gesetzes in dem Lande dem er zugeboren ist (V)’.

¹³⁸⁶ Egyptien, ‘Der Teppich des Lebens’, p. 291.

sought by the old pilgrim to Rome, replacing the desired image of Christ in the Trecento with that of a 'Lustknaben' in the nineteenth century, if we accept Egyptien's reading of 'der schöne buhle'.¹³⁸⁷ George's other Rome-poem, 'Feld vor Rom' (v: 68) asks the question: should one be less sad amidst these decrepit ruins, 'vor aufgehaufem prunke' (l. 5)? For Petrarch Rome and its ruins exerted endless fascination, but George's poem presents a certain disillusionment with what Mazzotta calls Petrarch's '*aesthetics of ruins*'.¹³⁸⁸

xiii. 'Gestalt' in *Der Teppich des Lebens*

Scholars have long pointed out the increasing Dantean aspects of George's later works, some of which it will be the task of the next, final chapter to examine. Our Petrarchan journey now ends, George would have us believe, in the formally Dantean architecture of *Der Teppich des Lebens*, where contingency is neutralised in 'dieser halden strenger linienkunst' (v: 14), where the ring by necessity fits the finger (*Par.* xxxii: 52-57). This Dantean interpretation was already part and parcel of Georgean ideology, bolstered by Gundolf's monograph that dedicates page after page to interpreting the 'Vorspiel' with positive comparison to Dante and Goethe. According to Gundolf, George unites form and content in the proclamation of the

¹³⁸⁷ Egyptien, 'Der Teppich des Lebens', p. 290: 'Es erscheint mir als ein Euphemismus, wenn Morwitz in dieser Gestalt ein Symbol für Rom sehen will (vgl. EM I, 189), eher wird man an einen Lustknaben wie im Gedicht *Porta Nigra* (SW, VI/VII, 16 f.) zu denken haben'. Egyptien's hypothesis is totally reasonable in the context of the history of the 'Grand Tour', for which Italy and Rome, with all its other culturally educational aspects, also became known as a 'hotbed of homosexuality' as Emily Thomas calls it (*The Meaning of Travel* (Oxford University Press, 2020)), p. 79; cited for discussion by Ellie Anderson in an episode of the *Overthink* podcast ('Travel', 29 July 2025, time stamp ca. 18:30 onwards)). See, for a more detailed investigation, Chiara Beccalossi, 'The "Italian Vice": Male Homosexuality and British Tourism in Southern Italy', in *Italian Sexualities Uncovered, 1789-1914*, ed. by Valeria Babini, Chiara Beccalossi and Lucy Riall (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) pp. 185-206.

¹³⁸⁸ Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch*, p. 22, and further: 'He perceives discontinuities at the heart of the tradition, which someone like Dante would still view as a uniform reality; he recognizes the pastness of the past in the sense that the monuments of the past appear to him as taciturn shadows of a shattered historical discourse, obscure signs of the withdrawal of what men have made into the opaque surface of the ground' (p. 22).

new law (the word 'Gesetz' appears some fifty-three times in Gundolf's 'Vorspiel' chapter, Dante some thirteen times).¹³⁸⁹ What Bianchi had called the volume's 'dantesche[] Baulehre' is justified by Gundolf's reading of George's new law: 'Darum ist das Vorspiel straff in Zahl und Maß gebannt, weil Zahl und Maß selbst schon Atemzüge dieses Gesetzes sind, und der Dichter dem es kund ward atmen, singen, gehen muß, laut und kraft dieses Gesetzes'.¹³⁹⁰ The unity of form and content identified by Gundolf in the *Teppich* is precisely the spiritual presence of the angel as the new law, which demands of the work,

daß es nicht nur geistig wahr sondern sinnlich schön nicht nur als Wissen sondern als Schau, nicht nur als Forderung sondern als Geberde, nicht nur als Innen sondern als Leib erscheine daß es zugleich sei was es künde, daß seine Form und sein Gehalt, sein Wert und sein Wesen eines seien.¹³⁹¹

This uniting of form and content is the achievement of a *Gestalt*.¹³⁹² The emphasis is on the work as both the vessel and the message itself, just as the poem 'Der Teppich' is itself an ekphrastic microcosm of *Der Teppich des Lebens* as a whole.

¹³⁸⁹ Gundolf, *George*, pp. 165-66. Cf. p. 163: 'Nicht das Ich und seine Grenze scheiden sich wie Faust und Mephisto, sondern das Selbst und sein Gesetz, wie Dante und Virgil, begegnen sich in diesem ewigen Paar. Wie der Faust und die Divina Commedia zeigt das Vorspiel den Sinn und das Heil des Menschen an dem Ringen der bedingten Person mit dem unbedingten Gesetz das sie als All erfährt. Diese Werke umfassen das All des einmaligen Ich: den Makrokosmos geformt vom Mikrokosmos' (Cf. Fitton, 'Trost und Beispiel', p. 226,)

¹³⁹⁰ Gundolf, *George*, p. 166. Bianchi, *Dante und Stefan George*, p. 7.

¹³⁹¹ Gundolf, *George*, p. 165.

¹³⁹² In Rossi's detailed examination of the idea in *Gesamterkennen*, discussing Wolters' programmatic essay from 1911, he draws attention to the essential nature of a *Gestalt*, as something 'Sich-Selbst-Erzeugendes' with its own inner 'Entelechie' (p. 199), to impact its surrounding environment, so that it becomes a kind of self-propagating process: a *Gestalt* forms another *Gestalt* and so on. This impact, he goes on to determine, lies behind the George Circle's pedagogy: 'Hinter Wolters Theorie der *Bildung des Gleichen* steht folglich die pädagogische Überzeugung, dass nur Gestalt Gestalt erwecken kann' (p. 200). This likely lies behind Gundolf's emphasis of emergent *Gestalt* in the *Teppich*, given that in this volume the lyric *Ich* receives knowledge from the angel which it must then transfer to its own followers.

In Gundolf's reading, the angel supercedes all the prior instances of higher communication (such as *Hymnen's* 'herrin') because he is eternally present and arising from within the poetic self. The confrontation with the angel in Gundolf's reading is the poet's staging of humanity's dual nature, the 'Zweieinigkeit des Menschen' previously found in the Greeks' conception of Dionysus, in Christ, in Dante's Beatrice and more recently in Zarathustra.¹³⁹³ The law of the 'schöne leben' that emerges from this encounter, is 'der Weg des Heils' or, as Gundolf goes on to proclaim,

der Anfang einer Vita Nuova. Sein Gesamtdasein hatte einen neuen Lenker, ja überhaupt jetzt erst einen Lenker, ein immer gegenwärtiges, sichtbares Geheiß. An stelle der einmaligen Erscheinung, die schenkte und verschwand, den Einsamen seinem dunklen Selbst und ihrer hellen Weihe überlassend, trat jetzt der ewige Begleiter, der sichtbare Daimon..¹³⁹⁴

Here is the confirmation of George's fundamentally Dantean endeavour. Gundolf, still, is quick to ensure that the influence and analogy are not one to one, downward from Dante to George. He consistently brings George into comparison with both Dante, poet of God, and Goethe, poet of the World, so that each emerges with his own poetic jurisdiction, George's being that of life: 'Dantes Gesetz hieß: schaue Gott .. Goethes: werde Welt .. Georges: gestalte Leben..¹³⁹⁵ 'Leben' seemingly synthesises the best out of both worlds, obtaining elements of the corporeal and the spiritual, as if George himself is the synthesis that reconciles the two former

¹³⁹³ Gundolf, *George*, p. 163.

¹³⁹⁴ Gundolf, *George*, pp. 164, 160.

¹³⁹⁵ Gundolf, *George*, p. 165.

poets, supplementing them with each other in his more advanced form, the Master, like God ('Gott') forming life (Goethe's 'welt') from above.

It is worth pausing here to consider the mechanics of literary reception more carefully. Gundolf's chosen word, 'der Daimon' refers to the angel, but the appearance of this one daemon covers over two others – his literary forebears. By establishing the commonality between these three poets, even in his nuanced differentiation, Gundolf is in a sense enacting on George's behalf the process of daemonization described by Bloom in *The Anxiety of Influence*, the process that 'attempts to expand the precursor's power to a principle larger than his own, but pragmatically makes the son more of a daemon and the precursor more of a man'.¹³⁹⁶ The 'daemonic vision' is that 'in which the Great Original remains great but loses his originality, yielding it to the world of the numinous, the sphere of daemonic agency to which his splendor is now reduced'.¹³⁹⁷ One should recall that Dante is named in the 'Vorspiel' as a source of 'trost und beispiel' (v: 27). This naming, however, relocates his comforting literary words to the past, it locks him in place in the eighteenth pillar of the structure of the 'Vorspiel' (the fact that it is a *Vor-spiel*, or mere prelude, likewise downplays his contemporary significance). The naming is simultaneously an act of forgetting or repression, of keeping Dante fenced for the time being while formally acknowledging him.¹³⁹⁸ Dante as the 'great Original' is 'de-individuat[ed]' and made a great precursor, whose poetic mission

¹³⁹⁶ Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, p. 106.

¹³⁹⁷ Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, p. 101.

¹³⁹⁸ Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, p. 102, citing Freud: 'The result is a kind of intellectual acceptance of what is repressed, though in all essentials the repression persists'.

was larger than himself and a mission that *equally* concerns our current poet, manifesting the *Gestalt* of his *schönes Leben*.¹³⁹⁹

xiv. Hesitating in the Desert: George's 'Verbal Figuralism'

In the previous chapter, the lexical item 'zag' marked the pilgrim's inability to proceed towards a union with his feminine companion, much as Petrarch's 'wavering desire' (*Rvf* 178: 6) keeps him from constancy. This 'zagen' was the *Ich*'s hesitancy to give in to his desires, given the Lady's disinterest (II: 35), and metapoetically it marked the poet's hesitation to commit to a heteronormative poetics. 'Zagen' is Virgil's accusation in his reproach of the pilgrim in the dark wood, when the lagging foot of his will keeps him from committing to the journey and overcoming any cowardly hesitation.¹⁴⁰⁰ This 'zagen' now undergoes the magic of George's 'verbal figuralism' and in the post-Dantean 'Vorspiel' it is remedied in the angel's new code of ethics:

Verweilst du in den traurigsten bezirken

Wo ruhmlos tat der starken wie der bleichen

Begraben wird so lenkt – wie ohn entweichen

¹³⁹⁹ Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, p. 107: 'Daemonization, which commences as a revisionary ratio of de-individuating the precursor, ends by the dubious triumph of yielding to him the whole of the ephebe's middle ground, or common humanity'.

¹⁴⁰⁰ 'Was also ist? Warum warum dies zagen?

Was nährest du im herzen solches grauen?

Warum gebricht es dir an freiem wagen?'

(X/XI: 15). George emphasises the idea of freedom in Dante's 'franchezza'

('Dunque: che è? perché, perché restai,

perché tanta viltà nel core allette,

perché ardire e franchezza non hai',

Inf. II: 121-23).

Furthermore, 'grauen' coincidentally appears in both texts (II: 35) – the pious gaze 'trotz ihrem grauen | Zu einer madonna von ebenholz'.

Zu jeder lust der leib – mein ruf zum wirken.

Die klare antwort steigt mit meiner sonne

Wenn du dich fragst: nach welchem winde kehren

Wo greifen da sich alle fäden queren

Wo schöpfen da es quillt aus jedem bronne?

Und leidest du am zagemut der väter

Dass der gestalten wechselnd buntes schwirren

Und ihre überfülle dich verirren:

Vernichtet dich die weltenzahl im äther:

So komm zur stätte wo wir uns verbünden!

In meinem hain der weihe hallt es brausend:

Sind auch der dinge formen abertausend

Ist dir nur Eine – Meine – sie zu künden.

(v: 19)

Thus here, a negatively-connotated lexical item ('zag'), which until the Dantean revelation of the 'Vorspiel' characterised the Georgean subject from his earliest Petrarchan beginnings ('Meine zager- und dulderstunden', l: 86), is redeemed by its rejection, ejection (*Verwerfung?*) and projection onto those whom the ideal ego

of the Georgian subject now casts himself as being in opposition to (the 'zagemut der väter'), no longer disoriented by possibility, as the second stanza suggests.¹⁴⁰¹

In *Der Teppich des Lebens*, two opposed poems contrast the figures branded 'Der Erkorene' and 'Der Verworfene' (v: 48-49). Critics have identified the chosen one as Friedrich Gundolf, and the reject as Hugo von Hofmannsthal, whose soul remains 'unbebaut und öd'.¹⁴⁰² That word, 'öd', once upon a time a predicate of the Petrarchan-Georgian subject's condition ('auf öden düstren bahnen', I: 13), is now projected onto the supposed lesser poet-other: 'in dir saugt ein gram: | Beschämt und unstät' (v: 49). Poor Hofmannsthal, condemned to carry the burden of what previously was George's psychic baggage – the cocktail of shame, grief and instability. This trend of rejecting-ejecting-projecting, *Verwerfung*, finds its cultural-critical form in *Der Siebente Ring* when the unholy mass of modernity is now plagued by 'ein ödes weh' ('Die Tote Stadt', VI/VII: 30), as discussed above, and where the artist Böcklin, with 'steter hoffnung', stands above 'öde fall und untergang' ('Böcklin', VI/VII: 15). Akin to Eliot's wasteland, George's '(Ein-)Öde' is a metaphor for modernity: 'Oed und leer das Meer'.¹⁴⁰³ In the desert, where

[n]othing beside remains. Round the decay

Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare

The lone and level sands stretch far away¹⁴⁰⁴

¹⁴⁰¹ Lacan, *Seminar I. Freud's Papers on Technique 1954-55*, pp. 43-44. Cf. Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, p. 65. Cf. also Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder*, p. 36 for 'projective identification' that is 'constitutive of the subject'.

¹⁴⁰² See the critical 'Anhang' to both poems, v: 113-14.

¹⁴⁰³ T.S. Eliot, *The Wasteland*, in *The Poems of T.S. Eliot*, vol. I, *Collected and Uncollected Poems*, ed. by Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue (Faber & Faber, 2015), p. 56. My thanks to Caitríona Leahy in conversation for reminding me of Eliot's quotation of Goethe.

¹⁴⁰⁴ Percy Bysshe Shelly, 'Ozymandias', quoted from <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46565/ozymandias> (accessed 16/10/2024).

one may find the decrepit remains of the odd archaic glory. Art, 'that colossal wreck', is a way of partially overcoming the relentless sand and testifying to former power. George takes this a step further, positing his new aesthetic Maximin-cult as what will make the desert bloom once more:

Trocknes und meer
Teilet ihr quer
Öden neu zu befelden.
(VI/VII: 63)

This phrasing that repeats the arrival of the male figure, and summer, in *Jahr der Seele*: 'Mit den welken seelen sollen | Sich die pfade neu beblümen' (IV: 33). In the poem cited above, the Petrarchan subject's ills are cured twofold by the angel's appearance: the world's fragmentary multitudes are reduced to a singular unifying principle of aesthetic form ('Eine – Meine'), and the earlier Petrarchan wanderings in the desert are halted, as Adrian Daub argues, by the angel's 'stätte', a place of permanence.¹⁴⁰⁵

This singular aesthetic solution to the flux of things is solidified in the following poem as eternal law: 'Nun spricht der Ewige: ich will! ihr sollt!' (V: 20).¹⁴⁰⁶ The angel is not a mere metaphor but a *Gestalt* capable of acting, and he redeems the image of the lily, which in *Pilgerfahrten* was a metaphorical 'böser engel!'

¹⁴⁰⁵ 'The *Bund* has a fixed *Stätte*. It is no longer transitory, and it is the property of an "I." And that I, that *Stätte* and poetic location become stabilized in tandem: The *Bund* now has a place, it has a speaker, and it endures, is forced into and kept in reality by the poet-leader's imperative', Adrian Daub, '»Ein Blitz, Für Uns«: Stefan George's Queer Dynasty', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 90.1 (2016), pp.135-59 (p. 148).

¹⁴⁰⁶ Cf. Kolk, *Literarische Gruppenbildung*, p. 235 who also cites this line in relation to the previous poem to highlight 'die Entfaltung einer sozialen Semantik von Meister und Jünger' and the 'Zentrumsposition des berufenen Führers'.

causing the pilgrim 'verwünschung' and 'tücke' (II: 48), and which was also associated with the Algabalian death cult ('Tote liljen und narzissen!', II: 67) and the slowly rusting relation of the *Jahr* ('Vom tore dessen eisen-lilien rosten', IV: 20): 'während er dies lächelnd sagte | Entfielen ihm die lilien und mimosen –' (V: 10).¹⁴⁰⁷ As a symbol it has transformed under the sign of the angel into an emblem of rejuvenating abundance and purgatorial purification ('Ich *badete* beglückt | Mein ganzes antlitz' V: 10, emphasis added).¹⁴⁰⁸ This education of the poet under the leadership of the angel finds its confirmation finally in the twenty-third poem, where the new collective community of faithful followers answers the poet-Master's prior doubts, asserting its readiness '[f]ür seinen ruhm in nacht und tod zu gehn!' (I. 16):

Wir sind dieselben kinder die erstaunt
 Vor deinem herrschertritt doch nicht verzagt
 Uns sammeln wenn ein waffenknecht posaut
 Dass in dem freien feld dein banner ragt.
 (IV: 32)

¹⁴⁰⁷ For the lily's association with seduction see Oelmann's note to 'Die frühe sonne küsst noch ohne feuer' in the 'Anhang', II: 117.

¹⁴⁰⁸ Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, p. 95 reads a hint of a 'threatening undertone' to the shower of flowers in light of the Algabalian background, seeing a desire for 'suicide brought on by the prohibition of homosexual love'. On the other hand, it is in the earthly garden of *Purgatorio*, where the Dante-pilgrim baths in the rivers Lethe and Eunoè, where lily-imagery, 'simbolo di purità' (Camerini commentary to lines 82-95, *La Divina Commedia*, p. 279), prominently occurs, one of the few cantos translated by George in full ('jeder mit der lilienkrone', x/xi: 88). Scartazzini's commentary, known to George (see Klusmann, 'Dante und Stefan George', 149 n. 11), similarly glosses the lilies while also suggesting the eschatological dimension ('giglio; probabilmente dal franc. fleur de lis. L'esser coronati di gigli significa la purità di dottrina nei libri del Vecchio Testamento, e fors'anco la fede nel venturo Messia', Scartazzini, *La Divina Commedia*, (op cit., comm. To lines 84-84, cited from Dante Lab Reader (<http://dantelab.dartmouth.edu/reader?reader%5Bcantica%5D=2&reader%5Bcanto%5D=29>))

Necessity, in the form of submission to a higher other in pursuit of a new ethics, is revealed as the condition of possibility of the freedom of the *schönes Leben*, the escape from *Verzagtheit*.¹⁴⁰⁹ Algabal's paradoxical dream ('Lass mich ungerühmt und ungehasst | Und frei in den bedingten bahnen wandeln', II: 68) is here realised.

xv. Putting Petrarch to Rest

Unlike Dante, who is kept in check in the 'Vorspiel', for Petrarch the final formal nail in the coffin comes in the 'Der Teppich des Lebens' cycle itself, in the series of 'Standbilder' poems closing the cycle, which can be said to offer a final deconstruction of Petrarchan thematics that have informed, in varying degrees, George's poetics from *Die Fibel* to *Das Jahr der Seele*.

The 'Standbilder' present a series of seven statues that summarise and clear the way into the future for the poetic *Ich*. In doing so, they re-collect and revise various motifs and thematic issues that have been examined so far.¹⁴¹⁰ What they also do is orient the speaker palinodically in relation to his prior works.¹⁴¹¹ This is achieved by granting the statue a voice and allowing it to self-deconstruct with what

¹⁴⁰⁹ Cf. Schelling: 'Vor der sittlichen Freiheit geht die Nothwendigkeit nothwendig voran. Denn wenn jene nur da anzunehmen ist, wo eine Scheidung, Entscheidung statt findet, so muß ihr ein Zustand der Ungeschiedenheit also der Nothwendigkeit vorausgehen', *Die Weltalter. Fragmente* (1811), p. 95. Cf. Friedrich Gundolf: 'Wo sie die Nothwendigkeit erkennen da löschen sie gern ihr Ich aus und freuen sich brennstoff zu sein für die höhere flamme' ('Gefolgschaft und Jüngertum', cited from *Der George-Kreis. Eine Auswahl aus seinen Schriften*, edited by Georg Peter Landmann, 2nd edn (Klett-Cotta, 1980), pp. 78-81 (p. 80).

¹⁴¹⁰ Such as the attempts at reconciling the spirit and the flesh in 'Standbilder · Die Beiden Ersten', v: 54 (or alternatively formulated in Egyptien's words: 'die Grundhaltung von griechischer Antike und westeuropäischer Gotik', 'Der Teppich des Lebens', p. 293). Other motifs include the diamond and its crystalline link to tears, the passerby motif (v: 55), and the seafaring motif (v: 56).

¹⁴¹¹ Cf. Egyptien, 'Der Teppich des Lebens', p. 294, regarding the fourth 'Standbild': 'Die gewählte Bildlichkeit erscheint als *locus classicus* eines Eskapismus im Zeichen des Ästhetizismus. George übt hier eine scharfe Selbstkritik an einer Werkphase, für die Gérardys apotheotische Formel "die schönheit die schönheit die schönheit" (BfdK II, 4, S. 113) als Leitmotiv Gültigkeit besaß'.

Egyptien calls 'einer massiven Desillusionierung' and a 'Selbst-Demontage'.¹⁴¹²

This disillusionment concerns in particular George's earlier works that presented a feminine other as a muse or guide to what the lyric self hoped was a higher life:

STANDBILDER · DAS DRITTE

Wie dacht ich dich mir schön · verhüllte frau!

Von welchem zauber dass du durch jedweden

Betrübten tag hindurch noch an ein eden

Den glauben wecktest hinter berg und bau!

Hat oft das allzu träge blut gestockt

Wie wusstest du mit einem blitz die untern

Die müden kranken irren zu ermuntern!

Wie ist die macht die stets uns fürder lockt ..

Du kind bemerktest nie: was euch befahl

So fortzuschreiten sei nur not und schauer ..

Sie färbten dir die fernen hügel blauer

Und qualen löst ich meist mit frischer qual.

Da du nicht länger säumen magst so heb

Die hülle – sie wird jezt dir nicht mehr frommen ..

Nun sieh was du die jahre hin genommen

Für demant-tüpfel schimmernd durchs geweb!

¹⁴¹² Egyptien, 'Der Teppich des Lebens', pp. 293, 294.

This is a highly ambivalent poem. The Lady (from stanza three) rips George's speaker – representative of all those questing selves in the early works – to shreds. At the same time, George's poetics going forward would not be sustainable if the Lady's advice was completely followed through on, for it would mean the total loss of 'Hoffnung und Utopie' (Egyptien) that his poetry goes on to pursue. And yet, her suggestion to shift to 'die gegenwärtige Notwendigkeit' is a typically Georgean emphasis on the here and now.¹⁴¹³ The Lady's veil is the catalyst of hope, awakening thoughts of a distant Eden, beyond 'berg und bau', and thus inciting pilgrimage, like Petrarch's old man 'pursuing his desire' (*Rvf* 16: 9). The veil plays with depth, with a suggestion of something secret and marvellous hidden beneath it, and the fantasy of the poem resides in the uncovering of the veil, the 're-velation' of banality – without actually fully removing the veil.¹⁴¹⁴

Das Jahr der Seele had seen the *Ich* go in search of what lies beneath the veil of nature (recall David's nature as the 'Schleier, der das Nichts bedeckt'), and the angel transported us to a purgatorial Eden under the sign of Dante.¹⁴¹⁵ Of course, in Eden Dante receives a similar scolding by Beatrice upon their reunion, one that also palinodically corrects his prior poetic and literary-philosophical pursuits that had led him astray from the proper path, to which she was originally

¹⁴¹³ Egyptien, 'Der Teppich des Lebens', p. 294: 'Sein anti-illusionistischer Gestus substituiert Hoffnung und Utopie durch Erkenntnis und Wissen, anders gesagt: Es lenkt den Blick von einem fernen Eden auf die gegenwärtige Notwendigkeit'.

¹⁴¹⁴ Or the fantasy of achieving an answer to the gap in the other between its demands and its desire, to put it in Lacanian terms. Cf. Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, pp. 123-24 on Lacan's third graph of desire. On *che vuoi?* cf. Lacan, *Écrits*, pp. 690/815. The poem is a fantasy of revelation, and not revelation itself. For if George took her advice, he would be left with the trauma of the Real, and no more poetry.

¹⁴¹⁵ David, *Stefan George*, p. 153.

leading him (this is the essence of Beatrice's rebuke in cantos 30 and 31). There, the pilgrim is more than once likened to a child being rebuked (*Purg.* xxx: 79; 31: 64) like our poet here, to whom the 'verhüllte frau' speaks ('Du kind bemerktest nie [...]'). The deficiency underlying his earlier pursuits of 'ein eden' (I. 3) only led to her forever churning out new pains ('Und qualen löst ich meist mit frischer qual' I. 12), attesting to what we have seen in the Georgean *Ich*'s journeying so far – endless variations on a theme, a quest for desire fulfilled which never is, and ever renewed after some kind of disappointment that demands he start again.¹⁴¹⁶

This statuesque '*donna petrosa*' goes on then to demystify the gift of the diamond that the Georgean *Ich* (and myself...) made such a great deal of back in the *Jahr*. In the final stanza she invites him to lift the veil that obscures – and thereby aesthetically transforms – what to him appeared as the twinkling stipple of diamonds underneath, to see them for what they really are: 'Nun sieh was du die jahre hin genommen | Für demant-tüpfel schimmernd durchs geweb!' The Lady's masterly function here is to undermine the aesthetic and ideological pretensions of the *Ich*'s former claim to grandiosity, where his tears and other impassioned affects ('aus gluten tränen schimmern') had worked to produce something aesthetically marvellous, 'die höchste meiner gaben: den demanten' (IV: 28). Beneath the fantasy, this 'verhüllte frau' would have the speaker believe, are simply tears – more 'qual', or the trauma of the Real, of a woman turned to stone.¹⁴¹⁷ Furthermore, what she demands is a literalisation of what previously was metaphorical, reversing the traditional structure of interpretation which seeks the 'spirit' beneath the veil, peering behind the *sensus litteralis* which is the surface of the stone and the

¹⁴¹⁶ Those pains ('dein ruf der qual', I. 12) were cured by the angel in the sixth 'Vorspiel' poem (V: 15).

¹⁴¹⁷ Cf. Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 193, who claims George personally confirmed that it was tears referenced to by the 'demant-tüpfel'.

flesh.¹⁴¹⁸ What she invites is to look under the veil of the aesthetic that turns transient tears into eternal diamonds and to see those diamonds for what they really are: transient signifiers of corporeal affect or, worse again, the traumatic Real no longer mediated by the layer of fantasy.

The fifth 'Standbild' further allows this *Donna petra* some harsher words:

STANDBILDER · DAS FÜNFTE

Ich bin es einzig die auch euch die klugen

Zur irre reisst · wenn meine lider schlugen

Sind eure festen bauten mürb und öd

Ihr ziehet hinter mir wie kinder blöd.

Euch selber fremd seid ihr nur meine knechte

Vergesst eure taten wünsche rechte ..

Ihr traget meine qual und nennt kein wie

Ein göttlich rasen zwinget euch ins knie.

Erfind ich euch die grausamsten gesetze

Dass keinen meiner lippe süsse letze

Der eine gunst genoss in meinem schoss:

Ihr fraget nicht .. ihr glaubt und duldet bloss.

¹⁴¹⁸ The veil is a traditional image of biblical interpretation. See e.g. Paul 2. Cor. 3: 14-15. For the mixture of Medusa-mythology and the Pauline hermeneutics of the veil see Freccero, *The Poetics of Conversion*, pp. 121-26 (and more broadly the chapter 'Medusa: The Letter and the Spirit'). A more condensed discussion of Freccero's argument is given by Durling in his commentary to *Inf.* IX: 61-63 (*Inferno*, p. 150), where the danger of Medusa for Dante is 'that of a kind of erotic fixation on the literal surface of texts, as opposed to a spiritual or allegorical view that sees beneath the veil'.

Ich bins die eure engen himmel ändert
Einmal in weite blut- und strahlumrändert ..
Dass euch der abgrund hallt wie schwacher schrei
Und todes fluch wie klingen der schalmei.
(v: 57)

The language is aggressive, the tone treacherous, the result of this Lady's machinations a consciousness alienated from itself ('euch selber fremd') and in total service to her cruel mastery and 'grausamsten gesetzen': they become her 'knechte', forced ('zwinget') to their knees, which builds a pointed contrast with the voluntary submission of the *Ich* before the angel in the 'Vorspiel', whose 'ehrengift' | Wird nicht im zwang errungen · dies erkenn!' (v: 11). Her 'grausamsten gesetze' are likewise directly opposed to the commandments of the angel, accepted with eagerness (v: 12). Her power is such that she makes the world desolate ('öd') in an instant, and entices even the clever ones off-course, 'zur irre'.

The pains of Petrarchan lyric consciousness are intimated here. She is, in effect, the negative Petrarchan mirror of the Dantean angel, petrified within the *Teppich's* gallery of statues – George has used the shield of Dante to reflect the Petrarchan Gorgon's gaze.¹⁴¹⁹

¹⁴¹⁹ Much as how Petrarch himself instrumentalises Dante's own gorgonic poetry (the *rime petrose*) and aims them back at Dante while downplaying the influence of Dante's other works, on this see Zygmunt G. Barański, 'Petrarch, Dante, Cavalcanti', p. 85 ('he has to shun Dante's Medusan lure') and p. 86: 'Suggestively, when the poet [Petrarch – JW] finally draws explicitly on Dante, it is to highlight the fact that he must cease doing so. [...] In this respect, Dante's overwhelming *petrosità* permits the *Canzoniere*, as with its camouflaging of the *Vita nova*, to hide its significant and now well-documented reliance on the *Commedia's* rich array of "non-harsh" elements, which, as a consequence, rather than recall their original author, appear as a natural part of Petrarch's personal lexicon; and when the origin of such elements in Dante is actually highlighted, this is usually done, as we have seen, to turn them against their creator'.

Klussmann rightly points out the male chauvinism of George's strategy here, contextualising it within the broader 'Anti-Feminismus' of the Circle and the works, in summary: 'Dem Dichter wird das Weib zu einer fremdartigen dämonischen Macht, die "den festen Bau" seines Werkes bedroht und ihn zum Knecht erniedrigen möchte, ihn, der sich vor allen zur Herrschaft berufen weiß'.¹⁴²⁰ That the feminine figure here receives a voice with which she can expose the lyric *Ich*'s naivety in the early works does not take from the fact that the *Ich* comes to internalise the lesson in surface-illusions enabled by the aesthetic veil, as the final, seventh statue-poem relates and simultaneously performs (a series of magical tricks ensnaring the reader within its spell). In *Die Fibel*, he was unable to grasp the veil ('.. weshalb nicht | Erfass ich den schleier mit forschendem finger?', *Erkenntnis*, I: 85), and in 'Weihe' (II: 10) he had to contend with his veiled 'herrin'. In the 'Traurige Tänze', veil imagery was implicated in his inability to establish a relationship, his song ('lied') '[i]st wie mein blick der nur umschleiert | In deinen blicken nicht erwidrung fand' IV: 91). Now he has received the 're-velation' of the angel (his 'bräutliches beginnliches entschleiern', v: 20), and wields the veil as the surface upon which he stages fantasy and desire: 'Ich werf ihn so [...] | So wie mein schleier spielt wird euer sehnen!' (v: 59).¹⁴²¹ This enacts a reversal of the

¹⁴²⁰ Klussmann, *Zum Selbstverständnis der Kunst*, p. 113.

¹⁴²¹ Precisely in the ability to manipulate the 'Schleier' and control the desires of his spectators ('euer sehnen!', v: 59). Aler, *Symbol und Verkündung*, p. 219, highlights this in his thorough commentary on the poem: 'So verzaubert ein großer Sprachkünstler, wenn er die Magie des Schleiers verkündet, auch uns'. See further page 224 for the intertextual references in the poem to George's earlier works, effecting 'eine fast mythische Monumentalisierung' of himself as poet. Cf. Egyptien, 'Der Teppich des Lebens', p. 298 who argues for this poem to be read as apart from the other 'Standbilder' given its poetological subject matter that links back to the opening poem of *Teppich*: 'Zunächst scheinen mir die beiden poetologischen Gedichte *Der Teppich* und *Der Schleier* einen Rahmen zu bilden und für sich zu stehen. Ich löse also Letzteres trotz der Zählung als siebentes aus den Standbildern heraus'. Egyptien is correct to do so also insofar as the numbers in the titles do not refer to the poems themselves but rather to the statues within them. Accordingly, the first poem is two 'Standbilder': 'Standbilder · Die Beiden Ersten' (v: 54) so that there are actually only six poems in the series. There are also only six statues, or at least the seventh (v: 59) is

Lady's reversal of traditionally Dantean-Pauline hermeneutics that urges one to look beneath the veil. Where for Paul 'littera [...] occidit, Spiritus autem vivificat' (2. Cor. 3:6), and where the spirit resides underneath the stony surface, for the Lady, the disenchanting Real is harboured underneath the symbolic spirit, so that going beyond the surface kills the splendour of aesthetic superficiality.¹⁴²² George's program in the *Teppich* is to reverse this. The letter and the spirit are flipped, relative to the hermeneutic veil: no longer is the surface dead, it is now rather the domain of the spirit itself, the 'guter geist' (v: 12) of the angel proclaiming the *schönes Leben*, an artistic 'going forth of God upon these waters' (trans. Longfellow, *Par.* xxix: 21).¹⁴²³ The letter no longer kills, the poetic Word is rather the source of the life upon this tapestry. George, indeed, is on record stating that one cannot take his poems literally enough.¹⁴²⁴

ambiguous. Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 196 claims it is a statue 'einer Frau, die einen Schleier in ihrer Hand schwingt' and extrapolates the artistic allegory from there. Egyptien, 'Der Teppich des Lebens', p. 296 reads it poetologically. Contra Morwitz, it must be noted that this poem is not entitled 'Standbilder' like the others, simply 'Der Schleier · Das Siebente'. The emphatic gestural presence of the *Ich* in the poem highly suggests that it is *George's Ich*, not that of a personified statue. Given what we know about the significance of the number seven in the following work, that seven is the number of his miracle, the number that completes the week of creation (cf. e.g. the six poems in 'Auf das Leben und den Tod Maxmins'), it suggests itself as a metapoetic foreshadowing of his planned use of the veil, although the immanent experience of Maximin, his revelations past, present, and future (cf. Bruno Pieger, 'Hölderlin und George – Eine Konstellation', in *Krise und Gemeinschaft: Stefan Georges Der Stern des Bundes*, ed. by Christophe Fricker (Vittorio Klostermann, 2017), pp. 115-46 (pp. 116-17)), are recounted in the *Stern* where he is a 'schleierloser' (VIII: 15).

¹⁴²² 'der Buchstabe tödtet, aber der Geist macht lebendig', cited from *Tetraglotton*. Cf. Erich Auerbach, 'Figura', in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur romanischen Philologie*, 2nd ed. by Matthias Bormuth and Martin Vialon (Narr Francke Attempto, 2021), p. 75.

¹⁴²³ Referencing Gen. 1:2: 'et spiritus Dei ferebatur super aquas', 'while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters', *NRSV*, as Durling points out (comment to this line, *Paradiso*, p. 589). The Henry Wadsworth Longfellow translation, cited here for syntax reasons, is available online at Digital Dante:

<https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/paradiso/paradiso-29/>

¹⁴²⁴ Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 30: 'Man könne seine Gedichte nicht wörtlich genug nehmen, pflegte der Dichter häufig zu sagen'. Cf. Likewise Robert Boehringer citing the poet in *Ewiger Augenblick* (Aarau, 1945), p. 39: "Die verse sind immer noch viel wörtlicher zu nehmen als man denkt" (cited in David, *Stefan George*, p. 474). It is perhaps apposite here to recall yet another anecdote recorded by Edith Landmann in her *Gespräche*, in which George and Robert Boehringer are debating about interpretations of Dante: "Nun will ich Euch noch etwas sehr Ketzerisches sagen, und dann will ich in mein Bett gehen: die Dinge sind manchmal schöner, wenn man sie nicht zu genau erforscht", *Gespräche mit Stefan George*, p. 112.

The tapestry of life, as the poem *'Der Teppich'* embodies it (v: 36), is itself what it means, what it says, as Aler argues, its form and content are one, its surface is its depth, its Word yokes 'Fleisch' and 'Geist' together 'als offenbare Gegenwart' as Gundolf writes.¹⁴²⁵ This lesson in tapestry-weaving allows the poetic speaker to create riddles, as Strathausen argues with regard to the poem *Der Teppich*, raising the poet to the idealised fantasy-position of the Master withholding the answers to the secrets of things.¹⁴²⁶

Finally, if the 'verhüllte frau' lambasting the *Ich* in the 'Standbilder' sub-cycle demands that *Ich* to lift the veil and see the pained reality underneath, this gesture is redeemed in the *Stern* when a disciple reports that his pains have been re-vealed ('Was einst verhohlen quälte ward entschleiert', VIII: 67) and dissipated by the Master's presence:

ich bleib und wechsele – meine stelle

In jeder deren glück mit dir gewährend

Und sachte überleitend wie das jahr ..

¹⁴²⁵ Gundolf, *George*, p. 168. Gundolf explicitly de-allegorises the *Teppich* in his commentary: 'Der Teppich des Lebens ist keine Allegorie deren Deutung hinter den Zeichen läge, aber auch kein Symbol das seine Einheit als Einheit darstellte: er ist ein Symbolgefüge, eine Gestaltenordnung, nicht Reihe, nicht Drama, nicht Bau – sondern allerdings am verwandtesten derjenigen Bilderverknüpfung nach der er benannt ist'. Gundolf, *George*, p. 182. Cf. Aler, *Symbol und Verkündigung*, p. 225: 'Die künstlerische Gestalt des Textes bestätigt und verdeutlicht auf diese Weise den Gehalt seiner eigenen Aussage, indem er das darstellt, wovon er spricht. Was das Gedicht meint, versinnlicht es auch. Georges Gedicht vom Schleier *ist* ein Schleier'. Similarly Martus, *Werkpolitik*, p. 629 (also with reference to Aler *ibid*, p. 221): 'dieser *Teppich* tut das, was er sagt: Er zeigt Verschlingungen und er besteht als Textura aus Verschlingungen, was wiederum die zyklische Form der Bezüglichkeit repräsentiert'. Cf. Strathausen, *The Look of Things*, p. 22, discussing the poem *Der Teppich*: 'George's poem claims to become alive because the meaning and being of life is always already inherent in the very language it speaks. The truth about "stepping out" of life's chaos is to step back into language'.

¹⁴²⁶ Strathausen, *The Look of Things*, pp. 14ff, p. 19: 'the coming alive of the work must be understood as an autonomous, self-initiating process that retrospectively creates the very riddle to which it provides a solution [...] The poem, however, much like the arabesque pattern of the carpet, infinitely recoils from such interpretative efforts, which immediately become ensnared in the loop of endless referral from signifier to signified, from words to patterns and patterns to words. And yet, apart from this playfulness, the poem nonetheless triumphantly declares to have given us the solution we sought'.

Schon trat ich schweigsam in die andre reige

(VIII: 67)

The growth of a disciple from one stage of life to another, as Morwitz reads it, is expressed with the naturalness of the year's smooth progression, as if the stagnant poetics of the *Jahr* have been transfigured in the *Bund*, capable of expressing both stasis and change ('ich bleib und wechsele'), one of the principles embodied by Maximin.¹⁴²⁷ Unlike in the *Jahr*, which leads nowhere, this *new* year of the soul in the light of Maximin allows for progressive growth, for remaining and changing simultaneously, healing the Petrarchan paradox of the 'process without progress' described by Greene.¹⁴²⁸

Given the scapegoating and vilifying of the figure of the feminine other, especially as *Das Jahr der Seele* and *Der Teppich des Lebens* conceive it, the strain of Shakespearian misogyny underlying his 'two loves'¹⁴²⁹ – his 'better angel' and his 'worse' women of the earlier works – overrides the potential reading in which the feminine emerges as the corrective voice, grounded in reality and seeing things for what they really are, beyond whatever aesthetic ideology the *Ich* invests in them.¹⁴³⁰ George fundamentally denies the feminine other access to the

¹⁴²⁷ Morwitz, *Kommentar*, pp. 373-74. As in the *Stern* (VIII: 77):

'Ich weiss von Einem nur der vielgestaltig
Sich auswächst will dass er vernichtet werde
Und auflebt jedesmal durch neue flamme'.

¹⁴²⁸ Greene, *Post-Petrarchism*, p. 55.

¹⁴²⁹ 'The better angel is a man right fair, | The worse spirit a woman coloured ill', William Shakespeare, 'Sonnet 144: Two loves I have of comfort and despair':

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/50651/sonnet-144-two-loves-i-have-of-comfort-and-despair> (Accessed 21/07/2025). For George's translation see *SW*, XII: 150. On this poem in the context of Georgian homosexuality discourse see Keilson-Lauritz, 'Stefan George's Concept of Love and the Gay Emancipation Movement', pp. 212-13.

¹⁴³⁰ The 'anti-illusionistischer Gestus' of the third 'Standbild' poem leads Egyptien to characterise it as an 'Exempel der Aufklärung' (Egyptien, 'Der Teppich des Lebens', pp. 293, 294). Cf. Rafael Winkler, Žižek's *The Sublime Object of Ideology: A Reader's Guide* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2024),

privileged world of the aesthetic, where the surface of reality is transformed into the marvellous world of creation, where tears can indeed become diamonds. She is petrified as a 'Standbild', in a zone without the transformative, transfiguring potential of fantasy.¹⁴³¹ We can divine the two conceptions of ideology examined by Žižek here in the 'verhüllte frau's approach and that of the *Ich*. The 'Standbild'-*Frau* might be said to be supplying a traditional Marxist critique of ideology, one that seeks to 'lead the naïve ideological consciousness to a point at which it can recognize its own effective conditions, the social reality that it is distorting, and through this very act dissolve itself.'¹⁴³² This is often figured through 'simple metaphors of demasking, of throwing away the veils which are supposed to hide the naked reality.'¹⁴³³ The *Ich*, on the other hand, refuses to be led by this procedure. Instead he elevates the ideological surface to the level of reality itself,

p. 32: "“Naivety” and “critique” are the terms between which the process of enlightenment (understood as a process of education) takes place. Enlightenment is the relentless drive to unmask illusions. Its aim is to raise consciousness out of its state of naivety and dogmatism and make it critically self-aware'. The point of view of reason is itself suspect; the notion that seeing things as they really are is not an ideological position, or one less invested with ideological energy, is itself naïve. Žižek's discussion (*The Sublime Object of Ideology*, pp. 125-26) of 'female' hysteria is relevant in this regard: not that the hysterical subject sees the 'reality' of things and has a privileged access to the truth, but rather understands the very contingency of those fantasies, which rather than restoring some reality opens up alternative possibilities, and makes the world questionable. Cf. similarly, Žižek's discussion of gender in Lacanian psychoanalysis in *The Indivisible Remainder*, pp. 157-158.

¹⁴³¹ The association of the 'modern woman' with Enlightenment reason and other progressive politics became programmatic in the George Circle, so that in the third volume of the *Jahrbuch für die geistige Bewegung* (1912), the introduction addresses an alleged 'V e r a c h t u n g d e s w e i b e s' (page V): 'Wir befeinden nicht die frau, sondern die "moderne frau", die stückhafte, die fortschrittliche, die gottlos gewordene frau. Gerade am mehr naturhaften teil zeigt sich die moderne verderbnis am abschreckendsten. Die moderne frau hat sich herausgestellt als die treueste vorkämpferin aller fortschrittlich ungeschichtlichen, platt humanitären, flach rationalistischen und flach religiösen ideen, ja sogar einige der schlimmsten wie die theosophie und die friedensbewegung sind gerade von weibern ausgegangen' (pp. V-VI). The passage labours on and on in the justification of its concern with feminist movements, exposing the root fear of the Circle, what's really eating at the boys in the *Kreis*: 'aus diesem entsubstanzierten, losgerissenen, reflektierten geschlecht kann nie wieder ein grosser mann geboren werden'. Klussmann, *Zum Selbstverständnis der Kunst*, p. 114 goes on to read forward from the 'Standbilder' into *Der Stern des Bundes*, where the difference between the sexes is made absolute and, as he says, ontological (discussing SW, VIII:96). Cf. too, on the issue, Osterkamp, 'Frauen im Werk Stefan Georges', pp. 30-33.

¹⁴³² Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 24.

¹⁴³³ Ibid., p. 25.

recognising that '[t]he mask is not simply hiding the real state of things; the ideological distortion is written into its very essence.'¹⁴³⁴ Why, then, does the *Ich* continue to wear the mask, continue to be 'guided by the fetishistic illusion'?¹⁴³⁵ Žižek proposes that the 'ideological fantasy' lies just as much in the act of doing (already suggestive in all the action words of George's *Schleier* poem, starting emphatically with 'Ich werf ihn so', v:59) as it does in the act of knowing (or of not knowing, of misrecognition), and in being aware of this to continue propagating the ideological spell nonetheless. For Žižek the cynic 'knows the falsehood very well, one is well aware of a particular interest hidden behind an ideological universality, but still one does not renounce it.'¹⁴³⁶ We need not think George is acting as if he does not know what he is doing. Why would he renounce it, when the 'ideological universality' is his very poetic vocation, propping him up as its charismatic, universal centre?¹⁴³⁷

We are back to his diamond – a gift of impenetrable writing, the poetic text as a kind of Derridean *pharmakon* – a gift and a 'Gift' (i.e. poison), 'poison and remedy' at once, Culler writes.¹⁴³⁸ His diamonds are no girl's best friend.

¹⁴³⁴ Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁴³⁵ Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁴³⁶ Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁴³⁷ Cf. Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 139 on *Der Teppich des Lebens*: 'Im Gegensatz dazu [to the early works] narcissistic 'Flucht vor der Welt', ibid – JW] gilt das von George seit dem *Teppich* in "Mitte der Welt" gestellte Ich als eine Antwort auf den Verlust der Einheit und des Zentrums in der Moderne'.

¹⁴³⁸ That the feminine other in *Das Jahr der Seele* is 'scapegoated' precisely through the ritual of gift-giving is symptomatic. On the gift as a 'poison and remedy' see Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Routledge, 2007), p. 143.

7. Dantism · A European Cure?

i. Getting a leg over · The Lagging Foot

The lagging foot, which turned up in the figure of the hermit in *Pilgerfahrten* ('Ein fuss im rain!', II: 32), is a Dantean image that George returns to in his prose 'Träume', a sub-cycle of *Tage und Taten* and an example of Dante's influence in the early 1890s. In 'Der Tote See' (written 1894, XVII: 27), the oneiric vision mimics the beginning of *Inferno* with a pilgrim-figure finding himself in the characteristic wasteland (the 'einöde') comparable to Dante's 'deserted slope' (*Inf.* I: 29), his path marked precariously by imposing, yet only vaguely helpful way stones: 'Nackte ungestalte steine kreuz und quer liegend deuten auf einen weg der kein ende zu nehmen scheint'. Suddenly a hill appears upon which, the lyric speaker deduces, the dead lake, 'schwarz und zäh' with a 'brenzliche geruch', must sit. He knows he must go there; he has the *intellectus*, but his willpower, his *affectus*, lags behind, keeping him from passing by the 'verwitterter pfahl' that points the way: 'Meinen einen fuss zieht es hinauf · den andern aber hält ein schmerzliches grausen ab am pfahl vorüberzuschreiten'.¹⁴³⁹ The dead lake, contrasting somewhat starkly with the Dantean 'see des herzens' (X/XI: 7; *Inf.* I: 20) of the pilgrim's body, along with the pathetic fallacy of the 'niedriger verfinsterter himmel' replacing the sun as it appears to the Dantean pilgrim (*Inf.* I: 16-18) constitutes a nightmarish inversion of Dantean poetics, a bad dream where the mountain of salvation is actually the path to hell, where what in *Pilgerfahrten* is a vision of an Edenic 'grünende insel' atop a purgatorial hill, the pilgrim's 'neue ziel!'

¹⁴³⁹ On the two feet of the soul (intellect and will) Freccero's essay 'The Firm Foot on a Journey without a Guide' in *The Poetics of Conversion*, pp. 29-54, esp. pp. 39-43.

(II: 42), here is only a dark, viscous, body of water. When the *Ich* of this nightmare finally appears, the vision suddenly ends, as if awaking out of fright from finding oneself (compare Dante's 'I came to | myself', *Inf.* I: 2). Where Dante's pilgrim contends with the dreadful beasts of *Inferno*'s first canto and has Virgil for backup, George's dream ends on the note of dread. A Dantean vision without hope, a medieval utopia crushed by the apocalyptic wasteland of modernity.¹⁴⁴⁰

ii. Ending the Petrarchan Loop

The circular imagery of Petrarchan consciousness, incapable of committing to the linearity of conversion, and its modernist correlative in George's wheeling year of the soul, underwent a strategic ideological reprogramming in the George Circle's idea of *Gestalt*, *Mensch* and other master signifiers. Thus roundedness and circularity were revalorised, and Dante's non-Petrarchan character, his linearity of vision, comes to be celebrated as 'das runde'. In Gundolf's account, Dante is 'das einheitliche Wesen, nicht das mannigfaltige .. das allhaltige, nicht das vielseitige .. das runde, nicht das bunte'.¹⁴⁴¹ Roundedness is associated with formal perfection, but also with the idea of the *Gestalt* as a closed, perfect phenomenon: 'Dantes

¹⁴⁴⁰ As Egyptien points out, the *Ich* appears only in the final sentence. See Jürgen Egyptien, 'Tage und Taten', in *Stefan George – Werkkommentar. Studien und Interpretationen zu sämtlichen Dichtungen und Übertragungen*, ed. by Jürgen Egyptien (de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 797-816 (p. 808). Cf. pp. 807-08 for these dreams as apocalyptic, and p. 808 for Morwitz' remark. Schäfer, *Die Intensität der Form*, pp. 74-75 discusses the Dantean resonance of George's 'Unsinnswort' in the other prose piece 'Tiholu' (xvii: 26). Morwitz, *Kommentar zu den Prosa-, Dramen- und Jugendedichtung*, p. 25, in regards to 'Tiholu', which 'knüpft an Dantes Schilderung der Hölle an'.

¹⁴⁴¹ Gundolf, *Caesar*, p. 105. Adrian Daub, 'Runde', in *Krise und Gemeinschaft: Stefan Georges Der Stern des Bundes*, ed. by Christophe Fricker (Vittorio Klostermann, 2017), pp. 305-12, furthermore points out that George's 'Rundenbegriff' appears strategically in the early Dante translations and taps into the word's allusion to 'quasi-religiöse Sozialitätsformen'. Daub's reading, without reducing George's use of 'runde' to his Dante translations as the only influence, emphasises the effect of positioning Dante as his forebear: 'Indem er Dante und das Vaterunser als "Runde" beschreibt, interpretiert George sie als Vorgänger seiner eigenen Bundkonzeption' (p. 306). The *Bund*, the circularity of the George *Kreis*, as well as that of its *Gestalt* ideology and the circularity of poetic creation ('Ich geschöpf nun eignen sohnes', vi/vii: 109) come together here in the idea of the *Runde*, the closed circle (cf. p. 310). Rossi, *Gesamterkennen*, p. 195, similarly discusses 'Einverleibung' as an example of the 'Reziprozität des Gestaltungsprozesses'.

Person enthielt noch den religiös geschlossenen, das heißt “vollkommenen” Kosmos der menschlichen Gaben’.¹⁴⁴² The *Jahr der Seele*’s roundness in this sense is like ‘die schlechte Unendlichkeit des Progresses’ for Hegel, trapped within a limited series of finite components.¹⁴⁴³ This ends in a ‘Zurückgekehrtsein in sich, das unmittelbar zugleich Außersichsein, Beziehung auf sein Anderes als auf sein Nichtsein’; *Ich* crosses a limit between itself and this Other, and it is caught in the recognition of its own emptiness and its desire for fullness: ‘welche Beziehung eine *Sehnsucht* bleibt, weil Ich sich seine gehaltlose und unhaltbare Leere einerseits und die in der Negation doch präsent bleibende Fülle als sein Jenseits fixiert hat’.¹⁴⁴⁴ *Das Jahr der Seele*, as seen previously, progresses forward into the past, ending where it began, searching for an imaginary other to complete it, having encountered its entrapment in the desire of the Other, stuck at the limit of the ‘toten quell’ (IV: 118). Separating itself from some *Dus* and joining with others, it remains ‘riveted to itself’, ‘wie in fesseln’ – in sight of the ‘glück’ but not close enough to grasp it (‘Es schauend und doch es nicht fassend’, IV: 117).¹⁴⁴⁵ The *Jahr*’s focus on finitude is established at the outset in the positing of its limit (the ‘totgesagten’ park), its circularity a seeming infinity built on finitude, on an inability to integrate the Other. The progressive series ‘ist unendlich [...] weil das Andere, das zu ihnen wesentlich gehört, jenseits ihrer ist’.¹⁴⁴⁶ The drive of the *Jahr* is a need to escape that circular finitude and transcend the limit of the *Ich*, alone with itself, ‘mit einem

¹⁴⁴² Gundolf, *Caesar*, p. 104. Cf. Rossi, *Gesamterkennen*, for ‘der Kreis und die Kugel’ (p. 206) as images of the ‘perfektive Charakter der Gestalt, ihr Vollkommen-, Ganz- und Rund-Sein’ (p. 207). Cf. further Rossi, *Gesamterkennen*, p. 178.

¹⁴⁴³ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Werke*, ed. by Eva Moldenhauer und Karl Markus Michel, 20 vols (Suhrkamp, 1986), V, *Wissenschaft der Logik I*, 1986, p. 288.

¹⁴⁴⁴ Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik I*, p. 267 (both quotes).

¹⁴⁴⁵ Levinas, *On Escape*, p. 64.

¹⁴⁴⁶ Hegel, *Die Wissenschaft der Logik I*, p. 289.

Jenseits behaftet, das nicht aufgehoben werden kann'.¹⁴⁴⁷ The completion of the *Jahr* leads into its own repetition, it returns to both the fall of autumn and the fall of finitude, the descent into mutability and transience, to the 'fallender äste hauf' (IV: 113), and repeats itself *ad (malum) infinitum*.

Hegel's comment on the Kantian sublime warrants mention here in its address to the sense of melancholy boredom that the Kantian encounter with the sublime is secretly conditioned by:

Was den Gedanken erliegen macht und das Fallen desselben und den Schwindel hervorbringt, ist nichts anderes als die Langeweile der Wiederholung, welche eine Grenze verschwinden und wieder auftreten und wieder verschwinden, so immer das eine um das andere und eins im anderen, in dem Jenseits das Diesseits, in dem Diesseits das Jenseits perennierend entstehen und vergehen läßt und nur das Gefühl der Ohnmacht dieses Unendlichen oder dieses Sollens gibt, das über das Endliche Meister werden will und nicht kann.¹⁴⁴⁸

An accurate summary of *Das Jahr der Seele* avant la lettre: the ever shifting 'Grenze' (in both the sense of limit and border) is subtended by the fundamentally modern mood of melancholic alienation and 'Ohnmacht' dominated by the 'Sollen[]'

¹⁴⁴⁷ Hegel, *Die Wissenschaft der Logik* I, p. 288. In this sense Hegel's later characterisation of the bad infinite is especially apt: 'der Progreß selbst ist die Wiederholung der gegen das Qualitative eingetretenen Forderung der Einheit und des beständigen Rückfalls in die der Forderung nicht gemäße Schranke'. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Werke*, ed. by Eva Moldenhauer und Karl Markus Michel, 20 vols (Suhrkamp, 1986), VI, *Wissenschaft der Logik* II, 1986, p. 363.

¹⁴⁴⁸ Hegel, *Die Wissenschaft der Logik* I, p. 265.

that reveals a lack in reality.¹⁴⁴⁹ The bad infinite falls back into the demand for totality, becoming 'die Wiederholung eines und desselben ursprünglichen Mangels'.¹⁴⁵⁰ Perfect circular fulfilment will be represented in the poetry by *Der Siebente Ring* and in the renewal of culture by George's social Circle.¹⁴⁵¹

Gundolf's reading is suggestive in this regard, as the idea of the 'Grenze' pervades his consideration of *Das Jahr der Seele*, of autumn as the 'traurigen Wissen der Grenze'.¹⁴⁵² Like the 'beständigen Rückfall[]' described by Hegel, Gundolf's George in *Das Jahr der Seele* is remanded constantly 'wieder zurück auf sich selbst', given that 'der Dichter dieses Buchs hat noch nicht sein wahres Du'.¹⁴⁵³ The way out of this Petrarchan bad infinity is the conversion of poetry to the Dantean poetics of, as William Franke discusses in another context, 'a kind of secularized theological revelation'.¹⁴⁵⁴ Gundolf is not subtle about this: in his discussion of the *Jahr's* winterly melancholy, he notes how its limit is never shattered by the light of spring. Gundolf's procedure sets up *Das Jahr der Seele* as the negative image of *Der Teppich des Lebens*:

¹⁴⁴⁹ Hegel states: 'Das Quantum ist ein Sollen', and relates to the bad infinity (*Wissenschaft der Logik* I, p. 260), the endless series in need of additional supplements (the other 'Quanta' through which it recognises and seeks to transcend its limit (p. 261): 'Die unendliche Reihe enthält nämlich die schlechte Unendlichkeit, weil das, was die Reihe ausdrücken soll, ein Sollen bleibt, und was sie ausdrückt, mit einem Jenseits, das nicht verschwindet, behaftet und *verschieden* von dem ist, was ausgedrückt werden soll. Sie ist unendlich nicht um der Glieder willen, die gesetzt sind, sondern darum, weil sie unvollständig sind, weil das Andere, das zu ihnen wesentlich gehört, jenseits ihrer ist; was in ihr da ist, der gesetzten Glieder mögen so viele sein als wollen, ist nur ein Endliches im eigentlichen Sinne, gesetzt als Endliches, d. i. als solches, *das nicht ist, was es sein soll*' (italics original, p. 289).

¹⁴⁵⁰ Hegel, *Die Wissenschaft der Logik* II, p. 363.

¹⁴⁵¹ Cf. Gundolf, 'Das Bild Georges', in *Jahrbuch für die geistige Bewegung* 1, ed. by Friedrich Gundolf and Friedrich Wolters (Blätter für die Kunst, 1910), pp. 19-48 (p. 29: 'Die oberste stufe ist da wo grösste bewegung und völligte bändigug eins sind. Der grenzenloseste schauer strebt zur strengsten form, darin er sich banne und erlöse. Dafür ist der k r e i s das symbol: das unendliche fliesen in dem unentrinnbaren ring geschlossen').

¹⁴⁵² Gundolf, *George*, p. 149.

¹⁴⁵³ Hegel, *Die Wissenschaft der Logik* II, p. 363. Gundolf, *George*, p. 147. It is significant that Gundolf refers to the 'Dichter dieses Buchs' and not to any abstract narrative *Ich* – the biographical background, the unity of man and work as *Gestalt* is here relevant.

¹⁴⁵⁴ Franke, *Secular Scriptures*, p. 3.

Der Abgrund den der Waller im Schnee durchmessen hat ist die tiefste winterliche Verlassenheit. [...] Auf dieser Stufe kennt der Dichter keinen Frühling: die Vita Nuova, eben der Frühling ist Anfang, Zerspaltung der Grenzen, Erwachen des unbekannten Gottes, der Weg ins Offene: das Jahr der Seele ist "Erfüllung" der Grenzen bis zum Ende und steht unter dem Bann der ungelösten Natureinsamkeit, sie mag hell oder düster oder fahl gefärbt sein. Es ist in einem herbstlichen Seelen- und Schicksalsstand empfangen, darum beginnt es mit dem Herbst und die Form unter der all seine Inhalte erscheinen kann nur die "Erfüllung" gegebener Grenzen sein. Die Naturbindung, die unerlöste Einsamkeit schließt nicht das Glück und die Freude aus, doch den Aufgang, das Beginnen, das zur Natur des Frühlings gehört. Noch wandelt George auf der geistlosen Mächtigkeitsstufe: die Stunde ist noch nicht gekommen da er aus der Natur, die sein Jahr der Seele bindet, weil er mit ihr eins ist, ins Offene treten darf, da der Gott, der die Natur und die Seele aus ihrer Einsamkeit löst durch einen neuen Bund, ihm sich offenbart, um Sinne und Worte zu wecken für beginnliche Welt, für Auftrieb, Anfang, für Frühling. Der Frühling ist ein Gott der Frühe. Das Jahr der Seele ist ein Buch der Grenze, der Erfüllung, die – man denke das Wort recht durch – immer Vollendung, d.h. ob Herbst ob Winter, ob Freude ob Trauer, Endschafft ist. Auch die glückliche Liebe, das Finden des Du, die Blüte des Lebens kann in diesem Bereich kein Beginn neuer Welt sein und muß eingetaucht bleiben in die Luft der Vollendung.¹⁴⁵⁵

¹⁴⁵⁵ Gundolf, *George*, p. 151.

Das Jahr der Seele emerges simultaneously as a deficient work of 'Endschaft' insofar as it cannot provide a spring, but also as a work that is a 'Vollendung', a perfect poetic artefact of ending: an end and final limit to Petrarchan meanderings, a limit burst open by Dante. Thus we find a mention of the *Vita nova* here, interpreting George's 'lyric vita', to borrow Peter Morgan's term, *sub specie Dantis*.

Gundolf doubles down on this in his chapter on the 'Vorspiel', calling the angel's proclamation of the *schönes Leben* the 'Anfang seiner Vita Nuova': the time is fresh for 'beginnliche Welt' (the angel's 'bräutliches beginnliches entschleiern', v: 20).¹⁴⁵⁶ In his account of the 'Vorspiel', Gundolf specifically likens the *Ich*'s movements to 'Dantes oder Fausts Reise durch die drei Reiche'.¹⁴⁵⁷ Dante has a privileged position in Gundolf's analysis as a continual point of comparison, but is absent from the introductory discussion where he lists 'Michelangelo Shakespeare Goethe Napoleon' as figures from the past afflicted with the same 'Graun' that had beset *Das Jahr der Seele*, 'die letzte große Dichtung des europäischen Weltschmerzes'.¹⁴⁵⁸ Unlike these other *Gestalten*, Dante offers a way out, 'für Auftrieb, Anfang, für Frühling'.

George procured his Dante texts during his travels to Italy in the late 1880s, with the first explicit mention of Dante in his work being 1893's short 'Lobrede auf Mallarmé', justifying the poetic use of 'klangvolle dunkelheiten' (xvii: 47) to evade the masses and uninitiated readers. Then there is the quotation from *Inferno* II for the epigraph to his 'Rat für Schaffende' (xvii: 68) from 1894, which connects artistic

¹⁴⁵⁶ Gundolf, *George*, p. 160.

¹⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

¹⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

originality to nobility, a concept that takes on central significance in the Circle's ideology.¹⁴⁵⁹

In the *Jahr der Seele*, the pilgrim's plight is at one moment stated in terms evocative of Dante's world: the icy landscape stretches on, the pilgrim figure is 'mit grauser nacht allein' looking '[z]u sternem [...] führerlos hinan' and contending with hellish 'todeswinde' and the threat of an immanent 'abgrund' (IV: 24). The Dantean aspect further lies in the persistent faith in a 'junger hoffnung' that will soon awaken. The Dante pilgrim escapes Hell, with its similarly bleak Cocito, barren and frozen by the freezing winds emanating from Lucifer's wings (*Inf.* XXXIV: 49-52), and climbs up 'to look again at the stars' (*Inf.* XXXIV: 139).

There are subtler, formal points of contact, too. Klussmann attributes the presence of the iambic pentameter as George's defining metre from *Das Jahr der Seele* and the *Teppich* to his Dante-reception – '[die] kräftigste Wirkung der Beschäftigung mit Dante'.¹⁴⁶⁰ Alongside this, a central aspect of George's 'Übernahme Dantescher Kompositionsprinzipien' resides in numerology.¹⁴⁶¹ The 'Jahr der Seele' section of the volume contains thirty-one poems across the three

¹⁴⁵⁹ According to the editors in the 'Anhang' to *SW*, XVIII: 139, George obtained *La vita nuova: il convito. Il canzoniere*, with preface and notes by Francesco Costèro (Sonzogno, 1888) during his travels there in 1889 (Archived as StGA/ 10/77). On Dante in both these texts see Klussmann, 'Dante und Stefan George', p. 140. Finally, it should be noted that George was identifying himself with Dante and Petrarch as poetic precursors even before 1893. The George Archive contains a letter from Carl Rouge to George from the 27/08/1890 containing feedback and critique of George's earliest poems that would go into *Hymnen*. The letter preserves George's own thoughts and responses written as notes, and near a paragraph in which Rouge had taken some issue with 'Ein Hingang's 'Dunkelheiten', George's marginalium reads: 'Schreiber dieses hat wohl nie den größten dichter Dante gelesen oder Petrarca'. My thanks to Dr. Maik Bozza (Stefan George Archiv, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart) who brought this letter to my attention and provided me with a transcript and permission to reproduce here (StGA/George IV, 0817). George will remain a champion of such 'Dunkelheiten', as the 'Lobrede auf Mallarmé' cited above declares. Even decades after first allying himself with Dante in defence of his own 'Dunkelheiten' he continues to champion it, reminiscing fondly about his originary years in France with Mallarmé and that movement: "[...] Dunkelheiten, das Infinite, ist schöpferisch, das völlig Klare ist tot", Landmann, *Gespräche mit Stefan George*, p. 76. For Dante 'als Zeugnis für klangvolle Dunkelheiten dichterischer Sprache', cf. Bianchi, *Dante und Stefan George*, p. 6.

¹⁴⁶⁰ Klussmann, 'Dante und Stefan George', p. 141.

¹⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

sub-cycles, a formula of three equal parts plus one (the proem 'Komm in den totesagten park'), which mirrors the structure of the *Commedia* (three canticles of thirty-three cantos plus *Inferno*'s first prologue canto), one that George will return to more insistently for the structure of *Der Stern des Bundes*.¹⁴⁶² There is yet another, even subtler nod to Dante's works: the *Vita nova* contains exactly thirty-one poems, the number of George's year of the soul.¹⁴⁶³ The *Vita nova*, however, ends with an elevation ('Beyond the sphere that circles widest') to Heaven, cutting off the work so that the poet can write a work of even greater praise for his beloved, signalling continuity across his endeavours.¹⁴⁶⁴ But the *Jahr der Seele* ends rather by circling the drain 'am toten quell,' wondering what the point of continuing to gaze upon 'den kahlen böden' (IV: 118) is. In the poem from 'Waller im Schnee' quoted above, the speaker admits admits his desire to be unconscious to himself, buried in snow: 'Ich möchte langsam auf dem weissen plan | Mir selber unbewusst gebettet sein' (IV: 24). Self-consciousness here is bound to the earthly realm of changing seasons, incommensurate with his desire for the transcendent Other, missing in 'diesem gottlosen Universum'.¹⁴⁶⁵

¹⁴⁶² Three books of thirty poems plus one introductory prologue of ten poems. Cf. Hildebrandt, *Das Werk Stefan Georges*, p. 355.

¹⁴⁶³ Cf. Kunkel's introduction to the *Vita Nuova: Das Neue Leben*, p. 135, for the number of the poems yielding a pattern of either '1:10:10:10, oder 1:9:1:9:1:9:1'.

¹⁴⁶⁴ For the verticality of Dante's 'Oltre la spera' (contrasting with the horizontal movement of Cavalcanti) see Gragnolati and Southerden, *Possibilities of Lyric*, p. 121. The continuity established by Dante is suggested by a key lexical echo between the end of the *Vita nova* and the beginning of the *Inferno*. Where in the former the final vision in chapter XLII exceeds his poetic abilities, so that he concedes 'to say nothing more about this blessed lady until I should be able to treat ['trattare' – JW] of her more worthily', VN XLII: 1). He begins the *Commedia* signposting from the outset that although the dark wood is full of terror, the story is worth telling: 'But to | treat ['trattar' – JW] of the good that I found there, I will tell of | the other things I saw' (*Inf.* 8-9). Beatrice, and God, and Love, constitute the 'Good' of the *Commedia*. Costèro (the edition used by George) acknowledges this continuity in his notes at the end of the *Vita nova* (XLII: 2): 'In queste parole [i.e. Dante's hope to write of Beatrice 'what has never been said of any woman' in a future work] è già racchiusa l'idea della *Divina Commedia*, per incominciare la quale aveva ancora di bisogno di ulteriori studi, ai quali attendeva indefessamente'. Costèro, *La vita nuova. Il convito. Il canzoniere*, p. 78. Incidentally, continuity is an aspect of George's oeuvre that Klusmann points out in his discussion, 'Dante und Stefan George', p. 141.

¹⁴⁶⁵ David, *Stefan George*, p. 162.

Numerologically, 31 breaks down into 3 plus 1, which gives 4, the number of the seasons and the cardinal points of space.¹⁴⁶⁶ The number of poems in *Das Jahr der Seele* in total (31 plus 34 plus 32) is 97, which when broken down and added together will yield 7 (one plus six), with 7 also being the number of sub-cycles in total constituting the *Das Jahr der Seele*.¹⁴⁶⁷ 7 is 'perfect completeness', the unity of 4 – the earth – and 3 – the divine.¹⁴⁶⁸ It is George's divine number, but at this point, prior to the Maximin event, it is missing the point of divinity, and its circularity is not yet that of *Der Siebente Ring*'s.

Der Teppich des Lebens, however, is numerologically even more suggestive, for it is precisely George's 'Annahme dantescher Baulehre' that makes of it a 'Vita nova' of his own and not just in Gundolf's hyperbole.¹⁴⁶⁹ The *Teppich* is divided into three equal parts, each with twenty-four poems of four quatrains. If the *Jahr* gives us a calendar tracing a failed conversion from Petrarchan circularity, the *Teppich* gives us a holy weekend of rebirth: three days of twenty-four hours with an equal balance between night and day (internally balanced by its three-part 'Tag-Gesang' and 'Nacht-Gesang', v: 79-84). The number of poems in the entire *Teppich* volume is 72 (3 x 24), which when broken down gives 9, the number of angelic orders as well as the divine number that symbolises Beatrice in the *Vita*

¹⁴⁶⁶ Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism*, pp. 13-14 for 4 in relation to the four lunar phases, four seasons, etc. For four in relation to the cardinal points p. 9; for four as the temporal counterpart to three qua eternal, see p. 84. See also Moevs, 'Subjectivity and Conversion in Dante and Petrarch', p. 236.

¹⁴⁶⁷ 'Nach der Lese', 'Waller im Schnee', 'Sieg des Sommers', 'Überschriften und Widmungen, Erinnerungen an einige Abende innerer Gesellschaft', 'Verstattet dies Spiel: Eure flüchtig geschnittenen Schatten zum Schmuck für meiner Angedenken Saal', 'Traurige Tänze'. For the numerological approach here see: Charles S. Singleton, 'The Poet's Number at the Centre', *MLN* 80.1 (1965), pp. 1-10 (p. 6): 'Now, as every student of numerology knows, one is always expected to add up the digits composing such numbers, to see if their sums may not prove important'. Similarly see Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism*, p. 82: 'All large numbers, as has been seen, are reduced to their roots for explanation'.

¹⁴⁶⁸ Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism*, p. 79, and p. 171: '7 as the image of man, composed, as he is, of the 4 of the body and the 3 of the soul'.

¹⁴⁶⁹ Bianchi, *Dante und Stefan George*, p. 7.

nova.¹⁴⁷⁰ And given that the *Teppich* is George's Dantean death and resurrection, the number 24 and the paired presentation of poems links its design to the earthly paradise at the end of *Purgatorio* where, as Klussmann pointed out, '[j]ener Triumphzug zählt 24 Gestalten, paarweis geordnet'.¹⁴⁷¹

iii. Maximin and Beatrice · 'Verbal Figuralism' and Conversion

Scholarship has examined the relationship George sought to construct between himself and his literary forebears, with Dante's influence even reaching down to physiognomic resemblance.¹⁴⁷² Here it is argued that George takes a similar approach to what Robert Hollander called Dante's own 'verbal figuralism', whereby the significance of a term evolves over the course of the work in light of progressive revelation, allowing George to instrumentalise particular words or phrases (his master signifiers) for the purpose of re-positioning himself into the prophetic poetic mode of the Master over and against the mass culture of his time.¹⁴⁷³ Shen (although not drawing on this particular tradition) provides an example of a figure and its fulfilment in George's works when he highlights 'den leichtfüßigen Gott' that appears first in *Der Siebente Ring* as a mere 'persönlicher Schutzgeist' and then come *Das Neue Reich* that same phrasing (the god's

¹⁴⁷⁰ See Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism*, p. 138: 'Of all the number symbols of the Middle Ages, few were so specifically meaningful as the number 9, which is always, first and foremost, the angelic number'. Hopper goes on to discuss Beatrice as 9, which is the square of the divine 3. *Der Teppich des Lebens* contains 1152 (yielding 9) lines of verse (16x72).

¹⁴⁷¹ Klussmann, 'Dante und Stefan George', p. 144.

¹⁴⁷² Much commented on in the memoirs of his Circle. On this aspect cf. Hölter, »*Dichter der Hölle und des Exils*«, pp. 137-41. DiMassa puts it summarily: 'by a certain point, the textual corpus of George looked inseparable from Dante. That linkage now encompassed his actual corpus, as well', DiMassa, *Dante in Deutschland*, p. 144, and pp. 142-43 for more on this physiognomic and artistic aspect of George's Dante reception.

¹⁴⁷³ See Hollander, *Allegory in Dante's Commedia*, p. 105 for how Dante 'use[s] his figural techniques to refer simultaneously to event in history and to previous event within the poem. This process has its final sophistication in what I am tempted to call "verbal figuralism," the technique of repeating a word used earlier in the poem in such a way as to "fulfill" its meaning'.

movement 'mit leichten sohlen', VI/VII: 77 & IX: 14) expands into a salvational prophecy, announcing the 'Erlöser des ganzen Heimatlandes'.¹⁴⁷⁴

The effect of having his later poetic texts gloss his earlier ones and allow particular words or terms to re-appear retrospectively imbues the prior one with a futural, figural meaning, so that the oeuvre as a whole takes on the sense of a coherent, bounded necessity, enveloping all times and allowing him to then declare, for example, 'Ihr sehet wechsel · doch ich tat das gleiche' (VI/VII: 6).¹⁴⁷⁵ This seems on the surface an anti-conversion narrative, where there is no before and after, but rather a self-same self whose changes are merely the public's misperceptions.¹⁴⁷⁶ The later works 'recapitulate' the themes of the earlier ones but from a divinely illuminated vantage point, so that the lost pilgrim of the early volumes points towards the pilgrim who has reached his destination in the later ones, fulfilling and giving hermeneutic closure to that earlier figure. The George Circle's *Gestalt* philosophy emphasises, rather expectedly, circularity, and this perhaps challenges figuralism as a discourse of what seems a linear trajectory of history intercepted transcendently.¹⁴⁷⁷ Its appropriation of the mechanics of that hermeneutic strategy taps into figuralism's own kind of 'circularity', as John Freccero summarises in Dante's context:

Conversion is the technical term of the theologians to describe the way the Old Testament was transformed in the light of the New. That transformation

¹⁴⁷⁴ Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 162.

¹⁴⁷⁵ Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 177 likewise points out that the salvation embodied in the new god is figured as being of total necessity: 'Das Leben und der Tod Maximins im Spätwerk Georges sind daher eine literarische Komposition von geschichtsphilosophischen Notwendigkeit, die alle Zufälligkeit ausschließt'.

¹⁴⁷⁶ On this aspect specifically of the 'Zeitgedichte' ('die Werkpolitik Georges und ihre Aufmerksamkeitsanforderungen') see Martus' discussion, *Werkpolitik*, pp. 634-43 (cited text p. 642).

¹⁴⁷⁷ Cf. Rossi, *Gesamterkennen*, p. 205.

is precisely in the form we have been describing [Dante's terza rima rhyme scheme – JW], forward motion toward recapitulation. This movement is the essence of the Christian theory of history, referred to by the early Greek fathers of the Church as *anakephalaiōsis*, or *recapitulation*. [...] According to it, Christ, as the fullness of time, recapitulates all of the preceding history and gives to it its moment of closure. The New Testament must be understood as the fulfillment of the old, which is to say, its ending. Thus history is the movement of time away from the Word and back to the Word, with all of the persons and events having their own autonomy, yet functioning prefiguratively as signs of their own truth: “di lor vero umbriferi prefazii” (*Par.* xxx, 78) (shadowy prefaces of their own truth)¹⁴⁷⁸

This is the essence of ‘figural typology’, as Freccero continues, and as Auerbach’s famous essay describes in rigorous detail.¹⁴⁷⁹ It allows historical figures to maintain their literal reality while signifying beyond themselves, a ‘Realprophetie’ in which the horizontal line of history is punctuated by a vertical dimension that guarantees its meaning in the divine order of things.¹⁴⁸⁰ This ‘line’, however, comes back to the beginning in the moment of recapitulation, allowing an implicit circularity to emerge.¹⁴⁸¹

¹⁴⁷⁸ Freccero, *The Poetics of Conversion*, pp. 266-67.

¹⁴⁷⁹ Freccero, *The Poetics of Conversion*, p. 268.

¹⁴⁸⁰ Auerbach, ‘Figura’, p. 87: ‘Auf diese Art wird jedes irdische Geschehen nicht als eine endgültige, sich selbst genügende Wirklichkeit angesehen, auch nicht als Glied in einer Entwicklungskette, wo aus einem Ereignis oder aus dem Zusammenwirken mehrerer immer wieder neue Ereignisse entspringen, sondern es wird zunächst im unmittelbaren vertikalen Zusammenhang mit einer göttlichen Ordnung betrachtet, in der es enthalten ist und die selbst eines künftigen Tages geschehende Wirklichkeit sein wird; und somit ist das irdische Ereignis Realprophetie oder figura eines Teiles zukünftig geschehender, unmittelbar vollendet göttlicher Wirklichkeit’.

¹⁴⁸¹ Cf. Michelangelo Picone, (‘La “Vita Nova” fra autobiografia e tipologia’, in Michelangelo Picone, *Scritti Danteschi*, ed. by Antonio Lanza (Longo, 2017), pp. 37-46), in who discusses the ‘tempo circolare della veritas divina’ in the figural context (p. 45).

Freccero elsewhere links this understanding of history to the genre of conversion autobiographies, for only with the death of the self can the totality of that life find its resting coherence, which he points out is possible within the Christian framework (for the banal reason that we can never view our life in its totality 'from within'):

The coherence of the whole poem may be grasped only with a view to its totality, a view from the ending, just as the coherence of the poet's life could be grasped only in retrospect, from the perspective of totality in death. Clearly the same may be said of universal history, whose coherence may be perceived only from the perspective of eschatology [...] For Dante, as for Augustine, there was a death which enabled the mind to grasp such totalities, not by virtue of linear evolution, but rather by transcendence, a death of detachment. To perceive the pattern of one's life in its totality was to see the structure or *figura* of God's redemptive act, the master-plan of all history.¹⁴⁸²

In *Paradiso* 17, quoted by Freccero in support for the passage just cited, the pilgrim appeals to his ancestor Cacciaguida in the heaven of Mars to prophesise his future, a speech cited by George and used as epigraph to his own prophetic speech in *Das Neue Reich*'s poem 'Der Krieg' (ix: 22). This canto is particularly rich in instances of Georgan terminology being used to render Dante's words, while those terms themselves are gaining increasing significance in his own prophetic poetry. He was translating *Paradiso* 17 in April and May of 1917 and produced, for

¹⁴⁸² Freccero, *The Poetics of Conversion*, p. 26.

example, 'Der Krieg' no later than June of that same year.¹⁴⁸³ The pilgrim, in George's rendition, begins his entreaty thus:

Hoch ragst du teures reis von gleichem rumpfe ·

Und wie es klar ist irdischem verstehen

Dass es in keinem dreieck gibt zwei stumpfe:

So siehst du alles fällige geschehen

Bevor es wird · indem du schaust zur mitte

Vor der als heutig alle zeiten stehen.

Als noch Vergil begleitet meine schritte

Beim abstieg in verlornen welten plage

Und auf der rettbar geister höhen-tritte:

Ward mir gesagt für meine künftigen tage

¹⁴⁸³ As per the *Anhänge* in both the Dante translations ("Chronologie", *SW*, x/xi: 160) and *Das neue Reich* (xi:139), as well as in Ockenden et al., *Zeittafel*, p. 276. Some instances of George's self-referential vocabulary for which I cannot spill more digital ink here would be his use of 'verhängnisse' (x/xi: 119) for Dante's 'fortuna' (*Par.* 17:26). *Verhängnis*, outside a single occurrence in *Der Siebente Ring* (V/VI:47), is a word that returns in *Das neue Reich* with some emphasis: *Goethes Letzte Nacht in Italien* has it in the fifth stanza, signifying what the 'lebendigen strahl' (xi:9) of the south ('die gebärden / Attischer würde', for example, *ibid.*, 10) that Goethe has in his soul means to the Germans to whom he is about to return (cf. Schäfer, "Das Neue Reich · Erste Textgruppe", *Werkkommentar* 573-574; and Morwitz, *Kommentar* I, 409-410); it appears again in the Dantean 'Der Krieg' to characterise the devastation caused by the war ('Keiner der heute ruft und meint zu führen / Merkt wie er tastet im verhängnis· keiner / Erspäht ein blasses glühn vom morgenrot', IX:25) and finally in 'Der Krieg's' sister poem 'Der Dichter in Zeiten der Wirren' it is used again to characterise the contemporary historical moment and denounce those who disavow the poeta vates and 'Will sich mit list aus dem verhängnis ziehn' without faith in a 'Lenker' (with a capital L!) or a Sühner (xi:29), two facets of the figure of the poet, along with that of the 'Seher' and 'Sänger' (mentioned in the first and third stanzas respectively, IX:28, 29) for George. We recall that 'lenker[]' is also the term used to translate Virgil's role as 'lo verace duca' in *Inferno* 16:70, a canto also on George's radar in 1917 ('Anhang' x/xi: 161) and the verb 'lenken' is used when George revisits canto one of *Inferno* by 1922: 'Du Meister mir und Stab um mich zu lenken' (x/xi: 10; 'Tu se' lo mio maestro e 'l mio autore', *Inf.* 1:85).

Manch lastend wort · weiss ich mich auch zur stelle

An allen ecken bei des schicksals schlage.

Drum wär mein wunsch dass sich vor mir erhelle

Was für verhängnisse mich überschweben ·

Denn der geschaute pfeil trifft minder schnelle ...

(X/XI: 119; *Par.* XVII: 13-27)

The key change regards Dante's phrasing 'mirando il punto | a cui tutti li tempi son presenti' (l. 17) and George's 'schaust zur mitte | Vor der als heutig alle zeiten stehen'. The 'punto' ('point') is emphasised throughout the *Paradiso*, especially towards the end, as God – the grounding centre-point of the universe upon which all else depends ('"From that point hang the | heavens and all Nature', *Par.* XXVIII: 41-42) that paradoxically envelops the whole universe and binds its multitudes as like a book

bound with

love in one volume, what through the universe

becomes unsewn quires

(*Par.* XXXIII: 86-87)

The 'punto' is both the centre *and* the circumference, it is, in Moevs' words, the 'all-encompassing Empyrean, infinite Being-Light-Love-Bliss, the dimensionless, all-projecting focal point of pure self-awareness'.¹⁴⁸⁴ This this eternal present instant

¹⁴⁸⁴ Moevs, *The Metaphysics of Dante's Comedy*, 153.

is the *nunc stans*, ‘the eternity that is the now, the Christic point or nexus between space-time and its ground’.¹⁴⁸⁵ This ‘dimensionless’ self-reflective consciousness comes to itself in the point that is not in time, and is itself dimensionless,¹⁴⁸⁶ the ‘nexus between God and creation’.¹⁴⁸⁷

George’s ‘mitte’ is developed throughout his poetry and the Circle’s writings as a point analogous to Dante’s, which becomes the site of the new god’s revelation, and a rupture in linear chronological time: ‘DU STETS NOCH ANFANG UNS UND END UND MITTE’. Thus begins *Der Stern des Bundes* (VIII: 8). This line, containing a beginning, middle and end in its unity, emphasises the constancy of all times in the present moment (Maximin is ‘stets’ beginning, middle, and end), while also privileging the ‘mitte’ at the end of the line: linearity is being twisted so that the reader’s mind goes from beginning, to end – circumference – and back to the centre; the centre emerges as the point in the line that recapitulates both extensions in time in its immanence. As Adrian Daub argues apropos this line: ‘Im Alpha und Omega ist die Mitte ausgespart, George richtet mit seiner ersten Kreisbeschreibung den Blick auf das Mittige, Immanente’.¹⁴⁸⁸

The issue again however is that while beginning and end are temporal, is that ‘Mitte’ is a spatial concept.¹⁴⁸⁹ This suggests that the new god is

¹⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 131.

¹⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 141.

¹⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 153.

¹⁴⁸⁸ Daub, ‘Runde’, p. 310.

¹⁴⁸⁹ Cf. Tina Winzen, ‘Du stets noch anfang uns und end und mitte’, in *Krise und Gemeinschaft: Stefan Georges Der Stern des Bundes*, edited by Christophe Fricker (Vittorio Klostermann, 2017), pp. 321–29 (‘Mitte als auch räumlich vorstellbares Gefüge’), as well as for the imbrication of Platonic and Christian influences in the ‘anfang uns und end und mitte’ (p. 323). Cf. Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 187 who also links this spatiality to the star imagery throughout George’s late work: ‘Und es versteht sich von selbst, dass der Stern in der Mitte der Leitstern für Mitglieder des George-Kreises ist. Die vielen Wandelsterne umkreisen den einen Fixstern und bleiben ihm verbunden und untertan’. If Maximin is a guiding star, then that leaves *Ich* and his communal *Wir* here on earth, in the realm of immanence, opposed to his transcendence as an unchanging star in the heavens above. The immediacy of the ‘Mitte’, accessible in the here and now of poetic

spatiotemporal (as the *Stern's* second poem states, Maximin brought 'die verschmelzung fleischgeworden [...] Eines zugleich und Andres' VIII: 9) even if he is all of spatiotemporal reality, this leaves him harbouring a transcendent moment within himself. The *Stern's* first poem, among many others, has a vertical dimension that leads Lehnen to posit a transcendent moment in relation to the god being proclaimed ('Auf deine bahn hienieden · Herr der Wende · | Dringt unser preis hinan zu deinem sterne', VIII: 9); the poetry relocates the god into the celestial spheres above, as well as blurring the line between Maximin and the god that he incarnates: as Lehnen points out, he is a 'Mittlerfigur'.¹⁴⁹⁰ Winzen likewise read these lines as going 'in Richtung eines "jenseitigen", über-irdischen Wirkungsverlaufs'.¹⁴⁹¹ The *Stern's* second poem evokes this transcendent verticality in its apostrophe to him:

Du warst der beten zu den wolken thronen
 Du warst der süsse schläfer in den fluren
 Zu dem ein Himmlischer sich niederliess
 (VIII: 9)

utterance, suggests however that proximity and access to this star-centre-now collide in poetic experience. Osterkamp argues that it is precisely the *kairos* that is 'in einem sehr präzisen Sinne tatsächlich sein höchster Gott', and that the *kairos* is an event that occurs within poetic language, that poetry is the only way to approach the mystery: 'Geheimlehre im Georgeschen Sinn ist, was sich allein poetisch sagen lässt', Osterkamp, *Poesie der leeren Mitte*, p. 124.

¹⁴⁹⁰ Ludwig Lehnen, 'Der *Stern des Bundes* und das Transzendenz-Problem der Moderne', p. 186. Armin Schäfer also points out that Maximin and George's new god may not be identical, after all. See Schäfer, 'Interpretationen von *Goethes letzte nacht in Italien, Hyperion, An die Kinder des Meeres, Der Krieg, Der Dichter in Zeiten der Wirren und Einem jungen Führer im Ersten Weltkrieg* (SW, IX, 7-33)', p. 578.

¹⁴⁹¹ Winzen, 'Du stets noch anfang uns und end und mitte', p. 322.

Who is this 'Himmlischer' if not the 'Andres' (VIII: 9), a principle of transcendent Otherness, an alterity that is always out of reach in its 'unnahbaren glorie' (VI/VII: 101)?

Commentators name various Greek myths of divine descent,¹⁴⁹² yet the presence of consistent Christian imagery throughout, from which the poet 'nie ganz entkommt',¹⁴⁹³ complicates any conception of good old pure Greek immanence.¹⁴⁹⁴ Indeed, even one of George's own interpreters, Kurt Hildebrandt, reverts to the transcendent to explain the distinction between Maximin and the 'wolkenenthronen' to which he prays: 'In dieser zweiten Hymne sagt der Dichter für immer, was Geist ist: klares Erkennen bis zum Ganymedischen Griff ins Transzendente'.¹⁴⁹⁵ In the first poem, too, the triple appearance of 'Da' towards the poem's end shifts the tone to suggest the sudden inbreaking of something transcendent, as Winzen suggests, without naming it: 'das Neuartige, Jähe, gänzlich Andersartige der Epiphanie'.¹⁴⁹⁶ *Da* is the magic word of Otherness. With each *Da* we return to the beginning of George's oeuvre (*Die Fibel*'s first 'Da plötzlich sah ich', I: 13) and the many other epiphany moments throughout.

¹⁴⁹² Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 343 cites Greek precursor myths, as does Oelmann in the 'Anhang' (VIII: 128). The 'Himmlischer' could be Maximin himself, which would require reading the poem's *Du* as being the poet himself – a valid reading, but one that would not resolve the problem of transcendent verticality. Maximin would still be coming from above.

¹⁴⁹³ Winzen, 'Du stets noch anfang uns und end und mitte', p. 324.

¹⁴⁹⁴ As Winzen, 'Du stets noch anfang uns und end und mitte', pp. 323-24 and p. 328 argues. Dante repurposes a similar Greek myth for use within his transcendent imagery. Cf. here Moevs, *Metaphysics*, p. 134: 'Dante's reference to "Leda's nest" probably runs deeper, however. By extension that "nest" is the eighth sphere itself, which diversifies being into material essences, into ephemeral sensory forms. When Intellect-Being (Zeus) gives itself to mortal beauty (Leda), the world of spatiotemporal multiplicity is born (which begins from the "nest" of the constellations). It is a two-way street: when the pilgrim's mind is ravished (like Leda) by the self-manifestation of the divine in the finite (Zeus as swan, or Beatrice), he is "uprooted" from the world of spatiotemporal multiplicity (and his own earthly attributes) and plunged into contemplating the source of space-time itself. Note again the Christian nature of this transcendence: it occurs through a ravishment or giving of self, a surrender to a self-revelation of the divine in or as the finite'.

¹⁴⁹⁵ Hildebrandt, *Das Werk Stefan Georges*, p. 357.

¹⁴⁹⁶ Winzen, 'Du stets noch anfang uns und end und mitte', p. 327.

The rupture in temporal and spatial experience marked by *Da* is the fundamental experience in George's poetry; the sense that a change is immanent, that revelation can occur from within and as a result of poetic language.¹⁴⁹⁷ To adapt Costa's argument, 'questo fuori è il suo interno più intimo, *questa alterità è il cuore pulsante del proprio*, quello che si ripete indefinitamente, una sorta di storia eterna'.¹⁴⁹⁸ The new is the 'ripetersi dell'origine', as Costa argues further, its foundational otherness reasserting it ever anew.¹⁴⁹⁹

The transcendent does not only break in from 'above': 'Da kamst du spross aus unsrem eignen stamm' (VIII: 8). It comes from our deeply-buried root in the ground.¹⁵⁰⁰ And yet, the 'beter zu den wolken thronen' and embodiment of the divine on earth (Maximin) is approached from above, as one '[z]u dem ein Himmlischer sich niederliess' (VIII: 9).¹⁵⁰¹ The gendered aspect of this 'Heavenly one' cannot be ignored, it is the culmination of George's masculinisation of the traditionally feminine beloved who is idealised and herself enheavend (Beatrice, Laura), and it also retains the divine beyond as a masculine agent. Schelling distinguishes the masculine personality of God the Father ('Gott'), who has to wrestle himself out of the inscrutable 'Ungrund', which is also gendered feminine as the 'Gottheit', which is his radical, 'abyss of freedom' (Žižek):

¹⁴⁹⁷ Franke has written extensively on the self-reflective aspect of lyric as being of tantamount importance to Dante's poetic project of revelation; it is the crux of his argument in *Secular Scriptures* (see e.g. pp. 27-31) and is probed in more dedicated detail in his *Dante's Paradiso and the Theological Origins of Modern Thought* (various chapters devoted to the topic of lyric self-reflexivity) and his *The Divine Vision of Dante's Paradiso: The Metaphysics of Representation* (Cambridge University Press, 2021), as well as in his *Dante's Vita Nuova and the New Testament*.

¹⁴⁹⁸ ('this outside is its most intimate core, *this otherness is the beating heart of its own*, that which repeats itself indefinitely, a sort of eternal history'), Costa, 'L'alterità nell'Immanenza', p. 306 (italics original).

¹⁴⁹⁹ 'repetition of the origin', Costa, 'L'alterità nell'Immanenza', p. 308.

¹⁵⁰⁰ Cf. Ludwig Lehnen, 'Der Stern des Bundes und das Transzendenz-Problem der Moderne', p. 186 regarding transcendence 'nach unten' as well as 'nach oben'.

¹⁵⁰¹ Cf. Pirro, *Come corda troppo tesa*, p. 230 who does acknowledge 'la natura trascendente di Maximin' with regards to another poem from the *Stern*, *Ihr wisst nicht wer ich bin .. nur dies vernehmt*' (VIII: 10). DiMassa, *Dante in Deutschland*, p. 155 likewise refers to Maximin in *Der Stern des Bundes* as transcendent.

Sie ist im Menschen die wahre Menschheit, in Gott die Gottheit. [...] Sie ist nicht Gott, sondern der Glanz des unzugänglichen Lichtes, in dem Gott wohnt, die verzehrende Schärfe der Reinheit, welcher der Mensch nur mit gleicher Lauterkeit des Herzens sich nähern kann. Denn da sie alles Seyn in sich als in einem Feuer verzehrt, so muß sie jedem unnahbar seyn, der noch im Seyn befangen ist.¹⁵⁰²

If history is 'God's poem' in the Christian model, god seems to be the earth's poem in the *Gestalt* model: 'Wie sein gesetz ist dass aus erdenstoff | Der Hohe wird' (VIII: 14).¹⁵⁰³ The *Gestalt* model also modifies the figural relation between poets. In Christian typology Dante would be seen to prefigure George as a prior point on the line of history, and George his fulfillment, whereas as *Gestalten* they are analogous to each other in their connection to the 'Mitte [...] durch die hindurch das Göttliche selbst wirkt'.¹⁵⁰⁴ The centre is eternal, but each historical *Gestalt* – taking form through a *Schöpfer*¹⁵⁰⁵ – expresses it differently according to the particular

¹⁵⁰² Schelling, *Die Weltalter: Fragmente*, p. 16. Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder*, pp. 14-16. Cf. *Philosophie der Offenbarung* (24. Vorlesung), *Sämtliche Werke* II, 4, 75. For the 'abyss of freedom' Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder*, p. 14. See Lawrence's footnote in his translation for the relevance of gendered aspects of Schelling's concepts (*Ages of the World*, 75 n. 40), including *Gottheit*.

¹⁵⁰³ Freccero, *The Poetics of Conversion*, p. 270.

¹⁵⁰⁴ Jürgen Egyptien, 'Die "Kreise"', in *Stefan George und sein Kreis. Ein Handbuch*, vol. 1, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer, Wolfgang Braungart, Stefan Breuer and Ute Oelmann, 2nd edn (de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 365-407 (p. 384). See likewise Kaiser, 'Traditionsverhalten', p. 661.

¹⁵⁰⁵ In a text entitled 'Über das Feststehende und die Denkformen', appearing in the ninth issue of the *Blätter für die Kunst* (1910) and purportedly authored by George himself (so Kurt Hildebrandt reports, see Ockenden et al., *Zeittafel*, p. 209), a sub-section on 'Das Göttliche' claims that the divine spark is in everyone, but each age needs a 'Schöpfer' to ignite the spark to fullness: 'Um diesen funken anzufachen erstehen die Schöpfer. Die Schöpfer haben das Göttliche in der ersten unmittelbaren art: sie sind urtypen [...] Die Schöpfer müssen das Göttliche immer wieder neu gebären', cited from Georg Peter Landmann, *Der George Kreis: Eine Auswahl aus seinen Schriften*, 2nd edn (Klett – Cotta, 1980), pp. 91-92 (p. 91). Eschenbach, *Imitatio im George-Kreis*, pp. 2-3 extrapolates the theory of the 'Urgeist' out of it and other programmatic texts in the Circle. See summarily page 31: 'Er steht in Kontakt zur Substanz, die auch als "Mitte", als "Allumfassendes"

historical time it finds itself in.¹⁵⁰⁶ The difference is important as it marks a significant swerve away from Dante while at the same time retaining him as a forebear and ally; Dante is not reduced to a prefiguration, but made a *Schöpfer* or *Urgeist* of the same ontological calibre, one of those who have the ‘power of the centre’ as Schelling calls it, the originary link to the divine that all humans have, or what in George’s master discourse becomes ‘der mitte gesetz’ (VIII: 84).¹⁵⁰⁷

George was likely well-acquainted with Dante’s figural understanding of history given that the only poem he translated from the *Vita nova* and included in his oeuvre is one that dramatises the concept quite clearly.¹⁵⁰⁸ Dante Gabriele

und “Zentrales”, als “zeugendes, unzerstörbares lebenszentrum”, als “leib”, als “gott” oder als “ens realissimum” bezeichnet wird’. Cf. Ratti’s explication (‘Der Begriff der Gestalt in Friedrich Gundolfs wissenschaftlichen Darstellungen’, 247 n. 12).

¹⁵⁰⁶ Cf. Gundolf, *George*, p. 2, who stresses this in plane terms: ‘Dieser Ausweg war nur heute nötig, und drum müssen wir wissen warum gerade dies Heute den D i c h t e r, seinen Gegenpol, hervortrieb. Nur gerade in dem einmaligen Augenblick seines Erscheinens hatte George dieses Amt. Jeder geschichtlichen Gestalt entspricht nur eine Zeit, und jede Zeit hat nur ein erlösendes oder erfüllendes Wort, nur eine ganz wahre Tat. Danach ob gerade ihr Wort und ihre Tat den ganzen Verkörperer findet oder ob sie in vielen Halben zerflattert und verdämmert, oder gar stumm bloßes Treiben, Ahnen und Sehnen bleibt, danach bemißt sich zuletzt die Größe und Frucht eines Zeitalters. Dies wahre Wort weiß zuerst nur der es zu sprechen hat, dann seine nächsten Hörer .. die meisten, die bedürftigen Empfänger wie die rückgewandten Betrachter, gehen fast immer irre, weil sie es nach Analogien der ihnen vertrauten Geschichte erwarten. Niemals gibt es zweimal d i e s e l b e Lösung, kein früheres Heil kann u n m i t t e l b a r übertragen werden auf eine andere N o t, so wenig es in anderer Luft als eben seiner wachsen könnte: es bedarf erst der jedesmaligen Erweckung durch den neuen “Löser und Lader”’. (cf. Pirro, ‘Per una lettura Begriffsgeschichtlich della Gestalt’, p. 108 citing this passage in his own analysis). George himself, if we believe him to be the author of the aforementioned text ‘Über das Feststehende und die Denkformen’, says the same: ‘Kein Schöpfer ist so gross dass das von ihm gebrachte Göttliche für immer wirksam wäre wie es auch nie ein gleiches Göttliches für alle stufen gibt’, cited from Landmann, *Der George Kreis*, p. 91. On Wolters distinction between the ‘Schaffende Kraft’ and the ‘Ord nende Kraft’ that develops this line of thought see his article in the first *Jahrbuch für die geistige Bewegung* (1910), and Rossi’s analysis of it in *Gesamterkennen*, pp. 151-52.

¹⁵⁰⁷ ‘Dem Menschen muß ein Princip zugestanden werden, das außer und über der Welt ist; denn wie könnte er allein von allen Geschöpfen den langen Weg der Entwicklungen von der Gegenwart bis in die tiefste Nacht der Vergangenheit zurück verfolgen, er allein bis zum Anfang der Zeiten aufsteigen, wenn in ihm nicht ein Princip von dem Anfang der Zeiten wäre? Aus der Quelle der Dinge geschöpft und ihr gleich, hat die menschliche Seele eine Mitwissenschaft der Schöpfung. In ihr liegt die höchste Klarheit aller Dinge, und nicht so wohl wissend ist sie als selber die Wissenschaft’, *Sämtliche Werke* I, 8, 200. For the ‘power of the centre’ see Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder*, p. 14. For ‘Mitwissenschaft’ cf. *SW*, 1, 9, 221: ‘Hier handelt es sich insbesondere nicht um eine historische Kenntniß jener Bewegung, sondern um eine Mitwissenschaft, *conscientia*. Hieraus folgt also, daß in uns selbst etwas jener ewigen Freiheit Aehnliches und Gleiches - oder noch bestimmter: jene ewige Freiheit muß selbst in uns seyn, selbst in uns das Erkennende von sich seyn’.

¹⁵⁰⁸ See Franke, *Dante’s Vita Nuova*, 8 n. 12 for further scholarship on the topic.

Rossetti's *Dante and his Circle*, which George was reading while composing poems for the *Teppich*,¹⁵⁰⁹ contains the *Vita nova*, translating the relevant passage as:

A short while after these words which my heart spoke to me with the tongue of Love, I saw coming towards me a certain lady who was very famous for her beauty, and of whom that friend whom I have already called the first among my friends had long been enamoured. This lady's right name was Joan; but because of her comeliness (or at least it was so imagined) she was called of many *Primavera* (Spring), and went by that name among them. Then looking again, I perceived that the most noble Beatrice followed after her. And when both these ladies had passed by me, it seemed to me that Love spake again in my heart, saying: "She that came first was called Spring, only because of that which was to happen on this day. And it was I myself who caused that name to be given her; seeing that as the Spring Cometh first in the year, so should she come first on this day, when Beatrice was to show herself after the vision of her servant. And even if thou go about to consider her right name, it is also as one should say, 'She shall come first': inasmuch as her name, Joan, is taken from that John who went before the True Light, saying *Ego vox clamantis in deserto: Parate viam Domini*.'" And also it seemed to me that he added other words, to wit: "He who should inquire delicately touching this matter, could not but call Beatrice by mine own name, which is to say, Love; beholding her so like unto me."¹⁵¹⁰

¹⁵⁰⁹ See Egyptian, *Stefan George*, p. 150 (and cf. Ockenden et al., *Zeittafel*, p. 77).

¹⁵¹⁰ Rossetti, *Dante and his Circle*, 68-69.

This comes from chapter XXIV of modern editions of the text, and introduces the following poem, now given in George's translation:

SONNETT AUS DER VITA NUOVA

Ich fühlte wie im herzen mir erwachte

Ein geist der liebe der im schlaf gelegen:

Dann kam aus fernen Amor mir entgegen

So froh dass es ihn fast unkenntlich machte

Er sprach: Nun denk mir ehre zu bereiten

Und lächelte bei jedem seiner worte

Mein Herr blieb etwas stehn an meinem orte

Hinschauend wo er herkam und aus weiten

Sah ich Frau Hanna neben Frau Beate

Mir grad entgegen wandelten die zweie

Die eine und die andre Wunderreiche

Und wenn ich Amors meinung recht errate

Sprach er zu mir: DIE hat den namen Maie

DIE Liebe · so ist sie mit mir das gleiche.

(xviii: 64)

Dante here elevates the courtly love traditions to the level of biblical figural history (John the Baptist prefiguring Christ), thereby theologising earthly events. Beatrice,

via a network of suggestions in the poem, in the chapter, and in the *libello* as a whole, is suggested to be a *figura Christi* and here equated to Amor (the personified god in the courtly love tradition), and in turn suggestive of the Christian god of *charitas*.¹⁵¹¹

Giovanna (Cavalcanti's lady), figuring Giovanni (John the Baptist) prepares the way for Beatrice, or Amor, or Christ (charity). She is the spring (Primavera) who will come first ('prima verrà', as Dante himself interprets). Let us now consider George's angel in this light, which sits somewhere between prefiguration and figural fulfilment, given that it seems to fulfil and redeem all those prior companions who proved failures in the earlier works, while remaining an idealised figure that does not yet have the corporeal earthly presence that Maximin will have, and thus remaining a 'shadowy preface' (*Par.* xxx: 78) of the truth of Maximin.

iv. George's Angel

Arrighetti succinctly formulates the central scholarly insight propelling the present investigation, namely: 'Die intensive Arbeit an der *Commedia* prägte in den Jahren nach 1900 auch StGs eigene Gedichte'.¹⁵¹² The starting point for a consideration of Dante's impact on the 'Vorspiel' is Klusmann's article on the subject, finding as it does a clear linguistic parallel between the angel telling the Georgian *Ich*: 'Ich bin freund und führer dir und ferge' (v: 16) and the pilgrim honouring Vergil in a climactic triptych of titles as 'der Herr · der Führer und der

¹⁵¹¹ Cf. Franke, *Dante's Vita Nuova and the New Testament*, esp. pp. 3-6 on the analogy Beatrice-Christ; and Olivia Holmes, *Assembling the Lyric Self*, pp. 120ff for Dante's application of Biblical figural history in his conception of literary history, whereby he comes to stand as the fulfilment of all former traditions (as much as George, in his own conception, is the latest fulfiller of the mandates required of historical *Gestalten*). Holmes, *Assembling the Lyric Self*, p. 137 teases out the analogy of Beatrice to God as *charitas*.

¹⁵¹² Arrighetti, 'Dante. Übertragungen', p. 220.

Weise ·' (in George's translation, *x/xi*: 15; *Inf.* II: 140) before commencing on the journey through hell.¹⁵¹³ The extent of George's Dantean posturing here can be illuminated all the more by reference to the broader context of the scene. In the previous poem, the angel relates how the *Ich*, thrown 'heimatlos [...] in die wüste' (v: 15) found peace in his presence (itself an anti-Petrarchan gesture, cf. *Rvf* 134: 1). The presence of that angel is like a bathing in the river Lethe, a purgation from 'der schrecken die dir längst | Verschollen sind seit du mir eigen bleibst' (v: 15), much as the Lethe causes sinners to forget the memory of their sins.¹⁵¹⁴ The angel, like Dante's Beatrice and Vergil, intervenes on the *Ich*'s behalf to release him from his dark night and guide him out of the dark wood to salvation.¹⁵¹⁵ This occasions yet another linguistic and motivic crossover: Beatrice enlists Vergil to help Dante, and her speech reported by Vergil in *Inferno* 2 is translated by George thus:

Mein freund – nicht der des schicksals – ist in trauer
 Auf ödem strand und so gedrängt von plagen
 Auf seinem weg dass er sich kehrt vor schauer.
 [...]
 Nun eile du mit deiner rede klänge ·
 Mit dem was ihm gebricht sei ihm zum horte
 Dass er sich rette und ich trost erlange!
 (*x/xi*: 12-13; *Inf.* II: 61-63; 67-69)

¹⁵¹³ Klusmann, 'Dante und Stefan George', p. 144. Kurt Hildebrandt, in his *Das Werk Stefan Georges*, likewise cites the line 'Ich bin freund und führer dir und ferge' and compares the encounter between the angel and the *Ich* to Dante's encounter with Vergil (p. 143). He likewise characterises the angel's *schönes Leben* to the (implicitly Dantean) earthly paradise (ibid).

¹⁵¹⁴ Cf. Klusmann, 'Dante und Stefan George', p. 143 for more on the angel's relation to Dante's earthly paradise. Furthermore, the pilgrim's address to Vergil in *Inferno* 2 ('Ich sprach: O Dichter der du bei mir bleibest', *Inf.* II: 10) has an echo of the angel's speech.

¹⁵¹⁵ 'So zischte durch die nacht dein ruf der qual', v: 15; cf. 'Die nacht die ich verbrachte so betreten' *x/xi*: 7; *Inf.* I: 21.

Lines 58-93 of this canto were translated by George before 1901, and the rest of the canto was finished in 1911.¹⁵¹⁶ Three lexical items here stick out. Beatrice is seeking 'trost', a word that has especial significance in George's canon-building, as previously examined, and she identifies the pilgrim's predicament 'auf ödem strand', that Georgean wasteland that has reared its head continuously since the opening line of the entire oeuvre (I: 13), another predicament that the 'Vorspiel' and the angel's intervention revises and salvages. Further on in *Inferno* 1 (the section translated by George later on, by 1922), Dante's text is once more translated 'ins Georgesche'.¹⁵¹⁷ When the pilgrim encounters Virgil for the first time, he calls out for mercy, George translates it thus: 'Ich sah im grossen ödland diesen boten .. / Erbarm dich meiner! rief ich zu ihm bange ·' (X/XI: 9; *Inf.* I: 64-5). 'ödland' works well as a translation ('the great wilderness' is Durling's rendering), but given the insistent imagery throughout George's oeuvre of all that is *öd*, the translation marks the Dantean scenery as Georgean, as if Dante were speaking in George's voice. Through Dante, George pulls himself out of the literary wasteland of Petrarchism and, once led safely out of the 'ödnis' by Virgilio-cum-angel-cum-Maximin, he will wield the power of the desert over his enemies, as we have seen. In the first autobiographical 'Zeitgedicht', for example, the imagery of the desert is repurposed and projected onto the bourgeoisie who 'in lärm und wüster gier des lebens | Mit plumpem tritt und rohem finger ranntet' (VI/VII: 6). In the final (again autobiographical) 'Zeitgedicht', the poet admits of increasing desperation before

¹⁵¹⁶ Per the 'Anhang' in X/XI: 158 & 160.

¹⁵¹⁷ Benno von Wiese, in 'Diskussion' to Paul Gerhard Klussmann, 'Dante und Stefan George', in *Stefan George Kolloquium*, p. 153.

ending with the triumphant recognition of the cultural renewal promised by the birth of a youth:

Mit wüsten wechseln gärten · frost mit glut ·
Nacht kommt für helle – busse für das glück.
Und schlingt das dunkel uns und unsre trauer:
Eins das von je war (keiner kennt es) währet
Und blum und jugend lacht und sang erklingt.
(VI/VII: 33)

The image picks up the close of the first 'Zeitgedicht' prophesying the birth of 'alle schönheit kraft und grösse [...] | Aus eines knaben stillem flötenlied' (VI/VII: 7), thus closing the circle, while also thematising the circularity of history, as von Petersdorff reads it: 'Mit wüsten wechseln gärten', but if George and his followers recognise the current state as the desert, then the hope for the 'gärten' offers a point to strive towards.¹⁵¹⁸ That it arrives out of (presumably) poetic song and sound does not surprise. 'Erklingen resonates with the verb 'klingen' that George uses to translate Dante's programmatic meta-poetic statement in *Purgatorio* 24, as Konrad Huber once pointed out:

E io a lui: "I' mi son un che, quando
Amor mi spira, noto, e a quel modo
ch'e' ditta dentro vo significando"

¹⁵¹⁸ Dirk von Petersdorff, 'Wieviel Freiheit braucht die Dichtung? "Das Zeitgedicht" im "Siebenten Ring"', *George-Jahrbuch* 5 (2004/2005), pp. 45-62 (p. 59).

(*Purg.* xxiv: 52-54)

‘Und ich: Ein solcher bin ich dass · derweile
Die liebe haucht · ich klinge und dermaassen
Wie sie im innern vorspricht wort erteile.
(x/xi: 77)

Amor’s inspiration, the verb ‘spirare’, is rendered with George’s ‘hauchen’, a verb that re-appears at the beginning of *Paradiso* 2 in Dante and George, where the topos of literary inspiration thematises the newness of the poet’s undertaking (l. 8; x/xi: 110), and the derivative noun of which characterises the poet’s appeal to the angel for purgatorial renewal in the ‘Vorspiel’: ‘Gib mir den grossen feierlichen hauch | Gib jene glut mir wieder die verjünge’ (v: 11).

‘Ich klinge’, meanwhile, replaces Dante’s ‘noto’ (‘I take notice’, ‘I write a note’), conjoined in the *terzina* not with *Amor* but simply ‘liebe’. This translation (from 1903) will find an echo, as Huber also pointed out, in *Das Neue Reich*, when the poet once more chooses to link his poetic output (‘klänge’) with the overarching force of love (‘liebe’) and, to be sure, in a rhyme with ‘ringe’ to tie it together into the oeuvre’s consistent thematics: ‘Ich bin nur frei weil ein gesetz mich engt | Ich weiss erst wie ich liebe wenn ich klinge’ (ix: 75).¹⁵¹⁹ If in Dante’s characterisation of his early Stilnovist poetry love informs or inspires the poem, in George the movement is reversed: consciousness of love – the world-birthing force¹⁵²⁰ – comes once the poetic law is in place, poetic form is the condition of possibility of

¹⁵¹⁹ Huber, ‘Philologische Bermerkungen zur Dante-Übertragung Stefan Georges’, 299 n. 28.

¹⁵²⁰ ‘MIT DIESEN KOMMT DAS ZWEITE ALTER · LIEBE | GEBAR DIE WELT · LIEBE GEBIERT SIE NEU’. (xi:14).

love, of human reciprocity; freedom emerges with the Master's law – in Schellingian terms, escaping the 'abyss of freedom' (the 'Ungrund') requires first a limiting contraction into a dark ground of necessity: the 'Grund'.¹⁵²¹

The 'Vorspiel' opens with the lines:

Ich forschte bleichen eifers nach dem horte

Nach strofen drinnen tiefste kümmernis

Und dinge rollten dumpf und ungewiss –

Da trat ein nackter engel durch die pforte:

(v: 10)

'kümmernis' is a *hapax legomenon* in George's own poetry and appears only once in the Dante translations, where the pilgrim beseeches his old friend Casella to sing for him and console his soul a bit, 'die mit ihrem leibe dringet | Hierher so voll von grossen kümmernissen' (x/xi: 52, for 'affanata tanto', *Purg.* II: 111).¹⁵²² George ends the translation on the note of how wonderfully sweet Casella's song is, not translating the immediate consequence of the spirits' negligent relaxation in the form of Cato's rebuke, aligning with what Michels called George's 'Ausschaltung der politischen, lehrhaft-didaktischen und moralisch-theologischen Spekulation'.¹⁵²³ While George does not translate the part of canto that dramatises the arrival of the angel on his boat (*Purg.* II: 13-54), he does make sure to signpost

¹⁵²¹ 'Also kann sich das Nothwendige nur als Grund dieser Geburt und demnach als Vorausgehendes in derselben verhalten'. Schelling, *Weltalter* (1815 draft), *Sämmtliche Werke*, I, 8, 304. Cf. Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder*, 25, op cit. On the 'abyss of freedom' Žižek, ibid, 14-16.

¹⁵²² Pestalozzi, *Die Entstehung des lyrischen Ich*, 321, identifies another hapax legomenon in George's work that reoccurs only once in the translations ('planeten' from *Entrückung*). Cf. Bock, *Wort-Konkordanz*, 340: 'Kummer' has its uses, but the variant 'kümmernis' only two.

¹⁵²³ Michels, *Die Dante-Übertragungen Stefan Georges*, p. 66.

the presence of that angel later in the canto by supplying 'engel' for Dante's use of a pronoun, which inevitably invokes his own 'engel' at the helm in the third 'Vorspiel' poem discussed previously (v: 12).¹⁵²⁴ By cutting out the theological rebuke that the pilgrims receive, at any rate, George's canto ends on the sweetness 'dieses trostes' (x/xi: 52) and thus privileges the aesthetic, which in Dante's text is either not enough, or dreadfully shortsighted. The song Casella sings is one of Dante's earlier poems, and most critics consider it a palinodic gesture on Dante the poet's part.¹⁵²⁵ When George subtly cites his own poetry in the translation work, it is a legitimising gesture rather than a palinodic one.

'Ich forschte' has a unique point in George oeuvre; the long-sought for 'horte' receives a counterpart in the Dante translation where it stands for the appearance of Virgil, so that Dante, now wearing George's linguistic robes, provides retroactively a literary authority for the 'hort' that has already appeared as George's own Virgilian figure of the angel. When the angel is likened to Christ in the fourth 'Vorspiel' poem (v: 13), Christ is deigned the 'Meister[]', a term of course appropriated by George for himself as leader of the Circle, but also a term given to Vergil in the translations. When the pilgrim Dante first emphatically addresses Vergil in the first canto, he exclaims: 'Tu se' lo mio maestro e 'l mio autore' ('You are my master and my author', *Inf.* I: 85), which George translates as 'Du Meister mir und Stab um mich zu lenken' (x/xi: 10). The 'Stab' is a relatively rare word in George's oeuvre, but it has emphatically metapoetic significance when it appears in both *Hymnen* ('Pilger mit der hand am stabe', 'Die Gärten Schliessen', II: 28)

¹⁵²⁴ 'benignamente fu' da lui ricolto', I. 102; 'Von jenem engel gültig aufgenommen', x/xi: 52.

¹⁵²⁵ On the metaliterary and self-referential palinodic aspects of the canto see fundamentally Robert Hollander, 'Purgatorio II: Cato's Rebuke and Dante's Scoglio', *Italica* 52.3 (1975), pp. 348-63; also R.A. Shoaf, 'Dante's "Colombi" and the figuralism of Hope in the "Divine Comedy"', *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 93 (1975), pp. 27-59 and Freccero, *The Poetics of Conversion* (chapter 12: "Casella's Song: *Purgatorio* II, 112").

and, later on, in *Der Stern des Bundes*, where it comes to stand for a kind of 'Wünschelrute':¹⁵²⁶

Erschrick nicht staune nicht: »warum denn ich?«

Wirf nicht im trotz das wunderding beiseit

Weil du es nicht begreifst .. geniess und hilf

Solang der stab in deiner hand gehorcht.

(VIII: 60)

These three instances of 'stab' provide a clear example of George's 'verbal figuralism'.¹⁵²⁷ In 'Die Gärten Schliessen', the 'stab' refers literally to the pilgrim's walking stick, and metaphorically to the poet's pen, figuring him as a poet heading out to wander the world; in Dante, the divinely-ordained intervenor becomes, in George's translation, the 'stab' to lean on, and finally, in the cult of *Der Stern des Bundes*, the term is spiritualised, miraculously transformed into a 'wunderding' that, not conceptually or rationally understandable, has a secret power. Let us note too, in this *Stern* poem, how the speaker has adopted an authoritative voice – he is no longer the pilgrim, but the *Meister*, and there is a vague resonance of Vergil's pep talks to Dante in that 'Erschrick nicht staune nicht: »warum denn ich?«. *But why me?* Is precisely the pilgrim's question at the outset of *Inferno*.¹⁵²⁸

Dante the narrator receives his authority from the character of Vergil (at least in the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*), much as George's *Ich* in the 'Vorspiel' receives its authority from the angel, partially modelled on the *Commedia*'s encounters (and

¹⁵²⁶ In Morwitz' interpretation, *Kommentar*, p. 370.

¹⁵²⁷ Hollander, *Allegory in Dante's Commedia*, p. 105.

¹⁵²⁸ *Inf.* II: 31-33; Vergil's encouragement *ibid.* II. 121-23 and III: 14-15.

on that other *Meister*, Christ, in v: 13). Dante the author, however, is able to legitimise himself as a poet in the way he adapts and reworks Vergil's *Aeneid* within the medieval Christian context, and this is accomplished in part by setting Vergil up to be a wholesome father-figure but also, alas, a damned and fallible character.¹⁵²⁹ George does not systematically usurp Dante's authority as Dante apparently does Vergil's, but he employs Dante as his forebear of choice, setting himself up in a seemingly figural relation to him, as the 'Zeitgedichte' of *Der Siebente Ring* strongly suggest, in which 'Dante und das Zeitgedicht' (VI/VII: 7-8) follows George's own 'Zeitgedicht' that opens the cycle, which is then in turn closed by another George-'Zeitgedicht' (VI/VII: 32-33).¹⁵³⁰ Significantly, when the pilgrim honours Virgil as his 'maestro e 'l mio autore' (*Inf.* I: 85), that second term acknowledges him as his 'author' insofar as Vergil's text is both an authority and,

¹⁵²⁹ On Dante's masterful narrative strategies of endearing the reader to Vergil the character while programmatically undermining him see Barolini, *Dante and the Origins of Italian Literary Culture*, chapter 7: 'Q: Does Dante Hope for Vergil's Salvation? A: Why do we Care? For the Very Reason We Should Not Ask the Question' and especially pp. 155-56 on poetic authority and Vergil as representative of a culture that has to be, if not rejected, then adapted.

¹⁵³⁰ *Seemingly*, because as pointed out above, there are nuances making Christian typology and *Gestalt* ideology differ in subtle ways, which a future study may explore in detail. The autobiographical parallels between the first 'Zeitgedicht' and the subsequent 'Dante und das Zeitgedicht' have been examined by Schloon, *Modernes Mittelalter*, pp. 213-21. On the typological aspect see Wacker, *Poetik des Prophetischen*, p. 103 (also cited in Schloon, *Modernes Mittelalter*, 211 n. 85). Wacker's summary of the figural relation is helpful: 'Das Charisma, das den negativen Leitfiguren abgesprochen wird, eignet sich der Dichter-Seher oftmals durch ihre typologische "Vollendung" an, so wie gemäß einem typologischen Geschichtsverständnis gegenwärtige und zukünftige Ereignisse als gesteigerte Erfüllung biblischer Präfigurationen wie vorgängiger Propheten zu werten sind' (Wacker, *Poetik des Prophetischen*, 103-04). Wacker suggests Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence* in analysing the *poeta-vates* gesture of poet-prophets, including George (Wacker, p. 92) and Bloom's final 'revisionary ratio' of *apophrades* applies rather neatly to 'Dante und das Zeitgedicht', where there is 'a manifestation of the dead in the garments of the living' (Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, p. 143): 'The mighty dead return, but they return in our colours, and speaking in our voices, at least in part, at least in moments, moments that testify to our persistence, and not to their own' (Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, p. 141). With Dante's return in the 'Zeitgedichte' he is speaking in and through George's poetic language, a poetic language that is also reshaping Dante's own text via the translations, creating the illusion that 'particular passages in his work seem to be not presages of one's own advent, but rather to be indebted to one's own achievement, and even (necessarily) to be lessened by one's greater splendor' (Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, p. 141).

in terms of influence, partly responsible for ‘authoring’ the *Commedia*.¹⁵³¹ George’s decision to exclude the idea of authority and authorship in his translation, and instead use his ‘Stab’-imagery, not only overwrites Dante’s text with his own poetic language but minimises the extent to which authority will be supplied even from the divinely authorised ‘Lenker’. When we read of that ‘Stab’, we are reminded not of Virgil’s authority, but of George’s own works.

When George returns to complete the translation of *Inferno* 2 in 1911, post-Maximin and in the height of composing *Der Stern des Bundes*, the language once more carries traces of his program. Dante’s ‘mente che non erra’ (‘memory, unerring’, *Inf.* II: 6) is transformed into the centripetal Georgean ‘ich [...] werde’, and Dante’s invocation of the muses into the Master’s imperative:

Seid Musen · sei du hoher Geist im bunde!

O sinn der was ich sah du in dich schreibest:

Hier gib von deinem edeltume kunde!’

(X/XI: 10)

The rare capitalisation of ‘hoher Geist im bunde’, with his addition of the rhetoric of a covenant, links George’s alteration of Dante’s text directly to the equally insistent capitalisation in *Der Stern des Bundes*, where the highest level is precisely a ‘reich des Geistes’ (VIII: 83). The ominous ‘alto passo’ (‘deep pass’, *Inf.* II: 12) for which the pilgrim is preparing is rendered by George as the ‘hohen ziel’, which emphasises instead the clear direction of the journey and corresponds to the

¹⁵³¹ Cf. Ascoli, *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author*, pp. 14-15: ‘This, in turn, would introduce an irony, one around which Virgil’s presence in the *Commedia* continuously spirals: having “authored” Dante, Virgil himself has become a character in a book of which Dante is the author’.

direction of his own *Bund*, '[d]ass die erkoren sind zum höchsten ziel | Zuerst durch tiefste öden ziehn' ('Der Dichter in Zeiten der Wirren', IX: 30), the 'ziel' that his oeuvre had searched for since its originary Petrarchan beginnings in *Die Fibel* ('Ziellos meine schritte lenkend | Nur an die geliebte denkend', I: 16). That 'erkoren', furthermore, finds an echo in the translation of *Inferno* 2, where 'küren' references Aeneas as the chosen one for the journey to the underworld ('Da vom erlauchten Rom und seinen welten | Der höchste himmel ihn zum stammherrn kürte', x/xi: 11), those chosen ('erkoren') few are the Master's elected who are 'in das Neue Leben umgeboren und umgestaltet'.¹⁵³² At the beginning of book III of *Der Stern des Bundes* this Dantean language is utilised:

Dies ist reich des Geistes: abglanz

Meines reiches · hof und hain.

Neugestaltet ungeboren

Wird hier jeder

[...]

Väter mütter sind nicht mehr ..

Aus der sohnschaft · der erlosten ·

Kür ich meine herrn der welt.

There is a consistent conception of divine intervention across both poets' works, reflected in the language and imagery used, and George's translation works to secularise Dante's religious worldview and transform it into a question of his own

¹⁵³² Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 381, discussing *Der Stern des Bundes*'s second poem of book III (VIII: 83).

'new life' for which one undergoes a conversion within the waters of his poetry. The precondition to becoming a Master able to curate his 'herrn der welt' is the evangelical doctrine of the 'good news' of Maximin, who provides the wandering poet with a destination. In the second poem of 'Auf das Leben und den Tod Maximins' in *Der Siebente Ring*, the 'ziel der reise' of a pilgrimage ('Das Zweite: Wallfahrt', VI/VII: 100) is the unassuming birthplace of Maximin. A rhyme from this poem ('reise' and 'weise') repeats an earlier rhyme from 'Der Jünger':

Ich weiss in dunkle lande führt die reise
Wo viele starben · doch mit meinem Herrn
Trotz ich gefahren · denn mein Herr ist weise
Ich traue meinem weisen Herrn.
(v: 47)

This poem is followed by the poem praising Gundolf ('Der Erkorene', v: 48) and disparaging Hofmannsthal ('Der Verworfene', 49), and also finds an echo at the end of *Inferno 2*:

Du bist der Herr · der Führer und der Weise.
So sagt ich ihm. Er war vorangegangen
Und ich trat an die hohe schwere reise.
(x/xI: 15)

further maintaining consistency across George's oeuvre, linking the themes of the journey, the Master and the eager disciple, and making difficult the process of disentangling his own poetry from Dante's.¹⁵³³

The poem 'Ich forschte' is connected, in one way or another, to almost everything else. *Der Teppich des Lebens* appeared publicly in 1900, prior to the publication of *Die Fibel* (1901), and the opening lines of each are no doubt set up in parallel.¹⁵³⁴ The poem first appeared alongside poems from *Das Jahr der Seele* in 1896's *Blätter für die Kunst* (entitled 'Der Besuch'),¹⁵³⁵ signalling how far back it reached and its contemporaneous production alongside and in counter to those poems. Its title as 'Der Besuch' is in turn redeemed by a poem from *Der Siebente Ring*'s Maximin cycle in turn entitled 'Besuch' (V/VII: 100), sandwiched between two of the volume's most Dantean poems ('Einverleibung', 109; and 'Entrückung', 111) and prophesying a reappearance of the divine, a 'pilgersmann' who

Nochmals vielleicht durchdrungen

Unsere erde und dann

Überm weg das geäst

Teilt mit dem heiligen oden –

Er eine weil deinen boden

Tritt und sich niederlässt!

(110)

¹⁵³³ To expand a point that Michels made regarding a particular passage (*Inferno* 4): 'Als Entwurf des individuellen dichterischen Anspruchs wird diese Teileinheit zu einem Georgischen Gedicht', Michels, *Die Dante-Übertragungen Stefan Georges*, p. 57.

¹⁵³⁴ Cf. Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 119 on the same point, suggesting both also evoke the opening line of the *Inferno* (p. 120).

¹⁵³⁵ Albeit 'deutlich, wenn auch nicht unmißverständlich, als nicht [to *Das Jahr der Seele*] gehörig abgesetzt', Oelmann's note in 'Anhang', v:91.

The 'positive Emotionalität' of the poem contrasts with the sub-cycle's other mournful poems, with the *Ich* preparing the garden in anticipation of another visit from the divine, of what Shen calls an 'erlösende[n] Plötzlichkeit'.¹⁵³⁶ The 'Besuch' is positioned in between the poem 'Einverleibung', in which poet and divine Du melt into one another, and 'Entrückung', where the poet dissolves his ego and loses himself in mystical rapture of cosmic proportions:

Ich löse mich in tönen · kreisend · webend ·
Ungründigen thanks und unbenamten lobes
Dem grossen atem wunschlos mich ergebend.
(111)

The venture embodied by the 'Vorspiel' is thus saturated ideologically with a Dantean conception of poetry seeking guidance away from the banality of bourgeois civilisation to the heights of a cosmic divine.

Throughout the 'Vorspiel' and *Teppich* George is establishing himself as the prophetic master of a new coalition of learned men and recasting his prior works in light of the angelic revelation. Two poems from the *Teppich* itself ('Der Erkorene' and 'Der Verworfene', v: 48, 49) illustrate this clearly. In 'Der Erkorene', the successful acolyte (Gundolf) undergoes a conversion to, is reborn in, the *schönes Leben* heralded by the Master: 'Sie grüssen dich laut zur schönern geburt' (48),

¹⁵³⁶ Gunilla Eschenbach, 'Maximin', in *Stefan George – Werkkommentar. Studien und Interpretationen zu sämtlichen Dichtungen und Übertragungen*, ed. by Jürgen Egyptien (de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 414-32 (p. 416). Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 137. Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 285 points out that both poems are linked by the word 'Besuch' in their titles, without exploring this further.

and the 'jüngling' is crowned with a wreath that will forever bloom as long as the disciple does not stray from his inborn tendency towards reverence for the aesthetic life.¹⁵³⁷ In 'Der Verworfenene', a failed disciple (Hofmannsthal) is chastised and comes away at the end 'ohne kranz' (49). Gundolf's later essay on George's centrality to German cultural renewal ('der wichtigste mann des gegenwärtigen deutschland') and to a 'bekenntnis zu George' (not his person, Gundolf underlines, but rather to the 'sprachleib des kommenden geistes' that he by necessity forms through his work).¹⁵³⁸ There is no half-conversion, Gundolf declares, and those disciples who failed to fully commit are done away with by reference to the miserable souls of *Inferno* 3, denied entry into hell: 'man kann nicht zwei herrn zugleich dienen, nämlich einem und keinem, und sie mögen jener öden vorhölle gedenken, wo es heisst: non ragionam di lor'.¹⁵³⁹

In Chapter four it was shown how George, in 'Der Verworfenene', re-appropriates the language characteristic of his poetic *Ich*'s plight in the earlier volumes and now projects them onto the other from the position of the Master reborn in the waters of Dantean poetry, poised to educate and induct the German youth into the *schönes Leben*. The gesture of blessing and crowning up-and-coming talents itself carries a faint echo of Virgil's own crowning of the pilgrim at the end of *Purgatorio*, which George translated soon after, in 1903.¹⁵⁴⁰ George translates Virgil's proclamation to Dante as:

'Dein geist ist fest und heil und frei von frone.

¹⁵³⁷ I'm following here Morwitz' paraphrase of the poem, Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 186 who calls this conversion a 'zweite, geistige Geburt'.

¹⁵³⁸ Gundolf, 'Das Bild Georges', pp. 21, 48.

¹⁵³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴⁰ For dating see the 'Chronologie der Übertragungen' in *SW*, x/xi: 158.

Nun wäre fehl zu folgen andrem sinne!
Hier krön ich dich mit mitra und mit krone!
(‘libero, dritto e sano è tuo arbitrio
e fallo fora non fare a suo senno:
per ch’io te sovra te corono e mitrio’)
(SW, x/xi: 81; *Purg.* xxvii: 140-42)

It is apparent that the steadfastness and solidity of the pilgrim’s mind (‘fest und heil und frei’) is markedly opposite to that of the failed acolyte of ‘Der Verworfene’, and alongside that, George supplies ‘von frone’ where Dante simply has ‘libero’. The specification ‘von frone’ adds a Georgean retrospective touch to the translation, for it is the ‘dunkler sehnsucht harte frohn’ (I: 9) that marked his conception of the *Fibel* poems, the yoke of Petrarchan servitude to a Lady that limits the aesthetic development towards autonomy of the *Ich*.

v. Glory Be

In ‘Ich fühlte wie im herzen mir erwachte’ (xviii: 64), Giovanna, or Primavera, proceeds before Beatrice, as John the Baptist preceded Christ. In Dante’s poem, both figures are preceded by the appearance of a cheerful Amor who asks the poet to do him honour. This sonnet, as the ‘Anhang’ speculates (xviii: 139), was translated only after 1901, and thus well after the ‘Vorspiel’'s angelic revelation. And yet there is something of George’s angel in these lines: his approach, his smile, his masterly command, and even his similarity to the beloved (the angel is a

first revelation, preparing the way for that of Maximin).¹⁵⁴¹ Dante's *Amor* is a kind of psychological manifestation, a personification, but Beatrice is there in the flesh and blood, approaching from afar, she is not a narcissistic reflection of the poetic self, but rather a true other that can 'interrupt the circuit of Dante's narcissism and break him open to the true source of his beatitude'.¹⁵⁴² This is a significant moment in George's movement from the angel (as specular ideal-ego) to the figure of Maximin who has a historic precedent in Maximilian Kronberger.¹⁵⁴³ To this effect, contra Gundolf, George's true 'vita nova' is recounted in the apocalyptic 'Vorrede zu Maximin' that was published after Maximilian Kronberger's death and dramatically opens the ornately designed *Maximin. Ein Gedenkbuch* published in 1907.¹⁵⁴⁴ Like the *Vita Nova*, but to a much lesser extent, George maintains the sense of the new god as having actually lived on earth as a flesh and blood person, comparable to Dante's insistence in his *libello* on 'the residue of personal and social identity' of Beatrice that will be left behind in the *Commedia*.¹⁵⁴⁵

This is the point of departure for the 'Vorrede': Maximin appears, like Beatrice, in the city, approaching on the horizontal plane:

¹⁵⁴¹ Cf. 'Vorspiel' I's 'während er dies lächelnd sagte' (v: 10) to Dante's 'lächelte bei jedem seiner worte'; the angel's appearance coming towards the *Ich* in poem IV ('Da trat ER mir entgegen fahnenschwinger', v: 13) and Amor's appearance ('Da kam aus fernen Amor mir entgegen'); the praise of the angel as the authoritative master and George's rendering of Dante's 'segno' with 'Herr', an ideologically loaded word (cf. 'Vorspiel' XXIII, v: 32; 'Teppich's' 'Der Jünger', v: 47). *Amor's* command that the poet honour him has faint echoes of the angel's own authoritative commands (e.g. v: 14, 15, 16, 19).

¹⁵⁴² Franke, *Dante's Vita Nuova and the New Testament*, p. 51.

¹⁵⁴³ Cf. Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, pp. 94-96, and p. 97 for the angel corresponding to the 'idealized self that will later be manifested in the figure of Maximin'.

¹⁵⁴⁴ The *Gedenkbuch* is Available online at <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/george1907/0009/image.info>

¹⁵⁴⁵ Teodolinda Barolini, *Dante's Lyric Poetry: Poems of Youth and of the Vita Nuova (1283-1292)*, ed. with general introduction and introductory essays by Teodolinda Barolini, trans. by Richard Lansing and Andrew Frisardi (Toronto University Press, 2014), p. 223.

Als wir Maximin zum erstenmal in unsrer Stadt begegneten stand er noch in den knabenjahren. Er kam uns aus dem siegesbogen geschritten mit der unbeirrbar festigkeit des jungen fechters und den mienen feldherrlicher obergewalt jedoch gemildert durch jene regbarkeit und schwermut die erst durch jahrhunderte christlicher bildung in die angesichter des volkes gekommen war.

(xvii: 62)

Like Dante's Florence, 'our city' is not specified, but the initiated know that the 'siegesbogen' refers to the 'Siegestor' in Munich where George first met Kronberger. Historical referent is here partly obscured in its elevation to a triumphant, if abstract, mythical imagery.¹⁵⁴⁶ It is not fully obscured. In the *Vita Nova*, Dante invokes an old piece of medieval wisdom that claims 'nomina sunt consequentia rerum' ('Names are consequences of things') to explain why *Amor* sounds so sweet to the ear.¹⁵⁴⁷ This fantasy essentially sutures the gap in signification, eliminating the arbitrariness of the signifier's relation to the signified. The same principle is implicit in his understanding of the name Beatrice, she who makes blessed.¹⁵⁴⁸ The first mention of her name invokes this principle: 'there appeared to my eyes the glorious lady of my mind, who was called Beatrice by many who did not know by what name she was called' (VN II: 1). She is

¹⁵⁴⁶ See e.g. Oelmann's note in 'Anhang' to xvii: 123. Alternatively Morwitz, *Kommentar zu den Prosa-, Dramen- und Jugenddichtung*, p. 55. Likewise see Coseriu and Kunkel, *Vita Nuova: Das Neue Leben*, p. 182: 'Es sei noch einmal daran erinnert, daß Florenz in der VN ausschließlich durch die Umschreibung "die Stadt, die der Allerhöchste meiner Herrin zur Heimat angewiesen" (Kap. VI) kenntlich gemacht worden war'.

¹⁵⁴⁷ On the background to this Latin phrase as a legal idea see Coseriu & Kunkel's note in *Vita Nuova. Das Neue Leben*, p. 159.

¹⁵⁴⁸ On this cf. Coseriu and Kunkel's comment: 'wichtig ist aber, daß Beatrice ein sprechender Eigenname ist und die "Seligmachende" oder die "Seligkeit Bringende" bedeutet', *Vita Nuova: Das Neue Leben*, p. 146.

recognisable as Beatrice even if one does not know her name: she is beatitude incarnate, and he often refers to her as 'my beatitude' (VN v: 1). George similarly puns with Maximin's real life name Maximilian Kronberger in the 'Vorrede' when he refers to him as the 'berger der goldenen krone' (xvii: 63).¹⁵⁴⁹ The name Maximin itself is a *consequentia rei*: Maximin unites opposites, dissolves the 'qual der zweiheit' (VIII: 9), ties the absolute maximum and the particular minimum together and, in its three syllables made up of seven letters (three spiritual vowels and four fleshy consonants),¹⁵⁵⁰ remains consistent with the numerological symbolism that defines his sub-cycle in *Der Siebente Ring*, which has 21 poems (3 x 7) divided into seven groups of three.¹⁵⁵¹

Bianchi points out the obvious intertext of the *Vita Nova* for George's 'Vorrede', commenting that alongside individual images and motifs, '[erinnert] der ganze Rhythmus der Prosa an die Vita nuova'.¹⁵⁵² The opening line, with its

¹⁵⁴⁹ Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 172.

¹⁵⁵⁰ Cf. Schelling in the *Freiheitsschrift*, uniting this poetic discourse to the divine in the human: 'Denn der ewige Geist spricht die Einheit oder das Wort aus in die Natur. Das ausgesprochene (reale) Wort aber ist nur in der Einheit von Licht und Dunkel (Selbstlauter und Mitlauter). Nun sind zwar in allen Dingen die beiden Principien, aber ohne völlige Consonanz wegen der Mangelhaftigkeit des aus dem Grunde Erhobenen. Erst im Menschen also wird das in allen andern Dingen noch zurückgehaltene und unvollständige Wort völlig ausgesprochen. Aber in dem ausgesprochenen Wort offenbart sich der Geist, d.h. Gott als actu existierend. Indem nun die Seele lebendige Identität beider Principien ist, ist sie Geist; und Geist ist in Gott', SW, I, 7, 363-64. Cf., as cited by Hennigfeld, *F.W.H. Schellings "Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit"*, p. 75, Schelling, SW, I, 5, 485: 'Die Vocale sind gleichsam der unmittelbare Aushauch des Geistes, die formirende Form (das Affirmative); die Consonanten sind der Leib der Sprache oder die geformte Form (das Affirmirte)'. Likewise Dante, in the *Convivio* (IV, vi, 2), discussing the etymology of 'authority', considers one potential etymology as coming from the Latin verb 'auieo', meaning 'to bind words' (3). He immediately points out that as a verb consisting of nothing but vowels, 'which are the soul and bond of every word', it requires the speaker to produce the 'figure of a bond' (4) in its very pronunciation, and 'inasmuch as *autore* comes from and is derived from this verb, it is used only for the poets, who have bound together their words with the art of the Muses' (4). Frisardi's explanatory notes on this 'figure of the band' is helpful: '*auieo* can be altered by a line that connects, via a sinuous route, the vowels arranged as normal: *aeiou*' (*Convivio*, p. 536).

¹⁵⁵¹ Technically, it is five groups of three and one group of six. However, 'Auf das Leben und den Tod Maximins' (group four, six poems) suggests a further division into two groups of three due to the parallel titles that poems two and five (the middle poem of each respective group) receive, causing them to stand out. I am not wholly convinced by Schultz' (*Studien*, p. 154) division of the sub-cycle into one group of nine poems and two groups of six.

¹⁵⁵² Bianchi, *Dante und Stefan George*, p. 8. Cf. Pensa, 'Stefan George e l'Italia', p. 240: 'tutto l'episodio [è] ricalcato letterariamente sul modello dantesco'.

‘mittägliche höhe unsres lebens’ (xvii: 62), is a clear reference to the beginning of *Inferno* (‘Es war inmitten unsres wegs im leben ·’, x/xi: 7; *Inf.* I: 1) but with an important difference, and one also elaborated by Shen, ever attentive to George’s Trecento influences: Dante moves immediately from the collective ‘our’ of human life in the first line to his own individual soul in the second (‘mi ritrovai’, I. 2), wedding the universal to the particular, and drawing us along with him on his journey. George, by contrast, maintains a ‘wir’ throughout the entire text, sealing off the Maximin experience from those who are not part of this select group.¹⁵⁵³

The *Vita nova* is largely about Dante himself as he records the many psychological and somatic perturbations resulting from his experience of *Amor*, what John Took calls the book’s ‘private and confessional aspect’.¹⁵⁵⁴ George retains the Master – Maximin relation in the text but externalises it by writing it in the third person, effectively expunging his *Ich* from the gospel while keeping himself in the defining role. Next to the introductory line, Bianchi cites chapter XXX of the *Vita Nova* – upon Beatrice’s death the entire city is lamenting like a widow (Lamentations 1.1) – for the effect that Maximin’s passing has on the community: ‘Wir stürzten nieder in der dumpfen verzweiflung der zurückgelassenen gemeinde · wir wanden uns in sinnlosem schmerz dass wir niemals wieder diese hände berühren dass uns niemals wieder diese lippen küssen dürften’ (xvii: 66).¹⁵⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵³ Cf. on this point Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 168. Despite this erasure – or obscuring – of his privileged poetic-master self, George was certainly aware of the coincidence of his age with the death of Kronberger, for if Dante’s thirty-fifth year was the midway point of ‘the days of our years’ as ‘threescore years and ten’ (i.e. seventy, Ps. 90.10), George was exactly thirty-five when Kronberger passed away on the sixteenth of April, 1904. DiMassa remains correct when he points out, however, that for the ‘Vorrede’, like Dante in the *Vita nova*, George takes some liberties with the presentation of his age, for technically speaking he had not crossed over the Dantean ‘mezzo’ of thirty-five when he first encountered Kronberger (when he was actually thirty-three). See DiMassa, *Dante in Deutschland*, p. 150. Cf. Bianchi, *Dante und Stefan George*, p. 20 for the curve of George’s poetic development following that of Dante.

¹⁵⁵⁴ John Took, *Dante* (Princeton University Press, 2020), p. 173.

¹⁵⁵⁵ Bianchi, *Dante und Stefan George*, p. 8.

Both Maximin and Beatrice have an ennobling effect on those whom they pass by – Bianchi cites chapter XXVI of the *Vita Nova* for the miraculous fact that Maximin even captures the attention of the unreceptive townsfolk: ‘Sein wesen bewegte sogar die unempfindlichen leute des volkes: sie warteten die stunde ab da er vorüberkam um ihn im nu zu betrachten oder seine stimme zu hören’ (xvii: 63).¹⁵⁵⁶ Beatrice’s presence is a miracle, and the young Dante has a vision of *Amor* coming and commanding him to bless the day that she appears coming with Giovanna: ‘and he seemed joyfully to say to me in my heart: “Think to bless the day on which I took you captive, since you ought to do so.” And certainly I seemed to have a heart so happy that it seemed not to be my heart, so new was its condition’ (VN XX iv: 2).¹⁵⁵⁷ In *Der Siebente Ring*, Maximin issues a more or less identical command to the we of the select community: ‘Preist eure stadt die einen gott geboren! | Preist eure zeit in der ein gott gelebt!’ (vi/vii: 99). Like Dante’s ‘nuova condizione’ in his new life, the life-altering experience of Maximin results in constant newness: his mystic union with the god leads ‘immer neu zu seliger einung’ (vi/vii: 109) and with vernal presence the ‘starre erde pocht | Neu durch ein heilig herz’ (92). Newness is the quality analogous to Maximin as the god of the ‘Augenblick’ and the ‘Mitte’ – for the new is new only for a moment in time and must be generated repeatedly in the here and now.¹⁵⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵⁶ Bianchi, *Dante und Stefan George*, 8. See VN XXVI:1 (‘This most gentle lady, of whom the preceding words have spoken, came into such favor among the folk that when she passed by people ran to see her; which brought marvelous joy to me’).

¹⁵⁵⁷ ‘und es schien mir, als spräche er freudig in meinem Herzen: “Denke daran, den Tag zu preisen, an dem ich von dir Besitz ergriff, denn du bist verpflichtet, dies zu tun.” Und tatsächlich erschien mir, als hätte ich ein so fröhliches Herz, daß es mir nicht mehr vorkam, als wäre es das meine, so neu war sein Zustand’, trans. by Coseriu and Kunkel, *Vita Nuova: Das Neue Leben*, pp. 75-77.

¹⁵⁵⁸ The new – this is emphasised repeatedly throughout *Der Stern des Bundes* and George’s late work generally (see the editors’ notes in the ‘Anhang’: ‘Zeuge dafür sind die zahlreichen Stellenbelege für das Attribut neu ab dem SIEBENTEN RING; sie verweisen auf das neue Leben (Dante), den neuen Bund (Neues Testament), den neuen Gott (Hölderlin) und das neue Heil (Nietzsche)’ (‘Anhang’ IX: 119). One need only glance at poems scattered throughout: ‘Neugestaltet

The generation of newness in each new disciple, in which the god is reborn,
constitutes George's new order of noble souls:

Neuen adel den ihr suchet
Führt nicht her von schild und krone!
Aller stufen halter tragen
Gleich den feilen blick der sinne
Gleich den rohen blick der spähe ..
Stammlos wachsen im gewühle
Seltne sprossen eignen ranges
Und ihr kennt die mitgeburten
An den augen wahrer glut.
(VIII: 85)

umgeboren | Wird hier jeder' in the 'reich des Geistes' (VIII: 83). That lyric *Ich* itself admitted earlier in the volume: 'Ich war verfallen als ich neu gedieh'. (14). The god announces his 'neue form' (10) in the introduction:

'nun naht das jahr

In dem ich meine neue form bestimme.

Ich wandle mich doch wahre gleiches wesen'

(a process comparable to what Leahy identifies in Ovidian metamorphosis: 'a constant cycle of newness and difference produced even out of the very indifference of identity and self-presence', *'Der wahre Historiker'*, p. 121); the god is begotten by the 'neue mitte' (16); the Master reflects late in the second Book:

'Ein leib der schön ist wirkt in meinem blut

Geist der ich bin umfängt ihn mit entzücken:

So wird er neu im werk von geist und blut

So wird er mein und dauernd ein entzücken'

(78)

Book III continues to insist upon newness: the double-barrel shotgun of newness that ends the poem 'Wir schau'n nicht mehr auf landes starre' ('Das neue wort von dir verkündet | Das neue volk von dir erweckt', 91) and leads immediately into the following 'AUF NEUE TAFELN SCHREIBT DER NEUE STAND' (92) is a case in point. This all, of course, culminates in *Das Neue Reich* ('reich des Geistes' VIII: 83), the new Secret Germany replete with a new concept of a new nobility. 'neu' is one of Keilson-Lauritz' 'Bausteine' for a potential 'homoerotischen Privat- oder Gruppencode', see *Von der Liebe die Freundschaft heißt*, p. 116. For Dante's obsession with 'the new', cf. Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy*, esp. chapters 2 ('Infernal Incipits: The Poetics of the New', pp. 21-47) and 5 ('Purgatory as Paradigm: Travelling the New and Never-Before-Travelled-Path of This Life/Poem', pp. 99-121).

The concept of nobility in the George Circle's poetic, pedagogical and political aspirations requires a study of its own. For Manfred Frank this new nobility is a correlate to George's project of a new mythology.¹⁵⁵⁹ The resemantisation of nobility as it occurs in this poem, shifting from inherited social status and familial lineage onto the more intangible (homoerotic) twinkle in the eyes of special individuals, has a significant precursor in Dante's philosophical treatise *Convivio*.¹⁵⁶⁰ There, in Book IV, the concept of nobility is reworked to rescue it from the idea of inheritance through blood and open it up to the individual whose body and soul are properly disposed (*Conv.* IV, XX, 9) to receiving 'this blessed and divine infusion' (*Conv.* IV, XX, 7) from God. '[N]obility', says Dante, 'is in the soul' (IV, xxi, 2), and 'does not fall on a lineage, that is on a family stock, it falls on individual persons; and [...] the stock does not make individuals noble; rather, individuals make the stock noble' (IV, xx, 5). The individual (George's 'seltnen sprossen', opposed to the 'Gewühl'), the body (the prized 'erdenleib dieses enge heiligtum', VIII: 11; the 'leib der schön ist', VIII: 78), and the soul ('Mein kuss der tief in eure seele brenne' VIII: 10) form a trinity of points within which the seed of nobility ('Dein same den ich trug in fahr | [...] Heut unausrottbar grünt' VIII: 20) can blossom. Significantly, the topic arises in a discussion about the purpose of language and

¹⁵⁵⁹ Frank, *Gott im Exil*, p. 278.

¹⁵⁶⁰ Bianchi, *Dante und Stefan George*, p. 10 points this out. Arriving at the 'literary sodomites' (Durling, *Inferno*, 231) in *Inferno* 15, the narrator hints at the homoerotic social context of Florence in his description of the souls' approach toward the pilgrim: 'we encountered a band of souls coming / along the barrier, and each was gazing at us as in the evening / people gaze at one another under the new moon' (*Inf.* xv: 16-19). Cf. On this DiMassa, *Dante in Deutschland*, p. 153. Martinez' essay 'Dante and Brunetto Latini' (in *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri, Volume I. Inferno*, ed. and trans. by Robert M. Durling, with Introduction and Notes by Ronald L. Martinez and Robert M. Durling (Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 557-59 provides a concise overview of scholarship on Dante's 'traditional iconography of urban homosexuality' here. A wide-ranging close-reading and cultural-historical study of the episode can be found in Michael Camille, 'The Pose of the Queer. Dante's Gaze, Brunetto Latini's Body', in *Queering the Middle Ages*, ed. by Glenn Burger and Steven F. Kruger (University of Minnesota Press, 2001), pp. 57-86. Finally, Keilson-Lauritz, *Von der Liebe die Freundschaft heißt*, p. 117 cites 'der augen wahrer glut' as one of the homoerotic 'Chiffren'.

style, and how language ought to match the subject in a subservience compard to that between a master – *maestro*, *Meister* – and a servant.¹⁵⁶¹

For the George-Circle, as Gundolf puts it, Dante was, among many things, an 'ewiges Vorbild feiner Sitte und ausdrucksvollen Seelenadels'.¹⁵⁶² Dante goes on to discuss prior theories of the nature of the soul (IV, xxi), chief among them that of Plato (one of the Georgean Masters) 'and others [who] maintained that souls came from the stars and were noble to a greater or lesser degree depending on the nobility of the star' (IV, xxi, 2).¹⁵⁶³ Although Dante rejects Plato's account, here in the *Convivio* two titans in George's genealogy meet, combining the Platonic star of Maximin with the Dantean reformulation of the concept of nobility.¹⁵⁶⁴

Both Kronberger and Beatrice die suddenly.¹⁵⁶⁵ For Dante, Beatrice is called to return to Heaven 'to glory under the banner of that blessed queen, the virgin Mary' (VN XXVIII:1), while George relates:

¹⁵⁶¹ Dante, *Convivio* I, v, 7-11; I, vi, 2-4. For George's purposes, perhaps even Dante's discussion of language's beauty by analogy with the *male* body (*Conv.* I, v, 13) is worthy of consideration.

¹⁵⁶² Gundolf cited in Arrighetti, 'Vorbote des Neuen', p. 127.

¹⁵⁶³ Cf. Lane, 'The Platonic Politics of the George Circle', p. 138. for an account of Plato's importance in the years in which the *Stern* was being composed. For Dante's point in Plato cf. *Timaeus*, 41e-42e (in *Timaeus and Critias*, trans. by Robin Waterfield with an Introduction and Notes by Andrew Gregory (Oxford University Press, 2008).

¹⁵⁶⁴ For the 'Verbindung zwischen vollkommener Liebe und Seelenadel' as 'Voraussetzung für die exemplarische Lobdichtung', and the Platonic influences hovering in the latter, cf. Arrighetti, 'Dante. Übertragungen', 225 n. 44. In sum, George's poetics of praise, the new nobility, the poetics of love (or Eros), Arrighetti's point suggests, have a dual inspiration in George's reception of Dante and Plato. Arrighetti elsewhere brings these figures together: 'Die an Platon anklingende Auffassung des Eros als Mittler des Göttlichen setzt sich gewissermaßen zunächst bei Dantes christlicher, dann bei Georges säkularisierter Umdeutung der läuternden Liebe zu einem Wesen fort, das den Liebenden über sich selbst hinaus steigert, wobei es ihm einen Neubeginn verspricht' (Arrighetti, 'Vorbote des Neuen', p. 131).

¹⁵⁶⁵ Kronberger died at the age of 16 of meningitis, Beatrice dies young, but the cause is not certain. At any rate, Dante presents her death in the *Vita nova* to be a sudden shock and, as Barolini points out, her death quite literally interrupts the writing of a *canzone* in chapter XXVII: 'In the case of *Si lungiamente* it is important to extricate the canzone from the complex role that is assigned to it in the *libello*, where Dante underscores the trauma of Beatrice's death, blaming it for the supposed interruption of the single-stanza canzone. It is clear that the choice of a monostrophic canzone in this position of the *libello* is functional for the purposes of the diegesis and tied to the announcement of Beatrice's death', Barolini, *Dante's Lyric Poetry*, p. 240.

Maximin hat nur kurz unter uns gelebt. Gemäss einem frühen vertrag den er geschlossen wurde er auf einen andren stern gehoben ehe seine göttlichkeit unsresgleichen geworden war. Er zog dem farbigen mannigfachen geschicke des glorreichen sterblings das erhabne stille walten der Himmlischen vor. Schon seine kinderjahre waren angefüllt mit sprengenden jenseitsgefühlen mit dem kampf wider den Unnennbaren. Zu ihm wandte er sich als dem Einzigen mit dem sich zu messen er für wert hielt · ihn bat er um prüfungen und aufgaben und flehte als lohn in seinen sehnsüchtigen nächten um das schauen des heiligen antlitzes. Als er erfahren hatte dass Gott sich solchermaassen nicht eröffnen könne bot er ihm diesen bund an: so zeig dich mir im besten deiner sichtbaren schöpfung! gib mir Leda die geliebte! gib mir den grossen menschen den Meister! und wenn es wahr ist dass hier jeder bau fällt · jede flamme lischt · jede blume welkt: so lass mich einmal auf deine höhe treten und dann von deinem adler schnell entrissen werden!

(xvii: 65)

His contract with the divine necessitated his early departure, and justifies his brief time on earth despite how 'glorreich[]' he was as a 'sterbling[]'.

What is revealed here and throughout the 'Vorrede' is the sense that, with his 'jenseitsgefühlen', Maximin (in the *Stern* a 'gott der nähe', VIII:71) is concerned with transcendence and the alterity of the 'Unnameable'. He entreats God to show himself in some form, there is still a 'beyond' to Maximin, an Otherness that defies being rendered immanent. Nevertheless, he has an imparadising effect on his surroundings: 'Willig gaben wir uns der verwandelnden kraft hin die nur anzuhauchen oder anzurühren braucht um den alltäglichsten umgebungen einen

jungfräulichen paradiesischen schimmer zu spenden' (XVII: 64). In the *Vita nova*, Beatrice is described as appearing as having come 'from heaven to earth to manifest a miracle' (VN XXVI: 6). Heaven and earth are clearly separated on an ontological, vertical axis. In the 'Vorrede', Maximin brings a paradisiacal shimmer to the world and is reported as having said to the Master: 'ich weiss nicht ob ich diese wesen je werde verstehen lernen die aus ihrem wohnsitz sich eine hölle bauen und darüber sich paradiese erfinden ..' (XVII: 66), which would corroborate those who argue for George as a poet of immanence.¹⁵⁶⁶ Beatrice likewise has an imparadising power –high up in the *Paradiso*, Dante refers to 'her who imparadises my mind' (28: 3). She brings paradise – the *Paradiso* – to the mind, and brings the mind to paradise. Petrarch's Laura, on the other hand, had an effect on earth more similar to Maximin. Among Laura's many beautiful features remembered by Petrarch after her death, he mourns how

le cresse chiome d'or puro lucente
 e 'l lampeggiar de l'angelico riso
 che solean fare in terra un paradiso,
 poca polvere son che nulla sente

¹⁵⁶⁶ Cf. David, *Stefan George*, p. 308; Shen, *Ennui, Epiphanie, Mnemopoesie*, p. 159; Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, p. 126 (although on p. 141 he recognises the 'language of transcendence and redemption' in the *Stern*); Braungart, *Ästhetischer Katholizismus*, p. 78; Todd, 'Poetry is Praise', p. 55; Klusmann, 'Dante und Stefan George', p. 152; and Jacob, 'Hymnen Pilgerfahrten Algabal (SW, II)', p. 115. Osterkamp, *Poesie der leeren Mitte*, writes insightfully about the 'Zeit und Ort des Neuen Reichs' (115-136) as the 'Eintritt des Absoluten in die Zeit' (p. 117), as a 'Form der intensiven Teilhabe am Leben' (p. 121) and 'Georges Absicht, das Zeitlose in die Zeit zu reißen und das Absolute reine Immanenz werden zu lassen' (p. 122). With all this talk of the absolute, and the central idea of Osterkamp's book as it manifests in his title ('der *leeren Mitte*' emph. added), of the void of Otherness at its core, it's hard to shake the aftertaste of transcendence.

Maximin hovers somewhere between both Ladies: suggestive more of Beatrice, the Petrarchistic Laura continues to haunt the transcendent 'erhabene stille walten der Himmlischen' (xvii: 65) with an earthbound sense of transience (it is a mere 'schimmer' of paradise, after all). His 'sprengenden jenseitsgefühlen', felt in childhood, suggest a Romantic intuition of the transcendent absolute, which refuses to disclose itself to him, but to which, as the end of the passage relates, he entreats to rapture him so as to escape the ephemerality of the earthly world (as figured by the three images of transience). But it is too late: the Master has already been introduced in this passage, and his job is to prioritise immanence.

Maximin is 'glorreich'. With this Latinism we are returned to the beginning of the study, the rhyme of 'glorie' and 'memorie' from 'Das Dritte' (vi/vii: 101). Beatrice, upon her death, is called 'to glory' under the Virgin – 'the queen of glory' (VN v: 1) – in heaven (VN xviii: 1). To 'glory' becomes her eternal duty in the afterlife, in the glory of heaven, while on earth the adjective accompanies her throughout the *Vita nova* continually emphasising the glory of her existence.¹⁵⁶⁸ Indeed, 'gloria' in the *Vita nova* and *Commedia* is at times synonymous with heaven itself, as well as

¹⁵⁶⁷ 'the lightning flash of an angelic smile | that used to turn the earth to paradise, | are bits of dust that can feel nothing now' (trans. Musa, *Canzoniere*, p. 413).

¹⁵⁶⁸ Cf. Richard Lansing's gloss on Giacomo da Lentini's use of *glory* in one of his sonnets: 'The word "glory" (*ghiora*) invariably signifies a condition of the afterlife in medieval literature and the essence of God in particular. Dante will open his *Paradiso* with it, placing it at the very beginning of the first verse: "La gloria di Colui che tutto move" (The glory of the One who moves all things). God, in essence, is glory, which is light', in Giacomo da Lentini, *The Complete Poetry*, trans. and notes by Richard Lansing (University of Toronto Press, 2018), p. 172. In the edition of the text used by George, Costèro points out in his commentary that 'gloriosa' (instead of an alternative reading *graziosa* – a reading also not accepted in modern editions) is apt 'perché quando Dante scrisse questo libro, Beatrice era già a vivere in cielo con gli angeli', *La vita nuova. Il Convito. Il Canzoniere*, p. 20.

being used in reference to Beatrice, the Virgin, and God the Father.¹⁵⁶⁹ Beatrice is 'the glorious lady of my mind' (VN II: 1), God the father is the 'glorious lord' to whom Beatrice's father returns upon his death, 'to eternal glory' (XXII: 1), glory marks the angels' singing ('gloriously') in Dante's proleptic fever dream of Beatrice's death (XXIII: 7), she appears to him in a vision as 'this glorious Beatrice' (XXXIX: 1), and the *libello* finishes with Dante hoping to one day 'journey to see the glory of its lady, that is, of the blessed Beatrice, who gloriously gazes on the face of him 'qui est per omnia secula benedictus (who is blessed throughout all ages)' (VN XLII: 3). In the *Convivio* this imagery returns to characterise Beatrice's afterlife in the poem 'All you who, knowing, make the Third Sphere move', (*Conv.* II, v. 17) and in his discussion of fourfold exegesis afterwards it is linked to the anagogical, or fourth, sense of interpretation, which builds on the literal and 'through the things denoted denotes the celestial things of eternal glory' (*Conv.* II, I, 7). This is the divine, Christian meaning of 'gloria'. There is also a secular, classical sense.¹⁵⁷⁰

George's use of 'glorreich' and 'glorie' alternate between the theological and the secular. Maximin's existence on earth is that of the 'glorreichen sterblings' (xvii: 65), but after his death he reappears to the mourners 'wie wir zuletzt ihn sahen: nicht in der eisigen unerbittlichen hoheit des todes sondern in der siegprangenden glorie des festes' (66). His earthly existence functions as a figure for his eternal afterlife, and both senses of 'glorreich' shine through here. George sometimes translates Dante's 'gloria' with the secular 'ruhm', its traditional pre-Christian

¹⁵⁶⁹ As pointed out by Sebastiano Aglianò, 'Gloria', *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, (final paragraph for synonym with heaven, also citing the *Vita nova*) available online at [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/gloria_\(Enciclopedia-Dantesca\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/gloria_(Enciclopedia-Dantesca)/) (accessed 02/08/2025).

¹⁵⁷⁰ Aglianò, 'Gloria', paragraph 3. Cf. the Grimm Wörterbuch's entry: 'b) auf profanes gebiet erweitert, weltliche ehre, menschlichen ruhm bezeichnend' and '2) im sinne von herrlichkeit, strahlender machtfülle. im religiösen bereich, zur kennzeichnung göttlicher wesenheit und himmlischen glanzes.). „glorie, f.“, Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm, digitalisierte Fassung im Wörterbuchnetz des Trier Center for Digital Humanities, Version 01/25, <<https://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB?lemid=G19974>>, abgerufen am 02.08.2025.

meaning. In *Purgatorio* 17, for example, Sordello begins his celebration of Virgil thus: “O glory of the Latins”, he said, “through whom our language showed its power’ (*Purg.* vii: 16-17). George renders it with ‘O der Lateiner ruhm der du gewiesen · | Sprach er · was kraft in unsrer sprache wohne’ (x/xi: 58). ‘Ruhm’ for George is often the poet’s (or the artist’s) fame, often the hero’s, and often an ethical category unto itself, but it can also suggest transience and vainglory.¹⁵⁷¹ George’s use of ‘glorie’ and etymologically-related terms (such as ‘glorreich’) is restricted to moments of enduring aesthetic significance, such as Fra Angelico’s ‘glorreich grosse tat’ in *Hymnen* (ii: 27) and Maximin’s ‘unnahbaren glorie’ (vi/vii: 101).

¹⁵⁷¹ Such as the passage translated from *Purgatorio* 11 (ll. 97-98) which George titles ‘Eitelkeit des Ruhmes’ (x/xi: 65). We recall the fear, expressed in *Die Fibel*, that: ‘Mir grünt es spät des ruhmes reis’, i: 27; in ‘Dante und das Zeitgedicht’ the third stanza recounts the poet’s ‘ruhm’ growing throughout Italy (vi/vii: 8); in the *Teppich des Lebens* ‘Vorspiel’ (poem XXIII) the disciples are ready ‘Für seinen [the Master’s, their ‘herr’, l. 5 – JW] ruhm in nacht und tod zu gehn’, v: 32. Dante the pilgrim praises Virgil with it in *Inferno* I (‘O du der andern dichter ruhm und helle!’, x/xi: 10). In George’s retrospective, biographical and Dante-coded ‘Franken’, it opens once more mimicking the outset of the *Inferno*, replete with hellish imagery:

‘Es war am schlimmsten kreuzweg meiner fahrt:
Dort aus dem abgrund züngelnd giftige flammen ·
Hier die gemiednen gaue wo der ekel
Mir schwoll vor allem was man pries und übte ·
Ich ihrer und sie meiner götter lachten’

(vi/vii: 18) and it is significant that this ‘kreuzweg’ poem is placed seventh out of fourteen ‘Zeitgedichte’: it is their middle point, or crossroads. In this poem, the memory of his grandfather’s nostalgic praise of France drives the young pilgrim to leave Germany (on the biographical background see Morwitz, *Kommentar*, pp. 226-27) and head west:

‘Da lud von Westen märchenruf .. so klang
Das lob des ahnen seiner ewig jungen
Grossmütigen erde deren ruhm ihn glühen
Und not auch fern ihn weinen liess ·’
(vi/vii:18)

If ‘*Ruhm*’ is broadened to include the related term ‘*Ehre*’ the list of example increases. Most suggestive is the first and third ‘*Trauer*’ poems in the Maximin sub-cycle: ‘Der tag ohne dich ist die sünde · | Der tod um dich ist die ehre’ (vi/vii: 96); ‘Dumpf ist die luft · verödet sind die tage. | Wie find ich ehren die ich dir erweise?’ (98). Finally in *Der Stern des Bundes* it is reified as the canonical law of the Circle: ‘In solchem dienst der liebe .. eins nur bleibt | Das stärker zarter ist: die heilige ehre’ (viii: 63), and further on:

‘Nun ehre dies unbeugbare gesetz
Und diese form in der ich ihm genüge:
Da menschenwesen sich nur dort erhält
Wo sich das dunkle opfer wiederholt’
(viii: 68).

When it comes to enduring aesthetic significance, the 'glory of Him who moves all things' (*Par.* I: 1), upon which the *Paradiso* and its heavenly kingdom rests, is the most enduring of all, and accounts for one of George's most emphatic uses of the word 'glorie' in his oeuvre:

Die glorie des bewegers aller dinge
Dringt durch das weltall und sie ist entglommen
Mehr in dem einen als im andern ringe.
Im himmel war ich der zumeist entnommen
Von Seinem licht und sah dort was verbreiten
Nicht darf noch kann wer von dorthier gekommen.
Denn wenn wir höchstem ziele näher schreiten
Liegt unsre einsicht in so festem bande
Dass das gedächtnis nicht kann rückwärts gleiten.
(X/XI: 107; *Par.* I: 1-9)

It was mentioned previously how this 'höchstem ziel', the vision of God, is repurposed in George's later prophetic poetry in *Das Neue Reich*, constituting another example of his strategically ideological deployment of Dante. Nevertheless, if there is a case to be made for *Der Siebente Ring*'s primary intertext being the *Paradiso*, either 'als Vorbild oder Bestätigung',¹⁵⁷² then the evidence in this passage must be highlighted, particularly concerning the argument for it as a 'Bestätigung', since it was translated in 1911.¹⁵⁷³ For one, Dante's 'in one place

¹⁵⁷² Oelmann's hypothesis in 'Anhang' to SW, VI/VII: 193: 'Daß das Dantesche "Paradies", in Georges Übertragung "Himmel" genannt, sich in sieben Kreisen aufbaut, mag für die Gestalt des *Siebenten Rings* Vorbild oder Bestätigung gewesen sein'.

¹⁵⁷³ 'Anhang' X/XI: 161.

more and less elsewhere' (l. 3) is concretised into George's 'ringe' which is already suggestive of *Der Siebente Ring*. This grandiose, exordic moment, furthermore, contains a rhyme in George's rendition that readers will recognise from the very Dantean poem 'Einverleibung'.¹⁵⁷⁴ That poem in turn borrows a rhyme from George's translation of *Paradiso* 33 that he had translated earlier in 1901:

Jungfrau und Mutter! Tochter deines sohnes!
Voll demut und voll würde wie kein wesen
Nach vorbestimmtem rat des ewigen Thrones ·
Du machtest unsre menschheit so erlesen
Und edel dass der Schöpfer selbst geruhte
Geschöpf zu werden dessen du genesen.
(X/XI: 140; *Par.* xxxiii: 1-6)

In 'Einverleibung's aesthetic theology the mediating figure of the Virgin who ennobles the human race is not present, so that the relation of the creator is one-to-one with his divine-aesthetic offspring:

Nun wird wahr was du verhiessest:
Dass gelangt zur macht des Trones
Andren bund du mit mir schliessest –
Ich geschöpf nun eignen sohnes.

¹⁵⁷⁴ 'All mein sinn hat dir entnommen
Seine farbe glanz und maser
Und ich bin mit jeder faser
Ferner brand von dir entglommen'
(VI/VII: 109).

Nimmst nun in geheimster ehe
Teil mit mir am gleichen tische
Jedem quell der mich erfrische
Allen pfaden die ich gehe.
(VI/VII: 109)

In the second stanza also quoted here, the many paths of the wandering *Ich* are now accompanied by a *Du*, there appears to be a fully-realised companionship, as the final, sixth stanza also emphasises:

Dass aus schein und dunklem schaume
Dass aus freudenruf und zähre
Unzertrennbar sich gebäre
Bild aus dir und mir im traume.
(VI/VII: 109)

The dream preserves the imaginary relation between himself and his specular other, his *Idealich*, in an essentially narcissistic fantasy. Schloon reads this final stanza's 'Transformation in die Sphäre des Imaginären' as essentially poetological, with reference to George's short prose piece 'Über Dichtung' (XVII: 69) in which is claimed: 'Das wesen der dichtung wie des traumes: dass Ich und Du · Hier und Dort · Einst und Jezt nebeneinander bestehen und eins und dasselbe werden'.¹⁵⁷⁵

¹⁵⁷⁵ See Schloon, *Modernes Mittelalter*, pp. 283-88 for a detailed reading of the poem as a 'unio mystica' (p. 285), and p. 288 for her reading of the 'traume' as the poem's poetological self-reflexivity.

Here George has birthed himself as a poem: the specular, imaginary self-reflexiveness of which, within the context of an eroticised set of (neo-)mystical motifs and topoi (following Schloon), contains the subject's specular libidinal economy in the form of a poem-dream-fantasy: a back and forth (i.e. specular, reciprocal) series of *coincidentia oppositorum* (Schloon) that encapsulate an 'image of the subject's narcissism which [...is] the fundamental essence of sleep'.¹⁵⁷⁶ This back and forth, alternatively, takes on the Schellingian-Böhmian-Blakean motions of contraction (the poem's terse trochaic tetrametre, the rhythm falling into dream; the imagery of closure ('bund') and secrecy ('in geheimster ehe'); the seed planted in the dark of the speaker ('keime'); the inner chambers of the body, 'im geblüte', and verbs such as 'umschlingen', 'schließen', 'umdauern'), and expansion (the opening verb of becoming, 'werden'; the blossoming of the seed, the growth of the blazing flame, etc). Here, the god arises out of a contraction from his ground and emerges outward in the light, as the final poem of Book I of the *Stern* has it: 'Das Bild erhebt im licht sich frei und nackt' (VIII: 47).¹⁵⁷⁷ In the *unio mystica* depicted in the poem, a mutual incorporation ('Einverleibung') has taken place, and the task of the poem is to be like a pill for members of the Circle to swallow, that they may then go off and 'reproduce'.¹⁵⁷⁸

¹⁵⁷⁶ Lacan, *Seminar I. Freud's Papers on Technique*, p. 153. For *coincidentia oppositorum* in the poem see Schloon, *Modernes Mittelalter*, p. 284.

¹⁵⁷⁷ The 'Keim' appears at important junctures of the Maximin myth, and it is also one of Schelling's central images for God's self-begetting: 'Der Wille des Menschen ist der in der ewigen Sehnsucht verborgene Keim des nur noch im Grunde vorhandenen Gottes', Schelling, *Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit*, p. 35 (SW, I, 7, 363). He uses it throughout the *Weltalter. Fragmente* (1811) e.g. pp. 18, 30.

¹⁵⁷⁸ Thus in 'Das Leben von Gedichten' does Boehringer, with recourse to Dante (citing *Par.* 17: 131-32) earlier on no less, write that whoever succeeds in fully absorbing the poetic Word becomes spiritually and corporeally re-figured: 'Wem es gelingt, das Gedicht sich derart *einzuverleiben*, daß dessen "heimlich bildende Gewalt" in ihm wirksam wird, der wird geistig und körperlich umgestaltet, gebildet im Goetheschen Sinne' (italics added), Robert Boehringer, 'Das Leben von Gedichten', in *Der George-Kreis: Eine Auswahl aus seinen Schriften*, ed. by Georg Peter Landmann, 2nd edn (Klett-Cotta, 1980), pp. 101-11 (p. 102). The poetic Word thus becomes something between a

In 'Einverleibung's first stanza, the rhyme 'thrones' with 'sohnes' is re-employed from the Dante translation to shroud the Maximin event, and George's self-begetting manoeuvres, in the language of erotic Christian mysticism, and its relevant literary descendants (i.e. Dante).¹⁵⁷⁹ Rhyme, for George, we recall, is a 'teuer erkaufte spiel. hat ein künstler einmal zwei worte miteinander gereimt so ist eigentlich das spiel für ihn verbraucht und er soll es nie oder selten wiederholen'.¹⁵⁸⁰ The birth of a new god, presumably, is one of those rare occasions that permit one to repeat a rhyme. Indeed, as the opening stanza claims, the god's assumption to the throne was already prophesied, set in stone by a prior utterance. Literarily speaking, we might say that that utterance was Dante's, metamorphosed through George's poetic idiom but Dante's nonetheless. George thus weaves a thread through Dante's text (*Par.* xxxiii, 1901), his own text ('Einverleibung', 1907), and back through Dante's (*Par.* i, 1911), linking his authorship to Dante's in an inextricable crossover of shared poetic 'glorie', a word lodged in this student's brain for four years, and which now it is time to excise.

George's 'glorie' rhyme is identifiable in at least three of his predecessors. The third, who has been under the radar here, is Baudelaire, in the poem 'Le Portrait', the fourth in a cycle of sonnets entitled 'Un fantôme' in which 'the idea of a close relationship between sexual passion and the pursuit of beauty through creative art' attempts to commemorate the poet's beloved.¹⁵⁸¹ The effect is rather gothic, and the rage against time, death and decay all shake the poet:

medication ('die Pillen der Ärzte zum Heile seines Leibes', p. 102) and a sacrament like Holy Communion. On this poem as staging 'die rituelle, gemeinschaftstiftende Kommunion in der Metaphorik des sexuellen Aktes [...], der zur poetischen Geburt führt', see Braungart, *Ästhetischer Katholizismus*, p. 249 (his full analysis of the poem pp. 235-53).

¹⁵⁷⁹ On the medievalist and neomystic aspects of the poem see Schloon, *Modernes Mittelalter*, pp. 281-88.

¹⁵⁸⁰ *Blätter für die Kunst* II, vol. 2, cited from Oelmann, *Von Kultur und Göttern reden*, p. 398.

¹⁵⁸¹ Pearson, *The Beauty of Baudelaire*, p. 353.

La Maladie et la Mort font des cendres
 De tout le feu qui pour nous flamboya.
 De ces grands yeux si fervents et si tendres,
 De cette bouche où mon cœur se noya,

 De ces baisers puissants comme un dictame,
 De ces transports plus vifs que des rayons,
 Que reste-t-il? C'est affreux, ô mon âme!
 Rien qu'un dessin fort pâle, aux trois crayons,

 Qui, comme moi, meurt dans la solitude,
 Et que le Temps, injurieux vieillard,
 Chaque jour frotte avec son aile rude...

 Noir assassin de la Vie et de l'Art,
 Tu ne tueras jamais dans ma mémoire
 Celle qui fut mon plaisir et ma gloire!¹⁵⁸²

¹⁵⁸² Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, pp. 78-80 (Poem 38. IV):
 'Disease and Death make only dust and ash
 Of all the fire that blazed so bright for us.
 Of those great eyes so tender and so warm,
 Of this mouth where my heart has drowned itself,

Of kisses puissant as a healing balm,
 Of transports more intense than flaring light,
 What now remains? Appalling, o my soul!
 Only a fading sketch in three pale tones,

Like me, dying away in solitude,
 And which Time, that maleficent old man,
 Each day rubs over with his churlish wing...

(LFdM 38)

In his own translation of this sonnet, George avoids the Latinate 'glorie' and 'memorie' completely, translating the last two lines as 'Du sollst mir niemals im gedächtnis morden | Sie die mein glück und meine wonne war' (SW, XIII/XIV: 53). Time's appearance as the great devourer of life, and the solitary poet's struggle against it to preserve the glory of his beloved in memory resonates with a Petrarchistic (Types-1 and -2) imagination. A rhyme of 'gloria' and 'memoria' occurs in Petrarch's own *Rvf* 126: 42 where Laura is found bathed in flowers reminiscent both retrospectively of Beatrice's vernal arrival in the Garden of Eden and prospective of George's angel and *Ich* in the first 'Vorspiel' poem:

Da be' rami scendea
(dolce ne la memoria)
una pioggia di fior sopra 'l suo grembo,
et ella si sedea
umile in tanta gloria,
coverta già de l'amoroso nembo;
qual fior cadea sul lembo,
qual su le treccie bionde
ch' oro forbito et perle
eran quel di a vederle,

Time, you black murderer of Life and Art,
You'll never kill her in my memory—
Not She, who was my pleasure and my pride!
(Trans. James McGowan, *The Flowers of Evil*, 79-81)

qual si posava in terra et qual su l'onde,

qual con un vago errore

girando pareva dir: "Qui regna Amore."

(*Rvf* 126: 40-52)¹⁵⁸³

Another of Petrarch's poems rhymes 'gloria' and 'memoria' to celebrate the deceased Laura's triumph over death, and thereby echoes (or rather prefigures) Baudelaire's thematics. The imagery of death is not so far removed from Baudelaire's:

Or ài fatto l'estremo di tua possa,

o crudel Morte, or ài 'l regno d'Amore

impoverito, or di bellezza il fiore

e 'l lume ài spento et chiuso in poca fossa;

or ài spogliata nostra vita et scossa

d'ogni ornamento et del sovrano suo onore;

ma la fama et 'l valor, che mai non more,

¹⁵⁸³ '(Falling from gracious boughs,
I sweetly call to mind ['memoria'],
were flowers in a rain upon her bosom,
and she was sitting there
humble in such glory
now covered in a shower of love's blooms:
a flower falling on her lap,
some fell on her blond curls,
like pearls set into gold
they seemed to me that day;
some fell to rest on ground, some on the water,
and some in lovelike wandering
were circling down and saying, "Here Love reigns."' (*Rvf* 126: 40-52).
Cf. Stroppa's note (*Canzoniere*, 233) on how 'l'immagine dell'epifania di Beatrice [...] è amplificata in questi versi da una rete di riferimenti classici'.

non è in tua forza: abbiti ignude l'ossa,

ché l'altro à 'l Cielo, et di sua chiaritate

quasi d'un più bel sol s'allegra et gloria;

et fi' al mondo de' buon sempre in memoria.

Vinca 'l cor vos tro in sua tanta vittoria,

angel novo, lassù di me pietate,

come vinse qui il mio vostra beltate.

(*Rvf* 326)¹⁵⁸⁴

As commentators point out, this poem aligns with the third of Petrarch's *Trionfi*, the 'Triumphus Mortis', insofar as it presents the beloved as surviving death and exposing it as lacking at the limit of its power (l. 1). Fame endures beyond death.¹⁵⁸⁵ In both Petrarch's and Baudelaire's poems one of the responses to death is praise of the deceased beloved in the form of the aesthetic. Baudelaire admits that Time will beat both art and life, but not memory – and as Pearson argues, this is blatantly untrue, since memory comes back around only within the aesthetic – while

¹⁵⁸⁴ 'Now you have worked your power to the limit, cruel Death, now Love's domain you have made poor, now beauty's light and flower you have killed and have enclosed it in a meager grave. And now you have despoiled our life and taken all ornament from it and its high honor, but fame and worth, which never dies, are not within your power—yours are the naked bones, for Heaven has the rest, and in its brightness glories with joy as in a brighter sun, and all good souls will not forget her here. In such great victory let your heart take, new angel there above, pity on me as all your beauty took me down on earth'.

¹⁵⁸⁵ See e.g. Bettarini, *Canzoniere*, vol. II, p. 1439 & Stroppa, *Canzoniere*, p. 508.

Petrarch attributes the endurance of his beloved's memory on earth to 'fama e 'l valor' (l. 7), which is precisely through 'la scrittura di chi resta'.¹⁵⁸⁶

In George's Camerini-edition of Petrarch, the introduction to the *Trionfi in Vita e in Morte di Madonna Laura*, of which there are six (matching the six poems of 'Auf das Leben und den Tod Maximins'), emphasises that the fundamental drive is to 'to render praise and honour on the sole, sublime object of his love'.¹⁵⁸⁷ In 'Das Dritte', the divinity has now departed, and his devotees are left with only the 'memorie' of him who has become 'eins | mit dem Wort das von oben uns sprach' (vi/vii: 101). That memory is simultaneously a memory of the poetic Word, with which the divine Maximin has become one.

The transcendent Word (capitalised only in *Der Siebente Ring*, and not in *Maximin. Ein Gedenkbuch*) speaking 'from above' problematises the reading of the Georgean poetic Word as a totally immanent affair.¹⁵⁸⁸ Maximin is generally portrayed as immanent, and his identity with the poetic-Georgean Word is inextricable from that poetic Word's status as a Word of praise, a testament to, as Franke writes of Dante at the end of the *Vita nova*, 'an experience of being broken open to a future that transcends him, but a future toward which his own poetry of praise opens the way'.¹⁵⁸⁹ Todd finds the high point of George's 'poetry of praise'

¹⁵⁸⁶ 'the writing of who remains' (trans. mine), Bettarini, *Canzoniere* 2, p. 1439. In response to the final tercet of 'Le Portrait', and the following poem in the cycle dedicating poetic lines to her memory, Pearson argues: 'Time, of course, will eventually do just that, but perhaps not before further spectral manifestations of his sexual past are restored to the poet within the present where they may undergo the resuscitations of his poetic art', *The Beauty of Baudelaire*, p. 355.

¹⁵⁸⁷ 'tributar lodi ed onori all'unico e sublime oggetto dell'amor suo', Camerini, *Rime*, p. 347.

¹⁵⁸⁸ Hildebrandt, with due reference to Dante, notes this in his reading of this poem: 'MAXIMIN hat das irdische Leben transzendiert, ist unnahbar geworden, Symbol des Gottes-Wortes, des Logos. Sein Antlitz, sein Lächeln (wie das Beatrices) durchdringt versöhnend unser Leben: er ist Maß für unser tägliches Tun geworden', *Das Werk Stefan Georges*, p. 277.

¹⁵⁸⁹ Franke, *Dante's Vita Nuova and the New Testament*, p. 54.

precisely in the Maximin cycle.¹⁵⁹⁰ The poet's oft-quoted saying 'poetry is praise' is conditioned upon an understanding of poetry as essentially a form of honour-recognition, a character-building, pedagogically ennobling gesture. In Landmann's memoir, 'poetry is praise' stands alone after a paragraph dealing with:

Das Aristokratische als das, was Ressentiment und Neid ausschliesst, weil genügend Selbstgefühl ist, um das andre nicht zu begehren. – Ehrfurcht und Erziehung zum Dienst beruht auf Selbstgefühl. Das Nichtverehrenkönnen, das Alles-Gleichhabenwollende als Mangel an Adel und Kraft: Rachitis der Seele. Poetry is praise.¹⁵⁹¹

A cliché in love poetry is that by singing the praises of their beloved Ladies, male poets manage to raise themselves to new heights.¹⁵⁹² The ability to praise and recognise an object worthy of praise already requires some savvy in the field. Praise is meaningless if not fully informed. Since Maximin became 'eins | mit dem Wort das von oben uns sprach', he has become one with the poetry of praise, its divine object of worship as well as the exalting utterance itself, a self-reflective

¹⁵⁹⁰ Todd, "Poetry is Praise": Beobachtungen zu Stefan Georges Dichtung', p. 47. Todd is in agreement with other critics regarding George as not being a 'Dichter der Transzendenz' (p. 60, discussing the poem 'Ringer' from *Der Siebente Ring*). Todd is attentive in his article not only to the Trecento influence, but also to the substantial influence of the Circle's work on Pindar's hymns.

¹⁵⁹¹ Landmann, *Gespräche mit Stefan George*, p. 164. Cf. Todd, "Poetry is Praise": Beobachtungen zu Stefan Georges Dichtung', 66 note 10, also citing Landmann here to connect the concept of the aristocratic character to a consistency in nobility through Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*: 'Dieses Zusammentreffen [i.e. of 'poetry is praise' to the paragraph preceding it – JW] lässt auf einen engen Zusammenhang zwischen Ehre, dem Aristokratischen und dem Preisen schließen'. Taking this one step further to involve the concept of love, Arrighetti argues that this combination of concepts is precisely what Dante, with the 'gezogene Verbindung zwischen vollkommener Liebe und Seelenadel' offers George: 'Diese Verbindung ist Voraussetzung für die exemplarische Lobdichtung, wie sie im *Paradiso* verwirklicht wird' (Arrighetti, 'Dante. Übertragungen', p. 226). The *Paradiso* is the exemplary poetics of praise, and this justifies the fictional Dante in 'Dante und das Zeitgedicht' in praising his own *Paradiso* above the other canticles (cf. Arrighetti on this, pp. 225-26).

¹⁵⁹² Cf. Natasha Distiller, *Gender and Desire in the Sonnet Tradition*, p. 35.

structure; the Word spoken from above has since become flesh in the form of 'Maximin', in the form of Georgean poetry, which is the ground of this god who in turn legitimises it and fills it with significance in the reciprocal bipolarity of the created creating the creator. In an earlier chapter it was stated that in 'Von einer Begegnung' the poet is lacking the legitimating instance of the other to constitute his poetics of praise. George now has his Maximin (and his 'Maximin', the poems, his maxims), birthed from himself. Indeed, to Lane's *enumeratio* of Plato as a 'model of a founder-legislator-leader-master-poet-lover-educator' we can supplement here the role of father (or mother?) to George's polymer of authority, 'geschöpf nun eignen sohnes'.¹⁵⁹³

This line from 'Einverleibung' has been linked to its Dantean predecessor in *Paradiso* 33 as well as to its spiritual sequel in the following poem from *Der Stern des Bundes*:

Ergeben steh ich vor des rätsels macht
 Wie er mein kind ich meines kindes kind ..
 Wie sein gesetz ist dass aus erdenstoff
 Der Hohe wird und eh ihn tat versehrt
 Mit schmerz und lächeln seinen heimweg nimmt.
 Wie sein gesetz ist dass sich der erfüllt
 Der sich und allen sich zum opfer gibt
 Und dann die tat mit seinem tod gebiert.

¹⁵⁹³ Lane, 'The Platonic Politics of the George Circle', here p. 134. For George as "mother" cf. Ernst Osterkamp, "Die Küsse des Dichters. Versuch über ein Motiv im 'Siebenten Ring' in *Stefan George: Werk und Wirkung seit dem 'Siebenten Ring'*", edited by Wolfgang Braungart, Ute Oelmann and Bernhard Böschstein 69-86, (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2001), here 73, citing Breuer's analysis in *Ästhetischer Fundamentalismus*.

Die tiefste wurzel ruht in ewiger nacht ..
 Die ihr mir folgt und fragend mich umringt
 Mehr deutet nicht! ihr habt nur mich durch ihn!
 Ich war verfallen als ich neu gedieh ..
 Lasst was verhüllt ist: senkt das haupt mit mir:
 ›O Retter‹ in des dunklen grauens wind.
 (VIII: 14)¹⁵⁹⁴

The verbal adjective 'ergeben' is of Dantean relevance in this poem from the *Stern's* introductory prologue (of nine poems). Full of paradoxes, it squeezes as much juice (to borrow a Dantean metaphor, *Inf.* xxxii: 4) out of George's fascination with self-sacrifice, self-begetting, gestures of dedication and servitude, secrecy and concealment, the poetic law, conversion, roots, shoots, darkness and light, depth and height, and the search for a saviour in the form of the the Word ('›O Retter‹' is apostrophic speech, it presences our speaker or speakers).¹⁵⁹⁵ The speaker's imperative and gestural reverence ('senkt das haupt') in line thirteen are evocatively Dantesque.

A short prolegomenon to future research must be mentioned here. The *Stern* is governed by the number ten: it consists of a hundred poems, adding up to a

¹⁵⁹⁴ See e.g. Oelmann's note in the 'Anhang' (VIII: 129); and Paul Bishop, 'Ergeben steh ich vor des rätsels macht', in *Krise und Gemeinschaft: Stefan Georges Der Stern des Bundes*, ed. by Christophe Fricker (Vittorio Klostermann, 2017), pp. 337-43 (p. 339); and Hildebrandt, *Das Werk Stefan Georges*, p. 358.

¹⁵⁹⁵ 'In foregrounding the lyric as act of address, lifting it out of ordinary communicational contexts, apostrophes give us a ritualistic, hortatory act, a special sort of linguistic event in a lyric present', Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, p. 213. Cf. Schelling, *Die Weltalter. Fragmente* (1811), in which God has to create a saviour out of his own ground in the form of the Word, and: 'Auch der Mensch, wenn sein erste Persönlichkeit anfängt, die Angst und jene tiefen inneren Schmerzen alles Lebens zu empfinden, muß, will er anders nicht im chaotischen Zustand bleiben oder einem innern verzehrenden Feuer anheimfallen, sich den Erretter, die andere höhere und bessere Persönlichkeit zeugen, welche die erste zur Entscheidung, zur Ausschließung, zur Besonnenheit bringt' (p. 57)

thousand individual verses, divided into three books of thirty poems (further divided into three groups of ten poems, of no more than fourteen and no fewer than seven lines), plus an introit of nine and a 'Schlusschor' of one, 'sodass Eingang und Schlusschor zusammen wieder zehn Gedichte ergeben' and so one must pass through the whole *Stern*, as Pieger comments, 'um das vom Eingang beschworene Ereignis in seiner Fülle zu erkennen und den Schlusschor in der rechten Weise mitzusprechen'.¹⁵⁹⁶ This leads Pieger to suggest the *Commedia*'s structure as an intertext, 'sodass dann das Erste Buch für das *Inferno*, das Zweite für das *Purgatorio* und das Dritte für das *Paradiso* stehen würde'.¹⁵⁹⁷

A cursory thematic consideration easily confirms Pieger's hypothesis, as does recourse to Gundolf's interpretation.¹⁵⁹⁸ The 'Eingang's apparition of the god ('All meines traums begehrt', VIII: 16) corresponds to *Inferno* 1's 'Erscheinung des Vergil' (x/xi: 7) as the pilgrim's saviour (Virgil, 'my truthful leader' is referred to as his 'lenker[]' in *Inf.* xvi: 62; x/xi: 33; the god is elsewhere thanked as the 'Lenker' (capitalised!) in Book II of the *Stern*, viii: 75). Book I is polemic, prophetic, and retrospective in nature, dealing with the past, the deficient world and those the poet has left behind: the overarching tone is that of wrath, as David writes.¹⁵⁹⁹ This is

¹⁵⁹⁶ Bruno Pieger, 'Der *Stern des Bundes* als architektonisches Gebilde', in *Krise und Gemeinschaft: Stefan Georges Der Stern des Bundes*, ed. by Christophe Fricker (Vittorio Klostermann, 2017), pp. 69-96 (cited text pp. 80 and 85). The numerological overview given here is following Pieger, esp. pp. 79-85. Although the *Stern* is made of three Books plus introit, as Pieger discusses it is actually in four parts ('Eingang', Books I-III, 'Schlusschor'). This has its own numerological significance in the figure of the Pythagorean 'tetraktys', which sees four yielding ten, perfection (1+2+3+4). On this in the *Stern* see Pieger (pp. 83-84). On the 'tetraktys' generally see Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism*, p. 42.

¹⁵⁹⁷ Pieger, 'Der *Stern des Bundes* als architektonisches Gebilde', p. 80.

¹⁵⁹⁸ 'Kein Werk zwischen der Divina Commedia und dem Stern des Bundes hat zugleich diese ursprüngliche Einheit, Allheit und Selbstheit .. keines die göttliche Gegenwart in jedem einzelnen Wort wie im Gesamtplan, die konzentrische Dreifaltigkeit in Ton, Lehre, Gestalt des einfach daseienden Dichters', Gundolf, *George*, p. 248.

¹⁵⁹⁹ David, *Stefan George*, 285 for structure, 286 for prophetic, 287 for 'Zorn' in Book I.

prophetic, infernal Dante, and George the 'Richter der Widerwelt'.¹⁶⁰⁰ The emphatically capitalised poem opening each decad is powerfully apocalyptic in tone, and the Book is full of George's 'Zeitkritik'.¹⁶⁰¹

The second Book, meanwhile, is erotic, and devoted to *Eros* as the covenant's 'Therapeutik', the 'Dienst zur Liebe'.¹⁶⁰² The infernal first Book ends with the emergence into light: 'Das Bild erhebt im licht sich frei und nackt' (VIII: 47), and the purgatorial second Book opens thus:

BREIT' IN DER STILLE DEN GEIST

Unter dem reinen gewölk

Send ihn zu horchender ruh

Lang in die furchtbare nacht

Dass er sich reinigt und stärkt

Du dich der hüllen befreist

Du nicht mehr stumm bist und taub

Wenn sich der gott in dir regt

Wenn dein geliebter dir raunt.

(VIII: 50)

¹⁶⁰⁰ Wolters, *Blättergeschichte*, 399. Oelmann, in the 'Anhang' to VI/VII: 193 identifies his programmatic use of Dante in *Der Siebente Ring* in the following respect: 'Der Dante des "Inferno" als vehementer Kritiker seiner Zeit, als Visionär (ZEITGEDICHTE), als Liebender der "Vita Nuova" (GEZEITEN) und als Mystiker der Liebe (MAXIMIN). Die Doppeltendenz von visionärer Zeitkritik und transzendentalen Aufschwung hat ihre Parallele in Dante'.

¹⁶⁰¹ Bruno Pieger, 'Der Stern des Bundes. Erstes Buch', in *Stefan George – Werkkommentar: Studien und Interpretationen zu sämtlichen Dichtungen und Übertragungen*, ed. by Jürgen Egyptien (de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 502-22, (p. 512). Cf. The Book's poems: 'DA DEIN GEWITTER O DONNER DIE WOLKEN ZERREISST?' (VIII: 18); 'AUS PURPURGLUTEN SPRACH DES HIMMELS ZORN:

Mein blick ist abgewandt von diesem volk ..

Siech ist der geist! tot ist die tat!

(28);

'HELPER VON DAMALS! RICHTTAG RÜCKT HERAN' (38).

¹⁶⁰² Pieger, 'Der Stern des Bundes als architektonisches Gebilde', p. 78. Cf. David, *Stefan George*, p. 287.

The imagery of spaciousness, peace and the ‘pure’ sky, and of cleansing (‘sich reinigt’) is clearly apt, for purgatory is ‘[w]o menschensinnes reinigung geschehe | Damit er wert das paradies erreiche’ (x/xl: 48; *Purg.* I: 5-6).¹⁶⁰³ There is also a liberation ‘der hüllen’ in this poem that corresponds both to the washing of the pilgrim’s hell-stained face in *Purgatorio* 1 and the need, as recounted in canto 2, to hasten ‘to the mountain to shed the slough that keeps God | from being manifest to you’ (ll. 122-23).

The second Book as a codification of *Eros* in the Master’s circle would correspond to *Purgatorio*’s central cantos (16-18) which are devoted to an exploration of the philosophy and theology of free will and love.¹⁶⁰⁴ The disciples speak in terms of dedication and conversion,¹⁶⁰⁵ reporting their spiritual increase through *Eros* (‘Seitdem ich ganz mich gab hab ich mich ganz’, 65).¹⁶⁰⁶ Finally, the flowery, Edenic imagery throughout the Book suggests is evocative of earthly garden atop Mount Purgatory:

Wir stiegen von dem strom aus gipfel-an
 Da ward mit eins des himmels rasengrüne
 Durchleuchtend blau wie in der süder buchten’

¹⁶⁰³ ‘dove l’umano spirito si purga | e di salire al ciel diventa degno’, ‘where the human spirit purges itself and becomes worthy to | ascend to Heaven’. Note George’s consistency in using cleaning (‘sich reinigt’, ‘reinigung’) as purgation (which Gmelin, *Purgatorio – Der Läuterungsberg*, translates with the verb ‘läutern’).

¹⁶⁰⁴ Cf. Jürgen Egyptien, ‘Der Stern des Bundes · Zweites Buch’, in *Stefan George – Werkkommentar: Studien und Interpretationen zu sämtlichen Dichtungen und Übertragungen*, ed. by Jürgen Egyptien (de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 531-47 (p. 533).

¹⁶⁰⁵ As Pieger points out in his discussion of Pythagorean number symbolism underlying the *Stern*, and as the eighth of George’s volumes: ‘Die Acht gilt als Zeichen für Taufe, Auferstehung und Neubeginn’, Pieger, ‘Der *Stern des Bundes* als architektonisches Gebilde’, p. 81.

¹⁶⁰⁶ Cf. The pilgrim’s teary tribute to Virgil upon the latter’s disappearance in *Purgatorio* 30: 51, in George’s translation: ‘Vergil dem ich mich gab damit ich lebe’ (x/xl: 92).

(74)

The purgatorial process of conversion to the flowery fields of the 'Bund' is captured in poem 22:

Blank und aller hüllen ledig
Stehst du fest auf blumigen grunde
Denn du bist ein gott der nähe'
(VIII: 71)

'Entstiegen aus der nacht der reinigung' (VIII: 77), one comes to the fresh air of the new life, '[e]in kühles licht ein herber hauch' (79), leading then into the 'paradise' of Book III. Like *Paradiso* 1, announcing the 'gloria' of God's eternal light,¹⁶⁰⁷ one of images dominating the opening of Book III opens with blossoming, laughter and light:

Die schöpfung schauert wie im stand der gnade.
[...]
Ein breites licht ist übers land gegossen ..
Heil allen die in seinen strahlen gehn!
(83)

This light is 'die glut im ringe | Und ihr diesnt uns ziel und glück' (90). Light now radiates from the male body ('am ganzen leibe strahlend ..', 88), as if resurrected

¹⁶⁰⁷ Camerini, *Commedia* 299 glosses 'gloria' as 'il divino raggio, o la luce divina' ('the divine ray, or divine light', trans. mine)

and re clothed with grace.¹⁶⁰⁸ The covenant has found its ‘fussbreit festen grund worauf ich stehe’ (104). Towards the end, the language picks up in its insistence on circular and ring imagery (the ‘neuen kreis der dinge’, 107; ‘Euch kreist im blut dreifacher wein der liebe’, 110) before switching to a final note of vernal splendour to introduce the closing prayer: ‘Von aller frucht und blüte duft umdrungen | Das heilige Loblied steigt: der ewige born’ (111). The ‘Schlusschor’ then closes the work in a unisonal prayer, sealing the work in Edenic blossoming: ‘Gottes glück ist uns erblüht’ (114). The final canto of *Paradiso* begins with St. Bernard praying to the Virgin on behalf of the pilgrim. Of this final canto George only translated this prayer, so that his Dante, like his *Stern des Bundes*, ends with a reverential prayer, a ‘heilige[s] Loblied’.

Thus to Dante’s 100 cantos of the *Commedia* George writes his own ‘tëodia’ (‘divine song’, *Par.* xxv: 73) built on the perfect numbers ten and expanding it out to ‘the ultimate boundary of number’: a thousand.¹⁶⁰⁹ In one of the poems dealing with the ‘sich aus dem neuen Leben ergebenden Lehre’ (Morwitz), a ‘geheime kunde’, the Master teaches:

Dass vollzahl mehr gilt als der teile tucht

¹⁶⁰⁸ Cf. *Paradiso* 14: 43-51:

‘When we are once again clothed with our glorious and holy flesh, our person will be more pleasing by being whole, therefore what the highest Good gives us of gratuitous light will be increased, light that enables us to see him, thus vision must increase, the ardor must increase that is kindled by it, the radiance must increase that comes from this love’.

¹⁶⁰⁹ Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism*, p. 102. For the reasoning see p. 101: ‘1 represented a point, 10 was often loosely considered as linear, 100 as two-dimensional and 1,000 as three-dimensional, or solid’. On Dante’s own *Commedia* as a ‘tëodia’ cf. Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy*, pp. 8, 59.

Dass neues wesen vorbricht durch die runde

Und steigert jedes einzelgliedes wucht

(VIII: 101)¹⁶¹⁰

The following poem similarly has it as: 'Die krönungszahl birgt jede möglichkeit ..' (102). According to Morwitz these numbers refer to George's tendency to have no more than twelve disciples in his inner Circle at once.¹⁶¹¹ The multiplicity of parts yields to the unity of the 'runde',¹⁶¹² so that the *Stern* becomes a testament to ordered monumentality.¹⁶¹³ Its temporality and inner movement (of purgation, conversion) is subordinated to the stasis of the whole in its monumental evenness contrasting so starkly with the 'heterogeneity' of *Der Siebente Ring*.¹⁶¹⁴ Each poem has its place, the whole work moves, like the disciples, '[g]emäss in schritt und klang der nahen Wal' (VIII: 92), 'like a wheel being moved evenly' (*Par. xxxiii*: 144) in one great 'göttliche[m] Gedicht', in a 'Mythologie, eine[m] abgeschlossenen Kreis der Poesie'.¹⁶¹⁵

If Book III of the *Stern* aligns with *Paradiso*, George's Dantean mode further appears when the Master addresses his disciples in the nineteenth poem: 'Hier schliesst das tor: schickt unbereite fort. | Tödlich kann lehre sein dem der nicht

¹⁶¹⁰ Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 394.

¹⁶¹¹ Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 394. Cf. Oelmann in 'Anhang', VIII: 147-48.

¹⁶¹² Cf. Oestersandfort, 'Antike-Rezeption', p. 649.

¹⁶¹³ Aler calls it its 'Dynamische Monumentalität', *Symbol und Verkündung*, p. 276.

¹⁶¹⁴ Cf. Wolfgang Braungart, 'Poetik, Rhetorik, Hermeneutik', in *Stefan George und sein Kreis. Ein Handbuch*, vol. 2, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer, Wolfgang Braungart, Stefan Breuer and Ute Oelmann, 2nd edn (de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 495-50 (p. 531): 'das *Neue Reich* ist, neben dem *Siebenten Ring*, das heterogenste Gedichtband StGs'. George in conversation with Edith Landmann explains: 'Im TEPPICH schien das Leben schon gebändigt, im SIEBENTEN RING bricht alles Chaotische wieder neu herein, wie das Leben eben ist. Etwas so Einheitliches wie der STERN DES BUNDES konnte nur entstehen, wo solch ein Chaos vorangegangen war' (*Gespräche mit Stefan George*, p. 78; also cited by Oelmann in 'Anhang', vii/vii: 193). George's oeuvre ends on the odd, with the heterogeneity of *Das Neue Reich*.

¹⁶¹⁵ Schelling, *Texte zur Philosophie der Kunst*, pp. 235, 233. Cf. Schäfer, *Die Intensität der Form*, p. 225: 'Die äußere numerische Ordnung des *Stern des Bundes* ist mit den einzelnen Gedichten kurzgeschlossen'. Cf. pp. 225-32 for the volume's numerology.

fasset' (VIII: 100).¹⁶¹⁶ We find a similar warning at the outset of *Paradiso*: the poet is leading ahead in his ship, custodian of the journey, but only those who are competent enough should follow, the rest ought not to be admitted upon such uncharted waters.¹⁶¹⁷ Should they not be up to the task, they could 'zerschellen ohne mein begleiten', as George translates it later in 1918.

'[S]marriti' is Dante's careful choice of word, linking back to his own estrangement from the good and proper path prior to commencing the journey (*Inf.* I: 1-3). In the *Paradiso*, he signals that he has transcended the deplorable situation at the outset of *Inferno* and can now lead his wiser readerly followers (those who 'stretched out your | necks early on for the bread of the angels', II. 10-11) out of that condition of being 'smarriti' (off the right path) if they stay close behind him.¹⁶¹⁸ 'Zerschellen', as George has it, lacks the continuity that Dante establishes between canto two of *Paradiso* and canto one of *Inferno*, but in his usual fashion he does infuse it with significance pertaining to his own work. 'Zerschellen' makes sense in the Dantean context's nautical imagery,¹⁶¹⁹ but in his own works the verb appears with metapoetological significance in the early poem 'Schweige die klage!' (a frustrated smashing of his lyre, a literal 'mit schall zerspringen' II: 44¹⁶²⁰), and in

¹⁶¹⁶ This poem is, famously, a Hölderlin poem (its across code), see 'Anhang' VII:147.

¹⁶¹⁷ **'ERMAHNUNG AN DEN LESER · EINTRITT IN DEN MONDHIMMEL**

O ihr auf winzigem kahne die im drange
 Mich anzuhören ihr euch liesset leiten
 Von meinem schiffe das hinfährt im sange:
 Kehrt wieder zu den heimischen gebreiten!
 Wagt euch nicht auf die hohe flut.. denn gerne
 Könnt ihr zerschellen ohne mein begleiten'

(X/XI: 110; *Par.* 2: 1-6). In the final line here George rephrases Dante's syntax and installs the typically Georgean concept of 'begleiten'.

¹⁶¹⁸ Readers competent in philosophy and theology, as Durling comments (*Paradiso*, p. 52)

¹⁶¹⁹ 'sehr geläufig von schiffen an klippen', „zerschellen, verb.“, Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm, digitalisierte Fassung im Wörterbuchnetz des Trier Center for Digital Humanities, Version 01/25, <<https://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB?lemid=Z04777>>, abgerufen am 20.08.2025.

¹⁶²⁰ Grimm, *ibid.*

‘Sprich nicht immer’ (III: 89), evoking the sound of the quinces’ fall.¹⁶²¹ In *Der Stern des Bundes*, however, the word occurs charged with Dantean influence:

Wie man zurücksieht nach dem klippensteg
Den man nur einmal heil durchmisst – nie mehr
Nachdem man jedes tritts gefahr schon kennt:
So schauerst du bei dem was dir gelang
Als ich in deine hände mich befahl ..
Sie leichter mürber – und ich war zerschellt!
Nun ehre das unbeugbare gesetz
Und diese form in der ich ihm genüge:
Da menschenwesen sich nur dort erhält
Wo sich das dunkle opfer wiederholt.
(VIII: 68)

As critics have observed, the simile that opens the poem is borrowed from the opening of the *Inferno*, the glance backwards by the pilgrim who has just survived death by shipwreck and has made it to shore.¹⁶²² George repurposes it for its use in the *Stern’s* second book, which deals largely with the Master-novice

¹⁶²¹ Zerschallen also ‘von zerbrechlichen dingen’, Grimm, *ibid.*

¹⁶²² ‘Und wie ein mann der sich herausgezogen
Schwer-atmend an das ufer aus den riffen
Und umdreht nach den fährlich wüsten wogen:

So wandte sich mein geist im fliehn begriffen
Noch einmal rückwärts um die bahn zu schauen
Die nimmermehr lebendige durchschiffen’.
(X/XI: 7-8)

Morwitz, *Kommentar*, 374. Cf. Oelmann’s note in the ‘Anhang’ (VIII:141) and Jürgen Egyptien’s interpretation, “Der Stern des Bundes · Zweites Buch”, in *Stefan George—Werkkommentar, Studien und Interpretationen zu Sämtlichen Dichtungen Und Übertragungen*, edited by Jürgen Egyptien, 531-547, (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), here 544.

relationship.¹⁶²³ The poet is not alone, but emphasises instead 'Bindung' that the shared experience of the perilous journey creates between the two, as Egyptien argues.¹⁶²⁴ Both Dante and George use a simile here: like something ('wie'), but not exactly. Inasmuch as they are both like one who looks behind, etc., George, by borrowing from Dante, becomes like Dante. As Egyptien also notes, the dynamics of the relationship in this poem are inverse: the Master is led by the novice, gives himself into his hands, admitting that were the novice's hands 'leichter' or 'mürber', he would have been 'zerschellt', much as Dante's readers – in George's translation – would be if they are not up to the task of following their poet-master-guide carefully.¹⁶²⁵ The Master, as in the usual Hegelian schema, relies upon the recognition of his acolytes, representing himself here as converting them 'from below' 'zum neuen Leben',¹⁶²⁶ by giving himself unto them, only then to ask that they honour 'das unbeugbare gesetz | Und diese form in der ich ihm genüge'. Being 'zerschellt' is avoided when the conversion of an acolyte is successful. A failed conversion would be a disaster for both parties, for the reciprocal self-giving and self-receiving in the rebirth of conversion implicates both both Master and novice.¹⁶²⁷

Here the biblical contours of the word ring through, for as the Grimm *Wörterbuch* cites it the word occurs in Luther's translation of *Matthew* 21. 4, in

¹⁶²³ Cf. Morwitz, *Kommentar*, 370; David, *Stefan George*, 286; and Egyptien, "Der Stern des Bundes · Zweites Buch", *Werkkommentar*, 536.

¹⁶²⁴ 'Es versteht sich, dass ein derartiges gemeinsames Erlebnis eine Bindung von ganz besonderer Qualität stiftet'. Egyptien, "Der Stern des Bundes · Zweites Buch", *Werkkommentar*, 544.

¹⁶²⁵ I agree here with Egyptien's reading of the syntax as a conditional, and with his comparison of these dynamics to the that of the father's self-humbling as 'geschöpf nun eignen sohnes' in '*Einverleibung*', see Egyptien, 'Der Stern des Bundes · Zweites Buch', p. 544.

¹⁶²⁶ Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 374. Morwitz consistently makes reference to the 'neuen Leben' throughout his exegesis. The Dantean undertones are unmistakable.

¹⁶²⁷ As DiMassa, *Dante in Deutschland*, points out, the goal of all of this 'divine sonship' is the 'goal of self-propagation' (p. 155).

Jesus' parable of the wicked tenants. Christ, the rejected stone, has now become the cornerstone for the faithful and the 'stumbling block' for the faithless upon which they are destroyed: 'nach Luthers bibelverdeutschung auch vom menschen: wer auf diesen stein fellet, der wird zerschellen *Matth.* 21, 44'.¹⁶²⁸ Egyptien's inference of Christ's presence in the poem ('das dunkle opfer', l. 10) is useful in this regard: a failure to recognise the new divine will be destruction.¹⁶²⁹ It is enough to stop the exegesis of this poem at this note: the central point for the present study is that a specific lexical item brands George's self-positing as the Master of his secret Germany as Dantean, stamped with the seal of Dante's approval. A moment of danger precipitates the poets' turning: first back to glimpse at that narrowly avoided danger; and then forward and away from that danger, in a moment of conversion. In this way, George establishes continuity not only between the individual volumes of his own oeuvre, but between himself and his literary-historical predecessors.

vi. The Riddler*

The retrospective towards the end of 'Ergeben steh ich vor des rätsels macht' (VIII: 14) likewise follows a Dantean-Christian logic of conversion: the before and after are split by a decisive 'death' of the self, mirrored metrically in the twelfth line's placement of the caesura midway through the line, splitting it into two

¹⁶²⁸ „zerschellen, verb.“, Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm, digitalisierte Fassung im Wörterbuchnetz des Trier Center for Digital Humanities, Version 01/25, <<https://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB?lemid=Z04777>>, abgerufen am 20.08.2025.

¹⁶²⁹ Egyptien, 'Der Stern des Bundes · Zweites Buch', pp. 544-45.

* No reference is intended here to the villain of the Batman franchise.

equal halves of five syllables: 'Ich war verfallen als ich neu gedieh'.¹⁶³⁰ 'Ergeben' in its sense of 'devoted' or 'dedicated' occurs rarely in George's oeuvre.¹⁶³¹ Its nominal form is found in George's retrospective prose text from 'Der Kindliche Kalender', where it is associated with the Catholic liturgy and ritualised gestures of devotion.¹⁶³² It appears in the Dantean *terzina* poem 'Entrückung' from *Der Siebente Ring*:

Ich löse mich in tönen · kreisend · webend ·
 Ungründigen danks und unbenamten lobes
 Dem grossen atem wunschlos mich ergebend
 (VI/VII: 111)¹⁶³³

The rhyme of 'webend' with 'ergebend' finds an echo in the later (pre-1921) completion of *Paradiso* 2:

¹⁶³⁰ A poetic figure not unknown to Dante, who for example dramatises the non-death suffered in the vision of Satan at the end of the *Inferno* with a similar metrical strategy: 'Io non morì, e non rimasi vivo' ('I did not die and I did not remain alive', *Inf.* xxxiv: 25). Cf. Freccero, *The Poetics of Conversion*, p. 174: 'The pilgrim is approaching the central point where descent meets ascent and death meets Resurrection'. Pirro, in his chapter on *Der Stern des Bundes*, identifies conversion and its ethics as one of the dominant motifs of George's later poetry ('Tutto il mondo poetico dell'ultimo George sta nel segno di questa pretesa di conversione e rinascita, sentita oramai innanzi tutto come un obbligo etico, cui la poesia mette a disposizione un modello simbolico di rigenerazione spirituale', *Come corda troppo tesa*, p. 234).

¹⁶³¹ Cf. Bock, *Wort-Konkordanz*, p. 125.

¹⁶³² 'Im monat der Maria gingen wir des abends mit kränzen und grossen fliederbüschen zur kapelle um das bild der himmelskönigin zu schmücken. Hier wurden uns die beiden gebärden des gebetes gewiesen: die eine mit ineinandergeschlungenen geneigten fingern um ergebenheit und dank auszudrücken · die andere mit aufrechten aneinandergelegten zu bitte und preis' (xvii: 15).

¹⁶³³ George does not employ Dante's *terza rima* rhyme scheme in his *terzinas*, even when he does rhyme them. His rhyme scheme for both 'Entrückung' and 'Empfängnis' (vi/vii: 128) is ABA CBC DED FEF GHG IHI KJL LKL. The key difference between this and Dante's (ABA BCB CDC DED EFE and so on) is that Dante's clearly emphasises the Trinity and the divine three in its tripling of each rhyme (August Wilhelm Schlegel's discussion of this in the *Vorlesungen* were likely known to George, as the *Vorlesungen* were part of the *Index. Zur Bibliothek eines jungen Menschen* (cited in Groppe, *Die Macht der Bildung*, p. 487). Schlegel's discussion is still insightful, and anticipates Freccero's argument in *The Poetics of Conversion*, pp. 258ff.), whereas George's scheme emphasises pairings, the poet and his god. Maximin, after all, is he who 'uns aus der qual der zweiheit löstest' (viii: 9). See on the rhyme scheme Pestalozzi, *Die Entstehung des lyrischen Ich*, p. 320.

Ich gab zur antwort: Herrin · so ergeben
Wie ich es nur vermag · will ich Ihm danken
Der aus des sterbens welt mich liess entschweben.
(X/XI: 111)

Paradiso 2, like 'Entrückung', is a passage of elevation and praise: upon gazing into Beatrice's eyes, '[w]ard ich entrückt wo wunderbar gesichte | Mich an sich zog [...] (X/XI: 111).¹⁶³⁴ George's own rapture is thus bound intertextually to Dante's, and being 'ergeben' its precondition.

In the *Stern*, as Pieger points out, the word 'Ergeben' with which the seventh poem of the 'Eingang' opens, comes to define the mood of the final triad of poems overall.¹⁶³⁵ The speaker is 'ergeben [...] vor des rätsels macht', and the poem revolves around a number of paradoxes governed by this mystery. The move is towards acceptance, a leap of faith, rather than scholarly or rational understanding:

Mehr deutet nicht! [...]
Lasst was verhüllt ist: senkt das haupt mit mir:
»O Retter« in des dunklen grauens wind.

The gestural lowering of one's head, 'verzichtenden Dankes', is counted by Bianchi among various 'Bilder dantescher Prägung' but without citing any particular

¹⁶³⁴ On this poem as a mini-*Commedia* see Pestalozzi, *Die Entstehung des lyrischen Ich*, pp. 336-37.

¹⁶³⁵ Bruno Pieger, 'Der Stern des Bundes. Eingang' in *Stefan George – Werkkommentar: Studien und Interpretationen zu sämtlichen Dichtungen und Übertragungen*, ed. by Jürgen Egyptien (de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 485-501 (pp. 496-97).

example.¹⁶³⁶ One clear example is the passage from *Inferno* 15 where the pilgrim encounters his former master Brunetto Latini, walking 'gesenkten hauptes' alongside him, a gesture typical of the 'zeremoniellen und rituellen Szenerie' that attracted George to Dante, as Michels argues.¹⁶³⁷ It is, after all, in Dante's 'ganz durchseelten und ganz geschlossenen Kosmos [...] worin jedes Wesen seine menschliche Gebärde und seinen göttlichen Platz hat,' as Gundolf has it, that George finds an immanent tie between corporeal expression and the divine.¹⁶³⁸ The gesture learned from the pilgrim's reverence for his 'Meister' Brunetto Latini (translated by George in 1903) now characterises the relationship firstly between Master and Maximin in the 'Eingang', and secondly to lend an air of ceremoniality to the relationship between Master and disciples in Book II. Upon achieving an epiphanic moment of embrace, the master pulls away and 'mit gesenktem haupte von dir trete' (VIII: 56). The emphasis on gesture throughout the *Stern* and George's late poetry is a way of picturing the unity of 'leib' and 'geist' (two of the Circle's master signifiers): the gesture is the spirit made flesh, an embodiment of

¹⁶³⁶ Bianchi, *Dante und Stefan George*, p. 10.

¹⁶³⁷ 'Nicht wagt ich mich mit ihm auf gleiche erde
Und schritt gesenkten hauptes am gestade
Wie einer mit ehrfürchtiger geberde'
(X/XI: 28)

Michels, *Die Dante-Übertragungen Stefan Georges*, p. 176. Arrighetti, 'Vorbote des Neuen', p. 126 likewise stresses the centrality of gesture to George's reception of Dante: 'die Anerkennung eindrucksvoller Gebärden [...], die aufgrund ihres gleichsam überzeitlichen Wertes der erstrebten "neuen" Kunst inspirierende Kraft und nicht zuletzt einen legitimierenden Grund zu liefern vermögen. Hierzu gehört auch [...] die ebenso künstlerische wie moralische Ehrerbietung des Sprechenden gegenüber seinem Meister Vergil' (p. 126). *Gesture* was one of the central semantemes of the Circle's program. See for instance Friedrich Wolters in his *Blättergeschichte* on 'Wort, Gebärde und Gemeinschaft' as constituting the drive towards 'neues Leben' (p. 67). Hugo von Hofmannsthal praised how in 'Die Aufnahme in den Orden. Ein Weihepiel', George had achieved pure gesture through language: 'Diese Sprache ist durchaus Geste, das Malende hat sie abgetan wie einen bunten Mantel' (George-Hofmannsthal, *Briefwechsel* p. 206, cited in the 'Anhang' to the *Schlussband* (xviii: 137). The fifth volume of *Blätter für die Kunst* (1901) has an entry on the need for a 'Deutsche geste' (cited in Landmann, *Der George Kreis*, p. 64). On George's appropriation of the Brunetto Latini scene in *Der Siebente Ring* for the 'matter of self-propagation' in the circle cf. DiMassa, *Dante in Deutschland*, p. 154.

¹⁶³⁸ Gundolf, *George*, p. 53

and unity with a non-corporeal, spiritual shape. It is also a cultic semiotics unto itself: one needs to be in the Circle in order to know the gestures.¹⁶³⁹

Being 'ergeben' is also gestural, as it conveys submission to a greater power: the 'rätsel'. George's carefully designed self-representation here contrasts with a passage in *Purgatorio* xxix ('Erscheinung der Sieben Leuchter') where both the words 'rätsel' and 'ergeben' occur. The canto is an apocalyptic one, drawing extensively on biblical revelation, where the history of the church is represented in an extravagant allegorical procession replete with numerological representations – chief among them the number seven – and figuring more broadly the 'invasion of time from eternity' and the redemption of the fallen human nature by Christ.¹⁶⁴⁰ The canto was translated in full between 1903 and 1905 – precisely at the time of the poet's engagement with Maximin *in vita* and *in morte*, composing poems that would go on to make up his own seven 'candelabra' of *Der Siebente Ring*.¹⁶⁴¹ For the Maximin *Gedenkbuch*, George's collaborator and artist Melchior Lechter depicted seven extinguished candelabra at the end of the book, further bolstering the Dantean thrust of George's self-positing as a revelatory poet, commingling here not only with Dante but, by association, with other figures of revelation who appear in this canto: the old man John of the Apocalypse appears (*Purg.* xxix: 144: 'Ein greis · im schlaf · doch klug von angesichte', x/xi: 90), and in whose Book of Revelation the number seven recurrently appears.¹⁶⁴² The pilgrim is so overtaken

¹⁶³⁹ Cf. Braungart, *Ästhetischer Katholizismus*, pp. 91 & 131; and Todd, *Stefan Georges Dante Translations*, pp. 141-42.

¹⁶⁴⁰ Durling and Martinez, *Purgatorio*, p. 504 (note to lines 55-57).

¹⁶⁴¹ Lines 1-51 in summer of 1903, lines 52-87 in September of 1904, and finally lines 88-154 by September 1905, as per the chronology in the 'Anhang' to x/xi: 158ff. For the Maximin *Gedenkbuch*: available online at: <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/george1907/0059/image.info.thumbs> (accessed 22/08/2025).

¹⁶⁴² For an analysis of the *Gedenkbuch* and its play with numerology and design see Jan Stottmeister, 'Pythagoreische Elemente in Stefan Georges Maximin-Kult', *George Jahrbuch*, 6 (2006/2007), pp. 122-49 (esp. 129-33).

with bliss at hearing a 'sweet melody' (*Purg.* xxix: 22) announcing the procession and resounding throughout the Edenic scene that he suddenly laments Eve's transgression:

Dann rann ein süßes tönen wie mich deuchte
Durch lichte luft – dass ich gerechte stösse
Auf das erkühnen Evas nicht mehr scheuchte.

Es folgten erd und himmel Gottes grösse
Als nur ein weib und das geformt erst eben
Nicht ruhte bis das rätsel sich entblösse.

Denn wenn sie's ausgehalten fromm ergeben
So hätt ich in dem unnennbaren glücke
Schon lang gelebt und immer mögen leben ...
(X/XI: 85-86; *Purg.* xxix: 22-30)

Dante's reproach of 'the boldness of Eve' (l. 24) is refigured by George as a failure to remain 'ergeben' before a 'rätsel'. George expunges Dante's biblical image of the veil ('velo') in exchange for his own richly semantised 'rätsel', one of his master signifiers, that features predominantly in his own poetry, and which constitutes the power of that poetry. The 'rätsel' is the cultic 'indivisible remainder', to borrow Žižek's term for Schelling's 'nie aufgehende[r] Rest', an excess that eludes rational comprehension, and it manifests in the imagery of darkness and night throughout the *Stern*: 'Die tiefste wurzel ruht in ewiger nacht..' (VIII: 14). One perhaps does not

find a more Schellingian line in all of George. Nor is Dante even absent here, for as Oelmann points out in the 'Anhang', there is a reminiscence of the inscrutability of God's judgement as expressed in *Paradiso* xx:

O predestination, how removed is your root
from the sight of those who do not see the first
Cause *total*
(ll. 130-32)¹⁶⁴³

In Schelling's Dante essay George (if even through Gundolf) would have encountered Schelling's idea of nature as the 'ewige Nacht', the furthest distance from God, but also as the 'Geburt aller Dinge' for which it comes increasingly to stand in the *Stern*: images of the ground, darkness, secrecy and telluric materiality combine in the *Stern* to represent the totally enigmatic origin of things.¹⁶⁴⁴ A similarly Schellingian darkness governs the twentieth poem in Book II:

Mir sagt das samenkorn im untren schacht:
›Aus dunst und düster ringt sich jedes ding ..
Verdamm das grausen nicht das dich umfing
Sei nicht erschrocken über soviel nacht –
Es sind die mühen der notwendigen trage‹ ..
Mit ihren freuden seh ich schon die tage
Wo unser beider frucht im lichte lacht.

¹⁶⁴³ Cited in the 'Anhang', VIII: 130.

¹⁶⁴⁴ 'Die Natur ist, als die Geburt aller Dinge, die ewige Nacht, und als diejenige Einheit, wodurch diese in sich selbst sind, das Aphelium des Universums, der Ort der Entfernung von Gott als dem wahren Centro'. Schelling, 'Über Dante in philosophischer Beziehung', *SW*, I, 5, 158.

Night must necessarily be faced so that the freedom of light can be found. The disciple, says the Master, must not fear it. 'Immer liegt noch im Grunde das Regellose', writes Schelling, 'die unergreifliche Basis der Realität', that which 'ewig im Grunde bleibt [...] Ohne dies vorausgehende Dunkel gibt es keine Realität der Kreatur; Finsternis ist ihr notwendiges Erbteil'.¹⁶⁴⁵ This darkness leads Schelling to precisely the same imagery as George: 'Alle Geburt ist Geburt aus Dunkelheit ans Licht; das Samenkorn muß in die Erde versenkt werden und in der Finsternis sterben, damit die schönere Lichtgestalt sich erhebe und am Sonnenstrahl sich entfalte'.¹⁶⁴⁶ And it is indeed a birth with which George is concerned: 'Hab ich selber ihn [the new god – JW] geboren?' he ponders in the following poem, before reminding himself that such reflective philosophical pondering is antithetical to the mystery: 'Schweig gedanke! seele bete!' (VIII: 70). As Dale E. Snow writes, these 'images of darkness, of will, and of birth' serve Schelling in expressing the 'recalcitrance of reality', the 'real' which 'by its nature can never become fully transparent to thought'.¹⁶⁴⁷

By keeping distant from the darkness of eternity, the mystery of his own rebirth, remaining 'ergeben [...] vor des rätsels macht', George thus positions himself here vis-à-vis his poetic son Maximin as a corrective to Eve's apparently lack of pious restraint and resultant sin. Eve removed the veil and sought enlightenment, much like the Petrarchistic-coded Lady of the 'Standbilder', who sought to defuse the enchanting aura of the aesthetic, which was the mystery of

¹⁶⁴⁵ Schelling, *Freiheitsschrift*, p. 32 (SW, I, 7, 360).

¹⁶⁴⁶ Schelling, *Freiheitsschrift*, pp. 32-33 (SW, I, 7, 360).

¹⁶⁴⁷ Dale E. Snow, *Schelling and the End of Idealism* (State University of New York Press, 1996), here p. 176.

the entire tapestry's magical life ('Und keiner ahnt das rätsel der verstrickten .. | Da eines abends wird das werk lebendig.' v: 36).¹⁶⁴⁸ The commandment in the *Stern* is precisely the opposite: 'Lasst was verhüllt ist' (VIII: 14). The secret is like the Lacanian (Žižekian) *Thing*:

Nennt es den blitz der traf den wink der lenkte:

Das ding das in mich kam zu meiner stunde ..

Ungreifbar ists und wirklich wie der keim.

Nennt es den funken der dem nichts entfahren

Nennt es des kreisenden gedankens kehr:

Nicht sprüche fassen es: als kraft und flamme

Füllt es in bild in welt- und gottesreich!

Ich komme nicht ein neues Einmal künden:

Aus einer ewe pfeilgeradem willen

Führ ich zum reigen reiss ich in den ring.

(VIII: 25)

'Das ding' is both immanent on a seemingly concrete corporeal level: it enters the speaker and is ontologically 'wirklich' but nonetheless is conceptually elusive, unable to be pinned down by the variety of thoroughly Georgian concepts deployed.¹⁶⁴⁹ It matches the Lacanian 'Thing' insofar as it 'in and of itself is what is closest to him while escaping him more than anything else'.¹⁶⁵⁰ For Žižek, the Lacanian 'Thing' is the retroactive production of a non-assimilable, 'real-traumatic

¹⁶⁴⁸ Cf. Strathausen, *The Look of Things*, pp. 14ff.

¹⁶⁴⁹ As Ludwig Lehnen points out in his reading of this poem, 'blitz', 'wink' and 'funke[]' are well 'verwendete Vokabeln' in George. Lehnen, 'Nennt es den blitz der traf den wink der lenkte', p. 351.

¹⁶⁵⁰ Lacan, *Écrits*, pp. 550/656. Cf. Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 146.

kernal' that is the leftover of the process of symbolisation: 'as soon as "brute", pre-symbolic reality is symbolized/historicized, it "secretes", it isolates the empty, "indigestible" place of the Thing'.¹⁶⁵¹ The 'Thing' is a place, it is the 'sacred/forbidden place of *jouissance*',¹⁶⁵² Žižek goes on, a place in which death is split in two: symbolic death and 'real' biological mortality. Žižek, as Rafael Winkler explains him, is interested in how this traumatic kernal can destroy a symbolic network 'because it is an intensity whose increase explodes the unity of the signifier'.¹⁶⁵³

George's guarded 'rätsel', and his traversal down into and through it (as the poems of the *Stern* suggest), is the site of conversion, requiring a symbolic death. The new god, the priestly George proclaims, is 'das geheimnis höchster weihe' (VIII: 16). *Highest* here is not merely a metaphorical high in the sense of 'supreme', but echoes back to 'Ergeben steh ich vor des rätsels macht' in which we find out that 'aus erdenstoff | Der Hohe wird' as part of the new divine 'gesetz'. This capitalised 'Hohe' is ontologically high, great, supreme, but the portal to this height is rooted in the ground. The dark ground is the secret, itself 'secreted' to borrow Žižek's imagery, out of the Symbolic world and the ground upon or around which George's new Imaginary (to speak with Peter Morgan) is constructed, and George himself is its privileged secretary, ensuring that no acolyte enters into it and inadvertently ends up naming it with finality, and thus destroying it.¹⁶⁵⁴

¹⁶⁵¹ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 150.

¹⁶⁵² Žižek, *Sublime Object*, p. 221. Cf. also Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder*, pp. 56-57.

¹⁶⁵³ Winkler, *Žižek's Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 100. It is serendipitous that Winkler uses the example of Ernst Kantorowicz' *The King's Two Bodies* (a Georgean work of scholarship) here to illuminate the distinction between real and symbolic death.

¹⁶⁵⁴ Cf. Ludwig Klages writing on George (1902) in which he highlights this dynamic plainly: 'Namenlos sind Geheimnisse, und wer sie dennoch nennt, geht der Teilhaberschaft verlustig: das ist der Sinn jener zahlreichen Märchen des Morgen- und Abendlandes, in denen unbezähmte Neugierde oder gebrochene Verschwiegenheit das Verderben zur Folge hat', Ludwig Klages, 'Georges künstlerische Gesinnung', in *Der George-Kreis: Eine Auswahl aus seinen Schriften*, ed.

An overarching concern of the *Stern* is the idea of the unnamed. In the apocalyptic twentieth poem of Book I, the process of naming is linked directly to destruction and the debris of a civilisation in its death throes. The previous poem had repeatedly highlighted the 'weltabend' in which the divine 'Er' diverts his gaze: 'Weltabend lohte .. rings war spiel und sang | Sie alle sahen rechts – nur Er sah links' (VIII: 36). In hell, Dante and Virgil always travel to the left (*a sinistra*, towards the sinister), while in purgatory they travel to the right. Even in hell they are travelling in the 'right' direction, given that hell and the entire northern hemisphere is upside down in relation to purgatory and redemption.¹⁶⁵⁵ This gesture of leftward gazing is therefore fitting in the 'infernal' first Book of the *Stern*. But that is a side note: what is significant is the following poem, in which, as stated prior, naming and destruction are linked: 'Was schon genannt ist liegt gefällt umher [...] Bringt kranz und krone für den Ungenannten!' (VIII: 37).¹⁶⁵⁶ The emphasis on the unnamed is consistent with the volume's focus on the ungraspable essence of the divine.¹⁶⁵⁷ The poem capping off the apocalyptic, infernal first Book equates unequivocally

by Georg Peter Landmann, 2nd edn (Klett-Cotta, 1980), pp. 489-98 (p. 495). Klages' citation of Schelling's dialogue *Bruno, oder über das göttliche und natürliche Prinzip der Dinge* (1802) provides further evidence of engagement with Schelling in the Circle, a topic of potential future inquiry. On the neo-mystical aspects of George's ineffability topos, with remark on the same poems as here, cf. Schloon, *Modernes Mittelalter*, pp. 295-98.

¹⁶⁵⁵ On this specifically see Freccero, *The Poetics of Conversion*, p. 182.

¹⁶⁵⁶ Unfortunately there is yet another Dantean reminiscence to distract us. Virgil's crowning of the pilgrim towards the end of the *Purgatorio* resonates in this line: 'Hier krön ich dich mit mitra und mit krone!' (X/XI: 81). It also resonates in the 'Vorrede zu Maximin' when the Master lets his star pupil go: 'Dies aber war Maximins stolzester abend als er unter langen gesprächen mit dem Meister durch die halbentschlafnen fluren gegangen war und dieser sagte während sich hinter dem schloss eine weinrote wolke erhob: Mein Maximin · was du mir entgelten wolltest ist reichlich zurückgegeben. Mit Einem satze hast du ein quälendes geheimnis gelöst zu dem kein buch und keine rede mir den schlüssel brachte: du hast über grosse eisige flächen nun ein gleichmässiges und wärmendes licht verbreitet. Ich entlasse dich als schüler · nimm mich zum freund! denn immer bleib ich ein teil von dir wie du ein teil von mir' (XVII: 65-66)

¹⁶⁵⁷ Cf. Wolfgang Christian Schneider's take on the topic: 'Der Ungenannte', in *Krise und Gemeinschaft: Stefan Georges Der Stern des Bundes*, ed. by Christophe Fricker (Vittorio Klostermann, 2017), pp. 297-304. As he points out (p. 297), the term 'Ungenannte' appears only once in George's whole oeuvre, as such it strikes with a particular, singular force for the poet whose self-posed prerogative was to name everything.

the probing and rationalising Enlightenment mind and the degeneration of the world:

Fragbar ward Alles da das Eine floh:
Der geist entwand sich blindlings aus der siele
Entlaufne seele ward zum törigen spiele –
Sagbar ward Alles: drusch auf leeres stroh.
Nun löst das herz von wut und wahn verschlackt
Von gärung dunkelheit gespinnt und trubel:
Die Tat ist aufgerauscht in irdischem jubel
Das Bild erhebt im licht sich frei und nackt.
(VIII: 47)

‘Fragbar’ and ‘Sagbar’ are the twins of the Enlightenment mindset, dissecting and defining their objects of inquiry. ‘Alles’, capitalised, has become nameable. Not only is the implicitly signalled universe (‘das All’) and the celestial heavens upon which Maximin’s star now rests put into question, but the sense of the Absolute as a metaphysical concept, totality at one with ‘das Eine’, is on the Enlightenment’s firing line. ‘Das Eine’, an equally obscure yet metaphysically suggestive term, evokes a principle of unity, the ‘Mitte’ that anchors everything, the star in the solar system around which everything else orbits. With the loss of ‘das Eine’, ‘[t]hings fall apart’, as Yeats has it.¹⁶⁵⁸ The new god and his earthly embodiment restore that centre in the ‘now’, where the heart is healed not with linear conceptual understanding but with the ‘Tat’ and the ‘Bild’ of free poetic procreation. Manfred

¹⁶⁵⁸ Yeats, ‘The Second Coming’, p. 211.

Frank reads the 'Eine' as returning now within George's own project, and invokes Schelling's philosophy of mythology to shed light on George's keen emphasis on sequestering the 'Holy' away from the many of modernity.¹⁶⁵⁹ As Frank argues: 'Nun aber *ist* das Eine wiederkehrt – und dieses Gedankens wegen scheint mir George in die Tradition der Idee einer Neuen Mythologie zu gehören'.¹⁶⁶⁰ The Romantic New Mythology, as expressed in the 'Ältestes Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus', aimed to return poetry to that, 'was sie am Anfang war – *Lehrerin der Menschheit*. [...] Dann herrscht ewige Einheit unter uns'.¹⁶⁶¹

The 'unnamed' is not Maximin, who has a very emphatic, almost an excess of, name. The unnamed is – to once more speak with Žižek and Lacan – that in Maximin which is in him more than him, the force hiding deep in the ground or high above, swinging between the two poles of this vertical axis that cuts through all of reality, from the world 'von ebb und flut' (VIII: 90) up 'zu den wolkenthronen' (VIII: 9) and to 'was unwandelbar ist in der ordnung der sterne' (VIII: 18): this is, to ironically give it a name, 'Eros', the principle of Book II, the eros that moves George's sun and his other star...¹⁶⁶²

¹⁶⁵⁹ Frank, *Gott im Exil*, pp. 272-76.

¹⁶⁶⁰ Frank, *Gott im Exil*, p. 272. The Romantics' idea of a New Mythology was certainly familiar to the George Circle. Wolters echoes the rhetoric of 'Das älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus' in his 'Herrschaft und Dienst' treatise when he makes reference to the 'mechanistischer räderwerke' of modernity: 'ein verhärtetes alter, dem die weit ein stumpfes rollen mechanistischer räderwerke. das leben ein so schmälicher kampf um brote und bräute wurde, dass schon die worte "erhaben und heilig", "feier und fest", "geheimnis und rausch" seine galle erregen, muss erst dahin sein, ehe die Ehrfurcht wieder ganz der grund und anfang jeder bildung, der natürliche zustand des lernenden, der geforderte des lehrenden vor seinen werten, der ruhende der meister vor dem Göttlichen wird', Friedrich Wolters, 'Herrschaft und Dienst', in *Der George-Kreis. Eine Auswahl aus seinen Schriften*, ed. by Georg Peter Landmann, 2nd edn (Klett-Cotta, 1980), pp. 82-86 (p. 86). Cf. Hegel's, Schelling's and Hölderlin's *Das älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus*: 'Wir müssen also auch über den Staat hinaus! – Denn jeder Staat muß freie Menschen als mechanisches Räderwerk behandeln; und das soll er nicht; also soll er *aufhören*', in Schelling, *Texte zur Philosophie der Kunst*, p. 97.

¹⁶⁶¹ Cited from Schelling, *Texte zur Philosophie der Kunst*, pp. 97-98. On George and the Romantic New Mythology of *Der Siebente Ring* onwards cf. DiMassa, *Dante in Deutschland*, p. 145.

¹⁶⁶² Cf. Hildebrandt on 'Ich weiss nicht ob ich würdig euch gepriesen', in *Das Werk Stefan Georges*, p. 377: 'Der Geborene ist Maximin, der Ungeborene, der immer wieder Hinsiehende und wieder Erwachende, Eros als Weltkraft wie in Platons Symposion'.

It is a long way from the quiet whisper of the 'Wandelbar' that occurred back in the *Buch der hängenden Gärten* (III: 89). Maximin has become raptured and 'unwandelbar' alongside those other *Urbilder* and *Gestalten* of literary history (Beatrice, Shakespeare's friend, et al.¹⁶⁶³), but his afterlife on earth is marked by change: 'Ich wandle mich doch wahre gleiches wesen' (VIII: 10). Those who are reborn within his kiln come to embody the same 'wesen' but in different forms, as a poem at the end of Book II thematises:

Ich weiss nicht ob ich würdig euch gepriesen
Dich den Gebornen dich den Ungebornen.
Ich weiss von Einem nur der vielgestaltig
Sich auswächst will dass er vernichtet werde
Und auflebt jedesmal durch neue flamme.
Erst einer füllt er seine vielen formen
Anders und gleich in gleicher herrlichkeit
Entstiegen aus der nacht der reinigung.
(VIII: 77)

The dual-aspect of the divine returns here within this 'Einem'; both born and unborn; the disciples are reborn in the *imago Maximini*, which is as much as being reborn in the *imago Georgi*, who is his own child's child, both the 'zeuger' and the 'schoss' (VIII: 27).¹⁶⁶⁴ Book II is generally identified as the book of the disciples'

¹⁶⁶³ See George's prose text 'Kunst und menschliches Urbild' (XVII: 70).

¹⁶⁶⁴ Here I follow Claude David's interpretation of the poem and the Maximin myth, see David, *Stefan George*, 307f. Similarly, cf. Lehnen, *Mallarmé et George*, 345 for Maximin as a 'leerstelle', 'que chaque lecteur doit remplir de son propre vécu'.

initiation and the government of the new covenant by the divine 'Eros',¹⁶⁶⁵ the sempiternal flame that awakens anew in each disciple, figured in and through the poetry of that second Book, and through George's poetry generally.¹⁶⁶⁶

The knot of transcendence and immanence remains, even if a critic like Braungart argues to the contrary: 'Man muß es wiederholen: George ist kein christlicher, ja nicht einmal wirklich ein religiöser Dichter. Es geht bei ihm nicht um das Verhältnis von Transzendenz und Immanenz'.¹⁶⁶⁷ Nevertheless, for all of George's de-theologised aesthetic and ritualised performance, one fundamental drive of his work is to resolve how 'Ich und Du · Hier und Dort · Einst und Jetzt nebeneinander bestehen und eins und dasselbe werden' (xvii: 69). His poetry continually highlights the tension between transcendence and immanence, staging and playing it out until it circles back upon itself, circling an abyss at its core, gazing tentatively towards a transcendent otherness (the proverbial secret).¹⁶⁶⁸ Here the critical road diverges in the dark wood of hermeneutics. We can follow those justifiably sceptical critics, such as Pirro and David, who view this secret zone as an example of George's ideological manoeuvring: he is the guardian of the secret, its privileged secretary and thus he retains the power of giving and taking.¹⁶⁶⁹ The other road takes the idea of the secret at face value (since in a way that is all it has) and consider, as William Franke does, what philosophical, even theological implications this combination of lyrical self-reflexivity and ineffability has. For Dante, according to Franke, revelation must always remain incomplete: the

¹⁶⁶⁵ Morwitz, pp. 365, 375; Wolters, *Blättergeschichte*, p. 402. Cf. David, *Stefan George*, p. 287.

¹⁶⁶⁶ Cf. Braungart, *Ästhetischer Katholizismus*, p. 237 ('Es gibt ihn [Maximin – JW] nur im poetischen Text, und an ihn ist er gebunden').

¹⁶⁶⁷ Braungart, *Ästhetischer Katholizismus*, p. 238, likewise p. 78.

¹⁶⁶⁸ Cf. Franke, *Dante Paradiso and the Theological Origins of Modern Thought*, 39: 'In some sense, at the deepest level, what the Son reveals of God is just this abyss of the Godhead'.

¹⁶⁶⁹ Pirro, *Come corda troppo tesa*, pp. 191-192; David, *Stefan George*, p. 296.

moment of revelation leads instantaneously to a failure to reveal fully, the secret's impenetrability is guaranteed by the required failure of revelation.¹⁶⁷⁰

If George has traditionally been accused of narcissism, it may be because critics overlook this paradoxical aspect of lyric language: 'Paradoxically, the way beyond the self passes through a reflexive turning back upon the self. That is the pattern of self-reflection that miraculously turns language — at least as it is exhibited in Dante's *Paradiso* — into theological revelation'.¹⁶⁷¹ With Dante's programmatic breakdown of linear narrative in the *Paradiso* and the increasing importance of lyrically self-reflective passages as the pilgrim and his poet nears the Godhead at the forefront of Frank's study, the fact that 'lyrical self-reflectiveness is at the same time a reflection of theological transcendence' and that 'the self-enclosure of lyrical language [...] should create an opening toward the transcendent Other and specifically toward a language-transcendent divine Person'¹⁶⁷² maps so well onto George's project, itself a kind of *imitatio Dantis* in purely lyric form, that perhaps we ought to recognise in it a very serious consideration precisely of the relationship of transcendence and immanence. In Frank's reading, these are inextricably linked: 'Language achieves transcendence by collapsing into the radical immanence of sound, which says nothing, and eventually yields to silence'.¹⁶⁷³

¹⁶⁷⁰ See his discussion in *Dante's Paradiso and the theological Origins of Modern Thought*, summarily: 'Revelation is approached in the Paradiso in and through the failure of every attempt at revelation and disclosure— which failure itself becomes a sort of second- degree revelation or disclosure. In the end, there is something beyond revelation: the unrevealable that remains by its very nature unmanifest and that can be experienced only as escaping from the regime of revelation' (pp. 282-83).

¹⁶⁷¹ Franke, *Dante's Paradiso and the theological Origins of Modern Thought*, 30.

¹⁶⁷² Franke, *Dante's Paradiso and the theological Origins of Modern Thought*, 30. On Dante's suppression of narrative linearity see Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy*, eschapter 10 "The Sacred Poem is Forced to Jump: Closure and the Poetics of Enjambment" and 221.

¹⁶⁷³ Franke, *Dante's Paradiso and the theological Origins of Modern Thought*, 30. This is similar to Jason Wirth's account of Schelling's program in the *Weltalter*: 'It is an original work whose theme

Our George is not yet totally silent. However, he does rebuke himself with silence:

ÜBER WUNDER SANN ICH NACH

In der weisheit untern kammern:

War der gott der mich erleuchtet

War der geist der mir erschienen

Fern aus unermessnen höhn?

Hab ich selber ihn geboren?

Schweig gedanke! seele bete!

Ist ein wunder gleich dem einen

Wunder dieses ganzen jahrs?

Riss ich nicht ins enge leben

Durch die stärke meiner liebe

Einen stern aus seiner bahn?

(VIII: 70)

It is hard to overlook the problem of transcendence and immanence represented in the interior drama of this poem. Did the god come from above, or from within? Did I drag him down from above? Such speculative thought belongs in 'der weisheit untern kammern', the basement of thought and far from the heights of divine revelation and elevation towards which prayer reaches. 'Nachsinnen' is our

is the expression of the inscrutability of its own possibility and the inexpressibility of its own ground. It is the Word falling in love with its anterior silence. [...] in hearing the faint echoes of silence within discourse, discourse falls in love with always being underway toward its own inherent silence—a silence that speaks louder than words but which can only be approached (but never attained) through words'. See Wirth, *Ages of the World*, xii.

Petrarchan *cogitatio*, the wandering mind that gets the subject lost.¹⁶⁷⁴ And yet, immediately after demanding his own silence, the speaker continues his Petrarchan *cogitatio*. He is absorbed in speculation about the miracles that resist such *cogitatio*. 'Wunder' appears a numerologically suggestive three times in the poem, evoking the mystery of the Trinity as well as Dante's Beatrice, who is three-squared (represented always by nine). That Maximin is associated with a magic number (the chaotic seven, tying the three of God to the four of man) suggests that he too, like Beatrice (*Vita nova* XXIX), is a miracle.¹⁶⁷⁵ Indeed, in his dedicated sub-cycle in *Der Siebente Ring* another Latinate, *hapax legomenon* in George's work confirms this: 'Reiner von der Welt beschwerde | Tret ich nie vor dein mirakel' (VI/VII: 106).¹⁶⁷⁶ Schelling argues in the *Philosophie der Kunst* that miracles are impossible in Greek mythology, as both gods and mankind exist within the same immanent realm:

Von dem Begriff der Offenbarung ist der des *Wunders* unzertrennlich. [...] Der Begriff des Wunders ist in der griechischen Mythologie unmöglich, denn die Götter sind da selbst nicht außer- und übernatürlich, es sind da nicht zwei Welten, eine sinnliche und übersinnliche, sondern *Eine* Welt. Das

¹⁶⁷⁴ 'nachsinnen, verb. die schwache form nur in schweizerischen denkmälern: sinn und nachdenken, erwägen, nachforschen, um ins klare, zum verständnis, zu einem entschlusse zu kommen: lang und vil nachsinnen, multum et diu cogitare'. „nachsinnen, verb.“, Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm, digitalisierte Fassung im Wörterbuchnetz des Trier Center for Digital Humanities, Version 01/25, <<https://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB?lemid=N01048>>, abgerufen am 25.08.2025.

¹⁶⁷⁵ Cf. Richard Lansing, 'Numerology', in *The Dante Encyclopedia*, ed. by Richard Lansing (Routledge, 2010), pp. 653-657 (p. 654): 'The point of such numerological patterning is, of course, that Beatrice's relation to Christ as the divinity is inescapable, and is the work of the divinity itself, not the poet'. Cf. Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism*, p. 138. On seven as irrational cf. A. W. Schlegel in reference to Dantean numerology, *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik* II/1, p. 152: 'Die Irrationalität der 7 hingegen veranlaßte von jeher die Anknüpfung eines dunkeln Zaubers an sie'. For the seven as three and four applied to Maximin cf. Jan Stottmeister, 'Pythagoreische Elemente in Stefan Georges Maximin-Kult', p. 132.

¹⁶⁷⁶ Cf. Bock, *Wort-Konkordanz*, p. 405.

Christenthum, welches nur in der absoluten Entzweiung möglich ist, ist in seinem Ursprung schon auf Wunder gegründet. Wunder ist eine vom empirischen Standpunkt aus angesehene Absolutheit, die in die Endlichkeit fällt, ohne deßwegen ein Verhältniß zu der Zeit zu haben.¹⁶⁷⁷

When Maximin releases us from the 'qual der zweiheit' (VIII: 9), it is as if George is seeking the reinstatement of the singular 'Eine Welt' of antiquity. But why, then, the need for a miracle, which Schelling would contend is possible only in a Christian world already split into a transcendent Other and an immanent 'Here and Now'? George's miracle is the object of a yearning, coming down '[f]ern aus unermessnen höhn'. The gesture intimated here of reaching over, yearning beyond the borders of the immanent, to pull a star off its course, is ambiguous.

An imperiously and apocalyptically divine voice thunders in Book I that it favours those who fled to 'dem heiligen bezirk' and who '[b]rünstig die arme in den abend strecken' (VIII: 28). Bianchi cites *Purgatorio* VIII (ll. 10-11) for this gesture, although there the hands of the soul reach toward the pilgrim while the soul's eyes are directed 'verso l'oriente', towards the east of the rising sun.¹⁶⁷⁸ There is another, plausible intertextual candidate from the *Paradiso*. This requires us first to return to *Der Siebente Ring*:

Du wachst über uns

in deiner unnahbaren glorie:

Schon wurdest du eins

¹⁶⁷⁷ Schelling, *Texte zur Philosophie der Kunst*, p. 227 (SW, I, 5, 438-39).

¹⁶⁷⁸ Bianchi, *Dante und Stefan George*, p. 10.

mit dem Wort das von oben uns sprach.
 Wir fragen bei all
 unsren schritten des tags deine milde.
 So macht ihr diener
 das lächeln der könige reich.
 Doch senkt sich der abend in
 der dir geweihten memorie:
 Dann zittert die sehnsucht
 dann greifen die arme dir nach ·
 Dann drängen die lippen
 zu deinem noch menschlichen bilde
 Als wärest du noch unter uns ·
 wärest uns noch – Herrlicher! gleich.
 (VI/VII: 101)

The temporality of this poem moves from Maximin's diurnal, beatific smile to the lonely evening of his absence and his devotees' longing.¹⁶⁷⁹ Petrarch, rhyming 'gloria' and 'memoria', was concerned with Laura's triumph over death in the afterlife ('Now you have worked your power to the limit', *Rvf* 326), and with his continued reflection on the power of his poetic word.¹⁶⁸⁰ In Laura's absence (she's now 'lassù', 'there above'), he begs for her mercy ('pietate', l.13), and goes off

¹⁶⁷⁹ Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 279 ('Beim Sinken des Abends, der immer das Gefühl der Einsamkeit steigert').

¹⁶⁸⁰ The following poem (*Rvf* 327) continues this:
 'and if my poetry has any power
 your name among all noble minds will be
 immortalized to endless memory here'
 (ll.13-14).

wandering lonely ‘from shore to shore’ in the evenings (*Rvf* 237).¹⁶⁸¹ Maximin’s devotees likewise pray that their steps be guided by his grace and mercy (‘milde’), as the day comes to a close, his memory, like that of Laura, is consecrated (‘geweihten’).¹⁶⁸²

The tension in the poem finds its most pressing moment in the final lines’ use of the subjunctive. Having moved from a position ‘über uns’ to one down ‘unter uns’, the poem presents the devotees as reaching out desirously towards their god, in what Ernst Morwitz calls (and most likely with Dante in mind) a ‘plastischen Ausdruck’.¹⁶⁸³ We find precisely the same gesture in a canto of *Paradiso* which George translated *in toto* between October 1903 and 1911, thus on either side of Kronberger’s death and bracketing the whole Maximin event.¹⁶⁸⁴ The canto, entitled by George as ‘Krönung der Jungfrau’, is a mystical one dominated by ‘its sweetly melodic and intensely affective language’, as Barolini writes, identifying it as a cornerstone of Dante’s increasingly lyrical mode towards the visionary end of the cantic.¹⁶⁸⁵ It is full of light and floral imagery, of affect and delight, song and praise, joy and wonder as the poet relates the visionary triumph of Christ descending with the Virgin to the eighth heaven of the fixed stars. George

¹⁶⁸¹ ‘Pining away I go from shore to shore,
pensive all day, and then I weep all night;
nor am I any stabler than the moon.
No sooner than I see the dark of evening,
sighs from my breast, and from my eyes, flow waves
to wet the grass and tremble through the woods’
(II.19-24).

¹⁶⁸² The Grimm dictionary testifies to the evocative, quasi-feudal older meaning of the noun ‘milde’: ‘die liebevolle fürsorglichkeit eines herrn für sein gesinde [...] als formelhafte bezeichnung einer königlichen eigenschaft, wie heute gnade’. „milde, f.“, Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm, digitalisierte Fassung im Wörterbuchnetz des Trier Center for Digital Humanities, Version 01/25, <<https://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB?lemid=M04979>>, abgerufen am 26.08.2025.

¹⁶⁸³ Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 279.

¹⁶⁸⁴ Lines 70-111 (October 1903); lines 25-69 in 1909; and finally lines 1-24 and 112-39 in 1911. See chronology in the ‘Anhang’ to *SW*, x/xi (158-62).

¹⁶⁸⁵ Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy*, p. 228.

translates it typically into his own idiom: the ‘Verbo divino’ (l. 73) is no longer divine, but eternal (‘ewigen’, x/xi: 128); the Virgin’s ‘ventre’ becomes the Georgian ‘leib’ at the centre of his cult of the body, its description as the ‘albergo del nostro disire’ is ‘[d]em hause drin einst der Verheissne lebe’ (x/xi: 129), a nominalised participle of the verb that returns at the height of his Dantean mysticism in *Der Siebente Ring*’s ‘Einverleibung’: ‘Nun wird wahr was du verhiessest’ (vi/vii: 109), a prophecy attributed to a *Du* in a poem that so blurs the *Ich* and the *Du* it becomes impossible to establish who exactly said what (Maximin as both son and father; poet as father to his own father, etc.).

This canto also features other prized possessions: Beatrice’s ‘heiligen lächeln’ (ll. 55-60; x/xi: 127); Dante’s dedication to the Virgin, to whom he prays ‘both morning and evening’ (l. 89), and the motif of circularity running through the canto (l. 109: ‘das rings herumgetragene singen’, x/xi: 129) are also likely to have been an influence on the mystical circles of *Der Siebente Ring*. Most importantly, however, it ends with the simile of the souls reaching up toward the Virgin returning to the Empyrean above as being

[...] einem kinde gleich das nach der amme

Die arme streckt nachdem es milch empfangen:

So machte wunsch der bis nach aussen flamme

Dass alle diese glänze aufwärts drangen

Mit ihrem haupt – und ihre hohe liebe

Für die Maria war mir aufgegangen

(x/xi: 130; *Par.* xxiii: 121-126)

George maintains Dante's rhyme sounds in this passage, rhyming his 'amme' ('la mamma') with the 'flamme' ('s'infiamma') and keeping something of the maternal tenderness that Dante so often invokes throughout the *Commedia* (a final image of the mother-child relationship occurs in the final canto, *Par.* xxxiii: 106-08).¹⁶⁸⁶ With the Virgin's departure, and after another affective lyrical outburst praising the heavenly singing and then the apostles, 'die hienieden | Als gute pflanzer ihren grund bebauten' (x/xi: 130; ll. 131-32), Peter arrives triumphantly, and the canto closes with a rhyme partially related to our Georgean one:

Hier feiert unter Gottes hohem sohne
 Und der Maria siege ['vittoria'] seiner schlachten
 Umringt vom Alten und vom Neuen Throne
 Er der die schlüssel hält zu solchen prachten. ['gloria']
 (x/xi: 130; *Par.* xxiii: 136-39)

George avoids the Latinate 'Glorie', but this is only one of several times throughout the *Commedia* (and the *Paradiso* in particular) that Dante has 'vittoria' in a rhyme position.¹⁶⁸⁷ The most significant moment of 'gloria' and 'memoria' rhyming – and likewise with 'vittoria' (one recalls Maximin appearing 'in der *siegprangenden* glorie des festes' in the 'Vorrede', xvii: 66, emphasis added) – is in the final canto, where the poet's struggle to relate the vision of God reaches its apex:

¹⁶⁸⁶ This observation is credited to many a conversation with Professor Corinna Salvadori Lonergan.

¹⁶⁸⁷ Other 'gloria' – 'vittoria' rhymes include *Purg.* x: 73-75; *Par.* ix: 122-26.

O somma luce che tanto ti levi
 da' concetti mortali, a la mia mente
 ripresta un poco di quel che parevi,
 e fa la lingua mia tanto possente
 ch' una favilla sol de la tua gloria
 possa lasciare a la futura gente,
 ché, per tornare alquanto a mia memoria
 e per sonare un poco in questi versi,
 più si conceperà di tua vittoria.

(*Par.* xxxiii: 67-75)¹⁶⁸⁸

The two most mystical cantos of Dante's *Paradiso* (xxiii and xxxiii of the third cantic), in which the poet wrestles with the representation of an *excessus mentis*, are probable intertexts for George's Latinate rhymes, citing the forebear poet at the moment in which he seeks to match Dante's sustained devotion, writing to catch a spark of the overwhelming abundance of the divine. Given that this particular rhyme is also found in George's two other main Romance language forebears, the poet has managed to charge this poem with a singular poetic force. If we consider the Baudelaire and Petrarch sonnets discussed previously, one notices how both end on a note of self-absorption: Baudelaire is talking about his own glory ('mon

¹⁶⁸⁸ 'O highest Light that rise so far beyond our mortal thought, lend again to my memory a little of how you appeared, and make my tongue so powerful that it may leave a single spark of your glory to the people yet to be, for, if it comes back somewhat to my memory and resounds a little in these verses, more will be conceived of your victory' (Trans. Durling & Martinez, *Paradiso*, p. 665).

plaisir et ma gloire!'), Petrarch about Laura's glory, while remaining caught up in considerations about his own predicaments. Dante is utterly self-involved, intensifying to a point of self-reflective density so that his poetic Word might refract a sliver of the transcendent for the 'people yet to be'.

All three forebear poets, along with George, are concerned with outliving or triumphing over death in their poems, and Dante most emphatically turns to the Divine Other for benediction. While George evokes Petrarch with the titling of the sub-cycle and the six-piece procession of poems evoking the former's *Trionfi* (and with 'Das Dritte' even mapping onto Petrarch's structure insofar as it praises Maximin's 'triumphus mortis'), his erasure of the poetic *Ich* from the cycle (until the very end, where it appears rather emphatically) in favour of a communal *Wir* juxtaposed against the Other of the *Du*, suggests that while trapped in the Petrarchan mode of self-reflexive, modern immanence, he is yearning for a Dantean poetics, reaching out to the divine in and through lyric self-reflexivity.¹⁶⁸⁹ 'Das Dritte' is pierced through by transcendent verticality, and herein lies the conundrum. Modelled partly on Beatrice, whose glory and charity led her devoted poet 'al divino da l'umano, | a l'eterno dal tempo', the figure of Maximin remains somewhat of a Laura, cut off from her devoted poet by death: Petrarch never quite gets the tour of heaven that Dante does, whose direction is in line with what Schelling calls the 'Christentum eigentümliche Richtung [...] vom Endlichen zum Unendlichen'.¹⁶⁹⁰ George's entire project is an attempted inverse of Dante's, to go *all'umano dal divino, al tempo dall'eterno*, recentering the divine within the male human body and within which that divine can be infinitely reborn, so that Maximin

¹⁶⁸⁹ Cf. Franke, *Dante's Paradiso and the Theological Origins of Modern Thought*, p. 6.

¹⁶⁹⁰ 'to the divine from the human, | to the eternal from time' (*Par.* xxxi: 37-38), Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst*, SW, I, 5, 447.

remains immanent even in death.¹⁶⁹¹ That the poem ends with subjunctive phrasing, however, suggests, rather literally, a hypothetical immanence. The devotees are guided by an 'as if' that casts a shadow of a doubt over the project. Franke's point that Dante's language works through itself reflectively in order to point beyond itself towards a higher authority, an ineffable Otherness governing the world, to 'a higher source that is not of one's own creation', is a point of difference to George, who remains self-reflective precisely within his own creation.¹⁶⁹² Maximin as the star (and the *Stern*) is a fitting symbol: immanent, insofar as it belongs to the natural universe and has a physical presence, but transcendent insofar as it is beyond our grasp. We can reach towards it, like George and his acolytes reaching their arms out, but it remains beyond. That is, unless we are Dante, 'puro e disposto a salire a le stelle' (*Purg.* xxxiii: 145).

¹⁶⁹¹ Cf. Armin Schäfer, 'Interpretationen von *Goethes letzte nacht in Italien*, *Hyperion*, *Der Dichter in Zeiten der Wirren* und *Einem jungen Führer im Ersten Weltkrieg* (SW, IX, 7-33)', p. 569: 'Diese Männer haben ihre Präfiguration in dem angekündigten neuen Gott, der reine Immanenz ist und an seinem Leib fasslich wird'.

¹⁶⁹² Franke, *Dante's Paradiso and the theological Origins of modern Thought*, p. 18.

8. Conclusion

George answers the chaos of *Der Siebente Ring*'s ecstatic circles with the stately, uniformly marching *Der Stern des Bundes*, the apotheosis of his Maximin cult and of himself as its prophetic Master.¹⁶⁹³ If there is one text of George's oeuvre that seems to most fully embody the discourse of the master, it is the *Stern*. The poetic voice emerges in this volume in its most imperative, most commanding, and most authoritative form. At the same time, it has its moments of (I hesitate to say) lyrical tenderness, as well as its eroticism (the homoerotic love poems of Book II), but it also has the fire and brimstone of Book I, and the misogyny of Book III (VIII: 86; 96), which all works together to compound the master's dominating personality. As Morgan writes: 'it is clear that we are in the presence of a master able to draw on every register in the language, play every note and manipulate every association'.¹⁶⁹⁴ Maximin is not named in the *Stern*, despite pervading it in essence: he is omnipresent and nowhere, the unreachable secret.¹⁶⁹⁵ His presence further decreases in *Das Neue Reich* (1927), a significant (but not total) absence after his cult in the previous two works.

Volume nine, *Das Neue Reich*, is an odd number in both senses. It starts off with a strong swing, the reader must pass through some of the biggest, longest poems in George's oeuvre, the language of which is often akin to the 'rime aspre e chiocce' Dante requires to describe the bottom of hell ('harsh and clacking rhymes', *Inf.* XXXII: 1). The bullish prophet and cultural critic Dante remains

¹⁶⁹³ Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, p. 136.

¹⁶⁹⁴ Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, 140. Morgan goes on to suggest that George falls 'under his own spell' (ibid).

¹⁶⁹⁵ The work is like the 'empty place of the Thing' in this sense, Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 150.

operative in these poems. 'Der Krieg's (ix: 21-26) epigraph, for instance, takes its authority from Dante, and 'Der Dichter in Zeiten der Wirren' (ix: 27-30) and the three Maximin-dedicated Gebete' (ix: 37-40) evoke the *Stern's* – and thereby the *Commedia's* – structure in miniature ('Der Dichter' has three stanzas of thirty lines each, and one could find thematic crossovers of infernal prophecy, purgatorial mountains, etc., and the 'Gebete' are three poems of twenty lines), but as the volume progresses so too does the size of the poems. Monumental prophecy and cultural criticism (ix: 7-49) shifts suddenly to fragmentary dramas (ix: 51-69), short 'Sprüche' (ix: 71-96) dedicated to friends, those who survived and those who were killed in the war, before finally coming to settle and end George's own poetic work on the quiet form of the short lyric poem (ix: 97-111). Ockenden has commented on one of these final poems as an example of the poet's acceptance of transience, redeeming him from being the 'dogmatic tyrant' that critics (the present included) are so often tempted to see him as, and likewise Morgan sees a 'counter-movement' that 'abandons the mythology of the Bund and Maximin for something more profound. [...] the recognition of intimacy and of the emotional relationships with the men around him'.¹⁶⁹⁶ Even Morwitz noted how the volume is pervaded by a sense of something transcendent, a beyond, 'etwas über die Grenzen des Lebenden Hinausweisendes'.¹⁶⁹⁷ The final poem of the oeuvre, I think, attests to these writers' points: 'Du schlank und rein wie eine flamme' (ix: 111) addresses a nameless *Du*, offering a poem of praise redolent with solemn gratitude and emotionally moving in its quiet, apparent simplicity:

Du schlank und rein wie eine flamme

¹⁶⁹⁶ Ockenden, 'Voyaging with a Concordance', p. 62; Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, p. 175.

¹⁶⁹⁷ Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 483.

Du wie der morgen zart und licht
Du blühend reis vom edlen stamme
Du wie ein quell geheim und schlicht

Begleitest mich auf sonnigen matten
Umschauerst mich im abendrauch
Erleuchtest meinen weg im schatten
Du kühler wind du heisser hauch

Du bist mein wunsch und mein gedanke
Ich atme dich mit jeder luft
Ich schlürfe dich mit jedem tranke
Ich küsse dich mit jedem duft

Du blühend reis vom edlen stamme
Du wie ein quell geheim und schlicht
Du schlank und rein wie eine flamme
Du wie der morgen zart und licht.

The poem has a biographical background in George's reaction to the tragic news of Bernhard von Uxkull, who together with Adalbert Cohrs took his own life in 1918, but this context of composition could not be deduced from the poem without prior knowledge, and so it is abstract enough to remain a pure poem of praise.¹⁶⁹⁸ The poem's two central stanzas are related to the *Ich*, while the first and fourth are entirely about *Du*. While the *Ich* in this way is still at the 'centre', it is bounded by

¹⁶⁹⁸ See Morwitz, *Kommentar*, pp. 473-74 for the background. Ending his final work with a poem of praise was intentional, Morwitz writes, 'da Stefan George die höchste Aufgabe jedes Dichtens im Preisen sah' (p. 483).

this ephemeral otherness at its limits, before and after the *Ich* appears, there is *Du*. In fact, 'Ich' does not appear until stanza three, after this passer-by *Du* has made an impact on 'mich' in its grammatically accusative form as object of the other. Before the agency of the subject, it is itself subject to the other, enabled by the encounter with the other. The final impression one gets from George's main, 'original' poetic productions (volumes one to nine of the oeuvre) is, thus, that of the Other, the *you, you, you, you*, which is a very different disposition than the Petrarchan *me, me, me, me*, and very different too to the almost maniacally zealous 'Ich'... 'Ich'... 'Ich'... 'Ich'... 'Ich'... 'Ich'... 'Ich'... 'Ich'... 'Ich'... 'Ich'... 'Ich'... 'Ich'... (VIII: 27), the 'end' and 'beginn' of the *Stern's* discourse, and with this almost pure address to the Other as you, in a highly lyrical, self-reflective poem, the oeuvre ends on the image of an expansive, but tender, clarity: 'Du wie der morgen zart und licht'. Yet we are perhaps not quite out of the Petrarchan wood: the language enveloping this mysterious other is more reminiscent of Laura than it is of Beatrice, with images of transience, flickering flames, passing breezes, a wish and a thought evoking Petrarchism and its many variations upon the theme of evanescence. So have we come, in bad Hegelian fashion, full-circle in a kind of bad infinity? Has a detour through Dante only led our wandering Georgean speaker back to the Petrarchism of his origins? It hardly seems so. There is none of the Type-2 Petrarchan anxieties infecting the above poem, which comes across as masterly in its intentional, focused tone and simple indicative phrasing, but it is certainly a lot gentler and more accepting of the Petrarchan anxiety about transience than the poems of *Die Fibel* (and the other 'masterly' poems of the Maximin-cult) were. There are no pretensions to a privileged *nunc stans*, to a rapture or whatever other cultish elements the Maximin sect aspired to. The poem,

in a way, goes back to the basics. Indeed, what George accomplishes with this poem is a return to his origins, but rather, as Martus writes, to his French, and not his Petrarchan, origins.¹⁶⁹⁹ As critics have pointed out, the poem's key intertext is Francis Vielé-Griffin's 'Vous si claire et si blonde et si femme', which it resembles closely in much of its phrasing.¹⁷⁰⁰ Like his beginnings, George posits (at least) two endings to his oeuvre. *Das Neue Reich* ends with a poem intertextually rooted in the time the poet spent in France with the Symbolists, while the final volume of the *Gesamt-Ausgabe* (*Schlussband*, SW, XVIII) contains 'Jugenddichtung' that evoke, among other things, the Petrarchism plaguing *Die Fibel* (e.g. 'Prinz Indra', SW, XVIII: 69).¹⁷⁰¹ 'Du schlank und rein' re-visits what might be called Petrarchistic imagery (its many descriptions of the beloved other) but with a Dantean poetics of praise and devotion to the other, a surrendering to the masterly posture, and perhaps even an openness to George's much contested enemy: contingency, for as William Franke points out, in Dante's context, contingency is literally 'an immediate touching together without anything in the middle', self and other. For Dante, in Franke's reading, the contingency of language foregrounds itself in God's heavenly sky-writing (*Par.* XVIII), so that '[t]he medium, as contingent, becomes present in and for itself'.¹⁷⁰² The trajectory of George's oeuvre has been to absolutise the poetic word, rather than to foreground any of its contingencies, and so even the simplest love-lyric at the end of his oeuvre has an inherent strain of self-reflexivity that, beyond any historical reference (the biographical background to the 'Du schlank und rein' for example), allows it to exist for itself. With that said,

¹⁶⁹⁹ Martus, *Werkpolitik*, p. 705. Martus also notes how *Das Neue Reich* mirrors the end of the *Gesamt-Ausgabe*, in this regard, with 'Prinz Indra' returning to George's early poetry.

¹⁷⁰⁰ For a detailed analysis see Böschenstein, *Studien zur Dichtung Stefan Georges*, pp. 127-39.

¹⁷⁰¹ On George's ending cf. Martus, *Werkpolitik*, p. 706.

¹⁷⁰² Franke, *The Divine Vision of Dante's Paradiso*, quoted text pp. 87 and 87-88.

the poem's emphasis on the other is further rooted in the language of the poem itself, in its own intertextual otherness. The critic, thus, comes away with a double sense of the other: a poem about the other, written in words evocative of another poet. Indeed, after *Das Neue Reich* the oeuvre continues through George's translation work, constituting tributes to and renditions of the poets that made him (Dante, Shakespeare, Baudelaire, contemporary poets from various European countries, etc.). The reader is given a sense of the plurality of voices and traditions that this poet has absorbed, and while containing them in his oeuvre is in one way a method of maintaining control over and domesticating his influences within a tightly-bound poetic structure, it is nevertheless also an acknowledgement of his poetic debts, an acknowledgment of his poetic others.

This study's main point of focus has been Stefan George's reception of two literary titans, exploring his creative adaptations and strategic manipulations of these precursors' works, and demonstrating his methods of alternately downplaying and acknowledging what Dante and Petrarch meant to him.

It began firstly with a consideration of Petrarch's place in German literary history, an area of scholarship that has not been as systematically explored as that of Dante in Germany. Ahead of this dissertation's exploration of Petrarch and George, chapter two sought to identify the most salient aspects of Petrarch's German reception and contextualise some case study moments within what scholars have called the 'first' and 'second' Petrarchisms.¹⁷⁰³ It sought to find 'clues' in German literary history that may point to why George so decisively downplays Petrarch's presence in his work. The chapter's examination of writers

¹⁷⁰³ See Korch, *Der Zweite Petrarkismus*, pp. 2-3.

from the German Enlightenment and Romantic eras painted a dual picture of Petrarch: on the one hand, European Petrarchism emerges as a school of poetic style that quickly became stale, despite its progenitor's own originality and literary authority. On the other hand, the figure of Petrarch himself emerges positively in German Romanticism but is contrasted often with Dante, who is consistently presented as the more masculine and impressive of the two. A close reading of A. W. Schlegel's Petrarch poem allowed the study to then veer into an exploration of the Romantic philosophy of language, preparing the way for later consideration both of George's own fixation on the magic of poetic words, as well as of contemporary literary theory's interest in the performative aspects of lyric language, exemplified in the work of Jonathan Culler.

Of the two privileged Masters, Petrarch is by far the more understudied when it comes to his influence on George. This study has attempted to rebalance that. To do so, chapter three set out on a literature review of existing scholarship on the topics of George and Petrarch, firstly, and George and Dante, secondly. The thesis then set out to intertwine both strands of scholarship as one of its primary goals, so that its own methodological approach became more clearly visible: to read the poet's reception of Dante and Petrarch as inextricably bound, each contributing to George's broader story of poetic self-development.

In chapter four, *Die Fibel* was shown to be laden with what I have called Type-1 Petrarchism: the infectious disease of European literary history, with its many clichés and tropes. This combined with that of Type-3, which was the young George's own personal engagement with Petrarch's texts, as opposed to an inherited, unconscious, discourse. This chapter also emphasised the importance of George's retrospective self-presentation, and how his literary origins were made

available to us only from the safety of his well-established poetic ground at the turn of the century. The chapter thus doubly contextualised *Die Fibel* as a work with two different beginnings, in a way, and thereby raised the issue of beginning in itself: how and when does one begin, and is there any absolute beginning, any beginning that is not contingent upon some prior phenomenon? From this dual-perspective of the young poet and the mature poet, it became apparent that Petrarch's influence was far from negligible, for the lengths the mature poet goes to section off, while simultaneously showing off, his engagement with Petrarch at a young age, attest to both a serious creative engagement in the past, as well as to a desire in the present (that is, around 1900), to present himself as having transcended and mastered that original Petrarchistic flare-up. This chapter read *Die Fibel* in its entirety, looking at how the volume functions in both its poetic cycles and its use of paratextual elements that work together to produce the effect of a well-founded authority. The close readings performed in this chapter provide the foundation for much of the thesis' interests: questions of desire, shame, homoeroticism, wandering, the pains of personal and poetic maturation, and all the personal and poetic concerns of the lyric *Ich* in its quest for companionship.

Chapter five moved on to George's early works, following Leonard Forster's insight that Petrarchism turns up even where you least expect it. It is here that the dissertation diverges from existing George scholarship insofar as Petrarchism is rarely diagnosed in these works. The chapter sought to demonstrate how these early works still evince aspects of Type-1 Petrarchism. Another, second Type then became apparent: this was the modern self as Petrarch (perhaps) first fully embodied it in lyric poetry: divided and in search of unobtainable fulfilment. The chapter's reading of the *Hymnen* continued to examine George's concern with

beginning, devoting some pages to an orbit around the hermeneutic black hole of *Hymnen*'s 'Weihe', a first good look into George's master discourse that emerges in the idea of the secret. The chapter then went on listening to individual poems from *Hymnen* and *Pilgerfahrten* with a Petrarchan and Petrarchistic stethoscope, and suggested particular poems from the *Canzoniere* as intertexts for George's own, keeping the potential of his Type-3 Petrarchism in view.

Chapter six charted George's movements within this fragmented Type-2 Petrarchan consciousness as he staged the breakout of *Das Jahr der Seele*'s mortal spiral, gathering up the pieces of a fragmented reality and binding them into a poetic artefact. His search for legitimation and poetic freedom found new ground in the figure of the Dantean angel, but this was not yet enough. However, the angel proved a suitable counter-figure to George's own 'stony lady' as represented in the 'Standbilder' of *Der Teppich des Lebens*. These were examined and revealed to be imbued with much of the Petrarchan qualities previously plaguing George's own poetic *Ich* and as such, acted as a scapegoat upon which he could cast Petrarchistic pathologies. This not-unproblematic manoeuvre was briefly contextualised within scholarship that is more attentive to the misogynistic tendencies underlying George's poetics. At any rate, this was read as the turning point of George's literary *conversio* from Petrarchism to Dantism. Chapter seven, finally, followed George as he turned to Dante, tracing the increasing influence of the translation work on his own poetry and its cult of the divine, and examining the poet's deployment of a kind of 'verbal figuralism' that Robert Hollander once attributed to Dante, whereby George's poetic oeuvre takes on increasing internal coherence with the revelation of Maximin allowing certain lexemes to retroactively illuminate former moments as their own prophetic prefigurations, lending the post-

revelation moment a degree of finality and the work as a whole a degree of self-satisfied mastery.

This study grounded its own beginning on one particular rhyme that, to this student's ear, foregrounded itself through the solemnly musical note of its Latinity. On its search for the origins of George's rhyme in the works of the Trecento authors, and enchanted by this master's discourse, the thesis followed the rhyme's call down the many winding paths of literary history, to know the causes of things, as per the Virgilian dictum cited in the introduction ('rerum cognoscere causas'). At the same time, the thesis' interest in the concept of beginning in itself, intertwined as that is with the idea of the origin and, or, the causes of things, led it to weave Schellingian speculation into its account and, thereby, to repeatedly encounter the difficulties of finding an absolute beginning. Thus while the thesis argues for Dante and Petrarch as two of George's primary intertextual 'modalities' (to borrow Peter Morgan's term), they are of course not the only relevant intertexts for George, but they happen to be those through which this thesis had come to itself '[n]el mezzo del cammin', as it were.¹⁷⁰⁴ What it has demonstrated is the deeply significant aspect of these two particular intertextual sources for George's entire project, that what Morgan calls George's two modalities are both poetically, biographically (as his account demonstrates), *and* intertextually motivated. This brings the study back to its own beginning, and hopefully now to its ending, with Birkenhauer's point cited in the opening pages that literary tradition hovers meaningfully even in single words, and especially in single rhymes. Thus it hopes that its own 'teuer erkaufte spiel' has been adequately justified and demonstrated.¹⁷⁰⁵

¹⁷⁰⁴ Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, p. 131. This is of course not to suggest that Morgan's study is devoid of any intertextual analysis – quite the contrary. This thesis, however, has made the intertexts its primary objects of enquiry.

¹⁷⁰⁵ George, cited from Oelmann (ed.) 'Von Kultur und Göttern reden', p. 398

George's literary conversion from a Petrarchan poetics of wandering desire to a Dantean one of praise and immanence is a very modern manoeuvre, one that does not fully escape the irritation of that other European 'disease' (as Deleuze and Guattari called it), transcendence. This study has looked at George as he attempts to create a system within which he is the unequivocal Master, a realm (be it poetic or social) in which no contingency can upset his new Symbolic (or rather, Imaginary) Order, where the ring rightly fits the finger, to borrow Dante's image (Par. xxxii: 57). As we have learned from our deployment of Schelling, via Žižek, however, no system can be fully and wholly self-bound, wholly independent, wholly sealed. Schelling extrapolated this basic premise to his vision of divine self-origination, with God's own utter self-involvement proving 'unbearable', and Žižek brings this claim to political ideology: no ideology is wholly, internally consistent, but is rather always reliant upon an inner contradiction that opens it to a (political, ideological) other.¹⁷⁰⁶ Between divine self-creation and political ideology sits George, creating himself through the poetry and ideologising that creation through the Circle. In doing this, he faces the issue of freedom, an issue characteristic of any system-thinking and raised by Schelling and Žižek. 'Strengstes maass ist zugleich höchste freiheit', wrote George on the subject of poetic creation, a line that likely undergirded much of the Circle's submission to him as its Master as well. For all his mastery over the Circle and his poetry, however, the basic issue remained: the full, self-satisfied identity of a system is impossible; it requires a constitutive other within it, a crack in the wall to allow a gust of fresh air. As this study has shown, a degree of intertextual otherness has pervaded George's

¹⁷⁰⁶ Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder*, p. 24 for God's 'unbearable anxiety', and pp. 131 & 145 for the system, and *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 16 for the 'constitutive moment' of an ideological symptom (and cf. pp. 142-43 and p. xxix, albeit discussing Hegel).

poems, down to the level of individual words, what the introduction discussed under the idea of 'double-voiced discourse'. His poetic words are doubled when the voice of another poet is also speaking through them.

Thus, this dissertation has been concerned with a fundamental otherness running through George's work, a work that presents itself otherwise, at least on the surface, as a fully-realised, tightly-bound system in full control of its own form and development, exhibiting consistent self-identity ('Ihr sehet wechsel · doch ich tat das gleiche', *SW*, VI/VII: 7). A series of questions posed at the beginning of the present study had to do with 'disentangling' the Trecento influences, analysing the 'crux' (Greenham) of George's rhyme insofar as it sought to separate out the individual intertextual moments informing it. George's project has been presented as a movement away from Petrarchan inconstancy and fluidity ('lapsus [...] ac ruina') to one of a monumental, Dantean solidity. Superficially, it succeeds in posturing as such, but there are issues that a further study on the topic may broach in the future: from a literary-historical standpoint, one main tension persisting in George is the fact of the lyric poem as such. He is not an epic poet, and thus runs contra to much of the German cult of Dante that emphasises that poet's strength and greatness in the accomplishment of his poetic form, which is the form of the epic, 'sein göttliches Gedicht'.¹⁷⁰⁷ Insofar as he is a modern lyric poet, George is fundamentally near to Petrarch's fragmentary poetic mode. Thematically, it may be said, George strives for Dantean content, but stripped of the absolute quality of that universe, so that he rather ends up with Dantean content in Petrarchan form. Even there, however, as this conclusion has already suggested, following Morgan and Ockenden, *Das Neue Reich* ends with notes of transience and a picture of the

¹⁷⁰⁷ Schelling, *Texte zur Philosophie der Kunst*, p. 235 (*SW*, I, 5, 445).

world as a kind of Petrarchan 'fleeting dream' ('breve sogno', *Rvf* 1: 14). Dantean solidity was discussed at the outset of this dissertation as an imagined fantasy of protection against contingency and the inconstancy of the Petrarchan and Petrarchistic modes. The penultimate poem of George's oeuvre, closing out his 'New Kingdom', his own Dantean Empyrean, is worth looking at briefly in this regard:

In stillste ruh
Besonnenen tags
Bricht jäh ein blick
Der unerahnten schrecks
Die sichre seele stört

So wie auf höhn
Der feste stamm
Stolz reglos ragt
Und dann noch spät ein sturm
Ihn bis zum boden beugt:

So wie das meer
Mit gellem laut
Mit wildem prall
Noch einmal in die lang
Verlassne muschel stösst.

The poem presents what are essentially three images of unexpected happenings, scenes of contingency, of something steady and stable being unexpectedly overcome, from a 'status' to a 'lapsus'. The valence of these disruptions is not certain: 'stören', 'beugen' and 'stoßen' are not particularly positively charged words. Is it a good thing that the old soul, in its most silent peace, is violently shocked? Is the near-destruction of a tree in a storm wind to be viewed with joy? Ockenden sees, at the core of this convincing little poem, 'an acceptance of the other', most apparent in the final stanza where the sea, 'something apparently alien [...] is at the same time a part of the self'.¹⁷⁰⁸ This is the crux of the matter, and the similes of stanzas two and three are key to reading the status (or lapsus) of the soul in stanza one. That soul is 'like' the proud tree, 'reglos', and 'like' 'die lang | Verlassene muschel'. On the one hand, an image of permanence, tradition and stability, on the other, of hollow barrenness.¹⁷⁰⁹ The proud tree and its 'feste[r] stamm', like Algabal's world, are ultimately rather lifeless, and with the comparison of the soul to these lifeless moments it would appear as though it ultimately stages a scene of relinquishment to a great, primal otherness as the rejuvenating force of life. So at the end of the work, and in the winter of its years, a calmer openness to chance and powers greater than itself fills the soul. It no longer flees itself or goes around in a spiralförmig pursuit of an idealised companion. A transcendent element is simply present and washes over the soul, filling it out like an old seashell. The *Du* in 'Du schlank und rein wie eine flamme' is so ethereal and abstract, presented significantly through similes, that while it appears idealised it is no longer any particular human figure that is idealised, but it is rather as if the Other – in all its

¹⁷⁰⁸ Ockenden, 'Voyaging with a Concordance', p. 62.

¹⁷⁰⁹ The tree returns us to Deleuze and Guattari, for whom it was the quintessential image of hierarchy: 'Arborescent systems are hierarchical systems with centers of significance and subjectification' (*Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. 16).

abstraction – is simply accepted. This is undergirded by the fact that the poem is, if not a direct translation, then a close adaptation, of Vielé-Griffin's poem, so the address to the *Du* as a kind of pure lyric entity, perhaps lyric language in itself, is an address to a language that is *not* the poet's own master discourse, it is a recognition of the other within even one's ownmost poetic creation, 'thus foreground[ing]', to borrow Culler's point about a different poem, 'all the strangeness of lyric language', strangeness in the precise sense of its inherent otherness.¹⁷¹⁰ Like Dante's terza rima rhyme scheme, as read by Franke, having its own inner principle of otherness (the odd rhyme of each *terzina*), George's poem here 'has also its own self-transcendence built into it'.¹⁷¹¹

Otherness has arisen thematically in the problem of transcendence. Transcendence has returned throughout this study because at a basic level, George's poetry is about a self, his 'lyric vita',¹⁷¹² and the literary self emerges only in and through encounters with an other, and otherness is the great threat to specular narcissism. George's *Ich* has not unjustifiably been called a narcissistic one, and the narcissist and the Master go hand in hand.¹⁷¹³ At the same time, true otherness is impossible: a paradox obtains when one attempts to incorporate the wholly Other: it becomes the same.¹⁷¹⁴ Our little poem here, to follow Ockenden's argument, presents us with a scene of the self and a great other ('something apparently alien' in his words) merging together. There is no *Ich* in this poem, but the *Ich* that returns in *Du schlank und rein*, as we saw above, exhibits none of the bullish character that characterises so much of George's master discourse. In a

¹⁷¹⁰ Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, p. 33.

¹⁷¹¹ Franke, *Dante's Paradiso and the theological Origins of Modern Thought*, p. 207.

¹⁷¹² Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, p. 40.

¹⁷¹³ Cf. Morgan, *The Homosexual Imaginary*, p. 142.

¹⁷¹⁴ Costa, 'L'Alterità nell'immanenza', p. 292; and Franke, *Dante's Paradiso and the Theological Origins of Modern Thought*, pp. 67 and 248-49.

certain way, then, he completes his work with a poem that demonstrates the principle of poetry in its purest form, as he himself once maintained: 'Das wesen der dichtung wie des traumes: dass Ich und Du · Hier und Dort · Einst und Jezt nebeneinander bestehen und eins und dasselbe werden' (XVII: 69).

The talk of transcendence throughout the dissertation has involved a sense of verticality, a longitudinal axis bisecting the universe. Schwartz, in her discussion, theorises a horizontal kind (the horizontal and the vertical are not absolute distinctions, however), the 'project of self-transcendence, the understanding that we are incomplete, thrusting ourselves into an incomplete future'.¹⁷¹⁵ In this sense, perhaps the success of George's 'conversion' from a Petrarchism wandering desirously toward a vertical transcendence and an idealised other to a Dantism that is constituted by a more relaxed openness, lies not in whatever cultish motifs or formal elements determine it, but simply, as Franke reads Dante and as Morgan reads George, in this redemption of narcissism, the combustion of the lyric voice into a simple flame.¹⁷¹⁶

¹⁷¹⁵ Schwartz, 'Introduction', p. xi.

¹⁷¹⁶ See Morgan's final two chapters ('Damaged Narcissus' and 'The Healing of Narcissus'), *The Homosexual Imaginary*, 115; and Franke, *Dante's Paradiso and the Theological Origins of Modern Thought* (the whole book, but esp. chapter 14, 'Narcissus and his Redemption by Dante', pp. 96-103).

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